



**Jigsaw Cambridgeshire  
Newsletter - No. 7  
November 2015**



## NEWS

### Fen Spitfire

In August, Jo worked with metal detectorists from four Huntingdonshire Jigsaw groups to help the Great Fen Archaeology Group work on this project. All these Jigsaw volunteers worked alongside Peter Masters from Cranfield University as he carried out the total geophysical survey. The detectorists found 124 fragments of the Spitfire, and the distribution pattern of these enabled Peter to confirm the exact position of the crash site.

During the excavation in October, these volunteers detected spoil spread thinly by machine, and retrieved hundreds of small pieces of the plane. Several volunteers worked closely with members of Operation Nightingale in the finds processing tent, cleaning and identifying some important pieces of the wreckage. They met this sensitive challenge with a dedicated and professional approach, and an HLF visitor to the site commented on the beneficial interaction between projects.

Cleaning of the smaller Spitfire fragments by Jigsaw volunteers will continue in the Great Fen over the winter.



### Best Practice Users' Guide

Several guides have been released since our last newsletter. The following guides are now available to download from the website:

**Flint Tools and Flint Knapping – James Dilley.** This excellent guide outlines how the shape and construction of flint tools changed through the ages, and thus how to roughly identify them. It also provides a step-by-step guide to how to undergo flint-knapping yourself. Those who were at the practical workshop earlier this year will know that it's not as easy as it looks!

**Step-by-Step Guide to Finds Processing – Jemima Woolverton.** Pot washing may seem like the easiest thing in the archaeological world, but there are lots of things you need to watch out for. Artefact types require different treatment, and this guide gives introductory information on the basic things to remember.

**Introduction to Archaeological Report Writing – Rachel Clarke and Liz Popescu.** Rachel spoke to us in 2014 about how to write archaeological reports. This guide outlines what content should be in each guide (geophysical, earthwork survey, fieldwalking, testpitting etc.)

We hope you find them useful!

**Step by Step Guide to Finds Washing**

Finds washing is a crucial part of archaeological excavation, and although it may seem common-sense, there are many things which set apart a good 'pot-washer'.

**Equipment – per person, per 1/2 day**

- 2 washing up bowls
- 2 newspapers
- 1 toothbrush (or several of different harnesses)
- 1 wooden (not metal) kitchen squeezer
- 1 small cellulose sponge (Spontex 2 thick moppets)
- 4 finds trays (or similar)
- c.10 finds (1/week) labels
- c.10 finds bags of various sizes

**Health and Safety**

- Some artefacts have **sharp edges**, so do take care.
- Wear gloves if you have any open cuts or sores on your hands or if you have any allergies to elements in soil, or if your hands react to prolonged contact with water. Note that some people have allergies to latex and nitrile gloves.
- Be alert to **contaminants** in the soil such as petrol. Keep a look out for asbestos, which may look deceptively like pottery.

**When to do it**

Finds washing should ideally be done during a dig or in the few days/weeks after the dig. Finds left muddy in bags for too long can 'wear' – if you aren't able to wash finds for a while, ensure you have punched holes in the bags to allow the finds to 'breathe'. Some finds will be more sensitive than others to being stored dirty; most post-Medieval pottery will survive fine if left for a while.

**What not to wash**

- Metalswork: Fe, Iron, Cu, Copper Alloy (green), Pb Lead, Ag Silver
- Frangible pottery: leave the three days to dry out before washing (see instructions, later).
- Stale
- Glass if indolent (oh my catina/coating)
- Charcoal – don't collect this unless it appears in large concentrations in a feature, in which case it should be taken as an environmental sample, not as a find.
- Wood – is only interesting if it is from a waterlogged deposit, in which case it should be taken as an environmental sample.

**Washing the finds**

- Lay newspaper down (about 3 sheets thick) on a table. Fill two washing up bowls about two thirds full with water and place them next to each other on the newspaper. One will be your 'dirty bowl' to wash in and one will be your 'rinsing bowl'. Change the water regularly.
- Line a finds tray with newspaper and place to the right of your bowls – this will be your drying tray.



### OASIS

One course in OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS) training has been held in conjunction with Cambridgeshire County Council, and taught by Mark Barrett from English Heritage. Representatives from 9 groups took part in this, and information has already been submitted to the database for validation. There are plans for Mark to take another course for us in 2016.

We would like to thank Sally Croft for arranging this course for us.

## FAREWELL

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**Hardwick Local History Group** – unfortunately Hardwick Local History Group has closed down. The group affiliated in 2012 but did not take an active role in Jigsaw, focusing more on local history and a programme of lectures. The village is quite small, and found it hard to build the membership.

**Jemima Woolverton** – is leaving Jigsaw and moving to pastures new in December 2015 to pursue a career in marketing and communications. She writes: 'it's been a pleasure working with you all. I've particularly enjoyed getting to know the groups I've been responsible for, and watching you develop into first class community archaeologists!'



## COURSES DURING THE TRAINING DIG

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Two special practical courses were run as Field Schools during the training excavation:

Graham Taylor of Potted History ran Medieval Pottery Practical. Graham entertained with a lively talk and demonstration, followed by participants hand-building pots and throwing on the wooden wheel.

Jon Cane was helped by Jigsaw volunteers to build a Roman-style kiln. During the hottest spell in the summer, temperatures inside the kiln reached 900 degrees, and Jon nearly spontaneously combusted! The pots made on the earlier course fired very successfully, and the makers were able to reclaim their masterpieces.



## TRAINING DIG HIGHLIGHTS

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The Jigsaw Training Dig was a great success, with around 70 people attending in total, with anything from 10-23 people there each day. We excavated 8 trenches across the field, and uncovered a range of remains, mostly pits and ditches. The pottery dates show that there were 3 main phases of occupation: the 11<sup>th</sup> – mid/late 13<sup>th</sup> century when 3 N-S boundary ditches across the site were in use and the beamslots from the building were filled in; the mid 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century when ditches/pits in Trench 1 and Trench 3b and the pond were in use; and the 20<sup>th</sup> century animal disease burning pit in Trench 1, and the demolition of post-Medieval buildings in Trench 2b marked on historic maps.

In summary, we found Medieval Covington! The spread and development of the village was previously unknown, and although we only sampled a small part of the field, it is clear that there was extensive occupation here in the Medieval period. Also they were big sheep/goat farmers, although there is one piece of evidence to suggest they may have eaten horses too... Big thanks to everyone who attended, and particularly to our volunteer supervisors. The report is currently at the editors, so should be available for download soon!



## SPOTLIGHT ON STAG

Back in 2012 I had just finished watching another episode of Time team and had a light bulb moment. 'I wanted to get involved in this'. I Googled 'Archaeology Groups St Ives Cambs' and although no groups came up Jigsaw based at Bar Hill did. A few emails later and I had been invited to a meeting at the Norris Museum in St Ives to talk about forming a new Archaeology Group.

The meeting took place on a cold dark evening in November 2012, in a back room at the Norris museum. For me everyone was a stranger who obviously knew a lot more about archaeology than I did, quite daunting if I'm honest. It didn't take long for me to realise that everyone was in the same boat very enthusiastic and keen but no idea on what to do about it.

Jemima Woolverton was chair lady who explained the Jigsaw goals. She made that first evening fun. We were all in this together and with her help we could run our own Group, WOW! Meetings followed meetings; we had a committee and a cool name STAG. Then we had a chairman (Alan Hunter), so there wasn't any need for Jemima to be there anymore. That group of strangers were now running their own Archaeology Group.



Well all that happened 3 years ago and I have no idea where the time has gone. The Group has gone from strength to strength. Members come and go. We average about 25 members a year, meeting at the Dolphin Hotel on a monthly basis, for either a workshop or to listen to a guest speaker. In the summer months we have projects which usually involve excavation work. Most of our work has been based around looking for the lost Priory of St Ives (which we are still looking for but getting close to). This has been made possible by the training that Jigsaw has on offer and the loan of various pieces of equipment. We haven't re-written any history books yet but had a lot of fun trying.

Personally I have learnt an awful lot about what is achievable when people work together and made a lot of good friends. I can now call myself an amateur archaeologist and bore my friends with stories about what might be hidden in that cow field or their gardens.

Considering that light bulb moment I had 3 years ago it is almost surreal to say that back in March this year Carenza Lewis came to The Dolphin Hotel and gave a talk to us on the Black Death, and that I am now Chairman of the group.

Many Thanks

*Philip Stimson*

