



ULSTER  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

# Newsletter

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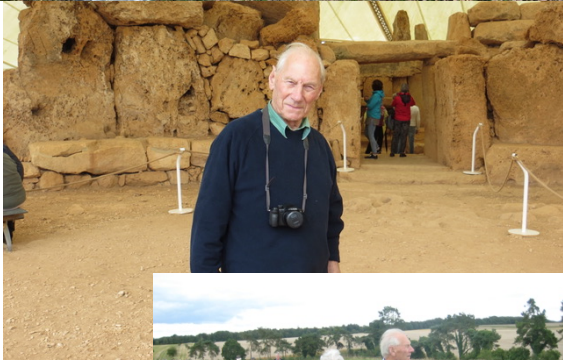
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# Kenneth Pullin BEM

1929-2023

Ken was born in King's Lynn on the 3rd February 1929 and lived for the first six years in a rented house with a tennis court before moving to Wanstead near Ilford, and lived opposite Ken's school. Ilford was close to the London docks so at the outbreak of war, the family sold the Ilford home and moved to Tunbridge Wells. When Ken got his Senior Certificate, his father found him a job at Shorts as an apprentice in the seaplane works at Rochester Bridge and he duly moved into digs in Military Road in Rochester. On a bus on the way into work he saw a headline in a newspaper that Shorts was moving to Belfast. At this stage the workforce hadn't been told but he was eventually given the option to relocate. However, when offered a job in Belfast he readily agreed as it seemed like a bit of an adventure and eventually lived with Mike Henderson, a fellow Shorts employee in a rented flat. Belfast appealed to Ken and he described it as "a good city with lots of engineering stuff".

Ken's parents moved to Ireland after the war and lived in Wicklow. Several years later they followed Ken to Belfast buying a house in Knockbracken, overlooking the city. The driveway proved too steep for his aging father and they soon moved to Knockbreda Park and when his father died, Ken moved in with his mother and this became Ken's house for the next sixty years.

I first met Ken in 1991 just as he was retiring from Shorts in Belfast where he was working on their missile programme. He arrived one afternoon at the Ballynahatty excavation at the Giant's Ring and said that as he was soon to retire, he could volunteer one day a week on Fridays. By then he had excavated with Jim Mallory at Haughey's fort but his earliest experience was with Ann Hamlin at Kilnasaggart in 1982. He became a trusted and integral part of the Ballynahatty project for the next ten years. During this time he developed an intimate knowledge and understanding

of the excavation process, developed novel recording procedures in difficult areas of the site and readily passed his knowledge to student excavators. Ken's versatility, quiet enthusiasm and absolute reliability contributed significantly to the success of the excavation. He volunteered and spent many seasons excavating at other major sites in Northern Ireland such as Navan Fort and Haughey's Fort, Ardglass and Dundrum Castles and with the Time Team. On a number of these sites, he doubled as a minibus driver and he also drove minibuses on Queens University student residential field trips to Donegal for four years. In recent years he mostly worked on the joint UAS/National Trust excavations at Castleward, the Bishop's Palace, Co Londonderry and the Belfast Hills. In June 2017, in his 88th year he worked on the Divis Mountain Excavation in the hills above Belfast. Ken was always fully involved in the process from clearing the site, pushing wheelbarrows, fine trowelling, detailed note taking, site drawing and surveying.

Ken became a member of the Ulster Archaeological Society on his retirement and was elected to the Standing Committee from 1992-94 and again 1998-99. From 2000-2002 he was Vice President and by the time I became President of the UAS in 2008, Ken had been Honorary Secretary for six years - the post he held until last week. He inaugurated an annual project to run weekend field excursions for the members to every county in Ireland. He also took on the arduous task of developing our annual lecture programme (eight sessions per year) involving the selection and contacting of lecturers, arranging for their accommodation and meals, collecting them from airport or train station and then meeting and greeting our members at the lecture theatre in Queen's University. Until his final illness, he had not missed a lecture in all this time. He supported and participated in all the field trips, both local and to Europe, and our fieldwork programme. Ken has been diligent in this role, attending and minuting all the monthly committee meetings and the AGM for 15 years. He maintained a digital database of members and sent out regular emails informing them of forthcoming events.

However, Ken cannot be defined by archaeology alone. His house is a repository of ninety years of interests and artefacts. Once Ken got over the embarrassment of his life being paraded in public, I think he would have appreciated an archaeological approach to the subject. So here is a history of Ken in eight objects, all of which I found in his house:

A dog:

As far as I am aware, Ken never kept pets but this white ceramic version was owned by Maureen George. Ken and Maureen were loosely inseparable. They were an unlikely couple in some ways but were clearly very fond of each other. They lived in separate houses, had some separate and many shared interests and for many years Ken went down to Maureen's for his evening meal. Ken would return the favour with DIY jobs, and this was extended to Maureen's friends for whom Ken was the DIY angel. In return he usually got a free lunch. I only ever heard one criticism of Maureen. After dinner they would often watch television (the Last of the Summer Wine was a favourite) on Maureen's old and very small TV which she refused to change. By this stage Ken has invested in a flat screen TV and he complained that he never got the opportunity to use it. Ken's great regret was that he was not able to see Maureen in her final days due to Covid restrictions.

A clockwork train:

There is a rather battered clockwork engine on the window ledge which was probably a childhood toy. There is also a train set somewhere although I have not actually seen this – Ken said it was in boxes and was mostly 'N' gauge, but his abiding passion was for the real thing. Long before he became interested in the Ulster Archaeological Society, he was a council member of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland and was responsible for designing the track layout for their Whitehead headquarters. He worked on various projects and, in a typically unassuming way, described his activities as that of a mere foot soldier. Nevertheless, for years he spent every Thursday helping with the conservation and maintenance of the rolling stock as part of a four man

team specialising in electrical applications. He attended a course qualifying him to work on their veteran coaches enabling manually operated doors to be brought up to modern safety standards.

A bookcase:

I was going to count his books but soon gave up. I hope Ken will forgive me if I simply say that he had 50m of shelving devoted to books on all periods and areas of archaeology and history, engineering, ships, railways, religion, philosophy, music and composers, the Greek classics, art history, horticulture, geography, mills, DIY and travel. The books were clearly not for show and were all well-thumbed and show his wide interests.

A file box:

Ken loved to put things in order. He had over 90 files and file boxes containing his life experiences, projects, societies, interests. He kept the itineraries, guidebooks and notes of all his holidays and often talked about the Queen's extra Mural study tours run by Noel Mitchel, Richard Talbot and Grenfell Morton. It was on these trips that he first met Maureen, the earliest being to Sicily in 1978. In subsequent years they visited Rome, Northern and Southern Greece, Algeria and Tunisia, Northern Cyprus, the Balearics, Syria, Thailand, New England, New Zealand, the Algarve, Israel and Jordan, the Carolinas, Czech and Slovak republics, Vancouver and Canada, Corsica and Sardinia, Arizona, China, the Hebrides and Orkney and Shetland. Of course, these tours were eventually superseded by Anne Macdermott's highly successful UAS field trips. In his final years this organized system somewhat broke down and a rather chaotic open filing system developed.

A paper knife.

Whereas most people would tear open an envelope with a finger to get to the contents, Ken carefully used a paperknife. The envelope could be reused with a fresh label but the backs were mostly used for writing scribbled notes and lists and were to be found all over the house. It

seems that nothing which could be remotely useful was ever thrown away. Envelopes, boxes, old shoes, calendars, tools, torches, generations of phones and electrical bits and pieces, pencils. All these had a potential and were not to be wasted.

A classical CD.

Ken had hundreds of classical CDs. His relaxation was listening to classical music and this he shared with Maureen. They were keen supporters of the monthly meetings of the Belfast Gramophone Society, where he made a regular presentation of music. Ken invited me to join what had, by this stage, become a rather select and elderly but musically educated group and we enjoyed many Saturday afternoons listening to programmes of music varying from the popular to the obscure. Ken was one of the few members able to stay awake for the whole of this listening experience. In a sense this was a substitute because his preference was always for live music and he and Maureen were long-standing subscribers to the Ulster Orchestra's Friday evening concert series and Queen's Friday morning music appreciation classes.

A membership card for the Ulster Ski Club.

In the late 1940s Ken's flat mate thought it would be good idea to try skiing and they duly went by train to the Alps. His friend gave up after the first year but Ken rather took to it and became quite adept. In Belfast he joined the Ulster Ski club and, to quote an obituary, 'he set up a pulley system to haul skiers up a sloping snowy field near Lisburn in the 1970s enabling skiers to get a tow up and then ski down'. At various times he was a member of other societies such as the Ski Club of Great Britain, The Glens of Antrim Historical Society and the British Interplanetary Society. According to his brother David, Ken was also a good mountaineer in his younger days.

A National Trust volunteer card.

Ken was fascinated by historic technology and, in parallel with his archaeological endeavors, he was involved in a long running heritage

project. His voluntary work running the corn mill at Castleward in Co Down for the National Trust on summer Sundays led to him becoming an active member of the Society of Mills and Millers of Ireland. Ken was also a volunteer with the Jubilee Sailing Trust in which able bodied volunteers are paired with disabled people so they can get the experience of sailing on a tall ship. He was quite indignant when he arrived at his last voyage to find that, because of his age, a volunteer had been allocated to him instead. At Shorts, he was a member of the Sailing Club and would race boats in the Wildcat Class.

Ken, in his quiet and unassuming way has made a real and genuine contribution to the archaeology and heritage of Northern Ireland, not just recently, but for over fifty years. For none of these activities has he ever been paid - he has always volunteered. I once apologized for not being able to pay him but he characteristically said that it was 'a privilege to work on the excavation at Ballynahatty' and I think we can agree that it was a privilege for us to work with him. The forthcoming monograph on the Ballynahatty excavation is dedicated jointly to Ken and his good friend and stalwart Ballynahatty excavator -the late Billy Dunlop, and their photograph appears on the frontispiece. Although slowing down a little in his final years, it is remarkable that he remained so active. In his late 80s, his brother David came to live with him and he found himself increasingly in the position of carer. David's welfare was always uppermost in his thoughts, and it was Ken's last wish to see his brother returned to his family. Ken organized David's son, Andrew, to collect him and he is now safely in Australia.

Ken Pullin received the British Empire Medal for his longstanding commitment to the archaeology and heritage of Northern Ireland and at the 74th AGM of the Ulster Archaeological Society in 2016 I had the great privilege, as retiring President, of awarding Honorary Life Membership to Ken Pullin for his long, outstanding and continuing contribution to the Society and to the furtherance of archaeology in Ulster - an event which was met by enthusiastic and prolonged applause



from the members. Ken continued as secretary for the next six years until, at the age of 94 he died in post. Ken met his final days with fortitude but to everyone's regret his death came too soon.

Ken was a most unassuming and dedicated man who readily gave his time and energy to projects as diverse as archaeology, music, steam trains and travel. He will be sorely missed by his many friends and we mourn the loss of a great companion. He led a rich, fulfilled life and enriched the lives of his many friends.

What does the future hold for Ken? You may think that, as this is a humanist funeral - nothing much. However, because of Ken's long association with the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland and the countless hours he spent there as a volunteer, Ken's ashes will go on one last journey as the RPSI has kindly agreed to shovel Ken's ashes into a locomotive firebox as it gives steam train rides in Whitehead. Ken will be going up in smoke for a second time, so it can truly be said: 'he died once but was cremated twice'.

**Barrie Hartwell**

**Past-president, Ulster Archaeological Society and formerly Senior  
Research Officer in Archaeology at Queen's University Belfast.**

## Lectures 2023

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

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

23 <sup>rd</sup> October	<b>Purdysburn Villa Colony - Archaeological Perspectives on the Treatment of Mentally Ill Patients in Belfast</b> Dr Gill Allmond
27 <sup>th</sup> November	<b>Ballynahatty Prehistoric Landscape</b> Barrie Hartwell
11 <sup>th</sup> December	<b>Ranelagh Cemetery</b> Prof. Eileen Murphy (Queen's University Belfast)

## Discovery 2023!

Our annual conference with the Centre for Community Archaeology at Queen's will be held on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

Full details are on our website - <https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/uas/Conference/>

Booking is currently open and the programme will be available shortly.

## April Lecture

The Society's April lecture was given by Dr Ruth Carden of University College Dublin on the Irish Cave Bones project.

The Irish Cave Bones Project started back in 2007, with Dr Ruth Carden of University College Dublin on a lonesome mission, carefully examining and reassessing the overlooked and often forgotten assemblages of antiquarian bone collections from around Ireland, stored in the National Museum of Ireland. Perhaps no-one could have foreseen that this labour of love would change our understanding of Irish prehistory forever. The project now is multi-disciplinary and multinational, with collaborators from around the world, contributing their specialities under both Dr Carden and Dr Helen Lewis's watchful eyes!

Dr Carden explained the phases of the project, which have led to the current nexus where science and archaeology are making waves. After the solitary work of 2007, the project was funded by the Heritage

Council of Ireland for a few months in 2009-10. The results started to attract attention, and by 2015 Ballinamintra Cave in County Waterford was being excavated by Coilin O'Driscoll and Dr Richard Jennings, with funding from the Royal Irish Academy, the bones and sediments found there being examined by Dr Carden. The late great Prof. Peter Woodman also was involved in securing excavation of Killuragh Cave, County Limerick, where a massive 10,615 bones were found, both human and animal, ranging from the Mesolithic period to the Late Bronze Age. It was during this busy phase, in 2016, that Dr Carden's collaboration with Dr Marion Dowd produced the first rumblings of an Irish Palaeolithic (the story, as it happened, can be read here: <https://twilightbeasts.org/2016/03/21/the-bear-from-clare-new-evidence-for-an-early-human-presence-in-late-pleistocene-ireland/>), as Dr Carden noted butchery marks on a bear patella from the Alice and Gwendoline Caves, near Ennis in County Clare. The radiocarbon dates were carried out by QUB Chrono, and produced a date range some 2,000

years before Mount Sandel's early Mesolithic arrivals to the island, who for so long have been considered the first people to inhabit Ireland. Dr Carden emphasised that we have no way (yet) of knowing the nature of human occupation of Ireland at this new Upper Palaeolithic phase – if these were people following the seasons of herds and shoals, or if they created actual semi-permanent dwellings. This much-publicised discovery caught the imagination of the producers of the RTE television show *Burren, Heart of Stone*, which was broadcast in April 2021. This show leaked some teasers for other discoveries from Castlepook Cave in County Cork, which were on track for academic publication that year until the pandemic lockdowns. Still, some multinational collaborations occurred through lockdown on the grey wolf, with Irish representation from cave bones.

This hiatus gave Dr Carden a chance to question the extent of the ice sheets of the Last Glacial Maximum. While an Irish Palaeolithic is quite feasible if using the most up to date models of the encroaching glaciers, there are

some areas which need reconsideration. Richard Ussher's 1904 excavation of Castlepook Cave produced evidence of Pleistocene fauna such as hyenas and mammoths, indicating the all-encroaching ice did not extend that far. There are current plans to examine aDNA and sediments from the cave.

Dr Carden told of the exciting series of cave excavations both ongoing and planned, including this year's excavation at Kilcolman. She emphasised the enthusiasm and help from the community of Doneraile, who made the excavation a very special one, even to one lady who had a collection of old photographic plates of Ussher's 1904 excavation! Dr Carden noted that the story really is only starting to find the Irish Palaeolithic, there are many surprises ahead, and it will certainly be an exciting journey.

**Dr Rena Maguire**

## May Lecture

The Society's March Lecture was given by Dr Niall Gregory, of Gregory Archaeology. His lecture was: Understanding dugout boats and their interaction within their receiving environment in Northern Ireland, through discoveries from recent weather events and experimental archaeology.

Niall did his BA in Archaeology and Economics at UCD. He completed a PHD at Edinburgh University on Irish Logboats. In 1988 he qualified as an Underwater Archaeologist. He has founded his own company, Gregory Archaeology, to advise on early watercraft. He has produced many papers and is currently working on two books. He is very much involved with an Early Watercraft International Network project. He has had previous association with the Ulster Archaeology Journal through his work with Wes Forsythe on the logboat discovered at Greyabbey. ("A Neolithic Logboat from Greyabbey Bay, County Down." Ulster Journal of Archaeology, Vol 66, 2007). Before Niall commenced his lecture, he paid a heartfelt tribute

to his friend and colleague, Miran Erič, who had passed the previous week. Miran Erič (1959-2023) was a Marine Archaeology Specialist from Slovenia and one of the founding members of the "Early Watercraft Global Network".

The principle focus of the talk were to be dugout logboats from the rivers Finn and Foyle flood plain and their classification in the context of the Irish corpus. Also, a focus on the emerging patterns and the potential for regional variations of finds. Consideration of expectations for more discovery from the increasing frequency of weather events that contribute to discoveries, for instance the impact of climate change, and following this, scope for the recording, and for the future analysis and the care of dugout boats.

Boats in general are built, dugout boats are sculpted. They had a wide variety of functions: Cargo, ferry, fishing, resource harvesting, militaristic purposes, personal use.

In November 2015 storm weather led to extensive flooding in the region of the Finn and Foyle. A

burst levy along the river Clady, which those who witnessed it said that it sounded like an explosion, left debris and much shattered material that on examination, were believed to be fragments of log boats.

It can be typical to get these finds in multiple parts and the process required to match the various fragments together is likened to solving a jig-saw puzzle. Timbers are separated according to timber grain, thickness of worked timber, compatibility of boat styles and features and the placement of timber relevant to the original hull. Details are all carefully categorised and measurements made. The quality of the surviving timbers, the tapered plan, the study of the adze marks, the perceived manoeuvrability, all characteristics are examined and photographs are taken. These are all recorded and interpretations made.

**Leo van Es**

## Field Trip to Greencastle and Carlingford, 17th June

The June field trip was by bus to Greencastle and Carlingford. The tour was led by Dr Tom McNeill with 29 members in attendance.

The first stop was the Norman castle at Greencastle. It is sited on a rocky height on the north shore of Carlingford Lough and overlooking the ferry quay which is south of the castle. Greencastle was built by Hugh de Lacy, probably between 1227 and 1242. It was strategically placed to protect the ferry crossing from Carlingford town which, with its castle, is on the south shore of the Lough. Greencastle helped to secure for the Normans the route up the east coast of Ireland from Dublin up through Carlingford and on to Dundrum, Carrickfergus and beyond. Routes further inland could be less secure depending on relations between the Normans and Irish at any given time. 1227 was Hugh de Lacy's second appointment as Earl of Ulster, having previously been Earl from 1205 to 1210. He was ousted (from Dundrum) in 1210 by King John,

went into exile, returned to Ireland in 1223 and was made Earl again in 1227 by Henry III.

The castle, as built by Hugh de Lacy, consisted of a quadrilateral outside curtain wall with towers at each of the four corners. Inside was a rectangular keep, or hall together with some other buildings. A rock-cut ditch further protected the outside walls. After Hugh de Lacy's time the castle had a varied history, being taken by Edward Bruce in 1316, attacked and sometimes captured by the Irish, and maintained as a garrison up to 1590. The remains as existing today are thus a mix of 13th to 16th century features.

The approach to the castle is from the south with the view being dominated by the keep. The western side of the site is now within an adjacent farmyard. On the approach Tom pointed out the eastern rock-cut ditch, now badly overgrown and all but invisible. He explained that previous excavations had found identifiable parts of the curtain wall now choking the ditch. Exactly when this event occurred is debatable but, from examining and dating deposit layers in the ditch,

excavators concluded that the collapse of the wall took place early in the life of the castle and suggested a possible date of about 1260 – the date of a known Irish attack.

Inside the castle Tom explained that the "keep" in Hugh de Lacy's time was a large first floor hall, entered from the west end and with a dais at its east end. A fireplace, windows etc. were all pointed out. Tom also explained several other features including a complex south west tower (remains in the farmyard) which probably contained private chambers for de Lacy's household, more private chambers at the north east tower and probable kitchen and service buildings north west of the hall. This helped to put the overall history of the buildings into context.

Tom then returned to the issue of the curtain wall collapse. He explained that in 1312 Richard de Burgh (the Earl at that time) married two of his daughters at Greencastle to two members of the Anglo-Irish nobility: Katherine to Maurice fitz Thomas on 3rd August 1312 and Joan to Thomas fitz John of Offaly on 14 August 1312. Tom

felt it was highly unlikely that Richard would have held two weddings with important guests at a castle with the ditch filled with debris from an old attack still visible. Indeed, the ditch would likely have been cleared and repaired for the occasion. Tom suggested the Edward Bruce attack and capture of Greencastle in 1315/1316 as a more likely occasion for the damage to have occurred.

Afterwards we went to Carlingford town for lunch and reconvened at its castle for 2 pm. Carlingford castle occupies a prominent position on rock overlooking the harbour. The castle dates from around 1190 and is thought to have been built by Hugh de Lacy; the family owned considerable lands south of Carlingford at that time. King John reputedly stayed in the castle in 1210 when, as we saw earlier, he was driving Hugh out of Ireland. It is still known as King John's castle.

We entered the castle via a modern entrance which is south of the original gatehouse, only part of which still survives. As explained by

Tom we were inside the western half of the castle, roughly D-shaped and with walls enclosing a courtyard. The remains of the north part of the gatehouse are on the west side of the courtyard and a square-shaped projecting tower is in the south west angle.

A massive cross-wall running approximately north-south separates the west and eastern parts of the castle. The eastern section is roughly rectangular and traditionally it is thought that the wall was built in the latter part of the 13th century, creating the eastern half within which a hall was constructed. However, Tom offered an alternative narrative as quoted below.

"The late 12th century castle is now divided into an eastern and a western half by a thick wall. This was clearly built after there was any need for the buildings against the south and north curtain wall, because it blocks windows at either end. It is remarkably blank, notable for having no windows in it and no defensive features. On the inner (east) face and north and south of it is a clear offset for a floor. In the middle of the wall, at



ground level, is a wide, but barely defended door; there is a second door at the north end of the wall, at first floor level. The only windows to the space defined by the wall are in the east curtain wall. A wide flight of stairs leads down from the centre of the space (opposite the ground level door) to a basement lobby. A vaulted room opens from the lobby to the south, while a wide door leads out to a platform overlooking the harbour. South of a cross wall at the south end of the main wall is a complex of chambers with fireplaces; one has an arcade of 15-16th style. The traditional explanation is that the wall was built in the late 13th century to create a large hall in the eastern half of the castle, presumably at first floor level. There is no dating evidence for the wall and as a hall the eastern space fails to convince. It lacks the windows that a hall should have; any sense of upper and lower end; a decent entrance, other than the small door at the north end; any sign or place for a kitchen and service rooms: all the features we identify with a hall. Associated with the wall and the eastern space are wide doors, out to the western

part of the castle and its entrance, the flight of stairs leads down to storage space and out to a platform which sits out over the edge of the harbour. This platform has been identified as a gun platform, without any evidence other than its siting. Instead of a medieval hall, I proposed that it was built for the storage of a lot of material, which could be got by a crane directly from a lighter moored in the harbour below. Some of the stores could be kept in the (virtually unlit) vaulted room; most could be carried up the wide stairs to the ground level of the castle and the big spaces enclosed by the wall. I suggested that a likely candidate to be the man responsible for this was Nicholas Bagenal in the later 16th century. He was Marshal of the army and had been granted the lands of Newry Abbey along with Greencastle and Carlingford. He essentially controlled all of Carlingford Lough. He built a large mansion at Greencastle, attached to the old hall which he largely rebuilt with big Tudor windows. He owned the town of Newry where he built a tower as his control place. As Marshal, he may have

planned to assemble material for a campaign from Newry and Carlingford (the two ends of the gap of the North) which he controlled. He had no use for Carlingford as a place to live, but it would have served as a fine store, controlling, and supplied by, the harbour."

After exploring the castle we made our way through the town, pausing at the former gatehouse dating from around 1450 and the "mint". The latter was unlikely to have been used as such but was the residence of a wealthy merchant. Our final stop was at the Dominican friary, an impressive ruin of a nave and chancel church with the remains of a tower between. Its foundation is sometimes credited to Richard de Burgo in 1305. He was recorded as being a patron of the Dominicans but documentary evidence suggests that the site of the friary was given to the friars by several townspeople in 1352. Of course, the friars may well have had a presence in the town before 1352.

Many thanks to Tom for a hugely interesting and informative day.

There are questions still to be asked - and answered!

**Randal Scott**

## Field Trip to Co. Carlow

Finally, after the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, 32 members of the UAS assembled at the aptly named Woodford Dolmen Hotel in Carlow for our first county trip since 2019. All agreed, it was great to meet up again both to socialise and learn something of the archaeology of this little explored county. It's a real hidden gem and the pleasantly warm weather certainly made our trip all the better.

Sustained by a huge dinner and breakfast (the hotel doesn't do things by halves) we set off on Wednesday morning with Pdraig Dooley, Past President of the Carlow Historical and Archaeological Society (CHAS), to nearby Leighlinbridge on the River Barrow. After a quick inspection of the Black Castle, a 16th c tower house replacing a 14th c castle, and site of an early Carmelite Friary, we crossed the bridge to Old Leighlin. On the site of the

6th/early 7th c monastic site founded by St Gobban, though better known for its association with his brother St Laserian, we were met by Richard Codd, President of CHAS and local parishioner, June. They showed us round the 12/13th c St Laserian's Cathedral, pointing out the multitude of notable features and evidence for re-building and modification of the building over the centuries. After admiring the beautiful Arts & Crafts "An Tur Gloine" (The Tower of Glass) East Window by Catherine O'Brien, the two ancient fonts, grave slabs, sedilia and more, we ventured down the road to St Laserian's Well, guarded by a 9th c wheel headed cross.

Next stop was the impressive Ballymoon Castle, built by Roger Bigod or a member of the Carew family in about 1290-1310. Perhaps never completed, the square-in-plan castle still stands to an impressive height with a curtain wall and 4 latrine towers. The internal structures are reduced to foundation level but the fireplaces, windows, garderobes and other features give an impression of how

the ranges were once used. The distinctive Caernarvon arches indicate the age of the castle, though it has never been excavated. A geophysical survey was undertaken in the surrounding area, full of interesting earthworks, probably contemporary with the castle.

We enjoyed a lovely lunch at the Goodly Barrow, a beautifully restored canal store on Carlow side of the River Barrow, followed by a talk on history of the navigation of the river and the buildings which have been made into a delightful café and museum. The owners Tom and Paula have done a wonderful job of breathing life into the area and giving the community an excellent asset for walkers, cyclists and other visitors.

We continued down the Barrow to St Mullins where we were greeted by Anne and Martin, members of the St Mullins Amenity & Recreational Tourism Group (SMART). After a thorough history of the area, from the 3rd c beginnings, the 7th c ecclesiastical site founded by St Molling, the Viking Age, Norman years,

medieval and post-medieval conflict right up to its 18th and 19thc industrial heritage. After viewing the fine Norman motte and bailey and the churchyard, with the remains of several churches and associated buildings and artefacts including the foundations of a round tower and a high cross. The heritage centre in the 1811 church was unfortunately closed for renovations – something to visit in the future!

Whilst some members retired to the Mullins Café (another restored canal store) the remainder wandered down the road to see the holy well, dedicated to St Mullin and still the focus of pilgrimage. Recent research by Dr Tomás O Carragáin, UCC, indicates that it is the remains of a baptismal chapel dating to c 1100, built over “the flowing waters of a holy well”, making it the only surviving early medieval well-chapel in Ireland.

Returning to the hotel, we passed by Templenaboe (Church of the Cows), the remnants of a small church built by St Moling to commemorate his success in

freeing the local people from the Bóroma Tax, the harsh tax payable in cattle to the High King. The site was later used as a cillín for unbaptised children.

On Thursday morning, Plan B sprang into action as at the last minute we were unable to get permission to visit the Linkardstown type tomb at Baunogenasraid. Instead, we went to visit Duckett’s Grove, an entirely different monument type! The existing ruins of this extraordinary house have a fascinating story to tell. The estate was bought in 1695 by Thomas Duckett who replaced the existing dwelling with a typical Georgian house in c 1745. Prospering, the family decided to “upgrade” the house according to the fashion of the time. From the mid 1820s, it was partly heightened and redesigned in a castellated Gothic revival style by English architect Thomas Cobden and in c 1845, the mansion was further extended by Irish architect John McDuff Derick who added the granite ashlar viewing tower on an octagonal plan to the south, turrets, statue niches and embellishments, entrance screens

and a stable complex to the rear. Definitely a case of More is Less!

After the death of William Duckett in 1908, aged 86 and last in the male bloodline, his second wife, Maria Georgina Duckett (52 years his junior), lived on in the property until c 1916. By this time she was no longer on speaking terms with her only daughter, Olive (William's stepdaughter). The outcome of this was the eventual disinheritance of her daughter following her death 1937, leaving her what is known as "the angry shilling", just one shilling, from an estate valued at £97,735 (equivalent to £6,700,000 in 2021). After Maria's departure, the estate was broken up under various Land Acts and the mansion was sold for a mere £320. During the War of Independence, Duckett's Grove was used as a base by the local IRA and its flying column. Possibly due to the Duckett's good treatment of their tenants and employees over the years, the interiors and furniture were left intact upon the IRA's departure from the house. However, in 1933, the house was destroyed overnight in a fire and still remains as a ruin.

In 2005, Carlow County Council acquired Duckett's Grove and commenced with the restoration of the walled gardens. It was officially opened in September 2007 for use as a public park, with a café and craft studios in the outbuildings.

Our visit continued to Clonmore where we met another member of CHAS and viewed the exterior of the 13th c Clonmore Castle. Its original builder is unknown but it was eventually it was granted to the Earl of Ormond in the 15th century. Clonmore was captured by the 9th Earl of Kildare in 1516 but in 1534, after 'Silken Thomas' Fitzgerald, the 10th Earl of Kildare, broke his oath of loyalty to Henry VIII and rebelled against English administration, the castle and lands were granted back to the Butlers of Ormond. During the 1641 Rebellion, the castle was taken over by the O'Byrne clan before it was finally slighted in 1650 on the orders of Oliver Cromwell. In 1697, the castle and lands were granted to the Howard family, who would eventually become the Earls of Wicklow during the 1800s. We continued to the graveyard, situated on the site of St

Maadhóg's monastery which flourished from the 7th to the 11th century, becoming an important place of pilgrimage.

The graveyard contains a large number of early medieval cross slabs and a few architectural fragments. According to Peter Harbison who studied the graveyard in 1991, all the loose stones, crosses and cross slabs were gathered up in 1975 and set upright in neat rows within a small paved area enclosed by kerbing at the north-western corner of the graveyard. Among them is the head of a solid wheel-headed high cross, the shaft of which still stands in the graveyard. Other fragments of this cross survive, enabling a reconstruction to be made. Harbison's study identified 24 early medieval cross slabs of varying design, some in low relief and some incised. Some are plain Latin crosses, some are ringed and some are unusually ornate. Most of these stones appear to date from the 9th and 10th century and may have been commissioned by pilgrims.

Across the road in the grounds of St John's Church (c 1812) is a

complete high cross, known as the Mission Cross or St Mogue's Cross. Next to this is St Mogue's Well, now incorporated into a little community Prayer Garden. It is a spring fed well, known for its curative powers, and there are a few steps leading down to a modern well head. Built into the right side of the well-head is a small bullaun stone. By the bridge, on the other side of the road is an enormous bullaun stone with 3 well defined hollows and traces of a fourth.

Heading back to Carlow, we passed by the superb Haroldstown Portal Tomb. Regrettably, it was off limits on private land but we had a good view from the coach in passing. It is a well preserved portal tomb with two slightly inclined, overlapping capstones and an unusually large chamber, measuring c 4m long and 3.20m wide. The capstones are supported by ten vertical stones. Unusually, the chamber faces NNW rather than a more typical easterly aspect. Next stop was the famous Brownshill (or Kernanstown) Portal Tomb on the outskirts of Carlow town. The chamber is defined by a pair of portal stones (c 1.5m high)

with a squarish door stone between them and a low back stone. These stones support the massive capstone (4.7m x 6.1m x 2m) which weighs in at an estimated 150-160 tonnes, making it the largest example in Europe. Antiquarian accounts suggest there were once three 'dolmens' in Kernanstown Townland, though no trace of the other two still exist.

We continued into town for lunch before assembling again at the Carlow County Museum as it was International Museum Day. We had a wonderfully interesting guided tour with curator Dermot Mulligan, seeing everything from the original gallows trapdoor from the Carlow Gaol to the magnificent late 19th century hand carved Flemish pulpit from Carlow Cathedral and the "Journey in Time" exhibition, showing artefacts found along the route of the M9 Carlow By-pass in 2006. These include flint arrowheads and scrapers, granite hammers and axeheads, sherds of pottery, and the smallest object, an Iron Age glass bead. Wall panels also describe the process and works in the excavation, as well as

overviews of life in Ireland during these ages.

The final visit of the day was to the Norman Carlow Castle – or what remains of it - after it was inadvertently blown up in 1814 by a Dr Middleton who was attempting to convert the castle into a lunatic asylum. The original ringwork castle was replaced by a stone castle built by William Marshall who succeeded Strongbow as Lord of Leinster (perhaps with his son William the younger) sometime between 1207 and 1212/13. The design – a strong, rectangular keep with round towers at each corner – was typical of many built in this period in Leinster. Today, only the western half of the castle survives. Also destroyed was the nearby hall, mentioned in early documents, as well as any of the remaining stone or wooden outer walls that would have provided additional defences for the castle.

The entrance can still be seen on the north side, where there is a doorway at the first floor level, originally accessed by wooden stairs. Only the outer face of the west wall survives, but the remains

of the mural stairs, providing access to the different levels, can still be traced in the rough inner face of the wall. Originally, the roof was contained within the castle walls and only covered the first floor. At a later date, perhaps when the castle became the seat of government in the 14th century, the roof was raised to the top of the outer castle walls in order to create a second floor.

Most people stayed on for a third night in Carlow, having enjoyed the opportunity to resume our study tours and a bit of craic. Our sincere thanks to all the local people who made our visit so informative and great fun.

**Anne MacDermott**

## Field Trip to Ballyduggan Medieval Village

On Saturday 13th May the UAS took a field trip to Ballyduggan Medieval Village. This is situated on the banks of Ballyduggan Lake, Downpatrick. It is run by the Magnus Viking Association. The group took their name from one of the viking chiefs named Magnus

Barelegs, whom it is believed was buried nearby. Bi-annually they hold The Magnus Barelegs Festival.

Our group was met by the Viking Jarl, or Lord, on arrival and escorted into the Pallisade. This enclosure contains numerous houses that are associated with different activities that archaeological and historical investigation would place in such a settlement during this time. The enactors are a Living History based group and while they so clearly enjoy the roles that they play, there is an excellent educational dimension to this endeavour.

We saw examples of, and could ask questions and reflect on aspects of what life could have been like in such a community and settlement. Religious beliefs, history, saga and identity, through an imaginative tapestry in the Long House. Kids will of course recognize the Marvel Heroes, Thor, etc.

There were examples of cooking and baking and some of the foodstuffs utilised, plants and herbs, pottery, jewellery and the



making of clothing and other items with animal skins. There is often an example of Viking boats on the Ballyduggan Lake, or pulled ashore.

The enactors are of various ages, including young children. Some of us were particularly amused and amazed at the artful trading skills shown by a very young Viking trader of plants. I predict a prosperous future.

We also saw examples of how tools and weapons were made. There is a forge on site. You can see replica shields, armour, helmets, axes and swords. One of our group got to don the full compliment and a very convincing Viking warrior he made. It would have been even more convincing if he had taken off his spectacles though.

Participants can have a go at using the bow and arrow and take aim at the archery targets. As most of our group had no previous experience some of our arrows went slightly askew. On reflection, it is a good thing that no one was lurking in the nearby bushes.

Our group were delighted with our visit and with the help and courtesy shown. An educative and fun day out for all the family.

Leo van Es

## Field Trip to 4CHRONO Centre, QUB

Members of the UAS were given a tour of the new accelerator mass spectrometer within the 14CHRONO Centre as well as other new machines for material analysis. The 14CHRONO Centre is an Internationally recognised high precision radiocarbon and isotope analysis laboratory. Queens University first installed a radiocarbon dating laboratory in 1966. The laboratory is actively involved in the analysis of samples for collaborative projects worldwide. Research and commercial projects are undertaken in a wide range of disciplines. The group were very courteously welcomed and guided by Dr Gerard Barrett BSc, MSc, PhD. Gerard is responsible for the operation, optimization and maintenance of the accelerator mass spectrometer and also the

ramped pyrooxidation system. There was certainly a lot for us to try and get our heads around. Gerard carefully explained processes and showed us examples of the equipment utilised. My own understanding of some of this is as follows. Radiocarbon  $^{14}\text{C}$  dating is the method most widely used by archaeologists to determine dates for organic materials, especially for antiquity and prehistory.  $^{14}\text{C}$  is produced by the interaction of atmospheric gas molecules with cosmic rays, resulting in the production of neutrons. Radiocarbon is formed by the reaction of thermalised neutrons with  $^{14}\text{N}$ . This is oxidised to form  $^{14}\text{CO}_2$  and it is in this form that  $^{14}\text{C}$  is distributed throughout the Earth's atmosphere. The radiocarbon age of any sample is determined by a measurement of its residual  $^{14}\text{C}$  content. This is a simplification of a complex process and I hope that I have it correctly. Any errors are my own. Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) is a technology that allows for the detection and distinguishing of different types of atoms. The AMS machine measures the abundance of carbon isotopes. AMS  $^{14}\text{C}$

technology is widely applied to radiocarbon dating. It is now the dominant method used. This was an exciting visit for everyone interested in archaeological science and its methods and use. A visit on-line to the lab's web page will provide much more of interest and more detail on the pre-treatment of objects and on the actual method than we have room for here. I think that I am not the only one who would welcome a return visit and it would provide an opportunity for those who missed this one to share the experience. <http://14chrono.org/>

Leo van Es

## Book Reviews

*Ballynahatty: Excavations in a Neolithic Monumental Landscape* –  
Barrie Hartwell, Sarah Gormley,  
Catriona Brogan & Caroline  
Malone (eds)  
Oxbow Books, £58

This excellent volume brings together many years of excavation and research at a site known to many members, the Giant's Ring. Excavations in the 1990s revealed

a massive timber complex, which is brought to life here through 3D reconstructions. Analysis of the artefacts also helps to show us how the monument and landscape may have functioned and its role in the lives of those who used it. The volume is full of plans, drawings, photographs and reconstructions to help us understand the monument and the landscape. This volume is the result of many years of dedicated research and makes considerable advances in our knowledge of this site and the Neolithic more generally. It will be of great interest to any archaeologist around Belfast, as well as further afield, and will be important for anyone interested in the Neolithic period.

*Death in Irish Prehistory – Gabriel Cooney (text) & Conor McHale (illustrations)*  
Royal Irish Academy, €30

Although a book about death, it is very much about life and the lived experience in prehistory. It is also innovative by making extensive use of images and informative illustrations. This is an academic book, with all the rigour of

research, but it is presented in a way that will be accessible and appreciated by a non-academic audience. The book takes us from 8,000 BCE up to 500 CE, thus tracing a significant part of the development of Ireland. Therefore, this book will have a wide readership and will appeal to many because the depictions of life in the past almost allow us to experience it.

*Making Money in the Early Middle Ages – Rory Naismith*  
Princeton, £38

This is an interesting book charting the development of money during the early Middle Ages in Europe and beyond. Coins form a significant part of artefact assemblages from sites, so it is interesting to understand their wider context. Naismith discusses the objects themselves as well as showing how they helped establish power structures that developed during the Middle Ages. This will be a useful book for anyone interested in the economic world and its development during the early Middle Ages

## Photos of fieldtrips in 2023



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.