

# The Trowel

Newsletter of the Archaeology Section, University of Chester  
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## Staff News

To begin with, congratulations to **Professor Gondek** who has been appointed as the new head of the Department of History and Archaeology, and been promoted to professor. Incredibly, she has also found time to carry out further work on the Pictish royal settlement at Rhynie (Aberdeenshire).

**Dr Morn Capper** continues to teach and carry out research on all things heritage and museums related.

**Dr Amy Gray Jones** has been busy directing a research project into the early prehistoric maritime communities of the Inner Hebrides. In July, along with Dr Taylor, she took a team of former students to the Isle of Muck to carry out surveys of sites around the coast, and discovered the first evidence for Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) activity on the island. This new discovery will form the basis for future work on Muck and the surrounding islands, which will provide new information on the way that early human groups recolonised the west of Scotland 11,000 years ago.



Dr Gray Jones excavating at Port Mor, on the Isle of Muck

**Dr Caroline Pudney** has set up a new third year module on Romano-British archaeology, and has been carrying out the post-excavation analysis from her excavations at Hen-Caerwys.

**Dr Barry Taylor** has been working on the final phase of the Star Carr project. First excavated in the late 1940s, Star Carr has remained one of the most important (but perhaps least well understood) sites of the British Mesolithic. The new excavations at the site have uncovered a wealth of information about life in Britain during the centuries following the end of the last Ice Age. Some of the results of the excavations have recently been published in *PLOS ONE*, and in several recent articles in *Journal of Archaeological Science Reports*, and *Internet Archaeology*. The full publication of the site is expected at the end of 2017.

This year the project received another award (to add to its growing list), this time the Award for Archaeological Innovation at the British Archaeological Awards. One of the most famous artefacts from the site, the red deer antler frontlets, have also just featured on a new Royal Mail stamp.



**Prof. Howard Williams** has published research articles on Viking mortuary practice and 'hogback' stones, which appear in a special issue of the *European Journal of Archaeology* (19.3) 'Mortuary Citations: Death and Memory in the Viking World', which guest edited by Howard <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/yej20/19/3>.

Howard has also co-edited a new book called *Archaeologists and the Dead* with Dr Melanie Giles (Manchester University).



Professor Williams, with co-editor Dr Melanie Giles

## Digital Humanities

The Digital Humanities Research Centre (DHRC) is now officially open! The DHRC works in the intersection of theory and methods between technology and the Humanities. We are developing innovative approaches to Humanities-based questions, and are attracting funding from institutions such as *The Society of Antiquaries of London*, *Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA)*, and *the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST)* among others.

In our most recent bid, Dr Patricia Murrieta-Flores, Dr Ruth Nugent (Archaeology) and Dr David Harry (History) have been awarded a grant from the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Arts to create the first interoperable online dataset of major English saints' shrines. The project, which also includes Matt Williams (recent Computer Science graduate) and Dr Naomi Howell (Medieval Literature, University of Exeter), focusses on how shrines have been depicted and described from the Late Anglo-Saxon period until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, using illustrations, photographs, stained glass images, shrine-shaped pilgrimage badges, medieval texts, eyewitness accounts, antiquarian records, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century guidebooks, and surviving shrines.

The team were one of only 5 digital projects accepted from 200+ submissions – not bad considering none of us are Art Historians!

Dr Patricia Murrieta-Flores

## From Degree to Digging

by Dave Laverty (2015 graduate and prize-winner)

Since graduating from Chester I have been employed as a full time member of staff with Archaeological Research Services Ltd, where I have been working on a wide range of projects, from excavating Romano-British cemeteries to recording industrial landscapes.

The skills and knowledge I gained from my Chester archaeology degree have proved invaluable in helping me to gain employment. The range of practical skills I learnt, from interpreting and recording complicated stratigraphic sequences, to the analysis of human remains and the use of Geographic Information Systems, have proved invaluable for the work I carry out on site. Equally, the discipline and research skills I learnt whilst writing my undergraduate essays and my dissertation has helped me to write excavation reports and desk based assessments to a high, professional standard.

During my time at Chester I also volunteered on a number excavation projects, and I would strongly recommend this to any students who wish to pursue a career in archaeology. I know it is time-consuming and tiring to do this alongside researching and writing your essays, but I honestly believe that all of the practical experience I gained whilst volunteering, along with the skills I developed in my degree aided me in becoming employed as a professional archaeologist. My hard work, and the help and support of all the staff in the Department, along with their never-ending patience with me, has enabled me to get my dream job!



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