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EAA 2015 Glasgow – An impression

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The opening ceremony in the City Hall, set the tone of the conference and introduced the archaeology of Scotland within its cultural and environmental context. Personalities presented the Heritage policy of Scotland, and its relationship to Continental Europe. Archaeologists underlined the difficult weather conditions in which they have to work, especially in the north. Respect was also expressed for our late Syrian colleague.

Social gatherings of the Conference were held in prestigious buildings, themselves assets of Scottish culture and Heritage. On the first night, the annual party united a throng of archaeologists in the grand and modern building of the museum of science beautifully set along the riverbank of the Clyde, built in lightish materials in comparison to its aerospace style. There one admired exhibits of contemporary painters, as well as periscopes and old submarine devices. Other displays completed the collection which could exemplify, with possibilities for archaeologists of the future or observers to interpret symbolic representation of tools, re-interpreted replicas of industrial or aerospace devices, creations of anonymous engineers.

The former church building in which the Annual Party was held, Oran Mor, allied architectonic features of Victorian date restored in muted colours favoured today, to pictorial contemporary interpretation of myths past or present, expressed in a neo-surrealist manner. Traditional Scottish music and dances animated the end of the conference during the Annual Dinner in the lavish hall of the Kelvingrove Museum.

This is the cultural setting in which this conference was carefully organised and where well documented practical and theoretical sessions underlined the re-occurrence, in a buzzing new-scientific discipline, of “long or short waves” interferences in the tracks of archaeological discoveries risking the interpretation of long term history. EAA Glasgow 2015 opened the possibility of positive discussions, and a fresh outlook of the preservation of cultural Heritage.

Béatrice Fleury, archéologue et poète
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S. Arnoldussen: EAA 2015 Glasgow – An impression

Between 2 and 5 September 2015, Glasgow was host to over 2200 delegates attending the European Association of Archaeologists' (EAA) conference, which was organized by the EAA, Glasgow University and Historic Scotland. Some delegates enjoyed the pre-conference excursions in the two days prior to the main events, but I attended only the scientific programme spanning most of 3 to 5 September. Whilst the seven main themes drafted by the organization committee were already widely encompassing (Archaeology and Mobility, Reconfiguring Identities, Archaeology and Science, Communicating Archaeology, Celtic Connections Legacies and Visions, and Interpreting the Archaeological Record), the total of 173 sessions ensured that every possible taste was catered to. It is a major and impressive feat of the organizing committee (and their

myriad volunteers) that every single detail, from signposting, to providing support stewards in every room, to transport to social venues was so well-organized.

As the main themes each generally had over 20 sessions, I was surprised that Celtic Connections contained only seven sessions. The sheer volume of sessions testifies to the popularity and value of the EAA as a platform for knowledge dissemination, yet it also means that as a participant, you are missing out on loads of nice presentations for each presentation you *do* attend. For example, for the 3rd of September, no less than 35 parallel academic activities (sessions, round tables) were programmed at the start of the day. No matter how thoroughly I am enjoying the session I am in, this fills me with slight regret and a great desire to be cloned and thus able to attend at least a few at the same time! Whereas I am aware of, and impressed by, the organizational complexity of a conference of this magnitude, I wonder whether recording and rendering available on-line of all presentations by consenting presenters (even if only for delegates) is not feasible.

This means that my opinions on the sessions I attended cannot be but a very narrow sample of the rich buffet of archaeological material provided. It's true that I did attend the occasional ever-present chaotically organized session, with its trademark poor introduction, awkward silence at question time and papers not even remotely connected to the theme; heard presentations read-out at jet-fighter speed by non-natives, presenters being halfway through their slides at the 20 minute mark but all offset by the rare brilliant paper that reassured you it was not just a bad dream. Most sessions I attended managed to walk the tight rope between coherence and diversity, sparked lively - but never harsh - debate and provided food for thought. I particularly enjoyed the fact that many (if not most) of the talks were given by relatively young people (heritage professionals, PhD students and young staff members). Their fresh viewpoints and novel methodologies are just what is needed to keep you on the edge of your seat. Let's be honest, if you want delegates to skip breakfast for sessions starting at 8:00 in the morning (even the day after a well-attended annual party), you need to offer them something stimulating. In what has *got* to be the weirdest method of conference evaluation ever, I rate the EAA Glasgow zero-breakfasts-out-of-3. The only valid excuse to sneak away from a few presentations, was to shop (breakfast! Souvenirs!) and – even if briefly – take in the beauty and hospitality of Glasgow. Whereas it might take some time for the EAA to return to Glasgow, I aim to return sooner.

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Philip Tonner: Adventures in theory at EAA 2015

Delivering a paper at an international conference is always a daunting prospect. Although, this time the 'daunting factor' was mitigated somewhat by the EAA being held in Glasgow, my home town. So, at least I didn't have to travel to