



TAYSIDE & FIFE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
COMMITTEE
TAFAC

Newsletter of the

Tayside and Fife Archaeological
Committee

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New Roman booklet



Rome's Caledonian Corridor

Exploring the Archaeology of the
Roman Military in Perthshire

Gavin J Lindsay

Illustrated by Iain Ashman



The Library of
Innerpeffray

Rome's Caledonian Corridor is a fresh take on an old archaeological enigma - what were the Romans doing in Perthshire? Written in a popular format and richly illustrated throughout with newly commissioned maps and reconstructive artwork of archaeological sites never previously visualised, the booklet is an accessible introduction to a fascinating episode in the region's history. For readers already familiar with the subject, *Rome's Caledonian Corridor* offers something different as it steps away from the more familiar narratives, leaves behind many of the assumptions that underlie traditional interpretations, and presents the evidence in a new light. Appropriately for a publication from Scotland's oldest lending library, this booklet also re-engages with a variety of classical sources and Latin terminology, bringing a refreshing reconnection to the ancient Roman world - all in just 32 pocket-sized pages!

The booklet will be launched at 2pm on Sunday 14th April at [Innerpeffray Library](#) near Crieff and the occasion will include a short illustrated chat with the author about the booklet, the research behind it and some highlights to look out for amongst the pages. This will be followed by a Q&A session, book signing and a brief optional walk-about of nearby Roman sites.

The booklet will retail at £5 with copies first available for purchase at the launch, then exclusively from the Library of Innerpeffray thereafter.

Some new discoveries

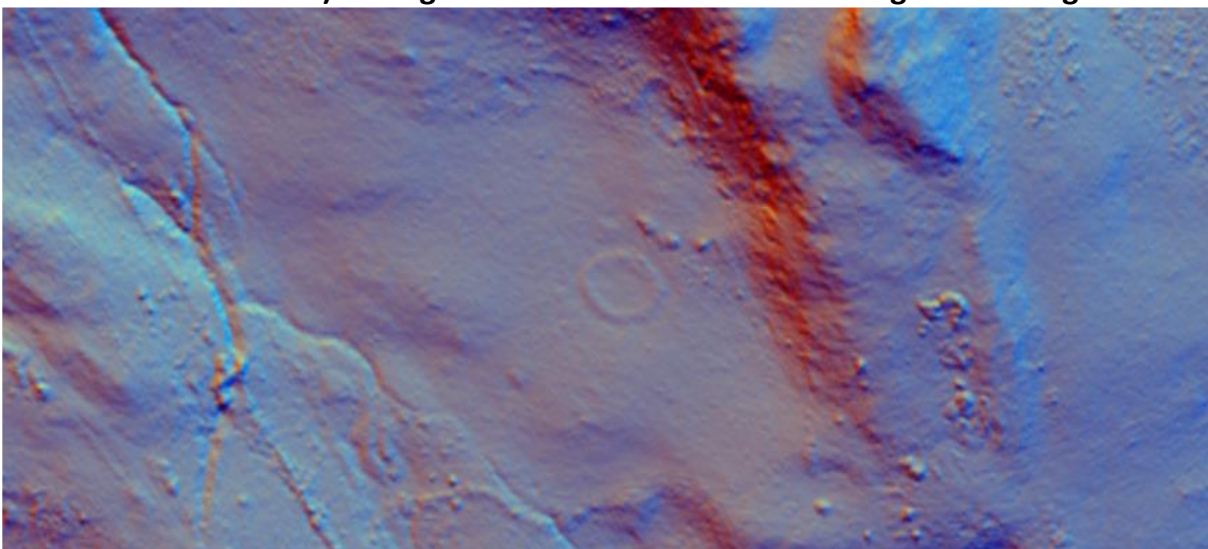
Your editor has been busy over the past few months browsing Lidar data that is available on the National Library of Scotland's website (<https://maps.nls.uk/>). This data, together with the wealth of map information also available, is an incredibly valuable source that allows anyone with the appropriate knowledge and experience (as well as time and access to the internet) to make a meaningful contribution to recording Scotland's heritage by undertaking field visits.

That contribution can be valuable in a number of ways. It can provide information about sites that are already in local and national heritage environment records (HERs) but for which there is little or no information. Many of these records have been created as a result of RCAHMS, HES or other aerial survey programmes, the purpose of which was to identify previously unrecorded sites in particular. However, whilst there may be photographs of these sites available online, often there is no description. Sometimes there is not even a photograph available online. A field visit to such sites is absolutely vital to confirm identification, note archaeological features that are not evident on aerial photographs and identify actual or potential threats to sites that were not present when the photographs were taken.

The contribution may also add 'new' sites to both local and national heritage environment records (HERs), something that is incredibly important nowadays in light of the reduction that has been undertaken in recent years in the amount of government sponsored proactive field-based archaeological recording. Sometimes, as we have seen in Steve Liscoe's pieces in the past two Newsletters, newly recognised monuments are important enough to be afforded the protection provided by Scheduled Monument status. The addition of previously unrecorded sites to local and national HERs also helps to fill gaps in those records – gaps that have evolved for a variety of reasons including a lack of interest in certain types of site – perhaps an indication that they were perceived as being unimportant.

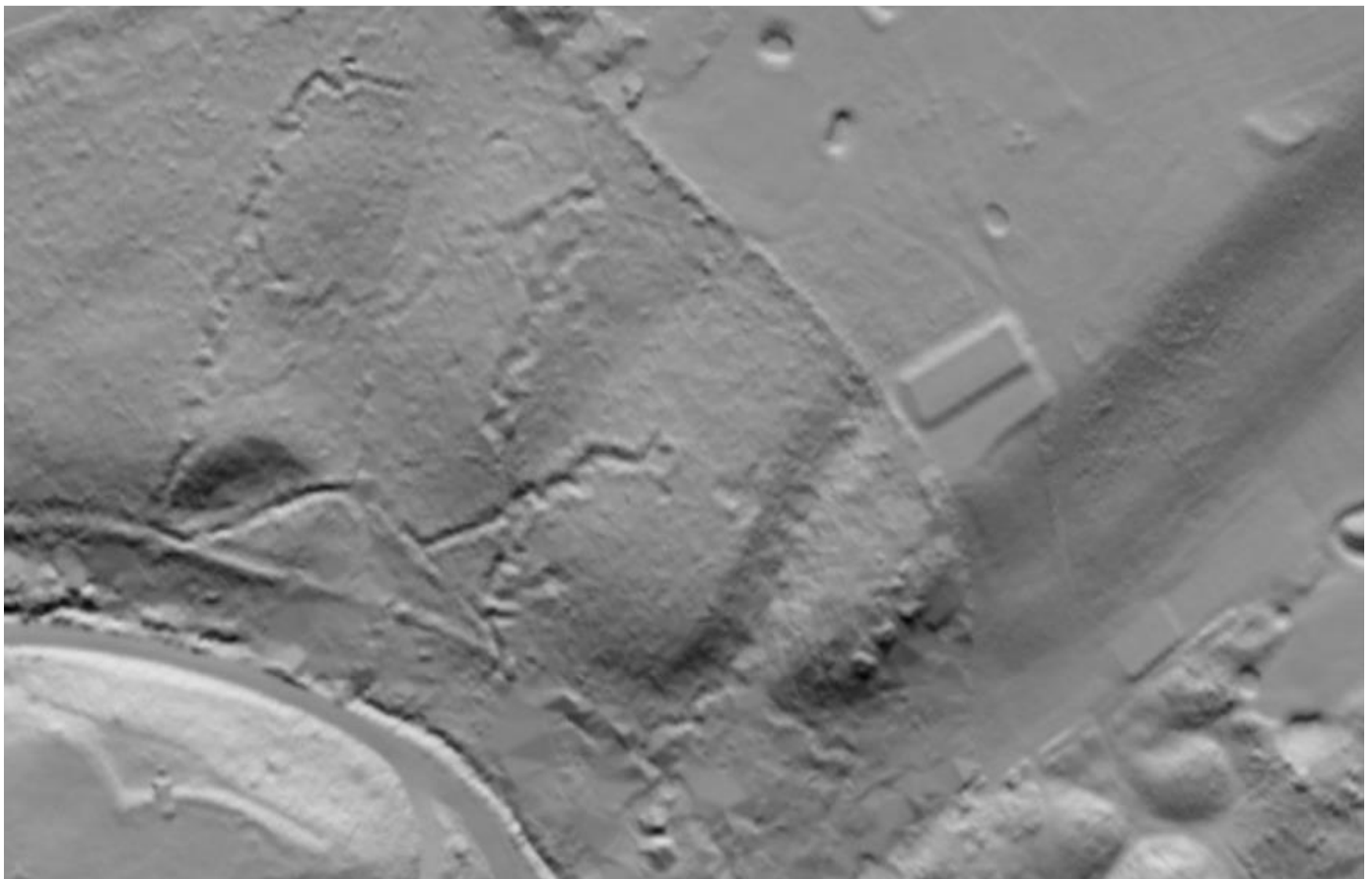
The importance of field visits cannot be emphasised too much. Aerial photography and especially Lidar are fantastic resources but at the end of the day they are simply sources of information that can easily be misinterpreted. Both forms of data require interpretation and confirmation, the latter best achieved through a field visit.

One site where a field visit proved essential is situated on a terrace on the south face of Benarty Hill in Cleish parish, Kinross. The Lidar data showed a roughly circular enclosure measuring about 10m in diameter within a thick bank. First thought was that it could be a hut circle, but there was no clear evidence of an entrance and the Lidar seemed to indicate a shallow external feature. A field visit confirmed that the enclosure was, in fact, the remains of a sheepfold, its turf wall (now reduced to a low bank) having been constructed from sods dug from the ground around it.



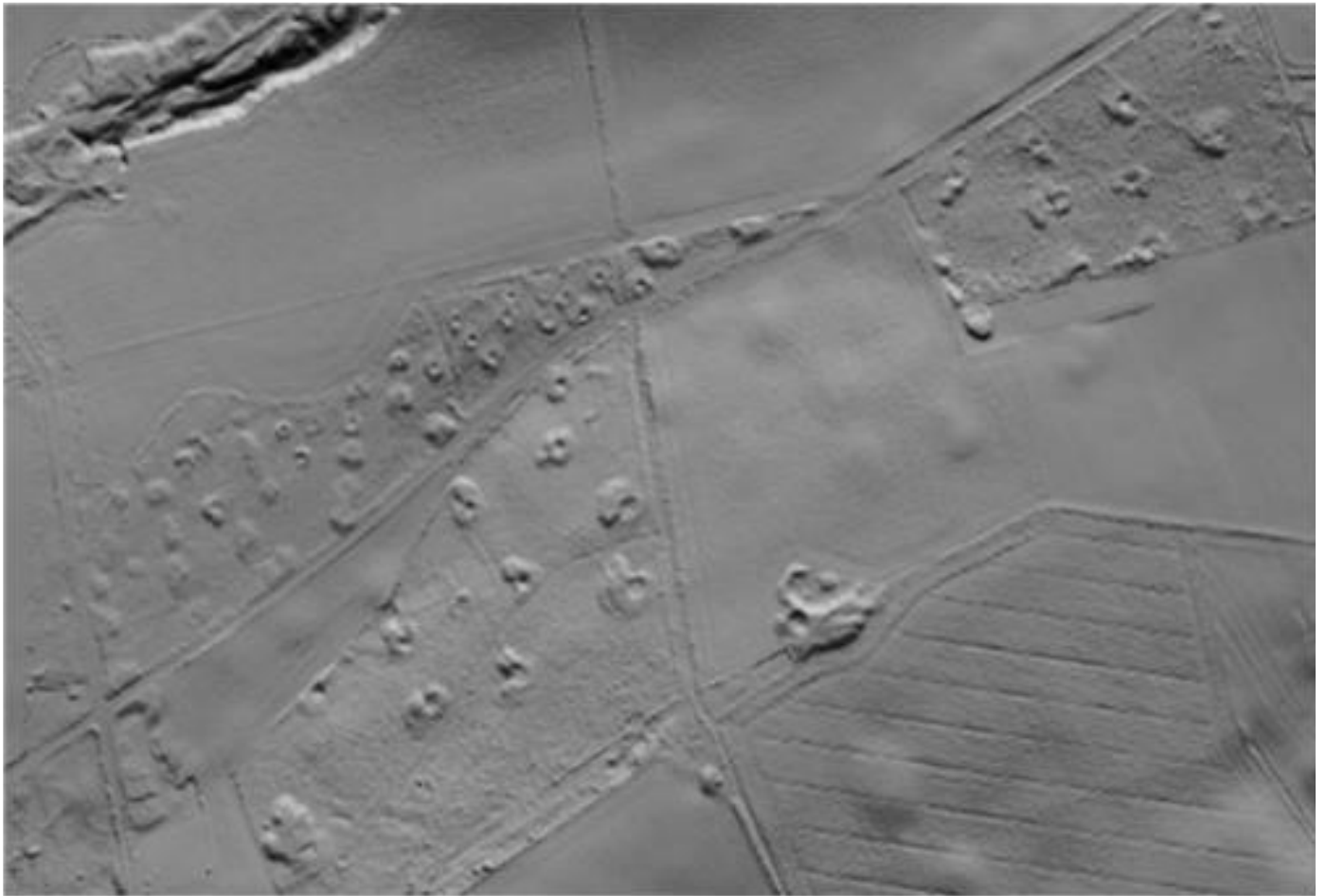
Lidar extract shown courtesy of the National Library of Scotland.

Another site that is visible on Lidar is more problematic than your editor initially thought when seeing it. The site (image below) is in Miledyke Wood in Scoonie parish, Fife, and on first impressions it appeared to be a typical example of a system of practice trenches dug during military training. It comprises a series of interconnecting zigzagging lengths of trench one of which leads to a rectangular dug-out. They have been excavated into sandy knolls and survive up to 1m in depth. Typically, a trench system such as this would date to the First World War. However, Steve Liscoe (Fife Council Archaeological Unit) has supplied sufficient information to cast doubt on this assumption. Another set of zigzag trenches, which are situated about 1km to the west in what is now a cultivated field, are known to have been dug after the 1930s – presumably as part of training for the Second World War. Further, Polish troops were billeted in the flax mill at Silverburn (200m south of Miledyke Wood), and it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that they would have carried out training exercises within the vicinity. This appears to have included digging trench systems. In the absence of any absolute dating evidence from the site itself but taking into account the available circumstantial evidence, it is probably fairly safe to conclude that the trench system with Miledyke Wood as a relict of World War Two rather than World War One.



Lidar extract shown courtesy of the National Library of Scotland. Please note the ‘fuzzy’ appearance of the detail on lidar images is simply a function of the process. It does not mean the image is out of focus.

The illustration at the top of the next page is a Lidar image showing mining remains, mainly bell-pits, in two areas of woodland near Teasses, in Ceres parish, Fife. Dating evidence for some of the mines is provided by an 1829 *‘Plan of Teasses Common with the Baronies of Balmain and Pitcruvie, the minerals under which are the property of the Honorable Lady Mary L Crauford of Crauford and Balbirnie. Surveyed under the direction of John Williamson, Esq., Mining Engineer, by James Horne, October 1829’* - National Records of Scotland (RHP 320). A version of this map is visible at <https://www.fifepits.co.uk/>, an excellent mining information source for the 19th and 20th centuries, but one that highlights how scant the information is for earlier coal workings.

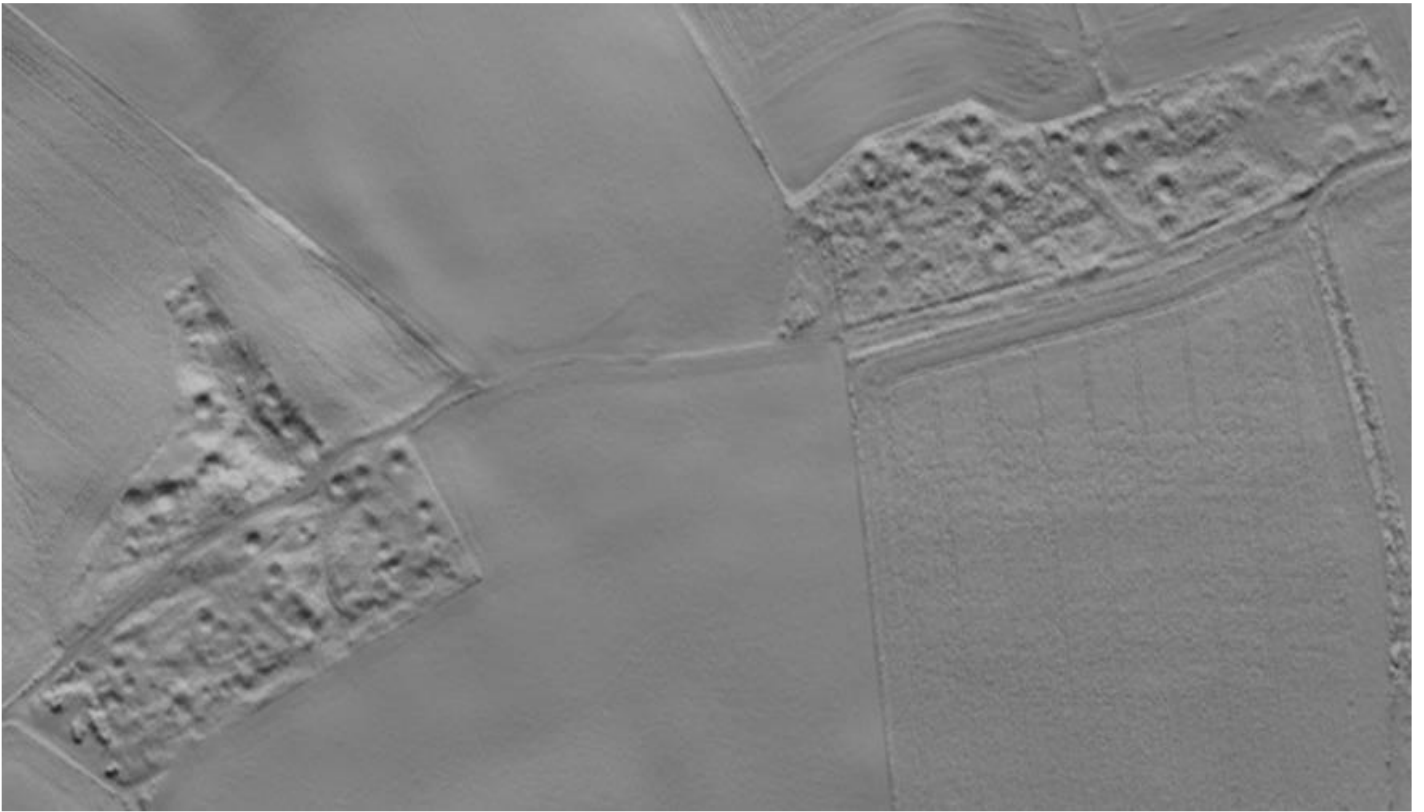


Up to 80 individual bell-pits, shafts and spoil-tips are evident in the woodland and fields to the SE of Teasses. The large mound which is visible (lower central right) in the image and has been partly quarried was formed when a new shaft was opened in the second half of the 19th century. Two of the slight 'dimples' to the north of it represent the ploughed down spoil-tips of mineshafts that were still in use in the 1850s. Lidar extract shown courtesy of the National Library of Scotland.

The western part of the area of mining lies within Ceres parish and the eastern part in Largo parish. The writer of the Statistical Account for the parish of Ceres refers to one working mine at that time and two that had been 'given up' about 1783 (Stat Acct., vol.5 (1793), 380), but does not state precisely where they were. The writer of the entry in the New Statistical Account states that there were no coal workings in the parish at that time but that there were 'numerous old pits between Hall-Teasses and New Gilston' (NSA., vol.9 (1845), 519). The entries for Largo parish in the Statistical Account and the New Statistical Account make only passing references to coal mining.

Given the evidence provided by both Statistical Accounts, the 1829 plan and the later OS maps, it is probably safe to conclude that a significant proportion of the mining remains that now lie within this woodland date to the 18th century or earlier. Fife has a long and rich association with coal mining and although the industry over the past 200 years has rightly been lauded, it is probably time to acknowledge its earlier history, not least because there are evidently substantial archaeological remains of it that still survive but which are largely unrecorded.

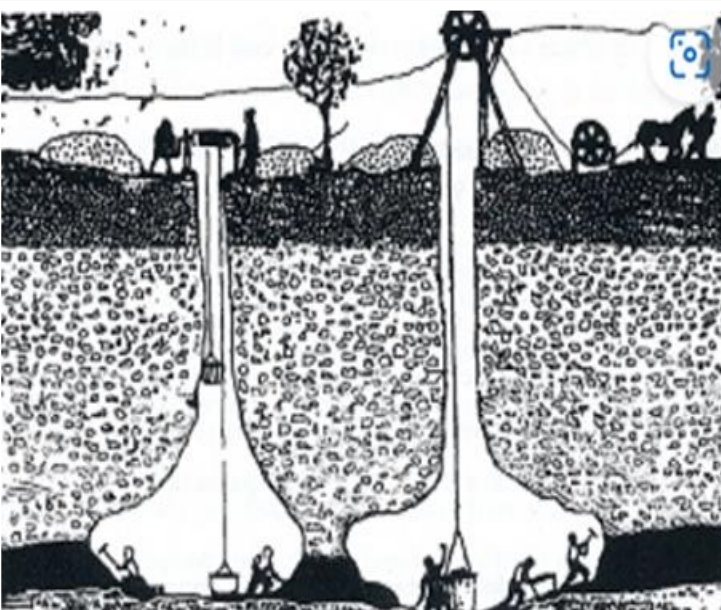
Further evidence of early mining in the form of bell-pits can be seen in two small areas of woodland near Ceres in Fife. The Coal Authority website [Interactive Map Viewer | Coal Authority \(bgs.ac.uk\)](https://www.bgs.ac.uk/coal-authority/) records a single mine entry in the wood on the right (seen image next page) but does not record its working date. Bell-pits are an indication of comparatively shallow coal deposits. A shaft is sunk and then expanded sideways to extract the coal (see illustration below). However, it can only expand to a certain limit before there is a serious risk of collapse. Adjacent shafts may



Surviving bell-pits at North Callange, Fife.

be less than 10m apart. The upcast from the pits, largely derived from the digging of the vertical shaft provides a good indication of the depth of the coal seam below – the larger the upcast mound is the deeper the coal will be. The mounds can also be informative in the sense that if they are close enough to one another (i.e. overlapping) they can provide a relative chronology.

The digging of bell-pits was the principal method of extracting coal until the late 18th/early 19th century, particularly for shallow seams. However, it was a method that has been used in Fife throughout the medieval period and unless there is good documentary evidence it is very difficult to assign a date of working to a specific site. However, that does not take anything away from the importance of these sites as visible reminders of Fife's coal heritage.



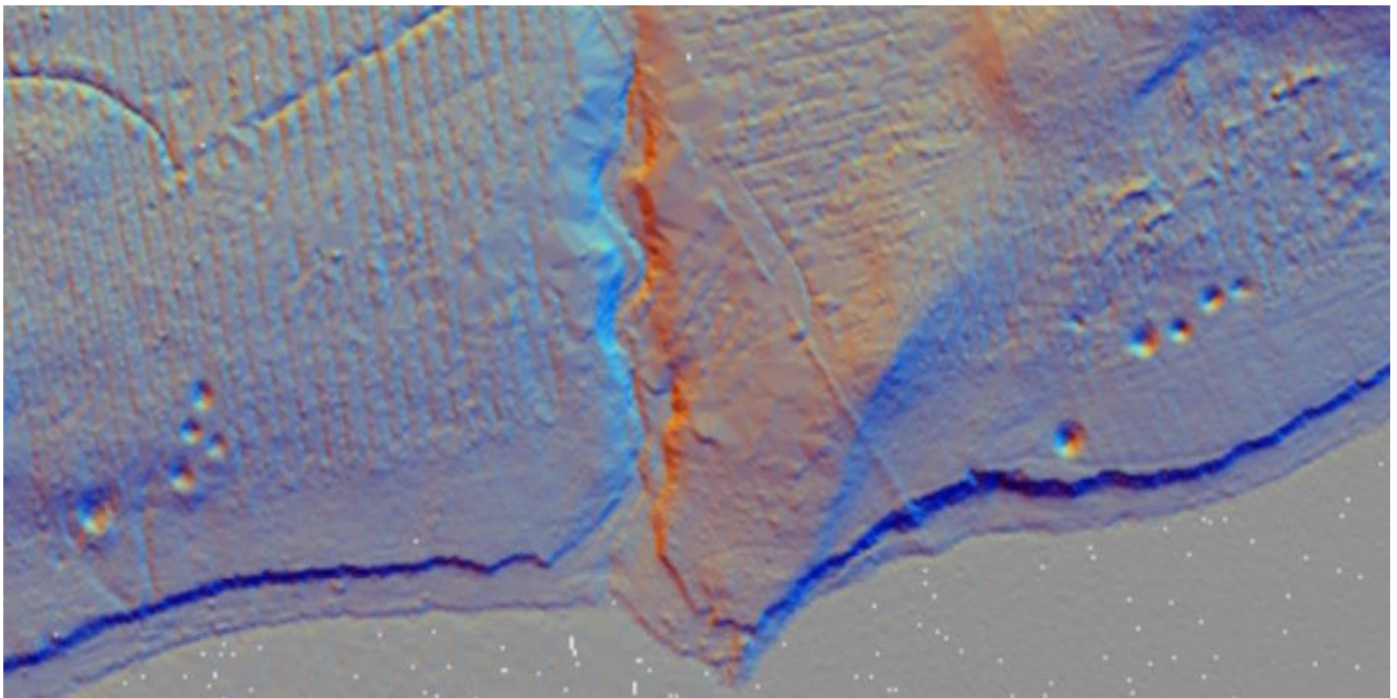
Schematic cross-section of bell-pits. Image courtesy of www.pentyrch.cc.



A view of the top of a filled in a bell-pit near North Callange. It measures about 6m in diameter and 1m in depth within a small mound of surrounding spoil. The photographic scale is in 200mm divisions. Image: JR Sherriff.

Bomb craters or?

Lidar data available on the National Library of Scotland website (<https://maps.nls.uk/>) shows two groups of small pits 180m apart on the northern shore of Loch Glow in Fife. Each group contains five pits the largest of which measures 7.5m in diameter by 2m in depth and the smallest about 4.5m by 0.7m. None of the craters has any significant upcast, which would have been expected had they, for instance, been the top of mine-shafts or bell-pits. The Coal Authority ([Interactive Map Viewer](#) | [Coal Authority \(bgs.ac.uk\)](#)) notes the presence of coal outcrops below Loch Glow but there is no evidence to show that these have ever been exploited. A more likely explanation of these pits is that they are bomb craters, dropped during the Second World War.



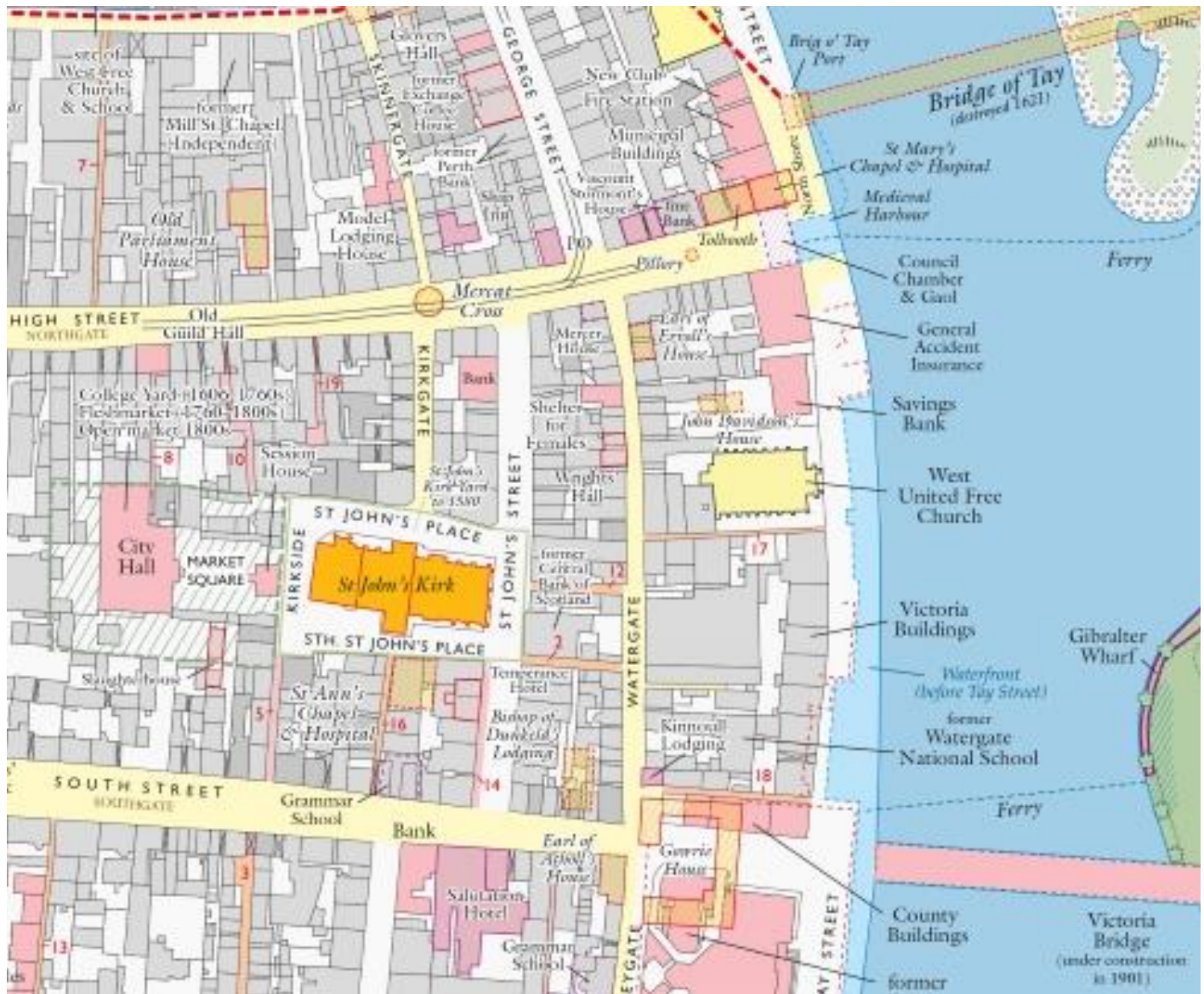
Loch Glow, Fife. Two groups of pits that lie close to the north side of Loch Glow may be bomb craters. The parallel features on the image above are the result of forestry ploughing. Lidar extract shown courtesy of the National Library of Scotland.

Below are images of two of the smallest craters, one waterlogged. Both have low upcast mounds. The photographic scale is in 200mm divisions. Images: JR Sherriff.



Mapping Perth's History - The Finish Line

A group from Perthshire Society of Natural Science have devoted much time over the past two years in creating a map and gazetteer providing a broad brief introduction to Perth's history. Historic Towns Trust (UK) approached Perth offering their experience, expertise and match funding to make this project happen. They have gained expertise from decades of creating maps for places across England and Wales damaged by the war and changed by modern development. Perth is the first Scottish town to be approached since one created for Glasgow in 1967.



A map extract showing centre of Perth - from the new publication. Copyright:

This project, begun in late 2022, is now approaching the finish line and, anticipating a timely completion of the final checking and printing, a launch event is being prepared for Saturday the 11th May at the Soutar Theatre, A K Bell Library, Perth. 9.30 for 10.00a.m start. David Bowler will be the main speaker, talking about the Development of the Burgh, and all are welcome. For more information email psns1948@yahoo.co.uk.

This, however, is not necessarily the end of the project. The wealth of information gathered and excavated for this project directs Perth to consider the creation of the next, more detailed production, known as an Atlas. This is an in-depth folio which expands on the data gathered, adds more, and draws in more of Perth's story. The Atlas will be full of maps and illustrations and papers leading the reader towards academic works that exist already and to encourage involvement in more research.

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Launch Event Programme

11.15 Question and Answer session then breakout to display & sales table – (refreshments)

