

Guernsey Museum Archaeology Group Newsletter

February 2009

Hello all,

It's a bit late to say Happy New Year, but Happy New Year anyway! Here's an update on what we've been up to over the last few weeks, and what's planned for the next month or two...

King's Road

Between Christmas and New Year we dug for what will probably be the last time on the Pré au Puits site. As you'll remember from the last newsletter we had uncovered another four graves beneath the old house just before Christmas, and while the building site was closed down we took the opportunity to investigate a few more areas in between the new footings trenches.



Making an offering around the grave?!

We had such a good turnout, despite the freezing weather – the champagne may have helped – that the work took about half as long as I expected. We found one more grave, again damaged by the previous house, and this time containing just a single iron object, probably a brooch. A couple of weeks ago I took all the objects to Esther Cameron in Oxford, who will be working on their conservation over the coming months. She was very impressed with their condition, even the shield boss – which I had expected her to be quite rude about, given that it came out in about a dozen pieces – so I'm looking forward to seeing what magic she can work with these objects.



King's Road grave

Delancey Park

We've made a good start on cleaning up the Delancey megalithic monument, so thanks to everybody who has helped with that. So far we have found about £3 in loose change, so that'll cover a packet of biscuits for the dig proper, and a very fine flint tool, 8cm long, shown here. There will be a pause now while I work out a proper programme of excavation for later in the spring. It seems increasingly likely that there will be very little archaeology left in situ, but then if Miss Collum managed to miss this flint in 1932, who knows what else she missed?



Airport

We have received permission to excavate a series of test pits west of the airport runway, in the fields which would be covered over if the extension goes ahead. I am waiting to hear whether we are going to get some extra funding for this before making a start on the work.

Flotation

I'm not a big fan of New Year's resolutions, but this year's is to do something with the small mountain of samples which are building up in the store here. These are bags of soil from various sites, including some of the King's Road graves. What we need is a suitable location to do the flotation: somewhere with a good supply of running water, and most importantly somewhere where the soil and debris can be washed away without clogging up the drains. If anybody can think of a suitable spot, please let me know.

Field-walking

Thank you to the fifteen or so people who turned out in very cold weather to walk a field at Pleinmont last week. There was a good spread of flint across the field and a fair amount of

pottery, most of it post-medieval although I've spotted a few sherds of Normandy Gritty Ware in there too. Because of the cold and damp we didn't walk the adjoining field, where the mound of the Hougue Anthan is shown on the Duke of Richmond map, but I hope we will return there soon for another look. Possibly on a warmer, drier day...



Herm

By way of advance warning, Prof. Chris Scarre is currently planning on 7th – 30th September for this year's season of work on Herm. These dates are not yet set in stone but I'll let you know as soon as they are confirmed.

HMS Victory

You've probably heard about the discovery of the HMS Victory, quite a long way from the Casquets – contrary to popular belief – and well out of our territorial waters, which is possibly not a bad thing. There is an interesting article about the discovery on the website of Odyssey Marine Exploration, which you can download here:

http://www.shipwreck.net/pdf/OMEPapers2-HMS_Victory.pdf

Lectures

As you may have seen in the Communiqué of the Société Guernesiaise, there are a couple of archaeological lectures coming up soon. On Thursday 26th February at 8pm Jason will be talking about the excavations which took place at the Nunnery in Alderney last August. On Tuesday 17th March at 8pm it's my turn, giving 'An Introduction to Celtic coinage, or, How the Celts learned to stop worrying and love Rome.' Apologies for the daft title. Here's a fine Celtic coin to pique your interest – I hope to see you all then, if not before. Cheers!



Phil

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