



**Perthshire Society of Natural Science**  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SECTION  
(Registered Charity Number SC 012718)

**Newsletter September 2018**

**Doors Open Days 2018**

15-16 September Eastern and Highland Perthshire  
22-23 September Strathearn and Kinross-shire  
29-30 September Perth City

The PSNS Museum Library will be open on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> September with displays about PSNS.

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September David Bowler is leading tours of Greyfriars at 12.00 and 14.00 starting from St John's Episcopal Church, Princes Street. No need to book.

The full Doors Open Days 2018 and Perth and Kinross Archaeology month programme is now available through the PKHT website and in local libraries.

On 28<sup>th</sup> September 12.30 – 13.30 Derek Hall will be giving a £2 talk at Perth Museum and Art Gallery “‘This is ane koull of Tullilum’ – Excavations at Perth Whitefriars 2014 – 2017”. This talk is designed to complement those given at Perth Museum in 2015 and 2016. Tickets are available from Perth Museum or online at Eventbrite.

**Winter lectures 2018**

Fri 12<sup>th</sup> October First Curious Minds talk of the winter session  
Dr Alison Sheridan, “Green Treasures from the Magic Mountains”

Wed 17<sup>th</sup> October First A & H Section talk  
Dr Colin Martin, “Archaeology on a Cromwellian shipwreck off Mull”

The membership form and full programme should be with you soon. If you haven't heard from PSNS in the next couple of weeks let me know. My contact details are at the end of the newsletter.

**Two conferences in Perth**

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> October 9.45am – 4.30pm at the A K Bell Library, Perth

**Scottish Local History Forum Annual conference and AGM**

**‘After the War is Over – The Legacy of WW1’**

£25 members, £30 non-members.

For more information or to book see [www.slhf.org](http://www.slhf.org) or contact me and I will pass on the details.

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 9.45am - 4.45pm at St Matthews Church, Tay Street, Perth, PH1 5LQ

**Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee**

**‘Recent Archaeological work in Tayside and Fife’**

Tickets £15 (includes refreshments but not lunch) I've enclosed a ticket application form with this newsletter but feel free to contact me with any queries.

## **Luncarty's Engineer**

George Turnbull 1809-1889

A Short History by John Andrews, published by the West Stormont Historical Society

*Reviewed by Margaret Borland-Stroyan*

John Andrews has kindly donated a copy of his recent biography of George Turnbull to the PSNS library.

As one would expect from its author, the book is packed full of interesting facts and well-written and is beautifully, and most appropriately, illustrated. I read it in one sitting and was sorry to reach the final page.

George Turnbull led a full life, from his happy childhood, originally at Luncarty and later at Huntingtower, attending Edinburgh University from the age of 15, then moving to London, initially working for that "fine, hale and hearty old man", Thomas Telford, through to his distinguished 13 year career with the East India Company as Chief Engineer in charge of the proposed East Indian Railway, where one of his finest of many achievements was the 4,700 feet long bridge over the River Soane.

During his 22 years working in England and Wales, George Turnbull was involved in many substantial civil engineering works, including the ship canal and docks at Cardiff, the Middlesbrough Dock, the final stretch of the South Eastern Railways line linking London and Dover and the Holloway Bridge in London. It was Turnbull who developed the material later marketed as Portland Cement for lining railway tunnels. Thomas Stevenson, son of Robert, became a pupil of Turnbull's.

One of George Turnbull's first jobs as draughtsman and clerk to Thomas Telford was to make the drawings for the copperplate engravings which were to feature in Telford's autobiography. While in Middlesbrough, he produced the Tees Tide Table and Mariners' Almanac for 1842.

Sadly, one tangible link for us with George Turnbull is missing, presumed disintegrated! In 1832 he presented "Part of the oak pile, with the iron shoe, taken from the foundations of Old London Bridge" to the Literary and Antiquarian Society of Perth. This artefact was certainly transferred to Perth Museum, but its condition was described as poor and it seems to have disappeared from the collection some time last century.

John Andrews is to be congratulated on his meticulous research for the biography of George Turnbull and for his ability to convey so much of the personality as well as the career of this devoted family man, kindly polymath and innovative and committed engineer. I can warmly recommend this book.

John's book is available by contacting Paul McLennan at [weststormontsec@gmail.com](mailto:weststormontsec@gmail.com) and costs £3 including P&P.

## **Reports of two of our Summer 2018 outings** by David Perry

The Section recently had two summer outings. **On Saturday 30th June**, a hot sunny day, 11 members and guests visited the museum at St Vigeans near Arbroath. The museum had been refurbished to better display the collection of Pictish stones that had been found in the 19th century when the parish church was restored. The redisplay was under the guidance of Professor Jane Geddes of Aberdeen University, who has spoken to the Section on the Pictish stones there. One of the stones is a shrine fragment, probably from a shrine to contain relics of St Féchín/Vigean, an Irish saint of the 7th century. Why this saint should be commemorated here is not known but presumably a monastery and cult in his honour were founded in the 8th century by a local landowner. The Drosten stone has an inscription on it, thought to commemorate either a saint or a patron, perhaps of the monastery; it has Pictish symbols on the reverse.



*The front of the Drosten stone with the shrine fragment to its right*

Another stone contains imagery of the meeting in the Egyptian desert of the desert fathers St Antony and St Paul of Egypt in the 4th century.

After the museum we visited the parish church situated on the top of a natural mound. The church contains a number of consecration crosses inside and outside (and one in the car park) from when the church was consecrated in the 13th century. There is a memorial inside to Sir Peter Young of Seaton, who had been a tutor of James VI and later served him as an ambassador.

In the afternoon we visited the Pictish stones at Aberlemno. A cross-slab, with Pictish symbols and a battle scene on the back, in the churchyard is thought to commemorate the Battle of Dunnichen, supposedly fought nearby in 685 when the Pictish King Brude defeated the Northumbrian army of King Egfrith. (An alternative location of the battle is Dunachton in Inverness-shire.) Three other stones with Pictish symbols are set by the road. Finally we visited the former Augustinian priory at Restenneth, of which only the tower and chancel and two walls of the cloister range survive to any extent; only the foundations of the nave survive.



Restenneth from the south-west

**On Sunday 15th July**, 15 members and guests visited Linlithgow Palace and Torphichen Preceptory under the guidance of Adrian Cox of Historic Environment Scotland. The day was overcast with drizzle in the afternoon, but fortunately the rain did not start until we had finished! Linlithgow was a royal residence from the time of David I (1124-53) and had been fortified by Edward I in the early 14th century as a 'peel', the name surviving in the area around the palace. The present palace was begun by James I in the early 15th century, but may incorporate remains of David I's residence at the SW corner. James I created an impressive entrance through the east range which contained his great hall on the first floor. James V created the present entrance on the south side with its impressive gateway decorated with his own coat of arms and the coats of arms of, and the orders of chivalry granted to him by, the Emperor Charles V (Golden Fleece), Henry VIII of England (Garter) and Francis I of France (St Michael). The south range contains the chapel and the west and north ranges the royal apartments, the king's in the west range and the queen's probably in the north range. The present north range was built by James VI in the 17th century after the earlier range had collapsed.



In the afternoon we visited Torphichen Preceptory, the headquarters in Scotland for the crusading knights of the Order of St John of Jerusalem. The site was granted to the Order by David I but the present remains are mainly from the 14th and 15th centuries. The tower and transepts survive and house a display on the Order of St John in the upper floor. The chancel and cloisters have been removed and the nave was rebuilt as the present parish church in the 18th century. Traces of wall decoration to simulate stonework survive in the transepts and crossing under the tower. On the west wall of the south transept are the fragmentary remains of a working drawing for an arch.



*A rare example of a sanctuary cross*

As ever, if you have any queries about any PSNS matters please don't hesitate to contact me and I will try to provide the answers.

Regards,  
Eva

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**[www.psns.org.uk](http://www.psns.org.uk)**

The Archaeological and Historical Section Committee 2018 - 2019

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