



TAYSIDE & FIFE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
COMMITTEE  
TKTQI

# Newsletter of the

Tayside and Fife Archaeological  
Committee

Issue Fifteen - July 2012

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

## RCAHMS - What Future?

In November 2011, Scottish Ministers asked Historic Scotland, as sponsor unit, to undertake a strategic options appraisal of the best means of protecting the core functions of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) in the medium to long term. The appraisal followed the most difficult spending review in recent years and was part of the government's commitment to secure value for money across the public sector.



John Sinclair House, Edinburgh. Current home of RCAHMS. Image Copyright: RCAHMS

The appraisal, which was led by Michael Proctor for Historic Scotland, involved widespread consultation of RCAHMS staff and stakeholders. A special workshop to discuss the appraisal, held in Edinburgh in February, was organised by the Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS). In

summary, this workshop encouraged a debate and discussion which demonstrated massive support for the Commission. While some of those present who are or have been users of the Commission's many services could think of ways that the provision of those services could be enhanced, few thought that this would be best achieved through a merger with Historic Scotland. The full report of the workshop may be read at: [http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/rcahms\\_media/files/news/rcahms\\_stakeholderworkshop\\_summaryreport.pdf](http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/rcahms_media/files/news/rcahms_stakeholderworkshop_summaryreport.pdf).

The appraisal report was completed in the spring and presented to Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, on 24 May. It detailed two options - a merger with Historic Scotland and the reconstitution of RCAHMS into a new Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB). The report concluded that both options were viable in terms of the 'core goal' of the review (i.e. 'securing a sustainable long term future for RCAHMS functions') and it made no specific recommendation.

Mrs Hyslop published the report <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/07/5774> on July 4 and announced that she had made her decision and had commissioned a detailed business case to be made for a merger between RCAHMS and Historic Scotland. Since then, RCAHMS' Chief Executive, Diana Murray,

has responded to the announcement with a statement:

<http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/news/rcahms-options-appraisal>

as have the RCAHMS Commissioners

<http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/news/rcahms-commissioners>

In summary, RCAHMS welcomes the publication of the report and although disappointed with the Minister's decision, it will be working with colleagues in The Scottish Government and Historic Scotland in the formation of a new organisation that will provide the benefits that the Cabinet Secretary seeks for both the public and the historic environment sector.

### Editor's Note

It will come as no surprise to readers to hear that staff at both HS and RCAHMS have been left somewhat bemused by the strategic options appraisal process and its aftermath to date. At one point the options seemed quite clear -- RCAHMS would either be merged with (subsumed into?) HS, an organisation that is ten times larger, or RCAHMS would be



It is hoped that the 'new' organisation will still be able to actively engage with members of local communities. Here volunteers at St Blane's on Bute were learning survey techniques from Commission staff. Image copyright: RCAHMS.

reformed as a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), losing its Royal Commission status but retaining all of its present functions.

However, while most RCAHMS staff thought that a takeover-type 'merger', was on the cards, it now seems that the Minister is thinking more along the lines of a completely new organisation which would contain RCAHMS and elements of HS.

The business case for the merger, which will explore the numerous options for how the new organisation might work, is due to be completed in the autumn. However, in the meantime it is business as usual at the Commission (and probably also at HS), with staff continuing to explore possibilities for closer working relations and eager to bring to a conclusion what has been a period of considerable uncertainty.



Detailed archaeological survey, one of the Commission's many strengths, has been identified as a core activity to be retained in the 'new' organisation. Image: Editor

## Museum of Abernethy

The Museum of Abernethy has recently been awarded Accredited Status from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) thanks to the hard work of all the volunteers.

The Museum opens for the season on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May at 1pm.

Opening hours are Thursday – Sunday from 1pm – 5pm.

The theme this year is pre-World War One Edwardian Abernethy.

[www.museumofabernethy.co.uk](http://www.museumofabernethy.co.uk)

## Pictish Conference

This year's Pictish Arts Society Annual Conference '*From Forteviot to Fortingall and Beyond*' will be held at the AK Bell Library in Perth on Saturday 6 October, starting at 10.00am.

Speakers/topics will include:

Niall Robertson on the early medieval sculpture of highland Perthshire;

Oliver O'Grady on the recent excavation at Fortingall;

Mark Hall on the Pictish sculpture from Forteviot and Invermay;

Cormac Bourke on early Christian hand bells;

Heather James on the SERF broch excavation;

John Sherriff on Pictish fortifications

The ticket price is £25 (£20 concessions); please refer to the PAS website for further details <http://pictish-arts-society.org/>

## Facebook page

Readers into social networking will be interested to learn that our Chairperson Christina Donald and Committee member Catherine Smith have set up a TAFAC Facebook page. Currently it is populated with photos of PHSE, journal covers, Isle of May book launch photos. Please look out for developments (or contribute?).

## TAFAC Conference

The annual conference this year will be held in Perth on Saturday 3 November at the North Inch Community Campus, which lies off Malvina Place at the east end of Gowans Terrace, Perth, PH1 5BF.

This is a new venue for TAFAC, with good public transport links and plenty of free parking, and we will be including a soup and sandwich lunch in the price of the ticket.

The final programme and tickets will be available in September. Check out the website [tafac.org.uk](http://tafac.org.uk) over the summer for further details as they become available

Confirmed speakers so far include: Steve Liscoe (Fife Council) who will be speaking about Recent work in St Andrews;

Johanna Babbs (Tayside Landscape Partnership) who will talk about that initiative;

Alastair Becket (Northlight Heritage) on excavations at the timber circle at Pittentian, Crieff;

Martin Cook (AOC Archaeology Ltd) on the Pictish linear barrow cemetery at...

Richard Fawcett (University of St Andrews) on the Corpus of Medieval Parish Churches;

Oliver O'Grady (Independent Researcher) on Culdees Monasteries;

David Strachan (Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust) – Glenshee archaeology

Sarah Kettles (Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative) on The Merchant's House, Brechin;

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## QLTR Report 2011-12

Readers interested in the work of the Finds Disposal Panel will be interested to learn that its latest report is available as a downloadable .pdf from ---

<http://www.treasuretrovescotland.co.uk/downloads/annualreport1112.pdf> Among

the artefacts highlighted (pp 9-11) are a bronze medieval figure from Dunkeld, a superb Neolithic polished axe-head from Crook of Devon, and a beautiful silver gilt ring from Ballinbriech, Fife.



## The Historic Churchyards Project

Fiona Fisher, Project Officer, Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust

The project was established to conserve and celebrate the rich heritage held in the historic churchyards of the Carse of Gowrie and Strathmore. There are three major conservation projects; at Coupar Angus (the Mausoleum and Watch House), which is underway; at Collace, where the Mort House (which has additional funding from Rural LEADER) is nearing completion; and at Meigle, where disabled access has been provided. Another initiative to repair boundary walls has resulted in three weeks of training traditional lime masonry at Westown (supported by Rural LEADER).

Some gravestone stabilisation has already taken place at Meigle and at Kilspindie, with subsequent conversion to wildflower meadows and it is intended to apply this strategy as widely as possible. Sadly, the sheer scale of decay and the loss of legibility of inscriptions and carvings does not allow specialist conservation of gravestones, or even setting them upright, except in exceptional circumstances. The project prioritises which gravestones to stabilise and focuses on reinstating graveyards to make them easier to manage and more attractive to visitors. It can be a challenging concept to return graveyards to a wilder appearance which is economically and environmentally sustainable.

There is historical evidence to show that the manicuring of graveyards is not traditional. To this end the SITA Tayside Biodiversity Fund is assisting in a transition to a management regime



Juli Dewar, Cargill (no date), no attribution.

which not only protects historic carved gravestones, but also enhances wildlife value. This combined heritage approach is the subject of a conference, "Living Churchyards: Integrated Conservation", organised by Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust, which will take place on the 7th September, 2012 at the AK Bell Library, Perth.

The programme and booking form will be available from July from the Trust's

website at [www.pkht.org.uk](http://www.pkht.org.uk) or from The Lodge, 4 York Place, Perth or by telephoning the project officer on 01738 477085.

The first promotional leaflet, "Historic Churchyards in East Perthshire" has recently been published. It is a free guide to the project's fascinating graveyards, some of which are medieval, of Strathmore and the Carse of Gowrie. It is available at libraries, visitor attractions and tourist centres across Perth and Kinross.

During archaeology month, in June, the exhibition, "Gone, but not Forgotten", opened at the AK Bell Library, after which it will tour the project area. Featuring pairs of photographs of 18th century carved stones, taken almost 30 years apart, by Betty Willsher MBE and by George Logan, professional photographer, it highlights the interesting carvings and the need to conserve and record them. A gravestone recording day was led by Dr. Susan Buckham at Collace churchyard. The Friends of Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust led three graveyard recording days during Perthshire Archaeology Month and is developing a volunteer programme to record the heritage carved in stone, which is celebrated in the project and its exhibition at the following venues.



Blairgowrie Community Library, July.

Alyth Museum, August.

AK Bell Library, September 7 only  
(The Living Churchyards Conference).

The Tufted Duck Café at Rait Antiques Fair,  
October.

The project is principally funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and The Gannochy Trust, with further support from Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (the Trust) and Perth and Kinross Council (PKC), and runs from March 2011 until March 2013. More information can be found by visiting the website [www.pkht.org.uk](http://www.pkht.org.uk)



Carpow logboat on display in Perth Museum:  
Image copyright: Perth Museum and Art Gallery

A reminder to readers that the Carpow logboat is now on display in Perth Museum and Art Gallery. In addition to the 9m long vessel, there is a selection of Bronze Age metalwork that has been recovered from the River Tay. These votive offerings include swords, spearheads, axe-heads and other implements.

The exhibition is free and runs until 31 January 2013.

### Editor's Note

The Editor is still keen to receive contributions to this Newsletter from TAFAC Corresponding Members or anyone else. Please send to: [johnsherriff@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:johnsherriff@hotmail.co.uk)

# New HERITAGE EXPLORER MAPS

Ian Hamilton, Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust.

The Trust has introduced a series of four, map- based leaflets to introduce, and guide, residents and visitors to many of the archaeological and historic sites in Perthshire. The series covers almost 6,000 years of the archaeological time line, from c4,000BC to the 18th century. The leaflets are based on the attractive, simplified cartographic format developed by Harvey Maps of Doune some years ago.

**Prehistoric Perthshire - Settlement and Ceremony** introduces the people who lived in the area from around 4,000 BC to AD 250, and locates some of the most impressive remnants of their settlements, ceremonial monuments and burial places.

**The Romans in Perthshire** explains the various invasions and guides readers to some of the best preserved archaeological sites of this period in the country.

**Picts, Scots and the Creation of Alba - Monuments in Stone** explores the people known as the Picts, and the events which laid the foundations for the unification of Scotland; and identifies the most tangible evidence of the Picts, their carved stones and the ecclesiastical architecture of the Pictish-Gaelic kingdom.

**Historic Perthshire** sets out many of the most impressive castles, church sites and townships of the medieval and post-medieval periods in Perth and Kinross.

This is an excellent initiative, to give residents and visitors alike a taster of the fantastic historical richness in the county.

I only have two reservations about these publications: you WILL still need Ordnance Survey maps to pinpoint most of the sites, and - although there is due reference to the Outdoor Access Code - it needs to be emphasised in such 'primer' publications that much care should be taken in accessing sites where stock may be grazing. The last two years have seen many serious incidents throughout the UK. Last summer I had a very scary experience on Colen Hill, near Scone, when some 30 young cattle decided I should leave their 'patch'! This would have been relatively easy had it not been for the dreaded barbed wire on the top row of the fence. Why, oh why, is such a barbaric device still so prevalent in the countryside?

The set of four costs £5.00 (or £2.00 each). Available direct from the Trust or through selected outlets. Contact the Trust at [www.pkht.org.uk](http://www.pkht.org.uk) or 'phone 01738 477080.

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## Forthcoming Events:

Dundee Museum: Thurs 2 Aug at 1pm -- Animals on Display: Behind the Scenes  
Wed 15 Aug at 1pm – Guided tour of the Collections Unit  
Sat 18 Aug at 10.30am – Family Big Art Session-Weaving through time  
Thurs 23 Aug at 1pm – Gallery talk – Leonardo and his Coins  
Thurs 13 Sept at 1pm – Gallery talk – Scottish Archaeology Month –  
‘Life on the River Tay’.

All these events are free but please refer to the Dundee Museum website as booking may be required <http://www.mcmanus.co.uk/content/activities-events/feed>

or phone the Art Gallery and Museum on 01382 307200.