

Once again spring is upon us, and the Scotland's Rural Past team are looking forward to the longer days and finer weather as we continue to carry out our training sessions and investigations with an increasing number of volunteers throughout the country. Not that we have been resting on our laurels over the winter – it has been a really constructive six months with lots of exciting developments in all areas of the project. We have opened up SRP to now include schools, youth groups and new audiences, we continue to receive a growing amount of interest from people wanting to take part, and have launched nearly a dozen new projects, as well as seen the launch and growth of the SRP website ([www.scotlandsruralpast.org.uk](http://www.scotlandsruralpast.org.uk)). Read on for more detail of what has been happening with SRP and our plans for the coming six months.

### **Teachers' resource packs & education projects**

Education lies at the heart of SRP and our education strategy has been in development since the start of the project. This was formally launched in March 2008 with the release of our teachers resource pack. These have been created to enable schools to investigate Scotland's rural past in the classroom. The teachers pack introduces historic rural settlements using case studies of the township sites at Rosal, Sutherland; Spittal of Glenmuick, Aberdeenshire, and Margdow on Loch Tay. The history of the sites can be investigated through different source material – archaeological records, photographs, historic records, maps and archaeological records. Alongside the source material are ideas of how to use the sources in the classroom and activities to engage with the topic.

The initial response to the education material has been very positive, and, over the next few months, Brian Wilkinson, the SRP Interpretation Officer will use the packs to develop partnerships and projects with selected schools. Teachers will be offered the opportunity to take their classes on an accompanied visit to local sites with a member of the SRP team. While visiting a site, children will get the opportunity to carry out hands-on survey and recording activities, and find out about life in a township in the past. We hope to encourage schools to take an interest in the remains in their locality and the work of the project. Where possible, we will try to arrange accompanied site visits in areas with existing or forthcoming SRP projects. To find out how your school can take part, please email Brian at [brian.wilkinson@rcahms.gov.uk](mailto:brian.wilkinson@rcahms.gov.uk).

### **Projects**

Eleven new projects have been started since October 2007, bringing the total now underway to 25. New projects range from surveys of abandoned farmsteads by small groups of independent volunteers in Kilmartin and Loch Long areas, to larger, community-based groups in Moidart, Mull and the Pentland Hills. Results of survey and recording work by some existing projects have been sent to the SRP team and are of high quality and we are keen to see and comment on more of your results. Details of all SRP projects can be found in the **Projects** section of the SRP website. This is constantly being updated and we are encouraging volunteers to develop their own areas of the project pages in order to share their results.

As a result of the work they have been doing for community heritage, pupils from Islay High School who have been working in association with the Islay Archaeology Society were short listed for the Young Scot awards, held in Glasgow on 19 March. While the archaeology club didn't win they did brilliantly to get into the final three. Sandy Smith, the teacher behind the archaeology club said, "The girls were delighted to be nominated. They are a bunch who work really hard on all fronts and don't always get the recognition they deserve, so you can understand how chuffed I was for them too".

### **Recent training courses**

Fieldwork training started early this year due to high demand from volunteers. Since January we have completed five training courses, ranging from one day to one week, and over 90 volunteers have taken part in these. The structure of the training course has been adjusted to evade the worst of the winter weather, and now includes longer indoor sessions using power point presentations to investigate source material such as maps and aerial photography. Every course we do is a bit different and every course enables us to further refine what we include in and how we structure the training. Volunteer feedback is invaluable in this process.

### **Fieldwork training completed since October:**

<b>25-26 January 2008</b>	NOSAS, Strathconon
<b>8 February 2008</b>	RSPB and Cree Valley Community Woodland group, Wigtownshire
<b>21-22 February 2008</b>	Moidart Local History Group, Moidart
<b>6-7 March 2008</b>	N W Mull Community Woodland Trust and The Isle of Mull Museum & other volunteers
<b>16-23 March 2008</b>	NTS Brodick Residential Training Camp

A more in depth training course was run on Arran in partnership with the National Trust for Scotland. 12 Volunteers attended (including one volunteer helper), and three RCAHMS staff worked with the SRP team. The weeklong course covered a wider range of field survey and recording techniques than is feasible in the two-day training courses, and the course was specially structured towards greater assessment of volunteers work.

### **Future fieldwork training**

<b>11-12 April 2008</b>	Gairloch
<b>17-18 May 2008</b>	Inveraray/ Glen Fyne
<b>June 2008</b>	Sleat, Skye

# SRP Newsletter

## Edition 3

### Spring 2008



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The team will begin to undertake a series of talks and site visits on the Western Isles in May to form the first stage of raising awareness about SRP and begin recruiting volunteers, with the aim of training them in September this year.

#### **Historic document training**

Following the success of the historic document research training before Christmas, a further two-day course will be run on 28-29 July 2008 at RCAHMS. This course introduces participants to the many archaeological, documentary and historic sources available to help research historic rural settlement sites. Full course details will be available from the SRP team in June, but you can reserve a place on the course now. Email [srp@rcahms.gov.uk](mailto:srp@rcahms.gov.uk) to book a place

#### **Looking forward**

Over the summer months we will concentrate on working with our already existing projects to carry out refresher training, to build on and extend the skills our volunteers have learnt so far.

We also want to encourage more groups to use their personal section of the SRP website. This is a really useful forum for keeping your fellow projects throughout the country informed and up-to-date about your latest findings and discoveries. It is also simple to set up and update. You can also use the message board to ask each other questions and share your experience of surveying in the field. Need advice with plane tabling? Not sure whether a structure is a byre or a barn? Use the message board to ask everyone involved in the wider SRP community.

#### **Conference and get together in November**

A date has been set for the SRP annual conference. This will be held at the Birnam Institute in Dunkeld on Saturday 15 November. We will be in contact with SRP volunteers over the coming months for suggestions on the programme and we shall be inviting volunteers to come and speak about their projects. We hope to get a wide variety of projects involved to share their discoveries and experiences of the project so far, and to include an interesting range of activities and discussions.

#### **SRP exhibition**

A new SRP exhibition is going to be developed, showcasing the best images of volunteers in the field and the latest examples of submitted drawings. We will take the exhibition with us when we give our talks throughout the country, and it will also be on display at the SRP Conference in November.

#### **Photo competition**

There is still plenty of time to take part in our photo competition and win the opportunity to take a flight with RCAHMS aerial survey team. We are looking for photographs that best capture the historic rural landscape today to help us record it

# SRP Newsletter

## Edition 3

### Spring 2008



before it disappears forever. The standard of entries we have received so far has been very high and we are updating the SRP website each month with the monthly winners. In October this year, the three overall best photographs will be selected by the RCAHMS Chairman and professionally printed as postcards for use by the winners and SRP. Winners will also receive a free copy of a recent RCAHMS publication of their choice and a goody bag. The overall winner will win the opportunity to accompany the RCAHMS Aerial Survey Team on a sortie recording sites and monuments from 2000 feet in a single engined Cessna 172. Keep your entries coming in!

#### **Project Ability**

From the end of May SRP will be working on a five week with Project Ability, a Glasgow based arts charity which enables people with learning difficulties and mental illness to create art and share their work with the whole community. Together we are going to investigate the site of a farmstead in East Renfrewshire and take a trip to the Highland Folk Museum at Newtonmore to find out more about people's lives in the countryside in the past. The sketches, photographs and measured drawings created by Project Ability will be used as inspiration for artistic works which will go on display in Glasgow in September 2008.

#### **Updating the RCAHMS database**

Our on-line form for submitting your data to the RCAHMS database is now up and running. Over the winter several groups have been trained in how to use it and data entry has begun. SRP staff will validate this data and transfer it to the RCAHMS database, where it will be made available online through Canmore. Following on from these pilot training sessions we are now updating our guidance notes on using the online form, and these will be made available on the SRP website by the end of April 2008. In addition we can provide training for volunteer groups ready to use the on-line form and data entry so please contact us for further details on [srp@rcahms.gov.uk](mailto:srp@rcahms.gov.uk).

#### **Scottish Rural Development Plan funding**

The Scottish Government has recently announced the relaunch of the Leader funding stream available as part of the Scottish Rural Development Plan (SRDP -see [www.scotland.gov.uk/srdp](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/srdp) for details). This is a large pot of money (£1.6 billion) available between 2007 - 2013 for rural development projects.

Within SRDP are two streams of money which SRP projects may be eligible to apply for. There are the LEADER funds directed at community groups and businesses to promote economic and community development within rural areas. One of the LEADER objectives is to support community-based initiatives that will enhance the rural heritage and this includes improving access to areas of high environmental amenity, improving the sensitive use of cultural resources, and improving the sensitive use of built heritage resources. This funding could help you to develop interpretation resources to make your findings accessible to a wider audience.

# SRP Newsletter

## Edition 3

### Spring 2008



Leader funds will be made available through Local Action Groups (LAGs) from April 2008. There has been no announcement about how groups apply to get the money from their LAG yet, but their contact details will be added to the Funding section of the SRP website as soon as they are.

Further funding streams are available through the SRDP which may also be of interest to SRP projects. The Rural Development Contracts - Rural Priorities scheme is primarily designed for land managers but will be available for local communities who want develop some aspect of their community with the agreement of the landowner. It is unlikely to support survey work but might support the development of a site as a heritage development or trail.

For information about Rural Development Contracts -Rural Priorities funding for management of archaeological or historic sites see:

- <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Rural/SRDP/RuralPriorities/Packages/HistoricEnvironmentLandsc>
- <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Rural/SRDP/RuralPriorities/Packages/HistoricEnvironmentLandsc/Sitesarchaeologicalhistor#top>
- <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Rural/SRDP/RuralPriorities/Packages/HistoricEnvironmentLandsc/EnjoymentRuralLand>

The Forestry for People Challenge Fund is intended to help groups realise the potential contribution of local woodlands to the health, learning and strengthening of communities. For further information see:

- <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/12/10103119/7>

#### **Scottish Archaeology Month**

Would you like to organise a walk, talk, site visit, fieldwork taster session or other event to promote your project and SRP during Scottish Archaeology Month 2008? We want to get as many groups as possible involved this year to make SRP really stand out in this September's events. Any ideas or proposals can be made to Brian at the SRP team by emailing [brian.wilkinson@rcahms.gov.uk](mailto:brian.wilkinson@rcahms.gov.uk).

#### **Year of homecoming**

2009 is being highlighted as the Year of Homecoming through the Scottish Government's Homecoming Scotland initiative. This will be a yearlong calendar of events encouraging people of Scottish origin to come back home and find out more about their roots. Culture and heritage are one of the strands being promoted particularly through ancestor research. To find out more look at the Homecoming Scotland website <http://www.homecomingscotland.com>.

**SRP Newsletter**  
**Edition 3**  
**Spring 2008**



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**Thank you**

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has put so much effort and enthusiasm into making SRP so successful and enjoyable, and for your continuing involvement in this exciting and important heritage project. We couldn't do this without you! We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible over the coming year.