

Archaeology News



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Introduction

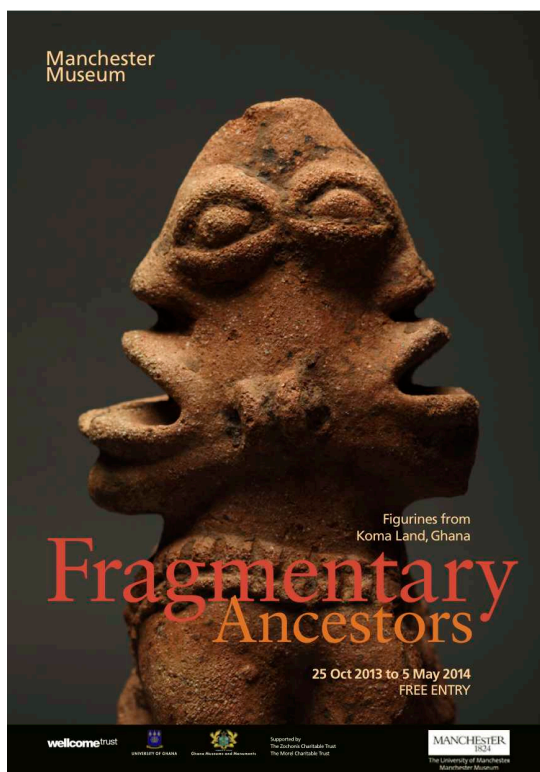
Dr Melanie Giles, Recruitment & Admissions
Professor Siân Jones, Postgraduate Director

Welcome to our Summer 2014 Newsletter! We hope you'll find the contents exciting. We have articles focusing on research projects ranging from Whitworth Park, on the University's doorstep, to remote parts of West Africa. We particularly like to include articles by our students and in this edition we have 3 stories that show how students at Manchester develop their own independent projects and increase their employability. In all of the articles you will see evidence of the importance we place on community engagement and public archaeology. In particular we have done a lot of work recently with our close partner Manchester Museum. Archaeological research at Manchester has also been in the media a lot and Melanie Giles tells us about her experience producing a documentary with Channel 5.

Above: Moai statues in Rapa Nui (Easter Island), where Prof. Colin Richards is conducting research.

Right: Prof. Julian Thomas leading our first year Peak District field trip.





The Archaeology of Medicine, Shrines, and Ritual in Northern Ghana

Exciting research in Ghana by Professor Tim Insoll, in collaboration with the University of Ghana and the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, sheds new light on traditional healing practices

Funded by the medical research charity, the Wellcome Trust, and the British Academy, Prof. Tim Insoll has been involved in archaeological research in Ghana, West Africa, for the last 10 years. Excavations and surveys have been completed in various sites including earth and ancestral shrines, as well as abandoned medicine shrines and iron working areas. The excavations have indicated that some shrines have been used for over 1000 years. Other parts of the project have been looking at animal sacrifice and its recognition archaeologically, and the composition of indigenous medicines. Manchester students have been involved throughout the fieldwork with 13 undergraduates taken to Ghana, and 2 PhD projects connected with the research in progress.

Recently an Exhibition of results of some of the research in Koma Land was on display in the Manchester Museum. This Exhibition, "Fragmentary Ancestors", had as its focus clay figurines, the function of which is currently being investigated

through scanning and DNA analysis in Manchester. The Exhibition has now transferred to the National Museum in Accra, Ghana.

Top upper left: Tenzug Shrine.

Top centre left: Kusanaab earth shrine in the Tong Hills.

Top lower left: Joint University of Manchester and University of Ghana excavations in progress, Yikpabongo.

Top centre: Poster for exhibition in Manchester Museum.

<http://insoll.org.uk/>

<http://www.manchester.ac.uk/research/Tim.Insoll/>



Some of the displays in the Fragmentary Ancestors Exhibition at Manchester Museum, 25 Oct 2013 – 5 May 2014



Postgraduate student focus

Our Phd students play a very important part in the life of the Department. They are carrying out original and exciting research projects, but they also teach undergraduate seminars and play an active role in student life. Here Ceri Houlbrook tells us how a Heritage Lottery Grant helped her combine her research with public engagement.

I'm in the third year of my Archaeology PhD at Manchester and my research has focused on the custom of coin-trees. These are exactly what their name suggests: trees which have been embedded with coins for a variety of folkloric purposes, and I've catalogued over 200 of them across the British Isles. Most are contemporary, dating to the 1990s-2010s, but some are quite a bit earlier – such as the Ardmaddy coin-tree in Argyll, Scotland. Local opinion suggests that the Ardmaddy coin-tree pre-dates the 20th century, but no early literary sources have been identified and the tree itself is heavily decayed, meaning that many of the coins have fallen loose and become buried. And so, if I wanted to establish how old this coin-tree is, I needed to undertake an archaeological excavation. This was a feat that at first seemed miles beyond my means and expertise, but my supervisory team was convinced that I could do it. And so, infected by their confidence and enthusiasm, I put my mind to the task.

My first job was to secure funding and so – with the invaluable help of staff at Manchester Museum – I made an application for a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant, which was successful. With funding secured, my next job was to assemble a team of archaeologists willing to work for nothing – an endeavour that proved surprisingly easy when you share a Department with dozens



of enthusiastic postgraduates eager to put their trowels to good use. The Archaeology Department then helped me employ a project manager and to source all of the equipment; most of which was

provided by the Department itself. And so, with the team assembled and equipped, we went up to Argyll in September 2013 and undertook a 5-day excavation, recovering 691 coins dating from 1914 to 2011. Not only did this excavation provide invaluable data for my thesis, but it also helped me develop my planning skills and – most importantly – it gave me the confidence to step out of the library and tackle larger projects that only a year or two ago would have seemed beyond me.

<http://cerihoulbrook.wordpress.com/>

<http://lovelockdiaries.wordpress.com/>

Main image: Ardmaddy Wishing Tree.

Below: Ceri's team excavating test pits around the tree.

Whitworth Park Community Archaeology & History Project

Our highly successful four-year community research project, funded by the HLF, culminates with a new exhibition at Manchester Museum. Co-directed by Dr Hannah Cobb, Dr Melanie Giles and Professor Siân Jones, in collaboration with the Friends of Whitworth Park, the project has explored the relationships between the Park's past, present and future.



Whitworth Park located on the edge of the University Campus is much loved by staff and students. This exciting project has investigated the long-term social, material and natural histories of the Park. At the same time the project has also used archaeology as a way of engaging contemporary residents and local schools with their urban heritage.

Students at all levels in the Archaeology Department have participated in the project working alongside local volunteers. It has provided a fantastic opportunity for them to gain training in archaeological fieldwork, but also to gain skills in public archaeology. They have also had the chance to work alongside our project partners, which represent some of Manchester's most important cultural institutions: Manchester Museum, The Whitworth Art Gallery and the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Centre.

Through a combination of archival research, excavation, and oral history, we've made exciting discoveries about the

history of the Park. These help us understand the wider place of public parks in the context of nineteenth-century industrialisation and urbanisation. The objects we have recovered are relatively familiar: bottles, coins, buttons from clothes, bits of leather shoes, marbles and other recognizable children's toys. But at the same time they tell us about how Victorian and Edwardian lives differed from our own. They connect people viscerally and emotively to the lives of

previous generations of Mancunians and tell us about the unspoken aspects of daily life.

Find out more by visiting our exhibition:
<http://www.museum.manchester.ac.uk/whitson/exhibitions/whitworthpark/>

Or our project blog:
<http://whitworthparklife.wordpress.com>



Above right: An Edwardian Postcard, excavation of the lake deposits, and a public tour.

Left: children from a local school enjoying some excavation

Student Employability and Skills Development

In today's competitive job market it is very important that students are able to develop their CVs to distinguish themselves from others. At Manchester we offer lots of training opportunities and a range of practical placements. We also have an award-winning Careers Service. But we also think it is very important to support and encourage students to pursue independent career development activities, particularly as they progress through the degree programmes.

Alison Burns has been studying with us since 2009 when she started her undergraduate degree. She is now in the process of completing her MA in Archaeology. Here she tells us about her fascination with the human footprints at Formby Point and how this has led to career development opportunities.

During my studies at Manchester, I have been actively involved in researching the prehistoric footprints preserved in the intertidal zone at Formby Point, Lancashire. These animal and human imprints dating to the late Mesolithic and Neolithic period are the focus of my MA dissertation, but I have also been actively involved in public activities surrounding these fascinating and intimate traces of the past. I do voluntary work with the Sefton Landscape Partnership Scheme, whose aim is to educate people about the area. I lead archaeological walks for members of the public and I have also produced a public information leaflet on the archaeology of Formby Point. Much to my delight, the leaflet has been adopted for use by the National Trust!

As a result of my studies at Manchester, I have also been commissioned to give a number of lectures to the University of the Third Age, Stoke-on-Trent Archaeological Society, Lancaster University Archaeological Forum and the Confederation of British Archaeologists



North West. I have even been asked to be a consultant on the footprints for the revised National Curriculum for History in the North West. My degree programmes at Manchester have given me the confidence to know that I will achieve good results. I also know that I can go to the tutors for support and guidance. I regard these activities as a start to a fledgling career, begun before the completion of the MA but realised by it.

Top: Auroch footprint.

Below: Alison preparing to make a cast of a footprint for research.

Below left: Alison leading an archaeological guided walk.





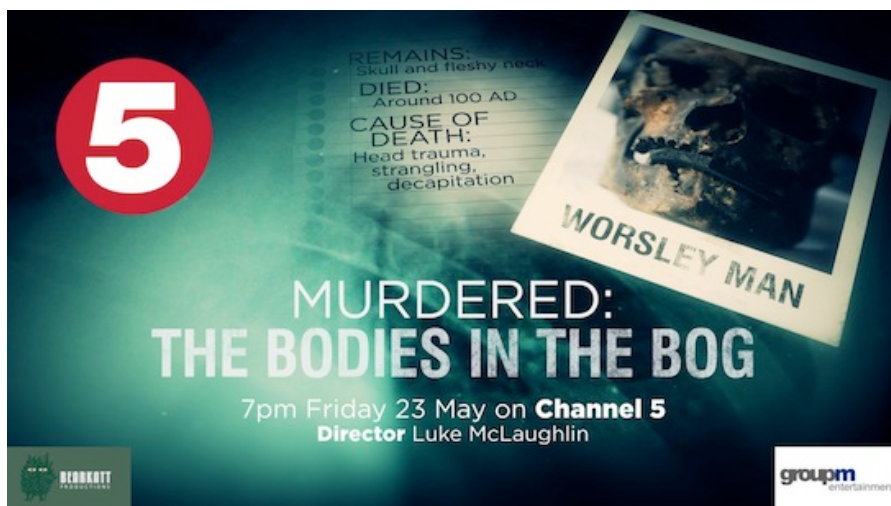
Archaeology in the News!

Dr Melanie Giles talks about filming an exciting new documentary on bog bodies with Channel 5.

Thanks to Channel 5 and Silkeborg Museum, Denmark, for permission to reproduce images.

Over the last year, I have been working with the Manchester Museum on their famous “bog head”: Worsley Man. Like his neighbour Lindow Man, he is a late Iron Age adult male, violently killed and placed in a bog around the time of the Roman occupation of the north. As part of a documentary for Channel 5, we have re-analysed the skull using the University’s micro-CT scanning laboratory, revealing a series of violent injuries to his face, head and neck. The scans also revealed a possible bone spear point embedded in his neck!

As part of the programme, I was able to visit bog bodies in Ireland and Denmark, such as Tollund Man (above and below), and discuss similarities with their archaeological curators. Human remains form an important part of teaching at both UG and PG level, reflecting not just on past lives and deaths, but the ethics of excavating and displaying the dead.



A Budding Academic Career: the Story of a "Home Grown" student!

Dr Bryn James started an undergraduate degree in Archaeology at the University of Manchester in 2005. He graduated with a first class degree and since then has gone from strength to strength recently completing a PhD in West African traditional healing practices under the supervision of Professor Tim Insoll and Professor Siân Jones.

Here, he tells us about the opportunities he has had at Manchester and his recent post-doctoral Fellowship in Residence with Manchester Museum.



During my time as a student at Manchester, I have benefited from innumerable opportunities, including receiving funding to pursue doctoral research, resulting in my PhD thesis: *The Healer's Tools: A study of Material Assemblages amongst Healing Practitioners in Ghana and their Archaeological Implications* (2014). As part of the research, I conducted fieldwork with contemporary healers and medicine traders in Accra, Ghana. Funded by the Royal Anthropological Institute, one outcome was collection of an assemblage of healer's wares, which was subsequently donated to Manchester Museum.

Since completing my PhD, I was awarded a fully funded internship at Manchester Museum, as part of the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures' *Researcher in Residence* (RinR) Programme. As a RinR, I have been mentored by senior curatorial staff at the Museum, and gained experience of a wide range of activities. These include a conference, which is part of Manchester Histories Festival 2014 (*Exploring African Medicine @*

Manchester Museum, March 17-23), and an upcoming exhibition based on community workshops scheduled for Black History Month 2014 (*Exploring African Medicine: Memories, Stories, Materials, Sept. 15 – Nov 15*).

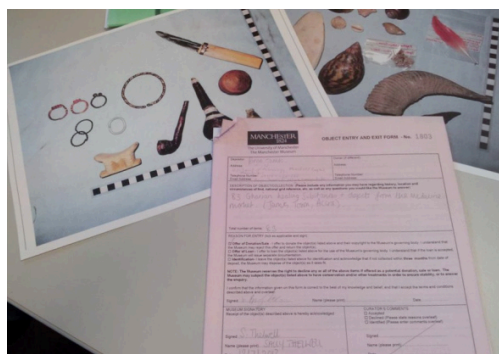
In a competitive academic job market, these opportunities have helped me establish a strong CV. I now have experience in museum curation, public engagement, and project management, to add to my expertise in academic research and teaching!

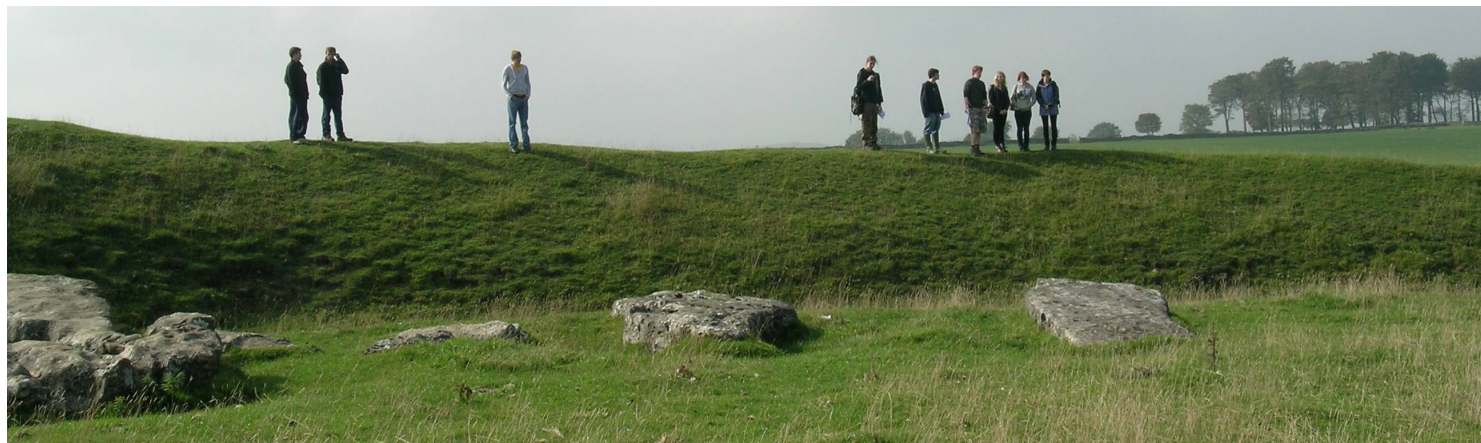
Top: Working with traders and suppliers at a healers market in Accra, Ghana.

Centre left: Part of my doctoral research collection donated to Manchester Museum

Below left: Speaking at a recent conference.

For more information see Bryn's Blog: <http://bryntrevelyanjames.wordpress.com/>





Find out more about studying Archaeology at Manchester

Undergraduate Programmes:

BA in Archaeology

BA in Archaeology and Anthropology

BA in Ancient History and Archaeology

Email: ug-archae@manchester.ac.uk

<http://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/subjects/archaeology/undergraduate/>

Postgraduate Programmes:

MA in Archaeology

MPhil in Archaeology

PhD in Archaeology

Email: masalc@manchester.ac.uk

<http://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/subjects/archaeology/postgraduatetaught/>

Email: PhDSALC@manchester.ac.uk

<http://www.alc.manchester.ac.uk/subjects/archaeology/postgraduateresearch/>

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Follow us on Twitter:

 @UoMArchaeology

Right: Award-winning photograph of Dr Lindy Crewe's Bronze Age excavations in Kissonerga-Skalia, Cyprus.

