

Medieval Archaeology

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Medieval Finds at DARC

Durham Archaeomaterials Research Centre

Work has begun at a new research centre for the analysis of archaeological materials at Durham University (www.darclab.com). For medievalists, there will be much of interest here, including the characterisation of Mediterranean imports and British pottery. The centre specializes

in the analyses of ceramics and other finds employing a range of methods, like ceramic petrography, X-ray fluorescence, X-ray diffraction, and ICP-AES and -MS, to gain insight into changing production technologies and trade networks in past societies.

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As we rush towards Summer and the delights expected from new fieldwork, this issue reports on several observations made from recent projects across the UK and also in Sicily. It begins however with a consideration of the results that can be achieved from detailed analysis of the chemical signatures of the clays used to create ceramics. Such techniques should be of great interest to medievalists, and it will be useful to see where these approaches will lead us over the next decade. Mark Hall concludes the Newsletter with further commentary on recent exhibitions, where he extends our medieval geography to China.

Niall Brady
Newsletter Editor
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Left:
A brown-glazed jug from Langport being analysed by ICP at the DARC Lab.



Ceramics from Somerset are currently being investigated using petrography and inductively coupled plasma spectroscopy (ICP). With the guidance of Michael Hughes in the first instance, the project seeks to continue his pioneering work using ICP-AES and -MS in order to investigate ceramic production and distribution in the southwest of England. ICP-AES and -MS can measure the quantity of major, minor, and trace elements found in a sample, like thorium, uranium, and caesium to concentrations of parts per billion. This can provide a very precise chemical signature that can be linked back to clay outcrops from where the materials used to make a ceramic were taken. The information gained from such analysis complements data obtained from petrography and allows for a deeper understanding of the origin of the materials, so that the production centre of a vessel can be identified. As much research has shown, determining the origin of a vessel is important as it allows for an understanding of the breadth and intensity of trade between sites and regions and how they shift with time, providing key insight into past societies and their economies.

The DARC laboratory is currently analysing an interesting group of medieval jugs from Langport, Somerset, including many almost complete examples with slip decoration. For a very long time most, if not all, of these brown-glazed wares from Somerset, Bristol, Devon, Wiltshire and Dorset were identified by researchers as coming from the large production site at Donyatt in south Somerset. Research led by John Allan (1999) using ICP, in collaboration with Michael Hughes and others, has demonstrated that fabric identification by eye and/or microscope is not reliable enough to distinguish between similar looking products coming from south, west, and east

of Somerset, including products from less well known centres at Nether Stowey or Crowcombe. For this area, chemical analysis with ICP has proved essential for identifying the production centres. The current research project promises to help advance our understanding of this long-lived industry in the West Country,

Kamal Badreshany and Alejandra Gutiérrez

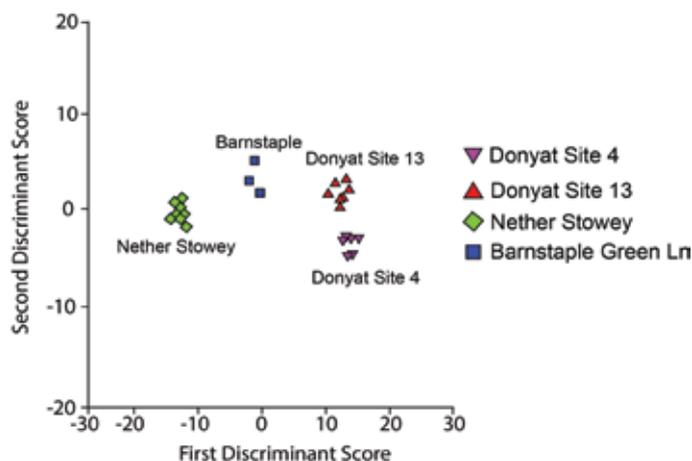
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Discriminant Analysis of ICP data grouping ceramics from four different production centres in Somerset (after Allen 1999).



View over the excavation area at Thornton Abbey.



FIELDWORK

Thornton Abbey, Lincolnshire

indications of pre-monastic settlement

Since 2011 The University of Sheffield has been undertaking an extensive programme of landscape survey and targeted excavation within the precinct of the Augustinian house of Thornton Abbey. The project's principal focus has been to understand the complex changes that the site underwent following its dissolution in 1539, although a number of significant features relating to the monastic phases have also been identified. In 2013 a small trench was excavated to the south of the inner precinct wall in an area that is significantly higher in elevation than the rest of the precinct, and probably the only part of the site that was originally above the surrounding natural floodplain upon which most of the monastery sits. It was anticipated that both the prominent earthworks and sub-surface geophysical features might relate to a post-medieval residential or garden complex. However, this was not the case and in its place a very significant concentration of human remains was encountered, radiocarbon dated to the 14th century. In re-evaluating the context, the surviving earthworks indicated the presence of a substantial building oriented E-W and lying south of the burials. The presence of male and female burials suggesting a lay cemetery population may help to indicate the possible site of the hospital of St James, which is known to have been located somewhere outside the inner precinct of the monastery.

In 2014 excavations continued in the area of the newly discovered cemetery, as well as two additional trenches over the east and west ends of the building complex. The eastern trench revealed the robbed walls of a stone building, thought to be a single-cell chapel from the remains of painted plaster, window glass, lead cames, some fragments of sculpture and small pieces of disarticulated human bone. The second trench located better-preserved remains of the western wall of the chapel and a large quantity of disturbed black and cream glazed floor tiles. At a later date, a brick extension was built at right angles and to the west of the chapel, forming a T-shape; at this point the already weathered stone of the earlier chapel was clad with a facing of brick.

Excavation of these two sections of the hospital is ongoing, and as yet the construction of the chapel cannot

be positively dated. However, the ashlar stonework was comparatively crude in construction and the moulded chamfering is of a far poorer quality than can be seen in the other surviving monastic buildings, which may indicate an earlier date. In a small trench opened for the first time in 2014, further late medieval burials were encountered. However, in a horizon 50 cm below these was an entirely different phase of inhumations. This took the form of widely-spaced and well-ordered interments on a slightly different alignment, in clear contrast to the burial pattern associated with the hospital phase. The earlier burial have been dated by radiocarbon analysis to c. 1050-1150 AD, and probably predate the foundation of the monastery in 1139.

The combination of the earlier phase of burial and the presence of a chapel that does not fit architecturally with the monastic occupation of the site leads to the tentative conclusion that this represents a Norman church, which is the first indication of such from the area enclosed later by the precinct at Thornton. Domesday Book identifies three settlements at Thornton: Thornton Curtis, Burnham and Bodebi. Thornton Curtis is the location of the parish church, and Burnham lies to the west of the parish; its late 10th-century chapel, which continued in use until the mid-16th century, was identified and excavated by Glyn Coppack in 1976/7. However, the location of 'Bodebi' has never been ascertained, and it is possible that it might lie in the area currently under investigation. If this identification is correct, it seems that the original grant to the canons intentionally included a pre-existing ecclesiastical building that they could use while they were constructing the first phase of the new monastery, on land that was not prone to flooding and was not of poor quality.

Fieldwork will continue in July 2015, when excavation of the trenches over the chapel and hospital buildings will be completed, as well as further work in the cemetery.

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Fulk de Breaute's 13th-century castle in Luton

Five phases of archaeological excavation funded by the University of Bedfordshire have been carried out on the site of Fulk (Falkes) de Breaute's 13th-century castle in Luton, the last of which (January 2014) is now in the final stages of post-excavation analysis and reporting (Streatfeild-James & Abrams: forthcoming). Fulk was a divisive figure in Angevin politics. He was employed by King John in lieu of support from his English barons. He became Sheriff of Glamorgan in 1211 and became custodian of Windsor, Oxford, Northampton and Bedford castles by 1216. Fulk enjoyed patronage from the king, but inspired animosity from parts of the Church establishment, something documented by Matthew Paris. He succeeded the Earl of Pembroke as custodian of Luton in 1216, and may have commenced the castle soon after. Lack of evidence to the contrary led to the assumption that it was of earth and timber construction, and subsidiary to Northampton and Bedford.

Previous work has revealed the scale and orientation of the castle moat (Albion Archaeology, 2009; 2012), the presence of timber-framed buildings, and a series of industrial areas and internal fence lines and ditches dividing up the castle complex (Woodley & Abrams: forthcoming; Archaeology South East, 2010). These results provide ample material upon which to base the current research design. The purpose of the archaeological works was to produce more information about the castle's layout; to look for signs of an entrance from Park Street, thought to be a medieval routeway; and to look at the site's occupation and its use after Fulk surrendered to the Crown and was exiled.

An archaeological watching brief on ground-works was required by Luton Borough Council, acting on advice from the Central Bedfordshire Archaeology Officer. The watching brief carried out by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd located the top fills of the castle moat, which were then excavated under archaeological conditions.

The archaeological sequence began with the digging of the castle's moat and the construction of the main complex. The moat reached a depth of 3.5 m below current ground level, presenting a significant obstacle to an attacking force. Debris at the base of the moat is thought to be from occupation activity within the castle complex, and contained fragments of Hertfordshire Grey Ware, a copper-alloy dress pin, and a single leather turnshoe sole.

A demolition layer had been deposited over the initial occupation material. Masonry fragments including ashlar, along with large flint nodules and fragments of mortar were found within the demolition level and are thought to have originated from a large stone-built structure, potentially the

gatehouse or curtain wall of the castle. The event probably marks the destruction of the castle's military capability in 1224, immediately after Fulk's exile.

A single worked oak timber rested over the demolition material, and was identified as the sill beam from a trestle bridge. The carpentry work is thought to be late 12th to early 13th century (Goodburn in Streatfeild-James & Abrams, forthcoming). The construction of a new bridge over the moat suggests that the complex continued to have some significance to the town after the demolition of the castle, and may represent use of the site by relatives of William Marshal, who regained the site following Fulk's demise.

By the later 14th or early 15th century, the moat had ceased to carry water and a dead hedge of upright stakes and horizontal brushwood was constructed inside a shallow re-cut. Occupation material including Surrey White Ware, and more Herts Grey Ware accumulated at the base of the re-cut. A single Moor's Head jetton, carried from the Continent, was also recovered from this level. The final fills represent gradual silting and backfilling prior to the construction of a late Victorian terrace.

The recovery of architectural fragments from the castle is the first indication that Fulk's castle in Luton was a significant financial investment and an important piece of military infrastructure, while the later levels reflect the later use of the complex after the castle had lost its military significance. Publication is planned in Bedfordshire Archaeology.

Jake Streatfield-James

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Obverse and reverse of French Moor's head jetton, 15th-century.

Life and Death in Medieval Nottingham

AMS fine-tunes the date of a burial site

Excavations by amateur archaeologists in the 1930s and in 1963 form the basis of 'Life and Death in Medieval Nottingham', a multi-disciplinary project funded by the Council for British Archaeology and Nottingham City Museums and Galleries.

The excavations on the east side of Cranbrook Street and on the north-east edge of the medieval town encountered human remains representing more than 70 individuals. Tony Wass directed the 1963 excavation and believed the remains predated the 12th century. The evidence was open to question, however, and the date was only more securely established in 2013 through AMS radiocarbon dating by the Oxford Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit.

The remains of two adult males survive and a sample from each has been dated. The first sample from individual SKV was dated to between 1454 and 1633 cal AD (with 95.4% probability). There was a slightly higher likelihood (50.6% probability) that it dated to between 1454 and 1526 cal AD than 1556 to 1633 cal AD (44.8% probability). The second sample from individual SKVa gave a date of between 1415 and 1450 cal AD (with 95.4% probability). The dates suggested the possibility that the individuals were buried at two different points in time rather than in one mass burial, as was suggested originally.

The project now aims to understand the circumstances necessitating burials outside the medieval town at a time when five burial grounds were in use within the town: burial grounds at the churches of St Mary, St Peter and St Nicholas, and the Carmelite and Franciscan friaries. The burial ground at St John's Hospital, located north of the town, had ceased to be used by the time of the Cranbrook Street burials.

The dead at Cranbrook Street were buried at varying alignments, contrary to Christian custom, with at least one individual lying at a right angle to a skeleton immediately beneath.

Documentary research has added support to the 1930s and 1963 excavators' understanding that the area east of Cranbrook Street was waterlogged during the 15th century; it lay west of the river known as The Beck. Indeed The Beck was deliberately blocked and diverted in the immediate vicinity of the burial site in 1408. It was Wass' belief that the dead were thrown into a natural feature such as a large pond or tract of marshland.

The burials date to a period of decline in Nottingham which followed the Black Death of

1349. Excavations in the Lace Market suggest the area east of St Mary's church, including Goose Gate, located immediately across the road from the burials, was abandoned c. 1350. In 1376, it was reported that 'a number of burgages are empty and ruinous'. In 1409-10 the mayor and burgesses petitioned the Royal court for assistance for the 'improvement of the inhabitants' of the town. By 1433/34 Nottingham was described in Royal papers as 'an impoverished town'.

Although there is some evidence of prosperity between c. 1480-1485, there was a general trend of decline. In 1535/36 it was noted that 'dyverse and many howses, messuages and tenements of habitations in the Towne of Notyngham ... now are and long tyme have been in great ruyne and decaye and specially in the pryncypal and cheif stretes there beyng, ... in tymes passed have been betwtiful dwellyng howses there well inhabited, which at this day moche part thereof is desolate and voyde groundes with pyttes, cellars and vaults, lying open and uncovered, very perilous for people to go by in the Nyghte withoute jeopardy of Lyf ...'

One hypothesis is that the dead were victims of an epidemic or a series of epidemics. The earliest burial records for Nottingham date to 1563. However, fresh documentary research suggests the likelihood that Nottingham was visited by some form of epidemic in 1409/10, 1435-1437, 1442, 1445, 1451/52 and 1461/62. Possible epidemics occurred occasionally for the remainder of the 15th and into the 16th century. In 1518 Henry VIII was advised not to visit Nottingham, because there was 'some death' in the town.

An osteoarchaeological examination has identified interesting characteristics of the remains, providing clues relating to the occupation and lifestyle of the two individuals. A facial reconstruction has been produced, to bring people face-to-face with a man living in Nottingham approximately 600 years ago.

Ongoing research, to be undertaken during 2014/15 includes stable isotopic analysis, ancient DNA analysis to test for up to 3,000 bacterial, viral and fungal pathogens and further documentary research. The results will form the basis of a larger paper for publication.

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Detail from a plan of the area excavated by amateur archaeologists in 1963. Drawn by Tony Wass. From the Tony Wass archive. Reproduced with permission from Nottingham City Museums and Galleries.



Website

www.medievalarchaeology.org
The website continues to improve.
Send us your comments:
medieval.archaeology@ gmail.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.

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SMA Newsletter email address has changed

Niall Brady, Newsletter Editor,
can be contacted at:
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SMA Annual Conference 2015

will take place **4-6 December** at the University of Central Lancashire, on the theme:

Being Medieval: archaeology, society and the human experience

Proposals for papers should be sent to Dr Duncan Sayer, dsayer@uclan.ac.uk, by July 3. For other details, contact Liz Roberts at ConferenceandEvents@uclan.ac.uk.

Society Links

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Society News

a special event in Oxford for Members

visit to the human remains from a 'lost' church from the cemetery of St Augustine, Ipswich

In 2012, major excavations at Stoke Quay in Ipswich, Suffolk, revealed the complete cemetery of the 'lost' church of St Augustine, as well as a number of Saxon barrow burials associated with the middle Saxon emporium. Evidence suggests that St Augustine's cemetery originated in the 10th century and remained in use until the 15th. The excavations provide an exceptional opportunity to examine changes in demography and burial practice in an urban parish from the period of the Conversion to the Reformation.

Over 1100 burials were excavated by a team from Oxford Archaeology and Pre-Construct Archaeology. These are now being fully analysed by Oxford Archaeology's Heritage Burial Services department. Analysis so far has revealed one individual from a 'clench bolt' burial

with leprosy; a high prevalence of healed trauma with evidence for disability, and a rare and unexplained case of sharp force modification from the nave of the church. Future work will focus on urban health, nutrition, morbidity, demography and population mobility.

On Thursday 11th June, Society members may visit Oxford Archaeology's Burials Services Department to meet the team, examine some of this remarkable material, and hear about the work. The event will begin at 2.00 pm at the offices of Oxford Archaeology South, Janus House, Oxford (OX2 0ES). **PLACES ARE LIMITED and are being allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.** If you would like to attend, please contact the Society's Membership Secretary, **Sarah Kerr**, on medievalarchaeology@gmail.com.

discounts for Members

OXBOW BOOKS is offering a 20% discount to SMA members on the book, *Trinkets and Charms* by Eleanor Standley (www.oxbowbooks.com/oxbow/trinkets-and-charms.html), published by the Oxford University School of Archaeology. This book presents a study of a wide range of evidence to reveal the use and meaning of dress accessories in daily life in two regions of Britain, c. AD 1300-1700.

Simply enter code **OUSA20** once you have added the book to your basket at www.oxbowbooks.com

to apply your discount. Alternatively order by phone on +44 (0)1865 241249 and quote code.

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY is also pleased to offer a discount of **£25% to SMA members** on all titles in its monograph series. To place an order, please contact Magdalena Wachnik at Oxford Archaeology South, magdalena.wachnik@oxfordarch.co.uk, or Elizabeth Popescu at Oxford Archaeology East, elizabeth.popescu@oxfordarch.co.uk.

old Med Arch journals seek good home!

A kind person in Reading has inherited a 'substantial stack of the society's journals and publications from the 1960s-70s' which they would like to find a good

home for, and are willing to give them to any SMA members in the region. Contact Rory Sherlock at medieval.archaeology@gmail.com to express an interest.

in memory of Lawrence Butler

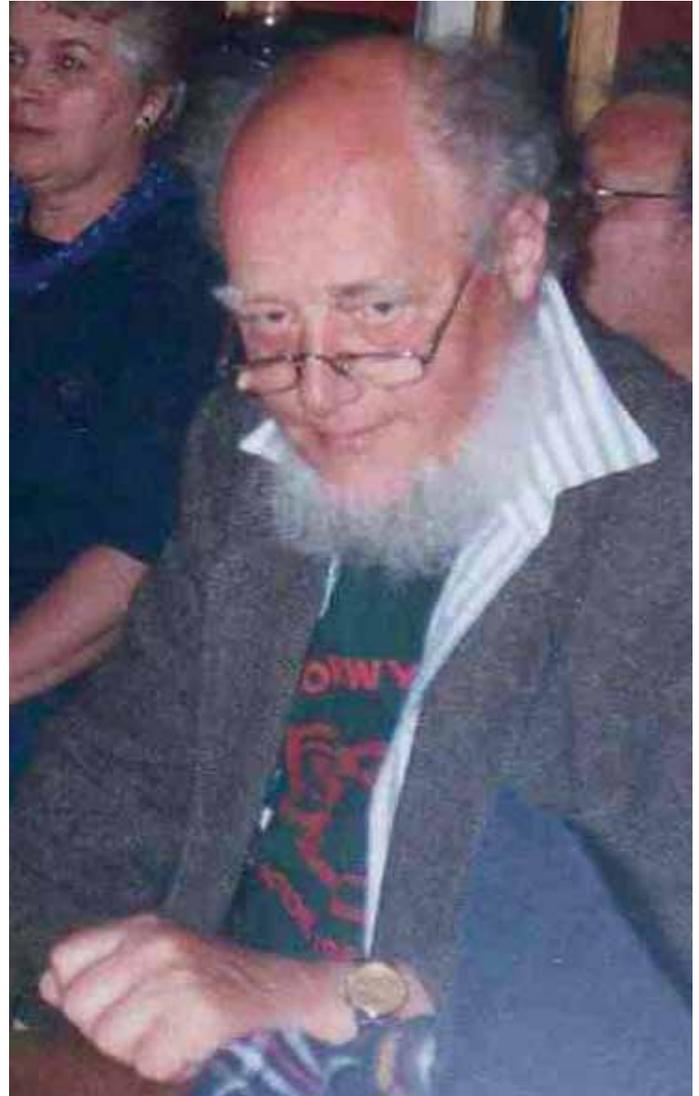
SMA Council member in the 1970s and
Vice President 1987-1994

Born in Nottingham in January 1934, Lawrence attended Nottingham High School, then Peterhouse, Cambridge, where he read History. From 1955 to 1958 National Service in the RAF within Fighter Command was spent tracking high-flying Russian aircraft; simultaneously he worked on his PhD on medieval sculpture. From 1959 to 1965 he served as an investigator with the Welsh RCHM in Aberystwyth. He then moved to Leeds University to be its first lecturer in Medieval Archaeology, building a new department there and becoming its head in 1991. When that department was closed he transferred to York University as Senior Lecturer and Head of Research in the Archaeology Department, where he remained until retirement in 2001.

One of the pioneering first generation of medieval archaeologists, his research activities and expertise focussed on castles and churches. Between 1964 and 1972, with Phil Mayes, he excavated Sandal Castle (Yorks), and from 1981 to 2000 directed annual excavations for Cadw at Dolforwyn Castle in mid-Wales. In Wales, he excavated the little understood Cistercian Maenan Abbey near Conwy, the equally overlooked remnants of the Augustinian abbey of St Kynemark's, near Newport, Gwent, as well as the magnificent Cistercian house at Valle Crucis. Perhaps most notably, from 1981 to 2000 he directed annual excavations for Cadw at Dolforwyn Castle in Montgomeryshire, a structure of great importance as the last castle built by Llewelyn ap Gruffudd, in 1273. Over two decades, students spent each summer gradually revealing the entire plan of the castle, hitherto completely engulfed in fallen masonry, thereby allowing Cadw conservation staff to repoint the standing masonry for display.

He published extensively on medieval castles, monasticism, settlement and houses, and grave slabs. He revealed the importance of 'grave-covers' through his seminal 1964 article in *Archaeological Journal* (based on his PhD thesis); church monuments continued to fascinate him throughout his life and he was a regular contributor to *Journals on the subject*. He also edited several county volumes of Sir Stephen Glynne's 'Church Notes', which often describe churches just before Victorian restorers began their scrapings. He served on the Cathedrals Advisory Commission for over 10 years and for many years was Consultant Archaeologist at Lincoln, Wakefield and Sheffield Cathedrals, as well as York Minster.

While on casual acquaintance a reserved man, all who worked with or were taught by Lawrence soon got to know



Photograph by Lucie Guibert.

a jolly man, who was active, often as officer, in numerous groups and societies, which included (as well as our own) the Castles Studies Group, the Society for Church Archaeology, the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology, and the Cambrian and Yorkshire archaeological societies. A devout Christian all his life, on retirement with his wife (who predeceased him) to Swaffham Bulbeck (Cambs.) he became much involved in church life and in the investigation and archaeological management of the church itself. Cultured and erudite, he sang, danced and acted, and from boyhood onwards remained a keen supporter of Nottingham Forest football club.

Lawrence died on 10 December 2014.

Paul Stamper, based on submissions from colleagues, friends and family.

News & Views

SMA's Postgraduate Colloquium 2014, in Belfast

The Society's annual Postgraduate Colloquium took place at the Queen's University Belfast (QUB) in November, organised by Sarah Kerr, PhD student and Student Representative for the Society. With the aim of providing a platform for students and early career archaeologists to discuss current research, the event welcomed delegates from 22 countries, including Serbia, France, Estonia and Italy. Taking place over three days, the Colloquium consisted of 31 chronologically and spatially diverse papers on medieval archaeology; taking us from Pictish shell middens in Aberdeenshire, to Norse contact in North America, and to weaponry in Slovenia. There was also a poster session, and keynote lectures by QUB Prof Audrey Horning, local archaeologist Nick Brannon, and curator of Down County Museum, Mike King. The delegates continued the discussions over a sponsored mead-tasting event, followed by dinner and a wine reception kindly funded by The Ulster Archaeological

Society and Elsevier Publishing. The Colloquium finished with a full-day field trip to Co. Down which included tours of medieval sites in the area, including Dundrum Castle, Cathedral Hill and the Mound of Down. Each year the Postgraduate Colloquium grows with more delegates from across Europe and the Americas, and it provides a friendly atmosphere in which to present on-going research and network with other students. The student members of the Society look forward to another successful event next year.

Thanks to all for a great year in the Society. The 2015 Colloquium will be held at the University of Sheffield in November and will be coordinated by Emma Green, ecgreen1@sheffield.ac.uk.

Sarah Kerr
Student Representative for the SMA, 2014
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SMA Postgraduate Colloquium on tour in Co. Down.

Chartered status is achieved, and CfA is borne

In December 2014, chartered status was conferred on to the Institute of Field Archaeologists, giving the profession significantly enhanced status in the UK. The charter is recognition from the state that the profession of archaeology works in the interests of the public and that the Institute is the recognized body to regulate the conduct of the profession.

CfA has six strategic objectives, namely:

- to increase understanding of the role of archaeologists in society and improve our status
- to inspire excellence in professional practice
- to strengthen the relationships between archaeologists across

the historic environment and other sectors

- to make CfA membership and registration essential demonstrations of fitness to practise
- to develop a stronger influence on historic environment policy
- to give archaeologists a credible, effective and efficient professional institute.

Find out more by contacting Amanda Forster, Standards Promotion Manager at CfA, amanda.forster@archaeologists.net.

CfA seal detail, copyright Aerial Cam Ltd.



Grants

The Byzantine-Islamic-Norman transition in Sicily

Martin Carver reports on the first year of a joint project of the University of Rome 2 (Tor Vergata) and the University of York

The aim of *Sicily in Transition* is to unravel and interpret the economic, social, political and ideological changes that took place here between the 7th and 12th centuries, using archaeological methods. The dominant cultures that succeeded each other at that time epitomise the struggle to capture the broader agenda and allegiance of Europe, at a key moment in its history.

The first season took place in September 2014 at Castronovo di Sicilia, where we were welcomed and supported by the town council and citizens, and lodged comfortably at the Convent of Saint Francis. Castronovo lies in the centre of Sicily, at the mid-point of the road connecting Agrigento (in the south) to Palermo (in the north), and so is located on a cultural frontier between the Byzantine, Islamic and Norman heartlands.

Using magnetometry, surface collection and sample excavation, we investigated two adjacent sites either side of Castronovo town, the suspected Byzantine stronghold of *Monte Kassar* and the roadside occupation area at the church of *San Pietro*. The *Monte Kassar* stronghold took the form of a 1.9 km long, 3 m thick mortared stone wall defending the open flank. It was shown to have been built in the 7th century and destroyed (probably by the Arabs) in the 9th. The excavations revealed a series of demolished houses originally built up against the inside of the town wall. Finds on the beaten earth floor included an 8th-century Byzantine military buckle and beads from a necklace.

On the plain beside the road connecting Agrigento and Palermo, the occupation area at *San Pietro* was shown by surface

collection to have been active from the 6th to the 13th century, and by magnetometry to have featured streets, houses and kilns. Test excavation revealed two children's cist graves from the 6/7th century, one with a crushed glass ampoule and the other with a pottery bottle carrying an incised cross.

Preliminary work in the Bioarch laboratory (York) has demonstrated the viability of residue analysis of the pottery containers, and isotope and DNA analysis of the human and animal bone. Collections of excavated human and animal bone from the key towns of Palermo and Agrigento were also assessed. These will provide scientific studies complementary to those for Castronovo.

The Society helped us prime the project by supporting the travel of 4 students from York to take part in the excavation – they were Alexandra Dronakis, Jasmine Lundy, Dan Miller and Ben Haines. They were a great asset to the work force and had a useful experience.

Jasmine Lundy comments: *I am very grateful for the opportunity to be part of such a brilliant project and team. It was a great learning experience, which enabled me to develop my skills as an archaeologist in a number of ways, technically, but also in learning how an archaeological project worked and progressed. I really feel part of the team and I am excited about the future potentials of this project after such success this season.*

The project team (York, Rome and the Soprintendenza archeologica in Palermo) is now committed to a long-term investigation at Castronovo, hosted by the town council. It hopes to use the project to raise the profile of early medieval Sicily and encourage and facilitate a new generation of researchers there

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www.york.ac.uk/archaeology/research/current-projects/sicily-in-transition/



The excavation on the summit of Monte Kassar looking towards the north coast of Sicily.

Other Granting organizations

The Castle Studies Trust



Gleaston Castle, Cumbria.



Pleshey Castle, Essex.

The Castle Studies Trust awards two further grants to advance the understanding of castles

Progress continues apace at the **Castle Studies Trust** (CST). As many of the Trust's 2014 grant awards came to fruition, the Trust's second round of grants are being decided upon. Once again, the Trust was heavily oversubscribed with nine applications asking for a total of £40,000.

Thanks to the donations of existing supports we were able to award grants totalling £9,500 to two projects:

- Photographic survey of the standing remains of **Gleaston Castle, Cumbria**. The survey will be used to create a 3D-model and help us not only to understand the little-studied northern border castles of Cumbria, but help in the conservation of this Grade 1 listed site, which has been flagged by English Heritage as being at severe risk.

- Preparation of phase plans and drawings of the historically and archaeologically important **Pleshey Castle, Essex**. These will be included in a published report on excavations carried out some years ago but never published.

Later on in the year we will be seeking to host exclusive open days of both these projects for all those who support the Trust's work financially, as we did last year at Wressle.

2014 Grant Awards Update

- 3D reconstruction computer model of **Holt Castle** is complete. The computer graphics produced cannot now be used on signage at the castle site as originally envisaged, but there are other ways of presenting them, notably through creating a video fly-through of the whole model of the castle.

- Architectural and topographical survey of **Ballintober**

Castle is complete. The survey revealed a number of high-status rooms in some of the towers, suggesting an interesting juxtaposition of luxury accommodation in a frontier castle. It raises the question of how much Ballintober was a frontier castle as once assumed: something only further research will reveal. A fieldschool project will be commencing in 2015 to take this work further. **Castles in Communities** will run through July. Contact **Niall Brady** if you will be in the area.

- Geophysical survey of the two baileys at **Tibbers Castle** will finish slightly later than the others due to a technical hitch in the surveying and applicant's work schedule; the completion date has now been put back to Summer 2015.

- Topographical survey of the garden and landscape of **Wressle** give a glimpse of the sophistication of high-status living in Northern England between the 14th and the 16th centuries.

The final reports for both Ballintober and Wressle are available to download for free from the Castle Studies Trust's website (www.castlestudiestrust.org).

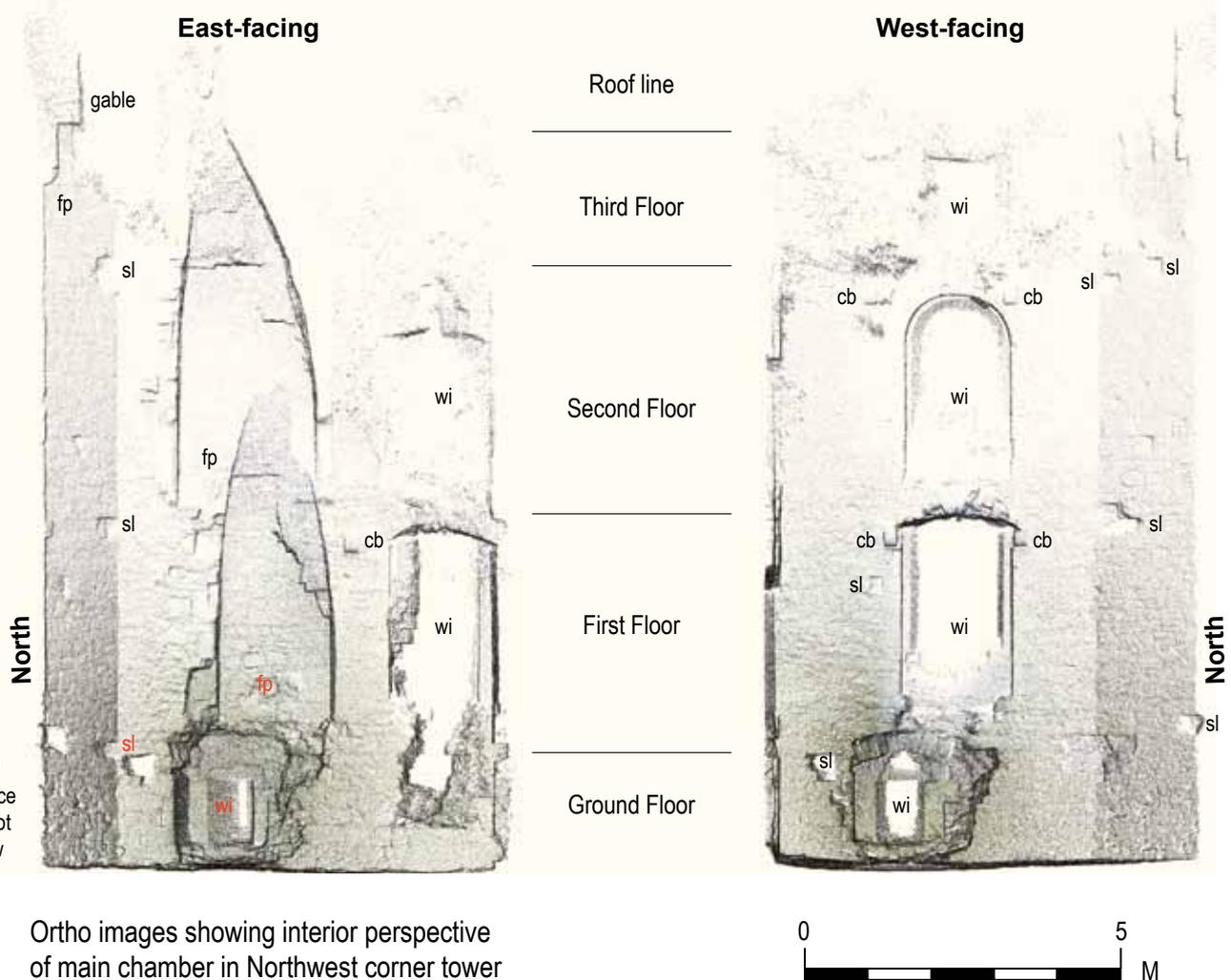
As the high calibre of the projects which the Trust has supported show, as well as the number and quality of projects we could not support, there is much great work still to do. To realise these ambitions requires your help.

The CST is entirely reliant on donations from the general public. To continue the Trust's work and gain the chance to come along to one of our exclusive open days later in 2015, you can make a donation at <https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/castlestudiestrust>.

Please do not hesitate to contact the chair of Trustees, **Jeremy Cunnington** on admin@castlestudiestrust.org.



Holt Castle, Denbighshire, as it currently survives on the left, and as 3D-reconstruction by Rick Turner and Chris Jones-Jenkins suggests it may have looked in the early 14th century.



Ortho images showing interior perspective of main chamber in Northwest corner tower

Ballintober Castle, Co. Roscommon, showing some of the results of laser-scan survey in the Northwest corner tower, which was remodelled extensively in the 1600s to reflect the largesse and confidence of the castle's then owners, the O'Conors. The 2014 survey is the first survey to create metrically accurate data of the larger castle complex above the ground-floor level. Further survey work, from higher up in the structures, may be able to fill in the components that are missing from the present work due to extended elevations and advanced ivy growth, yet it is surprising how much of the floor-plan detail was recorded at the higher levels in spite of the present restrictions.

Upcoming events

Percy Manning: The 'keen field antiquary' (b.1870–d.1917)

Few are aware of Percy Manning and how his collecting and pursuits affected a wide range of disciplines and our understanding of Oxfordshire's past. From mummers' plays to St Bernard dogs; from Morris dancing to archaeology, Manning's eclectic interests are reflected in the collections of the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers Museums, and the Bodleian Library.

In the late 19th century Manning collected objects through excavation, rescuing material during building works, and from people in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Despite poor performance as a Classics scholar, his ability to converse and maintain a working 'collecting dialogue' with the people from the region was exceptional. His relationships and forays to various locations took place over two decades. The first objects donated to the Ashmolean Museum in 1892 were Roman ceramics, medieval lamps, post-medieval keys and a seal matrix – there were no bounds to his interest in objects of antiquity. In 1908 Manning loaned material to the Ashmolean – a 'small series of objects from Standlake, consisting of a fine saucer brooch, beads, and weapons'. In 1911 more objects were incorporated into the collection and the material was already referred to as 'The Manning Collection' by the Keeper of the Antiquarium. In 1921, four years after Manning's death, the remainder of his archaeological collections and archive were acquired by the Ashmolean.

During the hiatus between the final publications of *Archaeologia Oxoniensis* (1895), *Architectural and Historical Society Proceedings* (1900) and *Oxoniensia* (began 1936), Manning was identified as being a key witness and recorder (by way of his drawings) of the demolition of houses in Oxford and the rescuer of material. He also frequented new building sites, such as Polstead Road, Oxford, where Roman finds were recovered in the 1890s during the house construction. Notably this road was the family home of T.E. Lawrence from 1896, and both Manning and were members of the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society, and were involved in salvaging archaeological objects from Oxford city. Lawrence's mother stated that her son's interest in medieval pottery was ignited when some was found during excavations for a public-house in Cornmarket Street – possibly the site of the Leopold Arms where Manning was recording the demolition and the foundations of the cellars in 1906.

Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire, was where Manning's interest in social history, folklore and archaeology came together. The first half of the barrow was levelled during a

great storm in the 18th century, and the labourers refused to carry on for fear of divine retribution. By the c. 1840s/'50s this fear or memory of the violent storm had dissipated and a Mr Arnatt's grandfather finished the levelling. Manning's account was made directly from Mr Arnatt in 1902 and has helped to piece together the destruction of the barrow and reveal the manifest fear/respect for ancient earthworks in the 18th century. Manning's archive is an invaluable asset for understanding the cultural history of the region, and a series of events are planned in Oxford in 2017 to commemorate his life and work.

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A puzzle jug of Brill/Boarstall ware used in drinking games. It was found during excavations for Oxford's new Town Hall and collected by Percy Manning in the 1890s. Manning lent the jug to the Ashmolean Museum in 1911, and it was finally acquired in 1921. AN1921.202, c.1250-1350 © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

FUNDED RESEARCH

Travel and communication in Anglo-Saxon England

Roadway at Shirley Farm, Kent.



The subject of travel and communication is central to the study of society, with great importance for matters of commerce, warfare, polity-identity and many other issues. Even so, previous work in the field of medieval overland and riverine communications is limited, in contrast to the substantial and prolonged interest in Roman networks. Though high-quality evidence is available, many maps purportedly showing Anglo-Saxon communications in fact show Roman roads, even though the afterlife of such roads is far from secure. A preliminary national survey has determined that only 27–33% of 14,281 km of Roman roads survive into the early modern period, with the likelihood that these roads fell out of use during the period AD 400–1200.

A new project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust for three years brings together researchers from the UCL Institute of Archaeology (Andrew Reynolds, Barbara Yorke, Stuart Brookes) and the Institute for Name-Studies (INS) at the University of Nottingham (Jayne Carroll, Eleanor Rye), and aims to provide a better picture of the routeway infrastructure of Anglo-Saxon England. Drawing on historical, archaeological, landscape, linguistic and literary sources, the project will be the first interdisciplinary national study focused on travel and communication. The research aims to address a number of questions at different scales. One outcome will be a national mapping of routeways identified through archaeological, historical, and place-name research, and the presentation of that material in an Online Atlas. The project is keen to examine the pattern of commodities of known origin, and the communications network to determine scales of movement and economic integration. A third element attempts to recover the experience of travel through the interrogation of the textual record for accounts of journeys (national), and their evidence in the landscape.

The project will use several key sources. As recent work by Ann Cole and others has demonstrated, toponymic evidence can make an important contribution to the study of travel and communication in medieval England, through

direct reference to elements of infrastructure and nodes of transportation, and through reference to activities, features or objects that might be presumed to have an association with travel and communication routes. Two main datasets will form the foundation of the analysis. Firstly, in areas where they exist, Anglo-Saxon charter boundary clauses offer a wealth of information on local topography and will be mined for references to local and regional transport routes. Secondly, the extensive surveys of English place-names published by the English Place-Name Society, together with unpublished material held by the INS, will be analysed in detail. Existing aerial, geophysical and archaeological surveys will be drawn together as a basis for reconstructing physical evidence for travel and communication routes. This will involve adding attribute data (i.e. datable evidence, surface conditions, road segments) to a pre-existing GIS source developed in two previous projects funded by Leverhulme: *Beyond the Burghal Hidage: Anglo-Saxon civil defence in the Viking Age*, and *Landscapes of Governance: Assembly-Sites in England, 5th–11th centuries*. The project will also draw on depictions of travel and communication in Old English poetry and prose, and make use of contemporary and later sources in Latin and Old Norse where appropriate.

In an increasingly specialized environment, a healthy development will be to re-emphasise connections and interrelationships between different archaeological and historical phenomena. Ultimately we aim to provide a resource that is relevant to all medieval studies sub-fields and demonstrate the value and potential of such an approach in a wide range of contexts.

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National Museum of Ireland.

Media & Exhibition

Culture Wars versus Viscious Vikings

In the previous issue of the Newsletter I outlined some thoughts on the Vikings and on medieval warfare and I begin the present issue's column with some comments on an exhibition that brings both of those themes together, before moving on to the Ming Dynasty of China.

Clontarf 1014, was an exhibition held at the National Museum of Ireland – Archaeology, April-December 2014. Modest in scale – the area occupied just over one quarter of the Museum's first floor balcony area – but big in exhibition and content, this was an engaging exploration of a key event in Irish medieval history. Although it effectively commemorated the 1000th anniversary of the battle of Clontarf, it also did much more in seeking to engage with the public perception of the battle and unpick its mythic roots. Without preaching, it offered a richly contextual story that encourages visitors to reappraise their understanding of the battle and its significance. It approached its subject through succinct themes: the sources for the battle (largely historical texts with no real archaeology to speak of), the principal combatants (chief amongst them High King Brian Boru), the political and cultural context for the battle, early 11th century warfare, the place of the battle, its outcome and the legacy of the battle and of Boru in popular culture. *En route* it raised valuable issues around gender and its perception, slavery and the importance of the critical appraisal of sources. The exhibition skilfully demolished the popular perception (recorded in a Vox Pop video from the streets of Dublin) of Clontarf as a ground-breaking Irish vs. Vikings affair by which Ireland was unyoked from Viking control. Instead we learn that the battle was more of a family affair in which the leading actors were by various marital turns related to each other, the battle ending with several of them dead and the balance of power not significantly altered. Some 100 years later the descendants of Boru, the O'Briens, patronised the writing of the account of the battle which became the determining one and which initiates the mythologising of the story. The actual site of the battle remains unknown and there are no objects that can with certainty be associated with the battle. Nevertheless, the rich collections of NMI meant that a material culture context, including weaponry, relics, dress accessories, coins and later invented regalia 'associated' with Boru could be readily presented so that the event and its performers could breathe again.

Meanwhile, from the other side of the world and in a different time we have the contrast of late medieval China, presented recently through two exhibitions exploring the

Ming dynasty: *Ming The Golden Empire* (National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh, 27 June – 19 October 2014) and *Ming 50 Years that Changed China* (British Museum, London, 18 September 2014 – 5 January 2015). It is presumably more than coincidence that this seeming popularity comes along at the same time that the UK Government is offering grants (£300,000 in total) to UK museums to support partnerships with Chinese museums: one of the outcomes of the UK-China Economic and Financial Dialogue (hammered-out in London). The exhibitions are analogous to a brace of cultural calling cards, almost replicating the cultural politics of the Ming dynasty and Zheng He's fleets taking Chinese culture across and around the Indian Ocean, receiving gifts/tribute in return. There is some resistance, notably the BM captioning each of the maps which appear in its exhibition with the proviso: 'the names shown and the designations used on the map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the British Museum.' It also raises Tibet by including objects from there in its collections.

Ming The Golden Empire takes the broader approach, encompassing the whole period of the Ming dynasty, to which it serves as something of an historical introduction. The key focus is on the upper echelons of society, their life at court and their consumption of luxuries and indulgence in connoisseurship. No direct insights were offered into the lives of those who produced the infrastructure of indulgence, though there were statements that pointed to a darker story of tyrannical production. We learn that between 1522-66 the imperial court ordered over 1 million ceramic items from the Jingdezhen kilns and that the bricks made to build the imperial palace at Nanjing were stamped with the name of the worker and his superior so that substandard bricks could be traced back to those responsible and they could be punished. The exhibition prefers to run with the dubious idea of a golden age and its concomitant definition of a society as that defined by its self-defining élites. There is much to marvel at but little is articulated as questionable and the fictional character of the whole enterprise is barely hinted at (one of the Four Masters of Ming painting, Tang Yin, was consigned to making a living from painting when he failed to pass his 'civil service' exam in 1499, instead he 'descended into a life of pleasure, drunkenness and poverty'). It is then an exhibition that deals with a limited percentage of a society's élite, leaving it unbalanced in terms of social dissection and gender. Élité women certainly get more than a mention but their position

as essentially adornments within the Ming social model is covered in a flat way without a questioning of what that meant for women. Although the exhibition emphasised the importance to the *literati* culture of collecting antiquities, paintings and calligraphy, it gave only a minimal sense of how the Nanjing Museum and NMS collections were gathered. One or two of the Nanjing objects, we learn, were excavated in the 1950s and others were salvaged from a shipwreck, while the collecting path for the NMS objects remains totally opaque. Is it a paradox or an irony? At any rate the exhibition at times feels like a continuation of that Ming collecting elitism. It compounds this by not even identifying who the scholars and researchers involved in the exhibition were. The catalogue/exhibition guide has no authorship attributed.

The star object in the NMS exhibition was certainly something to marvel at: a gold cicada on a jade leaf, excavated in 1954 from an official's tomb at Wufeng Mountain. Its intricacy of scale and its fusion of contrasting materials is a high testament indeed to Chinese craftsmanship. Its insect subject parallels a European Renaissance fixation with nature (*cf.* Crivelli's fly) and its skill demonstrates the ready adaptation of Islamic and Central Asian goldsmithing techniques.

Ming 50 Years that Changed China has a much tighter chronological focus: the first half of the 15th century, when the Ming empire apparently reached its zenith; again though we are in the dubious territory of a 'golden age'. Culturally the focus remains on the social élites. While it acknowledges that the society in focus ran on the agricultural labour of over 80 million peasants and an army of 1 million men, watched by an unforgiving beurocracy, there is no sense in which their material culture is represented. They must have lived in substantial villages and towns but no elements of these appear to have been excavated. The one opportunity to throw light in their direction - the excavation of the Nanking shipyards (where Zheng He's fleets were built) is perfunctorily dealt with in a brief video clip and a small case of shipwright's tools.

The catalogue is much fuller than that for the NMS exhibition, which is unsatisfactorily pitched between exhibition guide and catalogue. The BM catalogue combines object details with incisive essays on Ming politics, court-life, beliefs and commerce (all clearly authored). The star object in the BM show is much harder to pick and I remain torn between the enormously appealing 1414 hanging scroll of 'Tribute giraffe with attendant' and the board (made of paper) and gaming pieces for *weiqi* or Chinese Chess (in Japanese go) excavated from the tomb of Prince Huang of Lu (d. 1389).

One of my expectations in visiting both exhibitions was the hope of gaining a sense of difference between medieval China and Europe. Certainly there were apparent differences, not least in dress and accoutrements, in artistic style and in buildings but a little to my surprise I came away from both with an over-riding sense of surface — even superficial — differences masking deeper more familiar concerns: in Europe we had the Divine Right of Kings, in China the Mandate of Heaven; in both societies there was a shared concern for the mechanisms of élite patronage and the sustaining of a luxurious lifestyle rooted in peasant servitude; the symbolism of swords; in both belief in sympathetic magic was articulated through material culture (including amuletic protection for

buildings and the consecratory power of holy relics) and in both the élites defined themselves as collectors of antiquities and art. They also shared the defiance of sumptuary laws as part of a long story of élite competition and social aping leading to the growth of an urban, middle-class 'élite' that desired consumption, or rather consumed their desires. For both play was important, and accomplishment at board games for example was seen as a defining characteristic of high status. On land and sea the artery that connected these two worlds, of course, was the Silk Road, but this flow mechanism gets little mention in the exhibitions, though one of its key



British Museum.

commodities, blue and white porcelain does get some coverage. This is particularly true of the BM exhibition, which includes Mantegna's painting *Adoration of the Magi*, in which Casper offers a gold-filled porcelain bowl of the type made in the Yongle reign (1403-24) of the Ming.

There seems no escaping the conclusion that such exhibitions are in a direct line back to the medieval gift exchange that the Ming Empire was so keen on — the equivalent of one of those goody-packed ships of admiral Zheng He. Here of course the gift is a loan but it still comes with reciprocity attached.

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Conferences & Events

— FORTHCOMING —

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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:
niallbrady@gmail.com

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

Credits

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June:

15-17 June
3rd Annual Symposium on Medieval and Renaissance Studies, St Louis University.
smrs.slu.edu

July:

1-3 July
29th Irish Conference of Medievalists, University College Dublin.
www.irishmedievalists.com

6-9 July
22nd International Medieval Congress, Leeds, UK.
www.leeds.ac.uk/imc/imc2015/

September:

7-13 September
Religion, cults and rituals in the medieval rural environment is the theme for the 11th Rurality Congress, which will be held in Clervaux, G-D of Luxembourg. www.n.ruralia.cz/ruralia_conferences.html
christiane.bis@cnra.etat.lu

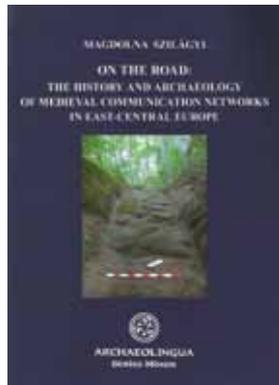
November, date tbc, SMA Postgraduate Colloquium 2015, University of Sheffield.
ecgreen1@sheffield.ac.uk

4-6 December SMA Annual Conference 2015 and AGM Being Medieval: archaeology, society and the human experience. University of Central Lancashire. ConferenceandEvents@uclan.ac.uk

— SOME PUBLICATIONS —

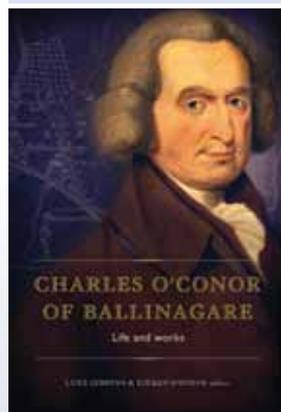
As we go to press, news is just in that SMA Council members, Stephen Harrison and Ragnall Ó Floinn's joint publication, *Viking Graves and Grave-Goods in Ireland*, volume 11 of the Medieval Dublin Excavations 1962-81 series published through the National Museum of Ireland, is being bound. We can expect the launch of this long-awaited and detailed study soon.

Archaeolingua, Budapest, www.archaeolingua.hu



Archaeolingua Foundation is an independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to interdisciplinary research and connected activities in Archaeology, Linguistics and other related fields. It was founded in 1990 as a joint Austrian-Hungarian enterprise. Among its current volumes is that by Magdolna Szilágyi, whose publication, *On the Road*, is based on her recently completed PhD, and is an inspiring approach to the study of medieval roads in east central Europe.

Four Courts Press, www.fourcourtspress.ie



Cultural History in Ireland owes much to the scholars of the 18th century, and among the best was Charles O'Connor of Ballinagare, who was regarded as perhaps the most linguistically capable Irishman of his day, being proficient in Latin, French and Old and Middle Irish; he was fascinated in Ireland's past and was a keen excavator. The present volume, edited by Luke Gibbons and Kieran O'Connor, brings together a series of papers on his life and his contribution to scholarship, where medieval studies played a significant part.