



ULSTER
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Newsletter

Summer 2021

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Editorial

Since the last Newsletter, the Society has been very active. We have been able to hold our monthly lectures over Zoom and YouTube, with good attendance at all. The recordings of these lectures are available to watch on our YouTube channel. We still have several lectures for the autumn and we will be finalising our programme for next year soon.

The Survey Group has also been able to resume activities. For much of the year they have met over Zoom for training sessions and talks. But the summer has seen them return to the field and hopefully that can continue through the autumn and increase in 2022.

Our annual conference is coming together well, with many speakers confirmed. You'll find some information about it later in this Newsletter. Keep an eye on the website, as we will update this with details as we finalise them.

During the summer we received the news that our vice-president, Prof. Eileen Murphy, has been appointed deputy Head of School for Natural and Built Environment, Queen's University Belfast. This is a great achievement for Eileen and recognition of all she does to promote archaeology. We also received the sad news of the death of Mr Paul Campbell, our printer for the Ulster Journal of Archaeology. Paul reliably printed the Journal to a high standard and was always helpful in its production. He will be sadly missed by many and the Society would like to extend its condolences to Paul's family and friends.

I hope you all stay safe and healthy and that you can join us at a lecture and the conference.

Duncan Berryman

A Message from the President

Happily, very many people have now been given their Covid-19 vaccination jabs. This has allowed the gradual recommencement of archaeological fieldwork to take place, work being carried out in strict accordance with Government health guidance and best practice. Hopefully, this will lead to new and exciting discoveries on sites in Ulster and, of course, the Ulster Archaeological Society will let members know about these as soon as we hear about them.

Please keep checking the Society's Facebook page and website for news updates and for details of our activities over the autumn, especially for updates on our Discovery 2021! conference being held in November.

We hope that you had a safe and enjoyable summer and we look forward to seeing you all again very soon.

With all best wishes,

Ruairí Ó Baoill
President, Ulster Archaeological Society

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President, Ulster Archaeological Society

Lectures 2021

We now have a programme for lectures for 2021. Zoom links will be emailed out to members and anyone can watch on our public YouTube channel -

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_axPKzQwK60Pm6VOQUgLTw

27th September	Movements and connections between Ireland and Scotland (and beyond!), from around 4000 BC to around 1500 BC Dr Alison Sheridan, National Museums Scotland
25th October	The transitory character of society in Gaelic Ulster Dr Katharine Simms, Trinity College Dublin
6th December	Reconstructing Ireland's Castles: An Archaeological Interpretation of the Environs of the Irish Tower-House Dr Michael O'Mahony, Queen's University Belfast

Workshops 2021

Our next workshop will be on Monday 8th November at 7.30pm.

Liam Óg Magill will demonstrate stone age bead manufacturing.

A link to register for the workshop will be emailed out to members in advance. Numbers will be limited.

Discovery 2021! Fifth Annual Review of Archaeological Discoveries in Ulster conference

Preparations for our annual conference are well underway. We hope to be able to share a draft programme with members in the coming weeks. The Committee has decided that the continued uncertainty around COVID restrictions and infections in the coming months makes it impossible to plan for a face-to-face event for November 2021. Therefore, the Discovery 2021! conference will be held over Zoom. We hope this will give the audience more opportunity to interact with the speakers and other participants. The Committee has also decided that the conference registration will again be offered for free, but the registration page will give you the option to make a voluntary donation to help cover the expenses of the conference and the work of the Ulster Archaeological Society.

Further information about the conference and a link for registration will be available on our website in the coming weeks - <https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/uas/Conference/>

If you missed any of our previous conferences you can view the programmes and paper abstracts on our website - <https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/uas/Conference/PreviousConferences/>

January Lecture

The Society's January lecture was our first live online lecture and was given by Dr Gill Plunket of Queen's University Belfast. Her lecture was titled 'How Mike Baillie was right: resolving the links between volcanoes, ice cores, tree-rings and societal responses'.

Tree-rings and ice cores can be used to investigate past climate. Tree growth responds to wet or dry climate and this causes variation in the growth ring. Ice cores have layers formed by snowfall, these contain impurities from the atmosphere. One of these

impurities is tephra (including ash and glass) produced from volcanoes.

In the 1980s Mike Bailie identified an anomaly in around 1159 BCE in Irish oak. He began to investigate if there was a link to the eruption of Hekla in Iceland at the same time period. He went on to suggest that this event was associated with the construction of hillforts in Ireland (such as Haughey's Fort).

Elsewhere in the world at around 1200 BCE there were other events that may have been linked to a climatic downturn, such as the end of the Shang Dynasty. Recent research by O'Brien and Driscoll has shown that Irish hillforts are not closely associated with a single date. Also, the Hekla eruption has been redated to the 1000s BCE, not 1100s BCE. However, something did cause a climate anomaly in 1159 BCE.

Two further anomalies were identified at 536 and 540 CE. The redating of some Greenland ice cores meant there was no longer a volcanic explanation. So, Mike suggested that these may have been the result of dust from

asteroid impacts. A further revision of ice core dates placed two eruptions close to these two anomalies and made volcanoes a likely candidate again. Mike went on to demonstrate that there was a consistent offset of seven years between ice core dates and tree-ring dates. Three eruptions are used to date the ice cores (one being Vesuvius in 79 CE).

Independent redating of the ice cores using Beryllium-10 dating (similar to radiocarbon dating) proved that the previous ice core dates were too old. This resulted in all the dates coming forward by seven years and matching up with the tree-ring dates. The layer in the ice core believed to be from Vesuvius turned out to be from a different eruption, probably in Alaska.

The 536 CE event only had a signal in the ice cores of the northern hemisphere, suggesting its source was in the north. But the 540 CE event left a signal in Greenland and Antarctica, indicating the volcano was in the tropics region. Tree-ring evidence suggests there was a drop in temperature for a few decades after the 536 CE

event. There doesn't appear to have been tephra for the 540 CE event, but there was well preserved tephra for the 536 CE event. The tephra doesn't come from a single source, thus there was perhaps three simultaneous eruptions. The combined effect of these eruptions could have been the equivalent of a single large eruption.

The 536 CE seems to be associated with plagues in China, Egypt and the Mediterranean (including the Justinian Plague). These could have been a result of a climatic downturn. This date also coincides with the end of the "Iron Age Lull" in Ireland. These may not be related, but there may be a correlation between climate and the end of the Iron Age in 44 BCE. After Caesar's death there were recorded eclipses, the sun didn't shine so brightly and there were crop failures. At this time there was an eruption of Mount Etna. The ice cores show a very large eruption around this time and American tree-rings show a downturn in 43 BCE. Tephra from this eruption don't match with Etna, but do match with Okmok in Alaska.

Temperature reconstructions indicate there was a cooling of the northern hemisphere from 43 BCE and historical sources indicate widespread famine and poor harvest in 43 and 42 BCE. This was supported by analysis of a climate model and the size of the eruption. The climate events in the Mediterranean may have contributed to the collapse of the Roman Republic. It is unlikely that this eruption had enough of an impact on Ireland to cause the end of the Iron Age, but it probably made Ireland drier and slightly colder.

Duncan Berryman

March Lecture

The Society's March lecture was given by Dr Adrian Moldonado of National Museums Scotland. His lecture was titled 'Rethinking Early Medieval Whithorn and the Conversion to Christianity in Scotland'.

The monastic site at Whithorn dates to the early medieval period and was a centre for devotion to St

Ninian. Ninian was an important saint in Scotland (alongside Columba and Andrew). Regular pilgrimages in the area were re-established in the 20th century, today they are primarily walking trails that attract many tourists. The first mention of Ninian is in the writings of Bede (8th century) and claims he lived long before St Columba.

Some of the earliest evidence for a Christian community at Whithorn is the Latinus stone. This is an upright stone inscribed in Latin, dedicated to Latinus, and dated to c. 450 CE. The inscription shows there were Christians, speaking and writing in Latin, from Celtic family groups in this area in the 5th century.

During the 1980s and 90s, Peter Hill excavated a significant portion of the monastic complex. The excavations revealed Roman material overlaid with a 5th century cemetery and over that was a timber minster church (8th/9th century) and a royal hall. The minster is in the style of the Northumbria churches and is the only example yet found in

Scotland. Most of the burials were male, although there were several females and one corner became a burial ground for children. After the Northumbrian phase, there was a catastrophic fire. By the 11th century the settlement was rebuilt as a Viking-age town.

Recent re-analysis of the excavation finds has confirmed that the earliest settlement on the site dates to the 5th century. While the earliest graves are from the early 7th century. There was also a group of stone cist burials that the excavators thought were earliest, but the bone preservation was not good enough for dating. The second phase of burial shows more regular alignment and use of log coffins, there was still a mix of males and females of different ages. The cemetery seems to have been reorganised in the 8th century, with the creation of the stone mortuary chapel (containing 8th century burials) and the timber minster.

The Northumbrian mortuary chapel and timber minster would have been ostentatious buildings and

there is evidence of stained glass. This suggests they were very similar to the contemporary Northumbrian monastery of Jarrow and that Whithorn was not an isolated foundation. This also indicates that the Northumbrian settlement of Galloway was earlier than previously thought. However, there are no Northumbrian place names or sculpture in the Whithorn area.

Log coffins were originally thought to have been a tradition brought by Irish monks, after some were found in Armagh. But their dating to the 8th century suggests a local development. There have also been finds from other monastic sites in east and west Scotland. A recent excavation at Great Ryburgh (Norfolk) uncovered a cemetery of log coffins with preserved wood. There is a large group of children's burials at the gable of the mortuary chapel.

The mid 9th century saw an extensive fire that destroyed most of the buildings. After this, the mortuary chapel and minster were rebuilt, but there were no further

burials. Only two further burials occurred – a child with an amber pendant and a bundle of disarticulated bones. Both these burials may have been pagan and possibly associated with Viking settlement. There were also several cremation burials, but this may have been remnants of the fire destroying bodies in the mortuary chapel before they were buried.

Analysis of strontium isotopes in the bones indicates that the majority of these burials were locals. Only one was from outside Britain and a few were from northern England.

There are no other references to a cult of St Ninian in the rest of the British Isles, so who was he? Ninian is probably a scribal error for Uinniau, or Finnian of Moville, a Briton working in Ireland and died in c.579. He was a contemporary of Gildas and may have taught St Columba in c.540s.

There appears to have been substantial Roman settlement on the site, with people eating from Roman vessels. Galloway also had

a significant concentration of Roman coins, which were rare in Scotland after the erection of Hadrian's Wall. Latin inscriptions were also concentrated in this area at the end of the Roman Empire. Imports of African slipware and amphorae to Whithorn were similar to those at hillforts and other elite sites across England.

The near-by church site of Kirkmadrine has several Latin inscriptions of 6th century marking graves of priests and bishops. It is possible that Whithorn was a royal centre and Kirkmadrine was the monastic centre during this earlier period.

Duncan Berryman

April Lecture

The Society's April lecture was given by Prof. Eileen Murphy of Queen's University Belfast and was on 'The Life and Times of Takabuti in Ancient Egypt and in Belfast'.

Takabuti lived in Egypt during the 25th Dynasty (c.755-656 BCE). She was from a high status family and

died when she was in her late 20s to early 30s. Her body was mummified and was probably buried in the great religious centre at Thebes (modern Luxor).

The mummy and coffin of Takabuti we acquired by Mr Thomas Greg, a wealthy man from Holywood, Co. Down, in 1834. They were donated to the Belfast Natural History Society. Takabuti arrived in Ireland in autumn 1834 and was unwrapped on 27th January 1835. Her body and coffin were studied by some of the greatest scholars of their day. She became a central figure in the earliest museums in Belfast, starting in the Old Museum Building, College Square North. In 1910, the Belfast Natural History Society gifted their collection to the city and it was moved to what is now Belfast Central Library, Royal Avenue. She was moved again in 1929 to the Belfast Municipal Museum and Art Gallery, now the Ulster Museum, Botanic Gardens. In the years since her unwarping, she has inspired paintings, poetry and stories.

The Takabuti project aimed to learn more about the woman

during her life, discover what happened to her after death, and explore her existence in the museum. The first phase of the project was in 2007-9 when the Ulster Museum was undergoing restorations. The second phase was in 2018-20.

Newspaper accounts provide a good description of the unwrapping and indicate that her inner bandages were stuck together with a kind of resin. Rev Dr Hincks studied the hieroglyphs of the coffin. He was able to say that she was called Kabooti (later amended to Takabuti) and that she was the daughter of a priest of Ammon. Within the body was found a mixture of powders with a strong aromatic odour.

While the Ulster Museum was refurbished, the opportunity was taken to find out more about Takabuti. She was taken to Manchester Royal Infirmary to undergo Xray and CT scans. Analysis of her hair showed that it was naturally auburn. Her hair had been cut just before or after death and was elaborately styled, using a heated implement and a fatty

substance. This was unusual as most Egyptians shaved their hair and wore a black wig to reduce headlouse infections. The focal point of a television programme made alongside this investigation was to recreate the face of Takabuti. A model of her face was made, along with a black wig, and this is now on display in the Ulster Museum.

A new project was begun in 2018 and aimed to look at some of the loose ends from the first project, particularly the cause of death. New CT images were taken of Takabuti in the Ulster Museum. Samples were taken from inside the mummy for tissue and DNA analysis.

In January 2020, on the 185th anniversary of the unwrapping, the researchers announced some of their findings. The key discovery was that Takabuti had been killed by a stab wound and she didn't have a peaceful end.

25th Dynasty Egypt was a period of political upheaval as the Kushite rulers were eventually replaced by the expanding Assyrian Empire.

Takabuti was from a family classed as middle elite and her hieroglyphs describe her as a married noble woman.

Radiocarbon dating confirmed Takabuti to be from the 25th Dynasty. However, the dates from the coffin wood appear to be older and may have been contaminated. Her diet was rich and varied, as her childhood diet would have been made up of offerings from the temple. Her teeth appeared very healthy, which was unusual for an ancient Egyptian. There was also no evidence of illness in her body. Ancient DNA showed an unusual haplogroup, more associated with the Canary Islands, Germany, and Bulgaria. The new facial reconstruction improved on the previous one showing her natural hair colour but with a grey skin tone (following modern ethical guidance in facial reconstructions).

The biggest discovery was evidence for sharp force trauma where ribs and spine meet. The most likely weapon to cause this damage was a concave axe from behind. Earlier x-rays had shown a package in her chest, believed to

be her heart, but this now appears to have been linen packing to fill the injury. The brain was removed through the back of the skull, rather than through the nose. Her skull had resin and other substances placed inside and her head was supported by a resin collar. Her heart was wrapped in linen (very rare in mummies) and returned to her chest. Her eyeballs were also packed with linen, keeping the soft tissue and optic nerve. The chest and abdominal packing was mainly sawdust of cedar and pine, giving the aromatic smell when she was unwrapped.

Today she lies in the Ulster Museum and visitors can now find out more about her. She has lost all the protective amulets that she would have been buried with. Egyptians thought the more a person's name was repeated, the longer they lived in the afterlife, hopefully we can keep her name alive through the museum and the book resulting from the research.

Duncan Berryman

May Lecture

The Society's May lecture was given by Gavin Donaghy of Northern Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. His lecture was titled 'Take me to church. A look at two Early Medieval enclosed settlements in County Armagh and their associations with early church sites'.

The two sites were excavated in 2017 and 2018. Kiluney Park was a housing development in the east of Armagh city. The excavation at Drumcree Church, north of Portadown, was to enable the creation of a car park.

Excavation at Kiluney Park uncovered a large enclosure surrounded by a double enclosure ditch. Within the enclosure were a number of curvilinear features, pits, and post-holes. The inner enclosure was 108 m – 120 m in diameter. Part of the site sloped steeply down to a river forming the southern edge of the site. The site was primarily early medieval to medieval in date, with some evidence for prehistoric activity in the northeast of the site.

The ditch had a highly organic fill in the northern section and was very deep. Preserved within this was a wooden peg, possibly from a timber structure, and a range of seeds from plants such as mustard, cabbage, and raspberry. The enclosure originally had a bank, which was later levelled into the ditch. Dates from the fill place it between 528-622 CE.

East of the centre of the enclosure was a semi-circular ditch that might have been related to an early medieval house. To the northeast of the house was a pit with excessive scorching, possibly a hearth or furnace. The house dated to 532-638 CE. A deep pit was also found within the enclosure. The base fills of the pit remained wet, despite a very dry summer during the excavation. This may have been a well or storage pit, or simply a rubbish pit. Worked stone was found across the site, similar to lignite in appearance, and the raw material was found to be about the depth of some of the pits across the site. Thus it's possible that these were quarry holes.

A small, square annex was added to the east of the ditch. It produced a worked stone ring, larger than a thumb ring and possibly used as part of a necklace. There was also lots of early medieval pottery. The annex dates to the second phase of the site's development, being 662-887 CE. The double ditches enclosing the whole settlement date to the later part of this phase (762-887 CE).

The most prominent and artefact rich feature was a curving ditch in the centre of the enclosure. The majority of pottery, worked stone, and stone beads came out of this feature. It had a 15 m internal diameter, but there was no evidence for stakes or posts within the ditch.

The latest feature on the site was a large pit with coarse medieval pottery and lots of organic material. The material returned a date of 1347-1393 CE.

The townland of Kiluney is mentioned in early medieval texts and is associated with a nephew of St Patrick. The townland name would also suggest a church

association. This enclosure may have been an industrial centre associated with this early church site.

Excavation at Drumcree was planned as several test trenches to ensure there was no archaeology under the new carpark. These showed up linear and circular features extending away from the church and graveyard. Full excavation was carried out of anything that the drainage ditches were going to cut through, but everything else was preserved in situ.

The earliest structure was an Early medieval enclosure made up of several curving ditches. Within this were circular structures and numerous pits, containing early medieval pottery. These were cut by two rectilinear ditches.

The ditches to the northwest of the site produced large quantities of souterrain ware and lignite bracelets, very similar to the finds at Kiluney. To the east of the site, the ditch was more sterile and it looked as if a bank had been pushed into it.

The structure to the west produced pottery and slag. There were indications of post holes within the structure, but these were not excavated. There was no evidence of a hearth within any of the structures.

Drumcree had been a church site for a long time and these structures and features may have been associated with the church. Both sites had similar features and artefacts and had historical associations with churches. We don't know if these were church enclosures, but they may well have been associated with churches and ecclesiastic settlement.

Duncan Berryman

New Books

The Life and Times of Takabuti in Ancient Egypt - Rosalie David & Eileen Murphy (eds)
Liverpool University Press, £9.99

Anyone who has visited the Ulster Museum will know the Egyptian mummy Takabuti. This book presents the results of a long running research project focused on finding out more about the life and death of Takabuti. The contributions to the book provide a detailed study of the mummy through modern scientific methods, showing us how she lived, how she died, and eventually how she was mummified. Other contributions discuss life in the 25th Dynasty in Egypt, the trade in mummies, and how Takabuti got to Belfast. This is a beautifully produced volume, with extensive illustrations and diagrams to explain the text. This book will be of interest to anyone who knows Takabuti or who wants to find out more about ancient Egypt.

The Early Medieval Hand-Bells of Ireland and Britain - Cormac Bourke
Wordwell Books, €50

This majestic book is the culmination of many years of research into the hand-bells of early medieval Ireland and Britain. The majority of this volume is taken up by the catalogue of hand-bells, providing key information about each bell along with extensive illustrations and maps. The first part of the book is a comprehensive discussion of the historical context of the bells, their production, design, use, and preservation. We gain a great insight into how hand-bells were created and their importance in the religious practices of the Middle Ages. This work is scholarship of the highest standard and makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of life and religion in the early medieval period. This excellent research is complemented by high quality production, the book's layout is clear and is illustrated throughout with copious images and drawings of the bells. This is a significantly important publication that will be of interest to a wide audience.

The Plight of the Big House in Northern Ireland - J.A.K. Dean
Ulster Architectural Heritage, £24

The big houses of Northern Ireland have been suffering decline and neglect for many years, and this book gives us an illustration of that loss. Organised by county, this is primarily a gazetteer of the big houses that have been lost or decayed. Each entry has some history and information about the house and most are illustrated. The introduction discusses the architectural styles of the buildings and the social context of their creation and decline. There are photos of how houses such as Downhill and Mount Panther appeared before they fell into ruin. It is also interesting to see images of places such as Belvoir Park and Castlewellan Cottage, which have now been lost but their demesne survives. This is a very interesting book and many readers will enjoy finding out about lost houses in locations they often visit or where they live.

Medieval Dublin XVIII - Seán Duffy (ed)
Four Courts Press, £29.95

The series of publications on medieval Dublin is well established, with this being the eighteenth volume in the series. Many of the papers of this volume have an ecclesiastic theme, including important chapters looking at the early medieval church enclosures in light of excavations across Ireland (Harney) and a study of saint dedications (Bhreathnach). Two chapters discuss excavations of tanning complexes (Duffy; Giacometti), revealing Dublin's leather working industry, and these are complemented by a study of late medieval footwear found in Chancery Lane (Nicholl). Whelan provides an interesting look at the European view of Dublin, while Smith discusses the lack of papal provision in the city. This is a wide-ranging volume and, despite its Dublin focus, will provide an interesting perspective on medieval Ireland. This book will be useful to scholars and interesting to the general reader.

Ireland Encastellated AD 950–1550
- Tadhg O’Keeffe
Four Courts Press, £40

This book looks at Irish castles from a European perspective, drawing many parallels and placing them in the context of current knowledge regarding English and continental castles. One key aspect of this is considering whether the earliest castles should be pushed back to the 10th century, rather than after the arrival of the Anglo-Normans, this would bring Ireland into line with the rest of Europe rather than being an outlier. This book questions many assumptions we may have had about Irish castles and helps open up considerable debate about these buildings, all backed up by extensive research and numerous examples.

The Town in Medieval Ireland in the light of recent archaeological excavations - Christian Corlett & Michael Potterton (eds)
Wordwell Books, €35

Corlett and Potterton have been editing volumes on evidence from medieval excavations in Ireland for over a decade, and they now turn their attention to towns and urban

centres. The majority of the papers are drawn from the south east of Ireland, reflecting the concentration of medieval urban settlement. The chapters cover well-known sites, such as Dungarvan, Wexford, and Kildare, and include a range of monuments, including priories, churches, houses, town defences, and water mains. But there is also discussion of the deserted town of Rindown (Roscommon) and the Gaelic market at Lough Key. As with the other books in this series, this is an invaluable resource to those researching medieval Ireland. The book is produced to Wordwell’s usual high standard and extensively illustrated throughout.

Prehistoric Forteviot - Kenneth Brophy & Gordon Noble
Royal Forteviot - Ewan Campbell & Stephen Driscoll
Council for British Archaeology,
£30 each

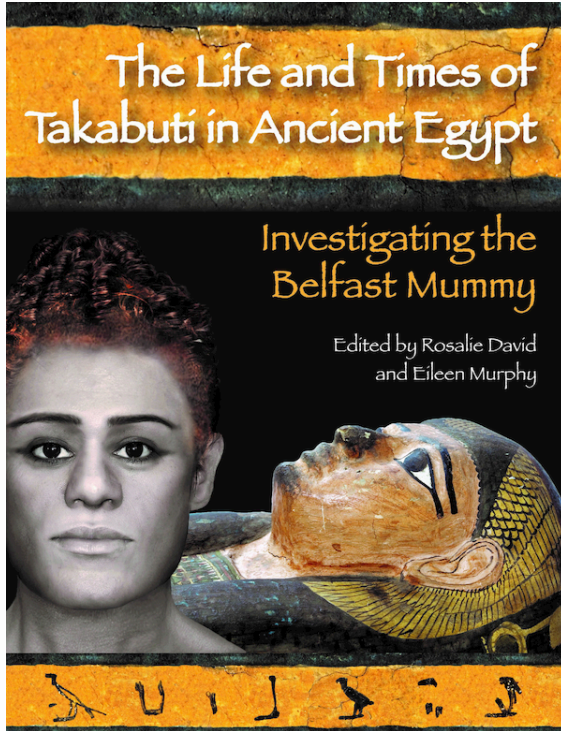
Many members will have an interest in early Scotland, due to its close connections with Ulster, and will have visited some of the Pictish sites. These volumes present the results of several seasons of survey

and excavation at the Pictish royal site of Forteviot, south of Perth, and its surrounding landscape. The Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot project sought to investigate the landscape around the Pictish royal site of Forteviot and understand it in a wider geographic and chronological context. The first volume looks at the prehistoric landscape and examines a palisaded enclosure, a cremation cemetery, and henges. The second volume presents the results of survey and excavation at the royal site, and places this alongside studies of the Pictish carved stones, high crosses, and metalwork. There is even a discussion of the Byzantine influence that may have shaped the structures and activities at the site. These are beautifully produced volumes, supplied throughout with colour illustrations; the reconstruction drawings really help to bring the site to life and help us imagine how it would have appeared. These books provide excellent insights into prehistoric and Pictish society and the evolution of an important landscape from the Neolithic to the early modern period.

Irish Country Furniture and Furnishings 1700-2000 - Claudia Kinmonth
Cork University Press, £35

This is a beautiful book, with extensive illustrations of Irish furniture in a range of settings. Each chapter examines a different type of furniture within the home, from seats and beds to the smaller utensils and house shrines. The detailed discussion paints a vivid picture of how the Irish vernacular house would have appeared. But the book goes beyond this, giving us a social history of these houses and objects. The introduction discusses how society and environment shaped the vernacular house. Throughout the book, the form and use of furniture is explained in relation to its social, economic, and environmental context. A book covering the 18th to 21st centuries may seem a little modern to be considered archaeology, but this furniture has similarities to predecessors and it is a disappearing part of our history that needs to be studied. This book will be of great value to anyone interested in Irish rural society from the Middle Ages to the present.

Recent publications by members of the UAS Committee



The
Early Medieval
Hand-Bells of
Ireland and Britain

CORMAC BOURKE



National Museum of Ireland
Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann