



Perthshire Society of Natural Science

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SECTION

(Registered Charity Number SC 012718)

Newsletter February 2019

Our AGM

The Section AGM will take place on Wednesday 13th March at 7.30pm followed by a talk by Mark Hall - **“The Tulloch Walker and some other new Treasure Trove acquisitions at Perth Museum & Art Gallery”** We look forward to hearing more about the unusual Pictish carving found during the recent roadworks on the edge of Perth.

We would welcome volunteers to join the Committee and will also be requiring a new Secretary as I am standing down from the post. We could also do with someone with an interest in using social media to help broaden our profile. Please contact any of the committee for more information.

A long-running Project needs help

Talking of volunteers, we will be looking for help in the next few months with a project that has been in abeyance for several years.

Many of our present members will be unaware that the Section set up one of the first round of Adopt-a-Monument projects in the 1990's, a Stone Circle Trail comprising of Colen, Loanhead and Bandirran stone circles. We would like to re-launch this and will require help from some of our fitter members with the tidying up of the sites, so please contact me if you feel that you can help.

Museum Acquisitions Fund

In January we joined with Culture Perth and Kinross in an online fundraising effort to raise money to secure for Perth Museum a neolithic carved stone ball found on Sheriffmuir. At time of writing it looks as though the appeal for the Sheriffmuir ball, which was due to close at the end of February, has already just about reached its total. In view of this success and the continuing financial constraints the museum is under we are giving consideration to developing this partnership further, to help them bring other items to Perth that they might otherwise not be able to afford to acquire through the Treasure Trove process.

More Volunteering Opportunities

Dr Gavin Lindsay, Research and Engagement Officer at PKHT, has been in touch to say:

Perth City Heritage Fund is looking for:

1. Individuals to give assistance with researching historic buildings in the Perth and Kinross Council Archive, specifically hunting down architectural drawings and old photographs of historic buildings within the Perth Central and Kinnoull conservation areas;
2. Assistance with searching the Landlords Registry of Scotland for details relating to buildings we'd like to approach to offer grant assistance for repairs.

Perth and Kinross (Regional) Archaeology Research Framework is looking for:

Assistance with a Perth and Kinross archaeology literature review – focusing on looking through digitised back issues of journals and proceedings (such as Perth Society of Natural Science) for articles relating to Perth and Kinross archaeology.

[Thanks to our member Colin McLeod's digitising skills, all PSNS publications are available to view online through our website www.psns.org.uk (Ed)]

If you think you can assist with any of the above or would like a bit more information then please get in touch. There's no specific deadline for getting back to me but we'd be keen to get these activities underway in the Autumn/Winter 2018-19.

Dr Gavin Lindsay, 01738 477082, Gavin.Lindsay@pkht.org.uk

Doors Open Day September 2018

On 30th September, as our contribution to Doors Open Day, PSNS held a small exhibition in the Museum Library Room with the help of the museum staff. We used boards from the 2017 Perth Museum Study of Nature exhibition kindly donated to us, and posters advertising the individual Sections and the Curious Minds lecture series.

To celebrate our Section's 70th Anniversary Mark Hall put together finds from prehistoric and medieval sites excavated by our founder Dr Margaret Stewart and involving members of the society over the years. These finds included part of a carved grave slab found at the Elcho Nunnery excavation in the 1970's. The broken large fragment shows a small dog wearing a collar nestled at the foot of what looks like flowing robes. The early 15th century style lettering reads "LCHONUNO" (part of "Elcho Nunnery" perhaps?)



Thanks to Roben Antoniewicz for the photos

The Photographic Section display centred on the Ackermann booklet described in our last newsletter. News of this find had appeared in the Courier a short time before and several of the visitors had come specifically to see it. The Section had also produced a facsimile which could be handled. They also had copies of the photobook that Mike Bell had produced to record the events of the PSNS 150th Anniversary the previous winter.

For the Ornithological Section Jeff Banks provided a display of bird skulls and feathers with some of his beautiful photographs, as well as a cute stuffed Little Owl from the museum collections.

The fourth display was of some of the Society's treasured rare books and beautiful botanical plates, as well as an example of a fish fossil collected on a PSNS excursion to Balruddery Den near Longforgan in the 1880's. The books were John Ray's *Synopsis Methodica Stirpium Britannicarum* (Methodical synopsis of British plants) (1696/1724); a volume of *Flora Amboinensis* by Georg Everhard Rumpf/Rumphius (c1740); a volume of *The North American Sylva* by Francois Andre Michaux (1852); and *The Potamogetons (Pond Weeds) of the British Isles* by Alfred Fryer (1915).

Over the Sunday we had at least 85 visitors and I am sure this has helped raise the profile of the Society, as well as giving us the opportunity to view artefacts not normally on show. Our thanks go to Mark Simmons, Paul Adair, Mark Hall and Barbara Hamilton for all their help with the preparation and setting up of the exhibits, the staff on duty on the day and all of our members who helped with either the organisation beforehand or greeting the visitors on the day.

Report of the last summer 2018 outing

On Sunday 2nd September sixteen members of the Section travelled up the A9 to the Aberfeldy area. **St Mary's Church, Grandtully** was our first stop to view the well preserved 1630's painted ceiling. The adjoining churchyard has several interesting gravestones including one with a rare 18th Century Abraham and Isaac depiction.



We next visited two sites, both described as stone circles, but very different in design and function.

Dr Margaret Stewart excavated what is usually described as a "four-poster" at **Lundin Farm** in 1964 with the help of volunteers. She showed that a shallow ditch had been dug around the top of a small natural mound before several cremations were deposited. A broken beaker decorated with twisted cord impressions has been restored and is on display in Perth Museum. Sherds of a collared urn and domestic pottery and a broken bowdrill stone were also deposited with several discrete groups of cremated bone.



Dr Stewart explaining Lundin. © CPK

Four standing stones were set up just inside the rim of the ditch, which was then filled in and cairn material heaped over the top of the mound. She deduced by the lack of erosion of the ditch that it had not remained open for long so that the whole process could only have taken a short time, possibly only a few days or weeks.

Croftmoraig is a much bigger, more complex monument consisting of several distinct elements which evolved over a much longer timespan and may have had more of a “ritual” function than a funerary one. It was excavated by Professor Stuart Piggott in 1965 in the days before carbon dating was really an affordable option for most excavations, so in 2012 Prof Richard Bradley dug some small trenches to collect datable material. This has proved that although Prof Piggott’s plan and recording of the features is accurate, his interpretation of the sequence of the construction of these features has to be revised. Unfortunately, the information board at the site is unlikely to be renewed any time soon to reflect this.



Croftmoraig ©Richard Bradley/Aaron Watson

We spent the afternoon at **Menzies Castle**, ancestral seat of Clan Menzies. The manager, Major Henderson, gave us a very colourful interpretation of the history of the mostly 16th Century Z-plan castle and the local area as he led us on a guided tour before we were left to our own devices to explore further or adjourn to the café for well-earned tea and cake.

I hope to have the summer 2019 outings programme ready soon and am looking forward to seeing some of you over the summer, either on one of the outings or with secateurs in hand near one of “our” stone circles.

I will still be around getting under people’s feet and muttering about how things used to be so if I can help in any way with any queries don’t hesitate to contact me as always.

Regards,
Eva

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