

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Covering the period July 2023 – July 2024



Field Archaeology for All
Arc-eòlas do na h-uile

Formerly Association Certificated Field Archaeologists

Registered Scottish Charity SC007099

Introduction

The past year has seen us build on and consolidate the work done to keep ACFA relevant to the archaeology scene in Scotland. We have attracted a number of student and early career members and have cooperated successfully with other archaeology entities and communities. Sadly we also lost a long-standing member Frances Hood who died in January. In recent years she was an enthusiastic member of the Tiree team drawing on her close personal knowledge of the island. We are also sorry to note the death of Brian Balmain who served as our independent examiner of accounts for many years.

Surveys

Our major project in the Borders, The Halter Burn Valley Survey, was finally completed this year following three visits in September, March and May, and survey director Dugie MacInnes has been invited to present at The Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders Archaeology Conference at Queen Margaret University this November. In October a group returned to Tiree to work on the areas of Scaranish and Kilmaluig. The survey of the farms, farmland and industry of Thorntonhall was also completed and the survey of neighbouring Busby is ongoing. A targeted survey of selected buildings in the village of Eaglesham is nearing completion. ACFA members took part in the Scottish Masons Marks Project return to recording in Glasgow Cathedral and assisted with introducing masons marks recording to the Friends of Crookston Castle and the community of Dundonald Castle. In November a group joined Stirling Archaeologist Murray Cook to carry out a further survey of Hermitage Woods, nr Stirling University. Agreement was finally reached with Glasgow Life Museums and Libraries to carry out a survey of the rock art held in their collection.

Publications

ACFA Occasional Papers, survey reports, produced this year were **Thorntonhall Part 1** and **Isle of Luig Vol 1. Eaglesham, The Farmlands and the Orry** was reprinted and continues to be popular. The highlight of our publishing year was the launch of **In the Glen of the Dark Goddess, History and Archaeology of Upper Glen Lochay, Killin**, although the launch itself in August falls slightly outside the range of this report.

Winter Zoom Talks

Our 2024 season of talks kicked off in January with the return of Eddie Stewart, now Dr Eddie Stewart, who gave a talk '**Local and global connections in early modern Glencoe: *exploring recent excavations, survey and creative engagements in Glencoe, Gleann Leac-na-Muidhe, Lairig Eildhe, Lairig Gartain and Rannoch Moor***', reporting on the excavations at Summerhouse of Maciain. Our February talk from Dr Paul Murtagh was **Shining light into a black hole: Investigating the Iron Age of Lanarkshire**. In March three ACFA members, Eric Gardner, Ailsa Smith and Ed Smith had their Clutha Archaeology hats on when they gave their talk "**It might be something." A promontory site, Avon Gorge, Chatelherault**, with early results from their excavation. Dr Kenny Brophy presented **Excavations in and around Drumadoon cursus on Arran, 2021-23** in April and the series concluded in May with a talk from Ingrid Shearer, Heritage Engagement Officer with Glasgow Building Preservation Trust, **It'll Be Great When It's Finished! Reflections on Glasgow's Built Heritage**, focusing on the restoration of the West Boathouse, Glasgow Green. All these talks are available to watch again on our YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@acfacommittee1155/featured> .

Promotion, Publicity and Social Media

Our social media accounts continue to generate interest and connections throughout the archaeology community in Scotland and further afield. With 589 followers on X (Twitter) we receive good engagement with likes and retweets, a recent tweet for #ThrowbackThursday featuring our 1989 survey of the Barns of Airlie souterrain being particularly popular. Use of our Facebook page is being extended to promote more of our activities and Instagram sees occasional posts of our work. Having said goodbye to our newsletter we have introduced a blog, Offset, on our website. Our survey in Seil Island was featured in HES digital magazine Celebrating Archaeology in Scotland 2023: <https://archaeologystrategy.scot/magazine/>

In May ACFA had a stall at the Bygone Con in Hamilton Town House Library, and at the start of June we had a stall and demonstration of standing building survey at Eaglesham Fair. Thanks to Iain Ross Wallace, Susan Hunter, Christine MacDiarmid, Ken Mallard and Ian Marshall for their assistance at these events.

Social

In February a group of ACFA members got a rare chance to handle artefacts from the previous year's excavations at the Summerhouse of Maciain in Glencoe. Thanks to Eddie Stewart and colleagues for arranging this. Our Spring Social in March was well attended and after lunch members were treated to an entertaining talk by Norry Wilson, Mr Lost Glasgow, which was centred on the history and buildings of the Blythswood Estate. In June a group of ACFA members were welcomed by Eddie Stewart to the excavations he was directing at Achnacon, Glencoe.

Training

In October ACFA members participated in online training, designed for voluntary groups, run by Archaeology Scotland explaining the method of inputting data to the OASIS reporting system for entries to Discovery and Excavation. ACFA members took part in a repeat of Clutha Archaeology's excellent QGIS training in November. Our own training programme got underway in May with the first Fieldwork Survey Director's course which received excellent feedback from participants. It will be run again, along with a Training the Trainers course, in Spring 2025.

External engagement

In March a group of committee members, joined by Dugie MacInnes, travelled to Newbattle Abbey for a very fruitful meeting with Archaeology Scotland's director, Gavin MacGregor and Adopt-a-Monument officer Phil Richardson. The discussions explored the potential for future co-operation, and the assistance and resources AS could offer ACFA. ACFA representatives attended the Clyde Valley Archaeology Research Framework symposium in June. Held over two days the first, in the University of Glasgow, introduced the CVARF to professional archaeologists and representatives of community groups. The second day was held at Govan Old Parish Church and Janie Munro, ACFA chairperson, took part in a panel discussion on the challenges faced by voluntary groups in the heritage sector. It provided an excellent opportunity to meet other groups and we look forward to future co-operation and engagement.

Fundraising

The Just Giving fundraiser for analysis of the Tiree lithics assemblage has concluded. We would like to thank everyone that contributed to this.