

Author Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Post-medieval Archaeology* vol 50.1 (2016) pp. 6-18.  
Available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00794236.2016.1160626>

## A Short History of the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology

### *Harold Mytum*

*After 50 years of existence, it is appropriate to review the history of the Society, and appreciate what it has achieved not only through its conferences and publications but also in its success in promoting the archaeology of recent centuries. From a position of rare part-time interest in this period by a few enthusiasts in 1966 we can now celebrate explicit post-medieval specialists within museum, state, local government, contract, and academic archaeology, with representatives active within the Society.*

The Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology was founded with enthusiasm and foresight, underwent some periods of difficulty whilst its mission to argue for the archaeology of recent times was largely unheard beyond those already converted, until the determination and strength of argument for this form of archaeology was eventually successful. We can celebrate the Society's anniversary in the knowledge that how ancient any material culture, structures or landscapes might be is no longer the primary factor in research, management or preservation. Now, the research and social value of any period's archaeology form the basis of discussion, and it is in no small part due to the Society and its members that this has come about.

This review of the Society's history is split into four main sections, followed by a brief conclusion looking to the future. The first examines the origin of the Society as it created its first vision of the subject and established the primary activities of conferences and journal publication, and indicated that standing structures and visible landscapes as well as excavations and portable material culture were all part of the subject. Second comes the period of consolidation over the first 15 years. During this period, British State agencies and museums increasingly recognised the importance of post-medieval archaeology, and a few universities began to include this in their curricula; a few European countries also began to recognise the importance of the post-medieval period. In the third phase, the next 20 years, however, there were times of relative failure in developing the subject more fully, though it was during this period that the infrastructure of understanding of the material world of recent times was laid down, and gradually examples of how this work could provide important insights into the recent past were published, and post-medieval aspects appeared within mainstream university curricula. The most recent phase of the Society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has embraced a wide range of methodological and theoretical approaches, and moved beyond classification and description to a wide range of interpretive approaches still heavily imbued with empirical data recovery, ordering and analysis. In this period, academia, heritage agencies and the media accept post-medieval archaeology as readily as any other in Britain, and increasingly this is being emulated in appropriately local contexts across Europe.

The Society has, as the leading period society in Europe, led a profound attitudinal shift in the archaeological and heritage landscape. Whilst some of the founders might find some of the interpretive approaches alien and too far from their empirical, classificatory roots, they would be amazed at the extent to which post-medieval archaeology is now central to so many management, preservation, interpretation and research endeavours. This paper charts the people, events and products that involved the Society in the campaign for recognition which has now been won; the challenge now is that in times of retrenchment in Higher Education, museums and heritage agencies,

the progress made this far is not lost. The post-medieval may have to take its share of cutbacks, but the Society must be vigilant that in any scaling down there is no retreat to a period bias that the Society was founded to alleviate. The Society can celebrate its first 50 years, but its members can be sure that in the next 50 there will be much to discover, much to reinterpret and much to protect.

### Origins

The Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology grew out of the Post-Medieval Ceramic Research Group, which had been established in 1963 through a demand to understand the range of pottery being recovered from excavations and about which little was known. John Hurst, of the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, had already been active in researching imported ceramics, extending his temporal interests beyond the medieval, joined Ken Barton in setting up the Post-Medieval Ceramic Research Group in 1963, following a successful University of Birmingham extra-mural week end event on Post-Medieval Ceramics. The two circulated a proposal for the establishment of the Group in September, with a slip for those interested to return to Barton.<sup>1</sup> A formal meeting that autumn at the City Museum, Bristol established the Group.<sup>2</sup> The interest in ceramics was considerable, with archaeologists, museum curators and collectors sharing common interests, with over 220 members in the group by 1966. It was planned that meetings at various museums around the country would allow members to see regional collections and share expertise, and a newsletter would be produced to disseminate short reports and information.

Interest in ceramics from excavations formed the initial focus, but the archaeologists also were interested in other artefacts recovered as well as structural evidence, and the increasing activity on post-medieval sites – or the final recognition of the importance of post-medieval deposits on sites of earlier periods, notably castles and abbeys in state care and some urban excavations, meant that some members of the Post-Medieval Ceramic Research Group were keen to expand the remit to create a more holistic approach.<sup>3</sup> A questionnaire was circulated to members, and the meeting at Southwark Town Hall in May 1966 reviewed the results of the vote for the proposed title of the journal,<sup>4</sup> with the result that 47 votes were cast for *The Journal of Post-Medieval Archaeology*, and 27 for *The Journal of Medieval and Post-Medieval Ceramics*. This therefore defined a narrower period range but wider subject remit, though it was only in 1975 that the Medieval Pottery Research Group was established to focus exclusively on ceramics<sup>5</sup>. The Society's journal was to comprise articles and shorter notes, together with reviews and a summary of recent fieldwork, a format mirroring that of *Medieval Archaeology*.

The Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology was officially formed in the autumn of 1966 in Chester, where its constitution was approved by its precursor organisation. A steering committee, chaired by John Hurst and comprising Hugh Tait, John Ashdown, David Crossley, Lawrence Butler and Phil Mayes, met in December and again in January where progress on setting up the administrative structures for the Society were discussed, with a final meeting in the evening before the first A.G.M. of the Society in March.<sup>6</sup> The subscription rate for ordinary (and indeed institutional) members was £2/2/0. A leaflet to publicise the Society was produced with the contents of volume 1 and specimen line and photographic illustrations included, together with an order form to subscribe. It is clear from the steady rise in membership that the publicity was effective, and tapped into considerable demand.

The initial dates of interest for the society – 1450 to 1750 – were inherited from the precursor Post-Medieval Ceramic Research Group, reflecting a start date where medieval vessel forms were being replaced and an end date when porcelain was produced in England.<sup>7</sup> The early meetings reflect the

ceramics focus of most of the members, with the first four being at Durham University (ceramics), National Museum of Wales, Cardiff (general), Portsmouth Museum (ceramics), Nottingham Museum (general)<sup>8</sup>. The initial officers reflected the ceramics focus with the President, Robert Charleston, being Keeper of Ceramics at the Victoria and Albert Museums, but the wider interests demonstrated with the Treasurer, John Ashdown from the Historic Buildings Division of the Greater London Council and the other main officers all being archaeologists. The first Council contained museum, civil service and academic representatives, though apart from Vice-President Ivor Noël Hume, all were based in England.

### **The first 15 years**

By January 1968 the Society's wider remit had led to a small increase in member numbers, up to 261<sup>9</sup>, but by June the increased profile of the Society had resulted in a membership of 340,<sup>10</sup> now well above that achieved by the Post-Medieval Ceramic Research Group. The minutes record the growth in size of the Society for Medieval Archaeology which had by its 11<sup>th</sup> year had reached over 1,000 members. The original agreed print round of 1,000 for the journal clearly reflected an optimism that a similar size could be achieved; by the equivalent point in its history the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology had also reached over 800 members, and still continued grow, but never reached 900 members, reaching its peak in its 15<sup>th</sup> year.

Once the Society was established, it might have been expected that consolidation and expansion of activities might have been expected, but financial constraints became a major concern. Finances were always a challenge within the Society, with the journal being a major expenditure each year. When articles – mainly excavation reports – received subventions this greatly eased the Society's balance sheet, but these were uneven in size only supported part of the range of papers that the Society wished to publish. At times inflation, which affected both printing and distribution costs, was substantial. This was particularly severe in the 1970s, with the annual percentage increase in double figures regularly. Subscriptions were increased to £3 for individual members for the 1973 year, but this only caught up with the value of the subscription when it was first set, and took no account of further inflation that was set to continue, and indeed get worse in the years to come, peaking at a spectacular 24% in 1975. Throughout this period of inflation subscriptions did not rise again until 1980, when the A.G.M. agreed to Council's proposals for these to rise to £5 for ordinary members, when to be the equivalent of 1973 they should have been set at £8. Although publication grants for some of the articles continued to assist the Society finances, it is no surprise that problems with cash flow and the imbalance of subscriptions and the costs of the journal in particular caused Council much concern (Fig. 1).

Despite any financial issues, the impact of the Society has been to encourage archaeological activity within the post-medieval period not only within Britain but abroad, starting in the Anglophone world. No doubt stimulated by local activities and archaeological politics, but aware of the Society's existence, the Society for Historical Archaeology was formed in North America in 1967, with Ivor Noël Hume a notable member of both Societies from the beginning. The Australian Society for Historical Archaeology (now Australasian) was established in 1970, but it was some years before other parts of the world recognised those archaeology sufficiently to justify establishing further societies and journals.

A key activity of the Society was its meetings programme, with two events held each year. These were publicised with printed programmes with tear-off slips with which a non-returnable conference fee would be enclosed. Events could include lectures, viewing of museum collections, and guided

site visits, and generally started on a Friday evening and lasted till Sunday early afternoon. Whilst the ceramic interests were frequently satisfied through events at museums in various parts of the country, other themes including other finds categories such as glass, and standing buildings and industrial archaeology also figured strongly.

The journal over its first 15 years revealed a steady interest in reporting archaeological excavations, In the first five years a significant proportion of articles were related directly to ceramics papers (no doubt reflecting the processor group's interests); this subsequently declined, though this was partly offset by articles considering other particular artefact categories. Industrial archaeology had a steady representation (the *Industrial Archaeology Review* did not commence publication until 1976), as did that of standing buildings. Although the Vernacular Architecture Group commenced its journal *Vernacular Architecture* in 1971, contributions in its early years were only short, and fuller studies required reporting elsewhere. Just as the initial Council was dominated by English members, the main articles were similarly geographically biased (Fig. 2), with only one from Wales in the first five years, and after 15 issues Wales had four, Scotland six, Europe four and North America two, compared to 135 on England. Nevertheless, the international scope was recognised from the first issue, with a note on historical archaeology in North America and its fledgling state, and of the establishment of the Society for Historical Archaeology in Dallas in January 1967.<sup>11</sup> The first overseas article appeared in the second issue of the journal, with an excavation report for the French fortress at Louisbourg, Nova Scotia,<sup>12</sup> but this international interest was not sustained in terms of articles in the first 15 years.

Regular communication to members through a *Newsheet* commenced in 1970, edited by the then Secretary Ken Barton, who continued after 1973 as *Newsheet* editor, though in 1975 the task of compiler once more became part of the Secretary's role, a format that would remain for nearly 20 years.<sup>13</sup> The main purpose of these ephemeral publications was to publicise forthcoming events – particularly conferences – and recent publications, though other news and requests for information also could be included. The quality and detailed format of the output changed from cyclostyle to photocopying, as technology changed, but the remit was constant throughout.

The establishment of post-medieval archaeology within the English archaeological landscape was reflected in an approach in 1975 by the Department of the Environment for its view of priorities in survey, research and excavation within the field. The first draft of the Society's response, outlined by Ian Robertson, was formulated by Council for discussion in April.<sup>14</sup> This, and its subsequent redactions, together reveal an evolution of understanding of the then current state of post-medieval archaeology and its potential across a range of themes. In 1975 notable issues were 17<sup>th</sup>-century Civil war earthworks, linking urban standing fabric with below-ground evidence, urban water supply and social not only morphology of urban landscapes. Emphasis only on deserted and not surviving villages was seen as a bias, and that cottages should be recorded. Country houses and palaces demolished in the Civil War deserved attention, as did industrial sites with particular emphasis on mills of all kind and on production sites associated with non-ferrous metals, leather, paint, bricks, gas (as local works were closed following the arrival of North Sea gas), and geographical gaps in ceramic production. With regard to communications, abandoned canals and civil ports were considered worthy of attention.

By January 1977, David Crossley was able to present a fuller draft with some additional topics, notably environmental evidence, gardens and landscapes of great houses, housing of the poor, and on industry pre-factory textiles, coal extraction and glass production.<sup>15</sup> In addition, more

sophisticated questions regarding change through time and interactions between centres is also revealed by encouraging consideration of stagnation as well as expansion in urban contexts, and the ways metropolitan centres affected their rural and small town hinterlands. At various points in subsequent years revised versions of this document have been provided to state heritage organisations, and representatives of the Society have also given expert advice on grant applications.

By this stage of its development the Society was well established, had a fine track record of conferences, and publication of the annual journal, despite some of the problems with producing this at the same time each year. During the 1970s, rescue archaeology expanded exponentially and regional and urban units were established in many parts of England.<sup>16</sup> Although the staff were trained at a time when post-medieval archaeology was not part of university curricula, a few units gave some attention to post-medieval phases of multi-period sites and, in some cases, ones purely of this date were excavated and recorded. Clearly English state archaeologists such as John Hurst and Gerald Dunning clearly had an impact in highlighting potential for later periods, and the annual reviews of fieldwork in Britain (and subsequently also Ireland) published in the journal reveal this diversity.<sup>17</sup> The meetings programme also indicates a wide geographical spread of interest. However, some problems of disputed authorship of a paper offered to the journal led to litigation and a Court Order, leading to much correspondence over several years involving the Society. This stressful process was time-consuming for the officers, and revealed how they could be held liable to damages as they were not protected by the constitution of the Society, since it was unincorporated. Even though the Society had acted in good faith, its existence was threatened and its officers exposed to potential financial penalty. Council therefore agreed that a new entity should replace the existing one, and legal advice was sought in finding an appropriate solution.

In April 1980, the Society as originally constituted was dissolved at an extraordinary general meeting held at Nene College, Northampton during its Spring meeting, and all assets and liabilities transferred to a new entity, the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology Limited, a company limited by guarantee which had been formed in anticipation in February of that year. This was approved unanimously, though the minutes do not state how many people attended<sup>18</sup>. The Charities Commission raised a number of matters regarding the Memorandum and Articles of association, but these were resolved by special resolutions at another extra-ordinary general meeting at the Autumn meeting in Oxford that September.<sup>19</sup> The Society could now continue into its next phase, no longer a fledgling society but one with a reputation and established role in the archaeological community.

### **The middle years**

The apparently secure position of the society – with a substantial membership and high quality outputs in terms of events and the journal – was undermined, however, as inflation continued to be high (over 30% in the first two years of the decade). Indeed, the financial position of the Society became particularly problematic in the early 1980s, with only the moneys accumulated in the Index fund preventing insolvency.<sup>20</sup> A five year plan was put in place to restore finances, with a rise in individual subscriptions rising again in 1984 to £8 (when it should have been £12 to match the original subscription), and there was to be a more careful management of the journal size and content (linked to grant-aided papers). By the September 1988 Council Meeting on the Scilly Isles, the Treasurer could report that reserves were almost up to one year's subscriptions. There was briefly a three-figure drop in membership following the rise, but this intermittently recovered in later years, though the Society has not since reached the levels of membership that it enjoyed the later 1970s and early 1980s (Fig. 3).

The accounts were volatile throughout the rest of the 1980s, in part because the journal was not always produced at the same point in the year leading to some financial years having no substantial printing costs and others having those for two issues of the journal. Moreover, delays in receipt of some grant-aid payments led to cash flow problems, most notably in 1990 when the Society was in deficit, though awaiting grants that would have given it a balance of around £3,000. It was clearly difficult for Council to understand the finances throughout this period; the minutes have rapidly changing amounts in the various bank accounts as publication grants came in and as payments for the journal went out; the journal for 1992 was the smallest ever, in order to keep costs to a minimum, and was little bigger in 1994 though this was largely because a group of papers due to be included that resulted from a conference were too substantial to be included given that had no external subsidy, and their future was to be held over until the financial position was clearer.<sup>21</sup> In 1993, subscriptions were raised once again, to £15 for individuals, though not up to the £19 it should have been to match the original subscription adjusted for inflation. There was a decline in the number of members over the following five years, but the greatly increased per capita income saw the Society steadily establish a healthy balance over time. In June 1995, the Treasurer could write to the Secretary stating 'At long last we appear to have got the financial operations of the Society under control', and that finding a significantly less expensive printer for the journal would also mean that once again the Index fund could be supported.<sup>22</sup> The Council could now concentrate on the mission of the Society rather than constantly fighting for its continued existence. A bequest of £1000 from Leslie Matthews in 1998 was used to support a student dissertation prize consisting of a cash payment and a year's free membership of the Society, with the first award in 1999.<sup>23</sup>

Communication to members was maintained through the distribution of the *Post-Medieval Newsheet*, compiled by the Secretary who also acted as editor.<sup>24</sup> This ran until January 1993 in an A4 typed format, but from Summer 1993 it became the *Post-Medieval Archaeology Newsletter* with its own editor, initially Deborah Ford, with an A5 format, typeset in double columns with a much smaller font size and printed in dark blue.<sup>25</sup> The growing importance of the internet was reflected with the Society establishing a page of its own on the Council for British Archaeology web site in 1996, and this provided an additional medium by which to communicate with members and publicise the Society. A new Priorities document was produced in 1997, though there was concern by some that it did not seem to have been noted by many county archaeologists.<sup>26</sup>

The 1980s and 1990s saw the significant increase in the volume of post-medieval archaeology in some parts of Europe, with the German Society for Medieval Archaeology<sup>27</sup> extending its remit to cover more recent times in 1990,<sup>28</sup> and the journal *Archeologia Postmedievale* founded in Italy during 1997.<sup>29</sup> Across Africa historical archaeology also developed, with the influences coming from the British through established colonial networks, and through North American archaeologists notably James Deetz in South Africa, Peter Schmidt in east Africa, and those interested in the African diaspora in West Africa.<sup>30</sup> There was, however, little formal contact between the Society and any of these initiatives and they are not represented in the journal or conferences, though some of those most active in these areas were members of the Society.

The subject was maturing into a recognised and increasingly respected sub-discipline, enhanced by the first synthesis of the British evidence by David Crossley,<sup>31</sup> utilising many of the studies published in the journal and reported at conferences. By the 1990s, there was growing concern that the Society's focus on pre-1750 archaeology should be expanded to include more recent archaeology, though others were not enthusiastic about expanding the period later, arguing that this was within the Society's remit 'only where the question of material-cultural continuity is concerned'. This was at

a time when industrial archaeology was evaluating its coverage beyond technology and architecture,<sup>32</sup> and wider period interests were being developed by some archaeologists.<sup>33</sup> The archaeological landscape in Britain was changing, however, and more explicit recognition of varied theoretical perspectives and an acceptance of research on material of the 19th and even the 20th century as within the Society's remit can be seen in the changing complexion of the journal contents, and the type of discussion and interpretation that attends the articles, though most still continue the Society's long tradition of presenting empirical data in some detail.

The journal was now a well-established vehicle for the publication of post-medieval material, with a steady stream of excavation reports on significant sites, though at times the size was constrained by finances, with those of 1989 and 1992 both being particularly small, with only two main articles in each issue (Fig. 4). The Caribbean, particularly Bermuda, was represented during the 1980s and 1990s, but other overseas papers remained rare (Fig. 2), apart from a small number of Irish studies which revealed an increasing interest in the period which led to the formation of the Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group in 1999.

In 1997, discussions began with Maney Publishing to consider their proposal for an arrangement under which they invested in the production, marketing and distribution of the journal, as well as distributing the *Newsletter*<sup>34</sup> and arrangements were agreed at the 1998 A.G.M. at which institutions subscribed for the journal directly from Maney Publishing and from the following year were no longer members of the Society. This new arrangement, reviewed and renegotiated every three years, gave the Society a more modern-looking journal (replacing the pink cover with the society logo to a navy blue one with an image in white derived from the current issue). It also created a stable financial model which enabled development of activities by the Society in the new millennium.

Meetings continued to be an important part of the Society's activities, often held in association with local societies or institutions, or cognate national specialist societies. For example, a conference in Cardiff in September 1994 in association with the Nautical Archaeology Society led to the edited volume *Artefacts from Wrecks* in 1997.<sup>35</sup> A pair of meetings during 1997, the first in Williamsburg in April with a second London in November, celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society for Historical Archaeology and cemented the close relationships the two Societies had enjoyed over the years. A wide range of topics, but especially ceramics, were discussed and in due course formed a publication of landmark significance, *Old and New Worlds*, that revealed both how far understanding had grown but also the different approaches and traditions in archaeology both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>36</sup>

### **The 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The Society was now back on a financial even keel, and several new developments were approved by Council during the first decade, with the 2002 AGM approving revised articles of association for the Society and a rise in individual subscriptions to £27 (now in real terms slightly more than the original subscription, and recognising the need to ensure a viable rate for the expected duration at this level). From 2006 a Gift Aid scheme to recover tax was established, and a further rise in 2014 took the subscription to £36 (equivalent to the early subscription rate and recognising a low inflation rate). The journal was now marketed to institutions – particularly university libraries around the world – by Maney Publishing and the Society could concentrate on individual membership in Britain and overseas and in engaging in activities that would attract and satisfy its members, even though this was a much smaller number than in the earlier phases of the Society. For most members the journal was the most important benefit, but the *Newsletter* continued to be produced, and other

modes of communication have proliferated. The Society established its own web site in 2001, with a web site manager on Council from 2003, and more recently has established a Facebook page and a Twitter account. Members also receive regular email updates, so the ways in which the membership can communicate with the officers of the Society and the officers with the membership have been transformed.

The journal had become a regularly published annual publication, and the irregular issue schedules of the early years were now in the past. As part of a renegotiated Maney Publishing agreement, the journal was produced in two parts from 2003, allowing the journal to increase in length and break the 400 page barrier that year. This division of the annual publication also allowed the Society to use a particular issue to explore a theme within the journal rather than as a separate monograph, this being the case with early modern Québec<sup>37</sup> and 400 years of Bermuda.<sup>38</sup> It has not, however, become a regular pattern, unlike the sister journal *Historical Archaeology*, and thus has kept waiting times for publication in the journal short, and the contents each year varied. In 2014 the journal began to be issued in three parts, with post-medieval fieldwork, reviews and the accounts being in the third section and allowing the other two to be devoted to substantive original studies. Colour images for some articles from 2009. The journal has reflected the interests of the members, and early years saw a domination of papers on English topics, with the rest of Britain and Ireland also present, and Europe and the rest of world not completely absent. Over time these proportions have changed (Fig. 2), reflecting both the growth of research in other parts of the world and the Society's increasing status and visibility, in part thanks to the internet and the accessibility of the journal via this medium. The longest excavation reports are no longer as prevalent in the journal as they were in the early years, as shorter more interpretive studies, backed up by excavation archives, have taken their place, and as more academics as well as field archaeologists engage with the period more theoretically aware studies are published.<sup>39</sup>

Conferences have continued to be an important opportunity for members to meet, provide mutual encouragement and support, and keep up to date with the latest discoveries and interpretations. These have continued the tradition of thematic events, often still linking with local or relevant national interest societies. The Society has also become more active on the international scale. It supported the Society for Historical Archaeology's first conference outside the Americas in York in 2005, at which it was presented with an Award of Merit for its contribution to the discipline, and again was involved in the 2013 conference at Leicester. A product of the York conference was a group of papers on Jamestown published in the journal the following year.<sup>40</sup> At these conferences and those of the European Archaeological Association, the Society has a presence and often supports a session which showcases post-medieval subjects. The new format for the Society's 2016 conference, with no overall theme but with many more papers from members grouped into thematic sessions, provides greater opportunities for communication. Another major innovation has been the creation of the Geoff Egan Memorial Lecture, with an invited eminent speaker delivering an address, now combined with the A.G.M., and subsequently published in the journal.<sup>41</sup>

An agreement regarding the publication of a monograph series was finalised with Maney Publishing in 2002, and the Society commenced this the following year with *The Archaeology of Reformation, 1480-1580*, the Proceedings of two joint conferences of the Societies for Medieval Archaeology and Post-Medieval Archaeology that had been held at the British Museum in 1996 and 2001.<sup>42</sup> Other Society monographs derived from collaborative conferences were *The Archaeology of Industrialization*<sup>43</sup> with the Association for Industrial Archaeology who also combined again, this time also with the Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group, for *Crossing Paths or Sharing Tracks?*<sup>44</sup>



and *The Archaeology of Post-Medieval Religion* with the Society for Church Archaeology.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the Society for Medieval Archaeology monograph series, no substantive site reports or artefact studies have been published; though proposals along these lines have been welcomed but have never come to fulfilment. Nevertheless, the monographs have proved to be an effective mode of thematic publication and have had significant academic and professional impact across a range of aspects of post-medieval archaeology (Table 1)

The international perspective of the Society was reflected in some of its conferences at this time, collaborating with its Irish partner society the Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group in 2004 (Belfast) and 2013 (Derry/Londonderry), the Editorial board of the Italian journal *Archeologia Postmedievale* as well as the Medieval Pottery Research Group in 2006 (Livorno) and marking the Society's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and with local heritage organisations on the Caribbean island of Nevis in 2005, and Memorial University Newfoundland in 2010 (St. John's), the latter leading to another of the Society's monographs, *Exploring Atlantic Transitions*.<sup>46</sup> There was also an increasing recognition that the period interests of the Society reached up to the archaeology of the contemporary world. The constitution has never been formally changed to recognise this, but conference presentations and journal articles have reflected this wider remit, and this was encouraged from 2006 by wording within the journal which states that the Society promotes archaeology from the late-medieval period up to the present day. To what extent this chronological shift should be represented in the Society's activities was reflected in a debate in the pages of the journal in 2011.<sup>47</sup> However, the widespread name recognition of both the journal and the Society, and its own heritage of development, has meant that Council has never proposed a formal change in name.

The Society also has developed its prizes and grants in the last 15 years. In 2005 Council agreed to make the undergraduate dissertation prize an annual award, providing there was a submission of sufficient quality.<sup>48</sup> A postgraduate dissertation prize was first awarded in 2009, and from 2015 a legacy in memory of Paul Courtney was established to support a student member attending a conference in a different European country from their own. Once the Society's funds reached a substantial level in the 2000s, a modest research grant scheme was instituted, with awards considered twice a year; in 2015 a Community Engagement Award was also established, reflecting the importance of post-medieval archaeology in the understanding of local heritage, and the Society's wish to support a wider application of archaeological approaches in the understanding of the recent past.

## Conclusion

The Society has managed to weather many challenges over its 50-year history, largely due to the commitment and dedication of its many officers (Table 2) and the numerous members of Council, many also serving in other offices that have existed at various times, such as newsletter editor, web site manager, membership secretary, publicity officer and monograph series editor. The Society is particularly grateful to its founding Council, and particularly John Ashdown, Ken Barton, Lawrence Butler, Robert Charleston, David Crossley John Hurst, and Hugh Tait who then served in various capacities in the years to come. In the middle years two secretaries –Rosemary Weinstein and David Gaimster – were particularly important, each serving in this role for a decade, the latter also serving as President and Vice-President, in the process steering the Society through to the strong position which it now enjoys. The journal has benefitted from a series of meticulous and astute editors, supported at various times by assistant editors and now an editorial board, ensuring the high quality of the enduring flagship product of the Society.<sup>49</sup> The promotion of post-medieval archaeology to

diverse academic, professional, student and public audiences is still at the core of the Society's mission, but in the final analysis it continues because of the members' dedication to the archaeology of the recent past.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Hugo Blake and Nick Brannon for assistance with this article, and Chris King and Hillery Harrison who have undertaken preliminary work on ordering the Society's archive, and without which this research would have been far less detailed.

### Figures

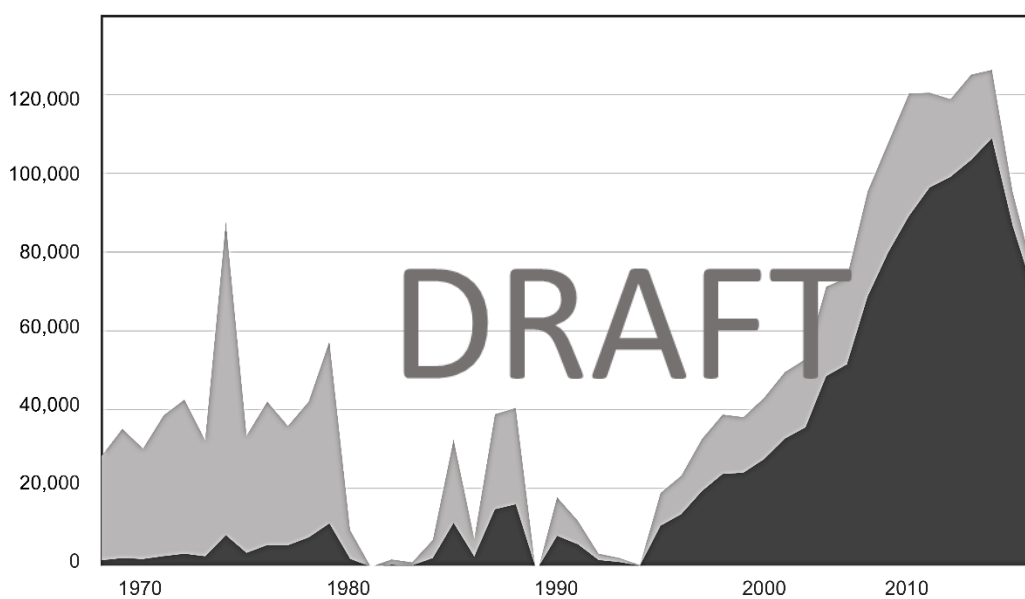


Fig. 1. Balance as represented in the accounts at the A.G.M. in black, with the value adjusted to 2016 values in grey.

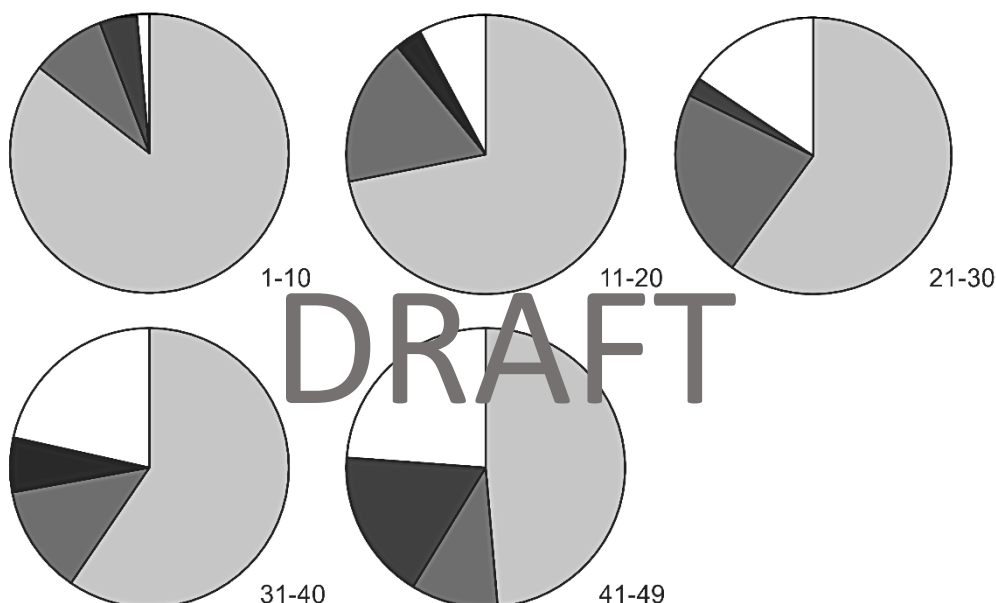


Fig. 2. Pie chart showing geographical spread of articles per decade (most recent to 2015); articles with no specific or comparative remit have been excluded.

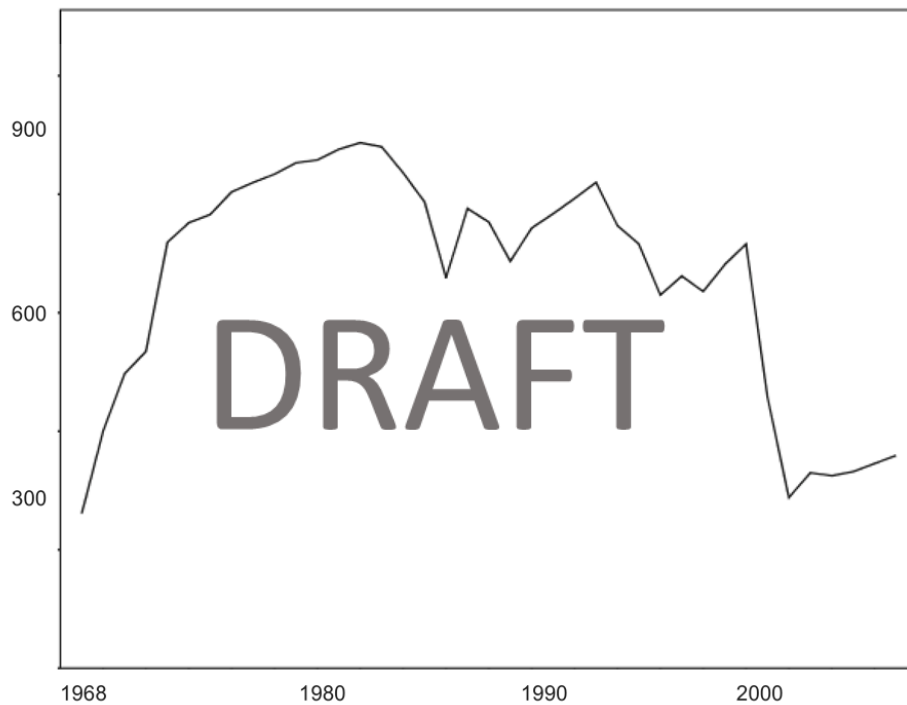
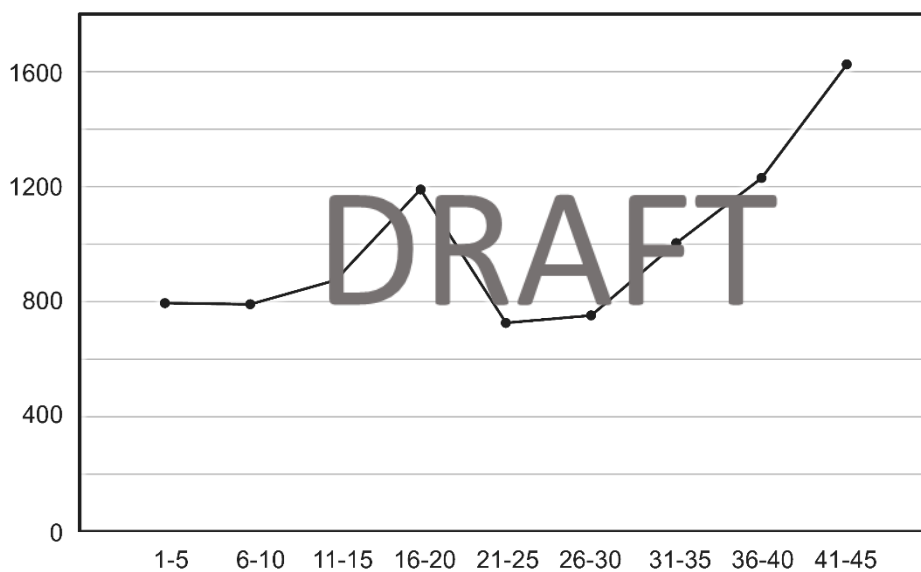


Fig. 3. Plot of all membership until 2007. The substantial drop in membership in part reflects that institutions now subscribe via Maney Publishing and are not counted as members.



Author Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Post-medieval Archaeology* vol 50.1 (2016) pp. 6-18.

Available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00794236.2016.1160626>

Fig. 4. Average number of pages devoted to articles per five-year period of *Post-Medieval Archaeology*. The journal also contains notes, reviews, and a summary of recent fieldwork not included here.

**Table 1**

**The Society's Monograph Series**

1. Gaimster, D.R. and Gilchrist, R. (eds) 2003, *The Archaeology of Reformation, 1480-1580*. Leeds: Maney.
2. Barker, D. and Cranstone, D. (eds) 2004, *The Archaeology of Industrialization*. Leeds: Maney, Leeds.
3. Green, A. and Leech., R. (eds) 2006, *Cities in the World, 1500-2000*. Maney.
4. Finch, J. and Giles, K. (eds) 2007, *Estate Landscapes: Design, improvement and power in the post-medieval landscape*. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer.
5. Horning, A.J. and Palmer, M. (eds) 2009, *Crossing Paths or Sharing Tracks?: Future directions in the archaeological study of post-1550 Britain and Ireland*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.
6. King, C. and Sayer, D. (eds) 2011, *The Archaeology of Post-Medieval Religion*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.
7. Dalglish, C. ed., 2013. *Archaeology, the public and the recent past*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.
8. Pope, P. and Lewis-Simpson, S. (eds) 2013, *Exploring Atlantic Transitions: Archaeologies of Transience and Permanence in New Found Lands*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.
9. Allan, J., Alcock, N. and Dawson, D. (eds) 2015, *West Country Households, 1500-1700*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.

**Table 2**  
**Officers of the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology**

<i>Year elected</i>	<i>President</i>	<i>Vice-Presidents</i>	<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Treasurer</i>	<i>Editor</i>
1967	R.J. Charleston	I. Noel Hume	P. Mayes	J.H. Ashdown	L.A.S. Butler
1968	R.J. Charleston	I. Noel Hume	K.J. Barton	J.H. Ashdown	L.A.S. Butler
1969	R.J. Charleston	I. Noel Hume	K.J. Barton	J.H. Ashdown	L.A.S. Butler
1970	J.G. Hurst	R.J. Charleston	K.J. Barton	J.H. Ashdown	L.A.S. Butler
1971	J.G. Hurst	D.W. Crossley	K.J. Barton	J.H. Ashdown	J.G. Coad
1972	J.G. Hurst	D.W. Crossley	K.J. Barton	J.H. Ashdown	J.G. Coad
1973	D.W. Crossley	J.G. Hurst, J. Cherry	I.G. Robertson	J.H. Ashdown	J.G. Coad
1974	D.W. Crossley	J.G. Hurst, J. Cherry	I.G. Robertson	J.H. Ashdown	J.G. Coad
1975	D.W. Crossley	J.G. Hurst, J. Cherry	I.G. Robertson	J.H. Ashdown	J.G. Coad
1976	K.J. Barton	A. Carter, D.W. Crossley	I.G. Robertson	J.H. Ashdown	J.G. Coad
1977	K.J. Barton	A. Carter, D.W. Crossley	I.G. Robertson	J.H. Ashdown	J.G. Coad
1978	K.J. Barton	A. Carter, D.W. Crossley	S. Moorhouse	A. Storey	D.W. Crossley
1979	J.H. Ashdown	K.J. Barton, P.C.D. Brears	S. Moorhouse	A. Storey	D.W. Crossley
1980	J.H. Ashdown	K.J. Barton, P.C.D. Brears	S. Moorhouse	A. Storey	D.W. Crossley
1981	J.H. Ashdown	K.J. Barton, P.C.D. Brears	R. Weinstein	P.J. Davey	D.W. Crossley
1982	I. G. Robertson	J. Cherry, J.H. Ashdown	R. Weinstein	P.J. Davey	D.W. Crossley
1983	I. G. Robertson	J. Cherry, J.H. Ashdown	R. Weinstein	P.J. Davey	D.W. Crossley
1984	I. G. Robertson	J. Cherry, J.H. Ashdown	R. Weinstein	P.J. Davey	D.W. Crossley
1985	H. Tait	I. G. Robertson, F. Verhaeghe	R. Weinstein	P.J. Davey	D.W. Crossley
1986	H. Tait	I. G. Robertson, F. Verhaeghe	R. Weinstein	P.J. Davey	D.W. Crossley
1987	H. Tait	I. G. Robertson, F. Verhaeghe	R. Weinstein	P.J. Davey	D.W. Crossley
1988	L.A.S. Butler	H. Tait, F. Verhaeghe	R. Weinstein	P.J. Davey	D.W. Crossley
1989	L.A.S. Butler	H. Tait, F. Verhaeghe	R. Weinstein	P.J. Davey	J.R. Kenyon
1990	L.A.S. Butler	H. Tait, F. Verhaeghe	R. Weinstein	P.J. Davey	J.R. Kenyon
1991	M. Ponsford	H. Tait	D.R.M. Gaimster	P.J. Davey	J.R. Kenyon
1992	M. Ponsford	[vacant]	D.R.M. Gaimster	G. Cole	J.R. Kenyon
1993	M. Ponsford	L.A.S. Butler, H. Weinstein	D.R.M. Gaimster	G. Cole, J. Rutter	J.R. Kenyon
1994	D. Barker	P. Jackson, M. Ponsford	D.R.M. Gaimster	G. Cole	J.R. Kenyon
1995	D. Barker	P. Jackson, M. Ponsford	D.R.M. Gaimster	G. Cole	J.R. Kenyon
1996	D. Barker	P. Jackson, M. Ponsford	D.R.M. Gaimster	R. Newman	J. R. Kenyon
1997	D. Barker	P. Jackson, M. Ponsford	D.R.M. Gaimster	R. Newman	J. R. Kenyon
1998	D. Barker	N. Brannon, J. Horne	D.R.M. Gaimster	R. Newman	W. D. Klemperer
1999	R. Leech	N. Brannon, J. Horne	D.R.M. Gaimster	R. Newman	W. D. Klemperer
2000	R. Leech	N. Brannon, J. Horne	D. Cranstone	B. Dix	W. D. Klemperer
2001	R. Leech	[vacant]	D. Cranstone	B. Dix	W. D. Klemperer
2002	D.R.M. Gaimster	G. Egan	D. Cranstone	B. Dix	W. D. Klemperer
2003	D.R.M. Gaimster	G. Egan	D. Cranstone	B. Dix	W. D. Klemperer, H. Blake
2004	D.R.M. Gaimster	G. Egan	D. Cranstone	D. Caldwell	J. Allan, H. Blake
2005	G. Egan	D.R.M. Gaimster	D. Cranstone	D. Caldwell	J. Allan, H. Blake
2006	G. Egan	D.R.M. Gaimster	A. Horning	D. Caldwell	J. Allan, H. Blake
2007	G. Egan	D.R.M. Gaimster	A. Horning	D. Caldwell	J. Allan, H. Blake
2008	N. Brannon	G. Egan	A. Horning	D. Caldwell	J. Allan, H. Blake
2009	N. Brannon	G. Egan	A. Horning	D. Caldwell	P. Courtney, J. Pearce
2010	N. Brannon	G. Egan	A. Horning	D. Caldwell	P. Courtney, J. Pearce
2011	D. Caldwell	N. Brannon	C. King	E. Dwyer	P. Courtney, J. Pearce
2012	D. Caldwell	N. Brannon	C. King	E. Dwyer	A. Brooks, J. Pearce
2013	D. Caldwell	N. Brannon	C. King	E. Dwyer	A. Brooks, J. Pearce
2014	H. Mytum	D. Caldwell	C. King	E. Dwyer	A. Brooks, J. Pearce
2015	H. Mytum	D. Caldwell	E. Dwyer	K Massheder-Rigby	A. Brooks

## Endnotes

---

- <sup>1</sup> Invitation circular, September 1963, in Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology archives.
- <sup>2</sup> Weekend conference programme, November 1963, in Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology archives.
- <sup>3</sup> Indications of discussions along these lines can be seen in a letter of 5<sup>th</sup> May to Hugh Tait from Henry Hornblower II stating that he and James Deetz had enjoyed the previous conference held at the British Museum in April 1966, and hoping that the broadening to all aspects of the post-medieval period would be achieved.
- <sup>4</sup> Minutes of Council 1<sup>st</sup> May 1966.
- <sup>5</sup> Interestingly the Medieval Pottery Research Group has gradually widened its temporal remit to include post-medieval ceramics, though it has not changed its name.
- <sup>6</sup> Minutes of Council 13<sup>th</sup> December 1966, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1967, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1967.
- <sup>7</sup> Barton 1967, 102.
- <sup>8</sup> Minutes of Council 21<sup>st</sup> January 1967.
- <sup>9</sup> Minutes of Council 19<sup>th</sup> January 1967.
- <sup>10</sup> Minutes of Council 19<sup>th</sup> June 1968.
- <sup>11</sup> Noël Hume 1967.
- <sup>12</sup> Sutermeister 1968.
- <sup>13</sup> Sadly the Society archives contain a limited range of the *Newsletter* or *Newsheet* issues.
- <sup>14</sup> Memorandum on Priorities in Post-Medieval Archaeology, Minutes 4<sup>th</sup> April 1975 presented at February 11<sup>th</sup> 1976 Council meeting.
- <sup>15</sup> Memorandum on Priorities in Post-Medieval Archaeology, presented at 17<sup>th</sup> January 1977 Council meeting.
- <sup>16</sup> Jones 1984; Rahtz 1974.
- <sup>17</sup> The scale, nature and geographical concentrations of this engagement can be assessed by examining the reports in the annual review of fieldwork published in *Post-Medieval Archaeology*.
- <sup>18</sup> Certificate of Incorporation 6<sup>th</sup> February 1980.
- <sup>19</sup> Minutes of Extra-ordinary general meeting Council 28<sup>th</sup> September 1980
- <sup>20</sup> Financial Statements for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> January 1983.
- <sup>21</sup> Minutes of Council 21<sup>st</sup> January 1995.
- <sup>22</sup> Letter to the Secretary, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1995, attaching audited accounts. This was well ahead of the A.G.M. whereas often the Society had found providing such accounts on time a challenge, and on occasion was fined by Companies House for late submission of audited accounts.
- <sup>23</sup> Minutes of Council 20<sup>th</sup> January 1998.
- <sup>24</sup> *Post Medieval Newsheet* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ser. 36, January 1993, though this did not announce the new Newsletter.
- <sup>25</sup> *Post-Medieval Newsletter* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ser. 37, Summer 1993; the numbering continued that of the *Post Medieval Newsheet*.
- <sup>26</sup> Letter from D. Cranstone to the Secretary, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1993.
- <sup>27</sup> Deutsche Gesellschaft für Archäologie des Mittelalters.
- <sup>28</sup> King 2014, 6071-72.
- <sup>29</sup> Hugo Blake points out that postmedieval was adopted by Italians despite being alien to their language, and was adopted in part because of collaboration with British archaeologists and the stimulation promoted by two Society conferences in Italy in 1994. See also Gelichi and Librenti 2007.
- <sup>30</sup> Wesler 1998
- <sup>31</sup> Crossley 1990.
- <sup>32</sup> Gould 1999.
- <sup>33</sup> Reflected in the publications by Tarlow & West 1999 and the period range in Newman et. al. 2001.
- <sup>34</sup> Minutes of Council 29<sup>th</sup> October 1997.
- <sup>35</sup> Redknap 1997.
- <sup>36</sup> Egan and Michael 1999
- <sup>37</sup> Volume 43.1, guest editor W. Moss 2009.
- <sup>38</sup> Volume 45.1, guest editors B. Fortenberry and M. Brown III 2011.
- <sup>39</sup> Courtney 2009.
- <sup>40</sup> *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 40.1.
- <sup>41</sup> The first was delivered by David Gaimster, a long-time servant of the Society and good friend of Geoff Egan, whose untimely death led to the creation of the memorial lecture from 2011 (Gaimster 2012).

<sup>42</sup> Gaimster and Gilchrist 2003.

<sup>43</sup> Barker and Cranstone 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Horning and Palmer 2009.

<sup>45</sup> King and Sayer 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Pope and Lewis-Simpson 2013.

<sup>47</sup> Dixon 2011; King 2011

<sup>48</sup> Minutes of Council 13<sup>th</sup> June 2005.

<sup>49</sup> An indication of its recognised quality can be measured by its category A grading by the European Reference Index for the Humanities, published by the European Science Foundation in 2007.