

PAS

Peeblesshire Archaeological Society
Newsletter July-August 2024

Looking for moated sites in Selkirkshire

Piers Dixon

Strat Halliday got in touch in May about possible moated sites in Selkirkshire that he had discovered while looking for archaeological sites in the county visible on Scottish Government LiDAR data. His suggestion of a field trip to examine them was quickly agreed to, but weather, family and other things delayed this until June when the vegetation was picking up, reducing visibility. Despite this we decided to go ahead rather than wait until

next spring. Two sites had been located: one at Altrieve in Yarrow and the other at Newburgh in Ettrick.

Moated sites for the uninitiated are small square or rectilinear ditched enclosures dating from the 12th to the 14th centuries, that are found in the UK and northern Europe. Occupied by freeholders, feudal lords and ecclesiastics or by monks or lay brothers at monastic granges, the ditches are often about 5m across and the interior is occupied by ranges of buildings around a courtyard. Though not built as defensive structures they could be architecturally imposing. Moated sites are usually situated in relatively low-lying terrain where the ditches could be filled with water to form a moat, providing an additional barrier to access and emphasising the importance of the residence.



Figure 1: View of moated site at Altrieve showing the internal stony bank, rushes mark the moat



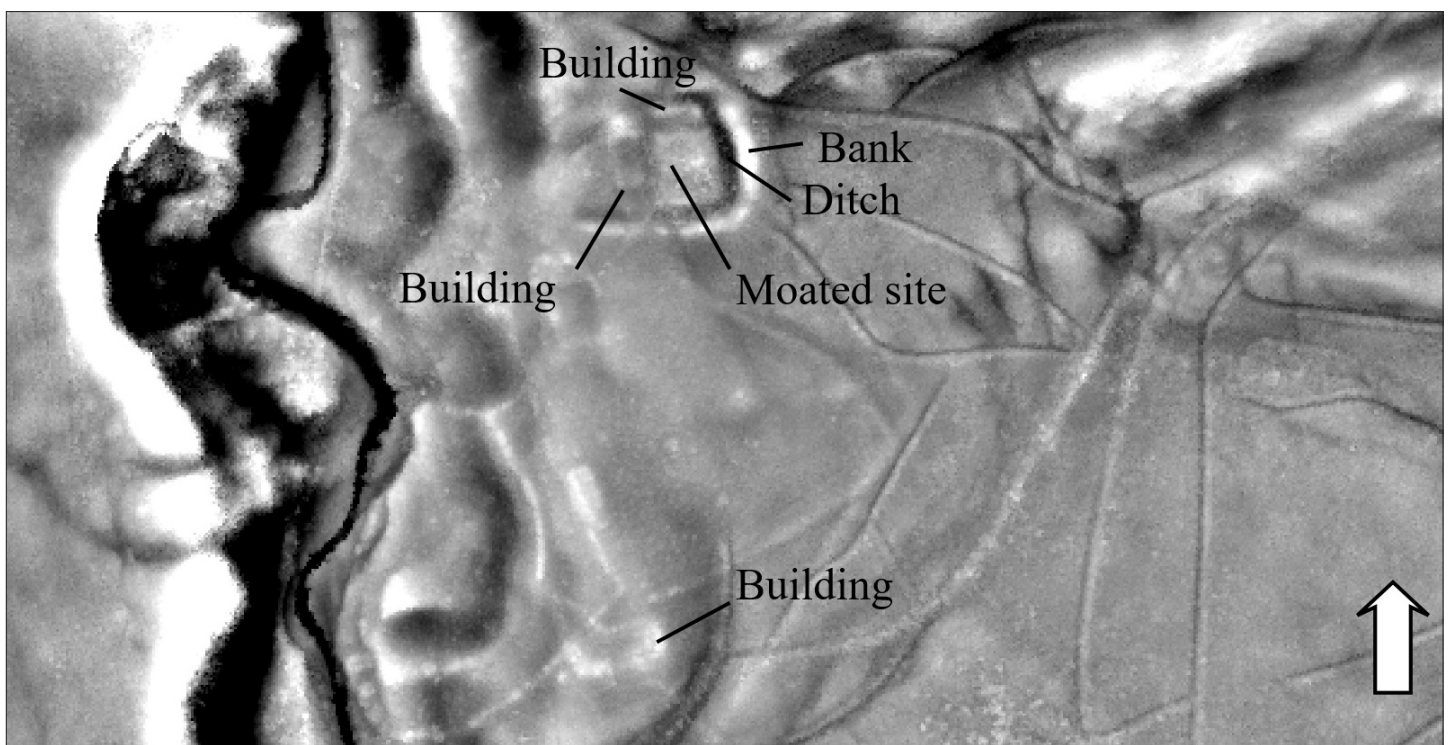
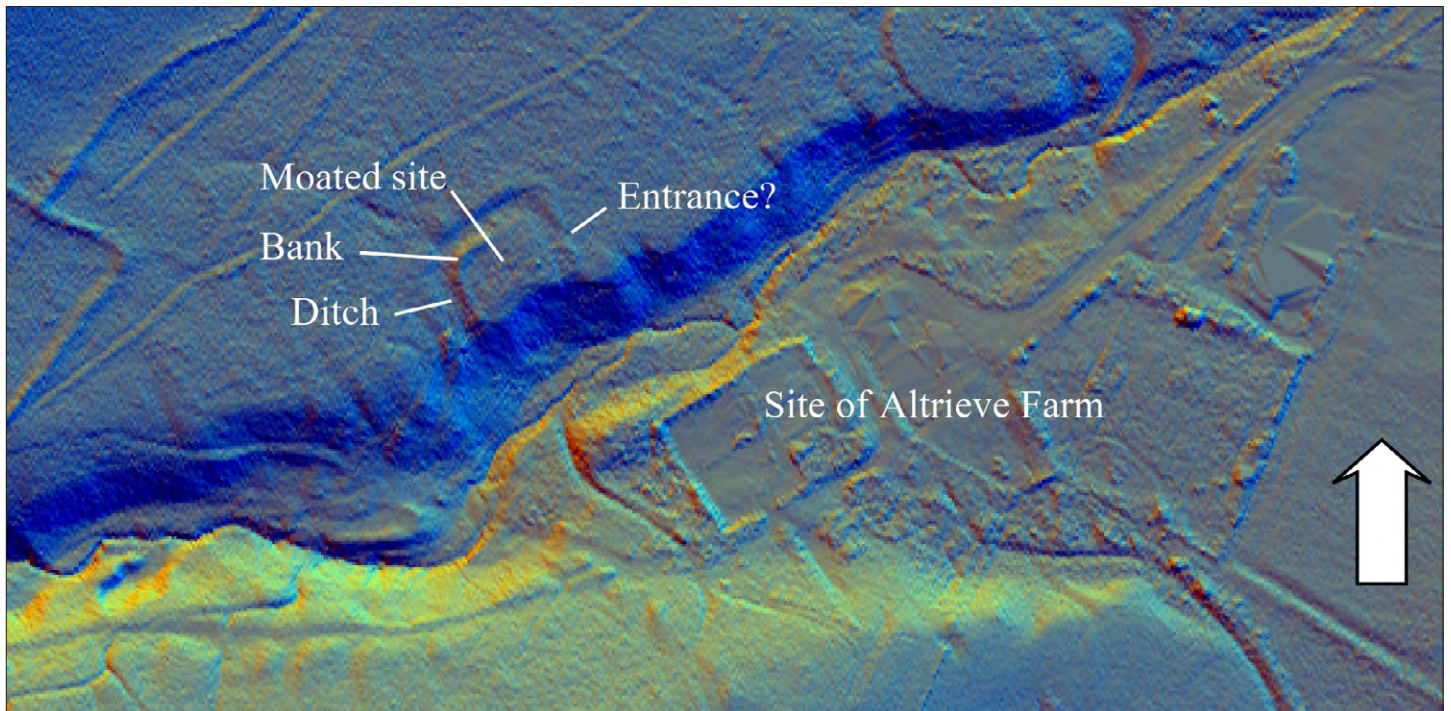
Figure 2: The rush-filled ditch and outer upcast bank of the moat at Newburgh

On June 12th, we visited Altrieve first (NT28462 22572), near the deserted sheep farm of the same name. The site was perched on the edge of a river terrace with a stony bank around the north and west part of its interior, which was largely absent on the north and east, where the site may have been accessed (see images below). The fourth side was provided by the eroded terrace edge. A little under 20m across, it is at the smaller end of these types of monument, but with a broad ditch 4.5m in breadth and 0.7m in depth. No traces of any buildings were found, but the absence of the stony bank on the north and east may be telling us where there were buildings which have been robbed.

From Altrieve we drove over to Ettrick and turned downstream, stopped by the converted farmsteading at Newburgh, and walked up the Newburgh Burn, a tributary of the Ettrick, across in-by sheep fields to open moorland. On gently sloping ground on a terrace beside the Newburgh Burn we found the moated site (NT31751 20456), well-marked by rushes growing in the ditch that occupies three sides of its enclosure with a substantial external upcast bank (Figure 2). Traces of buildings within it were

noted on LiDAR but difficult to define under the long grass, one of which sub-divided the enclosure in two and lay at right angles to the other building along the long side of the enclosure. These show well on the local relief model of LiDAR data (below). At 28m across its longer axis it is larger than Altrieve with a slighter narrower ditch, up to 4m across and filled with rushes.

These two sites provide evidence of an earlier phase of settlement in Ettrick Forest before the Wars of Independence in the 14th century and the late medieval forest steads we learn about in the 15th century after the forest was regained from the Douglasses by the Crown. In the 16th century the steads were let as feu tenures giving the tenants security of tenure, leading to the building of tower houses and peel-houses or bastles, such as that at Shootinglee. At present it is not clear that these moated sites are direct forerunners of the forest steads, as they are not at the same locations. Further examples have been spotted since our trip in June at Whitehope in Leithen Vale, Glengaber on the Megget Water and Fairnilee, opposite Yair on the Tweed.





Multi-storeyed South House

Taos Pueblo

Colin McLean

On vacation in the south-west USA in June 2024, we visited a World Heritage Site in New Mexico called Taos Pueblo, the oldest continually inhabited site in the country. I confess my interest was originally piqued by the book “Taos Pueblo” produced by Ansel Adams and Mary Hunter Austin in 1930. Original copies now change hands for astronomical sums and even the facsimile from the 1970s is outwith the reach of ordinary mortals. The images from the book are widely available online, and I am grateful to the Centre for Creative Photography at the University of Arizona for providing me with a facsimile of Austin’s text, which greatly helped my understanding of the site. There follows a short description of the place and its history.

Taos Pueblo lies in northern New Mexico and is an example of a settlement of the people who inhabited the region known as “the four corners”, where the current states of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona meet. This region was and is still also inhabited by the separate nomadic people of Native American tribes such as the Navaho, Sioux and Comanche, but they are outwith the scope of this note.

There are 19 pueblos extant in this region. The origins of Taos Pueblo are now recognised to be approximately 1,000 years ago, c.1,000CE. The culture of the Pueblo was heavily influenced by the invasion of the Spanish in the 16th century, and the people today blend their culture and religion with Catholicism, the two existing in parallel.

Formerly nomadic, the Pueblo tribe settled in the relatively fertile valley of the Rio Grande, where the water supply was more reliable than in the deserts to the west. They established sedentary farming communities, which distinguished them from the nomadic hunter gatherers of the aforementioned tribes. Corn was, and still is, a primary crop, and its cultivation was enhanced by a sophisticated system of irrigation canals. Taos Pueblo today depends for its water supply on the river emerging from the Blue Lake, north-west of the settlement, high in the neighbouring mountains. The name Taos is Spanish, and in the Tanoan language the Pueblo’s name refers to the red willow, a shrub which colours the flowing water of the river that runs through the village.

In the mid 16th century, the Spanish conquistadors arrived in New Mexico, searching in vain for the mythical *Seven Cities of Gold*. Around 1640, Spanish Jesuits constructed the mission

church of San Geronimo de Taos, destroyed in 1847. There are two versions of its destruction. One claims it was demolished by the US Army in the war with Mexico. The other claims it was destroyed by the natives of Taos, objecting to the imposition of Catholicism. Its tower stands forlornly in the graveyard (below), still sporting its original Spanish bell, returned many years after the demolition. This was replaced in 1850 by the current church of



San Geronimo (following page).

There is a long tradition of the Taos people resisting the cultural and religious imperialism of others. This came to a head in the Taos Rebellion of 1680, but the response by the Spanish was brutal, with many people killed.

On the establishment of the US National Park system in the 1920s, much of the land of the Pueblo was taken from them and incorporated into a National Park. Fifty years later, President Nixon reversed this decision and returned the land, now extending to some 38,000 hectares, to the ownership of the people. As a partially sovereign nation, they have their own laws and education system.

A significant feature of Taos Pueblo is its architecture. The four and five storey apartment buildings, of which two survive, dominate the Pueblo, which is otherwise of single storey buildings. The construction is of bricks made of clay, sand and straw, with walls thicker at the base and tapering to the top. The walls are spanned by heavy tree trunks, often protruding visibly at both ends, and these are overlain with smaller timbers and sealed with mud and clay. Each year, the community joins together to add a fresh coat



1850 Church of San Geronimo

of mud to the walls to maintain their weather resistance. When the straw becomes prominent on the outer surface, a re-coating is due.

As originally constructed, the apartments had no doors or windows as we understand them. Access was through an aperture in the flat roof, reached by a removable ladder for defensive purposes. Limited numbers of doors and windows have been inserted in the walls as a concession to modern living, and more recent efforts have been made to introduce a level of uniformity to the size, proportions and colour of these openings, as can be seen in the photographs.

Though the climate is arid and average temperatures high, the summer months bring a monsoon with heavy rainstorms late in the day. We experienced one such downpour on our visit, the only rain we saw in a three-week tour.

Some 1,400 people live in Taos Pueblo, abiding by the community's decision not to have running water or electricity in the houses, though they have adopted bottled propane as a source of heat. This is a remarkable situation for houses approximately 1,000 years old and of primitive construction, though it is understood that many if not all of these families also maintain homes in the nearby town of Taos. We visited one of the pueblo houses and spoke to the owner, who sells locally made craft products as well as some from other pueblos. Tourism is a primary source of income for the Pueblo, with open houses and excellent guided tours. There are clear demarcations as to where tourists can and cannot go, to retain a level of privacy for residents.

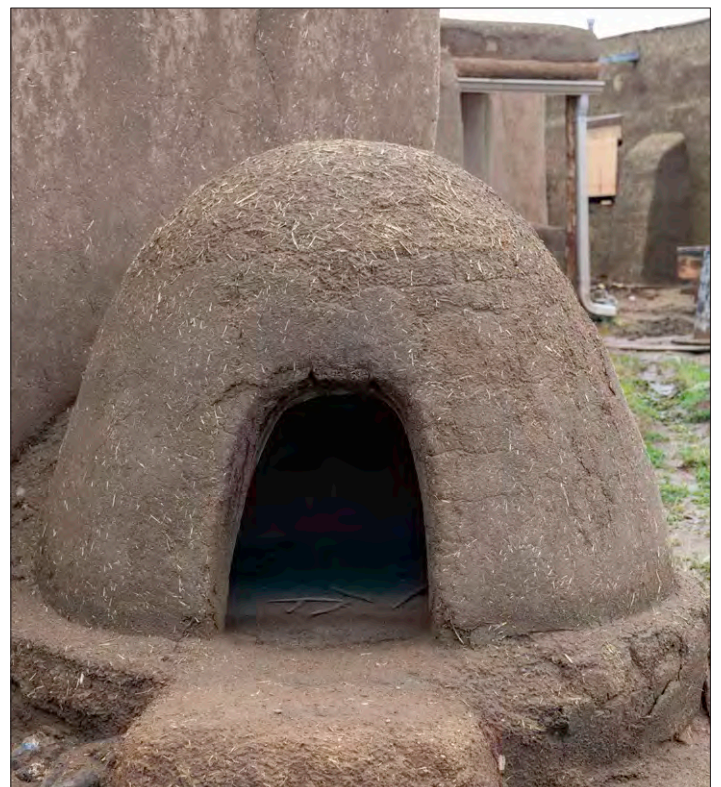
This is a very spiritual community, and although tourists are welcomed (and charged) throughout the year, there are certain festive days when visits are not possible. On other festive days when visits can be made, visitors are expected to respect what they see, and not take photographs or applaud after sacred dances. These are not performances; they are sacred rituals. Photography is also banned in the houses and in the church.

From a photographic perspective - my own particular interest - the aforementioned book by Ansel Adams and Mary Austin did much to enhance the village's fame, and the partnership of the two greatly excited Adams, who wrote to his father in 1929: *"Today there is thick black sky and snow is falling in the hills. Tomorrow it may be a crystal clear day; the changes of the weather are always startling...Mary Austin gets back in a day or so. We are enjoying every minute of the time, and the people are all so good to us that we feel quite at home. There is an unfolding perspective of work that seems much, much more than I had ever hoped for...I am certain that New Mexico will keep me half a year at least and I*

shall meet with a great success. The wealth of material is beyond belief." His photographs of Taos are well known; Austin's text less so; here is an extract:

"Their own tradition brings them from the north by way of the great ruins about Abiquiu, but it seems likely that the original Taos clans followed the migration trail of all Pueblo peoples, first as Pit Dwellers, as sojourners in caves and caveat lodges, as builders of the towered towns, of the walled pueblos, of the pyramidal house-heaps, moving in a migratory circle, still to be traced in their ruins and their tribal epics. This tribal trek followed the distribution of springs and rivers, down the Rio Grande and up along the Colorado tributaries. Between the two the trail went by way of San Juan and Mesa Verde on the north, and the Mimbres and Gila Rivers on the south."

Sources: Wikipedia; UNESCO World Heritage Site Citation; Khan Academy - Native American Culture of the South West; Taos Pueblo web site; University of Arizona Centre for Creative Photography; The Ansel Adams Gallery.
(photographs by Colin McLean)



PAS Field Trip to Burnswark Hill, May 25th 2024

Richard Welander

Burnswark has been on my bucket list for years. I must have driven past it hundreds of times over the years, belting down the A74 on our way to visit family in the Lake District but never taking the time to stop and explore. So, when Trevor Cowie suggested a field trip to this fascinating and controversial site, I was first in the queue.



Prominent on the skyline to the east of the A74 just north of Ecclefechan, Burnswark is an imposing native hill fort straddled to north and south by Roman camps. In view of the unusual location of the camps and the discovery of large numbers of sling bullets and quantities of other Roman ammunition at the fort, it has been suggested that the hill and its environs might have been a Roman army training area, but more recently it has been argued that the fort was the scene of an actual assault. The latter argument was first put forward by our guide for the day, Dr John Reid, chair of the Trimontium Trust in Melrose.

On a beautifully sunny Saturday morning back in May, our group of 16 PAS members rendezvoused at the Kirkconnel Hotel for morning coffee and to meet up with John Reid. In Trevor's words, John masterminded the recent very imaginative project to investigate the site, combining metal detecting and limited excavation and finds analysis that he has described in his delightfully alliterative Current Archaeology article "Bullets, Ballistas, and Burnswark" (available in Current Archaeology's digital archive).

Over coffee, John gave an account of previous investigations and differing interpretations of the site. With graphic videos of exploding ballistic gel, he introduced us to the fearsome destructive power of the Roman lead sling bullets found in their hundreds across the site. Hidden just a few centimetres below the modern ground surface, these bullets had remained static and undisturbed for two millennia until discovered by metal-detecting. Once plot-

ted and adopting methodologies used in conflict archaeology, their locations revealed evidence of phased assaults on the inhabitants of the hill fort summit.

Well primed, we set off in convoy up the narrow single-track road to the foot of the hill. Our progress was slowed by an encounter with a farm tractor that had to reverse half a mile back up the track! Parking cars on the hard-standing that John and his team had created during the project, we walked along the track and into the field on the left, crossing the clearly visible ditch-and-bank earthworks of the south camp and starting the gentle climb up the hill.

Arriving at the north rampart, we looked at the siege works in some detail. A series of flat-topped mounds projected out and up-hill from the rampart and John explained that these were platforms on which massive ballistas were mounted, firing projectiles up and into the fort. These, along with slingers and archers, would have decimated the population on the hilltop, who, the evidence suggests, were largely defenceless from such airborne assaults.



Sling Bullets

Climbing further up the hill towards the summit, we crossed the kill field and over the hill fort earthworks and onto the summit. Forgetting about the archaeology for a short while, we sat and enjoyed our packed lunches and the awesome 360° views. Gently retracing our steps back to the cars, we returned to the hotel where John had a final surprise for us - a recently-completed animated visualisation of the assault on Burnswark hill fort. The video was a graphic reminder of the ugly violence that this now beautiful peaceful place once witnessed.



This brief account can't possibly adequately capture the wonderful guided walk which John led us on. His enthusiasm is infectious and his knowledge, both of the site and its wider context, is remarkable. To learn more, I would urge you to read the paper by John Reid and Andrew Nicholson here https://journalofroman-archaeology.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/JRA32_20_Reid_v6.pdf. If you're passing by Ecclefechan sometime soon, take my advice - turn off up the lane and take a walk up Burnswark Hill. You won't regret it.

(photographs by Richard Wilander)

News & Events

Field trip Saturday 21st September 2024: Medieval settlements in the Forest of Ettrick

Piers Dixon

On the back of site visits by Piers Dixon, Joyce Durham and Strat Halliday, backed up by LiDAR research, a rash of new settlements have been discovered. These range from moated sites and forest steads to shielings and sheep farming structures. This trip will take in a selection of these in the upper Yarrow Valley. There will be a reasonably strenuous walk, about 4kms, along the Southern Upland Way to visit shielings reported on in the last Newsletter near Dryhope where there is a 16th century tower (below; photo Colin McLean) and forest stead, as well as a roadside stop by the Megget Water to visit a moated site that lies beside it. After this we can retire to the Glen Café for refreshment.

Please indicate if you have an interest in attending by sending me an email at piers.j.dixon@gmail.com. We will as usual double/treble up on cars to reduce parking issues. The meet will start at Dryhope at 11am where there is a pull-in for those visiting Dryhope Tower beside the A708 about 400m short of the turn to Dryhope Farm.



PAS Programme 2024-25

Richard Wilander

Our programme for the 2024-25 session has been progressing well, subject to confirmation from our final speaker. However, here are the dates of our forthcoming meetings for you to get into your diary. All the talks apart from December's are at our usual venue in St Joseph's Neighbourhood Centre.

• **Women in British archaeology**, including Peggy Piggott, Lady John Scott and others working in the Scottish Borders
Dr Mairi Davis, Historic Environment Scotland
- 19th September 2024

• **Investigating a Neolithic cursus on the Isle of Arran**
Dr Gavin MacGregor, Archaeology Scotland
- 17th October 2024

• **Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland**
Peter Yeoman, former HES Head of Cultural Resources
- 21st November 2024

• **The Twelve Towers of Rule - life and strife in the Valley of Rulewater in the late medieval period**
Professor Jane Bower FRSE (Note: The Tweeddale Society's annual Harkle Hendrie Lecture is held at Eastgate Theatre)
- 10th December 2024

• **Holyrood Park, Edinburgh: Recent excavations at Dunsapie Fort**
Jamie Humble, AOC Archaeology
- 16th January 2025

• **Rediscovering Cromarty medieval burgh**
Steven Birch, University of Aberdeen
- 20th February 2025

To be confirmed
- 20th March 2025

• **AGM**
- 17th April 2025

Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society Open Day at Cammo Estate, Saturday 24 August

Walking Tours at 10.30am and 1.30pm
Take part in the excavation, learn about the characters and see our finds. Meet at Cammo Lodge, Cammo Road, EH4 8AW. Contact volunteer@eafs.org.uk to book a place.



Uncovering the Tweed

Katie O'Connell, AOC Archaeology Group

Uncovering the Tweed (UtT) is a dynamic participatory archaeology and community heritage programme led by AOC Archaeology Group for the *Destination Tweed* project (see below). This initiative seeks to explore the rich archaeological and heritage tapestry of the Tweed river valley, stretching 113 miles from Moffat to Berwick-upon-Tweed.

What we're doing: Over the next three years, we'll delve into the valley's history through a variety of thematic sub-projects. These projects will investigate sites spanning different periods and types, from ancient bridges and Iron Age settlements to prehistoric flint scatters and historic mills.



Uncovering Lyne

Our research includes desk-based mapping and on-site surveys of various scales. This might involve geophysical surveys of potential Roman sites or deserted medieval villages, as well as historic building surveys in the urban areas of the Tweed valley. And, of course, there will be excavations ranging from test-pitting to broader explorations of diverse site types.

Get involved: These sites reveal the region's rich cultural history, and we need your help to uncover their stories!

We'll be utilising detailed LiDAR data, which will be available online for you to explore and identify sites independently. To help you get started, we'll conduct workshops on using LiDAR, followed by field visits to the identified locations. No prior experience is required, and we have activities and events that cater to all interests.



Surveying

To join us and stay updated on future projects, email getinvolved@aocarchaeology.com to sign up for our mailing list.



Destination Tweed

Katie O'Connell

Destination Tweed is a unique project which aims to celebrate and share the nature, history and stories of the River Tweed and deliver significant economic, environmental, educational and social benefits to the south of Scotland and North Northumberland.

The River Tweed is one of the UK's most important river corridors with a rich natural and cultural heritage. A five-year partnership led investment, will deliver a 113-mile trail running from Moffat, past the source of the River Tweed and on to Berwick Upon Tweed where the river meets the sea. As part of this, a further 12 projects covering a wide range of cultural, river and landscape enhancements, will connect communities and attractions along the route and create opportunities to celebrate, care for, enjoy and promote the river sustainably.

The Destination Tweed project is a multi-partner collaboration led by the Tweed Forum. There are over 30 funders including the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, South of Scotland Enterprise, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Sustrans Scotland, Northumberland County Council, EU LIFE, Fallago Environment Fund, Water Environment Fund, Woodland Trust Scotland, Esmée Fairbairn and a range of other trusts and foundations.

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