

Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic Alumni Newsletter



DEPARTMENT OF ANGLO-SAXON, NORSE & CELTIC

9 WEST ROAD, CAMBRIDGE



Dale Kedwards with Ben Guy and Máire Ní Mhaonaigh at the ASNC Summer Garden Party, 2025 — with Richard grazing on the snacks in the background.

I A Message from the Head of Department

Dear All, the sharp-eyed among our readers will have spotted that this Newsletter has skipped a year – following the example of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* – but here we are now, back on track. Since the last letter, we have had two busy and fruitful years, the current one of which seems to have gone on forever... (thanks to that good old moveable feast, Easter Term started late, so it just feels

that way!). Along with another fine crop of freshers, in October 2024 we welcomed Dale Kedwards to ASNC, as Assistant Professor in Old Norse. Dale also was elected a Fellow of King's College. Now that he has seen nearly two whole academic years through with us, I hope he feels right at home; certainly, it is hard to imagine the ASNC corridor now without his friendly grin (see the photograph on the front page, of Dale with Ben and Máire at

the ASNC Summer Garden Party 2025, with Richard grazing on the snacks in the background...). This year we have also welcomed Cameron Wacowich as our new Modern Irish teacher; Cam came to us from Toronto and it has been great to have his genial Canadian style of humour in our midst. Another beginning in October 2025 was Ben Guy's 3-year AHRC project 'Pushing the Boundaries of Early Medieval Wales: An Edition of the Earliest Welsh Charters', a collaboration between ASNC, Cardiff University and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, on which he is to be warmly congratulated. Eleanor Smith (Clare 2014) started as the Research Associate based in ASNC and it's nice to know that Eleanor will be gracing the post-doc office in the corner for three years.

Since the last newsletter we have enjoyed a succession of named lectures – E. C. Quiggin, H. M. Chadwick and Kathleen Hughes. In Michaelmas 2024, Professor Lena Rohrbach came from Basel to give the Quiggin lecture on archival practices, catalogues and the making of Old Norse genres in eighteenth-century Copenhagen, and then in 2025 it was the turn of Dr Aidan Conti, who came from Bergen to bring us stimulating news of 'Readings from Halsnøy: Latin exchanges across the twelfth-century North Sea'. It is worth mentioning that, except for the most recent ones, copies of most of our guest lectures are now available to download freely from the ASNC website, on the publications page.

Lent Term 2025 drew to a close with a Chadwick Lecture, for which it was our very great pleasure to welcome back into the

ASNC fold Professor Fiona Edmonds, who gave a deeply engrossing talk on '927–937: a pivotal decade in its Insular context', which contained something to refresh every part of ASNC. In 2026 Welsh was our subject, with a fine lecture from Professor Barry Lewis (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies) on the flourishing of vernacular literature in the Wales of Llewelyn the Great, followed by a dinner to which we welcomed some special visitors who had come both for Barry's lecture but also for a conference on Geoffrey of Monmouth the next day, namely Paul Russell and Oliver Padel.



The Chadwick Lecture dinner, March 2025, following Professor Fiona Edmonds's lecture.

During the course of the current academic year we took the decision to turn the H. M. Chadwick lecture into the Chadwicks Lecture, thereby recognising the not-inconsiderable contribution to scholarship of Hector Munro's wife and partner in research, Nora K. Chadwick. We look forward very much to welcoming Professor Kathryn Forsyth (University of Glasgow) back to ASNC (for what may well be more or less the 40th anniversary of her matriculation!) to give the first Chadwicks lecture.

Forging on into Easter Term 2025, we heard from Professor David Stifter (Maynooth University), our Kathleen Hughes Lecturer, about linguistic contributions to a model for the celticisation of the Western Archipelago. In 2026 the Hughes lecturer was Dr James Gerrard (Newcastle University) who brought insights from his specialist area to speak on 'Archaeology and Inequality: Christianity, the rejection of *paideia*, and the end of Roman Britain'. From Michaelmas 2026 the Hughes and the Quiggin will begin to alternate in the December slot, since we have begun to feel that Easter Term is pretty crowded with events already.

In February 2025, many of us enjoyed a very well-attended and enjoyable ASNC Society Black-tie Dinner at Newnham College, with an impressive line-up of ex-Presidents on hand to share the mead-horn; the same horn was then lifted by even more ex-Presidents at Christ's in 2026, also an extremely genial occasion (see the ASNC Soc report for some photos).

February 2025 brought a highly successful CCASNC, on the theme of sickness and wellness, with Dr Christina Lee of the University of Nottingham as keynote speaker, and a healthy (joke!) array of papers across the day. For 2026 the committee chose the theme of 'women and the weird' with a keynote from Caroline Larrington.

In May 2025, although the HoD was playing truant over at the International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo, Michigan, everyone else got to enjoy the joyful fare of the annual Peter Clemoes Reading prize, from which two joint winners emerged, Lefi Dafydd (reading Dafydd ap Gwilym's *Yr Wylan*) and Finn

Longman (reading *Feidhm is mó*), with honourable mention for Marko Trandafilovski's historical pronunciation of Latin. Those at Kalamazoo meanwhile had the pleasure of being present to hear the announcement that Rory Naismith's book, *Making Money in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton University Press, 2023), had won the 2025 Otto Gründler Prize: congratulations, Rory! The 2026 Clemoes prize saw three entrants battling it out: Lefi Dafydd again just pipped the others to the post with his performance of *Cad Goddeu* in Medieval Welsh, but the joint runners-up were Rhys Matthews, performing *Marwnad Llywelyn ap Gruffudd* by Gruffudd ap yr Ynad Coch in Medieval Welsh, and Theo Pyy-Sitzia, stirringly treating us to Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* in Old English.

In a break from recent tradition, but a return to old ways from before the new 9 West Road, the annual ASNC Garden Party has for the last two years been held in the Faculty of English social space and the courtyard garden (thanks to decent weather – indeed, this year, the sweltering heat!), with the ASNC staff serving as the wine-waiters. A cheery time was had by all. In 2025 we took the opportunity of being gathered together to offer a warm vote of thanks and farewell-not-farewell to Lauren Lalej, who has quit the ASNC office and moved miles and miles along the corridor to a role in the Degree Committee office. We were sad to be losing her, but delighted to gain her in another capacity. The ASNC Desk of Power is now womanned by Emily Boyd, whom we welcomed in Michaelmas 2025.

Speaking of losing and gaining, we extend our warmest congratulations to Professor Paul Russell, who having retired from ASNC in

2023 last August took up the reins as Margaret Brooks Robinson Professor of Celtic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University – from one Cambridge to another, as full of energy and enthusiasm as ever! Yet more losing and gaining all at once is in sight, as we welcome with hearty congratulations the very new news that Máire has been confirmed to serve a three year stint as the next Director (from October 2026) of the Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies School of Celtic Studies – this is a hugely prestigious role and wonderful for Máire, though of course when the time comes we are all going to miss her hugely and will have on constant repeat the episode of Melvyn Bragg’s *In Our Time* from 10 April 2025, focused on the Battle of Clontarf and featuring both our own Máire and also Professor Alex Woolf, from St Andrews but long-standing friend of ASNC (bbc.co.uk/sounds). Mention of St Andrews reminds me to mention that we sent Brigid Ehrmantraut to join the staff there last autumn, as Associate Lecturer in Latin and History of the British Isles, c. 1100–1500, another step in the ASNC bid to take over the

Universities of the world. Meanwhile, to fill the large gap Máire will leave, we are delighted to have appointed Becky Shercliff (St John’s, 2010) to take Medieval Irish in ASNC into the next era.

So now it only remains to congratulate all our graduand finalists and MPhils, all the PhDs who have submitted their theses this year, and to wish everyone a good summer. With this letter I am drawing to a close the second of my 3-year stints as ASNC HoD, preparing to spend a sabbatical year in 2026–7 hopefully reading books and writing one or two, and so I want to express deep-felt thanks to my wonderful colleagues for their infinite patience with me, and for all they do to make ASNC the best place to be. Next year Richard Dance will be back at the tiller holding things on steady course until he is succeeded by Rory Naismith in 2028.

With warmest wishes,

Rosalind Love

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

II Departmental News and Research

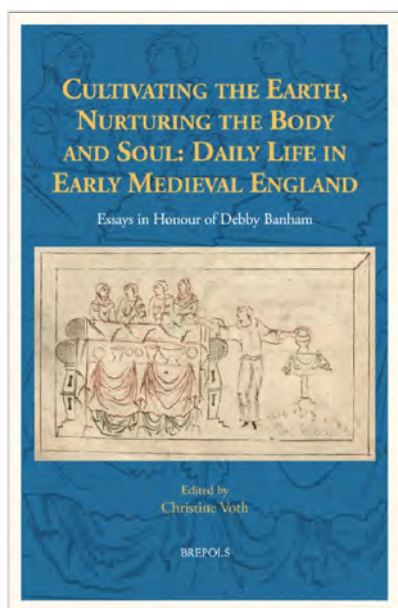
A Festschrift for Dr Debby Banham

WITH THANKS TO PROF. RICHARD DANCE

Cultivating the Earth, Nurturing the Body and Soul: Daily Life in Early Medieval England – Essays in Honour of Debby Banham, edited by Christine Voth, was published last year in tribute to the remarkable contributions and innovative scholarship of ASNC’s own Dr Debby Banham. As well as the honorand, the

‘Taking as their starting point the broad research interests of the volume’s honorand, contributors here offer new insights into the reproduction and ritual use of vernacular charms, examine the collation and translation of medieval medicine, elucidate monastic economies and production, and uncover the circumstances behind the production and transmission of medical manuscripts in early medieval England... the chapters in this volume not only offer a fitting tribute to Banham’s own groundbreaking work,

but also shed new light on what it means to nourish both body and soul in early medieval England.'



Brepols, edited by Christine Voth.

The volume was launched at Newnham College on Friday 11 July 2025, in the Pavilion Room. Further details of the book are on the [publisher's page](#).



The launch of the Festschrift at Newnham College, 11 July 2025.

Curious Cures, and Decoding Early English

The University Library's major exhibition *Curious Cures: Medicine in the Medieval World* (lib.cam.ac.uk; project page [here](#)) has attracted a great deal of press and other publicity; ASNC alumna Dr Sarah Gilbert is one of the project cataloguers. On 19 June 2025 the UL ran one of its 'Library Lates' events for the general public, and as part of this Richard Dance was asked to create a series of word games under the banner 'Decoding Early English', where participants got to learn a little bit of Old and Middle English while trying to figure out the meanings of some weird and extraordinary medical texts. Many thanks to ASNCs Kit Treadwell and Alexia Kirov for being there on the night to help run the event and field questions from the public.

The Kemble Lecture, Trinity College Dublin

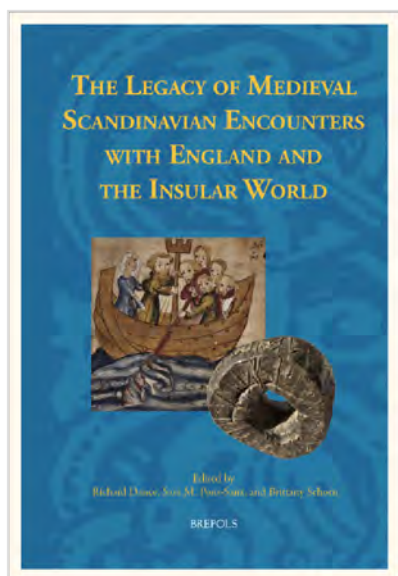
Richard Dance was invited to give the Kemble Lecture at Trinity College, Dublin, on 13 November 2025, a hybrid event in person and on Zoom. His title was 'Myths and Monsters: *Beowulf* and the Etymologists'.

The Legacy of Medieval Scandinavian Encounters with England and the Insular World

STUDIES IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES 34 · BREPOLS, 2025

Also out during the 2024–5 academic year was this volume, co-edited by Richard Dance with Sara M. Pons-Sanz (Cardiff) and Brittany Schorn: a companion to the study of Anglo-Scandinavian language contact, with thirteen

new essays on linguistic, historical and literary subjects. It contains contributions from a good number of ASNCs past and present – Lesley Abrams, Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, David Parsons, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, Brittany Schorn and Sara Pons-Sanz. Details are on the [publisher's page](#).



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‘Is a River Alive?’

MÁIRE NÍ MHAONAIGH

The question posed by Robert Macfarlane in his recent book of the same title (*Is a River Alive?*, Penguin Books 2025) can be asked of the rivers of medieval Ireland, whose origin-stories form part of a corpus of landscape literature, *Dindshenchas Éirenn*, the History of Ireland’s Notable Places. As readers of the Alumni Newsletter in previous years know, these rich and varied narratives are the focus of a research project in the Department funded by the Leverhulme Trust: ‘Mapping the Medieval Mind: Ireland’s Literary Landscapes in a Global Space’. As the research enters its final year, Prof. Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, who leads the work, and her colleague, postdoctoral researcher Dr David McCay, continue to study the history of the natural features of early Ireland, including its vibrant rivers.



The River Boyne. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

Pre-eminent among these is the River Boyne (*Boand*), named after a woman Boand whose name can be etymologised as ‘white cow’ (*bó and find*). Despite being explicitly prohibited from doing so, she approached a well in the Otherworld associated with her husband,

only to be submerged by waves gushing from it which disfigured her. As a result, she rushed towards the sea so that no-one might see her mutilated form. And every which way she went, water followed her, forming the course of the river which then bore her name after she drowned in it: *Boand*, the River Boyne. So — is a river alive?

DIAS School of Celtic Studies Summer School (July 2025)

Máire probed the question ‘Is a River Alive?’ in one of two lectures she gave as a guest lecturer at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies Summer School in July 2025. The second was on the theme of emotion in medieval Irish literature; both drew on research currently being undertaken as part of the Leverhulme-funded Cambridge *Dindshenchas* project.

The Summer School was attended by a number of undergraduates and postgraduates from the Department, who experienced the hottest days in Ireland for 150 years while enjoying Old, Middle and Early Modern Irish, as well as Middle Welsh. They were joined by past members of the Department studying at other universities in Britain, Ireland and the United States, and by former ASNCs currently working at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, Dr Nina Cnockaert-Guillou and Prof. Barry Lewis.

Medical Words / Medical Worlds

ASNC colleagues Dr Sharon Arbuthnot and Prof. Máire Ní Mhaonaigh continued their research as part of the Chronology of the Medieval Irish Lexicon project, funded by the

Arts and Humanities Research Council. With the assistance of departmental colleague Dr Ben Guy, and in collaboration with a Research Ireland project on medieval medicine based at Maynooth University and led by Prof. Deborah Hayden, who completed her PhD in the Department, they organised a workshop, 'Medical Words/Medical Worlds: Medical Language and its Contexts in the Medieval Latin West' (5–6 June 2025, Fitzwilliam College). Medieval medical terminology in Old English, French, Italian, Irish, Welsh, Latin and Old Norse was probed and investigated with surgical precision. Attendees were also treated to a wonderful tour of the Curious Cures exhibition in the University Library.



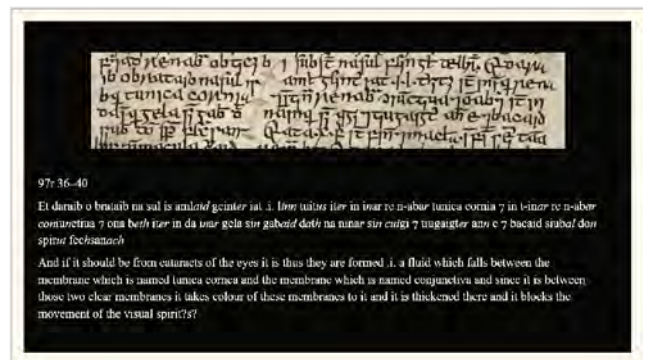
Nina Cnockaert-Guillou and Barry Lewis with the ASNC contingent at the DIAS Summer School, July 2025.

A Year of Modern Irish

ALICE TAYLOR-GRIFFITHS, MODERN IRISH
2024–25

2025 was another wonderful year of Modern Irish in the Department, with lots of interest and enthusiasm from students and members of staff from all areas of the University – linguistics, French, medicine, astronomy and film, to name a few (and, of course, ASNC!) – and from all over the world: Poland, Canada,

China, Italy and America, among others. Students enjoyed reading texts, learning grammar, and gaining confidence speaking with others at the weekly conversation group at the Granta. Six students are off to language courses in the Gaeltacht this summer, and one student is about to begin his PhD on Ulster dialects: this research will be an exciting contribution to an understudied area of the Irish language, and we look forward to hearing his reports.



Description of cataracts from Dublin, King's Inns Manuscript 15 (16th-century, Irish), from 'Irish Scripts on Screen' (www.isos.dias.ie), with gratitude to Dr Siobhán Barrett, Maynooth University, for permission to use her slide.

A series of excellent events was organised by Cambridge Group for Irish Studies secretary Sarah Upton, who is herself a fluent Irish speaker, including talks by Professor Riona Ní Fhrighil and Dr Róisín Kennedy. In conjunction with St John's College and writer in residence Vona Groarke, there were talks from award-winning novelist Eimear McBride and award-winning poet Sinéad Morrissey, and at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research a seminar by activist Jake Mac Siacais. These events are always very popular, and a wonderful way for both members of the University and members of the public to maintain and promote links to the Irish language.

Irish Day at the Irish Cultural Centre, Hammersmith

An entertaining and thought-provoking day was had by all at the annual Irish Language Day hosted by the Irish Cultural Centre in Hammersmith, London, on 24 May 2025. A contingent of Modern Irish students from Cambridge, tutored by Dr Alice Taylor-Griffiths, joined students from the Centre and from the University of Liverpool for a day of talks and discussion; the day was organised by Dr Eoghan Ahern of the Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool, whose doctoral work on Bede was completed in the Department.

The students gave readings in Irish, including Cambridge Modern Irish student Cillian Doherty and ASNC's Pau Blanco Rios. Cillian read the poem *Fill Arís* by Seán Ó Riordáin

and Pau read a passage from a Modern Irish translation of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. Both received many compliments! Fascinating talks were given by Irish language activist Darach Ó Séaghdha, lexicologist Gearóid Ó Cleircín, and ASNC's Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Sharon Arbuthnot, who discussed the development of a range of words from medieval to modern Irish. Thank you to the University of Liverpool for organising and the Irish Cultural Centre in Hammersmith for hosting – *chífidimid an bhliain seo chugainn sibh!*



To mark the occasion, the Royal Irish Academy – publisher of Arbuthnot and Ní Mhaonaigh's earlier work with Greg Toner, *A History of Ireland in 100 Words* – offered 20% off the volume with the code **HAMMERSMITH** at shop.ria.ie. Still valid.

III Publications by ASNCs

Professor Rory Naismith

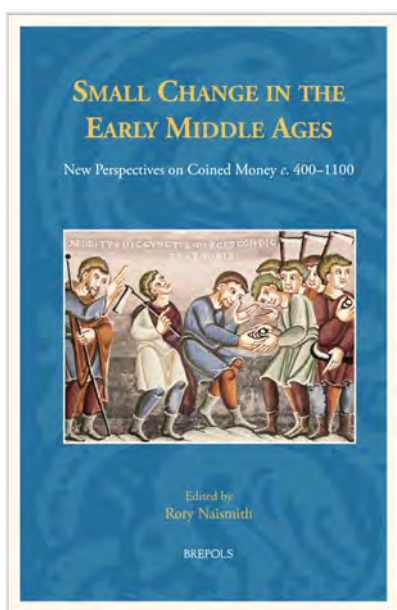
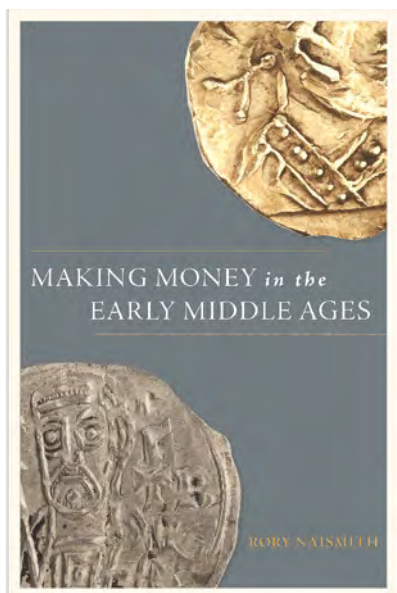
THREE RECENT BOOKS

Making Money in the Early Middle Ages

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2023

Between the end of the Roman Empire in the fifth century and the economic transformations of the twelfth, coined money in western Europe was scarce and high in value, difficult for the majority of the population to make use of. And yet, as this book shows, coined money was made and used throughout early medieval Europe. It was a powerful tool for articulating people's place in economic and social structures and an important gauge for levels

of economic complexity. Working from the premise that using coined money carried special significance when there was less of it around, the book uses detailed case studies from the Mediterranean and northern Europe to propose a new reading of early medieval money as a point of contact between economic, social, and institutional history. In 2025 it was awarded the Otto Gründler Book Prize of the Medieval Institute at the University of Western Michigan.



Small Change in the Early Middle Ages: New Perspectives on Coined Money c. 400–1100

BREPOLS, 2025

Coined money is a familiar part of day-to-day life, and has been for millennia in many societies. In the early Middle Ages, however, it worked rather differently. People across the former Roman Empire and beyond continued to think in terms of monetary units of account, but the supply and use of actual coin became highly uneven. Access to low-value coinage, small change, was particularly attenuated in western Europe, where gold and

silver pieces predominated. This volume explores how people and societies dealt with changes to monetary systems, from those who struggled with regimes that used only high-value coins to the elites who tended to benefit from those same conditions. The ten contributions consider diverse geographical areas from Byzantine Egypt to Italy, Francia and Britain, identifying parallels and divergences among them, and draw on cutting-edge archaeological and historical research to give a panorama of the latest thinking on early medieval money and coinage.

Offa, King of the Mercians

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2026



Offa ruled the Mercian heartland of the west midlands from 757 to 796. But while Alfred the Great and his dynasty are seen as agents of a new beginning that resulted in a unified Anglo-Saxon kingdom, Offa is best remembered as the builder of a great dyke and as a symbol of an older, divided order. In this major new biography, that view is challenged. The book reveals how Offa cemented Mercia's position as the dominant force in the

southern part of Britain, strengthened the internal cohesion of his domains, and laid the basis for a new model of kingship. Drawing on a wide range of sources, including charters, coins and chronicles, it reveals Offa as a king who was ambitious and successful, and who carefully constructed his image and that of the royal family. Far from just one in a sequence of overlords, Offa had a lasting impact on how kingship was practised and conceived across England.

Dr Rebecca Shercliff

ST JOHN'S 2010 · ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF
CELTIC FROM 1 SEPTEMBER 2026

The Department is delighted that Dr Becky Shercliff will be joining us as Assistant Professor of Celtic on 1 September 2026. Her appointment follows on from the election of Professor Máire Ní Mhaonaigh as the next Director of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies School of Celtic Studies from October 2026, an extremely prestigious three-year role. Becky is currently Departmental Lecturer in Medieval Irish at the Faculty of Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics at Oxford, but is of course no stranger to Cambridge, having been a JRF at St John's from 2019, after completing her PhD in ASNC. Her research interests range across both medieval Irish and Welsh literature, from labours at the coal-face of textual editing to thinking in new ways about gender, emotion and speech in medieval literature. We look forward very much to welcoming her back into the ASNC fold.

Becky's dedication to accessible teaching is abundantly on show in her brand-new textbook, already being taken up world-wide.



The contingent of ASNaCs who turned out for the book launch at the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

Old Irish: A Beginner's Guide

ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY, 2025 · ISBN 978-
1-80205-029-5 · €25



Medieval Ireland offers an unusually rich and varied corpus of literature, including saga, law, religion, pseudo-history and poetry. It was one of the earliest cultures in medieval Europe to produce extensive literature in its own vernacular, and yet this material is little known or studied. Old Irish (while challenging) is not in fact impossible for those who are new to language learning: this book is consciously and deliberately written with the absolute beginner in mind, including those who have no prior grammatical

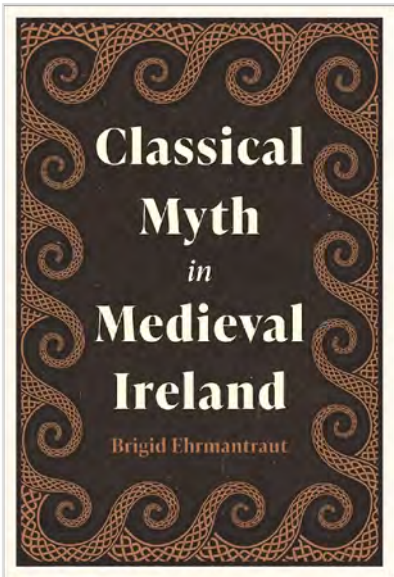
training. Details are on the [Royal Irish Academy shop](#).

Dr Brigid Ehrmantraut

RESEARCH FELLOW IN ASNC, ST JOHN'S COLLEGE



Brigid has been appointed Associate Lecturer in Latin and History of the British Isles, 1100–1500, in the School of History at the University of St Andrews, starting in September. Warmest congratulations from all of us in ASNC.



Boydell & Brewer, September 2025.

Her monograph, *Classical Myth in Medieval Ireland*, was published by [Boydell and Brewer](#)

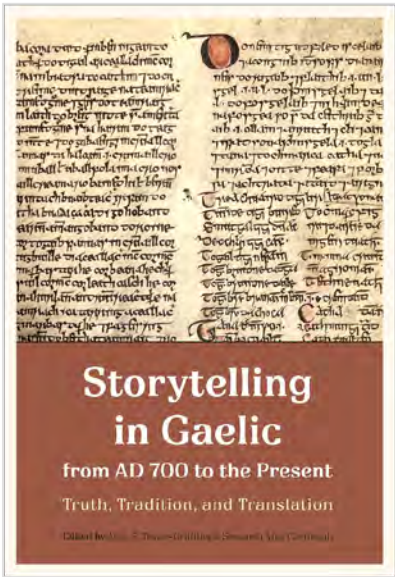
on 9 September, and a trade book, *Celtic Magic: A Practitioner's Guide*, follows from Thames and Hudson in early 2026.

Alice R. Taylor-Griffiths

TEACHING ASSOCIATE IN MODERN IRISH, ASNC

Storytelling in Gaelic from AD 700 to the Present: Truth, Tradition, and Translation

STUDIES IN CELTIC HISTORY 47 · BOYDELL PRESS, JULY 2025



Edited by Alice with Seosamh Mac Cárthaigh (Trinity College Dublin), this volume examines common themes and connections in Gaelic storytelling from the Middle Ages to the present day. From the great medieval saga *Táin Bó Cúailnge* to cautionary folk tales in contemporary Gaeltacht areas, storytelling has remained a cornerstone of Gaelic culture for over a thousand years; yet scholarship that crosses both medieval and modern fields is a rarity, leaving a question mark over what of the early tradition remains in the modern. The essays gathered here address composition, style, narrative technique, audience and the importance of physical and social landscapes, drawing on philological,

narratological, comparative, folkloristic and translation-studies methods. Among the contributors is another ASNC, Rebecca Shercliff, on the evolution and expansion of *Tochmarc Ferbe*. Details on the [publisher's page](#).

Dr Debby Banham

Medical Writings from Early Medieval England, Volume II: Bald's Leechbook and Leechbook III

DUMBARTON OAKS MEDIEVAL LIBRARY ·
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2026

Edited and translated by Debby Banham and Christine Voth, the second volume of *Medical Writings from Early Medieval England* brings together Bald's *Leechbook* and *Leechbook III* for the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, published by Harvard University Press in Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, and due out in 2026 – 'we hope!'

IV The ASNaC Society: 2025 Year in Review

2024-25 · WITH THANKS TO THE ASNAC SOCIETY COMMITTEE

Black Tie Dinner

The society held a wonderful Black Tie Dinner in Newnham College this February. We are as ever thankful to the past Vice-Presidents Sam and Izzy and volunteers (especially Lizzy Kesterton) for organising the event, the alumni whose generous contributions made it possible, and all those who attended on the night. We were so glad to see all the members of the department and friends of the society gather and enjoy an evening of good company. The turnout was spectacular, the food (and mead!) was delightful, and we hope to see just as many ASNCs and friends return next year!

Ely Trip

A day trip to Ely Cathedral was also organised during Michaelmas, serving as an educational

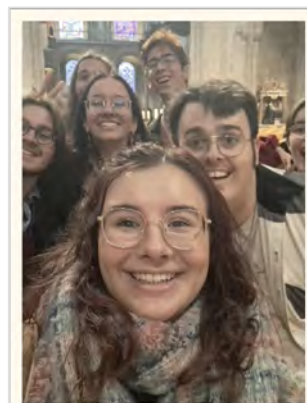
and enriching break from study for the society. We enjoyed the beautiful cathedral, were enlightened by the superb Stained Glass Museum, and (gladly) endured an unending barrage of eel-themed puns.

Regular Activities

The society continued to organise a great deal of activities for student members this year, ranging from pubs to picnics to barbeques. 'Welfare Wednesday' remains a weekly joy, bringing the society together to paint Christmas baubles, make mug cakes and 'Bede-ed bracelets', and participate in scholarly discussion on Wyrms. We look forward to another year of fun socials!



The ASNaC Society Black Tie Dinner, Newnham College, February 2025.



Ely Cathedral and the Stained Glass Museum, Michaelmas 2024.



Pubs, picnics and barbeques: regular ASNaC Society life.

V The ASNaC Society: 2026 Year in Review

2025-26 · WITH THANKS TO EJ HULANCE, ASNC SOCIETY OUTREACH OFFICER

Black Tie Dinner 2026

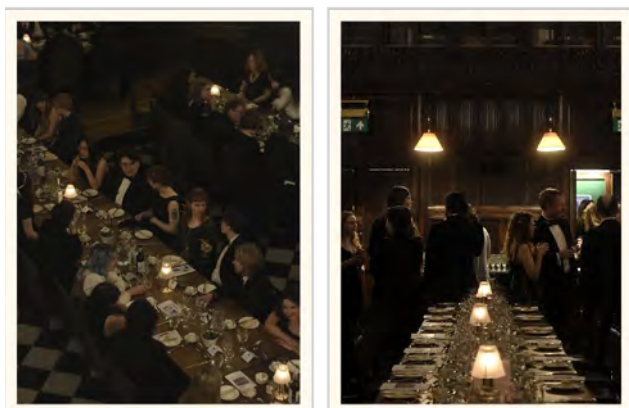
This year, the annual ASNC Black Tie Dinner took place at the beautiful Christ's College. The evening was fantastic as past and present ASNaCs joined together for delicious food, excellent mead and great conversation (truly, the atmosphere in that hall must have been felt across the city!). The night was organised by our wonderful 2025-26 Vice President, Brittany, and of course it could not have been possible without

the kindness and generosity from some of our amazing alumni!

ASNC Theatricalities

After sadly not being able to hold one last year, in December 2025 we resumed the ASNC tradition of our annual Yule Play to great cheer! The production this year involved a thrilling four-part adventure titled the 'Navigatio Sancti Bunfi', a sketch based on

the *Voyage of St Brendan* and all its absurdities. Other sketches included 'ASNC Take Me Out' and 'Real Holy Monk' (a St Cuthbert Pink Pony Club parody). It was such a joy to see the Yule Play back with all its usual chaos and laughter!



The ASNC Black Tie Dinner at Christ's College, 2026.



The Yule Play, December 2025.

We also celebrated St Rumwold's Day in the traditional ASNC manner (dressing up and sword fighting on Castle Mound — both essential skills for our studies). Costumes this year included a Breton dragon, Bede, both the

bloodied and bejewelled crosses from *The Dream of the Rood* and a gaggle of monks.



St Rumwold's Day on Castle Mound.

ASNC Days, ASNC Nights...

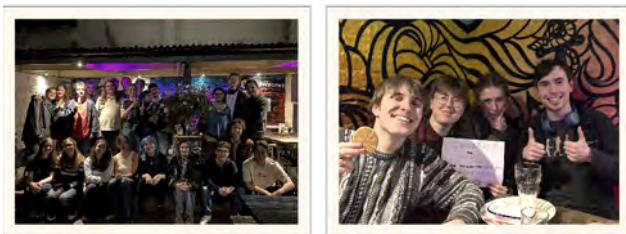
The weekly 'Welfare Wednesdays' have been a great success over the last few terms. Such activities have included (re)discovering the mysterious collection of board games found on a bottom shelf in the Common Room as well as rock painting and Welsh-caking for St Piran's and St David's Days. Last year, we also held an ASNC bake sale to raise extra money for Black Tie Dinner, selling an assortment of goods including muffins, biscuits and Welsh cakes (it can't be an ASNC event without Welsh cakes). The sale was so successful we are looking to make it a tradition in the coming terms!

ASNC pub has of course continued to prosper weekly on Fridays, making its rounds across the city and making sure ASNaCs are known north, south, east and west! Last term we had our inaugural ASNC pub quiz, which we plan to continue with this term, wherein ASNaCs were split into teams based on the 'ASNC Heptarchy' (imagine your classic

heptarchy system with some Celtic and Scandinavian representation sprinkled in...).



The bake sale in aid of the Black Tie Dinner.



ASNC pub, and the inaugural pub quiz.

President's Lecture Revival!

Back in March, the society brought back the President's Lecture, welcoming Dr Thomas Phillips, Research Associate for the BENEDICAMUS project here at the University of Cambridge. His lecture was titled 'Between

Tradition and Reform: Music and Liturgy in Medieval England', and explored Thomas's work on liturgical manuscripts with choral notation in post-Conquest England and the integration of continental customs and reforms into a pre-existing English culture of melodic composition. The lecture was both enlightening and entertaining, and we proceeded to a lovely dinner at La Margherita to finish the evening!



The President's Lecture, and the dinner at La Margherita afterwards.

THE COMMITTEE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 2025-26

PRESIDENTS	Jakob Heathcote, Ellen Jones, Ed Storrs
VICE-PRESIDENT	Brittany Nebiolini
TREASURER	Lefi Dafydd
SECRETARY	Harry Davies
ACCESS AND WELFARE	Ellie Bowden and Daisy Lean
OUTREACH	Frankie Deehan
SOCIAL SECRETARIES	Gwen Brazier and Phoebe Clayton
GESTA EDITORS	EJ Hulance and Theo Pyy-Sitzia
BAMOGLE	Rhiannon Warren

With thanks to the whole committee for another year of trips, visits, events, the ‘scurrilous’ Gesta Asnacorum and the weekly ASNC lunch.

VI ASNC Rock

Even as Michaelmas Term 2025 was barely begun, some members of the ASNC staff, still bursting with energy, donned their dancing shoes (or should I say ear-defenders?!!) to go and support our then recent export to the world of show-biz, András Droppa (Robinson, 2021), when his Painted Ladies country-wide tour came to the 66 Bar on East Road. After that gig, András went on to a pretty impressive tour and is still, as far as I know, strumming away out there now.

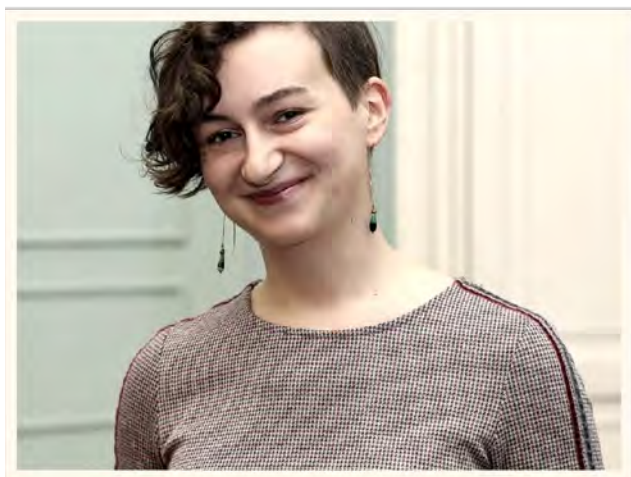


Ali and András, and yours truly and the star, at the 66 Bar on East Road.

VII Alumni News

Dr Nina Cnockaert-Guillou

O'DONOVAN SCHOLAR, SCHOOL OF
CELTIC STUDIES, DUBLIN INSTITUTE FOR
ADVANCED STUDIES



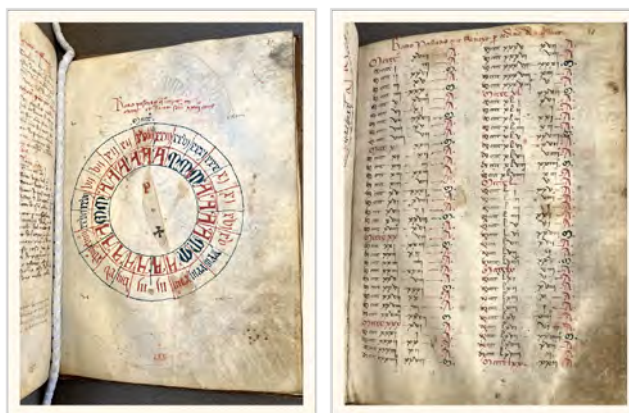
Nina is the O'Donovan Scholar at the School of Celtic Studies in Dublin, and last year her work there was the subject of a recent profile in *Seachtain (Irish Independent)*: 'Bean as an Bhriotáin a bhfuil a croí istigh i scéalta ársa na hÉireann' — a woman from Brittany whose heart lies in the ancient stories of Ireland. The School has also re-launched its Celtic Studies research podcast, *Ní hansae*, with a run of episodes on its current scholars, Nina's among them.

Dr Anthony Harris

SIDNEY SUSSEX · PHD VIVA 2021

Our own editor won a Fulbright scholarship in 2025 and spent the spring semester at Harvard, where he turned up a good deal in the manuscripts. As a visiting Fulbright Scholar in medieval studies he helped to decode several rare manuscripts in the

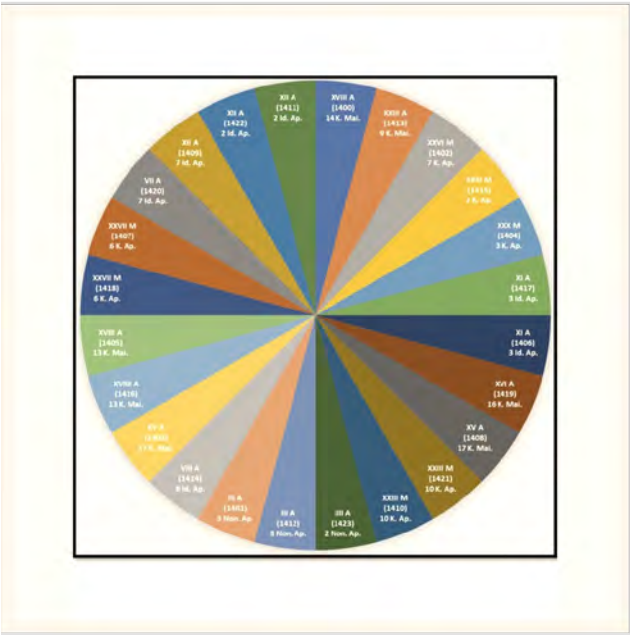
Houghton Library for the exhibition 'The Crusades Come to Cambridge', drawn from the library of the Crusades scholar Paul Édouard Didier Riant, bought for Harvard by the Coolidge family in 1899 and little used in the 125 years since. One featured manuscript, MS Riant 81, carries three large circular charts with rotating volvelles for calculating the date of Easter, which had long posed interpretive challenges; Tony worked out the coding behind the volvelle on *f. 37r* — an Easter calculator for the 24-year cycle 1400–1423, ingeniously built so that the two ends of the pointer always give dates twelve years apart. The full account is on the [Clare Hall website](#).



*Calendars and prayers. Manuscript: Italy, 15th century.
MS Riant 81, ff. 37r and 38r. Gift of J. Randolph Coolidge
and Archibald Cary Coolidge, 1899. Houghton Library,
Harvard University.*

After returning he took up a bye-fellowship at Emmanuel College, where he is Director of Studies in Computer Science and becomes graduate tutor from October. He keeps his hand in on medieval studies by tutoring Emma Part IB students on Middle English,

and is just finishing a British Academy Ker Award, which oversaw the digitisation of an important computus manuscript at the Bodleian Library — now [freely available in Digital Bodleian](#). These days his major focus is on the use of generative artificial intelligence for research in the humanities, and he recently ran a workshop on that topic for ASNaC graduates which was very well received by the participants.



Visually styled edition of the volvelle from MS Riant 81 (f. 37r). Construction by Anthony Harris.

Dr Ben Allport

BA ASNC 2009–2012 · PHD 2014–2019



Last year, Ben began a postdoc at the University of Groningen, working on the ERC-funded CONTACT project. CONTACT (Chronology of the Norse Transatlantic Colonies and Territories) is a five-year project exploring the Norse expansion across the North Atlantic using a combination of cutting-edge radiocarbon spike dating, stable isotope analysis, Bayesian modelling and historical research. One key aim is to narrow down the chronology of Norse activity in Greenland and Newfoundland. Ben’s role is to compile written references to the Norse settlements from the medieval period, to assess how well they fit the picture built up by the scientific evidence; he will also be considering the extent and nature of European awareness and perception of the transatlantic colonies.



L’Anse aux Meadows, the Norse settlement on Newfoundland. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

James David Wenn

CORPUS CHRISTI, M. 2007 · BA ASNC 2010

James writes that recent years have ended in a new working life as a self-employed consultant. The happier news is an art exhibition growing directly out of ASNC-related research, which he curated at The Minorities in Colchester.



Number in Time and Space: Exploring Plato's Fifth Element set out the forgotten meaning and significance of geometric shapes, motifs and proportions in British art and architecture spanning 2,000 years. The product of six years of research, the artworks arose from accidental discoveries by arts and heritage experts at the Essex-based cultural history consultancy Byrga Geniht, which James co-founded, and were made in collaboration with established and emerging British artists including Jacob Chandler, Dave Shrimpton, Caroline Weidman and Shay Shani. The works combine modern craft with genuine antiquities and digital projection, in media ranging from wood to glass to bronze and 24-carat gold.

'The influence of symbolic geology on the formation and evolution of English culture is enormous,' James says, 'and this art provides an accessible, enjoyable way to learn about this little-known part of our history.' Marcus du Sautoy, Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford, called the research 'a truly original and exciting bit of research', adding that the new insights into the role mathematical geometry played in the art and architecture of Anglo-Saxon Britain are 'absolutely fascinating'.



Works in bronze and 24-carat gold from Number in Time and Space.

The exhibition ran, with free admission, from 20 to 24 and 27 to 31 August 2025 at The Minories, 74 High Street, Colchester. More at byrga.co.uk.

VIII Hello to New (future) ASNCs

William Arthur Shercliff

Warmest congratulations to Dr Rebecca Shercliff (St John's, 2010) and family on the birth of William Arthur Shercliff in April 2025.



William Arthur Shercliff, born April 2025, with the family.

IX Farewell to ASNC Alums

Christine 'Chris' Thirlway (née Wippell)

GIRTON · 1939–2025 · BY DR
ELEANOR SMITH

Sadly, this past year saw the death of an ASNC alumna, my grandmother Christine 'Chris' Thirlway (née Wippell). Born in Exeter in 1939, Chris came to Girton around 1957 to read Natural Sciences, but for Part II decided to switch to ASNC. Her notebooks from that year — which include a hand-drawn map of Iceland — show that she was lectured by Kathleen Hughes; she was also supervised by

Nora Chadwick, who gave her a cake recipe on a handwritten card which she later passed on to me. During her time in Cambridge she developed what was to be a lifelong interest in poetry, sneaking into English lectures to hear Tom Henn speak about Yeats, and meeting and being influenced by the poet Kathleen Raine. Kathleen Raine also introduced her to Jim and Helen Ede, of Kettle's Yard, who influenced her in turn: when, many years later, I finally visited Kettle's Yard, my first thought was that it felt very like my Granny's house!

After her time in ASNC and some work at the

Forestry Commission and the Folio Society, Chris married my grandfather, Hugh Thirlway: the two initially lived in Cambridge, on Riverside. They later moved to a house in the Gog Magog hills, where they lived with their first three children, Margaret, Frances and Clare, and a donkey named Jack. Further moves were to follow: first to France, then to the Hague, in the Netherlands, where two more children, Sebastian and Cecilia, were born. Here – in addition to the not inconsiderable work of raising five children – Chris took on paid translation work in Dutch and French. Her translation of the works of the Modernist French theologian Alfred Loisy, produced alongside Charles Talar (her former parish priest), is still to be found in the University Library.



Chris in Cambridge, around 1957-60.

Later in life Chris moved to live in Bristol, where she trained and practised as a psychotherapist while also continuing to read and write poetry. Living in the suburb of St Werburghs, she worked to protect the local nature reserve of Narroways: on her retirement as a trustee she was given a brooch depicting the geese which St Werburgh – or Wærburh – is said to have chastised for eating her crops! I have many beloved memories of visiting Chris in Bristol, and the books which filled her house, including Lady Gregory's *Irish Myths and Legends*, primed me for an interest in all things ASNC.

Chris died in November 2025. She is survived, and much missed, by her sisters, children, grandchildren, and many friends.

§ Keeping in Touch

You are warmly invited to join the [ASNaC Alumni Facebook group](#) (Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic Alumni) for further announcements and updates and to keep in touch!

If you are interested in finding out more about our current research and teaching or our future plans, or would like to tell us news that you would like reported in future

newsletters, please contact us through the Departmental Secretary at office@asnc.cam.ac.uk or by post: Dept of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, 9 West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DP, United Kingdom.

The Departmental website also has an [alumni section](#).

Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic

9 West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DP · www.asnc.cam.ac.uk

Edited by Anthony Harris (PhD ASNaC 2021). All suggestions and comments (and new material for next year) to awh28@cam.ac.uk.

