



# PAST

Peebles Archaeological Society Times  
September 2011

## Strathearn: a grand day out! Report on PAS Summer Field Trip 2011

Against all the odds, weather-wise, members of Peeblesshire Archaeology Society enjoyed a grand day out on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> July on the occasion of its annual summer field trip. Our destination was Strathearn, so after an early start it was with thoughts focussed on tea in a cup rather than T-in-the-Park that members made their way up the M90 to Perth. First stop was Dobbies Garden World at Huntingtower - not very archaeological, but a handy place to rendezvous with our local guide for the day, Mark Hall from Perth Museum.

There was much talk of the grim weather forecast, but fortified by refreshments from the excellent café, the group set off westwards for the first of our first archaeological sites - the remains of Bronze Age standing stones and burials cairns on the moor above the village of Fowlis Wester.

There, we enjoyed splendid sunny views over fertile Strathearn south and east towards the Ochils and Sidlaws and Mark's expert commentary as he explained the significance of the prehistoric remains.

Then, it was a quick scoot back down into the lovely village of Fowlis Wester itself to view the Church and the wonderful 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century Pictish cross-slabs now housed within it. As a medieval specialist, with a particular interest in carved stones, Mark was able to give us great insights into the wider significance of the sculptured stones and the meaning behind the scenes depicted on them. After a packed lunch in the sunshine by Fowlis Wester village hall, we headed off via Crieff to follow the line of the Roman road to our next destination - the wonderfully preserved earthworks of the Roman fort at Ardoch on the outskirts of Braco.



**Fowlis Wester Church: inspecting the cross-slab. This sadly weathered but still superb Pictish cross slab formerly stood in the village square.**

The fort was a major station on the Roman road which ran from the Forth to the Tay. It was established in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD but had been abandoned by the late 80s AD; later, it was garrisoned as an outpost of the Antonine Wall from 142 to 165 AD.

While we were there, Mark showed us a tiny gemstone from the museum collection that had been found at the site; it had been engraved with a representation of *Fortuna* - the Roman goddess of good luck. Whether it helped its owner we will never know!



**St Serf's Church, Dunning**

Final stop of the day was St Serf's Church in Dunning which now houses the magnificent Dupplin Cross - or what we should perhaps call Constantine's Cross, for as Mark explained the cross is unique in that it mentions a named Pictish king, Constantine.

Dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the cross is gloriously carved on four sides with images depicting military and religious ideas of kingship. This wonderful monument from the days of the formation of the Scottish kingdom brought our outing to a close.

Just as we finished thanking Mark for his expert guidance over the course of a fascinating day, lowering skies and a flash of lightning signalled that we had nearly come to the end of our extraordinary run of good luck with the weather.

But it was only once we were safely heading for home that the heavens opened - so whether it was the pagan gods of the burial cairns at Fowlis; the Roman deity *Fortuna* at Ardoch, or the more familiar God of Early Christian Strathearn, someone was rooting for us that day!

**Trevor Cowie**

**Summer field trip 2012 - is there an area you would particularly like to visit? Suggestions welcome!**



**Fowlis Wester: inspecting the standing stone.**



# Field Work Projects: Shootinglee

Shootinglee is situated on the east side of the Paddock Burn about 1km passed Newhall on the St Marys' Loch road out of Traquair).

Early in May this year a group of PAS members walked round the sites which form what is intended to be the Society's next fieldwork project. The walk started at Traquair Kirk and went south up the Southern Upland Way.

The first few sites we encountered were a complete bonus as they do not form part of the Shootinglee project. The first consisted of what is believed to be an Iron Age settlement, - or is it the site of the first 11<sup>th</sup> century Traquair Kirk? –or even both? The second comprised a large previously unrecognised IA settlement; a variety of cultivation remains and an improvement-era turf bank marking the division between cultivated and uncultivated land.

On we went to the hillside opposite Shootinglee where we had lunch and looked down on the project area (see photograph below)

The sites here include medieval turf banks; two old tracks with built-up burn crossings; ancient coppiced alder trees; more turf banks; the vestigial footings of a building; evidence of 19<sup>th</sup> century sheep management and for good measure some fine WWII ambush trenches.

The design of the new project has yet to be finalised but the intention initially is to survey the area in the early spring next year when the vegetation is low. From the plan produced we should be able to gain a better understanding of the site and be able to assess whether excavation should be considered.

Archival research is confirming that the area was part of the medieval hunting scene as far back as the 15<sup>th</sup> century and probably earlier. Traquair House is known to be the hunting lodge of the Scottish kings (and occasionally the English). To date there has been very little investigation into medieval hunting remains so it is possible that this project has the potential to add something to present knowledge.

**Joyce Durham**



**View looking down towards Shootinglee (Photo: Joyce Durham)**

# Scottish Archaeology Month

## Launch of Scottish Archaeology Month

On 1<sup>st</sup> September, I was one of a number of guests, which included National Trust for Scotland board members, invited to the launch of Scottish Archaeology Month at Newhailes the NTS property at Musselburgh.

This involved a tour of the site and activities by Eila McQueen, Archaeology Scotland Director and Rhiannon Naismith, the NTS Newhailes Property Manager. These included a community excavation involving school children, with archaeologists from Archaeology Scotland and NTS looking for some of the waterworks at the Shell Grotto, part of a fascinating 18<sup>th</sup> century designed landscape.

To the front of the house the Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society were looking for more of this landscape, the main drive, using geophysics.

Other activities included a full scale Viking encampment, and hands-on workshops for children, such as meeting the Archaeology Scotland skeleton, prehistoric pot making, and artifact handling. Although most of these activities were only on for the day, Newhailes is worthy of a visit, with the house and visitor centre open 12-5, every day except Tuesday and Wednesday, 22 April to 30 September, and the estate open every day all year.

**Bob Knox**

## Guided walk to Camp Shiel on Sunday 18 September

As the Society's contribution to Borders Heritage Week (11-18 September) and Scottish Archaeological Month, we are offering an opportunity for people to see the sites featured in the Camp Shiel project which was carried out by members of PAS between 2007 and 2010.

The sites include illicit whisky stills, flax retting ponds and shielings dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the lade and pond which powered the mill at Damhead Farm in the 19<sup>th</sup> century - all of which fit well with the theme of this year's Borders Heritage Week which is 'Water'.

### Joining instructions

**Bob and Joyce will guide the tour which starts from Traquair Village Hall Car Park (NT 331 346) at 11am on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September. The distance to walk is about 7km/4miles and is mostly flat but with some uphill and some rough off-path walking (where a walking pole would be useful). We anticipate returning to the Village Hall Car Park by around 4pm.**

**Joyce Durham**

## For details of SAM & Borders Heritage Week events

### SCOTTISH ARCHAEOLOGY MONTH

Events throughout Scotland for everyone, free of charge.

<http://www.archaeologyscotland.co.uk/> - and follow relevant links

### BORDERS HERITAGE WEEK (Scottish Borders Council)

A host of activities throughout the Scottish Borders, celebrating our human connections with our rivers and our spectacular coast.

<http://www.scottishbordersheritage.co.uk/50125>



Bob, Piers and David examine a fine coppiced alder at Shootinglee.  
Photo : Joyce Durham

## Lecture Programme 2011-2012

15 September 2011  
George Haggarty  
National Museums of Scotland  
**'From Acorn to Oak Tree: Scottish Pottery c1750 to c1850'**

20 October 2011  
Tertia Barnett  
Hon. Fellow, Edinburgh University  
**'Rock Art'**

17 November 2011  
David Caldwell,  
National Museums of Scotland  
**'The Lewis Chessmen'**

19 January 2012  
Speaker from The Hawick Hub (Scottish Borders Archives)

16 February 2012  
Alistair Hackett  
**'Metal Detecting'**

13 March 2012  
Angus Miller  
**'The in-between Land: Clues to a Lost Ocean and the Collision of Continents'**  
Joint Meeting with the Tweeddale Society

19 April 2012  
AGM followed by **Members Night**

## ...and a reminder from the Treasurer

The Treasurer would be pleased to receive your subscription for 2011-2012  
by 15 September  
**£15 - individual membership £20 - joint membership**  
Please pay at first meeting or by using the form appended to this newsletter  
New members always welcome

## Subscriptions 2011-2012

Dear member

Please pay at meeting or detach the tear-off slip and send remittance as soon as possible to:

**Peter Barclay  
Peeblesshire Archaeological Society  
18 South Parks  
Peebles  
EH45 9DS**

Thank you.

**PAS Committee**

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