

Guernsey Museum Archaeology Group Newsletter

March 2012

Hello all,

It's been so long since the last newsletter that you may have assumed we've been hibernating... however, although there hasn't been any excavation taking place for some time, there is still plenty going on in the archaeological world and it's time for an update.



Airport

It finally got too wet to excavate in the fields west of the airport in early December. Tanya, Kit and I did a few more hours in there earlier this month – tidying up a couple of loose ends in Trench 7 – which unexpectedly revealed a few sherds from a fine Iron Age pot, in the very last feature we investigated. Although we have had a lot of early prehistoric material from this site, and even a few Roman bits and pieces, I think this

is the first (and perhaps the last) Iron Age find. As you will no doubt be aware, the developers have now moved in – the hedges have gone, or are about to go, and we are poised to mount a watching brief on the topsoil stripping, scheduled to take place in the next few days. We've also kept an eye on the work in the site compound opposite the airport entrance, where we picked up a few flints and a couple of sherds of prehistoric pottery. Most of the disturbance there is relatively shallow, however, and we are not expecting to do any more work in that area. My thanks to everybody who has participated in the airport work – it feels as though it's been going on for a long time, and in fact it's exactly three years ago this week that we first put spade to turf on this site.

The Brothers' Cemetery, Rue des Frères

One of the things which has occupied a great deal of time in the early months of 2012 is the cemetery on the Rue des Frères. As you know, in December of last year the Constables of St Peter Port announced proposals to clear the cemetery of all but one tomb. We



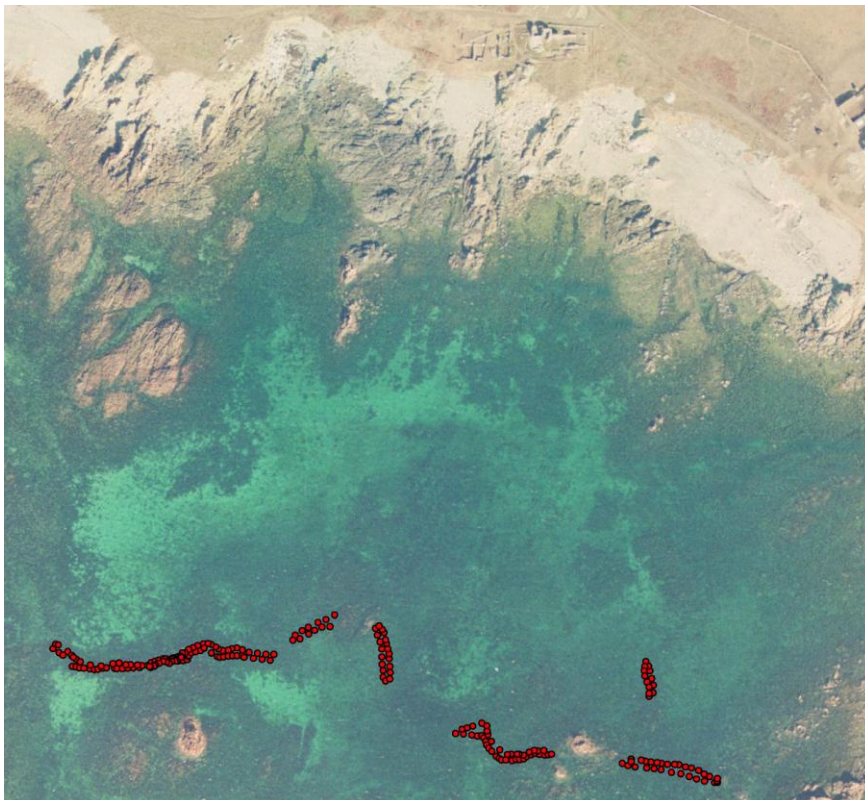
opposed their proposals at a meeting of the Ecclesiastical Court in January, and since then we have had another meeting with the Constables in an attempt to find some way forward. As a result of this meeting we offered to produce a condition survey, carried out according to English Heritage and Church of England guidelines. For anybody who is interested, the survey can now be downloaded from this address: <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~arch0013/RdF.pdf> (it's a big file, so it may take a minute or two to download).

We will be submitting this to the Constables in the next few days and awaiting their response. It is possible that they will decide not to do anything at all, in which case we will be developing some ideas we already have about setting up a 'Friends of the Cemetery' to carry out repairs, gardening and so on. Some people have already expressed interest in this idea and if it appeals to you, please don't hesitate to let me know.

If the Constables continue to press for the removal of the tombs I think it's fair to say that we will continue to resist this option, both through the Ecclesiastical Court and – if it gets that far – with the Environment Department. Thank you to those of you who responded to my initial appeal for support in December.

L'Erée

Duncan Garrow and Fraser Sturt have submitted their report on the final season of excavation at L'Erée, now available at <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~arch0013/L'Eree2011interim.pdf>. They are keen to come back and do more work on Guernsey in the future, so hopefully we may not have seen the last of either them or their copious supply of biscuits.



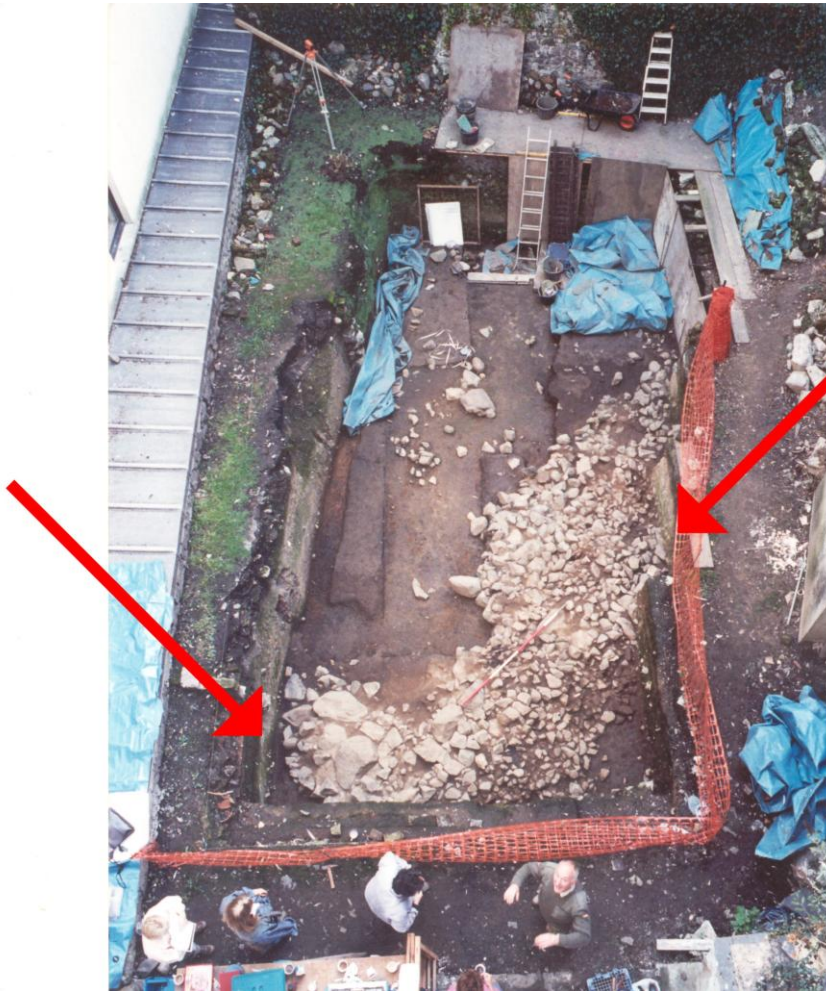
Fishtraps

Another download... at the address given below the picture is a slightly rough and ready version of the paper I wrote on the Lihou fishtraps, following the conference on maritime themes held in Vannes last autumn. The publication is taking a while to appear, so for anybody who is keen to see what we made of it all, please feel free to download the pdf version.

<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~arch0013/fishtraps.pdf>

The Canichers

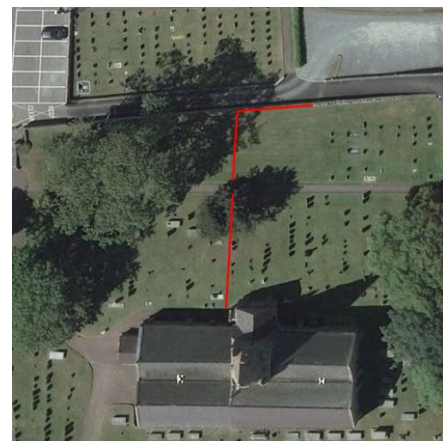
Those of you who have been around for a while will have memories – I am not going to say fond memories – of the pigeon-infested house in the Canichers, behind the Swan, where Heather started excavating in 2001. Planning permission to demolish the derelict house and replace it with an office building and car-parking was finally granted at the end of November 2011, and I am hopeful that we will be able to return to this intriguing site sometime this year. The planning consent includes archaeological excavation of the area beneath the house as one of the conditions, so we should get ample opportunity to investigate the curious stone cairn unearthed all those years ago. Looking at this aerial view, it seems to me that there may



be a wall – or even the corner of a building? – hidden within that pile of stones, and I’m keen to try and find out what it is. If and when we do excavate here, we’ll be extending this trench to the right, beneath the derelict house (once it, and its feathered inhabitants, both dead and alive, have been cleared away...).

Castel Church

We recently had an unexpected opportunity to add to our knowledge of Roman material from Castel Church, as the result of the excavation of a long trench for a new water pipe. The trench ran from roughly the middle of the northern side of the church, down the hill towards the newer cemetery, as shown here. Not surprisingly, a fair amount of human bone turned up, which we were careful not to collect but to leave to go back into the trench. We did collect all the Roman tile and brick we could find, however, and now have several buckets of the stuff being washed and processed in the store. In the words of one J.



Monaghan, who might be slightly biased in this respect, ‘you can never have too much Roman tile’. It does however reinforce the view that there must have been a pretty substantial Roman building somewhere in the vicinity of the Church. The difficulty is deciding where we might dig a trench without encountering dozens of bodies on the way down to the Romans...



Wessex Archaeology

A couple of representatives of Wessex Archaeology will be in the island in early April, and one of them – Kayt Marter-Brown – will be giving a lecture on their work at Candie, on Monday 2 April, at 8pm. Wessex have been involved with some of the biggest archaeological projects of recent years, including Heathrow Terminal 5 and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, and this is sure to be an interesting presentation on their work. I hope to see you there.

All the best
Phil

Tel. 07781 102219 or 709738
Email philip.dejersey@gov.gg