

# The Trowel

Newsletter of the Archaeology Section, University of Chester  
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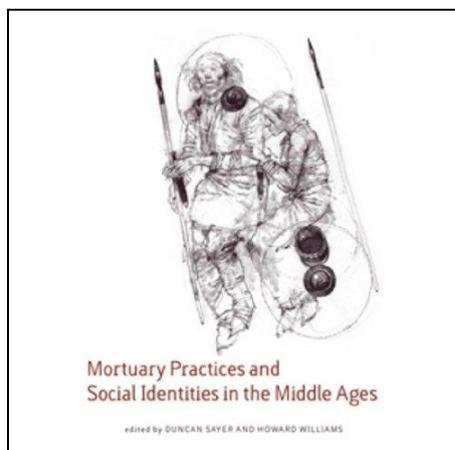


## Staff News

The Department was pleased to receive the news that in the NSS for last year, the archaeology programmes showed the highest student satisfaction rate (97% satisfied) in the University.

**Meggen Gondek** once again donned a woolly hat for a summer in Scotland. This year she co-directed with Dr Ewan Campbell, University of Glasgow, an excavation of a Pictish cemetery and Iron Age enclosure as part of the Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot project run by the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen. The site revealed a so-far unique example of a Pictish charred log-coffin burial. Meggen recently gave a paper on the work at the cemetery for an international conference in Dublin held by the Mapping Death project, an INSTAR programme based at University College Dublin.

**James Pardoe's** research on literary heritage sites has continued apace including contributions to conferences in London (LitHouses and Marketing) and Newcastle (Engaging Communities in Museums and Heritage Sites) in the autumn. During the latter, the recent Level 6 Field Visit to Whitley Castle was also discussed in some depth by delegates. James recently debated the similarities between interest in presentation techniques at the Museum of the Sexual Revolution, Maine USA, and Abbotsford, home of the writer Sir Walter Scott, with Dr Richard Williams of the University of Edinburgh (University of Manchester Centre for Museology Research Seminar).



Howard's latest volume is hot off the presses

**Howard Williams** has been busy this summer conducting research into commemoration at the National Memorial Arboretum and also on early medieval weaponry and the senses. He gave papers on both topics at the internationally renowned Theoretical Archaeology Group conference in December at the University of Durham. Howard's co-edited book, in which he also published a research paper, Sayer, D. & Williams, H. (eds) 2009, *Mortuary Practices & Social Identities in the Middle Ages: Essays in Burial Archaeology in Honour of Heinrich Härke*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, is hot off the presses. Both Howard and Meggen were involved in an important conference for the region: *Locality and Community: Cheshire Sculpture in Context*, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2009, organised by Sarah Semple, University of Durham.

## Out and about!

Our students have been kept busy, not only in the lecture halls and seminar rooms, but also on fieldtrips and field visits around Cheshire and further afield at the start of this new academic year. News of the famous Shropshire Hoard enticed a hardy crew to Birmingham Museum to see the first public display of the finds. We stood in the queue for about 3½ hours but it was certainly worth it. This year Howard has already taken students to Ironbridge, Liverpool World Museum and medieval sites in North Wales including Basingwerk Abbey.



Medieval archaeology students pose at Basingwerk Abbey

James's fieldtrip to Whitley Castle, Northumberland with Level 6 Heritage students will probably go down in Chester history as the muddiest fieldtrip ever. Issues of accessibility and presentation were discussed amidst some very slippery and muddy conditions. Everyone came back safe and sound, even if a few pairs of trousers were sacrificed.

As part of the Habitats and Hillforts project, Meggen took a group of student volunteers from all years to do a week's worth of geophysical survey at Kelsborrow Castle, near Chester. Students conducted both resistivity and gradiometer surveys trying to find interior features of the hillfort. It is hoped this work will feed into Dan Garner's work on the archaeology side of the Habitats and Hillforts project and that excavation will take place in the near future.



*Kelsborrow Castle: First year student, Emily Anderson, conducts a magnetic survey. Nick Window, second year, moves the guide ropes and Meggen wears her woolly hat.*

### Dissertation prize

The winner of the 2009 Chester Archaeology Dissertation Prize is **Tom Crowther** for his dissertation 'An Evaluation of the Entrance Patterns of the Brochs and Duns of Iron Age Scotland.' Tom will be presented with his prize at the Society's January lecture. Special mention should also be given to the other nominees for the award: Rob Parkinson for 'Why was the Cistercian Abbey of Stanlow Abandoned? Will of God or Human Weakness?' and Phil Cox, 'Prehistoric Connections: The burnt mounds of Llanfairfechan, Conwy, N. Wales and the Weald Moor, Shropshire and their connections to prehistoric settlement and ritual sites.'

### Spotlight on news from the History, Archaeology and Heritage Society

*Contributed by HAHS President, Jasmine Hopkins.*

The History, Archaeology and Heritage Society are the people to know! This year we have already been to Liverpool World Museum, Port Sunlight village

and the Lady Lever Art Gallery. We have had film nights watching various historical (-ish) films from *Carry on Henry* through to *Scrooge*. Bowling balls have been bowled and, of course, many pints have been raised.



*Last year's Society trip to Wiltshire included an inside look at Stonehenge! (photo courtesy of HAHS).*

Coming up this January is the first of our weekend residential trips, this time to London. We plan on soaking up some museum culture, entering the Tower of London, standing in both east and west hemispheres at once, travelling on and under the Thames and hopefully exiting the Tower of London. For our second weekend trip at the end of the year we are planning to visit York. Our day trips are planned to the castles of North Wales, Manchester Museum and many more places. We are planning our lecture series and we will also be meeting up with our Bangor University History and Archaeology Society friends, watch more historical (-ish) films, go ye olde worlde lazer-questing and, of course, raise a few more pints! Current students and those interested in the Society's activities can contact us at [history@chestersu.com](mailto:history@chestersu.com).

### Calling all Archaeology Alumni

We know you folks use Facebook but why not let the department know what you have been getting up to? Email your news to the address below and you might even find yourself featured in the newsletter!

#### Contact us:

Department of History &  
Archaeology  
University of Chester  
Parkgate Road  
Chester  
CH1 4BJ  
01244 512160

[archaeology@chester.ac.uk](mailto:archaeology@chester.ac.uk)  
<http://www.chester.ac.uk/historyandarchaeology/index.html>



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