



TAYSIDE & FIFE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
COMMITTEE
TAFAC

Newsletter of the

Tayside and Fife Archaeological
Committee

Issue Forty-nine – July 2025

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

Rare chance to explore Perthshire Neolithic

Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT) have announced that it will be running a community-based excavation near Aberfeldy from 2nd to 14th September this year. The excavation will explore a rock-art site with the aim of enhancing knowledge and understanding of these enigmatic sites, very few of which have ever been scientifically examined. Two different sites about 1km apart will be examined. Volunteers will be required to walk over uneven ground.

Volunteers are invited to join the excavation team for one or more days. Participation is free, no previous excavation experience is required and training in excavation techniques will be provided. Anyone interested should apply soon as places on the excavation are limited. For more information, please contact Tertia Barnett (Project Leader), at: Tertia.Barnett@pkht.org.uk. Booking is via a doodle poll – <https://doodle.com/group-poll/participate/azYDAx7e/vote>

Anyone who cannot take part in the rock art in Strathtay can visit the dig on its open day on Saturday 13th

Site tours start at 10.00am, 12.30pm and 3.00pm. Each tour lasts 1-1.5 hrs.

Site tours are free, but places are limited and must be booked in advance.

After booking you will be provided with information about parking, where to meet the group and other information. Any queries please contact Tertia.Barnett@pkht.org.uk.



Cupmarked boulder. Image copyright: Tertia Barnett.

BUILDING BRIDGES

Connecting Scotland's Archaeological Community

Our next conference will be taking place on the 25th-26th October 2025 at
Nicolson Square Venues, Edinburgh and online.



University
of Glasgow



Call for papers

Emily Johnston, on behalf of the Scottish Archaeological Forum Conference Committee, has announced a call for papers for the 2025 SAF Conference. It will be held on 25th and 26th October at the Nicolson Square Venues (25 Nicolson Square) in Edinburgh and the title of this year's conference is 'Building Bridges: Connecting Scotland's Archaeological Community'.

Under the above noted theme SAF invites contributions and hopes to foster dialogue across the Scottish archaeological spectrum. By highlighting collaboration across sectors, from academic research to community projects, museums, and government bodies, SAF aim to foreground the work of the diverse groups within archaeology. Despite the wide range of archaeological organisations active in Scotland, challenges persist in the equitable distribution of resources, accessibility, and the often insular nature of individual communities. This year's conference aims to open a joint discussion on how we can bridge disciplinary gaps and build the future of Scottish archaeology together.

The main Conference Themes are:

Building Bridges Across Sectors: Inclusivity and Accessibility in Practice.

Conversations Across Time: Engaging New Audiences with Old Stories.

Archaeology Without Borders: Scotland in a Global Context.

Crossroads of Discovery: Reinterpreting Scottish Archaeology Through Technology and Interdisciplinary Approaches.

The deadline for the submission of abstracts is 31st July 2025 and should be made via the link on the SAF [website](#) where more information about the conference and the Scottish Archaeological Forum can be found.

Discoveries in Glenericht

A trip up to Glenericht, north of Blairgowrie, in June has solved two things that have puzzled your editor for a couple of years. The first concerns a milestone that is depicted on the 2nd edition of the OS 25-inch map (Perth and Clackmannanshire 1900, Sheet LII.7). The odd thing about the milestone, which marked 4 miles to Blairgowrie, is that it stood on a private driveway belonging to Glenericht Lodge, situated on the opposite side of the River Ericht 1km to the NE. Further, at that time the contemporary mile markers on the close-by public road (now the A93) were cast iron mileposts. And one of those (pictured bottom right) marked the 4-mile distance to Blairgowrie. It is probable that the milestone also once stood on the A93, which became a turnpike road in 1844, but was rendered redundant when the mileposts were introduced. It is therefore likely that the milestone was simply removed by the Glenericht Estate and set up on the private driveway.



This image shows the milestone as found on 20 June. The wooden rule is 1.2m long.



A view of the rounded top of the stone showing the incised number '4' and 'MILES'.



The late-19th century milepost on the A93 marking 4 miles to Blairgowrie.



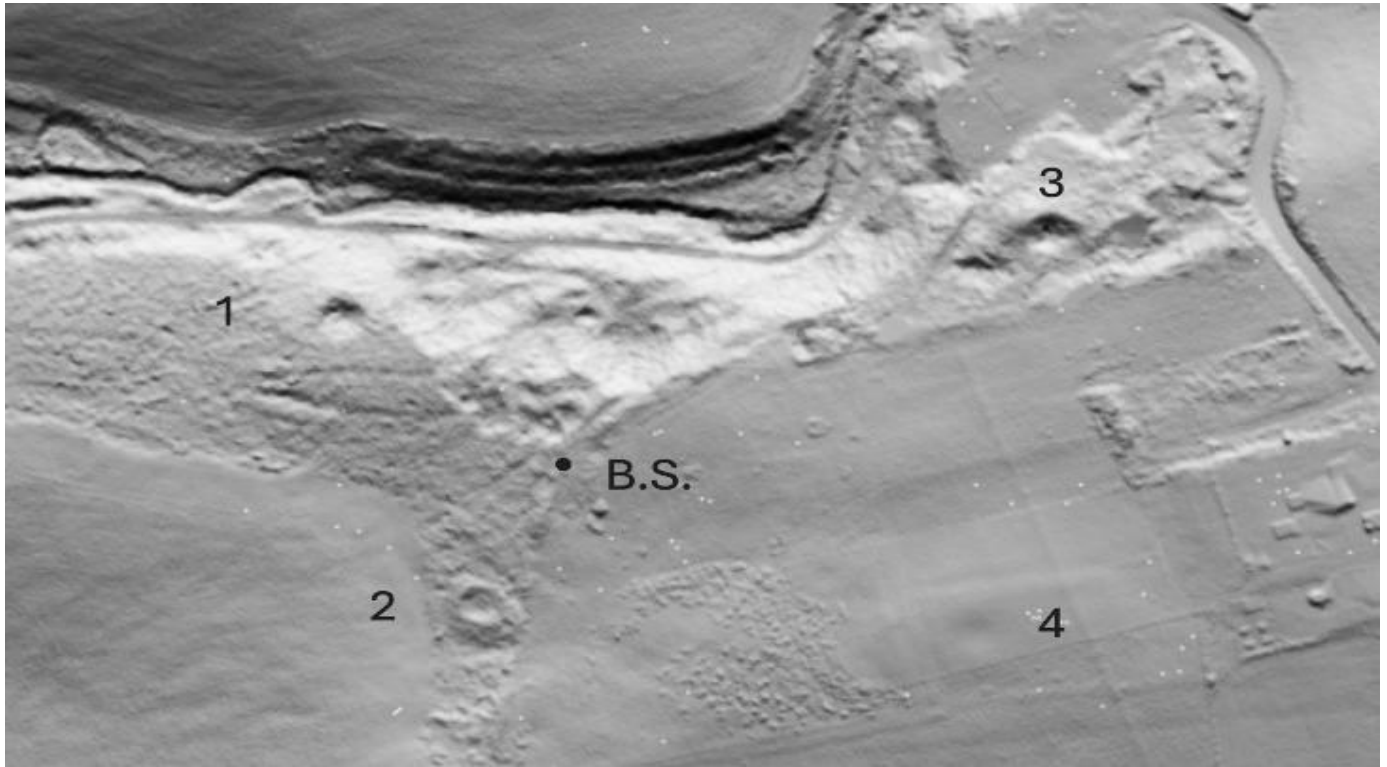
An image of the lower part of the inscription on the milestone showing the name 'Blairgowrie'. The fact that the name has not been accommodated in one line is not necessarily an indication of carelessness on behalf of the mason. A similar device that sees the end of a word carried on to the line below is one that can often be seen on gravestones. The style of the script dates the milestone to the first half of the 19th century.

The second mystery cleared up relates to an image revealed on lidar data available on the National Library of Scotland website (<https://maps.nls.uk/geol/>). That image appeared to show a previously unrecorded cairn. The visit on 20 June confirmed the presence of the cairn which may be of two phases on construction with a mound of boulders and stones measuring about 13m in diameter by 1.5m in height sitting on top of a larger mound (about 25m in diameter) itself set on a natural rise.



A view of the tree-grown cairn from the NW. The farm track that passes the SW side of the cairn is a surviving remnant of a once continuous road linking Blairgowrie with Bridge of Cally.

Yet another colliery and new boundary stone



A lidar image of woodland (Muir Row Wood), situated 1.5km SE of Crossgates, Fife, and available on the National Library of Scotland [website](#), suggested to your editor the presence of yet more remains of previously unrecorded early coal mining. A visit to the heavily overgrown wood at the end of June confirmed the presence of three large (about 10m diameter and up to 3m deep) depressions (1-3 on image above) together with numerous other delvings and trackways. The fact that the wood is depicted on John Dower's 1828 map of 'The Counties of Fife and Kinross, surveyed in the years 1826 and 1827', (NLS:EMS.b.2.27), strongly suggests that the mines are likely to date to the early 19th century at the latest, but are probably more likely to be of 18th century date or earlier. A fourth depression (4 on image) is also likely to indicate the top of an infilled bell-pit. It now lies in a horse paddock and was not examined on the date of visit. Given their location and likely date, the mines were probably opened early in the history of the Fordell Coalfield. The image above also shows the location of an unmapped and therefore previously unsuspected boundary stone.



Image left: - late 19th century boundary stone that has no inscription but has an incised groove across the flat top indicating the line of the boundary. Photo scale is in 200mm divisions.

The image on the right is part of the trackbed of the Fordell Railway which once transported coal to St David's Harbour from the Fordell Coalfield. The railway began life in the 1770s as a horse-drawn wooden wagon way but the wooden rails were replaced with iron ones in the 1830s



Heritage – a diminishing resource

In October 2023, whilst on his way to record old mining remains, your editor walked past a number of brick-built buildings on the S side of the village of Fordell in Fife. Of unknown purpose and clearly disused, they seemed to be of probably mid-20th date, but nevertheless a few photographs were taken. Just as well given what has happened since. Your editor believes that even humble structures such as these form part of our heritage and as such are as worthy of at least a basic level of recording before they disappear for good.



Above – a view of the building in October 2023. Below – the same building less than two years later.



Successful second season at Lindores

The second season of fieldwork at the Monastic Archaeology Field School at Lindores Abbey in Fife has ended. Led by researchers from the University of St. Andrews and Brandeis University, the student team and their supervisors have been working in and amongst the protected standing ruins of the Tironensian abbey, testing the results of previous geophysical surveys of the site and exploring the use of water by the abbey and its community. The six trenches opened this year have produced some intriguing results, including the potential line of the monastic drain on the NE side of the abbey, another stone-lined drain in a building on the SE which may have dealt with waste from the reredorter (toilet block), and internal structural remains and occupation deposits in the kitchen area. Three trenches in the abbey cloister have untangled evidence related to the levelling and cleaning up of the site by Alexander Laing and others in the late 19th century. Probably the most remarkable find this year has been a copper alloy seal stamp with a coat of arms on one end (centre of image below). This object was used to sign letters and official documents related to abbey business and may have belonged to John Leslie, Bishop of Ross, who was appointed Commendator to Lindores Abbey in 1565/6. His job was to sort out the division of the abbey's estates and assets following the Protestant Reformation of 1559/60. The seal stamp was found in association with two coins which appear to be German Nurembourg jettons that were used as counters in part of the accounting process.



Image courtesy of Derek Hall.

These finds alone offer a snapshot of life in the abbey towards the end of its days as an active monastic institution. Other finds from this season offer glimpses of the abbey's connections with Continental Europe with fragments of pottery from France and the Low Countries, along with floor tile fragments

from Holland. The site and team were filmed for the next season of 'Digging for Britain', which will be broadcast early in 2026. An oceanographer also joined the project to begin examining the relationship of the abbey to the Firth of Tay as part of the project's research questions related to water usage. The project team would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of this year's group of 15 students and 4 staff who came from America, Canada, Mexico and Australia, and thank the Mackenzie Smith family and the workforce of Lindores Abbey Distillery for their continued interest and support of the project.

Derek Hall, Prof Alison Beach, Prof Darlene Brooks Hedstrom and Dr Kimm Curran

Highland Perthshire archaeology walks

Readers may be interested in several walks organised by the Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust this summer. Fuller details can be obtained on the PKHT [website](#)

Saturday, 9 August (10.30am) -- Loch Tummel Landscape: From Prehistory to Present

Walk back in time on the shores of Loch Tummel and visit archaeological sites spanning 5,000 years.

Sunday, 10 August (10.30am to 1pm) -- 5,000 Years of Farming at the foot of Beinn a' Ghlà

Walk back in time with and visit archaeological sites at the foot of Beinn a' Ghlà.

Sunday, 7 September (10:30am - 2pm) -- The Archaeological Landscape of Loch Tay

Walk back in time above the shores of Loch Tay and visit ancient sites dating back over the past 5000.

Doors open Days 2025

The dates for weekends in which organisations and institutions (and more) will be opening their doors for the public have been announced as follows.

6 & 7 September - East Fife

13 & 14 September – Angus, Central Fife, Perth & Kinross

20 & 21 September – West Fife

27 & 28 September – Dundee

For more details why not sign up to the Doors open Day Newsletter [here](#).

TAFAC Journal (TAFAJ 31) and Conference 2025

This year's TAFAC journal will include papers from Aberdeenshire, Angus, Perth and Kinross, and Stirling Council areas. They include the long-awaited publication of the early phases of the late Colvin Greig's important excavations at Cullykhan in the 1960s and 1970s, a new consideration of some Bronze Age jet beads from Dundee and four papers on excavations in advance of redevelopment by CFA Archaeology and AOC Archaeology.

The prospective contents list for the journal is:

Moir Greig, Laurie MacLagan Wedderburn and Gordon Noble – *'Excavations at Cullykhan, Castle Point, Troup'*.

Angus Harry Francis (CFA Archaeology) – *'A Beaker cremation burial and a Medieval eight-post structure to the North of Edzell'*.

Lisbeth Thoms, Christina Donald and Alison Sheridan – *'The Balgay jet beads: new light on old jewellery'*.

Cathy McIver and Leanne Demay (AOC Archaeology) – *'Grain of Truth: Prehistoric pits and medieval kilns at Loak Farm, Bankfoot, Perth and Kinross'*.

Anne Ayonne-Marot (AOC Archaeology) – *'The mystery of St Monan's Church: post-medieval burials in Inverarity, Angus'*.

Kai Wallace (AOC Archaeology) – *'Early Bronze Age Cremations and Medieval and Post-Medieval Activity at 'Brucefields', South Stirling Gateway'*.

Provisional speakers or topics for the 2025 Annual Conference, which will be held in Glenrothes on Saturday 1st November, are: -

"A Tale of Two Forts" - Kenneth Green and Maureen Kilpatrick (GUARD)

Post-excavation analyses of the archaeological remains recovered from the excavation of the fort and souterrain at Broxy Kennels, north of Perth. This revealed a complex sequence of hilltop settlements from the sixth century BC until around the late first century AD, with some illuminating details of Iron Age life and unresolved mysteries too. Also, the post-excavation analyses of the archaeological remains recovered from a multivallate fort overlooking Guardbridge and the Eden Estuary revealed the Late Bronze Age origins of this Iron Age fort in the context of intense prehistoric occupation of this small corner of Fife.

Updates on excavations at Lindores Abbey and East Lomond

From AOC Proposed but not all confirmed

Cathy MacIvor -- Loak Farm

Suzanne Swan --Tay Street (see attachment)

Anne Marot -- St Monans

Steven Watt -- Carnoustie

St Monan's Church – post-medieval burials in Inverarity, Angus (24174-6) and Loak Farm (70534-1) are the two papers that will be appearing in the next edition of TAFAJ

An additional feature of this year's conference will be the "Tayside Treasures" slot, featuring objects from the collections of some of the museums in the Tafac area.

Inchtore Milestone

Your editor is delighted to include in this newsletter details of yet another previously unrecorded milestone, which originally stood on the N side of the main Perth to Dundee road (A90) W of Inchtore. It appears the milestone was removed from its original location to its current site outside the Inchtore Hotel when the road was upgraded to dual carriageway in the 1960s. It was here that it was recently recorded by the Abertay Historical Society's Fieldwork Group.



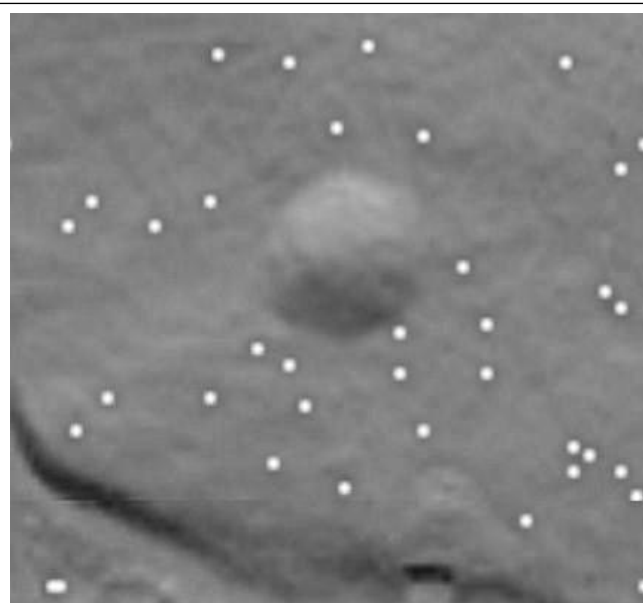
Three images of the Inchtore milestone courtesy of Catherine Smith.

The stone pillar stands 0.92m high and, like so many milestones, it has a rounded rear face and two straight facets, both 0.26m broad. These facets respectively provide the distances miles to Perth (13) and to Dundee (9); and, following tradition, the livery sees information highlighted in black on a white background. The use of such bold and large lettering and figures is unusual though; there is an OS benchmark on the top of the stone.

Perthshire cairns

In the September 2024 Newsletter your editor highlighted the discovery of a previously unrecorded large Bronze Age cairn at Almondbank, W of Perth. Having brought this impressive monument to the attention of Historic Environment Scotland (HES), your editor is happy to report that it has since been afforded 'Scheduled Monument' status.

Another site (image right), again possibly a large prehistoric burial mound, 24m in diameter, in highland Perthshire, has yet to be visited by your editor. Report in next issue.



A modified lidar image courtesy of the National Library of Scotland map [website](https://www.nls.uk).