



## Perthshire Society of Natural Science

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SECTION

(Registered Charity Number SC 012718 )

### Newsletter August 2019

#### **“Revisiting Scotland’s Neolithic Carved Stone Balls”**

***Tuesday 24th September 2019, Perth Museum & Art Gallery 7.30pm***

We are having an extra talk before the start of the normal season. Dr Hugo Anderson-Whymark (National Museum Scotland) will give a talk about Scottish Neolithic carved stones balls and the Sherriffmuir carved stone ball in particular. This example, recently acquired by Perth Museum with help with fundraising from PSNS, will be available for closer examination on the evening thanks to Mark Hall. Note that this talk will be held in the Museum.

#### **Regular Winter Programmes**

The A & H Section winter programme kicks off on Wednesday 16th October with this session’s Dr Margaret Stewart Lecture, Andrew Nicholson talking about ‘The Galloway Hoard’

The first Curious Minds talk is on the previous Friday, 11th October: Dr John Grigor, Abertay University “A Matter of Taste”.

All regular meetings are held at 7.30pm in the Soutar Theatre, A K Bell Library.

Ornithological Section – Wed 9<sup>th</sup> October: “Revealing the mysteries of bird migration and ecology with emerging technologies” - Ben Darvill (BTO Scotland)

Botanical Section – Wed 24<sup>th</sup> October: ‘The Rise and Fall and Rise of Flanders Moss National Nature Reserve’ – Dave Pickett, Reserves Manager, Scottish Natural Heritage

The Botanical and Ornithological Section meetings are held at 7.30pm in the Sandeman Room, A K Bell Library

#### **Doors Open Days - 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup> September**

The Library room will be open again this year with displays by the Archaeological & Historical Section and the Ornithological Section, and tours of the North Inch willows and demonstrations by the Botanical Section.

#### **Upcoming conferences**

Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> November at Rothes Halls £15.00

Scotland’s Community Heritage Conference Sat 9<sup>th</sup> November Birnam Arts and Conference Centre. The theme this year *Making Places, Connecting People*

## **Rhoda Fothergill**

For those who were unable to attend Rhoda's funeral please find enclosed with this newsletter a flavour of the tribute David Bowler presented on the day.

### **Adopt-a-Monument Stone Circle Trail**

On a fine March morning a group of us went up to Colen Stone Circle to remove overgrown vegetation. When we got there we found that the local deer had done most of the work for us over the winter but we tidied up and removed what was left and repaired the sign.



### **Section Summer 2019 Outings Reports** David Perry

#### **Dunkeld Community Archive**

On Wednesday 24 April 8 members of the Section visited the Dunkeld Community Archive. We were shown round by Colonel David Arbuthnott and Jane Anderson, former archivist at Blair Castle.

The Chapter House Museum was opened by the Society of Friends of Dunkeld Cathedral in 1994 in the upper room of the chapter house of Dunkeld Cathedral and began to receive documents and archives relating to the history of the cathedral and parish of Dunkeld. Following the closure of the Scottish Horse Museum in Dunkeld in 1999 its records and photographs were rescued by the Chapter House Museum and transferred to their museum.

By 2013 the archive had outgrown the chapter house and new premises were acquired in the former public toilet in The Cross, which was converted into an archive store and reading room with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other bodies and trusts. As the archive is run entirely by volunteers, opening times are restricted.

The archive comprises two sections. The Community Archive is largely based on the records and research of two local historians on the parishes of Dunkeld and Little Dunkeld. The archive of the Scottish Horse is kept separately and contains records from its formation by the Marquess of Tullibardine (later 8th Duke of Atholl) in 1900 for service in the Boer War. Among the regimental records is a series of pencil portraits of members of the unit when it was stationed in western Austria at the end of the Second World War during which the regiment was an artillery unit and had served in Italy. It is assumed that the portraits were done by a local or refugee to earn money.

#### **The Scottish Crannog Centre, Loch Tay**

On Sunday 26 May 16 members and guests of the Section visited the Crannog Centre by Kenmore. The crannog is a reconstruction from the 1990s based on the excavations in the 1980s by Nick Dixon at Oakbank crannog on the other side of the loch. It comprises a timber round house set on piles driven into the loch bed and linked to the shore by a timber causeway. The walls are a double skin of wattle with an insulation of moss/straw. The conical thatched roof has no vent for smoke from the central stone-built hearth; the smoke would have dealt with any insects/parasites lurking in the thatch. The ground floor of the crannog would have been used for storage of goods and possibly sheep, an upper level providing sleeping accommodation and more storage.

After the visit to the crannog we then visited the new accredited museum that has been opened at the Centre to house the objects that were found in the excavations but that have not been exhibited before. Because of the preservation conditions in the waters of the loch there

is a remarkable survival of organic remains, food, eating utensils, and cloth. Seeds, herbs, fruit, and pollen were recovered. A special find was a butter dish still with some butter (well past its use by date). Among the objects are timber piles radiocarbon-dated to 600-400BC. Other objects of special interest are a bridge from a lyre and a whistle showing the leisure/cultural side of the crannog inhabitants.

Our visit coincided with an activity day with demonstrations of fire-lighting, smelting, cooking, firing clay, weaving and dyeing.



*Rich Hiden demonstrating iron smelting*



*Lunching with some of the local wildlife*

### **Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre**

On Saturday 29 June 9 members and guests of the Section visited the heritage centre at Montrose Air Station. The Centre occupies only a part of the former air station, the rest of the station serving as a business park with the hangars from the First and Second World Wars being used for commercial purposes.

The station was the first operational air station in Britain in 1913 when No 2 Squadron of the Royal Flying Corps arrived under Major Burke housed in wooden hangars known as Burke's Sheds. It was from Montrose that the first RFC aircraft flew down to France in August 1914. The Reception/Shop and Exhibition Rooms occupy buildings from the First World War, the latter building being the former station HQ. After being closed in 1920, Montrose was reopened as an air training station in 1936 in the face of the growing threat from Nazi Germany to train pilots for the RAF and new hangars were built. It was bombed twice in 1940, suffering damage and casualties. During the war it was a base for Coastal Command.

One of the original wooden aircraft hangars (Burke's Sheds) from 1913 has been recently acquired by the Heritage Centre and houses an Avro Anson which is under restoration by volunteers of the Heritage Centre. Another rare aircraft is a Hawk Major, built in 1935 and acquired from the RAF Museum, one of only two remaining in Britain. The Hawk with modifications became the RAF as its first monoplane training aircraft. Other aircraft include a Vampire training jet, a replica Sopwith Camel and a replica B.E.2a, the latter representing the first RFC aircraft to land in France in 1914 from Montrose. There is also a replica of the 'Red Lichtie', a Spitfire funded by the people of Arbroath.



Displays at the Centre included one on local brides who married American servicemen at the end of the First World War and another on Russians in Scotland, about Russian pilots who trained at Errol in 1943, the latter based on the research of a Russian whose grandfather had been one of the pilots trained there.

## **Strathearn Community Campus Archaeology Trail - Eva Bennett**

On 17<sup>th</sup> July nine Section members joined by several members of West Stormont Historical Society met up at Strathearn Community Campus. A spell of good weather broke that day and as we arrived the heavens opened. Luckily we were able to start the tour inside with an introductory talk by Strathearn Archaeological and Historical Society Chairman Ian Hamilton, who gave us the background to the setting up of the Trail. By the time we were ready to go out around the grounds the worst of the rain had passed.

The Trail consists of five information boards following paths around the campus grounds. The area has a rich archaeological background although there is little archaeology visible above ground. Before the new buildings were constructed an excavation on the site in 2008 found the remains of the ploughed-out ditches of the 6000-year-old Broich Cursus. It was so massive that most of the campus fits inside it. Also in the area were traces of a possible Neolithic mortuary enclosure, a timber circle, a Bronze Age cemetery, a later prehistoric roundhouse and Iron age enclosures.



The nearby Pittentian timber circle was partially excavated in 2011 during the construction of the Beauly to Denny power line and a half -diameter re-imagining of the circle has been constructed close to the school buildings. Walking around inside this gives a real atmosphere of what the full-scale original would have been like when in use and fires the imagination and fuels the discussion about the life and rituals of the community at the time. It has been used by the pupils for musical events and even staging Shakespeare plays.

Ian then pointed out the site of the Stayt of Crieff barrow across the Broich Road, a Bronze Age barrow later used by the Earls of Strathearn as a court hill, where they passed judgement on cases affecting the local community. Court records exist back to 1475 although it is likely that the Stayt was used for this purpose for possibly hundreds of years before this.

The Trail is a great resource for the School and the local community and we must applaud the far-sighted imagination and drive of the group of people who pushed this initiative through to fruition. The first phase of the Trail was opened by the Earl and Countess of Strathearn and the final stage of the Trail has it's official opening in September.

While the post of Secretary remains unfilled please continue to contact me as before with any queries or comments.

Regards,

Eva

01738 850489

psns1948@yahoo.co.uk

Archaeological and Historical Section  
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(Registered Charity Number SC012718)

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