

President Dr Paul Booth FRHistS

The Chester Antiquary

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

2022 Issue 3 – October

Rendering Account and Reaping the Harvest

Somehow it seems fitting to be writing to you just after Michaelmas, one of the traditional accounting points of the year, and at the point of the Harvest Festival, because this is also a significant turning point in the Society's year, for stock-taking and looking forward to living off some hard work through the darker months.

Over the summer, Council members have been busy working on several initiatives and we were grateful to hear about the excellent progress with these at the first Council meeting of the autumn. Hugh Bray has brought the accounts up-to-date with typical efficiency, helped us navigate changing costs for publications, and has identified a cost saving too. Sadly, Sam Rowe had to stand down as editor of our journal because of the pressure of other commitments, but Peter Carrington has generously taken on the production of the next volume, which contains a mouth-watering set of papers and should appear in February next year. Jennifer Maddock has been investigating how to bring together the Society's library and make it more accessible to members.

Equally, others have been busy organising activities to tide us over the Autumn and Winter into Spring. Thanks to the efforts above all of Jo Kirton we have a wonderful series of lectures to look forward to: <https://chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk/lectures/> For the first lecture of the series

I was delighted to speak to a good audience of members, face-to-face, at the Grosvenor Museum and we plan another face-to-face lecture to end the series in May; between now and then we are exploiting the success of Zoom to continue online lectures, helping us retain the tradition of having some lecturers from far afield and allowing us to have maximum numbers of members in attendance, and (where possible) enabling us to make them available afterwards via the website. Some of the lucky ones amongst you joined Kelly Griffiths on an excursion to Poulton, reported below, and Kelly and I are setting up some more to be advertised soon. Peter, Andrew Reynolds and myself have been looking into the possibility of a Society conference as part of Chester Heritage Festival 2023.

As if that were not enough, members are reporting here some fantastic things from beyond the Society: Liz Montgomery introduces the fabulous new Grosvenor Museum exhibition, 'On Another Level', on the Rows, as well as their Object of Month lecture series; Heather Beeton reports on an exciting recent find of a Roman satyr figurine; and I flag up an enticing new edited volume celebrating the 35th anniversary of Chester Society for Landscape History.

Tom Pickles

Chair, Chester Archaeological Society



Some of the finds to feature in Pauline Clarke's online lecture 'The early medieval period in the Welsh Marches: the material evidence'. (See page 2 for details)

Lecture Programme 2022–2023

By the time that this newsletter appears, the first two of this season's lectures will have been delivered. Here is a list of what is to come. (The May lecture has still to be finalised).

Wednesday 2 November at 7:30 pm, online via Zoom

The Archaeology of Wirral. Presented by Dr Rob Philpott, University of Liverpool.

[Click here](#) for more information.

Wednesday 7 December at 7:30 pm, online via Zoom

The early medieval period in the Welsh Marches: the material evidence.

Presented by: Pauline Magdalene Clarke, post-graduate researcher, University of Chester.

[Click here](#) for more information.

Wednesday 4 January at 7:30 pm, online via Zoom

Beacon Ring. Presented by Dr Paul Belford, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust.

More information coming soon.

Members will be sent emails inviting them to register for online lectures. Non-members can buy tickets; look out for notices on social media.

Wednesday 1 February at 7:30 pm, online via Zoom

Recording the past for our future: the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Cheshire. Presented by

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

[Click here](#) for more information.

Wednesday 1 March at 7:30 pm

Prehistory and afterlives: reconstructing the biography of the Pillar of Eliseg, an early medieval cross in north Wales. Presented by

Professor Nancy Edwards, School of History, Law and Social Sciences, Bangor University.

[Click here](#) for more information.

Wednesday 5 April at 7:30 pm, online via Zoom

Commerce and consumers: the ubiquitous chest of the late Middle Ages. Presented by

Dr Katherine Wilson, Associate Professor of Later Medieval European History, University of Chester. [Click here](#) for more information.

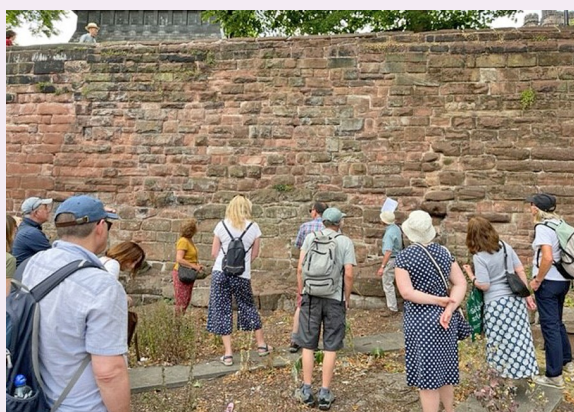
Chester Heritage Festival 2022: Retrospective

Films by Society members shine a spotlight on important aspects of the city's past.

As reported in detail in our June newsletter, this year the Society produced two films for the Chester Heritage Festival, both by Peter Carrington and Julian Baum. The first, 'New Walls for Old', looks at the history of the Roman sections of the city walls: how and when they were built and rebuilt and why sections are prone to collapse. It also looks at the sections of the Roman defences that have now vanished – from the Newgate westwards to the Magistrates' Courts and then north to St Martin's Gate – and shows how they have left their mark on the modern townscape.

A face-to-face tour on the same subject was also very successful but highlighted the advantages of the film format, with the ability to show more images and cover more ground than could easily be done on foot.

The second film takes the lead ingots in the Grosvenor Museum as the starting point to look at Roman lead-silver mining in Flintshire and



Participants on our tour look at phases of the city walls by the Frodsham Street steps.

across Britain. We are grateful for the help of Drs Alan Williams and Susie White, Rob Jones and Wrexham Museum in producing this film. You can find links to both films in the [Media](#) section of the Chester Heritage Festival 2022 website.

Peter Carrington

Society Visit to Poulton, 11 September



On Sunday 11 September, twelve of us visited the Poulton Archaeological Project, where we were given a talk and tour by Dr Kevin Cootes, the Project Director. Kevin's knowledge and enthusiasm for the project is impressive, and the fact that he gave up his Sunday afternoon to show us round was very much appreciated.

We began by looking at what remains of the World War II aerodrome, where the three runways can still be seen, together with some of the associated buildings that are now almost completely overgrown. Kevin is currently recording all the features on this site.

We then walked over to the area where the ongoing archaeological work is taking place. Kevin told us this work began over twenty years ago with archaeologists searching for the lost

Cistercian abbey. What was actually discovered was a graveyard and medieval chapel; the excavated remains of the chapel can still be seen. Subsequent investigations have uncovered flints from the Mesolithic period and also tools used by Neolithic and Bronze Age farmers.

We were thrilled to be shown many of the artefacts recovered from the site, including flints, Roman ceramics and beautiful coloured glass, also metal and building materials.

The search still continues for the site of the elusive Cistercian abbey. Fortunately, Kevin has been able to narrow this down to three probable areas. We all wish Kevin and his team every success with his investigations and look forward to learning more about this fascinating place.

Wendy Bawn

For the results of this year's work, see page 7.

Some publications on Poulton

Cootes, K, Cowell, R, Teather, A & Axworthy, J 2016

Cootes, K, Axworthy, J, Jordan, D, Thomas, M & Carlin, R 2021

Cootes, K, Axworthy, J, Jordan, J, Carlin, R, Thomas, M & Brooks, I 2022

Emery, M M, Gibbins, D J L & Matthews, K J 1996

Emery, M 2000

III: Hunting for the gatherers and early farmers of prehistoric Cheshire: an investigation of prehistoric land use in Chapel Field, Poulton.

J Chester Archaeol Soc new ser **86**, 11–31

IV: Poulton, Cheshire: The excavation of a lowland Iron Age settlement.

J Chester Archaeol Soc new ser **91**, 103–78

II: Poulton, Cheshire: Evidence of Neolithic activity. *J Chester Archaeol Soc new ser* **92**, forthcoming

The archaeology of an ecclesiastical landscape: Chapel House Farm, Poulton (Cheshire) 1995. (Chester Archaeol Excav Surv Rep **9**). Chester: Chester City Council

The Poulton chronicles: tales from a medieval chapel. Williamsburg (VA): Poulton Archaeology Press

Free 'Object of the Month' Talks at the Grosvenor Museum

These free lunchtime talks (1:00–1:30pm) give a fascinating insight into the unfolding work of West Cheshire Museum's curators and their work in preserving the history of West Cheshire by highlighting an interesting 'Object of the Month'.

Booking is not required and the talks are held in the museum's historic lecture theatre. The talks for October to November feature:

13 October 'Scary' Victorian Doll

October is the month of Halloween, so what could be more appropriate than delving into the history of Victorian dolls and their power to be occasionally seriously unsettling?

10 November Watergate Row North painted by Louise Rayner

Liz Montgomery, Senior Curator, West Cheshire Museums will be looking closely at this picture, examining the scene and the story of Eliz Muras and her business, which is shown in the fore-

ground. She will also examine Louise Rayner's contribution to our understanding and knowledge of Victorian Chester. Her talk will be linked to the exhibition on the Rows, 'On Another Level', opening on 15 October and running to 30 April 2023.

Please visit our website for details of forthcoming talks and events: www.westcheshiremuseums.co.uk.

Liz Montgomery



Looking at the Landscape

A new book by the Chester Society for Landscape History

Members will be familiar with the Chester Society for Landscape History: <http://www.chesterlandscapehistory.org.uk/>. Indeed, some of you may already be members of it. The society grew out of a University of Chester course co-run by Professor Graeme White – the MA in Landscape, Heritage and Society – now sadly discontinued. Students on the course founded CSLH in 1986 to promote interest in, and the study of, landscape history, encourage a deeper enjoyment of, and respect for, our landscape, hold lectures and to conduct field visits, organise study groups, and record and publish findings.

The society had its 35th anniversary in 2021, which it celebrated with a conference comprising papers by members on the landscape history of Cheshire and surrounding regions. With impressive swiftness, Sharon Varey and Graeme White have produced an edited volume from these papers, published by the University of Chester Press, to be launched to members of CSLH on Saturday 26 November and publicly available thereafter for £13.99. Because we know that the papers will be of interest to our Society's members, we include a preview of the contents here:

- The Christian landscape of early medieval Chester and Wirral – Tom Pickles
- Contrasting settlements along the Dee valley frontier: defence, crossing, refuge – Graeme White
- Cringlemire: taming a Lakeland landscape – Maggie Taylor
- Early nineteenth-century growth in three north Shropshire market towns and the Influence of the Ellesmere Canal – Robert Ginder
- Estimating the effects of the railway on Chester is not easy – Chris Pilsbury
- Carnegie libraries in Cheshire – Vanessa Greatorex
- The effect of planning laws on settlement development in twentieth and early twenty-first-century south-west Cheshire – Polly Bird

Varey, S M & White, G J 2022. *Looking at the landscape: glimpses into the history of Cheshire and beyond*. Chester: University of Chester Press. To buy a copy, go to https://storefront.chester.ac.uk/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=12_14&products_id=1121.

Tom Pickles

On Another Level: Exploring Chester's Rows

Chester's unique medieval Rows are explored in a free new exhibition at the Grosvenor Museum from 15 October.

Chester's unique medieval Rows are one of the city's most visited attractions and from October 15 an inspiring, free, new exhibition at Chester's Grosvenor Museum will explore their 700-year history, evolution and development to the present day. It will draw heavily on the museum's unrivalled collection of highly picturesque Victorian watercolours by Louise Rayner and archaeological, local history and costume collections to explore the history of the Rows and the people who lived in them.

The Rows exhibition will also examine some of the striking and well-known buildings and businesses of the Rows, for instance 'The Three Arches' (dating back to the 13th century) and Lowe's jewellers (dating back 250 years). Designed to inspire its visitors to go out and walk the Rows, staff at the museum also hope that visitors may wish to consider using Marketing Cheshire's new, downloadable guided walk of the Rows at www.visitchester.com/discover-the-rows.



Watergate Row North by Louise Rayner

Chester's unique Rows were developed in medieval times and ingeniously incorporated storage, retail and accommodation all in the one building, linked to others with a connecting walkway. Today, the Rows have developed to house businesses on both street and first-floor level, cleverly maximising space and profit. The exhibition examines the unique 700-year-old structures, bringing together extensive research by The Rows Research Project as well as other archaeological investigations of specific buildings.

The exhibition explores 'A Victorian Lady's Guide to Chester', featuring the picturesque street scenes of the Rows, created by Louise Rayner in the 1860s which beautifully capture the character of Chester. A donation of Watergate Rows by Louise Rayner, generously gifted to the Museum by Big Heritage, will also be on display for the first time.

The exhibition also complements the extensive work of Chester High Street Action Zone's Refresh programme, that has not only funded the exquisite Rows-inspired conceptual artwork 'Ellen's Dress' by Rachel Davies but a zine ([Refresh – Just another WordPress site \(chesterrefresh.org\)](http://Refresh – Just another WordPress site (chesterrefresh.org))) featuring previous Rows projects, such as Estelle Wooley's 'Fashion on the Rows'; 'Missing Buildings Project' and 'Rows Stories'. Refresh's art programme featuring artists, actors and writers will pop up in Chester and the Rows until 2024.

'On Another Level: Exploring the Historic Rows of Chester' will be at the Grosvenor Museum from 15 October 2022 to 30 April 2023. For more information, please visit the museum website: www.westcheshiremuseums.co.uk.

Liz Montgomery

A Splendid Satyr now in the Grosvenor Museum

This beautifully produced figurine reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme from Kingsley is possibly from an Italian workshop and attests to the cultural and trade links that spanned the Roman empire.



A splendid Roman copper alloy figurine of a satyr was found during metal detecting at Kingsley and reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Now, thanks to the generosity of the finder and landowner, it has been donated to the Grosvenor Museum, where it will shortly be displayed. This is the first figurine of a satyr to be found in Cheshire.

In classical mythology, satyrs are woodland creatures, typically part-man, part-goat, and are followers/attendants of the god Bacchus. They are often depicted as youthful, but many examples also present them as old and pot-bellied for humorous effect. This example presents a youthful male dressed in a sash positioned across the body that is made of individually attached fawn pelts; this is a *nebris*. Above its nude bottom is a small, looped tail. Around the head is a wreath of vine leaves, which are a typical symbol of the followers of Bacchus. In line with this, it is possible that the missing object in the outstretched hand would have been a *thyrsus* – a staff or spear tipped with an ornamental pinecone that was usually carried by Bacchus and his followers.

The satyr is an example of the high-quality objects that were available in Roman Britain. The figure is naturalistically rendered with great attention to detail to muscle definition, facial features and hair.

The high-quality craftsmanship and classical style suggest that the object may have been produced by an Italian workshop, reminding us of the wide-reaching trade connections between Britain and the rest of the Roman empire.

Several other figurines of satyrs have been reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme, including an example from Norfolk recorded under NMS-038224. However, the Kingsley example is better preserved. Other similar youthful satyrs are noted by Durham (2012), including two examples from London, (nos 100 and 482) and one each from East Yorkshire (no 763) and Leicestershire (no 764).

The object is recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database as [LVPL-C7C9F6](#), where a full description can be found.

Durham, E 2012. Depicting the gods: metal figurines in Roman Britain. *Internet Archaeol* 31. https://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue31/durham_toc.html. Accessed 22-06-2022

Heather Beeton

PAS Finds Liaison Officer for Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside

Poulton Excavation 2022: Sun-Baked Clay

Despite the weather, more intriguing Iron Age and Roman features emerged.

The summer heatwave presented us with the most challenging season that we have had on site in recent memory. However, in spite of the difficulties in excavating a clay landscape in temperatures often exceeding 30 degrees, we made good progress.

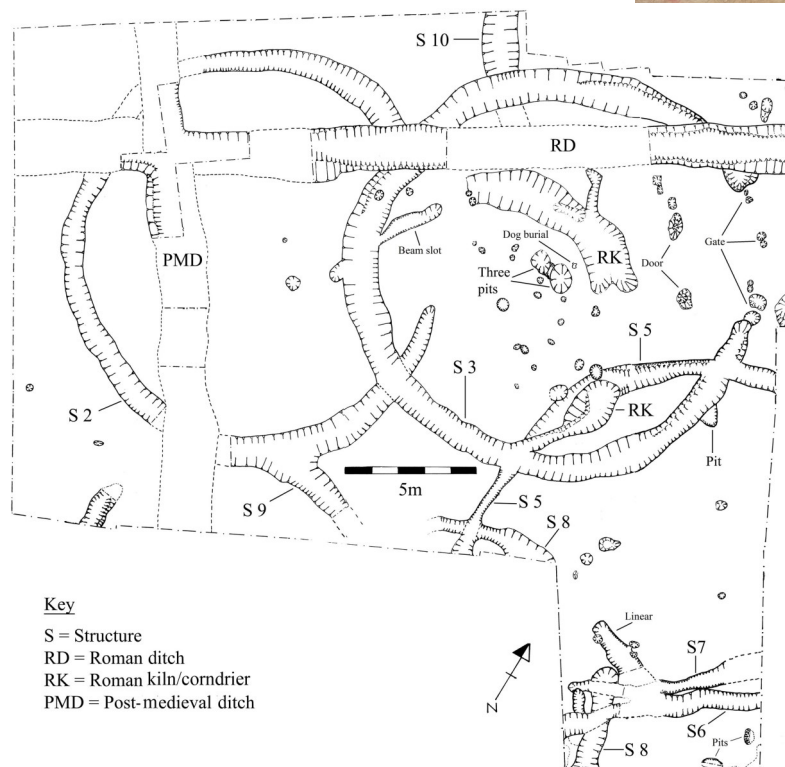
Our main objective was to further investigate the nature of Iron Age and Roman settlement on the site. We extended our current excavation area (Trench 48) 10m to the west, revealing multiple features. We investigated the western arc of roundhouse Structure 9 and took samples for environmental analysis and radio-carbon dating. A probable Iron Age gully was investigated, bringing the total discovered so far to twelve.

There were multiple pits, postholes and stake-holes scattered across the western portion of the trench. One example, however, was very different from those that we had encountered before, consisting of a large posthole with carefully placed glacial boulders holding a structural post, which had been left in place. A small fragment of briquetage suggests an Iron Age date, which we hope will be confirmed by radio-carbon dating.

We also continued our investigation of the D-shaped enclosure, focusing on its western arc. Previous dating of the southern portion had revealed that its origin lay in the late Iron Age but that it continued in use through the first and second centuries AD. We made some headway with this feature, which is well over 3m wide and 1m deep. Impressive quantities of animal bone were recovered, but only a few fragments of pottery, comprising oxidised Holt ware and some black-burnished ware.

We will continue our excavation next year and have covered the area over with tarpaulin to allow it to weather.

Kevin Cootes



Top Students cleaning Trench 48
 Above Posthole lined with glacial boulders

Left Plan from *J Chester Archaeol Soc* new ser **91**, 2021, 110, illus IV.4. Structure 9 is in the left-hand corner.

You can watch a recording of a short talk about the site given to our 2022 AGM [here](#).

Townfield Lane, Farndon: a Roman Fort or What?

Steve Lewis of the Holt Local History Society reports on the surprising results of the recent excavation.

The Townfield Lane site lies on the English side of the River Dee, on the floodplain in a bend of the river about 2km north-west of the centre of Farndon. Aerial photographs taken as long ago as 1947, followed by a more recent LiDAR survey for the Environment Agency, revealed a rectangular enclosure, leading to speculation that it was a Roman fortlet.

The site came to the attention of Archaeology Survey West (ASW: Chris Matthews and Nick Dawson) when engaged on the survey of the Holt Roman tile works for the Holt Local History Society in 2018, and in 2021 ASW funded a geo-physical survey. Support for an excavation was sought from the landowner and the Holt Local History Society – a partnership that led to the establishment of the Holt and Farndon Community Archaeology Project and to the ten days of excavation in September of this year.

Six trenches were dug, their positions based on the results of the aerial photography and the LiDAR and geophysical surveys. There were between fifteen and twenty volunteers each day. Initially, volunteers were organised into small teams across all six trenches, but at various points resources became focused on the more promising trenches. The geology of the site was not the easiest: sand, alluvial deposits and clay.

There were traces of a slight enclosure that may be associated with a temporary encampment, but it was difficult to fully expose them because of the depth of deposits. What there was clear evidence for was iron smelting, in the form of tap slag, iron ore and charcoal, the majority of which came from Trench 3 but which also occurred across the site. Trench 3 also revealed the remains of a bloomery floor overlaid possibly on a previous bloomery. There was no evidence of any permanent structures, although two postholes were found in Trench 3. Given that the area regularly floods it is assumed that any iron smelting was intermittent.

Small finds include one ceramic spindle whorl, iron nails, fragments of tile and one worked flint.

All the volunteers enjoyed the dig: the weather was good for most of the time, we started off with very hot conditions and ended with a down-pour; it seemed to be the transition of summer to autumn within the ten days of the dig!



LiDAR image of the Townfield Lane site, showing the rectangular enclosure. Environment Agency 2021. Open Government Licence v3.0. © Crown Copyright 2022



Trench 3 with postholes in the foreground and bloomery floor in the centre



Bloomery floor in Trench 3

For a summary of previous information, see the CHER monument record 6965. Information and LiDAR image kindly supplied by Rob Edwards, Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service.

Steve Lewis, Holt Local History Society

Heritage Strategy and Chester One City Plan

Cheshire West and Chester Council are consulting on a heritage strategy for the borough and have just launched a revised *Chester One City Plan* for 2022–2045.

Cheshire West and Chester Council are consulting on a heritage strategy – this time for the whole borough, not just for Chester as last time, and have contracted Heritage Lincolnshire to produce the strategy.

The Society has responded to four previous consultations on a heritage strategy. This time we have set out:

- **What we think heritage is** (what we inherit and bequeath, whether we like it or not!). It can be tangible (including biocultural) or intangible. It is the raw material from which history is written.
- **What roles we see for it.**
- **How we evaluate it** (for which there are established criteria, but with the addition of **Potential**).
- **How we manage it.**

We emphasise that ‘heritage’ has practical as well as ‘academic’ (ie archaeological/historical) uses. To quote the Society of Antiquaries of London:

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.

This broader appreciation has implications for how we evaluate and manage heritage (recognise its full potential and capitalise on it).

What we should like to see in a strategy includes:

- The integration of different aspects of heritage.
- Summaries of the character and significance of the borough’s communities.
- How heritage will be protected, investigated and enhanced, including through high-quality new development.
- Ways of improving public information (eg a new museum in Chester) and participation.
- The potential of heritage *re* placemaking, climate change, communities, lifestyles etc.

Our full comments are posted on the Advocacy page of our website; here is the [link](#), and many thanks to those of our members who commented on an earlier draft! Heritage Lincolnshire are also running public workshops, but you need to book a place:

- Victoria Jubilee Hall, Malpas, 12 October, 2:00–5.00pm.
- Chester Cathedral Chapter House, 20 October, 2:00–5.00pm.
- Weaver Hall Museum, Northwich, 27 October, 2:00–5.00pm.

To attend, email Laura Dunham: laura.dunham@heritagelincolnshire.org. You can also give your views online here: <https://www.heritagelincolnshire.org/projects/cheshire-west-and-chester-heritage-strategy>.

Back in 2020 we responded to a consultation on the revision of the *Chester One City Plan*, first issued in 2012; here are our [comments](#). A revised version of the plan, for 2022–2045, has now been produced and can be viewed [here](#); there are forty-five related ‘actions’, but these have not yet been finalised and at the moment seem aspirational rather than specific.

There is plenty of scope in the plan for improving, and making better use of, the city’s heritage: for instance, a bigger museum that would be more attractive to visitors and residents; better maintenance of the public realm; higher quality modern development; reducing motor traffic and making the city more ‘walkable’, allowing more of its built heritage to be appreciated; and enhancement of suburban archaeological sites such as Heronbridge and their incorporation into walks, aiding appreciation of them and also well-being.

It will be important for the heritage strategy to feed into the *One City Plan* and other council policies, and that is something we shall have to argue for in the years ahead. In the meantime, if you have any comments on either the strategy or the *One City Plan*, please get in touch.

Peter Carrington
editor@chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk

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.

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.

The Society will advertise this grant, with a submission date for applications, later in the year.

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://chesterarchaeolosc.org.uk/grants-and-awards/>.

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