

NEWSLETTER 39



www.acfabaseline.info

August 2013

*What a summer this has turned out to be. The crop marks from this year should be spectacular. It seems everyone has taken advantage of the fine weather to dig, survey and visit sites but still to find time to write up their experiences for the newsletter. Thanks to everyone who has contributed to the newsletter and I hope it encourages folk to send in something for the next one in November. And as usual, **don't forget the photo competition!***

WR

ACFA takes a turn in the classroom.

ACFA's Field Archaeology Course for Glasgow University Centre for Open Studies

You will all be aware of the recent unhappy history of the Certificate in Field Archaeology Course which has had to be suspended until September 2014. In order to keep interest from students alive until then, Angela McDonald of the Centre for Open Studies (formerly DACE) and



the committee put their heads together and came up with the idea of a short practical introduction to field archaeology.

It was decided to build on the work Ian Marshall had done last year for GAS using Pollok Park again as the locale. After much debate the weekend of 25th and 26th of May was chosen and then a great deal of planning and consultation took place. Since this was a joint operation with COS it generated a lot of

paperwork, some from the University but more from Glasgow Corporation: we had to do a risk assessment – would there be any dangerous wild animals involved, would we be dealing with dangerous substances, would we be doing ANYTHING dangerous? Would we need extra litter bins or special seating? We had to notify the local police of our activities and promise not to try to extort money from passers-by. Angela, bless her, undertook to deal with all this. The

optimum number of students for our resources was estimated at 15 divided into teams of 3 with a tutor for each team. The tutors were Ian Marshall, Dugie McInnes, Anne McDonald, Susan Hunter, Libby King and Janie Munro with Ian also acting as lecturer. 15 people enrolled although 2 failed to appear on the day. The rest came from far and wide, including one from Bridlington in Yorkshire and one from Andover in Kent.

Saturday 25th May dawned sunny and warm. Pollok Park has never looked more attractive. We began with an introduction in the Rangers' lecture room. Alan Leslie described the 2-year course and Stuart Mackey gave it a ringing endorsement as a recent graduate. Then Ian gave a crash course in field survey with a useful 'Idiot's guide' handout and a demonstration of tape offset on the floor. After



a picnic lunch in the sun and a chance to get to know each other, the group was led on a tour of the archaeological features of the park; to the mild disappointment of the tutors, one of the group immediately recognised the 'pissior' as a 19th century gents' urinal.

On the Sunday, groups of 3 were allocated a tutor and set to drawing one of the features. At the end of the day the students returned to the lecture room for a winding up session and completion of evaluation forms for COS. Needless to say I had a good look at them before sending them to COS. The results were very gratifying. Apart from one participant who hadn't read the prospectus properly and was hoping for education in excavation, they all enjoyed themselves and found the course both informative and fun.

Some comments:

Well-presented, procedures explained well along with reasoning for them

It was everything and more than I was expecting

Learned to look at things in much more detail

Enlightened on how archaeology isn't just digging

Discovered how much hard work is involved

Began to be able to see features which previously I couldn't

It was good working as part of a team

The only real grumble was about the toilets and it was acknowledged that they were not our fault. Actually the toilets were next door to the stable for the Clydesdale Horses – I did wonder No!

It has to be admitted, however, that there was something lacking from the weekend which would have given them perhaps a more realistic experience and possibly affected the level of

enthusiasm. The sites were all a short walk away on the level – no hills, no bogs, no bracken. It didn't rain and it wasn't windy. Field archaeology in heaven.

Carol Primrose

April in Orkney

It seems that so many ACFA members have visited Orkney this summer that, added to those who have been there in the past, this might render any account of mine a “teaching my granny to suck eggs” exercise. For me the prospect of my visit in April this year was something akin to a fan meeting an admired film star or hero; could Orkney possibly live up to my expectations or was I doomed to be disappointed?

Arriving at St Margaret's Hope, the sky seemed enormous stretching from horizon to horizon



From Cuween Hill

with that special luminescence of the north. April in Orkney, and the islands were still coming out of winter, the soft, rounded dun-coloured landscape showing the first traces of green; no wonder so many artists and craftspeople make Orkney their home. I immediately fell in love with the place.

Based in Kirkwall, in four days we got round most of the main sites on Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Rousay. We were too early for the excavations at the Ness of Brodgar (their season begins in July) but we peered over the fence at the black polythene-shrouded structures we'd heard so much about at a recent GAS lecture.

Our experience of the series of sites that make up the ritual landscape between the lochs of Stenness and Harray was 'enhanced' by a howling gale, but walking between the sites, rather than driving, helped our appreciation of the sense of navel from which the world expands, and the relationship of one site to another. Maes Howe, which Paul, my husband, had last visited over thirty years ago when visitors wandered freely about the site, was the star attraction. Access now carefully controlled by Historic Scotland, our visit was informative and entertaining, thanks to the Historic Scotland guide whose talk was up-to-date archaeologically speaking (including the Ness of Brodgar), comprehensive, authoritative, placing Maes Howe in context, and very funny.



An Orkney gale

Rousay and its wealth of chambered cairns and views across Eynhallow Sound took up most of a day, although we wished we'd stopped off at the tiny heritage display when we came off the ferry, rather than on our return trip, as we'd missed a lot of interesting information. I did scramble up a roadside bank to investigate one of the many wrecked chambered cairns marked on the OS map.

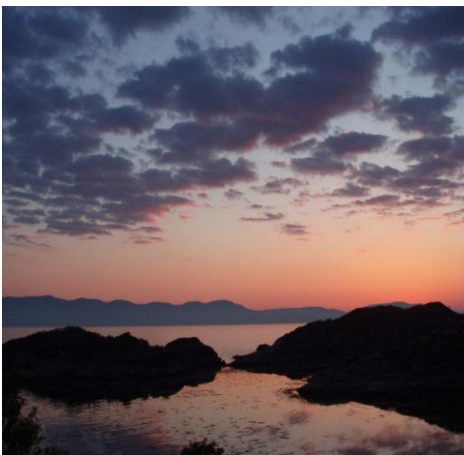
Having visited Isbister (Tomb of the Eagles) and enjoyed its excellent visitor centre, and the trip on the skateboard contraption used to access the cairn, we returned to South Ronaldsay to its

sister site Bank or The Tomb of the Otters. Bank was only discovered in September 2010 when the then owner of the Skerries Bistro, in extending their car park, shifted a capstone. An archaeology graduate, there to work the season, led us into a garden hut, which serves as a temporary visitor centre, and brought out large plastic boxes stuffed with finds, among them the otter skulls and bones which have given the site its name. She carefully held out a human cranium and the highly polished stone it had been found covering; this was intimate archaeology.

The cairn is entered from the side, having removed a sheet of hardboard covering the entrance. Like Isbister it is something of a hybrid. It is small and very wet, the main chamber maybe three metres long with a low roof, with side Maes Howe-type cells and small rounded chambers at either end. Orthostats project into the main chamber, but they are not paired-up as would be usual. The tomb has only been partially excavated and it was a real privilege to see it in this state. One of the side cells and most of one end chamber are still full of the material that filled the tomb when it was first discovered. Amongst the filling were deliberately formed layers of otter spraint (droppings) which can be seen, along with tantalising glimpses of other possible finds, in the unexcavated areas. Eight skeletons have been recovered so far but there are (April 2013) no plans to recommence excavation. We were told that resources were currently all tied up at the Ness of Brodgar project.

We didn't get to Hoy or Westray and Papa Westray so a return visit is definitely on the cards to beautiful, magical Orkney.

Janie Munro



Rona – The Final Push?

This is an early notification for all active members that the group who have been working on the island for the last four years are keen to complete the heroic work directed by Wendy.

In a splendid week in late April this year, which included Dr Heather James from Northlight, we successfully completed the survey of the northern settlement at Braig (and re-established the lost site of the 'Danish Princess's Grave' above Loch A'Bhraige). Wendy has now quite

naturally decided to step back from the task as director and as a measure of just how much work this involved, it is proposed that her role could be carried out by a 'Triumvirate' of Margaret Gardner, Libby King and Ian Marshall.

The remaining work consists of three components, one major – the survey of the southern settlement of Doire na Guaille (at least 30+ structures) epically walked over by Kath and Ewen this spring to provide us with a sketch plan. The challenge here is the lengthy daily walk in and out so the initial proposal is that this would be staggered out over the week with work every second day to allow for 3 days R&R in between.

The other issues are less: the publication of the drawings and elevations of the enigmatic An Teampuill medieval chapel – all the fieldwork is done on this and Wendy is aiming to get this published this winter. Lastly, there is the possible walkover of the immediate coastline of the historic anchorage of Acarsaid Mhor.

Whether this can be done in one year is of course dependent on many unknowns but we are all keen to do it and would be interested to hear from any members who would consider a week in either late April or early to middle May in 2014.

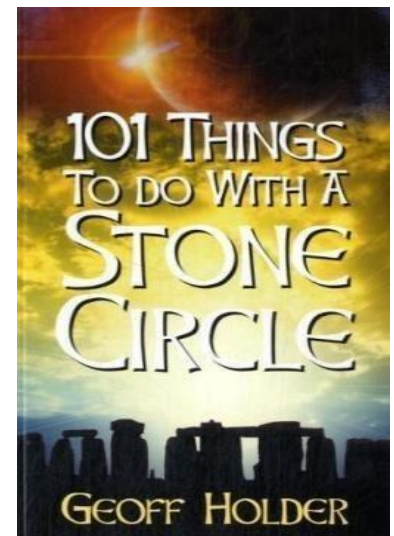
Libby, Margaret and Ian

Book Review: 101 things to do with a stone circle

Geoff Holder, Stroud, Gloucestershire: History Press, 2009.

Or rather 101 things that have been done, or at least imagined, with stone circles long after they were built. Not stone circles alone but also single stones, stone rows, burial chambers, henges and rock art.

The scope of the book ranges over antiquarian interpretations such as William Stukeley's conviction that Stonehenge was built by the Druids or Christian Maclagen's pet theory that stone circles were the foundation stones of ruined brochs; less 'academic' interpretations account for a variety of beliefs such as stones can ensure fertility, or in one (Scottish) case, contraception; stones can solemnise marriage or heal the sick as at the Odin stone on Orkney which was so popular that the landowner destroyed it in 1814 generating so much ire from the locals that his house was burnt down. Oddities which defy classification include the possibly apocryphal story of Stukeley and Lord Winchelsea dining on top of one of the trilithons at Stonehenge in 1723 and the absolutely true tale of how Sueno's stone near Forres was sent an electricity bill by Scottish Hydro.



Druids, ancient and modern, loom large. Actually hardly anything is known about ancient Druids, merely scrappy mentions in Roman writers. But antiquarians from John Aubrey's discovery of the Avebury circle onwards have made free with their imaginations; and modern druids don't just hang out at Stonehenge, ceremonies take place up and down the country; if you feel existing monuments are unsatisfactory in some way then build new ones like Edward Williams (1747-1826) aka Iolo Morganwy.

Even less justified by evidence (*pace* the shade of our own Harry Bell) is the development of theories of spiritual or at least supernatural influences; the author provides 14 definitions of a ley-line, of which one suspects no. 13 "a chance alignment by the opportunistic pattern-recognition software in the human brain" probably represents his own view. Dowsing, psychometry and UFOs likewise take a bit of a knock here.

The uneasy accommodation of ancient stones, or the ideas associated with them is touched on with some churches built on ancient sites and many stones being inscribed with Christian symbols although the author makes the point that this idea is somewhat over-hyped and that the vast majority of ancient sites were left unchanged by the Church unlike many other

agencies. At the time of writing, in 2008, the Hill of Tara in Ireland was under serious threat because of the government's insistence on the necessity of building a road through it. Some features have railway lines driven through them others have become garden features or parts of golf courses as befell the Muir of Ord Henge near the Black Isle. One of the stones at Machrie Moor in Arran was toppled to use for millstones though for some reason they were abandoned *in situ*.

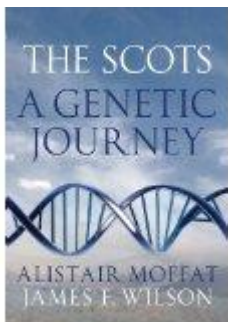
For those with a yearning for an aesthetic dimension to their megalithic experience, a chapter is devoted to "stage, screen and CDs" with an international megalithic movie database, not forgetting fiction and poetry. And for anyone who would like to continue the megalithic tradition there is a survey of those who have done just that including the currently very newsworthy circle in Sighthill which has already suffered from heedless authority since its completion was prevented by the then Prime Minister. '[so Sighthill is the only stone circle in the country to be condemned by Margaret Thatcher. Which must be something to be proud of.]' (p.183)

The monuments discussed are mostly, though not entirely, in Britain. A very useful aspect of the book is the author's assumption that you will want to go and see some of them if you happen to be in their vicinity so you get not only broad locations (such as the *departement* (for France) but 6 figure OS references for British sites and helpful hints as to the nearest road and car parking and how much walking is required. For anyone who wants to pursue some of the esoteric ideas described here there are suggestions for further reading in each chapter. All in all highly entertaining, informative and useful.

Carol Primrose

Book Review: 'The Scots, A Genetic Journey'

Alistair Moffat and James F. Wilson, Birlinn, 2011



This hugely ambitious book draws together the archaeology and history of Scotland from the last Ice Age and the Scots' genetic profile in all its variety and complexity.

Some may remember James Wilson's lecture at Glasgow Archaeology Society a couple of years ago where he explained the science involved in tracing genetic heritage and at which he revealed apparently significant genetic links between communities in the Northern and Western Isles and Scandinavia. The book provides a brief, simplified explanation of DNA and the two gender elements, male Y chromosome markers passed from father to son, and female mitochondrial DNA passed from mother to daughter. The book concerns itself principally with the Y chromosome as it contains many more sequences than mitochondrial DNA (a 60 million letter block of DNA is inherited through the male line intact).

The Scots' genetic heritage from the most ancient Y markers to the more recent arrivals is traced through a gripping account that merges science and story-telling, taking in many familiar archaeological sites and histories, from Lascaux, Star Carr, Amesbury, the Eildon hillforts and the Romans, to the lost medieval village of Roxburgh, the Clearances and recent immigrants. Along the way we learn that a distinctive Pictish marker, R1b-str47, is carried by around 10% of Scots men, which means that there are about 250,000 Scotsmen alive today of Pictish descent,

and that no one tested so far carries a marker that proves the belief that Spanish blood from survivors of the Armada courses through Scottish, or Irish, veins. We also discover that Neanderthals had the gene for red hair and that there is a strong link between surnames and genetic relationship.

The author, Alistair Moffat, who is a former Director of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and is Director of Programmes at STV, is a prodigious producer of popular Scottish histories, mainly with a Borders' theme, and the book is an easy read.

There was some controversy when the book was published, following an interview with Moffat by James Naughtie on the Today radio programme. Naughtie and Moffat are personal friends so the interview was seen as less than critical, plus Moffat is connected to Wilson's genetic ancestry testing company, EthnoAncestry, which was generously plugged on this BBC programme. I am no scientist and have little knowledge of genetics beyond the basics but I am aware that genealogical genetic testing is big business and that there are some question marks over some of the claims made.

The Scots, A Genetic Journey, concludes that as Scots we are all immigrants, just some from further back in time than others. The reader may take some of the claims with a soupçon of salt, but overall this book is an interesting and entertaining journey.

Janie Munro

Think Photo Competition!



Pack your camera

Useful Tip: don't park your camera on top of the car and drive away like I did.

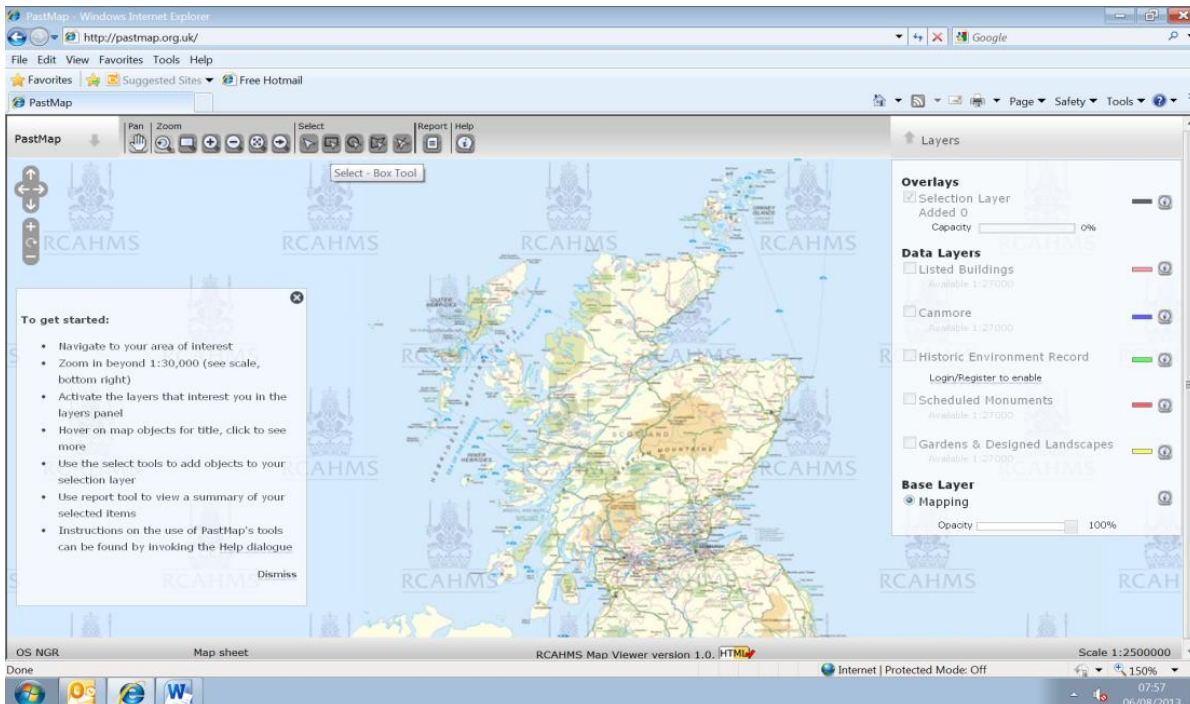
**Entries are welcome any time from now on till the deadline on September 15.
Just send them to me, Susan Bryson, Flat 4, 1 Oakshaw Street East, Paisley, PA1
2DD**

Web Site Review– Past Map

www.pastmap.org.uk

Past Map is the new mapping tool from the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Scotland which brings together data on:

- Listed buildings
- Canmore
- Scheduled monuments
- Historic environment records – you need to register to access this data
- Gardens and designed landscapes



Screenshot of home page

When you first access the site, you have to accept the terms and conditions and then it automatically brings up the “Getting Started” box with basic tips and information about how the site works.

To get started:

- Navigate to your area of interest
- Zoom in beyond 1:30,000 (see scale, bottom right)
- Activate the layers that interest you in the layers panel
- Hover on map objects for title, click to see more
- Use the select tools to add objects to your selection layer
- Use report tool to view a summary of your selected items
- Instructions on the use of PastMap's tools can be found by invoking the [Help dialogue](#)

Most of the data can only be viewed at a scale of 1:27,000 or larger, so zooming in or searching for a name is essential if you want to view the data. Once you have reached a larger scale, the

data Layers become available to you and this is indicated in the Layers bar at the right hand side of the map.

Starting with the whole of Scotland, you can zoom in and out and pan across the map to find the area you are interested in.

You can also search the database using place names, OS grid references or postcodes.

Layers

The “Layers” panel on the right side of the map allows you to select which datasets (technically known as layers in GIS)¹ you want to view. Simply check the tick box and the layer information will appear once you have zoomed in to a large enough scale.

The system also usefully tells you how many examples of each dataset are shown on the map view you have in front of you.

Tools

The toolbar helps you to navigate the map, select and report records and also has a Help function. Hovering your pointer over each of the tools will tell you what they do.

Pan tool: The little hand allows you to pan across the map. This is the default option, which I found slightly annoying as the map moved when I didn’t want it to! To get over this problem you need to quickly select another of the tools from the toolbar.

Zoom tools: Zoom to previous: if you have zoomed in too far or panned over too far, you can return to your previous view.

You can zoom in on an area by drawing a box round it.

There are standard zoom in and zoom out by one level of scale tools. By clicking on the + or – tools you will zoom in or out through a standard set of scales from 1:1,650 to 1:2,500,000. But remember that data only shows up at scales larger than 1:27,000.

If you get completely lost, you can always go back to the beginning by clicking on the Zoom to Scotland icon which will take you back to the initial map.

The arrow icon takes you to the gazetteer box which allows you to zoom to a map by place name, grid reference or postcode.

In my experience, the best way to find the area you are interested in is to use the zoom box icon to draw a box roughly round the area you are interested in and then continue to do this until you have arrived at the area you want to look at.

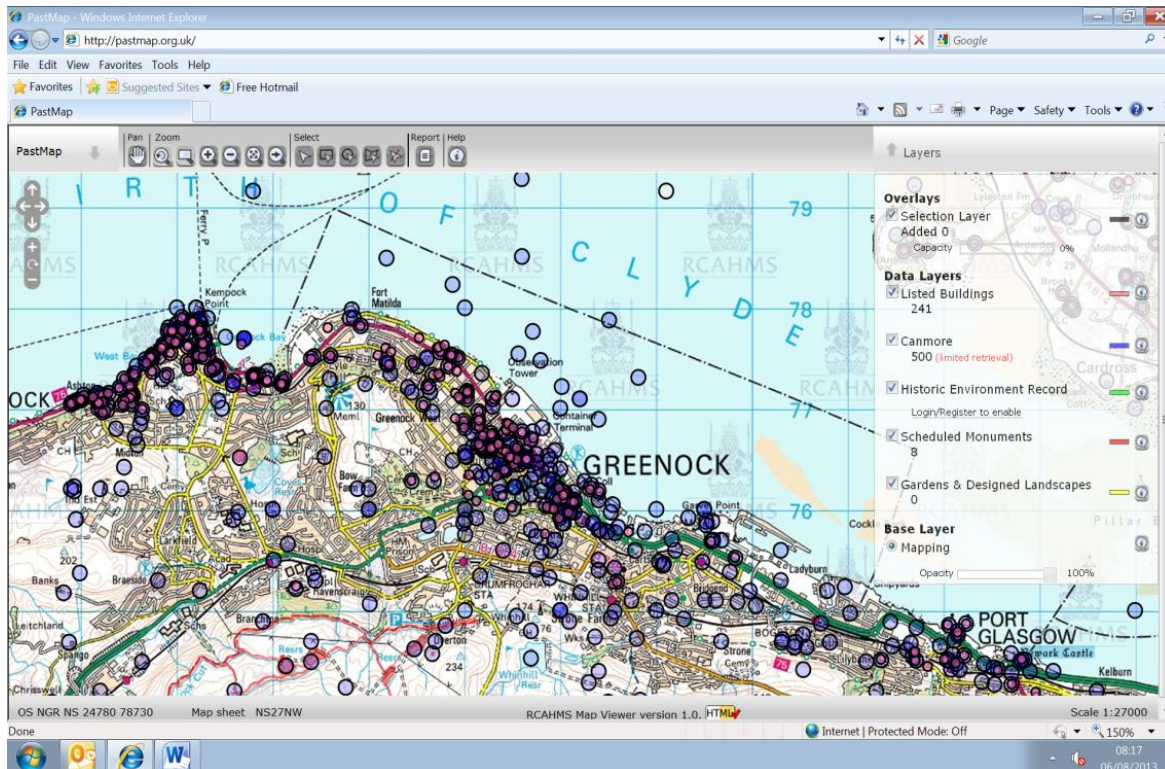
Select tools: The Select tool bar allows you to select records in a number of ways. From left to right:

Using the select individual records tool, you can hover over each item and get some basic details, then by clicking on the item you are interested in you can link through to much more detailed information as well as selecting it

You can also select by drawing a box, a circle or any shape of polygon round any details you are interested in.

¹ GIS – Geographical Information Systems

However, I found the selection system slow when using a tool which selected more than a small number of records. You need to have patience!



Screenshot for Greenock

The screen can become quite crowded as there is a lot of data out there!

You can even access details about wrecks from the Canmore records in the river:

ELIZABETH UPPER FIRTH OF CLYDE

Alternate Name

GREENOCK
INNER CLYDE ESTUARY
ELIZABETH

Site Type

CRAFT (19TH CENTURY)

Canmore ID 102452

Council ARGYLL AND BUTE

Parish MARITIME - ARGYLL AND BUTE

Read full details at: **RCAHMS**

Once you have selected all the records of interest, click on the “Report” icon and this provides a list of all the records you have selected together with hyperlinks to more detailed information. Your report can be downloaded as CSV file for further work.

However, I found a problem with exporting the file and I couldn’t find where it had been saved to. I am sure it was just my IT ignorance.

Selecting features along the Antonine Wall at Bonnybridge gave me the following report:

Report generated: Tue Aug 6 08:37:48 UTC+0100 2013
You can download this report in CSV format.

Dataset	Name	Council	URL	Parish	Details
RCAHMS	ROUGH CASTLE	FALKIRK	Link	FALKIRK	SITETYPE = FIELD SYSTEM CANMORE ID = 46790
RCAHMS	ROUGH CASTLE	FALKIRK	Link	FALKIRK	SITETYPE = DEFENSIVE PITTS (ROMAN), ROMAN FORT (ROMAN) CANMORE ID = 46803
RCAHMS	ROUGH CASTLE	FALKIRK	Link	FALKIRK	SITETYPE = STRUCTURE CANMORE ID = 110293
RCAHMS	BONNYSIDE WEST	FALKIRK	Link	FALKIRK	SITETYPE = SIGNAL PLATFORM (ROMAN) ALTNAME = ANTONINE WALL, BONNYSIDE EXPANSIONS CANMORE ID = 122823
RCAHMS	BONNYSIDE EAST	FALKIRK	Link	FALKIRK	SITETYPE = SIGNAL PLATFORM (ROMAN) ALTNAME = ANTONINE WALL, BONNYSIDE EXPANSIONS CANMORE ID = 122824
RCAHMS	ANTONINE WALL, ROUGH CASTLE	FALKIRK	Link	FALKIRK	SITETYPE = FRONTIER DEFENCE (ROMAN) CANMORE ID = 124018
RCAHMS	ANTONINE WALL, TENTFIELD WEST	FALKIRK	Link	FALKIRK	SITETYPE = SIGNAL PLATFORM (ROMAN) ALTNAME = TENTFIELD EXPANSION CANMORE ID = 127415

Download as CSV Close

OS NGR NS 83732 80457 Map sheet NS88SW RCAHMS Map Viewer version 1.0. HTML Scale 1:7100

A minor feature means that you can adjust the opacity of the background OS map layers using the slide bar. This lets you see the information you are really interested more clearly without the noise of the background mapping interfering.

A useful new resource full of information. In spite of a few glitches, go play and enjoy!

Jennifer Boag

CALLING ACFA MEMBERS!

Surveys

ACFA members are encouraged to undertake field survey, not just at a landscape level but also on a smaller scale for perhaps just one building or feature. These can be sent to RCAMHS and kept as a collection of ACFA Site Reports in addition to the Occasional Papers.

Contact the Committee if you are thinking of proceeding. There are many people who will be happy to advise if required. So, if you have come across an old farmstead or a kiln or a WW2 air raid shelter or any unusual feature in your walks, consider rallying a few of the members, drawing it up and writing a short report.

ACFA does of course promote the larger scale survey where a team of volunteers labour over many weeks / months / years. The costs of printing can be considerable depending on the size of the final report but the Committee will assist survey directors in applying for grants and also advise on a combination of in-house printing and electronic publishing.

October Field Trip



The programme for the October Field trip is nearly complete. We plan to dip into East Lothian's fine collection of castles, hill forts (we found an easily accessible one) and medieval churches as well as visiting Haddington's Georgian heart, its new archaeological exhibition (in the beautiful recently opened John Gray Heritage Centre), and a designed landscape. You'll have to brush up on your knowledge of the Rough Wooing, the Siege of Haddington and the development of agricultural practice after the Improvements, in which Haddingtonshire played a fascinating and major role. There are one or two other surprises, and we are lucky to be joined at times by Bill Nimmo, Dirleton's local expert on Gullane's medieval St Andrew's Kirk, and by David Connolly, local archaeologist, whom some of you will already know from his enthusiastic and impressive knowledge of the area.

There is still some space at the Open Arms, Dirleton if you haven't booked yet. Otherwise, there is other accommodation nearby in Dirleton and you can then join everyone for our evening meal. Alternatively you can come for the day on Saturday, since for this field trip there are no ferries and no long drives.

Anyone planning to come, please let me know so that you can be contacted with further details and field notes when they are available.

Dates : Friday evening till Sunday afternoon 18th till 20th October 2013.

Venue : Open Arms Hotel, Dirleton. www.openarmshotel.com

Cost : £75 per person per night dinner, bed and breakfast. All rooms cost the same. Please book directly with the hotel, mentioning Vicki and ACFA.

Contact Wendy at rainewest@btinternet.com

Telephone: 01968 660686

Dates for the Diary

September is Scottish Archaeology Month – see Archaeology Scotland Website
www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk

Sat 14th September 10.30 – 4.30: ACFA / SCHARP training event, Hillhead Library, Glasgow

Sat.14th September: East Dumbartonshire Doors Open Day 4pm Visit to Cawder House led by Carol Primrose, ACFA.

Wed 18th September: ACFA Committee meeting, St Andrew's Buildings, Glasgow

Fri – Sun, 18th - 20th October: ACFA East Lothian Field Trip, Dirleton, East Lothian

Sat 26th October: ACFA AGM STUC Buildings, Glasgow

Sat 9th November: Scotland's Community Heritage Conference 2013, Birnam Arts and Conference Centre, Perthshire.



Saltyre above East Lothian – July 2013

Title page photo: Hailes Castle, East Lothian. Photo by Peter Raine

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Submissions - It would be appreciated if submissions were sent in Word format with photos sent separately as JPEGs. Please note that the Editor reserves the right to shorten and generally edit articles, as required.

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