

NOSAS NEWSFLASH JUNE 2012

“WHAT A DIFFERENCE A WEEK MAKES”

No new cup marked stone discoveries since February 2011 then two are discovered in one week! Linda Lamb has excelled herself in discovering both. The first is at Achadh Mor just north of Rogie in the Blackwater Valley and the second is beside the driveway from the East Lodge to Coul Mains. The stone at Achadh Mor is a large erratic schist boulder deeply embedded at NH [41847 60171](#).

It bears 4 distinct but eroded diam x 10mm deep. The cups needle litter and that is all we surface honest! The importance that it lies in a recently landscape with a number of hut cairn fields. Such in situ cup ever exist singly, so every be discovered at Achadh Mor. discovery of one cup marked on to discover 11 more.



cups each c50mm were covered in removed from the of this discovery is recognised prehistoric circles and associated marked rocks rarely if possibility of more to Rogie began with the boulder, then we went

The second stone is sandstone and looks rather like an orthostat. It has been moved to be re-used as the base stone for an iron post at NH 47171 56284. It bears 6 well formed cups again c50mm diam x 10mm deep, two of which are enclosed with incised rings, one being penannular. The decoration is very eroded. Two more of the cups have been formed in a way that suggests relief carving to create a raised rim to the cups, a characteristic we are beginning to recognise on a number of panels when they are re-examined closely. The stub of the iron post is still in the stone with an abandoned drill hole beside it. There is every possibility that at least one of the drilled holes was made in the centre of a cup mark, something we have seen elsewhere in Strathpeffer. The stone would weigh at least 200Kg, so where might it have come from? Linda was on her way to Praes Mari chambered cairn 1Km distant at Contin when she discovered this stone. Another very similar stone lies a few meters away with the whole of an iron post still in it. There are no cups on the visible surface of this one and the two of us weren't fit to turn it over.



This part of Ross and Cromarty is interesting geologically in that lies right on transition between the old red sandstone to the east and mica schist to the west. The higher fields between Strathpeffer and Contin, and in Ord Wood above Strathpeffer all display outcrops of bituminous shale from which the spa waters derive. The Knockfarril /Cat's Back ridge and the exposed cliffs in Brahan Wood are sandstone conglomerate.

All this goes to prove that keeping alert and being observant is always likely to pay off in archaeology. Again, well done Linda.

John Wombell
25.05.2012

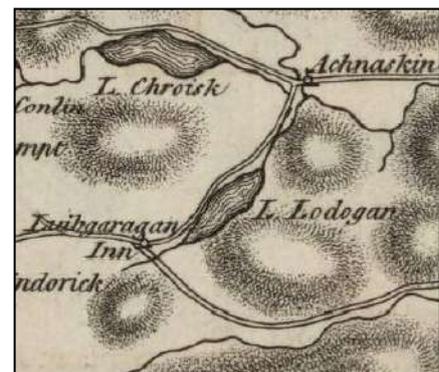
Old routes through Ross-shire – Luib, near Achnasheen, to Scardroy in Strathconon

A six mile stretch of rough moorland, west of Achnasheen, is traversed by what was once a well made road generally 3 metres in width. Although it has fallen into disuse and is travelled only by the occasional walker, possibly doing a coast to coast trip, the road today is very distinct and forms a pleasant days' ramble, especially when combined with an outward journey to Achnasheen on the Kyle of Lochalsh train (with homeward transport parked at Scardroy). But what are the origins of the road? and why did it fall out of use?

A route through Strathconon to Loch Carron had been in existence for centuries; it linked the east and west coast lands of the Clan Mackenzie. The Roy map of 1750 has the road passing NW from Scardroy to Luib on Loch Gowan, 3kms west of Achnasheen, and the first mention of an Inn at Luib, or Luibgargan as it is



sometimes known, is on the Dorret map of 1750. A 1798 list of householders has John Macdonald, described as "vintner", residing there and in 1814 Donald Sage passed this way: "Leaving Attadale in the morning I breakfasted at Luibgargan, proceeded on foot down Strathconon and rested during the night at Garve" (Memorabilia Domestica, Donald Sage, 1899 p191). Both the road and the Inn appear on other early maps too, the Ainslie map of 1789, Arrowsmith of 1807 and Thomson of 1830. It also appears on a Strathconon estate map of 1825 where it is annotated "the road from Loch Carron". So quite clearly this was a route of some importance; how did it come to be abandoned?



The Roy map of c1750 has just two tracks or roads in Ross-shire linking the east coast with the west coast; one track, that described above, passes through Strathconon and a further one a few kilometres to the north, passes through Strathbraan from Garve to Achnasheen. The construction of a road from Contin to Poolewe on the line of the latter first appears in the record in about 1760. Probably

built by Caulfield this road seems to have been kept in some sort of repair for a short while afterwards but by the end of the 18th century it was in poor condition and Lady Seaforth on her way to Lewis could only get as far as Loch Achanalt where her coach became a complete wreck (Inverness Scientific Society Transactions, Vol 5, p382, 1899). At this time the importance of good communications were being recognized as paramount to the economy of the Highlands and in 1801 Thomas Telford was appointed to report on the state of the roads and to plan safe and convenient routes for new roads. The “Loch Carron road”, through Strathbraan, which bifurcated at Achnasheen, would serve the purpose of linking the east with Poolewe in the west, where the cattle from Lewis were landed and also Loch Carron and Strome Ferry in the south west. It must have been chosen by Telford for upgrading in preference to the Strathconon route. The new road was completed by 1817 and for travellers heading from Loch Carron to the east the new road, although longer than the Strathconon route, would have been more easily traversed. The fate of the Strathconon road and the inn at Luib was sealed! - or was it?.



In the course of time the Inn at Luibgargan became a sheep farm, replaced by an inn at Achnasheen. But it was not the end for the Strathconon road! NAS documents (Balfour Papers) GD 433/3/3/8 reveal that construction of a road from Luibgargan to Scardroy was proposed in 1807, surveyed in 1835 and resurveyed in 1844. From the evidence on the ground this construction was clearly carried out but no evidence of



such could be found in the documents. By 1840 the Strathconon Estate had been sold to James Balfour of Whittingham who had made his fortune supplying the British Navy with provisions whilst in Indian waters; did he fund the construction of the road to give the population of his estate employment during a difficult time? There are numerous examples of such projects being undertaken in the Highlands at this time.

The road was not surfaced but this may have been by design, road builders were mindful that a hard surface was detrimental to the hooves of animals. In 1869 the Dingwall to Strome/Kyle of Lochalsh railway had been built. The road was possibly used by drovers taking cattle or sheep from the upper reaches of Strathconon to the station at Achnasheen for transport on the train to the Muir of Ord market.

Whatever the purpose of the road, a walk along it makes a good day out.

Meryl Marshall. Feb 2012

'wedigs' in Wester Ross

Lochbroom Field Club Community dig (wedigs) has now completed two digs out of the six planned. Three schools have taken part so far and children have been shown how to trowel, to survey, to draw a scale plan, and to sample soils. Further work with the High School children will take place in the school laboratories. Volunteers have had a memorable time with appalling weather for both digs. Martin Wildgoose is always an excellent mentor and we have had a lot of laughs and much delicious cake.

Initial results, photos and dig diaries can be found on the website <http://www.wedigs.co.uk/>



Achiltibuie, Loch Raa. Three hearths and a slab tank.

Ullapool, Rhue, trench across roundhouse wall
Come and join us! Next date of digs below.
For more details contact Anna Welti
01854612647, or annawelti@btinternet.com
March 2012

INVERGARRY APRIL 28TH 29TH

We couldn't believe our luck – a Nosas 2 day event with wall to wall sunshine. On Saturday we enjoyed a guided walk led by Hector Rogers round the planned Victorian village of Invergarry. We followed the old road to the castle, ice house, neglected walled garden and back by the lovely riverside walk.





Due to a communication breakdown, the ladies at the community hall had only 2 hours notice to provide lunch, but they miraculously provided tasty bacon and egg butties and gallons of tea and coffee. We had a short afternoon walk by the river.

A few intrepid souls had a frosty overnight camp at the beautifully located Faichemard campsite above the village.

Sunday was another sunny day for our long walk to lonely Loch Lundie and the extensive ruined

settlement complete with kiln – lime or corn? Then on to the surprise of the day, as we explored the still roofed houses of Dail a Chuirn and Achadh nan Darach, complete with some furnishings and old newspapers, we stumbled across a complex settlement. Along with the usual kilns there was a tennis court size pit. Speculation about its purpose kept us busy on the long walk back. Was it a vast tattie pit or even a bull corral? We must go back! Congratulations to Anne for arranging such a successful weekend. May she continue to wave her magic wand.

Beth Blackburn

Woodland Heritage Course 31 May 2012 hosted by Steve Boyle RCAHMS Introduced by Peter Quelch & Coralie Mills

This was a fascinating day on Speyside attended by several NOSAS members.

The morning session was in the Boat of Garten Hall where we learned of the importance of timber and forestry management to mankind over history and prehistory and saw examples of many traditional timber tools and artefacts. Dendrochronology was discussed and although a useful archaeological tool it has many limitations particularly in the highlands where the data base is still far from complete. It was interesting to hear that up to about 1450, native oak was the main building material but by the 15th and 16th Centuries became rare.

In the afternoon we went outside to see coppiced oakwoods at Loch Pityoulish and the associated boundaries. We then moved to Kinrara to see very old coppiced Alders beside the railway. These were thought to be an integral part of the pre improvement farming regime being grazed by cattle in the spring while calving and before moving up to hill land.

www.dendrochronicle.co.uk



David Findlay

Media Release

Cille Bhrea bones, Kiltearn parish, reburied following excavation 21.6.12

Human bones which were removed from the Cille Bhrea chapel and graveyard have now been reburied fifteen years later in the main parish cemetery of Kiltearn. The bones which are of relatively late date were removed in 1998 as part an excavation commissioned by Historic Scotland in response to the coastal erosion of the eastern end of the chapel which overlooks the Cromarty Firth a mile west of Ardullie roundabout. The excavation, conducted by AOC Archaeology, recovered information on a sequence of 50 graves and also excavated the eastern limit of the chapel. The bones of at least 32 individuals, of which 11 were under the age of twenty, were removed for analysis in before being sent to Inverness Museum for storage. In line with good practice, and as they are no longer required for archaeological analysis, a decision has been reached to rebury them in the main parish cemetery for Kiltearn, on the shore by Evanton. Reburial on the site itself is not recommended by Historic Scotland as it can disturb other burials and archaeology on what is a Scheduled Monument.



Kiltearn Community Council agreed to take a lead on the matter, after initial research by local historian Adrian Clark. The boxes of bones were recently handed over by Inverness Museum and prepared for reinterment by community council chairman Alpin MacDonald. Donnie Macsween, minister of Kiltearn Parish, carried out a short graveside recomittal on Wednesday 20 June at 11am.

The specialist report by Kath MacSweeney indicated that the bodies showed evidence of poor health, including malnutrition as shown by the teeth enamel, and 4 possible cases of arthritis. 7 bodies which were radio carbon dated indicate likely seventeenth to nineteenth century dates.



The chapel was reputedly founded in 1198 although the first written reference is from 1228. It was the first church in Easter Ross from which the Reformed religion was preached, Dr Munro of Castlecraig crossing the firth to do so. It was the parish church of Lemlair until united in 1618 with Kiltearn where the Munros of Foulis had created a burial enclosure in 1558. The chapel which was known as St Mary's may have been used as a mausoleum for the Munros in the eighteenth century and is also thought to have served as a burial place for the victims of cholera in 1836. The earliest excavation was by Dr Tony Woodham, who had a property adjacent to the chapel and who

died earlier this year aged 87. Some residents of Evanton recollect coming across loose bones by the shore when walking to Dingwall in their youth.

21 June 2012

Further Info: www.her.highland.gov.uk ID: MHG8942

Adrian Clark 01349 830517

Alpin MacDonald 01349 832983

Jeanette Pearson, Inverness Museum 01463 2371

ARCHAEOLOGY SCOTLAND SUMMER SCHOOL MAY 2012

The Summer School, which consists of two full days of Field Excursions and two evening lectures, has a different venue each year, trying to cover as much of the country as possible, and this year was based in Dumfries to explore some of the sites in Eastern Dumfriesshire. We were accommodated in the Station Hotel in Dumfries, having bed, breakfast and dinner, and a packed lunch; they did us proud and we were well looked after.

As usual, the two day event was superbly organised and 93 eager participants boarded the two local coaches at 0900 each day heading for points north and east, mostly prehistoric and Roman sites, and usually up on the hills, meaning we had plenty of exercise but great views over the country - and the skylarks were in full voice. The rolling hills and woods of deciduous trees, particularly beech, were beautiful although the vast plantations of conifers were intrusive at times.

On the first evening, Friday, we heard a lecture by the HER Officer for Dumfries & Galloway, Andrew Nicholson "An Introduction to the Prehistory of Eastern Dumfriesshire", which set the scene for our excursions.

The next day, Saturday, we went into Eskdale, and in spite of the notorious weather of Eskdale we had a dry day! First to Raeburnfoot to look at the Bank barrow, Roman fort and temporary camp, and Clerk Hill prehistoric settlement. There was a long walk in, but the less able of us were considerately catered for by a minibus, enabling us to save our energy for the scramble up the hill to have the complicated site described to us by Strat Halliday and Jack Stevenson (President of Archaeology Scotland), both recently retired from RCAHMS, who did the original survey many (30?) years ago. We ate our packed lunches in the Community Centre in Eskdalemuir, where volunteers provided hot drinks; they have an ambitious programme to make it a hub for the small and remote community.

After lunch we viewed the Loupin' Stanes and Girdle Stanes stone circles from the coaches on our way to Castle O'er hillfort in Eskdale, a spectacular fort which had timber round houses and linear earthworks. Then on to Over Rig, a unique ceremonial enclosure constructed in the early centuries AD.

After an excellent dinner we had a lecture "The Medieval Archaeology of Eastern Dumfriesshire" by Peter Corser, Heritage Management Field Officer, Historic Scotland, and formerly RCAHMS. After a day on the hills in breezy and cool conditions, and a good dinner, this required will power and concentration!

Next day, Sunday, dawned hot and sunny - a real treat. We explored the Peel of Lochmaben, previously passing Lochmaben Castle, a 12th century castle which we were unable to visit due to a major golf tournament, but the Peel was interesting and beautifully sited by the loch and defended by ditches, banks, and timber palisades. Then on to Burnswark hill fort, settlements and Roman earthworks, a large and complicated site.

We ate our picnics sitting in the sun by the side of the River Esk in Langholm, where the ice-cream van tempted many of us. Then we went to Boyken, a well-preserved pre-improvement platformed farmtoun containing about thirty buildings and their associated yards and enclosures. Our last visit was to see the famous Ruthwell Cross in the parish church at Ruthwell, first described in a written record in 1599. Stell quoted Professor Dame Rosemary Cramp and described it as "...the most complete theological programme of any surviving cross" which illustrates "the intellectual background of Northumbrian Christianity". There are carved images and runes, and the cross might date to the 700s.

Back in Dumfries, we were hosted to a reception at Dumfries Museum, which has exceptionally interesting and well presented displays and knowledgeable staff, before yet another excellent dinner. On Monday morning many of the delegates opted for a walking tour of Dumfries led by Wilson Ogilvie; I was unable to join this tour because of the timetable of my journey by public transport.

As usual, this was a hugely enjoyable and instructive weekend, most capably organised by Geoff Waters and Alison Reid, and led by Stratford Halliday and several local archaeologists. It was good to see many old friends but also some new and younger faces; the location near to the Border seems to have attracted more delegates from England.

Pamela Draper 6 June 2012

NOSAS OUTING TO STROMA, June 2012

The sad history and outcome of this island had been known to me for a number of years and I was really pleased to get the opportunity to visit. It did not disappoint! Although time and the weather has taken its toll, the “fossilised” remains of a past way of life has been preserved to a remarkable degree in the 60 or so houses that litter the fertile island. Yes,



the houses each with its box beds and fascinating assemblage of furniture were interesting but also some of the highlights of the visit for me were;

1. The many old agricultural (and other) implements lying abandoned - from ploughs, threshing machines and carts, to rollers, turnip mashers and tattie howkers, from sewing machines, commodes and bedpans to telephone boxes

2. The associated byres, behind and usually at right angles to the main houses (and the shoreline). They were consistently smaller than the houses, usually roofless, with no



windows and many with several compartments; were these the former dwellings which had been adapted to serve other uses when new buildings had been built?

3. The mills – there were two horse engines and one water driven mill still with its wheel in place. The water for the latter, at Mains of Stroma, was provided by an entirely man made reservoir (in fact there were two) with lengthy embankments.



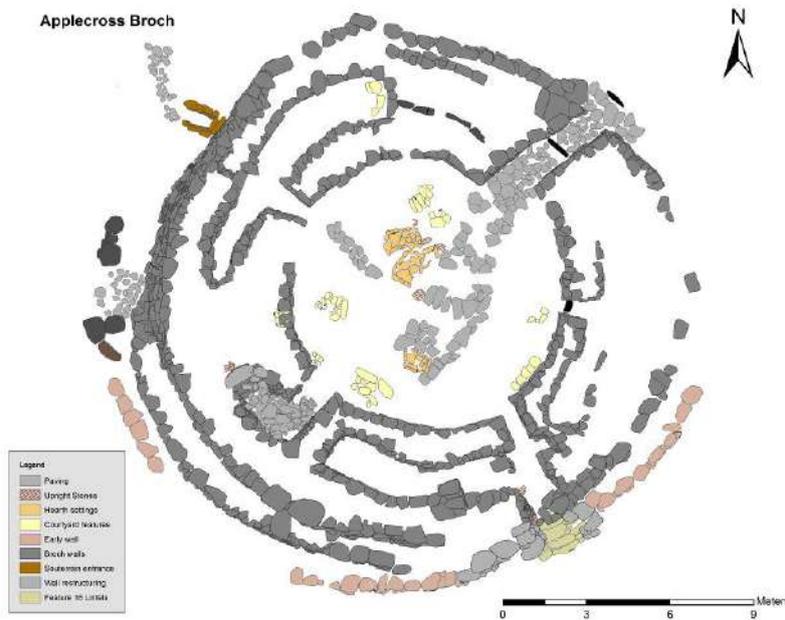
The sheer beauty of the place in the middle of the Pentland Firth with extensive views to Orkney, with huge colonies of seals (we saw at least 200 “sunning” themselves on the slabs at one point), and the occasional tiny blue squill (hyacinth) in the heathland

Many thanks to Jonie for organising the trip
Meryl Marshall

Applecross Broch

The Applecross Broch Community Archaeology Project 2006-2010 Data Structure Report has just been completed. Although post-excavation specialist work is still underway on the finds and samples, analysis of the excavation results is a fascinating culmination to the project which uncovered a final phase of occupation on the site dating to the 4th-5th century AD. The results have shown indeed that there

is no certainty that a proper broch existed beforehand on the site; however the main structure, certainly in use by the 1st century AD and postdating an earlier roundhouse on the site, was built after a stone-built underground passage dating to some time before the mid 4th-early 3rd century BC. The fieldwork has also show that at least one earlier ditch partially enclosed the site. For more information, please contact Mary Peteranna.



INVERNESS MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

I wanted to let you all know that I have recently been appointed to the position of Assistant Curator at Inverness Museum and Art Gallery and that I would like to extend a warm welcome you all to call in to the museum for a visit any time. Do just ask for me when you drop in and if I am around I should be delighted to say hello.

As many of you will know, we have a fabulous archaeological collection at the museum; both on display and in storage and I am arranging a couple of exciting opportunities to welcome folk into our stores during Scottish Archaeological Month, this coming October - see below for those dates.

I will also be inviting people to join me for a series of tours of Medieval Inverness - exploring the streets beneath our feet. These investigations will begin in the museum's fine medieval galleries, before heading out for an insider's view on the middens, monasteries and mercantile mysteries of the burgh as we walk the medieval settlement and hear about the archaeological investigations that have revealed Inverness' past - again see below for dates and booking details.

We are always delighted to be able to help with your enquiries and are more than happy to have a look at any objects of curiosity that you might want to bring in for examination. As well as being able to source information and comparison from our extensive collections, research library and team expertise, we are also able to call on the expert opinions and advise of our colleagues at the National Museums of Scotland, Highland Museums Forum and further afield. And, if you aren't able to call in person, an email with a photo attached will set us on the discovery trail. Do just get in touch with me at cait.mccullagh@highlifehighland.com I will be happy to help.

Archaeology in Applecross

The Broch

Unfortunately the University of Bradford summer school excavation wasn't able to happen this summer, although they're all very keen and hope that this will take place in summer 2013.

Applecross Archaeology Training Project

This project, funded generously by ALPS, started fairly late in the year and suffered from midgets in September followed by wind and rain which went on for weeks and certainly limited what could be done outside through the winter of 2011/12. Despite this, the project started with an investigation of corn kilns, followed by a weekend of geophysical training. Susan and Alastair, otherwise known as Rose Geophysics of Orkney, led the group through the techniques of Gradiometer and Resistance survey over the ground where the former township of Langwell is thought to have been.

We now have several plans of the survey area at Langwell showing the different results and, while it is clear that there are a lot of responses indicating former human activity such as burning and ground disturbance, we were maybe slightly disappointed that clear building outlines did not emerge. However, we can now narrow down the township area to within and south of the double row of dry stone dykes and areas of concentrated response indicate where we could go on to do test pitting to investigate the township further.

We had hoped to carry out an experiment in Iron Age smelting with Jake Keen, but a combination of bad weather and the problems of finding local sources of materials such as iron ore, clay and charcoal meant that this event had to be postponed. Instead we had a very interesting couple of days learning about traditional woodland management, coppicing and charcoaling, with hands-on greenwood working, with Mike Ellis of Helmsdale Charcoal and Coppice. Mike is a great character and we are sure he will be involved in many Applecross projects in the future.

The March sunshine brought out a good crowd to explore the mining history of Applecross and look at a few other sites around Kishorn on the way.

We took the opportunity of having a group of willing volunteers to carry some ore back down the hill. This, we hope will eventually be used in our iron smelting experiment.

Unfortunately the plane-table survey training day which followed was less well attended, I presume that's because NOSAS members are already experienced plane tablers. Nonetheless the small team managed to complete a ground plan of some mysterious building footings within the coniferous forestry south of the broch. All became clear after we'd spent a bit of time removing the overburden of tumble from the foundations, and they revealed themselves to be a standard pattern rectangular sheep fank and small cottage. Although these are common in the sheep farming areas of the Highlands, there are very few on the Applecross peninsula. This one probably dates to the early 19th century and was deliberately demolished around 1870.

In April we spent a fascinating couple of days carrying out a building survey at the steading of Applecross home farm, which is just by the campsite. This is a very early designed farm steading, possibly from around 1820, which has undergone many modifications as farming practices changed, leaving in some cases only small changes in stonework to indicate what had been there.

Weekends in May and June were given over to training in the digging of test pits, led by Mary Peteranna and Lynn Fraser. These exercises, at Langwell and adjacent to the broch, possibly raised more questions than provided answers, and I'll leave it to Mary and Lynn to present the results.

Cathy Dagg June 2012

Glasgow Archaeological Society visit to Culloden Battlefield

Three NOSAS members took up an offer from Glasgow Archaeological Society to accompany them on a visit to Culloden battlefield on 2nd June. We were treated to an excellent extended guided tour/lecture from Tony Pollard, Director of the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology at Glasgow University, whose excavations of key parts of the battlefield revealed that the Jacobite forces came far closer to victory than some accounts had suggested.

As a bonus, we also accompanied the GAS party to Clava Cairns, a site which Tony Pollard knew far more about than he was initially prepared to admit

Bob Jones June 2012

FUTURE EVENTS

Saturday 25th August, 2012: The city beneath our feet – discover the archaeology beneath the streets of Inverness. Step into the past with archaeologist/curator, Cait McCullagh. A compelling story of tsunamis, middens, castles, medieval merchants and monks. There are two options for this free tour. Option one starts at 11am and Option two at 2pm. Both begin in the museum gallery, each lasting 2 hours maximum. The tours are free, but booking is essential. To book email cait.mccullagh@highlifehighland.com or call me on 01463 237114.

Saturday 6th October 2012: Behind the scenes at the museum – delve into the archaeology stores at IMAG. Explore behind the scenes in our stores and discover the objects that reveal ancient maths, prehistoric bling and medieval money! There are two options for these free tours of the stores and collections. Option one starts at 11am and Option two at 2pm. Both last 2 hours maximum. The tours are free, but, again, as places are limited, booking is essential. To book email cait.mccullagh@highlifehighland.com or call me on 01463 237114.

I hope to be able to announce some more workshops, tours and learning sessions, all offering the opportunity for you to get behind the scenes at the museum and try out some new artefact identification, handling and recording skills. So, watch this space!

Looking forward to hearing from you and to seeing you at IMAG.

Cait McCullagh

Saturday 11 August: A day of walks of archaeological interest in north Sutherland. This promises to be a fascinating day – put it in your diaries.

Arranged by Anne Coombs. Details to follow.

Scottish Archaeology Month

September 2012 details www.archaeologyscotland.co.uk

Highland Archaeology Festival

29th September to 14th October 2012 details www.highland.gov.uk

Future test pitting of roundhouses – details annawelti@btinternet.com

Achiltibuie 27-31st August 2012

Ullapool 24-28th September 2012

Gairloch 22-26th October 2012

Beth Blackburn and Jonie Guest 27.06.2012