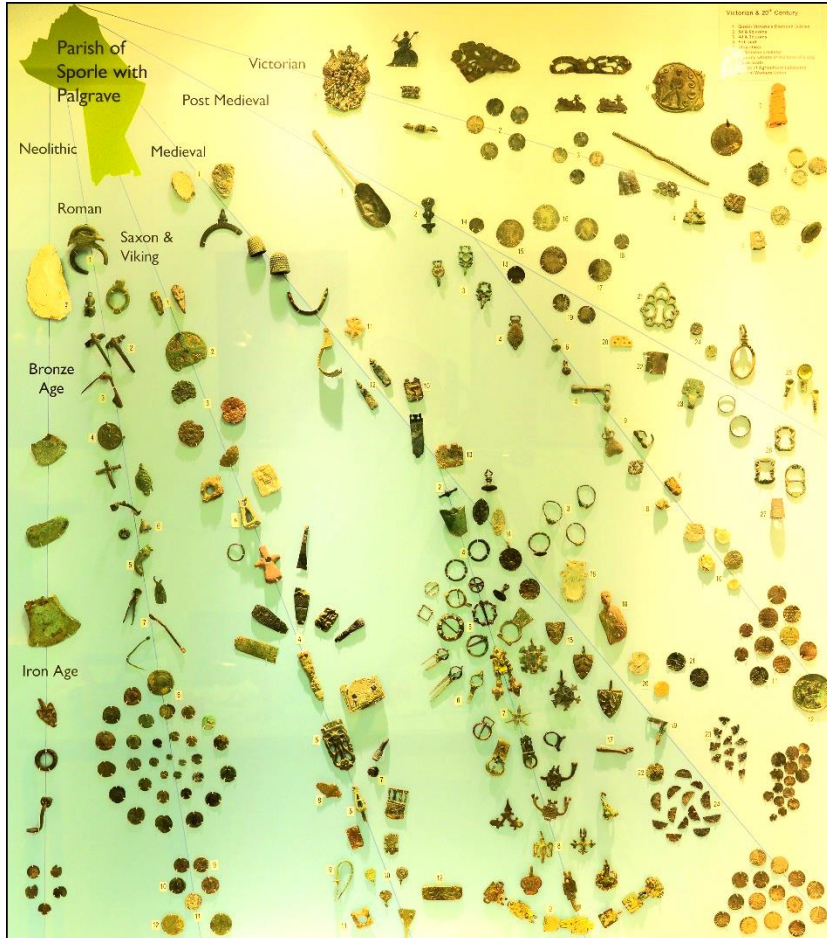


# THE SPORLE WITH PALGRAVE (MONIQUE SLAVEN) COLLECTION

A brief historical journey through this fascinating collection



A selection of the artefacts found by one detectorist in the fields of Sporle and Palgrave from Prehistory to the 20th

## The Collection

This collection of over 1000 artefacts were all found within the parish of Sporle with Palgrave over a twenty year period of metal detecting and field walking by one woman, Monique Slaven, who retired to Sporle with her husband Sam over thirty years ago. Monique spent many hours walking the local fields in search of anything that looked interesting or of historical.

The uniqueness of the collection lies in its diversity and time line; from flint tools of the Neolithic Age to medals, coins and buttons of the twentieth and all ages in-between. As such it is a valuable record of settlements and daily life in the parish over five thousand years.

Everything found was examined, identified and recorded by the Norfolk Museum and Archaeology Service and most of the items found are now on public display at Swaffham Heritage.

This booklet does not do justice to the collection but hopefully will encourage others to delve more deeply into the fascinating history of the ancient villages and hamlets of Sporle, Palgrave, Petygards and Cotes which make up the parish.

### Note:

Monique was neither the only nor the first person to have found signs of historic and prehistoric life in Sporle, although her findings far outweigh those of others. Findings have been registered with the Norfolk Museum and Archaeology Service since the 19th century and new finds are constantly being recorded. To make the record of the parish as complete as possible, some mention of these earlier finds has been made in this booklet.

## The Parish

Sporle is a small Norfolk village three miles north of Swaffham. The lost villages of Palgrave (Great and Little) lie to the north west and the ancient settlements of Cotes Common and Petygards to the south east, separated now from the main village by the A47. One farmhouse remains near the site of Petygards.

The parish of Sporle with Palgrave includes all.

It is bounded by Roman roads, two south to north and one west to east, and there has been a settlement in the area at least since the Stone Age.

These paths became not only parish boundaries but also linked with medieval pilgrimage routes to Castleacre and Walsingham.

The parish has an ancient history with artefacts found over many years from pre-history times. The Saxon era is particularly well represented, especially in the Cotes and Petygards area. Sporle and Great and Little Palgrave are mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086 as counting 20 villagers, 4 ploughs, 1 mill, 6 head of cattle, pigs and sheep.

There was a French Priory in Sporle from the time of Edward the Confessor but it was destroyed before the Dissolution. The church (St. Mary the Virgin) dates from the 1300s, although there are signs of an earlier church. On the south wall there is a cycle of a series of 15th century or earlier wall-paintings of St. Catherine of Alexandria.

The parish has connections with both the Paston and the Nelson families.

Many thanks to the Sporle with Palgrave History Group, especially Mary Trindle for much of the information and most of the photography for this booklet

## Prehistory Tools—about 10,000 BC to 2,350 BC.

The diet of Stone Age people was largely made up of the meat that they hunted, fish they caught and berries, nuts, leaf plants and mushrooms they collected. Their clothes were made of animal skins, cleaned by scraping and then sewn together. For all of this they needed tools to cut, hunt and grind. The process of creating these tools is called flint-knapping and consists of knocking two stones together and constantly refining the flint to make sharp points and scrapers. Very often they were shaped to fit the hand perfectly. A local high-quality flint core is on display in the Gallery.

The earliest sites to be discovered are prehistoric pot boiler scatters to the north of the village. These fire-cracked flints are evidence of early inhabitants of the parish boiling water for domestic purposes. A mound of these burnt flints was also recorded in Sporle Wood.



This flint tool was found by Sam Slaven

Flints are stone tools that early man used for hunting, fishing, and all daily activities. Flint is very hard and so is an effective and versatile tool. The earliest flint tools date from 800,000 BC and their use continues throughout the Stone Age.



A very sharp, unpolished adze.

Adzes are among the earliest type of stone tool identified, recorded regularly in Middle Stone Age. A typical adze is made of stone, shaped into a roughly rectangular form by flint knapping and then by grinding the working end into a more or less straight and somewhat pointed elongated edge.

## Bronze Age (2350 BC to 701 BC.)

Technology moved forwards rapidly and the Bronze Age people recognised that bronze (a mixture of copper and tin) was considerably more durable and flexible than either stone or flint. However, Norfolk had no natural resources of either copper and tin and local bronze implements are rare, although imported goods have been found.

In 1998 a Bronze Age awl from about between 1600-1700 BC was found during field walking. This was a simple pointed instrument for piercing cloth, leather or any other material. They are commonly made of bone, antler or flint. This one is made of flint.



An axe-head dating from around 1600 to 1700 BC

However and interestingly, although this was a time when pottery was known to have been used quite extensively, only isolated sherds have been found over many years of metal detecting and it would not seem that Sporle had a substantial Bronze Age community.

**although ....**

## Iron Age (800 BC to 45 AD)

In about 650 BC a knowledge of working with iron reached the area from the continent where it had been in use for at least 300 years.

Whereas bronze was poured, iron was worked into shape by repeated heating and hammering against an anvil. It was much harder than bronze and keeps a cutting edge for longer. Out of iron the people made ploughs, armour and coins. This was the age of the Iceni.—the first tribe to mint their own coins. Boudicca was queen of the Iceni in the 1st century AD.

Several different types of coins were produced during this era, many probably dating from the time of the Boudican Revolt in AD 60/61. About the size of a thick modern penny and first made of gold and then silver all coins carried a head of a horse on one side (the “tails” side), often with a name inscribed underneath and “heads” either a ferocious beast, a head with hair or crescents.



A Norfolk Wolf coin from about the 1st century AD. So called because the “ferocious animal” was a wolf.



Iceni coins from about the 1st century. Note the horse on both coins. That on the right has the word ICENI



Bronze was still used, mainly for decoration, for example in brooches and on warriors' scabbards, helmets and chariots.

## Roman (45 AD to 409 AD) Roman coins

The use of coins in Roman Britain was usually connected with the military but during the 3rd century AD they can be found in rural sites, perhaps as the town based rich migrated to country estates, taking military protection with them.

As Sporle was on the Roman Peddars Way, built under military supervision, we would expect to find Roman coins in the vicinity.

*Monique's finds, together with those of later detectorists, have led experts to believe that there was a manufactory in Sporle where cast imitation coins were made during the Roman period.*



A Roman Republic silver denarius, struck in Rome under the moneyer **Allius Bala** in 92 BC, but still in use during 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, because of the high silver content. Quite a rare find.

This silver coin shows the head of Emperor **Septimus Severus** 193-211 AD, He was born in Libya in 145 AD and was the first African born Roman Emperor. He came to Britain in 208 AD and tried to quell the northern tribes, but failed and died in York in 211 AD.



This coin shows the head of Empress **Julia Domna**, the second wife of Septimus Severus, and shows her famous hairstyle – crimped by the face with a large roll at the back of the neck. Julia was a powerful woman who accompanied her husband to Britain. After the death of her husband and the murder of her two sons, she committed suicide in 217 AD.

A coin from the late Roman period when the Emperors became Christian. The symbol is from the Greek 'X' Chi, and 'R' Rho meaning 'Christ'. The first Roman Emperor to become Christian was Constantine the Great, and this coin is from one of his successors, Magnetius, 350-353 AD.





## Saxon (410 AD to 1065 AD)

By 410 AD Britain was abandoned by the Romans and a century later was in the hands of the Anglo-Saxons.

The Anglo-Saxons came as pagans and buried or cremated their dead in barrows (burial mounds) or cemeteries along with their gravegoods. One such has been part-excavated in Swaffham.

From the 9th century Vikings began to invade the East coast and its villages. Although destructive, these raiders left little local (but some) evidence of their activities.

In the 19th century four Saxon barrows were uncovered towards Cotes Common to the south of Sporle. One of these contained horse bones and one contained six skeletons arrayed in two rows of three. Spears, shield bosses, brooches, beads and pottery urns were found accompanying these skeletons.

Under the reign of Alfred the Great (849-899) England turned again to Christianity and began building chapels and churches in wood, or very occasionally where Roman ruins remained, in stone.

Fieldwalking to the north has revealed Saxon and Viking artefacts.



A very small Viking silver ingot, weighing 2.61g. length 14mm. Hammer marks on all four long faces

10<sup>th</sup> century bronze metalworking Winchester style die or mold. Used to produce decorative silver foil panels to adorn drinking horns, buckles etc. Very rare.



5<sup>th</sup> century Middle Saxon silver coin - sceatta. These were freely distributed and available on both sides of the North Sea.



## Medieval (1066 AD to 1500 AD)

In the Middle Ages the five settlements in the parish were still populated. In those four now deserted, fieldwalking has found much evidence of everyday life.

The parish church is 11th century in origin and the Benedictine Sporle Priory Cell, to the south of the church, was established in 1123, operating until 1414. The large, comprehensive wall painting of the Life of St Catherine, dating from around 1400, is unique in an English Parish Church.

The pilgrimage of choice was, after Canterbury, Walsingham in North Norfolk. Walsingham Way runs south to north along the eastern boundary of Sporle. So it is very probable that many pilgrims visited the parish.



A pilgrim's ampulla, found in The Street in Sporle. This would have been filled with holy water and worn around the neck as a talisman. The scallop shell was the badge of pilgrims and on the reverse is the initial "R" for Richeldis, the founder of the shrine at Walsingham.



A religious figurine from a church casket.

The glass eyes are still intact.



Cut pennies - ½ penny and ¼ penny .

It was in 1279 in the reign of Edward I that round half-pennies and farthings were introduced rather than cutting pennies.



One of the smallest medieval rings ever found. Made of 98% pure silver it has moulded clasped hands and flowers. It was perhaps worn with a silk scarf.

## The medieval mid Norfolk hoard

In 1994 Monique uncovered the Mid-Norfolk Hoard.

The hoard of 112 coins was found in one small area near the site of a deserted medieval village. Any container has long since disappeared, but despite constant ploughing the coins did not stray far.

The coins are all complete silver pennies, with no cut coins. They range in date from 1180 AD to 1280 AD, so just before the new coinage of Edward I, and cover the reigns of the Kings Henry II, John, Henry III and two Scottish Kings William I and Alexander III.

There are 30 long cross coins and 82 short cross.



Short cross (1180 - 1247 AD)

Long cross (1247 - 1279 AD)

One of the long cross coins



One of the short cross coins

## 16th to 18th century

We know very little about Sporle with Palgrave in post-medieval times. There are a few interesting entries from the church registers, including the christening of Edmund Paston in 1584. Research has shown that he is 7th grandson of William Paston of the Paston Letters. The Nelson family also lived here (the family goes back to Scarning in 1590) as farmers and clergymen.

Both Admiral Nelson's grandfather and father held livings here and Horatio's sister Susannah was born in Sporle. The family moved to Burnham Thorpe two years before Horatio was born in 1758. Nationally the 16th century brought with it the Reformation and the dissolution of the monasteries. The little Benedictine cell in Sporle had vanished earlier, however — in the mid 15th century.

The 17th century turned the country on its head with the beheading of Charles I, the Civil War and then the restoration with Charles II.

Matthew Holworthy, a successful businessman and entrepreneur took the manor of Sporle and Palgrave and lived and raised his family here. His will of 1678 also left land for charity that eventually and still today furthers the cause of education in the parish.

Little Palgrave Hall dates to the 17th century. A large quantity of medieval stonework, possibly from Castleacre Priory, has been incorporated into the building. Palgrave Hall and the Old Rectory also date from the 17th century.

The religious turmoil did not really stop in the 18th century but little seemed to have touched Sporle.

The Pastons had gone; the Nelsons moved away, the Holworthys lost the family money. However, a town house to accommodate the poor was built on The Street in 1748, later known as Bailey Row.

An assortment of objects from this era has been found on Sporle fields. Musket balls and a cap for a powder flask dating from the 16th century.

Most things were obviously just forgotten or broken and cast aside such as the seed scoops, the bits of penknives and harness mounts.



A Tudor spoon



A miniature book cover.  
Books became popular  
amongst all types of people  
during the 16th century.  
But this one is really tiny!



An early domino  
made of bone

One Elizabethan half groat has been found, but most of the coins from this era come from the late 17th century onwards.



An early post Medieval coin dated 1602 and the monarch King James VI of Scotland. In 1603 James became King James I of England after the death of Elizabeth I who, unmarried, left no direct heirs. His accession began the Stuart Royal House. His youngest son Charles (1st) inherited the throne at his death in 1625.



Charles I shilling. The XII denotes 12d. On the reverse is the inscription *Christo Auspice Regno* meaning 'I reign under the auspices of Christ'. Charles' commitment to the Divine Right of Kings was a prime lever in the fight for a democratic parliament that that led to Charles' beheading and the Civil War. Whether the parish was Royalist or Parliamentarian is impossible to tell. The war split families as well as villages. As a county Norfolk was largely Parliamentarian with pockets of Royalists. However, the Manors of Sporle and Easthall, Great Palgrave, were in the possession of the Paston family until after the war, and most of the Pastons were fiercely Royalist.

## 19th to 20th century

During the 19th century the population of the parish grew from around 500 to peak in 1851 to 847 before dropping to under 500 in 1921. The population today is at just over 1,000.

At the end of the 19th century there were around ten farmers (owners and tenants), two blacksmiths, two corn millers (one on Bunkers Hill and the other on Newton Road), two shoemakers, a tailor and two shopkeepers. There was a school (1841) and Baptist and Methodist chapels. There was also a sub post office, four grocers, two higglers (peddlers) and a builder. The 18th century Poor House closed when the Swaffham Union Workhouse was opened in 1834. The railway arrived in 1847 but was swept away like so many other lines in 1968.

Because of the many farms and smallholdings in the parish it is probable that the majority of the population worked on the land. This becomes apparent when we discover that the renowned Joseph Arch, President of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union and Liberal MP for North West Norfolk in 1885 and 1892, spoke at the Hare and House public house in 1890.

Wages at the time were 15 to 17 shillings a week.

Research has uncovered a number of Sporle born men and families living in Yorkshire and Durham from 1861. Railways, coalmines and iron works opened up new opportunities at a time when technology was transforming agriculture and unemployment on the land high.

During the 1st World War there was a small military airfield in the parish, although the precise location is not now known.

A pill box towards Castle Acre remains from the Second World War and the Cold War is represented by a Royal Observer Corps bunker, known as Swaffham Post, near the pill box. Many men from Sporle with Palgrave served in the Two World Wars in various regiments.



An elaborate brooch celebrating Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897.

A badge of the Agricultural Labourers and Rural Workers Union. 1910-1920.



Festival of Britain badge 1951. The Festival was organised by the government to give Britons a feeling of recovery in the aftermath of World War II and to promote the British contribution to science, technology, industrial design, architecture and the arts.

The military badges and buttons found in the fields of the parish are quite remarkable in their diversity and number. Here are just a few.

It is probable that some at least are from troops from various regiments who were encamped in Sporle on their way to other places.

It is also probable that the military coats were used as root crop clamps in the fields. The material has rotten leaving the metal.

East Yorkshire



Devonshire



RAF



Air Raid Patrol Warden



Norfolk



Royal Field Artillery



## In praise of metal-detecting

“Taking up metal-detecting as a hobby is like opening a door to a different world, a bygone world, the mysterious past.

Nothing, NOTHING, prepares you for the elation, the excitement, the joy of holding in your hand a bronze buckle; a Roman coin; a military badge.

It’s a healthy pastime, fresh air a-plenty—and mud!

It is anything but easy or restful and the rewards can be few and far between, with as many as—say—95 holes out of 100 dug uncovering utter rubbish.



Every single item comes from one field or other in Sporle with Palgrave, and they cover daily life in this little corner of Norfolk from fossils to the World Wars.

I feel so privileged to have been given the chance to recover all these relics from the past so that this and future generations will be able to learn about the village of Sporle with Palgrave “in the old days”.

*W. Plaver*



## In praise of Monique 1927– 2018



Monique was born in Normandy, France, where her mother ran a small school.

During World War II Monique and her mother visited prisoners of war held in nearby barracks, taking in food and passing on written messages from loved ones. One of these PoWs was a Scottish soldier called Samuel Slaven whom Monique eventually married and together they settled in England.

In 1977 they retired to Sporle. Sam spent his free time sea-fishing but Monique invested in a metal detector.

With the permission of local farmers she began to search the fields of Sporle and Great and Little Palgrave.

The diversity of the items she found in one small village over twenty years detecting is remarkable, and gives a rare but significant glimpse into the lives of the villagers for more than a thousand years.

Monique was a regular volunteer steward at the museum until shortly before her death and visitors were always captivated by her passion and knowledge as she retold the story of her work as a detectorist.

Visit Swaffham History's Monique Slaven Gallery to see her collection and other local finds and listen to her as she describes it.



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