



TAYSIDE & FIFE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
COMMITTEE
TAFAC

Newsletter of the

Tayside and Fife Archaeological
Committee

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

THE STONE OF DESTINY: RETHINKING MEDIEVAL KINGSHIP, HERITAGE AND EDUCATION

Perth Art Gallery

March 14th 2026

9:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Admission Fee: £25/ £22.50 for Historic Scotland
members

Booking: Essential



Culture Perth & Kinross in partnership with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) are delighted to be hosting 'Rethinking Medieval Kingship, Heritage and Education: A Symposium to mark the display of the Stone of Scone in Perth Museum'.

Join us on the 14 March 2026 to be part of a fascinating day of talks celebrating the return of the Stone of Destiny to Perthshire. This is your unique opportunity to delve into the captivating history and enduring legacy of this iconic artifact, now proudly displayed in the new Perth Museum.

You will hear from key experts surrounding the Stone of Destiny including Davit Broun, Sally Foster, Stephen Driscoll, Gordon Noble, Alex Sanmark, Lucy Dean and our very own Mark Hall.

Uncover the secrets revealed by cutting-edge research, gain a deeper understanding of the Stone's role in shaping Scottish history and explore the enduring impact it has had on our collective imagination.

Please note that lunch is not provided, but there is a selection of shops and cafes nearby.

As part of the symposium, you will also have the opportunity to book onto a post-event reception held at Perth Museum from 7pm – 9pm, where you'll be able to view the Stone of Destiny.

Tickets may be obtained from the [Perthshire Booking Office \(PBO\)](#)

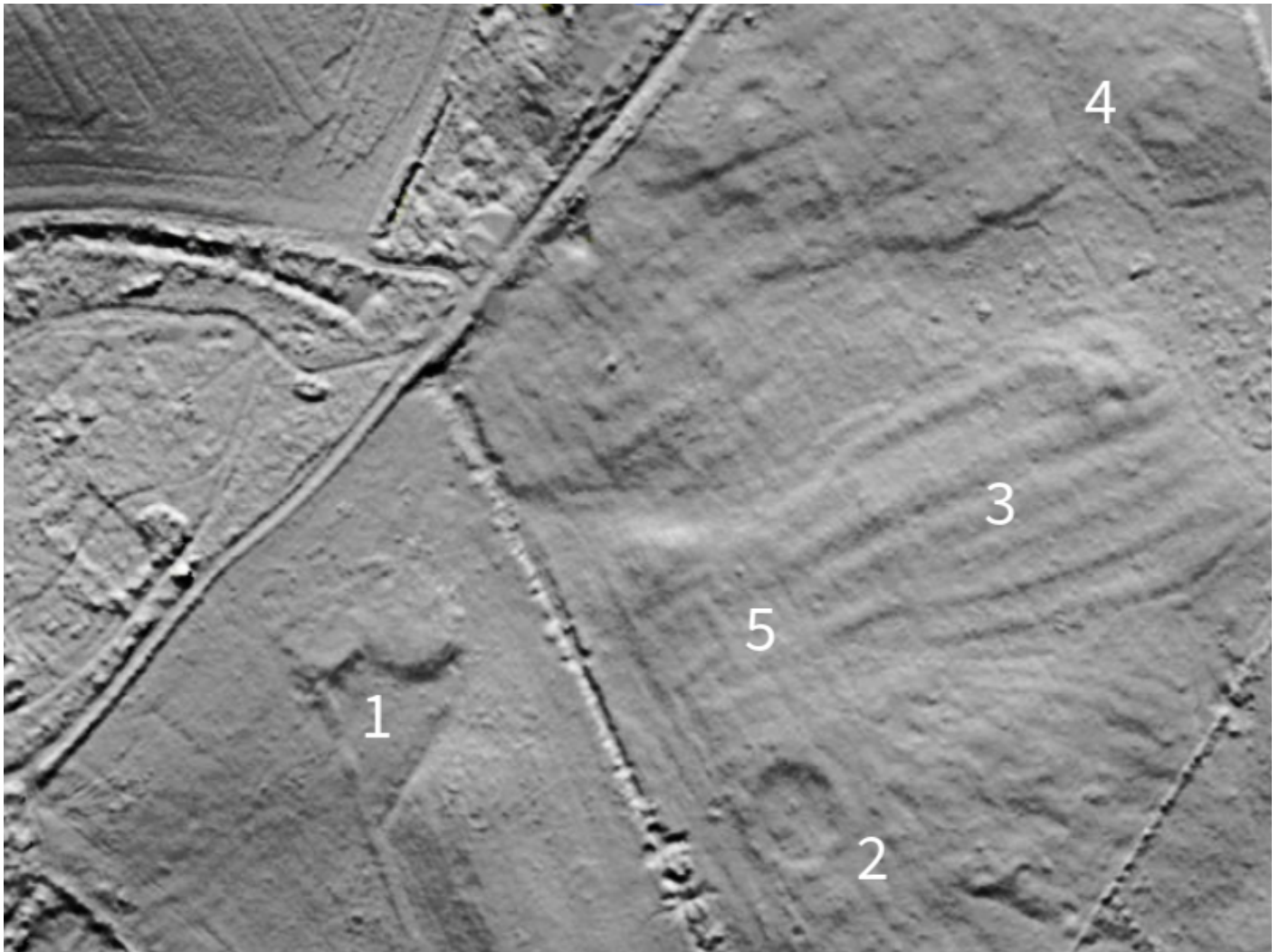


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More lidar stuff from Fife

Readers of this Newsletter will be aware of your editor's interest in the potential of lidar for the discovery and recording of sites and monuments that have yet to make their way into either local Sites and Monuments Records or the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE) – Canmore in old money. Whilst seeking evidence for early (pre-19th century) coal workings near Lochore, your editor perused lidar data available on the [National Library of Scotland website](#). The image below is an enhanced version of a screen shot of an area of rough pasture immediately SW of Ballingry and NW of Lochore.



What it shows is (1) the spread remains of a spoil-heap that signalled the entrance (adit) to a coal mine of late-19th century date and the remains of a tramway that carried the coal off to the SSE. Of more interest perhaps, and not just because it was previously unrecorded, is an enclosure (2). Oval on plan and situated on a SW-facing slope, it measures about 22m from NW to SE by 19m within a grass-grown bank up to 5m in thickness but no more than 0.3m in height. The interior on the N and NE appears to have been levelled into the natural slope to a depth of at least 0.6m and this is what makes it especially interesting because the most common reason for creating a flat area on a slope is to construct a building on it. And buildings within curvilinear enclosures are generally assumed to be prehistoric in date. However, the fact is the date of this enclosure is not known. What we can say is that it is certainly earlier than the cultivation ridges that cross it from NNW to SSE. Moreover, these rigs are straight and relatively narrow, implying a date possibly as recent as the late-1700s. These rigs also overlie what appears to be a small rectangular enclosure (5) and a large squarish enclosure (3) which measures about 55m across

within a thick bank. This enclosure though can be seen to overlie broad rigs (up to 10m across) which are potentially medieval. The large enclosure was clearly constructed during a hiatus in the arable cultivation of this piece of land. When that was, however, is only broadly estimatable. The straight and relatively narrow rigs cannot date much before about 1770 but without knowing exactly when the period of broad rigs ended we are probably looking at a date sometime in the 16th or 17th century.

St John's Kirk Celebrations

In 2026, St John's Kirk of Perth commemorates 900 years since the first mention of the kirk in an official document, when David I confirmed the grant of the teinds of the church of Perth to the Benedictine monastery of Dunfermline.

Amongst several commemorative events, St John's Kirk will host a lecture series of ten talks, each concerning some aspect of 'St John's Kirk and Perth' during a particular century.

The lectures will take place in St John's Kirk, at 2pm on the first Wednesday of each month between February and November. We will charge £5 per lecture, with funds going towards the current renovations project.

February 4th	12th Century
March 4th	13th Century
April 1st	14th Century
May 6th	15th Century
June 3rd	16th Century
July 1st	17th Century
August 5th	18th Century
September 2nd	19th Century
October 7th	20th Century
November 4th	21st Century

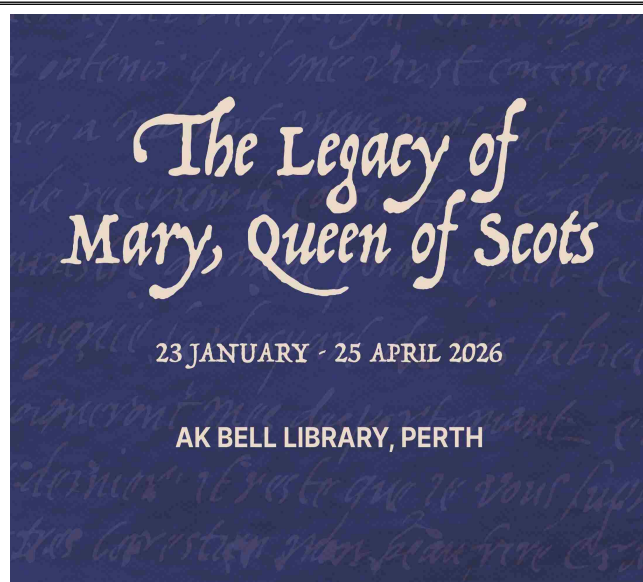
For further details please refer to the [St John's Kirk website](#).

Image right – St John's Kirk. Copyright: St John's Kirk website.



AK Bell exhibitions

Readers may be interested in two exhibitions that can be seen this year in Perth. One considers the legacy of Mary, Queen of Scots, and it is being held at the AK Bell Library (first floor) from January 23 to April 25 (10am – 4pm). The second, which is being held in Perth Museum (Jan 23 – Apr 26, 10am – 4pm) is titled '*The Last Letter of Mary, Queen of Scots*'. Admission to both events is free but donations will be welcomed. Booking is not required.



Policies

A contribution from Christina Donald

Have you ever been out walking or on a journey and passed by long stretches of stone wall and wondered what they were for or what lay behind them? It is possible that such walls mark out policies. The term policies is a peculiarly Scottish expression referring to the pleasure grounds around 18th century mansion houses. The surviving remains of the walls which marked such policies can be seen all over Scotland with some fine examples in Tayside including around Rossie Priory near Inchtute.

In May 2025 the Abertay Historical Society's Fieldwork Division visited the village of Inchtute which is located on the banks of the Tay between Dundee and Perth, and is an example of a displaced village. The village of Rossie was rebuilt as the village of Inchtute in the late 18th century on the formation of the policies around Drimmie House, Lord Kinnauld's house, which existed before the building of what is now Rossie Priory. Drimmie House was demolished after the mansion, Rossie Priory, was built.

Drimmie House was typical of a movement among lairds to form parks around their houses towards the end of the 18th century. It is thought that exiled Jacobean aristocracy picked up the idea in France, where the word policies (the same root as the word polished) came from, and the wealth acquired from the Scots' exploits in India and America in the 18th century enabled them to create these pleasure grounds. According to an older edition of the Oxford English Dictionary 'policy' in 'Scotch senses' is influenced by the late Latin word 'politie' or 'policies' (from classical Latin politus, polished) meaning elegance. From that the meaning transferred to the embellishments, or the improvements, themselves, and by 1775 specifically to the parks of estates.



Evidence of the creation of the policies at Rossie is recorded on General Roy's map c.1750 (above) and on later editions of the OS maps which show little has changed since the policies were created in the 18th century. Image copyright: National Library of Scotland.

A quote from the Statistical Account of 1792 states, 'His Lordship has made a beautiful park at Rossie including hilly and low grounds' and refers to a great deal of planting to beautify the country, all fitting in with the 'polishing'! It was George, the 7th Earl of Kinnaird, who decided to move the family seat from Drimmie House (on the estate, and subsequently demolished) to his new build, Rossie Priory. The creation of the park around the mansion meant the clearance and relocation of Rossie Village, a small farming community, to a new hamlet of cottages at Baledgarno near the western entrance of the estate.

By the time of the New Statistical Account in 1846 there is reference to a home farm at Rossie and the breeding and rearing of Ayrshire and shorthorn cattle and Leicester sheep and the introduction of fallow deer in Baledgarno Den, part of the policies. Still standing within the park are the Market Cross of the old village of Rossie dated 1746, and the former village church which is now the family chapel and mausoleum.



A view from the SE of a former lodge of Rossie Priory, situated on Moncur Road in Inchtute, formerly part of the main Perth to Dundee road (A85) prior to the village being bypassed by what is now the A90 dual-carriageway in the late 1960s. The lodge was constructed around 1870 and is B-listed (LB11784). Image copyright: LM Thoms.

A remnant of the policies remains on the south side of the dual carriageway. A lodge and a gateway are visible. The church, the inn and the houses in Inchtute are all of the same period and built of the same red sandstone quarried from inside the policies of what is now Rossie Priory.

From 1200 until the early 20th century, up until the 1914-18 war, estates dominated the economic, social and even the political lives of Scots. 90% of the Scottish population spent their whole lives on estates. The Carse of Gowrie is typical with policies at Megginch, Errol, and Glencarse, as well as Rossie Priory. Surviving evidence of policies can however be found even in what are now urban situations. The Fieldwork Division is currently pursuing surviving traces within Dundee – look out for more information in another newsletter if the Editor permits!



A view of the wall that marked the outer limits of the Rossie Priory Estate on its S. Image copyright: LM Thoms.

Local Archaeology on TV.

If readers have not already watched episode 4 of Digging for Britain (Series 13) your editor recommends that they do as it features, amongst other sites, last year's excavations at East Lomond and Lindores Abbey. The East Lomond piece provided a background to the excavations and gave a good impression of the scale of the dig and the conditions that the excavators endured. In the company of joint directors Joe Fitzpatrick and Gordon Noble, presenter Alice Roberts reviewed some of the more spectacular finds from the site, including the stone fragment on which a possible 'Pictish' face has been carved.

The piece on Lindores was equally interesting. Find of the year was undoubtedly the copper alloy seal (image below right) but structural features such as a vat (below left) were also found. Digging for Britain is available on BBC iPlayer.



Image copyright: NS



Image copyright: MAFS.

“VINTAGE” CRISP PACKETS

A contribution from Seonaid McGurk

I have lived in Monifieth, Angus, for over 30 years and have been actively involved with the Monifieth Eco Force monthly beach cleans since 2012. Since the arrival of our Border Collie 7 years ago, I have had many more walks on the beach than I would have done ordinarily but I always have a bag handy to do some tidying along the way. I find all manner of material but crisp packets in particular seem to appear after spells of particularly stormy weather, probably due to the sand shifting from where they have lain buried for years which has helped preserve them.

I enjoy researching my finds, just as archaeologists do, so I was very interested to read about the excavation and finds at the Kelvin Wheelies Skatepark. The Kelvin Wheelies Skatepark at Kelvingrove, Glasgow, which was the first outdoor skatepark in Scotland opened in May 1978.



Image copyright: Seonaid McGurk

It was subsequently closed and filled in a few years later due to concerns over maintenance costs and safety. There was some doubt as to when it was filled in but following excavation in August 2025 by a team from the University of Glasgow for the BBC's "Digging for Britain" programme, the discovery of crisp and biscuit wrappers with Best Before dates of 1983 helped to establish when it was buried.

Old crisp packets also provide a window on a more recent past. A Golden Wonder packet which I found on the beach at Monifieth, Angus, dating back to 1981 had a token on it for collecting badges to support the World Wildlife Fund. It was rather ironic, given that it had been littered over 40 years ago. Whoever dropped it had taken the time to carefully fold it up and tie it into a knot which helped preserve it.

A Walkers packet, also found on the beach, dating to the year 2000 had a token for the Free Books for Schools campaign. It contained 34.5g of crisps. Packets now typically weigh 25g or less. Heaven forfend if you encourage the consumption of junk food for educational purposes these days!

By 2006 Hula Hoops were proudly proclaiming that they had reduced saturated fat by 55% from 2005 levels. The packet still weighed in at 34g. Going back even further to 1993, Tudor had a special range of crisps which included Roast Beef and Pickle flavour. The packet contained 40g of crisps. Obviously 30 years ago, people and governments were less concerned about their waistlines.

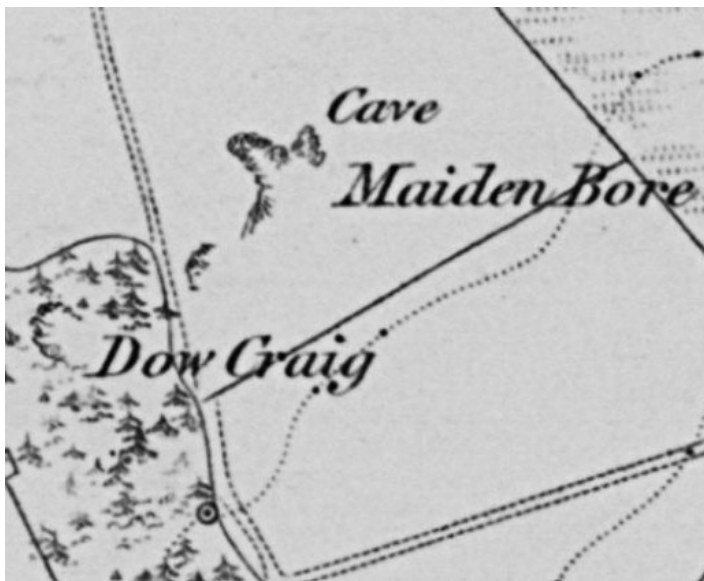
I was surprised to discover a market for "vintage" crisp packets along the way and even more surprised when a Tudor packet of Gammon and Pineapple flavour crisps I had realised £22.86 at auction.

The irony is that snacks which would have taken only a few minutes to consume have left such a dreadful legacy of waste to haunt us decades down the line.

More on the Bunnet Stane

The Bunnet Stane is part of a natural rock outcrop at the foot of the NW flank of the West Lomond. In [Newsletter 40](#) your editor described the artificial cave (Maiden's Bower) of unknown date that had been carved out of the solid rock at the base of the outcrop (see image right).

A revisit to the area in December to look for evidence of limestone quarrying took in an outcrop that stands about 80m to the SW on a knoll then known as Dow Craig (see map below).



Extract from Ordnance Survey 1st edition map (Fife 1856, Sheet 16). Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Scotland.

The map depicts a disused quarry and there is still today a lot of bare rock-face visible. However, the most interesting aspect of the old workings is the outline of a doorway cut into one of those rock-faces. The image on the right (middle) shows that carving. The photographic scale is in 200mm divisions so the area of carving measures about 1.9m high and 0.9m wide.

In Newsletter 40 your Editor suggested that the Maiden's Bower Cave was dug out by limestone quarriers as a shelter—most likely in the second half of the 18th century or at the start of the 19th. The end of quarrying would explain why a similar feature on Dow Craig was not completed.

Image bottom right: one of several graffiti visible on Dow Craig. All photos this page copyright JR Sherriff.

