

## Jemma Bezant and Janet Bailey

### Introduction

This document is a review and refresh of the Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales' (RFAW) Early 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 landscapes, lending it a dangerously superficial familiarity. Indeed, one 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). For this historic period then archaeology has the opportunity to really test the relationships between the written and the physical records – what do the histories tell us – are they right?

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 medieval Age of the Princes or the later Industrial period. Austin notes that these narratives are driven primarily by historians who 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).

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Gwyn proposes therefore 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.

This document gives a summary of previous revisions and offers some directions for the future framework which builds on, rather than replaces, previous iterations. The convenor would like to thank the CBA Wales for offering a platform at the AGM for discussion as well as those who contributed at the CIfA Wales Welsh Archaeology Research Framework Conference 2016 conference at Bangor, plus all others who contributed and engaged during the consultation process.

## **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 subjects.

Four central 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 is recognised to be relatively poorly understood. Integrated studies of survey and

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analyses are 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 are vital to the visual amenity of the country and more engagement with the farming communities is prescribed. The fullest involvement of professional archaeologists with all aspects of landscape managers is recommended as well as engagement with a wide range of statutory bodies who may not necessarily be 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 and a call for more resources was made. Only a properly-staffed workforce will be able to adequately quantify and assess the vast post-medieval resource and promote education amongst political, public and professional audiences. Without a full resource assessment it will be 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 framework 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

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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 recorded; more sympathetic treatment during planning decisions that currently favour only the unusual, and stronger 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

Post-monastic holdings in particular should be mapped using aerial photography and GIS and more thought to be given to dating the 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; while current legislation should be effectively policed to maintain them as valuable archaeological resources.

- Religious Sites and Burial Grounds

The work of historians and genealogists are recognised but full architectural survey of monumental features is also vital. 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:

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

- 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

A strong focus on Dissolution should be maintained, whilst acknowledging the artificiality of the medieval/-post medieval intellectual boundary. More understanding of early Protestant nonconformity should be sought. Also important:

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- Military – castles into 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 North East neglected
  - Tanneries, soap and glass industries are neglected
  - Influence of merchant capital
  - Woodland management is neglected
- Palaeoenvironmental is neglected – in both rural and urban contexts

### Recommended strategy 2011:

1. Approach
  - a. Challenge increasing specialisation in landscape, buildings, paleoecology and material culture.
  - b. Use Welsh language sources – integrate all written sources more
  - c. Encourage more imaginative collaboration
  - d. A conference would help establish an intellectual framework
2. Development Control:
  - a. Raise awareness of infrastructure 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*.

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### Refresh of the RFAW 2016 J Bezant

#### Recent Relevant Research

Since 2009/10, few archaeological projects have specifically targeted the period 1539-1750. The literature search concluded that while a lot of development control work was actually being carried out, publication was largely restricted to descriptive building surveys, watching briefs, or had a generally multi-period focus (Comeau 2012 for example). The updated bibliography has been compiled using a literature search of *Archaeologia Cambrensis* and *Archaeology in Wales* (including the Gazetteer and by consulting the useful 'recently published papers relating to Wales' section). A number of key texts have also appeared that have wider, more general, or multi-period themes that have been included here as they touch on this period: mostly relating to vernacular architecture and industrial archaeology.

There were very few projects directed exclusively at the 1539-1750 period but might be said to include: The Dyffryn Crawnon Project (a community landscape and building survey project in the Brecon Beacons; Bezant and Bailey 2009), the Middleton Hall Project (jointly with the National Botanic Gardens of Wales; Austin and Thomas 2012), and the First Swansea Copper Works (early 18<sup>th</sup> century; Miskell 2010).

A number of thematic research projects also relate in part to this period. The North-west Wales Dendrochronology Project has pushed back the chronologies for fully storeyed houses in this region to the first half of the 16th century (Suggett and Dunn, 2014). The archaeology, landscapes and contexts of the Welsh slate industry from the Roman period to the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century period are comprehensively covered by Dr Gwynn (Gwynn, 2015). Other regionally focussed publications emerging from the Royal Commission's Uplands Initiative include only relatively slight treatment of the 1539-1750 period.

At present, the only information provided by contributors on usage of the previous post-medieval research framework relates to scant 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.

## **Amendments to the current research questions:**

### **Challenges and Issues:**

A number of challenges and issues have become increasingly pertinent during the period 2009/10 relating to pressures on funding, loss of expertise through job losses and increasing issues surrounding climate change. Offsetting somewhat the uncertainties around Brexit is the adoption in 2016 of the new Historic Environment Act which seeks to clarify, strengthen and streamline certain areas within the historic environment. These contexts will have impacts on the framework for the period 1539-1750 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
- Soil/coastal erosion with increased rainfall
- Re-wilding debates and tensions between conservation and agricultural development

#### *Historic Environment Act 2016:*

The Act legislates on the historic environment in Wales and is intended to improve protection and management of the historic environment. Cadw are drafting new policy advice and guidance relating to historic environment records, listed buildings, historic parks and gardens and historic character areas in Wales. The key areas that are relevant to the period 1539-1750 are:

- Changes to Scheduled Ancient Monuments which will streamline the consents process but provide extra protections
- Strengthened regulation relating to Listed Buildings including expanding the use of temporary stop notices
- Development of voluntary heritage partnership agreements to streamline long-term historic asset planning.
- and SAMs and widening the protection of some battlefield sites
- Create a register of Wales' historic parks and gardens



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- Putting the HER on a statutory footing and including a new statutory list of historic Welsh place names

The Act will also convene an Advisory Panel for the Welsh Historic Environment that will advise on the implementation of the Act and will provide an annual advisory report to ministers.

### Discussion

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. 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.

We should continue to seek to address the ‘intellectual lacunae’ identified by Gwyn and pursue novel and imaginative ways to represent and investigate this period. Ways to enhance, improve, and fund, descriptive responses to commercial and development pressures should be sought. There is some sympathy for a move to adopt more thematic approaches to the research framework such as have been successfully adopted by the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework. 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.

The trajectories, politics and narratives of Scottish and Welsh archaeology are somewhat divergent however and we should develop our own specific

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themes that are very much about what makes Wales distinctive in this period. This is the period in which the modern political order of Wales is drawn, how does the archaeological record represent that and is it constant or are there regional archaeologies in Wales? Effort to more closely monitor and develop ways in which the practitioners, funding bodies and policy makers engage with the RFAW should be made.

### Update to the research questions: priorities

These are offered as updates and additions to the existing framework portfolio and are not intended to be replacements, or to suggest discarding previous themes or foci.

- Chronologies

There is an enduring division of expertise and interest between those studying the Medieval, Post Medieval and Industrial /Modern Periods. The focus should be shifted instead to encouraging the study of change *across* these artificial boundaries. Anglicisation is a key historical theme and this political disruption certainly fed into an emerging gentry culture and changes in economic practice. Assumptions around this key driver should be tested against landscape, architecture and material culture.

- Buildings

Buildings most often generate an archaeological response due to commercial development. Archaeological surveys of architectural styles, dating, and changes in layout and use should be made at usefully early stages in the development process so that the questions come at the beginning, rather than at the end. Urban settlement on new sites stands in contrast to deeply laden upland and rural farmscapes but they are part of the same post-medieval narrative. Descriptive record should be supplemented with personal histories and material culture which can be assessed to see how much they reflect wider socio-cultural changes in local, regional trade and contact, changing religious practice and accelerating urbanisation and industrialisation. Communities know their locales best and can usefully engage with the wider built environment: mills, tannery sites, canals, club houses, work houses, and the buildings of the polite: the manor, townhouse, court and gaol.

- Settlement and Land-Use

Tenurial changes appear to emerge at this time but it is unclear how much of this is administrative change and how much, if any, effect this had on agricultural practice, rural settlement and rural communities.

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Certainly there is more continuity through the late medieval period, (even through the Dissolution upheavals), than previously thought. The development of a register of place names can tease out physical changes in land use and map those against tenurial change from hereditary tenancies to more modern forms of tenancy and/or freehold for example. Relationships between people and their environments and landscapes can be explored, as can the relationships between the documentary and physical evidence. Palaeoenvironmental evidence is crucial to investigate the rural economy and should be integrated with historical studies. Rural practices around smithing, thatching, liming, kilning and hedging are important.

- Parks and Gardens: the Gentry Estate

Work to develop a statutory register for historic parks and gardens will strengthen this important area. Deer parks, horticulture, parkland and the estate architectural 'brand' should be considered alongside social elevation, ambition and patronage of Welsh lineage, the English 'polite' and the European Arts. Wider social and economic networks can be detected through the importation of exotic goods and building materials. Social agency can be detected through aesthetic aspiration: our great libraries, genealogies and collections were developed alongside landscape emparkment, agricultural 'improvement' (husbandry, water meadows, housing), and exploitation through early extractive industries (woodland, charcoal, slate, coal and lead).

- Religion and Burial

How is the Dissolution represented in the archaeological record beyond the monastic precinct? Countless farmsteads; their lands; upland sheepwalks and common pasture preserve former grange practice as well as changes towards capitalist economies. Was the counter-reformation at all important in Wales (in contrast to Ireland for eg)? And further understanding of early Protestant nonconformity should be sought – can we see a nonconformist household through its building, its material culture, its relationship with the landscape for example? If we can detect individual agency and intent in the historical record – we should specifically seek that agency in the physical one. Religious vernacular and architecture should be assessed in terms of memorialisation, emotion, burial and the changes in use of all spiritual places.