

# TARBAT DISCOVERY PROGRAMME

## Outline Programme to Publication

### *PROJECT HISTORY*

The Tarbat Discovery Programme was a programme of survey, excavation and research that began in 1994.

The *evaluation* ran from 1994-1996 and was supported by the University of York and Highland Council. It culminated in a Project Design (Bulletins 1-3), which anticipated the excavation of St Colman's Church and 0.6ha adjacent.

*Excavation* began in 1996 and was concluded in 2007. From 1996-2001, the work was supported by Tarbat Historic Trust, Highland Council, Heritage Lottery, Ross and Cromarty Enterprise and the University of York. From 2002-2007, the excavation was supported by Historic Scotland, the National Museums of Scotland, Ross and Cromarty Enterprise and the University of York.

These 14 seasons have always included a measure of post-excavation work. In September 2007 enough had been done to put out a preliminary publication Portmahomack, monastery of the Picts, which is to be published by Edinburgh University Press in May 2008. This publication will be the principal source of information until the main Research Report is completed.

The *post-excavation* programme has three main objectives:

- (1) To prepare a Research Report for publication. This has been provisionally discussed as a monograph of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland
- (2) To prepare an electronic archive for access via Archaeological Data Services
- (3) To deposit all finds and records in the National Museum and/or the Royal Commission.

In general the majority of this work is scheduled to be done by Cecily Spall (co-director) and her staff at FAS Ltd, in conjunction with Martin Carver (co-director) acting as an independent.

### *AIMS of THIS DOCUMENT*

This document offers a desk-top account of the desirable scope of work to publication, subject to a full Post Excavation Assessment. It is the principal aim of the first PX Season (2008) to carry out a full PX assessment.

## *DESK TOP ASSESSMENT of POST-EXCAVATION REQUIREMENT*

The content of the Research Report will comprise the excavation at Portmahomack, survey on the Tarbat Peninsula and Researches into Context.

### **EXCAVATION**

The excavation was conducted in four SECTORS as follows:

*Sector 1:* Excavations in the South Field. Contained the monastic vallum, a hall and a metalworking quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> century; and two buildings of the 9-11<sup>th</sup> century connected with grain processing. A part of the Field Report has been prepared by Madeleine Hummler.

Programme: It is planned to enhance and complete this report in the form of a DSR.

Special studies to do: the metal-working area; the architecture of Structure 1; a small assemblage of animal bone; spatial analysis of bone and artefacts.

*Sector 2:* Excavations in the Glebe Field. Contained burials of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, wells and cisterns of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, a paved road, vellum workshop, dam, pool and culvert of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, a road and metal-working area of the 9-11<sup>th</sup> century; metal-working features of the 11-13<sup>th</sup> century; large animal bone assemblage; paleobotanical sequence from Iron Age marsh up to Norse period pool (700BC-900 AD).

Programme: A DSR is required for 2007. It is planned to re-present the project history for 1994-2001 also in the form of a DSR.

Special studies: stratigraphy; the vellum industry, the metal-working industries (including slag); water-management; the botanical sequence; the architecture of the road and vellum-working structures; a very large animal bone assemblage (including fish and molluscs) needs to be assessed; the sculpture assemblage requires a full inventory and study in conjunction with the sculpture from the church (see below); large assemblage of querns and stone artefacts needs assessment. Medieval pottery and coin reports are done.

*Sector 3:* Small scale excavations north of Tarbatness Road. Contained little.

Programme: The field records to be summarised as a DSR

*Sector 4:* St Colman's Church. Contained a sequence of 9 churches, 200 skeletons and 14 pieces of sculpture.

Programme: The records were analysed in 1997 and again in 2004 and preliminary accounts have been or are about to be published (Roe 1997; Carver 2008, Ch 8). The

archive has been indexed. It is proposed to re-present the archive for Sector 4 in the form of as DSR.

Special studies: The human bone has been analysed and a full report prepared by Sarah King; three more skeletons (from outside the church) need to be seen by S.King;  
Sculpture: a preliminary study of the sculpture is about to be published (Carver 2008, Ch 5); the remaining work will be mainly geared to reconstructing the four monumental crosses that have been broken up. Coffin fittings and other metalwork; pottery.

## **SURVEY**

Topographical and other surveys have been undertaken at Nigg, Shandwick and Hilton of Cadboll. A reconnaissance survey has been undertaken along the probably line of the portage. These field records need gathering and re-presenting in the form of a DSR.

## **RESEARCHES INTO CONTEXT**

A preliminary listing includes comparative research into water management schemes, vellum and manuscript production, working precious metals, analogies for construction in stone and timber.

## **PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE**

2007 Prepare DSR for final season on Sector 2

2008: Manage site archive

- Commission PX assessments

- Prepare DSR for Sector 1

- Prepare PD for PX programme

2009: Commission specialist reports on human bone, animal bone, petrology, metallurgy.

- Prepare DSR for Sector 3 and 4

- Prepare DSR for Surveys

2010: Finalise stratigraphy and phasing for Sector 2 and 4.

- Complete in-house analysis on industries and architecture

- Researches into context

2011: Prepare texts and illustrations (1)

- Researches into context

2012: Prepare texts and illustrations (2)

- Prepare electronic archive for ADS

## **PROGRAMME for 2008**

Preparation of PX assessment and draft full PX programme

1. Prepare animal bone, petrology, and metallurgy assemblages for assessment and choose contractors
2. Assess other assemblages
3. Write detailed programme.

Finance:

Animal bone assessment: £2000 [to be appointed]

Petrology assessment £500 [to be appointed]

Metallurgy assessment £1000 [to be appointed]

Additional human bone report (3 skeletons) £500 [Sarah King]

Other assessments £2000

Write PX programme £8000 (Cecily Spall)

Edit PX programme £4000 (Martin Carver)

Prepare DSR for sector 1 £2000

Total £20000

BIDS for FUNDING

Historic Scotland £10000

National Museums of Scotland £10000\*

\*This excludes additional help in kind to be discussed with NMS during the preparation of the PX assessment and programme in 2008.