

EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

News

Issue 174 – July 2009



BACK TO CARRIDEN!

The big item of news in this issue is the imminent start of this season's Carriden dig, under Dr Geoff Bailey, Keeper of Archaeology and Local History at Falkirk Museum. Geoff says:

"This year's holiday excavation at Carriden (Bo'ness by the Sea) will be 1-16 August. First we found a western annexe. Then we found a bathhouse outside the fort, world heritage site and scheduled area. Then we reversed the positions of the fort and the annexe. Now we are getting really ambitious and are in search of another annexe, to the south of the fort – and we have only 16 days in which to find it (and backfill!) Of course we have the evidence of the geophysical survey by Glasgow University to go on – and we all know how reliable such surveys are.

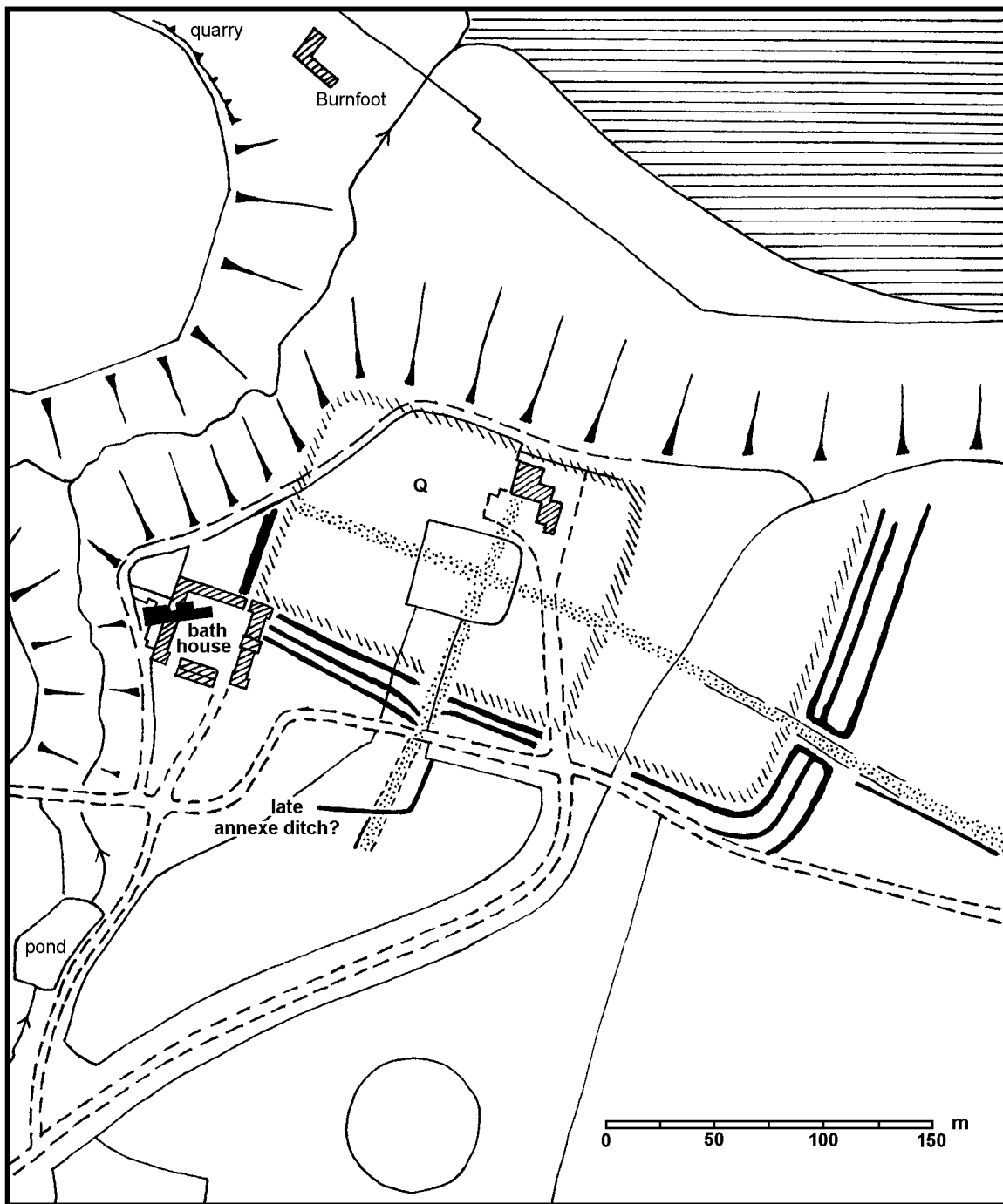
Carriden provides an unusual opportunity to examine the immediate setting of a fort on the Antonine Wall, as most of the forts are in built-up areas. And as one of only two terminal forts it is particularly interesting. To the south of the fort is an open field and the farmer has given us access to it. This is very much a research project building on our previous work, and when you recall that the area has been occupied since the Iron Age the chances are that we will find something completely different. Remember the 10th century Celtic Cross discovered in 2002? I hope to see you there. Bring a friend..."



Carriden Bathhouse excavations 2008

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The following illustration shows what is now known of the Carriden site:

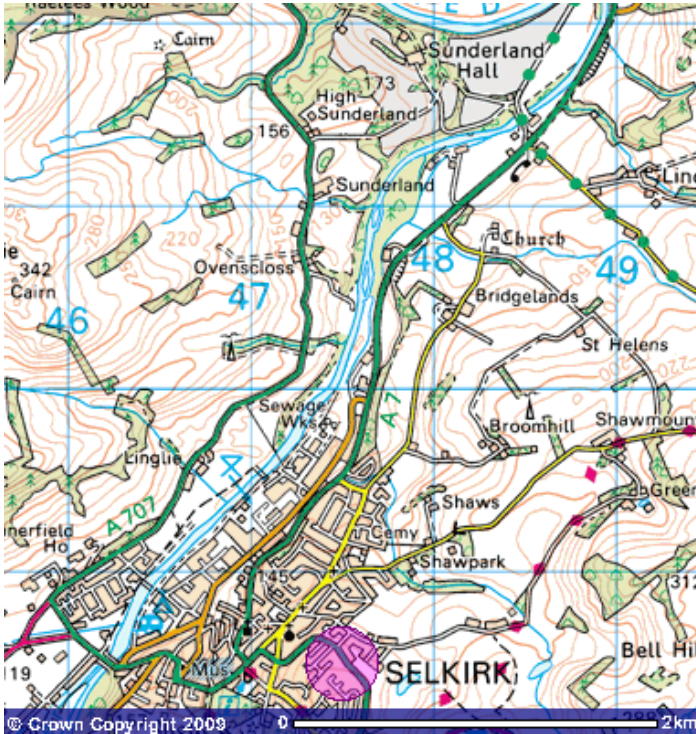


If you would like to see the Glasgow University geophysics results they are at www.antoninewall.org/content/pdf/carridenExtract.pdf.

The dig will run from 9.15 a.m. daily. Parking will, as usual, be in the courtyard of the stables.

A MEDIAEVAL VILLAGE AND A LOST ABBEY AT SELKIRK?

The owner of 6-7 Sunderland Farm Cottages, on the A707 just north of Selkirk, has invited us to make an area resistive survey over what he thinks could be a mediaeval village.



Our first visit will be on Tuesday 18 August, meeting at the Cottages, where there is parking, at 10.15 a.m. If you are interested in joining the survey party, please contact Dave Jones (0131 337 7165) who may also be able to advise about car sharing.

This could be a large project. The area is nearly 4000 square metres. Some test pitting has been done, with the approval of the Borders Council archaeologist, and a clay bonded wall about 1.0m wide has been found. The “humps and bumps” continue on the east side of the road, on the Sunderland Estate, and it has been suggested that a survey could be arranged there too.

In parallel with this, Frank Harkness, our resident member in Selkirk, is researching Selkirk Abbey, which had a brief existence (1113-1128) before the Tironensian Order moved to Kelso. The Selkirk site was deemed “unsuitable”, perhaps because it flooded from the Ettrick Water. The abbey was thought to be on the east side of the Ettrick, in Selkirk, but the site is lost. Frank believes, however, that the site may have been to the west of Selkirk. Ian Cowan, in his *The Mediaeval Church in Scotland* compares Selkirk with Dunfermline, where the abbey “attained its own burgh apparently on the opposite side of the Tower Burn”, and suggests that Selkirk Abbey and burgh could have been on opposite sides of the Ettrick Water. If so, the Sunderland mediaeval village would not be far from the abbey site and there could have been a connection.

...AND A LOST CHAPEL AT OLD PENTLAND?

As a follow-up to the geophysics survey carried out in February (see News 172), David Connolly is undertaking a small excavation at Old Pentland burial ground on Saturday 12 September starting at 11 a.m. Members are invited to attend as excavators or observers.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Ground Resistance Surveys at Camilty and Castle Greg (from Dave Jones)

Six 20m x 20m squares were surveyed from the old picnic area at Camilty north towards the Crosswood Burn. The results from the first two squares, which were reproduced in the last Newsletter, contained the only reasonable outline from the survey.

At Camilty the difficulty is that early maps show a considerable bend in the road where it bridges the Shear and Crosswood burns. The present road is almost straight and geological maps show 150m of made up ground along the line of the road. Where did the “make up” soil come from? The solid geology map shows a coal seam “at the surface” on the opposite side of the road from Camilty, and early maps show a tile works, kiln and clay pit close to the road and about 400m to the south. If the coal from the seam was used to fire the kiln, the “building” we detected could be associated. The geological map also records “made up ground over bedrock” at the north end of the promontory we surveyed towards Crosswood Burn, which runs in a deep glacial meltwater channel. Have we been surveying over a mine tip?

At Castle Greg we have now completed six 20m by 20m squares over very difficult tufted grass terrain. The printout looks very similar to the outline of the hachured area on the 25in to the mile map, except that we have some interesting looking internal features. We need to cover at least four more squares to complete the survey, and hope to do this later in the year when walking the site should be easier.

Ground Resistance Survey at Gormyre Hill, West Lothian (from Ian Hawkins)

At the request of John and Rosie Wells, on Thursday 16th July we carried out a survey of four 20m x 20m grids on Gormyre Hill in the area of the feature described as a Roman Camp in the OS First Edition map of 1856 (but omitted from subsequent editions). Gormyre is a gently sloping plateau with a 360 degree view of its surroundings which include Torphichen Preceptory about a mile to the SW and Cairnpapple Hill. There are some surviving mainly rectangular earthworks and some evidence of rig and furrow which shows up well on Flashearth. The survey went off without any problem other than a very heavy rain shower about half way through.

Interpretation of the results was confusing due to the extent of near-surface geology on the site which overwhelmed much of the archaeology. There was some tenuous evidence for a right-angled corner formed by higher resistance “blobs”, possibly field clearance deposits in pits. The situation would have been ideal for a fort (no signs of ditches) or possibly an observation tower but only excavation will help to reveal its true nature.

We are indebted to John and Rosie for setting up this survey and for their assistance on the day, and to local archaeologist Jim Knowles for his assistance on the day and help with interpretation of results.

Cramond (from Dave Jones)

The interpretation of the area and linear array resistance surveys, coupled with Val Dean’s drawing of “three broad, shallow depressions” in Trench C, appear to confirm the conjecture of Nick Holmes in his Cramond excavation report¹ that the Antonine fort was bigger than the later Severan version. Joining the dots is always somewhat of a gamble, especially if you have not got many. However, if one accepts the archaeological canard that “three stones in a line is a feature”, then four V-sections and an excavated “scoop” should also qualify! Alignment of the Trench C middle “scoop” with resistive linear array low resistance V-sections (a plausible Roman ditch) gives a line parallel to the north facing wall of the Severan fort some 30m further to the north. If this represents the north ditch of the Antonine fort, it would make the fort, in that period, symmetrical about the Principia, which is assumed to be under the church. Historic Scotland have been made aware of

¹ *Excavation of Roman Sites at Cramond, Edinburgh* (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph)

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the rabbit burrowing to the north of the Severan fort which could be causing further damage to the Antonine remains.

Penicuik

This project is now complete, with the excavations all filled in, levelled off and tidied up. A return visit will be made in the spring to check that the site is stable. All that remains is to write the report!

SCOTTISH ARCHAEOLOGY MONTH

Cramond

Cramond Heritage Trust's 2009 SAM events will take place on Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 September between 11am and 5pm.



Cramond Island Fortifications
(by kind permission of Rafal Kwiatkowski)

Guided walks to Cramond Island will take place at 12 noon on the Saturday and at 3pm on the Sunday. It will be necessary to book in advance (tel: 0131 336 2124) and the walks will last about 2 hours. Tough footwear and weatherproof clothing are essential. Other walks will be offered around Cramond itself and will last about 1 hour. No booking is required for these. Meet at The Maltings, Riverside, Cramond.

Patrick Cave-Browne will be running his highly successful Ancient Technology Workshop with opportunities for hands-on practice at creating fire from very basic materials, making rush lights or nettle string. Also available is Ancient Writing where one can find out how the Romans sent their letters or what lines scored on stones can mean.

The Maltings will be displaying its comprehensive exhibition on different aspects of Cramond's history.

Green Knap, Craigluscar, near Dunfermline

There will be a ranger-guided walk through the Craigluscar community woodland on Saturday 26 September. This will visit the Iron Age fort on Craigluscar Hill, and the ruined cottage at Green Knap (or Nap) which Society members have been recording for the Scotland's Rural Past project. Again, tough footwear and weatherproof clothing are essential. Meet 2 p.m. at the car park beside the water tanks to the left as you approach.

Doors Open Days

Doors Open Days takes place again in September, when buildings normally closed to the public, or which usually charge an entrance fee, open their doors for free. The full programme can be seen at www.doorsopendays.org.uk. The Edinburgh programme is organised by the Cockburn Association and takes place on 26 and 27 September. Among the buildings featured will be Historic Scotland's Specialist Conservation Workshop at South Gyle, which has been adapted to incorporate specialist studio facilities designed to deal with the conservation of stone, timber and painted artefacts from historic buildings and sites throughout Scotland. Demonstrations and tours of the conservation facilities will inform visitors about current conservation and research projects being undertaken.

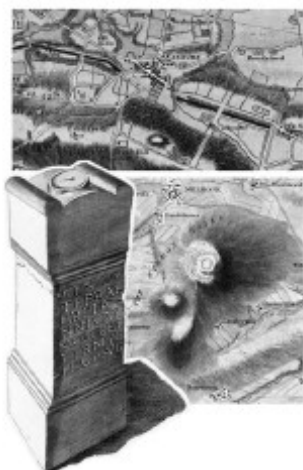
Society lectures – autumn/winter programme

Wednesday 14 October 2009 “Cramond Excavations 2008” by Martin Cook, Project Officer, AOC Archaeology

Tuesday 10 November 2009 “The Archaeology of Beer and Brewing” by Rebecca Boyde, Adult Education Tutor and Researcher, Archaeology Scotland (NB change from published programme)

Wednesday 9 December 2009 2009 project updates and AGM

NLS Map Library Seminar



A one day seminar on Tuesday 27 October will have as its theme “Mapping and Antiquities in Scotland”. Morning sessions will look at maps by Pont, Blaeu and William Roy, plus estate mapping of Loch Tayside. The afternoon will focus on themes associated with the Antonine Wall. Cost £15 (lunch £5 extra). Booking forms and further information from the Map Library, 33 Salisbury Place, Edinburgh (0131 623 3970) or see www.nls.uk/collections/maps/subjectinfo/2009-seminar-leaflet.pdf

Other dates for your diary

29-30 Aug. 2009 *Independent archaeology...business as usual*. The Biennial Conference of Independent Archaeologists, University of Derby, Buxton. Further information www.independents.org.uk

7 Sept. 2009 *Recording the Past*, British Museum. Conference on dealing with portable antiquities found by members of the public. £15 per person. Further information ccostin@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk

Membership

The Society has welcomed twelve new faces in 2009, and membership remains steady around the 100 mark.

Fast Castle publications

We still have copies of the Society's publications on the Fast Castle project. The *Excavation Report* costs £10 and the *History* is £5. Both are available from the Editor.

Next issue

Newsletter 175 will be due at the end of September. Contributions from members are welcome. Why not send in a review of your summer archaeological reading? The deadline for submissions is 23 September 2009.

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(Views and opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society, its Committee and Members, or the Editor).

31 July 2009