

**HALF-YEAR REPORT OF THE ARCHAEOLOGY DEPARTMENT,
NORWICH CASTLE MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY,
APRIL – OCTOBER 2003**

Report by Head of Museums and Archaeology

This report reviews the work of Norwich Castle Archaeology Department, which is part of the Curatorial Section of Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service

1. The Archaeology Department, April – October 2003

- 1.1 The work of the Archaeology staff has again been focused towards new and innovative displays and exhibitions, both at Norwich Castle and across the Service.
- 1.2 Staff have been involved in education projects, through a new teaching initiative at Norwich Castle Study Centre and by talks to the public. Wider access to the collections also continues to be achieved through the Study Centre.
- 1.3 Important progress has been made with regard to achieving significant new acquisitions.

2. Staff and volunteers

- 2.1 The permanent staffing within the Archaeology Department continues to be Dr Tim Pestell, Alan West (afternoons only) and Dr John Davies, the Chief Curator and Keeper.
- 2.2 Three volunteers have been employed under supervision during the period, in addition to long-term volunteer Dr Peter Robins, who continues to work on the Department's prehistoric flint collections.

3. Collections

- 3.1 Progress has been achieved in the study of the oak logboat which was excavated near Smallburgh in 1927 and which has been held in store at Great Yarmouth Maritime Museum over recent years. A sample of wood was taken

by Norwich Castle archaeology staff and sent to Queen's University Belfast for radiocarbon dating. The results have now been received and confirm an early historical date for the vessel, which has been found to be between 669 and 775AD, centring on 722AD. River-borne transport would have been very important at that time. Sea level was falling and the east coast and river system were changing and developing. Research will now continue towards two publications about this rare and important vessel. Staff are working towards displaying and interpreting the boat at the new Tower Curing Works Museum at Great Yarmouth, which is to open in 2004.

4. Acquisitions and loans

- 4.1 The Department has continued to monitor newly discovered material for potential acquisition. In the four month period from the beginning of April to the end of July, twenty-nine important new finds were reported in the county under the Treasure process. The Department has expressed an interest in acquiring eleven of these. The British Museum has expressed interest in a further two.
- 4.2 The Department successfully achieved the acquisition of the outstanding Anglo-Saxon jewellery from Harford Farm cemetery, following a public appeal. Excavations at Harford Farm, on the line of the A47 took place fifteen years ago and yielded a rare 7th century cemetery. Exquisite items of gold and silver had been deposited on loan to Norwich Castle by the landowner, who has since died. The executors of the estate agreed to sell the objects for a total of £91,646.50. Funding was acquired from three sources. £10,000.50 from the Friends of the Norwich Museums, £41,646.00 from the National Art Collections Fund and £40,000.00 has now been given from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This magnificent collection will be a major feature of the new Anglo-Saxon and Viking Gallery.
- 4.3 In May the archive from the excavation of a Roman Kiln at Caistor St Edmund was received from the excavator Mr Michael Brely. The kiln was situated to the north of the town, situated beneath the north wall. It was excavated between 1970 and 1972. The archive contains a range of complete and fragmentary pottery vessels, coins, notebooks and papers.
- 4.4 In May, the latest batch of Iron Age coins discovered from a deposit at Fincham in south-west Norfolk was acquired for the Museum. The site appears to have been a votive deposit and has yielded many unusual coins but Norwich Castle had previously only managed to acquire the first two batches. This new batch of coins (number 8) comprises 22 silver units of the Icenii. There are 4 Boar-horse, 4 Face-horse and 14 inscribed Pattern-horse examples. The group contains a number of early issues which have helped to tie-in previous finds to known production groups.
- 4.5 The Hevingham Late Bronze Age hoard was acquired, with funding from The Friends of the Norwich Museums. The hoard contains a rare (only the second

known) example of an axe mould with asymmetrical decoration on the valves. The recording of this particular item, following consultation with the British Museum, has led to the recognition of a new form of socketed axe, decorated only on one side.

- 4.6 Loans have been prepared and sent out to other museums and institutions during the period.
- 4.7 Horse-related artefacts of Iron Age and Roman date have been loaned to an exhibition in Kentucky, USA, called 'All the Queen's Horses'. They included Iron Age harness fittings and the ceremonial cavalry helmet from Worthing in central Norfolk. This loan was arranged in association with the National Horseracing Museum at Newmarket. The material returned to Norwich at the beginning of September.
- 4.8 Historical custodial items, including manacles, a restraining belt and documents, were loaned to The Law Courts in Norwich for the Combined Court Open Day in May.
- 4.9 Objects have been prepared for loan for the British Museum partnership exhibition, 'Treasure, Finding Our Past', which is to open in London in November.
- 4.10 Artefacts have been prepared for loan to Great Yarmouth Museums, for inclusion in the Tower Curing Works Museum.

5. Displays

- 5.1 The main focus of the Archaeology Department has continued to be towards the preparation and development of new galleries within the Service.
- 5.2 Tim Pestell leads on the new Anglo-Saxon and Viking Gallery project, which is to open in early summer 2004 at Norwich Castle. The design brief has been completed and discussion continues about the way topics should be framed most appropriately, to reach a wide variety of audiences without compromising a scholarly base or pleasurable viewing experience. Planning continues towards the interactives. Building work has started in the gallery and initial case and display tenders have been received. Julie Curl has been appointed as part-time Documentation Assistant, in place of Denise Beale, who has left the Service.
- 5.3 John Davies continues work on the Archaeology and Early History Gallery at the new Tower Curing Works Museum at Great Yarmouth, which is to open in 2004. Significant progress has been made, with the signing-off of gallery plans. Preparations are being made for illustrations and interactive exhibits, while other research continues. Objects for display have been through the conservation process. Writing of text panels is currently underway.

- 5.4 A temporary exhibition was opened at Norwich castle entitled, *Neanderthals: Butchers of the Ice Age*. This exhibition was constructed jointly by the Natural History and Archaeology Departments to publicise the important site at Lynford quarry which was excavated during the summer of 2002. Although artefacts from the excavations were not available for display, previous finds from the site, from the Museum's collections have been shown within a context of other important early prehistoric finds from the county.
- 5.5 Work has continued on the re-display of the Fitch Room, which had been empty since the re-development of the Castle Museum. The original Victorian appearance of the room has been restored and collections from a range of disciplines have now been installed there. The displays highlight some of the collectors and collections which were integral to the establishment of the Museum. They also celebrate the breadth and depth of the collections. Alongside Archaeology material are collections from Social History, Fine Art, Decorative Art and Natural History are also displayed. Archaeology material includes prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval pottery, Roman brooches and brooch-manufacturing material, prehistoric flints from around the world and medieval armorial horse harness furniture.
- 5.6 Staff have begun plans for a possible new gallery with an archaeological theme at Gressenhall Rural Life Museum. Discussions have begun between staff of both museums to consider the precise content and scope of the displays.

6. Future exhibitions

- 6.1 Work continues towards the British Museum partnership exhibition entitled *'Treasure: Finding Our Past'*. The exhibition will contain material from the very greatest treasure finds from this country, such as the Hoxne Treasure, the Mildenhall, Cunetio and Cuerdale hoards and the recently discovered Amesbury Archer burial. The exhibition opens in London in November, before travelling to Cardiff, Manchester, Tyne and Wear, arriving in Norwich in July 2005, where it will run until January 2006. Norwich material has been prepared for travelling to London. Other preparations are underway towards the layout and case plan for the Norwich leg.

7. The Study Room

- 7.1 Researchers and students have continued to visit Norwich Castle Study Centre to study the archaeology collections.
- 7.2 In addition to independent researchers, students have come from the Universities of Reading, Oxford and Buffalo U.S.A..

- 7.3 Collections studied during the six months include Neolithic flint tools, Bronze Age metalwork, the Helmingham Breviary, maps, Roman roof tiles, the Hocking runic plaque and Iron Age coins.
- 7.4 Staff continued training sessions for the front of house Interpreter team, employing the facilities of the Study Room.

8. Education and Outreach

- 8.1 A new Adult Education course was set-up in the Archaeology Department in association with UEA Centre for Continuing Education. This ten week course was titled '*Beginners Guide to Identifying & Interpreting Archaeological Artefacts*'. This was run from May to July, on Tuesday evenings. It provided a practical 'hands-on' guide to archaeological artefacts and an insight into the range of the archaeology collections, which were used in the teaching. The course is currently being repeated (started on 29 September). Teaching has been undertaken by Norwich Castle staff, together with Alice Lyons from the Norfolk Archaeological Unit.
- 8.2 The members of the Department undertook a Group Evening at Norwich Castle on 10th June. The theme of the evening was important discoveries and the manufacture of artefacts and coins. This comprised formal talks by staff, tours of Galleries, informal talks and demonstrations of coin striking.
- 8.3 Staff have given the following presentations:
- 'By Small Things We Remember – An Archaeology Of Literacy'*, The Sue Margeson Memorial Lecture at Norwich Castle, **Tim Pestell**
- 'The Balthilde Seal Matrix'*, at Norwich Castle Archaeology Group Evening, **Tim Pestell**
- 'Recent Finds from Bronze Age Norfolk'*, at Norwich Castle Archaeology Group Evening, **Alan West**
- 'The Romans in Norfolk'*, to Pulham Market Society, **John Davies**
- 'Irregular Coin Production in Roman Britain – New Evidence'*, to The British Numismatic Society Centenary Meeting at the British Museum, **John Davies** and Adrian Marsden
- 'Saxon Metalwork'*, to Discovery Tours, in Norwich, **Tim Pestell**
- 8.4 Staff continued their outreach work with Discovery Tours. Close liaison has ensured good practice by this metal detector team, resulting in continued reporting of archaeological finds to NMAS and donations of significant finds to Norwich Castle.

- 8.5 Staff have continued their involvement with the Sue Margeson Memorial Group and have arranged the following lecture for Saturday 3rd April 2004: *'An Embarrassment of Riches – Some Lessons Learned from 70 Years of Finds Recording in Norfolk'*, which will be delivered by Dr Andrew Rogerson.

9. Publications

- 9.1 *'Markets in Early Medieval Europe. Trading and 'Productive' Sites, 650-850'*, edited by **Tim Pestell** and Katharina Ulmschneider.
- 9.2 **John Davies** was the consultant specialist and reviewed the text for the second edition of *'Celtic Fire and Roman Rule'*, by Bruce Robinson and Tony Gregory.

Recommendation: that the report be noted

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