

EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

Scottish Charity No. SC006520

News

Issue 225 – Summer/Autumn 2025



The Society has been informed of the sudden and tragic death of Ian McPherson, the husband of the current Chair, Christine McPherson. The EAFS committee has sent their condolences on behalf of all members and trust that the reason for the delay in publication of this shortened report can be appreciated.

EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY ACTIVITIES AT CAMMO

(MARCH TO OCTOBER 2025)

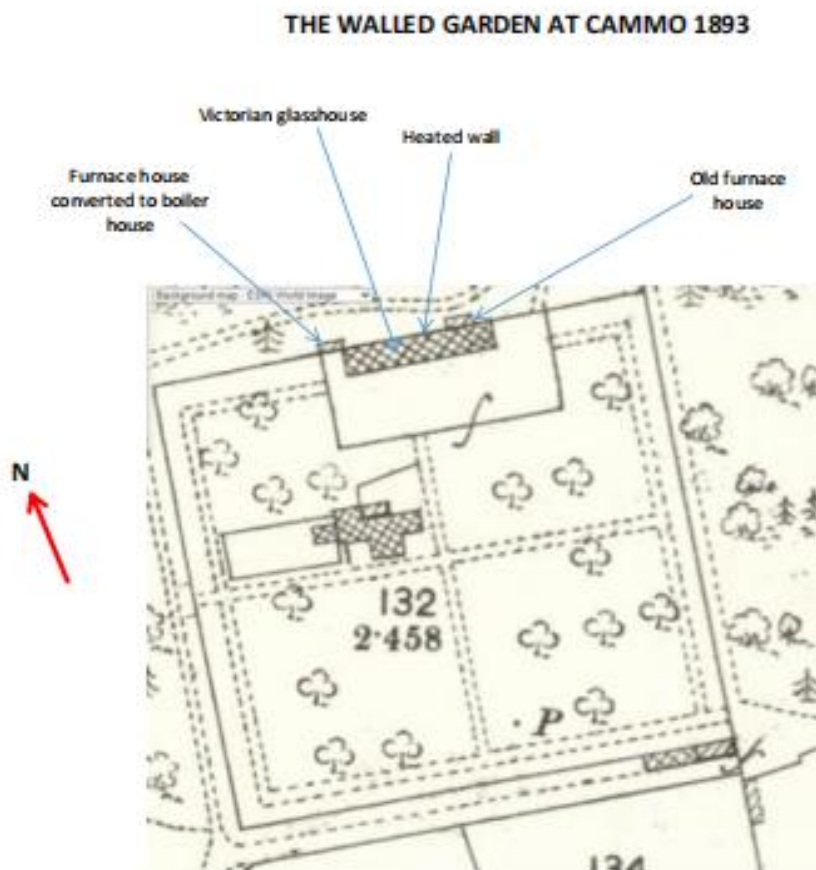
Maggie Wilson August 2025



VOLUNTEERS

In March some EAFS volunteers made a final attempt to find a central entrance to the large Victorian glasshouse situated against the heated, north wall of the Cammo Walled Garden. Nothing was found to indicate there had been any opening at the centre of the long glass wall and digging in that area was ended. Friends of Cammo have started to create a garden there, delineated by a privet hedge and bricks recovered from our current excavation. Work in the Stable Block was also finished.

Since March all efforts have been concentrated in the central area of the Walled Garden. Estate plans from as early as 1805 show a plain rectangle immediately to the north of the west gateway into the garden, which we assume was some kind of low enclosure, to be investigated further using geophysics when the undergrowth allows it. The Garden plan from 1893 shows the Victorian glasshouse, small buildings round the outside of the walls, the pump and pathways, and, in the centre, a large, mostly glass roofed building of a non-uniform shape. It is this that we aimed to excavate.



Crosshatching on structures show glass roofs. Diagonal lines are solid roofs.

The other buildings in this plan are:

- centre - some kind of conservatory or maybe orangery. Currently being excavated and not confirming anything yet.
- on the SE corner a gardener's bothy and pottling shed. Excavated.

The 'P' is where there would have been a pump over a well - the well is still there, stone lined. So far there is no explanation for the white rectangular areas - to be investigated.

In 1896 a sales inventory mentions the '*Walled Garden with vineries, a peach house and a conservatory*'. We were expecting that excavation would confirm the building we were uncovering in this central area was the conservatory, but in archaeology nothing is that simple! First, we revealed brick walls mostly on top of a stone base layer, suggesting quite a narrow rectangular structure. Many, if not all, of the bricks appear to be of fairly poor quality, lots being recycled air bricks, not used for ventilation as they are designed for, but mortared one on top of another. Some bricks are named: 'Niddrie'; 'W Hunter & Co', Portobello. Also included in this area are two dressed stone corners, three large flagstones plus one broken one, and a threshold stone, all of considerably better quality than the brick walls. Are these perhaps the remnants of a larger, higher status building, more as expected from the plan?

Throughout the site we have found a huge amount of broken glass, both plain and, particularly at the east side, striated. Research suggests that this frosted glass was quite usual in the roofs of conservatories, providing a more shaded area for some plants and humans.

As the excavation continued, we uncovered the top of an interesting saddle boiler set deep into the ground and several large cast iron pipes. Over the summer we have found two large cement-lined, brick 'water tanks' (1.86m X 2.56m), c87cm deep so far. They have been filled with hardcore, presumably in the 1980s when Edinburgh MDC made the estate safe by demolishing the remains of the ruined buildings. Removing the hardcore to find the base was back breaking and unrewarding as there is water at a depth of c80cm which cannot be removed by bailing.

More recently, we have continued clearing undergrowth and tracking the ground level remains of a stone wall, which surrounds a partially flagged area. This would seem to pre-date the brick walls. It has an impressive flag stone 'step' entrance, which should line up with the path marked on the plans, running across the width of the walled garden from east to west. Speculation is now that this may be the remains of the conservatory, the brick walls being added to part of it later, using some of the older stone walls as a foundation.

We have found very few artefacts, apart from the rusty metal remains of the roof frame, pipes, probable guttering and a few nails. The purpose of one trellis-like rectangle (approx 180cm X 50cm) in which aluminium strips have been interwoven with iron is still a mystery - any ideas gratefully received. Some small animal bones have been discovered, probably rodent, the largest maybe fox or similar, and, as elsewhere in the garden, there are quite a number of broken plant pots. We have uncovered a few, fairly modern bottles (eg Coca-Cola), several golf balls and a very few shards of pottery. One of these has a willow pattern but it could as easily have been brought in with top soil as be a remnant from use in the conservatory.

Investigating the full extent of the stone structure will be one focus of our work over the next month, but we are also looking at the north side of the area where there may have been a cellar giving access to the boiler. It would be interesting to find out where the cast iron pipes run. During the autumn, we hope to use the newly acquired Emlid to plot the exact position of the excavation in relation to the walls of the garden and to find evidence of the path that crossed from east to west. There are still many questions to try and answer: what, when, where, why???

During the holiday period especially, we have been pleased to welcome a large number of volunteers, including families, students and retirees and we have enjoyed speaking to many passing visitors, in addition to those who have come on our guided walks. There is plenty of work for any enthusiasts to get involved in.



FLAG STONE ENTRANCE TO GREENHOUSE/CONSERVATORY



SADDLE BOILER



PIPE WORK

In September 2025, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland organised a two-day trip to Argyll concentrating on the prehistoric monuments of Kilmartin Glen. Various sites were pointed out en route to our first stop at Inveraray for lunch. Unfortunately, we did not have time to stop at Auchindrain, the highland township run by a trust and well worth visiting. Passing through Lochgilphead and driving alongside the Crinan Canal we came to our first site up a forestry road to Ach nabreac. This is a large panel of rock art which along with cup and ring marks has complex motifs, thought to relate to passage grave art from the neolithic period in the Boyne Valley. The next stop was Dunadd, that early medieval site which dominates the flood plain of the River Add and the Moine Mhor. The date of the establishment for the Dalriadic kingdom in Argyll is around 500AD. Originally excavated by Leslie Alcock in the 1980s the site is regarded as a nuclear fort situated on a small hill with a flat top and terraces. The site has been dated by radiocarbon to between 5th and 8th centuries AD. It has produced evidence of metal working with Anglo Saxon and Irish stylistic influences. Contact with the Atlantic trade routes from France are indicated by finds of E-ware and glass vessels. It is considered to be the inauguration site due to the carved footprint, an incised boar, and ogham. From there we travelled to our accommodation at the Loch Melfort Hotel where we enjoyed talks on Kilmartin Museum by the Director Dr. John Raven and Curator Dr Sharon Webb.

The following day we visited the newly refurbished Kilmartin Museum where we were met by Curator Sharon Webb who gave us a guided tour of the exhibits and explained their relevance. Of particular interest was the jet spacer plate necklace, the pottery and the 3D image of the underside of the large capstone of the Dunchraigaig Cairn. We had free time to further explore the museum, and I decided to visit the graveyard of Kilmartin church which holds a large collection of West Highland grave slabs. After a lovely lunch at the museum we had a guided walk of the glen looking at the linear cemetery of cairns, the stone circles at Templewood and standing stones, By this time it was raining rather heavily and we bid farewell to Sharon and Kilmartin Glen for our journey back to Edinburgh. It was a busy two days but so full of interest and a delight to return to my home county.



Jet Spacer Plate Necklace



Dunadd Footprint

CONFERENCES

Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee (TAFAC)

Annual Conference at Rothes Hall, Glenrothes Saturday 1st November 2025.

Details from TAFAC website: www.tafac.org.uk

Or email tafacinfo@gmail.com

Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders Archaeology Conference 2025 – 15th November

Queen Margaret University, Musselburgh

www.eastlothian.gov.uk/archaeologyconference

Scottish Archaeological Forum

“Building Bridges: Connecting Scotland’s Archaeological Community”

25th October, Nicolson Sq. Venues, Edinburgh EH8 9BX

Details from SAF website: www.scotarchforum.com/saf2025

AGM

Archaeology Scotland

25th October, Leven, Fife

Inc. Lecture

“The Levenmouth Project”

with

Tour of

Some Levenmouth Sites

EAFS LECTURE SERIES
LG34 PATERSON'S LAND
HOLYROOD ROAD
EH8 8AQ
2025

12 November - Dr Kirstie Dingwall, Headland Archaeology.

(Discoveries from the Clyde Wind Farm project.)

10 December - EAFS members' updates and Christmas social

2026

14 January - Dr Peter Yeoman, Stirling University.

(SUBJECT TBA)

11 February - Dr Nick Hannon, HES.

(Recent excavations at Lewisvale Park, Inveresk.)

11 March - AGM

8 April - Chris Fleet, NLS Map Library.

(SUBJECT TBA)

13 May - Dr Edward Stewart, Archaeology Scotland. 10 June.

- (SUBJECT TBA)

**This Newsletter was compiled by Alan Calder, member of the EAFS Committee, with
contributions from Committee Members.**

**(Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society,
its Committee and Members)**

Next Newsletter will be issued later this year.

All Contributions welcomed

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