



NETWORK NEWS

The newsletter of the Leicestershire and Rutland Archaeological Network

NUMBER 26: November 2004

ARCHAEOLOGISTS ON THE MOVE

The Archaeological Services Team and archaeologists in the Historic and Natural Environment Team moved from Thurmaston to County Hall at the end of October 2004. All other Heritage Services staff based at Thurmaston have also moved, mostly to Holly Hayes. See section at end of this newsletter for contact details for the archaeologists.

It may be possible for the teams to reserve a space in the Visitors Car Park for visitors who are able to make an appointment in advance.

MEMBERSHIP

Alan Ingle has joined as the replacement Warden for Oakthorpe & Donisthorpe, whilst Langham is a Parish new to the Network – number 188. Sqdn Ldr and Mrs Wright are the Wardens, and also Heritage Wardens for the parish. Unfortunately, vacancies now exists for Keyham and Shackerstone parishes, following the Wardens' resignations.

JEWRY WALL MUSEUM

The hours that this museum is open to the general public are 11.00 – 16.30, Saturdays only. It is shut throughout December, and on New Year's Day. Thus, the last open day in 2004 is 27th

November, and it will reopen on 8th January. Museum visitors who want to get their fix of archaeological exhibits over the holiday season can of course visit the County Council's museums: Charnwood, Donington-le-Heath Manor House, Harborough, Melton Carnegie and Snibston Discovery Park all have archaeological collections on display.

THE "24 HOUR MUSEUM" ...

This website, 24hourmuseum.org.uk, has a page entitled "City Heritage Guide: Welcome to Leicester", accessed by fingering the spot on the "choose a city" map that marks the city (map linked from "City Guides" on the main menu). However, much information on both County Council and independent museums in the County of Leicestershire can be found on the website, as well as details of the museums in Leicester.

... AND SOME OTHER WEBSITES

Access to Archives aims to develop a virtual national archival catalogue for England, accessible on the internet. Six archive offices in the East Midlands are working on the project, including The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. Family and estate papers have provided the themes for the East Midlands' collaborative contribution. The website address is www.a2a.pro.gov.uk.

Heritage Services

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Internet Archaeology “the premier international e-journal for archaeology”, is a subscription publication: see details on <http://intarch.ac.uk> .

The British and Irish Archaeological Bibliography is also available by subscription on the internet: see www.biab.ac.uk . Details can also be found on www.britarch.ac.uk the website of the Council for British Archaeology.

Keys to the Past, “unlocking the archaeological secrets of Northumberland and Durham”, provides website access to a complete record of the archaeology of the two counties at www.keystothepast.info .

Images of England aims to take a photograph of each of England’s c. 370,000 listed buildings> These images are then linked to existing publicly available information about each structure. The website is www.imagesofengland.org.uk . There is a need to register in order to undertake detailed searches, but 50 sampled records for each county are available to the casual reader.

ViewFinder is an online picture resource from the National Monuments Record, the public archive of English Heritage. It contains about 30,000 historic photographs covering the whole of England. They are free to view, and you do not have to register. The website is www.english-heritage.org.uk/viewfinder .

The Portable Antiquities Scheme website is www.finds.org.uk . Go to “News” then “newsletters” for regional publications: if the Midlands one is not there, a hard copy can be had from Wendy Scott (see end of this Network

News for contact details). A new “easy to use” website is due to be launched in the New Year. Use www.findsdatabase.org.uk to look at what has been put on the record. A forum for the Scheme’s staff and the public to interact can be found at <http://pasforum.toadhms.com> .

EVENTS AT DONINGTON LE HEATH MANOR HOUSE

January 23rd: 11.00-4.00 Indoor craft and games event.

February 2nd. 7.30 Lecture: “The Middle Trent from Prehistory to present”, by Lynden Cooper, University of Leicester Archaeological Services

February 12th-13th. 11.00-4.00 Medicine through the Ages

March 13th. The Romans are Coming!

Admission to all the above DLH events is free. Ring (01530) 831259 for further information.

THE SAPCOTE HERITAGE GROUP OPEN DAY 2004

Keith Hextall, Archaeological & Heritage Warden for Sapcote

This year, Sapcote Heritage Group’s annual open day took the form of an Archaeological Roadshow. Held in the function room at Sapcote Club on September 9, displays ranged from Sapcote Roman villa and manorial site to looking at the industrial archaeology of the village, including the quarries and brickworks. The garden of group chairman Keith Hextall’s Church Street home, built on part of the manorial complex, has yielded stacks of medieval pottery over the years and has also been found to contain part of a medieval moat. Member Ray Haslett put on an impressive display of some finds he has made over the years while metal detecting.

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On display for the first time were photographs and details of a seventh century Anglo-Saxon gold and garnet pendant, found within the parish and declared to be Treasure under the terms of the 1996 Act. Paul Devenyi of Sharnford, who found the pendant came along to the exhibition and brought a collection of medieval silver coins also found in Sapcote.

Brian Burningham (Archaeological warden for Misterton & Walcote and Ullesthorpe) exhibited part of the large collection of flints found by the Lutterworth Fieldwork Group and Malcolm Lockett (Heritage Warden for Hinckley) with members of Hinckley Fieldworking Group displayed a large collection of their finds. Stoney Stanton Archaeological Warden and Heritage Group Chairman Alison Jackson brought along photographs of Manorfield schoolchildren carrying out their own archaeological dig in the school grounds. The year 6 pupils' own finds, recording forms and grids, plotting the spread of finds, were also on display.

One of the main aims of the day is to involve as many local schoolchildren as possible. Sapcote Heritage Group members helped 80 children from All Saints Primary School dress up in period clothing, try brass rubbing and examine the archaeological finds. Leicestershire County Council archaeologist Richard Knox, dressed as an Angle-Saxon, worked with the children from All Saints school, who were able to dress up in the replica period clothing from Roman and Tudor times that he had brought along.

Wendy Scott, Finds Liaison Officer for Leicestershire and Rutland, was on hand throughout the day to examine and identify finds brought along by children and adults. In the evening

Wendy gave a slide show about recent archaeological finds in Leicestershire.

The events was well received and allowed the public to see what there is to be found not only in Sapcote, but in the surrounding villages.

School Head teacher, Mrs Kath Allsopp reported the event in the school newsletter. "Once again we were thrilled to visit the Heritage Group Archaeology Exhibition. Our Key Stage Two children were able to dress up in period clothing, participate in brass rubbing sessions and examine archaeological finds. Diane Dunne from the Heritage Group kindly came into school to talk to the older Key Stage One children".

The following are just some of the comments received from the school children.

"Thank you for inviting us to the Working Men's Club and organising the historical activities, because they were really enjoyable. It was very interesting, but the part I liked most was the dressing up. I liked looking at the old stones. I did not know that in the Stone age that they used stones for tools".

"Thank you for letting us come to the talk. It was really interesting learning about different time Periods. I like learning some stuff about the stone age. Like they built everything nearly out of stone and that they fought with them. I never knew that there was a roman barn near Sapcote. Or how they built Stoney Cove".

"Thank you for letting us come to the Working Mens Club. I enjoyed doing the drawing most. When we looked around people told us all about the

rocks and pottery and how they found them that was fun”.

“Thanks you for inviting us to the Working Mens Club we all enjoyed it. I really enjoyed dressing up and holding the big shield. It was really interesting to learn about all the Romans and how they lived in those days. I liked scribbling on the piece of paper and it drew a person”.

“Thank you for organising the historical activities at the Working Mens Club, because they were really fun and interesting. I really liked it when we dressed up in clothes from the past. It was really interesting when we were shown around the stalls, I found some facts that I never knew before. I hope you organise something like this at the Working Mens Club again”.

As a group we feel that it is most important to involve village schoolchildren as much as possible. If we manage to get just a few children to look at their village in a different way, we will have achieved something for the future.

EXCAVATIONS AT WYCOMB ROMAN VILLA

David Stanley, Archaeological Warden for Eaton Civil Parish, with contributions from Prof. Roger Wilson, University of Nottingham

Introduction

Sited on the ridge of a hill overlooking the village of Goadby Marwood in north-east Leicestershire, the Wycomb villa was first discovered in the 1950's when the field, known locally as 'Desert Island', was ploughed for the first time. Inevitably, the trailer plough pulled by a crawler tractor became stuck on what was believed to be a Roman wall, but the field owner at that

time was not keen for the villa site to become more generally known. The site is sometimes known locally as Goadby Gorse, but it lies within Scaford parish, not that of Goadby Marwood.

The area was subsequently fieldwalked in 1979 by the Trent Valley Group (*Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* Vols. 54 [1978–79], 79–81; 55 [1979–80], 95–7). In 1981 fieldwalking located 'fine and coarse tesserae, sufficient evidence to indicate the presence, originally, of a mosaic': this was sufficient to get Wycomb an entry in the *Corpus* of Romano-British mosaics, where it is numbered Mosaic 37.1 (Neal and Cosh 2002, 127). A more detailed fieldwalking survey was undertaken by the Melton Fieldworkers group over a six-week period during 1985 (*TLAHS* 63 [1989, 111–13]). It is noted in that report that 'in about 1970, the owner of the field had grubbed out the remains of limestone walls ... and was still finding it difficult to plough deeper than about 7 inches in certain parts of the field'.

During 2002, the Framland Local Archaeology Group (FLAG) undertook a resistivity survey in the area of the villa. The survey was done in 20m squares and covered an area measuring 100m east–west and 140m north–south. The results clearly showed the position of villa walls.

Work in 2003

During 2003 the resistivity plan was used to plot three trenches over the site, and these were subsequently evaluated to determine the condition and extent of settlement and to try and establish a date for the construction of the complex.

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One trench found an east–west aligned wall of the villa and produced numerous pieces of pottery including most of a Nene Valley ware ‘hunt cup’ with barbotine decoration [squirred onto the cup’s body in the manner of icing a cake]. The second trench was located in a position where the resistivity survey indicated the presence of walls. These walls were found to enclose a room, but nothing remained to suggest the type of floor that must have once existed in it.

The third trench in 2003 was sited on an area shown on the resistivity survey to have high resistance, but only what appeared to be a working surface of crushed ironstone was found. The trench revealed a large post-hole that had a significant piece of a *mortarium* [a Roman pottery mixing bowl] used as post packing.

During the 2003 operations, a large number of tesserae were noted lying on the surface just to the north of the second trench.

Work in 2004

The 2004 excavation was undertaken in an attempt to locate whether *in situ* mosaic survived, and also to determine the condition of the villa walls following the damage thought to have been caused by deep ploughing.

The availability of a mini-digger enabled the topsoil from an area some 13m long by 4m wide to be removed quickly, and a number of wall foundations became immediately visible, along with building debris such as fallen stone, fragments of mosaic and wall plaster.

Making sense of the wall patterns was not easy, and it was decided to bring in the help of Professor Roger Wilson

of Nottingham University, who is also an Honorary Member of FLAG. On his first visit to the site he suggested that we might have the hypocaust of a bath house. As the area was gradually cleared, this proved to be correct. However while the team searched for the *pilae* of a hypocaust it became apparent that the system used at Wycomb was different. In fact the room uncovered in the excavations had a hypocaust system of the channelled type, with a central flue on the long east–west axis of the room, and branch channels leading off it at right angles on either side.

As excavation proceeded the stoke hole of the room became clear, with burnt stone and charcoal deposits in its immediate vicinity. At the end of each branch flue, the remains of box-flue tiles were found against the room’s outer walls, to allow hot air from the hypocaust to rise vertically in the thickness of the walls.

It was decided that the original trench had to be extended if the complete dimensions of the hypocaust room were to be explored. The trench was therefore lengthened to the west by an area 3m x 6m until the wall at the west end of the room was found.

In the course of excavation literally hundreds of coarse tesserae in white and grey [limestone] were found which clearly made up the largest part of the floor, including its border. Near the centre of the room, however, a small area 300mm x 200mm of intact mosaic appeared, close to the central flue. By a miracle this had escaped the ravages of the plough, and the incomplete pattern appeared to show a lozenge type of design with black, white and yellow tesserae, mostly in tesserae 7 mm square. One lozenge in yellow was substantially complete.

Loose examples of red tesserae of the same size have also been found in this area and it is clear that these four colours (red, yellow, black and white) were used in the central, intricate part of the floor which featured a geometric design. Many other small pieces of intact mosaic that had fallen into the adjacent flues have been recovered, some composed of tesserae as small as only 5 mm square. A significant number of pieces of painted wall plaster was also recovered from the central flue at the west end of the room. Several of them had dark red lines on them and one piece carried part of a design in green.

Interpretation of the room must await further work. A single heated room might have been a living room or a room in a bath suite. Further excavation to the west is needed to confirm whether or not there are other heated rooms awaiting discovery there. If the room uncovered does form part of the bath-suite, it is probably the *caldarium* [hot room] in view of the discovery of a stoke hole providing maximum heat to this room.

The walls of this room have pitched-flag foundations, as do those of some other fragmentary walls uncovered further south. They appear to abut a north-south wall uncovered at the extreme eastern edge of the main trench, which seems to have been constructed in a different style, with well-coursed small masonry blocks without pitched foundations. The latter wall may therefore belong to an earlier building, still to be uncovered further east, to which the structures including the heated room were added at some later period. The chronology is not certain, but if the mosaic is contemporary with the hypocaust, a fourth-century date for the room might seem probable, because that is the

chronology of every other known mosaic from a rural context yet discovered in Leicestershire. However fourth-century material may not be plentiful at the site; certainly the finds, which await detailed study (see below), appear to be mainly of second- and third-century date. If this material is not residual, therefore, it is possible that the structures uncovered including the heated room date earlier than the fourth century. The small, 7mm size of the tesserae used in the intact piece is without parallel in rural fourth-century Leicestershire, raising the possibility that this might be a highly unusual example of a villa (as opposed to town) mosaic in the county which pre-dates the fourth century

Conclusions

Finds and information recovered from the site indicate that a large villa, probably of courtyard or winged-corridor type, once stood on the hillside overlooking the Romano-British 'small town' on the outskirts of what is today the village of Goadby Marwood. The walling uncovered on the whole survived in good condition: it is clear that wholesale robbing of the villa down to foundations has not occurred, at least in this part of the site, and that damage from ploughing, while severe, had still left most of the wall foundations intact. The finds suggest that the villa site had been occupied probably from the late first century and that it flourished during the both the second and the third century; whether that continued into the fourth century is at present uncertain. The excavation by the FLAG team of the probable bathhouse is a significant step in the understanding of how the landscape was developed and managed.

KIRBY MUXLOE CASTLE

The castle was built in 1480 by William, Lord Hastings, but remained incomplete following his execution by Richard III in 1483. It is one of the earliest examples of a brick building in Leicestershire. The moat was drained in June 2004, in order that repairs can be made to the masonry. The castle is due to reopen to the public in 2006.

The moat was previously drained in 1913, when a diverse range of finds was recovered. A collection of these is held by Heritage Services, on loan from the former Ministry of Works, including pottery, floor tiles, and iron objects. The water level of the moat fell in 1996, revealing the bones of several large animals under the bank of the moat. The castle is one of three properties in Leicestershire managed directly by English Heritage for the State: the others are Ashby-de-la-Zouch Castle (also built by Hastings), and the Jewry Wall itself in Leicester.

Details of these and other English Heritage properties can be found on their website, www.english-heritage.org.uk.

CONTACTS AT LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE SERVICES

The County Council's archaeologists are all now based at:
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LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL MUSEUMS

CHARNWOOD MUSEUM

Queen's Hall, Granby Street,
Loughborough, Leics LE11 3DU
Open 10.00-4.30 Mon-Sat; 2.00-5.00 Sun.
Tel: (01509) 233754. Keeper: Susan Cooke.

COLLECTIONS RESOURCE CENTRE

Barrow-upon-Soar, Leicestershire.
Tel: (01509) 815514. Guided visits by appointment with the Site Manager, Fred Hartley. Appointments to examine collections should be made with the relevant collection curator, but will normally be between 10.00-3.30 Mon-Thurs, and 10.00-3.00 Fri. Contact: Archaeology - Richard Pollard (0116 264 5803 or 01509 815514); Art and Costume - Philip Warren (01509 815514) (but note that for operational reasons Philip will not be available until the summer of 2005); Geology - Susan Cooke (01509 233754); Home and Family Life - Fiona Ure (01530 278442); Natural Life - Tony Fletcher; Working Life - Fred Hartley (both 01509 815514).

DONINGTON-LE-HEATH MANOR HOUSE

Manor Road, Donington-le-Heath, Coalville, LE67 2FW. Open 7 days a week, October - March, 11.30-3 pm, April - September 11.30 - 5 pm. (Dec, Jan and Feb, open weekends only, 11.30-3pm.) Tel: (01530) 831259 . Keeper: Peter Liddle.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES CENTRE (HOLLY HAYES)

216 Birstall Road, Birstall, Leicester, LE4 4DG. Open 10.00-4.00 Mon-Fri by appointment. Tel: (0116) 267 1950.

HARBOROUGH MUSEUM

Council Offices, Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough, Leics. LE16 7AG.:

Open 10.00-4.30 Mon-Sat; 2.00-5.00 Sun.

Tel: (01858) 821085. Keeper: Zara Matthews.

MELTON CARNEGIE MUSEUM

Thorpe End, Melton Mowbray LE13 1RB. Open 10.00-4.30 Daily. Tel: (01664) 569946. Keeper: Jenny Dancey.

THE RECORD OFFICE FOR LEICESTERSHIRE, LEICESTER & RUTLAND

Long Street, Wigston Magna, LE18 2AH.

Open 9.15-5.00 Mon, Tues, Thurs; 9.15-7.30 Wed; 9.15-4.45 Fri; 9.15-12.15 Sat; closed on Suns.

Tel: (0116) 257 1080. County Archivist: Carl Harrison.

SNIBSTON DISCOVERY PARK

Ashby Road, Coalville, LE67 3LN

Open daily 10.00-5.00. Admission Adults £5.70, Child £3.60, under 5's free;

Concessions £3.90; half price after 3pm.

Group discounts : call for details.

Tel: (01530) 278444. Collections Curator: vacant post.

There are many other museums and historic buildings in Leicestershire and Rutland open to the public, run by the voluntary sector and other organisations. Details should be available at your local library.

**THIS NEWSLETTER HAS BEEN
PRODUCED BY THE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES
TEAM FOR THE LEICESTERSHIRE
AND RUTLAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL
NETWORK**

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