



TAYSIDE & FIFE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
COMMITTEE
HESNI

Newsletter of the

Tayside and Fife Archaeological
Committee

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

Recording Fife's Wartime Remains

The past few months have seen a project to record First and Second World War coastal defences along the River Forth undertaken by the Archaeological Survey Team within the Heritage Directorate at Historic Environment Scotland (HES). In the First World War the Forth Estuary was a sheltered anchorage for the British Fleet and its defence saw an integrated system of gun batteries, searchlight emplacements, anti-submarine and ship defences, as well as all the infrastructure required to support it. In the Second World War the emphasis changed from a need to defend the fleet to guarding the Rosyth Naval Base and the Forth Railway Bridge.



First World War pillbox, one of an inner ring of six that defended the gun battery on Braefoot Point.

All images this article copyright: JR Sherriff; (HES after November 2022)

In recent years a tremendous amount of work has been undertaken by Gordon Barclay and Ron Morris, looking at the history of the development of the River Forth defenses. The HES survey, however, has focused on recording the physical remains of the defenses, aiming at enhancing the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE) by undertaking measured survey and photography. To date, the HES survey has included two gun batteries in Fife – the First World War gun battery on Braefoot Point

and the Second World War gun battery on Charles Hill, the sites lying immediately W and E respectively of the Braefoot Bay Marine Terminal. The HES surveyors were especially pleased to be able to record features at both sites which had previously gone unnoticed.



A view of the holdfast of the northeasterly of the pair of 9.2-inch guns at Braefoot. Most of the steel bolts which secured the gun mounting are still visible – some retaining their nuts. The image on the left shows one of the lockers in which ammunition was stored in readiness.

Braefoot Point is a rocky and wooded hill where, in 1915, the military built a battery comprising two 9.2-inch guns capable of firing 380 pound (170kg) shells a distance of a little over 16½ miles (26.5km). The gun emplacements still survive as do many of the other buildings, including a barracks, magazine, Warrant Officers' Quarters and telephone exchange. One of the aspects of the site hitherto not explored is its perimeter fence which does not survive but is described as a 10ft high palisade. What does largely survive, however, is the concrete footing into which the palisade was secured, and this informs us that the fence comprised v-section steel palings measuring about 2in in breadth and set 6in apart. A section of the footing is



shown below (left). The manufacturer and supplier of the palisade is not known but a vital clue might be provided by the discovery of a fencepost (but not part of the palisade) at the northern end of the site.



Two other aspects of the site that were recorded but reflect much more recent activity are graffiti and off-road biking. Neither is relevant to the interpretation or importance of Braefoot as a First World War gun battery, but it is appropriate to consider both in the context of the management and continuing preservation of the site and of its use in modern times.



Above is a selection of the many graffiti 'throw-ups' or 'throwies' evident on the standing buildings at Braefoot. Much of the graffiti that is visible, some of it many years old, is of low quality but the throw-ups illustrated above demonstrate some artistic merit.

Below. Whilst most of the fifteen or so trails in Braefoot Wood have had a negligible impact on the environment, some have bitten deep through the thin topsoil down to solid rock. Jumps have been manufactured with soil dug out of large holes.





A view down into the gun-pit of the battery on Charles Hill, Aberdour. A twin 6-pounder gun was installed here at the beginning of World War Two as a defense against rapid-moving enemy vessels such as motor torpedo boats.

The gun battery on Charles Hill superseded that on Braefoot Point but it is less well preserved all of the accommodation and administrative buildings having been removed many years ago. That said, the gun-emplacement survives, comprising a gun-pit (above), magazine, crew shelter and gun store. The engine house still stands, as do three searchlight emplacements. More subtle features include a mount for a spigot mortar (below left) and a series of shallow excavations that may be the result of military training (below right).



Recent internal wall excavations at Markinch St Drostan's Bruce Manson



Upper portion of door linking tower and nave viewed from upper chamber. Image copyright B Manson.

During the summer of 2022 the opportunity arose to carry out further investigations into the 12th century features of Dt Drostan's Church in Markinch. A check for dry rot and a repair to a ceiling cornice enabled the team to examine closely the wall surface lost under 19th century plasterwork. Samples of mortar and plasterwork were retained, and the layers removed were photographed at each stage of the process. The work followed earlier discoveries, including a 5.17m high western arch with a double set of voussoirs, both orders flush with the wall linking the tower and the nave. A hood moulding over the arch facing into the nave had been chiselled off some time during the post-Reformation period and no sculpted features remained except a *croix-pattée* style cross and some well-defined banker marks, both left by the stonemasons. The marks included two that have been interpreted as relating to the construction of the tower which is of a very high architectural quality. A section of chip-carved arch was retrieved from a point in the graveyard about 2m from the likely location of the chancel arch.

Upper-level doorway

This year plaster was removed from the lower section of the high-level door linking the first floor of the tower with the nave. It was clear from the wear pattern on the threshold that the door once led along a frequently used corridor to the roof space above the nave (now lost). The upper part of this door is accessible from inside the loft of the existing building. It features a neatly cut arch facing east towards the nave and a series of bar slots suggesting that it could be effectively locked or barricaded from inside the 12th century roof space. These features

suggest that the door once led to an upper croft or living space above the nave, rather than to a display balcony or clerestory as was once suggested. The idea of an upper chamber used as living space accords with the defensive nature of the tower with walls well in excess of one meter thick and the likely absence of a door at ground level. The legal and strategic position of Markinch in the 12th century is also relevant. The Earl of Fife or a senior member of his family is likely to have presided over court proceedings at nearby Dalginch and would have required secure accommodation for several days at least. Permanent accommodation for a priest (perhaps a member of the MacDuff family) is also a possible use.



Internal decoration of the nave

The second piece of plaster removed inside the church this year was from the area around the northern impost of the western arch. The scars left where the hood moulding and string course had once been indicate clearly that a decorated frieze, most probably of stars/saltires (*étoiles en creux*) once continued along the gable of the nave wall. This internal string course was 22 cm deep and accords exactly with the depth of chip-carved decorative elements reused on the exterior of the 17th century south wall. The nave therefore had both an interior and an exterior frieze, the latter continuing around the tower with a diamond or lozenge motif. If the internal stringcourse continued along the north and south windows of the nave then the windows would have been located above them, their high level position again according with the defensive nature of the building.

Top of great western arch and lower portion of upper doorway linking nave and tower. Image: B Manson

Other ongoing work

Work is continuing at the chancel end of the building where the only internal features revealed so far include the chip-carved section of hood-moulding, once part of the chancel arch, and a possible large burial feature revealed by ground penetrating radar. Work inside the tower and on the remaining gable of the nave is focussed upon the nave roof structure and covering. What appear to have been mudstone slabs used as packing between 12th century ashlar blocks may point to the original roof covering. The form and accuracy of the original raggle lines and the tower structure itself indicates that the team of masons working in Markinch

was of the highest order. This perhaps indicates that the 12th century Scottish aristocracy had access to craftsmen close to the Anglo-Norman court, certainly through Alexander I and David I and possibly also through their sister Matilda of Scotland, the wife of Henry I. It should be recalled that the Earls of Fife were responsible traditionally for enthroning the monarch and were often in addition Justiciars of Scotland, certainly north of the Forth. The scale and quality of the building at Markinch may account for the comment by Edward I's chronicler who referred to the church as a *moustier* or minster during their brief visit in 1296.



One of a number of masons marks found on the dressed stone within the church. Image: B Manson

2022 Conference

This year's annual conference – *Recent Archaeological Work in Tayside and Fife* will be held in the Rothes Halls, Glenrothes, KY7 5NX on Saturday, 5th November 2022, 9.50am to 4.15pm (doors open 9am). Tickets are £15.00 (includes refreshments but not lunch). **Pre-booking is essential**



One of the activities that the TAFAC audience will hear about this year is the excavation of a fort and souterrain (above) at Broxy Kennels, a little to the N of the River Almond and overlooking the confluence of that river and the River Tay. Those with a keen interest or a good memory will note the similarity in construction between this souterrain and that excavated by Trevor Watkins at Newmill on the opposite side of the Tay in 1977. Image courtesy of the excavators.

The list of this year's speakers is:-

Harry Francis - Early Medieval Long Cists and other features at Powmyre Quarry, near Kirriemuir.

Julie Franklin - Loaves and fishes in St Andrews: excavations at 100 North Street, St Andrews.

Gavin MacGregor - Results from the Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration community excavation of Inverkeithing Friary.

Kenneth Green and John-James Atkinson - The excavation of Broxy Kennels fort and souterrain, Perth.

Alastair Rees - Recent Fieldwork in Fife and Area.

Saline Heritage Society - Saline Heritage Society and the hunt for the 'lost' church.

Helen Spencer - Continental Connections: Window glass from medieval Perth and Elcho.

David Strachan and Helen Spencer – Perth and Kinross Archaeological Framework.

Susan Thompson - Excavation of an Iron Age settlement at the James Hutton Institute, Invergowrie.

If you are unable attend the conference in person, we plan to stream it live online for £10. **Pre-booking is essential.**

Anyone with access to a computer and not a confident user but think that they may be interested, please contact Eva Bennett on 01738 850489. The talks will be recorded and available later for free through a link on our website.

Please cut along here-----

*I would like to purchaseticket(s) for the 2022 TAFAC Annual Conference in Glenrothes at £15.00 each and enclose a cheque for the sum of £.....
(PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO 'TAFAC').*

Name:.....

Address:.....

Post Code:..... **Email:**.....

Send this application, your payment and a stamped, self-addressed envelope (not too small please) to Mrs Eva Bennett, Brackenbrae, Aberargie, Perth, PH2 9NE.

www.tafac.org.uk

<http://www.facebook.com/TaysideAndFifeArchaeologicalCommitteetafac>

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Please see below the links to the Eventbrite pages for this year's conference. Pre-booking is essential. Anyone not confident of booking online can reply to this email or contact me on 01738 850489

We are offering 10 student discount tickets on a first-come, first-served basis, again by contacting me directly.

Roths Halls, Glenrothes, in person £15

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/recent-archaeological-work-in-tayside-and-fife-2022-tickets-414698844407?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

Zoom tickets £10

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/recent-archaeological-work-in-tayside-and-fife-2022-online-tickets-417857150987?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

Perthshire Society of Natural Science runs a series of Friday evening lectures "Curious Minds" around the general theme of Contemporary Science in Scotland in the Soutar Theatre, AK Bell Library, Perth, PH2 8EP. Two of this winter's lectures may be of particular interest to our readership.

Friday 27th January 2023 7.30pm
Dr Steve Brusatte, 'Dinosaurs on Skye'. Steve Brusatte is a professor and palaeontologist at the University of Edinburgh who specialises in the anatomy, genealogy and evolution of dinosaurs and other fossil organisms. His fieldwork has taken him across the globe, and, perhaps surprisingly, includes the Isle of Skye in Scotland. He is the author of the Sunday Times bestseller "The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs" and the new popular science book "The Rise and Reign of the Mammals" and will sign books after his talk. He has appeared on the BBC Radio 4 programme "The Life Scientific". He is a great communicator and will update us on recent exciting discoveries.



Image: Dr Brusatte at work.

You can find links to tickets on the Programme page of the PSNS website <http://www.psns.org.uk/programme/>

Tickets for the live talks in the Soutar Theatre are £5 for non-members.

Tickets for following the talks on Zoom are £3

Friday 24th March 2023 7.30pm

Professor Rob Wilson, St Andrews. "Dendrochronology and Climate Change". Tree rings can give us a fascinating picture of past climate variations. Prof. Wilson, based at St Andrews University, connects tree information with historical records to try to understand drivers of climate and environmental change. He is a leader of the Scottish Pine Project, a multi-disciplinary approach to deriving a broad, holistic view and understanding of climatic and environmental change over the late Holocene period.

The remaining lectures in the Winter programme of the Archaeological and Historical Section of PSNS are detailed below. All meetings are held on Wednesdays at 7.30pm in The Soutar Theatre, AK Bell Library, York Place, Perth PH2 8EP. Non-members are welcome. Contact psns019@gmail.com for more information or see www.psns.org.uk

9th November 2022

Liam Devlin

'The Public Register'

The Rothesay Herald, Liam will tell us about the Lyon Register of all the coats of arms in legal use in Scotland, the standing court that regulates it and some of the fascinating stories recorded in this "national memorial cairn"

30 November 2022

David Strachan

'The King's Seat Excavations'

David is the Director of Perth Heritage Trust. He will talk about recent excavations that unearthed a Pictish power centre and major site of metalwork and textile production with significant links to continental Europe.

18 January 2023

Dr Mark Hall

'The Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society 1784-1914: collecting Scotland, collecting the World'

Mark is Collections Officer for Culture Perth & Kinross. He will tell us about a local offshoot of the Scottish Enlightenment whose interests and collections came to encompass the entire globe.

15 February 2023

Sophie Nicol

'The role of Historic Environment Manager at Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust'

AT PKHT Sophie has managed all the archaeology and built heritage projects of the Tay Landscape Partnership Scheme and done much else besides. What are the responsibilities and challenges of her current role? What can she tell us about particular projects?

Sophie's talk will mark the 75th Anniversary of the founding of the Section
by Dr Margaret Stewart

15 March 2023 --- Bruce Keith 'Bridgescapes'

Bruce, a surveyor, is the author of 'Bridgescapes', a comprehensive history of Scottish bridges. From the Bridge of Balgownie to the Queensferry Crossing, he will tell us about Scotland's bridges and engineers like Mylne, Rennie and Telford, as well as their world-wide influence.



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Journal 28 (2022)



This year's journal will again be published online after the conference but if you do not have access to a computer and are interested in any or all of the papers please contact Eva (see conference details page 8) and she can print a hard copy for you.

Jessica Lowther and Stuart Wilson

Big Bertha: prehistoric and later occupation evidence at Bertha Park, Perth

Julie Franklin and Steve Cox

Loaves and fishes in St Andrews: excavations at 100 North Street

Derek Hall

A Hidden Vernacular? Rapid Building Survey in Perth and Kinross and beyond

Catherine Smith

The 'Poor Man's Mart': history and archaeology of goats in Scotland