

Society for Medieval Archaeology Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to *Newsletter 30*. This is my first issue as the *Newsletter Editor* and I should like to take this opportunity to thank the previous editor, Simon Roffey, for his valuable work over the last four years. Simon has assured his place in the annals of Newsletter history with a mid-term revamp which has improved the visual impact and readability of the publication immeasurably.

The range of news and reports included in this spring issue has a distinct northern emphasis with both the Outer Hebrides and Norway coming under the spotlight. A previous theme, that of ecclesiastical archaeology, is also revived although the current slant is on monastic industries, specifically metalworking, with reports on new research and discoveries associated with two Cistercian houses in Yorkshire.

All comments, reports and news to **Gabor Thomas, School of European Culture & Languages, Cornwallis Building, University of Kent, Canterbury, CT2 7NF, Email G.Thomas@kent.ac.uk**

Deadline for Newsletter 31 is 31st August 2004

COMMENT with *Duncan Brown*

My last column bemoaned the impending loss of the threatened archaeology unit in Winchester, while also pondering, however obliquely, how this seemed to be symptomatic of the current archaeological climate in this country. The rot is spreading, for three members of the field team currently supported by Southampton City Council are also facing redundancy. It is difficult for local authority units to compete with rivals who are not hampered by unrealistic overheads when they bid for projects. The benefits of extensive experience and a deeper understanding of the archaeology are irrelevant to developers. These qualities however, should be valued more highly within the archaeological community than presently appears to be the case, and we should be striving to retain those people who have them.

It occurs to me, as I look over my shoulder while simultaneously sympathising with my threatened colleagues, that there is one task to which they are admirably suited; a task that

is crucial to the furtherance of our archaeological understanding and which, the longer it remains neglected, constitutes a considerable embarrassment to British archaeology and archaeologists. Even as our local authority units are whittled away, there resides in their stores a huge backlog of uncompleted excavation reports. In Southampton (and it would be invidious of me to attempt any other example, although I know we are not alone in this), hardly any of the excavations carried out within the walled medieval town between 1970 and 1990 have been fully researched and published. This backlog includes sites undertaken by a variety of organisations operating under a variety of funding sources. The DoE provided continuous funding for a few years after 1980, which has resulted in the production of half-a-dozen monographs, mainly concerned with the middle Saxon town, the most recent of which appeared in 2002. Add in a handful of articles in the local journal and there remains a shameful catalogue of unpublished sites and associated finds that may never be properly published. These include excavations at over a dozen major urban tenements and the friary, a summary of the evidence for late Saxon occupation, major assemblages of Saxon and medieval metalwork, medieval glass, post-medieval pottery and Saxon and later environmental materials. As curator of the archaeology collections I assume some of the responsibility for this, but however much I would love to spend my time pursuing a publication programme, there are no resources for such a project and no intellectual, political or practical support.

We seem now to live in a society that offers little encouragement for cultural development, to the extent that we are prepared to compromise world heritage sites and commodify university education. I am not aware of any institutions in this country that would support the publication of this national backlog, an endeavour that would surely contribute hugely to our understanding of the past, and particularly the development of major towns and cities. While this embarrassing situation persists, we look on as the practice of archaeology is diminished by an atmosphere of competition in which long-serving personnel find themselves jobless. Could not one problem be addressed by the other? Why should we not mobilise local authority units in bringing backlog sites

to publication? There is a distinct lack of willingness among national institutions to promote any such project, which is too often seen as a local issue. I maintain that it is a source of national embarrassment that we have allowed this situation to accrue and have not even attempted any redress.

One useful starting point might be to create a catalogue of the unpublished excavations in the country. The Society for Medieval Archaeology, for instance, could start off by asking someone to go through the journal identifying those sites that appear in the regional summary but have not since been published. How about it?

CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Regionalism in Medieval Small Finds - Wessex

24.4.04

A one-day conference organised by the Finds Research Group AD700-1700 to be held at Wiltshire Heritage Museum, Devizes. Speakers include Susan Youngs, Nick Stoodley, Michael Metcalf, David Hinton, Jane Harcourt and Paul Robinson. For further information and bookings contact Quita Mould, Eastmoor Manor, Eastmoor, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE33 9PZ or visit www.frg700-1700.org.uk

Henry Loyn Memorial Lecture 2004

6.5.04

Professor David Bates 'William the Conqueror and his Wider Western World' to be delivered at the Centre for the Study of Medieval Society and Culture, Cardiff University. Professor Bates has recently produced a monumental edition of William the Conqueror's charters and is currently working on his authoritative biography. He is an internationally acknowledged expert on the history of northern France, England and the British Isles in the Central Middle Ages who seeks to write the history of England in a European context. With his breadth of interest as well as his depth of scholarship he closely mirrors Henry Loyn's own extraordinary range and contribution to his field of study. For more information contact Liz Walker, School of History & Archaeology, Cardiff University, PO Box 909, Cardiff, CF10 3XU, email Walker@cardiff.ac.uk

Kings and Tyrants: the Transition in the West AD350-AD700

7.5.04-9.5.04

Organised by Department of Archaeology, University of Bristol, to be held at Burwalls, Clifton. Speakers include Ken Dark, Barbara Yorke, Bruce Eagles, Roger White, Mark Corney and Michael Costen. Further details including costs from Dr M Costen, Dept of Archaeology, University of Bristol, 43 Woodland Rd, tel 0117 9546072, email m.costen@bris.ac.uk

The Battle of Bosworth: Enigma of a Battle

12.6.04

Market Bosworth Community College, Market Bosworth, Nuneaton
Was the battle fought at Atherstone? Is there a connection with Merevale Abbey? Was Henry Tudor a Yorkist Claimant? What impact did the chronicles have on the history of the battle? Is there a case for Dadlington? Was Richard on Ambion Hill? How immoral were the politics of the Wars of the Roses? What new evidence has been discovered about the battle? What new changes can we expect at the current Bosworth Battlefield Centre? For any questions on the conference please contact Middleham@aol.com

Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and Interactions

3.6.04-7.6.04

An international conference at Lund, Sweden, which will explore the character of Old Norse religion from a broad multidisciplinary perspective. The conference is hosted by the Swedish interdisciplinary research project "Roads to Midgard: Norse paganism in long-term perspectives", which involves scholars from archaeology, history of religion and medieval archaeology. We invite scholars and PhD students from various disciplines to take part in a scholarly interchange, which will give rich opportunities for comparisons in time and space as well as dialogues between subjects. More information can be found at:

www.ark.lu.se/oldnorsreligion

The Archaeology of the Early Medieval Celtic Churches

9.9.04-12.9.04

The Society for Medieval Archaeology and the Society for Church Archaeology will be holding a joint conference hosted by the Department of History and Welsh History, University of Wales Bangor. This will focus on the archaeology of major monasteries, hermitages, local churches, chapels and cemeteries highlighting new research on early medieval church archaeology c 400-1100 in Wales, Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man, SW Britain and Brittany. The objectives are to reassess the current state of knowledge, highlight ongoing debates about its interpretation and to compare and contrast the nature of the archaeological evidence for the development of the church in the different Celtic areas. For further details visit the conference website at www.britarch.ac.uk/socchurcharchaeol or contact Dr Nancy Edwards, Department of History and Welsh History, University of Wales Bangor, Gwynedd, LL57 2DG, his010@bangor.ac.uk

Saxon Sussex: Six Centuries

Landscape and Settlement studies

13.9.04

The Sussex Archaeological Society Autumn Conference to be held at the University of Sussex. Speakers include: Sarah Semple- Burial and settlement in the South Saxon kingdom: the fifth to eighth centuries; Jane Brennan - Grave assemblages in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries: a reconsideration of traditional interpretations of status, chronology and ethnicity; Robert Hutchinson - Darkness into Light: Construction of Saxon Churches in Sussex; Judie English - Pattern and process in Anglo-Saxon settlement; Gabor Thomas - New Light on Later Anglo-Saxon settlement in Sussex: Bishopstone Excavations 2002-4; Diana Chatwin - Landscape and Early Medieval Settlement in the Western Sussex Weald; Mark Gardiner - Fishing and Trade in Sussex, 900-1100. Bookings and enquiries to:- Lorna Gartside, Membership Secretary, Barbican House, 169 High Street, LEWES BN7 1YE, Tel: 01273 405737, email: members@sussexpast.co.uk

Anglo-Saxon Landscapes - Real and Imaginary

16.10.04

The Sutton Hoo Society conference 2004 to be held at the Royal Hospital School, Holbrook near Ipswich. The day will be chaired by Professor Martin Carver and Angela Care Evans. Speakers: Professor David Dumville; Professor Peter Fowler; Dr Helena Hamerow; John Newman; Andrew Rogerson; Dr Tom Williamson. To guarantee an early place please send your name and address to Mr M Argent, 2, Meadowside, Wickham Market, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP13 0UD (programme & booking form sent out April 2004).

Training Excavations at Bishopstone, East Sussex

9.8.04-18.9.4

The second season of open-area excavation within Bishopstone will target further remains from a Late Anglo-Saxon settlement and an associated pre-Conquest cemetery identified in close proximity to the minster church of St Andrew. The field school offers comprehensive training in archaeological survey, excavation and sampling techniques. The excavation is also open to volunteers. For further information and on-line trainee and volunteer application forms visit the Bishopstone pages of the Sussex Archaeological Society website: www.sussexpast.co.uk or contact Alison Lawrence, Barbican House, 169 High Street, Lewes, BN7 1YE, tel (Mon-Thurs) 01273 405730, castle@sussexpast.co.uk

SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

Fifteenth-Century Metalworkers employed by Fountains Abbey, North Yorkshire

Fountains Abbey is best known for its impressive architecture, yet monastic industries literally underpinning abbey construction and maintenance have been little explored. Fountains metalworking is especially neglected. Evidence comprises several thousand metal objects¹, mining rights², metalworking debris including a range of slag material³, industrial remains within the precinct⁴, and craftsmen

recorded in contemporary documents. Predominantly studied by antiquarians, Fountains manuscripts are particularly valuable, the Memorandum Book of Thomas Swynton 1446-1458 edited by JT Fowler, contains an inventory of 115 workmen⁵. Analysis of metalworkers in this record, part of wider research⁶, using original manuscripts⁷ and Medieval Latin studies is outlined here⁸. This work was partly funded by a grant made from the Society's Research Fund.

deult hudson faber

Robt Ketylwell plumbar

Principal metallurgies; iron and leadworking, are evidenced by smiths [de ffabrili] Johí Beyn and Ricí Raskell, blacksmiths [faber] Will Hudson and Will Smyth, and leadworkers [plumbar] Robí Ketylwell and Ricí Bettés. The most intriguing metalworker is Thomae Golthwate *de Balz*, translated⁹ somewhat vaguely by Fowler as '...connected with smelting and lead...', Golthwate was paid variously *ad plaustr* [by the wagonload] and his name is frequently mentioned in association with Dacre, a grange of Fountains (see below).¹⁰

Th Golthwate de Balz ¹¹

Fowler also interpreted *bales* as 'bellows', *baler* as 'presumably someone who bales water at the smeltnill', and *baled* as 'some kind of lead', clearly unacquainted with early lead smelting technology known locally as bales. Essentially bonfires, bale sites have been identified on Fountains monastic estates¹², the Fountains Lease Book¹³ refers to bales near Dacre '...th'abbot and Marmaduke Bayn...burne...leede...unto their baill in Bishopsyde...'.¹⁴ To conclude, the evidence confirms Thomae Golthwate smelted lead, employing bale technology in Nidderdale, either transporting by or paid by the wagonload. Clearly, further work is required to establish the significance of these craftsmen.

¹ Fountains Abbey Collection, curated by

English Heritage, Yorkshire

² Lancaster WT (1915) *Chartulary of Fountains Abbey Vols. I and II*, Leeds [Pb and Fe mines were granted in Nidderdale]

³ Frith JA (forthcoming) *Metal working slag, hearth bottoms and lining, charcoal samples, hammerscale; Analysis and Reassessment*. In *Monastic Metallurgical Crafts and Industries of the Cistercian Abbey of Fountains, North Yorkshire*. M.Phil. thesis. Dept Archaeological Sciences, University of Bradford

⁴ Coppack G (1986) the Excavation of the Outer Court Building, perhaps the Woolhouse at Fountains Abbey, North Yorkshire, *Medieval Archaeology* Vol 30. Frith opp. cit. *Kitchen Bank; Fountains Industrial Complex?*

⁵ Fowler JT (1918) *Memorials of the Abbey of St Mary of Fountains Vol III Surtees Society CXXX* p. 250-2 [*Occupations are discussed in the glossary, however some translations are shown to be erroneous*].

⁶ Frith opp. cit. *Workmen employed at Fountains; occupations, accounts and their role in Cistercian economy*

⁷ British Library Add MSS 40011A f.121 b , London.

⁸ Latham RE (1965) *Revised Medieval Latin from British and Irish Sources* Oxford University Press; Fisher JL (1997) *A Medieval Farming Glossary of Latin and English Words* Essex Record Office

⁹ Fowler opp. cit. p.258

¹⁰ Fowler opp. cit. p.3, 76, 80, 151, 162-3, 168 and 245

¹¹ Image 1: Will. Hudson faber. Image 2: Rob. Ketylwell plumbar. Image 3: Th. Golthwate de Balz. All by permission British Library Add MSS 40011A f.121 b

¹² Gill MC (1993) *Yorkshire Smelting Mills, Part 2: The Southern Dales and Lancashire*. British Mining No. 48 p.133. [*Bale Hill, Low Bishopside, Pateley Bridge, - near Dacre*]

¹³ Michelmore DJH (1981) *The Fountains Abbey Lease Book*, YAS Rec. Ser. Vol CXL

¹⁴ Michelmore opp. cit. p.194. Lease 203 dated 12th September 1527 [*Bishopside, Pateley Bridge*]

Jacquelyn Frith, *Archaeological Sciences, University of Bradford*

Structural survey at Howmore, South Uist, Outer Hebrides 2003

A two week programme of structural and topographical survey was undertaken at the medieval ecclesiastical site at Howmore on the western side of South Uist in July 2003. The remains comprise four medieval buildings, surviving to varying degrees, and two post-medieval burial enclosures, all sited on an eminence and now largely enclosed by a wall of nineteenth-century origin. Whether the eminence upon which the churches are located is of natural or artificial origin remains to be established, although a detailed hachure survey of the earthworks revealed evidence for a relatively recent cutting made into its eastern side.

The two principal medieval buildings are the axially aligned churches of St Mary and St Columba, both are represented only by their eastern ends, although the remaining outlines are traceable as earthworks and partially exposed foundations. To the south of St Mary's, a further chapel of smaller proportions (known as Chapel G) survives to a greater extent, although the walls are much eroded having lost much of their outer facing on the north and south sides. To the north-east of St Columba's lies the Clan Ranald burial chapel, conventionally believed to have been created in the mid-sixteenth century. The two medieval burial enclosures lay immediately to the north and west of the Clan Ranald chapel. Conventional wisdom places St Mary's church, the westernmost of the two principal churches, as the earliest of the entire group on the basis of a two-light opening of thirteenth-century character surviving in the eastern wall. A loose fragment of moulded stone with dog-tooth ornament, found lying in the Clan Ranald chapel, has long been known from the site and is presumed to have been displaced from St Mary's church.

Structural recording in 2003 set out to explore in detail the structural sequence at Howmore and to investigate the locale by topographical and geophysical survey for the remains of a further chapel, recorded by T.S. Muir in the nineteenth century but now lost, and for other features of potential significance. A full photographic survey of the structures and associated monuments was also completed.



Work in the 2003 season focussed on St Columba's Church, Chapel G and the Clan Ranald Chapel. Recording of the surviving eastern elevation of St Columba's revealed two phases of building, whereby the primary building had been widened on the north side. Earthwork survey suggests that the structure was divided internally into three compartments. These divisions relate to the widened church and are thus secondary features. Chapel G is evidently of a single phase and represents a single celled building of the same width as the primary phase of St Columba's Church, a doorway in the eastern end has inclined jambs of early type. Recording of the Clan Ranald Chapel revealed a complex sequence of four principal phases. The earliest element of the building comprises the eastern part of the chapel, which also has a doorway with inclined jambs and is again comparable in form and dimension both to the first phase of St Columba's and Chapel G. The second phase involved widening of the structure on the northern side, similar to the second phase of St Columba's. A chancel arch was then inserted and is dated to thirteenth century by the discovery of an *in situ* moulded stone with dog-tooth ornament identical to the loose fragment within the chapel. It can therefore be demonstrated that the Clan Ranald Chapel has two structural phases prior to the thirteenth century, and that the character of the earliest of these phases is also exhibited in St Columba's Church and in Chapel G.

The existence of a cross-incised slab of likely early medieval date, and the inclined jambs of doorways recorded in two of the buildings at Howmore are suggestive of origins earlier than the thirteenth century for religious activity at the site and future

work is planned to investigate the dating of the medieval structures by scientific means. While fieldwork to date has substantially revised both the dating and sequence of the structural remains at Howmore, it is planned to investigate the local and regional context of the site on completion of the present survey.



Fieldwork in 2004 will involve checking and augmentation of the 2003 field record and completion of the earthwork and topographical survey. Stone-by-stone recording of the surviving elements of St Mary's Church and of the two post-medieval burial enclosures and associated monument will also be undertaken.

Andrew Reynolds (Institute of Archaeology, UCL) and John Raven (Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow)

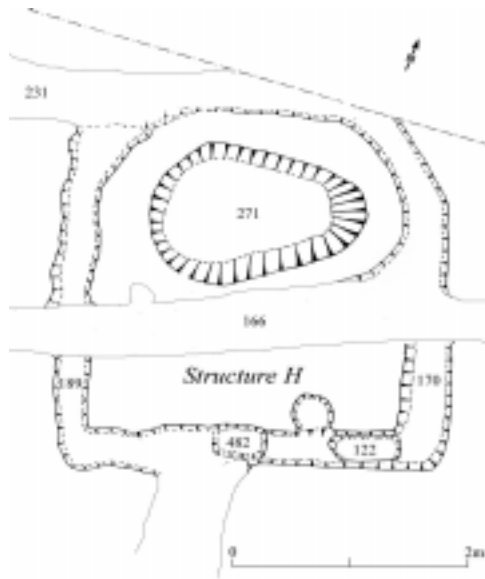
Excavation and survey in Bishopstone, East Sussex, 2003

The second year of the Bishopstone Valley Archaeological Research Project saw an intensification in field work with the launch of a training excavation on the village green to the north of the Anglo-Saxon minster church of St Andrews - an area previously shown to preserve archaeological remains belonging to an abandoned portion of the Late Anglo-Saxon/ Saxo-Norman settlement.

A further dimension to last season's work was a ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey of St Andrew's church undertaken by Stratascan Ltd, made possible by a SMA research grant. This aimed to provide new evidence for the configuration of the Anglo-Saxon church of which the nave and a southern porticus survive substantially

intact, the latter with an apparently *in situ* sun-dial that has been upheld as one of the features indicative of pre-Viking origins. The survey took in available floor-space within the nave, the choir, and north aisle, and a 5m-wide external strip on the north side of the church. The strongest evidence for structural remains came from the choir where an anomaly approximating to the putative southern wall of an eastern porticus was identified. This is likely to be one and the same as the feature described as a 'Saxon chancel', discovered when the church was repaved during a Victorian restoration. Other anomalies of structural significance suggest the possible survival of foundations associated with the north wall of the pre-Conquest nave and the eastern wall of a western porticus, although that they relate to later phases of building cannot be discounted. More enigmatic is an east-west anomaly running down the centre of the nave which is too substantial to be associated with either under-floor services or heating.

The excavation, which took in the full width of the green, from the boundary of the churchyard to the northern limits of a chalk spur capped by the church, exposed the complete and partial ground-plans for a minimum of nine earthfast timber structures - notable for their close spacing and planned alignment - together with a range of other domestic features such as pits and fenced enclosure boundaries. Rectangular buildings of 'post-in-trench' construction predominated, although at least one post-hole structure was also identified. The largest of the fully exposed buildings, measuring 9m x 5m, produced charred remains from a post-setting which yielded a radio-carbon date of AD 855-1005 (95% probability). More unusual, and setting Bishopstone apart from typical rural settlements of the Late Anglo-Saxon period, was an apsidal-ended structure (illustrated below) enclosing a central cess-pit which finds its closest parallels amongst a group of latrines exclusive to high-status secular and ecclesiastical sites such as Cheddar, Somerset, and North Elmham, Norfolk.



Two further closely-spaced inhumations and a possible exhumed grave from an early phase of St Andrew's cemetery were also discovered within the confines of excavation, bringing the total number of extra-mural burials to five.

The better preserved of the two inhumations, which was likely to have been tightly wrapped in a shroud, supplied a radio-carbon date of AD 850-1020 (95% probability) thereby confirming the suspicion that this halo of interments is pre-Conquest in origin. The extension of domestic features up to the churchyard boundary suggests that the settlement had expanded to fill a vacuum created by a contraction in the bounds of the pre-Conquest cemetery.

Although small and fairly standard in range, the finds assemblage includes the first stratified collection of Late Anglo-Saxon pottery from East Sussex, whilst the recovery of bun-shaped loom-weights, a decorated hooked-tag and a coin of Aethelred II, provides further support for assigning the occupation to between the late 9th and the late 11th centuries.

Excavation will be resumed in 2004 under the joint auspices of the University of Kent and the Sussex Archaeological Society in order to resolve some of the ambiguities surrounding partially exposed structures and to define the limits of the occupation.

An interim report detailing the results of the 2003 excavation including illustrations and plans can be downloaded as a PDF file from the Sussex Archaeological Society website: www.sussexpast.co.uk

Gabor Thomas

LOCAL SOCIETIES AND MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY: HUDDERSFIELD AND DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Iron Makers of Myers Wood

Myers Wood is part of the Storthes Hall campus of the University of Huddersfield, situated some 3½ miles south east of the West Yorkshire town. Evidence of iron making was discovered by accident in 1998, when members of the Huddersfield Society, searching for pre-historic burial mounds, came across substantial mounds of tap slag alongside a stream in the depths of the wood. Without the means, or experience, to properly explore the site, the Society sought professional advice. West Yorkshire Archaeology Services put the group in touch with Dr McDonnell (University of Bradford), who quickly saw the potential significance of the site and offered his assistance.

It was agreed that the University of Bradford would provide the expertise and specialist equipment, with the Society providing enthusiastic volunteers for a supervised excavation. The high cost of geophysical surveying, laboratory analysis of slag and sophisticated archaeomagnetic and radiocarbon dating, was covered by an initial lottery fund grant of £15,000 from the Countryside Agency through the Local Heritage Initiative. The initial plan was for a single, ten-day, excavation of areas of activity identified by the surveys, extracting samples and artefacts to help interpret and date the site. The dig was to be advertised and open to the public, as a condition of receiving the grant. To date, the excavations have extended to three main sessions, each of ten days, during 2002/3 and have attracted hundreds of visitors, keen to see an important part of their local heritage emerging from the ground.

Evidence for all stages of metal production has been discovered on the Myers Wood site. Extraction of ore, charcoal production, ore roasting, furnace building, iron smelting and, unusually, bloom smithing were all carried out in a well-organised operation. Slag analysis shows that metal extraction was efficient and consistent, with temperatures around 1300C being achieved in the smelting furnaces. Since there is, as yet, no evidence of water-powered bellows being used, the hand-operated bellows must have had a high degree of sophistication.

The estimated 600 tonnes of slag, in six main heaps and spread widely over the area, indicate that about 2200 tonnes of roasted ore was processed to produce 1100 tonnes of metal. This would suggest that the site was in operation over a long period of time. The remains of five furnaces have been uncovered with tapping channels running 'down-slope' towards slag heaps. That shown below retains a section of its tapping arch.



It follows that many more furnaces, long since destroyed, must have been situated 'up-slope' of all the slag heaps. The presence of a smithing hearth was detected through the discovery of hammerscale and the different nature of the slag associated with a raised stone hearth built into the

natural slope of a bank. Archaeomagnetic and radiocarbon analysis of many samples of fired material and charcoal taken from the site, show that the iron makers were operating in the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. These dates were supported by the pottery sherds found in all the main areas of excavation. They were identified as Pennine Gritty Ware originating in West Yorkshire with a few pieces of Beverley Ware from East Yorkshire. All were manufactured between the 11th and early 14th centuries.

A monastic grange called Tymberwood was located to the south of Myers Wood at Thunderbridge. It was associated with the Cistercian abbey of Roche, near Rotherham. Experts from the University of Bradford have studied Cistercian methods of iron making at the abbeys of Byland and Rievaulx over many years and have reached the conclusion that Myers Wood has all the hallmarks of a Cistercian enterprise.

Activity on the excavated site probably ceased at the time of the Black Death, but elsewhere in the wood, evidence is emerging of later iron production using waterpower. It is clear that much of the surrounding landscape has been shaped by those associated with iron making over many centuries. A top-level team of inspectors from English Heritage visited the area in February 2004 and immediately declared the whole wood to be a site of national importance. Funding will be made available to carry out landscape and woodland surveys, which together with further careful archaeological investigation will confirm the full significance of this unique site.

Established in 1956, The Society actively studies, explores and records the archaeology of the Huddersfield area. A Winter Lecture Series is held on the first Friday of each month from October to March, attracting speakers from the top-rank of professional archaeologists and researchers. The illustrated talks are usually held at the Town Hall, and non-members are welcome. As well as research and excavation work, the Society organises excursions and social activities. New members are encouraged to be involved, especially those willing, and able, to wield a spade and a trowel!

For more details please contact the Secretary, Sandra Harling, at 72 Moorside Road, Kirkheaton, Huddersfield W. Yorks, HD5 0LP, 01484-511400, www.ichuddarch.co.uk

*Granville Clay – Project Coordinator
Huddersfield and District Archaeological Society*

NEWS AND VIEWS

Gothic vs The Lord of the Rings: retelling the Medieval in popular culture

2003 drew to close with the opening of the exhibitions *Gothic Art For England 1400-1547* at the V&A and *The Lord of the Rings Motion Picture Trilogy, the Exhibition*, next door at the Science Museum. *Gothic* is the culmination of a twenty-year exploration of medieval England which began in 1984 with two exhibitions, *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art 966-1066* (at the BM) and *English Romanesque Art 1066-1200* (at the Hayward Gallery). These were followed in 1987 by *The Age of Chivalry, Art in Plantagenet England 1200-1400* (at the Royal Academy of Arts). The final part, *Gothic*, had to wait for 15 years but the intervening period left room for several smaller scale exhibitions including *Image and Idol* (at the Tate, 2001) and *Wonder, Painted Sculpture for Medieval England* (Henry Moore Gallery, Leeds, 2002). Taken together the exhibitions represent an unparalleled exploration of medieval art and culture in England. Their intellectual stimulus is not primarily archaeological but art-historical but they deal with a significant chunk of the evidence for medieval England and so should not be ignored by archaeologists, though they may want to change the terms of the debate. The primary connecting thread in all these exhibitions was a celebration of the artistic culture of England's medieval elites (though with some minimal recognition of a wider social involvement in the practices looked at) and a deeply absorbing selection of fascinating objects.

Gothic does not radically break with this tradition, signalled by its magnificently attention-grabbing opening with the proudly priapic wooden sculptures, the Dacre Beasts. It arranged the subject into nine themes with a number of sub-themes: Introduction; Royalty; War & Chivalry; Patrons; City and Town; Household; Church; Death and 1547. Again the emphasis was very much on an aesthetic of artistic quality first, the working of society second. The display approach was very clean and minimalist, with barely a nod towards, for example, the use of contextualising photographs or video/slides. The arrangements of objects tended towards isolationism but there were notable exceptions as with the altar arrangement seen through a rood screen and the mock-up supporting the St William of York shrine fragments. *Gothic* was good on how the wealthier levels of society commissioned, invested-in and consumed objects and buildings but poor on a corresponding analysis of how these were aped and /or disputed by the less wealthy members of society. The section dealing with the church came closest to dealing with such questions, focussing as it did on the parish church, the most socially inclusive arena of medieval religion.

The exhibition has provoked some sharp comment on its lack of architectural context but I did not feel that this was entirely justified. The framework of Gothic architecture is certainly important but should it be viewed as the prime context in an exhibition such as this? I felt it took a nuanced line that implicitly broadened the definition of Gothic and so encouraged the visitor to reassess it. Although it did not explicitly foreground architecture (particularly exteriors) neither did it overcome a reluctance to be explicit about a definition of Gothic. Should the term *Gothic* even have been used as a title? In a large percentage of the popular consciousness it probably has more to do with horror-fiction narratives than its stemming from a 19th century academic analysis that was concerned with a pure high-style of architecture, its occupying space, royal expression and nationhood (though the two are linked historically and culturally). The academic debates have moved on to a broader social understanding

and as a source of evidence for this archaeology has played an important role in charting a more holistic view of the medieval past. *Gothic* came closest to this on the question of religion, clearly demonstrating the comprehensive and pervasive hold of Catholic beliefs: within the power-struggles of the mighty and their concerns for social display, within wider social practice such as pilgrimage and at the very personal level of private devotion (some times rather touchingly conveyed as with Richard II's Book of Hours, a second-hand relatively modest affair avoiding ostentation).

In the final analysis the exhibition generally came down on the side of "the deeds of great men" school of history. There are huge wall-charts showing the succession of English kings and a Battle Timeline which begins with Agincourt in 1415 and ends with Boulogne in 1544, rather conveniently two English victories over the French. The exhibition concluded with Henry VIII's death in 1547, portrayed (despite some textual caution) very much as the dividing line between medieval and post-medieval in a way that a single-life can scarcely be.

Religion was perhaps the key element of medieval life focussed on by *Gothic*. In one of the most enduring re-tellings of the medieval, J R R Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, religion is noticeably absent as an organised authority. The popular phenomenon of the triptych filming of that work retains that explicit absence. This was perhaps a factor that made the staging of the film exhibition appropriate for the Science Museum, not generally an abode of medievalists nor those interested in religion. The juxtaposition of the two exhibitions in the V&A and the Science Museum was one that was hard to resist. The LOTR Exhibition was very much a "how did they do that" look at how the films were made. That there is a good deal of applied science here cannot be denied but equally the films can be seen as the apogee of design bent in the service of cinema and narrative film-making so equally deserving of a place in the V&A. The exhibition very much demonstrated the multi-media approach to exhibition design reflecting its subject matter through conceptual art, costumes and other props (armour, weapons,

manuscripts, heirlooms etc), special effects techniques, models and video footage. There were several videos to each themed section, all of short duration lasting in the region of 90 seconds which facilitated information grab as readily as conventional labels but also added movement, colour and sound, though perhaps at the cost of attention-span and concentration. The films are a significant 21st century visualisation of an imagined medieval world and video interviews with the films' personal were peppered with references to how a sense of "medievalness" permeated both the story and the film-making. The relationship between Jackson's films and Tolkien's books also has a medieval sense of re-telling tales about it, just as Tolkien's work is itself a re-telling of Tolkien's understanding of the lost language and myth of Anglo-Saxon England and Germanic Northern Europe.

Finally, my no doubt unscientific observations on the day of my visit noted two very different demographics to these two exhibitions: *Gothic* was busy but LOTR attracted at least three times as many visitors of a noticeably younger age range by about 20 years. Perhaps there is a lesson in there on narrative appeal for medieval archaeology to explore?

Mark Hall, Perth Museum

Viking-period harbour discovered at Fånestangen, Frosta, Nord-Trøndelag, Norway

Fånestangen lies at the south-western part of a bay on the northern part of the Frosta peninsula, just visible from Trondheim in the Trondheim fjord. The initial discovery was made during the construction of a breakwater for a small marina when, following the removal of a layer of large beach stones, a pattern of wooden posts was exposed on the foreshore. Periodic sightings at low tide alerted local amateur historians who sent photographs and a sample of the one of the posts to local archaeologists based at Nord-Trøndelag Fylkeskommune (County Council). First dismissed as a construction associated with the 17th- or 18th-century timber trade, the real significance of the discovery only came to light when the wood sample was returned

with a radio-carbon date of AD 1005 – 1160. During this period the regional “thing” for Trøndelag was at Frosta, and this may explain the need for a harbour and a well constructed quay. Under Norwegian law the site is now protected and the County Council, in liaison with the regional archaeological museum at NTNU, Trondheim, is assessing whether the site should be covered permanently, conserved *in situ*, or fully excavated. Plans and pictures of the Viking quay can be found at www.ntfk.no/hovedside/side/Faanestangen.ppt

*Information provided by Lars Forseth
Archaeologist, Nord-Trøndelag
Fylkeskommune*

SOCIETY GRANTS 2004

The Society’s Officers met on the same day as Council to consider applications to the various research funds. The following awards were made (from the Medieval Archaeology Research Fund)

James Barrett (York) - £900 for his project ‘Landscape Archaeology, Economic Intensification and Long-Term Settlement History in Westray, Orkney’

Christopher Dyer (Leicester) - £500 for the ‘Whittlewood project test-pitting programme’

(from the Eric Fletcher Fund)

Sam Turner (Exeter) - £250 for the ‘Mothecombe Early Medieval Beachmarket Project’

Andrew Ferrero (Institute of Archaeology, UCL) - £250 for ‘A Study of Settlement within the Medieval Landscape of Southern Shropshire’

Future Applications

Please note that a new updated form must be used for all subsequent applications. This can be downloaded from the website (see address at the bottom of the front page of this *Newsletter*) or obtained from the

Honorary Secretary, Andrew Reynolds:
Institute of Archaeology, University College
London, 31-34 Gordon Square, London
WC1H 0PY

BOOKS

Romanesque and Gothic Metalwork and Ivory Carvings in the Museum of Scotland, by Virginia Glenn 2003, 216pp, 40 colour & 160 b/w illus, ISBN 1 901663 558, £35

This catalogue brings together an important collection of Romanesque portable artistic media from the Museum of Scotland including such works as the Lewis Chess Pieces, the Whithorn Crozier, twenty Scottish seal matrices, and a selection of other gold and silver jewellery. Catalogue entries include photographs, measurements, descriptions and technical analysis whilst discussion focusses upon the history of the collection and the historical and social context of individual pieces.

SOCIETY NEWS

Council met in London on Wednesday 24th March to consider, among other things, how the 50th Anniversary of the Society might be celebrated. Plans are firming up for a series of events throughout 2007. Look for further details in future Newsletters...

Gift Aid

A substantial number of members have returned Gift Aid forms allowing the Society to reclaim the tax paid on their subscriptions. Gift Aid enables the Society to increase its income at no extra expense to members. It should only be signed by those who pay Income Tax and who do not treat their subscription to the Society as an expense. The declaration does not require witnesses and does not need to be renewed. Forms should be returned to the Treasurer, Dr Mark Gardiner, School of Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen’s University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN.

If you have lost your form and would like a replacement, they can be obtained from the Treasurer (email: m.gardiner@qub.ac.uk).

**THE SOCIETY FOR MEDIEVAL
ARCHEOLOGY MONOGRAPHS**

Cemeteries and burials

- 4 A. L. Meaney and S. Chadwick Hawkes, *Two Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries at Winnall, Winchester, Hampshire* (1970) £6.00 (£5.00)
- 14 K. Parfitt and B. Bruggmann, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery on Mill Hill, Deal, Kent* (1997) £40.00 (£30.00)
- 16 D. A. Hinton, *A Smith in Lindsey: The Anglo-Saxon Grave at Tattershall Thorpe, Lincolnshire* (2000) £22.50 (£17.50)
- 17 S. Lucy and A. Reynolds, *Burial in Early Medieval England and Wales* (2002) £33.00 (£28.00)

Rural settlement

- 6 G. T. M. Beresford, *The Medieval Clay-land Village: Excavations at Goltho and Barton Blount* (1975) £6.00 (£5.00)
- 8 J. G. Hurst (general ed) Wharram. A Study of Settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds, Vol. I: D. D. Andrews and G. Milne (eds) *Domestic Settlement, I: Areas 10 and 6* (1979) £12.50 (£10.00)
- 12 D. Austin, *The Deserted Medieval Village of Thrislington, Co. Durham: Excavations 1973-74* (1989) £12.50 (£10.00)

Towns

- 7 H. Clarke and A. Carter, *Excavations in King's Lynn, 1963-1970* (1977) £12.50 (£10.00)
- 9 C. M. Mahany, A. Burchard and G. Simpson, *Excavations at Stamford, Lincolnshire, 1963-69* (1982) £12.50 (£10.00)
- 13 V. L. Yanin, E. N. Nosov, A. S. Khoroshev, A. N. Sorokin, E. A. Rybina, V. I. Povetkin, and P. G. Gaidukov, *The Archaeology of Novgorod, Russia* (1992) £17.50 (£15.00)

Industry

- 10 P. Mayes and K. Scott, *Pottery Kilns at Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton* (1984) £12.50 (£10.00)

Religious and monastic sites

- 11 J. G. Hurst and P. A. Rahtz (general eds) Wharram. A Study of Settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds, Vol. III: R. D. Bell, M. W. Beresford *et al*, *The Church of St Martin* (1987) £17.50 (£15.00)
- 18 S. T. Driscoll, *Excavations at Glasgow Cathedral 1988-1997* (2002) £29.00 (£24.50)
- 19 P. Mayes, *Excavations at a Templar Preceptory. South Witham, Lincolnshire, 1965-67* (2002) £30.50 (£26.00)

Manors and moats

- 3 P. A. Rahtz, *Excavations at King John's Hunting Lodge, Writtle, Essex, 1955-57* (1969) £6.00 (£5.00)
- 5 H. E. Jean Le Patourel, *The Moated Sites of Yorkshire* (1973) £6.00 (£5.00)

New perspectives

- 15 D. Gaimster and P. Stamper (eds), *The Age of Transition: the Archaeology of English Culture 1400-1600* (1997) (available from Oxbow Books only)
- 20 J. Hines, A. Lane and M. Redknapp (eds), *Land, Sea and Home* (2003) £54.00 (£46.00, £36.00 until 30/4/04)

Forthcoming titles for 2004-2005:

- W. D. Klemperer and N. Boothroyd, *Excavations at Hulton Abbey, Staffordshire. 1987-94*
- K. Giles and C. Dyer (eds), *Town and Country in the Middle Ages. Contrasts, Contacts and Interconnections, 1100-1500*
- A. Saunders, *Excavations at Launceston Castle, Cornwall*
- S. Foster (ed), *Able Minds and Practised Hands. Scotland's Early Medieval Sculpture in the 21st Century*

Members of the Society are entitled to each monograph at the lower price (in brackets).

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