



## Society's Community Led Approach to Local Archaeology is Highly Commended

North of Scotland Archaeology Society members will be thrilled to hear that their Society has made the short list of four finalists contending for the Council for British Archaeology's new Marsh Community Archaeology Award, the winners of which will be announced shortly.

The Society, which will celebrate its 10th Anniversary this autumn and is already in receipt of an 'Highly Commended' Award from the Council for their archaeological investigations in Glen Feshie, now stands to be further honoured for their work which draws members from all corners of the north - from the Northern Isles to Argyll - to research, survey, excavate, interpret and communicate their local archaeology through community digs, training events, presentations, publications and exhibitions.

Meryl Marshall, NOSAS Secretary and author of *Glen Feshie - The History and Archaeology of a Highland Glen* - shared the members' sense of joy and achievement: 'We are delighted. It is so encouraging for us to receive this recognition and it demonstrates just how important it is for us to continue our contacts with communities in the Highlands and Islands; supporting each other together to discover, appreciate and better understand our rich archaeological heritage.'

Bob Powell, Highland Council's Principle Museums Officer, was more than pleased to endorse the NOSAS' application for the prestigious award: 'To date Glen Feshie is perhaps the most outstanding work that NOSAS are known for. However, as a member of the Scotland's Rural Past Project Advisory Group, I am also aware of the significant survey and documentation work that they are currently carrying out in Strathconon. This is important work and it is a great example of a community organisation undertaking work for which we have little capacity within our own established heritage institutions, to a continuing high standard, and for the benefit and interest of local communities and beyond.'

Cait McCullagh, NOSAS Committee

## More Good News

In January NOSAS was offered an Awards For All Scotland grant for £2500. Awards for All Scotland is supported by the Scottish Arts Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund, sportscotland and the Big Lottery Fund and awards grants of between £500 and £10,000 for people to take part in art, sport, heritage and community activities, and projects that promote education, the environment and health in the local community.

Meryl Marshall



## Rogie Project

The work of the Rogie Project continues. At the end of January members of the Scotland's Rural Past Team ran a highly successful course at Rogie for NOSAS members and Susan Kruse's Workers Education Associational (WEA) Group, meeting at Strathpeffer, have researched the Census and Old Parish Records Data, collected evidence of landscape change through published maps and begun interviewing residents of the locality.

Brian Duff, from the Forestry Commission, has initiated work on the site of the township to make it both safe and accessible to the public and the Commission hopes, eventually, to include all the information that has come from the NOSAS survey and the WEA's researches on a Rogie Website.



Rogie from the air

An aerial view of Rogie, looking north. The photograph, taken by Jim Bone on February 19<sup>th</sup> 2008, shows the modern day Rogie farm (Map reference: 4423 5931) on the site of the old township of Balnain in the bottom right hand corner of the picture, close to the confluence of the Rogie Burn and the Black Water.

The townships being surveyed and studied by NOSAS and the WEA lie in the forested area to the north and west, in the top left hand corner of the photograph, on the far side of the railway line to Garve. Rogie Falls, and the Rogie Falls Car Park, lie to the south and east, just outside the photographed area.



## Rogie Training Course

On a very wet and cold couple of days at the end of January, 15 members of NOSAS attended an RCAHMS field recording training session based at the Rogie townships near Contin.

The training was arranged under the auspices of the Scottish Rural Past (SRP) project and we had excellent tuition from 2 of the SRP project team, Ishbel and Danny, supported by 2 of the permanent surveying staff of RCAHMS.

The first part of Day 1 was spent in a shed with a very detailed review of all the sources of research covered to date by RCAHMS and others, including historical maps, OS namebook entries, aerial photos, RCAHMS data base entries and census information.

The party then travelled the 5 miles from Contin to the site in Land Rovers through extensive flooding at Rogie Farm. We looked in detail at 2 individual homestead sites. The first had a building, which was roofed and a partly roofed building shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS Map. This site probably had a dwelling, internal byre and midden, a kiln barn with a double flue and several auxiliary buildings probably covering many generations of change and development. At least 2 of the buildings had good evidence of cruck slots.

The second homestead site, connected to the first by a track with evidence of banking and walls was rather more complex with a slope in the northern side down to a very wet area and burn again in full spate. It was felt that this settlement included a kiln barn and midden.

The afternoon was spent indoors in the warmth and comfort of Strathpeffer Community Centre with training on the field recording form, an introduction to plane tabling and a demonstration of RCAHMS's database and SRP website.

Day 2 started with a storm force sleet and hail squall and it took all the enthusiasm of the RCAHMS staff to persuade us to go back up to the Rogie homestead. The next couple of hours were spent doing our own field sketch. It all looks easy in the handout and in the class, but when you try yourself it's not so easy and it's amazing how much difference a little more concentration on the relief of the site rather than just the outline of the building can make. The best sketches were definitely the ones with the bankings and levels shown in some detail. The second part of the day was spent putting into practise the plane tabling techniques we had learned the previous day. We broke up into small groups and each tried to draw up a small section of the site. I think we were all surprised at end the day when the 5 plans all fitted together to show the whole site.

Despite the weather, it was a most enjoyable 2 days and an excellent practical training. The enthusiasm of the RCAHMS staff was infectious and they must be congratulated on an excellent training course. If this training can be made available again, then I would certainly recommend it to less experienced members.

David Findlay

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## Strathconon Project

There has been very little activity on this front over the last few months for a variety of reasons, not least the poor weather, however it is hoped to start up again in the next few weeks. Over the next couple of months we will be targeting the section of the glen between the Meig Dam and Bridgend starting at the Meig Dam (the boundary with the SC1/Scatwell phase of the project). It is just 15 minutes drive west of Marybank. We will be exploring west from the dam in our usual manner of specific areas being allocated to small "teams". There is some woodland both natural and planted forest and the going will be heathery in places - but less rough than Scatwell. There will be some clearing of bracken from sites to reveal their extent as on previous occasions.

Several settlements have been identified on the old maps and on the estate plan of 1825, these have been matched up with historical documents and we have a pretty good picture of where we are likely to find things. Some settlements may inevitably be underwater but we have the benefit of some old pictures found on the website: [www.gerrymcguigan.co.uk/](http://www.gerrymcguigan.co.uk/) - Balnault, Druimanriach and Achlorachan are the sites we are particularly interested in at the moment. Again it looks as though we may find evidence of illicit distilling and it would appear that there was a murder at Achlorachan in 1835, possibly in connection with the smuggling - much more research is needed yet.

There are also some interesting Gaelic place names on the map and we have already noted, in passing, an enclosed area of coppiced hazel woodland (culturally modified trees (CMTs) seem to be the "in-thing" at the moment).

If any members are interested in joining us please let me know and I will put your name on the mailing list for information on the project

Meryl Marshall



Balnault in Strathconon (1950 - before the reservoir).  
The site is still "above water" but pretty well flattened



# CLACHTOLL BROCH PROJECT GAINS MOMENTUM

Clachtoll is the major broch site between Caithness and Skye, and is Assynt's finest prehistoric monument. Historic Assynt is concerned about the state of the drystone masonry of the monument and is working hard to raise awareness both of the monument itself, and of the threats to it. In 2007, the site was visited twice by Historic Scotland, (the statutory body for Scottish archaeological and other heritage sites), and also by the relevant Highland Council Archaeologist. Recent weeks have seen more visits and secured several promises of assistance in trying to assess the options for the future of this complex site.



Clachtoll Broch, Assynt

One of the first priorities is to derive as much information as possible from the site as it is at present; with much of the structures masked by fallen masonry, this can be very difficult. The Historic Assynt Survey Team produced the first full plan of the site, and this was enormously helpful to the Project Officer, Robin Noble, when he went to Edinburgh to try to get assistance with the task. We are now very pleased to report that RCAHMS (the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, the national body for the surveying and recording of ancient monuments), will be doing their own survey of the site this year, probably in early June. We are also very grateful to AOC Archaeology who have carried out a three-dimensional laser survey of the site (mercifully done in recent brilliant sunshine!); both will greatly increase our understanding of the broch and its surrounding structures.

Representatives of two voluntary archaeological bodies have also recently visited; the Council for Scottish Archaeology, which runs an Adopt-a-Monument, project for community groups, and SCAPE (Scottish Coastal Archaeology and the Problem of Erosion), whose interest in this coastal site will be

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obvious, (especially considering the gales we have experienced this winter!). We look forward to working further with both these bodies.



Survey work in progress, Clachtoll Broch

During all these visits, (in hugely varying conditions!) our own awareness and understanding of many aspects of the site has grown significantly. In particular, we have become even more aware of the unstable state of much of the drystone masonry-much of which consists of extremely large blocks of sandstone. We are therefore very much looking forward to a visit in the immediate future from Shetland, where a two-man team of archaeologist and dry-stone builder have been working on the impressive site of Old Scatness. We hope they will have the same good weather that AOC experienced, so that we may fully benefit from their views on the stonework of Clachtoll Broch.

Robin Noble

## NOSAS Library Updated

NOSAS members accessing the Society's website will have noticed that the NOSAS Library page has been updated. An alphabetical search list has been added making it far easier to find the book you are looking for.

The well-stocked library forms a unique resource for archaeologists and local historians working in the Highlands. For further information contact John and Trina Wombell to see if the library has the information you are looking for. A room is available for study.

Tel/FAX 01997 423273 or Email [johnandtrina@onetel.com](mailto:johnandtrina@onetel.com)





## Pullyhour Henge Excavation

Professor Richard Bradley of Reading University will be leading a team to excavate this site as the final chapter of a research project into the henge monuments of Northern Scotland.

Pullyhour Henge is a few miles south of Halkirk in Caithness. The excavation will be taking place from March 23rd - April 12th and will be open to volunteer diggers for part of the dig or the whole 3 weeks.

PLACES ARE LIMITED SO BE SURE TO BOOK EARLY. The details as to days off site have still to be finalised and will be advertised nearer the time.

For further details about the project contact;  
Emma Sanderson on 01593 721868 / 07855 875619.  
To book a place on the dig contact;  
Paul Humphries after 1st March on: 01847 851275

## Strathconon Project

I'm pleased to say that the project is up and running again and a field day is planned for Tuesday next week, 26th Feb and probably another the following week - a good chance to put all the skills that folk learned on the SRP training day (Rogie) into practise

Next Tuesday we will explore the south side of Loch Meig, particularly concentrating on Balnault. Meet 10am at the Meig Dam, bring packed lunch and come equipped for all weathers, don't forget protective gloves (there will be some bracken clearing) Please let me know if you intend to come so that I will have some idea of the tasks we will be able to set ourselves to and also so that I will be able to supply you with the maps and historical information that has been gleaned so far.

Meryl Marshall

## Membership Satisfaction Questionnaire

At a recent review of NOSAS affairs it was suggested that we should be monitoring membership satisfaction. Your committee has drawn up a questionnaire that is to be circulated to members.

We would be grateful if you could take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and make any comments or suggestions that you may feel would improve our efforts to meet the aims and objectives the group. Please return completed questionnaires to MM by Easter 2008. The questionnaire can be anonymous but any names declared will be entered into a draw for free 2009 membership!

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## New NOSAS Members

Welcome to:

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## NOSAS helps clear kiln site at Scatwell



Having surveyed a number of sites in the Scatwell area of Strathconon it quickly became apparent that the fabric of the kiln site at Allt Dubh was under threat from young saplings. Members of NOSAS are seen here helping to clear the trees and consolidate the site earlier this month.

## NOSAS NEWS

Contributions for NOSAS NEWS should be sent to the Editor:

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