

Chalky's Find

by Yvette Staelens

Senior Lecturer
Bournemouth University

Yvette Staelens, BA, FMA, FSA is a Senior Lecturer in Heritage and Museum Studies at Bournemouth University, UK and programme leader for the internationally acclaimed MA Museum Studies course there. She began her career as a museum archaeologist, working in Gloucester City Museum and the National Museum of Wales and recently worked on the research excavation at Stonehenge in April 2008.

Her senior management and directorial positions include head of service at Weymouth and Portland Museum Service, Scunthorpe Museums, and Much Wenlock Museum and Deputy Director of the Area Museum Council for the South West.

She has completed commissioned research for the Museums and Libraries Council (MLA), the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and others and also directed and managed cultural programmes including Festival at The Edge (FATE) and Girls Rock ON! (Youth Music).

She has recently been awarded a £204,000 knowledge transfer fellowship by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for her work on folk mapping.

Yvette also works internationally as a musician and her music website is www.rootsquartet.com

Castle Camp Primary School has been doing a project on 'Old Things'. Each child in year 2 has been asked to bring in something really old. On Friday afternoon Mrs Green clears the 'showing table' and the children chat excitedly about the things they might bring. The school bell sounds and the screech of scraping chairs signals the end of another school week.

"Don't forget your objects everyone".

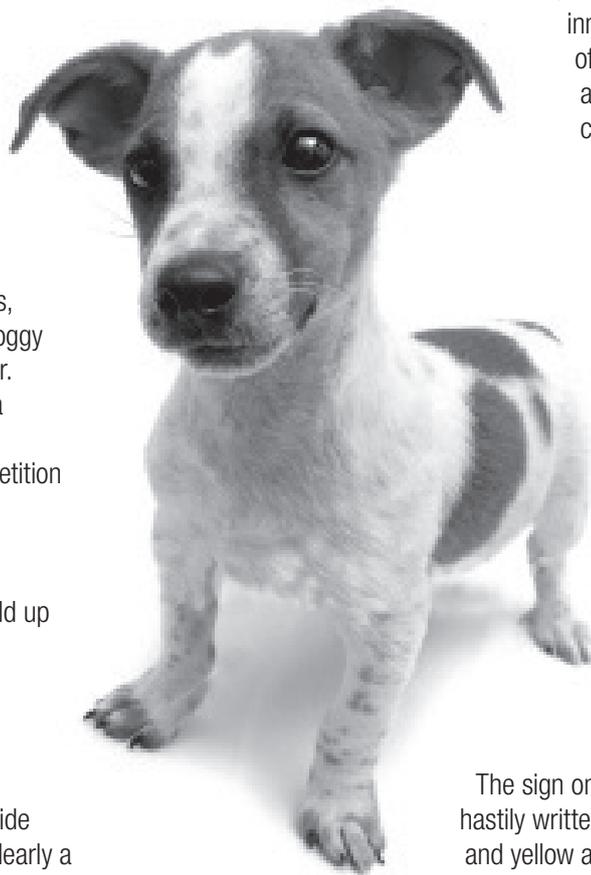
Monday morning brings an 8 o'clock rain shower and the children, anxious to bring out their treasures, hurriedly discard their coats, macs and wellie boots in soggy piles on the cloakroom floor. Pockets, shoe boxes, and a rainbow of plastic bags are quickly emptied. The competition to find the oldest and most unusual object has begun.

One by one the children hold up their chosen item and tell its story. Each precious artefact is then gently carried to the table and all the previously deposited items are hastily shoved aside to make room for what is clearly a more interesting and crucial piece of the past.

Amongst the toys, fossils, rocks, wartime memorabilia, books, old newspapers and personalia lies a small metal object and nobody quite knows what it is. Mrs Green picks it up to examine it. It is about the size of a packet of Wrigley's gum and appears to be made of silver, one side is decorated with swirling intertwined animals that look like elongated dragons, the other side is plain. Becky knows that her Grandad has given her something really special to show and share.

At eighty five years of age Mr Bellows is remarkably active. He walks his Jack Russell dog Chalky every morning and he is about to have a big adventure. It all began on a Friday. His normal route along the cliff path had been closed due to a landslide. Jim Bellows knew that the cliff had been unstable for some time and

had noticed several rock falls over the past five years or so. The heavy rain and westerly wind of the previous night had hammered their way into coastal fissures and a large slice of the cliff had sheared off onto the foreshore. It lay there, like a badly sliced birthday cake, peppered with grassy tufts and boulders. Herring gulls wheeled over head and the grey sea, now becalmed, lapped innocently in and out of the new pools and eddies it had created.



The sign on the stile was hastily written, PATH CLOSED, and yellow and black hazard tape had been strung across it. Jim was saddened at the loss of the cliff and decided, no

matter he'd take Chalky down onto the beach today and they could return along the top of the Chissel, and so they back-tracked down the foot path and headed for Castle Combe Farm. From there a green lane led down to the dunes. Jim had never met the farmer. He had heard that Old Man Totterdell was a reclusive sort of chap and was probably about the same age as him. The locals reckoned that the Totterdells had lived there since Domesday and that in recent times there had been some sort of family rift and that Old Man Totterdell had been left alone to keep things going.

Totterdell ran a small herd of dairy shorthorn cattle, just a dozen or so milkers and followers and received a monthly milk cheque that kept him going. Times had not been easy of late with

the turmoil of BSE and then Foot and Mouth and now the gradual rise of TB in the national herd. But he'd been lucky, the local badgers had not troubled his cattle and he'd not had a TB reactor for years. Old Man Totterdell was an old style farmer who kept a bit of this and a bit of that. Alongside the dairy herd he had a couple of middle white sows about to farrow, and a flock of Hampshire Downs nicely plump with lambs. This spring, all was well on Castle Combe Farm.

As Jim and Chalky approached the farm gate, a ragged border collie ran across the yard towards them. Stopped short by his tethering chain he snarled and barked furiously as Jim unlatched the gate which gouged the soil as he pushed it open. Hinged only with orange baler twine, the gate hadn't swung for years. Chalky's hackles were up; head down, eye to eye both dogs growled a long threatening crescendo of rage and were ready for a scrap.

Jim categorised Castle Combe as 'a tin and string farm'. At its heart lay the farmhouse, once a fine medieval timber framed hall. Generations of Totterdells had modernised it and from the mid 19th century, bedrooms, bathrooms, a larder, parlour, kitchen and scullery had been added. However, little had been spent on the fabric in recent years. At least not since Granny Totterdell died in 1958, and today broken window panes were boarded up with cardboard, doors and latches were mostly secured with the ubiquitous baler twine, and ivy clung to most of the walls choking the life out of the house. It had strangled the climbing roses long ago.

Granny Totterdell's roses had been one of the marvels of Castle Combe Farm and walkers would detour in June just to delight in their scent and profusion. Here could be found the heady delights of Albertine, Madame Gregoire Staechelin, and Zephyrine Drouhin straggling vigorously up the farmhouse, screening the outside privy and festooned over porch, each lovingly tended with tea-leaf mulch and farmyard muck.

Jim and Chalky quickly crossed the yard and the paddock, following the foot path along the hedgerow and then over a stile and onto the green lane. The lane was clearly ancient and had been cut deep into the landscape by generations of carts and tractors. Primroses dotted the banks and hawthorn, blackthorn and ash lined the field boundaries alongside. A trickle of spring water bubbled in the ditch on the right.

It felt good to be heading to the sea in spite of the morning's light drizzle. Ahead the crescent sweep

of the Chissel pebble bank beckoned and Jim let Chalky off the lead, the little dog scampered ahead, sniffing and pausing now and then to look back for Jim and then on again, panting, sniffing, digging and poking his curious little doggy head into fox, badger and rabbit holes.

The sea was in sight when Jim spotted Chalky digging furiously in a burrow. As he drew closer he noticed that the hole was perfectly round. He bent down and was amazed to find that it was in fact the rim of a pot, about 8 inches in diameter. Rabbits had dug right through the bottom of the pot and all that was left was the rim which formed the entrance to their burrow. It could have been there for centuries.

"Chalky, leave it, leave it!"

Chalky, looked up snout covered in mud and then toddled off. Jim used his walking stick to poke at an odd looking 'stone' sticking out of the hole. It fell out and he bent to pick it up. It felt quite heavy in his hand and when he rubbed off the mud it appeared to be decorated on one side.

"Yap, yap".

Chalky was barking aggressively, this meant either a stranger approaching, or another dog. Either way it could mean trouble. Jim quickly pocketed the object and set off to find Chalky.

The phone rang.

"Hi Grandad, it's Becky. We're doing a project at school on old things and Mummy thought that you might have something special that I could take in for the showing table. Can we come over later and see?"

Later that afternoon Jim showed Becky a gold and garnet brooch.

"And so where did this come from Grandad?"

"Ah now then, that belonged to your grandmother, it was her favourite, she always wore it to church. I believe her mother gave it to her when she was about your age."

"And what about this one, what is it?"

"Well, that's a bit of a mystery. I found it when I was walking Chalky down near the Chissel. We were in that sunken green lane near Castle Combe Farm and I found it, or rather Chalky found it in a rabbit burrow. What do you think it is?"

Becky turned looked closely at the strange wrestling dragons and frowned.

"Hmm dunno, I think I'm going to choose it to take to school."

"You can have it if you like."

"Wow, thanks Grandad."

A week later, Becky and her Mother went to the Quayworth Museum with Chalky's find. It had been voted the best 'Old Thing' by her classmates at school and now Becky wanted to find out all about it.

"Hello we've come to see the Curator."

Quayworth Museum was established in 1909. It had a local history collection, prints

and watercolours, local fossils and a small archaeological collection. This was mostly stray finds from the locality plus a small archive donated by Quayworth Secondary School from their excavation at Yarworth Roman Villa during the hot summer of 1976. The museum is managed by a Curator, supported by a museum assistant, a conservator, two full time and one part time attendant, plus volunteers. The Curator trained as an archaeologist but primary role is management of the museum service.

If the Museum can acquire this object it will be the first Anglo-Saxon artefact to be acquired by the museum and the first evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity in the area.

He bent down and was amazed to find that it was in fact the rim of a pot, about 8 inches in diameter.

QUAYWORTH MUSEUM	IDENTIFICATION SERVICE	QM 08/8
Description: Anglo-Saxon strap - end? 8th century with intertwined dragon decoration. silver/gilt Found at Combe Castle Farm in association with urn (undated) NGR - to be confirmed Landowner - ? Mr Totterdell		Action:
Name: Becky Darvill (age 6 years)		Date 8 March 2008
Address: Sydenham Lodge, 11 Central Road, Quayworth		Signed:
Please see overleaf for terms and conditions		Date of return:
		Signed:



Exercise

1. Becky is a child – how do you deal with this situation **ethically**? She believes that the object is hers, a gift from her Grandfather.
2. The object has come from what is likely to be an **archaeological site** on private land. Who do you contact and how do you proceed? Old Man Totterdell is the landowner and he knows nothing of the find or the possibility that the pot in the rabbit hole may be an Anglo-Saxon cremation urn and could indicate a cemetery in the locality. Was Jim Bellows **trespassing** when he took the green way path? How can you check? Who do you contact?
3. The **ownership** of the object is unclear? Who does it belong to and how do you communicate this to the owner and to Becky and her Mother who brought it in? The object was found on Old Man Totterdell's land, however if it is made from silver or gold it may be subject to **national legislation** on treasure trove. What is the legal position and who do you contact?
4. You wish to **acquire** this artefact for the museum. Who do you negotiate with and do what about the issue of reward or payment?
5. Becky and her Mum went to the local newspaper after you identified the strap-end. The archaeologist at the **regional museum** has seen the news report. He is an expert on Anglo-Saxon metalwork and he wants to **publish** the artefact and to **acquire** it for his museum. How do you deal with this?
6. The **national museum** has been alerted by the fact that the artefact is a unique specimen of its type and also wishes to **acquire** it. How do you deal with this?
7. This will be the first Anglo-Saxon artefact in the Quayworth local history museum. Does this mean that it is imperative that you **acquire** it or should it go to the regional archaeological museum, or the national museum? Who decides and what about the finder/owner?
8. Whatever action you take, you will end up possibly upsetting someone, would it be best to record the find and send the information to the regional archaeological sites and monuments database and do nothing else? What is the best action to take **ethically**?
9. The media coverage has put this story into the public domain and whatever action you take is likely to have **media** interest, how do you **manage** this?
10. The media coverage has also alerted your governing body to the importance and potentially high value of this find, how do you **manage communications** with your committee members and **stakeholders**?
11. As an archaeologist, you as Curator, are keen to **acquire** and study this object. Is this appropriate given the nature of the museum's existing collections and what **management policies and procedures** will need to be addressed if this action is taken?