



Greater Manchester Archaeology Federation

Newsletter

Volume 1 Issue 9 September 2012

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Update on Greater Manchester Archaeology Advisory Service (GMAAS)

Since Newsletter 8 was issued in March this year, there have been considerable changes for archaeology and planning in Greater Manchester. As announced in Newsletter 8, GMAU was closed down at the end of March. The Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service has been established at Salford University to look after the Historic Environment Record and provide archaeological planning advice for the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA). Details can be found at: <http://www.salford.ac.uk/built-environment/research/applied-archaeology/greater-manchester-archaeological-advisory-service>. Norman Redhead, Andrew Myers, and Lesley Dunkley (formerly Mitchell) are delivering the new service as a separate section within the Centre for Applied Archaeology, part of the School of the Built Environment, University of Salford. Sadly, we have lost the services of Peter Leeming, who did such a sterling job on producing minutes and newsletters for the Greater Manchester Archaeology Federation. I am pleased to note that Peter will still be around as he is studying for a PhD at the University of Manchester. The first 7 newsletters can still be accessed via GMAU's old website, but it is intended to put them on the Salford University website in due course.

This has been a worrying year for curatorial archaeology services around the country, most of which have been, and continue to be, badly affected by local government funding cuts (see Current Archaeology Issue 267 for June 2012 for Norman's article on the state of local government archaeology). This year has also seen major changes in national planning policy, with the government replacing the short-lived PPS 5 with the National Planning Policy Framework in March. The final version is a big improvement on the original draft which was so heavily biased in favour of economic development. 'Sustainable development' is now defined by three criteria: social and environment as well as economic. Archaeology fares pretty well as most of the PPS 5 policies relevant to archaeology have been transferred across to NPPF. Moreover, the Historic Environment is referenced throughout the policy document as well as having its own dedicated section. But the acid test will be to see how well the policies are implemented and how the meaning is defined through inspector and appeal decisions.

Federation members

The following groups are members of the Federation:

Bolton Archaeology and Egyptology Society, Bury Archaeological Group, Darwen Local History Society, Glossop and Longdendale Archaeological Society, Holcombe Moor Heritage Group, Littleborough Historical and Archaeological Society, Manchester Region Industrial Archaeology Society, Mellor Archaeological Trust, Middleton Archaeological Society, Moston Archaeology Group, Prestwich Heritage Society, Royton Lives Through the Ages, Saddleworth Archaeological Trust, South Manchester Archaeological Research Team, South Trafford Archaeological Group, Tameside Archaeological Society, Wigan Archaeological Society.

GMAAS are delivering an interim service until the end of this year, whilst AGMA procure a longer term archaeology advisory service of between 3 and 5 years (which GMAAS have tendered for). Andy and I have been giving planning and archaeology workshops to the ten GM planning authorities to describe the new service, the Historic Environment Record, NPPF in relation to archaeology, and the archaeology planning process. The level of consultations are increasing and a number of old planning permissions with an archaeology condition have come 'live', so there is a lot of interesting archaeology happening now or about to take place. More on this in the next issue, and at the Greater Manchester Archaeology Day which is taking place on Saturday 24th November and which will show case some current projects. Lesley has been busy dealing with a range of enquiries on the Historic Environment Record as well as beginning to tackle the backlog of reports and other information that needs to be added to the database. The HER's paper and photographic archive are now stored in the basement of Joule House, where GMAAS are based. This archive can be viewed by appointment but we would like to undertake a project over the next few years to make much of this accessible via the internet.

Finally, I am pleased to report that this year is turning out to be a very successful and busy one for community archaeology projects in Greater Manchester. Dig GM has finally kicked off and is producing some great results. Other projects are coming forward independently, such as the Newton Hall scheme, and opportunities are also being taken to add community engagement elements to commercially led archaeology projects, such as Ashbury's in Gorton and Whitworth Art Gallery extension in Manchester.

Norman Redhead
Heritage Management Director (Archaeology)
GMAAS

Update - Rectory (Wigan Hall) Project

In previous Federation Newsletters (Nos. 6 and 7) we reported on the work we had been carrying out in 2010 on the Parish Church Rectory site in Wigan. We were trying to locate the old Frog Lane, which had been buried under landscaping when the present Hall was constructed in the late 19th century. We were also hoping to discover earlier features, such as the Medieval moat, which was reported to have surrounded the original Manor House (since the 12th century the Rector at Wigan

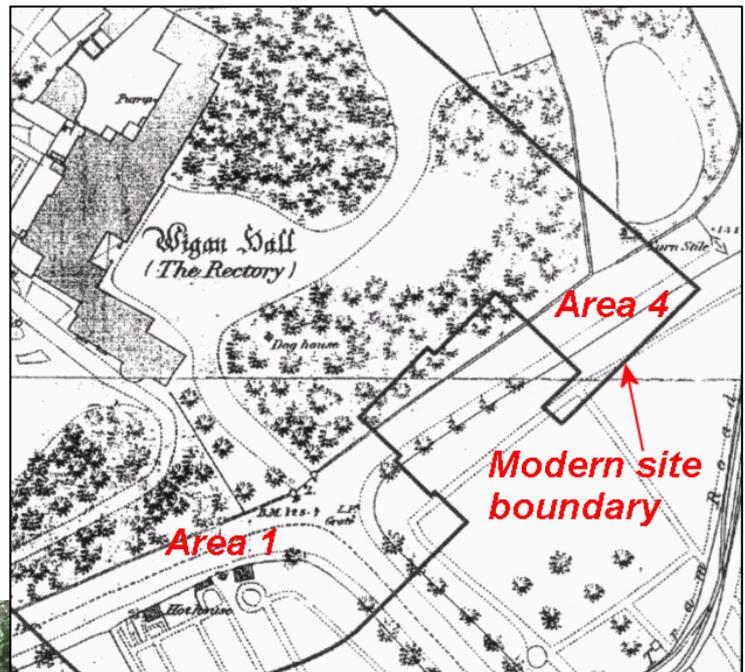


was also Lord of the Manor). Our excavations on the left-hand side of the current entrance (Area 1) revealed that the road had survived as a compacted dirt track lying on top of a bed of sand. However, the composition changed to a single slab of concrete as it approached the entrance to the Hall. This, we presumed, had been done to prevent subsidence in an area where there was evidence of earlier quarrying. At some point in time a strange water feature had also been inserted on the northern edge of the road. It consisted of an iron container surrounded by stone sets, complete with a water feed and drain.

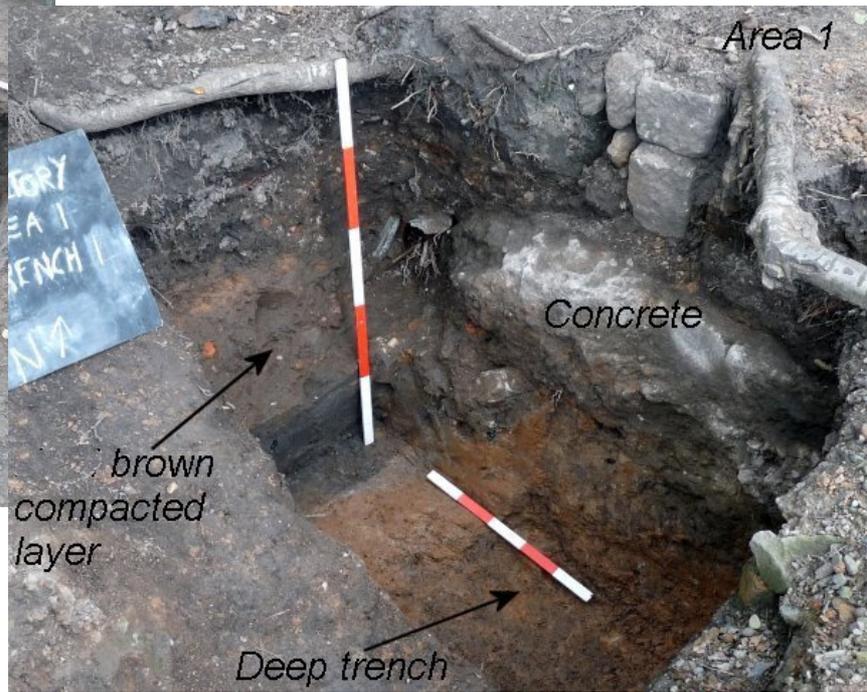
As our excavations continued we came across earlier features such as a shallow filled-in ditch, which contained 17th century pottery. We also discovered a brown compacted layer, lying directly under the water feature, which produced more pre-Victorian pottery and large pieces of cow bone. Both this, and the shallow ditch, had been truncated by a deep trench running parallel to the road. This deep trench also cut through the road and the underlying sand bed; however at that time we could not establish the purpose of the trench as it was too deep to fully excavate. We did however discover that at some point a field drain had been inserted into it on the north side, and the hard surface repaired to the level of the road.

Last year we turned our attentions to a part of the Rectory grounds on the right-hand side of the current entrance (Area 4) where early maps showed the possibility of an earlier entrance. As with our earlier excavations, we received help from students from Winstanley 'A' level College, and we had some initial success with the discovery of a substantial curbed track.

We quickly realised however that this was not the old Frog Lane or the original entrance, but a track associated with the construction of the current Hall. Digging deeper, we eventually discovered evidence of compacted surfaces at three different levels. The lowest, at 1.5m deep, was 30 to 40 cm thick and contained 17th/18th century pottery. These levels could be evidence of roads surfaces, however a deep pit backfilled with building rubble had truncated the features on the south and east side. This made it difficult for us to determine the full extent of these surfaces.



These archaeological levels were quite deep and there were also concerns about damage to nearby trees (which have preservation orders on them). We decided therefore to curtail our excavations and backfill the trench.



At the beginning of this year, we returned to our original site (Area 1) to see if we could establish the purpose of the deep trench discovered in 2010. We also wanted to see how it related with the concrete slab i.e. did it go under it. If it did, this would

mean that the dirt track, which the deep trench also cut through, must be older than the concrete. Our excavations proved this to be the case. However, as we expanded the area, we came across another ditch lying directly under the brown compacted layer that we had discovered earlier. In fact, on closer inspection, we realised that the ditch was back-filled with the compacted layer. At the moment we are in the process of excavating this feature, which seems to be quite deep. However we have already uncovered a layer of blackish sedimentary material suggesting the ditch was once filled with water. Could this be the moat we have been looking for? As the blackish layer is overlain by the compacted layer (which produced the pre-Victorian pottery) it must be earlier, therefore putting it in the right timeframe for the moat. We are again restricted in this area by the surrounding trees, but already we have expanded the area where the water feature used to be, to reveal a cobbled surface lying under the brown compacted layer. Our intention is to remove this surface so that we can investigate the ditch feature which is hopefully lying underneath.



Our work at the Rectory has been a long term project stretching over four years. We are grateful to Liverpool Diocese, who owns the land, for allowing us to continue our excavations there. Over this time, working only at weekends, we have managed to discover some interesting features which has enabled us to throw more light on the history of this important site. Once we have completed our investigations in this current area, our intention is to move to behind the Hall later in the year, where we hope to find evidence of the earlier Manor House. You can find more information about our work on our website at www.WiganArchSoc.co.uk (Society Newsletters Nos. 146, 154 and 156).

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MELLOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

The Trust has three areas of interest.

From 1998 to 2009, all accessible areas of The Old Vicarage garden and parts of the fields were dug with many members of Federation Societies taking part. There was a small dig in the triangular field in 2011. Although more might be done in the fields, the hard physical work has now moved elsewhere. Two actions remain for the OV site. (1) The viewing area with a bridge over a section of the Iron Age ditch is about to be transferred to Stockport Council. (2) As part of the final report to HLF on the broader Mellor Heritage Project 2007-9, John Roberts wrote an overview of the excavations and their significance plus two volumes of specialist reports. Peter Arrowsmith is now extending this for publication as a BAR report, with Steve Bellshaw adding drawings.



Viewing area of Old Vicarage

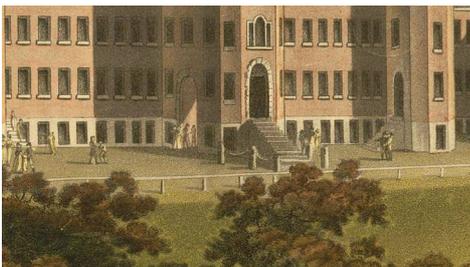


Volunteers at Shaw Cairn

Shaw Cairn on the top of Mellor Moor, the southernmost of the three spurs, was excavated by a small group in the 1970-80s and the fragmentary records of their work was put together in a report by Victoria Mellor, a student on secondment at GMAU. in 2000. Mellor volunteers, under the direction of Peter Noble and Donald Reid, revisited the site on 2008 and 2009 and among the finds were around 100 amber beads buried in a cist with the “Mellor princess”. At the same time, Alison Sheridan of National Museums of Scotland looked at the pottery from the 1970-80s dig and described it as the best collection of Early Bronze Age pottery in the NW and colleagues at Edinburgh University added surprisingly detailed information on the cremated bones. Andy Myers has reported on the Mesolithic and Neolithic flints. Clearly, there is much more to be learnt, particularly about the earliest occupation of the site and where people lived during the Bronze Age. We have been fortunate in interesting Bob Johnston of Sheffield University in the site. In July 2011, he came with Sheffield students and joined Mellor volunteers, particularly opening trial trenches in the adjacent fields. The dig was repeated in July of this year, but the weather was against us! The farmer had not been able to get his silage cut, which meant that nothing more could be done in the fields and a longer route had to be walked to the top of the hill. As I write this, we are hoping for

better weather when we open the site on July 21-22 during the Festival of Archaeology. Small-scale, or possibly bigger, excavations will be carried out in future summers. The work is supported by a small grant from the Prehistoric Society and Trust funds, but is not expensive.

The Trust's major effort is at Mellor Mill, built by Samuel Oldknow in 1790-92 and burnt out in 1892. Now the area looks like old woodland. The mill itself is part of a wider complex, which includes: an area nearer the River Goyt with a second (Waterloo) wheel pit, workshops and stables; Oldknow's mansion and garden across Lakes Road; three millponds; a weir where Oldknow diverted the river; and an apprentice house adjoining a model farm. GMAU carried out a survey in the 1980s and recommended "excavation, conservation, and presentation of the site" but nothing came of this. Our trials digs in 2009 and 2010 found bases of walls, cellars and bits of textile machines. Now we have done something more substantial. Last year, we received a grant of £15,000 from the Association for Industrial Archaeology (AIA) to uncover and conserve the Wellington wheel pit, which was under the centre of the mill. 120 tons of soil, stone and other debris were removed and the magnificence of the curved base of the wheel pit was displayed. When weather permits, conservation with lime mortar will be carried out. A path leading down to a fenced viewing platform provides public access and attracts many visitors as they enjoy a walk along the Goyt valley. The six-storey, 400-foot mill was the largest of its time and the template for the architecturally impressive mills that spread through the region. As Mark Sissons, Chairman of AIA, said at the opening on March 10, it eclipsed earlier mills, such as Cromford and Styal, which were more domestic in style.



Front Entrance of Mill



Under the entrance stairs

Volunteers are continuing to work on the site. Four stairways leading down to the wheel pit are being cleared. The 7-foot high tunnel carrying the drive shaft from the Waterloo wheel to the mill is being excavated. The cobbled surface in front of the mill is being exposed – but not all of it is just roadway. Part is under the grand staircase leading to the "posh" front entrance of the mill. Volunteers found holes among the cobbles. It was a stable, where visitors to the mill could leave their horses. Some holes divided stalls and some were drainage channels. Other excavations are tracing the corner of the mill walls at the north end.



Wheel pit before clearing



Wheel pit after excavation with information board

This uncovering of these small parts of the mill demonstrates how valuable it would be to open up all three areas as an industrial heritage site in a small country park. *Pace* Andrew Selkirk, this needs a large grant, approaching £1,000,000. The first bid to HLF failed, but we were encouraged to try again. The second bid coincided with a bid by British Waterways for another of Oldknow's promotion, the Peak Forest Canal with its great aqueduct, flight of locks, warehouses and lime kilns, which transformed Marple from a small village to an industrial town. HLF took the view that there would be greater value if the projects were combined. After fruitful discussions with Nick Smith and Fiona Turpin from British Waterways, now the Canal and River Trust, we jointly submitted in June an application for "Revealing Oldknow's Legacy, Mellor Mill and the Peak Forest Canal in Marple". Decision time for the first Development Stage is September!

Photos by Arthur Proctor, Amy Slack and others.

Celebrating the work of the South Trafford Archaeology Group

This year's annual Festival of British Archaeology is nearly upon us. Running from 14 July to 29 July, and coordinated by the Council for British Archaeology, this is a chance to celebrate some of the best sites, organisations and finds in British archaeology, through more than 750 dedicated events including behind the scenes tours, walks, and digs. Most of these events have been organised by some of the 2,030 archaeology and history groups that can be found across the UK, representing more than 215,000 voluntary members interested in spending some of their spare time on heritage projects.¹ The scale of this voluntary membership demonstrates how the enthusiasm and dedication of archaeological volunteers can have a tremendous impact on their local community and their immediate landscape.

A good example of this is the work of the South Trafford Archaeology Group (known affectionately as STAG). Founded in 1979 and with a membership of around 100 they have worked on archaeological sites and buildings across eastern Cheshire and Greater Manchester. The group has led the landscape survey of the rural township of Warburton, discovering new timber-buildings and the medieval origins of the village. They have rediscovered and excavated a Middle Bronze Age barrow at Fairy Brow in Little Bollington, assisted the National Trust in the survey of the Apprentice House at Quarry Bank Mill and with the help of students from the University of Manchester investigated the extra-mural settlement at Roman Northwich. They have built their own headquarters building which is a regular venue not only for their own events but also for extra-mural classes by the Workers' Education Association, CBA North West and the Centre for Applied Archaeology at the University of Salford. All of this and more can be chartered through their website, regular newsletters and occasional publications. Like many other archaeology and local heritage groups they are a dedicated group of enthusiasts with specialist knowledge of their own area, led for many years by the original founders of the society, which includes the present Chairman, Derek Pierce.

This is perhaps best seen in their excavations of the medieval moated site of Timperley Old Hall, now part of Altrincham golf course in Trafford. This project has run, since 1989, in two phases. The first series of excavations, from 1989 to 1999, explored the moated platform. It revealed not only the medieval timber hall and its Tudor rebuild in stone, but also an intact timber-lined medieval well, and beneath the hall the remains of late Saxon activity in the form of a fence-line and hearth. The origins of the site were taken back even further with the discovery of a scatter of late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age flints deposited at a time when the southern arm of moat was part of the meandering course of Timperley Brook. This now runs several hundred meters to the south of the moated site. These investigations were covered in a publication in 1999.²

The second phase, running between 2008 and 2012, was funded with a Heritage Lottery grant and designed to turn the moated site into a public amenity. A further set of excavations between 2009

and 2011 discovered the western wing of the Tudor and Stuart hall, and excavated a large rubbish dump from the western arm of the moat which included large amounts of medieval roof tiles, and a regionally important grouping of 16th and 17th century domestic pottery. The site was then landscaped by STAG during 2011 and 2012, with the help of Trafford MBC. This final part of the project has seen the restoration of the 19th century kitchen garden wall surrounding the moat platform, the building a new footbridge into the site, the laying out of the footprint of the hall buildings, the creation of a herb and physick garden within those walls, and the installation of information boards about the archaeology and history of the site. This was celebrated at a grand opening by the Lady Mayor of Trafford and the local MP on 25 May when the society handed the site back to the council as a fully functioning local amenity.



STAG's many achievements over the last 33 years have been recognised by the inclusion of some of their most important discoveries (at Fairy Brow, Roman Northwich, Timperley Old Hall and Warburton) as part of the North West Regional Research Framework volume 'The Archaeology of North West England',³ published in 2006. Yet the restoration of the medieval moated platform at Timperley will have the greatest impact on their local community.

So why not visit STAG's own display centre and the adjacent Timperley Old Hall gardens during the Festival of British Archaeology, and enjoy the positive impact that archaeology and heritage can have on the local community and landscape. Better still, why not join STAG and help to further uncover and preserve Trafford's archaeology with them?

1) Thomas S, 2010, *Community Archaeology in the UK; Recent Findings*. Council for British Archaeology, York.

2) Faulkner P, (ed), 1999, *Timperley: The History and Archaeology of Timperley Old Hall*. South Trafford Archaeology Group, Altrincham.

3) Brennan M, with Chitty G & Nevell M, 2006, *The Archaeology of North West England. An Archaeological Research Framework for North west England: Volume 1. Resource Assessment*. Archaeology North West Volume 8.

Melandra Roman Fort - Glossopdale & Longdendale Archaeological Society (GLAS)

This article is to introduce and set the scene for the GLAS proposed HLF Community Archaeology Project for the Roman Fort - probably to be called "Rediscovering Melandra"

GLAS is a relatively new society, formed in 2006 and Glossop is situated in the very North West tip of Derbyshire, where Cheshire and Lancashire (now Gtr Manchester) and Yorkshire, all meet together. About 3/4 of our town boundary is circular where we adjoin the Peak District National Park and much of our archaeology lies within the surrounding farmland and high moorland of the Park.

Because we are 'on the cusp' of these present political boundaries much of our archaeology remains uninvestigated, with one or two exceptions, and so we have mesolithic right through to all the phases of industrial archaeology and also some very interesting geology. Lot's to go at!

Despite historically always being in Derbyshire we, in the Dark Peak, are separated from the rest of Derbyshire and nearby Sheffield by very inhospitable high moorland and we feel our archaeology and development has always been closely linked to the area NW of the Pennines, hence our membership of GMAF. We are, literally, on the eastern edge, but with excellent train and road links to Manchester.

Aside from our Melandra project, we are looking at the possible Neolithic/Bronze Age landscape above Glossop, especially in relation to nearby Shaw and Brownlow Cairns close to Mellor. We have a scheduled cairn above Glossop and a nearby possible cairn which we've been looking at with the Peak Park Archaeologist ... so, upland pre-historic landscape, 8 Domesday villages in the valleys, etc., and where the farms to support our Roman Fort at Melandra were - we think we have some clues.

Currently we are working towards an HLF funded Community Archaeology Project at our Roman Fort - Melandra (Ardotalia) - a scheduled monument. At this stage I must mention that our HLF region is East Midlands, based in Nottingham, and our English Heritage regional office is in Northampton - so you will appreciate our difficulties. However, at least we're not in competition with the North West region.

CfAA has just submitted our Written Scheme of Investigation to English Heritage, who will support our HLF application. The site of the fort is owned by High Peak Borough Council and together with Derbyshire County Council is supportive. Melandra has been previously excavated at various times from the late 1800s to 1998, the latest excavations led by Dr. J.P. Wild of Manchester University, and one of our main aims is collation and publication of the various results. A huge amount of information is held by Glossop Heritage Trust and two of their Directors are also Directors of GLAS.

The fort is hardly mentioned when it comes to the North West, despite its close proximity to Manchester (about 10 miles fort to fort as the crow flies). Similarly, Castleshaw is about 9 miles north and, importantly, the Iron Age settlement at Mellor is about 3-4 miles as the crow flies and has inter-connecting ancient trackways. Mellor is historically linked to Glossop and, until recent political boundary changes, was part of the Parish of Glossop. Melandra was linked by roads to the forts of Buxton in the South, Brough to the east, etc. The early wooden fort probably dates from the seventies of the first century AD, followed by a later stone fort, which was finally abandoned in the mid-second century. More details can be found on the Glossop Heritage Trust website.

The fort stands just outside the town of Glossop (on the Manchester side) on a promontory of land overlooking the valleys of the Etherow River and Glossop Brook, which would have been a rich source of fish in Roman times. It still has commanding 360 degree views of the surrounding countryside and hills and particularly to the Woodhead Pass towards Yorkshire and the east. It is on open land and very accessible to visitors, surrounded by the open grass verges of the ring road around a Manchester overspill estate known as Gamesley. This was built in the late 60's and over part of the fort's civilian settlement. The Gamesley estate, now part of Glossop, is in the highest 6% of neighbourhoods nationally on the 2010 Index of Total Deprivation and the top 3% on the Index of Education Deprivation. We are currently working hard within the local community to create awareness of this special heritage site and provide opportunities for local people to become involved in the project.

The site was used latterly as farmland, otherwise it is relatively untouched and now used as a sort of park/open space. There is some evidence that many local cottages and other works have been constructed from stone from the fort. The site is maintained by High Peak Borough Council, who mow essential footpaths and some of the outer surrounds, but most of the site has become overgrown since excavations in the 70s, after which, unfortunately, some well meant tree planting took place on some of the surrounding slippage slopes.

The proposed museum never happened when Glossop lost its autonomy and became part of the High Peak, and we have recently lost our volunteer managed Heritage Centre due to financial reasons. Many Melandra finds are on loan to Buxton Museum, or stored in boxes at numerous locations and need to be reunited and eventually displayed in Glossop.

The archaeology is at risk from tree growth, vandalism and slippage - part of the bath house long since disappeared down one of the steep slopes. Two metal detectorists were apprehended in broad daylight recently by the police - who had been alerted by one of our members. All the signage and the main display board are now missing (the display board recently came back into our possession by chance). Just one sign on the main road points to the fort, and then visitors usually sail past it on the ring road as the fort blends into the landscape, although there is a small car park. Of course, there is now no Heritage Centre in Glossop to point visitors in the right direction and give information.

After finally getting agreement and licence from English Heritage a geophys. and laser survey of the NW Quadrant was carried out on our behalf by CfAA last autumn - not easy because of the tussocky state of the ground. The bath house just outside this quadrant was also surveyed, and EH would like us to re-excavate this - we were delighted as this was on our wish list anyway - some of us remember excavating it the first time round! We hope to find latrines in the NW quadrant and leather and wood have been preserved very well on this site.

Working towards our imminent HLF application a test pitting week was organized by Lorraine Gregory at a farm bordering the site, but outside the scheduled area. We also hope to involve the local community in some garden test pitting. In April we held a very successful Roman Melandra Day in the Community Hall at the Gamesley Estate, which was attended by over 300 people. We had displays, films, slides, artefacts etc. on show and activities for children and were supported by MAT, TAS, and CfAA. The excellent press coverage, which also announced the proposed project, certainly re-awakened local interest in the fort. The day was attended by various local dignitaries and I think their eyes were opened as to all the potentials. We'll be repeating this day again in Glossop on November 10th, and also inviting the Glossop Heritage Trust to take a more active part, as we are all working closely towards a new Heritage Centre for the town. Local schools are keen to be involved in the Melandra project and we have already visited one primary school and are planning to do some test pitting at the nearby local primary school with the children.



Members of GLAS committee taking a break during test pitting at Melandra Farm.
l to r Maxine Wild, Kath Siddall, Mike Brown, Keri Brown, Roger Hargreaves, Archie Gillespie, and Lorraine Gregory



Children's activities at Roman Melandra Day.



Roman leather sandal from Melandra.

We envisage that the initial HLF grant, if we are successful, will be the start of many more grants and years of work (hopefully providing jobs for professional archaeologists). We would like to bring this important but neglected fort back to the educational and tourist resource it should be for Glossopdale and, also, cover a wider Glossopdale project with Melandra as a focal community project, which was our original intention.

Kath Siddall - GLAS Chairman

Dig Greater Manchester: Interim Report on the First 6 Months.

Introduction

Dig Greater Manchester (DGM) is a five year AGMA funded project centred on community involvement in archaeological investigations. Each borough of Greater Manchester will be involved, including the borough of Blackburn with Darwen, and each will receive a community based archaeological excavation, workshops in archaeological techniques and lectures on various aspects of archaeology both local, regional and national. On each excavation up to twenty adult community members will be carrying out the digging with professional guidance from member of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, University of Salford. There will be a heavy schools involvement where up to ten local schools will be invited to spend half a day on site where they will take part in up to three activities on site one of which will be excavation. The schools activities will be supervised by a dedicated educational archaeologist who will also attend each school prior to their visit. Included in the educational aspects of the project are a number of day workshops and evening lectures on various aspect of archaeological techniques and interests.

The project is designed for total inclusivity and it is hoped that members of neglected groups and people who would not consider themselves eligible for inclusion will be facilitated for, groups such as physical disabled, those with learning difficulties etc.

The DGM project commenced in December 2011. The initial stages were taken up by the setting up of the administration, contacting the various educational bodies and arranging the excavations in the boroughs for the year 2012. Four excavations were arranged for 2012 and these were the sites of Etherstone Hall, Leigh in Wigan (1st – 20th March), Close Park, Radcliffe in Bury (28th June – 17th July), Chadderton Park, Chadderton in Oldham (6th – 25th September) and Reddish Vale Park, Reddish in Stockport (4th – 23rd October). Arrangements are in hand to schedule the other seven excavations in the remaining boroughs of Greater Manchester in 2013 and early 2014.

Excavations

The first excavation at Wigan was concluded in mid March. Several trenches were opened and the archaeology proved to be interesting. One of the aims of the excavation was to locate and assess any medieval or remains of previous structures and habitation of the site. In this the excavation was unsuccessful in the area chosen for investigation but it should be remembered that only a small portion of the site was subjected to below ground investigations.

However, the excavation did locate a large majority of the 19th century structures indicated by historic mapping. These remains proved to be ideal for a community based archaeological excavation with walls, rooms and floor surfaces being uncovered and recorded along with many artefacts that enhanced the experience of the volunteers as they were able to be shown finds processing techniques.

The community aspect of the excavation was extremely successful as demonstrated by the figure listed below which will be used as a bench mark for future DGM projects.

The second excavation, Close Park, Radcliffe in Bury provided equally good archaeology with a complete footprint of a row of seven worker's cottages being uncovered and recorded along with the only remaining elevation of the house belonging to the Bealey family who owned a bleach works on the park site.

The community involvement aspect was if anything more encouraging than that at Bury. Similar numbers of adults were involved and the schools were equally represented with another ten local schools spending time on site. What was encouraging were number of people new to archaeology who have joined up to volunteer at further DGM events and several signing up for our annual two weeks at Mons pool in Nottinghamshire (a week long residential course). Several of the volunteers have been trained in Geophysical techniques and were able to carry out a resistivity survey of the scheduled area around Radcliffe Tower.



Etherstone Hall,
Wigan. Site tour
by Lorraine
Gregory.

Etherstone Hall,
Wigan. Site tour
by Lorraine
Gregory.

Newton Hall,
excavating the
cellar.

Newton Hall,
Vicky giving a
Historical
Research
workshop

Schools involvement

So far the Dig Greater Manchester schools programme has been very successful with 30 primary and secondary schools involved and signed up in the three evaluations in Leigh (Wigan), Radcliffe (Bury) and Chadderton (Oldham) plus 10 primary schools at the Newton Hall spin off site in Hyde. In addition to the schools involvement there has also been two Sixth Form Colleges which have taken part.

School participation has taken the form of two sessions of practical learning, before and during the evaluation, followed by the opportunity to take this further in the classroom by using the resource pack provided as part of the project. The initial classroom session is designed to give students

a 'taster' of archaeology and to find out their thoughts on the subject. This is done through informal discussion and the use of activities and visual resources. When out on site the students are given the chance to try out real archaeological techniques which have included excavation, geophysical survey, buildings survey and graveyard survey. Students from the Sixth Form Colleges have been given on-site training in common archaeological practices to help them work towards their A-level qualifications.

All of the schools and colleges that have taken part in the project have expressed how much they have enjoyed the experience, both from the teachers and students perspectives. The most frequent comment made by teachers is that the project has given their class the opportunity to try something different and 'hands on' which has captured the students imagination and enthusiasm. Another popular aspect has proved to be the provision of the education pack as this has enabled teachers to carry on with the subject in class and fit it into their own teaching plans.

"Thank you so much for the 'Big Dig' event. It was a fantastic experience and we all really enjoyed it. I have had lots of positive responses from everyone on the trip and they had a great time. It was so lovely for our pupils to get to take part in a 'hands on' activity and it really brought History to life for them."

Vivienne Ross, History Co-ordinator, Castlebrook High School, Bury.

"Our children have been inspired by the dig and the work they have been doing. During the warm weather just before we finished for Easter the children were allowed on the school field. A number of them came to me with handfuls of pottery that they had dug up from just below the surface of our land and were talking about what they thought they were and who had used them. The school is built on land where terraced houses and a mill used to be! These treasures are now on display in class!"

Anne McNally, Headteacher, St Joseph's Primary School, Leigh.

Statistics

Though the analysis of the feedback forms has not yet been conducted for the excavation at Wigan & Bury numbers and groups who participated can be given as below:

- 188 (96 at Wigan and 92 at Bury) individuals took part in the actual excavations and recording of the site
- Those 188 completed 485 placement days
- 12 members of the Young Archaeologist Club with their mentors spent a day on site taking part in a variety of activities on both sites
- 28 'A' Level archaeology students spent a day on site of these four spent further days of their own time volunteering at Wigan.
- 21 (11 at Wigan, 10 at Bury) schools (one extra was allowed to spend a day in the second week) spent half a day carrying out various activities that included excavation.
- Approximately 600 individual children from these 21 schools took part together with their teachers and assistants (4/5 adults with each school)
- 140 people signed the register on the open day at Wigan and 120 at Bury. These people were given guided tours of the site and it is estimated that several more found their way onto site without officially registering especially at Bury where there were several entrances to the park. It is estimated that around 400 adults attended the open day at Bury who also took advantage of other side events such as consulting the Heritage Environment Record, Family History experts, crafts and a special trench for children and parents.
- There was a visit from several councillors from Wigan borough and others from Chadderton along with Professor Martin Hall (V.C. University of Salford) visited the site for an official tour.

- A small group and their supervisors from the Greater Manchester Occupational Therapy unit attended site and carried out various pieces of art work in conjunction with their projects with the unit.
- 30 members of local University of the Third Age groups also spent a day on site
- There were five people volunteered to run specific activities (such as family history research) on the open days
- 8 volunteers from the excavations were trained to carry out guided site tours on the open day

Added Value

During the initial phase of development one site identified as a potential DGM site, Newton Hall, Hyde in Tameside was considered to be of high importance and we were able to persuade the local group (Tameside Local History Forum) to apply for Heritage Lottery Funding for a more enhanced project with the help of the DGM team. In January 2012 good news was received and funding of £48,500 was allocated to the Newton Hall project. The project will run between February and October 2012 and the methodology was based on the DGM design.

The results were in a similar vein to the excavations at Leigh with numbers of volunteers and educational visits being proportionate. This can be viewed as added value to the DGM project and has enabled Tameside to be able to conduct two excavations thereby hopefully reaching a much wider audience in that borough.

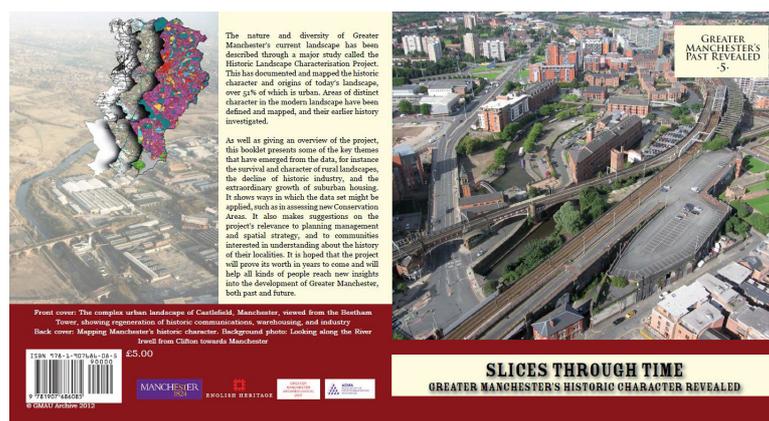
Conclusion

The first DGM excavation could be said to have been very successful but did raise certain issues. Firstly the timing of publicity for the events needs to be addressed. At Leigh there was an intense campaign the week before the event and it became obvious from the applications to join that this was too late. Future excavations need to have a longer and more sustained publicity campaign. This was addressed for the next excavation at Bury in July 2012 and continues for the next two excavations. As a result at Bury we had six articles in the local and regional press and two interviews for Radio Manchester.

Also, though the numbers of adult volunteers was almost at full capacity at Wigan (221 people days out of possible 240 and of the 91 separate individuals around 65% were people who had never experienced an archaeological excavation before) it was felt that the ‘neglected’ groups of the community were not as well represented as they could have been. Again this is being addressed.

It can be concluded that although the project has a long way to go the results of the excavation and the enhancement to the project have been encouraging and it appears that more people are being given the opportunity to take part in and benefit from the DGM project.

The following is the foreword to no. 5 in the series ‘Greater Manchester Past Revealed’, written by Graham Fairclough & Roger M Thomas of English Heritage



Over the past decade or two, the business of 'heritage protection' has evolved significantly. There is now a much wider focus on the historic dimension of our surroundings as a whole, which is often referred to as the 'historic environment' or 'historic landscape'. This shift has coincided with a wider appreciation of the social importance of landscape (urban as well as rural) in general, and of its proper management and protection.

In support of these aims, English Heritage has been working with local authorities across the whole of England to carry out a national programme of Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) projects. This work is designed to increase familiarity with the whole of the inherited landscape, not just the 'special' sites or heritage assets (such as individual Listed Buildings) on which most heritage management has in the past focused. Our HLC projects aim to document and map the historic character and origins of today's landscapes across the whole of England, because all localities possess historic character and because landscape, as the European Landscape Convention reminds us, is everywhere, not merely in special places. HLC started in the predominantly rural 'shire' counties, but a later generation of projects has tackled the great industrial 'metropolitan' conurbations of England. These areas, where many aspects of today's global industrial urbanisation were pioneered, distinctively exemplify many key themes of British history over the past few centuries. They include Liverpool and the rest of Merseyside, Sheffield and its south Yorkshire iron working and manufacturing region, the Black Country and, of course, Greater Manchester, where fortunately EH was able to harness the expertise, enthusiasm and energy of the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit to carry out the work.

The Greater Manchester HLC is one of the largest and most ambitious projects undertaken by GMAU. Using GIS (Geographical Information Systems – sophisticated computerised mapping software linked to a database) the entire area of each of the ten Greater Manchester authorities has been examined in detail, taking information from a combination of modern and historic maps, aerial photographs and other sources as well as from our historic and archaeological knowledge of the region's heritage, created over the past four decades and recorded in Greater Manchester's Historic Environment Record. Areas of distinct historic character in the modern landscape have been defined and mapped, and their earlier history investigated. The result is a highly detailed interactive GIS map with related interpretations that chart the historical development and present-day historic character of the whole of Greater Manchester. The mapping and database contains information about some 54,000 individual blocks of land and this information can be queried and displayed in an almost infinite combination of ways.

End products include a detailed report on the historic character of each authority, and in conjunction with the HLC data these have a wide variety of uses. They can inform planning and regeneration proposals, assist with Conservation Area designation and management, provide context for decisions about designating individual structures, give a starting point for more detailed research into particular areas or topics, and help to inform local people and communities about the history of their localities, and to engage them in debate about future plans. Looking more widely, the Greater Manchester HLC can be compared with those for other areas, such as Merseyside and West Yorkshire, to help define what gives Greater Manchester its particular character.

GMAU is to be warmly congratulated on completing this huge and ambitious project. What matters now is that the value and potential of the Greater Manchester HLC is fully exploited, for the benefit of the area's historic environment and people. We commend this project, and urge anyone who thinks that it may be of use to them to contact the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities.

The Federation adds its congratulation and thanks to all those who have worked on the last five publications and hopes that the data and information collected will be made freely available to both federation members and the wider public.