



President Dr Paul Booth FRHistS

The Chester Antiquary

2021 Issue 5 – October

A Busy Autumn to Look Forward to!

I trust that you all had a good summer, coped well with the unusual heat, and managed to catch up with family, friends – and perhaps some archaeology! Your Council has once again been busy behind the scenes for you, for which I, for one, am very grateful and thankful.

As the autumn unfurls and we head towards the festive period in December, you will note that we have a full and very interesting lecture programme; we thank Jo Kirton in particular for her sterling efforts in gathering such great speakers together to talk to us in the comfort of our own homes. Please do sign up early for the next lecture on 3 November by our very own Council Member and Senior Lecturer at the University of Chester, Dr Caroline Pudney, who will be updating us on the first very exciting season of the Rossett Roman villa dig just completed, which is now receiving worldwide attention. Watch out for the forthcoming registration email from our Membership Secretary, Hugh Bray.

Our Council Members John Cubitt and Kelly Griffiths are kindly arranging a Society visit to the Wrexham Museum 'Hidden Holt' exhibition. Again, watch your email inboxes for more information. If you don't manage to get in on this first-come-first-served excursion, do try to go to see it before it closes in January 2022; it promises to be a wonderful exhibition!

Some of you will have completed an online public consultation about the proposed Hydro Hub in Chester, and Niall Macfadyen, CAS Council Member and the one technologically behind the successful online Zoom delivery of our lectures, provides an exciting update on the proposed new use for the old hydroelectric station. We wish him well in his Chair role of CHASE CIC for this wonderful project and look forward to hearing more news from him soon.

Many thanks to Peter Carrington for all matters on advocacy. Peter's summary of his considerable work on behalf of the Society for the Local Plan revision, visitor signage in Chester and the stabilisation of Dee House is summarised in this newsletter. Please do contact him if you have views on any heritage-related planning matters.

Again, with huge thanks to Peter, volume 91 of our journal for 2021 is now heading towards the printers, and we welcome contributions for volume 92 for 2022.

Finally, we thank Kelly Griffiths for her fascinating and informative read on being a metal-detecting archaeologist!

Enjoy the newsletter, do feed back to us, and stay safe and well!

Rachel Swallow

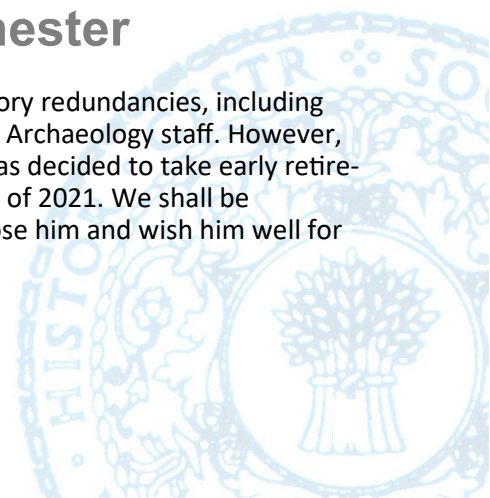
Chair, Chester Archaeological Society

Archaeology at the University of Chester

In our March newsletter we reported that staff in the Department of History and Archaeology at the University of Chester (including those teaching heritage), based both at Chester and at Shrewsbury, were among those in the university targeted for redundancy.

We now understand that the university has ended its staffing exercise and has managed to

avoid any compulsory redundancies, including among History and Archaeology staff. However, Dr James Pardoe has decided to take early retirement from the end of 2021. We shall be extremely sad to lose him and wish him well for the future.



Lectures Autumn–Winter 2021/2

This season's lectures will again be delivered via Zoom. Visit the [Lectures](#) page of our website for more information and registration.

Weds 3 November 2021 at 7.30 pm

In the Footsteps of Trebellius Maximus

Dr Caroline Pudney, *Senior Lecturer in Archaeology, University of Chester*

Weds 1 December 2021 at 7.30 pm

Recent research on the Early Medieval Monastery of Lindisfarne (Holy Island)

Dr David Petts, *Associate Professor, Durham University*

Weds 5 January 2022 at 7.30 pm

The First Conservationists? Land Management and Environmental Impacts in the Tenth Millennium BC

Dr Barry Taylor, *Senior Lecturer, University of Chester*

Weds 2 February 2022 at 7.30 pm

Excavations at Grosvenor Park, Chester

Julie Edwards, *Senior Archaeologist, CWaC*, and Dan Garner, *Research Associate and Visiting Lecturer, University of Chester*

Weds 2 March 2022 at 7.30 pm

The Human Remains Project

Dr Ruth Nugent, *UKRI Future Leader's Fellow: The Human Remains Project, University of Liverpool*

Weds 6 April 2022 at 7.30 pm

The Northgate Development: The Archaeological Response

Mark Leah, *Development Management Archaeologist and Team Leader, CWaC*

May 2022

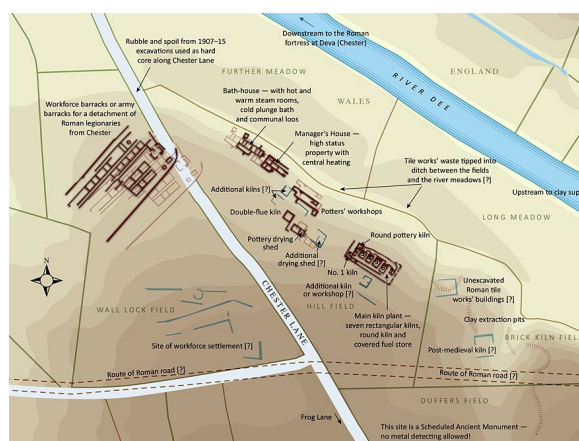
Newstead Lecture (TBC)

'Hidden Holt' Exhibition at Wrexham Museum

The Roman pottery- and tile kilns at Holt were excavated by Arthur Acton between 1907 and 1915. In 2018, the Holt Local History Society sponsored a geophysical survey by Archaeological Survey West showing that they remained substantially in place, along with some intriguing anomalies that are still to be investigated; the results are published in *JCAS* ns **89**, 2019, 71–83.

The most significant finds from the excavations were sold by Acton to the National Museum in Cardiff. Now, for the first time since 1925, they form the centrepiece of an exhibition at the Wrexham Museum entitled 'Hidden Holt', which will be open until January 2022.

The Chester Archaeological Society is hoping to arrange an evening guided tour of the exhibition at Wrexham Museum in late November or early December, followed by a social drink. Look out for emails and check our website soon for more information!



Plan of the Holt Roman pottery- and tile works, based on original research by Arthur Acton (1907–15), William Grimes (1925–9) and Chris Matthews (2018). © Crown Copyright, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, Archaeological Survey West and Holt Local History Society. Reproduced with permission

John Cubitt and Kelly Griffiths

The Hydro Hub

A new use for the old hydroelectric station on Chester weir

After organising the opening of Chester Castle to the public in 2017 (with the help of Chris Matheson MP, Cheshire West and Chester Council and English Heritage) I was asked to look at reintroducing power generation on the weir.

After a year of meetings and design options, the Government cut subsidy of hydroelectric power to zero and the project was shelved. However, I was still keen to use the site to tell the story of the 850 years of clean power on the site, since the weir was built by Hugh Lupus in 1093.

A way forward was identified in July 2020, with the idea of turning the site into a careers and education centre for green technology, telling people about the history and future of clean energy in Cheshire. The new strategy started when I realised that the Chester area had been chosen to be one of the first low-carbon industrial clusters in the UK, including an £1bn investment in the HyNet (low-carbon hydrogen) project. My plan was, if they had £1bn, they could afford to give me £1m to set up a science museum on low-carbon energy!

After little more than a year, we have funding to develop a business plan (from CWaC and the Architectural Heritage Fund) and funding for a Green Expo trade show, conference and awards dinner in June 2022. As part of this process, we undertook a public consultation (which many members of the Chester Archaeological Society completed), with the results summarised here:

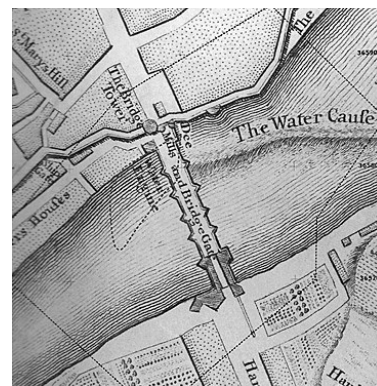
- Responses to date: 287;
- 60% feel they do not know enough about 'net zero';
- 89% feel they do not know enough about local activities on climate change and net zero;
- 82% want the centre to tell the story of the Dee and hydro power;
- 72% feel the site should have an educational purpose;
- 60% would like the site to have a café (necessary to pay for the primary educational purpose);
- 87% want power generation to be re-established (this is difficult because the site is archaeologically sensitive, an SSSI, and a key site for monitoring salmon migration);
- Finally, 90% of respondents say they would visit the site if it were a museum demonstrating the history and future of renewable energy in Cheshire.

Our conclusion: people want us to go ahead! A company has been set up to deliver the project, Cheshire Heritage and Sustainability Enterprises (CHASE CIC). The directors have agreed that they will take no remuneration for their efforts (like charity trustees). We expect the business plan to be complete before Christmas and will go for planning and fundraising in 2022.

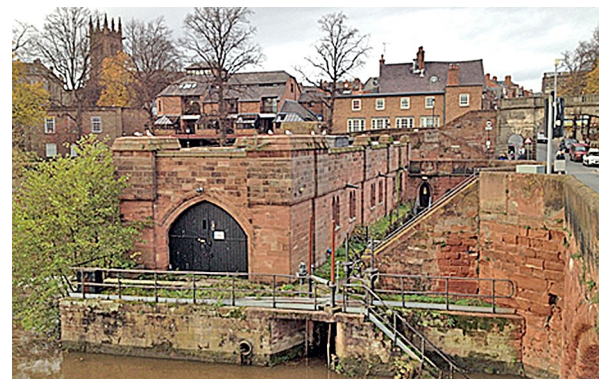
Niall Macfadyen (*Chair of CHASE*)

Email hydrohubchester@gmail.com;

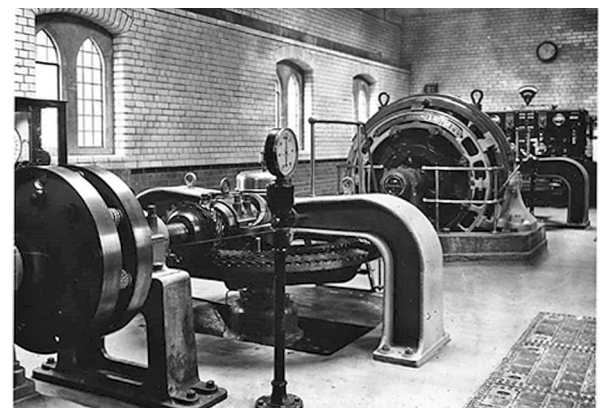
web hydrohubchester@gmail.com



Extract from the Lavaux map of Chester of 1745, showing the 'Water Causeway', Dee Mills and 'Water Engine'.



Exterior of the hydroelectric station today



Interior of the hydroelectric station in 1916

Top and bottom images from report by ARS, reproduced courtesy University of Chester; middle image N Mcfadyen

Local Plan Revision, Visitor Signage and Dee House: Consultation Responses

We have recently commented on three subjects: Local Plan revision, visitor signage in Chester, and the stabilisation of Dee House as a first stage towards its renovation. For the first two, policies and advice exist; it is a matter of implementing them.

Since our last newsletter, we have responded to three consultations: on [revision of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan](#), [visitor signage in Chester](#), and the [application for Listed Building consent for Dee House](#).

Local Plan

Parts One and Two of the Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) Local Plan were adopted in 2015 and 2019 respectively. Since then the Society has responded to a number of relevant major local consultations: [Walk, Ride, Thrive](#); the [High Street, Town and City Centre Commission](#); the [Climate Emergency Response Plan](#); and the [Chester One City Plan](#). At national level there have been the [National Model Design Code](#), [National Design Guide](#) and the government White Paper, *Planning for the Future*, to the last of which we have also [responded](#). References to the *National Model Design Code* and *National Design Guide* are now embedded in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#).

Understanding the past is key to understanding our place in the world. Its practical implications are wide-ranging, delivering heritage-led regeneration and tourism, the public health benefits of informed planning and placemaking, critically informing public policy on social justice and cohesion, and contributing through long-term understanding to modelling and developing responses to climate change. [Society of Antiquaries of London, May 2021](#)

In our view, the existing CWaC *Local Plan* is sound but clearly needs to be revised to take account of recent consultations and government policy. The *National Model Design Code* and *National Design Guide* are both helpful in reinforcing existing design guidance that seeks development that respects built heritage, such as the [Chester Characterisation Study](#). *Planning for the Future* pays lip service to these documents, but its proposals for the approval of large blocks of land for growth, renewal or preservation are very problematical, and the word 'archaeology' does not appear once! The Covid-19 pandemic has acted as a catalyst for changes already in progress and should prompt us to think what sort of future we want.

The main problem facing us is that, both at local and national level, planning decisions too often conflict with policies and guidance (as is admitted in *Planning for the Future*). Thus, in our view, the *Local Plan* needs to be revised to make crystal-clear to all concerned what is planned and what development is acceptable. The two parts of the CWaC *Local Plan*, neighbourhood plans (including the *Chester One City Plan*) and supporting strategies and evidence base documents should be distilled into clear, visual, long-term masterplans for communities.

Our priorities for the Local Plan

- Topography/flood risk;
- Travel – walking, cycling and public transport rather than private motor vehicles wherever possible;
- Capitalising on the qualities of historic walkable settlements and healing the wounds inflicted by adaptation for motor vehicles;
- Shops and services that are easily accessible at the centres of communities;
- Gradually running down car-dependent places in favour of more sustainable town-centre locations;
- Attractive places and spaces that enhance historical character;
- Adapting old buildings rather than demolishing them;
- Adapting landscapes to encourage biodiversity, capture carbon and reduce flooding.

Visitor signage

The Society recently responded to a questionnaire sent to a number of stakeholders about visitor signage in Chester, and we have posted an edited version on our website. In summary:

- Chester's small size, the distinctiveness of its streets, its grid plan and the consequent intervisibility of its landmark buildings mean that it is easy to navigate, reducing the need for help in wayfinding.
- Like other street furniture, there are too many wayfinding signs in Chester. There are three 'generations' of such signs in the city

(plus another of interpretative signs). In some cases, signs duplicate one another; in others, they point to features in plain sight. This degrades the quality of the public realm.

- Mobile phones that can display detailed digital maps are now ubiquitous, and there is great potential for the expansion of digital technology. Old-fashioned paper maps are still useful in exploring the city. However, there remains a role for physical signage.
- There should be a thorough audit of existing wayfinding signs and a masterplan prepared, based on the recommendations in the [Chester Public Realm Design Guide](#) and linked to a digital strategy. Signage must make a positive contribution to the public realm, and redundant signs should be removed.
- Sympathetic redevelopment would enhance the inherited navigability of the city and enable people to find their way easily, without a lot of wayfinding signage. Sadly, it is easier to point to examples where post-war redevelopment in Chester has had the opposite result.

Dee House

The Society has now been part of a Working Party of stakeholders considering the future of Dee House for three years. We welcome its conclusion that the building should be retained and refurbished as the sole survivor of an elite eighteenth-century suburb around St John's Church and a symbol of the nineteenth-century Catholic Revival in Chester; this echoes our [2015 consultation response](#).

Sadly, over the past quarter century Dee House has been allowed to deteriorate to the extent that it has not been possible to find a private developer willing to restore it. This winter CWaC therefore plans to carry out the stabilisation of the building, so that potential developers will be dealing with a 'known quantity'. Unfortunately, because the building is in a dangerous condition, this stabilisation involves removal of the roof and stripping out almost all of the interior, leaving just the shell, with internal fittings of importance to be stored for potential reuse. Listed Building Consent for this work has recently been granted ([21/03217/LBC](#)).

Given that our suggestion of acquiring the Civil Justice Centre (Trident House) and combining that with Dee House and the amphitheatre as a new museum for Chester was deemed impractical, we do not favour any specific use for Dee House in the future; indeed, we recognise that commercial uses are likely to change from one



Above and left Owl jug and sergeant's-at-law ring. [Research News 4, 2006](#), 25–6. © English Heritage

Below Early medieval cross fragments. [JCS 36 \(2\), 1948](#), pl vii



generation to another. However, they should be consistent with preserving and enhancing the historical character and setting of the building and the possibility of public appreciation: its internal plan form; the reinstatement or replacement of internal fittings; absence of obtrusive modern additions; its grounds; and public access to the exterior and preferably interior.

Interpretation of the area raises more questions. Should any on-site display include the sixteenth-century tin-glazed owl jug and gold sergeant's-at-law ring found during the 2004–6 excavation and attesting wealthy occupation before Dee House was built, the early medieval cross fragments found in the 1930s, or even some of the finds from the Grosvenor Park excavation featured in the [Chester Antiquary 2021 issue 4](#)?

Peter Carrington

Email p.carrington@tiscali.co.uk

Further reading

[English Heritage Research News 4, 2006](#)

M Withey & A Menuge. [Dee House, Chester: an investigation and assessment](#). (Research Report Series 5-2016). London: Historic England, 2016

Journal 92 for 2022

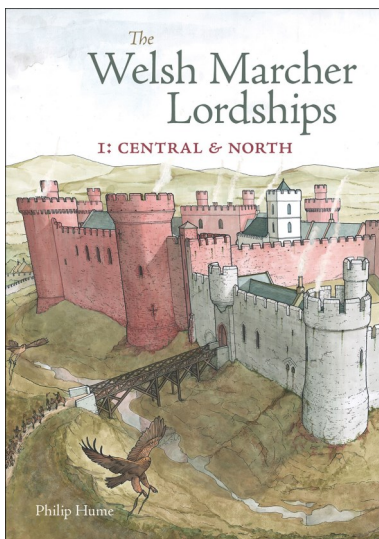
Typesetting of volume 91 of our journal is now under way and it should be in members' hands before Christmas. With detailed reports on the investigation of the Seven Lows prehistoric barrow cemetery at Delamere and on the extraordinarily rich Iron Age occupation at Poulton, it will be significantly longer than recent volumes.

We are now inviting contributions to volume 92 for 2022. The deadline for major research articles is the end of December, to allow time for refereeing and revision; shorter, simpler contributions can be accepted until the end of March.

You can find guidance on scope and presentation in our [Notes for Contributors](#). Remember that we cover the whole of pre-1974 Cheshire (Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Stockport, Trafford, parts of Warrington, and Wirral) and surrounding areas and welcome papers on history, historical architecture and archaeology.

To submit papers, or if you have any questions, email chesterarchaeologicalsociety@gmail.com.

New Books

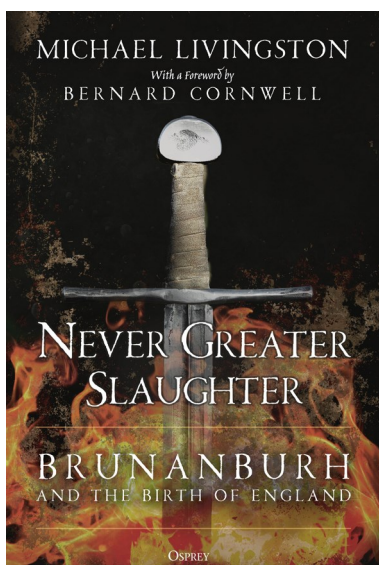


The Welsh Marcher Lordships I: Central and North (including Radnorshire, north Herefordshire, Shropshire, Montgomeryshire, Denbighshire & Flintshire) by Philip Hume. Pbk. 320 pages. Eardisley (Heref): Logaston 2021. ISBN 978-1-910839-45-4

Nearly fifty Marcher lordships extended from the Dee down to the Severn estuary and across south Wales to the coast of Pembrokeshire. They formed a unique border region with its own laws and with exceptional powers exercised by their lords. It was referred to as 'Marchia Wallie' to distinguish it from 'Pura Wallia', and was politically separate from both Wales and England.

This book is the first of a three-volume series synthesising the history of the lordships for the general reader. Future titles will cover the south-west and south-east of Wales.

A detailed review of volume 1 will appear in *JCAS* ns **92** for 2022.



Never Greater Slaughter: Brunanburh and the Birth of England by Michael Livingston with a foreword by Bernard Cornwell. Oxford: Osprey 2021. Hbk. 224 pages. ISBN 1-472849-37-X

Never Greater Slaughter is a study of one of the most significant conflicts in the long history of the British Isles, where Athelstan, king of England, defeated an alliance of the Viking and Celtic kings of Dublin, Scotland and Strathclyde in a battle that secured England's future as an independent, unified kingdom.

For centuries, the site of the battle has been lost. Today, an extraordinary effort uniting enthusiasts, historians, archaeologists, linguists and other researchers – amateurs and professionals, experienced and inexperienced alike – may well have found the site of the long-lost battle of *Brunanburh*.

A review of the book will be published in the next issue of this newsletter.

Confessions of a Metal-Detecting Archaeologist

I have a secret, please don't tell anyone – I go metal detecting. Yes, I am also an archaeologist, so shh.....

I go metal detecting. Yes, I am also an archaeologist so shh. ... That's how it went in my first year as an archaeologist; I felt that being a metal detectorist was something not to be admitted. I had started accidentally when I saw a detectorist on land near my ponies. I immediately interrogated him about whether he had permission and what exactly he would do if he found something of value. I scared him away, only for him to come back the next day with a selection of buttons and coins and... an extra metal detector. After gaining permission from the farmer, I spent the afternoon listening to 'grunts' (ferrous) and high-pitched pings (non-ferrous). Four ring pulls, a dozen iron nails, a nineteenth-century thimble and bell, and a mysterious lead object later, I was thoroughly hooked. Later that evening on the Portable Antiquities Scheme website I found a similar lead item, found in Berkshire, which was a stamp or a die dated to the seventeenth century.

The fields I detect in Cheshire are now pasture, with no evidence for archaeological sites, so the finds I recover are stray or possibly the result of spreading and earlier ploughing. Even though they're not in context, the fact that I'm randomly discovering a wide variety of everyday objects only adds to the allure. Also, the fact that I am making these finds on land I've known all my life adds a unique personal element, as does the fact that my six-year old son – for whom I purchased his own mini-detector – also seems to share my fascination.

I find myself, very unacademically, imagining the people who'd dropped these objects. The thimble I found made me think of a person sewing in the field while workers turned the hay, and a small child running about with, as was common, the bell hanging about their neck, high-pitched tinkling keeping adults aware of where they were. And I can't help but relate this wholly imaginary scenario to my own present as, while I'm metal detecting, my own boy dashes about the same field.

But back to the rigour of archaeology. Recently, on my first day on a lovely medieval excavation in Lancashire, a colleague pulled out a metal detector. Did I know how to use one? Put on the spot I said I did, but not to judge me. The site was fairly large, with structures and features coming up frequently, and every day local metal detectorists came down. They proved themselves to have great local knowledge and, what's more, their detecting provided one of the dig's best finds – a medieval lead spindle whorl. I don't know where I got the impression that owning and using a metal detector was something to be ashamed of; as a tool it can be as necessary and useful as a trowel. And now my secret's out, my employers are sending me on a metal-detecting survey – in Cheshire.

Kelly Griffiths

Council Member, Chester Archaeological Society

Editor's comment See also R Philpott, VI: An assessment of the utility of supervised metal detecting in development-led archaeological work in Cheshire, *JCAS* ns **88**, 2018, 87–113



Left 17th-century lead stamp or die. Photo Ross Anderson

Right Medieval spindle whorl from excavation in Lancashire. Photo L- P : Archaeology



The Aerial Archaeology Mapping Explorer

A newly launched website, the [Aerial Archaeology Mapping Explorer](#), makes the results of aerial mapping projects undertaken by Historic England, its predecessors and many partner organisations, freely available online.

Hundreds of thousands of photographs, ranging in date from the 1920s to the present, have been studied and the visible archaeological features recorded. More recently, innovative technologies such as LiDAR (airborne laser scanning), have been added to the resources used. The mapping

allows all these features to be seen not just as individual sites, but as part of complex, multi-period landscapes. Each mapped archaeological site includes a link to any associated record on local and national Historic Environment Records published on the [Heritage Gateway](#).

Editorial comment The mapping for the Chester area does not include the latest discoveries summarised by Joel Goodchild in *JCAS* ns **90**, 2020, 167–70. We look forward to updates!

Grants and Awards

We are offering the following grants and awards in 2021:

Undergraduate Dissertation Prize

Our annual prize of £100 for the best Final Year dissertation in the Dept of History and Archaeology at the University of Chester.

St John's House Fund

Grants totalling up to £500 pa for archaeological work in Cheshire. Applications may be made at any time of year.

PAS Finds Study Grant

A grant of up to £700 for the study of finds from the pre-1974 county of Cheshire reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme, the results to be published in our journal. Applications to be submitted by 30 June.

There were no successful applications for this grant. Council will decide when next to offer it.

For more information on these grants and awards, see <https://chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk/grants-and-awards/>.

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Make a Donation

Annual subscriptions only cover the regular running costs of the Society, plus some of the costs of our *Journal*. We want to be able to cover more of our *Journal* costs and to expand our range of prizes and grants in order to reward excellence in student performance, encourage people to undertake research, and promote local archaeology and conservation generally.

You can help us to do this by making a donation. Click the [Donate Now](#) link to make payments by PayPal or debit/credit card and allow us to claim Gift Aid. Thank you for your support!

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