

The Trowel

Newsletter of the Archaeology Section, University of Chester
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Issue 9



Staff News

Meggen Gondek spent the Easter Break co-directing an excavation around a Pictish symbol stone in Rhynie, Aberdeenshire. This was done as part of the Rhynie Environs Archaeological Project (REAP), which is co-directed by Dr Gordon Noble, University of Aberdeen. Over two weeks of excavation, REAP uncovered a substantial fortified Pictish settlement. The finds were also exciting and included rare imported pottery and bronze pins. Meggen also spoke at a conference, *Scotland and Beyond: Early Medieval Carved Stones*, in Edinburgh in March.

James Pardoe has been on sabbatical this year and is in the final weeks of finishing a substantial piece of research on literary tourism.

Anne Teather spoke to the University of Bristol Archaeology and Anthropology Society in February on 'British Neolithic Art and Artefacts.' This paper was also given to the Bangor University Archaeology Society in May, where she also spoke briefly about British Women Archaeologists (<http://britishwomenarchaeologist.org.uk>). Anne also has been active working on material from the Stonehenge Riverside Project and attended a meeting at the University of Sheffield in May. She is completing the post-excavation report on the chalk artefacts found at Durrington Walls and also the Chalk Pig found within the Stonehenge palisade ditch.

Howard Williams gave his Inaugural Lecture as Professor of Archaeology in February. His topic was 'Ashes to Asses and Dust to Rust: Archaeology and Death in the 21st Century.' He has also seen a number of research papers published in a range of internationally-renowned journals, including *Mortality* and the *Journal of Social Archaeology*. He has recently taken on a new role as Assistant Editor for *The Archaeological Journal*, the annual publication of the Royal Archaeological Institute (<http://www.royalarchinst.org/>).

And of course amongst all that activity, the staff have been teaching a range of classroom and field-based subjects: highlights this year included a human bones session with Howard, the annual Overleigh Cemetery survey and the Halkyn Landscape Project survey with the first years.



Professor Howard Williams teaching 2nd year students in a session on human remains

Academic Prizes for 2010-2011

The Department sends its congratulations to the recipients of this year's academic prizes. The University Prize for Archaeology and Heritage (formerly the 'Blue Coat' prize) was awarded to **Gary Duckers**. The Rhys Williams Prize for Study in Archaeology was awarded jointly to **Nicholas Window** and **Hayley Bates**.

This year, the Department was also pleased to receive support for a new prize. The **David and Betty Evans Memorial Prize** was created to reward an archaeology student either in their 2nd or 3rd year with an outstanding academic profile and a strong commitment to the discipline of archaeology over and above the course requirements. For its inaugural year, the prize will be awarded to **Dean Paton**, a final year, single honours, archaeology student. Dean is also part of the 'Roman Fort Project,' which has been selected as a finalist in Barclay's Take One Small Step competition. We wish the Roman Fort Project and Dean good luck! (See <https://www.takeonesmallstep.co.uk/Entry/Detail/3932> for additional information).

Spotlight on: icing on the academic cake

Doing a degree in archaeology is not just about what is required and assessed. Our students can take advantage of a range of additional opportunities, such as fieldwork and field trips, which enhance their experience.

One of our second year, single honours archaeology students, **Heidi Archer**, was chosen by the Department to participate in the international PORTICO project as part of a team representing Chester (<http://www.portico.nu/home.html>). Students were asked to develop an innovative business case for the presentation of the archaeological heritage and history of the city.

Heidi commented about her experience: 'University life opens doors. During my degree I have been to more places and met more people than I ever thought I would. I have been able to volunteer within the archaeology department on surveys and excavation and also volunteer outside of my academic life. With the PORTICO Heritage Project I was able to travel to Belgium and Germany presenting ideas that will be the basis for new heritage displays around Chester.'

Two of our final year students, **Dean Paton** and **Gary Duckers**, had the opportunity to 'shadow' English Heritage's Landscape Investigation Team, based in York.

Here is their account:

'Armed with a generous bursary from the department, intrepid landscape lovers Gary Duckers and Dean Paton boarded the 0930 train to York to spend a week with the legendary landscape archaeologist, **Stewart Ainsworth**. The first day saw us work with the digital photography team, rectifying images and mapping out newly-discovered Roman forts along Hadrian's Wall. This was followed by a day on Grassington Moor mapping out an eerie lead-mining expanse, which at times resembled a scene from Star Trek. Our jobs for that day were a bit 'Indiana Jones'. Stewart assured us he had carefully risk assessed all activities, so we felt much safer when jumping over mine-shafts, falling into bogs, scrambling up mountain slopes and avoiding angry sheep. We were rewarded the next day for our work, as all three of us sat for lunch on top of Kilburn White Horse, after recording erosion and damage to this amazing monument.

We would both like to thank the department for funding an unforgettable learning experience which was hugely beneficial to our dissertations and, of course, our CVs! We especially wish to thank the Bearded Deity, that is Stewart, for a memorable and enjoyable week.'

CAER Project – dig update

The second field season of the Chester Amphitheatre Environs Research (CAER) Project got under way in May with our 2nd year archaeology students getting their hands dirty on their four week training dig.



Excavating the 16th century building in Grosvenor Park

This year's excavations focused on the footprint of a timber structure, which probably dates to the late 16th century. Finds were plentiful, the students were in good spirits and worked hard and the squirrels in the park were well fed! Check out all the details of the dig on the blog at: <http://www.univchester-parkdig.blogspot.com/>.

Research Student News

The archaeology research student population continues to grow and we have several new students beginning in the autumn. Three of our research students: **Jonathan Coley**, **Joanne Kirton** and **Ruth Nugent** represented the Department at the Early Medieval Archaeology Student Symposium in Glasgow held at the end of May. Ruth presented a paper on her research entitled: "I got soul, but I'm not a soldier": Exploring the 'other' early Anglo-Saxon male and his corpse, and Joanne Kirton presented a poster on her research entitled: Re-connecting early medieval sculpture with its physical context: Wincle, a case in point.

Alumni News?

We'd love to hear how our former students are getting on. Please contact us at the address below and you might find yourself in the next issue!



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