



PAST

Peeblesshire Archaeological Society Times
April 2017

Annual Report 2016-2017

Lecture summaries

The arrival of spring means that we have come to the end of our programme of talks by invited guest speakers – and as in previous years, this provides an opportunity to recall the wide range of subjects they have covered.

Back in September, as our speakers for the first meeting of the session, we were delighted to welcome **Gretel Evans & Natalie Mitchell** from AOC Archaeology Ltd. In their talk entitled '*All that is Gold does not glitter*', they described their conservation work on the amazing Viking Age hoard discovered in Dumfriesshire in 2014. The hoard comprised a superb collection of silver ingots and rings beneath which was concealed a gilded silver vessel containing a variety of precious objects, including gold ingots, a pectoral cross and jewellery.

Gretel and Natalie both work as artefact conservators in the Conservation Laboratory at AOC, and the treatment of the hoard is being carried out as a project for Historic Environment Scotland. At the time of the lecture, they had completed the initial conservation process, stabilising the finds until the Treasure Trove process is complete. When the new owner/holder of the hoard is established much further conservation and analytical work will be required.

The find is especially important because the sealed vessel containing much of the hoard, together with the soil conditions, has preserved a variety of textile fragments. Fortunately the metal-detectorist who discovered the hoard left it reasonably intact permitting excavation in lab conditions, and the recovery of information on ancient textiles which would not normally survive.

The extremely fragile nature of these textiles has been a major contributory factor to the two years needed so far to tease apart the hoard for preliminary study and valuation purposes. Each stage of the conservation process has been meticulously recorded. Some of the items were wrapped, and it is the survival of these fabrics which is unusual. It is thought that copper impurities in the silver have corroded and acted as a biocide to kill the organisms that destroy cloth. Silk, woven wool, linen and leather have all been identified. Several glass beads also survive as well as some enigmatic charms and clay beads. A Mercian coin is embedded in one charm. The hoard is very mixed, from a variety of sources, and it is anticipated that future detailed analysis has the potential to uncover many more interesting insights into the Viking age.



The silver vessel in the Galloway Viking hoard. © Crown Office

Our guest speaker at the October meeting needed little introduction: as Archaeology Officer for Scottish Borders Council, **Dr Chris Bowles** has been a regular contributor to our annual Member's Evening meeting April. The Borders is one of the richest regions for archaeology and built heritage in Scotland With more than 15,000 registered entries in the regional Historic Environment Record (HER). For this talk, titled '**Torwoodlee Broch in Context**' Chris focused on one category of archaeological monument, the broch, as seen through the lens of the important Borders site at Torwoodlee.

Although rather less well-known than Edin's Hall in Berwickshire, Torwoodlee deserves recognition as a significant monument in its own right. It sits above the Galashiels to Clovenfords road, strategically placed to monitor the valleys to the N and SW. Around the broch are the remains of a hillfort, and also what may be one end of the major linear earthwork known as the 'Picts' Work dyke' or Catrail. This seems likely to have been a territorial boundary of early medieval date, but Chris speculated that might even have marked an even earlier tribal political boundary, for example between the Selgovae to the West and the Votadini to the East – but this is speculation.

The broch was excavated in 1891 by James Wilson, who cleared the interior and found Roman Samian ware, glass and a coin. Professor Stuart Piggott revisited the site in 1951 and excavated further seeking to establish the relationship of the broch to the surrounding features.

Although the lowland brochs seek to mimic the form of the well-known Northern brochs, the local Borders stone is harder and does not laminate conveniently in the manner of the northern flagstones which lent themselves to drystone construction of the highest order). It is therefore unlikely any of the lowland brochs actually exceeded two storeys, as the walls comprise two skins of masonry with rubble infill (and thus lacking the developed intramural staircases and galleries of their northern counterparts).

Piggott's excavations indicated that the broch at Torwoodlee may have only been in use for a few decades, before it was then apparently deliberately demolished. A burial of a young female was found, dated to the time of the demolition. Carefully placed in a stone lined cist this may have been part of an associated ritual. Without radiocarbon evidence, dating was tenuous, possibly to the end of the 1st or beginning of the 2nd century AD.



Aerial view of Torwoodlee from the south. Source: CANMORE © G Geddes

The real use of the lowland brochs remains unknown, as does the reason for the demolition. Past explanations involving the Romans are questionable when it is considered Edin's Hall has no Roman pottery; at Edin's Hall at least, a link to copper working in the area is possible. Whatever the relationships to the northern counterparts, these substantial lowland buildings clearly represent expressions of power and wealth. Another excavation is planned at another of the lowland brochs at Tappoch or Torwood at Dunipace near Falkirk, so further information may eventually become available to expand our appreciation of these fascinating monuments.

November marked the occasion of our annual joint meeting with the Tweeddale Society, and a tremendous presentation by **Dr John Reid** on the topic of '**The Roman Assault on Burnswark Hill – a conflict rehabilitated**'. Dr Reid is the chairman of the Trimontium Trust; recently retired from a distinguished medical career, he has resumed an interest in archaeology, in particular the ballistic capability of the Roman Imperial Army.

At Burnswark, situated about 4 miles south of Lockerbie, and only 18 miles in a direct line from Hadrian's Wall, he has led new investigations of an important native hillfort and the two Roman camps that partly surround it. With an area of 17 acres, the hillfort is the largest near Hadrian's Wall, with a 10 acre Roman fort situated on its southern flank, and a 6 acre fort to its north. These forts were interpreted as siege forts from the first investigation in 1792 until a new theory put forward in 1964 suggested the complex was a practice facility for Roman artillery. Despite no such site being found elsewhere in the empire, and the site being on 'enemy' territory, this theory was largely accepted. New evidence however lends support to the original idea.

The slingshot, ballista balls and arrow heads found in the late 1890's caught Dr Reid's interest and he was keen to investigate the site further but as a rare site that had not been ploughed and that had no obvious later occupation, there was great reluctance to disturb it. However in 2014 Scheduled Monument Consent was granted for a non-invasive metal detecting survey of the site, where possible finds were flagged. Expert detectorists, with good equipment, were able to pinpoint hundreds of possible finds and identify different types.



Lead slingshot bullets found at Burnswark. Source: Current Archaeology. © J Reid

Concentrations of slingshot were found on the hillfort ramparts and on the South camp around three mounds on the wall nearest the hillfort that have been identified as ballista bases. Recent similar surveys at battlefield sites such as Culloden and Killiecrankie, or abroad at iconic sites such as Waterloo and Little Bighorn, have proved so worthwhile that permission was granted for two small trenches to be dug in 2015. These have provided a wealth of finds, with a variety of slingshot of types also known elsewhere in the Empire (plus one type found only at Burnswark!). The metal detector survey was also extended and over 2,200 contacts were flagged, with at least 670 identified as more lead shot. In 2016 a further three trenches were permitted at key locations.

Using isotope analysis done in Frankfurt, and evidence from Roman inscriptions, historical sources and new European studies, Dr Reid constructed a good case for the site to have been the site of a major siege by the 22nd Legion from Germany, with Syrian archers, conducted in the manner of the siege at Masada in Israel. Led by the general Lollius Urbicus acting on instruction from the emperor Antoninus Pius in about 140AD, this action was the beginning of the conquest of Southern Scotland that culminated in the Antonine Wall being built.

The Offensive Romans **Tweeddale Museum, Peebles**

If you haven't seen it yet, the Burnswark evidence is explored in detail in a fascinating exhibition currently on show in the Tweeddale Museum but you will need to be quick - the display finishes on 29 April!



Burnswark: the South camp viewed from the hillfort. Source: Current Archaeology

For our first meeting of 2017, we were pleased to welcome **Matt Ritchie**, Forest Enterprise Scotland's Archaeologist, to talk on **"Echoes in Stone: creative archaeological visualisation on Scotland's National Forest Estate"**. Matt introduced us to his role, which involves managing and co-ordinating the recording, conservation and promotion of the very extensive inventory of archaeological sites within the national estate. In particular, he was experimenting with various new techniques of recording, monitoring and sharing the results of his work. The overarching primary aim is to create much improved visual presentation of the monuments that can be used to inform and engage public, technical and academic audiences. Towards this aim, since 2013, Forest Enterprise Scotland has in a joint effort with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) been translating Forest Enterprise's Geographic Information System into a three dimensional digital record.

Using fascinating examples such as rock art at Ormaig (Argyll) & Ballochmyle (Ayrshire), the 'Giant's Graves' chambered cairn (Arran) and the dun at Kraiknish (Skye), Matt showed just what high resolution aerial laser scan surveys and photogrammetry could produce. By combining the results with traditional maps and drawn records, and encouraging the recording archaeologists to be creative with their data presentation, he is furthering his objectives of an enhanced record and baseline

information which can be used in the management and presentation of the monuments. He hopes to create an 'integrated outdoor collection' of good examples which can be used in a three-tier communication strategy to cover the public, informed audiences, and academic or technical audiences. The information can also be used to prepare better contract information for the part of Forest Enterprise dealing with the planting, care and felling of trees.



Caisteal Grugaig Broch, Glenshiel. To enhance the existing records of the site, Forest Enterprise commissioned a new measured survey using modern techniques, including laser scanning technology. This detail shows the huge triangular lintel over the low entrance passage. © Forestry Commission

Matt concluded by describing some examples of how creative thinking had been deployed to enhance interpretation and appreciation of the archaeological resource. Examples included employing actors dressed as 18th century Redcoat soldiers to pose near some repaired Wade bridges, the use of a monument to record some folk music with the associated graphics based on the digital scans of the monument; large posters and even bespoke jigsaws! All this contributes to what is clearly an admirable and imaginative scheme for promoting the care, preservation and presentation of archaeological and historic monuments within our Scottish Forests.

PAS has undertaken two projects under the auspices of the Adopt-a-Monument scheme, and in February we were pleased to welcome **Phil Richardson** to speak on the topic of '**Adopt-a-Monument projects in Scotland**'. Phil has worked in archaeology for 13 years, and is currently the co-manager of 'Adopt-a-Monument', a community archaeology scheme run by the charity Archaeology Scotland.

After an initial pilot scheme in 1990s, a second pilot of 12 schemes began in 2006. In 2009 Phil was employed with a brief to expand funding and since 2011, Phil and his colleague Cara Jones have enabled 70 projects. Of these, 55 are what might be termed traditional schemes involving the clearing, surveying and recording of selected monuments and arranging

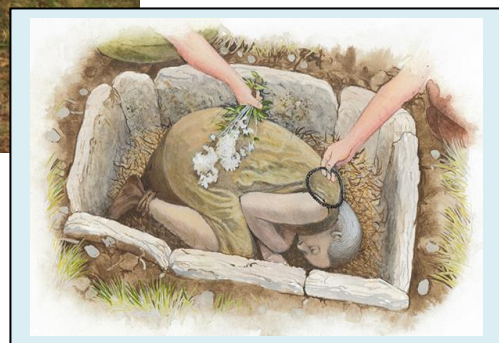
interpretation and visits. The other 15 are more innovative outreach projects, involving partnerships with youth groups, carers, ex-offenders and other disadvantaged groups, designed to teach new skills, raise confidence and awaken new interests. Interestingly, only 60% of projects relate to designated sites (scheduled monuments or listed buildings), as the voluntary bodies have brought forward a very wide variety of schemes.

While graveyards and monuments are the most numerous (from the Glasgow Necropolis to memorial stones like the Adam and Eve stone at Lyne adopted by PAS), Adopt-a-Monument projects have included chambered tombs, almshouses, community woodlands and Iron Age forts. The lowland broch at Torwood near Falkirk is another good example, as is the Bronze Age cairn at Harehope, the second project taken on by our society.

The enthusiasm of the volunteers has provided thousands of man hours devoted to looking after at least 50 of the projects on a long-term basis. For example, one group in Argyll was inspired to undertake a wider survey of their district, and identified a hundred more sites, many never before recorded! Overall, the success of the Adopt-a-Monument scheme has seen it copied in Ireland and Finland, and Norway is also considering a version. Here, Phil is keen to see the original Scottish concept grow stronger and to continue to lead the way.



Harehope Bronze Age Cairn. Located beside one of the local 'Tweed Trails' popular with walkers, the interpretive panel explains the significance of this prehistoric burial cairn (see also p10). Inset: reconstruction of cist burial by David Simon. © PAS & Archaeology Scotland.



In March we were delighted to hold a **'Celtic evening'** with two separate presentations by **Fraser Hunter and Martin Goldberg**, from the Department of Scottish History & Archaeology at National Museums Scotland, and the curators responsible for the Edinburgh leg of the hugely popular Celts exhibition in 2016. Their talks arose from this work, and looked at rather different aspects of the question of Celts from those dealt with in the exhibition.

In his talk on **'The archaeology of Asterix: Discovering the realities behind the most famous Celt of them all'**, Fraser explored various aspects of the archaeology of the Iron Age in a light-hearted but informative way, drawing on the recent research and analysis and highlighting the very considerable extent to which this iconic cartoon series was accurate.

For example, the Roman conquest of Gaul in 55BC brought the surrender of Vercingetorix but pockets of resistance remained, as in the cartoons. As another example, the clothing depicted includes some rather impractical helmets, but Fraser showed real archaeological examples even more extreme than those in the books!

From grave goods we know that looking special seems to have mattered to the Gauls (which is what Romans called the Belgae, Aquitani and Celtae who inhabited Gaul); the beautiful shield found in the Thames at Battersea was a fine example from the UK of something intended for show, not simply for use. This is a theme common to many artefacts attributed to the Celtic culture which spread across Europe but had local variations. They are thus not necessarily from one group of people, but from related tribal societies: it was 'a Europe of the regions'.

The Asterix character Obelix is a 'Menhir Delivery Man'. While this seems an anachronism, as such stones are usually from much earlier periods, there is a local tradition of erecting decorated standing stones during the Iron Age in the Armorica region of Gaul – the home of Asterix! The musical instruments featuring are also accurate – the Lyre and the Carnyx – and the transport represented by the two wheeled chariot is also contemporary. By way of illustration, Fraser referred to the fine reconstruction of the fragmentary remains of the chariot excavated near Newbridge near Edinburgh.



Asterix (on the right) and Obelix

However the Asterix books are not always totally 'on the ball!' The religion in Asterix is based on Roman reports, but we now consider there was no pan-Celtic religion, but many local deities. On the theme of food too, the emphasis on wild boar is wrong, as this was a ceremonial dish only. From isotope studies it has been shown that fish was not eaten before the Roman conquest of the area – perhaps related to religious beliefs. This was true during the Iron Age in Scotland also. Feasting vessels are highly decorative, and illustrate again the Celtic desire to parade their wealth. The portrayal of women's roles as subordinate is also wrong, perhaps showing a bias arising from the time the cartoon was produced. From grave goods we know many women of the time were as rich as men, and quite possibly wielded considerable influence. The last aspect Fraser considered was the role of the druids, very powerful in the cartoon but as the historical evidence is largely based on classical sources it is difficult to decide the reality.

Martin then treated us to a consideration of the myths and realities of the idea of **'The Naked Celt'**. The evidence from classical sources portrays Celts as barbarians, almost by definition naked and tattooed. The Romans wished to show their enemies as weak, primitive and powerless. However the limited examples we have of *self-representation*, for example from coins, tell a different story. The Celtic culture itself seems to have regarded dress as very important, and grave goods include many decorated clasps and belt fittings, indicating clothes were worn. Perhaps those warriors that chose to fight naked, as a show of courage, became a *stereotype* that the classical authors seized on? The Greeks coined the name Celts for some of the culturally connected tribes across central and Western Europe.

The name Celt fell out of use however and it was not until the 16th century that it appeared again, as in George Buchanan's *History of Scotland* in 1582. Although shown there as wild men, the reality is that our 'Celts' were culturally rich, gifted and sophisticated artists, and very far from being the coarse barbarians as so often depicted.

Jeff Carter

Thanks go to Maureen Erasmuson for masterminding our programme for 2016-2017 – and to Jeff Carter for his excellent reports on the meetings. Our next syllabus is already beginning to take shape – please look out for announcements in the Peeblesshire News, Peebles Life or when sent direct to you by email. If we don't have your current email address please let us know!

Why Let the Facts Spoil a Good Story Department...



Ancient Celts: Fanatics

Wild-eyed and snarling, Celt Fanatics are an awe-inspiring sight wearing nothing but a shield and a crazed expression as they charge with reckless abandon towards the enemy lines...

From an advertisement for the Warlord Games Naked Fanatics Range.

War & Peace Wargaming Website



Some more images of the remarkable finds from the Galloway Viking Age hoard (see lecture summary p.1) – a peek into the interior of the vessel, an ornate pectoral cross and a charming bird-shaped gold pin! © Crown office

Treasurer's Report

As is our custom the Accounts are shown on the basis of annual income and expenditure and indicate a surplus for the year to 31 March 2017.

Normally Insurance is paid in advance but the cover is being altered and the new invoice, which will show an increase, has not yet been received. Payment for our annual subscription to Archaeology Scotland, which has been reduced to £48 and is now made by direct debit has not been collected but will be in April.

The expenditure incurred at Shootinglee, which was for carbon dating and tree felling, has been largely covered by specific grants.

Income from subscriptions reflects the increase in membership fees introduced last year. Visitor numbers were well down from the previous period although the loss of income from this source was more than covered by the sale of books.

Peter Barclay
Treasurer

Analysis of Income & Expenditure 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017

	Income		Expenditure	
	2016	2017	2017	2016
Subscriptions	£525.00	£ 690.00	Insurance	£ 189.47
Sale of Books	40.00	151.00	Speakers	125.00 95.00
Visitors	71.00	16.00	Hire of Room	69.00 97.00
Grants	1134.00	1773.40	Shooting Lee	2072.40 1134.00
			Equipment	11.24 115.88
			Photocopying	3.00
			Flowers	30.00
			Refreshments	38.25 33.72
			Syllabus	30.00 29.00
			Subscriptions	65.00
			Website	55.04 38.26
Excess			Stamps	6.60
Expenditure	27.33		Surplus Income	189.87
	<u>£1797.33</u>	<u>£2630.40</u>		<u>£ 2630.40</u> <u>£1797.33</u>

Balances at 1 April 2016

General Account	£1376.00
Cash Account	41.56
Surplus	189.87
	<u>£1607.43</u>

Balances at 31 March 2017

General Account	£1568.71
Cash Account	38.72
	<u>£1607.43</u>

Examiner's Report

The Income and Expenditure Account and Abstract of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2017 are in accordance with the Books and Vouchers presented to me and appear to give a fair and accurate position of the financial state of the Society.

Fergus Brown
Accounts Examiner

Fieldwork

Shootinglee – an update

During the previous season a series of trenches revealed a substantial 1.2M thick clay-bonded stone wall standing to circa 1M which formed the N end of Building 2 at the N end of the row of buildings. The W wall of this was more ruinous: a result of stone robbing and forestry ploughing. At the S end of the site was another building with a 1.1M thick clay-bonded stone wall running E-W. This wall has a curved corner at the E end and overlays a cobbled surface.

At the start of the current season it was decided to extend excavation to all the available area within the buildings where available. The centre of the building bounded by the N and W walls was uncovered down to the occupation surface. A sondage was dug at the NW corner which shows that the sloping site has been levelled off with stones packed on end and clay infill. There is a hearth on two levels in the NE corner and an occupation layer below. The extent of the E wall has yet to be determined.

At the S end of the site, the cobbles on which the S wall was built, extend into the interior and are overlaid by paving slabs on which there is a hearth close by the wall. The paving slabs extend northwards towards an E-W drain-like feature in which an unabraded piece of well-fired late-medieval pottery was found in the upper fill. Between this and the occupation surface of the N building there is evidence of an earlier phase of occupation yet to be fully investigated but which has a N-S drain (pic). The W wall of this building has been badly robbed of stone.

There have been prolific finds of clay pipe pieces, some dating to the early 17th century and green bottle glass of the same era, mainly retrieved from the clay overburden. Some 17 sherds of late-medieval pottery, largely green-glaze, have been recovered most of them associated with the disturbance caused by ploughing

Joyce Durham



Tree? What tree? Excavation in progress following tree clearance at Shootinglee.
© Joyce Durham.

Outreach

Harehope Adopt-a-Monument Project

One of the aims of Peeblesshire Archaeological Society is to promote awareness of the extremely rich archaeological and historic heritage of the region.

To this end, the Society has in recent years undertaken two projects on local sites under the auspices what is known as the Adopt-a-Monument scheme. Run by Archaeology Scotland, this is a nation-wide Community Archaeology scheme that provides volunteer groups with the practical advice and training they need to care and conserve their local heritage. The aim of the national project is to encourage local groups to get involved in hands-on activities to improve the condition, accessibility and interpretation of selected local sites.

Following the successful completion of our first conservation and interpretation project at Lyne Kirk, our attention turned to the remains of an Early Bronze Age burial cairn at Harehope between Lyne and Eddleston. The cairn was excavated in the 1970s but over the years, the site had become badly obscured by extensive heather growth and by the spread of self-seeded trees from the surrounding conifer plantation.

Having obtained Scheduled Monument Consent from Historic Scotland, members of the society and other interested local volunteers carefully cleared vegetation from the site. These work parties have made a significant difference to the appearance of the cairn, allowing surviving features such as the remains of burial cists and the kerbstones which lined the original edged of the cairn to become visible again. As a result of careful brashing, the site is now also less hemmed in by the surrounding spruce trees.

Working with local designer Russell Eggleton, an attractive interpretation panel was created to explain the significance of the site and installed in early 2017. The panel explains what was found in the course of the excavations while attractive reconstruction paintings by illustrator David Simon try to give a flavour of the original appearance and landscape setting of the cairn during the Bronze Age.

When the plantation is harvested in a few years' time, a new planting scheme will be put in place. As part of that process, we hope that it will be possible to open up the view over the valley of the Meldon Burn and across to the White Meldon – at least partly restoring the prospect that our Bronze Age farmers would have had from their ancestral burial place around 4000 years ago.

Trevor Cowie, Maureen Erasmuson & Gillian Brown

For further information about the Adopt-a-Monument scheme see:

<http://www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk/our-projects/adopt-monument>



Harehope Cairn: Becca Barclay, from Archaeology Scotland, during the installation of the interpretation panel.

© PAS