



PAST

Peeblesshire Archaeological Society Times
Autumn 2017

Scotland's Early Silver at the National Museum of Scotland

"It's very exciting to be able to tell a story of a thousand years of power and prestige through the biography of this one precious metal"

Alice Blackwell

A new exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland supported by Glenmorangie shows for the first time how silver, not gold, became the most important precious metal in Scotland over the course of the first millennium AD.

The results of new research and recent archaeological discoveries chart the first thousand years of silver in Scotland. The exhibition showcases Scotland's earliest silver introduced by the Roman army, and demonstrates the lasting impact this new material was eventually to have on early Medieval Scotland.

This research is part of a unique multi award-winning cultural partnership with The Glenmorangie Company which is now in its ninth year.

Alice Blackwell, Glenmorangie research fellow at National Museums Scotland explains:

"We're delighted to be able to showcase the first thousand years of silver in Scotland. This exhibition looks at the most powerful objects made in a new and precious material. It sheds light on the crucial transition from Roman Iron Age tribal society to the first early kingdoms in Scotland that emerged in the 4th – 9th centuries.

The newly opened exhibition includes the first public display of the recently unveiled Dairsie Hoard, which dates to the late 3rd century AD and is the earliest known example of hacksilver from anywhere beyond the Roman frontier.

Also on their first full public display are finds from Gaulcross in the former county of Banffshire Aberdeenshire made in 2013 near the findspot of a 19th century hoard. Since its excavation, research has revealed striking similarities with another find, from Norrie's Law, in Fife. Both hoards date to the 5th–6th centuries AD and show for the first time how earlier Roman silver was recycled and repurposed over the centuries.



Detail of enamelled head of decorated silver pin, found at Gaulcross, Banffshire in the 1830s (© NMS)

The exhibition is accompanied by a book and a programme of public events, and reflects recent scholarship undertaken to place Scotland's early silver in a European context through a research network project supported by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council.

The exhibition has been made possible by an innovative partnership between The Glenmorangie Company and National Museums Scotland. Since 2008, this association has supported the Museum's academic research and public engagement activities and funded an archaeological research post.

The basis for the partnership comes from eighth-century Hilton of Cadboll Stone, on display in the National Museum of Scotland's Early People gallery. The Hilton of Cadboll stone was discovered near Glenmorangie Distillery in Ross-shire, and is the inspiration for the brand icon that adorns Glenmorangie's range of single malt whiskies.

13 October 2017 - 25 February 2018
National Museum of Scotland
Chambers Street, Edinburgh
Admission: Free

Source: National Museums Scotland



Some items from the new hoard of silver found at Gaulcross in Banffshire in 2013 (all © NMS)

- a parcel of hacksilver with a coin between the folds;
- complete brooch with twisted hoop from Norrie's Law, Fife, for comparison with one of a number of fragments of a similar brooch from Gaulcross;
- various fragments of decorated silver objects



Maureen Erasmuson

In July, we were deeply saddened to hear of the death of Maureen Erasmuson. A longstanding member and supporter of PAS, Maureen was extremely generous with her time and enthusiasm and contributed to the work of the society from the outset in a variety of ways - from participation in fieldwork, especially the Eddleston survey, to assisting with field trips.

Latterly, and before she was eventually forced to resign from the committee due to her ill health, Maureen took on the role of Programme Secretary, organising our annual programme of talks for a number of years. Its success owed a great deal to her exploration of possible speakers and topics, her persistence in making contacts and her careful 'follow-up' to ensure everything would be 'alright on the night'!

As a contributor to our annual Members Evening, she more than once shared her knowledge and enthusiasm – usually following some archaeological holiday in her beloved Scotland.

Finally, Maureen took a special interest in the society's outreach activities and was the driving force behind our successful local Adopt-a-Monument projects at Lyne Kirk and Harehope Cairn which have given local residents and visitors two fascinating windows onto Tweeddale's past.

Indeed, Maureen's close association with these two projects means that these sites especially will be tangible reminders of her work for the society in particular and of her enthusiasm and support for local archaeology and history in general.



Maureen finding worked chert flakes in molehills during walkover survey at Shiplaw, Eddleston

Clearing vegetation, Harehope Cairn Adopt-a-Monument project

Maureen (in red jacket and in typical pose!) viewing rock art at Roughting Linn. Field trip to Northumberland 2012.



O'er the hills to Eskdale...

Summer Field trip 2017

The destination for our summer excursion this year was Eskdale in Dumfriesshire. Our guide for the day was Strat Halliday, formerly of the Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland. Having played a major part in their intensive archaeological survey of Eastern Dumfriesshire during the 1990s, Strat was the ideal person to introduce the group to Eskdale's rich archaeological landscape.

Sites visited over the course of the day included the excavated settlement site at Boonies; the impressive hillforts at Bailliehill and Castle O'er – the main local centres of power in the valley during the Iron Age; and the enigmatic 'amphitheatre'-like earthworks at Over Rig of broadly the same period.

Despite Eskdalemuir weather station's rainy reputation, the weather stayed kind all day and the party enjoyed packed lunch at Castle O'er; however, we couldn't let the day go by without sampling the excellent Old School Café at the splendid Eskdalemuir Community Hub.

Fortified by tea, cake and traybakes, and still blessed with fine weather, we finished our day out with food for thought in the shape of a visit to the fine pair of stone circles known as the Loupin' Stanes & the Girdle Stanes.

The field trip was organised by Gillian Brown, Joyce Durham and Trevor Cowie. Special thanks are due to Strat for acting as our guide.



Exploring the hillfort at Bailliehill in Eskdale (Photo: Trevor Cowie)



Walking along the ramparts of the hillfort at Bailliehill in Eskdale (Photo: Trevor Cowie)

An overview of Overig (Photo: Gillian Brown)



Girdle Stanes (Photo: Gillian Brown)



Tomb it may concern...

2017-2018 lecture programme off to a flying start!

The society's autumn lecture programme was given an excellent start with a talk by Dr Margaret Maitland of National Museums Scotland which took us from the north of Scotland to the sands of the Nile. In her presentation, Margaret traced the story of the pioneering Scottish antiquary Alexander Henry Rhind from his early life and his ground-breaking excavation of a broch at Kettleburn in his native Caithness to his investigations of an undisturbed ancient tomb at Thebes near modern Luxor.

Sadly Rhind had developed TB while still a young man, and decided to go to Egypt in the hope of a more suitable climate. He corresponded with eminent Egyptologists of the time, learned quickly and soon obtained permission to dig. In Scotland, Rhind had pioneered a systematic approach to excavation and he brought this to bear in his work in Egypt, in particular in his investigation of the tomb at Thebes.

The focus of a recent temporary exhibition in the National Museum, the tomb in question was originally built for a Chief of Police and his wife around 1290BC, shortly after the reign of Tutankhamun and around the height of the ancient Egyptian empire.

Over the following centuries it was looted and reused several times, leaving behind a collection of beautiful objects from various eras. In her talk, Margaret showed how these and objects found in other tombs nearby give a vivid sense of how burial in ancient Egypt changed over time.

The Tomb's final use occurred around 9BC, shortly after the Roman conquest of Egypt, when it was sealed intact following the burial of an entire family whose names were still identifiable from rare funerary papyri full of family information. Even their family tree could be constructed!

The tomb then lay undisturbed until it was excavated by Rhind. He died only a few years later at the age of only 29.

Jeff Carter

Thanks go to Jeff for compiling the detailed reports on our talks on which this edited summary is based. They provide the basis for the annual round-up in the Spring issue of PAST and an excellent record of our meetings over the years (however, it should be noted that Jeff is not to blame for the headline!).



Mummy shroud for Aemka, the previously unknown son of the Roman-era high-official Montsuef and his wife Tanuat. c. 9BC © NMS

Dates for your diary!

PAS Lecture Programme 2017-2018

Thursday 16th November 2017
Andrew Jepson (Archaeology Scotland)
Stobs Camp: Past, Present & Future

Thursday 18th January 2018
Strat Halliday
Forts and fortification: regional patterns in the Scottish Iron Age

Thursday 15th February 2018
Dr Graeme Cavers (AOC Archaeology)
Excavations at Black Loch of Myrton: an early Iron Age village in SW Scotland

Thursday 15th March 2018
Alan Blair (Guard Archaeology)
Neolithic Halls, Bronze Age roundhouses and a late Bronze Age hoard at Carnoustie, Angus

Thursday 19th April 2018
AGM / Members Evening

Meetings start at 7.30pm and will be held in the Community Centre, Walkershaugh, Peebles – unless stated otherwise.

---Non-members welcome (there is a charge of £4 towards expenses)---

And finally...

After a great deal of hard work by Stephen Scott and Neil Crawford throughout this year, our website has been completely revamped and is now up and working in provisional form.

Some pages are still under construction but further content is due to be uploaded over the coming months – and new contributions are always welcome!

The URL remains the same

<http://www.peeblesarchsoc.org.uk/index.html>



The screenshot shows the website's home page with a navigation menu (Home, About, Meetings, Membership, Contact, Blog) and a 'Welcome' section. The 'Welcome' section includes a photograph of a landscape with stone structures and text that reads: 'From traces of prehistoric hunters to the remains of Second World War defences. The past is out there! If you would like to explore the rich archaeological heritage of Tweeddale or learn more about archaeology in general, please come along to one of our regular meetings.' A 'Survey' button is visible in the bottom right. The footer shows the time as 22:05 on 31/10/2017.

PAS website home page (October 2017)