

# The Chester Antiquary

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## A 19th-Century Society fit for the 21st-Century

Our New Chair's Hopes for the Way Ahead

am hugely honoured to have been voted in as your Chair, with the opportunity to work alongside a wonderful Council of very talented and willing members. Thank you!

In his welcoming speech at our AGM on 25 November 2020, Dr Paul Booth, our new President, said: 'The Society is a child of the nineteenth century. It deals with archaeology, history, architecture – and Rachel's interests span these original causes.'

Both these statements are indeed true: the Chester Archaeological Society was founded in 1849 and it is maturing into a very well rounded, highly renowned and extremely respectable adult. The original objectives of the Society were, and are: 'to further the education of the public in the archaeology, history and architecture of Chester, Cheshire and North Wales, and to promote public knowledge, understanding and appreciation of these subjects generally'. My own interests certainly assist in ensuring that these objectives continue: my multidisciplinary and cross-period research and

publications on British fortifications in the landscape include the study of history, archaeology, architecture, contemporary literature, and place-names.

The impact of Covid-19 on our lives cannot be under-estimated. If we can take any positives from the experience of this pandemic, however, the main one for the Society is that we are now forced into reassessing our role in a 'new normal' world, and particularly in how we engage with you, our members — and also with our potential members.

And so, it is my intention as your Chair, that the nineteenth-century-born child with multiple interests focused on our exceptional regional heritage is revived with all its original enthusiasm, and nurtured in preparation to fully meet the demands, challenges – and excitement – of the twenty-first century.

Thank you, all, for your support! Rachel Dr Rachel Swallow FSA



## A Win for Wetlands!

ur prize for the best Final Year Archaeology Dissertation at the University of Chester in 2019 goes to Rowena Young for her study of the wetlands of the Vale of Pickering.

Rowena's dissertation questions how representative the famous site of Star Carr is of its immediate landscape during the Mesolithic period. To do this she analyses and presents macrofossil plant remains from the nearby site No Name Hill to establish the local environment. The findings demonstrate that Star Carr is unique in its landscape but that the forms of deposition occurring are a wider trend throughout the period.

We extend our congratulations on an outstanding piece of work, which impressed the review panel with innovative knowledge, novel perspective and an exceptional demonstration of relevant background knowledge – all of which Rowena communicated and argued to an extremely high standard.

We wish Rowena well with her career!

## **Changes to Council: Welcome and Farewell!**

ur AGM on 25 November saw quite a few changes to Council:

Janet Axworthy stood down after serving an extended term of four-and-a-half years as Chairman and one-and-a half as Acting Secretary. We thank her for service through a difficult period.

Peter Carrington stood down as Journal Editor – a post he first took up twenty five years ago! – but has agreed to act as Newsletter Editor and Publicity Officer until the next AGM. He was elected as the Society's first 'Distinguished Member'.

We are also sorry to lose Clare Dudman and Clive Tolley from our Council.

We are delighted that Paul Booth, one of our Vice-Presidents since 2017, has agreed to serve as President – a post vacant since the death of the last Duke of Westminster.

Rachel Swallow was voted in as Chairman and Journal Editor and Joanne Kirton as Secretary.

To meet the challenges of operating in a virtual world, Niall McFadyen took on the new post of Lecture Technology Coordinator.

We welcome Julian Baum, John Cubitt and Andrew Reynolds as new members of Council.

Some of our new officers and council members introduce themselves and their interests in these pages.

#### Rachel Swallow: Chairman and Journal Editor



esearch Fellow at the universities of Liverpool and Chester. Over ten years' interdisciplinary research experience, specialising in multi-period British fortifications and their landscapes in the Irish Sea region and beyond. Has published extensively in international and national journals and books. Over twenty years' teaching experience at both under- and post-graduate levels, as well as talks at international conferences and to community groups.

**Joanne Kirton: Secretary** 



outh Engagement Manager for the Council for British Archaeology. This includes the co-ordination of the UK-wide Young Archaeologists' Club. Also a Codirector of the Bamburgh Research Project based at Bamburgh Castle on the

Northumberland coast, an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Chester and an Associate Member of CIfA, sitting on their Early Careers Special Interest Group.

Joanne has a background in running community training excavations and public outreach projects and has worked as a VL for several years with a focus on teaching fieldwork techniques.

Her research interests broadly focus on the early medieval period in the British Isles, with a specialism in carved stone monuments from this period. Her PhD thesis explored the biographical and landscape context of Cheshire's early medieval stone sculpture assemblage.

#### Payment of CAS membership subscriptions in 2021

The annual subscription for all classes of CAS membership is payble on 1 January 2021. Rates are unchanged: Ordinary £20, Associate £10, Institutional £25, Student £10.

If you pay by Standing Order, please check that payment will be made to the Society in early January. If you pay in another way, please make a prompt payment in January. Membership Application forms can be downloaded here: <a href="https://chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk/how-to-join/">https://chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk/how-to-join/</a>

If you are a UK taxpayer please complete the Gift Aid Declaration on the Membership Application Form; this enables the Society to reclaim 25p for every £1 you pay to the Society

#### **New Council Members: Julian Baum**





Illustrator and digital visual effects artist working in archaeological reconstruction. I have a particular interest in early Chester and Roman Britain more generally. Contributions include providing reconstructions for the Elliptical Building and the Chester amphitheatre reports

My experience includes 3-D modelling, material development for 3D models, digital

compositing paint, and photography. Some GIS and photogrammetric work, and how these technologies can be applied to research as well as presentation.

Won the Peter Neaverson Award for Digital Initiative and Innovation in 2016 for work modelling and animating the compound steam engine at Queen Street Mill, in Burnley.

#### **John Cubitt**



After training as a geologist and a career in oil exploration and production around the world spanning forty years, John retired to his home in Holt and now dedicates himself to supporting his local community. He has been a local councillor for the last eight years and was chairman of the Holt Local History Society for seven years (now Lecture Secretary). He has been actively involved in conducting research on Holt's history and recently co-authored a paper published in the *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society* on Holt's Roman tile and pottery works. He is married to Professor Cynthia Burek of the University of Chester, has three grown children and five grandchildren. His other interests include archaeological excavations, gardening, walking with his Labrador, Charlie, reading and stamp collecting.

#### **Andrew Reynolds**



orn in Neath, South Wales, now living in Cheshire, and married with two children. Degrees in History, Education and Archaeology. Worked as a University Senior Lecturer on BA/MA programmes and as a primary school Deputy Headteacher.

Research interests: British prehistory, Celto-Roman studies, landscape archaeology, Celtic art and Welsh archaeology I am a doctoral researcher at the University of Reading. My research aims to contribute to the recent shift in approaches to the analysis and understanding of the western European Bronze Age and Iron Age hoards and their deposition by re-investigating the metalwork hoards of Wales and the Marches such as those from Beeston Castle, Congleton

and Rossett.

## **New insights into Old Hoards**

A Reinvestigation of Bronze Age and Iron Age Metalwork Deposition Andrew Reynolds

s archaeologists keep pace with new hoards in the region, especially those reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme such as the socketed axes found at Beeston Castle this year, there is always a danger that earlier discoveries will be overlooked. Fortunately, this is not the case in Cheshire and north-east Wales, where they are safely curated and accessible to the public in local museums

My doctoral research at the University of Reading looks at patterns of selective and reflective deposition in the Bronze Age and Iron Age metalwork hoards from Cheshire and North Wales by re-examining the objects themselves, studying the original reports, looking at site topography and creating a database using ArcGIS.

As an example, the Broxton Hoard consists of a middle Bronze Age palstave axe and a basal-looped spearhead, dated *c* 1325 Bc. An initial study shows heavy use, probably prior to deposition.

The second hoard, from Helsby (c 900 BC), is a very interesting assemblage and shows reflective depositional action, with a bronze gouge forced inside a socketed late Bronze Age axe.

These old hoards offer an important insight into the identity, society and beliefs of the people who inhabited the country before written records. They provide important information on social, industrial and ceremonial practices of the prehistoric communities of the area.



It is a pleasure to acknowledge the help of local museums, both before and during the Covid-19 pandemic: for example I have been fortunate enough to recently examine two hoards at the Grosvenor Museum, thanks to the help of Liz Montgomery (Interpretation and Collections Officer).





Above: Late Bronze Age socketed axe from Helsby with a gouge forced inside the socket

Left: The Broxton hoard, with heavily damaged palstave



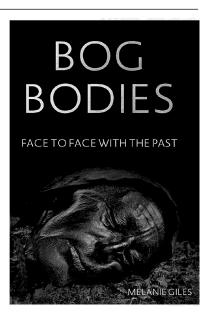
# **Lecture Programme Spring 2021**

Lectures for Spring 2021 will be posted on our website, with updates on Twitter, Facebook and in e-newsletters

he subject of our first talk by Dr Melanie Giles is dealt with in her new book, Bog Bodies: Face to Face with the Past (Manchester University Press), now available to pre-order.

The 'bog bodies' of northwestern Europe have captured the imaginations of poets and archaeologists alike, allowing us to come face-to-face with individuals from the past.

This book features a groundbreaking 'cold case' forensic study of the Manchester bog head 'Worsley Man'. It argues that the bodies must be resituated within a world of endemic violence and change and reveals the bogs as places that were rich and fertile yet dangerous.



## **Latest Discoveries in the Grosvenor Park**

Julie Edwards

ach May for the past few years, Cheshire West and Chester Council and the University of Chester have run a training excavation in the Grosvenor Park, Chester, for the University's archaeology students. In spite of the pandemic, a shorter, twoweek, excavation employing Covid-19 safety measures took place this year in late September, followed by finds processing in the specially adapted offices of the Grosvenor Museum.

Previous work had revealed a Roman road, large Saxon and medieval ditches, a stone medieval boundary wall, and building debris from a building destroyed in the English Civil War. It is likely that these remains were part of the hospital and chapel of the fraternity of St Anne in the precinct of the Church of St John the Baptist. They were acquired by Sir Hugh Cholmondeley in the late 16th century and developed into his Chester residence.

This year's excavation area consisted of an extended Trench VIII, first opened in 2017. In the south and west extensions, Civil War destruction debris was encountered, consisting of fragments of roof slates and tiles, 16th- and 17th-century bricks, plaster etc. Scattered throughout the layer were lead shot and gunpowderholder caps, and a possible iron musket rest was found by metal detectorist Colin Sharratt. Within and below the destruction layer more 16th-century objects were found, notably pieces of Low Countries tin-glazed ware, Raeren and Cologne stoneware mugs/jugs, and fragments of Venetian-style glass vessel fragments, all



Lead shot, powder-holder cap and musket rest



Amethyst intaglio depicting Mercury

suggesting fine dining in a prosperous household.

The medieval boundary wall was confirmed as running through Trench VIII, and in the western extension quantities of late medieval floor tiles were discovered above the remains of a mortar bedding layer, indicating a tiled floor and confirming the presence of a building in this part of the trench

Residual Roman and medieval artefacts were also found in the southern area of the trench, the most intriguing of which are a Roman intaglio and a late medieval pilgrim badge. Prof Martin Henig identified Mercury as the figure on the intaglio, which



Pilgrim badge in form of a bishop's liturgical comb

would have been set in a signet ring similar to examples found during the 2004-6 amphitheatre excavations. The lead alloy badge in the form of a bishop's liturgical comb is a souvenir of the shrine of St Blaise at Canterbury. St Blaise, thought to be a 4th-century bishop in Asia Minor, was credited with performing miracles to cure throat ailments. It is the first pilgrim souvenir to have been identified from an excavation in the city, although such items have been found elsewhere in Cheshire.

Despite the masks, hand—and tool-cleansing and 2m social distancing, the students were enthusiastic and hardworking, and in the two weeks discovered much that contributes to our understanding of this significant area of Chester.

#### **Acknowledgements**

The excavation was directed by Dan Garner (L - P Archaeology) on behalf of CWAC, assisted by Julie Edwards (CWAC), Rachael Matthews (L - P Archaeology). Finds photographs are by Cheryl Quinn (CWAC). Andy James and Rob Jones (CWAC Parks and Open Space) enabled the excavations to take place in the park. 'RINGWAY' generously loaned a JCB and a dumper truck to open up and close the excavation trench. John Crisp kindly provided logistical support.