

EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

News

Issue 181 January 2011



Welcome to the first newsletter of 2011. We may still be in winter's icy grip, but the Society is formulating a busy programme of surveys and digs for the spring and summer which we will put dates to as the warmer weather arrives. There should be something to appeal to everyone, with projects covering various dates from Roman times to World War II.

SOCIETY LECTURES

Our winter lecture programme resumes on Wednesday 9 February 2011 when Ivan Young of the intrepid Grampian Speleological Group will be telling us how he and his colleagues found evidence of the animals with which our ancestors shared their landscape, not to mention some that pre-date human occupation, in the Bear Caves of Assynt.



The Grampian Speleological Group was formed in 1961 and is the oldest and largest caving club in Scotland. Its members have discovered and extended caves all over Scotland and the British Isles - a process that continues today. Further afield, members have participated in expeditions from Austria to Ecuador to Hawaii to Zimbabwe, and caved on all continents - except perhaps Antarctica.

On Tuesday 8 March, Robin Murdoch will be talking about "Glass in Scottish Archaeology", and on Wednesday 13 April, Alan Macniven's alliterative topic is *Burnt Bones and Boat Burials*.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's Fortieth AGM was due to take place on 8 December 2010. Unfortunately, that was just when the snow and ice in Edinburgh and the surrounding area were at their worst. The Committee was concerned that many members would be unwilling or unable to make the trip to attend, with the result that the meeting would not have a quorum. It was also felt that members should not be asked to travel in the prevailing road and pavement conditions, in view of the risk of accident. The decision was therefore taken to postpone the AGM to coincide with the first lecture meeting of 2011, on 11 January.

Alan Calder was elected unopposed to another year as Society Chairman.



Alan Calder

FIELD-WALKING AT CRAMOND

We have hoped for some time that we might fieldwalk and survey the 30 acre field that lies to the north of the Roman cemetery field (Farl O' Cakes) on the north side of Lauriston Castle.

Oblique aerial photographs of this field, in the RCAHMS collection, show circular and linear features designated Cramond 1 and 2. They could be of Iron Age date possibly relating to the population that lived on the periphery of the Cramond Roman fort.

The edge of the 30 acre field slopes north towards the promenade and the Firth of Forth, crossing the east-west line of the old raised beach. A brief walk by our former chairman Dave Jones round this field last September produced a number of surface finds including some interesting looking pieces of chert; mainly from the northern end about the raised beach line. One of the pieces of struck chert has been identified by Alan Saville, Senior Curator Earliest Prehistory at National Museums of Scotland, as a good example of a Mesolithic core for producing flakes or blades.

The field is owned by City of Edinburgh Council, and, like Farl O' Cakes, is let out for grazing or crops. An approach has been made to John Lawson, the City Archaeological Officer, requesting that we be allowed to field-walk and survey over the cropmarks and the northern part of the field. The field currently appears to have a crop that could be winter cattle feed so immediate access is unlikely.

Prehistoric activity on the edge of the raised beach, Neolithic and Mesolithic, has been found at Cramond and on the western side of the River Almond on the Dalmeny Estate, so for this to continue eastwards should not be surprising. Val Dean found cherts near Cramond Boat Club some years back. If cropmarks 1 and 2 relate to round houses it suggests the Iron Age population preferred living a more sheltered life further away from blown sand and spray than their Neolithic predecessors.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 2011 are now due. All members should by now have received by e-mail or post a note of the current year's rates.



While the standard rates remain unchanged from 2010, at the AGM it was agreed to increase the concessionary rates from half to two-thirds of the equivalent standard rates, meaning that senior citizens, juniors, full-time students and unemployed now pay £10.00 per year – still outstanding value for money.

Payment should be sent to the Editor (for his sins also the Society's new Hon. Treasurer) at the address at the end of this newsletter.

2011 membership cards are posted out on receipt of subscriptions.

2011 COMMITTEE

A re-shuffle of committee members was approved at the AGM to allow Anne Brockington to step down from the Treasurer role, due to other commitments. Graeme Collie's resignation had left a vacancy for an ordinary committee member, and as this was not filled at the AGM, the committee subsequently co-opted Norah Carlin. Norah has been an energetic participant in all aspects of the Society's activities. A retired academic historian, she has a particular interest in, and talent for, historical research.

The new Committee comprises:

Chairman	Alan Calder
Vice Chairman	Christine McPherson
Hon. Secretary	Ian Hawkins
Hon. Treasurer	John Urquhart
Ordinary members	Anne Brockington, Norah Carlin, Val Dean, Ann Kerrigan, Don Matthews, Jill Strobridge

Don has taken on the role of fieldwork co-ordinator, an onerous task in what looks like being a busy year.

THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY

Agreement has now been reached with the Society of Writers to the Signet that the Society's library collection will be donated to them, to be held in the Signet Library in Parliament Square, with arrangements to allow access to the books by Society members. The Signet Library is one of the most distinguished interiors in the city. It was completed in 1822 for the visit to Edinburgh of King George IV, who described the Upper Library as "the finest drawing room in Europe".



The Signet Library

The books will be housed in the Lower Library. They will be available for reference only, as they will not be added to the Signet Library's computerised borrowing system.

They will be delivered to their new home during February. Members will be notified in due course of the procedure to be followed for access, as we will not become Signet Library members under this arrangement. Our Webmaster, Fergie Meek, is looking at the possibility of listing the inventory of the collection on our website, so that members can check what titles are available for reference before visiting.

KITE PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE LOST DOCKYARD OF JAMES IV

In November last year our speaker was John Reid of the Falkirk Local History Society who has researched the dockyard position near the old Kincardine Bridge. His photographs, taken from the shore, give a foreshortened view of the position of the many stakes and piles that are visible at low tide. Some are assumed to delineate the dock shape (others could well be remains of later fish traps). It is not possible to determine accurately a layout from these photographs.

It was suggested that contact be made with John Wells, who spoke at our October meeting on his aerial photography using his wing kite. By flying the kite from the southern shore of the River Forth it should be possible to record near vertical views of the positions of the piles and confirm their lines and spacings. John is sure that, given a reasonably steady west wind, he will be able to take photographs that will accurately record the pile layout. The two Johns are now in contact and will shortly be out together beside Kincardine Bridge. We look forward to an update on the lost dockyard investigation.

WHITE CASTLE

Last year we joined, for one weekend, with David Connolly and Rampart Scotland in the ground resistance survey and dig at this site. We are invited to join further digging and to conduct more geophysical survey during the period 23 July to 6 August when they will be on site. Our involvement will probably be on the middle weekend. The Rampart Scotland activity will also cover Chesters Fort at Drem (NT508783) and during this period geophysics will also be required there.

AMISFIELD, HADDINGTON.

We have also been asked if we will make a ground resistance survey in the walled garden at NT 525754 to attempt to determine what if anything was originally built there. The suggestion is that the survey could be made over one weekend in May.

TEMPLE

David Connolly has invited us again this year to join with him and with Dr Brenda Franey, the sponsor of the project, to investigate further the Knights Templar site, probably in April and/or May. The intention is to continue the excavation of the 'fortalice' building, which appears to post-date the Templar period, to conduct more geophysics and test pit some of the anomalies found in the area ground resistance survey. The Society's excavations at Temple last September inspired Norah Carlin to carry out some research into the history of the Temple fortified house. This is part of her report.

In 1582 the second Lord Torphichen had granted 'the Mains of Temple, with the tower, place, fortalice and mill thereof' to James Cockburn of Ormiston, the husband of the first Lord Torphichen's sister Alison Sandilands. This is the earliest reference I have found to a fortified house in Temple. In 1585 James and Alison settled this estate of Temple on one of their sons, Samuel.

After Samuel Cockburn's death in 1614, his children fell out over their inheritance. In 1616 his daughter Elizabeth claimed she was owed 12,000 merks (£8,000 Scots) by her brother Francis as her portion, and had two of his properties, Vogrie and Temple, 'apprised' (valued) for satisfaction of this debt. The appraisers found that Francis was holding 'the farmtown and lands of Temple, with the demesne lands, manor place, Temple grain mill, teind sheaves' and other rights from the current Lord Torphichen. Elizabeth got the property at Vogrie, which she soon sold to a Stephen Boyd (perhaps a relative of Francis' wife) of whom more later.

Francis seems to have remained at Temple. In February 1627 the Privy Council ordered Elizabeth's brothers Francis and William Cockburn to provide sureties to keep the peace, because 'thair is great appearance of trouble and unquyetnesse like to fall out between [them] anent the right of the place and fortalice of Temple'.

Francis and William agreed to refer the case

to arbitration. But five months later the Privy Council expressed concern 'anent the violent surprysing and taking of the hous of Temple' by one of them, and put 'the said hous and towre of Temple with the laich biggings thereof' in the custody of a royal official until their mutual complaints were heard.

The dispute dragged on into 1628, as Francis refused to sign the house over to William according to the Council's decision, and his wife Marion tried to get the decision reversed.

The unfraternal dispute seems to have been resolved by Stephen Boyd selling Vogrie to William Cockburn and buying Temple for himself, securing Elizabeth's resignation of her claim and a charter from Lord Torphichen to seal the bargain.

Temple passed from Stephen to his son James Boyd, who was active on the Edinburghshire committee during the Covenanters' war against Charles I. But by 1665, James Boyd was heavily in debt, and the property was once again appraised at the instance of John Boyd (relationship not known) who claimed James owed him the enormous sum of £13,475 – plus the sheriff's fee of £670 15s!

In 1673 Temple was conveyed to Sir Patrick Murray of Deuchar in Selkirkshire. Sir Patrick died in 1689 and is buried in Greyfriars Churchyard. Around 1700 Sir Patrick's son John told Father Richard Augustine Hay that while his father was still alive he had come upon the foundations of a stone building with large pillars, which he thought must have been the Templars' church, while digging in the garden. Temple finally passed from the family of Murray of Deuchar to that of Dundas of Arniston in the mid-18th century.

Was this garden to the north of the 'fortalice' building? In our geophysics, four high resistance points stand at the corners of a square; these could represent pillars, but they seem to be isolated and not very near to the large rectangular high resistance that suggests a building not less than 20m square. We will hopefully find out a lot more about this site in the next few months.

ELECTRICAL RESISTIVITY TOMOGRAPHY

It may sound new and different but it is apparently the modern term for information produced from resistive linear array surveys. The software processing of the data is the key to the interpretation of the profile along which the probes have been inserted. The computer programme is iterative, in that it interprets the many resistance readings, taken at different depths, a number of times to give a 'best fit' of the data to give a smooth printout. In theory, the more iterations performed the more accurate the printout.

The most commonly used programme is made by Geotomo Software of Penang and is known as RES2DINV. The full version makes five iterations and is very expensive but there is a simpler programme that makes only three iterations; it can be downloaded free. This version has been generally reckoned to fulfil our needs.

The Cramond printouts, apparently showing slumped, truncated and backfilled ditches, some with high and some with low resistance material, have caused us to wonder how well these are being depicted using the three iteration programme. There was also doubt on the low resistances fairly consistently shown on the Gormyre prints where high resistance bedrock was expected based on information on the drift geology map.

Dr Bruce Hobbs, who arranged the surveys and processed the data for our early surveys at Cramond, used the five iteration version of the programme; he agreed to reprocess some of the Cramond profile data to compare with the three iteration printouts produced by Dr Peter Morris. Comparing printouts showed only minor 'improvements' between the three and five iteration programmes which relieved our doubts.

The BGS drift geology map records 'Bedrock at or near the surface' and 'Drift thickness generally less than 1m'. We now have confidence that over the area of Gormyre 'camp' there is about 2.5m.

ST ABB'S HEAD MONASTERY

The existence of an Anglian monastery at St Abb's is well-documented in historical sources, but the actual location of the site remains in doubt. The traditional site appears too small for the substantial building which is believed to have existed. Features at a nearby cliff-top location suggest the possibility that they might be the foundations of the building, and the National Trust for Scotland, which owns the site, wishes to explore this alternative, initially by means of a geophysical survey. Dr Daniel Rhodes, NTS Group Archaeologist (South), has invited the Society to carry out this work.

We will be surveying twelve 20m x 20m squares, over two days, covering a roughly rectangular feature on Kirk Hill which has not previously been investigated. If time permits we may also be able to survey some nearby traces of circular structures which could possibly be beehive-type cells, of the type found at other early Christian sites.

This is likely to be one of the first Society activities of the 2011 season, but given the exposed location, we will wait for more clement weather to reduce the chances of our team being blown over the cliffs into the North Sea.

RETURN TO COUSLAND

As part of the Big Dig at Cousland in 2008-09, a lot of vegetation was cleared from the site of the windmill. This revealed that the mound on which the windmill was constructed, in the late 17th or early 18th century, itself lay on a larger, roughly rectangular platform. This platform may be a natural feature, or it may relate to an earlier, so far unidentified, use of Windmill Hill. A number of early Christian cist burials have been found in the vicinity of Windmill Hill, although their precise location is uncertain. Could the Hill itself have been the site of some early Christian religious building? We hope to go back later this year to carry out a geophysical survey and perhaps some test pitting.