



# ROYAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

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## A NEW PRESIDENT and other Events Katherine Barclay

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The day before the first Council meeting for 2019–20, the President, Blaise Vyner resigned. With his letter of resignation, Blaise sent his personal view of aspects of the Institute in need of change. At that meeting, on 9 October, Council members welcomed the offer from Vice-Presidents (Dr Gardner, Dr Lunt, Mr Oldham, and Professor Yorke) to share presidential duties, such as the chairing of Council, of committees, and of lectures, until Council had had time for reflection and discussion, and to consider a proposal for a new President. Council agreed too to contribute their own views on possible changes to the Institute and a summary of their submissions can be seen on our website at <https://www.royalarchinst.org/about/council-deliberations-autumn-2019>

A wide variety of views were discussed at Council in December; it was agreed that the appointment of President should wait until a decision on a formal external review had been taken by Council, and a brief had been drafted. In March, Council considered the brief and appointed Mr Ken Smith as President, and his introductory letter to Members is in this mailing. Council asked him to form a small working party to oversee a review of the Institute, with particular emphasis on its place in archaeology in Britain today and for the future, and the initial papers were circulated to Council in March. As part of this review, the opinions of members of the Institute will be sought, though if you wish to contribute in advance, look at the scope of the submissions first please, send your thoughts by email to [admin@royalarchinst.org](mailto:admin@royalarchinst.org), or write to the Administrator.

For the time being, please send any postal correspondence to the address on the back of this newsletter. Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, Burlington House, and therefore the Society of Antiquaries, who kindly forward our post, are closed until further notice.

A further result of this closure is that our April and May lectures and the Annual General Meeting have been cancelled. The Charity Commission has advised that ‘Trustees need to consider what is in the best interests of the Charity, and what is reasonable in all the current circumstances. Provided that what they do meets these two requirements, Trustees are at liberty to decide to set aside statutory requirements. They should document their decisions. Provided these steps are followed, the likelihood of any challenge being successful is minimal.’

Ordinary (full) members can access all recorded past lectures at <https://www.royalarchinst.org/rai-lectures-online>. If you need login details, please email the Administrator: you will be sent a username and password to login to our website, using the boxes at the top of its first page. You will then be able to change your password to something more memorable. Associate members and non-members can access some of the online lectures at <https://www.royalarchinst.org/lectures>. Links to other online events can be seen on the front page of the website.

Because of the pandemic, the Spring visit to Dover (15–17 May) has been cancelled. Regarding the Summer visit to Malmo and Copenhagen (11–18 July), we are waiting to see how things unfold. If you are booked for the Summer trip, you will be kept informed.

Please provide your email address in case it should be necessary to cancel any more meetings or events. We could at least contact those whose email addresses we hold; if you have not yet done so, please email it to our Administrator at [admin@royalarchinst.org](mailto:admin@royalarchinst.org)



## NEW PUBLISHING 3D MODELS IN THE *ARCHAEOLOGICAL JOURNAL* Peter Gane

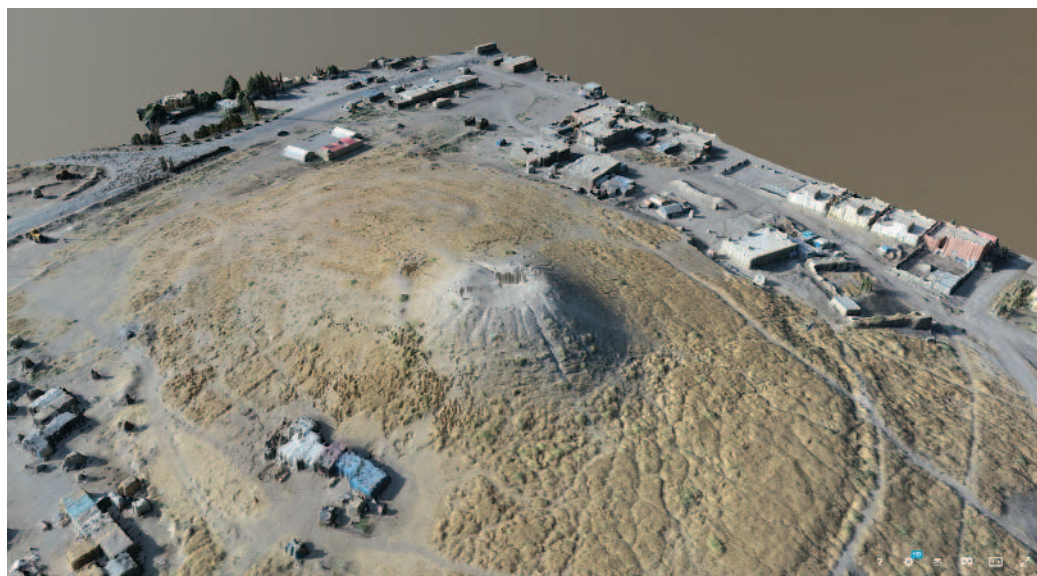
As part of our ongoing efforts in innovation within publishing, Taylor & Francis has recently partnered with the online 3D viewing platform *Sketchfab* (<https://sketchfab.com/taylorandfrancis>). This has now enabled us to embed a new interactive 3D viewer within our online journals.

The viewer is fully integrated into Taylor & Francis Online, and so it does not require the reader to open a new window or navigate away from the main body of the article to interact with the 3D model. We are the first major publisher to incorporate 3D models within the HTML version of online journal articles. This facility can be used to publish a project's 3D outputs just as you would any other form of data (e.g. tables, charts or illustrations) for full peer review.

As Taylor & Francis is a signatory of the Transparency and Openness Promotion Guidelines (TOP: see <https://cos.io/top/>), we are committed to making research data open and widely accessible. Published 3D models within a journal are made freely and permanently available via Sketchfab, actively encouraging researchers to discover and engage with full datasets.

The archaeology and heritage collection are amongst the first journal titles to use this technology and this was partly brought about by our work with the *Journal of Field Archaeology*, where many researchers were asking about using 3D technology within articles, as it formed a major part of large projects. It is a great way of enhancing the visualization of a project and can help complement the text and other data sets.

The *Archaeological Journal* will be able to support 3D models; however if you are interested in submitting any, please contact me and the editor Lisa Marie Shillito. For more information about integrating these models and how to build them please visit our author services page (<https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/3d-models/>) or contact me by email [Peter.gane@tandf.co.uk](mailto:Peter.gane@tandf.co.uk) or as Archaeology Portfolio Manager, Routledge Journals, at Taylor & Francis.



Screenshot from Herrmann, J. T., Glissmann, B., Sconzo, P., and Pfälzner, P., 2018 'Unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) survey with commercial-grade instruments', *J. Field Archaeol.*, 43:4, 269–83 in Taylor & Francis online

## GRANTS AND AWARDS

### British Archaeological Awards 2020

Although this scheme has now resumed under the umbrella of the Council for British Archaeology (CBA), it has been postponed until March 2021, primarily as a result of the dramatically reduced archaeological activity predicted for this year.

The BAA website will be updated in the coming weeks with details including when nominations reopen.

### ROYAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE RESEARCH GRANTS

The Institute awards the following grants annually:

**Tony Clark Fund** Up to £500 for archaeological work and dating

**Bunnell Lewis Fund** Up to £750 towards archaeology of the Roman period in the UK

**RAI Award** Up to £5000 towards archaeological work in the UK

Please download an application form at <http://www.royalarchinst.org/grants> or write to the Administrator.

Closing date for applications: 14 December 2020. Awards announced in April 2021.

### RAI Cheney Bursaries

The investment of a bequest left by Frank Cheney produces a small fund of money to enable students to attend conferences or RAI meetings. An allocation is available annually from which individuals can apply for a maximum sum of £200. Please check with the Administrator that money remains in the yearly fund before you apply. Students who wish to apply for a bursary should email [admin@royalarchinst.org.uk](mailto:admin@royalarchinst.org.uk) or write to the Administrator, RAI, c/o the address on the back of this *Newsletter*, at least six weeks before the event they wish to attend, stating: the institution in which they study, the event they wish to attend, the sum of money requested, a breakdown of how the money would be spent and a summary (up to 250 words) of why they would like to attend the event and in what way this would be useful to them. Successful applicants may be asked to produce a brief report of the event for the Institute.

In 2019, four students received bursaries to attend the Institute's Annual Conference, *The Romans in the North-East*.

### RAI Dissertation Prizes

The RAI holds two competitions for dissertations on a subject concerned with the archaeology or architectural history of Britain, Ireland and adjacent areas of Europe. In even-numbered years, the competition is for the best dissertation submitted by an undergraduate in full-time education, the Tony Baggs Memorial Award. In odd-numbered years, the prize is awarded to the best dissertation submitted by a Master's student. Nominations are made by University and College Departments. The winner receives a prize of £500 and the opportunity for a paper based on the dissertation to be published in the *Archaeological Journal*. The chief criteria considered are (a) quality of work and (b) appropriateness to the interests of the RAI as reflected in the *Journal*.

The RAI Master's dissertation prize, covering years 2018 and 2019 was awarded to Adam Leigh from Newcastle University for his dissertation, *Considerable Geometric Precision: can the Bi type cursus be considered a regional phenomenon?*



Adam Leigh received his prize at the Institute's meeting on 11 March 2020 from Vice-President Dr Mark Gardner. (P.Wilson)

## RAI Research Grants, 2020

Research grants for 2020 have been awarded to the following projects:

David Brooks	<i>Exploration of a Romano-British site at Hagg Farm, Swaledale (N. Yorks)</i>
Duncan Wright	<i>St Hugh's, Lincoln: origins and evolution of an historic suburb</i>
Martin Millett	<i>Excavations at Isurium Brigantum, Aldborough (N. Yorks) (Bunnell Lewis Fund)</i>
Nathalie Cohen	<i>Exploring Smallhythe, Kent</i>
Niall Finneran	<i>The archaeology of death and memory in Whitechapel (London)</i>
Nick Overton	<i>Exploring Mesolithic belief systems through the treatment and disposal of animal remains</i>
Peter Halkon	<i>Petuaria (E. Yorks) revisited — looking for a lost Roman theatre</i>



## RAI Research Grant Reports

### **At the Water's Edge** Michael Stratigos and Derek Hamilton

With this project we continue to explore Early Iron Age settlement patterns around Loch Tay, Perthshire. New research on Loch Tay's eighteen crannogs shows that the majority of Early Iron Age activity took place about 400–350 BC. This substantial settlement activity contrasts with the surrounding land where little contemporary settlement is recorded. In 2018, geophysical survey immediately onshore from a series of crannog sites aimed to test this distribution, and showed it is unlikely that archaeologically visible activity took place here.

To test the apparent lack of contemporary settlement around Loch Tay in the Early Iron Age, we excavated at two later prehistoric roundhouse sites. Additionally, archived botanical samples from previous roundhouse excavations at Croftvellick and Tombreck are being dated to gauge the contemporaneity of terrestrial settlement and the floruit of crannog building.

Our excavations in 2019 revealed substantial roundhouses at Easter Croftintygan and Ardnagaul. At Easter Croftintygan, excavation through the ring-ditch found abundant charcoal and the

internal area had a series of post holes and two shallow depressions filled with likely hearth waste. At Ardnagaul, post holes with substantial stone packing were found, overlain by wall collapse and possible later cobbling for an animal enclosure. Initial radiocarbon dates indicate last century BC activity at both roundhouses, slightly later than Croftvellick and Tombreck with dates calibrating to the fourth to second centuries BC.

The initial dates suggest all identifiable terrestrial activity post-dates the Early Iron Age floruit of crannog-building. Analysis of 27 further samples is ongoing, aiming to identify earlier, *c.* 400 BC, activity, or otherwise support the emerging pattern that Early Iron Age crannogs in Loch Tay were not complemented by significant terrestrial settlement at that time.

Sixteen student volunteers from the University of Glasgow excavated at the two sites, many of whom were on their first archaeological excavation. Further volunteers from the local community and the Scottish Crannog Centre Young Archaeologists Club also participated in the excavation. The digs welcomed visitors from the Fearnan Village Association and the Killin Heritage Society on open days at both sites, and was followed by a public talk given in Killin in November.



The collapsed wall,  
Ardnagaul  
(M. Stratigos)



Rosemarkie Man, Learnie  
2B Cave (© Rosemarkie  
Caves Project)

## The Rosemarkie Caves Project, Black Isle, near Inverness Mary Peteranna

We have been investigating old sea caves on the southeast of the Black Isle, near Inverness. In 2011–15 survey and test pitting provided baseline data. Stratified samples of animal bone and charcoal demonstrated third- to first-century BC occupation at Caird's Cave; second- to fourth-century AD occupation within three caves; seventh- to ninth-century occupation at five caves (including excellent evidence for metal-, antler-, and bone-working); and eleventh- to seventeenth-century dates from seven caves. Significant evidence for eighteenth- to twentieth-century traveller occupation was found across the caves, particularly in the Learnie group and Ivy Cave, with evidence for leather shoe-making or repair, basketry and recycling of other materials.

Excavations in 2016–18 in the Learnie Caves explored their multi-period uses. A major discovery was a deviant burial of a 30–40 year-old male who had suffered a brutal death, dated cal AD 430–540. The inhumation was accompanied by feasting residues from at least eight cattle, a horse, cod and two plaice. Metalworking, including a furnace, smelting, bloom refining and blacksmithing, was taking place in the seventh and eighth centuries. Post-holes in two caves suggest that metalworking was taking place within wooden structures or wicker screens. The presence of

metalworking at Rosemarkie has parallels elsewhere in Scotland including early medieval ecclesiastical centres at Portmahomack, Whithorn, Iona and Kinneddar.

Twenty-eight species of fish were recorded; about half cod with saithe/pollack, haddock, ling, flatfish, and the salmon family. Herring was present in quantity only in the early medieval period. Two fishing areas were identified: inshore, for young cod family, small flatfish, and salmon or trout, and in deeper water 140 km east of Rosemarkie. Finding large cod in early phases, before the Viking Age is unusual and perhaps indicates a pre-Viking open water fishery in the early medieval/late Iron Age period. Most of the fish were eaten fresh, but a suggestion of imported preserved cod during the post-medieval period, in turn suggests regional fish drying/salting post-dates the trade of the Late Norse period. The post-medieval deposits produced a substantial collection of fish scales, with results of biomolecular analysis awaited.

The macroplant and charcoal assemblages suggest a variety of resources: cereal, nuts, fruits, vegetables, and wood peat and dung. The ecofacts have all derived from domestic activities, although some charcoal would have been for metalworking. There was evidence for bracken sleeping mats during all periods of activity.

For further information see <http://www.spanglefish.com/rosemarkiecavesproject>

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### 2020

**Spring Meeting** planned for 15–17 May, at Dover **has been cancelled**.

**Summer Meeting** 11–18 July, at Copenhagen and Malmo, led by Hedley Swain. **If not cancelled, it is already fully booked and has a waiting list.**

**Autumn Day Meeting** 17 October, at Newark, led by Mark Gardner (details to be confirmed).

**In 2020 there will be no Annual Conference**

**Please note** that non-members are not covered by the Royal Archaeological Institute's Public Liability Insurance and they must arrange their own insurance to enable them to attend Institute events.

**Please check our website** for news and early details, at [www.royalarchinst.org/events](http://www.royalarchinst.org/events). As soon as they are confirmed, full details and booking forms for Meetings will be made available on the Meetings Programme page <http://www.royalarchinst.org/meetings>. Places are limited, so please book promptly. If you would like further details of any of these meetings sent to you, please send your email or postal details to the Administrator, RAI, c/o the address on the back of this newsletter or [admin@royalarchinst.org](mailto:admin@royalarchinst.org) or to Caroline Raison, RAI Assistant Meetings Secretary, 48 Park Avenue, Princes Avenue, Kingston upon Hull, HU5 3ES, or [csraison@gmail.com](mailto:csraison@gmail.com).

Dance-of-Death pane, St Mary Magdalene, Newark (C. Raison)



## MEETINGS NOTES

### 165th SUMMER MEETING 6–13 July 2019: Dumfries and Galloway

M. AMORY, V. COAD, M. EFSTATHIOU, C. FRANSON, W. HUSBAND, M. NIEKE, A. SCOTT, S. SHAW, K. STUBBS, G. VICKERY

Sunday was a glorious day for a walk around the 'Queen of the South' and a picnic! We left our very cosy and slightly threadbare Victorian hotel opposite the cute railway station (listed by Historic Environment Scotland) for the short walk into town with our knowledgeable, approachable and enthusiastic guide Tom Hughes — storyteller, historian and bagpiper.

First stop was outside St Mary's-Greyfriars' Church, built like many of the buildings in Dumfries of the red sandstone from the local

Locharbriggs quarry. The current building is from 1836/7, built on what was Execution Hill in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. One of those executed here, for treason and for his part in the Comyn murder, was Robert Bruce's brother-in-law, Sir Chrystelle Seton. The Chapel of the Holy Rood, also known as the Chrystal Chapel, was built here in his memory in 1324, by the King, but nothing of significance remains of it.

After a pause at the Dumfries and Galloway Council offices (1912–14), which were sited within



the confines of the previous military complex, we walked to the site of the Roman Catholic Cathedral, St Andrews on Shakespeare Street, which burnt down in 1963. All that remains are two almost similar square towers, which the Register for Scotland has now declared to be 'At Risk'. Across the road we came across another feature of this generally beautiful town — Georgian houses, though their peeling facades presented quite a sad picture.

But just 100 metres down the road is the splendid looking Theatre Royal, reputedly the oldest working theatre in Scotland; built by public subscription, it opened in 1792 and was greatly supported by Robert Burns and his circle. While J. M. Barrie studied at Dumfries Academy, he loved to visit the theatre and tried to peek backstage and watch all the magic. The buildings have been newly refurbished and were very busy later in the afternoon as we passed again on our way home.

Dutch-style gables were among the architectural marvels to be seen as we made our way along Georgian streets towards the centre of the old town, and marvellous carvings. Those on the Queensbury Hotel have been included by the Dumfries Stonecarving Project, which is photographing, recording, and providing guided tours about the town's fascinating heritage. Later, we were to see the carving of the oldest depiction of bagpipes in Scotland, and being played by a pig, above the what is now a 'chippy'.



The bagpiping pig (M. Efstathiou)

After a stop at the 1850s fountain where Tom told the story of riots during a visit by the notorious William Hare (of Burke and Hare infamy) we made our way to the Midsteeple, the focal point of the High Street. A magnificent building built between 1703 and 1707 to house the town's charter, records, and criminals, although CANMORE (the National Record for the Historic Environment) describes it as '... an early 18th-century structure with no outstanding architectural features'.

We paused by the ornate 1897 neo-Greek Minerva building of Dumfries Academy, the neo-Gothic Greyfriars, or St Brides' church and the Robert the Bruce pub, and statues, of Henry Duncan (1774–1846) who opened the world's first commercial savings bank (see below p. 16), and of course, of Robert Burns.

Tom regaled us with anecdotes the whole time, including, as we passed the site of the old prison, the last public hanging in Scotland, in 1868, of Robert Smith, a 19-year-old convicted of murder, rape, robbery and attempted murder. The nearby Dumfries Sherriff's Court, built in the Scottish Baronial style, bears more magnificent carvings, this time as if of knotted rope — a reminder of Dumfries' heritage as a rich port during the tobacco trade.

When we reached the river at the medieval Devorgilla Bridge, we walked along Dockhead to our picnic at Dock Park, with views of the sadly derelict Rosefield Mills, the largest tweed mill in Dumfries when built in 1885, and during the



Sculpted-stone rope moulding (M. Efstathiou)

Second World War, home to billeting Norwegian troops no less!

After a picnic around the bandstand in Dock Park, we crossed the river via the iron suspension bridge to Maxwelltown and the Dumfries Museum. Climbing to the top of its old mill we had a good look at the world's oldest working Camera Obscura, and in the museum itself saw fantastic slideshows, Celtic stone crosses, and a great collection ranging from Neolithic axes to nineteenth-century farming implements.

After a visit to the Burns Mausoleum at St Michael's churchyard, and the Burns House nearby, we made our way back to the hotel, by way of various ice-cream stalls and pubs — a grand day out!

The evening saw us sitting on the edge of our seats and listening in awe to the story of the initial discovery and excavation of the Galloway hoard, a project led by our speaker, the County Archaeologist Andrew Nicholson. Described as the richest collection of rare and unique Viking-age objects ever found in Britain or Ireland, it is clearly one of those 'discoveries of a professional lifetime'! Buried in the early tenth century, possibly within a building, the hoard lay undisturbed until discovered by local metal detectorists in September 2014, after picking up what they described as 'the faintest kiss of a good signal' on their sixth return visit to a particular field (the location of which is a well-kept secret). Initially the detectorists thought they had found a Georgian teaspoon handle but rapidly realised it was a ninth-century Viking arm-ring and that it wasn't alone. Thankfully they quickly appreciated the significance of the material and reported the find to the Scottish Treasure Trove Unit. Initial rapid excavation led by Andrew with the help of the detectorists revealed that the metalwork had been placed in a pit some 60cm (24in) deep and had originally been held in organic material, possibly a leather bag. Preservation was such that the material still shone when first revealed. Andrew conveyed the extreme excitement of the day as an exquisite enamelled and gilded silver pectoral cross and chain (the largest ever found in Britain) appeared amidst silver ingots and armrings. By 5pm, after a long and exhilarating day, they thought they had removed all and had hit 'natural' gravel in the bottom of the pit ... but then a final sweep of the detector pro-



Andrew Nicholson recording the Galloway hoard  
(The History Blog 10/2014)

duced more beeps! Cunningly hidden a further 8 cm (3 in) below was the second, even more exciting, group of material. A two-tier hoard — possibly with lower value material in the decoy top layer! At the deeper level the top of a silver-gilt Carolingian vessel (one of only three in Britain and the only one with a lid) appeared. Work then had to continue — for security reasons they couldn't leave the material in the ground any longer than necessary. The vessel had also been packed in some form of textile and next to it were more Viking armrings, this time curved — some 46 examples, some fastened together in groups for handy transport. A delicate and unique gold bird-shaped cloak pin with niello inserts appeared (described by the *Daily Mail* as a 'flamingo') which must only have pinned the lightest and finest of cloth; then a rare gold ingot (other examples of this date are only known from Whithorn and Norwich). The lidded pot opened easily to reveal the top of packed contents including beads and brooches. These were left within and the whole vessel was lifted as a block as daylight began to fade. At this point Andrew placed the items in his van for transport to security — stripping down to his boxer shorts and boots to

use his clothing as additional packing, he was glad not to have been pulled over by the local 'Polis' on the drive back!

The finds were quickly whisked off to the National Museum in Edinburgh for conservation and the X-ray and opening of the pot. This revealed a collection of Anglo-Saxon disk brooches, an Irish silver brooch, a hinged silver plate possibly from a book binding, Byzantine silk, linen fragments, another gold ingot and a gold and crystal object wrapped in a cloth, a group of ecclesiastical pointers, small clay balls and more. Currently the collection is undergoing detailed conservation and analysis prior to display in 2020. There is so much more to learn about all this material. The Carolingian pot is considered to have been at least 100 years old when buried so an heirloom in its own right. Some of the beads are also antique pieces whilst initial analysis shows the finds originated from far and wide.

Further excavations by AOC archaeology discovered a few more individual artefacts but also looked at the wider context of the hoard. This showed that it was located in the corner of what might be a multi-phase building. Geophysics indicated more activity in the area, and other pits — although dating suggested these are Bronze Age in date. The barrel-shaped enclosure suggests a settlement site and the possibility that it is an unknown early monastic site remains tantalising. A PhD student at Glasgow University will now look into the landscape context of the site.

Detailed further research on the material continues in Edinburgh, sadly at some arm's length from Andrew. Already there are indications that the Pectoral Cross may have come from Dublin and that its unusually decorated arms may represent the four Gospels. Anglian runic names on some of the arm-rings will be investigated as will the extensive textile remnants. There will be many further updates on this remarkable material.

Under Scottish Law the finders will receive rewards related to the market value of the items — with their total 'value' (insofar as such priceless material can be 'valued') set at £1.98 m in 2017. The National Museum of Scotland ran a major fund-raising campaign which successfully raised this amount to buy the hoard. In 2018 Scottish Government funding was provided to enable the Museum to tour an exhibition of the material around

Scotland — this is eagerly awaited in the regions. Eventually parts of the collection will be on display in both Edinburgh and Kirkcudbright.

All in all a fabulous story of discovery, not least because of excellent and early team work with the local detectorists, a group often derided for their 'cavalier' approach to archaeological significance and context. It is always good to report cases of best practice; without them this treasure would surely have not been found and thoroughly excavated in this way.

Monday saw us pile into the coach, firstly for sight of the Cairn Holy chambered tombs. These are remarkable and impressive survivals in a dramatic landscape position overlooking Wigtown Bay. Both cairns were built in the fourth millennium BC as evidenced by excavations by Piggott and Powell in 1949. They are part of a wider grouping in south-west Scotland sometimes known as Clyde Cairns. Cairn Holy I is the most elaborate with a complex group of monumental stones remaining, especially framing the curving façade in front of which a forecourt area had originally been used for several fires — perhaps part of the burial rituals. This façade and forecourt area was of late Neolithic date, the main body of the cairn being earlier. The latter has two chambers; the outer one, entered through the façade, held a jadeite ceremonial axe imported from the Alps, a leaf-shaped arrowhead and fragments of Neolithic pottery. The inner chamber is a closed box inaccessible from the outer chamber. It was probably roofed by a large stone slab. A secondary cist here demonstrated re-use, as does the incorporation of cup-marked stones.

A short distance away stands Cairn Holy II which local tradition identifies as the tomb of the mythical Scottish King Galdus. Extensively robbed but still retaining two large portal stones; it also had two chambers. The rear chamber had been extensively robbed and the other, whilst disturbed, revealed an arrowhead and flint knife as well as fragments of later Bronze Age pottery. Few human remains were found on excavation, but the finds hint at a sophisticated Neolithic community with widespread contacts. Our guide for the day, Andrew Nicholson, proved ever informative and told us of the extensive evidence for settlement and activity in the adjacent valley, particularly of Bronze-Age date.



Onward then to Whithorn, a typically small linear Scots town focused on what is traditionally claimed to be the location of the first Christian Church in Scotland, known as the ‘Candida Casa’ or ‘shining house’. This later became known as ‘Hwit Aerne’ which then evolved into the present name-form. An urban burgh was established here in 1325 under the superiority of the adjacent priory. By 1511 it had become a royal burgh. The Venerable Bede wrote of Whithorn and St Ninian or Nynia in 731 telling us that the ‘southern picta long time before (565 AD, and Columba’s ministry on Iona) embraced the true faith as the fruit of the preaching of Ninian, a Briton, deeply revered Bishop and a man of great sanctity’. Ninian visited Rome to train, and built his church after meeting St Martin at Tours, dedicating the new building to him. Miracle stories abound of healing and miraculous deeds, many associated with a visit to Ninian’s grave. There remains much academic discussion about the veracity of the Ninian story, too much to cover adequately here, but clearly there was an important early Christian presence of some form here. In the 300s Whithorn was already an established British settlement. 431 is the year traditionally ascribed to the death and burial here of Ninian, his shrine then being visited by many thousands of people.

Our guide Andrew had first come to Whithorn in the 1980s for six weeks’ digging on a major excavation in the Glebe field next to the later church and burial ground. He quickly caught the ‘Whithorn’ bug and is still in the area some 30 years later. His was a detailed and energetic tour of the site. The major research excavations there, led by the late Peter Hill, were prompted by proposals to build sheltered housing on the site. Thankfully this didn’t happen, the Whithorn Trust was founded and the research excavation was established. The Glebe field was shown to have been a settlement conurbation over an extended period stretching back to the fifth century and retained extensive archaeological evidence including waterlogged remains.

During the 700s the region came under the control of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria. The early church and shrine were transformed and the Northumbrian monk Pecthelm, a friend of Bede, was made Bishop. The excavations revealed a timber church of this date as well as a

chapel. Coffins, window glass and stone crosses were also found. White plaster seems to support the idea of a shining white church. One complex of buildings are thought to have accommodated and fed the continuing stream of pilgrims. The church and burial chapel were destroyed by fire around the 840s — the time of the Viking invasions. New settlers were Christian Norse who established a series of stake-built houses, similar to those in York and Dublin. Finds indicated extraordinary levels of craft working and demonstrated that the site was part of a vigorous and wide trade network.

The Viking rule of Galloway came to an end c.1100 at which point the lands were paying dues to the Scottish King Alexander I. In 1128 the Bishopric, which had lapsed under Viking rule, was re-established and an Augustinian monastery was created. This did not last long and in about 1175 the Premonstratensians took over. Most of the surviving monastic structures, including cloisters and a great cathedral were built by them. Around 1200 the chapel housing Ninian’s tomb was incorporated into the cathedral with the tomb lying in a crypt (with parallels at Hexham or Ripon). Andrew was able to show us the most likely location for this in the ruined medieval church. The shrine remained a major pilgrimage site throughout the medieval period: Robert the Bruce visited in 1329 very shortly before his death. And the late 1400s and early 1500s were a golden age thanks to visits from James IV and major rebuilding. Between 1957 and 1967 excavations revealed the burials of some of the medieval bishops grouped around the high altar. Rich remains of vestments, jewellery and ecclesiastical objects were discovered — the largest group of bishops recovered from any great church in Britain.

The Protestant Reformation of 1560 devastated Whithorn: the church and monastery were suppressed, the shrine destroyed and the cathedral stripped of wealth and estates. By the late 1500s the church was in ruins. By 1690 the nave of the cathedral church had become a simple parish church. This was replaced in 1822 when the present church was built.

The church and early associated remains are complex and hard to comprehend quickly – even with an expert guide. Thankfully the story of the

complex and its many finds can be unravelled at the Whithorn Story, developed by the Whithorn Trust as part of its on-going aim to interpret local archaeology and history for the public. The Glebe field remains open and undeveloped and in part is the location of a series of reconstructed features including a major Iron Age round house based on evidence from nearby excavations. Historic Environment Scotland present and manage the medieval priory remains whilst a small gallery houses an important collection of some 60 stones, many carved in the 900s and 1000s and of 'The Whithorn School'. Amongst these is the 'Latinus' stone, a memorial erected on the hilltop by Latinus and his unnamed daughter. It is the oldest Christian monument in Scotland. This memorial may have stood in the oldest Christian graveyard, the inscription demonstrating that Roman culture and literacy still had a firm grip in the area in the 400s. The 'Peter' stone was erected outside Whithorn around 600 and invokes the protection of Peter, one of Jesus's disciples. As well as an inscription it bears a Chi-Rho cross. We made an intriguing visit which really needs a return to consider the full detail and complexity of the site.

Our afternoon's visits began with St Ninian's chapel, situated on what was, until the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, an island. Still named the Isle of Whithorn, the location is now physically connected to the adjacent peninsula. This is a wild and windswept location with amazing views across to the Isle of Man and beyond. In the Iron Age a substantial defensive promontory fort was constructed here, consisting of a series of banks and ditches with palisades. The earthworks still survive.

St Ninian's chapel was built in the thirteenth century as a stopping point for pilgrims coming to venerate the saint. The pilgrims would have landed in the sheltered harbour here and walked along the valley side to Whithorn. The chapel, restored in the late nineteenth century by the Marquis of Bute, is now roofless but largely intact, a rubble-built single-cell building. The foundations of a wall 4.5 metres to the south of the chapel may relate to a surrounding enclosure wall of an earlier chapel, the foundations of which were discovered through excavation.

The sheltered harbour of the Isle of Whithorn could take deep water vessels and, from the

sixteenth to the eighteenth century was the principal port of eastern Wigtownshire.

We travelled back through Whithorn, and thence northwards to Torhouse which Andrew explained was a crofting settlement for Irish migrants in the 1840s. Our destination was the impressive stone circle, dating probably to the late Neolithic and composed of nineteen granite boulders, ranging from about 0.6m to 1.5m in height, the largest at the south-east of the circle. Near the centre of the circle is a setting of three stones, aligned south-west — north-east, the smaller stone in the middle flanked by two massive boulders. Across the road and not part of our visit were a further three boulders, set in line.

Our journey then took us past the small motte at Boreland and onward over the river Tarff to Glenluce Abbey. The late twelfth-century Cistercian abbey, founded by Roland Lord of Galloway, was a resting place for pilgrims travelling to Whithorn. Robert the Bruce stopped here in 1329 on his final pilgrimage to St Ninian's shrine. Monastic life ended with the Scottish Reformation in 1560 but the fifteen monks still living here then accepted the reformed religion and remained here until 1602 when the last monk died. The buildings then fell into decay and the ruins were finally entrusted into state care in 1933. There is a small display of finds recovered when the site was cleared in 1938, including jugs, pitchers, floor tiles and architectural fragments. The majority of the collection is held in the National Museum of Scotland.

Little remains of the abbey church beyond the bottom courses of walling but more survives of the south transept and its chapels. Sadly the best preserved of the abbey buildings, the late fifteenth-century chapter house, was closed for repair, but a glance through the windows in the east wall revealed the central pier, from which spring the ribs of the sexpartite vault, and in the centre of the floor some medieval tiles.

Tuesday was a full and varied day with visits ranging from tower houses, via an excavation to twentieth-century art. We were fortunate to have David Devereux as our guide for the day; with his immense knowledge, he brought the buildings and sites vividly to life. Our first stop was at Dumcoltran Tower, now standing at the edge of a farmstead. It was built in the sixteenth century as a

fortified defensive structure with living accommodation. This is one of a number of tower houses in the area; those dating to the sixteenth century were built by powerful families taking over land after the break-up of monastic estates. Built of local Whin rubble stone, it has rounded corners to avoid using more expensive dressed stone. It is L-shaped in plan and formidable in appearance, tall and austere with small window openings. Most of the floors are now lost, but it retains its character and feeling of security and protection. We noted the advice carved above the entrance which translates: 'Keep secrets, speak little, be truthful, avoid wine, remember you must die, be merciful'.

Next, to another tower house, Threave Castle, which was built in 1369 by Archibald the Grim. It sits on an island, a rocky outcrop in the River Dee which was a superb defensive position. Even today visitors reach it by boat, using a bell to alert the boatman. Earlier visitors could use a boat to cross the river channel, or a hidden causeway — a hazardous journey for those unfamiliar with the river. Waiting for the boat on the river bank and on a sunny day, visitors see the castle looking idyllic reflected in the river, in contrast to its purpose: to repel unwelcome visitors and withstand attack. The buildings surrounding the tower — chapel, bakehouse, kitchens and lodgings — are now mostly gone, visible only as humps and bumps on the ground. They were probably removed to construct an artillery wall in 1147, one tower of which survives. The tower interior is now roofless but it had four stories with a Hall, living accommodation, and an upper floor which could house a garrison and be used to fire artillery.

Threave is now part of a large estate, managed to conserve its important wildlife habitat, including otters, a bat reserve and heritage gardening. There are regular sitings of Ospreys and other hawks, with feeding stations and viewing platforms; the more organised of us managed to see ospreys as well as the castle. The River Dee is managed in this area to enable lower water levels, which favours the nesting wildfowl at Threave.

Our next visit was to Tongland, where a hydro-electric power station was built in 1934 to harness and manage the river. Although built of concrete in a modern style, with a nod to Art Deco detailing, it did not appear incongruous in the rushing river setting and with sheep grazing in the neighbouring



Tongland: wall foundations, possibly of the cloister  
(M. Nieke)

fields. The name Tongland may have Norse origins, meaning tongue of land. A Premonstratensian Abbey was founded here in 1218 by Alan, Lord of Galloway, whose grandfather founded the nearby Sweetheart Abbey. A large churchyard contains two sadly ruinous and roofless parish churches, one built in 1633 and the second in 1813 when the earlier church became too small for the parish. A Romanesque arch, and short length of wall incorporated in the 1633 church, are the only visible standing remnants of the Abbey. Alan, Lord of Galloway is the only Scot named on Magna Carta and in recognition of this, a community archaeology project was set up as part of the Magna Carta 800th Anniversary commemorations, co-ordinated by David Devereux. The project including placing attractive and well designed interpretation panels in the churchyard and a leaflet describing the work and findings was published. The work carried out included a geophysical survey and ongoing excavation in the manse garden. Below the remains of the Manse tennis court, there is good survival of the abbey's masonry wall foundations.

The afternoon began in Kirkcudbright, a delightful town at the mouth of the Dee with the Solway.



It was the county town and administrative centre of the Stewartry district and has many fine houses and buildings. In the early twentieth century, the town was favoured by artists who settled here in the early twentieth century, including E. A. Hornel, and it has been a town of artists and craftspeople since then. The town originated as a small burgh, founded by 1330 and a Franciscan convent was founded in 1455. Thereafter the town declined, the convent garden was taken over by MacLennon of Bombie who built the imposing MacLennans Castle and the parish church.

Although it was the best natural sea port on the Solway, a Council report of 1692 describes the community as 'all they have they, they bring from Leith, Dumfries and other free burghs on horseback'. In 1724 Daniel Defoe sadly described 'a harbour without ships, a port without trade, a fishery without nets, a people without business'. Communications were improved by the construction of a bridge in 1868, replaced by a concrete bridge in 1924–6. The influx of artists changed the fortunes of the town and we enjoyed a walk around admiring the well-maintained houses (and potential holiday lets), Boughton House which was the home and Japanese-inspired garden of Hornel, the Tolbooth, and the Stewartry Museum. The Kirkudbright Galleries were showing work by artist Charles Oppenheimer, one of the family of the Manchester firm of Oppenheimer Ltd who produced the amazing Arts and Crafts mosaics which we saw in the Horan Chapel, University of Cork during our Summer meeting in 2017.

Dundreddan Abbey was the next stop – one of the thirteen Cistercian abbeys in Scotland founded in 1142, and a mother house of Rievaulx. It was a wealthy house associated with Mary, Queen of Scots who spent her final night in Scotland here. The abbey is notable for its design – during the fifty years of building work, the construction for the first twenty years was in Romanesque style and then changed to Gothic, the earliest use of this style in Scotland. The transition from Romanesque to Gothic is very apparent in the ruined church and it is a fascinating example of the transition of styles in this period.

On Wednesday morning we visited Castledykes, a tree-girt motte so obfuscated by landscape gardening that we were not much the wiser. However, in the park here stood a much besieged

fortress of the 1260s, defending the southern approach to Dumfries. This was slighted to bits by Robert the Bruce to disoblige the English and any irate kinsfolk of the slain Red Comyn.

Then, down the east bank of the Nith we reached glamorous Caerlaverock. King Alexander II granted land for a castle here to his chamberlain Sir John de Maccuswell (Maxwell), around 1220. Brisker members walked through an ancient wood to this excavated site. For the Maxwells the position proved too close to the Solway Firth: it kept flooding. A spectacular triangular new castle of red sandstone was therefore created in the 1170s, with outer defences now under grass. After much siege warfare it was rebuilt in the 1370s. The two-towered gatehouse at the apex of the triangle was again refashioned and machicolated in the fifteenth century. With vertical slits for bowmen and horizontal gun holes, it now catered for all your killing needs. But it was Covenanters not Sassenachs that made it a ruin, albeit a spectacular one, today reflected in its sunlit moat. The great surprise lay over the bridge and through the gatehouse: facing a triangular courtyard is the 3-storey Renaissance façade of the Nithsdale Lodging, with red pediments sculpted with figures from classical myth, large windows within columned architraves, and a datestone, 1634.

The healing well of Brow, near Ruthwell, has a modern surround, and steps down to reach a chalybeate spring which, today, was not very forthcoming. Sadly a draught of it was not enough to save the 37-year-old Robert Burns, who came here specially three days before he died. In the simple kirk at Ruthwell we saw next the famous sculpted high cross, its 17 foot now reassembled and sat in a railed-off pit behind the communion table. The stones that form the crosspiece are Masonic replacements, but original carved stones of the eighth century depict Mary Magdalene washing Our Lord's feet, the Annunciation, the Crucifixion and eight other scenes. Later runes along its edge spell out the Dream of the Rood. Despite more reliable later scholarship the translation by George Stephens (1813–95) still reads well:

'Rood was I reared now  
Rich King heaving  
The Lord of Light Realms  
Lean me I durst not ...'



Reverend Henry Duncan (M. Efstathiou)

The Ruthwell Cross was saved by Reverend Henry Duncan, minister hereabouts for almost half a century. Duncan was a polymath, a geologist, newspaper editor, essayist, agricultural reformer and artist. He is remembered above all for his institution on commercial principles of a Savings Bank, in the building which is now a museum. An account could be opened with a 6d (worth about £1.50 now) and in the first year deposits totalled £151. The funds were invested at the Linen Bank, which paid 5%, a rate which is practically unobtainable at the present day. Four percent went to the depositor and 1% was retained at Ruthwell for charitable purposes.

Duncan had been Moderator of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland but felt obliged by his conscience to join the Free Church at the Disruption of 1843. He lost his post, his house, his income and many of his congregation. He continued his ministry elsewhere in the district.

The Cistercian New Abbey, or Sweetheart Abbey owes its existence to Devorgilla, the Lady of Galloway, who granted its charter in 1273, and its name to her devotion to the memory of her husband, John Balliol, whose *Dulce Cor* or Sweet

Heart she carried with her for 21 years until her own death in 1289. She (and it) were buried in the choir of the abbey church. A more substantial and permanent memorial is the college they funded and which bears his name at Oxford.

The Abbey is built of the local red sandstone, which gives its distinctive colour. Best preserved is the church, with a splendid nave arcade and an almost intact crossing tower. The buildings once extended over 30 acres, but although they are clearly visible in outline, little else remains to give an impression of their function.

Sweetheart suffered in the endemic disorders of the region. The monks complained to Edward I of England of war damage amounting to £5400, a lament of a kind often repeated through the three centuries of the Abbey's life. Its end came, not with the sudden brutality of the Dissolution south of the border, but after a period of twilight existence in which Gilbert Broun, the last Abbot, was protected by the local family of Maxwell, until he was finally arrested and exiled in 1605. The last monk died in 1624. A parish church was built to the south of the Abbey in 1731 but removed in the nineteenth century; nothing taller than the gravestones in the cemetery now impedes the view.

Monksmill, New Abbey's Corn Mill is fed from the northern end of Loch Kindar by a 1 km-long lade to the pond which lies just to the south-west of the mill. The present eighteenth-century structure is on or near the site of the monks' original mill. The machinery is fully restored and working, powered by a backshot or pitchback wheel, more efficient than an undershot or breastshot system, because it uses the weight of falling water rather than the flow of a millstream.

Our guide for Thursday was John Pickin, a freelance archaeologist and heritage consultant specialising in industrial archaeology, particularly mining.

Lincluden Collegiate Chapel is at a strategic position on the west bank of a loop of the Cluden Water near its confluence with the River Nith, north of Dumfries. It was preceded by an Anglo-Norman 'mottelet', the mound of which still stands within the grounds: King David encouraged Norman knights to settle here on volatile border land. Around 1160 a Benedictine priory was established, which by the 1389 had become dissolute, according to Archibald 3rd Earl of Douglas (alias



Lincluden Collegiate Chapel from the south-east (A. Williams)

The Grim), and was suppressed, allowing Archibald to rebuild the chapel for a College of Canons. The Douglas family continued to enhance the chapel during the early 1400s. In 1540 an elaborate tomb, built by the renowned mason, John Morow, was constructed in the Choir for Princess Margaret the daughter of Robert 3rd and widow of the 4th Duke of Douglas.

The chapel was partially destroyed by Protestant reformers at the Scottish Reformation in 1560, but subsequently rebuilt and a tower house was constructed to the north, the remains of which are still upstanding. A large sunken knot garden was also created, with impressive earthworks to the east of the chapel ruins, having been 'restored' in the 1930s. The whole site was abandoned in the 1700s, fell into disrepair and was extensively quarried until it was rescued as a national monument and is now in the care of Historic Scotland.

Today the site presents the contrast between the monumental, privileged past and the functional every-day present, approached as it is through a nondescript housing estate. The commanding Gothic ruins are proud and imposing but isolated in an unexpectedly rural setting. Its one-time grandeur is still evident in the huge empty windows surrounded by fine tracery silhouetted against the sky. It is no wonder that it inspired Robbie Burns. Of the chapel building, only the Choir remains where the elaborate tomb of Margaret and the doorway arch to the Sacristy have particularly fine and crisp carving surrounds in Dumfries sandstone. The remains of an elaborate rood screen and loft are still partially evident. The College domestic buildings are now represented by the ruined vaulted cellars.

The personality of Lincluden is now closely associated with its less picturesque, but vibrant



neighbourhood: over the last five years the People's Project initiative has reclaimed it for community projects. But now the project information boards stand neglected and battered against a similarly battered ruin which nonetheless retains its powerful presence in a world of dog walkers, teenage high jinks and archaeologists.

The seventh largest stone circle in Britain at 87m×79m, the Twelve Apostles (Holywood) is situated in a field within a flat fertile plain, on a south-east facing promontory between the Cluden Water and River Nith, with hills to east and west, and is now an ellipse. For its size and architecture, Aubrey Burl included it in the Cumbrian/south-west Scotland stone circle tradition. The area is rich in finds of Lake District Neolithic stone axes. The circle appears to have been true originally, marked by eighteen regularly-spaced stones. By 1837 there were eleven; tradition says a twelfth stone represented 'Judas' and thus had been removed. The stones are of glacial-erratic Greywacke and quarried granite, the nearest source of which is two miles distant. There are now eight standing stones which contrast rounded and sharper outlines, the larger ones being around 2m in height and appearing to reflect a south-west alignment to the midwinter sun. Ploughing has also brought up quantities of white quartz. No archaeological investigation has been carried out except a geophysical survey in the 1990s which found no sign of features.

The circle was just one element of a rich prehistoric monumental landscape, locally and across Dumfries and Galloway, demonstrating a land fully utilised for its mild climate, rich agricultural potential and proximity to sea routes along the Solway Firth. More information on this landscape and the cursus monuments within 1.5km of the circle can be found in Julian Thomas's edited volume *Place and Memory* (Oxbow, 2007).

Christian appropriation is evident in the circle's name but also in the dedication of an oak wood to St Congal, at Dercongal, later renamed Holywood, where a Premonstratensian abbey was founded in the thirteenth century. The tantalising report of a bronze statue found at the circle and identified by C. A. R. Radford as St Norbert came to nought: it had been referenced by Alfred Truckell, curator of Dumfries Museum 1948–82, but staff currently at the museum could find no trace.

We then headed north up Nithsdale to spend the afternoon on the Duke of Buccleugh and Queensberry's estate. First to Wanlockhead, Scotland's highest village at more than 1500 feet up in the Lowther Hills, a major centre of lead mining from the late seventeenth to the early twentieth century and now enjoying an afterlife as a museum run by the Wanlockhead Museum Trust.

Mining here started with gold. John Pickin explained that the river gravels were once rich in alluvial gold, drawing prospectors in the Middle Ages. There is little gold left now, just enough to enable the Trust legitimately to offer gold panning as a visitor attraction. Lead mining on an industrial scale began in the late seventeenth century. In 1675 the Earl of Queensberry granted a lease to English investors, including William Blackett, of the family who made a fortune out of lead in north-east England. They opened several lead bearing veins and built a smelting mill, but abandoned their efforts as unprofitable. There followed a number of tenants, initially English but later Scottish, whose fortunes fluctuated until the mid-nineteenth century. Then, when the lead price was low, the Buccleughs took the mines in-house and operated them economically, substituting water power for coal-generated steam. The last mine was closed in 1934, though large reserves of lead and zinc ores remain in the ground. The Wanlockhead Beam Engine, preserved on site, is the only water-bucket pumping engine to survive on a mine in Britain, and, working 24 hours a day, provided a low-cost solution to the problem of pumping water out of mines. There is a working model in the Lead Mining Museum.

The tour included a guided hard-hat visit to the Lochnell Visitor Mine, proceeding down a horizontal tunnel or 'drift' cut deep into the hill, from which the miners could access drifts above and below by ladders. We also saw three miner's cottages presented as they would have been in 1750, 1850 or 1910, showing the improvement in living standards.

The Wanlockhead Miners' Library, a community subscription library established in 1756, remained in use until the mid-1940s. Members subscribed 4 shillings a year, partly funding the acquisition of books, which entitled them to borrow up to four books a month. Over two hundred years, the stock gradually increased to



Wanlockhead: the horse gin and pump (M. Nieke)

more than 3,000 volumes. The books and the last and largest library building, completed by January 1851, have been restored and can be visited.

Our second site, down in Nithsdale, was Drumlanrig Castle, a Scottish palace remodelled in renaissance style in the late seventeenth century. On arrival we found they had mistaken our booking, so that we were unable to enter the house. Perhaps no bad thing on a fine afternoon? There was more than enough to do exploring the 40-acre gardens: and even a Duke's garden can suffer from box blight.

The garden layout reflects the medieval origins of the site, a tower in a strong defensive position on a bluff. Vast early eighteenth-century earthworks have left the house standing on a grassy plinth, the land falling away steeply to the south and east.

Lastly we crossed the Nith to Durisdeer Parish Church, a plain but elegant Presbyterian church of about 1720 designed by James Smith. It incorporates the north aisle from the earlier church, with a lead pepperpot roof reminiscent of Drumlanrig, and known as the Queensberry Aisle. This contains the Queensberry Mausoleum, an exuberant white marble structure comprising a baroque mural monument with effigies of James, 2nd Duke of Queensbury and his wife and, above the entrance to the burial vault, a free-standing baldacchino. On a more sombre note, the martyr's grave of Daniel

McMichael, a Covenanter shot in cold blood in 1685, stands outside in the churchyard.

Our Summer Meeting programme sometimes includes a visit more surprising than usual; this was the case with the Samyé Ling Monastery (of the Buddhist Karma Kagyu school) at Eskdalemuir. What is said to be the largest Buddhist monastery in Europe was a strange element to find among the beautiful agricultural landscapes, small towns and traditional varieties of archaeology in the hinterland of Dumfries.

We were forearmed with facts about its early development. The buildings evolved around a sturdy former hunting lodge, Johnstone House, and its work developed under the Trust formed in 1965 to promote religious study, meditation and mental and spiritual well-being. Begun by a Canadian Theravada monk, the monastic community declined and the monk left. The Trust then invited two refugee Tibetan lamas to take over, soon joined by another monk and a master-artist. Samyé Ling became a well-known spiritual and artistic centre, 'Samyé' referring to the first Buddhist monastic university and 'Ling' meaning place. It attracts students, while visitors are drawn by the spectacular gilded temple and the stupas (domed shrines and reliquaries, with bell-like tops, having ritual significance), set in gardens with statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (seekers of enlightenment on the path to Buddhahood). It is

also a centre for the creation and repair of thangkas, the painted cotton wall-hangings depicting deities displayed in temples and elsewhere, and for the creation of prayer-wheels and traditional sculpture.

We walked into Samyé Ling from a large car park planted with junipers by volunteers, and were cheerfully led through the well-tended gardens, pools, buildings and stupas by an enthusiastic young woman from the north-east of Scotland. She had a nun's neatly cropped hair, beads and red robes, and sensible trainers on her feet. Summing up the history of the community, she introduced herself as one of 20 trainees, resident at a nearby unit, studying Tibetan morning and afternoon, learning the rituals and working on projects such as their Peace Garden.

She explained the use of the prayer-wheels, stacked here in glass cylinders along an external arcade, looking a little like a store of antique film-reels. The wheels bear the prayers and even the ashes of followers — and non-followers (and some of their pets); ashes are also placed inside stupas in small cabinets. Prayer-wheels are variously designed to be spun, either in the electrically-rotated cylinders here, or on handles or in a water-mill, as an equivalent of reciting, accessible to the scholarly and illiterate alike. There were old, wind-turned wheels on the roof-tops. As far as she could recall, our nun told us the significance within the faith of colours, and of certain numbers — four noble truths, 108 candles a day reminding of the 108 teachings of Buddha, and twelve stupas for the twelve deeds of Buddha, for example — while she conducted us to the courtyard of the principal buildings.

The temple, designed by a Tibetan, with its sweeping oriental roofline, dragon-decked corners and bright array of colours, stood high in front of us; it was above a flight of steps, topped on each side by a dominant statue on a pedestal, a yak bull on one side, its cow and calf the other, the yak being of great importance in Tibetan culture. The buildings left and right around the courtyard included inter-faith libraries, accommodation for the many visiting teachers, and dining areas; some 400 were expected for the evening meal that night. Inside, the main hall of the Temple was immaculate and stunning, elaborately decorated and furnished, with cushions and stools on the carpeted

floor, columns, dragon-panelled ceiling, brilliant colour and gold everywhere; there were cymbals and drums, significant objects such as a thousand Buddhas in rows, and bowls of saffron water, ritually filled and emptied, indicative of generosity. A lifelike waxwork figure of a 1967 founder was present.

We moved on to café and shop, where the products on offer aimed to be both commercial and reminiscent of the values of the community, and to wander through the gardens.

Exploring this monastery was something of a challenge to members' expectations on approaching a site and perhaps to the sense of satisfaction on departure. For example, the bright colours of the temple, blue, black, white, red, green, yellow, are each aligned to a specific Buddha and (except black) signify a virtue such as purity, wisdom, sanctity; but, to Western eyes, together they suggest rather the worldly merriment of a fair or circus. We were also aware that well-known figures such as David Bowie, Leonard Cohen and Billy Connolly were among the beneficiaries and benefactors of Samyé Ling; so is it a fashionable retreat for the privileged or, as planned, a restorative for anyone suffering in mind or spirit? On the way home from Dumfries, after our cross-country trip on a rail-replacement bus to catch, by seconds, a crowded train, I was offered a seat beside a local resident, a calligrapher, who at least spoke highly of Samyé Ling as a valued resource. It certainly made an unusual, informative and thought-provoking visit.

The visit intended for the final afternoon of the week was to Hermitage Castle, a massive fortress built in the early thirteenth century by Sir Nicholas II de Soules, to defend the border with England. En route, our guide, Andrew Nicholson, pointed out a number of sites, including several hill forts and two stone circles in the base of the valley. We passed through Langham, near the border, which lies between four hills in the valley of the river Esk. To reach our destination the coach turned off the main road to navigate a narrow, twisting single-track road which presented several challenges, including a cattle grid and sheep on the road; the last was a small stone bridge almost at right angles to the road. The driver made several efforts to manoeuvre the coach, with advice from the guide and Hedley Swain, but he was unsuccessful. When



it was accepted that we could go no further, Caroline Raison was superb in guiding the driver to reverse, with lots of encouragement and support. We headed back to Langham, and with the excitement over, several members reached for their packed lunches! Time to relax and enjoy the superb scenery, rolling green hills, big skies and dramatic clouds. A half hour break at the river side in Langham with ice-cream restored the group, and a decision was made to drive to the Devil's Porridge Museum at Gretna, named for the explosive mix used in WWI munitions.

In 1915, Britain was losing the war through lack of ammunition, and to remedy this the government built HM Factory Gretna, a factory nine miles long and two miles wide, where at its peak, 30,000 people worked. In effect, they created a new town, with extensive railway and road networks, power source, water supply, housing, cinemas, dance halls and churches. It was the largest munitions factory in the UK.

However, the drinking exploits of many of the 10,000 navvies who built the Gretna factory generated real concerns about how the drunkenness and disorderly behaviour could be controlled, as it endangered production and the supply of ammunition to the troops. In a unique experiment, entitled the State Management Scheme, the government took over all the public houses around HM Factory Gretna. The scheme controlled licensing hours, set age restrictions and curtailed drinking habits. The government replaced the worst pubs with model pubs where customers could eat,

enjoy music, and take part in activities such as billiards.

The outbreak of WWI also changed the status and role of women. Despite the dangers and health risks involved in producing cordite, the work at the factory was principally undertaken by thousands of working class women, with 62% aged 18 or under, who were attracted by the higher wages and the opportunity to do their bit for the war effort.

Among the people profiled by the museum is the man brought to Gretna to oversee the development of the project, K. B. Quinan, an American with international expertise in the research, development and use of explosives. It is said that, in late 1914, on receipt of a telegram from London, he immediately packed and sailed from Cape Town the same day. The factory at Gretna was in production by early 1916. Quinan declined a knighthood, but he was one of the first recipients of the Order of the Companions of Honour, and the French awarded him the Croix de Guerre. Lloyd George publicly thanked him in the House of Commons saying 'It would be hard to point to anyone who did more to win the war than Kenneth Bingham Quinan.'

An unexpected last visit, the museum proved interesting and engaging, with many attractive displays recording the history of the development of the factory, the production of the munitions, and the people involved.

Members were as ever grateful for Caroline's organisation and care, and for Hedley's knowledge and leadership.

## AUTUMN DAY MEETING 12 October 2019: Reading

WILLIAM HUSBAND AND LORRAINE PARTRIDGE

We met at Reading Museum, where we were served refreshments in the gallery showing the work of the Aldermarston Pottery, and in particular of the late Alan Caiger Smith, who was a specialist in and a scholar of tin glaze and lustre wares. Guja Bandini, the museum's Learning Officer described the scope of their galleries — from prehistory to biscuit tins — which we had only a brief time to explore before being guided through the new displays in the Story of Reading Gallery. Here they have reconstructed the Abbey's cloister arcade, while more of its Romanesque carvings, some of the finest in Europe,

may be found in the Bayeux Tapestry and Window galleries. Striking reconstructions and 3D modelling can be seen online at <https://www.readingmuseum.org.uk> on their blog's Reading Abbey pages.

We walked behind the museum through Forbury Gardens, where the massive Maiwand Lion, a 16-ton cast-iron figure by George Blackall Simonds, commemorates the 329 members of the 66th Foot (Berkshire Regiment) killed at the battle of Maiwand in the Second Afghan War (1878–80). But we found no memorial to Bobbie, a Reading mongrel dog, who had accompanied them to



Aldermanston lustre-ware tiles at Reading Museum  
(C. von Patzel)

Afghanistan and was present at the battle. Despite his wounds he managed to rejoin the regiment the following day. He was brought back to England and presented to Queen Victoria, only to meet his end under the wheels of a hansom cab.

The gardens and prison are in the area of some 30 acres that was once the precinct of the Abbey. Its inner gatehouse, which once divided the public area of the complex from the monks' private domain, is the best survival. In the eighteenth century it became a ladies' boarding school; alumni included sisters Cassandra and Jane Austen.

To the east of the gardens is Reading Gaol. Since 1786, there has been a prison here, built over the east end of the abbey church and infirmary, though the present Grade II-listed building dates back to 1844. And it is here that Oscar Wilde was imprisoned (1895–7). HMP Reading is redundant and since 2013, increasingly derelict, yet it costs the

government more than £250,000 a year to maintain. At the time of our visit, the city council and local pressure groups were working together to get consent for an arts centre at the site, rather than see its re-use entirely as luxury flats.

Reading was one of the most prestigious monastic houses in England. Its foundation by Henry I gave it status; its position on the Thames provided easy communication with London; and its establishment as a Cluniac house made it part of a powerful, continental religious movement. King Henry died in France but his body was brought back to Reading for burial. The Abbey's church was consecrated by Archbishop Thomas Becket; John of Gaunt married Blanche of Lancaster at the Abbey and the parliament of 1453 met there. Hugh Cook, the last Abbot, was one of three heads of house who were executed at the Dissolution, for reasons which are now obscure.

The decline of the abbey buildings thereafter, from their glory days to their present condition could hardly have been more precipitous. From the sixteenth century, Caen stone was being recycled to buildings such as Windsor Castle, and wooden panelling went to Magdalen College, Oxford. Although substantial ruins of masonry remain, these are but the core of flint and mortar left once the finished stone facing had been robbed out. Without knowing the usual layout of a medieval monastery, a visitor might have difficulty identifying the various spaces. John Speed's town plan of 1611 shows some buildings still standing, but by 1724 William Stukeley could write: 'so total a dissolution I scarcely ever saw ... as if they meant to defeat even the inherent sanctity of the land'. By 2009 what remained had become so unsafe that the site was closed to the public. Eventually, the 'Reading Abbey Revealed' project stabilised the walls, recapped them with slate, turf and sedum, and renovated the surviving Abbey Gateway, and the Ruins were re-opened in 2018.

The Abbey's best memorial is probably *Sumer is icumen in*, one of the earliest known songs in English, which survives in a MS of the 1260s. 'Bulluc sterteth, Bucke verteth' is the first recorded use in English of a 'raspberry tart'.

After our tour of the Abbey Quarter, we set out through the rain to the Museum of English Rural Life, which is housed by the University. We began with an excellent lunch. Then we had a short



Reading Abbey's inner gatehouse (R. Arnopp)



Relics of English Rural Life (R. Arnopp)

introduction to the Grade-II listed house designed in the 1880s by Alfred Waterhouse, for Alfred Palmer of the Reading biscuit makers. As it was Saturday unfortunately most of the house was not open to the public, but we were able to appreciate the windows and staircase of the entrance hall, designed in the Gothic Revival Style. It is now used for small displays. The museum is in a modern extension; we were guided around the galleries and shown how they use the lives of real people to help illustrate rural history. An example Jenny gave was the story of Henry Beecham, the inventor of Beec-ham's powders, who helped his cousin Thomas, a shepherd, with lambing and dosing sheep.

The key part of the collection is housed in the ground floor galleries, covering all aspects of rural life and the interface between Town and Country. Jenny talked in detail about some of the major items of interest, such as the American Titan Tractor from 1917, introduced because all the farm horses had been taken for service in the First World War. Driven by Paraffin, it was heavy and got bogged down in the mud. The collection also showed the many uses of steam for power, before it gave way to petrol and later electricity.

An exceptional survival is a seventeenth-century birthing mat found intact in a wall, for they were usually used only once and then destroyed; it was likely that this one had never been used. A coffin in the town and country gallery was a poignant reminder of high infant mortality in the past. Elsewhere there were items from the Festival of Britain exhibition celebrating country life. There

was much to remind us of the great changes in rural life which had taken place within living memory.

In the overflow collection upstairs, we saw, among all the farm implements and clothing, the multiplicity of things made from wicker before the advent of plastic. My favourite was the improbable replica of the Sutton Hoo helmet!



A Massey-Ferguson 135 (Kit Houghton)

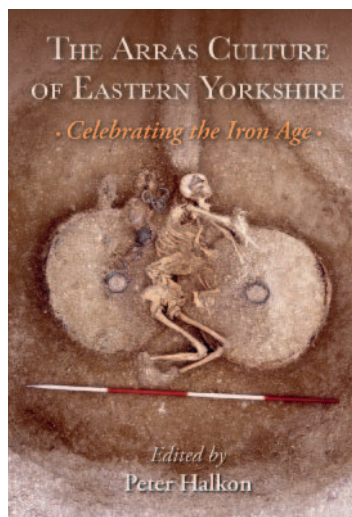


One final treasure was the Ladybird Books collection housed on the upper floor. It took me back to the time to when they were a source of knowledge for me. During our visit, the main focus of the display was books on space exploration in honour of the fiftieth anniversary of the Apollo 11

Moon landing. An unexpected end to an absorbing and interesting afternoon. We were all grateful to Hedley and Caroline for organising the day.

Stukely, W., 1724, *Itinerarium Curiosum* in P. Ackroyd, *Thames: Sacred River* (London 2007)

## MISCELLANY



### Book News

The Proceedings of our 2017 conference, Arras 200 — celebrating the Iron Age, were recently published: Halkon, P. (ed.), 2019, *The Arras Culture of Eastern Yorkshire — Celebrating the Iron Age*, Oxbow, pbk, 216 pp. ISBN: 9781789252583. Though it is available directly from Oxbow at £38 plus p&p, it is cheaper from other online booksellers with free delivery.

### The Galloway Hoard

Margaret Nieke who kindly wrote about the lecture on the hoard for the Summer Meeting

notes above, has written to alert us that the hoard is due to go on display at National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh from 29 May to 18 October and thereafter to be shown at Kirkcudbright and other locations nearby. The dates at least are now uncertain because of the corona pandemic, so please check locally before attempting to visit.

### Gifts

Under the gift aid scheme, if you are a taxpayer, the government will refund to the Institute, 25p in the pound of the value of your subscription. If you would like to help, please ask the Administrator for a form.

Please consider making a donation or a legacy, and if you wish, stipulate the area of our work to which it should be directed. A sum of £25,000 will increase our annual grant giving by £1,000. A legacy to the Institute, an exempt charity, is extremely tax-efficient.

### Contacting the Administrator

The Society of Antiquaries premises have been closed while the restrictions of the corona pandemic are in place. The Institute's Administrator will be working from home. The direct telephone number is 07847 600756, the email is [admin@royalarchinst.org](mailto:admin@royalarchinst.org) and for the time being, the postal address is RAI, c/o the address below.

## ROYAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

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NEXT ISSUE Copy for the next issue must reach the editor by the end of May 2020 for publication in August 2020.

THIS ISSUE'S COVER PICTURE: Excavations within the inner chamber of Learnie 1A Cave, Rosemarkie, near Inverness (© Rosemarkie Caves Project; for their Research Grant report see p. 7)