



# THE CASTLE STUDIES GROUP BULLETIN

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## Editorial

Pamela Marshall, the Chair and Secretary of the Castle Studies Group has decided, after serving in the role for 14 years, to step down at the next AGM in April. During that period Pamela has given so much of her time to CSG affairs not only for the benefit of the CSG membership directly but also has represented us on the international stage. Her election to the Comité Permanent of the Château-Gaillard Colloque at about the same time allowed those links between that august body and the CSG to be strengthened for the benefit of castle studies more widely. I am sure all of us would wish to thank Pamela for steering and guiding the CSG over the past 14 years but also look forward to her continuing contribution to castle research and publication.

The successor to Pamela, who after Bob Higham, will be only the third elected Chair in the history of the group, is now being sought. Nominations for the new Chair are being considered and will form part of the discussion at the forthcoming AGM to be held during the CSG Ulster conference in Belfast on April 26 2014. It is expected that members will have an opportunity to vote for the new Chair but to give due consideration and an appropriate period of consultation, an interim or caretaker Chair may be necessary in the short term.

This edition of the *Bulletin* reaches you on the eve of the annual CSG conference to be held this year in Northern Ireland. Hopefully as we move into spring and some settled weather we have left behind what has been one of the wettest and stormiest winters on record, with damaging floods and winds not only for the UK and Ireland but across large areas of Europe and beyond. The devastation of homes and businesses has been catastrophic for some but our built heritage has also suffered. Significant damage has been reported to many castle remains throughout the region and it is to be hoped that scarce resources can also be

found to consolidate and repair these buildings alongside those of more pressing need for homes and businesses.

Peter A Burton  
CSG Bulletin  
Editor



Cover Photo: Lancaster Castle. The Romanesque keep with added 18th century prison buildings by Thomas Harrison. Lancaster castle is gradually becoming more accessible since the closure of HM Prison in 2011. See page 6 for more details.

NEWS IRELAND

Limerick

Part of the line of Limerick City’s medieval walls are currently being excavated in advance of Council development of the land under which they lie, currently in use as a car park for nearby King John’s Castle. The walls define the northwest edge of the medieval walled town and were probably constructed mid-thirteenth century. They were missed in past test excavations of the site, but are now being exposed in a series of deep trenches begun in January 2014, excavation continuing at the time of writing. The walls are about one metre thick, with several post-medieval property boundary walls extending perpendicular to them outside the old city. Current thinking is that housing will be built on the city side of the wall and the wall’s outer face, now only between one and two metres high over a basal plinth, will be left exposed to face a public space. Should this plan be carried out it will greatly enhance the heritage value of the city walls.

Irish castle damaged in winter storms

Coolbanagher Castle, Laois, after the storm of 14 February 2014. The fallen masonry of the eastern facade lies below.



A large section of a historic Laois castle was knocked down by the storm on the night of 14 February 2014. Coolbanagher Castle is a four storey towerhouse situated on farmland between Portlaoise and Emo some 90Km SW of Dublin. The southern facade of the towerhouse completely collapsed in the high winds and the resulting debris can be clearly seen in

the accompanying photograph taken the following morning. This eastern wall, badly cracked and in poor condition even before the storm, contained the remains of an upper fireplace, now sadly lost.

The National Monuments Service were informed by the owners of the site on February 21 that they intended to ‘make safe’ parts of the structure causing most concern. The NMS consented to this ‘limited action’ on the grounds of urgent necessity. Astonishingly, the whole castle was then subsequently demolished by the owner as shown in the second photograph here.

The castle remains were inside the grounds of a private house and as such are privately owned and maintained. The storm damage sustained and demolition of Coolbanagher, widely reported in the Irish media, has prompted a renewed debate amongst archaeologists and politicians on the future funding and conservation programme of the government heritage department and how such damage might be prevented within the climate of cuts within the heritage sector.

Coolbanagher Castle, Laois, now a pile of rubble following ‘safety’ work on 21 February 2014.



## Carrickfergus Castle

Archaeologists conducted test excavations at Carrickfergus Castle over three weeks in February as part of the ongoing work by the Department of the Environment to uncover more of the castle's history and to inform future development of the castle to enhance the visitor's experience.

Excavations underway at the presumed location of the Great Hall at Carrickfergus Castle in February 2014.

© Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, QUB.



The castle has a long history and has been continuously occupied for more than 800 years since it was constructed in the late twelfth century by John de Courcy. Test excavations were carried out at two locations to find out more about the date and survival of archaeology in the inner and outer wards. Neither of these areas had been subject to such detailed investigation before and analysis is vital before new projects are put in place at the castle.

Although the test sites were fenced off for safety purposes, visitors to Carrickfergus Castle were able to see what the archaeologists were uncovering as the excavations progressed.

The Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast, carried out the work on behalf of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and kept interested members of the public updated with a Facebook page for the

excavations as they went along. The main area of focus was the presumed remains of the Great Hall in the Inner Ward, one of the most important public areas of this Medieval Castle when it was first built by John de Courcy.

The second area of testing was the Outer Ward. The excavations there will provide new information about the nature of and depth of archaeological structures and features in this part of the Castle.

Commenting prior to the dig, SDLP Environment Minister Mark H Durkan said: "This is an exciting new phase in the life of Carrickfergus Castle.

"We do not know yet what we will find in the excavations and we want to make sure that any new discoveries become part of visitor experience at the site.

"I announced major funding for heritage-led development at sites such as Carrickfergus, Dundrum and Tullaghoge which will help strengthen Northern Ireland's unique heritage offering for all visitors to our treasured sites."

Carrickfergus Borough's Mayor, Alderman Billy Ashe, also welcomed the excavations.

"This is a notable development and I look forward to witnessing the excavations at first hand," he said.

The results of the digs will help guide how the areas are presented to the public and how these areas can be used in the future.

CSG members may recall the weekend conference at Carrickfergus castle in October 2011 and the excellent write-up of the proceedings by Dan Tietzsch-Tyler in the CSG Journal 26, pp 151-168, when the future presentation of the castle was debated. The CSG 2014 conference on Castles of Ulster in April will visit Carrickfergus on the opening day and see first hand the latest work there.

Carrickfergus Castle from the harbour.





Windsor Castle: The Round Tower, Royal Court and Devil's Tower from the Black Rod. Paul Sandby c.1770

**DIARY DATES**

**Friday, 7 February 2014 to Monday, 5 May 2014**

**Capturing the Castle: Watercolours of Windsor by Paul and Thomas Sandby Windsor Castle**



Paul Sandby was 'the father of English watercolour'. With his brother Thomas, he produced dozens of watercolours that together comprise a fascinating visual record of Windsor Castle during the reign of George III.

Detail of the main painting to highlight the very interesting shell keep. c.1770.

Many of the works incorporate scenes of everyday life at the Castle, from soldiers on duty and deliveries being made, to the visiting public enjoying the Castle grounds. Twenty of the Sandby brothers' finest views of Windsor are displayed alongside a selection of rare 18th-century guidebooks, offering an intriguing comparison with the experience of visiting the Castle today.



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**Sunday 15 June 2014**

**Defensive Dwellings of the Border  
Guided visits to Bastles and Peles, Cumbria.  
10.30 - 16.30. Meet Askerton Castle.**

This is a free field trip organised by the recently formed Cumbria Vernacular Buildings Group. It is initially for members only but unfilled places may be available to non-members. For all enquiries see their web site <http://www.cvbg.co.uk>



**DIARY DATES**

**1-3 August 2014**

**Antiquity and Lineage: The Tower as Status Symbol**  
**The 5th Conference on Towers in Medieval Europe.**  
**The Copthorne Hotel, The Close, Newcastle.**

**Call for Papers**

For the 5th annual conference on Towers in Medieval and Renaissance Europe, we invite papers on the theme of ‘Antiquity and Lineage: the Tower as Status Symbol’. The role of towers as a physical representation of the link between the family who owned the structure and the territory in which the tower stood is a common aspect of the projection of lordship across Europe. Towers became symbolic of the antiquity of a lineage and the length of a family’s association with a particular territory. The ‘old tower’, as the dominant component of the ‘ancient paternal seat’, was often preserved as a highly visible element in the later development of lordly complexes, or was subsumed within later buildings to form the core around which Renaissance great houses were developed. Preservation of these towers seems not to have been a question of structural constraint but appears rather to have been a conscious decision driven by the needs of owners to prove their lordly credentials through possession of a structural symbol of ancient status that also provided an incontrovertible, tangible link between the family and the lands that they occupied.



We invite proposals for papers of up to 30 minutes length on any topic related to the conference theme. Please submit abstracts (250 words maximum) by 25 April 2014 to Prof Richard Oram either by email ( rdo1@stir.ac.uk ) or post (Prof R D Oram, History and Politics, School of Arts and Humanities, University of Stirling, Stirling, FK9 4LA).

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**3-5 October 2014**

**The four-sieges of 17th century Limerick**  
**Limerick city**

King John’s Castle,  
Limerick

As part of Limerick’s year as City of Culture, the Thomond Archaeological and Historical Society is to host a three-day conference on the four sieges of 17th-century Limerick. The sieges in question are the successful 1642 siege of King John’s castle by the Catholic and Royalist forces of the Irish Confederacy in 1642, the successful Cromwellian siege of the city by Henry Ireton in 1651, and the two Williamite sieges of the city - unsuccessful in 1690 but finally successful in 1691. The conference will also explore the transition from medieval to modern siege techniques, the international flavour of the armed forces involved, the logistics of seventeenth century campaigning and the effects of this half century of siege activity on Limerick’s citizens. See page 9 for further details.



NEWS ENGLAND

Changes to the Heritage at Risk Registers.



Last October, the annual Heritage at Risk Registers were published by English Heritage. About 270 sites recorded in the Gatehouse online gazetteer of medieval fortifications and palaces are in the nine regional Registers.

New sites added to the Registers this time are;

- Almeley Castle, Herefordshire. Condition described as “Generally unsatisfactory with major localised problems.” Principal Vulnerability as “Scrub/tree growth.” Trend as “Declining.”
- Barnstaple Castle, Devon. “Generally satisfactory but with significant localised problems. Deterioration - in need of management. Declining.”
- Bronsil Castle, Herefordshire. “Generally satisfactory but with significant localised problems. Deterioration - in need of management. Declining.”
- Camber Castle, Sussex. “Artillery castle built in three phases between 1512-43. Failed wall-head cappings and plant growth and the affects of harsh winters is causing damage to the stirrup towers and mural galleries associated with the von Haschenperg’s scheme. A programme of repairs needs to be implemented.”
- Crawley Tower, Northumberland “Remains of an early C14 towerhouse, with an C18 cottage built inside when the ruins were altered to form an eye-catcher on the Shawdon Estate. Constructed of massive squared stone; the cottage with a slate roof. The interior is now gutted and contains structural propping. The tower is vacant with no identified use, although the adjacent buildings form part of a working farm. A budget for project development work has been identified.”
- Glasney College, Cornwall. (A fortified collegiate church). “Generally satisfactory but with significant localised problems. Permitted development. Stable.”
- Holwell Castle, Parracombe, Devon. “Generally satisfactory but with significant localised problems. Plant growth. Declining”
- Otford Palace, Kent. “Remains of gatehouse range to early C16 Archbishops Palace. Ruinous parts in need of consolidation work. Options for funding the repairs need to be discussed with the owners.”
- Rodbaston Old Hall. Staffordshire. “Generally satisfactory but with minor localised problems. Scrub/tree growth. Declining”
- Taynton Parva motte, Gloucestershire. “Generally satisfactory but with major localised problems. Other. Declining”
- Turret Castle, Huntington, Herefordshire. “Generally satisfactory but with significant localised problems. Scrub/tree growth. Declining”
- Kingsland Castle, Herefordshire. Was on the Register for 2010 but was removed but is re-entered. “Generally satisfactory but with significant localised problems. Stoke erosion - extensive. Declining”

20 sites have been removed from the registers. The Registers can be found online at [www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk/)

*Philip Davis*

**Lancaster Castle**

Lancaster Castle. The Keep photographed from the roof of the gatehouse.

Lancaster castle contains the least studied Norman-Romanesque keep in England. This is largely because the keep has been out of bounds to architectural historians and archaeologists due to it being right in the heart of Lancaster prison. Lancaster castle has been the site of first the County Gaol, a role it performed from at least the 16th century and then, from the late



19th century onwards, HM Prison, and has continued to house inmates until 2011, when finally, the outdated facility was closed.

Since 2011, when the Duchy of Lancaster estate resumed the day-to-day responsibility for the castle, public access has gradually increased. Many of the medieval towers still remaining at Lancaster, and the fine 15th century gatehouse, can all be freely viewed externally from within the courtyard during opening times. A guided tour of certain parts is available and includes the 13th century Adrian's tower, which is circular in construction, and where the fine ashlar basement is visited and a number of blocked 13th century embrasures can be examined. The tour also usually includes the basement of the Well Tower. Much of the tour however concentrates on the later history of the castle and particularly the prison system and remains of cells and courtrooms within the castle.

The most interesting parts of Lancaster castle to CSG members, the interiors of the medieval towers, the gatehouse and especially the keep, remain for the present, of restricted access. The site staff are currently clearing the years of accumulated prison apparatus from the buildings (the Norman-Romanesque keep for example had until recently been used as the prison gymnasium and the boiler house) and hope eventually to open more of the castle to visitors.

It was with great anticipation therefore that a small delegation of CSG members were granted access to the keep at Lancaster in February and March 2014 and were given permission to visit all parts of the building. Some background to the present understanding of Lancaster castle keep and a brief history is given in the CSG Journal 26, 2012-13, pp. 207-215, by Neil Guy and can be downloaded from the CSG website [here](#).

Great Hall looking towards the western end. Behind this curious, undated, screen lies the site of the original first floor entrance to the keep.



The keep, when visited this year, was entered from a ground floor doorway on the eastern side of the building through what seems to be an inserted 13th century entrance. This leads to what was the basement or undercroft of the southern half of the keep. The other, northern half of the keep is separated by an original cross wall that divides the keep into two and runs on an e-w axis up through all floors. There are some doorways through

the cross-wall at various points allowing movement between the southern and northern sides of the keep.

This southern basement contains several modern sub-divided rooms and at the far western end three old prison cells. Within these basement rooms is contained the massive oak timber framing that supports the floor of the great hall above. These timbers consisted of three huge squared oak posts located on low pad-stones to keep them off the damp earth, with large curved braces supporting a massive timber joist or tie-beam running the whole length of the keep, parallel with the cross wall.

It is understood that a sample of these timbers have recently been taken for dendro dating but the result of that work was not yet available. On visual appearance alone this timber framing appeared post-medieval in date and possibly installed to replace older timbers at the time of the great restoration work on the keep during Elizabeth's reign in the 16th century.

Above this basement was the great hall. Here a recently uncovered triple arched screen and gallery at the western end of the hall was intriguing. An examination behind this screen found evidence for the original external first-floor entrance to the keep but much altered. A blocked, round-headed external doorway at a level some 10

feet below the present great hall level was encountered (probably an original entrance into the south basement). The two floors above the great hall were also studied, accessible via an added 15thC spiral staircase from the above great hall level, built into an extended corner staircase tower at the SW corner of the keep, rising to the top floor and then still further to the roof and parapet.

It seems likely that the second floor was created in the space that was originally the upper section of the double-height great hall. An additional floor was created above that in the roof space, perhaps in the 16th century. These upper floors, with a continuation of the dividing cross wall, are not without interest. The roof-top with its crenellated parapet and roof architecture continues across the whole keep covering the northern half of the building, below which, unlike the southern half, there is now a void without a floor at first floor level, resulting in an open space from ground floor running up through the third storey level.

The two windows on the northern side of the keep are original. It would appear that all other Romanesque windows of the keep have been replaced or modified over succeeding years, (but the round headed windows on the east elevation will repay closer inspection). These two first-floor windows on the northern side have survived but are not visible from the outside of the castle other than from the enclosed courtyard below, which was created as an execution yard in the 19th century when public hanging ceased and the grisly business was performed in private behind these high walls.

This pair of large single-light Romanesque windows are in a fine state of preservation and have their simple yet elegant shafts, cushion capitals and round-headed window openings intact. The plain, simple design of these windows, showing none of the more decorative features of the mid 12th century Romanesque, the period that the keep at Lancaster is often dated, may indicate an earlier, perhaps late 11th century date for the construction.

A fuller, more considered report on the visit to Lancaster and a deeper analysis of some of the construction and dating issues of the keep will appear in the next CSG Journal.

*Peter A. Burton*



Keep, north facade eastern bay window. Stylistically, this original Romanesque window, and the corresponding one in the western bay, could be of the late 11th century.

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**MORE NEWS IRELAND**

Ballinskelligs Castle, Co. Kerry, during the storm of 9th January 2014. This coastal castle was damaged by high tides and waves pounding the shore.

**Ballinskelligs Castle**

On the SW coast of Ireland, Irish broadcaster RTE 1 reported on its 9th January News that **Ballinskelligs Castle**, Co. Kerry, is in danger of collapse after part of its foundations were washed away. Government environment agencies say the castle is a low priority in comparison to other storm damage.





Limerick Siege Conference 3-5 October 2014

The conference will commence on Friday 3rd October with a tour of King John's Castle led by archaeologist Ken Wiggins. A keynote lecture in the evening, 'The Danish Expeditionary Force in Ireland 1690 and 91' by Kjeld Hald Galster, will be followed by a wine reception.

The conference proper on Saturday 4th October will be addressed by a range of invited speakers including:

- 'Ancient, medieval, modern: continuity and change in the conduct of siege warfare' by CSG Hon. Treasurer Peter Purton;
- 'An imminent feare of death every houre': the taking of Limerick castle in 1642' by Ken Wiggins (who excavated the castle and discovered the siegeworks);
- 'Siege, Storm & Slaughter: The Archaeology of 17th century Sieges in Ireland' by Damien Shiels (military archaeologist, Rubicon Archaeological Services);
- 'Siegecraft, starvation and subterfuge: Ireton's reduction of Limerick in 1651' by Col. James Burke (Military Engineer, Irish Defence Forces);

On Sunday 5th October there will be an optional walking tour of the walls of seventeenth century Limerick, with emphasis on the 17th-century defences of Irishtown and the 'breach' that was the main focus of the vigorous defence of Limerick in 1690.

The conference will be based in the Absolute Hotel in Limerick City. Anyone interested in further conference details can contact CSG member, Dr Dan Tietzsch-Tyler by e-mail at dantt@eircom.net.

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**Dunsandle Castle, Co Galway.**

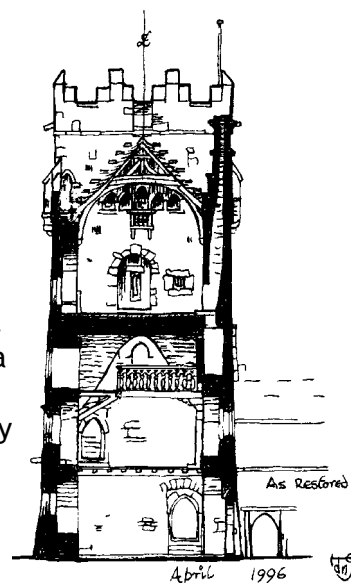
Cross section of the tower at Dunsandle Castle, Co Galway, drawn by David Newman Johnson during the restoration project there.

Almost 20 years ago I was the restoration architect on a project to bring back into use Dunsandle Castle, a fine 15th century tower in County Galway. In the 2001/2 CSG Newsletter I reported on progress of the project and continued to update CSG members for a number of years following. The project was successfully completed and the castle is now a popular wedding venue, tourist attraction and exhibition space with an excellent website (<http://www.dunsandlecastle.com>) giving many details of the castle and a summary of my castle profile report.

Since then I have considered further some of the many interesting aspects of this castle. The most unusual aspect of the tower is that at least two floors are strengthened by massive oak tie-beams in the thickness of the walls. These have rotted out leaving the rectangular horizontal holes in the wall thickness. These can be variously seen at points along the (anticlockwise) spiral stair, embrasures and elsewhere.

I produced a rough sketch at the time of the restoration work which subsequently has been turned into a postcard for sale at the castle and also on the website (reproduced here), which had I known was going to be turned into a permanent record I would have taken a bit more trouble with! However the cross-section sketch does show the very unusual vault, being groined, supporting the top stone floor. Also the 'secret room' in the haunch - hiding place or prison? - is entered through a removable stone slab in the floor of the fireplace above. Very safe if a fire is going! The ground floor door shown in the sketch is an insertion in a window embrasure.

The upper fireplace at Dunsandle, like the lower door, is also an insertion of the medieval period and the two are almost coeval. The lower door leads to an attached hall, similar to the examples recently described from Scotland in Richard Oram's papers on Doune and other Scottish towers.



David Newman Johnson

## NEWS SCOTLAND

### Scaffolded Scottish West Highlands and Islands Castles

#### Mingary, Ardnamurchan

Mingary Castle.



Following on Jon Haylett's report in the September 2013 Bulletin, it is well worth emphasising the quality and detail given in the 'analytical and historical assessment' provided on the website (<http://www.mingarycastletrust.co.uk/>) of the Mingary Castle Preservation and Restoration Trust which Jon mentioned. Tom Addyman and Richard Oram have provided very thorough accounts of the archaeology and history respectively but much more will emerge when the archaeologists' final report is published. Most recently (mid-February)

comes news of the discovery of what is said to be graffiti dating from the second half of the thirteenth century and so possibly the oldest graffiti in Scotland (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-26229130>). At the same time, the Oban Times (6 February 2014) reported that part of the castle ditch 'has been filled with concrete foundations for a woodchip biomass boiler which will dry out the walls for

Mingary Castle. Graffiti dating from 13th century.

plastering and eventually provide heating and hot water to the castle'. Jon has reported to the newspaper that most of the ditch will be kept as it is while the boiler will be faced in local stone and have a turf roof so that it fits in with the castle environment. The Trust's appeal for funds has already attracted some £250,000 but much more is needed: see the website for more details. Look out too for an article on the castle in a forthcoming edition of Scottish Island Explorer.



#### Dunollie, Lorn

Dunollie Castle.



Ivy-covered Dunollie is prominent on its bluff to the north of Oban Bay and much photographed by the many sailing by on the CalMac ferries to their various island destinations. It is thought to have been built by John MacDougall in the years after 1451 when his family line regained Dunollie and some of their lands from John Stewart, Lord of Lorn. Its principal feature is a tower (12m x 11.3m) of four storeys each of a single chamber. Additionally there are the remains of an outer enclosure or barmkin, part of which is said to be late - 'probably' sixteenth century.

This is another castle being rescued and for which the Dunollie Preservation Trust was established last year. As reported in the Oban Times (17 October 2013), an Ancient Monuments Grant of £50,000 from Historic Scotland was allocated to help pay for the first part of the work estimated to cost £100,000. This was to be focused on stabilising the loose wall-head stones and general work to prevent further water ingress to the fabric of the castle. It is also intended to safeguard the flora and fauna both during and after the works 'to enhance the ecological interest and diversity of the monument'. It is felt that restoration plans could take up to 2019 during which time the tower will be closed to the public but it is intended to keep the courtyard open for the vast majority of the working period.

**Moy, Mull.**

This tower house had three storeys, a garret, and ingeniously, two sizeable entresol chambers formed partly within the haunches of the main vaults which run in opposite directions. It had the added protection of a barmkin to the south-east and a shallow,

Moy Castle on the Isle of Mull.



rock-cut ditch to the north-west. It is reported as built by Hector Reaganach Maclean, 1st Laird of Lochbuie, brother of Lachlan Lubanach Maclean of Duart, in the first half/mid fifteenth century. This particularly complex and fine tower house has now been in scaffolding for some time and is another needing vast amounts of money to return it to a state in which it can once again be enjoyed by the informed. The 'first phase' alone was said to be budgeted at £380,000. Nothing deterred, work continues with the help of various funding

organizations. See the small website (<http://www.moycastle.com>) for further details (and of course, how to contribute!).

*Jonathan Haylett & James Petre*

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**Kisimul Castle**

One of Scotland's most iconic castles is to undergo major conservation, archaeological and interpretation work as part of a plan agreed between Historic Scotland and Macneil of Barra.

Kisimul Castle on the Isle of Barra is regarded as the most significant medieval castle in the Western Isles. The work, which will see an investment of over £200,000, half of which is coming from funds donated by Clan Macneil members, represents a unique opportunity to conserve and secure the site for current and future generations. It will also result in an improved visitor experience and ensure that the fabric and structure of the castle are conserved for years to come. Gaelic will be a key consideration in the interpretation that will be developed for the site.

As part of the plan, three key projects will be completed by the end of 2015 - re-roofing the flat roof over the hall, reinforcing concrete structures and overhauling the

Kisimul Castle, Barra.

© Historic Scotland

chapel roof and incorporating a new timber walkway. Upgrading works to slipways at the castle and on the shore will follow at a later date. Historic Scotland have made special efforts to record local knowledge of the source of materials used to build the castle. In this way, it should be easier to more accurately conserve the fabric of Kisimul.



Rory Macneil, the 47th Clan Chief said, 'Agreement on the conservation plan is a milestone in the long and varied history of Kisimul Castle. It opens the door to completion of the immediate projects covered by the plan and long term conservation of this unique structure.'

This plan will help ensure that Kisimul continues to play a central role in Barra and Vatersay, and to serve as an inspiration to MacNeils around the world.' Ian Walford, Chief Executive of Historic Scotland said, 'Kisimul Castle is a true icon of the Western Isles, representing Barra's rich, colourful and sometimes turbulent history. There are few castles of this nature in Scotland, sitting proud in the island's main harbour and for most visitors it is their first experience of Barra's historic environment. Working in partnership with Macneil of Barra, this plan will conserve and enhance a truly magical site in a spectacular Scottish setting for future generations to come.'

CASTLE STUDIES TRUST

**Castle Studies Trust Awards Four Grants to Advance the Understanding of Castles**

Since the last CSG newsletter the Castle Studies Trust has been very busy, having completed its first round of applications for grants . It got an amazing response with 28 projects from all over the UK and Ireland asking for a total of £119,000. This was far more money than the £15,000 the CST had to give away with a number of high calibre projects, meaning that sum could have been more than doubled if the money was available.

The trustees supported by a team of expert assessors decided to fund the following four diverse, high quality projects:

Holt Castle,  
Denbighshire.

© Wrexham Borough  
Council.



**1. Reconstruction of Holt Castle, Denbighshire by 3-D modelling** - managed by the high quality team Rick Turner and Chris Jones-Jenkins this work has the potential to inform a number of debates about the development and function of castles in the Middle Ages, as well as helping the general public gain a much better understanding of this important ruined site.

Ballintober Castle, Co.  
Roscommon. Northwest  
tower.

© Discovery  
Programme.

**2. Architectural and topographical survey of the standing remains of Ballintober Castle, Co. Roscommon** - the detailed study of this major site, led by leading Irish medieval archaeologist, Dr Niall Brady, will help put Irish castle studies on firmer footings due to the current lack of detailed studies on individual castles. It will also help in the future management and conservation plan for the site.

**3. Topological survey Wressle Castle (East Yorkshire) gardens and landscape** - led by experienced archaeologist Ed Dennison. It is part of a wider study of this important C14 site by helping to integrate the castle in its surroundings, which will help our understanding of the interaction between the building - and the resident viewers - and the garden/ landscape that was viewed.



Wressle Castle, East Yorkshire.

© Ed Dennison  
Archaeological Services Ltd.

**4. Geophysical Survey of Tibbers Castle, Dumfriesshire** - led by Piers Dixon one of the foremost experts in Scotland on high-status settlement. It will attempt to understand the function of the two baileys of one of the biggest timber castles in Scotland and, according to Professor Richard Oram, one of the important castle sites in Scotland.



Work on these projects will be carried out in the next few months, with the results of these projects being known by early 2015. Indeed, the work on Wressle will start in March 2014. Not only will the Trust be overseeing this work, it will also be preparing for the next round of grant giving, applications for which open in September 2014.

**So much to do, too limited funds.**

As the high calibre of the projects that the Trust supported, as well as the number and quality of projects we could not , shows there is so much work still to do. This is even more difficult with the continued financial restraints on traditional funding bodies.

To do that the Castle Studies Trust needs funds. It is entirely funded by donations from the general public and thus any support you can give would be greatly appreciated and help the Trust continue to advance our understanding of castles.

You can donate by visiting: <https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/castlestudiestrust>.

If you would like to find out more information you can either contact Chair of Trustees, Jeremy Cunnington on [admin@castlestudiestrust.org](mailto:admin@castlestudiestrust.org) or visit the website at [www.castlestudiestrust.org](http://www.castlestudiestrust.org).

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**Excavating Pitt-Rivers**

The Victorian archaeologist General Pitt-Rivers is world-famous for his development of modern scientific archaeology, but the earliest archaeological collections that he made have never been studied. The Pitt Rivers Museum, where these artefacts are held, has been awarded £76,654 by Arts Council England’s Designation Development Fund to document this important early material.



Excavating Pitt-Rivers is a research programme based at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford University, led by Dan Hicks (Associate Professor & Curator of Archaeology). The programme is focused on the archaeological collections made by General Pitt-Rivers between c.1851 and c.1881. Over 10,000 archaeological artefacts came from England, the largest single assemblage from “Caesar’s Camp’ near Folkestone.

Of particular relevance to CSG members who will have noted the centenary celebration of Ella Armitage’s ‘Early Norman Castles of the British Isles’ in 2012 was that Lane-Fox (as he then was) excavated the ringwork-and-bailey of ‘Caesar’s Camp’ in 1878 and demonstrated that it was of Norman origin (reported in *Archaeologia* 47, 429-65).

The programme has a national dimension and the museum will be working collaboratively over the life of the project with many local societies and regional museums where the original excavations were held in a series of public archaeology events. Keep up with the latest developments on the Excavating Pitt-Rivers Blog.

NEWS WALES

Excavations at Harlech Castle

Architects impression of the new Harlech Castle visitor centre.

© EPT Partnership Architects.

Archaeologists from Archaeology Wales were at Harlech in December carrying out excavations in advance of construction of a new Cadw visitor centre for Harlech Castle.

After removing the accumulated deep layers of recent soil and rubble from land adjacent to the Harlech Castle Hotel, archaeologists have uncovered some evidence of previous occupation on the site including building foundations, a large cess pit that may have served a building located at the rear of the site and two human burials, possibly dating from the medieval period.



Excavated remains of a building, possibly a chapel, on the site of the new visitor centre.

© Archaeology Wales



Dr Kate Roberts, Cadw’s Senior Inspector of Ancient Monuments and Archaeology said: ‘It is exciting to get an opportunity to investigate an area within this historic town. We believe that a chapel used to be located near the castle in the middle ages, and finding these two burials appears to support that. We will use the information the archaeologists collect to support our new interpretation and presentation of Harlech Castle. There is still more work to be done here, and we will be analysing and dating the finds for some time to come.’

The Harlech Castle visitor centre project, funded by the Welsh Government with support from the European Regional Development Fund, involves the development of the former Castle Hotel and improved access to the Castle with the aim of bringing benefits to the area including attracting additional visitors, opening doors for local businesses and offering a better experience for tourists.

Cardigan Castle

Archaeologists say the discovery of a medieval archway buried in the floor of Castle Green House is the most exciting find yet at Cardigan Castle.

Experts from Cadw, the Welsh heritage body, have been called in to examine the structure, found under the main hallway. Archeologists have sealed off the site to protect the findings.

The archway looks as though it links to the medieval cellar beneath the house. It is one of the few remains of Lord Rhys’s 12th-century stone castle, which hosted the first eisteddfod back in 1176.

Archaeologist Nigel Page said: “There are so few elements left of the medieval castle that this really is an exciting discovery. It all adds to the story of the site.”

He added that it was likely the archway was the original entrance to the North Tower.

The top of the archway was unearthed as workmen removed the Georgian floorboards to install cables and pipework as part of the £11m restoration. Mr Page added that the walls of the house followed the lines of the original medieval castle as Georgian builders took advantage of the stonework for foundations.

Cardigan Castle. The top of the medieval archway discovered beneath the floorboards of Castle Green House



**John Wright**

John Wright welcoming CSG members to Plane Castle in April 2013. He gave an introductory address before taking the group on a tour of the castle and its grounds followed by a memorable evening of good food and drink.

© Dorothy Glynn

CSG is sad to lose one of its more colourful members. John Wright passed away on February 7th 2014 after several months of incapacity following a stroke. John was a minister of the Church of Scotland and had lovingly restored Plane Castle, Stirlingshire, with his wife Nancy.

Members who attended the Annual Conference in 2013 will recall a memorable evening spent at Plane as guests of John and Nancy. John will be missed and our condolences go out to Nancy and her family.

*Pamela Marshall*

CSG members will be represented by Geoffrey Stell, the Scotland representative, at a memorial service held for John, at the Church of the Holy Rude, Stirling, on Wednesday, 9 April. Geoff and other CSG members and friends of John Wright will also be in attendance to pay their own respects privately.

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**Dr Neil Guy FSA**

On the 20 February 2014 Dr Neil Guy, the Castle Studies Group Journal Editor was elected as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. The Society's 2,900 Fellows include many distinguished archaeologists and art and architectural historians holding positions of responsibility across the cultural heritage. The Fellowship is international in its reach and its interests are inclusive of all aspects of the material past.

Neil's election was sponsored and endorsed from within a large group of distinguished castle scholars and historians who are themselves Fellows and is awarded in recognition of his contribution to castle studies. Chief amongst these is his editorship and contribution of scholarly papers to the Castle Studies Group Journal. During Neil's period of editorship the Journal has grown to become the most important academic journal devoted to castle studies in Britain. The range of papers and articles commissioned, overseen and edited under Neil's guidance continues to be at the forefront of the latest thinking on the subject.

To be recognised and appreciated in this way by his peers will I'm sure be a source of great satisfaction for Neil and I am equally sure the CSG membership as a whole would wish to congratulate him on his well-deserved honour.

*PAB*

Neil Guy with his wife Sharon. The photo is taken in the grounds of Villa Arnolfini, high in the hills above Lucca, Tuscany.



**Society for Medieval Archaeology Conference. University of Nottingham.  
September 2013.**

The Society for Medieval Archaeology held the 2013 conference on the theme: 'Transformations and Continuities in the Eleventh Century Archaeology of the Norman Conquest'. Over 50 members attended, during a fine late summer weekend, in the leafy campus of Nottingham University. As Chris Dyer noted in his conference summation, had the conference been held in 1957, when the Society was founded, it would have been entirely about castles and churches but the modern conference was considerably more varied and was a rich programme of talks that covered many aspects of 11th century England, with many papers of great value but of tangential interest to castle studies.

The two papers most directly relating to castle studies were both short summaries of recent doctoral theses given by the next generation of academics.

Michael Fradley's paper 'The view from the motte: rethinking the imposition of urban castles on Late Saxon burhs' takes its starting point from the Colin Drage's discussion of urban castles published in 1987 in the CBA research report on Urban Archaeology in Britain. The urban castles in question are those established in the immediate post-Conquest in many of the 100 or so places which might be described as urban, most notably the shire town. Traditionally these castles are seen as the Normans imposing their authority onto a Saxon population; 'as repressive, culturally alien impositions upon the pre-Conquest townscape'. However, close examination of their location within towns in England and of early castles in towns in Normandy shows how

generally the castles are sited to do as little economic damage as possible, usually in the least used corners of the existing burh defences. The idea of Ella Armitage, that this location represented a desire by the conquering group to have access to an 'escape route' from revolting Saxons (one with its origin in the very different 19th century British Imperial colonial experience) can be dismissed by the Norman choice of the same corner location for the castle of Rouen, their



Session chair Bob Liddiard (centre) in conversation with Michael Shapland (left) and Michael Fradley (right).

own capital city. Fradley argues these Norman castles, often the base for shire reeves, were a replacement for the Saxon burh acting as a centre for tax collection, administration and law courts (and their jails) for the wider shire. That is the urban castle was not an imposition on an urban community but a replacement form of administrative centre for the local region. There remain questions as to the reason the Normans found, apparently from very early after the Conquest, that the existing Saxon system did not work or, at least, did not work for the Normans with the existing Saxon building forms.

Michael Shapland's paper entitled 'Anglo-Saxon towers of lordship and the origins of the castle in England' takes the thought provoking idea that the tall, slender, square keeps, such as those at West Malling and Bramber take influence from Anglo-Saxon tower-nave churches of which the best surviving examples are at Earls Barton, Northamptonshire, Barton on Humber, Lincolnshire and St George's Tower in Oxford Castle, although some 20 such towers survive. Whilst recognizing the great palatial towers, such as London's White Tower and Colchester Castle, take their precedents from France, the Saxons did have a tradition of tall, basically square plan, towers



associated with lordship. The tower-nave churches were initially free-standing towers within, or on the edge of, lordly enclosures used as private places of worship but rich with the symbolic representation of lordly status. Many were clearly the bellhus of the thegnal promotion law. The tower-nave chapels then became one of the influences on the keep along with the bughgeat (Saxon examples of which are lost from the archaeological/architectural record; Exeter Castle is the best example although this is currently dated as after 1066.) The skeuomorphic details of the towers at Earls Barton and Barton on Humber remind us that there were likely to have been many timber examples of such towers in preConquest England and these also may have more directly influenced masonry Norman towers. Shapland’s thesis is that in England royal and monastic tower-naves, western church towers and lordly timber towers influenced the development of lordly tower-naves whilst in France elaborated aristocratic halls led to French keeps and then both these English and French influences played a part in the architectural development of the 12th century English castle.

Another paper overthrowing earlier suggestions of dating was Naomi Sykes paper on the diffusion of fallow deer. New DNA and isotope evidence now suggests the fallow deer was a pre-Conquest introduction coming directly from a source in the Balkans, probably Bulgaria. Previously, although there was some place-name evidence for a pre-Conquest introduction, Naomi had theorized the fallow deer was a Norman introduction coming indirectly from its Anatolian origin via Sicily and northern France.

Generally this writer was left with the impression of the remarkable amount of continuity of Anglo- Saxon England in the immediate post-Conquest period. Many characteristic ‘Norman’ features and policies existed in pre-Conquest England and there is a possibility that some of these may even be English institutions taken up with a convert’s fervour by the Normans (?Forest Law). The Conquest may represent a period of more rapid transformation but of itself the only actual change was that of senior management in the instruments of state. Indeed it might well be argued the major lasting change was to the English church where the Conquest brought about a lessening of the traditional independence of the English Church allowing for an adoption of general papal reform.

The Proceedings of this conference are likely to be published in due course as a monograph which will certainly be worth reading.

Michael Fradley’s thesis is available online from the University of Exeter (<https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/3248>)

*Philip Davis*

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### Appleby Castle, Cumbria

**T**he gates at Appleby Castle are to be opened again after 16 years to admit the public for tours of the site. The castle, which has been private up until now, is letting visitors in for a unique guided historical tour of the grounds and castle. The private tours will include bedrooms, hallways and dungeons which have never before been seen by the public.

The site dates back to Roman times but the first castle was built in the 11th century. Owned by the kings of England and Scotland, the castle became stronghold of the Clifford family in the 13th century and remained in family ownership until the second half of the 20th century.

Restored by its most celebrated owner, Lady Anne Clifford, in 1652-53, it is the last remaining castle owned by the Clifford’s in the north of England which is not a ruin.

The current owner of the castle



Appleby Castle, Cumbria. Aerial photograph showing 12thC great tower and curtain wall built around the earlier motte & bailey.

Sally Nightingale said: "I am delighted to be able to share the home of Lady Anne Clifford with the general public. Visitors to the castle will gain a valuable insight into the estate's heritage and future.

"This is a new and exciting chapter in the history of Appleby Castle, and sets the mood for its many chapters to come."

Sir Martin Holdgate, author of *The Story of Appleby-in-Westmorland*, has been advising Mrs Nightingale on historical matters as she prepares to open the castle to guided tours.

Tours will be limited - only 12 visitors per tour and only 3 tours per day at 12pm, 2pm and 4pm (on selected days)- by appointment only. Visitors will be greeted at the front gate where a guide will tell you the history of the castle and its owners who have played significant roles in the history of England. There are hidden corners of this castle that have remained unchanged over the centuries and the public are being allowed access to them for the first time. See their website for more details [here](#).

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### Archaeology Festival, Conisbrough Castle

Conisbrough Castle is nearing completion of a £1m re-development project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Doncaster Council and English Heritage. The new visitor centre and exhibition "If Walls Could Talk: Stories from Conisbrough Castle", is due to open in April 2014. As part of this programme they will be undertaking the first excavations at Conisbrough Castle in almost 40 years during June 2014 and intend to involve as many members of the community as possible by having a community and a schools dig alongside the works.

Conisbrough Castle, South Yorkshire. View overlooking the earthworks to the south of the castle.



The project, which is being carried out in partnership with Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, will tell stories from the castle's past and focus in particular on the castle at the end of the 12th century, when the wealthy and powerful Hamelin and Isabel built the unique castle keep.

A two week-long archaeology festival will be part of the opening celebrations and will run from June 2 - 13 2014 and feature a

community dig at the castle, archaeologists on site and guided tours.

Schools will also be invited to tour the excavations and undertake their own school based digs, along with other archaeological activities.

Dr Mark Douglas, properties curator for English Heritage, said: "We are extremely excited about the proposed archaeology festival in the local area.

"This site has been untouched for almost 40 years and we are anticipating discovering some new and fascinating information about the castle, the local area and its past.

"It is not often that the public has the opportunity to get close to our history experts and we are offering people a chance to come and ask questions and learn more about their area, or perhaps get involved themselves.

"We are hoping our activity with local schools and members of the community will enthuse people to discover what is literally in their backyard and to excavate a piece of their own land as part of the project."