

A TOUCH OF GAS


The Newsletter of the Glasgow Archaeological Society




Issue 73 – Spring 2014

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

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

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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Members are reminded that the AGM will take place on

Thursday 17 April 2014

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.

**The meeting will be followed by:
The Archaeology of WWI
Dr. Iain Banks, University of Glasgow***

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Meeting of the AGM on Thursday 18th April 2013
3. Annual Report from the President, Susan Hothersall
4. Annual Report from the Treasurer, Stephen Stockdale
5. Election of Office Bearers and Council Members
6. AOCB

***Change of Speaker –** Since the new material from Bannockburn is “embargoed” until released by the BBC we have agreed that Dr. Tony Pollard will now deliver his talk, following on from the Second Summer Excursion (see page 3) to open our 2014/2015 Season on 16th October 2014. We are delighted that Dr. Iain Banks from Glasgow University will now speak on 17 April on the Archaeology of WWI, in keeping with our Anniversaries Theme.

Second Winter Excursion – 12th April 2014
Visits to St. Andrew's Cathedral, Clyde St. & The Briggait, Glasgow

Our morning visit will be to St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Cathedral in Clyde Street. The cathedral, an A-listed building, designed by the architect James Gillespie Graham, was opened in 1816. After almost two hundred years it was closed in 2009 to undergo major renovations and the work was completed in April 2011. Our group will be taken on a guided tour of the church, which will allow us to appreciate the craftsmanship of the past and present including a new canvas by Peter Howson, which depicts St. John Ogilvie facing death at Glasgow Cross in 1615.

Members will meet in the porch of the Cathedral at 11.a.m.

After lunch the group will rendezvous at the Briggait, a short distance from the Cathedral, where we shall be taken on a tour of this fascinating Glasgow landmark.

The Briggait, an A-graded building, was built in 1873 as the city's fish market but closed in the late 1970's. In the 1980's it was re-opened as a shopping complex but after a few years it was once again closed. It then lay empty until the WASPS Artists' Studios, a Charity, began redeveloping the derelict building and transforming it into a state of the art cultural centre. It was officially opened in 2010 and now provides good quality, affordable studio space to enable artists and Arts Charities to carry out their work. The Briggait is not usually open to the public.

We require to confirm numbers so please contact the Excursions Convenor via the website contact form.

SPRING WALK – Jim Mearns will conduct a walking tour of Glasgow Green on **Saturday 3rd May**. Meet at Glasgow Cross at 10.30am, then to St. Andrews Church, down to the 1999 House for Future Buildings and through The Green finishing at the People's Palace by lunchtime. Please contact the Excursions Convenor via the website contact form.

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 Professor Richard Bradley, Dr. Chris Stringer, Professor Sir Barry Cunliffe, Ian Hodder, Professor Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and Professor Mike Parker Pearson.

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 – see the GAS website for more details.

Applications require to be submitted before October in any year, when the awards are made.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED – we are always looking for volunteers to help run the Society, particularly to serve on Council. In addition –

DALRYMPLE/DONALDSON FUND – This is administered by six Trustees, three from Glasgow Archaeological Society and three from the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Two of our representatives have expressed an interest in standing down, including the Secretary. The positions are not onerous involving one meeting per year to distribute the funds. If you are interesting in participating in this fascinating work please see the GAS website for more details.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR – While I am happy to continue, there is a certain “shelf life” and perhaps the time is right for a fresh approach. If anyone is interested in taking over, please contact me – Dale Bilsland

EXHIBITION NEWS



**Britain From Above: Scotland's Industrial Might
The Lighthouse, Glasgow – Until 27 April**

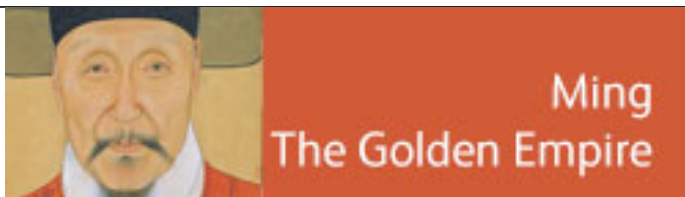


**Scottish Gold
The Hunterian, Glasgow
until 15 June 2014**

This major new exhibition features a spectacular array of Scottish gold items from the Bronze Age to the present. Focusing on the occurrence of gold in Scotland and Scottish gold mining, *Scottish Gold*

offers a unique opportunity to learn about the precious metal as part of the natural history of Scotland and its historical uses.

Drawing on The Hunterian's rich collections of mineralogy, archaeology and history and supported by key loans from around the UK, *Scottish Gold* features a large selection of the finest Scottish gold specimens and objects made and used in Scotland.



**National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh
27 June – 19 October, 2014**

Discover the extraordinary story of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), a period of China's history marked by economic strength and a dramatic flourishing of the arts.

Meaning brilliant or bright, the Ming era represents the starting point of modern China. A collection of original artefacts from the [Nanjing Museum](#), including Chinese National Treasures, introduce key aspects of the Ming dynasty, focusing on the remarkable cultural, technological and economic achievements of the period. This will be the only UK showing of this internationally significant exhibition.



**British Museum – *The Vikings: Life and Legend*
Until 22 June 2014**

The exhibition will present personal objects, including jewellery, amulets and idols, which help to reveal more about how the Vikings saw themselves and their world. Exquisite objects, including the magnificent Vale of York Hoard, demonstrate the global reach of the Viking network of trade, plunder and power – a network that left a lasting legacy in countries from Ireland and the UK to Russia and Ukraine.

SUMMER EXCURSIONS 2014

First Summer Excursion – Saturday, 24th May – Carlisle and Maryport

The coach will leave from outside the Boyd Orr Building, University Avenue at 8.30 am. After a short stop en-route our group will arrive at the **Tullie House Museum**, Carlisle by late morning. The Museum houses a permanent exhibition – *The Roman Frontier: Stories beyond Hadrian's Wall* – and has a broad range of interpretive techniques throughout the Gallery to enable visitors to develop an understanding of life on a Roman Frontier.

Lunch will be in Carlisle (own arrangements) and in the early afternoon members will travel to Maryport for a tour of the **Senhouse Museum**, which is situated on the cliffs overlooking the Solway Firth and displays the largest group of Roman Military Altar Stones and inscriptions from any site in Britain, together with unique examples of Roman-British religious sculpture. Members will also be taken on a tour of this season's excavation site. Archaeologists from Oxford will be involved in excavating a house plot, part of the civil settlement next to the Roman Fort.

There will be a short stop on the homeward journey and we should arrive back at the University at approximately 8.30pm

Second Summer Excursion – Saturday, 27th September – Bannockburn

The coach will leave at 9am from outside the Boyd Orr Building, University Avenue. On arrival at the Battle of **Bannockburn Visitor Centre**, a recently opened world-class visitor attraction marking the 700th Anniversary of the Battle, members will have the opportunity to experience mediaeval combat and learn about this crucial event in Scottish history through state-of-the-art 3D technology.

After lunch (own arrangements) Dr. Tony Pollard will lead us on a detailed tour of the battlefield. Tony from the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology has recently been involved in extensive archaeological excavation and research to establish the exact site of the Battle of Bannockburn.

We shall commence our return journey late afternoon arriving back at the University around 6pm.

****This will be a popular outing so please book and pay quickly to secure your place!****

Dr. Pollard will open our 2014/1025 Season of Lectures with a talk on the new findings – 16th October 2014

✂

To: [Redacted]

Saturday, 24th May – Carlisle and Maryport

Please reserve meseat(s) on this excursion at £27.00 each

I enclose a cheque payable to **Glasgow Archaeological Society for £.....**

From Name Phone No.
Address

Please return by Sunday 4th May 2014, and enclose a return stamped addressed envelope.

✂

To: [Redacted]

Saturday, 27th September – Bannockburn

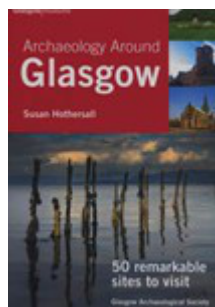
Please reserve meseat(s) on this excursion at £11.00 each (Member of National Trust)
Please reserve meseat(s) on this excursion at £22.00 each (Non-Member of National Trust)
Please reserve meseat(s) on this excursion at £19.00 each (Non-Member National Trust - Concession).

I enclose a cheque payable to **Glasgow Archaeological Society for £.....**

From Name Phone No.
Address

Please return by Sunday 24th August 2014, and enclose a return stamped addressed envelope.

Archaeology Around Glasgow



Having completed the Munros and visited 304 of Historic Scotland's 308 Sites I was looking for a new project when I came across this excellent guide by Sue Hothersall.

I had already visited about a dozen of the fifty sites, e.g. Glasgow Cathedral, Govan Old Parish Church, Dumbarton Rock, etc. but it was with a sense of enquiry and satisfaction that I set off to work my way around Sue's list. This took me into hidden corners of the world that I had missed on my outings.

For example the wonderful chambered cairn 'The Druids's Grave' in pleasant country near Beith, the prominent hillfort (?) Dunwan Hill giving an excuse to walk through Whitelea Wind Farm, the Meikle Reive hillfort on the slopes of the Campsies giving a lovely day out and Sir John de Graham's Castle looking out over the Carron Valley.

Favourite Sites? – Four stand out in different areas and of different types. Firstly the Crannog at Dumbuck a muddy walk at low tide but with surprisingly extensive remains visited on a lovely evening with the *Waverley* paddling by 20 yards away. Secondly Stockie Muir Chambered Tomb, giving an excuse to visit that unique geological feature The Whangie. Thirdly Torwood Broch very overgrown, but with substantial walls, a rare southern outpost of the architectural feature more common in the north. Finally as a Romanist my top favourite Lurg Moor Roman Fortlet above Port Glasgow with fabulous views up the Clyde to the Loch Lomond Hills and to the west. Now threatened by Wind Farm development, I spent two hours here soaking up the views and appreciating the pragmatism of the Romans to pick the perfect spot.

This is only a snapshot of the pleasure to be got from this excellent illustrated and well described Guide. With a perfect "how to get there" section I cannot recommend this book highly enough.

Buy it, get there and ... enjoy!

Donald A. Cameron

We believe Donald is our first "GASbagger" but please let us know if you have done all 50 Sites.

Archaeology Around Glasgow is available at Meetings (£10) or via the website (£1.50 postage)

GAS CEILIDH? – Our Social Team is considering organising a Ceilidh following the popularity of the one on our Inverness Trip. To gauge interest, if this appeals please contact Dorothy Gormlie

Excursion Booking Forms Overleaf

The Slamannan Spitfire Report – Stephen Stockdale

On a cold misty morning in February, 1941, 22 year old Sgt Pilot John Tristram Silvester climbed into his Mark 1a Spitfire L1059, at RAF Grangemouth, and took off on a training flight. At about 1050 am his aircraft was seen circling over the village of Slamannan near Falkirk. The aircraft was flying low and the engine appeared to be misfiring. A few minutes later, witnesses heard the plane's engine scream in a rapid descent. It struck the ground in a field near Hillend Farm and exploded, bursting into flames. Sgt Silvester was killed instantly in the crash and his aircraft destroyed.

The RAF Rescue unit which attended at the scene, removed such pieces of the aircraft as could be readily picked up, and they also removed Sgt Sylvester's remains from the wreck for burial. He is buried in the quiet churchyard of St Andrews, near his home town of Omberly in rural Worcestershire. The unit then filled in the crater with earth and debris, and peace returned once more to Hillend Farm.

Fast forward 72 years later, and, together with my colleagues of the Dumfries and Galloway Aviation Museum, I am standing at the crash site, waiting for our team leader Alan Leishman to complete his magnetometric survey of the crater. Once completed, we start to dig in the area indicated, and almost immediately, the pungent smell of Aviation fuel permeates the air. After its fall to earth all those years before, what remains of Sgt Sylvester's aircraft is coming to light once more.

The D.G.A.M. have operated an Aviation Archaeological Section since 1975. Amongst its aims are not only the recovery of any displayable relics, but any parts or equipment which provide evidence to agree or disagree with the eye witnesses statements.

Unlike conventional Archaeology, where the meticulous removal of the various soil levels are of extreme importance in dating any finds, such care is not required at an aviation crash site when the date of the incident is well known.

Accordingly, the seven members present began digging, and we were soon recovering items from the cockpit of the aircraft. Pilot's goggles and flying helmet, Pilot's seat armour plate, parachute harness and release toggle, all emerged from the muddy crater, to be cleaned and laid to one side. Gradually, the yellow tips of the propeller blades came in to view, but it soon became apparent, that without mechanical help, it would not be possible to raise the blades and what remained of the engine and crankcase.

With the light now fading, it was decided that a second visit to the site would be necessary, and with that decided, the hole was backfilled and we returned the field to the farm's bovine residents.

In October 2013 we were back: this time with a JCB. The farm had been sold and the site earmarked for development. This would be our last chance before the landscapers moved in and obliterated all trace of the crash.

The JCB made short work of the backfill, and before too long had also removed the 3 bladed De Havilland propeller and reduction gear. Other parts of the engine were also recovered, but it was now evident that most of the engine had been destroyed. We decided that further digging would not reveal anything of useful interest, and the dig was closed, the hole backfilled.



All that remained to be done was the tidying of the site, and the compilation of a report to the M.O.D. It is incumbent on the holder of an excavation licence to report any items found, and be declared to the Service Personnel & Veterans Agency, in case of a claim by relatives or other interested parties. Most of the items we recovered would be cleaned and placed on display at the Museum. Any personal items found, would be forwarded to the relatives of the Pilot.

Postscript

Before beginning to excavate a crash site, the team are ever mindful, of the human cost of the tragedy. Sgt Silvester was not killed in combat, but he was a young man in the prime of life, serving his country, and his death was due the same measure of honour given to all those who risked, and lost, their lives in the Second World War.

Accordingly, on a bright sunny day on Sunday, 10 November, 2013, I stood with an RAF Honour guard, members of the local community, and DGAM members, and listened as a Piper played a lament at the crash site. A wreath was laid near the spot, and a local Chaplain held a brief service of Remembrance. After 72 years in that cold lonely field, perhaps at last Sgt Silvester could receive some final measure of peace.

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 sole 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

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions are published in good faith. Views expressed by individual contributors are not necessarily those of The 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 (pdf or jpg format).

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