



# PAST

Peeblesshire Archaeological Society Times  
Spring issue / April 2019

## Annual Report 2018-2019

### Looking back...and looking forward

*As our 2018-2019 programme of talks draws to a close, the Spring newsletter offers an opportunity to recap what has been another excellent series of presentations that have been full of interest and variety.*

In September **Dr Gemma Cruickshanks** (National Museums Scotland) got the series off to a great start with her presentation on **Iron Age Iron: Iron production and use in Iron Age Scotland** in which she traced developments over roughly a 1000-year span from its initial appearance around 800BC. The following month, **Jamie Humble** (AOC Archaeology) spoke on **Shedding light on Dun Deardail, Lochaber**, outlining the results of the recent fieldwork, public outreach and post-excavation research associated with that spectacular vitrified fort in Glen Nevis. In November, **Dr Andrew Bicket** (Wessex Archaeology) presented a wide-ranging review of current work in the field of **Maritime archaeology in Scotland** (for full reports on all the talks mentioned above, see **PAST** November 2018). December marked the date of our joint meeting with the Tweeddale Society, when a near-capacity audience filled the auditorium of the Eastgate Theatre to hear **Dr Martin Goldberg** (National Museums Scotland) talk about **'International Connections in the Galloway Hoard'** - the stunning Viking-Age treasure found by metal detectorists in Dumfries & Galloway in 2014 (as fully reported in **PAST** February 2019).

In January, our speaker was **Dr Melanie Johnson** (CFA Archaeology) who gave an entertaining presentation under the title **Kings and Castles: recent community excavations at Lochmaben Castle and Dundonald Castle**.



**Excavations in progress at Dun Deardail vitrified fort, set in a spectacular location high above Glen Nevis (AOC Archaeology)**

In her talk, Mel outlined the varied work that CFA Archaeology carries out on behalf of Historic Environment Scotland, when archaeological work is required to be undertaken at their Properties in Care. In February, we welcomed **Dr Tertia Barnett** (HES/ScRAP) to talk about **'Scotland's Rock Art Project'** (ScRAP). After outlining the key issues surrounding rock art research and the range of new approaches being applied to the study of prehistoric carvings, Tertia went on to show how ScRAP aims to enhance understanding and appreciation of our rock art through community-led recording and analysis. Finally, **Cathy MacIver** (AOC Archaeology) brought our series of lectures to a close in March with an enjoyable presentation on **'The Shieling Project'**, in which she described the archaeological work undertaken as part of that very impressive and innovative outdoor learning and social enterprise project in the Highlands (for fuller summaries of the Spring series of talks, see the lecture reports by Jeff Carter included in this issue).

Looking forward to next session, we have another fine series of talks already lined up with guest speakers addressing topics ranging widely in space and time from aspects of Bronze Age Metalwork to the development of Early Stone Castles in Scotland. In December, we are delighted to see that Chris Atkinson - one of our members - has been invited to present what has been designated as the joint Tweeddale/PAS lecture for the session, when he will be talking about the archaeology and history of West Linton.

In fact, this is a significant year for PAS as 2019 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the society's formation! To celebrate this milestone, we have organised a **one-day conference** devoted to the **Archaeology of Tweeddale** which will be held in the MacFarlane Hall (Peebles Old Parish Church) on **Saturday 19 October**. In a series of short papers, speakers will review the archaeology and early history of the area from the earliest human settlement until the medieval period – a story to which PAS has made a significant contribution over its quarter century!

**Trevor Cowie**

## Spring Lecture reports



As our first speaker of the New Year we welcomed **Dr Melanie Johnson (CFA Archaeology)** who gave an entertaining presentation entitled ***Kings and Castles: recent community excavations at Lochmaben Castle & Dundonald Castle.***

CFA Archaeology currently holds Historic Environment Scotland's call-off contract for all archaeological work undertaken at their Properties in Care. Mel explained that this involves working at some of the most high-profile monuments in Scotland, meeting all sorts of requirements from routine maintenance to survey, building recording, geophysics, research and community excavations. After outlining the



**Tertia Barnett pointing out rock art at Dod Law, near Wooler. PAS field trip to Northumberland 2012**

very varied nature of this work and the privilege of being able to work on wonderful heritage sites all over Scotland, Mel closed by focussing on the results of fieldwork at two monuments in particular - Lochmaben Castle in Dumfries & Galloway and Dundonald Castle in Ayrshire – at both of which local community archaeology was a key element.

**In February, we were delighted to welcome Dr Tertia Barnett (HES) to talk about Scotland's Rock Art Project, a 5-year project set up with the aim of enhancing understanding and appreciation of rock art through community-led recording and analysis.**

Based at Historic Environment Scotland, Tertia is the Principal Investigator with the Scotland's Rock Art Project (ScRAP) team and has a long track record of rock art recording and research in Britain and North Africa. She set the scene by showing examples of figurative and abstract rock art from every continent (except Antarctica!) to illustrate its world-wide range. Scotland is very unusual in being almost entirely restricted to abstract forms – mainly cup-and-ring marks although some linear designs also occur also

occur. Each engraved surface appears to be unique. Rare but important examples of 'passage grave' art occur (especially in Orkney), characterised by spirals and lozenges, while the Early Bronze Age burial cists in several of the cairns in Kilmartin Glen, Argyll are known for their axe carvings.

There are over 3500 recorded examples of rock art in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man. In Scotland about 2700 are recorded in the CANMORE database – a figure which includes about 900 examples found only in the last 10 years. There are regional concentrations within Scotland – for example in Galloway, Argyll, Central Scotland and the Highlands – and there appears to be some variation in the types of rock art found in different areas.

Having set the scene, Tertia discussed some of the factors that lay behind the development of the Scottish Rock Art Project. Often hard to access, and hard to discern, rock art can also be hard to understand, and as a result focussed research has been neglected in recent years at least at a national scale. One aim of the project will be to enhance understanding of the context

of the rock art, both immediate and in the wider landscape. Excavations at rock art sites (for example in Kilmartin Glen and by Loch Tay) have shown the very real potential for engaging with these sites, drawing on modern digital recording techniques and anthropological research to tease out ideas about their possible significance.

Other obstacles to research have included lack of resources and very variable standards of recording, often compounded by inconsistency and inaccuracy (for example, some recorded examples of rock art are now considered to be natural features). ScRAP has been designed to overcome these issues. With some eleven community teams now trained, complemented by field schools for university students, the project will revisit and verify known monuments and search for others. All sites will be digitally recorded and modelled in 3D in a consistent way, before being uploaded to CANMORE after checking by the core SCRAP team co-ordinating the work. Hundreds of records are already complete or underway, and significant new discoveries are being reported. Readers are encouraged to consult the project's attractive website – [www.rockart.scot](http://www.rockart.scot) – to see how Scottish rock art is being put back on the map!



**Northumberland field trip 2012. Visiting the rock panels at Roughing Lynn, near Wooler.**

**In March we enjoyed a fine presentation from Cathy MacIver (AOC Archaeology) on the subject of 'The Shieling Project'. The Shieling Project is an off-grid learning centre based in Glen Strathfarrar, to the west of Beaulieu.**



The Shieling Project is all about outdoor living – from looking after livestock to making real buildings, from weaving baskets to making burgers from the meat raised there. The tradition of the shieling, where folk lived outdoors all summer herding the cattle, gives us a window onto the past and an inkling of a way of farming, known as transhumance, common across Europe in the past. The herds were moved to use the rich upland pasture and to remove animals from the ripening crops on the lower fields. Often the people who stayed with the herds were the women, or youngsters learning responsibility but this varied from locality to locality. The project has a ten-year lease on land at Dunmaglass and conducts activities in a marquee classroom, outdoor kitchen and some newly constructed sleeping pods. An old byre is being rebuilt to form a dairy for treating milk from the three Shetland cows on site. Cheese and butter will be made. Various old breed pigs and other animals are also kept. The shieling is about an hour's walk from Dunmaglass. An abandoned township that could have used the shieling is about half that distance.

AOC Archaeology were contracted by Dr Sam Harrison, the director of The Shieling Project to deliver an archaeological survey and excavation of a shieling site at Allt Mòraig to better understand the construction of the structures and their chronology and to give a more detailed insight into the use of the site. The excavation data is being used as part of the learning centre resources and to inform reconstructions of the shieling, both digital and hopefully eventually, physical.

The resulting survey at Allt Mòraig identified 27 structures, and some walling that probably restricted animal access to the nearby watercourse. The grazing areas, being well manured, have the potential to provide environmental evidence as their vegetation differs from the surrounding moorland.



**Survey in progress at Allt Mòraig (AOC)**

Cathy explained that the physical remains of shielings are very limited as such structures were small and not built to last. Originally they were built largely of turf, perhaps with a course of stone as a foundation, but more substantial huts with stone/turf coursing, or in the Hebrides structures built entirely of stone, appeared later, some remaining in use until the mid-1900's. A 6-day excavation was undertaken, with just two professionals but aided by volunteers, while school groups also came each day to help. Finds were few but one red ware pot from early/mid 1700's was found. The older structure was a rough oval, with a course of flat stones under the slumped turf. The later, larger one had an internal division, but neither had a hearth. Bulk soil sampling has identified nearby natural woodland of birch, alder and hazel and thin soil samples were taken for microscopic analysis later.

The township probably used other shielings in the area, so Cathy would like to do further work with a wider landscape survey, and also further excavation. It is hoped the project will not only give a lot of young people a sense of how earlier generations lived but will provide a basis for the investigation of shieling sites in other areas.

**Jeff Carter**

For further details of the Shieling project see <https://www.theshielingproject.org/>

# Treasurer's Report

The Society has again ended the Financial Year with a small surplus, if the Grant of £1500 from the Peebles Common Good Fund for the production of a leaflet on the history and archaeology of Haylodge Park and its environs is discounted. The leaflet is not quite finished and payment will appear in next year's Accounts. The increase in the costs of speakers has arisen as a result of the Galloway Hoard lecture (for which we received a Grant of £200) and our final speaker who had to travel from Inverness.

The increase in income from visitors arose from a payment of £84 from the Tweeddale Society, being 50% of cash received from ticket sales to members of the public (ie non-members) who attended the Galloway Hoard lecture at the Eastgate Theatre.

Peter Barclay  
Treasurer

## Analysis of Income & Expenditure

Income			Expenditure		
	2018	2019	2019	2018	
Subscriptions	£811.00	780.00	Insurance	278.74	£259.45
Sale of Books	130.00	100.00	Speakers	346.10	150.00
Visitors	148.00	218.00	Hire of Room	80.00	80.00
Grants	823.00	1700.00	Shootinglee		103.19
Outing	150.00	100.00	Outing	90.00	127.10
Donation	5.05	1.00	Gift		25.00
			Equipment	179.52	1126.33
			Refreshments	27.15	46.30
			Syllabus	33.00	32.00
			Subscriptions	15.00	48.00
			Website	76.64	38.26
			Photocopying	11.50	
			Stationery	11.40	
			Excess Income over		
			Expenditure	1749.95	181.42
	-----	-----		-----	-----
	£2217.05	£2899.00		£2899.00	£2217.05

### Balances at 1 April 2018

General Account	£1724.12
Cash Account	64.73
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	<b>£1788.85</b>

### Balances at 31 March 2019

General Account	£3512.72
Cash Account	26.08
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	<b>£3538.80</b>

### Examiner's Report

The Income and Expenditure Account and the Abstract of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2019 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.

Peter Jack  
Examiner

# Shieldgreen Tower Well

## All's well that ends well!

*We were recently contacted via the PAS website by John Whitehead from Nairn, who was keen to recount his lifelong interest in tracking down the site of the well that provided the water supply for Shieldgreen, the ruined 16<sup>th</sup> century tower house that overlooks the valley of the Soonhope Burn to the NE of Peebles. John's article is an excellent bit of detective work, written with a good touch of humour, enthusiasm, and a clear love of the Peebles area and the Border Hills, and we are happy to include it in this issue of PAST*

### Background

I grew up in Peebles, having moved here from Edinburgh with my parents when a few months old. I attended Halyrood and Kingsland Primary Schools before going up to the High School to complete six years of secondary education. I thereafter had to leave Peebles to seek employment, as did a lot of my contemporaries. My wanderings took me to the Highlands, where I still reside. I still return to Peebles four or five times a year, because although my heart is in the Highlands, my soul is definitely in Peebles.

Through my parents and a Miss Davidson, who taught Primary 7 at Kingsland, I developed a keen interest in history, mainly Scottish, Peebles and Roman. I indulge this passion whenever I

can. Another great passion, which I received from my father, is hill walking and mountaineering. Throughout the decades I have enjoyed walking in the Peebles area and would like to think I know most of its hidden corners.

When I was a small boy, I remember my Dad had a 1 inch to the mile Ordnance Survey map of Peebles, mounted on linen (this was more expensive but more durable!). I pored over it for hours and with its help, explored a lot of country as only a small boy can. I cycled all the routes in Glentress Forest long before mountain biking was invented, my 3-speed Sturmey Archer gears having to suffice whereas now you can have 27 at least!

There was one point of interest marked on that map that always held my interest and that was a well which was marked to the NE of Shieldgreen Tower. The ruins of the tower were well known to me, but the well really intrigued me. What if I could find it? Way back then in the 1960's - despite a lot of effort - I never did succeed. But the desire to find that well never left me and it has remained with me to this day.

After the Ordnance Survey maps went metric in the 1970s, and the much loved 1:63,360 (1" to the mile) maps became the 1:50,000 series, the well dropped off the new maps and to all intents and purposes, vanished from sight....



Illus 1. General Roy's Map showing Peebles area and location of Shieldgreen (Source: National Library of Scotland)

## The Search for the Well

Coming up to the present day, the internet is a great source of information - if a bit of common sense and caution is used!

When a well is marked on an Ordnance Survey map, especially in Scotland, it usually means a spring. The Red Well on Cademuir and the Witch Well near the Cardon Law, are two good local examples. In the Highlands, the gaelic word "Tobar", also means a spring and you can see this quite often marked on OS maps. So, nine times out of ten, if looking for a marked well, look instead for a spring!

The National Library of Scotland is a fantastic source of all sorts of knowledge, and a lot of this is now online. There is a whole section dedicated to old maps. General Roy's Military Maps (1747 – 1755) are there as well as many others. Interestingly, although Shieldgreen is marked on General Roy's Map (see **Illus 1**), the tower and the well are not. General Roy was of course born near Carluke, so could almost be classed as a local lad.

Moving forward in time to the 1850s, Peeblesshire was surveyed in scrupulous detail for the first time by the Ordnance Survey. Published in 1859, the 6 inch 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey Map of this date shows Shieldgreen Tower and also the "Tower Well". (**Illus 2**). This flags up a couple of things of interest. The first is that the well is shown on

the Shieldgreen Kipps footpath and that it's bang on the 1500 foot contour.

The position of the well then continues to be shown on all Ordnance Survey maps up until metrication in the early 1970s. This is not unusual. The Ordnance Survey regularly simply copied details from one map to the next edition without actually checking the accuracy of the location of the feature shown. In the course of the original 19<sup>th</sup> century survey, the locations of places were sometimes noted down after a conversation with a local person, so sometimes their position, and quite often spelling, varied. The early survey, although very accurate for its day, could and did incorporate some inaccuracies.

However, I now had the approximate position and an altitude for the Shieldgreen Tower Well based on the old maps. What next? Well for a start I didn't know if the old grid squares matched up with the grid squares on modern maps. These are the squares on maps (black on old maps and blue on new maps), which are used to work out grid references. The squares, even in the newer old maps, were 1 kilometre squares, and can be used to work out a series of numbers to signify the position of objects in the grid squares. In the old days, six figure map references were used. This gave a location within a 100 metre square. These days, ten figure map references are used and this can place an object within a one metre square. All this is possible because of GPS.



**Illus 2** Extract from OS 6 inch 1<sup>st</sup> edition map (Source: National Library of Scotland)



**Illus 3. Looking towards presumed location of the Well (Source: John Whitehead)**

Armed with the old maps, the contour data and bearings taken off the maps from nearby peaks, I determined a position for the well: NT 27908 43939.

I also undertook a search for old records that might help. Eventually, in volume 33 of the Ordnance Survey Name Books for Peeblesshire compiled between 1856 and 1858, I found the following entry under 'Tower Well': *[Situation] About 5/8 of a Mile N.E. [North East] from Shieldgreen. About half way betwixt Shieldgreen Kipps and Tower Rig near to the mountain foot path - is a well - some feet deep from which the occupants of the Tower were supplied with water, it is now stagnant and unfit for use.*

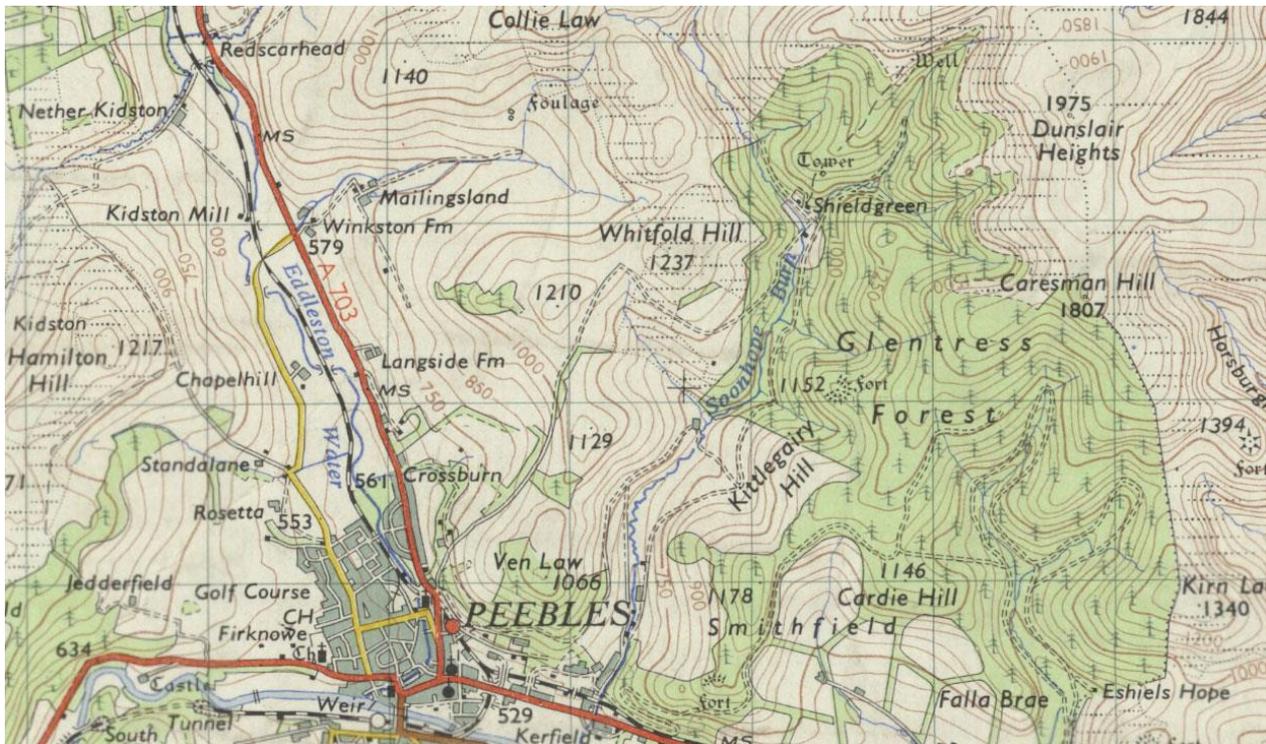
### **From mapwork to fieldwork**

On Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2019, armed with all the information I could muster and a GPS, I set out to explore the possible well site. I headed up from Eddleston to walk part of the Perilsome Road, an ancient track that goes from Cringletie, by Whiteside Edge and the Witch Well, over to Huthope, in Leithen. It was called that because it was so steep that it was dangerous for horse and carts. I took in Cardon Law, cut down to the Witch Well and floundered through deep heather on to the old track that lies beneath the Shieldgreen Kipps. This is now used by mountain bikes, so care is needed. I approached the site where my calculations said the well should be (**Illus 3**). This is a very steep-sided slope and would certainly not be a place for a well, but it could hide a spring. I quartered the hillside for quite a while but found nothing.

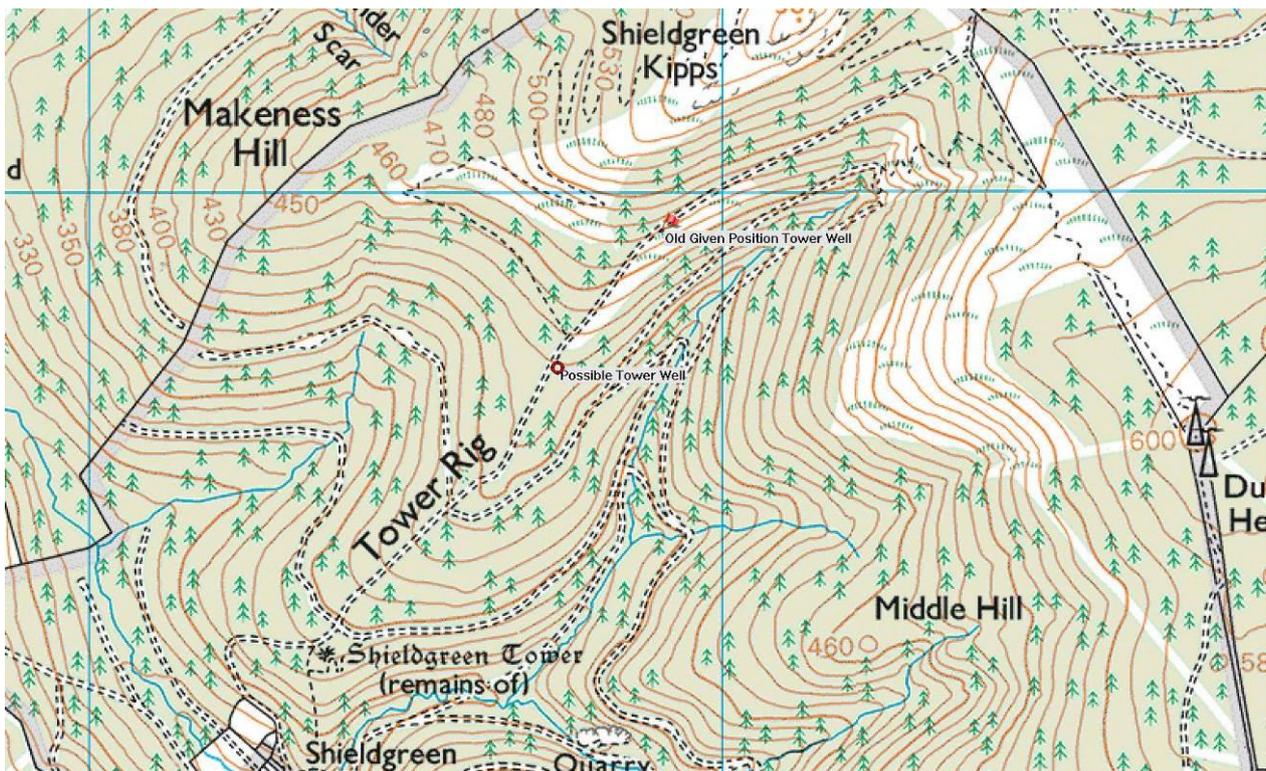
There was an old rowan tree near the spot and I thought that might indicate a well as they were often planted by cottages and wells for good luck and to ward off evil spirits. At one time a bit of rowan was always incorporated in a baby's cot to protect the baby and ward off any evil spirits. I still didn't find anything. Not a hint of a spring or anything.

It seemed my search had proved fruitless. However, I carried on down the track, looking on both sides. The forest here is now quite dense but I searched as thoroughly as I could. And then some way further down, I came to a spot on the track where it briefly flattens out. Here, on the downhill side east of the track, there was a definite spring forming an issuing puddle. This flowed quite well into a ditch which became, quite quickly, a small but nevertheless significant stream. Having noted the map reference as NT 27745 43720, I prodded around in the mud to see if I could feel any stonework that could be the enclosure for a well. Unfortunately, I didn't detect anything but that's not to say it's not there: who knows – there may still be artefacts in or around the site!

Bearing in mind the old description with its reference to a well 'some feet deep... now stagnant and unfit for use', I'm convinced in my own mind that this is the Shieldgreen Tower Well. It's a good-going spring and it is slightly nearer the Tower, which makes more sense. It's on the path and although not in the position given on older maps, inaccuracies in surveying could account for that (**Illus 4-5**).



Illus 4. Extract from the old 1" to the mile map used by John. The much-loved one inch map series was replaced by the metric 1:50 000 Landranger maps in the 1970s.



Illus 5. Map extract showing old location of the well and the new location recorded by John in 2019 (© OS)

### All's well that ends well!

So, what next? It would be wonderful if evidence could someday be found that would determine, once and for all, if that is definitely the site of the Shieldgreen Tower Well.

But whatever happens, I am happy that my life-long obsession and search for the well may be at an end!

**John R Whitehead**

# Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Rhind Lectures 2019

***Friday 10 May – Sunday 12 May***

**Professor David Breeze OBE, BA, PhD, Hon DLitt, FSA, Hon FSA Scot, FRSE, Hon ClfA**

## ***Hadrian's Wall: A Study in Archaeological Exploration and Interpretation***

Hadrian's Wall was written about even when it was still in use as a frontier. Interest continued through the next 1000 years, but it was the spirit of enquiry generated by the Renaissance which led to more focussed study.

Once archaeological excavations started, the pace quickened. Now we have an enormous data base even though only about 5% of the Wall has been examined. To understand our interpretations of Hadrian's Wall today, it is necessary to start in the 1840s, and in particular consider the work and influence of John Collingwood Bruce (Rhind lecturer in 1883).

The first two lectures in this series of six will review the excavations and surveys, theories and flights of fancy since that decade.

The next two lectures concentrate on the different phases of activity on the Wall and through them seek understanding of how the Wall operated.

The impact of the Wall on local people and the landscape is the subject of the fifth lecture, while in the final talk the state of Hadrian's Wall today is considered, with time for questions.

**For full details of this series of **FREE** lectures and to book tickets for the event visit the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland website:**

**<https://www.socantscot.org/event/rhind-lectures-2019/>**



**Hadrian's Wall  
(© David Breeze)**