



ULSTER  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

# Newsletter

Spring 2019

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Editor: Duncan Berryman

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## From the Editor

This year the Committee has decided that our monthly lectures should start at 7.30pm. This will mean that anyone who needs to get a bus or a train home afterwards will no longer miss the end of the lecture or the questions afterwards. Please be sure to make a note of the new starting time in your diary so you don't miss the start of the lecture!

The New Years Honours list brought the well-deserved news

that Dr Chris Lynn has been awarded the MBE for services to archaeology and heritage in Northern Ireland. We also have to celebrate our secretary, Ken Pullin. Ken was awarded the BEM last year for services to archaeology and heritage and this year celebrates his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. I'm sure all the members of the Society join me in congratulating them both!

**Duncan Berryman**  
Editor

### **Discovery 2019! Third Annual Review of Archaeological Discoveries in Ulster**

This conference will take place at QUB on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November with a full day of lectures in the main lecture room of the Geography Building. All are welcome! As before, this conference is being organised by the UAS and the Centre for Community Archaeology at QUB. More information will be placed on the website - <http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/uas/Conference/>

### **Subscriptions were due on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019**

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

You can use PayPal on the website - [www.qub.ac.uk/sites/uas/JoinUs/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/uas/JoinUs/)

# Diary Dates

## Lectures

Monday 7.30pm, Elwood Building, QUB

15 <sup>th</sup> April	Michael Gibbons (Independent)	The False Lintel of Newgrange and the making of a Global Heritage Icon
20 <sup>th</sup> May	Dr Patrick Gleeson (QUB)	Kingship and Religion: Framing archaeological narratives for first millennium AD Ireland
26 <sup>th</sup> September	Professor Dan Bradley (Trinity College Dublin)	Ancient Genomics and Irish Human Prehistory
28 <sup>th</sup> October	Dr Dirk Brandherm & Dr Cormac McSparran (QUB)	Knocknashee: Results from fieldwork on Knocknashee Hill, Co. Sligo
9 <sup>th</sup> December	Dr Roisin Ní Reilly- Brennan (Independent)	The Archaeology of Folklore

## Field Trips

18<sup>th</sup> May – Day trip to Lough Neagh's Eastern Shore

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

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

17<sup>th</sup> August – Day trip to Slieve Gullion area

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

**If you would be happy to only receive the Newsletter by email, please let Ken know at the same email address.**

## Survey Group News

The Survey Group spent the winter of 2018/2019 researching, writing up reports and carrying out some training on our equipment and systems. I don't know if it was the relatively mild winter, but it seemed very short somehow and now we are about to embark on another season of surveys. Where does the time go?

Since we acquired our geophysical survey equipment at the end of 2016, we have had an additional layer of capability (and workload) within the group, but thankfully David Craig has taken on the role of managing a dedicated geophysics team from within the Survey Group membership. Having started from scratch, trained and practised with this specialist equipment, the geophysics team has already produced some spectacular results. These surveys are also subject to reports and these are being made available on the society website, for anyone interested in finding out more about these activities. Already this season, the geophysical survey team has carried out a major

survey at a hilltop enclosure near Mountstewart, which was first identified by aerial photography. This produced impressive results and it is hoped to carry out three further surveys at similar sites this season.

The Survey Group has several interesting site surveys planned this year, including Coney Island in Lough Neagh, Lighthouse Island off Donaghadee, Cushleake Passage Tomb near Cushendun, an abandoned village at Avish, near Downhill and a surface artefact collection at White Park Bay. Our first survey has been planned for Derrymore, near Bessbrook in County Armagh, on Saturday 30 March. It is exactly ten years since our first visit there, when we identified the remains of a Second World War army base, home to soldiers from the United States before their deployment to Normandy in 1944. We hope to add further details to our original report and perhaps carry out a geophysical survey as well.

In the Survey Group, we are very fortunate to have a core of members who have been with us

for many years, but we are also pleased to have many new members, who add much to the group with their enthusiasm and expertise in a variety of areas. As always, membership of the group is open to all members of the society and no previous experience is necessary. Why not come along and give it a try?

**Harry Welsh**  
**Fieldwork Co-ordinator**

## January Lecture

The Society's January lecture was given by Paul Gosling of the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology Department of Heritage and Tourism and was entitled "The Route of the Táin Bó Cúailnge: The manuscript and the folklore".

The story of the Táin Bó Cúailnge (TBC) is often seen as the preserve of linguistic scholars, but there is much that a field archaeologist can contribute to the study. The TBC is part of a range of Táin Bó stories, most of which are centred on Rathcroghan and Connaught. The TBC is the central story of the

Ulster Cycle and recounts the raid of Queen Medb from Rathcroghan to Cooley to steal a bull. The raid begins in winter of the year 19 BCE. All the main characters are shown to be flawed figures.

The story is an insight into early medieval, and possibly Iron Age society. It demonstrates the interregional rivalry, such as between Ulster and Connaught. It shows the importance of cattle in society. It also indicates social structure and a tribal hierarchy, with royalty, warriors, and commoners.

There are three literary versions of the text and these have been translated in a number of different ways. Kinsael, in his translation, created maps to show the route of the raid through Ireland.

The TBC can be used to tell us about medieval routeways. The itinerary lists 66 places that the Connaught army passed through but do not feature in the story. There is some debate whether they were real. Some places can be identified with placename evidence.

Many other sites can be identified using local folklore traditions. Local traditions recall Queen Medb camping at raths and barrows, while others recall people digging up what were assumed to be the medieval roads she travelled along. At Scramoge, someone remembered their father digging up an old road. A land dispute over a cul-de-sac at Bothar Maol, Dundalk was settled when local folklore stated that Queen Medb travelled along the road and therefore it was not always a cul-de-sac.

Taking a more landscape archaeology approach, Gosling has looked at the Medb's pass in the Cooley Mountains. The TBC describes the Connaught army being forced over the mountains. Traditionally this is believed to have been at Windy Gap, to the north of the range. But local folklore picks out a visible cutting in the summit of the mountain, known as Berna Bo Cúailnge. This landscape feature is said to have been cut over three days by Medb's army and it is clearly visible from the plain of Cooley.

The site of the final battle was in the townland of Garthy, Westmeath. This townland name means 'a shout'. The Ulster men were camped on Slanemore hill, where folklore says that the stepped barrows were constructed as a seat for King Conor. Interestingly, Uisneach is at the centre of this area, but is not mentioned once in the TBC and is rarely mentioned in early Irish literature despite its importance.

There are 22 instances of folklore associated with movement in the TBC, and these can be divided into three categories – way-lore, camp-lore, incident-lore. Approximately half are from the Schools' Collection and half from local history. It has to be remembered that there were a number of biases in the Schools' Collection, but it does provide a good starting point for looking at folklore. Studies elsewhere in Europe have shown how stories are recorded and how they can be re-oralised and transmitted. These collections and local history provide sources of topographic information and fragments of the story separated from the manuscripts. Folklore

provides a useful source of additional information about medieval routeways in Ireland and develops the topographical aspects of the written stories of the TBC. It is also evident how history and folklore can be easily mixed. A large earthwork at Teltown was part of a routeway; one part is associated with Medb, another with Bridget, and yet another section with Cromwell.

**Duncan Berryman**

## Co Dublin Study Tour September 2018

Setting out from our base in Balbriggan, our first visit of the weekend was to nearby Bremore Castle. Thanks to Fingal Community Archaeologist Christine Baker, we were able to have a preview of this restored 16th century castle before its official opening to the public. We were shown around by Christine and members of the restoration team who justifiably showed great pride in the work they have carried out using traditional masonry and carpentry skills. On the site of a

manorial estate existing from the 13th century, Bremore Castle was home to a branch of the Barnewall family from the early 14th century to the 18th century, and parts of their original castle may be incorporated into the later structure. The restoration is based on late 18th century drawings and will give the public a good idea of what life in a late medieval castle was like, as well as being a fully functioning modern community facility.

Lack of time and difficulty with coach access meant we skipped the proposed visit to Baldongan "Castle" – actually a medieval church, and continued to the coast at Loughshinny. From the shore we were able to view the textbook geology of chevron folded layers of limestone and shale topped with conglomerate till as well as looking across the bay to Drumanagh Promontory Fort. This site is the subject of much controversy as, in addition to being a typical Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age promontory fort, defended by cliffs and triple ditches and ramparts, Roman style artefacts found by illegal metal detecting led to

heated debates as to whether these were proof of a Roman invasion into Ireland or a possible trading post. The site was sold to the State in order to protect it from further incursions by metal detectors and motorbike scramblers who have caused considerable damage.

We had a guided tour of Skerries Mills, visiting the exhibits of artefacts relating to the history of baking and milling before heading outside to see the watermill and two windmills, one 17th century and one 18th century. After a brief lunch stop in Skerries, we continued to the Lusk Heritage Centre where local guardian, Pat Kelly showed us the exhibits housed in the 5-storey tower, all that remains of the medieval church. However, it incorporates a fine round tower, a reminder that Lusk was an important monastic site. Highlights of the exhibits included an extremely fine example of a 16th century chest-tomb commemorating Sir Christopher Barnewall and his wife Marion Sharl, a 17th century effigy slab depicting James de

Bermingham and part of a fireplace removed from Bremore Castle.

The next visit was to Swords Castle, a fortified archbishop's palace dating to the late 12th century, with 15th century Constable's Tower and 13th/14th century chapel. Unexpectedly, we found the site closed to visitors, although we had booked, as filming was in progress for a tv series. After a few delicate negotiations, we were allowed in for a quick look round on the understanding nothing was touched or photographed to protect the film-sets. A script left lying about told us what the tv programme was – but we're not saying! The final visit was to Balrothery Church, an early medieval site but with only a few later medieval remains in the graveyard around the modern church.

Sunday was spent in the company of some members of Resurrecting Monuments, a local community archaeology group. They guided us round a number of sites in the Howth area, starting with the exterior of Howth Castle, a multi-

period castle dating from the 15th century with several additions, right up to Lutyens' 20th century restoration. A short walk through the woods took us to Howth Portal Tomb, very impressive despite its partially collapsed condition. Next stop was Tower Hill in Howth where we had a great view over the harbour and Island's Eye from the site of Howth first castle, most likely a motte, now marked by a Martello tower. Our guides have excavated here, finding probable evidence for the levelling of the motte carried out for the construction of the Martello tower. We took a quick look at St Mary's Abbey Church, the 14th/15th century replacement for an earlier church built on the site of the Hiberno-Norse King Sitric's original 1042 foundation.

After lunch, we made our way to The Summit, site of a 1667 lighthouse, where we had views of its replacement at a lower level in the form of the early 19th century Little Baily lighthouse, built on Dungriffin Promontary Fort. The final visit was to the enigmatic St Dolagh's Church, Kinsealy, where we were met by members of the

Friends of St Doulagh. In the 19th century church, we had an excellent talk about the history of the site before splitting into smaller groups to explore the small medieval church dating from 12th – 15th centuries, St Doulagh's Baptistry, St Catherine's Well and the area of the adjacent field where geophysics and excavations have found traces of the enclosure of the Early Christian monastic site.

In all, another busy weekend. Special thanks to Christine Baker, Pat Kelly, Mairead McLoughlin and other members of Resurrecting Monuments, and The Friends of St Doulagh's who contributed greatly to our enjoyment of the weekend and are great advocates of community archaeology.

**Anne MacDermott**

## Lough Neagh Field Trip May 2018

On Saturday 19th May 2018 there was a well-attended UAS fieldtrip to archaeological sites along the western side of Lough Neagh led by UAS President, Ruairí Ó Baoill. On a day of glorious sunshine, the Society visited a variety of sites from different periods. These included the impressive Early Christian platform rath, later reused by the Anglo-Normans as a motte and bailey, at Rathenraw (NISMR Ant 050: 013), Antrim town, and the superbly-preserved Early Christian round tower (NISMR Ant 050: 009) at the monastic site at Steeple, also in Antrim town. This was followed by a trip to the Medieval church (NISMR Ant 049: 049) and holy well at Cranfield.

Moving on from County Antrim into County Tyrone lunch was taken in Ranfurly House on the Hill of the O'Neill at Castle Hill, Dungannon. Castle Hill is an important multi-period site which was the main centre of the lordship of the O'Neills in Ulster from Medieval times until the early 17th century. The O'Neill castle (or castles) was replaced by an English

one erected by Arthur Chichester at the end of the Nine Years War. Evidence for both of these fortifications (NISMR Tyr 054:017) was uncovered by the joint CAF: QUB- HED excavation carried out in 2010.

After lunch the Society visited the Early Christian and Medieval monastic site at Ardboe (NISMR 040:004) with its superb high cross (NISMR 040:003) and later church and graveyard. The final site visited on the fieldtrip was the early 17th century English campaign fort at Brocagh, known as Mountjoy Castle (NISMR 047:002), two-storeys high and constructed of stone and redbrick. The castle is located across the road from the very successful CAF: QUB excavation that uncovered the remains of the slightly earlier earthen campaign fort (known as Mountjoy Fort) that took place in June 2018 directed by Ruairí Ó Baoill.

The fieldtrip was a great success and many thanks to everyone who came along.

**Ruairí Ó Baoill**

## New Books

*Myth and Materiality*, by John Waddell

Oxbow Books, £15.99

This is a small but insightful book that draws on Irish archaeology and mythology. Waddell has considered the archaeology of the royal sites of Ireland and high-status burials across Europe and drawn comparisons with stories from Irish mythology. He also considers sites and stories that are associated with the otherworld, such as Owengat (the mouth to hell at Rathcroghan). This book draws on similar ideas to Mallory's *In Search of the Irish Dreamtime*, but presents it in an accessible way and draws comparisons with Europe, suggesting that this approach can be applied more widely. This is a very interesting book with a wide scope of interest.

*Heritage after Conflict: Northern Ireland*, edited by Elizabeth Crooke and Tom Maguire

Routledge, £115

This volume brings together a collection of papers reflecting on the recent heritage of Northern Ireland. Many of the papers are more about sociology than archaeology, but there are some that take an archaeological approach. One paper discusses the importance of public participation in and access to a shared heritage, such as at Long Kesh/Maze prison. Another paper discusses how we deal with the sites of conflict within cities, such as the Crumlin Road Gaol and the neighbouring site of Girdwood barracks. The final paper examines the position of women in the public memory of the Troubles in Belfast. This is an thought-provoking volume for anyone who is interested in the wider aspects of heritage within Northern Ireland and the ways we can engage with our past.



The round tower at Antrim



Ardboe High Cross, Co. Tyrone

Photographs were taken by Navarat Turner on the fieldtrip