



REFLECTING ON RELEVANCE:

SCOTLAND'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL
JOURNEY IN THE PRESENT
UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW | ONLINE
23-24TH OCT 2021

SAF 2021

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME & ABSTRACTS



REFLECTING ON RELEVANCE:

SCOTLAND'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL JOURNEY IN THE PRESENT

DAY 1

10.00-10.20.....SAF President's Address

10.20-10.50.....Keynote - Ian Ralston

Break

SESSION 1 *Community Archaeology*

11.11.20.....Iain Wallace

11.20-11.40.....Kenny McElroy

11.40-12.00.....Patricia Tolana

12.00-12.20.....Archaeology Scotland - Paul Murtagh,
Phil Richardson, Kieran Manchip & Helena Gray

Lunch

SESSION 2 *Archaeologies of Climate Change*

13.30-13.50.....Nicki Whitehouse

13.50-14.10.....Stephen Davis, Knut Rassmann & Julie Gibson

14.10-14.30.....Annika Mazzarella

14.30-14.50.....ScAPE

Break

SESSION 3 *New Research Directions*

15.15-15.35.....Edward Stewart

15.35-15.55.....Lucy Killoran

15.55-16.15.....Cara Jones

16.15-16.35.....Shalen Prado

DAY 2

10-10.15.....Welcome

SESSION 1 *New Approaches to Old Material*

10.15-10.35.....Hazel Mosley

10.35-10.55.....Louisa Campbell

10.55-11.15.....Samantha Ferrer

11.15-11.35.....Colleen Batey

Lunch

SESSION 2 *Innovative Engagement in Archaeology*

13.00-13.20.....Gavin MacGregor

13.20-13.40.....Lizzie Robertson

13.40-14.00.....Emily Gal

14.00-14.20.....Matt Ritchie

Break

SESSION 3 *Nationalism and Identity in Archaeology*

14.45-15.05.....Kenny Brophy

15.05-15.25.....Orla Craig

15.25-15.45.....Harry Ross

15.45-16.05.....Daniel Hansen

DAY 1

SESSION 1:

Community Archaeology

Iain Ross Wallace

(Scottish Stonemasons' Marks Research; Carved Stones of Scotland)

Leaving a mark on history: Masons' marks of the stone buildings of Scotland from the 12th and 13th Centuries

Our knowledge and understanding of medieval buildings in Scotland is conditioned by the historical record, which invariably focuses on those who occupied the buildings. This multi-disciplinary research is investigating the stonemasons' marks on the early medieval stone buildings in central and southern Scotland and, by extension, those who were involved in their construction. The data has been analysed to identify how many different marks and, by interpretation, how many masons worked at the sites surveyed as well as chronological and geographical distribution. Comparisons of marks found with those identified on charters and other contemporaneous records have been made to identify individual masons by name. Marks have been recorded by drawing and photography and the database has been constructed to facilitate the creation of maps showing distribution patterns, by chronology and by individual mark, enabling the identification of work patterns of individual masons. It is intended to publish the research and to make the database available electronically to encourage and facilitate further research. This research will expand our understanding of the construction of these buildings and those who undertook the work by enabling us to identify, at least by symbols, those who were directly involved in their creation. This ongoing research project will engage with local heritage groups and communities to facilitate opportunities to survey buildings in their area and to record, using standardised practice, masons' marks found. This will encourage communities to engage with historic buildings in their area and serves to build a sense of ownership and participation.

Kenny McElroy

(Caithness Broch Project)

Broch to the Future: Community development in Caithness

Caithness: the most northerly county of mainland Britain. This is an historic region, awash with archaeological potential and myriad magical monuments – and yet the county has perhaps not made the most of its historic environment. As Caithness enters a challenging new period 'post-Dounreay', can archaeology assist in ensuring a sustainable and successful future for the region? In this talk, Kenneth will discuss his own research and draw upon examples from Caithness Broch Project in utilizing archaeological landscapes to contribute towards revitalization and recovery, and the ways in which the sector can help to develop a sense of well-being within communities. Though somewhat 'woolly', concepts of identity, pride of place, belonging, mental and physical health can all be bolstered by heritage and archaeology, leading towards more resilient communities. Furthermore, archaeology provides very clear benefits in terms of financial prosperity, bolstering economically-fragile regions such as Caithness. All of this suggests that archaeology is key in sustainable, practical and successful community development.

Patricia 'Iolana

(independent scholar and avocational archaeologist)

A confluence of circumstance: The discovery and excavation of a WWII civilian air raid shelter

In February 2021, extenuating circumstances found us moving into adapted council housing. The property, typically a homeless transition space, boasts an enormous back garden (22m long and over 4m wide) which has been neglected for decades. The bottom of the garden was buried in 4m of overgrowth. Shielding, bored, and keen, I started clearing the space and discovered a brick building buried under rubbish and green waste. Curious, I contacted Historic Environment Scotland (HES) via Twitter and received a DM requesting more photos via email. I was contacted by WWII specialist and archaeological investigator Allan Kilpatrick who informed me that I had indeed discovered something quite unique: a WWII civilian air raid shelter built in 1942. Collaborating with Kilpatrick, my site excavation began in earnest in May 2021. Kilpatrick's research indicates this shelter may be a local variant unique to Falkirk Council area and possibly my road – only two remain standing (the other crumbling). It appears to be an early design as it is more complex having two entrances for two households, a dividing wall, escape crawl space, knock out window, all-brick construction with a poured concrete roof and slab, and a brick baffle wall to protect the entrance as there is no evidence of a door on the shelter. The shelter has been untouched for decades, and with my excavation now complete, it has been added to CANMORE. This presentation will examine the excavation from find to clearance and what comes next for this community archaeology/heritage management and protection project.

Paul Murtagh, Phil Richardson, Kieran Manchip & Helena Gray (Archaeology Scotland)

Prompting social well-being through participatory archaeology

Archaeology Scotland has a long track record of carrying out archaeological investigations alongside a range of communities. Traditionally this work would have been considered standard community archaeology practice with little attention paid to the non-archaeological benefits of such practice. Increasingly however the work that Archaeology Scotland undertakes is specifically aligned to broader themes to do with education, training, health and well-being and community development. This paper will outline two recent case studies of Archaeology Scotland's work. "Playing the Past" concentrated on the sporting heritage of the south side of Glasgow, a part of the country with several underlying social issues. By engaging "New Audiences", refugees, asylum seekers and socially isolated members of the community, we excavated the two football stadiums including the First Hampden Park, which was the world's first purpose-built football stadium. In our "Canal College" programme we worked in partnership with Keep Scotland Beautiful, who provide training for young people out of work and education, to excavate part of an 18th century designed garden as well as part of a historic canal system. The participants gained an array of new skills and confidences, a sense of community and new support networks. This paper will outline the processes behind the development and implementation of each of the projects, both of which were designed to engage groups that do not normally have access to heritage. By focusing on engaging audiences in participatory archaeology and in a range of heritage activities there were multiple outcomes for people, place, communities and archaeology.

DAY 1

SESSION 2:

Archaeologies of Climate Change

Nicki Whitehouse

(Senior Lecturer in Archaeological science, University of Glasgow)

How did prehistoric land use impact our climate system? A consideration of European land use at 6000 BP

I will outline how land use affects the climate system and why its important to reconstruct prehistoric land use systems; show examples of land use reconstructions from across Europe and then focus on how this compares with modelled land use data and zoom into Scotland and Ireland to examine the effects here.

Stephen Davis, Knut Rassmann & Julie Gibson

(Lecturer in archaeology, UCD; Romano-Germanic Commission, Frankfurt; UHI)

Boyne to Brodgar: Large-scale geophysical surveys on Rousay in the context of changing climate

The island of Rousay, Orkney is well-known for its exceptional density of megalithic tombs; however, only one settlement site is currently recorded - Rinyo, excavated by Gordon Childe in the 1930s. Rousay is also an island where the archaeology is disproportionately impacted by climate change: a number of important sites are located within the coastal strip (e.g. the brochs at South Howe; Mid Howe; the multi-period site at Swandro). As part of the ongoing 'Boyne to Brodgar' project we have undertaken two seasons of large-scale geophysical survey on the island of Rousay, Orkney, focused on the southern coastal strip and the Sourin Valley, adjacent to Rinyo. This paper will present some of our initial survey results and discuss these in the context of potential climate impacts, especially within the context of coastal archaeology on Rousay.

Annika Mazzarella

(MSc, University of Glasgow)

Creating synergy within the nature/culture dichotomy: An interpretivist introduction to 'museum ecology' and the 'spiritual materiality' of marine mollusc shells in Scottish museums through a Scandinavian lens

To prompt an intellectual interdisciplinary debate on 'museum ecology' – an uncoined term for the current emergence of museum exhibitions addressing climate change awareness specifically through ecology – my dissertation intrinsically bridges the gap between archaeological theory and practice by examining the nature/culture dichotomy through personal experiences, interpretations and reflections. By using a holistic research (and writing) process and conducting interpretive systematic and explorative fieldwork in museum and natural contexts, I create synergy – theoretically and literally – to explore “How can the materiality of marine mollusc shells be used to address ocean exploitation in Scottish museums?”. With the overarching focus on our societal collection practices of eco-facts, I use Scandinavian Scotland and Medieval objects – in relation to glass display cases – as a comparative lens to re-conceptualize materiality theory to include 'spiritual' elements and address marine mollusc shells as cultural artefacts – highlighting the lack of collaboration in environmental studies.

Tom Dawson and Joanna Hambly

(University of St Andrews and The SCAPE Trust)

Coastal communities and climate change

Heritage sites transform over time and natural processes play a major role in that slow decay. Climate change will lead to damage at faster rates and many coastal landscapes will be at increasing risk. For the past twenty years, SCAPE has worked with coastal communities to locate, record and monitor vulnerable sites, and this paper will discuss some of the different projects, highlighting the benefits of working with local groups at sites threatened with destruction.

DAY 1

SESSION 3:

New Research Directions

Edward Stewart

(PhD candidate, University of Glasgow)

Repopulating upland landscapes: constructing new narratives of shieling practice in Gleann Leac-na-Muidhe

Based on recent survey and excavations in Gleann Leac-na-Muidhe, Glencoe, this paper will focus on approaches to reinterpreting this upland landscapes as a case study for producing narratives of the Post-Medieval upland landscape which repopulate - rather than rewild - these landscapes. This is done with the aim of acknowledging the harmful impact of past archaeological and cultural narratives of upland emptiness on contemporary communities

Lucy Killoran

(PhD candidate, University of Glasgow)

Testing a lo-fi prototype GIS plugin for survey automation by machine learning: Interim results from a first-iteration workshop

The applications of Machine Learning (ML) and Computer Vision (CV) approaches for automating elements of archaeological survey, prospection and landscape archaeology have been demonstrated by multiple studies. These studies show an emerging approach to automation by ML/CV in which workflow processes traditionally essential to archaeological survey practice are not explicitly included, such as the use of contextual information to help decide on the classification of an object. Several new software tools, both open source and proprietary, which facilitate the use of ML/CV for geospatial data analysis in a relatively accessible way have recently become available, however there is not yet consensus on the way that these technologies can or should integrate with current archaeological workflows and interpretive practices.

This research project aims to understand the impacts of ML/CV technologies on workflows for archaeological survey. With these technologies evolving at a rapid pace, it is important to clearly define the current and future needs of archaeological survey practitioners in relation to these tools. To do this, this research will gather feedback from user testing of software prototypes to envisage effective workflows for archaeological survey enabled by the integration of ML/CV approaches. This presentation will discuss recent work in engaging survey practitioners in defining some functionalities and outcomes relating to automation that would be a valuable integration into their current and future workflows.

Cara Jones

(Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA))

Rethinking how we create archaeologists: Aim 5 of Scotland's Archaeology Strategy

The recent results of Profiling the Profession (published by Landward Ltd) has highlighted yet again at the lack of diversity within the archaeology profession, leading us to ask is there is a better way to create and develop the archaeologists of the now and future? This paper gives an overview of the work of CIfA in Scotland supporting the delivery of Aim 5 of Scotland's Archaeology Strategy. This work includes developing new entry routes into the profession and rethinking how up upskills our existing our archaeologists.

Shalen Prado

(PhD candidate, McMaster University)

Microbotanical analyses across Pictland - preliminary findings

Paleoethnobotanical approaches allow archaeologists to investigate human-environment relationships through the collection and analysis of plant remains. However, within many prehistoric and early medieval sites in Scotland, the macrobotanical record is significantly impacted by acidic soils and preservation biases. By targeting more durable microbotanical residues (i.e., phytoliths and starch grains) contained within archaeological sediments and artifact residues, paleoethnobotanists can avoid some of these preservation biases to reconstruct the botanical relationships between past peoples and their proximal plant communities. My doctoral research focuses on the Picts and asks how did the Picts secure their foodways? Were Pictish foodways influenced by external cultural groups? How were plants and plant products distributed across Pictland? Furthermore, what can botanical residues tell us about activity areas within Pictish sites? I collect sediment samples from intact floor layers and extract microbotanical residues adhering to artifacts (e.g., pot sherds) and teeth (e.g., cattle and pig) to examine the distribution and use of plants at Pictish archaeological sites. In this paper, I present my preliminary findings of microbotanical residues from Pictish sites, and use this data to interpret seasonality, Pictish foodways, raw material resource collection, movement through the landscape, and dwelling patterns. For example, microbotanical remains extracted from animal teeth recovered from Pictish sites (e.g., Mither Tap, Burghead and Craig Rock) will be presented to provide further insight on pastoralism and farming practices within Pictland.

DAY 2

SESSION 1:

New Approaches to Old Material

Colleen Batey

(Visiting Fellow University of Durham (St Johns College and Archaeology) and Hon Research Fellow UHI)

Orphir, Orkney: A Norse Economic Hub, looking back over the decades

The 1970s in Orkney's archaeology was a period rich in exploration and discovery: the early days of environmental archaeology, the beginning of interdisciplinary study. The Norse site of the Earl's Bu in Orphir provided tremendous potential and large quantities of material to develop techniques of analysis in terms of economy, environment and consumption under the control of the Norse Earls. In the ensuing decades scientific analysis has changed our understanding of the Norse in Orkney – estate management, feasting, local importing and consumption, on site processing of grain as well as expanded the scale of wider contact through trade and possibly tribute.

Hazel Mosley

(PhD candidate, Queen's University Belfast)

Landscapes of production: Exploring the palaeoenvironmental context of stone tool quarrying, manufacture, use and deposition on Neolithic Shetland

During the last decade, new radiocarbon dates and reanalysis of Shetland sites long suspected to be Neolithic, such as Ness of Gruting and the stone buildings at Scord of Brouster, has suggested an early Bronze Age chronology. This challenges previously held beliefs about settlement and land use during the Neolithic, creating a gap in our understanding of this important period. More recently, radiocarbon dates from felsite stone tool quarries in North Roe and a cache of polished axes and knives at Modesty in West Mainland have indicated extensive quarrying and distribution networks in the early to middle Neolithic. Polished felsite axes and knives are found across the archipelago, suggesting widespread settlement activity. A review of the palaeoenvironmental and archaeological data has shown north-west Mainland has a wealth of Neolithic archaeology and limited palaeoecological coverage, something this project seeks to redress. This paper will summarise existing mid-Holocene palaeoenvironmental studies, which show considerable local variation in tree pollen and the timing of grass and heathland expansion but are mostly focussed on south and west mainland. It will then outline the project aims to for new palaeoenvironmental investigations targeting areas associated with felsite production and use in north-west mainland. Through fieldwalking and auger survey we have identified deep peat with potential for preserving a Neolithic sequence and begun a programme of pollen analysis. This supplements a re-evaluation of the palaeoenvironmental sequence and chronology at Scord of Brouster, using a previously collected peat core. The project will also integrate new and existing pollen data, using geospatial analysis and visualisation to explore vegetation cover across Neolithic Shetland.

Samantha Ferrer

(Sonraitch Project Collections Officer, CnES)

The 'Sònraichte' Project: Improving the knowledge and management of the archaeology collections of the Outer Hebrides

Museum nan Eilean (MnE) is the main repository for archaeology collections of the Outer Hebrides. As part of an HLF funded heritage project, the museum aims to build a fit for purpose store for the collections, which would allow creating a learning resource centre for the public, making its collections accessible. For this matter, the 'Sònraichte' Project aims to improve the collections management and increase the knowledge of the archaeology collections held at the museum. By using current standards and guidelines for the recording of archaeological materials and create new ways to promote through social media and open days, the museum aims to achieve accessibility to its archaeology collections showcasing the collections and the work that goes behind the scenes, giving a new insight for potential research of old data. Results to date show a lack of documentation standards where data is organised differently from assemblage to assemblage; different levels of post-excavation work giving wrong descriptions to finds; and incomplete assemblages. Issues that are getting resolved within the project standardising the documentation of finds with detailed descriptions and locating missing objects. The project will prepare staff to exploit the collection for research and dissemination enquiries. An up-to-date catalogue and inventory will help to understand the needs for a new fit for the purpose store. Replicating the 'Sònraichte' Project will make the Scottish archaeology collections even more accessible and resilient using current methodologies and standards to gather new information from past excavations and finds.

Louisa Campbell

(Lord Kelvin Adam Smith Leadership Fellow in Archaeology, University of Glasgow)

Breaking down (mural) barriers and scholastic legacies: Discovering new dimensions to the Antonine Wall distance sculptures

Focusing on Roman distance sculptures from the Antonine Wall, this paper develops innovative multi-disciplinary approaches to old material. Antiquarian observations on this iconic body of evidence have stood the test of time, remaining unchanged, and unchallenged, for centuries. Recent close engagement with the collections has led to the, potentially controversial, unravelling of golden Antiquarian threads woven through interpretations and the subsequent scholastic legacies built upon them. This paper crosses traditional disciplinary divides to take an explorative journey into a more holistic understanding of these sculptures and how they operated in their original cultural context at the margins of the Roman Empire up to their presentation and replication for contemporary audiences. Aspects explored include the deployment of non-invasive technologies to identify and reconstruct original surface treatments; determining divergent distances and new dimensions to deconstruct the frontier; proposing alternative placements of the sculptures; and bursting the bubble of their 'votive deposition'.

DAY 2

SESSION 2:

Innovative Engagement in Archaeology

Gavin MacGregor

(Northlight Heritage)

Archaeological Activation: create, craft & celebrate

The importance of innovation in archaeological practices has long been recognised as a priority in the sector. I will briefly consider why innovation, in relation to engagement, matters more than ever now, and for what purposes do we need to innovate. Through a few examples, I will explore emergent areas of practice which could potentially be important for future innovation in the sector.

Lizzie Robertson

(PhD candidate, University of Glasgow)

Creating sound and place in Scottish Highland landscapes

Representations of the Scottish Highlands have often been subject to romantic notions of the sublime – with landscapes being perceived as empty, wild and rugged. Memorialised pasts have become the focus of many narratives about the highland experience. Such perceptions have a tendency to overlook the archaeological past and present realities of highland life, where landscapes were busy with the activity of human and non-human actors and supported a rich tradition of Gaelic language and culture. Creative and innovative approaches to archaeological methodologies and interpretation have played an increasing role within the discipline, with interdisciplinary collaborations between archaeologists and artists paving the way for new spaces in which archaeology can be a creative process. Parallel to this, emerging forms of immersive technologies present new mediums through which to further explore creative forms of archaeological practice and interpretation. Through the use of immersive soundscapes, my research is about creating new forms of interaction with Scottish Highland landscapes through their archaeological, historical and geographical dimensions, and how this differs to representations that primarily rely on visual stimuli. As part of this practice-based research I will seek to explore the ways in which creative audio experiences, experiments and acoustic reconstructions can engage audiences with the past in emotional, meaningful ways. These augmented and mixed reality experiences can show how such technology can enhance an audience's experience of cultural heritage landscapes, and how immersive audio can play with the lack of visual presence versus sonic presence when it comes to interpreting such landscapes. These contemporary digital interventions will promote more nuanced interpretations of highland life that, as mentioned above, have often been subject to romantic stereotypes and a memorialised past.

Emily Gal

(Lews Castle College UHI; Uist Virtual Archaeology Project)

Uist Unearthed: Exploring applications of location-based Augmented Reality in an island landscape

Uist boasts internationally-significant archaeological sites, exceptional preservation of remains, and diverse archaeological landscapes. Nevertheless, there are few impressive upstanding remains, fewer still with any form of on-site interpretation and limited material in local museums. This is challenging for communities and visitors wishing to engage more meaningfully in Uist's heritage. The Uist Virtual Archaeology Project is meeting these challenges head-on by recognizing that Uist's strengths lie in its buried remains, located in the rich and diverse landscapes of machair and moorland. Created and led by Lews Castle College UHI Archaeology staff supported by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, this innovative digital interpretation project raises awareness of Uist's unique sites and realizing the potential of decades of archaeological research. The first of its kind in Scotland, Uist Unearthed app reimagines seven important archaeological sites along the Hebridean Way in stunning Augmented Reality (AR), offering an exciting trail-based experience for communities and visitors alike. The mixed-media app explores a variety of presentations of complex archaeological data, including stunningly detailed AR reconstructions of sites alongside bilingual information from excavations, animations, audio, and 3D artefact models. Following the launch of the App and first reconstruction, this presentation will reflect on the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing location-based Augmented Reality at heritage sites.

Matt Ritchie

(Forestry and Land Scotland)

To Build a Broch: reimagining an icon of Scottish archaeology

Describing a work in progress, looking behind the scenes of a new outdoor archaeological learning resource from Forestry and Land Scotland. Exploring themes of creative vision, collaborative work, different audiences and brand identity, and reflecting on the relevance of brochs as icons of Scottish archaeology. Have archaeologists created an accessible icon, where imagining the broch builders matters as much as debating their architecture?

DAY 2

SESSION 3:

Nationalism and Identity in Archaeology

Kenny Brophy

(Senior Lecturer in Archaeology, University of Glasgow)

Should Auld Acquaintance be forgot? The anti-Scottish independence Gretna cairn

In summer 2014, during the last throws of the Scottish independence referendum, the then Tory MP Rory Stewart came up with a vision for a monument to the Union, to be constructed at Gretna just metres from the border with England. This monument was built in the form of a Clava Cairn, a Bronze Age style of burial monument found in the Highlands. Called the Auld Acquaintance cairn, it was constructed from stones brought by an army of volunteers from across the UK and capped with pebbles painted with pro-Union messages. The cairn has always been, I would argue, a contested place despite the aspirations of the designer, and in the years since 2014 has become a focus not just for Brexit but also a range of other issues such as rural mobile phone reception. In this paper I will discuss my own engagements with this cairn, documenting the ongoing and contested nature of this monument played out in material form of painted pebbles, vandalism, flags, and public art. I will also explore the wisdom of using prehistory to underpin contemporary nationalist political positions (both British and Scottish nationalisms), and speculate on the future of this cairn during any IndyRef2.

Orla Craig

(PhD candidate, University of Glasgow)

Unwrapping Identity in Early Medieval Galloway

The discovery by metal detectorists of a Viking-Age hoard in the grounds of Balmaghie Church, Galloway in 2014 has prompted fresh study into early medieval Dumfries and Galloway. The Galloway Hoard contains clear evidence of cultural contact around the Irish Sea Region and beyond. The hoard's discovery provides an opportunity to look at the, at this point little-understood, socio-political landscape into which it was deposited. Over the 9th to the 11th centuries, there is practically no historical record coming out of Galloway, but we know we have a number of cultural groups active within the modern county of Dumfries and Galloway, particularly Northumbrians, Britons, Scandinavians and the Gall-Gaidhil. This paper will examine how we can attempt to see identity in the archaeological record and whether the multicultural nature of the Galloway Hoard is a reflection of the landscape into which it was deposited.

Harry Ross

(University of Dundee; teaching artist, producer, and opera librettist)

I, Highland Warrior, notes from autoethnographic performance fieldwork

I'm a writer, producer, socially engaged artist and privileged white man. Driven by a sense of shame, I'm confronting the identity conferred upon me by my forebears' actions. I'm doing this in order to precipitate interdisciplinary discussions about how we tell stories about ourselves and our nationhood. Through this I seek to participate in a new, more nuanced, collective imaginary. I'm examining my ancestry in relation to the hagiography of the Highland Warrior. By performing the distance between reality and fiction I'm attempting to embody complexity in an age of polarisation, to propose new historiographies of ancestry and place. I am researching this through performing the following interlinked actions: 1. Positioning my physical body in relation to memorials of stone and steel that are relevant to the hagiography of the Scottish Warrior. 2. Taking historic art writing that can be considered part of Scotland's martial mythology and performing them outside in ways that delete or change the texts and imbue them with different meaning. 3. Searching for the non-existent traces of my Great Grandfather's culture by (re)creating notions of tangible and intangible heritage that are present in the contemporary Highland landscape. I am at the start of my research journey. I would like to present some actions that I have currently undertaken, hopefully to encourage discussion, critique and new collaborations.

Daniel Hansen

(PhD candidate, University of Chicago)

The semiotics of Pictishness: (Re)interpreting identity in the past and present

Archaeologists interested in social identity or ethnicity often seem to be fighting a two-front battle, grappling with the epistemological difficulty of uncovering ethnic meaning in the past as well as the fraught political uptake of past identities in the present. With early medieval identities taking on particular nationalist salience in the present world, the question of how to reconcile these two poles in the study of Pictish identity remains problematic. One increasingly popular direction in Pictish studies as elsewhere has been to define past ethnicity as a set of meanings largely lost to time, and to avoid engaging with the concept archaeologically. Yet, as many archaeologists have become aware, archaeological narratives continue to be taken up by various publics within ethnic frameworks. Furthermore, archaeologists themselves often continue to employ ethnic logics "in disguise" despite their disavowal. Taking as a starting point the fact that archaeology is social practice, this paper argues that Pictish archaeology can no longer treat the interpretation of signs of identity among past people and the interpretation by archaeologists as discontinuous phenomena. Instead, we must understand both as ideologically regimented semiotic processes of differentiation. The archaeologist does not stand apart from past identities or from present social life, but rather engages in the continuing open-ended (re)interpretation of material signs with respect to social difference. By highlighting evidence of reinterpretation in the early medieval past and by tracing the various scholarly constructions of Pictishness in modernity, this paper demonstrates a continuity of archaeological practice and past ethnic understanding.

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SCOTLAND'S ARCHAEOLOGICAL
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**SCOTTISH
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
FORUM**

Illustration by Lizzie Robertson @lizzierbertson



University
of Glasgow



Forestry and
Land Scotland
Coilltearachd agus
Fearann Alba



HISTORIC
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