

STAFFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

LECTURES for SEASON 2017-2018

29th September 2017

Nigel Coulton

As the Bishop said to the Nun...

The Bishop is Roger Northburgh, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield for well over thirty years in the fourteenth century including the years scarred by the catastrophe of the Black Death. The Nuns are those who lived in the Nunneries of the diocese to whom he paid official visits after which he sent a report back to them. I will be talking about these reports and the picture they allow us to see of the state of the Nunneries.

Nigel read Classics at Oxford long ago, but more relevantly for the last twenty years taught Latin to various groups and individuals, including post grad. medieval historians at Keele. Nigel also teaches palaeography to members of the Ranulph Higden Society. This all began by coming across the Borough Minutes of Newcastle under Lyme, which he transcribed and/or translated from the 14th century onwards. I further transcribed and translated the Quarter Sessions records of the Borough from the Restoration on. My main palaeographic task, however, has been the transcription and calendaring of the vast Correspondence Register of Roger Northburgh, which I have virtually finished.

6th October 2017

Teresa Gilmore

The LeekFrith Torcs

Four Iron Age gold torcs were discovered in a field by metal detectorists during December 2016 at Leekfrith, North Staffordshire. The find consists of three neck torcs and a bracelet. They were located in close proximity to each other and are believed to be the oldest Iron Age gold jewellery found in Britain.

Teresa Gilmore is the Finds Liaison Officer (East Staffordshire and North West Midlands) for the Portable Antiquities Scheme/ Birmingham Museum Trust.

27th October 2017

Grahame Appleby

NOTE: THIS TALK IS A 7.30pm START

Must Farm, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire.

It is described as the Pompeii of Britain. No need to say any more.

Grahame Appleby is now working with Leicester City Council as City Archaeologist having previously been Archaeologist at Must Farm project and has many years experience.

10th November 2017

Mike Shaw

Medieval Town Planning

Mike Shaw is an independent Archaeologist having previously been the Black Country Archaeologist at Wolverhampton City Council and Historic Towns Project Officer at Cheshire County Council.

His talk tonight using examples from the Midlands and Cheshire explores the origins, growth and topography of medieval towns by utilising modern technology.

24th November 2017

Dr Samantha Paul

Mapping the Value of Archaeological Archives in Museums

It is widely believed that the archives that result from commercial archaeological interventions are important heritage assets, though there is little in the way of research to support this assumption. Professional archaeologists focus on the storage crisis, the potential loss of important material and the cost of curation, rather than what value these archives actually hold in the present and for the future despite the fact that this has direct relevance in terms of policies relating to acquisition and discard. While archaeologists debate these issues, they are not the ultimate custodians of this material and often those that are (namely museums) have no say in what we expect them to be responsible for.

As a direct result of the current space crisis within museums, not only the value but also the very existence of these archives is being questioned by the institutions which hold them. One published view is that 'archaeological archives are not worth the space and time they take up within museum stores'. Current projects within museums aim to address the issue through the reduction of the archaeological archives that they hold. The varied approaches to these reviews have led to a situation where certain elements of the archive are 'legitimised' by being accessioned into the museum's collections while other aspects are effectively thrown away. But how are these decisions being made and what are the implications on how archaeological archives are created in the future?

15th December 2017

The Annual General Meeting followed by

Stephen Dean

Staffordshire Update

Stephen is Staffordshire County Archaeologist and is tonight presenting an over view of the Archaeological Works that have been undertaken either directly by the County or as a result of planning conditions placed on development sites during the past year or so. Also an update on Cannock Chase Historical Environment Group will be included the overall roundup.

23rd February 2018

Speaker yet to be confirmed

Talk topic yet to be confirmed

9th March 2018

Andrew Fitzpatrick

In the footsteps of Caesar: The Archaeology of the First Roman Invasions of Britain

Andrew is a specialist in later prehistory joining Leicester University as Postdoctoral Research Associate in 2014 to lead

the new Leverhulme funded research project which is the subject of the talk tonight. Andrew was previously at Wessex Archaeology.

23rd March 2018

Dr Keith Ray MBE

Dorstone Hill, Herefordshire: A Neolithic Landscape

The talk will focus upon the range of remarkable discoveries made across now seven seasons of excavation at the site from 2011. These include evidence for three of the earliest timber and daub aisled halls known from Britain, dating from around 3850-3800BC, with possibly also the earliest evidence for structural carpentry. A deep mortuary chamber has also been investigated, sited between two of the mounds; this was later covered by a mound, with a major human cremation pyre deposit subsequently laid along its ditch. The halls were burned down deliberately, and their remains were made to form the foundation for long earthen mounds; two of these mounds were stone-fronted and capped before all four mounds in a row were encased in a massive stone façade. This remarkable complex was then revisited and commemorative acts performed at it up to 600 years later. Meanwhile a causewayed enclosure was built on the hillside above the mounds, to enclose within its circuit of segmented banks and ditches a fourth mound, surviving intact today (but so far unexamined). The 'causewayed camp' is the principal target for excavation in 2017.

Keith Ray: began his archaeological career 47 years ago excavating at a massive Neolithic henge site near Dorchester in Dorset. Since then, he studied archaeology to postdoctoral level at the University of Cambridge, lectured in archaeology at the University of Nigeria, and spent more than 25 years in conservation archaeology in Britain, working for universities and local government in Scotland, Wales, Oxfordshire, Plymouth and Herefordshire, where he was County Archaeologist from 1998 to 2014. He was awarded an MBE for services to archaeology and local government in Herefordshire in 2007. Currently a freelance heritage consultant, he also writes and edits books on archaeology and is Honorary Secretary for the Herefordshire Victoria County History. He is author of the books *The Archaeology of Herefordshire: An Exploration* (Logaston Press, 2015); lead author of *Offa's Dyke: Landscape and Hegemony in Eighth-Century Britain* (Windgather Press, 2016); and co-author of *Neolithic Britain:*

The Transformation of Social Worlds (Oxford University Press, forthcoming – 2018).

6th April 2018

Speaker yet to be confirmed

Talk topic yet to be confirmed

20th April 2018

Gavin Speed

Bronze Age Barrow and Anglo Saxon Cemetery at Rothley, Leicestershire

Dr Gavin Speed is a Project Officer at University of Leicester Archaeological Unit (ULAS), he has over 15 years archaeological experience, having excavated on a range of archaeological projects both in the UK and abroad, he has particular expertise in Iron Age settlements, and Late Roman / early Anglo-Saxon archaeology.

Gavin spent the early part of 2016 investigating the site at Rothley being the subject of the talk tonight, in advance of residential development.

4th May 2018

Dr Rob Ixer

NOTE: THIS TALK IS A 7.30pm START

Stonehenge and the Blue Stones

The precise number, identity, geological provenance and prehistorical significance of the various Stonehenge bluestones have been, and will always remain, contentious. Petrographical and geochemical re-examination of lithic assemblages collected during the last century, plus examination of all those from 21st century excavations, found within Stonehenge and its immediate environs (over 7000 samples) combined with dedicated, geological, *in situ* collecting has allowed a greater qualification and quantification of the rock types, demonstrated their relative archaeological 'importance' and suggested some of their possible origins. These data have shown that many earlier provenancing studies are incorrect whilst also uncovering cryptic questions including:

- Why are some orthostats not represented in the abundant and spatially quite uniform Stonehenge 'debitage' ---and *vice versa*?
- Why are the geological origins of the non-dolerite bluestone so diverse and often from 'insignificant' outcrops for example the small outcrop of Craig Rhos-y-felin?

Can finding the geographical origin of the bluestones give us the transport route?

We shall never know why Stonehenge was built and rebuilt but might discover from whence.

Dr Rob Ixer FSA

Dr Rob Ixer was an economic geologist for 40 years before returning to archaeology. His interests are concentrated on early copper and bronze mining especially within the British Isles, Neolithic to Iron Age ceramics in Europe, Inka and Pre-Inka ceramics in the Andes and the geographical origin of almost any prehistoric lithic including all things Stonehenge.