

EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

News

Issue 180 – September 2010



It has been a busy summer for the Society, with members participating in numerous surveys and excavations. This edition of the Newsletter contains reports on activities since July. In addition we have further reports on the work at Castlecary Roman Fort and Sunderland Cottages carried out earlier this year. There are no firm dates for future field work as we go to print, but there are proposals at various stages of development for work at Gormyre Hill, White Castle, Temple, Castle Greg, Eddleston, Cramond and Garvald (East Lothian), details of which will be given in future Newsletters, or in *ad hoc* email "Alerts". If you are not on the mailing list for email Alerts, and you would like to be added, please email the Editor at the address on the last page.

Our main *raison d'être* as a Society is to provide field work opportunities for the amateur archaeological enthusiast, and we would like to encourage as many members as possible to participate. We can usually arrange transport and provide equipment. We will provide a member contact for each planned activity. If you see a project that interests you, please don't hesitate to contact that member.

SOCIETY LECTURES 2010/11

The first of our autumn/winter series of lectures is on Wednesday 13 October with Dr John Wells talking about his pioneering work on "Kite Aerial Photography of Archaeological Sites".



Society members have been working with John and Rosie on the site investigations at Gormyre Hill, near Torphichen, West Lothian. Our picture shows a kite aerial photograph of Gormyre Hill taken last winter, which clearly shows the features which piqued their curiosity and prompted them to invite us to carry out our geophysical survey. No doubt John's talk will update us on the conclusions reached to date.

The next few meeting dates are:

Tuesday 9 November 2010	John Reid	The Lost Dockyard of James IV
Wednesday 8 December 2010	Society members	AGM and Project Reports
Tuesday 11 January 2011	Steve Wallace, RCAHMS	Field Photography within RCAHMS
Wednesday 9 February 2011	Derek Alexander, NTS	Archaeology at the National Trust
Tuesday 8 March 2011	Robin Murdoch	Glass in Scottish Archaeology

RECENT ACTIVITIES

7-8 August White Castle Fort (from Dave Jones)

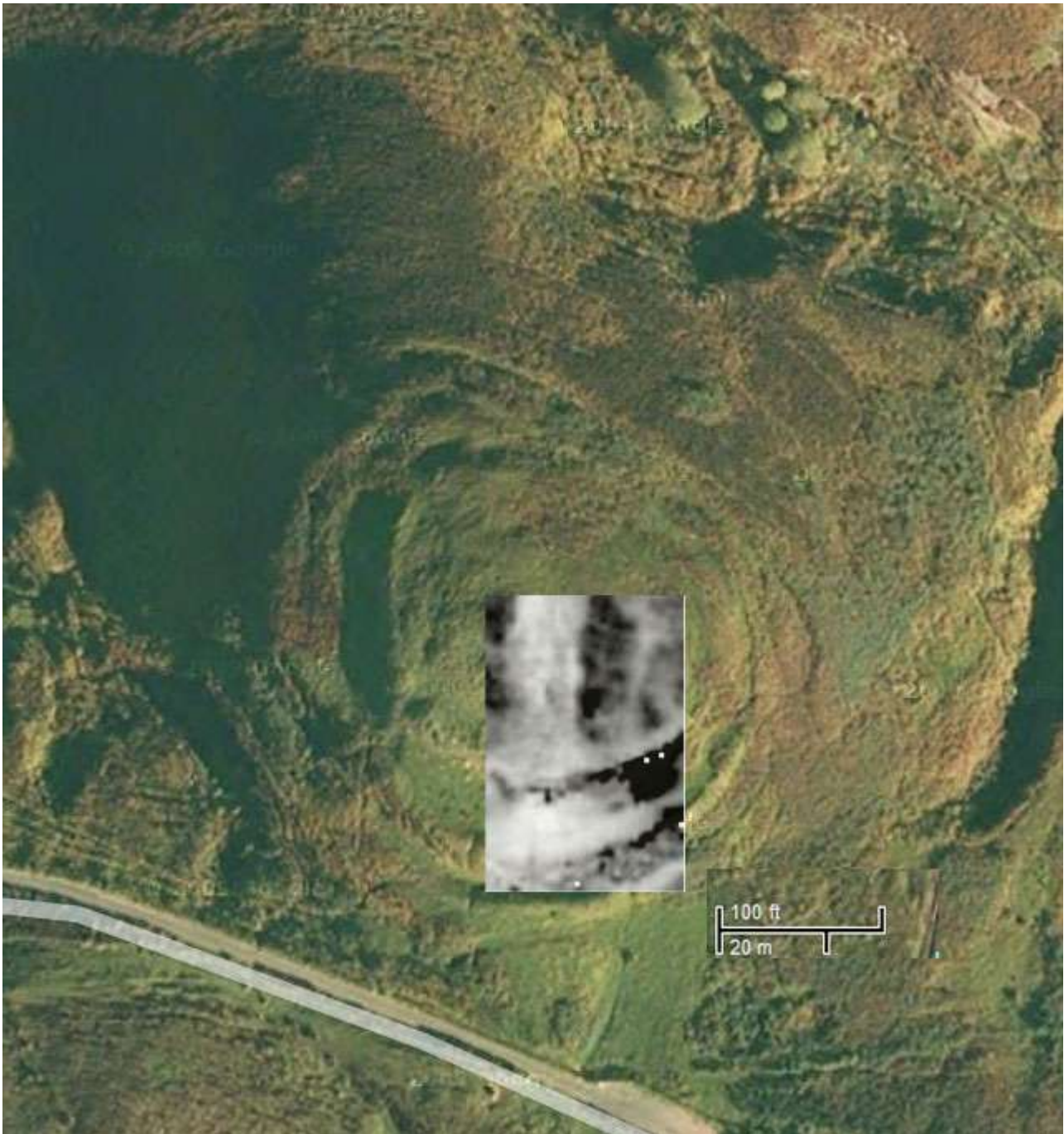


Photo copyright EAFS and D Connolly

David Connolly mocked up this aerial photo with the Society's geophysics results superimposed, with stunning results

This survey and dig, organised by Rampart Scotland (Murray Cook) ran for two weeks as a training course. We were involved by David Connolly to conduct a ground resistance survey on the middle weekend. From the vague ground features there appear to be numerous round house sites within the main fort area, some of which could appear in the ground resistance printout. The banks are overgrown but the very high resistance detected indicates a solid stone core. Within the bank were a few small (1.5m diameter) circular low resistances. The excavation by Murray and his students, on the edge of the main fort, found possible cremation burials; if these continued to the south they could account for these circular low resistances. Further work with Murray and David on the site is probable in 2011.

29 August Culzean Castle Geophysics (from Don Matthews)

On 29 August a small but dedicated team of geophysers trekked to Culzean Castle in South Ayrshire to capture a doughnut, or more precisely a doughnut-shaped cropmark, for the National Trust for Scotland. The ring feature in the middle of High Whiteside field near the castle had shown up in aerial photographs and was to be the focus of an NTS Thistle Camp excavation in September. Enjoying excellent weather and ground surface conditions, we surveyed a 60 metre square grid around the estimated position and were relieved to find a broad low resistance ring about 40 metres in diameter with a slightly higher resistance centre around 20 metres in diameter. This exercise both confirmed the existence of the feature below the plough soil and established a more precise position for it, ready for the Thistle Camp. NTS were delighted with the results and the campers were able to verify the presence of the features by excavation. When Derek Alexander of NTS addresses the Society at its February 2011 meeting, we will no doubt hear his conclusions regarding the findings.



The Culzean Geophysics team, with the results of the survey superimposed. The red circles represent Derek Alexander's interpretation as showing a ring ditch.

Photo copyright D. Alexander



Photo copyright I Hawkins

The spiral staircase excavated at Temple

The site, shown as 'Temple House-site of' on the 1893 25-inch map of Temple, is situated behind the houses and school on the east side of Temple main street. The 'Temple House' gateway, illustrated in July's newsletter, stands just north of an area of raised and undulating ground measuring some 25m E-W and 12m N-S lying about 20m south of the site of Temple House. The survey area of ten 20 by 20m squares was laid out with a 60m baseline running E-W to the north of the raised area but including the gateway in the middle square of the baseline three.

The printout showed high resistance on the line of the arch, suggesting it stood on a wall line. A significant rectangular high resistance, about 20m by 30m, lies on the east side of the survey roughly in the position shown as 'site of' on the 1893 map. Hachured marks on this map point to a possible sunken roadway leading north from the site, and this appears as a more diffuse high resistance. A clearer high resistance curves from the north-east corner of the rectangular high in the direction of the northern part of the village – possibly in the direction of the old Temple church. Excavation to confirm the wall line on which the arch stood and what lies in the raised undulating ground was led by David Connolly. The wall line on which the arch stands was soon confirmed and appeared to have been carefully robbed of all its upper stone.

A trench running up the bank to the raised ground produced much demolition debris and a fine spiral staircase going downwards from the top of the bank. This probably indicates a castle built later from the stone derived from the demolished Temple House. A section of carved stone, reused slate and greenglaze pottery would seem to confirm a later building but no historical record exists.

We record our thanks to David Connolly for inviting us to join this project and to Dr Brenda Franey of the Houston, Texas group who instigated and funded the project and in particular our survey. The survey and excavation will be continued next year.

18-19 September Old Pentland Churchyard (from Dave Jones)

We returned, with David Connolly, to excavate further on the church site that was confirmed a year ago following our area resistance survey on 28 February 2009. The eastern part of the church was regrettably more robbed out than the section of chamfered stone walling found last year. Finds of greenglaze and white gritty pottery do however put the date back earlier than the 2009 finds.

A small N-S trench, about 15m to the south of the church, was placed over another high resistance which it was thought might represent the west wall of another building. A large masonry block was found but it appeared to have been reused as a grave marker; greenglaze pottery was also found in this trench.

The unusual shape of the churchyard enclosure, with a very straight south wall inscribed with the date 1729, suggests this was a late rebuilding. The church is recorded as being raised to a parish before 1275. Two 20 by 20m squares were area resistance surveyed on the south side of the straight wall to see whether any trace remained of a modification to the shape of the enclosure. A number of high and three linear low resistances appeared on the printout but cannot be construed as earlier churchyard walls.

23-24 August Tullibardine Castle and the 'Great Michael' Site (from Dave Jones)

This project, in which we were involved with David Connolly and Dr Louise Yeoman, will result in a Radio Scotland programme that will be broadcast later this year. The castle had been deliberately demolished and the site returned to agricultural use but maps, plans and an etching in Tullibardine Collegiate Church showed a site in a field to the north as its likely position. Tradition has it that the shape of the Great Michael was laid out in the castle garden and outlined with a hawthorn hedge. Area ground resistance and magnetometry surveys were carried out over both sites. On the crest of the field the printouts showed anomalies, possibly wall foundations, which were sufficient for David to put in a small trench that rapidly found a wall base. Adjacent to the wall a sherd of greenglaze pottery and a small piece of thin window glass were found; enough to justify the claim that this was the castle site. The printout of the area resistance survey over the marshy area produced a row of high resistance spots that might originally have delineated the outline of the 'Great Michael'. A trench dug by David on the north side of the area filled with water as fast as it was excavated. Rain water was running down the field from the direction of the castle increasing the marsh area - not good archaeological weather on either of the days! The B.B.C. Producer, Louise Yeoman and David Connolly were well satisfied with the results of the geophysical surveys and we record our thanks for a generous grant for our two days of work.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN SINGAPORE

EAFS member Jon Cooper is now based in Singapore, but still enjoys the Society's Newsletter. He invites members interested in seeing what he is working on to check out the following websites

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/battlefieldarchaeology/centreprojects/singaporewwiiprject/>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Adam-Park-Project/137333236283715>

GIS PLOT OF SUNDERLAND FARM COTTAGES GEOPHYSICS (from Don Matthews)

Newsletters 175, 178 and 179 have described the ground resistance surveys we have undertaken in three areas at Sunderland Farm Cottages near Selkirk. In an experiment with GIS, we have now pulled together the three areas into one plot superimposed on the 1st edition 25 inch OS map (courtesy of the National Library of Scotland).



David and Val Beaver's garden is in the bottom left of the picture and the remains of the building that they have found - and which led to our involvement on the site - shows clearly as a dark (i.e. high resistance) rectangle near the road. The high resistance presumably reflects a rubble spread in the area enclosed by the remains of the walls. David and Val have found other wall lines in their garden which unfortunately do not show up on our geophysics.

To the north of the main group of cottages, we have surveyed parts of two fields on opposite sides of the A707. East-west plough marks show clearly in the field to the west, the dark line on the western edge being a length of steep slope, apparently man-made, with a gap towards the northern end where a track leads through to the upper fields. The dark area beside the road might be the remains of another building, though this is not certain. The eastern field also shows a dark area but this is rather shapeless and could be either a building or geology.

A dark line running east-west in the northern part of this plot matches the visible remains of the base of a stone wall. Surrounding it is a light (i.e. low resistance) and somewhat enigmatic area that appears to continue on the other side of the road. This must pre-date the stone wall but, as with the adjacent dark area, might just be geology.

We have now completed our anticipated programme of geophysics but Chris Bowles, Borders Council's Archaeology Officer, is looking at the possibility of taking the investigation further with a few trial trenches either carried out by or under the supervision of professional archaeologists. Whether this might provide an opportunity for further work by EAFS at some point in the future remains to be seen.

CASTLECARY BATHHOUSE (from Geoff Bailey)

One of the more unusual pieces of pottery from the recent dig was a type of samian with a recessed lattice decoration – see the picture. It was found in Trench C by our intrepid mole – Ian. This is what Peter Webster says about it:

“The piece you illustrate is in what is usually called 'cut-glass' decoration for reasons which may be clear - or at least would be if the sharp edges had not worn badly. If you have a copy of Oswald & Pryce, you will find a range of designs on Plate 77. It is more common in East Gaulish than Central Gaulish ware and more likely to be second half of 2nd century than earlier. It is also as you deduce fairly rare - not in the hen's teeth bracket but one would not expect to see more than a few sherds in a large collection and it is not likely in small ones.”



Oddly enough we don't have a copy of Oswald & Pryce. This is not first for the Antonine Wall. One other example has been found – in 1902 – from Castlecary!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

22-23 October	The Lake-Dwellings of Europe: Munro Trust International Seminar “An exciting line-up of international speakers has been put together to introduce the latest work on lake dwellings across Europe”	Archaeology Department, Old High School Yards, University of Edinburgh, Entry £20 Tickets are available through the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, either by filling in the form in the conference leaflet or by contacting info@socantscot.org .
23 October	What's New in Roman Scotland? One-day conference Glasgow Archaeological Society/NMS	St Mungo's Museum, Glasgow see page 6 of last Newsletter tickets £10 (GAS/Roman Society member)/£12(student)/£15(other)
30-31 October	Scotland's Rural Past Conference	Crieff Hydro see: www.scotlandsruralpast.org.uk
6 November	TAFAC Annual Conference Speakers: Gordon Barclay, Lindsay Farquharson, Trevor Cowie, Alan Saville, Tom Dawson, David Strachan, Edwina Proudfoot, Derek Hall	Younger Hall, North Street, St Andrews Tickets £13 johnsherriff@hotmail.co.uk
20 November	Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders Archaeology Conference Speakers: John Gooder, Chris Bowles, Bill Nimmo, Diane Sproat, Ian Fraser, John Lawson, Piers Dixon, Trevor Cowie, Alistair Robertson, Bruce Glendinning, George Haggarty	Queen Margaret University, Musselburgh £20 conc £12 lunch £8 w: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/archaeology e: bookings@eastlothian.gov.uk
11 December	Conference in Memory of Ian Shepherd celebrating his wide contribution to Scottish Archaeology	Kings College Conference Centre Aberdeen University Tickets £10 tel 01224 664726

FIRST MILLENNIA STUDIES GROUP 2010-2011

FMSG has announced its programme for 2010/11. Lectures are held on Tuesdays at 5.30pm in the Lecture Theatre, University of Edinburgh Archaeology Department, High School Yards, Edinburgh, with one (December) in the Boyd Orr building lecture theatre B, University of Glasgow.

Oct 5	Guy Halsall	The Woad Less Travelled: Pictish society and social change viewed from Frankia
Nov 2	Ewan Campbell	Royal Forteviot: the early medieval evidence from the SERF project
	Sarah Winlow	Two new dates from two old investigations: reconsideration of the Women's Knowe, Inchtuthil and Kingoodie Long Cist Cemetery
Dec 7 Glasgow	Sally Foster	Physical evidence for early church architecture in Scotland: insights, questions, opportunities
Jan 11	Graeme Cavers	Cults Loch: an Iron Age wetland landscape in Galloway
Feb 1	Ross Murray	Culduthel
Mar 1	Daniel Sahlén	A ceramic perspective on metallurgical production in late prehistoric Scotland
April 5	Louisa Hammersley	Culture contact in the North: Roman ceramics from Iron Age contexts
May 3	Erica Guttmann	Why you should care about Geoarchaeology: Evidence for specialisation and trade in Iron Age Shetland
June 7		Day Seminar – Broxmouth

THE LITERATURE OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

Edinburgh University has announced a course (already in progress as we publish) on the life and writings of Mary, Queen of Scots being taught by Dr James Ellison at the Office of Lifelong Learning:



"From Shakespeare to Liz Lochhead, from Spenser to Schiller, writers and dramatists have been fascinated by the life of the tragic Scottish Queen. This course will study her own poems, contemporary documents, and subsequent representations and appropriations of the myth." Basil Skinner Room, 15 Buccleuch Place, Fridays 10-12 from 1st October for 11 weeks. Fees £80/£53 conc. Contact OLL on 0131-650-4400.

DR TOM WELSH – AN APOLOGY

The Society has received the following email from Dr Tom Welsh of Northampton University:

I refer to the undernoted in your May 2009 newsletter. Whatever else I wrote in 'Independent Archaeology' I had nothing to do with the articles someone wrote about past sea levels in the Firth of Forth. I did write a series looking at good practice in professional archaeology under the heading "Archaeology and other disciplines" which did include the lack of scrutiny of the Pitcarmick dates. Though Dave Jones may think otherwise, there are some serious anomalies in the interpretation of radio-carbon dates from archaeological sites.

I don't expect pro-professional archaeological societies, such as professionally controlled Community Archaeology projects to read my book "Local History on the Ground" as it does intentionally challenge the assumptions on which professional archaeology is based, as did the series "Archaeology and other disciplines".

Most sciences progress by debate. Archaeology (at least at a professional level) doesn't. So it is hardly surprising that just such a "community archaeology" reviewer hasn't even read my book when he advises members not to purchase copies. I can see you are opposed to any kind of dissent in the ranks.

Unfortunately that kind of despotism denies amateurs the freedom they once had. Much better to toady up to the professionals and do everything they tell you to do rather than ever suggest that amateurs in Scotland were once renowned for their outstanding contribution to knowledge of Scotland's past.

I am personally proud to belong to an organisation (Council for Independent Archaeology) that does everything they can to promote and defend good practice in archaeology. Unfortunately there are some parts of Britain we can never hope to reach. I am also proud to be a Scot who has always defended traditional values and not let himself be dragged under by this current money driven despotism.

Dr Thomas C. Welsh
14 June 2010

Dave Jones has replied as follows:

My reasons for lack of review of his book, and the item I wrote for the Newsletter, were based on:

- (i) his series "Archaeology and other disciplines"
- (ii) a letter I wrote to the Council for Independent Archaeology newsletter suggesting that articles should be "peer assessed" before publication, as I felt that critical and incorrect views were being expressed with no substantiation.

I regret that, in abstracting from my letter to CIA (which covered comments on more than one author) I included the comment on sea level at Cramond in addition to the correct attribution of his attitude to professional archaeologists and his unsupported criticism of the Pitcarmick dates. I unreservedly withdraw the comments on Cramond sea level as having originated from him.

His book "Local History on the Ground" was reviewed by Andrew Selkirk in *Current Archaeology* No. 246 (September 2010). Selkirk comments that "Tom loves to have a good argument". My Oxford Dictionary defines argument as a "reasoning process" which is not what Tom Welsh does. There is a clear dictionary difference between argument and argumentative.

Selkirk also says of fieldwalking "A dedicated team would set out to cover an entire area...The results were a revelation...and it became possible to do a more objective sort of history...So successful was the experiment that today fieldwalking is the correct way to do archaeological surveying. Tom Welsh will have none of this". I do not understand Welsh's logic in this.

Having found his long, rambling series "Archaeology and other disciplines" difficult to follow, I still would not recommend the purchase of the book. Selkirk suggests that disagreement "is the very stuff of progress". Possibly, yes, but alienation of people by abuse is a retrograde step.

Dave Jones
28 August 2010

The Editor apologises to Dr Welsh for the publication of the sea levels error. *Local History on the Ground* is published by The History Press £16.99. The Editor commends Andrew Selkirk's review to members, and would welcome comments on the book from any member who has read it.

COMMITTEE VACANCIES

Graeme Collie has resigned from the Committee due to pressures of other work, and Anne Brockington, our Treasurer has intimated her intention to stand down at the AGM in December for the same reason. In addition, our Independent Examiner, Brian Tait, is moving to England, and will not be seeking re-election at the AGM.

The Society will therefore be seeking to fill the following vacancies by election at the AGM:

Hon. Treasurer. Preferably a previous Committee member but this is not essential.

Ordinary Member. Any member of the Society is eligible for election.

Independent Examiner. The Independent Examiner need not be a member of the Society, and is not a member of the Committee. The role is to audit the Society's accounts in October each year prior to their being presented to the AGM, and then to OSCAR (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator). No formal audit or accountancy qualifications are required, but some form of audit experience is needed to meet OSCAR recommendations.

Membership of the Committee involves attendance at an evening meeting approximately once a month. Those elected hold office for one year until the following AGM when they are eligible for re-election. The Committee would welcome nominations as soon as possible. If you would like further information, or wish to suggest a name, please contact the Editor.

ANNUAL REPORT

Those contributing to the Annual Report should ensure that their submissions are with Val Dean by 6 November. As the cost of printing and posting the Society's Annual Report is a major expense for the Society, the Committee has decided that members who receive the Newsletters by email will, from this year, also be sent the Annual Report by email. Any member who falls into this category but particularly wishes to receive a hard copy of the Annual Report should contact the Editor.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This has been the longest Newsletter of my editorship, mainly due to the fact that with our new printer, I am more confident to include photographs. My thanks to all contributors of articles and photographs. This is the last Newsletter for 2010, although of course the Annual Report comes out at the end of November. The deadline for Issue 181 is 24 January 2011, and articles, letters and photographs from members (and non-members) will be most welcome.

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).