

# Medieval Archaeology

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY

## The Rock, excavation at the MacDermot caput on Lough Key, Co. Roscommon



Excavations on the the Rock of Lough Key, a medieval island caput of the MacDermot lords of Moylurg, began in the summer of 2019 as a joint research project between Saint Louis University and the University of Minnesota-Morris. Surveys on 'the Rock' from the early 2000s identified a number of medieval elements of the

standing structure, which has been typically characterized as a 19th-century folly designed by John Nash for the King estate. Excavations in 2016 at a moated site located close to the lakeshore south of the island identified medieval occupation, and this led to more detailed work on the Rock, to clarify what extent of medieval

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Our discipline continues to engage in the latest surveying and recording technologies and such developments are always exciting, reflecting both a healthy level of activity and the challenge to understand their most effective applications. In this issue of the Newsletter there is an important note on the OASIS project, which is a concerted attempt to post online accessible reports of the many projects conducted across the UK. Such initiatives can tie into existing programmes in Scotland and Ireland and are to be applauded. We must not lose sight of the issues with digital data and be ever-vigilant to ensure such data will remain accessible far into the future. Simple firm guidelines on 'How To' would be welcomed, and newsletters are ideal places to post such matters.

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Newsletter Editor  
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*Left:*  
*Aerial image showing excavation under way on the 'Rock' of Lough Key, medieval caput of the MacDermots, lords of Moylurg.*

occupation may have survived on this former very high status Gaelic lordly site.

Limited investigation has already revealed extensive medieval remains, including at least three non-contemporary structures, whose artefacts suggest a date range of the 13th–15th centuries. The earliest structure identified so far is a large, dry stone enclosure wall that precedes all of the other structures including the ‘cashel’ wall that forms the standing perimeter wall. The buried enclosure wall is some 3m deep, and had an entrance that looks towards the moated site on the shoreline. No artefacts were found in association with this horizon. The second building was constructed on top of a significant layer of burning and belongs to the high middle ages. A number of artefacts associated with it include silver pins, gaming pieces, a large

deposit of animal bone (mostly large joints of cattle and deer), and worked antler. A third building post-dated this structure but was not fully excavated.

The extent of the remains is startling, in terms of the depth of archaeology and the density of features and artefacts. We anticipate additional excavations on the site to further identify what might be construed as a ‘Gaelic lordly assemblage’, particularly since this assemblage of artefacts is securely dated to the 13th and 14th centuries, an era that is noted for its otherwise dearth of particular artefacts related to high status Gaelic settlement.

Thomas Finan  
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*Close-up aerial view of excavation underway.*

# Society Grants

## Attendance at 'The Long Black Death'

Attendance at this year's Society for Medieval Archaeology 2019 Annual Conference in York, entitled "The Long Black Death": New Perspectives" was made possible for me by an Eric Fletcher Fund grant. As a doctoral candidate at Staffordshire University, investigating the lives and deaths of non-adults who have been excavated from English Medieval hospital sites, I am primarily using existing osteology reports, in addition to archaeological and historical sources, to understand more about the role hospitals played during the medieval period in caring for and housing non-adults and burying the dead.

The conference's keynote address by Prof. Monica Green introduced the theme and the value of interdisciplinary research by archaeologists, historians and climate and genetic scientists, to understand the origins, transmission and impact of *Yersinia pestis*. The papers given by Craig Cessford and the 'After the Plague' project team were of particular interest, as they involved discussions of medieval burials in Cambridge, including the burials of inhabitants of the Hospital of St John. The conference prompts me to think about the questions we ask of data, and how negative information can be as important as positive findings; what is not identified can be as important as what is discovered in the data sets.

## Attendance at the IONA conference, Vancouver

In April 2019 I attended the IONA conference, at the Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada. The theme of the conference was, 'Early Medieval Studies and the Islands of the North Atlantic: transformative networks, skills, theories, and methods for the future of the field'. I organised and ran a three-part session that took place over the three days of the conference.

'From Fibre to Decorated Textiles in the Early North Atlantic: making, methods and meanings', was an interdisciplinary and experimental session that brought together craft workers with knowledge of making textiles based on examples known from the Viking Age world; scholars who focus on interpreting meaning and methods of making; and researchers, teachers, curators and artists

Social and environmental factors that contributed to the spread of plague, and the impact of pre-existing health conditions on the prevalence of plague also stimulated interesting discussions. The ability of societies across Europe to recover following episodes of plague varied; some villages disappeared altogether, while many towns continued but took decades to recover to their pre-plague population and economic statuses. The monitoring, containment and treatment of plague during the medieval period, and today, provide fascinating insights to the social and political responses to disease. The conference inspires me to ask new questions of my data that I would not have considered if I had not been present for the intriguing and thought-provoking papers and discussions.

I would like to thank Prof. Hadley and Prof. Lewis for organising the conference, the SMA committee, the Eric Fletcher Fund and all the speakers who made the conference such a rewarding event.

**Esme Hookway**

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who are keeping traditional methods of textile-making alive. The aim of the session was to create a network of people who are willing to work together to develop our knowledge and understanding of early medieval textiles and the societies that made and used them, and to develop collaborative projects in this area of research.

The sessions were well attended with approximately 30 people at each. On the first day, we ran four workshops and two demonstrations: Anna Asplund (independent researcher and teacher) led a tablet-weaving group, a form of weaving worked off the loom, and another on laid-work, an embroidery stitch used on larger hangings such as the Bayeux Tapestry. Carol James (independent researcher and teacher) taught sprang, a form of weaving

that creates a fabric with natural elasticity. Liselotte Öhring (Lödöse Museum, Sweden) and Anna Josefsson (independent teacher) taught Nalbinding, a technique used to create fabric by ‘binding’ thread together with a needle. Barbara Klessig (Humboldt State University and PhD candidate University of Exeter) demonstrated loom weaving. Lotta Rahme (a Swedish tanner who works with traditional tools and techniques) demonstrated the art of making fish leather. The first session was a great success with many positive comments, especially about the fish leather demonstration. People were also seen working on their favoured techniques in other conference sessions and teaching them to conference-goers who had not attended the workshops.

Our session took on a more traditional format on the following days. The second day focused on the meaning and interpretation of textiles and textile-making. Barbara Klessig discussed her research on textile tools from Viking Age graves and whether they were part of a burial ritual or actually everyday tools. Mary Valante (Appalachian State University) talked about women’s work and women’s identities in Viking-Age Ireland. Rachel Evans (PhD candidate Leicester University) explored the literary function of cloaks in the *Íslendinga sögur*. Finally, I highlighted how approaching the study of Viking Age textiles and textile-making from a sensory perspective can provide a greater understanding of the people who made and used the textiles. An in-depth discussion concluded the day.

The third day explored projects that aim to keep traditional making skills alive. Elisa Palomino (Central St Martin’s, London) described her collaborative work with Lotta Rahme and others who use traditional skills and techniques to make fish leather. She also showed us how fish leather was used by the modern fashion industry. Stephanie Bunn (University of St Andrews) discussed her project, ‘Woven Communities’, which explores traditional Scottish basket-making skills and its history. Liselotte Öhring and Anna Josefsson told us how they approach teaching Nalbinding. Finally, Liselotte presented a virtual tour of Lödöse Museum and its early medieval textiles.

Everyone who took part in one or more of the sessions came away from the conference feeling empowered and positive about their work and the contribution they can make to our understanding of textiles and textile-making. An online group has been established where we share our thoughts, ideas and problems. We are also joined by people who were unable to attend the conference. I am currently exploring options for an edited volume based on the presentations and workshops.

The Eric Fletcher grant helped fund my travel costs to the conference and I am grateful to the Society of Medieval Archaeology grant committee for seeing the merits of the session and awarding the grant.

**Alexandra Makin**

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## Attendance at 'Ritual and Religion'

Thanks to the generous grant from the Eric Fletcher Fund, I was able to present a paper at the ‘Ritual and Religion in the Medieval World’ conference, organised by the Center for Medieval Studies, Fordham University, New York in March 2019. My paper was based on my doctoral research project, which concerns religious rituals performed by soldiers during warfare, drawing on both archaeological and historical sources. The conference’s interdisciplinary theme was a suitable context and audience and I received some good feedback. I developed my thinking on how to integrate interdisciplinary sources when considering medieval rituals. It was also a good networking opportunity with medievalists from American universities. The grant from the SMA, along with funding from my PhD’s funding body, enabled me to travel to New York to present my research and I am very grateful for how it has helped me to define and develop my research and other professional skills as a PhD candidate.

**Beatrice Widell**

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*Remains of the Neville's Cross monument, Durham, located near an Anglo-Scottish battlefield from the 14th century. The monument was part of the ritual landscape that the soldiers engaged with after battle.*  
*Photograph by Beatrice Widell.*

**Website**[www.medievalarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.medievalarchaeology.co.uk)

The website continues to improve. Send us your comments:  
[medievalarchaeology@googlemail.com](mailto: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](http://www.medievalarchaeology.co.uk)

**Current Officers**

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

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**Society members are entitled to a 20% discount on all Routledge books. To apply the discount, please go online to the Routledge website, <https://www.routledge.com/>, and use the following promotional code: MA20.**



# Society News

## Notice of the Annual General Meeting and Winter Symposium

The 2019 AGM of the Society will be held on Monday, December 2, 18:00 in the Sorby Room, Wager Building (attached to the Department of Archaeology), University of Reading, RG6 6AX.

**Agenda**

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

The following nominations have been received for election:

Honorary President	Professor Stephen Rippon
Members of Council	Nathalie Cohen
	Professor Aidan O'Sullivan

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

The AGM will be followed by three short lectures on recent archaeological discoveries (at around 18:30), details of which are presented on page 16.

*The lectures will be followed by a wine reception at around 19.30. The event and wine reception are free to attend for members of the Society. It would help planning of the event if members of the Society could indicate their intention to attend through the Eventbrite site that has been set up and is accessible from the Society's webpage: <http://www.medievalarchaeology.co.uk/>*

**Karen Milek, Hon. Secretary**  
[karen.b.milek@durham.ac.uk](mailto:karen.b.milek@durham.ac.uk)

# Announcing the SMA's 2020 Annual Conference

## Cultures of Cloth: The Archaeology of Textiles in Medieval Northwest Europe

University of Nottingham, 10–12 July 2020

Textiles were the single most important manufactured product in the medieval world. Moving from domestic household production to the commercialisation of the textile industry was a primary driver of the medieval European economy and helped to shape landscapes and settlements ranging from rural villages to international cities. Textiles were one of the most prominent commodities in medieval trade networks; wool and linen were the stuff of everyday life while silks, damasks and cloth of gold were among the most valuable luxuries in the medieval world. Textiles were used as clothes, bedding, tablecloths, wall-hangings, sails, sacks, altar-cloths and shrouds; they were integral to every aspect of the routine and ritual lives of medieval people, through which they expressed identities based on geography, status, gender, age and ethnicity. For better or worse, spreading disease and depopulation as well as wealth, opportunities and knowledge, cloth production and its trade inter-connected communities of all sizes across Europe, surviving and driving a millennium of profound social, economic, political and environmental change.

Interest in medieval textiles amongst social and economic historians has been growing, and archaeology provides unique data and new perspectives. Textiles rarely survive in the ground, but permeate all aspects of the medieval archaeological record – from the production of raw materials and the development of manufacturing processes to the growth of international trade; from the use of textiles in ritual and everyday life to the impact of new wealth on the physical fabric of the medieval world. Archaeological evidence for medieval textiles encompasses sheep cotes, deserted villages and retting ponds; seeds, sheep bones and DNA; fulling mills, guildhalls, merchant's houses and churches; seals, loom weights and spindle whorls; clothing, brooches and dress-pins; shroud-pins and funerary effigies; chantry chapels and stained glass windows.

Networks of textile production, exchange and consumption drew together medieval communities across Europe and beyond, but the north-western European zone of textile manufacture and trade was particularly significant, connecting farmers, craftspeople and merchants across the North Sea and English Channel. This conference aims to bring together scholars from both sides of the channel, across the fields of archaeology and allied disciplines, covering both earlier and later medieval periods in Northwest Europe, to explore the multi-faceted evidence for the ways in which 'cultures of cloth' drove medieval society and wove the fabric of medieval life.

### Call for papers

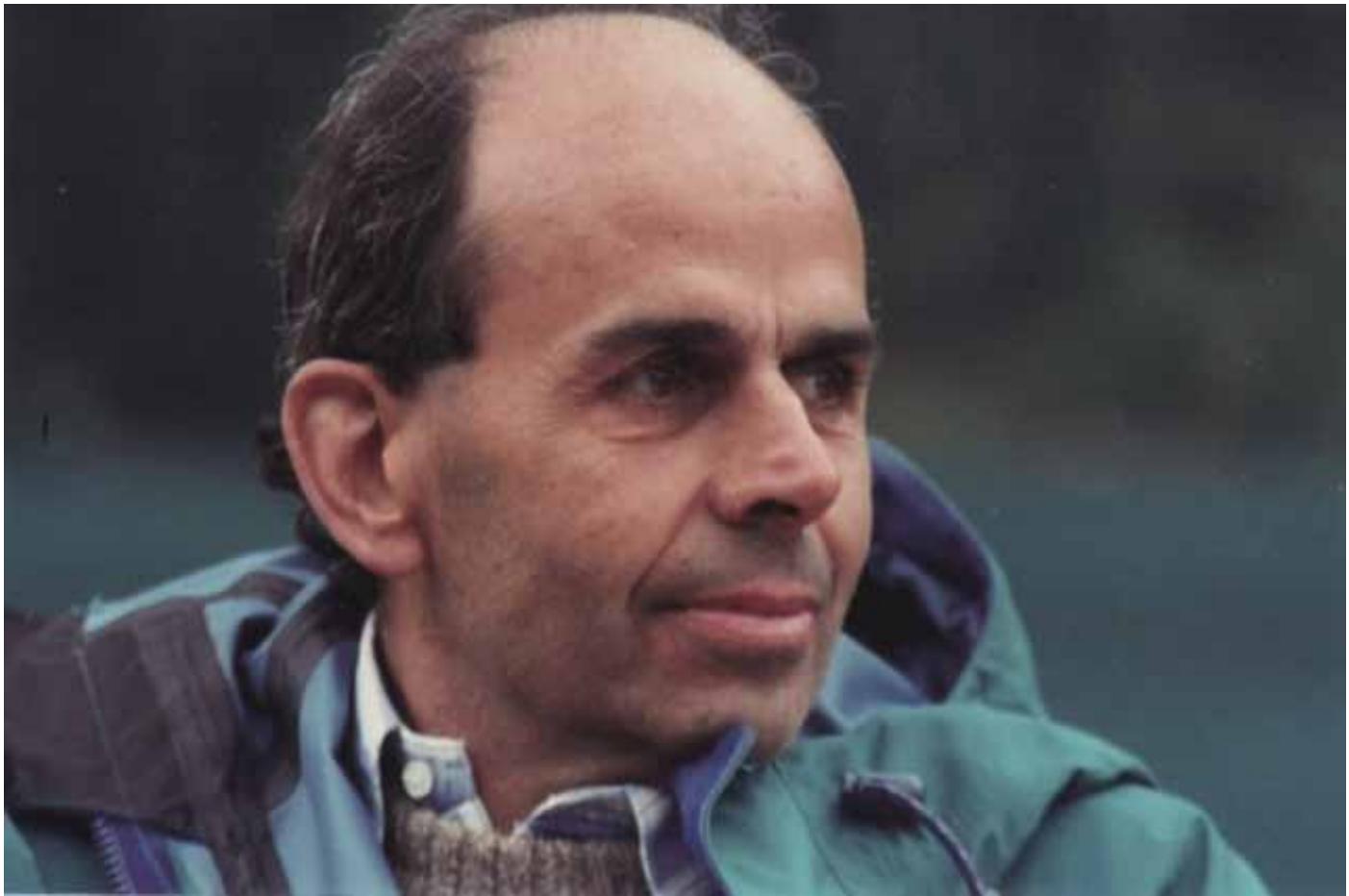
We welcome proposals for papers of 20 minutes length from scholars at any stage in their career, using physical evidence to explore the impact of the production, trade or consumption of textiles in medieval Northwest Europe, for any period between the 6th and 16th centuries. We would particularly welcome contributions that address international connections between England and the Continent. Questions that might be addressed include (but are not restricted to): the extent to which medieval 'cultures of cloth' represent, reinforce or transcend personal, local, national or international boundaries and identities? The impact of the textile industry on the physical world and the lessons this holds for today? Can an archaeology of textiles help to better understand risk and resilience in medieval society? How useful is an international perspective for research into the medieval textile trade, and what questions should we be exploring in the future? We are keen to encourage interdisciplinary approaches and welcome proposals from scholars in the fields of economic, social or cultural history who wish to explore material culture perspectives on these topics. The call for papers closes on 30 November 2019.

Please contact [Chris.King@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Chris.King@nottingham.ac.uk) for more details.



*British Library Royal 16 G V f.56.  
Rouen, c.1440.*





*The picture of Graham was provided by Liz Colquhoun, and is courtesy of Anne Maney.*

Graham Maney, who passed away this year, was for many years head of the firm Maney and Son of Leeds, which was responsible for the printing and distribution of several archaeological journals, including *Medieval Archaeology* and the monograph series.

I met Graham in 1979, when I became Editor, and found him courteous and quietly efficient. On one occasion I visited the printing works in Leeds, as I was unsure whether we ought to keep the journal with the company; I knew that their charges were reasonable, but we were then emerging from the days of hot-metal printing, and I needed to know that the firm could provide an acceptable standard of work with the new technologies. Authors' typescripts were still produced manually and often manually amended. They then had to be reset, also manually, and in Leeds men who had been brought up to carry heavy type-setting trays were sitting awkwardly at what looked like giant type-writers, trying not to pound the keys to destruction as they transferred texts into dot matrix, on ribbons. A hot-metal machine stood desolate in a corner, retained in case of a special commission. Production of off-prints proved to involve the excruciatingly dull job of taking individual pages before they went to the binder, putting them in their covers, and stapling them by hand; no wonder they were expensive.

Illustrations were another problem, as they too had to be handled directly. An editor's office slowly

filled with giant rolls of drawings and precious card envelopes of photographs, hopefully labelled 'Do Not Bend'. Eventually the day would come when it became necessary to get all this to Leeds. Sometimes Graham and I would agree to meet in London for a transfer, and although I would combine several different contributors' illustrations into a single roll, I never managed to get down to fewer than five packages of different shapes and sizes, which I would hand over with no reluctance to Graham. In better years, for me, he would come to Southampton.

In due course, galley proofs would arrive, printed almost always impeccably on sheets of paper about twice as long as a sheet of A4. I then sent a set to each contributor, discouraging any notion that they should make anything more than essential corrections, as changes were still costly even though the printer did not have to move metal type around. If an alteration was really necessary, the challenge was to adjust wording so as to keep as many lines unchanged as possible. Galleys then went back to Graham, and only then were they paginated; I saw final copies, but always felt it better not to bother contributors with those, in case they did not like what they saw. I then awaited the arrival of the journal with trepidation, but Graham never let the Society down.

**David A. Hinton**

# An OASIS for medieval studies

**OASIS** (<https://oasis.ac.uk/>) is a data capture form through which archaeological and heritage practitioners can provide information about their investigations to local Historic Environment Records (HERs) and respective National Heritage Bodies. As well as being an information-gathering medium, the OASIS records also allow the practitioner/contractor to upload reports for the HERs to access, and for release in the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) Library (<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/library/>).

The current form dates back to 2004, initially for use in England and latterly for Scotland and the maritime zone of Wales. OASIS has recorded over 30,000 records, with nearly 50,000 reports transferred into the ADS Library. Although a major success, the time is now right for the system to be rebuilt to accommodate a wider range of workflows, facilitate efficient public access to reports, and link digital and physical resources together. The redevelopment of the form is a key part of Historic England's Heritage Information Access Strategy (HIAS) (<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/support-and-collaboration/heritage-information-access-strategy/>), with additional funding from Historic Environment Scotland to support reporting to Archaeology Scotland's annual summary of fieldwork: Discovery and excavation in Scotland. The new OASIS system will allow Welsh HERs to copy their records and reports into the Library, and it is hoped that the form will also be used for projects within Northern Ireland.

The redevelopment is now actively underway, and the new form is due for public roll-out after

March 2020. The form is open to all types of project, including research projects undertaken by Higher Education bodies or local research societies. To encourage a high uptake by the archaeological community, the new form aims to:

- Create a modern interface that reduces the amount of time to record a project.
- Use modern technology to increase accuracy.
- Reduce duplication of effort.
- Expedite transfer of unpublished reports in the ADS Library for public access.

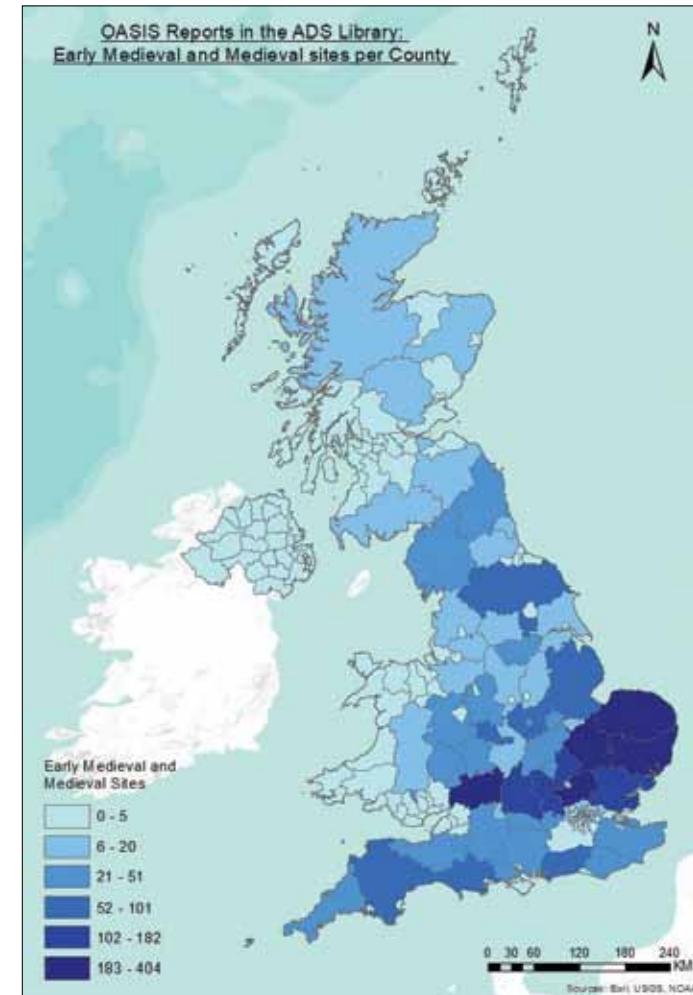
Specifically, the new version will allow the user to:

- Use current standards for the recording of events, objects and monuments, allowing records to be cross-searched consistently and accurately.
- Record projects using accurate spatial metadata.
- Record the location of physical and digital archives, with links to museum holdings.
- Incorporate and link to the new generation of Research Frameworks in England and Scotland.
- Record published resources in their record.
- Efficiently transfer reports into the ADS Library and provide accurate citation for use via Digital Object Identifiers.

## Impact for study of the Medieval Period

At the time of writing, 1580 reports relating to the Early Medieval period and 9422 for the Medieval period in the UK have been transferred from OASIS into the ADS Library. These represent a wide geographic spread across England and Scotland.

These reports (freely available under the ADS Terms and Conditions of use) represent a broad range of projects,



Distribution of OASIS reports containing results relevant to the study of the Early Medieval and Medieval periods.

from large-scale excavations to smaller evaluative works and surveys, and cover the gamut of site types and finds including settlement (<https://doi.org/10.5284/1048242>), industry (<https://doi.org/10.5284/1048072>) and funerary sites (<https://doi.org/10.5284/1003392>). They also represent the range of techniques used to investigate such remains, from conservation reports of specific artefacts (<https://doi.org/10.5284/1033682>) all the way up to landscape-wide analysis using aerial photography and remote sensing (<https://doi.org/10.5284/1030152> or <https://doi.org/10.5284/1042691>).

Reports are also linked to the online version of Medieval Britain and Ireland (<https://doi.org/10.5284/1000424>), updated annually by the Society. It is hoped that with the

successful redevelopment OASIS will facilitate information exchange between the various research, commercial and curatorial sectors, allow for increased access to records and reports by the wider community and so encourage a new wave of innovative research and understanding of the Medieval period.

More information on the redevelopment can be found on the OASIS website (<https://oasis.ac.uk/>), which features a blog (<https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/blog/oasis/>) that is regularly updated with news and information on the project. Alternatively, if you wish to find out more about OASIS, including how to register as a test user, please contact Tim Evans at [herald@ads.ac.uk](mailto:herald@ads.ac.uk).

**Julian Richards**  
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# Group Reports 2018



Carrigadrohid Castle, Co Cork.

## Castle Studies Group

In April 2018, the CSG spent the weekend at the Rochestown Park Hotel, Co. Cork, for the group's Annual Conference and 32nd AGM. The conference was organised by Brian Hodkinson and Daniel Tietzsch-Tyler, and focused on the castles of South Munster. It covered a broad range of castle types and periods that feature in the area, ranging from mottes to fortified houses. The conference followed the usual CSG format of mainly site visits, but benefited from two evening lectures. The first, delivered by Prof. Tadhg O'Keeffe considered castles as a mechanism to study the character of Anglo-Norman settlement in the region, and the second by Dr James Lyttleton on the later medieval and early-modern castles of the area. Site visits included some privately-owned castles for which we were granted special access; in recent years this has become a key feature of the group's annual conference and is something we all look forward to, as well as seeing the well-known sites of course. Our first site was Blarney Castle, where members were naturally given the opportunity to kiss the infamous Blarney Stone and achieve for themselves 'the gift of the gab'. Other sites visited were Castlemartyr, Gallows Hill Motte, Dungarvan, Inchiquin, Igtermurragh, Barryscourt, Glanworth, Mallow, Kilbolane, Kanturk, Liscarroll, Buttevant Castle and town, Mashanaglass, and we ended in the sunshine at the especially-picturesque Carrigadrohid Castle on the River Lee. Our site guides included James Lyttleton, Tom McNeill, Con Manning and Dave Pollock.

Not content with this stunning line-up of castles, a small number of our party made their way across to Co. Wexford to visit Sigginstown Castle, which was recently purchased by our members Liz and Gordon Jones. Their kind invitation to visit the castle (which they are in the process of reroofing) extended to partaking in an impromptu musical session at the local pub. Sigginstown was awarded the CSG small project grant in 2017, to radiocarbon-date preserved wicker centring from the tower's vaulting. Furze, or gorse, was used and a sample from the ground floor vault had a radiocarbon age of  $272 \pm 25$  with a 95% (2 sigma) calibration of 1521–1578, whilst a sample from a first floor window embrasure had a radiocarbon age  $319 \pm 39$  with a 95% (2 sigma) calibration of 1471–1648.

Aside from the usual Spring Conference, CSG held a day-conference in October at the Society of Antiquaries, London, celebrating the launch of our Festschrift produced in honour of Derek Renn, *Castles: History, archaeology, landscape, architecture and symbolism*, edited by Neil Guy. The theme for the day was 'Castles Studies, Current Work and the Future'. Speakers included a mix of Festschrift authors and others, with papers ranging from feminist approaches to studying castles, to detailed reinterpretations of castles we thought we knew.

Relooking, reanalysing and challenging long-held assumptions was a key thread running through the day and the same is true of the Festschrift, which contains over 400 pages, in hardcover with colour illustrations. There are over 20 papers by invited authors covering a wide remit of topics. It is available to order from our website, at: <http://www.castlestudiesgroup.org.uk/page130.html>. Derek has sadly passed away since the conference, so it was a timely celebration of both his academic contribution to castle studies and his personal contribution to mentoring and befriending many of those who wrote in the Festschrift and took part in the conference. He was truly an influential character and will be missed.

A number of members were invited to present papers and attend the 29th *Chateau Gaillard* conference in at Chateau Thierry in France in August. The theme this year was 'Living in Castles' and papers from CSG members included John Kenyon on Middleham Castle, Pamela Marshall on Domestic life in great towers, Richard Oram on Borthwick Castle, Therron Welstead on castle chapels, and Karen Dempsey on feminist perspectives on castle life.

Finally, in March 2019 a small group of members attended a site study day at Haddon Hall, organised by David Mercer and Neil Guy. This special visit allowed access to much of the private and family areas in both the Upper and Lower courts that are not on the usual visitor route. The areas of particular interest built on previous studies by Anthony Emery, Patrick Faulkner, Christopher Hussey and John Goodall. The hope is to publish it as papers in due course, following a presentation to the family and their guide staff.

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*. Nos 29 and 30 were produced this year covering 2017 and 2018. The *Journal* is distributed to all members each December and is edited and produced by Neil Guy. 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](http://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](mailto:secretary@castlestudiesgroup.org.uk)  
[www.castlestudiesgroup.org.uk](http://www.castlestudiesgroup.org.uk)

# Finds Research Group



Picking and choosing? Murray Andrews presents on some fascinating medieval finds at the joint FRG, RFG, King's College London and Instrumentum conference on Hoarding, June 2019.



The Finds Research Group stand, June 2019.

This Spring, the FRG published a bumper crop of Datasheets. Datasheet 51, entitled *Medieval base-metal mirror-cases at the Museum of London*, was written by Alison Bazley. It was richly illustrated with some wonderful examples from MoL and includes a useful bibliography. Members also received Datasheet 52, *Decorated two-part clasps* by Teresa Gilmore. Again, it was fully illustrated with colour photographs of these enigmatic objects, of which there are now hundreds of examples on the Portable Antiquities Scheme's database.

We held a joint conference with the Roman Finds Group and in collaboration with King's College London and *Instrumentum* International Meetings in June this year. The theme was 'Hoarding and Deposition in Europe from later prehistory to the medieval period – finds in context'. It was very well attended, and a wine reception as well as time to view the wide range of posters on display made for excellent networking opportunities.

The Geoff Egan prize goes from strength to strength, and last year we were very pleased to receive a good response

from up-and-coming finds researchers. We shortlisted two different pieces of work and decided to award a prize to both. One prize went to Derek Parrott for his very well-written master's research on the distinctive Gotlandic box brooches found across Viking-age Scandinavia. The other prize goes to Sarah Partridge for her Cambridge undergraduate work on a pair of Ostrogothic earrings and possible associated finds, which were acquired by the British Museum in the late 19th century. Many congratulations to both our winners and we wish them well in their future careers.

The closing date for 2019 entries is 30 November, and the website has further details. For information regarding membership, meetings and the Geoff Egan Prize, please visit [www.findsresearchgroup.com/](http://www.findsresearchgroup.com/). New members are sent the most recent datasheets along with our twice-yearly newsletter.

**Nicola Powell**, FRG Editor in Chief  
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# Medieval Settlement Research Group

Over the last few years it has been a central aim of the MSRG to provide a wider range of benefits to members, and to forge closer links with those involved in community archaeology. We have created two new Officer roles: a Membership Secretary, and a Community Archaeology Officer. Two of our current committee members – Dr Helen Fenwick and Dr Peter Allen – agreed to take on these roles respectively. Helen's remit includes welcoming new members, managing our membership database and producing our new newsletter (launched in Spring 2019, and still available on our website: <https://medieval-settlement.com/newsletter/>). Peter has many years' experience with the Council for British Archaeology in the East Midlands and, since joining the committee, has been active in promoting the Group's interests within this community and in acting as a conduit between community-led groups and the academic world. I am also delighted to welcome Dr Rebecca Gregory (University of Nottingham) to the committee. Becca is an interdisciplinary place-names scholar, and her work focuses on the Scandinavian influence on naming vocabulary in the East Midlands. Following the successful completion of his PhD, we are sad to lose Dr Eddie Procter as our Student Representative, but happy to welcome Paul Shaw, who has just started his PhD research at Leicester.

In December 2018, following the re-launch of the John Hurst competition for students, we held a full-day Winter Seminar, with the morning session focusing on four student finalists presenting papers that took us from Bedfordshire to Leicestershire, via Wales, Flanders and Iceland! It was a close competition, but the deserving winner was Gerben Verbrugge from Ghent University, who show-cased his PhD research on tracing Flemish identity through planted settlement landscapes in Wales and Flanders. A synopsis of Gerben's work will be published in this year's edition of *Medieval Settlement Research*. The competition is now open to entries for 2019, and we warmly encourage students to apply – full details are on our website (<https://medieval-settlement.com/grants-awards/dissertation-award/>). Over the course of the afternoon, a record-busting 103 delegates enjoyed papers on the theme of 'Settlement in the Danelaw' from a stellar line-up of speakers, including Prof. Dawn Hadley, Prof. Julian Richards, Prof. David Stocker and our very own Dr Stuart Wrathmell and Dr Rebecca Gregory.

In March 2019, 80 delegates braved the roadworks on Cambridgeshire's A14 to enjoy a one-day conference organised by Stuart Wrathmell on 'New

Discoveries in the Cambridge Region: Medieval Settlement in the A14 Corridor and its Wider Context' at Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge. For the second time in just under four months the event sold out, and we very sadly had to turn away a number of people in the last two weeks before the event. The moral of the story is to book early for MSRG conferences! The reason for this rush for places was that we managed to attract an outstanding group of speakers, including our own Prof. Chris Dyer, alongside Prof. John Blair (Oxford), Prof. Carenza Lewis (Lincoln) and Dr Sam Lucy (Cambridge). These scholars put into context the preliminary findings outlined by speakers from CGMS, Mola and Headland Archaeology.

This year's Winter Seminar will return to Leicester, where Prof. Stephen Rippon (Exeter) will lead the way on 'New Directions in Settlement and Landscape Studies'. Alongside Benjamin Morton (Newcastle), Stephen has been working on the latest 'MSRG Review of Medieval Settlement Research', which is due to be published in the 2020 edition of *Medieval Settlement Research*, and focuses on the ten year-period 2007–2016. It brings us up-to-date following Mark Gardiner's previous review, published in the MSRG's *Annual Report* (21) in 2006. In addition to Prof. Rippon, December speakers will include Prof. Naomi Sykes (Exeter), Dr Duncan Wright (Bishop Grosseteste, Lincoln) and Dr Ben Jervis (Cardiff). Book early to secure your place! This event will be preceded in the morning by the John Hurst student competition, providing a packed programme for medieval landscape and settlement enthusiasts.

This was also the first year of our newly-revised grants scheme, and attracted a number of applications. Currently underway are projects on a medieval corn drier in Wales (Dr Rhiannon Comeau, UCL), and a community archaeology project focusing on Randall manor in Kent (Andrew Mayfield, Community Archaeologist, Kent County Council). The latter was the focus for a recent MSRG field-trip, following our 2018 Spring Conference in Canterbury. We can look forward to reading updates on these projects in forthcoming editions of our newsletter, and in due course in *Medieval Settlement Research*. Finally, following the launch of our newsletter, Helen Fenwick is always happy to receive content for future editions – if you have ideas for submissions, please contact her by email at [h.fenwick@hull.ac.uk](mailto:h.fenwick@hull.ac.uk).

**Susan Kilby**, Hon. Secretary  
[sk565@leicester.ac.uk](mailto:sk565@leicester.ac.uk)



Professors  
 John Blair (above)  
 and  
 Chris Dyer (below)  
 address the MSRG



# Media & Exhibition

## RAGNAROK REPEATING: Science, the supernatural & salvation: Medievalism in the movies HELLBOY and AVENGERS: ENDGAME

Spring 2019 saw the release of two further ‘superhero’ movies, each of markedly different comic book origin and each distilling some familiar medieval tropes. *Hellboy* represents an attempt to reboot the film franchise adaptation of a cult Dark Horse comic book. *Avengers: Endgame* is the concluding, fourth part of a film cycle developed from the Marvel comic book series, *The Avengers*.

*Hellboy* as a comic first appeared in the 1990s. It appeared

as a film adaptation in 2004, with a sequel in 2008. In this latest adaptation the familiar tropes of medieval legends, folklore and religious practices as real-world phenomena – most notably perhaps the actual existence of Hell with a hierarchy of demons. It adapts connected storylines from two of the comics, *The Wild Hunt* and *The Storm and the Fury*. In the comic, the Wild Hunt is both the actualised myth of Wotan/Odin and his pack of hounds riding the sky on stormy



Hellboy. Open Access image.



End Game. Open Access image.

nights and a modern adaptation of it, which the film takes up, of a group of British aristocratic folklorist-antiquaries, the so-called Osiris Club. They hunt giants that emerge from the English landscape to wreak havoc. This tradition can be dated back to 1259 and sees the leader of the hunt wearing a stag's head to evoke Herne the Hunter. Interwoven with this is the matrilineal genealogy of Hellboy that makes him the first male descendant of Modred son of Arthur, born to the 16th-century witch Sarah Hughes and the demon Azzael. Of course, this entitles him to wield the sword Excalibur (in the custodianship of Morgana Le Fay) and to wear crowns of both England and Hell.

The comic book handles this with skill and a sense of a continuum of adaptive, folkloric beliefs and practices, rooted mainly in the medieval past. The film is less successful, appearing both clichéd and disconnected. Contra the comic, the film uses the Arthurian connection as a vehicle by which Hellboy could fulfil the prophecy of his reigning over the earth as a fiery demon. This is glimpsed as a possibility, invoking a strand of the film's reforging of Ragnarok, creating an affordance with the fire demon Sutr. In the comic, Ragnarok is evoked differently – having given one of his eyes to the witch Baba Yaga for her prophecy, Hellboy becomes Odin-like. In the succeeding battle with the forces of the sorceress Nimue, an army of resurrected knights is led by a reincarnated Arthur on a field where the prophecy tells Ragnarok it will take place and where Hellboy, championing mankind, will defeat the evil dragon at the cost of his own life.

The film weaves into this thread several other strands of medievalism. Its opening prologue is set in 517 AD, 'the Dark Ages', and sees Arthur and Merlin defeat the sorceress Nimue atop Pendle Hill. As she cannot be killed, she is chopped into her constituent limbs, each part locked in a box (an inversion of relic making) and each buried beneath a holy site. In the late 20th century, these 'relics' are slowly collected together by the forces of Nimue. One is held at an abbey, attacked by a demon who slaughters all its monks (monks who had maintained their vow of silence through hand-written placards rather than monastic sign language!). King Arthur's tomb and the Excalibur are secretly buried beneath St Paul's cathedral,

London, where Hellboy and Nimue battle over them, opening a gateway to Hell through which Nimue calls forth its denizens: a panoply of demons that begin to devour the citizens of London in a nightmare of the imagination redolent of Bosch and Goya.

In *Avengers: Endgame*, the series maintains its medievalism chiefly through the character of Thor. Here he is no longer a supernatural being but an interplanetary superhero, emblematic of a world – Asgard – where the supernatural is simply complex science beyond the ken of humans. After the ravages of a Thanos unleashed Ragnarok in the previous instalment, the few Asgardian survivors are here relocated to Earth, to Tønsberg, Norway, which is renamed New Asgard (and 'played' by St Abbs, Scotland). Rebirth-like this takes us back to the start of the sequence of 22 films, in which Odin hid the so-called 'tesseract' (a powerful cosmic stone) in Tønsberg. The medievalism of the Marvel universe eschews religion (too divisive in modern-day America) but does not eschew its genuine medieval fabric. Thus, Durham Cathedral serves as the location for the palace of Asgard. The cathedral's massive Romanesque pillars define a secular, royal space belonging to Odin and his family. *Endgame* continues the redefining of Thor in sharp contrast to his medieval imagined persona: he becomes both more powerful in his wielding of lightning and a new weapon, the axe Stormbreaker, alongside his traditional hammer, Mjölnir, and also more vulnerable, with grief and guilt sending him on a five-year alcohol and fast-food binge. His gender politics to the fore, he abdicates the kingship of New Asgard in favour of Valkyrie as queen. It finds an affordance with both Arthur and Beowulf through its weapons (i.e. Mjölnir and Captain America's shield) that make warriors worthy and which can only be wielded by the right one.

Thor has now headed off into deep space as part of the Guardians of the Galaxy team and I look forward to seeing how the Thunder God continues to be redefined.

**Mark Hall**

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# Other Grants

## Castle Studies Trust digs up surprises at Shrewsbury Castle and invites 2020 applications



Above:

Shrewsbury Castle, deck chairs showing width of ditch.

Below:

Shrewsbury Castle, arrow heads.

Laughton, ditch excavation.

Druminnor well excavation.



There has been much activity at the Trust's projects since the last newsletter with the fieldwork completed for all of them, while the period for applications for the 2020 round takes place between 1 September and 28 November.

The Trust has had a lot of interest from possible applicants, including projects on Raby, Warkworth, Shrewsbury, Berkhamsted, Clavering and Canterbury.

Donate and allow us to fund more of these projects.

You can donate in a variety of different ways:

- By credit or debit card.
- By cheque (made payable to the Castle Studies Trust) or standing order form.
- By going here: <https://www.castlestudiestrust.org/Donate.html>.

Please return them to the address on the forms, with the gift aid form if applicable.

In addition to helping the Trust fund this work, your donation will give you the chance to visit sites funded by the Trust.

### 2019 Projects Update

The five projects the Castle Studies Trust funded in 2019 are progressing well:

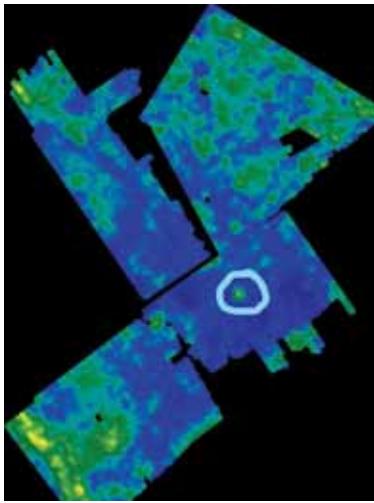
• **Shrewsbury, Shropshire** – Geophysical survey and excavation concentrating on the inner bailey, in particular to examine the tail of the north rampart. Survey revealed what was thought to be the remains of a building and the motte ditch.

Excavation showed the possible ruined building to be natural glacial material, but more significantly the motte ditch turned out to be much larger than previously thought at 12m wide and 4-5m deep, and had finds from the period of its military use including arrowheads. This seems to indicate, at least in its early stage, that the area in the inner bailey was very small. The results are being processed and written up, while preliminary findings from the dig are posted at: <https://castlestudiestrust.org/blog/>.

• **Laughton en le Morthen, South Yorkshire** – Excavation to try to confirm the findings of the geophysical surveys funded by CST in 2018, which indicated that the castle was placed right on top of a high status Saxon dwelling. The excavations confirmed the geophysical survey findings, but were unable to confirm the date of the ditches because of a dearth of artefacts. The full excavation report and a blog article explaining the findings will appear on CST's website.

• **Druminnor, Aberdeenshire** – Using GPR to investigate the 15th-century core of the castle, which is presently under a hardcore car park. The results have revealed the site of a well, which has since been excavated, and which might be at centre of the original early tower.

• **Wressle, East Yorkshire** – Geophysical survey of the area to the south of the castle ruins followed an earlier CST-funded topographical survey, and aimed to get more information about the various garden structures as well as other details regarding the deserted village, moat and fishponds. The geophysical survey confirmed much of what was discovered in the earthwork survey as well as the likely site for the school-room in the garden. The report is available on CST's website.



Above:  
Druminnor GPR showing the well.

- **Hoghton Tower, Lancashire** – This project aims to form an axis of research into Hoghton Tower's unique physical history. The main focus is to investigate and advance knowledge of the pre-1560 site and specifically to test the hypothesis that the north side building may form part of the 'original' Hoghton Tower. The investigations have been concluded and the report is being prepared.

#### 2018 Grant Awards

Only two projects remain outstanding:

- **Pembroke, Wales** – the excavation was very successful in finding a late 15th-century residential block that is probably the birthplace of Henry VII. A review of the huge number of finds however failed to confirm the date of the building, but did help our understanding of the form of the building. The report is completed.
- **Ruthin, Wales** – The reconstruction has now been completed. CST are co-funders of the project and await permission to show the results.

If you have any questions about any of the projects we have funded this year or the Trust in general, please do not hesitate to contact the chair of trustees, Jeremy Cunnington on: [admin@castlestudiestrust.org](mailto:admin@castlestudiestrust.org).

# RURALIA note

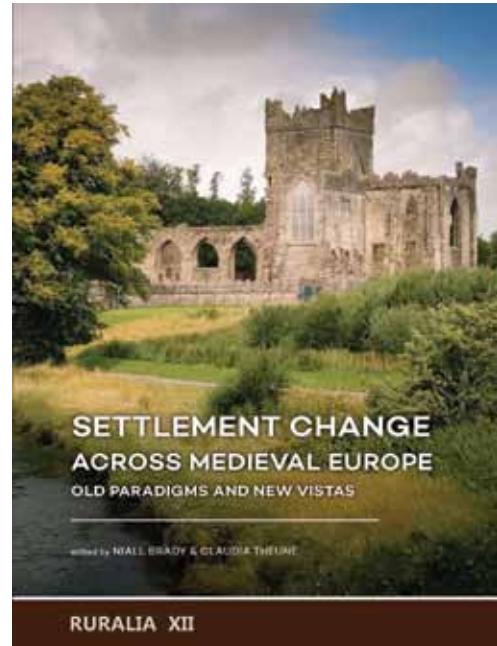
Every two years, the RURALIA group gathers in a European venue to discuss particular themes designed to highlight current research into the rural medieval landscape across Europe. The group has just completed a very successful visit to Scotland, where Piers Dixon and Kirsty Owen organized RURALIA XIII on the theme of 'Seasonal settlement in the medieval and early modern countryside', and based the event at Stirling. What a wonderful week it was, with trips to shieling sites and great discussions that considered not only the upland/lowland issue, but seasonality in coastal communities and woodland. On the topic of industry, it was no surprise to hear about whisky (illicit and legitimate endeavours), but we also listened to research on kelp and coke. When considering herding, the issues did not only focus on transhumance, and we were treated to several very engaging presentations on long-distance droving; quite thought-provoking when dealing with landscapes the size of the Carpathian Basin, and more. The

opportunity was also taken to visit Stirling Castle, expertly guided by Peter Yeoman, past member of the SMA committee, where the City of Stirling also hosted a magnificent banquet in the Great Hall.

The two-yearly gathering is the place where the published proceedings from the previous meeting are launched. We were delighted to issue RURALIA XII, based on the 2017 conference in Kilkenny, with papers by several UK and Irish scholars, including our SMA president, Carenza Lewis and our Newsletter editor, Niall Brady.

RURALIA XIV will take place in September 2021, in Portugal, where Catarina Tente will organize the conference around the theme of Household Goods. It promises to be another great event where some 75 researchers will once again gather to listen and to discuss, and to enjoy close insights to the medieval landscapes of the host country. Keep the time slot in mind, and look out for the Call for Papers.

<http://ruralia2.ff.cuni.cz/>



RURALIA XII, edited by Niall Brady and Claudia Theune, Sidestone Press ([www.sidestone.com](http://www.sidestone.com)), hard copy and eBook.  
Peter Yeoman, presenting his work on Stirling Castle.

To advertise  
conferences/events in  
the Newsletter, please  
email:  
[medieval.archaeology@googlemail.com](mailto:medieval.archaeology@googlemail.com)

We would like to thank Patrick Gleeson (QUB) for his input to organizing events notices these past few years. As his term on Council comes to an end, we will appoint another in his place in due course.

## 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](mailto:niallbrady100@gmail.com)

The due dates for receipt of copy are:  
**Spring Newsletter:** 15th February  
**Autumn Newsletter:** 15th August

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# Conferences & Events

## — FORTHCOMING —

### 7 December 2019:

'New Directions in Settlement and Landscape Studies,' Medieval Settlement Research Group, University of Leicester.

<https://medieval-settlement.com/events/conferences/>

### 24-25 April 2020:

'The senses in Medieval and Renaissance Europe: Hearing and auditory perception', Forum for Medieval and Renaissance Studies in Ireland (FMRSI), Trinity College Dublin. <https://fmrsi.wordpress.com/12432-2/>

### 7-10 May 2020:

The 55th International Congress on Medieval Studies takes place on the campus of Western Michigan University. <https://wmich.edu/medievalcongress/>

### 6-9 July 2020:

The Leeds International Congress takes place on the campus of Leeds University. The thematic strand will be 'Borders'. <https://www.imc.leeds.ac.uk/imc2020/>

### 10-12 July 2020:

The SMA's Annual Conference in 2020 will be on 'Cultures of Cloth: The Archaeology of Textiles in Medieval Northwest Europe' and will take place at the University of Nottingham (see page 6).

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The three lectures on recent archaeological discoveries to be presented as the Society's **Winter Symposium**, following the AGM on 2 December in Reading:

Prof. Michelle Brown, University of London: **Letters from the Past: The inscriptions from Tintagel and what they tell us of its early medieval inhabitants.**

James Fairclough, Museum of London Archaeology: **Great Ryburgh: The excavation of rare Anglo-Saxon coffins and a Saxon Church.**

Nathan Wales, University of York: **DNA from archaeological seeds illuminates medieval grapevine production.**