



# *News Release*

January 2019

## **AMAZING ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY AT CUPAR'S EAST MOAT HILL!**



*Image credit: Ian Jacobs Photography*

Evidence of Bronze Age Burials has been discovered at the summit of East Moat Hill in Cupar during a community archaeological dig delivered as part of the Cupar CARS/THI programme managed by Fife Historic Buildings Trust on behalf of Fife Council.

Over a ten day period in October, twenty local volunteers worked with ARCHAS Cultural Heritage and AKD Archaeology to excavate four trenches across the hill. The aim of the community excavation was to give local people an opportunity to actively explore the town's heritage and learn new archaeology skills through on-site training. East Moat Hill was chosen for the excavation as Moat Hills across the UK were places of medieval assembly where open-air councils were held and justice was dispensed, and medieval documentary evidence from the 12th century onwards shows that Cupar's Moat Hill was used in this way until the 15th century.

Alastair Rees of ARCHAS Archaeology said: "During the excavation many interesting 17th to 20th century artefacts such as coins, metal objects, a gunflint and a .303 cartridge were found in the trenches excavated on the flanks of the hill. However, the very last day of the excavation revealed some interesting deposits on the summit of the hill: a large, deep pit was revealed and a small investigative trench was excavated into this feature. At the base of the pit, a small cremation deposit was located. We were able to extract a small sample of the cremated bone which has been Radiocarbon dated to approximately 1750BC, roughly the transition from the Early to the Middle Bronze Age nearly 4000 years ago. Although only a small part of this large feature was investigated it is very likely that what was revealed is a Bronze Age Cremation pit in the centre of Cupar! It is also highly probable that there will be other similar features located close to the pit already identified as these features are often found in small clusters."

Douglas Speirs, Fife Council Archaeologist said: "This is a really exciting find. The Cupar CARS/THI community excavation not only provided a vehicle for local people to actively explore their local heritage but in doing so, they have made a discovery of national importance. Prehistoric origins for early medieval places of assembly have long been postulated but to date, only a couple of sites have revealed tangible evidence to support this assumption. The discoveries at Cupar add to this growing corpus of evidence and shed new light on our understanding of the very deep history of medieval open air court sites. This is a very significant archaeological discovery and makes a good case to return to the hill next year for further excavations."

Peter Klemen, AKD Archaeology said: "This is a significant archaeological discovery and adds much to our understanding of prehistoric Cupar. We will be presenting the findings of the excavation at a free seminar on Thursday 31 January 2018 at the County Buildings in Cupar. Doors open at 7pm for a 7:30pm start. Everyone is welcome to attend, and to book your place on this seminar, please email [akd.archaeology@hotmail.com](mailto:akd.archaeology@hotmail.com). We will also be visiting local primary schools in January to tell them about the dig."

The community excavation was funded by Historic Environment Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund through the Cupar Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) and Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) programme.

## Notes to editors

- Cupar Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) and Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) is operated by Fife Council and Fife Historic Buildings Trust , and core funded jointly by Historic Environment Scotland, the Heritage Lottery Fund, and Fife Council. The five-year CARS/THI programme, which runs until March 2019, has delivered a number of elements: priority building projects including the Cupar Burgh Chambers, a building repair grant scheme, public realm improvements to Cupar streets and closes, and training, apprenticeships and community engagement. [www.fifehistoricbuildings.org.uk](http://www.fifehistoricbuildings.org.uk)
- Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, it invests in every part of our diverse heritage. To date it has invested over £588million in Scotland's heritage. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk); @heritagelottery
- HLF's Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) encourages partnerships of local organisations to carry out repairs and other works to a number of historic buildings, structures or spaces. Grants range from £500,000 to £2m. To date, HLF has invested over £214m regenerating towns that have suffered serious social and economic decline.
- Historic Environment Scotland's Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) provides financial assistance, over a five year period, for Conservation Area based regeneration and conservation initiatives undertaken by Local and National Park Authorities, community groups and other 3rd sector organisations experienced in delivering multi-funded projects. Since 2005, there have been seven CARS application rounds awarding £41.5m of Scottish Government investment.



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