

NOSAS Annual General Meeting 2010

Dave Rendell resigned as vice-president and committee member (but continues as newsletter editor) and Meryl Marshall resigned as secretary.

Brian Duff and Brigitte Geddes resigned from the committee as did Beth Blackburn and Simon Gunn who were co-opted in the course of the last year. Thanks were expressed to all the above.

The new NOSAS Committee

Anne Coombs continues as President and Meryl Marshall was elected to the post of Vice President. David Findlay continues as Treasurer.

Cait McCullagh was elected to the post of Secretary and Committee members Janet Hooper, Lynn Fraser, Allan Mackenzie, Susan Kruse and Alastair Morton are joined by Beth Blackburn, Simon Gunn, Paul Dungey, George Grant and John Wombell.

NOSAS Diary

Monthly Archaeological Discussions.

Thursday, January 20th 7.30pm, Strathpeffer Community Hall

A rose by any other name!

Broch, semi-broch, wheel house, complex and simple round house, Atlantic or North Sea, in the light of Applecross and the Northern Broch project are we any the wiser?

Friday, December 17th 7.00 pm

NOSAS Christmas Dinner

This year the dinner is to be held at the Coul House Hotel, Contin at a cost of £23.00 per person. The meal will be followed by appropriate after dinner entertainment. Guests will be very welcome.

Coul House is also offering a special deal for accommodation - B & B £50 for a double room £30.00 single. Contact Chris at Coul House 01997 421 487 mentioning NOSAS to make your own bookings for accommodation.

Please book with your menu choice and payment by contacting Trina Wombell. Trina's e-mail is john.wombell@btinternet.com

Subscription Reminder

Subscriptions are now due, £12.50 single or £20 for a couple at the same address. Please send to your cheques to Trina Wombell.

Your Committee has set the deadline for renewal as the end of December after which the password to the members' page on the website will be changed.

MAD

Last winter we had 2 very successful discussion evenings, handily referred to as MAD (Monthly Archaeological Discussion) evenings.

We began with an ambitious overview of the Bronze Age Landscape, tightening the focus of the second meeting slightly to look for evidence of the Romans in Moray. Unfortunately last winter's weather caused the cancellation of a number of events leaving us with a range of suggestions to tackle this winter.

During the summer we followed-up our initial discussions with a weekend visiting hut circles to look at extant Bronze and Iron Age landscapes.

Our first MAD meeting of this winter was held on Thursday, 18th November. Our subject was the medieval period and Dr. Eric Grant began proceedings with an introduction to the history of the period. We then had a lively discussion on how the historical evidence was represented in the archaeology of the Firthlands. The mottes found around the area were considered, as were the ecclesiastical remains. The discussion continued over coffee, focussing on the enigmatic David's Fort near Conon Mains, but as usual as the evening drew to a close we still had lots of unanswered questions.

Next time we will be looking at brochs and 'all things round', some of which were briefly mentioned during the last meeting.

Anne Coombs (Anne.Coombs@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

NOSAS Calendar 2012

The committee has approved the creation of a NOSAS calendar 2012, to be ready for sale by next September.

You are invited to submit your photographs for inclusion, featuring NOSAS archaeology projects, preferably "happening". Humour is welcome - but please seek the permission of any recognizable person in the scene.

Please submit photographs, as jpegs, reduced to less than 1Mb. Maximum 2 per member (just in case we are overwhelmed with entries!).

If your photograph is chosen, you will be asked to resubmit at a higher resolution ready for printing. Email your photographs to:

elizabeth@riverford.fslife.co.uk.

Closing date July 31st 2011

For any further information contact the Calendar "team" of Beth Blackburn, Marion Ruscoe and Simon Gunn.

An exciting new NOSAS Research Project, Exploring Shielings



A reconstructed Highland shieling at the Highland Folk Museum, Newtonmore

We are planning a comparative research project on shielings in the Highlands. At the moment the project is in its infancy and all ideas are welcome.

If anyone is interested in joining our project please let me know and we will add your name to the list of contacts.

Anne Coombs (Anne.Coombs@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

NOSAS Secretary's contact details

New NOSAS secretary Cait McCullagh's postal address is:

*Tigh Beag, Lemlair, Old Evanton Road,
Ross-shire, IV15 9TT - tel: 01349867733*

Any emails to her as secretary and for circulation to other NOSAS members should go, from now on, to nosasmail@gmail.com.

The NOSAS Library

The NOSAS Library is housed in the Community Library at Dingwall Academy. Members can also access the library from their local Branch of the Highland Library Service via the Library Catalogue and Loans System.

Trina Wombell (john.wombell@btinternet.com) is happy to replace any lost or worn Library Cards if you wish to make use of the library.

Clachtoll Broch and associated excavations, 2011



Clachtoll Broch

As a good number of NOSAS members know Historic Assynt has been hoping for some time to stabilise and excavate the Broch at Clachtoll. Hopefully we will be able to conduct several seasons of phased work there, but to begin with we want to conduct some emergency stabilisation work and related excavation.

We're linking this initial phase with two other excavations, which follow up findings from our recent Hidden Lives Project. Together these create a unified project to investigate some important/typical Neolithic, Iron Age and Pre-clearance structures in Assynt. Following consultations with prospective funders applications are about to be sent off and IF we get the hoped for grants within the planned timeframe then the outline programme for 2011 will be as follows –

March

Stabilisation/Excavation at the Broch

May

Excavation of a pre-clearance long house at Glenleraig

July

Excavation of a chambered cairn near Loch Borrolan

Anyone who would like to be involved in any or all of those pieces of work will be very welcome – particularly at the Broch where we need to move a huge amount of stone!

I'll send out another circular in the New Year when we have funding, giving some definite dates for the three excavations.

Gordon Sleight (01571 855207)

2010 Highland Archaeology Festival, Tomintoul and the Lecht Iron mines

A small group assembled, in rather dreich conditions, and our leader, John Davison, arrived at 10.58 and donned his fluorescent safety jacket, explaining to us the most dangerous part of the walk was crossing the road to view the Well.

Consulting his little list he found we were two short, and so we waited, and they arrived a few minutes later, having come from Dingwall, to make seven of us, plus our leader.

John told us about the inscription on the Well, and a similar one on the bridge at Grantown, marking the end of their stint. The road was built to get supplies to Fort George, and to keep the unruly Highlanders under control, after the risings of 1715 & 1745.



Road Marker, Lecht

Changing out of his fluorescent jacket John reappeared moments later as a gentleman of the 18th century, complete with tricorne hat, and pistol stuffed down his riding boot.

He asked us “Did we know what date it was?” The correct answer was not October 5th 2010, but 1730, when he claims he was last here, on a visit to the newly established mine, opened by the York Buildings Company, and he then explored the exotic history of the company.

The York Buildings Company – a water works company - was formed to raise water from the Thames to supply the city of London with good fresh water. Their activities expanded, and they bought up the Forfeited Estates, and purchased the wood of the

Forest of Abernethy, floating the timber down the Spey to ship it south to supply the Navy with masts, for shipbuilding at Deptford. Unfortunately the trees were of insufficient quality for masts, so another use had to be found for the timber.



A voice from the past

It was decided that the timber would in fact be used to make charcoal and smelt iron and the ore was carried on horseback to the furnaces at Abernethy, 16 miles away, employing 120 horses and their handlers.

In the Old Statistical Account for Abernethy and Kincardine, The Rev. John Grant says of the York Building Company they were “a most profligate set that were ever heard of in this corner. Their extravagances of every kind ruined themselves, and corrupted others. Their beginning was great indeed, with 120 working horses, wagons, elegant temporary wooden houses, saw-mills & iron-mills. They used to display their vanity by bonfires, tar-barrels, and opening hogsheads of brandy to the country-people, by which 5 of them died in one night.”

The Company did bring some good to the area though, as roads were made through the woods, and they erected proper saw-mills, and invented the construction of the raft. Previously the floaters had steered logs down the Spey using currachs, a highly dangerous occupation.

Mismanagement took its toll though, and the Mining enterprise collapsed in 1737 and the mine was abandoned.

As we walked up towards the crushing mill in the distance John told us about the Passers-by on the old routes, the whisky smugglers and drovers.

The mine was reopened in 1841 by the Duke of Richmond, to mine Manganese from 3 pits up to 60 ft deep (18m), and the crushing mill was built and the ore was crushed and hand sorted before being carried on horseback 45 miles to Portgordon, and shipped to Newcastle.

The price of manganese, however, fell and in 1846 the mine closed for good.

We crossed the burn though, in the sunshine now, and went up a track on the right, to explore the pits left by digging out the Manganese ore, and pick up a few samples. Some of us found this very hard going in the deep heather, clambering up out of the pits, and then down a rough slope back towards the burn, as by now we were above the Crushing mill.

There is an excellent display in the Mill, explaining how it worked.

None of our company knew what Manganese was used for – so we had to consult our reference books when we got home. We found manganese is important in steel manufacture, and for glass, paint and varnish production.



Lecht Iron and Manganese Mine

If you have not been to the mine - go and see for yourself, the Museum at Tomintoul has a very good leaflet for sale.

Ann & Edwin Wakeling