



ANALYSIS PROJECT

NEWSLETTER 3

DECEMBER 14 2012

INTRODUCTION

Hello! As most of the project team are now aware after our meeting at PMAG, the task of producing Newsletter No. 3 and subsequent issues has come to me. The circulation of this issue has been a little delayed because of further work on the Hoard site, which Hilary discusses below. As a ceramacist I have to report that – alas – there was no pottery! Nor was there any Anglo-Saxon pottery found nearby at a small excavation in Hammerwich, which I visited earlier in the Summer, apart from one very small, battered rim sherd that could be early-middle AS in date. I find myself, therefore, pretty much in the position of the polar bear below! Nevertheless, this issue has much to interest our readership and I thank the various team members who have submitted their reports below.



'Yes, but is there any news of the iceberg?'

The next newsletter will be due around the end of the financial year and I will be soliciting you all for contributions in due course.

All that remains is to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

STOP PRESS: The gold standards have now arrived at the BM

NOTES FROM THE PROJECT MANAGER

This Newsletter comes to you somewhat later than anticipated as a result of ongoing developments. It seemed sensible to wait until they had all unwound so that you could be notified as soon as possible. It is also the first one that will be edited by Stephanie Rátkai, one of my colleagues at Barbican, and I am very grateful to her for agreeing to take on this task.

One of the developments was the new work on the field where the Hoard was found. In the summer the farmer told Stephen Dean (the Staffordshire County Archaeologist) of his intention to plough it again. This would be the first time this had happened since the discovery in 2009. Stephen Dean put together a project for systematic metal detecting and field walking subsequent to the ploughing. This was funded by Staffordshire CC and English Heritage, and carried out by Warwickshire Archaeology with field-walking support from the local archaeology society. I was invited to be part of the executive as it was appreciated that, should any new hoard-related finds be recovered, the new project and the research project would need to converge rapidly.

The work eventually took place during the final two weeks of November under the direction of Bryn Gethin. I have to admit that what I was mainly hoping for was some nice pottery that would help us provide some context for the use of the field. As it transpired the field continued to be remarkably barren – apart from seventh century gold, silver and copper alloy items! In total c. 90 additional pieces have been found, concentrated in the original *locus* of the Hoard in 2009. As was to be expected most were very small scraps, but interesting additional finds now include another cheek-piece, the companion of the one already found. There is also a small cross and another small cloisonné bird. There are also some additional scraps from decorated helmet foils.

This material is now in the Treasure process and Kevin Leahy is producing a brief report for the Inquest which is to be held on January 4. The opportunity has been taken to send it to Lincoln where it has been X-radiographed following the normal protocols established for the Hoard. From there it goes to the British Museum. We naturally hope it

can be acquired by Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent, and be re-united with the rest of the material. It will then be incorporated into the research project.

The other development has been related to the growing realisation that the first stage of the research was going to be delayed by the number of items that were still obscured by dirt. The X-radiography is a great help for seeing overall pattern, but it cannot help with issues such as degrees of wear, details of the damage, whether edges are real or broken etc. At the monitoring meeting with English Heritage at the end of September, I was invited to undertake an evaluation of the scale of the problem with a view to EH providing additional funding for a temporary uplift in the amount of conservation and cleaning that can be undertaken. I have completed this and presented it to EH and the Hoard Management Group in November. They have adopted some of the proposed solutions and a variation requesting funding was submitted to EH. This has now been agreed.

This will result in two 3 month additional posts to be based at Birmingham. Other work may be carried out elsewhere in the same time frame. At the same time Birmingham has raised sufficient funds to extend Deb and Cym's contracts for an additional year from April 2013, and to appoint a new conservation manager also for a year. The new manager, Pieta Greaves, starts in the new year and will take over from Deborah Cane who returns to her original job within BMT from which she was seconded. We look forward to welcoming Pieta to the project and hope to include a brief section about and by her, in the next Newsletter.

Whilst all these new resources are very welcome, it is unlikely that they will result in all of the cleaning that is needed for the research project being completed within its first stage. For this reason we have decided to prioritise the filigree decorated pieces, as they pose particular problems and are a coherent group. The underlying rationale is that research can progress on that category, whilst the cleaning of other material is completed.

The core team had a very useful project meeting at PMAG at the end of October. It was the first time everyone had been together, and we will now be able to put faces to the names at the bottom of the emails.

The morning was devoted to short presentations and the afternoon to discussions of where the different strands were usefully overlapping. Some of the presentations are reflected in the sections that follow. I prepared brief notes after the meeting, recording what had been presented and discussed. If anyone in the wider team would like to see these, please contact me.

HEMC

THE CONSERVATION TEAM BRITISH MUSEUM

The initial cleaning work on some of the remaining National Geographic funded objects i.e. K304, 298, 242, 274, 301, 291 was completed and they were sent to the Science section for detailed analysis. It was noted that (also confirmed by Chris Fern at the first project meeting on 26.10.2012) there may be more fragments associated with K301 and 291 (silver pommel with decorated/gold front part). It was agreed that these fragments would be checked by the conservators at Birmingham Museum and sent to the BM at a convenient time.



Meanwhile, the work on the English Heritage funded component of the project continues. Close examination of the silver/silver-gilt foils helped to allocate them according to at least 11 frieze/decoration

types. During the work, selected fragments were X-rayed, and a further selection of the fragments to clean for identification was made. Currently, the investigation and reconstruction of friezes 7, 8 and 9 are in progress. Technology of construction is also being investigated by examining the beginning and end fragments for the frieze panels under high magnification. Particularly on frieze 9, apparently straight edges with two possible rivet holes on some fragments (**see above**) may indicate that they were placed at the beginning of the panels. Otherwise most of the edges are broken. In the course of this work interesting variations in features of the design are becoming apparent; for example the 'foot' elements shown below have not yet been seen on other fragments of frieze 9. This particular decoration will be investigated further to see whether it forms a completely new frieze type or is part of frieze 9. In addition, Deborah Klemperer of PMAG has kindly offered to bring the remaining foil fragments which have been on display at the PMAG (including parts of frieze 9) when she visits the BM on 15th November 2012.



With the arrival of Eleanor Blakelock at end of September – the first of the XRF pilot studies in the EH project design is underway – a set of 16 multicomponent items (gold hilt guards) selected by the EH project to be representative of the known spatial distribution of the Hoard across the find area. Surface μ XRF has been carried out on all items and the next stage, which is to carry out surface EDX analysis, has started. This will be followed by sub-surface analysis to assess the extent of surface enrichment. We are still awaiting the arrival of the gold standards.

Reports have been completed on the majority of the macro organics (by Caroline Cartwright) on the objects from the National Geographic group at the BM and on the 6

items with glass inlays (by Andrew Meek) which were analysed by proton induced X-rays and gamma ray emission (PIXE and PIGE) at AGLAE in Paris in Nov 2010.

We are expecting a visit from Chris Fern in the week of 10th December 2012. He will be studying some of the Staffordshire material as well as comparable objects in the BM's collection, with a particular interest in the filigree, which will feed into the work ongoing in Science. He will be collaborating closely with the Conservation & Scientific Research and Prehistoric & Europe Departments at the Museum.

X-RADIOGRAPHY AT LINCOLN

The meeting provided an opportunity to clarify, for the project team, the scope and objectives of the x-radiography being undertaken at Lincoln.

The first part of the presentation outlined Lincoln's approach to the delivery of x-radiographic screening of assemblages of archaeological material recovered as a result of excavations undertaken within planning & development control environment, and related this work to the MoRPHE project framework. Within this approach two main criteria guide the screening.

1. Routine application of multiple variable exposures.
2. Routine imaging through varying, precisely recorded, elevations.

This methodology is designed to comprehensively interrogate all aspects of the morphology of (what is usually more extensively) deteriorated structures, and in a way which maximises accessibility for archive reporting.

The four generic levels of potential information capture about the objects can be summarised.

- Identification of objects where type is completely obscured by deterioration products.
- Clarification of level of deterioration.
- Indication of presence of surface decoration and/or other features.
- Recording of information relating to the

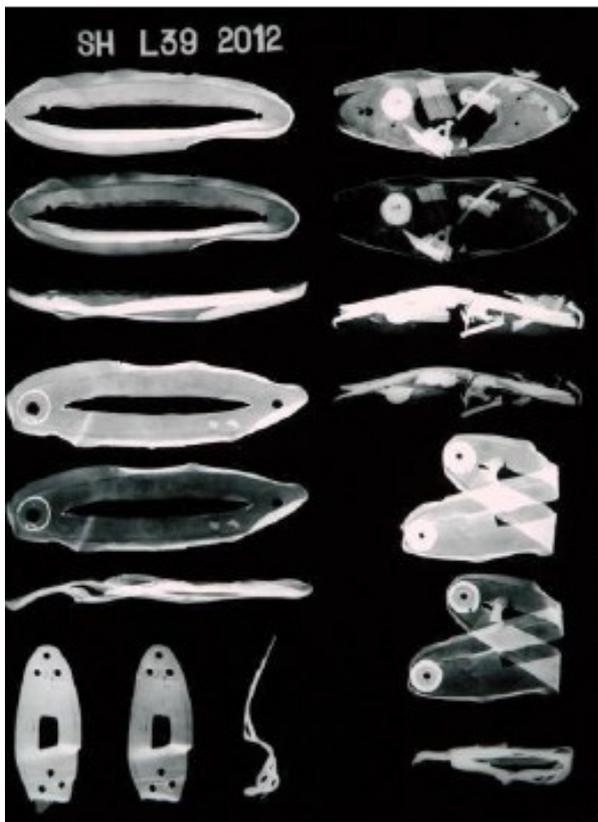
technology/manufacture of artifacts (including evidence that may relate to site based processes such as trapped metalworking debris in the outer corrosion "envelope" which can potentially be lost in single exposure/elevation screening).

Examples of all four generic information areas were provided using non-Hoard related material.

The second part of the presentation concentrated on the results being obtained by applying this methodology to the Hoard. Again examples were provided of the layout/exposure/elevation approach to the plates, and how this might assist the work of the artefact researcher(s), along with specific examples of the generic information capture areas referred to above. 3 examples of the results are shown below.

Below, Details from x-ray plates showing:

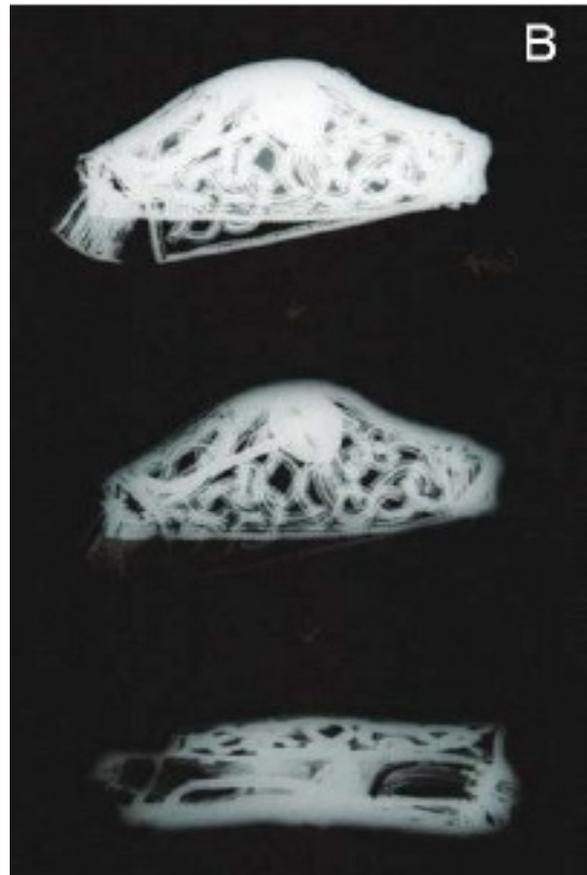
A K427 which is still fully obscured by soil and burial debris, the x-ray clarifies the contents of the soil lump and the orientation of the fragments within.



Example of a typical plate from the first batch of x-rayed material

Overall the results so far have been promising, particularly given the lack of comparative data around the effectiveness of x-raying gold, and we are now progressing the screening of the second major batch of material.

B Pommel K460, which still has soil and burial debris inside, the x-ray has revealed a rivet within the pommel.



THE CONSERVATION TEAM BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM

The conservation team has started conserving the first batch of EH research objects selected by Chris Fern - a variety of pommel caps and hilt collars, many of which have filigree. Deborah Magnoler has conserved K457, a gold pommel cap with complex zoomorphic filigree decoration (five snake heads outlined with fine beaded wire and with gold globules for eyes).



Gold pommel cap K457: zoomorphic filigree decoration



Gold pommel cap K457: interior with iron tang

Upon excavating the interior of the object she found a copper alloy lining and the remains of an iron tang. Cym Storey is currently conserving K369, a beautiful, intact silver hilt collar with gilded, recessed lines and bands of triangular indentations, a few of which appear to contain niello. The collar also has a copper alloy lining and a foreign object (section of filigree band) embedded in the soil inside it. It has a pair (in fragments).

Cym and Deb Magnoler are also finishing up their individual characterisation projects.

Deb is examining and conserving a set of gold & cloisonne garnet strips and their associated filigree panels (report to be distributed to the team in the spring) and Cym is working on the second phase of her niello project, which has involved conservation and examination of objects with niello inlay, including gathering images of tool marks seen on the objects (report to be distributed to the team in the new year).



K369: silver hilt collar

The hoard is proving to be as popular as ever with the public. The conservation team hosted an Open Day on 17 November that was completely sold out. Visitors had the chance to see hoard objects under microscopes and hear about conservation of the hoard. Contemporary and medieval metalworker Jamie Hall joined us in the studio to demonstrate wire-making techniques. Feedback forms from the event show that 100% of participants enjoyed the day. Our monthly tours are regularly sold out and receive similar feedback, which all goes to show that the public is still very enthusiastic about the hoard and interested in the conservation programme.

TYOLOGY AT PMAG: - OBJECT OF THE MONTH K1448

K1448 is a small, cast silver pommel cap with a round back, and one thick integral rivet, which belongs to small group of similar pommels that are amongst the latest objects in the hoard. It has traces of gilding, with on one side densely weaved interlace decoration, and on the other side a blank recess. Into this fits a gold eye-shaped mount (K1403) of sheet-metal, and with filigree scroll ornament, that was found separately. The pommel's bottom edge is curved, which, together with the angle of the rivet, indicates it was

mounted on a curved guard, possibly that of a seax rather than a sword (given its size). The shoulders of the cap are decorated with the same interlace as on the face, and considerably worn, presumably from prolonged use.

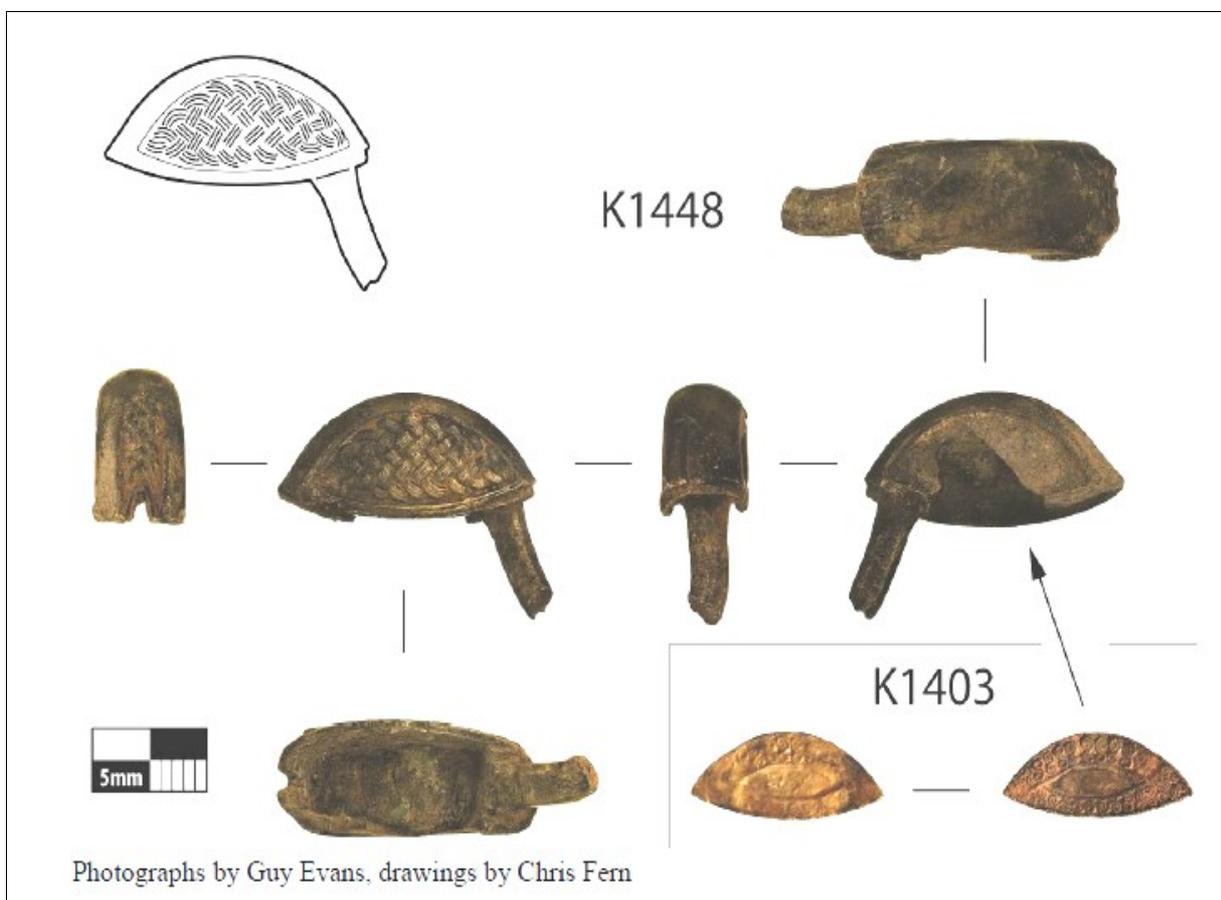
The use of the 'eye' device can be compared to other similar almond-shaped (or Vesica Piscis) mounts in the hoard. This is a motif not previously known in early Anglo-Saxon metalworking, though ocular imagery was a feature of 'pagan' art of the 5th-6th centuries (Williams 2011). Most similar are

the almond-shaped eyes of animals and humans which populate early manuscript art. Its use in the context of early Christian England evokes comparison with the notion of the 'all-seeing eye' of *Psalm 33:18*:

'Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him: and on them that hope in his mercy'

Williams, H. 2011 *The sense of being seen: Ocular effects at Sutton Hoo*, *Journal of Social Archaeology* 11(1) 99-121

Chris Fern



AND FINALLY...

I have noticed pictures of the Hoard popping up in some unlikely places from time to time, but spotting it in the back pages of *Private Eye* in the edition from 16th-29th November was unexpected. The back pages of the *Eye* are, of course, the bit where the investigative journalism occurs. Fortunately it was nothing to do with our project, merely an article about Birmingham University and what is going on

there with archaeology. The pretext for the picture being that the former Birmingham Archaeology unit carried out the original excavations on site.

Please send in other unusual sightings of Hoard pictures in the press. There will be a small prize at the end of the project for the most unusual / silliest.

HEMC