

EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

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News

Issue 189 – July 2012



Dirleton – 11 August

On 11 August, we will be taking our geophysics equipment to Dirleton, at the invitation of the local history society. We are surveying two sites - some humps on the Green and a former house site next to the Manse. Records show that there was once a chapel in Dirleton, but its location has never been identified. Perhaps generations of Dirletonians have been walking their dogs over its foundations without knowing it. This project has the added bonus of a pub beside the Green! Names to Ian Hawkins (ihsc25293@blueyonder.co.uk or 0131 339 1288) after 4 August.

Gormyre Hill – 25-26 August

On the weekend of 25 and 26 August we will be returning to Gormyre Hill near Torphichen with Jim Knowles of West Lothian Archaeology to excavate test pits over the mysterious 40m by 40m embanked enclosure (described as a supposed Roman Camp in the OS First Edition map of 1856 but omitted from subsequent editions) shown on the geophysics carried out by ourselves and Dr Peter Morris and in the kite photography carried out by Jim, and by John and Rosie Wells - see www.westlothianarchaeology.org.uk. To participate, contact Ian Hawkins, as above.



© Jim Knowles

The enclosure highlighted by snow

Cramond – 15-16 September

As part of Scottish Archaeology Month, the Society is teaming up with Cramond Heritage Trust to run ancient skills workshops at The Maltings Interpretation Centre, Riverside, Cramond Village, EH4 6NY. There you (or your children or grandchildren!) can make string from nettles, create fire from stone, write like the Romans, sort and identify excavation finds, and join up pottery sherds. There is an exhibition on various aspects of Cramond's history and a display of finds from excavations in and around the Roman fort. The Maltings will be open on Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 September from 10am until 5pm. Guided walks around Cramond will be on offer at 2pm.

Society Lecture – 10 October

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.

Sheriffside, Gifford

David Connolly has ventured some thoughts on the results of the second season of excavation at Sheriffside, although a definitive analysis will require to await the C14 dating of the finds, particularly from the postholes.

It seems clear that there is a series of two definite lines of ditches. The outermost one is a massive 7m wide and 2.75m deep. This was a secondary re-cut of a smaller ditch 1.7m wide and 1.2m deep. The same was true for the interior ditch, though it was only 3m wide and 1m deep in its second phase. Originally, it was just a shallow slot (possibly a palisade?) Between these two ditches there were two parallel lines of postholes that seem to match the line of the outer ditch, reminiscent of a box rampart.

If the dates for the postholes come back the same as for the larger ditch then we have a massive rampart and ditch. However, nothing remains above the ground now. What happened to the ramparts and when? Were they ploughed out in later times? Or was the site deliberately demolished in a single episode of infill? No features have yet been located in the interior. The possible Bronze Age date for a pottery find from the first season was later corrected to the period 130BC to 60AD, so the C14 dating of the second season finds is awaited with great interest.

Carpow Logboat

The Carpow logboat is now on display in Perth Museum and Art Gallery. Members may recall our lecture a few years ago, describing how the boat was discovered and excavated. In addition to the 9m long vessel, there is a selection of Bronze Age votive offerings recovered from the River Tay, including swords, spearheads, axe-heads and other implements. The exhibition is free and runs until 31 January 2013.

Shootinglees – 9 June

The Society was invited to assist Peeblesshire Archaeological Society by surveying a former hunting lodge of the Earls of Traquair at Shootinglees, south of Traquair on the St Mary's Loch road. The site, which was last occupied by the Amos family in 1848, is on a gently sloping plateau bounded by a forestry plantation and wall higher upslope and by a steeper slope down to a stream by the roadside.



A total of 4800 sq m was surveyed on 9 June. Joyce Durham of PAS was kind enough to describe our survey as “rather stunning”. It revealed possible foundations of a substantial rectangular structure overlain by the later boundary wall. The results aligned with visible remains of a multi-cell building on the other side of the wall, and the remains of a house and garden to the northwest which were not surveyed. Some fainter high resistance anomalies noted could represent possible field boundaries or drains. .

PAS have opened a trench across the southern-most rectangular feature. Excavation will now continue regularly on most Saturdays (excluding 11 August). Anyone is welcome to participate, but it would be advisable to check with Joyce (01896 830721) or with Bob Knox (01721 722203) to see whether the meet is on and for instructions on how to get there. The plan is to meet at 9.40 a.m. at Kingsmeadows car park, Peebles (contact Bob) or the Cow Peel layby at 10.00 a.m. If you are coming bring gloves, kneeling mat and a trowel if you have one.

Allandale, Castlecary – 5 to 10 June

After a phenomenal amount of paperwork and the granting of Scheduled Monument Consent, Geoff Bailey obtained permission to dig up the football pitch at Allandale near Castlecary, and Society members duly volunteered. The site lies directly on the Antonine Wall – the rampart, berm, ditch and upcast mound. The permission was subject to limitations. For example, we were only allowed to go to a maximum depth of 1m and all digging had to be by hand. In the end of the day, a very wet dig revealed very little, due to previous disturbance. However, the results provided information which will be respected by the football club in the installation of new field drains, and it is understood that negotiations are in train with Historic Scotland to vary the extent of the scheduled area to exclude much of the football pitch and focus more accurately on where the archaeology is located.

White Castle – 14 and 15 July

Several members of the Society returned to White Castle in the Lammermuirs to carry out further ground resistance survey work in support of a second season of excavation organised by David Connolly and Rampart Scotland.



Geophysics at White Castle

The site to be surveyed was steep and largely overgrown with bracken, making the work particularly awkward and strenuous, in unseasonably cold weather, but we still achieved a good result confirming the location of the earthworks on this interesting Iron Age hillfort site.

Comely House, Falkirk - 21 July to 3 August

As usual, Geoff Bailey's summer dig was eagerly anticipated, the more so because of the unusual nature of the site – the back garden (once an orchard) lying to the south of Comely House in central Falkirk, which had lain undeveloped and undisturbed for many decades, and which lay on the suspected line of the Antonine Wall. This preliminary report, from the Editor, is subject to correction when Geoff has had the opportunity to consider the outcomes of the dig in full.



The old orchard – Day 1

Arriving on Day 1, we were at first daunted by the amount of undergrowth which had to be cleared before any trench could be started. Over the next few days, several very substantial trenches were excavated over the putative lines of the Wall and Ditch in the back garden with nothing positive to show for the very considerable effort exerted, other than traces of a possible Roman road, which, however, in Geoff's initial view, might not be Military Way.

This lack of success established that previous theories about the line of the Wall here needed to be revised, and at the end of week 1, we turned our attention to another overgrown area, this time at the front of the property. Again, substantial clearance of bracken, brambles, etc, was required before any trenches could go in.

The first two trenches revealed nothing of significance, but at last, on Day 9 of the dig, the north bank of the Ditch was found in Trench C. This trench was extended south in a dog-leg by some 8.5m, in the hope of finding the south bank of the Ditch, but without success. We could not extend further without digging up the front lawn (on which we had carried out a ground resistance survey with inconclusive results) of the house, but Geoff was able to conclude from the measurements that at Comely House the Ditch, being in excess of 8.5m wide, had dimensions close to those apparent to the west at Bantaskine.



Trench C showing the bank of the Ditch

A smaller fourth trench was then put in to the west of Trench C, where the north bank of the Ditch was again found, confirming its alignment. This showed that the Wall, parallel to the Ditch, must have run across the top of the small hill on which Comely House now stands, but also demonstrated that the Wall and Ditch had taken an unexpected change of direction in this locality, perhaps explicable by the need to

accommodate a pre-existing fortlet on the hilltop. However, no evidence of such a fortlet, such as a defensive ditch, was found.

At the south end of Trench C, a clay level was found in the sand infill of the Ditch with a layer of charcoal on top, appearing to indicate occupation, and samples were taken for dating. As this “floor” was found at an intermediate level of the fill, the charcoal date may provide information as to when the Ditch was filled. A 9th century date has been obtained for blacksmithing activity elsewhere on the Ditch fill.

As we go to press, only backfilling remains to be completed. The outcome of the dig is that it has provided further information as to the actual line of the Wall and Ditch in Falkirk, where the line shown by the Ordnance Survey is notoriously inaccurate. This inaccuracy has significant implications for development and redevelopment in an intensely built-up area, so it is important to establish the correct alignment of these remains. But other questions remain unanswered – when and why was the Ditch filled in, and where did the fill material come from?

ROMAN CAMPS IN SCOTLAND BY REBECCA H JONES

It is not often that Scottish archaeology, with its fairly small audience, is favoured with such a sumptuously-produced book as this publication by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Rebecca Jones has built on her PhD study of Roman camps in Scotland by synthesising the work of many people over many years, and plundering the archives of RCAHMS, where she worked until recently, to produce an almost unimaginably comprehensive and detailed survey of every known site in the country, plus the “probables” and “possibles”. Interestingly, Gormyre Hill does not feature, even in the latter categories. There are plans of the vast majority of the camps, and some interesting aerial photographs – well over 200 illustrations in total. As a gazetteer of sites, it is a book to browse through selectively, rather than read from cover to cover, but so far your reviewer has noted a credit to EAFS in relation to Lochlands, and a mention of this esteemed publication (Issue 172 to be precise) in the bibliography. This is a valuable and welcome addition to the literature in this field, and both the author and the Society of Antiquaries deserve our congratulations. The author was recently appointed Head of Archaeology at Historic Scotland, so perhaps this presages a deeper interest by that body in matters Roman.

A career in archaeology?

The Council for British Archaeology (CBA) is offering twelve-month paid bursary places with 12 host organisations across England, Scotland and Wales. The host organisations and locations for this year include Archaeology Scotland at Musselburgh and the SCAPE Trust at St. Andrews.

The Community Archaeology Bursary Placements (CATPs) are aimed specifically at providing training to individuals who already have a good working knowledge of archaeological theory and techniques and who are keen to develop their skills for utilisation in their future career to enhance relationships between the archaeological profession and a wide range of communities. In particular, this round will focus on developing youth engagement. Placements will start in October 2012 and successful candidates will receive a salaried bursary of c. £16,450 (see individual job descriptions for further details). Application packs (including full job descriptions,

person specifications and interview dates) can be downloaded from <http://new.archaeologyuk.org/community-archaeology-training-placements>. Closing date for applications is Sunday 19 August 2012.

TAFAC Conference

The annual conference of Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee will be held on Saturday 3 November at the North Inch Community Campus, which lies off Malvina Place at the east end of Gowans Terrace, Perth, PH1 5BF. Tickets are priced at £15.00 which includes a soup and sandwich lunch. The final programme and tickets are, however not available until September. Confirmed speakers so far include:

Steve Liscoe (Fife Council) on Recent Work in St Andrews;
Johanna Babbs (Tayside Landscape Partnership) who will talk about that initiative;
Alastair Becket (Northlight Heritage) on excavations at the Pittentian timber circle, Crieff;
Martin Cook (AOC Archaeology Ltd) on a Pictish linear barrow cemetery;
Richard Fawcett (University of St Andrews) on the Corpus of Medieval Parish Churches;
Oliver O'Grady (Independent Researcher) on Culdees Monasteries;
David Strachan (Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust) on archaeology in Glenshee
Sarah Kettles (Breachin Townscape Heritage Initiative) on The Merchant's House, Brechin;

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Date	Event	Organiser
7 Sept. 2012	Conference: <i>Living Churchyards: Integrated Conservation</i> AK Bell Library, Perth	Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust www.pkht.org.uk
13 Sept. 2012	Gallery event: <i>Life on the River Tay</i> Dundee Museum (SAM event)	Dundee Museum www.mcmanus.co.uk
6 October 2012	Conference: <i>From Forteviot to Fortingall and Beyond</i> , AK Bell Library, Perth	Pictish Arts Society www.pictish-arts-society.org

Obituaries

Recent months have seen the deaths of a number of members or former members of the Society, and while it is not a comprehensive list, we have noted the passing of Mary Cave-Browne, June Davidson, Bill Oxenham, and Liz Ward (nee Melville), in addition to those recorded in previous issues – Maurice Carmichael and Bob Marks. Our sympathies go to their families and friends.

Corrour Old Lodge - a correction

Hugh Dinwoodie has asked the Editor to clarify that the drawing appearing in the last issue was not the original 1896 sketch of the Lodge, but a 2012 copy he made from the original, omitting some half dozen signatures encroaching upon it, including that of Sir John Stirling Maxwell, of Pollok House, Glasgow, who built the lodge. The original is held by RCAHMS, and available for inspection there.