



# ALGAO:Scotland *news*

2011

*The newsletter of the  
Association of Local Government  
Archaeological Officers:Scotland*



## Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers: Scotland

Only around 7% of Scotland's archaeological heritage is designated (protected by law) and so over 90% depends on the network of local authority archaeology advisors for its care and protection.

In 2010 there were 16 such advisors covering 32 local authorities in Scotland. Local authority archaeologists play a critical role in ensuring that the planning process takes account of the impact of new development on sites of archaeological importance. Where protection is not possible, heritage assets are investigated, recorded and published by qualified professionals.

### Scottish Government's vision

Scotland's historic environment contributes to the Scottish Government's strategic objectives. The historic character of our environment is important to our quality of life and sense of identity. Many of its elements are precious, some are not well understood; if it is lost or damaged, it cannot be replaced. The historic environment requires careful and active management to ensure its survival (SHEP 2009).

### Scottish Planning Policy

The historic environment is a key part of Scotland's cultural heritage. It enhances national, regional and local distinctiveness and contributes to sustainable economic growth and regeneration. It is particularly important for supporting the growth of tourism and leisure, but also contributes to sustainable development, through the energy and material invested in historic buildings with scope for adaptation and reuse, which help create a unique sense of identity for communities. Planning authorities can help to safeguard historic assets through development plans and development management decisions. Development plans should provide the framework for the protection, conservation and enhancement of all elements of the historic environment to allow the assessment of the impact of proposed development on the historic environment and its setting.

### Local authority archaeology advisors

There are 16 local authority archaeologists and staff in Scotland providing a comprehensive network of archaeology advisors, offering a range of specialist skills in the built, buried, coastal and submerged historic environment. They provide advice that is proportionate, consistent, informed, impartial and timely.

## Historic Environment Records (HERs)



Fundamental to the work of local authority archaeologists are Historic Environment Record (HER) or Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). These are comprehensive, accessible and authoritative records of the local historic environment which include information on designated and non-designated archaeological and historical sites; cultural and relict landscapes; previous archaeological fieldwork “events”; publications; and artefacts or “finds”.

HERs are used by local authority archaeologists to inform advice to local authorities on planning and for those who develop, manage, interpret or study the local historic environment. They are not static records, however, and need to be continuously managed and updated to reflect new discoveries, designations and investigations.

## Local Advice

“Experience has shown that it is essential for the archaeology advisor to be co-located with the HER, in order to provide a cost-effective one-stop response to commercial enquiries, to ensure the HER is continuously updated with new casework, and to maintain the critical mass of an effective service”.

*The Archaeology Forum (TAF) 2011 Why Local Government Needs Archaeology Advisors*

## Learning and Engagement

Many of our members also provide learning and engagement opportunities, including voluntary involvement, and local provision of this is clearly beneficial to communities. From the Curriculum for Excellence to life-long learning, the historic environment is a key area of interest to both local residents and visitors from within the UK and further afield.



*Learning through archaeology: expert instruction in Bronze Age Crafts,  
Perth 2010 (© Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust).*



## Cleaning archaeological records - why our data is important to you

The Aberdeenshire, Moray and Angus Archaeology Service is typical of such Local Authority services in that it holds a database of all known archaeological sites within the area it covers. These databases, known either as Sites & Monuments Records (SMRs) or increasingly as Historic Environment Records (HERs), contain a wealth of information from the earliest Mesolithic flint finds to WWII pillboxes and beyond for their geographic area.

The HER, as we refer to our database as, is an essential tool in protecting the 93% of the historic environment that is not covered by national designations. It provides a baseline of unique information that has been captured in the region over the last 35 years, which is used to make decisions at a local level on everything from planning applications, Local Development Plans and forestry schemes, to land management, community projects and visitor attractions.

Our HER contains records for some 30,000 sites, with a 1000 more being added on average every year. As it forms such a key resource it is vital that the records are as accurate as possible to ensure the best informed decision can be made through the services that we provide.

With that in mind we have undertaken a year long project to validate the 2 million data fields that form our database, leading to the HER now being the most comprehensive record for the area ever. Of course this data cleaning has also highlighted that we still have gaps in our information which means further enhancement projects. This is perhaps one of the most important aspects to understand of our work; the HER is an ever evolving fluid dataset that requires constant input and 'cleaning' by ourselves in order to ensure continuing accuracy.

Without that continuing accuracy of the regional HER data, we cannot make our daily professional judgements on how to protect and manage the area's historic environment. That makes the data not only important to us as a Service, but to everyone who lives in or visits the NE of Scotland.

**Bruce Mann**  
**Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service**  
[www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/archaeology](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/archaeology)



*Screenshot showing the GIS mapping element of Aberdeenshire's HER.*

Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea  
the very best of Scotland



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## Archaeology Service Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)



The Archaeology Service maintains the Sites and Monuments Record, more commonly referred to as the SMR, for Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Councils.

Access the Aberdeenshire, Angus or Moray **online summary SMR databases**

The **full versions of the databases are held in the office** by the Service and contain information on nearly 30,000 sites of archaeological and historical interest ranging from Mesolithic flints to airfields of World War II. The information consists of a computerised database linked to a GIS (Geographical Information System) with further physical records of maps, photographs, articles and reports.

The databases are updated regularly with all new discoveries, including those made by our own aerial photography programme.

The online summary versions of the Aberdeenshire SMR, Angus SMR and the Moray SMR databases have over 30,000 records that can be searched by you. The sites recorded vary from well-known and regularly visited ones to less obvious landscape features such as cropmarks.

**The online databases are not suitable for Planning, Utility, SRDP or Forestry applications.**

*The new online HERs, re-launched after the recent cleaning of the data.*

## Managing the archaeological impacts of development

In any given year archaeological work takes place all over Scotland. The role the Council archaeologist plays in this work may not always be readily visible, as most excavations are undertaken by commercial archaeological companies on behalf of developers.

These commercial companies however are usually working to a brief provided by the Council archaeologist. The Council archaeologist will have ensured that the Council has appropriate policies protecting archaeology in its development plan, and will have identified any archaeological issues at an early stage in the application by prospective developers for planning consent. He/she will also have determined the scope and extent of required archaeological excavations to be funded by the prospective developer, and will have monitored the work of the commercial archaeologists to ensure compliance with professional standards.

The West of Scotland Archaeology Service provides archaeological advice to 11 Councils and has the largest development management workload in Scotland. It therefore oversees a large range of developer funded archaeological work by commercial archaeological contractors. The work can be very variable, from simple archaeological watching briefs to wider excavations, and ranging in date from prehistory to the modern period. For example in the period 2009-10 a prehistoric, probably Bronze Age, settlement was excavated at the Beecraigs Country Park in West Lothian before construction of a visitor centre, burials were excavated beside the former parish church in Crawfordjohn in South Lanarkshire before construction of an extension to the village school, and the late 19th century Saracen Pottery in Glasgow was excavated before construction of supported accommodation.

Archaeological remains at the Saracen Pottery and the Crawfordjohn Church were strongly suspected to exist from assessment of historical map evidence by the Council archaeologist, but the archaeological remains at Beecraigs were not known prior to the requirement for the prospective developer to conduct archaeological trial trenching. Without the intervention of the Council archaeologist all of these archaeological remains would have been destroyed without anyone knowing of their existence. Further information about these excavations and many others may be found on the West of Scotland Archaeology Service web site at <http://www.wosas.net/news.html>



*Excavation of the Saracen (or Possil) pottery (© WoSAS).*

## Battle landscapes: preserving the past and managing change



Battlefields are very often a highly emotive topic to a wide cross section of the community. Not only do they provide cultural keystones which help inform our understanding of Scottish history but they contribute to our local and national identities and sense of place. Battlefields, and the history that surrounds them, are often a fantastic gateway for drawing locals and tourists alike into an area and can create socio-economic opportunities and enhance local pride.

The newly released Inventory of Historic Battlefields provides information on how battles and their associated landscapes should be protected, managed, interpreted and promoted for the future. The implementation of this through the planning process has been delegated to Local Authorities and their Archaeological Advisors. The assessment of proposed changes to a battlefield involves a remarkably large number of factors and it is the Local Authority Archaeology Services which are best placed to make informed and balanced decisions. An understanding of local elements such as previous development, local landscape topography and popular perception is key to determining what changes are acceptable to these fragile landscapes.

Fundamental to ensuring the long term conservation of these landscapes is an in-depth knowledge of each battle site, an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of historical evidence, and a comprehensive understanding of how developments can potentially impact (direct, indirect, cumulative, setting) on that landscape. In addition to this, a comprehensive understanding of archaeological fieldwork methodology is imperative as are good relationships with local landowners and the local community.

In East Lothian three of the county's seven battle sites are regarded to be sufficiently defined and of sufficient import to be included on the National Inventory. Although several of the counties battle sites are under development pressure, the Battle of Pinkie (1547) is under enormous pressure and extensive negotiation and partnership working by East Lothian Council Archaeology Service has secured valuable archaeological research and fieldwork whilst also raising the profile of this battlesite and its importance with planners, developers, archaeologists and local heritage groups. All of this has helped to ensure the long term conservation, sustainable development and interpretation of this fragile landscape.

**Biddy Simpson and Andy Robertson**  
**East Lothian Council Archaeology Service**



*Metal detecting at Pinkie (© East Lothian Council Archaeology Service).*



## A capital idea: Council corporate projects incorporating archaeology

Local Authorities have a fundamental role in providing services to the community, such as public toilets, cemeteries and ensuring corporate property assets protect the public's health and safety. Much of this work involves the development of Council owned property, or the acquisition of new land. This is where archaeological advisors to the Councils can have a real impact on Council priorities for the planning, design and implementation of corporate projects.

Some Council projects that involve potentially invasive ground works, such as new schools or cemeteries, are years in the making. Others develop more rapidly, and often in response to a health and safety risk such as flooding or slope instability. In either case, consultation with the Councils archaeological advisors is key to ensuring that any consequent risks to our heritage are properly managed.

Scottish Borders Council has recently seen two such projects that have needed archaeological input, and ultimately mitigation. In Kelso, there has been a long-standing issue with the provision of burial plots in the towns' over-crowded cemeteries. A process to locate a new cemetery site had been going on for a number of years, but only one site was deemed appropriate, at Ferneyhill Toll north of Kelso. The Council sought internal advice on the archaeological potential for the site, and an examination of the Historic Environment Record quickly highlighted the suspected site of a medieval hospital of St Leonards somewhere in the vicinity. Medieval hospitals often contained a number of buildings, including chapels and churchyards, and the possibility of encountering human remains necessitated a non-intrusive approach to evaluating the proposed cemetery site. The Council contracted the services of GUARD to undertake a geophysical survey with limited test excavation. This work identified the likely location of the hospital and a later farm steading. Consequently, the Council was able to design the cemetery to avoid and preserve the archaeology *in situ*. A further trial-trenching evaluation of the redesigned cemetery was conducted by Headland Archaeology and provided further confidence that the cemetery will not pose a risk to the archaeology. All told, ready access to archaeological advice within the Council led to a sensitive cemetery design that preserved an important medieval site.

In another instance, a significant landslip occurred in late 2010 in the cemetery of Lennel Kirk near Coldstream. This church, which has overlooked the River Tweed from its elevated position for just under a millennium, is a popular destination for dog-walkers and visitors to a newer cemetery nearby. The churchyard is owned by Scottish Borders Council, and it understood that it had a health and safety obligation to stabilize the landslip by digging into a section of the burial ground itself. Again, archaeological advice was sought and on the basis that burials dating to the medieval period could be disturbed, it was felt that an archaeologist with experience of working in historic churchyards was needed during all ground-works in order to assess, record and, if necessary, help exhume burials. Human remains would be stored on site and re-buried in new graves elsewhere in the cemetery. At the time of writing this work is on-going, but the case of Lennel Church highlights the need for Councils to have ready access to archaeological advice in order to inform proactive and reactive corporate projects.

Local Authorities who employ archaeologists as advisors benefit greatly from ability to quickly assess the potential risks that corporate projects pose to our Heritage. In this way, Councils are helping to preserve important evidence of our past and positively contributing to identities and a sense of place.

**Chris Bowles**  
**Scottish Borders Council**







## The Police, human remains and archaeology

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In Scotland, it is a crime to disturb, or attempt to disturb human remains without lawful authority (Historic Scotland 2003, 21). Any human remains discovered should be reported immediately to the local police or Procurator Fiscal's office and further disturbance must cease until permission to continue has been granted by the legal authorities. If human remains are known to be at a site, which is about to be disturbed, the police should be informed prior to commencement of work at the site.

However, it should be remembered that unexpected human remains in Scotland are much more frequently ancient archaeological remains rather than recent crime victims. It should also be remembered that, no matter what age the bones are, both the police and archaeologists are looking for evidence to help establish date, age and method of death. This requires careful inspection of the site and accurate recording.

Over the last few years there have been several cases highlighted in the Press where Police have been called in when human remains have been found without consulting archaeologists, even although it was evident that the skeletons were within stone burial cists of probable Bronze Age date. This unfortunately resulted in both damage to other contents, contamination and the removal of some bones.

In an attempt to stop similar events happening in the future a meeting was arranged with the Police to discuss the issues and the position of archaeologists in the procedure. This resulted in a new Procedure being written for the Police in which they have been given examples of different types of burials found in archaeology to help them make better informed decisions and know when to hand over to archaeologists. This new Procedure, called The Police, Human Remains and Archaeology, has been approved by the Crown Office and is now being rolled out to all Police forces in Scotland. This should hopefully see Police and Archaeologists working closer together in the future..

**Moira Greig**  
**Aberdeenshire, Moray & Angus**



*A Bronze Age burial uncovered in Aberdeenshire.*



## Learning and engagement in Perth and Kinross

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Over the last 10 years, Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust has developed a suite of nationally recognised historic environment outreach events for both residents and visitors alike.

The annual Doors Open Days, the Scottish celebration of European Heritage Days, offers public access to historic buildings free of charge and has been co-ordinated by the Trust in Perth and Kinross for 15 years. Often including events such as lime mortar demonstrations, DOD 2011 in Perth and Kinross will run over the weekend of the 24th and 25th September. Perthshire Archaeology Month began as Perthshire Archaeology Week in 2003 and as an archaeological equivalent to DOD. It provides a programme of guided walks, public talks, displays and hands-on events focusing on the archaeology of area, provided by a range of regional and local bodies, including Perth Museum and Art Gallery, The Scottish Crannog Centre, and importantly local history and archaeology societies.

The Trust has also developed a high-quality publication series, working in partnership with local and regional organisations, to produce reasonably priced full-colour A5 booklets, in addition to interpretative information made freely available through leaflets and interpretation panels at key sites.

In 2010, as part of the Perth 800 celebrations, the Trust promoted a two-day conference on the history of the burgh along with an innovative weekend of prehistoric technology and crafts entitled Making The Bronze Age inspired by the 3,000 year-old Carpow logboat excavated by the Trust in 2006. The event brought together top experimental archaeologists in ancient wood-working; prehistoric pottery; and bronze metal-working from across the UK. Members of the public were encouraged to take part when possible, and saw the carving of a 5 foot replica of the early Iron Age figurine from Ballachulish using authentic replica tools; Late Bronze Age swords cast in clay moulds; and workshops to make and fire prehistoric pottery, the dying, spinning and weaving of fibres, basketry.

The emphasis of our outreach work has been on participation, and we have a list of over 300 volunteers who are regularly engaged in both Trust projects, and projects organised by others, such as the Roman Gask Project, or the Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot programme. These 'hands-on' opportunities include working on historic building recording, archaeological excavation, geophysical survey, archaeological field-walking, site clearance and management, and graveyard recording. The volunteers are currently organisation a Friends of Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust to enhance how volunteers work with the Trust, encouraging projects to be developed from a grass root level, rather than been parachuted in from a national agency: truly a model for learning and engagement in the voluntary sector.

[www.pkht.org.uk](http://www.pkht.org.uk)



*Innovative ways of learning through engagement with the historic environment:  
Making The Bronze Age, Perth 2010 (© Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust).*

## Partnership working

The importance of partnership working across all sectors is an important key strategy for ALGAO:UK and its members in Scotland, whether it be working with National Government Departments and Agencies and other organisations such as BEFS and Archaeology Scotland on responding to national policy consultations or organising training events.

Using its range of contacts ALGAO in partnership with the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology, Historic Scotland, English Heritage & the National Trust for Scotland organised in late September 2010 a major UK wide conference at Culloden Battlefield on 'Surviving the peace: Public Access, Conservation and Military Heritage'. The event drew in participants from across the UK and Europe to discuss the challenges presented by preserving and enjoying Britain's military past, ranging from historic battlefields hundreds of years old to Cold War installations.

The event over two days combined a range of case studies from Local Authority Archaeologists, representatives of government agencies, members of community trusts, tourism managers and land owners actively engaged in this growing field. The participants discussed the problems and challenges presented by conserving and promoting this heritage and the various ways that these challenges were resolved through providing on-site interpretation, public access and educational facilities but also by promoting community involvement in archaeological and conservation projects and utilising sites as a focus for commemoration. Abstracts and notes of the event were collated and are published on the ALGAO:UK website.



Surviving the peace: Public Access, Conservation and Military Heritage  
Culloden Battlefield, September 2010 (© Centre for Battlefield Archaeology).

This is the fourth annual newsletter of ALGAO: Scotland, the association for archaeologists working for, or on behalf of, local government in Scotland.

Our members carry out a wide range of tasks, from working with planning officers, to community interpretation and outreach projects, to research and conservation. **ALGAO: Scotland news highlights the importance of locally-based curatorial archaeologists who are able to provide a wide range of services and functions which benefit the preservation of our shared archaeology, while contributing to both learning and engagement and sustainable regeneration..**

For details of the ALGAO:Scotland committee see the website: general enquiries to the Association should be directed in the first instance to the administrative assistant, Caroline Ingle at [admin@algao.org.uk](mailto:admin@algao.org.uk)

ALGAO:Scotland welcomes financial support from Historic Scotland to help us meet common objectives in the conservation, management and promotion of the historic environment.



*Back Cover Images: Cist burials.*



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