

The Ross-Shire Rock Art Project

The Ross-Shire Rock Art Project is now a NOSAS 'adopted project'. John Wombell, the Project Co-ordinator, has prepared budget estimates and has applied to various trusts and the Highland Culture Programme for substantial funding. It is initially estimated that the Project will run for about 2 years, allowing for all the other demands made on NOSAS members' time.

The Ross-Shire Rock Art Project (*RRAP*) will be the first area project of its kind in Scotland. NOSAS cannot make an official start until all the grants are in place but in the meantime John is carrying on with a landscape reconnaissance and raising awareness of the Project and its aims.



Strath Sgitheach above Dingwall

The initial aim of the project is to verify all 60 plus rock art entries on the Historic Environment Record, some of these date back to the 1880's. Since then stones have been taken from the wild and placed in gardens, stones have been destroyed - 2 were deliberately smashed up in Strath Rusdale last year. All of the 'official' records were made before the advent of GPS and the positions of some stones are very vague. The Ordnance Survey identified a lot of cup marked stones about 30 years ago and most of these have not been visited since. Some natural marks were wrongly identified as man-made and some records have been duplicated.

Once a definitive list of stones has been established and funds are available each rock art panel will be recorded in detail. It is proposed to use the recording methodology established by the Northumberland and Durham Rock Art Project (*NADRAP*) using photogrammetry to make 3D digital images of the panels. The budget allows for the specialist training that this will require.

NOSAS members have discovered 20 or so new stones over the past two years, with the group of 12 marked stones at Rogie now being the largest known group in Ross-shire. The proposed budget allows for the purchase of Map Maker software, digital base maps to cover the whole area of the former County of Ross and Cromarty and for training in the use of Map Maker. John would also like to do some geographical modelling when we know where all the sites are and from that undertake some carefully targeted prospecting of new sites.

John envisages that there will be a 50 /50 split between actual fieldwork and the administration of the project, so volunteers will not need to have the constitution of a mountain goat to get involved with the project. Further details are available from John on 01997 423273 or johnandtrina@onetel.com

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The Mulchaich/Ferintosh Project

On agricultural land at Mulchaich Farm, two miles NE of Conon Bridge, there are the remains of two townships within 400m of each other, overlooking the Cromarty Firth

East Mulchaich (NH579 569) has been previously recorded and is a scheduled site (NH55NE 007) but the information on the record is very limited. It is described as:

"Some six turf-covered footings survive in a reasonable condition on a small stony eminence in an arable field, and there are two or three others mutilated by quarrying. The wall footings are spread to 1.0 m and 0.3 m high".



East Mulchaich

Jim Bone

West Mulchaich (NH 577 568) is in some respects the more interesting site. It is overgrown with gorse bushes and grossly trampled by cattle but at least 6 buildings can be seen. The farmer believes that this is the site of the former Ferintosh distillery and there is a large building beside a bog (where there appears to have been a well) There is a scheduled chambered cairn (NH55NE 002) with a cup marked stone incorporated into the kerb, close by.

The Roy map of c1750 depicts a densely populated area at Ferintosh with at least 7 large townships and there is a strong possibility that the remains of the two townships at Mulchaich are all that is left of these settlements. Neither of the sites at Mulchaich are shown on the 1st Edition OS survey of 1870.

In 1689 Duncan Forbes of Culloden (1644 – 1704) secured the privilege of distilling whisky free of duty on his Ferintosh Estate for services rendered to the Crown, his estate had been sacked by the Jacobites in 1689. There was an immediate boom in the production of the spirit and Ferintosh whisky became increasingly popular and important, both because of its quality and its price. In 1781 there was an outcry from Lowland distillers against the flood of whisky produced in Ferintosh.

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In c1782 a large distillery was constructed at Ferintosh, but "the Privilege" was withdrawn in 1786 to meet other distillers complaints about the injustice of the competition from Ferintosh whisky.

Robert Burns in his poem "Scotch Drink"(1786) devoted a verse to Ferintosh whisky, lamenting:

*"Thee Ferintosh! O sadly lost!
Scotland lament frae coast to coast!
Now colic grips, an' barkin' hoast
May kill us a';
For loyal Forbes' charter'd hoast
Is taen awa'!"*

Legal distilleries continued in the area, the Old Statistical Account mentions 29 in the Parish of Urquhart and there is documentary evidence of them at Taynahinch (Tighnahinch), Braes of Dunvorn, Drumcuden (Drumuden), Findon, Tornabulag (?Ternabuig, location as yet unidentified) and Ryefield(?1689) but most seem to have been short lived. The Ben Wyvis distillery was built in nearby Dingwall in 1879 and took the name of Ferintosh in 1893.

The 2 townships at Mulchaich are worthy of surveying and recording in a formal manner, both because of their significance and their historical background. The initial survey of the townships will form the focus of two days of the Scotland's Rural Past Training. It is planned to continue the project throughout the summer months. An important part of the project plan will be to continue historical research into Ferintosh and the 2 sites, exploring the wider area for further archaeological evidence in order to set the townships in context.

If you are interested in becoming involved in the project, please contact me on 01349 861824 or at Meryl.Marshall@tesco.net

Meryl Marshall



Clearing West Mulchaich prior to the SRP Training event.



Field Survey and Recording Course at Mulchaich

NOSAS members joined The Royal Commission's SRP Team for a field-training course at Mulchaich Farm during the weekend of March 20/21.

The aim of the course was to provide an introduction to the skills and knowledge required to survey and record deserted rural settlement sites and an opportunity to work with experienced archaeologists and surveyors

The course was broken down into a series of 3 'classroom' sessions with practical follow-up in the field.

1. What are you looking for?
 - Survey, reconnaissance and identification of rural settlements and landscapes
2. What are you looking at?
 - Observation and interpretation of rural settlements and landscapes
3. How do you record it?
 - Field sketching
 - Measured survey using tape and offset
 - Writing site descriptions
 - Using GPS
 - Digital photography
 - Using the SRP recording forms

By the end of the two-day course we had been taught how to conduct a map regression, make an annotated field sketch and, working in small groups, make a tape and offset survey of a house site. Each group also produced a written site description and took digital photographs to illustrate their description.



For the absolute beginner this was an excellent introduction to basic field surveying, to those of us with previous experience of fieldwork it was a timely reminder of the fact that the old method of working with a surveyor's tape could be just as accurate and cost effective as the more expensive and technically demanding methods used by the professional archaeologist.

Further information about survey techniques and documentation are available on the SRP website at:

<http://www.scotlandsruralpast.org.uk>

Dave Rendell

North Of Scotland Archaeological Society



NOSAS members examining a moss covered decorated stone slab on the East Mulchaich site, discovered by Tertia Barnet and the SRP team while preparing for the SRP Training Course.



East Mulchaich cup marked stone slab,

If you should find a cup marked stone like this, please take photographs, a grid reference and make sketches and report it to John Wombell!



Course members making an initial reconnaissance of East Mulchaich township



Assynt Hears News Of Clachtoll Broch Project

On a cold winter night, a full Stoer Hall heard the latest on the Clachtoll Broch project, which is, in itself, the flagship for a wider, pan-Assynt project to heighten awareness of the Parish's considerable archaeological heritage.

Gordon Sleight of Historic Assynt (and NOSAS) began the proceedings with a welcome and short introduction to the evening, then handed over to Robin Noble, who outlined the steps taken during the course of the year of the feasibility study, in particular referring to the number of official visitors to the broch, and the growing awareness of its importance and also of its structural problems, which resulted from those visits. This had led to the decision to commission a full conservation appraisal from the firm of AOC Archaeology, specialists in broch studies, and deeply involved in a large heritage project in Caithness.

Graeme Cavers outlined the work he had been doing with his colleagues, demonstrating the astonishing capabilities of laser technology to measure and record even such a complex monument. He highlighted areas of the structure, which were giving cause for real concern, before handing over to John Barber, who discussed the experimental work they had been doing in Caithness (building sections of broch wall, before then deliberately making them collapse, and subsequently excavating the collapsed walls) which would inform their study of Clachtoll. AOC's full report on the state of Clachtoll and the options for the future are expected early in March.



Clachtoll Broch

Andy Heald then spoke about AOC's wider project in Caithness and the idea of an Assynt project, which had evolved following discussions with members of Historic Assynt and other local groups during recent visits to the area.

The aim of the project is to look for the folk of Assynt's past, using the wide range of archaeological sites as windows into that past. These people had helped shape the astonishing Assynt landscape but that landscape had in turn done much to shape their lives and looking at the remarkable geology of the area and its varied natural history would be an important aspect of the project.

It was emphasised that Assynt is very well-placed to embark on such a project; a lot is known about the Parish, and a number of groups, including Historic Assynt, Culag Community Woodland Trust, Comunn Eachdraidh Asainte, Assynt Field Club, and the Assynt Tourism Group are already working in the relevant areas. A lively discussion session then followed and members of the audience gave a clear indication of general support for the wider project before the meeting closed.

Robin Noble

NOSAS Anniversary Events

After the successful January 'wall walk' during which Dave and Chris Rendell introduced NOSAS members to a variety of wall types around Conon Bridge I am continuing to develop events for the coming year.



NOSAS members inspecting the remains of a boundary wall at Conon Braes.

Anna Welti has hosted a two-day event on the West Coast recording hut circles and Cait McCullagh is organising a Linear Feature Project Day on Saturday, June 6th.

Events are also planned at Ardgay, Glencalvie and Brora and members will be informed by email about these, as and when details are finalised.

Ann Coombes

North Of Scotland Archaeological Society



Strathconon Project

Only one field day has been held in the last few months. The weather has not exactly been conducive to fieldwork - with snow on the ground it would not have been easy to locate and record sites, so a couple of outings had to be cancelled.

The historical background research has continued with a further visit to NAS in Edinburgh and more details of early rentals of 1720 to 1728 have come to light. Just before Christmas Marion and I had an excellent meeting with Alastair MacLeod, the Highland Council genealogist, who is very enthusiastic about our project and has given us a lot of background on the Mackenzie Clan, plus lots of secondary references for Strathconon.

The report for Phase 1 of the project has been completed and a .PDF file is available on the NOSAS website.

Meryl Marshall

Strathconon Project on the Radio!

Last Autumn John Wombell, Ann Coombes and Meryl Marshall were interviewed "in the field" by Radio 4 for a series of short 15-minute programmes which are to be called 'Ankle-high Histories'.

The programmes will chart the progress, research and the discoveries of some of the SRP groups and will be broadcast on Radio 4 over four consecutive Sundays, starting on Sunday 22 March at 4.45 pm. As far as we know at present, the order of programmes will be Mull, Strathconon, Glen Muick/Glen Isla

Linear Feature in Easter Ross

Many of you may remember that two walks were conducted along parts of what may be a linear communication network through Ross, last year. The first of these, in June, saw a small group cover ground from the area close to the shore at Tarradale to Tulloch Castle above Dingwall - some ten miles in total - the second, in August, picked up the network in the vicinity of Kildary and finished at St Duthac's Chapel, Tain, a distance of around six miles. Since these initial walkovers the project team have been researching and attempting to identify other fragments of the network and investigating how it inter-relates with surrounding sites, monuments, features and find spots, wherever it can be traced.

Research has included an aerial photographic survey, through Easter Ross, a great help towards beginning to characterise the landscape surrounding the feature. We have also visited the RCAHMS archives in Edinburgh and with the assistance of the Commissioners have identified and obtained approximately 100 copies of aerial photos from the RAF Sorties of the mid 1940s. The RCAHMS Aerial Survey Team has kindly agreed to include the line of this feature in their survey that will be undertaken this spring.

Additionally, we have spent the winter months making contact with a number of individuals and groups who have an interest in ancient and historic communications, trade and exchange throughout the Highlands and would be delighted to hear from anyone else who shares this interest.

A ground survey is planned for this spring and early summer. On Saturday the 6th of June we are inviting NOSAS members to join us in recording features occurring from the North Shore of the Beauly Firth to the Southern bank of the River Conon. To find out more and to sign up for this activity please contact Cait at cait.mccullagh@gmail.com or on 01349 867733 or Allan on 01349866494.

Cait McCullagh

SCRAN now available to NOSAS members

The Scottish Cultural Resource Archive Network (SCRAN) is an online learning resource base with over 360,000 images from museums, galleries, archives and the media across the country.

This year there is a special subscription rate, to mark the Year of the Homecoming 2009. NOSAS has taken advantage of this and members are now able to access this great resource in their own homes. The password and username for access to SCRAN have been circulated to members but if you have any problems contact Meryl Marshall on 01349 861824

Auchindrain

Steve Boyle, RCAHMS, warned Mulchaich course members that Auchindrain Township Museum is under threat of closure because of a lack of funds.

Auchindrain, near Inveraray, was probably the last multiple tenancy farming township and has been preserved as it was when Eddie MacCallum gave up his tenancy in 1962. Although plans had been drawn up to 'improve the township' in 1788 these were not acted upon and thus Auchindrain stands as a unique example of an historic landscape that will be lost forever if the museum closes.

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NOSAS Library collection

The NOSAS library collection is in the process of being transferred to the Dingwall Library, some of it is already on the shelves but the complete collection will not be transferred for some time. You will have received a NOSAS library card that can be used in conjunction with your Highland Library card to borrow NOSAS books from the Dingwall library. Other members of the public can only use the books for reference at the library. A full NOSAS library list is being compiled and will be put onto the website when it is completed.

To mark the occasion of the transference and establishment of the NOSAS library within the new Highland Council Library at Dingwall Academy, the decision was taken by the Committee to spend the £120 donated to us from the winding up of the Inverness Museum Volunteer Support Group on some new, up-to-date books. The books so far chosen are all very stimulating and relevant to archaeology and the North of Scotland. All will be available through the HC library system and members are encouraged to borrow them. The new books are:

Portmahomack: Monastery of the Picts - Martin Carver

The Pictish Symbol Stones of Scotland - RCAHMS

Buildings of the Land: Scotland's Farms 1750 - 2000 - RCAHMS

Edge of Empire, The Antonine Wall - Rome's Scottish Frontier - David Breeze

The Antonine Wall, World Heritage Site - 1:25000 map - RCAHMS

NOSAS Journal

To mark the Tenth Anniversary of the North Of Scotland Archaeological Society it is proposed to begin publishing an occasional Journal of Proceedings that will be made available to members of the Society.

Members and friends of the Society are invited to submit articles about any aspect of archaeology in the Highlands of Scotland for publication, to coincide with the Highland Archaeology Festival. As well as peer-reviewed 'refereed articles', members are encouraged to submit material to an 'Observations' section.

This section will include reports on specific projects, notes and personal reminiscences. Material from conferences, working parties and workshops will also be published, especially where such material might not otherwise be published.

Further details of how to submit articles can be obtained from Dave Rendell (dacamacsys@btinternet.com).

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Lochbroom Field Club Archaeological Excavation, Braemore Square near Ullapool May 19th - 30th 2009

Braemore Square is a multi-period settlement site situated on flat ground between the Abhainn Droma and the main A835 road, about 10 miles south of Ullapool (NGR: NH 195 791). It has features ranging in date from the prehistoric period to the nineteenth century. In 2008 we excavated part of one hut circle and an adjacent clearance cairn, and found material carbon dated around 250BC, (Iron Age).

This season we plan to extend the work to further elucidate the settlement patterns on part of the site. The work will be under the direction of Cathy Dagg.

For further information contact:

Anna Welti (Project Co-ordinator), Ard Coille,
Braes, Ullapool, IV26 2SZ

Tel: 01854 612647 / e-mail:

annawelti@btinternet.com

Applecross Broch

The Applecross Community and the Archaeological Society is planning a sixth season on the excavation of the Iron Age Broch at Applecross. The proposed dates are 5th - 20th September.

National Community Archaeology Conference 16 and 17 May 2009

The first national community archaeological conference to celebrate the range and diversity of archaeology projects across Scotland is to be held in East Lothian on 16 and 17 May 2009 at the Musselburgh East Community Learning Centre. To compliment the weekend conference there will be an opportunity for community archaeology projects to promote and raise awareness of their project and their local area through display stands and a double page summary article (with images) in the conference.

To book a place email bookings@eastlothian.gov.uk
01620 827 408

Archaeology Service,
East Lothian Council, John Muir House, Haddington, East
Lothian, EH41 3HA



Archaeological Research in Progress

In collaboration with **Archaeology Scotland**
Saturday 30th May 2009 Edinburgh
OPEN EVENT

This annual conference, organised for 2009 by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and staged jointly with Archaeology Scotland, provides an opportunity to hear up-to-date accounts of fieldwork and research being undertaken in Scotland. This year the venue is the Royal Society of Edinburgh, 22-26 George Street, Edinburgh. Further information and a booking form tel 0131 247 4133 or email info@socantscot.org.

Fellows / Archaeology Scotland Members places @ £25

Non- Fellows / Members places @ £30

Student / Unwaged places @ £25 (evidence must be provided)

UHI Occasional Lectures, 2009

15 April Karen Cullen (North Highland College)
'Climate and Weather in Late Seventeenth Century Scotland'
(Title to be confirmed)

20 May David Worthington (North Highland College) -
'Highlanders in Poland, c.1500-1800'

28 October Cameron Taylor (North Highland College)
'Who do you think you were?
Ancestral Connections as Tourism Motivation'

18 November Karly Kehoe (North Highland College)
'The Journal of Richard C. McClement, MD, RN: Scottish
Perceptions of the West African Slave Trade in the 1850s and
1860s'

Lectures will take place at 5pm in the Coach House,
Murray Road, Dornoch. If you would like to attend
one, please contact Dr David Worthington for more
details.

Email: David.Worthington@thurso.uhi.ac.uk / Tel:
01847 889624

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Historic Rural Settlement Group Golspie Field Meeting

Golspie Community Centre

Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th May 2009

Further information from Steve Boyle at RCAHMS 0131
662 1456

steve.boyle@rcahms.gov.uk

Highland Archaeology Festival 2009

Saturday 3 October - Sunday 18th October

Highland Archaeology Conference

Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th October

NOSAS Officers and Committee 2008-2009

Chairperson - Emma Sanderson

Vice-Chairperson - Anne Coombs

Treasurer - Allan Mackenzie

Secretary - Meryl Marshall

Membership Secretary and Librarian - Trina Wombell

Social Secretary - Brigitte Geddes

Newsletter Editor - Dave Rendell

Committee members

Brian Duff, David Findlay, Lynn Fraser, Janet Hooper,

Paul Humphreys, Susan Kruse,

Cait MacCullagh and Alastair Morton

**The next Committee Meeting is on Tuesday,
June 2nd**

**Members of the Society wishing to raise any issue(s) should
contact the Secretary, Meryl Marshall**

Meryl.Marshall@tesco.net

