



ULSTER
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Newsletter

Winter 2022/23

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A Message from the President

I would like to wish all members a very Happy and Healthy New Year. Let's hope 2023 is a good one for us all, with lots of activities planned for the UAS. At last, things are getting back to some sense of normality and we have been able to reconnect with friends and colleagues over the last few months. Despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic, the UAS has continued to grow and I would particularly like to welcome our new members. I hope you will find your membership to be enjoyable as well as educational and that you will join us on some of the events planned for the coming year.

The programme for the year is coming together with lectures available to all and workshops, study tours, day and evening field trips etc. available to paid-up members. Keep an eye on the website and social media for further information, and make sure we have your current contact details.

From 30th August – 2nd September, the 29th European Association of Archaeologists Conference comes to Belfast, and congratulations are due to Prof Eileen Murphy and her team for enabling the city to host this prestigious event. It is organised by the Department of Archaeology & Palaeoecology in the School of Natural and Built Environment at QUB, working in conjunction with Visit Belfast, Tourism Northern Ireland and Belfast City Council, with support provided by a range of partners from across Ireland. There will also be opportunities for volunteers, and I hope some members of the UAS will consider helping out. Details of this will follow, but if you are interested, keep the dates in mind.

As always, I would also like to thank all the Committee members who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the smooth running of the society and also the volunteers who enable the updating of our IT and social media. Your efforts are sincerely appreciated.

I look forward to seeing you all, old friends and new, at our forthcoming events.

Anne MacDermott
President, Ulster Archaeological Society

Membership Subscriptions

Full and Retired subscriptions are due on the 1st January 2023.

Please send a cheque, payable to the **Ulster Archaeological Society**, for £28 (Full) or £33 (Full nonUK) or £10 (Retired) or £13 (Retired nonUK) or £7.50 for new Student (UK & Non UK), to the Hon. Treasurer, Lee Gordon, 135 Old Holywood Road, Belfast BT4 2HQ.

Paid up student members at 31 December 2022 do not have to renew until 1st October 2023. You can also use PayPal on the website– <http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/uas/JoinUs/>

If you are a U.K. taxpayer, you can increase the value of your contribution, at no extra charge to you, by signing a gift aid declaration. If you pay by PayPal you must tick the gift aid permission box even if you have previously signed a gift aid declaration to allow the society to claim the gift aid.

If you pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of gift aid claimed on all your subscriptions & donations in that tax year it is your responsibility to pay any difference.

N.B. Please notify the Hon. Secretary, Ken Pullin, (16 Knockbreda Park, Belfast BT6 0HB) if you:

- Want to cancel this declaration
- Change your name or home address
- No longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

Lectures 2023

Lectures will be held in the lecture theatre, Elmwood building, Elmwood Avenue and online via Zoom.

Recordings of previous lectures can be found on our YouTube channel - <https://www.youtube.com/c/TheUlsterArchaeologicalSociety>

30 th January	St Brigid's shoe: a religious statement made in 1710 Cormac Bourke
27 th February	AGM
27 th March	Stonehenge, a curator's view Heather Sebire, English Heritage (only on Zoom)
24 th April	Irish Cave Bones Dr Ruth Carden, University College Dublin (only on Zoom)
29 th May	Understanding dugout boats and how their interaction within their receiving environment in Northern Ireland, through discoveries from recent weather events and experimental archaeology. Dr Niall Gegory, Gegory Archaeology

Fieldtrips 2023

Saturday 13th May

Visit to Ballyduggan Medieval Village

Saturday 17th June

Tour of Carlingford and Greencastle

Annual General Meeting

The 81st Annual General Meeting of the Ulster Archaeological Society will be held in the lecture theatre, Elmwood building, Elmwood Avenue and online via Zoom (<https://zoom.us>), the details are:

Date: Monday 7.30pm 27th February 2022

Meeting ID: 852 9081 2180

Passcode: UAS_AGM_23

Only paid-up members can vote during the AGM

Agenda

1. President's Address.
2. Minutes of 80th AGM held on Monday 28th February 2022.
3. Honorary Secretary's Annual Report for 2022.
4. Honorary Treasurer's Annual Report for 2022.
5. Election of Officers.
6. Election of two Ordinary Committee Members (3-year term).
7. Election of Honorary Auditor.
8. Business of which notice has been given.
9. Any other business.

Notices of motion and nominations for officers and committee positions should reach Mr Ken Pullin, Hon. Secretary, Ulster Archaeological Society, (16 Knockbreda Park, Belfast BT6 0HB or email ulsterarchaeolsoc@gmail.com) by Monday 20th February 2022.

The President, three Vice Presidents, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer, Hon. Editor Ulster Journal of Archaeology, Hon. Editor UAS Newsletter and Hon. Auditor are elected annually. Two Ordinary Members of the General Committee retire annually and are not eligible for re-election for one year.

The AGM will be followed by a short talk on prehistoric beadmaking.

Survey Group

The first field outing for the survey group in 2023 is planned to take place on 25th March and will be at Ballygomartin townland located on the northeast side of Divis Mountain. This townland is an area which the National Trust has recently purchased and among the field monuments located within the land are two scheduled ringforts, the site of a megalithic tomb and numerous abandoned farmsteads, many of which are of at least 19th century date. It is planned that our fieldwork will take place where possible on the last Saturday of each month and the field programme will run through to the end of October. While most of the survey for this year will be focused on the lands at Ballygomartin townland, we also hope to include dates in the summer for carrying out geophysical surveys at Lisnabreeny in south Belfast and at Mount Stewart, Co. Down.

National Trust are currently in the process of procuring some pieces of new equipment which will be available to the survey group. Full details will be circulated when everything is confirmed by start of

March, but on the shopping list new equipment includes a Bartington hand-held twin gradiometer, another twin-probe resistivity kit, a portable hand-held 3D scanner and Arrow 100 GNSS. Once the new equipment is in-hand, arrangements will be made for training sessions in how to operate the new kit, hopefully in Spring or early Summer so that some of it can be used in this year's fieldwork.

Dates for the diary; March 25th & April 29th survey at Ballygomartin. Introductory information on this year's programme will be circulated to survey group members at the end of February.

Mal Conway
Survey Group Co-Ordinator

July Lecture

July's UAS monthly lecture was a reflection by Ruairí Ó Baoill, former UAS President and excavation director with the centre for Community Archaeology, QUB, on forty years of being a field archaeologist in Ireland.

Ruairí graduated from Queen's University in 1985 with a Joint Honour's degree in Archaeology and Ancient History. He undertook his first archaeological excavation, the QUB student training dig, at Lough na Trosc above Carnlough, Co. Antrim in July 1982. His most recent excavation before the lecture was assisting in the June 2022 QUB student training dig at Stranmillis University College, Belfast. While still a student at QUB, Ruairí worked on the first two ever archaeological excavations undertaken in Belfast city centre, at Castle Place (1983) and High Street (1984), both directed by Nick Brannon of the DOE as well as on the first two seasons (1984 and 1985) of the seminal rath excavation at Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim, directed by Dr Chris Lynn and Jacqueline McDowell of the DOE.

One of the big changes that took place in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the establishment of commercial archaeological companies in Ireland who now carry out the vast majority of excavations in Ireland and who work all year round. Prior to this it

was only the institutions- the universities, museums and government bodies which regulated archaeology both North and South in Ireland- who undertook licenced archaeological excavations in Ireland and these excavations were generally carried out within a digging season that did not include the winter months. There has been a boom in licenced archaeological investigations in Ireland's towns in recent decades and these, along with the excavation reports that have derived from them, have revolutionised our knowledge of life in Ireland's towns.

After graduating from QUB, Ruairí worked in Dublin for several years on the Dublin Castle excavations directed by Conleth Manning and Dr Ann Lynch and, in 1990-1991, on the King John's Castle Limerick excavations, directed by Ken Wiggins. Both of these important excavations yielded evidence of Viking-Age occupation that predated the construction of their Medieval Castles. Since the 1980s, Viking-Age archaeology has been found in many of Ireland's biggest towns such as Dublin, Waterford,

Wexford, Cork and Limerick and more than 200 buildings from the Viking-Age in Ireland are now known. Ruairí directed his first archaeological excavation in 1991 and since then has been involved in dozens of excavations, including large-scale projects with multiple sites. For much of the 1990s, he carried out important excavations within the historic core of Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim.

Ruairí was a Full Member of *Irish Association of Professional Archaeologists* (IAPA) from 1990-2001 and he was a member of the IAPA Sub-committee on Membership, 2000- 2001. From 2001-2006 he served on the Board of the *Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland* (IAI), the body which succeeded IAPA and which is the representative all-island organisation for professional archaeologists working in Ireland.

Ruairí was also instrumental in founding the *Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group* (IPMAG). He was the first Chair of the group, from 1999 to 2007, and he still serves on the IPMAG Committee as Editor of the *IPMAG Newsletter*.

Between 1998 to 2002 Ruairí was a member of the EHS: Built Heritage's Archaeological Excavation Unit. In August 2005 he joined the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork (CAF), now the Centre for Community Archaeology (CCA), at Queen's University Belfast (QUB) where he still works.

Ruairí passionately believes in public outreach and in disseminating archaeological information to both the archaeological profession and the interested wider public. Over the last thirty years he has taught a variety of courses in archaeology to adult learners. He was a part-time lecturer in archaeology at the Belfast Institute from 1994 to 1997, and was course co-coordinator of the Certificate Course in Archaeology with the Institute of Continuing Education at Queen's University Belfast from 1998 to 1999. Between 2013-2018 he was a Course Tutor at Stranmillis University College Lifelong Learning, teaching evening courses in various aspects of Irish archaeology, including the Archaeology of Ulster, the Viking-

Age Archaeology of Ireland, the Archaeology of Irish Towns and the Archaeology of Belfast. Since 2018 he has been teaching a variety of evening archaeology courses for the Open Learning Programme at Queen's University Belfast in the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work.

Ruairí has published dozens of archaeological papers and he has written books on the archaeology of Carrickfergus (2008), Belfast (2011) and Derry-Londonderry' (2013). He is one of the co-editors (along with Professor Audrey Horning, Dr Colm Donnelly and Dr Paul Logue) of *The Post-Medieval Archaeology of Ireland 1550-1850* published in 2007 which was the first ever book to deal with the Post-Medieval/ Historical archaeology of Ireland.

From 2016-2022 Ruairí served as President of the Ulster Archaeological Society (UAS). He is currently one of the Society's Vice-Presidents. In 2017, both he and Dr Colm Donnelly, QUB, established the highly successful annual archaeological *Discovery conference*, organised jointly by

the Ulster Archaeological Society and the Centre for Community Archaeology, Queen's University Belfast. The conference is held in QUB and it is the only annual archaeological conference to take place in Ulster and the Ulster Archaeological Society continues to grow from strength to strength.

So, all in all, a very interesting forty years of digging in Ireland. Here's to the next forty!!

Ruairí Ó Baoill

October Lecture

The Society's October Lecture was given by former UAS President Ruairi O Baoill, of Queen's Centre for Community Archaeology. His lecture was titled "An Overview of the Viking-Age Archaeology of Ireland." Ruairi first encountered Viking archaeology while working at Dublin Castle in the 1980s.

Vikings started attacking Ireland at the end of the 8th century. They were not a political unit, kingdom or tribe as described by later historians, but Scandinavian raiders originating from parts of Norway,

Sweden and Denmark. The Vikings that attacked Ireland were generally of Norse origin, and may have been born and raised in western Scotland, compared to the Danish Vikings who attacked England and France.

The initial Viking impact in Ireland, from around 795 to 830, consisted of a series of hit-and-run-raids, the success of which depended on the element of surprise and swiftness of the raiders. The attackers would not remain long in the area and returned to Scandinavia with their spoils after their raids. However, in the 830s, their tactics changed. The Vikings began creating winter camps, such as possible bases near Arklow or the mouth of the River Boyne. The first mentioned are the 840-841 camps in Dublin and Annagassan in Co. Louth. They use the word longphort to describe these centres, which seems to note a defended enclosure designed to protect ships. A series of these bases were established in the mid-800s then abandoned after a few years, however there is evidence of occupation within or near them that took on a more permanent aspect. D-shaped defences along

ivers where ships could pull up and defend the encampment included Corbally, Co. Limerick and Summerhill Co. Clare. At Corbally, evidence of warfare in the form of iron axes, iron rings, and iron spear butts have been found. The documentary evidence shows that Dublin became a very important settlement during the second half of the 9th century, while the historical evidence for other longphorts is incomplete.

Archaeologically, the best evidence for 9th century Viking settlement is provided by Viking burials, whose distribution is coastal with a few exceptions. These burials suggest that Viking settlements did not go very far inland or that such bases did not last very long. The grave goods' insular nature is unusual for the time and may indicate people who had adapted to Irish ways. For example, Irish kings may have been recruiting Viking mercenaries in the early 9th century, with a burial at Navan reflecting such a person in the Co. Meath area.

Dublin was Ireland's first town, as it was the first settlement whose

economy was based primarily on craft-working and trading, and it had a recognisably urban structure. It has been the largest urban entity in Ireland since the 10th century, with a brief interlude when Belfast's population was higher in the late 19th century. It was viewed as a key power centre in Ireland since the 11th century by native, foreign, and ecclesiastical contemporaries.

Evidence for riverside activity was discovered at the 1996-1998 Copper Alley, Temple Bar West excavations. An unusual house-type was found at the lowest levels on site. The house was 7 metres long by 4 ½ metres wide, with a double set of load-bearing walls, an off-centre hearth, and a south-side entrance. Post hole material was radiocarbon-dated to the late 8th/early 9th century. This house bears no resemblance to any other Viking houses discovered in Dublin, with the closest parallels found in Anglo-Saxon England. A small Romano-British type double-sided comb was found inside this house. To the north of the house, the timber fence bounded the early line of the Liffey and the

manmade inlet that had been there from the 7th to the 9th centuries, at which point the inlet was filled in, and the area was ploughed and built upon by the Viking settlers in the mid-9th century. The majority of the Vikings that came to Ireland came from western Norway. From the mid-9th to the 11th centuries, the Vikings controlled Dublin, but ever after their decline in power, the Vikings continued to influence Dublin's economy, culture, and society until the coming of the Anglo-Normans in 1170 AD.

The site at Temple Bar West contained 15 Viking houses, dating to the late 9th and 10th centuries. At this time, Irish resistance to the Viking raids intensified, and in 902 AD, it seems that the Vikings were expelled from Dublin. These Vikings went to England, in particular to York. However, excavations in Dublin show no break in occupation in the 10th century, so it may have only been the Viking elite and soldiers who were expelled. The ordinary population may have remained, just under Irish rule. In 917 AD, Dublin was recaptured in an overland campaign, and the

settlement began to function more as a trading centre or emporium, rather than as the slave market that Norse and Irish writers tell us it thrived as. In the later 10th century, the Irish kings started targeting Dublin as a convenient source of wealth. Of the 25 battles between the Vikings and Irish listed in the contemporary annals, the Vikings only won 10 of these. After 944 AD, Dublin was recorded in the annals as a dun, or fortified settlement, reflected the need for defence against these attacks. Between 980 and 1014 AD, Irish attacks intensified, and the Dublin Vikings suffered 3 major defeats in battle: at Tara in 980 AD; Glenmama in 999 AD; and finally at Clontarf in 1014 AD. They permanently lost their autonomy as an independent kingdom in 1052 AD.

The town of Wexford was known to be a Viking settlement from the historical sources, with the name 'Ux's Fjord' meaning 'the ford of the waterlogged island.' The first reference to the foreigners of Loch Garman (the Irish name for Wexford) was in 888 AD. The first archaeological excavation to

confirm the Viking settlement was exactly 1100 years later. This excavation was directed by Ed Burke at a site on the corner of Bride Street and Main Street. The area available was only 7 metres by 8 metres, but preserved on site was 300 years of settlement, starting around the year 1000 and ending in the early 14th century.

Waterford was founded on the River Suir about 15 kilometres upstream from the open sea. The land west and north of Waterford is mountainous, but the Suir river valley provides easy access inland. This and the sheltered location of the city made Waterford one of Ireland's most important seaports for a millennium. The earliest Viking settlement in the Waterford area appears to be at Woodstown, five kilometres upriver from the present city. This was a *longphort*, enclosed by a ditch and wooden palisade, and was occupied roughly between 830 and 850 AD. The site appears to have been abandoned in the early 10th century, with a settlement established at the site of modern Waterford in 914 AD, the

traditional date for the founding of the city.

At Woodstown there was a Viking burial of a warrior uncovered. He was buried with a knife, whetstone, two swords (one broken deliberately), a ringed pin, and a spear. On the site were also found the foundations of a building structure. This site was declared a National Monument and is one of the few *longphort* sites systematically excavated to date. Finds from the site included a Viking weight with a man's face enamelled into the surface and a silver dirham coin from Wasit, southern Iraq dated to 742AD that bears a quotation from the Qur'an: 'There is no god but Allah. He has no associate.'

Cork was built upon the estuary islands in the marshy river valley of the River Lee, roughly 20 kilometres inland from the open sea. The Lee divides into separate channels that travel through Cork before emptying into Loch Mahon and then Cork Harbour, one of Europe's largest and best protected natural harbours. The original settlement was sited

slightly upstream from the top of the estuary loch, at what would have been the lowest fording point in the river. Thus, it is no surprise that such a culturally, commercially, and historically significant city developed here.

In Limerick, King John's Castle excavations went from 1990 to 1998, and uncovered 11th-12th century Hiberno-Norse houses, with many of them being the Type 4 sunken floor houses. Finds from these excavations included ring pins, combs, spearheads, a swan head pin found by Ruairi, and a silver penny. The major publication was published in 2016 by Ken Wiggins.

In 2001, burials were discovered at Truska, Connemara, County Galway. A small sub-rectangular Viking-age house with a ramp entrance cut by burials was also excavated in 2002. It appears to have been originally rectangular in plan and originally measured 4 metres by 2.5 metres, with 3 metres of one wall at a height of 65 centimetres surviving. It appears the house was abandoned around or shortly before the burials were

cut into the ramp entrance. Two men were found buried into the ramp entrance. Fragments of an early 10th century end plate of a decorated antler comb were recovered the house's floor.

While Viking influence had ended in Ireland by 1052 AD, their impact on Ireland has lasted into the present day in archaeological excavations and finds, place names, historical documents, and even in the Irish language. It is hoped that future excavations will add more information to the knowledge we have of Viking Ireland.

Courtney Mundt

November Lecture

The Society's November lecture was given by Prof Graeme Warren, University College Dublin. His lecture was titled 'The Archaeology of Hunter-Gatherer Ireland: asking better questions'.

Earliest evidence of human settlement in Ireland is at Mount Sandel (Londonderry) from around

8,000 BCE. There was a delay of about 1,500 years between settlement in England and Ireland, probably related to being an island and the distinctive flora and fauna.

Research into the Irish Mesolithic has been relatively poorly served with publications synthesising the evidence. Therefore, narratives of the Mesolithic focus on "campsites" and hunter-gathers rather than looking at wider society. Research into demographics has suggested Ireland had a low population and that this was associated with isolation and simple technology. However, these primitivist arguments are not necessarily based on facts but are a result of colonial legacies and thought.

Later Mesolithic blades have been described as coarse and crude tools. But many of these are well made and they may have served the communities as well as a more intricately produced blade. Previous studies compared Ireland to Tasmania. Both are islands separated from a larger island and it was argued that both saw regression in their material culture

alongside population decline. There are issues with the dataset used for predicting the Irish population. There are also problems with the comparative study in Tasmania. The decline of the aboriginal population of Tasmania was a myth purported by the colonial settlers who were trying to push them off the land. Tasmanian society was claimed to be the most primitive cultures identified by the European colonisations and they were seen as equating to European prehistory. More recent archaeological studies of the Tasmanian aboriginal culture have shown an expansive and dynamic society with trade networks and social complexity. The use of colonial-era Tasmania as a comparison for Ireland causes several issues for the study of the Irish Mesolithic. It makes the Mesolithic of Ireland look small and isolated. These studies have also neglected the structure of the population of Tasmania (clans and nations) and whether Ireland had a complex society too.

Analysis of radiocarbon dates from the Irish Mesolithic show an

increase in dated sites during the 6500 to 6000 climate anomaly. Not only are there more dates, but they are also spread further apart across Ireland. Rather than indicating an increase in population, this change is probably related to the uses and deposition of material culture. There is also a significant range of material culture, more than just bann flakes. Polished shale points are found in Ireland but not Britain. Cowrie shell beads from late Mesolithic Ireland have parallels with ones in Scotland.

The early Mesolithic of Ireland closely parallels the middle Mesolithic in Britain, both in dates and material culture. While the later Mesolithic in Ireland occurs the same time as the late and final Mesolithic of Britain. Late Mesolithic Britain sees regionalisation of material culture, similar to what is happening in Ireland.

Commercial archaeology has produced a significant amount of evidence for Mesolithic occupation, but it has generally been dismissed by researchers.

Much of what has been found are stake holes, pits, and burnt spreads. Rather than looking for 'shiny stuff', we need to use the evidence we have to think about society. Architecture seems to have been mobile and could be reconstructed many times. There's a need to better define terms referring to structures. Tents will leave very little trace in the archaeological record, but the associated activities will be shown by pits and stake holes. Tents seem to be the preferred form of accommodation, but why when they could build more substantial buildings (like Mount Sandel)? Ethnographic parallels show tents promote intimate living resulting in trust and sharing of resources, thus are important for societies.

It is possible that there was an increase in population towards the end of the Mesolithic, indicated by an increase in radiocarbon dates. Normally an increase in population results in a move away from egalitarian society. But that does not appear to be the case in Ireland, there was a continued commitment to living together,

sharing space and resisting inequality.

Duncan Berryman

December Lecture

The Society's December lecture was given by Dr Eóin Parkinson of Queen's University Belfast. His lecture was "Lesser Spotted Europe: a bioarchaeological approach to early farming lifestyles in southern Europe".

The central Mediterranean is the European story in one peninsula, from the Palaeolithic all the way to the foundation of the Roman empire, especially within the context of the spread of agriculture across the Mediterranean. The story of Neolithic Europe begins when humans spread into Europe via two main routes: The Danubian/Continental Route and the Mediterranean Route.

These different roadways actually had quite a major bearing on the genetic population structure of Neolithic Europe. There is a real marked distinction between early farmers on this overland Danubian/Continental route, which

has a distinct, tight genetic cluster, versus the genetic structure of those who took the Mediterranean Route. The Mediterranean genetics are much different, as the Mediterranean samples have a very far spread-out genetic drift that falls into a distribution based on geographic location. It shows that these small pioneering groups jumped from coastal enclave to coastal enclave and spread out in a higher level of movement than their Danubian/Continental counterparts.

The Neolithic in the Mediterranean is a dynamic process with regional variation. After an initial stall in the Balkans, the first farming sites inside of Italy come around by about 6100 BC. As early as 5950 BC, pioneer farming groups extent up into the north of Italy and the south of France. By about 6000 BC, these farming groups can be found in Sicily, the Maltese Islands and other parts of the Mediterranean region. Some parts of the region show a different picture, where for example in the Adriatic, the arrival of Neolithic farming groups is a much slower, muted process. By about 5500 BC

the Neolithic way of life was established across the entire region and can be considered a watershed moment in human history. However, this watershed moment has been watered down post-processual archaeology and by certain movements in terms of thinking about how fine this transition was or was not.

The density of radiocarbon dates over time within the central Mediterranean region that Parkinson and McLaughlin *et al* produced is a popular approach which has been used as a proxy for reconstructing population size. In their paper, there is a signal of a low population density in the pre-agricultural period coming in at around about 6100 BC. The spike from 6100 BC onwards was a signal of a population boom with the Neolithic, seen all over Europe. This spike is evidence of the introduction of agriculture and signals to researchers that there was a large booming fertile population in Europe starting at this time. The skeletal data supports this, and the genetic work also shows that there is a huge population boom with the

transition to agriculture. What's really interesting is that after that, things are never really the same again, and while there is a fluctuating pattern with sustained populations thereafter, it is only after the introduction of agriculture that such a huge increase is seen.

Body mass and body stature expression estimations from the Upper Palaeolithic into modern times show that in the Neolithic period, there is a pronounced decline with the transition to agriculture, but then there is recovery amongst established farming groups going into the Copper Age. There is also a smaller but similar decline in the Roman period, which seems to point to episodes of physiological stress that led to growth impairment, but this can be linked to times of marked social and economic change. It is worth noting that this trend of declining body size with the transition to agriculture in Neolithic is something that is seen almost on a global scale, especially in large parts of Europe. During the agricultural transition period with its sharp decline in body mass and

stature, there is a noted difference between men and women as well. Stature amongst males over time is quite volatile, but amongst women it fluctuates significantly less over time. This would indicate that there are different physiological responses to stress between men and women. Women are more buffered against episodes of physiological stress, and this is a pattern that can be seen over this 24,000-year story of humans

There is a big increase in the robusticity of the upper limb of the humerus during the Neolithic period. In comparison, there are slight decreases in this type of robusticity in the Metal ages and the Roman period. By comparing differences in the left and right upper limb and looking at patterns of asymmetry, what is seen is greater asymmetry and upper limb strength among men and less so among women. Men tended to have more strength on one side whereas women tended to have equal strength on both sides. This has been seen in other parts of Europe and the world. This data has generally been interpreted as males being involved in extra

domestic agricultural tasks which involve a lot of working with one hand versus women being involved in things such as bimanual food processing (using querns for grinding grain, etc.). The most crucial thing about this is that it actually shows that there is a whole new regime of activity and behaviours that come with agriculture.

With regards to stabilised isotopes, nitrogen 15 levels within bones shows a progressive decrease in nitrogen enrichment leading into the Neolithic in Northern Europe, in hunter-gatherer pre-agricultural populations, and in populations that were relying on marine resources (such as fish). That's not the case in the Mediterranean because agricultural groups there did not eat a lot of fish – they were relying on terrestrial resources - so there was not as profound of a signal. This pattern is quite multi-factorial, as it can be influenced by a number of different factors. It could be a signal of decreased consumption of protein over time, or it could be a signal of landscape degradation where there are fewer nutrients in the soil. This can be

stabilized by the inclusion of a faunal stable isotope baseline, which is the next step in this research.

A smaller example of this research is Fonteviva, Apulia, southern Italy, with two female individuals from a ditched village on the Tavoliere. This area is a large coastal plain in southern Italy, which saw a huge amount of settlement during the Neolithic. These settlements took the form of ditched enclosed villages, and the ditches were used to bury people, which is where the two females from Fonteviva were found. These remains were radiocarbon-dated with funds from the Prehistoric Society, and date to the apex of the population growth in the Neolithic. The stable isotope data for these individuals was slightly more nitrogen-enriched than most other Neolithic individuals from the same region, apart from a cluster of individuals from a nearby site. Comparing this work proved frustrating though due to a lack of directly dated burials. If this data could be looked at on a continuous, absolute timescale informed by radiocarbon

data, smaller, more interesting trends could be revealed.

Courtney Mundt

Current Research by postgraduate students within QUB ArcPal

The number of postgraduate researchers in ArcPal continues to grow and some of the newest wanted to take this opportunity to update UAS members on the current areas of research.

Masters Research

Researcher Name: Ryan Montgomery

Project Title: Thig Air Mo Chùlaibh: The role of dogs in Ireland from Prehistory to Medieval Period.

Project Abstract: "Thig Air Mo Chùlaibh" (Come to My Heel: Irish sheepdog command). This Masters research project will investigate the canine remains from a range of sites dating from the Mesolithic Period through to the Medieval Period in Ireland. The aim of this study is to gain insight into the

relationship between dogs and humans and identify how this relationship and treatment of the animals changed over time. This project will include zooarchaeological and isotopic investigations as well as an exploration of historical data and Irish folklore.

Researcher Biography: As well as zooarchaeology, Ryan has an interest in experimental archaeology and digital recording through aerial surveys and structure by motion capture.

Researcher Name: Jack Tubman

Project Title: Vegetation History and Prehistoric Human-Environment Interactions at Millin Bay Cairn, Co. Down.

Project Abstract: Millin Bay Cairn is a late Neolithic burial monument, situated near the southern tip of the Ards Peninsula, on the eastern coastline. This project seeks to employ palaeoecological methods to provide an environmental context for the archaeology of the site, in the hopes that light can be shed upon the nature of past

human activity, its timing, and the interplay between prehistoric human-environment interactions in the locality.

Researcher Biography: I am an Archaeology-Palaeoecology graduate (2022) with a keen interest in all things palaeoecology. I'm especially interested in human-environment interactions in prehistory, and how Holocene climate change has influenced both human and ecological development in Ireland, especially along the coastline.

Researcher Name: Liamog Magill

Project Title: The application of focus variation technology in morphological and topographic analysis of archaeological artifacts.

Project Abstract: An assemblage of shell beads was recovered in a mortuary context from a cave in the Trảng An Scenic Landscape Complex of northern Vietnam. This assemblage is tentatively dated to the Phung Nguyen Culture (c. 2,000 – 1,500 BC), a transitional late Neolithic Age – Early Bronze Age society. Statistical analysis of an assemblage of shell disc beads

revealed standardisation in manufacture. The current research is on identifying traces of manufacture on the surface of the beads using focus variation technology. Focus Variation Technology is typically used in the aerospace industry to identify microfractures in fuselage. It can create accurate 3D models while performing measurements of features down to 10nm vertical resolution and 400nm lateral resolution.

Researcher Biography: I am a graduate in Archaeology from QUB, interested in the late neolithic of Mainland Southeast Asia and China, particularly the advent of new technology and its relationship to changes in mortuary practices and grave goods. I have an interest in craftworking, replicating lost traditional craft methods and experimental archaeology.

Researcher Name: Maia Giles

Project Title: Can experimental archaeology be utilised to further our understanding of how Irish

Neolithic maceheads were used and manufactured?

Project Abstract: This research Masters aims to build upon the information gathered in my undergraduate dissertation, in which I previously explored how maces could be used as markers to map regional change and variation within the UK and Ireland. The second phase of my research will seek to address a new angle, focusing on how Neolithic maceheads were manufactured and used, particularly with respect to Irish maceheads. To do this successfully, an experimental approach will be undertaken to explore how a hole was created in a mace, how significant raw material and finishing techniques were, and if there is a correlation between type and use.

Researcher Biography: I am an Archaeology and Palaeoecology graduate carrying out a research masters in Archaeology at Queens university Belfast. My main interests centre around the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age period, Maceheads, fieldwork, and experimental archaeology.

Doctoral Research

Researcher Name: Elisabetta Dixon

Project Title: Radiocarbon Dating of Single Tree-rings - Annual Precision Records of Environmental Change

Project Abstract: Radiocarbon dating is a powerful tool made possible through the radiocarbon calibration curve which calibrates radiocarbon estimates to the calendar scale. The curve is built by carbon dating samples with a known calendar age, for example tree-ring dated wood. In the past, due to the need for large samples, such wood was cut into 10-ring blocks and so the accuracy of the curve was limited by the available data. As technology improves, we are now able to date samples as small as single tree-ring widths. The research project will focus on creating large numbers of new annual data. This will increase the accuracy of the radiocarbon calibration curve, which will not only improve our precision of dating specimens but will have a considerable impact on our ability to understand previous climate

activity and its relation to carbon levels. If we can match carbon levels to previous climate records, we can better understand the correlation between them, providing us with the strong potential to better predict and understand future changes in the environment.

Researcher Biography: Elisabetta Dixon studied Mathematics at the University of Sheffield for her undergraduate degree, spending a year abroad in Perugia in central Italy. She has always had a passion for archaeology and palaeoecology, and the applications of her mathematical and statistical capabilities to them. She has applied these skills by undertaking two summer research internships with Caitlin Buck and her team on Bayesian chronological modelling in 2019 and 2020. Elisabetta spent a month in both Peru and Spain pursuing archaeological field work experience and combining it with her love for travel in 2022.

Researcher Name: Cherie Edwards

Project Title: The Dynamics of Bronze Age upland settlement in Ireland and Northern Britain in a comparative perspective

Project Abstract: The project aims to utilize data from Bronze Age (second and early first millennium BC) sites in upland areas of Ireland and Northern Britain to examine the impact of environmental and socio-economic factors on settlement dynamics. To do so, the research will be focused on settlement patterns, shifts in landscape use patterns and evidence for roles played by climate change, landscape memory, and socio-economics (both locally and in a broader context). Scholarship has had a long-running debate about what caused visible social changes in middle-late Bronze Age landscape use and settlement. To date the bulk of the datasets used to support varying hypothesis has been generated from research done in Southern Britain. This project focuses on creating data sets for analysis that are geographically and regionally

specific to Ireland and Northern Britain.

Researcher Biography: Cherie has a MSc from the University of Edinburgh where she focused her Masters research on the Iron Age Brochs of Southern Scotland, a BA from St. Mary's College of California in Government and Politics and an AA in Archaeology. Prior to returning to the study of Archaeology, Cherie has spent 15 years in public policy focused on energy and infrastructure development, renewable resources and community engagement and outreach.

Researcher Name: James Dill-Russell

Project Title: Multi-proxy investigation of the effects of a drying climate on peatlands and human activity

Project Abstract: My research focuses on investigating ancient climates and their relationship to peatland environments. It will use sediment cores from peatlands across Northern Ireland and Scotland to collect data on

multiple proxies, including pollen, carbon and oxygen isotopes and tephrochronology to reconstruct past changes in peatland vegetation and peat formation.

Researcher Biography: I studied my undergraduate in Geology at the University of Southampton and my MSc in Palaeobiology at the University of Bristol.

Belfast 2024

Belfast 2024 is an ambitious creative celebration for our city next year. We will present a wide-ranging programme of creative local projects, events and city initiatives. We are inviting expressions of interest from the creative and civic sectors to commission a host of ideas, projects and events that we will develop with the city over the next year and present as part of our creative programme for Belfast 2024.

Open call for creative programme ideas - We're excited to give an opportunity to support bid ideas, imagination and ambition to create

this celebratory year of creativity for Belfast. There are three stages in this first open call. For stages 1 and 2, bidders must submit a form on Council's eSourcing. Successful bidders from these stages will receive funding to develop their idea to a full project plan in stage 3. The closing date for stages 1 and 2 is Wednesday 8 March 2023. For further information and to get a meeting with the Belfast 2024 Programme Team please visit www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Belfast2024

please contact Prof. Eileen Murphy – arcpal@qub.ac.uk

You can find out more information about the conference here - <https://www.e-a-a.org/EAA2023/>

European Association of Archaeologists Annual Meeting

The 2023 Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists will be held at Queen's University Belfast from 30th August to 2nd September. The organisers are keen to have members of the Ulster Archaeological Society involved in the conference as volunteers supporting the event. Further information will be sent to members. If you want to volunteer,

New Books

Rethinking Medieval Ireland and Beyond: Lifecycles, Landscapes, and Settlements – V. L. McAlister & L. Shine (eds)
Brill, €140

This volume is dedicated to Prof. Terry Barry, and contains a range of papers on topics central to his career and research. Medieval Ireland is the core, with one looking at Viking age Dublin and some at more modern landscapes. Several papers focus on a single site while others provide a much wider context for understanding Medieval Ireland. O’Conor’s paper on moated sites is important for their study and Murphy’s paper on possessions and identity provides a new look at medieval society.

These papers present the results of recent research and excavation. They mark important developments in our knowledge and understanding of Medieval Ireland and indicate new directions for future research. This will be an essential volume for anyone researching Medieval Ireland.

Hunter-Gatherer Ireland: Making connections in an island world
– Graeme Warren
Oxbow Books, £19.95

Explores the Irish Mesolithic - the period after the end of the last Ice Age when Ireland was home to hunter-gatherer communities, mostly from about 10,000-6,000 years ago. To understand the communities of hunter-gatherers who lived there, it is essential that we consider the connections established between people and the other beings and materials with which they shared the world and through which they grew into it. Understanding the Mesolithic means paying attention to the animals, plants, spirits and things with which hunting and gathering groups formed kinship relationships and in collaboration with which they experienced life.

The book closes with a reflection on hunting and gathering in Ireland today. The overriding aim of the book is to provide a point of entry into the lives of the Irish Mesolithic, to show the different ways in which people have lived on this island, and to show how we might narrate those lives.

Some of the speakers at Discovery 2022! (shared by Ryan Montgomery)



Some photos from workshops in 2022! (Shared by Lee Gordon)



Some of the speakers at Discovery 2022! (shared by Ryan Montgomery)



Front cover illustration (by Deirdre Crone): engraved bronze plate from the River Blackwater at Shanmullagh, Co. Armagh, one of an original four from a shrine or book cover; 8th century; Ulster Museum.

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