



## Scottish Group Newsletter

December 2013

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### News

#### Scottish Group AGM

This year's AGM was held at Historic Scotland in Edinburgh on Wednesday 23 October 2013.

The Chair reported that the Group's 5 Year Plan will shortly be updated, to mesh with the IfA's Strategic Plan, and that the Group will be required to produce a Business Plan as part of an overall development of the IfA Groups Forum and coordination of Groups.

Andrea Smith provided an outline of the Historic Scotland grant to IfA and what that will mean to the IfA's and the Group's activities over the next 3 years.

Training continues to be very active and the year has seen the delivery of several training sessions, which were well received. The Chair thanked all of the tutors and committee members who made these sessions possible.

SGIfA continued to contribute to advocacy work in Scotland, by assisting the IfAls Policy Advisor, Tim Howard, with consultations on Scottish matters and through attendance at workshops and membership of BEFS.

Membership statement – the group currently has 471 IfA members and 3 non-IfA group members.

As there were more nominations than available places on the committee, a ballot was held prior to the AGM. The candidates elected were Warren Bailie, Murray Cook, Richard Heawood and Biddy Simpson. The Chair welcomed them to the committee and thanked all of the candidates for standing.

The new committee consists of: Mark Roberts (Chair), Melanie Johnson (Secretary), Cara Jones, Matt Ritchie, Warren Bailie, Biddy Simpson, Richard Heawood, Murray Cook, Andrea Smith (co-opted), Peter Hinton.

The committee members who were standing down were thanked by the Chair for their hard work and commitment over the previous 3 years.

The business of the AGM was followed by a very stimulating afternoon of discussion in small groups on The Future of Planning-Led Archaeology in Scotland.

The event was introduced by Peter Hinton who outlined some of the relevant experience from the Southport Group. The attendees were then divided into break-out groups to discuss issues such as public participation, community engagement, research, archives and publication, the market, adding value to development and the management of quality.

Each group considered: what steps might be taken in Scotland to increase further the contribution of Scottish commercial archaeology to the people of Scotland; and advised on how the *Institute for Archaeologists* can engage with Scotland's emerging Historic Environment and Archaeology strategies on your behalf.

A summary of the main issues discussed and conclusions of the groups will be circulated in due course.

#### Scottish Group Training

Training continues to be very active, and indeed the Group is one of the most active of IfA's special interest groups.

Two recent training events have been completed. The SPEAK workshop with Carol

Jefferson-Davies successfully took place on 8 October 2013 in Edinburgh, with some fantastic feedback from the participants, who learned how to connect meaningfully with their audience, continually engage their thoughts and imagination, how to make their message memorable, manage their nerves, and deliver a message with presence and impact. The participants also built confidence and left feeling empowered.

A training session on archaeological archiving, specifically designed to be relevant to Scotland and undertaken in conjunction with IfA, RCAHMS and National Museums Scotland, was held on 11 December 2013. This was a hands-on training session aimed at anyone who has to compile, receive or use archaeological archives. This course was fully booked but the intention is to host courses in other places if demand is there, so we would welcome expressions of interest from potential attendees in Glasgow, Perth, Aberdeen and Inverness. Please email to register your interest with [lianne.birney@archaeologists.net](mailto:lianne.birney@archaeologists.net).

Watch this space for further training events to be held in 2014!  
[www.archaeologists.net/groups/scottish](http://www.archaeologists.net/groups/scottish)

## Member Survey

### **A goldmine of data – the 2013 SGIfA Membership survey**

Cara Jones IfA, SGIfA committee

In October 2013, most of you would have seen the launch of our membership survey, the results of which were revealed at the Scottish Group AGM. We received 93 responses to the survey, 30% of which were non-IfA members. We were amazed at not only the volume of responses we received but also the amount respondents wrote in the comment boxes, which provided valuable information we can utilise for future SGIfA work.

Why do the survey in the first place? Well, as part of our five year plan, we wanted to find out who you are and what you would like to see SGIfA achieve in the future. We felt that the survey could help us plan future training opportunities, to see how we can help members and also see what you think it is we actually do!

We developed 11 short questions, some with multiple choice answers and some with comment boxes. Responses were varied and reflected a number of over-arching themes that many of us within the heritage sector are facing at the moment. Below I've discussed some of the responses in relation to the Scottish Group, but a more detailed report of the results will be presented at the January committee meeting and will be made available to SGIfA members on request.

*If you are not a member of SGIfA, why not?*

70% of respondents were already members of SGIfA, but of the 30% who were not members some stated that they were unaware of SGIfA's existence, clearly demonstrating we need to start shouting louder about who we are and what we do! Other respondents stated they did not know how to join or felt it wasn't relevant to their job or where they live/work, which again suggests we need to demonstrate the relevance of membership to all of those who work within the heritage sector. The 30% who are not members are also intriguing – how did they find out about the survey? Through colleagues? Round Robin email? Or social media? Our next membership survey will definitely add a question to find out how people are receiving SGIfA information.

*If you are not a member of the IfA, please tell us what could make you join?*

This question provided a multiple choice answer – many of the respondents stated that they wanted more information about the relevance of the IfA to them and to see a more visible presence of the IfA in Scotland. Some stated that they wanted lower fees for the non-waged – a policy which has actually been in place for a number of years (see concessionary rate information on IfA subscription webpage). Reduced training rates and CPD progression was also a popular answer and is something that we have been working on within the committee within the last year. Question 7 (What other archaeological organisations or societies are you member of?) showed that many respondents were also members of organisations such as Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and Archaeology Scotland, suggesting there is an opportunity for partnership training or events, again which is something we had already begun to explore.

*What local authority are you live in?*

The results from this question demonstrated a clear bias of members living within the ‘central belt’ (ie Edinburgh, Glasgow and the land in-between!). This result wasn’t a big surprise – five of the main commercial units are based within the central belt, but we know that we need to develop a more regional approach to our work and are keen to hear ideas on how we can do this.

*What archaeological sector do you work in?*

Unsurprisingly 35% of respondents work within the private sector: however, the remaining 65% work within central government (16%), regional government (9%), third sector (18%), voluntary (7%), museums (2%), students (4%), currently unemployed (2%) or other (15%) which was predominantly retired or freelance. How can this help inform what we do? Well, it shows areas of the heritage sector which are under-represented within the IfA (students in particular) and this information hints about where we need to do more active promotion of who we are and what do.

*How can SGIfA help you or the profession in Scotland?*

We had 91 different responses to this question but there were some clear recurrent themes throughout the responses – help maintain professional standards, assist with professional development, help promote Scottish issues within the main IfA organisation, give more help to sole traders (and in particular to attend training sessions), use social media (we already do!), be more visible, help network between the different heritage sub-sectors and help increase wages. Some of these themes are already being achieved by the committee but we again need to promote what we are doing in a more effective way.

*What training courses would you like to see happen?*

So many of you responded to this question, but again some clear front runners presented themselves. Many of you wanted practical courses which you can apply to your work (for example pottery identification, GPS survey, information on the planning system and role of

curatorial archaeologists, GIS and so on). Phrased by one respondent as a ‘commercial archaeology crash course’, many of you asked if SGIfA can help address the skills gap for graduates when taking that leap from training to work.

**Where will this survey take us?**

I’ve teased out here only some of the comments and results – we are still analysing them and we will be discussing them further at the January Committee meeting. Just looking at the results for this article alone really shows how much information is contained within the survey which we can apply to the SGIfA year ahead.

What do you think about these results? Are there further comments you would like to add? Are there aspects of the results which you think you could help us with? Please please please get in touch and thank you to all of you who answered the survey!

Thank you to Matt Ritchie and Lianne Birney who both worked on developing and launching the survey during a particularly manic work time for myself!

## Events

### IfA Conference 2014 – Glasgow!

The team at head office are continuing with organisation for the next IfA conference in Glasgow, and the session list looks like it will be a fantastic event.

The call for papers is now closed but we are still very interested to hear from potential sponsors, advertisers and exhibitors.

The conference will be hosted at the Marriott Hotel in Glasgow, from 9-11 April 2014. Look out for more information as it becomes available:

[www.archaeologists.net/conference2014/info](http://www.archaeologists.net/conference2014/info)

Booking is now open and forms are now available on the website (as well as in the latest edition of *The Archaeologist*):

[www.archaeologists.net/conference/2014booking](http://www.archaeologists.net/conference/2014booking)

## Project News

### Excavation of a Ditched Enclosure at Winchburgh

Ian Suddaby MIfA, CFA Archaeology Ltd

As part of the Winchburgh Masterplan, land located just to the North-East of Winchburgh, West Lothian is soon to be developed. Between July and October 2013, CFA Archaeology Ltd excavated a sub-circular, double-ditched enclosure. The site had been previously identified from aerial photographs, the details of which were provided by WoSAS. Thanks to the West Lothian Archaeological Trust we were able to obtain some great aerial photographs as the excavation proceeded, revealing the ditches in their entirety.

The discontinuous outer ditch measured c. 62m NW-SE by 68m NE-SW, whilst the inner ditch was set 7-8m inside the outer ditch. The internal enclosed area measured c. 41m NW-SE by 50m NE-SW. There was an eastern entrance on the outer ditch, with the inner entrance located further to the south. There was also a north-western entrance on the inner ditch.

The internal ditch fills contained large amounts of quarried stone, suggesting that a stone wall or rampart was present to the inside of the inner ditch. A greater volume of stone was recovered from the south-western entrance of the inner ditch, suggesting a possible gateway was located here. The stone recovered from the inner ditch decreased in volume from east to west on either side. There was no evidence of internal features apart from two possible postholes.

The lack of artefacts recovered from the site, along with the absence of identifiable internal structures, may indicate a non-domestic function for the site. A number of shale bracelet rough-outs were recovered from the ditch fills, providing a possible Iron Age date and indicating that manufacturing activities associated with shale jewellery were being carried out on the site. The bracelets are typical of later prehistoric sites in west-central Scotland.

A programme of post-excavation work will now be undertaken, to further analyse the site and finds. The excavation was funded by Regenco Ltd.



*The Winchburgh ditched enclosure from the air  
© West Lothian Archaeological Trust*

### Early Bronze Age burial rites emerging from a range of excavations across Scotland

Warren Bailie MIfA, Iraia Arabaolaza MIfA & Christine Rennie PIfA, GUARD Archaeology Ltd

Through Historic Scotland's Human Remains Call-Off Contract, GUARD Archaeology teams in recent years have made a number of striking discoveries about Early Bronze Age burial practices, which are now coming to light through their online archaeological journal, [archaeologyreportsonline.com](http://archaeologyreportsonline.com).

The most recent publication concerns evidence that cists in the Bronze Age may have been tailored for individuals during their lifetime, possibly from early in life. The investigation began after a stone cist burial was accidentally damaged by ploughing at Blairbuy Farm in Dumfries and Galloway, in April 2012. Post-excavation analysis found the skeletal remains to be that of a juvenile individual with an age estimate of approximately nine to twelve years old. This child suffered malnutrition, indicated by dental enamel hypoplasia (DEH) and cribra orbitalia, both childhood stress indicators. A radiocarbon date of 2027-1886 cal BC ( $2\sigma$ ) was obtained from the left ulna, placing this

individual's death in the Early Bronze Age period.

The GUARD Archaeology team, however, also uncovered two additional empty cists. These cists were constructed differently in terms of both material and form. Samples from all three cists and the surrounding subsoil were tested using multi-element analysis and this demonstrated that the two empty cists had never been used for the burial of human remains, suggesting that they were possibly constructed in anticipation of use, rather than being constructed as and when required. Perhaps this was a conscious attempt by a group or family, related to the young individual who was buried here, to set aside graves in the immediate vicinity for future use. The stress indicators on the skeletal remains may be indicative of a wider problem for the community at that time, perhaps a food shortage or onset of disease; this is a possible explanation which may have prompted the preparatory construction of the surplus cists. This implies that the community understood and planned an individual's burial practice well in advance of that person's death.



*The Blairbuy cists © GUARD Archaeology Ltd*

Previous attempts to establish the presence of human remains in empty cists have used phosphate levels alone. As Jennifer Brown, one of the contributors to the Blairbuy report notes, other studies have found either no signs of phosphate accumulation in grave soils or no conclusive evidence. The Blairbuy results therefore highlight the merit of multi-element analysis and the advantages of using readings from an occupied cist as a signature for comparison with other potential funerary contexts in the proximity. This work also shows that we cannot assume that the construction of

the cists we discover is necessarily contemporary with the burial of the bodies contained therein.

When another prehistoric burial was accidentally discovered in September 2011 during the construction of a septic tank at Spinningdale in Sutherland, the GUARD Archaeology team made an extraordinary find. Their excavation of a stone cist recovered the remains of a crouched inhumation of a middle-aged adult female (35-50 years) with signs of spinal joint disease. A radiocarbon date of 2051-1911 BC and 2151-2018 BC was obtained from a bone and charcoal fragments respectively, placing the cist in the Early Bronze Age period. A tripartite food vessel urn, of Early Bronze Age date, was placed to the west of her skull, but what made this burial a particularly extraordinary site was the discovery of sheepskin and wool recovered from under the skeletal remains. The sheepskin discovered within the left arm of the body is the first sample of this kind in Scotland and is the first known example discovered from a Bronze Age burial in Britain. There have been two other samples of Bronze Age wool found in the British Isles, but no other examples of potential sheepskin are known. Findings of hide or fur are few and far between in Britain but are often associated with 'rich burials' of adult inhumations.



*The Keas Cottage Burial © GUARD Archaeology Ltd*

Yet another archaeological investigation examined part of a shallow burial pit uncovered during landscaping work at Rothes Golf Club in Moray in July 2011. Although no human remains were found, their existence was implied by the presence of an intact All-Over Corded Beaker, sherds of a second Beaker and a piece of cramp recovered from the sieved spoil from

landscaping. Charcoal from this unusually small Beaker has been radiocarbon dated to 2462-2271 cal BC.

The full results of this research, *ARO5: Spinning the yarn: a cist at Keas Cottage, Spinningdale*, *ARO6: Preparing for death: excavations at Blairbuy, Dumfries and Galloway in 2012* and *ARO7: Beakers and Bunkers; Investigations at Rothes Golf Club* are freely available to download from the Archaeology Reports Online (ARO) website  
<http://www.archaeologyreportsonline.com/>

## Cromarty Medieval Burgh Community Archaeology Project

Steven Birch PlfA & Mary Peteranna PlfA

The Cromarty Medieval Burgh Community Archaeology Project was developed after winter storms and high tides in December 2012 revealed extensive Medieval and Post-Medieval archaeological deposits along the shoreline on the east side of Cromarty.



*Aerial photograph taken by Edward Martin: looking northwest over the dig site and the Cromarty allotments to the present town of Cromarty*

In the spring of 2013 a geophysical survey was conducted in Reeds Park, the green field site adjacent to the shoreline erosions, to assess the potential for further archaeological remains. During the summer, in conjunction with SCAPE/SCHARP, the first season of excavations for a community dig was undertaken on both the shoreline erosions and in Reeds Park. With a force of volunteers, we uncovered the Post-Medieval/abandonment phase of archaeological remains in this part of

town – including Thief’s Row and the robbed-out remains of three houses shown on the 1880 Ordnance Survey map sheet. Results from the excavation are helping us to learn more about how the people of Cromarty lived during the 18th-19th centuries by analysing the artefacts recovered - many of which are personal objects from the inhabitants, some of whose names we know from old house lists and Census Records – and animal bone, fish bone and shellfish forming a part of their diet.

More targeted excavation below the 18th-19th century layers uncovered significant medieval remains, including the stone-built foundations of substantial buildings, supporting our belief that Medieval Cromarty was an important burgh. The preservation of the medieval archaeology is excellent and small finds from the medieval deposits on the site include ceramics dating to between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (including imported wares from the Scottish Central Belt, the Low Countries of Europe and Yorkshire in England), iron fish hooks and knives, stone and ceramic spindle whorls and a substantial number of what appear to be stone ‘pot lids’.

Ceramics specialists Derek Hall and George Haggarty visited the site during the excavations and have recently conducted an initial assessment of the 2013 pottery assemblage. There appears to be a high quantity of imported redwares during earlier periods of occupation, with a gradual transition to locally-made redware pottery. The later ceramics are equally intriguing, with very few high status pots being represented. An assessment of the spread of the material will help us to learn much more about the settlement along Thief’s Row.



*Hard-working volunteers during the 2013 excavation*

Overall results from our work during 2013 suggest that the site may have been an industrial area within the burgh related to fishing. At the moment, this is supported by the amount of shellfish remains (most likely used for bait), large quantities of fish bone associated with rich ash layers, the number of stone 'pot lids' and very few domestic cooking pots. However, it is also apparent that some of the deposits recovered from the earliest settlement on the site are domestic in nature and further work is required to fully understand the site and to learn more about the medieval burgh.

We look forward to more digging on the site next year to learn more about Medieval Cromarty. In the meantime, we will be processing the results from the first season and continuing our research into primary documentary sources - so watch the website for updates as we progress on post-excavation work:

[www.medievalcromarty.org](http://www.medievalcromarty.org)

The project organisers are grateful to our sponsors and funders, the support of SCAPE during 2013 and the people of Cromarty and northern Scotland for their valuable support as volunteers.

## Book Reviews

### Black Spout Book Review

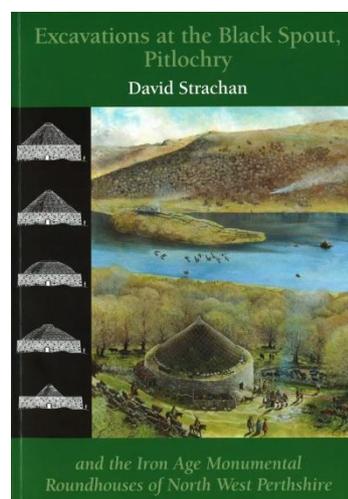
Jeff Sanders, Dig It! 2015 Project Manager

Striking the balance between readability, information and presentation is always a challenge. Happily, *Excavations at the Black Spout, Pitlochry* by David Strachan, walks this tightrope to deliver an informative, beautifully illustrated, and enjoyable account of excavations investigating an important form of Iron Age settlement.

Split into four main sections (Introduction, Excavation Results, Landscape, and Context, Interpretation and Synthesis) Strachan takes the reader from the background to the project and methodology, through the results of excavation and dating evidence, and considers the wider environment and social landscape before looking at how these monumental roundhouses can be reconstructed. Finally, Strachan places the site back in broader discussion of Iron Age settlement in Scotland. The richness of the locale shines through, from the strong research

tradition in the area via the many local people involved in the excavation (and captured in photographs on the inside book cover) to the links with wider Perthshire history.

The book stands out in three ways. The first is the balance of data and interpretation. The excavation results are set out along with a number of specialist contributions, with dedicated sections to the radiocarbon dating, small finds, environmental context and an interesting section on 'distribution, setting and inter-visibility'. There are also five specialist appendices. However, these do not overwhelm the structure of the book: they are kept succinct and add to the broader picture being painted. It is also good to see place-name evidence considered.



Secondly, the Black Spout itself represents a monument type that is a crucial and oft missing piece in the jigsaw that is Iron Age Scotland. The excavation, the first to a modern standard of this site type, is essential to understanding the Scotland-wide picture, from the stone duns and brochs in the west, to the timber constructions in the east. The book also attempts to put the findings in a broader context and explicitly sets out to answer a number of questions articulated through the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF).

And thirdly, the medium is as important as the message – the book is very well illustrated with great photographs, thoughtful maps and clearly drawn sections and plans. It is the reconstructions and illustrations that bring it to life. The section on reconstruction will be of particular importance to those with an interest in prehistoric and early historic buildings much

more broadly, and the uncertainty inherent in reconstructing the roof of a prehistoric building is neatly captured (and indeed, highlighted on the front cover). The visualisation of data is very well handled, while leaving room for debate and discussion.

This is an enjoyable book that will hopefully spark further debate and field-work. The final chapter on synthesis and discussion could have been expanded, and I found myself wanting more than one page on 'future research' – which I suppose means that the author has succeeded in whetting the appetite. As Strachan himself notes, "these are exciting times for Iron Age studies in the region" – the Black Spout publication contributes to this in no small part, feeding in positively to our understanding of Iron Age Scotland as a whole.

## A final word....

### **RCAHMS & Deposition of Archaeological Archives**

The Collections team at RCAHMS is aware that there may be a perception within the archaeological community that RCAHMS are no longer accepting archives for deposition. This is not the case, and RCAHMS still accept archives – digital and paper – for long term deposition.

Guidelines for depositors are available at:  
<http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/freedom-of-information.html>

These guidelines will be updated in due course to reflect the fact that RCAHMS no longer requires the deposition of slides as part of archives. Digital images or hard copy photographic images are sufficient.

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## SGIfA membership

Membership of the Scottish Group is free for IfA members, and attracts a small fee for non-IfA members. Please feel free to circulate this newsletter and we would like to ask you to encourage your friends and colleagues to join the Scottish Group.

For more information on the IfA's Scottish Group please see our website, where you can download copies of meeting minutes and past newsletters, and keep up-to-date with the work of the Group and training course:

<http://www.archaeologists.net/groups/scottish>

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. Search for 'Scottish Group of the Institute for Archaeologists' and 'like' us or go to:

<http://www.archaeologists.net/groups/scottish>

The next committee meeting is 31 January 2014 - please feel free to get in touch if there any items you would like to see included on the agenda, or members are welcome to attend the meetings, normally held in RCAHMS at 3pm.

Newsletters are published 3-4 times a year and all contributions from Scottish members are welcome (news, events, new discoveries, project roundups, books, talks, staff news etc). To make a contribution to forthcoming editions of the Newsletter please email:  
[mel@cfa-archaeology.co.uk](mailto:mel@cfa-archaeology.co.uk)