



Scottish Group newsletter - Spring 2018

News

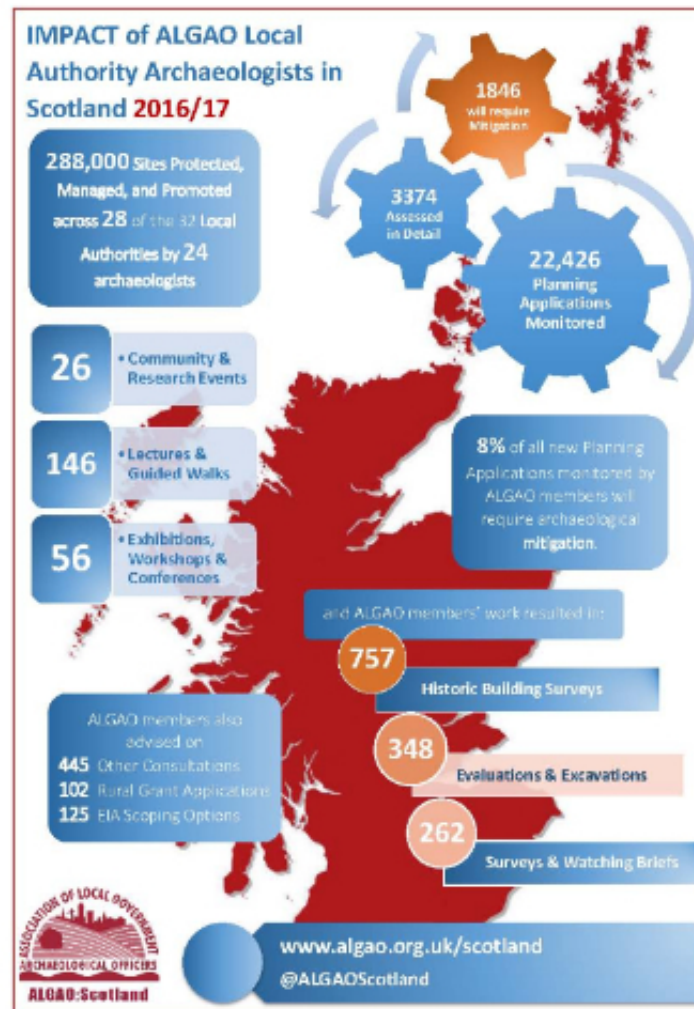
ALGAO Scotland – Latest Figures!

The Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO) Scotland represents Archaeologists working for, or on behalf of, Local Government and National Parks in Scotland and whose task is to protect, manage and promote the historic environment. Our members provide services to 28 of the 32 Local Authorities in Scotland. Some of the key roles carried out by ALGAO Scotland members are;

- maintenance of Historic Environment Records (HERs)
- to advise on strategic development and local development plans and policies
- to advise planning authorities and developers on planning proposals that may affect archaeological sites, including input into development design
- monitoring compliance with planning requirements including conditions on behalf of planning authorities
- to advise on the management of the rural and urban historic environment
- working with all elements of the community to foster understanding of the historic environment
- where resources permit, to lead community-based projects to explore the local historic environment, and through this contribute to skills

development, learning and community cohesion

Each year information about the work carried out by ALGAO Scotland members is gathered through an annual survey, the results of which are submitted to Scotland's Historic Environment Audit (SHEA) and Measuring Success. The information from ALGAO Scotland, along with information from other organisations helps to build a picture of the Historic Environment in Scotland. The results from the annual survey for 2016/17 indicate the substantial and wide-ranging body of work carried out by the Local Authority Archaeologists and a snapshot of the impact of some of the work is highlighted in the following infographic.



South East Scotland
Archaeological Research
Framework (SESARF) Update –
Portal Launch

Lesley Dalglish, Wessex Archaeology (Scotland)

In the last ClfA Scottish Group Newsletter we introduced the South East Scotland Archaeological Research Framework (SESARF) and the series of workshops that were run in Edinburgh. SESARF has been under development by SESAP (South East Scotland Archaeology Partnership) and Wessex Archaeology since Spring 2017. The Regional Research Framework (RRF) will cover the council areas of Edinburgh, Midlothian, East Lothian and The Scottish Borders and is being funded by the Society of Antiquaries for Scotland supported by a grant from Historic Environment Scotland. The RRF is formed around three key themes of **Understand**, **Value** and **Protect** and will be developed throughout 2018 with a wide range of stakeholders.

Due for final delivery via an online portal in Spring 2019 a lot of progress has already been made this year, with a specific focus on collating the 'known' archaeology of the region and priorities for future research.

With the first draft of Understand theme having been produced, we are pleased to announce that the **Online Portal is planned to launch in April 2018** for contributions on all archaeological periods, key themes, specialist case studies and research questions and priorities.

For those of you who attended our workshops last year and expressed an interest in contributing, we will be in touch soon. For anyone who would like to be added in to the list of contributors please do get in touch with the SESARF project via our dedicated email address:

sesarf@wessexarch.co.uk

To keep up to date with all things SESARF please visit our [website](#) for the latest news, information and upcoming workshops.

Members' news

Arran pitchstone – different forms of exchange at different times?

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Introduction

In 2009, one of the authors (TB) of this paper concluded the project *Archaeological Pitchstone in Northern Britain* with the publication of a monograph on the topic (Ballin 2009). The main reason for undertaking the project was the fact that the number of artefacts in this raw material, as well as the number of pitchstone-bearing sites, had multiplied exponentially.

When Williams Thorpe & Thorpe (1984) published their important paper on the topic, only approximately 1,400 pieces of worked pitchstone were known, from c. 100 find locations, but in 2009 approximately 20,300 pieces had been recorded, from c. 350 sites. Since then, significant numbers of pitchstone artefacts have been recovered from all parts of northern Britain.

To be able to discuss matters such as pitchstone procurement and exchange, it was necessary to date the recovered pitchstone artefacts. When Williams Thorpe & Thorpe (1984) presented their paper, the dating evidence was generally weak, and it was thought that pitchstone might have been exchanged across northern Britain during most of Scottish prehistory, including the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age periods. In 2009, after the recovery of much more archaeological pitchstone, it was possible to show that the exchange of this raw material, from Arran to the rest of northern Britain, mainly took place during the Early Neolithic period (two diagnostic chisel-shaped arrowheads from Biggar and Glenluce Sands indicate that this exchange may have ended around, or shortly after, the Early/Middle Neolithic transition; Ballin 2009), although with some later use in Argyll & Bute (which might have formed one part of a social territory in which Arran was also included) and Orkney in the far north (which in many respects represents a 'special case'; Ballin 2009; 2013). Since 2009, new dating evidence has confirmed a Late Neolithic phase of pitchstone use and exchange along the western seaboard of Scotland and extending as far north as Orkney (Ballin 2015; 2017). This appears to be part of a reciprocal movement of ideas, objects and people at that time – the use of Grooved Ware and timber and stone circles spreading south-westwards down the Atlantic façade and, among other things, pitchstone northwards along the same route (Sheridan 2004).

Until recently, no evidence indicated the importation of pitchstone from Arran to the Scottish mainland in pre-Neolithic times, and all diagnostic pieces found off Arran, as well as all pitchstone-bearing contexts, were datable to post-Mesolithic times. The evidence of this fact was presented in a number of papers (Ballin 2015; 2017), focusing on pitchstone from radiocarbon-dated pits (Fig. 1). However, over the last few years, a small number of pitchstone artefacts of apparently Mesolithic date have been recovered from sites off Arran, all from sites in either Argyll or south-west Scotland. These finds include two pieces from a pit at Succoth near Arrochar, Argyll, two pieces from a pit at Dunragit, Dumfries & Galloway, and the fragment of a scalene triangle from Tayvallich, also Argyll.

The aim of the present paper is to present this new evidence, as well as discuss what this means to our understanding of pitchstone exchange. It is suggested that the new evidence may indicate changes to exchange patterns around the Mesolithic/Neolithic transition, with *systematic* pitchstone exchange being a mainly Early Neolithic phenomenon (apart

from along the western seaboard of Scotland), but with *solitary* pieces finding their way off Arran during the Mesolithic period.

Fig. 1. Radiocarbon-dated pitchstone from pits.



Radiocarbon-dated pitchstone from mesolithic pits

In total, four pitchstone artefacts have been recovered from pits yielding Late Mesolithic radiocarbon-dates, two from a pit at Succoth in Argyll and two from a pit at Dunragit in Dumfries and Galloway.

Fig. 2. Pitchstone flake from the base of the Succoth pit (courtesy of Argyll Archaeology).



Succoth

The site of Succoth (excavated by Argyll Archaeology in 2017) is situated near Arrochar, in the inner part of Loch Long. This location was almost certainly submerged during the Main Holocene Transgression (c. 5630-5440 BC; Ballantyne & Dawson 1997). The site represents a complex case of site formation, and in the lithics report the following scenario is suggested: 1) Possibly activity around standing trees during the Late Mesolithic; when these trees fell, a number of lithic artefacts found their way into treethrow holes; 2) during the Main Holocene Transgression, some (but not all) lithic artefacts were rolled and scattered across the site; 3) at some stage – probably during the Early Neolithic period – the treethrow holes were expanded and a number of ditches created; 4) Early Neolithic activity around the ditches. Eleven radiocarbon-dates were obtained from features and spreads, with nine returning Late Mesolithic dates, whereas two are Early Neolithic.

A pitchstone chip and a pitchstone flake (Fig. 2) were recovered from the lower levels of Ditch 123 (C134). A radiocarbon sample from this context returned a date of 5968-5766 BC (SUERC-77125). As shown in Fig. 1, this age determination pre-dates the existing string of 30 Early Neolithic dates from Scottish radiocarbon-dated pits by c. 2,000 years.

Fig. 3. Pitchstone flake from the base of the Dunragit pit (courtesy of GUARD Archaeology Ltd)



Dunragit

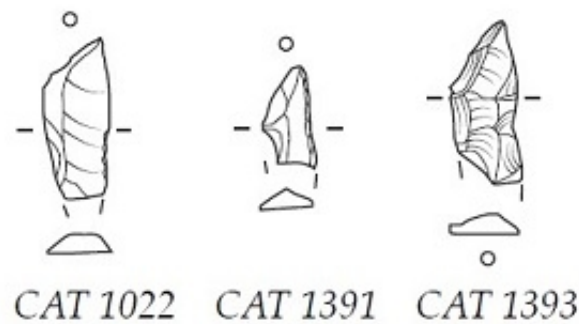
In connection with GUARD Archaeology Ltd's work at Dunragit, Dumfries & Galloway (2013), a number of Mesolithic sites were discovered, such as Sites 7 and Site 19. At Site 19, a large Mesolithic scatter was encountered (possibly the foot-print of a structure), and at Site 7, a number of pits and other features were excavated. Pit 073 was one of the larger pits at this site (2 x 1.2 x 0.5m), and from the basal fill of this pit (C072) a pitchstone chip and a pitchstone flake were found (Fig. 3). A radiocarbon sample from this context returned a date of 6830-6643 BC (SUERC-44560). This date is approximately 1,000 years older than the Succoth date (Fig. 1).

Diagnostic mesolithic pitchstone artefacts

Tayvallich

Until the excavation of Tayvallich, Argyll, by Argyll Archaeology (2015), no diagnostic Mesolithic pitchstone artefact had been encountered off Arran, whereas for example pitchstone microliths and microburins are common on Arran itself (Affleck *et al.* 1988). From the central and southern parts of Scotland, only Early Neolithic leaf-shaped points and Middle Neolithic chisel-shaped arrowheads had been found, and along the Scottish west-coast later Neolithic objects (eg, from Bute and Orkney; Ballin 2013; Ballin *et al.* 2008).

Fig. 4. Three scalene triangles from Tayvallich, Argyll; CAT 1393 is in porphyritic pitchstone (drawn by LEEANNE WHITELAW).



However, in connection with the investigation of Tayvallich (which like Succoth is a multi-phased site, which had been submerged during the main Holocene Transgression) a fragment of a scalene triangle in pitchstone was recovered (Fig. 4). Surprisingly, the raw material is porphyritic pitchstone, which is generally associated with post Mesolithic objects, like the above-mentioned chisel-shaped arrowheads from central and southern Scotland.

Ten radiocarbon-dates were obtained from Tayvallich, five of which indicate visits to the site during the period c. 5000-6000 BC.

Different forms of exchange

In contrast to trade, exchange usually has a distinct social side, namely that of regulating interaction between groups of people (Wilmsen 1972). The overarching principle behind exchange is simply to provide security, in material as well as social form. The material basis of exchange is the fact that different tribal groups, within different territories, had variable access to natural resources, and via participation in exchange networks these resources were distributed throughout the region, and possibly beyond. Exchange forged alliances and helped to maintain the peace or, in the case of threats from outsiders, alliance partners could either be asked to help in the war effort, or they could provide a safe haven to which a group could flee, should they be overrun (Ford 1972). In most situations, exchange is based on kinship (eg, Renfrew 1993), although the formation of non-kin 'gift-partnerships' is also common (Orme 1981).

Table 1. The social and economic organisation of band societies, tribal societies, chiefdoms, and states (Service 1971); adaptation of definitions given in Renfrew & Bahn (1996).

	<i>Band societies</i>	<i>Tribal societies</i>	<i>Chiefdoms</i>	<i>States</i>
<i>Social organization</i>	Egalitarian Informal leadership	Segmentary society Pan-tribal associations 'Big Men'	Kinship-based ranking under hereditary leader	Class-based hierarchy under king or emperor
<i>Economic organization</i>	Mobile hunter-gatherers	Settled farmers Pastoralist herders	Centralized accumulation and redistribution Some craft specialization	Centralized bureaucracy Tribute-based Laws and taxation

It is generally accepted that, in prehistory, different forms of society (Table 1) were characterized by different forms of exchange, depending on the social and economic organization of these societies (including their kinship structure). It would therefore be expected that the exchange of an egalitarian (Mesolithic) band society would differ from that of less egalitarian later forms of society.

Scrutiny of Fig. 1 supports this thought, with 30 radiocarbon-dates from secure pitchstone-bearing features clustering in the Early Neolithic, between 4000-3500 BC, whereas at the present time only two features have been radiocarbon-dated to the Late Mesolithic. This suggests a marked rise in the amount of pitchstone exported from Arran after the Mesolithic/Neolithic transition, and probably a change in the exchange mechanisms. If the same mechanisms had been in place during both periods, and the stream of pitchstone across the Firth of Clyde been steady throughout the period covered by Fig. 1, Fig. 1 should have shown approximately 180 dates during the period 7000-4000 BC and not just two.

Although at the moment the following is entirely conjectural, it is possible that pitchstone exchange became more ritualised during the Early Neolithic period, as indicated by the presence of pitchstone in the postholes and internal pits of Scottish timber halls (eg, Doon Hill, Warrenfield, Claish, and Balfarg; in connection with GUARD Archaeology Ltd.'s recent work at Carnoustie, Angus, pitchstone flakes were recovered from two features within the larger of the two timber halls [work in progress]), as well as from a pit beneath the Fordhouse long-barrow (possibly a form of 'cornerstone ritual').

Future perspectives

However, more evidence is needed to allow firm interpretation of the deposition of pitchstone in off-Arran features, and thereby of the exchange

mechanisms responsible for bringing the pitchstone across the Firth of Clyde. It is important that the focus is on either strictly diagnostic pieces (like the Tayvallich scalene triangle), or on datable sealed contexts (Fig. 1).

In the past, some pitchstone artefacts have been defined as Mesolithic if they were microblades, but today we know that narrow microblades were also produced during the Early Neolithic, and several of the pitchstone objects from radiocarbon-dated pits (Fig. 1) are microblades (eg, Carzield and Fordhouse Barrow). It has also been common to define pitchstone as Mesolithic if they were from a site or scatter which yielded diagnostic Mesolithic artefacts, but following this approach it could be claimed that Palaeolithic pitchstone (c. 12,000 BC) was recovered from Howburn in South Lanarkshire – at a time when the Isle of Arran may not yet have been discovered by the ‘European’ reindeer hunters colonizing Late Glacial Scotland.

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Sick Picts at the Isle of May monastery – care in the early medieval community

Peter Yeoman MCIfA

The Isle of May is a small island at the mouth of the Firth of Forth, with a 1000 year history of ecclesiastical use. The May is traditionally the burial place and shrine of St Ethernan, possibly the real individual recorded in the Iona chronicle for 669 as having died amongst the Picts. He may have helped establish the early monastery on the May Island as an important seat of ecclesiastical power, before this was vested in St Andrews in the 8th century.

Following full publication of the 1990s excavations ([website](#)), the sample of

58 skeletons have been re-examined in a new palaeo-pathological analysis by Dr Marlo Willows for her Edinburgh University 2016 PhD ([website](#)) which compares the unusual results from the May with three other excavated medieval assemblages. The majority of the skeletons were from the early medieval period, burial activity having fallen off sharply once the site became a reformed Cluniac house in the early 1100s.



Image: The remains of the teenage male with possible congenital syphilis being excavated by Dr Heather James (grave with two skulls). Copyright: Peter Yeoman

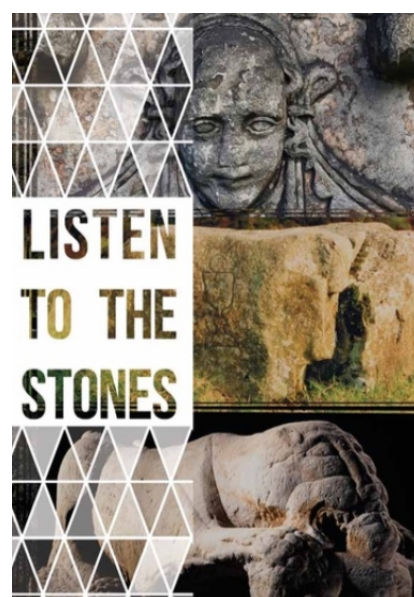
Excavations have revealed that the monastery and burials on the island lasted from the 5th to 16th centuries. The important new research on the human remains has yielded fascinating insights into the lives and deaths of individuals especially during the early medieval period, from about 500 -1100. New osteological and stable isotope analysis has offered the opportunity to validate its importance as a place of pilgrimage and healing, providing rare glimpses of severe medical conditions as suffered by these people. Early cases of prostate cancer and congenital syphilis were identified.

More than 90% of the burials in the early medieval period were found to have suffered rare and late stage diseases. This new research has provided remarkable data on the lives and deaths of these individuals, their survival, care and treatment during illness, giving insights into the continuous care which was being provided by their families and communities.

Listen to the Stones

Sally Foster MCIfA, University of Stirling

Future Thinking on Carved Stones in Scotland: A Research Framework was launched as part of the Scottish Archaeology Research Framework (ScARF) in August 2016. It is now available in new formats that will appeal to a range of users, whether heritage practitioners, community groups or academics. *Listen to the Stones* is a popular summary booklet produced to promote *Future Thinking in Carved Stones in Scotland: A Research Framework*. You can download a PDF of this 24pp booklet from the [ScARF website](#).



Nicely illustrated PDFs of the Framework's 2016 full text and 39 case studies are now also available from the [National Committee on Carved Stones in Scotland website](#). Those of you needing or preferring a linear read of the Framework will find these particularly useful. Finally, a poster summarising the approach to the project is available [here](#). The Framework innovates in adopting the heritage cycle of knowledge creation and understanding, understanding value, securing for the future and engaging

and experiencing as its framework for discussing our ideas for the way forward. As such its structure aligns with the Scottish Government's strategy for the historic environment, *Our Place in Time*. With its explicit foundation on understanding value, including social value, this Framework also seeks to contextualise research with societal needs. As such, this is a project with wider relevance for how to design a research framework to make a difference on the ground. Its ideas can all be linked in the chronological and regional frameworks of the ScARF.

Membership of the Scottish Group is free for ClfA members, and is £10 per year for non-ClfA members. Please feel free to circulate this newsletter and we would ask you to encourage your friends/colleagues to join the Group.

For more information on the ClfA's Scottish Group please see our [website](#), where you can download copies of meeting minutes and past newsletters, and keep up-to-date with the work of the Group and training courses.

Keep in touch with us via the Scottish Group's [Facebook page](#), where information about events and the work of the Group will be publicised. Search for 'Scottish Group of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' and 'like' us.

Newsletters are published four times a year and contributions from members are welcome. The deadlines for articles in 2018 are:

Summer Edition (8 June)

Autumn Edition (7 September)

Winter Edition (30 November)

To make a contribution to forthcoming editions of the Newsletter or for any queries please email [Biddy Simpson](#).



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