



ULSTER  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

# Newsletter

Spring 2023

---

Editor: Duncan Berryman

---

School of Natural  
and Built Environment,  
Queen's University Belfast  
Belfast BT7 1NN

---

newsletter.ulsterarcoc@gmail.com

Find us online at: [uas.society.qub.ac.uk](http://uas.society.qub.ac.uk) | Find us on Facebook and Twitter (@UlsterArcSoc) | Email us at: [ulsterarchaeosoc@gmail.com](mailto:ulsterarchaeosoc@gmail.com)

Find us on Facebook and Twitter (@UlsterArcSoc) | Email us at: [ulsterarchaeosoc@gmail.com](mailto:ulsterarchaeosoc@gmail.com)

Find us on Facebook and Twitter (@UlsterArcSoc) | Email us at: [ulsterarchaeosoc@gmail.com](mailto:ulsterarchaeosoc@gmail.com)



## 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>

29 <sup>th</sup> May	<b>Understanding dugout boats and their interaction within their receiving environment in Northern Ireland, through discoveries from recent weather events and experimental archaeology.</b> Dr Niall Gregory, Gregory Archaeology
11 <sup>th</sup> September	<b>Visualising the Past: the use of 3D technologies in the interpretation and conservation of cultural heritage</b> Dr Eimear Meegan, Discovery Programme
25 <sup>th</sup> September	<b>Aspects of Medieval Co Antrim in the 12th/13th century</b> Dr Tom McNeill
23 <sup>rd</sup> October	<b>Purdysburn Villa Colony - Archaeological Perspectives on the Treatment of Mentally Ill Patients in Belfast</b> Dr Gill Allmond
27 <sup>th</sup> November	<b>Ballynahatty Prehistoric Landscape</b> Barrie Hartwell

# Fieldtrips 2023

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May

## **Visit to Ballyduggan Medieval Village**

Details will have been circulated to those already booked.

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June

## **Tour of Carlingford and Greencastle**

The UAS will be having a one-day field trip by coach on Saturday 17th June to Carlingford and Greencastle led by Dr Tom McNeill. This will be by coach, starting and finishing at QUB. The cost is £20 per person. Places are limited so if you would like to go, please contact Anne MacDermott [macdermottanne@gmail.com](mailto:macdermottanne@gmail.com)

Monday 19th June – 6pm

## **Tour of 14-CHRONO Centre and facilities in Queen's University Belfast**

The UAS will be given a tour of the new accelerator-mass-spectrometer within the 14-CHRONO Centre as well as some of the other new machines for material analysis. Meet in the foyer of the Archaeology & Palaeoecology building on Fitzwilliam Street, the tour will start at 6pm. Places are not limited, but please notify [duncan@ulsterarchaeology.org](mailto:duncan@ulsterarchaeology.org) so we have an idea of numbers.

# Subscriptions 2023

Full and Retired Members are reminded that UAS subs for 2023 were due on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023. Please send a cheque, payable to the Ulster Archaeological Society, for £28 (Full) or £33 (Full non-UK) or £10 (Retired) or £13 (Retired non-UK) or £7.50 for new Student (UK & non-UK), to the Hon. Treasurer, Lee Gordon, 135 Old Holywood Road, Belfast BT4 2HQ.

You can use PayPal on the website <http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/uas/JoinUs/>

Paid up student members at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 do not have to renew until 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

## January Lecture

The Society's January lecture was given by Cormac Bourke, former curator at the Ulster Museum and Honorary Editor of the Ulster Journal of Archaeology. The lecture was – St. Brigid's Shoe: A Religious Statement made in 1710.

Cormac's lecture described his ongoing research into an intriguing religious relic from Loughrea near Galway in the west of Ireland. The relic is in the form of a metal (brass) shoe or, as it has sometimes been referred to, a slipper. Cormac looked at its origins and history, a description of the object, why and by whom it was made, possible sources of inspiration for the shoe's design and speculation as to its use at the time.

The shoe is first mentioned in the literature by Petrie, collector and historian, in 1870. It was in Petrie's "cabinet", having been purchased from a priest. It was described by Petrie as a metal shoe, impact damaged with a missing side. References were made to it in 1922 and 1923 (Armstrong, Crawford) and again in 1941. It seems to have been repaired or restored in or

around the 1960s and is currently in the National Museum of Ireland.

The shoe has various images and inscriptions "engraved" on it. These include John the Baptist (head), settings for stones, floral ornamentation on the heel and a human figure in a long "dress", hatched belt, possible veil and wimple and displaying stigmata on both hands. Cormac concluded that this figure does represent Saint Brigid based on a detailed analysis of evidence. This evidence included an inscription naming St. Brigid (another inscription mentions John the Baptist), and a reference to "Lochreich" (i.e. Loughrea) where there is a St. Brigid's well.

The shoe also has an inscribed date which Petrie originally suggested was 1410. However, Cormac showed examples of old gravestones etc. from the area where the "7" resembled a modern "4" and concluded that the date on the shoe is 1710. Other evidence, for example style and other references, backs up the 1710 date.

The shoe is made of sheet metal and is relatively simple in style suggesting it was locally made – very elaborate metal work was being produced at the time and Cormac showed some of these. However, the image of St. Brigid bears a striking resemblance to various images of female saints in paintings from as far afield as Europe (e.g. Sienna) suggesting a wide-based inspiration for the image. Also, the floral design on the shoe's heel is similar to that on dress shoes of the period. Several examples illustrating these points were shown.

Finally, why was it made? Cormac suggested it may have been a "counterblast" to the restrictive anti Catholic Penal Laws of 1709, producing a local object which could be revered in the traditional way.

Overall, a deeply researched study of this intriguing object.

**Randal Scott**

## March Lecture

The Society's March Lecture was given by Dr Heather Sebire, currently a Senior Historic Property Curator for Stonehenge at English Heritage. Her lecture was: Stonehenge: a Curator's view.

Stonehenge and Avebury are now a single UNESCO World Heritage Site. With their inter-related monuments, they help us to understand the Neolithic and Bronze Age ceremonial landscape from 3700 and 1600 BCE. The area of the World Heritage Site around Stonehenge covers 2,600 hectares (26 sq. km) and contains at least 700 archaeological features.

There are several sites within the landscape that are older than Stonehenge – Mesolithic pits, the Cursus, and Winterbourne Stoke long barrow. There are many sites dating to the time of Stonehenge – the Avenue, Woodhenge, Durrington Walls. Later sites within the landscape include Normanton Down barrow group.

Stonehenge is a complex multi-period monument, but it can be divided into three broad phases.

The earliest construction was a circular ditch with an inner and outer bank about 100m in diameter (3,000 BCE). The cut chalk would have been white and clearly visible in the landscape. Inside the bank was a ring of 56 holes, probably for posts and contained cremated bone (3,000-2,000 BCE). The second phase sees the construction of the stone monument, around 2,500 BCE. The bluestones were arranged in various configurations and possibly predate the sarsen horseshoe and circle. One of the final phases was the erection of two rings of posts between the stones and the ditch around 1,800 BCE. The earthworks were cut by antler picks. The sarsens were brought from the Marlborough Downs, 30km to the north. The bluestones came from the Preseli Hills in south Wales, about 240km to the west. One of the features that makes Stonehenge the most complex prehistoric monument is the mortice and tenon joints that hold the sarsens together. In 1877 Flinders Petrie planned the site and numbered the stones, a numbering system still used today.

The new visitor facilities at the site were designed to provide a more suitable experience for the many visitors. A greenfield site was chosen in the far corner of the World Heritage Site. The A344 was grassed over and part is used for bringing visitors to the stones. The centre and the car park were designed to be sympathetic to the landscape and reversible. English Heritage had to borrow artefacts from local museums to create a permanent exhibition. The visitor centre has been open for 10 years and is preparing to update in light of new research.

The current exhibition tries to place the stones in a wider context and recreate the contemporary landscape. It also presents a range of theories about the purpose of the monument. There is an external gallery recreating Neolithic houses for visitors to experience life for the builders. A temporary exhibition shows similarities between Stonehenge and prehistoric Japan.

There is a proposal to put the A303 road into a tunnel but there is a lot of controversy around it as

it would have an impact on the archaeology. A longer tunnel is desired but will be costly.

Recently, conservation work was carried out to remove concrete from the trilithons to secure the lintels.

**Duncan Berryman**

## Vernacular Buildings and Historic Farms

I am organising two conferences in Ulster for national groups – the Vernacular Architecture Group and the Historic Farm Buildings Group. The conferences will take place in late spring or early summer 2024. Over the course of a week these groups will visit a range of vernacular buildings. We have still to work out the areas the groups will visit. I would be grateful to hear from any members who own vernacular buildings (or know someone who does) and would be willing to allow these groups to visit. You can contact me via email: [duncan@ulsterarchaeology.org](mailto:duncan@ulsterarchaeology.org)

**Duncan Berryman**

## Potential Kilclief Early Church Site

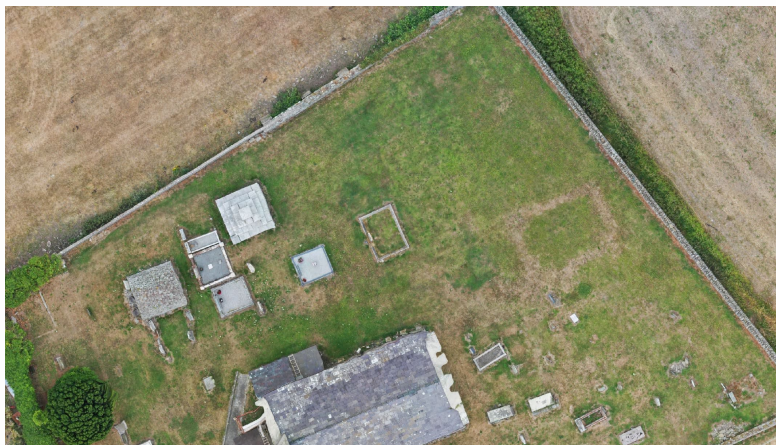
Kilclief Church was over flown with drone while acquiring images for photogrammetry of the area in July 2021. An unusual rectangular parch mark was noticed in the graveyard being wider and larger than other mausoleum structures already present on the site. Measurements can only be approximate due to potential tumble and the 'hazy' edge nature of a parch mark. The shorter (gable) wall is approximately 0.85m thick. Its internal measurements are 6.22m by 4.31m. by comparison the church at St Johns Point measures 6.1m by 3.96m with a wall thickness of 0.71m. It is therefore suggested that this parch mark could be the remains of an earlier church at Kilclief with its dimensions almost exactly the same as the St Johns Point Church. If so, this could be on the site of an earlier wooden church.

**David Craig**

Photos on the back cover  
© 2023 David Craig | HeritageNI.com



## Potential Kilclief Early Church Site



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.