

Institution: University of Chester
Unit of Assessment: 17B Geography, Environment Studies & Archaeology (Archaeology)
Title of case study: Project Eliseg: Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This case study builds upon co-director Professor Howard Williams' expertise in archaeologies of memory and mortuary archaeology through the archaeological fieldwork of Project Eliseg (hereafter PE). This project has transformed academic and popular understandings of a unique and striking ancient monument by: (i) creating a network of strategically designed outreach activities engaging the public with archaeological fieldwork at early medieval stone monuments, (ii) disseminating the research to a range of audiences via traditional and new media, and (iii) instigated strategies for the heritage management and conservation of an internationally important heritage site.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Investigating the unique and internationally significant Pillar of Eliseg for the first time using modern archaeological methods and techniques, fieldwork by PE (2010-12) is shedding new light on the Bronze Age origins of the mound beneath the Pillar, the ninth-century materiality and landscape context of the stone cross, the medieval persistence of the monument as a landmark, the eighteenth-century excavation of the mound and rehabilitation and inscription of the stone cross-shaft, and the nineteenth- to twenty-first century treatment of the monument. Revealing a monumental biography over four millennia, PE is exploring how the mound, and subsequently the mound and cross together, accrued shifting significance in myth, history and memory in the Welsh landscape.</p> <p>PE is a high-profile archaeological research project, a collaboration between Professor Nancy Edwards (Bangor), Professor Dai Morgan Evans (Chester), Dr Gary Robinson (Bangor) and Professor Howard Williams (Professor, University of Chester, 2008 – present) and mobilising collaborations with Cadw, Bangor University and Llangollen Museum.</p> <p>The project will result in a multi-authored monograph, but Williams (see section 3) has authored interim discussion and interpretation of the early medieval phases of the site in terms of memory theory and early medieval elite commemoration (Williams 2011).</p> <p>The study of early medieval sculpted stone crosses sheds light on belief, power and social memory in the early Middle Ages (c. AD 400-1100). Recent research has shown that their investigation requires a detailed investigation of their cultural biographies: how they appropriated monuments of earlier (prehistoric and Roman) date, as well as their subsequent reception to the present day. The Pillar of Eliseg is an internationally important fragment of an early ninth-century stone cross, situated near Valle Crucis Abbey, Llangollen, Denbighshire, Wales and a prominent tourist attraction close to the Cadw-run Valle Crucis Abbey. The Pillar's location, materiality, form and long Latin text together promoted the illustrious and legendary ancestors for the ruler of Powys, Concenn and celebrated the military victories of his great-grandfather, Eliseg, making this a key source of information about the origins of Wales. The cross was likely raised as a symbol of royal authority and an assertion of legitimacy and military prowess at a site of assembly and/or inauguration at a time when Powys was being dismantled by the rival early medieval polities of Gwynedd and Mercia. Situated on the threshold between prehistory and history, the Pillar is unrivalled in its archaeological and historical importance. Yet equally the Pillar is an enigmatic and hitherto unexplored relic of the era that saw the emergence of modern Britain.</p> <p>Professor Williams' established research expertise in 'archaeologies of memory', including the specific practice of the reuse of prehistoric monuments in the early Middle Ages, and the history of</p>

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early medieval archaeology, including the study of antiquarian attitudes to burial mounds, informed the project design and execution. Moreover, Williams' ongoing research on the archaeology of social memory in early medieval Britain formed the immediate context for the collaboration with Evans, Edwards and Robinson on PE. Finally, Professor Williams' expertise in community archaeology assisted in a strategy for public outreach during and after the field seasons and informing Cadw's conservation, management and presentation of the monument for the future.

3. References to the research

Peer-reviewed high-profile publications demonstrate Williams' active international profile in four related research themes that informed the design and development of PE:

1. Simpson, F. & Williams, H. 2008. Evaluating community archaeology in the UK, *Public Archaeology* 7(2): 69-90. DOI 10.1179/175355308X329955
2. Williams, H. 2009. On display: envisioning the early Anglo-Saxon dead, in D. Sayer. & H. Williams (eds) *Mortuary Practices & Social Identities in the Middle Ages: Essays in Burial Archaeology in Honour of Heinrich Härke*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, pp. 170-206.
3. Williams, H., Rundkvist, M. & Danielsson, A. 2010. The landscape of a Swedish boat-grave cemetery, *Landscapes* (2010) 1: 1-24. ISSN 1466-2035
4. Williams, H. 2011. Remembering elites: early medieval stone crosses as commemorative technologies, in L. Boye, P. Ethelberg, L. Heidemann Lutz, S. Kleingärtner, P. Kruse, L. Matthes and A. B. Sørensen (eds) *Arkæologi i Slesvig/Archäologie in Schleswig. Sonderband "Det 61. Internationale Sachsensymposium 2010"* Haderslev, Denmark. Neumünster: Wachholtz, pp. 13-32.
http://www.academia.edu/521529/Williams_H._2011._Remembering_elites_Early_medieval_stone_crosses_as_commemorative_technologies
5. Williams, H. 2011. The sense of being seen: ocular effects at Sutton Hoo, *Journal of Social Archaeology* 11(1): 99-121 (See REF 2)

PE was funded by the Universities of Bangor and Chester and additional funding from the University of Wales, Cambrian Archaeological Association and Cadw amounting to the tune of **£6,383.96** (grants variously applied for by Professors Edwards and WILLIAMS 2010-12). Project Eliseg involved a series of outreach components intended to communicate findings quickly and effectively to as wide an audience as possible and supported by the University of Chester's Knowledge Transfer Fund with a grant of **£6,043.75** (application by Williams, 2010).

4. The contribution, impact or benefit

PE has revealed, disseminated and interpreted the Pillar of Eliseg, inspired by the co-directors' expertise in early medieval archaeology, field archaeology, community archaeology, contemporary archaeology and the history of archaeology.

Integrated Fieldwork Outreach

PE has adopted an explicit philosophy and methodology for the generation of academic and popular knowledge and debate through the engagement of the public with early medieval histories in stone *during* fieldwork. Key aspects include:

- Opportunities for local volunteers to participate in the fieldwork, c. 7 each in 2010, 2011 and 2012
- Training undergraduate students in archaeological fieldwork techniques linked to the study of the context of early medieval monuments, 12 in 2010, 8 each in 2011 and 2012
- Open door policies giving tours to visitors on a daily basis, c. 100 each in 2010, 2011 and 2012
- Open days attracting a wide range of visitors, c. 125 each in 2010, 2011 and 2012

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- Primary school groups site tours in 2012, c. 70 children.
- Project video blog by Chester archaeology student, Joseph Tong

Popular Media

Between field seasons, PE has disseminated results of the fieldwork through a variety of media:

- Conference papers and public lectures, including international conferences: Williams, H. 2011. Remembering elites: Early medieval stone crosses as commemorative technologies, Boye, L. et al. (eds) *Arkæologi i Slesvig/Archäologie in Schleswig. Sonderband "Det 61. Internationale Sachsensymposium 2010" Haderslev, Denmark*. Neumünster: Wachholtz, pp. 13-32, open access on Academia.edu and viewed **404** times @ 1st Sept. 2013: http://www.academia.edu/521529/Williams_H._2011._Remembering_elites_Early_medieval_stone_crosses_as_commemorative_technologies.
- Public talks on PE by Williams including: Investigating Eliseg's Pillar'. Clwyd Archaeology Dayschool organised by Fiona Gale, Denbigh, 24th February 2013 and the keynote of the Runes Network conference in March 2013 (also a public lecture) subsequently posted online: <http://vimeo.com/64725297>. **93 plays** @ 1st Sept 2013
Bilingual (English and Welsh) website updates, e.g. <http://www.projecteliseg.org/>.
- Popular magazine articles outlining the results of Project Eliseg: Williams, H. 2011. Myth and memory in the Welsh landscape, *Minerva* 22(1): 34-35 and Williams, H. 2010. Desperately seeking Eliseg, *Current Archaeology* 248: 8, Williams, H. 2011. Project Eliseg – Digging for Early Medieval Myths and Memories, *Past Horizons*: <http://www.pasthorizonspr.com/index.php/archives/11/2011/project-eliseg-digging-for-early-medieval-myths-and-memories>, which had **33** tweets.
- Newspaper articles, regional radio and television, leading to a wide range of media outputs during the fieldwork. A range of new media utilised for the project, including news stories (e.g. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-north-east-wales-15007707>).
- The Project Eliseg website provides information about the project and its discoveries: (<http://www.projecteliseg.org/>) which averages c. **650** hits per day (**47,789** hits for July 2013)
- The Project Eliseg Facebook page which has received 203 'likes' (<https://www.facebook.com/ProjectEliseg>) and on Youtube: (<http://www.youtube.com/user/ProjectElisegMedia>) (@ 1st Sept 2013, 2011 field season has a total of **3195** views, 2012 field season has a total of **1714** views)
- Bespoke art video of Project Eliseg 2010 by Dr Aaron Watson and John Was: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu8FL_84CSg (**259** views @ 1st Sept 2013)

On-Site Heritage Management and Interpretation

Project Eliseg post-excavation conservation, access and revised heritage interpretation panels for the monument by Cadw will be directly utilising the results from Project Eliseg.

Museum Engagement

- Project Eliseg is working with Llangollen Museum where finds from the excavations have been displayed since July 2011, with **50,000** visitors to July 2013 (average **25,000** visits per year for Llangollen Museum)
- Plans are now underway to redisplay the replica Pillar of Eliseg within the Museum using the artefacts discovered by PE.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Statements from Chairman of Llangollen Museum.