

SRP Newsletter

Edition 8

Winter 2010-11



A belated Happy New Year from the SRP team, and all our best wishes for 2011. It has been another very busy six months for the SRP project and this bumper newsletter gives a round-up of all that's been going on since the summer. There has been a wealth of work undertaken by our participants, and we would like to thank everyone taking part for the many and varied contributions you have made, enabling SRP to become the noted success that it is. As ever, if you have any ideas or suggestions for our next (and final) newsletter, please let the team know by the end of August. Our final newsletter will be sent out in September 2011.

Scotland's Rural Conference 2010

The SRP Third Annual Conference took place on 30 October 2010 within the comfortable surroundings of Crieff Hydro, which all the team thought conducive towards a very successful and interesting event. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to gather our SRP participants together in the one place to share our discoveries and insights once again. It is always hugely satisfying for us at these events to talk with so many of our SRP groups and get personal feedback and comments from you. We hope you too managed to share your findings with acquaintances old and new.

Over 150 SRP volunteers and professionals attended, and were treated to a key note talk by broadcaster Dr Fiona Watson on 'Everyday life on the land' followed by 13 insightful talks from a varied cross section of ongoing and completed SRP projects. The conference dinner on the Saturday night was well attended and, together with the guided walks the following day, allowed the SRP team to meet and talk at length with many of our volunteers with whom we rarely get to see face-to-face.

Our conference was such a resounding success thanks to the hard work contributed by our speakers and exhibitors in providing a range of informative, entertaining and thought provoking talks and displays. Our thanks go out to all the speakers and to all the groups who created displays; once again they successfully demonstrated the extremely high standard of fieldwork and interpretation within the SRP community. Our challenge is to make the 2011 conference the best yet!

Scotland's Rural Conference 2011

We now have a date for this year's event, so keep your diaries free. Our fourth and final Scotland's Rural Past Conference will be held on Saturday 18 June 2011 and we'll be returning to the Birnam Arts and Conference Centre, at Birnam, Perthshire. This year you'll have to bring your dancing shoes as we'll be following the presentations with an evening dinner and ceilidh at Blair Castle, Blair Atholl. You might like to bring your hiking boots too. In case the dancing doesn't wear you out, on the following day, Sunday 19 June, we will be running a day event for all the family, exploring rural settlement remains on and around the Blair Atholl Estate. This year Sunday 19 is Father's Day and we promise to make it a great day out for all the Dads who come along!

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The conference programme will be available on the SRP website (www.scotlandsruralpast.org.uk) at the end of March. Places will be limited, and we expect demand to be high, so please watch this space and book early to avoid disappointment.

Call for papers

An email calling for conference papers for this year's event went out to all SRP groups in early January. We want our final conference to be a celebration of the fantastic work you have achieved, so we are encouraging everyone to get involved. We would like to have as many SRP projects as possible presenting their work and would especially like to hear from the many projects that have not had a presence at previous conferences.

We are proposing a number of ways in which you could present your project. You are invited to do any or all of these:

- 1. Give a 15 minute presentation**
- 2. Exhibit a display**
- 3. Present a poster**
- 4. Introduce a slide show**

If you have not given a presentation at an SRP conference, please think seriously about giving one this year, regardless of whether or not you have completed your project - we all want to hear from you! However, if speaking in front of an audience fills you with dread, there are alternative ways to present your work: you could put together a display - project displays have been an important feature of all our conferences, you could present a poster and you could prepare a slide show. The SRP team are happy to give guidance on poster and slideshow presentations, please get in touch. As there are so many options for you to present your work, there's no excuse, we would like to hear from you all! We are in the process of putting the programme together at the moment, so if you would like contribute in some way at the conference, please can you let us know as soon as possible.

New faces

Many of you will have met our new SRP team member, Kirsty MacDonald, at the conference in October. Kirsty has taken up a new post, Community Liaison Officer, and will be a much needed additional pair of hands to help the team in the day-to-day running of the project, as well as organising the final conference and assisting SRP volunteers with their queries. Kirsty brings an added dimension to the skills of the SRP team; she is a native Gaelic speaker from North Uist and joins us from helping run the University of Edinburgh's Tobar an Dualchais / Kist o' Riches project: www.tobarandualchais.co.uk,

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which many SRP members should find interesting and useful. Some might also recognise Kirsty from her previous job as presenter of BBC Alba's Talamh Tròcair and Ulaidhean, two programmes which investigated cultural heritage around Scotland.

Later this spring the team will be complemented by a sixth member, as the SRP team and RCAHMS will be hosting a Council for British Archaeology 'Skills for the Future' Community Archaeology Training placement. This 12 month post will be advertised shortly and the successful candidate will work with the SRP team for the remainder of the project to gain experience in the practical aspects of running a community archaeology project. After September they will help supply continuity by assisting Steve Boyle from RCAHMS provide ongoing liaison with SRP participants and validation of site entries.

SRP Projects

Out of the 65 projects started since the beginning of SRP, a total of 33 have now been completed – that's 83% of the target of 40 community projects! We'll be concentrating on bringing the rest of these projects to completion between now and the end of September.

The work these projects have undertaken is already making a difference to the level of understanding of rural settlement in Scotland. As of the end of December 2010 over 350 site records have been submitted, validated and made publicly available through Canmore, – that's over 50% of the number of site entries we originally estimated would be entered during SRP. If you need any help in using the online form, please get in touch with the team. We'll not be resting on our laurels until all the SRP sites are on Canmore.

Projects which have been completed over the last six months are Barry Prater's 'Berwickshire Butterflies' project, investigating Windy Winsheil farmstead in the Scottish Borders, Neil Malcolm's survey of Cuil, in Appin; Barclye RSPB reserve's archaeological survey of Barclye farm in Dumfries and Galloway; Uyeasound Primary school's survey of abandoned croft houses on the island of Unst, Shetland; Bev Langhorn and Hylda Marsh's survey of Baliscate settlement, Mull; Moidart History Group's survey of the Ardnish peninsula in Moidart; David Coleman's investigation of Hill of Fare, Aberdeenshire; Maggie Hancock and Jennie Hynd's investigation of 500 years of settlement at High Mathernock, Inverclyde; and Edinburgh Field Archaeology Society member's survey of farmsteads in the Pentland Hills, Midlothian. Each of these groups has completed the objectives they originally set out to do in their project plans, and many of them have continued to survey new sites and build on experience gained through SRP work. The SRP team would like to congratulate each of these groups for their exemplary hard work and boundless enthusiasm in contributing new entries for the record. Details of each of these projects can be found on the SRP website.

SRP training

Historical document training

Our final SRP historical document training course will be taking place on March 15 and 16 in Aberdeen University. This is the rescheduled date for the December workshop which was postponed due to the bad winter weather. A couple of spaces are available due to cancellations; please contact the team if you are interested. Ten of these courses have now been delivered and we currently have no plans to deliver any more in our final year; however you will find Ishbel's extensive notes, packed with a wealth of useful information on undertaking documentary research within the 'Doing research' section of the SRP website.

SRP Skills workshop

The last of the SRP skills workshops has now been delivered and our evaluation has shown that the workshop programme has been very useful in expanding the range of skills of SRP participants. Our final SRP skills workshop took place at RCAHMS in November and brought together the expertise of the British Archaeological Jobs Resource, Historic Scotland, Archaeology Scotland and SRP to present a workshop introducing the basics of heritage interpretation. While this workshop will not be repeated, if anyone is thinking of interpreting their site and needs help or advice on developing interpretation, our SRP Interpretation Officer Brian Wilkinson will be very happy to advise. Email Brian at brian.wilkinson@rcahms.gov.uk.

Training for trainers

We extended the SRP project's reach to new audiences last summer, with a two-day 'Training for Trainers' workshop on the National Trust for Scotland's Mar Lodge estate. This course was aimed at Young Archaeologist Club leaders and others working with young people, as well as rangers, education officers and other heritage professionals who work face to face with the public. The aim of the course was to improve awareness of rural settlement history and archaeology, build confidence in identification and interpretation of sites, and introduce a range of techniques that could be used for engaging the public with rural settlement remains. The training attracted YAC leaders from across Scotland, England and Wales, rangers from NTS and the Forestry Commission, and local Council officers from Perthshire and the Borders. Our feedback showed that everyone who took part found it a valuable experience that would enhance their work and understanding of the cultural landscape, and enable them to engage with their audiences. A further Training for Trainers course is under consideration for late summer 2011.

SRP Projects

Raising awareness

The last six months have been a fantastic illustration of how the results and benefits of SRP are being made widely available through your communities. A big thank you to all the SRP projects that have sent us details of the events and activities you have organised to raise awareness of your work and your rural heritage. These have included talks to local groups, exhibitions, presentations, guided walks and even several excavations. We are all extremely impressed with the quality and quantity of outreach events and are delighted that SRP has played a role in this. Some examples of what SRP groups around Scotland have been up to include:

Jackie Wilson and Jim Buchanan curated an exhibition of the extensive and high quality work undertaken by the **Loch Ewe Heritage Group** at Naast and other sites in the vicinity. The exhibition went on display in the Gairloch Heritage Museum during autumn 2010, and impressed the SRP team when they visited in October.

The work of the **Noss Head group** was displayed as part of an exhibition on the archaeology of Caithness at Caithness Horizons in Wick during September and October.

Dorothy Malone and Anne MacInnes of the **Gairloch SRP group** attracted an audience of 95 local people to their talk on the crofting township of Port Henderson.

The **North of Scotland Archaeological Society** gave a guided walk of Strathconon during Highland Archaeology Fortnight which highlighted their investigations throughout the strath. NOSAS also exhibited a display of their work exploring the results of the Strathconon project alongside the 'Drovers Exhibition' in the Highland Auction Mart, Dingwall.

Staff and students from the University of Manchester undertook an excavation of the corn drying kiln at Baliscate township, which had been recorded by the **Baliscate Settlement Project**. A plan to undertake full excavation at the early Christian chapel site, discovered at Baliscate by SRP volunteers Bev and Hylda and featured on Time Team, is also being developed.

Also on Mull, the **Craig, Penmore and Kildavie group** have begun excavating Kildavie township with Phil Richardson from Archaeology Scotland's Adopt-a-monument project.

Morlaggan Rural Settlement Group have launched their own website and secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Argyll and the Islands LEADER and the Robert Kiln Trust to allow the continuation of their excavation. The dig will take place every day (except Mondays and Tuesdays) between 23rd April and 19th May. Volunteers are welcome and can register for the dig on the website:

<http://highmorlaggan.co.uk>.

Take part in 2011

In case all these events have inspired you to organise your own, there are a variety of opportunities available to raise awareness of the work you have undertaken, both locally and nationally. If you've already broken your New Year's resolution why not make a new one to take part in an event during 2011 and raise awareness of Scotland's rural archaeology?

Scottish Archaeology Month (SAM) is one of Archaeology Scotland's best loved initiatives. Through SAM, the archaeology of Scotland is made accessible to the public through a programme of free events. There are events for all ages and abilities and a separate SAM for schools events programme.

You don't have to be an archaeologist to organise an event for Scottish Archaeology Month – Past events have included art exhibitions and storytelling on the theme of local heritage, historical reconstructions, talks and slideshows, tours of local sites, churchyards and historic buildings and opportunities to get close to museum collections.

As long as your events are **free**, related to Scottish heritage and take place between mid-August and mid-October, you can register an event as part of Scottish Archaeology Month. If you think you'd like to organise an event for SAM 2011 call Mags McCartney at Archaeology Scotland Telephone 0845 873 3333 or email m.mccartney@archaeologyscotland.org.uk for advice on how you can get involved!

The **CBA Festival of British Archaeology 2011** takes place between 16th and 31st July. The Festival is co-ordinated by the Council for British Archaeology but relies on the participation and support of heritage groups, societies and organisations around the UK. More details are available from the CBA website: <http://festival.britarch.ac.uk/>

Highland Archaeology Festival takes place during October each year and provides an excellent opportunity to present the results of recent field projects and research, raise awareness of local archaeology, history and heritage and encourage people to discover the historic environment of Highland. The dates for the 2011 event are not yet available, but further details are available from the Highland Council Archaeology Unit, telephone 01463 702250 Email: archaeology@highland.gov.uk

Perthshire Archaeology Month takes place in June and offers a month long series of walks, talks, displays and hands-on events focusing on the archaeology of Perth and Kinross. Further details are available from www.pkht.org.uk.

Schools and Young People

Several new projects with schools and youth groups have taken place since the last newsletter, many of which have been prompted by links between the schools and SRP project members.

Hawick Heritage Hub

Brian was invited to lead a tour around an abandoned farmstead in the Borders as part of a project investigating emigration, organised by Scottish Borders Council Archive Service. The visit was made to Shootinglees, near Traquair; a former farmstead, which, when abandoned, became reused and integrated within a now-ruined sheepfold. The emigration project was set up by Sarah Chapman, Education and Outreach Assistant at Hawick Heritage Hub. The project investigated emigration with three Borders primary schools, using archive records to trace the movement of people from the region during the nineteenth century. Shootinglees had been the home of a young woman called Helen Amos, whose records show had emigrated to Australia in the early 1800s. After emigrating, her home must have fallen into disrepair as the farmstead is shown as unroofed on the first edition OS map. The remains of Shootinglees were visited and investigated by pupils from Ettrick and Yarrow primary schools where, the trace of a former byre dwelling was picked out by the pupils from the overlying remains of the later sheepfold, and a story of landscape use was pieced together.

Lost? project, Aboyne Academy

Brian spent three days at Auchtavan township with an entire cohort of S1 pupils from Aboyne Academy, undertaking the fieldwork element of their year-long Enterprise project to record and interpret the township. Despite having one fieldwork day cancelled due to storm force winds, around 100 pupils visited the site over the course of the week and began a plane table survey. Volunteers from the Glen Muick and Braemar SRP projects helped the pupils carry out their recording. The project was visited by Mark Stephen from BBC Radio Scotland's 'Out of Doors' programme who recorded interviews with the pupils and teachers about the work they were undertaking and its relevance to pupils' learning. The project also featured in a double page spread in the Times Educational Supplement Scotland in October.

Threipmuir, Youth Vision

The SRP Interpretation Officer spent two mornings with Youth Vision investigating Threipmuir stading in the Pentland Hills Regional Park and telling them about how people lived and farmed in the past. Youth Vision is an HLF-funded informal education project which uses outdoor learning to assist young people who have low self-esteem, lack of confidence, are underachieving in school, have behavioural problems or are not in employment, education or training. Youth Vision has taken a long lease of Threipmuir, which has been surveyed in detail by the Pentland Hills SRP group.

Gairloch Primary School

On 5 October eight young people from the Gaelic medium unit at Gairloch primary school, their class teacher and one SRP volunteer joined Brian Wilkinson, SRP Education Officer, and Kirsty MacDonald, SRP Community Liaison Officer, on a visit to Port Henderson crofting township. The class was undertaking a project to investigate crofting in the district and, working with the local SRP project, had arranged to visit the modern crofting township and talk with local crofters about life in the past. The

pupils were given a tour around a surviving croft house and byre by two elderly local crofters, and were allowed to handle a range of traditional tools stored in the byre. Kirsty, a native Gaelic speaker, led the discussion on how the tools were used on the croft and how the croft house was built. The class went on to investigate the remains of a corn-drying kiln and a row of fishing cottages on the shore.

Uyeasound Primary School, Unst

Working with SRP, Uyeasound Primary School have mapped many of Unst's ruined croft houses, measuring and recording the site and condition, identifying on a map, plotting GPS grid references and researching census information. One of the crofts surveyed was Valind, the family home of Captain John Gray, first captain of the SS Great Britain. Investigations into this resulted in partnerships with the Shetland Museum and Archives and the SS Great Britain Museum. As well as uploading their research onto Canmore, the pupils created an exhibition in school for the Shetland Hamefarin 2010, an event which welcomes back to the islands people with Shetland ancestry or family connections. An electronic display of the pupils' research has been installed in for the Unst Heritage Centre and, in recognition of their work, the school has been awarded Shetland Environmental Award for 2010.

SRP Website

The SRP website is a useful source of information and guidance on undertaking fieldwork, historical research and site interpretation as well as an ongoing record of what many of the SRP projects have been doing. A study of the web statistics has shown that the website has been used increasingly over the past year, and we have even made an impact worldwide. In June 2010 we received an email from the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., USA, requesting permission to archive the SRP website and add it to the Library's research collections. We were honoured to be included as, according to the email our website is of "historical importance to the Congress and to the American people to foster education and scholarship". High praise indeed! Look out for new additions to the SRP website over the next few months, with details of school projects and the SRP training films due to be added.

Coming soon

Editorial work is in progress on the SRP field survey guide, and the SRP publication which will document the work and impact of the project through case studies written by our participants. The SRP training films are also in their final edit and will be given their premiere in the coming months. The SRP publication will be officially launched at the 2011 conference, and the field survey guide will be distributed in September, with copies of the training videos. The survey guide and training videos will also be made available on the SRP website.

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And finally....

Thanks to everyone's hard work over the last 6 months we are right on target for meeting the SRP project's targets. All the team will be making every effort to help our participants complete their projects over the next few months, with the aim of leaving a lasting legacy of Canmore records and making a valuable contribution to our understanding of rural settlement. **You will be hearing from us!**

Best wishes,

Tertia, Ishbel, Danny, Kirsty and Brian.