

SRP Newsletter

Edition 9

Summer 2011



Welcome to the ninth (and last!) edition of the SRP newsletter. This is a final round-up of all that's been happening over the last six months, and a very busy time it has been!

With SRP drawing to a close in a few weeks, we have also taken this opportunity to tell you about what will be happening at RCAHMS after SRP finishes, and to say a massive thank you to everyone who has been involved in the project, whatever your contribution has been. You have all helped shape the project over the last five years, and have made it into what has become a fabulously successful partnership between volunteers and professionals.

The SRP website will still be accessible after the project finishes, and it will continue to provide valuable guidance and information for people interested in doing fieldwork or research. In the next few weeks we will also be writing to all participating SRP projects with more specific details of what will happen after SRP.

Scotland's Rural Conference 2011

Over the lifetime of the SRP project one of the highlights of the team's year has been the annual conference. It is the culmination of months of planning and preparation to provide the SRP community with a memorable weekend of thought-provoking talks, insightful presentations, practical workshops, enjoyable walks and engaging company. So, given the benchmark set down by previous years, the fourth and final SRP Annual Conference had much to live up to. This year we planned the event to be a celebration of the achievements of the SRP community, and an opportunity to look back and reflect on all the successes that participants and the SRP team have witnessed over the past five years.

Our final SRP Conference was held at Birnam Arts and Conference Centre on Saturday 18 June, and attracted over 150 delegates, both SRP participants and archaeology professionals. Many groups from across Scotland took the opportunity to exhibit displays and to give presentations which highlighted the work undertaken for SRP, as well as showcasing how their investigations have grown into sustainable community archaeology projects which will continue into the future. The poster session within the main auditorium featured posters based on the work of over 20 SRP projects. These gave everyone the opportunity to discuss methods and findings, and more in-depth accounts of fieldwork across Scotland were presented in this year's talks.

With the exception of very informative talks by Professor Richard Oram, (University of Stirling), Colin Maclean (Heritage Lottery Fund), and Susan Kruse (ARCH - Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands), all presentations were delivered by SRP groups. One session was devoted to projects by young people, and included a documentary video made by pupils from Uyeasound School, Unst,

Shetland. The conference also provided the opportunity to launch and distribute the SRP publication, and display the two new SRP exhibitions.

Once the main business of the conference had been completed, the celebrations continued into the night with a champagne reception, gala dinner and ceilidh in the ballroom at Blair Castle. Formal and impromptu speeches were given and the SRP project's many successes were acknowledged by our special guest Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs. Ms Hyslop gave strong praise to the project, commenting on its lasting worth in recording heritage, encouraging community participation, and enhancing lifelong learning.

We rounded off the conference on the Sunday with a guided walk and a 'walk with a difference' in the landscape around Loch Moraig, above Blair Atholl. Luckily the sun shone and we had a glorious day for being outdoors, searching for archaeological clues in the landscape. Both walks ended at an *al fresco* tea party, with tunes supplied by our two talented colleagues, Kirsty MacDonald on the fiddle and Jill de Fresnes on the accordion. Over 30 volunteers had supplied cakes or biscuits for the tea party, and special thanks have to go to Denise Boyle, daughter of RCAHMS' Steve Boyle and Georgina Brown for a wonderful cake decorated to show the entire SRP team undertaking a field surveying training workshop at Auchindrain. This hugely enjoyable day brought together a good cross section of the SRP community and provided an apt and poignant finale to the conference weekend and to the SRP project. Photographs of the conference, the tea party (and the cake!) can be seen on the SRP website conference page, or by following this link: <http://bit.ly/n6cQGZ>.

SRP Publications

The SRP Report, *Scotland's Rural Past: Community Archaeology in Action* has now been published and is available without charge from RCAHMS. It has been written to provide a thorough report on the aims, objectives and outcomes of SRP over the past five years, and the 30 case studies written by SRP participants provide a detailed synthesis of the project's impact throughout Scotland. We have been busy distributing copies to all project participants and partners, however if you have not yet received your copy please email and request one from Kirsty: kirsty.macdonald@rcahms.gov.uk. The publication will soon be available as a pdf on the SRP website.

Final editing of the SRP Manual, *A Practical Guide to Recording Archaeological Sites*, is currently underway and the guide will be published in mid-late September. This will be a companion volume to the SRP Report, and provide practical guidance on undertaking archaeological field survey and recording. It will give useful and useable guidance on recording techniques and is illustrated throughout with photographs and detailed diagrams. In combination with the SRP field survey videos, we hope that

it will provide a continuing practical legacy for SRP, and will inspire and guide many future volunteer-led archaeological investigations. This free guide will be sent out to all participating projects and stakeholders, and will also be available as a downloadable pdf on the SRP website. If you would like one or more copies, please contact the SRP team before the end of September, or Steve Boyle after the start of October. You will also be able to pick copies up from RCAHMS.

RCAHMS Community Liaison

From the beginning of October, responsibility for community archaeology within RCAHMS will pass to the Community Liaison team of Steve Boyle and Amy Gillespie. Many of you will be familiar already with Steve as an RCAHMS field investigator and stalwart of SRP training sessions. He has taken on the role of Community Liaison Manager to provide continuity for community archaeology projects and develop new opportunities. Steve will be assisted by Amy Gillespie, who joined the Commission in April as a recipient of a twelve month Council for British Archaeology 'Skills for the Future' Community Archaeology Training placement. Steve and Amy will be busy organising a community archaeology project in the Aviemore area over the next few months with RCAHMS colleagues and the Cairngorms National Park Authority, and will also be co-ordinating a community archaeology conference in 2012. From October onwards, any SRP or other community archaeology related enquiries should be addressed to the new email: communities@rcahms.gov.uk. The SRP email address will cease to exist, but emails sent to the SRP mail box will automatically be forwarded to the new 'communities' address.

SRP Projects

Out of the 65 projects started since the beginning of SRP, a total of 52 have now been completed, – that's 130% of the target of 40 community projects we originally set out to do! Details of all projects can be seen on the SRP website www.scotlandsruralpast.org.uk. The team are busy following up the remainder of the projects, and validating completed records. As of the end of August 2011 around 800 individual site records have been submitted, validated, and made publicly available through Canmore.

Projects which have been completed since the last newsletter include:

- Haddington's History Society's Walden Farmhouse Project in East Lothian
- Kinnettles and District Heritage Group's Strathkerbet Grain Mills Project in Angus
- John Pickin's Garheugh Fell Project in Dumfries and Galloway
- Peebleshire Archaeological Society's Kilubrie Hill Project in Peebleshire
- Karl Peet's Tin City Project at Wester Essendy, Perth and Kinross

- Buteshire Natural History Society Deserted Settlement Study on the Isle of Bute
- Robin Mason's Rankle Burn Project in the Scottish Borders
- Còmhlán Croag's Croig, Penmore and Kildavie Project on the Isle of Mull
- Comunn Eachdraidh na Pairc Cleiter Village Project on the Isle of Lewis
- Bostadh Archaeological Group survey of Bostadh, also on the Isle of Lewis
- William Reid's Kirkton of Rothiemay Project in Aberdeenshire
- Marjorie MacInnes' Claigan Project in Skye
- Norma MacLeod's Storr Lochs Project in Skye
- Gairloch SRP group's Port Henderson Project, and
- Alastair Weir's North Ayrshire Mills Project.

Reports on most of these projects can be found in the SRP Report, on the SRP website, and in Canmore. Congratulations to them, and to all participants for submitting their findings.

SRP Website

Over the last few months we have been busy updating the Scotland's Rural Past website Learning section with reports on the fantastic work undertaken over the last five years by schools across the country. Looking back it is quite amazing to see what has been achieved; not only investigating abandoned rural settlements with schools from Shetland to Kirkcubrightshire, but also seeing the many creative projects that pupils and teachers have gone on to do following their work with the SRP team.

We are very pleased to let you know that the Schools Projects section is now fully up to date with short reports about each of the outreach projects the SRP team has been involved in. You can see these reports in the Learning section of the SRP website, or by following this link: <http://bit.ly/i9Vrrn>. We hope you enjoy reading them!

Photo Competition

The winner and runners-up in the 2010 SRP Photo Competition were presented with their prizes at the SRP Conference. Runners-up were Ken and Jean Bowker of the Moidart History Group for their picture 'They breed 'em tough in Moidart'. Ken and Jean received a copy of RCAHMS' *Buildings of the Land* and were presented with the book and a certificate by RCAHMS Chairman, Professor John Hume. Also receiving a runners-up prize were the pupils of Uyeasound Primary School for their photo 'Young surveyors from the Uyeasound School, Unst, Shetland, recording GPS data as part of their SRP project'. The pupils received individual prizes of an aerial photograph of their survey area on Unst, along with a

larger print to display in the school. The first prize winner was Sandra Kay, janitor at Arrochar Primary School, on whose behalf a certificate was accepted by Sue Furness and Fiona Jackson of the High Morlaggan Project. Sandra had already taken her prize of a flight over Arrochar and Loch Long with the RCAHMS aerial survey team on a clear day in April. The winning photographs can be seen on the [SRP website \(http://bit.ly/rnQi3G\)](http://bit.ly/rnQi3G). Our congratulations to the winner and runners up, and our thanks to all participants for their excellent contributions to the competition.

Isle of Man Conference

The SRP team were invited to attend and speak at an international conference in Douglas on the Isle of Man at the end of June. Ishbel and Brian, along with Steve Boyle and Amy Gillespie of RCAHMS were guests at the **New Light on Vernacular Architecture** conference which highlighted ongoing studies in Britain, Ireland, the Isle of Man, and further afield. Steve presented a talk about the reasons for SRP and community involvement, while Brian spoke about the survey and recording methods used throughout the project, and also participated in a round-table discussion about community involvement in vernacular architecture. Scotland was well represented in the programme, with ourselves, Bob Clark Development Manager of the Auchindrain Trust, and conference organiser Catriona Mackie delivering talks about different aspects of Scotland's vernacular architecture. Delegates from across the British Isles, Ireland and the rest of the world who spoke to the team were very impressed by what has been achieved, and reference to how SRP has filled a gap in knowledge was mentioned in more than one talk.

In addition to the conference sessions, the team had the opportunity to visit the Manx National Folk Museum at Cregneash, a preserved village of thatched buildings that interprets the Manx vernacular building tradition.

The SRP team was also invited to deliver a field survey training session for Manx locals and members of Manx National Heritage who are keen to survey and record the many tholtans (abandoned settlements) which survive on the island. We spent a very sunny and enjoyable afternoon at Killabrega, a farmstead sited in a glen below Snaefell, teaching observation, sketching and plane tabling. Giving a field survey workshop in the sunshine was very nice for a change!

We hope that the brief introduction to survey techniques will prove useful to our Manx colleagues – they have already been in touch to let us know they have bought a plane table and are looking to source an alidade. We wish them every success with recording the Isle of Man's Rural Past.

SRP Videos

The SRP fieldwork training videos were finished and made available online in April. There are four videos, each lasting between 5-15 minutes and covering techniques for using GPS, field sketching, tape-and-offset, and plane tabling. They can be viewed on the Videos page of the SRP website (<http://bit.ly/gJ4I45>), and also on YouTube (www.youtube.com) and Vimeo (<http://vimeo.com>).

We hope you enjoy the videos and find them useful, even long after SRP has finished. Please let other interested people know about them as well! We would welcome any comments you might have about them, and would be very grateful if you could complete the short survey questionnaire on the Videos page. Thank you to those of you that gave us feedback on the draft videos at last year's SRP conference.

Brian and Amy were filmed talking about their roles for RCAHMS contribution to the 'Day of Archaeology', which gave a snapshot into the working lives of 400 archaeologists. You can see their videos here: <http://www.dayofarchaeology.com/tag/rcahms/>.

Alidades

The Moidart History Group once again have precision-engineered alidades for sale. Full details on their website: <http://www.moidart.org.uk/book/alidades.htm>.

SRP Projects

Morlaggan Rural Settlement Group enjoyed another season of excavation at High Morlaggan, once again involving many people of all ages from their local community in researching and discovering their rural past. Several of the SRP team worked alongside local volunteers in the sun (and rain)! A short report on the 2011 dig can be seen on their website: <http://highmorlaggan.co.uk>.

On Mull, the Còmhlán Croag group have continued their community dig at Kildavie. Working with Phil Richardson from Archaeology Scotland's Adopt-a-Monument project, they have been excavating the township, and planning and photographing the uncovered structures. Interesting finds include a piece of pottery with a preliminary estimated date of 13-15th century, and a potential burial ground. The group has also been hosting school visits and providing tours to describe and interpret the remains. Visitors included a lady from Australia whose distant relatives came from the area, but emigrated to Australia in the late 18th century.

Schools and Young People

At the end of March, Brian visited the Black Isle to work with Tore Primary School, Ross and Cromarty Young Archaeologists, and Inverness Young Archaeologists, in association with the ARCH project on crofting settlement remains at the Heights of Kilcoy. Tore primary school investigated and measured a croft house, and also explored a more ancient farming community in a visit to a nearby Clava Cairn. The Young Archaeologists also visited the croft with Brian and a local farmer, and worked with an artist to create a record of the site's history. Their pictures went on display at the SRP conference.

The LOST? project at Aboyne Academy was selected to provide a case study for the Learning and Teaching Scotland website to help inspire other teachers to undertake similar projects. You can read the case study on the LTS website: <http://bit.ly/oZ7rFQ>. Michael Foy and Jane Summers, the two teachers leading the LOST? project, have also been invited to present their findings to a wider audience at the Curriculum for Excellence Outdoors second annual conference at Glenmore Lodge in October. This event aims to promote innovation and excellence in outdoor learning. It is incredibly rewarding for the SRP team to see this innovative project gain wider recognition within the education sector. We hope it will inspire many other teachers to explore the archaeology and history of their local areas with their pupils.

Final SRP school visits will take place in September when Brian and Kirsty travel north to Arisaig and Acharacle primary schools to work with their pupils and the Moidart History Group.

SRP Equipment

RCAHMS is taking over responsibility for the SRP survey equipment in October. Eighteen of our 24 plane tables, along with sundry other pieces of equipment, are now out on three year loan to local groups. The remaining plane tables and survey equipment are at RCAHMS, where they will be used for training courses and short-term loans. If you have a project in mind and would like to borrow any equipment, please contact Steve or Amy from October onwards at communities@rcahms.gov.uk.

Our Last Bow

The SRP team will get one final outing at the end of September in the very last week of the project. Our Community Liaison colleagues have asked us to join them in Aviemore for a field survey training workshop which they will be holding in collaboration with the Cairngorms National Park Authority. We could hardly say no could we?

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But before we pack away our plane tables and alidades for the very last time, we'd just like to say a word of thanks.

Over the last five years we've achieved so much more than we ever set out to do, and we could not have done any of it without the eager participation, hard work, good humour and camaraderie of the entire SRP community. We've learnt a lot from you all and it has been a real pleasure working with you. We wish you good luck and good weather with your future surveys. Thank you all.

Best wishes,

Tertia, Ishbel, Danny, Kirsty and Brian.



Kirsty, Danny, Tertia, Steve, Brian and Ishbel.