

FRIDAY FINDS

July 12, 2014 Rob Hedge Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2014, Finds, Medieval, Neolithic, Post Medieval, Public Archaeology Archaeology, Community Archaeologist, Finds Archaeologist, Worcestershire, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service, Worcestershire Young Archaeologists' Club

My name's **Rob Hedge**, and I work for **Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service**. Some of the time I'm a Community Archaeologist, helping the public find out about, and get involved in, the archaeology of their area. The rest of the time I'm a Finds Archaeologist – responsible for processing the finds that come in from our fieldwork, analysing them and writing assessments, and preparing them for archiving.



The finds processing room, shelves nicely filled with finds drying, awaiting marking and assessment

Today was one of my Finds days. I started off checking and logging the finds incoming from the field teams, and sorting out my correspondence, before moving on to reviewing and editing some recent assessments. A quarry site in Warwickshire has produced a pretty diverse range of finds, from beautiful Neolithic flint to medieval horseshoes, and a wide range of 17th/18th century pottery. Our senior project manager Derek Hurst suggested some edits to my report. With finds work, it's important to be able to consult with others and discuss ideas/interpretations, and I'm fortunate to be surrounded by a hugely experienced and knowledgeable finds team, to whom I'm frequently turning for help!



Neolithic flint knife from a Warwickshire quarry



Less glamorous, but still important: 18th century plate with a trailed-slip decoration and 'pie-crust' edges, from Worcestershire

Some of our Finds Volunteers were in today, doing a great job assisting me in processing, marking and sorting finds; they're vital to a lot of the important public aspects of our work. For example, last week a member of the public brought in a whole [box of beautiful medieval floor tiles](#), which were probably taken from a local Abbey post-dissolution. With no core funds available for projects like this, the time and efforts of our volunteers will hopefully enable us to preserve the assemblage and display it for all to see.

One of our large community excavations last year took place at [St Mary's Church, Kidderminster](#). I spent some time this morning packing a selection of the finds up for an exhibition on the results of the dig at Kidderminster Museum of Carpet tomorrow, including some [interesting pottery production waste](#) hinting at a short-lived and little-known Kidderminster industry.

The exciting discovery of prehistoric wood in a Staffordshire quarry was next on the list. It's rare that wood survives so long, but in waterlogged conditions it can remain beautifully preserved for thousands of years. These samples came from a pit, pre-dating a 'Burnt Mound' feature, so they're likely to be Bronze Age or earlier. Careful hand-removal of the encasing silt revealed cut marks and worked edges. With wood, it's important to keep it wet until analysis has been carried out, so the samples are placed in perforated bags, submerged in water and kept cool and dark.



Prehistoric wood from a pit underlying a burnt mound in a quarry in Staffordshire, with toolmarks visible at top left

Once the wood was safely packaged, I headed across town for a physiotherapy appointment. About six weeks ago I fractured my elbow in a cycling accident, and the healing process is long and frustratingly slow. I'm lucky to have a sympathetic employer, and plenty of non-site work to keep me busy in my current role, but debilitating injuries like this can be a big problem for archaeologists. A few years ago, as a site-based field archaeologist on short-term contracts, reliant on physical fitness and the ability to drive, I took out personal injury insurance to give me a bit of breathing space in the event of injury/illness. It costs, but I'd encourage any field archaeologist to do the same.

After physio, back to the office to sort out equipment for a [Worcestershire Young Archaeologists' Club](#) event. We'll be at [Croome](#) on Sunday for the CBA's [Festival of Archaeology](#), excavating some small trenches to locate the course of a trackway that once ran through the 'Home Shrubbery' to the splendid Rotunda, so Learning & Outreach Manager Paul Hudson and I spent some time gathering and checking the necessary equipment.

Lastly, I put a short piece up on our [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) pages – I try to post 'Friday Finds' each week, focusing on something I've been working on during the week. This week, I've been spoilt for choice, but decided on the prehistoric timbers; it's not every day you come across wood so perfectly preserved, and there's something special about being able to see ancient toolmarks. It's a tiny but evocative echo of an everyday task carried out hundreds of generations ago.