

**It has been a very eventful and exciting six months since our last newsletter, so this has turned into a rather lengthy report on our many activities. We hope that you find it interesting reading and that you will contact us with any comments or suggestions you might have.**

The SRP Team, November 2008

### **British Archaeological Awards 2008**

Much excitement! SRP was shortlisted for the 2008 British Archaeological Awards (BAA) in the Best Archaeological Project category. It is a great honour to be shortlisted for this prestigious award which is a showcase for the best in British archaeology and a central event in the archaeological calendar.

The purpose of the Awards is to advance public education in the study and practice of archaeology in all its aspects in the United Kingdom, and in particular by the granting of awards for excellence and/or initiative. The Awards are committed to recognising significant contributions to knowledge and the importance of research, professional standards and excellence, involvement of local communities in the study of archaeology, effective dissemination and presentation of archaeological knowledge, and innovation and originality of approach.

The awards are entirely dependent on the participation of archaeologists whose nominations are used to compile the shortlists in each Award category. Ten different panels and nearly 100 judges, many of them Fellows, have spent the summer sifting and reading up on the people, projects and books nominated by the public and members of the heritage community for the 2008 British Archaeological Awards.

A contingent from SRP and RCAHMS went to the awards ceremony at the British Museum on Monday 10 November. SRP was one of three projects shortlisted for the Best Archaeological Project award, including the Heathrow Terminal 5 project and the Shapwick Project, both large-scale, recently completed archaeological programmes. The award went to the Heathrow Terminal 5 project, with SRP receiving a 'Highly Commended' from the judges and a certificate from Carenza Lewis of Time Team fame.

The BAA Chairman, David Breeze, noted the strong competition for the award and we have subsequently received a letter of congratulation from the SNP Minister for Culture, Linda Fabiani, who wanted to pass on her regards to all the volunteers involved with SRP – she has been most impressed with the commitment shown by so many!

We'll try again in the next round in two years time!

**SRP First Annual Conference, 15 November 2008**

We were delighted that our first annual conference was a complete sell-out. The Birnam Arts and Conference centre was limited to 130 delegates (for the catering), but we ended up with 140. We've had fantastic feedback from many, many of the people who attended the conference – both volunteer and professional – who all seem to have had a most enjoyable and inspiring time. We all certainly enjoyed it very much and were truly impressed by the variety and high standard of the talks and the many displays from local groups. We also had a very entertaining key-note talk from Dr Simon Taylor of Glasgow University. Everyone, without exception, gave a very interesting presentation on their work and, from the feedback we have received, this has really reinvigorated other groups and individuals in their work, so well done all! Details of all the talks are in the conference programme on the SRP website homepage.

As well the talks and displays we had a range of other activities throughout the conference day, including rural craft displays and our IT and Interpretation workshops. I know that many of you who went to these, especially the hands-on sessions of the IT workshops, really benefited from the training. The excellent guidance notes we developed for the workshops will shortly be available on our website Projects pages.

The awards for the SRP photo competition (see below) were made at the end of the conference and followed by a welcome wine reception. About half of the delegates stayed for the conference dinner at the Hilton Dunkeld House Hotel. The Hilton did an excellent job coming to our rescue following the closure of our intended dinner venue, the Birnam House Hotel, earlier in the week before the conference.

Around 60 people also stayed to enjoy our two guided walks on the Sunday; exploring the woodland at Black Spout Wood in Pitlochry with Woodland expert Peter Quelch and Piers Dixon from RCAHMS, and visiting the abandoned settlements at Ballinreigh with Dave Cowley from RCAHMS.

Thank you also to all those who answered our evaluation questions. We shall send the report on these round to everyone once we have compiled them into something more legible.

So we are now starting to think about how we can do something even more interesting and engaging next year...

### **SRP Photo Competition**

The conference also signaled the end of our photo competition, launched last October when the SRP website went live. Three winners have been chosen every month and our panel of judges selected a final shortlist of three from this pool in October 2008. The three finalists were informed but the overall winner (selected by Professor John Hume, Chairman of RCAHMS) was not announced until the conference.

There was a very high standard of entries throughout the competition, and the quantity of photos we received each month has grown substantially over the last year as more people found out about the competition. It seems a shame to stop now, and we may run something similar in the future. The judges chose three excellent, and contrasting, photographs by Jackie Wilson (Poolewe), Liz Forest (Kinlochewe) and Hamish Jack (Edinburgh). These will be displayed on the SRP website home page during December. We will also display all the winning photos from the whole year in our photo gallery on the SRP website.

The three finalists each received a free RCAHMS publication of their choice and 250 postcards of their photo, printed specially for them. The overall winner, who will receive a free flight with the RCAHMS Aerial Survey Team (when weather conditions allow), was Jackie Wilson. Liz Forest also received the same prize for her consistently good entries every month. We will manage to fit them in the pane together, with an RCAHMS aerial photographer – and a pilot!

If you would like the photo competition to continue, or something similar to be run, please let us know what you think by emailing us at [srp@rcahms.gov.uk](mailto:srp@rcahms.gov.uk).

### **School projects**

School involvement in SRP has really taken off this term with primary schools in Raasay, Applecross and Dunkeld each receiving a two-day visit from the SRP Interpretation Officer. Each project has had a classroom visit and talk to find out about the rural past in their local area and visited an abandoned settlement to sketch, measure and draw the remains. The schools are going to continue studying the topic as part of their curriculum and produce exhibitions for the local community to show the work they have been doing and what they have learnt about their local ruins. Further school projects are already being planned for the spring. If you know of a local school near your project that would be interested in investigating their rural past, please email Brian Wilkinson, SRP Interpretation Officer at [brian.wilkinson@rcahms.gov.uk](mailto:brian.wilkinson@rcahms.gov.uk).

### **SRP Projects**

Still going strong! A further nine projects have been launched since the beginning of May, now bringing the total number of SRP projects to 43. This continues to demonstrate the huge interest across Scotland in discovering and improving our understanding of our rural past, and also suggests that the momentum generated by existing SRP projects is inspiring new groups to start their own fieldwork.

New projects include the Frackersaig Farm project on Lismore; Pairc Historical Society on Lewis, recording the blackhouses at the site of Cleiter village, and the Spittal of Glenmuick project, investigating sites on the Balmoral estate. In Skye, the Camuscross project is investigating the history of pre-clearance land use and its effect on settlement patterns, and in Argyll the newly formed Strachur Historical

Society is investigating building remains and local history for the township of Strachurbeg.

While new projects are being set up, others are coming to completion. Four projects have been completed in the last three months, bringing the total now finished to seven. Congratulations to all those who have completed their projects; the records you have created are of an excellent standard and all at RCAHMS are most impressed. All completed work is now publicly accessible through Canmore and is already contributing to research. Remember also to regularly check our website project pages, which are continually growing as more groups add information about their work – and if you have an SRP project page on our website, do please continue to post your work and photos – this is a great way to share you ideas and we are getting very positive feedback about this part of the website.

### **Fieldwork training courses**

Since the last newsletter we have been busy carrying out fieldwork training for volunteers the length and breadth of Scotlan. Over 140 more volunteers have now been trained in field survey techniques, which brings to total number of volunteers trained to over 500. Fieldwork training courses have included the following:

**11-12 April 2008** Gairloch and Poolewe Heritage Groups, Naast, Poolewe;  
**10 May and 16 June 2008** Pentlands SRP Group, Thriepmuir, Pentlands;  
**17-18 May 2008** Strachur Local History Society and Here We Are, Loch Fyne;  
**24 August and 9 November 2008** Kinnettles and District Heritage Group, Holemill, Strathkirbit;  
**29-30 August 2008** Sleat Historical Society, Calligarry, Isle of Skye;  
**19-20 September 2008** Pairc Historical Society, Cleiter village, Isle of Lewis;  
**9-10 October 2008** Spittal of Glenmuick township project, Balmoral Estate, Aberdeenshire.

As ever, we have been fully supported on these training courses by our colleagues within RCAHMS, who provide their insight and experience into interpreting each of the sites and pass on the skills they have learned through years of surveying in the field.

Details of future training courses are posted on the SRP website What's on page as soon as we have dates and venues fixed.

### **Historic Document Research training**

A two-day training course was successfully completed on **28-29 July 2008** at RCAHMS. Sixteen volunteers from existing or proposed projects attended this

popular course, which, as always, was heavily over-subscribed. The course will be repeated in Edinburgh on **11-12 December 2008** and again on **20-21 July 2009** in Edinburgh. We are currently also investigating taking the course to Inverness in winter 2009 – your thoughts on this would be helpful. This course introduces participants to the many archaeological, documentary and historic sources available to help research historic rural settlement sites. Full course details will be available from the SRP team in November, but you can submit a note of interest in the course now by emailing [srp@rcahms.gov.uk](mailto:srp@rcahms.gov.uk).

### **SRP Exhibition**

We have had a new travelling exhibition created for us by our designer Martin Tilley in late August. This exhibition focuses on the training SRP provides and features photographs of training in progress, as well as examples of volunteer work and quotes from training evaluation. The exhibition will be on display at venues around the country and we hope that it will inform people about the impact SRP is having and the contribution our volunteers make in building the record on rural settlement.

### **Project Ability Exhibition**

Over the summer the SRP team set up a project with a group from Project Ability, a Glasgow arts charity working with people with mental illness and learning difficulties. Assisted by the Association of Certificated Field Archaeologists, we investigated and drew farmstead remains in East Renfrewshire, and travelled north to visit the Highland Folk Museum and township remains in Glen Banchor. During each of our site visits the Project Ability team made preliminary drawings that were later developed into artworks and displayed at our exhibition in their studio gallery during Scottish Archaeology Month. The highly creative artwork produced in response to the site visits was of an extremely high standard, and we hope to continue working with Project Ability in future.

### **NTS Trailblazers**

Another project with a new audience took place in August. The SRP team developed and completed a one-day landscape survey training session with a group of eleven 16 -17 year olds as part of the National Trust for Scotland Trailblazers camp. Trailblazers is the NTS conservation volunteer programme for young people. Together we investigated settlement remains at Dalvorar in Glen Dee and undertook site interpretation and landscape analysis to make clear the impact human activity has had on forming the landscape visible today, and the value in preserving archaeological remains. The feedback we received from the young people was very positive and our aim is to offer archaeological input to future Trailblazer camps elsewhere in Scotland. This is an age group that is very rewarding to work with but can be difficult to access, so we are delighted to have this partnership with the NTS.

### **Volunteer initiatives**

Many of our volunteers have had an active summer and early autumn taking part in outreach activities for Scottish Archaeology month and the Highland Archaeological Festival, among others. These include an extensive exhibition by the North of Scotland Archaeological Society at the Strathconon games, housed in a marquee which they had borrowed for the occasion; an exhibition of fieldwork results by the Pentlands SRP group exhibited at the Pentlands Regional Park visitor centre, and five guided walks led by different SRP volunteers in Assynt, Gairloch, Moidart, Bute and Glenmuick. We want to encourage every group to spread their findings to a wider audience and we can offer you advice on how to do this. If you have any ideas you'd like to discuss about presenting your SRP project, please contact Brian at [brian.wilkinson@rcahms.gov.uk](mailto:brian.wilkinson@rcahms.gov.uk).

### **Funding streams**

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) has launched the Rural Direct Service to help rural communities access funding. This may be helpful for those seeking funds through the Scottish Rural Development Plan (SRDP) that has recently become both more complicated and richer in opportunities for communities. For more information contact 0845 8388598 or email [info@ruraldirect.org.uk](mailto:info@ruraldirect.org.uk). Visit the website at [www.ruraldirect.org.uk](http://www.ruraldirect.org.uk)

### **Field manual**

The SRP Volunteer Survey Manual is being updated at present following consultation with volunteers and a review of how it ties in with our fieldwork training courses. It is undergoing a rewrite to include more case studies by volunteer groups and will reflect more fully the range of techniques in which we train SRP participants.

### **BBC and other media interest**

BBC Radio 4 have taken an interest in the work of SRP and have been busy recording a series of four programmes based on SRP projects over this autumn. "Ankle-high histories" will feature projects and many volunteers in Mull, Glen Clova and Glenmuick, Strathconon and Killin, uncovering fascinating discoveries about the ruins, the people and the participants. The programmes are due to be broadcast in Spring 2009. We will send out an email nearer the time to let you know when to tune in. You may also have seen coverage in the Sunday Herald about the Scotland's Rural Past project at Balisgate on the Isle of Mull. The article reported on a previously unknown early Christian chapel site, discovered by Bev Langhorn and Hylda Marsh in the course of their SRP field survey. RCAHMS staff worked with Bev and Hylda and other members of the local community to make a detailed record of this site. This chance find has captured the imagination of the media and has turned

# SRP Newsletter

## Edition 4

### Autumn 2008



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out to be a real success story, so if you spot anything unusual while out in the field, be sure to let us know!

#### **And finally – the SRP website....**

This is growing and (we hope) improving all the time, so do continue to use it and to let us know if there's anything you would like to see added to it. In addition to our updated survey manual, which will be available on the website, we are also currently working on our illustrated glossaries for rural buildings and landscapes, and on 'culturally modified' woodland landscapes, which will all be downloadable from the website.

For those of you that have been adding material to your SRP project webpages (and in some cases struggling with glitches in the website), we now have comprehensive guidance notes to help you build you webpages and to show you how straightforward it really is (honest!) to add new images and text.

**Our next newsletter will be in May 2009.**