

# The Chester Antiquary



Newsletter of the Chester Archaeological Society  
2006 Issue 2 (Autumn/Winter)

## Fieldwalking at Churton



Fieldwalking at  
Churton  
(photograph by  
Phillip Miles)

**A**T the end of May 2006, a small band of Society volunteers braved the wet and windy conditions to undertake two days of fieldwalking at Churton, near Farndon, courtesy of landowner Mr Michael Trevor-Barnston. Phillip Miles, the Society's Fieldwork Co-ordinator is running a non-invasive project under the auspices of City Archaeologist Mike Morris, and involving volunteers from the Society.

The location was first identified from cropmarks in 1978 by Mr Rhys Williams and further aerial photography was carried out by Jill Collens and Rob Philpott in 1994. The site at Churton is of considerable age, and may include a

funerary site, round barrows and ring ditches. The local metal detectorist club has recovered a range of artefacts associated with the Bronze Age and Romano-British periods, which tends to suggest a multi-period site which may date from the Neolithic through to the Roman period and beyond.

As some of the crops were still in the ground, we were only able to walk a narrow strip of the field with the crop mark, Field A, but we were able to collect a large quantity of flint (both worked and unworked), burnt pottery and industrial waste.

Field B, which is some seven hectares in size, was completed on day two. It

produced a larger quantity of material, especially industrial waste, and smaller quantities of flint and ceramics.

All the finds are either in the process of being cleaned or subject to expert examination, but they already support the view that this is a significant ancient site with multi-period occupation.

Further work is envisaged, including more fieldwalking, resistivity surveys to locate the crop marks, and the possibility of trial trenches to confirm the existence and nature of the buried structures. This will extend over a number of years and volunteers from the Society are always welcome to attend.

**Phillip Miles**

# The Twentieth Legion's other amphitheatre

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The activities of the Twentieth Legion in North Wales have been gradually researched over the years, but the archaeological sites associated with them are generally not well presented

**T**HE exception is Caernarvon, although there have been major excavations of the forts at Caerhun and Bryn y Gefeiliau, Capel Curig. There is little to show on the ground and the finds are hidden away. Llandudno Museum has the finds from Caerhun, which can be seen by special appointment. The major industrial site at Prestatyn has been partially excavated and a bath house preserved and vandalised in the middle of a housing estate.

The other amphitheatre is to be found at the remote fort of Tomen Y Mur, which has now become more accessible with some interpretation boards and marked footpaths.

To reach the fort go to Bettwys y Coed and take the A470 road to Ffestiniog. Follow the A470 through Ffestiniog and Llan Ffestiniog to its

junction with the A487, turning left in a southerly direction, and take the first left into a narrow lane, which goes under an iron railway bridge. In just over a mile you will come to a car park with information signs about Tomen Y Mur. This is a very bleak and wind-swept place and the going is very boggy. You need good waterproofs and boots, as some of the most interesting features are in the wettest places.

I could suggest that you waited for an opportunity for it to be interpreted by one of the archaeologists of the National Park, but this is the ideal place to practice field archaeology. At first you will not see a thing because in front of you is a natural landscape untamed by man, but after careful study you will find some of the features left behind by the Romans. There is a very flat field, which was the parade ground, and the sheep

pen by the car park is an amphitheatre. This was a major fort and a miserable posting and it has been suggested that the amphitheatre was there to keep up their spirits.

To carry out this exercise you must have the OS Explorer map OL18 for Harlech, Porthmadog and Bala. Further help is to be found in *Snowdonia from the Air* by Peter Crew and Chris Musson, which is normally available from The National Park Shop in the Stables at Bettwys y Coed, and also in Frances Lynch's *Gwynedd: A Guide to Ancient and Historic Wales*, published by CADW.

The practice camps are up to half a mile away and require some time and effort to identify their banks and ditches.

**Roy Coppack**

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## The Claverton Project

**T**O all those who volunteered to take part in this project, we are pleased to confirm that we plan to start fieldwork in late October. Desktop research may start sooner.

Full details, including dates, will follow after site inspection at the end of August.

Thanks to all members who have already signed up and for your patience.

**Phillip Miles**  
**Fieldwork co-ordinator**

### Claverton deserted village?

Claverton is the township in which the site of the Chester Archaeological Society excavation at Heronbridge is located. Claverton lies immediately to the south of the boundary of the city liberties of Chester. An important

Roman civilian settlement and possible site of the early medieval battle of Chester, it appears in the Domesday Book of 1086 as one of the richer Cheshire manors, valued at 40 shillings, possessing a salthouse in Northwich worth 12d and two hides (c 240 acres) of arable land.

It also held eight burgesses in Chester and four in neighbouring Handbridge. Now, however, it is entirely unpopulated and the location of any population centres it may once have had is now lost. During the later medieval period, Claverton became effectively an extension of the Handbridge open field system and ridge and furrow is evident in the fields and in the surrounding woodland associated with the driveway to Eaton Hall, known as the Duke's Drive.

The details of how these fields changed hands over time and eventually became the property of the Grosvenor

family are well documented and make a fascinating story.

Keith Matthews surveyed the area in 1999 and provisionally identified a settlement site from a series of earthworks. The problem is that these earthworks lie within the city liberties in St Mary's Parish and *not* in Claverton township. Is this the lost village of Claverton? If not, what is it?

Our project aims to teach members surveying techniques and to apply them to better understand the topography of Claverton. Over a number of years starting from this autumn we hope to:

- Plan and examine the earthwork features resulting from our own landscape survey, and those identified by Keith Matthews, to establish if it is the settlement of Claverton and, if not, what it is.

- Locate and examine the 'Grey Ditch', which is supposed to form part of the boundary of the liberties of

Chester and the Roman settlement at Heronbridge.

- Investigate the location, function and date of Hayward's Castle, referred to in seventeenth-century sources and described as a watch tower, built to defend Chester during the Welsh wars. A field name on the Claverton boundary has this name.

- Do fieldwalking and documentary research, which might shed light on some of the Handbridge residents and activities and on the relationship between Chester, Claverton, Handbridge and Heronbridge over time.

Our survey will be steered and assisted by a professional surveyor and archaeologist, Margaret Worthington, who will provide members with training and support.

**Ian Archibald**

## Excursions

Derbyshire  
13 May 2006

**T**HE society's trip to Derbyshire in May was very interesting and enjoyable, despite the unpredictable and dismal weather. Our coach driver was to be commended for his skill in backing up a curving drive and through a very narrow gateway for our coffee stop just below the Cat and Fiddle. In lieu of the lack of view, the hot coffee, excellent home-made biscuits and warming fire were very welcome.

The next stop was Arbor Low, probably built around 2500 BC, between Ashbourne and Buxton. It is a very well preserved henge consisting of a circular embankment with two entrances surrounding a stone circle (the stones have now fallen). Our intrepid leader, Prue Wendt, led us to the next field where we climbed up the Gib hill barrow, not easy to find in the atmospheric low mist.

Bakewell proved to be an excellent choice for lunch. We enjoyed the walk over the bridge with views of the weir and river life, a visit to the impressive church, dating back to twelfth century, with beautiful views over the roof tops of Bakewell to the surrounding hills and countryside. Another visit to this very

attractive town is definitely needed to include the museum, for which there was not enough time to see.

Our main visit was to Haddon Hall, owned by Lord Edward Manners, and everyone spent a very happy afternoon exploring this well-preserved, fortified, medieval stone manor-house with its courtyard, long gallery, banqueting hall and ancient fourteenth-century kitchens, which had huge tree-trunk chopping blocks and well-worn timber surfaces. The collection of tapestries in the house were still very impressive despite the destruction of about sixty of them in a fire in 1925.

The chapel is a little gem with high-sided oak pews, wonderfully painted walls, a very special fifteenth-century Nottingham alabaster reredos behind the altar and the beautiful and moving marble effigy of the son of the eighth Duke of Rutland, who died at the age of nine.

The house is on a hill and the restored terraced gardens are a delight, beautifully tended and full of roses, clematis, pansies, tulips and many herbaceous plants and beautiful well cut lawns, which are a joy to walk round.

Many thanks to Prue for such an excellent, well planned and organised day. It was hugely enjoyable.

**Margaret Parks-Smith**

Stafford  
1 July 2006

Our first stop was in the small town of Eccleshall, now an elegant backwater but once a stopover on the coaching route between Chester and London. Coffee was taken in a well-chosen coaching inn in the centre of the town. The church was the seat of the Bishops of Lichfield for over six hundred years and five of them are buried there.

Thence to Stafford, a county town that invites comparison with Chester. After lunch there was time to visit only a few places, which we chose according to our tastes. There was a wide choice, including the Ancient High House (re-built in 1595), the Shire Hall Gallery (dating to 1798, which was formerly the courthouse), and the church of St Chad (which has curious carvings of animal heads, reputedly carved by Arab slaves

brought back from the Crusades). I chose to visit the Record Office and investigate their archaeological collections. Staffordshire is fortunate in having been the home of the antiquarian banker, William Salt, whose widow bequeathed his books to the County, which has housed them in a handsome building adjacent to its record office. It is closed on Saturdays so I was unable to go inside. Unlike our County, Staffordshire appears to have solved the problem of providing a proper archaeological library.

After a too-short visit to the city we drove to the castle, dramatically occupying a hilltop beside the M6. The castle has a long, interesting history, but what remains are the uninspiring fragments of a botched Victorian restoration. The wooden Visitor Centre provides an introduction to mediaeval warfare and displays some of the finds.

Finally to Hodnet Hall Gardens in Shropshire, close to the more famous Hawkstone Follies. Hodnet has sixty acres of lovingly tended lawns, flower beds, wooded hillsides, and a large lake. The gardens are privately held and are now open only to parties of over twenty five, so we were privileged. Tea was served in a timbered hall adorned with many hunting trophies. It was a relaxing end to a relaxing visit to some unfamiliar places not too far from home. Our thanks to Prue Wendt who made all the arrangements with her usual efficiency.

**Alan Comyns**

## Excursions 2007

**S**OME dates to keep free in next year's diary:

**26 May** – A trip focussed on the wooden churches of South Cheshire.

**30 June** – An outing to North Wales.

More details and an application form will be circulated in the first copy of *The Chester Antiquary* next Spring.

**Ian Archibald**

## Forthcoming events

### Timber! Wood and Archaeology in the North West

**C**BA North West will be holding its Autumn Meeting on Saturday 21 October in St John's Church Hall, Waterloo, Liverpool at 9:15 pm. The subject will be the archaeology of wood and will include presentations by Jim Innes on *Long term vegetation change and human impact on woodland*; Ron Cowell on *A Neolithic wooden trackway at Hightown near Crosby*; Mark Adams on *A cruck framed building at Bebington*; Jim Spriggs on *Conservation of archaeological timber*; Mark Leah on *Waterlogged archaeological remains in Cheshire towns*; and Steve Allen on *Recording archaeological wood*. There will be a

walking tour of historic Waterloo at lunch time. Cost, excluding lunch, will be £11 for CBA members and £15 for non-members. Registration, required by 13 October, with Andy Towle, Gifford & Partners, 20 Nicholas Street, Chester, CH1 2NX.

### Archaeology for All: The theory and practice of community archaeology

A national conference at the University of Manchester from 3–4 November 2006.

- What is Community Archaeology?
- What are the challenges and opportunities?
- What makes archaeological projects special and unique to their community?

- Does archaeology for all have a future?

All these questions will be explored in this major conference, organised by the University of Manchester and the City of Manchester, who have together taken a leading role in developing community archaeology.

The conference will provide an opportunity to discuss:

- The social, economic, tourist, educational and regenerative benefits of community archaeology
- How people can get involved in their own community projects
- The role of the media
- How to attract funds
- The role of the professional, amateur enthusiast and volunteer
- The future for community archaeology?

The Conference will be held at the Martin Harris Centre for Music and Drama, The University of Manchester, from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. Go to <http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/umfac/archaeologyforall/> for more information.

There will be interactive workshops for children at the Manchester Museum on Saturday (10.00 am–12.00 pm and 1.00 pm–3.00 pm). There is no need to book for the drop-in sessions.

## Society Information

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*Fieldwork co-ordinator* Mr Phillip Miles (*address as for Mrs Kathryn Miles*)

### Library

Members are reminded that they are welcome to come in and browse through the Society's library at Chester Community History and Heritage.

### Internet

<http://www.chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk>

## Society Dissertation Prize

It was decided earlier this year to award a Chester Archaeological Society prize to a selected dissertation from a final year student at the University of Chester. This year the prize was awarded to Gary Crawford Coupe. His dissertation on Burton Point in the Wirral and its possible relationship to the protection of trade in Cheshire salt on the Dee will appear as an article in a future volume of the Society's Journal. We congratulate Gary on his substantial and informative study.

The *Chester Antiquary* is published twice a year, in Spring and Autumn. We welcome letters and articles from Members. Contributions for the next issue should be with the newsletter editor, Dr Ian Archibald, no later than 28 February 2007.