



THE FIELDWORKER

NEWSLETTER OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE FIELDWORKERS

MAY 2020: ISSUE 288

Welcome to the May edition of The Fieldworker. We normally start the newsletter with news of the next meeting. Regrettably, the May meeting has now been cancelled. We do plan to get Chris Fern back to speak to us about the Staffordshire Hoard as soon as possible and that also goes for Ian Meadows who would have given the March lecture on the Roman town of Irchester in Northamptonshire. As soon as we know about the June meeting we will let you know, we are working on delivering the talk digitally in the probable event we can't meet physically. We are also moving the Annual General Meeting to September.

This fieldwalking season seems to have been effectively cursed with the unremitting rain followed, just as the rain stopped, by the Covid-19 lockdown keeping virtually all our groups out of the fields for the entire season. I think we probably have to go back to the early 1970s for a fieldwalking season with less activity.

Stay safe...

– Peter and Mathew



Sorry, we couldn't resist this one (eds)

FACEBOOK

Don't forget to like the new Facebook Page to keep up to date with all the latest news and events. Just go to www.facebook.com/leicestershirefieldworkers.

PROVISIONAL DATES FOR 2020

- **June 18th TBC:** Mathew Morris talking on the excavations at Oakham Castle (probably a digital talk).
- **September 17th:** AGM and Peter Liddle talking on 50 years of Leicestershire Archaeology
- **November 19th:** Professor Simon James talking on Archaeology in a colonial maritime landscape: Roman and Byzantine Akrotiri, Cyprus
- **January 21st:** Dr Richard Buckley on the Highcross Excavations

FESTIVAL OF ARCHAEOLOGY

The 2020 Leicestershire and Rutland Festival was planned to run from June 27th to July 26th, but Covid-19 has thrown a spanner into the arrangements.

The national Festival is now running a digital Festival from 11th to 19th July and an 'on the ground' Festival from October 24th to November 1st. We will support this locally with lectures in October (subject to the prevailing situation).

We have not entirely given up on a limited number of socially distanced guided walks in July if it is possible and Mathew Morris is working on some digital content.

GROUP NEWS

Oadby and Wigston Group plans - including several test-pits in Oadby, fieldwalking, meetings, and a trip to St Albans - have all been put on hold. They hope to be able to explore the possibility of fieldwalking - which automatically builds in social distancing - when circumstances permit. In the meantime, they are keeping members actively engaged with news of TV programmes on archaeology, interesting news snippets and quizzes. At least two of the group are digging test-pits (or are they escape tunnels?) in their back gardens. From the pictures received they appear to be going about their task very professionally.

The Rutland Fieldwalking Group seems to have bucked the local trend this season in that they have been able to walk most weeks. On the few occasions the weather or ground conditions precluded getting out on to the fields they were able to use the Rutland County Museum workshop for group identification and recording sessions.

They have continued surveying the Ridlington area; being on the ridge meant that they avoided major flooding and they completed fieldwalking the '100 acres' field on the southern side of the village. Elaine Jones had walked about half the field about 5 years ago. The Group found a range of pottery and flint material, which has not been fully analysed as yet. They had started on a field to the west of the village when the coronavirus restrictions were imposed. There is evidence of a smelting site - unfortunately with no definitive dating material.

LEAD FALSE TEETH?

Roger Thomas reports on a curious metal detecting discovery...

Most people know that stained glass windows are held together by lead strips, which are called 'comes'. For the past 400 years they have been produced using a milling process, by feeding strips of lead through a lead mill, or glazier's vice, a simple machine that was invented sometime in the 16th century. There are written references going back to the early 1500's, and the earliest pictorial representation is in Joost Amman's 'Ständebuch' (The Book of Trades) of 1568. But for years before that they were produced by melting lead and pouring it into moulds, and there is a description of the process, using timber moulds, in a book by a Benedictine monk called Theophilus Presbyter dating from the early 12th century.

The earliest dated stone mould from this country was recovered from a 14th century context, but window glass is known from ecclesiastical buildings from before the Conquest, and from secular buildings of the Saxo-Norman period.

So 'what has this got to do with false teeth?' I hear you say. Well if you were metal detecting and found something looking like this what would you think it was?



Lead false teeth, or are they?

Both of these are actually the casting gates from the top of a three gang window came mould, where the lead was poured in. I don't know whether they would have been discarded where they were cast, or if all three comes would have been taken to the place where the window was to be installed before the sprue was trimmed off. You would imagine that the waste lead would have been saved for recycling, but we all know what builders are like.....

In case you were wondering – no I don't have permission to detect in the churchyard, both of these came from a field between Bosworth and Osbaston. Makes me wonder how they got there.

One of the great things about metal detecting is that you never know what will turn up (apart from shotgun cartridges & ringpulls!), and researching and recording what you find (which frequently takes much longer than you spent finding whatever it was in the first place) leads you up some fascinating alleyways, as in this case. Luckily I was pointed in the right direction by Wendy Scott, the former Finds Liaison Officer for Leicestershire, and already had the appropriate reference books to identify them.

You can look at the records for these (and a great many more) objects on the Portable Antiquities Scheme website at www.finds.org.uk where they are recorded as PUBLIC-622C25 and PUBLIC-622E47

Or, if you get the emailed edition, by clicking these links:

<https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/947879>

<https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/947878>

PETE'S COURSES

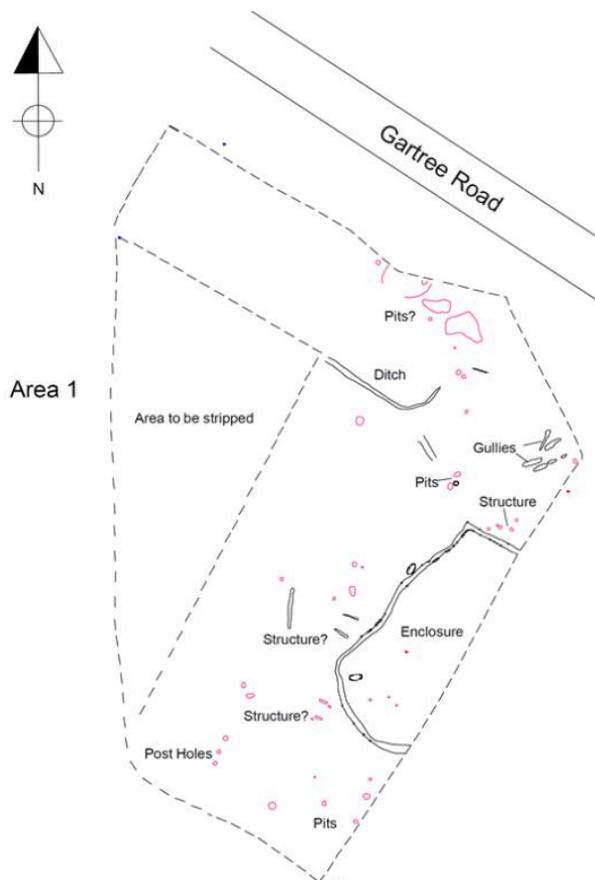
Peter Liddle's **Discovering Leicestershire Archaeology** at The Guildhall got halfway through before it was suspended due to the pandemic. It is hoped that it will resume in September and will be followed by a second course on **Roman Leicestershire and Rutland**. Details will be sent out as soon as they are available.

EXCAVATION NEWS

Before the lockdown our friends at **ULAS** managed, despite the wet weather, to get on with some excavation work, now suspended by the virus. At **Shawell Quarry** the team finished the excavation of the Iron Age settlement mentioned in the last newsletter and were able to make a good start on the Roman activity close to Watling Street. A fairly well-defined area of Roman enclosures and drainage channels, possibly ribbon development from the Roman small town of *Tripontium*, was revealed, as had been indicated by geophysical survey. Pottery from the features has largely been spot dated as late 1st to 2nd

century. Any potential roadside Roman building activity is under the verge of the A5 and the topsoil bunds for the extraction area.

At **Gartree Road, Oadby** excavation has revealed what appears to be a large enclosure, which extends eastward beyond the excavated area. Internal features are sparse, but a fairly dense scatter of pits and post-holes and gullies, possibly indicating structures, have been found directly outside the enclosure. Initial excavation has revealed pits that contained dumps of heat affected daub and large pottery sherds, probably 1st century in date.



Plan of the site at Gartree Road, Oadby



Excavation of a Roman pit containing dumps of daub and a large quantity of pottery.

At **Lockington Quarry** a double pit alignment has been traced an additional 85 metres from where it was recorded in 2011. It then narrows to a single line of pits that turns near to a palaeochannel and continues to the south-west for a further 91m. At the same point as the turn to the south-west, an alignment of small circular double pits continues toward the palaeochannel. As is usual with pit alignments there was little dating evidence, but a prehistoric date is likely and, close to the palaeochannel, peat deposits in the pits may give both environmental and dating evidence. Other features recorded in 2020 have included scattered pits that are undated and further examples of parallel ditches that would appear to define stock routes.



The pit alignment at Lockington Quarry.



Sampling one of the pits in the alignment for pollen from a silty peat fill in the base of the pit.

At **MIRA Technology Park** a massive soil strip of 33 hectares, included land within the registered boundary of Bosworth Battlefield, continues. Finds have been limited, but include a small curvilinear ditch, some areas of small pits or post holes (all undated), and a number of large infilled features, probably ponds. The work has included the systematic use of metal detector survey on both removed topsoil and remnants of furrows, and from the investigation of the pond fills.

Artefacts recovered from metal detecting range from a silver farthing of Queen Elizabeth I to a £1 coin of Queen Elizabeth II – with most centuries in between represented through buckles and buttons and horseshoes, which included an early example, possibly 15th Century, which came from one of the pond features, close to Fenn Lane.

ULAS are still carrying out some fieldwork where social distancing rules can be enforced but most projects have been suspended for the time being, with staff furloughed or working from home writing up past projects.

Don't forget, you can keep up to date with more ULAS news on <https://ulasnews.com/>, or:

- <https://www.facebook.com/ulasnews/>
- <https://twitter.com/ULASarchaeology>
- <https://www.instagram.com/ulasarchaeology/>

NEWS FROM THE PAS

Last newsletter we reported that Megan Gard had started as the new Finds Liaison Officer.

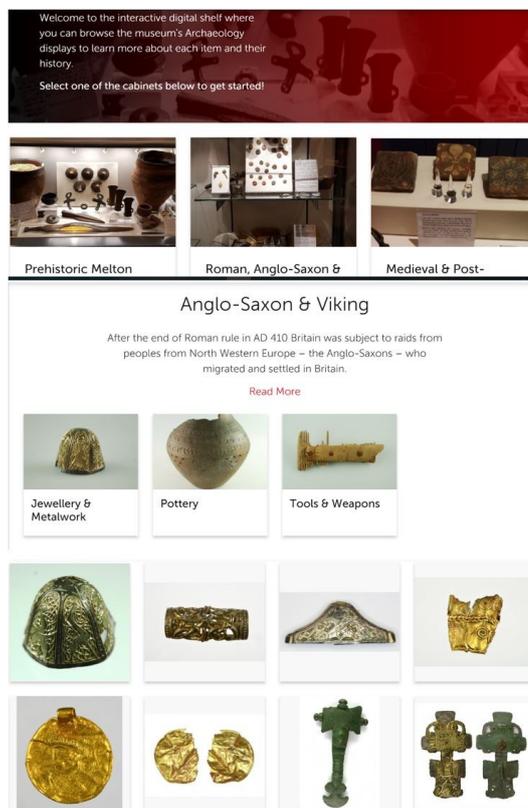
My name is Megan, I am based at Rutland County Museum in Oakham. It is my job to record small finds of archaeological interest found by members of the public, which are over 300 years old, I also record objects which qualify as treasure under the Treasure Act 1996.

I am looking forward to seeing the wide range of objects from Rutland and Leicestershire's unearthed past. I have an interest in a range of objects from all time periods. I am happy to record a range of objects on the database, including various metals, ceramics and flints. If you have found an object of interest, whether this be through metal detecting, field walking, gardening, farming or any other activity and would like to contact me to get it recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database, please email me at mgard@Rutland.gov.uk.

COUNTY MUSEUM NEWS

Leicestershire County Council's museum sites and stores are currently closed but we are looking into ways to make our collections more visible online

during lockdown. Our museum sites have Facebook pages and we have the Twitter account **@LeicsMuseums**. If you are on Instagram you can view images of objects from our collection by following **@leicestershire_collections**. You can also take a virtual visit to the archaeology gallery at Melton Carnegie Museum www.meltonmuseum.org/digital-shelf featuring photographs taken by our volunteer, and fellow Fieldworker, Andy.



NEWS FROM THE HER

The Leicestershire County Council archaeology team are still all hard at work, providing as close to normal a service as possible from our homes. We're all still contactable on our usual phone numbers and e-mail addresses, which are listed online:

- <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-archaeology>
- <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/history-and-heritage/historic-environment-record>.

If you're stuck at home and want to do some desk-based archaeology, there are plenty of resources online (see next page).

If you do spot something you think is a new archaeological site, check the Historic Environment Record to see if we already know about it. The HER can be accessed via the Heritage Gateway: <https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/>. If the site is a new one, e-mail Helen Wells at her@leics.gov.uk and tell her about it!

GRANTS

The Grants page and application form are now available on the Fieldworkers website at <http://leicsfieldworkers.co.uk/about-us/grants/>

ONLINE RESOURCES

As we are all stuck at home for the foreseeable future, we thought we would put together a few online archaeology resources that you might find useful.

Online Research: With record offices shut, here are some useful websites which will help you continue research.

Historic Environment Record (HER) & Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) etc.

- <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>
- <https://finds.org.uk/>
- <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

East Midlands Archaeological Research Framework

- <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/researchframeworks/eastmidlands/wiki/Main>

Geological & topographical information

- <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>
- <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>
- <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/business-and-government/products/opendata.html>
- https://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/versions/
- <https://www.bl.uk/subjects/maps>
- <https://enfarchsoc.org/opendata/> (LiDAR)
- <https://houseprices.io/lab/lidar/map> (LiDAR)
- <https://www.flickr.com/photos/environmentagencyopen-surveydata/albums> (LiDAR)

Historical & archaeological background, reports, journals etc.

- <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/>
- <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/>
- <https://www.le.ac.uk/lahs/index.html>

Domesday Book & place names

- <https://opendomesday.org/>
- <http://kep.n.nottingham.ac.uk/>

Historic Maps (National Library of Scotland)

- <https://maps.nls.uk/>

Trade Directories and other special collections

- <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/>

Aerial and historic photographs

- <https://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/>
- <https://imageleicestershire.org.uk/>

Council for British Archaeology have put together an enormous resource hub for adults and children, including links to useful websites, online talks, podcasts, videos etc.

- <http://blog.archaeologyuk.org/2020/03/24/archaeology-resources-hub/>

Archaeology on Furlough may be of interest to some. Primarily aimed at commercial archaeologists who are currently out of work but open to all, Archaeology on Furlough provides archaeologists with access to volunteer projects that can be done from home. It also has a very useful section listing free archaeological resources on the internet

- <https://www.archaeology-on-furlough.com/>

Online museums and virtual tours: Take a trip through some of the world's greatest collections including the British Museum's Museum of the World.

- <https://britishmuseum.withgoogle.com/>

Google Arts and Culture has a huge archive of digital content from over 2000 museums and archives.

- <https://artsandculture.google.com/>

Take a virtual tour of five historical sites from across the globe with Google's interactive trek experiences. Highlights include the Great Pyramids at Giza, Petra, Angkor, Taj Mahal and Venice.

- <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/about/treks/#/grid>

Online courses: FutureLearn currently has over 40 history courses available including 5 archaeology courses.

- <https://www.futurelearn.com/subjects/history-courses>

DigVentures also have online courses.

- <https://digventures.com/courses/>

CONTACT US

THE FIELDWORKER is edited by Peter Liddle, 57 STANFELL ROAD, LEICESTER, LE2 3GE.

Tel: 0116 2214508

Email: peter.liddle51@gmail.com.

Contributions welcome!

Our webmaster is Mathew Morris who also welcomes details of events and news.

Email: mlm9@le.ac.uk