

A TOUCH OF GAS

The Newsletter of Glasgow Archaeological Society



Issue 91 – Spring 2023

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

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Glasgow-Archaeological-Society/106126069499502> click "like" to receive Society updates

@GlasgowArchSoc

We have 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

Annual General Meeting 2023

Members are reminded that the AGM will take place on

**Thursday 20th April 2023
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 AGM on Thursday 21st April 2022
3. Annual Report from the President, Kenny Brophy
4. Annual Report from the Treasurer, Stephen Stockdale
5. Election of Office Bearers and Council Members
6. A.O.C.B.

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.

Glasgow Green Walk



GAS members attended a Walk and Talk on 22nd October 2022 led by Jim Means.

The group met at Glasgow Cross on a dull dry morning, but Jim brightened the day by giving an informative talk on this ancient area of Glasgow, illustrating changes in the district with photographs. We walked from the High Street to the Church in St Andrew Square (a past project by Glasgow Building Preservation Trust who spoke at GAS recently), with tales of the balloonist Lunardi, in 1785, entertaining huge crowds with his exploits. Then on to modern architecture and a mention of the Whistling Kirk overlooking Glasgow Green. We also paid a visit to the Humane Society, a welcome break from the rain, then on to the Green itself. We ended at the People's Palace where we saw a Punch

Bowl which had been donated by the first President of GAS. We finished at approximately 12 noon with a hearty thanks to Jim.
Helen Maxwell Picture (GBPT)

City Chambers Visit



Our latest Winter Excursion took place on Wednesday, 15th February at the City Chambers. We took advantage of the City Council providing a free escorted tour of the building for up to 25 people. Our guide, Jim, was very knowledgeable and informative. He told us that the whole building and furnishings cost £578,232 in 1888!! The whole project was finished on time and within the budget!! We were most impressed. We covered three floors of imposing Victorian architecture and decoration. Marble staircases, mosaic ceilings, mahogany, satinwood and walnut panelling are all very grand. Huge murals on the walls depict the history and industries of the city. At the end of the tour our guide was given a vote of thanks, and we all found the nearest coffee shop. Many thanks to everyone who came.
Helen Maxwell

Pics Helen Maxwell & Margaret Gardiner



Frontier Walks

There are a number of well known long distance footpaths that folk consider tackling for their holidays. There are those that follow natural features (Coastal paths, West Highland Way etc) and those that link particular sites of interest (e.g. medieval pilgrimage routes) but there are a few that take the walkers along and through borderlands.



Over the past decade Geoff Bailey and I have walked the routes of two Roman and one Mercian frontier.

We started with the Antonine Wall (left), naturally enough, as it is possible to complete stretches of it and get home at night! Also, being only around 40 miles long (depending on your route and necessary diversions) it can be completed reasonably quickly. Unfortunately it is the least well plotted and supported route, many segments are not signposted and others run through difficult, often muddy, terrain with no clear route or path to follow. Much of it also lies along roads busy

with traffic. Despite this, it is well worth the effort and aside from our own Antonine Wall Handbook there have been a few authors who have recently published descriptions of their walks along the Wall – Cameron Black's "The Antonine Trail" (2014) and most recently Alan Montgomery's "Walking the Antonine Wall" (2022). For some historical comparisons it is interesting to read a copy of George Waldie's 1883 book "Walks along the Northern Roman Wall".

Later we tackled the c75 miles of Hadrian's Wall (right). We basically broke this into a couple of segments, basing ourselves just outside Carlisle for the western end then travelling from Sunderland to cover the eastern end. This is a much more travelled path running from Bowness on Solway in the west to Walls End in the east. There is a clearly marked route with a well maintained path and plenty of information along the way. There are various guidebooks, but for the archaeologist the must use is the latest version of the J Collingwood Bruce's Handbook to the Roman Wall (14th Edition, 2006, edited by David Breeze). The walk also contains some magnificent views, north and south and you rarely finish a day without meeting people travelling in the opposite direction with stories of why they chose to tackle the walk. One important fact to note for those following the Official Hadrian's Wall Path – it misses out much of the visible remains from Benwell Fort into Newcastle as it travels along the River Tyne instead of following the Wall through the busy city centre. For this segment, it is better to simply use a map and see the remains.



Most recently we completed the 177 mile Offa's Dyke Path (right). We chose to travel from the Severn in the South to Prestatyn in the north on the grounds that with each trip we had less distance to travel to our start point! This is a wonderful walk, well signposted and maintained that covers a huge range of archaeological landscapes, building and features. The path does follow much of Offa's Dyke but it is really a borderland walk along dipping into and out of Wales and England as you travel northwards. The scenery in places is magnificent and the options for side visits is fully given in the must have Offa's Dyke Path Official National Trail Guide. This guide gives detailed OS maps for each section to be covered on 12 suggested daily walks of varying lengths of between 10 and 18 miles.



As with all travel plans, the best outcome is achieved through careful advance planning and research. We chose to use cars driving out each day to our final destination, returning in one car to our start point and walking back to the endpoint. Some segments can be completed by cycling but much of the terrain is too difficult for that, being designed for walkers but there are those brave souls who choose to camp along the routes attempting to complete entire frontiers in a single trip. Have some fun, pick the walk you would like to complete and read the guidebooks, then plan and complete a walk. Even if you only do a few sections, you will find it a fun and interesting challenge!

Jim Mearns

Scottish Archaeological Journal

The latest edition of the Scottish Archaeological Journal, Volume 45, has now completed and will be issued to members in early March. Papers and reviewers for future editions are always welcome.

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.

The International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies 2022

The 25th Congress (also known as the Limes Congress) was held in Nijmegen, Netherlands, from 21 to 27 August 2022 under the chairmanship of Dr Harry van Enckevort. This was 73 years after the first Congress, which was held in Newcastle in 1949 and sponsored by this Society; that was attended by about 40 people. The Congress has grown hugely in the intervening years with over 400 archaeologists and ancient historians from 34 countries at Nijmegen, the largest gathering to date. This resulted in six concurrent sessions of lectures interspersed with a day excursion across the border into Germany to Xanten and Vetera with its recently discovered temporary camps. A second excursion remained in the Netherlands, visiting Castellum Hoge Woerd (with its replica fort, museum and exhibition including a Roman barge), and Zwammerdam/Nigrum Pullum, both exemplars of the display of Roman remains designed in a manner to benefit the local communities. That day finished with a visit to the Archeon archaeological park where Congress delegates witnessed officials of the municipality of Alphen aan den Rijn signing a charter supporting the creation of a national Roman ship museum, an exciting future development. The highlight of this visit

was undoubtedly the opportunity to see some of the enormous Roman barges found in the Rhine estuary in the last 50 years under the expert guidance of our Dutch and German colleagues. Congress delegates were also treated to a tour of the superb exhibitions in the Valkhof Museum in Nijmegen, and many went to visit the new huge 'Face of Nijmegen' Roman head sculpture on an island in the River Waal facing the Roman fortress; this was based on a Roman cavalry face mask found over a century ago in Nijmegen. David Breeze was presented with a replica of this as a lifetime achievement award by the organisers of the Nijmegen Congress.

This being the 25th meeting, a special souvenir book was published, *A History of the Congress of Roman Frontier Studies 1949-2022*. Also at the Congress, five books in the multi-language Frontiers of the Roman Empire Series were launched, *The Eastern Frontier*; *The Saxon Shore and Maritime Coast*; *Wales*; *The Upper Germanic Limes*; and *Dacia*. Over 5,000 books were distributed free of charge to the participants, most owing to the generosity of Richard Beleson FSA and the Municipality of Nijmegen. All these books are now published by Archaeopress and available Open Access online, with more planned to be launched at the next Congress at Georgia in 2024.



Archaeopress are offering a discount on these books:

Order ***A History of the Congress of Roman Frontier Studies 1949-2022*** or any volume in the ***Frontiers of the Roman Empire*** series direct from Archaeopress and save 20% with free postage and packaging. Order online at www.archaeopress.com, entering the voucher code below before checkout.

Voucher code (case-sensitive): LIMES-History-20 Code expires: 30th April 2023

David J. Breeze and Rebecca H. Jones

A book launch in Amman

On 28 September, a unique event took place in the Dutch embassy in Amman, the launch of the two versions of Frontiers of the Roman Empire: The Eastern Frontiers. One version is in English and French, the other is in Arabic. These are the latest books in the multi-language series on the Frontiers of the Roman Empire edited by David Breeze and published by Archaeopress. The launch took place in Amman as the Foreword to the two books was written by His Royal Highness Prince Hassan bin Talal, Hon FRSE, and a staunch supporter of the archaeology of Jordan, in the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath and many local archaeologists and guests. Copies of the books were presented to His Royal Highness. The event took place in the Dutch embassy through the kindness of the ambassador Harry Verweij as the author of the section on Jordan was written by Mark Driessen of the University of Leiden. The event was covered by Jordanian television and also by the Jordanian Times.



David Breeze

Picture (HRH Prince Hassan signs books with, left to right, authors Fawzi Abudanah, David Breeze and Mark Driessen)

Church Recording Project

Scotland's historic church buildings are currently experiencing a period of upheaval last seen on this scale in the 19th century. Hundreds of sites, many of which have been places of sacred ceremony, community fellowship and spiritual

refuge for centuries, are set to close their doors to the public.

In most cases, the exterior solid fabric of these well-known local landmarks will be saved, as the buildings are reused for other purposes, but the artefacts inside will mostly be removed elsewhere and scattered to the four winds.

Scotland's Churches Trust is working with Historic Environment Scotland on a pilot project to try to enlist and empower local volunteers across the country to make a record of as much of this unique, multi-generational, cultural heritage as possible, before it is lost forever.

By its very nature this is effectively an emergency recording exercise. Depending on the church size and the number of available volunteers, we would hope to complete the survey of each church in as little as a single morning or afternoon.

As well as offering training and advice, we have also created an online church recording form into which volunteers can add a description of each item and up to five photographs straight from their smartphone or tablet. The results of these recording sessions will eventually be made publicly available on the CANMORE website.

The Church of Scotland Presbytery Planning process officially closed on the 31st December, when all local plans for the future of their buildings had to be submitted to their internal governance committees. Consequently, the full extent of the next wave of closures will become much clearer in early 2023. So, early in the 2023 we will host a group discussion on Zoom to lay out our plans before offering some online training for those that can't make it along in person to the next churches our existing small band of volunteers identify for recording.

We hope to grow a national database of potential volunteers that we might be able to call upon to visit their local closing churches. So we would be hugely grateful if you could share this with your members and ask them to get in touch with us if they would like to get involved with this important project.

If have any further questions or suggestions, please also do get in touch at director@scotlandschurchestrust.org.uk



Lochhill and Slewcairn: completing two important projects by the late Lionel Masters

The late and greatly missed Lionel Masters (August 1942–April 2019) was a weel-kent figure in the Glasgow Archaeological Society from the 1960s until the Noughties, and was its President from 1994 to 1997. As his obituary in the *Scottish Archaeological Journal* makes clear (Marshall and Leslie 2020), Lionel made a significant contribution to Scottish archaeology, not only through his excavations in Dumfries and Galloway and in Caithness, but also through his tireless work in adult education in the now-defunct Department of Extra-Mural and Adult Education at the University of Glasgow. This work included his establishment of a three-year Certificate Course in Field Archaeology – something that gave rise, in 1987, to the hugely successful Association of Certificated Field Archaeologists (ACFA), established by his students as a way of using the skills he had imparted to them to support both community-based and academic/commercial archaeology.

Having moved to Dumfries in 1966, Lionel undertook the excavation of two very important Early Neolithic funerary monuments – long cairns built over burnt-down rectangular timber mortuary structures – at Lochhill (1969–71) and Slewcairn (1973–81) in the former Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. He was especially interested in prehistoric cairns, and felt that these two sites would give his students and volunteers good experience in surveying, excavating and recording. The Lochhill monument had only been discovered the previous year, when the low hill on which it was located was brought under cultivation (Williams 1968; Henshall 1972, 159, 457).

The excavations were undertaken on a shoestring, with funding obtained from Glasgow University, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society and from Dumfriesshire Extra-Mural students. Additional funding for the first year of the Slewcairn excavation – which that year was co-directed by Ian Kinnes – was obtained from New England College in Sussex where he was then a lecturer, with American students from that College joining the more local dig team.

The excavations were carried out meticulously, with due attention to detail and with hundreds of photographs being taken, and both sites were completely excavated. Annual updates were published in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (in 1969 and 1970 for Lochhill, and 1973–80 for Slewcairn), and a summary report on the results of the Lochhill excavation, including a radiocarbon date, was published in the journal *Antiquity* in 1973 (Masters 1973) and in *Current Archaeology* in 1972 (Masters 1972). An unpublished typescript interim report on the Slewcairn excavation was produced in 1977 (Masters 1977). However, no final report was produced for either of the monuments, and while some initial post-excavation specialist reporting was undertaken, there were no funds to complete the necessary work or to publish the definitive reports, and so the archive remained in Lionel's house in Doune until after his death. The current author promised Lionel's wife Margaret that she would get the work done to bring both sites to full publication, and with assistance from Ian Marshall of ACFA and generous financial help from Glasgow Archaeological Society, the Prehistoric Society and Forestry and Land Scotland (per Matt Ritchie), that work has been underway since 2020, with a view to publication in 2024. Osteologist Angela Boyle, lithic specialist Torben Ballin and plant remains specialist Susan Ramsey have joined the author in studying the finds from the two monuments, and a suite of eight radiocarbon dates have been obtained so far. The results are exciting and they underline the importance of these monuments in advancing our understanding of the evolution of Clyde Cairns in south-west Scotland from their non-megalithic 'forbears'.

Lochhill

The long cairn at Lochhill, New Abbey (NGR NX 9688 6507, Canmore ID 65428) was located on the northern slope of a low hill, some 9 km south of Dumfries and around 3 km from the Nith Estuary, at an altitude of 48 m (Fig. 1). It is overlooked by Criffel, the highest hill in the area.

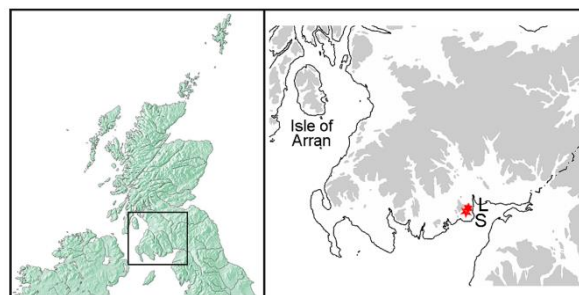


Fig. 1 Location of Lochhill (L) and Slewcairn (S)

Before excavation the monument appeared as a low, oval grass-covered cairn, 25 m long, 14 m in maximum width and 1.7 m high, with its broad end towards the north east, with a few stones poking through the vegetation. Excavation rapidly established that it was a trapezoidal cairn with a shallow megalithic façade made from overlapping granite slabs with some drystone walling above the slabs. From the centre of this façade a small slab-built 'chamber' extended into the cairn (Fig. 2). The cairn, which had clearly been subject to robbing, was edged by a revetment of granite boulders and blocks, and the forecourt had been deliberately and carefully blocked with split and rounded boulders, among which were found three white quartzite stones.



*Fig. 2 The Lochhill monument at an early stage of the excavation. The forecourt blocking material has been removed.
Photo: Lionel Masters*

Further excavation revealed that the cairn, façade and (probably at least part of) the stone 'chamber' had been added to an earlier funerary monument that had started its life as a free-standing, open-sided rectangular timber mortuary

chamber, 7.5 m long and with an average width of 1.4 m, set within a rectangular hollow that had been excavated through the ground surface to a depth of 12 cm and fronted by a shallowly curving façade made from 16 upright timber posts (Fig. 3). The four posts at the centre of the façade had been set into a trench, and in the upcast from this trench were found two pairs of the side stones of the stone ‘chamber’, suggesting that they may have been erected at this stage, extending from the centre of the timber façade in line with the mortuary structure to form a porch-like feature.

Each end of the mortuary chamber had consisted of a massive, split oak trunk around 90 cm in diameter, erected with the flat surface facing inwards, and set in a hole 75 cm deep – which suggests an original height above the top of the post hole of around 2.25 m. Mid-way between these D-shaped posts had stood a pair of smaller, round posts with diameters of 30 cm and 25 cm, set within an oval pit 75 cm deep, and traces of transverse oak planking (which Lionel interpreted as a floor) were found in one half of the structure. It is believed that the central posts had supported a platform upon which a human body – or part thereof – had been placed, and the abundant presence of birch bark in the chamber area indicates that the chamber had been covered with some kind of flat roofing (though not a pitched roof, as Paul Ashbee had proposed for similar structures found in southern England).

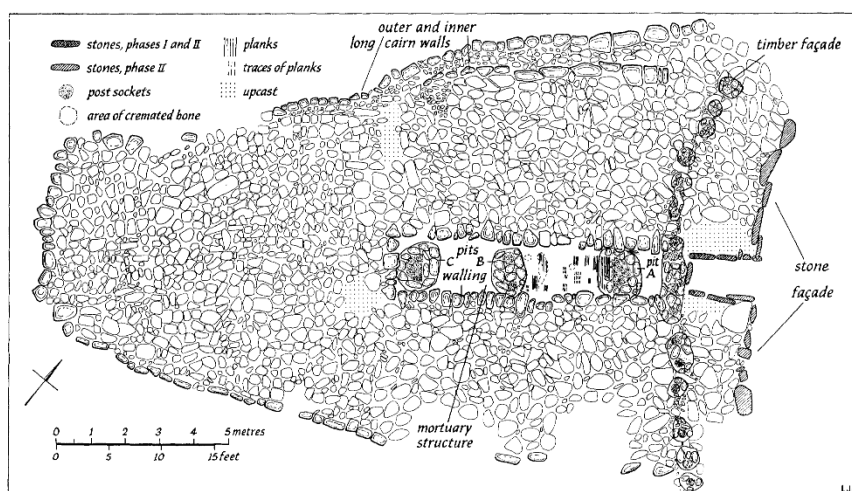


Fig. 3 Composite plan of the Lochhill monument in its final, pre-blockage form, by Lionel Masters. Note that the cairn stones covering the remains of the timber mortuary structure and façade are omitted

Having stood for a while, it appears that the mortuary chamber and the timber façade were deliberately burnt down, and small boulders were thrown into the area where the chamber had stood while the embers were still hot. A low stone wall was constructed in the footprint of the former chamber, covering the outer edges of the three axial post holes, and at the same time a trapezoidal cairn was added, with its stone forecourt situated slightly beyond where the timber façade had stood. The stone ‘chamber’ was probably extended, and a back slab inserted, at this stage (Fig. 4). That cairn effectively sealed the site of the mortuary chamber and its façade. At the north-west corner of the cairn, an apparent extension of the cairn outwards, with an outer line of revetment, was initially thought to relate to a later phase of activity but Lionel later dropped this hypothesis in favour of the idea that the cairn design was amended during its initial construction.



Fig. 4 Excavation of the stone ‘chamber’, 1970. Photo: Lionel Masters

That was not the end, as far as structural modifications are concerned. There is evidence for localised cairn collapse, and the addition of buttressing material, but how soon this occurred after the cairn was completed is unknown. The

blocking up of the stone forecourt façade is likely to have taken place during the Chalcolithic or Early Bronze Age, when a Beaker pot was deposited on top of the cairn. In the more recent past the cairn and the forecourt blocking material were robbed, and a pit was dug at the rear of the stone ‘chamber’, perhaps in search of treasure. What the pit-digger unearthed, however, were over 180 sherds of Early Neolithic pottery of the Carinated Bowl tradition, representing eight or nine carinated and uncarinated vessels that may well have been deposited with offerings to the dead while the timber mortuary structure was in use (Fig. 5). Sadly, those sherds are the only element of the finds assemblage that cannot now be located, but their identification as early, ‘traditional Carinated Bowl’ pottery is clear from Lionel’s photographs and excavation notes.



Fig. 5 Rimsherds of early Carinated Bowl pottery. Photo: Lionel Masters

The only human remains to be discovered at Lochhill were small fragments of calcined bone, in poor condition, found within the area of the mortuary chamber. Lionel’s suspicion that the bones all belong to one individual has been confirmed by Angela Boyle, who has examined the *c* 223 g of bone fragments recently; they form part of the body of an adult male, with parts of the skull, of arm long bones, and a kneecap present. How these incomplete cremated body parts came to be in the mortuary structure is a matter for debate: Lionel argued that they were placed as a token deposit, after the structure burnt down, but it is arguably equally or more likely that they had been present in the mortuary structure, as disarticulated body parts, and became cremated as it was burnt down. This raises intriguing questions about funerary practices, discussed further below; what is striking is that just a single individual (and incomplete at that) was being memorialised in the monument. Perhaps that person was portrayed, for future generations, as a founding member of the community.

Apart from the Early Neolithic pottery, other artefactual finds were not abundant at Lochhill. Just twelve lithic artefacts were found – eleven of flint and one of chert (along with an unworked fragment of chert). Of these, only one is likely to relate to the initial use of the monument: a fragment of a heavily burnt scale-flaked knife of Early Neolithic type, which may have been in the mortuary structure as it burnt down. (The precise co-ordinates are not noted on the find label.) Torben Ballin’s report states that the other lithic finds comprise four pieces of debitage, two cores, two scrapers, a used denticulated tool, a fragment possibly from a second knife (not polished as had been claimed in *DES 1969*) and a flake with an indentation. One flint core, found in a pit at the top of the cairn, is of a Late Mesolithic type and may have been incorporated within the cairn material by accident. The chert flake is of local chert, and while most of the flint could conceivably have been obtained from the coast, two of the tools (the denticulated and indented items) are of black flint and may have been imported from a considerable distance to the south-east during the Late Neolithic; one was found on top of the cairn, the other in topsoil.

The fairly small Beaker found at the top of the cairn, decorated with zones of comb-impressed geometric motifs including criss-cross bands and nested chevrons, is of a type (short-necked, Clarke’s ‘N2’ or ‘N3’ type) likely to date to between 2300 BC and 2000 BC. No bones were found with it and it is unclear whether it was related to any funerary activity.

Activity at a much later date, but of unknown nature – a casual loss? A good-luck deposit? – is attested by a fragment of an Anglo-Saxon silver coin (Fig. 6). Identified by Lloyd Laing in 1970, this is a cut AR halfpenny of Eadgar, AD 959–975, made by the moneyer Durand (Laing 1973, 49). Other Anglian/Anglo-Saxon material in south-west Scotland was discussed by Laing (*ibid.*), and of course the famous Galloway Hoard, deposited around AD 900, includes Anglo-Saxon artefacts (Goldberg and Davis 2021).



Fig. 6 Obverse and reverse of the cut Anglo-Saxon halfpenny of Eadgar. Photo: Alison Sheridan

Forestry and Land Scotland have, for the current project, funded three AMS radiocarbon dates relating to the mortuary chamber – one from calcined human bone (SUERC-107450), one from birch bark (SUERC-107452) and one from the outer rings of an oak plank (SUERC-107451). The results are strikingly consistent (Fig. 7) and place this phase of the monument at 3706–3527 *cal BC* (95.4%; Bayesian modelling by Rick Schulting). These dates provide a far more accurate and precise estimate of the date of the mortuary structure than the conventional ^{14}C date that Lionel obtained in 1970 or '71 from a piece of planking (I-6409R, 5070 \pm 105 BP, 4216–3641 *cal BC*).

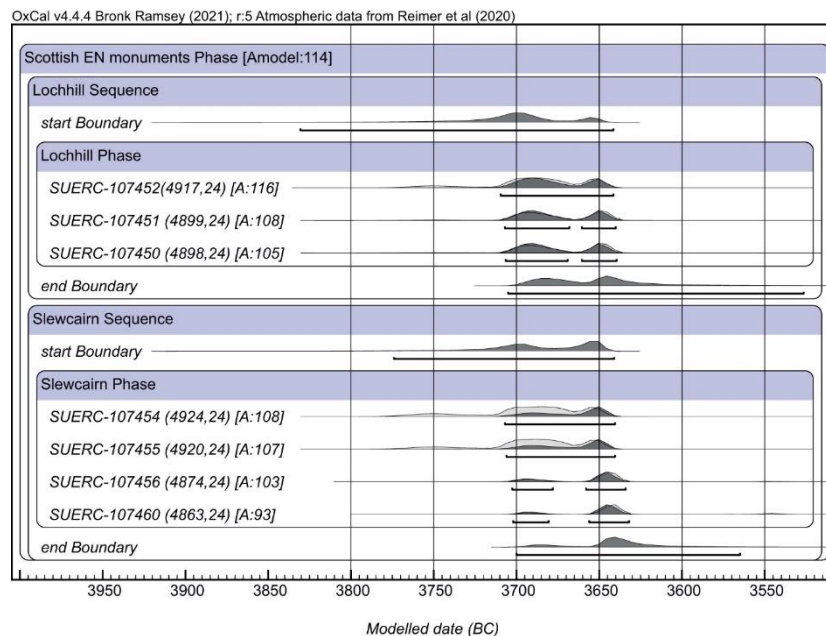


Fig. 7 Bayesian model, by Rick Schulting, of the newly-obtained radiocarbon dates for Lochhill and Slewcairn commissioned by Forestry and Land Scotland

Slewcairn

Located just 5.79 km south-west of Lochhill, and situated on the slope of Meikle Hard Hill, the long cairn at Slewcairn (NGR NX 9239 6142, Canmore ID 65491) offers many similarities with its neighbour (Figs 8,9). It, too, is a trapezoidal long cairn (c. 25 x max. 15 m) with a megalithic façade that covered the remains of a burnt-down timber mortuary structure, and its forecourt was deliberately blocked, almost certainly at a time when Beaker pottery (of All-Over-Cord type) was in use. It differs from Lochhill in having had a paved area behind the roughly N–S-orientated mortuary structure; in containing the cremated remains of seven individuals; in producing a larger artefactual assemblage; and in experiencing a more complex history of modification. Moreover, no trace of any timber façade was found, although any such traces may have been destroyed when the cairn was constructed.



Fig. 8 Slewcairn in 1974, showing the façade. Photo: Lionel Masters

The history of the monument includes the insertion of a 'passage' leading to a 'chamber', constructed by hollowing out part of the cairn (Fig. 9); the deposition of All-Over-Cord (AOC) decorated Beaker pottery in the forecourt prior to (or around the time of) its blocking; and the deposition of a coarse pot, possibly associated with a tiny amount of cremated bone, in a pit beside the cairn; this last act may well have occurred during the Early Bronze Age. Later still, the cairn was robbed, and in the relatively recent past, lambing pens were constructed using its stones.

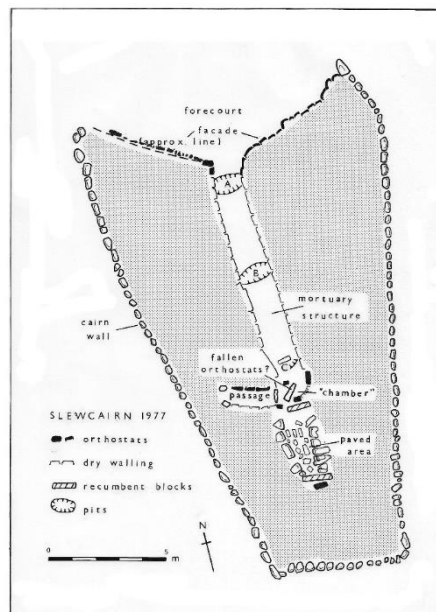


Fig. 9 Plan of Slewcairn in 1977, by Lionel Masters

As at Lochhill, the mortuary structure (8 x 1.0–1.1 m) was constructed from a split oak trunk, with a central posthole between the two halves. When it was burnt down, stones were thrown into the rectangular area while the embers were still hot, and then the footprint of the chamber was marked by a low stone wall, constructed when the cairn was built (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10 View along the walling constructed on the footprint of the timber mortuary structure, 1976. Photo: Lionel Masters

The paved area behind the mortuary structure was delimited on the N and S by two standing stones. The only finds in this area were sherds of Early Neolithic 'traditional Carinated Bowl' pottery – the same kind of pottery found in the forecourt area.

The pattern of finds is distinctive. A much larger and better-preserved assemblage of calcined human bone was found than in Lochhill, virtually all of it in the area of the mortuary chamber (Fig. 11). Angela Boyle's painstaking work has established that the partial remains of seven individuals are present: at least three male and two female adults, and two sub-adults whose sex cannot be determined. The bones show signs of having been cremated with the flesh still on, and here, as at Lochhill, this raises the fascinating question of what happened to the bodies. The working hypothesis being formed now is that complete bodies may have been laid out on the paving, to allow partial decomposition, then parts were transferred to the mortuary chamber, being cremated when the chamber was burnt down. Alternatively, complete bodies may have been placed in the chamber, then parts were removed; there is much of the 'choreography of death' still to be worked out.

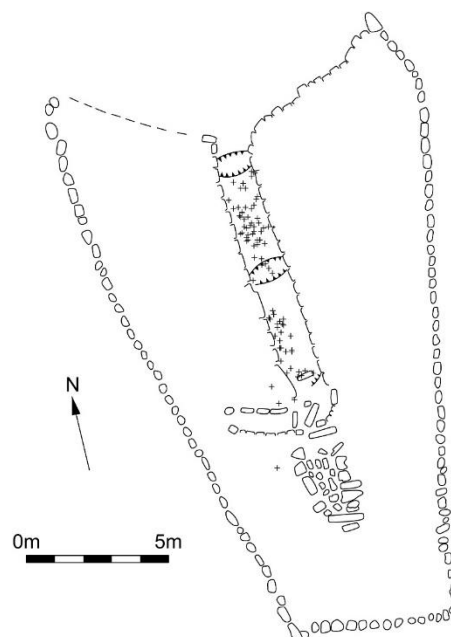


Fig. 11. Distribution of calcined bone. (Note: the small amount from a probably EBA pit outside the cairn is not shown). Plotted from Lionel Masters' data by Alison and Linda Sheridan

The pottery comprises over 360 sherds of Early Neolithic pottery of traditional Carinated Bowl type, found not only on the paved area (>60 sherds) but also in an old land surface in the forecourt (nearest to, and in line with the mortuary chamber: >300 sherds) and under the cairn; among the forecourt blocking material; in the 'porch' area; and among the

stones of the cairn. Three tiny sherds of AOC Beaker were found in the forecourt, and the sherds of a thick-walled, coarse, decorated pot was found in the pit just outside the W edge of the cairn (not shown in Fig. 10, as found post-1977).

The lithic assemblage includes artefacts of imported Antrim flint (Fig. 12) and of imported pitchstone (Fig. 13), a volcanic glass like obsidian, from the Isle of Arran. Torben Ballin has identified both unburnt and burnt artefacts of both materials, and once again the distribution pattern is interesting (Fig. 14): the pitchstone artefacts are all from the buried soil, mostly in the forecourt, for example. The only lithic finds in the mortuary chamber area were two flint knives and a leaf-shaped arrowhead, all burnt.



Fig. 12 Examples of flint artefacts from Slewcairn. The two on the left, if not all four, are of high quality Antrim flint. From left: burnt scale-flaked knife; burnt end scraper; end scraper-cum-knife, unburnt; scale-flaked/serrated knife, unburnt. Photo: Beverley Ballin Smith



Fig. 13 Examples of unburnt (top) and burnt (bottom) pitchstone from Slewcairn. Photo: Alison Sheridan

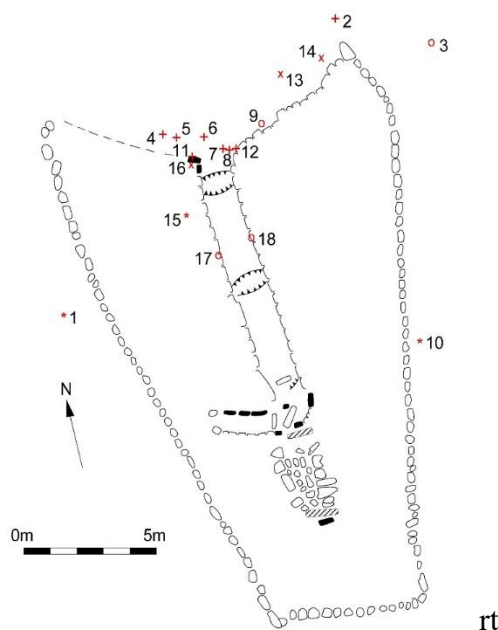


Fig. 14 Distribution of pitchstone, by Torben Ballin

A suite of five radiocarbon dates, funded by Forestry and Land Scotland, have revealed that the 'mortuary chamber' phase of activity – dated by samples of burnt birch bark (SUERC-107455), calcined human bone (SUERC-107456 and -107460) and oak charcoal (SUERC-107454) – dates to 3701–3566 cal BC (95.4% probability), making this potentially contemporary with its counterpart at Lochhill. A further date, of 3332–3015 cal BC (SUERC-107453, 4450±24 BP), from burnt hazelnut shell found under the façade, could be contemporary with the addition of the 'passage' and 'chamber', but this is impossible to prove.

Conclusions

Work on the finds continues, with more details of the overall narrative needing to be added, and the project is on target for full publication in late 2023 or early 2024. Different interpretations from those adopted by Lionel are being considered, and plans are afoot to undertake isotope analysis of the calcined bones to see whether the dead had been brought up locally. Glasgow Archaeological Society, like the other funders, is thanked for its generous support of the project. Watch this space!

References

Goldberg, M. and Davis, M. 2021 *The Galloway Hoard: Viking-age treasure*. Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland (NMSE Publishing)

Henshall, A.S. 1972 *The Chambered Tombs of Scotland. Volume 2*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Laing, L. 1973 The Angles in Scotland and the Mote of Mark. *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society* 50, 37–52

Marshall, I. and Leslie, A. 2020 Lionel James Masters (August 1942–April 2019). *Scottish Archaeological Journal* 42, 140–42

Masters, L.J. 1972 Lochhill. *Current Archaeology* 3, 297–99

Masters, L.J. 1973 The Lochhill long cairn. *Antiquity* 47, 96–100

Masters, L.J. 1977 Excavations at Slewcairn, Boreland of Southwick, Kirkcudbrightshire: an interim report. Unpublished report

Williams, J. 1968 Lochhill, New Abbey. *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* 1968, 25

Alison Sheridan

Forthcoming Excursion



As mentioned in the last edition of A Touch of Gas, Provan Hall in Easterhouse is about to reopen to the public following a £2.5M restoration and when it does our excursions sub-committee will be organising a visit by GAS.

Members will be sent details of the visit once a date has been finalised.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to future issues should be sent to the Newsletter Editor – Alan Gifford, 33 Crawford Avenue, Lenzie, G66 5HW (0141 578 1285) gifford1469@gmail.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 2021-22

President	Kenny Brophy Kenny.Brophy@glasgow.ac.uk
Vice-President and Lecture Secretary	Natasha Ferguson
Treasurer	Stephen Stockdale
Minutes Secretary	Dr. Janet MacDonald
Journal Editor	Jim Mearns
Journal Editorial Board	Professor Stephen Driscoll, Dr. Kenneth Brophy, Dr. Phil Freeman, Dr. Sally Foster, Professor Niall Sharples, Professor Jane Downes
Publications Officer	Elaine Shearer
Publicity Officer	Tony Lewis
Membership Secretary	Margaret Gardiner
Excursions Convenor	Helen Maxwell
Archivist	Jim Mearns
Newsletter Editor	Alan Gifford
Webmaster	Andrew Watson
Independent Examiners	Susan Hunter & Maureen Langford
Council Members	Cathy Gibson, Stephen Harrison
Correspondence	Direct Correspondence to the Appropriate Official via the Website or to the President

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.

© The Glasgow Archaeological Society, 2023

Printed by Deacon Brothers (Printers) Ltd, Old Mill Park, Kirkintilloch, G66 1SW www.deacon-brothers.co.uk

Glasgow Archaeological Society is a Scottish Registered Charity – SC012423