



Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society

Autumn 2023 newsletter

Welcome to our Autumn 2023 newsletter, enclosed is the programme card for the forthcoming Winter 2023-24 lecture series; this newsletter is intended to give a summary of the activities of the Society during the last six months, and highlight other selected topics of interest to members.

Excursions Summer 2023

We have enjoyed a magnificent range of excursions this summer across the Island from Cornaa and Glen Roy valleys to Colby, the Calf of Man to the Currags and



Sandygate; covering an incredible range of subjects from dragonflies and orchids to mining to Captain Quilliam's Castletown, bronze age swords to Lezayre folklore (left).

A huge thank you from all of us who have benefited over the years from Pat Newton's brilliant arranging of excursions and knowledge. Pat has stepped down as excursion co-ordinator and will be missed.

Ideas Invited for Next Year's Excursions

Is there some corner of our island that you would like to explore and learn more about? Does its natural history, architecture, archaeology, history, or geography intrigue you? Or, perhaps, you know of experts or enthusiasts who might be invited to lead a visit to guide our members through some of their discoveries?

We would be delighted to hear your ideas, and invite you to join us in Seminar Room 1 on the top floor of the Manx Museum for tea, sandwiches and a chat on Saturday 14th October from 1.30pm until 2.30pm, the start of the first lecture of our Winter Programme.

Alternatively, please email any suggestions to us at: secretary@manxantiquarians.com

Winter events

The enclosed programme card contains a full and varied programme of six lectures arranged by our new Hon. Lectures Secretary, Jo Shimmin. As described in the Digital Strategy circulated at the last AGM, the Committee has committed to try to make lectures available on-line as well as in-person; and continues to work to find a practical and affordable way to do this.

Nigel Crowe RBV

With great sadness we must advise members that Nigel passed away on 2nd August 2023; he was working on his many Manx research topics right until the end. A full tribute to Nigel will appear in the next *Isle of Man Studies*.



IoMNHAS Committee

Following the 2023 AGM, Dr Marie Weale joined the Committee as a Research Coordinator. Here in her own words Marie introduces herself:



“I am a Human Osteologist and have spent the last ten years studying human remains from various archaeological time periods and locations. I have also worked on a range of forensic cases and mass disasters. In May of 2023, I was awarded my Ph.D. for my research on vitamin D deficiency across English History. Using a multi-method approach of stable isotope analysis dental histology, and radiography I reconstructed the prevalence of nutritional rickets from the tenth to nineteenth century in England and assessed the decline in maternal health as urbanized living became the norm. In addition to my doctoral research, I have been working with Manx National Heritage since 2016. I have assessed a range of skeletal materials from across the Island and have a particular interest in Rushen Abbey. I grew up in Castletown and used to spend a lot of time there as a child. My work on the site has assessed for the types of diseases present during the thousand years of burials as well as changes in the diet and evidence of trauma. All of this, and a lot more is featured in the Rushen Abbey Monograph that will hopefully be published later this year. I received two Marshall Cubbon Bursaries from the society to help with my research costs and I am really excited to as a Research Coordinator for the Society, to be able to support more researchers to include the Isle of Man within their work.”

Marie also posts on the Society’s new Twitter / ‘X’ account [@IoMNHAS](https://twitter.com/IoMNHAS)

Following Nigel Crowe’s passing, we now have only one Research co-ordinator on IoMNHAS Committee; our Society Rules allows up to four. Any member who feels they might be able to contribute (Natural History especially welcome) is asked to contact the Hon. Secretary secretary@manxantiquarians.com

Round Mounds Cronk Guckley post-excavation

Dr Rachel Crellin, Associate Professor of Archaeology at University of Leicester returned to the Island in June to conduct post-excavation work on the Neolithic and Bronze Age finds recovered from Cronk Guckley during the Round Mounds Project (2017-2022). IoMNHAS members were amongst the local volunteers, many of whom had previously participated on the dig, who were invited to get involved over the two week period with work taking place at the Manx Museum.

Week 1 concentrated on the excavation of three sets of funerary urns which had been block-lifted from the site and kept in storage.



Due to space restrictions, only a small number of volunteers were involved, and work was painstaking due to the fragility and nature of the material. The fine, silty soil which had accumulated within the urns was removed with brushes and wooden tools so as not to damage any of the cremated remains which each urn was found to contain. Due to the care required, some volunteers continued to work on the urns throughout the two week period. The pottery, bone and associated materials were cleaned, photographed throughout each stage of excavation, documented and carefully stored in preparation for further analysis.



During Week 2 work moved to a larger area in the museum, allowing more volunteers to get involved in processing the vast collection of items, particularly flint and pottery, recovered from the site during 2018 and 2019. These were organised, photographed and updated on the project database, providing a catalogue of approximately 8,000 objects before being repackaged and returned to storage. The database will allow experts to identify specific items for future study.

On 1st July, Dr Crellin addressed a busy lecture theatre at the Manx Museum, with many Society members in attendance, where she provided an informative and insightful talk on the Round Mound Project and its ongoing work.

This work includes Dr Crellin returning in January 2024, when volunteers will help to process similar finds from the 2017 and 2022 seasons.

'Favourite of Fortune'

The book on Captain John Quilliam RN HK by Andrew Bond, IoMNHAS's Frank Cowin, and Professor Andrew Lambert (see Autumn 2021 newsletter) has just been released in paperback and should be available for £12.99 in all good Manx bookshops.

Building Conservation and Planning

Our Built and Natural Heritage is under increasing threat. The Society presented evidence to the Tynwald Select Committee on Built Heritage earlier this year – their report is out and is to be debated in Tynwald in November. There are two consultations afoot as well – the 'Preliminary Publicity' phase for a new Strategic Plan; and a set of proposed changes to the Town and Country Planning bill which, amongst others, propose changes to how Registered Buildings are treated. This latter seems possibly precipitate to issue plans and consult on them when Tynwald will not be considering the Select Committee on Built Heritage report until November? IoMNHAS will be making submissions to all these consultations and updates will be sent to members.

Marshall Cubbon Bursaries

Each year, IoMNHAS awards up to two bursaries in memory of Marshall Cubbon to students (undergraduate or postgraduate) who are researching a Manx related topic at a recognised institution of Higher Education. Applications for the 2024 bursary round will open 1st November 2023, details and the application form can be found on www.manxantiquarians.com

Keeping in touch

- If you haven't already done so, you can join our e-mail list used to keep members informed – details & privacy policy: www.manxantiquarians.com/page_72633.html
- Visit our FaceBook page, for information from the Society and selected other items of interest to our members. You don't have to be a member of FaceBook to read our page; but if you are, please "Like" our page to be automatically notified when updates are posted www.facebook.com/IsleOfManNaturalHistoryandAntiquarianSociety/
- Follow us on Twitter / 'X' [@IOMNHAS](https://twitter.com/IOMNHAS)
- Visit our web site www.manxantiquarians.com