

The Trowel

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Welcome Professor Ian Shaw

We welcome our new Head of History and Archaeology and Professor of Archaeology: Ian Shaw.

Ian is an expert in the archaeology of the Near East, east Mediterranean and north-east Africa from the Neolithic to the Iron Age. His research focuses on materials and technology as well as urbanization and warfare in Ancient Egypt.

Co-director of the Gurob Harem Palace Project, Ian has written/edited ten books and written many journal articles and book chapters on his research. His most recent book is called: *Ancient Egyptian Technology and Innovation: Transformations in Pharaonic Material Culture* (Bloomsbury, 2012).

Ian joins us having previously worked at UCL's Institute of Archaeology and the University of Liverpool.



Ian gave a keynote paper at the First International Chinese Conference for Egyptology, Changchun, July 2015



Exploring robbed Late Bronze Age tomb at Gurob, Egypt

Staff News

Dr Amy Gray Jones co-presented a poster with Barry and Andy Needham at the Meso 2015 conference in Belgrade, Serbia in Sept. on the Flixton School House excavations. She also continues as Deputy Head of Department for Archaeology this academic year.



Excavations at Rhynie, August 2015

Dr Meggen Gondek had another successful season for the REAP project (www.reaparch.blogspot.co.uk), where she has been excavating a high-status Pictish site in conjunction with colleagues from the University of Aberdeen. This year's highlights include many sherds of rare imported Late Roman amphorae, a glass bead, and a possible iron pin. A large suspected 'stone-hole' for a now-lost Pictish symbol stone was found near the entrance to the inner enclosure of the site; half a cattle jaw was deposited in the very bottom of the pit.



James and fellow judges at the Discover Heritage Awards

Dr James Pardoe was elected a full member of the Association for Heritage Interpretation and also he has been a judge for their Discover Heritage Awards. James also presented a research paper at the Conference on the Inclusive Museum in New Delhi in August.

James has been appointed Director of Design, Heritage & the Built Environment at University Centre Shrewsbury where he will be coordinating the delivery of new degrees including the MSc Museum Practice.

Dr Caroline Pudney has been very busy on leave researching and writing about Iron Age and Roman archaeology as well as community archaeology.

Summer 2015 saw the fifth and supposed final season of excavations on the multi-period landscape at Hen Caerwys, Flintshire. Involving Caroline and Chester students working alongside local volunteers and staff from Cadw and Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust, the dig investigated an enigmatic large enclosure and a bizarre, beehive shaped feature which might have been an ice house. With many questions left unanswered, perhaps a return to the site is on the cards for a *final final* season in 2016...



Chester students Matt and Dan with landowner Mike in the possible ice house

Dr Patricia Murrieta-Flores has recently published several articles and with Howard she is working on GIS-based techniques to investigate the early medieval landscape of the Pillar of Eliseg. In October, she organised the 'First Course of Computational Technologies Applied to Archaeology and Anthropology' in Mexico City.



Paty with her class in Mexico City

Dr Barry Taylor and colleagues carried out their final season of excavation at the early Mesolithic site of Star Carr. This iconic site was first excavated in the late

1940s but new work is showing a far larger site occupied all year round. Amazing evidence was found in the 2015 season: dense concentrations of wood, bone and antler artefacts, such as spear points made from red deer antler, a bodkin made from the bone of an elk, and several of the iconic red deer antler frontlets. They also found beads carved from shale and an inscribed stone pendant.



Barbed point from Star Carr

Deposited in a structured manner, along with the butchered animal bones, into what would have been an area of shallow standing water at the edge of the site, were these offerings to placate the spirits of the hunted animals?

Professor Howard Williams has published two articles in the journal *Internet Archaeology* and a book chapter entitled 'Beowulf and Archaeology'. He has edited his fourth *Archaeological Journal* for the Royal Archaeological Institute. Check out his *Archaeodeath* blog: <https://howardwilliamsblog.wordpress.com/>.

Postgrad News

In September, the department hosted a book launch of a new book: *Early Medieval Stone Monuments: Biography, Materiality, Landscape* (Boydell and Brewer, 2015). Co-edited by just-completed doctoral student Joanne Kirton with Meggen and Howard, the book explores new research on early medieval inscribed and sculpted stone monuments from Ireland, Britain and Scandinavia. Joanne's chapter explores the landscape context of the Cleulow Cross, Wincle, Cheshire.



Joanne, Meggen and Howard with their new book

In November, Rachel Swallow successfully defended her doctoral thesis entitled: *Cheshire Castles in Context*. Rachel's research investigated the landscape contexts and locations of Cheshire's medieval fortified residences from the 11th to the 13th centuries AD. Congratulations Rachel on being our second successful PhD in archaeology!



Dr Rachel Swallow

Well done also to Jonathan Coley who successfully defended his MPhil thesis: *St John's and St Werburgh's; Rivals under Heaven. An Analysis of the Two Great Church Powers of Chester between 1070 and 1350AD*.

Undergrad News

In September we welcomed our brand-new first-year students who joined us immediately on a test-pitting exercise close to the University. Then, in November, we celebrated the graduation of last year's final-year students at Chester Cathedral.



Graduation: Congratulations all!

In addition, a bumper number of our graduating and former students are finding work in the archaeology and heritage sectors. 2015 graduates are now working with, among others, Archaeological Solutions, Archaeological Research Services, Earthworks Archaeology and Wessex Archaeology.

Other graduates from 2015 have begun Masters degrees with us here at Chester, where we offer an MA Archaeology and Heritage Practice and the MA Archaeology of Death and Memory. For further students, their undergraduate degrees with us have provided a springboard to postgraduate degrees elsewhere.

We are proud of our students, whatever they decide to do with their degrees!

Magdeburg, Germany

by Chiara Bolchini (final-year student)

Summer 2015 saw final-year student Chiara join the EASE project through Grampus Heritage and Training Ltd.

The placement allowed me to spend two months working with several commercial units in Magdeburg, Germany. During my time I worked on three commercial excavations, from the early medieval, late medieval and modern periods. Also, I took part in a community archaeology excavation of a Neolithic burial mound. We unearthed different Bronze Age and early medieval pottery fragments and an incredible amount of animal bones and horns from a medieval tanning pit. More than 200 medieval coins were found on the border between the region of Saxony-Anhalt and Brandenburg, as well as some occasional metal items from the GDR period and from WWII, including a soldier's helmet.

The months spent working with German archaeological units allowed me to notice the differences between the German and the British process of excavating and recording sites. Overall, I found this experience challenging, but incredibly worthwhile and inspiring, both as a person and as an archaeologist.



Excavating a Neolithic burial mound, near Marienborn

Portugal 2015

by Aaron Clarke and Hannah Proctor

Level 5 students Hannah and Aaron report on their summer excavations in Portugal.



Hannah Proctor and Aaron Clarke

Over summer 2015 we took part in an Erasmus/Grampus Heritage project in Portugal, for two months, excavating two Chalcolithic (Copper Age) sites. The first site was on the top of a mountain in the northern region, just outside the village of Friexo de Numao. It had been first excavated by the famous Portugese archaeologist Vitor Oliveiri in the 1980s. The temperature soared to 40°C daily so work was tough. However, the site revealed important new finds from animal bones to brooch pins.

The second site was in the south of the country, on the border of the Leira and Lisbon districts. Our contribution involved two weeks of museum work at Museu do Bombarral. We undertook finds processing, from previous seasons of excavation on the site. This was followed by three weeks excavation where we learned many useful skills, not only about excavation but also regarding site management.

Our summer was not all hard work: during spare time the hosts and locals took the opportunity to share their favourite places: surfing at the beach, mountain hiking, a day trip to Lisbon and even horse riding. This project was a brilliant experience, highly rated and recommended by us both.

Work at Chirk

by Jasmine Hopkins

Former Chester archaeology graduate, Jasmine Hopkins, has just landed a new job in the heritage sector and tells us about how her degree has led her there.

I am the new Volunteer and Community Involvement Officer here at Chirk Castle in the beautiful Ceiriog valley. My responsibilities focus on supporting all the heads of department with the management of their volunteers, working on recruitment for volunteers and heading up any ongoing community involvement projects. As many of you are aware, the National Trust highly values its volunteers as they are the life blood of our organisation. We couldn't do the work we do without them.

My degree in Archaeology sparked a passion in me for heritage management and I am finding that lots of my experiences at university are useful in my role here, especially the endless field trips to heritage sites. Since university I went into retail management and that gave me a good base for people management which is obviously a huge part of my new role. After all it's all about heritage forever... for everyone!



Jasmine Hopkins graduated in 2010 with a BA (Hons) Archaeology degree from the University of Chester

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