

-1Appleby Archaeology November 2008

Appleby Archaeology group were pleased to welcome back Dot Boughton, Finds Liaison Officer (Lancashire and Cumbria) who brought the group up to date with her power point presentation on Recent Finds in Cumbria.

She reminded the group of the role of the Portable Antiques Scheme (PAS) which is a voluntary scheme for the recording of archaeological artefacts found by members of the public, thereby promoting the recording of chance finds and increasing awareness of the importance of such finds for understanding our past. The scheme was established in 1997 for England and Wales and at present there are 36 Finds Liaison Officers.

Dot's main role is to record archaeological objects found by the public but she is active in promoting archaeology through displays, visiting schools and clubs where youngsters can handle artefacts and experience what it might have been like living in an earlier period. She has links with metal detecting groups and individual detectorists and holds sessions on responsible metal detecting. When time permits she enjoys being involved in fieldwork.

75% of finds are likely to belong to the finder but there are those which are covered by the Treasure Act of 1996. This covers the finding of gold and silver items, or a group of coins that are at least three hundred years old and the finding of any group of two or more metallic objects, of any composition, of prehistoric date that come from the same findspot.

There have been over 3,000 finds in the last three and half years with the number increasing year by year. In 2007 there were 1004 and 830 to date this year. Dot hopes, at least, to equal last year's record by the end of the year. Finds include stone artefacts, pottery shards, coins, medieval seals and other metal objects. Artefacts later than the eighteenth century are not recorded. There has been an increase in the finds from the Morecombe area and a number of clusters near the M6. Metal detectorists are not permitted on National Trust land which may account for a sparsity of finds in the Lake District. Dot can refer to Finds Advisors for help in identification of an object. She told the story of receiving a photograph of an item that the finder thought might be Anglo Saxon but after investigation and consultation it was identified as a modern Turkish kebab skewer.

The group enjoyed looking at pictures of recent finds from Cumbria from different periods. These included a cup and ring marked stone from Crosby Ravensworth, Roman pottery from Kirby Thore, an Edward 1st penny from Appleby and a hoard of 14th century coins from Kirby Stephen. Langdale axes, or parts of them are the most frequent finds and recently one was brought to Dot which had been used as a door stop for many years. Viking finds are uncommon in the area. Two were described, the first being a beautiful heavy gold, untarnished

finger ring of the 9-10th century found near Sedburgh and the second a Thor's hammer silver pendant found near Irthing. It is hoped that, in the future, both will be displayed at local museums

Objects of great rarity are sometimes found and may test the experts. One such was a coin of Prince Henry, Earl of Northumberland and Huntingdon (1139-52) found at Croglin but where it was minted remains a mystery. Another was a thin piece of shiny gold found by a metal detectorist who took it to a jeweller who thought it was over 300 years old. When the archaeologists first saw it they were puzzled and it took some time to conclude that it was the terminal of a Bronze Age lunula necklace (i.e. one shaped like a crescent moon) They were able to compare the find with complete necklaces in Edinburgh. It is hoped that, in time, it will be housed in the Tullie.

Dot concluded her lively and informative talk with some advice to would be finders. One example was that when an object is photographed it is helpful to have a scale so that the finds Officer can determine its size.

Dot answered a number of questions from the group before being thanked for her talk and wished success in beating the 2007 total for the number of finds in 2008.

The next talk will be on the Tuesday 9th December at 7.30pm, in the Supper Room, Market Hall, Appleby, when Professor Charlotte Roberts will talk on *What we can learn about the human remains of our ancestors: the study of bio archaeology*.

Phyllis Rouston 24/11/08