6. Scottish Archaeology Month and Doors Open Days (September 2009)

Bruce Henry

As part of the busiest yet undertaken, the tenth anniversary of Scottish Archaeology Month (SAM) had over 230 events taking place all over Scotland. Out of a total of sixty SAM / Doors Open Day (DOD) events in Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire Local History Forum Archaeology Section contributed four major projects in mid-September 2009. Two of these took place on Doors Open Day in the environs of Castle Semple Country Park and demonstrated two aspects of archaeological investigation – excavation and geophysical survey. The other two more extensive projects continued work carried out at Paisley Abbey in 1990 by Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division involving more detailed investigation through further excavation over twelve days around DOD of the area around the “Great Drain”. Over the summer months, laboratory examination of the pottery recovered during the earlier dig was carried out at Glasgow University by an MLitt student assisted by RLHF volunteers.

6.1 ‘Victorian Midden’, Castle Semple Country Park

The location of a previously identified midden in the heart of Parkhill Woods, lying below the western boundary of the old West Park of Courtshaw Hill (shown on the Castle Semple Estate Map of 1780) and the Blackditch Burn, was the site of a demonstration dig carried out by volunteers from the Forum and attended by up to 50-60 visitors over the course of the day.

A steep bank, possibly enhanced by quarrying, descends to a section of mapped track which encircled the western policies of the Estate. Between the track and the burn, a low mound of eroding midden was detected by the Country Park Rangers some years ago, lying at some distance from any known settlement source. It was decided to open a trial trench to assess the possible extent, dating and the nature of the contents of the feature.

The visible extent of the mound is about 4.0m x 3.0m and about 0.2m high, dropping down through scrub and trees to the Blackditch Burn. The upper, east end is possibly truncated by the successive relaying of the track which limited any confirmation of its relationship to the track to avoid potential damage of the latter. The lower, west end appears to terminate at a continuous bank of material along the east bank of the burn resulting from successive seasonal scouring.

The surface of the mound offered evidence of the fragments of glass and ceramic transfer ware which first alerted the Country Park Rangers. The contents of the midden as revealed in the assessment confirmed a moderately rich selection of material from possibly the early nineteenth to twentieth centuries.

Although still to be fully evaluated, finds included twentieth century melamine blue ware, red and blue earlier transfer ware, a good selection of late nineteenth / early twentieth century medicinal and household ware, clay pipe bowls and stems, a possible early nineteenth century base of a wine or claret bottle, two graded stoneware jars (no inscription), a quality cast iron candle bracket and other cast iron lighting fittings. These possibly come from a series of discrete depositions which probably require further investigation.

Figure 12: Trench at Castle Semple being excavated by Ian Marshall (*S Clancy*)

The trench also revealed a cast iron pipe or artefact spanning the exposure area, at a depth of about 0.3m, the purpose and nature of which is unknown. While the material appeared to be thinning out at a depth of about 0.5m the trench was not bottomed due to time constraints. A section was drawn in the time available at day's end, but suggested complexities would require further work.

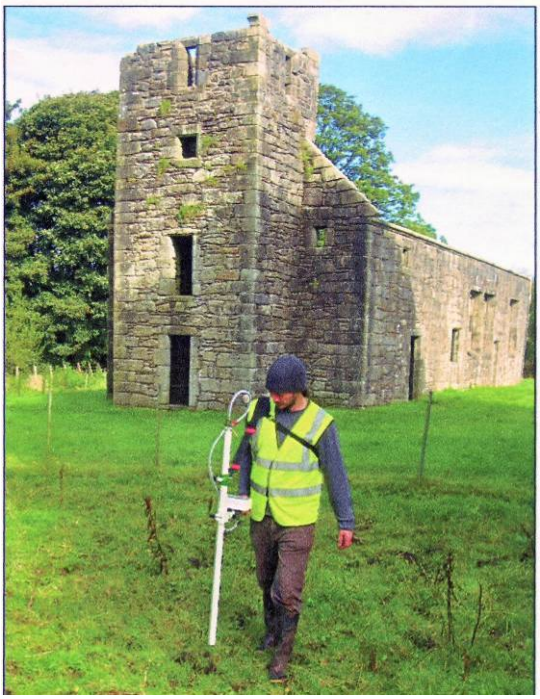
The material seems to represent a typical rural midden of the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. The items of cast iron wall furniture suggest that these components came from a domestic environment of some quality. However the siting and purpose of the midden, located in a comparatively remote part of the estate remains a mystery.

Acknowledgements
The evaluation was carried out by Stephen Clancy, Ian Marshall and Scott Jacobson (*Archaeological Heritage Services*) in fine autumnal weather. RLHF would also like to thank the Rangers of the Castle Semple Country Park for their assistance in identifying the site and bringing it to the attention of RLHF and for allowing the opportunity to investigate the site and also for providing transport during the day.

6.2 Castle Semple Collegiate Church Geophysical Survey

In collaboration with Renfrewshire Council and Historic Scotland, a Geophysical survey was undertaken by Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT) across an enclosed field, surrounding the remains of the Collegiate Church at Castle Semple.

The objective of the survey was to assess the area, using fluxgate-gradiometer and resistivity, for the presence of buried building remains and other areas of potential archaeological significance.



The Fluxgate-gradiometer survey was completed over the majority of the survey area, followed by targeted resistivity used to investigate areas identified by the magnetic survey as potentially of archaeological significance and within the interior of the collegiate church's enclosure, where magnetic survey was not feasible. A data structure report was produced to present the results of the geophysics; provide interpretation of the data and recommendations for further investigation. This note summarises the data in the DSR.

Figure 13: Fluxgate Gradiometer Survey underway by Dr Oliver J.T. O'Grady

Survey area and archaeological background

The survey area comprised of a wedge-shaped field, presently used for rough grazing, surrounding the west, south and east sides of the enclosed late medieval collegiate church. Potential for significant archaeological remains in the area was in part identified on the basis of historical accounts referring to additional ecclesiastical buildings dating from the sixteenth 16th century.

The collegiate church was founded in 1504 by John, Lord Semple, and its consolidated remains are designated a Scheduled Monument. Canons serving the church were recorded in the 16th century as being in possession of residences nearby to the church. Recent cartographic research has indicated that multiple buildings once existed to the south and west of the church in the early eighteenth century.

In the early twentieth century the Dalry to Johnstone railway line was constructed, bordering the survey area to the south. This caused the re-routing of a historic trackway, which originally passed to the south of the collegiate church and was visible on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of the area. A modern farm roadway now borders the survey area to the north. During the latter history of Castle Semple estate the survey area was given over to smallholdings. Buildings relating to these properties are visible on 1930s private oblique aerial photographs. Demolition of

these buildings was remembered by the predecessor of the current landowner. On this basis the survey area has potentially been the location of settlement during the sixteenth, eighteenth and twentieth centuries although activity on the site may have spanned the intervening centuries [1].

The combination of standard magnetic and electrical resistance surveys identified the potential location of building remains which may comprise demolition debris and at least partially robbed foundations. The presence of historic woodland and the apparent lack of modern ploughing activity on the site mean it is unlikely that substantial disturbance has occurred across the area in recent years.

The following areas were selected to provide the most useful comparative information within the limited time commissioned for the electrical resistance survey.
a) anomalies G4 and D4
b) an area of apparently geological readings on the west side of the survey area.
c) the interior of the church enclosure.

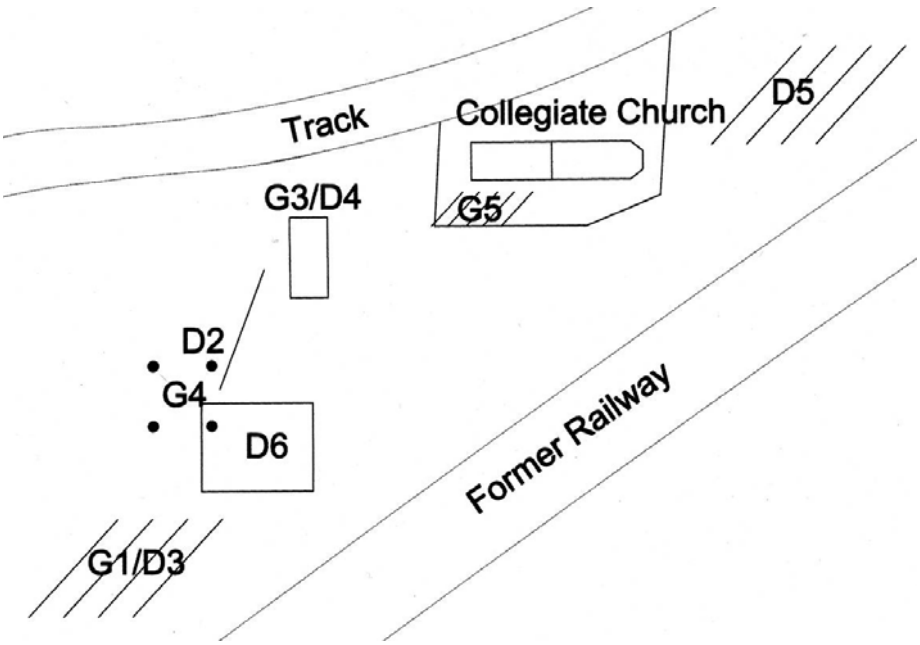


Figure 14: Sketch Summary of Collegiate Church Survey Results

Summary of Plots
The following is a summary of the magnetometry (Ref 'D') and resistivity (Ref 'G') findings (see Figure 14).

A number of possible drains, including the line of a probable field drain crossing the plot as a linear low resistance anomaly, draining the western side of the survey area, was evident (D2).

An apparently square arrangement of discrete high resistance responses in the south-west of the plot are interpreted as a related group of anomalies (D6). The

[1] NMRS site No. NS36SE 10; pers. comm. RLHF membership www.rlhf.info; pers. comm. Alan Steel, Kibbleston Farm; private aerial photographs of Castle Semple provided by Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Ranger Service www.clydemuirshiel.co.uk; 1st edition Ordnance Survey map 1:2500 'Ayrshire/Renfrewshire' 1858-93.

derivation of these anomalies is not clear, partially due to the limited area surveyed, but this may be the remains of pits, an ephemeral building or have a mundane agricultural origin. Another possibility is that the anomalies derive from prehistoric activity (G4).

G3 was interpreted as potentially relating to one of the buildings shown to the west of the church on John Watt's eighteenth-century survey for William McDowall and correlates with magnetic feature D4.

G5 was an anomaly in the southwest corner of the enclosed area of the church, and is likely to relate to a dump of masonry materials deposited at this location during consolidation of the church by the Ministry of Works [2] .

Despite the necessarily limited size of the resistivity survey, the data retrieved provided useful comparative information and allowed specific areas of interest to be more affectively queried for archaeological significance.

Conclusion

The geophysical surveys provided good indications for the sites of historic building remains. This was despite considerable background noise encountered from the underlying solid geology.

Possible buildings include the remains of at least two modern structures: D3/G1 and D5 (shaded areas).

Possible historic building remains are also potentially indicated in the magnetic results and to a lesser extent by the resistivity (D4/G3, D6). At least one of these (D4/G3) may represent the remains of a late medieval building associated with the collegiate church.

The location of possible pits or a four-post structure has also have been suggested by the electrical resistance survey (G4).

Overall this prospective geophysical survey illustrates the potential presence of a dense concentration of archaeologically sensitive remains within what is a relatively small area of land surrounding the collegiate church. The survey results also provisionally corroborate the findings of historical, cartographic and aerial photographic research undertaken by RLHF, and provide useful spatial information from which further archaeological investigations could be developed.

Acknowledgements

PKHT's sincere thanks are extended to the landowner Mr Alan Steel of Kibblestone Farm for permission to undertake the survey. PKHT would also like to acknowledge the kind assistance and advice given by RLHF members. In particular thanks go to Bruce Henry and Andrew Eadie who approached PKHT to undertake the survey, arranged access and supplied the mapping, including a copy of Stuart Nisbet's (RLHF) reproduction of John Watt's c.1730 plan of the site. Useful information was also gratefully received from Helen Calcluth and Stuart Nisbet (RLHF) about past land-use and the history of Castle Semple estate. Finally thanks go to Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Ranger Service for liaising on site and providing access to private aerial photographs. The survey work was supported in part by Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Service, Renfrewshire Council and RLHF.

RLHF also wish to acknowledge, with thanks, the assistance of Historic Scotland staff in obtaining Scheduled Monument Consent to carry out the project.

[2] Personal communication Helen Calcluth, RLHF.

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O'Grady, Dr O, 2009; *Collegiate Church, Castle Semple: Geophysical Evaluation*, This article is a summary of the detailed Data Structure Report for RLHF; Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (unpublished) which can be provided to Forum members on request.

6.3 Excavation of the Paisley Abbey Drain

A limited archaeological excavation was carried out by Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division (GUARD) and Renfrew Local History Forum volunteers on the site of major medieval drain at Paisley Abbey. The project ran for 12 days and coincided with the 'Doors Open Day' weekend in September 2009. During 'Doors Open Day' artefacts and posters were on display and members of the team were kept busy with a constant stream of enthusiastic visitors.

Figure 15: Abbey Drain Dig in progress, Paisley Abbey in background (Bob Will, GUARD)

Paisley Abbey Drain survives as an 80m long tunnel internally approximately 2m high and 1m wide. The Drain is built from dressed sandstone masonry, the western section has a pointed arched roof which becomes a rounded arch to the east and then as the drain gets smaller becomes a flat roof. The Drain is a remarkable structure due to its size and architectural detail. The Drain would have been part of the monastic precinct centred on the Abbey and would have served the kitchens, toilets, guest accommodation and storerooms. Unfortunately very little information survives concerning the actual layout of the monastic buildings at Paisley

The location of the Drain was largely unknown until the early 1990s when it was rediscovered. Archaeological investigations carried out then concentrated on the deposits and artefacts recovered from inside the drain so this was the first opportunity to investigate the construction of the drain and the deposits surrounding the drain.

A trench 8m by 6m was excavated around the manhole that presently provides access to the drain. After the turf was removed excavation was initially by machine to remove the upper layers of modern overburden consisting of demolition layers relating to nineteenth century tenements that occupied the site and recent landscaping. Once these were removed excavation continued by hand and revealed areas of undisturbed archaeological deposits especially in the deeper sections of the trench. The remains of a masonry wall and stone foundation were uncovered to the north-west of the trench that appear to be contemporary with the drain and could therefore be part of the monastic precinct. Part of the roof and north exterior wall of the drain were also exposed: two distinct sections of stonework suggest that the drain may have been built in two phases or was possibly repaired. Previous investigations on the architecture of the drain itself had demonstrated different phases of building.

Figure 16: Volunteers in Action at Abbey Drain dig

In addition to the medieval structures and deposits relating to the drain, there were also more recent structures and walls from the buildings and tenements that occupied the site in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The excavation fulfilled its aims of assessing the level of disturbance around the Drain and demonstrated that structural remains, associated with the Drain and the monastic precinct, survive beneath the later landscaping. It is hoped that we can take this project forward to further investigate the Drain and the monastery at Paisley.

Acknowledgements
Thanks must go to Anne Phillips and Nigel Lack of Renfrewshire Council, Susan Jeffrey from Paisley Museum, Frank Snow of On-Site and all the members of the Paisley Abbey Drain sub-committee who have spent the last year organising and setting up the project. Renfrewshire Local History Forum volunteers' help and commitment was much appreciated. The project was funded by Renfrewshire Council and was supported by Renfrewshire Local History Forum, Paisley Common Good Fund, Paisley Vision Board, the Gordon Macrae Memorial Fund, Acre Industrial, Scotjet Ltd, On Site Ltd and University of Glasgow.

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McBrien, J. H., *Abbey Close, Paisley: late medieval structural remains, pottery*, Discovery & Excavation in Scotland (1991) p70.

Assessment of Pottery Retrieved from the Paisley Abbey Drain in 1990

When the archaeological investigations were carried out on Paisley Abbey Medieval drain in the early 1990s a large amount of medieval pottery along with many other artefacts were recovered both from the silts that were mechanically removed from the Drain and from the subsequent small excavation within the drain. The pottery amounted to over 30 boxes and at the time little more than an assessment was made before the pottery and other finds were handed over to Paisley Museum. RLHF volunteers worked with the Museum spending a great deal of time separating the different fabrics and looking for joins. Several profiles and large fragments were reconstructed but after this no further work was undertaken.

In 2009 following discussions with the Paisley Abbey Drain Committee it was decided to try and move things along with the remaining post-excavation work in advance of the Cluniac 2010 celebrations. By coincidence there was a post-graduate student at Glasgow who wanted to work on medieval pottery for her dissertation. As a result, the pottery was moved to the Department of Archaeology lab where it was worked on over the summer by Sabrina Gillman along with volunteers from both the Renfrew Local History Forum and Glasgow Archaeology Society.

A database to help catalogue and record the pottery assemblage was devised by Edouard Masson-Maclean of GUARD which enabled photographs and illustrations of the sherds to be included along with the basic record. The methodology for recording the pottery and the work programme for the volunteers was devised and supervised by Sabrina who also undertook the data entry from the hand written record sheets used in the lab by the volunteers. The volunteers were given a range of different tasks to do including counting, weighing, drawing and describing the pottery.

Nearly fourteen thousand sherds of pottery weighing almost 217 kg were catalogued over the summer making it one of if not the largest collection of medieval ceramics yet recovered in the West of Scotland and the Glasgow area. The pottery is predominantly locally produced, but the presence of a small number of imported sherds from mainland Europe along with other artefacts recovered within the Drain has helped to date the assemblage to the transitional late medieval/ post medieval period of the early 16th century. Lead seals used on bolts of cloth have been tightly

dated to no later than 1540. The imported pottery consists of Rhenish stonewares and several sherds, possibly from France, that would date to the same period.

The material was catalogued by fabric and three main types were identified according to recognised fabric groups, Scottish Medieval Redwares, the Scottish White Gritty Ware tradition of whitewares and the late medieval/post-medieval greyware tradition (Scottish Post-medieval reduced wares and Scottish Post-medieval oxidised wares). All the sherds were counted and weighed along with identifiable features (rims, bases, handles etc) and types of decoration were entered into the database. Where possible the type or shape of the vessel was also recorded.

Figure 17: Bases of small jugs or vases (Bob Will, GUARD)

While in many ways this is a standard late medieval / post-medieval Scottish assembl-age consisting of large green glazed jugs, many unusual vessel forms, decorative features and traits were also recognised along with the high level of production skills. Of particular note were two highly decorated and well made jugs or bottles and a group of smaller jugs or vases with applied flat bases that protrude beyond the body of the vessel. Other sherds in local fabrics copy the distinctive frilled bases of Rhenish stonewares that also occur it the collection and date to the late 15th or 16th century.

While the project has achieved its objectives of providing a useable catalogue that will make the pottery more accessible it will also form the basis of future research into the development of local and national fabric collections and pottery typologies.

Acknowledgements
This project was made possible and completed through the efforts of numerous people. Each person and organisation involved merits recognition and appreciation for their contribution Paisley Museum and Renfrewshire Council, Renfrew Local History Forum, Glasgow Archaeological Society and of course the volunteers who made the project feasible and far less daunting.

In addition to the acknowledgements noted at each section above, I would also like to thank: Ian Marshall for the initial draft of the note on the 'Victorian Midden', Castle Semple Country Park; Dr Oliver O'Grady, Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust for allowing me to extract information, photographs and figures from his report *Collegiate Church, Castle Semple: Geophysical Evaluation* and Bob Will of GUARD for drafting the notes on the Excavation of the Paisley Abbey Drain and Assessment of Pottery Retrieved from the Paisley Abbey Drain in 1990.
The last was based on work done by Sabrina Gillman, in her dissertation for her MLitt in Medieval Archaeology, supervised by Bob Will and we wish her well in progressing to a successful conclusion of her studies.

