



The

Chester Antiquary

Newsletter of the Chester Archaeological Society

2014 Issue 1 (Spring / Summer)

Recent additions to the Cheshire West Museums Archaeology Collections

Over the past few years the Cheshire West Museums' relationship with metal detectorists has gone from strength to strength with the help of the Portable Antiquities Scheme and our collections continue to benefit from both treasure finds and from donations by finders.

In the past two years, two significant medieval finds, both finger rings, have been discovered by metal detectorists in Cheshire and have been acquired by the museum service following the completion of the Treasure process organised by the British Museum.

One ring (CHEGM 2012.282) is a gold finger ring set with a purple stone, possibly an amethyst. When it was discovered on cultivated land in Baddiley during a metal detecting rally, the stone had become detached, but luckily the eagle-eyed metal detectorist saw and retrieved the stone from the ground and we were able to have the ring conserved when it came into the museum collections. The ring dates to the 13th or 14th century AD and though now distorted from being in the ground for centuries, would have been a relatively high status piece of jewellery in the medieval period.

It was found in association with a silver groat of Henry VI of the 1420's and is of great significance, not only because it is a beautiful artefact in good condition, but because it is highly likely that the ring formed part of a much larger hoard which was found in the same location by the same detector twenty-eight years earlier. The original Huntington Hoard consisted of forty one gold coins and a ring and has been in the museum collections since 1986.

These two treasure items were purchased by the museum with the help of the V & A Purchase Grant Fund and have been on display over the summer in the 'Discover a Medieval City: Places, Voices, Journeys' exhibition which is now moving on to Wrexham Museum where it will be on display until January.

Liz Royles

*Below:
Baddiley Ring*

*Right:
Huntingdon Ring*



Another recent addition to our collections, another medieval finger ring, was found by a detectorist in Huntington, just outside Chester City Centre. The beautiful gold ring (CHEGM 2013. 10.1) has an engraving of St Christopher shown in his traditional pose carrying the infant Jesus and dates to the late 15th or early 16th centuries AD.



Development and Consultations: Good News and Bad

At last there is some good news on the development front. However, there are also some very worrying threats on the horizon.

The resubmitted plan to build a 'student village' on Green Belt land between Blacon and Mollington was rejected by a special meeting of Full Council held at Chester Town Hall on 23 October 2013, and at last the developers seem to have got the message. Likewise a scheme for student accommodation adjacent to Telfords Warehouse at Tower Wharf was rejected by members on the Strategic Planning Committee on 23rd January 2014. We opposed this application because its massing would obstruct important views in the area, its density was inappropriate, and because the large number of students in the 'Garden Quarter' already causes friction; the rejection seems largely to have been based on the last criterion. By contrast, the proposal for student accommodation on the Linenhall Stables site (on the western side of St Martins Way, opposite the Crowne Plaza Hotel) has been approved. We considered that this application was a sustainable one in terms of function, and our concerns about damage to the underlying archaeological remains (the Linenhall itself, the Franciscan friary and the Roman extramural baths) have largely been allayed. The height of the St Martins Way frontage was reduced as a result of the consultation process, and we hope that the building (assuming it is constructed) will at least be acceptable rather than being another blot on the landscape. Nevertheless, because of the absence of any properly informed public debate and policy on the subject, the questions of how much more dedicated student accommodation is needed in the city and where it is best sited remain unanswered.

We commented on the final draft of the CWaC Local Plan, pointing out that the sections on historic environment and urban design were weaker than the National Planning Policy Framework would allow them to be.

The Plan has now been submitted for government approval.

Our present worries revolve around the announcement by CWaC of another 400 staff cuts over the next three years as a contribution to budget savings. The cuts are initially focussed on management posts, although others will not be immune. Although the details are not yet clear, it seems that both the Archaeological Planning Advisory Service (APAS) and the Historic Environment Team (HET) will lose their specialist leaders and will come under more general managers. HET is already threatened with losing all its Council funding by 2017. We are sure that the remaining staff will do their best, but it is obvious that services will suffer in capacity and status. Given that last Autumn CWaC also withdrew officer support from the Conservation Area Advisory Panel, one has to ask whether the Council actually understands and values Chester's unique heritage or merely regards it as a hindrance to development. We have already commented on these changes, as we shall be doing to the related parliamentary consultation on the future of local authority archaeological services in general.

Finally, we are very aware that, because of the limits of knowledge and time, our comments tend to be restricted to developments in Chester. We would very much welcome it if members who live elsewhere in Cheshire (East as well as West) were to draw our attention in a timely way to developments near them that may affect the historic environment (including the setting of ancient monuments, buildings and conservation areas).

For more information on all these topics, see the Conservation page of our website:

www.chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk/conservation.html

Peter Carrington

Forthcoming Society Visits:

Saturday 29th March 2014: Wirral Through the Ages

A visit to Big Heritage's pop up museum celebrating the archaeology of the Wirral Peninsular from the Mesolithic through to the Medieval period. Members should make their own way to the museum and meet there at 2 pm. It is situated in the Pyramid Shopping Centre minutes from Birkenhead railway station. A member of the Big Heritage team will be on hand especially to talk CAS members through all the exhibits.

Monday 28th July 2014: Two hillfort excavations in one day

CAS members have been invited to visit the University of Liverpool's dig at Penycloddiau and the University of Oxford's dig at Moel y Gaer, Bodfari.

Being hillforts, access to both is steep and include stiles, so this should be taken into account by members wishing to participate. The visit must place on this Monday to enable us to take in both sites in one day. CAS members will be taken around Penycloddiau by Liverpool's Dr Rachel Pope, and Bodfari by Oxford's Prof Gary Lock, both of whom are leading hillfort experts which should make for a very interesting day. For those who can't attend this weekday visit, these sites are both open to the public the previous weekend : Penycloddiau on Sat 26th July, Bodfari on Sun 27th July.

Date TBC – visit to Parys Mountain on Anglesey and the Great Orme Copper Mine.

Details of these visits will be available on the Society website.

The Society's Library: Slow but Sure Progress

Things are slowly coming together with the library, but a lot of work remains to be done by the middle of the year when we have to vacate our store at the Bumpers Lane council depot.

We have reached an informal agreement with Cheshire Libraries to rent shelving in their reserve store on Hartford Way, off Sealand Road, Chester, to house our core collection of monographs and pamphlets, and we hope to sign a formal agreement shortly. Access arrangements have still to be agreed (unfortunately it will certainly not be open to all members for browsing), and at the moment Cheshire Libraries managers do not expect it to be a permanent home. But at least it is dry, warm and clean. The search for a permanent home continues.

As reported in our last newsletter, our collection of Cheshire topographical prints and a handful of archaeological drawings are being transferred to the Grosvenor Museum. The items are being handed over in batches as accessioning by museum staff proceeds.

We have identified over 1400 items that may be appropriate to Cheshire Record Office and will shortly pass the items over to them for review; they have already provisionally stated that they will accept most of them.

We are also rationalising our holdings at Chester University in order to ensure that all our journals are kept in one place: previously in some cases issues of the same journal have been divided between the university and Bumpers Lane! Unfortunately, because of limitations of space this again means disposals, and Council has devoted a great deal of time to reviewing what should be kept and what should go. In the future

there will be stronger emphasis on archaeological journals from the western side of Britain that are available in print only, with disposals from among those that are more appropriate to a record office, that are out of scope geographically, that are available free of charge online, or of which we only have short runs. We believe that will result in the greatest practicable range of journals being available in Chester to our members and other users.

Alice Bray and Anna Johnson have continued to work hard to make arrangements with booksellers and auctioneers to sell the items for disposal that appear of some value, and we hope that their efforts soon bear fruit. However, members should not expect a vast improvement in the Society's balance sheet!

Unfortunately, journals do not appear to have a second-hand value, but we are having some success at transferring them free to other organisations that wish to build up their libraries; this is at least better than seeing them pulped.

By the time of the next Autumn newsletter, the move from Bumpers Lane should be complete. Nevertheless, numerous tasks will remain: a more refined 'weeding' of the collection, better cataloguing (hopefully leading ultimately to an online catalogue), identifying items for repair, and encouraging use of the library by better publicity. I shall be giving up my role as *de-facto* librarian when the move is over, so we need members with the appropriate skills and interests to come forward and take over. In the first instance, contact myself or our Secretary, Alan Williams.

Peter Carrington

Editorship of the Society Journal

Last Autumn Meggen Gondek stood down as Editor of our journal, and we should like to take this opportunity to thank her before all our members for carrying out this demanding task so ably at the same time as holding a lectureship at Chester University.

In the absence of a single candidate to replace Meggen, Council agreed for the moment to appoint an Editorial Subcommittee, consisting of Peter Carrington, Leigh Dodd, Julie Edwards and Dan Garner. The idea of appointing an Assistant Editor had in any case been discussed for some time.

The first task for the Subcommittee is to oversee the production of volume 84 of the journal. Contributions include articles on a rare Roman coin from Mollington,

peasant life in fourteenth-century Cheshire as seen through the Shotwick court rolls, the excavation of a medieval-early post-medieval salt works at Nantwich, and excavations at Neston.

As new features we also plan to include summaries of recent discoveries reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme and of developer-funded fieldwork in Cheshire; we hope that these will become standard items.

Some of the contributions have been finalised and are ready for typesetting but others still require editing. Consequently it may be Autumn 2014 when the volume appears.

Peter Carrington

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on **facebook**

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Library

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

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 30th August 2014.

CAS Journals Online by the End of 2014 ?

Council has approved a scheme to digitise back copies of the Society's journal and make all but the latest three issues freely available online through the Archaeology Data Service at York. There will be a rolling programme with additional issues being released online as new issues are printed.

Numerous archaeological journals are now available in this way. In order to maximise potential use of the journal, and also in the interests of simplicity, we decided not to charge for downloads. However, non-members wishing to consult any of the latest three issues will still have to go to a library or buy them; this is a frequent practice among other societies and preserves the benefits of membership.

We have no plans to make the journal a digital-only publication. For the moment, we see paper and digital versions as complementary: bound printed copies are more convenient for intensive use, digital versions more convenient for researchers pursuing occasional enquiries. However, in the future we shall not carry the large stocks of printed back issues that we have done in the past.

By the time that this newsletter appears, back copies of all issues (including the 'Old Series') up to volume 73 will have been scanned by Hobs Reprographics of Watergate Street, Chester; digital versions of the more recent volumes have already been supplied by the designer, Shawn Stipling of Aquarium design. However, much work remains to be done. The single pdf (Portable Document Format) file for each issue has to be split up to produce a file for each article and an index has to be compiled; we estimate that there will ultimately be in the region of 800 articles. At the moment this task is being divided between Phil Miles and Peter Carrington, but more help would speed up the task. Any members who think they have the necessary computer skill should contact:

p.carrington@tiscali.co.uk.

Peter Carrington

A Visit to the Hardman's House Saturday 17th May 2014

A unique National Trust Property in Rodney Street, Liverpool

The Studio and home of Edward Chambré Hardman, prominent portrait photographer and prize winning landscape photographer and his wife Margaret.

Hardman became interested in photography while serving as an officer in the Army in India. After being made redundant in the Army cuts of the 1930s he worked from studios in Liverpool and Chester.

His home, studios and developing rooms are conserved as they were in the 1950s.

A unique piece of social history.

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