

Later Prehistoric Finds Group



Issue 8

Winter 2016 / 2017

Contents

Welcome	2
All change on the LPFG steering committee	3
'From Every Object a Story': Overview and Reflections	5
A recent find of an Early Iron Age socketed sickle from Congleton, Cheshire	8
Announcements	12

Welcome to the latest edition of the LPFG newsletter. This issue has been slightly delayed, to allow for full coverage of our two-day conference 'From Every Object a Story', held between Bristol and Cardiff in November. Our new Social Media Secretary, Matt Knight, shares his impressions of the conference on pages 5-7, while on pages 8-11 our new Deputy Chair, Dot Boughton, presents a recent find of a rare Early Iron Age socketed sickle from Cheshire. Both Dot and Matt introduce themselves on pages 3-4.

A happy New Year to all our members.



A small sample from the Bristol Museum's extraordinary Fawcett Collection, which attendees at the November conference were able to view. Courtesy Bristol Museum & Art Gallery (c) Bristol Culture

Welcome

The Later Prehistoric Finds Group was established in 2013, and welcomes anyone with an interest in prehistoric artefacts, especially small finds from the Bronze and Iron Ages. We hold an annual conference and produce two newsletters a year. Membership is currently free; if you would like to join the group, please e-mail LaterPrehistoricFindsGroup@gmail.com.

We are a new group, and we are hoping that more researchers interested in prehistoric artefacts will want to join us. The group has opted for a loose committee structure that is not binding, and a list of those on the steering committee, along with contact details, can be found on our website: <https://sites.google.com/site/laterprehistoricfindsgroup/home>. Anna Booth is the current Chair, and Dot Boughton is Deputy. Elizabeth Foulds is Treasurer.

If you would be interested in helping to run the group, we would love to have you on the steering committee. It is open to anyone who would like to be involved. If you are interested, please e-mail us at the address given above.

*

The LPFG newsletter is published twice a year. To submit articles, notes or announcements for inclusion, please e-mail Anna Lewis at lpfgnews@outlook.com. Guidelines are available on the website, but please feel free to e-mail with any questions.

All change on the LPFG steering committee

The Later Prehistoric Finds Group's 2016 AGM was held as part of the 'From Every Object a Story' conference in November. During the AGM, Sophie Adams confirmed her intention to step down as Deputy Chair, and Michael Marshall (in absentia) his intention to step down as Social Media Secretary. It was agreed during the meeting that the role of Deputy would be taken over by Dot Boughton, and the role of Social Media Secretary by Matt Knight. Dot and Matt introduce themselves below.

Very many thanks are due to Sophie and Michael for the dedication they have shown to the group during its founding years. Michael has held the role of Social Media Secretary since the group's inception in 2013, promoting its events and publications online. He was also instrumental in organising our 2015 conference in partnership with the Prehistoric Society, 'Tales the River Tells'. Sophie Adams took on the role of Deputy Chair in 2014, and will continue her work as Datasheet Editor. The first two datasheets, published under Sophie's guidance, are proving very popular with FLOs and other museum and field staff as aids to artefact identification, and Sophie (adams.sophia@gmail.com) is keen to hear from anyone who would be interested in writing a sheet on any type of Later Prehistoric find. We are also grateful to Sophie for all her hard work in organising the 2016 conference at Bristol and Cardiff (full report on pages 5-7, courtesy of our new Social Media Secretary!).

Meet Matt and Dot:

I'm **Matt Knight** and I'm thrilled to say I'm your new Social Media Secretary. For those of you who don't know me, I'm a PhD candidate at the University of Exeter funded by the AHRC South West and Wales DTP. My PhD focuses on the deliberate destruction of Bronze Age metalwork, using South West England as a case study. This research incorporates elements of experimental activities, as well as studying relevant museum collections. I've been working on Bronze Age metalwork in South West England since 2012, having co-authored a regional corpus of material with Theresa Ormrod and Professor Susan Pearce in 2015.



I'm a keen advocate of social media as a tool for engaging with people online and spend much of my spare time sharing my ongoing research on Twitter and Facebook. I also frequently blog about my project as I find and study relevant and interesting material; I use this to try to engage members of the public through accessible articles posted on the website: www.alifeinfragments.wordpress.com. I'm always happy and willing to discuss any aspect of my work and can be followed on Twitter, using the handle: @mgknight24.

As Social Media Secretary I'm keen to increase the online presence of the Later Prehistoric Finds Group, through Twitter and Facebook, and potentially also Instagram. If you have any interesting finds, research or upcoming conferences that you are happy for me to share online, I'd like to encourage you all to send them to me at: lpfgsocmedia@gmail.com. If you'd like to see more of what happens on our social media pages, they can be reached via: www.facebook.com/LtrPrehistFindsGrp and using the Twitter handle: @LtrPrehistFinds.

Dot Boughton: I was born in Hannover, Germany, but grew up in Berlin (West) – I was extremely fortunate to experience the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification first-hand in the late 1980s and early 1990s! I always loved history and archaeology and decided to start an undergraduate degree at the Department of Prehistory at the Freie Universitaet Berlin in 1996. In 1999 I completed my undergraduate degree and received joined honours in Medieval History, Classical Archaeology and Prehistory. For some inexplicable reason I had always been drawn towards the British Isles (linguistically, archaeologically and... well, generally, really!) but when I tried to find a university in Germany where I could study British Prehistory I drew a blank. It was obviously, really: I needed to move to Britain. Thus, between 1999-2001, I studied Anglo-Saxon metalwork during the Migration Period (AD375-520) at the University of Oxford and completed an MSt and an MPhil. In 2005 I started working for the Portable Antiquities Scheme and have been Finds Liaison Officer for Lancashire and Cumbria ever since. However, even though I like Migration Period metalwork and I enjoy my job in the North West, I wanted to expand my knowledge of Prehistoric metalwork and in 2015 I completed my PhD on British Early Iron Age socketed axes (800-600BC) at the University of Central Lancashire.

I think that the study of objects, their manufacture, use and social contexts are hugely significant and I feel that, in the LPFG, we have a wonderful 'assemblage' of research looking into all kinds of Bronze Age and Iron Age artefacts: tools, weapons, decorative items, harness, pottery as well as flint and other stone artefacts. I think that it is hugely important that we continue to share and exchange research and knowledge (through the newsletter, the Facebook page or at the annual meetings) so that we can further our understanding of all the different artefacts and artefact classes. I very much look forward to meeting up with and working for the members of the Later Prehistoric Finds Group as the Deputy Chair!

Good luck to both Matt and Dot in their new roles!

‘From Every Object a Story’: Overview and Reflections

Matthew Knight

Overview

On October 19th and 20th, we had our annual conference – this year called ‘From Every Object A Story’ – split across Bristol and Cardiff.

The first half of Saturday consisted of a series of talks held at Bristol’s Archaeology and Anthropology department, beginning with Julia Farley’s dramatic tale of the mysterious “cursed” Hexham heads and finishing with Susanna Harris’s assessment on what we might learn about the lost piece of textile from the Mold assemblage by analysing other textile remains from across Britain. Talks in between jumped from the intricacies of Iron Age glass beads (by Elizabeth Foulds), to the ugly repairs of the Snettisham grotesque torc and its potentially long use-life (by Jody Joy), as well as Dot Boughton’s thought-provoking and highly topical talk reflecting on Llyn Fawr material in light of her post-Brexit experiences.



Day one of the conference, Bristol (image reproduced with permission of Sophie Adams)

Next came a highly stressful part of the day (for me at least!) as I was one of four presenting a Pecha Kucha (a style of presentation consisting of 20 slides, each 20 seconds long). The research presented ranged from Brendan O’Connor’s assessment of a little-known Late Bronze Age hoard from Gilmonby, to Helen Chittcock’s biographical analysis of the Grimthorpe shield, and finally Yvonne Inall’s broad overview of Iron Age spears in Britain. My own Pecha Kucha concerned my ongoing research into the Bronze Age Bloody Pool hoard. Needless to say, we all survived the process!

The day then became more relaxed as we spent the afternoon wandering around the impressive collections of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, including various displays of prehistoric material from across the area.

A special visit had been arranged for us to go subterranean and see the Fawcett collection in the Bristol Museum stores. Dr. H.A. Fawcett had made it a life ambition to collect an example of each everyday object ranging from the Paleolithic era through to the Romano-British period. His collection thus included thousands of archaeological pieces, many of which represented exquisite examples from across Europe.

Naturally all of this provoked intricate discussions about the objects we collect and study, which carried on into the evening over drinks.

On Sunday, we relocated to the fantastic National Museum of Wales (Cardiff) where Adam Gwilt, Mark Lodwick, and Jody Deacon had coordinated a day where we listened to various talks followed by handling sessions. These talks again delved into broad, period-spanning topics and sites. Niall Sharples presented his investigations at a midden site at Whitchurch, Warwickshire, which is contributing not only to our knowledge of midden sites, but also an increasingly prevalent type of object: miniature socketed axes.



Day two of the conference, Cardiff (image reproduced by permission of Sophie Adams)

Mary Davis spoke about her analysis of Late Iron Age red and yellow glass inlays, while Mark Lodwick gave a comprehensive overview of the contributions of PAS Cymru, particularly in identifying areas of significant interest. Adam Gwilt continued in this vein, delving into themes and trends emerging from the material, including a surge in Late Bronze Age hoards discovered in south Wales, and presenting significant Iron Age and Romano-British objects.

As with the day before, we were offered the rare opportunity to observe and handle many of the artefacts presented throughout the morning, including a diverse range of Ewart Park phase hoards, the Llanmaes material, the massive Llyn Cerrig Bach hoard, the Llyn Fawr hoard, and the Seven Crosses material.

The whole conference was a huge success giving everyone involved plenty to think about, and it was a shame to depart on the Sunday afternoon. I, for one, can't wait for next year!

Reflections

I think it's only apt to add a brief reflection to this overview as the aim with any conference is surely to get us to comprehend new research, and come away with a new understandings and ways of thinking. This conference certainly managed that. The stories of the objects we study are increasingly more intricate as we understand more and more about the production, use, and depositional processes involved. This applies not only to recent, newly discovered finds, but also to those that have been in museum collections for decades and are re-examined in a new light.

New approaches to object analysis, be that through experimental work, scientific techniques, or refined typologies, mean that we can increasingly appreciate the social dynamics in the later prehistoric period (and indeed other periods!) through the material culture left behind. Much of the

work presented over the weekend demonstrated our growing appreciation for the skills involved in object production, and the potential prehistoric retention of different elements over long periods, as well as the exotic nature of individual and collective pieces. On top of this, it was particularly striking how many objects were still accumulating stories post-recovery, demonstrating the dynamics of our own relationships with archaeological items. In many cases, local myths and legends still surround various oddities, preserving them within a community, while the Fawcett Collection demonstrates just how far we've progressed in terms of object collection for a purpose, beyond our innate desires to simply accumulate 'stuff'. In the current climate of austerity, it is surely more important than ever to be considering these elements and the relationships that can be built between archaeological objects and people.

What this conference has demonstrated, however, is that the current state of object studies is stronger than ever, and it will be interesting to see how the research and ideas presented develop in the future.

Matthew Knight is a PhD candidate at the University of Exeter, and is the LPFG's new Social Media Secretary (see pages 3-4). He can be e-mailed at: Mgk205@ex.ac.uk.

A recent find of an Early Iron Age socketed sickle from Congleton, Cheshire

Dot Boughton

Introduction

In April 2015, a metal detectorist discovered three joining fragments of an Early Iron Age socketed sickle near Congleton, Cheshire (Fig. 1). He reported the find to the local Finds Liaison Officer, Vanessa Oakden, who recorded the sickle as LVPL-23E5CF on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database. She also published it in her volume on PAS finds from Cheshire (Oakden 2015, no. 7). The sickle from Congleton appears to be identical to an example currently held at Norwich Castle Museum (Acc. No: NCM: 1959.38; Fig. 2) which is allegedly from Norfolk.



Fig. 1 (L): Early Iron Age sickle from Congleton, Cheshire. PAS reference LVPL-23E5CF © Portable Antiquities Scheme / Trustees of the British Museum

Fig. 2 (R): Early Iron Age sickle, presumably from Norfolk © Norwich Castle Museum

Description

The socketed heeled sickle from Congleton is the first Early Iron Age sickle recorded on the PAS database. It is part of the Llyn Fawr metalwork assemblage and dates from c. 800-600 BC. The object is in three pieces and has been irregularly broken during antiquity. The sickle consists of an oval socket and a decorated curved blade which is almost complete with a downwards facing point. The internal depth of the socket is 50.03mm. On each face of the socket, 4.25mm above the socket mouth, is a circular rivet hole. One rivet hole, measuring 6.10mm in diameter, is broken at the base, with the crack running down to the socket mouth. The rivet hole on the opposite face measures 5.81mm in diameter and is complete.

On one face of the object the heel, in line with the socket, is decorated with a decorative moulded circle/spiral. Three worn ridges expand from this circlet along the length of the blade, becoming more worn and flattened towards the incomplete point of the sickle. The upper and lower edges of the blade along with the point have been damaged. A large wedge of the object is missing between the central part of the blade and the internal edge of the socket.

The opposite face of the object has an oval depression which may have been a corresponding decorative circlet, now worn and damaged. Traces of three ridges can be seen in places on this face along the length of the blade, but the decoration is much more worn. It can be assumed that the decoration mirrored that of the other side.

The object has a mid-brown patina with patches of light green corrosion in places and adhering traces of iron corrosion. There are no visible casting seams. The iron corrosion indicates that it has come from somewhere waterlogged / iron-panned at one point.

Discussion

As agricultural harvesting or cutting tool, sickles were known since the Neolithic, when they were knapped from flint. In the Bronze Age, flint sickles were succeeded by cast copper alloy sickles, but hardly changed in size and shape except for the socket. This was a Late Bronze Age addition to sickles in Northern France and Britain, while Continental sickles often had flat hilts with single knobbed rivets (Evans 1881, 195). In addition to the socket, Early Iron Age sickles often have a 'heel' on the opposite side of the blade. All sickles have either gently curved or almost semi-circular blades which may be plain or strengthened by curved ribs along the edges. Until the discovery of the sickle from Congleton, only the sickle from 'Norfolk' was known to have additional moulded decoration: a moulded circle and M-shaped pattern in the area between the blade and the socket (**Fig. 2**).

The group of Early Iron Age socketed sickles from Britain is small with only eight single finds (three of which have uncertain findspots) and four sickles from two Welsh assemblages, Cardiff and Llyn Fawr, Glamorgan (**Figs. 3 and 4**):

Single finds:

River Thames at Hammersmith
 River Thames at Taplow
 Probably Southacre, Norfolk
 Icklingham, Suffolk
 Probably Norfolk
 Oxford region, Oxfordshire
 Dores, Inverness
 Errol, Perth and Kinross

Assemblages

Llyn Fawr, Glamorgan (3 sickles – two bronze, one iron)
 Cardiff, Glamorgan (1 complete sickle)



Fig. 3: Sickle and sickle blade fragment from Cardiff, by permission of the National Museum of Wales

They are all made from copper alloy except for the one iron socketed sickle from Llyn Fawr, which was discovered with other items of Early Iron Age metalwork and two of its immediate bronze forerunners (**Fig. 4**, overleaf).



Fig. 4 (L): Three sickles from Llyn Fawr, Glamorgan, by permission of the National Museum of Wales

Fig. 5 (R): Winterbourne Monkton, Wiltshire © Wiltshire Museum, Devizes

The chronology and typology of British and Irish bronze socketed sickles was discussed in great detail by Fox (1939). In his paper, Fox defined two groups: vertically socketed sickles and laterally socketed sickles, the latter of which includes our small group of Early Iron Age socketed sickles.

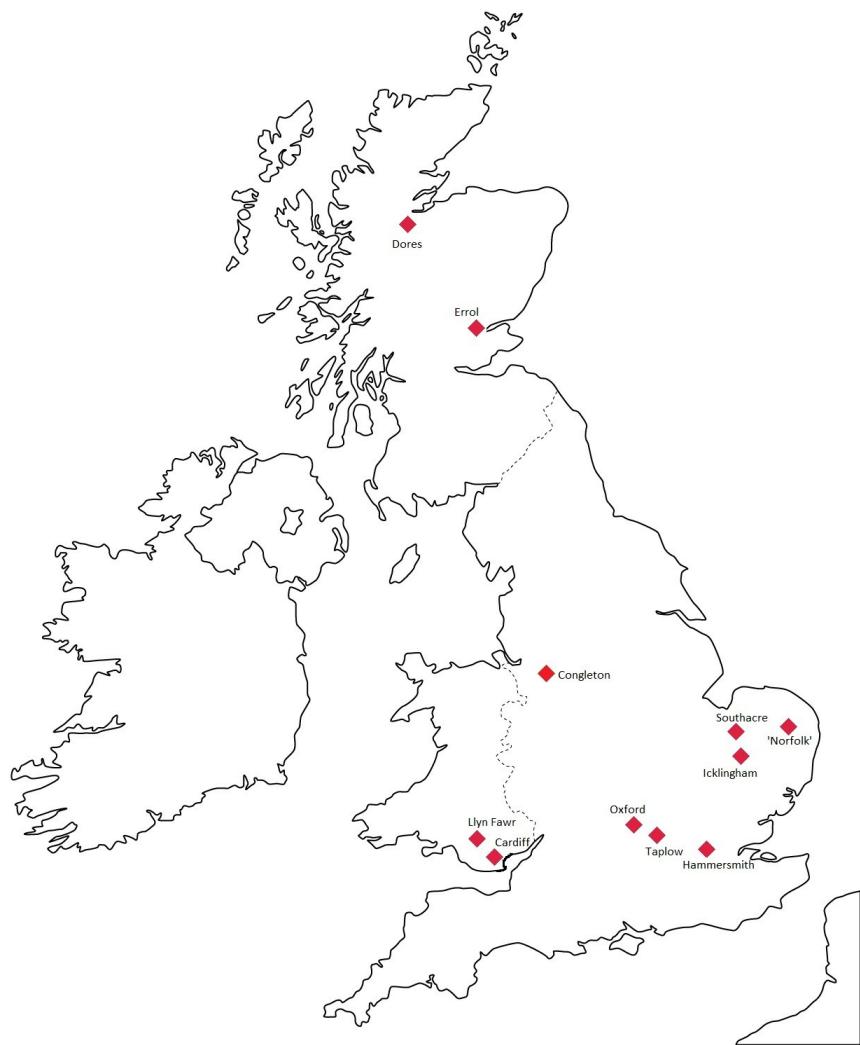
The development of 'laterally socketed sickles' began with sickles that consisted of a ring-socket with laterally attached curved blade, followed by sickles with conical socket, such as the specimens from the Vale of Wardour Hoard (Fox 1939, 223) and Winterbourne Monkton (PAS reference: WILT-E8DA70; **Fig. 5**), both Wiltshire. Socketed heeled sickles such as the new find from Congleton stand at the end of Fox's typology.

Like almost all other types of Early Iron Age metalwork, socketed sickles were either found singly or in metalwork hoards, such as Llyn Fawr and Cardiff. While socket fragments can be identified and dated, the dating and secure identification of sickle blade fragments is problematic.

Conclusion

British Early Iron Age socketed heeled sickles are small in number but distributed over a wide area with two single finds from Scotland but none from the Midlands or Northern England (**Fig. 6**). The new find from Congleton is the first one from the North West. It provides a link to the find from Norfolk with which it shares its shape, size and decoration. However, the sickle from Norfolk comes from the Woodward Collection and is not securely provenanced. With the sickles from the two Welsh hoards and this new find from Congleton we now have to look into the possibility that it was not an East Anglian find at all, but was possibly made in the west of Britain.

Fig. 6: Distribution of socketed heeled sickles



Bibliography

Evans, J. 1881. *The Ancient Bronze Implements and Ornaments of Great Britain and Ireland*. London: Longmans, Green and Co.

Fox, C. 1939. 'The Socketed Bronze sickles of the British Isles'. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society (New Series)* 5, 222-248

Oakden, V. 2015. *50 Finds from Cheshire. Objects from the Portable Antiquities Scheme*. Stroud: Amberley

Dot Boughton is the Portable Antiquities Scheme's Finds Liaison Officer for Cumbria and Lancashire, and is the LPFG's new Deputy Chair (see pages 3-4).

Announcements

Note from the editor

If you enjoy reading the LPFG newsletter, please consider contributing! I would be delighted to see more people submitting to the newsletter, to help it thrive and grow. Short articles and notes are welcome on any topic of interest to the group's membership, such as finds reports, book reviews, and introductions to new research. Please see the website for full submission guidelines (<https://sites.google.com/site/laterprehistoricfindsgroup/home/newsletter>). Articles can be academic or informal in style – both are very welcome.

I am also seeking to start a “letters page”, to encourage discussion and debate. If you'd like to comment on anything in the newsletter, alert the membership to upcoming books or events, or indeed would like to raise anything of potential interest to the group, please write to Anna Lewis at lpfgnews@outlook.com.

Survey of archaeological specialists

The environmental and labour market consultancy Landward Research Ltd. has been commissioned by the national heritage bodies (Cadw, Historic Environment Scotland and Historic England) to undertake a survey of archaeological specialists, aimed at understanding the distribution of specialists, their working environments, training needs and opportunities, and their thoughts on the future. More information is available at <http://www.landward.eu>. If you are an archaeological specialist or scientist, you can take part in the survey at <https://novisurvey.net/ns/n/specialists.aspx>, until 3rd February 2017.

Keep up with us online at:

<https://sites.google.com/site/laterprehistoricfindsgroup/home>.

E-mail us at:

laterprehistoricfindsgroup@gmail.com

Find us on [Facebook](#)

Or on [Twitter](#): @LtrPrehistFinds