

Medieval Archaeology

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY

New Approaches to the Construction and Survival of the Late Medieval English Peasant House

Dr Mark Gardiner, Queen's University, Belfast,
& SMA President, will present
The Society for Medieval Archaeology's Annual Lecture, 2013



It is more than forty years since John Hurst last offered an overview of the archaeological evidence for the medieval peasant house in England. The volume of excavated data now available, together with evidence from standing buildings makes it possible to revisit the conclusions he offered. Perhaps surprisingly, Hurst's analysis still serves as a good basis for understanding.

The greatest area of change in our thinking, however, has been in the interpretation of the durability of peasant houses. We no longer view these as structures that were poorly built and could

only last for a couple of decades. But is there a better explanation for the patterns in the construction and abandonment of houses? Chris Currie has offered one interpretation based around the idea of the progressive 'attrition' of the housing stock. An alternative approach proposed in this paper considers those factors which led to conscious decisions to repair or to abandon houses. This can be related to the patterns of surviving (still-standing) houses determined by dendrochronology and of destroyed buildings found through excavation.

for AGM details, see page 4.

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The number 50 has a certain ring to it, and we celebrate the fiftieth issue of the Newsletter by looking back over its development, which started quite modestly. Members will know, of course, that the scope of content has remained constant, and in the present issue we catch glimpses of new research, we lament the loss of Seamus Heaney whose interest in our sphere is well known, and we have the Group Reports from 2012. The refurbished displays on Iona are also a focus, where Peter Yeoman charts some of the intentions behind the wonderful work, and Mark Hall appreciates the results.

Niall Brady
Newsletter Editor
e-mail: niall@discoveryprogramme.ie

Left:

Reconstruction of a peasant house or detached kitchen at the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, Sussex. The building is based on the results of excavations by Eric Holden at the deserted medieval village of Hangleton.

Maney Online Launching in November 2013

In November 2013 all Maney journals currently hosted on ingentaconnect, including **Medieval Archaeology**, will move to their new journal platform, **Maney Online**. SMA members will still be able to access online articles from the journal and access will be uninterrupted. Usernames and passwords will be changed, but members will receive an email about this with their new password.

Torpel Manor Field, Cambridgeshire

New survey work led by the University of York

Since November 2012, a new programme of archaeological investigation has been taking place at Torpel Manor Field. The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument near Helpston (Cambridgeshire; historic Northamptonshire), which is held by the Langdyke Countryside Trust. It is home to an important and visually impressive series of medieval and later earthworks. The site is well-known locally, but little archaeological work has been carried out, and its character, context and development are poorly understood.

The field is reputedly the site of an early post-Conquest ringwork castle or fortified manor, and is surrounded by earthworks that are indicative of further medieval settlement and activity. There is an adjacent deer park, and standing remains of what may well be an associated hunting lodge. The site lies close to other villages of early foundation and significance, such as Stamford, Barnack, Maxey, and Peterborough, and it has the potential to illuminate wider considerations of settlement, trade, and elite power in the medieval period. Its situation on the edges of the 'midland' and 'ancient' zones of medieval agriculture makes it a particularly interesting site through which to examine the development of the landscape and field systems, and their relationship to the adjacent villages and castle/manor.

In consultation with the Langdyke Trust, which has recently received Heritage Lottery Funding to develop Torpel for visitors, a project to explore the site and its wider landscape context has been undertaken by Dr Steven Ashby and Dr Aleksandra McClain of the University of York, with assistance from the survey team of Dr Michael Fradley of Bournemouth University, and Dr Helen Goodchild and Dr Hayley Saul of the University of York. The project aims to assess the site through a programme of non-invasive survey and archival work, which will allow us to characterise the physical development of both the site and the surrounding landscape and social context of the medieval Soke of Peterborough.

So far, a detailed earthwork survey of the site has been carried out by Michael Fradley, which has helped the team to identify particular areas within the site that merit further investigation, and which have the potential to illuminate questions of phasing and subsequent development around the central ringwork. Arising from this initial survey, a further programme of targeted geophysical survey is being carried out in 2013.

Aleks McClain

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Michael Fradley recording earthwork elevations at Torpel using differential GPS. Photo by Steve Ashby.



CONFERENCE / SEMINAR REPORTS

Transformations and Continuities in the Eleventh Century

The Society's conference at Nottingham, September 2013

The Society's conference at the University of Nottingham (20-22 September) showed that the eleventh century is the subject of immense academic activity. Papers presented, particularly by younger scholars, suggested that a radical reappraisal of the period is underway. The debate has moved on considerably from a few decades ago when the central issue, and indeed practically the only question asked about the period, concerned the origins of the castle.

The conference papers ranged widely over changes in dress accessories, the practice of dining, the use of grave monuments and the symbolism of towers. As Professor Hugh Thomas pointed out in one of the two keynote addresses, archaeologists

are no longer working to an agenda set by historians, but have struck out to investigate areas of society which are inaccessible using only written sources. Unlike historians of this period, they can draw upon a large and expanding data-set.

One of the high points of the conference was a visit to Southwell Minster, which though renowned for its late 13th-century chapter house, is quite as notable as a mid- and late-11th century Romanesque building.

Mark Gardiner
President



Delegates from the SMA conference in Nottingham, including Michael Fradley (left), Anne Sassin (third from left), Ben Jervis (second from right) and Aleksandra McClain (right)

Ploughing Ahead: technological, socio-economic and environmental developments in Old World ploughing

Rewley House Oxford, March 2013

The myopic detail of scholarship is perhaps the compelling appeal for many researchers, and for those who delight in these approaches, a most useful day's colloquium took place in Oxford on various aspects of ploughing.

The medieval period was well represented, and the topics ranged from the palaeoenvironmental studies of plough soils in Norway and Belgium, through object-specific approaches that drew from current research on the continent, in Britain, and in Ireland, to studies that are examining faunal pathologies aimed at bringing insight to help explain the transformation from oxen to horses as the principal traction animals. Ploughing has been a neglected area of research for several decades, but researchers have been working away quietly and are bringing new insight to

bear, enriched by fresh approaches particularly in environmental studies, but we cannot neglect the written sources, and here too we were treated to a reassessment of the pictorial and documentary evidence for ploughing in Anglo-Saxon England.

The event received generous financial support from both the School of Archaeology's Meyerstein Fund and the British Agricultural History Society, whose sponsorship helped to subsidise the attendance of nine postgraduate delegates.

Mark McKerracher and Lisa Lodwick
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ploughing.ahead@gmail.com





Website

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

Apply for a Grant

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

Current Officers

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2013 titles from the Monograph series, to be celebrated at the AGM on 2nd Dec.

Transforming townscapes. From Burgh to Borough: the archaeology of Wallingford, AD 800-1400,
Monograph 35

Wigmore Castle, North Herefordshire: excavations 1996 and 1998, Monograph 34

Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods of the 6th and 7th centuries AD: a chronological framework,
Monograph 33

Society Links

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Society News

Notice of the Annual General Meeting

To be held at 6pm on Monday 2nd December 2013 in the Lecture Theatre, Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY
(tube – Euston Square, Warren Street, Goodge Street)

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be served from 5:15pm in the A.G. Leventis Gallery

Agenda

1 Minutes of last Annual General Meeting

2 Elections of Officers and Council

The following nominations have been received:

For re-election:	Hon. Editor	Prof. Oliver Creighton
	Hon. Secretary	Prof. Dawn Hadley
	Hon. Treasurer	Prof. Steve Rippon
For election:	President	Prof. Helena Hamerow
	Members of Council	Sue Brunning
		Andrew Davidson
		Dr Meggan Gondek

3 Election of auditors Bronsens, 267 Banbury Road, Oxford

4 President's Report

5 Treasurer's Report

6 Editor's Report

7 Secretary's report

8 Prizes

9 Any other business

10 Date of next meeting

Annual Lecture

The AGM will be followed by the Annual Lecture (at approximately 6:20pm) by Dr Mark Gardiner (Queen's University, Belfast)
'Approaches to the Construction and Survival of the Late Medieval English Peasant House'

Wine Reception

The annual lecture will be followed by a wine reception,
at which the Society's most recent monographs will be launched.

Prof. Dawn Hadley, Hon. Secretary

Society for Medieval Archaeology Conference,
5-7 December 2014, Rewley House, University of Oxford

Temporary and Seasonal Sites and Settlements in Medieval Europe



*View looking at the foundations of a seasonally occupied hut in the valley of the Duhonw, Mynydd Epynt in mid Wales.
Photograph by Bob Silvester © Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust.*

Next year's Society Conference will consider sites and settlements used for brief episodes, such as fishing bases, army camps, miners' huts, and charcoal burners' shelters, as well as those used on a recurrent, often seasonal basis, such as those associated with transhumance and fair sites. Speakers will address issues of recognizing and dating such sites, the nature of temporary buildings, and will explore what they tell us about economic developments, changes in land use and the environment, military strategy, etc.

Proposals for papers should be sent to Professor Helena Hamerow at Helena.hamerow@arch.ox.ac.uk and should take the form of a 100-word summary that, if accepted, may be used in the conference programme.

The closing date for receipt of proposals is 1 February 2014. The conference will be held at Rewley House, Oxford. Details regarding the conference programme, booking, etc. will be announced in the Spring 2014 Newsletter and on the Society's website. Reduced conference fees will be available for Society members, and bursaries will be available for postgraduate students, who should apply once the programme is finalized.

Helena Hamerow

Helena.hamerow@arch.ox.ac.uk

Buildings and Society in an Historical Perspective AD 500-1914 – Contributions from Archaeology, History and Architecture

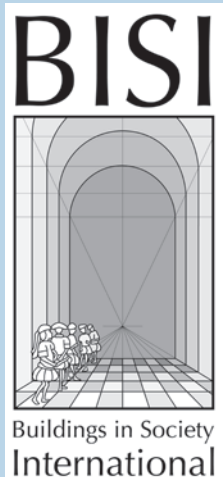
19-21 June 2014, Queen's University Belfast

In spite of the importance of architecture in structuring our environment, the relationship between architecture and societies in the past remains poorly understood and under-theorized. This interdisciplinary conference will examine the historical contexts in which buildings have been constructed and the responses to buildings over time.

Jill Campbell

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<http://qub.ac.uk/sites/BISI/>



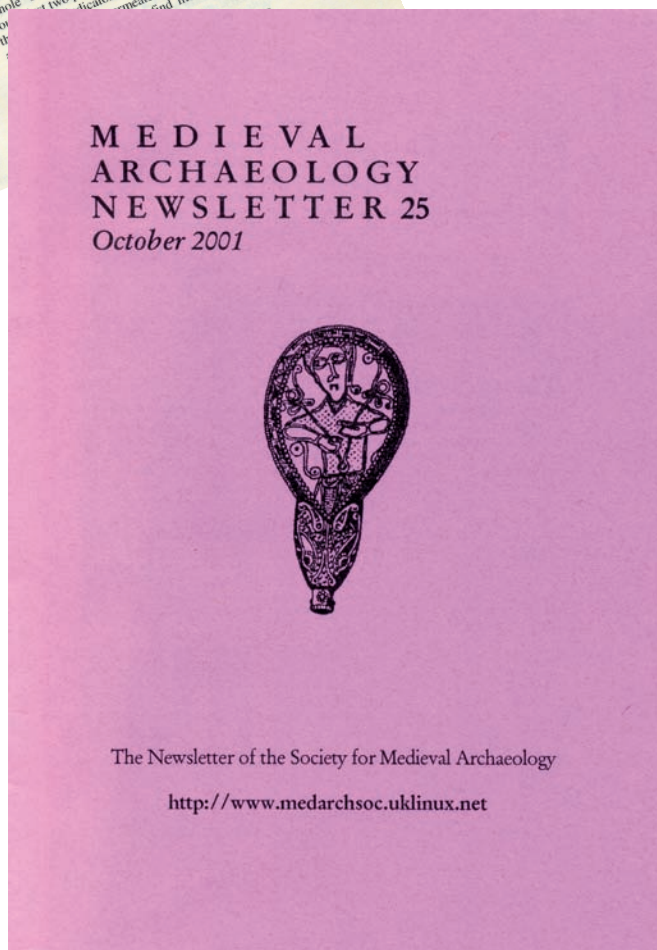


The Society's Newsletter is celebrating its fiftieth issue, which makes it an appropriate moment to consider its substance and development. Perhaps it is a feature of the temporary nature of these documents that explains why my own early copies appear to be missing, or at least why they are not to hand; no doubt they are stored in a box in my attic along with sundry types of associated literature that never quite justified a presence on the bookshelf. If that was true for the early issues, it is not the case today.

The earliest copy I can locate is No. 20 (March 1999), which appeared as two folded A4 pages stapled together to give eight pages of interesting news, edited by Andrew Reynolds. Andrew states that No. 20 contained 'rather more variety than usual', which may explain why it lies next to my journal today. The content was organized to include conference and meetings notices, Society-funded research and News, while a short list of recent publications was quickly followed by a short list of deaths. Kit Wesler was also seeking help with compiling references to the finds of chess pieces from excavations.

In essence the range of content has not altered so much, despite the sequence of successive editors, which has included Simon Roffey, who oversaw the transformation to full A4 size with Issue 28 (June 2003), and Gabor Thomas who held the reins between Issue 30 and 39 (March 2008), introducing more and more illustration. I took over from Gabor, and was delighted when Mark Gardiner resolved that it was time for colour. The transformation that occurred with Issue 46 (Autumn 2011) coincided deliberately with the redesign of our journal, both to increase the Society's appeal among medievalists, and to represent the growing expectation for full-colour printing. The range of content has remained consistent over the years of the Newsletter, but we have become unshackled from the limitations of basic Office-derived pamphlets. The Newsletter now verges on being something of a 'glossy', but an informed one, and online-users will know that the embedded hyperlinks are interactive. We can look forward to further growth as our expectations increase, and if you have an idea or desire particular content, let me know and we will see what is possible.

Niall Brady
Newsletter Editor



The Newsletter of the Society for Medieval Archaeology

<http://www.medarchsoc.uklinux.net>

New Charity to Fund Research and Understanding of Castles



The **Castle Studies Trust (CST)** is a UK-based charity founded in July 2012 to increase knowledge of castles in the UK and internationally.

The Trust is currently offering grants of up to £5,000 to fund new pieces of research on castle sites. Suitable projects might include surveys (such as geophysical, architectural, historical,

topographical or LIDAR); testing (such as Radiocarbon dating); or projects that increase public understanding of castle sites (such as reconstruction drawings).

Applications will be accepted from Monday 2 September 2013 with the closing date of Friday 13 December 2013.

The work of the Castle Studies Trust is endorsed by patrons Edward Impey and John Goodall. Grants are entirely funded by public donations.

For further information about applying for a grant, including the grant-giving criteria and an application form, please visit the Castle Studies Trust website www.castlestudiestrust.org or contact Jeremy Cunnington at admin@castlestudiestrust.org or Flat 3, Ferme Park Road, London N4 4ED.



Seamus Heaney, *in memoriam*

'They extolled his heroic nature and exploits and gave thanks for his greatness; which was the proper thing for a man should praise a prince whom he holds dear and cherish his memory when the moment comes when he has to be conveyed from his bodily home.'

Beowulf, lines 3173-77.

Poetry is a vital cultural and artistic medium through which relationships with the past, personal and social, can be articulated and contemplated and made alive. Readers will be only too aware that one of its greatest exponents, Seamus Heaney, died recently (30 August). I can offer no personal recollections to share but do feel the loss of someone who was so alive to the past and its difficulties (along with the present Troubles). His interest in archaeology and history is transparent in his poetry – he would, I imagine, simply have called it an interest in people. His palpable interest can be felt as a delicate, sensitive touch that infused most of his poems, poems that ranged across the bog bodies of Denmark, Clonmacnoise Abbey, the trial bone pieces from Viking Dublin and of course his triumphant, human translation of *Beowulf*. He was interested both in the past and how the past could be recreated –

just weeks before his death he gave a keynote address at the 'Medievalisms in the Modern World' conference at St Andrews University. His poetry communicates a deep understanding of people and their relationships with and their inhabiting of things; his warm, watery, melodious voice will be sadly missed.

Mark Hall

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'There are trial pieces, the craft's mystery improvised on bone: foliage, bestiaries,

interlacings elaborate as the netted routes of ancestry and trade. That have to be

magnified on display so that the nostril is a migrant prow sniffing the Liffey,

swanning it up to the ford, dissembling itself in antler combs, bone pins, coins, weights, scale-pans'.

Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces, verse 2.

News & Views

The Mick Aston Landscape Lecture

OU DCE is sponsoring an annual lecture on landscape archaeology in memory of Mick Aston, who sadly died earlier this year. The 2013 lecture will be given by Trevor Rowley, 'Landscape Archaeology: Forty Years On', where Trevor will discuss the thinking behind *Landscape Archaeology*, a book that he and Mick published in 1974, and which went on to have a significant impact on the development of field archaeology in Britain. The lecture will be held at Rewley House, Oxford, at 6pm on Friday 6 December. For further details, email: ppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk

A Quest for Information

An archaeo-malacologist has recently come across a scallop-shell, pierced with a pair of holes for suspension by a cord, marking it out as a badge of a successful pilgrimage to the shrine of St James the Apostle in Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, northwest Spain (one of the most popular of medieval pilgrimages). This example (discarded in a Bristol ditch in the late 13th-14th century) was unusual. Traces of the original suspension-holes could still be seen in the broken-off 'ears', so the suspension holes in what are thought the usual position, through the body of the shell, are in fact replacements. The shell is much too thick for its present size, so it has been extensively broken and re-ground to reinstate the shell-shape. Also, the type of shell is typical, not of Atlantic scallops, but of the Mediterranean, and is rare even in northern Spain. The researcher seeks to catalogue the British and Irish examples of these badges, looking for the shell type used, evidence of how long they were worn by the pilgrim, and how they were disposed of (few are interred with the deceased pilgrim; many other badges are recovered from water or damp ground). The last general catalogue was done in the mid-1980s, and was primarily Continental. Archaeologists with examples of scallop-shell pilgrim badges in their collections or archives can contact the researcher at the following address:

Greg Campbell

The Naive Chemist

150 Essex Road

Southsea, Hants.

PO4 8DJ

Tel. 023 9275 4585

Email: [g.v.campbell@](mailto:g.v.campbell@btinternet.com)

[btinternet.com](mailto:g.v.campbell@btinternet.com)



Grants & Awards



Building survey and Tree-Ring Dating Analysis at 32 Goodramgate, York a Medieval Archaeology Research Grant

32 Goodramgate is a late-medieval timber-framed structure situated on the corner of Goodramgate and College Street in York, forming part of a larger complex of buildings known historically as 'Cambhall'. Across the late medieval period the plot was owned and managed by the vicars choral of York Minster as part of their extensive urban estate of rental property holdings. The plot and its associated buildings are well-documented with property deeds, rent and repair accounts, and a building account detailing its ownership and occupation patterns, as well as its physical development, across the late medieval period.

The support of the SMA has made it possible to combine the results of a previous documentary-based study of Cambhall with an archaeological building survey of 32 Goodramgate, and a selective programme of sampling and tree-ring dating analysis. The project sought to understand the construction and date of No. 32, and identify the relationship between the building and the properties described in the documentary evidence.

The structure comprised two timber-framed ranges set at right-angles to each other. The Goodramgate range (Building

No. 32 Goodramgate (The National Trust Gift Shop), from College St., © York Archaeological Trust.

3) consisted of the end two bays of a conceivably longer structure. The College Street range (Building 2) formed an integral, three-bay timber-framed range. The two elements of the building were constructed in separate phases; Building 2 abutted Building 3, and the roof of the former over-sailed the latter. The roofs of Buildings 2 and 3 have been substantially altered and modified over time. The roof of Building 3 was re-built in the post-medieval period, involving the insertion of two queen strut trusses. The timber-framed gatehouse spanning College Street was a later structure.

The tree-ring analysis identified some of the earliest timbers recovered from a standing domestic building in York, but was insufficient to date the two buildings conclusively. Original timbers within the roof space of Buildings 2 and 3 include timbers felled in 1202-18 and 1298. The timbers dating to 1298 are significant, as the date corresponds with when the vicars choral became owners of the Cambhall plot. Two further samples dated 1583-1608 were from the queen struts in Building 3, dating the alteration of this building.

Prior to the present study, 64-72 Goodramgate (*Lady Row*), was dated by tree-ring analysis to 1316, and was the oldest domestic building in York. The identification of much earlier timbers in 32 Goodramgate suggests there are older structures among the surviving domestic buildings.

Jayne Rimmer

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No. 32 Goodramgate (The National Trust Gift Shop), © YAT.



17th Viking Congress

a Sudrey's Fund grant

I was invited, as the Welsh student delegate, to attend the 17th Viking Congress which was held in Lerwick from 3-10 August 2013. This was the first time the Congress had been held in Shetland since the inaugural conference in 1950.

The Viking Congress is an event that is held every 4 years. As the website states, the main aim of the conference is to provide a forum for Viking Age scholars from different countries and disciplines to converse and share theories and recent research. It allows for varied and stimulating discussion and conversation. This year Congress delegates were treated to presentations covering a wide geographic area from the Isle of Man to Arctic Canada to Gotland, and a diverse range of topics, including viking silver economy, burials and place-names in Shetland and Orkney.

Our hosts at the Shetland Amenity Trust organised an exciting programme of site visits as part of the Congress. These included a trip to Old Scatness, Jarlshof, the lawting site at Tingwall, Scalloway castle, Mousa and Clickimin broch.

Panoramic view over Jarlshof, taken during the Viking Congress' site visit.



Ploughing Ahead, Oxford

an Eric Flectcher Fund grant

As reported in this Newsletter (p. 3), a useful one-day conference was organized at Rewley House, Oxford, by two enterprising young scholars as part of their ongoing commitment to draw attention to the plough. It has been many years since medievalists have gathered to discuss this most basic yet essential aspect of medieval society, and it was an unmissable opportunity. The organizers are to be congratulated for enticing a wide range of speakers from across Europe, and it was useful to gauge the direction in which research is headed. It is always a challenge in such circles to avoid too much emphasis on the nature of individual plough parts or plough types; the intensity of such typological studies can

be overwhelming. The balance of papers managed instead to reveal the processes behind ploughing, and the usefulness of detail to demonstrate how ploughing can illuminate wider issues. My own modest contributions have focused largely on Ireland, and they have edged beyond form to process, so it was a most useful conference for me to attend, with the assistance of the Society to meet the travel costs. Good things rarely occur in isolation, and so it was that I made a further journey this year to attend Ruralia's congress in Slovakia, where the theme was 'Agrarian technology in the medieval landscape'. Settlement archaeologists, who may otherwise dread the thought of too many myopic papers on detail, were pleasantly surprised to see that here too the study of technology is engaging quite confidently in the wider issues.

The themes of the Congress were Shetland in the Viking World, Viking Identities, Viking Islands, Viking Homelands and Mapping the Viking World. The first three complement my thesis research well, as I am examining Norse social identities in the North Atlantic islands. The interdisciplinary nature of the Congress also suits my PhD thesis, which seeks to integrate archaeological data with evidence from different disciplines. I was fortunate to present my research in a poster that was displayed for the duration of the Congress and in a dedicated session. It was an excellent opportunity to share my research with specialists in Viking Studies at a key stage of my doctoral studies. The Congress was not only a beneficial experience but an enjoyable one too. My attendance would not have been possible without generous financial support from the Sudrey's Fund.

Lara Hogg
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be overwhelming. The balance of papers managed instead to reveal the processes behind ploughing, and the usefulness of detail to demonstrate how ploughing can illuminate wider issues. My own modest contributions have focused largely on Ireland, and they have edged beyond form to process, so it was a most useful conference for me to attend, with the assistance of the Society to meet the travel costs. Good things rarely occur in isolation, and so it was that I made a further journey this year to attend Ruralia's congress in Slovakia, where the theme was 'Agrarian technology in the medieval landscape'. Settlement archaeologists, who may otherwise dread the thought of too many myopic papers on detail, were pleasantly surprised to see that here too the study of technology is engaging quite confidently in the wider issues.

Niall Brady
niall@discoveryprogramme.ie

Group Reports 2012

Castle Studies Group



A Windswept Brough Castle

In April 2012, 73 members attended the 26th AGM of the Castle Studies Group during its Annual Conference. Based at Collingham College, University of Durham, the conference theme, 'Castles of Durham and the Palatinate', organised by Pamela Marshall, began with a formal dinner in the Great Hall of Durham Castle. Papers and site talks were given by Peter Ryder, Malcolm Hislop and Pamela Marshall. The varied field itinerary included castles at Durham, Raby, Barnard Castle, Witton-le-Wear, Brancepeth, Brough, Bowes and Lumley, as well as the bishop's palace at Bishop Auckland, the gatehouse at Hylton and the fortified priory at Tynemouth.

In October a day-conference on 'Timber Castles', organised by Jeremy Cunnington, was held at University College London in recognition of the 20th anniversary of Higham and Barker's seminal work on the subject. Papers by Brian Davidson, Derek Renn and Bob Higham revisited classic excavations at Sulgrave, South Mimms and Danes Castle, while regional overviews for England, Scotland and Ireland were given by Oliver Creighton, Richard Oram and Kieran O'Connor. Chris Caple gave a paper on Nevers Castle and its role in colonisation in Wales. Cormac McSparron spoke on Drumadoon, Co. Antrim, and further overviews of Irish sites, ringwork castles and the use of mottes, were given by Emma Arbuthnot and Tom McNeill respectively.

In July several members contributed to the 3rd Towers Conference at Krakow in Poland, on 'Medieval Urban Towers'. In late August other members contributed to the 26th Chateau Gaillard Colloque on the theme of 'Borderland Castles', based at Aabenraa, Denmark. Reports of these events will appear in the forthcoming *CSG Journal*, vol. 27.

The *CSG Journal* includes other news of CSG activities, members' interests and updates on castle research. Castle-related publications for the year are listed and reviewed in *CSG Bibliography* No. 24, compiled by John Kenyon and Gillian Eadie. The *Journal* is edited and produced by Neil Guy. In spring and August *CSG* interim E-Bulletins are distributed, compiled and edited by Peter Burton. Committee members can be contacted by email via www.castlestudiesgroup.org.uk.

Undergraduates and post-graduates who are writing a dissertation or thesis on a castle-related theme may qualify to attend the Annual Conference at half price. *CSG* also awards small grants to group projects involving castle research, details for which are on the website.

Pamela Marshall, Hon. Secretary
secretary@castlestudiesgroup.org.uk
www.castlestudiesgroup.org.uk

Finds Research Group

Heavy Metal and Dirty Deeds:

Buttons, Hooks and other Dress Accessories

The first of three FRG meetings in 2012 gathered at the Museum of London in March to celebrate the much missed Geoff Egan's enormous contribution and continuing influence on the study of medieval and later dress accessories. The speakers included colleagues in the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), former collaborators from MoLAS, the Museum of London and others with whom he had shared his knowledge and enthusiasm; it was a measure of his influence that one speaker came over from the Netherlands. It was no surprise that the day was very well attended and proved to be a great way to pay tribute to Geoff's work in this one of his many fields of interest and expertise.

A celebration of the Knowth excavations

In April we returned to wonderful Dublin to help celebrate the publication of *Excavations at Knowth 5* by George Eogan (and many others). The meeting, held in the magnificent surroundings of the Royal Irish Academy, opened with a summary of the excavations by Professor Eogan, followed by accounts of various aspects of the finds assemblage by those that had studied them, and concluded with a consideration of Knowth in its wider regional setting by Pat Wallace. The meeting of high scholarship drew an appreciative audience from Ireland, Scotland and England.

On Sunday we had the marvellous experience of being guided around Knowth by George with the added delight of an impromptu visit to Monasterboice, where Niamh Whitfield described aspects of the iconography on the Higher Crosses. We are so grateful to Cathy Johnson and Ian Riddler for their organisation.

Precious Metals

The group's ties with our friends and colleagues in Scotland were strengthened by a successful meeting in Edinburgh in the autumn. A day of lectures on 'Precious Metals' covered many aspects, ranging from the history of gold and silver mining in Scotland, the manufacture and use of Roman and Viking silver, and considerations of particular object types and individual items dating from the medieval through to the early modern periods. Did we detect a slight whiff of deception hovering around one or two of the items under discussion? Alice Blackwell's presentation of the analysis being undertaken on the Norrie's Law Hoard had all the makings of a good detective novel with the discovery that the highly unusual occurrence of pairs of objects in fact represent

original items and well-executed copies, made close to the time of the Hoard's discovery.

The next day we took the scenic train journey to the Perth Museum and Art Gallery, where Mark Hall arranged an enjoyable afternoon. Following a view of the galleries, we were able to handle the large array of finds recovered from the excavations at Perth High Street specially laid out for us. A wide range of items of metalwork, leather and textile was on show: the beautifully preserved, intricately decorated hair net was one item particularly remarked on. Mark then led a walking tour of the 'edited highlights' of medieval Perth.

On Sunday we visited the galleries of the National Museums of Scotland that had been reopened in 2011. Like all major museums, it was a visual treat and we strolled at our leisure. We were lucky enough to catch the chiming of the amazing Millennium Clock Tower, which has to be seen to be believed! The trip has certainly left us wanting to return. The sun shone from a blue sky throughout our stay, bathing Edinburgh in a golden light. Our thanks to all our hosts and, in particular, Jackie Moran.

The *Geoff Egan Prize for Finds Research*, will once again be awarded to an individual in recognition of great potential in the field of finds research (post-Roman to modern periods). The award will be made on the basis of a piece of original artefact research submitted by an up-and-coming researcher with no track record of publication in finds research in Archaeology or cognate subjects. For further details, see our website.

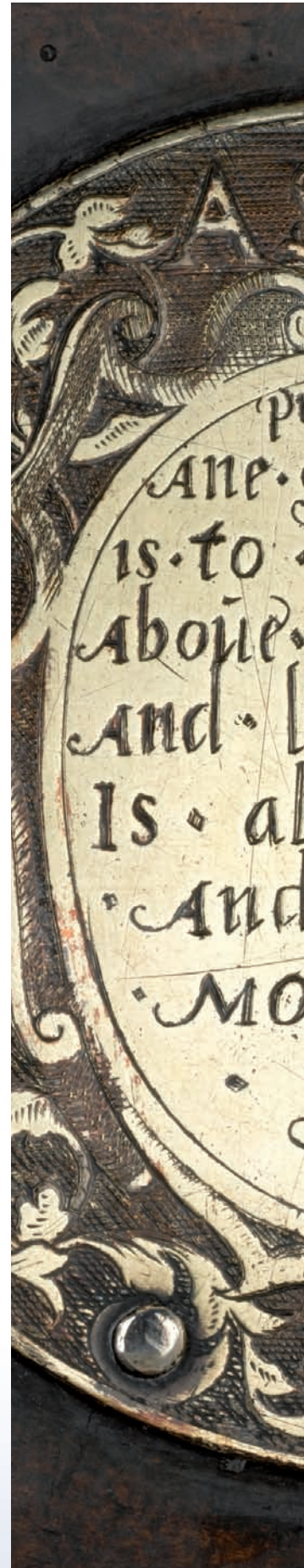
Annual Membership costs £6 (£10 or €15 for overseas members), members receive two mailings a year and we try to have two annual day-conferences. The Group is in a healthy financial position and membership is currently around 390. The FRG produces Datasheets on particular categories of objects which are sent out free to members. Copies of the Datasheets and Datasheet Books I and II are available from Stuart Campbell (s.campbell@nms.ac.uk), or via our website.

Looking ahead to 2014 we plan to celebrate a major exhibition at the Museum of London entitled 'The Cheapside Hoard: London's Lost Jewels' with a visit on Friday 21st February 2014.

Jane Cowgill, Hon. Secretary

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www.findsresearchgroup700-1700.org.uk



Medieval Pottery Research Group



A few of the delegates from the 2013 MPRG conference held in Portsmouth.

As reported last year the MPRG met in Douglas on the Isle of Man in June 2012 for its three-day annual conference, 'Ceramics on the Edge', the papers from which will appear in the next volume of *Medieval Ceramics*. The Group has also helped to organise and support a small number of other conferences over the last year; in October we supported the Southampton Ceramic Research Group Conference held in honour of David Peacock, and in November we organised a joint conference with the Association for the History of Glass in memory of Sarah Jennings. Held at the Wallace Collection in London on the theme of 'Recent Research and New Discoveries in Glass and Ceramics', it was very well attended and the Group would like to thank Julie Edwards and Sarah Paynter for their hard work to organise it. The papers from this conference along with a number of others will be published as a festschrift in Sarah's memory. A similar festschrift is also in preparation in the memory of Anna Slowikowski.

This June the group met for its biennial one-day conference at the newly opened Mary Rose Museum at Portsmouth Dockyard. The conference, 'Ceramics in Marine Contexts', provided an opportunity for members to see the newly opened museum and its exhibits and was very well attended. While our main conferences remain strong, the decline in the strength of the regional groups appears to continue, the current climate in archaeology making it difficult for regional representatives to arrange meetings and for those who are interested to attend. Factors such as changes in archaeological practice, pressures on funding and the demise of commercial units across the UK have not helped the situation. The infrastructure to support specialists in developing artefact studies and conduct research is being eroded away, leaving neither the interest nor the financial capital to promote artefact and pottery studies by specialists.

Despite these issues and other simple barriers such as museums, libraries and other facilities now charging fees for room-hire, there were two regional group meetings this year. The North West Region Medieval Research Group met in March, and provided an opportunity to view and discuss recent finds from Rainford near St Helens. This is a documented 17th-century pottery and clay tobacco pipe production centre, where recent fieldwork carried out by Sam Rowe, the CBA Community Archaeology placement at Liverpool Museums and a team of volunteers, has revealed waste dumps containing Cistercian-type wares, confirming suggestions for a source of these wares within the region. There was also a joint meeting

of the Yorkshire, Humberside, East Midlands and North East regional group held at Doncaster Museum and organised by Chris Cumberpatch, which provided an opportunity for specialists to present papers on a range of recent work from across the area.

The healthy audiences at both meetings demonstrated that while anecdotally the number of pottery specialists appears to be in decline, there are still professional archaeologists, PAS officers, avocational practitioners and planning officers who are interested in the topic. While professionals struggle to attend regional group meetings, there appears to be a growing body of interested amateurs who, funded through bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, have the means to carry out excavations and analysis purely for research purposes. The MPRG is exploring ways it can support the regional groups, improve opportunities for training, and encourage best practice by specialists and excavators, as well as promoting the importance of detailed artefact analysis to the wider archaeological community. This work includes: developing a new set of minimum standards for the recording and analysis of pottery published jointly with the Prehistoric and Roman study groups and supported by ALGAO; setting up of new specialists' training days; and a project to start online publication of a set of non-specialist datasheets.

The international outlook of the Group highlighted by our 2012 and 2013 conferences has been also been reflected in the Group's Newsletter, which continues to be published tri-annually. Over the last twelve months it has included a number of short reports that reflect the Group's widening reach: from the Saxon pottery kilns at Stoke Quay, Ipswich and Cantu L'Rey, Spain; via fire-pots from Corfe Castle and medieval flower pots from Trellech, Wales; to reports on the medieval pottery from Khirbet an-Nawafla, Jordan and Khirbet Beit Bassa, Bethlehem, and the post-medieval pottery from the Bala Hissar, Kabul.

The Group's Facebook page goes from strength to strength with regular updates on relevant projects and discussions of medieval and post-medieval ceramics and is attracting new paying members to the Group. Further information about the Group and its work can be found at www.medievalpottery.org.uk.

Andrew Sage, Hon. Secretary
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Medieval Settlement Research Group

The MSRG elected as President Professor Stephen Rippon, Department of Archaeology, University of Exeter, whose research has done much to develop interdisciplinary approaches to landscapes and related settlement. Stephen takes over from Paul Stamper, who presided over a very productive term that included publication of our flagship monograph (2012).

We have also been successful in the digitisation of back issues of the MSRG journal and *Annual Report*, and the availability of these as an online searchable resource via ADS at York (http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/msrg_2012/). The initiative can be followed up in the coming year with scanning and digitisation of the reports of the previous MVRG as well as the Moated Sites Research Group, which is important because few complete printed runs of these remain available.

The Group's AGM and Winter seminar was held at St Edmund's Hall, University of Oxford. It was hosted and organised by Dr Stephen Miles, to discuss the theme of 'Oxfordshire in the First Millennium', with speakers including John Blair on 'Anglo-Saxon West Midlands in its broader social and economic context', Helena Hamerow on 'The Origins of Wessex Project', Stephen Miles on an innovative South Oxfordshire Project, Ros Faith on 'Livestock and land-use: woodland and downland compared', and Chris Gosden on 'English landscapes and identities: a national view'.

For its 2012 Spring event, the MSRG collaborated with English Heritage and the University of York to run the conference 'Wharram Percy: past, present and future', held at the Department of Archaeology, University of York. The conference celebrated the 60 years since Beresford and Hurst began their remarkable collaboration at Wharram, and launched the new volume *Wharram XIII*, the last in the publication series. The roll-call of speakers was impressive: pre-medieval Wharram was assessed by Steve Roskams, before Stuart Wrathmell tackled 'Wharram's village origins

and the repopulation of the Wolds in the Anglo-Saxon period', the pre-AD1000 community was also addressed by Ian Riddler, assessing Continental and Irish influences in the artefact assemblage, and by Julian Richards who sought village formation in the regional Anglo-Scandinavian context. Chris Dyer examined the medieval hey-day of the village, but questioned (from documents and finds) just 'How poor were medieval peasants?', while Al Oswald made people realise how much more can now be read from the actual village earthworks. David Neave's paper on Wharram and the Wolds in the more recent past took the story beyond the village, before Elisabeth Zadora-Rio reiterated how influential the excavation was and has been in 'The Wharram project in the context of European medieval settlement studies'.

An important new step for the MSRG was the creation of a Student Committee Member to help encourage young/new scholars in the field. Our reduced rate student membership has attracted a good number of new members undertaking PhDs and MAs, and the Student Representative, Susan Kilby, PhD candidate in English local History at the University of Leicester, will hopefully find ways to promote their involvement in the Group.

MSRG membership is healthy (c. 475 members), and membership remains a very affordable £12 (£6 *per annum* for student membership) and includes the journal, *Medieval Settlement Research* (published annually in October/November). See the web pages for the Membership Form. Any member is eligible to apply for fieldwork grants (awards of up to £500) and students can apply for the conference bursaries – the details are provided in the journal and on the web page. There is also an MA Dissertation Prize in honour of John Hurst (entry date, 31st December).

Neil Christie, Hon. Secretary
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Wharram Walkers. MSRG Treasurer Dr Robin Glasscock is leading the charge up the hill. Photograph by Richard Gray, NUI Galway, one of four recipients of MSRG Beresford Bursary awards for attending the conference.



Media & Exhibition

Iona revealed

This year Historic Scotland took up one of its greatest challenges – to separate the magical reality of Iona and our greatest saint, St Columba, from their accumulated mythological baggage. But how to set about doing this? On the face of it little survives of the early monastery founded by Columba, a high-born Irish monk, in 563, or of the even more successful religious settlement that grew up focused on their priceless treasure – the bones of the greatest saint in an age of saints. The picture has been further obscured by repeated attempts to repack the Columban experience, chiefly to attract wealthy pilgrims. This was done on a regular basis, firstly within almost living memory by the saint's biographer Abbot Adomnán in the late 600s, repeated by the Benedictines of Iona in the later middle ages, further promoted by Dr Johnston, Scott and Wordsworth, until finally fully realized in the 20th-century restoration of the later church and cloister.

Undaunted by this, we knew that Historic Scotland must somehow chart a clear path through the heavenly mists to enhance the experience for visitors, marking this year as the 1450th anniversary of Columba's arrival. To understand the real historical people behind Iona Abbey is to understand so much of the early history of Scotland and its place in Europe.

All of this had to be underpinned by the three Rs – research, research and research. It began with a bang in Easter 2012 with a conference held in the abbey, where great scholars laid out the wealth of new discoveries from historical and archaeological study. The chief outcome was a consensus of the extraordinary importance of the early monastery on the European stage, as 'Iona of the Firsts' – the place where the Church first got involved in the making of kings; the place of the first book in Britain and Ireland (a psalm book written by Columba himself); the first place in western Europe

for the production of sacred texts; the first great school and library; the first in artistic innovation and craftsmanship, producing unprecedented artistry in metalwork (to adorn the saints' shrine), manuscripts (the Book of Kells as the finest illuminated gospel book in western Europe), as well as in stone (the first great Celtic high crosses). Here we see a Gaelic Golden Age, lasting into the 800s, the effects of which ripple through society to this day.

Careful archaeological study has revealed that more of the remains of the early monastery survive, within the landscape of the abbey, than was previously realised. The key concept is that the monks consciously set out to replicate their idea of the Holy Places of Jerusalem on their wee Hebridean island, as an aid to their constant contemplation of the Passion of Christ. The idea unlocks an understanding of the Street of the Dead as the *Via Dolorosa*, passing the High Crosses representing Golgotha, culminating in Columba's shrine chapel as the Holy Sepulchre.

Informed by this new research, teams have come together across Historic Scotland to create new permanent exhibitions, improved interpretation and visitor facilities. It includes a well-designed new ticket office; a superb new display of the early carved crosses, as well as of the later unique grave slabs of West Highland nobles and priests; a new display in the abbey church telling the story of the Columba pilgrimage; a new audio tour; and a display telling the story of the restoration and of the Iona Community. We work in close partnership with the faith Community who are still based at the abbey, and who are celebrating their 75th anniversary this year.

It is a great time to come to Iona, to experience the tranquillity and rich heritage of Columba's holy isle as never seen before.

Peter Yeoman
Head of Cultural Heritage

The Iona high crosses in their new display context. Images copyright and taken by Mark Hall and courtesy of Historic Scotland.



One of the highlights of the late medieval sculpture is the 1543 gravestone of Prioreess Anna Macleoin. Unfortunately its interpretation is let down by a reliance on Pennant's 1769 drawing which mistakes an architectural pinnacle behind the Virgin as, impossibly, the Virgin wearing an abbot's mitre.



'In bright, everlasting light' arisen

Recent years have seen a welcome resurgence in the display of Scotland's early medieval sculpture (Kettins, Skinnnet and Ulbster, and Nigg), and key assemblages (Whithorn, St Vigean and Govan [on-going]). It is encouraging to see that Historic Scotland's programme of sculpture interpretation (beginning with Whithorn) continues with the opening of the refurbished museum on Iona.

The new displays occupy the same building (the restored infirmary) they always have in recent decades but until now the display was perfunctory, cluttered and primarily motivated by storage considerations. It facilitated access but never much excitement from visitors. The new displays are an act of transformation that would delight Columba, Adomnán and their brethren. The transformation is a shining beacon of intelligent interpretation that is accessible and accomplished, not least in the dramatic use of space that allows the St Oran's, St Mathew's and the St John's high crosses to be reconstructed and displayed so finely, along with elements of other high crosses (their names lost but why not St Luke's and St Mark's?), grave markers and cross bases. The full catalogue of all the sculptures is accessible online at: <http://www.ionahistory.org.uk/iona/ionahome/ionaabout/ionadiscoveries.htm>

The narrative thrust of the displays tells the story of Iona's Christian community from 563-1560 AD and as primarily revealed by its surviving sculpture. Crucially the evidence is extended to include a range of objects from excavations around the monastery, including a bronze lion from a reliquary, window glass (Scotland's earliest, from the 7th century), a small bronze bell and several stone beads (suggested to be for trade, though perhaps for prayer?). The inclusion of this 'new' material not only confirms the high-end craftsmanship shown in the stone carvings but also gives a fuller glimpse of daily monastic existence through the inclusion of more intimate, everyday personal items.

The narrative thread takes the visitor through several episodes and themes: Columba's monastery; the significance of the Cross as sign, symbol and physical presence; art in the service of faith; pilgrimage; Columba's shrine; the viking raids; monastic routines; Iona as *teminos*; Scandinavian artistic influence; the re-founding of the Abbey as a Benedictine house; later medieval warriors and other patrons and their investment in sculpture, concluding with a couple of codas on the opacity of women in Iona's story (one that can surely be corrected in the future with a fresh interpretation of the Nunnery) and on the Ritchie's (one of them a woman, of course) revitalisation of Celtic art in the early 20th century. The interpretation strategy is expressed through a colour scheme of deep, liturgical purple for the walls

and illuminated panels, a time-line that runs around the walls, above the displays (its date highlights integrated with the display themes beneath them), a lucid text which does not over assert itself and combines broader themes and individual object labels (and is peppered with telling quotes from the *Vita Columba*) and a terrific *son et lumière* show. The show helps explore the high cross iconography, and its monastic reading, through a 24-hour cycle, follows the sun with changing light and sound (those of the island, the sea and bird-song mixed with the monastic community at work and prayer) around the high crosses. I noticed visitors appreciating this but not understanding its purpose – the audio-guide may explain it but I did not use this; perhaps an additional encouraging label in the exhibition could be added?

Diamonds always come with flaws and so it is with the new displays and a programme of snagging is under way. Other issues can only really be dealt with if the new displays are not seen as an end but the beginning of a process. The admirably tight editing of the text has inevitably led to a couple of potentially misleading elisions. There are occasions when the boundary between evidence and interpretation becomes blurred (notably the 'description' of the rituals around Columba's relics). The thousand-year gap between the erection of St John's cross and its collapse in the 1950s cannot credibly be put down to a failure of early medieval skill and ingenuity. The 1950s collapse is more likely to have resulted from a failure in 20th-century skill in putting the cross back together. The elision is part of a bigger omission, of the biographical trajectory of Iona's sculptures, including the coming together of the various collections of stone, though this can be addressed in a future phase of the interpretation. The new displays argue for a new edition of the guidebook to replace the now clearly out-of-date 2012 edition. and why not an e-reader edition of the *Vita Columba* available from the Abbey shop or Historic Scotland's website?

The new displays have renewed interpretation in and around the Abbey buildings, all adding up to an exciting first phase which manifestly deserves follow-up with fresh interpretation around St Ronan's, the Nunnery, the monastic vallum, St Mary's chapel, etc. I came away with the clear wish for a ScARF-linked research and fieldwork programme across the whole island, consolidating what has been done and moving forward to ask anew and new vital questions to improve our understanding of Iona's story. *Take up thy staffs oh pilgrims and journey to Iona, the rewards are high.*

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