

# Society for Medieval Archaeology Newsletter

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## EDITORIAL

The Society's 2009 AGM was an engaging affair and it was certainly very heartening to end last year with the launch of the most recent monographs; not one but three! It was as though the last breathes of the first decade in the new millennium could demonstrate buoyancy and optimism, which has wonderful appeal in challenging times. The present Newsletter continues the trend to grow, and showcases two new high profile research projects on early medieval period assembly places. We also read of the Postgraduate Colloquium held recently in Birmingham, and Sarah Semple presents an upbeat account of research facilities and interests at the University of Durham. There is much more besides, but perhaps it is fitting that exhibition of the Staffordshire hoard has galvanized Mark Hall to ponder what motivates the public imagination when it comes to medieval archaeology.



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## CONFERENCES & EVENTS, forthcoming

**MAY:** The 4<sup>th</sup> annual **Early Medieval Archaeology Student Symposium** will take place at School of Archaeology, University College Dublin on **19–20 May**. See: [www.emass2010.com](http://www.emass2010.com)

The full programme of the 2010 **International Congress on Medieval Studies**, to be held at the **University of Western Michigan, Kalamazoo, USA, 13–16 May**, including a session sponsored by the Society for Medieval Archaeology on **New Directions in European Castle Research**, is now available. See: [www.wmich.edu/medieval/congress/](http://www.wmich.edu/medieval/congress/)

**Revisiting New Towns of the Middle Ages**, a conference to be held in memory of Prof Maurice W Beresford and hosted in the classic medieval new town of Winchelsea, East Sussex, **21–23 May 2010**. See: [www.winchelsea.net/conference.htm](http://www.winchelsea.net/conference.htm)

**JUNE: Dating and Deposits: Ceramic Chronology and Site Formation** is the theme of the Medieval Pottery Research Group's annual conference, in Perth, **14–16 June**. Contact George Haggarty, Secretary, [haggartyg@aol.com](mailto:haggartyg@aol.com)

**Perceptions of Place: English Place-Name Study and Regional Variety** is the theme of an international conference hosted by the **Institute for Name-Studies**, University of Nottingham, **23–27 June**. See: [www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/ins](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/ins)

**JULY: The International Medieval Congress (IMS) at the University of Leeds** will take place on **12–15 July**. See: [www.leeds.ac.uk/ims/imc/imc2010\\_call](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/ims/imc/imc2010_call)

**Trebuchet to Cannon: Military Technology 1000–1600**, at the Middelaldercentret (Danish Medieval Centre), **26–29 July**. See: [www.middelaldercentret.dk/Projekter/hox.html](http://www.middelaldercentret.dk/Projekter/hox.html)

**SEPTEMBER:** The Hague, Netherlands will host the **16th Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists** on **1–5 September**. Many themes and sessions dealing with medieval/ historic archaeology. See: [www.eaa2010.nl/](http://www.eaa2010.nl/)

The **Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology** will host its conference on **Engaging the Recent Past: Public, Political, Post-Medieval Archaeology** at the University of Glasgow, **3–5 September**. See: [www.spma.org.uk/](http://www.spma.org.uk/)

**10–11 September** on, **Perth: A Place in History**, sponsored by the Perth Museum & Art Gallery and the AK Bell Library, as part of the Perth 800 celebrations. See: [www.pkht.org.uk](http://www.pkht.org.uk)

[www.medievalarchaeology.org](http://www.medievalarchaeology.org)

The **2010 Deerhurst Lecture** will take place at 7.30 pm on Saturday **18 September** in St Mary's Church, Deerhurst. The lecture will be given by Emily Howe on the subject of "Painted Anglo-Saxon sculpture in St Mary's, Deerhurst: materials, techniques and context". See: [www.deerhurstfriends.co.uk](http://www.deerhurstfriends.co.uk)

The **Society for Medieval Archaeology** and the **Vernacular Architecture Group** will jointly host **Medieval Domestic Cultures conference: Oxford, 24–26 September**. See Society News below for more details.

**OCTOBER:** An international conference will be held in **Douai, Northern France in October** on the subject of **Pottery Manufacture in the Early Middle Ages**. For details and a call for papers, see: [www.arxaiologia.gr/assets/media/PDF/7267.pdf](http://www.arxaiologia.gr/assets/media/PDF/7267.pdf)

**Call for submissions to *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology (PIA)*, issue 20.** *PIA* covers a wide range of archaeological subjects, but in recent years medieval topics have not been well represented. The editorial committee would welcome submissions from society members, especially post-graduates or early-career researchers. Due date for submissions: 30 June. See: <http://piajournal.co.uk/index.php/pia/user/register> and register as an author, or contact [pia.journal@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:pia.journal@ucl.ac.uk)  
Tom Williams  
PIA editorial committee  
University College London

**Exhibition at the Perth Museum:** Scotland's Minister of Culture Fiona Hyslop opened Perth Museum and Art Gallery's current archaeological exhibition, ***Skin & Bone: Life & Death in Medieval Perth*** in January. The exhibition is part of Perth's celebratory year, 'Perth 800', marking the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the charter granted by King William, the 'Lion', and confirming the town's royal burgh status.

The exhibition charts the archaeology and history of the town from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The *Life* gallery displays a wide array of material culture under the themes: Origins, Castle & Defences, Port

of Trade, Streets & Vennels, Buildings & Rigs, Master Craftsmen, Everyday Pleasures & Pains, Religion and Food & Drink. The gallery is rounded-off with a look at the history of excavation in the town, including archive footage of the Perth High Street excavation 1975–77. The majority of the pieces on display have been recovered from excavations in the town over the past 40 years, including Perth High Street, Meal Vennel (1983) and Horsecross (2003). There are also significant loan items on display including the Guildry or Lockit Book (courtesy of the Guildry Incorporation of Perth), the Perth Psalter and the Perth Hammermen Book (both courtesy of the National Library of Scotland), the Perth Hammermen's offering box (courtesy of St John's Kirk), a 14<sup>th</sup>-century copy of the 1210 charter (courtesy of Perth & Kinross Council Archive) and several religious artefacts (courtesy of National Museums Scotland). The *Death* gallery airs the theme of people and pets through a display of the skeletal materials of several individuals (children, men – including a murder victim – and a woman) and several fighting, working and pet dogs.

This is a rich, colourful exhibition for young and old. Both can try their hand at dressing up or playing a medieval game when they have exhausted looking at the fascinating array of objects.

The exhibition runs until 29 December 2010 and the Museum is open Monday to Saturday 10am – 5pm, admission free.



*The Perth exhibition*

## CONFERENCE REPORTS

**Sense of Place in Anglo-Saxon England (SPASE).** In 2009 a vibrant series of five workshops were organised and delivered by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded network project SPASE. The workshops brought together

scholars from across the UK and from as far afield as Scandinavia, to investigate from interdisciplinary perspectives, how we might find new ways of using and exploring the habitative place-names of Anglo-Saxon England.

The workshops were conceived, developed and organised by Dr Richard Jones (Leicester), drawing on the inspiration of the previous AHRC-funded network series POMLAS that toured the UK in 2006–7. The five SPASE workshops were run with help from two co-organisers, Drs Sarah Semple (Durham) and David Parsons (Aberystwyth).

We began in February 2009 with *Changing Places and Changing Names* at the University of Leicester which brought together 9 speakers who queried and discussed, via selected case studies, the strengths and weaknesses of current new interdisciplinary approaches, the stability or instability of settlement location, form, and naming conventions. In May we moved to Durham University for *Religion and Belief* at which 8 speakers discussed place-names as a source of evidence for belief and religion before and after the Conversion to Christianity. Papers ranged beyond Anglo-Saxon England and emergent themes included the frailty and complexity of the English evidence; difficulties of characterising the archaeological qualities of particular types of religious or spiritual place; and the absence of precise meanings for some terms applied to religious foci. *Centres and Dependencies* in June moved to Reading University, where papers tackled how place-names, settlement histories, archaeologies, and geographies combine to elucidate the social and administrative organization of the Anglo-Saxon countryside. The workshop demonstrated in a variety of papers, how detailed case-study led exploration could establish patterns of change in the archaeological record and link this to changes in place-names. August saw the series move to the University of the West of England for *Form and Function*. A smaller number of papers, centred on specific case studies of particular place-name groups such as *burhs*, *wics*, and *worths*, made for engaging discussion

on the importance of settlement form and function in establishing the identity of place, as reflected in particular naming patterns. The concluding event was hosted at Nottingham University. Many of those who had attended other workshops in the series came together to scrutinise two detailed case studies: Wharram Percy and North Staffordshire. Here the value of long-term projects and study that integrated names with extensive evidence drawn from field work, retrogressive analysis, large scale geophysical survey and buildings analysis, was powerfully evident. Jones offered an insightful résumé and reflection on the lines of enquiry generated by the workshop series and a series of potential future avenues of enquiry were mooted. New workshops or networks may emerge, publications are forthcoming and planned, and the project web site ([www.spase.org.uk](http://www.spase.org.uk)) will continue to offer an on-line record of the series and a forum for on-going research.

The organisers would like to thank first and foremost all those who attended the workshops, as speakers or participants, and made this series such a fruitful and productive project. In addition, our thanks go to Dr Gabor Thomas, Prof. Richard Coates and Dr Jayne Carroll who arranged and organised the workshops at Reading, UWE, and Nottingham. Finally we would like to thank the Society for Medieval Archaeology, the Medieval Settlement Research Group, the Society for Landscape Studies and the English Place-Name Society, all of whom supported our venture and our project from its inception. This project was funded by the AHRC.

Drs Richard Jones, Sarah Semple & David Parsons

**Talking about Medieval Archaeology; the Society for Medieval Archaeology PG Colloquium.** In February 2010, the University of Birmingham hosted the Society for Medieval Archaeology's Postgraduate Colloquium, entitled 'Talking about Medieval Archaeology'. The conference attracted 44 postgraduate students from a number of institutions including Belfast, Birmingham, Bradford, Cambridge, Cork, Trinity College

Dublin, Durham, Exeter, Glasgow, Leicester, London, Nottingham, Oxford, Reykjavik and York. Sessions were structured around four broad themes; Life and Death, The Material World, Settlement and Society and Power and Monument. The papers were wide-ranging and of an exceptionally high standard, demonstrating the quality and diversity of current postgraduate research in medieval archaeology. The work being undertaken is clearly innovative and dynamic – and massively significant. The full range of archaeological specialities were represented (finds, environmental, survey and excavation), leading to stimulating and useful discussions at the end of each session (and spilling into coffee breaks).



*Martin Carver in full medieval flow*

Our keynote lecture was presented by Prof. Martin Carver, who held delegates at the postgraduate Medieval Archaeology conference in thrall, arguing that early medieval people enjoyed a much greater freedom of thought than archaeologists are sometimes prepared to recognise. He took us on a guided tour of some of the key sites from his career – Sutton Hoo, Wasperton, Tarbat and Stafford – suggesting that the people represented here were ‘free to choose’ how they constructed their identities, either in death or in life. In particular, he argued, early medieval people frequently made reference to prehistory in their material culture, and even avowed Christians still had a certain license to interpret their faith. He spoke about the need for medieval archaeologists to understand where the cultural landscape within medieval archaeology is situated, emphasising the need to use as many

different strands of evidence as possible to get the bigger picture – an ideal theme for the conference.



*The careers session under way*

### **Who wants to be a medievalist?**

The Careers session hosted by Jill Campbell (QUBelfast, and SMA PG Rep) was designed as an open Q&A session with ten panellists representing a cross-section of the professional community – museums (Dave Symons, BMAG), local planning authority (Mike Hodder, BCC), national government (Sally Foster, Historic Scotland), commercial archaeology (Amanda Forster, Birmingham Archaeology) and the academic community (Dawn Hadley, Sheffield; Andy Howard, Birmingham; Chris Callow, Birmingham, Terry Barry, Dublin and Martin Carver, York). It raised some major concerns about the immediate problems facing graduates (job opportunities, wages and the recession) and how students can help to lay a sound foundation for their careers. The discussion suggested many things; take any opportunities provided (such as free training within Institutions), try and gain demonstrable experience via voluntary work (e.g. at Museums, Units), gain some hands-on experience (on excavations, with finds material, etc.) and also try their hand at publication – but within reasonable parameters (e.g. book reviews, short summary papers). The advantage that medievalists have is their diversity of resource – archaeology, history, materiality, linguistics; all of which play a part in our research. Perhaps one of the themes the Society should take away from this is the need to help our postgraduate members find those opportunities and to try and create a dynamic student network within our discipline.

### **Thank you!**

The Colloquium was supported by the Society for Medieval Archaeology, with a generous contribution from the Roberts Trust Fund (College of Arts and Law, University of Birmingham). The conference was organised by Amanda Forster (IAA, University of Birmingham) and Jill Campbell. Sessions were chaired by Dawn Hadley, Terry Barry, Anthea Harris (Birmingham) and Chris Callow. The panellists provided an excellent and rare opportunity for a debate which crossed both disciplinary and professional boundaries and the conference organisers were extremely grateful for their enthusiasm and insightful contribution on the day.

### **The next conference...**

The Society is keen to build on the success of the 2010 conference and is planning more post-graduate events. Following on from the Careers session, we are hoping to run a similar workshop in October 2010 which will include topics such as employability and publication. The 2011 Colloquium will be held later in the year and during the Autumn term.

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## **SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH**

**Landscapes of governance. Assembly sites in England, 5<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries** is a three-year interdisciplinary venture funded by the Leverhulme Trust which will address the broader issues of the constitution and structure of early medieval governance in the English landscape through a study of the spatial character and nomenclature of a fundamental, yet largely neglected, aspect of governance and civil society: places of political, social and judicial assembly and their associated districts. In bringing archaeology, place-names and written sources together, the project will challenge current concepts of the genesis of administrative frameworks by mapping and analysing places of assembly and their names, examining the scale and forms of related administrative and social functions, and exploring

chronological patterns in the evidence for the first time on a national scale.

Assembly sites were important at many levels of early medieval society – royal/national, regional, local and urban – and they provided a means whereby royal and official prerogative met with local concerns. Place-names of assembly sites and their associated district indicate varying origins, in some cases referring to pre-Christian gods, including Woden and Thor, while other terms relate to monuments of earlier ages, such as burial mounds and standing stones. Other meeting-places are named after seemingly mundane features such as crossroads, bridges and settlements.

Only a dozen or so English assembly sites have been investigated by detailed archaeological survey and excavation. Studying meeting-places and their surroundings can reveal much about their relationship to other significant sites and their role within a wider network of social functions. Form, layout, accessibility and view-shed are among the attributes to be examined by the project.

Outcomes of the project will include the *Electronic Anderson*: a fully-revised and updated online catalogue of the English hundreds and their territories, based on the pioneering research on the English hundred-names by the Scandinavian scholar O.S. Anderson; a hundred recording and resource pack hosted by ADS; an international conference on hundreds and other systems of governance to be held in November 2011; and a major synthetic monograph on the hundreds of England.

The project team is led by Dr Andrew Reynolds (UCL Institute of Archaeology), in collaboration with Prof Barbara Yorke (Department of History, University of Winchester) and Dr Jayne Carroll (Institute for Name-Studies, University of Nottingham). Full-time researchers on the project are Drs John Baker and Stuart Brookes. For more information and updates see: [www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/project/assembly/](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/project/assembly/)

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**The Assembly Project (TAP) – meeting-places in Northern Europe AD 400-1500** is newly funded by an award from the Humanities in Europe Research Area (HERA), and represents a collaborative project bringing together scholars from Norway, Austria and the UK. This international team will investigate the role of assemblies (things) in the creation of collective identities and emergent kingdoms in medieval Northern Europe (AD 400-1500). The first systems of governance in Europe have long been a neglected research theme, with the significance of these places in the medieval world highlighted only in recent publications. This project will build on these researches and offer a new, innovative, and large scale study of thing sites in the context of the transition from localised polities to large-scale kingdoms and nation states. TAP is a joint project run by the Universities of Oslo, Vienna, Durham and the UHI Millennium Institute, Orkney.

The key questions will be addressed via multi-disciplinary research examining assembly within the political development of kingdoms in Viking and medieval Scandinavia and those areas colonised and settled by the Norse. By comparing the establishment of administrative frameworks in Scandinavia with new systems in colonised regions, the project will examine how authority was articulated in landscape terms by new and developing kingdoms, and how control and consensus were transferred and established. In order to produce a set of comparative data, TAP will also seek to create a cohesive account of the development of administrative systems within a wider European context. In order to reflect critically upon assemblies within the Scandinavian core area of study and the areas of comparison, TAP will examine the historiography of research into assemblies. All research questions will be approached in the same manner in Scandinavia and the areas of comparison through a strict methodological framework. GIS will serve as an important analytical tool together with visual analysis, GPS-survey and excavation.



*The assembly site at Anundshögen, Västmanland Sweden. Photography: Daniel Löwenborg*

**Dr Frode Iversen** at the Museum of Cultural History, Oslo University, and two PhD students, will focus on how supra-regional royal power established solid administrative systems in new subordinated provinces and conquered kingdoms. This part of TAP offers an overarching study that seeks to model emergent complex power systems in proto-states in Northern Europe. It will establish, via 8 case studies in Scandinavia and medieval Germany, the role of the thing institution as a stimulus and propagator of supra-regional royal power systems in Northern Europe in the Middle Ages. It will focus on the two kinds of proto-governmental structures: (1) the areas dominated by the kings' dynastic property and (2) the areas with a high density of property belonging to royal office. Assembly locations will be compared with cultural key features in the landscape, e.g. boundaries, burial sites, and farmsteads, as well as topographic features.

**Dr Alexandra Sanmark** at the UHI Centre for Nordic Studies in Orkney will explore the establishment of the Norse thing organisation and assembly sites in the areas of Norse settlement and colonisation, compared and contrasted to the situation in the Viking homelands, and set within the wider context of assembly in Northern Europe. Fieldwork will be carried out at a select number of sites in Scotland and the North Atlantic islands. The significance of assemblies for conflict resolution, particularly in newly colonised areas, will be highlighted. The thing places established in these areas will be studied in order to establish if the settlers used sites already

monumentalised by the local population or whether they created new ones. In what ways did they define and monumentalise their assemblies and how were they developed, remembered and celebrated over time? The impact of Christianity on the design of the thing sites and the thing proceedings will also be examined.

**Dr Natascha Mehler** at the Department of Prehistoric and Historical Archaeology, Vienna University, will analyze the mercantile aspects of assembly sites and their effects, focusing on economic activities, such as trade, craft and exchange, at or near thing sites. These activities involved different ethnic and social groups and had implications both for local societies and foreign traders, whose businesses were regulated by the assembly. Mehler will analyze how assembly sites were used for trade, what kind of mercantile aspects were connected to assembly sites, what infrastructure lies behind the establishment of an assembly site, how assembly sites topographically relate to trading sites and what all this implied for local societies and foreigners. New fieldwork will be carried out together with Sanmark in e.g. Shetland and Iceland. Previously excavated material, as well as written sources, will also be re-evaluated.

**Dr Sarah Semple** of the Department of Archaeology, Durham University together with one PhD student, will investigate past and current scholarship, emphasising divergences in assembly practices and structures as well as shared traditions and themes at a NW European level, AD 400-1300. Semple will establish a new critical understanding by means of selective, historiographic research on the treatment of assembly as a research theme – exploring how assembly has been valorised in differing strands of scholarship and used as evidence to support ideas of nationhood, legitimate authority, migratory patterns and shared ethnic descents. Building on this critical base of knowledge, but also interlocking with the project core research themes, the PhD project will focus on advancing our understanding of the dynamics of assembly and political organisation in

areas of impact, colonisation and social flux. By means of a study of assembly organisation in Northern England in AD 400-1100 this study will analyze the role of individual assemblies in newly settled areas and emerging kingdoms; how they were used to consolidate territorial identities; and how they were used to mediate control in regions with indigenous and migrant groups.

The project, administered in Oslo, will start in June 2010 and runs for three years. The first fieldwork campaign is planned for this summer. To ensure good cooperation with ongoing projects and other interested parties four workshops will be held in Oslo, Vienna, Durham and Kirkwall. TAP has proposed a session with the title *Assembly-sites in Medieval Europe – Cradles of Democracy or instruments of Power and Identity?* for the annual conference of the EAA in The Hague this September.

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**INSTAR Funding in Ireland – the Early Medieval Archaeology Project (EMAP)** is a North/South; Archaeological Industry/ University collaborative research project involving the School of Archaeology, University College Dublin; the School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast, and several commercial archaeological sector companies, including Cultural Resources Development Services, Archaeological Consultancy Services, Archer Heritage Ltd and Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd. EMAP was established in 2008 with Heritage Council funding and has received INSTAR funding in 2008 and 2009. The EMAP team includes Drs Aidan O'Sullivan (UCD) and Finbar McCormick (QUB) as Principal Investigators, Dr Thomas Kerr, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at QUB, and Lorcan Harney, Jonathan Kinsella, researchers, Dr Rob Sands ICT co-ordinator, Mikie O'Sullivan ICT Developer and Conor McDermott project manager at UCD. INSTAR EMAP in its support of the Irish commercial archaeological sector also funds a part-time PhD (Matthew Seaver,

CRDS) and a part-time 2-year MA (Robert O'Hara, AH).

It is well-known that the pace, scale and intensity of archaeological excavations in Ireland between c. 1992–2005 has transformed the way we view past Irish societies. Early medieval archaeology in Ireland has probably benefited most from this 'Celtic Tiger' boom in discovery and data gathering. Approximately 2,000 early medieval sites were excavated in Ireland between 1930 and 2008, with a large proportion of these discovered in recent decades. Our review of the quality and significance of early medieval excavated sites indicates that approximately 600 early medieval site excavations can be considered as 'highly significant' or 'significant' and require some level of publication. The need to transform this grey literature 'data into knowledge' and the 'publication crisis' in Ireland have also been established by various professional and academic institutional policy reviews. The global economic crisis has intensified these matters— i.e. much remains to be published and synthesised and funding is restricted. EMAP aims to play a role in identifying, collating, interpreting and disseminating this massive volume of early medieval archaeological data and in furthering research agendas in early medieval archaeological scholarship.

Key aims and objectives:

- To investigate and analyse the history, character and results of early medieval archaeological excavations in Ireland.
- To publish a series of books and peer-reviewed papers and to make available a website with an online database of early medieval sites to help transform unpublished 'data into knowledge'.
- To establish and promote collaborative research and graduate training links between the university and commercial archaeological sector.

EMAP has been successful in realising its initial aims and objectives over the course of its two funding cycles (May-December 2008 and July-November 2009). Research

and dissemination is at the core of the project.



Banner of EMAP website

EMAP recognises that we are using archaeological data generated by the wider profession, and it is our policy to make all the project reports, databases and bibliographies publicly available via the project website [www.emap.ie](http://www.emap.ie).

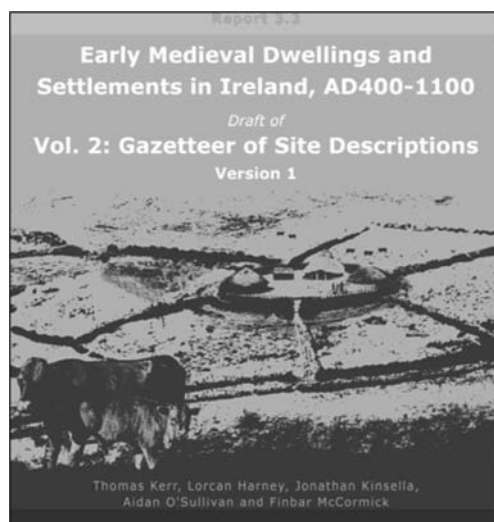
A first significant publication will be *Early Medieval Ireland: Archaeological Excavations 1930–2004* (based on O'Sullivan *et al* 2009), to be published by the Royal Irish Academy in December 2010. The monograph will contain chapters on the historiography of early medieval excavation; early medieval settlement and landscape; agriculture and economy; the church; death and burial; crafts and industry and trade and exchange. The volume is arguably the first academic synthesis of the subject in 20 years.

In 2009, EMAP completed substantial progress on a more detailed investigation of early medieval dwellings and settlements. A gazetteer of excavated early medieval dwellings and settlements providing summaries of 229 'significant' excavated settlement sites has been completed (Kerr *et al* 2009). The report will form the basis for a second book, to be completed in 2010/2011, entitled *Early Medieval Dwellings and Settlements in Ireland, AD 400–1100*. It will provide a more interpretative study of early medieval settlement in Ireland in its wider northwest European context. The Gazetteer provides concise descriptions of key sites with their radiocarbon dates, bibliographies, plans and sections.

EMAP has been preparing a comprehensive bibliography of early medieval archaeology in Ireland. *A Bibliography of Early Medieval Archaeology in Ireland: Version 2* (Harney *et al* 2009) – is a thematic research document. A keyword-searchable ENDNOTE bibliography containing 5,000 early medieval references is to be brought online shortly



to allow users to build queries and import and export bibliographies into and from the system.



*Settlement Gazetteer Cover*

The project includes a database of all excavated early medieval sites in Ireland, which provides such details as a summary of each site, their excavated structures/features and site activities, as well as license-specific information. The database was established in 2008 (Sands *et al* 2008) and has been redesigned and updated in 2009 to include 2,208 excavated sites of all types, preparatory to its online publication as a research resource, where it is to be developed as an Early Medieval Archaeology Research Portal.

EMAP recognises a responsibility to support undergraduate and postgraduate students, across a range of disciplines. In addition to its own EMAP Scholars, the project has supported 10 PhD, 10 MA, MSc and several BA student dissertations in 2008/2009.

Looking ahead, and depending on funding, it is intended to continue publishing substantive volumes and peer-reviewed papers; develop the project website as a primary archaeological research portal for early medieval archaeology in Ireland; and organize a series of seminars and public lectures, while continuing to research early medieval excavations in Ireland.

Aidan O'Sullivan, Finbar McCormick, Lorcan Harney, Jonathan Kinsella,

Thomas Kerr, Matt Seaver, Rob O'Hara, Rob Sands & Conor McDermott. See: [www.emap.ie](http://www.emap.ie)

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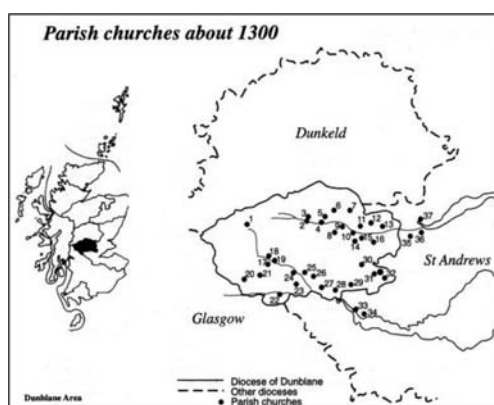
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Seaver, M. & O'Sullivan, A. forthcoming. 'Living with the dead in early medieval Ireland: some observations on burial, cemeteries and settlements, AD 400-1100'. *Medieval Archaeology*.

**Corpus of Scottish medieval parish churches: pilot study in the dioceses of Dunblane and Dunkeld.** Other than a few widely known examples, such as Edinburgh St Giles or Perth St John, the

medieval parish churches of Scotland have tended to be ignored in general surveys of the ecclesiastical architecture of the British Isles. Indeed, it has been widely assumed that very few medieval parish churches survive in a recognisable state. However, recent work has been increasingly suggesting that many more churches have a medieval basis than has been assumed, with initial pointers to this being found in the way that so many churches are oriented, and have proportions that are longer from east to west than would be ideal for reformed worship.

To investigate this more fully, with the generous financial support of the AHRC, Richard Fawcett of St Andrews University, Richard Oram of Stirling University, and Julian Luxford of St Andrews University carried out a pilot study of churches within the area of the medieval dioceses of Dunblane and Dunkeld.



*Map of parishes in the diocese of Dunblane. Reproduced with kind permission from the 'Atlas of Scottish History'*

105 churches and church sites were examined, which together represent approximately one tenth of Scotland's medieval parishes. The preliminary conclusions have suggested that 14 churches still in use and 22 abandoned churches have retained a significant and identifiable element of their medieval appearance; 17 churches are likely to be on the footprint of their medieval predecessors and may incorporate some medieval fabric; and 26 churches are likely to be wholly or partly on the site of their medieval predecessor. The evidence of the other sites is undergoing further evaluation. In only two cases did it not

prove possible to identify the location of the medieval church with confidence.

Although a number of churches were of complex plans, especially in the wealthier and more urban parishes, the majority had never been of more than unaugmented rectangular plan. The average ratio of width to length at churches where the medieval plan appears to have governed what is now seen was in the order of 1:2.69.



*Aberdour Church, diocese of Dunkeld, from SE*

A particular concern of the project had to be the investigation of post-Reformation attitudes to medieval church buildings, and the identification of the consequent range of ways in which the buildings might be adapted to make them more suitable for reformed worship. Structural changes were found to vary from truncation or widening of churches deemed to be too long in relation to their width, through attempts to make two- and three-compartment structures more like single unified spaces. One slightly unexpected finding, however, has been that churches of entirely post-Reformation date might sometimes be as strictly oriented as their medieval predecessors, though it is assumed that this was because of a wish to have the light from southward-facing windows rather than for any ritual reasons.

The results of the project have been set out on a searchable website. The core of this is a section on each site that gives an account of the historical sources, an analytical description of the accessible architectural and archaeological evidence, together with references, bibliography and images. There is also a

series of sections offering overviews of the evidence and discussions of the conclusions drawn from the study. The project website, which is illustrated by over 1,100 images, is <http://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/corpusofscottishchurches>. The findings are also discussed in a forthcoming paper in *Antiquaries Journal*.

It is hoped it will be possible to extend the study to cover the whole of Scotland, and plans are currently being made to take the dioceses of St Andrews, Brechin Argyll and the Isles as the basis for the next phase.

Richard Fawcett, Richard Oram & Julian Luxford



*Banner of Scottish castle initiative website*

The **Scottish Castles Initiative** was launched on 1st May 2009 by Michael Russell MSP, Scottish Government Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution, at the restored Barholm Castle in Dumfries and Galloway. Historic Scotland is undertaking an important initiative exploring castle restoration, under the direction of its Chief Inspector, Malcolm Cooper.

Scotland is internationally renowned for its castles and tower houses. Whether ruined or still in use, they are an important part of Scotland's heritage and identity. Scotland has many moderately sized tower houses that lend themselves to re-occupation, and as a consequence there has been a long tradition of successful castle and tower house restoration. The tradition continues into the present day with towers being restored for family homes and also for commercial and leisure use.

Restoration projects are by their nature complex, and restoration will not be appropriate in every case. However Historic Scotland believes that the tradition of restoration should continue and be encouraged. The Initiative will

provide people with guidance, advice and the expertise they need for restoration projects. It is the first of its kind to be undertaken by the Scottish Government and it aims to encourage financial investment in, and refurbishment of, Scotland's built heritage.

The main aims of the project are:

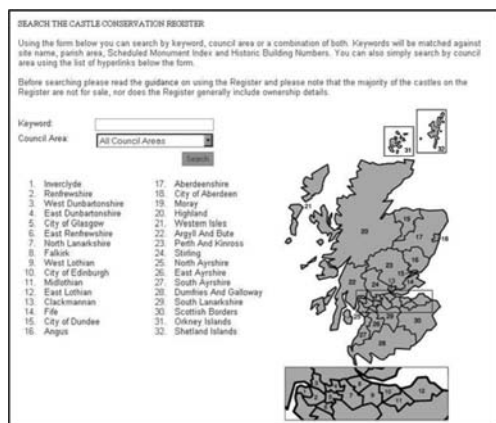
- The preparation, maintenance and publishing of an online register of castles and tower houses which demonstrate the characteristics that would enable a successful scheme for restoration to be developed.
- A guide to castle and tower house restoration drawing on Scottish exemplars, showing best practice and acting as a resource pack for prospective owners and developers.
- A publication outlining the history of castle and tower house restoration in Scotland which will provide the historical context of this fascinating aspect of Scotland's historic environment.
- Identification of an exemplary project to allow further public understanding of the history of Scottish castles and towerhouses, their conservation and/or their restoration and the development of craft-skills and best practice.



*Fairburn Tower, Highland*

The project is progressing well with the register now online with 22 entries and with further entries planned ([www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/))

scottishcastleinitiative.htm). Historic Scotland has taken care to ensure that owners are fully consulted before placing any entry on the register and has been heartened by the response. The owners themselves have fairly disparate views on restoration; some would like to restore their properties themselves, some would be happy for another party to restore their castle on a long-lease basis, others would sell to a restoring owner if the circumstances were appropriate and others are Trusts that are actively progressing schemes to bring a castle back into some form of use. There are also a few owners who would not like to see their towers restored at all but are content for them to be on the register recognising that they are nevertheless good examples of the types of castles and tower house that can be restored.



CCR Search page

We have appointed Simpson and Brown to assist Historic Scotland with the production of a guide to castle restoration. As with the other parts of the Initiative, owners of restored castles have been closely involved and have been interviewed as part of the compilation of case studies. Historic Scotland has been very anxious to get a broad picture of castle restoration, not simply from the perspective of the architect, and the guide will encapsulate owners' experiences of the restoration process and some of the ups and downs of living in a restored castle.

Historic Scotland is also progressing with a monograph on the history of restoration in Scotland and the State's involvement with such projects. This is being authored by Professor Richard

Fawcett of Historic Scotland and St Andrew's University and Dr Allan Rutherford of Historic Scotland and is to be published by the Council for British Archaeology.



CCR guidance page

A reference group has been established to ensure the Castle Initiative has an external perspective and this meets every quarter. The group is made up of castle owners, architects and other professionals in the field.

For further information, contact Dr Allan Rutherford of Historic Scotland at alan.rutherford@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

**Gardens, Pits and People: expanding the search for medieval Wallingford.** The Wallingford Burh to Borough Research Project, organised between Leicester, Exeter and Oxford Universities and funded by the AHRC from 2008, is now in its final year of full fieldwork and research. As highlighted in *Medieval Archaeology* 53 (2009) 'Fieldwork Highlights', this major project is geared to examining in detail the archaeology of an important later Saxon and medieval town in south Oxfordshire: Wallingford was in origin a substantial shire *burh* of Alfredian date, and a royal seat from the Norman period, in part in recognition of its strategic and economic location on the Thames. Earthworks of both the *burh* urban rampart (on the western and northern flanks) and the substantial castle (north-east quarter) are the major visible elements of Wallingford's medieval heritage. Excavation, topographic survey, geophysics, standing building analysis, archive analysis (of developed-led work, watching briefs, and, in particular, unpublished reports of some sizeable excavations in the castle area in the 1960s and 1970s), plus PhD studies (generously funded also by the AHRC) provide the key tools employed in this project. As the air photograph of Wallingford shows, the town offers excellent scope for large-scale intra- and

extra-urban geophysical survey and targeted research excavations, which have been designed to explore the size, content and material culture of the town from its origins to its late medieval decline. Excavations in 2008 and 2009 (reported in *South Midlands Archaeology*) investigated the spaces of the Kinecroft and Bullcroft (the former with housing of 12<sup>th</sup>-century date; the latter pointing to the north-west zone having long remained open ground), areas of the castle inner bailey and outer rampart, and the medieval roadway beyond the town's north gate. In 2010 we will explore the north gate area plus a presumed 12<sup>th</sup>-century quay structure between the castle and the river.



*NMR photo of Wallingford viewed from the south, displaying a clear late Saxon sub-rectangular plan; the tree line on the left side traces the extant ramparts of the western half of the town*

The project is more than a University-led and run project (also utilising professional unit staff amongst its supervisors): from the outset it has been a partnership with local bodies whose knowledge is crucial for guiding, informing and assisting our work on numerous levels. Reading Museum and the Ashmolean Museum (Oxford) have given access to materials from previous studies and finds in the town and from the river; the Northmoor Trust, a conservation body that manages both the Castle Meadows and Riverside Meadows, has aided in advice, site access and preparation; but most prominently, the teams that make up Wallingford Museum and The Wallingford Historical

and Archaeological Society (TWHAS) have been generous in time, space, volunteers and enthusiasm. Conferences and talks, displays and posters, open days and tours, teas and biscuits are all fruitful components of this partnership.

In this Newsletter article, we highlight a significant sub-project that has evolved within the academic research. From the early days of fieldwork, it was recognised that trenching and survey would necessarily focus on the larger, open spaces of Wallingford and its suburbs – and in so doing run the risk of missing vital data on urban and suburban development, mainly due to the presence of much built-up space in the historic core and to west and south. A strategy was devised with TWHAS, and in full consultation and liaison with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services, and building on the experience and methods of the Whittlewood project (overseen by Prof Dyer, University of Leicester), to initiate a programme of urban garden archaeology, comprising test-pitting in gardens offered by TWHAS members and keen members of the public alike. Started by the academic team to ensure training in methods and recording, the programme is now fully co-ordinated and managed by TWHAS. The two teams link up for every other month weekends (x 3 test-pits), but TWHAS undertake monthly test-pits too to ensure momentum is maintained. Currently 23 garden test-pits have been dug, recorded and logged (a wiki hosts all the reports); finds are washed and sorted by TWHAS members, and finds analysis is undertaken by specialists. The end target is 100 test-pits.



*TWHAS members in the snow engaging in mid-winter test-pitting, sieving and recording*

The programme has developed its own style and ‘technologies’. The test-pits are all 1.5 × 1.0m in dimensions and are excavated in spits of 20cm unless surfaces dictate one or more smaller spits; features are recorded; and soil samples are taken where suited. All spits are 100% sieved unless conditions prevent this (e.g. excessive clay content or wet conditions – though gazebos do make regular appearances and snow does not halt the work!). Plastic tarpaulins encircle the test-pit to prevent damage to lawns and gardens, and builders’ sacks are used generally for the sieving and to contain the soil. We ensure that locations are negotiated with owners and they are kept informed of proceedings, finds, tea and toilet needs, etc. and they inspect the test-pit when completed and back-filled. No complaints so far – not even really when minimal finds and archaeology turn up!



*Young John displays one of the fragments of medieval floor tile found in a test-pit near the High Street and Bullcroft which helps to pinpoint structures of the ‘lost’ Norman priory*

The 2010 summer targets include a focussing of effort on the north-western intramural area of the Bullcroft and its environs, to pin down the extension of the demolished priory. The trenches may be difficult in terms of legibility and access, but by plotting areas of demolition, and hopefully picking up floored areas and possible walls we may get a valid and valuable image emerging. Additional test pits will be made to the south of the town in the area of St John’s Primary School – where the children will be helping out – as a mini-archaeological contribution to their Centenary year!

Finally, of course, it is important to stress that the test-pitting or garden

archaeology programme is one that can and will continue beyond the lifetime of the AHRC Wallingford project. The members of TWHAS are keen and eager to keep enhancing their knowledge of this historic town and bite-sized insights are now recognised as an important training and research tool. They can keep you fit as well!

Neil Christie & Matt Edgeworth  
(University of Leicester), Gerard Latham & Judy Dewey (Wallingford Museum and TWHAS)

## RESEARCH CENTRES



*Durham Cathedral*

**Medieval Archaeology at Durham University** is recognized as a leading centre of excellence with an international reputation for high-quality and wide-ranging research on the historic archaeology of Britain and Europe. Building on a long tradition of medieval archaeology, established at Durham University by Prof. Rosemary Cramp, the Department offers research and supervisory expertise on the medieval archaeology of Britain and North West Europe. Our research strengths include: death and burial, religion and belief, monumentality and landscape in early medieval Britain and Europe (Dr Sarah Semple); early medieval sculpture (CASSS); the archaeology of early medieval Wales, western Britain and Ireland, Christianity and the conversion (Dr David Petts); early medieval to high medieval settlement archaeology, and landscape studies, ceramics and trade in Britain and Spain (Prof. Christopher Gerrard); the urban archaeology of Britain and its European trading partners and the archaeology of religious practice, c. 1200-c. 1800 AD (Dr Pam Graves) and

the historiography of Medieval Archaeology. Our coverage extends beyond Europe, with complementary research taking place on society and monasticism in early medieval Sri Lanka (Prof. Robin Coningham) and settlement, economy and monetization in early medieval India (Dr Derek Kennet).

Research on medieval societies also forms a core part of our archaeological science provision with Prof. Charlotte Roberts, Dr Becky Gowland and Dr Andrew Millard pursuing research interests in the health, diet, disease and pathology in medieval populations; field and laboratory-based research by Dr Mike Church on Norse settlement and environmental impact in the North Atlantic.

Recent and on-going major research projects include: Canon Greenwell and the Development of Archaeology in the North of England (Leverhulme Trust); the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture (AHRC); Durham Secular Medieval Buildings Project (EH); Durham Cathedral and Castle World Heritage Site; Bamburgh Bowl-Hole Anglian Cemetery (AHRC); One Monastery in Two Places: Wearmouth and Jarrow in their Landscape Context (EH) and The Assembly Project. Meeting Places in Northern Europe AD 400-1500 (HERA) (see above this issue). Field projects include: Roman and Medieval Binchester, Co. Durham; the Shapwick Project. Somerset; A Rural Landscape Explored; Nevern Castle – Castell Nanhyver, Pembrokeshire, Wales; Moncayo Archaeological Survey, NE Spain; Archaeology of Assembly and Governance: Anundshög, Västmanland, Sweden; and Yeavinger, Northumberland, England.

We hold a range of research seminars and day-workshops each year with workshops on the History of Medieval Archaeology and a Sense of Place: Anglo-Saxon Place-names and their landscape contexts taking place in 2009–10. Research seminars take place throughout the year via our integration with the Departmental Research Groupings (Landscape, History of Archaeology, Biographies of Artefacts, Bioarchaeology and the Archaeology of

Northern England) and resulting from our close links with the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies and the Institute for Advanced Studies. In 2009–10, we are hosting an interdisciplinary and cross-faculty workshop network on ‘Water as Sacred Power’ sponsored by the IAS.

We enjoy a thriving community of taught and research postgraduates with a dedicated strand in Historic Archaeology at Masters level, which caters for those with research interests in the archaeology of early to late medieval Britain and Europe. We have over 15 PhD students specializing in aspects of medieval archaeology at present and current topics include: the use, meaning and socio-cultural significance of dress accessories from British border regions, c. AD 1300–1700; the colour and composition of medieval jewellery; Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture in Mercia as evidence of continental influence and cultural exchange; head injury and disability in the medieval period, 1066–1600; the Role of ‘Pilgrimage Architecture’ in the Sensory Experience of the Medieval Church; a historiography of the archaeology Anglo-Saxon Conversion; the uses of enclosure in early medieval secular and ecclesiastical sites; human and animal-human hybrid imagery in Anglo-Saxon decorative metalwork; isotopic approaches to diet within the multi-faith society of medieval Spain; and Patterns of monetisation and coin loss in England during the Middle Ages (11th-16th centuries).



*University College, Durham*

Since 2007, the Durham Medieval Network, organized and led by our PhD students, has held a series of events and day workshops, including the AHRC-funded workshop series ‘Sensory Perceptions in Medieval Britain’ and led a range of sessions at major conferences

e.g. Leeds IMC 2008; TAG 2008; TAG 2009.

We are currently welcoming applications to the MA Archaeology (Historic Strand) (please contact Dr Pam Graves at [c.p.graves@durham.ac.uk](mailto:c.p.graves@durham.ac.uk)) and enquiries from prospective applicants for PhD research (please contact Drs Graves, Semple, Petts, Caple or Prof. Gerrard direct by e-mail). For more information see our Department website: [www.dur.ac.uk/archaeology/postgraduate/research\\_degrees/research\\_areas/medieval/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/archaeology/postgraduate/research_degrees/research_areas/medieval/)

We will shortly be advertising a fully funded PhD on the subject of early medieval assembly places and practices in northern England before and during Danelaw, tenable from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010; see our website for details and contact:

Sarah Semple, [s.j.semple@durham.ac.uk](mailto:s.j.semple@durham.ac.uk).

## NEWS & VIEWS

**Curating the Middle Ages.** On 10<sup>th</sup> February, the curators of the Museum of London's *Medieval London Gallery* (John Clark), The British Museum's *Paul and Jill Ruddock Gallery of Medieval Europe* (James Robinson) and the V&A's *Medieval & Renaissance 300–1600* (Glyn Davies) galleries came together at King's College London to discuss the challenges of re-presenting their medieval collections, following the recent opening of all three galleries. Shifting chronology was the common theme that emerged from the presentations and Q&A that followed, with 'when is medieval?' being a fundamental issue that each museum was forced to engage with in different ways. While all three have jettisoned the iconic 1066 date, the V&A has opted to begin its story in 300 in order to establish a narrative of Christian art, whilst the Museum of London's gallery has retained the traditional 410 starting point and terminates at a thoroughly logical 1534 with the dissolution of the monasteries. The British Museum, reflecting its international standing and visitor base, has chosen 1050 and 1500 to delimit the later medieval period, and although arbitrary, these dates do manage to avoid the controversy that has (and will

continue to) beset the timelines of the other institutions. In particular, the V&A's Glyn Davies fielded particularly sharp criticism over the handling of Islamic art and cultural influence, the V&A's timeline marking only the inception and destruction of the Islamic state in Spain. However, as the curators of all the museums were quick to point out, the nature of interpretation is inevitably dictated by each museum's collections and remit; all the museums had considered, on at least some level, the most problematic aspect of medieval curation – the danger of presenting a monocultural or glamourised image of the middle ages that perpetuates uncomfortable nineteenth century myths. Also welcome in the discourse was a self-conscious recognition of each gallery's place in its own historical continuum. These three new medieval galleries represent a wilfully modern and 'en vogue' approach to museum and gallery design and interpretation. The Museum of London's John Clark remained unconvinced by the result; all acknowledged that history will be the judge of their success.

Tom Williams

### Excavations at Lejre continue

With renewed funding from the 'Foundation of 29 December 1967' (established by Ejlif Krogager), Roskilde Museum has recently found it possible to resume investigations at the old princely seat of Lejre. This has resulted in epoch-making discoveries during the summer of 2009.



*Christensen at Lejre*

Three huge new halls from the Viking Age have come to the light of day, each of which exceeds in size the previously discovered 'Lejre Hall'. The largest of these constructions measures no less than



60m in length and 11m in breadth, surpassing all known buildings of this era in southern Scandinavia.

It is now possible for Roskilde Museum to bring forth yet more exciting details about these unique antiquities, which represent only a small part of a yet larger complex of buildings that have not yet been excavated.

From an historical point of view, the area around Gammel Lejre is unique, even from an international perspective, on account of the close interplay between well-known legends about the Skjoldungs and *Beowulf*, the many prehistoric monuments that are visible at Lejre, and the rich archaeological discoveries.

Indeed, the area of Lejre constitutes a significant part of the project 'Land of the Skjoldungs', which, with the support of the Arbejdsmarkedets Feriefond (the Workers' Market Vacation Fund), has as its purpose to develop the idea of a National Park to be located at Lejre and the Roskilde district. Extending the opening hours of Lejre Museum is part of that plan, as is research using magnetometers to provide an image of constructions hidden beneath the earth.

Based on a Roskilde Museum article, October 2009, see <http://www.roskildemuseum.dk> for additional information and reporting.

John Niles

## SOCIETY NEWS

**Medieval Domestic Cultures conference: Oxford, 24–26 September 2010.** Medieval artefacts and medieval buildings are generally studied entirely separately and usually by different people. Even the pioneering volume of London finds, *The Medieval Household*, was a study of items which belonged in the house, rather than an examination of artefacts in their domestic setting. In recent years a number of new studies have appeared, mainly by historians, which have begun to consider domestic interiors and the way in which they might have appeared to occupants and been shaped for display to visitors. Domestic cultures is a rapidly developing field of research being studied

not only from documents, but also using the evidence of the buildings themselves and of artefacts.

The Society's autumn conference will be a chance to review the latest work in this field in England, Scotland and Wales. The conference is held jointly with the Vernacular Architecture Group and brings together for the first time in recent years scholars from all the relevant disciplines to consider the evidence for the interiors of medieval houses.



*The chamber at 15<sup>th</sup>-century Bayleaf farmhouse at the Weald and Downland Museum, Sussex*

## Programme

Furnishing the medieval English house – archaeology, documents and buildings – **Mark Gardiner**

Residence or workspace? The use of medieval urban buildings in England – **Sarah Pearson**

Domestic culture in the south east: evidence from the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum – **Danae Tankard**

Lost comforts in the early Scottish house – **Charles McKean**

Domestic artefacts and furnishing from Scotland – how well does the archaeological record reflect the written sources – **David Caldwell**

Medieval dwellings in Wales inside out – **Richard Suggett**

Interiors and households in Wales and the Marches c. 1450–1550 – **Charles Kightly**

Gender, status, and intimacy: the meaning of furnishings in town and country – **Jeremy Goldberg**

Ceramic scene-setters in the medieval home – **Maureen Mellor**

Lifestyle in late medieval Wharram Percy – **Peter Brears**

Living in medieval peasant houses – **Chris Dyer**

The conference is being organized by the Dept of Continuing Education, University of Oxford and further details can be obtained from their website: <http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk>

**Dr Patricia Hutchinson**, who sadly died on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2009, has left the Society for Medieval Archaeology a legacy of £1,000.

#### *Advance Notice*

The **Society's AGM** will take place on **Monday 6th December 2010**, the venue and time to be announced in the Autumn Newsletter. The AGM will be followed by the **Annual Lecture**, to be given by our president, **Leslie Webster**, on the subject, *Forging backwards: a contextual look at Anglo-Saxon fakes*.

#### **LOOKING AHEAD TO 2011**

**Don't forget the Society's Excursion to Rome, 16–23 September 2011 with Professor Éamonn Ó Carragáin, noticed in the previous Newsletter.** The Society is delighted to announce that Professor Éamonn Ó Carragáin of University College Cork has agreed to lead a tour of Rome for Society members. Participants will be able to benefit from Éamonn's personal knowledge of the city, its history, art and archaeology. The itinerary, which will concentrate on Medieval Rome, will include special admissions to important medieval sites. It is hoped to include in the programme visits to Castel Sant'Angelo; the Crypta Balbi museum of Medieval Rome; St Peter's Basilica (especially the fragments of Old St Peter's in the Crypt of the Popes, and the Vatican necropolis); the Vatican galleries and the Sistine Chapel; the excavations under the basilicas of San Clemente, Santi Giovanni e Paolo, San Crisogono and Santa Cecilia; the frescoes recently found in the excavations at Santa Susanna; Santa Maria Antiqua and the Chapel of the Forty Martyrs in the Roman Forum; the Sancta Sanctorum chapel at the Lateran; the catacomb of Priscilla, and many other sites.

Participants will be accommodated in the British School at Rome which offers good, set evening meals, included in the

price. Participants will also have the opportunity to meet Roman scholars based at the British School at Rome, and will enjoy access to the School's excellent Roman archaeological library.

The excursion and accommodation fee per person ranges from 610 to 990 Euro and includes bed, breakfast, and dinner Sunday to Friday, and breakfast and packed lunch on a Saturday, metro/bus tickets and admission to a number of museums and sites.

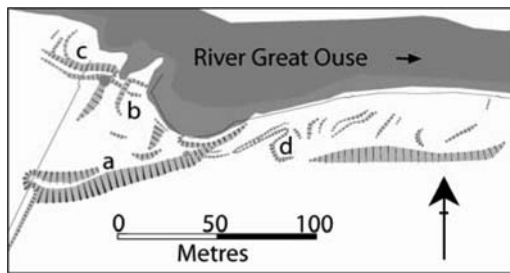
Participants will make their own travel arrangements to Rome, the price of which is not included in the fee. For details of exact costs please contact Katinka Stentoft at [katstentoft@hotmail.com](mailto:katstentoft@hotmail.com).

Interested members should contact **Katinka Stentoft at [katstentoft@hotmail.com](mailto:katstentoft@hotmail.com)** for further information. Please also note that places are limited to 26, and it is recommended to express an interest as soon as possible. These dates are not yet finalised and may change.

#### **GRANTS AND AWARDS, 2009**

**Tempsford.** Funding was provided by the Eric Fletcher Fund to Michael Fradley, a Ph.D candidate at the University of Exeter, to undertake a measured earthwork survey of a site (TL 153534) identified as a possible early 10<sup>th</sup>-century Danish fortification near Tempsford in Bedfordshire, amounting to £425. Fieldwork support was provided by Tom Phillips and in close liaison with Project Director Dr Matt Edgeworth (University of Leicester).

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that a Danish force abandoned their fortification at Huntingdon in favour of one at Tempsford, and that Danish forces were subsequently defeated by an army under Edward the Elder, with casualties including the Danish king of East Anglia (Swanton 1996, 101–2). The site of the documented fort of Tempsford has never been positively identified, and the present site under investigation has only recently been brought into consideration, although field investigations have yet to clarify the site's date or function (Edgeworth 2008).



*Tempsford survey*

The site is divided by a modern field boundary and at a basic level consisted of a large D-shaped ditched enclosure about 200m long and up to 80m wide fronting on to the Great River Ouse to the north. The local hydrology has changed significantly in the post-medieval period from navigation improvements; most significantly the site formerly stood a little west of the confluence of the River Ivel with the Great Ouse. Features identified principally through the analysis of aerial photographs in the western field originally stimulated interest in the site. Unfortunately it quickly became clear that despite lying outside the area of modern cultivation there was little in the way of surviving earthworks in this western area, and that it had been subject to heavy ploughing previously before being removed as 'set-aside' in the early 1990s as it was subject to regular flooding. In contrast far better preservation of earthworks was encountered in the eastern field which at present is used as pasture.

The enclosure ditch (a) was recorded across the eastern field for a distance of some 70m and measures up to 15m wide and 0.6m deep. The ditch may have originated as a natural side channel of the Great Ouse and was overlaid at its east end by the spoil and cut of a large sub-circular bay at the time of whose construction the earlier ditch had clearly fallen into dis-use. Internally a small rectilinear layout of earthworks (b) appears to relate to some form of occupation or activity on the site. To the west the remnants of a large bank (c) aligned east-west and measuring up to 4m in width and 1m in height was recorded continuing into the western field. A second, silted bay was recorded on the north side of the bank, and if the latter feature continued westwards it may have overlooked a number of possible

bay revetment features previously noted along the waterfront in aerial photographs. At a simple level the bank may have served to separate the immediate waterfront area from the rest of the enclosure interior, potentially even serving a defensive role.

In addition to the earthworks of the enclosure itself, a complex of connected earthworks probably related to water management were recorded to the east. Situated on a narrow tongue of land defined by the river to the north and an extensive area of lower-lying marshland to the south, the complex begins with a narrow channel tapering off from the large ditch of the main enclosure. In turn this channel fed into a rectangular pit or pool (d); a succession of less well-defined but related earthworks was recorded further east.

Earthwork survey of the Tempsford site has confirmed that it has been utilised extensively in the past and that a significant archaeological potential survives. Although it has not succeeded in defining date or function, much of it would appear to pre-date the post-medieval navigation of the local river courses and it would appear likely to be medieval or earlier in date, and potentially of multiple phases. A number of areas for future investigation have been highlighted, and this has been complimented by the results of recent geophysical work. In spite of a lack of data being retrieved from the western half of the site, the identification of a possible water management system to the east has further highlighted its complexity, while the low-lying marsh area to the south would appear to emphasise its apparent inaccessibility by land. Ultimately archaeological excavation will be required to move the analysis and interpretation of this site forward, but the present survey marks an important step in guiding any future intervention and assuring that any results may be set in their wider topographic context.

Michael Fradley

#### References

M. Swanton (ed). 1996. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, London: Phoenix.

M. Edgeworth. 2008. 'The Tempsford Project: An Interim Report', *South Midlands Archaeology* 38, 8–16.

#### **The Cosmeston Archaeological Project.**

A research grant was received from the Society towards the costs of digitizing the archive records of the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust's (GGAT) excavations at the medieval village of Cosmeston, Vale of Glamorgan, between 1977 and 1987. With further funding from the Medieval Settlement Research Group and from the Cardiff School of History and Archaeology, a primary finds database (Microsoft Access™) has been created, initially containing simple transcriptions of the catalogue produced by students for the Project from the GGAT records and the sorted finds themselves. In this finds are classified, quantified, and listed by context. With the unexpected but welcome recovery of many of the original site plans and sections, this phase of work has also been able to include scanning of the drawings, and a start has been made on scanning site photographs. Currently the original context-sheet records are being transcribed to a digital database.

The work of the project thus continues on a more strongly evaluated, accessible and applicable basis. Understanding of the site is being improved through targeted further excavation as a community project. Incorporating the results of an AHRC collaborative doctoral studentship (2009–12), we look to the publication of a full report within five years. All digitised records may be consulted on request, and will gradually be made available directly from the website. The latter is constrained at present by the practicality of uploading the data and the need for care with raw archive information. The finds database is now being made available category by category at [www.cardiff.ac.uk/hisar/archaeology/cosmeston/](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/hisar/archaeology/cosmeston/)

John Hines

**Residue analysis.** A grant of £300 was received from the Fletcher fund to carry out a pilot residue analysis study of pottery from *Hamwic* (mid-Saxon Southampton). The grant was added to a small sum of money received from

the University of Southampton's archaeology department. A total of 9 sherds of various fabrics from across the settlement were sent to KU Leuven (Belgium) for Gas Chromatography Mass Spectroscopy (GC/MS) residue analysis. The results of this analysis are promising. All of the sherds analysed had traces of some organic residues. These were chiefly ruminant fats (which occurred on 8 of the 9 sherds), fish indicators (5 sherds) and evidence of green or woody vegetables (8 sherds). The most exciting discovery was traces of herbs on a sherd of mid-Saxon sandy ware from SOU 31 (Six Dials). It is likely to relate to the presence of a herb such as coriander or juniper. Such traces are extremely rare. The evidence offers tantalising evidence of the way herbs may have been used to flavour dishes in the mid-Saxon period and may even allude to the following of recipes. Funding is now being sought for a larger programme of analysis to better understand the use of pottery across the settlement, changes which occurred over time and differences in the usage of different ceramic types.

Ben Jervis, University of Southampton

#### **MEDIA AND EXHIBITION**

##### **Redefining the Dark Ages: public participation and the medieval past.**

Things being all quiet on the cinematic front allowed me to catch-up with the DVD releases of the most recent film adaptation of *Beowulf*, *Outlander* (US 2008) [given an engaging sci-fi spin by having Beowulf and his monsters remediated as aliens, bitter enemies from two different worlds] but I will save that tale for another day and instead I am prompted to write about a treasure fit for Beowulf, the Staffordshire Hoard.<sup>1</sup> I write this column amidst a hectic week (ending on 10 October 2009) in which on-going thoughts about cultural biography and its application to medieval material culture clashed for time with the need to attend to the cultural biography of my house (i.e. redecorating the kitchen). One consequence was that I was unable to attend the official launch (8 October) of the recently published *A Fragmented Masterpiece – Recovering the*

*Biography of the Hilton of Cadboll Cross-slab* (by Heather James, Sally Foster, Isabel Henderson and Sian Jones), in the seaboard hamlet of Hilton, Easter Ross. The book is a landmark publication in Pictish sculpture, in cultural biography and in public archaeology. The Hilton community's attachment to its unsurpassed piece (or rather many pieces, partly in the National Museum, Edinburgh and, one piece, partly in Hilton) of 8<sup>th</sup> century Pictish sculpture forms a pivotal element in the book's analysis of the monument's importance. The impasse over the lower portion of the cross-slab retained in Hilton (a prize of self-determining heritage guerrilla action) reflects the political sensitivity around trying to balance legal and expert opinion with other ways of knowing regarded by the Hilton community. In another guise, at the end of the week, I was confronted with the same reflex to acknowledge, to include, to respect public opinion on the past, with a visit to see elements of the Staffordshire Hoard on display in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

The recognition of public involvement in archaeology is, of course, a key strand of the Portable Antiquities Scheme in England and Wales. Whilst there may be some truth to the criticism that the PAS veers on pandering to metal-detectorists, certainly north of the border in Scotland most archaeologists look on enviously at the level of resources that supports the PAS – even crumbs from this table would be an improvement on the less than meagre resources that currently fail to hide the shame of the Scottish Treasure Trove system. If ever a case demonstrated the value of the PAS and the collaboration it facilitates between detectorists, archaeologists and the public it is probably that of the Staffordshire Hoard. Despite the large gap between my penning (or should that be key-tapping?) this piece and its appearance in the Newsletter in Spring 2010, I am sure the details of the hoard as found do not need repeating and that readers will be familiar with the account in the November issue of either *British Archaeology* or *Current Archaeology* and with the excellent PAS website: [www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk](http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk) (combining

both superb photography and initial interpretation and comments, to be followed by an initial guide book to appear in November 2009). Suffice to say that in an otherwise undistinguished field some 4 miles from Lichfield and 10 miles from Tamworth, a little short of 1,500 objects of precious metalwork (gold, gold and garnet and silver) were recovered in July 2009, initially via metal detector, later by excavation. The initial view is that they could represent a hoard of war trophies (with persuasive interpretive recourse to Beowulf from Dr Kevin Leahy) possibly deposited in the early to mid 7<sup>th</sup> century. Fieldwork has not established the presence of a site in the field to corroborate the finding of the metalwork. However the exposed, wind-blown location and its history of ploughing could account for the lack of such site context. Its wider landscape, with a clutch of Anglo-Saxon placenames (including an Odin element) and an out-stepping parish boundary on which the field sits, combined with the selective nature of the finds (with particular parts of swords substituting for whole swords for example) suggests that the items may have been ritually deposited (presumably over several years) in a pagan tradition, possibly at the site of a sacred tree. Beowulf may be appropriate again here: 'Hold you now, earth, now warriors may not, the possessions of warriors!' (lines 2247–8 quoted by Bazelmans following Alexander's translation<sup>2</sup>). By the time this column appears no doubt inroads into these questions and others will have been made (expedited by the very timely publication of the detailed photographs of the hoard – see below). My main focus here is rather the initial display of the hoard in Birmingham Museum, which proved such a fascinating and popular experience.

As displays go, it was not a landmark event: the hoard had to share gallery space with some decidedly uneven modern art, was displayed in six 'what was available' cases, in glaringly bright light and with the baldest of labels. This led to what one might call an interpretation gap – certainly some frustration was detectable in the muttered questions along the lines of 'what is filigree?' and 'how did they do that?' and

‘what was that for?’ testifying to a fascination with what and how. This could have been reasonably accommodated with a single sheet leaflet/flier containing a glossary of terms and a labelled drawing of a sword hilt. I did hear from a colleague that when she had been in the queue earlier in the week some enterprising Brummies were selling at 50p a time their “home-made” leaflets explaining early medieval swords, Sutton Hoo etc. My own queue was only regaled by a Big Issue seller, seeking donations towards his breakfast. Later in the day there were costumed latter-day Anglo-Saxon warriors (including “Sutton Hoo Man”) to entertain the queue (though these included rather anachronistic later medieval musicians). However, such otherwise failings mattered little against the public appetite to see the hoard material as soon as possible. Eighty-two pieces were displayed, all, but for one silver sword-pommel cap (decorated with two boar figures), of gold or gold and garnet, predominantly sword/dagger/seax furniture, but also the pectoral cross, the crumpled (processional?) cross, the inscribed strip and two of the previously unknown snake objects. Many of the objects still had some of their field-soil adhering to them, which though obscuring did convey a sense of the newly discovered and gave all of us on-lookers a sense of sharing in first contact with this material in well over 1,000 years. Because the items had not been over-cleaned they also retained the true dullness of fine gold (and reaffirmed the oft-quoted Beowulf analogy, ‘They let the ground keep the ancestral treasure, gold under gravel, gone to earth, as useless to man now as it ever was’ [lines 3166–68 in the Heaney translation, note 2 below]).

Though the viewing conditions were cramped, it was a splendid congestion as each case was surrounded by eager, respectful eyes feeding into hungry brains: many did not want to leave, causing bottle-necks which led to unsurprising expressions of concern from warding staff as to how they were going to get everybody through.



*Queuing to see the Staffordshire Hoard, Oct. 09*

The day I visited –10 October– the Museum extended the opening hours from 9am -11pm. Arriving just before 9am I was greeted by the first queuers who had arrived at 7am. It was a good-humoured bunch of couples and family groups encompassing all ages, predominantly white and predominantly local (though I know there were visitors from as far afield as California and Bangladesh). Museum staff kept the younger members fed with word searches and a colour leaflet on the hoard was available for £1, the proceeds going to the purchase fund for the treasure. My queuing stint lasted 2 hours 45 minutes (later in the day the wait rose to 5 hours). Earlier in the week management of the queue was attempted through the use of timed tickets but this had to be abandoned when the enterprising Brummies showed up again selling their timed tickets to people much later in the queue. What lured all these people and the thousands of others over the preceding two weeks? For some certainly it was the thrill of a new find in their favoured subject area but for many it seems to have been the lure of gold, the romantic idea of treasure that everyone would love to find and retire on – seeing it in the flesh perhaps making it seem a more tangible prospect for themselves to find?

Symposia, conferences and workshops will surely follow, stimulating debate for years to come but the over-riding question I was left with is how, in present times, will the Potteries Museum and Birmingham Museum be able to afford the inevitable high asking price.\* The Yorkshire Hoard (2007) of Viking Age

silver and gold went for a valuation of £1million, with joint ownership between the BM and the Yorkshire Museum. That hoard comprised 684 objects (617 of them coins) and very little gold. The Staffordshire Hoard will undoubtedly be valued well in excess of this figure (at least £2million, one imagines). Indeed one of the drivers for the hoard going on display so quickly is presumably to fully embed it in public consciousness so as to have a chance of raising the huge sum that will be needed to keep it in the public domain. But how are resource-starved museums to continue to fulfil their public duty to collect? They may just cope with this Hoard (let's be optimistic) but what about the next one and the one after that ...?

Mark A Hall  
Perth Museum & Art Gallery

#### Notes

1. The only thing to report is a delightful, Virgin Media Short currently (October 2009) doing the cinema rounds (but also available online): *Ceci N'est Pas Une Mouche* ('This is Not a Fly'), an animation built around Crivelli's late 15<sup>th</sup> century painting of *St Catherine of Alexandria*, which includes a life-size fly on the frame of the painting, a Magritte-like gesture questioning viewers perceptions of what is real.
2. Jos Bazelmans 1999 *By Weapons made Worthy, Lords, Retainers and Their Relationship in Beowulf*, Amsterdam University Press (Amsterdam Studies in Archaeology 5), p.155; Michael Alexander 1973 (1995 ed.) *Beowulf A Verse Translation*, London. Heaney has 'Now, earth, hold what earls once held and heroes can no more;' – Seamus Heaney 1999 *Beowulf A New Translation*, London. In this episode the treasure and only the treasure, is being committed to a barrow.

\* On going to Press, it was announced that the Art Fund had been able to acquire the hoard for the nation. See: <http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk/> that the.

## FUTURE CONTRIBUTIONS

As the Newsletter continues to develop, we especially welcome submissions relating to current research projects in Ireland, the UK and on the continent.

We would like to suggest that submissions do not exceed 1,000 words.

Images are welcome with your text, but *please do not embed* pictures in Word/text files as this restricts our ability to ensure high-grade printed versions in the Newsletter.

Please send pictures/plans as separate high quality JPEG files.

If in doubt, please contact the Newsletter Editor below.

The due dates for receipt of copy are as follows:

Spring Newsletter: 15<sup>th</sup> February  
Autumn Newsletter: 15<sup>th</sup> August

Many thanks,

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### Did You Know?

Volumes 1–50 of *Medieval Archaeology* are available online via the Archaeology Data Service (ADS).

[http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/med\\_arch/](http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/med_arch/)



Three Society Monographs were launched in December 2009, among which was the Society's 50th anniversary volume, which is packed full of essays that look ahead to the future of Medieval Archaeology. <http://www.maney.co.uk/index.php/books/sma30/?back=1>

To **advertise conferences/events in the Newsletter**, contact: *Dr Oliver Creighton*, Dept. of Archaeology, Laver Building, North Park Road, Exeter, Devon, UK EX4 4QE, or email [o.h.creighton@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:o.h.creighton@exeter.ac.uk)

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