



President Dr Paul Booth FRHistS

# The Chester Antiquary

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

2022 Issue 1 – March

## There's a Lot Going On!

**Y**ou will see from our newsletter that there is a lot going on in the heritage world in Chester at the moment.

Coming up in June, we have the wonderful Chester Heritage Festival, which will feature a number of Chester Archaeological Society events. You can find details of all events on the website ([www.chesterheritagefestival.co.uk](http://www.chesterheritagefestival.co.uk)) – do take a look, there is something for everyone!

Before that, an exciting new exhibition, Medieval Chester Retold, will be opening at the Grosvenor Museum. Part of the Mobility of Objects across Boundaries 1000–1700 project run as a partnership between the Universities of Chester and Oxford and West Cheshire Museums, the exhibition will explore our complex and diverse city in medieval times. It will run from 30 April until 9 July before moving on to the Cathedral Chapter

House. And don't miss a fascinating University of Chester student exhibition on finds from the Grosvenor Park training dig, on until 31 July. This year's dig will run from the end of April throughout May. Do visit the site and see what's being uncovered. You can also check the West Cheshire Museums' and the University of Chester History and Archaeology social media accounts.

In addition to our Autumn/Winter lectures, now available as recordings on our website, and our forthcoming Spring lectures, please note our AGM on 20 April. Following the business meeting we welcome some of the contributors to Volume 91 of our journal, who will be giving short presentations on their articles. We hope to see you there!

**Elizabeth Montgomery**  
*Vice-Chair, Chester Archaeological Society*

## Dissertation Prize 2020

**E**ach year the Society is pleased to award our Undergraduate Dissertation Prize to a student from the History and Archaeology Department in the University of Chester.

As ever, the four dissertations submitted to our judging panel this year were of a very high standard. We were particularly struck with the presentation, scope and research of the papers:

**Amy Briers** – *How and why do museums create aura and atmosphere within exhibitions and how does it affect visitors?*

**Clara Gartner** – *Making mountains out of molehills: analysing finds from Epiacum Roman fort collected through molehill surveys in 2012 and 2013*

**Tina Sviggum** – *If you can't bring the water to the elk, bring the elk to the water: a study of three Mesolithic rock art sites from the Mjosa region of Eastern Norway.*

**Robyn Andrews** – *An investigation of the Langcliffe Scar complex: an unexplored upland settlement*

All four were worthy candidates for our prize. Amy's museum-focused dissertation was especially engaging, bringing together a range of current research on museum studies. Clara's use of a previous molehill survey created a very strong dissertation. Tina's use of photogrammetry on Mesolithic cave art was fascinating and offers tremendous scope for further research. But it was Robyn's very thorough and extensive research, using all available HER, mapping and survey data and with very successful field trips put together so clearly, concisely and confidently that we all felt should be awarded the 2021 CAS Undergraduate Dissertation Prize.

Congratulations to all four students, and especially to Robyn on your well-deserved award!

## AGM 2022

**M**embers have already received an email with formal notification of the AGM, to be held on 20 April. Once again we are holding it remotely, and the Zoom invitation, agenda and all the other papers will be posted in the Members' Area of the Society's website. If you have any questions about the AGM, please email them to [secretary@chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk). The business meeting will be followed by a series of short talks highlighting research that the Society has recently published.

### Is the Future of the Chester Archaeological Society in Jeopardy?

The past year has seen significant 'churn' in the Society's Council, and an increasing burden has fallen on a small number of officers. This situation cannot continue without putting the future of the Society at risk. The posts of Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Journal Editor in particular carry significant responsibility and are time-consuming to discharge without assistance; with assistance they are far less so! All Council members need to be committed, active and prepared to devote time, both to enable succession planning for principal officer posts and to share the everyday tasks involved in the running of the Society.

The revised constitution that members will be asked to approve at the AGM foresees a smaller Council, so this year we are not seeking new members. However, we do seek candidates for the Chair.

**The Chair is responsible for ensuring that:**

- the Society is run in a lawful and orderly way;
- members of Council operate harmoniously and effectively;
- and for representing the Society to the outside world.

For a full job description, email [secretary@chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk).

### AGM Short Talks

These talks summarise some of the articles published in our most recent journal

#### A New Late Bronze Age Sword from Cheshire and its Wider Context

Matt Knight, *Senior Curator of Prehistory, National Museums of Scotland*, with Vanessa Oakden, Ben Jones and Dirk Brandherm

In 2018 an almost complete late Bronze Age copper-alloy sword was recovered during metal detecting at Swettenham, Cheshire. The sword falls within the 'transitional' group of carp's-tongue swords and is the first of its kind in Cheshire and one of only a few known from western Britain. This talk outlines its discovery and its wider significance.

#### Cheshire Finds Reported under the Portable Antiquities Scheme in 2020

Heather Beeton, *PAS Finds Liaison Officer for Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside*

In 2020, just over 200 objects from Cheshire were reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. These included a broad range of objects dating from the Bronze Age through to the eighteenth century. This brief talk will take a look at some of the highlights.

#### A Medieval Cross Fragment from Storeton, Wirral

Rowan Patel, *Council Member, Chester Archaeological Society; Independent Researcher*

In a lease of 1334, the 'Cross of Storeton' is mentioned as a landmark, and from this document a possible site within the township can be proposed. Remarkably, a carved stone – which appears to be part of a cross's base – lies a little over fifty metres from the suggested site. Is this a fragment of Storeton Cross, unknown for almost 700 years?



## Lectures Spring 2022

Our second successful season of Zoom lectures is drawing to an end. Here we highlight what is still in store and list previous talks that you can still listen to.

*Wednesday 6 April at 7:30 pm*

### **The Northgate Development: the Archaeological Response**

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

This talk will look at the work undertaken prior to the most recent planning application and examine the development of the mitigation strategy, which is heavily focussed on the preservation of the archaeological remains. It will also describe the results of the investigations that have accompanied the intrusions into the Roman and medieval levels and look at the construction of the new off-site drain that will convey rainwater from the site to a new outfall in the river Dee.

*Wednesday 4 May at 7.30 pm (Newstead Lecture)*

### **Encounters with Achilles: the Discovery of a Trojan War Mosaic in a Rutland Field**

John Thomas, *Deputy Director, University of Leicester Archaeological Services*

In 2020 a Rutland landowner's walk across fields during the pandemic lockdown led to the discovery of one of the most exciting Roman mosaics in over a century. The unique mosaic featured scenes of Achilles and his battle with Prince Hector of Troy as told by Homer in his epic Trojan War poem *The Iliad* which were the first of their kind from Roman Britain. John Thomas will describe the discovery of the mosaic, and talk about further work by University of Leicester Archaeological Services and Historic England that has revealed the wider setting of the mosaic within an extensive villa complex.



## **Recorded Talks**

### **[Negotiating Viking Age Furnished Burials at or near Ecclesiastical Sites in the Irish Sea Area](#)**

Dr Danica Ramsey-Brimberg, *University of Liverpool*

### **[In the Footsteps of Trebellius Maximus](#)**

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

### **[Recent Research on the Early Medieval Monastery of Lindisfarne \(Holy Island\)](#)**

Dr David Petts, *Associate Professor, Durham University*

### **[The First Conservationists? Land Management and Environmental Impacts in the 10th Millennium BC](#)**

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

### **[The Trouble with Tombs](#)**

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





## The Rutland Mosaic: the Inside Story

Debbie Frearson, Chair of the Rutland Local History and Record Society, recounts the discovery of the mosaic and the organisation of its excavation.

In 2020, just as England was in the shock of the first lockdown, I received a telephone call telling me about a local villa site that had just been found and asking if the Rutland Local History and Record Society would be able to release funds if necessary to help investigate it. I asked if I could go and see the site before discussing it with the committee; this was met with a word of caution that the correct permission was needed before anyone could see it. Less than thirty minutes later I received a call, which I assumed would be said permission, but instead asked me if, as a qualified archaeologist, I could excavate the site as part of a small team with Jennifer Browning of University of Leicester Archaeological Services and local community archaeologist (retired but still volunteering extensively), Peter Liddle MBE.



Because of travel restrictions, I was in the ideal place, living less than one mile away from the site and with my own kit.

The press coverage of the site speaks for itself, I think, but what you don't see is the professionalism of those involved and the impact of the generosity of some of the local community. Although it is amazing to see the mosaic in its full glory, the processes to get to that stage were intense as there were two other trenches with their own narrative. We also had a limited time to excavate and targets to reach for the filming to take place. Funding for these sites is limited so there is always an element of goodwill unpaid and paid involvement.

As an active member of the local heritage community, I often think I have lived in this area



of Rutland too long, but the network of contacts proved really useful and we were able to bring in local people who were proficient at machining trenches and offered their equipment and time free. We signposted local amenities, we collected official visitors, and helped out with advice about local security for the site, creating a network of locals who reported unofficial 'visitors'.

As an archaeologist it has been a wonderful experience for me, for my wellbeing during lockdown, and for my professional career as I worked and learned more from amazing mentors; as a member of the local heritage community, less so, as we are not involved in any of the decision-making processes for the site from a Historic England perspective and rely on ULAS (whose communications are excellent) to inform us of any update. I sincerely hope that this site will create a best practice for how to engage the local community from a national Historic England perspective.



## Congratulations to Roy Coppack!

We offer our congratulations and thanks to Roy Coppack, who joined the Society in 1948 and is standing down as our representative on the Cheshire Local History Association. Here Roy picks out some of the highlights of his long career.

I became interested in archaeology in the late 1940s through membership of the Bromborough Society, which met on Friday evenings at the Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight, in the main gallery surrounded by pre-Raphaelite paintings. We were led by the headmaster of Bromborough School, Arthur Oakes, who owned a Voigtlander camera adapted to use the new 35mm Kodachrome slide film to illustrate the monuments of north Wales.

I joined the Chester Archaeological Society in 1948, having been introduced by my school friend and fellow Bromborough Society member Graham Connah, now Emeritus Professor of Archaeology at the University of New England Australia. We helped Graham Webster, then Curator of the Grosvenor Museum, in the excavation of the legionary fortress defences at Chester, mainly washing pottery. I also did some work with Graham at Bromborough mill, a deserted fishing hamlet near Eastham locks and a medieval building at Bromborough dock.

At this point I left my bombed-out school for a bombed-out Birmingham University to do a course in medieval and modern history. There I was recruited by the Manx archaeologist Peter Gelling, senior lecturer at Birmingham, to work on a rescue dig on the Roman site at Droitwich and later in the Isle of Man on an early medieval promontory fort.

In 1964 I obtained a post at Chester College of Further Education and almost immediately was involved in writing up some of the material for the major exhibition 'Engineering in Chester 1760 to 1960'. From this I became involved in industrial archaeology, which led to the formation of a group of within the Society doing visits to Ironbridge, St Helens and various canal sites. We were also invited to comment on a proposal to refurbish Bunbury mill, which became a prestigious site for North West Water, and some of us helped in the management of its opening to the public.

At the same time I followed the expansion of interest in local history through the Cheshire Local History Association, which now publishes the annual journal *Cheshire History*.



The most rewarding project that I have been involved with was the celebration of Thomas Baldwin's balloon flight from Chester Castle to the far side of Warrington on 8 September 1785. This celebration involved two lectures and an exhibition in the Chester Heritage Centre, manned by Society volunteers and supported by the Science Museum, Chester Record Office and Mr B Witter's hot air balloon.

The stimulation was Baldwin's book *Airopaidia*, published in Chester in 1786. The Society has donated a copy of this book to Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, and there are other copies in the Science Museum and with a local collector. It is unique in that it explains the complexity of hydrogen balloon flight, including the chemistry of reacting iron and sulphuric acid on board as well as the meteorology of the surrounding air currents. Baldwin was a Cambridge graduate living with his father at Hoole Hall.

From Baldwin's account I estimated that he reached about 13,000 ft above sea level, from where he produced the first ever aerial colour pictures of the Dee estuary, emphasising the red sandbanks and the black slate roofs of Frodsham. Our celebratory flight took place on 8 September 1985 at 6am from Chester Castle and landed on the other side of Christleton.



## Come and Join the Society at the Chester Heritage Festival 2022!

**T**he Chester Heritage Festival aims to bring to life for today's world all aspects of the city's past and to tell stories stretching back over two millennia. The festival is becoming well-established as an annual feature of the city's cultural calendar and this year will take place between 17 and 27 June.

The varied programme of events and activities that take place across the city during the festival is supported by [www.chesterheritagefestival.co.uk](http://www.chesterheritagefestival.co.uk), where you can explore Chester's fascinating heritage online from your own home wherever you are in the world, from virtual tours, talks and lectures to exhibitions, ghost stories and character monologues.

This year the Chester Archaeological Society has so far planned to offer both a live and virtual tour of the city's ancient walls. One of Chester's most important and historic structures, 'New Walls for Old' will be led by Roman expert and local archaeologist Dr Peter Carrington and the 'live' walk can be booked through the festival website or the virtual tour taken by clicking the



relevant option on the website. We are also planning a short video on the local lead industry in Roman times and have a couple of other ideas up our sleeves!

We're really looking forward to welcoming back previous festival-goers and friends alongside new visitors to this year's festival. If you can't join us on the streets of our great city then please join us on the worldwide web...or do both!

**Andrew Reynolds**

## Grosvenor Museum 'Object of the Month' Talks

Chester's Grosvenor Museum will be staging a year-long series of 'Object of the Month' talks starting on 3 March.

**T**hese free talks are aimed at attracting a lunchtime audience between 1.00 and 1.30pm in the museum's historic lecture theatre and will give a fascinating insight into the unfolding work of West Cheshire Museum's three curators and Archaeology Officer, much of whose work in preserving the history of west Cheshire and the collections of its museums takes place behind the scenes. Booking is not required.

The next two talks are:

**14 April, Gold and Garnet Ring** Liz Montgomery, Senior Curator, West Cheshire Museums  
This talk will focus on an exquisite medieval gold and garnet ring that was found during excavations in Chester city in an unexpected place. It will be a star attraction of the Grosvenor Museum's 'Medieval Chester Retold' Exhibition, starting on 23 April.

**12 May, Coronation Handbag** Liz Montgomery  
In advance of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June, Liz will explore the excitement and pride

felt by the people of Chester at the Coronation in 1952. This story will be told through one special object – a Coronation handbag.

Councillor Louise Gittins, Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council said:

*West Cheshire Museums does a hugely important job in not just preserving the history of our area but bringing the collections of all four of its museums to life. Their work involves maintaining the collections, staging exhibitions and educating school groups. However, an unseen, but vital, part of their work is to research and bring to life stories and objects from the museums' archive collections. West Cheshire museum staff are enthusiastic and creative and I know their year-long talks will be not only be informative and interesting but spark interest in the ongoing story of our museums' collections.*

For more information see [westcheshiremuseums.co.uk](http://westcheshiremuseums.co.uk).

## The Mobility of Objects (MOB) across Boundaries 1000–1700

In connection with this Arts and Humanities Research Council project, the University of Chester and the Grosvenor Museum have arranged a variety of events and exhibitions through the year to appeal to all ages.

**T**his project takes the dictionary definition of a 'mob' as a gathering to include not only people but things. Through their mobility, objects come into contact with a wide range of individuals and with other objects, giving rise to the dissemination and transfer of motifs, ideas, and knowledge.

The exhibitions, organised by Senior Curator Liz Montgomery of Cheshire West and Chester Museums Service and Dr Katherine Wilson, Associate Professor of Later Medieval European History at the University of Chester, will be staged at the Grosvenor Museum from 30 April to 9 July and at Chester Cathedral from 22 August to 9 September.

Events will include handling sessions, object boxes for schools, dressing up for children, films and augmented reality to put objects into their surroundings. Two pop-up exhibitions have already been held, at Storyhouse and in the Forum Shopping Centre.

The everyday medieval and early modern objects chosen shed light on how they were mobile or facilitated journeys of people or other objects, sometimes travelling long distances through trade, diplomacy or spiritual journeys.

You can find out more about the project at <https://mob.chester.ac.uk/>, which among other things has all the downloadable resources for teachers and instructions on how to use and order object boxes. Our member Andie Byrnes has written an account of one of the pop-up sessions in his blog : <https://basedinchurton.co.uk/2022/03/04/telling-stories-from-handling-medieval-and-early-modern-objects/>.

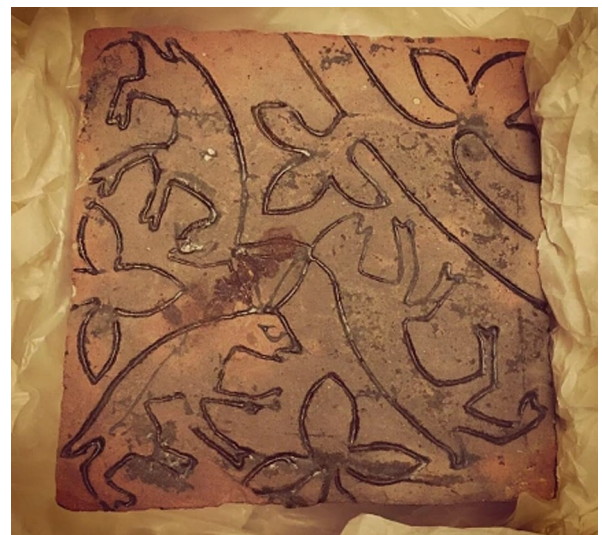
*Above right* 14th-century 'three hare' tile from Chester Cathedral. Each hare has two ears but only three ears are drawn on the tile! The design is a copy of a 6th/7th century motif in a cave in Dunhuang, western China. The design shows how motifs and ideas could circulate, probably by trade and travel along the Silk Roads from China to northern Europe.

*Right* St John's Church as seen by a pilgrim

Images © Grosvenor Museum, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Chester Cathedral and University of Chester



Silver spoon handle from Rome showing the face of St Peter. Such objects demonstrate the mobility of medieval people, their travels to other places over long distances and the objects they brought back as reminders of those places and experiences.



## Excursions

The joint Excursion Co-ordinators, Kelly Griffiths and Dave Garner, are now working on summer trips for members and already have some planned. However, if you have destinations that you would like to suggest, please get in touch by emailing [miss.kellygriffiths@googlemail.com](mailto:miss.kellygriffiths@googlemail.com).

## 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!

## Grants and Awards

We shall be making the following grants and awards in 2022:

### 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.

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

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