

## Post Medieval Wales (1539-1750)

### Introduction

This document is a review and refresh of the Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales' (RFAW) Post Medieval Wales (1539-1750) methodology. It aims to:

- Review relevant research in the last five years since 2009/10
- Identify how that research ties into the research framework
- Suggest amendments to the research questions for this period
- Document where the Research framework has been used
- Update the bibliography with relevant literature

The post-medieval (or early modern) period is represented strongly in Wales' rural landscapes, our urban fabric, our road, waterway and coastal transport networks, our extractive and industrial past, our buildings, farmscapes, stately homes, estates, parks and gardens. These features underpin our modern and later historical material culture, lending it a dangerous superficial familiarity. Indeed, might ask why we need archaeology at all in order to study this recent historic past? Documentary evidence was produced by people with an agenda – to include, and exclude, information to suit their aims and approaches. Archaeology provides a different perspective and studies the relationship between *people and their material environment* (Dalglish and Tarlow, 2012, p. iii).

One of the fundamental challenges facing the post-medieval is what Dr David Gwyn (2011) framed as a lack of *intellectual starting point* exacerbated perhaps by the attitude that this period is somehow less important than the Age of the Princes or the Industrial Period. Austin notes that narratives are driven primarily by historians. They find it difficult to engage with archaeologists that have failed to make a clear contribution (Austin, 2006, p. 194; and see discussion in Bezant and Grant, 2016). Tarlow further observes that practitioners of the post medieval often '*do not contextualise their work beyond questions of local technological and economic development, or the narrow histories of one kind of material ... there is little sense that arguments are being made*' (Tarlow, 2007, p. 5).

Gwyn proposes that the RFAW adopts approaches evident within other frameworks, in particular, that of Scotland, and may like to address wider themes such as: the Atlantic World, emerging consumerism and changes in religious and agricultural practice.

### Past Research Agenda Priorities and Achievements

2004

The first Research Framework for Post Medieval Archaeology presented in 2004 by Dr S Briggs drew on a series of detailed regional seminars that addressed a number of key common subject areas.

Four key areas emerged, and, whilst not exhaustive, offered the most important priorities to promote understanding of a vulnerable and fragile archaeological resource. Each subject was accompanied by recommendations:

- Wales and the Wider World

To contextualise Wales's contribution to global industry, particularly coal and metal mining and metal and slate production, international and collaborative research partnerships were prescribed.

- Transport Corridors

Because rail, roads and waterways are in constant use, it is important that profile raising takes place wherever possible by engaging with local and national authorities, government and local heritage stakeholders

- Public And Worshipping Buildings, Houses And Gardens

Of immense importance and diversity, the potential of vernacular, polite, industrial, religious and agricultural buildings was recognised to be relatively poorly understood. Integrated studies of survey and analysis was prescribed in order to inform processes of change and emphasise the regional and local distinctiveness of land and townscapes.

- Agriculture (Managing Change In The Rural Environment)

Rural farmlands were seen as vital to the visual amenity of the country and more engagement with the farming communities was prescribed but also recommended the involvement of professional archaeologists with all aspects of landscape management by a wide range of statutory bodies, not necessarily primarily concerned with the historic environment.

2007

The 2007 review conducted by Dr S Briggs identified a reduction in professionals with the specialist skills required to carry out the archaeological activities required and a call for more resources was made. Only a properly-staffed workforce would be able to adequately quantify and assess the vast post-medieval resource and promote education amongst political, public and professional audiences. Without adequate resource assessment it was deemed almost impossible to address intellectual questions for the post-medieval period.

Nevertheless, methodological objectives were outlined:

- integration of material or excavated remains with written sources
- establishment of a more reliable frame-work of architectural and landscape styles
- an accelerated dendrochronology programme where appropriate
- investigation of recent sites with the same rigour as is applied to earlier sites
- a firmer basis for artefactual studies

Specific subject areas were again considered – mainly in terms of quantifying and protecting a vulnerable resource threatened by development and ignorance of their existence by planners, authorities and other stakeholder bodies:

- Settlement

More investigation of deserted rural settlements, adequate engagement by local authorities to safeguard the resource and a full survey of all farm buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and all surviving earthworks.

- Villages and Towns

Pre-industrial urban settlement should be sought, sympathetic application of planning decisions that currently favour only the unusual, and proper intervention as part of the Listed Buildings consent process. Communal buildings such as halls, schools, hospitals and other institutional spaces and memorials should be surveyed.

- Land Use and Enclosure

Particularly post-monastic holdings should be mapped using aerial photography and GIS and more thought to be given to dating forms of agricultural practice such as rig and furrow that show regional variation.

- Estates, Parks and Gardens

A need was identified to accelerate the documentation of deer parks, buildings, horticultural and parkland features and current legislation should be effectively policed to maintain them as valuable archaeological resources.

- Religious Sites and Burial Grounds

The work of historian and genealogist is recognised but full architectural survey of monumental features is advocated. Re-use, abandonment and conservation was highlighted as was the need to properly analyse human remains. The work of volunteer groups and the resource presented by the existence of church records could be better utilised, particularly by local authorities.

- Other

Other areas for consideration touched on battlefield sites, particularly Civil War sites; the specific requirements for extensive survey of parklands and gardens, and the need to recognise and identify the value of rural crafts including smithing, potteries, thatching and hedge laying.

2010

A review of this framework by Dr D Gwyn allowed revisions to be presented in 2010 with a paper published in 2011. Gwyn noted that the post-medieval period lacked the 'emotive appeal' of both the Age of the Princes and the Industrial period, standing somewhere uneasily between the two. He states that there is as yet 'no clear intellectual starting point'

to address wider themes in the post-medieval (or Early Modern) such as: the Atlantic World, emerging consumerism and changes in religious and agricultural practice. In order to tackle this he advocated different approaches evident within other frameworks, in particular, that of Scotland.

Gwyn's priority areas remained largely similar to those of preceding framework reviews:

- Chronology

Transition periods should be a focus for study, that is, the 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries

- Settlement:

He recommends the integration of other practitioners such as historians and architects and to seek the support of planning officers. Fairs, markets and other regional vehicles for communication such as postal services, inns, courts merit further study. The Great Rebuilding is a key narrative of this period and recommends more work with dendrochronology that has proved useful in north Wales.

- Land-Use and Enclosure

Landscape needs to be mapped against social and tenurial changes prevalent in this era. Features such as kilns, mills and fishponds are essential to understanding the rural economy and palaeoecological studies should be integrated with historical ones.

- Religious Sites and Burial Grounds

We should retain a focus on Dissolution but seek strategies to dissolve the medieval/-post medieval intellectual boundary. We should work harder to challenge the assumption that all ecclesiastical change is 19<sup>th</sup> century. We should continue to push for DNA studies where appropriate, and seek to understand more about early Protestant nonconformity.

- Military – castles to dwellings and Civil War sites
- New elites:
  - Houses on new sites – new styles
  - Consumer goods – ceramics, pipes, linen, clocks – influence of Ports – Liverpool, Bristol.
  - Anglicisation – social change or population movement?
- Industrial:
  - Continuity with earlier and international context should be studied
  - Coal extraction in 17<sup>th</sup> century – eg, Anglesey vs English influence
  - Mining and quarrying in NE neglected
  - Tanneries, soap and glass neglected
  - Merchant capital
  - Woodland management neglected
- Palaeoenvironmental – neglected rural and urban

Recommended strategy 2011:

1. Approach
  - a. Challenge increasing specialisation in landscape, buildings eg. Also in academia – history.
  - b. Use Welsh language sources – integrate written sources more
  - c. Encourage collaboration – imaginative
  - d. Conference? establish intellectual basis for PM in Wales
2. Development Control:
  - a. Raise awareness of remains still in use – bridges, roads etc
  - b. Urban regeneration opportunity DC and developer funded.
  - c. Some outside/unprotected by planning control – brownfield sites – local lists?
  - d. Building recording – before planning consent to allow for preservation in-situ.

### **Refresh of the RFAW 2016 J Bezant**

#### **Recent Relevant Research in Archaeology of Post Medieval Wales**

[Comments and additions from all most welcome especially if there are perceived omissions which need to be addressed]

Over the review period, very few directly relevant research papers have been published. An updated bibliography has been compiled below using a literature search of *Archaeologia Cambrensis* and *Archaeology in Wales*, including the gazetteer and the ‘recently published papers relating to Wales’ section). The literature search concluded that while much work was being carried out within this period much of it was either a brief record of building surveys and/or watching briefs or projects which were largely multi-period (Comeau 2012 for example). Many excellent works are continuing within vernacular architecture and industrial archaeology but are also, necessarily, multi-period and not directly focussed on the period 1539-1750.

There were very few projects directed exclusively at the 1539-1750 period but might be said to include: The Dyffryn Crawnon project (Bezant and Bailey 2009), the Middleton Hall project (Austin and Thomas 2012) and the first Swansea copper works (Miskell 2010).

A number of thematic research projects also theoretically relate to this period (e.g. RCAHMW Chapels, Slate Industry, Uplands Initiative) but include only relatively slight syntheses of the post-medieval period.

#### **Recent Usage of Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales - Post Medieval Wales**

[Comments and additions from all most welcome especially if there are perceived omissions which need to be addressed]

At present, the only information provided by contributors on usage of the previous post-medieval research framework relate to inclusion within a limited number of project designs. The archaeological research community as a whole might reflect on how best to monitor the usage of the

RFAW over review periods to facilitate our understanding of the extent to which research priorities identified within RFAW are highlighted within project designs, guidance etc.

## Archaeology of Post Medieval Wales (1539-1750) – Research in Context

### Challenges and Issues:

A number of challenges and issues have become more pertinent during this refresh and review period and are summarised below:

#### *Funding and Research*

- Austerity and cuts to heritage budgets
- Brexit and Category 1 funded areas
- Loss of expertise within the sector

#### *Climate change*

- Pressures on uplands as growing season extends; the growing of crops to higher altitude
- Increasing soil/coastal erosion with increased rainfall
- Re-wilding and tensions between conservation and agricultural development

#### *Historic Environment Act 2016:*

- Strengthened the parts of the Act relating to Listed Buildings and SAMs and widening the protection of some battlefield sites
- Created a statutory register of Wales' historic parks and gardens
- Putting the HER on a statutory footing and including a new statutory list of historic Welsh place names

### Recommendations and Discussion

- The Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (Scarf) seeks to address a framework using a dramatically different approach to RFAW. Some of these wider theoretical approaches might be considered for the RFAW and may seek to address the 'intellectual' lacunae identified by Gwyn: we should be finding novel and invigorating ways to represent and investigate this 'problematic' period – and not merely as a response to commercial and development pressures. The SCARF seeks to achieve knowledge with particular reference to the "relationships between people and their material and natural environments". For them, the 'Modern' period relates not only to a period in history but also to "particular relationships and ways of being and living". Scarf offers three 'co-ordinates' inside which individuals can articulate their work: the *humanity* and *materiality* of the modern world and the *relevance* of the modern past. This allowed them to devise eight themes: Reformation, Global Localities, the Modern Person, Nation & State, People & Things, People & Places and People & Landscapes. These types of thematic headings might provide a fruitful way forward for the RFAW.
- We should consider re-attaching this 211 year period to the other post-medieval periods (Industrial and Modern) and considering them as a whole. Post-medieval narratives

concerning capitalism, global trade, industry, reformation, colonialism, improvement and modernity are relevant right into the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A larger Post-medieval to Modern period could be devised with themes and specialisms inherent: built environment/urbanism, reformation and the church, gentry and improvement (parks and gardens), landscape, land use and tenure - here specialists can contribute material inside a 'modern' framework.

- The public strongly identify with the post-medieval, perhaps most of all because it is accessible through historical material such as family records, archival maps and the built environments. The archaeological community should strongly support, and encourage community engagement for continuing innovative projects .

## **Conclusions**

This period is short (211 years) and is closely defined by historical imperatives. That it exists as a definable period at all owes much to great socio-political changes – a transition between the tearing away of the medieval world and the appearance of a radical new scientific, capitalist world along with the genesis of a modern industrial age. These narratives of transition are very poorly represented by the archaeological world and difficult to address within this 211 year period. What fails to enthuse the professional/ academic archaeological world has however proved greatly attractive to the public and communities with a number of significant and successful projects in the recent years. This should be encouraged and facilitated wherever possible.

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