

# A TOUCH OF GAS

The Newsletter of Glasgow Archaeological Society



Issue 87 – Spring 2021

**Glasgow Archaeological Society, c/o Tho. & J.W. Barty, Solicitors, 61 High Street, Dunblane, FK15 0EH**

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@GlasgowArchSoc

There is now a Flickr account for members to download their photographs of Society events, moderated by Natasha Ferguson - <http://www.flickr.com/groups/gasmembers/>

**Keep up to date with Society Activities on our website – [www.glasarchsoc.org.uk](http://www.glasarchsoc.org.uk)**

## Annual General Meeting 2021

Members are reminded that the AGM will take place (by Zoom) on

**Thursday 15th April 2021  
At 7:15pm (Note earlier time)**

This is your Society and your AGM gives you the opportunity to raise points that concern you or which you think will be of interest to the Society.

### AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Meeting of the AGM on Thursday 18th April 2019
3. Annual Report from the President, Dorothy Gormlie
4. Annual Report from the Treasurer, Stephen Stockdale
5. Presentation of the President's Award
5. Election of Office Bearers and Council Members

**Please note that this year the Presidential lecture will be the following week (22nd April) when**

**Retiring President Dorothy Gormlie will introduce Patrick Parsons whose lecture is entitled**

**I will stand the hazard of the die: Richard III and the Mask of Command**

For the present all lectures will be presented online via Zoom (Council will advise later in the summer what will happen from October). To attend lectures you need to download Zoom (via <https://zoom.us/download>) to your device if you have not already done so. You will be emailed a link, meeting code and password for the lecture on the day, which you can join from 7.15pm onwards. The lectures will be recorded and placed on YouTube (with links from our website) after the event. If anyone has any concerns about this process or getting set up, please also email Kenny Brophy

### The Dalrymple Lecture Fund

Jointly with Glasgow University the Society administers The Dalrymple Lecture Fund, a generous bequest by James Dalrymple to finance a series of free public Lectures on European topics of historic and archaeological interest.

The first Lecture Series was delivered in 1907, and recent speakers have included, Dr Chris Stringer, Professor Sir Barry Cunliffe, Ian Hodder, Professor Mike Parker Pearson, Professor William Hanson and Professor Roger Stalley.

The Fund also generously supports the publication of the Scottish Archaeological Journal.

### The Dalrymple/Donaldson Fund

In addition to the Dalrymple Lecture Fund, James Dalrymple left money in trust, later greatly augmented by Professor Gordon Donaldson, formerly Historiographer Royal, to provide funds to assist with the renovation and repair of buildings of historic or architectural importance.

Further details may be obtained from the Fund Secretary – Dr Anthony Lewis - [bletherer@hotmail.com](mailto:bletherer@hotmail.com).

Applications require to be submitted prior to commencement of works by 31 October in any year in which the awards are made.

### Euan Mackie (1936-2020)



As an undergraduate archaeology student at the University of Glasgow in the early 1990s, one of the highlights of my degree was hours spent in a dusty teaching space behind the Hunterian Museum, handling and discussing objects from their extensive anthropological collection under the tutelage of the tall and erudite Euan Mackie. Over the next three decades my path crossed with Euan from time to time, and on each occasion, he showed me nothing but kindness and support. His visit to my own excavations at the Cochno Stone rock-art site in 2016, sharing his memories of his dalliances with West Dunbartonshire rock-art, was humbling. It is in similar small details and memories that many GAS members will recall Euan, who served as President of the Society from 1985-88.

Euan had a wonderful career as prehistorian within and beyond the walls of the Hunterian, with my own research interests leading me to his 1970s books *The Megalith Builders and Science and Society in Prehistoric Britain*. These publications were by no means welcomed by the academic archaeological establishment at the time, with their focus on ancient astronomy and concepts such as 'megalithic missionaries'. Yet these were simply indicative of a career built on independent thought and consistency of purpose. Euan was a pioneer in many ways in Scottish archaeology, notable for his early championing of radiocarbon dates when others were more reluctant to accept the shattering implications of the resultant chronological revelations. This contrarian role was enhanced by his work in the field of archaeoastronomy – to the extent that he actually coined the word archaeoastronomy!

Euan's excavations at the standing stone and cairns at Kintraw, Argyll, in 1970, were a vital staging post in this strand of his research because they were an attempt by him to ground-truth the astronomical observations made by Alexander Thom. Thom and Mackie became close friends, with both men convinced that prehistoric people had scientific levels of sophistication and knowledge that most archaeologists would not credit them with ('wise men' as Euan called them in *Antiquity* in 1981). These excavations convinced Euan that Thom's theories had merit, but he was able to add an archaeological narrative and sensibility to the survey and astronomical detail that Thom was unable to. Even towards the end of his life, Euan stuck by his principles, his last book being published only weeks after his death: a biography of Thom. Yet as Fraser Hunter notes in his obituary of Euan, published in the current *Scottish Archaeological Journal* (volume 43), there was so much to his career. Mackie, for instance, remains an important figure in Iron Age studies, excavating and publishing extensively on the topic, notably the Iron Age of the west and the processes of vitrification.

The Sighthill stone circle was constructed in a Glasgow park in 1978 under the guidance of Duncan Lunan. The monument was dedicated to three leading archaeoastronomical figures: Archie Roy, Alexander Thom - and Euan Mackie. Recently moved to a second location within a new housing development, this stone circle is a fitting Glaswegian memorial for Euan Mackie, and I urge GAS members to visit when the circle is re-opened to the public to remember this principled, brave and innovative archaeologist.

Kenneth Brophy 26 Feb 2021

### Scottish Archaeological Journal

The latest edition of the Scottish Archaeological Journal has just been published and if any member has not received it by the end of April they should contact the President.

Members are entitled to access back issues online from the Edinburgh University Press website. This requires an exclusive **Access Token** which has changed and the previous one is no longer valid. This facility is only available to members of Glasgow Archaeological Society, and can be obtained from the Membership Secretary.

GAS members are also entitled to discounts on EUP Publications – 20% on Books and 10% on Journal Subscriptions. Again a different **Access Token** is required is available from the Membership Secretary.

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### An Orkney Tour

In these (hopefully soon to end) times when we can't get out and about to archaeological sites I thought it might be a relaxing diversion to recall some sites we can visit we are free to do so again.

A few years ago I revisited Orkney, having last been there 40 years previously. My recollections of going there in those days were mainly of the ferry journeys and of cars being lifted bodily off the dock into the depths of the ship. Thankfully these days and for many years now, it is a roll on roll off service. Of my recollections of the archaeological sites the most vivid is of Skara Brae, perhaps, I think, because we had actually been told about it in school.

On this occasion my wife and I had a week to "do" Orkney. I had given some thought as to what sites to visit, but, on the first day wandering around Kirkwall I happened to notice a sign in a shop window which advised that that day was the last that year that Maes Howe would be open. So we immediately headed off to Maes Howe only to find tickets for that day were already sold out (I was to discover that evening when,



somewhat belatedly, looking at my guidebook - The Peedie Orkney Guide Book, which I thoroughly recommend, (although it is important to read it beforehand to get the full benefit - other guide books are available)) did say when it was open and that it was essential to book tickets in advance. However, given that we had come that far we decided to at least walk across to it from the ticket office and see it from the outside and a very kind Guide took pity on me and my wife and invited us to join the tour (there are only guided tours). That was fortuitous indeed. Maes Howe, as I am sure you know, is one of the largest burial mounds in Neolithic Europe and is a site well worth visiting. The atmosphere inside, even with a crowd, is very special. Our knowledgeable guide explained the history including the fact that for a few days on either of the winter solstice the setting sun shines directly along the entrance passage (see photo) to light the main chamber in similar fashion to other Neolithic sites such as Newgrange in Ireland, which GAS visited a few years ago. However, in some ways the most

interesting aspect is the runes which were carved when Norsemen broke into the mound in the 12th century. That carving, although we would call it vandalism today, gives you that human connection which dissolved the years between their visit and mine.

Very close by and, mercifully being outdoors not requiring a ticket, are the standing stones of Stenness and the Ring of Brodgar. These are also spectacular (one quickly runs out of superlatives when visiting Orkney's many archaeological sites).



Stenness is stone circle surrounded by a ditch. Construction is thought to have started about 3,000 BC. The tallest stone (pictured) is a massive 5.7 metres. Just on the other side of the narrow strip of ground which links the two sites and divides the Loch of Harray from the Loch of Stenness is the Ring of Brodgar. Again GAS members will recall Nick Card's fascinating talk a few years ago about the ongoing work there and the remarkable discoveries by him and his team. The Ring of Brodgar is larger than the circle at Stenness with 60 stones, again inside a circular ditch. Unfortunately when we were there, being in late summer, work had already finished for the season and all we could see of the dig was tarpaulin covered in used tyres.

On another day we visited the Tomb of the Eagles on South Ronaldsay. Visiting this site has the added advantage of not only letting you cross and see the famous Churchill Barriers, which were used to secure Scapa Flow during the Second World War, but also the Italian Chapel on Lamb Holm, built by Italian prisoners of war. Unlike other sites visited so far the Tomb of the Eagles requires a bit of a walk from the visitor centre and some flexibility once you get



there. It is a chambered tomb which one accesses by means of lying down on a skateboard type arrangement and pulling on a rope to wheel yourself into the tomb (picture of author elegantly exiting the tomb). What this arrangement does, aside from providing entertainment for your spouse, is allows you, once inside and on your own, to fully experience the atmosphere of the tomb and to think about that large number of white-tailed eagles talons which were found inside it and why those might have been so special to our ancestors.

Skara Brae was the one site I had clear recollections of from my childhood and on that occasion I visited with my aunt and uncle and their family. There must have been at least seven children, plus adults, in the car in a way that would be frowned upon today. The site itself It consists of stone built houses which were in occupation from around 2,900 to 2,600 BC. "Lost" for many many years it was revealed by a violent storm in 1850. I found it as intriguing as when I saw it as a child. I think what struck me then and still strikes me is the impression one gets that the occupants have just left.



By its nature many of the archaeological sites on Orkney are fairly close at hand and there are many more that are well worth a visit including the Broch of Gurness, Saint Magnus Cathedral and for Second World War enthusiasts Scapa Flow Museum in Lyness on Hoy is excellent.

The Peedie Guide to Orkney by Charles Tait published by Tait Publishing Ltd

Alan Gifford

### Contributors wanted

We are always looking for articles for AToG, so if you have something you want to share with GAS members please send it to me. It might be an article about a favourite archaeological site, a story about a visit to somewhere or anything else you feel might be of interest. Perhaps you have a idea for a new feature, something that has not been done before. It doesn't need to be a lengthy piece and if you have photos to accompany your article, so much the better.

I look forward to hearing from you.



It is with great sadness that I report the death of GAS member Douglas Jessiman. Douglas died on 22nd October 2020 in the presence of his wife Elaine, their children Rob and Shona.

Doug chose to study law at The University of Glasgow. His career began with Brown Mair Mackintosh and he later joined Brechin Tindal Oatts where his expertise in the field of Reparation Law and Regulation of the Medical and Dental professions was recognised as being without equal. His preparation and research was second to none and his legal advice and opinions were well respected by colleagues, barristers, advocates and the doctors and dentists that he represented so well. He became a Partner and subsequently a member of the Senior Management Board and it was due to Douglas that the firm was recognised as the foremost legal firm in that specialist field. His position in the legal profession is evidenced by the many many letters and messages received by the family from clients, fellow lawyers in the field, barristers, advocates and expert witnesses. His legacy at BTO is confirmed by comments from colleagues to whom he was a valued and respected mentor and friend who was always ready to offer advice and assistance. Such was the man's modesty that you would never know of the position he held in the eyes of the profession. On a personal note, Douglas was my first choice for over 30 years to act on behalf of health care professionals and to my certain knowledge he was never anything other than the complete professional.

In his younger days Douglas played rugby and football and he kept up his interest in football by organising a five a side team. It would be safe to say that Douglas "took no prisoners" and did not hold back on tackles. Many friends from his rugby and football days attended his service remotely and he will be long remembered for his commitment and his sense of fun.

Douglas was an accomplished piper and in their early years together, he and Elaine travelled America with Douglas busking to cover expenses. His taste in music was very varied and he introduced me to the music of Hoagy Carmichael. And he was a kindred spirit in appreciating the movies of Laurel and Hardy. One never knew where you would end up when chatting with him such was his range of interests and knowledge.

Douglas and Elaine enjoyed travel but his preferred holiday place was his "but and ben" in Morar. It was there that he enjoyed many family holidays and created precious memories. Swimming, kayaking and walking with family and friends. The importance of the environment was uppermost in his thoughts and he had a keen interest in gardening and creating sanctuaries for wildlife both at home and in Morar.

Douglas's interest in history was deep and he had an encyclopaedic knowledge of Roman history and the history of Scotland. He found the time to create a collection of hand painted soldiers who garrisoned a fort made from Magnum sticks! He researched his family history and the regiments in which his grandfathers had served in First World War. To Douglas, history was real and exciting and brought to life in his imagination.

This life long interest was such that in 2018 he restricted his work hours to participate in digs. He took part in several digs at Paisley Abbey and he enthusiastically reported on finds uncovered in the Abbey drain! His enthusiasm was fostered by Murray Cook, Stirling Council archaeologist, who valued his energy, enthusiasm and good humour on digs at Bronze Age cairns and Roman Iron Age forts. Douglas became a valued and valuable member of the team and he is remembered with respect for his energy, good humour and spirit.

Above all, Douglas was a man devoted to his family who always tried to make dreams come true. A man who always tried to do his best as a husband and proud father of Shona and Rob. A legacy to fit the man that he was. Time with Douglas was time that was always well spent. A man who lived life as it should be lived.

Hugh Harvie

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to future issues should be sent to the Newsletter Editor – Alan Gifford, 33 Crawford Avenue, Lenzie, G66 5HW (0141 578 1285) [alangifford@ntlworld.com](mailto:alangifford@ntlworld.com)

Contributions are published in good faith. Views expressed by individual contributors are not necessarily those of Glasgow Archaeological Society or its Council. It is assumed that Contributors have obtained all necessary consent from other parties or Organisations to whom reference is made.

Material can be supplied by "hard copy" but email attachment is preferred (Word) to save retyping! Photographs and drawings are welcome (png or jpg format).

## GENERAL COUNCIL 2019-20

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## Data Protection Act

Members are reminded of the Society's Policy under this Act.

Members' details are held electronically in computer and are used solely for administrative purposes of the Society. Details are not provided to any outside body other than Edinburgh University Press for the purpose of distribution of the Scottish Archaeological Journal.

Any member who wishes to exercise the right to have his or her name excluded from the database should contact Margaret Gardiner, the Membership Secretary

## Electronic Communication

It is our Policy to use E-mail communication where possible reminding members of the forthcoming lecture, other events of interest and to distribute *A Touch of GAS* and inform members of events that arise between issues.

We would urge members if possible, to subscribe which can be done through the website. Council accepts that members may be either unable or unwilling to receive *E-Bulletins* (it is astonishing how quickly one's "Inbox" fills up!) and that is their right. We can assure members that they will not be disadvantaged by not subscribing inasmuch as they will continue to receive twice-yearly Newsletters.

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