

## NEWTON ST CYRES HISTORY GROUP



On Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May we were pleased to welcome back Colin Hart. He is an experienced and knowledgeable metal detector, and we spent an interesting evening looking at and discussing more of his finds.

He had arranged and laid out all manner of objects, some very old and some more recent, which he has discovered in locations all over the country but mainly in the south west. The collection of 'crotal bells' related to our previous evening on bell founding, because they were made by bell founders for keeping track of cattle and other animals, from the late 17<sup>th</sup> onwards. If they had metal peas inside then they rusted, but if they had clay baked peas, they survive and the bells still ring! Another animal related item was a horn protector, used to put over the point of an animal's horns, usually after it had been cut off, for safety.

Trade weights were used to try to prevent cheating before measures were standardised. Colin had one with 'Exon' and a dagger, the city's symbol, inscribed on it. Also involving the world of commerce were examples of trade tokens, used instead of money in an employer's shop, but which entered the general monetary system when there was a shortage of small coinage. He also had coin weights, which were used to stop people clipping coins for the value of the metal, as well as pre-decimal coins - sixpences, shillings, 2 shilling pieces etc.

Seals of various kinds tell a story of trade and imports and exports, of guano, used as a fertiliser, of flax from Russia, and of the cloth trade, when the seals were often stamped with the yardage and put on the bale. Even old GPO seals, threaded with a wire to hold them on to the email bag, have been found.

Buckles and buttons of all kinds often turn up, which have come from boots and shoes, belts, horse and animal harnesses, hats and sword belts, or from military uniforms, livery belonging to family servants, or uniforms of midwives, the RAC, the Fire Service etc.

Miscellaneous items such as thimbles, jewellery, clock winders are clear, but some things can not be identified. We were all foxed by metal shoe pattens (to keep one's shoes out of the mud), a calf weaner, and a sheep worm fluke dispenser!

It was interesting to hear that the sanitary arrangements of the past are one of the main reasons for the finds made in fields. Night soil was collected in the towns and piled up outside the cities where a large manure heap would result. This was then carted out to the country farms and spread on the fields, and thus lost domestic items can lie underneath the ground for years until someone finds them.

Colin explained how the signal received through the metal detector can vary according to the size, depth and angle of the buried object, and also whether the soil is wet or dry. He is very experienced in interpreting the sound he hears, but it was clear that a great amount of digging is required to be a successful metal detectorist!

Meetings are usually on Thursday evenings in the village hall club room and start at 7.30pm.

Everyone is welcome. There is a small charge of £2 which includes tea and biscuits.

For further information contact Jean 851337 Isobel 851351

## **NEWTON ST CYRES HISTORY GROUP**

### Next meetings

Sept 19 <sup>th</sup>	Helen Turnbull - The Story of a Manor – Chudleigh 1050-2012
Oct 17th	Lynda Pearce Pictures from the Past, Newton St Cyres
Nov 14th	?? Lynette on Miners of N St C
Dec 12th	Christmas meeting

We have no special membership arrangements. Everyone is welcome. If you would like further details ring Jean 851337 or Isobel 851351