

## INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY / BRITISH MUSEUM MEDIEVAL SEMINAR 2019–20 PROGRAMME

*The Wilson Lecture and all subsequent seminars in the series will commence at 6.15pm. Any changes to the advertised programme will be communicated via email.*

**Wednesday 23rd October 2019 (IoA Lecture Theatre G6)**

**The Sir David Wilson Lecture in Medieval Studies by Prof. Neil Price (University of Uppsala):  
*Engendering the Viking Age***

From September 2017 discussion has continued around the reinterpretation of a Viking-Age chamber grave from the island settlement of Birka in Sweden. In this talk, Professor Price will not primarily focus on the 'female warrior' in burial Bj.581, but instead reflect on the wider state of gender studies relating to the Viking Age, as illuminated by the research team's experiences during the ensuing controversies. Archaeologists and other scholars often claim to seek a pluralistic view of the early medieval past, one that recognises diversity and rejects prejudice; this applies especially to the arena of gender, in its widest sense. But are they, are we, succeeding, in this project for which all must work together? Balancing his innate optimism with something perhaps a little bleaker, this lecture will work through some of Professor Price's current thinking on engendering the Viking Age.

*A joint meeting with the Institute of Historical Research Earlier Middle Ages Seminar, followed by a **launch party for the seminar series in the IoA Staff Common Room.***

**Tuesday 19th November (IoA Room 612)**

**Ole Nordland (UCL): *Viking Age ironmaking in Norway***

The Viking Age is a period where there can be no doubt that large quantities of iron were needed. In Norway, well-established and long-running iron-making traditions lasted from the start of the Iron Age until about AD 600, at which time a complete collapse of iron-making is apparent in the archaeological record. During the Viking Age, a completely different type of iron-making furnace spread throughout the country, coinciding with the unification of the country under king Harald Finehair. This talk will highlight the differences between the iron-making traditions practiced before the Viking Age and during the Viking Age, and explore the relationship between political and technological changes.

**Tuesday 10th December (IoA Room 612)**

**Matilda Holmes (UCL): *Ploughs, pollen and plants: Investigating changes in medieval agricultural practice***

A dramatic increase in the population of England between the Saxon and medieval periods brought with it economic growth, an increase in urban living and widening social hierarchies. This transition required an expansion of cereal cultivation that culminated in the widespread application of open field farming to facilitate the production of enough food to sustain the increasing population. The Feeding Anglo-Saxon England project combines analysis from animal bones, seeds, pollen and isotopes to inform the nature of this transition. Did it come about as a wholesale 'package' of social and agricultural change, or was it a case of piecemeal technological uptake as the local conditions necessitated? As the final year of the project approaches, preliminary results are emerging, as well as a better idea of how the various strands of research will come together. This presentation aims to provide some early data regarding animal husbandry, cereal cultivation, geographical variation in settlement archaeology, agriculture and land use.

**Tuesday 14th January 2020 (IoA Room 612)**

**Dr Adrian Maldonado (National Museum of Scotland): *Norse, Norman or neither? Reframing the 11th-century archaeology of Scotland***

Assigning objects to periods named after groups of people has become standard convention for medieval Britain, problematic even if only meant as a shorthand. However, terms like Viking age and late Saxon have limited use in Scotland between the 10-12th centuries, where there are several regional powers. The kingdom of Alba only covers east central Scotland, but there is no clear 'Alban' style of objects. The effect is that objects are assigned to broad types which refer to external actors: Irish, Hiberno-Norse, late Norse, late Saxon, or early Norman. Anything falling outside these categories is left with the unsatisfying label of 'Celtic', with the effect that the material culture of the 11th century in Scotland is rendered invisible except for imports. New reassessment of material in the National Museum of Scotland from the 9-12th centuries is helping address this apparent gap and helps situate Scotland in its Insular context.

**Tuesday 11th February (IoA Room 209)**

**Dr Hugh Willmott (University of Sheffield): *Excavations at the migration-period cemetery at Scremby: living and dying on the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds***

Recent excavations at Scremby have revealed a hitherto unknown migration period cemetery on the southernmost tip of the Lincolnshire Wolds. Situated in a commanding location overlooking the fenland to the south, and dating to the first half of the 6th century, the cemetery contains an unusually high proportion of highly furnished burials, many showing clear connections with the south coast of England and Continental Europe. This lecture will provide an overview of the preliminary findings from the excavation, as well as outlining what modern scientific approaches such as isotope analysis and Raman spectroscopy can tell us about people living on the edge of the Kingdom of Lindsey and their connections with the wider world.

**Tuesday 10th March (IoA Room 612)**

**Dr Alexandra Makin (Independent researcher, PhD University of Manchester): *Embroidery: the lost art of the Anglo-Saxon world***

Embroidery is little studied as part of early medieval material culture. This paper argues that this fragile form of decoration was not only an integrated part of Anglo-Saxon material culture, but that it was considered art, and the women who made it were treated with the highest regard. My forthcoming book, 'The Lost Art of the Anglo-Saxon World: the sacred and secular power of embroidery', tells this story. This presentation will give an overview of the results and what they tell us about early medieval life in the British Isles and Ireland.

**Wednesday 20th May (IoA Room 612)**

**Dr Gabor Thomas (University of Reading): *Monumental Strategies in Early Medieval Britain: Bridging Perspectives within and beyond Archaeology***

Drawing upon recent advances in the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon elite residences, with a particular focus on 'Great Hall Complexes', this paper will explore how settlement perspectives can complement frameworks of interpretation usually applied to early medieval mortuary studies and architectural history. Such comparisons help to underline the 7th century as a highly innovative phase in the development of elite monumental strategies. *Followed by a summer party in the IoA Staff Common Room.*

#### CONVENORS

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***Sponsored by the World Archaeology Section (IoA) and the British Museum***