

Guernsey Museum Archaeology Group Newsletter

October 2008

Hello all,

A newsletter is well overdue, so here's a bumper edition with updates on the activity over the summer, and some news on what's coming up over the next few months.

Vale Priory

Our work here has just about finished, and the foundations for the new Sunday School are now in place. The contractors removed a large amount of nineteenth century infill from within the old Treasure Seekers building, which revealed more of the stone paving probably associated with the Priory structure.



The paving does not continue beneath the wall with the arch, on the right hand side of the photo above, but does reappear outside the wall, in the area we excavated earlier this year. It also extends below the wall which is now the boundary with the road (photo on next page). I have been puzzling over why the paving didn't go right the way through under the arch, but it is possible that the stone here was robbed out at some point in the past. We did find one very large stone directly below the arch which might perhaps have been a threshold stone, but much lower than the level of the paving.

I'll be writing up the results of our work here in the next few months, but one other interesting feature we can already see in the finds is the lack of fine pottery: there was plenty of Normandy Gritty Ware, but very little of the fine, glazed imports we might expect. And no coins or other small finds either. It suggests that the users of this priory building were relatively poor, certainly poorer than their counterparts on Lihou.



Herm

As most of you will have read in Tanya's Société newsletter earlier this week, Professor Chris Scarre had a successful fortnight excavating four small trenches on Herm. We had a brief meeting with the new tenant of the island while we were there, and he's keen for the work to continue next year, as Chris had planned.

Here are some pictures of this year's trenches:



Next to the tomb on the south-west slope of Grand Monceau



On the sandy plain. This is the area which we cleared of gorse in the spring this year. One of the diggers is sat on a curious circular stone structure, which was excavated by Lukis in the mid-nineteenth century. Chris would like to do more work on this site next year.



A bit further north-east from the last picture. Although this trench started out as the result of a geophysical anomaly – probably a quarryman's iron crowbar! – it turned out to have the largest quantity of flint and pottery in it, in the prehistoric soil lying on top of the bedrock.

L'Erée

In September Fraser Sturt and Duncan Garrow excavated a fairly large trench, 10m x 5m, in the field below the Prosperity memorial at L'Erée. This is the field where Barry Cunliffe dug a small

trench in the late 1990s, and of course it's where we've been picking up material from the eroding cliff edge for many years now. Here is the excavation at an early stage:



The results were slightly disappointing: although Duncan and Fraser got a reasonable quantity of flint and pottery, this was mostly from the later Bronze Age horizon and not from the Neolithic layers they were hoping for. It seems as though the bulk of the occupation is further south, on the other side of the tamarisk trees on the photograph. That land is privately owned and it is proving more difficult to obtain permission to dig there, but we hope that there will be more work on this site next year.

Coming up...

There are various developments going on in the island which we have flagged up during the planning process as being of archaeological interest, but I can't say yet whether we'll actually break out the trowels for any of them! These include the redevelopment of the Grand Bouet and the work going on behind Gategny Esplanade, where Bucktrouts warehouse used to be, plus some smaller sites, for example in Fort George and in the King's Road area. I'll keep you informed about those. We may also get the opportunity for some survey work and/or excavation at the western end of the airport runway, if the States decide to press ahead with that project.

In January I plan to take advantage of the museum being closed for a month to get the exhibition cases opened up, so that we can photograph all the stuff that's currently on display – like we did for the antiquarian collections in the store earlier this year. This will take more than just a Wednesday morning or two, so I'll organize a more concerted effort closer to the time. For those of you who are regulars on Wednesday mornings/Thursday evenings, I apologise for the irregular meetings at the moment: we are not producing enough finds to keep you all busy!

Most of you will have read Tanya's request for menus and bookings for the Christmas meal, at the Fleur du Jardin on Friday 12 December, 7.30 for 8. Please get in touch with her with your booking and menu choice as soon as possible.

I'm sure there was more that I've forgotten, but that'll do for now. Hope to see you soon,

Phil

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