



Peeblesshire Archaeological Society

September 2023 Newsletter

Welcome to the first Peeblesshire Archaeological Society newsletter of the 2023/24 season! In this edition we have exciting news of this year's lecture programme!

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Lecture Programme 2023/24



St Joseph's Neighbourhood Centre, Peebles. Image courtesy Richard Welander

September marks the start of our annual programme of talks by invited guest speakers who will be looking back through the mists of time to explore a fascinating range of topics. The committee have been working hard to create a series of talks we think you will enjoy. Please see page 11 for the full programme.

All the 2023/24 meetings will be held either at the St Joseph's Neighbourhood Centre or the Eastgate Theatre. Please note that guests are always welcome at our talks. Non-members can attend for the price of £4 per talk, payable on the night.

First lecture: Jessica Lowther, The Lammermuir Community Project



Aerial view of the Bothwell excavation. Image courtesy AOC Archaeology

On **Thursday 21 September** we look forward to welcoming **Dr Jessica Lowther (Headland Archaeology)** to the St Joseph's Neighbourhood Centre in Peebles to talk about '[The Lammermuir Community Project: Morham Castle and Bothwell Water Sheepcote](#)'.

Excavations at the Bothwell Water Valley and Morham Castle formed part of the Whiteadder: Historic Heart of the Lammermuirs project; an archaeological landscape project which used LiDAR survey to identify new archaeological sites and features for investigation to contribute to the understanding of the Whiteadder river catchment area.

The project was undertaken by AOC Archaeology from 2019 – 2020 on behalf of several funders, including LEADER, Scottish Borders Council, East Lothian Council and the Fallago Environment Fund.

Marked on the 1854 OS map in the small village of Morham is an annotation simply reading 'site of castle'. At the nearby church a 9th century carved cross slab was identified, incorporated into the later church wall, demonstrating the sites medieval roots. Documentary evidence records the lands of Morham as home to several influential Lothian families. In August 2019, as part of the Whiteadder project, a community evaluation was carried out to try to identify the remains of the castle.

Analysing the LiDAR data in the Bothwell Water Valley revealed the remains of a curiously long earthwork measuring 47m long and 7.5m wide.



The excavation at Morham. Image courtesy AOC Archaeology

The site was excavated in February 2020 with the help of volunteers and archaeologists from AOC Archaeology as part of the Whiteadder project. The remains revealed by the project hint at the landscape and industrial changes in the Scottish Borders in the Medieval period.



Jessica Lowther, Headland Archaeology

Jessica directed the excavations at Morham Castle and Bothwell Water Valley whilst working for AOC Archaeology as their community archaeologist on a maternity cover contract. After spending 8 years as a fieldwork archaeologist, she has since moved on to become the permanent community archaeologist at Headland Archaeology where she has now worked for over 2 years. She has a keen interest in Medieval History and Archaeology, particularly in Lowland Scotland.

Venue: [St Joseph's Neighbourhood Centre, Rosetta Road, Peebles](#)

Date: [Thursday 21 September](#)

Time: [7.30pm](#)

Refreshments will be available after the talk.

Renewal of annual subscriptions

The arrival of September also means that we are now inviting you to renew your annual subscriptions. You will be pleased to learn that the cost of membership will remain the same. Subscriptions are now due for the year beginning 1st September 2023. To help you, please find attached a renewal form with instructions. The form is in Word and PDF formats. Please use whichever format you feel more comfortable using.

We would be sorry to see you leave but if you do not wish to renew your subscription, we would be grateful if you could inform Treasurer **Brian Tait** (brikath16@hotmail.com) as soon as possible so that we do not trouble you with further reminders.

In coming to a decision, please bear in mind that as well as supporting our programme of talks, your subscription also helps to fund other essential expenditure such as our public liability insurance, Council for British Archaeology affiliation fees and printing costs.

Final reminder: Walk at Portmore Loch, Eddleston

As reported last month PAS Chairman **Trevor Cowie** will be leading a walk at Portmore Loch, Eddleston on **Sunday 24 September**.

The day will start at **11am** with a morning coffee at the **Scots Pine**

Café to set everyone up for a guided walk through the wooded policies of Portmore House and around nearby Portmore Loch, stopping at selected points to hear about the development of the House and its associated designed landscape; to visit the well preserved Iron Age hillfort at Northshield Rings; and to take in other points of archaeological or historical interest along the way. We will return to the café by **2.30pm**.

The length of walk is approx. 6 miles and will mostly be on easy estate tracks with some uphill sections.

Numbers are limited to **20** so if you are interested in joining please register by emailing **Trevor Cowie** (trevor.cowie@btopenworld.com) and copy **Andrew Jepson** (theandyjepson@hotmail.com) as soon as possible. Further details will be sent to participants nearer the date.



View of Portmore Loch. Image courtesy Trevor Cowie



Northshield Rings: view of the ramparts and ditches. Image courtesy Trevor Cowie

The cost is **£6** (reduced from £7.50), payable on the day (to cover morning coffee and scone/traybake).

Unfortunately, no dogs are allowed.

Bowden Moor Farm guided walk



Galloway cattle running across the bank and ditch of a medieval earthwork on Bowden Moor. Image courtesy Piers Dixon

On **Sunday 8 October** Peeblesshire Archaeological Society Vice Chair **Piers Dixon** will be leading a walk at Bowden Moor Farm, Melrose, in conjunction with historian, **John Gilbert**, around various phases of medieval earthworks, including the parish boundary that marks the line of the boundary between the Melrose Abbey and Kelso Abbey estates designated by King David I. Other sites include an Iron

Age fort, Bronze Age burnt mounds, ridge and furrow and more recent sheep farming enclosures.

For those who do not know his background: John Gilbert completed a PhD on hunting and hunting reserves in Medieval Scotland at Edinburgh University which was published in 1979. He pursued a career teaching history that took in Selkirk High School and latterly was depute head-teacher at Madras College, St Andrews. After retiring in 2010 he has reduced his golf handicap index to 13.3 and returned to historical research. He has published articles on Falkland Park, woodland management in medieval Scotland and on the Dormount Hope deer trap, this last article with Piers Dixon. He did some work on Bowden Moor in 2011 and 2012 and is pleased to be returning to the topic again with Piers Dixon.

We will meet at the farm building, currently under renovation, where there is parking for up to five cars on the track just beyond.

Registration for this trip is essential as parking will be limited and car sharing will



Recording a burnt mound on Bowden Moor in 2022

be strongly advised.

The walk will start at **11am** for return by **3.30pm** at the latest. Length of walk: approx. 6.5 km. This will be partly on forestry tracks – replanting is currently in progress - and public footpaths (Melrose Paths No. 9 at Rhymer’s Glen) and partly on rough ground, with some uphill sections. The farm occupies an exposed ridge overlooking Melrose and it is advisable to come prepared for wet weather and rough ground: walking boots are recommended. There are Galloway cattle on the farm and attendees should treat them with respect and not go near wherever possible. No dogs are allowed. The woods on the farm are being restocked and there are new plantations, so gates must be shut behind you.

Attendees should bring a packed lunch and drinks. Please note there are no toilets: the nearest public toilets are in Melrose, where there are plenty of watering holes to visit after the walk.

Numbers are limited to **20**. There is no cost.

To register, please email **Piers Dixon** (piers.j.dixon@gmail.com) and copy **Andrew Jepson** (theandyjepson@hotmail.com). Further details will be sent to participants nearer the date.

Greek inscriptions in the Borders – Trevor Cowie

Do you know of any Greek inscriptions in the Borders?



Dawyck Chapel: above the Latin inscription is a monogram incorporating the Greek letters *Chi* and *Rho* denoting the first two letters of the Greek spelling of 'Christ', together with *Alpha* and *Omega*, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, signifying Christ as 'the first and the last' (Photo: © Elliott Simpson (cc-by-sa/2.0))

I was recently contacted by **Ian McHaffie**, who taught Classics and Religious Education at George Watson’s College, Edinburgh, from 1970-2005. Ian is engaged in a quest to record the many Greek language inscriptions that can be found in all sorts of settings in Scotland ranging from public buildings and churches and cemeteries to private houses.

His first book, *Greek Secrets Revealed – Hidden Scottish History Uncovered* (Edinburgh, 2019, ISBN 978-0-9525026-3-0) dealt with the wide range of inscriptions

that can be found in Edinburgh - some fifty in all. In his very engaging book, he

translates and explains these inscriptions and teases out their stories.

He has now nearly finished off his second book which deals with Fife and the North of Scotland and after that, he has his sights set on a further publication covering Central, West and the South of Scotland.

In the Borders, Ian tells me he is already aware of Greek inscriptions in Galashiels (the Scott Aisle), at Abbotsford (on a sundial) and in Innerleithen cemetery (where there are two Biblical quotations on the tomb of James Stewart). Elsewhere in southern Scotland, he has records of inscriptions in Penicuik (the Scobie Well), at Ian Hamilton Finlay's garden at Little Sparta and on the stained glass window commemorating James Clerk Maxwell in Corsock Church in Kirkcudbright.

However Ian is particularly keen to hear if PAS members know of any more examples in the region. To his list, I have been able to add the fine Chi Rho monogram above the door of the Chapel at Dawyck Garden ... but now it is over to all of you!

If you are aware of any other Greek inscriptions in the Borders, please contact Ian at:

Ian McHaffie,
176 Granton Road,
Edinburgh.
EH5 1AH
Email:
mchaffie1@icloud.com

Ευχαριστώ !



The Scott Aisle at Galashiels. Image courtesy Andrew Jepson

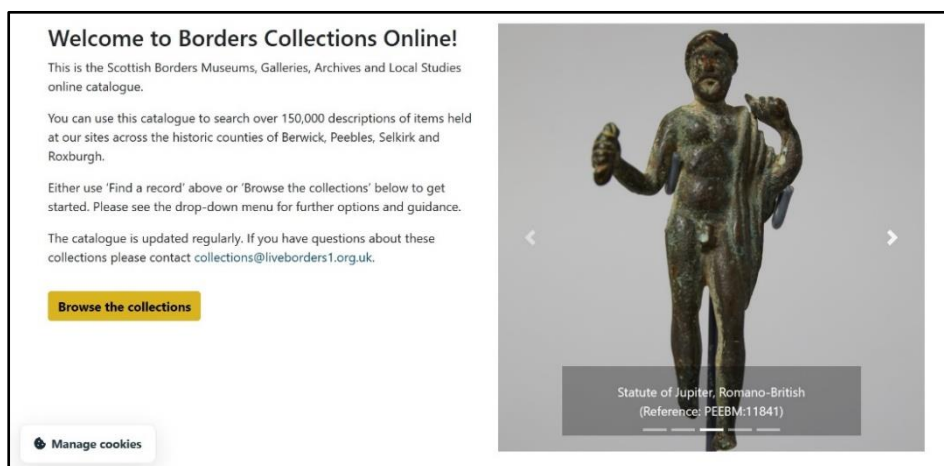
Invitation to help Peebles Museum select content for a new exhibition

Did you know that most museums have less than 10% of their collections on display? The vast majority are held in stores hidden from public view awaiting documentation or research.

Like every other museum across the country, Peebles Library, Museum & Gallery has collections of archaeological artefacts that it can't currently display but **Chris Sawers**,

curatorial assistant at the Museum, is planning a new exhibition in the Chambers Gallery and has invited PAS to explore the collections and help her select items for display.

A good place to start your exploration is the Borders Collections Online database at <https://www.calmview.eu/HUBCAT/CalmView/default.aspx>. If you'd like to get more involved, drop Chris a line at csawers@liveborders1.org.uk to arrange a visit.



Borders Collections Online

The plan is that small groups (around half a dozen) of PAS members will get out-of-hours access to the museum (probably on Wednesday afternoon or early evening

after the Chambers Institute closes to the public) so that they can examine and handle some of the artefacts found at sites across Peeblesshire. Hopefully some of you will be inspired to write up your thoughts and observations about the objects you've seen and share them with fellow members in future newsletters. Don't forget to take a couple of photos!

An update on dating results from Tinnis Castle & Fort and Thirlestane Barrows

As PAS members will be aware last year's fieldwork at Tinnis Castle & Fort and Thirlestane Barrows managed by **Ronan Toolis** and **GUARD Archaeology** proved to be an exhilarating experience for many. In recent days the results of dating analysis has been released and the news couldn't be more interesting.

During the excavation of the Thirlestane square barrow a soil sample was carefully taken from the edge of the ditch defining the barrow. This was submitted to the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of St Andrews who undertook OSL dating. Optically Stimulated Luminescence dating of an appropriate soil sample provides a measure of time from when the sediment grains in the soil sample were deposited and shielded from further light or heat exposure.

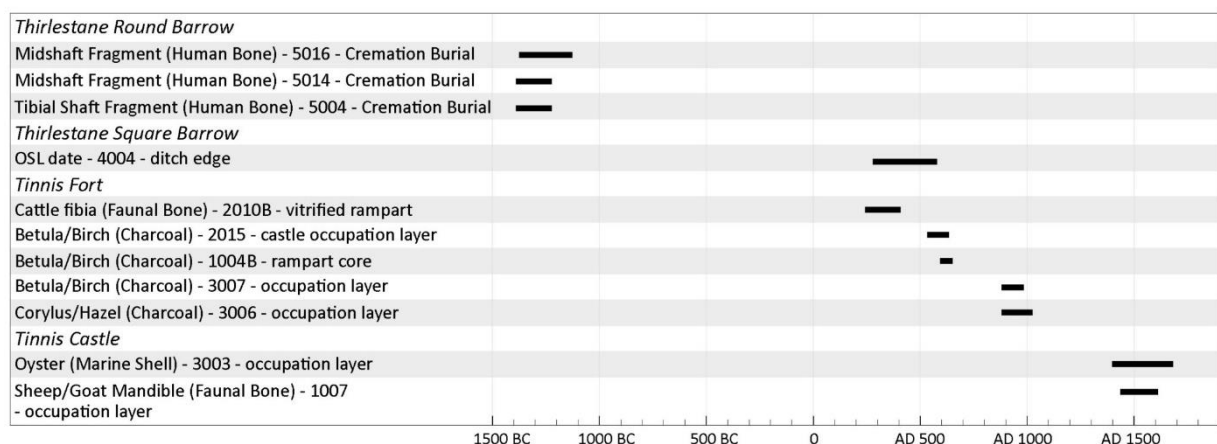
OSL dating has yielded a date from the surface of the square ditch surrounding the easternmost barrow – AD 430 +/- 150. This gives a maximum range of between AD 280 and AD 580.



The sample for OSL dating was taken from the section through the ditch at the Thirlestane Barrows

Some exciting results have also been revealed by radiocarbon dating. The dates from the Round Barrows suggests a short span of burials in the 14th-13/12th centuries BC.

There seems to have been at least two phases of occupation of Tinnis Fort. The earliest phase was during the late Iron Age which ended with the burning of the rampart, causing the core of the rampart on the south-east side of the summit to vitrify. This took place sometime between AD 250 and AD 405, which is close to the OSL date from the Thirlestane Square Barrow ditch (AD 280 – AD 580). The OSL date also overlaps with the two mid-late sixth/early seventh century AD dates from Tinnis, which indicate subsequent occupation of the fort (including presumably rebuilding of the summit rampart).



Interestingly, the local Merlin legend is set around AD 600 and these two radiocarbon dates suggest that Tinnis Fort was occupied at this time. Does this

support the theory that the origins of the story lie in Drumelzier?

But that's not all. Two of the dates from the lower enclosure indicate that occupation continued sometime into the late ninth to the early eleventh century AD, when this part of the Scottish Borders likely belonged to the kingdom of Strathclyde.

Finally, the two latter dates indicate when the subsequent castle was occupied – sometime between the 15th and 17th centuries.

Extract courtesy of <https://dark-age-digs.com/>.

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

Andrew Jepson
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PEEBLESSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

2023/24 LECTURE PROGRAMME

21st September, 7.30 pm. St. Joseph's

Jessica Lowther

Community Archaeologist, Headland Archaeology

'The Lammermuir Community Project'

19th October, 7.30 pm. The Studio, Eastgate Theatre*

Nick Card

Director, Ness of Brodgar Project

'Building the Ness of Brodgar'

16th November, 7.30 pm. St. Joseph's

Dr Coralie Mills

Director, Dendrochronicle

'The SE Scotland Oak Dendrochronology

Project'

12th December, 7.30 pm. Eastgate Theatre*

in collaboration with the Tweeddale Society

Prof Gordon Noble

University of Aberdeen

'Kingship and the Northern Picts'

18th January, 7.30 pm., St Joseph's

George Prew

Treasure Trove Unit

'Recent Discoveries in the Borders'

15th February, 7.30 pm. St. Joseph's

Rob Engl

AOC Archaeology

'A Home by the Sea: Excavation of a Mesolithic house at East Barns, East Lothian'

21st March, 7.30 pm. St. Joseph's

Derek Alexander

Head of Archaeology, National Trust for Scotland

'Pioneering Spirit: Illicit Stills'

18th April, 7.30 pm. St. Joseph's

Dr Sharon Webb MBE

Director and Curator, Kilmartin Museum

'The Kilmartin Museum Redevelopment Project'

2nd May, 7.30 pm. St Joseph's

Annual General Meeting

followed by

Ronan Toolis

CEO, GUARD Archaeology

'Recent Excavations at Tinnis Castle, Drumelzier and at Broughton'

*Ticketed event. Available from Eastgate Theatre

All lectures, unless otherwise indicated, are held at St. Joseph's Neighbourhood Centre, 17 Rosetta Road, Peebles EH45 8JU. Car parking is available.

PAS members: FREE

Guests: £4 (at the door)

www.peeblesarchsoc.org.uk @PeeblesArchSoc

Tinnis Castle, August 2022. Image courtesy Richard Welander