



The Chester Antiquary

Newsletter of the Chester Archaeological Society

2011 Issue 1 (Spring / Summer)

Habitats and Hillforts: Excavations at Eddisbury Hillfort

Throughout late July, August and September Habitats and Hillforts undertook a series of excavations on the hillfort at Eddisbury sometimes known as Castle Ditch.

As with our earlier work on Woodhouse and Helsby hills we were primarily concerned with the re-excitation of old trenches; in this case originally excavated by William Varley between 1935 and 1938. Specifically, we wanted to re-expose sections through the inner and outer ramparts in order to retrieve samples for scientific dating and analysis; however, we also took the opportunity to re-excavate the eastern entrance in order to assess the condition of the buried structural remains. The Merrick's Hill area of the hillfort was also re-examined by a 40 strong team of students who were using the excavation to gain valuable field experience as part of a formal 2 week field school organised by Liverpool University.



The re-excavated remains of the hillfort's south-east entrance

With the exception of Merrick's Hill all of our excavation work was undertaken by an army of local volunteers under the supervision of professional archaeologists. The work was hard labour at times with some large sandstone boulders to remove within the backfill of the east entrance.

Cheshire Archaeology Day 2011

Cheshire Archaeology Day will be held in conjunction with the Chester Archaeological Society, The Cheshire Local History Association, and, Middlewich Town Council on **Saturday 9 April 2011** at the Winsford Lifestyle Centre, Winsford, Cheshire.

Guest Speaker: Dr Kevin Leahy: The Staffordshire Hoard

(National Advisor, Early Medieval Metalwork,
The Portable Antiquities Scheme)

Plus

- Simon Ward (Senior Archaeologist, CWAC) Chester City Walls
- Ian Miller (Oxford Archaeology North) The Middlewich Brine Pump
- Dan Garner (Project Officer - Habitats & Hillforts) Habitats and Hillforts Project
- Mark Harrison (Policing Advisor - Heritage Crime Initiative, English Heritage) The Heritage Crime Initiative.

Booking forms for the day will be available at the end of February / beginning of March and will be sent to all on the Council mailing list. If you want to check if you are on the list or to register your interest in attending you can email:

Archaeology@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk



**Cheshire
Archaeology Day**

All of this labouring ultimately proved to be rewarding when one of the boulders was discovered to be decorated with a form of Bronze Age rock art known as 'cup marks'. This art work together with finds of Bronze Age pottery and flint work (including a barbed and tanged arrowhead) clearly demonstrate that Eddisbury hill was an important site long before the Iron Age hillfort was built.



Sandstone boulder decorated with Bronze Age 'rock art'

During late August and September we were able to extend our excavation on to the interior of the hillfort with the enthusiastic cooperation of local farmer and landowner Mr Michael Platt of Eddisbury Hill Farm. This additional work enabled us to test the results of the geophysical survey work that we had undertaken

the previous winter. While many of our trenches yielded little in terms of archaeological features we did locate a line of 5 postholes that probably represent one side of a rectangular building. The work on the hillfort interior also yielded some artefacts of Roman date including the rim of a *mortarium* which dated to the 3rd century AD. Could these Roman objects be associated with the rectangular timber building represented by the postholes ?

We now await the results of the scientific analysis and dating programme in the hope that we will be able to either confirm or overturn the conclusions of William Varley's original work.

The "Habitats and Hillforts of Cheshire's Sandstone Ridge" is a Landscape Partnership Project, that aims to conserve the natural and historic heritage of this unique area, to increase public awareness and understanding of its special assets, and provide opportunities for people to access and enjoy its heritage. The project is led by Cheshire West and Chester Council and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership Scheme.

If you are over the age of 16 and are interested in our archaeology volunteering events or would like to be kept up to date about the results of our archaeological work then please contact Dan Garner:

dan.garner@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

(archaeology project officer) using the contact details provided on our website.

The Buildings of Cheshire

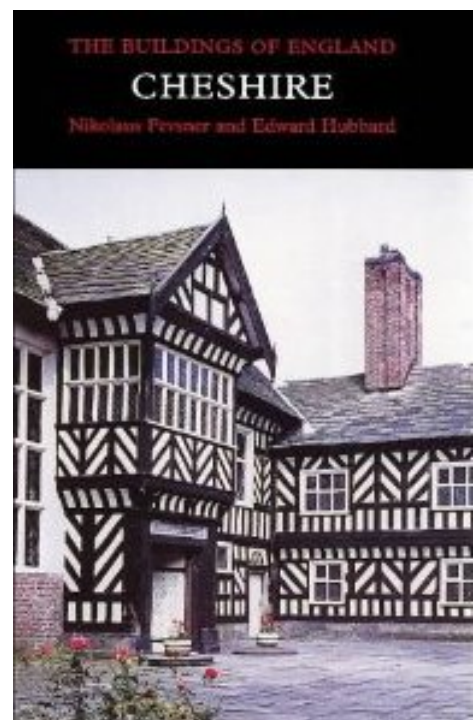
"Cheshire is not a county much visited by architectural travellers. Nor is it often the specific goal of tourists. It would probably be right to say that it is one of the least known of English counties."

So wrote Nikolaus Pevsner at the beginning of his introduction to the Cheshire volume of his Buildings of England.

I am sure members of the society have considerable familiarity with Cheshire, but as Pevsner notes the county is nuanced with considerable variety in type and function among its notable buildings.

Allen Lane, founder of Penguin Books, for whom he had written '*An Outline of European Architecture*', asked Pevsner to suggest ideas for future publications. Pevsner began to write '*Outline*' while interned as an enemy alien in Huyton (now part of Knowsley, Merseyside) in 1940.

Pevsner had found that the study of architectural history had little status in academic circles, and the amount of information available, especially to travellers wanting to inform themselves about the architecture of a particular district, was limited. His response to Lane was a series of comprehensive county guides to address this shortcoming. Work on the Buildings of England series began in 1945, and the first volume was published in 1951. Pevsner wrote 32 of the books himself, ten with collaborators, a further 4 of the original series were written by others.



A Lecture at Chester Archaeological Society 10th November 2010

A society member's view

From last year's programme, one lecture which stays in my mind is 'Liverpool Old Dock, built in 1715', given by Jamie Quartermaine of Oxford Archaeology North.

His report on the excavation of this dock revealed a remarkable level of preservation, one which will eventually create a very interesting public display. The dock is important too, because the rise of Liverpool as a port was entirely due to it.

Before 1715 Liverpool had a small trading harbour, which was really just a shallow inlet usable only at high tide. Ships took up to two weeks to unload. After the construction of the new tidal dock ships could lie alongside the unloading points at all times, and only one day was needed for a complete turnaround.

Significantly, no other port on the west coast had a tidal dock then, and Liverpool gained a great advantage, especially with the growth of the Cotton Industry in Lancashire. The Old Dock continued in use for many years, and was only filled back in 1826, but in the meantime the principle of tidal docks had been greatly extended, creating the series of basins still on view today.

Excavation showed the dock wall had originally been made of brick, with stone topping, and much of the work remains intact underground. I thought the speaker had excellent slides showing this, conveying well the surprise and delight he and his colleagues had experienced at their discovery.

John Hess



Tours of Liverpool's Old Dock can be booked from Merseyside Maritime Museum.

The Old Dock has been preserved under Liverpool 1 and is publicly accessible.

Booking information:

Please note that places are limited so **booking is essential**. Call **0151 478 4296** to reserve places.

Public tours are conducted on Tuesdays at 11am, 1pm and 2.30pm, and begin at Mersey Maritime Museum.

Pevsner's Cheshire

Pevsner's Cheshire volume was completed with the assistance of Edward Hubbard who particularly contributed to the Wirral entries.

The Cheshire volume is currently out of print though second hand copies of the 1971 (pictured opposite) and 1978 editions can be found quite readily.

The Pevsner Books Trust has a programme for the revision and publication of Pevsner's guides. Work has begun on a new revision of the Cheshire volume, though there is no publication date as yet.

Revised editions for neighbouring counties have been published recently:

- The revised Cumbria volume in 2010.
- Lancashire: Liverpool and the South West in 2006.
- Lancashire: Manchester and the South East in 2004.
- Shropshire in 2006.

Further Developments

Though not originally part of Pevsner's project, to the Buildings of England series has been added another series 'The Buildings of Wales,' now complete save for Powys, and further series are under development to cover Scotland (ten volumes published, four under development) and Ireland (both the Republic and the Province of Northern Ireland).

- The Gwynedd volume was published in 2009.
- Clwyd in 1986.
- Powys in 1979.

www.pevsner.co.uk

There is also an online guide; 'Looking at Buildings' created by Pevsner Architectural Guides to support and inform those with a developing or incomplete knowledge of architectural terminology:

www.lookingatbuildings.org.uk

Carolyn Kershaw

Call for a New Honorary Treasurer

Mr Alan Austin wishes to vacate his position as the Honorary Treasurer of the Society as soon as possible and by the end of his term in May 2012 at the latest. We thank Alan for all his hard work and dedication to the Society.

Alan has worked hard to computerise the accounts and the membership subscription process, and therefore, it is less of a daunting position to take on for the next Hon Treasurer.

The responsibilities of the Hon Treasurer are as follows:

- Maintain records of the Society's expenditure and monies received. Prepare a financial statement at the year end.
- Pay invoices for expenditure, and deposit any monies received into the Society's bank account in Chester.
- Maintain records of subscriptions which are due annually in January, and take the necessary steps to recover any outstanding subscriptions.
- Attend Council Meetings to provide up-to-date details of the Society's account.

The Society is looking for a volunteer ideally from within the membership, but this is not essential. If you are interested or know of someone who we could approach then make their interest known to the Chairman, Phillip Miles. Contact by email philkath.chester@virgin.net, or by telephone 01829741207

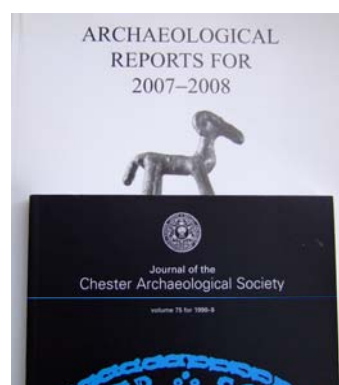
Library Access

advance notice of temporary closure

Because of the planned refurbishment of the Seaborne Library at Chester University during the summer, the Society's journal collection housed there will be temporarily inaccessible. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause.

Refurbishment will begin in mid-June and is predicted to be completed in early August.

Journals are available at Chester History and Heritage at St Michaels Church in Bridge Street Row East.



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Library

Members are welcome to browse through the Society's library at Chester
History and Heritage (general books) and Chester University (journals)

Internet

<http://www.chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk>

The *Chester Antiquary* is published twice a year, in Spring and Autumn.

We welcome letters and articles from members.

Contributions for the next newsletter should be with the newsletter editor Carolyne Kershaw no later than 15th September 2011.