

THE CASTLE STUDIES GROUP BULLETIN

NUMBER 45



Editorial

1

Diary Dates

1

CSG Conference

2–3

CSG Notices

4–5

Bedford Siege Book Offer

5

CSG Chair and Secretary

6

Armathwaite Castle Fire

5

Castell Dinas Bran

Excavation

6

Jean Mesqui

7

Castles on Royal Mail

Stamps

7

The Frontispiece of

Huntley Castle

8–11

Ballymoon Castle

Excavations

12

CST updates

13–16

English Civil War

Exhibition

17

Leeds IMC Call for Papers

18

Application for CSG

Small Project Grant

19

As I write, I'm looking out at what was formerly grass, now a just a large patch of brown. Although the plants have struggled in this record-breaking heat, the conditions have nevertheless revealed many new details and previously unrecognised archaeological sites through the appearance of some remarkable parch marks.

In April, Gillian will be stepping down as the CSG Chair/Secretary (see page 6). If you would be interested in taking on the role, or would like further information, please do get in contact.

This bulletin also includes information about next year's conference, which will be held in County Wexford, Ireland. I like many of you, I am very much looking forward to it. The application form will be circulated to CSG members later in the year.

Thank you very much to everyone who has written or suggested items for this bulletin. If you have anything you would like to contribute for the next one, please send it to bulletin@castlestudiesgroup.org.uk. I would particularly love to hear from research students who would like their abstracts on castle-related research to be included in the CSG bulletin (see page 5).

Therron Welstead, CSG Bulletin Editor

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Diary Dates and CSG Online Talks

CSG Conference 2027 County Wexford and Carlow

Thursday 15–Sunday 18 April

(See pages 2-3)

CSG Online Talks

30 September - Katharine Keats-Rohan, " 'For the defence of the realm': the role of Wallingford Castle and town 1067-1646"

28 October - Brian Kerr on Cathcart Castle

25 November - David Mercer, title TBC

As normal, there will be emails sent out to CSG members with links and details prior to each of the talks..

Recordings of previous talks are available on the [CSG YouTube channel](#).

If you have any queries, please email
Membership@castlestudiesgroup.org.uk

Image Above,
Panorama of Wexford town
walls and abbey (featuring in
next year's CSG conference)

©T. Welstead

Castle Studies Group Conference 2027

15–18 April 2027, Whites Hotel Wexford, Ireland

We welcome you to Wexford, the Model County, in the sunny southeast of Ireland (that's really a thing!) The Anglo-Normans first settled this area in 1169 when invited by the 12th King of Leinster, Diarmait Mac Murchada. This started a long history of castle building - you will see many worthy examples if you come on the tour next year! You will be staying at Whites Hotel in Wexford town. Conveniently located near the bus and train station for public transport options (below some detail). Whites is a nice hotel with parking garage if you choose to drive. We will see a variety of sites and buildings.

The final itinerary subject to timings, permissions, and bus access, of course. Here is a notional itinerary to whet your appetite...

*Ballymoon Castle,
Co. Carlow*

©Liz Jones



Thursday afternoon: Town walk around the walls and possible Westgate tower access. Selskar Abbey and some other bits of Wexford, an old Viking town, are interesting.

Friday: South West Wexford: Fethard Castle - Slade Castle - Hook Lighthouse - Clonmines Medieval town - Ballyhack Castle - Coolhull Castle

Saturday: North Wexford and Carlow: Ferns Castle - Ballymoon Castle - Ballyloughan Castle - Clonmore Castle - St. Mullins Ecclesiastical site with Motte

Sunday: Tower Houses of South Wexford: Rathmacknee Castle - Butlerstown Castle - Sigginstown Castle (our home and ten-year renovation project). We will host a place for you to eat your packed lunch, provide some tea/coffee/cake before the bus returns to Rosslare ferry port and then hotel/train/bus station for your departure.

There are oodles of other historical things to see in Wexford and also nearby Waterford if you choose to spend a bit more time in Ireland. In Wexford: Irish National Heritage Park, Johnstown

*Ballyloughan Castle,
Co. Carlow*

©Liz Jones



Sigginstown Castle,
Co Wexford.
Restored by Liz and
Gordon Jones

© Liz Jones

Castle, Gardens and Agricultural Museum, Enniscorthy Castle, 1798 Rebellion Centre, Dunbrody Famine Ship, Dunbrody and Tintern Abbeys, Ballyhack Castle. In Waterford, the Medieval Museum, Reginald's Tower, Viking Experience, Grainneach Castle. Kilkenny is 1.5 hours away, and Wicklow has Glendaloch and other great places. Let us know if you need more info on sites to see!



Travel Information

Dublin Airport: Regular flights from everywhere and straight shot down to Wexford by car, bus or train (2-3 hours) Cork or Shannon airports are about 3+hours away by car. By bus you would have to change in Waterford. Not as easy as Dublin. Public transport from Dublin is available via bus and train. Bus: Every half hour (more or less from Dublin Airport). The bus will take about 3 hours. It is worth waiting for the "X" express bus if you are close to that schedule time as you will avoid a lot of local stops and delays. Bus Eireann route 2-X2 from Zone 13 or Wexford Bus route 740 or 740x from Zone 14 Dublin Airport - Wexford Town. Both buses end in Wexford at Redmond Square near the train station and a few minutes walk to Whites Hotel.

Train: Irish Rail route Dublin Connolly Station - Rosslare Europort. Get off in Wexford town and you will be a few minutes walk to Whites Hotel.

Ferry: Rosslare ferryport with connections to Wales and continental Europe is 15 minutes drive. There are buses and trains to/from the ferryport but the schedule can be infrequent. We recommend Nessa or Oz Taxi which is based in Rosslare (tel: 087 113 1340 or 087 130 3193) and pre-arranging with them to bring you into Wexford town.

Hope to see you in Ireland in 2027!! Liz Jones (lizjones429@earthlink.net) working with the committee of Gillian, Jeremy, Brian Hodkinson and Conleth Manning for this Irish conference.)

Slade Castle Co.
Wexford,

©Andreas F. Borchert

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CSG Conference Student Bursary

Undergraduate and postgraduate students who are writing a dissertation or thesis on a castle-related topic may apply to attend the Conference at half cost. Applications outlining the theme of the dissertation/thesis should be sent by letter/email to the Secretary to arrive no later than 31 January. The successful applicant will be expected to submit a short report to the Secretary secretary@castlestudiesgroup.org.uk.

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Ph.D. and M.Phil. Abstracts

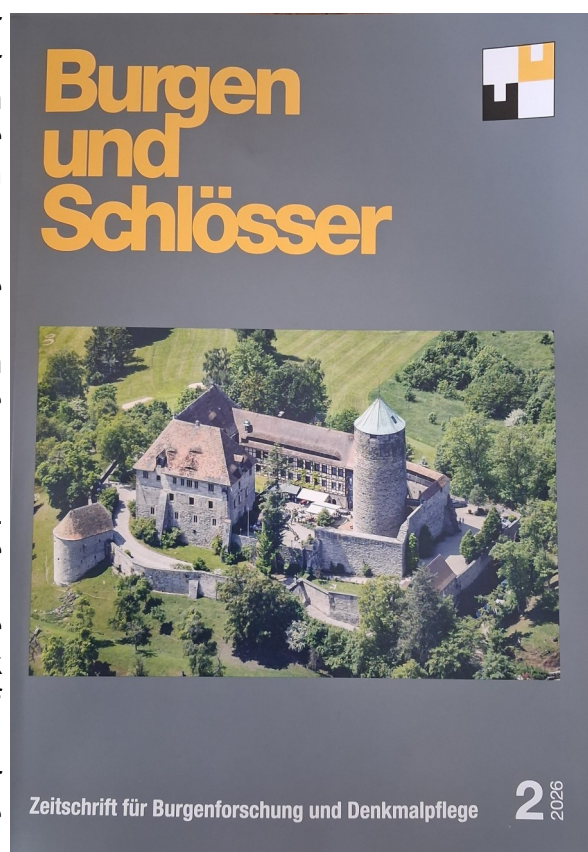
If you are working on a Ph.D. or M.Phil. thesis (or know someone who is) and would like your abstract to be included in a future bulletin for CSG members to read, please send it to bulletin@castlestudiesgroup.org.uk along with the names of your supervisors and the university and/or organisation you are affiliated with. Including your abstract in the CSG bulletin is a means of not only piquing people's interests into your research, but also opening up discussions and providing new ideas and ways of thinking.

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Burgen und Schlösser

Volume 67/1 of *Burgen und Schlösser* (2026) contains articles by Peter Haupt et al on Burg Windeck in Heidesheim, Winifried Freitag on the construction of the ducal Burg in Schwaben based on building accounts, Katarzyna Jancika on Schloss Kurnik/Kornik, Marco Langhard on the burning and reconstruction of the Old Castle in Stuttgart, and Ulirch Klein and Gerhard Wagner on studies of the development of Marburg Schloss.

Burgen und Schlösser vol. 67/2 contains Thomas Steinmetz on the castle of Colmburg (MittelFranken), Benjamin Rudolph on Herrieden castle in the same region, and Marina Beck on the role of location in siting of bishop's castles (Salzburg, Passau, Würzburg). Tobias Bidlingsmaier writes about the architecture of the lower gate to Hohentuebingen castle.



*Front cover of
Burgen und Schlösser
vol. 67/2*

The journal is in German but there are English summaries. Anyone wishing to see any of the above is invited to contact treasurer@castlestudiesgroup.org.uk to arrange copying.

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CSG Small Project Grants

A reminder to CSG members that applications for grants from the CSG Small Project Fund are open until the end of October. The fund for this year will be announced at the CSG AGM in April.

The grants are available for castle-related research and excavations undertaken by CSG members. Members are invited to submit proposals, which will be reviewed by the Funding Committee. Applications will be considered on their merits and any funding will be granted on a one-off basis.

Applications should be sent to the CSG secretary by 31 October for projects in the following year. Decisions will be agreed by 31 January of each year. Successful applicants will be expected to submit a report on completion of the work, which may be published in the CSG Bulletin. The application form can be found at the end of the bulletin.

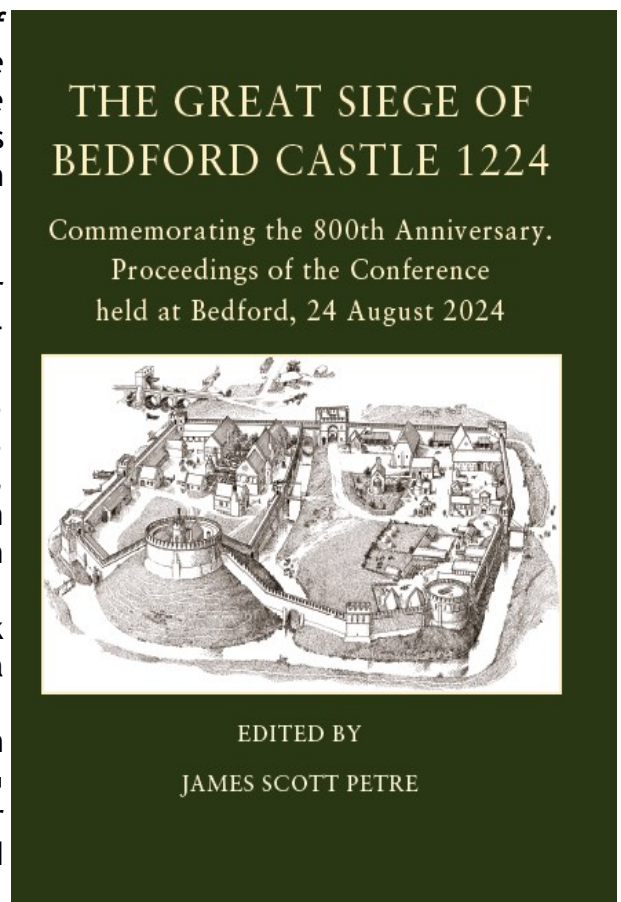
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Great Siege of Bedford Castle Book Offer for CSG Members

Copies of *The Great Siege of Bedford Castle* are now available from James Petre. If you would like to order a copy, please e-mail James on jamespetre@btinternet.com in the first instance.

The book is xvi + 109 pp, 40 colour illustrations, hardback, saddle-stitched on quality glossy paper. Contributors include James, Professors Robert Liddiard (UEA, Norwich), David Carpenter (King's, London), Jeremy Oetgen (Albion Archaeology, Bedford), Peter Purton and Ben Murtagh (both of the CSG). The normal retail price of this book is £30. However, owing to a generous subsidy towards its costs, awarded from The John Kenyon Publication Fund of the CSG, CSG members can purchase copies for £20 inclusive of postage and packing.

Front cover of the book *The Great Siege of Bedford Castle*



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Looking for a new CSG Chair and Secretary

As announced at the AGM earlier this year, Gillian Scott intends to stand down as Chair and Secretary of CSG at next year's AGM in Wexford. It will be a fitting date for a changeover as next year's AGM marks 40 years of CSG. All being well, we will elect our fourth Chair and Secretary to take CSG into its next phase.

We are interested in hearing from anyone who thinks they may wish to volunteer for the role, or from anyone who has a suggestion of someone we may wish to approach in relation to the role. Gillian is happy to speak with anyone about her experiences and the requirements. Please get in touch with any member of the committee if you would like to discuss this further. Email addresses can be found on our website.'

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Major Fire at Armathwaite Castle

On 22 July there was a major fire at Armathwaite Castle, Cumbria. The fire has caused extensive damage to the historic building including the tower house, the oldest part of the site. Over 50 firefighters were involved bringing the blaze under control, which took around 7 hours. Portable pumps took water from the river Eden to help with supply of water. Some crews remained on site for several days to ensure no reignition. There have been no injuries reported. At the time of writing, investigations of how the fire started are being carried out. Historic England said it "will be offering swift advice and support to the local authority, and owner, on next steps as needed".

The site consists of a Tower house dating to probably the mid-fifteenth century with later alterations. There was a large extension added in the late eighteenth century. The site was originally granted to John Skelton in 1444 who carried out the first phase of the castle. The gatehouse gazetteer entry can be found [here](#).

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Castell Dinas Bran Excavation

A two-week excavation took place at Castell Dinas Brân, Denbighshire, during the summer. This was the final season of work funded by Cadw and the Clwydian Range National Landscape, and the dig was undertaken by Heneb.

This season saw the completion of a trench through the bank and ditch of the large outer enclosure—assumed to be Prehistoric—which was first opened in 2025-26. The enclosure proved even more substantial than expected, and produced a surprising cache of medieval finds, in fact more than were recovered from the 13th-century twin-towered gatehouse over the previous two seasons.

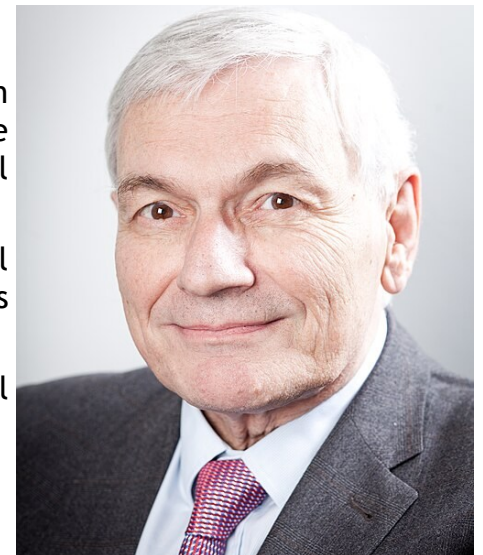
The work this year has confirmed the construction of the rubble rampart, comparable to excavated Iron Age examples in the region. Its outer face was probably robbed out during the building of the medieval castle of the Princes of Powys. The limits of an impressive rock-cut ditch were also defined, with last year's later finds now better interpreted as rubbish associated with the robbing process. Securely stratified samples have been obtained for scientific dating.

Jean Mesqui 1952–2026

As some of you have already heard, Jean Mesqui passed away on 24 July 2026 at the age of 74. He was one of the most influential scholars in French castles and bridges.

I'm sure there will be many members who will miss him as both a friend, but also his generosity with his wide knowledge.

There will be a full obituary in the CSG Journal in a few months' time.



Jean Mesqui in 2013

©Jmsat

CC BY-SA 4.0

Castles on Royal Mail Stamps

Royal Mail 1st class stamps released in May 2026

©Royal Mail



In May 2026, Royal Mail released a special stamp issue featuring photographs of castles from across the UK. The eight First Class stamps feature Bamburgh and Warwick in England, Stirling and Urquhart in Scotland, Raglan and Pembroke in Wales, and Dunluce and Dundrum in Northern Ireland.

In addition, Royal Mail also produced a miniature sheet to complement the main set. These stamps depict four royal castles: Windsor, Dover, Caernarfon and Balmoral. These four were illustrated by British artist Robert Ball.

First Castle high value stamp series, issued in 1955

Image in public domain.

This is far from the first time castles have featured on Royal Mail stamps. In 1955, the Castle High Value series was released. Printed by Bradbury Wilkinson using line engraving, these stamps depicted four of the nation's great castles: Carrickfergus Castle (2s 6d), Caernarfon Castle (5 shillings), Edinburgh Castle (10 shillings), and Windsor Castle (£1). Although later reissued with variations of Queen Elizabeth II's portrait, they remained in use for nearly two decades.



In 1988, the Castle High Value series was reissued. The same castles were chosen, but this time Chris Matthews created the engraved designs based on photographs taken by the then Prince Andrew.

Castles have also featured in other Royal Mail issues, including the 2017 issue focusing on Windsor Castle and the 2025 issue focusing on the Tower of London.

The frontispiece of Huntly Castle: a new interpretation

Penelope Dransart

One of the outstanding features of Huntly Castle in Aberdeenshire is a magnificent panel surmounting the entrance leading from the inner courtyard into the main palace building of the castle (fig. 1). It bears the date 1602. In the seventeenth century the panel was known as the 'frontispiece'. Writing in the 1640s, James Gordon, Parson of Rothiemay, recorded the partial defacement of the panel at what he called 'Straboggy (or Huntlye) castell', calling it the 'frontispiece' (Gordon 1841 [1637-1641]: 211).

Fig. 1. The frontispiece at Huntly Castle, Aberdeenshire.
©Penelope Dransart

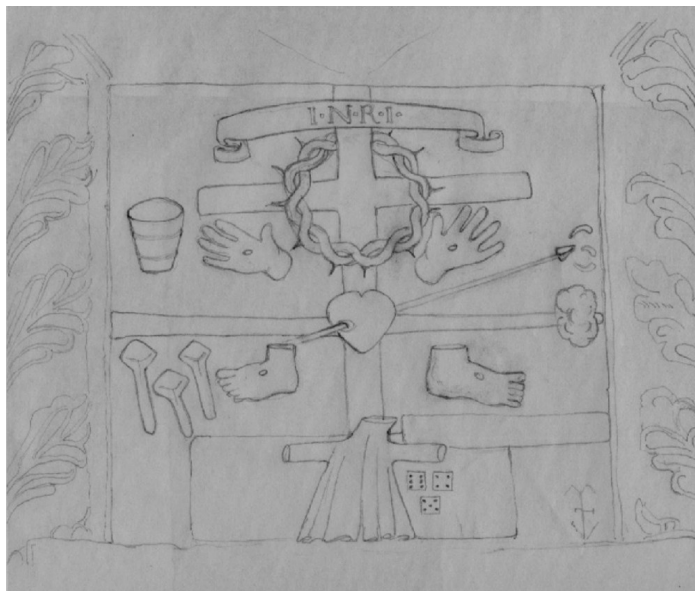
The term 'frontispiece' had been gaining in popularity during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in reference to a form of architectural embellishment relating to an entrance or opening. A frontispiece is a 'pediment crowning the front of a classical building or one constructed above a door, gate, or window; the facade, or part of the facade, of a building esp. when decorated' (Oxford English Dictionary 2026).

At Huntly, the frontispiece frames the door opening into a spiral stair. A visitor to the castle would have already passed other heraldic displays, first through a gateway located between two towers on the avenue leading to the castle and probably again at the now largely missing gatehouse before entering the inner courtyard or 'close'. The frontispiece was different because it combined heraldry with religious imagery. In an act of iconoclasm during the 1640s, when skirmishes took place between the royalist Strathbogie regiment under George Gordon, second marquess of Huntly, and an army of Covenanters, the castle was temporarily occupied by the latter, one of whom chiselled off the religious imagery. Historic Environment Scotland commissioned a study to supply visual references for missing items in the defaced panels, to inform the drawing of the intact panel as it might have looked when newly installed at Huntly Castle. The drawing is included in colour in the forthcoming HES guidebook of Huntly Castle (French and Gall 2026: 14).

Carved on the lintel above the door are 1) the quartered arms of Gordon (for George Gordon, the first marquess of Huntly) 2) a monogram combining George Gordon's and his wife Henrietta Stewart's initials 3) the quartered arms of Lennox (for Henrietta Stewart) and 4) a roundel containing the date 1602. Rising above the lintel, in a successive hierarchy, is an armorial containing the arms of George Gordon and Henrietta Stewart and, immediately above it, the armorial of James VI, King of Scots (from 1603, also James I of England), and his queen, Anna of Denmark-Norway. Supporters bear both shields, a deerhound for Gordon and a wolf for Lennox in the lower armorial and a unicorn for James VI and a lindworm or wyvern for Anna of Denmark-Norway in the upper armorial.



Fig. 2. Sketch drawing by Penelope Dransart showing the reconstructed elements of the *arma Christi* panel in the frontispiece at Huntly Castle



Above these earthly honours a panel contains the imagined arms of Jesus Christ, the so-called *arma Christi* (fig. 2). Despite the damage, certain elements can be discerned but others are more conjectural. At the centre of the composition, the empty cross rises from an open sepulchre. Christ's seamless garment, for which the soldiers cast lots, is presented in front of the sepulchre, and three dice were placed on or near the garment. By the

middle of the fifteenth century, this visual arrangement had been circulating among Rhineland communities. More than a century later, a similar arrangement was used in an engraving, dated 1588, by Johan Sadeler after Maerten de Vos in an engraving dedicated to the Prince Bishop Julius Echter of Würzburg, who actively supported Catholicism in post Reformation Franconia. The engraving shows a shield hanging from the cross displaying the wounds of Christ but, in the Huntly panel, the bleeding hands and feet of Jesus were prominently placed round the lower shaft of the cross at a point where a rod with a sponge at the end was placed horizontally across the mid point of the shaft. A spear pierces the bleeding heart, a motif which had already appeared in *arma Christi* carvings in the chapter house of Elgin Cathedral (between 1482 and 1501). Although the arrangement of the Huntly panel makes reference to *arma Christi* traditions in north-eastern Scotland, it is highly unusual because the empty cross appears to be double barred. A double-barred cross would have been more common in a Danish context, as exemplified by a portrait of Anna of Denmark - Norway, which shows a double barred cross on the Queen's bodice (Thøfner 2020: 401; fig. 3). On the Huntly panel, the crown of thorns was placed at the true crossing of the empty cross, but the iconoclast chiselled that area with particular intensity.



Fig. 3. Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, *Anna of Denmark-Norway*, 1614. Oil on panel. Edinburgh:

Royal Collections, Palace of Holyroodhouse (RCIN 404437).
© Royal Collection Trust.

The panel is surrounded by a frame carved in high relief as though wrapped by leaves. It resembles borders used in wall paintings in the Spitalkirche, Karlstadt am Main, in Lower Franconia, Germany. A motto 'In defens', which belongs to the royal armorial of the kings of Scotland, occupies the lowermost section of the frame. Figures supporting the *arma Christi* panel have been heavily defaced. I suggest that they were forward facing angels, which characterise other *arma Christi* panels in Scotland.

Immediately above the *arma Christi* panel is a heavily damaged inscription. On a sunny day, it is possible to discern the lettering. Starting with a pointing

hand, it reads ABSIT NOBIS GLORIARI NISI IN CRUCE DOMINI NOSTRI JESU CHRISTI (Simpson 1960: 16). This New Testament text is extracted from Galatians:

Mihi autem absit gloriari, nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi: per quem mihi mundus crucifixus est, et ego mundo ('But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world'; Galatians 6, verse 14. Vulgata Clementina Sanctus Hieronymus)

The great disc above this inscription was also subject to much chiselling. W. Douglas Simpson thought it displayed 'the Risen Christ in glory' (1960: 16), perhaps because an inscription at the top of the disc states DIVINA VIRTUTE RESURGO ('I rise again with divine power'). Originally, I agreed with that interpretation (Dransart 2015: 170), but after further examination I suggest that that it contained an allegorical image of the resurrection, namely the pelican in her piety feeding her chicks with blood pecked from her breast. Strictly speaking, the pelican is not one of the instruments of the Passion, but the pelican does appear in many *arma Christi* rolls and manuscripts. The imagery conveys the intensity of devotion to blood piety that had become widespread Western Europe (Newhauser and Russell 2024: 102-103). It is possible that the Gordons of Huntly had an *arma Christi* roll in their possession containing an image similar in tradition to that in fig. 4.



Fig. 4. Unknown illuminator, A Pelican Feeding her Young, c.1270

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Ms. Ludwig XV 3, fol. 17 (detail), 83.MR.173.17.

Photograph in public domain.

Finally, at the top of an ogival arch, Saint Michael Archangel stood with his foot on a vanquished dragon. The iconoclast cut away his face, feet and hands, as well as the dragon but the surviving evidence shows he had a similar posture to that of the Saint Michael carved on an outer corner of the parish church of Linlithgow.

Saint Michael was honoured by the Stewart monarchs of Scotland, who maintained chapels in honour of St Michael at Stirling, Edinburgh and Rothesay castles. The family of George Gordon would also have had a reason for acknowledging the saint. In September 1550, the then earl of Huntly (the fourth earl) was a member of the retinue accompanying Mary of Guise to France. Henri II of France received the delegation in Rouen, where he is said to have kept the solemnity of the Order of St Michael, presumably beginning on the eve of 29 September, during which the earl of Huntly was created one of the Knights of St Michael (Lesly 1578: 484).

The panel must have been commissioned by George Gordon, sixth earl of Huntly, who had a close but tumultuous relationship with James VI. The

religious content of the panels, however, is likely to have been devised late in the 1590s by his uncle, the Jesuit James Gordon. Huntly's wife, Henrietta Stewart, daughter of the late Esmé Stewart, first duke of Lennox, whom Huntly married in 1588 with the approval of James VI, must also have contributed to the heraldic content and she is likely to have overseen the implementation of the rebuilding of the castle's stair tower and its external frontispiece in the years up to 1602, the date recorded on the lintel. George Gordon had briefly gone into exile in 1595. In 1597 he returned to royal favour, after being pressurised into subscribing to the Presbyterian Confession. The king then made George Gordon the first marquess of Huntly. In the same year, George Gordon's uncle James returned from continental Europe to Scotland where, in 1598, he was detained in Edinburgh Castle. In the 1590s, Henrietta Stewart was the chief lady of the queen's household and she is credited with influencing Anna's conversion to Catholicism. Possibly, plans for the frontispiece were conceived in 1598, during James Gordon's detention in Edinburgh and before his final banishment with letters of protection from James VI and from Anna, to her brother, the king of Denmark, which enabled him to travel safely to Germany. The frontispiece serves as a witness to the importance of the religious beliefs held by George Gordon and Henrietta Stewart at a time when severe pressure was being exerted on the couple to commit themselves to Presbyterianism. Drawing on traditions circulating locally as well from the Rhineland, it displays how James Gordon, George Gordon and Henrietta Stewart developed religious imagery in the frontispiece to express religious dissent in an effort to open a space for religious tolerance for Catholic members of the household at Huntly Castle, at the same time as expressing loyalty to the crown.

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Excavations at Ballymoon Castle

In late April and early May, a two-week excavation was undertaken at Ballymoon Castle, County Carlow.

The dig was led by Niall O'Neill in partnership with Carlow County Council. The excavation was funded through the National Monuments Service (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage) via their Archaeological Research Excavation Grants Scheme. It continued a previous excavation in 2024.

Caoilfhionn Ní Stoirí
sieving soil at
Ballymoon Castle

©Carlow County
Council



In this year's excavation, there were two trenches. One examined a building structure, where a foundation trench was identified. The other trench focused on an entrance feature, as well as another feature that extended outwards from the castle. It was found that a bank had been created by deliberately building up material at the entrance of the castle. This bank predated the other feature.

Current thinking is that the Bagenal family, who bought the site in 1585, stopped using the site around forty years later, when they quarried stone from the upper parts of the castle to construct their new manor house.

During the excavation, a large quantity of ironwork was recovered, much of which requires further research to determine its function due to rust corrosion. Other finds at the site include a bell clapper, chisel, and book clasp. Many other finds are still to be fully assessed.

There is hope that wheat or oat grains have survived in the excavated soil, as these could be used for radiocarbon dating, aiding understanding of how and when the site was used.

There remain questions about how the site was used. Previous work at Ballymoon has revealed significant activity in the surroundings of the castle in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The new evidence helps to demonstrate that there was settlement at the site for at least 300 years, up until the early seventeenth century.

Ballymoon is on the 2027 CSG conference itinerary.



Castle Studies Trust increases its maximum Grant to £15,000

The Trust is delighted to announce that for our next round of grants, which will open in September, we will be increasing the maximum grant award by a further £1,000 to £15,000. We have done this in recognition of the continued rising costs faced by archaeologists. If we want to carry on funding interesting and diverse projects, we need to increase the amount we can award. The increase has been possible due to the continued generosity of existing donors as well as the kindness of new ones.

2026 Projects

All our projects are well underway with one, at Sudeley, having finished its work and had its report signed off.

Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire:

Tree-ring dating and recording with 3D imaging the original roofs of Sudeley Castles Outer Courtyard Ranges. The castle site dates to the anarchy but the castle was rebuilt in the fifteenth century by Lord Sudeley. The tree-ring dating has indicated that the roof structures were built around 1570, which questions the long-held belief that the castle was slighted after the Civil War.



Dr Andy Moir taking samples from Sudeley Castle Roof

©Gloucestershire Historic Buildings Research Group

Fyvie, Aberdeenshire: The project aims to create new interpretation drawings to showcase key stages in the architectural development of the castle, which dates to the thirteenth century, and share these as part of outreach and engagement. They have decided on the dates from which they will base the six images and they are 1211, 1398, 1596, 1734, 1794 and 1890. They hope to have the work completed by February 2027. You can learn more about it [here](#).

Cockermouth, Cumbria: Cockermouth Castle is an extensively surviving major multi-phase northern fortress whose evolutionary history has never been subject to systematic or formal assessment. The building survey focused upon developing a detailed understanding of the physical fabric of the castle's inner ward structures. The team have been hard at work with two visits to the site and have already made a series of fascinating discoveries, including stone features dating from around 1200 and an indication that the front part of the inner ward was built over a previous moat. To learn more, read the recent [blog](#) on the work.



Interior of Cockermouth Gatehouse

©Tom Addyman

Durham Castle, County Durham: Investigating the twelfth-century entranceway of Durham Castle. The aim of the project is to utilise digital archaeological techniques to create high-resolution images and models of the twelfth-century archway into Durham Castle's North Range, enabling detailed investigation of the architectural features. Work is progressing well



on the digital scanning of the Puiset archway in Durham Castle. The initial capturing sessions have been successful and the initial data capture has already been completed. The processing of the imagery is currently well underway. Associated contextualising research has continued, examining contemporary high-status entranceways into castles for potential informative parallels and comparisons. The development of the section within the Castle Research Group website is also ongoing, working to expand the access to the research outputs and the created model from the project. You can learn more about the project [here](#).

Ruthin, Denbighshire: Co-funding a structural survey and analysis of the great gatehouse of this formidable thirteenth century baronial castle that was a key part of Edward I's strategy to secure the conquest of Wales. The work was completed in April with the report finished but the analysis has yet to be completed. You can read more about the work in our blog piece [here](#).

Newcastle, Northumberland: To co-fund the publication of the report of the excavations of Newcastle Castle, one of the major royal castles in the North East of England, which took place over 20 years between 1974-95. The funds will be for synthesising all the different excavations, updating specialist reports and preparing relevant reports. We are only part funding £2,000 of the £8,000 asked for, as we lacked the means to fund any more. They have now worked out the key parts of the excavation that need to be published, and where we need to prioritise. These are focusing on the early phasing of the development of the defences and how they relate to the keep in the 12th and 13th centuries. The phasing of the excavations and the dating evidence provided by pottery evidence and historical evidence are the key elements they are using to achieve this. This will then be supported by an assessment of the building by Richard Pears, which seeks to place the development inside the standing structure within the historical context of the site and supported by the evidence from the excavations. This will contextualise the overall site within the development of urban Newcastle. The contribution from the CST will support the illustration and phasing work needed to achieve these aims.

Kilkenny, Leinster, Republic of Ireland: This project proposes the use of geophysical survey to locate and map the lost Flemingstown of Kilkenny Castle - a unique example of a purpose-built Flemish colonial suburb. While some of the outer ward has already been investigated, the one area missing has been around the site of the township's tower. You can learn more about its importance to Irish castle studies [here](#). They have completed the survey and

are currently writing up the final report. They were able to locate the Flemingstown settlement and identify parts of its main street, house plots, and outer defences. Thanks to favourable weather, they were able to carry out magnetometry over a greater area than expected, and also completed more resistance survey grids than planned which has revealed a great deal about the landscape around Kilkenny Castle. Furthermore, they were able to extend the survey into the upper parkland, where they identified a dense concentration of buildings and gardens adjacent to Flemingstown, along with some previously unknown seventeenth- and nineteenth-century designed landscape features.

Ellesmere Motte
survey
©Gary Bick

Ellesmere, Shropshire: Geophysical survey of the large motte and bailey castle in Shropshire which, prior to June 2024, had never been surveyed before when the large motte was surveyed by GPR which revealed possible buildings. The resistivity and magnetometry surveys would confirm that, as well as extend the survey to the rest of the site which played an active part in the Marcher disputes in the reign of Henry III. The slightly delayed survey has just been completed and the preliminary results look exciting with a substantial stone structure discovered in the bailey and revealed some more structures on the motte including a possible well.



2025 projects

Canterbury, Kent: To create an interactive digital model of the castle's keep. The keep is one of the largest surviving from early Norman England dating to the late eleventh/early twelfth century. Now much ruined and inaccessible to visitors due to instability, the project will use the findings of previous archaeological research to create an interactive model. The Visualising Canterbury Castle project is now coming to a close having held the final co-design session with their group of stakeholders in January. The digital reconstruction of the Norman keep is complete and the project team are currently developing assets for public dissemination and curriculum resources. Timelines for this have been slightly delayed to enable better integration of this material with the Canterbury Castle interpretation material also now in development. The project has been signed off so please look out for publicity on it.

Clavering, Essex: To fund an excavation to help understand the development of the site which was occupied for over 600 years, and which could be one of the very few pre-conquest castles in England. The excavation will build on the extensive survey work carried out by the local group on the site. The excavation was carried out in June 2025 and we had a series of blog posts charting the dig's progress, the last of which can be read [here](#). The key to getting dating evidence will be the radio-carbon dating of the bones, expected by February 2027.

Crookston, Glasgow: A community-led geophysical survey, using multiple techniques, through which the Friends of Crookston Castle in conjunction with HES hope to learn more about Glasgow's only castle. While the standing remains are believed to date from the early fifteenth century, it is thought

that the castle dates back to the twelfth century. The report has been published. Not only has the project been an archaeological success revealing a range of archaeological features that include a range of buildings and structures, such as a stone enclosure surrounding the current standing remains and perhaps including a well within the castle keep. There is also possible evidence of another entrance with a gap in the stone enclosure aligning with a square enclosure south-east of the main castle. However, the greater success has been the engagement of the local community as [blog article](#) shows.

Knepp, West Sussex: An excavation building on a geophysical survey to better understand the site's development and its relationship to the local area of this important baronial centre, thought to have been built by the de Braose family. The first documentary evidence is from 1210 when it was under royal control, recording repairs, while the geophysical survey shows activity that pre-dates the extant stone tower. Excavations have been completed and you can see what they discovered [here](#).

Transcription and translation of C17 Dutch Engineer's Survey of English castles and fortifications: A joint project between Dutch academic Dr Esther Raamsdonk, Dr Paul Pattison and English Heritage to transcribe and translate part of an early seventeenth-century manuscript of a Dutch surveyor's examination of castles and forts in England. The sample covers six of what was thought to be 23 castles and fortifications in the document, number SP 9/99 held by the National Archives in Kew. The document is filled with detailed drawings and maps of these fortifications with often lengthy descriptions of their condition. The transcription and translation are now complete, bar a few technical words which Esther and Paul are consulting Dutch fortification experts on. The 23 folios (46 pages) now seem to indicate that there are at least 29 fortifications surveyed rather than the 23 originally thought. The project has now been signed off. The team have also written a very extensive article on the manuscript, including some discussion of Pendennis Castle and St Mawes, and what we have learned from SP9/99 about these sites, which is to be published in Fort. They are working on another article talking about the provenance of SP9/99 and possibly linking it to another manuscript in the British Library which will then be followed by a piece for our blog.

2024 Projects

Lowther Castle, Cumbria: The 2024 project followed on from 2023's excavations funded by the Trust, to see if this earthwork castle and village was an example of early Norman colonisation in the late eleventh century. In the second season, the team carried out excavations to see if there was a ditch and gatehouse, and looked for finds within the interior. The plan now is to combine the information from 2024's excavation which we funded, with the one carried out in 2025 which we did not (which included the village) and thus be able to include all the environmental sample data which has yet to be analysed. This has been further delayed due to the crisis in the university sector which has meant the academic leads have had to divert time to re-writing their curricula to stave off being cut. We hope they will be able to return to the work later in the year.

If you have any questions about any of the projects we have funded this year or the Trust in general, please do not hesitate to contact chair of trustees, Jeremy Cunnington on admin@castlestudiestrust.org.



English Civil War Fortress and Sieges a special exhibition at the Cromwell Museum

Cromwell Museum, Huntingdon

2nd November 2026 to 4th April 2027

The importance of sieges and fortifications during the Civil Wars of 1639-60 is often misunderstood and under-represented in studies of the conflict. But to contemporaries, sieges dominated the fighting. Writing in 1677, the 1st Earl of Orrey, a veteran of the wars, noted that it was fought “more like foxes than lions, and you will have twenty sieges for one battle”. More recently, historian Professor Christopher Duffy described the Civil Wars as “a war of trenches, ramparts, palisades, bombardments and blockades”.

Just why fortresses were so important during the wars will be explored in a new special exhibition at Huntingdon’s Cromwell Museum this autumn.

Run in conjunction with the Fortress Study Group, the exhibition brings together a number of exhibits, many not normally on display, explaining how and why these fortresses were built and how they were besieged.

As well as the exhibition itself, there are other activities taking place during the exhibition including siege-focused wargames and, in March 2027, a symposium dedicated to the study of fortresses and sieges during the English Civil War.

Taking place on Saturday, 20 March 2027 at Huntingdon Town Hall, joining the event’s key-note speaker, Doctor Ismani Pells, will be experts presenting papers covering the latest research into fortifications and sieges. Tickets will go on sale in October 2027.

Further information about the exhibition and symposium will be available in due course at <https://www.cromwellmuseum.org/events>, but in the meantime, you can contact the museum at The Cromwell Museum, Grammar School Walk, Huntingdon, PE29 3LF; Tel: 01480 708008, Email: museum@cromwellmuseum.com.

CASTLE COMMUNITIES: ONTOLOGIES, AFFORDANCES AND TEMPORALITIES IN HISTORY & HERITAGE

Call for Papers – Leeds IMC 2027 5-8 July 2027 – ‘Communities’



Kitchens of Cockermouth Castle (England). © W. Wyeth



Decorated floor tile - PAS FindID 734216. Wiki Commons

What is a castle community, in history and in heritage? What new things can we say about them?

The medieval castle has traditionally been understood as the domain of the elite – yet below the surface lie *communities*: cross-cutting relations of people, animals, things and ideas; multiple and at times contradictory ontologies; performances, traditions, tendencies, affordances, always in processes of becoming. A castle community today can also be defined in heritage terms – a place characterized and understood through the lens of a castle in care or afforded minimal legal protection; a monument locally prized or ignored. How do communities today reckon with castles within existing ontologies, entrapments and temporalities?

This panel welcomes proposals which examine the castle community in a medieval sense, and modern communities in some way defined by castles, drawing upon (among others) medieval studies, architecture, archaeology, history, heritage and medievalism.



Papers of between 15-20 minutes, by researchers at all career stages and scholarly backgrounds, discussing any aspects of castle studies research including but not limited to the following, are welcome:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ◆ Theories of castles communities: contentions, trajectories, legacies | ◆ Individuals in the castle community: patterns, recoveries, commitments |
| ◆ Doubting, troubling and critiquing castle communities | ◆ Connected and dissociated castle communities in history and heritage |
| ◆ Representing and reflecting castle communities | ◆ The castle community of the future |

Please send proposals (a title and abstract of no more than 200 words; short biography of 50 words or fewer), or any questions, to William Wyeth (william.wyeth@english-heritage.org.uk) by Monday 7 September 2026.

This session is organised by Emma Fearon (Independent scholar) and William Wyeth (English Heritage) and is sponsored by English Heritage.

Application for the CSG small projects grant

Please return to: CSG Secretary, (secretary@castlestudiesgroup.org.uk)

1. Name and contact details of applicant (and sponsoring body if appropriate)
2. Present position or occupation, academic qualifications and/or relevant experience of the applicant(s)/directors of the project
3. Short title and summary outline of the research project
4. Planned overall duration of the research project with approximate dates for fieldwork/ research time
5. Estimated total cost, both overall (if a longer project) and for the year of application
6. Specific details of the work for which the grant application is being made to CSG and the sum requested
7. Please name any other sources of funding to which application is being made and the result of this where known
8. Minimum sum from all sources needed to make the project viable
9. Give details of previous grants from any source (including CSG) for this project
10. Publication programme: please state the envisaged method and place of final publication
11. Envisaged destination of research material (eg. excavation records, finds, transcripts, etc.)
12. Are any permits/permissions necessary to pursue this project? If so, give details of these and whether they have been granted.
13. References: Applicants should nominate at least one referee (more if possible) who may be approached by the Committee should any further information be required as to the suitability of the applicant for the proposed work.
Name(s), position(s) and contact(s) of referee(s) - email addresses preferred:
14. If your application is successful, to whom should cheques be made payable and where sent?

Date of application:

Signed: