

Guernsey Museum Archaeology Group Newsletter

October 2009



It's quite difficult to find good photographs of Jean actually looking at the camera – she was always far too busy on site, and more often than not hidden under a floppy hat. Here she is on Lihou a few years ago. She was a remarkable woman, full of curiosity and enthusiasm for archaeology, both for digging and for finds processing; she was almost always first through the door of the store on Thursday evenings, often complaining that she hadn't quite managed to catch up some lanky six-footer – probably fifty years younger than she was – on her walk down the Grange.

Partly because of her enthusiasm for the Thursday evening meetings, we will have a very informal celebration in memory of Jean in the store on Thursday 22 October, from 5pm onwards. Refreshments will be provided, and I hope that you will be able to come and join us.

As Jean would be the first to say, life goes on, so here is an update on our busy summer...

Sark

In July, Barry Cunliffe returned again to Sark, this time to a new location: a field in the north-west of the island, near the Petit Champ hotel and Port à la Jument. He excavated four trenches in and around a rubble cairn which now forms part of a field boundary. There were relatively few finds – some pottery and flint probably of Bronze Age date – but the most interesting feature was a broken menhir within the structure of the cairn, shown here. The



plan is to return and dig some more of this site next year. While Barry was digging this cairn, Andy Payne of English Heritage did some intensive geophysical survey of fields on Little Sark, and I hope to bring you news of his results soon.

Alderney

Over the Bank Holiday weekend, a small group directed by Jason dug several more trenches at the Nunnery, both inside and outside the walls. Jason will give a full account of what we got up to in due course, but it is probably fair to say that absolutely unequivocal evidence for its Roman origins is still frustratingly elusive. Within the Nunnery we found the continuation of a massive wall, seemingly more than two metres thick and surely of Roman build, but even at a depth of almost two metres there was medieval and post-medieval disturbance alongside it. Outside the Nunnery, on the Longy Bay side, we re-excavated a trench that Heather had

started some years ago, taking it down to below the lowest courses of the wall. Here again it proved nearly impossible to say that we were definitely digging a Roman structure, but all the evidence surely points to that conclusion.



(left) Inside the Nunnery: the massive ?Roman wall is beneath the yellow and black buckets. A later wall sits on top of it, running off to the left hand side of the picture, above the yellow bucket. Both walls have been damaged by the (German?) electricity cables between Isabel and Dave.



(above) The Roman wall forms the foundation for the sloped revetment (behind the two standing figures on the left); this is surprisingly recent, probably German in date.

L'Erée

Duncan Garrow and Fraser Sturt have done another three week stint at the Neolithic and Bronze Age site at L'Erée, with a small trench alongside the one they dug last year, and a series of test-pits in the adjacent, privately-owned field. Several of the pits produced a wealth of material, including a fine barbed and tanged arrowhead, a couple of hearths, ditches and a possible wall. The only problem with this part of the site is that at present, the landowner is firmly opposed to any more digging in his field. Over the next few months Duncan and co will be trying to make him change his mind...

Two hearths in the base of a test pit at L'Erée



Herm



Kendrick tomb no. 15, viewed from the south-west

Chris Scarre has just finished another successful season on Herm, digging a series of trenches across the Common. One of these was focused on Kendrick's tomb no. 15, which is now much more exposed than it used to be. Below is Lukis's sketch of the same tomb in August 1841, with the Pierre aux Rats in the background. Some elements of the sketch are difficult to reconcile with what is there now, and several stones have clearly been moved during the past 170 or so years. The tomb appears to have been surrounded by a rubble cairn, but its exact form is still not completely clear; next year Chris will probably excavate the final quadrant to try and establish the whole picture.



Lukis's sketch of the tomb, from the south-east

One of the other trenches was dug just south of Robert's Cross, where a suspected menhir turned out to be very much a real menhir... The stone has slipped at some time in the past, but the socket and the trig stones are clearly visible at its base.

Chris should be returning for a final season of excavation next year, and at some point we will no doubt have the opportunity to hear him talk about the results of his work.

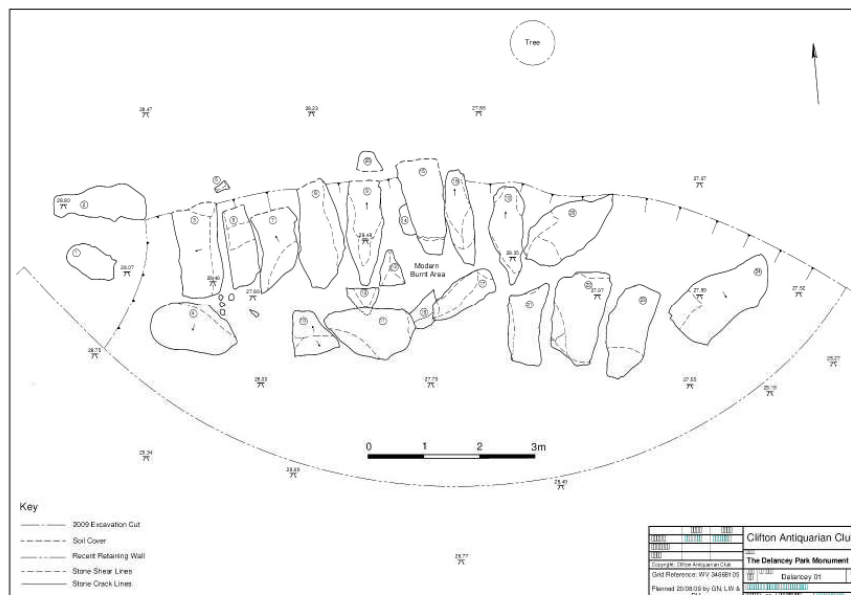
Airport

With all this going on, we have rather had to abandon the work at the airport. And I must admit I'm embarrassed by the weeds on the site and the tattered safety fencing whenever I go past. We will get back there again, but possibly not until later in October, because before then we are back at...



King's Road

Yes, just when you thought it was all over. The house immediately next door to Pré au Puits has been sold and the new owner has permission to build a small extension at the back, just a few metres from some of the graves we dug in 2005 (including the rich female burial). The owner is very keen that we get the chance to excavate before the building work takes place, so we will be starting with a mattock and shovel blitz of the topsoil next week. Depending on what turns up we may then call on extra help – I'll be in touch if we need assistance, or if anything exciting turns up.



Delancey

And that's still not all... a while ago I thought we might be digging Delancey in October, but then Dr George Nash got involved and we decided to take advantage of his expertise, so the actual digging is now likely to start next summer. In the meantime George and his team paid a flying visit one day in August, and

produced this plan of the Neolithic monument – remarkably, the first proper plan of the stones since they were uncovered in 1919. I have submitted an application to the Environment Department for permission to remove the two pine trees immediately next to the site, which are doing quite a lot of damage to it.

Lecture

As you may have seen in the Société Communiqué, I'll be talking about the year's archaeology at Candie on Tuesday 24 November (8pm). So that'll be mostly about the airport and King's Road – including the work we did there at the very end of last year, which I haven't talked about before. I hope to see many of you there.

Museum 'do'

On Saturday 31 October the Museum is having a sort of 'end of term' meal in the Hatton Gallery in Castle Cornet – this will replace the museum's annual Christmas meal, which was becoming less and less popular (NB this is **not** the same as our Christmas party, don't worry, that's more popular than ever. Especially the dressing up). Everybody who is associated with the museum is invited, not just the staff, so that includes all of you. The menu that has been suggested is shown here, and there would be a charge of £15 per head. If anybody is interested please let me know, so I can pass on details to Rose at Candie.

Buffet

**Platters Of Grilled Plaice
Brown Nut Butter**

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**Pork Glazed Apple In Calvados
Served With Rice**

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**Mixed Salads
New Potatoes
Roasted Vegetables**

**Warm Sticky Toffee Pudding
Toffee Sauce**

**Vanilla Cheese Cake
Warm Fruit Compote**

Halberd

In 1853, two splendid bronze halberds were found at Chateau L'Etoc on Alderney (details of the find are in Kendrick, p.61 and pp. 243-6). One of them was recently identified in the National Museum of Scotland, where it had been given a spurious, Scottish provenance. The other one stayed in Guernsey, but was



sent to the UK for conservation – I think in the late 1970s – and then disappeared from view. I'm pleased to say that it has now reappeared – in the museum store, although not, I hasten to add, anywhere in the archaeology department. It's a superb item, well over a foot long and in extraordinarily good condition. A pity that all our prehistoric bronzework isn't quite as nice as this.

Site safety

As you will be aware, we do have to take site safety very seriously these days, so I'll finish with a couple of images to remind you of certain basic precautions. The first one appeared in

a recent French excavation report, and there are just so many accidents waiting to happen here that even I was impressed.



As for this one, well I'm sure there's some sort of rule that says elderly ladies shouldn't be climbing ladders, but thank goodness Jean didn't hold with any of that sort of nonsense. We'll drink a toast to her memory in the store on October 22nd, and I hope to see you then.

Phil

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