

PAS Peeblesshire Archaeological Society Newsletter

December 2025

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2025-26 Lecture Programme + Other Events



Welcome

Colin McLean, Newsletter Editor

With these wildy fluctuating temperatures (and humidity), matters meteorological will be at the forefront of all our minds. There is no escaping the fact that winter is upon us. It always seems to come as a surprise; certainly to me, though a surprise that turns up every year without fail.

A trip to Mull in early November to see family took us past the north end of Loch Awe. It was late afternoon and I was particularly struck by the dramatic silhouette of Kilchurn Castle against the autumn sunset. Kilchurn is a castle I had not visited and I resolved to return when I had some time to explore it with my camera.

Which is exactly what I did at the end of that month. Leaving Peebles in heavy rain, which mercifully disappeared as I turned off the M90, I was met by clear skies and snow-capped hills and mountains - Scotland at its best, surely.

The first afternoon was useful, with a walk around the castle. The second day was perishing cold but, undaunted, I was up and about with my Nikon well before dawn. However, the light was good and clear as it had been for the previous evening's sunset. These *golden hours* (the last hour before sunset and the first hour after dawn) are invaluable to photographers, when landscape features and buildings take on a golden hue.

Kilchurn Castle originated in the mid 1400s; a tower

house (on the right of the photograph opposite) for Sir Colin Campbell of Glenorchy. A laigh (lower) hall soon followed; now gone but located behind the curtain wall angled to the left of the round corner tower. The remnants of the round turrets at the top of the original tower are from the C16. Towards the end of the C17, the 1st Earl of Breadalbane undertook major works of enlargement. Extensive barracks were added to the rear of the building as we see it here, now also ruined.

It is difficult to make sense of the plan from a distance, and without an aerial view. You can walk, and I did, round the building's perimeter, but Historic Environment Scotland has closed the building meantime whilst it carries out safety checks. Kilchurn is important in the history of this part of Argyll, and its architecture is interesting. But it also has real significance as a dramatic feature in the landscape, sitting proudly on its peninsula at the top of Loch Awe.

The Newsletter wouldn't exist without the hard work and patience of the various authors, and for their contributions to this issue I'd like to thank James Garry, David Bartholomew, Piers Dixon, Trevor Cowie and Richard Welander. You too could contribute by writing a piece and/or sending in photographs of somewhere interesting you have visited or have been reading about.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a very happy Christmas and every good fortune in 2026. ■



KILCHURN CASTLE ON LOCH AWE © COLIN MCLEAN



Spectres Beneath The Soil: Ghostlore & Archaeological Landscapes in Peeblesshire & the Scottish Borders

James Garry

Some places in the Borders refuse to stay silent. Stand on a wind-scoured rampart at twilight, and the air sometimes carries the illusion of voices, or only the soft movement of wind through long-abandoned earthworks. Either way, for those who walk Peeblesshire's hillforts, burial grounds, and ruined towers, whether as visitors, researchers or residents, the past is seldom experienced as mere stratigraphy. It is encountered as atmosphere, memory, and story.

The traditions gathered here are not presented as evidence of the supernatural, but as part of the Borders' rich intangible heritage: narratives historically linked to archaeological landscapes and preserved through antiquarian writing, early guidebooks, and long-standing local tradition. These stories reveal how communities have understood and emotionally inhabited ancient ground long after its original purpose has faded.

Few Borders ghost traditions are as enduring as that of the White Lady of Neidpath Castle. Most frequently identified as Jean Douglas, "Bonnie Jean" of ballad tradition, she is said to wander the long gallery and spiral stair in a pale dress, waiting for the lover who never returned. In some versions, he dies at Flodden; in others, he departs for France or is separated by family intrigue. What remains consistent is the image of a sorrowful woman bound to the castle's upper chambers. The story appears in numerous nineteenth-century accounts, including Robert Chambers' *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*, and is echoed in Sir Walter Scott's poem *The Maid of Neidpath*, embedding the tale firmly within documented Borders folklore.

Though lying just outside Peeblesshire, Melrose Abbey forms a vital part of the region's wider cultural geography and hosts one of its most strongly attested spectral traditions: the Hunderprest, or "Dog Priest". This grotesque monastic figure, said to haunt the abbey after death as punishment for moral corruption, appears in medieval chronicle tradition and later antiquarian discussion. Robert Chambers refers to the tradition in *Domestic Annals of Scotland*, while its roots may be traced to earlier ecclesiastical anxieties surrounding the perceived decay of monastic discipline. Here, historic fabric, religious unease and supernatural imagination converge in a narrative that has endured for centuries.

Long before castles or monasteries, the Borders hills were already charged with an otherworldly presence. The Eildon Hills stand at the centre of this tradition, associated with Thomas the Rhymer, who was famously



EILDON HILLS © COLIN McLEAN

taken beneath the hill by the Queen of Elfland and returned seven years later endowed with prophetic sight. This narrative appears in medieval ballads, later folk collections, and Sir Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. The Eildons were long understood as a portal into the *Otherworld*, and similar beliefs extended across Peeblesshire, where hills such as Dreva and Black Meldoun were described in nineteenth-century sources as fairy knowes: liminal places where lights, music and movement were witnessed after dark and where small offerings were left to appease unseen inhabitants.

Among the houses of the Borders, Old Gala House in Galashiels presents one of the more compelling modern traditions of spectral presence. Visitors and staff report



MELROSE ABBEY © COLIN McLEAN



DOES MERLIN LIE HERE? TINNIS CASTLE WITH THE POWSAIL (DRUMELZIER) BURN IN THE MIDDLE DISTANCE
 © COLIN McLEAN

lights flickering in peripheral vision, statues shifting when unobserved, and a tall, icy figure looming in the mansion's upper rooms and gardens. These accounts appear most often in recent local reportage rather than early antiquarian sources, but they illustrate how the mansion, its landscaped grounds and the surrounding townscape continue to attract ghost-story narratives. The estate, with a built heritage extending to the sixteenth century and an ongoing museum function, demonstrates how modern folklore builds on historic places of memory, transition, and reuse.

Among the most securely documented supernatural traditions in Peeblesshire is the belief that the wizard Merlin lies buried near Drumelzier, close to the Powsail Burn (the old name for Drumelzier Burn) on the upper Tweed. The supposed grave is discussed by Sir Walter Scott in *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (1830), where he records the local belief that birds refused to fly above the site and that Merlin remained in enchanted rest beneath the earth. Medieval texts such as the *Vita Merlini* further reinforce the deep antiquity of the association. Here, myth, medieval biography and physical landscape are powerfully entwined.

In Scotland, archaeological sites attract ghost stories not because they are empty, but because they are saturated with remembered life, death, and belief. The soil is not silent; it carries centuries of human presence.

Burial sites contain ancestral remains, and disturbance has long been understood as morally dangerous as well as culturally transgressive. The concept of “thin places”, where time folds and the unseen draws near, is deeply embedded in Scottish tradition and far predates modern archaeological interpretation.

Ruined towers, abandoned abbeys, and ancient hills intensify this perception, and histories of violence and loss, of Border warfare, religious conflict and political upheaval, provide fertile ground for stories of restless spirits. Such traditions do not oppose archaeology; they exist alongside it, offering another way in which communities have understood and cared for these places over time. Archaeology measures the trace; folklore preserves the memory.

*“By the stream that glides in shadow still,
 They say old spirits wander.”*

— Sir Walter Scott

When you walk a ruined tower or prehistoric ridge at dusk, you pass through more than stone and soil. You move through an inherited landscape of narrative, belief, and care — the living afterlife of the Scottish past.

Torch, thermos, notebook... and perhaps a quiet respect for the stories that still linger beneath the Borders soil, waiting for the next careful observer to listen. ■

The Kenmure Burial Aisle

David Bartholomew

Alongside Dalry Church in the Glenkens of northern Kirkcudbrightshire lies part of the former pre-Reformation church. It was a side aisle of the earlier church, and the reason it was not demolished when a new church was built on the site in 1771 was because in the vaults beneath it were buried the Gordons of Kenmure. It was known as the Gordon aisle or the Kenmure burial aisle. Within the roofless remains there is a stone plaque informing us, 'This aisle and the vaults below were built by Sir James and Lady Gordon 1546. Restored by their descendants Charles and Jean Forbes 1939. "Ora Pro Nobis." Most likely this side aisle was added to the rectangular pre-Reformation church in 1546.' Sir James Gordon was the 4th Lord of Lochinvar and was probably the first to be buried in the vaults, for he was killed at the Battle of Pinkie in 1547. You can still see the arched entrance into the main church which was filled in with stonework in 1771 to stabilise and help preserve the retained aisle.

There is an old Glenkens rhyme about the Gordons which runs,

*"In the sainted kirk of aul' Dalry
Their coffins will stand and their banes will lie."*



I've not been able to discover the first written record of this rhyme, but Jean Gibson in her 1974 booklet, 'Around Dalry: A Guide to St John's Town of Dalry' quotes it.

There is a widely held belief (at least in the Glenkens) that Robert Burns made use of the story of Adam Forrester of Knocksheen in crafting his poem 'Tam O'Shanter'. Burns knew the Glenkens, and is known



DALRY PARISH CHURCH (WILLIAM McANDLISH, 1830-32)



to have visited the area at least once. The story goes that Adam Forrester was making his way home on his horse one night after drinking at a tavern in the village of Dalry when he heard the sound of music coming from Dalry Church. Looking in he saw the Clachan witches dancing away to wild music. He shouted out, in Tam O'Shanter style, to the local barmaid, "Ah, Lucky Hair, ye'll no deny this the morn!" and had barely time to mount his horse when they were out and after him. Up on the shoulder of Waterside Hill he realised they were catching up on him; so he jumped off his horse and drew a circle with his sword in the name of God around the place where he stood. And within that circle he and his horse were protected from attack - though in the encounter his horse lost its tail, which had been grabbed by one of the witches! When they heard a cock crow on a neighbouring farm, heralding daybreak, the witches suddenly departed. That supposed circle ('The Score'),

is marked on the 1849 six inch Ordnance Survey map, and you can still view it up on the side of Waterside Hill.

In his poem Burns makes reference to the upright coffins in Alloway kirk, echoing the supposed upright coffins of the Gordons in the Gordon aisle in Dalry churchyard. He describes the coffins standing round in Alloway kirk with their dead in their last dresses holding lights in their hands. It is said that in the vaults under the Gordon aisle at Dalry Church the coffins were stood upright in order to fit them in that tight space. But these vaults have been closed up since the new church was built in 1771 when Burns was a child.

It would be fascinating to record the actual contents of the vaults, which would likely include some very early stone coffins. We have no information on the actual form of the structure, which may well be vaulted. There may be steep stairs down into it from an access point under a large stone slab on the floor of the side aisle. If some of the later coffins were wooden they maybe have suffered significant decay, but likely have brass plates on them with the name of the one interred.

Reasons for that project were increased when a gentleman got in touch with me recently who is doing research on the Gordons of Kenmure. He wanted to ascertain whether William Gordon, the 6th Viscount Kenmure, was buried at Dalry after he was executed in London in February 1716 after the 1715 Jacobite Rising. Our investigations since then suggest that he was, and that he would have been laid to rest in the family vaults. At present we are in the early stages of bringing together a project to open up those vaults temporarily and record what is in them. There may well be some fascinating old stone coffins with lettering on their lids. ■

All photographs by David Williamson



How do you date medieval earthworks? Reflections on excavations at Bowden Moor 2024

Piers Dixon

Bowden Moor, near Melrose in the Scottish Borders, is the location of a remarkable series of successive and interrelated bank and ditch earthworks (Figure 1). First mapped by the Ordnance Survey in the 19th century (Roxburghshire 1899, Sheet VII), the earthworks were recorded in the Royal Commission Inventory of Roxburgh in 1956 (RCAHMS 1956, 73, 114-116; NRHE 55759).

In 2022, a pre-forestry survey was undertaken on Bowden Moor Farm by Peeblesshire Archaeological Society (PAS) under my direction and this coincided with renewed interest in the historical significance of the complex of earthworks. At my suggestion, the Society then went on to carry out excavations to be described below, with the aim of elucidating their date.

Briefly, the earthworks consist of an iterative sequence of six phases of boundary, comprising banks standing up to about 0.75m in height and with external ditches (Figure 2), rising to the ridge on the north side of Bowden Moor (Figure 3). They appear to stem from what has been identified as the boundary between the lands of Melrose Abbey and Kelso Abbey, as described in a charter of King William I in 1204 but attributed to his grandfather David, when he founded the former in

1136. To end a dispute between the two abbeys, William instructed both parties that this was the boundary between them and that he would brook no further dispute. We hear no more!

On that basis, the earthworks should be late 12th or early 13th century at the latest. Archaeologically, they are like other assart boundaries found in southern Scotland, mainly in royal or baronial forests thought to date to the 12-13th centuries during a period of settlement expansion. The estate boundary, also the parish boundary, cut through a wood and it is likely that building timber was the prime target of Melrose Abbey, with each successive earthwork enclosing more woodland for exploitation. Alternatively, it has been suggested they are late woodbanks dating to c.1500 when scarcity of timber drove the enclosure of plantations of woodland.

In informal discussion, Strat Halliday questioned the dependence on the documentary dating and whether they could date to the late medieval period or later. In the hope that excavation would clarify the issue, the Society therefore went on to carry out targeted excavations under my direction with the twin aims of applying modern scientific dating techniques to establish their date and revealing the method of construction of the earthwork. Bearing in mind that earthworks are notoriously poor in producing contemporaneous charcoal for c14 dating or artefacts, I decided to try OSL dating and Tim Kinnaird of St Andrews University kindly agreed to carry out the sampling and analysis for us.

Two of the earthworks were excavated, the first (T2) and fourth (T1) in the sequence of earthworks on the

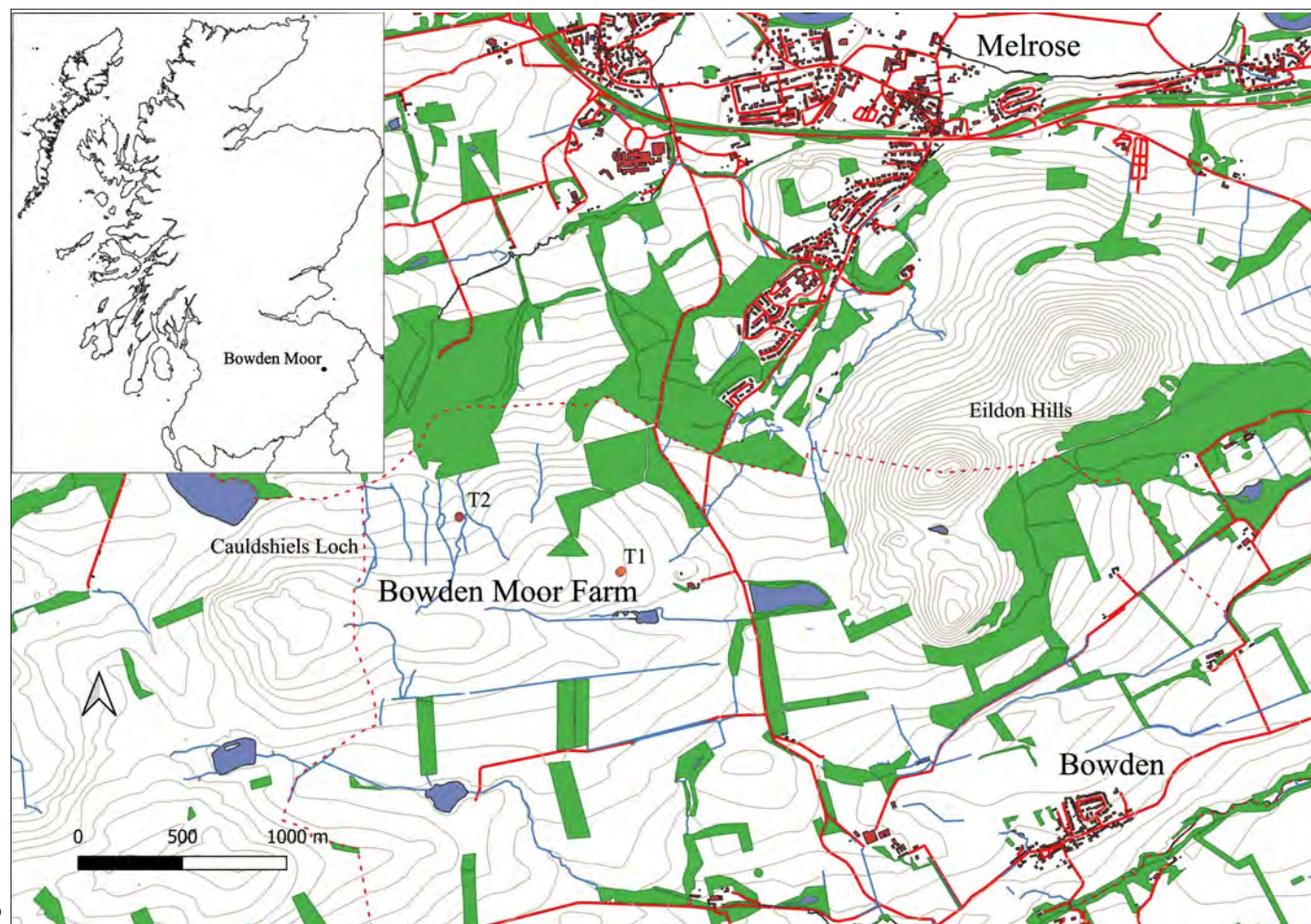


Fig 1: BOWDEN MOOR TRENCH LOCATIONS

Fig 2: LINEAR EARTHWORK LOOKING WEST TO CAULDSHIELDS



Moor. Neither earthwork revealed any buried soil which suggests the turf and topsoil had been stripped to build the earthworks, with the turf apparently being used to make walls to retain the upcast material dug from the ditch. This made it unlikely that good dates for the construction of the bank were achievable, and it was decided to sample the ditch as backup, providing a *terminus ante quem*.

In the event the dating of the samples taken by Tim Kinnaird from under the banks came out as Neolithic. Early dates were probably not entirely surprising in view of the lack of buried soil, but where did that leave the presumed Medieval activity? Luckily, the samples from the ditch were available and those from Trench 1 (T1) were also processed (Figure 4). The dates from the second- and third-lowest samples, the first being scrambled, gave a weighted combined date of 1360+90, or AD 1270-1450. So, the bank predates the mid-14th century when its sides were eroding and filling the ditch. Theoretically, this extends the possible date range of the infilling from the late 13th to the early 15th century, but on balance this would tend to confirm a mid-late 12th century construction date over a late medieval date.

However, this is not the whole story of the earthworks. Once built, earthworks of course remain as landscape features long after they have ceased to be used for their original purpose. The ditches filled with silt eroded from the bank sides; vegetation grew and any fence on top of the bank decayed. The earthwork excavated at Trench 2 (T2) which runs up to and along the crest of the hill (phase 1 and phase 2 on plan; Figure 5) is depicted in 1753 as the boundary between Bowden Common and Huntlywood Farm at the time of their enclosure, but no trace of any secondary modification was found during excavation.

Moreover, it seems Huntlywood was the name of the divided wood referred to in 1204 as being the subject of the land grab by Melrose Abbey. After the Reformation in 1571, the Huntlywood lands on the Kelso side of the estate boundary belonged to Ker of Cessford, and were taken out of Bowden Common to be turned into farmland, perhaps for the second time.

Two points arise from this process of reflection on

Fig 3: THE EARTHWORK AT TRENCH 2 LOOKING NORTH



Fig 4: TIM KINNAIRD SAMPLING TRENCH 1 PAS



the results of this exercise. Earthworks built by topsoil stripping are unsuitable for obtaining OSL construction dates, though the ditch fill can be a useful backup. An earthwork can be reused as a boundary if it is suitable.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the landowner, Laura Hamilton and her husband, Lionel Mill, for permission to excavate and unfailing onsite support. I would also like to thank all the diggers from Peeblesshire Archaeological Society, Tim Kinnaird for taking the OSL samples and

John Gilbert for his documentary research and project support.

References

RCAHMS 1956, An Inventory of the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Roxburghshire, Volume 1 (Edinburgh).

NRHE National Record of the Historic Environment of Scotland, Bowden Moor Earthworks, accessible online at <https://www.truve.scot/place/55759>

Illustrations

Figure 1. Location map of the excavations on Bowden Moor. T1 and T2 are the excavation sites and the red dotted line the estate and parish boundaries. Copyright PAS; OS OpenMap Local Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database rights 2019; OS Terrain 50 © Crown copyright and database rights 2022.

Figure 2. The phase 6 earthwork on the top of Bowden Moor taken from the ditch looking west to Cauldshiels. Copyright PAS

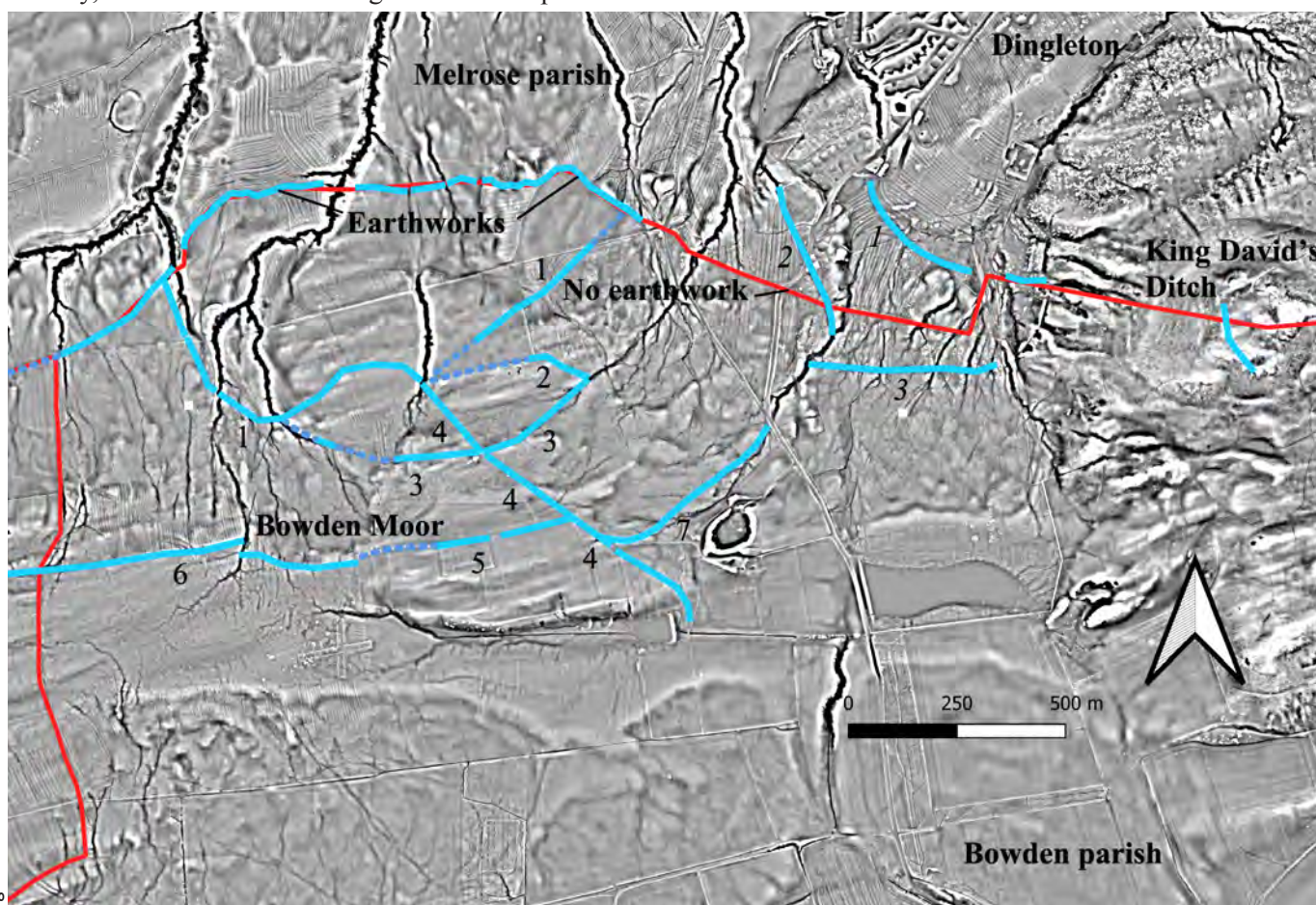
Figure 3. View of the earthwork at Trench 2 looking north. This is the earthwork that became the boundary between Bowden Moor and Huntlywood farm after the Reformation. Copyright PAS

Figure 4. Tim Kinnaird sampling Trench 1. The ditch is under excavation in the foreground. Copyright PAS

Figure 5. Plan of the earthworks on Bowden Moor on a LiDAR local relief model, Phase 3 50cm resolution. Earthworks in blue, parish boundary red, copyright PAS. Scottish Remote Sensing Portal; Crown copyright Scottish Government, SEPA and Fugro (2020).

A version of this article was published in the Landscape Survey Group Newsletter 2025. ■

Fig 5: BOWDEN INTAKES LIDAR





CHESTER HILL VIEWED FROM THE NORTH COLIN McLEAN

From Hundleshope to Heyshott - In Search of Miss Phoebe Keef

Trevor Cowie

Introduction Members may recall an entertaining and informative article in our October 2024 Newsletter, in which Richard Welander described his favourite local view - that looking southwards from Cademuir, just south of Peebles, towards Hundleshope and Manor.

Richard then went on to draw particular attention to the prehistoric fort on Chester Hill, noting that it had been partially excavated just before World War 2 by a Miss P A M Keef. As she was seemingly someone otherwise unknown to Scottish archaeology, Richard rounded off that paragraph of his article with a challenge to the reader: "Do you know anything of her?"

The role of women in the development of Scottish archaeology is currently a topical research subject, so despite being a little less hard-boiled than Raymond Chandler's fictional detective Philip Marlowe, I was sufficiently intrigued by the mysterious Miss Keef to take up the scent. However as we shall eventually see, it turned out to involve the whiff of Woodbine cigarettes rather than Chanel N° 5!

Early life Miss Keef was born into an army family in India. Her parents were Major George Alfred Keef (1858-1901), of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, and Alice Rose Tuely (1871-1968). They had married in Wimbledon in Surrey on 9 March 1895, before returning to India where his regiment was stationed. Phoebe Alice Marion Keef, the first of their two children, was born on 9 December 1895 in Amritsar in the Punjab. Her brother, George Patrick Keef (1898-1975) was born in 1898, by which time mother and daughter had returned



CHESTER HILL FORT COLIN McLEAN

to England. Less than three years later, Major Keef himself was invalided home from India but sadly he died of fever and dysentery during the voyage. He was buried at sea in February 1901.

The young Phoebe Keef seems to have spent her childhood and adolescence living in Mortimer Lodge, Wimbledon Park, SW19, the home of her maternal grandmother. Later in her life there was to be some uncertainty regarding exactly where she received her secondary education, but in 1911, it seems clear the teenage Phoebe was being educated locally at Levana House School, Princes Road, Wimbledon Park.

In 1915, her mother Alice Rose was to marry again, to Lt. Col. Athol Hay Forbes (1870-1942), but she had no further children. Forbes had also been an officer in the Royal Scots Fusiliers in India, where he had fought on the North West Frontier; he was later to be awarded a DSO during the First World War. Towards the end of the war, Phoebe herself served with the YMCA and St John's Ambulance Brigade, and from 2 November 1918 until December 1919 she was based at Trouville in France. She was awarded the British War Medal in recognition of this service.

During the 1920s, it is almost an understatement to say that no clear picture of her life emerges from the archives. In 1921, while seemingly still living in the family home at Mortimer Lodge, her name crops up as a member of the British Mycological Society. While home life and a rather obscure interest in the biology of fungi might suggest that modernity and the Jazz Age were passing Phoebe Keef by, she clearly started to spread her wings soon afterwards. The census for that same year indicates that she had registered as a music student at the Royal College of Music and was boarding in a house in Kensington. Later still that same year, and somewhat enigmatically, she travelled to New York.

When she returned to the UK in 1923 on the White Star Line's RMS Olympic, she described herself on the ship's passenger list as a 'teacher' and stated that she intended to live in Marlow, Buckinghamshire. Whether

this ever materialised is uncertain, and by 1934 her address was given as the Women's United Services Club, 23 Courtfield Gardens, London, SW5. She appears to have been a resident in this elegant garden square in Kensington until at least the eve of the War.

Miss Keef discovers archaeology If the late 1920's are a comparative blank, it seems that by the 1930s she had found what was to become an enduring passion for archaeology.



SIR MORTIMER WHEELER © NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Based largely on her own recollections in later life, she appears to have worked as a volunteer at several of the major excavations carried out in England by Mortimer Wheeler and his wife Tessa Verney Wheeler, most notably at the Roman temple complex at Lydney



INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, ST JOHN'S LODGE
INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY ARCHIVES

in the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire (excavated 1928-1929) and at the well-known hillfort at Maiden Castle in Dorset (excavated between 1934 and 1937).

She also apparently worked on several significant pre-War excavations in Sussex, notably at the Neolithic causewayed enclosure at Whitehawk Camp near Brighton, excavated in 1935 by E. Cecil Curwen, the doyen of archaeology in the county for much of the 20th century. In Sussex too, she worked on excavations on the site of an important Roman villa at Angmering - a dig directed by Leslie Scott, one of Mortimer Wheeler's particular female protégés. In Scott's published report, Miss Keef was singled out for her careful work, but a few years later there was to be a falling out between the two women.

While her work at those sites signalled what was to become an abiding interest in the archaeology of Sussex, she was also involved in excavations further afield; in particular she worked with Colonel C.D. Drew, a pivotal

figure in Dorset archaeology, on the site of the Roman town in Dorchester. While based in Dorset, she herself recorded evidence of a Roman site that was undergoing coastal erosion near Weymouth.

At some stage during this time, Miss Keef apparently enrolled as a Diploma student at what would then have been the recently opened Institute of Archaeology, founded by the Wheelers as a centre for archaeological training within the University of London. From the time of its opening in 1937 until 1957, the Institute was located at St John's Lodge in Regent's Park; in 1958 it moved to new, purpose-built premises in Gordon Square, where it remains today as the UCL Institute of Archaeology.

In a further reflection of her developing interest in the subject during the 1930s and 1940s, Miss Keef's name started to appear in the membership lists of several of the major British archaeological societies. They included the Royal Archaeological Institute, which she



CHESTER HILL FORT WITH MANOR VALLEY BEYOND © COLIN McLEAN

joined in 1934 and the Sussex Archaeological Society in 1937. Then, in the following year, Miss Phoebe A M Keef was one of the nine new Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland elected by ballot at its December Meeting. In the absence of any other hints of Scottish connections, it seems reasonable to assume that her unprecedented interest in northern archaeology was associated with whatever plans were afoot for the excavations at Chester Hill.

Miss Keef's foray into Scotland The circumstances which led Miss Keef to excavate at Chester Hill are not entirely clear but in her published report, she notes that the site was investigated as part of a wider project set up to investigate sites in Manor parish. If so, this provides a significant clue, for the much better known part of that project was that led by R.B.K. Stevenson in the Manor Valley itself and in Glenrath, subsequently published as 'Medieval dwelling sites and a primitive village in the Parish of Manor, Peeblesshire. Excavations in July 1939' in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

While studying Classics at Edinburgh University, Robert Stevenson had been a student of archaeology with Gordon Childe. After graduating from Edinburgh, he continued his archaeological studies at Bonn in Germany and then at the Institute of Archaeology in London, where he trained in field archaeology with Mortimer Wheeler at Maiden Castle and with Dr Kathleen Kenyon at Wroxeter (indeed, it has been observed that he would probably have continued in field archaeology had it not conflicted with what was to be his life's work as the Keeper of the National Museum of

Antiquities of Scotland).

Even if it is uncertain exactly how the separate strands of the Manor fieldwork were set up and organised, it seems highly likely that Robert Stevenson and Phoebe Keef were acquainted as a result of belonging to the cohort of students and volunteers who had trained with the Wheelers in the years running up to the eve of World War 2.

As noted at the outset, the excavation at Chester Hill, Hundleshope and its subsequent publication amount to Miss Keef's sole foray into Scottish archaeology. However, mention may be made here of her donation of eight worked flints from Blackdown in Sussex to the collections of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland in February 1939. Comprising examples of Mesolithic and Neolithic cores, flakes and tools, their surface damage clearly shows they derive from surface collections rather than undisturbed contexts.

It seemed appropriate to end this chapter of Miss Keef's life with this small collection of flints from the south of England, for while she was thereafter to remain a stranger to Scottish archaeology, she was to become a well-known figure in Sussex - the county which was to become her adopted home for the rest of her life. As a result, it is mainly in her later years that we get a series of much more personal glimpses of Miss Keef, to be revealed in the next instalment!

In addition to various published sources, I am greatly indebted to a number of individuals for information relating to Miss Keef's life. All will be fully acknowledged in the concluding part of this article, to follow in the January issue. ■



FLINTS FROM BLACKDOWN, SUSSEX ■ HUGO ANDERSON-WHYMARK, NMS

Lecture Programme & Events

Richard Welander

Despite the poor weather, there was a better than anticipated audience for Dr Murray Cook's talk on Thursday 20th November and we were treated to a lively and wide-ranging discourse on the work that Murray has undertaken at and around Dumyat Hill, on the western edge of the Ochil Hills to the south of Stirling. However, from the outset, Murray explained that he wanted to widen the scope of his talk re-titled 'New Light on Dumyat Hillfort: but really understanding the

Forth after the Romans!' He began by taking a broad look at the geography and topography of the Stirling area and the historic crossing points over the Forth (several of which he'd crossed as a wild swimmer!). Moving onto his recent fieldwork, he described what he sees as a frontier zone caught between powerful factions from Romans through to medieval kings pushing up from the south or down from the north.

If you missed Murray's talk (or would simply like to listen to it again), I urge you to click [here](#) and watch it on our PAS YouTube channel.



Turning to this month, it's the annual Halkett Hendrie Memorial Lecture co-hosted by the Tweeddale Society and PAS. This year, the choice of speaker being with PAS, we have invited back Peter Yeoman, who gave us a wonderful talk last November on medieval pilgrimage.

This time Peter will be speaking about another of his great passions – 'The Lost Royal Lodgings of Edinburgh Castle'.

Peter has spent a lot of the last 40 years investigating the hidden medieval story of Edinburgh Castle, and says he is beginning to get the hang of it. On Tuesday 9th December at the Eastgate Theatre he'll be sharing his experiences of exploring Scotland's premier ancient monument and promises to reveal for the first time some exciting new findings from his most recent research for the new Edinburgh Castle guidebook.

Peter calls Edinburgh 'the Castle of the Lost Towers', with as many as a dozen medieval towers that have left almost no trace – unless you know where to look! The two million annual visitors can at least see something of David's Tower built around 1370, the chief royal residence for over 100 years, but it was just one of the many towers that ringed the walls, providing self-contained accommodation for royal offspring, for key courtiers and government officers.

So why have these towers all been lost? – two words: siege artillery. The castle was shaped by sieges,

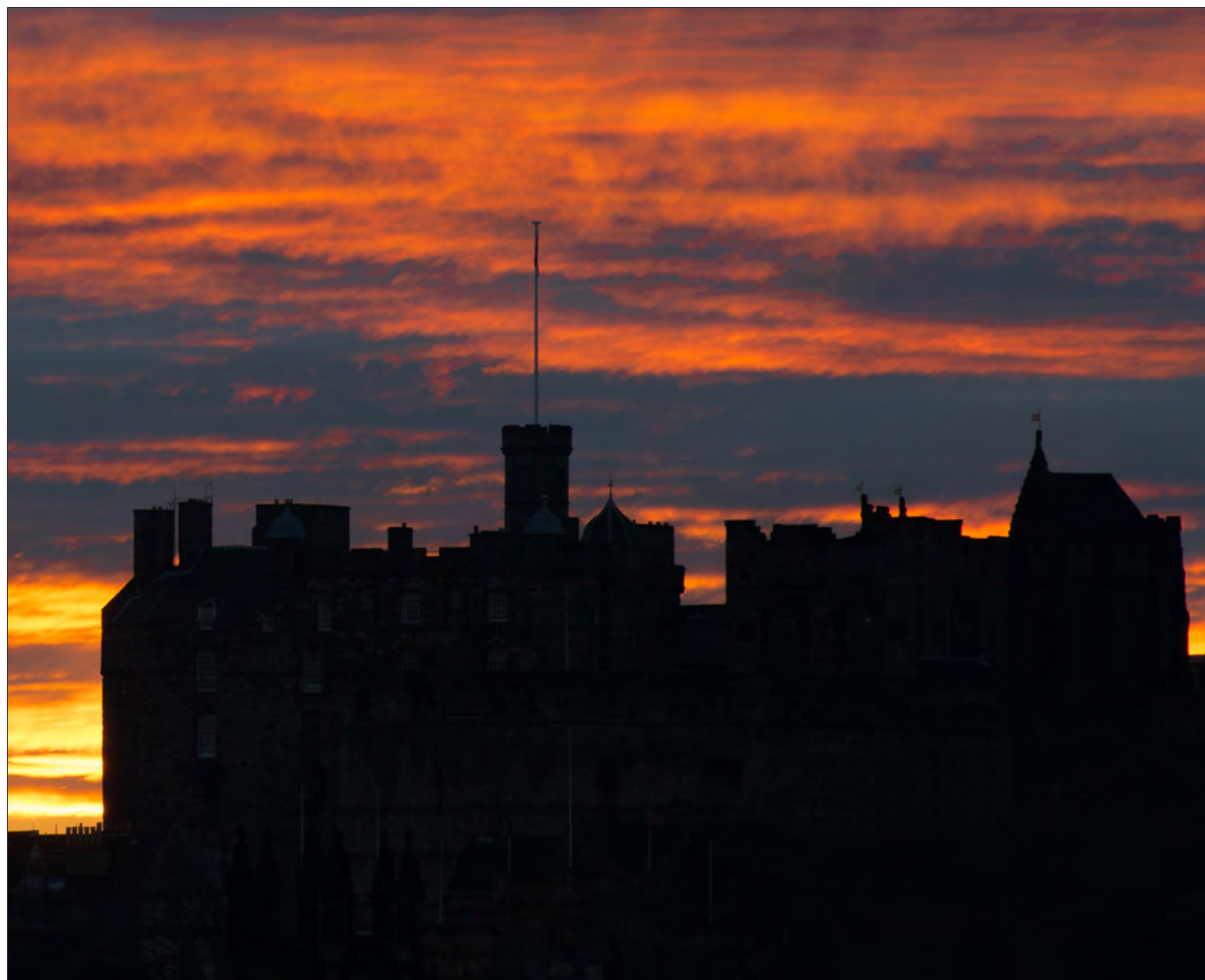
especially those of 1314, 1573, 1650 and 1689, which wrought terrible destruction. Gunpowder artillery demolished the proud medieval buildings, and so this was the final nail in the coffin for Edinburgh as a Castle of Towers. From then on low-rise was the order of the day, resulting in the Castle so familiar to us today.

Peter will reveal how archaeological investigations during the last 40 yrs, closely coupled with targeted historical research, have transformed our understanding of Edinburgh Castle, and he is sure that more secrets of the lost towers will yet be revealed.

This is always a popular event, so tickets are selling out fast, but do contact the Eastgate Theatre - there may still be a few seats available.



PETER YEOMAN - PHOTO SUPPLIED BY PETER YEOMAN



EDINBURGH CASTLE AT SUNSET - SEE DECEMBER LECTURE @ COLIN McLEAN

PAS Lectures 2025-26

Unless otherwise indicated, all lectures start at 7.30pm, and are held in St Joseph's Neighbourhood Centre, Rosetta Road, Peebles.

December 9th 2025: The Lost Royal Lodgings of Edinburgh Castle & the Birthplace of Great Britain – Peter Yeoman (*NB: at the Eastgate Theatre*) Details on page 11

January 15th 2026: The Archaeological Landscape & Historical Context of the Galloway Hoard – Dr Orla Craig, Historic Environment Scotland

February 19th 2026: Hillforts, Settlements & Ancient Geography – Strat Halliday

March 19th 2026: Recent Work on Lindisfarne: New Light on a Central British Monastery – Professor David Petts, University of Durham

April 16th 2026: Annual General Meeting & Members' Evening.

Uncovering The Tweed

Manor Valley event on December 11th. As part of this programme, AOC Archaeology has opportunities for volunteers to get involved in recording the base of a 10th Century Cross and several other stones. Come along for an introduction to photogrammetry, GPS and other digital recording techniques. Places are limited

and advance booking is essential. Further details available [here](#).

Join PAS

If you're not yet a member of the Society, then do join us: it costs only £25 pa (£35 for couples).

- We have monthly lectures from September until March
- We organise site visits and outings
- We run local projects and digs
- We produce this newsletter
- And we're a friendly bunch!

To join, visit our web site at www.peeblesarchsoc.org.uk and go to the Membership page.

A Reminder - you will recently have received an email inviting you to renew your subscription. If you have already re-joined – thank you! If you have still to respond, we hope that this is still on your “to do” list and that you will continue to support PAS!

The PAS Newsletter is produced and distributed by Peeblesshire Archaeological Society - <http://www.peeblesarchsoc.org.uk>. We are always keen to publish members' news, articles or letters. Please send them to the Editor, Colin McLean: PASEditor@icloud.com