

PAS

Peeblesshire Archaeological Society Newsletter May 2024

A New Look

The Society is changing the way that we distribute our newsletter, in order to keep up with new technologies. Later this year we will be switching over to an electronic newsletter delivered via Mailchimp, and we will take the opportunity to refresh the GDPR permissions that you each give us to hold your personal data in order to contact you. You can expect to receive by email a simple form to facilitate this - do please complete and return it as soon as possible. We hope to complete this change over the summer, and in due course we will also refresh the Society's web site; streamlining it and making it easier to use and update. Our plan is that the new website should be in place by the end of 2024.

The format of this May issue is therefore by way of an interim step while we put the new arrangements in place, so please do bear with us.

I have just taken over from Andy Jepson as Newsletter Editor, and I want to pay tribute to all his hard work over a number of years to keep you informed (and amused!). Do please feel free to email me with any potential content for future issues, whether text, photographs, or (even better) both. You can send contributions or contact me at: PASEditor@icloud.com

Colin McLean

Recent Excavations at Tinnis Castle, Drumelzier, and Thirlestane Barrows, Broughton

Dr Ronan Toolis, May 2nd 2024

Ronan outlined that this was a community project to find what Archaeology there was in the area around the rock called Merlin's Grave, relating to the tradition. Merlin is referred to in a 15th century documentary account about St Kentigern that says Lailoken, a Cumbric name, was his original name. Three sites were targeted, Tinnis Castle, Thirlestane Barrows and Merlin's Grave.

Ronan started with the earliest dated material, Mesolithic flint found in soil under the wall in Trench 1 at Tinnis Castle. The round barrow at Thirlestane Barrows produced 4 burials which dated to 14-1300BC from cremated bone contained in burial urns. Not all the bones were present but only a remnant, suggesting pre-burial processing of the bodies. The square barrow nearby contained two early Christian burials. OSL dating of the ditch sample produced a date 430+150 years, the first scientific dating of this type of site. This is an elite burial and overlaps with the early occupation of Tinnis Fort.

Trench 2 at the fort produced vitrified stone and cattle bones radiocarbon dated to late Iron Age. This is a rare example of a late Iron Age fort. Trench 1 had a rampart which was 1.7m thick

that produced a C14 date of AD 600-657 from the base of rampart core. Trench 2 also produced a date of this period, AD 542-638 from the core of the rebuilt rampart. Trench 3 excavated a rampart in a lower terrace 1.6m in height covered with debris from above. The charcoal rich deposits under the debris dated AD 890-1020. Lead from here was derived from the Southern Uplands, which was a similar date to that found in the Manor valley. Iron smelting slag was also found - a rare find. The metal working is a sign of an elite site as is its design as a nucleated fort, comparable with others in southern Scotland with a local concentration in Peeblesshire, suggesting a petty kingdom in the area.

The castle had walls with mortared stone. Mortar from the bailey which was excavated and the castle ruins are from the same source which is local - lime from Carlops. A rectangular building in Trench 2 is argued to be part of the castle. A midden deposit outside the walls contained Scottish Medieval Redware of 13th-15th century, a medieval knife and other iron objects and lead window kaims made from lead from the Pennines. Merlin's Grave was the last site explored, mapped as early as 1775 and described in an account of later 17th century. Geophysics survey suggests a pit of some sort which might account for the story of Merlin's Grave.



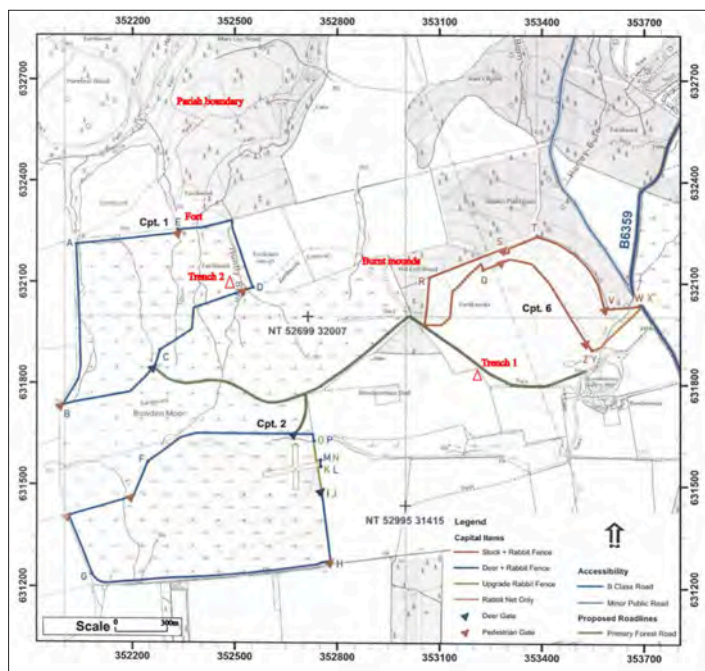
The early medieval Christian burials during excavation of the square barrow (image provided by Ronan Toolis)

Report by Piers Dixon

Bowden Moor Medieval Earthworks Excavations June 2024

Preparation for the excavations of two of the earthworks on Bowden Moor move into action later in May with the lay out of the two trenches, and GPS and drone survey of them. A small team comprising Stephen Scott, Neil Crawford, Joyce Durham and myself will be carrying this task during the last week of May.

The dates for the excavations are fixed for the weekends of June 15th-16th and 22nd-23rd (Trenches 1 and 2 respectively on plan). Dr Tim Kinnaird of St Andrews University will be coming to take OSL samples on the Monday following each excavation in order to obtain scientific dates for their construction.



Plan of farm with Trenches 1 & 2 marked

Visitors to the excavations are welcome. As the Saturday will be spent uncovering the earthworks, I recommend that you visit on the Sunday. We will be backfilling on the Monday afternoon following the sampling process. Please contact myself by email to indicate that you wish to visit, as parking at the farm is limited. My email address is piers.j.dixon@gmail.com

Piers Dixon

Shootinglee Post-excavation Progress May 2024

All specialist work on the artefacts and samples from Shootinglee excavations has now been completed, with the glass and baked clay reports delivered in March, and I am working on synthesising the results. The focus will be drawing overall conclusions about the date range of the occupation and its main phases of construction; the social status of the occupants, the economy and the local environment as well as its context in the late medieval and post-medieval Southern Uplands and the forest of Ettrick.

Those who attended my talk on March 7th will have a good idea of the current state of my interpretation of the site comprising three main periods of occupation: a late medieval phase, a mid-late 17th century phase and an 18th to early-19th century phase. These may be described briefly as the peel house of the Stewart's of Shootinglee, a small township around the converted peel-house and finally a sheep farming phase.



(upper image) A fragment of a fired clay object from the late 17th century burning event, peel house

(lower image) A glass bead from a necklace found in the stables, Trench 7

Piers Dixon

South Hawkshaw Rig Survey May 17th 2024

Joyce Durham and I visited South Hawkshaw Rig near Dryhope to record the sites that I had first seen while walking the Southern Upland Way from St Mary's Loch to Traquair in early April. What we found comprised a shepherd's bothy (upper photo on the following page) and a nearby robbed out sheep bucht beside the Way at NT27746 26182, and a group of shieling huts on the SW of Hawkshaw Rig, mostly turf-built except one in stone which is crossed by the Southern Upland Way itself at NT 27462 26004.

In the midst of the shielings, a later prehistoric unenclosed house platform was spotted and nearby a cultivation terrace, also likely to be prehistoric in date (lower photograph).

Piers Dixon



*Above: Shepherd's bothy marked by the grassy banks between the ranging poles beside the Southern Upland Way
Below: Later prehistoric unenclosed house platform from the NE (images provided by Piers Dixon)*



Letters

Sir,

I was very interested to read Colin McLean's article on Perth City Museum [April Newsletter], and especially to see his photograph of heraldic horse-harness pendants.

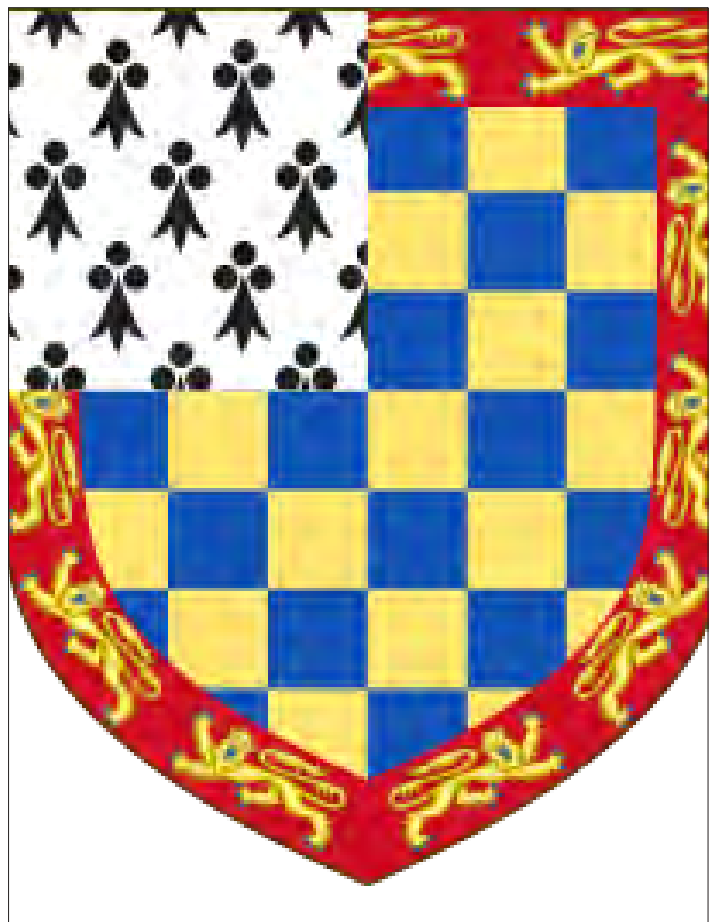
I'm the secretary of Temple Old Kirk Friends, a charity devoted to the conservation of the ruins of Temple Old Kirk - a fine late medieval Parish Church built over the foundations of the Knights Templar Preceptory of Balantrोध; (Andy Jepson has given us a great deal of help in our endeavours). Visitors are often understandably frustrated by the lack of evidence for the Knights Templar's years at Balantrोध - but a recent (2018) find has gone some way to pacify them. It is a heraldic mount from a horse's harness, which I illustrate below. All my information about it comes from Dr Alice Blackwell at the National Museums of Scotland.

The mount is badly damaged, but Dr Blackwell is confident that it carries the arms of John of Brittany, Earl of Richmond (1266-1334). He was a close and trusted relative of King Edward I of England, and was appointed as the King's Lieutenant in Scotland in 1305. His best documented presence in Scotland relates to the campaigns of 1298/1300 and his role in administration between 1306/1310.

He may well have been involved in wrapping up the affairs of the Knights Templar following their excommunication, and overseeing the transfer of their estates to the Knight's Hospitaller, so the discovery of this mount near Temple Village is particularly interesting. This is a modern version of John of Brittany's coat of arms, for comparison.

John Kerry

<https://templemcp.wixsite.com/mysite/temple-old-kirk-friends>



left:heraldic mount; top: Temple Old Kirk; right: modern version of John Brittany's coat of arms (images provided by John Kerry)

Burnswark Visit, May 25th

Under the expert guidance of Dr John Reid, Chair of the Trimontium Trust, Society members visited Burnswark in Dumfries & Galloway. Dr Reid gave us an introductory lecture in the Kirkconnell Hall Hotel beforehand, then led us on a fascinating walk on Burnswark Hill, a place of recognised archaeological significance with a complex history ... but that's for a future article.



Top: the view from Burnswark; Dr John Reid; above: marauding tribe celebrates capture of Burnswark Hill; below: Burnswark Hill.
(images provided by Colin McLean)



News & Events

Richard Welander, PAS Programme Manager, reflects on the past year and looks forward to the coming 2024-25 session

Well, that's the 2023-24 session come to a successful conclusion at our well-attended AGM on 2nd May. Looking back, what a bumper year it's been! In total, we had ten lectures. Instead of our usual six monthly talks, we had seven. I can't remember why we decided to postpone our AGM by a month and add Sharon Webb onto the end of the programme, but it seemed like a good idea at the time, and I hope that those of you who were there agree with me that it was well worth it! We also had the Halkett Hendrie Memorial Lecture, our annual joint meeting with the Tweeddale Society, back in December with Gordon Noble speaking and then two 'bonus' talks, Piers Dixon's very successful fund-raising Shootinglee talk in March and then, instead of our traditional Members Evening at the AGM, we finished the session with Ronan Toolis's excellent talk about his recent work at Tinnis Castle.



We've managed to cover a wide chronological range from the Mesolithic (Rob Engl) through the Neolithic and Bronze Age (Nick Card, Sharon Webb) to the early medieval (Jessica Lowther, Gordon Noble, Rona Toolis) and onwards into the modern era (Piers Dixon, Derek Alexander) as well as a couple of broad, thematic talks from Coralie Mills (dendrochronology) and George Prew (Treasure Trove). Whether you missed a talk or simply want to listen again, I'm pleased to say that all our speakers agreed to be filmed and the full 2023-24 series is now available on our PAS YouTube channel – just click on 2023-24 PAS Lectures and enjoy! The past year has been the first time we've filmed our in-person lectures, but during the Covid lockdown Neil Crawford managed to record our Zoom talks and we're working on getting these onto YouTube too.

As soon as one session comes to an end, another one starts, and Neil and I have been working on putting together the lecture programme for 2024-25. It's still 'work in progress' but we're planning to be rather less ambitious than last year and revert to just the usual six monthly talks starting in September with Mairi Davies (Historic Environment Scotland) talking about notable women in British archaeology – if you enjoyed the film 'The Dig', you'll enjoy this too! Gavin MacGregor (Archaeology Scotland) will be telling us in October about archaeological work on Arran over recent years followed in November by Peter Yeoman on medieval pilgrimage in Scotland.

The Tweeddale Society have just announced their chosen speaker for our joint meeting in December (it's their turn to choose) – Professor Jane Bower FRSE with the intriguing title 'The Twelve Towers of Rule - life and strife in the Valley of Rulewater in the late mediaeval period'. Professor Bower describes herself as "not a historian, nor an archaeologist" but "a molecular geneticist who manages a 2500-acre hill farm, Gorrenberry, which has a herd of Belted Galloways (great beef!) and which is also an ecological restoration project". She chairs the Campaign for a Scottish Borders National Park.

Jamie Humble (AOC Archaeology) excavated in Holyrood Park last year and in January (weather permitting!) he'll be reporting on his work at Dunsapie Fort. We still waiting to confirm our final two speakers for February and March but for next year's AGM on 17th April 2025 we are hoping to hear news from our own members' research including David Bartholomew on metal detecting, Stephen Scott and Neil Crawford on graveyard surveys and Piers Dixon on progress of work (starting next month) at Bowden Moor.

We'll be keeping members posted about the full programme over the coming months via this newsletter, the website and (for those that get it) the monthly Peebles Life magazine. If you have any comments or suggestions about anything to do with the PAS lecture programme, please drop me a line: richard.welander@gmail.com

Society of Antiquaries of Scotland: Rhind Lectures 2024 – Two 'little' ice ages and an anomaly: climate, environment and cultural



change in medieval and early modern Scotland.

May 31st and June 2nd. At the Augustine United Church, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh and online (free). A series of six lectures by Professor Richard Oram MA(Hons) PhD FSA FRSA FSAScot. See [here](#) for details. *Image of Glen Derry provided by Richard Oram.*

Unearthing Ancient Tweeddale. Peebles Library, Museum & Gallery will be hosting the launch of the Unearthing Ancient Tweeddale exhibition about the recent archaeological surveys and



excavations at Tinnis, Thirlestane and Merlin's Grave, which uncovered archaeology from the Bronze Age to the Medieval period.

All members of the Peeblesshire Archaeological Society are welcome to attend the launch of the exhibition, which will be held 10:30-11:30am Saturday 8 June.

The exhibition in Peebles will run from Saturday 8th June to Saturday 27th July 2024. Following this, the exhibition will be going on tour to Broughton, Drumelzier, Stobo, Traquair House, Edleston, Moffat Museum, Tweedsmuir, Kirkton Manor and Biggar Museum over the course of August-October. *Image of Tinnis on fire provided by Ronan Toolis*

Border Archaeological Society: Rock Art - Making Connections. Using rock art and excavated material to improve our understanding of the hunter/gatherer past in the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Mountains in South Africa. Lecture by Aron Mazel, formerly of Newcastle University. 7.30pm June 3rd, Berwick Parish Centre, Berwick upon Tweed TD15 1FD.

HARP Archaeology: Archaeology Tour in the Scottish Borders - Romans, Reivers and The Rough Wooing. Join us in the Scottish Borders for a unique experience and learn how to read the

landscape like an archaeologist. Only an hour from Edinburgh, our small group tours are led by professional archaeologists who have worked extensively in the area; a part of the country packed with prehistoric hill forts and Roman forts, and witness to centuries of Anglo-Scottish Border conflicts that were instrumental in the development of a 'reiving' way of life romanticised by Walter Scott. See [here](#) for more information.

PAS Committee. Following the AGM held at St Joseph's on May 16th, the Society's Committee is as follows: Trevor Cowie (Chair), Piers Dixon (Vice Chair), Brian Tait (Treasurer), Richard Welander (Programme Manager), Colin McLean (Newsletter Editor), Neil Crawford (Programme Organiser), Joyce Durham (Fieldwork), Gillian Brown (Minutes & Outreach), Ian Macleod (ex officio).

The PAS Newsletter is produced and distributed by Peeblesshire Archaeological Society - <http://www.peeblesarchsoc.org.uk>. Contact PASEditor@icloud.com



Mavisbank House: the Landmark Trust was recently awarded £5.3m from the National Heritage Memorial Fund to assist in stabilising the 18th century villa as a first step towards full restoration (image provided by Colin McLean)