

Institution: University of Chester

Unit of Assessment: 17B Geography, Environmental Studies & Archaeology (Archaeology)

a. Overview

The Department of History and Archaeology contains five full-time archaeologists (GONDEK appointed 2006, WILLIAMS appointed 2008, GRAY JONES appointed 2011 and MALDONADO and TAYLOR appointed 2013, plus one part-time Professor (AINSWORTH appointed 2013). In addition, there are ten further honorary affiliates and six postgraduate research students.

A strong research culture underpins the work of the archaeologists in the Department, supporting the strategic aims of creating high-quality outputs and impacts through a combination and integration of field- and desk-based research that together directly inform and involve undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. Through this strategy, the archaeological research environment has been transformed dramatically since 2008. Indeed, the upward trajectory of momentum for original research undertaken by archaeologists at Chester has resulted in this, our first ever submission to a national assessment of research.

b. Research strategy

In 2008, the archaeologists in the Department defined a simple and realistic research strategy designed to yield palpable results for this exercise whilst keeping a clear vision on longer-term research development leading towards 2020 and beyond. This realistic yet inherently aspirational approach has involved clear successes in field-based archaeological investigation, a raft of high-quality research outputs and the creation and development of a postgraduate research community. The Department is now home to a flourishing hub for archaeological research of recognised and respected regional, national and international significance.

Focuses on the archaeology of the British Isles, north-west Europe and Scandinavia in the Mesolithic period (GRAY JONES, TAYLOR), the Middle Ages (GONDEK, MALDONADO, WILLIAMS) and the modern era (AINSWORTH, WILLIAMS), Chester's archaeologists hold cross-period expertise in palaeoecology (TAYLOR), landscape archaeology (AINSWORTH, GONDEK, MALDONADO, TAYLOR, WILLIAMS), mortuary archaeology (GRAY JONES, MALDONADO, WILLIAMS) and archaeologies of memory (GONDEK, MALDONADO, WILLIAMS).

The four core components of the Department's successful strategy are: (i) facilitating high-quality and high-profile research outputs, (ii) the promotion of field-based research activity, (iii) support for impact activity integral to research activity, and (iv) commitment to research-led undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes.

- (i) All colleagues produce high-quality and high-profile peer-reviewed publications. These include special issues of journals, multi-authored monographs and book chapters, but a deliberate decision was made to focus on journal articles because of their high-level accessibility within and beyond academia. This feasible strategy is reflected in quality outputs in mainstream archaeology publication venues (e.g. AINSWORTH: Britannia, GRAY JONES: MoLA monograph, MALDONADO: Medieval Archaeology, TAYLOR: Antiquity, Journal of Archaeological Science, Journal of Wetland Archaeology, WILLIAMS: Journal of Social Archaeology) and interdisciplinary venues (e.g. GONDEK: Pictish Progress book; WILLIAMS: Early Medieval Europe, International Journal of Heritage Studies, Journal of Material Culture, Landscapes, Mortality). Put another way, archaeologists working at Chester since 2008 (GONDEK, WILLIAMS) have produced 23 book chapters and journal articles, one edited book and two journal special issues. Appointments within the REF audit period (AINSWORTH, GRAY JONES, MALDONALDO, TAYLOR) have contributed a raft of over 18 further high-quality outputs.
- (ii) The Department has encouraged and enabled field-based archaeological research to be at the centre of the evolution of research activities. This is demonstrable through the Rhynie Environs Archaeological Project (hereafter REAP) (GONDEK) and Project Eliseg (WILLIAMS) projects that constitute the archaeology impact case studies (3), but also through the Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot (hereafter SERF) (GONDEK, MALDONADO), Carbon Footprinting of Archaeological Report (hereafter CFAR) (GONDEK), the Mantle Walls Research Project (MALDONADO), the Kingskerswell Archaeological Research Project (hereafter KARP) (WILLIAMS), the Skamby Landscape Project (WILLIAMS), Contemporary Commemoration in Britain and Sweden (WILLIAMS) and fieldwork at Star Carr (TAYLOR) and Flixton School House Farm (GRAY JONES, TAYLOR).



(iii) The Department has long pursued a policy of impact activity, founded upon outreach to schools, public lectures, fieldwork and heritage interpretation. As outlined in the impact template (3a), impact has formed the third focus of the Department's research strategy, implemented through various means including field-based archaeology projects like REAP and Project Eliseg. Other impact-related field projects include the on-going CFAR project (GONDEK) which explores the carbon foot-printing of archaeological projects while the on-going KARP (WILLIAMS) considers the changing commemorative uses of churchyards from the 19th century to the present day. Indeed, the Department has actively encouraged all staff to make their research available to a wider public; research findings are disseminated to both an academic and non-academic audiences via a range of media from blogs and other social media, conferences, public talks and public engagement during fieldwork. Project Eliseg (WILLIAMS) has led to a striking new display of the discoveries of fieldwork in Llangollen Museum. The Department, therefore, has established strong links with a range of local schools and heritage sites, heritage organisations and archaeological societies (e.g. GONDEK: Chester Archaeological Society, WILLIAMS: Royal Archaeological Institute).

(iv) The fourth and final dimension of the Department's research strategy has involved the support of research-led degree programmes. Indeed, the archaeologists in the Department are proud that many elements of its long-established undergraduate programmes as well as its newly established (Sept 2012) taught MA Archaeology of Death and Memory and MA Archaeology and Heritage Practice are the direct result of research projects and expertise. Complementing these, the remaining modules delivered have served as a springboard for new areas of research. Research-led fieldwork projects are conducted from design to execution with a philosophy and practice that regards them as simultaneously exercises in public outreach and student teaching; students and local volunteers are integral to our field-based research. To ensure there is a healthy marriage between research and teaching, the Department dedicates extra resource funding to all new modules and also encourages the rotation of modules to match tutors' current research activity.

In addition to these taught programmes, research activity also underpins the Department's postgraduate research degrees. During the current REF cycle, the Department introduced an MRes in Archaeology which matches students' personal research interests with tutors' own expertise. MPhil and PhD students, of course, also work incredibly closely with the Department's research specialisms. As a result of this strand of the research strategy, there has been a massive fivefold increase in the number of research students supervised since RAE 2008; the majority of these students have been attracted by the Department's strong research emphasis. The development of this element of the strategy from 2008 to date has manifestly paid dividend and thus the Department will continue the same focus through to 2019.

Drivers behind this four-pronged success in archaeological research at Chester have been the provision of research funding, the improvement of library resources, and the implementation of a sabbatical leave scheme open to all staff (on these initiatives, see section c. below). The Department has also sought to promote all colleagues' research, but in particular those at an early stage of their career, through a formal mentoring scheme (again see section c. below). The Department has also fostered close cooperation between all colleagues whether on a geographical, chronological or thematic level which has demonstrable outputs in terms of ongoing collaborative projects between archaeologists GRAY JONES and TAYLOR and between GONDEK and WILLIAMS.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

The Department is strongly committed to the continual development of all staff members and is also driven by the firm belief that all colleagues should have equal opportunities to further their academic careers. During the current REF cycle, the Department's staffing and development strategy have been closely aligned to the four strategic elements detailed in section b. above: research outputs, research fieldwork, research impact and research-led undergraduate and postgraduate teaching.

In pursuing these goals, the Department benefits from structures put in place by the University to help the development of all staff working in the institution. These cover a wide range of working practices. On the one hand, the institution has committed itself wholeheartedly to activities that promote equality and diversity. For example, it runs a long-established Diversity



Festival once a year. There is also a Disabled Staff Group which provides a safe and supportive environment for discussing issues relating to disability. The Human Resources Department also monitors regularly for equality issues as part of the recruitment process for all employees, and is currently working towards an Athena Swan award.

The University provides particular support for early career researchers. All new academic staff members are supported through an accredited training programme which focuses on the demands of teaching practice, research supervision and the assessment process. Successful completion of the programme leads to Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. During their probationary and induction programmes, new staff members are introduced to the facilities available from the Research and Knowledge Transfer Office and the Graduate School. These include assistance in grant applications, advertising research projects and interviewing potential research students.

The University's commitment to staff development is not only of great benefit to the Department but has also been recognised externally. Recently the University was granted the prestigious 'HR Excellence in Research Award'. This demonstrates a commitment to implementation of the 'Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers'.

In conjunction with the wider University, the Department has also put in place structures to ensure that early career academics, which the Department has always sought to nurture, are fully supported. Drs GRAY JONES, MALDONADO and TAYLOR are recently appointed and fall into this category. To help these colleagues develop their teaching while at the same time strengthening their research profile, GRAY JONES has been awarded a lighter teaching timetable in her second year of permanent service. The Department has also appointed research mentors for each new staff member (WILLIAMS). Early career researchers from within the Department also participate in the University's early-career staff forum. This enables academics to network across discipline boundaries to help identify and address common problems facing those in their first academic post.

As a sign of the Department's commitment to research, a long-standing sabbatical scheme has been instituted and open to all staff. This is open to all academics in the Department, including those newly appointed or at an early stage in the careers. It relieves the individual from teaching (aside from any PhD supervision) and administrative commitments.

In addition to the sabbatical scheme, the Department has also been able to reduce teaching loads for all staff through the distribution of internal and external research funding. This is a further demonstration of the value that the Department places on research and staff development in archaeology. Under this plan, which was agreed at both a Departmental and Faculty level, in each academic year all colleagues in the department are provided with relief from teaching either a Level 4 or Level 5 module. As a result, staff members have been afforded at least two days per week dedicated entirely to research and impact activity.

Such is the Department's commitment to these two areas that it has been able to allocate each colleague a generous personal research budget each year. This can be used for conference attendance and research expenses. Supplementing this important scheme, the Faculty also runs a competitive bidding process for additional staff development funding for research with applicants able to claim up to £1,000 of additional research finance.

The Department's impressive research environment also accommodates a comprehensive conference and seminar programme. The research seminar series meets a minimum of eight times per year and attracts a mixture of internal and external academics. Recent speakers have included academics from the universities of Leicester, Bangor, Birmingham and University College Dublin. During the current REF cycle, the Department has also hosted several international events including the two-day 'International Research Network Runes, Monuments and Memorial Carvings' conference in April 2013 and the Royal Archaeological Institute's annual conference 'Rome's Impact on the Countryside', Oct. 2013. The subject is also found at the University's Annual Staff Conference. This is an all-day event which includes a series of parallel sessions focusing on examples of successful research projects, opportunities to develop impact, and a sharing of good practice in grant applications and management.

ii. Research students

The supervision and mentoring of postgraduate research students (hereafter, PGR) is one of the four areas (alongside research outputs, fieldwork and impact) that the Department has placed at



the centre of its development strategy. Since RAE 2008, the number of PGR students has increased significantly. This is not only a testament to the research atmosphere within the Department but also a sign of its commitment to future research and the Academy itself. All six of the PGR students are in receipt of a Faculty fee bursary. These are either part-time or commenced their full-time studies less than three years ago and thus none have yet submitted.

When they first embark on their PGR programme, students experience both a central University induction, and a local induction within the Department. This ensures that they have a full understanding of the regulations and services provided by central support departments as well as of the local support staff and facilities in the building where they are studying. At the same time, students undertake a skills audit, which helps them to identify their training needs. Students can access a range of support designed to develop both subject-specific and transferable skills. The Graduate School has responsibility for providing generic skills training, while the Department itself not only offers supervision, but also specialist training and support.

Each academic year, the Graduate School puts together a comprehensive schedule of skills training, covering everything required for successful graduate studies. These sessions are all supported by a Moodle site, which provides on-line access to training materials written and contributed by academic staff from across all subjects and faculties.

Alongside this programme, the Department encourages students to attend both internal and external training seminars. Internally, the Department runs several research workshops through the academic year on subjects such as submitting journal articles or running conferences. These are always run by a member of the Department in an informal manner to allow both colleagues and PGR students to contribute with thoughts and questions. In addition, the Department requires students who are employed as Graduate Teaching Assistants and/or Visiting Lecturers to undertake the specific training offered by the University's Learning and Teaching Institute. They may, if they wish, also undertake modules leading to Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy.

PGR students at Chester have the support of at least two approved supervisors, one of whom is a designated Director of Studies, and who has supervised at least one student to successful completion of the award. Supervision meetings take place frequently, with at least one meeting per month being recorded with outcomes and targets. Following a probationary period of between six to nine months, student progress is formally reviewed. If the student's registration is confirmed at this probationary review, a termly meeting of the full supervisory team reviews progress with the student subsequently and an Annual Progress Review (chaired by an independent academic staff member) reviews progress against objectives and expectations on an annual basis before the Annual Progress Board meeting. Students must submit a report, give a seminar and attend an interview before their upgrade from MPhil to PhD can be confirmed. There is a similarly rigorous process to consider applications to transfer to 'writing up' status.

To ensure PGR students are able to play a full role in the both the Department and Faculty more generally, students select a representative or representatives each year. These students then have the responsibility of representing their peers at Graduate School meeting, the Faculty's Board of Studies as well as feeding back information from the Graduate School itself. Within the Faculty of Humanities at Chester, there is also a designated postgraduate tutor (currently Dr Dawn Llewellyn, Theology & Religious Studies) who is available to see PGR students by appointment and to resolve any issues they may have.

The value of conference, seminar and colloquia participation for all PGR students of course cannot be gainsaid. In addition to the Department's seminar series at which PGR students attend and often deliver papers, the Department also runs an annual day-long PGR conference. This highly successful event provides students with a friendly and constructive environment in which to present their research to an audience of peers and more senior academics. Students themselves take the lead in organising the event, from issuing the call for papers through to shaping the panel sessions. This ensures that as well as honing their presentation abilities, they also gain valuable conference management skills. It is a Departmental requirement that any PGR student seeking an upgrade from MPhil to PhD presents a paper at the conference. Students benefit from dialogue and debate on the day and written feedback provided by their supervisors after the event.

In addition to the Departmental conference, there is an annual Faculty PGR conference. As this event also includes contributions from PGR students in the departments of English, Modern Languages and Theology and Religious Studies, it offers another forum for fostering inter- and



multi-disciplinary research dialogue. PGR students are also actively encouraged to attend subject specific conferences and seminars outside of the University. To this end both the Department and the University's Graduate School have established funds to support conference attendance. Each year applications are invited and all successful applicants are provided with funding. The Department's own funds also extend to research expenses incurred by PGR students in the course of visiting and working within archives and libraries. Applications are invited termly and must be accompanied by a supporting statement from the supervisor. PGR students have been presenting their research at the Theoretical Archaeology Group annual conference in recent years, as well as at the International Medieval Congress held each year at the University of Leeds. Furthermore, PGR students in archaeology have been instrumental in organising their own events, bringing international archaeological researchers to the University of Chester for the first time. PGR Joanne Kirton co-organised (with GONDEK) the International Runes Network workshop in April 2013 and PGRs Joanne Kirton and Ruth Nugent organised a three-day postgraduate conference, the *Early Medieval Archaeological Student Symposium*, in May 2013.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Besides the research sabbatical scheme and the provision of lighter teaching timetables facilitated through the distribution of research funding, (both detailed in sections above), additional leave is honoured where external research grants and/or funds have been awarded. Most significantly, WILLIAMS shared a European Research Council grant of € 1,200,000 with academics from the University of Exeter to explore local memory cultures in England and Wales: *The Past in its Place*. This funds a three-year Senior Researcher (2014-2016) plus a year of research leave for WILLIAMS (2013-14). This follows on from the award of £208,000 from the Leverhulme Trust to enable WILLIAMS with Professor Philip Schwyzer (University of Exeter) to investigate burial and commemoration practices in five English cathedrals, providing WILLIAMS with a research sabbatical 2011-12 and a fully funded PhD student. A British Academy small research grant was also awarded to GONDEK in 2009 to support her CFAR project, investigating the carbon footprinting of archaeological fieldwork projects. The fruits of these grants have allowed both scholars to make significant inroads into their new research projects.

Finance, of course, only accounts for part of the Department's recent research success. The library and research facilities available to students and staff alike have also contributed to the Department's wider research culture. The main University Library holds approximately 260,000 printed volumes and subscribes to over 1,000 printed journals and more than 13,000 electronic journals. The collections also include access to online source collections and over 15,000 e-books, which are core academic texts. At the main campus library there is 24/7 access to computers, printing and quiet study space throughout the year and extended access to all collections across all sites is provided during term-time and at peak periods.

Supplementing these resources, the Department is proud to have its own specialist research collection of rare and high-demand books that are made available to both students and staff studying history or archaeology. Within the Departmental library, a small suite of computers provides additional access to online material. PGR students, of course, have access to a dedicated secure study space, newly-refurbished in 2012-13 and also benefit from an enhanced interlibrary loan budget.

Within the city of Chester itself, the Department enjoys excellent links with heritage, museum and archive agencies, including amongst others the Historic Environment Team, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Cheshire Record Office, the Cheshire Military Museum and the Grosvenor Museum.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

Editorships

GONDEK:

• Honorary Editor, Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society (2006-2012);

WILLIAMS:

- Honorary Editor, the Royal Archaeological Institute's annual publication: the Archaeological Journal (2012-),
- Book Series Editor: Oxford Studies in the History of Archaeology (2006-)

Positions on Subject Associations/Learned Societies



GONDEK:

• Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (2009-)

WILLIAMS:

• Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London (2006-)

Collaborative Partnerships/Networks Joint Research Projects

AINSWORTH:

- Miner-Farmer Landscapes of the North Pennines AONB Project: partnership with English Heritage, North Pennines AONB, Natural England and Environment Agency (2012-)
- Chester Amphitheatre: partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Council (2012)
- Heritage at Risk projects research and mitigation strategies on a number of high-risk landscapes with English Heritage, Yorkshire Dales National Park, North Pennines AONB, Dorset AONB Partnership, Dorset County Council (2012-).
- Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme advisory role and research partnership with Shropshire Hills AONB (2013-)
- Ordnance Survey research partnership in use of remote-sensing data (2012-)
- Hexhamshire and the Allen Valleys Lidar Recording Project with North Pennines AONB, Northumberland County Council and Environment Agency.

GONDEK:

- Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot Project (SERF). Honorary researcher, (directed by universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen) 2006-2012
- Rhynie Environs Archaeology Project (REAP). Co-director with G. Noble (University of Aberdeen), 2004-present
- Co-editing book with Howard Williams (University of Chester) and Joanne Kirton (University
 of Chester) Memories in the Making: The Materialities, Biographies and Landscapes of
 Early Medieval Stone Monuments (under consideration by Oxford University Press).

GRAY JONES

- Co-founder of the 'Mesolithic Studies Group' with B. Taylor (University of Chester), Nick Overton (University of Manchester) and Jim Leary (University of Manchester)
- Flixton School House Farm. Co-director with B. Taylor (University of Chester) 2008-present
- Farthing Down Landscape Project. Co-director with B. Taylor (University of Chester), 2004-2006

MALDONADO

- Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot (SERF) research project, University of Glasgow: Research Assistant Feb 2012-Feb 2013, currently Honorary Researcher
- Creating Material Worlds: Theorising Identity in Archaeology (co-founder, international research group, August 2011-current, leading to co-authored book)
- Glasgow Iona Research Group, founding member, April 2012-current, AHRC research grant bid submitted Aug. 2013, proposed to begin July 2014
- Mantle Walls Project: The Archaeology of Ancrum: Project Manager, Oct 2011-current
- Foillsich: Revealing the Gaelic Heritage of Glasgow University: Museum Collections Researcher, July 2013-July 2014

TAYLOR

- Co-founder of the 'Mesolithic Studies Group' with A. Gray Jones (University of Chester),
 Nick Overton (University of Manchester) and Jim Leary (University of Manchester)
- Star Carr research project. Co-director with N. Milner (University of York) and C. Conneller (University of Manchester), 2004-present
- Flixton School House Farm. Co-director with A. Gray Jones (University of Chester) 2008present
- Farthing Down Landscape Project. Co-director with A. Gray Jones (University of Chester), 2004-2006

WILLIAMS

- Skamby, Östergötland. Co-directed excavations with M. Rundkvist, 2005 and subsequent research outputs in 2008 and 2010.
- Project Eliseg. Co-directed with N. Edwards (Bangor University), D. M. Evans (University of Chester) and G. Robinson (Bangor University), 2010-present



- Project Geordie. Co-direct fieldwork with A. Davenport (University of Winchester) and S. Evans (Llangollen Museum), 2012-present
- Speaking with the Dead. CI on Leverhulme Trust funded research project. PI: Philip Schwyzer, University of Exeter. £208,000, 2011-2014
- The Past in its Place. CI on European Research Council funded research project. PI: Philip Schwyzer and CI: Nicola Whyte, University of Exeter. € 1,200,000, 2012-2016

Examination of Doctorates

WILLIAMS: Bangor PhD (March 2012), Manchester PhD, (February 2012), Reading PhD (December 2011), Southampton PhD (August 2011), Helsinki PhD (September 2010), Aarhus PhD (May 2010), Cambridge PhD (June 2008).

Organisation of Conferences

GONDEK: (with Joanne Kirton, University of Chester), *Runes, Monuments and Memorial Carvings International Research Network*, April 2013.

WILLIAMS: (with D. Breeze) The Impact of Rome on the Countryside (Chester 2013), (with S. Oosthuizen) Death and Memory in the Historic Landscape (Cambridge 2012)

Refereeing Academic Publications/Research Proposals

GONDEK: Referee for *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, *Archaeological Journal*;

MALDONADO: Referee for *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, Scottish Archaeological Journal and Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal;

WILLIAMS: Research Grants: Estonian Research Council, National Research Council Canada, The Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities Research Council, Icelandic Research Fund.

Refereeing for the Journal and Publishers: Annual Review for Anthropology, Antiquity, Anthropology Quarterly, Archaeological Dialogues, Cambridge Archaeological Journal, Church Archaeology, Florilegium: Journal of the Canadian Society of Medievalists, Journal of Anthropological Archaeology, Journal of Archaeological Science, Journal of Social Archaeology, Journal of Wetland Archaeology, Landscapes, Medieval Archaeology, Oxford University Press, World Archaeology.

Scholarly Awards/Fellowships

GONDEK: British Academy, Small Research Award, 2009 (£2,000)

TAYLOR: English Heritage 2009, £27,000 (with C. Conneller and N. Milner)

WILLIAMS: European Research Council 2012-2016 , € 1,200,000 (with P. Schwyzer and N.

Whyte); Leverhulme Trust 2011-14, £208,000 (with P. Schwyzer)

Invited Keynotes/Lectures

AINSWORTH: Centre for North West Regional Studies Annual Archaeology Forum (Lancaster 2013), EMASS (Chester 2013), Managing the Industrial Heritage (Oxford 2013), The archaeology of the North Pennines: prehistory to present (Hexham Sep 2013).

GONDEK: Converting Landscapes conference (Bangor 2013), Scotland and Beyond Conference (Edinburgh, 2011) Mapping Death conference (UCD, Dublin, 2009)

GRAY JONES: Ancient Death Ways II Workshop (Uppsala (Sweden) 2013)

MALDONADO: Frontiers of the European Iron Age conference (Cambridge 2013), Seventh Century colloquium (Edinburgh 2013), Converting Landscapes conference (Bangor 2013), 63rd Internationales Sachsensymposion conference (Durham 2012), Making Christian Landscapes conference (Cork 2012).

WILLIAMS: Runes Network conference (Chester 2013), Converting the Landscape conference (Bangor 2013), Dialogues with the Past conference (Aarhus 2012), Forum för kulturavsforskning workshop (Stockholm 2012), Jelling Project conference (Jelling, 2010), Valsgärde's Boat-graves conference (Uppsala, May 2009).