



ULSTER
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Newsletter

Spring 2022

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Editorial

As we begin the third year of this pandemic, it feels that very little has changed despite the relaxation of restrictions by the government. The UAS is primarily concerned with the health and safety of our members and, therefore, has been extra careful over these years. We hope that things are improving and that we will be able to hold face-to-face events later in the year, particularly the Discovery 2022! Conference. However, we are also aware that things can change quickly and we may need to change plans at the last minute.

The Society is aware that our online format have enabled more people to participate in our activities. Throughout 2021, there were 3,588 views on our YouTube channel, with a total of 665 hours watched (that's almost two lectures a day!). Being online has meant our audience has come from far beyond Belfast, and even Ulster. As public education is one of the key aspects of the UAS, it's safe to say that even if we do go back to face-to-face lectures and conferences, we will continue to make our talks available online.

This year's AGM marked the end of Ruairí Ó Baoill's term as President and saw the election of Anne MacDermott as the first female President of the UAS. Dr John Moore was elected as a Vice President and Rena Maguire and Brian Sloan were elected as ordinary committee members. I would also like to acknowledge Courtney Mundt's agreement to help me with the Society's social media, she has already made our Facebook page significantly more active.

I hope this year we can all get out more and spend more time with archaeology.

Duncan Berryman
Editor

A Message from the President

I was deeply honoured to be voted in as the President of the Ulster Archaeological Society at the AGM. Most of you probably know me as the organiser of our study tours for the last thirteen years or so, and I hope to continue doing this in the future, just as soon as it is safe to do so. I have been a member of the UAS since 1985 and have been on the committee for the last 15 years, in which time the society has grown and developed into the vibrant organisation it is today.

Although I feel somewhat underqualified for the Presidential role as I am neither an archaeologist nor an academic. In fact, I have never formally studied archaeology, but I have had an abiding passion for the subject since I was about nine years old. Greatly encouraged by my paternal grandfather and maternal grandmother, my bookshelves started to fill up with classics by Leonard Woolley, Leonard Cottrell and Seton Lloyd, followed shortly after with works by Estyn Evans, Sean P O Riordain etc., and the gift of the Archaeological Survey of County Down which became my "go to" bible. A lifetime later, I still can't resist adding to my archaeological collection.

Family holidays during my childhood started to include visits to nearby monuments happily tolerated by my siblings. The habit stuck, and over the years since, both home and abroad. I have had the opportunity to visit wonderful places; from Orkney to the Channel Islands, from Ireland to Greece, from Egypt to South Africa, taking in the sites of many ancient cultures. Perhaps most poignantly, was the trip to Syria in 2010, a few months before much of what I saw was destroyed.

Our heritage is precious; it belongs to us all. I firmly believe that archaeology is for everyone, professionals and amateurs alike. It is our aim as a Society "to advance the education of the public in archaeology and history, particularly in regard to Ulster". I believe the UAS fulfils this

aim, through its lectures, field trips, study tours, conferences, the activities of the Survey Group, and through the Ulster Journal of Archaeology.

Although it has been a difficult two years, the Society has adapted using technology to keep in touch. The committee has met monthly as usual by Zoom and we have enjoyed a great variety of monthly lectures, workshops and the November Discovery! Conferences by the same means. An enormous debt of gratitude is due to Dr Duncan Berryman who has facilitated these events on our behalf. Although many are probably suffering from Zoom fatigue, it has given us greater access to interesting lectures and events provided by other societies and groups from far and wide.

Archaeology has come a long way since its modern, scientific beginnings and we hope to celebrate this as our theme for the Discovery! 2022 conference in November. This year is also a year of anniversaries, not least the 75th Anniversary of the UAS. The first meeting of the newly formed Society was held on October 15th, 1947. Something to celebrate indeed! Hopefully we will be able to meet up again face to face before too long and resume the social aspects of the society, along with our usual activities.

My thanks are due to the whole committee who are tirelessly dedicated to the interests of the UAS, and to the entire membership, old and new. With your support, we can look forward to another year of celebrating archaeology in Ulster and beyond.

Anne MacDermott
President, Ulster Archaeological Society

Lectures 2022

We now have a complete lecture schedule for 2022. Although government restrictions on gatherings have been eased, the UAS is still concerned for the health of its members. We will continue to hold lectures over Zoom, and the Secretary will announce should there be face-to-face meetings again. Zoom links will be emailed out to members and anyone can watch on our YouTube channel - <https://www.youtube.com/c/TheUlsterArchaeologicalSociety>

25 th April	"If I had a hammer": Bronze Age metalworkers and their tools Dr Linda Boutoille, Queen's University Belfast
27 th June	Idols, ards and severed heads: Three thousand years of deposition in a Roscommon fen Dr Eve Campbell, Archaeological Management Solutions
25 th July	40 Years 'a Digging. Reflections of an Irish Field Archaeologist Ruairí Ó Baoill, Centre for Community Archaeology
29 th August	Larne Lough. A Forgotten Seascape Stephen Cameron, Antrim County Archaeological Society
26 th September	Exploring Ulster's hidden medieval landscape Dr Laura Patrick, Queen's University Belfast
31 st October	The Tara Research Project Roseanne Schot, The Discovery Programme
28 th November	The Archaeology of Hunter-Gatherer Ireland Graeme Warren, University College Dublin
12 th December	Mullyash Mountain and the Ulster Warriors: the extraordinary history, iconography and geology of the claimed pagan statues of Ulster Richard Warner

Workshops 2022

Monday 20th June

Animal Bone Identification

Judith Findlater, Queen's University Belfast

If possible, this workshop will be held in the Archaeology Department, QUB. Contact the Hon. Secretary to record your interest, as numbers will be limited.

A recording of the workshop on mapping and online heritage research is available on YouTube.

Discovery 2022! Conference

The Discovery 2022! Conference will be held on Saturday 12th November.

We hope this will be again held in the School of Natural and Built Environment, Queen's University Belfast, as well as online. However, this cannot be confirmed at this stage.

Fieldtrips

We are hopeful that fieldtrips may be able to resume in some form during 2022. Further details will be circulated to members by the Hon. Secretary as they become available.

Discovery 2022! Sixth Annual Review of Archaeological Discoveries in Ulster conference – 1st call for papers

The sixth Discovery conference will be held on Saturday 12th November 2022. This year will mark the 75th anniversary of the first meeting of the UAS. The conference will present recent archaeological research, but it will also look at 75 years of growth in Ulster archaeology. Since 1947 there have been many advancements in our understanding of the past and how we do archaeology. This year's conference is a good opportunity to reflect on these changes.

We hope to be able to hold the conference physically in Queen's University. However, it is too early to tell and further details will be provided in a future Newsletter.

The conference organisers would be grateful to hear from anyone who would like to present a paper at the conference. Papers can

cover recent research, excavations, community initiatives, or reflect on the development of archaeology over the past 75 years. Papers will be 20 minutes in length. Please send a title and a short (max 200 words) abstract to duncan@ulsterarchaeology.org by 30th June.

January Lecture

The Society's January lecture was given by Dr Rena Maguire of Queen's University Belfast. Her lecture was titled 'For want of a horse, the rider was lost' – an introduction to Ireland's Late Iron Age equitation.

Horses have been part of the human journey for most of the past, but their equipment has been little studied. It is possible to use the tack (equipment) to tell how people used their horses and can reveal much about their cultural identity. Horse bits (attached to the bridle) served a range of purposes and could be used to manage horse behaviour.

The Iron Age bits are almost identical to modern patterns of double-jointed snaffles. There is a wide variety of sizes for animals, indicated by the width of the bit (remembering that part would have been outside the mouth). The majority of bits showed equal use wear on both sides, suggesting they were mainly used for riding rather than driving.

The use of Y-pieces in the bridles is similar to modern tack for activities such as polo matches. This would have allowed the rider to control the horse with one hand while having the other free. Thus it is possible that the stories of cattle raiding were based on real events.

The size of the Irish bits indicates that most of the horses were the size of a large pony (about 14 hands). In Britain, the majority of animals were small ponies (about 10 hands).

A number of bits were found in bogs or as wetland deposits. But many were also found on sites associated with elite activity and reused in the early medieval period. There is a concentration of

bits found around the Bann mouth and in north Dublin. Outside of these areas, most bits were found along the ancient roads running across the country from Dublin to Galway and from Dublin to the north Antrim coast.

The tack used in Ireland is quite different to that in Britain and on the continent. However, there are close parallels between Irish and north German Y-pieces. Excavation at a Roman site in northern Britain produced a Y-piece that was a hybrid of Irish and German styles and attached leather was dated to 56 BCE to 54 CE.

The design of the bits develops over time from simple styles to having folds and La Tène decoration. The shape and fold decoration have many parallels with roman phallic talismans. Thus, the visible parts of the bits showed La Tène decoration, while the part inside the horse's mouth was a roman phallus. This may suggest the riders had a dual identity. Tacitus records a story of an Irish king who had been forced out of Ireland and joined roman forces in Britain. It is likely that Irish troops

who fought for Rome returned with new ideas about how they wanted their tack to look. Many of those who commissioned tack would have been elites who wanted to use the iconography of Rome while also maintaining their ancestral styles.

Duncan Berryman

February Lecture

The Society's February lecture was given by Dr Cormac McSparron, of Queen's University Belfast. His lecture was titled "Better pass boldly into that other world": The Dead in the Irish Early Bronze Age, their rituals and the society that made them.

The Chalcolithic period in Ireland began around 2,500 BCE with the start of copper mining at Ross Island (Co. Cork) and an increase in human activity (indicated by an increase in C¹⁴ dates). This was also associated with the development of wedge tombs and, from 2,200 BCE, the single burial tradition; there was a change from burial in groups to a focus on the individual. The single burials were both

cremation and inhumation in either a pit or cist. There was a range of pots and urns associated with these burials as well as a range of grave goods.

The single burial tradition began around 2,150 BCE and lasts until 1,600 BCE. It seems to appear later in Munster than in the rest of Ireland. Cists predate pit burials slightly, while inhumation predates cremation. There seems to be a fall-off in both inhumation and cist burials around 1,950 BCE.

Waddell noticed that there is also a tradition of potless burials. These were inhumations with no associated pottery vessel. This tradition appeared later than the start of single burials but continues to the end of the Bronze Age.

There appears to have been three phases of the single burial tradition. Phase A was c. 2,200 to 2,050 BCE and was marked by inhumation in cists and pits with bowls and optional grave goods. Phase B was 2,050 to 1,950 BCE, this saw pottery becoming optional and the introduction of cremation. Phase C was 1,950 to 1,600 BCE,

now cremations in urns were the most common form of burial, grave goods were more common, and the most opulent burials are overwhelmingly adult males.

Cremation appears around 2,050 BCE and quickly becomes the main form of burial. It required a significant amount of wood, about 600kg for one person. Premodern societies may have had different ideas of death and cremation may have played a role in completing the process of death. Cists are generally found in dry, gravel areas, there may have been a fear that damp conditions would prevent decomposition and therefore the ancestors could not die properly, cremation was a solution to this. As cremation became the norm, associate pots became larger and cists and pits became smaller.

Location was important in all periods. Where burials are found in and around a mound, they are most often found on the eastern side of the site. There is an over-representation of females in the centre of the mound, with more males on the outer edges. Phase C

burials were less likely to be found associated with a mound.

Anthropologists have looked at the development of societies and described various levels to them. One way to look at them is to see a progression from non-ranked (egalitarian) societies, through ranked to stratified, where there is a change from people being recognised for their abilities to people having power based on lineage. This can also be seen in terms of economy, where there is a move from free access to land and resources to an economy where everything is controlled by the elites. Lewis Binford was the first person to suggest there was a relationship between social complexity and burial complexity.

It is evident that there was increasing complexity in burial traditions across the Irish Bronze Age. Phase A burials indicate that this was a tribal society with some social hierarchy based on lineage. Phase B was still a tribal society, but with more complexity. Phase C shows a significant increase in complexity and may indicate an advanced chiefdom.

Copper working in Ireland appears as a fully-fledged tradition, suggesting it was imported.

Scottish burial traditions closely parallel Irish traditions at this point and the beaker burial at Culduthel (Inverness) was of an Irish person. There is significant evidence of exchange between Ireland, Britain, and Europe. Ireland had the conditions for a ranked society, but it took the "copper crisis" of 1,900 BCE to trigger the emergence of an elite. This period saw the end of work at Ross Island which may have increased the value of copper and created an elite that controlled the supply.

After 1,600 BCE there appears to have been increasing complexity in society. This resulted in more settlements and the development of swords and weapons. However, there was a simplification of burial tradition.

Duncan Berryman

Prof George Eogan Died 18th November 2021

George Eogan was born in Nobber, Co Meath on 14th September 1930. An early interest in archaeology was nurtured from his school days, culminating in a degree in Archaeology and English at University College Dublin (UCD) and a PhD at Trinity College Dublin (TCD). He worked as a researcher at TCD, the University of Oxford and Queen's University Belfast before being appointed as a lecturer in archaeology at UCD in 1965. He became professor of archaeology in 1979 and continued in that role until his retirement in 1995.

Prof Eogan was a renowned scholar of Neolithic and Bronze Age Europe, perhaps best known for his research into the Neolithic passage tombs of Ireland and Western Europe which saw him direct more than 40 years of archaeological excavations at the Knowth passage tombs in Co Meath. The results of the excavation at Knowth were published over many years, with the final volume (volume 7) being

completed just before his death and published in 2022.

In 1991 he became the founding chairman of the Discovery Programme. In 2007, he was awarded the Royal Irish Academy Gold Medal in the Humanities. He was a member of many prestigious institutions, not least the UAS.

The UAS extends its deepest sympathies to his family, friends, colleagues and former students.

HERoNI Lecture Series

DfC Historic Environment presents an annual HERoNI Lecture Series, providing an insight into our local heritage, archaeology and more. All of the HERoNI events are free to attend and will be hosted on Zoom. There is more info here: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/heroni-lecture-series>

Tales of Transformation, Inspiration and Perspiration

Friday 20 May 2022, 1-2 pm
Speaker: Caroline Maguire

The Pre-Plantation Archaeology of Lisburn; the Search for Medieval Origin

Friday 17 June 2022, 1-2 pm
Speaker: Aaron McIntyre

Vernacular Architecture Online Glossary

The Vernacular Architecture Group has created an open-access, online glossary for vernacular architecture. The Glossary identifies terms used for vernacular buildings, in particular the components of timber-framed structures. It can be searched by illustration, with labelled drawings linked to definitions, and by building terms linked to definitions and illustrations, as well as to the names of related or contrasting terms.

The Glossary can be accessed here: <https://www.vernacularbuildingglossary.org.uk/>

New Books

Irish Late Iron Age Equestrian Equipment and its Insular and Continental Context – Rena Maguire
Archaeopress, £44 (£16 ebook)

This is the second volume in the Irish Archaeological Monographs series by Queen's University Belfast and Archaeopress. This volume presents the results of Rena Maguire's doctoral research. Maguire provides an excellent introduction to Iron Age equestrian equipment, placing it in its archaeological and historical context. The opening chapters give a clear description of bits form and use, before examining the distributions of finds and discussing the influences of the styles. This is a story that takes a relatively simple object and reveals Ireland's place in an interconnected Europe. One of the major contributions of this volume is the exquisitely illustrated catalogue, taking up almost half the book. This book is a valuable contribution to the study of the Irish Late Iron Age and will be essential reading.

The Prehistoric Artefacts of Northern Ireland – Harry & June Welsh
Archaeopress, £65 (£16 ebook)

This book is the completion of a trilogy on prehistoric life in Northern Ireland, the previous volumes covering burial and settlement. This volume is an inventory of all known locations of prehistoric artefacts in Northern Ireland, arranged by county. Each entry contains a description of the artefact, its location, and any references; many entries are accompanied by an illustration. The discussion includes distribution maps of objects by period, providing an overview of prehistoric activity across Northern Ireland. This is the culmination of many years of dedicated work. It will be an essential reference work for anyone looking at the prehistory of Ireland

Irish Thatched Cottages: A Living Tradition – Emma Byrne
O'Brien Press, £11.99

We are all familiar with the thatched cottage in the Irish countryside. The first half of this

beautiful book introduces us to the history of thatching, the tools and techniques. The second half takes us on a tour around Ireland and shows many examples of thatched buildings and structures. There is also a glossary and a list of funding sources to support maintenance. This book is packed full of wonderful colour images of the buildings, giving the reader a flavour of their appearance across Ireland.

Plantagenet Ireland – Robin Frame
Four Courts Press, £50

The 12th century was an important time in Ireland, with the creation of the English colony having repercussions through to today. This volume explores the key themes of this period. The first half looks at the relationship between England and Ireland under the Plantagenets, while the second half focuses on the government of the colony and the influence of particular individuals. This book is a collection of essays arranged thematically, making it accessible as a reference volume for the various topics discussed.

Excavations at Knowth 7: The Megalithic Art of the Passage Tombs at Knowth, County Meath – George Eogan & Elizabeth Shee Twohig
Royal Irish Academy, €70

The final volume in the series of publications on the excavations of Knowth focuses on the art of the tombs. The initial chapters provide an overview of megalithic tombs and the archaeology of Knowth before focusing on the art itself. An appendix contains a detailed record of all the art found within the tomb. This is a hugely important publication for our understanding of megalithic rock art and megalithic tombs. The book is full of colour images of the stones as well as diagrams and plans, helping the reader to understand what is presented. This is an essential publication for anyone interested in megalithic tombs and Irish prehistory.

Beyond Exclusion in Medieval Ireland – Stephen Hewer
Brepols, €100

This monograph provides a valuable insight into the position of women and Gaels in later medieval Ireland. Using English legal documents, it is possible to show that groups we often think of as excluded actually had significant access to English courts and justice. This is a very interesting study and increases our understanding of misunderstood aspects of medieval Irish society. This book will be of importance for those interested in medieval social history.

Mapping New Territories in Art and Architectural Histories – Niamh NicGhabhann & Danielle O'Donovan (eds)
Brepols, €165

This is a volume of essays produced in honour of Prof. Roger Stalley, an eminent art historian. The essays have an Irish focus, reflecting Stalley's own interests and include new studies of buildings and artworks. Particularly interesting papers include a study

of early cross slabs at Aghowle (Wicklow), a discussion of animal and bird ornament on the 'Tara' Brooch, and observations on the decoration of Cormac's Chapel at Cashel. Beyond Ireland, one paper looks at the 'crazy vault' in Lincoln Cathedral and another discusses the mapping of medieval architecture. These are insightful papers covering a wide range of topics in medieval art and architecture. This is a great addition to the library of anyone interested in medieval art and architecture.

Brepols are offering UAS members a 25% discount and free shipping on both their books listed here. Use offer code UAS22 and contact orders@brepols.net to place your order. Offer valid until 30th September 2022.

THE PREHISTORIC ARTEFACTS OF NORTHERN IRELAND

Harry and June Welsh



Irish Late Iron Age Equestrian Equipment in its Insular and Continental Context

Rena Maguire



THE MEGALITHIC ART OF THE PASSAGE TOMBS AT KNOWTH, COUNTY MEATH

George Eogan
Elizabeth Shee Twohig, Archaeological Editor

