



## NEWSLETTER January 2015

### Dates for your diary

For further details about these events see the WHAT'S ON section of the NOSAS website.

**MADs** Tuesdays 7.30 - 9.30 pm at Strathpeffer Community Centre

20 January **An eclectic mix of NOSAS activities**

17 February TBA

17 March **Embo boats and other SCHARP activities including Sanday**

- Ellie Graham-Allsop of SCHARP/SCAPE

### Winter walks

Thurs 12 February **Around and about Glenmarskie, Strathconon** (note change from 5 Feb)

- Meryl Marshall, contact [mm.marshall321@btinternet.com](mailto:mm.marshall321@btinternet.com)

Sunday 8 March **Whitebridge Pictish Cemetery** and other sites east of Loch Ness

- Roland Spencer-Jones (note change from 7 March)

Saturday 11 April **Dun Lagaidh and adjacent sites on the south side of Loch Broom**

- Lachlan McKeegie

**Fieldwalking at Tarradale** Sundays beginning 18 January

If you would like to take part looking for flints, potsherds, glass, slag etc. contact Eric Grant at [eandjgrant@gmail.com](mailto:eandjgrant@gmail.com) No experience necessary, but warm clothing certainly is.

Monday 9 February 11 am - 1 pm at Strathpeffer Community Centre

**Free workshop, run for Archaeology Scotland, on how to enter data to 'Discovery and Excavation in Scotland'** No need to book - just turn up.

Tuesday 6 pm reception for 7 pm lecture at Inverness Museum

**Excavations at Vindolanda - the evidence for a frontier constantly in transition**

- Andrew Birley, Director of excavations for the Vindolanda Trust

Booking essential, with [Cait.McCullagh@highlifehighland.com](mailto:Cait.McCullagh@highlifehighland.com)

### Special event weekend 20-22 March

Friday evening: Talk on **Archaeology of the Landscape** by Richard Tipping, Stirling University

Saturday: proposed visit to landscape in Upper Glen Affric

Sunday: another field visit

### Weekend visit to Luing Friday 1st - Sunday 3rd May

Guided by Sheila Clarke, Historic Scotland.

Day trip to the Garvellachs, by hard boat, weather permitting, Sat or Sun.

Need to book accommodation on Luing/ferries to Luing in advance.

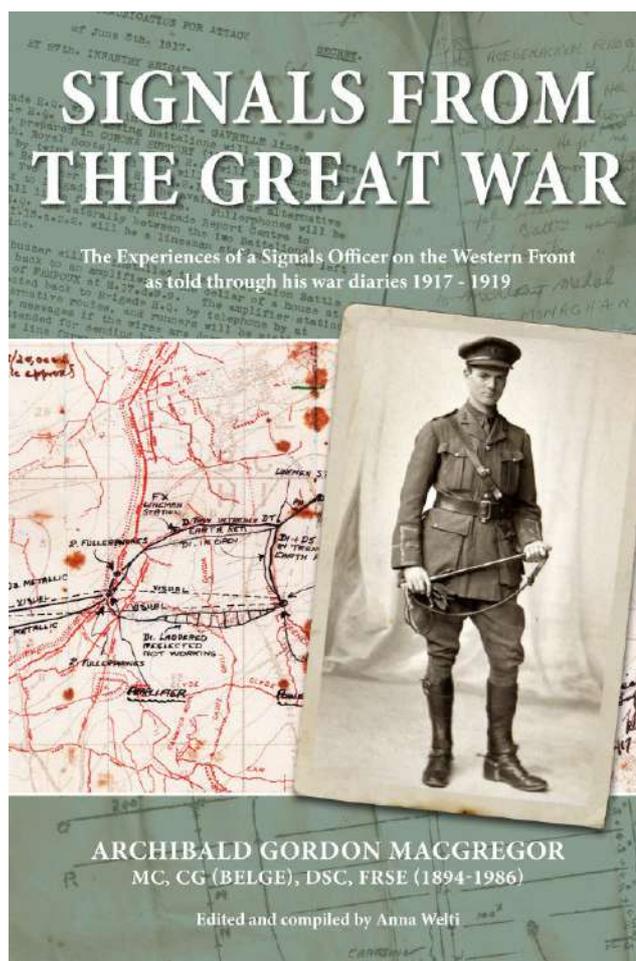
- Jonie Guest. For further details contact [jonie.guest@gmail.com](mailto:jonie.guest@gmail.com)

## Signals from the Great War, edited by Anna Welti

Signals from the Great War: The experiences of a Signals Officer on the Western Front as told through his war diaries 1917-1919 by Archibald Gordon MacGregor RE MC edited and compiled by Anna Welti published by Reville Press, November 2014 ISBN 978 1 90333690 3 cover price – £15.99 Paperback, 223p. Illustrated. Available from Waterstones and other bookshops, and from Amazon.

Review by Chris Baker, former chairman of the Western Front Association, and author of website 'The Long, Long Trail'.

I have to confess to a connection with this book in that the editor, Archibald Gordon MacGregor's daughter Anna, kindly allowed me to quote from his diary and use a photograph of him in my 2007 book "The battle for Flanders: German defeat on the Lys, 1918". Even back then she was engaged in the work that resulted in this excellent "Signals from the Great War".



Archibald Gordon MacGregor was born in Nova Scotia in 1894 and moved with his family to Edinburgh in 1901. He was commissioned into the Royal Engineers in February 1915 and served as the Signals Officer of 27th Infantry Brigade of the 9th (Scottish) Division on the Western Front from 1917 to 1919. "Archie" was awarded the Military Cross for his work during the Battle of the Lys in April 1918.

Archie left a real treasure trove of material concerning his war: his diary, letters, collected orders and other official material, maps, press cuttings, photographs and sketches. He also wrote a fascinating dedication of his material to his grandchildren in 1968. The editor has applied the lightest of touches to pull this material into a good, logical, well-presented and easily readable story. Letters and other documents are reproduced in facsimile, while the narrative is in clear text. It makes for an insightful, detailed, view of the war as experienced by a subaltern and is particularly valuable for its coverage of the last year of the war, a period all too often skimmed over or virtually omitted. Archie's personality, practicality and objectivity come across clearly and I found I liked him. It is also of great interest that despite experiencing periods of great tension, personal danger and loss he never descends to disenchantment: quite the opposite indeed, for he knows there is a job to be done. His 1968 missive to his grandchildren concludes, "I hope neither you nor your children have to fight another war to defend the basis of Christian civilisation – but if you do, hold high the torch that was passed on in Flanders fields so long ago!". Amen to that.

Very nicely produced in glossy paperback, the book is well priced and I commend it anyone. For those interested in the work of the Signals Service of the Royal Engineers or in the 9th (Scottish) Division, it is a particular treat.

## A cross stone found in Rosemarkie

This intriguing carved, reworked and relatively portable piece of sandstone (0.32 x 0.38 x 0.15 m) was originally located in a rockery in the garden of 1 High Street, Rosemarkie.

Neither the owners of the house nor the local community have any knowledge of its provenance. The find location at 1 High Street is at the south west top of the High Street close to Rosemarkie Church and ancient graveyard where many Pictish and medieval stones have been discovered. The owners were selling their house and offered it to me as I was intrigued with its most unusual design.

The front of the stone appears to bear the design of a cross carved in relief and the rear is flat. It may have originally been rectangular (possibly square or close to it) with a broad chamfered margin on at least three sides. The very prominent chamfer could be a feature of a cross slab associated with the early medieval Pictish centre at Rosemarkie but could equally point to being an architectural fragment with a later date. The fact that the chamfer has been partly removed and an arc cut out of the stone shows that the stone has been perhaps reworked and re-used for another purpose.



*Rosemarkie cross stone*

*Tim Blackie*

John Borland of RCAHMS recorded the stone in August 2014 and confirmed the prospect of a 10th century cross slab but also suggested that it might be some sort of boss from the crown of an 18/19th century mausoleum/vault/aisle but offers no boss comparisons at this time. Existing Rosemarkie church records make no mention of a large mausoleum, vault or aisle in Rosemarkie graveyard but many historical records were destroyed in a fire.

In addition to the apparent reworking, the top surface of the cross exhibits some droving lines, visible only in low angle light. Some of lines show a pecking technique in the working, and John suggested an 18/19th century date to these. Why someone would apply that finish onto a re-used stone is difficult to understand.

John has suggested two cross slab designs at as comparisons: a cross at St Vigeans <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/260540/details/st+vigeans/> and a cut off corner at Menmuir <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/35134/details/menmuir+parish+church+cross+slab/>



*Top in low angle light, showing droving lines*

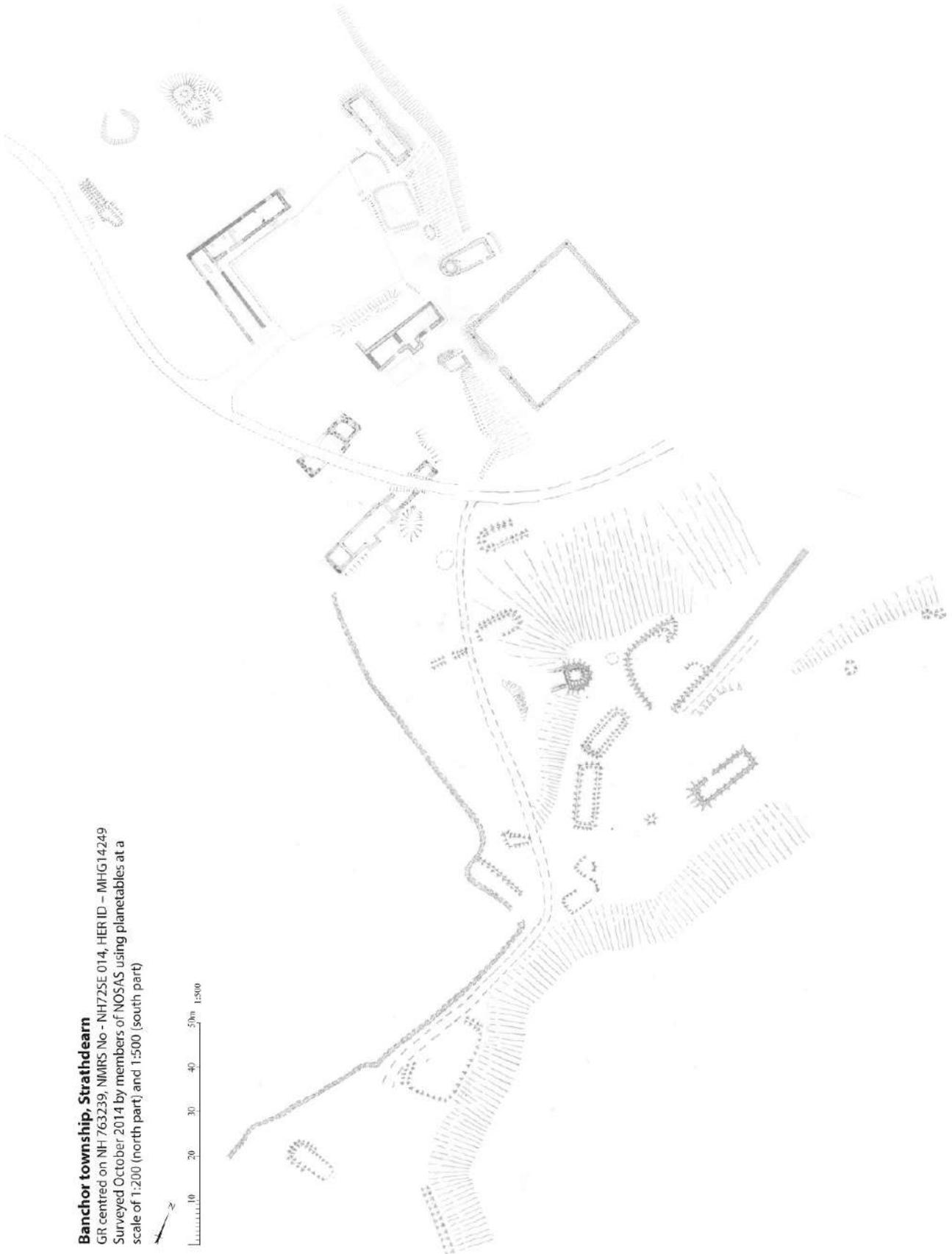
*Tim Blackie*

I submitted a TTU report 3 months ago and await their assessment but however believe that the stone will continue to be an enigma. John Borland is encouraging lots of experienced eyes to offer their opinion and all suggestions will be gratefully received.

Tim Blackie

## Banchor update

Here is the amalgamation of all our individual drawings, put together by Alison McCaig of RCAHMS. If you are viewing it using Acrobat Reader you can rotate the page using the View menu, then Rotate View, then Clockwise. Afterwards you will need to rotate back again to read the rest of the newsletter.



## The ghostly remains of past glory days – the graveyard of the Embo Zulus at Loch Fleet

When did it all start? A group of NOSAS members were keen to participate and received training with SCAPE about the coastal archaeology at risk at Simon's house, The Old Store, in January 2013. At that time I had no idea of where it would all lead and where I was going to travel.

Following on from this training it was decided to take on board some of these coastal at risk sites and to walk from Golspie to Littleferry on a cold February day. We had hardly got started at Loch Fleet when we came across timbers protruding from the sand, which looked like wrecks ...



*The Old Store*

*Jonie Guest*



*A wreck*

*Jonie Guest*

and also mounds of stones in clusters and a capstan in the intertidal zone.



*Capstan*

*Jonie Guest*

It was decided to do a quick survey of the area and it was thought that there were about 16 wrecks. There was no reference to these wrecks on Canmore, Scotland's National Monuments Record. When back home I uploaded all the information and photographs onto the SCAPE site.

However, later on after looking at the Highland Council Historic Environment Record there was an article by Richard Easson of Tain in the Northern Times in 1995 which mentioned 12 boats including a large winch, found close to Skelbo. We were later told that these could be the remains of the Embo fishing fleet. Partly because so many fishermen did not return after WW1, the boats were left in Loch Fleet and burned.

Well is this the true story and what should we do next?

I contacted SCAPE and after emails and phone calls Jo and Ellie came up to Loch Fleet and had a look at the wrecks. We discussed how to go about recording and what needed to be done. Loch Fleet is a National Nature Reserve and protected as a SSSI (site of special scientific interest), SPA (special protection area, for birds) and Ramsar (a wetland of international importance). Before we could start surveying it would help if the seaweed could be removed and permissions would have to be sought.

Further conversations took place between SCAPE and NOSAS, since members had not surveyed intertidal wrecks before. A plan was put in place to return and survey.

The wrecks sit within a sandy sheltered embayment at the south side of Loch Fleet, centred at roughly NH 79685 94950. They are partially covered with sand, with some elements of the boats' structures standing above the present sand level.

By November 2013, tide times have been checked and permissions obtained - but it's not the best time of year to choose.

Members who volunteered were split into teams to tackle each wreck and tried various techniques to scrape off the seaweed, using wire brushes, knives, trowels and scrapers and the weed was eventually raked away. The wrecks were identified and given a letter of the alphabet starting at 'A'.



*Loch Fleet*

*Jonie Guest*



*Surveying*

*Jonie Guest*

In February 2014 Jo and Ellie offered to come up for the weekend and we met at Dornoch Social Club. Training was given about coastal sites at risk, how to monitor, record and submit information about our local coastal heritage.

Steve Liscoe from the Nautical Archaeological Society (NAS) was also present to give a talk to local people about historic fishing vessels and fishing of the period.



*More surveying*

*Jonie Guest*

#### HOW WE WENT ABOUT THE SURVEY

The teams surveyed the wrecks A to Q. One constraint was of course the tide. Some of the wrecks were easy to identify whilst others were hidden in the sand. Stone ballast also survives in situ within the wooden structures of the boats. Metal elements of the boats, including fixtures attached to the wooden elements and the capstan shown above, also survive.

After that the drawings had to be scanned and digitised, which was done using Inkscape. Lastly an aerial photo scan of the site was produced by Eddie Martin. More details will be revealed in 2015 at an evening MAD session.

The NOSAS team was Anne, Beth, Colin, James, Karen, Lee, Marion, Michael, Naomi, Sheila, Richard and myself.

I was asked by SCAPE to give my input on the Embo Zulus in a presentation at The Nautical Archaeology Society and Thames Discovery Programme Annual Conference at the Museum of London. My maiden presentation went well, although at the beginning I was very nervous as the lecture theatre was full.

The participating NOSAS members were given the opportunity to take, for free, the NAS e-learning course Introduction to foreshore and underwater archaeology, and to gain a certificate. Richard and I have been participating in marine archaeology since 2000 and had already gained NAS I and II certificates. We had accumulated points towards our Part III certificate by taking part in surveys in the Sound of Mull and our participation in the Loch Fleet survey was sufficient to complete Part III. We were awarded our certificates at the NAS London conference.



*Phil and Jonie*

*Richard Guest*

Afterwards I met Phil Harding who was in Time Team over the past 20 or so years.

Jonie Guest

## Winter Walk 2 January 2015

Our post-Christmas-event walk was deferred because of icy road conditions, and Anne decided to try again on 2 January. It was certainly winter (biting wind, not much sleet) and we didn't walk far, but it was still a good morning out. The theme was Clava cairns, which are a type of Bronze Age chambered cairn typical of our area.

We first visited the cairn by Druid Temple Farm, on the southern outskirts of Inverness, at NH 6851 4201. Although described as 'denuded' there is a lot to see as most of the larger stones remain and its scale and outline are clear. A great site, and of particular interest to me (and a few others) because it is close to where we live, but being behind a farm it's not readily accessible. We therefore took the opportunity to have a good look round.



*Druid Temple Cairn*

*Alan Thompson*

We then travelled in convoy to Balnuaran of Clava (NH 7572 4445) which is in many ways the 'type site' for these cairns. Historic Scotland offer a short visitor guide at <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/clava-cairns.pdf> The weather briefly improved and we were well able to examine and discuss the three cairns in the winter sun.



*Clava East Cairn Alan Thompson*



*Druid Temple Cairn Alan Thompson*

Finally we walked west to the remains of a chapel and enclosure (NH 7522 4391) which have been built partly over another cairn. The picture shows this, looking eastward towards Balnuaran of Clava and the railway viaduct over Strathnairn.

Anne had planned visits to several other cairns but the weather worsened and we decided to head home.

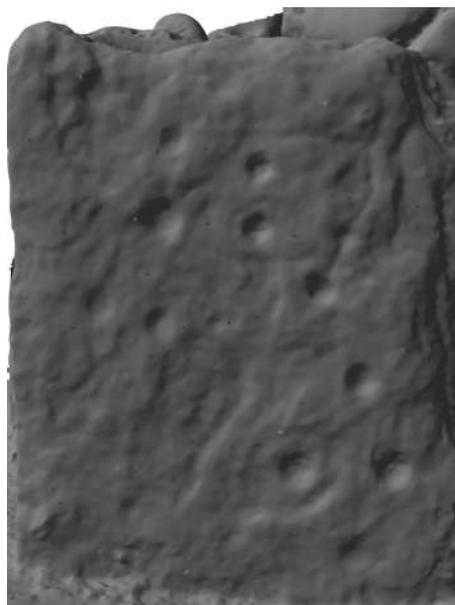
Whilst at Clava (SW cairn) I took several pictures of the cup marked stone (on the right looking out from the centre of the cairn) from different angles and using photogrammetry processed a 3D image which helps show the markings (without cleaning the stone, which is clearly not allowed!)



*Clava Chapel Alan Thompson*



*Stone before Alan Thompson*



*Stone after Alan Thompson Alan Thompson*