

NEWS BULLETIN



THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

No.71 June 2021

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WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne promotes the preservation, study and enjoyment of historical and archaeological heritage in general, and of the North East of England in particular. We have nearly 800 members, and always welcome new ones.

In normal years we have a full programme of public events, lectures, walks and visits, and social activities, although in 2020-21 much has been online. We are guardians of world-class collections of antiquities and archives, and of a library of over 30,000 books and journals. We sponsor and publish research into North East history and archaeology of all periods.

For more information, look at our website, www.newcastle-antiquaries.org.uk or contact us at SANT, Great North Museum: Hancock, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PT, phone 0191 231 2700, e-mail admin@newcastle-antiquaries.org.uk. For as long as the Coronavirus crisis continues, please use e-mail if at all possible.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Lockdown has brought us some welcome innovations as well as inconveniences. Two of our lecturers have been online from North America via Zoom, and thanks to the good offices of Simon Pallett and Michael Johnson, recordings of almost all our events are available on our private YouTube channel. As I write, it really seems possible that as the year progresses we will be able to resume some normal activities, including physical lecture meetings.

I hope members have enjoyed the recently issued *Archaeologia Aeliana* for 2019. Our editors have been making very good progress with their catching-up, so that a further issue may well be your hands by the time you read this.

If all goes according to plan, the Great North Museum will have re-opened on 17 May, making our collections accessible once more. I want to put on record the Society's gratitude to Ian Bower, the professional librarian at the GNM who has recently retired. Ian was the valued gatekeeper of a collection which is one of our most treasured assets, and we wish him a

happy future. The library service remains suspended for the moment, but the library should be accessible again from July. By then, it is hoped, a replacement librarian will be in post.

Historic sites in the region are gradually reopening, from Vindolanda, where digging is already progress, to the Tyneside forts of South Shields and Wallsend. Those Roman sites and others of all periods have missed you and need your support. I will be speaking in July about the discovery and excavation of the Roman baths at Wallsend in 2014–15. This is the talk I was originally going to give when the crisis broke in March 2020, and which was cancelled for obvious reasons. Whether this will be in an actual lecture room, or still online only, who knows!



The hot room of the Roman baths at Wallsend, during excavations in 2015

Once again, I wish all members well and thank them for their patience and support through the pandemic. I look forward to seeing as many people as possible out and about, or, before long, face to face at one of our events.

Nick Hodgson

NEW BANK ACCOUNT FOR THE SOCIETY

Since 1 January 2021 the Society has been operating as a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO). This provides a better and more modern legal structure for the Society whilst making hardly any difference to members. The name, charitable objects and programme of activities remain the same and all members are members of the new CIO with the same voting rights.

The assets of the old unincorporated association have been transferred as of 1 January to the new legal entity, and we have had to change our bank account. The new details are:

Lloyds Bank PLC, Newmarket (309596) Branch, PO Box 1000, BX1 1LT
Sort code: 30 95 96
Account Name: The Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne
Account Number: 30604868

If you are making payments to the Society by standing order or by internet banking, you will need to change the payee to reflect the new bank account. If you pay your membership subscription by direct debit, then you have nothing to do, as we'll make the necessary arrangements.

Anyone with queries is welcome to contact me at treasurer@newcastle-antiquaries.org.uk.

Simon Pallett

THE SOCIETY RETURNS TO REAL LIFE

The lockdown year has seen some new ventures, including our first (and possibly only) Quiz Night. As you might expect from Antiquaries, the questions were not those you might have found in your average pub-quiz, with one round about Roman artefacts and another about books in our library.

Now the Activities Committee are looking at how we can go back to holding our monthly meetings in person and in real time. This may be possible from 28 July, though as this goes to press that is still under discussion. We will not have access to lecture theatres at Newcastle University until at least January 2022, but we have been able to hire the lecture theatre at The Common Room, formerly the Mining Institute, where the Society met for over eighty years, until November 2021. We know that some members will have concerns about meeting indoors, and



Eager participants in our Quiz Night in December 2020

we are checking what measures The Common Room will have in place. At the same time, many members have been able to join the monthly online lectures from around the world, as well as from the comfort of homes more locally. So we intend to continue livestreaming the monthly talks via the internet as well.

We are also planning on a Summer Social. The Common Ground in Sacred Space project at St Nicholas' Cathedral has carried on and is nearing completion. We have arranged an evening of tours

and talks for you to see the transformation on 2 September. Full details will be circulated after the 21 June relaxation of restrictions, so keep an eye on the website and e-newsletter for details.

We may also be able to run some guided walks after 21 June. Again, keep an eye out for fuller details.

Richard Pears

A MESSAGE FROM IAN BOWER



If you go down to the woods today ... (picture from Ian himself)

This is just a short note to say thanks very much for the various messages I have had from SANT, and its members regarding my time as librarian at the Great North Museum: Hancock Library. It was a real pleasure to perform this role over the last eight years. The job provided me with the chance to work with a terrific collection of books and encounter some really interesting people. Many thanks also to the library volunteers whose help has been invaluable and much appreciated, especially Denis, Howard, Peter, Eric, Mike and Chris.

I do hope to return to the library on a voluntary basis when this is possible. During my retirement I plan to get out for many local walks and also dust off my camera. I'd also like to do some travelling both at home and abroad and continue the ongoing battle with the weeds at our

allotment. And I'd like to extend my limited repertoire of culinary skills to include some that don't involve pasta!

Ian Bower

NORTHUMBERLAND'S FORGOTTEN SON

Andy Bogle is currently writing the biography of Oliver Heslop. He was born in South Shields and shares a passion for Northumbria's dialects. He is actively engaged in supporting dialect projects throughout the region. For more information, visit www.northumbrianwords.com.

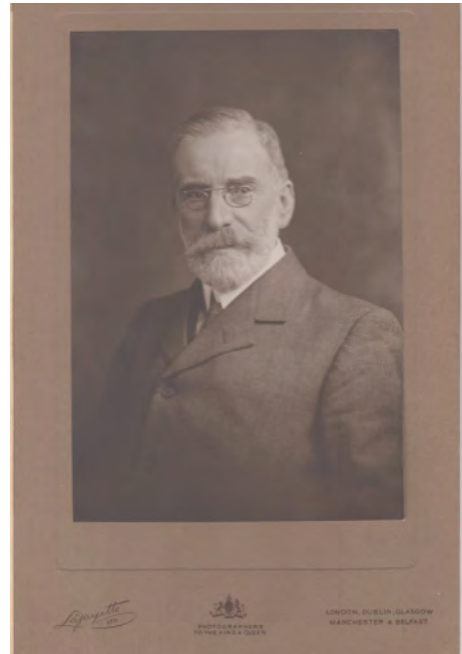
Born in early Victorian Newcastle in 1842, Richard Oliver Heslop died 74 years later amid an era of steam, steel, and a brutal war. His life is a remarkable tale of a self-made man whose energy and devotion earned him the highest respect among his peers. His industry and talent created a successful business enterprise while he was forging a parallel career as a respected author, historian, dialectologist, and lexicologist. He was active in many of Newcastle's societies

and served in several civic positions, including as a justice of the peace and consul for the Netherlands. His abiding passion lay in the study of the region's history and in particular, its dialects.

There were many who disparaged the use of dialect, branding it as a sign of ignorance practised by a lower class too lazy to learn the Queen's English. Heslop espoused the region's ancient language. As well as writing stories and songs in the Tyneside dialect, he also lectured on its usage and history, especially the distinctive Northumbrian burr. In 1892 he published a glossary, *Northumberland Words*, for which he was awarded an honorary MA by Durham University.

His funeral brought together dignitaries including the Lord Mayor and the Sheriff of Newcastle, both dressed in their ceremonial robes, and accompanied by mace and sword bearers. Among the distinguished mourners were Sir Walter Runciman MP, the Mayor of Durham, city councillors and representatives from five consular offices, who joined more than 150 others from all walks of civic, academic, antiquarian, and business life.

Andy Bogle



Richard Oliver Heslop, 1842-1916, photo Lafayette Studios

WEARDALE WITNESSES – A LOCKDOWN DISTRACTION

In 1686 the Bishop of Durham, who owned extensive lead mining rights in Weardale, brought an Exchequer Court case against Humphrey Wharton who, as 'moormaster' had a long lease of those rights. The Bishop claimed that Wharton had under-reported the amount of lead mined and thereby reduced the payments he owed to the Bishop. Each side called local witnesses, including those who carried lead ore to Wharton's smelting mills and the Bishop's 'watchers', who were meant to keep a tally of the ore. Wharton's agents and carriers sought to blacken the character of one watcher, saying he spent his time in the Frosterley ale-house, and delegating his work to his wife and young son. Many assertions central to the case probably cannot be trusted, but the testimonies of the ordinary people of Weardale shed much light on daily life and the lead industry.

During lockdown a group of us, fascinated by old documents, transcribed the difficult and faint witness statements and became absorbed in the period, a great refuge from pandemic press conferences. This vision of seventeenth-century Weardale has whetted our appetites to revisit the area as soon as we are able, along with lists of mines, to look for the remnants of that very different world.

The transcripts from this case now form part of the ever-expanding Dukesfield Documents free online archive at www.dukesfield.org.uk/documents. This originated in the lottery-funded Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers project in 2012, but the volunteer team continues to add new material loosely centred on the northern lead industry between the mid-17th and mid-19th centuries. It now contains over 12,000 documents and 2.8 million words of searchable content.

Gail Boyes and Lynne Farquarson, with Greg Finch



The Black Bull at Frosterley - Photo © Bill Henderson (cc-by-sa/2.0)

MULTI-LANGUAGE BOOKS ON ROMAN FRONTIERS

For several years, I have been editing a multi-language series of books on the Frontiers of the Roman Empire, as well as writing those on Hadrian's Wall and the Antonine Wall. There have been major problems in the past with marketing and sales of the books on an individual basis,

while the existing books are almost invisible online. So it is very good news that specialist publishers Archaeopress has agreed to take over the publication of the series seek to keep all books in print and up-to-date and upload them online for open access.

The series highlights the scale and importance of our evidence of Roman frontiers for policy makers across Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, where there is continuing pressure on these heritage landscapes. It also provides considerable potential to develop further the Roman Frontiers WHS designation and its geographical scope. There are five books in preparation, on Egypt, the Eastern frontier, the Saxon Shore/Maritime Coast and Wales, all funded by Richard Beleson, with Dacia to follow. We are therefore close to circling the entire boundary of the Roman empire with the series of 20 books.

David Breeze

The full announcement is at www.archaeopress.com

THE PEOPLE'S ROMAN REMAINS PARK



The foreman of the excavation, Mr Grey, in 1875-6, from South Tyneside Libraries collection

I worked for many years on the archaeological investigation of the Roman Fort at South Shields, and always found the history of the discovery and early excavation of the site as interesting and important as its Roman archaeology. I was extremely pleased to hear that a full account of the 1875 excavations has been published, complementing Martha Stewart's 2017 paper in *Archaeologia Aeliana*, which took an academic look at the significance of the venture. It is an impressive piece of scholarly work of over 200 pages, about a story that has been waiting to be told in full. The authors have found many photographs and documents that I had not previously come across despite my work in the field, such as the letter from the Church Commissioners giving permission to dig, which is in Robert Blair's scrapbook.

I'm hoping they will soon begin on Volume 2, to continue the story beyond 1875, looking at the work undertaken at the site by Sir Ian Richmond (1933), followed by the renewed interest in the Park after the Second World War, including the formation (and

subsequent rise) of the South Shields Archaeological and Historical Society who started their first excavation (in conjunction with Richmond) in 1949. Members of the Society went on to explore any and every available piece of ground around the fort during the 1950s to 1970s, aided by the 'slum clearances'. This culminated in the excavation of part of the extra-mural settlement west of the fort (now the site of Hadrian Primary School) alongside John Gillam. Many characters within that Society were passionate and dedicated supporters of the site. Volume 2 could end with the arrival of Tyne & Wear Museums in the late 1970s, and that could lead to Volume 3, the exploration of the site from then till present day.

Graeme Stobbs

The People's Roman Remains Park, by David Kidd and Jean Stokes, is published by Harton Village Press. To obtain a copy, e-mail jastokes@virginmedia.com. £15 inc p&p.

MEETINGS AND EVENTS

November 2020

Richard Beleson spoke from San Francisco about Queen Zenobia of Palmyra, and the connection between Palmyra and Northumbria. Richard dedicated his lecture to Khaled al Asa'ad, the guardian of the historic temple sites at Palmyra, who had refused to lead the terrorist group Isis to hidden treasures, and had been beheaded. Isis subsequently demolished the temples, leaving nothing but rubble.

Palmyra, Richard explained, was an oasis city about 130 miles north-east of Damascus, a key stop on the silk roads to the East. Its Greek name was a direct translation of its biblical name Tadmor, derived from the Arabic Tamar, meaning date-palm. Its culture was bilingual, Greek and Aramaic. It was a buffer for many years between the Roman and Persian empires, and its history could be told in terms of the images on coins and sculptures.

In 250 its ruler was Odenathus, who pushed the Persians back to the Euphrates. He married Julia Aurelia Zenobia, uniting two powerful wealthy families. In 260 the Persians invaded Roman territory again, and Emperor Valerian took to the field to relieve Antioch. The title Valerian used on his coins. 'Restitutor Orientis' was unmerited; he was defeated, captured and executed. His body was flayed, and the skin stuffed.

In the aftermath, rival Roman emperors fought it out. Odenathus, remaining loyal to Valerian's son Gallienus, recovered most of Armenia and Mesopotamia, but in 267 he was poisoned by relatives. In 270 Zenobia, as regent for her young son, invaded Egypt, gaining control of the grain supply to Rome. Two years later, she declared herself Zenobia Augusta, ruling jointly with her son and independent of Rome. Sadly, she did not last long, but was captured by the Emperor Aurelian ('Restorer of the World' on his coins) and paraded in golden chains at Aurelian's triumph.

The Hadrian's Wall connection, Richard concluded, was that of a love story. Regina was a freedwoman, married to Barates of Palmyra. He set up a tombstone on her death with Latin and Aramaic inscriptions. A tombstone at Corbridge commemorated Barates of Palmyra, but Barates was a common Syrian name so the identification was not certain.

Nick Hodgson pointed out that both Regina's tombstone and that of Victor had been carved in Palmyrene style. A sculptor from the area appeared to have been living and working on the northern frontier at the time.

Richard can be contacted on rbeleson@gmail.com.

Virtual Coffee House, December 2020

Matthew Ayre, talking by Zoom from the Arctic Institute of North America at Canada's Calgary University, gave us an update about his 2018 discovery of the wreckage from the veteran Dundee Arctic whaleship *Nova Zembla*, lost in 1902.

In 2019, he explained, his group returned to the wreck site on the fisheries research vessel *RV Nuliajuk*, a converted crab trawler, with permits to land on the beach. They found that the entire 4km stretch of beach was covered in seemingly untouched wreckage. There were around a thousand individual pieces of timber and iron fittings including a 60ft section of hull. They even found the masts, the remains of a whaling boat lost when the crew initially tried to abandon the vessel, and several pieces of ornate floral carving from the ship's bow, visible in an 1884 painting of *Nova Zembla*.

They also discovered several mysterious timbers placed as bridges over old streams, and two pieces of burnt wreckage in a seal hunting blind. The explanation came later in 2019, when Matthew was transcribing an 1899 diary. Its author had visited the wreck of the *Eagle*, a Dundee-built whaler sailing out of St Johns, Newfoundland, abandoned in 1896 after being stove in the ice. He had traded with an Inuk named Olnick, who lived on a nearby island and was leader of a group of about 40 people. Olnick was already well known to the Scottish whalers, and had spent a winter in Dundee where he was treated as a celebrity.

He was probably behind the salvage of the *Eagle*, leaving the site almost bare, and it was likely the bridges and burnt pieces were also from that ship. Olnick died in 1900 in the presence



Queen Zenobia's Last Look Upon Palmyra, Herbert Gustave Schmalz (1888), Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.



The fisheries research vessel Nuliajuk, picture courtesy Matthew Ayre

of the whalers, and an account of his funeral was published in the *Dundee Courier*.

The next trip back to this site (likely to be in 2022) would continue to survey the Nova Zembla, begin to survey the wreck of the Eagle and search out Olnick's settlement, which probably incorporated material salvaged from the Eagle in its construction.

Afternoons on the Tyne



Pilot Boat Protector at the mouth of the Tyne.
Picture courtesy John Burn

In January and February we had two Zoom afternoons with the River Tyne as the theme, starting at the river mouth and ending at Hexham.

Tynemouth to Newcastle

Retired Tyne pilot John Burn began with the story of the pilot boat Protector. On New Year's Eve 1916 she was blown up by a mine laid at the mouth of the Tyne by a German submarine. There were no survivors. Only the captain's body was discovered, and he was buried in Preston Cemetery in North Tyneside. The rest of the crew was commemorated as 'lost at sea' on a monument on Tower Hill, London.

Nigel Todd then talked about the 'race riot that never was', at the Mill Dam in South Shields in 1930. He explained that South Shields was a home to many Arab seamen, some with families and some living in boarding houses. After the end of World War 1, the seamen's union locally had colluded with the employers to introduce a register restricting the Arab seamen's opportunities. The 'Minority Movement', a group within the union backed by the Communist Party, opposed this and picketed the registry office. There were scuffles, which the press described as race riots, and in the aftermath a number of seafarers were arrested and fined or deported.

Moving up-river, Eric Cambridge talked about the seventh-century monastery sited on a promontory above the 'port of Ecgrith' as Jarrow Slake was known at the time. There was probably a royal palace nearby, so that Bede was able to meet visitors from other parts of the country and indeed Europe. Today the Bede's World museum and Anglo-Saxon farm were situated on land reclaimed from an oil-storage depot.

Nick Hodgson focused on today's Wallsend, the ancient Segedunum. The 'wall's end' was probably marked by a massive monument and a temple on a mole, visible from both up- and down-river, and used for ceremonial purposes. There would have been a similar monumental site at Pons Aelius, the bridge between today's Newcastle and Gateshead, with inscriptions marking the boundary between Oceanus and the river gods.

Finally, urban historian Sarah Collins explained her research into industries and trade on Newcastle's Quayside. In the seventeenth century, shops and warehouses for luxury goods and necessities co-existed along the quayside. Going into the eighteenth century, and especially with the creation of Mosley Street, the luxury goods and better-off residents had moved uphill, leaving the Quayside to more basic goods.

Editor's Note; In March 2021 we received the sad news that Nigel Todd had died suddenly from heart failure. He will be much missed.

Upriver to Hexham

Judith Green began by talking about riverside industries. Immediately upstream from Newcastle, in the nineteenth century there was a string of pit villages with fields behind, with some small industrial concerns. The Tyne banks had then filled up with heavy industry, including the massive Armstrong works. She showed a film by John Taberham about the Lemington glassworks and the quayside at the 'Gut'. The abandonment of regular dredging of the Tyne, she suggested, might mean that new islands emerged.

Les Turnbull talked about the eighteenth-century waggonways on the north side of the Tyne, developed particularly on the Duke of Northumberland's land and running into Lemington Staithes. Much engineering was needed to ensure that horses could manage the gradients with fully laden wagons, including cuttings, embankments, and trestle bridges. Little survived, however, since the wooden sleepers and trestles would be recycled when they fell out of use.

Greg Finch then discussed Bywell Hall, built by William Fenwick. After 200 years in the

Fenwicks' possession, in 1810 the Rev Septimus Hodson had inherited their estate of 4,000 acres of good land on each side of the river through marriage. He sold the Hall on to Thomas Wentworth Beaumont, characterised as 'vain and haughty' by Recorder James Losh. Beaumont built a bridge across the Tyne, connecting the village to the south bank and allowing him to re-route the public road away from his house.

Frances McIntosh took us to Corbridge, in photos of the excavations of the Roman site in 1906-14. Only the gentlemen archaeologists' names were known, and she was hoping that local people could identify the labourers in photos of the works. There had been some poorly-recorded investigations between the wars, but much better work after the war. Most recently Ian Haynes had undertaken a large geophysical survey. This had uncovered a mass of foundations beside the road leading up to the fort, suggesting a civilian settlement of shops and small scale industry.

Finally, Sue Ward looked at the three Hexham bridges, built one after another between 1764 and 1795. The first, built by Sir William Blackett, was finished in 1770 and collapsed in the Great Flood of 1771. The second only lasted 14 months before also collapsing in 1782. Its eminent designer John Smeaton had probably skimped on design and material. After a long political and court battle, a third was built with strong foundations, and is still standing but with much reinforcement underneath.

January 2021

For the January lecture, Dr Andrea Dolfini, Newcastle University, talked on *The Way of the Sword: New Insights on Bronze Age Fighting*. He focused on the international Bronze Age Combat Project, involving colleagues from Britain and overseas. This was working with historical European martial arts specialists from The Hotspur School of Defence, a group trying to reconstruct lost martial arts.

Neil Burridge, an expert bronzesmith, had used Bronze Age manufacturing methods to replicate a number of archaeological swords, spears and shields, including swords from the Ewart Park hoard in Northumberland. He had standardised the mix of metals in the alloy, and the hardening methods, in the swords and spears so that they could know that differences in performance were due to performance in the combat tests, and not because of any variances in material properties. The bronze shield was not cast but arduously hammered out, and it took 54 hammering cycles, with annealing between every cycle, to create it. Even though the shield was very thin, the swords could only dent it, and were bent on impact.

The weapons were tested through single-action combat moves, and then short 'plays' taken from a fifteenth-century fencing manual. The researchers then carried out metalwork wear analysis, (pioneered at Newcastle University), to compare the wear marks between the modern and the archaeological specimens. They identified twenty-three distinct categories of wear-mark, fourteen of which could be replicated during the tests. Four could be classified as diagnostic – that is, resulting from specific actions.

The project was able to conclude that Bronze Age swordsmanship was culture and society-specific, and was a sophisticated martial art that probably required extensive training to be mastered.

Dr Dolfini can be contacted at andrea.dolfini@newcastle.ac.uk



Remains of the old kilns from the 18th century ironworks in Lemington, now buried under a new supermarket. Photo courtesy John Taberham



Swordfighters from the Hotspur School of Defence practising combat moves ahead of the weapon tests. Picture courtesy BBC/360 Production/Paola Desiderio

February 2021

Ronan O'Donnell talked about Landscapes of the Great Depression in the North East, a research project in the Department of Archaeology in Durham University. At the beginning of the project, he said, they had not known whether such a brief period would show up at all in the archaeological record.

Following the Great War and the upheavals of the 1920s, he explained, Great Britain's economy was in a parlous state even before the Crash of 1929. By 1933 industrial areas like the North East and South Wales were still very badly depressed. The Government passed a series of Special Areas Acts, covering the North East among other areas, and gave the Special Areas Commissioners budgets to develop schemes. The Landscapes project was looking at the evidence on the ground of four of these.

Heartbreak Hill allotment scheme and work-camp, in East Cleveland, had been set up by Jim and Ruth Pennyman, an old-fashioned Tory Squire and his left-wing wife. They provided allotments, a furniture-making workshop, and activities such as music and dance and amateur dramatics. Day to day, it was run by the unemployed miners as a community.

Swarland 'Settlement' in Northumberland was on a bigger scale, set up by a local landowner who recruited via the Labour Exchanges on Tyneside, asking unemployed people if they'd like to live and work in the countryside. Their first task had been to build their own houses, to a strikingly modern design. They ran community activities, and small craft industries, some of which continued into this century.

Hamsterley Forest work camp was different, intended to deal with the perceived problem of men used to hard physical labour 'going soft' due to idleness. In theory going to the camp had been voluntary, but in practice it was quite coercive, and involved hard labour for pocket-money only. Most standing buildings have long been removed, but fieldwalking and geophysics suggested that some remains survived below ground.

Finally, the Team Valley trading estate of course was still going. The Commissioner had brought together industrialists and persuaded them to set up a company and lend it money on favourable terms. This had purchased land and built factories. A number of refugees from Europe had taken space there for new businesses. It was difficult to judge its 'success', as it had only got going in 1938, and had quickly been overtaken by wartime industrial demands.

Ronan can be contacted on r.p.odonnell@durham.ac.uk.

February Coffee House

The first speaker was Liz Shaw, who is doing a PhD at Newcastle University on Roman shoes and foot-shaped artefacts. Her interest had begun, she explained, with the discovery of well-preserved sandals at Vindolanda, including a pair with possibly the first designer labels in history. She had now created a database of over 20,000 foot-related items, of which 1200 were foot-shaped objects, mostly dating from the second and third centuries. Generally in Roman lore, the right (dextra) was seen as lucky and the left (sinistra) as unlucky, but this did not hold very strongly among the objects studied.

A number came from burials, where they might have been seen as providing protection, or helping the deceased find their way to the underworld. Shoe-shaped brooches might signify Mercury, even if the wings at the back of his sandals were not shown. But some seemed simply whimsical, such as a jug with a leg- and foot-shaped handle, although they were mostly used for ritual purposes.

Victoria Szafara, a PhD researcher from the University of Leicester, then talked about headstud- and trumpet-type brooches and their variants. They were popular during the late first and second centuries, and may have been worn in pairs with a chain between them to fasten a dress or cloak. A distribution mapping of finds from sources like the Portable Antiquities Scheme showed these were less popular in the Thames region than in the Midlands and around the Humber. Compared to the number of other Roman brooch types, they seemed especially popular in the north.

Victoria took case-studies from four different hoards, including the rich Winchester Hoard, which included gold ornaments, and discussed how these brooch types could be signifiers of rank and status, rather than of regional origins.

Liz can be contacted on E.Shaw9@ncl.ac.uk and Victoria on vs206@leicester.ac.uk.

March 2021

Dr. Anneke Hackenbroich spoke about the wooden collection at Vindolanda, which was over 2,000 items strong, not counting the writing tablets. Their Wood Digitisation Project aimed to create a modern database for the collection, and to make it accessible to researchers and the

general public. It involved a number of volunteers, and specialist advisers from University College Dublin.

Excavations had taken place annually on the site since the foundation of the Vindolanda Trust in 1970, and they had discovered that there had been at least 9 different forts. Constant building and rebuilding was one of the reasons so many wooden artefacts had survived, as they had been included in the backfilling of ditches and sealed under multiple layers. The particular soil type, and waterlogging, had also helped to create anaerobic conditions.

Pollen analysis from the area suggested that while this part of Northumberland was well-wooded in prehistoric times, felling had already begun in the Neolithic period. It continued through the Iron Age, so that by the time the Romans arrived the area was a mix of woodland and moorland.

The wood for the artefacts did not all come from the area, or indeed this country. Dr Hackenbroich took as her first example a boxwood comb which might well have been imported from Northern Italy. Boxwood grew in the Mediterranean area and was ideal for such items because it did not splinter. A pair of barrel staves might have travelled many hundreds of miles as part of a cask containing wine or other foodstuffs. Other staves from the site had been recycled as floorboards or in window-frames.

Finally, she considered a group of tent pegs. A group of volunteers had experimented with modern replicas of these. They had established that they would only be effective if leather tents had a complete wooden framework to bear their weight.

Future work included 3D scanning of many items, and the creation of an online exhibition on the Vindolanda website.

Dr Hackenbroich can be contacted on AnnekeHackenbroich@vindolanda.com. A recording of her lecture is on the Vindolanda YouTube channel.

April 2021

Dr Andrew Marriott presented The Somme Crosses of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI): a case study in memorialisation. He introduced them within the wider study of 'trench art' (most commonly decorated brass shell cases) from World War One. In the academic context, 'trench art' could embrace any war materiel transformed into something artistic or commemorative. Importantly, the object loses its lethality.

Originally on the Western Front, the DLI crosses were now in Durham Cathedral and churches in Bishop Auckland and Chester-le-Street. They commemorated an attack on the Butte de Warlencourt in November 1916, a closing engagement of the Somme campaign. The Butte is an ancient chalk hillock, at the time believed to house burials of Gallic chiefs. Its sepulchral presence sapped morale, many soldiers believing it cursed. The assault by three battalions of the DLI saw over 900 killed, wounded or missing. Held by the Germans, it was abandoned in early 1917 in their withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line.

DLI soldier pioneers had created the crosses from various military timbers. The initiative had come from the charismatic and deeply religious Roland Bradford, VC, MC, commander of 9th Battalion during the assault. Bradford was later killed as a 25 year-old Brigadier. Photographic archives confirm the arrangement of the crosses and the erection of later memorials. One was placed by the Germans during their Spring Offensive of 1918. These crosses present multiple narratives, one suggesting a desire to



Boxwood comb with graffiti on the central bar. CARANTVSAPICTNVS, Carantus was presumably the owner of the comb. Courtesy Vindolanda Trust



The Butte de Warlencourt, a chalk hill standing about 30 metres, with memorial crosses evocative of Calvary. (Imperial War Museum ©IWM (Q78163)

exorcise a pagan site into the form of a Calvary. Others reference competing rights of ownership of the Butte among the various combatants.

The crosses were brought to England in 1926, and with notable ceremony in Bishop Auckland. Oddly no official documentation had survived for the cathedral cross.

This study, Dr Marriott concluded, exposed deficiencies in archives, even for the comparatively recent past, but affirmed such artefacts as rich sources for archaeological investigation.

Dr Marriott can be contacted at agmarriott@aol.com.

DEATHS

Professor Anthony Birley

Tony Birley died on 19 December 2020 aged 83. He was born at Chesterholm, the house next to the fort of that name, now better known as Vindolanda, which his father Professor Eric Birley had bought in 1929 when the Clayton Estate was auctioned off. He was the younger brother of Robin, and uncle of Andrew Birley, present director of excavations at Vindolanda. He was a distinguished ancient historian, having been Professor of Ancient History at Manchester (1974–90) and Dusseldorf (1990–2002), and Honorary Professor in the Department of Classics and Ancient History at Durham University.

Tony wrote over a dozen books including biographies of the Emperors Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus, as well as *The People of Roman Britain* (London 1979) and *The Roman Government of Britain* (Oxford 2005). One of his last publications was 'Antoninus Pius' Guard Prefect Marcus Gavius Maximus' in the Festschrift for Lawrence Keppie, *The Antonine Wall*, published last year by Archaeopress.

In his youth, Tony excavated on Hadrian's Wall and he maintained his interest in the monument for the rest of his life. He attended his first Congress of Roman Frontier Studies and first Pilgrimage of Hadrian's Wall in 1959 and wrote up his reminiscences for the book published after the last Pilgrimage, *The Pilgrimages of Hadrian's Wall 1849–2019: A History* (Kendal 2020).

In 1970, Tony became a founder trustee of the Vindolanda Trust and served as Chair of the Trustees from 1996 to 2016. He excavated with his brother Robin at Vindolanda and elsewhere on the Hadrianic frontier as well as in Libya, places which reflect his wide-ranging interest in the Roman Empire.

David Breeze

Dr Peter Hill

Peter Hill died on 19 March 2021. He was a trained stone mason whose publications taught us to view, research and record Hadrian's Wall in new ways.

He was born on 6 April 1944 at Lowdham in Nottinghamshire, and started training as a stone mason in 1971. He worked at York Minster for 10 years, and then became Clerk of Works to Lincoln Cathedral from 1982 to 1988, and subsequently a stone consultant.

In 1969 the week-long course 'Hadrian's Wall and Hadrian's Army' run by Brian Dobson and myself at Bardon Mill kindled his interest in the Wall's physical structure. His first published study was 'Stonework and the archaeologist; including a stonemason's view of Hadrian's Wall', in *Archaeologia Aeliana's* 1981 volume, with several more over later years. Peter was in great demand by organisations like English Heritage as well as individual archaeologists to report on the stonework of the Wall. He also led courses based in Durham to study and visit Hadrian's Wall. He published *Practical Stone Masonry* with John David in 1995.



Peter at Chesters bath-house, courtesy David Breeze

In 2003, Peter was awarded a PhD by Durham University. This led to the publication of *The Construction of Hadrian's Wall* by BAR in 2004 and a more popular book with the same title two years later. He examined and reported on the Stone of Destiny when it was returned to Scotland in 1996, a report subsequently published in *The Stone of Destiny; Artefact and Icon*, by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

In the early years of this century, Peter began a study of Civil War officers together with Jane Watkinson. This led to the publication of two more books, but Covid 19 brought an end to his research on this topic.

David Breeze

Bill Purdue

Professor A.W. (Bill) Purdue, a great authority on modern British and North East history, died aged in November 2020 at the age of 79.

Bill was born on 29 January 1941 and grew up in North Shields and Whitley Bay, before earning a BA in History from King's College, London. He completed a two-year contract with the Instructor Branch of the Royal Navy, and then became a Lecturer at Newcastle Polytechnic. Subsequently he joined the Open University where he spent most of his academic career. He was, until his retirement, Reader in British History at the Open University and a visiting Professor at Northumbria University.

Bill's MLitt thesis, completed in 1974 at Newcastle University, explored the origins of the Labour Party in this region in the early twentieth century. He was the author of sixteen books and many articles. His research into political history produced books on the monarchy, and articles on political campaigns in nineteenth and twentieth-century North East politics. His most recent work looked at Northumbrian support for the Jacobite Rising in 1715. His military interests produced histories of the First and Second World Wars. Bill's passion for his native North East led to *Newcastle: The Biography*, the history of the Blakett family in *The Ship That Came Home*, and several books and articles on the Carr and Ellison families. Bill was also a book reviewer for the *Times Higher Education* and *Northern History*, a contributor to *The Article*, and a much sought-after speaker on historical topics at many societies in the region and at conferences.

Bill lived in Allendale and served as a County Councillor for the area from 1989 to 2009. He leaves Marie, his wife of 41 years, daughter Jessica, and generations of students who learnt so much from his warm, friendly and erudite scholarship.



Bill Purdue, picture courtesy of his wife Marie

Tony Barrow with Richard Pears

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I am always glad to have readers' comments or suggestions for the content of the Bulletin. I am also happy to receive contributions from members, but pressure of space means that articles frequently have to be cut, deferred, or dropped altogether. My address is 5 Goldspink Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 1NQ, phone 0191 232 2968, or e-mail me at

events@newcastle-antiquaries.org.uk

Copy deadline for the next edition is 10 November, 2021. The mailing date will be 9 December. All inserts must be delivered to the Membership Administrator by 2 December. If you want an insert included, please e-mail the Administrator on admin@newcastle-antiquaries in good time for details of the requirements. An electronic copy of any insert must also be provided (as a Word or pdf document) so that it can be included in the electronic mailing.

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