

EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

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News

Issue 188 – May 2012



Penicuik House

On 21 and 22 April we completed our resistivity survey of the lawns which lie to the front of the imposing Ionic hexastyle portico of the ruined Penicuik House. We were looking for evidence of the foundations of Newbiggin, also known as Old Penicuik, the massive extended tower house which became the home of one of Scotland's most famous families, the Clerks of Penicuik.

Newbiggin was demolished in the 1760s to make way for Penicuik House, designed in the Palladian style by Sir James Clerk and the architect John Baxter. In 1857, Sir George Clerk added end blocks designed by David Bryce. However the building was destroyed by fire in June 1899, leaving a roofless shell which is now being stabilised under a six-year project which should see it open to the public in due course.

What we hope to establish is whether Penicuik House sits, in whole or in part, on top of the foundations of Newbiggin, or whether, as has been suggested, these foundations lie in front of the building which replaced it. The task is complicated by extensive landscaping which raised the ground level to create a ha-ha, and by the later installation of driveways, some now under tarmac.

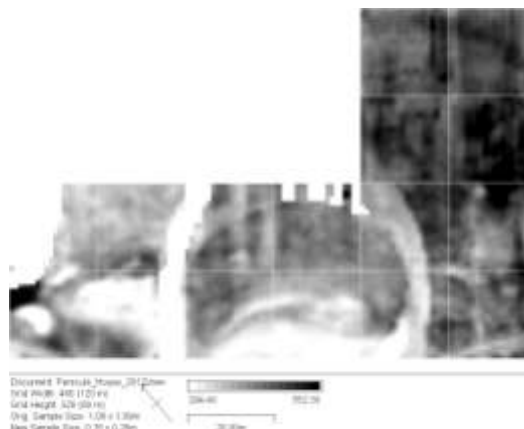
The results of our survey, shown here (as if the portico is at the foot of the picture) show interesting anomalies to the right.



Penicuik House



Newbiggin c.1750



Life Beyond Flodden...EAFS in the Far East (from Jon Cooper)

You may recall meeting a very keen 'young' man sometime back in 2008 on various digs bleating on about battlefield archaeology. Then he simply disappeared and has not been heard of since. Well now we can reveal that Jon Cooper is safe and sound and working hard in Singapore. Jon and his family left for the Far East in 2009 on what was to be an 18 month detachment. Three years on he is still there but he has not forgotten his EAFS roots and archaeological training.

Jon set up and managed 'The Adam Park Project' (TAPP) looking into the potential for WW2 battlefield archaeology in the concrete suburbs of Singapore Island. Three years on and 16 site surveys later, Jon has completed the first ever battlefield archaeological study in Singapore. His work culminated in a display of artefacts at the Singapore National Library entitled 'Four Days in February' which told of the dramatic defence of the Adam Park estate by the 1st Battalion of the Cambridgeshire Regiment through the artefacts and research material collected during the project. He was also called upon to reveal the project findings in a number of seminars and talks during the 70th Anniversary Commemorations for the Fall of Singapore. In 2011 Jon and the project team appeared on an episode of History Channel's 'Hidden Cities' in which he showed the presenter Anthony Morse around the site and discussed the project findings in detail.



Jon on site at Bukit Brown – scene of heavy fighting in 1942 and the proposed site of a new road in 2012

Adam Park is now recognised as a remarkable and unique WW2 heritage site. Not only was it the scene of heavy fighting during the fall of the city but it also became the location for a POW camp for work parties working on the infamous 'Shrine Job' on the Singapore Island Country Club Golf Course. What is more remarkable is that, in a city renowned for its rapid growth and all consuming urban development, the estate remains intact at all. In fact thanks to the Government rental schemes and heritage protection the site has remained unchanged since 1928 when it was built.

There are some areas of the site where the bullets and webbing equipment can be found scattered on the surface on the manicured lawns and tennis courts. Have a look on Google Earth and you can take a virtual tour of the estate today and see what we mean.



Mike Ng from the TAPP metal detecting team shows off his GS Cap badge found in the front garden of 18 Adam Park

Job commitments means that Jon and the family plan to be in Singapore for a few more years which will give him plenty of time to run TAPP2 which will be looking for a lost Shinto Shrine on the shores of MacRitchie Reservoir, a POW Chapel and hidden mural, a review and survey of the infamous Sime Road prison camp and a number of missing Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders thought to have been buried on the Dairy Farm Road battlefield.

Jon says he's looking forward to his return to Scotland though. He misses the 16th Century warfare sites he specialised in during his time with the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology at Glasgow University and looks on with envy at the work currently underway on the Pinkie and Flodden battlefields. He doesn't miss the weather, but at least there is little risk of being bitten by cobras, scorpions and mosquitoes whilst on digs in the Lothians !

If you would like to know more about the work being undertaken in Singapore then log on to the Adam Park Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Adam-Park-Project/137333236283715> and we recommend taking a look at the videos taken on site during the earlier surveys.

Cramond revisited (from Val Dean)

Some older members may remember excavating the Road site in Cramond Woods under the direction of Charlie Hoy, between 1978 and 1985. This was a multi-period Roman road leading from the east gateway of the fort, through the vast annexe (now under the Cramond Campus housing development) and heading in the general direction of Inveresk.



At the time, the excavation was surrounded by chicken wire and chestnut paling fencing, topped by barbed wire - which had never been removed. Now that the vegetation has pretty well taken the site over, it was felt that, for environmental and safety reasons, the fencing should be removed.



So, on a sunny Saturday, 5 May, a group of members, some of whom are seen here hard at work, tackled the fence and removed the materials from the site. Many thanks to Heather Smith for nobly filling her car and heading for the Sighthill recycling centre. Thanks also to the rest of the group for their fine efforts.

Sheriffside, Gifford

On 8 and 9 April, we returned to the hillside above Sheriffside Farm, near Gifford, where last year our geophysical survey across a cropmark revealed concentric circles of a previously uninvestigated feature (see Newsletter 183). Early indications derived from David Connolly's 2011 trench are of a late Bronze Age or early Iron Age site.

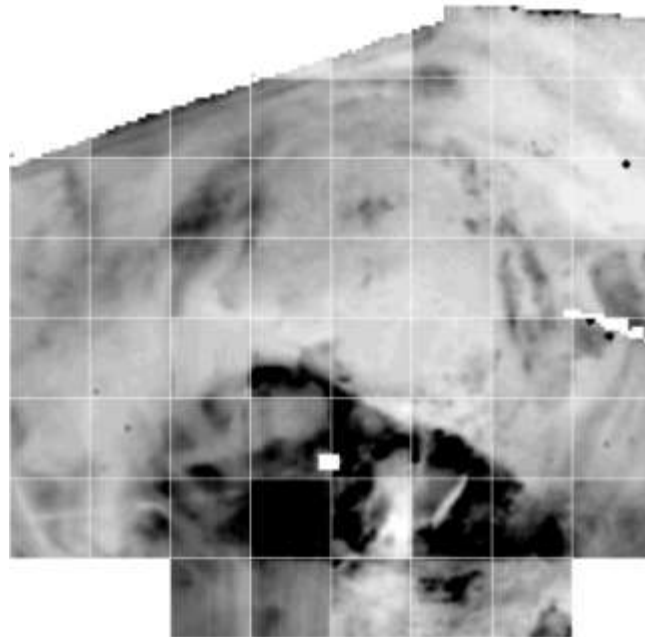


Laying out the grid, with the Lammermuirs behind



That warm clothing was very necessary!

David was also back with an enthusiastic team of students who opened a new trench. While they dug ever deeper (and deeper!), we surveyed the remaining parts of the hillside, which is in fact the south-facing slope of a large flat oval plateau lying at an elevation of over 200 metres between Traprain Law to the north and the Lammermuir Hills to the south. We await David's verdict on the results of his dig.



This year we added 27 grids to the 31 from last year, making this our largest ever geophysics project. This print shows the concentric ditch features. The dark area is believed to be a former quarry, now infilled.

Corrour Old Lodge

On 9 May 2012, five intrepid members of the Society hiked five miles along the old Road to the Isles from Rannoch to Corrour Old Lodge on Rannoch Moor to continue Hugh Dinwoodie's survey of the ruined building and its surroundings. After spending several hours at the site, there was nothing else for it but to hike five miles back. Surely this is the most remote site the Society has worked at!

Fortunately the weather was kind, revealing the spectacular views from the Lodge (which, located at an altitude of 525 metres, is the second highest in Scotland) of a sweep of mountain ranges from the Black Mount, to Glencoe, the Nevis Range and the Grey Corries.



1896 sketch of Corrour Lodge

The small building shown in the left foreground of the sketch is believed to be a demountable corrugated iron "house" later moved to another site. The stone foundations on which it stood were clearly visible on our survey.

Hugh has also carried out a significant amount of historical research on the building, and has exploded the myth, fostered in Scottish Mountaineering Club publications, that it was an isolation hospital for TB patients, or for the recovery of soldiers gassed in WW1. It is clear from Hugh's research that the lodge had fallen out of use and was roofless by 1901. It seems that the roof was removed to avoid payment of rates, and rows of neatly stacked slates are still visible on the ground beside the building.

A fuller report on the survey of the site will appear in a future Newsletter.

First Millennium Studies Group Day Seminar, 26 June 2012
Meadows Lecture Theatre, Edinburgh University
Ending and Beginnings: the impact of change in the first millennium AD

The first millennium AD saw considerable changes in societies across Scotland. Changing social systems and the spread of new ideas had an impact on life. New technologies, including writing, appeared alongside new ideas such as Christianity, and new people including the Norse and the Romans. This is mirrored in changes in material culture and use of the wider landscape.

Academic opinion is divided in studying this period. Some people advocate a long Iron Age, spanning the millennium. Others split the Iron Age from the early Medieval period, typically around AD 400, which has become a dividing line emblematic of a supposed watershed in the first millennium AD and a convenient shorthand for dividing Scottish history into a 'before' and 'after'. The seminar will bring together scholars from across the period, looking at changes, causes and effects on societies in different parts of the country. Fuelled by established work, new research, and a formal debate with full audience participation, the usefulness of AD 400 as a dividing line will be explored. Should we look to a long Iron Age or stick with an early Medieval?

9.00 Coffee/ bookstalls

Morning Session (Chair: Fraser Hunter)

9.30 *Contacts: Roman and early Christian*

Richard Hingley

Adrian Maldonado

11.30 *Settling the landscape over the 1st Millennium AD*

Strat Halliday

Richard Tipping

12.45 Lunch/ bookstalls

Afternoon Session (Chair: Dave Cowley)

14.00 Regional summaries/soapboxes

Graeme Cavers: North

Alison Kyle: The West and Ireland

Gary Stratton: Northeast

Paul Murtagh: Southwest/West

16.00 Debate: *Models of Society pre- and post-AD 400* (Chair: Rod McCullagh)

Ian Armit v Martin Carver

Discussant: James Fraser

Wine reception

Corstorphine Hill

Members of the Committee visited Corstorphine Hill on 22 May with John Lawson, the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeologist, to consider the possibility of carrying out some fieldwork to investigate possible archaeological sites identified by Dr Tom Welsh (see Newsletters 184 and 185). At John's request, we will now work up formal proposals for consideration by Council officials (the Council owns the Hill), covering survey and/or possible excavation, not only at some of the sites identified by Dr Welsh, but also at some other sites suggested by John as meriting further investigation.

Perthshire Archaeology Month

June is Perthshire Archaeology Month, and as usual the organisers have put together a very impressive programme of activities, including lectures, site visits and opportunities for excavation. To see the programme, visit www.pkht.org.uk

Tayside and Fife Archaeology Committee

This is advance notice that the 2012 TAFAC Conference will be held at the North Inch Community Campus, Perth, on 3 November 2012. Soup and sandwiches will be part of the £15 ticket price.

Lectures

The next Society lecture is on Wednesday 10 October 2012, when Dr Fraser Hunter of the National Museum of Scotland will be speaking about the Blair Drummond torcs.

Fieldwork

The Society will be carrying out a geophysical survey at Shootinglee, near Traquair at the invitation of Peeblesshire Archaeological Society on Saturday 9 June 2010. Members interested in participating should contact Ian Hawkins on 0131 339 1288.

2012 subscriptions

Renewal subscriptions for 2012 were due by 14 April. Notice of cessation of membership to take effect on 14 June has now been sent to all members who have not renewed so far, so this is the final reminder for those who wish to renew but have not yet done so.