



TAYSIDE & FIFE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
COMMITTEE
TAFAC

Newsletter of the

Tayside and Fife Archaeological
Committee

Issue Fifty – September 2025

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

2025 Conference

There is, as always, an exciting and varied programme of talks and lectures at this year's conference at the Rothes Hall, Glenrothes on Saturday 1st November 2025. In no particular order, some teasers are given below. Further details on pages 9 & 10.



Overhead shot of souterrains. Image copyright: AOC Archaeology Group.

Steven Watt MA(Hons), MSc, FSA Scot, MCIfA is a Senior Project Officer with AOC, and his talk is entitled – *‘More from Recent(ish) Excavations at Upper Victoria, Carnoustie: A Post-excavation Update and a Trifecta of Souterrains’*.

Abstract: In 2019 excavations by AOC uncovered a multi period settlement site with a cist cemetery likely dating to the Early Bronze Age. Since then, post-excavation work has continued, and early results will be presented. Further, we will hear about the 2023 excavation of two stone-built souterrains and an earlier precursor proto-souterrain which were recorded as part of the same development.

A second talk by AOC will be given by Cathy McIvor who has been a Project Manager for over ten years at AOC Archaeology, where she has worked on a variety of developer-led, community and research projects including a particular interest in later prehistoric and early medieval settlement sites across Scotland. She is currently delivering a range of fieldwork and public archaeology projects and writing up sites such as Loak Farm. The title of Cathy's talk is *'Grain of Truth: Prehistoric pits and medieval kilns at Loak Farm, Bankfoot'*.



Abstract: A sequence of occupation activity spanning the Neolithic to the medieval period was identified as part of a phased topsoil strip to the south-west of Loak Farm, Bankfoot, Perth and Kinross. This talk will provide an overview of the results from the excavation and subsequent post-excavation work with particular focus on the latter phases of activity which comprised several substantial corn-drying kilns dating to between the 12th to 15th centuries AD.

Image: One of the medieval corn-drying kilns as excavated. The photographic scale is in 50cm divisions.

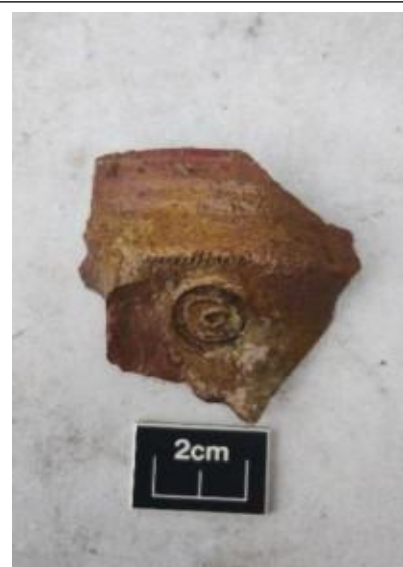
Image copyright: AOC Archaeology Group.

Derek Hall (lead archaeologist) will be summarising the results of this year's excavations at Lindores Abbey in a talk entitled *"Dancing in the Ruins'-Season 2 of the Monastic Archaeology Field School at Lindores Abbey"*.



Trench 4 under excavation. Image copyright: D. Hall

June 2025 saw this year's team of 15 students and five staff finally get to open six trenches in and around the Scheduled ruins of the church and cloister at the Tironensian Abbey of Lindores in Fife. This presentation will reflect on another excellent season, detail some of the surprising discoveries and the experience of being filmed for *'Digging For Britain'*.



Scottish Redware Jug rim sherd with facemask fragment from Trench 6. Image copyright: D Hall.

Two members of GUARD, Kenneth Green and Maureen Kilpatrick, will be presenting a joint talk '*A Tale of Two Forts*'. This follows previous talks given shortly after fieldwork was completed and it will detail the post-excavation analyses of the archaeological remains recovered from the excavation of the entirety of Broxy Kennels Fort and souterrain to the 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. The talk will also give the results of the post-excavation analyses of the archaeological remains recovered from a multivallate fort overlooking Guardbridge and the Eden Estuary - revealed to have Late Bronze Age origins.



Above - A general view of the excavation by GUARD of the fort at Broxy Kennels. Below – An aerial view from the west showing the location of the fort, with the A9 road, Perth Inverness railway and River Tay beyond. . Images this page copyright: GUARD Archaeology Ltd.





**Above - Oblique aerial view of excavation in progress at the Guardbridge multivallate fort in Fife.
Below – Excavation of a stone-revetted structure. Images on this page are copyright GUARD Archaeology Ltd.**



Dr Tertia Barnett (Community Archaeologist, Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust)
**Will talk to the conference on the subject of ‘*The Lost Stones of Strath Tay:*
community excavation of prehistoric rock art’.**



Two images (above and below) featuring the second week of excavations in Strath Tay. Copyright: Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust.

Prehistoric rock art is one of the most fascinating yet poorly understood and under-valued aspects of our historic environment. Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust’s *Lost Stones of Strath Tay* project is a voyage of discovery that seeks to both enhance knowledge about rock art and forge new connections with it. Central to the project is community excavation of several carved stones near Aberfeldy in September. This talk to our annual conference will outline the social and archaeological journeys that evolved from this work. It discusses what the excavation has revealed about rock art within the context of Strath Tay’s prehistoric landscape, and its implications for our wider appreciation of Scotland’s prehistoric carvings.

More about the Conference on pages 9 and 10



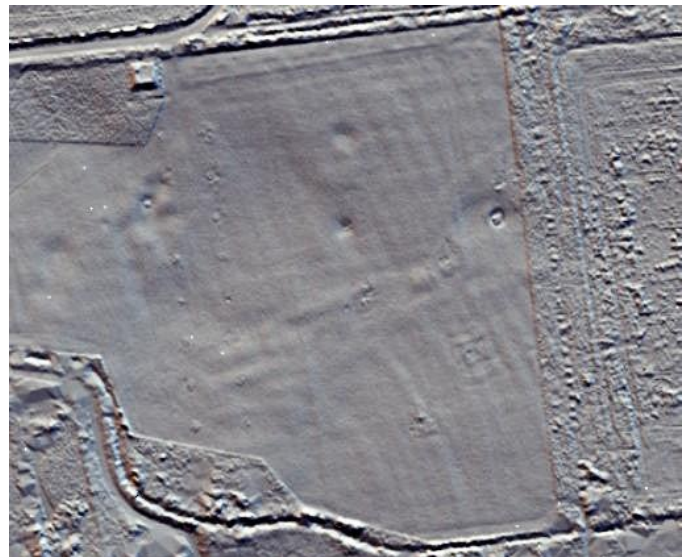
Monk's mines?

After watching an excellent 10-minute video at Culross Palace recently, a video that highlighted the roles that the Cistercian monks at Culross Abbey and later Sir George Bruce played in the exploitation of coal, your editor wondered whether there might be surviving and visible evidence of the earliest mining in the area. There is good evidence of where the coal seams are (or were), one source being the interactive [map](#) on the Mining Redemption Authority website. This provides a good idea of where coal measures are, where (some) mine entrances are, and (some) dates when the measures were exploited.

Another source is the Geological Survey of Britain and a map published in 1878 and based on the OS 1st edition 6-inch map (Perthshire 1861, Sheet CXLII), shows the location of the 'Ding Dong' pit some 270m NE of the Abbey church (image below left). The fact that the mine is not shown on the map when it was first published in 1866 is probably good evidence that the shaft was sunk sometime between 1861 and 1878. And nothing is now visible of the pit in an arable field. So, too late for the monks to have worked. However, the field immediately to the W, named 'Abbey Park' is more promising. There are no mining remains indicated here on the 1st edition map, but the 1878 geological map shows the location of the underlying seam of limestone associated with the Janet Peat coal seam.



1878 Geological Survey Map. Copyright: National Library of Scotland.



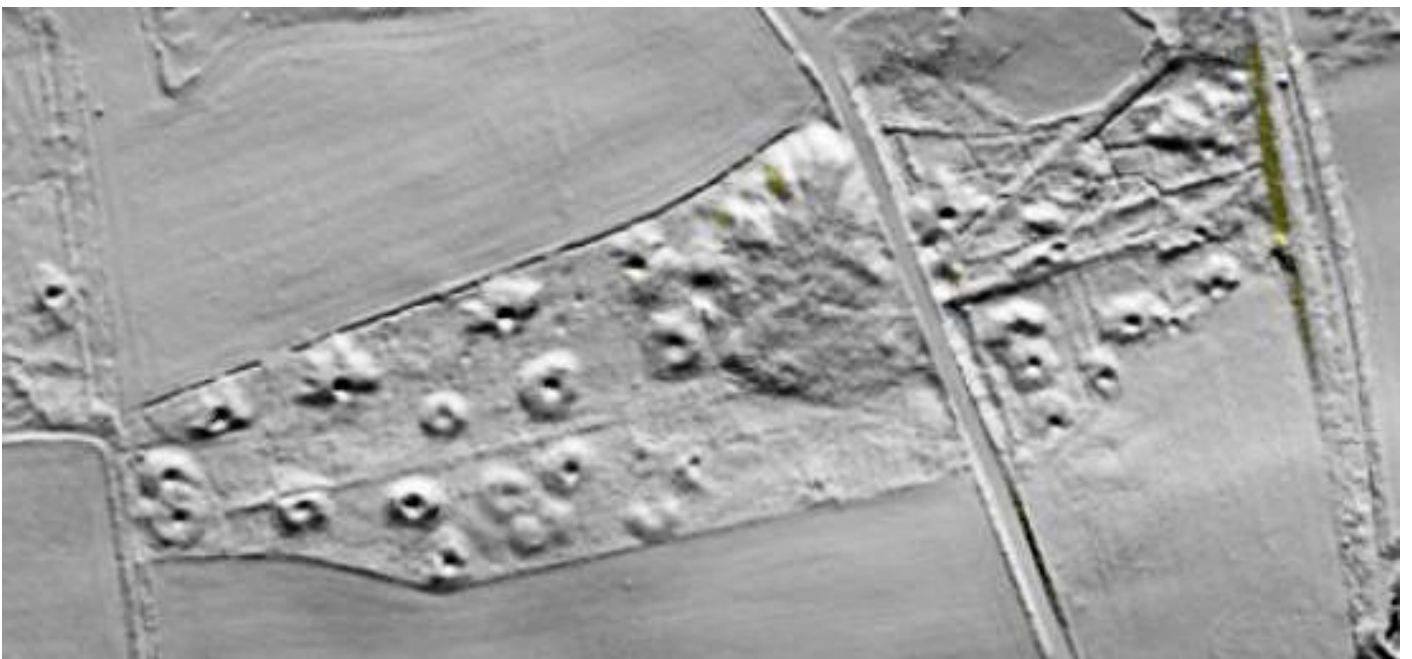
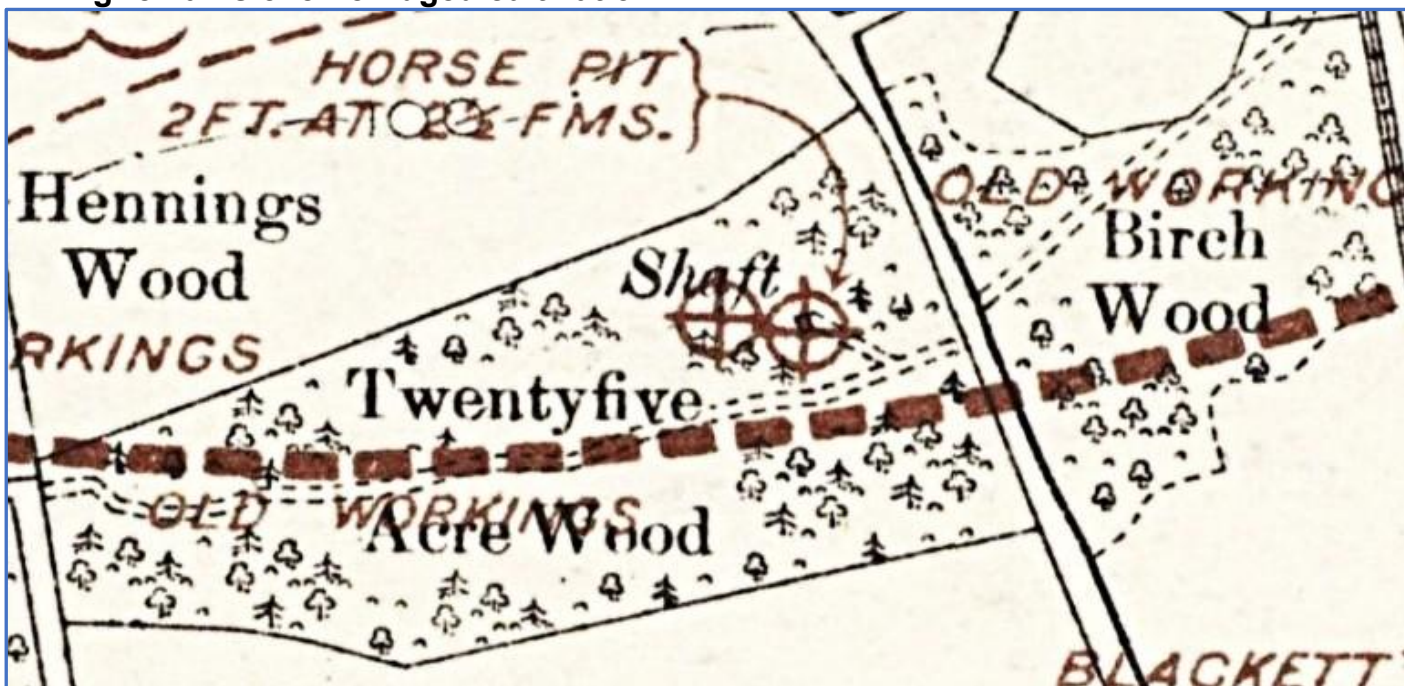
Greyscale Lidar image of the Abbey Park showing the location of several mine shafts. Copyright: National Library of Scotland.

Lidar data available on the [NLS georeferenced maps website](#) (above right) shows the location of several mine shafts that are all indicated by hollows measuring from 9m to 25m in diameter and up to 1m in depth. The shaft shown to the right is undated, as are all the others in the field. However, if one accepts that there must have been a long period between when the monks were exploiting shallow outcrops and when Sir George Bruce undertaking deep mining from the late 16th century, then there is a very real possibility that the Abbey Park contains the remains of medieval coal mining.



More mining

Still on the subject of coal mining, your editor has taken the liberty of including a note about a site in Clackmannanshire. The justification for this is not just that Clackmannanshire directly borders TAFAC's main area of interest, but that the site centred on Twentyfive Acre Wood is very similar to sites in Fife, in particular that at Teasses and North Callange, highlighted in Newsletter 45 in March 2024. Moreover, your editor has come to realise that sites such as these are important – not just because they represent an important aspect of our collective history but because of their archaeological potential. In the image directly below (A Geological Survey annotated on an OS 6-inch map (Clackmannanshire 1926, Sheet CXXXIII.SE) the two shafts shown are of late 19th century date and they account for the large spoil-tip best appreciated by looking at the lidar image of the same area below. More interesting though are the numerous bell-pits that pre-date the 19th century. Other features that are evident include wagonways or raised tracks. A depth of chronology is evident in how some of the bell-pits relate to one another, how one or two relate to the large spoil-tip, and how all the mining remains overlies ridged cultivation.



Copyright both images: National Library of Scotland.



Perthshire Society of Natural Science

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SECTION

(Registered Charity Number SC 012718)

Readers will be pleased to learn that the Winter Programme of talks to the Archaeological and Historical Section has been announced.

Wed 8th October 2025

'Songs from Perthshire's History'
Dr Nicola Small & Syd House MBE

PlaidSong, an eminent local duo -- forester/ecologist Syd House and historian Nicola Small (pictured right), blend music, storytelling, and history to bring Scotland's rich heritage to life.



Wed 5th November

'Unlock Your Past' Sarah Smith

Wed 26th November

'The Positioning and Location of Roman Fortifications in Scotland'

Dr Andrew Tibbs, archaeologist specialising in Roman and Iron Age Britain and currently

Wed 14th January 2026

'30 Years of Policing in Scotland' John Nicholson, a detective with Fife Constabulary from 1970 to 2000.

Wed 11th February 2026

'Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico (1864-67): Hero or villain?' Professor Will Fowler, author of a recent biography of Maximilian.

Wed 11th March

'Rock Art'

Dr Tertia Barnett (Community Archaeologist for PKHT), archaeologist specialising in the rock art of Britain, Europe and North Africa.

**All talks are at 7.30pm in the Soutar Theatre, A K Bell Library
NON-MEMBERS WELCOME**

www.psns.org.uk



Readers will be pleased to hear that tickets are now on sale for the Scottish Archaeological Forum Conference 2025, *Building Bridges: Connecting Scotland's Archaeological Community*.

This year's conference aims to foster a shared discussion on how we can bridge disciplinary gaps and shape the future of Scottish archaeology together. The event will bring together researchers, practitioners, and community partners for two days of papers, discussion and networking, with both in-person and online attendance options available.

Ticket prices are as follows:

- General admission: £25
- Concession (student/unwaged): £15
- Online attendance: £10

In-person tickets include lunch and refreshments on both days, as well as access to the conference wine reception, kindly sponsored by AOC Archaeology.

The conference will take place at Nicolson Square Venues, EH8 9BX – a fully accessible venue in central Edinburgh with excellent public transport links.

The full programme will feature a wide range of paper and poster presentations. Tickets, programme details and further information can be found on the SAF website: www.scotarchforum.com/saf2025

If you have any questions, feel free to contact the organising committee at: scotarchforum@gmail.com

SAF Conference Information: [Visit the SAF Conference Page](#)

TAFAC Conference 2025 (cont)

Joe Fitzpatrick and Gordon Noble will be presenting the results of this year's excavations on the East Lomond. There has been quite a bit in the press and on social media recently about this year's excavation, so there is no need to provide further detail here. The results, however, appears to have again exceeded expectations.

Residents of Perth in particular will be keen to hear Suzanne Swan's talk – *“Super Sewer”: What can be learned from the Tay Street and Shore Road Perth excavations?*

Colm Moloney's talk is entitled *‘Recent archaeological investigations ahead of the A9 Tay Crossing to Ballinluig Road Scheme.’*

NEW FEATURE

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.

Anne Marot will tell the conference about a survey and excavation that took place on the grounds of the Fotheringham Estate in Inverarity, Angus, in a talk entitled '*The mystery of St Monan's Church: post-medieval burials in Inverarity, Angus*'.

ABSTRACT

The work was undertaken in August 2018 as part of a call off contract for human remains between Historic Environment Scotland and AOC Archaeology Group.



Image above - A general view towards the artificial mound in which the scattered human bone was found. The photographic scale is in 50cm divisions. Image copyright: AOC Archaeology Ltd.

Excavation revealed a scatter of human bones on the south side of an artificial mound. The remains belonged to a minimum of six individuals: four adults and two children. Radiocarbon dating of two samples from skeletal remains indicates that the bones date roughly to the post-medieval period. These remains add to our understanding of ecclesiastical sites and burial practices throughout the region.

Booking Essential Tickets: In person **£20**, Online **£12.50**, Students **Free**
Eventbrite/Recent Archaeological work in Tayside and Fife 2025
or email tafacinfo@gmail.com or phone 01738 850489



The Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee (TAFAC) is registered in Scotland as a charity (SC002450)

www.tafac.org.uk

www.facebook.com/TaysideAndFifeArchaeologicalCommitteetafac

Editor's note

Your editor apologises for not being able to provide an update of the possible unrecorded burial mound in northern Perthshire as predicted in the previous Newsletter, but a trip to visit the mound is planned for October. Your editor would also like to once again to request contributions to this Newsletter from readers. Contributions are unlikely to be refused, can be of any (reasonable) length and, when possible) accompanied by a jpeg image or two. Contributions should be emailed to the editor at – johnraesherriff@outlook.com.