



ULSTER
ARCHÆOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Newsletter

Summer 2017

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Lectures

Monday 8pm, Elwood Building, QUB

25 th September	Antoine Giacometti (Archaeology Plan)	Excavations at Rathfarnham Castle
23 rd October	C. Dunlop & J. Barkley (NAC)	The Frosses Excavations
13 th November	David Bell (QUB)	Bronze Age Blades and the Battle of Ballynahinch: Unexpected Connections
11 th December	Catriona Moore	The Drumclay Crannog Wooden Assemblage

Conference

Inaugural conference hosted by the Ulster Archaeological Society and the Centre for Community Archaeology at Queen's taking place in October

To mark the 80th anniversary of the formation of the Ulster Archaeological Society at Queen's University, the establishment of the 3rd Series of the Ulster Journal of Archaeology and the launch of the new Centre for Community Archaeology at Queen's, the UAS and the Centre for Community Archaeology are hosting, in October, the first of what will be an annual conference at Queen's University.

The Discovery 2017! Inaugural Annual Review of Archaeology in Ulster conference is taking place in the Elmwood Building, Queen's University Belfast on Friday evening, 20th October 2017 with a full day of lectures taking place on Saturday 21st October. We will be sending out more detailed information about the conference, as well as putting material on our website and Facebook page, in the coming weeks.

Survey Group News

Our 2017 survey season is in full swing and as usual there are plenty of interesting and challenging monuments for us to survey. We kicked off the season on Saturday 25th March with a visit to Broughderg in County Tyrone, where we surveyed a prehistoric complex consisting of two stone circles, a standing stone and two stone rows. David flew the drone over the adjacent bogland and reported further stone features breaking the bog surface, so there are probably a lot more monuments to be discovered here. Our preliminary research also suggested that two burial cairns had been removed close to the stone circles during land reclamation work, so we intend to return to the site at the end of August to see if we can identify any remains. Broughderg townland already boasts 64 prehistoric monuments of most types, so it will be nice to contribute to this total in due course. Many thanks to Sean Clarke and the members of the Broughderg community who looked after the group so well on

the day, with home baking and lashings of tea and coffee.

In April, we made our way to Castle Ward, where we were tasked to survey the Temple Water. Yes, that's correct, the Temple Water, which as many of you know, is a lake. This is the first time we have ever surveyed a lake, so it was quite a challenge. We deployed about every piece of kit in our arsenal and actually managed to complete it. We thought at first that Mal Conway was joking, but apparently this forms an essential part of the formal landscape at Castle Ward, so having an archaeological survey is an essential part of understanding this.

On 27th May, we made our way to Dunseverick Castle on the Antrim coast. There, we had the very challenging task of surveying a series of stone enclosures, which we think are the remains of boat noosts (to over-winter your boat). Once again, David carried out a drone survey and it produced some wonderful images of features on the promontory, obviously associated with the castle itself.

David Irving spent a few days there and explored the coastline by kayak, finding all sorts of stone enclosures and remnants of industrial activity in the area. Someone is going to have fun writing this one up!

Our June survey took place at the 'Big Dig' at Divis, where for the open day, the survey group were joined by the resistivity team to assist with planning the excavation trenches at the excavations at Divis Cashel and a nearby hut site. Many members of the survey group were taking part in the excavations, so it was a full house on the day. We had just taken delivery of our UAS branded high-viz vests and our promotional banner, so the society were well-represented at the event and the crew looked very smart in their uniforms! As if this were not enough, the excavations were the venue for a society evening field trip on Monday 19th June. Many thanks to Mal Conway and Dermot McCann from the National Trust, who facilitated all of our efforts. Thanks also to Lizzy Pinkerton of Belfast Hills Partnership, who organised the event and gave the

crew a lovely chocolate cake as a token of thanks for their efforts.

At the end of July, we are off again to Drumgath, this time to check over some details for the graveyard survey. Chris Stevenson and Randal Scott have completed the first report on the early ecclesiastical site and this should be available on the society website shortly. Well worth a read. As we aim to return to Broughderg at the end of August, this will allow our long-suffering friend Mal Conway to have a couple of Saturdays off. This is long overdue, as he has been at the constant beck and call of the group since our foundation in 2005 and has enthusiastically supported us throughout. Who knows what he has in store for us in September, but I'm sure it will be as interesting as ever.

Harry Welsh
Fieldwork Co-ordinator

March Lecture

The Society's March lecture was given by Dr Mark Gardiner and Dr Tom McNeill. Their lecture was entitled The Distant North: Late

Medieval Ships and Trade in Gaelic Ulster.

Late medieval trade in Britain and on the continent is often revealed through port records. These show the types of goods being transported, their place of origin and their destination. However, such documents are rare in Ireland. There is also a lack of coinage and Ulster towns suggest a lack of commercialisation. This has led many historians to believe that there was very little trade in Ireland.

Gardiner and McNeill set out to investigate the systems of trade and their archaeological remains. They noted that the Western Isles and seaboard of Scotland, Iceland, and the Faeroes had a system of trade quite different to the rest of Europe. This trade was based on fish and exchange of goods. Sheltered anchorages had been identified on Shetland and a number of ports were recognised in 1563 where goods were traded for fish. This resulted in a highly regulated system, with agreed meeting places and merchants regularly returning, all controlled by local lords. Cod was the main

fish produced in Iceland, but Ireland produced large quantities of salmon.

So what evidence is there for ports in Ulster? There are a number of 16th-century documents that identify some ports around the Ulster coast. These indicate harbours in Co. Donegal, which were visited to assess their suitability. Donegal, Rathmullan and Doe Castle were all possible landing sites, with evidence of a harbour area and a shore cleared of stone at Doe Castle, allowing trade with the castle. However, Sweens Castle looked promising on the map, but there was no safe harbour.

The lordship of the MacDonalds proved an opportunity to search for harbours with no documentation. Four sites were investigated – Dunivaig on Islay, Claig on Fraoch Eileen, Ballycastle, and Dunluce. Dunivaig provided evidence of a sheltered bay with a cleared shore and a castle clearly designed for trade, as well as a structure for the hospitality customs of the Gaelic. Claig Castle appears to have been a customs post controlling a sheltered

harbour before ships entered the Sound of Islay. Ballycastle is a polyfocal settlement with a royal site, church, port, and market. Dunluce had a castle, church and market, but did not have a port, so the town was only built to enhance the castle.

It is evident that Ulster did have a trading system based on salmon and the traditional routes it followed. Local lords constructed substantial stone infrastructure, such as castles, churches and towns, as a result of this trade. By the 15th lords were becoming landlords, but they were also exploiting the resources of the land for trade. What did these lords get in return for salmon? Wine was the main import, allowing feasting and entertaining, but gun powder was significant during the Nine Years War. Gaelic lordship was fully integrated into the European network and just as interested in trade as any other lord of the time.

Duncan Berryman

May Lecture 1

The Society's first May lecture was given by Dr Duncan Garrow of the University of Reading.

Duncan described how his investigation of remote crannogs on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides began with a quiet afternoon stroll in 2012 by Lewis resident Chris Murray. While walking his dog Chris spotted a small, interesting-looking island not far from the shore of the loch. Thinking it looked artificial, he wondered what it might be and if people had ever lived on it. Luckily he didn't stop there, as so many others might have done. Chris had spent much of his career working as a Royal Navy clearance diver. The next weekend, he lugged his dry suit, cylinder and other diving paraphernalia across the moors and had a look on the loch bed, looking for clues as to what the islet was, and if it had been inhabited. What he found there proved to be arguably one of the most surprising and important discoveries in British Neolithic archaeology for many years. Inspired by his findings Duncan and Dr Fraser Stuart (Southampton) got involved in the investigation of the sites in 2014.

'Crannogs' – artificial island settlements constructed in lochs – are a widespread and intriguing

category of archaeological site. They have a north-western distribution in Britain, with almost all known examples coming from Scotland. They were constructed in many different periods of the prehistoric and historic past. It is generally considered that they were built, used and re-used over a period of 2500 years – from the Late Bronze Age to the medieval period (c. 1000 BC to AD 1500), and in some cases even more recently than that. It used to be assumed that these sites must have been built as small island settlements, easily defensible. However, more recently, people have suggested that they were perhaps politically significant, a sign of one's social isolation and/or ability to marshal huge amounts of labour in the construction process.

Over 400 known crannog sites have been recorded in Scotland. Many more no doubt lie undetected. The Outer Hebrides, off the north-west coast of mainland Scotland, represent a particular hotspot in their distribution, with 150 potential sites having been identified there. As virtually none of these have been excavated – most identified

by survey alone – it is broadly assumed that they range from the Late Bronze Age to the medieval period.

The Outer Hebrides are well-known for their Neolithic archaeology. The Late Neolithic stone circles and alignments at Calanais on the Isle of Lewis, for example, are amongst the best known in Britain. Among Neolithic specialists, however, the islands are perhaps most renowned for their settlement evidence, so rare across much of the rest of Britain. Impressive stone-built houses, dating as far back as c. 3700 cal BC, have been identified at half a dozen sites including Eilean an Tighe, Allt Chrìsal, the Udal and An Doirlinn.

Perhaps the best preserved Outer Hebridean Neolithic settlement found so far was excavated by Ian Armit and his team at Eilean Domhnuill, North Uist in the late 1980s. Intriguingly, having set out to dig what everyone thought likely to be an Iron Age crannog, Armit soon realised that the site was in fact Early Neolithic – huge quantities of material culture of that date were recovered. Built on

what appeared to be a sizeable, artificially-constructed island linked to the land by a causeway, the Neolithic settlement there is now known to have lasted over a thousand years. Multiple phases of buildings were identified, and the islet has been interpreted by Armit as a seasonally-occupied site of potentially specialised (ritual?) function that was eventually abandoned due to flooding. The site has been compared to another Neolithic island settlement, Eilean an Tighe, also dug in North Uist in the 1930s, although it is possible that this site was originally located on a promontory, becoming an island much more recently due to raised water levels in the loch. As a result of Armit's work in the 1980s, questions as to why a group (or groups) of people had felt compelled to go to the enormous effort of constructing such an isolated islet settlement in a loch during the Neolithic were, unsurprisingly, reignited. In the Iron Age and medieval periods, many different kinds of defended settlements are known and warfare is assumed to have been prevalent. But in the Neolithic, very few clearly defensible sites are known

and things are usually thought to have been more peaceful. What did this new discovery imply about Neolithic social relationships in the Outer Hebrides?

Duncan described the 2016 survey work which consisted of two main elements: (1) underwater geophysical survey of the loch beds and (2) diver-based survey and collection of diagnostic material from around the islets themselves. The main aims were to establish in more detail the artificial character and extent of the sites and to try to ascertain once and for all whether they were (only) Neolithic in date.

They employed a combination of side-scan sonar and dual frequency single-beam echosounder. The side-scan sonar provided a high-resolution two-dimensional image of the loch bed, which could potentially be used to identify any underwater features (such as rock-built causeways). The single-beam echosounder was used to produce both an accurate three-dimensional model of the loch floor (enabling them to establish the precise topographic location of each islet) and an understanding of the depth

of sediment lying above it (and thus the palaeoenvironmental and archaeological potential of each site).

Intriguingly, the models produced suggested that all three of the sites investigated had been constructed on pre-existing local rises in the loch bed. Our Neolithic builders had an expert understanding of the character of each loch and chose exactly where to construct their islets on that basis.

Diver survey simply involved donning dry suits, getting in the loch and having a look, just as Chris had done a few years previously. This time, however, the team had the necessary survey equipment to create accurate and detailed maps of the sites on which they could also locate any finds recovered, keeping track of their precise archaeological context each time. Disappointingly, in the first loch visited (Loch Arnish), visibility was terrible due to the amounts of rain-washed sediment suspended in the water – and the survey had to be abandoned. Luckily, Chris was able to tell the archaeologists a great deal about

the site and the whereabouts of finds made previously in the loch. The next two sites, Loch Bhorghastail and Loch Langabhat, proved much more productive. At both, they were able to establish that each islet was indeed human-made, involving the piling up of huge rocks on the loch bed (some of which must have weighed, literally, a tonne) creating monumental stone islands 15-20m across.

At Loch Bhorghastail, they were also able to plot a stone-built causeway leading out to the islet from the nearest promontory of land. On the opposite side of the island, they identified a row of worked timbers that appeared to have been used as some form of revetment, perhaps an attempt to prevent that part of the site from collapsing. They had surviving worked timber architecture and clear archaeological stratigraphy. In addition, substantial quantities of pottery and worked quartz were observed within eroding silt deposits to one side of the islet. At Loch Langabhat, obvious structural features were less in evidence, but pottery was even more abundant. Its distribution to the north of the

islet clearly related, again, to particular silt deposits.

On both sites, all identified pottery was lifted from the loch bed, having been accurately plotted using the highly-sophisticated 'extra-long survey pole held on the loch bed. Of the 94 sherds in total recovered in 2016 from Bhorghastail and Langabhat, every single one was identified as being Neolithic in date. No later material whatsoever was recovered.

The work in 2016 proved once and for all that the islets first identified by Chris were indeed artificial constructions and were firmly (and quite possibly exclusively) Neolithic in date. As many have long expected, Ian Armit's site at Eilean Domhnuill, 80km to the south in North Uist, can no longer be considered an anomaly – all of the recently investigated sites in Lewis were Neolithic too, also dating to the middle-late 4th millennium BC.

However, as is so often the case with archaeological investigation, the 2016 survey work in some ways raised as many new questions as it answered old ones. The sites identified did not look exactly like Eilean Domhnuill, being smaller

and less clearly settlement-related (at least on the surface). Did the small islets actually house settlements or should they perhaps be viewed as a new kind of site, possibly ritual? What practices were carried out on the islets in the Neolithic and how did these end up with substantial quantities of material (including complete pots) being deposited on the loch beds nearby? Does any architecture survive on the surface of the islets, and what buildings or other features might be detected through dry-land excavation? If these artificial islands were settlements, they will transform our understanding of social relations during the Neolithic – what drove people to isolate themselves from the rest of the community in such a dramatic way shortly after the region was first settled on a substantial scale? Alternatively, if they are specialised, occasional-use sites, what purpose did they fulfil and what roles did they play alongside other monuments? These new islet sites have the potential to cause a step change in knowledge, both of this key site type and of the British Neolithic more generally. It is therefore vital

that we build up a more complete understanding of them. Further excavation work is planned in the summer of 2017, so we might find out at least some of the answers to the questions posed above this year.

N.B. The material for this article was kindly provided by Duncan and formed the basis of a report in July-Aug 2017 edition of British Archaeology magazine.

Pat O'Neill

May Lecture 2

The Society's second May lecture was given by Ken Wiggins. He is an experienced field archaeologist who directed the excavations of King John's Castle, Limerick. These excavations were the subject of his lecture.

One important question to address was – what was King John's involvement with the castle? The castle is often called Limerick Castle by archaeologists and St John's Castle by locals. Roger Stanlihurst believes that John ordered the construction of the castle. It has many parallels with

Dublin Castle, which was constructed under John's orders.

There is evidence for an earlier structure than that of John's Castle. Three possible references in the annals mention an attack on a castle at Limerick and the Anglo-Normans had taken the town by 1175, they lost it a year later to the local Irish king, O'Brien. Excavation revealed that there was an Anglo-Norman ringwork castle under the later masonry structure, this was earthen with a stone revetment. During the Norse occupation, the area is likely to have been the þing Plas, the community meeting site. The Norse main street reached the ringwork and continued beyond it, suggesting a smaller earlier structure. The Anglo-Normans built over the þing Plas to reinforce their control over the Norse population.

Sunken-feature-structures (SFSs) were uncovered under the ringwork. This suburb was a network of roads and lanes with houses and SFSs within the house plots. The arrival of ringwork must have been very destructive to the area and unwelcome.

The local inhabitants took back some of the land when O'Brien

regained Limerick in 1176. They filled in the ditch, absorbing it into properties, and the ping and market were replaced in the ringwork. An alternative main street to the east had replaced the old Norse one.

The Anglo-Normans retook the town in 1195 and began to construct a castle within the ringwork. The main gate, northeast tower, and east curtain wall were all constructed at this time. The curtain wall stopped level with the ringwork structure, suggesting a reuse of this fortification. This wall was also rebuilt. The castle expanded in the 13th century.

The excavations have shown that this was King John's Castle. The earlier Anglo-Norman ringwork was lost to the hiberno-norse suburb. King John replaced this structure with the castle that stands today and retained control of it by giving and taking power from his supporters in the area. As John's power in England waned, he managed to hold onto control of this outpost and the castle that retains his name.

Duncan Berryman

Cyprus Study Tour 19th–26th April 2017

I had not returned to Cyprus since serving there with the RAF in the early 1970s; arriving 8 months before the Turks invaded in Jun '74, ruining my only 'sunshine tour' and forcing Glenys to be evacuated back to Ireland. So I was doubly enthused when Anne declared that this year's study tour would be based in Limassol and I would get a chance to learn a lot more about the history of the island and to see the inevitable changes that the intervening 43 years had made.

As has now become expected, Anne had designed an exciting and expansive itinerary covering every stage of the islands development from Neolithic, through the Roman occupation and forward to the Knights Hospitallers, as well as preparing copious notes on all the sites we were to visit.

Suitably briefed all 32 of us duly reported to Belfast International Airport at 8am for our 09.55 flight to Larnaca. This early start was to set a pattern for the rest of the

week, as we had to leave the hotel each day at this time, to beat the rush and to see as much as we could before the sun got too hot. The Hotel Kapetanios Odyssea, in Limassol, had everything we needed to make our short stay comfortable, and I think most of us would agree that the dining-room and bar staff were very accommodating.

Our tour started with a visit to Kourion (Curium) Museum that covered the period from the 6th Millennium BC to the Middle Ages. We then spent a fascinating time at the amphitheatre complex main Kourion Archaeological Site with its Roman and Early Christian monuments and the Temple of Apollo Hylates complex, before returning to our hotel via Kolossi Castle. The next day we dashed off to visit the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia and to be rendered speechless by the quality of the exhibits, and the exceptional way that they were presented and lit. This was by far the best museum I have been into in years and I would wholeheartedly recommend it to everyone. After a tour of part of the walled city including the Famagusta Gate and St John's

Cathedral and a hearty lunch, we entered the Turkish occupied zone, and after a passport check, we arrived at the grand 13th century Cathedral of St Sophia that had been converted into a mosque in the 16th century.

The next day saw us in the city kingdom of Amathus and the Neolithic site of Choirokoitia, before stopping at the enchanting local village of Lefkara to see ladies sitting outside in the warm afternoon sunshine making traditional embroidery. On the Sunday we made the obligatory stop at Aphrodite's birthplace on our way to Old Paphos, to see a temple named after her, before being equally impressed with the Tombs of the Kings, Basilica of Chrysopolitissa and the world famous Roman mosaics of Nea Paphos. Monday saw us in the 9th century Byzantine Church of St Lazarus and the Temple of Aphrodite-Astarte in Larnaca before driving into the Turkish zone in Famagusta to the Tomb of St Barnabas near Salamis where we also saw the well-preserved amphitheatre and huge gymnasium and bath complex. In

Famagusta, we drove around the walled city before visiting the ruins of St George of the Greeks and St Nicholas' Cathedral (now the Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque). The only sombre moment was driving back through Famagusta Ghost Town and seeing the wrecked homes still standing testimony to the 1974 invasion.

Tuesday saw us leave the heat of the coast and head for the cooler climes of the Troodos Mountains to the beautifully peaceful spa village of Kalopanagiotis, before strolling to the monastery of St John Lampadistis to see the icons dating back to the 11th century. Most of the party took the opportunity to travel back to the coach using the magnificent lift system with its spectacular views of the area. Our last visit of the tour was to the Church of St Nicolas tis Stegis (of the roof) with its Byzantine murals dating from 11th to the 17th century, before lunch in nearby Kakopetria. Wednesday morning was free time, and most of the group explored old Limassol and its museums and old harbour.

Obviously not planned as a 'holiday' but as a 'study tour', the

week was fabulous, the weather could not have been kinder (dry, but not too hot), the itinerary was amazing, Maria (our guide) knew her subject and could convey it easily and fluently. The group seemed to gel well together and enjoyed each other's company. Just brilliant!

One amusing thing that will remain in my memory for a long time is the guide's insistence on trying to explain to us what it was like to live in a country that had suffered terrible sectarian conflict that had left the country divided by hard borders controlled by armed soldiers with people of two faiths suspicious of each other's motives!

Chris Stevenson

From the Editor

I apologise for the delay in the production of this issue. I have spent the past few months finishing my PhD thesis and handing it in, plus a week at a conference on medieval studies!

Duncan Berryman
Editor

New Books

An Archaeology of Northern Ireland 1600-1650, by Rowan McLaughlin & James Lyttleton
Department for Communities, £20

This impressive volume makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the archaeology of Northern Ireland. The work originated from a project initiated by the Ulster-Scots Academy to study the plantation period of Northern Ireland. The main aim of the project was to identify the contribution of the Scots to the plantation, but Gaelic Irish and English sites have also been included to provide a context for the Scotch sites.

Each chapter takes a county to survey and divides it into its baronies. This produces a gazetteer of sites that can be easily accessed by anyone seeking information about their local area or a particular study area. Each site has a brief description, grid reference, MBR number, and further reading. These are complemented by more detailed case studies of a number of sites,

such as Dunluce Castle and Dungiven Priory. Many of these case studies draw on excavations carried out by the project, which have provided a significant amount of information regarding life in these sites.

This book has been extensively researched, providing a very useful synthesis for this little studied period. Its attractive layout makes it a pleasure to read and its organisation makes it easy to navigate and informative. This volume clearly sits alongside the great archaeological surveys of Northern Ireland and is invaluable to anyone interested in the plantations and the development of modern Northern Ireland.

Water and the Environment in the Anglo-Saxon World, edited by M. Clegg Hyer & D. Hooke
Liverpool University Press, £80

This is the third volume of the series on material culture and daily life in the Anglo-Saxon period. This book explores how water was used and how people lived around water. The contributions include studies of poetry, legal texts,

mythology, as well as the archaeology of fishing, bridges, watermills and trading sites.

Wetlands were significantly more extensive than today and were an integral part of daily life. Many chapters make use of placenames to reveal how the landscape appeared and was used. The chapters on watermills and landing places discuss the archaeological evidence of these sites. This book provides a great insight into daily life in the Anglo-Saxon period, covering aspects of transport, industry and beliefs. Although this book focuses on England, many of the activities and ideas would have been similar in Ireland; we only need to look at the Nendrum tidal mill and fish traps to see the similarities with many aspects of life.

Clavis Litterarum Hibernensium, edited by Donnchadh Ó Corráin
Brepols, €875

This is a massive three volume set of books that catalogue all medieval Irish texts from 400CE to 1600CE. This is a very extensive and detailed survey of surviving texts of Irish origin or writings by the Irish in Europe. Ó Corráin has attempted to bring together everything from the earliest ogham script and written genealogies to the late medieval writings. The only texts not dealt with are the later medieval administrative documents drawn up in Dublin Castle.

The entry for each text contains a description of the document, the locations of manuscript copies, facsimiles and editions produced, references to the document, and literature making reference to or discussing the text. These detailed entries help to make these texts accessible and provide context and further analysis for each document.

This is an extensive and excellently researched catalogue. It is clearly invaluable to anyone researching Irish writing or Irish history, giving quick access to original and contemporary literature. These volumes provide a rare insight into Irish medieval literature and history.