

Newsletter of the

Tayside and Fife Archaeological
Committee

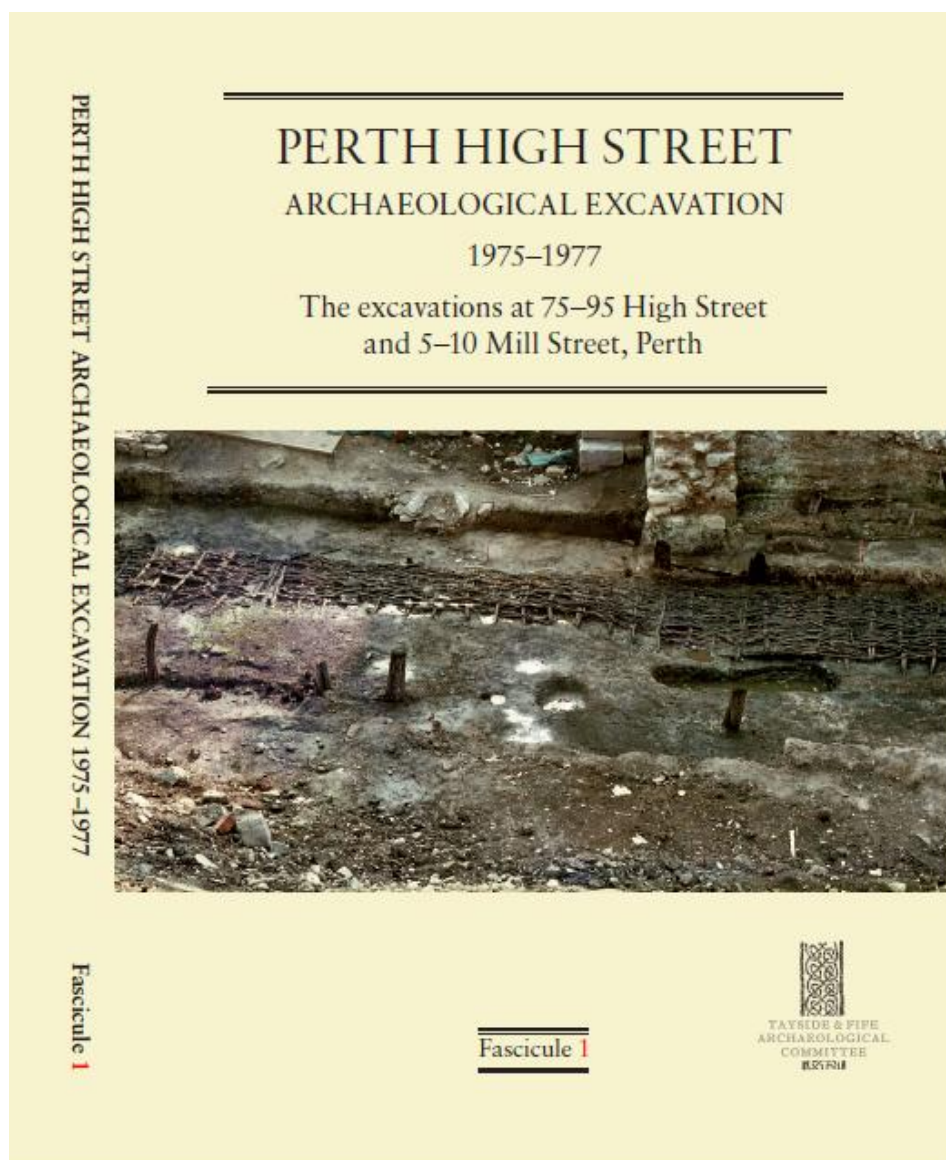
Issue Thirteen - July 2011

TAFAC is registered in Scotland as a charity (SC002450).

Perth High Street Reports --- at last!

TAFAC is pleased to announce the long awaited publication of the Perth High Street (Marks and Spencer) excavations in a series of four fascicules.

'It was in Perth in the mid 1970s that we saw, for the first time in Scotland, just how rich the urban archaeological resource might be. Perth is still the jewel in our urban archaeological crown, unique amongst Scottish towns for the depth, importance and consistently high quality of its archaeological remains' Olwyn Owen's opening sentences in the Foreword to Fascicule 1



Publication timetable:

Fascicule 1
Excavation, history
and excavated
buildings
(September 2011)

Fascicule 2 Ceramics,
metalwork religious
and wooden objects
(late-2011)

Fascicule 3 Leather
and textiles
(mid-2012)

Fascicule 4
Environmental
remains and
miscellaneous finds
(September 2011)

PERTH HIGH STREET

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

1975-1977

Living and Working in a Medieval Scottish Burgh
Environmental Remains and Miscellaneous Finds from the Perth
High Street Archaeological Excavation 1975-77



Fascicule 4

Fascicule 4

TAYRIDE & PIPE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
COMMITTEE
BRNH



FORTHCOMING EXCAVATION AND SURVEY Volunteers still needed!

Following successful geophysical survey in 2010, the Scottish Culdee Monasteries Archaeology Project will continue with further survey and trial excavations at two early medieval monastic sites this August: St Serf's Island in Loch Leven and Fortingall in Perthshire. For more information on both sites, see contact details below.

St Serf's Island:

Mon 1st - Sat 13th August. Getting there by boat, surveying and excavating for two weeks with a break on Sunday 7th August.

Fortingall:

Survey begins on Mon 15th August and the dig on Wed 17th till Wed 31st, with a break on Monday 22nd.

Please contact Oliver O'Grady ASAP if you would like to join either project.

o.j.t.ogradey@gmail.com Dr OJT O'Grady For Culdee Archaeology Project

Pricing:

Single volume, £15 + £3 p&p

Two volumes (purchased together) £25 + £6 p&p

Four volumes (ordered and paid for together) £40 + £12 p&p
BEFORE 12 November 2011

European postage costs are available on request

Orders (cheques payable to 'TAFAC') should be sent to:
Derek Hall, TAFAC Asst Editor, 34
Glenfarg Terrace, Perth, PH2 0AP
email derek.hall1@blueyonder.co.uk

Orders for all four are welcomed in advance of publication of final fascicule.

2011 Conference

This year's annual conference will be held in Abertay University, Bell Street Dundee on Saturday 5 November.

Please note the new venue. The price of the ticket will be £15.00, which will cover the cost of entry and refreshments but not lunch, for which delegates should make their own arrangements.

Please see the TAFAC website soon for further details – www.tafac.org.uk

PERTH AND KINROSS HERITAGE TRUST

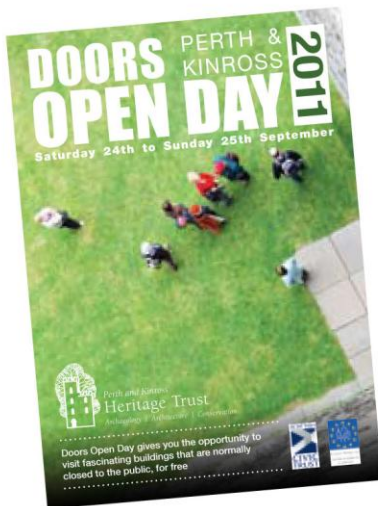
presents

Perthshire Archaeology Month – September 2011

Perth and Kinross Doors Open Days – 24-25 September

Over 80 free events over the month offering guided access to the best archaeological sites and historic buildings that Perth and Kinross has to offer...

See www.pkht.org.uk for details



Details of events can be found by picking up a brochure or at www.pkht.org.uk

If you are organising an event please detach and complete this poster to publicise your event.

Perth Young Archaeologists' Club



Perth YAC is looking for members aged 8 -16 years of age. The club, which is associated to the Council of British Archaeology, normally meets once a month on a Saturday and last year members enjoyed outings to:

Abernethy Round Tower and Castle Law Fort

Jacobites at Balhousie Castle, Perth

Hands-On Event: Kinnoull Hill Building Recording

The current cost of membership is £10 per year. If you are interested or would like any further information please contact perthyac@gmail.com.

Stirling Conference

Readers may be interested to know about a conference to be held at Stirling University that is to be held over the weekend 13-14 August. 'Monuments and Monumentality in Later Medieval and Early Modern Europe'. A total of twenty-eight speakers will deliver papers on a number of themes, including: tomb style and setting development; changing patterns of lay and ecclesiastical patronage, motive and meaning; family mausoleums, chantries, collegiate churches and urban tomb burial; European artistic, architectural and spiritual influences and connections; ecclesiastical provision, liturgy and ritual; and post-Reformation antiquarianism and modern conservation; with case studies from Denmark, England, France, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Scotland and Wales.

Of these speakers, those who are well known to TAFAC audiences include **Iain Fraser** from RCAHMS, who will speak on *Medieval Monuments in Scotland: a survey of knowledge and conservation*; **David Caldwell** 'Medieval Sculpture in the West Highlands and Islands of Scotland - commemorating a warrior caste'. **Richard Oram** 'Bishops' and Abbots' Tombs in Medieval Scotland'. **Richard Fawcett** 'Canopied Tomb Design in Scotland'.

Other lectures with immediate local reference include:

Michael Penman [Stirling] - *A Programme for Royal Tombs in Scotland: a Review of the Evidence, c.1093-c.1542*, and **Stephen Holmes** 'Not everyone should be indiscriminately buried inside a church': *William Durand of Mende (c.1230-96) - a Medieval View of Burial*.

The cost for the two days is £80 registration [£70 unwaged/student, single day rate available]

Further details may be had by contacting Dr Michael Penman, History & Politics, University of Stirling, Stirling, FK9 4LA, 01786 467575, m.a.penman@stir.ac.uk

or through the website <http://www.historyandpolitics.stir.ac.uk/Seminars-Events/MonumentsConference.php>

Friends of Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust

The Friends is a group of like-minded individuals who have an interest in the heritage of the Perth and Kinross area and who wish to complement the outstanding work that the Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT) has done and is doing. PKHT has a long-standing commitment to the Heritage and Archaeology of the area and part of this commitment is to involve the local community. But organising and managing volunteers and arranging activities for volunteers is very time consuming. The Friends will help PKHT to encourage and co-ordinate volunteers, adding further activities, and creating an interchange of like minds for all those interested in our heritage.

Benefits of being a Friend of Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust

- Supporting the work of Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust: conservation, archaeology, learning and engagement.
- Early reminders of calls for voluntary work.
- Find out about opportunities for volunteering/learning new skills – both in the field and in desk-based research.
- Get the early access to Doors Open days and Perthshire Archaeology Month brochures. (2012)
- Receive a newsletter on support/contribution of work done and plans/aims for the future.
- Get involved with the group and develop projects with like-minded people.
- Our Website and participate in its content.
- Featured members-only talks and walks.
- 20% off PKHT publications.

Membership: Individual: £10 Family/Joint: £15 Associate/Corporate: £20
For further information email

enquiries@fopkht.co.uk or see www.fopkht.co.uk



PKHT Friends at Meigle

Two images featuring Friends of Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust volunteers at work.

Top left image: Volunteers with Fiona Fisher, PKHT Historic Graveyards Officer.

Centre left image: 'Friends' Vice-Chairman Ian Hamilton sowing wild flowers in Meigle Churchyard.

The copyright of both of these images belongs to George Logan.



Fascicule 4 will also contain the report on the worked bone artefacts. This includes the famous walrus ivory knife handle carved in the shape of a reveller enjoying the Spring festivities common across medieval Europe, and decorated with carved leaves, possibly hawthorn and rowan.



Perth High Street whorls

The handle is of such high quality that it probably belonged to a person of some wealth and importance. It featured in the popular Skin and Bone exhibition, which took place at Perth Museum and Art Gallery, and can still be seen there.

The Editor thanks Catherine Smith for this item.

Perth Whorls

Amongst the artefact types to appear in the miscellaneous finds section of Perth High Street's Fascicule 4 will be the stone whorls. Thirty-four of these fascinating and attractive small objects were found on the site. Made of local soft mudstones and siltstones, they were used to weight the yarn on a spindle, usually a wooden stick, while hand-spinning wool.

The whorl itself acted like a fly-wheel.

With these small portable tools, women (for it was mostly women who used them) could go about other tasks, perhaps walking or herding animals and still be able to usefully spin yarn. The wool would then be woven into lengths of cloth, some of which actually survived on the site: these will be the subject of the textiles report, to appear in Fascicule 3.

TAFAJ 17

A reminder that TAFAJ 17 will be published on Saturday 5th November at the annual Conference in Dundee. The papers included are:

An oval enclosure at Burnside, Blairgowrie
Chris O'Connell.

A Middle Bronze Age dirk from the River Tay at Friarton, Perth Trevor Cowie, Mark Hall, Peter Northover and Brendan O'Connor.

A Middle Bronze Age gold ring from near Falkland, Fife Trevor Cowie, Barbara Armbruster and Susanna Kirk.

Maiden Castle, Inch, Aberdeenshire: choice and architecture in Pictland Murray Cook

Excavations at the Bishop's Palace, Brechin
Charlie and Hilary Murray.

A hunting we will go? Stirling University's Deer Parks Project Derek Hall, Richard Oram and Kevin Malloy.

Excavations at Alloa Tower, Clackmannanshire Alison Bailey and Tamlin Barton.

The World War 2 Command Line in Perth and Kinross Gordon Barclay.

Copies can be obtained from the editor at:
21 Burleigh Crescent, Inverkeithing,
Fife, KY11 1 DQ – Price £15 + £3p+p
Cheques payable to 'TAFAC'. Please use the
book order form on the website
www.tafac.org.uk if possible.

An unusual gold object from Kinross -- Trevor Cowie and Jim Crombie

While metal detecting across arable fields to the north of Loch Leven some years ago, keen metal detectorist Jim Crombie found an unusual little gold object. It consists of a curved tab of metal fitted with two prongs at one end with a small peg between them (Figures 1a & b), with more than a passing resemblance to a squashed ring-pull. Having recorded the location, Jim immediately despatched the gold object to Stuart Campbell of the Scottish Treasure Trove Unit for assessment. The TTU is based at the National Museums of Scotland and is responsible for identifying and assessing all newly discovered objects in Scotland (for further details see www.treasuretrove.scotland.co.uk.)



At first glance, a prehistoric date seemed a possibility as the object had some features in common with some of the small examples of Bronze Age gold ornaments of the type known as *bullae* known from Ireland. Later, though, analysis of the gold tended to suggest that it was probably post-medieval. However, after much to-and-fro-ing of ideas and suggestions and asking around for second opinions, we
See next page

Figure 1a (left) & 1b (next page, top left)
Jim's mystery gold object from Kinross-shire consisted of a curved tab of metal fitted with a small peg and prongs at the ends. Photographs courtesy of Stuart Campbell/ Crown copyright.

we were still only able to say *what it wasn't* rather than *what it was*. The object seemed to have everyone stumped.



Then Stuart had a brainwave; although it was a lot smaller, the find had some similarity to historic dental plates. He happened to speak to Roy Scott, a detectorist from the Scottish Borders. It turned out that Roy had found rather an unusual item on Spittal Beach near Berwick - a gold denture base for a set of false teeth (see 'Toothless in Spittal' -- *Archaeology in Northumberland 2002-2003*, 4). Probably dating from the earlier 19th century, Roy's find consisted of a horseshoe of sheet gold which would have been formed around the gums of the wearer, while pegs of gold would have held the false teeth in place (Figure 2).

Stuart was immediately reminded of Jim's mystery object! The points of similarity include the little peg (onto which an artificial tooth would have been placed) and the flatter areas for placing the plate over the gums, while the prongs would have anchored the plate to intact, healthy teeth. The metal composition – a fairly pure gold – is in keeping with a post-medieval alloy, possibly even as late as the 20th century, and its purity would be in keeping with the requirements of dental work.

Since then we have learnt of other related finds. For example, in the recently published *Portable Antiquities and Treasure Annual Report 2008*, Finds Liaison Officer Dot Boughton describes gold dentures found by a metal detectorist at Carnforth, Lancashire consisting of an upper plate with several teeth still attached to the pegs (Figure 3). In the report on this find, Dot wonders how these articles came to be lost, noting that such personal items 'would have been of very little value for someone other than the wearer, who must surely have missed them very much'.

Quite so! That thought - the importance of such artefacts to their wearer - was brought home to us when the auction of a set of Sir Winston Churchill's false teeth made national news in July 2010.



Figure 2 (above): Two images of the gold denture base from Spittal Beach, Berwick, dated c. AD 1810-1840. Photograph courtesy of Ken Simpson



Figure 3 (above): Gold dentures from Carnforth, Lancashire, c. AD 1800-1950. Photograph courtesy of Dot Boughton/Portable Antiquities Scheme.

revealed two minute gold prongs clipped to her eye-teeth. When I admired them and hoped I would have some eventually, she said, 'Look here.' With a click of her tongue she thrust out her bridgework, a gesture of cordiality that cemented our friendship'.

Jim and I reckon a simple handshake would have been good enough for us! The upshot of all this is that although Jim's find may not have been of great historical significance it still shows how the detective work on some finds can lead up some fascinating byways. Jim is still a teeny bit sorry that his bit of gold it is not from some unusual Bronze Age gold ornament but he sees no point in gnashing his teeth over it!

Acknowledgements

As noted in the text, credit for identification of the gold plate goes to Stuart Campbell. For help and advice in the preparation of this article, we are also grateful to Mary Cahill (National Museum of Ireland), Dot Boughton (Finds Liaison Officer for Cumbria/Lancashire, Portable Antiquities Scheme), Liz Williams (Northumberland County Council) and Ken Simpson.

Next Newsletter

The next Newsletter is due to be completed around the end of October. The Editor would like to extend an invitation to all readers to send articles for inclusion to him at the address below by the middle of October. Articles should be in Microsoft Word format and images should be jpegs between 500kb and 1Mb in size.

Send to:
johnsherriff@hotmail.co.uk

These famous dentures were sold at auction to a collector for a jaw-dropping £15,000 - (more than three times the estimate) - but what interested us were once again the distinctive prongs for attaching the plate to the original teeth (for an illustration see for example, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-norfolk-10795088>

In fact, this type of solution to dental problems seems to have been quite well-known by the 20th century— the American author Harper Lee was clearly referring to something similar in her classic novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* (later made into a well-known film):

'[Miss Maudie's] speech was crisp for a Maycomb County inhabitant. She called us by all our names, and when she grinned she