

President Dr Paul Booth FRHistS

The Chester Antiquary

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

2023 Issue 3 – December

Treasuring the Past

We are always concerned with Treasuring the Past, but this is a particularly apt phrase to introduce our December Newsletter – and not because we are about to commemorate Christmas, Epiphany, and the giving of treasures. Rather, this theme links together many of the items in the Newsletter.

Most importantly, we take a moment to remember our former CAS Treasurer, Alan Austin, who recently passed away.

Next, we review the second social event generously organised by Liz Montgomery at the Grosvenor Museum – Treasure! At the most recent CAS Council Meeting we approved the election of Andie Byrnes to the vacant role of Communications and Publicity Officer and Pauline Clarke as a second Excursions Coordinator. They will help us build on these events.



At the latest Heritage Forum we were asked for input to initiatives to encourage people of all ages to treasure the past of Cheshire. Here we ask for your views and ideas.

Equally, in responding to the Cheshire West and Chester draft Heritage Strategy and Transport Plan Consultation, we have been advocating policies and practices to treasure that past. Here we remind you of this work and ask you to consider responding yourselves.

Now seems like a good moment to celebrate the Heritage Lottery Funded scheme to move Cheshire Archives and Local Studies into a bespoke building, and to prompt you to get involved with their fantastic Gems project. More immediately, we wanted to draw your attention to the current exhibition at the Grosvenor Museum, *Minted: Making Money and Meaning*, and its associated Object of the Month talk on the Castle Esplanade Viking treasure hoard.

Ahead of our PAS Lecture we review some of the multi-period finds discovered in Cheshire since the last Newsletter in October as a reminder to check up on the PAS site regularly and as a taste of some of the things you could ask Heather Beeton about at that lecture. This is a convenient moment to remind you of the Nantwich Museum appeal to purchase PAS Treasure finds.

Finally, we suggest some links to recent publications on the industrial archaeology of Cheshire, to online resources from the wonderful Alderley Edge – Invisible Worlds project, and to the *Current Archaeology* Awards for 2024, where you can vote.

Tom Pickles, Chair

Alan Austin



We are very sorry to report the death of our former Treasurer and Council member, Alan Austin, who died on 21 November.

Alan was born in Birmingham. His father was in the bomber command in the RAF and about 1950 the family was posted to Germany. He had a younger brother, Tony, to whom he was close and with whom he spent many holidays, but who sadly died in 2019.

Alan learned to speak German quite well as a child, better than his parents in fact – a sign of his future intellectual prowess. In the UK he enjoyed seaside holidays staying with his maternal grandmother in North Berwick. But his cousins recall that he often had his nose in a book – something that was to be a lifelong passion.

Alan went to Imperial College, London, to study chemical engineering and graduated in 1967. In the late 1960s he joined Cabot Carbon, initially as a process engineer before moving into the European Research and Development team, at one time spending a year in Iran. At that time, computers were beginning to be used in business, and Alan became the group's Apple ex-

pert. He retired in 1999.

Alan's passion was history and archaeology. After joining our Society, he served on Council from 2008 to 2014 and acted as Honorary Treasurer from 2008 to 2012. He took part in the Society's Heronbridge and Eccleston excavations and later in the Oswestry Castle Research Project. Even when he was unable to dig any more, he continued to visit museums and archaeological sites. Alan also helped to organise and run stands on behalf of the Society and faithfully supported its lectures and excursions.

Alan was a very reserved, gentle man, but enjoyed sports cars (a TR7 in the 1970s and a red BMW until comparatively recently) and loved music and singing. After an accident during the summer, he sadly lost his independence but was supported by friends and neighbours and remained positive – something that we should remember as we get on with our own lives.

To Annabel, Dawn and all of Alan's relatives we offer our warmest sympathy.

Peter Carrington, Vice President and Journal Editor

Wonderful Things

'Wonderful Things' (Howard Carter's famous words on glimpsing the contents of Tutankhamun's tomb in November 1922).



A group of ten of us had our own Tutankhamun moment on Tuesday 5th December, at the Grosvenor Museum but, unlike Howard Carter, we had curator Elizabeth Montgomery on hand to tell us exactly what we were seeing. After an introduction on the Portable Antiquities Scheme, Liz passed around a selection of some of the more spectacular recent local finds: a tiny silver brooch from around the start of the fourteenth century with the face of a king staring back; a gold ring from Handbridge, large and heavy in the hand, its amethyst, clasped between the mouths of two creatures, purple in the torchlight.



There were more mundane objects too: a silver

end of a strap from around the 14th century found in Marston; silver Stuart cufflinks found in Tattenhall; an apostle spoon knob (end of a handle) with a shepherd holding something (lamb or child - we discussed and decided on lamb); and a Tudor silver seal matrix found in Ince. The last two had almost impossibly small carvings, and we marvelled at the workmanship: so tiny and intricate.

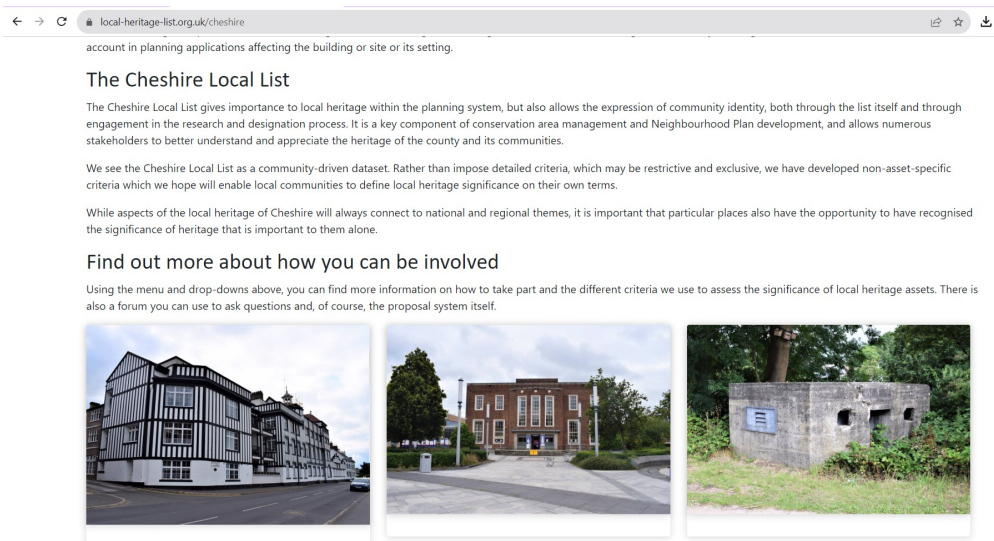


My favourite, though, was a silver verrel from Bruen Stapleford (near Tarvin), with the name 'J Bruen' inscribed on the surface. John Bruen has a Wikipedia entry, thanks to a biography by the curate of Bunbury, William Hinde. We know who he married, when he got up, and how his life changed when his father died in 1587, leaving him with reduced means and the life of a Puritan. So, this verrel is presumably from his earlier life when he was able to spend the holy Sabbaths 'in May games and May-poles, pipings and dancing'.

Passing around these objects and admiring them, it gave us the perfect opportunity to get to know fellow members of the society over this interest we have in common. Many thanks to Liz Montgomery for such an enjoyable afternoon.

Clare Dudman, Secretary

Heritage Forum



At the most recent Heritage Forum we were introduced to three initiatives and invited to make contributions.

Local Lists

Our Cheshire West and Chester Council Built Environment Officer (Conservation and Design), Dr James Dixon, introduced the draft document *Cheshire Local List: From identification to approval* (13th September, 2023). Together, Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, and Halton are seeking to standardise the Local List through a community-led approach. For Cheshire West and Chester the proposal is for the Local Plan Policy DM48 to have a technical appendix comprising places on the Local List and this will constitute non-designated heritage assets to add weight to the case for retention. To achieve this, individuals and community groups will be invited to make nominations and conduct background research, for checking by local authority officers and approval by the Head of Planning.

To learn more, visit:

<https://local-heritage-list.org.uk/cheshire>

At this stage we are being asked to consider possible nominations under eight criteria: Asset Type; Age, Rarity; Architectural and Artistic Interest; Group Value; Archaeological Interest;

Historic Interest; Landmark Status; and Making History.

If you have suggestions for events we might organise to facilitate this process or places that might be considered, let us know via chair@chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk.

School Age Activities

Councillor Kerr presented on aspirations for a new role – Leaders Champion for History and Heritage. The idea is for the role to concentrate on engaging with children at National Curriculum Key Stage 2/3 (8 - 14 year olds). The proposal is to produce a calendar of events from Easter to October and a possible mini children's festival. An invitation was made to make proposals for possible topics and events: Clare Dudman, who was in attendance, has responded with suggestions, but we welcome any further ideas to chair@chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk.

Craft Study Weekend

A proposal was shared for a Craft Study Weekend and invitations were made to offer up possible crafts and potential demonstrators – examples included blacksmiths, stone masons, coppicing, weaving, husbandry. Again, we welcome any suggestions to chair@chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk.

Tom Pickles, Chair

From Our Past, Towards Our Future

We summarise below our comments on the Cheshire West and Chester Council draft heritage strategy. The strategy is open for public comment until 8 January 2024, so you can still have your say.

We are pleased that the Council's consultants, Heritage Lincolnshire, have taken note of many of the things that we said in our submission at the start of the consultation. It is a document that we can generally support. However, it would benefit from strengthening and reordering so that the interlinked topics are grouped together.

We strongly agree that: 'Heritage is prioritised at all levels of the council and there is political leadership for heritage'. Heritage is inextricably entwined with other areas of council responsibility such as planning and transport. However, prioritisation will involve securing investment, public and private, to ensure that heritage assets are preserved and maintained.



Chester Water Tower—Tom Pennington CC BY-SA 2.0

Safeguarding our heritage for the future.

This has to be the top priority. Without it, there will be no tangible heritage for people to enjoy. Sustainable uses need to be found for historic monuments and buildings, and they need to be protected from and adapted for climate change.

Supporting local identity, connections, and placemaking.

Built heritage can have a major beneficial role in regenerating and extending settlements in an aesthetically pleasing and environmentally sustainable way that fosters personal interactions. Currently new developments rarely rise above doing slight harm to conservation areas. The creation of such places will require skilful and sensitive master-planning.



Chester Canal—Tagishsimon CC BY-SA 3.0

Using heritage resources to help tackle climate change.

This section should refer to the 'walkability' of historic settlements, which should be built upon. Woodland and hedgerow restoration, field ponds and street trees should also be mentioned.

Championing diverse heritage for a diverse borough.

This section ignores the potential of Chester's role as a historic 'Crossroads of Britain' and the diverse origins and experiences of the borough's past inhabitants to build bridges in the present, both locally and further afield.

Unlocking the economic potential of our heritage.

To maximise the attractiveness of the borough to heritage tourists and investors, monuments, listed buildings and the public realm need to be well maintained. Investment in a bigger muse-

um is needed, comparable to those found in many other towns and cities. It should tell the story of Chester and west Cheshire through the ages in its regional, national and international context in a way that is meaningful to outsiders.

Public information and engagement.

Information can be divided into two overlapping areas: a 'grand narrative' likely to interest visitors, and 'local stories' that are more likely to interest residents and be a source of neighbourhood identity and pride. The former should form baseline permanent museum displays. New discoveries and research by local groups and individuals should be publicised in temporary exhibitions in museums and other public buildings. Opportunities should be sought for members of the public to take part in commercial archaeological projects. Other attempts at public engagement should perhaps be linked to monument repair/enhancement projects rather than taking place in a vacuum.

Rebuilding heritage skills.

The document considers this subject chiefly with regard to building maintenance. However,

specialist archaeological; expertise has been declining for over twenty years across the country because of reduced job opportunities and recognition. Without that expertise it is far more difficult for others to learn about, value and care for their heritage.

Overall we should like to see signs of more joined-up thinking, how to exploit the potential of heritage to mitigate climate change and to build more pleasant, sustainable communities; there is an increasing amount of national guidance on these subjects and it would give more substance to the title of the strategy, *From our Past, To our Future*. We should also like to see greater engagement with partners such as the University of Chester and English Heritage to ensure that Chester's heritage plays its role on a larger stage; for example it was an important node in the frontiers of the Roman empire, which are now recognised as a UNESCO trans-national World Heritage Site.

You can read our full response [here](#), and make your own comments on the draft strategy [here](#).

Peter Carrington, Vice President and Journal Editor



Chester History Centre—Artist's Impression, *Chester and District Standard*

Let's Talk About ... Transport

A vision for transport in Cheshire West and Chester that embodies ideas that the Society has been advocating for a number of years but which will need radical action to be effective.



Cheshire West and Chester (WaC) have also recently launched a consultation on a local transport plan, with a vision of what it wants to accomplish and a large evidence base document to back it up. The emphases are on ensuring that lack of transport does not restrict people's lives; decarbonising; and building more attractive places for people to live. The Society is broadly supportive of the stated priorities and aims, which match ideas that we have been advocating for several years. We are still formulating our response, but the main points are likely to be:

- The need to realise that our car-dependent environment, with its consequences of congestion, pollution, frequent lack of public transport, and problems in getting about by walking and cycling, is the consequence of policies that have been deliberately pursued for sixty years. Only when we recognise the full scale of the problem can we really start to tackle it.
- It is clear that it is the older, more compact, historic town centres and conservation areas that are more attractive, have local services, and are easier to walk around and to connect by public transport. These advantages should be capitalised on and the lessons learned in

planning new developments. This ties in with the emphasis we placed in our response to the draft Heritage Strategy on the potential of the historic environment.

- More frequent and joined-up public transport, eg between buses and trains.
- The need for networks of cycleways between suburbs, town centres and employment parks. Reclaiming road space from motor vehicles for cycles and pedestrians and planting street trees will help to bind together our towns where they have been torn apart and make them more attractive.
- One-third of the borough's population lives in rural areas and will continue to need to use cars; their needs also need to be considered.
- Although the aims of the plan are admirable, few of the current actions that are summarised make a significant contribution to achieving them – indeed, some are hostile; we consider that far more radical actions along the lines suggested here are needed. Some of these will be contentious; the relevant political decisions will accordingly be difficult and may even be beyond the current powers of the local authority, but not making them, or making half-hearted efforts, will leave worse problems for future generations

You can read all about the plan [here](#) and can submit your own responses, The consultation is open until 28 January 2024..

Cheshire's Archives: A Story Shared



Most of you will know that a major relocation and representation of Cheshire's archives is underway, a project known as *Cheshire's Archives: A Story Shared*. Thanks to a National Lottery Heritage Fund award, two new buildings in Chester and Crewe will house the archives and provide bespoke space for public engagement. To learn more about the plan, visit: <https://www.cheshirestoryshared.org/> One thing you should be aware of is that in Spring 2024 direct access to the archives will be suspended and this situation is projected to end with relocation to the new buildings in 2025.

A key part of the representation of Cheshire

archives is a project called 'Gems', slated to go live in Spring 2025. At the heart of 'Gems' is the identification of 100 Gems per township – documents, images, audio clips and films – which will be geolocated so that visitors to the website can search by postcode.

Fundamentally, the project is intended to be community-led. To that end, they are seeking local history groups and people with knowledge of local histories to select a list of items, which will be refined through public engagement, and to help with geolocation, captioning, and editing audio-visual material.

To learn more about the project, read about the volunteer roles, and apply, visit: <https://www.cheshirestoryshared.org/home/introducing-gems>

To see some of the Gems identified for select townships, visit <https://www.cheshirestoryshared.org/> and scroll down to explore Winsford, Sandbach, Nantwich, Malpas, Lache, and Bollington.

Tom Pickles, Chair

Minted: Making Money and Meaning

Exhibition

Minted: Making Money and Meaning

7 October 2023 - 18 February 2024

Gallery Two

The Grosvenor Museum has an amazing money collection containing coins, tokens, jettons and paper money. It not only charts the history of people's interaction with wealth, but documents political issues, cultural attachments and even fashion.

This exhibition looks at how money was made, how it was used by those who created it, and

what it meant to the people who owned it.

Object of the Month

11 January 2024 @ 1.00pm - 1.30pm

Accompanying Minted, this month's behind the scene's talk will take a look at the amazing Castle Esplanade Hoard of Viking Silver.



PAS Finds and Treasure

Because the Portable Antiquities Scheme quietly and efficiently goes about its business on a daily basis, receiving, assessing, recording and uploading finds, it is easy to overlook the extraordinary wealth of new objects appearing in our region.

For that reason, once a year we invite our own Finds Liaison Officer, Heather Beeton, to deliver a lecture to the Society, reflecting on finds from the last calendar year. Heather will deliver her lecture on Wednesday 6th March, 2024, at 19:30, via Zoom.

Between now and then we remind you to visit the Portable Antiquities Scheme website (www.finds.org.uk), select 'database' and 'advanced search', and specify North West and Cheshire West and Chester, or Cheshire East: you will then get a list of the objects discovered with dates of recording, showing you up-to-date finds.

To whet your appetite, here are just some of the finds discovered since our last Newsletter in October, chronological order.



LVPL-FC0385 National Museums Liverpool CC BY-SA 4.0.

Stone Age finds are some of the rarest to be discovered by any means and are not the most responsive to metal detecting, yet there has been a wealth of flints uncovered recently, including LVPL-FC0385, a probable Neolithic flint scraper (c. 4000-3300 BC), just one of a collec-

tion of flints from three fields.



LVPL-FA0B6D National Museums Liverpool CC BY-SA 4.0

An Early Bronze Age (c. 2400-1500 BC) barbed and tanged flint arrowhead, LVPL-FA0B6D, is a product of the same context.



LVPL-OE06F6 National Museums Liverpool CC BY-SA 4.0

To this we can add two Early Bronze Age axe-heads (LVPL-OE06F6 and WMID-A17076), belonging to the early phases of metalworking in Britain.

Our new Bronze Age finds will be of special interest to CAS Council Member Andrew Reynolds and those who attended his fascinating CAS Lecture last year, based on his PhD Dissertation on Bronze Age hoards, which is in its final stages.



LVPL-BF64EB National Museums Liverpool CC BY-SA 4.0

Two new examples of Roman Wirral-type brooches have emerged (LVPL-BF64EB and LVPL-CF837E), with characteristic bright orange enamel, which add to the corpus first brought together by Rob Philpott and mentioned in his CAS Lecture from 2022-2023, and analysed comprehensively in Frances McIntosh's paper at the CAS Conference 2023.



DENO-7538AF Derby Museums Trust CC BY-SA 4.0

A medieval copper alloy Limoges figurine (DENO-7538AF) (AD 1150-1250) reminds us of the extraordinary richness of small, decorative mounts that we would have found in medieval

Cheshire.



LVPL-BA4842 National Museums Liverpool CC BY-SA 4.0

A Venetian coin, c. AD 1367-1423, depicting the lion of St Mark holding a gospel book (LVPL-BA4842) reminds us of the trading connections of medieval and early modern Cheshire discussed by CAS Chair Tom Pickles and Cheshire West and Chester Senior Archaeologist Julie Edwards, also at the CAS Conference 2023.

A post-medieval (1500-1800) Jews Harp (LVPL-A12083) – a small musical instrument designed to be held in the mouth against lips or teeth – provides an insight into the musical life of the inhabitants of early modern Cheshire.

To set against this, we have an early modern (c. AD 1600-1700) lead powder measure (LVPL-C1A213), probably used to measure a charge of gunpowder, perhaps the last resort of someone who really needed that Jews Harp player to stop.

Local museums rely on public support to fund these acquisitions. If you can help, Nantwich Museum has a current fundraising appeal for purchase of four items from Batherton and Marbury, totalling £850, including a late medieval dress fastener, a medieval mount, a silver gilded double-sided crucifix and a posy ring:

<https://nantwichmuseum.org.uk/2023/11/10/help-us-buy-local-treasure-items/>

Tom Pickles, Chair

Stop Press!



The latest edition of the journal *Industrial Archaeology Review* has a paper of interest to CAS Members (but it does require payment): <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/yiar20/current>

Rachael Matthews, Ric Buckle and Liz Govier, focus on the Chester Leadworks on the north bank of the Chester Canal, founded in 1799. Here the Grade II* listed shot tower has survived the demolition of other structures, accompanied by episodic excavations, and commercial redevelopment with excavation by L-P: Archaeology in 2018-19 prompted this synthesis of the results.

Making Invisible Worlds Visible

Alderley Edge – Invisible Worlds was a UKRI Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project from 2020-2023 led by Victoria Flood (English Literature, University of Birmingham), Andrew Elliott (Department of Media Studies, University of Lincoln), and Catherine Clarke (Institute of Historical Research, School of Advanced Study, London). CAS Members may recall that Catherine Clarke led Mapping Medieval Chester and Discover Medieval Chester, and has regularly returned to speak about the importance of the history, literature, and heritage of Chester and Cheshire.

Working with the National Trust, the author Alan Garner, the Blacken Trust, and Derbyshire Caving Club, these collaborators have been seeking to find ways to connect the tangible heritage of Bronze Age and Roman mines with the intangible heritage of legendary associations for visitors to the site. To achieve this, they have worked with creative practitioners in visual media, soundscapes, and storytelling, and developed Augmented Reality (AR) resources.

Underlying their work is the oral tale that a legendary hero and his army sleep beneath the Edge, guarded by a wizard, a tale referred to as being told since the nineteenth century, which Alan Garner's grandfather passed on to him and which he used in his novels.

To bring together the tangible and intangible heritage, they commissioned three creative teams whose time working together at the Edge was captured and who produced soundscapes; they conducted public workshops whose results were recorded; and they created school teaching packs and an Alderley Edge Augmented Reality App, free to download, to accompany visits to the Edge.

Everything they have created is available at <https://www.invisibleworlds.ac.uk/> where they are also requesting that people download the App, visit the site, and relate their stories of the Edge, which CAS Members might like to do!

Tom Pickles, Chair

CAS Lectures

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.

CA Awards 2024

Members will recall that the magazine *Current Archaeology* shortlists archaeologists annually for a range of Awards and asks the public to vote on the final winners. This year's nominees for Archaeologist of the Year, Book of the Year, Research Project of the Year, and Rescue Project of the Year have been announced. You might like to visit the site, read through their list, explore some of the projects and outputs, and cast some votes: <https://archaeology.co.uk/vote>

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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