

Find of the month 2008

December 2008A small fragment of clear blue or aqua Roman glass vessel was recently found in Herefordshire. The fragment is decorated with a circular pattern and may have come from a square bottle, which often occur in 2nd century contexts. The body of the bottle is almost always blown into a multi-part body mould with separate base piece. Similar bottles have been found in Usk.

the circular handstone from a rotary quernNovember 2008This Roman rotary quern stone was recently uncovered in Herefordshire. As the name implies, the rotary quern used circular motions to grind the material, meaning both the quern and the handstone were generally circular. The best type of stone to manufacture quern-stones from are igneous rocks such as basalt. These have naturally rough surfaces, but grains do not detach easily, so the material being ground does not become gritty. However, such rocks are not always available, meaning that quern-stones have been manufactured from a wide variety of rocks, including sandstone, quartzite and limestone. The handstones from rotary querns would have been turned with a wooden handle. The handle normally slots into a hole on the outer edge of the stone. There is no such hole on this stone but a lead 'plug' on the outside face may have served such a purpose. close-up of the lead plug on the outer face of the handstone October 2008not all eggs are golden - some are ceramic The ceramic egg above was found in Pembridge. It looks like ordinary white egg, but would have been used as a dummy in hen coops to try and encourage the hens to lay. The white clay used to make the egg is similar to the clay of make tobacco pipes and may have been fired as a secondary product of a clay pipe kiln. September 2008This rather fine pottery vessel was uncovered during excavations at the Magistrates Court in Worcester. The vessel or jar dates from the 2nd century AD (Roman period) and is a fine sandy grey. There are a number of sources for this fabric (fabric 14) including the Glevum ware kilns at Berkeley Street, Gloucester. August 2008In 2005 we excavated an area close to the Romano-British town of Alcester, near Warwickshire. During the excavation many soil samples were taken for the recovery of plant and other environmental remains. The most interesting plant remains were mineralized (probably in cesspits) and have provided evidence of the type of food people were growing and eating almost 2000 years ago. The mineralized remains included numerous fruit stones and seeds including; cherry, plum and figs (which would have been imported). There were also many charred plant remains including the chaff from spelt, a type of wheat. The chaff is what is left over after the cereal has been cleaned. July 2008

During the post fieldwork assessment of material excavated prior to the construction of the new ASDA store in Hereford further interesting discoveries were made. The team already knew that the site had been occupied from early Neolithic times on the basis of flint finds, pottery and a carbon date placing human activity on the site 5500 years ago. It was only when the flint report was being produced that it became apparent that man may have been using the site from before 6000 years ago. These tiny pieces of flint would be carefully shaped and crafted though snapping flakes and making small chips (called retouch) along one edge to form a specific shape. What were they used for?

Good question! They had a number of uses - perhaps one way to explain them is as either saw teeth or barbs that would be hafted in a sequence along a bone/antler or wooden shaft. They were most probably used in the slaughter and preparation of carcasses. Puts the meat counter at ASDA in perspective! June 2008 The sherd is the rim of a spouted pitcher in Cotswold fabric D2, dated in Hereford to the 11th to early 13th centuries. On the right of the picture you can see where either the spout or the handle joined the neck of the vessel. The sagging base of a pitcher such as this made it easier to tilt when pouring liquid, and also may have strengthened the vessel. In some cases the limestone inclusions have leached away, probably a result of storing acidic liquid in the pitcher.

May 2008You might be forgiven for thinking had been working in the swamps of Australia digging up crocodile skeletons. This is nothing quite so romantic as that, but forms a serious part of Hereford's 20th-century history when tanks were brought here to be decommissioned after the second World War. We have looked further into this particular artifact and believe that it may be the track from a Bren gun carrier. What did it look like in its original form? This photograph gives us an idea:

April 2008 This artifact was discovered within less than 1km of the site of the 'Rotherwas Ribbon'. It is most probably late Neolithic in date and as can be seen from the inset detail had a finely worked serrated edge. This type of blade was most probably used to assist in the skinning of animals, perhaps to saw through tendons etc.. It was most likely used unhafted between finger and thumb and clearly fits a right handed person rather than a left handed one.

March 2008 It is the 10th anniversary of the discovery of this small weight found on the banks of the River Wye in Hereford. It is exciting for two reasons: 1) being of medieval date the picture of the glove is probably a reference to one of Hereford's most long standing trades - that of glove making 2) it indicates international trade as it is from Amsterdam. So what was it used for? We believe that it is a well documented example of a weight that was used for measuring the quantity of gold to add to Spanish coins. From the Amsterdam connection it would appear that the Spanish coinage was being made in a Dutch mint. This is a fine example of a find that can tell its own story! February 2008 Sometimes finds tell a story, and at other times they are just begging for our imagination to create one for them. Certainly Sir Mortimer Wheeler never shied away from the opportunity to elaborate on archaeological evidence. As the saying goes - 'never let the facts get in the way of a good story'. The facts:

- We know this comes from a securely dated civil war context.
- Probably a contemporary ground surface.
- The artifact appears to be a toggle made from a sheep phalanges (toe)
- It could be for a coat, or a drawstring for a small pouch.

The story:

Imagine in the summer of 1646, the forces in Hereford have held the city for six long weeks and despite being besieged

seem to be fairing well. Then early one morning a commotion at the Bye Street Gate (near the Kerry Arms) expands into a skirmish within the walls resulting in the loss of the city to the Parliamentarians. Perhaps in the ensuing panic the coat was ripped or powder bag dropped, the toggle lying where it fell that day.

Sadly archaeology isn't like this - but wouldn't it be fun if it was! January 2008 Unfortunately we can not say where this coin comes from. What we can say is that the site was associated with the civil war and lies somewhere in Herefordshire. The coin is a well preserved silver shilling from the reign of King Charles I. It was dated by the mint mark "R" at the top of the reverse side of the coin to 1644-1645. The coin weighs 6.2 grams, which is its original weight, although it looks as though it may have been clipped as many coins were, this could however be the way the coin was struck. This issue of coins was recalled in 1696 and it is likely that it was lost before this date. The fine condition of the coin could indicate that it had not been in circulation for long when it was lost. It is likely that the layer the coin was found in represented the ground level within the site being investigated at the time of the English Civil War, as it is probable that the coin was dropped and lost at or around that time. fffffff