

EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

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News

Issue 186 – January 2012



SOCIETY LECTURES

Wednesday 8 February	Dr Daniel Rhodes <i>National Trust for Scotland</i>	Archaeology in the NTS South Region
Tuesday 13 March	Steven Boyle <i>RCAHMS</i>	Archaeology on The Small Isles
Wednesday 11 April	Dr Jeff Sanders <i>ScARF</i>	The Big 5: Future Trends in Scottish Archaeology
Tuesday 8 May	Nicholas Holmes <i>NMS</i>	Cash or Cache: Romans, Natives and Coins in Late Antonine and Severan Scotland

BOB MARKS

Dave Jones contributes an appreciation of Society stalwart Bob Marks who died recently.



Bob was born and attended school in East Anglia. He completed his National Service in the Royal Navy in the immediate post-war years and when demobbed, studied quantity surveying in London. On achieving Chartered Quantity Surveyor status, he married Joyce, who was a native of Edinburgh, and moved north in the early 1960s, to work on large projects, firstly with Crudens and then with McAlpine. He retired from the latter in 1991, having completed work on Torness and Hunterston power stations.

Bob then joined EAFS, having already attended an archaeology course that involved him in excavation in West Lothian. In the following years he participated in digs at Cramond and Penicuik, sorted finds at Broughton Market, fieldwalked at Dalmeny, and was a mainstay of the then new activity of geophysics, initially at Newhailes House and then twenty other sites.

Bob was a man of many interests: at one time a keen rugby player; a supporter of Scottish cricket; a member of the Astronomical Society; and a very keen beekeeper with hives on the Dalmeny Estate. He assisted on the Scottish Beekeepers stand at the Royal Highland Show, and if you were lucky he gave you a pot. Bob was a gentle man in both senses of the word. Joyce died in 2003 and Bob leaves a son and two daughters. His cheerfulness and willing support in all activities are sadly missed. Thank you, Bob, for your friendship over the years.

LARBERT WOOD EXCAVATION 13 & 14 December 2011 (from Ian Hawkins)



Geoff Bailey, Chairman Alan Calder and EAFS members take a break at Larbert Wood

Geoff Bailey was asked to investigate an area of Larbert Wood by the Forestry Commission in advance of footpath upgrading

The site is that of a Roman temporary camp initially identified by Gordon Maxwell from aerial photographs that show the south west corner. The north west corner and maybe the north east corner survive as standing earthworks. However, the east side is only conjectured and the intention was to cut long linear trenches across the postulated line. The camp is very large and it has been suggested that it belongs to the early third century campaigns of Septimus Severus.

On a very wet and windy Tuesday in mid-December we met up with Geoff and a mini-digger to excavate some evaluation trenches. Hopes were raised when an edge was located but this turned out to be a pipe trench - a very large pipe trench for the main water supply for Grangemouth. How did the Forestry Commission not know it was there! Next day in much better weather a very long trench was excavated to the west and this rapidly filled with water - another much smaller water pipe. After a move further down the line of the path a third trench quickly found a water-filled field drain to complete the set. Ah, the joys of archaeology in Scotland - two days' work to find.....absolutely nothing!

SCH@RP (from Christine McPherson)



Those of you who attended the AGM in December 2011 heard a fascinating talk from Joanna Hambly about the new project that The SCAPE Trust is developing. SCAPE stands for “Scottish Coastal Archaeology and the Problem of Erosion” and members will recall that the Society participated in the Trust’s “Shorewatch” survey project during 2000-2005.

SCH@RP (Scotland’s Coastal Heritage at Risk Project) is a development out of Shorewatch. The original survey covered about 40% of Scotland’s shoreline and recorded approximately 12,000 sites. These sites have been prioritised into groups on the basis of risk, with 322 being in the ‘top’ priority group and 618 in the ‘high’ priority group. Read more about SCH@RP at <http://www.scapetrust.org/html/scharp>

The plan is for local groups to survey these priority sites and record them. The SCH@RP team feel that local groups will know the terrain and history of their local area better. The second phase would be for approximately 12 of the most at risk sites to be excavated and preserved by record. In the area that we could easily connect with there are 54 priority sites. These include St. Dennis Chapel, Seacliff Tower, a midden at Kinneil Kerse, Airth Wharf, hulks in Aberlady Bay and Eyemouth Fort.

There was general agreement at the AGM that the Society should once again get involved. Training will be provided and the SCH@RP team have indicated that they would like to test their training out on a group with good experience of similar surveys. They feel that we fill the criteria. They have applied for lottery money for the project and have got through the initial rounds of bidding. As soon as their finance is confirmed they will be in touch with us to make a start. If you are interested in taking part look out for information in the newsletters or through the e-mail alerts.



MUMRILLS FIELDWALKING 5 November 2011 (from Geoff Bailey)

Due to the glorious sunny and warm weather, the plough soil had not weathered as much as I would have liked, which meant that we did not find as much coarseware and mortaria as we might have expected. This was because the darker coloured pottery was far more difficult to see. On the other hand we still got about seven pieces of decorated samian, which I will be reporting on in due course. And a bucketful of flue tiles! The metal detecting was not fruitful, which gives us the comfort of believing that we are not losing stuff to night hawkers.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's AGM arrangements were, thankfully, not disrupted by the weather but only a bare quorum turned up on the night. The existing Committee was re-elected unopposed. However, Anne Brockington has since resigned as an ordinary committee member and the Committee will consider the co-option of a replacement at its next meeting. There was a brisk debate on the Committee's proposed change to the Rules, which was designed to allow all official communications between the Society and its members, including notice of the AGM, to be made by e-mail. A number of members felt that as there were members who had no e-mail, or whose systems could not cope with large files, the option of ordinary mail should be retained for those members if they so wished. The meeting agreed, and the new Rule as approved by the AGM reads:

Where any provision of these Rules requires that any notice, request or other communication, whether or not in writing, be posted or otherwise made or given, it shall be sufficient compliance with that requirement that the said notice, request or other communication be made or given by e-mail or other electronic means unless a member has requested otherwise.

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

The Committee has a number of projects under consideration for the 2012 season, but no dates have been firmed up just yet. The SCH@RP project described in this issue will run throughout the season once it gets started. We are due to dig some test pits at Goremyre Hill. We expect to carry out further geophysics at Castle Greg. There are ongoing opportunities for building survey and recording at Penicuik House. There may be excavation and/or survey opportunities with the NTS at Newhailes House, House of the Binns and Melrose Abbey. We are looking at a possible project at Brunstane Castle which, if approved by Historic Scotland, could involve a geophysical survey and test trenches. A return to Sheriffside, near Gifford, for further excavation with David Connolly is likely in April. There are various other projects in the pipeline, and as usual, other unforeseen requests for involvement will crop up throughout the season, so we expect to be busy! Members will be kept informed through the Newsletter, and by the e-mail "Alerts" system.

COUSLAND

The hunt for the lost early Christian burial cists at Cousland has run into an obstacle. These cists have been found by previous excavators, but information recording their precise location has been lost. The most likely site now has a pipeline running through it, and it is considered that the only way forward is by means of a survey using ground-penetrating radar (GPR). If any reader knows of anybody who could put such equipment at the disposal of the Society, please contact the Editor.

LIBRARY

If any member has made use of the new arrangements (described in the last issue) for access to the former society library, now housed at the Signet Library in Parliament Square, the Editor would welcome feedback on the experience.

RCAHMS LUNCHTIME LECTURES

Open to all, these lectures are presented by experts in their field on a wide range of subjects. Held in the RCAHMS Conference Room, the lectures start at 1pm and last for up to 1 hour including time for questions. All talks are free of charge but must be pre-booked since places are limited - 0131 662 1456 or email info@rcahms.gov.uk. RCAHMS are currently putting together the lecture schedule for 2012. If you would like to present a lecture please get in touch with philip.graham@rcahms.gov.uk.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Date	Event	Organiser
9 February 2012,	<i>Roman Inveresk</i> Talk by Dr Fraser Hunter, St Peter's Church Hall, High Street, Musselburgh 7.30pm	Musselburgh Conservation Society,
15 February 2012	<i>Loyalty to the Sovereign and the Scottish Heralds</i> Lecture by Charles J Burnett Esq, Ross Herald Extraordinary	Society of Antiquaries of Scotland http://www.socantscot.org
15 February 2012	<i>Living and Dying at Auldham, East Lothian – The Excavation of an Anglian Monastic Settlement & Medieval Parish Church</i> Talk by Anne Crone, AOC Archaeology, Kirk Stables, Aberlady 7pm	Aberlady Conservation and History Society
12 March 2012	<i>Armour or Glamour? Shields and Warfare in the Bronze Age</i> Lecture by Dr Marion Uckelmann, University of Exeter	Society of Antiquaries of Scotland http://www.socantscot.org
14 March 2012	<i>Crannogs and Iron Age Settlements in Scotland</i> Talk by Graeme Cavers, AOC Archaeology, Kirk Stables, Aberlady 7pm	Aberlady Conservation and History Society
13 - 15 April 2012	<i>The Rhind Lectures: 'On the Windy Edge of Nothing: Vikings in the North Atlantic World - Ecological and Social Journeys'</i> By Professor Kevin Edwards, University of Aberdeen	Society of Antiquaries of Scotland http://www.socantscot.org

THE STORK'S BEAK SCHOOL

The Stork's Beak School <http://www.storksbeak.co.uk> practises fencing techniques based on historical combat manuals from the 15th to early 20th Centuries. Current disciplines taught include the Longsword, Dussack and Great Stick. The School researches and practices Swordsmanship in the Western Martial Arts tradition. Andy Taylor, who runs the school, says "Simply put this is the most fun you'll ever have with a Sword!"

The School meets from 7:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. every Thursday in the Upper Hall of Kirk O'Fields Church on Brown Street (just off the Pleasance). Classes are open to all levels of ability/experience, and equipment is provided. For the month of February the first lesson is free.

RCAHMS REVIEW

The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, has commissioned Historic Scotland to undertake a strategic options appraisal on the future of RCAHMS. The official statement on the RCAHMS website reads:

The value of the work that RCAHMS does and the expertise that it holds in a modern Scotland are not being questioned. With the Scottish Government placing more emphasis than ever before on Scotland's cultural heritage, being able to record the historic built environment, maintain a living collection of artefacts that describe it, and make this collection accessible to both specialists and enthusiasts, remains important to Scottish Ministers. Indeed, it is in this context that they have commissioned a review.

However, there is a view that Scottish Government wants to make RCAHMS part of Historic Scotland, and that the review is window-dressing. You can contribute to the review via the RCAHMS website <http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/news/rcahms-review>

WHITE CASTLE

Rampart Scotland is running a third season of excavation at the Iron Age hillfort at White Castle in the Lammermuirs. The Society assisted with geophysics at the site in the first season. The course runs from 9 - 20 July 2012. The cost is £575 including bunkhouse accommodation, food and transport to and from site. For further information see <http://www.rampartscotland.co.uk>

HONORARY PRESIDENT

As many members will know, our Honorary President, Dr David Caldwell, retires from the National Museum of Scotland in February, and we wish him a long and active retirement. He has indicated to the Society that he feels that this would also be the right time to relinquish his role as Hon. President, and while we are sorry to lose him, we fully respect his wishes. It will fall to the next AGM of the Society in December 2012 to elect a replacement. We therefore have plenty time to consider our choice and the Committee wishes to canvass opinion among members for suggestions as to whom we might approach. Names please to the Editor, who will put them before the Committee, with a view to a recommendation of a suitable, and willing, candidate to the AGM.

Editor: J. Urquhart, 91 Milton Road, Kirkcaldy KY1 1TP 01592 644710 john.urquhart1001@btinternet.com

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