

Medieval Archaeology

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY



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Post-Roman to Medieval landscape transformations in the Erlauf Valley, Austria (5th–11th centuries AD) a Mick Aston Grant report

Targeted geophysical survey has been employed to investigate the open rural settlement types and strategies adopted prior to the renaissance of a strong urbanism in a core zone of central Europe, the Erlauf Valley (Austria), in order to study two transformations of the 5th–11th centuries AD relevant to large parts of Europe: the end of Roman rule and Frankish colonisation. The research forms part of a broader project of the PI, investigating – by systematic fieldwalking survey and targeted geophysical survey – post-Roman to high medieval landscape transformations in various areas of the Erlauf Valley. The study region provides excellent opportunities for investigating these phenomena, as it formed part of the Roman province of Noricum until AD 488, and was variously controlled/influenced afterwards by Germanic groups and Avars, until it became part of the ‘East-Land’, an area colonised by the Carolingians in the Danube Basin in the 9th century, and colonised again by the Ottonians in the 10th–11th century. While written sources attest to

these political transformations, there has been limited information available to date on how these developments were manifested in the landscape, and specifically how they impacted upon settlement dynamics.

Geophysical surveys – magnetometry and electrical resistivity – were carried out with the support of the Mick Aston Grant from the Society for Medieval Archaeology in the region of the present-day towns of Purgstall and Wieselburg in November 2018. A total of c. 10 ha was investigated at six sites (Site 16 Zehnbach; Site 39 Hochrieß; Site 10 Purgstall; Site 115 Gries; Wieselburg, South of the Church Hill; Wieselburg Recreational Centre). The geophysical survey was carried out by Dr Steven Trick and Jake Godfrey, in cooperation with the PI. The practical survey work was additionally supported by Teodora Polyak, a PhD student of the University of Exeter and Cranfield University, writing her thesis on the archaeometry of early medieval pottery from the Erlauf Valley. The geophysical surveys were combined with fieldwalking surveys of five of the six sites

The importance of material culture underscores the relevance of Archaeology to cultural discourse, yet it is necessary to continually reaffirm this message. Of late, it is most interesting to sense the growing comfort that medieval archaeologists have with the interplay between material remains and written sources. Hopefully gone are the days when archaeologists stood at a remove from documents, just as historians failed to grasp the relevance of objects. Mark Hall's report on the recent A-S exhibition at the BM suggests this positive shift, while the Society's forthcoming conference on the Black Death will surely be a *tour de force* of such interdisciplinarity.

Niall Brady
Newsletter Editor
e-mail: niallbrady100@gmail.com

Left:
Site 39 Hochrieß. Photograph by Teodora Polyak.

(Wieselburg Recreational Centre is covered by lawn, therefore fieldwalking was not possible there) with the support of a Society of Antiquaries of London Research Grant. Further fieldwalking and geophysical surveys will be carried out in 2019 in the Steinakichen area of the Erlauf Valley with the support of a match funding Research Grant from the County of Lower Austria.

The combined geophysical and fieldwalking surveys in the region of Purgstall and Wieselburg have shown that (1) all investigated 5th–11th-century sites are situated at a former Roman site; (2) after the Roman period, most of these sites (4 of 5) were only re-occupied during the Carolingian and Ottonian colonisation (9th–11th centuries); (3) only a minority of the sites (1 of 5) was inhabited in the 7th–8th centuries; (4) at present, the pottery of the 6th century AD cannot be identified in the region, and possibly results from the ongoing use of late Roman pottery after the formal end of Roman rule in AD 488; (5) only some of the investigated sites (2 of 5) have prehistoric material, which suggests a natural landscape change (e.g. water level) prior to the start of Roman occupation. In addition, the geophysical surveys suggest that it is unlikely that early medieval rural sites in the Erlauf Valley comprised mainly sunken-featured buildings, as no features of this type could be identified by the surveys. The nature of buildings at early medieval settlement sites has been a long-standing debate in central Europe, as hardly any remains of ground-level buildings have been uncovered. We expected sunken-featured buildings in the Erlauf Valley, as further in the east of Austria and Hungary such buildings are widespread at early medieval settlement sites. So far, no large-scale early medieval settlement research has taken place in the Erlauf Valley or in the areas immediately to the west of this region; therefore, comparative data from these areas is not available. Based on the survey results, plans for

any future excavation in the Erlauf Valley need to include considerations for identifying remains of early medieval ground-level buildings, which leave much less obvious traces in the archaeological record than sunken-featured buildings

The new surveys provide new data and are an important starting point for understanding landscape transformations in this very rich archaeological region. The investigations form part of the PI's broader research project on post-Roman to high medieval landscape transformations in the Erlauf Valley and will be evaluated in detail following the completion of all surveys. It will also be the time when the broader research questions of the project, such as the choice of sites for settlements relative to landscape features (e.g. terrain, hydrology, geology, soils), and the spatial extent and internal structure of sites can be addressed in more detail. An interesting aspect will be whether differences can be seen in these parameters between different parts of the Erlauf Valley and/or between different historical periods, which would show the adoption of different strategies for occupying and using the post-Roman landscape.

The project funded by the Mick Aston Research Grant has facilitated a strengthening of contacts with professional and academic archaeology in Austria as well as with local historians and the broader public. In addition to the new academic knowledge gained in the course of the project, researchers from the UK got to know Austrian colleagues, as well as local people and aspects of their lives. At the same time, inhabitants of the region met people arriving from a different country with an academic interest in the region's past. In the present-day political climate, these aspects of archaeological fieldwork should not be underestimated.

Hajnalka Herold

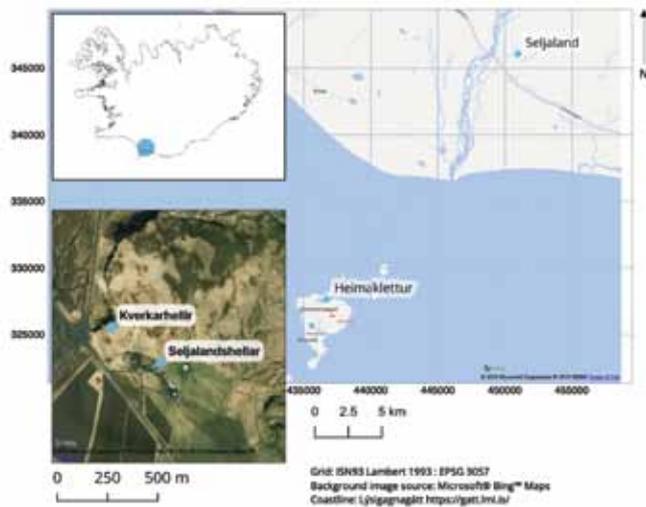
H.Herold@exeter.ac.uk



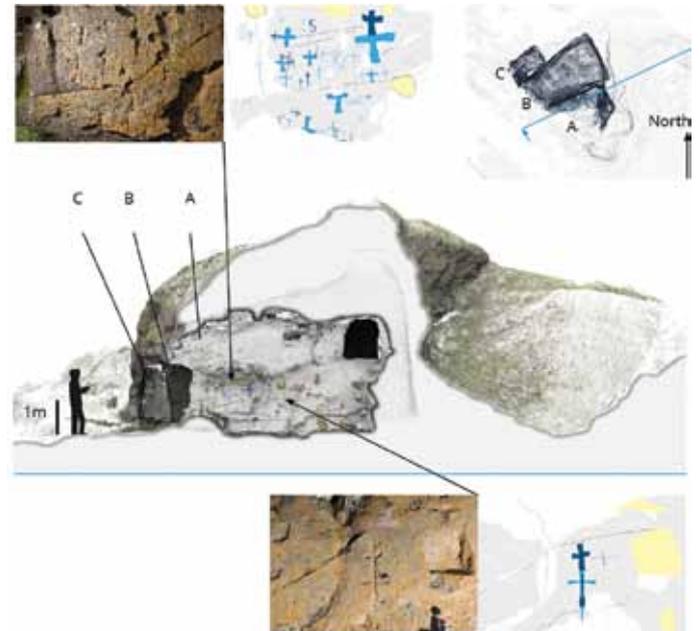
Site 115 Gries. Photograph by Dominik Hagmann.

A possible early monastic complex in South Iceland: Enhanced recording and fieldwork

a Mick Aston Grant report



Location map. Prepared by Alexis Pantos.



Details of the Seljaland caves. Prepared by Alexis Pantos.

The first settlement of Iceland is traditionally seen within a model of western Norse expansion. Pre-landnám settlement (before *c.* AD 870) has a more elusive status, confirmed by a contemporary Hiberno-Latin source yet obscured by literary representation of pre-landnám settlers as mythical ‘papar’. Emerging evidence for pre-landnám settlements and anthropogenic landscapes requires a holistic view, taking account of data from a number of disciplines. That the earliest human settlement of Iceland may have been monastic led the late Mick Aston to take an interest in this research and we gratefully acknowledge that his legacy funded the 2018 work.

Our project develops initial discoveries presented in Ahronson’s *Into the ocean* (University of Toronto Press, 2015). The 2018 research centred on a site in South Iceland, where sustained fieldwork by geoscientists has identified medieval landscapes on the edge of the sandur plain. These landscapes include previously undated artificial caves, a site-type clustered around the sandur

region. A number of these caves feature cross sculpture similar to Hebridean-Irish types. The most extensive collection is at Seljaland. The use of photogrammetry has allowed the team to survey the Seljaland caves, as well as a site with similar cross sculpture on the nearby island of Heimaey (Vestmannaeyjar). Other outcomes from the present work include a fuller understanding of the Seljaland caves themselves, identification of a substantial number of previously unrecorded crosses, and preliminary sequencing of the sculpture. A separately-funded concurrent excavation at an upland site uses tephrochronology to contextualise early medieval landscape change at Seljaland within local environmental sequences.

Kristján Ahronson

kristjan.ahronson@wolfson.ox.ac.uk

Jonathan Wooding

jonathan.wooding@sydney.edu.au

Research



Glascarrig Motte in Co. Wexford from a drone showing slumping on the cliff. The Discovery Programme 07/06/2018.



Kilfarrasy Promontory Fort in Co. Waterford showing erosion of cliffs and sea arch. The Discovery Programme 28/09/2017.

The CHERISH Project and effects of climate change on medieval sites around the Irish Sea

Erosion of coastal medieval heritage is becoming more visible with climate change causing ruthless storms, flooding and rising sea level. The CHERISH project aims to raise awareness and understanding of the impacts of climate change on the cultural heritage of the Irish and Welsh regional seas and coastlines. This multi-disciplinary project will use laser scanning, photogrammetry from drones, coring, luminescence dating, LiDar, and aerial photography that is linked to the sea with underwater remote operated vehicles and multi-beam echo-sounder mapping.

Threatened sites being investigated include Glascarrig Motte in Co. Wexford. The area was granted to the Anglo-Norman, Raymond FitzGerald, in 1170 and may have been an important early medieval port associated with Ferns. Today, erosion of the motte castle is causing slumping down the cliff face and the local community has set up a group to research and highlight the site. The Cherish Project will conduct intensive geophysical survey in the surrounding fields to identify sub-surface archaeological features before they are damaged by erosion. The connection between the neighbouring priory and the motte will also be examined.

Between Dungarvan and Tramore in Co. Waterford are 26 promontory forts within a distance of only 24km. The area was controlled in late Iron Age and early medieval times by a group known as the *Deisi*, and there is some evidence of settlement and links to Dyfed in SW Wales.

Mining and fishing opportunities and control of the sea routes could help explain the concentration of forts along this coast. The promontory forts are being actively eroded and the monitoring of this erosion and detailed recording of the sites is being undertaken as part of the project. Aerial survey of the region in 2017 and droning in 2018 has provided a baseline survey of the coastline. Other promontory forts in Wales are being surveyed, such as on Ramsey Island, South Castle on Skomer Island, Linney Head, and Great Castle Head, and could be part of this maritime network.

CHERISH (Climate, Heritage and Environments of Reefs, Islands and Headlands) is a 5 year European-funded Ireland-Wales project between the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, the Discovery Programme: Centre for Archaeology and Innovation Ireland, Aberystwyth University: Department of Geography and Earth Sciences and the Geological Survey of Ireland. Funding is provided through the Priority 2 Specific Objective: To increase capacity and knowledge of climate change adaptation for the Irish Sea coastal communities of the EU Ireland-Wales Programme. CHERISH funding comes from the European Regional Development Fund through the Ireland-Wales Cooperation programme.

Edward Pollard
edward@discoveryprogramme.ie

Medieval Horses and Warhorses

‘... we have to hope that archaeology can produce some results’ (Davis 1989, 77).

So wrote the great medieval historian R.H.C. Davis some thirty ago on the vexed question of whether the Anglo-Saxons had warhorses. February 2019 saw the launch of a new AHRC-funded project that will respond to this challenge and many other important questions about the archaeology of medieval horses and warhorses. The medieval horse was arguably the most characteristic animal of the Middle Ages. But, while the development and military uses of warhorses have been intensively studied by historians, the archaeological evidence is too often dispersed, overlooked or undervalued. This new three-year project will conduct the first ever systematic study of the full range of archaeological evidence from medieval Britain. As a collaborative venture between the University of Exeter’s Department of Archaeology (Oliver Creighton and Alan Outram) and the Department of History at the University of East Anglia (Robert Liddiard), the project will examine medieval horses in their broader social and landscape contexts from the late Anglo-Saxon to the early Tudor period (c. AD 800–1550). The overarching aim is to produce new understandings about a beast that was an unmistakable symbol of social status closely bound up with aristocratic, knightly and chivalric culture as well as a decisive weapon on the battlefield. The project will also work in partnership with two collaborating organisations — the Royal Armouries (Leeds) and the Portable Antiquities Scheme (British Museum) — to magnify the impact of the research on large public audiences.

The project has three research strands (Fig. 1). First, the work will re-analyse the bones of horses and warhorses from archaeological excavations, across a sample of assemblages held by museums and archives. The use of advanced 3D

geometric morphometrics (GMM) techniques will give the work a scientific cutting edge. The second strand will be a comprehensive survey of surviving horse apparel (for instance harness pendants and bridle bits, including a wealth of information produced by the Portable Antiquities Scheme), and horse armour. Third, the project will conduct the first coherent archaeological study of horse-breeding landscapes (especially studs), informed by analysis of published and unpublished historical materials. Integrated analysis of these datasets will produce a new body of information about warhorses, their development, training, appearance and, by extension, their military and social roles.

Among the key questions that the project will engage with are: Did the Norman Conquest see the widespread introduction of new breeds of horse, or was the development of the warhorse a more incremental process rooted in the late Anglo-Saxon period? How was the development of knighthood in the 12th and 13th centuries reflected in horse apparel? Does the archaeological record provide evidence for the celebrated ‘great horse’ of the 14th century? How do these trends relate to the changing nature and decoration of horse apparel and to the geography of horse studs? Do we see physical evidence of attested decline in warhorses, followed by Tudor-period initiatives to increase their size?

We would be delighted to hear from members of the Society for Medieval Archaeology who would be interested in hearing more about, or contributing to, the project.

Oliver Creighton

o.h.creighton@exeter.ac.uk

<http://medievalwarhorse.exeter.ac.uk>

Reference

Davis, R H C 1989: *The Medieval Warhorse: Origin, development and redevelopment*, London: T&H.

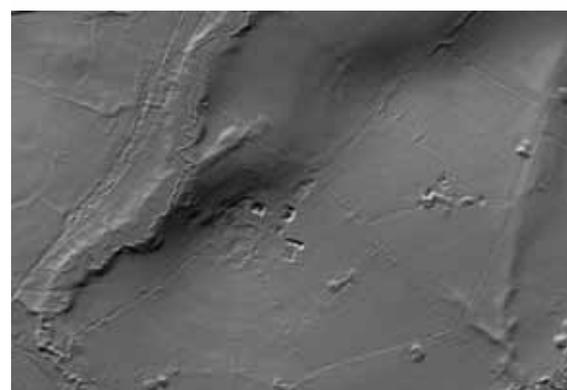
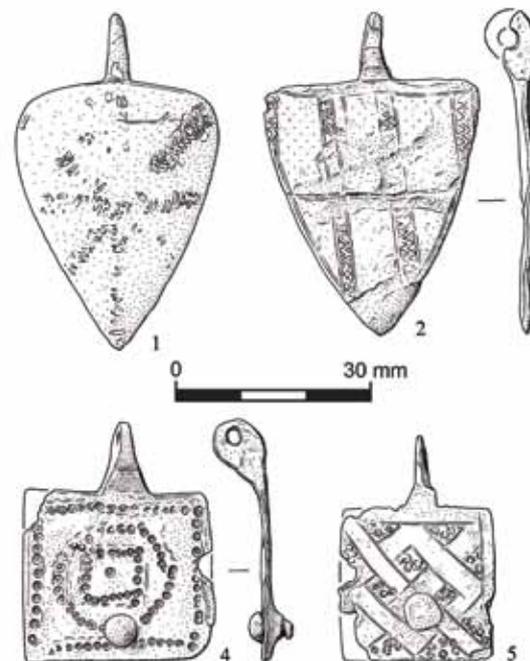
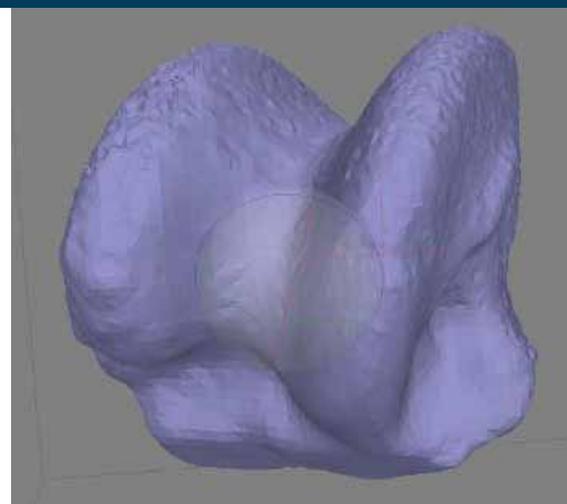


Fig. 1: Categories of archaeological evidence for medieval horses and warhorses.

top: Horse bones: horse astragalus (14th century) from Okehampton Castle, Devon. The 3D image, which enables detailed GMM (geometric morphometrics) analysis, has been created using photogrammetry and edited using Photoscan software.

mid: Equine material culture: examples of horse harness pendants (12th century) recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

bottom: Horse-breeding landscapes: LiDAR plot of features within the medieval deer park at Mere, Wiltshire, site of Richard, Earl of Cornwall’s horse stud active in the mid- to late 13th century. Image created by Oliver Creighton and Duncan Wright from Environment Agency data.



The Long Black Death – New Perspectives

Society for Medieval Archaeology Annual Conference

King's Manor, University of York, UK, 5–6 July 2019

A recent upsurge in scholarly interest in the Black Death has been driven in major part by methodological advances and new discoveries across a range of disciplines: archaeology is central to this as analysis of physical evidence has underpinned many recent advances. As our knowledge and understanding of the origins and impact of the Black Death in the short, medium and long term, becomes increasingly clear, wider interest has grown in the role of plague across the world in periods from the prehistoric to the post-medieval. This is heightened by awareness that microbial resistance to antibiotics now used to treat plague is growing; interest in plague pandemics may not for much longer be confined to the past.

This conference brings together researchers in different fields to explore the latest research into the origins and impact of the 14th-century pandemic. Our keynote speaker is Professor Monica Green (Arizona State University), who will address the wider implications of this emerging understanding of the 'long' Black Death for plague studies globally.

Programme

Friday 5 July 2019 (2–6pm, reception 7–8.30pm)

Keynote Address – Prof. Monica Green, 'The Historian, the Archaeologist, and the Geneticist: Pandemic Thinking'.

Dr Marcel Keller, 'Ancient *Yersinia pestis* genomes: comparative insights into the onset and progression of the first and second pandemics'.

Dr David Orton, 'The Long Black Rat': assessing the a priori feasibility of *Rattus rattus* as a European plague reservoir during the first and second pandemics'.

Craig Cessford, 'New approaches to finding *Yersinia pestis* in Cambridgeshire cemeteries'.

Dr Boris Schmid, 'The role of climate in medieval plague outbreaks'.

Dr Philip Slavin, 'The Second Wave: The geographic and demographic contours of the *Pestis Secunda* in England and Wales, 1361–2'.

Reception at Yorkshire Museum & Public Lecture – Prof. Carenza Lewis, 'Digging the Black Death in your garden: public archaeology reconstructing the impact of demographic change'.

Saturday 6th July 2019 (9am–5.30pm)

Dr Daniel Curtis, 'From universal killer to a discriminant disease? Understanding selective plague mortality through new data from the medieval Low Countries'.

Dr Michaël Gourvenec, 'A medieval community faced with the Second Pandemic: the study of Black Death cemetery at 16 Rue des Trente-Six Ponts, in Toulouse, France'.

Dr Sasha Kacki and Prof Dominique Castex, 'Digging the grave. An archaeo-anthropological study of plague cemeteries from continental Europe'.

Dr Sarah Inskip, 'The impact of the Black Death on Cambridge'.

Prof. Paul Arthur, 'Plague and the Italian Mezzogiorno: Archaeological insights into the impact of the Black Death in southern Italy'.

Dr Paolo Forlin, 'Exploring seismic disasters in the wake of the Black Death: the Alpine and Apennine earthquakes of 1348 and 1349'.

Dr Richard Thomas, 'Black Death, Green Pastures: 14th-century England in zooarchaeological perspective'.

Dr Michael Lewis and Dr Eljas Oksanen, 'Understanding the impact of the Black Death through finds data from the Portable Antiquities Scheme'.

Dr Murray Andrews, 'Pennies and pestilence: Medieval European coin hoards and the Black Death'.

Dr Euan Roger, 'Living with the Black Death? Exploring attitudes to epidemic outbreaks in early Tudor England'.

Prof. Ben Dodds, 'The Black Death and the invention of England's national pasts'.

Dr Richard Nevell, 'Digital Diligence: Communicating the Black Death in the 21st century'.

Discussion, 'The future of Black Death studies'.

For the details, check out the conference webpage: <https://medievalarchaeology.co.uk/sma-conference-2019/>

Website

www.medievalarchaeology.co.uk

The website continues to improve.

Send us your comments:

medievalarchaeology@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.co.uk

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Be sure to check out our website and facebook pages for updates on members' events that fall between Newsletter dates

Society News

SMA Student Colloquium report

The Society for Medieval Archaeology's Student Colloquium took place at the University of Reading, 9–11 November 2018. The conference was attended by approximately 35 students and academics from across the country and Europe.

The papers covered a broad range of topics and aspects of medieval archaeology; the first day's session included papers on scientific and experimental methods, which was followed by papers on Anglo-Saxon pottery, osteology and medieval stone monuments in northern England and Wales. The following day included papers on Viking Age homes, osteology and medieval landscapes. After the last session, Dr Gabor Thomas chaired a

discussion where the students considered how they could contribute to the discipline of medieval archaeology and its challenges and possibilities.

The two keynote lectures were given by Professor Roberta Gilchrist and Dr Karen Dempsey.

The conference ended with a conference dinner at a restaurant in central Reading, and the following day with a guided tour of Reading and Reading Abbey by Professor Grenville Astill.

Overall, the conference was a successful event with interesting papers, networking and very interesting and rewarding discussions.

Beatrice Widell

b.widell@pgr.reading.ac.uk

A bumper crop of forthcoming monographs

Eckweek, Peasedown-St-John, Somerset: Survey and Excavations at a shrunken medieval hamlet 1988-90. By Andrew C. Young, Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 40.

The next volume in the monograph series show-cases one of the most important medieval rural settlement sequences yet excavated from south-west England. The narrative is centred on a succession of well-preserved buildings spanning the late 10th to the 14th centuries, equal in significance and diachronically-informative detail as the architectural repertoire of such classic rural settlement excavations as Wharram Percy and Raunds Furnells. In-depth analysis of the structural sequence offers a new regional perspective on pre-Conquest earthfast timber architecture and its subsequent (12th century) replacement by masonry traditions. Culminating in a richly preserved 14th-century farmhouse, including a very complete assemblage

of structural and domestic objects, the structural archaeology provides an unusually refined picture of the internal organisation of later medieval domestic space within a rural farming context. Detailed analytical attention is given to the abundant artefactual and environmental datasets recovered from the excavations (including prolific assemblages of medieval pottery and palaeoenvironmental data) with a nuanced appraisal of their interpretative implications. Anyone with an interest in the dynamics and regional tendencies of medieval rural communities will find this a stimulating and enlightening read.

Other monographs in the pipeline for 2019/20 include:

- *Negotiating the North* (Semple et al)
- *Faxton, Northants* (Butler/Gerrard)
- *Waiting for the End of the World: Perceptions of disaster and risk* (Forlin, Gerrard and Brown)



Eckweek, Fig. 8.2.

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Excavation

Kidpile Moat, Rumbush Lane, Solihull, West Midlands (formerly Warwickshire)

SP 096 744, SOLIHULL HER: MSI 3108

During 2015–2017, Solihull Archaeology Group conducted an investigation at Kidpile Moat, led by Malcolm Cook. The name Kidpile was used because of the close proximity to a farm of that name. Research found that the site in the old manor of Forshaw, in Solihull Parish, probably belonged to William and later Nicholas d’Oddingseles from the 13th century. Following a resistivity survey, it was decided to investigate the site, recording evidence of structures and occupation.

Four arms of the moat were all intact, three containing water. During the late 20th century, two arms had been dredged and a pool created for cattle. The platform is rectangular in shape, measuring 22x24m, and 2m above surrounding field level with a slightly dished interior. The moat is approximately 2m deep and 4–6m wide. A number of trenches were dug but the siting of these was largely dictated by numerous oaks and hawthorn.

Large quantities of 13th- to 14th-century tile and 118 potsherds were found, along with many pieces of

Victorian pottery; the platform had been used in the 19th century for farming and gardening. A field drain from the 1850s cut across SW–NE on the western half, resulting in mixed horizons and some early pottery being found in topsoil. All post-conquest pottery has been expertly examined and includes: Chilvers Coton, Buff White ware and Reduced Deritend ware.

Underlying the medieval platform, evidence was found of pre-moat activity. Most trenches revealed post/stake holes but these did not indicate the outlines of building structures. We were informed that sandstone blocks had been present at the entrance during the 1960s, and that the site had suffered from metal-detector activity. There is evidence to prove that a building/s of indeterminate status was present on the platform in the 13th century.

Gill Carmichael
gillyc@hotmail.co.uk

East side of platform showing moat and surrounding field level. Prior to work commencing in 2015.



Southeast corner of T12 showing a typical soil profile, 2016.





CST Grants

Castle Studies Trust **Grant Awards reach £100,000 as it makes five new awards**

The Castle Studies Trust is delighted to announce the award of five grants, totalling a record £27,000. These awards mean we have reached the landmark of giving away £100,000 in grants.

It has taken six years for us to achieve this, during which time the Trust has doubled the maximum amount we can award to £10,000 and has made great strides in increasing the understanding of castles, such as at Pembroke, Pleshey, and Laughton, to name but three. The five projects selected cover all periods of castle studies and have a broad geographic spread:

Druminnor, Aberdeenshire – Using GPR for an investigation of the 15th-century core of the castle – presently under a hardcore car park. This was the original caput of the lords of Forbes. During the 15th century they were amongst the most powerful families in the Northeast of Scotland.

Hoghton Tower, Lancashire – This project aims to form an axis of research into Hoghton Tower's unique physical history. The main focus will be to investigate and advance knowledge of the pre-1560 site and specifically to try to test the hypothesis that the north side building may form part of the 'original' Hoghton Tower.

Laughton-en-le-Morthen, South Yorkshire – Excavation to try to confirm the findings of the geophysical surveys funded by the CST in 2018. These indicated that the castle was placed right on the top of a high-status Saxon dwelling.

Shrewsbury, Shropshire – Geophysical survey and excavation concentrating on the inner bailey to examine the tail of the north rampart. Despite being one of the main fortresses on the Welsh border no major excavations have taken place in the bailey. The medieval plan of the bailey, and the missing domestic ranges that should be there, remain completely unknown.

Wressle, East Yorkshire – A geophysical survey is planned of the area to the south of the castle ruins that had been covered by the previous earthwork survey funded by the CST, to get more information about the various garden structures there,

as well as other details regarding the deserted village, moat and fishponds. The 14th-century castle was one of the most important castles owned by the Earls of Northumberland.

2018 Grant Awards

Pembroke, Wales – the excavation was very successful in finding a late 15th-century residential block that is likely to be the birthplace of Henry VII. The report is currently being written with preliminary findings available shortly. The full report will take longer as a consequence of the success of the excavations; the number of finds exceeded the budget for analysing them and the applicants are seeking funding from other sources to cover these costs.

Dig It! 2017 Castles of South Scotland – The team has filmed all of the short videos about Dundonald, MacDuff's, Neidpath, Ravenscraig, Crichton and Borthwick, all of which have been published and can be seen on our website.

Laughton-en-le-Morthen, England – the archaeological investigation of the motte and bailey castle suggests that the Normans placed their castle right in the middle of an Anglo-Saxon lordly residence. The hypothesis will be examined further with test excavations that the Trust has funded in 2019.

Keith Marischal, Scotland – geophysical survey at Keith Marischal House, in search of a lost medieval castle and renaissance palace. The survey unfortunately proved inconclusive.

Bolingbroke, England – The work in the Route Yard and on Dewy Hill has been completed along with the report. As with Keith Marischal, the results were disappointing. The full report is now available on our website.

Ruthin, Wales – The reconstruction is now complete and can be seen on our social media and website.

To find out more about all the projects we have funded this year and previous projects, please visit our website www.castlestudiestrust.org or contact the chair of trustees, **Jeremy Cunnington**, at admin@castlestudiestrust.org

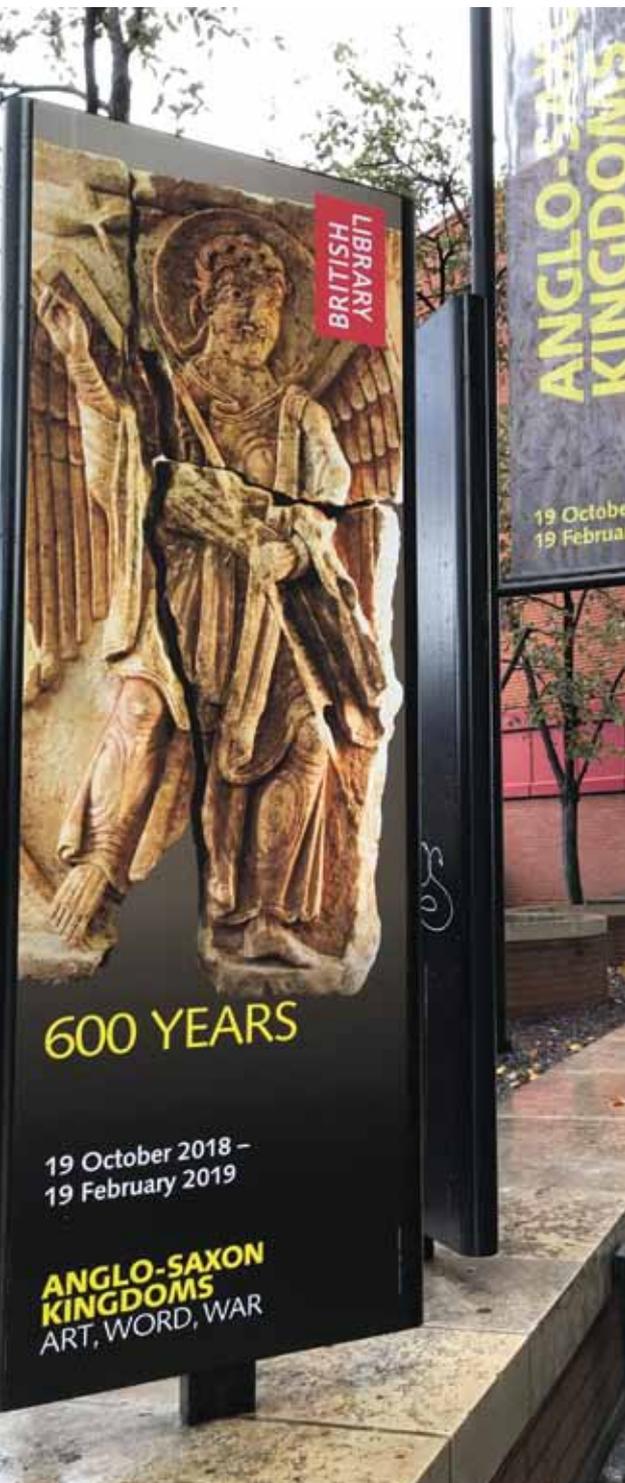
Top: Excavations under way at Pembroke, 2018.

Right: Laughton Castle.



Media & Exhibition

‘Anglo-Saxon Attitudes’: A review of the British Library Exhibition Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War



This exhibition, which ran from October 2018 to February 2019, was an undoubted highlight of my 2018 adventures in medievalism. Deservedly popular, as the near-constant queues for admission and sold-out tickets testified, it brought together many old favourites with several newer ones, in the first major display of Anglo-Saxon material culture since the British Museum’s *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture AD 600–900*, in 1991.

Given the gap of nearly three decades between the two endeavours, we might have expected greater, even radical, differentials between the two. Inevitably, of course, they share the same territorial waters and both exhibition titles conceptualise and communicate a notion of English identity being forged and largely determined by the pursuits of internationally-aware, symbiotic elite individuals and their institutions, in an evolving suite of kingdoms. There are though welcome distinctions between the two exhibitions, in exhibits, chronology and sub-text, all signalling that for this new exhibition we are not simply in repeat mode.

The chronology takes us well beyond AD 900 – the conventional date for seeing England born as a single kingdom – and into the 11th century. The exhibition’s coda or postscript, interpreting Domesday Book, reminds us that the new Norman overlords were reliant on

a well-honed and resilient English administration. That at least is the appealing rhetoric but, for me, it also planted the questioning seed of what is meant by ‘English’ here, other than ‘not-Norman’. The Norman elite conquered new territory just as Anglian and Saxon elites had done before them. In such instances does the myth of nationhood not distract us from the workings of power and social hierarchy?

The presence of Domesday Book also signals the key material culture change of emphasis, in line with the change of space to the British Library, that is, the book as lead object category – the piece of material culture carrying the brunt of the interpretive weight. It splendidly felt like the whole of the Library’s rich Anglo-Saxon manuscript collection was on display, making the scale of the thing hugely impressive but also sobering when one considers that their survival is the merest fraction of what existed. This collection was augmented by the addition of several exciting loans from beyond our shores. Most notable was undoubtedly the *Codex Amiatinus*, briefly returned from Italy for the first time in over 1,000 years. Long desirous of seeing this book, nothing somehow prepared me for the breath-taking sight of such a monstrously huge book. Simply by its very presence it made tangible the scale of its resourcing, production, cultural commitment and its journeying.



Codex Amiatinus on loan from Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana to Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms at the British Library. © Sam Lane photography courtesy of The British Library (detail of).

The book had, of course, travelled from Italy in a contemporary (if much shorter) episode of cultural exchange and knowledge creation and, like the other loans, was so redolent, so symbolic of early medieval book journeys. It was an exhibition so much about books – not just their textual value, but also their making, their consumption, their political patronage, their artistic endeavour and their journeys across Europe in the second half of the first millennium AD; all a part of their rich biographical trajectories. Such books are fundamental to telling us about a cultural landscape of interconnections and transitions encompassing Europe and beyond. It was a powerful reminder indeed that we have always been a part of Europe and that we thrive when we are so.

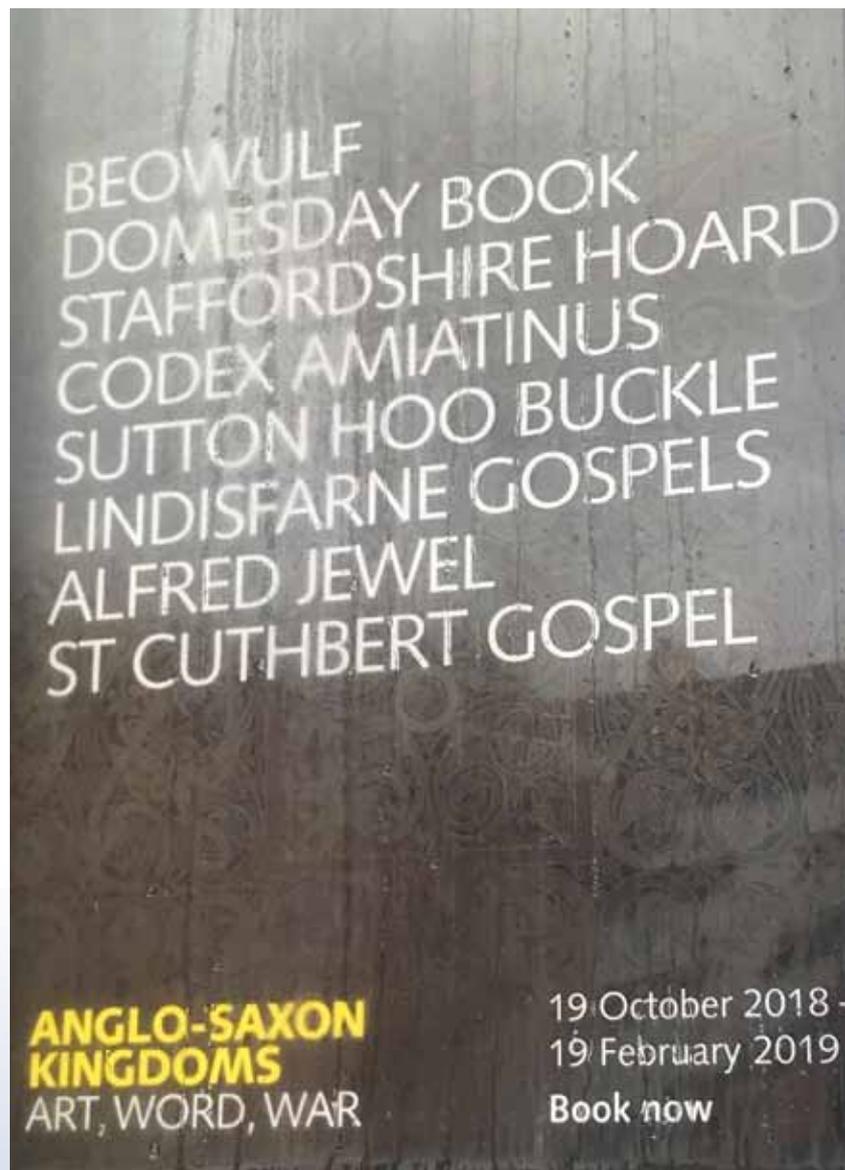
So books lead, yes, but the exhibition made inclusive space for other elements of material culture, bringing into the mix many recent archaeological discoveries, notably the Staffordshire Hoard and the Lichfield Angel, but also the Binham Hoard, the Harford Farm brooch and the Hockwold mounts, for example. Full publication of the Staffordshire Hoard remains pending but it is immensely useful to have it brought into a more general, broad discourse with its cultural context.

The exhibition lives on, and is extended, through its fine catalogue edited by the curatorial leads, Claire Breay and Joanna Story. The catalogue is striking, not least in that it recalls catalogues of old in its main focus on the exhibition's objects as individual entries. Nearly 500 pages long, it boasts a clutch of introductory essays – covering Continental relations, Irish contacts, the cultural milieu, England's birth and the Norman interface – that take up the first 60 pages or so, with the remainder forming the catalogue proper. Arranged by the exhibition's eleven themes – from origins to the Norman Conquest – it describes in detail and with sumptuous illustrations the exhibition's 161 objects, from the Spong Man anthropomorphic urn lid to the Exon and Great Domesday Books. The exhibition's map graphics are grouped together at the end and the book is rounded off

with a rich bibliography and indices of exhibits and of names and places.

Mark Hall

marcusantoni@virgin.net



Poster Poetry for The AngloSaxon Kingdoms. © Mark A Hall.

Conferences & Events

— FORTHCOMING —

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We welcome submissions relating to current research projects in Ireland, the UK and on the continent, and ask that submissions do not exceed 800 words, with conference reports to be within 500 words.

Please do not embed pictures in Word/text files but do send pictures/plans as separate high quality JPEG files. The preferred format for site plans/maps is EPS, with layers clearly indicated and unlocked, and any linked files attached.

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The due dates for receipt of copy are:

Spring Newsletter: 15th February

Autumn Newsletter: 15th August

Credits

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22 June:

The Surrounding Forest: Trees in the Medieval Imaginary in the Danelaw, Birkbeck College, U of London.

27-29 June:

33rd Irish Conference of Medievalists, UC Cork. www.irishmedievalist.com

1-4 July:

International Medieval Congress, Leeds. Special theme on **Materialities** www.imc.leeds.ac.uk

5-6 July:

Society for Medieval Archaeology 2019 Annual Conference, "The Long Black Death": New Perspectives, King's Manor, University of York (UK) (see page 6).

9-15 September:

Seasonal Settlement in the Medieval and Early Modern Countryside, RURALIA XIII, University of Stirling. <http://ruralia2.ff.cuni.cz/index.php/news/> and follow the links.

14 September:

The 2019 Annual Deerhurst Lecture will take place at 7.30 pm in St Mary's Church, Deerhurst. Prof. Barbara Yorke (University of Winchester) will present 'Æthelred, lord of the Mercians (d. 911) and his Deerhurst connections'. Tickets at the door, price £5 (students £3). <https://deerhurstfriends.co.uk>

Summertime Excavation projects



Detail of structure to the south of Lyminge Parish Church. Roach Smith, C 1861: 'Lyminge, in Kent', *Collectanea Antiqua* 5, 184-200, Pl. XXI.

The core of early Christian Lyminge to give up its secrets

In recent years the Kentish village of Lyminge has been the focus of intense archaeological scrutiny resulting in a series of well-publicised early medieval discoveries. While several large open spaces within the village have been targeted by excavation, Lyminge's archaeological potential has not been exhausted. Key in this regard is the churchyard itself. Excavations by Canon Jenkins in the 1850s led to the discovery of an apsidal masonry church-like structure — generally considered to be the cult focus of the documented Anglo-Saxon monastery — where the shrine of Lyminge's founding abbess, Queen Ethelburga, daughter of King Æthelberht of Kent, was supposedly located. Over the years there have been repeated calls for these structural remains to be reinvestigated due to interpretative ambiguities riddling Jenkins' published accounts. Now, thanks to a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, this call will finally be answered with a new project, entitled **Pathways to the Past: Exploring the Legacy of Ethelburga**, delivered as a partnership between Lyminge parochial church council and the Department of Archaeology, University of Reading. To take place within an intensive two-month window in July-August 2019, the re-excavation will initiate an 18-month programme of community-based activities that will substantially enhance the visibility and value of Lyminge's internationally significant early medieval heritage. Members are welcome to view the excavations in progress this summer and regular updates will be posted on the project blog: <https://geopaethas.com>

Castles in Communities begins its 5th season at Ballintober

The discovery, investigation and continuing survey of the medieval settlement in Ballintober, Co. Roscommon, has grown into a multi-faceted community-engaged research project that is examining the context of the 14th-century Anglo-Norman castle and its associated contracted settlement within a frame that seeks to understand and record the living community's sense of how its rich cultural heritage can feed meaningfully into a future vision for the village and wider region. SMA members are welcome to drop by and enjoy the marvel between 5 July and 1 August. For more detail, see <https://sites.google.com/view/irelandcastlesincommunities/home> or email niallbrady100@gmail.com



Detail from gradiometry survey showing house within property plot. © CICASS.