

EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

Scottish Charity No. SC006520

News

Issue 222 – Summer 2024



Notes from the Chair, August 2024

Again we have the sad news of the death of a good friend to the Society Robin Murdoch. An obituary will be part of this newsletter. We and all Scottish Archaeology will miss him.

We will be informing members soon about the next tranche of lectures. We intend to move from St Augustine United Church to University of Edinburgh buildings. We are currently negotiating which of the lecture theatres we will be able to use. As we need to be finished and out by 9.00pm we are contemplating starting a little bit earlier at 7.00pm. This will give us time to have our lecture, ask questions of the speaker and still have time for tea/coffee and social activity which is an important part of the Society.

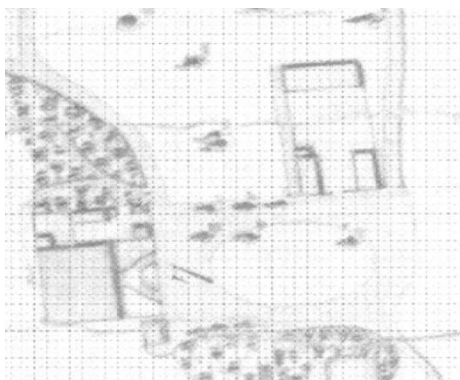
We have also been discussing a range of other archaeological activities to engage those of you that are not free on Mondays or find Cammo difficult to reach. We will be joining with Ben Bright to get involved with his project at Tormain and our President has plans for a few areas of work in the near future. Our good friend Geoff Bailey also has more Falkirk excavations coming up. There will be plenty to get involved with.

Cammo Report

Our Cammo excavations have moved to a new area. We are investigating the 3 buildings that appear on the 1805 map but not on the 1825 map. As the 'New Stables' were finished in 1811 we have a theory that the buildings that have disappeared may be the previous stables. Sir John Clerk talked about his Grand Stables and we have wondered where they may be.

Neil surveyed in the points from the 1805 map onto the current one and has led us to where we are excavating. So far we have come across the levelling work done in the 1980's (a clue was early decimal currency found in the deposit in Trench 1). About a metre further down we came across pottery that more closely matches the late 18th/ early 19th Century which was more supportive of our theory. We also found a midden deposit of broken glass bottles that John Lawson has pronounced likely to be from 'onion' bottles again dating from a similar era.

To begin with we were opening trenches and then filling them in at the close of the day. This made for heavy and soul destroying work. Luckily we have been allowed to keep the trenches at the side of the Avenue open but fenced, which has improved the life of our excavators immensely.



CAMMO OLD STABLE BLOCK, 1805 MAP



OLD STABLE BLOCK EXCAVATIONS

Our Open Day on July 20th gave us a good opportunity to open a longer trench over an area nearer the middle of the Avenue. This was helped by having 8 students from the United States who took part in the Open Day with enthusiasm. This was enhanced by a range of interesting finds including a clay pipe stem which had the makers name on it.

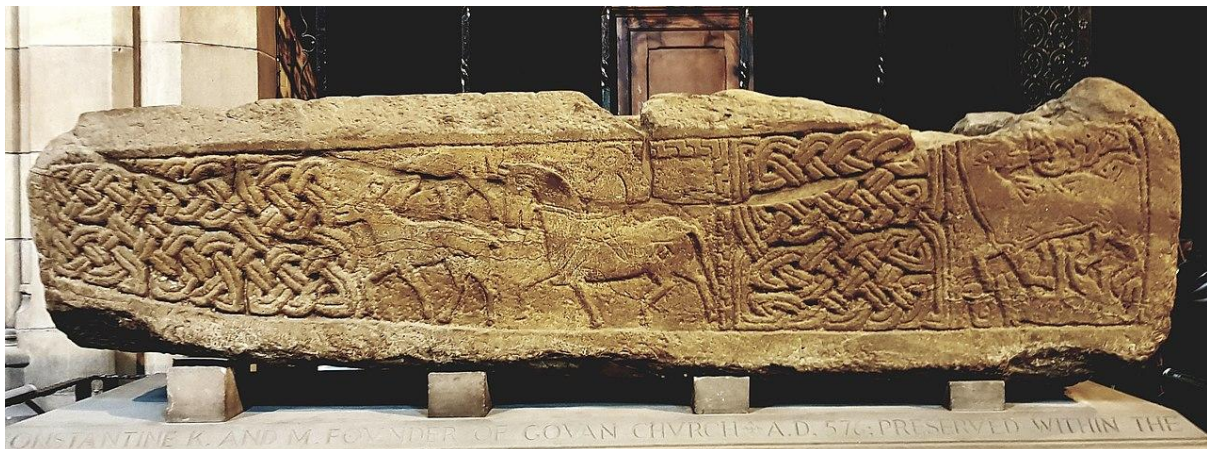
The tours of the Estate that were offered as part of the Open Day were full and well received. Lord Morton attended the morning tour. As a direct descendant of the last Watson to own Cammo he was very interested in the work that Ann Kerrigan has done to trace the history of the House owners.

Sculptured Stones at Govan Old Parish Church

On 26th June 2024, a small group of EAFS members ventured through to Glasgow then by subway to Govan Cross with a short walk to the church. Govan Old Parish Church was built by Rowand Anderson in 1884 on the site of several earlier churches dating back to the early Christian period. The church has outstanding stained glass, with several windows by Charles Eamer Kempe but this was not the aim of the visit. A very knowledgeable guide took us around the church explaining the history of the site thought to have been built under the royal patronage of the kingdom of Strathclyde and dedicated to St Constantine.

Shafts of upright crosses, one containing a panel showing St Paul and St Anthony breaking bread in the desert and many recumbent cross slabs with crosses and interlace together with 5 Hogback monuments make up the 31 stones in the museum.

The sarcophagus minus its lid was intended to be seen from all sides with its intricate carvings of hunting scenes, animals and interlace, reminiscent of Pictish and Anglian art.



THE GOVAN SARCOPHAGUS

For the last 25 years Professor Stephen Driscoll has been leading excavations in the Churchyard. He has been exploring the site and its significance. Evidence points to Govan being the principal political centre of the early medieval kingdom of Strathclyde (Ystrad Clud).

Recent excavations have uncovered 1 more carved stone, possible remains of the vallum and a pathway to Doomster Hill, demolished by shipbuilding works in the nineteenth century. Excavations at Govan Old will take place from 3-16 September. info@thegovanstones.org.uk

(It is to be noted that at the Largs Viking Festival on Thursday 5th September, 2024 Professor Driscoll of the University of Glasgow will give a lecture on the "Govan Stones Project (from the 9th Century)" linking the Scots, Pictish, Norse and the Kingdom of Strathclyde.

"Dig where you stand: recent archaeological developments at Govan Old")



Report: Cramond Walled Garden Watching Brief

A watching brief on the 25th of April 2024 was undertaken at the request of City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service for planned community tree planting activities within the Cramond walled garden area. Five tree planting pits to depths of planned disturbance of 40cm were undertaken and assessed as per HES Scheduled Monument Consent (Case 300069871). 100% of the disturbed soil was assessed, stratigraphy recorded and finds collected and photographed.

Overall, the stratigraphy across the test area reflects expected site formation process of the 17th /18th century walled garden, consisting of topsoil, an interpreted 18th – 19th century ‘clinker’ layer (see Dean, 2017:102), and a disturbed silt layer. No archaeological features were identified. Finds in the topsoil were consistent with disturbance, and comprised of modern plastic and glass debris, and pottery. In the clinker layer distinct across tests 1 – 4, fire altered building material made up 100% of the finds. At the intersection of and in Test 4, an ex-situ unfrosted brick was encountered, and collected. No finds were found in context. No finds were found in Test 5. All finds were catalogued and collected.

Doris Koeck, BA FSAScot

On behalf of Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society

References

Dean, Valerie. “Cramond Excavations 1988 - 2001: Data Structure Report.”

Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society, 2017.

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Archaeology Summer School 2024

This year we visited Bute from 10 -13 June crossing the Clyde from Wemyss Bay to Rothesay and our accommodation in the Glenburn Hotel. Each evening, we had dinner followed by a lecture including Paul Duffy who gave an overview of the archaeology of the island and Richard Oram. Bute is interesting from a geological perspective as the Highland Boundary Fault Line bisects the island creating two distinct landscapes. It was necessary to concentrate on the south as the buses would not be able to cope with the roads in the north

Saturday saw us at the south end of the island where from a hillside we viewed the landscape in which Scalpsie Barrow was situated before visiting the site where excavation took place in 2010. Our next stop was to see a limekiln in the back gardens of houses at Kingarth where we had our packed lunch at the jetty. St. Blanes Chapel /Kingarth monastery was a multiperiod site comprising features of an early Christian monastery, a nave and chancel church with a beautiful Romanesque arch and two graveyards, one of which contained a hogback stone and other carved stones. The site had been partially excavated, consolidated and landscaped in the nineteenth century by the 3rd Marquis of Bute. The site is extremely complex, and a wide-ranging discussion took place regarding the relevance of its proximity to Dunagoil vitrified fort and Little Dunagoil fort. On our return to Rothesay, we visited the museum built in 1925-6 by the 4th Marquis of Bute to house the collections of the Bute Natural History Society founded in 1905. Many of the exhibits are the result of excavations conducted by Dorothy Marshall. It is a museum which covers the history of the island from its geology to a jet spacer plate necklace, a penny farthing, photographs of the steamers that took Glaswegians down the water and so much more.

Sunday morning saw us at the High Kirk of Bute to visit St Mary's Chapel with its recessed canopied tombs and an effigy of a West Highland warrior amongst other carved stones. Our next site was one of the most remarkable stately homes in Scotland. Mount Stuart rebuilt in the late 19th century by Rowand Anderson after a fire in 1877 for the 3rd Marquis of Bute. The interior designed by Burges features a stunning marble hall with a ceiling depicting the signs of the zodiac, an internal heated swimming pool and a marble chapel. Words do not do it justice.



St. BLANES CHAPEL



MOUNT STUART

From there we visited two sites alongside the bed of the Rothesay to Ettrick Bay Tramway which ran from 1882 until 1936. Cnoc na Rath was a curious site defined by a bank and ditch with a 19th century grave at the centre. There is some suggestion that it may have been a ting (a meeting place) due to Norse influence. St Cormac's Stone Circle was our last stop on our way to Ettrick Bay where some hardy souls had a swim. Returning to Rothesay the bus drivers stopped to show us the bus garage originally the tram depot.

Rothesay Castle was visited on Monday during our walk along the original streets of the royal burgh. At some point during the weekend, we visited an A listed building the West Pier Public Convenience which is lavishly decorated.

INDUSTRIAL LEITH OPEN DAY

AOC Archaeology held an Open Day on 3rd August showcasing the two industrial sites in Leith where they are currently working and I went along to have a look.

The Baltic street site was used as a Naval yard during the 18th century and the old sea wall can be seen here showing how much the coastline has changed. During the early part of the eighteenth century it was used as a Gas works and at one point 60% of the gas used in the Leith district was produced here until eventually production was moved to the much larger site at Granton in 1900. Latterly it was used as a timber yard before lying empty.

The Halmyre Street site was used by an important Ironworks during the 19th century while later on it was used as a tram depot which then became a bus depot. Few finds were available to view but there were some pieces of glazed pottery, patinated glass and pipe bowls and stems. AOC are hoping to take down the excavated walls after recording is completed and dig further in the hope of finding possible evidence of the siege of Leith.



LEITH OLD SEA WALL (SLOPED LEFT) AND FOUNDATION WALL OF NAVAL YARD (RIGHT)

TRIBUTES FOR KEITH MITCHELL AND ROBIN MURDOCH

We are extremely sorry to be giving members the sad news that two of our longest standing members - Keith Mitchell and Robin Murdoch - passed away within three months of one another. They did so much for the Society over the years and their knowledge and advice were of particular use in the creation of the City of Edinburgh Museum's exhibition to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society.

Our deepest sympathy goes to Keith's and Robin's families.

They will be a great loss to the Society.

KEITH MITCHELL

2nd September 1942 – 23rd April 2024



Keith spent his formative years between Edinburgh and the Province of Quebec, Canada. As a young boy he began the process of becoming a passionate devotee of anything relating to archaeology, history, space flight and certain aspects of cosmology.

One day in the summer of 1969, Keith was invited by friend Eric Robertson to go down to Fast Castle in Berwickshire to join a 'Treasure Hunt'.

This incident, along with other aspects of the treasure hunt, led them to call into question the way in which activities on the ground were being run and how, over time, the general manner of proceedings was transformed for the better.

As a result the East of Scotland Archaeological Association was formed on the 22nd March 1971, with Keith being the first Secretary and Eric as Chairman. To avoid any confusion with other organisations, the ESAA subsequently changed its name to the Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society. In the early days he served as Chairman for three years.

Little did the Society know that the Fast Castle's excavation would extend from 1971 until 1986. There was a number of interesting and exciting episodes, such as rescuing a bale of fencing material which had rolled off the top of the cliff, abseiling down the cliff face to investigate an underlying cave, finding a gold and enamel button, and camping on site.

Following completion of the excavation, members took on the task of researching and writing up many of the finds. A room was made available at the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland for the weekly work. Keith, Robin Murdoch and John Ward undertook the compilation and publication in 2001 of the comprehensive excavation report – *Fast Castle : Excavations 1971-86*. This report gained the Pitt Rivers Award in the 2002 British Archaeological Awards. Keith, in company with Hugh Dinwoodie and Denis Smith, was delighted to be awarded this certificate and plaque at the ceremony in Liverpool.

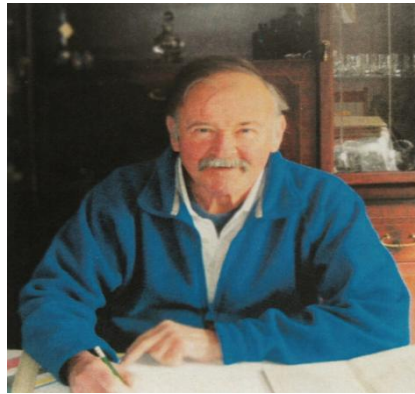
Keith was curious about the history of the castle and instigated its research. He gathered together a group of members to seek out as much as possible in every likely library and source. Then this material had to be transferred on to a card index system and then compiled into not one, but two, comprehensive histories. *Fast Castle : A History from 1602* by Keith (1988) and *Fast Castle : The Early Years* by Mary Kennaway (1992). He followed this up by setting up another research group into Cramond's history.

Prior to retiring from business in Edinburgh in 1999, Keith also developed an intense interest in genealogy, taking up the long-serving post as historian for the family. He created his own website *Scottish Family Heritage* which makes available primary source material for family historians. Since retiring to Moray in the Millennium year, Keith helped to establish the Moray Burial Ground Research Group in 2023. He also became a member of the Elgin Writers in 2020, a group that seeks to encourage authors in their writing endeavours. Another keen interest of his has been as a lifelong bibliophile, with a particular attraction for books dealing with the unusual, mysterious or inexplicable.

Kind-hearted Keith was a very welcoming and encouraging person who will be a great loss to all.

KENNETH ROBIN MURDOCH

1st August 1942 - 6th July 2024



A former aerospace engineer, Robin first became involved in archaeology in late 1971, joining the Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society (EAFS) which had been formed earlier that year. He was Honorary Chairman for 18 years from 1983, Secretary from 1975 to 1977 and Newsletter Editor for 15 years from 1975. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1976. In addition to being FSA Scot, he was a member of the Association for the History of Glass and a trustee of the Scottish Ironwork Foundation.

Robin spent many seasons working on the Fast Castle excavation from 1971 to 1986 and supervised the work for a time. Members spent many evenings marking up the finds on his dining room table. With Keith Mitchell and John Ward he co-produced the excavation report as well as reporting on certain groups of the finds.

He worked in the mid-1970s Edinburgh Council excavations on the Roman site at Cramond which included the Bathhouse and Annexe. He also created an excellent photographic record of the excavations.

His interest in glass was stimulated by the discovery of a considerable deposit of vessel and window glass during an EAFS dig at Cramond Tower in 1978. Since then Robin set up a small company, Harlaw Heritage, to study and report on glass assemblages from excavations all over Scotland. Many of these have been published in Proceedings and in stand-alone publications.

In 1991 he decided to give up engineering to follow a career in freelance archaeology which included hands-on excavation of virtually all periods from Mesolithic to Industrial. In collaboration with John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology, he excavated at the salt pans at St Monans in Fife, and co-authored the 1999 TAFAC Monograph 2 *The Salt and Coal Industries at St Monans, Fife, in the 18th and 19th centuries*.

Robin assisted at the Society excavation at Cornton/Castlehill, Penicuik, by carrying out a topographical survey of the site by EDM.

He was enthusiastic about the Scottish Rural Past Landscape Project of surveying the Pentlands to record deserted settlements. One site, Threipmuir, was deemed worthy of further examination when a horse gin was revealed. Robin became the director of the excavation and restoration of the deserted farmhouse. Six apartments of the main range at Threipmuir were re-roofed and the cottage is currently used by a local charity benefiting difficult and disadvantaged children.

Robin was a very encouraging person to work with and he attracted people to excavate with the Society in its various projects.



KEITH AND ROBIN AT FAST CASTLE

COMING EVENTS

Cammo Open Day, Saturday 24th August, 1000 - 1500

Cammo, Doors Open Day, Sunday 29th September, 1000 - 1500

EAFS lecture, Wednesday 9th October, 1930

"The Role of Deer in Scottish Prehistory"

Kath Page

(n.b.Venue to be announced)

East Lothian Archaeology & Heritage Fortnight

31st August - 15th September

Edinburgh 900 Archaeology Conference, Saturday 12th October 0900

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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