

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2017

INVESTIGATING LOST LANDSCAPES ACROSS THE EAST MIDLANDS

A YEAR IN PERSPECTIVE

2017 proved to be another landmark year in our continuing development as a historic landscape investigation team, with a number of firsts paving the way for some new and exciting projects in 2018.

In June we produced an A0 style poster featuring the history of the lost church of St Ethelburga. The poster has since been installed at St Andrews Church at Langar which is our very first permanent community installation.

We made our debut appearance at the annual Nottinghamshire History & Archaeology Festival at the University of Nottingham in July where we exhibited our findings from the St Ethelburga field surveys at Langar and the Romano-British site at Cropwell Butler. Both sets of displays showcased two landowner-held historic collections and presented us with the opportunity to introduce and explain our field survey methodology to a wider audience.

July was also the month where we were privileged to gain private access to the Goadby Marwood Romano-British collection at Barrow-Upon-Soar, thanks to the very kind and generous support of the Leicestershire Archaeological services, this was an important first step towards unravelling the historic mystery of a Romano-British site situated on the Belvoir ridge that could potentially lead us to learn more about the South Nottinghamshire and North Leicestershire farming and industrial landscape around 2000 years ago.

It's almost incredible to believe that 18 months ago there were only three members of the team and as 2017 drew to a close, the Field Detectives had grown to become a multi-disciplined landscape investigation group that can now provide a more diverse range of field survey and historic research activities.

Of course, without the continuing support, trust and generosity of the landowners, farmers, local community groups, parish councils and our historic sector colleagues, we wouldn't have access to the fields where we have been able to decipher and tell the stories through those lost coins and artefacts.



Hammered Silver Penny

John I of Brabant 1275-1285

found - Sewage Works field Cropwell Butler

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COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS IN 2017

- Poster & artefact display of the Cropwell Bishop & St Ethelburga studies at the University of Nottingham
- Poster & artefact display at the very last Harby Show
- Poster, artefact display & talk on St Ethelburga for the Keyworth Local History Society
- Poster Installation at St Andrews Church, Langar
- Poster, artefact display & talk on St Ethelburga for the Eastwell History Group

“We now have three artefacts dating to the 8th and 9th centuries”



Anglo-Saxon bronze strap end

Zoomorphic Design

c. 9th Century

Following on from our initial 35 acre field survey of 2016, we decided to set up our twenty by twenty metre field survey grid sections to cover the area to the immediate south of the St Ethelburga site, which is an area of land known as Shipman’s Yard in the hope that we could add a little more weight to the emerging Celtic/Romano-British story.

Interestingly, during a targeted field survey focusing on the footpath situated on the opposite side of the Stroom Dyke in 2016 (Limes Farm), we recovered a Saxon Pin Head dating to the 8th-9th century.

The sense of disappointment that could have emerged when further Iron Age evidence failed to materialise during the field survey, was quickly extinguished by the appearance of an Anglo-Saxon strap-end dating to the 9th century and a further Anglo-Saxon dress pin dating to the c.8th-9th centuries.

We now have three artefacts dating to the 8th and 9th centuries, providing three pieces of datable evidence that strongly suggests the presence of people frequenting this landscape during the Anglo/Scandinavian period.

Their story remains a mystery; even though we know they were here at that time we do not know what they were doing here and why.

The questions are building: Were they farmers, were they visiting a sacred place, did they live here or nearby, was this a trackway, was this a meeting place?

The Field Detectives have once again set out to search for answers and returned with more questions, which means that, if we want to add a few more chapters to this unknown story, then further metal detecting and field walking surveys on the 35 Acre Field and neighbouring fields will undoubtedly provide more extremely valuable clues that will greatly enhance our understanding of the St Ethelburga site and its relationship to the wider landscape.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF MEDIEVAL ENGLAND AND WALES

2014

John Steane

There is now growing evidence from field work done in different parts of the country that Parish Boundaries may perpetuate estate divisions which go back into the Roman period or even into the pre-Roman Iron Age

Anglo-Saxon Pin Bronze Polyhedral Dress Pin

Decorated with Ring & Dot Motifs

c.AD 750-850

During the 8th century the use of pins for fastening women’s clothing became widespread. Smaller lightweight pins in bronze or silver were most likely used for pinning veils or other forms of head coverings. The heavier pins would have been used for pinning dresses or cloaks.



ARROW HEAD FIELD SURVEY AT EASTWELL

The initial survey at Hall Farm, Langar, in 2016 to investigate a field that once featured the church of St Ethelburga, produced a significant find that prompted a series of questions in regard to the historical chronology of the site.

The Hall Farm Corieltauvi Gold Stater (c.45-10 BC) found in 2016, provided evidence to suggest that the field church was built on foundations rooted in a much earlier time, a period in history that remains shrouded in a lost landscape of farmsteads, trackways, villa's, industrial sites, market and administration centres.

Further research has revealed that a roman road/trackway possibly linked Margidunum (Bingham/Fosse way) to the ironstone mining operation at Goadby Marwood. If so, then it must surely have been part of a wider communication and transport network.

During the post 35 Acre Field survey discussion at Hall Farm, John Parker suggested that we take a look at a field located on Harby Hill, as a gentleman by the name of Alan Massey from Loughborough used to visit it for many years to collect flint arrow heads. John felt that this could be an opportunity to learn more about those earlier beginnings.

Incredibly, we managed to locate Dr Alan Massey and his wife Sylvia and they were able to tell us about their Neolithic findings up on Harby Hill, along with their knowledge in regard to Neolithic and Romano-British findings from around the Goadby Marwood area. Alan and Sylvia went on to volunteer their services in support of the Arrow Hill survey and the flint finds we recovered during the survey continue to add further evidence indicating a significant Neolithic presence on the field stretching back many thousands of years.

The limited number of metallic artefacts recovered from the field dating from the bronze age right through to the modern day presents a peculiar puzzle, especially in light of the fields close proximity to the Romano-British settlement at Goadby Marwood, so further field survey activities on the neighbouring fields can help us to better understand the possible reasons for this. We did manage to capture those earlier beginnings and yes, this is just one more little piece in a giant uncharted landscape jigsaw.

“a significant find that prompted a series of questions”

DR ALAN MASSEY

The Field Detectives spent a few weekends field-walking searching for Stone Age flint artefacts under the direction of Dr Alan Massey. The field is one that Alan identified over 20 years ago as being important to Mesolithic (around 10,000 to 6,000 years ago) ‘hunter-gatherers’ and Neolithic (around 6,000 to 4,000 years ago) ‘farmers’. Perhaps the occurrence of flint as a raw material and a high, defensible location on a ridge in an extensively wooded Mesolithic landscape were the attractions; together with an abundance of animals to hunt such as red deer, roe deer and wild boar. As extensive forest clearance progressed through the Neolithic and new opportunities arose in other locations, it appears that the descendants of these people moved on. However, the evidence of their occupation can still be found today.



Jill holding the Flint ‘Laurel-Leaf’ point typical of the Early Neolithic period. They are relatively unusual finds and date to c.3500-2900 BC

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Alan & Sylvia Massey
Prehistory Consultants &
Witch Bottle Experts

WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

The Field Detectives seek opportunities to survey fields that can tell us more about how our farming landscapes evolved

By sharing the stories that we uncover from our field survey activities we hope to inform a better understanding of how our farming landscapes evolved over the centuries.

Share the Learning and record the information for current and future historical research

On completion of the field survey activities, a field survey report is produced. One copy is presented to the landowner, and a further copy is sent to the relevant County Historic Environment Record where it is allocated a unique reference number and then a copy is sent on to the relevant Finds Liaison Officer to ensure that all related findings are uploaded on to the National Portable Antiquity Scheme Database. Once the field survey reports have been processed, the artefacts, coins and pottery are assembled as a Landowner Collection where they are safeguarded for further research and study, a community presentation is arranged where the information is shared and an opportunity is provided for the local community to get involved in future developments.

By submitting the completed Field Survey Reports to the County Historic Environment Record and by working closely with the Finds Liaison Officer and the British Museum et al, we are providing a growing set of historic collections which are held by the respective landowners who act as custodians for the benefit of current and future educational research.

PDF copies of our reports and posters can be sent out electronically

email: fielddetectives@talktalk.net

HELP US - TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR HISTORIC FARMING LANDSCAPES

If you are interested to find out more about our field survey activities, please contact us and we will be more than happy to come out to see you.

We are always on the lookout for opportunities to tell the story of a field so that it can help us to learn more about how our modern day farming landscapes evolved over the centuries.