

The Trowel

Newsletter of the Archaeology Section, University of Chester
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All change at Chester

The last year has been one of great change for Archaeology at the University of Chester. We've said goodbye to Dr Sarah Semple who has moved to the Dept. of Archaeology at Durham University. However, we've welcome the arrival of two lecturers, **Dr Meggen Gondek**, the new course leader and **Dr David Petts**. Meggen joined us after lecturing at the University of Durham, whilst David had previously been working as a local government archaeologist, also in Durham! They both have research interests in the early medieval period. Meggen is carrying out work on early medieval Scotland, with a particular interest in the Picts. Meanwhile, most of David's research has been on early medieval Wales, especially the spread of Christianity.

The increase in lecturers has been reflected by the increase in the number of students studying archaeology at Chester. Beginning in October 2007 for the first time we will have a full compliment of single-honours archaeology students.

There are also changes in the structure of the archaeology course. The university is getting rid of the old system of semesters and putting in place year long courses. This has allowed Meggen and David to completely re-design the undergraduate course and creating some exciting new courses, including Death and Burial, Buildings Archaeology, Advanced Practical Skills and Debates in World Archaeology.

Students head for Europe

This summer a number of our students will be heading to foreign parts to work on archaeological excavations. They were successful in winning the opportunity to participate in the EU-funded *European Archaeology Skills Exchange*, a project which allows students from the UK to join a range of excavations across Europe. This year the lucky students from Chester will be working on a Viking site in Sweden, a medieval castle in Latvia, a Bronze Age settlement in Slovakia and urban excavation in Germany. Bon Voyage and send us a postcard!

Dissertation prize

The annual Chester Archaeology Society undergraduate dissertation prize was awarded in 2006 to Gary Crawford-Coupe for his work *The Archaeology of Burton Point*. The winner receives a cash prize and the opportunity to publish their work as an article the *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*.

Digging in Chester

For several years 2nd-year archaeology students at Chester have carried out their fieldwork training on the site of the Roman amphitheatre. The summer of 2006 saw the last stage of this internationally important project, so this year students have moved on to another important site for their practical excavation experience. They have moved just a hundred metres east and are now working on the site of a 19th century town house. It is thought that 'Cholmondeley's Mansion' sat on the site of earlier medieval buildings attached to the collegiate church of St. John, which was passed to Sir Hugh Cholmondeley after the dissolution of the monasteries. The excavation, run by Chester Archaeology, hopes to establish how the area was used during the Roman period and will pay special attention to a ditch that was first found during the building of the Union Street Baths in 1899.



*Chester students at work in Grosvenor Park.
Photograph by Gavin Smithies*

Out and About

Studying archaeology at Chester isn't simply about sitting in lecture rooms and the library. Students get the opportunity to get outside to explore archaeological monuments in the field or learn new practical skills.

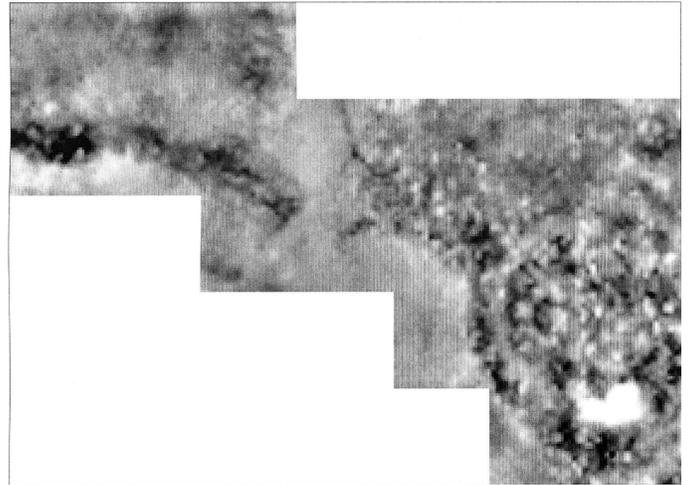
This year the first years had the chance to carry out earthwork survey in Wepre Wood near Connah's Quay. Despite the snow(!) they learnt how to draw plans and profiles of archaeological sites. In May, the first years had a chance to explore the stunning prehistoric archaeology of Anglesey. They were able to visit upstanding Neolithic burial monuments such as Bryn Celli Du and the Iron Age hilltop settlement at Din Lligwy. Earlier on in the year the second years learnt more about medieval Wales with a trip to the important Cistercian monastery of Valle Crucis, near Llangollen and Denbigh Castle. In this coming year we hope to give students more opportunities to visit the fantastic archaeological sites of Cheshire and the Welsh Borders, and hopefully further afield.



First year students hard at work at Wepre Wood, near Connah's Quay, Photograph by Peter Aherne.

Current research

As well as being responsible for most of the undergraduate teaching, both Meggen and David are active researchers. In November Meggen took a small team of students to Aberdeenshire to help with fieldwork on the Rhynie Environs Archaeological Project, an exploration of the complex prehistoric and early medieval landscape of the Rhynie Valley. She has also had a major paper on early medieval sculpture in Scotland published in *Medieval Archaeology*. This summer, as a research associate with the Strathearn Environ & Royal Forteviot Project, she will be working with the University of Glasgow exploring a complex Neolithic to Medieval landscape.



Resistivity survey carried out at Rhynie (Aberdeenshire) Nov 2006 showing ditched enclosures in association with the Craw Stane, an early medieval Pictish symbol stone

At Easter David spent a week in Estonia visiting the Dept. of Archaeology, Tallin University and carrying out preliminary research into the archaeology of the East Baltic. He had a chance to meet Estonian archaeologists and explore the archaeology of the Tallinn region. In the future he is hoping to develop a project exploring the development of the historic landscape of coastal Estonia. More locally, he is planning to carry out a geophysical survey of the churchyard at Meifod (Montgomeryshire), an important early medieval ecclesiastical centre with a link to the Kings of Powys in the 10th and 11th centuries. This year he saw the publication of the English Heritage-funded North-East Regional Research Framework, which he co-authored with Dr Chris Gerrard of Durham University and a paper on the use of war memorial in late 19th century India.



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