



# Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic Alumni Newsletter

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic

Issue 4 September 2011

(all in 9 West Road unless otherwise stated)

### ASNC Alumni Reunion:

**24 September 2011**, 5–7.30pm drinks in the ASNC Common Room.

### Festival of Ideas:

**29 October 2011**, 1.30–4.30pm

'War and Peace in the Early Middle Ages', a series of talks and performances.

### Quiggin Lecture:

**1 December 2011**, 5pm Professor Odd Einar Haugen (University of Bergen). Followed by a reception.

### Chadwick Lecture:

**15 March, 2012**, 5pm Professor Michael Lapidge, commemorating the centenary of H M Chadwick's Appointment as Elrington and Bosworth Professor. In Clare College, followed by a reception.

### Kathleen Hughes Lecture:

**7 May, 2012**, 5.45pm Dr Alex Woolf (University of St Andrews). In the Pavilion Room, Hughes Hall, followed by a reception.

### ASNC Summer Garden Party:

**20 June 2012**, time and venue to be announced.

**ASNC Alumni are warmly welcome to attend any of these events** (see the website for updates)

### From the ASNC Alumni Outreach and Fundraising Committee

Many thanks for all your support over the past year. Should you wish to find out more about our current research and teaching or our future development plans, or to let us know about news that you would like reported in future newsletters, please contact us through the Departmental Secretary either electronically at [asnc@hermes.cam.ac.uk](mailto:asnc@hermes.cam.ac.uk) or at our postal address: Dept of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, 9 West Road, Cambridge CB3 9DP, United Kingdom. The Departmental website also has an alumni section ([www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/alumni/index.htm](http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/alumni/index.htm)).

### ASNC Reunion 2010

Last September we were delighted to welcome back some ASNaCs who were making their first visit to the Department since student days, including David Westover (Magdalene, 1978) and Chris Bissell (Jesus, 1969). Chris, now Professor of Telematics in the Faculty of Maths, Computing and Technology at the Open University, but still an avid linguist too, shared his recollections of being taught by Kathleen Hughes.

Please do consider joining us in September 2011!

**S**eldom has ASNC been as much in the media as it has been this year, one way and another, and in this newsletter we'll round up some of those stories, as well as reporting on our regular events and bringing you word of what staff, students and alumni have been doing during the past year.

In January of this year Dr Emily Lethbridge (Emma, 1998) embarked on an epic year-long journey in an ex-MOD Land Rover ambulance (the 'Embulance', pictured below against a stunning Icelandic backdrop), making a pilgrimage around the saga-steeds of Iceland, the settings for the *Íslendingasögur*, that will be familiar to many an ASNaC. See inside (page 6) for the story so far.



Image, top: Chris Bissell in conversation with Elizabeth Boyle



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

## Departmental News and Events

Another year has gone by and, as I write, summer is certainly in the air, most undergraduates have departed and MPHils are in the balmy days between results and graduation. We were delighted to welcome many of you back to events such as the Alumni Reunion in the autumn, January's black-tie dinner, and the ASNC Garden Party. We hope you enjoyed your visits and look forward to greeting more of you on similar occasions or when you drop in to 9 West Road.

If you do stop by, we're confident that you will find ASNC as vibrant as ever. This year we welcomed a new colleague, Dr Margo Griffin-Wilson, who teaches Modern Irish. She has both educated and enthused her students, and during *Seachtain na Gaeilge* (Irish language week) had many of us almost dancing jigs (see *opposite*). Ragga Guðmundsdóttir came once a week to teach Modern Icelandic, and now that she is moving to Cambridge we plan to see much more of her.

It is also pleasing to relate that aspects of the

Department's research have received welcome attention. Dr Fiona Edmonds and colleagues at the University of Liverpool began a project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) focusing on Jocelin of Furness (more on page 5). In addition Dr Rory Naismith became the youngest ever recipient of the British Numismatic Society's prestigious Blunt Prize.

We are also heartened by the growing interest in our subjects. Dr Elizabeth Boyle organised ASNC's first Sutton Trust Summer School in 2010; it was very successful and this year's is already booked out. As ever, our students and you, our alumni, remain our best ambassadors. You can hear what current students say about ASNC in a video now on YouTube and on our website. We are truly grateful to Bettina Talbot, the free-lance producer, who worked with us to create this wonderful piece, and to fiddle-player, Josie Nugent, who supplied the lovely music that accompanies it. We hope you enjoy it.

### Dr Máire Ní Mhaonaigh



Máire, with Paul Mulvaney, who provided lively musical entertainment at the alumni reunion. Máire bows out as Head of Department this September, to be succeeded by Dr Paul Russell (better be dusting down your flute, Dr Russell!)

### Celebrating Irish culture

Highly successful classes in Modern Irish continued this year, thanks to a grant from the Irish Government. Wandering around the University, one is now far more likely to hear *cúpla focal* ('a few words') of Irish wafting around. This year also saw the University's first marking of *Seachtain na Gaeilge*, 'Irish week', an international festival of Irish language and culture that takes place every year around St Patrick's Day. Margo Griffin-Wilson organised a number of events as part of Cambridge's contribution. These included a discussion on Irish place-names led by the author and map-maker, Dr Tim Robinson (Parnell Fellow at Magdalene College this year). Tim explored the importance of place in medieval texts and modern folklore, as well as probing the effects of the loss of local place-names within rural communities.

On St Patrick's Day Professor Wendy Davies (University College London) gave the H M Chadwick Memorial Lecture, 'Water mills and cattle standards: probing the economic comparison between Ireland and Spain in the early middle ages'.

On the same day, ASNC and St John's College offered members of the University a chance to see one of the treasures of the College's Old Library, the Southampton Psalter. Dr Denis Casey (Trinity Hall, 2005), guided participants through the history of this 9th- or 10th-century Irish manuscript and spoke on the significance of its interlinear Irish and Latin glosses.

The week's highlight was the performance by students from the Modern Irish classes. They presented a selection of beautifully enunciated poems and traditional songs to a large, appreciative audience. The recitations were complemented by a musical recital, including a wonderful solo harp performance by Katie Mclvor (Pembroke, 2010; *photo top Right*).



Katie Mclvor



Members of the Modern Irish classes

## Departmental News and Events

### Honouring Mark Blackburn

The Department hosted a special event in September 2010 to launch the collected essays of Dr Mark Blackburn, Keeper of Coins and Medals at the Fitzwilliam Museum, and Reader in Numismatics and Monetary History in ASNC since 2004, and a good friend of the Department long before that: many ASNaCs will recall trips to see coins at the Fitz. Various speakers celebrated all aspects of Mark's work, culminating in the presentation of the volume (*Viking Coinage and Currency in the British Isles*), which was also reproduced in cake form (see photo). In May 2011, Mark was awarded a LittD, one of the University's Higher Doctorates, recognising his extensive publication record.

Staying on the subject of coins, it is very pleasing to record that Rory Naismith (Trinity, 2002) was the 2011 recipient of the British Numismatic Society's Blunt Prize, to mark his significant contribution to the field.



Mark receiving his volume of collected essays from Dr Robin Eaglen, President of the British Numismatic Society.

### Right, from top:

Rory receiving his prize from Dr Eaglen

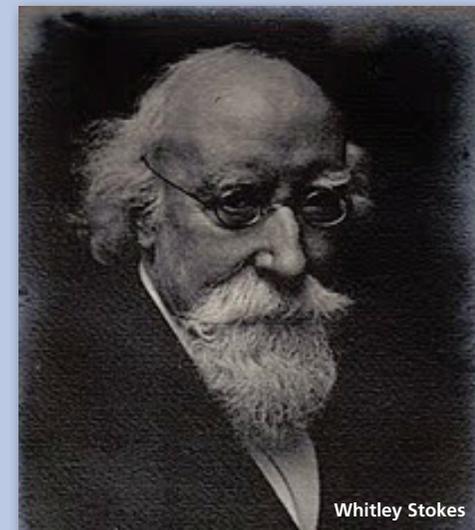
A medal commissioned to commemorate Mark's twenty years as Keeper of Coins and Medals at the Fitzwilliam, with a portrait by Ian Rank-Broadley

The Celebratory Cake.



## Research in ASNC

Fiona Edmonds is currently involved in a two-year project funded by the AHRC, working with a team at the University of Liverpool comprising Drs Clare Downham (Lucy Cav, 1997) and Ingrid Sperber (a specialist in Celtic Latin). 'Hagiography at the Frontiers: Jocelin of Furness and Insular Politics', focuses on one of the most significant medieval writers to emerge from England's north-west. Jocelin (1175 to 1214) spent most of his life at Furness Abbey in Cumbria (photo below), and wrote four great works including a *Life of St Patrick*, which has never been published. The team will put that right by the end of 2012, producing new editions of two of Jocelin's texts, the *Lives of Patrick*, and of Helena, mother of Constantine, whose Brittonic origins Jocelin stressed. The project also aims to explore Jocelin's Cumbrian context and to highlight his contribution to the cultural history and identity of England's north-west at a turbulent time when Richard I and King John held sway. What were Cumbria's politics, and how far did its people see themselves as English, Norman, Celtic, or something else? This July the project gained significant publicity through a highly successful conference, 'Medieval Furness: Texts and Contexts', held in Barrow-in-Furness. Fiona observes, "Furness was culturally and linguistically diverse. The peninsula protrudes into the Irish Sea which meant strong trading and cultural links with Ireland and the Isle of Man, and for a time Furness was under Scottish rule. The Abbey was emblematic of the region's incorporation into the Anglo-Norman realm, but it also had daughter houses in Ireland and on Man. So Jocelin's setting was complex, and that makes it interesting to ask why he devoted so much of his career to writing about Scottish and Irish saints, or why he was asked to." (Project website: [www.liv.ac.uk/irish/Hagiography/index.htm](http://www.liv.ac.uk/irish/Hagiography/index.htm))



Whitley Stokes

Following on their 2009 conference marking the centenary of the death of the great Celtic scholar and colonial jurist, Whitley Stokes (1830-1909; photo above), Elizabeth Boyle and Paul Russell are publishing a volume of essays on Stokes' life and legacy (*The Tripartite Life of Whitley Stokes (1830-1909)*, Dublin: Four Courts). Among the volume's contributors are several familiar ASNC names - including Dr Geraldine Parsons (Trinity, 1998; now at the University of Glasgow), Dr Pádraic Moran (now at NUI Galway), and Dr Alderik Blom (Peterhouse, 2002; now at Oxford). The book will be launched on 17 November at Stokes' childhood home, 5 Merrion Square, Dublin, which now houses the School of Cosmic Physics of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.



The ruins of Furness abbey today

The 'Embulance' pictured on the front page of this Newsletter (*and right*) has been both means of transport and home to Emily Lethbridge since January of this year, when she began her extraordinary quest to seek out the places and landscapes connected with the Sagas of the Icelanders. As well as writing a blog with insightful commentaries on the sites she has visited and the sagas in which they feature (<http://sagasteads.blogspot.com/> also full of her own beautiful photos), Emily has also been kept busy by the media. She has contributed to BBC Radio 4's *From our Own Correspondent* (July 7), but she has also been on Icelandic TV and radio, on French TV, and in various newspapers in the UK and beyond (details on her blog). Her project is featured in the latest issue of *Research Horizon* (see [www.research-horizons.cam.ac.uk](http://www.research-horizons.cam.ac.uk), Issue 15) and a stunning film about her journey will soon be available on the University's *Cambridge Ideas* website.

Once her travelling is over, Emily will hunker down in a little turf-roofed house at Fljótshlíð in Fljótsdalur, to spend October and November writing up her experiences and discoveries. "This kind of 'literary fieldwork' approach," she says, "is not only making my understanding of the sagas more nuanced, both as narratives in themselves and as a medieval and modern cultural phenomenon, but also I hope that the book I'm writing about the sagas and the ways in which they are inscribed in the spectacular Icelandic landscape will appeal to a general audience as well as a specialist one."



#### Right, from top:

Emily and her 'Embulance'

Aðalból (where Hrafnkel established his farm) looking south down Hrafnkeldalur

Emily explaining Egilssaga on French TV



#### ASNC's Sutton Trust Summer School

In August 2010, the Department hosted its first Sutton Trust Summer School in Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, offering students (all from Year 12) a taste of life as an ASNC undergraduate at Cambridge. The Sutton Trust is a philanthropic organisation that promotes social mobility through education, and its Summer Schools seek to inspire participants to go on to university. The students who took part at ASNC came from state schools all over the country, from Barnsley to Ross-on-Wye. They were introduced to the full range of ASNC subjects, both historical and literary/linguistic, through a combination of lectures from staff, and small-group supervisions led by ASNC graduate students and postdocs. The students also had a research assignment in the reading room of the Parker Library at Corpus Christi College, which ended with a chance to see at first-hand the manuscripts they had researched. Altogether the students got an intensive, whistle-stop tour of medieval languages, literature, history and palaeography over the course of a few brief days, but they were unflagging in their enthusiasm and their dedication. You can see this for yourself: some of these students discuss this experience in a series of videos featured on a blog by Elizabeth Boyle, who organised the School (<http://anglosaxonnorseandceltic.blogspot.com/2011/07/widening-participation.html>). The next Summer School is taking place in August 2011, as we go to press.

#### Festival of Ideas

In October 2010 the Department took part in the University's Festival of Ideas for the third year running, with an afternoon of hands-on activities designed for families, and a sequence of short talks, under the overall heading of 'Anglo-Saxon Treasures'. Participants tried their hand at writing Insular scripts with a quill pen, carving runes, mixing herbal remedies, decorating brooches inspired by Anglo-Saxon designs, and composing their own riddles and kennings. Especially popular was a talk by Professor Simon Keynes on interpreting the Staffordshire hoard (you can read his contribution to a fascinating symposium on the hoard, held in March 2010 at the British Museum, here at the website of the Portable Antiquities Scheme: <http://finds.org.uk/staffshoardsymposium>).

#### Teachers' Day in ASNC

This is a new venture, planned for Saturday 14 January 2012, aimed at widening the range of potential applicants to ASNC by giving teachers an inside perspective on what the course can offer. There will be more information about this event on the ASNC website in due course.

**Image top:** *60-Second Impressions: The Sutton Trust Summer Schools*, a still from the video *60-Second Impressions*; Elizabeth Boyle's lecture on Medieval Irish literature.

Elizabeth Ashman Rowe has become a regular panellist on the BBC Radio 4 series *In Our Time* hosted by Melvyn Bragg. In November 2010 she was on a panel discussing the Scandinavians in Russia, and returned in June to talk about the Battle of Stamford Bridge, Harald Hardrada's ill-fated invasion of England in 1066. Both programmes can be found in the *In Our Time* archive, as 'Battle of Stamford Bridge' and 'Volga Vikings' ([www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/in-our-time/archive/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/in-our-time/archive/)).

Paul Russell has also recently been on the airwaves, in BBC2's *History of Celtic Britain* presented by Neil Oliver. You can enjoy watching him call Neil a hippy in reconstructed Celtic (*image below*), thanks to YouTube (search for A History of Celtic Britain part 3/4 episode 2; Paul's contribution comes near the start).

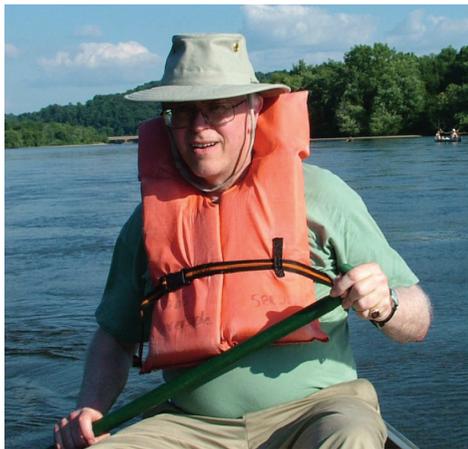


During her sabbatical in Lent term, Judy Quinn spent two months as Visiting Professor in the Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere at the University of Verona. While there, she co-organised an international symposium, 'The Hyperborean Muse' on the reception of Old Norse literature in later European culture.

In June of this year, our Professor Emeritus, Michael Lapidge, was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Letters (DLitt) from the University of Toronto, where he had taken his PhD degree forty years earlier. He was presented to the Toronto convocation by Andy Orchard (Queens', 1983, now Provost and Vice-Chancellor of Trinity College, Toronto): see *photo*. To hear Michael's acceptance speech, search on YouTube for 'University of Toronto: Michael Lapidge, Convocation 2011 Honorary Degree recipient.'



ASNC was well represented at the 2011 meeting of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, with papers from Rosalind Love (John's, 1984), reporting on the Boethius Commentary Project, Helen Forbes (Trinity, 2001; now a postdoc at the University of Leicester), and Rory Naismith, who spoke in a session honouring Mark Blackburn, chaired by Simon Keynes (Trinity, 1970). Some of us also took to the Wisconsin River by canoe, with Keynes and Love far outstripping all the competition (*photo below, with runners-up a tiny speck in the distance*).



### ASNC Society: a report by Moa Höijer (Hughes, 2008)

This year saw a host of events organised by the ASNC Society. Following the runaway success of the first Yule Play in 2009, we put on another at the end of Michaelmas term, this time in a hagiographic format with the title *Navigatio Sancti Hugonis* ('The Voyage of Saint Hugo'), starring among others Shelby Switzer (Trinity, 2009) as the fictional Saint Hugo, Adam Kirton (Catz, 2010; *photo below, with Dr Richard Dance at the black-tie dinner*) as Dafydd ap Gwilym / Ælfric / Ragnarr Loðbrók, and Moa Höijer reprising her role as Bede (*see photo*). A DVD of the play is in the making. The 2011 black-tie Dinner was held at Robinson College and provided a fabulous night of delicious food, heartfelt reunions, and traditional Welsh songs as entertainment. The Committee Handover took place in March, when Moa Höijer and Kit Finn (Corpus, 2008) handed over their presidential positions to Shelby Switzer and Ben Guy (Selwyn, 2009). The new Committee has already proven itself by organising the very first (and very successful) ASNC Pub Quiz, as well as a term of ASNC Lunches of never-before-seen quality, put on by new Catering Officer, Linda Intelmann (Newnham, 2010). We wish the new Committee a successful reign and are confident that the Society will prosper in their capable hands.

### Graduate Seminar in Norway

Graduate students from the Department participated in a seminar organized by the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Bergen at the end of May. The Seminar, on the Aesthetics of Old Norse Genres, followed a two-day conference on Aesthetics and Ideas of Beauty in the Old Norse World. After the seminar, participants rode the Fløibanen to the top of Fløyen mountain overlooking Bergen (*see photo*).

### Kenning Symposium in ASNC

Alumni who studied Old Norse poetry will be pleased to hear that in June two final-year PhD students in ASNC, Emily Osborne and Debbie Potts, organized a symposium with their supervisor, Judy Quinn, on kennings in skaldic verse. The event drew participants from around the world, intrigued by the way in which poets from the Viking Age and later called poetry, for example, 'fors horna hlítstyggs farms arma Gunnlaðar' (waterfall of the horn of the insatiable cargo of the arms of Gunnlöd) and beer 'allra stríða heilivágr' (the healing-wave of all troubles).



#### From top:

Moa as the Venerable Bede

Adam and Richard at the black-tie dinner

Judy and the Old Norse graduate students above rainy Bergen, with Prof John McKinnell (Durham University)



Hayley and her band



Carly on location with James Adcock and Kerry Ely from *Time Team*. Since writing this profile, Carly has been appointed as editorial assistant for two monthly magazines, *Current Archaeology* and *Current World Archaeology*. Congratulations, Carly!

### Hayley Gullen (Peterhouse, 2003)

After graduation, I fancied something more ‘gritty and real-world’, so I became a Greenpeace fundraiser, asking strangers on the streets of London and the South-East to part with their bank details. It was not easy, but I had a brilliant time and met a full cross-section of British society. A year was more than enough, though, and with winter on the way working indoors seemed a good idea, so I moved to an event management agency. In my spare time I joined a folk-punk band, *Apples for Everyone*, playing fiddle alongside bagpipes, flute, trumpet, guitars, singers and percussion (picture left).

After two years I took a job at a Hoxton Music College, writing funding applications for their community projects. Based in a tiny office next to their music studios, I felt trendy for the first time in my life. Following redundancy in 2010, I’m now a Trust Fundraising Officer at St Mungo’s (a London-based homelessness charity), work I’m very happy with, not least because St Mungo’s projects are for an excellent cause. Sadly, my band broke up, so I’ve started a duo, *The Reactionaries*. I’m also involved in running Autumn Shift, a tent which we take to festivals as a venue with artists, tea and music (see <http://autumnshift.co.uk>). I’d love to return to the ASNC field one day (I have a thing about the Picts), but meanwhile I’m enjoying learning about everything else.

### Carly Hilts (St John’s, 2005)

Following the ASNC MPhil, I had a brief spell as a journalist, working for an agency covering eight counties for all the national papers, but a swift change of direction came when I was offered a research job with Channel 4’s *Time Team*. It was hard work but enormous fun: my job was to find sites, compile research folders, and to search archives for historic maps, documents and images to show on screen. During filming I briefed contributors before history scenes, gave site-tours to local officials, press and school groups and answered the director’s factual questions. Highlights included learning to drive the huge 4x4s off-road, and dressing up as a Roman for a reconstruction scene. Since the series ended I have worked as a freelance history researcher, both in TV and educational media; although I’m often covering historical periods outside those I studied in Cambridge I am always using the skills I developed as an ASNaC.

ASNC has an uncanny centripetal force—last year Charlie Farquharson-Roberts (Emma, 1996) returned and successfully completed the MPhil. This year we welcomed back Rosie Marshall (Trinity Hall, 2004) to do a PhD in Scandinavian history. While abroad, Rosie met Damien Bonté, whom she married in March of this year, in Wales, surrounded by a goodly number of ASNaCs. The wedding photos were taken by Rosie’s contemporary, James Appleton (Girton, 2004). One of his portfolios won the 2010 Wanderlust Travel Photo of the Year; see the winning shots at [www.jamesappleton.co.uk](http://www.jamesappleton.co.uk).

In May, Ben Snook (Girton, 2001) married Kate Falconer (St John’s, 2004); they met doing the MPhil in 2004-5, finding an unexpected added value in the degree! More recently, an ASNC of an earlier vintage, Chris Abram (Robinson, 1995), who now lectures in the Scandinavian Studies Department at UCL, married Amy Mulligan (a postdoctoral fellow at Bergen’s Centre for Medieval Studies, but currently an Honorary Research Associate in ASNC). News also reaches us of ASNaC babies, including Curtis George Leslie Miller, born 27 November 2010, to Flora (née Spiegel, Trinity, 2001) and Tony (St John’s,

1993); and Lois, born to Roberta Hamilton (Fitz, 1996). Also busy with night-wakings is a recent Departmental secretary, Victoria Mould-Lever, who gave birth to Enid Winifred in March 2011. Congratulations to one and all, and apologies to anybody whose news we’ve missed!

Congratulations also go to Levi Roach (Trinity, 2003) and Deborah Hayden (Hughes, 2003), elected JRFs at St John’s (Cambridge) and Christchurch, Oxford, respectively; to Eleanor Barraclough, also off to Oxford as a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow; and to Denis Casey, awarded a Society for Renaissance Studies Fellowship, to work on Christopher Nugent’s primer of the Irish language, created for Elizabeth I. We also congratulate Helen Forbes, appointed to a four-year postdoc at Leicester, and Peter Stokes (Corpus, 2001) on winning a European Research Council Starting Grant for a new project, Digital Resource for Palaeography (<http://digipal.eu>) based at the Centre for Computing in the Humanities, King’s College, London. Peter’s project team will be thoroughly ASNC, since the funding includes a PhD studentship, awarded to Tilly Watson (Robinson, 2007), currently finishing her MA at York.



Left: Rosie’s bridesmaid, Eleanor Perkins (Trinity, 2004) with Rachel Hilditch (Sidney, 2004).

Right: Rosie and Damien

