



## March Newsletter 2021

Dear Scottish Group members,

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2021!

With spring already upon us we are well on our way into 2021, and it's showing no signs of slowing down! Yet again we have another packed newsletter full of all the exciting projects, initiatives and updates from our Scottish archaeology community.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the shiny new [SGCIfA Facebook Group](#) that is now up and running – it will allow for a more dynamic voice for SGCIfA and a more open format, so please, sign up and get involved!

If you have any comments or queries about the Scottish Group, feel free to get in touch with us through our email, [secretary.cifa.sg@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.cifa.sg@gmail.com), or on our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). We also have information on the group's [CIfA webpage](#).

Keep safe!

Josh Gaunt BA MCIfA

And the Scottish Group committee

### In this issue:

[Final year of the Scotland's Rock Art Project](#)

[Women in Heritage](#)

[Real Wild West: Adopt-a-Monument on Ardnamurchan 2021 and 2022](#)

[Timberwatch Scotland Campaign](#)

[Girvan Mains, Ayrshire](#)

[A Song in Stone](#)

[SCARF Update](#)

[From the Central Belt to the far side of the Outer Hebrides](#)

[Viking Wind Farm, Shetland](#)

[Scotland's Archaeology Strategy](#)

[Temporary access works at Drumdown, South Ayrshire](#)

[Membership](#)

## Final year of the Scotland's Rock Art Project

Linda Marie Bjerketvedt (Historic Environment Scotland HES), Tertia Barnett (HES), Joana Valdez-Tullett (HES), Stuart Jeffrey (Glasgow School of Art), Guillaume Robin (University of Edinburgh)

Scotland's Rock Art Project (ScRAP) is a five-year project working with local communities to document, research and raise awareness of prehistoric carvings in Scotland, using detailed recording methods and 3D digital modelling techniques. Established in 2017 with funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), ScRAP is the first major research project focusing on prehistoric rock art in Scotland. It is hosted by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in collaboration with the School of History, Classics and Archaeology of the University of Edinburgh, and Glasgow School of Art's School of Simulation and Visualisation. Throughout the project, we have been working closely with project partners – Kilmartin Museum, Archaeology Scotland, and the North of Scotland Archaeological Society (NOSAS) – as well as with local communities, heritage professionals, and land managers across the country.



Since 2021 is the final year of ScRAP, we are organising a series of free online events to celebrate and promote Scotland's rock art to a wider national and international audience. We are currently running a series of webinars where we host talks by specialists on themes relevant to Scotland's rock art. The webinars are held on the last Monday of each month throughout 2021, and registration opens about seven weeks before the event via Eventbrite and our website: <https://www.rockart.scot/events/scrap-webinars/>. The last webinar on the 13 December will be delivered by the ScRAP Team, where we will talk about the project, our research and the results achieved at the end of 5 years of hard work!

In addition, we are organising an online ScRAP conference, 'Celebrating Scotland's Rock Art' which will take place on the 24 April. The conference will open with a keynote lecture by Dr Alison Sheridan (National Museums of Scotland) on "Rock art studies in Scotland: looking back, looking forward". There will also be talks by academic researchers and members of our wonderful community teams, showcasing the work they have done throughout the project, as well as presentations by the ScRAP Team on our preliminary research results. We will be running two workshops focusing on "Protecting and Promoting Scotland's Rock Art" and "A Future for Scotland's Rock Art", delivered by academics and heritage sector professionals, to progress the ScRAP legacy. You can find more details about the conference on our website:



<https://www.rockart.scot/events/scrap-conference/>

Finally, we have an ongoing **Photography Challenge** running until September 2021. We are looking for striking and memorable images that capture the essence of prehistoric rock art in Scotland, with entries welcome from all ages. There are different categories one can submit to, and the first prize includes Historic Scotland membership for a year, a HES book and a ScRAP Mystery Prize! All the details including tips on how to photograph rock art can be found on our website.

We hope that everyone will enjoy these online events and look forward to celebrating Scotland's rock art with you!

## Women in Heritage - University of Edinburgh Archaeology Society

Natalie Bryan (Secretary) and Becky Underwood (Dig Chief), on behalf of University of Edinburgh Archaeology Society



The University of Edinburgh Archaeology Society (ArchSoc) hosted another successful Women in Heritage event on Sunday 14 March 2021. The fourth annual event was hosted via Zoom and began with a short presentation from ArchSoc committee member Patricia Hromadova about the history of women in archaeology, featuring the pioneering work of Margaret Guido, Gertrude Bell, Zelia Nuttall and Margaret Simpson. Dr. Hannah Cobb gave an inspiring keynote speech on equality and diversity in Archaeology and Heritage, informing attendees of the vital grassroot level activist groups which are collaborating with organisations like CIfA and FAME to develop initiatives to support and fairly represent women in the sector.

The event provided a safe and inclusive space for women to share their research, experiences and advice with each other and there was a strong sense of community which arose from the empowerment of women supporting other women. The focus of the event was split between two fantastic panel groups, composed of professionals and academics from a diverse range of backgrounds and expertise. All panellists shared details about their own experiences and career journeys to the positions they hold today, and it was motivating to listen to them speak so candidly about obstacles they have faced, and conquered, along the way. Significant themes were addressed in the panel discussion, such as the intersectionality of inequalities facing women in the working environment, representation of women archaeologists in the media and the ubiquity of 'imposter syndrome' and other mental health stressors in academia. Many useful resources were shared via the chat box directing attendees to informative web pages and online women-led communities for archaeologists.

Many of the students attending the event were able to openly ask questions and share their experiences as young people beginning their careers in archaeology. The panels were very honest and willing to advise audience members on how to navigate their careers as young women. Students were encouraged to consider their aspirations, rather than striving for what they think they need, or are expected, to achieve; this included feeling the need to justify one's work as a woman in the profession by the acquisition of academic titles through postgraduate qualifications. Many attendees came away from the event with encouragement to contact the panellists for further advice, in acknowledgement of the successes of peer-to-peer mentorship among this community.



Participants acknowledged that although there have been great advances, there are continued struggles for women in the profession, such as barriers to promotion to the highest positions in comparison to their male counterparts. Discussion also raised the issue that a one-size-fits-all approach to feminism, especially in academia, does not benefit all. To achieve equality in heritage this must be intersectional, rather than simply acknowledging diversity on a surface-level. The important work of establishing groups such as the recently established European Society of Black and Allied Archaeologists (ESBAA) and Haud Yer Wheesht, both founded by women in archaeology. With some powerful testaments from panel members, the discussion turned to acknowledging and uplifting those who are non-able bodied, BIPOC, our trans sisters, non-binary colleagues, and those from other marginalised backgrounds.

ArchSoc was founded from the League of Prehistorians, an organization established in 1929 by female students studying archaeology in Edinburgh. Inspired by this knowledge, shared during recent ArchSoc seminars, the committee hopes to encourage further recognition of its origins and continue to support women in archaeology today through events like this. ArchSoc also aims to run more events advocating for marginalised communities in the future.

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## Real Wild West: Adopt-a-Monument on Ardnamurchan 2021 and 2022

Archaeology Scotland have been awarded a grant to carry out a two-year programme of work on Ardnamurchan, incorporating part of our Adopt-a-Monument programme, supported by Historic Environment Scotland, and extending it to include archaeological field work, excavations, experimental archaeology and innovative interpretation, focusing various aspects of the historical environment of the peninsula. We will be working in partnership Ardnamurchan History and Heritage Association (AHHA) and various landowners and crofters to deliver this unique heritage project throughout 2021 and 2022.

The Real Wild West: Adopt-a-Monument on Ardnamurchan programme is part of a new £9 million Scottish programme of projects to invest in the Highlands and islands to provide more and better-quality opportunities for visitors to enjoy natural and cultural heritage assets. The Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund is led by NatureScot and is part funded through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund will encourage people to visit some of the more remote and rural areas and create and sustain jobs, businesses and services in local communities. The purpose of the fund is to promote and develop the outstanding natural and cultural heritage of the Highlands and islands in a way that conserves and protects them.

The programme will be launched in early 2021 and there will be lots of opportunities for people who live and visit Ardnamurchan to get involved. In the summer of 2021 there will be two, two week long, archaeological excavations taking place around Camas Nan Gaell. We will be attempting to rebuild or refurbish a blackhouse, over another two, two-week long period. We will be exploring some of the designated archaeological sites on the peninsula and making records of them and we will be enhancing five archaeology sites by installing new access and signage. Each of the events and activities will be advertised locally and we hope as many people as possible can get involved. Each participant will learn new skills, from archaeological excavation to drystone walling and from report writing to photography, while another element of the project will be to provide training in heritage focused business and tourism development. Dates are still to be confirmed but we will make sure advanced notice of all activities and events are widely circulated.

Due to the complex nature of the European fund and issues surrounding COVID-19 there have been lots of delays in getting all the contracts signed, and we had hoped to have been up and running before now, but we hope that 2021 and 2022 will be full of archaeological opportunities and fun!

If you have any questions about the project or would like to take part, please contact Paul Murtagh at Archaeology Scotland [p.murtagh@archaeologyscotland.org.uk](mailto:p.murtagh@archaeologyscotland.org.uk)

Please visit the Archaeology Scotland or the AHHA website in the New Year for more information and find out how you can get involved.

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## About Archaeology Scotland

- Archaeology Scotland is Scotland's leading archaeology and education charity.
- Archaeology Scotland is a membership organisation working to inspire people to discover, explore, care for and enjoy Scotland's rich heritage since 1944.
- Archaeology Scotland run several projects across the country including: Adopt-a-Monument, The Heritage Hero Awards, Attainment Through Archaeology, Scottish Archaeology Month amongst others.
- Contact Archaeology Scotland:
  - Facebook page: [archaeology.scotland](https://www.facebook.com/archaeology.scotland)
  - Twitter: [@ArchScot](https://twitter.com/ArchScot)
  - Website: [www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk](http://www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk)
  - Email: [info@archaeologyscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@archaeologyscotland.org.uk)
  - Phone: 0300 012 9878

- Address: Suite 1a, Stuart House, Eskmills, Station Road, Musselburgh, East Lothian, EH21 7PB
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## **About the Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund**

*"The natural heritage includes natural habitats and wildlife, geology and landscapes. Cultural heritage includes history, language, architecture, ancient monuments, historical sites and cultural landscapes and the sectors of theatre, arts and literature. There is a close link between these two and interests often overlap. They are important locally, and on a national and international scale. They provide opportunities for the cultural and creative industries, environmental and tourism sectors. "*

The Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund is funded through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with an almost £9 million investment in the Highlands and Islands. The Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund will invest in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland to: provide more and better quality opportunities for visitors to enjoy natural and cultural heritage assets; encourage people to visit some of the more remote and rural areas; and create and sustain jobs, businesses and services in local communities. The purpose of the Fund is to promote and develop the outstanding natural and cultural heritage of the Highlands and Islands in a way that conserves and protects them.

The Scottish Government is the Managing Authority for the European Structural Funds 2014-20 Programme. For further information, visit their [website](#) or follow [@scotgovESIF](#).

NatureScot is the government's adviser on all aspects of nature and landscape across Scotland. For more information, visit [Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund \(NCHF\) | NatureScot](#) [http://twitter.com/@nature\\_scot](http://twitter.com/@nature_scot).

## Timberwatch Scotland campaign

Dr Coralie Mills and Dr Anne Crone

The 'Timberwatch Scotland' campaign aims to raise awareness, improve protection and seek support for the investigation of historic timbers in Scotland's built heritage. The campaign is led by Scotland's two heritage dendrochronologists, Dr Coralie Mills of Dendrochronicle and Dr Anne Crone of AOC Archaeology, both long-standing members of CIfA.

Our recently published '*Timberwatch Scotland*' article is available here - <http://dendrochronicle.co.uk/timberwatch/>. As it shows, there has been very little uptake of dendrochronology or related investigation of historic timberwork in Scotland, outside of our own self-driven research projects. Few conditions are ever placed by the authorities upon historic timbers impacted by repairs or development in Scotland, and there is no central funding or support for dendrochronological analysis here, in stark contrast to the much better support in England and most European and Scandinavian countries. Consequently, in England over 4000 Listed Buildings have been dendro-dated over the last few decades, while in Scotland only around 40 standing building sites have been, as the illustration shows.

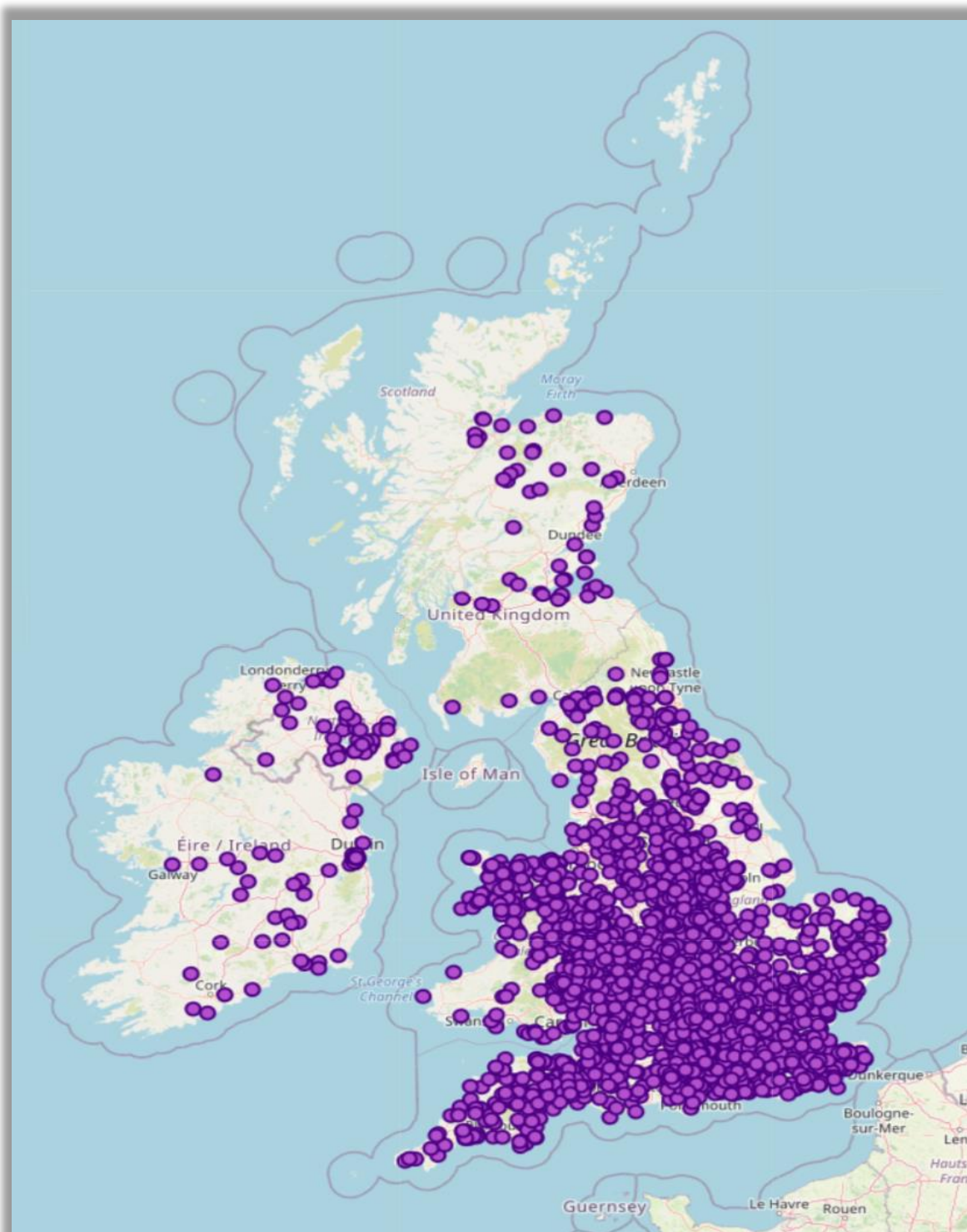
We are keen to change the situation in Scotland, for the benefit of our built heritage, and also to make our specialism sustainable in Scotland in the longer term. While the poor situation with regards to standing buildings is most acute, the archaeological response is uneven to say the least, and we would like members of SGCIfA to be aware of the issue for timbers both above and below ground in Scotland.

The great advantage of dendrochronology is firstly in the precision allowed by the dating, which can be to a year or sometimes even a season of felling; so precise that the dates can tie up closely with documentary evidence in the historic period, or can tease out close phases of occupation or modification 'invisible' to other dating methods in prehistory, where appropriate material survives obviously. The other great advantage is that through dendro-provenancing, the source of timbers can be identified; in this way we can discover trade connections both national and international, and we can reveal new precisely-dated information about timber supply, woodland management and problems with them in Scotland's past.

We are pleased to report positive early discussions with a number of key heritage and archaeology organisations in Scotland who are keen to help to change the situation, and we hope soon to be able to offer some CPD to help effect change as a first step. But we ask all archaeologists in Scotland to be aware of this issue, and to help us with our mission; it is early days and it will take some time to effect these changes. The more shoulders to the wheel the better.



We are grateful to the Native Woodlands Discussion Group ([www.nwdg.org.uk](http://www.nwdg.org.uk)) for publishing our article. Anyone wishing to assist us with this campaign can contact us at this email address - [timberwatch@dendrochronicle.co.uk](mailto:timberwatch@dendrochronicle.co.uk)



Archaeology Data Service *Vernacular Architecture Group* Dendrochronology Database: Map of dendro-dated historic buildings across England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; Accessed 26.11.20 from [https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/vag\\_2019/map.cfm](https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/vag_2019/map.cfm)

## Girvan Mains, Ayrshire

Ann Clarke and Melanie Johnson

CFA Archaeology Ltd undertook an archaeological strip, map and sample in September 2020 on the site of a new Small Transmission Reduction Station (STRS) at Girvan Mains on the northern edge of Girvan, South Ayrshire, on behalf of gas network company SGN. The STRS site lay within the Girvan Mains Scheduled Monument (SM 5596) comprising Roman Camps, a linear cropmark and an enclosure. Scheduled Monument Consent was granted by Historic Environment Scotland.

A trial trenching evaluation had been completed by GUARD Archaeology in 2019; the evaluation consisted of four machine excavated trenches and a single pit containing lithics and charcoal was discovered. As a result, a strip, map and sample was required of the STRS site (measuring 22m x 18m), and additional areas monitored included an access road, a cable trench, a Receiving Kiosk and the tie-in pipework.

Eleven archaeological features were identified. They ranged from small and shallow amorphous pit bases to large features containing multiple fills. The features interpreted as small pits formed no pattern and most contained no artefacts, so their date and function is unknown.

Two larger, adjacent pits were also recorded, and are likely to be contemporary. One of these was the feature which was partially excavated by GUARD during their evaluation. Both pits contained well preserved charcoal, with alder dominant and smaller amounts of hazel and oak charcoal; the dominance of alder suggests they are perhaps Late Neolithic or Bronze Age in date. One of the pits contained several small flint flakes, undiagnostic of knapping technique or date. One sherd of abraded prehistoric pottery, possibly decorated, was also recovered. The pits are considered to be prehistoric in date and are interpreted as fire pits. Six fragments of flint recovered during GUARD's evaluation were dated by them as likely being Mesolithic-Early Neolithic.

Of the finds recovered, an unstratified large flint blade is the most interesting, probably made from mottled translucent grey flint. It is a long, straight, parallel-sided blade with dimensions of 59mm length, 16mm in width, and 6mm in thickness. The platform is trimmed with fine flaking, and slight damage has obscured the original platform type, but it was probably flat. The distal end is broken at the tip and differences in the cortication of the outer and inner layers at the break indicate it snapped in antiquity but after it had already been subject to considerable surface alteration. The blade scars on the dorsal face are parallel and show that the blades were detached from either end of an opposed platform core.

In relation to its size, and the use of opposed platform core working this blade shows characteristics of Late Upper Palaeolithic flint working. An estimate of the date of the blade is in part determined by the location of the site which lies on raised beach deposits dating to the Holocene c.11.8 thousand years ago. This means the blade is unlikely to be older than the onset of the Early Mesolithic. However, the blade production technique is more akin to that used in the Late Upper Palaeolithic. In relation to lithic assemblages from southern Britain, it has been proposed that the Early Mesolithic be divided into two or more phases including a Long-blade technology as the earliest Mesolithic phase. This phase is now referred to as Terminal Palaeolithic (TP) or Terminal Upper Palaeolithic (TUP) since the blade manufacturing techniques are closer to the previous Palaeolithic than Mesolithic periods. It is suggested here that the unstratified blade dates to a similar period, around 10000 BC the Final Palaeolithic or Early Mesolithic.



Recent excavations at Howburn, Lanarkshire; Rubha Port an t-Seilich, Islay; Kilmelfort Cave, Argyll; and various sites in Aberdeenshire have clearly demonstrated the presence of a range of Late Upper Palaeolithic lithic industries dating from the Hamburgian (12,700BC onset) to Ahrensburgian (10,800BC onset) across Scotland. To the south-east of Girvan, recent excavations at Maryport on the Cumbrian coast (by CFA Archaeology Ltd) uncovered the remains of (undated) Final Palaeolithic flint and tuff working which is the first clear evidence for occupation of this period in the region.

Flint working from the period c.10000 BC has not previously been recognised in the SW region of Scotland. Though unstratified, this blade is evidence for activity in the region earlier than previously recorded and as such, contributes to the rapidly widening knowledge of Final Palaeolithic / Early Mesolithic activity in the north of Britain.



## A Song in Stone

Matt Ritchie

Scotland's Neolithic rock art comprises an outdoor gallery several thousand years old, part of a shared cultural heritage that can be found all along the Atlantic coastline of Europe.

[A Song in Stone](#) (Forestry and Land Scotland, 2021) uses an inspirational blend of objective recording, subjective analysis and narrative interpretation to encourage both critical thinking and creative arts. It draws on the work of leading archaeologists and rock art researchers to describe a time and tradition far removed from today. As both illustrated reference material and creative learning

resource, the practitioner is prepared with accessible background information, unconventional ideas and exceptional artwork and design. A fresh take on a fascinating subject, this new resource will be of interest to teachers, archaeological educators and anyone with an interest in the presentation and interpretation of our ancient past.



*Characters like our archaeologist Jasmine are accessible and authentic. They help drive the narrative – whether as Neolithic rock artists or contemporary rock art researchers – and inspire a human connection.*

Alongside *Into the Wildwoods* (2020) and *The First Foresters* (2019), *A Song in Stone* enables the discovery and investigation of an ancient past that is still accessible today, rooted in an archaeological and ecological understanding of place and time – and in our human response to both. The development process behind all three booklets was recently described by Matt Ritchie in [A New Set of Threads](#), a guest lecture presented by the University of the Highlands and Islands Orkney College Archaeology Institute.

*"Because these are not just **any** learning resources, these are **archaeological** learning resources: detailed, creative, informative and imaginative – and all available online for free."*



2021 is shaping up to be an exciting action-packed year for ScARF as we continue to support the creation of Regional Archaeological Research Frameworks, student bursaries and conferences, and updating the national Archaeological Science Framework. Read on to find out how you can get involved!

### **Regional Research Frameworks**

The Highland Archaeological Research Framework ([HighARF](#)) has entered its final phase and is on-track to be completed and made available on the ScARF website this summer! Do you have an interest in the archaeology of the Highlands? Do not miss out on your last chance to comment on these draft chapters – are there key examples missing? Can you spot research gaps? You are invited to read and comment on the following chapters: Palaeolithic and Mesolithic, Neolithic,



*The Clava Cairns at Balnuaran of Clava, near Inverness form part of a distinct regional burial tradition – discussed in a new HighARF case study! (©ScARF)*



Bronze Age, Iron Age, Early Medieval, Medieval, Post-Medieval, Land and Environment. View these draft documents on the ARCH website [here!](#)

The Perth and Kinross Archaeological Research Framework ([PKARF](#)) is now well under-way with chapters and research questions being refined by key contributors and specialists. PKARF chapters will be ready for public consultation in September! Keep an eye on our social media for updates and how to get involved. We are also pleased to let you know, following a brief deferment due to Covid, consultation opportunities for the South East of Scotland Archaeological Framework ([SESARF](#)) are forthcoming – if you have previously been involved, please keep an eye on your inboxes or get in touch if you would like to contribute.

### **National Science Framework – Update**



As we revealed in the last newsletter, we will be working over the next year to update the National Archaeological Science Framework! The original Science Framework was launched eight years ago and so much has moved on, with new techniques and some considered as cutting-edge then have become routine on archaeological sites today. We are currently working with specialists who are or have been involved with projects all over Scotland to make the new Science Framework more multidisciplinary and full of new case studies to show how a range of scientific techniques can work together to answer, and pose new research questions for the future! This updated Science Framework will be designed to complement our Regional Research Framework projects, which will naturally update the overall chronological picture across Scotland. There is still time to get involved with this exciting project. If you are an archaeological scientist with an interest in

Scottish archaeology, we would love to hear from you (or a Scottish archaeologist with an interest in Science)!

### **Student/Covid Bursaries**

A reminder that we still have a number of Covid-19 Student and ECR Bursaries available! ScARF Student Bursaries are normally available to help with the costs of travel and attendance at conferences or workshops, however, in light of Covid-19 and the cancellation of in-person networking events and workshops, ScARF is keen to support students in other ways. These bursaries are designed to help students studying an aspect of Scottish archaeology who have experienced additional costs incurred as a result of the pandemic. Are you, or do you know a student/ECR who has had unexpected costs, for example purchasing software; membership/joining fees; training; access to digital resources? Let us know how we can help! The maximum that can be applied for is £200 – please spread the word about this bursary. More information and criteria can be found on the Students page of our website [here](#).

### **Archaeological Research in Progress 2021 – save the date!**

The Archaeological Research in Progress Conference organised by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (in partnership with Archaeology Scotland) will take place online this year. As usual, an exciting programme will showcase new archaeological research from across the country. This year's conference will take place on **Saturday 29 May**. Keep an eye out for updates and how to book on the Society's website at [www.socantscot.org](http://www.socantscot.org).

Society of Antiquaries  
of **Scotland**



As always – if you have any comments or would like to contribute to our frameworks please get in touch [scarf@socantscot.org](mailto:scarf@socantscot.org).

Helen and Leanne

# From the Central Belt to the far side of the Outer Hebrides and across the other side of Scotland

Beverley Ballin Smith MCIfA, GUARD Archaeology Publications Manager and ARO Editor

A variety of new archaeological research from development-led work across Scotland has been published recently; all freely available to access online.

The first of these publications follows a road development that led to entirely unexpected archaeological remains being discovered. During the M8, M73 and M74 Improvements Scheme, GUARD Archaeologists discovered the remains of four medieval houses dating to between the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, close to where the 10<sup>th</sup> century Netherton Cross stone once stood. Remarkably, these remains survived literally on the edge of the M74 near Hamilton. The buildings appear to be representative of rural settlement in lowland

Scotland over this period but one of the buildings contained an unusual deposit of artefacts within a foundation level. Amongst the more recognisable occupation debris of green glaze pottery sherds was a collection of objects not found elsewhere across the site. This included a whetstone of fine-grained sandstone, a spindle whorl made of cannel coal, a possible gaming piece or counter crafted from a sherd of green glaze pottery, and two 17<sup>th</sup> century coins. The final artefact was an iron dagger, possibly prehistoric in origin. The practice of depositing 'special' objects in medieval and post-medieval buildings is well documented and was intended to protect the building and its inhabitants. Alas, it did not seem to work. The village of Netherton was swept away in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by improvements to the estate by the Dukes of Hamilton, transforming the site into well-ordered and symmetrical parkland. And then later came the motorway, which subsumed most of the village; the four structures encountered during GUARD Archaeology's excavation



*Overhead view of one of the Netherton structures during excavation © GUARD Archaeology Ltd*



represent the last vestiges of this lost settlement. *ARO41: The road to rediscovery: Netherton Cross and the M8, M73, M74 Motorway Improvements 2014-15* by Iraia Arabaolaza, Warren Bailie, Morag Cross, Natasha Ferguson and Kevin Mooney is freely available to download from the ARO website - [Archaeology Reports Online](#).

New evidence of inhabitation of St Kilda over two thousand years ago has also been recently published. Archaeological investigations were carried out by GUARD Archaeology between 2017 and 2019 on the main island of Hirta overlooking Village Bay as part of the development and refurbishment of the MOD base. This included the largest archaeological excavation ever undertaken on the island, which revealed traces of inhabitation during the Iron Age. Radiocarbon dating of carbonised food remains adhering to a numerous sherds of Iron Age pottery that had been washed into a stone channel indicates intensive inhabitation nearby at some point between the early part of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC to almost the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. The majority of the pottery recovered dates from the Iron Age, although a sherd of a possible early Bronze Age Beaker and two sherds of medieval pottery were also found. *ARO42: Hirta, St Kilda* by Alan Hunter Blair is freely available to download from the ARO website - [Archaeology Reports Online](#).

Moving to the opposite end of Scotland, excavation and analyses by Murray Archaeological Services Ltd revealed a site in Aberdeenshire intermittently visited during the Mesolithic. In the early Neolithic the site was revisited, and post-pits are interpreted as an ephemeral structure, with hearths and a knapping area suggesting sporadic Neolithic use of the site over several hundred years. Bayesian analysis suggests that while the activity around one hearth may date to around the time of the building of the nearby timber halls at Warren Field and Balbridie, the post-



General view of the St Kilda site © GUARD Archaeology Ltd.

pit structures this site are earlier. Which raises the question of whether this represents an initial stage by people with early Neolithic cultural characteristics moving, possibly seasonally, up the Dee, prior to the greater degree of investment in the construction of the timber halls. Or whether these archaeological remains represent one of the last Mesolithic communities in the north-east at a time when new communities of farmers from Europe were beginning to transform the hitherto wild landscape of Scotland. *ARO43: Nether Park Quarry, Aberdeenshire: a small Mesolithic and Neolithic site on the banks of the River Dee* by Hilary K Murray and J Charles Murray is also freely available to download from the ARO website - [Archaeology Reports Online](#).

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## Viking Wind Farm, Shetland

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd.

Since June 2020 Headland have been involved in the archaeological mitigation relating to the development of Viking Wind Farm in Shetland. The project has included geophysical survey, trial trenching evaluation and risk mapping of heritage assets, which has led to excavations of two sites. These two sites were targeted for set-piece excavations, including a turf building which desk-based evidence suggested had previously formed part of a mill; and a cairn located on a ridge which had a possible Norse origin. Works will be continuing into 2022 with ongoing watching briefs, and further excavations to take place where required.

In other news, the publication of the Iron Age site at Culduthel, Inverness is due for release this summer through the Society of Antiquaries, so keep an eye out for it!

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## Scotland's Archaeology Strategy

Scotland's Archaeology Strategy is now 5 years old! In a milestone for the archaeology sector in Scotland, an accessible publication highlighting what has been achieved so far as a result of the Strategy in the past five years has been launched and can be downloaded here: <https://bit.ly/3umqVcN>. The review shows that we are already delivering dividends on our vision to make archaeology matter for everyone.

To mark the occasion, Historic Environment Scotland have written a short blog noting five top highlights that showcase the strategy in action and it is well worth a read: [Scotland's Archaeology Strategy: Five Years, Five Aims, Five Highlights \(historicenvironment.scot\)](#)



# Assessing the impact of temporary access works through an archaeological sensitive area

Kimberley Teale

A recent commercial project has provided a much-welcomed opportunity to undertake additional research to better inform works of a similar scope within Scotland. The project entails temporary access works through a Prehistoric cairnfield and the research addresses potential damage to the assets after the works have been completed, to see if any additional mitigative measures can be applied to future projects.

In December 2020, a colleague and I undertook an archaeological walkover survey on a site at Drumdown, south of Barrhill in South Ayrshire, Scotland. The survey was required ahead of the installation of a temporary access road, to enable scour protection operations to be undertaken on a railway bridge which runs to the west of the site. Following consultation between Network Rail and the Planning Archaeologist for Dumfries and Galloway County Council, Andrew Nicholson, it became apparent that the proposed route lay within the regionally significant East Rhins Archaeological Sensitive Area and passed through the Prehistoric 'Miltonise' Cairnfield (HER ref. MDG1886).



*The 'Drumdown' hillock encompassing the Miltonise Cairnfield, looking north.*

Though the works were deemed as an essential permitted development and therefore did not require planning consent (which meant therefore that the threat to any archaeological assets would have typically been negligible), the client took on board advice given in the Scottish Planning Policy which aims to safeguard historic assets by managing change in an informed and sensitive way (Scottish Planning Policy 2010, para 110-112). They agreed to follow best practise by treating the archaeological requirement as if they had required a planning consent and had been given a planning condition.

This allowed us to conduct one of the first surveys within the East Rhins area since 1987, where the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) found well-

preserved archaeological remains in a generally peat-covered landscape, with 606 recorded monuments being described as 'most worthy of preservation' (Dumfries and Galloway Council, 2018). Also last surveyed in 1987 by the RCAHMS, the 'Miltonise' Cairnfield was said to contain a group of around thirty small cairns ranging from two to three meters in diameter and extending for 1.6Ha on the eastern, southern and western slopes of the hillock known as 'Drumdown' (Canmore, 2020).

The project began with a walkover survey in late December 2020 to record and photograph archaeological assets within the cairnfield which could be potentially affected by the temporary access route. The proposed route was systematically walked in a grid-like fashion to identify any exposed, partially exposed and/or buried heritage assets. The survey revealed 23 visible and buried heritage assets comprising of cairn stones and mounds within the proposed route, as well as outside of the route, particularly to the south and east.



*A cairn presenting as a mound containing buried stones in the Miltonise Cairnfield, looking east*

Some of the assets presented as grassy mounds, particularly those higher up the Drumdown hillock. Some presented with partially exposed stones measuring 20-45cm in width, and some with the stones buried just beneath the surface. The stones appeared to be set in a sub-circular arrangement with none identified in the centre.

Further assets were located as depressions on the hillock, particularly at the base of slope of Drumdown towards the east and south-east. Upon investigation, further exposed, partially

exposed and buried stones in sub-circular arrangements were discovered.

The next phase of works involved a watching brief to monitor the setting of a path of track mats through the cairnfield. The client remained sensitive to the location of the exposed cairns and selected a route through them which would cause the least amount of damage, though some would still inevitably occur.

Once the essential works have been completed over the next few months, the track mats will be uplifted, and we will return to Miltonise in the summer to repeat the walkover survey. We will then assess the condition of each of the 23 assets in order to understand the impact of the track mats upon them, allowing for a comparative research exercise to be undertaken. This work will hopefully go on to inform councils and companies regarding future works of a similar scope. This

exercise will assess a number of factors including whether the laying of the mats offered enough protection for the site, if it made any difference to their levels of preservation, if a different kind of matting could have provided more effective ground protection. It is hoped by this author that our findings will instigate a conversation regarding similar schemes of work.

I would like to give thanks to Andy Nicholson for his guidance with the works. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the client and contractor – while it was not strictly necessary for them to follow best practice for this development, they nonetheless provided us with their full support in helping to protect and preserve this unique historic environment.

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## Membership

Membership of the Scottish Group is free for CIfA members and is £10 per year for non-CIfA members. Please feel free to circulate this newsletter and we would ask you to encourage your friends/colleagues to join the Group.

For more information, see [here](#).

Keep in touch with us via the Scottish Group's [Facebook page](#), where information about events and the work of the Group will be publicised.

Newsletters are published four times a year and contributions from members are welcome.

Our next issue will be released in July 2021.

To make a contribution to forthcoming editions of the newsletter please email [josh.gaunt@headlandarchaeology.com](mailto:josh.gaunt@headlandarchaeology.com) or [secretary.cifa.sg@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.cifa.sg@gmail.com)

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## Upcoming meetings

As a member of the CIfA Scottish Group, you have the right to attend our group committee meetings if you so wish. Committee meetings are held each quarter. Members can attend in person (when possible) or remotely with an internet connection via our videoconferencing facilities.

The date of the next meeting is to be decided but will be held in June or July this year.

If you would like to attend, please send an email to [secretary.cifa.sg@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.cifa.sg@gmail.com).