



May-June 2023 Newsletter

Welcome to the latest Peeblesshire Archaeological Society newsletter! We hope that you are enjoying the lovely warm weather we have been having recently!

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1) Members' evening, AGM and talks (St Joseph's Neighbourhood Centre)

On **Thursday 20 April** the Society marked the end of this year's talk programme with our [Annual General Meeting](#) followed by a medley of short illustrated talks. The minutes of the previous AGM and the Society's accounts to 31st March 2023 had been distributed in April's newsletter.

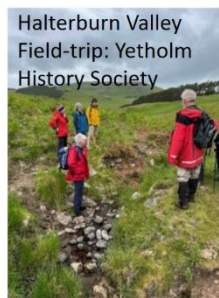
Vice Chairman **Piers Dixon** began proceedings by delivering the Chairman's review of the past year. He reflected on the 2022-3 lecture series

which included in-person talks [The World of Stonehenge](#) by Dr Neil Wilkin, [Violence and conflict in south-east Scotland from AD400 to AD850](#) by Dr Angela Boyle and [Culduthel: An Iron Age site](#) by Dr Candy Hatherley and online talks [Chevaux de Frise in Britain and Ireland](#) by Dr James O'Driscoll, [Underwater Encounters](#) by Dr Lindsey Büster and [Swandro Iron Age site](#) by Dr Julie Bond and Dr Steve Dockrill. In December

PAS In the Field



PAS Bowden Moor Pre-forestry Survey



Halterburn Valley
Field-trip: Yetholm
History Society



Thirlestane Barrows Excavations:
GUARD Archaeology



Trimontium Museum Visit



PAS Shootinglee Excavations



Tinnis Castle Excavations:
GUARD Archaeology

PAS activities in the field 2022-3. Slide courtesy Piers Dixon



members had joined the Tweeddale Society at the Eastgate Theatre for Dr John Reid's lecture on *Trimontium – the face of Roman Scotland*. Dr Nick Card's talk had had to be postponed due to complications caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Next season's lectures will again be a mixture of in-person talks at St Joseph's Neighbourhood Centre in Peebles or online via Zoom.

In the field PAS had conducted the Bowden Moor pre-forestry survey and had visited the Trimontium Museum in Melrose for a guided tour of the new exhibition space. A number of PAS members had taken part in the Drumelzier Project managed by Ronan Toolis and GUARD Archaeology. Sites included digs at Tinnis Castle Hillfort and Thirlestane Barrows. The Society's long-running dig at Shootinglee had finished and focus had now turned to writing up the project's findings. In June PAS members joined the Yetholm History Society for a field trip to the Halterburn Valley.

Referring to his financial summary Treasurer **Brian Tait** thanked auditor Colin Bell for examining the accounts. He noted that subscriptions were up as our membership had increased. The Society currently has 87 members. He added that with the current financial position the committee had recommended subscription rates remain unaltered for 2023-4.

As no new nominations had been received the following office bearers were confirmed for 2023-4:

Chairman	Trevor Cowie
Vice Chairman	Piers Dixon
Treasurer	Brian Tait
Secretary	Andrew Jepson

The following committee members were also re-confirmed: Neil Crawford (Programme organiser and website), Joyce Durham (Fieldwork & book sales), Gillian Brown (Outreach) and Iain Macleod.

Richard Welander will join the committee as Programme Manager and will work with Neil on the annual lecture series.

A date was set for next year's AGM. This will take place on **Thursday 18 April 2024**.

With Society business conducted the AGM was followed by two short illustrated talks and a film showing:



Clearance of a target winch pit at Barns Moss Firing Range, Stobs, September 2022.
Image courtesy Andrew Jepson

First was [Scheduling Stobs](#) presented by **Andrew Jepson**.

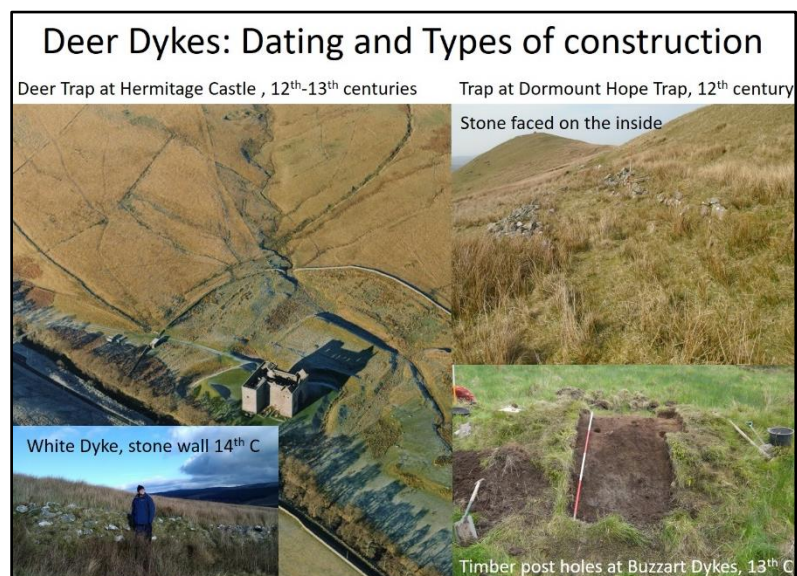
Andrew has worked for Archaeology Scotland at Stobs Camp, south of Hawick since 2016.

Members may recall the talk he gave to the Society in 2017 and the subsequent field trip to the camp. Stobs is internationally

important as it relates

to Scotland's preparation for the First World War and the subsequent handling of First World War prisoners. Andrew revealed that four areas of the camp had recently been scheduled. These include the training trenches close to Acreknowe reservoir, rifle ranges to the south-west, the internment camp, training camp and prisoner cemetery and the Second World War tracked target range above Shankend Viaduct. Andrew discussed the fieldwork that had been undertaken at the four areas in the years before their designation, including excavation, geophysics, survey, historic building recording, vegetation clearance, metal detecting and the rebuild of a prisoner memorial. Historic Environment Scotland's designation statement concludes that Stobs is of "*national importance because it makes a significant contribution to our understanding or appreciation of the military heritage of Scotland*" and is a "*very rare example of an extensive military camp with upstanding remains covering many of the contemporary functions. [...] The First World War prisoner of war hut is the last surviving upstanding example at a camp in the UK*".

This was followed by **Piers Dixon**'s talk on [Bowden Moor Survey and Monkish Disputes](#). This focused on the presence of linear earthworks thought to be of Medieval date in the



Deer Dykes: Dating and Types of construction
Slide courtesy Piers Dixon



context of the documented boundary dispute between Kelso and Melrose Abbeys and the contribution that PAS has made to the understanding of these monuments. The earthworks were first recorded by the Ordnance Survey and then by RCAHMS in 1956. It was uncertain whether the earthworks represented the actual boundary in question. A pre-forestry survey conducted by PAS in April 2022 visited all of the linear earthworks and found two new sections of rig and furrow. They suggested that the earthworks reflected the intake of land for agriculture. Piers revealed how LiDAR data can help detect sequences in the development of the intakes. Similar interconnected linear earthworks enclosing land for farming can be found at Southdean and Liddesdale. Might these linear earthworks be deer dykes used to enclose parks and as barriers in hunting traps? Piers concluded that the Bowden Moor earthworks are Medieval intakes, known as *assarts*, for the purposes of agriculture. The boundaries keep deer out as opposed to those in parks that are designed to keep deer in. The boundary between the two Abbey lands is memorialised in the parish boundary, in places by surviving earthworks but they do not intersect with the assart boundaries on the Moor.



Richard Welander and the Stone of Destiny, 1996
Film still courtesy Michael Brooks and Richard Welander

The evening concluded with a showing of *The Return of the Stone*, a 20-minute film directed by Michael Brooks documenting the return of the Stone of Destiny to Scotland in 1996. The film was introduced by **Richard Welander** who also features prominently. In 1996 Richard was Historic Scotland's Collections Manager. By the time he retired in 2019 Richard was Historic Environment

Scotland's Head of Collections. Over to Richard to pick up the story...

With the King's Coronation only a matter of days away from this year's AGM, Piers Dixon asked me to say something about the Stone of Destiny, aka the Stone of Scone and its historic role in royal inaugurations and coronations. Piers recalled that I had had some involvement in the events surrounding the return of the Stone back to Scotland from Westminster Abbey in November 1996 and subsequently its care over



the past 25 years at Edinburgh Castle. It seemed to me to be something of a tall order to summarise 700 or more years of history as well as the recent stories of the Stone in a brief 15-minute presentation at the end of the AGM but then I remembered a short video made at the time that did precisely that – and far better than I could do!

The 20-minute film *The Return of the Stone* was filmed and produced by Mike Brooks and scripted by Pat Connor, both friends and former colleagues of mine at Historic Scotland. Mike was then our Senior Photographer and Pat, our Press Officer. The voiceover was done by the actor, Brian Cox, who then, although already a famous name, was available and affordable! The video sought to emulate the pacy reporting style of Pathé News and, having introduced us to the early myths and legend of the Stone and its early history, told the stories of the famous theft of the Stone from Westminster Abbey by Glasgow University students on Christmas Day 1950 followed by the somewhat more legal events of 1996. The latter were filmed meticulously as an unique historical record and also as a possible aid to future movements of the Stone whether to London or to Perth.

The VHS video was never released for sale due to commercial copyright concerns over the use (albeit very brief) of the theme tune to that summer's blockbuster film – Mission Impossible! It seemed very apt at the time!

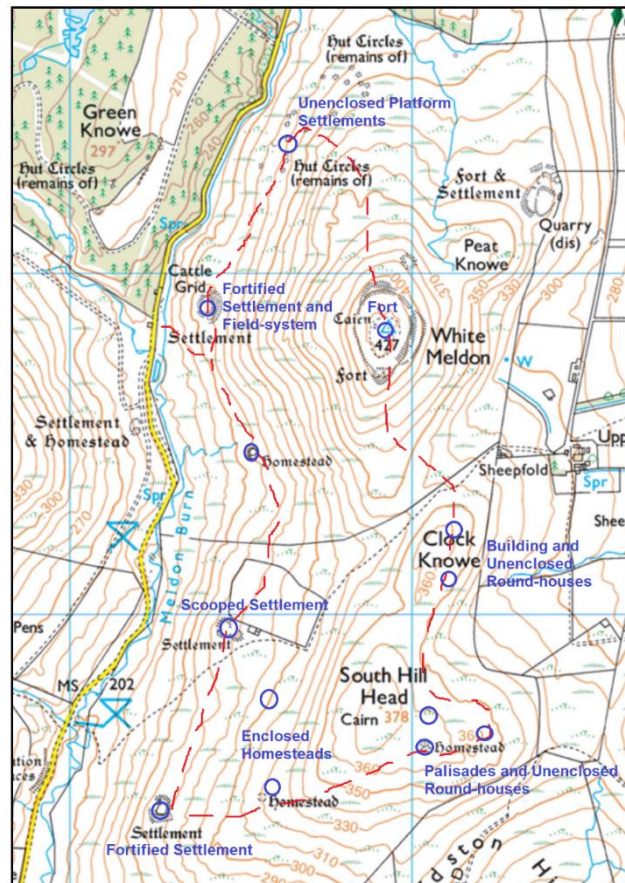
If you were unable to attend the AGM or would like to see the film again, Mike has kindly made it freely available online. Click on <https://vimeo.com/764096037> to access the film. Please note that you will need a Vimeo account. It is free and easy to set up if you do not have one.

2) “A Walk in the Meldons” – report on PAS field trip from Trevor Cowie

Our spring field trips over the last two years have taken us as far afield as the English Border, in the shape of visits to Dormont Hope (2021) and the Halterburn Valley (2022). This year we barely reached the Peebles parish boundary for our destination was the Meldon Valley, no more than a few kilometres from the centre of town but an ideal location for appreciating the quality and often the subtlety of the prehistoric archaeology on our own doorsteps. Our guide for our ‘walk in the Meldons’ was Strat Halliday, who had designed a route taking in many of the sites on and around the White Meldon and its neighbour South Hill Head. In what follows, my debt to his field notes will be very clear!



After assembling at the disused toilet block - not the most picturesque of trysting places - the party of some 15 PAS members crossed the Meldon Burn and set off up the slope opposite. Our first stop was the location where Strat's analysis of the LiDAR data has given remarkable definition to a prehistoric field system, originally detected in the course of his own fieldwork but masked by bracken for much of the year and lacking clarity. However, the local relief model has been little short of a revelation, revealing a patchwork of small rectangular fields extending over some five hectares. Indeed, one of the recurrent strands of the day was to be the fresh perspectives that the LiDAR has brought to our appreciation and understanding of the surviving archaeology.



Meldon Valley: showing the planned route (some adjustment was made on the day). Image courtesy Strat Halliday

Moving on from the field system, we stopped to view the substantial rampart and ditch of the fortified settlement located just to its north on a broad terrace overlooking the Meldon Burn. Within the rampart is an inner enclosure now recognised as a scooped settlement dating from the Roman Iron Age and almost



A view of the fortified settlement on the broad terrace overlooking the Meldon Burn, with the Black Meldon in the background. Image courtesy Trevor Cowie

certainly inserted once the defences had become derelict. It is with this later scooped settlement phase, perhaps dating from around the 1st to 2nd century AD, that the field-system is almost certainly associated.



Making our way out of the entrance of this farming settlement and heading north again, we followed the line of a contemporary driveway. As Strat had noted, this track was in a sense taking us back through time for within a few hundred metres we encountered the first of nearly 20 house platforms which make up an extensive unenclosed platform settlement dating from the Bronze Age and quite possibly abandoned for a thousand years or more by the time the driveway was in use. However, as Strat emphasised, this apparent cluster of house platforms is itself most likely to be the cumulative product of many episodes of occupation and abandonment over long periods of time rather than one continuous long-term occupation.

Taking advantage of the relatively gentle ascent offered by the approach from the north, the group then made its way up to the fort on White Meldon. Enclosing as much as 2.7 hectares at its largest extent, for it clearly went through a number of phases, this is the largest fort in Peeblesshire. Here Strat pointed out the outlines of some of the many round houses that can be traced within the interior; here too,

LiDAR has changed the picture by adding significantly to the total number recorded in the course of the original RCAHMS survey.



Strat indicating the outline of one of the timber round houses in the interior of White Meldon fort.

Image courtesy Andrew Jepson

As the weather had remained favourable, we stopped for lunch in the lee of the summit, with fine views over to the east. However, as we emerged from the shelter of the rock outcrops after our lunch break, we were met by a chilly breeze and the ominously dark clouds to the west prompted some of the party to don cagoules and over-trousers in readiness for the rain that was clearly threatening to follow.

Leaving the fort, the party then made its way down the southern spur of White Meldon to Clock Knowe where LiDAR data has once again greatly assisted and altered our appreciation of features first recorded in the course of conventional fieldwork in the 1980s. While still defying easy recognition on the ground, with the aid of the LiDAR-derived local relief model it was just possible to tease out the



presence of a probable prehistoric settlement, while one or maybe two elongated turf-walled buildings (possibly sheephouses) and an area of rigs bounded by a turf dyke indicate the survival of a fragment of the post-medieval farming landscape above the limits of the modern improved fields.

Moving onto South Hill Head itself we were able to trace the outlines of the well-preserved palisaded settlement with an impressively large ring-ditch house in the interior, first noted on aerial photographs and then surveyed in the course of work for the RCAHMS Peeblesshire Inventory. The relatively clear outlines of this site contrast with the much more subtle traces of a series of individual unenclosed ring-ditch houses, at least nine in all, ranged around South Hill Head and its immediate environs and revealed by a combination of modern aerial survey, fieldwork and analysis of the LiDAR data. Such sites represent a significant aspect of the prehistoric settlement pattern of which we were not previously aware - and it is one that will have been, and still remains, especially vulnerable to loss through cultivation or afforestation.

Dropping down onto South Hill Head's broad SW spur, we briefly viewed one of the smaller settlements, conventionally termed 'homesteads' which are strung out along the slopes on both sides of the Meldon valley. By now an initial mizzle had turned into a steady drizzle and those who had not yet donned their raingear admitted defeat!

By now firmly on the return leg of the trip, we stopped to view what must once have been a substantial scooped settlement surviving next to an improved field brought in



Our final stop of the day - a small walled settlement located on the SW slopes of White Meldon overlooking the Meldon Burn. The walls of the prehistoric homestead have been extensively robbed in more modern times to build the prominent sheepfold which overlies it. Image courtesy Andrew Jepson



to cultivation at the end of the 19th century. As Strat had noted with a final nod to the value of the LiDAR data, fragments of earlier banks and lynchets surviving on these slopes among the later rigs hint at the extent of the field systems that would once have surrounded these prehistoric farming settlements. After rounding off our itinerary with a brief halt to view another of the smaller 'homesteads', we returned to the cars, somewhat damper but much better informed than when we had set off!

Our warm thanks go again to Strat for providing the detailed field notes circulated in advance to all members and, on the day itself, for leading an excellent, informative and very enjoyable field visit. Finally, we are grateful to Hugh Stewart, Upper Kidston Farm, for readily granting us access.

Trevor Cowie

3) An early 19th century Peebles Trade Token – David Bartholomew

Between the 17th and 19th centuries, trade tokens were often issued by local traders in many cities and in some towns to be used as small change at their and other businesses.

At the beginning of April, while detecting at Drumelzier, I found a lead farthing token



The Peebles lead farthing token. Images courtesy David Bartholomew

issued by Robert Frazer, Tea and Spirit Dealer, Peebles. On one side it has originally had the legend 'Tea and Spirit Dealer' round the margin while the Peebles emblem of three fish can still clearly be made out in the centre. On the other side it has 'Robert Frazer, Peebles' round the margin and the date of 1813 in the centre.



Robert Frazer is mentioned in Pigot and Co.'s Directory of 1825-26, p.570, where he is listed among the Grocers and Spirit Dealers. He had a shop on the High Street. Trevor Cowie drew my attention to John Wood's 1823 map of Peebles, 'A Plan of the Town of Peebles from Actual Survey', which can be accessed in the map section of the National Library of Scotland website. This shows Frazer's property lay on the north side of the High Street at a point which Trevor reckons would correspond with the street frontage occupied today by Keith Walter the jewellers and the adjacent opening leading to the Oven Door tearoom.

Dalton & Hamer, the standard catalogue of tokens, records this type of token – seemingly the only token ever issued in Peeblesshire. The National Museum of Scotland holds an example which is complete, but more worn than my token. The letters are less easy to read than those still remaining on my example. It would seem that few examples of this token have survived.

David Powell covers the token in Issue 150 of the *Lead Token Telegraph*, his online newsletter for collectors. He has also done some research into Robert Frazer and discovered that he was born in 1789, was one of Peebles' magistrates and was actively involved on the committee seeking to establish the Edinburgh and Peebles Railway. I plan to see if I can find out more on Frazer and then write a short article for Peebles Life.

Interestingly, in Issue 145 of *LTT* David Powell shows another lead token with the fish emblem, but in this case with the motto of Peebles '*Contra Nando Incrementum*' round the margin. There is beading around the margins on both sides, but the other side is blank and slightly concave. It is possible this was a design template for the Peebles token and was never meant to be used in circulation.

David Bartholomew

4) Upcoming conferences, exhibitions and lectures

Over the next couple of months there are plenty of opportunities for members to attend talks or conferences and to visit local exhibitions. A short selection of FREE and chargeable events is provided below. Please note that these are not Peeblesshire Archaeological Society events. Please contact the relevant organisers for further information or to book (where necessary).



Lectures & festivals

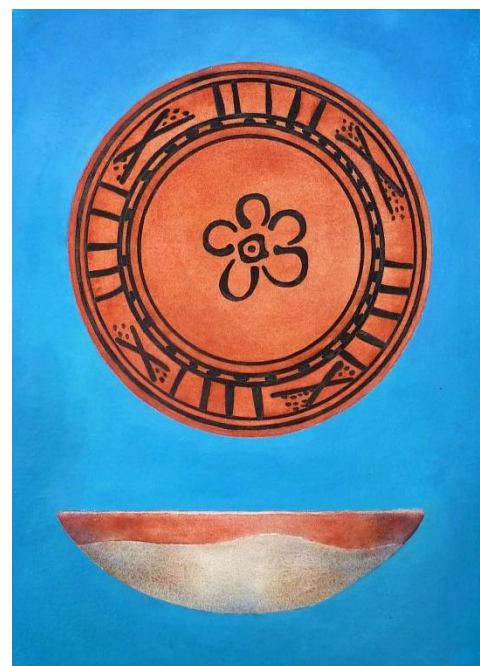


The Council for British Archaeology's [Festival of Archaeology](https://www.archaeologyuk.org/festival.html) runs from **Saturday 15 to Sunday 30 July**. This year's theme is "Archaeology and Creativity". The programme website can be accessed here -> <https://www.archaeologyuk.org/festival.html>. Events are online

or "on the ground". The festival listings are searchable -> <https://www.archaeologyuk.org/festival/festival-event-listing.html>.

Coming up on **Tuesday 18 July** the CBA's "This is Archaeology" Lecture Series is hosting a FREE online talk entitled *Traces from the other end of time: imaginary futures and the prehistoric past*. For further information and to book your free place head to the CBA's webpage here -> <https://www.archaeologyuk.org/get-involved/events-and-activities/event-calendar/this-is-archaeology-traces-from-the-other-end-of-time-imaginary-futures-and-the-prehistoric-past.html>.

This year's [Rhind Lectures](https://www.socantscot.org/event/rhind-lectures-2023-what-has-maya-archaeology-done-for-us/) take place between **Friday 29 September** and **Sunday 1 October** with 2023's theme being *What Has Maya Archaeology Done For Us?* This event is open and free to all. It will take place in Edinburgh and will also be live-streamed online. The lectures will be presented by **Professor Elizabeth Graham** from the Institute of Archaeology, University College London. Click on <https://www.socantscot.org/event/rhind-lectures-2023-what-has-maya-archaeology-done-for-us/> for further details. The website currently states that tickets will become available in due course.



Black on red bowl decorated with a flower motif. From the 'Ottawa Group' at Lamanai about A.D. 800.



The CBA's "This is Archaeology" Lecture Series returns on **Thursday 9 November** with an online talk entitled *Warrior Treasure: the Staffordshire Hoard in Anglo-Saxon England*. This is free to CBA members, £5 for non-members. Click on

<https://www.archaeologyuk.org/get-involved/events-and-activities/event-calendar/this-is-archaeology-warrior-treasure-the-staffordshire-hoard-in-anglo-saxon-england.html> for further information and to book your place.

Conferences

This year's [Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders Archaeology Conference](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210596/archaeology/12109/archaeology_what_s_on/2) will take place on **Saturday 18 November**. Once again, this will be held at Queen Margaret University. More details about the conference will be available soon at https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210596/archaeology/12109/archaeology_what_s_on/2. In the meantime, members can watch videos of the 2022 conference talks from this very webpage.

Exhibitions

From **Saturday 1 July to Saturday 30 September** the Old Gala Club will be reliving [how entertainment evolved in Galashiels](https://www.liveborders.org.uk/exhibitions/the-old-gala-club-relives-entertainment-old-gala-house/). Featuring a mix of photographs, memorabilia and artefacts from the Club's collections the exhibition at Old Gala House will document how times have changed in the town. Entry will be free but donations are always welcome. <https://www.liveborders.org.uk/exhibitions/the-old-gala-club-relives-entertainment-old-gala-house/>.





And finally, Peebles Library, Museum and Gallery is hosting a series of events for [Step Back In Time](#). At various dates from **June** to **October** there will be walks on a number of historical themes, including Transport & Roads, the Railways of Peebles and People of the Past. In **November** and **December** you can drop in to the museum and explore photographs from the past.

Click on -> <https://www.liveborders.org.uk/exhibitions/exhibition-step-back-in-time-with-eric-chris-peebles-library-museum-gallery/> for further information and <https://www.liveborders.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Step-Back-in-Time.pdf> for the itineraries, dates and times.

Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to seeing you soon.

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