



The Institute for Archaeologists

**Finds Group Newsletter
Spring 2013**

Welcome to the latest edition of the Finds Group Newsletter. Apologies for the lateness in sending it out. I hope you find something of interest. There is the usual mix of training/CPD, finds news and publications. We have a paper on medieval flowerpots from an archaeological student which forms part of an assessment she was asked to write following an archaeological dig in Trellech, Wales. The student has been encouraged by the site director to have the work published, and if anyone has any advice for her, please email me and I will pass the comments on.

As ever, if you wish to comment on any issue in this Newsletter, or have suitable material for publication in the Autumn 2013 edition, please get in touch. My contact details are on the back page. Stephen Brunning - Editor.

Sussex School of Archaeology Saturday 'Finds' Day Schools 2013, 10-4pm

Flint knapping; Saturday 8 June; Tutor: Paul Saddleton; Venue: Bentley Woods, near Ringmer, Sussex.

Making prehistoric toolkits; Saturday 22 June; Tutor: Paul Saddleton; Venue: Bentley Woods, near Ringmer, Sussex.

Conservation in the field; Saturday 20 July; Tutor: Chris Cleere; Venue: Isfield, Sussex.

Finds recording and management; Saturday 17 August; Tutor: Luke Barber; Venue: Isfield, Sussex.

Iron Age and Roman Coins, Saturday 7 September. Tutor: David Rudling. Venue: The Bridge Community Centre, Brighton, Sussex.

Finds Illustration; Saturday 19 October; Tutor: Jane Russell; Venue: Linklater Pavillion, Lewes, Sussex.

For further details of these and other day schools and short courses please contact: The Sussex School of Archaeology: Tel. 01323 811785; <http://www.sussex.archaeology.co.uk/>

SANHS Training Course

Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society and the Wells & Mendip Museum are jointly organising a 6 day training course "Making Sense of Pottery" -An introduction to pottery from archaeological fieldwork and excavations: how to process, describe, interpret, attribute and date pottery led by David Dawson. The course will take place on Saturdays from 7 September at the Museum in Wells BA5 2UE. Places limited and bookable through the SANHS website www.sanhs.org or office from 1 July; cost about £85.

The Forgotten Past: post-medieval small finds and their contribution to our understanding of the past.

A Portable Antiquities Scheme and Finds Research Group Conference

Stevenson Lecture Theatre, British Museum

Monday 21 October 2013

10am-5pm

Once given little consideration by most archaeologists, post-medieval material was the 'stuff machined through' to get to the 'interesting layers' below. However, thanks to changing attitudes amongst archaeologists and also a growing dataset of finds recovered by metal-detectorists and others now being recorded with the Portable Antiquities Scheme, there is increasing awareness of the importance of post-medieval finds for understanding the past. It is this interest, and research into such finds, that will be highlighted at this conference.

People giving papers at this conference have been asked to consider the following questions while highlighting their research. Why record post-medieval material, and are there aspects that can be disregarded or selectively studied? What types were once thought of rare, but are now considered quite common, and does that change how we feel about what we record? What have we discovered that is new, and does this help with future research agendas?

Post-medieval finds have greater potential to link objects to specific people or occasions, so does that make certain objects more interesting or important? How does the recording of post-medieval finds advance research?

Speakers include: Gary Bankhead, Laura Burnett, Stuart Campbell, Helen Geake, Kevin Leahy, Michael Lewis, Brian Read, Ian Richardson.

The cost of the conference is £10 for members of the FRG and £15 for non-members. To book a place please send a cheque made payable to 'The British Museum' to Janina Parol, Department of Portable Antiquities & Treasure, British Museum, London, WC1B 3DG. Tel: 020 7323 8546. Email: parol@britishmuseum.org.

Horses' Heads on the Bone Fire. By Roy and Lesley Adkins.

In the Autumn 2012 Newsletter we asked if anyone had an idea what the significance might be of the expression to 'drag an old horse's head to a bonfire'. No one was able to help, and so we had another look at the 1817 newspaper report where it came from and noticed that the person who had made the statement was reported as 'an Irish Gentleman'. We started researching Irish folklore and eventually came across this account in William Hone's *The Every-Day Book and Table Book* (volume II, 1830, p.596):

'On the first day of May, in Dublin and its vicinity, it is customary for young men and boys to go a few miles out of town in the morning, for the purpose of cutting a May-bush. This is generally a white thorn, of about four or five feet high, and they carry it to the street or place of their residence, in the centre of which they dig a hole, and having planted the bush, they go round to every house and collect money. They then buy a pound or more of candles, and fasten them to various parts of the tree or bush, in such a manner so as to avoid burning it. Another portion of "the collection" is expended in the purchase of a heap

of turf, sufficient for a large fire, and, if the funds will allow, an old tar barrel. Formerly it was not considered complete without having a horse's skull and other bones to burn in the fire. The depots for these bones were the tanners' yards in a part of the suburbs, called Kilmainham; and on May morning, groups of boys drag loads of bones to their several destinations. This practice gave rise to a threat, yet made use of: - "I will drag you like a horse's head to the bone-fire." About dusk when no more money can be collected, the bush is trimmed, the turf and bones are made ready to set on fire, the candles are all lighted, the bush fully illuminated, and the boys giving three huzzas, begin to dance and jump round it. If their money will afford the expenditure, they have a pot of porter to drink round. After an hour or so, the heap of turf and bones are set fire to, and when the candles are burnt out, the bush is taken up and thrown into the flames. They continue playing about until the fire is burnt out: each then returns to his home; and so ends their May-day.'

Did this ritual spread elsewhere? And should we be re-examining burnt horses' bones? With hindsight we may have received more response from Newsletter readers if we had provided the whole of the rather lengthy newspaper report that carried the expression, rather than leaving out much of the context. Perhaps the lesson here is that in history, as in archaeology, context is everything!

Why is Trellech the only site in Wales to have medieval flowerpot?

By Kathryn Ward.

Excavations at Trellech have been taking place since 2004. The main objective of the excavation was to find the lost medieval village of Trellech and was led by various organisations including the University of Cardiff and Newport before ending up with the Monmouth Archaeological Society leading the current excavations. The lost city was found but in the courtyard of the manor house a flower pot was found. It was this piece of pottery that was dated late medieval or early post medieval by Steve Clark who came up to site and identified the flowerpot. This means that Trellech is the only site in Wales to have found a piece of medieval flowerpot and is one of the few sites in both Wales and England to have found medieval flowerpots. This shows how rare the flowerpots were and that they were made at certain centres in England like East Yorkshire and possibly Wales although none have been found.

The flowerpot at the site in Trellech was found in a stony slag context below the rubble in the courtyard of the manor house as shown in the two photographs below. The rubble is thought to have occurred as a result of the rear of the building being abandoned at the same time the main hall ceased to be used as a dwelling and it got turned into a metal working site. (Wilson, 2012, 1) This happened about 1500 which is about late medieval. The stone slag surface is on top of another solid slag surface which is certainly medieval but was there before the courtyard and the manor house was there. Apart from the pottery that suggests it to be a manor house, Stuart Wilson (2012, 1) the site director, believes that the manor house building is most likely to do with the administration of the town as it is an important building. The flowerpots were used for displaying plants and were used and moved to a particular area of the garden when in full flower (Landsberg, 2003, 99).



Figure 1 Context of where the flowerpot was found. Picture taken by author 2012.



Figure 2 Close up of the context where the flowerpot was found. Taken by Author 2012.

There has been one other site in England so far that medieval flowerpots have been found on in East Yorkshire. There were four flowerpots in total that were found in Yorkshire, of which the majority of the sites tend to be a monastic site with just one royal manor – Cowick Canter and one production centre which is at Cowick and it is shown in figure three (Moorhouse, 1991, 104). So far no other production centres of medieval flowerpots have been found in the United Kingdom. This could be due to the fact that none have been found on an archaeological dig since the ones in East Yorkshire. But there is or that they might be in the South Coast area or even in London.

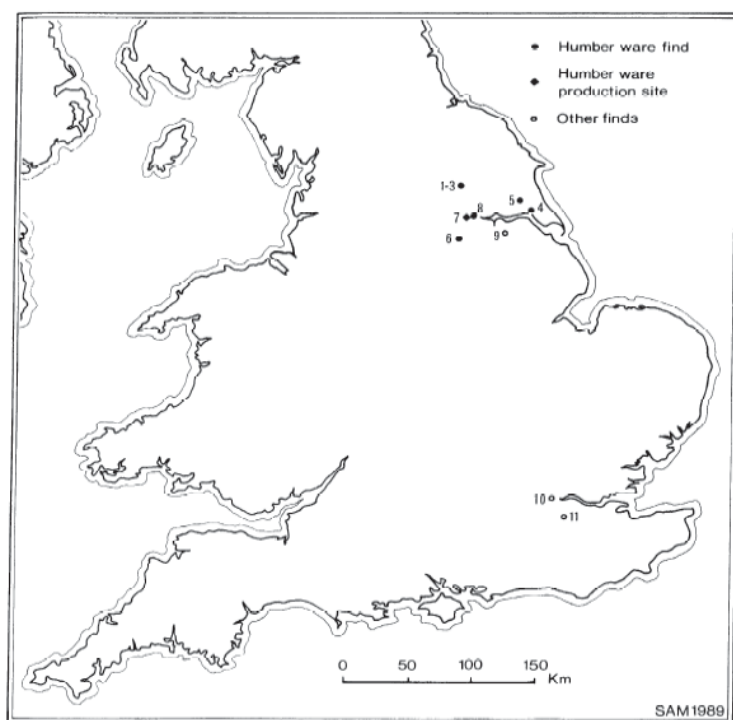


Figure 3.

Since the majority of the flowerpots have been found in East Yorkshire, it can be assumed that there must have been a trade link going on with Trellech and the De Clares that owned the manor house as there has only been this one flowerpot that has been found. This also could be due to the fact that the owners wanted to state how wealthy they were as they founded Trellech to be iron works. The flowerpots that were found at York were mostly likely used for ornamental plants (Moorhouse, 1984, 199). Ornamental plants would be anything that was not herbs herbaceous plants native to England. This is because there were two types of gardens Ornamental gardens and herb gardens.

The flowerpots in East Yorkshire are not the only ones to have been found. There is one that has been found in Northern Lincolnshire in a mid-fourteenth century deposit. This flowerpot is essentially a large bowl with straight sloping sides, flat base, and a basket handle with face terminals on the rim (Moorhouse, 1984, 201). This shows that there are some medieval flowerpots in existence even though "they were in common use" (Moorhouse, 1991, 101.) All that this shows is that there are flowerpots in the rest of England but because they are such a rare item and not many people know about them. They often go undetected as flowerpots even though documentary sources claim that they are available for use the archaeological sources claim that they are not (Moorhouse, 1991, 101).

The flowerpot at Trellech seems to have a decoration on it. The decoration consists and involves some birds flying around at the top of the flowerpot while on both the sides there seems to be images that resembles plant stems. This could be to make the flowerpot seem more impressive and to make a bold statement about who lives there. Unfortunately we do not have the bottom of the flowerpot yet so we are unable to see what the bottom looks like but it could be plain along with some decoration on the side. This flowerpot has been estimated by Steve Clark who is the pottery expert in South Wales and has dated the flowerpot to be around the late medieval or the early post medieval period so from around 1400 to 1600AD.



Figure 3 remainder of the flowerpot from Trellech. Photo taken by author 2012

My interpretation of the flowerpot found at Trellech is that it would have been a wealthy site and that it was on a trade link with another place maybe Yorkshire in England. This is because there is a manor house at Trellech and it is mainly seen as a wealthy place to live especially in a medieval village. Since there is one flowerpot found at the site there is possibly more than one flowerpot still in context that has yet to be discovered. It is only by finding the other flowerpots that we can see what the pattern is and if possible see if they can be matched to the flowerpots found in East Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire. This is based on the evidence found in East Yorkshire where there was a production centre. There is not a production centre near to Trellech that I am aware of, but this might not have stopped the De Clares, who were a powerful merchant family from Gloucester, (Aslet, 2000, 511) from buying in the flowerpots. The manor house belonged to a wealthy family; there would enough space to have flowerpots on the windowsill or even in an area of the garden. There is no evidence yet for there to be a garden near the manor house at Trellech unless it is now underneath the road. Another possibility is that there is no evidence of the garden remaining or that we are not digging in the right place in the field to find the garden.

Also by having the flowerpot found on site it proves that as well as medieval houses being there, there was some space to be able to grow some plants or herbs on the windowsills as there were 378 burgages or medieval houses in 1244. But there were only 44 that were vacant in 1349. Forty years later after the second plague struck they were still empty (Aslet, 2000, 511). This shows that once the village got into decline that there was no use in having a manor house as people did not want to live there anymore. Consequently all the wealth of the settlement went with the last De Clare who got killed in battle in the 1300s. (Aslet, 2000, 511). This was due to nobody being in charged to manage the iron production which was the main factor in bringing the wealth into the settlement. This shows how influential a family can be on a small area in Wales that is in the middle of nowhere. Even since then the towns of Cardiff and Newport became more important and overtook the village of Trellech and became influential even to this day. Today Trellech is just a little village with not much happening as Trellech is mostly overlooked and unheard of.

The flowerpots at Trellech are a significant find. This is because they are the only flowerpot found in Wales and possibly in the East of England. There are various reasons why flowerpots haven't been found elsewhere in Wales. This is because there hasn't been any other significant medieval settlements found in Wales or there haven't been any wealthy people associated with the settlement. This doesn't seem likely as at the same time in

Southern Wales, Cardiff and Newport were beginning as towns and were a rival to Trellech even though they were owned by the same family – the De Clares. There were various other wealthy families in Wales who were known as the da Brose in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Walker, 1990, 51). What could have also happened is that the pieces of pottery have been misidentified as the finds officer could have just labelled the flowerpot as a piece of pottery.

References:

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- Moorhouse, S.A. 1984. Late Medieval Pottery Plant Holders from Eastern Yorkshire. *Medieval Archaeology – Journal of the society for medieval archaeology*. 28. 194- 202.
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Launch of the Later Prehistoric Finds Group

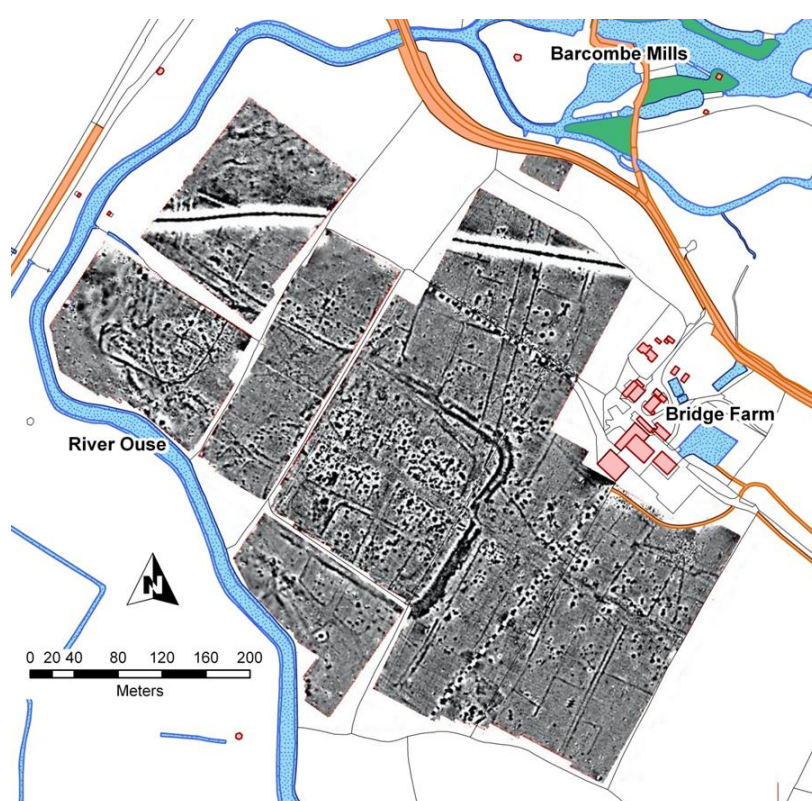
The Later Prehistoric Finds Group is a new organisation for all those who are interested in the material culture of later prehistory, with a principle focus on the British Bronze and Iron Ages. The idea for the group emerged out of a conference that was held at the University of Leicester in October 2012, the European Iron Age Artefacts Symposium: it was felt that a lot of exciting research is currently being carried out on prehistoric portable artefacts, and that it would be really helpful if those who are interested could find a way to meet regularly and share information and ideas.

The group's first meeting was held at the British Museum in April 2013, and a second meeting is planned for autumn or winter of this year. We hope that this will be an interactive event, with a mix of discussion, short papers and some group activity such as artefact handling, or a gallery tour. The group and its meetings are open to all – although we are still in the early stages, please keep an eye on our website (<https://sites.google.com/site/lateprehistoricfindsgroup/home>) and our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Later-Prehistoric-Finds-Group/512956972097132?fref=ts) for updates. Our first newsletter will be published over the summer – if you would like to be sent it, free of charge, please e-mail us at LaterPrehistoricFindsGroup@gmail.com. And of course, if you are interested in coming along to the next meeting or would like to get involved in the group in any way, then please just get in touch!

Culver announces exciting New Discoveries and Substantial Funding at Bridge Farm Roman Settlement. By David Millum. AIfA, MA.

During early 2011 David Staveley conducted a magnetometer survey in a large field at Bridge Farm, Wellingham, Nr Lewes (TQ43301440) on behalf of the Culver Archaeological Project (CAP). He was looking for the Roman London to Lewes road that Ivan Margary had suggested ran down the east side of the Ouse at this point (Margary 1948, p.150-1). The

initial results were so outstanding and unexpected that the survey was extended over the next 2 years as a clear picture of a substantial Roman settlement in a bend of the River Ouse emerged from the geophysical images. The location is just across the river from Culver Farm where a Roman road and industrial workings have been discovered just to the north east of the Barcombe villa and bathhouse complex. The settlement pattern is apparently interrupted by a double ditched enclosure suggesting more than one phase of activity on the site. In the magnetometer images the enclosure appears to overlay the settlement but the chronology was not conclusive and the CAP directors, Rob Wallace and David Millum (both USAS committee members), agreed that this was one of the main questions to be resolved when planning the subsequent excavations for July and August 2013. The later surveys revealed radiating roads heading to the north, east and west, with smaller trackways and boundaries indicated by ditches in the area surrounding the main settlement (Fig.1).



Ordnance Survey data supplied by the EDINA digimap service. Crown copyright/database 2010. All right reserved

Fig.1. Geophysical survey results (D. Staveley 2012)

The interpretation of the buried features as Roman was supported by the Roman pottery and tile collected by systematic field walking in early 2011 when CAP volunteers were joined by members of BHAS, LAG and USAS. Then in late 2012 David Cunningham, a local metal detectorist who had collected an assemblage of finds from the site over several years, was introduced to CAP by Robin Hodgkinson of the Independent Historical Research Group. This extensive collection ratified the longevity of the settlement as it included various coins from the Republican era right through to Gratian in the late 4th century AD (Fig.2). Whilst it is

likely that the worn nature of these republican coins indicate use in the 1st to 2nd century AD rather than when they were minted, the coin sequence still indicates a 300 year time span (David Rudling pers. comm.). In early December 2012 CAP organised a thorough and systematic metal detecting survey by the Eastbourne, West Kent and Ringmer groups, who found a further 17 Roman coins mainly dating from the 3rd century AD. Over the next few months the full results of this survey and Mr Cunningham's collection will be scrutinised and fully recorded.



Fig.2. A small selection of the detected Roman coins: *a*] Titia 1 (Q. Titius) denarius, c.90 BC; *b*] Aemilia 8 (M. Aemilius Scaurus and Pub. Plautius Hypsaeus) denarius, c.58 BC; *c*] Galba denarius AD 68/9; *d*] Trajan denarius c.AD 114-7; *e*] Julia Maesa (died AD 225) denarius; *f*] Gratian siliqua AD375-8 (mint of Thessalonica, Greece).

Further exciting news was received in October when the project was awarded a substantial grant of £90,900 from the Heritage Lottery Fund which has enabled a comprehensive programme of surveys and excavations to be planned for 2013, with a strong focus on the involvement of the local community including nearby schools. The main excavation has been set for a six week period from 1st July to 10th August 2013, to be open seven days a week to encourage the widest possible participation. Participation in the fieldwork is free with camp site with shower and toilet facilities being offered at £50 for Monday to Friday and £20 for Friday-Sunday. Further details will be posted on the project's website, www.culverproject.co.uk.

Acknowledgements: David Staveley for the use of his magnetometer survey image and for his expertise and perseverance over many months of data collection; David Cunningham for access to his artefact collection; David Rudling for his identification and dating of the coins; and to Mark Stroude for allowing CAP continued access to his land.

References: Margary, I. 1948. *Roman Ways in the Weald*. London, Phoenix House.

Excavations at Rainford. By Samantha Rowe.

The Merseyside Archaeological Society and National Museums Liverpool carried out a community excavation on Church Road in Rainford near St Helens, Merseyside, in April 2013. The site came to light when the landowner uncovered an almost complete 17th century 'tyg' drinking vessel in the garden. The excavation was carried out over a number of days with the help of local volunteers.

The excavation uncovered a sealed deposit of late 16th century pottery material dumped from a local kiln site. The assemblage contained profiles of a number of early post medieval dark-glazed fine wares, as well as table wares and a considerable amount of kiln furniture. This assemblage represents the earliest ceramic material to be discovered in Rainford village and is one of the earliest pottery kiln assemblages from the North West region: a truly amazing discovery.

Rainford village is known to have been at the heart of a thriving ceramics cottage industry throughout the 17th-20th centuries, being a famous producer of clay tobacco pipes from the 1620s onwards. Little material was available previously in helping to understand how far back pottery was being produced in the village, but this site has revealed that pottery was being made in the village earlier than previously indicated. It has also shed light on the range of products being produced and how they were being made.

The assemblage is comparable to other 'Cistercian' kiln group sites including Wrenthorpe in Yorkshire, and Ticknall in Derbyshire, and has similarities to material found at Eccleston Hall, Merseyside, and Norton Priory, Cheshire. The material is currently being processed by curators and volunteers at the Museum of Liverpool, and a report on the findings will be produced in the near future.

This excavation forms part of the Rainford's Roots community archaeology project: a Heritage Lottery Funded project which endeavours to explore and learn more about the industrial heritage of Rainford village, whilst providing opportunities for local people and volunteers to become involved in the archaeological process.



Group of early post medieval dark-glazed fine wares from Rainford



Sample of early post medieval dark-glazed fine wares from Rainford

For more information visit the project website: www.rainfordsroots.com

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New publication from Museum of London Archaeology.



Series: Monograph Series 63

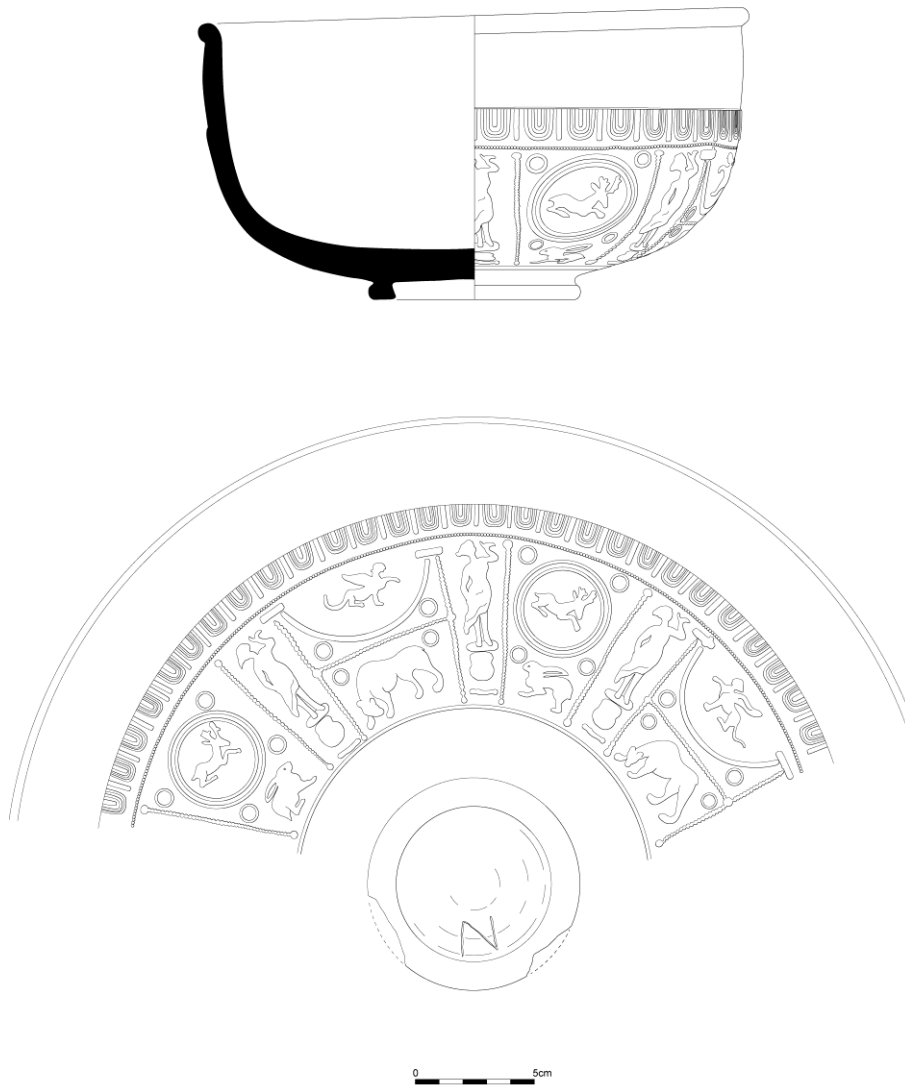
Published by: MOLA 2012. ISBN 978-1-907586-14-9. Hb 361pp + CD-ROM. 187 bl/wh and col
ills.

If you would like any further information or are interested in receiving a copy of this title in order to review it in your publication please contact Karen Thomas on 020 7410 2228, email kthomas@mola.org.uk, or follow the email link to book reviews above.

And finally.....

...the only complete (?) Samian Bowl from Scotland. It's a Dr 38 dated to about AD140 Found in Glasgow Green, north of Kings Drive and by the gymnasium in 1876 while digging for new pipe trenches.

Samian Bowl, Glasgow Green



Thomas Small

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