

UNCOVERING THE IRON AGE

NOSAS members came out in force to participate in a fifth season of archaeological excavations at Applecross Broch this summer. The dig was coordinated by the Applecross Archaeology Society and archaeologists Cathy Dagg, Cait McCullagh and Mary Peteranna – the latter two being NOSAS members – working with a team of local volunteers, including campsite visitors and NOSAS members from as far afield as Wick, Assynt, Strathpeffer and Conon Bridge.

The team had returned to uncover a third broch quadrant and to look at areas exposed last season. With 75% of the site now exposed it is possible to see that it has been inhabited during at least three different phases. Additional intramural galleries and



John Wombell

Applecross Broch, 2008 Uncovering the evidence of multiple periods of occupation

Cannel Coal, or *Candle Coal*, is a lightweight bituminous coal that burns without producing smoke and, importantly, doesn't leave a mark when handled. It is relatively easily worked and polished and a good substitute for its shiny counterpart jet, where the latter does not occur naturally. Jet and cannel coal have been used to make decorative objects since the Bronze Age (2000BC - 700BC in Scotland).

wall passages, and slab steps and paved areas—continued evidence that the broch was altered to accommodate a later phase of occupation - have all been uncovered. At the same time, more evidence of an earlier and larger structure below the broch is also emerging. "Whereas last year we thought we had uncovered a souterrain entrance, this year we can see it's a different sort of structural entrance, probably pre-broch," says Mary Peteranna. "Based on what we have uncovered below the outer broch wall this year and last year, it is possible that an earlier roundhouse structure was built on the site, and much of the building material from it was taken to build a broch on top of it. So this could have been the entrance into the earlier structure."

Following the exciting recovery in 2007 of an incised stone, this year the diggers found a fragment of a cannel coal (shale) bangle fragment—evidence of the very fine ornamental jewellery worn by at least one of the Iron Age occupants of the site and a possible pointer to the broch community's trading links with the east coast.

Bangles, such as the one of which this is a fragment, were commonly made and used in the Iron Age and many examples of such and similar jewellery are known from east coast sites. The broch bangle may have been made to imitate a similar item made of jet imported from the north of England - perhaps a precious heirloom? It provides us with a very compelling insight into the elite taste and penchant for 'black gold' of at least one of the broch's inhabitants." said Cait McCullagh.

As part of the programme of archaeological investigation at the broch and with the support of the Cultural Coordinator for Schools in Ross and Cromarty, children from schools based throughout the Wester Ross and Skye areas were invited throughout the two week excavation period to come and try-out as young archaeologists; digging in the trenches and working on the artefacts found at the site.



John Wombell

**Applecross Broch, 2008
Shale bangle fragment**

With help from Karen Hudson of Archaeolink, the children also got a real taste of the Iron Age diet, baking flat bread on hot stones around a reconstructed hearth, as well as playing Iron Age stick wrestling and creating their own Iron Age storytelling sessions. Using the evidence of some of the recent finds from the dig, and their own knowledge about the past, Karen helped them to imagine what it might have been like to live in the broch, bringing to life the people who had lived in Applecross more than 2,000 years ago.

This community-led project is aimed to increase understanding of region's history as well as the culture of the Scottish Iron Age. This year's season has left the enthusiastic volunteers and archaeologists reluctant to leave the site and the many unanswered questions that must wait until next year, when the Applecross Archaeological Society hope to see the return of NOSAS members to share in discovering more about this increasingly complex and exciting site.

Some of the artefacts are currently being exhibited at the Applecross Heritage Centre along with prior year's findings. A report on the work will also be published. For further information, please contact Highland Archaeology Services, at info@hi-arch.co.uk

Cait McCullagh and Mary Peteranna

NOSAS 1998-2008

**Celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of NOSAS
Buffet style dinner and Ceilidh
Saturday 18th October
More details in this Newsletter**

North Of Scotland Archaeological Society



The Strathconon Games

The Strathconon Games, at the beginning of August provided an excellent opportunity to present an update on our findings in the ongoing Strathconon Project to the Strathconon community and the general public. The intention was to communicate, involve and invite feedback from local people.

John and Tri Wombell's large marquee was erected on the Friday evening by a willing group of NOSAS members, despite being almost eaten alive by midges!! and John had made an impressive arrangement of display boards.



The project is far from finished but we have already collected many interesting facts and photos and discovered some intriguing stories about the glen. Sandy Snell, a metal detectorist from the glen, lent us some of his items for the display - 4 silver coins found in a field at Carnoch including one dated 1582 (Elizabeth 1) and one 1834, also a simple annular brooch.

The day went really well and the feedback from both from the general public and local people was tremendous. Many volunteered information or said they would be willing to help in any way they could. I would estimate that most of the 400 people at the Games paid us a visit, including the "Chieftain of the Games", Colin Hendry, the keeper from Scardroy whom we have come to know quite well from our contacts with him in that part of the glen.

Other highlights of the day included watching the hill racers and the tossing of the caber. J and T's raspberries and strawberries were the icing on the cake!

Meryl Marshall

North Of Scotland Archaeological Society

Strathconon Project Update

Since the last Newsletter we have targeted Glen Meinie, Inverchoran and Blar na Beithe.

While surveying Carnoch and Glen Meinie Duncan MacLennan, the farmer, showed us some very overgrown stack bases in an enclosure next to one of his byres. The group recorded yet another illicit still, and a dwelling house(?) close beside it, and what looked like an Iron Age(?) wall as well as a hut circle and field system. This is an interesting ancient landscape with a dun, a crannog and a cist having been previously recorded on the SMR.

Inverchoran itself proved rather "sterile" as so much activity has taken place on the hill. However there was an interesting byre with a sunken cobbled rectangular pit, similar to the ones we found at Corriefool and Achlorachan, Angus Cameron, the keeper, said that it was a midden - the "debris" from the byre would have been shovelled out into the pit and the liquid allowed to drain off before being put on the fields (obvious really - I don't know why we hadn't thought of that before!). Angus also told us that he had been informed that a pile of stones just before the farm was all that remained of a blacksmith's workshop.

Blar na Beithe is a township that was cleared in 1850. We recorded 19 features, including two new features; a recessed platform, which may have had a building, and a row of 12 storage pits (possibly potato clamps) on an exposed well-drained ridge, similar to the ones recorded at Achness (opposite Scardroy).

Meryl Marshall



**Ongoing fieldwork in Glen Marksie
Surveying shielings and outshots using taped offsets.**



High Mingarry



A survey of the deserted settlement at High Mingarry, near Acharacle, were carried out in Spring and Summer of 2008 by the Moidart History Group as part of the Scotland's Rural Past Project. Eighty-four buildings, dykes and other features were identified, described and plotted – the current OS map shows nine. More detailed survey of six groups of buildings was carried out by plane table.

The head dyke was probably altered to include more land during the long period of occupation. The very ruined remains represent the last phase of occupation (1780 to 1855). The area within the head dyke is subdivided into small areas by a series of dykes. Although Estate records between 1814-1851 show that the farm of Mingarry was let in eight parts or lots, there are not eight clearly defined areas within the head dyke. Groups of ruined buildings, each comprising one or more possible houses with byres, storage shelters and enclosures were identified in seven different sites within the head dyke. Another similar group of buildings was found outside the head dyke on the east side of the settlement.

Only six of the ruined rectangular buildings measure about 10m by 3m. internally. These were almost certainly houses. Since there were thirteen houses on the rent rolls in 1841, many of the smaller rectangular structures are likely to have also been dwellings.

The buildings are in too ruinous state to identify any barns, and, curiously, no corn-drying kiln has been found. It is possible that the kiln was destroyed when the late 19th century track was constructed.

More details can be seen on the Group's website at www.moidart.org.uk.

Sandra Evans



Ruined building, High Mingarry

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'Road Through Ross-Shire'

A big thank you to all the NOSAS members who have taken part in the project familiarisation sessions and especially to those of you who managed to make it for the '6 miles to Tain'. This constituted our second walk along part of the 'road through Ross-shire' route, this summer - this being the northern-most extent of what we continue to hope is a route signifying a communication network of some antiquity travelling from Tarradale to Tain.

It took us seven hours from start to finish - this thanks to many interesting diversions, physical and conceptual. We made a rapid photographic survey of a hut circle nexus north of Court Hill and other possible pre-historic and significantly evident but less obvious sections of the 'King's Causeway'. Our arrival into the heart of Medieval Tain was truly magnificent through the kindness of Alistair Jupp who opened the gates and doorways to Tain Museum and the Collegiate Church of St Duthac's.



**'Kings and Queens of the Road'
The King's Causeway, south of Tain**

One object in the museum's collections that drew much attention was Alexander Sangster's map of Tain and Environs (1750) currently on display in the main gallery and, gratifyingly, depicting the roadway we had just traversed - with plenty more interesting information besides. If you would like to take a wee peek - here is a link to the digitised version of the map on the Tain Museum website:

<http://www.tainmuseum.org.uk/imagelibrary/picture/number321.asp>

The Project is ongoing and has stimulated a number of research activities including an intriguing delve into possible evidence for a northern trading network associated with pig iron production and distribution in the Iron Age.

Many thanks to those of you who have offered desk-based research or further fieldwork and we will get in touch with you in due course. If you would like to be involved in the Project please don't hesitate to be in touch with Allan or with me to share your thoughts, questions, ideas and suggestions - all are most welcome.

Cait McCullagh (cait.mccullagh@gmail.com) 01463 243 028
Allan Mackenzie (Ardblair@aol.com)



The Mesolithic in East Ross and Sutherland

Well, officially no such presence has been recorded. That Mesolithic people were not present in East Ross and Sutherland simply cannot be true. So where are they hiding?

I have some ideas for field walking this coming winter around the Cromarty and Dornoch Firths and the prospect of further work at the Learnie Caves on the Black Isle is also exercising various minds. Chris and Dave Rendell, I know, are looking at the historical records relating to Caird's Cave and correlating the changing sea-levels and associated raised beaches with the Sites and Monuments Record, which all sounds most intriguing.

If anyone has any bright ideas, knowledge of possible lithic scatters, unrecorded shell middens or anything of that nature and would like to get involved, please get in touch.

John Wombell (john.wombell@btinternet.com)



Jim Bone

Ormond Hill and associated raised beaches, south of Avoch on the Black Isle

**Highland Archaeology
Fortnight
now
Highland Archaeology Festival
2008**
Downloadable Events Guide from
kirsty.cameron@highland.gov.uk

North Of Scotland Archaeological Society

NOSAS At HAF 2008

Saturday 4th October. 10.00am-3.00pm.

“Rogie Township Walk”.

Join Forestry Commission Scotland for a walk to Rogie Township via Rogie Falls (approx 10km). Meet at Rogie Falls car park (NH445587). Booking essential.

Forestry Commission Scotland Tel: 01463 791575

Saturday 11th October 10.00am-12.00pm.

“Medieval Archaeology Walk”.

Join Cait McCullagh on an entertaining walk through Medieval Inverness. Cait will provide an insight into the ongoing archaeological investigations of the Old Town and let you in on some of the amazing and strange events surrounding our city.

Meet in the foyer of Inverness Museum and Art Gallery.

Inverness Museum & Art Gallery Tel: 01463 237114

Wednesday 15th October. 1.30pm-4.30pm.

“NOSAS Guided Walk to Soulmarksie”.

Join NOSAS for a guided walk (5km) to Soulmarksie through a multi period landscape, with items of interest along the way including an early hydroelectric scheme, a curious rock shelter, a complex post medieval farmstead, culturally modified trees, and a mica mine.

Meet at the Little Scatwell / Luichart Dam road junction (NH393571).

To reach the start point take the minor public road passing Loch Achilty off the A835 approx 400m north west of Contin village and proceed for approx 4.5 miles (7 Km).

John Wombell, NOSAS Tel: 01997 423273

Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th October,

What's New in Highland Archaeology Seminar

The Waterside Hotel, Ness Walk, Inverness

Sunday 11.40am - 12.15 pm Anne Coombs, NOSAS

“Digging into the Archaeology of The Highlands

NOSAS Ten Years On”,

Sunday 12.15pm-12-50pm John Wombell – NOSAS

“Statements in stone – recently discovered cup-marks”

STOP PRESS
Ordnance Survey
Six-inch First Edition Maps
of Scotland
1843-1882

First edition six-inch maps of Scotland are now available on the Internet via the National Library of Scotland's website at:

http://www.nls.uk/maps/os/6inch/county_list.html



'Offerings to the Gods'

Back to Rogie to take more images of the decorated earth- fast boulders and outcrops we have found there recently. I was sitting beside one of the boulders wondering how to show the positions of the cup-marks clearly. The air was heavy with the scent of ripe wild raspberries as I was literally surrounded by them, so just for fun, I picked a handful and placed one rasp in each cup. On a roll after that I did this with all the known boulders and outcrops. In the process of fossicking around I found another 4 marked boulders in the same area. We already have 12 marked boulders and outcrops in the Rogie group and national research suggests that this is a 'classic site' of its decorated rock type. Somewhere, probably not far away, on higher ground, and possibly well hidden by vegetation, there could be a marked rock with greater complexity of design, overlooking the Rogie stones. Needless to say there is much more to do at Rogie, and a 'pound to a penny' there are more discoveries to be made.

John Wombell



John Wombell

'Wild Raspberry Cups'

Highland Archaeology Fortnight in Assynt

Wednesday 8 October

Historic Assynt Survey Team

Open SRP Survey Day at an iron-working site close to Ardvreck Castle.

Details from Gordon Sleight 01571 855207

Saturday 11 October

Historic Assynt

Inchnadamph Bone Caves Conference –

A review of previous work and hearing about latest discoveries

Details from Robin Noble 01571 833246

Sunday 12 October

Historic Assynt

Guided walk with Janet Hooper and Gordon Sleight from Ardvreck Castle to the multi period site of Edrachalda.

Details from Gordon Sleight 01571 855207

Thursday 16 October

Braemore Square Survey Team

Open SRP Survey Day

Inverlael, Lochbroom

details from Anna Welti 01854 612647

Gordon Sleight

The Highland Historic Environment Record (HER)

The HER is up, running and available to all. Known since the 1980's, when it began, as The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) its main function has been to provide professional advice to Council services, utility companies, landowners and developers

The Highland Historic Environment Record (HER) is maintained by the Highland Council Archaeology Unit and is a record of all known archaeological and historical sites, monuments and buildings throughout the Highland Council area. A wide range of material including photographs, plans, articles and fieldwork reports supplements the database and all of the sites on the HER are mapped digitally using a GIS system which links to the database.

Initial reactions from amateur archaeologists and historians have been enthusiastic, finally having access to a range of materials available in the past only to the professional researcher. Some disappointment has been expressed over the interface and linkages but the HER is an ongoing project and will continue to develop and be added to over time.

To access The Highland HER:

<http://her.highland.gov.uk/simplesearch.aspx>

North Of Scotland Archaeological Society



WEA Archaeology Courses:

Highland Heritage Using the HER
(Historic Environment Record)

Tuesday, 9th September, 10am-1pm

James Cameron Centre, Limetree Avenue, Inverness, £2

Thursday, 11th September, 10am-1pm,

Highland Theological College, Dingwall, £2

Romans in the Highlands?

Wednesdays 5th & 12th November, 7-9pm

Spectrum Community Centre, Inverness,

£3 per session

10,000 Years in Easter Ross

Mondays for 6 weeks starting 27 October, 7-9pm

Perrins Centre, Alness

£2 per session

Bookings essential on 01463 710577 or email

inverness@weascotland.org.uk

Susan Kruse

Notice of Annual General Meeting

NORTH OF SCOTLAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
in the Waterside Hotel, Inverness at 5 pm (approx),
Saturday 18th October 2008

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of last years Annual General Meeting
3. Chairpersons report
4. Treasurers report
5. Secretaries report
6. Librarians report
7. Election of Office bearers and Committee
8. A.O.C.B.

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Nomination for NOSAS Committee 2008 - 2009

Position

Nominee

Proposed by

Seconded by

To be returned to M. Marshall or handed in at the AGM
prior to the commencement of business. This does not, of
course, preclude nominations from the floor at the meeting

North Of Scotland Archaeological Society

Rosemarkie Coastal Caves- Exploring Cave Life Past, Present and Future

In the autumn of 2006 a community archaeology project, led by John Woods, made a preliminary excavation of one of the larger caves below Learnie on the southern shore of the Black Isle.

The excavation report is now complete and will form the core of an interpretive display at Groam House Museum during the Highland Archaeology Festival. The exhibition will provide an analysis of the dig and place the Learnie Cave excavation in the context of wider research into the Moray Firth coastal area in ancient times.

There will be a photographic display of some of the finds from Learnie and Caird's Cave, excavated by William Maclean in the early twentieth century.'

Simon Gunn



Rosemarkie Coastal Caves

NOSAS Committee, 2007-2008

President - Emma Sanderson

Vice President - Anne Coombs

Treasurer - Allan McKenzie

Secretary - Meryl Marshall

Membership secretary - Trina Wombell

Newsletter Editor - Dave Rendell

Committee members

Brian Duff, David Findlay, Brigitte Geddes, George Grant,
Janet Hooper, Paul Humphries, Susan Kruse,
Cait MacCullagh, John Wombell



The Loch Hourn Project 2009

A further season at Loch Hourn is now at the advanced planning stage. A small group of NOSAS members undertook a week's reconnaissance in March this year to get to grips with the extent of the archaeological remains around the Outer Loch that have not yet been surveyed and recorded. The conclusion is that we should be able to complete a walkover survey of the remaining areas with a team of 10 or 12 in one week, based at Arnisdale, which is now planned for the spring of 2009.

Logistically this will not be as straight forward as previous seasons, as a team of that size cannot all be accommodated under one roof at Arnisdale - we shall have to arrange a number of holiday houses. However the new 'Ceilidh House' at Corran (effectively a village hall) has just been officially opened, attended by Trina and myself, and this may present the opportunity for us to have an expedition headquarters for admin, public display of our work, and possibly for us to eat together in the evenings.

The only means of reaching the Knoydart side of the Outer Loch is by boat, with all its weather dependant and safety implications. As ever, vertical declivity is a major issue around Loch Hourn, and there are several islands to be recorded. We covered a huge area during our reconnaissance trip with the highlights being the discovery of several prehistoric sites - all yet to be surveyed and recorded in detail. The first photo is of a possible ring cairn on the back-beach at Slisneach - the most westerly point of our project area on the south (Knoydart) shore, and the second photo is of members of the reconnaissance team contemplating a more contentious possible multiple cist burial site also at Slisneach.

At this stage in the planning process, would anyone be interested in taking on the role of cook for the evening meal, along with some possible admin duties and explaining our project to locals and visitors during the day?

John Wombeli

North Of Scotland Archaeological Society



Arnisdale, Loch Hourn March 2008



NOSAS Survey Group at Arnisdale March 2008

NOSAS Walk at Edderton, Saturday 13th September

Reay Clarke will be guiding us around some varied and interesting sites at Edderton. Meet 10.30am at the Edderton Graveyard car park, 2miles west of the roundabout at the south end of the Dornoch Bridge and bring a packed lunch.

The plan is to visit the sites connected with the Picts in the morning plus the church and then the Hill of Edderton in the afternoon (it will be quite possible to come for just the morning or afternoon). Some walking will be involved on this day but it is optional as it is possible to drive between the sites although there is some off-road stuff on the Hill.



NOSAS 10th Anniversary Dinner and Ceilidh



**Celebrate the 10th anniversary of NOSAS!
We are having a buffet style dinner and an
informal Ceilidh after the AGM on 18th of
October.**

**Bring your own Bottle – and an instrument if
you wish!**

**Kenneth Street Church Hall, Inverness
(11 Kenneth Street)**

7pm onwards

**Cost: £5 for NOSAS members,
£10 non-members**

All welcome! Booking is essential so we can get adequate catering.

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I would like:

___ members tickets @ £5 each

___ non-members tickets @ £10 each

Total Enclosed: _____
(Cheques made payable to NOSAS)

Please let me know any dietary information:

If you'd be prepared to perform in the Ceilidh, please tick here and I will get back in touch with you: _____

Name

Address

E-mail (if you use it)

**Return to Susan Kruse, Cruachan, Heights of Fodderty, Strathpeffer, Ross-shire IV14 9AF
by 14 October
or e-mail details to Cruachan.hts@googlemail.com**

Please note: to save postage tickets will not be mailed out, but will be available at the door.

North Of Scotland Archaeological Society

