

# Medieval Archaeology

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY



## Brooches of the European Migration Period

a British Academy funded research project

The 5th to 7th centuries AD saw the collapse of the Western Roman Empire and the origins of many of the European nations we know today. During this period, identities and power structures were renegotiated on a spectacular scale, as central and northern Europe ceased to be the obscure fringe of a Mediterranean Empire and became host to a number of small kingdoms that were power centres in their own right, both within and beyond the bounds of the formerly Roman world. Simultaneously, particular women, from an area that stretched from the North Sea and the Baltic all the way to the Black Sea, began to dress with large brooches, which were often elaborately decorated. In most regions,

this phenomenon lasted little more than a few generations, but because many of these women were buried wearing this jewellery, thousands of brooches survive, making it one of the richest datasets available for this period.

The brooches have been studied for more than a century, and their typologies and chronologies are relatively well understood. The path is now open to study these objects on an international scale as a single phenomenon, something that has not yet been comprehensively attempted. A new three-year postdoctoral project at the University of Oxford, funded by the British Academy, sets out to do just this. The project is examining who wore the brooches, why the brooches became so popular,

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In addition to notices of new research, this issue includes an update on the Assemblies Project, which promises to provide deep insight to an aspect of early medieval society that has been the preserve of documentary scholars. We are happy to include notice of a selection of summer fieldwork projects, all of which engage in the wider community and reveal the fascination with our medieval past; an interest reflected on screen too, as Mark Hall reviews *Game of Thrones*.

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#### Left:

A massive sixth-century gilded copper-alloy cruciform brooch from Rothley Temple, Leicester (length 153mm). Photograph by T F Martin, reproduced with permission from the Society of Antiquaries of London (accession number LDSAL 99).

**Science and Technology of Archaeological Research** is a new journal being published by Maney publishers that may interest members. It will present information across a range of subject areas but its focus is to make those rather hard-science issues accessible to a wider readership. The journal is also entirely open access, which means that it will be available free as an online resource. The first papers are scheduled to be published in summer 2014. See [www.maneyonline.com/loi/sta](http://www.maneyonline.com/loi/sta).

how they were used to demonstrate power at a local level, and whether the brooches demonstrate the rise of a trans-European elite community on an unprecedented scale. The key question therefore is what these brooches, both humble and ornate, can tell us about the elite networks that grew up in the wake of the Western Empire, and how dress, particularly that of women, was a fundamental component of this development.

The project is currently underway at the Institute of Archaeology, Oxford (running from 2013-2016). It builds on the strong chronological and typological foundations that have been constructed over the past century. Some chronological synchronisation will be a necessary part of the endeavour. However, rather than producing substantial new work in the well-trod area of typology and chronology, this project takes advantage of more recent work on the contextual meanings of such material culture and its active role in the construction of

networks and identity. Given the large geographical scale of the project it will be based mostly on published data, necessary to rapidly construct the sizeable database that is required for such an undertaking. Work will commence with a series of small pilot studies in western Norway, eastern England, the Rhineland, and the Pannonian Basin, focusing for the time being on a specific set of bow brooch types. Research objectives are not only concerned with a comparative study of regional brooch styles and iconographies, but also contextual information regarding specific manners of dressing and burial as well as more object-biographical micro-studies of particular objects, their manufacture, wear and repair.

**Toby Martin**

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## The Population & Cemetery Simulator

New doctoral research at the Institute of Archaeology, Oxford, highlights a useful software development

The Population & Cemetery Simulator (Duering, 2013) is an agent-based software modelling tool (Kahn and Noble, 2010) and is a part of Andreas Duering's D.Phil. research at the Institute of Archaeology in Oxford. It helps archaeologists and osteologists to simulate cemetery populations and project various possible dynamic living populations based on palaeodemographic data. Two interfaces help users either to enter data to run most of the relevant simulations, or change the parameters and principles in the background with a few easy clicks. The model can be easily shared and downloaded over the web. For example, you can estimate if a burial ground belonged to a growing, stable or a declining population.

For the standard model you need a mortality profile, the composition of the starter generation and some parameters for the reproduction of the population. If you do not know all of these, you can try out various scenarios with ease. When you run the model you can watch graphs and monitors of the size and composition of the living population each year of your simulation in parallel with the steadily accumulating burials in the cemetery. This helps you to recreate your excavated cemetery.

You can also monitor the mean or average ages, mean number of children, family sizes and the frequency of

artefacts and diseases for every virtual individual, age group and for each sex. If you download the netLogo-based model onto your computer you can run more complex experiments and create tables and spreadsheets of your results, e.g. thousands of repetitions with yearly monitored parameters.

The beta of the model is freely available on the webpage of the modelling4all project together with a brief introductory handbook (available at: <http://resources.modelling4all.org/projects/population-cemetery-simulator-beta-1-0>). Members of the Society are encouraged to try out the programme on their own cemetery sites and to test their own research questions. Any comments and suggestions would be welcome. Please email me if you are interested in an introductory course.

**Andreas Duering**

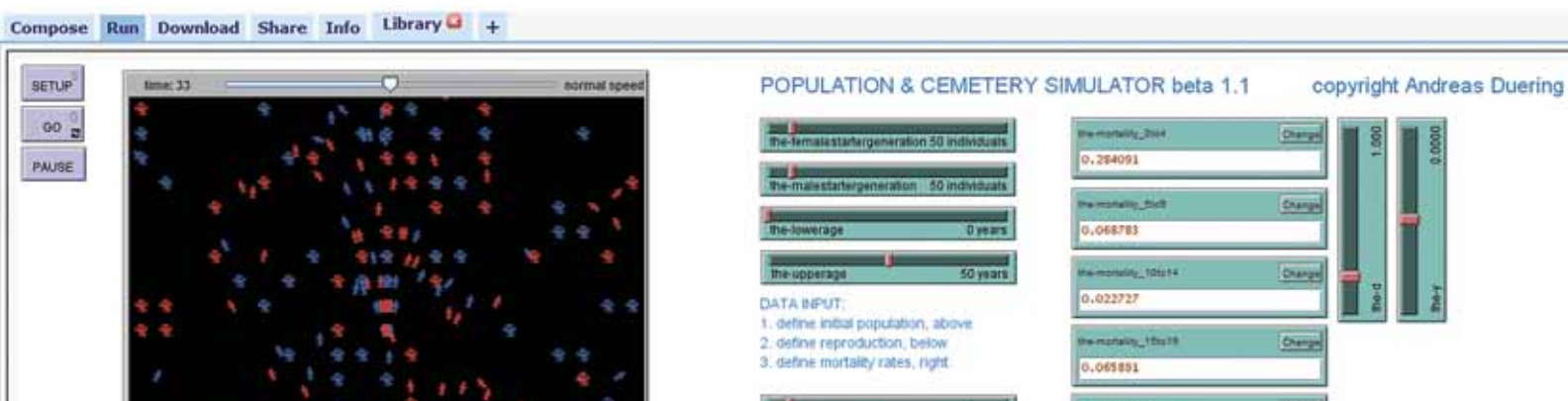
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### References

Duering, A 2013, 'The Population & Cemetery Simulator' [Online]. Available: <http://resources.modelling4all.org/projects/population-cemetery-simulator-beta-1-0> [Accessed 17/09/2013].

Kahn, K and Noble, H 2010, 'The BehaviourComposer 2.0: a web-based tool for composing NetLogo code fragments'. Proceedings of Constructionism 2010, Paris. Available: <https://docs.google.com>.

*Detail from the standard interface of the Population & Cemetery Simulator beta. Here you can enter your population-specific data and run the agent-based model.*







*Tingaholm, Tingwall, Shetland: the meeting place of the local assembly.*

# Searching for Things in Northern Europe: The Assembly Project

Assembly as a tradition of early government is known across North Europe in the first millennium AD and the sites of these gatherings – royal, popular or legal – can sometimes be identified through place-names and documentary evidence, and occasionally because of their active survival e.g. Tynwald Hill, IoM. Assemblies varied in purpose. Some facilitated powerful royal theatre, some enabled dialogue between different tiers of authority, some were held regularly and others were one-off events, but all were intrinsic to peace-keeping, regulation and maintenance of the laws. While royal and ecclesiastical councils often took place in palaces and churches, legal and popular assemblies at regional and local levels, were usually held outdoors at specially selected locations.

Our project, funded by the Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA, 2010-13), has taken early medieval assembly (AD 400-1500) in the North Sea zone as its theme. Collaborative research and fieldwork have resulted in a critical understanding of the emergence, development and role of the assembly in early medieval societies. Our geographic scope has allowed us to break down the national boundaries and undertake comparative work across England, Scotland and the Northern Isles, Iceland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden, using a strict methodological framework and a common GIS. Field investigation has been an essential part of our methodology with new investigations conducted at seven locations across four countries.

We have identified strong connections between early assembly sites and cultic and collective activities in Norway, Sweden and England; for example at Tjølling, Vestfold, Norway, a geophysical survey revealed an extensive area of 700 cooking-pits at Lunde, less than 1 km from Tjølling church and the known site of the Viking-age Thing. Our excavations have provided a calibrated date range for these hearths of 200/300 BC – AD 600 attesting to the repeated use of this site for centuries for large-scale gatherings involving communal cooking. Reassessment of the so-called courtyard sites in Norway has also suggested that these may represent early assembly sites, serving a distribution of districts that endured, surviving in the Medieval administrative arrangements.

We have also examined how systems of governance developed in Norway, Denmark and Sweden, and were later migrated into new areas such as Iceland, Shetland, Faeroes and North Eastern England. We have found this process to be remarkably consistent, but the systems were not imposed without alteration.

They could be adapted, for example in the Danelaw, to new topographies and existing systems. Different terrains presented different needs. In some cases, in Iceland and Greenland the use of harbours as places of assembly or the location of assembly sites close to harbours suggests the imposition of assemblies was driven by a need for close involvement in the regulation of trade.

More rigorous systems of administration and justice begin to show more clearly in the material and landscape record around the 9th and 10th centuries. In Norway the assembly emerged as a powerful agent in fringe areas, facilitating royal access but at the same time regulating the reach of royal power. An increased investment in ritualised action and material rhetoric can be identified at this time as kings or chiefs gained more power within the assembly and made greater use of it as a means of negotiating control over land, resource and people. The use of ancient monuments or topographically distinct locations in Sweden, England, Scotland and Ireland, suggests the authors of these emerging visions of power re-appropriated the ancient to create a sense of legitimacy. Such traditions can be found much later in time as well: the revival of places of assembly by political and ideological movements in the early modern and modern eras often involved the recreation of the ‘ancient’. Foremost among these is the Thingstätte phenomenon created by the Third Reich between c. 1936-8, aimed at re-connecting the German population with their ancient cultic past.

These findings have implications for how we envisage the processes of state-formation in Europe. Negotiation and the dynamic between kings and subjects can be argued as stimulating forces. Rather than a static place of decision making, assemblies were powerful locations and events, intrinsic to the shaping of individual and collective power and identity, and central to the facilitation of authority and power over territories and resources. In this way the early medieval assembly had a powerful agency and role in the creation of Medieval Europe. Our findings, excavation reports and publications are accessible at: [www.khm.uio.no/english/research/projects/assembly-project/index.html](http://www.khm.uio.no/english/research/projects/assembly-project/index.html).

*Prepared on behalf of The Assembly Project (Project Lead Dr Frode Iversen with Drs Natascha Mehler, Alexandra Sanmark and Sarah Semple).*

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## Website

[www.medievalarchaeology.org](http://www.medievalarchaeology.org)  
The website continues to improve.  
Send us your comments:  
[medieval.archaeology@googlemail.com](mailto:medieval.archaeology@googlemail.com).

## Apply for a Grant

The Society is in the happy position of being able to offer grants for research and for travel. For information on how to apply for a Society grant/award, see our website [www.medievalarchaeology.org](http://www.medievalarchaeology.org).

## Current Officers

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## 2014 titles from the Monograph series

A number of volumes are nearing completion and should be published before the end of the year, but Rosemary Cramp deserves great praise for bringing *Hirsel* to completion before even Spring has passed.

*Hirsel*, Monograph 36, see page 10 for more detail.

## Society Links

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# Society News

## From Viking Camps to Saxon Assemblies

is the theme for the Society's 2014 Conference, which takes place at Rewley House, Oxford, 5-7 December.

This weekend conference considers medieval sites that were used for brief or recurrent episodes. These types of site are often overlooked in discussions of medieval settlement, yet were critical not only in the economic exploitation of the landscape, but also in governance, trade and military conquest. Recent projects have shed new light on our understanding of previously poorly understood, yet important sites such as assembly places, markets, fairs and military camps, sites associated with transhumance, and temporary refuges.

Speakers will address some of the issues that face archaeologists around recognizing and dating such occupation, the nature of short-lived buildings and other structures, and what temporary sites tell us about economic developments, changes in land use and the environment, military strategy etc. The programme will present a range of different types of temporary and seasonal settlements drawn from seven countries and diverse environments, stretching from Ireland to the Auvergne.

## The Society's Student Colloquium 2014

takes place at Queen's University Belfast, 13-15 November.

The preparation for this year's Student Colloquium is well under way. Following on from the success of Aberdeen, our Student Members will meet once again, at Queen's University Belfast. The Colloquium is a two-day conference with keynote speakers, located in QUB's Lanyon Building, followed by a one-day field trip around the medieval sites of south County Down.

Papers from across the medieval period (5th-16th centuries AD) from all geographical areas are welcomed. To reflect the location of the Colloquium in Ireland, we are particularly interested in medieval archaeology from across

Europe and the peripheral islands. Papers and posters from subjects other than archaeology but which have a broader medieval significance will also be considered.

While our speakers will be students and early career archaeologists, we would like to invite all medievalists to attend the Colloquium.

Keep checking our website over the next coming weeks for the Call for Papers!

If you have any questions during the interim please contact Sarah Kerr, the Student Representative at [medieval.archaeology@googlemail.co.uk](mailto:medieval.archaeology@googlemail.co.uk).



Monks Trod, photograph by Bob Silvester.

# The Society for Medieval Archaeology 2014 Conference

## From Viking Camps to Saxon Assemblies: Temporary and Seasonal Sites and Settlement in Medieval Europe

### 5-7 December, Rewley House, Oxford



#### Friday

18:15 Registration

19:00 Dinner

20:15 Welcome

*Helena Hamerow, Society President*

20:30 SMA Annual Lecture

The Viking winter camp of 872-3 at Torksey,  
Lincolnshire: new archaeological discoveries

*Dawn Hadley and Julian Richards*

#### Saturday

8:15 Residents' Breakfast

9:15 A riverine site in North Yorkshire: a  
Viking camp?

*Ailsa Mainman*

10:15 The Assembly Project: meeting places in  
Northern Europe AD 400-1500

*Sarah Semple*

11:15 Coffee/Tea

11:45 Seasonality and continuity in the  
assembly places and practices of Gaelic elites  
in Medieval Ireland

*Elizabeth FitzPatrick*

12:45 Lunch

14:00 Beach markets, islands and  
promontories: coastal occupation and  
networked trade

*David Griffiths*

15:00 Coffee/Tea

15:30 Place-names and temporary settlements  
in the West Midlands

*John Baker*

16:30 Shielings and *Limes Norrlandicus*.  
Origin, function and cultural significance of  
Scandinavian shielings

*Eva Svensson*

17:30 Free time

19:00 Dinner

20:15 Seasonality and the *longue durée*: a  
French upland landscape at Cipieres (Alpes-  
Maritimes) in the Middle Ages

*David Austin*

#### Sunday

8:15 Residents' Breakfast

9:15 Transhumance in medieval Scotland

*Piers Dixon*

10:15 The seasonal pastoral settlement in the  
middle mountains of the Auvergne region  
(France)

*Frederic Surmely*

11:15 Coffee/Tea

11:30 Bayvil Fair, Wales: a seasonal market on  
the outland

*Rhiannon Comeau*

12:10 The 'Ricetti' of Piedmont, Italy

*Stefano Leardi*

12:50 Lunch, Conference closes.

Conference Fee £115 (SMA members), £125 (non-members). Fee does not include meals or accommodation, which can be arranged through Rewley House. To book a place, please contact Rewley House, Oxford, or go online to: [www.conted.ox.ac.uk/V400-456](http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/V400-456). The online code for the SMA fee rate is: SMA14. A limited number of bursaries are available to assist students to attend. Apply to the Society's Secretary, Professor Dawn Hadley, [d.m.hadley@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:d.m.hadley@sheffield.ac.uk).

Dingieshowie, photograph by David Griffiths.





# News & Views

Good Friday (April 18) 2014 marks the thousandth anniversary of the battle of Clontarf and the death of Brian Boru, king of Munster and high-king of Ireland, in 1014. Clontarf is probably the most famous of all Irish battles, the equivalent for Ireland of Hastings (1066) in England or Bannockburn (1314) in Scotland. At the time, the battle of Clontarf was regarded as an event of European significance and soon generated its own myths and legends both in Ireland and abroad. Its key figure, Brian Boru, became the archetypal hero and Ireland's greatest king, with the Vikings cast as the foreign oppressor.

The National Museum of Ireland is marking the Clontarf Millennium with a new exhibition, running in the Museum of Archaeology, Kildare St, Dublin from **April to December 2014**. The exhibition will be based around the Museum's unparalleled collection of archaeological material from Viking Dublin and elsewhere in Ireland, augmented by selected material borrowed from elsewhere.

While the exhibition will focus on Brian Boru and the battle of Clontarf, it will place the events in their wider context and will also take the opportunity to enhance appreciation and understanding of the Vikings and their contribution to economic and cultural life in Ireland. By placing the new exhibition alongside the Museum's existing Viking-Age Ireland gallery it is hoped that each exhibition will enrich the other.

A number of themes are being explored, including:

- the historic, political and economic background to the battle,
- what is known (and not known) about the battle and more generally about warfare and weaponry in 11th-century Ireland,
- the central role of Dublin in the events surrounding the battle,
- current popular perceptions (and misperceptions) about Clontarf,
- how the event was viewed by contemporary chroniclers and successive generations through to modern times and how such views influenced the popular imagination.

The exhibition forms part of a joint programme of events with Trinity College, Dublin, including a sister exhibition entitled "Emperor of the Irish: Brian Boru and the Battle of Clontarf, 1014", to run concurrently in the Long Room at the Old Library,



Trinity College, from **April to October 2014**. An international symposium on the Battle of Clontarf is also being held in Trinity College, and forms the focus of the 16th Medieval Dublin annual symposium, April 11-12.

**Andy Halpin**  
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The Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) received some good news in February. The IfA is the trading name for the Institute of Field Archaeologists, whose stated purpose is to promote high professional standards and strong ethics in archaeological practice, to maximise the benefits that archaeologists bring to society, and to bring recognition and respect to our profession. Having petitioned for a Royal Charter of Incorporation, the Queen has signed the Order of Grant, and soon the IfA will become the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). CEO, Peter Hinton, comments, 'If there remained any doubt that

archaeology is a profession, uncertainty ends here. ... Things will be different now. Our influence is massively strengthened. The award of a Royal Charter will not be the end of a process but the best possible opportunity to increase the effectiveness of our campaign to enhance the status of archaeology and archaeologists, to raise standards of archaeological practice and so to give yet better service to clients and the public.'

**Amanda Forster**  
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*Ballintober Castle, Co. Roscommon. Photograph by Martina Cleary.*

## The Castle Studies Trust Awards Four Grants to Advance the Understanding of Castles

The inaugural round of Castle Studies Trust (CST) grant-giving received an amazing response, with 28 projects from all over the UK and Ireland, asking for a total of £119,000. This was far more money than the £15,000 the CST had to give away and with a large number of high-calibre projects, that sum could have been more than doubled if the money was available.

The trustees supported by a team of expert assessors decided to fund the following four diverse, high-quality projects:

Architectural and topographical survey of the standing remains of **Ballintober Castle, Co. Roscommon** – the detailed study of this major site, led by Irish medieval archaeologist, Dr Niall Brady, will help put Irish castle studies on firmer footings, given the current lack of detailed studies on individual castles. It will also help in the future management and conservation plan for the site.

Reconstruction of **Holt Castle, Denbighshire** by 3-D modelling – will be managed by the high-quality team of Rick Turner and Chris Jones-Jenkins. The work has the potential to inform a number of debates about the development and function of castles in the Middle Ages, as well as helping the general public gain a much better understanding of this important ruined site.

Topological survey of **Wressle Castle, East Yorkshire**, gardens and landscape – will be led by experienced archaeologist Ed Dennison. It is part of a wider study of this important fourteenth-century site, helping to integrate the castle in its surroundings, which will in turn aid our understanding of the interaction between the building – and the resident viewers – and the garden/landscape that was viewed.

*Wressle Castle, East Yorkshire. Photograph by Ed Dennison.*



Geophysical Survey of **Tibbers Castle, Dumfriesshire** – will be led by Piers Dixon, one of the foremost experts in Scotland on high-status settlement. The project will attempt to understand the function of the two baileys of one of the biggest Scottish timber castles and, according to Professor Richard Oram, one of the important castle sites in Scotland.

Work on these projects will be carried out in the next few months, with the results being known by early 2015. Not only will the Trust be overseeing the work, it will also be preparing for the next round of grant-giving, applications for which open in September 2014.

As well as the projects that the Trust has supported in 2014, the number and quality of projects we could not support reveals the scale of the work to do. The challenge is even more difficult with the continued financial restraints on traditional funding bodies.

The Castle Studies Trust continues to need funds to achieve the larger goals. The Trust is entirely funded by donations from the general public, and any support you can give will be greatly appreciated and will help the Trust to continue to advance our understanding of castles.

You can donate by visiting: <https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/castlestudiestrust>.

If you would like to find out more information you can either contact the Chair of Trustees, Jeremy Cunnington, on [admin@castlestudiestrust.org](mailto:admin@castlestudiestrust.org) or visit our website at [www.castlestudiestrust.org](http://www.castlestudiestrust.org).

**Jeremy Cunnington**

[admin@castlestudiestrust.org](mailto:admin@castlestudiestrust.org)

*Holt Castle, Denbighshire, Wrexham Borough Council.*







## The Archaeology of Bidford-on-Avon

### a Society for Medieval Archaeology Research Grant

**B**idford-on-Avon in south-west Warwickshire is known for its substantial Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery, mostly excavated in the 1920s, and more recently for a Middle Anglo-Saxon 'productive site' found in fields to the east of the present village. These are high points in a sequence of activity from prehistoric evidence to Middle–Late Anglo-Saxon settlement features revealed by rescue excavations within the village between 1971 and 1994, by W. J. Ford, Sue Hirst and Archaeology Warwickshire. The goal of the two-year project is to publish the excavations and use them to enhance understanding of Bidford's place in social, economic and cultural development, locally, regionally and nationally.

In the Roman period, Bidford was probably never more than a minor nucleated settlement, just as in medieval and later times it barely attained urban status, but it derived importance from its location at a hub in the communications system of the lower Avon valley. Excavation of a Roman ford, ditches and quarries suggest a possible new line for where Ryknild Street crossed the river. In the 2nd century AD a nearby mortuary enclosure may have been a roadside feature, while settlement evidence of 2nd- to 4th-century buildings comes from a site in the modern village to the east. Some time in the 5th century an Anglo-Saxon cemetery developed on the west side.

The cemetery, which continued in use into the 7th century, is by far the largest of a line of Anglo-Saxon burial grounds along the Avon valley that at the time seems to have constituted a major cultural boundary. Bidford is therefore of significance to current debates about relationships between

*Close-up of grave 26 from 1990, showing the burial of a mature adult female, datable to phase AS-FB (cal AD 510/545 – cal AD 555/585 @ 95% probability) in the new chronological framework for Early Anglo-Saxon graves and grave goods.*

*Visible are her stamped and bossed accessory pot, a great square-headed brooch (fastening a cloak), a pair of saucer brooches on the shoulders (fastening a peplos with tablet-woven edge) and some of the blue glass and amber beads strung in two rows between. She also wore an underdress with sleeve clasps, silver finger rings and carried a knife and a bag on an ivory ring. Photograph by Archaeology Warwickshire.*

post-Roman Britons and immigrant English in the territory of the nascent kingdom of Mercia and beyond. By setting the 37 burials excavated in the recent campaigns into the context of the estimated c. 370 inhumation and cremation burials uncovered in the 1920s, the opportunity arises to assess for the first time the cemetery's overall character and development. The task is not straightforward nor can it be comprehensive for conditions of survival have not been kind, and the 1920s' methods of excavation, recording and publication leave uncertainties. However, crucial unpublished data, most especially the complete cemetery plan and a compendium of individual grave records, remain at The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon, which allow some of the holes to be plugged. The Society's research grant has facilitated consultation of the archive and the primary records of the rescue excavations held by Archaeology Warwickshire. It has also funded specialist reports on the costume and textiles from the burials found in 1990 (Penelope Walton Rogers, The Anglo-Saxon Laboratory, York) and on the pottery stamps from the whole cemetery (Diana Briscoe, Archive of Anglo-Saxon Pottery Stamps, London), with promising results for the final analysis. Bidford is a key unpublished site for the West Midlands and will be ready to be submitted for full publication in a local journal, accompanied by a synthetic article in a national journal, in 2015.

**Tania M. Dickinson and Sue Hirst**  
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# Grants & Awards

## Recording Masons' Marks in Pontigny Abbey Church

Pontigny Abbey church, in the Yonne region of Burgundy, has a large number of masons' marks on its visible surfaces, made as part of the construction process and allowed work to be associated with the individual who did it. They were made free-hand at the bench by the skilled stone masons who shaped the stone for the building masons to use in the construction. Rather than attempt to trace individual masons by connecting marks found in different buildings, a method favoured by the antiquarians who first noticed the marks, but fraught with difficulties since coincidences are common, our work has been concerned with the distribution patterns of marks within single buildings, or phases of them. We record each mark and its precise location, to create a database of all occurrences, plot the distribution of marks within the building, and comment on the progress of its construction.

The Cistercian church of Pontigny Abbey was chosen for study because it is a complete building and little has been written about the detailed construction of such sites. It is challenging to record, as it conforms to the order's rules of simplicity and plainness, and lacks mural passages or other access to its upper walling. There are no active conservation works in progress and the building is used for services and parish events, so there was no possibility of having scaffolding in the building. Creative solutions are required to record the masons' marks.

For the last three seasons work has occurred at night, using portable lamps to provide the raking light needed to

reveal the marks and enable them to be photographed. Work concentrated on the piers of the nave and transepts, and on the lower levels of the building, and a considerable number of marks were recorded.

For the first time this season, 2013-14, we added a powerful scope and matching zoom lens to see and record the marks on the high vault ribs, which are invisible to the naked eye since they are at a height of over 20m. Processing the results will follow, but it is already clear that there are close connections between the high vaults and the side aisles of the church, which has important implications for the debate about their relative dates. Not all the high-vault ribs were marked, and there are considerably more marks in the vault bay third to the west of the crossing than elsewhere, which may tell us about variations in the organisation of the cutting masons' teams.

The diagonal moulded ribs consist of a flat soffit flanked by angle rolls with a simple rebate, whereas the transverse arches are square-cut. The marks on the transverse arches are invariably on the sides of the block, while those on the diagonal ribs are usually on the rebate close to the angle roll. The sections of rib without visible marks may be those that have been marked on a part of the rebate covered by the vault web which overlaps them. In one case the mason has placed his mark on the soffit of the huge four-rib crossing of the vault with its very plain boss, and he may have needed special permission to display his mark more prominently. In several cases there are two marks on each section and further work is needed to determine whether one of these marks is an assembly mark, or possibly an orientation mark.

The current season's work has added to our record of the masons' marks on the early Gothic parts of the church and to our knowledge about the working methods of medieval stone masons. The work will inform the study of Pontigny's abbey church in the 900th anniversary of its foundation.

The research team is led by Prof. Terryl Kinder from Pontigny, and Dr Jennifer Alexander of Warwick University, with four ex-students from Warwick and Oxford Brookes Universities; Rosie Harris Adamson, Roo Alexander-Jones, Lucy Henderson and Agatha Golmolka. The work was supported by *Les Amis de Pontigny* and the Society for Medieval Archaeology.

**Jennifer Alexander FSA**

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High vault boss with mason's mark, Pontigny Abbey church nave.  
Photograph by Roo Alexander-Jones.



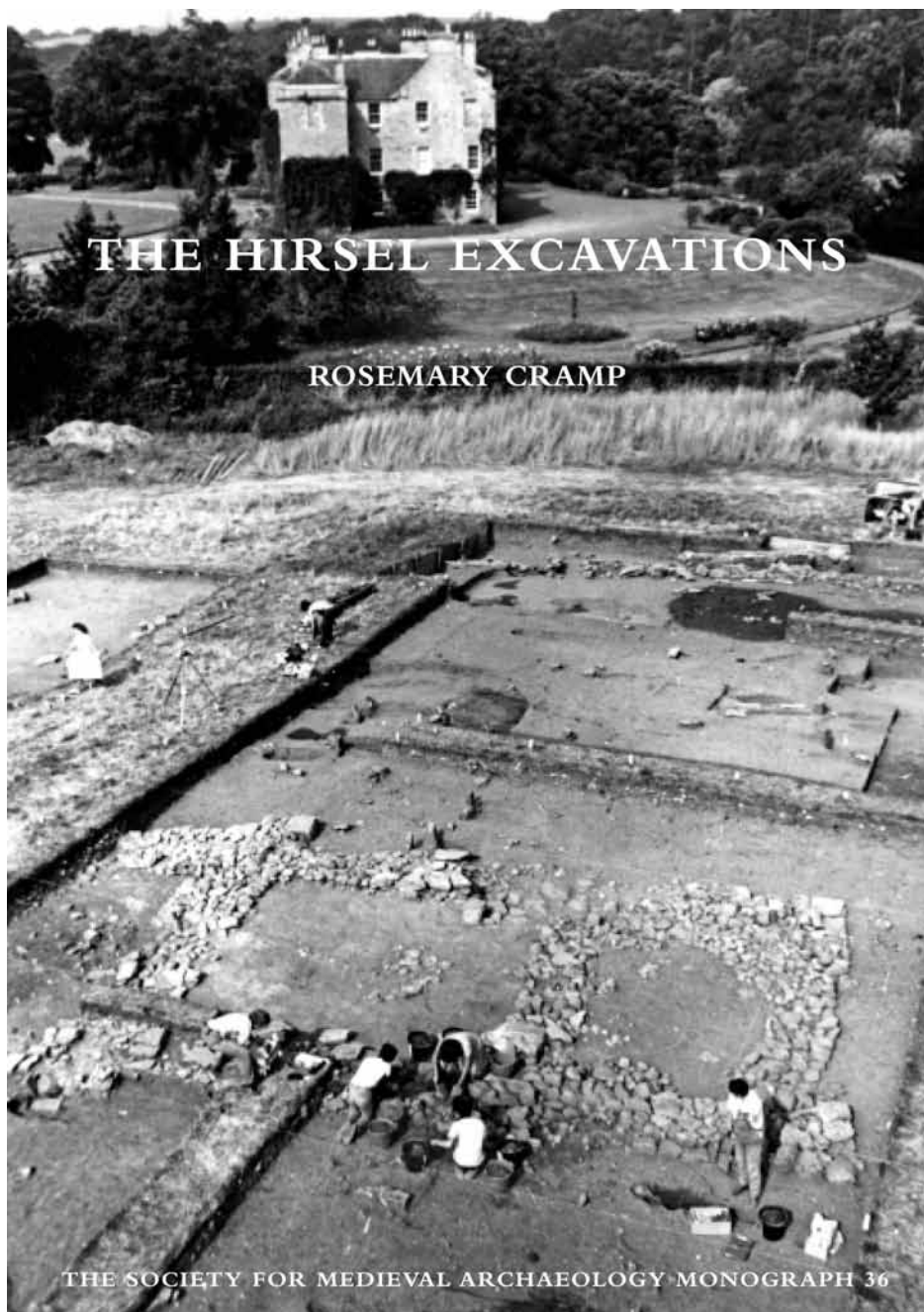
# New Titles

## The Society for Medieval Archaeology, Monograph 36

Monograph 36, *The Hirsell Excavations*, by Rosemary Cramp, details the results of an archaeological project near the Hirsell House, Coldstream, Scotland, where grave stones had been revealed by ploughing in 1977. The site has revealed a long occupation beginning in the Neolithic period. The history and topography of the Estate is first considered, but the main focus of the excavation was on a church which developed from around the 10th to the 14th century with an associated cemetery which seems to have existed until the 16th century with sporadic interments into the 17th century.

This is the most complete excavation of a proprietary church in Scotland, which developed from a single-cell drystone building into a substantial church of cut and mortared stone. It was granted to the nearby Priory of Coldstream in 1165, only to be put out of ecclesiastical use, ruined, turned to lay use and finally burnt before being firmly sealed over with rubble by the 16th century. Its location was forgotten by the 17th century. This is then a remarkably detailed story of a church at a period when the parochial structure in Scotland was being developed and very little is known about the relationship of estate churches and the monasteries to which they were donated.

Prehistoric pottery and flints, as well as Roman pottery and glass were recovered from the excavation; the medieval finds are particularly rich for this type of site. They include an important collection of ironwork, unusual stone tools, and a large amount of pottery dating from the 10th to 16th centuries, as well as a considerable collection of architectural and funerary stone work.



The cemetery is one of the largest medieval rural cemeteries in Scotland, and provides evidence for an interesting range of burial modes and grave markings, as well as the palaeopathology of the skeletons. The

life of the people who lived on the estate has been further illuminated by the environmental discussion in the botanical and faunal reports.

**Price £30. Order from Oxbow Books, or email [orders@oxbowbooks.com](mailto:orders@oxbowbooks.com).**



## Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, XI



We're delighted to announce the publication of the latest volume in the Corpus series. Volume XI, *Early Cornish Sculpture* (2013), surveys the county of Cornwall and provides an analytical catalogue of its early carvings, highlighting the particular distinctiveness of Cornish sculpture compared to other regions. There is an astonishing diversity and scale of the Cornish monuments – and numerous new insights and new sculptural finds. The survey has been completed and brought to press by Ann Preston-Jones, English Heritage and Historic Environment Projects, Cornwall Council, and Elisabeth Okasha, Head of the Language Centre for English as a Foreign Language, University College Cork, with contributions on the history by Oliver Padel, geology by Roger Bristow, and later monuments by Andrew Langdon. The volume has been edited and produced to the usual high standard of the Corpus project by Derek Craig of Durham University.

This is the first comprehensive publication of the early carved stone monuments of Cornwall in over a century, since A.G. Langdon published his seminal *Old Cornish Crosses*. New discoveries and interpretations are presented, along with a comprehensive photographic record. Langdon illustrated his text with drawings, but here each sculpture is illustrated by new black-and-white photographs, with a rich selection of colour plates that show key sculptures in their setting, as well as a selection of antiquarian illustrations.

Introductory chapters consider the material within its geological, topographical, historical and archaeological context, assessing it in relation to the development of Cornwall, from an independent western kingdom to becoming part of the Anglo-Saxon realm. The discussion touches on the continuing tradition of carved monumental crosses in Cornwall after the Norman Conquest, with a list of all the medieval sculptures in Cornwall included.

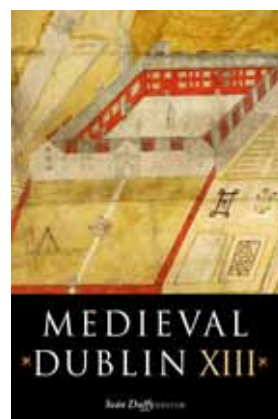
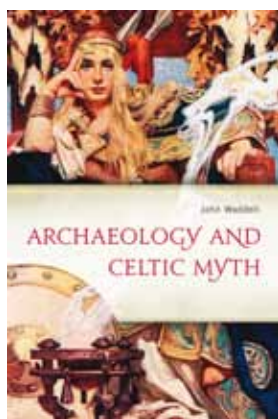
The early carved monuments in Cornwall include substantial free-standing crosses, altar stones, and some recumbent coped stones, as well as newly discovered enigmatic monuments such as the figural cross-base from Gulval. The relationship of the sculpture to monuments in Wales, Ireland and Western Britain is of particular interest given Cornwall's position as a peninsula jutting into the western seaways. In this context, the potential role of Scandinavian influence is also considered.

Volume XII of the Corpus project will be edited by Paul Everson and David Stocker, on Nottinghamshire. The project is generously funded by The Headley Trust, The Pilgrim Trust and the British Academy. See [www.ascorpus.ac.uk](http://www.ascorpus.ac.uk).

**Sarah Semple** (on behalf of Dr Derek Craig and Prof. Dame Rosemary Cramp)  
[s.j.semple@durham.ac.uk](mailto:s.j.semple@durham.ac.uk)



## Titles from Four Courts Press



As one of Ireland's more prolific publishing houses, Four Courts Press continues to produce a worthy collection of medieval studies, many of which are relevant to archaeologists. John Waddell, Emeritus Professor of Archaeology at the National University of Ireland, Galway, provides an accessible volume that takes further his longterm interest in the transition between prehistory and the earliest historic period in *Archaeology and Celtic Myth*. Students of the early medieval period proper will be enormously grateful to historian Edel Bhreathnach's *Ireland in the medieval world, AD 400-1000*, where she attempts a new synthesis that blends a deep understanding of genealogy with perceptive empathy for archaeology and social history. The third current offering from the Press is the latest publication of the Medieval Dublin symposium, *Medieval Dublin, XIII*, edited by Trinity College historian Seán Duffy and including useful archaeological work arising from largely development-led projects in the city and its surrounding region. For further information, see [www.fourcourtspress.ie](http://www.fourcourtspress.ie).

## Fieldwork Projects this Summer



Dr Rory Sherlock runs the **Galway Archaeological Fieldschool**, which is a new endeavour supported by the National University of Ireland, Galway, specialising in the archaeology and architecture of medieval Ireland. The fieldschool is running courses in 2014 based at **Isert Kelly Castle**, seat of the MacHubert Burke family in the late medieval period, 2 June-25 July. See [www.galwayarchaeologicalfieldschool.com](http://www.galwayarchaeologicalfieldschool.com).



The **Thornton Abbey Field School**, Lincolnshire, has been running since 2011, where the University of Sheffield is embarked on an extensive research programme focussed on the abbey precinct. Comprehensive topographical and geophysical survey of the monastic enclosure, combines with targeted excavation of the identified medieval and post-Dissolution features, to gain a better understanding of the site's long history. The 2014 season will concentrate on the possible location of the medieval hospital of St James, situated on an artificial mound at the east end of the precinct. To participate in June or July, contact the excavation director Dr Hugh Willmott, [h.willmottheffield.ac.uk](http://h.willmottheffield.ac.uk). See [www.sheffield.ac.uk/archaeology/fieldwork/thornton](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/archaeology/fieldwork/thornton).



Dr Duncan Sayers will direct again the **Oakington Project, Life on the Edge** in Cambridgeshire. The multidisciplinary research effort focuses on the Early, Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon Periods in the fenlands. It looks at the relationships of Oakington's early inhabitants with their environment, each other, death and their dead. It is a public archaeology project and community involvement includes research questions focused around the engaging of local people in research activity. For 2014, work in June and July will continue at the site's cemetery and on domestic dwellings and ditches at the site. See [www.ifrglobal.org/programs/eu/u-k-oakington](http://www.ifrglobal.org/programs/eu/u-k-oakington).



# Media & Exhibition

## Speculum fantasia II: soap opera medievalism in *A Game of Thrones*

Take a generous helping of *Lord of the Rings*, sand-off most of its High Romance and Faerie Glamour, add copious amounts of sex, plus a little more sex, several pints of blood and sprinkle with Elric of Melniboné, the Dragonriders of Pern, the Horsecloans, the Dune Trilogy, Earthsea, Amber and Majipoor's extended season and you pretty much have *Game of Thrones*. It is being written by George R Martin as a seven-volume sequence, *A Song of Fire and Ice*, in which the first five books have been written (the fifth in two parts) and the final two have yet to appear. It is being filmed by HBO cable TV network in the United States, under the title of the first book, *A Game of Thrones*, at the rate of a series or season of 10 episodes per book, with season 4 to be broadcast in the US in 2014. It has proven hugely popular in both formats,

attracting several million readers and viewers (though in Finland, for example, re-runs of the UK TV drama *Heartbeat* attract audience figures four times the size of those for *Game of Thrones*). The pleasure of the text still waits me (having read every fantasy trilogy going in my teenage years I am not sure if there is room for more) and this review deals with the TV adaptation only, specifically the UK DVD releases of seasons 1 – 3 (with a projected 5 or 6 seasons to go to film the rest). Its impact in audience interest is huge and beyond that has seen various impacts including board games, a range of beers, *The Simpsons* satirical version, a plethora of fan websites and online analysis (e.g. Mondschein 2013 for an endorsement of the economics of Westeros, the kingdom at the heart of the stories) and an international touring exhibition





The Game of Thrones images are web-sourced.

(that in 2013 visited Toronto, New York, San Paolo, Amsterdam and Belfast). Its interest, if your fancy does not run to sex-laden sword-wielding anti-heroics (with a facility to reverse genre stereotypes, including having one of its key heroic characters a clever dwarf who is not a warrior, and not a dwarf in the fantasy sense) is two-fold:

1. Its playful hijacking of previous fantasy medievalisms and
2. Its playful hijacking of medieval European history (including its material culture – from weapons to mazers to the Bayeux Tapestry) .

The author, George R Martin, has acknowledged the influence of both in his specific recognition of Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* and of the Wars of the Roses. The Wars of the Roses has long been a staple of historical fiction in English, most notably at the hand of Shakespeare but in recent years many writers from Jean Plaidy to Alison Weir and to Philippa Gregory have successfully ploughed the furrow of this extended episode of English history with equally extended series' of novels. Their ranks have most recently been added to by author Conn Iggulden (who has already given us extended trilogies, 4 and 5 books respectively, on Julius Caesar and Genghis Khan) with *Wars of the Roses: Stormbird*, the first in a projected trilogy. But in *Game of Thrones* it is also possible to detect many more fantasy influences and borrowings, as my opening sentence suggests. All the writers alluded to there (J R R Tolkien, Michael Moorcock, Ursula Le Guin, Robert Silverberg, Roger Zelazny, Frank Herbert and Robert Adams) imaginatively reworked the contemporary world through the filtering lens of the medieval past or a medieval past that suited the writer, creating a variety of past and present medieval worlds, many of which were related to our own earth (for the wider context see Eco 1986 and Frayling 1995). *Game of Thrones* brings into it the darkly-witty, slightly over-cooked, baroque character dynamics and profiles of soap opera aesthetics.

In its physical geography it is perhaps closest to Tolkien's Middle Earth, a 'European' land mass with icy wastes to the north and hotter lands to the south and east, making it less Middle-Earth by deploying the conceit of variable seasons that sometimes last for years (essentially borrowed from Robert Silverberg's Majipoor stories and Anne McCaffrey's Pern chronicles). This physical template of 'near-Europe' is accompanied by borrowings from episodes of European medieval history, not just the political manoeuvrings of the Wars of the Roses but the Mongol invasions – elided with a sense of earlier barbarian incursions requiring negotiations by a less than mighty empire (be it Rome or its Byzantine off-spring) - and a melange of material culture (weapons, costumes, buildings etc.) which sharpen character distinctions and plot lines and help to clarify geographical and cultural variety. With season three we

are given a Robin Hood-like band of outlaws, the Brotherhood without Banners.

To help bring the edge of reality to the imaginary, large parts were filmed on location in surviving late antique and medieval environments (notably castles and towns), including in Morocco (Quarzazate), Croatia (Dubrovnik and Diocletian's Palace, Split), Northern Ireland (including Slane's Castle and Castle Ward), Malta (Valetta and Mdina), Scotland (Doune Castle) and Iceland. Mixed with these are more dressable but non-medieval spaces such as the Harland and Wolff Paint Hall in the Belfast docks (used for the Throne Room and Red Keep, King's Landing) and Magheramorne Quarry, Co. Antrim (for Black Castle and The Wall). These spaces and places are the bedrock for the re-imagined fusion of medieval European epochs and cultures, places and peoples. The Kingdom of Westeros appears to have passed its zenith and be in decline – its northern frontier, the Wall, was erected by a great empire now fractured into (medieval) kingdoms/polities. The Wall, of course, is a clear echo of Hadrian's Wall as a lingering monument. When seen on a map it looks very like Hadrian's Wall in symbolic value. As a barrier against the other and the cold far north it reflects one of the antiquarian and medieval rhetorics about the Wall. It is emphasised by the element of horror introduced in the shape of the deadly White Walkers and their zombie army, from north of the wall; an imaginatively forceful mixed metaphor for the European depredations of both the Vikings and the Black Death.

One of the story's central places, on the periphery of Westeros, is Winterfell, a castle re-imagined as a small city, combining the ruins of both Slane's castle, Co. Antrim, and Doune castle, Scotland with CGI embellishments, to create a huge edifice. The cold, brutal north of grey stone and lingering paganism is a playful evocation of North British and Scandinavian dourness that strikes the right, dramatic contrast with the warmer southern climes of King's Landing. This, the capital and main urban centre of Westeros, which incorporates a Mediterranean feel through its warm light, fine armour, silks, tapestries etc., is a clear echo for example of Rome or Constantinople but also with a clear nod to the Minas Tirith of the *Lord of the Rings* films in its elegant towers and armour detailing.

The religious backdrop of *Game of Thrones* also mirrors medieval Europe. There is a prevalent belief in the state endorsed New Religion, the centre of which is King's Landing. This is contrasted with a residual pagan belief in the Old Gods, especially in the North. This is well articulated as rooted in sacred trees and springs, often with particular family or kin associations, more suitable for an early medieval setting rather than a late one of the Wars of the Roses and the Hundred Years War. This, like the absence of overt Christianity (but there is a monotheistic religion rooted in fire rituals and sacrifices, with



clear Zoroastrian tendencies), in part reflects those Late Antique and early medieval beliefs as part of its imaginative re-mix and in part reflects a contemporary desire to believe what one wishes spiritually (and perhaps to not offend Christianity?) without state or hierarchical control – a central tenet of New Age fantasy belief systems. Its exploration of religious systems is also fused with its echo of medieval culture clashes in the shape of the Dothraki, the nomadic horse lords of the east, generally on the move across the steppe landscape with an annual visit to tent city where the drawing of blood is forbidden. The Dothraki are clearly based on the Mongol hoard, married with that of the Plains Indians of North America, which add perhaps a touch of the strangeness of the other that so appealed to the medieval imagination.

*Game of Thrones* works primarily because it is a honed and polished piece of drama with clever plotlines and gritty characters and to a degree because we are presented with more, very frank, sexual shenanigans than we are used to seeing in a medieval setting (though in film terms, Pasolini for example has never been shy in presenting medieval sexuality with his adaptations of Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, and the *Tales from a Thousand and One Nights / Arabian Nights*, in his so-called *Trilogy of Life: Il Decameron* (It 1971); *I racconti di Canterbury* (It 1972) and *Il Fiore delle mille e una Notte* (It 1974)). In fact it is the graphic sexual content of *Game of Thrones* that is much more likely to offend some Christians than its absence of Christianity. The level and tone of sexual content has been characterised by one writer, Myles McNutt, as 'sexposition' (Hahn 2012), the exposition of lengthy chunks of plot background against the backdrop of sexually explicit sexual encounters. It is not the sole preserve of medieval fantasy (a wide range of programmes engage with it – just as movies were keen

on it in the 1970s to distinguish themselves from TV, so cable and satellite channels are now keen on the tactic to emphasise their distinction from terrestrial TV) but it does play into the stereotype of the bawdy middle ages. That said, the interplay of sexual desire and fulfilment with a non-linear narrative style that digresses for family feuds, incest and genealogy is consistent with many medieval epic romances.

Unrelentingly grim and pitiless in its depiction of human greed for power, with many characters unable to see beyond their own venality, it retains just enough beacons of human worth to keep you hoping and watching. It also reminds me why I have never been very fond of medieval kings or kingship.

**Mark Hall**

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*Winterfell, one of the central places, on the periphery of Westeros, is portrayed as a cold, brutal north of grey stone and lingering paganism, complete with sacred trees and sacred pools.*



To advertise conferences/events in the  
Newsletter contact:

**Dr Karen Milek**  
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We welcome submissions relating to  
current research projects in Ireland,  
the UK and on the continent, and ask  
that submissions do not exceed 800  
words, with conference reports to be  
within 500 words.

Please do not embed pictures in  
Word/text files but do send pictures/  
plans as separate high quality JPEG  
files. The preferred format for site  
plans/maps is EPS, with layers clearly  
indicated and unlocked, and any  
linked files attached.

Send to Newsletter Editor, e-mail:  
[niall@discoveryprogramme.ie](mailto:niall@discoveryprogramme.ie)

The due dates for receipt of copy are:  
**Spring Newsletter:** 15th February  
**Autumn Newsletter:** 15th August

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# Conferences & Events

## — FORTHCOMING —

### MAY:

**8-11 May**  
49th International Congress on Medieval  
Studies, Western Michigan University,  
Kalamazoo, MI, USA [www.wmich.edu/](http://www.wmich.edu/medieval/congress/)  
[medieval/congress/](http://medieval/congress/)

**9 May**  
'Northern Harvests: Hunting, Fishing and  
Long-term Economic Cycles in the Medieval  
North', speaker James Barrett, Medieval  
Archaeology Group, University of Cambridge  
[www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk/events/mag](http://www.mcdonald.cam.ac.uk/events/mag)

**19-21 May**  
EMASS annual meeting, to take place at Prior's  
Hall, Durham Cathedral. [www.emass.org.uk](http://www.emass.org.uk)

### June:

**16-18 June**  
2nd Annual Symposium on Medieval and  
Renaissance Studies, Saint Louis, Missouri.  
<http://smrs.slu.edu/>

### 19-21 June

Buildings in Society International (BISI)  
conference, Queen's University Belfast.  
[bisi@qub.ac.uk](mailto:bisi@qub.ac.uk)

### July:

**1-3 July**  
28th Irish Conference of Medievalists takes  
place at University College Dublin.  
[www.irishmedievalists.com/](http://www.irishmedievalists.com/)

**7-10 July**  
21st International Medieval Congress, at  
the University of Leeds. This year's theme is  
'Empire'. <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/ims/imc>

### 17-18 July

The world of the Newport Ship, University of  
Bristol, celebrating the merchant vessel built  
in Spain c. 1450 that foundered at Newport  
two decades later. [www.bristol.ac.uk/history/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/history/research/newportship2014.html)  
[research/newportship2014.html](http://research/newportship2014.html)

### August:

it seems the academy is on vacation

### September:

**6-7 September**  
The Archaeology of Early Christianity, is the  
theme for this year's annual conference  
of the Society for Church Archaeology, to  
take place in Chester. [www.archaeologyuk.](http://www.archaeologyuk.org/socchurcharchaeol/conferences/conf14/chester_programme.pdf)  
[org/socchurcharchaeol/conferences/conf14/](http://socchurcharchaeol/conferences/conf14/chester_programme.pdf)  
[chester\\_programme.pdf](http://chester_programme.pdf)

### 20 September

Defining Kingdoms: sixth to the tenth  
centuries, is the theme of the Sutton Hoo  
Society's one-day conference at University  
Campus Suffolk, Ipswich. [http://suttonhoo.](http://suttonhoo.org/)  
[org/](http://suttonhoo.org/)

### October:

**23-25 October**  
Medieval Materiality: A Conference on the Life  
and Afterlife of Things. University of Colorado at  
Boulder. Submissions for titles/abstracts by 1  
May. <https://cmems.colorado.edu/>

# Newsletter Items

## MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the SOCIETY for MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY No.1 October 1989

### WHAT ARE THEY UP TO NOW?

This is the first issue of the SMA  
Newsletter, a new venture for the Society  
and one which we hope meets with your  
approval. It is planned that the Newsletter  
will appear twice yearly, in Spring and  
Autumn. It will contain news and reviews  
of conferences and exhibitions together  
with information on Society matters, such  
as the Eric Fletcher Awards which feature  
in this copy. It is also the intention to  
provide a forum for debate and  
correspondence, so that members may  
air their views and be informed of the  
issues which affect the Society, medieval  
archaeology, or archaeology as a whole.  
This issue thus contains pieces on the  
fall-out from the Rose Theatre and the  
HBMC Liaison Committee. It is the  
editors' intention that members should  
contribute to the Newsletter. We will  
gladly publish any letters, articles,  
panegyrics or diatribes, though we  
reserve the right to edit all copy. Readers  
should note that none of the opinions  
presented in the Newsletter are  
necessarily those of the Society.  
Your Editors are Duncan Brown, Finds  
Officer at Southampton City Museums,  
and John Oxley, Principal Archaeologist,  
York City Council. We have worked



Come to the AGM to find out more about  
this. See p. 3.

(continued on back page)

### IN THIS ISSUE:

To Be or Not to Be...  
Conference News  
The Eric Fletcher Awards  
Monograph Offers  
Exhibition Reviews  
HBMC Liaison Committee  
Society Events  
Missing Members

Elisabeth Okasha, University  
College Cork, has been in  
touch following publication  
of Newsletter 50, in relation  
to the earliest issues. It is  
always heartening to receive  
correspondence from  
members, and Elisabeth  
suggested she could send in  
her collection of back issues  
for scanning. I am delighted  
to report that we now have  
an almost continuous run  
of Newsletters to add to  
the website archive. Issue 1,  
pictured here, was a six-page  
A5 pamphlet, produced in  
October 1989. It consisted  
of a folded A4 page, with a  
single sheet of A5 inserted,  
and double-sided printing  
throughout. The series was  
launched confidently by its  
two editors, Duncan Brown  
and John Oxley, with the  
promise that the Newsletter  
will appear twice yearly,  
and will contain news and

reviews of conferences and  
exhibitions together with  
information on Society  
matters. Happily that  
promise is being kept. Issue  
1 went into some detail on  
the Eric Fletcher fund, and  
reported that awards in that  
year ranged from a £58  
grant to Peter Yeoman, for  
travel to attend the Society's  
conference in Leeds, to the  
largest grant by far of £400,  
given to Cathy Courtts and  
John Moreland, to meet the  
costs of taking four Society  
members to survey the Hafn  
area of Lochyfort in South  
Uist.  
To complete our set, we are  
still missing issues 4 (March  
'91), 10 (March '94), and  
13 (October '95). Please  
contact me if you find them.

**Niall Brady**  
Newsletter Editor