



# The Chester Antiquary

Newsletter of the Chester Archaeological Society

2010 Issue 1 (Spring / Summer)

## The Eccleston Research Project

It was agreed during 2009 that, with the imminent publication of the Heronbridge excavation report and the availability of a certain amount of funding from the Society reserves, the time was right for the society to expand its fieldwork activities. The project chosen is an investigation of Early Medieval Eccleston.

Eccleston, just south of Chester, has been proposed as a sub-Roman matrix ecclesia or mother church on the basis of placename evidence and the apparent presence of a large enclosure surrounding the current church (see T. Austin in Vol 74 of the Society journal).

The placename 'eccles-' comes from the British 'egles' which is borrowed from the Latin 'ecclesia' meaning church or Christian community. The combination with Anglo Saxon '-ton' suggests that the name was created sometime in the pagan Saxon period.

The enclosure, some 800m x 500m, is believed to follow the Chester Old Road in the west and respect the Roman settlement of Heronbridge to the north. Its Eastern boundary appears to follow the natural river cliffs. In addition at some time after the end of the Roman period, Watling Street, which would have crossed the middle of the enclosure was diverted



*Ruins of St Mary's Church, demolished in 1807.  
Records show part of Saxon Cross*

around it, only returning to its original line some time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A study of this sort is highly consistent with the Research Agenda and Strategy outlined in 'An Archaeological Framework for North-West England Vol2' (ed Mark Brennand et al) and will build upon recent work carried out by the society in both Heronbridge and in Claverton.

The project will include geophysical survey, contour survey, documentary research, fieldwalking and excavation (both small scale inspection trenches and larger excavations to address specific research questions).

The project will be carried out by a volunteer workforce composed of members of the Society's Fieldwork Sections together with members of local communities, supervised, where necessary by a professional archaeologist employed by Chester Archaeological Society.

It is planned to hold a preliminary meeting and a site visit in May (date to be determined). If you are interested in taking part in any way, can you express your interest to Ian Archibald:

telephone: 01244 680096  
mobile: 07515 890459  
email: archibaldian@mac.com



*Mound, looking north, variously suggested as  
a Bronze Age barrow or a medieval Motte*

## The society journals collection has moved to a new home

The Society's collection of journals has been moved from the Blue Coat School Resource Room to the Seaborne Library at the University of Chester. The library has a growing Archaeology section and the library's Humanities team are delighted that this specialist collection of journals, spanning from 1824 to the present day, has been added to the library holdings. The Society's journals are seen as being an invaluable resource for the University's Archaeology students and staff.

Meggen Gondek, Programme Leader for the undergraduate archaeology programmes at the University, says 'The CAS collection provides us with a great resource for research on British archaeology.



*The Society Journals, re-homed*

The Department of History & Archaeology is very pleased that the University Library will now provide such excellent guardianship of the journals.'

The Seaborne library welcomes visitors and Society members wishing to consult the collection are asked to report to the helpdesk upon arrival to sign the visitors' book. The collection is located in a mezzanine area, overlooking the library's reading room and is available for reference only. The library has open access photocopying facilities and visitors can purchase photocopying cards from the library helpdesk. Helpdesk staff can provide assistance in retrieving items from the collection and assist with general queries.

Society members can also make use of the library's printed resources for reference.

The Seaborne Library has approximately 300,000 books and over 1500 journals, including current subscriptions to *Antiquity* and *Post Medieval Archaeology*. Further details of the library's holdings can be found on the library catalogue at <http://libcat.chester.ac.uk/>. A complete list of the Society's journals kept at the Seaborne Library can be found by carrying out a catalogue search for 'Chester Archaeological Society Collection'.

Members of the Society can access the journals collection and library resources during library opening hours:

**Term time:**

Monday – Friday 8.30am – midnight,  
Saturday & Sunday midday – midnight;

**Vacation:** Monday – Friday 9am – 5.30pm  
with late opening on Wednesdays until 8pm.

If you would like to arrange a visit or if you have any queries about the library please contact Fiona McLean, Subject Librarian (Humanities):

Tel: 01244 513304

E: [f.mclean@chester.ac.uk](mailto:f.mclean@chester.ac.uk)

Seaborne Library, University of Chester, Parkgate Road, Chester CH1 4BJ

**Fiona McLean,**

---

## Habitats and Hillforts News

Over the next few months the project is hoping to run geophysics training at Beeston Castle (June) and excavations at Helsby hillfort (26th April to 10th May) and Eddisbury hillfort (July for 4 weeks).

**Helsby:** The plan is to open two excavation trenches on Helsby Hill for two weeks between 26<sup>th</sup> April and 10<sup>th</sup> May. The intention will be to re-excavate two trenches through the ramparts that were originally opened up in 1955 and 1964, to re-expose the sections and recover charcoal samples for radiocarbon dating.

Working days will be: Monday 26<sup>th</sup> to Friday 30<sup>th</sup> April; Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> to Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May; and Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May.

Owing to the nature of the excavation we will only be able to accommodate a limited number of volunteers at any one time. Individuals may only be offered a couple of days on site. For this reason **booking will be essential**. Please register your interest by emailing Dan Garner:

[dan.garner@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:dan.garner@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

## Behind the Scenes in Local Collections

The opening of the new Liverpool Museum in 2011 provides an opportunity to review what is going on in our local collections during the next year, in the run-up to this event. The north - west region will soon benefit from having in its midst 'the largest newly built national museum in the UK for over a hundred years.' Not only is this to be a new focus for the long-term history of the region, but the project is advertised by the World Museum Liverpool as a pioneering venture, concerned with 'raising social history as a museum discipline to an international scale'

The emphasis on social history stems in part from the origins of the new institution in the old Museum of Liverpool Life, which also housed the local archaeological collections. But the programmatic nature of the museum's advertised strategy tells us something significant about how the planners envisage what the museum is to be about. Exhibitions are not to be viewed simply as opportunities to display artefacts and collections using contemporary techniques and materials. The new emphasis on social history reflects changing attitudes among professional museum specialists about what the purpose of display is. There is a widespread recognition among professionals that display is always imbued with the social values of the age. So, to some extent, curators are choosing to highlight social values in a much more self-conscious way. The topics advertised on the Museum's web pages already point to the kinds of themes that the planners want to showcase: 'Port City', 'Creative City', 'People's City'

and 'Global City.' These themes and strategies are rather different from the kinds of displays with which most archaeologists and museum visitors are familiar. They are not about evolving societies, landscape change, or the symbolic dimensions of artefacts. Nor are they about trendy academic subjects, like 'ancient identities' or Classical receptions.

The culture of museums is undergoing dramatic transformation. Unchanging permanent collections are being superseded by an increasing number of temporary thematic exhibitions. Are we visiting museums more frequently as a result? How do we feel about the emergence of curators who prefer 'in your face' messages? One example of these curatorial changes is the recent exhibition of Lindow Man on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his original display in the Manchester Museum.

Not all new exhibitions are controversial or deliberately provocative. CAS members have a special treat in the current exhibition at the Grosvenor Museum about Robert Newstead, prepared by Chester's new curator of Early History, Liz Royles. A year ago the new Egyptian gallery was opened in the World Museum to great acclaim.

One of our members, Gina Muskett, has recently been appointed curator of the Classical collections, which are in process of being re-displayed. Some of these new developments will be highlighted in future issues.

**Zosia Archibald**

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/about/capitalprojects/mol>



*The new Museum of Liverpool  
(Computer Generated Promotional Image)*

### Open Days for 'Archaeology in the Park' 2010

University of Chester undergraduate archaeology students will be led by the CWAC Historic Environment Services team in an archaeological excavation during May 2010. The dig is a key training experience for students and contributes to the city's research agenda for Grosvenor Park and its fascinating history. This year, the dig is holding two Open Days with specific activities and site tours on the afternoon of May 21<sup>st</sup> (1.00-4.00 pm) and during the day on May 22<sup>nd</sup> (10.00am - 4.30pm). Activities will include artefact handling and washing, site explanations and tours and child-friendly activities such as colouring and a 'kiddie-dig.'

The dig will run from May 4<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>, Mondays to Fridays. Questions and visits from the public are welcome throughout the dig, but the site will only be 'open' and special activities arranged only for the two Open Days. Members of the Society are encouraged to follow along the dig progress on our Blog at:

<http://univchester-parkdig.blogspot.com/>

**Meggen Gondek**

# Cheshire Archaeology Day: an Update

Following the article in the Chester Antiquary 2009 Issue 2 regarding the recent demise of Cheshire Archaeology Day and the concern amongst the Archaeological fraternity that this popular event had been cancelled for good – there is good news.

Following a meeting between the Chairmen of both the Chester Archaeological Society & the Cheshire Local History Association and Jill Collens, Project Manager: Archaeology Planning Advisory Service, we can announce that Cheshire Archaeology Day will resume in 2011 !

This prestigious event is planned for April 2011, probably

at Northwich Memorial Hall, and its format will be similar to previous years' to include specialist speakers on a wide range of subjects, and, the opportunity to see a range of exhibitions from local archaeological and historical societies from the region.

Advance notice of and details of the event are expected to be circulated in September / October 2010.

The Society will ensure our members are kept up-to-date via the Cheshire Antiquary as usual.

Phil Miles

## Society Information Contacts

**Chairman:** Mr Philip Miles  
10 Deansway, Tarvin, CH3 8LX  
Tel (01829)741207  
E: philkath.chester@virgin.net

**Vice Chairman:** Mr Dan Garner  
Backford Hall, Backford, Chester  
Cheshire, CH1 6PZ  
Tel (01244) 975915  
dan.garner@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

**Honorary Secretary:**  
Mr Alan Williams  
20 The Yonne, City Walls Road,  
Chester, CH1 2NH  
Tel (01244) 310563  
E: alan.williams844@o2.co.uk

**Membership Secretary:**  
Mrs Kathryn Miles  
10 Deansway, Tarvin CH3 8LX  
Tel (01829) 741207  
E: philkath.chester@virgin.net

**Honorary Treasurer:**  
Mr Alan Austin  
8 Pinfold Close Chester CH4 7ES.  
Tel (01244) 682332.  
E: Alan.Austin-CAS@tesco.net

**Honorary Editor:**  
Dr Meggen Gondek  
Dept of History & Archaeology,  
University of Chester, Parkgate Rd,  
Chester, CH1 4BJ  
Tel (01244) 512150.  
E: m.gondek@chester.ac.uk

**Honorary Newsletter Editor:**  
Ms Carolyne Kershaw  
39 Stalbridge Avenue, Liverpool,  
L18 1HA  
Tel (0151) 280 2669  
E: carolyne.kershaw@virgin.net

**Fieldwork co-ordinator:**  
Mr Phillip Miles  
10 Deansway, Tarvin CH3 8LX  
Tel (01829) 741207  
E: philkath.chester@virgin.net

### 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>

## An opportunity to renew our acquaintance with the Vikings

### Society Excursion to Ireland 2011

A possible visit to Ireland in mid / late September 2011 has been proposed.

Coach travel from Chester and four nights in a hotel near Dublin (half board), mid / late September.

**Newgrange:** Ireland's best known prehistoric site, one of the finest passage tombs in Europe

**Clonmacnois:** Monastery founded in 548/9, a great centre of learning. Wonderful carved crosses, grave slabs etc, other churches & a round tower.

**Glendalough:** Famous round tower, crosses etc.

Dublin itself a Viking city, with its Christ Church Cathedral, St Patrick's Cathedral, Trinity College, its museum, and library that includes the Book of Kells.

At this early planning stage the Society needs to know how much interest there is from members. Without any commitment, would you register your interest at the Society's AGM on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2010, or by letter, phone or email to the following Addresses:

Jackie & Tony Bland, 2 Andrews Close, Tarvin, Chester CH3 8LN  
Tel: 01829740523

By email to: Phil Miles:  
[philkath.chester@virgin.net](mailto:philkath.chester@virgin.net)

The **Cheshire 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:  
**30th September 2010**