

EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

News

Issue 177 – March 2010



Help!

With spring in the air, this issue contains news of interesting opportunities to participate in Society activities. But before you read further - do you hold books etc belonging to the Society? If so, please see page 3. Or do you hold tools or equipment belonging to the Society? If so, please see page 5.

Calls for volunteers – your Society needs YOU!

Selkirk – 10 April We are going back to Sunderland Farm Cottages, near Selkirk, on Saturday 10 April, to resume our geophysical survey. As we cannot carry out the proposed work on the east side of the A707 until the lambing season is over, the intention on 10 April is to survey eight more 20m by 20m squares on the west side of the road to the north of the area covered last September. We hope to find evidence of buildings which are shown on an old plan of the Sunderland Estate, and which should be there somewhere among the nettles, now well died down. Please let Dave Jones (0131 337 7165) know if you are able to come. Dave will try to co-ordinate car-sharing for the trip.

Cramond – 19 April We will meet at the car park at 10.00 a.m. before carrying out further resistive linear arrays to attempt to confirm the line of the Roman ditches that appear to relate to the Antonine fort. We suggested five lines but Peter Morris has added two more, so we will have a busy day. Eric Jamieson has given us permission for two lines within the grounds of Cramond Tower, and we will do five lines around the Kennels with the permission of John Lawson of Edinburgh City Council. Our thanks go to both. Again, Dave Jones (0131 337 7165) is co-ordinating this activity

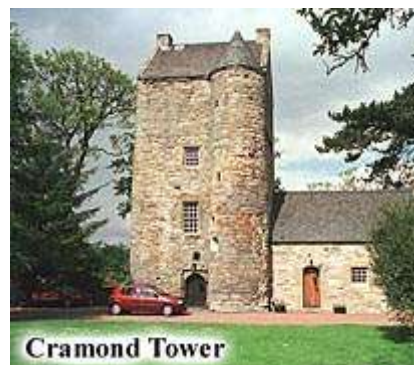


Photo: G C Jamieson

Society lectures

The remaining lectures in the spring series are as follows:

Wednesday 14 April	Derek Hall <i>Freelance Archaeologist</i>	"Scottish Monastic Landscape"
Tuesday 11 May	Tam Ward <i>Biggar Archaeology Group</i>	"The Earliest People in Scotland"

Project news update

With more dates confirmed, a busy summer is in prospect. We now have additional information on some of the prospective projects described in the last Newsletter, as well as a new project:

Castlecary Bath House: Geoff Bailey's summer dig this year is from 17 to 31 July at Castlecary Fort on the Antonine Wall, where we are invited to help him excavate the site of the bath house.

White Castle Fort: Survey and excavation from 1 to 14 August, as described in the last issue.

Old Pentland Churches: Two weekends are planned at Old Pentland. On 21 and 22 August, we will resurvey the southern area of the site to extend the coverage to identify more of the possible older church. Then on 18 and 19 September, as part of Scottish Archaeology Month, there will be excavations on both church sites. For information on the site see *Villages of Edinburgh, Vol.2* by Malcolm Cant. Also see *Old Pentland Slabs* on page 7 of this issue.

Cousland Pottery: The dates for the Cousland "Big Dig" are now confirmed as 30 August to 11 September. The excavation will explore the pottery kiln site shown in the geophysical surveys and confirmed by a brief excavation last year.

Gormyre Hill: Further interpretation of the geophysics results offers the possibility that what we have here is an Iron Age palisaded enclosure. Such enclosures were not always round, as examples at Greencraig, near Cupar, Greenbrough Hill, near Morebattle, and Rispain, near Whithorn, demonstrate. They typically contained up to five roundhouses, and we hope to find out, by a magnetometry survey, whether we have houses with central fireplaces. Permission for the survey has been obtained from the farmer and we hope to announce dates soon.



Could Gormyre Hill have looked like this?

The future of the Society's library

The Committee has been debating the future of the Society's library, which (though many of you may have been unaware of the fact) currently resides in a steel cabinet at 23a Fettes Row, allowing members to borrow items on our eight lecture nights each year. In fact, however, the library, which principally comprises books and periodicals donated over many years, is little used, and its lack of accessibility is no doubt a major factor in this respect. Its value as a research resource has been overtaken by the internet, and in any event diminishes as the stock ages. We have considered disposing of the collection, by offering items for sale to members, but we felt that this did not keep faith with those who donated books to the collection for the benefit of our members. The Committee therefore wishes to ask members for their views on an alternative proposal.

This is that the Society should donate the collection (under exclusion of our own Reports and similar publications) to the WS Society, which has told us that it would be happy to hold it in the Signet Library in Parliament Square. Members of the Society would be able to use the collection, without requiring membership of the WS Society, on prior notice to confirm authorisation. Access would (as a general rule) be for reference purposes only, as the collection would not be added to the WS Society's computerised borrowing system. A catalogue of the collection would be placed on our website, so that members could see what is available.

The Committee feels that this represents the best way of making the library resource more available to the membership, and might even encourage future donations. Please email or write to the Editor with any comments on this proposal.

Library book amnesty. A recent check of our library inventory revealed that several books are unaccounted for. Among the missing titles are:

Hidden Worlds of History – Excavations on Edinburgh Royal Mile (Schofield / Tabraham)
 Lasswade – Gravestones and Local History (Noble)
 Life in Scotland until 1603 (Nichol)
 Review of Scottish Culture No. 2 (NMS)
 Romans in Inveresk, Musselburgh (Exhibition guide)
 Scotsman issue No. 1 25/1/1817 (reprint)
 Sculpture in Scotland in the 6th to 9th Centuries (Stevenson)
 Traprain (official guide)
 Britain Under the Romans (Winbolt)
 Roman Britain (Branigan)
 Archaeology – An Illustrated Introduction (de Paor)
 Heritage of History (Stone Age to 1066) (Davies)
 Whithorn (Official guide)
 EAFS Fast Castle – Cave Reports (EAFS/Ashby-Smith)
 EAFS Occasional Paper No. 4 – Hopetoun Estate Geophysics (EAFS/Jones)
 Review of Scottish Culture No. 2 (HMSO)

If you have overlooked that you have these, or any others, of the Society's books, please contact the Editor to arrange for their return.

Did we find ludeu? (from Dave Jones)

A review of *Caledonia to Pictland: Scotland to 795* by James Fraser was contributed to Newsletter 173 (May 2009) by Brian Tait. Having found the book in Blackhall Library (DA777) I agree with Brian's comments on the difficulty of sorting out who is who when names are given in "standard Middle Irish forms". Putting awkward nomenclature aside, I was intrigued by comments on Oswy, his brother Oswald and their father Aeolfrith.



King Oswy as depicted in a stained glass window from Lichfield Cathedral, now in Lichfield Guildhall

Fraser records *"The main thrust of Bernician expansion during the reign of Aeolfrith (King 592-616) seems to have been into Gododdin. The conventional attribution of a siege of Edinburgh (Etin) in 640, is to Oswald (King 634-642). The siege probably marks at least the first stage in the final expansion of Bernician sovereignty into Etin; seemingly a district encompassing the coastal lands of Mid and West Lothian"*

Etin was in Bernician hands by 655 when Oswy (King 642-670) *"became holed up in the elusive stronghold of ludeu, in or around West Lothian at a site allowing the Firth of Forth to be called the sea of ludeu"*. Later, in 681, when an episcopal see was created at Abercorn, with Trumwini as its bishop, Fraser comments that *"it was probably near, and intervisible with, the stronghold of ludeu."*

In February 2001, the Society made a ground resistance survey over a cropmark located at the western end of Hopetoun Estate. It is shown in an aerial photograph in RCAHMS. The cropmark surrounds a flat topped hill, about 2km from Abercorn, and it lies immediately to the west of "Nynia Well Field", depicted on an 18th century estate map. From the top of the hill, overlooking Blackness Castle, there are extensive views over the Forth and Abercorn. The survey along the east limb of the cropmark was limited by weather and the simple equipment then in use. The printout showed a bank (high resistance), a ditch (low) and possible upcast on the outer east side over a distance of about 90m. The ditch possibly terminated at the south end of the cropmark just short of where there appeared to have been a square structure.

Our report, Occasional Paper No. 4, suggested that the site could have been Northumbrian, associated with Oswald: alternatively, Edward I appears to have has a fort at Blackness in 1303-04. In the light of James Fraser's comments, does the former suggestion become more likely? Did we find "the elusive stronghold of ludeu"? Is it time for a more extensive survey?

Whither EAFS?

In the last issue, Dave Jones posed the question whether the Society should be more active in attempting to develop its own projects, or should be content *“to sit back and wait for serendipitous happenings to drop some jewels into our laps?”* The Editor asked for views from members but as none has been forthcoming he offers some personal thoughts of his own:

The Society's reputation is based on its work on major projects such as Fast Castle and Cramond, prestigious projects which appeal to members who want to participate in "real" archaeology. But they demand a serious commitment in time and staying power. And a major constraint is that it is essential to the running of our own projects to have a capable, competent project director of professional standard. So it is easy to sit back and wait, as Dave says.

On the other hand, if we continue as at present, we may become thought of as a bunch of geriatrics useful only for geophysics (not that competence in geophysics is a bad reputation to have) and as a source of arthritic labour for unpaid hire. To preserve our reputation as serious contributors to Scottish archaeology and to continue to attract new, and younger, members, we need to have something more meaty to get our teeth into.

Our constitution says that we have as our objectives the study and promotion of Scotland's archaeological heritage – all very fine but a bit ovine! Without descending into the corporate jargon of mission statements and development plans, perhaps we need to ask: What is our real purpose as a Society? What are our goals for the future? If we can answer these questions, then maybe we can decide what we need to do to achieve that purpose and those goals.

Why not add your comments to this discussion in our next Newsletter?

Dates for your diary

23-25 April	Rhind Lectures (Martin Carver) <i>Design versus Dogma</i>	Royal Society, Edinburgh www.royalsoced.org.uk
15 May	<i>Scotland's Cluniac Heritage</i>	Paisley Town Hall www.cluny2010scotland.info
15-16 May	Historic Rural Settlement Research Group Conference and Field Excursion	Laggan, Strathspey Contact Prof. Richard Oram rdo1@stir.ac.uk
21-24 May	Archaeology Scotland Summer School	Blackwaterfoot, Arran www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk
28-30 May	ARP 2010 Conference	Burrell Museum, Glasgow www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk

Inventory of excavation tools and equipment

Over the years several members have volunteered to take custody of items of tools and equipment, and it may be that some of these are lying almost forgotten in a shed or garage at your home. We need to inventory these for insurance purposes, and of course it would be useful to know just exactly what resources the Society has, and what we may need to replace. If you hold any such items, please contact our chairman, Alan Calder (alancalder@btinternet.com or 01383723523).

Green Nap



As part of the Scotland's Rural Past scheme, Society members, along with members of Dunfermline Community Heritage Trust have been surveying, and researching the history of, Green Nap, a ruined roofless farm cottage on the Craigluscar Estate north west of Dunfermline (NT053913). The main building is rectangular and single-storey. From clear dividing lines in the masonry, it appears to have been constructed in three phases. The oldest and most ruined section appears to have had a double-width doorway (perhaps a later modification) wide enough for a horse-drawn cart. The middle section, adjoining on the west, is of finer, and apparently later, construction, with the main door and windows either side. The westmost section, later still, had no windows, and is floored, with a drainage channel, and is thought to have been a byre.

The remains of two other structures are visible. Behind the cottage are two sections of curved stone wall, about two metres high, apparently on a circular plan. This structure has been tentatively identified as a horse gin. To the front of the cottage, and sloping downhill from it, lies a large, formerly enclosed, rectangular area of ground, interpreted as the kitchen garden. Two adjoining stone-built structures are visible on the east boundary of this garden, one apparently partly built into the slope. Their extent and function is not clear.

As to the history of the farm, the earliest reference to the building so far identified is on Roy's map of the 1750s. In the 19th century census returns, the extent of Green Knap Farm is shown as between 40 and 60 acres. The tenant farmers were John Drysdale (1841 and 1851), John Leitch (1861) and Peter Keir (1871). There are no later records. Scottish farming hit troubled economic times after the end of the American Civil War, and Green Knap Farm, always marginal in size for a viable economic agricultural unit, may have ceased to be separate farm, being resumed by the Craigluscar Estate. On the OS One-Inch Popular Map of 1927 the building is depicted as unroofed, and is not named. It no longer appears on the OS 1:50000 maps.

Book Review (from Ian Hawkins)

The Roman Army in Northern England by Paul Bidwell and Nick Hodgson (The Arbeia Society, 2009)

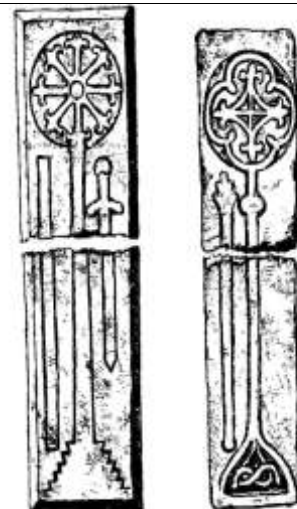
One of the benefits of membership of the Arbeia Society is regular issues of journals and other publications. One such is this gazetteer of Roman military sites, excluding those described in the Handbook to the Roman Wall. All forts in Northern England are included extending as far south as Cheshire, Derbyshire, South Yorkshire and Lincolnshire from Flavian (AD71) to AD 395 dates. In addition to forts and camps roads, bridges and signal stations are covered, with six-figure grid references for location.

This is a well-researched and comprehensive study of a rich area of Roman military occupation which has been somewhat lacking in general publications when compared with Hadrian's and the Antonine Wall.

Old Pentland Slabs

In the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries XIV 1879-80, Thomas Arnold describes the excavation of two sculptured sepulchral slabs some twenty three years earlier, when he had taken the trouble also to sketch them. His account and sketches appear below.

"On the site of the chancel there was an unusually flat piece of turf, whose square outline suggested it grew over some stone slabs. Assisted by my brother, who was with me, I loosened the turf all around the edge of the hidden slabs, and after some trouble we unrolled the grassy cover which had for ages protected these memorials. The stones were discovered clean and sharp; and, excepting the damage received by the original destruction of the church, quite uninjured. Some vaulting or other heavy stonework of the chancel had fallen on and broken the two slabs nearly in the middle. These slabs had not been seen for centuries in all probability: the closely-adhering and old matted turf showed the growth of many generations. After sketching the slabs we replaced the turf covering."



Sculptured Slabs in the Chancel of
Old Pentland Church.

The Cramond Association

The Cramond Association intends to mount an exhibition celebrating its 50th anniversary. This may form part of Scottish Archaeology Month in September, possibly in the second half of the month.

Beecraigs Roundhouse *(from Nick Davis)*

Headland Archaeology has discovered a number of features including ring ditches, a roundhouse and other evidence of settlement during groundworks for a new Eco Centre to be built in Beecraigs Country Park, West Lothian. Nick has been assisting Headland by sifting spoil from the works.

RCAHMS Search Room

RCAHMS have announced changes to its Search Room services from 12 April, intended to enhance the way its collections can be consulted. It is now open Tuesday to Friday from 9.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. (6.00 p.m. on Thursday). On Mondays it is open only for pre-booked group visits. Visitors are encouraged to make appointments (essential for the Aerial Photography Collection) but drop-ins are still welcome. Full details at www.rcahms.gov.uk

Scottish Community Archaeology Conference 2009

The booklet from the Musselburgh conference is now available for purchase – see www.eastlothian.gov.uk/archaeology

Editor's Note

Thanks to all contributors. The deadline for Issue 178 is 24 May.

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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).