

It has been a very eventful and exciting eight months, so we have once again a rather lengthy report on our many activities since our last newsletter. As ever, we hope that you find it interesting reading and that you will contact us with any comments or suggestions you might have. We particularly look forward to welcoming you to this year's SRP conference, details of which you will find below.

The SRP Team, July 2009

Scotland's Rural Past Conference, 2009

Following on from the success of last autumn's big event in Birnam, we have decided to head west this year. We shall hold the 2009 SRP conference at the Ben Nevis Hotel in Fort William over the weekend of **14 and 15 November**. An event-packed programme has been organized, which includes a variety of stimulating and entertaining papers from SRP volunteers and professional archaeologists, discussion sessions, project displays and guided walks. A series of workshops will be run by SRP and RCAHMS staff and by specialists. There will also be a wine reception and conference dinner on the Saturday night and plenty of other opportunities to meet and exchange ideas with your fellow volunteers. The conference programme and registration details will be available on our website and will be sent out to all volunteers in early August. Early booking is strongly advisable as space this year is limited to 100 delegates.

SRP Projects

Our projects continue to grow from strength to strength! A further three have been launched since the beginning of April, now bringing the total number of SRP projects up to 51. The latest projects signed up include a study of settlements and graveyards on the Ross of Mull; a survey of approximately 200 sites within Kirkhill parish, Ross-shire; an investigation of ruins at Hill of Fare, Aberdeenshire and the survey of five abandoned settlements at Storr Lochs, Skye.

Altogether 14 projects have now been completed, and new records are being submitted to SRP via the website on-line form. Some of these include extensive research reports, in addition to digital images and basic site records. All the completed work validated by SRP staff is now publicly accessible through Canmore and is already contributing to research. Our thanks and congratulations to all those who have completed their projects and have expanded our knowledge of rural settlement.

Don't forget to update your project pages on the SRP website to let everyone know about your findings.

Fieldwork training courses

Since the last newsletter we have extended our reach with further fieldwork training for volunteers in the Western Isles and our first visit to Shetland.

Since the beginning of the project we have now trained over 600 volunteers – that's an amazing 150% of the total project target. And there will be more to come in the next few years! Fieldwork training courses have included the following:

10-11 March 2009 Lewis and Harris Archaeology Group at Bosta township, Isle of Lewis

20-21 March 2009 North of Scotland Archaeology Society at Mulchaich township, Ross-shire

24 April 2009 Strachur History Group at Strachurbeg township, Argyll

30 April 2009 Haddington History Society, Peebleshire Archaeology Society, Hawick Archaeology Society, University of Edinburgh archaeology students at Windy Windshiel, Berwickshire.

5-6 June 2009 Unst Archaeology Group and others at Sandwick Bay, Unst, Shetland.

Volunteer Historical Document Research training

17-18 December 2008 RCAHMS

10 June 2009 Museum and Archive, Lerwick, Shetland.

20-21 July 2009 RCAHMS

The next historic document training course is set to take place in January 2010 at the recently built Highland Council Archive Centre in Inverness. This course introduces participants to the many archaeological, documentary and historic sources available to help research historic rural settlement sites. Details of this training course are on the SRP website *What's on* page and we are registering people who are interested in taking part. Information about our other courses will also be made available on the website as soon as we have our dates fixed. You can contact us about the Inverness training or any of our other courses by emailing us at srp@rcahms.gov.uk.

Another SRP Exhibition

We now have had a third travelling exhibition, created for us once again by our designer Martin Tilley. This exhibition focuses on the education work of SRP and features photographs of school projects in progress, as well as examples of children's work and quotes from children, parents and teachers. The exhibition will be on display at venues around the country and we hope that it will inform people about the impact SRP is having on our youngest participants. If you know of a venue looking for a display, or would like to borrow this or either of our other exhibitions (about fieldwork and SRP's aims) please send us an email at srp@rcahms.gov.uk.

Education

There was a surge of interest from schools at the beginning of the year, making the spring a very busy time. The SRP project with the Royal School of Dunkeld was completed in March with a very impressive exhibition of pupils' work in the Birnam Arts and Conference Centre during March. The exhibition, which included scale models of rural settlements, was based on a visit the children made to the nearby abandoned settlement of Ballinreigh, Strathbraan in October 2008.

Class visits were made to Strathconon, and Marybank primary schools, Ross-shire to explore the rural past, and we went with the children to an abandoned settlement in Strathconon to sketch and measure the remains. After Easter, Brian visited primary schools in Carbost and Staffin, both in Skye after which the children produced written work in Gaelic and English to document their visit.

Sue Furness and Fiona Jackson, two SRP volunteers from Arrochar, set up a highly creative project with their local primary school using the ruins they have been recording at High Morlaggan as inspiration. With the help of a grant from Argyll and Bute Council, the Clore Duffield Fund and the Scottish Community Foundation, a programme of events and visits was developed to engage the children and bring the past to life. Morlaggan had been occupied by weavers, so a Gaelic song group was invited to the school to teach the children waulking songs and tell them about spinning and weaving. Pupils worked with specialists to create poems about the rural past and developed a play based on life in a rural settlement. This play, *Stories from the Ruins*, was performed by the school pupils on a glorious summer day within the grounds of Auchindrain Township Museum.

During the SRP trip to Shetland in June, visits to abandoned crofts were made with Uyeasound primary schools, Unst and Nesting, Mainland. A class talk to Baltasound Junior High in Unst was also undertaken in June. The primary schools are planning on taking what they have learned one stage further, with further projects emerging from these initial visits in the next school year

Ankle High Histories

'Ankle-high histories', the series of four short radio programmes featuring SRP projects, was broadcast on Radio 4 in the spring. It featured projects in Mull, Glen Clova and Glenmuick, Strathconon and Killin, and made for some fascinating listening; uncovering stories about the ruins, the people who lived in them and our SRP volunteers. It was a great opportunity for everyone involved to make their findings known and raise awareness about abandoned rural settlements to a much wider audience. Our thanks for everyone who took part.

Time Team

One of the 'Ankle-high history' sites received some extra media attention, attracting the Time Team over to Mull to excavate and film what SRP volunteers Bev Longhorn and Hylda Marsh discovered while surveying at Baliscate, near Tobermory. Tony,

Mick, Phil and the rest of the Time team spent an eventful three days uncovering the site in forestry just outside Tobermory and came away muddy and midge-bitten but very happy. We are sworn to secrecy about the programme's outcome but can tell you that they said making this episode was "the perfect Time Team"! All will be revealed when the programme is broadcast on Channel 4 in early 2010.

Forestry Commission Films

SRP, The Forestry Commission and the Highland Folk Museum have produced a series of one-minute films focusing on life in rural settlements. Filmed in early spring at Rogie in the Highlands, the films interpret typical remains, telling how each of the buildings were used and what living in a township would have been like. The ruins have been brought to life by award winning film-makers Becky Brazil and Graham Drysdale, using the reconstructions at Newtonmore to illustrate how a typical township may once have looked.

These films can be seen on the Forest Heritage Scotland website (<http://www.forestheritagescotland.com>), YouTube (www.youtube.com) and will soon be available from the SRP website itself.

Year of the Homecoming events

One of the highlights of the Year of Homecoming is the 'Scotland's Global Impact' conference taking place in Inverness on 22-24 October. SRP will be leading a guided walk for delegates at a rural settlement site in Glen Banchor, Newtonmore, followed by a tour of the reconstructed township at the Highland Folk Museum. Two further walks will be led by members of the NOSAS SRP project in Strathconon. These will explore different settlements recorded by NOSAS, including several illicit stills. We hope to show delegates from all over the world the high standard of work SRP projects have been undertaking, and illustrate the types of settlement that most emigrants would have once lived in.

SRP is also going to highlight volunteer work as part of the RCAHMS/Scotland's Places exhibition and workshops at the Global Impact conference.

Forthcoming events

Two fieldwork training sessions has been arranged for **4-5 September** near Thurso, Caithness, and **25-26 September** at the Forestry Commission site of Polmaddie, Dumfries and Galloway. We are taking bookings for the courses and anyone interested should get in touch with SRP by email, srp@rcahms.gov.uk, or by telephoning us on 0131 662 1456.

And finally – the SRP website....

We have had substantial work done on the SRP website over the summer to update it, add more information and make it work more smoothly. The site will continue to

SRP Newsletter

Edition 5

Summer 2009



grow and develop, so please let us know if there is anything you would like to see added to it.

Just another reminder that we now have comprehensive guidance notes to help you build your project pages and show you how straightforward it really is (honest!) to add new images and text. If you haven't yet used your own project pages, why not have a go and let everyone else know what you are doing!

Our next newsletter due in December 2009.