

Society of Antiquaries
of **Scotland**

Annual Impact Report

June 2025–May 2026

Founded in 1780 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1783, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland is Scotland's oldest heritage charity and learned society.

For nearly 250 years, it has shaped how Scotland's past is researched, protected and shared. Its early Fellows (members) collected nationally significant artefacts, including the Lewis chess pieces, laying the foundations for the National Museum of Scotland when the Society gifted its collections to the nation in 1851.

The Society has not simply witnessed Scottish history; it has helped build the institutions that carry it forward.

Our charitable vision is simple:

"Scotland's past is for everyone to research, share, enjoy and protect, at home and abroad."



Advancing learning and knowledge of Scotland's past since 1780



Today, the Society is an independent voice for Scotland's heritage, connecting around 2,800 Fellows worldwide and bringing together a global community of scholars, archaeologists, historians, enthusiasts, heritage organisations, grassroots initiatives and local communities. Alongside supporting its Fellows, it delivers nationally important heritage projects across Scotland on behalf of major public and institutional funders, including Historic Environment Scotland and The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

- **The Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF)** is a national resource that identifies priorities for archaeological research, supporting scholars, heritage professionals and community groups to share knowledge and shape future research. Funded by Historic Environment Scotland. www.scarf.scot
- **Dig It!** is a hub for Scottish archaeology that encourages greater public engagement by publishing accessible online articles, developing national initiatives and advertising free or low-cost

Every year, we need to raise £1 million to continue our work across communities in Scotland, and we are indebted to our Fellows, funders and sponsors who have supported us over the past 12 months. Together, we have kept Scotland's past alive and, with your support, will continue to help secure its future.

Find out more at: www.socantscot.org

Image, right: National Museum of Scotland Research Library © Neil Hanna

events from across the sector. Funded by Historic Environment Scotland. www.digitalscotland.com

- **Research in Action on Church Heritage (ReACH)** responds to growing concerns about Scotland's at-risk church buildings and their contents, helping communities and organisations to better understand, protect and plan for their future. The project is led jointly by the Society and Scotland's Churches Trust, with funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Pilgrim Trust. www.churchheritage.scot
- **Make Your Mark** is a national campaign hosted by the Society that aims to increase the number and diversity of heritage volunteers in Scotland. It provides resources and support for volunteer-involving organisations and includes an online platform connecting people with volunteering opportunities. The campaign is overseen by a working group of major stakeholders and funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. www.makeyourmark.scot



Our Impact in Numbers

Heritage can be a powerful catalyst for change. It shapes our sense of identity, brings people together, and supports wellbeing.

By connecting people with the past, we can play our part in helping build a more resilient, inclusive and connected society.

Broadcast, Print and Digital Media

Combined Engagement and Potential Reach

- Across media coverage, publications, websites, digital channels and events, the Society generated more than **3.7 million** combined engagements and potential media impressions during the year, including views, downloads and attendances.
- Extensive coverage of our charitable work in leading media included the BBC, *The Guardian*, the *New York Post* and *Current Archaeology* magazine. The total potential audience for print coverage alone is estimated at over **2.2 million**.

Social Media and Digital

- **20,000+** followers across the Society's social media channels
- **9,100+** YouTube subscribers
- **2,600+** public e-newsletter subscribers
- **5,100+** project e-newsletter subscribers

Advocacy and Safeguarding

The Society made representation to the Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate (SGRPID) in Dumfries and Galloway regarding the possible destruction of historic sites through agri-environment schemes.

The Society worked on the development of a new national Archaeology Strategy and the development of the BEFS manifesto ahead of Scottish elections on 7 May 2026. In support of this work, the Director also published an article in a national newspaper highlighting the decline in funding across the charitable heritage sector.

Publications

- **56,868** e-book downloads
- **6** new e-books, including digitised editions of four out-of-stock titles
- The *Scottish Archaeological Internet Reports* (SAIR) became the *Scottish Historical and Archaeological Internet Reports* (SHAIR) in April 2026
- **5** new SHAIR reports
- **133,109** SHAIR downloads
- **20** articles submitted to *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (PSAS)
- **968,523** PSAS downloads

New Publications

- *The Archaeology of Finlaggan, Islay*, by Dr David Caldwell MA PhD FSA HonFSAScot, published in September 2025: **4,680** downloads and **376** books sold

- *Rhynie, A Powerful Place of Pictland*, by Professor Gordon Noble MA PhD FSAScot, published in March 2026: **5,905** downloads and **700** books sold; a crowdfunding campaign raised more than **£18,000** to fund the printing of the book

Grants

- **18** funded projects totaling over **£30,000**

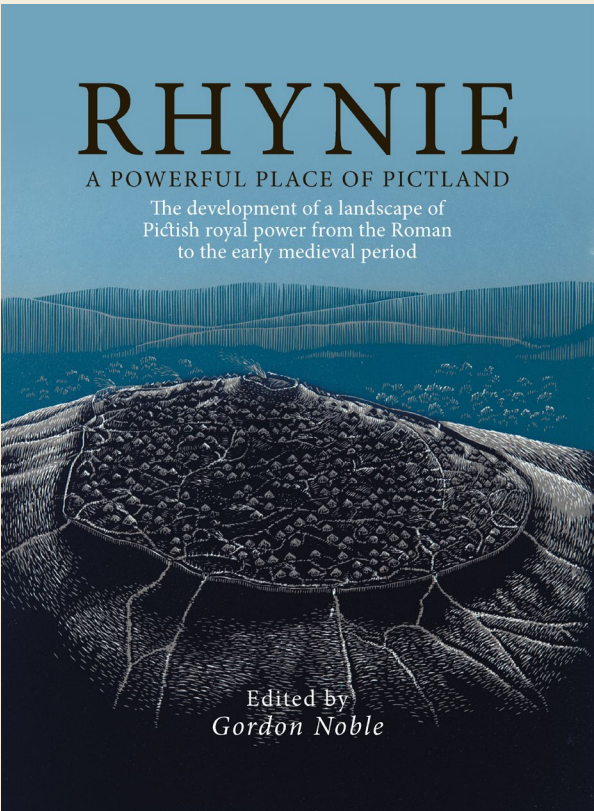
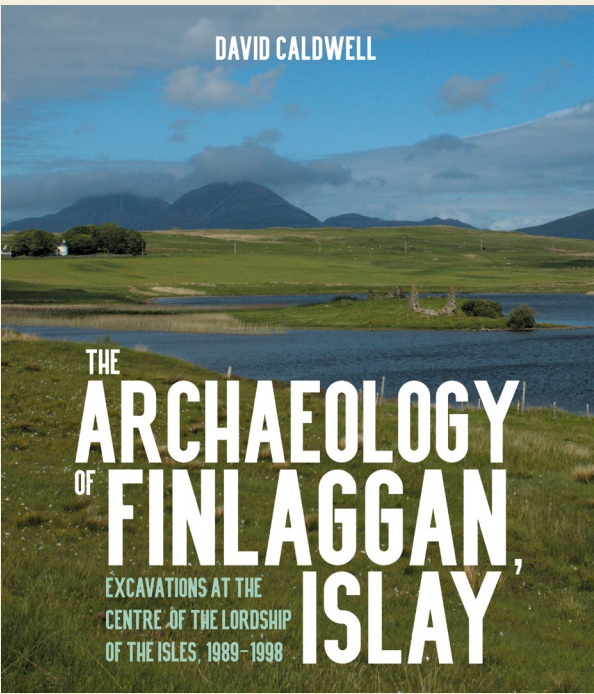
Society grants support a range of activities relating to Scotland's past, from archival and historical research to excavation and scientific analysis. The funded projects spanned time and place, from the Mesolithic to the modern period and from the Borders to Shetland

Lectures and Events for Fellows and the Public

- **7** public lectures, with a total of **589** attendees in person and **924** attendees online
- **6** additional lectures delivered as part of the 2025 Rhind Lectures, attracting **188** in-person and **1,186** online attendees
- **10** online Fellow talks attended by over **480** Fellows
- **62,800+** views of recorded lectures online: **46%** in the UK, **19%** in the USA and **35%** in the rest of the world
- **100** Fellows took part in **8** guided tours of Scottish archives, historic houses and libraries

"The quality of the information that the Society provides to the public, free of any charge, is exceptional. Whether your interests are the Picts or Ahrensburgian Scotland or Atlantic Rock Art, you will find wonderful lectures."

– Public lecture attendee



Project Work

Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF)

- **200** people attended free public events across four council areas
- **205,141** website views
- **320** web pages containing new research resources were added
- The **final chapters** of the Southeast Scotland Archaeological Research Framework were launched
- The **final 2** regional research frameworks are now underway
- Regional Research Frameworks are either complete or underway in **all areas** of Scotland

Dig It!

- **159** free or low-cost public archaeology events advertised
- **92,000** visitors to the Dig It! website
- **19,000** social media followers
- **742,000+** estimated print circulation of news stories for the launch of *Carved in Stone: A Storyteller's Guide to the Picts*, a project led by Brian Tyrrell of Stout Stoa Press and ArchaeoPlays' Dr Heather Christie FSAScot in partnership with Dig It!

Research in Action on Church Heritage (ReACH)

- **94** people attended the launch symposium, online and in person, in September 2025
- **200** people attended the Open Day in February 2026
- More than **8 hours** of oral history recorded from **26** individuals
- **27** organisations involved in the Church Heritage Action Group
- **24** community groups engaged so far
- **6** heritage spotlight blogs commissioned and shared

"I think that we all feel a real sense of renewal as we prepare for the next stage in the life of St Mary's, Whitekirk. Your visit seems to be launching us into the future with hope and confidence."

– Sandra, Whitekirk New Life Trust, following the Open Day

"It was my privilege to be part of the session today with the Research in Action on Church Heritage project. It taught me a lot. Encouraged me a lot. Showed me the importance of what I'm doing. And gave me hope that there are many people on the same page as me."

– Church Heritage Action Group participant, following a meeting

Image, right: Research Manager, Lizzie Swarbrick, giving a tour of Whitekirk Church © DJ Johnston-Smith/Scotland's Churches Trust



Make Your Mark

Hosted by the Society and overseen by a working group of major stakeholders, Make Your Mark supports everyone in Scotland to volunteer with history, culture and nature organisations.

- **80** organisations registered on the Make Your Mark platform, advertising 184 volunteering roles
- **27** events coordinated or participated in
- **200+** attendees at the Make Your Mark Inclusive Volunteering Conference
- A total of **149** member organisations
- **11,000+** views of the Make Your Mark Inclusive Volunteering Toolkit

“This is the best resource I have seen in years!”

“It changed the way I thought about volunteering.”

– Make Your Mark Inclusive Volunteering Toolkit users

Fellowship

- As of May 2026, the Society had **2,812** Fellows
- A total of **219** new Fellows elected during the year: **116** in November 2025 and **103** in April 2026

Geographical Distribution

- UK: **80%**
- Europe: **2.5%**
- USA and Canada: **15%**
- Australia and New Zealand: **2%**
- Rest of the world: **0.5%**

Image, right: A participant at the Kilmartin Rock Art symposium investigating the deer carvings at Dunchraigaig cairn © ScARF



The Heritage Hub Campaign

In January 2026, the Society embarked on a transformative new chapter: the creation of Scotland’s first national heritage hub. The capital fundraising appeal was officially launched on Burns Night, Sunday 25 January 2026, through a special online event broadcast from Broomhall House, the historic home of Lord Charles Bruce FSAScot. Hosted by broadcaster Sally Magnusson MBE FRSE, the evening featured special guests, including renowned Scottish singer-songwriter Dougie MacLean OBE FSAScot, and celebrated the Society’s long history and ambitious plans for the future. Supporters joined the event online from across the world, and a recording of the launch remains available to watch at www.youtube.com/@SocietyofAntiquariesofScotland

Following in the footsteps of the 18th-century antiquaries of Burns’s time, who came together through a shared passion to establish the Society, we are asking our Fellows, supporters and friends to unite behind another ambitious and historic goal.

Our vision is to establish a much-needed national, independent gateway for heritage, connecting the wider public and the heritage sector in one visible and accessible place. By bringing together Scottish statutory bodies, professionals, researchers, enthusiasts, grassroots community organisations and global Scottish diaspora networks, the heritage hub will unlock more effective collaboration, research, learning and knowledge exchange.

The heritage hub will also be a destination where people can connect with Scotland’s past and discover pathways to places linked to their own Scottish roots. This will directly address critical challenges facing the sector and provide the infrastructure needed to build financial resilience, reduce costs and deliver greater public benefit at scale.

We have identified a B-listed building within Edinburgh’s cultural corridor and the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Surrounded by the National Museum of Scotland and other major cultural attractions that collectively welcome more than 10 million visitors annually, and with centuries of history of its own, it is the ideal home for the new heritage hub.

We are now seeking support to secure its purchase. Phase one of the project will cost £2.1 million, enabling the Society to purchase the building. The Society has already committed £600,000 from its reserves, with the remaining £1.5 million to be raised through philanthropy by early 2027. Find out more about the campaign and how to support it on the Society website: www.socantscot.org/heritagehub

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has donated so far.

*Image, right: artist’s impression of the Bristo Place shopfront
© Benjamin Tindall Architects*



About Us

Founded in 1780, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland was formed to provide an independent forum for the study, conservation and enjoyment of Scotland's past, mainly through archaeological and historical research.

The Society continues to help translate Scotland's rich heritage for wider contemporary audiences, highlighting the importance of past and current research.

We achieve this by publishing high-quality books and peer-reviewed papers, supporting independent research with awards and grants, running public lectures and conference programmes featuring leading experts, developing innovative educational projects and delivering sector-leading projects.

Our values of collaboration, opportunity, transparency, research excellence and equality are central to everything we do as a charity.

Our strategy is aligned with national and international priorities, ensuring that our work delivers local impact while also contributing to broader outcomes and goals, including those set out in Scotland's Archaeology Strategy, Scotland's strategy for the historic environment, "Our Past, Our Future", the Scottish Government's National Outcomes and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Royal patronage was originally granted by King George III on 6 May 1783 and continues today under the patronage of His Majesty King Charles III.

With thanks to our funders and sponsors

Historic Environment Scotland, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Museums Galleries Scotland, the Pilgrim Trust, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Forestry and Land Scotland, the Pictish Arts Society, the Marc Fitch Fund, Orb's Community Bookshop CIC, Ordnance Survey, the Hunter Archaeological and Historical Trust, and Finlaggan Islay Single Malt Whisky

A special thanks to the Late Janet Hunter, Mrs M.H. McMillan Charitable Trust, Dr Doug MacKie, Elizabeth Pitts, Elizabeth Ewan and the estate of Gordon Maxwell

A special thank you to all the donations via Kickstarter for the Rhynie publication

In kind partners

National Museums Scotland, Archaeology Scotland, Scotland's Churches Trust, the Prehistoric Society and the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers



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TO GOOD FUNDRAISING
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