

Cults Loch Community Heritage Project: First Year Report

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BACKGROUND

The Cults Loch Community Heritage Project, which began in September 2009, is a collaborative study between local community groups, schools, museums, councils, archaeologists and local and central government. The overall aim of the project is to use the rich heritage around Cults Loch – particularly the 2000 year old crannog - to facilitate and encourage the diverse local communities of Dumfries and Galloway to be involved in, and inspired by, the discovery, management, enhancement, interrogation and display of one of the most important cultural heritage landscapes in Scotland.

The project aims to involve as many people and groups as possible. Particularly important is the involvement of young people and any activities will have school children at its core. The constant emphasis on teaching, training and education, and the diverse media through which this is implemented, will encourage a learning and skilful region. It is hoped that the project may empower the community to drive forward future local developments and improve the quality of life and heritage of Dumfries and Galloway in an ethical and sustainable fashion.

The project has many activities. Central to the project is the archaeological excavation fieldwork centred round Cults Loch, Castle Kennedy. As well as involving the local community in the actual excavations and survey this component will also include training workshops, open days, organised school visits and tours. But the project's geographical scope stretches far beyond Castle Kennedy, culminating in an ambitious regional community programme, which will take place during and after the fieldwork. Community exhibitions will be hosted across the region in appropriate venues, such as Stranraer Museum. These will be complimented by object handling sessions, reanalysis of existing museum collections, workshops and public lectures. The project will herald a touring school's workshop culminating in a county-wide education pack. Dissemination of information through various media, particularly the world-wide-web, is integral to all aspects of the work.

FIRST YEAR ACTIVITIES

The programme of works was outlined in the original funding application. What follows is a brief overview of the activities that have taken place thus far.

Community excavation training programme

The community excavation training programme ran for 3 weeks from Sep 23rd to Oct 11th 2009m centred on Cults Loch, Castle Kennedy. A full research design and a summary of the work to date can be found at http://www.aocarchaeology.com/projects/heritage-and-community-outreach/cults_loch.htm. As well as taking part in the excavation of a 2000 year old wooden house and promontory fort the community also took part in various training activities including training in soil identification, artefact analysis, geophysical survey, excavation and other general skills.



Fig 1: Cults Loch, Castle Kennedy

Throughout the three-weeks visitors were encouraged to visit the site at any time to see the archaeology and there was a designated open day.

A week of school visits was also organised. Through one and a half hour sessions children were introduced to the concepts of archaeology and the rich heritage of the area both through visual prompts, a short lecture and a visit to the site to see the archaeology and the archaeologists.

Due to the success of the project Historic Scotland assigned additional grants for further excavation work for 1 week at the end of March 2010 and another 2 weeks between Aug 22nd to Sep 3rd 2010. Although this further funding is separate from the original Leader application this additional grant-aid allowed the community excavation programme to be extended. Daily updates on the current web-diary are occurring allowing individuals to follow the excavations and findings (see aocarchaeology.com; and twitter). The project directors, Dr Anne Crone and Dr Graeme Cavers, have reported that more members of the public are volunteering and visiting than in previous years, indicating that the project aims of furthering interest in the local heritage is being fulfilled.

In summary, over 300 individuals have either taken part, or visited the site, during the excavations.

Despite the often bad weather, to date we have had 10 volunteers taking part in the excavations and around 55 casual visitors. Around 250 school children (6 different schools) took part in the school visits.

Reporting on the archaeological results

A report on the archaeological works and discoveries was completed during January 2010 (called a *Data Structure Report*). This report records all the information recovered during the excavation and initial thoughts, prior to full post-excavation. A further report documenting the findings for March has just been completed. Both reports are hosted digitally on *OASIS*. It is intended that either the full report, or a summary report, will be accessible via the AOC archaeology website in the near future.

The report is also the basis for many of the other project outputs including the final publication, the developing teacher's pack, the temporary exhibition in Stranraer Museum (see below) and the forthcoming touring regional exhibition.

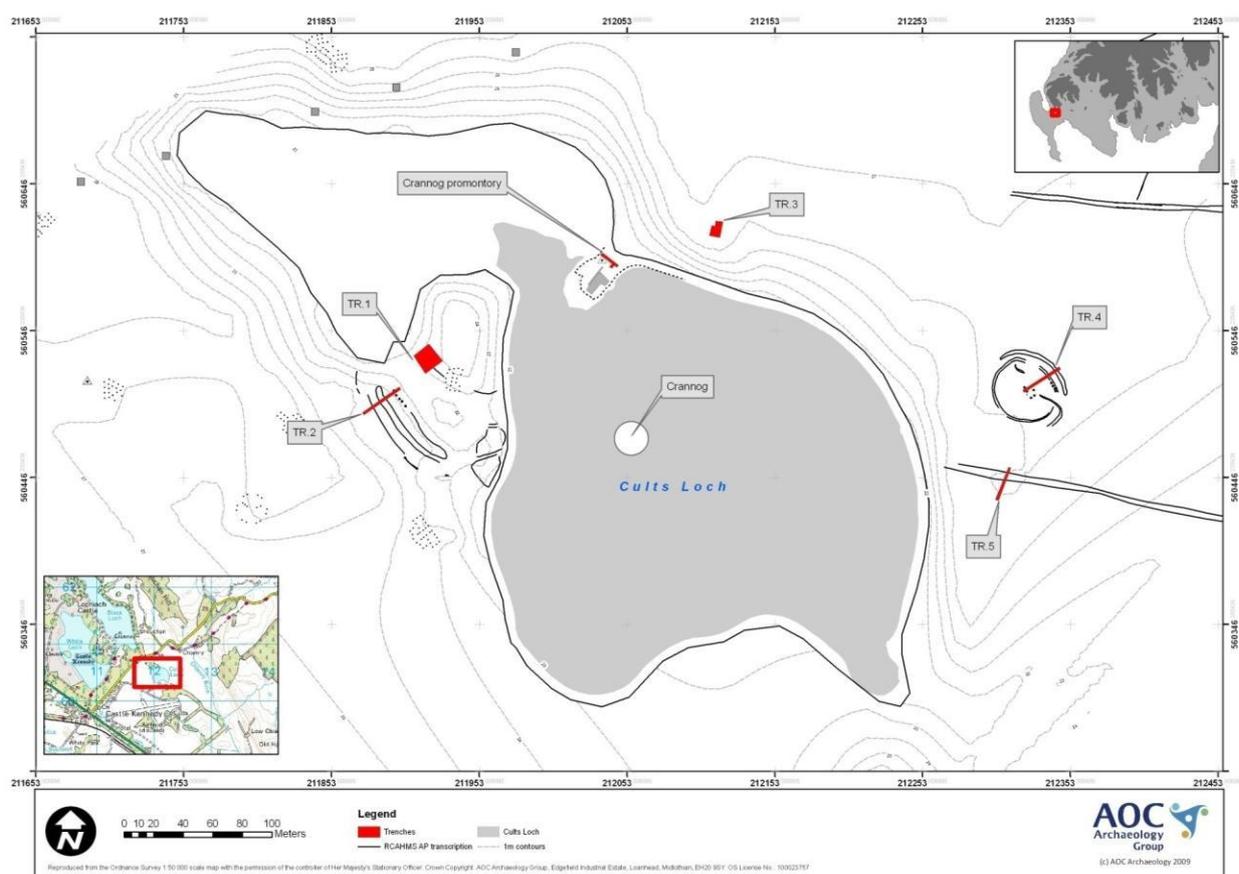


Fig 2: The site and location of the trenches



Fig 3: A member of the local community learns how to use a geophysical machine

Temporary exhibition in Stranraer Museum

A month-long exhibition was hosted in Stranraer Museum in January 2010 in partnership with the hosts. The exhibition displayed some of the finds recovered during the Cults Loch excavations and display boards, text and images outlined some of the key findings. The exhibition coincided with an *Antiquarian Exhibition* undertaken by Stranraer Museum. This timing was ideal as some of the finds and discussions in this exhibition involved local antiquarians, including Lord Stair, the landowner of Cults Loch. The display boards will be held by Stranraer Museum for future community work.

The display was well-received with visitor numbers for the Museum in January totalling 427.

Touring school workshop programme

Young children are central to the project. A week-long touring school's programme was undertaken in March 2010, the format designed in discussion with local head-teachers. The children were encouraged to learn about their past through a series of activities: powerpoint presentation on the archaeology of Cult Loch and crannogs; a time-line game; mock-up excavations; object handling sessions; and a 'what objects tell us' teaching session. By visiting a wide number and range of schools the project has reached a wide range of ages, genders and cultures and offers equal access to training opportunities.

Fourteen separate sessions were undertaken at the following primary schools: Drochdruil; Castle Kennedy; Park Primary; Belmont; Rephad; Portpatrick and Sandhead. Over the week c350 school children took part in the activities.



Fig 4: A member of the local community who has just discovered an Iron Age whetstone

Object training session in Stranraer Museum

An object handling session (undertaken in April 2010 in order to compliment the school's touring programme) was undertaken in partnership with Stranraer Museum. During the week 7 sessions were run by Jamie Enstone, John Pickin (both Stranraer Museum) and Julia Dawson (AOC Archaeology) in Stranraer Museum. Each session ran for an hour and a half and involved object handling, object recognition and worksheets.

During the week 165 school children took part in the activity.

Production of county-wide teacher's pack and associated resources

A key outcome of the project will be the production of a teacher's pack, due for completion by October 2010. Discussions are ongoing with relevant bodies and school teacher's concerning the structure and content of the teacher's pack. All of the content will be complimentary and integral to the Curriculum for Excellence.

Considerable work has already been done on the pack and further discussions with head-teachers will take place during September and October 2010 in order to finalise the pack.

The pack is intended to be distributed to as wide a group as possible ensuring that the results reach a wide range of ages, genders and cultures and offer equal access to training opportunities, as possible. Distribution is still being discussed but it is hoped that the teacher's pack will be distributed to every primary school in Dumfries and Galloway (total schools 115; pupil role c12,000).

Virtual learning: web-site

Although it was hoped that a range of individuals and groups would physically take part in the project (e.g. participation in the fieldwork; school visits; visiting community displays etc) it was always likely that many people would not be able to. In an attempt to further encourage ongoing engagement in the project and disseminate information virtual learning and access through the

World Wide Web has been integral to all aspects of the work. This has included a daily web-diary during the three seasons of excavations (see above) and regular updates throughout the duration of the project. It is envisaged that the teacher's pack may be hosted on the internet.

The web-diary has been a good success. It is advertised through the AOC web-site and on twitter, with links to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and Archaeology Scotland. It is also advertised in other media (press releases, posters etc).

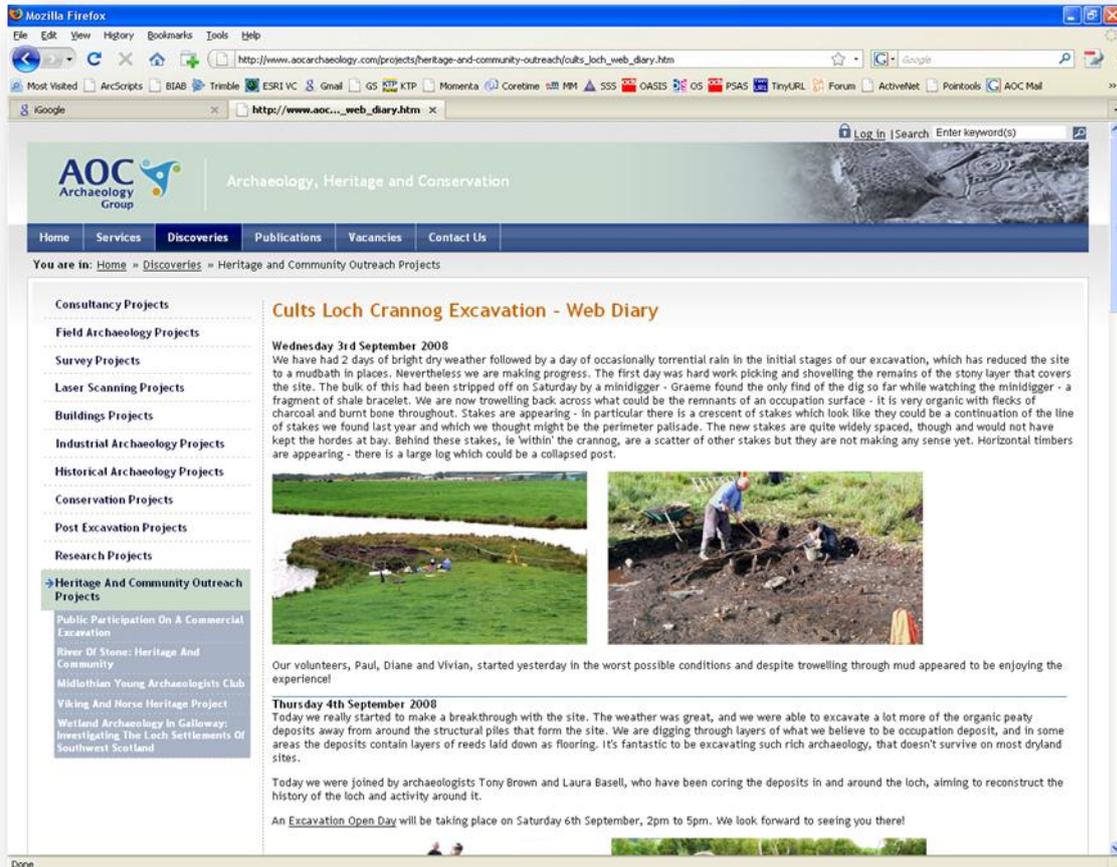


Fig 5: The daily web-diary

Other achievements

In October 2009 a public lecture was undertaken in association with Wigtownshire Antiquarian Society (28 people in attendance). The project director's also discussed the community project at the International Wetland Conference in Dublin in February 2010. Graeme Cavers and Andy Heald discussed the project in a major article on 'Community Archaeology' in the May edition of *History Scotland*.

One of the key outcomes has been the additional work undertaken by the local schools. Stimulated by their visit to Cults Loch Belmont Primary School undertook a major display in their school foyer which documented their visit to the excavations and their attitudes to archaeology. Numerous schools have also undertaken illustrations, the writing of poetry and/or short stories which will be integral to the school's pack and the touring regional exhibition. Further, spurred on by their object handling class Park Primary visited Whithorn to find out more about their archaeology and have

been undertaking a project on the Vikings. A retired teacher from Rephad is also now one of our regular excavation volunteers!