

A TOUCH OF GAS


The Newsletter of Glasgow Archaeological Society




Issue 88 – Autumn 2021

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

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

Keep up to date with Society Activities on our website – www.glasarchsoc.org.uk

Lecture Programme 2021-2

21 st October	Beverley Ballin Smith , Guard Archaeology Ltd – Carnoustie excavations: Neolithic timber Halls and a Bronze Age hoard
<i>Dalrymple Lectures</i>	
8 th -11 th November	Professor Jane Downes , University of the Highlands & Islands – Archaeology and Sustainability: Island Perspectives
16 th December	Members Night – Professor Stephen Driscoll , University of Glasgow - Forteviot and Govan: a tale of two Constantines Professor Kathryn Forsyth , University of Glasgow – The archaeology of ancient and medieval Glasgow: the evidence of placenames
20 th January	Dr Alison Sheridan , National Museums Scotland – Calanais in context: new light on a ceremonial landscape in Lewis
17 th February	Professor Gordon Noble , University of Aberdeen - The Northern Pict Project
17 th March	Angela Gannon , Historic Environment Scotland, Dr Kenny Brophy , University of Glasgow & Dr Gavin McGregor , Northlight Heritage – Scotland's upland Neolithic Cursus monuments
21 st April	Professor Bill Hanson , University of Glasgow – New light on an old wall: recent work on the Antonine Wall

The October lecture will be presented online via Zoom, but the Dalrymple lectures will be in the Sir Charles Wilson building as usual. Council will advise later what will happen thereafter but we are hopeful that face to face lectures in the Boyd Orr building will resume in December (in limited numbers) and from January as normal.

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.

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

Presidential Award 2020



The President's Award is made to a member of the Society who has made an outstanding contribution to Scottish archaeology. This year's worthy recipient is Professor Emeritus Bill Hanson and retiring President Dorothy Gormlie (virtually) presented him with the Presidential Award at the AGM in April. Incoming President Kenny Brophy then gave a summary of Bill's career and his contribution to archaeology in Scotland and beyond.

As Head of the Archaeology at the University of Glasgow Bill was a passionate advocate for the archaeology department, a place where he served with distinction for 40 years between 1975 and 2015. He joined archaeology after doing an undergraduate and PhD degree at Manchester, and soon became an essential and active part of the department and the Scottish archaeology scene. He became Professor of Roman Archaeology in 2000, and served as Head of Subject for seven years.

He has also been a member of GAS and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland for almost half a century and is a well-known figure on the Scottish archaeology scene, for instance acting for a period as President of the CSA (now Archaeology Scotland). In 2014 he gave the Dalrymple Lecture series on the theme of aerial and satellite imagery in Scotland.

However, Bills' reputation and legacy stretches beyond Glasgow and Scotland, with his research into Roman frontiers, the Roman interaction with indigenous peoples, and remote sensing in archaeology of international standing and repute. He has also written over 130 academic papers and book chapters, and ten books, some of which have become definitive works. This has been accompanied by many hundreds of speaking engagements across Europe.

Bill was an active field archaeologist with a lengthy and distinguished excavation career. He was invited to excavate at Croy Hill after his work in 1974 at Corbridge. This was followed by significant excavations at other Roman sites such as Elginhaugh, Inveresk, and Ardoch.

Prof Hanson replied that he was honoured to receive the award, particularly as GAS has had a long association with Roman archaeology, and continues to produce the Antonine Wall handbook.

GAS excursions return

On Saturday 11th September some 14 members of GAS arrived at Roseneath Caravan Park. Tam Ward was there to greet us and gave us an interesting talk on the work he has been doing on the Roseneath Peninsula.

The area began as a secret operation when America was still neutral in July 1941. Civilian workers were sent from America to set up a joint Naval installation with the UK. After Pearl Harbour in December 1941 America became involved in the Second World War.

Tam has uncovered the remains of an extensive site with the concrete bases of Quonset huts. These were used as accommodation for the navy personnel and ensuring that the men had access to hot showers, canteens etc. This involved setting up water pipes, electricity, concrete bases and paths etc.

Most of us had no idea that that this installation was on our doorstep, and had played an important role in the Second World War.

Helen Maxwell



An Alternative Archaeological Reading List

The reading list was one of the first things I received as a student starting archaeology at university. It was long, with the usual mix of recent and older publications and a smattering of texts written by our own lecturers. There was also great encouragement to read more widely and this was specifically promoted when it came to writing essays on specific topics as the course went on. Fortunately for me, I enjoyed reading. Spending time browsing through bookshops for that interesting volume that might reveal something I had never thought of before came easily. Having the money to pay for them and space to put them in, not to mention time to read them were less important considerations!

In recent years I have been interested in some of the more off-the-wall areas of archaeological literature, in particular biographies and autobiographies but also those compilations of memoirs by archaeological and antiquarian travellers that speak to the archaeological way of life rather than the material discovered. The experiences of people exploring and excavating the ancient past of many cultures is fascinating and the stories they tell are important to the history of the subject. The field of the history of archaeology is well established and there are many excellent modern volumes dealing with the lives of 18th, 19th and 20th century men and women who worked in archaeology for decades and created the subject that we all love.

The modern texts can give information on archaeologists in a given area such as the Near East or widen out to cover Asia, Africa and the Americas. I recently found a copy of Brian Fagan's "From Stonehenge to Samarkand: An Anthology of Archaeological Travel Writing" (2006) in a second-hand bookshop in Wigtown. I already had a copy of his later book "The Great Archaeologists" (2014) and am looking forward to enjoying the new text. I have often found though, that some of the most interesting are those first-hand accounts by individuals involved in archaeological work who are not professional archaeologists. These give a particularly fascinating slant on field work!

Agatha Christie once quipped that she married an archaeologist (Sir Max Mallowan) because the older she was the more interested in her he became. She wrote a lovely memoir "Come Tell Me How You live" which describes working on excavations in Syria and Iraq in the 1930s. First published in 1946, it was re-published in 1999 by Harper Collins. It tells what life was like for those working on excavations in that area at that time, from a very different perspective to that of the trained archaeologist. One section in the introduction will appeal to many who are partnered with archaeologists:

"One thing that can safely be said about an archaeological packing. It consists mainly of books. What books to take, what books can be taken, what books there are room for, what books can (with agony!) be left behind. I am firmly convinced that all archaeologists pack in the following manner: They decide on the maximum number of suitcases that a long suffering Wagon Lit Company will permit them to take, They then fill these suitcases to the brim with books. They then, reluctantly, take out a few books and fill in the space thus obtained with shirt, pyjamas, socks etc."

It is not only the spouses of archaeologists who have written memoirs, the other staff – secretaries and trainee diggers – have also told the tales of their experiences on excavations. Mary Chubb, originally a secretary with an Institute that promoted excavations in the Middle East wrote two volumes which describe life on the excavations she attended: “Nefertiti Lived Here” and “City In the Sand”. They give excellent descriptions of the way archaeological work was carried out in Persia and Egypt in the 1950s. Another secretary turned digger was Sylvia Matheson whose book “Time off to Dig” about excavating in Afghanistan is especially fascinating as she describes a country and a people flourishing and at peace. She also writes repeatedly about the beauty of the young men who worked on the dig. That woman played a significant role in early archaeology is surely in no doubt when you read books such as the striking autobiography by the centenarian Margaret Murray who dug with Flinders Petrie in Egypt. She called the book “My First Hundred Years” and it leaves you longing for more.

Browsing through a bookshop in Hay-on-Wye recently I came across an archaeological book by another writer known mostly for crime fiction, Erle Stanley Gardner – author of the Perry Mason series. For the princely sum of £5.00 I bought a fascinating story of a trip Gardner made into the heart of Baja, California which discovered caves decorated with pictographs by the earliest local peoples. Largely illustrated by his own photographs, this is a brilliant book which is a must read for those interested in cave art.

In another volume about North America, the archaeologist Jacquetta Hawkes and her husband J B Priestly take a trip through Texas and New Mexico. Hawkes writes chapters about the ancient peoples of these areas and Priestly writes about the modern America and the result is an absolutely fascinating picture of a world lost and a new world rising. “Journey Down a Rainbow” was published in 1955 by Heinemann.

Archaeologists do not always write dry, academic tomes. Those who worked in the middle of the 20th Century had two world wars and incredible technical changes to deal with. Mortimer Wheeler’s “Still Digging” is a brilliant evocation of the difficulties faced and overcome by archaeologists at this time. Leonard Woolley wrote a beautiful little book, “As I seem to Remember” about many of the more entertaining adventures and mishaps he had had to deal with in his career. Posthumously published in 1962 it is illustrated with cartoons and the stories range from identifying fake antiques whilst waiting for a train with T E Lawrence in Baghdad (the kangaroo on the carving gave it away!) to giving talks in large halls to small children.

I am looking forward to reading my latest acquisition – Mortimer Wheeler’s “Alms for Oblivion – An Antiquary’s Scrapbook”. It is a collection of his essays and with titles like “The virtue of intolerance”; “Archaeology and the transmission of ideas” and “Adventure and Flinders Petrie” I am sure to be in for a fascinating read.

The challenge is to find these gems! The antiquarian and second-hand bookshops are waiting for you to come and browse. I am sure you won’t be disappointed.

Jim Mearns

Membership Renewals – Subscriptions are now due and early renewal helps the Society. Please return your Renewal Form to Margaret Gardiner from whom Gift Aid Forms are also available.

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 an 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.

Alan Gifford – Newsletter Editor

Duncarnock & Meikle Reive

As restrictions eased earlier this year I was able to continue my quest to visit all the sites listed in “Archaeology Around Glasgow” by Sue Hothersall and, as members will be aware, published by Culture & Sport Glasgow (Museums) & G.A.S.

On separate days I visited Duncarnock Fort and Meikle Reive to the south and north of Glasgow respectively. Both sites are of course handy for Glasgow and aside from their archaeological interest offer great views, from different perspectives, over the city.

The first, Duncarnock fort (below), is just to the south of Barrhead. Canmore state it's date as “unassigned” but in the late 1950's a piece of pre-Roman native pottery and a fragment of worked shale were found near the north east corner of the fort.



It is easily accessed from the quiet roads nearby or if you fancy a longer walk, from the Balgray reservoir. It is signposted from the small loch below and I simply followed a track, albeit fairly steep in the latter stages, to the summit. The remains of features on the top can still be distinguished fairly readily and the climb and vertical sides demonstrate its defensive capabilities. There are great views in all directions, which were

surely of importance from a defensive standpoint but also to allow sight of other similar locations used in prehistory such as Tinto Hill.

When you are in the area it is an ideal opportunity to see the Athurlie Cross, an ancient stone (of the 'Govan school'), Set in the, slightly incongruous, surroundings of a modern housing estate it is still worth a look.



On north side of the city and also in an elevated position is The Meikle Reive (left) on the lower slopes of the Campsie Fells above Lennoxton. Canmore states that it dates to the Iron Age. There is good road access initially but you then need to cross some boggy ground. The various banks are quite evident and it has commanding views to the south. Apparently Tinto Hill can also be seen from here.

If you are lucky (and I didn't find it!) you will also be able to see, on your way up or down, the remains of Maiden castle, a medieval motte & bailey.

Scottish Archaeological Journal

The next Issue of SAJ (44) is being prepared and will be published next spring.

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

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).

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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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