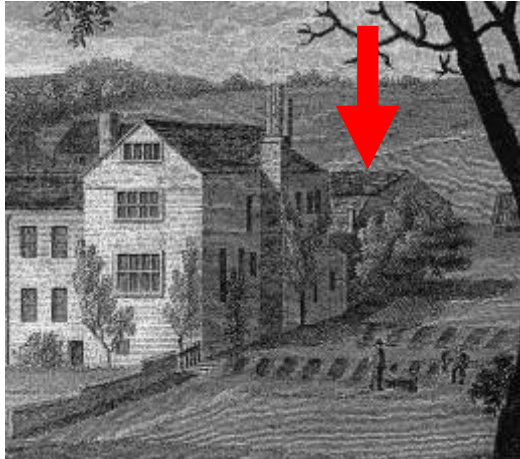


# Newsletter

Volume 1 Issue 2

November 2009

## Royton Hall Excavation



Royton Hall in 1793. The building arrowed is the one described in the following article by Michael Higgins, Chairman, Royton Lives Through the Ages, about a recent excavation where members from several of our societies were involved, with Royton Lives Through the Ages being assisted by the Tameside Archaeological Society and MADASH.

Royton Lives Through the Ages (RLTA) was formed by Royton Local History Society to oversee 3 years of excavations on the site of Royton Hall (2005-2007). The older parts of the hall (the East Wing), were excavated first uncovering a fine central staircase tower and sections of 15th century wall in the northern part of the wing. 2007's dig uncovered mainly 18th century cellars of the West Wing. However excavations at the East Wing gable end porch area late in the dig uncovered sections of wall to the north of the porch that were contemporary with the late medieval walls found in 2005. Alas we were not able to explore the line of the wall to the north or to see if it bore any relation to agricultural buildings shown on a 1793 illustration and the 1840s O.S and Tithe maps.

Royton Hall Yard was an integral part of the hall, especially during the 19th century when two families of farmers rented the hall, using the park for pasture and meadow. They sublet the unused rooms to tenants. There were bound to be many Victorian finds. Our finds in October thus also included small bottles and clog irons. During the 18th century the park was used also as a paddock, the stables holding 18 horses. The Yard was also known as the Fold, giving its name to the road leading out of it (Top of Fold or modern Middleton Road). The early Royton village developed as a stretch of houses along this road 'at the corner of my Fould' as the 1765 rental book has it.

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### New Equipment available at

#### GMAU

Following the closure of our sister unit, the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit has purchased the following equipment which members of the Federation can use for free.

- Plane Table and Alidade
- Dumpy Level and Staff
- Ranging Rods
- Optical Square

Thank you to all who have contributed to this newsletter. Keep those contributions coming in. The 'Dig Manchester' legacy website now has pdfs of the booklets produced for the Moston Hall and the Northenden Mill excavations. These are on the page <http://www.digmanchester.com/library/archaeologicalreports.html> under the heading 'Site Guide' on the 'Moston' and 'Northenden' pages.

## Some Forthcoming Talks

### **Bolton Archaeology & Egyptology Society—(at Loyals Lounge, The Town Hall, Bolton , 7:30pm)**

Wednesday 18/11/09 "Recent Excavations in Greater Manchester" Norman Redhead

Wednesday 20/01/10 "The origins of mummification in Ancient Egypt" Vicky Gashe

### **Glossop & Longendale Archaeological Society**

Tuesday 05/01/10 "(Some of) Orkney's Archaeology" Peter Leeming

### **MRIAS (at Rm E0.05/05A, John Dalton Building, Chester St, Manchester. Tel 0161 980 7612)**

Friday 13/11/2009 "Chetham's Library" Michael Powell

Friday 11/12/2009 To Be Announced

### **Royton Lives Through the Ages (at Downey House, Church Street, Royton, Oldham, 7:30pm)**

Monday 14/12/09 "What the papers said" (Victorian Newspapers) Glen Atkinson

Monday 11/01/10 "Townley Hall, Burnely" Ken Darwen

### **Saddleworth Archaeological Trust (at The Masonic Hall, High St, Uppermill, 7:30pm)**

Tuesday 17/11/2009 "The Mesolithic in Northern England, implications of recent research" Andy Myers

Tuesday 08/12/2009 "Recent Archaeological Research in Greater Manchester" Norman Redhead

### **South Trafford Archaeological Group (at STAG HQ, behind Timperley Old Hall, 7:30pm)**

Friday 27/11/2009 STAG's 30th AGM followed by "Dunham Farmsteads" Mike Nevell

### **Wigan Archaeological Society (at Baden Powell Centre, Wigan at 7:30pm)**

Friday 02/12/2009 "OAN update" Ian Miller

## Federation members

The following groups are members of the Federation:

Bolton Archaeology and Egyptology Society, Bury Archaeological Group, Darwen Local History Society, Glossop and Longendale Archaeological Society, Littleborough Historical and Archaeological Society, Mellor Archaeological Trust, Moston And District Archaeological and Social History Society, Prestwich Heritage Society, Royton Lives Through the Ages, Saddleworth Archaeological Trust, South Manchester Archaeological Research Team, South Trafford Archaeological Group, Tameside Archaeological Society, Wigan Archaeological Society.

Part of the RLTA Project was to landscape the finished site and cut an outline of the hall in the turf, complete with new interpretation board and visitor path. With Oldham Parks Department's help we were ready to commence the landscaping in October 2009 and thought that a small dig to explore the area north of the East wing porch could be done in conjunction with the initial stages of the turf laying and landscaping as the Parks Department digger crew were available to give us a hand.

We therefore again sought the supervision of Adam Thompson, who had overseen the earlier digs and was available under his new role as Principal archaeologist for the Centre for Applied Archaeology at the University of Salford (CfAA).

After preparatory resistivity and magnetometry readings undertaken by TAS volunteers we were able to start the dig on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> October, the first action being to scarp away part of the bank behind 19th century buildings on Middleton Road. Tuesday was a washout with rain making the site almost unworkable and putting the dig in some jeopardy as we had not yet found anything. But on Wednesday, with good weather and 9 volunteers we uncovered a large drain and adjacent wall of a 'very large building'. The wall length seemed to be 16th or 17th century and was compatible with a barn or shippon of the period. Thursday saw cleaning work and a first layer of a connecting yard pathway uncovered. Friday was the last day of digging, recording and filling in.

Finds are still being examined and contained much Victorian pottery, clay pipe sections, including a complete bowl with belt and buckle motif, and a 1923 shilling.

All in all I felt the dig was a success as we had found the 'barn' and tentatively dated its construction. We also found the yard features intact with nothing exhausted. And everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.

RLTA could not have succeeded without the help of the Tameside and Moston groups, along with other volunteers. This is a good start to the aims of the GMAF.

Michael Higgins

For more information about the Royton Hall excavations see the Royton Lives Through the Ages website <http://www.zen42299.zen.co.uk/index.htm>

### Fred Broadhurst 1928-2009

Fred sadly passed away on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009, age 81. Following his retirement from the Dept of Geology at Manchester University in 1990 he became a good friend to GMAU and other archaeologists in Greater Manchester by offering advice, freely and gladly, on the complex geology of a range of archaeological excavations and historic buildings. Fred was wonderfully enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and I have fond memories of him holding his audience spellbound at the Mellor Old Vicarage excavation site as he described the 300 million year old rock formations that had once formed part of a river delta. (see photograph)

Norman Redhead



*Gristlehurst 2009*

At the site of Gristlehurst Hall (SD 84691220), further investigation in 2009 included extensions to the north (6N) and south (6S) sides of the previous excavation.

At its west end, trench (6N) contained part of a well-preserved late 18<sup>th</sup> century yard, paved with flagstones and cobble infill, terminating on the east against a flimsy stone foundation. A robbed stone drain and its adjacent ceramic replacement had seriously disturbed the area east of the foundation, in close proximity to the farmhouse.



Trench 6N

In view of the complicated nature of its stratigraphy and lack of time, we postponed work at trench (6N) until the following season.

Trench (6S) situated immediately south of the building found earlier on Well Brow, revealed the flagstone corner foundation of a small 17<sup>th</sup> century building, erected on a clay platform up to 0.36m thick. The foundation had been enclosed on its west and south sides by a narrow gully, probably dug to accommodate a wall of edge-set flagstones originally secured at the base with packing stones, surrounded by a compact gravel layer.

The purpose of the clay platform became clear when it was removed to reveal a backfilled ditch 1.5m wide by 0.6m deep, emerging from the east end of the trench for a short distance before joining a lower ditch running at right angles. This second ditch also 0.6m deep by 1.5m wide at the base followed the downslope of Well Brow.

These ditches were part of an earlier system deliberately filled in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to provide more space (in places the backfill had been cobbled over). However, drainage remained a problem, evidently solved by laying a drain in the backfill. Hollowed out sections of split tree trunk laid end-to-end and covered by flagstones resolved this.

The ditch fill contained a few sherds of medieval and early post-medieval pottery, but more unusually fragments from a bakestone, perhaps made from local mudstone, or possibly imported from Delph near Saddleworth, which had a reputation for bakestone manufacture from the medieval period onwards.

Norman Tyson



Trench 6S

*Comings and goings from the Museum*



The Manchester Museum has made a number of changes to the archaeology displays. The Museum recently took down the Kyrenia ship scale model (left) from its prominent position suspended from the ceiling in the Mediterranean Gallery. This was partly for reasons of maintenance and partly in anticipation of the redevelopment of this gallery and the Egyptology Gallery as part of a £1.63 million Heritage Lottery Fund project, finishing in October 2012. The ship may be used in an exhibition in America in the short term and may eventually be transferred to the Cypriot Antiquities Service. Whilst it is always sad to lose a high-quality and high profile exhibit, the fact remains that the ship is a scale model and there is no archaeological material from the Kyrenia shipwreck in the Manchester Museum collections. The ship served as an impressive centrepiece to the Museum's Mediterranean Gallery but now that the future role and content of the gallery are about to change it is a good time to remove it. The Mediterranean Gallery is about 16 years old and has served the Museum and archaeology well but is now showing its age (the industry working life of a gallery is 5 years). Public consultation has shown that visitors would prefer to see more local and regional archaeology and there is certainly scope to widen the scope of the archaeological interpretation that we currently offer beyond Classical and Mediterranean antiquities.

The Museum has also taken the plaster casts of the Anglo-Saxon crosses from Ruthwell and Bewcastle on the Scottish Borders (right) off display as part of the redevelopment of the Museum's foyer area. The casts were purchased during the 1950s and although there has been a lot of interest in the reconstruction of the painted decoration, it remains the case that there is relatively little in the archaeological collection, with which to create a context for the crosses. That is not to say that the originals are not deeply fascinating objects and there is clearly value in having the opportunity to display the crosses side-by-side in order to compare their iconography. The Museum is exploring the possibility of transferring them to another institution.



Although several high quality replicas have been removed, the Museum has recently put the Manchester Roman altar (below) on display to the public for the first time. Discovered last spring during excavations undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology on the site of the Tom Garner Garage at the junction of Chester Road and Great Jackson Street, the altar is one of a relatively small number of inscriptions found in Manchester. Two other inscriptions displayed in the Museum's Mediterranean Gallery are on loan to the organisation from other institutions so at last we have an altar of our very own! The inscription (reproduced below) on the altar has been translated by Paul Holder of the John Rylands Library and it tells us that it erected by Aelius Victor in honour of the Mother Goddesses of the Hananeftis and other peoples in fulfilment of a vow. The Hananeftes or Chananeftes were a German tribe living at the mouth of the Rhine. Presumably Aelius Victor was part of the Roman army and was recruited there or served there before being posted to Britain. In the context of the Museum's Manchester Gallery the altar is important evidence of the journeys that people have made in order to live and work in the city and of the historical diversity of the city's population.

Last, but not least, the Museum's branch of the Young Archaeologists' Club (the Man Yacs) continued its annual programme of activities with a visit to York to see the excavations at Hungate in June. Recently the members dug 1m trial pits at Timperley Old Hall. They were tremendously excited at the opportunity to dig and found 18<sup>th</sup> century pottery and clay pipe stems. Thanks are due to Clare Pye and to Derek at STAG for organising the day.

Bryan Sitch  
Head of Human Cultures  
The Manchester Museum



DEABUS MATRIBUS  
HENANEFTIS  
ET OLLTOTIS  
VICTOR  
AELIUS  
VSLLM

The Roman Altar from Chester Road. Photo courtesy of GMAU

The geology of the Pennine edge means that as demand for coal grew in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century numerous small coal pits were established. Many of these were drift mines sometimes known as “Breast High” ( a photograph of one is reproduced below).

A team from Littleborough Historical and Archaeological Society (LHAS) consisting of David Grayson, Bernard Pratt and Peter Schofield have been excavating the entrance area of one of these mines on Cleggswood Hill just outside Littleborough. The pit had a tramway which ran down the hill to a staithe on the Rochdale Canal. Early in the season the team uncovered the standing remains of a small building now thought to be a Blacksmith’s Shop.

Over the last few weeks they have found a stone channel that appears to have been built in the centre of the tramway leading east from the original mine entrance. This ran at the rear of the blacksmith’s shop and into the mine entrance building. Whilst they were excavating this they found a full section of cast iron plateway which has now been cleaned up and stored. Just recently they have managed to establish the positions of the boiler and steam engine complete with their respective drainage systems. The dig will continue next year.

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As well as an active digging programme LHAS are just about to take possession of the old station buildings at Littleborough under a lease from Northern Rail. Architects plans are being prepared to convert the building to an archive and local history study centre.

Peter Bone



*Archaeological survey of Brown Road Farm , Broadbottom*

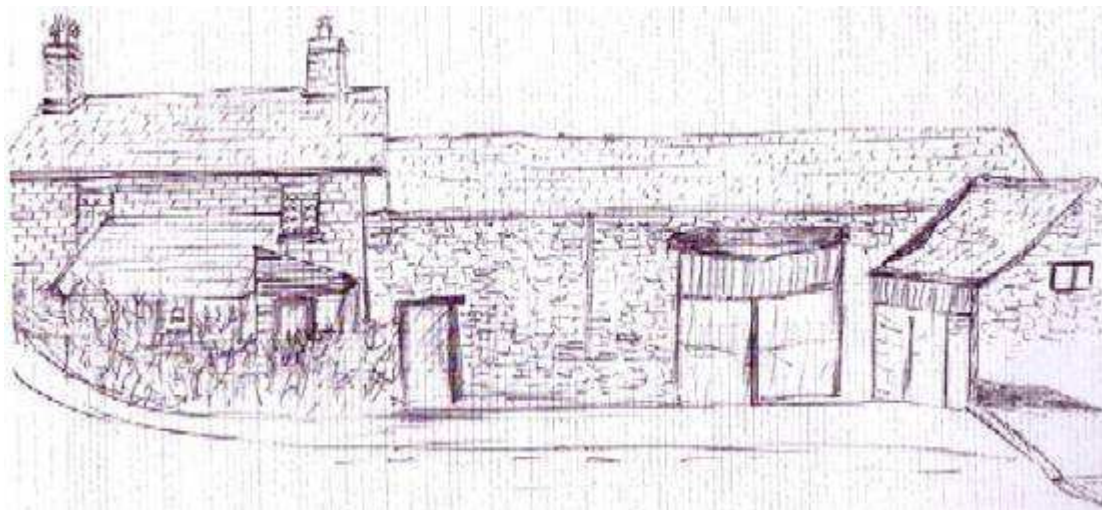
On behalf of GMAU, TAS routinely visits sites on the Historic Environment Record, and in spring of 2009 we discovered a threshing barn in Broadbottom, one of only two recorded in the Tameside area (the other is at Audenshaw Lodge, previously studied by TAS in the 1990s).

This barn is still part of a working farm, but the owner invited our society to undertake further works. Historical research in the possession of the farm owner shows that the farm has been tenanted since before 1600.

TAS decided to undertake an RCHM(E)/English Heritage Grade 3 building survey of the barn, together with a metal detecting survey of three adjacent fields. This metal detecting has, to date, produced 16 coins dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century through to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The barn was surveyed with the accompaniment of aerial acrobatics from the recently fledged swallows. The building survey is at the report writing stage.

Both aerial photographs in the farm owner's possession and field walking by TAS identified anomalies in one of the fields. Permission has been granted for test pits to be dug to investigate these anomalies and also for the evaluation of two wells which were also discovered. This series of investigations will be undertaken in 2010.

Kevin Wright



Sketch of Brown Road farm

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## Mellor Archaeological Trust

With the end of the Mellor Heritage Project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, a celebratory conference will be held in Stockport Town Hall on Saturday January 16. In addition to reviews of the archaeology and history of Mellor, there will be short presentations on "What the project has meant to me" by professionals and volunteers who have worked on the project and on "What Mellor means in the wider context" by various speakers. The day will end with a talk by Julian Richards on "At home with the Ancestors, bringing the past to life". Further details will be on [www.mellorheritage.org.uk](http://www.mellorheritage.org.uk) or from [annhearle@hearle.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:annhearle@hearle.eclipse.co.uk).

John Hearle

### Wigan Rectory Project

A number of test pits have now been opened on the Rectory site – and some interesting features are already beginning to emerge. Work started here at the beginning of August, on what we are calling Area 1, with a topographic and ‘general area’ resistivity survey. We followed this with a ‘pseudo-section’ survey which gave us an idea of the depth of any archaeology present. (Area 1 is where we are expecting to find the remains old Frog Lane which we presume was buried when the grounds of the new Rectory was expanded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.) Our surveys, however did not give us exactly the results we were expecting as low resistivity readings appeared where we expected the high resistivity of the road surface and vice-versa. Our test pits were therefore located to see if we could identify the features indicated in our surveys.



**Test pit 1** was located over the high-res anomaly to the south of the surveyed area and revealed, at a depth of about 20cm, a straight edge of hard compacted soil running roughly north-south. On the west side of the edge the soil is much softer. Our initial interpretation is that this is part of the formal garden feature shown in this area on the 1849 OS map.

**Test pit 2** revealed a finely cobbled surface laying just 5cm below the surface. This pit was located just where we expected to find the old Frog Lane, however its construction of small river pebbles, suggests a path rather than a road. Maps of this area, drawn after the construction of the 19<sup>th</sup> century hall, indicate that a path was laid here on top of the old lane when the grounds were extended.

The next test pits were therefore located to try to identify the edges of this path.

**Test pit 3**, located 1m south of test pit 2, revealed a cinder surface lying just below the top soil.

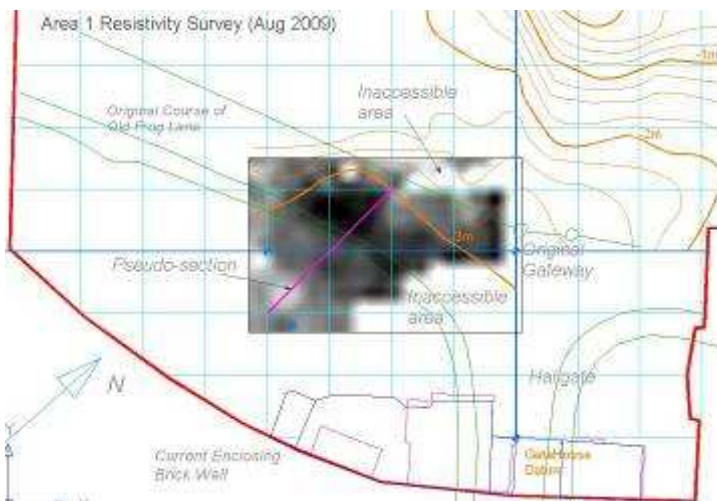
**Test pit 4** was put in just north of test pit 2 but further west in a better hope of catching the edge. There was no sign of any surface in this one; however at a depth of about 20cm, random sandstone blocks and bricks began to appear suggesting the remains of a wall or maybe the old road.

**Test pit 5** (located another 1m south of test pit 3) drew a blank, although its initial depth is only 10cm. When test pit 3 (with the cinder surface) was extended into test pit 2 (with the pebble surface), we realised that the former actual lay over the latter. Careful examination of later maps of this area suggests that the original path was extended to access the rear of the gatehouse which could explain the cinders lying on top of the pebbles.

Lastly extending test pit 2 further north showed that the pebble surface continues a further 50cm before disappearing under the rising embankment to the north.

The Rectory Project has been funded by the Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust with a Grant from the “Curating in the Community” scheme. Its requirement is for us to involve the local community and over the next few weeks we will be inviting groups of pupils from a number of schools and colleges in the area to come down and spend a day with us excavating, surveying, recording and generally helping us expand on the work we have already started (more details on our website at [www.WiganArchSoc.co.uk](http://www.WiganArchSoc.co.uk))

Bill Aldridge





The most important piece of commercial archaeology since the last newsletter has undoubtedly been the excavation by OAN at the Miller Street car park site of the proposed Cooperative HQ. The Co-Op have been model developers, funding much of the archaeology before planning permission was obtained. This development site, on the corner of Dantzic and Angel Street, was once covered by houses, shops and industrial premises but was cleared after bomb damage in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. This was once part of Angel Meadow, an area notorious for slums and overcrowded lodgings famously described by Friedrich Engels as 'hell on earth'. Archaeologists were pleased to find substantial remains of cellars and courtyards. Many of these originated as respectable 18<sup>th</sup> century properties which declined and were subdivided in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as Manchester became overcrowded. There was good evidence for housing improvements in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. An open day was held at the end of the dig, on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October which was attended by around 1000 visitors. The CoOp have funded the dig and will look at ways to display the archaeology on the adjacent public realm site. (see photographs left and immediately below).



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GMAU have been busy getting to grips with and commenting on the draft Planning Policy Statement No. 15 – Plan-

ning and the Historic Environment. This is due to be published next spring and will have a profound affect on the way heritage interests are dealt with in the planning system. It will replace existing guidance documents PPG 15 (Historic Environment) and PPG16 (Archaeology). It will change terminology for heritage sites, with Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments being lumped together under the term 'designated heritage assets' whilst the importance of non-Scheduled archaeological remains (which make up about 98% of archaeology) will be given equal recognition as 'undesigned heritage assets'. Historic Environment Records are placed at the heart of a planning system that demands pre-application consultation to determine if heritage assets will be impacted on by development proposals. There is much more emphasis on public benefit and participation. The thirteen policies that make up PPS 15 are supported by a practice guidance produced by English Heritage. There is a lot of tightening up to do in these documents to make them watertight and consistent, if the government is keep its promise of no reduction in current protection levels. PPS15 is regarded unfavourably by Conservation Officers but archaeologists feel more positive about it. GMAU's response can be found on our website.



Whilst commercial archaeology has been relatively quiet in recent months, the same cannot be said for society activity! There has been an exciting range of field projects undertaken over the summer and autumn months, some of which are show cased in this newsletter. Five medieval hall sites, a bleachworks, and a mesolithic camp site have been investigated by Federation member societies. The Mellor Heritage Project held probably its last major open weekend event at the beginning of September. Over 1,300 visitors saw the results of this season's excavations in the Old Vicarage Gardens (see photo, right). We look forward to the publications on this significant excavation and to the celebration event at Stockport Town Hall on 16<sup>th</sup> January to mark the end of the Heritage Project.



Norman Redhead

## Greater Manchester Archaeology Federation

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The Greater Manchester Archaeology Federation was formed in 2009. It is a loose organization of local archaeology societies from Greater Manchester with affiliated groups from neighbouring counties.

### GMAU report

As reported in the last issue, this year has been an exceptionally difficult one for commercial archaeology. Following on the back of UMAU's closure at the end of July, it is sad to report that another important University Archaeology Unit that specialises in industrial archaeology is to close – this being ARCUS at Sheffield University. However, it is pleasing to note that Salford University has now established a Centre for Applied Archaeology, under the Directorship of Mike Nevell.

GMAU have produced an annual report for the financial year April 2008 to March 2009, which can be found on our website [www.gmau.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.gmau.manchester.ac.uk). The downturn in developments is reflected in the planning statistics, as there were around 5,000 fewer planning applications compared with the previous year. Yet the level of archaeological brief writing and advisory letters in response to planning proposals has remained constant.

(Continued on page 9)

### New publications and reports

Does your society have a new publication or report which you would like to be included in the newsletter? If so contact Peter at GMAU.

### Equipment at GMAU (cont from Page 1)

- A range of Sieves
- A3 landscape Weatherwriter
- Laser Distance Meter (30m range)
- Pegs (wooden and plastic),

GMAU is also looking into obtaining some more basic tools (spades, trowels etc) and some photographic scales.

To borrow these, contact Peter at GMAU on 0161 275 2321.



GMAU staff with some of the equipment