



# ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN PROGRESS CONFERENCE 2026

## *Abstracts and Biographies*

### *Morning Session*

Chaired By Moira Greig, President of Archaeology Scotland

09:00 Registration

09:30 Welcome and Opening Remarks

#### 09:40 - SOUTH WEST SCOTLAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

**Speaker:** Thomas Rees, Rathmell Archaeology

**Abstract:** South West Scotland has been called an archaeological 'black hole'. This presentation discusses our innovative approach to compiling the baseline for the research framework, challenging this notion and guiding future research objectives.

**Biography:** Thomas grew up in Yorkshire before reading Archaeology in Edinburgh. He has over three decades of experience as a field archaeologist, surveyor and consultant, based in Ayrshire. After graduation, he moved around commercial and council posts before establishing Rathmell Archaeology in 2003. He continues to work there, merging that practice into AOC Archaeology Group earlier this year.

#### 10:05 - INVESTIGATIONS AT TARRADALE 2D: COASTAL RESILIENCE IN THE MESOLITHIC OF NORTHERN SCOTLAND

**Speaker:** Dr Ben Elliott, UHI Archaeology Institute

**Abstract:** Results of investigations at an estuarine shell midden in the Beaully Firth, where human activity spans the Storegga Tsunami and 8.2 BP Climatic Event. These will be considered within their local, national and international contexts.

**Biography:** Dr Ben Elliott is a Lecturer in Archaeology at UHI. His research focusses on the hunter-gatherer communities of Mesolithic Northern Europe, with specific interests in socially situated technology, human-animal relations and the role of sound within the experience of landscape. He also studies the influence of the deep past within contemporary society and is PI of the British Academy funded Prehistoric Policies project.

## 10:30 - THE EARLY NEOLITHIC MONUMENTS OF LOCHHILL AND SLEWCAIRN, DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY: BRINGING LIONEL MASTERS' EXCAVATIONS TO PUBLICATION

**Speaker:** Dr Alison Sheridan, National Museums Scotland

**Abstract:** This talk presents the results of recent research shedding new light on the important Early Neolithic long cairns at Lochhill and Slewcairn, Dumfries and Galloway, excavated by Lionel Masters 1969--81 but never published.

**Biography:** Dr Alison Sheridan specialises in the Neolithic, Chalcolithic and Bronze Age of Britain and Ireland. She is currently a Research Associate with National Museums Scotland (NMS), having retired as Principal Curator of Early Prehistory in 2019 after 32 years' working at NMS. She is Vice President of Archaeology Scotland. Her book, 'The Sheridan Collection', which is a compendium of some of her past publications, has just been published by Oxbow Books.

10:55 Questions

11:05 Tea and Coffee Served

## 11:40 - LAND USE, ANTHROPOGENIC SOILS AND HUMAN IMPACT AT DRUMADOON AND MACHRIE MOORS PREHISTORIC LANDSCAPE, ISLE OF ARRAN, SCOTLAND

**Speaker:** Prof Nicki Whitehouse, University of Glasgow

**Abstract:** New multidisciplinary research reveals the Drumadoon cursus, Arran, as an exceptionally preserved early Neolithic monument complex closely integrated with farming landscapes and the ceremonial landscape of nearby Machrie Moors. Arran was a major centre during the Neolithic and across the Irish Sea.

**Biography:** Professor Nicki Whitehouse is an environmental archaeologist and palaeoecologist at the University of Glasgow whose research explores long-term relationships between people, climate, and landscapes. Internationally recognised for her work in environmental archaeology and palaeoecology, she specialises in reconstructing past environments using biological and archaeological evidence to better understand sustainability, biodiversity, and environmental change.

## 12:05 - A BRONZE AGE BURIAL EVENT IN SOUTH-WEST SCOTLAND AND ITS WIDER CONTEXT

**Speaker:** Thomas Muir, GUARD Archaeology

**Abstract:** The discovery of a barrow in Dumfriesshire revealed a mysterious mass burial 3,300 years ago. What was the context for this? And what new insights do recent excavations reveal about life across Bronze Age Scotland.

**Biography:** Thomas Muir is a Project Officer at GUARD Archaeology Ltd. He first joined GUARD Archaeology in 2018 and has directed numerous excavations of prehistoric, medieval and post-medieval archaeological sites across Scotland.

## 12:30 - NEW DISCOVERIES ON THE MACHARS: THE WHITHORN-MAP PROJECT

**Speaker:** Dr Graeme Cavers, AOC Archaeology

**Abstract:** An overview of recent research by the Whithorn Trust, including excavations at a newly-identified Iron Age loch-side settlement, promontory fortifications and the copper mine at Tonderghie.

**Biography:** Graeme Cavers MA PhD MCIfA FSA Scot is a director at AOC Archaeology Group, and oversees the company's survey, Social Value and Innovation sectors. He has worked in Scottish archaeology for over 25 years, directing numerous large scale surveys and excavations, including at Cults Loch, Clachtoll Broch and the Black Loch of Myrton.

12:55 Questions

## 13:10 - LAUNCH OF DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND

**Speaker:** Dr Jennifer Thoms, Archaeology Scotland

**Abstract:** Jennifer will launch this year's volume of Discovery and Excavation in Scotland (DES), highlighting a tiny selection of the many interesting and exciting sites that feature within it. She will also introduce some forthcoming changes that we hope will help us use DES to spread the stimulating stories of Scotland's archaeology to more people.

**Biography:** Jennifer Thoms is the editor of Archaeology Scotland's journal, Discovery and Excavation in Scotland (DES), and has been in post since 2018, before which she worked on the learning team. Continuing the work done by the previous editor, Paula Milburn, Jennifer has overseen changes to how people submit their entries, now mainly done using the OASIS database. In 2025, Jennifer coordinated a consultation across the sector to ascertain the journal's role within Scottish archaeology. The results were very positive, demonstrating that Discovery and Excavation in Scotland still has an important role to play in Scottish archaeology, and we are now eagerly anticipating its 80th "birthday" next year.

13:15 - Lunch

# Afternoon Session

Chaired By Simon Gilmour, Director of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

## 14:10 - TO CURE OR NOT TO CURE: THE ARCHAEOBOTANICAL EVIDENCE FOR WATERLOGGED PLANTS AND PUFFBALLS BEING USED FOR THEIR SUPPOSED MEDICAL PROPERTIES AT THE IRON AGE WETLAND SETTLEMENTS AT CULTS LOCH, BLACK LOCK AND HYNDFORD, SCOTLAND

**Speaker:** Jackaline Robertson, AOC Archaeology

**Abstract:** To outline the role of identifying fungi and plant resources used as a medicine during the Scottish Iron Age.

**Biography:** I am an environmental specialist at AOC and have worked extensively on macroplant and animal bone assemblages dating from the prehistoric to the post medieval period throughout Britain.

## 14:35 - BURNSWARK: THE ONGOING CONFLICT

**Speaker:** Andrew Nicholson, Dumfries and Galloway Council

**Abstract:** Burnswark remains a site evoking ongoing debate, with archaeologists, like the Romans themselves, split into two camps. Ahead of the final excavation season of the Burnswark Project we review the current state of play. Ever since Kenneth Steer suggested in the 1960s that the Roman works at Burnswark might represent a training facility rather than an actual siege debate has continued into the nature of the works. Andrew Nicholson of the Burnswark Project provides insights into the current project post-excavation research and the forthcoming final season of project excavation in 2026.

**Biography:** Andrew Nicholson is the Archaeologist for Dumfries and Galloway Council, and has worked as an archaeologist in the region for nearly forty years. He is co-director of the Burnswark Project, an initially Heritage Lottery-funded community archaeology project, examining the controversial nature of the Roman camps at Burnswark.

## 15:00 - BACK TO THE FUTURE: INVESTIGATIONS TO INFORM THE RESTORATION OF DAIRY WOOD, NEAR MOFFAT

**Speaker:** Dr Coralie Mills, Dendrochronicle

**Abstract:** Dairy Wood is an open grazed woodland near Moffat within Ericstane hill farm recently acquired by Borders Forest Trust. They commissioned this dendrochronology and woodland history study of Dairy Wood to inform their conservation management approach.

**Biography:** Coralie Mills is a dendrochronologist and environmental archaeologist working in Scotland's natural and built heritage spheres. In 2009 Coralie set up her consultancy Dendrochronicle which undertakes heritage tree-ring dating and historic woodland studies across Scotland. She is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of St Andrews.

15:25 Questions  
15:35 Tea and Coffee

## 15:55 - SUBSISTENCE, STATUS AND CONNECTION IN 17TH - 18TH CENTURY ACHNACON: UPDATES FROM THE GLENCOE ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

**Speaker:** Dr Eddie Stewart, Archaeology Scotland

**Abstract:** In this paper we will explore the archaeology of the settlement of Achnacon based on excavations and post excavation analysis from our 2024 and 2025 seasons in Glencoe. Recent discoveries present us a picture of life and death in this settlement across the 17th and 18th centuries including the everyday rhythms of life and subsistence practices, connections, the expression of status, religious and spiritual practices, as well as responses to the dramatic changes of this period including Jacobite risings, improvement and climatic change, and clearance. Our team will present on the archaeology, material culture and preliminary results of soil science we have been conducting at this site, to build a picture of life here over 200 years!

### **Biographies:**

- Dr Edward Stewart is an engagement officer at Archaeology Scotland and affiliated researcher on the Glencoe Archaeology Project (University of Glasgow).
- Amy Hellier is graduate of the University of Glasgow, a gallery assistant at Perth Museums, and supervisor of the excavations, finds and archiving, on the Glencoe Archaeology Project.
- Leonore Kitt is a senior honours student at the University of Glasgow, and excavations and post-excavation (environmental analysis) assistant on the Glencoe Archaeology Project.

## 16:15 - DESIGNING UTOPIA: A COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ORBISTON COMMUNITY, 1825-1828

**Speaker:** Kieran Manchip, Archaeology Scotland

**Abstract:** This paper will present and reflect on Archaeology Scotland's recent work with partners in North Lanarkshire looking at the archaeology of the Orbiston Community, a short lived co-operative Owenite community.

**Biography:** Kieran studied archaeology and history at Glasgow University before undertaking a Masters in Conflict Archaeology at the same university, which he graduated from in 2018. Kieran then went on to work for HARP Archaeology until June 2019 when he started at Archaeology Scotland. Kieran works primarily on the Adopt-A-Monument and New Audiences projects. He is passionate about the difference archaeology can make to peoples lives and their communities

## 16:35 - OLD SCHOOL ACTION: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF GLASGOW'S FIRST CONCRETE SKATEPARK

**Speaker:** Dr Kenny Brophy, University of Glasgow

**Abstract:** This talk will present the results of the first ever excavation in the world of a concrete skatepark, Kelvin Wheelies in Kelvinbridge Park, Glasgow. The skatepark was built in 1977, opened in 1978, and run by the local authority. Despite being hugely popular, and state-of-the art, it was closed by the council in 1982 and, for safety reasons, had to be buried the following year. The skatepark is just about still visible in Kelvinbridge Park close to a more modern (and less exciting) skatepark but was in danger of being lost and forgotten. Survey and excavations in summer 2025, a collaboration between the University of Glasgow and Archaeology Scotland, revealed concrete runs and bowls for the first time in decades. Crucially this work was done working closely with the skateboarding community, including adults who had skateboarded here as teenagers. As well as reporting on results and sharing some of the amazing images sent to us by the public of the skatepark in use, we'll also discuss the value of contemporary archaeology and consider what the future holds for the skatepark. Excavations were carried out with the permission of Glasgow City Council and funded by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

**Biography:** Kenny is a Senior Lecturer in archaeology at the University of Glasgow (where I have taught since 2000) with research specialisms in the British Neolithic, Contemporary Archaeology, and Public Archaeology. I have over 25 years of experience of directing fieldwork projects across Scotland, working on sites spanning the Stone Age up to the 1980s, and have published extensively on a wide variety of topics. Between 2020 and 2023 I was President of the Glasgow Archaeological Society. My most recent book, on The Contemporary Archaeology of Prehistory, will be published by Bloomsbury towards the end of 2026.

17:00 - Questions and Closing Remarks

17:15 - Conference Ends

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