

Life and Death in Medieval Southampton

Study Day 8/6/2019 – Southampton Archaeology Society

Timetable and Abstracts

9.30 Registration. Tea and coffee (30 mins)

10.00 Welcome – Sarah Hanna (10 mins)

10.10 Andy Russel 'From Wine Vaults to Water-Houses: the buildings of medieval Southampton' (50 mins)

11.00 Duncan Brown 'Living with Pottery in Medieval Southampton' (50 mins)

11.50 Drinks break (20 mins)

12.10 Phoebe Merrick 'Cloth Trade in Hampshire from the 1390s to the 1470s' (50 mins)

13.00–14.10 LUNCH BREAK (70 mins)

(Lunch not provided – you are welcome to bring a packed lunch or take advantage of the pubs and shops nearby – see map below. Coffee and tea will be available.)

[13:30 Guided tour of Medieval Merchant's House (English Heritage), extra cost]

14.10 Ian Friel 'Late Medieval Southampton and the Wooden World: changing ships and technology' (50 mins)

15.00 Ian Riddler 'The Woman Falconer' (30 mins)

15.30 Drinks break (20 mins)

15.50 Mary South 'Disasters and Diseases in Medieval Southampton' (50 mins)

16.40 Sarah Hanna – closing remarks and final questions (20 mins)

17.00 End

The time for each speaker is to include questions (about 5 minutes) at the end of each talk.

Abstracts

From Wine Vaults to Water-Houses: the buildings of medieval Southampton

A brief survey of the built environment of the medieval town using standing and excavated examples. Stone was expensive and had to come by sea, so only the wealthy merchants, the Church, and the King could afford it. We can still identify owners of some of the grander buildings, and although the builders have been forgotten, we can learn much of their methods and techniques through archaeology. The townspeople would mostly have lived in smaller, timber-framed houses. Such buildings survive less well, but can be more accurately dated with dendrochronology.

Dr Andy Russel BA, PhD, MCIfA

Living with Pottery in Medieval Southampton

Pottery is such a common find on excavations in the medieval town of Southampton that it is easy to think it must have been present in every person's life. This talk will attempt to place pottery into the context of daily living, considering questions such as where pottery was made, how it was acquired, how it was used and how it was disposed of. Most of the time, archaeologists see pottery as discarded rubbish, either deliberately dumped into pits or occurring incidentally in build-up layers or features such as gullies and postholes. If we are to understand how pottery informs our understanding of past lives then we need to translate what we find into what might have happened. The aim here will be to explore that process and in so doing, illuminate the role of pottery in medieval Southampton.

Duncan Brown BA, FSA, MCIfA

Cloth Trade in Hampshire from the 1390s to the 1470s

The cloth trade of Hampshire in the later 14th and 15th centuries was a major source of revenue in the county. This talk covers the processes entailed in turning wool to cloth for the market and discusses the operations and the finances involved. The talk is based on written sources, including the ulnage records and is illustrated.

Phoebe Merrick MA, MPhil

Late Medieval Southampton and the Wooden World: changing ships and technology

For most of the period between the 5th century AD and the 1200s, the maritime technology used in northern Europe was very different from that of the Mediterranean. Things began to change between the late 13th and mid-15th centuries. This led to the development of reliable ocean-going ships of the kind that Europeans later used in their voyages of exploration and conquest.

There is important evidence of technological change in English ships and shipbuilding from late medieval Southampton. Some people may know that the town built medieval England's biggest ship, the *Grace Dieu*, but this is only part of the picture. This talk will look at the general situation, and then focus on what we know about the Southampton area: a story of ambition, innovation – and ignorance.

Dr Ian Friel MA, PhD, FSA

The Woman Falconer

An elegant late medieval anthropomorphic knife handle from St Michael's House shows a woman wearing a veil and a long gown. It belongs with a series of handles known from across Europe that show both men and women carrying out a variety of activities, usually as single individuals. This handle has been interpreted as a woman falconer but that seems unlikely, given that no falcon is present. It is closely related to that series, however, which represents a particularly English late medieval tradition. On English knife handles the falconer tends to be a woman; on Continental knife handles it is usually a man. At one level these handles can be read as simple expressions of an aristocratic activity, carried out by both sexes. But there is also a completely different meaning behind them, which relates directly to symbols of the art of love, where the veil and the falcon play an entirely different role.

Ian Riddler MA, FSA

Disasters and Diseases in Medieval Southampton

One thing could be certain in the medieval town, you were going to die, often unpleasantly and probably due to some external influence. No doubt the Church told you, this was due to your many sins, so your only hope was prayer. However, praying for divine intervention became intertwined with astronomy, astrology, charms and plant lore. Control of disease for the entire town's population, could only be achieved by isolating those that were sick, which often only added to their suffering. The only good thing that could be said when disaster struck, either due to natural forces or an outbreak of some pestilential disease, both rich and poor were afflicted, and death made everyone equal.

Mary South