

After a period of hibernation, a whole lot of activity is flagged up in this edition of the newsletter. Some members have been busy through the winter though. In connection with the Loch Hourn project, a day in January was spent investigating and recording similar sites on the south shore of Loch Torridon. In February, 6 members plane-tabled and recorded a probable motte site, near Muir of Ord, and last but not least a very successful exhibition was put on for the Ross & Cromarty Heritage Fair at Strathpeffer earlier this month. Thanks to all involved.

The website is looking good. Members' attention is drawn to the page on project reports and write-ups. These projects do not necessarily have to be NOSAS ones. If you have something of your own that is appropriate, you are encouraged to submit it for inclusion in this section. We wish to make the website look vibrant and diverse.

Meryl Marshall, 10 Riverford Crescent, Conon Bridge, Ross-shire, IV7 8HL, tel 01349 861824 or email Meryl.Marshall@tesco.net

New address for Emma Sanderson: Averon House, Russell Street, Lybster, Caithness, KW3 6AG. Tel 07855 875619. Email email@caithnessarchaeology.org.uk

Ronnie Scott has a new email address: ronnie.scott@btconnect.com

Hilary Hanson is moving to Ayrshire, contact details will be circulated later

Caithness Archaeological Trust (CAT) are to be busy over the Summer months and would appreciate any help from volunteers. Their projects include:

1. Excavation at the Battle Moss site at Yarrows, by Thrumster, nr. Wick, from July 11th to 1st week August
2. Also in the same weeks - Help to build and dismantle a chambered cairn (1 straight & 1 round) in Spittal Quarry (a public event)
3. And in July/August - A mix of surveying and excavation work on brochs. Run by CAT, AOC plus a group of university students.

For details of all these events check with Emma Sanderson of CAT, 01593 731 269 or email@caithnessarchaeology.org.uk

Continuing in the series "Old Routes in the Highlands" this walk, on Saturday, the 23rd April, is from Clachan to Dundonnell along the old road between the heads of Loch Broom and Little Loch Broom. The road was constructed in 1758 by Mackenzie of Dundonnell and replaced in 1848 by the road from Braemore known as the "Destitution Road" (the present road follows the line of this later route). Our original route is known locally as the funeral road because the lairds of Dundonnell were carried along it and buried at the Clachan Church. The walk is 9 kilometres in length and quite rough in places - stout supportive footwear is recommended. There is a steep ascent of 400metres initially, so a certain amount of fitness

The report for the 2004 Inner Loch Hourn (south shore) and Barrisdale Survey is complete and a copy has been sent to Historic Scotland. The report will be available on the website shortly. Discs will be supplied to team members - this is because there are 428 images, maps and plans. In all 243 sites were recorded, just about the same number as on the north shore in 2002.

Volunteers needed for Ronnie Scott's excavation

Ronnie is looking for help with his excavation at Lakenbuie (south of Nairn, on the Grantown road), from the 5th to 26th June. He writes:

"The site sits in a gently sloping, south facing field. As far as we can look back in time from Parish records, maps etc. the ground consisted of scrub land till the current landowner, Peter Muskus, cleared it to use for his camping site for Laikenbuie Holiday homes. On discovering about fifty small cairns (5m approx) of different shapes, some of which seemed to have hollows at their centres, and one larger cairn (12m approx) he contacted the regional archaeological services. They identified the larger cairn as an Iron Age hut circle and the smaller cairns as small huts and clearance cairns. This being the conventional explanation for that time.

Peter's daughter asked me to have a look in 2003. I was fairly certain that the larger cairn was probably a kerbed cairn and not a hut circle. We decided to make a small exploratory trench through the north kerb to prove whether or not the kerb was part of wall footings. The excavation proved that indeed the feature was not a hut circle but a small kerbed cairn. By typology and by conferring with Jill Harden (NTS) and Richard Bradley we decided, tentatively, to date it somewhere in between mid to late Bronze Age. The cairn has similarities with Balnuaran of Clava South, which he excavated, and Mains of Clava which was surveyed at the same time (Bradley R. 2000, 'The Good Stones' pp 60 - 63). So far we have no radiocarbon dates or artifactual evidence to confirm this.

In 2003 we partially excavated the cairn. One trench, 2m wide, down to the original land surface from well outside the cairn to its centre. In 2004 we excavated another 1m trench diagonally opposite to obtain a section. One quadrant was de-turfed and planned. I intend this year to complete the deturfing and planning the rest of the cairn

My other priority is to start excavating some of the smaller cairns and get them recorded. Other work will be surveying the surrounding landscape. This all depends on people power though and will change as events unfold. Very little work has been done in Scotland on cairnfields in the Bronze Age (see PSAS Vol 90 1956 - 57 'Cairnfields in Scotland'). Some work has been done in Cumbria (see 'Breaking new Ground' in Bruck J (Ed) 2001 'Bronze Age Landscapes' pp 99 - 109)

We may have a managed Bronze Age landscape fairly undisturbed by agriculture in the present though there may be evidence of disturbance in the past."

Contact Ronnie if interested in helping: 01667 493375 or ronnie.scott@btconnect.com .

Subscription reminder - Most of those who have not "paid up" will have been contacted by Allan and many will have rejoined by now. This will be the last newsletter for those not forwarding their sub to Allan by 30th April. £12.50

is required too. The Parish Church of Lochbroom at Clachan is to be opened for us on Saturday morning. The church has remained almost unaltered since its construction in 1817. It is unusual in that it has a double row of parallel box pews and communion tables running down the centre.

Meet at 10.00am at Braemore junction GR NH 210777. Bring a packed lunch. Please let me know if you are to attend as we will need to arrange "a pick-up" at Dundonnell. Meryl M

The library is now with Trina Wombell, and the full list of books and publications is available on the website members page (anyone wishing the password contact me) The library has become a really comprehensive and useful resource but so far has received little attention from members. Trina has sorted the books and if you let her know what topics or periods you are interested in she will be able to make suggestions. We are keen for the library to be used and welcome any suggestions as to how we can facilitate this - Would it perhaps be better if our library were sited in the Inverness Public Library? We have been offered space there (alongside the Fraser Mackintosh Collection!). If there was more demand for the books then it may be worth investing the time in a more efficient indexing system. Contact Trina 01997 423273 or john.wombell@btinternet.com

single, £20 double to Allan Mackenzie at Braeval, Brae of Kinkell, Conon Bridge, Ross-shire, IV7 8HZ

Scotland's Historic Rural Settlement Trust -formerly Mediaeval or later Rural Settlement Group (MOLRS)

is to hold its usual annual discussion seminar in May. This is always a very informative and stimulating get together, entirely appropriate to the Highlands. We are encouraged to attend.

More information from Meryl nearer the time or visit the website: www.molrs.org.uk

The Council for Scottish Archaeology Summer School

is to take place between 20th - 23rd May and is to be based in Berwick upon Tweed. The main study area is to be Berwick-shire, but north Northumberland will also be visited. More information from Meryl M. or Anne C.

Perthshire Archaeology Week - 28th May - 5th June.

Nine days packed with events and visits to some of the many and varied sites of Perthshire. Visit www.perthshire.co.uk/archaeologyweek.

For the future:

Nosas is hoping to run a "follow-up" excavation at Glen Feshie in late September and we are looking at holding the Autumn weekend in the Lairg/Rogart area.

We understand that Highland Archaeology Week is to be extended to 2 weeks - between 1st - 16th October.