

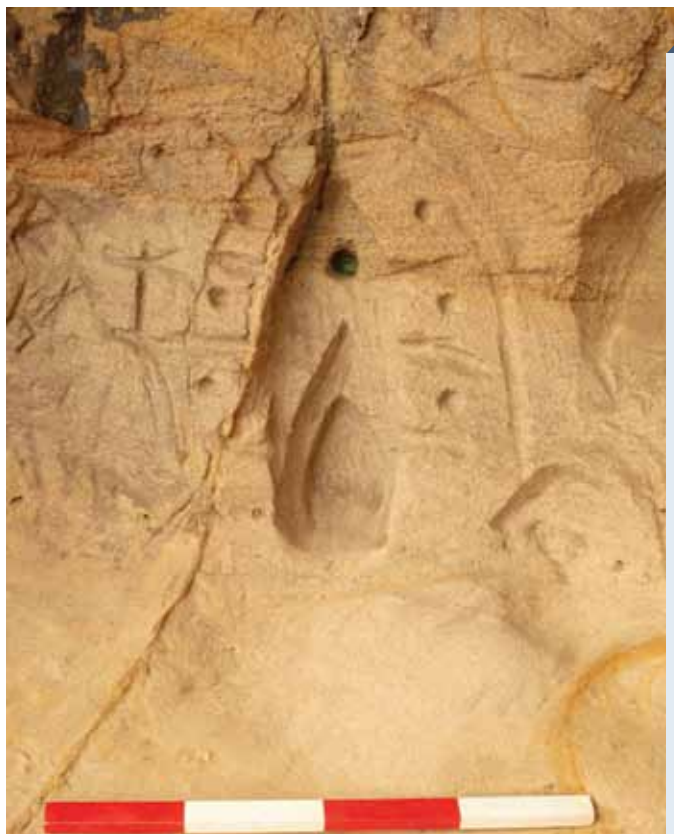
Medieval Archaeology

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Medieval cave shrine discovered in a railway cutting near Guildford

A small cave containing suspected medieval carvings has been revealed in the side of a railway cutting following a landslip near Guildford. The discovery was made by rail workers from Osborne carrying out repair works on behalf of Network Rail and is being investigated by a team of archaeologists from Archaeology-South East, part of the UCL Institute of Archaeology. The cave survives as a shallow shelter up to c. 1.7m high and 2m deep, but it may originally have been more extensive prior to the construction of the adjacent railway in the early 1840s. This cuts through a prominent sandstone hill, which is topped by a ruined late 13th-century chapel dedicated to St Catherine.

The cave was found to contain a number of niches carved into the soft sandstone, together with markings on the walls and roof, and possible firepits cut into its floor. One of the niches takes the form of a pointed arch of



three principal orders, surrounded by a decorative border of alternate recessed lines and dots, conceivably in imitation of the stone voussoirs of a Gothic arch. Adjacent is carved a Calvary cross (†) atop a stylised hill (∩), signifying Golgotha, a style of cross that is particularly common in the later medieval period. The other markings comprised sets of letters and initials,

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It is the moment of Halloween, as Autumn leaf fall and sunshine remind us of natural shifts. Yet the year has had an unnatural sense to it, as we all wrestle with face coverings and hand sanitisers. The effects of COVID-19 pepper Newsletter 64, and Mark Hall takes the opportunity to reflect on how film and literature have responded to the medieval experience of pandemic. It is clear that the current little pest will continue to find ways to wreck more havoc, and well into 2021. In the meantime, in addition to remaining vigilant, we can dip in and out of the latest and most engaging research in ways that were previously not possible. The 'Mighty Zoom' and its equivalents give everyone the opportunity to 'attend' conferences and events, and to listen to global speakers who might otherwise present to exclusive invitation-only conferences. Such opportunities will no doubt stay with us long after we cast aside the PPE.

Niall Brady
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Left:
The Gothic niche or shrine discovered in a cave near Guildford.

thought to have been left by post-medieval visitors to the cave. One interpretation of this site is that it is a medieval wayside shrine or hermitage associated with the adjacent church of St Catherine. In this way it is comparable to a number of other rock-cut sites across England, which almost without exception are said to have been home to late medieval and early modern hermits. The cave was encrusted with soot, perhaps the remnant of passing steam trains, the use of firepits, or perhaps evidence that its niches were formerly set with lamps and offerings.

This site bears the possibility of much older and deeper ritual significance, of which the cave was only a relatively late expression. The pre-13th century name of the hill in which it lies was *Drakehull*, ‘Hill of the Dragon’: in the Old English imagination dragons resided within caves, fissures, and crags to guard their treasure, and indeed several rich finds of Bronze Age metalwork are known from the hill. It lies on a suspected long-distance routeway, adjacent to a river crossing by a medieval sacred spring. This was probably the meeting place for the 9th century or earlier hundred of Godalming, and has been identified as a special class of early medieval ‘hanging promontory’ assembly site that often relate to major territorial land units such as shires or early kingdoms. The hill lies on the boundary between the tribal territories of the *Woccingas* and the *Godhelmingas*, early sub-kingdoms that pre-date the existence of Surrey itself. The sense of the hill as a place of regional gathering has an echo in an annual fair that was established on the hill in the early 14th century, and which only petered out with the First World War. During the medieval period, the Church frequently established churches on sites of long-standing cult significance, to sanctify them for the orthodox religion and appropriate something of their power. Perhaps the newly-discovered cave shrine formed a part of this process of sacralisation.



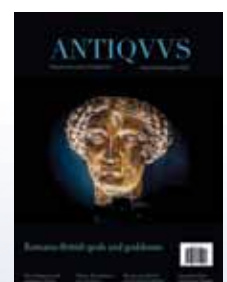
Archaeologists investigate the cave, which could only be reached by abseiling.

My thanks to Matthew Champion, David Callow and Stuart Brookes for their help with the interpretation of this site. It is hoped that future analysis of soot and other deposits from the cave can tell us more about the period of its use. A 3D-model of the cave is available online: <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/cave-with-medieval-gothic-shrine-fa794db5dc854f708da12f65967670ab>

Michael Shapland
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New Publication

Antiqvvs is a new magazine dedicated to archaeology, ancient art and history. The magazine was founded by Dr Mark Merrony and Dr Murray Eiland in 2018 and is now published bi-annually. **Antiqvvs** seeks to make archaeology and ancient worlds more accessible and it is written in a semi-popular style and is visually alluring, appealing to wide audiences from enthusiasts to academics. The contents are global in nature and previous editions have contained pieces on, amongst other topics, Ancient Rome, the Stonehenge, Ancient Greece and the Gandhara. Written by experts in their fields, it contains editorial pieces, book reviews and news stories. Subscription to the Winter/Spring, Summer/Autumn 2020 + Winter/Spring 2021 printed issue is currently priced at £9.90 on our site, though we are happy to sell it to SMA members for £8.95 plus P&P. See the magazine's website for more information: <https://www.antiqvvs-magazine.com>



New light on medieval settlement in lowland Scotland

Remotely-sensed data, and especially Airborne Laser Scanning (ALS, aka Lidar) data is becoming ever more widely available in Scotland (<https://remotesensingdata.gov.scot/>). In response to this Historic Environment Scotland (HES) established the Rapid Archaeological Mapping Programme (RAMP) in 2019 as a two-year research project that aims to develop protocols for creating systematic archaeological data across large areas (Banaszek, Cowley and Middleton 2018; Cowley *et al.* 2020). This initiative is routinely doubling the numbers of known monuments on record in area-based surveys – of Arran, Kilmartin and the Whiteadder River catchment so far. Amongst a range of monuments, these surveys are providing significant evidence for medieval and post-medieval land-use and settlement. On Arran, for example, the HES survey increased the number of records of sheiling sites from 41 to 197, with major implications for our understanding of transhumant land-use and grazing patterns.

As part of this project, the growing ALS data – which will shortly cover much of southern and central Scotland – is being sampled widely to assess its potential contribution across different parts of the country. During assessment of areas in lowland Scotland a previously undocumented deserted medieval village ([Canmore Id 364510](#)) was discovered in the grounds of Mertoun House ([HES 2020](#)), a short distance east of St Boswells on the River Tweed (see figure overleaf). Such deserted medieval villages are rare finds in the predominately arable areas of south-east Scotland, and this is a reminder of the potential for long-established areas of grassland, like that in historic gardens and parklands, to preserve earthworks of medieval and earlier settlement and land-use. This potential has been recognised before, both through field survey documentation, as at Hume Castle ([Canmore Id 58551](#)), and through aerial survey, and the village earthworks recorded from the air in the grounds of Makerston House ([Canmore Id 57210](#)). These earthwork survivals are rare in heavily ploughed landscapes and the medieval village site excavated at Springwood Park, near Kelso, for example, was found through artefact pick-up survey (Dixon 1998). The discovery of the deserted village at Mertoun is a significant addition to the corpus of sites, pointing to the potential of the ALS data and targeted examination of areas of long-established grassland and parkland. This is especially valuable for the often-subtle earthworks that may have been smoothed by episodic ploughing for reseeding grass, making it difficult to appreciate from field observation or to capture on aerial photographs.

The deserted village at Mertoun House is typical of a form of medieval settlement found in lowland areas

of northern England and southern and eastern Scotland, comprising two rows of houses and yards flanking a street (Dixon 2017). The earthworks of the northern row are more pronounced in the ALS-derived visualisation and comprise some eight yards defined by banks that extend from the back dyke of the village, which also forms a headland along the south side of a block of rig. Subtle hollows mark the sites of houses to the south of the plots, with the same broad pattern visible in even more understated form to the south. The clearance of villages in south-east Scotland was mainly a feature of the 18th century, one element in a range of processes of agricultural or estate ‘improvement’. This broad pattern appears to apply to the village in the grounds of Mertoun House, which does not appear on Roy’s Military Map of 1747–55 ([NLS 2020](#)), a reliable source in this area. Tax returns from the early 1690s indicate that as many as 27 households occupied the village, each with one or two hearths, while the laird at Mertoun, Sir William Scott of Harden, had 24 in his grand house, a distinction that speaks eloquently to the status of Mertoun’s village residents.

Dave Cowley and Piers Dixon
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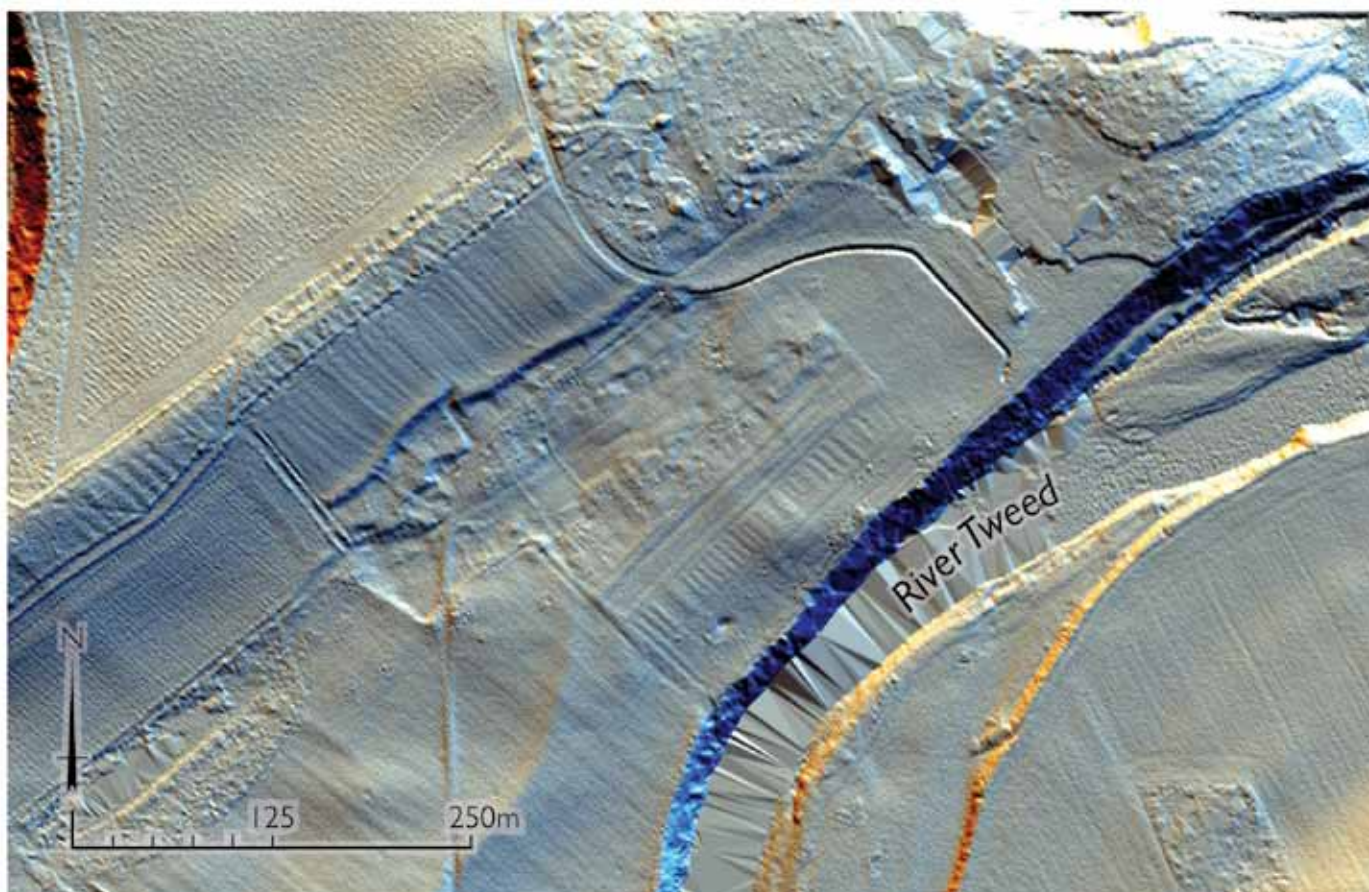
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ALS-derived three direction hillshade visualisation of the deserted village in the grounds of Mertoun House. Aspects of the village layout are readily discerned, with hints of stratigraphy in the remains. The River Tweed skirts the village to the east. This image is derived from a relatively low-resolution ALS data point density, collected in 2012 with a minimum of 1 point/sqm, and approximately 2 points/sqm on average. Subsequent acquisitions have been of considerably higher point densities, but this example demonstrates the utility of even the lower resolution datasets. ALS data: © Crown copyright Scottish Government, SEPA and Scottish Water (2012).

Conferences & Events

— FORTHCOMING —

7 December 2020:

SMA AGM and Winter Symposium. See facing page.

7-8 December:

New perspectives on the medieval 'agricultural revolution'. The latest research into medieval farming produces the first direct evidence for the conditions in which cereals were grown and animals were kept. At this virtual conference, organized by the Feeding Anglo-Saxon England project (FeedSax), speakers will explore how the analysis of excavated plant and animal remains enables us to reconstruct farming regimes from across medieval England and beyond. Free registration to this international online conference will open soon. For more information, including the programme of talks, visit: <https://feedsax.arch.ox.ac.uk/conference.html> or e-mail: feedsaxproject@gmail.com

13-19 September 2021: hopefully in-person,

RURALIA XIV will meet in Viseu, Portugal. The theme will be 'Household goods in the European medieval and early modern countryside'. The Call for Papers is live. Abstracts due 15 January 2021. See <http://ruralia2.ff.cuni.cz/index.php/news/>

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

Current Officers

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

SMA Members are entitled to improved discounts on ALL Routledge books

*Routledge has kindly increased the discount available to members when buying monographs. The current discount of 20% is increased to 30%. To apply the discount, please go online to the Routledge website, <https://www.routledge.com/>, and use the following promotional code: **MA30**.*

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Society News

Notice of the Annual General Meeting and Winter Symposium

This year, the AGM and Winter Symposium will be held online for the first time using Zoom, on Monday, December 7, 12:00 Noon.

Link: <https://bit.ly/3itJTHr>, Passcode: **691191**

Agenda

1. Minutes of last Annual General Meeting
2. Elections of Officers and Council

The following nominations have been received for election:

Members of Council	Dr Meriel McClatchie (School of Archaeology, University College Dublin)
	Dr Andy Seaman (School of Humanities, Canterbury Christ Church University)
	Dr Duncan Wright (School of History, Classics and Archaeology, Newcastle University)

3. Election of auditors
Bronsens, 267 Banbury Road, Oxford
4. President's Report
5. Treasurer's report
6. Editor's report
7. Secretary's report
8. Prizes
9. Any other business
10. Date of next meeting

To join the AGM and the Winter Symposium using Zoom, simply go to <https://bit.ly/3itJTHr>, and, when prompted, enter the passcode and 'join'. It is not necessary to download the Zoom software to join the meeting – you can join straight from your web browser.

The AGM will be followed immediately by the Winter Symposium, which will last until approximately 14:00 hrs. See details overleaf.

Karen Milek, Hon. Secretary
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SMA's Winter Symposium

online via Zoom at <https://bit.ly/3itJTHr>, Passcode:
691191 on 7 December at 12:30-14:00 hrs,
immediately following the AGM

12:30 Ben Jervis (Cardiff University) and Lizzy Craig-Atkins (University of Sheffield): ‘The dietary impact of the Norman Conquest: a multiproxy archaeological investigation of Oxford’.

The presentation concerns a study that employs an integrated multiproxy analytical approach to identify and explain changes and continuities in diet and foodways between the 10th and 13th centuries in the city of Oxford. The integration of organic residue analysis of ceramics, carbon ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$) and nitrogen ($\delta^{15}\text{N}$) isotope analysis of human and animal bones, incremental analysis of $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$ from human tooth dentine and palaeopathological analysis of human skeletal remains has revealed a broad pattern of increasing intensification and marketisation across various areas of economic practice, with a much lesser and more short-term impact of the Conquest on everyday lifestyles than is suggested by documentary sources. Isotope data indicate short-term periods of instability, particularly food insecurity, did impact individuals. Evidence of preferences for certain foodstuffs and cooking techniques documented among the elite classes were also observed among lower-status townspeople, suggesting that Anglo-Norman fashions could be adopted across the social spectrum.

13:00 Duncan Wright (Newcastle University): ‘Laughton-en-le-Morthen, Yorkshire: an archaeology of elite residence’.

At the western edge of the village of Laughton-en-le-Morthen, South Yorkshire, is a well-preserved motte and bailey castle. There are numerous suggestions of high-status activity even earlier than the castle, not least in the Domesday Book which records that Laughton was the location of Earl Edwin of Mercia’s aula (hall). Recent fieldwork has conclusively proven that Edwin’s residence lies beneath the castle earthworks, and that Laughton was an important high status centre from at least the 10th century. Construction of the motte and bailey over the earlier hall complex provides insight into how elite residences were transformed in the 11th and 12th centuries, and has important implications for how we understand the rationale behind early castle building.

13:30 Fiona Beglane (Institute of Technology Sligo): ‘Forests, chases and rights of free warren in medieval Ireland, 1169– c. 1399’.

Irish forests, chases and rights of free warren have been largely ignored by medievalists. Alongside parks, these were landscapes within which the elite sought to control not only access to hunting, but also to timber and woodland resources. The aim of this presentation is to describe the evidence for these landforms in Ireland in the period 1169 – c.1399, and to examine the chronology of their creation, their ownership, uses and functions. The presentation uses an interdisciplinary approach, combining historical, cartographic and archaeological evidence for past activity and provides an insight into these extensive medieval landscape features.



A word from our President

Those of us who study the past are used to exploring the impact that major events have had on society, but I doubt any of us thought that we would live through a period as difficult as the present event. Everyone from colleagues working in universities, museums and the commercial archaeology sector, through to members who are retired, will all have experienced this year differently. With regards to the Society we have been able to continue with our core activities albeit working in different ways. The production of our newsletters, journal and monographs has continued, and the Annual Student Symposium is being organised. It is great to see that our four latest monographs are now published and available to order (see <https://www.routledge.com/The-Society-for-Medieval-Archaeology-Monographs/book-series/SMAM>):

- *Eckweek, Peasedown St John, Somerset: survey and excavations at a shrunken medieval hamlet 1988–90* by Andrew Young.
- *Negotiating the North: meeting-places in the middle ages in the North Sea Zone* edited by Sarah Semple, Alexandra Sanmark, Frode Iversen, and Natascha Mehler.
- *Waiting for the end of the world?: new perspectives on natural disasters in medieval Europe* edited by Christopher Gerrard, Paolo Forlin, and Peter Brown.

- *Faxton: excavations in a deserted Northamptonshire village 1966–68* by Lawrence Butler and Christopher Gerrard.

I want to thank all of the Society's officers for their hard work this year in often difficult circumstances.

There are also now some positive signs: after a period of shut down, commercial archaeology is up and running – securing a lot of jobs – with one example being excavations at the Doddershall DMV in Buckinghamshire. And as I write I have just had an email to say my local Museum in Exeter is reopening too! Whilst so many traditional face-to-face social events have had to be cancelled, the way that many organisations have been able to arrange alternative online events has been hugely impressive (I am a member of numerous county archaeological societies and they have done a great job in keeping in touch with their members). In the present circumstances the Society for Medieval Archaeology's AGM on Monday 7 December 2020 will also clearly have to be online, and details of that are presented in this Newsletter. Let's all hope for a better 2021!

Best wishes,

Stephen Rippon
President, SMA

SMA Annual Student Colloquium, 23-27 November

2020: Research & fieldwork in the face of adversity

We will be holding a Virtual Colloquium that showcases ongoing archaeological research and looks at how we conduct research and fieldwork in the face of adversity. Posters will be displayed on a digital platform and the symposium will conclude with a virtual keynote lecture and Q&A session. There will also be an opportunity for students to deliver a short presentation if desired.

We have invited submissions from across the medieval period (5th-16th centuries) and all geographic areas. We are also open to posters from subjects outside archaeology but with a broader

significance. We have encouraged those who might adopt a reflective approach to explore how the events of the past few months have influenced or impacted their research. Indeed, we welcome reflections on any kind of adversity faced when conducting research, including but not limited to, racism, sexism or ableism.

Registration is FREE for both members and non-members of the Society. To become a member of the Society, please visit: <http://medievalarchaeology.co.uk/how-to-join/>





The motte in Oxford.



Newark.

Castle Studies Group

While 2020's events have inevitably been impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Castle Studies Group report in the Medieval Archaeology Newsletter generally reports on the activities undertaken by the group during the previous year. In 2019 – ‘the good old days’, when talking face-to-face and shaking hands with your friends was totally normal.

In April 2019 our CSG members spent the weekend at the Hilton Hotel in Northampton for the group's Annual Conference and 33rd AGM. The conference was organised by Neil Guy, James Petre, Brian Giggins and Richard Ley. It focused on the castles of Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Lincolnshire, and featured an optional extra day looking at the mottes and ringworks of the area, with the intrepid group visiting an impressive 13 sites in one day. The conference followed the usual CSG format of mainly site visits, and benefited from an evening lecture by Neil Guy and Brian Giggins on Barnwell Castle – one the sites visited during the conference. The conference began with a visit to Berkhamstead where William the Conqueror received the submission of the English, introducing our first theme: ‘Following in the footsteps of William Conqueror’. The theme also saw us visit Farthingstone Castle Dykes, Bampton, Wallingford, Oxford (incl. town walls) and Deddington. Our second conference theme focused on ‘Edwardian castles in the East Midlands’ and we began at the Rockingham castle, where not much remains of the Edwardian work, except its imposing gatehouse. Other sites visited included Barnwell, Woodcroft, and Newark-on-Trent with its vast façade along the river. Our final day was spent in Lincolnshire looking at later-medieval castles, including Tattershall, but also South Kyme Tower (a 14th-century solar tower) and Bolingbroke that has similarities to the first castle at Tattershall. A special treat, and a break from the castles, came in the form of a visit to the Eleanor Cross at Geddington, one of the best surviving of an original 12 crosses ordered by Edward I to mark the 12 resting places of the funeral procession for his first wife Eleanor of Castile. We included some privately-owned sites for which we were granted special access. In those, and the other sites, there was an impressive line-up of owner, local guides, scholars and researchers who gave us the benefit of their time and detailed knowledge of the sites in question; an invaluable addition.

In June the group visited the Castles of Poitou and the Charentes for a Summer tour organised by the very successful partnership of Pamela Marshall and Richard Eales. The site visits included the medieval towns of Poitiers, La Rocheposay, Chauvigny, Partenay, Angoulême and La Rochelle, and

the castles at Grand-Pressigny, Angles Sur l'Anglin, Coudray-Salbert, Niort, Cherveux, Gençay, Pons and Saint. A selection of Romanesque churches and other sites were also included along with the large Renaissance Chateau at La Rochefoucauld.

In late August a number of members travelled to Lund, Sweden, to participate in the sixth conference in the Towers in Medieval and Renaissance Europe series, or Turrus, organised primarily by Richard Oram. This conference was organised by Martin Hannson at Lund University, on ‘Towers of Strength’. Members' presentations included Ben Murtagh on ‘Late Viking defensive towers in Waterford’, Penny Dransart on ‘Towers of strength and confinement: Saint Andrews and Lochleven castles and prisons’, Bas Aarts on ‘The real “donjon”; a contribution to castle terminology’, and Richard Oram on ‘Defence on the Anglo-Scottish Border in the 16th century’. Site visits included Helsingborg and Borgeby, as well as a walking tour of Lund city and Cathedral. Papers from the conference will be published in a forthcoming monograph in the series published by Shaun Tyas.

Finally, in October a number of members participated in a one-day conference in Ayrshire organised by the Ayrshire Federation of Historical Societies. Members' presentations included Geoffrey Stell on ‘Ayrshire Castles in context’ and Piers Dixon and Will Wyeth on ‘Turnberry: castle and countryside’.

The CSG *Journal* includes news of CSG activities, members' interests and updates on castle research. Castle-related publications for the year are listed and reviewed in the CSG *Bibliography*. The *Journal* is distributed to all members each December and is edited and produced by Neil Guy. Neil will be standing down after *Journal* No 34 for 2020/21 and Dr Rachel Swallow has been co-opted onto the committee to take on the role of editor in his place. Neil will remain a committee member and is responsible for the upkeep of our website. We have plans to redesign the website in the near future. Our interim e-Bulletins are now three per year, distributed, compiled and edited by Therron Welstead. Committee members can be contacted by email via the contacts page at www.castlestudiesgroup.org.uk. Undergraduates and post-graduates who are writing a dissertation or thesis on a castle-related theme may qualify to attend the Annual Conference at half price. CSG also awards small grants of up to £1,000 to group projects involving castle research, details for which are also on the website.

Gillian Scott, Hon. Secretary
secretary@castlestudiesgroup.org.uk

Group Reports 2019

Finds Research Group

The Finds Research Group has been able to hold its committee meetings online, which has had the advantage of facilitating more committee members to attend remotely. With the postponement of our big meeting in Plymouth as well as any of our famous ‘trippettes’ to (hopefully) next year, photos of FRG members in action are thin on the ground this year. We are, however, very pleased to have published two of our datasheets this Autumn: *Datasheet 53* by Ben Bishop, looks at early medieval and medieval bifacial sheath fittings, and *Datasheet 54* by Simon Maslin is entitled ‘Post-medieval horse bridle

bosses and rosettes’. Both publications demonstrate the breadth of research being carried out on medieval and post medieval artefacts at this time.

Visit our website for information on how to submit a proposal for a Datasheet, and for a free download of some of our earlier publications.

For further information regarding membership and meetings, please visit www.findsresearchgroup.com/

Nicola Powell, FRG Editor in Chief

Medieval Settlement Research Group



MSRG Archives.

It has been a relatively quiet year for the MSRG as well because of COVID-19. This year’s planned Spring Conference, due to have taken place at the University of Hull, was cancelled. We fervently hope to be able to invite everyone to Hull next Spring, where we will be looking at ‘Coastal settlement and landscape: exploring relationships between land and sea’, and plans are currently underway to reassemble the brilliant programme that Helen Fenwick had put together for that event. Fortunately, we were all able to meet in Leicester in December for the annual AGM and Winter Seminar. 2019’s focus was a ten-year review of settlement studies, assessing the years 2007-2016 and led by Stephen Rippon. The review, following on from Mark Gardiner’s 2006 evaluation of the previous period (1996-2006), will be published as a report (Rippon and Morton) in this year’s edition of *Medieval Settlement Research*, due out in late 2020. In addition to Stephen, we welcomed papers from Ben Jervis, Duncan Wright

and Ben Morton, while Richard Jones summoned up his best impression of Naomi Sykes, who was unable to attend at the last minute. A full report of the event is available in our newsletter, at: <https://medieval-settlement.com/newsletter/>. We continue to support students interested in settlement and landscape studies, and the 2019 John Hurst Prize, awarded at the Winter Seminar, was won in 2019 by Dóra Szábo from the University of Exeter, who presented a paper on ‘Household archaeology of early medieval settlement in Central Europe’. Congratulations to Dóra. For further information on this competition, please see our website: <https://medieval-settlement.com/grants-awards/dissertation-award/>.

Perhaps one of the best pieces of news this year is that our archive – previously held in the Historic England Archive in Swindon – has now been transferred to a temporary home at the University of Hull. We are currently in the process of cataloguing the contents, following which the archive will be

delivered to its new home at the Hull History Centre where it will feature alongside Maurice Beresford's Wharram Percy collection. It is intended that the archive, which incorporates material from our earliest days as the Medieval Village Research Group, will be much more publicly accessible, not least because for the first time there will be a valuable catalogue detailing the contents.

We continue to support settlement and landscape scholarship through our grants scheme, and this year was extremely competitive, with several very high quality applications. The panel had some difficult decisions to make, but it was agreed to support three projects:

- A pilot phase of *The Yeavinging environs project*, an initial exploration that will underpin a three-year programme of work across 2021-2023 (Sarah Semple, Durham University)
- *The evolution of a lowland Welsh landscape: pollen analysis in the Dinas Powys environs*, a project focusing on agriculture and land use between the fifth and twelfth centuries (Stephen Rippon, University of Exeter);
- *Understanding the medieval Avon at Stoneleigh, Warwickshire*, an interdisciplinary project seeking to date

by radiocarbon analysis a palaeochannel featured in a fourteenth-century perambulation (Richard Jones, University of Leicester).

We look forward to reading more about these exciting projects in due course, both in our newsletter and journal.

We hope to return to Leicester for our Winter Seminar on 12 December, where we are scheduled to run a programme focusing on *Migration and communication*. In these uncertain times, please keep checking our website for updates on this event. Finally, we were delighted to welcome two new colleagues onto the committee in 2020 – Gareth Davies and Mark Forrest. Gareth is the Director of Trent & Peak Archaeology in Nottingham, and his research interests focus on early medieval settlement in the East Midlands. Mark is an experienced historian and archivist, and edits a number of publications relating to Dorset, including the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, and the Dorset Record Society series.

Dr Susan Kilby, Hon. Secretary, MSRSG

Castle Studies Trust projects start to make progress again



Lincoln Castle, as viewed from Lincoln Cathedral.



A general view of The Wirk, courtesy of Take the High View.

In past years our articles at this time of year for the SMA Newsletter would be reporting on how our funded projects were developing and yielding preliminary results. Lock-down has delayed progress but as conditions eased in late Summer, some work has been under way.

2020 Grant Award Updates

Lincoln, Lincolnshire: To develop a reconstruction drawing of the castle, as it would have been in the latter part of the 12th century. The team has produced a draft of the model, and work is ironing out inconsistencies and checking details.

Shrewsbury, Shropshire: To fund a second year of excavation, this time to understand the rampart of the inner bailey. The excavation was rescheduled. Follow the blog post: <https://castlestudiestrust.org/blog/2020/04/19/shrewsbury-castle-a-2020-vision-from-saxon-habitation-to-c18-landscaping/>

Sowing the Seeds: The aim of the project is to try to understand better everyday life in castles by seeing if there are any surviving plants at four Irish castles that were planted, grown and cared for by medieval people. The research involved ecological surveys at each location which have all been done and we await the results.

The Wirk, Orkney: Could the Wirk be a Norse castle? The survey work was due to take place in April at the same time as planned

excavation on the site, and both were rescheduled, subject to the approval of Historic Environment Scotland.

Warkworth, Northumberland: Using various forms of geophysical survey to try to understand the sub-surface features for the former caput of the Earls of Northumberland. The survey was scheduled to take place in October.

Projects that cannot be carried out within the 12 months stipulated in the criteria will be rolled-over for completion in 2021.

To help castle enthusiasts remain entertained during this period when visiting castles is very difficult for most people, the Trust has greatly increased the frequency of new articles appearing on its blog so that a new piece will appear at least once a fortnight. Articles will feature both existing and previous projects funded by the CST, and also other castle-related topics. Check it out at <https://castlestudiestrust.org/blog/>

While we already have a number of articles in the pipeline, if you have any interesting ideas for an article please contact me at admin@castlestudiestrust.org and we can see if it is suitable. Also get in touch with any questions about any of the funded projects, or about the Trust in general.

Jeremy Cunnington, Chair of Trustees
www.castlestudiestrust.org

Media & Exhibition

Pandemic Medievalisms: Plague and Pestilence in Medieval Fictions



William Waterhouse's pre-Raphaelite version of *The Decameron*, painted in 1916. © Wikimedia Commons.



Seventh Seal's Dance Macabre. © Wikimedia Commons.

Readers will be only too aware that since the Spring issue of the Newsletter the world has been shaken and continues to be shaken by COVID-19. This has impacted almost all aspects of life, most seriously in the death and illness it has caused and the economic havoc it has wreaked. In the world of archaeology and heritage it has certainly negatively affected the pursuit of research projects and the engagement of audiences with the medieval past. Many museums across Europe have been closed until comparatively recently and so there are no new exhibitions to discuss here. Many cinemas have been similarly closed and so there are no new cinematic visions of medieval pasts to consider here either.¹ So instead let's survey what creative endeavours in the fields of cinema and literature have given us in the way of responses to the medieval experience of pandemic. The human and animal experience of pandemic illness was a consistent element of life throughout the medieval period and, of course, were not exclusive to it – even today COVID-19 comes on the back of other endemic and pandemic outbreaks, including SARS, BSE and Foot and Mouth.

In terms of the fictionalized medieval past, the perceived medieval experience tends to resolve around the most well-known episode, the Black Death of 1348 and subsequent outbreaks. In literary terms the key evocation and recreation remains the contemporary account, *The Decameron*, by

¹ As the issue went to press cinemas were reopening and I was able to see *Tenet*. Despite the title I did not anticipate the film's meaning would so strongly derive from the Roman-medieval SATOR Square magical-invocation palindrome. Watch this space!

Giovanni Boccaccio, completed by 1353. It brings together 100 tales told by seven elite refugees from Florence in lockdown in the Italian countryside. The book is a classic example of how mythologizing the past can begin in that past. For Boccaccio, writing in the face of the Black Death was the chance to stretch the bounds of moral certainty and social convention (which life itself had snapped with the Black Death). Above all else it is its often bawdy humour that has fueled later re-tellings of some of the tales. In Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1972 film version, *The Decameron*, five tales are selected with an emphasis on bawdy and erotic behaviour and set within a ruined medieval landscape of southern Italy. The erotic, bawdy theme is followed by the less successful film *Virgin Territory* (2007), which hovers between saucy postcard and bowdlerized version but makes good use of locations in Sienna and Florence. In these medievalisms faith is a matter of foolish credulity. Quite a different tone is taken with the film classic, *The Seventh Seal* (1957), in which Swedish director Ingmar Bergman breathes cinematic life into the medieval metaphorical response to the Black Death known as the Dance Macabre, which also figures in the plague scenes of *Narziss and Goldmund* and which saw a profusion of frescoes, paintings, stained glass and illuminated manuscripts bearing witness to Death as the governor of life, regardless of social standing and moral behaviour. As such it makes a sly, foreboding entry into the final scene of the darkly comic film *The Hour of the Pig* (1993), bringing down the curtain on all in the guise of a plague-infested knight arriving in remote Ponthieu from Paris.

To advertise conferences/events in the Newsletter

please email:
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googlemail.com](mailto:medieval.archaeology@googlemail.com)

Contribute to the Newsletter

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.

Send to the Honorary Newsletter Editor by e-mail:
niallbrady100@gmail.com

The due dates for receipt of copy are:

Spring Newsletter: 15th February
Autumn Newsletter: 15th August

Conferences & Events see page 4

Credits

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Paul Verhoeven's film *Flesh + Blood* (1985) uses a sense of generic plague as no more than a plot device for its dark story set c. 1500, which wants to remind viewers that the medieval period was less a romantic fairy tale and more a palette of blood, mud, disease, death and hierarchy. A graphic departure from medieval film conventions, it made possible a clutch of subsequent films that relied on the Black Death as a backdrop to variously horrific, superstition-fueled dramas, notably *Anazapta* (2002, released in the US as *Black Plague*), *Solomon Kane* (2009; re-situated at the end of the 16th century), *Black Death* (2010) and *Season of the Witch* (2011). This line is picked up in the recent novel *To Calais, in Ordinary Time* (2019) by James Meek. It too charts the early spread of the Black Death from France to southern England, like *Anazapta*, in the context of the Hundred Years War, as a company of archers attempt to make the journey from Gloucestershire to Calais. It retains the bloody reality of life but veers away from the exploitation excess of some of the films into a more reasoned blurring of the boundary between faith and superstition and also broadens the scope of the social disintegration caused by the Black Death to tell a story of transgender inequality. This in part recalls Boccaccio, whose stories of confinement had a gender dimension that pointed up the inequalities of agency enjoyed by women. Its multi-narrator device owes as much to Chaucer as to Boccaccio and it also points up the importance of language as a cultural and ethnic marker. This is something it shares with *Laurus* (2012, but first published in English in 2015) by Eugene Vodolazkin, which tells the life of a late 15th-century Russian healer and holy man variously known as Arseny, Ustin, Amvrosy and Laurus. He spends much time tending

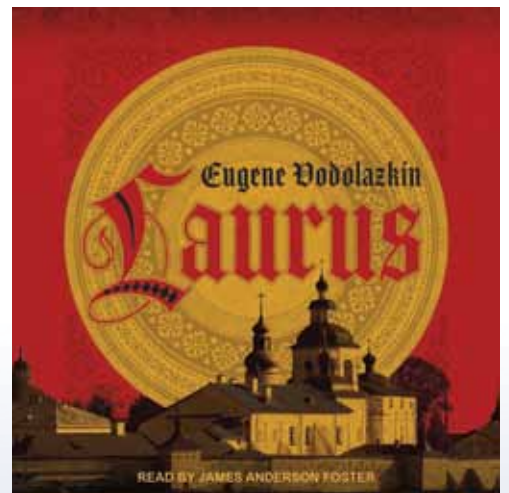
victims of the plague but also undertakes a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, before returning to Russia and a long-awaited monastic cell. His wanderings and adventures recall the wanderings charted in Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Andrei Roublev* (1966) and perhaps the greatest fictional reimagining of Europe at the time of the Black Death, *Narziss and Goldmund* (1930) by Herman Hesse, a novel unsparing in its assessment of the devastation caused, both directly and as an irrational knock-on with such as the murderous persecution of Jews.

Laurus echoes the circularity of time suggested in *Narziss and Goldmund* and also links to two of the most compelling and surreally imaginative retellings of the Black Death, the films *The Navigator: a medieval odyssey* (1988) and *Book of Days* (1989). One of the strategies of *Laurus* is to play with time and it brings the past-present and the future-present together through visions of the 20th century had by the Italian monk Ambrogio, and also through a suggestion of time-leaks, suggested by the appearance in medieval Russia of a 21st-century plastic bottle, in a midden. In *The Navigator*, one of the lead characters, Griffin, is gifted with second-sight, which gives him visions of salvation from a future set in 1980s New Zealand. These are used to lead a remote Cumbrian mining community to try and escape the encroaching Black Death by mining through to that antipodean salvation. In *Book of Days* the visionary is a young Jewish girl whose glimpses of the twentieth century she records as graffiti, though they bring no salvation as she and her community are wiped out by the Black Death.

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Albertus Pictor's 1480 fresco of Death Playing Chess, from Täby Church, near Stockholm.
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Cover for the audio-book of *Laurus*.
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