



ULSTER  
ARCHÆOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

# Newsletter

Spring 2017

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Editor: Duncan Berryman

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## From the Editor

This year started out with the sad news of the deaths of Vanessa Ryan and Prof. Peter Woodman. Many of our members will remember Vanesa from our field trip to Carlingford and the tours that she organised around the area. Her death is particularly sad because of her young age.

Society members will also have been familiar with the late Peter Woodman and his publications. Peter had very recently produced an excellent book on the Mesolithic in Ireland and was due to talk to the Society on this subject in February. Paul Logue quickly volunteered to stand in for Peter after his sudden death in late

January. Peter will be sadly missed in the archaeological community, his contribution to our understanding of the Irish Mesolithic was immense. He was always a strong supporter of the Society and he will be sadly missed.

At our AGM in February John Moore stepped down as Hon Treasurer, after many years of magnificent service. He is succeeded by Lee Gordon, who will make an excellent Treasurer.

**Duncan Berryman**  
Editor

### **Subscriptions were due on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017**

If you still have not paid, please send cheques for £20 (full) or £7.50 (retired) to the Hon. Treasurer, Lee Gordon, at the address on the cover of the Newsletter.

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# Diary Dates

## Lectures

Monday 8pm, Elwood Building, QUB

8 <sup>th</sup> May	Duncan Garrow (University of Southampton)	Neolithic Crannogs? New research on islet sites in the Outer Hebrides
29 <sup>th</sup> May	Ken Wiggins	King John and King John's Castle, Limerick
25 <sup>th</sup> September	Antoine Giacometti (Archaeology Plan)	Excavations at Rathfarnham Castle
23 <sup>rd</sup> October	C. Dunlop & J. Barkley (NAC)	The Frosses Excavations
13 <sup>th</sup> November	David Bell (QUB)	Bronze Age Blades and the Battle of Ballynahinch: Unexpected Connections
11 <sup>th</sup> December	Catriona Moore	The Drumclay Crannog Wooden Assemblage

## Field Trips

13<sup>th</sup> May – Day trip to the Mournes

12<sup>th</sup> June – Evening fieldtrip (location to be decided)

7<sup>th</sup> August – Evening fieldtrip (location to be decided)

19<sup>th</sup> August – Day trip (location to be decided)

Contact Ken Pullin for info on [ulsterarchaeolsoc@gmail.com](mailto:ulsterarchaeolsoc@gmail.com)

## Survey Group News

The Survey Group usually devote their Winter meetings to gather together the information we obtained from surveys and to produce our survey reports. Several survey reports are nearing completion and this should keep our backlog to a minimum before our new season of surveys commences at the end of March. However, several other developments have taken place to make our winter season more interesting.

The first of these was the delivery of our new geophysical survey equipment in mid-December. This is a TAR-3 Resistance Meter, supplied by RM Frobisher Limited, who included two days of training on the new equipment as part of the package. Having obtained an excavation licence (as required by Historic Environment Division when using this technology) and the necessary permission from the National Trust, we carried out this training at Minnowburn, near to Shaw's Bridge in Belfast. After setting out our base line, we set out our survey grids and started to

take readings with our new instrument. The grids were plotted with our Leica Sprinter electronic measuring instrument in order to mark them accurately on the national grid map. Fourteen members of the group underwent this training and will form a core team for future resistivity surveys. This core team will be led by David Craig and will add another dimension to our surveys. Many thanks to David and all the members involved for making this possible. We would also like to record our thanks to Craig Somerville and his National Trust team at Minnowburn for making available the facilities there and facilitating our survey. We would also like to thank Ken Neill and his colleagues at HED for the assistance and understanding given during the licence application process.

In January, we hosted a delegation from the Resurrecting Monuments group (formerly Grassroots Archaeology) in Dublin. The group, led by Aidan Giblin, gave us a presentation of their work in the north Dublin area. This involves archaeological excavation, survey

and public outreach events to give local people a better understanding of the ancient monuments in their area. This was a very interesting and informative talk and subsequent discussions highlighted the areas of common ground between our two organisations. We hope to follow this up with a visit to Dublin, as we all felt the two groups had much in common and to learn from each other.

Looking forward to our forthcoming survey season, we hope to pay a visit to a prehistoric stone circle and standing stone complex at Broughderg in County Tyrone, in association with the Heart of Ancient Ulster Landscape Partnership. Also on our hit list are sites at Dunseverick and Cushleake Mountain North in County Antrim and at Divis Mountain in the Belfast Hills, to coincide with a public outreach excavation there in June. More details will follow on these surveys as they become available. Hopefully the weather will be kind to us for our survey season, but I'm sure we will have a great time regardless. Don't forget, the survey group is open to all members of

the Ulster Archaeological Society and no previous experience or knowledge is required. Why not give it a try?

**Harry Welsh**  
Fieldwork Co-ordinator

## December Lecture

The December lecture 'Origins of the Irish' was delivered by Prof Jim Mallory, who, in his own words, is "blissfully retired from QUB". The lecture, and the associated book, had their origins in an article written in 1976. Prof Mallory began by addressing some of the criticisms levelled at his publication, namely that he did not state definitively where the Irish came from. In answer to this Mallory asked, 'Where did Americans come from?' before using the analogy of 'Americans' as a molecule, composed of different atoms.

Prof Mallory views Niall of the Nine Hostages as the archetype of what we think of as Irish, using 450AD as a starting point, with the Irish language established in Ireland. This date moves beyond prehistory which Mallory views as a series of

migrations into Ireland from multiple sources, whilst avoiding the bias normally given to historical records. The earliest written Irish dates to 400-700 AD. These earliest inscriptions are staggering similar to Gaulish examples e.g. Lugudeccas = Lucudeca

Celtic is only one branch of the Indo-European family which stretches all the way to China.

There are two major 'homeland theories' of the origins of the Irish

- 1) From modern day Turkey c 7000 BCE with 'proto-Irish' arriving in Ireland in 4000BC with the spread of farming

- 2) From pastoral tribes in the Steppes c 3000 BCE, with 'proto-Irish' arriving between 2500 and 300 BC

Recent genetic evidence suggests that Palaeolithic and Mesolithic genes demonstrates population expansion from Ice Age refuges. In an Irish context a single individual currently stands for the entire Neolithic population. A c.3000 year old female skeleton from Ballynahatty has genetics with modern parallels to Sardinia, with dark hair and dark eyes. Mallory therefore argues that the 'origins' of the Irish as we know ourselves

today does not extend to the Mesolithic population, or even those of the Neolithic. Genetic evidence in mainland Europe suggests a North Black Sea refugee with migration from east to the west. In Germany 80% of corded ware has been uncovered with skeletal remains of individuals from the area north of the Black Sea. Three male bodies from Rathlin Island c.2000 BC are genetically similar to those of Steppe ancestry featuring light hair and brown eyes. This male DNA features an R1B haplogroup which has its highest concentration in Ireland, suggesting a major continuity from the Bronze Age. The archaeological evidence however, does not support the theory of mass emigration or the mass wipe-out of an earlier male population. More research into genetics is required to ascertain the speed of change.

Mallory subsequently looked at language. The evidence of language change in Irish prehistory is very ephemeral, but it is clear that Irish must have replaced an earlier native language. Language can change through social domains. These new social

domains would have been attractive, spreading bilingualism and the consequent death of the old language. Mallory used the term 'subtractive bilingualism'. Prof Mallory highlighted two archaeologically reconstructed domains from 2500 BC onwards.

i) Hillforts – There are 74 identified hillforts in Ireland of which approximately 12 have been excavated. The archaeological evidence reveals they were a new social domain in a central location with evidence of feasting.

ii) Royal Sites – The social domains of the Royal Sites from c.100BC were ritual sites with similar architecture across Ireland featuring double ring and 40m structures with Neolithic sites incorporated; perhaps in an attempt to replicate old ways and spread a 'new' religion?

Prof Mallory brought the lecture to a close with a 'reality check'. There is no evidence of the Celtic language coming with hillforts and the royal sites are unique to Ireland, and hence an insular development. Prof Mallory concluded that the major genetic structure of Ireland began from 2500-2000 BC with new social

structures and religion. This lecture was a whirlwind trip through genetic, linguistic and archaeological evidence and I have to acknowledge any mistakes in this piece are my own. If you are interested in learning more I would highly recommend Jim's book 'Origins of the Irish'.

**Aaron McIntyre**

## January Lecture

The Society's January lecture was given by David Gibson, archaeological manager with the Cambridge Archaeology Unit. His talk provided an overview of the recent excavations at Must Farm, Cambridgeshire.

The fens of East Anglia are exceptionally flat and have been heavily silted over the centuries. This means that much of the archaeology has become buried. The cleaning of agricultural drainage channels is monitored to recover any artefacts and bones that have survived, this allows the identification of new sites. The old river channels became filled up with sand and these provide hard ground for modern settlement,

rather than the softer silts around them. Flag Fen was discovered at the edge of the fen, where the archaeology is not so deep; this site was a causeway leading to an island in the fens. However, Must Farm was much deeper into the fens and was constructed on an island within the river Neen. It must also be remembered that the Bronze Age landscape was much wetter than the Neolithic one, resulting in more water courses and less land.

Cambridge Archaeology Unit have been carrying out monitoring evaluations and excavations with the Forterra brick works quarry for many years. These have uncovered woven wicker work of fish weirs and traps, nine log boats (dating from 1500 - 400 BCE), a spear with its haft intact, and late La Tene swords with their wooden handles and one with a maker's mark. The site of the main excavations had been identified as a potential area to explore, the decision to fully excavate it was made once the quarry planned to destroy the area.

The first thing the excavators did was to construct a large marque building over the site. This meant

that large areas of fragile timber could be left exposed overnight and protected from wind, which dries out the timber, and rain. This also allowed scaffolding to suspend the excavators over the archaeology and the installation of cameras over the area to record the excavation as it happened.

All the spoil from the site was sized and processed, this picked up significant amounts of charcoal along with animal bone, shells and pottery. The timber structures burnt down and ended occupation at the site, this produced a very large amount of charcoal. The remaining timbers were recorded daily with thousands of photos. The images were stitched together overnight on powerful gaming computers, thus producing a plan of the site each morning. Part of the site had been affected by an old quarry, thus the timbers in this area had decomposed and the preservation of other materials was not as good.

The earliest use of the site was as part of a causeway. This must have pre-dated the spring of 1284 BCE. The posts had their bark removed and hand-holes carved to allow

them to be manoeuvred into place. A number of metalwork deposits were associated with the causeway, this included spears, rapiers and pins.

The second phase of occupation was the construction of a palisades enclosure and a number of round house platforms. There was possibly a walkway around the inside of the palisade, supported by a row of poles. Five house platforms have been identified, with the potential for more in the area of the site that had been lost to the quarry.

The house had oak posts around the edge of the platform and ash in the middle. Oak was also used in the rafters. The timbers date to 850/60 BCE. It appears that they were still green when they burnt down, meaning that the structures were only in use for up to three years and possibly as little as a single year. When the houses burnt down, all their contents fell through the floor and into the river below, thus preserving most of it. A large collection of pottery was found below each house, some still containing food remains and one even had a spoon stuck in the

food. There was also jewellery and items for textile production. All remains of textiles were plant based, there was no evidence for the use of animal skins. There was a range of metal objects, particularly axes, sickles, and spears; many of these still had their hafts. A cart wheel was well persevered in one of the houses. The roofs were thatched and the floors had wickerwork hurdles, each house was connected by a walk way. The houses appear to have had different areas for the various activities.

This site appears to have had the same economy as a dry land settlement, yet it was in the wetlands of the Fens. It is possible that people moved from the highground to the wetland during the Bronze Age, with a slow change in their economy. Must Farm is only a small site in the Fens, we therefore have to ask how much more is hiding out there and how much more can we learn about this Bronze Age landscape.

**Duncan Berryman**

## February Lecture

The Society's February lecture was given by Dr Paul Logue of Department for Communities: Historic Environment Division. Dr Logue recently completed his doctoral research on the Nine Years War, focussing on cultural interaction and conflict in the later 16<sup>th</sup> century. The lecture was entitled 'Identity, architecture and conflict in the north of Ireland: new perspectives on the role of crannogs' and considered how crannogs were used, challenging the traditional narrative that they were only used as temporary residences in the late medieval period.

In the 1970s, dating samples were taken from 28 crannogs and 15 were found to date to the late medieval period (1450 – 1650 AD). This was thought to be unusual, and there was much debate about the appropriateness of the sampling strategy. However, Dr Logue's research which has looked at 40 crannogs mostly in Ulster, indicates that crannogs were significantly used and maintained during the late medieval period.

Dr Logue introduced various classifications of crannog based on their function, these crannog types can exist on their own or together to form crannog complexes. 'Home crannogs' were central places held by service families on behalf of their lords and used for residence and hospitality. They were often substantial sites, for example the crannog in Carrick Lough was known as 'O'Flannagan's Town' in the 1590's. At Marlacoo the crannog was not a temporary refuge but was in fact used as one of Hugh O'Neill's main residences for at least 34 years. Evidently it was highly important but also virtually unrecognised by archaeologists. When Thomas Walker visited Dungannon in 1601 he describes going the island in a canoe, indicating that the crannog played a central role in O'Neill hospitality.

'Storage crannogs' were a lower class of crannog often used for storing collective produce for surplus goods. Other examples show they were used to hold hostages and prisoners such as at Gartan Lough in north Donegal. 'Military crannogs' were used to base arms and munitions. Gaelic

confederate forces needed steady access to munitions during the Nine Years War and many were sourced from Scotland. These 'military crannogs' formed a munitions supply chain operating from Strangford Lough into central Ulster.

Another site type introduced was 'crannog bawns'. These were formalised spaces on the loughshore which controlled access to lordly crannogs. Documentary sources describe visitors to sites going through two checkpoints, for example, when Thomas Walker visited Hugh O'Neill in Dungannon he was greeted on the shore by Catherine Magennis with a drink before proceeding to the crannog by canoe where he was greeted again. This tradition of designated places on the shore, or 'ports', extends back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century with Dr Logue suggesting that 'ports' started to become enclosed and formalised, resulting in 'crannog bawns'. Often this site type is unrecognised, but a closer look at the cartographic evidence and the 'sites and monuments record' show numerous enclosure sites on crannog loughshores which have been misidentified.

This can be seen at Marlacoo, Lough Island Reavey, Lough Lug where probable 'crannog bawns' have now been identified. The size of the trees depicted on the Bartlett maps perhaps suggest that these 'crannog bawns' are medieval or late medieval in date.

The lower prevalence of stone tower houses in the north of Ireland has led to a view that crannogs are an alternative to tower houses, however they are venues in their own right. There is however much cartographic evidence for timber tower houses, including evidence for timber tower houses being built on crannogs themselves. These timber tower houses were not a defensive feature but were built as a status symbol. Many of the cartographic representations show these tower houses being decommissioned towards the end of the war similar to the representations of the stone tower house on the hill of Dungannon.

The site types mentioned above would have been part of the designed landscape. There would have been crannogs, a church, a rath, a 'crannog bawn' with the

loughshore surrounded by domestic spaces such as houses, orchards, fields, crops and beehives. This designed landscape can be seen at Dungannon which is a complex of sites which developed over many centuries. This built-in segregation meant that people visiting the site knew where to go, with different protocol for elite and non-elite visitors. Over time Marlacoo appears to become purely elite, with non-elite activities happening nearby at the crannog at Ballynewry.

The crown had an operational and strategic derogatory view of crannogs, most were to be destroyed with very few utilised for crown garrison. They viewed crannogs as being marginal, wet, medically and culturally dangerous places where no right minded person would or could live. Crannogs represented impermanence and a lack of cultural progress, they represented places where the Irish hid away. As the crown ultimately won, we have received a version of their narrative today.

Gaelic nobles chose to build their permanent elite sites in a manner they believed represented their cultural inheritance from the past and crannogs were critical to the maintenance of hospitality and Irish identity. By maintaining crannogs and continuing their use, people were maintaining their cultural heritage. Tower houses marked innovation in a continued ancient tradition and a strengthening and renewing of Gaelic culture. Ultimately crannogs were about not forgetting, but this in itself has been forgotten.

**Grace McAlister**

## Ulster Journal of Archaeology

The Committee of the Ulster Archaeological Society has been informed by the Historic Environment Division, Department for Communities that, with immediate effect, it has withdrawn its partial subvention towards full publication of government-commissioned and funded excavations in the Ulster Journal of Archaeology. This ends a nearly 80 year collaboration and tradition where the Ulster Journal of Archaeology has been the main vehicle for the full publication of the backlog of government excavations in Northern Ireland. Although this news is disappointing, it will not have an effect on the Ulster Archaeological Society to carry out the wide range of activities that it currently undertakes.

### Up-Coming events

5<sup>th</sup> May – Historic Environment Division lecture, Graeme Moore: ‘Nomadic – A ‘Titanic’ Restoration’. This lecture will be in the Ulster Museum at 1pm

26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> May – IPMAG conference on Rundale and Runrig, held in the School of Natural and Built Environment, QUB. The papers presented look at this type of agriculture from across Ireland, Scotland and England. For further information, contact Dr Mark Gardiner – [m.gardiner@qub.ac.uk](mailto:m.gardiner@qub.ac.uk)/02890 973448

12<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> June – Excavation on Divis Mountain. Belfast Hills Partnership, The National Trust and the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork are undertaking an excavation of some sites on Divis, this is likely to include a Bronze Age settlement site and a possible early medieval cashel. Excavating at these little-known sites will probably be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! If you would like more information or would like to volunteer, contact the Belfast Hills Partnership - [info@belfasthills.org](mailto:info@belfasthills.org)

## New Books

*Underground Archaeology: Studies on human bones and artefacts from Ireland's Caves*, edited by Marion Dowd

Oxbow Books, £48

This large volume of papers follows on from Dowd's 2015 book on the archaeology of caves. Here she brings together a wide range of papers, covering all of Ireland and most of history. The first section deals with human remains from a number of caves. The second part has nine papers on artefacts, beginning with Woodman's analysis of prehistoric lithics and ending with papers on early medieval and Viking artefacts. The final section contains four reports on specific artefacts from individual sites, most notably the stone rings from Robber's Den, Co. Clare.

All the papers are well illustrated with excellent line drawings and numerous charts and tables, there is also a central section of colour illustrations. This volume is highly informative and adds some new aspects to our consideration of Ireland's archaeology.

*Ireland's Ancient East: A guide to its historic treasures*, by Neil Jackman

The Collins Press, €17.99

Following on from Failte Ireland's new promotional drive to create interest in the heritage of Ireland's east coast, this book provides a handy tour guide to take you to many of the famous and less well known sites in this area. Each of the 100 entries is well researched, explained and illustrated. At the end of each entry is a box that provides co-ordinates, grid reference, opening times, entry cost, facilities and parking information. At the back of the book are several maps to show the locations of the sites, a glossary of words you may not be familiar with, and a bibliography so you can look up more information about each site.

This book makes a great companion to keep in the car on a journey along Ireland's east coast, or further inland. Informative, illustrated and inexpensive, this is a great book to take out with you.

*Ireland's Immortals: A history of the gods of Irish myth*, by Mark Williams

Princeton, £32.95

Williams has taken a similar approach as Mallory, in his book on the Irish Dreamtime, by combining archaeology, mythology and literature. But Williams specifically focuses on the creation and evolution of these myths and deities. Williams begins by recognising the problems of Irish mythology – that we have to rely on sources written in the Christian period and we have no details of the earlier pagan practices. He then goes on to explore what we can learn of these pagan gods and he discusses how their identities have changed through time. The writing style is easy to read and extensive footnotes allow the reader to explore the topics in greater detail. This book gives some context to a number of our most enigmatic artefacts and helps us to understand the pagan religions.

*The Cult of Relics in Medieval Ireland*, by Niamh Wycherly, €75

*Golden Middle Ages in Europe*, edited by A. Willemsen & H. Kik, €59

These two recent books by Brepols provide new perspectives on Medieval Ireland. *The Cult of Relics* discusses how relics were used in the early church in Ireland, particularly in the consecration of churches. This book provides many interesting insights into relics in Irish society. Although it draws heavily on the textual material, there are also studies of the material evidence.

*The Golden Middle Ages* focuses more on the archaeology of Europe, placing Ireland in a European perspective. The three sections look at settlements, material culture, and the case study of Dorestad. All the chapters are interesting, as they allow us to think about the people and sites that the Irish were trading with during this period. Both these books provide an interesting context to much of what we know of medieval Ireland and are an excellent addition to your library.

## UNDERGROUND ARCHAEOLOGY

*Studies on Human Bones and Artefacts from Ireland's Caves*

