

NEWSLETTER

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Society of Antiquaries
of **Scotland**



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Teachd Fhinn Mhic Cumhaill, 2023
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Welcome

The President Writes...

Today we stand at a defining moment for our Society. We are presented with a unique opportunity to create a new home for our Fellows, our activities and a national heritage hub for Scotland. We have been offered the chance to purchase a B-listed building on Bristo Place, adjacent to the National Museum of Scotland, for a fixed price through the generosity of the current owner. It is a truly exceptional and fitting location, steeped in its own remarkable history and reflecting our close relationship with the Museum throughout the centuries.

In my report in the autumn 2025 newsletter, I informed Fellows about the major funding application that we had submitted to The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Shortly after that was published, we learned that our initial application had been unsuccessful. However, the feedback we received was extremely positive. The Heritage Fund expressed strong interest in the project and recognised the heritage hub's potential to transform the Society's future and strengthen Scotland's cultural infrastructure. They encouraged us to reapply for funding once the building has been purchased, a clear signal that acquiring the property is an essential first step in unlocking wider support from the Lottery and other grant-giving sources.

At our Council meeting in October 2025, there was unanimous agreement that the combination of cost, location, and sustainability represents a unique, time-limited opportunity that must be seized. Council agreed to press ahead with urgency and raise the £1.5 million necessary for the purchase by January 2027. If you have been following the activities of the Society through our monthly e-newsletter, you will know that on 25 January we officially launched our fundraising campaign with an online Burns Night celebration, hosted by Sally Magnusson MBE. By now, you will have received a campaign brochure, and it is up to all of us to help spread the word and champion the appeal if we are to be successful. If you would like to learn more, contact our Head of Fundraising, Deborah Roe FSAScot, at deborah@socantscot.org.

Director's Note

In January we recruited Adam Coates as a fixed-term fundraising officer to support our Head of Fundraising, Deborah Roe to push forward our fundraising appeal to purchase a new home for the Society and a national heritage hub for Scotland. Adam comes to us from his most recent position at Mary's Meals International where he was Philanthropy Officer, and he previously worked as a Grants Officer for Revive MS Support. If you wish to contribute to our campaign, either through a donation or other means, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Once we have successfully raised the required funds and purchased the building in January 2027 we will immediately start working with individuals and organisations to deliver the benefits outlined in our campaign brochure and on our website. Over the rest of this year I will be looking to meet with those who have already shown an interest in working with us in the building. If you would like to be involved, in whatever capacity, I would love to hear from you! Feel free to contact me at director@socantscot.org.



*Artist's impression of the Bristo Place shopfront
Images on this page and opposite © Benjamin Tindall Architects*

This year's events programme has proved interesting and varied, both the public lectures and those reserved exclusively for Fellows. I am lucky enough to be able to hear most of them and receive feedback from the Fellows who attend. The programme has included presentations from some of our most distinguished scholars, including the long-awaited lecture following the Society's publication of *The Archaeology of Finlaggan, Islay* by Dr David Caldwell HonFSAScot, and a reflection on 40 years' study of Edinburgh Castle by Peter Yeoman FSAScot.

Other lectures in the programme presented alternative perspectives or different approaches to the study of Scotland's past. I have received many comments on these, the majority positive. My view is that the Society should reflect the scope of current archaeological and historical research, from the more traditional to the avant-garde, while providing a forum for debate as we have always done. Feedback is always welcome, as are ideas for future events, and I always look forward to meeting Fellows in person and online.

– **Diana Murray CBE MA FSA FRSE HonFSAScot MClfA, President**

In other Society news, as I write we are shortlisting candidates for three new posts funded by Historic Environment Scotland to complete our Regional Research Frameworks for the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF) project. We aim to have a project manager and two officers in post by the time you read this newsletter and we look forward to introducing them to you in the autumn edition.

The Society continues to advocate for Scotland's past and has responded to a recent consultation by Historic Environment Scotland on its properties and collections. We have also contributed to the Steering Group for Treasure Trove in Scotland, and we introduce you to Bobby Sandeman, Chief Executive Officer of the King's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer, later in this edition.

All these endeavours will ensure that we can continue to champion research, promote discussion and protect Scotland's extraordinary heritage for everyone to share and enjoy.

– **Dr Simon Gilmour FSAScot, Director**



Artist's impression of the Bristo Place shop interior, with lecture and exhibition space

Help Us Raise £1.5 Million and Become Part of Scotland's Story

Our £1.5 million fundraising campaign to purchase a building beside the National Museum of Scotland in central Edinburgh and create a new heritage hub for Scotland got off to a strong start on 25 January, Burns Night. We launched the appeal online to Fellows with An Evening of Burns and Ambition, hosted by Sally Magnusson MBE.

For those who were unable to watch it live in January, the recording of the event can still be viewed at www.socantscot.org/burns and the short appeal video can be seen at www.socantscot.org/heritagehub.

As of March 2026, over £100,000 has already been raised or pledged demonstrating the generosity and commitment of our Fellowship. Dr Brendan O'Connor FSAScot, a long-standing Fellow and former Treasurer of the Society, has made a generous donation towards the heritage hub project. When asked why he wanted to support this initiative, Dr O'Connor said:

'The idea of a heritage hub has been under consideration for some time. It was proposed to the Society's Council soon after I became Treasurer. Since then, the Society has taken on more responsibilities, like ScARF, and more staff in its rather cramped offices. These offices are also increasingly difficult for other people to visit, whether Fellows or not. So now that the proposed hub can be brought about, I was happy to make a donation, and I look forward to being able to celebrate our 250th anniversary in the Society's new home.'

Dr O'Connor's words capture both the practical need and the long-term vision behind this campaign.

The building we are seeking to acquire is not simply about establishing a permanent home for the Society. It is about creating a welcoming and accessible centre for collaboration across the sector; a place where national projects can be led, young professionals supported and trained, research advanced, partnerships strengthened, and the public engaged.

In March, we formally launched the campaign to a wider audience through a press launch, supported by local and national media coverage, alongside targeted international outreach.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who has donated so far. All donors, no matter the size of their donation, will be individually recognised in a volume of the



Primary Donor will be recognised with their logo, coats of arms or name featured on the exterior of the building

Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, creating a permanent published record of those who helped secure the Society's future. In doing so, each name will be inscribed into Scotland's scholarly record in perpetuity. To acknowledge gifts of £2,000 or more, we have developed a series of tiered recognition levels. For significant gifts these include naming opportunities and the opportunity for benefactors to have their coats of arms, name or logo formally displayed. Those that do not have a coat of arms will have the opportunity to work with us to design and propose one and present as a petition to the Lord Lyon.

Full details of the recognition levels can be found at www.socantscot.org/heritagehub/givingtiers together with information on how to make a gift.

Spread the Word or Donate

The campaign stands at a pivotal moment. The foundations have been laid, but as we only have until January 2027 to raise the funds, success depends upon sustained momentum. We ask every Fellow to consider the part they can play in bringing this vision to life and to help us spread the word about this remarkable opportunity to leave a philanthropic legacy that will become part of the nation's story.

We would be deeply grateful if you could spread the word about our campaign with your connections in local and national societies, publications, or professional networks. We also encourage you to share the campaign webpage, video or brochure with your own contacts to champion the project. To assist you, we are preparing a communications toolkit containing key messages, images and ready-to-use text, making it as straightforward as possible for Fellows to share the campaign.

We thank everyone who is on this fundraising journey with us. Creating a heritage hub worthy of the Society's pedigree and of the quality of scholarship in Scotland will require a shared effort. It will succeed because people who value our past choose to invest in Scotland's future. Together, we can secure the Society's work for generations of scholars, communities and discoveries yet to come.

To register your interest in receiving the campaign communications toolkit or to find out more about the campaign, please contact me at deborah@socantscot.org or call 07379 121 820.

– Deborah Roe FSAScot, Head of Fundraising

Proceedings (PSAS)

Volume 154 of the Society's *Proceedings* was published on 30 November 2025, and it is now available online at <https://doi.org/10.9750/PSAS.154>. As a Fellow of the Society, you are entitled to exclusive access to all new PSAS papers published online. To access locked content, please use the login details below:

Username: *psas* / password: *Buchan1780*

Keep an eye on our Fellows' monthly e-newsletter throughout the year for notifications of new PSAS articles from Volume 155 as they are published online.

Virtual Journal Issues

In March 2026, the Society published its first three Virtual Journal Issues. These online curated collections offer Fellows and non-Fellows alike a new way to read, engage and appreciate some of the many papers that have been published throughout the long history of the *Proceedings*. The Virtual Journal Issue webpage is now live at:

<https://journals.socantscot.org/index.php/psas/virtual-journal-issues>

The first three issues include introductions written by work experience placements Amy-Jo Kearton FSAScot and Gabrielle Hill-Smith, as well as the Society's Communications & Events Officer, Sally Pentecost FSAScot.

These issues showcase how virtual journal issues can shed light on contributions to the journal from authors belonging to under-represented groups (e.g. 'Research by Women in the *Proceedings* from 1900–50'), allow readers to dive deep into the work of some of our famous Fellows ('Alexander Henry Rhind'), and even give us the opportunity to trace the development of a discipline through PSAS papers ('An Introduction to Scottish Environmental History').

We are now offering Fellows the opportunity to curate their own Virtual Journal Issue on a theme of their choosing. If you have an idea for a Virtual Journal Issue topic, please contact the Editorial Manager at editor@socantscot.org to discuss the proposed theme.

Award Winners

The winners of the RBK Stevenson Award for 2025 were Hazel Moore FSAScot and Graeme Wilson FSAScot for their article 'Revisiting Knap of Howar, Papa Westray, Orkney'. <https://doi.org/10.9750/PSAS.154.1422>

The winner of the Murray Prize for History for 2025 was Shane McLeod FSAScot for his article 'Watching the waters: sentinel sites in the Inner Hebrides and western seaboard of Scotland'. <https://doi.org/10.9750/PSAS.154.1417>

Scottish Archaeological Internet Reports (SAIR)

The following reports have been published since the last newsletter:

SAIR 112 'The re-examination of the Carmahome passage tomb, Isle of Arran, North Ayrshire' by Clare Ellis FSAScot, Matt Ritchie FSAScot and Alison Sheridan FSAScot <https://doi.org/10.9750/issn.2056-7421.2025.112>

SAIR 113 'A Middle Bronze Age settlement near Mauchline, East Ayrshire' by Stephen Cox FSAScot and Fraser McFarlane <https://doi.org/10.9750/issn.2056-7421.2026.113>

SAIR 114 'A Later Prehistoric Settlement and Early Medieval Reuse at Loak Farm, Bankfoot, Perth and Kinross' by Magnus Kirby <https://doi.org/10.9750/issn.2056-7421.2026.114>

SAIR 115 'A Middle Bronze Age Roundhouse at Beaully Substation, Beaully, Inverness-shire' by Callum Murray <https://doi.org/10.9750/issn.2056-7421.2026.115>

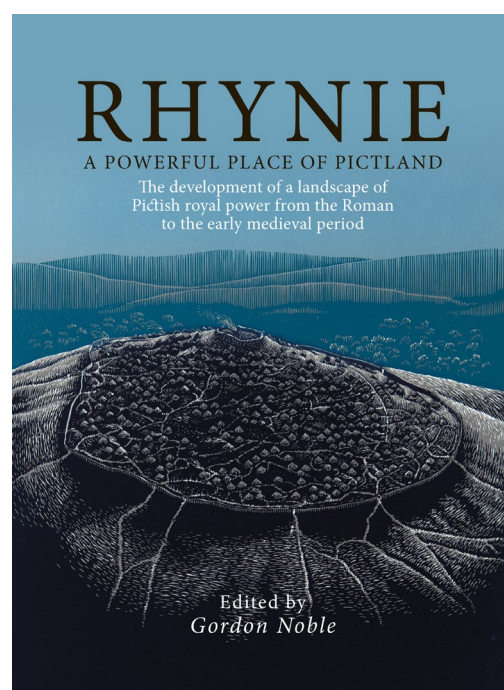
Rhynie, A Powerful Place of Pictland: The development of a landscape of Pictish royal power from the Roman to the early medieval period

by Professor Gordon Noble FSAScot

This publication presents the results of three major excavations in the Upper Strathbogie Valley, Aberdeenshire: the Craw Stane elite complex and the hillforts of Tap o' Noth and Cairn More. Offering a transformative reassessment of power, settlement and material culture in Late Roman Iron Age and early medieval northern Britain, this volume provides the first comprehensive analysis of a Pictish central place complex. Integrating artefactual, environmental, stratigraphic and scientific datasets, it explores themes of rulership, cult and connectivity between northern Pictland and the wider European world. It establishes Rhynie as a key locus for understanding sociopolitical formation in early medieval Scotland and suggests new models for the emergence of polity, economy and identity in Late Roman and post-Roman northern Europe. *Rhynie, A Powerful Place of Pictland* was published on 31 March and retails for £30. As a Fellow of the Society, you will receive 20% off the RRP when logged in to our online shop.

Special thanks are due to everyone who pledged to the crowdfunding campaign for this title. Copies of the book were shipped directly to backers on the publication date and will also be available for purchase on the Society's website for those who missed the opportunity to pre-order this nationally important title.

– Kate Bailey FSAScot, Editorial Manager



© Society of Antiquaries of Scotland



The Dunmore Pineapple, a unique 18th century summerhouse located in the Forth Valley region. Both images © ScARF

Regional Research Frameworks

With the launch of the South East framework last November, the ScARF team has now published four Regional Research Frameworks, with the fifth, the Scottish Islands framework, set to be released this year. We continue to make good progress with the South West and Clyde Valley projects, with draft chapters for both frameworks being prepared and made available on the ScARF website for comments and feedback. We have a busy summer of ScARF events planned with the third CVARF Symposium taking place in Gourrock, Inverclyde, and the second set of SWSARF workshops organised for Ayr and Dumfries in June. Booking is now open to attend these events.

We are also delighted to announce that we have now been awarded funding from Historic Environment Scotland to create the final two Regional Research Frameworks for Scotland. These will cover the Forth Valley and Fife region and the North East of Scotland. Three new members of staff will deliver these highly anticipated frameworks, which will complete the final pieces of our Regional Research Frameworks jigsaw.

Thematic Frameworks

Following three successful Royal Society of Edinburgh-funded rock art workshops in Faifley, Kirkcudbright and Culloden last year, the feedback and discussions from these sessions are now being fed back into our research frameworks. New sections of Future Thinking on Carved Stones in Scotland, as well as our Regional Research Frameworks, will be published this summer. We are hosting a one-day hybrid event at Kilmartin Museum this May to celebrate the launch of these updated sections and discuss the future of rock art research in Scotland – a link to book your place can be found on the ScARF website.

In the decade since the Archaeological Science Framework was published, scientific techniques have developed significantly in archaeology. We are currently updating the framework to reflect these advancements. Updated sections, as well as new case studies highlighting how science can be used to gain more valuable information from archaeological materials, are being worked on and will be uploaded to the ScARF website later this year.



Participants of the RSE-funded Culloden Rock Art workshop assessing the carved stones at Clava Cairns

Contribute to ScARF

Since the launch of ScARF's National Framework in 2012, we have endeavoured to keep our frameworks and case studies accurate and relevant. In order to do this, we rely on archaeologists, students and members of the public letting us know when new information is available. Whether you have information about new radiocarbon dates, a recent excavation or have answered a research question, please let us know and help us keep ScARF up to date.

You can contribute to ScARF by adding inline comments throughout our completed and ongoing frameworks which will be reviewed by our team and incorporated into the website. Adding comments to the relevant paragraphs helps us update specific information and illustrate the value of the feedback to future users. Full instructions for registering and adding comments can be found on the ScARF website.

ScARF Bursaries

In addition to attending various ScARF events this spring and summer, we are happy to be heading out to regional and national archaeology conferences across Scotland, including the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) conference on 28 and 29 April in Edinburgh.

Remember, we offer bursaries year-round to students and early career researchers who require financial support to attend conferences and events relevant to Scottish archaeology. These bursaries can contribute towards registration fees or travel and accommodation costs associated with attending an event. You can now apply directly on the ScARF website using our online application form.

Please subscribe to our e-newsletter for regular updates, or visit www.scarf.scot to learn more. You can reach us at scarf@socantscot.org with any questions about the ScARF project.

– Dr Jennifer Allison FSAScot, Research Officer

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Facebook, Instagram and

Threads [@ScARF_scot](https://www.threads.net/@ScARF_scot)

The ScARF project is primarily funded by Historic Environment Scotland.



Dig It! & Make Your Mark



Cuisine pages from Carved in Stone
© Ilsa Zhang

The Dig It! project has been working towards the Society's strategic aims, with an emphasis on encouraging and improving access to heritage and promoting the sharing of knowledge.

Playing the Past

In November, we collaboratively launched *Carved in Stone: A Storyteller's Guide to the Picts*, an illustrated and comprehensive source of inspiration for anyone interested in Scotland's past. Created over four years by game designers, writers, archaeologists, several Fellows and a diverse group of artists, the project was led by Stout Stoa's Brian Tyrrell and Archaeoplays' Dr Heather Christie FSAScot in partnership with Dig It!.

To buy your own physical or digital copy, visit www.CarvedInStone.scot.

The University of Glasgow's Dr Gareth Beale and the Society's Dr Jeff Sanders FSAScot have also been coordinating workshops which assembled researchers and practitioners from around the world to discuss this exciting area of study through a project called Archaeology Performance Play. More information on this Royal Society of Edinburgh-funded work can be found at <https://archaeologyperformanceplay.carrrd.co>

Top Discoveries

In December, our list of Scotland's 'top discoveries of the year' was read by thousands after being covered in the national press. The story included Neolithic feasting, a possible Roman siege and a 'supernatural' amulet, and showcased work by Fellows Stephen Jennings, Dr James O'Driscoll, Cathy MacIver and Dr George Prew-Stell.

Dig It! Articles

The team have also commissioned and written more online archaeology articles for the public, including one on extinct animals in Scotland by Dr Alex Fitzpatrick FSAScot and one on Edinburgh Castle by Peter Yeoman FSAScot. Visit www.DigItScotland.com/Discover to dive in.

Follow Along

Sign up to the monthly Digest on the Dig It! website and follow us on social media so you don't miss any future Scottish archaeology updates.

– By the Dig It! Team

Dig It! is primarily funded by Historic Environment Scotland.



Make Your Mark conference keynote speech
© Lexi Hemshaw

The Make Your Mark campaign supports everyone in Scotland to volunteer with history, culture and nature organisations. Hosted by the Society and overseen by a cross-sector working group, the project advances the Society's aims of widening access to heritage and promoting inclusive engagement.

Taster Sessions

Thanks to funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, last autumn Make Your Mark supported two organisations to co-design volunteer taster sessions with people new to heritage volunteering. Uppertunity, a Dundee-based organisation supporting adults with additional support needs, chose to rake a wildflower meadow at Tentsmuir National Nature Reserve, while Edinburgh Young Carers tried their hand at creating a tour for the City Art Centre.

Research Report

In early 2026, Make Your Mark partnered with Our Past, Our Future and Volunteer Scotland to publish the Heritage Volunteering in Scotland research report. The report highlights the wellbeing, skills and community benefits of heritage volunteering, whilst also identifying challenges including skills gaps, limited investment and barriers to inclusion. It calls for greater support and flexibility to ensure heritage volunteering in Scotland can continue to thrive, and underlines the importance of making sure that everyone can get involved.

Inclusive Volunteering Conference

In February, over 200 people attended the Make Your Mark Inclusive Volunteering Conference at Edinburgh Zoo and online to explore how co-creation and collaboration can transform volunteering in the heritage sector and beyond. In feedback, 99% of respondents said that they would recommend Make Your Mark events and one attendee reflected: 'It was an excellent event; I felt challenged, encouraged and inspired.'

Stay Connected

Subscribe to Make Your Mark's monthly e-newsletter for volunteer organisers, or explore volunteer opportunities at www.makeyourmark.scot.

– Erin Burke FSAScot, Make Your Mark Co-ordinator

Make Your Mark is primarily funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.





Left: Inverness Old High Kirk. Right: Lizzie Swarbrick FSAScot, Research Manager, welcoming people to Whitekirk © Scotland's Churches Trust. Below: a panel discussion at our Launch Symposium © Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

Research in Action on Church Heritage (ReACH)

When we launched the ReACH project in partnership with Scotland's Churches Trust last year, we knew that the issue of church closures touched the lives of many in Scotland. However, the team have been overwhelmed with the number of people keen to engage with the project. Some have ties to a particular church, others are specialists, and even more are simply concerned about the potential loss of community spaces and heritage that can happen when a church closes.

In Scotland, around 300 churches have closed since 2020, and another 757 churches are currently at risk of closure. Since last autumn, we have visited churches across the country, listening, learning, and working hard to bring people together to deal with this urgent challenge to Scotland's ecclesiastical heritage.

Since our Launch Symposium in September 2025, when we heard 20 lightning talks on a variety of topics connected to Scottish church heritage, we have been building relationships across the heritage sector. We have established a Heritage Action Group so that people involved can come together to tackle this issue, sharing resources, expertise, and data.

Also in September last year, we undertook our first pilot study at Inverness Old High Kirk, where this landmark building is at a crucial point in its transition to community ownership. We visited East Kirk, Inverness, the Kirkmichael Trust, and Cromarty East to see a variety of churches, from medieval to Victorian, each at different stages of their transitions to new uses after they ceased operating as churches. Overall, the team have visited 14 different churches since the project began to learn more about at-risk heritage, to find out how closures are affecting communities, and to offer our support.

Behind the scenes, we have been working on a database which, when launched, will create a publicly accessible central point for information on the heritage and social value of Scotland's churches at risk of closure. The goal is to collect existing data and new findings together, all in one place, so that everyone in the sector can plan and work proactively, not reactively, to protect and record the heritage, whenever a historic church changes use. Communities will be able to use it to research their own church, so that they can promote and advocate for the brilliant heritage for which they care. It is a huge

undertaking, but important work for the Society to lead on.

In February, the ReACH team joined volunteers from Scotland's Churches Trust for our second pilot study, to carefully record the heritage of St Mary's, Whitekirk, in East Lothian. Now managed by Whitekirk New Life Trust, the community invited us in to take a look at their brilliant church, and to hear their memories. We welcomed more than 200 people on our open day, who came out to join heritage tours, hear musical performances, and share how much the church means to them.

Activities were created to elicit memories and there was space for people to share their stories. Locals told us about how the church has been their special place of solace during difficult times, families searched for their names in the cradle rolls, ex-ministers recalled cold days writing sermons in the tiny vestry, enthusiasts came to expound on the 15th-century architecture, the Lorimer furnishings, and the spellbinding Karl Parsons windows. We hope that by working together with communities and organisations across the sector, we can ensure that church heritage, like the wonders found at Whitekirk, is preserved and celebrated for generations to come.

Visit www.churchheritage.scot to learn more and sign up for ReACH events in 2026. If you have a particular interest in churches and would like to feed into the project in any way, please get in touch by emailing churches@socantscot.org.

– Dr Lizzie Swarbrick FSAScot, Research Manager

ReACH is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Pilgrim Trust.





Bronze Age cairns in a deforested landscape in Perthshire
© Foresight Group

Supporting Research

Supporting research into Scotland's past to increase understanding and promote further enquiry is one of the key aims of the Society. You can read more about the ongoing work of our nationally important research projects – the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF) and Research in Action on Church Heritage (ReACH) – elsewhere in this issue.

We also continue to award grants twice a year to those wishing to undertake high-quality research into Scottish history and archaeology. We are pleased to share in the following pages summaries of recent projects carried out by our grant recipients over the past few years. Dr Jim Gledhill FSAScot reports on his archival research into Scotland's nuclear past, while Dr Mélanie Cournil has written about her research into William James Hooker and his association with Glasgow Botanic Gardens.

The Society supports research that covers a wide range of topics from earliest prehistory to the recent past. Our latest grant awards, totalling £20,769, will fund nine more projects, ranging from the post-excavation analysis of a nationally important Mesolithic site in the Highlands through to a community project to investigate 19th-century salt pans in Fife.

We are particularly grateful to friends and family of the late Dr Euan Mackie for continuing to support a legacy fund in his name. This year an award was made to help cover the costs of radiocarbon dating and micromorphology of soil samples from two Iron Age roundhouses at Achtercairn, Gairloch, which were excavated as part of a local community project.

Other projects funded earlier this year are:

- **The Cairns Excavation Project** – to support the costs of excavations at this significant broch site in Orkney.
- **Lismore** – the illustration of nationally important finds from this early monastic site in Argyll and Bute.
- **North East Dendrochronology Project** – continuing to support the dating of wood at the early medieval site at Burghead in Moray.
- **Mesolithic Tarradale** – post-excavation analysis of Mesolithic finds from Easter Ross.
- **Experimental Archaeology at Portmahomack** – building vellum processing tank to test methods of parchment making that may have been used at this early medieval monastery in Easter Ross.



President Diana Murray and the Dorothy Marshall Medal winner, Christine Yuill, at the Society's 2025 AGM
© Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

- **Hinge-mounding Archaeology** – testing walkover survey methods in a prehistoric Perthshire landscape following ground preparation for forestry.
- **Nave Island** – the dating of possible Viking skeletal remains from Nave Island, Inner Hebrides.
- **Out of the Salt Pan, Into the Firth** – a community project to survey and investigate St Monans' salt pans.

The two annual application submission deadlines for grant funding are **30 April** and **30 November**.

We are also pleased to have supported two recent lectures through our Regional Fund Buchan Lecture grant. Dr Lucinda Dean delivered a lecture and skills workshops on understanding historical manuscripts at Dunkeld Museum in Perthshire, and Fellows Professor Ian Armit and Dr Lindsey Büster gave a talk, *Close Encounters with the Dead* at the Covesea Caves, at Elgin Museum in Moray.

Dorothy Marshall Medal

Every three years the Society awards the Dorothy Marshall Medal to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to Scottish archaeology in a voluntary capacity. At our AGM in November, we were delighted to award this silver medal to Christine Yuill FSAScot who has volunteered on excavations since 2003, as well as with the National Museum of Scotland carrying out a range of archival and post-excavation tasks. She has made sustained and valuable contributions on the post-excavation work for sites including Birnie and High Pasture Cave, has digitised and catalogued thousands of historic photographs, transcribed George Petrie's Orcadian notebooks, and worked through boxes of our own Society archives to catalogue and make them accessible to future researchers. For this dedication and her invaluable research work over the last 15 years, sometimes during very challenging circumstances, she is a highly deserving recipient of the Dorothy Marshall Medal.

The next Dorothy Marshall Medal will be awarded in 2028, but we welcome nominations for this prestigious award at any time. Find out more by searching 'Dorothy Marshall Medal' on the Society website.

For more information about how the Society can support your research through a grant or award, please visit our website – or email helen@socantscot.org for more information.

- Dr Helen Spencer FSAScot, Head of Research

Scotland in the Nuclear Age: Archival Research into Scotland's Nuclear Past

By Dr Jim Gledhill FSAScot, Independent Historian

In 2024, a Society grant enabled me to undertake archival research into Scotland's nuclear history. I explored many exciting sources to understand the deeper social implications of nuclear technology; in particular, the historical importance of non-metropolitan areas in Scotland's nuclear age.

National Archives, London

In April 2024, I spent two weeks working at the National Archives in London. I was able to study the deliberations of the Festival of Britain's Scottish Committee around the atomic energy display at the 1951 Exhibition of Industrial Power in Glasgow. I now have a more nuanced view of the intellectual rationale for the Glasgow exhibition's portrayal of atomic energy, as well as the wider economic and political contexts. This informed my examination of Scotland's participation in the first British nuclear power programme, which led to the first Scottish civil nuclear power station opening at Hunterston in 1964.

In the National Archives, I also consulted a range of military sources pertaining to nuclear weapons and the armed forces' plans for defending Scotland against nuclear attack by the Soviet Union. These included the Air Ministry's plans for the Scottish elements of 'Operation Rotor' (1950–7), a scheme for renovating the Royal Air Force's control and reporting system and one of the most ambitious defence infrastructure projects in British history.

I gleaned that Scotland, and the Highlands and Islands in particular, featured far more prominently in strategic planning in this period than I had hitherto realised. In fact, 'Operation Rotor' prompted a northerly reorientation of Britain's air defences, which became integral to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's early warning system as it developed in the 1960s and 70s.

Additionally, I looked at RAF operations record books for units stationed in Scotland to fill certain gaps between official plans and how they were implemented on the ground. This gave me fresh insights into the strategic and tactical dimensions of air defence in the nuclear age. I also gained new perspectives on the social life of the RAF in Scottish rural communities, units' impact on local economies and how local people perceived them. From the RAF unit diaries, I discovered more about the role played by aircraftwomen of the Women's Royal Air Force and Women's Royal Auxiliary Air Force in this period, breaking some new ground. Fellows can read more about this in my article in PSAS 154.

I also uncovered more about the history of the Royal Artillery Guided Weapons Range in the Outer Hebrides, the site of the first tactical nuclear weapons deployment in Scotland. My research findings will be published in the journal *Northern Scotland* later this year.

Nucleus Archives, Wick

In May 2024, I travelled to Caithness to conduct research at the Nucleus Archives on the Dounreay experimental fast breeder reactor programme. Having studied the high-level historical record in London, my aim was to consider the regional impact of nuclear technology on the Highlands.

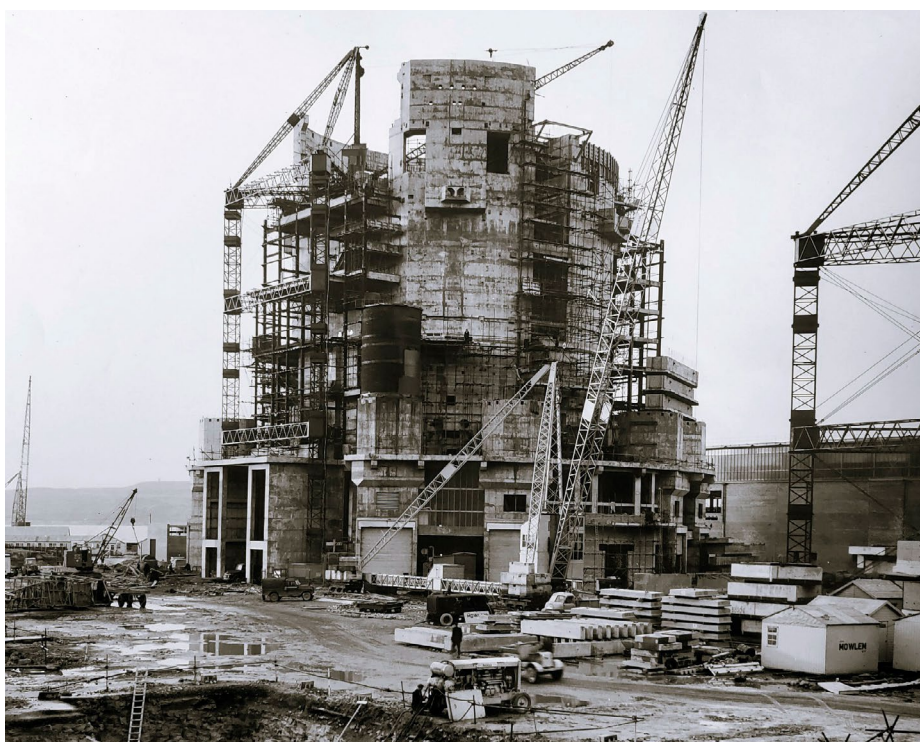
From this I learned a great deal about what communities actually thought about atomic energy, as well as the economics of electricity generation in the Highlands. I was thus able to contrast official thinking on atomic energy with local attitudes to it in a peripheral part of Britain.

As a historian, I think it's important to analyse and relate complex regional situations to the bigger picture and so my research weaves together British government policymaking with local Scottish histories to address national and international questions.

Atomic energy is, of course, not just in Scotland's past. In light of contemporary debates around nuclear weapons, electricity transmission and decarbonisation, the Society has funded research that is both timely and relevant to the general public.

In 2026, Edinburgh University Press commissioned Dr Gledhill's monograph on the history of atomic energy in Scotland, entitled *Nuclear Scotland: Atomic Energy and the Disintegration of British State Power*. <https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/books/subjects/scottish-studies>

Hunterston nuclear power station under construction, c.1959
© General Electric Company



Cultivating Empire: William Jackson Hooker and the Glasgow Botanic Gardens

By Mélanie Counil, Senior Lecturer in British History
at Sorbonne University

William Jackson Hooker (1785–1865) is best remembered as the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, London, a position he assumed in 1841 at the age of 55. While Hooker's London career has been thoroughly studied, references in the literature to his tenure in Glasgow, between 1820 and 1841, are often brief, relegating this formative period to little more than a footnote. Yet the two decades he spent here, as Regius Professor of Botany at the University of Glasgow and Director of the Glasgow Botanic Gardens, were crucial both to his scientific career and the development and growing prominence of the Gardens.

Despite having no formal academic training, Hooker quickly established himself as a popular lecturer and an energetic director. Under his leadership, the Glasgow Botanic Gardens (founded in 1817) flourished, and they became a key site for the circulation of botanical knowledge and imperial connections. Hooker expanded his scientific and diplomatic networks across Europe, North America and British colonial territories, as testified by his impressive professional correspondence (he received around 30,000 letters in his lifetime), now held at Kew Gardens' Library and Archives in London. By the time Hooker left for Kew in 1841, he had built an impressive international reputation through his correspondence and his many publications.

A central focus of my research project is to understand how such professional networks were created and maintained. In particular, his relationship with his father-in-law, Dawson Turner, provides an illuminating perspective on his emerging career. The correspondence between the two men reveals the more intimate side of scientific life in the early 19th century. It contains hundreds of letters sent by Hooker to Turner, in which he discussed his professional ambition, the financial pressures of his career, his editorial projects, and institutional politics. Turner, a banker and fellow botanist, acted as mentor and confidant, offering much-needed advice and helping to bolster Hooker's professional standing.

These letters also underline the important (and often overlooked) role of Maria Hooker (née Turner). A highly skilled artist, Maria assisted with botanical illustrations and acted as an amanuensis, contributing directly to her husband's career. Yet tracing her voice in the archive has proven difficult. Her work is sometimes referenced in her husband's letters, but her own papers are, for the most part, missing (and listed as such in the Wren Library's catalogue in Cambridge). This absence exemplifies broader patterns in which women's intellectual labour has been largely erased from historical narratives and rendered less visible in institutional collections. My research project seeks to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of many individuals to Hooker's professional career – not only Maria, but other female botanists, collectors and illustrators, as well as indigenous plant collectors whose ancestral and local knowledge was essential to the circulation of botanical specimens.

Right: Portrait of William J. Hooker in Joseph Dalton, 'A sketch of the life and labours of Sir William Jackson Hooker', *Annals of Botany* Vol. 16 (1902)

Below: A plate from "Dendrobium pierardi", William J. Hooker, *Exotic Flora*, Edinburgh: William Blackwood, Vol. 1. (1823)



My archival research – supported by a Society grant – has involved piecing together material scattered across multiple repositories and institutions. Hooker's correspondence and personal papers are dispersed and catalogues are sometimes incomplete, rendering the task even more challenging. However, consulting letters in person has made it possible to better understand Hooker's rise to prominence and has offered a very personal and unfiltered perspective on Hooker's views of his tenure at Glasgow University and as Director of the Botanic Gardens. Seen from this perspective, Glasgow emerges not as an incidental period in Hooker's personal story, but as a formative period during which his scientific authority started to take shape.

Acknowledgments:

I am grateful to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland for the financial support, which has been essential to advancing my research. I would also like to thank the archivists at Kew Gardens' Library and Archives, London, and the Wren Library, Cambridge, for their invaluable assistance in locating important archival materials.



Left: Bobby Sandeman with Treasure Trove Unit and policy team pictured beside the Cramond Lioness sculpture
Right: Holding a Bronze Age socketed axe head found by metal detectorists in Dumfries and Galloway. Images © Crown Copyright

An Interview with Bobby Sandeman, Chief Executive Officer of the King's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer

Under Scottish law, all portable antiquities of archaeological, historical or cultural significance are subject to claim by the Crown through the Treasure Trove system and must be reported. The Treasure Trove system operates on behalf of the King's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer (KLTR) to ensure our heritage is recorded and preserved.

As part of our advocacy work, the Society responded to the comprehensive review of the system undertaken in 2024 and is now part of the steering group which will support the KLTR going forward, acting as an independent voice for heritage. We wanted to let Fellows know more about the KLTR by introducing you to Bobby Sandeman, their Chief Executive Officer.

Can you briefly describe your job, the KLTR and the Treasure Trove system?

'As Chief Executive Officer of the King's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer (KLTR), I lead the organisation responsible for dealing with ownerless property in Scotland. A major part of that work is overseeing the Treasure Trove system for archaeological finds.

The Treasure Trove Unit, based at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, records and assesses reported finds on our behalf and helps ensure that museums have the opportunity to acquire the most significant objects. This process helps protect our national heritage so it can be preserved, researched, and enjoyed by future generations. Museums and finders play an essential role in this system. Without their responsible reporting and the conservation of these finds, many important objects, and the stories they hold, would never come to light.

My role is both custodian and enabler of this system, and championing a system that is fair, effective, transparent, and focused on public benefit.'

How has the review and the implementation of its recommendations changed both the policies and operation of the Treasure Trove process?

'In September 2024, the review published 60 detailed recommendations that provided a clear roadmap for modernising the Scottish Treasure Trove system.

One of the biggest changes has been KLTR stepping into a much more explicit policy leadership role, supported by the establishment of a Treasure Trove Steering Group to help guide strategic planning and monitor delivery of the action plan. Operationally, we are strengthening governance, procedures and capacity —

including planned publication of an updated Treasure Trove Code of Practice online by the end of March 2026, and through our ongoing work to standardise data and reporting so performance can be understood consistently.

Overall, the review has helped sharpen responsibilities, improve transparency, and reinforce a culture that supports finders and museums while protecting Scotland's portable heritage for the public.'

What do you see as the potential of the Treasure Trove process into the future?

'I think the Treasure Trove process has enormous potential in the years ahead. We're already seeing more people reporting their discoveries, and I want to build on that momentum by making the system as intuitive and user-friendly as possible. Finders are central to Treasure Trove, and supporting them, through clearer guidance, better information and quicker responses, will remain a priority.

I also see great value in strengthening collaboration between finders, museums and archaeologists. When these groups work closely together, we gain richer context, better research opportunities and ultimately a deeper understanding of Scotland's past.

Technology will help drive much of this improvement. We're developing a mobile reporting platform that will allow finds to be recorded more easily, with better data and faster communication. Combined with clearer policy and stronger partnerships, I believe Treasure Trove can become a more open, responsive and innovative system that protects our heritage and encourages responsible discovery.'

To find out more about Treasure Trove, visit www.treasuretrovescotland.co.uk



In autumn 2025, Fellows visited the internationally important prehistoric landscape of Kilmartin Glen, taking in Dunadd Fort (left) and Kilmartin Museum (right) © Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

Welcome everyone, including new Fellows who were elected to the Society in November and April this year. My colleagues and I hope you continue to enjoy being part of the Society, building new connections and making the most of the opportunities, events and benefits available through Fellowship.

Fellows are the bedrock of the Society, so if you know someone with a keen interest in Scotland's past, please mention the Society to them and ask them to consider applying to join.

Fellows-only Events

Over the past few months since the publication of the autumn 2025 newsletter, Lucy Gibbons (Fellowship and Administration Officer) and I have organised several Fellows-only events including Online Fellows' Meetings and behind-the-scenes tours. For example, in October last year, a guided group tour of the Museum on the Mound in Edinburgh led by Doug MacBeath FSAScot and Gillian Paterson FSAScot, an online talk by Professor Murray Pittock FSAScot on 'Army, Politics and Imperial Policy after Culloden', and an online talk by Dr Sylvia Valentine FSAScot on 'Genealogy and Family History'.

Then, in November 2025, Fellows enjoyed and took part in a behind-the-scenes tour of Historic Environment Scotland (HES) Archives and Library in Edinburgh, and an Online Fellows' Meeting with an update on new research from the Scotland's Earliest Megalithic Monuments project which received the first award from the Society's Audrey Henshall Legacy Fund thanks to a generous bequest left to the Society by the late Audrey Henshall OBE HonFSAScot. More recently, in February this year, Stewart Stevenson FSAScot gave an online talk to Fellows on some of his recent archival research on adulterine births in Scotland.

At the time of writing, plans for several other new and exciting Fellows-only events are developing nicely and are scheduled for the spring and summer. These include a guided group tour of the National Library of Scotland's Map Library in Edinburgh in April, an Online Fellows' Meeting on tracing artefacts in the John Garstang Distributed Collection by Dr Alex Fitzpatrick FSAScot, also in April, and the third Online Writers' Retreat for Fellows facilitated by Professor Heather Pulliam FSAScot in May.

For more information about upcoming Fellows-only events, please visit the events area of the Society website and look out for details in the monthly e-newsletters. Also, if you have ideas for new private tours, online talks or public lecture topics which you and other Fellows would be interested in, please email Andrea Kaszewski, Fellowship and Development Manager, at andrea@socantscot.org.

Hardcopy Proceedings

The Society is an independent publisher of research in Scottish history and archaeology supported by our Fellows. Our publishing activity dates back more than 230 years: the first volume of the Society's transactions, *Archaeologia Scotica*, was published in 1792. We follow in the tradition today by producing research papers, reports and books written by leading experts. The *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (PSAS) is the leading peer-reviewed journal of Scottish historical and archaeological research. Fellows receive exclusive access to all articles in the most recent online editions before they become Open Access after two years. All Fellows also have the option to pay a small fee to receive a hardcopy edition of PSAS every year. To opt in for hardcopy PSAS, please contact fellowship@socantscot.org.

Thank You!

Thank you to you, our Fellows, for your continued support of the Society – be it by sending ideas and feedback, giving talks and taking part in Online Fellows' Meetings and other events, paying annual subscriptions or making additional donations to the Society. Your support is much appreciated and makes a huge difference by helping the Society deliver for both heritage and people.

– Andrea Kaszewski, Fellowship & Development Manager

The Society has been informed and notes with sadness the deaths of the following Fellows over the past few months and offers its deepest condolences to their family, friends and colleagues.

- Dr Pat Dennison FSAScot
- Professor James Curl FSAScot
- Naomi Tarrant FSAScot



HES Archives and Library tour, looking at architectural plans with Neil Fraser © Society of Antiquaries of Scotland



Entrance to the Museum on the Mound, visited by Fellows in October 2025 © Courtesy of the Museum on the Mound

Feedback

Fellows-only events received great feedback:

'Thank you for organising the tour of the HES archives and library and helping to make it the success it was. The place was a delight to visit and our lead who gave the tour brought it alive.'

'Thank you once again for the insightful tour and experience with the HES archives and library team.'

'I took a lot from the tour of HES archives and library. It'll be a big help in a research writing project I'm working on. Thanks very much for organising the event.'

'It was a terrific tour of the Museum on the Mound. I learnt so much and shall certainly return to study the objects and excellent display panels and labels in due course. Thank you all very much!'

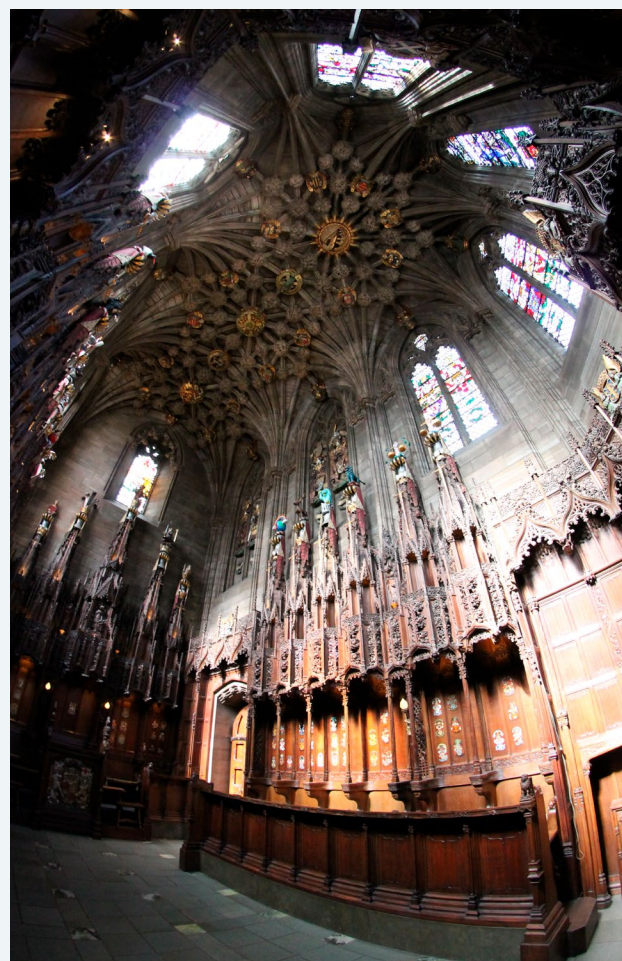
Fellows' Reflections

Elizabeth Roads LVO CStJ HonFSAScot AIH LLB, writes:

'I was encouraged to become a Fellow 40 years ago and I do not regret a moment. The breadth of interest amongst Fellows means that a wide range of Scotland's past is explored each year, be that archaeological or more related to historical culture.

Whilst, as Secretary of the Order of the Thistle and formerly one of Queen Elizabeth II's Herald of Arms, my own my own expertise and research is particularly in the development of heraldry and chivalry over the centuries, I have relished the opportunity provided to expand my knowledge elsewhere. The wide range of topics in the *Proceedings* allows more information to be acquired and disseminated each year and luckily the older papers are easily accessible. I encourage all Fellows to scroll through past PSAS and discover gems such as the 1896 article on the seals of the Royal Burghs. What the Society does is to show how apparently disparate disciplines interact with each other to create the rich heritage that is Scotland.

The extensive Fellowship allows for much cross-fertilisation and for those with a deep interest in Scotland, but perhaps not from an academic background, the opportunity to broaden their interests to new fields. I recall with pleasure meetings in the old Society of Antiquities rooms in Queen Street, a place that felt like home, and it is with excitement that we start the new project to acquire a permanent home for a Society approaching its 250th birthday. My recent election as an Honorary Fellow was a wonderful surprise and I thank the Society on several fronts for being the custodian of our heritage.'



The Thistle Chapel of St Giles' Cathedral Edinburgh By CPClegg, CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons.

Events

Public Events Programme

The Society has delivered a wide-ranging programme of public lectures this year, spanning research into Scotland's history, heritage and archaeology, including the archaeology of Islay and Skye, four decades of research at Edinburgh Castle, addressing Glasgow's colonial histories, bringing the Picts to life and examining queer suffragist gravestones. This season also featured introductory talks by early career researchers on topics related to the headline lectures, strengthening our commitment to supporting emerging scholarship in Scotland.

Our events are offered in a hybrid format, enabling participation both in person and online. All our public lectures remain free and open to all, and we hope you have enjoyed the programme so far.

The Society's public lectures are held at Augustine United Church, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, EH1 1EL.

April Lecture and Fellowship Election

16 April 2026, 6pm (UK time)

This event will announce the results of the spring election of new Fellows, with voting information shared in advance via the Fellows area of the Society website and through email. The accompanying lecture will present the latest findings from the University of Aberdeen's PALaEoScot project, as Professor Kate Britton FSAScot examines Scotland's Late Pleistocene recolonisation, its Ice Age inhabitants and their wider continental connections. *Image, right: View of the Allt nan Uamh valley from inside Reindeer Cave © Kate Britton*



Archaeological Research in Progress (ARP) Conference

23 May 2026, Robert Burns Centre, Dumfries and Galloway

Scotland's annual ARP Conference is being organised this year by Archaeology Scotland in partnership with the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and Dumfries & Galloway Council's Archaeology Service. Please visit Archaeology Scotland's website (www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk) for more information and to book tickets.

Rhind Lectures 2026

Martial Fervour: The Representation of Scottish Officers and Highland Regiments During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793–1815

By Professor Viccy Coltman

19 June 2026, 5pm–9pm, 20 June 2026, 3pm–6pm,

21 June 2026, 3pm–6pm (UK time)

This series of six lectures uses an art history lens to explore the 22 years of near-continuous warfare between Britain and France from 1793 to 1815, focusing on how Scottish officers and Highland regiments were culturally celebrated. It highlights major battles, the deaths of key Scottish commanders and the portrait traditions that shaped their public image. The lectures also examine how idealised military bodies regulated appearance and first-hand accounts informed the commemoration of Scotland's soldiers. *Image, right: Major James Macdonell, c.1804–09, by Henry Raeburn © Museum of the Isles*



Summer Excursion 2026

At the time of writing this newsletter, the Society is putting the finishing touches to the plan for this year's Summer Excursion. Final details will be confirmed by the time this newsletter is delivered to Fellows in April. Information on the excursion and how to book a place will be on the Society website and in e-newsletters in due course.

Recommend a Future Speaker

Have someone in mind you would like to hear speak at a Society public lecture or an Online Fellows' Meeting? Or perhaps you have new research you would like to share with our global audience? We welcome suggestions from Fellows for potential speakers on any topic that supports the study and enjoyment of Scotland's past. Please contact us at events@socantscot.org.

Explore Our Archive of Recorded Talks

Over 300 recordings of Society lectures and talks are available to watch free on our YouTube channel. Subscribe to receive updates when new content is released (www.youtube.com/@SocietyofAntiquariesofScotland).

Updates and Changes

The most up-to-date details on Society events are available on the events page of our website, and we encourage Fellows to check it regularly alongside reading the monthly e-newsletter. To receive the e-newsletter, we need an up-to-date email address. If you would like to subscribe or update your details, please contact Lucy at fellowship@socantscot.org.

– Lucy Gibbons, Fellowship and Administration Officer



An Archaeologist's View of Orkney and Shetland

6 days from £1,895 | Departures: 11th April and 24th August

with an archaeological expert as tour manager (Carol Knott in April and Peter Yeoman in August)

The islands of Orkney and Shetland are littered with archaeological remains. People first came here over 5,000 years ago and many of their remains survive. Research is ongoing here and excavations by archaeologists continue to uncover new information. The islands are therefore of enormous interest to anyone who enjoys first-hand contact with ancient settlements and buildings as well as the people who once lived here.

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Silk scarves and silk ties are available to purchase via the Society online shop. Please visit www.socantscot.org/shop.



Interested in advertising in the newsletter?

The newsletter is sent to Fellows of the Society twice a year (spring and autumn) in digital and hard copy form.

It is distributed to over 1,500 people across the globe and has an estimated readership of c.2,000 people.

The newsletter includes information on a wide range of topics related to Scotland's past, the Society's activities, and news of interest to Fellows.

If you are interested in placing an advert in the next issue please contact the Society by 30 July 2026.

Advertising rates

The content/topic of an advert should be relevant and in keeping with the Society's charitable purposes: to support the study and enjoyment of Scotland's past.

More information and full terms and conditions can be requested by emailing fellowship@socantscot.org.

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Subscription Categories and Rates

Annual subscriptions are due on **1 July** each year. Subscriptions form the Society's core income with which we undertake the Society's charitable purposes and actively support the study and enjoyment of Scotland's past. Fellowship subscription categories and rates are found on our website at www.socantscot.org/join/subscriptions.

How to Pay Subscriptions

If you have any questions regarding payment please contact Jan Paterson, Finance Manager (details on left).

- **BACS** – contact Jan Paterson for details
- **Direct Debit** – Direct Debit Instruction forms are available on the Society website and are for Fellows with a UK bank account. For more information visit www.socantscot.org/support/donate
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- **Standing Order** – Please contact your bank to amend your payment (N.B. The Society cannot amend your Standing Order on your behalf)
- **Cheques** – Should be made payable to 'Society of Antiquaries of Scotland'. This is particularly important for USA Fellows due to new US banking regulations
- **Overseas Fellows** are advised to pay by credit card or via the website (see above) – please *do not* send credit card details by post, it is not safe. We do take foreign cheques, but this is becoming increasingly expensive.
- We also do not advocate sending cash or cashier cheques through the post. Please see the website for current exchange rate details

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The Society can recover an extra 25p per £1 on donations and subscriptions from UK tax payers.

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