



PAST

Peeblesshire Archaeological Society Times
Winter issue / February 2019

Unveiling the secrets of the Galloway Hoard!

Annual joint Tweeddale Society/PAS lecture

On Tuesday 11 December, a near-capacity audience filled the auditorium of the Eastgate Theatre to hear Dr Martin Goldberg of National Museums Scotland talk about 'International Connections in the Galloway Hoard' - the stunning Viking-Age treasure found by metal detectorists in Dumfries & Galloway in 2014.



This significant event in the calendar of our two Societies was made possible by generous sponsorship received from the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in the form of a grant from their Regional Fund, the aim of which is to enable local groups around Scotland to host high quality talks by invited guest lecturers.

The hoard represents the richest and most varied collection of rare and exotic Viking-age objects ever found in Britain and Ireland. Some of the artefacts are of types never found before in the UK; some are known only in hoards from outside Scotland; and several seem to be unique survivals. While largely composed of silver objects, the hoard includes more gold than other UK hoards as well as unusual gemstones and a range of organic materials. These include items of wood, leather, linen, wool and Scotland's earliest examples of silk – all rarely found in Scottish conditions.

In an enthralling presentation, Martin led us through the contents of the hoard as excavated and prepared for conservation.

A top layer consisted of silver arm-rings and ingots and lastly a splendid decorated pendant or pectoral cross with a fine chain still wound around it; on the arms of the cross are depictions of the Four Evangelists. This was an exceptional find in its own right but this upper layer may have been buried as a decoy to disguise the fact that yet more amazing treasures had been buried beneath.

Under an intervening layer of gravel, lay a larger lower deposit: this included many more ingots and arm-rings, some of them with intricate decoration. Variations in the treatment of the arm-rings and the presence of abbreviated inscriptions in Anglian runes suggest that up to four individuals may have been involved in their creation. Alongside these lay the fragmentary remains of a wooden box, which contained a gold finger-ring, a rare gold ingot and a charming bird-headed gold pin of fine workmanship and unique form.



Galloway Hoard: bird-headed gold pin
(Source: NMS)

Most astonishing of all was an ornately decorated silver-gilt vessel of Continental manufacture - the only complete lidded vessel of its type ever discovered in Britain and Ireland. The vessel had been wrapped in several layers of textile, while the series of objects packed inside had also been enclosed in textiles. CT-scanning (courtesy of Borders General Hospital!) was undertaken to assist the delicate process of removal of the contents of the vessel. It turned out to have been jam-packed with an amazingly varied collection of items including beads; amulets of glass and rock crystal; a silver brooch; another gold ingot; Anglo-Saxon disc brooches of a kind not previously found in Scotland and two examples of a new type of brooch.



Galloway hoard: silver-gilt vessel Carolingian
Source: NMS)

Still carefully wrapped in individual textile bundles were an exotic rock crystal flask or jar (probably from the Middle East) and what appear to be a set of three jewelled *aestels* (pointers used to read and mark places within medieval manuscripts). Some of the more unusual objects still await interpretation, such as two strange balls of compressed soil; Martin's current intriguing suggestion is that these may represent soil brought back by pilgrims from sacred sites. Many of these items, including the vessel itself, clearly represent cherished items or heirlooms and were clearly already old when the hoard was buried early in the 10th century AD.

Martin brought an excellent presentation to a close by summarising the key features of the hoard. Above all, he stressed how this discovery opens up fresh perspectives for considering an exceptional range of international connections; among the many fascinating aspects of this amazing find, one of the most significant is the way it brings together in a single deposit, objects originating from Ireland and the Irish Sea region, the Anglo-Saxon world, the Holy Roman and Byzantine empires and perhaps even further afield.

Recently appointed as the Principal Curator of Medieval Archaeology and History in the Museum's Department of Scottish History & Archaeology, Martin is now leading what will be the definitive 3-year programme of conservation and research into the find. As the project proceeds much more information will undoubtedly emerge and it is our hope that further down the line we will have another opportunity to hear about this wonderful discovery that is helping to reshape our understanding of Early Medieval Scotland!

Jeff Carter/Trevor Cowie



Galloway hoard: rock crystal sphere (Source: NMS)

A Peeblesshire Bog Body?

A skeleton found at Lamancha (Newlands) in 1898

The British Newspaper Archive is a partnership project between the British Library and Findmypast, set up to digitise the Library's collection of historical newspapers and make it available on the internet so researchers from all over the world can access the treasures that lie within. Launched in 2011, millions of pages of historical newspapers have now been scanned in and made available online. You can now search the archive by keyword, name, location, date or title and watch the results appear in an instant. Searching the site is free, but to view the newspapers, you have to pay a fee (a variety of subscription or pay-as-you-go packages being available).

It has long been recognised that early newspapers are a rich source of antiquarian and archaeological information but before the advent of digital resources, mining for such data involved laborious searches through often fragile print copies or grainy micro-film. Now the British Newspaper Archive makes it possible to undertake such research from the comfort of one's home!

In the course of a recent search, I found the following intriguing report of a previously unrecorded local discovery among the miscellaneous news items in - of all places - the *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough* of Monday 11 April 1898, p4:

Whilst a drainer was at work in the field between the railway bridge at Lamancha Station and the blacksmith's shop at the Whim, Peeblesshire, last week, he uncovered a skeleton, which upon being carefully removed, proved to be that of a full-grown woman. The skeleton was lying at a depth of thirty inches from the surface, and was in a good state of preservation, the skull and teeth in particular being perfect. Not far from the place where the skeleton was found, with soil like it partaking of a peaty character, is one of the most interesting antiquities in Peeblesshire—a plateau of ground thickly strewn with flint arrow heads, an indication that some twenty centuries ago a sanguinary combat had been fought on the spot.

Report of discovery of skeleton at Lamancha, *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough* - Monday 11 April 1898. Image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved.

'Whilst a drainer was at work in the field between the railway bridge at Lamancha Station and the blacksmith's shop at the Whim, Peeblesshire, last week, he uncovered a skeleton, which upon being carefully removed, proved to be that of a full-grown woman. The skeleton was lying at a depth of thirty inches from the surface, and was in a good state of preservation, the skull and teeth in particular being perfect. Not far from the place where the skeleton was found, with soil like it partaking of a peaty character, is one of the most interesting antiquities in Peeblesshire – a plateau of ground thickly strewn with flint arrowheads, an indication that some twenty centuries ago a sanguinary combat had been fought on the spot.'

For such a short account, the details of the location are remarkably precise, so using the hugely impressive online map resources of the National Library of Scotland, it was a simple matter to re-locate the railway bridge and the smiddy and the likely area of the find. The precision of the account suggests a local informant or source but how the story was then picked up by the Middlesbrough paper remains unclear.



Extract from Six-inch 2nd edition map, Peeblesshire. Publication date: 1900 Date revised: 1898. Reproduced with permission of the National Library of Scotland.

The circumstances – the discovery of the remains during drainage work, their recovery from peat or peaty soil and the implication that they were of some antiquity - invite comparison with other finds of bodies in Scottish bogs.

The current overall total of such burials stands at nearly 45 sites producing a minimum of some 70 individuals; and as the adjacent map shows, this previously unrecorded find adds to the scatter from southern Scotland, the extent of which has only become clear relatively recently. It is the second such record from Peeblesshire: two human crania are said to have been found *'at different times, at a considerable depth, in a moss at Linton, Peeblesshire'* but their present whereabouts are unknown. The location of the Linton moss cannot be ascertained from the available map evidence but was probably situated in the low-lying ground to the E of West Linton.

Of course, unless the Lamancha bones can be retraced, the date of this skeleton will remain unknown; a prehistoric date is certainly possible, but in most cases where the preservation is good enough or adequate documentation exists, the Scottish 'bog bodies' are likely to be, or are known to be, medieval or post-medieval in date.

The unknown reporter of the Lamancha discovery has given us an extra bonus, for he or she also refers to a dense spread of flint arrowheads in the immediate vicinity. While its identification as the site of a conflict can perhaps be taken with a pinch of salt, this tantalising reference to a previously unrecorded lithic scatter certainly also invites further investigation in the form of reconnaissance and field-walking when weather and local conditions permit!

Trevor Cowie



Jack: "Well, here's another nice mess you've gotten me into..."

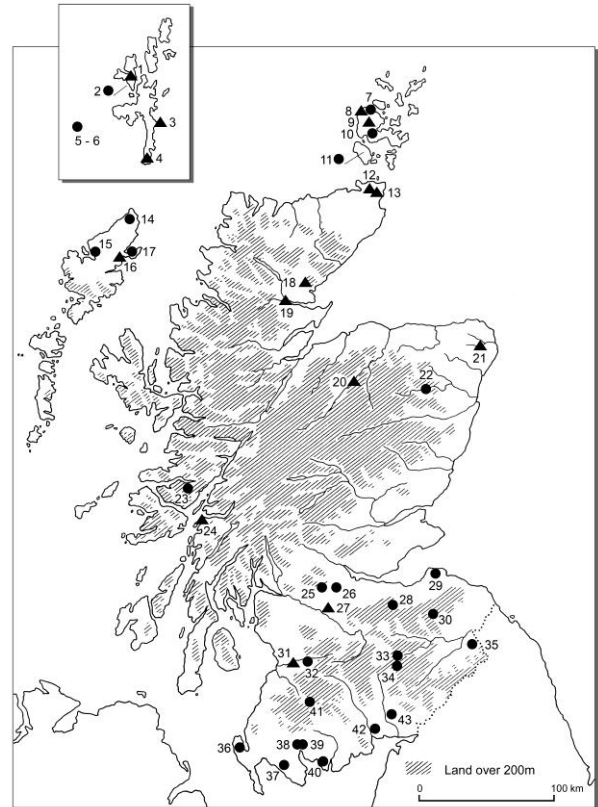


Figure 1. Map showing locations of bog bodies found in Scotland. ▲ = sites recorded in survey by Turner (1995); ● = additional sites recorded by Cowie et al 2011

Reference: Cowie, T, Pickin, J & Wallace, C 'Bog bodies from Scotland: old finds, new records', *Journal of Wetland Archaeology*, 10 (2011), 1-45

For full details of the British Newspaper Archive see their website at:
<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

Thank you.
 I liked learning
 about the stone
 age, the stones and
 how they were
 used.

See following article!

A Journey into the Unknown...

In late December we received an e-mail via our website from Lorna, a Primary 1 teacher at West Linton, asking if someone from PAS could perhaps come along and chat to her pupils about Ancient Man and how early peoples survived in and around Peeblesshire.

Seemed a straightforward ask...

Trevor and I met with Lorna in early January and, over a pleasant coffee at Coltmans, she outlined what she hoped we might cover – a presentation to Primary 1 & 2 (around 36 kids in total), incorporating artefacts if possible.

At the same time, she tried, in her own words ‘to put our minds at rest as regards dealing with an audience of wee kids’.

Failed!

However, nothing daunted, we set to work. Visits to the museums in Peebles and Biggar resulted in the generous loan of a couple of crates of artefacts from their handling collections – flint knives and scrapers that could practically remove the hide of a rhino; stone and bronze axeheads capable of felling oxen; a copy of the Rotten Bottom bow along with some vicious-looking arrows; animal skins in various olfactory conditions; a selection of fire-raising equipment and a veritable cacophony of musical instruments.

Just what you need for a school visit...

A powerpoint presentation was also carefully crafted around the story of the Late Glacial reindeer hunters of Howburn along with various child-friendly references to Tardis, Time-Lords and Sven the spindle-shanked Reindeer from Disney’s *Frozen*. Unfortunately, no space could be found for Scrut, the sabre-toothed squirrel star of *Ice Age* and he reluctantly ended up on the cutting-room floor...

And so, the afternoon of January 16th saw us heading over to West Linton’s splendid Primary School.

Haven’t classrooms changed! No chalk, no blackboard, just smartboard technology - plug in the presentation and off you go!

Various artefacts were spread out across three classrooms: flints and stone tools in one; bone, antler and skins in another; and musical instruments in the third.

Just time for a deep breath before the pupils trooped in from their lunch break...

We needn’t have worried! The presentation went well – Trevor & I doing an Ice Age Laurel and Hardy performance. The kids were absolutely brilliant - polite, eager to learn and with a real sense of fun - a credit to their teachers.

They asked lots of questions, some more awkward than others; as when we asked: ‘so what else could you do with a deerskin?’ Having gone through making tents, clothes etc, I helpfully suggested ‘Why not make a handbag for your Mum?’ ‘But where would we get the zip?’ came the reply. Bless ‘em...

Presentation over, the children split into 3 groups, for sessions of 10 minutes with each set of artefacts. We had Trevor on the flint and stone tools, me on the wood, bones and skins etc, and teacher on the musical instruments.

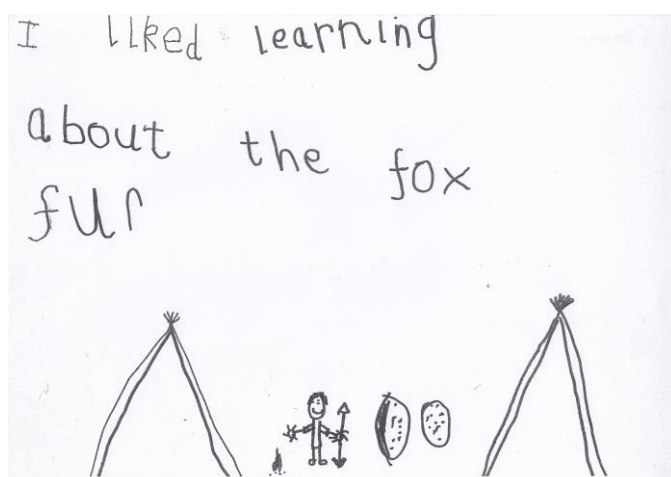
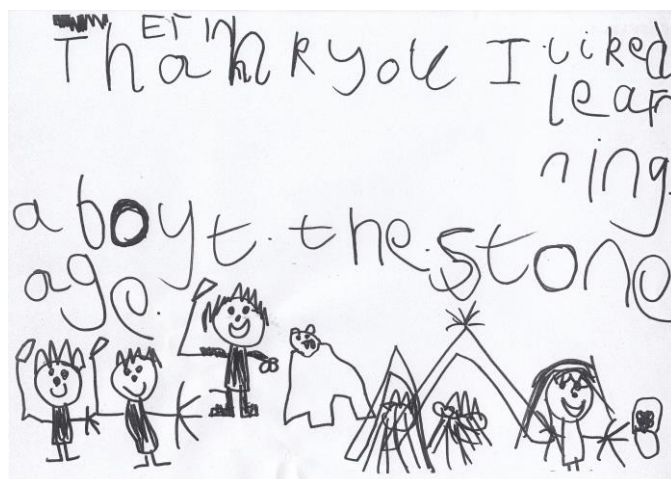
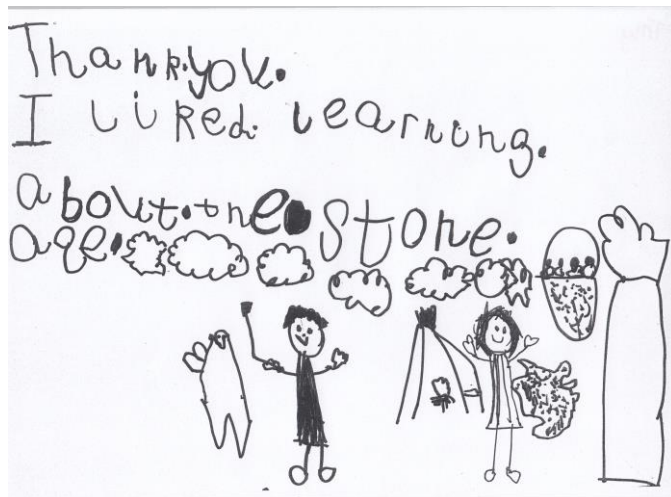
Musical instruments seemed to be a hit in every sense, the well-disciplined children being organised into bands by their teacher; however, Trevor described his sessions as “controlled mayhem” while around me 5-year-old boys explored the lethal possibilities of flint-tipped replica arrows. Favourite item in my group was the beautiful but slightly whiffy skin of a red fox - cuddled by the little girls and frequently jabbed by the boys when asked to find an alternative use for the arrows.

The teachers pronounced the day a brilliant success and we received lots of lovely “Thank You” letters from the pupils.

Sincere thanks go to the staff of West Linton Primary School, to Jim Ness at Biggar Museum and Chris Sawers at the Tweeddale Museum in Peebles, and most of all to the children..... they were brilliant!!

Would we do it again?...Yes...Possibly...Maybe!!

Jack Boughey



The Howburn Farm report

Reindeer hunters at Howburn Farm, South Lanarkshire

A Late Hamburgian settlement in southern Scotland –
its lithic artefacts and natural environment

Torben Bjarke Ballin, Alan Saville, Richard Tipping, Tam Ward,
Rupert Housley, Lucy Verrill, Matthew Bradley, Clare Wilson,
Paul Lincoln and Alison MacLeod



**Reindeer Hunters at Howburn Farm,
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Housley, Lucy Verrill, Matthew
Bradley, Clare Wilson, Paul Lincoln
and Alison MacLeod, Archaeopress:
Oxford, 2018

Available both in print and Open
Access.

The Howburn report is available as a
hardback at £25. However as it is an
open access publication, you can
download it as a free pdf from the
following page on the publisher's
website:

[http://archaeopress.com/ArchaeopressShop/
Public/displayProductDetail.asp?id={4ED1A6
9D-996A-4D30-A92A-5FC7CFD6099F}](http://archaeopress.com/ArchaeopressShop/Public/displayProductDetail.asp?id={4ED1A69D-996A-4D30-A92A-5FC7CFD6099F})

↩ Just a few of the super thank-you
letters sent to us by the West Linton
pupils. Judging by the expressions of the
hunters and their families life at Howburn
wasn't all bad!

Shootinglee 2018

The following brief report has been submitted to *Discovery & Excavation Scotland 2018* due to be published this spring

NT 31600 31400 (Canmore ID 180363).

Excavation continued at the remains of Shootinglee peel house, a fortified farmstead in what was formally Ettrick Forest. Previous seasons had revealed the peel house which had been partitioned to make two living areas at ground floor level at the N end and a substantial extension that had been built on at the S end, also used for domestic purposes. The N end had subsequently burnt down and the whole building extensively robbed of stone (DES 15 - 178, 16 - 158, 18 - 174-5).

The N end was divided into quadrants for excavation, each of which was excavated in sequence, starting with the occupation layer. This had circa 20mm of burnt debris at the S end, near what had been the partition, reducing in depth towards the N. Two central hearths were removed and a further group of hearths towards the NE corner, all made from weathered whinstone, suggesting a large hanging lum.

Below the burnt layer there was a made floor of upright packing stones with yellow clay between which had been so placed in order to raise the floor level. Removal of these revealed the rest of the substantial N-S drain, part of which had been revealed in previous seasons, a typical feature of bastle and peel houses of the Border country where the ground floor was used to house cattle. To either side of the drain was a paved area overlain by patches of concreted dark brown clay, possibly the residue of byre deposits. At the S end of the building, removal of the paving stones and hearth uncovered a second occupation layer also covered with a layer of burning over another paved surface. A section of the S wall of the extension was removed to reveal that it was built upon scree like that which occupies the hillside above the site.

Finds from the building have included clay pipe and metal objects, some of which are nails, but also two musket balls, one of which has been flattened from use, and knife blades, probably of domestic type. Occasional finds of medieval pot suggest that there has been earlier activity at the site.

Joyce Durham

And finally, a venerable bead!



Roman melon bead from South Hill Head, near Peebles © Crown Office

This fragment of a Roman glass bead was spotted by Strat Halliday on South Hill Head as he was showing some less than beady-eyed students around sites in the Meldons (apparently they had all just traipsed across that very spot!).

The bead was reported by Strat to the Treasure Trove Unit for assessment and eventual museum allocation. Dr Fraser Hunter (Scottish History & Archaeology Department, NMS) has kindly supplied the following information:

'Known as 'melon' beads (because of their shape), this type of bead was worn by people and horses in the Roman world and was also used to adorn tools on occasion. While there is obviously a lot of Roman activity in the area which could explain this one, the findspot is close to an Iron Age settlement so it may be a Roman artefact which has come into local hands. Most were made in the 1st century AD but their popularity continued through the 2nd'.

For any inquiries relating to Treasure Trove or if you have an archaeological object to report contact Emily Freeman or Ella Paul at the TT Unit (email TreasureTrove@nms.ac.uk or phone 0131 247 4082 / 4025) or consult the website: <https://treasuretrovescotland.co.uk/>