

EXCAVATION OF CAIRD'S CAVE, ROSEMARKIE 21 JUNE – 2 JULY 2010

A Ross-shire doctor, Dr William MacLean, excavated a "cave near Rosemarkie" from 1907-12. He found many pieces of worked bone, mainly fairly basic pins and awls. One pin was much better finished and originally had five inset pieces of amber. No excavation notes appear to have survived when his widow later presented his finds to the National Museums of Scotland.



Excavation in progress, Caird's Cave, June 2010

The Rosemarkie Caves Project was set up, with the support of NOSAS, to research the archaeology of the caves on the coast between Rosemarkie and the Cromarty Firth and their first major field project was to excavate Cairds' Cave, the nearest cave to Rosemarkie, and traditionally said to be the site of Dr Maclean's excavations 100 years ago.

The excavations in 2010 quickly established that Cairds' Cave was indeed the site of Dr MacLean's excavations, original deposits still survived beneath a layer of broken rocks and earth that had spread over the floor of the cave after MacLean's excavations. These deposits contained shells, charcoal and a bone awl. A section was made into part of MacLean's spoil heap revealing large numbers of limpet and periwinkle shells. Animal bone fragments, fishbones and charcoal were retrieved using wet and dry sieving. A bone pin was also retrieved. The cave deposits all seem to relate to one period of occupation, possibly suggesting a Pictish bone-processing workshop.

Post excavation analysis is about to begin and it is hoped to obtain radiocarbon dates from bone fragments found both by Dr MacLean and in situ in the recent excavation. Dr MacLean's original finds are currently on display at Groam House Museum in Rosemarkie, and Trevor Cowie of the National Museums of Scotland will be lecturing on Dr MacLean in the main hall at Fortrose Academy on 19th August at 7.30 pm.

Eric Grant

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Mulchaich Project

A team of 6 finished planetching the upper settlement at Mulchaich on a sunny day in May. It was quite a difficult task with the subtle changes of slope and the rapidly growing vegetation, which by May was seriously beginning to obscure the features.

There are two pre-improvement settlements at Mulchaich/Ferintosh both of which probably played a part in the distillation of Ferintosh whisky during the 18th century. NOSAS will be organising a walk that will visit the two settlements and the nearby scheduled chambered cairn for Highland Archaeology Fortnight on Tuesday, October 12th - 2pm to 4.30pm. All welcome.

Meryl Marshall



Scotland's Rural Past News

NOSAS continues to play an active part in the SRP Project and NOSAS projects and members figure prominently in the latest SRP Newsletter as can be seen from the extracts below:

Raising awareness

A big thank you to all the SRP projects that have sent us details of the many events and activities you are organizing to raise awareness of your work and your rural heritage. These include talks to local groups and at conferences, exhibitions, guided walks and a whole variety of publications. We are all extremely impressed with the quality and quantity of 'outreach' events and are delighted that SRP has played a role in this. We would recommend to anyone passing through Dingwall that they go and have a look at the work by the North of Scotland Archaeology Society (NOSAS) on their two SRP projects – Strathconon and Mulchaich – which is on display alongside the 'Drovers Exhibition' in the Highland Auction Mart, Dingwall, for the next few months (Monday-Friday 9am-4pm and some Saturdays).

Completed projects

A total of 21 SRP projects have now been completed, which represents over 50% of the overall project target. This includes the impressive Strathconon project undertaken by the North of Scotland Archaeology Society (NOSAS). This project identified, surveyed and recorded well over 250 sites along a 30-mile stretch of Strathconon - a mammoth undertaking indeed! While previous

NOSAS projects have been submitted to RCAHMS as a hard-copy report, we are delighted that NOSAS have submitted their individual site records to SRP via the on-line form. Courtesy of their data inputting, we can validate their data and make the information, photographs and plans for each site available more widely through Cammore. All those involved, and Meryl Marshall in particular, are to be congratulated on their inspiring work. Plans for full publication of the work are now underway.

Gairloch

A class talk was presented and a visit made to Lonmore crofting township with the Gaelic medium class of Gairloch primary together with Anne and Dorothy from the now completed Gairloch SRP project. Having spent the day sketching and measuring some of the croft houses, both the class teacher and school head expressed an interest in developing these exercises further into a full school project.

Scotland's Rural Past Conference, 2010

After last year's highly successful SRP conference in Fort William, the third annual get-together will be held in the wonderful surroundings of Crieff Hydro in Perthshire, over the weekend of **30 and 31 October**. Once again, the SRP Team promise an eventful programme which includes presentations from a wide range of SRP projects taking place across Scotland. Many other projects will also have their work on display to share with conference delegates. This year there will be workshops on topics ranging from how to obtain funding to how to do oral history recording, and from working with young people to drawing beautiful hachures on archaeological site plans. There will also be other stalls and events, including the chance to preview the new SRP fieldwork training videos.

This year's keynote speaker will be renowned historian, author and broadcaster Dr Fiona Watson, who will engage us with her lecture "Everyday life on the land: a hidden history". A wine reception and conference dinner will be hosted after proceedings on Saturday night where there will be plenty of opportunities to meet and share ideas with fellow SRP participants. The guided walks to two local rural settlement sites on Sunday morning will help blow away the cobwebs and stimulate further discussion.

The conference programme and registration details are now available on the SRP website (www.scotlandsruralpast.org.uk). Please book early as places are restricted (especially on the guided walks).

Tertia Barnett

New Members

NOSAS membership continues to grow and we would like to take this opportunity to welcome the following new members.

Mark Stevens and Andrew David Sturdy

Details of members and membership can be found in the Members' section on the Society's website.

Trina Wombell

The NOSAS Website

The NOSAS web site has been transferred to a new provider and updated in the process. There are a number of new features that are outlined below.

Members' page – this involves a new, slightly different way to access the members' area. Instead of there being a members' page on the left hand menu members should log in to the site. To do this click on the 'log in' option at the top right of the page – that brings up a log in page. Select 'NOSAS Member' from the drop-down list of administrators, enter the usual password and click on the log in button at the bottom of the page. A message pops up to confirm that you are logged in and an additional page 'Membership List' appears in the left hand menu – click on that and you go to the membership list page as of old. Job done! It will now be easy to add other pages that only members can see, once they are logged in. Other ideas and suggestions welcome.



Events page - A completely new events page has been added to the website. Send me (Alastair) details of any events you would like added to the events page.

The Current Projects page badly needs updating. Whilst I could have a go at this I think it would be much better if project leaders supplied me with the material they would like to see in there about their respective projects.

The more material people send me (text, photos, documents etc.) the more use we can make of the site.

"Guestbook" facility - You'll see that Plexus have provided us with a 'Guestbook' facility on the site. This enables any visitor to the site to send in a comment, question etc. Those are not visible on the site until I, as moderator, look at them and take a decision

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whether to publish them. There's a nice one there already that gives us an example. Obviously members can use this just as well as other visitors.

Alastair Morton

Brora Excavation 2010

Excavation dates
Sunday 18th July to Sunday 8th August

We have allocated an extra week this time around, as it is our final year. We will be concentrating our efforts on the very badly eroding remains of the old late 16th/early 17th century salt works. At the tail end of last year, we were able to determine that much more of this possible saltpan survives than originally thought. Monitoring of the eroding walls has identified a possible collapsed furnace structure on the inside of the building.

Open Day Saturday 31st July at 2pm.

Jacquie Aitken
(Brora excavation volunteer coordinator)

A LAD O'PAIRTS'

A DAY CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD IN MEMORY OF IAN SHEPHERD TO CELEBRATE THE WIDE CONTRIBUTION HE MADE TO SCOTTISH ARCHAEOLOGY

KINGS COLLEGE CONFERENCE CENTRE, ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY
ON SATURDAY 11 DECEMBER 2010
10am - 5pm

SPEAKERS will include:

Gordon Barclay, David Clarke, Trevor Cowie, Dave Cowley, Kevin Edwards, Shannon Fraser, Bruce Glendinning, Charles McKean, Charlie & Hilary Murray, Ian Ralston, Alison Sheridan, Carol Swanson, Neil Wilkin

Ticket £ 10, includes light lunch and contribution to Brain Research Trust

Available from Aberdeenshire Archaeology Service
Tel: 01224 664726 or

e-mail: archaeology@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

NOSAS Diary

Another MAD day out. Strath Sgitheach, Dingwall in August. Details will be emailed to everyone and put into the Events Diary on the web site.

Craggie Bloomery Excavation 10th to 13th September. Details will be emailed to everyone and put into the Events Diary on the web site.

Scottish Archaeology Month, September 2010

As part of S.A.M Forestry Commission Scotland, in partnership with archaeologists from GUARD and NOSAS, is investigating a mysterious ironworking site in Glen Oykel.

An Open Day will be held at the excavation in Glen Oykel (NC 33617 05152) on Saturday 11th September, 10am-4pm.

Highland Archaeology Festival, 2-17 October

Advance notice of AGM
The NOSAS AGM will be held at the Spectrum Centre, Inverness, after the Saturday session of the HAF seminar on October 16th (usually 4.45ish)

Office Bearers and Committee Members 2009-2010

Chairperson – Anne Coombs
Vice Chairperson – Dave Rendell
Treasurer – David Findlay
Secretary – Meryl Marshall

Committee Members

Brian Duff, Lyn Fraser, Brigitte Geddes, Janet Hooper, Susan Kruse, Cait MacCullagh, Allan Mackenzie and Alastair Morton

Trina Wombell continues to act as Membership Secretary

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Sutherland Hut Circling Weekend, July 10th –11th



A full report in the next Newsletter !