



ULSTER  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

# Newsletter

Autumn/Winter 2019

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Editor: Duncan Berryman

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# Discovery 2019!



## From the Editor

We've reached the end of another successful year for the UAS. We've had many interesting lectures and fieldtrips, our Survey Group has surveyed many exciting sites, we launched our latest UJA, and we've hosted the third conference on archaeology in Ulster. Each year our conference is growing, and we are already preparing for next year's.

Make sure to renew your membership so you can benefit

from all we have planned for 2020. As I go to press with this issue we are still finalising the programme of lectures. There are also many interesting fieldtrips to go on.

I look forward to seeing many of you throughout the year and I wish you all the best wishes for the year ahead.

**Duncan Berryman**  
Editor

### **Subscriptions are due on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020**

Subscriptions are due on the 1st January 2020. Please send cheques for £20 (full) or £7.50 (retired/student) to the Hon. Treasurer, Lee Gordon, at the address on the cover of the Newsletter. You can 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.

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N.B. Please notify the Secretary if you:

- Want to cancel this declaration
- Change your name or home address
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# Diary Dates

## Lectures

Monday 7.30 pm, Elmwood Building, QUB

20 <sup>th</sup> January	Dr Mélie Le Roy	Who was buried there? Funerary practices and selection in late Neolithic burial sites in Southern France.
24 <sup>th</sup> February	AGM	
30 <sup>th</sup> March	David Craig	Recent Remote Sensing in Co.Down
27 <sup>th</sup> April	Dr Gill Allmond	Asylums in Northern Ireland

## Field Trips

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> August – ‘Not the Giant’s Ring’ Evening trip to sites around the Giant’s Ring (Note that this is a Tuesday, not our usual Monday)

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August – One-day trip to Co. Tyrone (joint with Belfast Geologists)

6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> November – Discovery 2020! Conference (Elmwood Building, QUB)

Dates and locations of other trips to be finalised, info will be emailed.

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

# Annual General Meeting

The 78<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Ulster Archaeological Society will be held in the Lecture Theatre, Queen's University Elmwood Building, Elmwood Avenue, Belfast BT9, on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020, commencing 7.30pm.

## Agenda

1. President's Address.
2. Minutes of 77<sup>th</sup> AGM held on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019.
3. Honorary Secretary's Annual Report for 2019.
4. Honorary Editor Ulster Journal of Archaeology Annual Report for 2019.
5. Honorary Editor UAS Newsletter Annual Report for 2019.
6. Honorary Treasurer's Annual Report for 2019.
7. Election of Officers.
8. Election of two Ordinary Committee Members (3-year term).
9. Election of Honorary Auditor.
10. Business of which notice has been given.
11. Any other business.

Notices of motion and nominations for officers and committee positions should reach Mr Ken Pullin, Hon. Secretary, Ulster Archaeological Society, (c/o School of Natural & Built Environment, Elmwood Building, QUB, Belfast, BT7 1NN or email [ulsterarchaeolsoc@gmail.com](mailto:ulsterarchaeolsoc@gmail.com)) not later than Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020.

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.

Following the business of the AGM there will be a number of talks on topics of interest to members.

## Survey Group News

Having finished a very busy and interesting season of site surveys, the group has set up camp at the National Trust offices at Rowallane in order to focus on our research and report-writing. The facilities at Rowallane really are everything the group could wish for and we are deeply appreciative of the National Trust and particularly Mal Conway, for making these available to us.

We have also embarked on a more focused training programme, both to refresh our memories about our methods and equipment and to help our new members understand our sites and procedures. We are very fortunate to have a steady stream of new members, in addition to a core of long-standing members and we hope that through our training and exchange of experiences our members can get the best out of our activities. Our training programme includes topics such as Irish prehistory, Irish history, identifying and surveying medieval buildings, understanding the Griffiths Valuation, aerial and geophysical surveying, practical planning with tapes and also

electronic equipment and fieldwork health and safety. In addition, we are hopeful that as many of our members as possible can receive first aid training as part of the National Trust volunteer training scheme (one of the many benefits of being a volunteer group of the trust).

Our November meeting will be the last of 2019 and we look forward to next season, our fifteenth year! At present, we have surveyed 94 monuments and completed and published 82 reports on our website, with the remaining reports being worked on. We also hope to complete our one hundredth survey in 2020, which would be some achievement for the group and all their sustained hard work. Hopefully, we will be able to arrange a party to celebrate this during the season (another good reason to consider joining the group).

Thanks again to Mal Conway and the staff of the various National Trust properties that we have been to. Mal in particular has been an enthusiastic supporter of the survey group since its beginnings

in 2005 and we very much value everything he has done for us.

**Harry Welsh**  
Fieldwork Co-ordinator

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

The Ulster Archaeological Society and Archaeology and Palaeoecology, School of Natural and Built Environment at Queen's University Belfast, jointly hosted the Discovery 2019! Third Annual Review of Archaeological Discoveries in Ulster conference on November 8th and 9th 2019 at Queen's University Belfast. Since our last conference, the Society has published a new volume of the Ulster Journal of Archaeology, Volume 74, in Queen's University. The new journal is a festschrift in honour of the life and archaeological work of Dr Chris Lynn, a former President and long-

time Committee member of the Society. Our thanks to Cormac Bourke, the Hon. Editor, and Grace McAlister, the Hon. Assistant Editor of the Journal for getting two volumes of the Ulster Journal of Archaeology published in less than a year!

The launch of the Discovery 2019! conference took place on the Friday 8th November with a wine reception and with the conference keynote address given by Paul Mullan, the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Country Director for Northern Ireland. Paul's address on Heritage, Archaeology and Uses of the Past discussed how archaeology has been used by HLF-funded projects across the UK, with particular reference to Northern Ireland, to enable community engagement in heritage through its ability to involve people and capture their imagination about the past.

On Saturday 9th November, there was a full day of 17 short presentations and the wide range of papers, once again, gave a taster of the interesting and important archaeological work

currently being carried out across Ulster by heritage institutions and bodies, commercial archaeological companies and community groups.

There were two papers on the activities of the Ulster Archaeological Society's Field Survey Group during 2019- one summarising the activities of the Survey Group in 2019 and another detailing the UAS survey carried out at the late Victorian/ Edwardian garden at Redburn, Co. Down. Papers discussing the results of archaeological excavations included an account of the second season of digging at Early Christian and Medieval Downpatrick, Co. Down, the Medieval cemetery at Ranelagh, Co. Roscommon, a Viking-Age burial from Rathlin Island, Co. Antrim and the Premonstratensian Abbey in White Abbey, Co. Antrim. Two papers on Carrickfergus described the exciting work being carried out by the Carrickfergus Heritage Township Initiative at Dobbins Inn, in the historic town centre, and the HED's Carrickfergus Castle Great Tower Roofing Project. There were papers on material culture relating to metalworking and rural craft-

working in Later Medieval Ireland and on Late Bronze Age bridle in Ireland. There were fascinating papers on the rediscovery of monastic Derry's "Long Tower" and new interpretations of the prehistoric rock carvings at the Isle of Doagh, Inishowen Co. Donegal. Other interesting papers presented at the conference included those covering education, outreach and community archaeology in Northern Ireland, an update on the HED's Historic Environment Record of Northern Ireland (HERoNI), the work of HED/ DAERA on conserving the marine heritage, the ongoing work by National Museums NI imputing archaeological finds onto the museum's database and an account the Earl of Sussex campaigns in Ulster in 1566-57 that throw light on the Gaelic landscape of the time, and the various monuments within it.

We would like to thank all the speakers who generously shared their discoveries with us, the people who chaired the various conference sessions, those who assisted in the hosting of the conference and, especially,



everyone- both members of the public and members of the archaeological community-who came together at the conference to discuss and learn about the new archaeological projects, research and publications taking place in Ulster. The conference was, once again, generously supported by funding from the Culture and Society Research Cluster in the School of Natural and Built Environment at Queen's University Belfast and we are very grateful for their continued support.

The Discovery 2019! conference was a great success and almost 100 people attended over the two days, another impressive turnout. It is further evidence the annual Discovery conference has now been established as the most important yearly archaeological conference in Ulster. As for the last two years, we have put photographs from the conference weekend on both the UAS Facebook site:  
[www.facebook.com/The-Ulster-Archaeological-Society-190943297657719/](https://www.facebook.com/The-Ulster-Archaeological-Society-190943297657719/) as well as the 'Archaeology at Queen's'  
Facebook site:

[www.facebook.com/archaeologyatqueensbelfast/](https://www.facebook.com/archaeologyatqueensbelfast/) An archive of material relating to the conference will shortly be put up on the UAS website  
<https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/uas/Conference/>.

Our planning for the Discovery 2020! conference is now underway and it will take place at Queen's University Belfast on 6th and 7th November 2020. We will be circulating information about the conference to UAS members as details are confirmed.

We hope to see you all again at Discovery 2020!

**Ruairí Ó Baoill**  
**President**

## September Lecture

Our September lecture was given by Prof Dan Bradley of Trinity College Dublin. It was about ancient genomics and Irish human prehistory.

The study of genetics has developed into a much wider field called genomics. This field covers all of human genes and inheritance, combining vast amounts of data. Many people who work in the field are data scientists rather than medics. Genomics can tell us much about past human populations, such as – migration, kinship, physical attributes, and infections.

Ancient DNA provides many additional issues to researchers. For example, an excavated human long bone has only 1% human DNA, the rest is made up of soil and microbe DNA. To overcome this, the petrous bone is analysed; it is a much harder bone than elsewhere in the human body and retains about 35% of its DNA.

Analysis is carried out on 500,000 variables in the genome. When

graphed, this can produce a pattern that is identifiable as the modern map of Europe. This is similar to, but more detailed, the genealogy tests that can be bought off the internet. However, the map of Europe has changed over centuries. Analysis of Ötzi's genome placed him in modern Sardinia, yet his stable isotopes indicated that he was local to the Alps.

To understand the genetic landscape in the past, TCD began a study of ancient genomes. Some of the samples included a Mesolithic burial from Sramore Cave (Leitrim), a Neolithic burial from Ballynahatty (Down), and a Bronze Age burial from Rathlin (Antrim).

The Mesolithic genome mapped to where the Faroes would be today. This was similar to hunter-gathers found across Britain and north-western Europe. There was probably continuity because of the land bridge of Doggerland.

The Neolithic genome maps to somewhere south of Spain. There is too great a difference for this to

be the result of inter-population changes. This suggests a large influx of people from continental Europe.

The Bronze Age genome is similar to British and Scottish genomes today but is very different from the Neolithic one. Again, this indicates a large migration of people into the British Isles.

These changes suggest there were three genetic groups across Europe after the ice age. One was the Mesolithic population of Britain, one was in Anatolia and another was in Iran. Between 5,500 and 2,500 BCE there was an influx of Anatolian genome across Europe. Between 2,500 and 1,000 BCE saw a spread of the Iranian genome across Europe. This second influx originated in the Steppes of Europe.

The flows of genomes also match some of the proposed flows of language. Cognate words have a commonality across the Indo-European world. The two suggested origins for the Indo-European language are Anatolia (Renfrew) and the Steppes

(Gimbutas & Mallory). These match with the two origins of influxes of genomes. The Mesolithic language disappeared with the arrival of farming.

The Neolithic migration appears to have been 50/50 male and female. However, the Bronze Age migration was 20:1 male to female, indicating a migration that was not as peaceful as the Neolithic.

Ireland's genome has always been quite different from elsewhere. Modern characteristics include fair skin, freckles, lactase persistence into adulthood, Galactosaemia (1 in 110), Phenylketonuria (1 in 34), and world maximum in haemochromatosis and cystic fibrosis. Haemochromatosis, fair skin, and lactase were all present in the Bronze Age population.

**Duncan Berryman**

## October Lecture

The October lecture, 'Probing the Hill of the Fairies: Recent Fieldwork and Excavation at Knocknashee, Co. Sligo' was given by Dr Dirk

Brandherm and Dr Cormac McSparron. The lecture summarised fieldwork and excavation completed in 2016 and 2017 as part of the Knocknashee Project funded by the Royal Irish Academy.

Knocknashee is a limestone hill with a flat-topped plateau approximately 700m x 300m in size. The spectacular plateau which has long attracted the attention of antiquarians and archaeologists has multiple roundhouse features, two cairns, a perimeter bank and post-medieval walls. The cairns and roundhouses were conventionally dated to the Neolithic and the perimeter bank was thought to be Late Bronze age. Knocknashee is one of a number of elevated settlement sites in the West of Ireland, some of which were discussed by Dr Stefan Bergh at a previous UAS lecture in September 2018.

The Knocknashee Project was a two-stage project with the first part a programme of topographic and geophysical survey. The main objectives of this survey work was to establish if the houses and cairns

were contemporary, establish how many archaeological structures were present there on the summit, understand the morphology of the structures, establish how many different types of structure there were and also work out their spatial relationship to each other and the site. The team used GPS survey, drone aerial imagery and LiDAR to identify 51 definite structures, 16 potential houses and some post-medieval rectangular structures. The geophysical survey of the site (conducted by Earthsound Geophysics) helped to identify other enclosing structures and areas of higher human activity. The survey also revealed that the houses and tombs were in two distinct areas. Furthermore, there were two clusters of settlement with a possible corridor or routeway between them.

The second stage of the project was the excavation which was carried out in 2017. The objectives of the excavation were to establish the age of the roundhouse structures, their function and their relationship between the cairns and the other structures. A long trench measuring 36m was

positioned across three of the roundhouses. The excavation revealed that the lower parts of the walls were stone-faced both on the inside and the outside with earth packing in between. Excavation in the interior of the houses, revealed earth-packed floors but no central hearths were identified. Finds included worked chert, coarse pottery, a ground stone disk and number of naturally occurring fossil corals, one which appears to have been worked. A butt trimmed flint blade was also found at the base of one of the walls, indicating the disturbance or the redepositing of Late Mesolithic material. 16 samples were submitted for radiocarbon dating and were mostly Late Bronze Age in date, suggesting that construction of the houses excavated, commenced in the 12th century BC between 1180 - 1130BC with continued to the 10th century BC.

To conclude the results from the project suggest that the roundhouses at Knocknashee are not Neolithic adding to evidence that many elevated roundhouses settlements in the west of Ireland appear to be Late Bronze Age in

date. Excavation also suggests that Knocknashee is one of only a few examples of hillforts in Ireland with a nucleated settlement within the interior..

**Grace McAlister**

## Co. Galway Field Trip

The first day of our Co Galway study tour was spent in the highly informative and entertaining company of archaeologist Paul Gosling of the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, and one of his students, Seely Pratt. Our first stop was at Ballynacloghy Portal Tomb which lies close to the shore at the east end of Galway Bay. Although somewhat collapsed and overgrown, the monument is still impressive with its huge capstone lying against one of the portal stones. The interior has been disturbed and it is said fragments of cremated bone and teeth were found in it.

Nearby, we visited Ballynamanagh East, the site of a cillín within a poorly preserved circular cashel

defined by a collapsed drystone wall. The cillín consists of a roughly square area delimited by a line of boulders. Within it lie numerous small set stones indicating the graves. Two larger slabs are visible at the west and immediately to southeast is a plain stone cross.

Continuing to Kinvara, past the picturesque Dunguaire Castle which was built in 1520 by the O'Heyne family on a rocky outcrop on the shores of Galway Bay, we met members of the Kinvara Heritage Group. They gave us unusual access to the remains of the medieval parish church of St Coman, now landlocked behind houses in the town. The church dates from the 13th century, sited on a strategic hill at the head of Kinvara Bay, on an earlier monastic site. Despite the nettles and other undergrowth, we managed to negotiate our way around the graveyard and were told the history of the site and managed to see a few of the remaining architectural elements of the building, noting substantial rebuilding in the late 15th/16th century. One of the highlights is a piece of 13th century graffiti

carved on a corner stone. The depiction of a comical-looking figure is probably the work of a disgruntled stonemason, carved just before the building would have been plastered. The Heritage Group is to be congratulated for preserving this important church for future generations.

After lunch, we continued to Kilmacduagh in the south of the county, where Paul showed us the extensive remains of the monastic complex, originally founded in the 6th century by St Cólman MacDuagh. The upstanding remains date to the 11th/12th century onwards and include a fine round tower standing 34m high, Templemore Macduagh (Kilmacduagh cathedral) and remains of several subsidiary churches. Most have been altered in the 15th century.

We also investigated the Glebe House, thought to have served as both a bishop's residence and seminary for the education of priests. It probably dates to the 13th century, but a number of major alterations are evident, most recently the restoration which

involved re-roofing the east half of the building with a gabled roof and crenellated parapet.

Close by is the Augustinian monastery, built by the O'Heynes in around 1230 to replace the earlier monastery which was ruined during the conflict of the early 13th century. The church has several examples of sculpture characteristic of the 'School of the West'. A later range of conventual buildings lies to the south of the east end of the nave.

Our next site was supposed to be Kiltiernan Monastic Site, a well preserved Early Christian ecclesiastical enclosure with internal divisions and the remnants of a small church, originating in the 9th/10th century. However, a very large bull guarding his harem of cows with their calves persuaded us that the site might best be left for another day. A pity, as the site has been well excavated but never built over, so it has much of interest and is unlikely to be preserved for much longer under the weight of many tons of beef on the hoof.

Paul then took us to another church nearby at Kileely. The late medieval pointed doorway in the south wall and the semi cyclopean masonry in the building points to an earlier structure being later modified. The double-oped east window is of early 13th century style as is the ogee headed piscina in the south wall. A bullaun stone also survives inside the church, a nod to its early foundation. We were very grateful to have Paul as our guide for the day, and enjoyed being "off the beaten track" with someone so willing to share his knowledge and passion of this corner of south Galway with us. Thanks from us all, Paul! And Seely, I hope your exams went well.

The following day we headed to Athenry, starting with a visit to the castle. Meiler de Bermingham's castle originally consisted of a 2-storey keep and a rectangular hall built within a curtain wall. The keep has, unusually, some School of the West decoration, notably on the 1st floor entrance and windows. We saw an AV relating to the history of the castle and town before heading up modern stairs

to the upper floor (raised perhaps as early as 1250) where a nest of jackdaw eggs attracted a lot of attention, tucked in behind a window. (They hatched successfully a few days later). Thanks to the OPW staff who showed us around the castle.

Our next stop was the Athenry Heritage Centre on the site of the medieval St Mary's Parish Church, parts of which still remain, even after the 19th century church was built. We were taken through interactive exhibits of weaponry, the market square, the dungeon and model displays of the medieval town, and the staff demonstrated medieval armour and scold's bridles, modelled by "willing" volunteers from the group.

Next stop was the Dominican Friary, also founded by Meiller de Bermingham in 1241. Here we saw more examples of the School of the West style of ornamentation on tomb niches, typical of the period in this area. The church also contained several medieval and 17th century grave slabs with interesting carved decorations.

After lunch, we headed to Moanmore to see the unusual stone circle set within an embanked feature. Excavations in the early 20th century were inconclusive in terms of finds or dating evidence, however there has recently been a suggestion that this monument could now be classified as a radial-stone cairn.

Pallas Castle is considered to date from around 1500 when it was built by a branch of the Burke family, descendants of the Anglo-Norman de Burghs who had seized territory in this part of Galway. The five storey tower house remains in exceptionally good condition, surrounded by a rectangular bawn dating to the 17th century. It has a two storey gatehouse with machicolation above the entrance on the east side, and turrets at the northeast and southeast corners. There are small rectangular bartizans at the northwest and southwest corners. A fortified house was also attached to the tower house in the 17th century but it was removed in the 19th century to build a new, modern house (now gone). These "fortifications" seem to have been



for show, rather than military function, and were never put to the test.

The final visit of the day was to St Brendan's Cathedral and Clonfert Diocesan Museum in Loughrea. The cathedral, built between 1897 and 1902 is noted for its collection of Celtic Revival and Arts and Crafts artefacts and is the greatest showcase of the artistry of An Túr Gloine (The Tower of Glass), one of Ireland's most remarkable stained glass studios. Local historian Gerard McInerney pointed out the intricacies of the splendid woodwork and stained glass windows before taking us cross to the small museum, stuffed with ecclesiastical treasures. Many thanks, Gerard!

**Anne MacDermott**

## South Co. Armagh & North Co. Louth Geoarchaeology Field Trip

17<sup>th</sup> August 2019 Leader: Dr Ian Meighan. Joint with the Belfast Geologists' Society

A good attendance (40) and favourable weather. For logistic reasons the Slieve Gullion South Passage Tomb was not visited. So the first locality was the Ballymacdermot Court Tomb, constructed from Newry Granodiorite and damaged by a US tank during World War 2!

Then the Clorotygora Court Tomb, which utilized a younger granitic rock, Porphyritic Granophyre (glacial erratics possibly from the nearby Slieve Gullion Ring Dyke). The third locality was Proleek where the classic portal tomb and wedge tomb were examined.

Our final stop was at Dromiskin, Co. Louth, where the round tower and High Cross were inspected. The leader distributed handout sheets with the day's programme and geological definitions – these proved popular! Thanks to all participants and our but driver Mark of Agnews.

**Ian Meighan**

## New Books

*The Irish Tower House*, Victoria McAlister  
Manchester University Press, £80

In this book, McAlister looks at tower houses from the perspective of their functions and place in the landscape. This is an interesting study as it reminds us that what appear to be isolated structures today were once surrounded with settlements and agricultural buildings. She also considers their association with rivers and the importance of rivers in the Irish landscape. One chapter is devoted to the urban tower house, emphasising the similarity of the buildings and the rural nature of Ireland's urban settlements. The final chapter looks at Ireland's place in the wider world, discussing the role of the tower house in trade with Europe and America.

This is the first book to focus entirely on tower houses, one of the most common archaeological monuments in Ireland. McAlister spends little time discussing the appearance of tower houses or their features; instead she focuses on their importance within the

landscape. This is an informative and refreshing approach to tower house studies, although a chapter on morphology would have been helpful for the non-expert reader. This will become an important book for anyone studying many aspects of medieval and early-modern Ireland.

*Hillforts: Britain, Ireland and the Nearer Continent*, edited by G. Lock & I. Ralston  
Archaeopress, £45

This volume of papers presents a range of examples from the Atlas of Hillforts of Britain and Ireland project along with a few European comparisons. The opening chapters discuss the Atlas and its background. There follows chapters on the hillforts of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. These chapters are extensively illustrated and discuss site morphology. Three chapters provide an analysis of the data within the Atlas to broaden our understanding of these structures. The final three papers look at hillforts from France, Cantabria and southern Germany. This is a very interesting volume and provide new information about hillforts.



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