



Monthly eNewsletter

June/July 2020

Hi everyone,

Normally in the summer we would be enjoying Society field trips, excavations, surveys, and our own day trips and holidays to sites near and far. Although some places are beginning to open up, allowing the public to visit heritage sites and museums, the UAS activities are currently on hold as large groups are still not safe. Where members are making outings, please remember to stay safe and follow public health guidance.

The committee has been meeting over Zoom to discuss future activities for the Society. Current guidance from Queen's University makes it unlikely we will be able to hold physical lectures and our conference in the autumn. We have begun to prepare for a virtual conference, I have given some more info later in the Newsletter. Please keep an eye on your emails for further information about the Society's activities in the coming months.

Best wishes,

Duncan

Editor

Discovery! 2020



This year we are unlikely to be able to hold our Discovery! conference in the normal format. Therefore, the committee has taken the decision to organise the conference online. Details of how to register will be made available nearer the time, but registration will be essential as we are using a secure system to host the conference. Registration will also be free, so anyone can attend.

We are trying to keep as close as possible to our normal conference, so the event will still take place on Saturday 7th November. The conference will take a similar form to our usual, physical conference, with a number of sessions being made available during the day. We hope to be able to provide a live discussion forum throughout

the day. We don't know what lockdown restrictions will be in place by then, but maybe members could meet in small groups to watch the lectures together and have some discussion amongst themselves.

We are still to decide on speakers for the conference, a line-up will be published on our website and social media as soon as we have it ready. However, the committee just wanted to take this opportunity to assure you that plans are in place for this year's conference and to make sure you have the date in your diaries.

If anyone has sent memberships to us at the Department of Archaeology, Queen's University Belfast, we will not have received these. Postal memberships can be sent to:

Lee Gordon, UAS Treasurer, 135 Old Holywood Road, Belfast BT4 2HQ

Or join online: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/uas/JoinUs/>

Metal detecting and Archaeology in Northern Ireland

Following some recent reports of members reporting metal detecting activity, we thought it might be useful to summarise what the law says and does not say about metal detecting in Northern Ireland.

The most universal legal restriction on metal detecting is Common Law, in so far as no one has the right to detect on any land unless they have the permission of the landowner. This applies to all land - it does not have to have any statutory protection, be a known or suspected archaeological site or have any other special status.

When it comes to more specific legal restrictions, such as the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (HMAO), only one of the 45 Articles makes any reference to 'detecting devices'. This is Article 29, which makes it an offence to have possession of a detecting device and to remove any archaeological object discovered by the use of that device from a protected place without the written consent of the Department. A protected place is defined as any monument which has been scheduled by or is in the care of the Department. As a detecting device is defined as any device designed or adapted for detecting or locating any metal or mineral, the consent applies to both metal detecting and some types of geophysical survey.

It is worth noting that the simple possession of a detecting device in such protected places is an offence, with the removal of an object which it detected a further offence (as is anyone acting with written consent who fails to comply with any conditions of that consent).

The HMAO says nothing further on detecting devices. It is therefore perfectly lawful to have and use a detecting device anywhere other than a protected place if any other regulations, such as prior consent from the landowner, have been complied with.

The HMAO does, however, contain a second Article which potentially restricts 'typical' metal detecting activity anywhere in

Northern Ireland. This is Article 41, contained within Part III of the Order under the heading Archaeological Objects. The Article basically makes it an offence to search for archaeological objects, structures or 'thing of archaeological interest', if that search involves ground disturbance, without a licence from the Department and in compliance with any conditions it contains. This Article repeats a licensing requirement dating back to 1937 and hence long-predating the use of metal detectors to search for archaeological material. In effect, however, it means that while it may be legal to have and to use a metal detector in an unprotected place, it may not be legal to investigate a signal if that involves disturbing the ground surface in search of archaeological material.

On the face of it, given that almost all metal detecting activity involves ground disturbance to investigate a signal, this looks like a blanket legal control. Any successful prosecution, however, rests on the ability to prove that the detectorist was searching for archaeological material. But short of the detectorist admitting that this was exactly what he was doing, it is extremely difficult to prove this. After all, they can argue that they have no idea what is buried in the ground, will only know that when it has been retrieved and anyway, how are they to know what exactly is an archaeological object, structure or thing of archaeological interest? If you have a spare moment, take a look at p4 of the HMAO and the definition of an archaeological object and decide if the average person could easily judge.

Article 41 is the basis for the excavation licensing procedures managed by Historic Environment Division (HED). These require potential licence holders to satisfy certain criteria to be eligible for a licence. No detectorists have applied for an excavation licence and in any case the same criteria could not be applied to metal detecting permissions as few, if any detectorists would satisfy them. If HED were ever to issue permits or licenses for metal detecting, they would have to use different criteria and standards. Some excavation licenses do, however, include an element of metal detecting within the overall excavation programme, with the licence holder managing the detecting activity. The most notable example of a project involving metal detecting was the work on the

Blackwater dredgings in the 1990s. With detectorists managed by licence holders from the Ulster Museum, this produced a wealth of artefacts including the Clonmore Shrine and the Shanmullagh Hoard.

In conversation with current detectorists, they may say that they search for military memorabilia, lost rings, coins or bits of agricultural machinery. In the only case where a detectorist was convicted of illegally searching for archaeological material, this was overturned on appeal based on his statement that he had been searching for fishing weights.

There is a third Article of the HMAO which can come into play in relation to the objects – Article 42, which requires any person finding an archaeological object to report it to a relevant authority within 14 days. So anyone holding onto or trying to sell an object, including objects found by detecting, without reporting it, may be guilty of an offence. They may even provide supporting evidence by advertising what the object is or even where they found it. The central issue here is whether the objects have been reported, which is almost always to a Museum. The object should also be theirs to keep or sell, which means this should have been agreed with the landowner.

Metal detecting and associated legislation and regulations is quite topical. There has recently been a consultation on proposed amendments to the Treasure Act, which applies to England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the associated Codes of Practice. This has major implications for metal detecting as the vast majority of items deemed to be Treasure are found by detectorists.

There is also an Historic England funded feasibility exercise underway on the proposal to establish an Institute of Detectorists which would aim to provide training, disseminate information and a clearly defined best practice methodology for detectorists. Staff from both HED and the National Monuments Service, Ireland are Observers on the Project Advisory Board.

More locally, HED has been considering the relationship between archaeology and metal detecting and would hope to present a paper for wider consultation in the coming months. Preparatory

work has reminded the Department of how much variation there is legally and practically in the approaches to metal detecting, even within the UK and Ireland.

It is clear that, despite any potential legal restrictions, there is more metal detecting activity in Northern Ireland than ever before and that many detectorists use HED maps and databases when researching potential locations. It is also worth noting, however, that almost all of the major metal artefacts, both Treasure and non-Treasure, acquired by National Museums Northern Ireland in recent years were found by detectorists and reported by them as required by both the HMAO and the Treasure Act.

Ken Neill

Heritage Advice and Regulation Branch,

Historic Environment Division, Department for Communities

What to do if you see a metal detectorist

- The HMAO can be accessed here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1995/1625/contents>
- If a member sees detecting taking place in land/grounds owned by Councils, National Trust, Government (including State Care Monuments) then they should report it to the landowning body – ideally if there is staff available at the time directly to them, otherwise by email or phone. Also by all means forward the information to: Historicenvironmentenquiries@communities-ni.gov.uk
- It is not recommended to approach or challenge the detectorist in case this leads to confrontation.
- If they observe it on private land again do not approach the detectorist – as explained above, it will be hard to prove they are breaking the law in any case. If they know the landowner, perhaps

Speak to them at some point. Again forward any information to the enquiries inbox above.

- Photographic evidence of the activity or even the aftermath, such as the holes left behind, may be useful but only take photographs if this is safe to do so and is not likely to lead to a confrontation.

A future for metal detecting in Northern Ireland?

Ken Neill and HED have indicated that there are discussions taking place about the possible future of metal detecting in Northern Ireland. This is happening alongside a UK wide consultation on the possibility of better engagement with detectorists and improved training for them. The UAS will be following these developments with interest and will provide members with updates whenever there is news and when the HED produces their public consultation. These will be communicated in the Newsletter and by email.

Coastal Quarrying At Dunseverick Castle



A view across the quarry camp from the east



The loading ramp from the east, the water is roughly 3m deep



Looking due north from the quarry site on the NW corner of the castle stack

The Survey Group were invited to Dunseverick Castle by The National Trust in order to record some of the features in the 'ports', the day prior to the survey I took a swim out from Portnahooagh to the quarry camp in the next bay west. The preservation of the camp is much better towards its western end where structures and walls survive to chest height (1.3m) the structures vary in size considerably the largest being 5x8m with internal divisions. One of the more interesting features is the loading ramp/dock which is a modified natural feature, as is the small stump just next to it.

On the return swim I spent time looking at the cliff faces leading to the stack that the castle sits on and the outer faces of the stack itself, I then swam out, around, then onto the stumps just off the downwards for a 100m or so and lying against the sides there are massive fingers of stone that must have been overburden.

Floating there looking down I was reminded of a blade core and how each blade flaked left a distinct concavity, rather like those on the cliffs.

By this time the tide was starting to run so I made one last stop on the NW corner of the stack where there is a small post quarrying platform, this was fortunate as there is a thin layer and seam of the red stone which had been the target of the quarries. Although it doesn't show well in the pictures the material is red with multiple inclusions of what I believe are sponges and shells, to my eye it is either the same material or very similar to that used in the red pillars in Mount Stewart House.

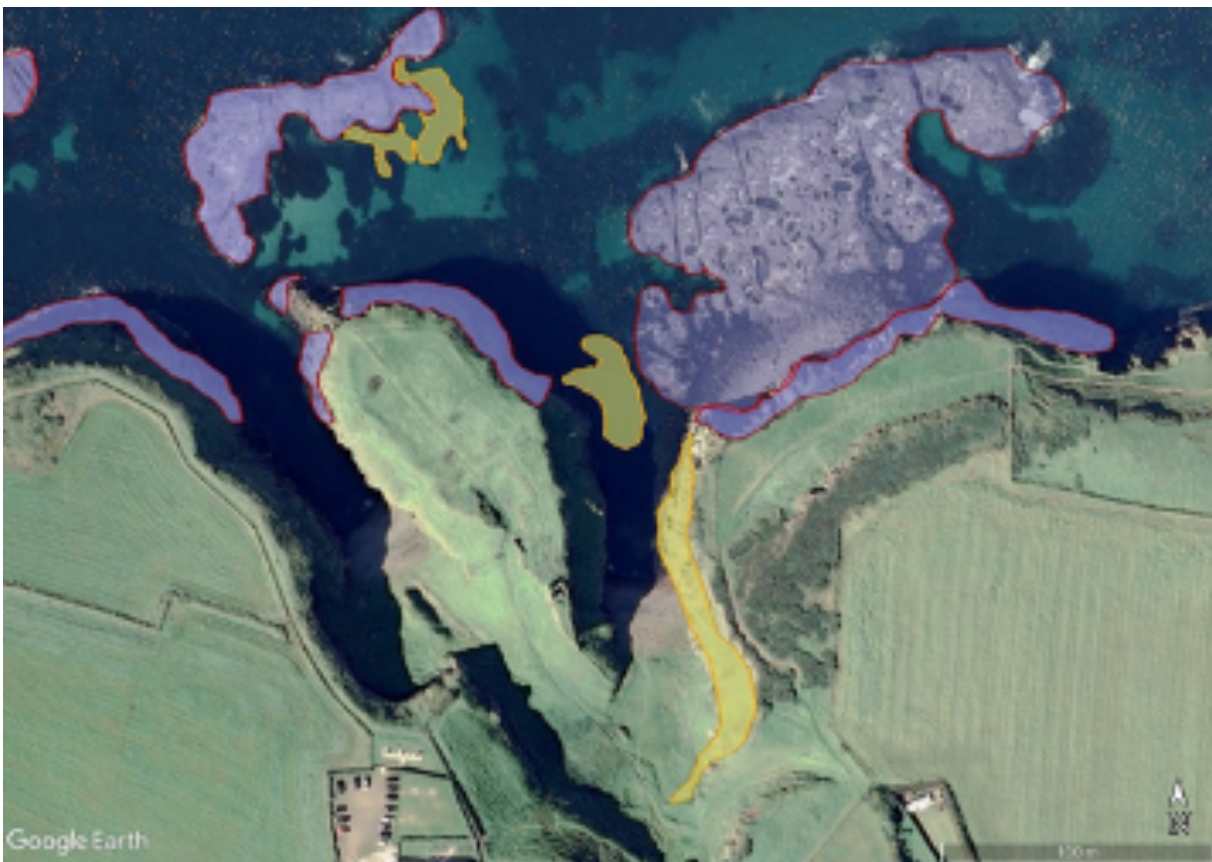
The question about how much material was removed needs more investigation, that it was considerable can be seen in early images of the site, some of which suggest that a similar amount of material has been removed from the castle stack as the sea stack shown in the image below.



There is something wrong with this image and it took me ages to work out what it was, if you look at the tower and building on the stack they are the wrong way around, the image has been flipped. If it had been of higher resolution I'd have spotted the reversed signature a lot quicker.



With the image flipped the view makes a lot more sense, now rather than showing the western port we have a view from above the mining camp with identifiable features. Much of what we see in this image has been changed by quarrying, the path or more probably road halfway up the cliff is gone, the large sea stack with its cave likewise. There are more subtle differences which may be down to artistic interpretation, the jagged outcrops of rocks which rise toward a sudden drop and the 'port' at bottom left match up fairly well with the western side of the quarry camp if seen from the NW (roughly under the waterfall created by the drainage ditch). The 'port' and part of the western slope above is now largely filled with tailings from the quarrying.



An image from Google Earth showing the areas with evidence of quarrying, the line and areas enclosed in red have surviving quarry marks, remnant red stone or finger type concavities, those in yellow are areas I am less certain about. I suspect that an examination of the seabed would reveal further evidence of quarrying between the castle stack and the eastern cliff/quarried area.



The location of the small stack at the mouth of the eastern port raises the possibility of a land bridge or sea arch linking the castle stack to what is now the headland to the east, the same may apply to the NW corner and the stack just off from it.

The valley beneath the castle has not escaped the quarries either, as the print below shows an outcrop of 'causeway' stone has been removed from the bottom of the access path.



A fairly standard pastoral scene still contains information

Conclusion

The evidence is clear that the stack which the castle stands on has been reduced by quarrying, the full degree of this reduction is currently unknown and may be unknowable but it should not be ignored. Further underwater investigation may reveal that the sea bed immediately off the stack has also been modified, it is exceptionally flat and the layout (with the L shaped stack complete) would make a really good harbour.

Coming soon,

Dunseverick, what historical drawings and photographs can tell us about changes to the site.

The lost Parish of St. John in the Ardes, research into Ballyhalbert has thrown up some interesting leads including the location of St. Johns Port

David Irving

New Books

Early Irish Sculpture and the Art of the High Crosses - Roger Stalley

Yale University Press, £40

This book is an impressive study of the art and production of Irish high crosses, focusing on the work of the sculptor known as the Muiredach Master. Stalley begins by looking at the meaning of the ringed cross and the technical challenges in their production, before going on to look at the art of the crosses. In addition to the art, Stalley studies the patrons who commissioned the crosses and the audiences who interacted with them. Throughout this work, Stalley places the high crosses in the context of Irish society and European art in the Early Medieval period. This book is beautifully presented and extensively illustrated throughout with colour images and line drawings of artwork. This book will be an important addition to the library of anyone interested in Early Medieval Ireland and Early Medieval art.

Partnership & Participation - Community Archaeology in Ireland - Edited by Christine Baker

Wordwell Books, €35

Over the past number of years there has been an increasing desire among communities to engage directly with the archaeology, heritage and traditions of their local area. The term 'community archaeology' is generally understood as the communities of today engaging with the people of the past through a variety of means — excavation, surveys, studies and dissemination. This publication encompasses geophysical surveys, 3D projects, landscape surveys, heritage-based tourism, public art and community excavations and gives voice to a wide range of perspectives, from the community itself to institutional overviews.

Communities and knowledge production in archaeology - Edited by Julia Roberts, Kathleen Sheppard, Ulf R. Hansson and Jonathan R. Trigg

Manchester University Press, £80

This volume applies scientific network theories to the history of archaeology, considering how archaeological knowledge is generated. For those of us who regularly rely on interpretations of archaeological knowledge, it is useful to sometimes reflect on how that understanding has been created. The papers presented here look at a number of world-wide case studies as examples of the development of archaeological knowledge. This is an interesting book for anyone interested in archaeological theory and the history of archaeology. This is not an easy read for someone just generally interested in archaeology (although the papers are short and written in a readable manner), but it does provide an interesting perspective on the subject.