



TAYSIDE & FIFE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
COMMITTEE
TAFAC

Newsletter of the Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee

Issue Thirty-Six – September 2020

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

Oliver O'Grady – two appreciations

The TAFAC Committee was stunned and saddened in May to learn of the untimely death of Olly O'Grady. The two appreciations below, written by Joe Fitzpatrick and David Munro respectively, express the sentiments felt by all of Olly's friends and colleagues. – Ed.

JF - Oliver first came into my life in the summer of 2014 and little did either of us know then that a working relationship and a bond of friendship would still be going strong six years later.

In life, some people stick in your mind for a long time – people who really moved us on in our understanding of the world. - it might be a teacher at school, a lecturer at College or University or a wise older relative. In the world of Archaeology, Oliver O'Grady was such a person. Oliver possessed a rare combination – an extensive



Oliver and Joe discussing the latest excavation results from East Lomond with Professor Alice Roberts. East Lomond was one of the projects selected for inclusion in the BBC programme "Digging for Britain" and this session was shown as part of Series 6 - North in December 2017' Image courtesy of the Falkland Stewardship Trust.

knowledge of his chosen field of work, superb technical skills and knowledge, and the ability to effectively communicate and motivate those who worked with him on projects around the country. He encouraged, cajoled and nurtured the innate curiosity which seems to be present in many who take the step of volunteering to participate in archaeological excavations, and he valued the experience and knowledge which others brought to the table. We had several conversations about creating a 'Dig Culture' which was welcoming, inclusive and which encouraged questions and group discussions at our biscuit and cake-

filled tea breaks. His values, sense of humanity and care for the natural environment made him a 'good fit' for the work of the Falkland Stewardship Trust and he became a trusted and valued collaborator as we developed our Archaeology Programme.

Oliver's leadership of the archaeological excavations on East Lomond in 2014, 2017 and 2019 was exemplary, as was the level of detail and care which went into our pre-excavation planning and logistics, and a joint focus on the welfare and wellbeing of our volunteers was as important as the archaeological methodology.



Oliver with Joe & Caroline (Falkland Stewardship Trust) together with the Archaeology Ambassador team for East Lomond – Anne, Veronica, Mary, Su and Nicola. Image copyright: Joe Fitzpatrick

The preparation for the excavations was always much more than a desk exercise looking at maps and photographs on Canmore; it involved fieldwalking, some geophysics, dialogue around why a particular focus and approach might be preferable to another. In the end we always found a way forward and were able to set out clear aims and objectives for each excavation, which gave us a singular shared focus for our work on East Lomond.

This preparatory work had its periodic 'exciting' moments! One memorable occasion which sticks with me was a late afternoon when the two of us were completely absorbed doing some electrical resistivity work on an exposed part of the shoulder of the hill. We were vaguely aware that it was getting duller, but when we saw a

lightning flash and heard the rumble of nearby thunder just beyond West Lomond and a storm coming our way ... our metal prongs were out of the ground (in a flash!), everything was switched off, gathered up and we raced down the hillside as best we could carrying bundles of equipment. The thought of being potential lightning conductors energised us to the extent that we must have broken the half mile downhill running record. I never knew Oliver could run so fast!

Oliver's passion for Community Archaeology and the desire to involve and engage local volunteers in learning and developing both their practical excavation skills as well as their understanding of the nature of the East Lomond site contributed hugely to the high regard in which he was held. He made sure to talk to every individual each day and was always encouraging and supportive.

From his work on the three archaeology projects delivered by the Living Lomonds Landscape Partnership, several individuals demonstrated a high level of commitment and a strong desire to be more fully engaged and involved in further archaeological activity. This group were supported to become the Archaeology Ambassador team (pictured below) and would take on higher levels of responsibility and logistical support for the 2017 and 2019 excavations on East Lomond. I know Oliver was

extremely proud of the achievements of this team, some of whom went on to study University level Archaeology courses. They too feel the loss of a mentor and friend.

Oliver's sudden departure leaves a void in many lives; it deprives Scotland and Scottish Archaeology of a talent which had much still to give by way of understanding our early origins. His work at Falkland and on East Lomond energised local communities and created huge interest in understanding the special landscape which surrounds us. He knew, and we know, that it is of potential national significance. It is now up to us to respect that legacy and to repay what Oliver invested in all of us.

Joe Fitzpatrick, Chairman, Falkland Stewardship Trust

DM - An appreciation from friends at Kinross (Marshall) Museum

The sudden death of Dr Oliver O'Grady at the age of 39 on Friday 22nd May deprived many aspiring archaeologists of a close friend who had over the past decade enthralled us by rolling out a series of local community-based archaeological digs that revealed new insights into the story of our place.

When Oliver first came to Kinross (Marshall) Museum in 2011 he was in search of volunteers to help him with an archaeological survey on St Serf's Island on Loch Leven, the holy grail of places to set foot in Kinross-shire. It was here that we gained a first taste of Oliver's wide-ranging knowledge and his gift for engaging with community volunteers. He had a way of communicating his enthusiasm and his passion for exploring landscapes that was infectious and thereafter there developed a growing band of brothers and sisters willing to work with him on archaeological digs that



Oliver on Loch Leven, on route to St. Serf's Island. Image copyright: David Munro

turned up remarkable finds.

The surveys that took place on St Serf's Island over three summers uncovered not only an array of smaller finds but also, on a larger scale, a monastic vallum that helped identify the footprint of the former Culdee Abbey that had possibly been established in the late 7th century. Always keen to fit local surveys into the wider historic picture, Oliver viewed the St Serf's discoveries in the context of other pilot investigations he and others were carrying out at early medieval monastic sites in eastern Scotland. In the process, he introduced us to field walking, geophysical survey techniques and excavation and recording. He taught us a new way of looking at landscape.



Oliver and community volunteers at the 'Our Portmoak' Dunmore hillfort dig. Copyright: David Munro.

Oliver next played a key role in planning and delivering the 'Discover the ancient Lomonds' historic landscape project which formed part of the Living Lomonds Landscape Partnership which included Kinross (Marshall) Museum on its Board. Over three years, from 2013 to 2016, the annual 'Big Dig' community archaeology surveys attracted an even wider range of volunteers keen to take part in exploring East Lomond hillfort, the royal deer park at Falkland and Lochore Castle. An additional survey of boundary stones linked to the division of a large area of commonty in 1818 offered an opportunity to explore every nook and cranny of the Lomonds in all weathers. For many of us who took part, this was a great opportunity to learn more about Oliver and his love of historic landscapes.



An image of the top of one of over 130 boundary stones recorded on the Lomond Hills by Oliver and his team of volunteers. Image copyright: J Sherrieff.

In all of the activities associated with the Living Lomonds Landscape Partnership, Oliver's creative mind sought new ways of engaging not only with volunteers but also with people of all ages in the wider community. An open day at Lochore Castle, for example, engaged those who came in assorted medieval activities ranging from sword fighting to cooking, parchment making and writing with a feather quill. In coming out to support this project, the people of Lochore, Crosshill and Ballingry demonstrated how important Lochore Castle and this project was to their community. The Living Lomonds Landscape Partnership legacy lingers on and some of those who took part in the 'Big Digs' went on to study archaeology, no doubt enthused by Oliver's dynamic approach to exploring the past.

With Oliver one thing always led to another and, when the Living Lomonds Landscape Partnership completed its delivery phase, he quickly identified sources of funding to mark the 'Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology' in 2017. In partnership with Kinross (Marshall) Museum the 'Our Portmoak: Uncovering Stories from the Past' sprung into life, with Oliver playing a key role in putting together an imaginative series of digs. In addition to important archaeological surveys at the hillfort of Dunmore, the site of the old chapel at Portmoak and the Bronze Age burial urns field at Kilmagadwood, a number of 'Muckle Digs' in local village gardens were aimed at engaging with younger members of the community.

Always brimming with ideas for promoting archaeology, Oliver recently joined the Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee and was, just prior to his death, putting down on paper thoughts for the future. In almost a decade of developing community archaeology in Fife and Kinross, Oliver O'Grady leaves behind him not only an invaluable record of historic landscape studies but also many friends who will remember for the rest of their lives the times spent with him in the field in and around the Lomond Hills and Loch Leven.

David Munro, Kinross (Marshall) Museum.

Mysterious Fife stone

Your editor is grateful to his HES colleague Mike Middleton for informing him about the rather odd boulder that is illustrated below.



Image copyright: Mike Middleton

The boulder is situated at the entrance driveway to Dairsie House where it was

set up about ten years ago. On the front of the stone is the name of the house, but it is the rear that is most interesting. Here, there is a large, dished-shaped depression which is undoubtedly not natural. The obvious conclusion might be that it is some form of quern - used for the grinding of cereals primarily but possibly for other things as well. However, saddle querns of the early prehistoric period in Scotland, whilst hefty objects, can usually be described as easily portable, which this boulder certainly is not – at least not without the aid of modern technology.

Of course, the boulder could have featured within a permanent settlement in which case there would have been no need to move it. We may never know the true story of this stone, but your editor would be grateful if any readers would let him know of any knowledge they have of this stone, or others like it, and ideas regarding its purpose.

Contact the editor at:
johnsherriff@hotmail.co.uk

News from Save Wemyss Ancient Caves Society

Sue Hamstead

It will come as no surprise to anyone that our plans for the year were rapidly derailed back in March, our tour season halted before it had even begun. Nevertheless, the committee continued its regular meetings via the internet and plans for some online activities were soon taking shape.

With our chair Mike Arrowsmith acting as guide, we ran some virtual tours of the caves online by means of the Wemyss Caves 4D website, complemented by live Q&A sessions. Also, Jo Hambly (SWACS & SCAPE) put together an illustrated talk on last year's excavation at the caves, again with live Q&A sessions. Both received lots of positive feedback from the many people who tuned in. Furthermore, they can both still be accessed via the Videos tab of the SWACS Facebook page. We are planning for further online tours and talks over the winter period.



Image copyright: Sue Hamstead

At the beginning of July a few of us were able to gather – strictly social-distanced – for a long overdue spot of gardening at our visitor centre. Soon after that the lockdown rules had relaxed enough to permit us to begin preparations for a cautious resumption of our guided tours. The hall was prepared with a thorough clean and rearranged to allow a one-way flow. Cleaning materials and PPE equipment were purchased in abundance. A risk assessment was prepared, and a checklist drawn up specifying the tasks to be performed before, during and after every tour, in order to keep everyone safe. Advice was also formulated for our prospective visitors. Our Covid-aware bear (MacDuff, our mascot) now sits at the door of the visitor centre wearing his face covering, ready to greet our visitors, hand-cleansing gel at the ready. So, the tours have resumed, albeit with heavily limited numbers and 2m social distancing separating individual family groups and our volunteer guide and escort.



SWACS mascot MacDuff. Image copyright: Sue Hamstead

On a different subject, you will no doubt appreciate that the danger from vandalism to which the Wemyss Caves are exposed has been a concern for a very long time. Over winter, we had been investigating options for protecting the caves, but were not able to pursue this during lockdown. However, we have recently had a meeting on site to discuss requirements with a local company experienced in working for HES on such projects. They will be responding soon with a range of costed proposals for us to consider.

Finally, the Wemyss Caves will soon be featuring on another TV programme, but we're unable to divulge any details at this point. More information will be available on our website in due course: www.wemysscaves.org.

2020 Conference

Because of the Coronavirus, this year's annual conference will be carried out online over two consecutive mornings of Saturday and Sunday, 7th and 8th November.

Booking is free but donations would be appreciated. Once again, the Committee is very grateful to AOC Archaeology Group for sponsoring the event.

Anyone wishing to 'attend' the conference should book via the [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk) website

In the meantime, summaries of at least some of the talks that will be given are provided below.

The talks have already been recorded/filmed by Doug Rocks-McQueen and they will be available on the TAFAC website after the event.



Hugo Anderson-Whymark and Mark Hall

Neolithic Carved Stone Balls in context: A new find from Sheriffmuir

In 2018 a decorated carved stone ball dating from the late Neolithic (c. 3000 BC) was discovered while planting forestry on the Blackford Estate, Sheriffmuir. A subsequent field visit demonstrated that it lay in a contemporary artefact scatter and detailed analysis of the artefact revealed evidence of the techniques used to manufacture the ball and decorate its surface. This paper will explore the wider significance of this find and consider the long history of the research into carved stone balls, including the numerous and diverse suggestions for how they were used.

Irene Hallyburton

Fear Maidens: The Witches of Perthshire

Between 1563 and 1736 over three thousand individuals in Scotland were charged with witchcraft, and around one-third of these were executed. One hundred and thirty accusations have been identified so far in the County of Perth, found within literature and official records, and more live on in local legend. A selection of these cases will be examined within the context of the Scottish Witch-hunts, and the relevance of the Witches of Perthshire in the big picture. Were those charged with witchcraft in Perthshire really people to be feared, or was an accusation of Witchcraft a much more frightening experience?

Joanna Hambly SCAPE & SWACS

New archaeological discoveries at the Wemyss Caves

In summer 2019, a team of volunteers from SWACS in partnership with the SCAPE Trust, University of St Andrews and with contributions from the University of Aberdeen carried out archaeological excavations in the Court Cave, Doo Cave and Sliding Cave, and the promontory adjacent to MacDuff's Castle.

The investigations have shed new light on the timing and nature of the activities in the caves during the period when the Pictish symbols may have been carved. They have also revealed new information about the medieval uses of the caves and thrown up more mysteries to ponder.

Magnus Kirby

Loak Farm, Bankfoot: excavation of a prehistoric settlement

This talk will describe the recent excavations at Loak Farm, near Bankfoot, where seven post-built roundhouses, plus a number of four- and six-post structures and other remains, form an extensive spread of later prehistoric settlement. Post-excavation work is currently ongoing and this talk will provide the latest results.



To face 132

THE DEVIL PREACHING TO THE WITCHES

Prof. Gordon Noble

Uniting North and South - Investigations in Southern Pictland by the University of Aberdeen

Since 2012 the University of Aberdeen has been running the Northern Picts project, investigating the Pictish period in northern Scotland focusing on the archaeology of Aberdeenshire and Moray. The project has led to some remarkable discoveries such as the power-centre at Rhynie, a large number of objects from the Gaulcross silver hoard and identified early medieval phases at a number of new sites. Since 2019 the project has moved south to begin investigating sites from southern Pictland to begin to provide a more cohesive picture of the Pictish period. This has included work at Wemyss Caves, hillforts such as Craig Rock, geophysical and excavation at Glamis and Aberlemno and a range of other sites. This talk will summarise the results so far and compare and contrast the archaeology of northern and southern Pictland.

Gavin Lindsay (PKHT) –

The Perth & Kinross Archaeological Research Framework: an update

Douglas Speirs, Fife Council Archaeologist

Fife's Gold Rush

Steven Watt, AOC Archaeology

An Unexpected Bronze Age Cemetery, Carnoustie, Angus

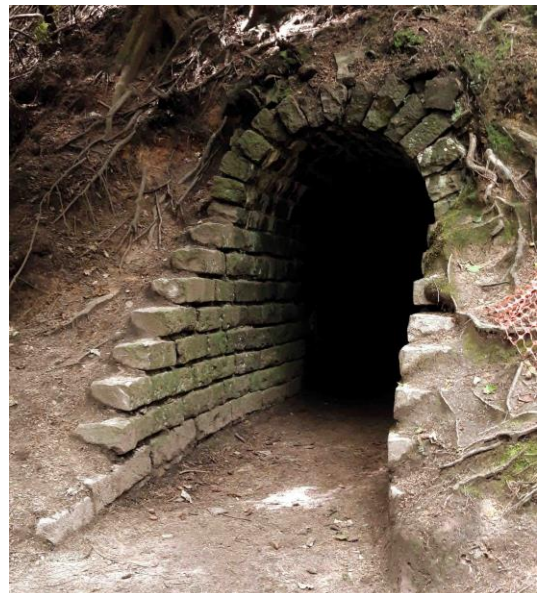
During an archaeological excavation ahead of a new housing and industrial development near Carnoustie, Angus, a rich early prehistoric and later landscape was revealed. Nestled amongst the later remains of a medieval/post-medieval farm were a series of stone cists comprising a small Early Bronze Age cemetery. The full excavation of the cists demonstrated that the contents survived in a variety of conditions: some were infiltrated with soil and the skeletal remains were in fairly poor condition, whilst others were superbly preserved with clear traces of organic, possibly animal hide, coverings overlying the skeletal remains alongside traces of possible textile garments. A range of funerary practices are displayed amongst the cists, including individual inhumations, multiple inhumations as well as deposits of disarticulated and cremated bone, and many of the individuals had been afforded grave goods in the form of Beakers, dress accessories, ornaments and one, a small copper or bronze blade. With the post-excavation programme in its early stages, this presentation shall discuss the nature of the discovery and outline the main aims of the post-excavation analysis and its potential future outcomes.

Falkland Estate

At the risk of sounding like a member of the Fife Tourist Board, your editor recommends to all readers who haven't already done so to pay a visit to the Falkland Estate. Not the high ground containing the East Lomond, but the lower ground around Falkland House, where there is a great designed landscape full of 19th and 20th century architecture. The big house (now a school) is out of bounds, but there is a myriad of other buildings to enjoy – former stables (including café), chapel, ice-house, numerous bridges, hilltop memorial tower and the Temple of Decision.



Falkland Estate: Bridge and Ornamental Pond dating to the early 20th century. The bridge forms part of a path leading up to and beyond the Lord Ninian Crichton Stuart Memorial Chapel.
Image copyright: John Sherriff.



No expense was spared in the laying out of paths within the designed landscape. When solid rock got in the way, it was simply tunnelled through. Image copyright: John Sherriff.



It's worth a walk up Black Hill to visit the memorial to the mid-19th century Tyndall Bruce monument. Image: John Sherriff.

Perth graffiti

Whether you accept it as part of our contemporary cultural heritage or consider it nothing more than vandalism, graffiti is here to stay and recording it (or at least a representative sample of it) is one of the roles of heritage professionals. Perth city centre continues to yield a plethora of new tags and throw-ups (throwies). In the column to the right there are images of two variants of the same throw-up. Both are dated this year 20(20) and both are accompanied by a variation of the tag 'Venom', a tag that has been widespread throughout the town and suburbs for a number of years.

In contrast to the tags and throwies, Perth has enjoyed for some years now sanctioned 'Street Art', a fine example of which (by the renowned American artist Kelsey Montague) is illustrated below. It was painted last October on a gable-end in Bridge Lane and is entitled '#WhatLiftsYou'.



All images on this page are copyright:
John Sherriff