



Falconer Museum

Friends of Falconer Museum Updates

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Moray Archaeology for All. Clarkly Hill 2013.

On these dark wintry evenings I enjoy reminiscing about my bright September days digging on Clarkly Hill. Previous digs on Clarkly Hill revealed that this site included Iron Age and Medieval settlements. The dig was part of a wide range of activities with *Moray Archaeology for All* designed to encourage people to become involved with their archaeology. I decided to take



part in the Clarkly Hill dig 2013 as part of my Post Graduate Research. The project was led by Dr Fraser Hunter and principally funded by the Gordon and Ena Baxter Foundation and Moray Leader.

It was hard work but enjoyable due to the team spirit and beautiful surroundings of Clarkly Hill. We worked to the sound of bird song, curlews and sand martins each day.

Martins and swallows circled the site swooping for insects and we were certainly reminded of the proximity to the sea by the seagulls and the smell of seaweed. The exciting prospect of a 'find' kept us going when we felt weary. Some of the oldest finds were Mesolithic from approximately 6000 to 8000 years ago. Flints were found from hunter gathers who had passed on a visit. There was previously a loch at Roseisle making this an attractive site for a settlement.

Stone circles are rare in Moray but intriguing plough scarred boulders were excavated which may be part of a circle from 4000-5000 years ago. Other features excavated at the site were of a large round house with post traces and a hollow for keeping animals. A beautiful sandstone hearth was revealed within the round house and in another trench a tuyere, a clay hollowed disc to protect the nozzle of the bellows used in a kiln, was revealed. Portable finds included a shale bangle which was of particular note as shale is not found locally in Moray and was probably imported from Brora demonstrating connections over a distance at that time.



Further exciting finds included a copper alloy ring, a few querns on which grain was ground, and an unusual shaped bowl. Whenever a major find was excavated it was wonderful for the individual making the discovery but the excitement was shared by the whole team. For my part I gained enormous satisfaction from the large 'boar like' teeth I excavated and my slag finds although I am unsure how much excitement these generated throughout the rest of the team! As a team we united in the joy of each find revealed during excavation and together we mourned as the site disappeared from view when it was backfilled to await the planting of shallow rooted Christmas trees.

Finds washing has been a regular event at the Falconer Museum store on a Monday morning. The team has washed their way through a considerable amount of slag (a by-product of iron smelting) and finds from the Birnie and Clarkly Hill excavations. Other activities include residue sorting and archive work. Not only have these sessions been interesting from the activities undertaken but the team have enjoyed the chat and banter of these sessions. So much we enjoyed a Christmas Lunch together on the 16th of December.

The opportunity to take part in a geophysical survey was not to be missed. Not only was this an exciting chance to discover what the landscape would reveal of previous settlements but it was also a great physical workout! Walking up and down the field and bending to plot grids all day ensured an appetite and a good night's sleep. Field walking has yet to be undertaken as due to the good spell of weather the fields are only now being ploughed but this new opportunity beckons in the spring.



This was not only a wonderful; opportunity for archaeologists, historians and students but also for the local community and in particular children from local schools. I personally achieved my objectives for my history research but gained far more in terms of all the lovely people I met and the enjoyment of working as part of a team. I made many friends with whom I have kept in touch.

Should there be another *Moray Archaeology for All* excavation in 2014 this will most certainly be an opportunity not to be missed!

Happy Christmas and all the very best for 2014!!

Yvonne M. Findlay.