



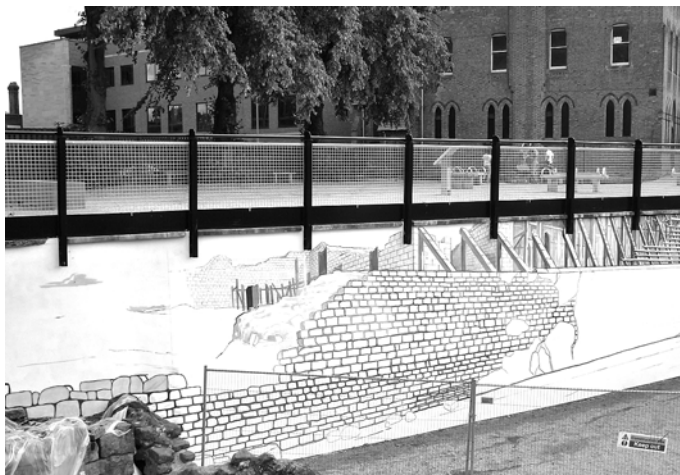
The Chester Antiquary

Newsletter of the Chester Archaeological Society

2010 Issue 2 (Autumn / Winter)

Amphitheatre News

By this time hopefully many members will have had the chance to see the redisplayed Chester amphitheatre. In the past a frequent comment from tour guides was that visitors often had trouble imagining what the amphitheatre looked like: the 1960s concrete retaining wall bisecting the site made it look like a semi-circular theatre and obscured its original elliptical shape. The replica walls built in the Spring on the lines of those excavated in 2004/05 are therefore now being complemented by a mural on the retaining wall depicting the southern half of the structure.



The mural is being painted by award-winning London based artist Gary Drostle. It is hoped that it will last several decades. The pace of work is obviously dependent on the weather but it is likely to take until the end of August. For more about the artist, see: www.drostle.com

It is also hoped the produce a large 3-D model of the amphitheatre, to be sited in the middle of the seating area by the side of the walkway. Producing the design both for the mural and the model has involved a lot of hard thinking about the size and form of the superstructure which should be incorporated in the eventual report on the excavations.

Peter Carrington

Eccleston Progress

The new society fieldwork project on early medieval Eccleston got off to a damp start on June 13th, when an intrepid group gathered in Eccleston village to make a preliminary survey of the site and its context. The weather was typical for a June day in England; freezing cold and with torrential rain!

Our tour started with the church which lies at the heart of the village. The current Eccleston church is a nineteenth century creation of the Grosvenor family and stands outside the circular churchyard which is postulated to be the early medieval foundation. The ruins of the church within the circular enclosure, that give the churchyard a distinctively Gothic atmosphere, are also a nineteenth century construction, built by William Porden, estate architect to the 1st Earl Grosvenor in 1809. They do stand on the site of an earlier church. It is illustrations of this earlier church which show what appears to be a Saxon cross. Inspection of the

churchyard suggests that it has been extended to the north sometime after the middle of the 18th century. Remains of the original bank and ditch are visible within the current boundaries. We hope that a geophysical survey of this area will clarify the structures. The cemetery occupies only the eastern portion of the enclosure. The western part forms part of the old vicarage garden and is wooded.

Just to the west of the churchyard lies one of Eccleston's more enigmatic features. This is a distinctive mound with some associated earthworks. The mound has been variously interpreted as a bronze age barrow, a botontinus (Roman surveying post associated with laying out roads and territorial divisions), the medieval castle of the Venables family and a Civil War gun emplacement. The site was excavated in the nineteenth century and it is claimed that human remains and roman coins were found, but these are

now lost. The whole structure was greatly reduced in size later in the nineteenth century, but no further evidence was found. It is distinctly possible that human remains could have been incorporated into the mound from a surrounding cemetery adding support to the idea early medieval activity in the area. This site is a scheduled ancient monument. The area of the barrow was the subject of a RCHME survey in 1985 and, although the feature is still described in the sites and monuments register as a motte, the view of the surveyors and my personal view is that this motte is rather moot! The earthworks which surround the monument do interact with the earthworks forming the supposed early medieval churchyard and we hope that our fieldwork project will reveal some of the chronological relationships which this interaction entails using a combination of geophysics, fieldwalking and excavation. The area covered by the schedule was surveyed in some detail, but it would be good to extend this survey to the area of the churchyard. Those members who took part in the Claverton project know how painstaking a manual contour survey can be and it is hoped that we can use lidar data (laser based remote sensing conducted from aircraft) to ease the burden.

Inspection of the mole hills in the area surrounding the churchyard and barrow does not indicate the presence of much modern debris and pottery, but the soil does appear to be rich in clinker and slaggy deposits. This

might be a positive indication for early use of the site. We hope that a more systematic investigation will reveal more.

Our by now soaked investigation party then turned its attention on the large enclosure which it is suggested might surround the entire village and caused the deviation of the Roman road at some point in the past. In order to understand this better, we propose to look at the line of the medieval road and investigate where it interacts with the proposed enclosure. We had a look at the earthworks where this road would have entered the village in the medieval period. These lie where you might expect the early boundary to lie, but cartographic evidence suggests that these are modern features. Much work needs to be done to define the boundaries of this enclosure.

Another part of the project will, we hope involve asking local residents if we can create test pits in order to better understand the stratigraphy of the area.

Thank you everyone who braved the weather to take part. I am in the process of drafting a plan for the research programme which will be discussed with Mike Morris and then circulated to interested members. I am also in the process of seeking some additional funding to support the activities.

Ian Archibald

Early Medieval Sword Pommel found at Malpas

This sword pommel was brought to the Grosvenor Museum for identification and recording with the Portable Antiquities Scheme. It was found by a local metal detectorist in Malpas near Chester. It is made of cast copper alloy and dates to the Early Medieval period. The object is of lobed form and hollow. The base, which curves upwards at the ends, would have rested upon a concave pommel bar. The exterior is decorated with thirteen lobes with domed ends that taper towards the broad end where the handle was attached. The lobes vary in size with the central lobe being the widest at 18mm. A small amount of gilding can be seen next to the oval opening which held the protruding sword tang.

Each surface of the object is decorated by a raised median band which divides the decoration in two. The decoration appears to be the same on each side, however in places it is worn or chipped. Above the median band the object is decorated with a series of raised vertical ridges which stop just below the lobes. The ridges are dissected by two shallow, irregular and uneven horizontal grooves. On one side of the object semi-circular grooves can be seen at each end, which terminate against the median band. The upper part of the decoration has chipped away on this side and a small amount of gilding can be seen.

Below the median band the object is decorated with a raised central oval which is bordered by an oval ridge. To each side of this are V-shaped ridges which point downwards from the median band. There appear to be



two sets of V-shaped decoration to each side which then have a series of larger Vs expanding downwards. Below the V-shaped decoration are wave-like ridges which fill the remaining part of the pommel. The decoration has been chipped away at the base of each side where contact would have occurred. The base of the object is undecorated.

The object has a dark brown patina and is in fair condition. The form of the pommel suggests that it is Anglo-Saxon and of late ninth-century date. However a parallel is as yet unknown for the decoration. It is possibly a poor version of the Trewhiddle style. It has been recorded on the Portable Antiquities Database:

www.finds.org.uk/database as LVPL-30CCE0

Lecture Programme 2010 / 2011

Wednesday 6th October 2010 7:30pm

Prehistoric Forteviot, Perthshire , excavations 2007-10)

Dr Kenneth Brophy (University of Glasgow)

Wednesday 10th November 2010 7:30pm

Liverpool Old Dock

Jamie Quartermaine (Oxford Archaeology North)

Special Lecture

Saturday 4th December 2:30 pm

Swords, Helmets and Crosses: The Staffordshire Hoard

Kevin Leahy (Portable Antiquities Scheme)

Saturday 8th January 2011 2:30 pm

'The excavation of Mesolithic and Neolithic remains in advance of the Carlisle Northern Development Route'

Paul Clark (Oxford Archaeology North)

Wednesday 2nd February 2011 7:30pm

The Poulton Research Project

Mike Emery

(Director of Poulton Research Project.)

Saturday 5th March 2011 2:30pm

Building a Roman Villa (tbc)

Prof Dai Morgan Evans

(Visiting Professor University of Chester)

Wednesday 27th April 2011 7:30pm

AGM followed by

Some Recent Excavations in Chester

Leigh Dodd (Earthworks Archaeology)

Saturday 14th May 2011 2:30pm

'Why study sculpture? The early medieval inscribed stones and stone sculpture of North Wales

Prof Nancy Edwards (University of Bangor)

County Historical Societies Symposium London 1st May

This symposium was organised by the Victoria County History along with other associations to look at some of the challenges and opportunities facing societies. Presentations by speakers on the chosen subjects; recruitment, funding, publishing, adult learning and advocacy, were followed by 'break-out' groups where members of the twenty-four societies attending shared experiences.

The main topics were:

- **Recruitment:** the perceived problem of ageing memberships and the need to recruit new members more actively

Cont . . .

Esmond Hawes MA

Esmond Hawes who died in January aged 91 had been an active member of the Society for nearly 60 years. He attended lectures regularly until shortly before his death, and participated in both day and weekend excursions frequently. His votes of thanks at lectures were pertinent and witty.

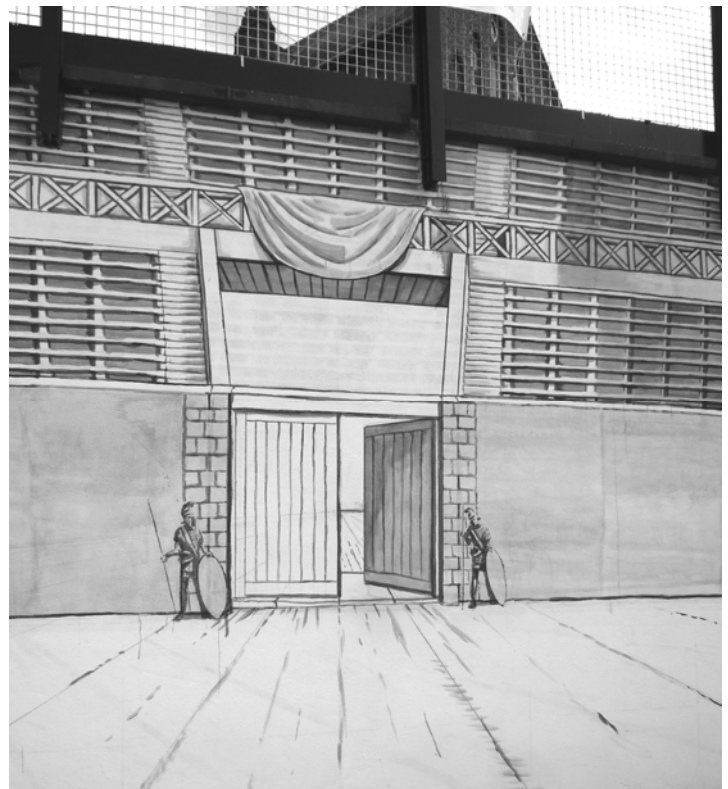
For many years he was a member of the council which he served with dedication. He was always concerned about the role of the society and its future direction, particularly in the promotion of archaeology in Chester. He expressed his ideas forcefully and could cause some consternation over his opinions. However they were always well thought out and demanded consideration.

Esmond had a distinguished academic career; he read Science at Oxford, graduating with 1st class honours. After war service he joined British Nuclear Fuels, then ICI. Although he had the opportunity to further his career by moving from Cheshire he decided to stay here.

He had many interests other than archaeology, in all of which he was very knowledgeable. He had a deep love of music and travelled far to attend concerts. He was an active and erudite member of many societies, local and national. He attended the annual conference of the British Archaeological Association for many years and was a well known and respected figure; as he was at the English Haydn Festival at Bridgenorth. He was a devout Anglican and a staunch adherent of the Book of Common Prayer.

For many of us the principal memory will be of Esmond deep in conversation, expressing his opinions and seeking those of others. The Society has lost a member of distinction and commitment.

Rosemary Martin



- **Funding:** problems surrounding Gift Aid and some of the sources of finance available
- **Publishing:** the saleability of society volumes, 'print on demand', electronic publishing, web-sites, the digitisation of back issues
- **Adult learning:** the collapse of university provision of historical courses and the need for self-help
- **Advocacy:** the need for societies to fight to preserve the local public services they value
- **Joint working:** the opportunities for county societies to work with local groups and national organisations, e.g. in holding conferences

What came as a particular surprise was the different approach and experience of archaeological and historical societies. Overall CAS compares favourably with other societies in the variety of its activities and its innovative approaches. However, there is also scope to do much better, and your Council has appointed three of its members, Peter Carrington, Julie Edwards and Dan Garner, plus your Chairman Phil Miles, as a working party to look at ideas as to how the Society could be improved.

If you have any suggestions, get in touch !

Peter Carrington

Membership Subscriptions

Can I give everyone an early reminder that next years' membership subscriptions are due on the 1st January 2011. Subscription rates are:-

**Ordinary Full Membership:
£20 per year**

**Associate and Student
Membership: £10 per year**

Several months ago I wrote to all members who had either not yet paid their 2010 subscription or had paid the lower 2009 subscription rates.

There are still some members who have not yet paid their 2010 subscription. We do not want to lose any members but the Society will cancel the membership of anyone who has not paid their membership subscription by the end of August 2010.

There are also members who have not paid the full subscription rate for 2010. Can these members please make sure that they pay the difference between the 2009 and 2010 subscription rates to the society. This is £5 for an ordinary full membership and £3 for an associate or student membership.

Alan Austin
Honorary Treasurer

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Library

Members are welcome to browse through the Society's library at Chester
History and Heritage (general books) and Chester University (journals)

Internet

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

The Chester Antiquary is published twice a year, in Spring and Autumn.

We welcome letters and articles from members.

Contributions for the next newsletter should be with the newsletter editor Carolyne Kershaw no later than 15th March 2011.