

## AN INTERESTING FIND

About 40 years ago I moved into a house in Rectory Road in the old Orchard area of Falcon Lodge. Before the housing estate was built in the 1950's this was originally farm land and had been so for hundreds of years until it was bought by the local council.

While digging around, attempting to create a rockery in my back garden, I found this strange little item. I rubbed off the impacted mud and saw what looked like a small stylised horse or seahorse.



Initially, I was excited and thought I had found an ancient treasure! After cleaning it up, I saw that it was made from wood. There was a little bit of damage on one side and I could see the grain. Because it was wood, I decided it was unlikely to have survived for many years in wet soil and so unlikely to be a piece of history!

I put it away in a glass box and forgot about it for several years.

In the 1990's I discovered Irish Bog Oak, an ancient black wood that has survived, buried in peat/bogland, for millions of years. I started collecting small pieces of jewellery, buttons, pipes and ornaments which were carved

from this wood. It became very popular in the Victorian era when, after the death of Prince Albert, black mourning brooches and other jewellery were the height of fashion. Remembering my 'find', I got my little 'horse' out of its box and had another look. Although my item is not black it appears to be made of an iron-hard wood which could explain why it may have survived for many years, even centuries!

It is definitely not Irish Bog Oak, but other Bog Wood has been discovered in parts of England. The main woods being Yew, Oak and Pine.

After a bit of research, I decided it resembled the stylised horses in Saxon and Roman Art. I was intrigued to find out more about its history so I took it along to Birmingham Art Gallery & Museum to see if anyone could give me any information on its origin.



Unfortunately, although the 'experts' there agreed it was possibly of some great age, no-one was able to help, so it went back in its glass box for another 20 years. This time though it was on show with my collection of Bog Oak Artefacts.

Over the next few years I searched the internet for similar items and sent photos of the horse to anyone who may have been able to help, but to no avail.

Early this year there was a little glimmer of hope. Maybe!

In February, the Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group organised a visit to the Conservation Department at Birmingham Museums where the technicians were busy creating replicas of several small items from the Anglo Saxon Staffordshire Hoard.

In amongst the treasures I spied a little gold horse head - very similar in design to my horse head.

Luckily, I had a photo of my little 'find' on my phone so showed it to a member of the team and told her where I had unearthed it.



She suggested I should contact the Birmingham Museums Portable Antiquities Scheme and gave me their contact details.

I have sent photos and a brief history and am currently awaiting a reply.

In the present lock down, it will take a bit longer but I live in hope that I will eventually be told I have a real 'find'...a real treasure!

Have a look at the photos...what do you think?

When I receive a reply and hopefully, some result, I will update this article.

Eileen Donohoe

June 2020