

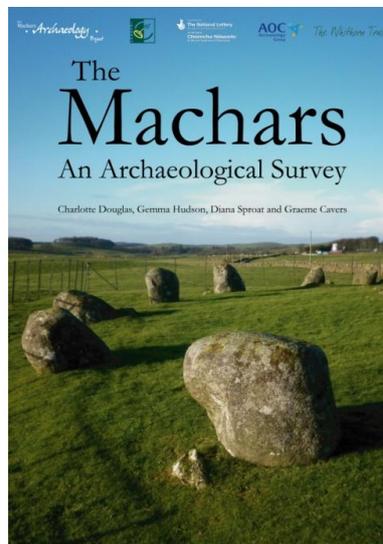
Machars Archaeology Project

Final Project Evaluation Report

Background to the project

In past years Dumfries and Galloway has been increasingly marketed as a destination for walkers. The Whithorn Trust began to look at how it could capture some of these visits. National interest in pilgrimage routes, both ancient and modern is also developing and the Whithorn Trust is engaged in promoting the pilgrim routes to Whithorn. Also a partnership with other groups is being investigated in order to progress a Landscape Partnership similar to the Dalriada Project in Argyll

The main activity of the Whithorn Trust is to carry out research, mainly through archaeological and historical investigation and to relate the results in the Visitor Centre. The Machars area is extremely rich in sites from all different periods of history. Few have been surveyed in recent times and there was little information about the sites themselves, access issues and interpretative potential.



The idea to carry out a wide ranging survey of sites was considered as a first step. Whilst this activity could have been purely bought in it was felt that this project could also give meaningful training to local people thus engaging them with the landscape and their heritage.

This idea developed into a full scale research project with the community at its heart. Top quality training would initially give local people a good understanding of the sites investigated. The wide range of potential sites would also give a chronological background to the history and development of the Machars peninsula.

It was anticipated that this type of training project would also be sustainable in the future. Trained and engaged volunteers may continue to investigate sites. For further integration with the community it was decided that an education activity should be included in the project.

Funding was sought from Leader and from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Stranraer and District Local History Trust and South Machars Historical Society were particularly interested in the education part of the project and they both made a contribution.

The funding package amounted to

Heritage Lottery Fund	35,700
South Machars Historical Society	1000
Stranraer and District Local History Trust	900
Whithorn Trust	300

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The project experience

Timescale

The project took place from 27th July 2011 to May 31st 2012

Tenders

A panel of Trustees and advisors (George Pattison, Janet Butterworth, Kenny Barr, John Pickin and Jane Brann) was drawn together to consider the tenders and a scoring matrix was drawn up. A letter and brief for tender was sent to all companies on a list of archaeological contractors held by the Council.

Eight tenders were received and all were considered. AOC Archaeology Ltd was selected largely as their tender showed best fit with the project aims around community archaeology in addition to their understanding of Curriculum for Excellence.

Launch

A high profile launch was arranged in conjunction with the Scottish Government Cabinet meeting in Stranraer. This enabled Fiona Hyslop Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs to 'cut the ribbon'. This was featured on BBC Radio Scotland and in local press.

Afterwards a more public launch was arranged. This was on 14th September between 2pm and 7.30pm. The activities were linked with BBC Hands on History and Catherine Garvie of the BBC education department attended. Twenty one people registered for the project on the night.



Spheres of activity

There were four main spheres of activity – Survey, Talks, Big Dig and Education. The Big Dig was scheduled in quite early in the project in order to use media coverage to publicise the project. It was decided that surveys should take place monthly and the educational activity should follow at the end of the project in order to use some of the research data gathered.

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Survey

Before any work could begin AOC Archaeology had to carry out a desk based survey of sites in the Machars and prioritise those to visit. We were looking for places which could be built into trails in the future and from a spread of periods.

A training weekend was held on 24th-25th September in conjunction with Doors Open Day. Twelve people participants attended. A resistivity survey was carried out on Castlehill in Whithorn itself. A plane table survey to map visible remains at the Priory was carried out and a GPS total station survey was used to create 3D maps of the features.

The survey programme was as follows:-

Dowalton Loch area – 18-22nd October

Physgill/ Glasserton area - 15-19th November

Boreland, Crouse, Torhousekie areas– 12-16th December

Kirkmaiden, Sorbie, Cruggleton and Torhouse Croft buildings– 16th - 20th January

Garheugh area – 13th-17th February

Cruggleton Castle and Barhullion Fell – 12th-16th March



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Talks

At the inception meeting of the project we decided that we would hold a talk or a workshop during each survey week. The subjects would cover the chronology of the sites to be surveyed and would equip the volunteers with knowledge to enable them to continue to research the area.

On 17th October Dr Graeme Cavers gave a talk on the identification, interpretation and recording of archaeological sites. He outlined the areas to be surveyed and talked about the type of clothes to be worn and kit to be brought on the survey days. Nineteen people attended.

On 29th October George Haggarty gave a talk for nine attendees on 'A Decade of Medieval Ceramic Research'. He looked at recent changes in our understanding of medieval and later pottery, what it can tell us and where future research might take us. Six people attended.

On 12th December Dr Graeme Cavers gave a talk entitled 'Perspectives on the Iron Age in SW Scotland'. Dr Cavers discussed aspects of the Iron Age in Wigtownshire, considering the results of recent surveys and excavations and discussed the sites surveyed by the MAP project to date. Thirteen people attended.

On 19th January a workshop was held on 'Online Resources for Heritage Research'. AOC Archaeology supplied laptops for this interactive workshop introducing the online resources available for carrying out research into the heritage in the area. Eight people attended.

On 16th February John Barber gave a talk entitled 'Understanding Neolithic Archaeology in SW Scotland' where he discussed the Neolithic archaeology of SW Scotland in context, and looked at how we can interpret the monuments built by the first farming communities in the Machars. Six people attended.

Big Dig



The idea of the Big Dig was to get as many volunteers as possible to excavate as many 1metre square test pits around the town as possible. This idea not only brought volunteers but also Border TV who covered one of the days.

AOC Archaeology brought ceramics expert George Haggarty to help with finds identification (ceramics were anticipated to be the largest finds group).

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Permission was given by 5 householders to excavate in their back gardens in addition to the back of the Old Town Hall, the graveyard extension field, the old slaughterhouse site, the back of the Post Office. Twelve test pits were excavated in total.

Sixteen volunteers were involved in the Big Dig. The weather over the weekend was not as good as it could have been however the quality of finds was excellent. More common finds were returned to go into the teaching resource kit held at the Whithorn Trust whilst more rare finds will go through the treasure trove process

On the Monday morning (31st October) Whithorn Primary P7's (19 children in total) were taken onto Castlehill where a total of six test pits were opened up. The pits had been de-turfed by AOC Archaeology staff in readiness to make things easier.

Education project

The education activity was in two phases – 'Introduction to Archaeology' in-school workshops and the development of a teachers resource pack for use in the classroom.

The school workshops were offered to all primary schools in Wigtownshire. Nine schools booked workshops with two booking two workshops in the day – eleven workshops delivered in total. Two hundred and forty nine children participated in the workshops.

The workshop was split into three activities – a powerpoint presentation which illustrated 'who is an archaeologist' and what equipment an archaeologist might use. Later the presentation talked about sites in and around the area. Half way through the presentation a break introduced the concept of a timeline using an interactive activity. Finally children were given a sandbox containing artefacts. They each had a recording sheet and were encouraged to discuss the object they found, research and record it and finally this was shared with the whole group.

We had initially anticipated a paper based teacher resource pack being produced. However, through discussion it was decided that this would be better as a web-based resource. This would mean that it could always be accessed and not lost, could be updated with new information and would have an interactive section for children. The resource takes the form of a web-site designed to be used for investigation by children. A protected area for children allows them to carry out investigation at their own pace whilst a teacher area gives access to additional information and resources to support classroom learning. Initially we had hoped to hold a session for teachers to try out the resource and give feedback. This was arranged as a continuing professional development twilight session through the Council. No teachers signed up to the evening. Since this could have been due to the timing of the event we will be running an event to introduce the pack at the beginning of the new session after the school holidays.

Marketing

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A dedicated web-site was developed for the project. The web-site will continue to be hosted by AOC Archaeology and will be available on an ongoing basis. The site could be accessed through Wordpress allowing continual updates on surveys as they progressed (www.aocarchaeology.com/machars).

The use of social networking media was incorporated into the project. A Facebook and Twitter account were set up and training was given by AOC Archaeology. The Facebook presence quickly gathered enough 'likes' to have www.facebook.com/whithornorg.

Press releases were placed in the Galloway Gazette and Stranraer and Wigtownshire Free Press. The launch was covered by BBC Radio Scotland and on the BBC Things to Do website. The Big Dig was covered by Border TV for Lookaround.

A database was gathered from those registering with the project and email alerts were sent monthly about the new survey site. These emails were also circulated to the U3A groups in the area.

Posters were printed for each month and these were circulated throughout the Machars. These were also circulated via email, the web-site, facebook, and to local networks via the Local Rural Partnership.

Who took part

Generally the participants were local people however occasionally a visitor would join in. Some only accessed the talks whilst others even booked holidays to take part in survey weeks. We found that teenagers were the group we failed to attract. We reached children through the primary schools and through events. Generally those involved in the survey were middle aged to retired.

There were 1583.5 hours of survey participant time in the project. For the purposes of the project these volunteers are counted as participants. Volunteer hours for the purposes of the project are project management hours i.e. tender selections and emergency base station.

Additional benefits

The project brought people into the Whithorn Trust building who had not been in before. This initial contact has resulted in further volunteering on projects and in one case as a new Trustee.

Final Budget

The original budget for the project was £73,982 (with Heritage Lottery Fund also accepting a contingency budget of £2040). The final expenditure was £71,779.93 (see detail below).

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Leader	HLF	
£ -		
£ -		-
£ 2,400.00	£ 2,400.00	Professional fees
		Repair and cons
£ 9,840.00		Desk based analysis
£ 276.00		Desk based analysis
£ 17,910.00		Field survey
£ 336.00		Field survey materials
£ 4,224.00		Field survey living and transport
£ 11,664.00		Field survey data processing
£ 4,108.80		Field survey reporting
£ 7,560.00	£ 55,918.80	Project management
		Training for volunteers
£ 2,388.00		Launch weekend
£ 318.00		Launch weekend expenses
£ 1,445.37		School visits
£ 344.80	£ 4,496.17	School visits expenses
£ -		Expenses for volunteers
£ -		Cost of producing learning materials
£ 1,440.00		Preparation of teacher pack
£ 576.00		Teacher pack graphic design
£ 270.00	£ 2,286.00	Teacher pack printing
£ -		Publicity and promotion
£ 1,070.40		Project exhibition text
£ 1,070.40		Project exhibition graphics
£ 1,070.40		Project exhibition production
£ 576.00		Project website design
£ 796.80		Project website writing content
£ 396.00	£ 4,980.00	Project website updates
£ -		
£ 1,403.96	£ 1,403.96	Overheads (proj manager)
£ -		
£ 295.00		Volunteer time
£ -		
£ -		Contingency
£ -		
£ 71,779.93	£ 71,484.93	

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Lessons learned

Access

The sites surveyed are not in close proximity to paths or roads. They are generally across rough pastureland. We decided to contact landowners to seek permission before confirming sites to be surveyed. Locating the relevant landowners proved difficult as, in many areas, all fields do not belong to the closest farm. Some farmers have bought or rent parcels of land quite a distance from their main property. We found that the best way to tackle the problem was to get a map each month of the target area. One of the Trustees (a farmer) then identified as many farmers as possible who might be involved. Each farmer was then contacted by phone and asked if there was a need to contact anyone else not on the list. We had anticipated that landowners might need persuasion to allow us on the land but most were very supportive. We were told where there may be cattle however in the main the cattle were indoors at that time of year.

Timing

It had been decided that winter was the best time of year for a number of reasons. The time suited the cash flow and work cycle of the Whithorn Trust, in the winter cattle with calves would not be in fields, vegetation would be low allowing the ground features to be more visually apparent and easier to identify.

The winter was particularly wet but not too cold. This made the ground boggy and slippery. A number of sites were on exposed hillsides making recording difficult. The December survey month was restricted and one day was abandoned due to snow making the side roads dangerous.

Health and safety

General risk assessments were issued to all participants, both for outdoor sites and for buildings. A talk was given about the clothing needs on sites. Waterproofs, warm layers, waterproof boots were required.

The project was to give the opportunity for volunteers to train and engage in real research. This brought dangers. Initially the site was identified on the map and a discussion took place on how to approach the site. Using grid references and hand held gps the site was located (sometimes the gps co-ordinates were adjusted on the records).

As the project progressed we discussed the need for an emergency base station to be established in case of emergencies. Given the exposed and remote location of sites we discussed emergency solutions to raise assistance. AOC Archaeology staff have had first aid training and we maintained radio contact between groups.

Disability

During the project a participant emerged who, whilst not registered disabled presented an issue when accessing the more remote sites. The project offered a wide variety of

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opportunities to get involved with some easily accessible sites on flat ground and close to the road (for example we carried out some graveyard surveys). However, inevitably we had some sites only accessible across miles of rough ground and with walls or fences to scale. In addition the equipment had to be carried in. The particular participant expressed concern that his level of disability was being gauged without a sufficient understanding and he was being excluded from participation. However, since he had indicated that he could not use steps due to a back injury it was necessary to make a judgment to safeguard the leaders and the rest of the participants (if one person had an accident the others would have to be left without supervision in order to get help).

Education project

There was large demand for workshops and schools had to be limited to fit the timescale. In the main the project could only offer one workshop per school with only two occasions where two were offered. We had designed the education project to be delivered by Whithorn Trust staff. Training was given by AOC Archaeology and a teaching resource pack with notes was made up from objects recovered in the Big Dig. In this way it was felt that workshops could be offered again in the future.

A continuing personal development twilight session was arranged so that teachers could input to the development of the teachers resource pack. No teachers registered for the event so this was cancelled. AOC Archaeology used personal contacts with teachers to gain feedback so that the resource set the right tone and met Curriculum for Excellence needs.

The decision to make the teachers pack a web-based resource had implications. This activity took much longer than anticipated. Schools in Dumfries and Galloway use PC's and



the system had to be developed for optimum use on the hardware and software in use. Copyright issues with some photographs had to be checked and resolved.

The teachers resource was ready to launch on 1st June. Aileen McLeod MSP and Norman Hughes (headteacher at Whithorn Primary) checked out the site and were enthusiastic about it. Since this was at the very end of the school year we will hold another launch event after the summer holidays.

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Legacy

The main legacy for the project is the survey results. The project web-site will continue to be hosted by AOC Archaeology and a final report has been written (enclosed). The research results have been added to Dumfries and Galloway Council Historic Environment Record.

The group of participants are now trained and want to continue to survey sites. It is anticipated that they will investigate setting up a constituted group and seek funding to buy equipment and perhaps engage support from archaeologists for some survey events. Two of the participants have already contributed information to Canmore (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland database which brings together the results of the survey and collections material

In order to continue the success of the Machars Archaeology Project the Whithorn Trust is working with AOC Archaeology to develop ideas for an excavation training programme.

Specific issues covered by the project relating to the funders requirements

Heritage Lottery Fund

- help people to learn about their own and other people's heritage.
- help more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about heritage.

Leader

- Link communities and land together

The Machars Archaeology Project has delivered training to a group of local people to enable them to identify, locate, record and better understand the features in the landscape surrounding them.

The fact that the trainees were engaged in 'real' research made them feel valued but also made a real link with the heritage value of the sites. The training has enabled them to continue in research rather than being engaged in desk-based learning.

Participants have developed an understanding of the breadth of time periods covered by the sites. Generally the more intact sites are of the medieval period, however a number of Iron Age sites have been investigated.

Children have been introduced at a young age to the importance of the sites around them and of the area in general. The possibility of a career as an archaeologist has also been introduced.

More generally the project has given the Whithorn Trust an understanding of the access restrictions when considering their long-term aim to introduce interpreted trails in the area.