

EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

News

Issue 182 March 2011



Spring is here (and British Summer Time!) and our programme of field activities is well under way. Below you will see news of some imminent events in which we hope you will be able to participate, while inside there are reports of some activities which have already taken place.

SATURDAY 9 APRIL - EDDLESTON

We have been invited by Peebleshire Archaeological Society to carry out a geophysical survey at Darnhall Mains, Eddleston. The intention is to survey a crop mark which may indicate the site of a Roman camp or fortlet. Please contact Ian Hawkins (ihsc25293@blueyonder.co.uk or 0131 339 1288) for further details.

TUESDAY 12 APRIL – VISIT TO CALLENDAR HOUSE MUSEUM, FALKIRK



We will be the guests of our old friend Dr Geoff Bailey when he will show us the museum's substantial collection of finds from excavations along the Antonine Wall. Meet at the car park at Callendar House a 1.45 p.m. The visit begins at 2.00 p.m. Any queries to Ian Hawkins (contact details above) who may also be able to assist with transport information.

LECTURE WEDNESDAY 13 APRIL

Our speaker on Wednesday 13 April is Dr Alan Macniven of Edinburgh University. His talk is alliteratively entitled "Burnt Bones and Boat Burials" and deals with his excavations in Islay and what they revealed about the Norse influence on the history and culture of the Hebrides. The lecture is at the usual time and place – 7.30 p.m. at 23a Fettes Row.

SATURDAY/SUNDAY – 9/10 APRIL KINNEIL ROMAN FORTLET

If you prefer excavation to geophysics next weekend Geoff Bailey offers a chance to get your hands dirty at Kinneil Roman fortlet. He writes "As a result of ground works to the south of the Roman fortlet we have the opportunity to examine the setting of the site in this area. The proposed works involve the re-digging of drains which have collapsed and are causing severe erosion.



Kinneil

"The archaeological work will consist of the hand excavation of trial trenches across the projected line of the Roman road heading south from the fortlet to the Military Way. This will help to establish if the Romans used a causeway here – or not, and if anything remains of the road itself. If time permits we will also look for the second fortlet ditch put forward by Lawrence Keppie.

"I'll be on site from 9am to 4.30pm on both days. Enter Kinneil Park and House from the A993 at the west end of Bo'ness. There is parking in that area."

FIRST MILLENIA STUDIES GROUP

The next lecture is on Tuesday 5 April at 5.30 pm in the Meadows Lecture Theatre, Archaeology Department, Edinburgh University, when Louisa Hammersley's topic is "*Culture contact in the North: Roman ceramics from Iron Age contexts.*"

ST ABB'S HEAD MONASTERY

The geophysics project at St Abb's Head described in the last Newsletter is tentatively scheduled for the week commencing 16 April. This is not confirmed as we go to press but pencil it into your diary just in case! An email alert will be issued to members as soon as the dates are confirmed.

THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY

The Society's library has now been delivered to the WS Society. When they have checked the inventory and shelved the collection, we will notify members of the access arrangements. It will be necessary to pre-arrange a time for access as the bays in the Lower Signet Library are "let" for study purposes. It is a very pleasant environment for research and we are very happy to have obtained this facility for Society members.

SCOTTISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS ALLOCATION PANEL

John Urquhart, the Society's Treasurer and Newsletter Editor, has been appointed as the lay member of the Panel for four years from 1 April 2011. The function of the Panel is to advise as to whether archaeological items of treasure trove should be acquired on behalf of the nation for allocation to an accredited Scottish Museum. The panel also advises on any *ex gratia* payments made to people who find and report such items, and is consulted on other matters relating to treasure trove, for example, the recent Scottish Law Commission discussion paper on Prescription and Title to Moveable Property.

John's appointment post-dates the award of £460,000 to David Booth who found the four Stirling Torcs, so he accepts no credit or blame for that decision! The torcs, incidentally, are now on display in Hawthornden Court in the NMS.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 2011 are now overdue. If your subscription is still outstanding, please forward it to the Treasurer, at the address at the end of this Newsletter. The 2011 subscription rates are:

Single	£15.00	
Family	£22.50	*Concessions:
Concession*	£10.00	Juniors
Concession Family*	£15.00	Fulltime Students
Country Single	£10.00	Unemployed
Country Family	£15.00	Senior Citizens
Institution	£30.00	

This is the "final call" before cessation of membership in accordance with the Society's Rules. 2011 membership cards are posted out on receipt of subscriptions. If any paid-up member has not received a card, please contact the Treasurer.

CALENDAR HOUSE – AGAIN!

If you want to know what life was like in a Roman encampment on the Antonine Wall, its sights and sounds are to be recreated for a special World Heritage Day event at Callendar Park, Falkirk, on 18 April. Workshops and exhibitions will take place at all five of Scotland's World Heritage sites - Edinburgh's Old and New Towns, the Antonine Wall, Neolithic Orkney, and St Kilda (at Tarbert, Harris).

OTHER PROJECTS

Other projects currently in the planning stage which may come to fruition in the next two months are:

Gifford (geophysics)
Gormyre Hill (test pit excavation)
Sunderland Farm (further geophysics).

Email alerts will be issued when arrangements for these projects are finalised.

CASTLECARY

The annual Geoff Bailey two week "holiday" dig this year will be at Castlecary on the Antonine Wall in July or August. Full details in the May Newsletter.

INVERESK ALTARS

(from Dr Fraser Hunter)

The two altars found last year at Inveresk have finally been turned over. Details are still unclear due to adhering mud, but it seems clear they come from a mithraeum. Both are dedicated by the same man, C Cassius Fla [...], centurion (and fort commander?). One is inscribed

DAEO / INVICT[.]MY/C CAS/FLA

which might be read either as DAEO for Deo, thus “To the Invincible God Mithras” – or possibly it may evoke AEON / AION, god of time, attested (arguably) iconographically in mithraea. The sides show a lyre and plectrum, and a griffin, suggesting conflation with Apollo, along with patera and jug.



The other is an amazing sculpture – a pierced radiate head of Sol, like the altar from Carrawburgh. On the capital are busts of the Four Seasons, and the inscription is most likely SOLI.C.CAS.FL[.], although the start and end are still partly obscured by mud. Wreaths on the side may evoke Sol Invictus.

VISIT TO HIGH MORLAGGAN – 15 MAY

High Morlaggan is a deserted rural settlement above Loch Long, near Arrochar, Argyll. Over the past two years it has been surveyed and excavated by a group led by Sue Furness and Fiona Jackson, and the project has been one of the stars of the *Scotland's Rural Past* scheme. Funding has been secured for a further season of excavation in 2011



High Morlaggan, above Loch Long

The Society has arranged a trip to the site on Sunday 15 May. We are not going there to dig - our visit is simply to see the site, learn about its history, and hear from Fiona and Sue about how the project has developed. Alan Calder is co-ordinating the visit. Some members signed up for the trip at the March meeting, but if you have not yet done so, please contact Alan for details (by email alancalder@btinternet.com or by phone 01383 723523). The project has its own website at www.highmorlaggan.co.uk

ARP CONFERENCE 2011

The annual Archaeological Research in Progress Conference run by the Society of Antiquaries in collaboration with Archaeology Scotland is to be held at the Royal Society of Edinburgh on 28 May 2011. Coldingham Priory, where the Society has worked in the past, features in a lecture by Chris Bowles of Borders Council, whom we know from Sunderland Farm at Selkirk. Full programme details and the booking form can be found at www.socantscot.org

EXCAVATION AT LAURIESTON

(from Dr Hugh Dinwoodie)

The first field activity of the 2011 season took place on 7 March at 74 Grahamsdyke Street, Laurieston, at the request of the owner who was constructing an extension. Around eight members turned out to help Geoff Bailey. We had assisted in a very similar exercise three years before in the garden of the house next door (no. 76); both houses had been built directly on top of the Antonine Wall itself.

A U-shaped trench, 0.6m deep and 0.6m wide, was excavated behind the house, corresponding with the planned foundations of its extension. This was deep enough to reach Roman levels; the most striking finding was an area of Roman turf just over a metre wide, crossing the trench from S to N. The turf was a distinctly lighter colour than the surrounding soil, and the individual sods were outlined by darker brown lines of soil. A similar turf deposit had been found in 2008, some ten metres distant to the east. A few sherds of Roman pottery, and some charcoal flecks, were found, confirming the stratigraphical interpretation, and adding confirmation to the theory that some form of settlement existed here, adjoining the south side of the wall, near to the fort and its annexe at Mumrills.



Boss and labourer

While to some the results might not seem very spectacular, they are nevertheless another small piece in the jigsaw that is post-Antonine Falkirk. It should be acknowledged that Geoff Bailey furnished a detailed report to all participants within a week of the dig: our thanks are due to him both for this, and for allowing us to take part in this interesting and rewarding day.

MUMRILLS FORT FIELDWALKING

On 19 March, a good turnout of members joined local enthusiasts under Geoff Bailey's supervision to walk the field which contains Mumrills Roman Fort, the largest fort on the Antonine Wall. Excellent weather had produced good conditions for walking the ploughed field, with some energetic grid-setting keeping just ahead of the walkers. The usual array of red samian (some 15 sherds) was found, including fragments of decoration and a burnt base. There was also a piece of black samian. Mortaria rims were also well represented, with Geoff reckoning that at least five mortaria rims were worth drawing. The star find was by our own Vice-chairman Christine McPherson, who found what appears to be the base of a shale box, which has gone to NMS for assessment.

EARLY MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY STUDENTS SYMPOSIUM

The fifth Early Medieval Archaeology Students Symposium will take place at The University of Glasgow between 25th and 27th May 2011. The conference offers an opportunity for graduate students and early career professionals to present their research in an informal setting. All are welcome to attend. For further information, www.gla.ac.uk/departments/archaeology/newslinks/emass/ or email emass2011@gmail.com

ADULT EDUCATION IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology Scotland has commissioned a research project "to get a snapshot of adult continuing education archaeology courses available July 2010-Aug 2011 and what courses adult learners would like to see." It can be found at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QJ3W7NY> Members might wish to take part in the online survey, or alternatively contact: R.Boyde@archaeologyscotland.org.uk

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