



Society News

“The best-laid plans o’ mice and men gang aft agley.”

Notes from the Chair.

Yes, sadly, as for so many others, Covid19 required the Society to drastically rethink what had been planned to celebrate its 50th year.

The Rt. Hon. Lord Provost, Councillor Frank Ross had kindly agreed to host a Civic Reception to begin the year’s programme. However, this could not take place. Instead, it was agreed to invite the Lord Provost to visit the Society’s flagship project at the Cammo Estate. This took place on Friday 20th April and is recorded in this special 50th Anniversary Edition.

Other events will include the Exhibition at the Museum of Edinburgh [planned to open in May] which is now likely to open in September/October. We then plan to take it ‘walkabout’ to other venues later in the year.

A talk on ‘EAFS 50th Anniversary’ at the Edinburgh, Borders and Lothians Conference on 20th November 2021. It will be ‘live’ on-line.

Getting back to the “new normal” we also hope to start up our lecture series in the Autumn – possibly in a different venue. Our first talk will be a round-up of the work over the 50 years of the Society and a celebration for all members to join in.



The Visit of the Rt. Hon. Lord Provost

The Lord Provost spent two hours with members of the Society at Cammo. He was greeted by members of the Committee and was shown around the various sites that the Society have been excavating. A booklet with the history of the Society and of Cammo, with illustrations of the work was presented to him.

The finds from the excavations were on display at the Lodge and at the Cottages,. Other members of the Society were based at the different sites to talk the visitors through the site's history and what we have learnt. At the 'Steading' site, excavation and surveying was taking place so they could see the Society in action.

The history of the various previous owners was explained by the Society's researcher.

The visit culminated in coffee and cake at the Lodge where the presentation of the plaque took place. So involved were the visitors that they overran their visit and the Lord Provost had to be dragged away to his next meeting but not before giving a short speech and presenting the plaque.

He made several very positive remarks about the work of the Society and its members work over the 50 years, culminating in calling it 'a credit to Edinburgh' and wishing us well for the next 50 years. He promised he would return to visit us as he had enjoyed his time with us so much.

It was a highly successful and pleasant morning. We have hopes that we might get another distinguished member out of the contact. The Committee toasted the day in 'Nosecco' and more cake.

Thanks are due to all the members who have taken part in the project at Cammo and especially to the Committee for all their hard work over the course of the project and the preparations for the visit.

The Photographs of the day's events.



Members of the Committee welcome the Lord Provost to the Cammo Project



At the finds table.



A bone chess piece is particularly interesting.



The archaeology of the project is demonstrated.



Peoples from the past; research presentation



A "socially distanced" presentation of the plaque

The Peoples' Story. Margaret Wright – A Faithful Servant

In 2017 work began to excavate a building situated on the southern edge of Cammo Estate close to the Stables. This was an area known as 'The Offices'. The term 'offices' on a farm or estate usually describes outbuildings such as animal housing, barns or workshops. As excavation progressed however it became clear that this building had been used not for animals but for domestic accommodation.

The building had been divided into separate rooms by several thin brick walls. Within these rooms was an infill deposit consisting largely of building rubble and topsoil with substantial quantities of brick, stone and slate. Towards the base of this deposit, near the floor level a large quantity of domestic finds were recovered. These finds included; perfume bottles, ink bottles, part of a toothpaste pot, hairpins, bottles which had contained medications, embrocations and tonics, numerous wine and champagne bottles and many kitchen items such as storage jars, pans, plates, cutlery and jelly moulds.



All this opened up the question as to who had lived in this house. Census listings for Cammo Estate during the 19th century record buildings including Cammo House, Cammo Lodge, a Gardener's Lodge, a Coachman's Lodge and an under-Gardener's Lodge. By the 20th century the 1911 census included a building referred to as Cammo Cottage. Within this listing a resident named Margaret Wright was recorded as the sole occupant. It seemed possible that the building we were excavating could be Cammo Cottage and it seemed fitting to find out more about the woman who may have lived there and had made use of all the items that we had found.



From the study of Birth and Census records it was discovered that Margaret Wright, one of five children, was born in Monymusk, Aberdeenshire on 26 November 1840 to parents James and Barbara Wright. In 1851 she was 10 years old and living at home but by 1861 the census records that she was employed as a domestic servant with a family named Gough in Ordmill Cottage, Monymusk. Her date of birth changes often over the years and in this census it is recorded as 1842.

By 1871 Margaret had moved to Feteresso, Stonehaven where she was employed as a house maid but according to the census of 1881 she had moved south to Edinburgh where for the first time she is recorded as being employed as a domestic cook for a family in Melville Street. She was obviously still not prepared to settle and so by 1891 the census shows she had moved to Magdala Place in Edinburgh where she was again employed as a domestic cook by a widow named D. Deas.

Adverts in the Scotsman suggest that it was also in this year of 1891 that Margaret now aged 50, moved employment again, this time to Cammo House where she was employed by Mrs Maitland or Clark Tennent as a domestic cook. By 1901 she is still shown as being employed as a domestic cook living in Cammo House but she is now recorded as having a birth date of 1845 reducing her age by 5 years.

Returning to 1911, as referenced above, the census records Margaret living in Cammo Cottage on her own. It is possible that due to her age (she was then 70) that she was allowed to stay on at Cammo, possibly no longer required as the cook in the big house but allowed to live in her own cottage.

By 1915 her death certificate shows that she had returned to the town where she was born, Monymusk, and where she died on September 11th of that year, a single woman, aged 74. She was however recorded as having been employed as a housekeeper to a private family up to that date and so she died never having married and spending the whole of her long working life in domestic service.

The Deaths Notice in the Scotsman newspaper from 15th September 1915 could also be considered as her epitaph:

“WRIGHT – At Blackhillocks, Monymusk, Aberdeenshire on the 11th September, Margaret Wright, for 24 years the faithful servant of Mrs Maitland Tennent, Cammo House, Cramond Bridge, Edinburgh.”

Next Newsletter

The next edition of the *News* will be issued in August covering the work on the Cammo project from May 2021.
Another “Special 50th Anniversary” edition will be issued at the end of the year.
All Contributions welcomed.

Until then, enjoy your archaeology!

Editor: Graeme H Bettison, 7 Chapelhill, Dirleton, EH39 5HF. graeme.bettison@uwclub.net
(Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society, its Committee and Members, or the Editor).