

Newsletter 144 Supplement. August 2013

- Owing to serious hardware and software problems MRIAS Project Officer **Peter Bone** was omitted from the main Newsletter masthead. We wish to re-assure members that Peter is still very much our Project Officer and Committee member!
- We are pleased to say that MRIAS Vice Chairman **Gordon Browne** has agreed to a talk in next year's programme, the talk will be titled: 'The Life and Times of Joseph Whitworth'. Also MRIAS member **David George** has agreed to lead a walk next summer along the Rochdale Canal from Ancoats/Piccadilly to Castlefield, finishing at Albert's Shed.
- Two new MRIAS publications are now available 'Thomas Hoyle and the Mayfield Print Works, Manchester - A Short Illustrated History' 54pp (£3.50 plus postage) and 'John Ashbury and the History and Archaeology of the Ashbury Railway Carriage and Iron Company' 135pp (£7.50 plus postage) Small print run. (admin@mrias.co.uk.)
- For those who you who might not have come across MRIAS member **Mike Nevell's** 's blog - archaeologyuos - here is a treat from the 24th August: **Excavating Peterloo**:

Picture the scene on a summer's day: tens of thousands of protesters campaigning for the vote; a government fearing revolution; the army brought into to break up a large rally; hundreds of protestors injured and dozens killed. This situation is not Cairo in 2013 but Manchester in 1819. August 16th marked the anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre. On that day 194 years ago around 60,000 campaigners gathered on St Peter's Fields in Manchester (roughly the area between the present Free Trade Hall and St Peter's Square) to demand Parliamentary reform. Trouble began when the yeomanry tried to arrest the speakers at the rally. The crowd panicked and the hussars were then ordered to make a sabre charge in an effort to restore order. That charge left up to 15 dead and around 700 injured: and the term Peterloo? That was used to mock the soldiers at Manchester by echoing Waterloo. The soldiers from that battle, which ended the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, were seen by many as heroes for helping save Britain from totalitarian rule, so, such a jibe was two edged: the 15th King's Hussars had fought at Waterloo, and their actions in 1819 were verging on the totalitarian intolerance the battle had been fought for.

*The massacre was widely condemned at the time and remembered in Percy Bysshe Shelley's political poem *The Masque of Anarchy*. It has been described by some historians as a world changing event and it has been claimed that it led to the rise of the Chartist Movement (from which grew trade unions) and even that it resulted in the establishment of the Manchester Guardian and ultimately helped pave the way towards ordinary people being given the vote.*

So where does archaeology come into this political tale? Through Dig Greater Manchester's latest excavation in Hulme. Manchester's Hulme Barracks, which were occupied from 1804 to 1915, were the home of the 15th King's Hussars. The site housed up to 399 hussars and 20

officers at the height of its use in 1839. It was established at a time of war (against France) and its location on the southern edge of the most famous manufacturing town in Britain was also a statement about the worry such a large urban population, the largest outside London, could pose to the Government of the day. The buildings stopped being a cavalry barracks in 1895 and were used by infantry battalions before it was sold to the Manchester Corporation in 1915. The corporation demolished the majority of the site but kept the now Grade II listed officers' quarters and mess, which was used as a bowling green clubhouse before being handed to the St George's Community Association.

Since there had been no building work on the site since it was demolished, most of the area being a park, the excavations were able to uncover undisturbed deposits. Four trenches were positioned to target the site's barracks, canteen, riding school, and terraced houses. The excavation of the remains of the barracks (two-storey structures with ground floor stables and first-floor living accommodation accessed from a long veranda) was made difficult by later tree planting, but the other three trenches all produced significant remains. The foundations of the original brick-built perimeter wall of the barracks were found in several locations and in one area back-to-back houses were found to abut this wall. These early 19th century houses were occupied by retired hussars and the Census Returns from the mid-19th century show how the houses around the barracks had become an ex-soldiers' colony.

The site produced large quantities of material from the canteen area, and around the barracks and workers' housing. This material culture included pottery and glass bottles from throughout the 19th century, as well as buttons from military uniforms and other items that could be directly linked to the hussars who occupied the site. Amongst the most domestic items were a number of single-shot bottles of the beef extract drink Bovril, found along with clay pipes and uniform buttons. First made in 1871 the drink was originally known as Johnston's Fluid Beef, before being renamed in 1886. They may have been issued to the hussars in their rations and probably formed a welcome hot drink on a cold Manchester winter's night.

These remains provide, for the first time, physical evidence to illustrate the human side of the story of the hussars in the early 19th century. The survival of the barracks throughout that century reflected both the continuing worries of successive Governments and also Manchester's role as a recruitment ground for the army. They are also a timely reminder (it's just six years until Peterloo's 200th anniversary) that archaeology has the ability to produce new evidence beyond the textile factory about this important period, when the world's first industrial city was emerging.

archaeologyuos / August 24, 2013 archaeologyuos.wordpress.com **Dr Mike Nevell** (Head of Archaeology, The Centre for Applied Archaeology, University of Salford.)