



## News and events

- **Our next meeting** will be on **Wednesday 18 October**. Collins Antiques and the Collins family played a central role in the life of the village; Anne Atton (née Collins) will tell the story of **99 years of Collins Antiques in Wheathampstead** from 1907 to 2006.
- The Herts Association for Local History Annual Symposium 2023 '**Rebels, Traitors and Eccentrics**' will be on **Saturday 14 October** at the Katherine Warington School, Harpenden. To book your place, go to <https://tinyurl.com/4nt7pvrp>

## The Palm-cup

The most important historic relic ever found in Wheathampstead is probably the 7<sup>th</sup> century



bronze ewer that is now in the British Museum (BM), recorded as having been found in 1887. Society member Ray Wilson has been researching a much less well-known object, a palm-cup that apparently was found at the same time as the ewer.

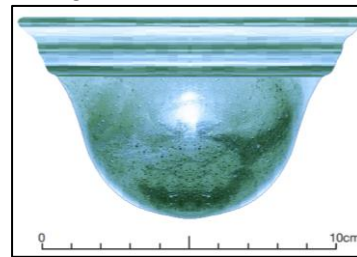
The Herts Advertiser dated 31 January 1885 reported a meeting of the St Albans Architectural and Archaeological Society (Arc & Arc) held earlier in that month. Two papers had been presented, one by the Rev. Canon Owen Davys, rector of Wheathampstead, the other, on the restoration of *The Parish Church of St. Leonard, Sandridge*, by the Rev. Dr. John Griffith, vicar of Sandridge.

The Herts Advertiser verbatim report of the meeting included this aside from Dr Griffith's paper: "*I don't know if Canon Davys is acquainted with the fact or not, but recently in his parish there has been discovered a considerable cemetery of Saxon times, from which my sons have taken one or two remnants*". Griffith's "*recently*", and his doubt as to Davys knowing about the find, suggests that it was very recent: December 1884 seems likely.

In June 1901, the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London reported on a meeting in March 1900 at which "*the glass tumbler found with the bronze vessel*" was exhibited by a Mr Arthur Griffith. Arthur Griffith was the sixth of seven sons of the Rev. John Griffith.

In the BM's 2008 catalogue of beads, beakers, bottles, bowls and broken bits of Anglo-Saxon glass, Item 99 is described as a "*7<sup>th</sup> century palm-cup from the Rhineland*", found "*in a mound*"

at Wheathampstead in 1887 and described as being a '*light green-blue, bright shade, bubbly and*



*glossy with a few inclusions*', with a '*deep folded rim*'. These details and a cross-section in Figure 20 in the catalogue inspired this sketch by Ray. The

cup is about 5" wide by 3" high.

The catalogue also states that the palm-cup was "*extensively broken and restored with only three small gaps*". The entry concludes with "*Date of finding recorded as 1887 but an old label on the glass bears the date 'December 1884'*". This, combined with the date of the Herts Advertiser report, suggests that the BM's recorded date of the finding of the palm-cup is wrong.

Ray surmises that the Rev. Griffith's sons had visited the gravel pit where the cemetery had been found and spotted the freshly-broken palm-cup – perhaps trodden on by the gravel-diggers but not smashed to smithereens by a shovel or pickaxe. They collected the fragments, all but three tiny pieces lost in the gravel, did the jigsaw puzzle and, probably using hoof glue, rebuilt the palm-cup which Arthur Griffith exhibited in 1900.

The BM bought the Wheathampstead Ewer in 1900 and Griffith donated the Palm-cup in 1910.

The story is complete: the Wheathampstead Palm-cup was found in fragments in December 1884 by the Griffith brothers, restored by them, and reunited with the Wheathampstead Ewer at the BM in 1910.

Which prompts a question. It was "*a considerable cemetery of Saxon times*". What else was there and has been lost forever?

***Thanks to Ray Wilson for his research which will be published in full in due course.***