

# Association of Certificated Field Archaeologists Annual Report

## November 2021

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Re-reading last year's annual report I was struck by the optimism of a return to 'normality' with survey work restarting only for it to be halted again with the imposition of the Christmas restrictions. Those of us who live in Glasgow were restricted in movement for even longer than others and it was towards the middle of this year before our survey activities fully recommenced. That aside it has still been a very busy year with members taking part in more and more on-line activities.

### Surveys

Covid restrictions prevented another visit to **Tiree** by one of our regular larger groups but there have been a couple of visits by smaller groups (Covid compliant) to continue the work on Ben Hynish. This has included a very recent return trip by a soil scientist and further potentially important data on the age and relative chronology of the field boundaries.

The suspended survey of **Thorntonhall** and **Braehead** was restarted in the spring recording lime kilns and the vestiges of the settlements recorded in the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map of 1856. Susan Hunter and her team also continued their surveys of **Broom Estate** and **Kirkhill** as part of the continuing project to record rural remains amongst the suburban sprawl of Newton Mearns.

In May and June a team led by Dugie MacInnes carried out a survey of two farmsteads on **Croy Hill** near Cumbernauld. Both are indicated on Roy's military maps. Croy Hill cottage, a ruin beside the site of the Roman fort was included in the survey. A local man, still alive, was born there in 1933. Finds include houses, outhouses, a kiln barn and worked stones.

In July a team returned to **Luing** and the neighbouring island of **Torsa** to 'mop up' and draw some remaining features. Also in July another team revived the **Halter Burn Valley** survey which included one of the hottest days of the year spent field walking the plateau that is the watershed just over the English border in the full glare of the sun. A start was made of recording a possibly medieval settlement and a row of unenclosed platforms in the lower area of the valley which we will return to next March. Further news of these surveys can be found in the recent issue (No. 55) or our newsletter.

**Scotland's Rock Art Project** (ScRAP) drew to a close this year with final submissions to the data gathering on their website in September. Glen Lochay was visited a couple of times including a gloriously sunny day at the end of August when a large panel at Corrycharmaig was recorded. The legacy of the project is at least partially protected by its inclusion in Historic Environment's (HES) Scotland's Past portal and some Acfa members have taken part in the training for submitting future data with the intention of holding a further training opportunity in the new year.

## Excavations

Although Acfa doesn't usually engage in excavations members take part in 'digs' often organised by people and organisations we have existing relationships with. Members took part in excavations run by Heather James at **Drumshanty Flax Mill** and **Ardleish** (the ongoing MacFarlane project). Members also took part in the following excavations: Callander Heritage Society **Dunmore Hillfort, Auchenlaich Hillfort** and **Cambusbeg West**; Murray Cook **Castlehill Dun, Baston Burn** and **Coxet Hill**, and Archaeology Scotland **Avon Gorge** - a possible promontory fort at Avon Gorge that members Ed Smith and Eric Gardner found on their CAVLP (Clyde and Avon Landscape Partnership) Heritage walkover surveys in Chatelherault Country Park.

## Online

In April Ian Marshall and Ewen Smith gave presentations at a **ScRAP** conference on the work of the Acfa teams. As noted above members have also attended online training from ScRAP.

Acfa hosted an event as part of the **Glasgow University Festival of Archaeology** in August celebrating the Certificate in Field Archaeology and the founding of Acfa. The event featured a brief overview of the history of the certificate and Acfa, a conversation with Dr Alan Leslie, the last director of the course, and Dugie MacInnes's presentation on the work on Ben Hynish, Tiree.

Following the success of Elaine Black and Ailsa Smith's presentation on the Hynish Lines (Tiree) project at the 2020 AGM it was decided to hold a series of **Zoom talks** over the winter and spring of 2021. The Tiree presentation was reprised, Dugie MacInnes presented a companion piece on the archaeology of Ben Hynish, Simon Davies gave a fascinating talk on the inter-tidal archaeology of South Uist, Mary Braithwaite enlightened those of us unlucky enough not to have been part of the surveys on the archaeology of Luing, and Ken Tomory demonstrated the wealth of information to be found in the Hamilton estate records. All of these presentations can be viewed on Acfa's YouTube channel. A new series is planned starting in January 2022.

Improvements to **Acfa's website** have been appreciated. Brief informal reports are now available to download and our longer Occasional Papers will become available to download for free starting with the Raasay papers.

## Publications

This year has seen the publication of two occasional papers, Glen Duror: In Search of James of the Glen, and Halterburn Valley, Part I, Halterburnhead. Work continues of the Glen Lochay and Tiree books.

## Miscellaneous

The initial evaluation exercise of **Eric Cregeen Archive** project is coming to completion with the final documents being assessed.

The **newsletter** has become bigger and better providing members with a range of material from coverage of Acfa activities to articles on recent developments in the study of early hominids. Thanks are due to Ian Marshall and Janet MacDonald for their work in editing and producing it.

Members Ailsa Smith and Ed Smith received further training on Acfa's **total station** from Ian Hill of Harp Archaeology as part of the Avon Gorge excavation. Training for other members in the use of the total station is planned to recommence in the new year.

Ed Smith continued his **drone photography** on Ben Hynish in Tiree this month and also of the crannog on Portnellan Island in Loch Vennachar with Callander Heritage in September, and at Ardleish with Heather James also in September.

Ailsa Smith was appointed to be the Community Heritage representative on SSAC, the **Scottish Strategic Archaeology Committee**, in January and has attended three virtual meetings this year, bringing up the issue of what happens after ScRAP ends in December, which has now been addressed by HES (see above).

Ailsa Smith and Ed Smith together with a group of former CAVLP volunteers formed the **Clutha Archaeology Group** to continue the archaeological training, digs and surveys that were enjoyed during the project. Acfa looks forward to future co-operation with this newly formed group.

And finally, twenty five members and partners enjoyed four days of archaeological site visits and talks on the **island of Arran** in October. Highlights of the trip can be found in the latest Acfa newsletter (No 55). Thanks go to Libby King and Margaret Gardiner for all their hard work in planning and ensuring a good time was had by all.

Janie C. Munro, Chairperson

