

Newsletter of the

Tayside and Fife Archaeological
Committee

Issue Four - July 2008

BRONZE AGE POTTERY TREAT

Perth Museum has announced the recent arrival of the finds assemblage from the early bronze age ring-cairn at Sketewan, near Pitlochry, excavated 20 years ago by Roger Mercer and Magdalena Midgley of Edinburgh University.

To quote the published report, the cairn and its contents 'formed an important element in a funerary and ceremonial complex in this part of Strathtay, which began in the early Neolithic and continued in use for at least two millennia. The excavation of the cairn... revealed a complex sequence of Early Bronze age funerary activities ...' comprising 'several episodes of pyre cremation, construction of a large central cist and six smaller cists all of which had cremations deposited in them.'

Shown in the accompanying photograph is a Food Vessel that was recovered intact from the central cist. The report describes it as being unique in form & decoration and probably dating to around 1600 BC. Once accessioned, the Sketewan finds will join the bronze age Beaker excavated from a nearby cist by Dr Margaret Stewart in the 1960s. The full report is published in Mercer, RJ & Midgley, MS 1997 'The Early Bronze Age cairn at Sketewan, Balnaguard, Perth & Kinross', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 127 (1997), 281-338. See the Society's web-site at: <http://www.socantscot.org/> or go direct to: <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/psas/>

Right: The Food-Vessel from Sketewan; Photo copyright, Perth Museum and Art Gallery

ST VIGEANS

In their latest magazine for Members, Historic Scotland have announced that the Pictish and other sculptured stones from St Vigeans will be returned there by the end of this year, with the 'new-look' museum opening in time for Easter 2009.

In recent years all of the stones have been recorded to an hitherto unprecedented level, at least for such a large collection. In addition to being photographed and drawn in detail by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), the carvings have been subjected to the latest laser technology. Lasers have been used both to remove unwanted material from the stones and to digitally record, in miniscule detail, the surfaces of the stones.



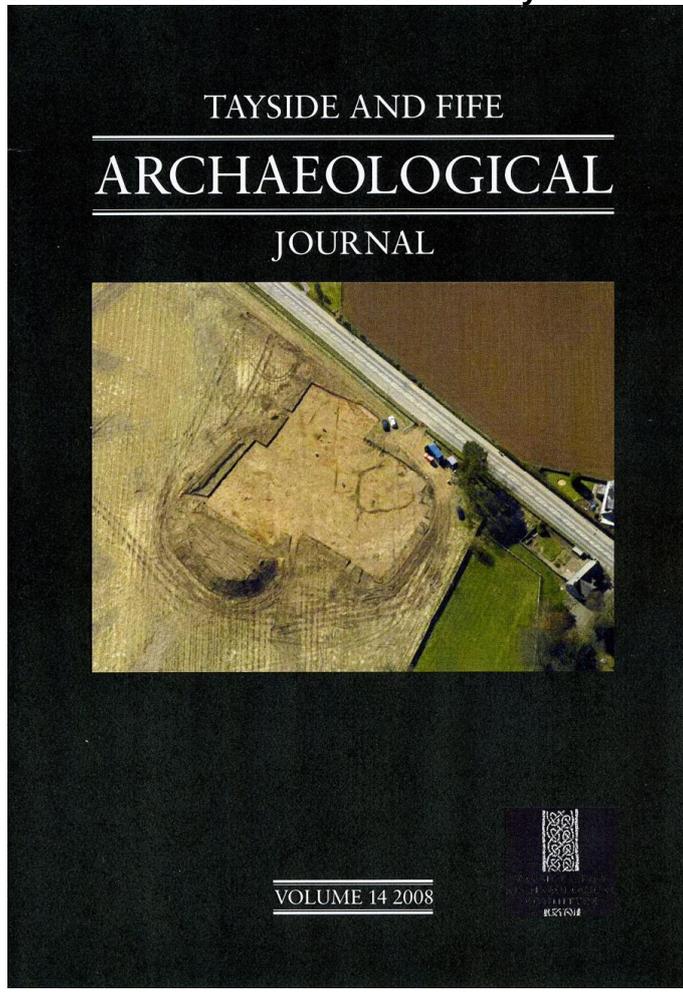
SERF Volunteer Opportunities

The Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot (SERF) project are looking for volunteers to take part in excavations and other aspects of the project, which runs from 5 – 23 August. Previous knowledge or experience is not necessary as all training and equipment will be provided. If you're interested in getting involved email STimoney@pkc.gov.uk

More details about the project, including reports on all aspects of last year's research, on their new website: www.gla.ac.uk/departments/archaeology/research/projects/serf/

Please check the Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust website www.pkht.org.uk throughout the summer for more opportunities for fieldwork.

Readers will be pleased to learn that vol 14 of our journal (below) will be on sale at the conference in Dundee on Saturday Nov 1.



Museum of Abernethy

The Museum of Abernethy is preparing to open for its eighth season, the highlight of this year being the new exhibition Sports and Games in Abernethy. This display explores the sporting trials and triumphs of the village over the decades. Features include Highland Games, local photographs and artefacts. If you can provide any additional information on this subject, the Museum would be delighted to hear from you! During the winter, Museum volunteers have been hard at work and have built a new display space upstairs, creating much needed extra space for exhibitions.

For those of you who haven't visited yet, the Museum is an excellent place to get a real flavour of the rich and long history of the village. Additional displays focus on the Carpow Log Boat, village life and include weaving and textiles, history of the church, school and tower, war-time memories, shops and businesses and the development of the village. There are also maps of Abernethy through the ages. Other features include the children's corner, which offers hands on activities throughout the season. The beautiful and tranquil garden is on the site of the ancient Culdee monastery. As well as taking in the herbs and flowers, there are also more displays here about farming and fishing.

Open Thursday – Sunday from 17th May until 28th September 1-5pm. Admission free.

www.museumofabernethy.co.uk

Finds allocated to Montrose Museum

The Editor has recently been informed that the Queens and Lords Treasurer Remembrancer (QLTR) has accepted the Finds Disposal Panel's recommendation that the artefacts found during fieldwalking by members of the Kinnettles and District Heritage Group in 2007 be allocated to Montrose Museum.

Fancy a Roman Holiday?

Fife Council are putting on a summer exhibition that will see Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery invaded by the Romans. The fun-filled family-friendly exhibition and series of events runs from 5 July to 21 September 2008 and will include Latin Taster Sessions, Evening Lectures, a chance to 'Meet the Romans' and a Roman writer- David Wishart.

Five Latin Taster Sessions will be delivered by staff from the University of St Andrews, and they will be looking at the Latin language, the poet Catallus, Roman place-names and the Latin behind some Scottish mottos.

The evening lecture series (21 Aug – 18 Sept) includes Professor David Breeze on 'The Antonine Wall: A World Heritage Site?' --- Dr Jon Coulston (Univ of St Andrews) 'Reconstructing the Roman Army in Northern Britain' and 'A century of Archaeology in the City of Rome'.

Meet the Romans when the Antonine Guard set up camp at Kirkcaldy Museum over the weekend of 26/27 July.

David Wishart is the crime writer of the series featuring Marcus Cornivus. Come and meet him on 4 September.

All events are free, to find out more and book a place simply contact Alice Pearson at Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery on 01592 583213 or email: alice.pearson@fife.gov.uk

St Andrews Castle

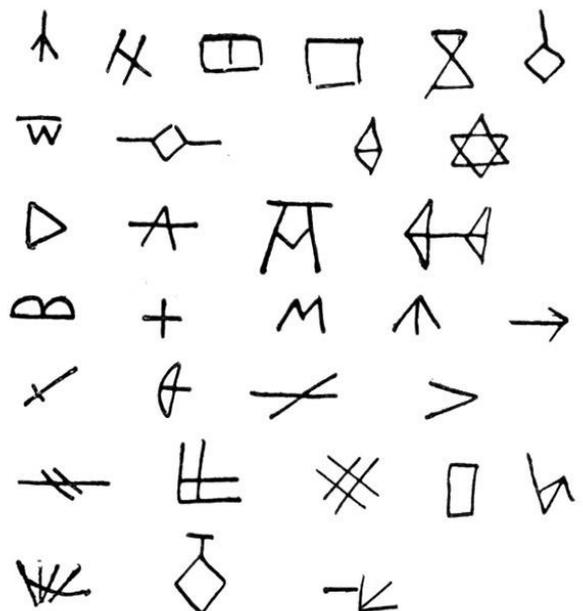
Head for east Fife on Sunday 20 July for an enjoyable medieval day out. At St Andrews Castle that day there will be a chance to meet Robert the Bruce!, watch archery demonstrations, and see weapons such as axe, sword and spear in action. Also there will be a 'soldiers' camp with a range of medieval crafts. Noon to 4pm

Survey of Masons Marks

As many readers will know, mason's marks represent one of the most ubiquitous, yet poorly understood, aspects of Scotland's architectural heritage. From Medieval cathedrals and churches, to post-medieval towers and mansions, to 18th century bridges and much more, mason's marks are a common occurrence, yet little or nothing has been done in recent years to record this facet of our past.

However, that may be about to change with the call from Moira Greig (Aberdeen-shire Council) for information regarding mason's marks in Aberdeenshire, Moray and Angus. Local history and heritage groups are being approached by Moira to search for and record mason's marks at medieval buildings in their areas. It is hoped that the results will help to explain what purpose the marks served. It is also hoped that the results will allow historians to chart the progress of individual masons.

Historic Scotland have agreed to waive entry fees at a number of properties for those undertaking the survey.



Some typical mason's marks

Fife Doocots

In 2006-07 the Cupar and North Fife Preservation Society, with grant aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Fife Environment Trust, restored two doocots in north Fife. We celebrated their restoration by opening them for Doors Open Day 2007, and they will be open again this year, on Sunday 21 September, 11am to 5pm.

One of the doocots, which is tucked away between later houses at School Brae, Letham, is a very small lectern-type. The other one, however, which is situated just west of Melville Lodges roundabout between Cupar and Auchtermuchty, at NGR NO 3027 1265, is very different. Newly lime-harled and with the trees close-by having been cleared, it is also now very public. It is distinctive because it is circular on plan, narrowing towards the top, having been originally built as a windmill, probably around 1700 (at the same time as Melville House). Its vaulted basement survives intact, making it a rare example of its type.

Within the doocot is a potence, the simple but effective revolving ladder that provides access to all the nesting boxes. It will, therefore prove well worth a visit from enthusiasts of both windmills and doocots. The key to the door of the doocot is held at Windmill Cottage, just across the road from it. There is also an information board.

For further information about the doocot or the Cupar and North Fife Preservation Society (or to arrange a group visit) telephone Paula Martin on 01334 840241 or email her at: (paula@arnydie.demon.co.uk).



Doocot at Melville Lodges, which started life as a windmill around 1700 but was later converted.
Photo copyright: Paula Martin

Quiz

The quiz that appeared in Newsletter 3 (March 2008) resulted in the grand total of no replies being received by the editor by the time this issue was prepared. The editor, adopting a generous attitude, is prepared to be persuaded that all of our readers knew all the answers, but instead were prepared to give someone else the chance of winning two tickets to the 2008 annual conference in Dundee.

Continuing in a generous mood, the editor is still prepared to receive replies, but the offer of two conference tickets is withdrawn (you had your chance) and instead the winner will receive a brand new shiny copy of volume 14 (2008) of the TAFAC journal.

Contact the editor at:
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