

EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

Scottish Charity No. SC006520

News

Issue 196 – January 2014



Renewal subscriptions for 2014 are now due. The rates are unchanged from last year and the table can be found on the Society's website.

Remittances, please, to Hon. Treasurer, EAFS, 91 Milton Road, Kirkcaldy KY1 1TP.

Society News

Any suggestions for a new meeting venue?

A topic which came up at the AGM was the suitability of the current venue for our lecture meetings - the Edinburgh Cine and Video Society clubrooms at 23a Fettes Row. Some members expressed the view that a more suitable venue could be found, particularly having regard to location, transport and parking.

On the other hand, the cost to the Society at £42 per evening is modest, and the kitchen facilities are useful.

The AGM agreed that alternatives should be looked at.

Do you have any views on the issue? If you can suggest any suitable options, with facilities for lectures (i.e. a screen and seating) and provision of tea and coffee, please let us know, with details of costs if available, and the Committee will investigate further. Suggestions please to Alan Calder or Ian Hawkins.

Time to set your diaries for field activities.

In an effort to encourage greater participation in the Society's field activities, the Committee thought it might be helpful to members if a regular monthly date was fixed.

Accordingly, we have designated the last Sunday of every month from February to November as a field activity date, so that you can put it in your diary and keep it clear!

The actual project to be undertaken on each of these dates will be notified by e-mail nearer the time. The aim is to establish a regular fieldwork programme on this date every month but there will also be field activities on other dates throughout the year.

On Sunday 23 February, we will be digging out and recording a World War II air raid shelter at 23 Marchmont Road, Edinburgh, in conjunction with local residents and the Grampian Speleological Society.

The usual e-mail alert regarding arrangements for participation will be issued soon.

Field Activity Updates

Dunfermline Dig (by Alan Calder)

For some considerable time now, Dunfermline has been pressing for a new museum. The old museum, closed to the public for a number of years, was not suitable for development and a new site had to be found. After much wrangling it was decided to go for a new build and the site chosen was next to the Andrew Carnegie public library. An application to the Heritage Lottery Fund was successful and with match funding from Fife Council, the project was given the go ahead in February 2013.

In anticipation that the chosen site for the proposed extension to the library was acceptable, a programme of archaeological investigation was conducted in September 2011.¹ As indicated, the site would use an existing car park, but all buildings in the vicinity lie within what was Dunfermline Abbey Precinct. Adjacent to the site is Abbot House, the subject of archaeological investigations in 1993/4, during which a section of cemetery was uncovered which might have extended into the proposed new site.²

The contract for the full scale investigation was awarded to Rathmell Archaeology and in keeping with HLF funding; the local community had to be involved. Thus for five weeks from 26 August to 28 September, 2013 some 80 volunteers, led by Rathmell, took the opportunity to try their hand at uncovering something of Dunfermline's past. The weather was exceptionally kind, and with places available, many people came for more than they had initially applied for. Had the weather turned sour, shelter was never far away. An old bank building, to be demolished as part of the development, was at the organisers' disposal and, apart from a kitchen and an office, all tools could be stored under cover and finds sorted/dried etc all on site. Depending on your point of view, no great finds were made! A fairly typical range of pottery from medieval to recent, assorted animal bones, shells (mainly oyster), a few clay pipe stems and bowls, a couple of coins, glass etc. Some larger pieces of dressed stone, mainly built into walls, were also found. All finds were washed and bagged on site awaiting further inspection by experts – perhaps only then will the true story come out as to what it all means.

As for structures, a great confusion of drains/water courses/culverts were found to cross the site. Many of these appeared disconnected and incomplete, running as they did at different levels. The most intact and well built water course ran through the site from approximately north to south. Perhaps its condition means that it was the most recent, but it was built soundly into the natural unlike some of the other conduits.

What was taken as the foundation for a massive building was partly excavated in the SE corner of the site. Its extent could not be determined, as to south and east it ran outwith the limit of the area to be excavated. The extent of the foundation to the east may yet be found as it lies under the library car park, which will be lifted as part of the new museum development – another short archaeological dig or watching brief will be conducted this Spring before the builders move in.

The final report should make for interesting reading!

¹ Dunfermline Library Car Park, Fife: Archaeological Investigation, Rathmell Archaeology, 30 September 2011.

² TAFAC Journal, Vol.2, 1996, 'Excavations at the Abbot's House, Maygate, Dunfermline'.

Leith Fort - Update by Charlotte Douglas, AOC.

AOC Archaeology Group was very pleased to work with the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service at the site of Fort House in Leith, formerly the site of a Georgian coastal defence fort. Fort House was built in the 1960s and demolished in January 2013. AOC was onsite to monitor the demolition, recording any archaeology uncovered in the process.

In April, the new development for 21st Century Homes and the Port of Leith Housing Association received planning permission and Listed Building Consent for 94 new homes on the site, all of which will be affordable housing.

In advance of any building works, AOC conducted three weeks of excavation in November, which included three public open days. These free open days, which were very popular, provided an opportunity for around 100 participants to take part in the excavations and attend workshops on artefacts, survey methods, ceramics and kite aerial photography. A dedicated schools programme saw AOC's public archaeologist visiting around 150 pupils from five local primary schools to deliver archaeology workshops, before the pupils visited the site for themselves to see the archaeology as it was uncovered.

Work onsite finished at the end of November and we are now in the process of drawing up the report. Sometime in the new year we will hold another public talk to share all of the results with you – we will circulate the details in due course. In the meantime, please find below the initial summary of our findings.

“The excavation site at the former Fort House housing estate took place in order to investigate the surviving remains of the early 19th century extension to the gun battery and fort designed by James Craig. Leith Fort represents an important but relatively unknown period in Leith's history. In 1779, during the American War of Independence, three mercenary ships led by Scotsman John Paul Jones threatened Leith Harbour but stormy weather prevented the armed vessels from launching an attack. A fort was built in 1780 to prevent against future assaults.

Ten guns pointed out into the harbour to attack any hostile ships that might approach Leith from the sea. However, the harbour was not threatened again. The Fort was in use as a military base and barracks until the mid-1950s. Parts of the perimeter wall, entrance gate and guardhouse are still standing today.

The excavations took place over six areas, focussing on the perimeter where most of the fort buildings were situated. A number of walls and foundations were revealed that tie in to the different phases of the fort's use. Four building foundations related to the late 19th century were revealed, all of which were constructed of concrete with some areas of sandstone walling still attached. One of these later structures included a brick-built boiler room containing a coal chute, ventilation shaft and staircase.

From the earlier phases of the fort (circa 1804) the remains of the large stable block, the ordnance store, the gun shed and the powder magazine were revealed in three of the excavation areas, and one long wall and foundation of an unknown building were revealed along the NW edge of the site. No floor surfaces appear to have survived the late 19th century redevelopment of the fort, and as such very few military artefacts were found with only one possible copper button and two lead musket balls retrieved by the excavations.

Pre-dating the fort, the excavations revealed a boundary ditch and post holes for a fence along the NW edge of the site that relates to the 15th-17th century agricultural activity on the site prior to the fort's construction. Furthermore, evidence of ploughing was found next to this ditch and medieval pottery was found in earlier soil horizons surviving at depth in the northern and western corners of site, providing evidence for use of the site as part of a field system dating to this period.



Plate 1 - Area E structures including boiler room

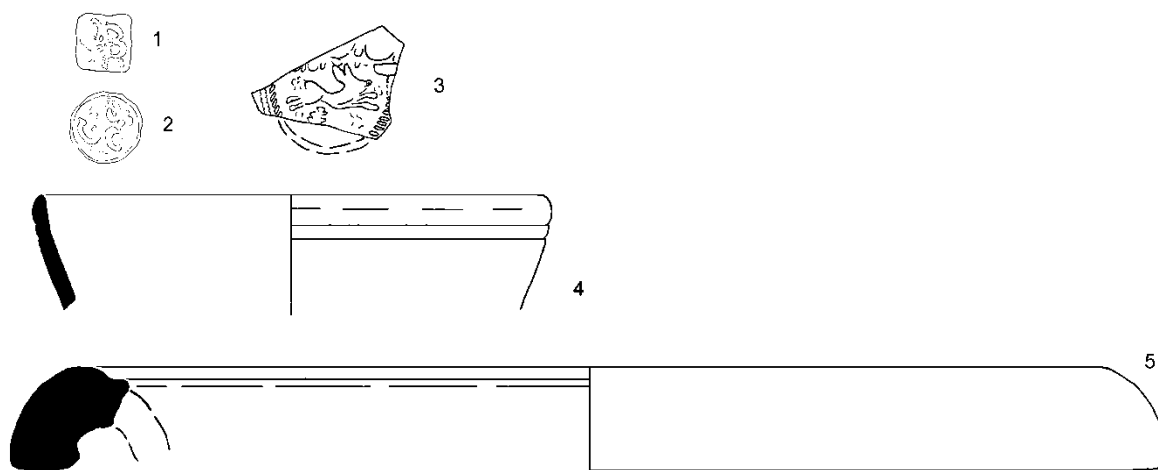


Plate 2 - Boundary ditch in Area B

Charlotte Douglas is Project Supervisor (Public Archaeologist) with AOC and is happy to provide any more information you may require. She can be contacted on 0131 440 3593 or charlotte.douglas@aocarchaeology.com

Field walking at Carriden by Geoff Bailey

On Sunday 19 January 2014 a metal detecting sweep was conducted on the open fields to the east of Carriden House (NT 026 808) over the eastern area of the Roman annexe to the fort, the possible parade ground and the field system. It was noted that the site was pitted with numerous holes indicating that the area had already been detected in the recent past. On this occasion a small amount of modern ironwork was found, including a 20th century penknife, but no Roman metal artefacts. Two lead communion tokens of early 18th century style and a square piece of lead, probably a weight, were the only significant discoveries.



1. Square lead alloy communion token, 15 x 16mm, embossed "AB" [ligatured]. Worn. The initials are those of Abercorn, the adjacent parish to the east of the findspot. Numerous examples of this token have been found in the Carriden area. Typologically such tokens can be dated 1700-1740.
2. Round lead alloy communion token, 20mm dia, embossed "SGR" {?}. The lettering is very difficult to read due to damage and wear to the surface, but appear to be the three letters that occur on several square tokens found in the area. c.1720-1760.
3. Body sherd of samian from a small form 37. The decoration includes the lower part of the band of ovolo with a bead and reel border below it. A roped festoon contains a small animal figure, possibly a stag, over a bush. To its left is a vertical beaded border.
4. Rim of an oxidised bowl in orange fabric with two grooves on the exterior.
5. Rim sherd of a mortarium in pale cream/white chalky fabric, probably from Colchester. c. 0.31m dia.
6. Five body sherds of amphora (285g).
7. A body sherd of coarse ware in buff fabric. Roman.
8. Four small body sherds of 13-15th century pottery. One is in a hard white fabric with tiny red inclusions.
9. Square piece of sheet lead, 15 x 14mm. The sides have been cut rather than cast and taper slightly. This is probably a weight.

Thistle Camp at Culzean Castle by Christine McPherson

'Archaeology it's so much fun in Scotland' This is a quote from a young Portuguese archaeology student who came on a Thistle Camp based at Culzean Castle.



The idea of a 'Thistle Camp' is to bring together a group of volunteers to spend a week on a project within the National Trust for Scotland portfolio of properties. The work can range from building footpaths to harvesting the apple crop. It also includes 'living history' such as building a cruck-frame house or repairing dry-stane dykes. There are also Archaeology based Thistle Camps each year and it is my privilege to 'lead' these camps. Thistle Camp Leaders are volunteers too, but have had training to deal with the logistics of taking 12 disparate volunteers, often to remote places, and making sure they keep safe and enjoy themselves.

Thistle Camps have taken me to such iconic places as St Abb's, Iona, Canna and Brodick as well as House of Dun, Loch Lomond and next year Unst and Threave.

The archaeology is overseen by the professional staff from the National Trust for Scotland and training is given in surveying, excavation, planning and recording as well as finds processing. Those volunteers with proven experience in archaeology can often help supervise the beginners or explain to visitors to the NTS property what we are doing.

Not all NTS volunteering opportunities are through Thistle Camps though. Last year saw the 'Big Dig' at Bannockburn – a continuation of the series of excavations started in July 2012 (the 700th day before the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn) run by Guard, collaborating with Tony Pollard and Neil Oliver. This was an opportunity in which a number of EAFS members took an active part. There was also an anniversary of the Battle of Pinkie which was commemorated with an excavation at Inveresk last year.

Last year was a busy year for those of us who enjoy excavating. The NTS gave me many of my best excavating experiences. I'm looking forward to making 2014 another good digging year.

If you are interested in the idea of volunteering look at the NTS website – www.nts.org.uk

Saline Old Graveyard, Fife by Alan Calder

At the invitation of the Saline and District Heritage Society, a geophysical survey of the old graveyard at Saline, Fife, was undertaken on 13 July 2013. The survey included two full 20x20m squares within the graveyard with a further 20x20m square divided between the graveyard and the adjacent garden of Kirklands house. Two further 20x20m squares were completed in the Glebe Field to the north of the graveyard.

Although the graveyard is well populated with gravestones, the old church of Saline is said to have stood within the old graveyard and to have been demolished in 1810-1812. Interments post this date continued up to 1924 and records show that permission was granted to have 'rooms' allocated within "the foundations of the old church". But where had the old church stood and what were its dimensions?

At the heritors' meeting where it was agreed to demolish the old church, it was stated that in order "to prevent any interference with the burial ground, they resolved that no part of the walls under the present surface of the ground shall be sold".

Much interference of the ground within the graveyard is evident and it is likely that the wishes of the heritors to preserve the foundations were not observed. Certainly the geophysical survey did not indicate the presence of foundations where they might have been expected.

However, to the east of where the old church is thought to have been situated there were some interesting high resistance features which may be interpreted as the foundations of a small cellular building. The geophysics in the grounds of Kirklands, immediately to the east of the graveyard, were hampered by the vegetation – trees, bushes and shrubs – and it is uncertain if the results show a continuation of the cellular features or are just the result of the many roots in the vicinity. The results from the Glebe Field were negative.

The geophysical results were sent to the Fife archaeologist, Douglas Speirs, who was very impressed with what they appeared to show. As a consequence, a press release was made in September 2013 with the proposal that a small-scale archaeological excavation should be undertaken. Currently the Society plans to return to Saline in the spring of 2014 to continue our investigations and if planning permission is granted, do some test pitting, most probably in the grounds of Kirklands.

Rock Art at Tormain Hill

On 1 December 2013 about a dozen members of the Society paid a visit to Tormain Hill, near Ratho, by way of a “recce” for our next rock art recording project. The object of the visit was a group of small rock outcrops which our prehistoric forebears have decorated with cup marks, and in one case, an intricate pattern of ring-like markings reminiscent of Iron Age torqs.

Conditions for viewing the rock art were ideal, with a strong winter sun low in the sky at 11 in the morning, providing excellent lighting conditions to illuminate the engravings, as the attached photographs show.

Despite being well-known for over 150 years, and well documented, these rocks have not been recorded in any great detail in Canmore. There is a small sketch from 1882, which mentions eight separate slabs, and under the guidance of Dr Tertia Barnett, we were able to identify at least seven of these. The design on the ring-marked rock, is, to the best of Tertia’s knowledge, unique in southern Scotland, although bearing similarities to a stone near Ilkley in Yorkshire.

There is an obvious need to create an up-to-date detailed record of these rocks, using the same methodology as we employed at Corstorphine Hill last April. This will need to wait for some warmer and drier weather in the spring or summer, and a date will be announced in due course.



Photos by John Urquhart

Mumrills by Geoff Bailey

Despite the frost, the visit to Mumrills on 24 November found five rims of black-burnished pots, one of grey ware, and a small body sherd of decorated samian, two clay marbles and a golf ball. The star find (of Mars Bar status), by Alan Baxter of the Antonine Club, was a sestertius of Hadrian with Liberty on the reverse.



Obverse: Laureated draped bust of Hadrian facing right. IMP.CAESAR
TRAIANVS HADRIANVS AVG.P.M.TR.P.COS.III

Reverse: Liberty seated facing left holding a sceptre in her left hand and
a laurel branch in her right. LIBERTAS PVBLICA/ S.C.

Forthcoming Conferences, Lectures and Events

First Millennium Studies Group

Meetings are held on *Tuesdays at 5.30pm* in the Meadows Lecture Theatre in the Archaeology Department, School of History, Classics and Archaeology, Edinburgh (NB March meeting in the Boyd Orr Building lecture theatre B, University of Glasgow, adjacent to Archaeology Department).

February 4 *Turf architecture in the North Atlantic region in the 1st millennium AD: construction methods, archaeological analyses and interpretation* - Karen Milek (Aberdeen University) Note this will be held in Lecture Room 5, Appleton Tower.

March 11 (NB: in GLASGOW) *A Pictish phantasmagoria:– Recent work on Pictish barrows* - Martin Cook (AOC); and *An update on Rhynie* - Gordon Noble (Aberdeen University)

April 1 *When is a crannog not a crannog? Excavations at the Black Loch of Myrton, Wigtownshire: Scotland's first loch village* - Anne Crone and Graeme Cavers (AOC)

Edinburgh Geological Society

March 12 *"Tracing visitors to our shores: the application of isotope analysis to archaeological human migration studies"* - Professor Jane Evans (NIGL) Grant Institute in King's Buildings.

If you excavate a burial which contains a beautiful Germanic brooch, can you conclude that the person is of continental origin, or simply that a German brooch was brought in Britain? It is one of the big questions in archaeology: Do people move or do artifacts move? On a larger scale; was there a large influx of Saxons/Romans/Vikings into Britain who settled here and change the culture, or did a few individual, and their contacts, change the social habits of the indigenous population? Full details under "Lectures" at http://www.edinburghgeolsoc.org/l_home.html#1203

Penicuik Historical Society

February 24 *'The John Buchan Story'*, Peebles, Ian Buckingham (John Buchan Museum Trust)

March 31 AGM, followed by *Aspects of Penicuik's Past*, Members of PHS Archive Team

April 28 *Penicuik House Preservation Trust*, Sir Robert Clerk

All meetings are held in Penicuik Town Hall at 7.30pm

Border Archaeological Society

March 3 *"The Circus comes to Town: Roman Wild Beast Shows"*, Jeremy Paterson. Berwick Parish Centre at 7.30pm. A small charge is made for non-members.

The SCAPE Trust.

March 22 *An Archaeology Fact Finding Event.*

Designed for all those who have an interest in and take part in archaeology and heritage in a non-professional capacity, this one-off event will give you the opportunity to get up to speed with the incredible range of techniques, specialisms and services across the sector and meet the experts and practitioners face to face. [View the Ask an Expert Programme here.](#) Booking is ESSENTIAL for this FREE event, which includes lunch and other refreshments. It will be held in the [Western Infirmary Lecture Theatre, University of Glasgow](#), on Saturday 22 March 2014 from 9.30am (registration) to 4.30pm. As the event is likely to be oversubscribed, SCAPE is offering priority booking to volunteers and supporters of the Scotland's Coastal Heritage at Risk Project (SCHaRP). Please email or telephone SCAPE by **Friday 14 February** to book your place via the Programme link above.

Other Publications, Websites etc

“Stone Pages” is a web guide to European megaliths & other prehistoric sites with a comprehensive listing of broch/hill settlements, cairns etc in Scotland.
<http://www.stonepages.com/news/>

“Excavations at the Black Spout, Pitlochry”, by David Strachan. Published by Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust [ISBN 978-0-9572114-1-4] The story of an archaeological dig from 2005-09 which uncovered remarkable broch-like architecture at an Iron Age building near Pitlochry. 176 x A4 pages, full colour with over 100 illustrations. £15.00 retail available from www.pkht.org.uk.

Archaeology Scotland’s “Out and About” No. 16 has just been issued. It is “jam packed” with forthcoming events and well worth a visit. www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk

Letter to the Editor

Well another year flown out of our grasp!

The summer digs at Larbert and Bonnybridge went well and brought up some very useful information. The retaining wall to the upcast mound on the Antonine Wall at the latter is particularly important and this information has been incorporated into the second chapter of the book that is being written to re-assess the frontier.

I hope that we’ll get the chance to do a little more digging on the Antonine Wall next year in order to add to it. So far I have permission to dig the garden to the north of those we looked at this year at Bonnybridge in order to explore the north side of the upcast mound. We have also been invited to dig at Mayfield on Arnothill in Falkirk. I am hopeful too of getting another site in the town.

The coin of Hadrian from Mumrills coming on top of that of Nero last time has significantly added to our collection from the Wall. We’ll be looking to repeat that.

And I can finally see the end of the graveyard surveys – though I’m not there yet. It still amazes me that a stone Iron Age lamp was found during the survey at Airth, a bailey or outer enclosure to a motte at Dunipace, a tenth century Celtic Cross at Carriden, the Rampart of the Antonine Wall at Polmont, and we’ve just acquired an 18th century cast iron pedestal stove from Larbert!

So a BIG THANK YOU to all of you that made this possible. I hope that you all have a wonderful Christmas and look forward to what the New Year brings.

All the best,
Geoff Bailey | Keeper of Archaeology & Local History
Falkirk Community Trust
t: 01324 503783.

The Caption Competition

Caption Competition 1



Photo courtesy of Archaeology Scotland.

The Winner!

I can't resist a Wagnerian entry to your caption competition: ***'Stop complaining! The three Norns have to do all this and sing at the same time.'***

(Gotterdammerung, Act I, Scene 1)

Nick Holmes

No. 2 At the "Dirleton Dig"



Photo - Graeme Bettison.

Entries please by mid March to
[graeme.bettison @ tesco.net](mailto:graeme.bettison@tesco.net)

Next Newsletter

The next Newsletter will be issued at the end of March 2014. All Contributions welcomed.

Until then, enjoy your archaeology!

Editor: Graeme H Bettison, 18 The Promenade, Port Seton, EH32 0DF. graeme.bettison@tesco.net
(Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society, its Committee and Members, or the Editor).