

**Contextualising Metal-Detected Discoveries:
The Staffordshire Anglo-Saxon Hoard**





As usual, thanks to all the contributors to Newsletter 4.

NEWSLETTER 4

FEBRUARY 28, 2013

This issue of the newsletter gives an opportunity to welcome new members to the Conservation Team, including the new Hoard Conservation Manager, Pieta Greaves. Pieta has provided a synopsis of her background, as have the two new, three-month placement conservators, who join Deb Magnoler and Cym Storey at Birmingham Museum.

The newsletter also welcomes Jenni Butterworth (you may remember her as the 'virtual nun' in one Time Team episode!) who is the Programme Co-ordinator for the Hoard. More about Jenni and her role in the Hoard Team is also in this newsletter.

A short report on the field-walking and metal-detecting survey of the 'Hoard Field' can be found below. As you are probably aware, a further 89 items were found, most quite small, but which included an eagle mount, a pectoral cross and a cheek-piece, matching the one found during the original excavation. Short articles on the survey and its results, by Bryn Gethin and by Kevin Leahy, have appeared in *The Searcher* (March 2013).

One unfortunate outcome of this most recent work has been to bring the site back into the public gaze, resulting in illicit metal-detecting on the site by so-called 'night-hawks'.

Hilary offers an overview of the Hoard Project management thus far and our regular features continue with Chris Fern's 'Object of the Month' and updates from the BM and Birmingham conservators, and from the Lincoln X-radiographers.

We also turn our attention to some of the more humorous aspects of the Hoard under 'Hoard Spotting...' Contributions for future newsletters are welcome.

NOTES FROM THE PROJECT MANAGER

My main news for you in this Newsletter is that following decisions made by the Hoard Management Group in their January meeting, I am in the process of re-designing Stage 1 of the project. This will result in a revised Project Design which I hope to write in April (lucky me!). Some of the revisions are organisational ones that will have little impact on the team as a whole. Changes of this sort include the fact that the whole Staffordshire Hoard programme now has a co-ordinator. Another is the fact that two advisory committees – the Research Advisory Panel (RAP) and the Conservation Advisory Panel (CAP) – ceased to exist in December. Phoenix-like from their ashes has arisen a new committee, the Research Project Advisory Panel which has the less pronounceable abbreviation RPAP. A more fundamental change is that the work of the conservators at Birmingham is to be more closely integrated into the research design, and so I have been discussing timetabling issues with Pieta and others. The outcome of this has been that we at Barbican have decided that the original 31st October 2013 finish date for Stage 1 is no longer possible. We do not think a viable project design for Stage 2 can be written by that time.

So following discussions with representatives of the HMG and English Heritage, it has been decided to re-schedule the end of Stage 1 to May 2014. By that time all of the Hoard will be clean. We will also be able to have had an intensive two week grouping exercise during which all of the Hoard will be brought together, and Chris will be able to re-unite the various fragments he believes belong to the same item. Currently these are often at different venues making his work difficult.

For most members of the team, the elongated timescale will not have any major impact. The strands of work will continue along their currently agreed timetables to their finish dates.

They will then effectively hibernate over the winter whilst the cleaning is completed and the grouping exercise carried out. The major impact will be on the project meetings. We were due to have two more. The first in April 2013 where we could have preliminary discussions about which strands of research would be most useful to take forward into Stage 2. The second was to have been in September 2013 when the draft research plan could be discussed.

With the revised timetable, it now makes more sense to delay the third project meeting until April 2014. I also propose to re-schedule the second one to May of this year. By which time I should be in a position to present the fully revised PD and discuss the impact with you. So strand leaders have received a circular requesting what days in May you and your team cannot do.

METAL-DETECTING THE HOARD SITE



With the announcement that the farmer intended to plough the Hoard site field, Stephen Dean, asked Bryn Gethin (Project Officer, Archaeology Warwickshire) to detect and survey the site. Despite the awful weather, the detecting team (made up of four members of the Bosworth Survey Group, two- including Bryn - from the Edgehill Survey Group and a young detecting archaeologist who had worked at Basing House and Oudenarde in the Netherlands), augmented by Rob Jones and Kev Wright (Archaeology Warwickshire), set to work. The field was sandy and an ideal surface to detect on, although the subsoil is a dense sticky clay.

On the second day the detectorists were amazed to find a cheekpiece, which appears to be the

companion to the one discovered in 2009. Over the next few days more finds emerged, including an eagle head and a cross-shaped mount.



Finds recovered by metal detecting

A fieldwalk survey was also carried out under the direction of Archaeology Warwickshire, with volunteers from Stoke-on-Trent Museum Archaeology Society and Hammerwich Wildlife group – you may recall them and their excavation at Hammerwich from the previous newsletter. The prolonged gap between ploughing and detecting proved beneficial to this survey which was carried out on a well-weathered surface. Despite the success of the metal detecting survey, a fragment of foil was found during the surface survey and a further day of metal detecting was agreed.

The material recovered from detecting and surface survey produced over 2,500 finds. Most of these post dated c. 1700 – excepting, of course, the Hoard-related items. There was, therefore, an enormous gap between the Middle Anglo-Saxon exploitation of the site and the much later dumping of domestic refuse. The quantity of late domestic waste and rubbish in the field is far higher than was anticipated and it seems likely that the sandy soil on the site was being ‘enriched’ from waste from nearby town ashpit privies. The absence of any pottery (eg from manuring scatters) from the field is quite remarkable.

Kevin and Dianne Leahy examined the finds in Warwick and subsequently at the Lincoln Conservation Lab. **Table 1** (taken from Leahy's report for Archaeology Warwickshire), quantifies the hoard items identified (object weights include soil adhesions). The summary description of the objects (below) is also from Leahy's report.

Where datable, the gold and silver fragments can be confidently assigned to the 7th century and are likely to have formed part of the hoard found to



Metal	Total	Garnet	Filigree	Niello	Gilt
Au	19	4	12		
Ag	58			4	7
Cu alloy	10				3
Cu/base Ag	2				1
Metal	Total (g)				
Au	40.37	22.43	11.73		
Ag	100.59			2.92	82.55
Cu alloy	13.86				4.81
Cu/base Ag	2.36				0.99

Table 1 (taken from Leahy 2013)

be Treasure at the 2009 Inquest. In addition to the precious metal there were seven pieces of copper alloy which, it is suggested, are recent. A further five pieces may be base silver or copper alloy, but as they were probably associated with the hoard, they too may be considered to be Treasure. More problematic are three fragments of interlace decorated, gilt copper alloy (**5001**, **5007** and **5026**). These are of the same date as the hoard and are of high quality but their form and material sets them apart. They are important as, if they are not part of the hoard, they suggest that there was other activity in the immediate area during the 7th century. Comparable to **5001** and **5007** is part of a gilt copper alloy disc set with a blue glass gem found by Terry Herbert (the finder of the original hoard), approximately

100m away from the find spot. These pieces could have formed part of the same set of fittings and are comparable to a mount found in Mound 2 at Sutton Hoo.

More detailed information on the detecting and surface survey can be found in The Searcher (March 2013, 16-17) and in Palmer, S, *Further Archaeological Survey in Hammerwich, Staffordshire, in 2012*, Archaeology Warwickshire Internal Report 1304, February 2013). I am grateful to Stuart Palmer and Bryn Gethin for making this information available.

NEW FACES

New Conservators at Birmingham Museum

Pieta Greaves: Hoard Conservation Manager
Prior to being appointed as Staffordshire hoard conservation manager, I was employed at AOC Archaeology as Senior Conservator. I have been an accredited member of Institute of Conservation since 2011.

My conservation specialisation is in archaeological materials, this has lead me to work on some of the most important archaeological assemblages from Scottish sites excavated in the last few years, such as the

Bronze Age dagger burial at Forteviot, the Viking boat burial from Ardnamurchan, the wooden lyre bridge from High Pasture Cave as well as the internationally significant Roman altars from Inveresk. For these projects it was important to liaise with a range of professionals including curators, archaeologists, conservators and other experts, to ensure the objects reached their archaeological potential.

I have also worked on an extensive range of other object types including social history, arms

Three-month placement positions:

Natalie Harding: My decision to pursue a career in conservation was first influenced by my initial training in Gold and Silversmithing in Canberra, Australia. I was interested in those people who cared for and maintained the objects in museums and wanted to take a more practical approach, so began a two year intensive course in metal conservation at West Dean College. After completing the MA in Conservation studies, I was recruited by the National Museum of Scot-



Above: Conservators clockwise from the back left Deborah Magnoler, Cymberline Storey, Pieta Greaves, Ciarán Lavelle (sitting) and Natalie Harding (sitting).

and armour, statues and sculpture, also carrying out preventive and remedial conservation for exhibition, loans, storage and research.

Prior to training as a conservator at Cardiff University I worked as an Archaeologist in New Zealand and Australia, having graduated from Auckland University in 2001. Further to work in the UK, I have worked on overseas excavations in Egypt and Belize for several field seasons both in a conservation and archaeologist capacity.

land in Edinburgh where I had previously undertaken my student work placement. I was involved with the completion of the four year Royal Museum Project, primarily employed to treat, reassemble and install the Millennium Clock (a fifteen-metre tall, mixed media, mechanical, chiming clock) and various other metal objects to go on display.

In September 2011, I successfully secured an HLF internship at the National Maritime

Museum in Greenwich, focusing on inorganic conservation. This was a fantastic opportunity to become fully integrated within a national museum institution and to further develop my conservation skills within the museum environment. I was involved with all aspects of working within a museum conservation department from condition checking and treating objects to liaising with professionals from other institutions during exhibition installations and participating and giving my recommendations on storage, handling and environmental care for objects in the museum stores. I have now moved on to a new and exciting challenge at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, where I am employed as a conservator on the Staffordshire Hoard. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, that I am very excited to be a part of.

Ciarán Lavelle: Originally from County Armagh in Northern Ireland, I read for a BSc in Conservation of Objects for Museums and Archaeology and an MSc in Professional Conservation at Cardiff University; with a post-graduate degree in Museum and Cultural Heritage Studies from the University of Ulster and for a BSc in Archaeology and Palaeoecology from Queens University, Belfast.

I have previous experience working in the heritage industry at the Science Museum as a lead project conservator; for Bristol Museum as an object conservator on the Museum of Bristol project; as an archaeological conservation intern at the Athenian Agora excavations; as an object conservation intern at The Riverside Museum, Glasgow.

Before I found conservation and followed this career path, I worked as a professional archaeologist in Ireland, gaining experience excavating on numerous sites from the Neolithic to the Victorian period. This love of history and all things archaeological is what drives me to work on such projects as the Staffordshire Hoard, as they offer exciting opportunities to work with a unique collection. By becoming a member of the Hoard team I bring with me the knowledge and understanding of the life of artefacts in the burial environment and experience in the excavation of archaeological finds.

Programme Coordinator for the Staffordshire Hoard

Jenni Butterworth: Jenni has been appointed as the co-ordinator for the various Hoard projects. Her training is as an archaeologist and her background is in television production - she worked on the National Geographic documentaries about the hoard in 2010-11 and is delighted to be back and involved with the Hoard once more! She began as Programme Co-ordinator in January 2013 and works on a freelance basis. She is supporting the Hoard Management Group through coordination of the various Hoard projects, enabling the HMG to take a strategic over-view of the programme as a whole. Her initial tasks include creating a strategic plan of Hoard activities, so do please get in touch if you have information to share.

UPDATES

Conservation Team Birmingham Museum



Hilt plate K295 before and after conservation

Archaeological Kinder-Surprise:

Although this artefact is not the most appealing in terms of its aesthetic value, it is very interesting due to the contents of the soil surrounding it. The artefact, designated as **K295**, is a hilt plate, and it was used as a decorative covering for the cross on the handle of an Anglo-Saxon sword. The hilt plate itself was covered with soil from the burial environment; and what made this artefact of particularly interest was the amount of other objects and fragments that were found within the soil surrounding the hilt plate. that may or may not have been associated with the plate originally.

For example the soil contained a boss decoration, two rivet ends that have been broken off a pommel cap, a fragment of filigree, a silver rivet and multiple fragments of gold, silver and copper metal strips.



Two fragments from a pommel cap: the one on the left still retains its rivets



Decorative boss found with K295

During the treatment of this artefact it became known as an archaeological Kinder Surprise, as you never knew what you are going to find until you start the conservation process. Once the contents of the soil were revealed it provides an exciting surprise and presents us with a whole new set of artefacts and riddles which we try to make sense of as well as to make connections with the other artefacts in the hoard so as to bring the world of the Anglo-Saxons into the light and reveal their story.



A collection of metal fragments from the soil associated with K295

The Conservation Team British Museum

Conservation and scientific analysis are continuing to progress in close collaboration and the gold analysis pilot study of the surface enrichment is nearing a conclusion. Reports on all of the National Geographic funded analyses will be completed by the end of March, and all associated images and data prepared for inclusion in the project database.

Conservation work on the silver/silver-gilt foils continues. Friezes 1-6 (various warrior decorations), frieze 9 ('duck' heads with serpentine bodies) and frieze 10 (interlace decoration) are currently in progress. Examination of Frieze 10 (below) showed that it may be different from the silver-gilt foils in terms of size, form and surface decoration, being generally without gilding and larger than the silver-gilt foils. It is difficult to make assumptions at this stage on the overall shape, due to distortion, but like the other friezes it may not form a linear panel.



Fragments of Frieze 10



Frieze 9, K1383 (left) and K1412 joining together



More fragments of K1412, Frieze 9, joining to K1383

Examination also revealed that Frieze 10 may possibly represent different forms of interlace decoration or it may be another frieze type. Methods, including a pilot survey of silver foil alloy composition, will be explored to try to answer these questions.

Following Deborah Klemperer's (PMAG) visit last November, it is exciting to report that we have found a join between the Frieze 9 fragments which Deborah brought to us (K1383) and the ones we have here in metals conservation (K1412) (above). This helped us to understand that these friezes may have sometimes formed longer panels rather than short, rectangular ones and it emphasises the need to examine all the foil fragments in case they may join together or fill the missing parts. We have started cleaning the



Some of the foil fragments in soil

foil fragments which are currently covered in soil. Some of these fragments were x-rayed to

give a preliminary idea of their shape and decoration.

Chris Fern spent two days at the British Museum, between the 10th and 13th of December, 2012, studying Hoard objects and which are currently covered in soil. Some of these fragments were x-rayed to give a preliminary idea of their shape and decoration. Also objects from the BM collections for comparison (kindly provided by Sue Brunning, curator of Anglo-Saxon antiquities). He spent time in both conservation and science sections, discussed particular objects with the specialists and raised a number of questions and requests.

Brian Alvey came to the BM on January 11th for an exchange of information with the Staffordshire Hoard Team and other specialists, including BM web database specialists Jonathan Whitson Cloud and Philip Fletcher.

It was good to meet Pieta Greaves, who visited the BM on 7th February and brought the Birmingham gold standards for analysis and comparison with the other two sets made for the project.

Finally, the BM hoard team were given access by The Portable Antiquities and Treasure Department to look at the latest batch of objects which is currently going through the Treasure evaluation process. It was very useful to see the newly found objects and particularly the foil fragments that are related to our work here .

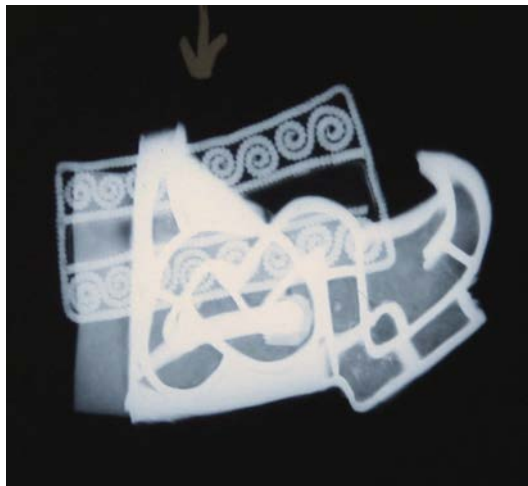


X-radiography at Lincoln

Work on the x-radiography continues to be undertaken in Lincoln where the second batch is being processed. This was interrupted by the new material that was found at the hoard site in November with x-radiography being undertaken

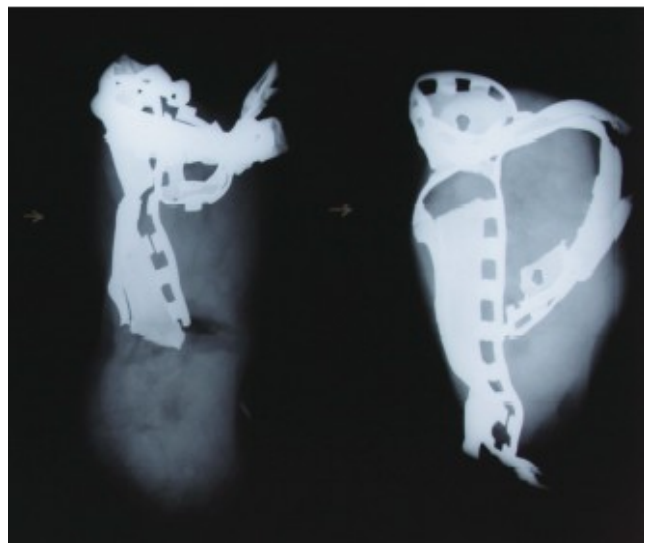
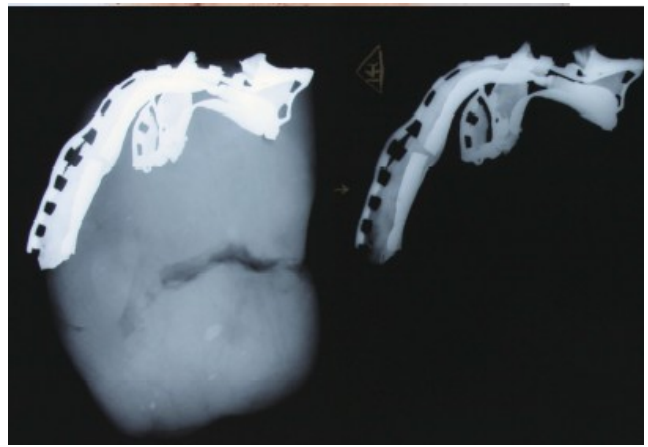
on the new finds prior to the inquest January 4. The 90 finds were processed according to the same methodology developed for the hoard and as described in the previous newsletter with similar results. For example:

Find 125 was shown to comprise two items stuck together which have since been given two different K numbers (**5009** and **5090**)



Find 125 (5009 and 5090)

Also the contents of the soil block (**Find 141**, below) were shown to consist of one crumpled piece:



Find 141: X-rays

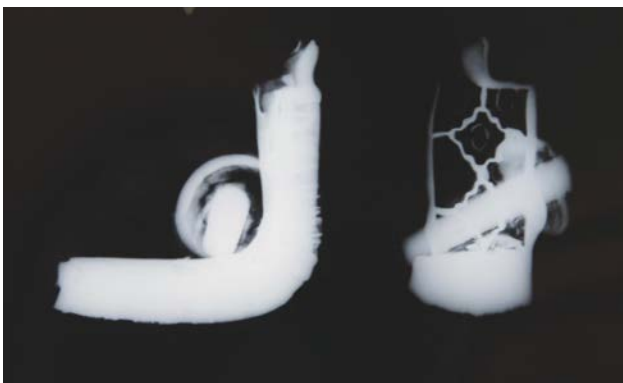
Work is now continuing on the second batch, with over 100 items having already been returned to Stoke and the remainder due to return at the end of March. Work will then commence on the third and final batch. Chris Fern continues to visit, to work on the objects while the x-rays are being produced, and similar information is being revealed in batch two as it was in batch one. For example:

Revealing details of design such as on **K807** (below)



K807

Clarification of groups of objects within soil such as **K323** (below) consisting of a curved garnet decorated strip and a rivet.



K323

And occasionally evidence of damage and deterioration as seen below on **K629**.



K629

Object of the Month:K457

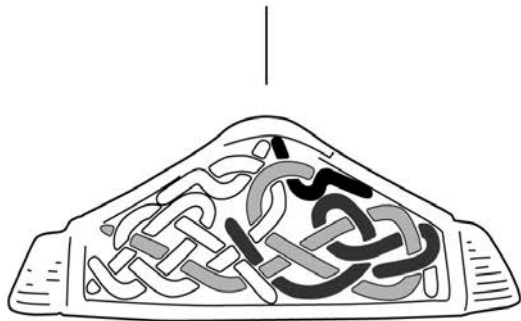
by Chris Fern

Pommel **K457** is one of around 50 gold examples with filigree decoration in the hoard (the most numerous type). It has animal-art (Style II) interlace on both its faces and shoulders. One side shows two back-to-back zoomorphs with characteristic angled head-surrounds, looped jaws and limbless, ribbon-like bodies. The other shows four serpents that interweave to form a central quatrefoil knot. The eyes of the serpents are formed from tiny granules of gold and the bodies of the zoomorphs/serpents from strands of beaded wire. The shoulders are also decorated with knotted serpents (not visible in the photo).

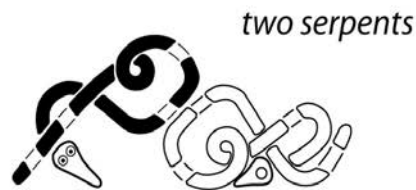
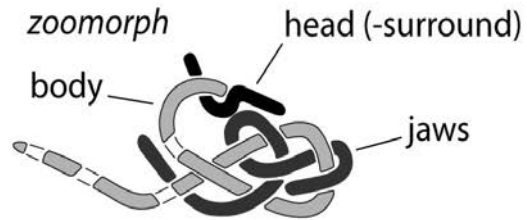
The pommel is one of the most heavily worn objects in the collection. Its gold filigree decoration has been flattened in places by repeat handling, although that close to the apex could represent damage caused by a tool (e.g. tongs), used to strip the pommel from its sword-hilt. A copper-alloy core remains in the interior of the sheet-gold cap, with a small fragment of the iron sword-tang also present.

It is very similar to a pommel found at Market Rasen, in 2002, in Lincolnshire (now in the British Museum), which also has a copper-alloy core in its interior and shows evidence of having been prised off its sword-hilt. Possibly they were products of the same workshop and suffered a similar fate — as battle trophies, maybe. The

K457



Market Rasen, Lincs



[photographs and drawings by Chris Fern]

animal art dates their manufacture to the later 6th century, or perhaps the early 7th century. Its wear and this date indicate pommel K457 was at least one generation old when buried — an ancestral

weapon — with decoration to match the writhe-hilted and serpent-marked (*wreopenhilt ond wrymfah*) swords described by the Beowulf poet!



HOARD SPOTTING....

A clarification from Hilary about the most unusual / silliest reference to the Hoard competition.

“I was somewhat surprised on 14th February whilst on a train journey to find a little filler in the *Times* headlined ‘Breathtaking Anglo-Saxon

hoard reveals a timely kiss? – you can see the press release at

<http://swns.com/news/anglo-saxon-gold-heart-shaped-eagle-trinket-staffordshire-hoard-31556/>

It concerned two birds touching beaks with a heart-shaped space below (aah) that had been cleaned as part of the first week of the

conservators working at PMAG. It was indeed silly. Well-done chaps. But I think we'll have to introduce a rule to the competition that says the silliness must come from people *outside* of the team. Otherwise, that way madness lies."

One of the perils of working as a freelance is that it is all too easy to drift into 'Webworld'. It does throw up a few strange things from time to time, as I have discovered.....

So, the Newsletter is proud to present:-

The Staffordshire Hoard....



Yes, folks it is a hamper! '*...named after Staffordshire's other famous treasure, this hamper contains some remarkable and tasty treats*'. I particularly like the sense of equivalence inherent in 'other'.

So, hats off for the most imaginative use of the Staffordshire Hoard name for a product that has no relevance whatsoever.

A second sighting is of the Staffordshire Hoard hair-slide.



Actually, I quite like this one but then I am the woman who has a pair of Anglo-Saxon interlaced-style earrings, so my taste is probably suspect. What a pity that the Anglo-Saxons didn't see the need for either (hair-slides and earrings that is, not earrings and taste) and Chris has had to restrict himself to sword parts, mounts and crosses!

Finally, there are a number of beers which nod in the direction of the Hoard, 'Staffordshire Gold' being one of them. The happy conjunction of beer and archaeology seems entirely appropriate and will come as no surprise to any of us.....