



ULSTER
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Newsletter

Winter 2023/24

Editor: Duncan Berryman

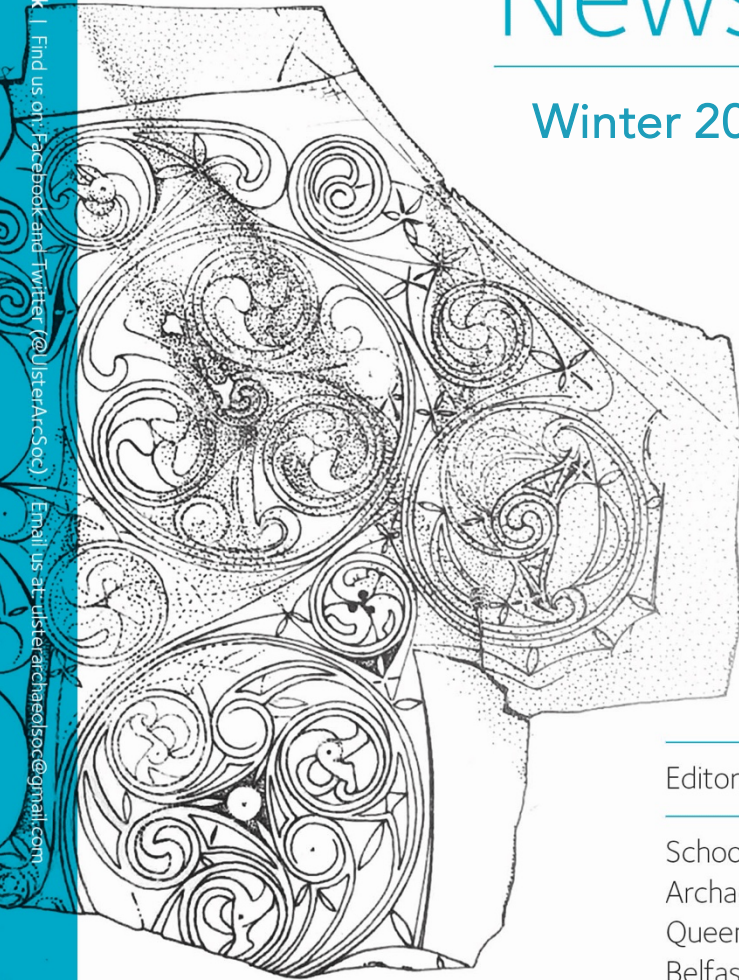
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A Message from the President

I hope you have had a very happy festive season and I send my best wishes to all our members for a happy, healthy and prosperous 2024. Winter is certainly upon us and tramping round the countryside to visit archaeological sites may not seem just as appealing as staying warm indoors and perhaps reading all those books we got for Christmas. However, there is still plenty to do to keep enjoying archaeology and history in Ulster. Nothing wrong with a bit of armchair exploring! Here are a few very random suggestions for “virtual” visits to our many excellent museums and their contents to get you started.

www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/see-do/arts_museums/museums-services/ballymoney-museum

www.thebraid.com/exhibition-specific.aspx?dataid=175252

visitarmagh.com/places-to-explore/armagh-county-museum/research-geneology/archaeology/

www.visitmournemountains.co.uk/museums/whats-on/for-the-curious-and-interested-a-british-museum-touring-exhibition-p874871

towermuseumcollections.com/maritime-collections/

www.ulsteramericanfolkpark.org/whats-on/bad-bridget

www.enniskillencastle.co.uk/explore-the-castle/

cavanmuseum.ie/virtual-tour

Nonetheless, I hope to see lots of you at our upcoming lectures in person. Please join us for a cuppa before the talks and enjoy a bit of social interaction – an important aspect of the UAS.

Best Wishes

Anne MacDermott
President, Ulster Archaeological Society

Membership Subscriptions

Full and Retired subscriptions are due on the 1st January 2024.
Please send a cheque, payable to the **Ulster Archaeological Society**, for £28 (Full) or £33 (Full non-UK) 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.

You can use **PayPal** via <http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/uas/JoinUs/>

Or by **Bank Transfer** to Ulster Archaeological Society (Ulster Bank)

Sort Code. **98 01 30**

Account Number **15587062**

Please include your name in the reference so we know who is paying!

Paid up student members at 31st December 2023 do not have to renew until 1st October 2024.

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. Treasurer, Lee Gordon, 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 2024

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 th January	The Valley of Dry Bones: Belfast's forgotten burial grounds Dr John Ó Néill, IAC Archaeology
26 th February	AGM
25 th March	The Deconstruction of HED? Rhonda Robinson, Historic Environment Division
29 th April	A Population Census for the Ancient Irish Dr Rowan McLaughlin, Maynooth University
27 th May	TBC

Fieldtrips 2024

Fieldtrips for 2024 are still to be confirmed and the Hon. Secretary will circulate updates. A study tour has been arranged to County Westmeath from 8th to 11th September 2024.

Ulster Journal of Archaeology

Volume 78 of the Ulster Journal of Archaeology is due to be published in early spring 2024. This will be distributed only to members who have paid their membership subscription for 2024.

Annual General Meeting

The 82nd 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 26th February 2024

Meeting ID: 869 7088 4687

Passcode: UAS_AGM_24

Only paid-up members can vote during the AGM

Agenda

1. President's Address.
2. Minutes of 81st AGM held on Monday 27th February 2023.
3. Honorary Secretary's Annual Report for 2023.
4. Honorary Treasurer's Annual Report for 2023.
5. Election of Officers.
6. Election of two Ordinary Committee Members (3-year term).
7. Provision of Auditing for 2024.
8. Business of which notice has been given.
9. Any other business.

Notices of motion and nominations for officers and committee positions should reach Ms Gina Baban, Hon. Secretary, Ulster Archaeological Society, (c/o Department of Archaeology, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1NN or email secretary@ulsterarchaeology.org) by Monday 12th February 2024.

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 presentation of photographs from 2023 fieldtrips.

September Lecture

September 2023 saw two lectures presented to the UAS. The first of these was Dr Eimear Meegan of the Discovery Programme talking about the use of 3D technologies in the interpretation and conservation of cultural heritage.

Dr Meegan gave an excellent overview of how 3D technology has been used by the Discovery Programme to help understand and protect Ireland's heritage. She began her talk looking at the history of virtual reconstructions in archaeology and the development of the technology.

Research at Çatalhöyük (Turkey) has revolutionised the use of 3D recording, using immersive virtual reality to increase the understanding of contexts during the excavation. Similar technology has been used to record the recently discovered passage tomb at Dowth Hall (Meath).

Laser scanning has been used by the Discovery Programme to record monuments like Newgrange, buildings including Leinster House (Dublin), and

landscapes such as Tara. Photogrammetry has helped to improve the models produced. Landscape surveys can also highlight costal erosion and damage to sites, such as at Dunbeg (Kerry). 3D recording of sites and buildings helps to inform their conservation.

You can find out more about the work of The Discovery Programme on their website - <https://discoveryprogramme.ie>

Duncan Berryman

September Lecture

The second lecture in September was given by Dr Tom McNeill. Dr McNeill lectured on a topic he has been working on for many years – 'Economy and society in Co. Antrim 1100-1300: innovation, evolution and continuity'.

There were two major upheavals in 12th century Ulster – the reform of the Church and the arrival of the Anglo-Norman lords. The reform of the Church has been overshadowed by the Anglo-

Normans and been neglected by historians. A focus on Antrim covers a range of farming landscapes and social groups.

The reform of the Church aimed to create a formal structure to the organisation with the Pope at the top. Synod of Ráth Breasail (1111) introduced the changes, resulting in too many bishops. The creation of the Parish made a significant change to the position of the Church in the community. Tithes to the new priests required defined boundaries within the Irish landscape (these hadn't existed before) and the communities were responsible for paying this tax. St Malachy was a key figure in this reformation. The creation of Dioceses and Parishes happened up to 50 years before the arrival of the Anglo-Normans.

The population of western Europe increased threefold between 1100 and 1200, having a significant impact on economics. Food prices increased over this time. Towns developed to support small communities to trade foodstuffs and essential items. This also led to the development of coinage for

the payment of craftspeople and portable wealth, replacing a cattle based economy.

There must have been an influx of craftspeople and merchants. This enabled an increase in stone buildings and the growth of markets. These incomers would have required local people to know the landscape. New ideas also came in; pottery was produced in non-local styles but using local techniques.

The centre of the rural estate was key to its management. These were marked out with mottes or raised raths. There are fewer raised raths and they are focused on uplands, serving both arable and pastoral. Mottes are on lower land with mainly arable farming and smaller estates. The construction of mottes is probably associated with the Anglo-Norman take-over of already existing estates. Alongside the motte there was often a chamber tower and a hall.

Peasant settlements were generally dispersed in nature. Structures and features within the settlement may have been short lived and often

replaced. Houses were of wattle-and-daub or sod built. This construction is reminiscent of Irish house styles. Many examples of settlement in Antrim suggest that the motte was inserted into a pre-existing settlement with a relationship to the parish church. The motte was situated where it would be most prominent.

Open-field settlements were thought of as the typical English form, but there was significant variation across the country. Ireland predominantly has a dispersed settlement pattern, with single farms and fields. It is unlikely that villages were the normal form of settlement in Ireland.

The 'two nations' view of Ireland is outdated. The changes during this period were not all a result of the Anglo-Norman conquest. The Anglo-Normans integrated with the Irish aristocracy. The Church reformation was a European change and was undertaken partly from within the Church in Ireland. Economic changes were possibly inevitable with developments in Europe. Anglo-Norman estates took over a system that was

already in existence and continued its development. There was no clear colonisation and reform of society by the Anglo-Normans, but an adoption of what was already there and an evolution to get the most out of the landscape at a time when economic growth enabled them to live comfortable lifestyles.

Duncan Berryman

October Lecture

The Society's October Lecture was given by Dr Gill Allmond, Historic Environment Division. She talked on her PhD research and discussed the case study of Purdysburn Villa Colony.

Dr Allmond began by discussing the development of asylums in Ireland during the late 1700s. Regional asylums were built in the early 1800s. These early buildings were similar to prisons with panopticon designs. Later versions used a 'corridor plan' where the rooms were arranged along the buildings and were more similar to hospitals. They varied in size from about 100 to about 500 patients.

Numbers of patients continued to grow and there was possibly a change in view of insanity from seeking a cure to removing such people from society.

The Belfast asylum was opened in 1829 on the site now occupied by the Royal Victoria Hospital. By 1895 it was full and by 1900 it was surrounded by industrial buildings, thus a new site was required. In 1895 the Purdysburn demesne was bought from the Batt family and additional land was purchased to the east. It was decided to construct a colony design with villas siting in the landscape without any fences to enclose the land. This plan was based on the asylum at Alt Scherbitz (Saxony, Germany). The villas were more like domestic houses, providing a comfortable and informal environment. There was also an element of control within the buildings, as the living spaces were all connected and there was no distinguishable front door. It was hoped that these open spaces and relaxed environments would help with the cure of patients.

You can read more about Dr Allmond's work in her recent book *Village and Colony Asylums in Britain, Ireland and Germany, 1880-1914*

<https://www.barpublishing.com/village-and-colony-asylums-in-britain-ireland-and-germany-1880-1914.html>

Duncan Berryman

November Lecture

The Society's November lecture was given by Barrie Hartwell summarising years of excavation at Ballynahatty and his recent publication. His lecture was titled 'The Ballynahatty Neolithic Temple complex'.

The site (Neolithic complex and henge) sits on the edge of a plateau about 7 km southwest of Belfast and just above the river Lagan. Within the landscape is an extensive prehistoric cemetery.

The excavations of Ballynahatty took 10 years and involved many people. The earliest excavated evidence was a stone-lined,

subterranean burial chamber. Two main timber structures were excavated, labelled Ballynahatty 5 (BH5) and Ballynahatty 6 (BH6). BH5 was a large enclosure that surrounded BH6, which was a smaller double timber circle with a square structure in the centre. Many of the post holes were 2 m deep, meaning posts standing 6 m above the ground. Most of the posts were removed at some stage and the holes were backfilled with rubble. The entrance to BH5 later had an annex added, it is approximately square and has four posts within.

The start of the timber circle construction dates to around 2700 BCE. The remodelling and addition of the annex was about 2500 BCE. There was a considerable level of planning across the site with a series of concentric circles and arcs defining the placements of the posts. The double timber circles were probably to contain trimmings from trees to create a solid barrier. The timber walls were also used to make the structure more visually impressive on the approach. The entrance annex was probably for funeral feasting with a

focus on the sky. The centre of BH6 was an excarnation platform for the exposure of bodies.

You can read more detail about the site and excavations in the recent publication - Ballynahatty: Excavations in a Neolithic Monumental Landscape <https://www.oxbowbooks.com/9781789259711/ballynahatty/>

Duncan Berryman

Meet the Flintstones: Flint Knapping Workshop

Members of the Ulster Archaeology Society were recently treated to a fascinating Workshop focusing on the subject of flint and flint napping. We were able to explore the processes and usage of this craft with some hands-on experience. The workshop was conducted by Brian Sloan of the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork (CAF), School of National and Built Environment, Queens University Belfast.

Brian has completed a Joint Honours Degree in Archaeology and Modern History. He has a particular interest in the study of lithic artifacts and has completed a number of lithic specialist reports. He has contributed to many publications and reports on a range of historical and archaeological ages from prehistorical through to the post-medieval. Brian has directed a number of excavations. A large selection of flint rocks and straw awaited the group upon arrival at our outdoor workshop area. There were also buckets of water. However, for guidance on how to proceed with all of this, we were in good hands. Brian's knowledge of his subject was evident and his enthusiasm was infectious.

Amidst much bashing, thumping, puffing and gasping the group managed to knock some flint shards off the larger rocks and then use these smaller edges in conjunction with another instrument to create sparks in order to ignite a small straw bundle. Once alight these were then extinguished in the water

buckets, understandably, in the interests of health and safety. Somehow, no person was hurt or injured during this workshop.

Flint is common. It is a hard brittle siliceous rock. Chemically similar to quartz, it is a hard mineral with a diagnostic conchoidal fracture. This makes it highly suitable for the manufacturing of tools with edges by the process of knapping or flaking. This technique involves applying force to a large core rock with a smaller piece of rock. The process of percussion and pressure results in flaking of the larger rock. The microcrystalline structure of the rock allows it to be worked in a regular and controlled manner.

Globally flint was one of the minerals that were very important in the manufacture of lithic items. The sites that have been discovered are generally held to be some of the earliest examples of manufacturing on an industrial scale.

Prehistoric flint mines existed in County Antrim, specifically just Northwest of the port of Larne at Ballygally Head and above the

village of Glenarm. There have been finds of exceptionally large quantities of rolled flint artifacts in Antrim coastal sites. These include many blades and micro-blades, chipped stone tools in abundance. In fact, the term 'Larnian' was originally given to recoveries of flints in some of these areas to create a typological framework, following excavations by Hallam Movius in the 1930s.

Further investigations by other archaeologists in other areas however disputed that the label was appropriate as a general cultural term. Peter Woodman suggested that it should only be used when referencing that particular technique of flint working that uses direct percussion to produce broad blade flints.

The large flint blocks of raw material for knapping were obtained from natural outcrops or seams of underground flint. Most flint mines are of Neolithic date and there are many examples in many parts of Europe.

Flint scatter is a term generally applied to discoveries of areas of

various sizes of worked flint and associated raw materials. Much of it is often waste material or debitage.

The flint shards can be shaped, as was demonstrated at our workshop, by a skilled practitioner into useful implements, such as scrapers and arrowheads.

In Ireland and elsewhere these prehistoric lithics were often believed to have been the work of the magical fairy folk.

It was believed that the objects had been thrown or dropped by these little people and supernatural properties were often ascribed to them. These artifacts, with a variety of names ascribed to them, such as elf stones, fairy dart (saighead), spear of the sidhe (gae sie) were used in folk medicine.

This was observed by antiquarians writing in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is documented that these beliefs and practices were widespread.

Observations by early antiquarians of a more scientific mind-set had of course recognised the objects for

what they were and their origins in earlier societies.

The Welsh polymath Edward Lhuyd FRS (1660-1709) wrote in 1699: 'I doubt not but you have often seen of these Arrowheads they ascribe to elfs or fairies: they are just the same chip'd flints the natives of New England head their arrows with at this day; and there are several stone hatchets found in this kingdom, not unlike those of the Americans'.

The UAS wish to thank Brian for arranging and conducting this workshop. It was a very enjoyable evening. We are looking forward to perhaps seeing the sparks flying at a suggested Blacksmiths workshop.

For anyone wishing to investigate the subject of flint lithics further, perhaps I can give a few pointers. Curran Point, Larne, County Antrim: The Type Site of the Irish Mesolithic muse.jhu.edu/article/856189. This is the Movius study.

For excavations at Bay Farm 1, Carnlough by Peter Woodman and G. Johnson, see [Project_muse_856194](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/856194).

Dowd, M. 2019 'Fairy Flint and Lithic Lore' *Archaeology Ireland* Volume 33 No. 3 issue No 129

Much other information is of course available for the interested searcher. Or you could talk to Brian Sloan.

Leo Van Es

New Books

Town & Country: Perspectives from the Irish Historic Towns Atlas – S. Gearty & M. Potterton (eds)
RIA, €30/£28

This volume brings together research on the interaction between Irish towns and their suburban surroundings. The book is dedicated to J.H. Andrews (renowned cartographic historian) and the first section discusses his impact on the study of town maps. The second section looks at the changes in urban and rural relations over time, with a concluding chapter by Prof. Dyer on the importance of looking at the town and countryside together.

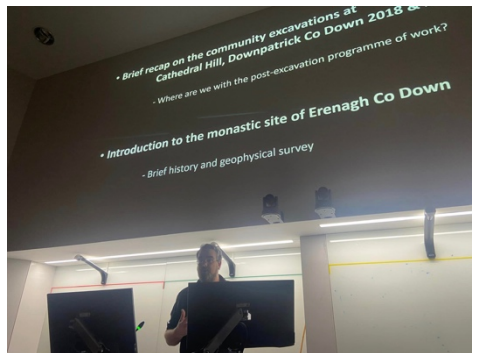
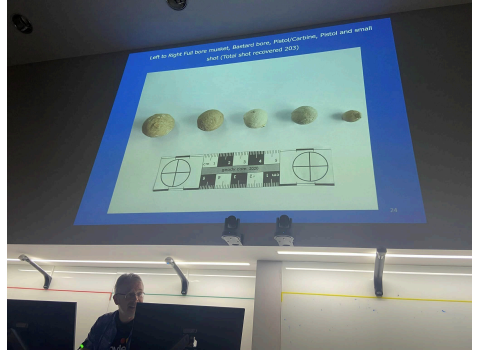
The text is wonderfully illustrated with colour images, including many maps from the Atlases. The chapters are insightful and provide new dimensions to our understanding of historic towns. As it covers from the early Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, this book will be of interest to anyone researching the historic landscape.

The Bare Bones: Explore the Early Neolithic Chambered Cairns of the North Channel
– G. Lindsay, M. Ritchie & A. Sheridan
Archaeology Scotland, £14.50

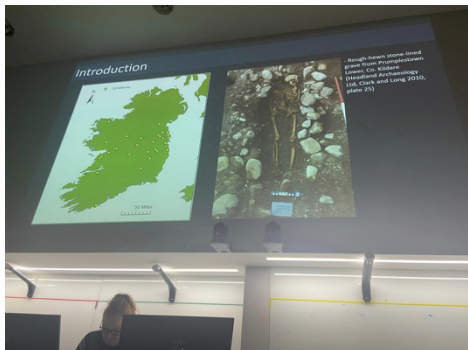
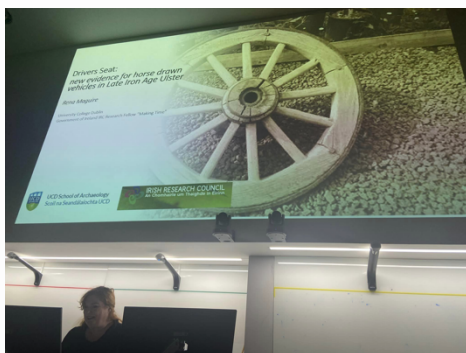
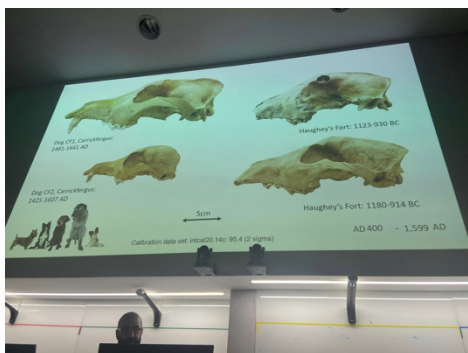
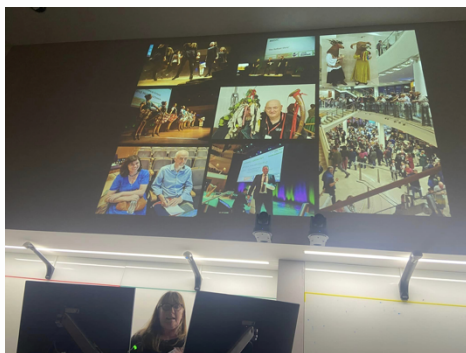
This is primarily a book for use with children, but the content is based on the latest archaeological knowledge. The illustrations are central to the book, with comic strips and cartoons showing what life might have been like alongside reconstruction drawings, plans, and photographs. These all make the book informative and engaging. Interaction with the content is increased by the inclusion of activities for children, such as constructing a cairn or recording a skeleton. This is a great resource to entertain children and help them learn about the past and the landscape.

Archaeology Scotland have a selection of different books for sale on their website - <https://www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk/shop/>
These include books about brochs, rock art, and dendrochronology.

Some photos from Discovery 2023! (shared by Courtney Mundt)



Some photos from Discovery 2023! (shared by Courtney Mundt)



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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