

President Dr Paul Booth FRHistS

The Chester Antiquary

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

2023 Issue 2 – October

Getting together!



Xiaohu, Xinjiang, Bronze Age Cemetery: by 罗布泊—CC BY 3.0.

Already we have arrived at that cosy time of the year when the trees turn, the conkers drop, the nights draw in, and we begin to get together once more as the CAS season for 2023-2024 begins.

Taking advantage of this point in the cycle, we wanted to advertise the upcoming Lecture Series and tease you with the contents of the next volume of our journal.

To kick off the new series of CAS Lectures – outlined below – we organised a double-bill on Wednesday 4th October, including a joint hybrid lecture with the Department of History & Archaeology at Chester in the afternoon and a Zoom lecture in the evening, juxtaposing very different archaeological and historical evidence for viking-age and later medieval exchange. We hope that you will enjoy the whole Lecture series, which takes in discussions ranging from the Bronze Age to the later Middle Ages, from salt to sculpture, and hoards to hats, and stretches as far as Xiaohu, Xinjiang, western China!

Building on our ambition to foster collab-

oration between heritage institutions across Chester and Cheshire, we also wanted to direct your attention to what has been, and is, going on in the Archives, the Grosvenor Museum, and the Cathedral.

With an eye to thinking about what we might achieve in 2024, we also review some significant events which have taken place since the last editions of the Chester Antiquary, especially the Chester Heritage Festival, two conferences on successive Saturdays in Summer 2023 and the Cathedral Heritage Discovery Day, and highlight a new initiative – the Chester Festival of Ideas – to which we will want to make a contribution.

Finally, we highlight a must-read blog - Based in Churton—and some upcoming events including the Department of History & Archaeology Research Seminar series.

Tom Pickles

Chair, Chester Archaeological Society

Reconstruction, Xinjiang Museum: by Hiroki Ogawa, CC BY 3.0.



Lecture Programme 2023-2024

Wednesday 4 October, 3:00pm, Exton Park Campus, Sutton/ Beswick CBE013 and online via Teams

The Crack of Doom: viking-age hoards before the hacksilver horizon . Presented by Dr Adrián Maldonado, National Museums Scotland.

Wednesday 4 October, 7:30pm, online via Zoom.

Selds and the City: The complex relationships between Chester's traders and regulators c. 1400. Presented by Pam Powell, University of Nottingham.

Wednesday 1 November, 7:30pm, online via Zoom.

Prehistoric and Early Roman Salt in Britain. Presented by Dr Janice Kinory, Independent Archaeologist.

Wednesday 6 December, 7:30pm, online via Zoom.

ENDURE: Urban Life in a Time of Crisis—Later Medieval Britain. Presented by Dr Ben Jervis, University of Leicester.

Wednesday 3 January, 7:30pm, online via Zoom.

Before Diwrnach: the Halkyn Mountain Hoard, cauldrons and copper-alloy vessel hoarding in the fourth and fifth centuries. Presented by Prof. James Gerrard, Newcastle University.

Wednesday 7 February, 7:30pm, online via Zoom.

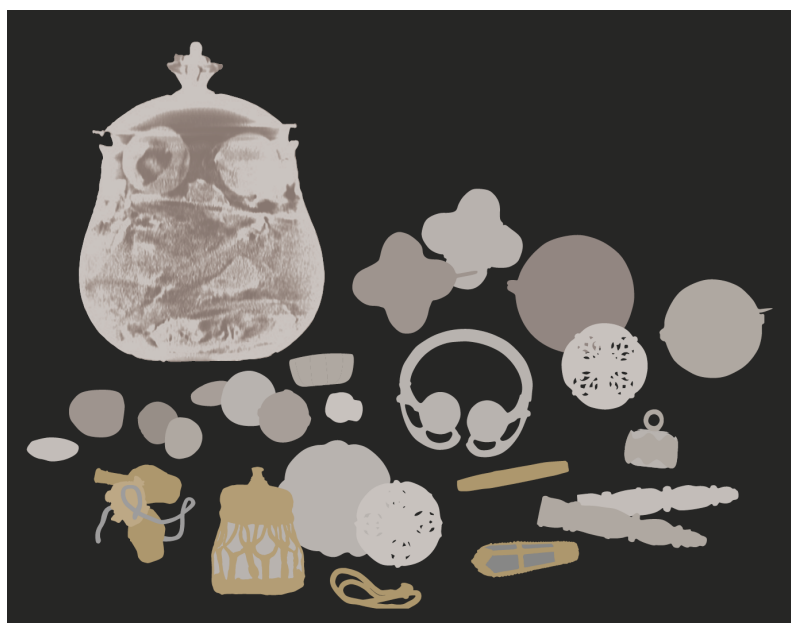
Analysing Hat Production Techniques at the Bronze Age Cemetery of Xiaohe, Xinjiang; an experimental approach. Presented by Elsa Heebner, CAS Dissertation Prize-Winner, 2023.

Wednesday 6 March, 7:30pm, online via Zoom.

Recording the Past for Our Future: The Portable Antiquities Scheme in Cheshire. Presented by Heather Beeton, National Museums Liverpool.

Saturday 4 May, 2:00pm, Grosvenor Museum.

Rosemary's Baby: adventures and insights from contributing to the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture in England. Presented by Dr Paul Everson, Keele University.



Galloway Hoard—Visualisation of vessel and contents. National Museums Scotland.

JCAS

This year's journal will be with members in the new year but should be back to its pre-Covid-19 length with varied and important articles (please see below for contents).

The first item is a review by our Vice-President David Mason of the publication of a Roman 'complex farmstead' excavated at the former army camp at Saughton. Complex farmsteads are subdivided into multiple enclosures and are more often found in the south and east of England. The fragments of sculpture found in the enclosure ditches led the excavators to suggest that there had been a villa nearby. The report was originally destined for our journal but the plan fell through for financial reasons (see back cover). Nevertheless, thanks to the good offices of the Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service (CAPAS) it can be downloaded free. All being well, we expect a summary report on another Iron Age and Roman farmstead on the other side of the Dee, at the Chester Business Park, next year.

George Nash, David Joyce and Peter Winn report on the discovery of an example of possible prehistoric rock art from Delamere Forest – extremely rare in Cheshire.

Our newsletter editor Andrew Reynolds situates the small Bronze Age Wrenbury hoard, found near the headwaters of the River Weaver and so far unique in Cheshire, in the context of a cluster of other hoards in Shropshire and north-east Wales and also Anglesey. In the words of Adam Gwilt (National Museum of Wales) they suggest individuals of standing within wealthy farming communities and/or tied into the network of copper, tin and gold exchanges between western Britain and Ireland of the time. It appears that riverside locations were commonly selected, in northeast Wales and Cheshire, as appropriate places for the burial of gold artefacts and hoards. Rivers seem to have exerted deep symbolic significance to these prehistoric farming and metal-working communities. This region may now also be regarded as one of the 'hot spots' for gold use and burial in Britain at this time.

The major article this year is the comprehensive report by Oxford Archaeology North on their excavations in advance of the Northgate development, Chester. With advice from CAPAS, great care was taken to differentiate areas of survival and to avoid intrusion into the best-preserved, principally Roman, remains. Conse-

quently the areas excavated were small, but they usefully complement earlier discoveries in the area, notably by Tim Strickland and colleagues in 1979 and 1981 (see the interim report in our journal volume 65, 1982).

Since 2020, AJP Archaeology and the Border Heritage and Archaeological Group have been carrying out investigations at Tilston, following on work by the Waddeloves in the early 1980s and among other things have excavated the remains of a Roman pottery kiln. We are delighted to have secured a note on their work to date.

In the round-ups of fieldwork and discoveries reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme, the highlight this year is surely the high-quality Roman copper alloy figurine of a satyr (mythical woodland creatures, part-man, part-goat) found by a metal-detectorist and generously donated to the Grosvenor Museum. We are also pleased to add another element to these reports, by Cheshire West and Chester Conservation Officer James Dixon, on the work of the team, which we hope will become a regular item. This year his report focuses on Chester's Rows, but other topics have already been discussed for future years.

Peter Carrington
Journal Editor

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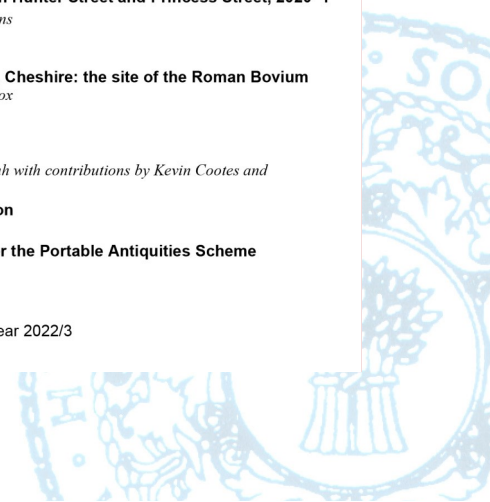
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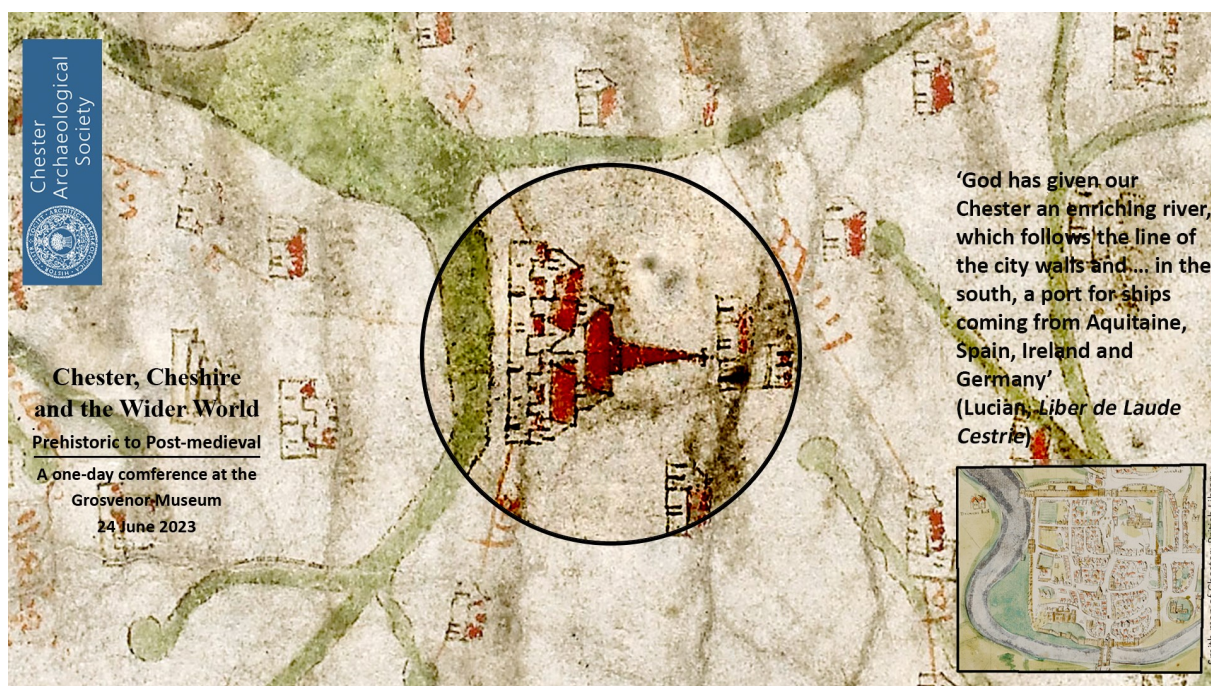
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Heather Beeton

Council and officers for the year 2022/3



CAS Conference 2023



To coincide with the Chester Heritage Festival, we convened a Chester Archaeological Society Conference: ‘Chester, Cheshire and the Wider World: Prehistoric to Post-Medieval’, on Saturday 24th June in the Grosvenor Museum. Almost fifty attendees, including members and non-members, were treated to a fantastic set of talks, written and delivered by contributors in return for travel expenses and lunch.

Kicking-off the day, Rachel Pope (University of Liverpool) gave a bravura overview of her investigations at Bronze Age hill-forts – from some excavations of eye-watering scale, she has clarified the relationship between the landscape position and function of these settlements, showing how people of this region were at the forefront of social and material change, as well as illustrating how these sites drew people together from wide areas.

Inspired by her work with Rob Philpott and National Museums Liverpool, Frances McIntosh (English Heritage) revisited the Roman ‘Wirral brooches’, raising fascinating questions about how a regional culture of brooch production, exchange, and use emerged, but also how we might explain significant outliers in the distribution in northern Roman Britain.

Returning to his Cheshire and North Wales roots, David Griffiths (University of Oxford) brought to bear all of his wisdom from a career studying vikings in the Irish Sea zone to consider how and why our region was a strate-

gic frontier from AD 890-980, bringing fresh perspectives by breaking events into shorter periods and defining significant change over time.

Prompted by the work of University of Chester students on PAS Treasure finds acquired by the Grosvenor Museum, and aided by techniques outlined by Sarah Hinds in our final in-person Lecture, CAS Chair Tom Pickles put a ring inscribed to the Magi in its broader context of the links between Chester and London merchants (textile merchants) and Cologne.

Bringing to bear her extraordinary expertise on Chester’s early modern ceramic assemblages, Julie Edwards (CWAC) dazzled us with the range and quality of ceramic finds, constructing a compelling case for distinguishing those items produced or acquired by more regular trade routes from those which were the acquisitions of elites who collected them through social and cultural connections, service, and travel.

Tom Pickles
Chair

Chester Heritage Festival 2023

As trailed in our Spring newsletter, our main contribution to this year's Heritage Festival was a film by Julian Baum and Peter Carrington on Chester's Rows. Entitled 'Galleries which the call the Rows': a multi-dimensional trip through Chester's history, it looks at their origins in the late thirteenth–fourteenth centuries and traces their development and fortunes up to the present day, including sections that have now disappeared.

Something that came out of the preparation of the film was the apparent importance of

the city's sloping topography, in addition to the remains of Roman buildings, in prompting the building of the undercrofts that carry the Row walkways.

We also prepared a 'taster' film, showing snippets from last year's films on the City Walls and the Roman lead industry, as well as a preview of the Rows film.

Peter Carrington
Journal Editor

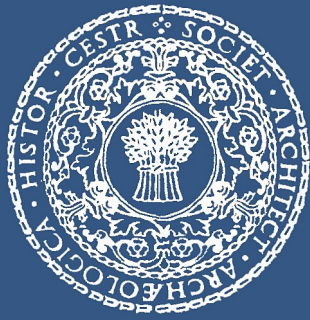
SSMML Conference 2023

Still reeling from the CAS Conference, just a week later CAS Chair Tom Pickles convened a second, free, conference on behalf of the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature (SSMML) – 'Universal Chronicles in the Middle Ages' – in the Grosvenor Museum on Saturday 1st July, 2023. Happily, a contingent of CAS members were able to attend and contribute to discussion.

Inspired by our own Ranulf Higden and his famous, influential *Polychronicon*, contributors were asked to reflect on the tradition of producing 'Universal Chronicles'. Papers by Roy Flechner (University College Dublin), Máirín MacCarron (University College Cork), and Tom O'Donnell (Fordham University) set the scene by introducing us to the less well-known Irish chronicler Pseudo-Origen, the much better-known chronicler Bede, and the fascinating Irish exile on the Continent, Marianus Scotus. From our perspective, however, it was wonderful to see the status of Ranulf Higden emphasised through Cornelia Dreer's (Schlossmuseum Sonderhausen) beautifully illustrated exploration of the maps created for versions of his *Polychronicon* and through Matthew Kempshall's (Wadham College, University of Oxford) mind-blowing discussion of the relationship between causation and chronography, which put Ranulf's approach in its complex intellectual context.



Ranulf Higden, *Polychronicon*—Chester Cathedral Manuscript.



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Grosvenor Park Excavations 2023

The 2023 archaeological training excavation run by West Cheshire Museums for University of Chester students began on 24 April in Grosvenor Park, Chester and seven students were led through the processes of excavation and finds processing procedures. Whilst there was a much smaller group of students than usual, we made good progress in resolving some of the questions raised by last year's dig and the lack of numbers was made up for by enthusiasm and a great willingness to learn, resulting in an enjoyable four weeks for everyone.



Trench from Ferris Wheel: Roger Hones

This year we re-opened the central and western part of Trench VIII; this trench has been the focus of our work for the last four

years. The principal purpose for the siting of the trench was to locate evidence for occupation linked to the Roman road found in 2007. To date that evidence has not yet been revealed due to the quantity of late medieval and early post-medieval activity.

One of our aims for the 2023 season was to uncover the full extent of the medieval cobbled surface identified in 2022 and to investigate the possible east-west running ditch that cut the surface at its southern end. Our first task was to remove the thick layer of soil covering the central area of the trench. As we were gradually working down through the deposit two groups of large stones began to appear and further investigation revealed that they were packing stones for two post pits similar to those found in 2022; whilst they were on a different alignment to those pits they were however in line with a pit in the northern half of the trench excavated in a previous season, suggesting some sort of timber structure. On the south side of the trench what had been thought to be a ditch cut into the natural ground surface was found to be a large feature with rounded ends lined with re-deposited clay – perhaps a pond or large pit. Finally, we reached the level of the cobbling to find that rather than a courtyard area it resembled a pathway consisting of a north-south running strip of cobblestones bounded by larger flatter stones.



Excavating the post pits



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Meanwhile in the southwestern quadrant of the trench an area of demolition debris believed to date to the Civil War siege of 1644 was investigated. The layer was removed revealing pieces of moulded wall plaster, window glass and fittings as well as other building materials and artefacts associated with military activity: lead shot, a gun powder holder, a possible trigger from a gun and an iron pike head. This is the second pike head to be found on the site but it is in slightly better condition than the one found in 2021 and its broken langets can still be seen. The pointed head would have fitted on to a long wooden pole over 2 m in length; the langets were strips of iron that ran from either side of the head down the length of the pole, where they were nailed into place to stop the head being cut off by attacking cavalry.



The iron pike head

In addition to these artefacts a large assemblage of animal bone was found including chickens, possible waterfowl, rabbit, fish as well as pig, sheep and cattle.

Once the demolition debris had been removed stone wall footings were revealed which appear to be in line with those found on the northern side of the trench and are potentially part of the late medieval/early post-

medieval building, structures relating to which have been found in previous seasons.

Time and the smaller workforce meant that not all our aims could be met this year; however, enough features, deposits and structures were found to enable the students to practise recording skills and techniques of excavation. Another element in the student experience is communicating their findings with the public which was enabled by the steady stream of visitors to the dig and our open afternoon. An addition to the visitor experience over the last couple of years has been Digital on Tour demonstrating how digital technologies can help interpret the site for visitors. Alex Foster of DoT has developed a virtual tour of the excavation enabling people to 'walk' over the site and look into the pits and other features even when the site has been backfilled. For many visitors it was the first time they had donned a VR headset and so the excavation provided a learning experience for a wide audience.

If you missed the dig this year we will be back in the Park next year when we may find the elusive Roman roadside buildings.

Acknowledgements

The excavation is a partnership project between West Cheshire Museums and the University of Chester Department of History and Archaeology; the excavation is directed on behalf of West Cheshire Museums by Dan Garner, Museum of London Archaeology. We would like to thank Andy James and the staff of Grosvenor Park for facilitating the excavation, Roger Hones for assisting the excavation with his metal detecting skills and Alex Foster of the University of Chester Digital on Tour project for his digital skills.

Julie Edwards

Senior Archaeologist
Cheshire West and Chester Council

Chester Cathedral Heritage Discovery Day

Reprising for a third, and even more successful time, the Cathedral Heritage Discovery Day, the Chester Cathedral Works Department this year treated us to a cornucopia of Tudor-themed activities.

CAS Chair and Vice-Chair Tom Pickles and Katherine Wilson took their daughter, Isla (8 years), and her friend, as secret shoppers to experience and review the day: since Isla is studying the Tudors at school this term, she was the ideal critic. Suffice to say she was bowled over by it all.

Surrounded by the sounds of Tudor music performed by live recitals and choirs, and against a backdrop of videos of Chester's history including a number of CAS members, they worked their way around stations in the Cathedral nave that addressed different aspects of Tudor history.

At a crafting centre, they were able to colour in a stained-glass window and manufacture their own badge. At a masonry table, they learned about the tools, techniques and products of masons. At an 'everyday life' stall, with CAS Council Member and Grosvenor Museum



curator Liz Montgomery, they explored Tudor material culture and tried out Tudor games as depicted on a Bruegel painting. At a Plague Doctor's surgery run by Chester's Sick to Death, they were treated with leeches and made protective nose-gays. After all this, they failed to make the stand where they would have learned about all the materials, chemical processes, and artistic techniques behind Tudor manuscript illumination and painting, and did not manage to try out the fabulous archery workshop!

Based on this, Isla recommends that you look out for the Cathedral's offerings across the year and make sure to attend the Heritage Discovery Day in 2024.

Tom Pickles
Chair



Chester Festival of Ideas

Chester Festival of Ideas is a new initiative in progress, timetabled to take place from 4th-7th July 2024. Building on the success of similar festivals in cities like York and Bristol, it will be a programme of free and accessible public events on a wide range of themes co-created by the University of Chester and City partners.

Within the University it is being led by Katherine Wilson, CAS Vice-Chair, and it is designed to align with the 'One City Plan' and the University and CWAC Partnership Agreement, which commits them to 'revitalise the city centre and shape its ongoing regeneration, including through the further collaborative support of existing strategies and programmes of work.'

Stakeholders across the City are working on event themes including Sustainable City, Health and Wellbeing, Heritage and History, Communities, Creative Industries, Borders and Frontiers, Diverse City, Business and Entrepreneurship. Working with these themes, the University will book core venues in the City, bring in high-profile speakers to help draw in audiences, and co-create or facilitate further events with all stakeholders.

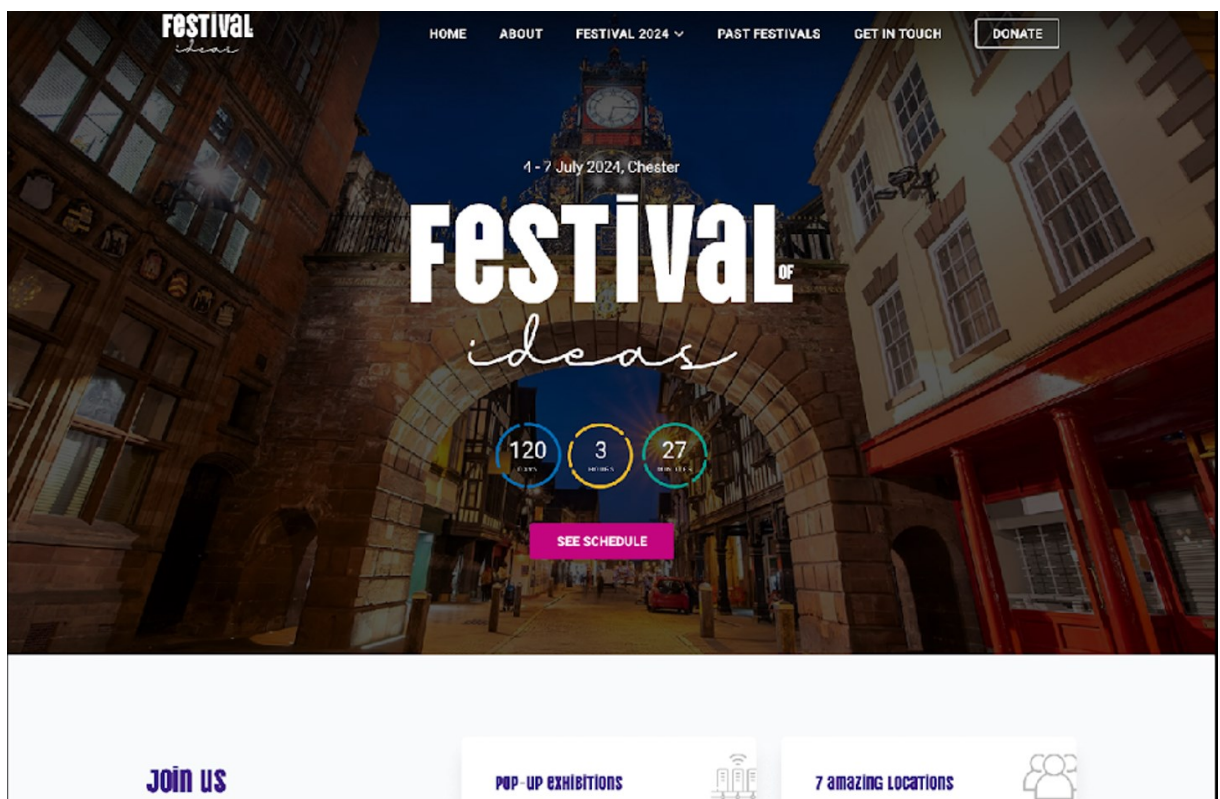
For other festivals in the City and for organisations like CAS, this will be an opportunity to advertise themselves through reviews of past

and future events, as well as to put on events distinctive from those already offered on other occasions.

To provide a platform for the Festival, the University will launch a bespoke website in January 2024 with a call for submission of events by a deadline of the end of March 2024.

The University is currently engaged in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders (including CAS Council Members) as well as booking venues, and CAS Council will discuss this as part of our annual programme of offerings at the next meeting, so CAS Council and Katherine Wilson welcome any and all suggestions from Members!

Katherine Wilson
Vice-Chair



Based in Churton—A must-follow new blog



Interior of Rhug Chapel © Andie Byrnes

Pont Cysyllte aqueduct © Andie Byrnes



The heritage scene in west Cheshire has recently been enlivened by regular blog posts by Andie Byrnes, 'Based in Churton'. Andie is one of our members and currently studying for an MRes in medieval history at the University of Chester. She trained as an archaeologist, and during her university vacations she spent her time digging up most of Britain from the earliest prehistory to the Roman period, including the Cuppin Street excavations in Chester in the mid-1980s. Since then she has done all sorts of things, both within archaeology and beyond it, spending much of her career working in mobile and internet, with a major strand in website and software development management. She has now settled in Churton, hence the title of the blog.

Andie's blog is organised into Heritage and Art, Walking and Visits (including 'walks suitable for unwilling legs'!), and History in Garden Finds. Her latest posts are devoted to the Chirk and Pont Cysyllte aqueduct; the 17th-18th-century Rhug Chapel with its wonderfully decorated interior, and Caer Drewyn hillfort (both near Corwen); a four-part series entitled 'Who was Brymbo Man, what was the Mold Cape and

why do they matter?'; 'St Werburgh, Queen Æthelflæd, pilgrim badges and the shrine in Chester Cathedral' (see image overleaf); and 'The 1991 discovery of an important Roman inscription in Holt' (see image overleaf), explaining the decipherment of a graffito on a brick found by our member Helen Anderson, recording expenses. The basic premise of the blog is that everything she writes about should be do-able within a day's drive.

The posts are well written and researched, well illustrated and are backed up by further reading and practical information. Do give Andie a follow and have enjoyable days out!

Peter Carrington
Journal Editor

History & Archaeology Research Seminars

The Department of History & Archaeology at the University of Chester runs *free* Research Seminars during the course of the academic year—indeed CAS is delighted to share our first Lecture of the year with the Department this year. All but the first and last Seminars are online via Microsoft Teams and CAS Members will receive an invitation in advance of each to register via Eventbrite.

Wednesday 4 October, 3:00pm, Exton Park Campus, Sutton/Beswick CBE013 and online via Microsoft Teams.

The Crack of Doom: viking-age hoards before the hacksilver horizon. Presented by Dr Adrián Maldonado, National Museums Scotland,

Wednesday 1 November, 1:00pm, online via Microsoft Teams.

When good boys go bad: The 1919 case of a would-be assassin. Presented by Dr Chris Millington, Manchester Metropolitan University.

Wednesday 29 November, 1:00pm, online via Microsoft Teams

PAS – poacher turned gamekeeper. Presented by Dr Pauline Clarke, Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS).



Late 14th-century misericord in Chester Cathedral showing St Werburgh performing miracles. Photo by Stephen Hamilton, CC BY 3.0.

Wednesday 10 January, 1:00pm, online via Microsoft Teams.

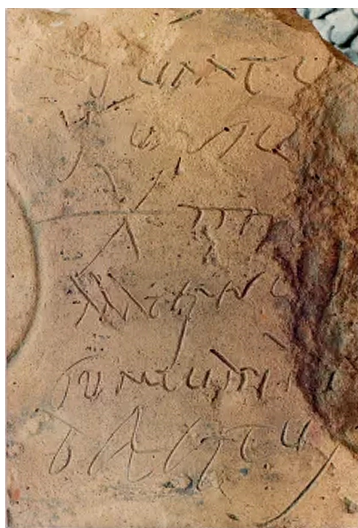
The Make-Up of the City: An Interdisciplinary Perspective on Urban Society in the Late Medieval Low Countries. Presented by Dr Bart Lambert, Free University Brussels.

Wednesday 7 February, 1:00pm online via Microsoft Teams.

From being unloved to being the star in the Museum of Lies – tracing the layered lives of (extra-) ordinary objects. Presented by Dr Katharina Zinn, University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Wednesday 27 March, 1:00pm, Exton Park Campus, Chritchley CCR004/1&2 and online via Microsoft Teams.

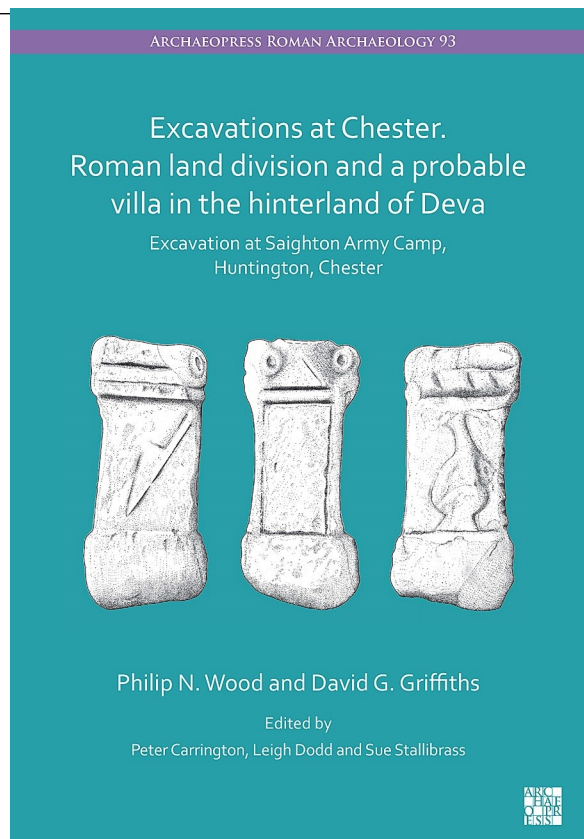
Virtuality, Materiality, and Jurisdictional Immunity: The Invention of the Liberty of Whiteby Strand, AD 1100-1250. Presented by Dr Thomas Pickles, University of Chester.



Roman brick with graffito recording expenses. © Helen .Anderson. For the inscription, see <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/Brit.26.28>



The Grosvenor Park Excavation Team 2023!



Grants and Awards

We shall be making the following grants and awards in 2023-24:

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

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