

Minutes of the meeting of

THE SCOTTISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS ALLOCATION PANEL

10.45am Wednesday 3 February 2010
Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh

Present: Professor Ian Ralston (Chair), Ms Jane Robinson (MGS), Dr Alison Sheridan (NMS Panel appointee), Mr Stuart Campbell (TTU), Mr Andrew Brown (QLTR solicitor) present from item 5 onwards, Catherine Wilson (QLTR solicitor) present from item 5 onwards, Mr Neil Curtis (Marischal Museum), Mr David Connolly (BAJR), Mr Ron Smith (ESPC), Ms Kerry McMillan (NMS) was in attendance throughout and took the minutes.

Apologies: None

1. Chairman's remarks

The Panel were in agreement that there is an urgent need for a Service Level Agreement (SLA).

a. The departure of the QLTR

The Panel expressed regret that the present QLTR, Norman McFadyen, will be relinquishing his post. The Panel wished him well in his new post as a 'Floating Sherriff'. A replacement has not yet been appointed.

Regret was expressed at the news that Ron Smith will also be leaving the Panel, due to work commitments in London. It was felt his experience and acumen had contributed greatly to the workings of the Panel, and he was wished well for the future.

b. Temporary display of the gold find from Stirlingshire

IR and NM had agreed to NMS' request for the pre-allocation loan of the torcs. They will be displayed from January 20th to February 15th. After this date the objects will be valued externally. It was noted by the Chairman that there was an unfortunate ambiguity in the display text and the distinction that the objects were on temporary display and not allocated to NMS was not sufficiently clear. The Panel expressed regret at the ambiguity of the wording.

A discussion followed in which RS suggested that the Panel create a protocol document, with clear guidelines for the wording of labels accompanying TTU objects on pre-allocation loan. The Panel were in agreement with this suggestion. It was also suggested that press issues relating to TTU objects be handled by the Crown Office Press Office, instead of NMS.

Stirling Museum was offered the torcs for temporary display but seemed disinclined to proceed due to major renovation work taking place at the museum.

IR expressed regret that the Stirlingshire Gold press release only featured NMS staff with no representatives from SAFAP or TTU.

c. Progress on the SLA between VQ and NMS

The Panel expressed frustration at the lack of progress on the SLA. IR has emailed VQ twice to check on progress but has had no response. RS suggested that an SLA could be created in a matter of days, with the right people working on it. Despite standing down from the Panel, RS offered his services in this respect. RS to contact David Sears at VQ to inform him of the critical importance of the SLA, especially given recent events surrounding the Stirlingshire Gold.

Concern was expressed that NMS management wanted to show the Stirlingshire Gold to the Trustees without permission from TTU.

IR stressed that the TTU is struggling to fulfil its aims due to only having one member of staff. SC is working at Head of TTU level but is not being paid at this level.

RS suggested that SAFAP make a presentation to the NMS Trustees to inform them of the work which the TTU and SAFAP does. RS suggested waiting until the SLA has been agreed before presenting to the Trustees.

SC will find out if the Trustees receive an induction pack and if so it was suggested that an A4 sheet detailing exactly what the TTU does be included within the pack.

d. Further temporary appointment

The 6 month post of temporary administrative assistant for Treasure Trove has been advertised and will be filled by March. The Panel expressed their concern that the post is not permanent and that NMS has not sought advice from SAFAP regarding the job description. It was also considered inappropriate that no SAFAP member will be on the interview panel. IR will contact the Crown Office for advice on this matter. Ideally the panel would like SAFAP to be included on any future interview panels for TTU staff. SAFAP would also like to be informed by NMS when they are advertising TTU posts.

e. AGM with the Crown Office

All felt the meeting was very productive, and had highlighted the problematic issues relating to human remains.

f. Publicising the Code/discussing the assemblages issue with the archaeological profession.

VQ had previously promised funds to SAFAP to launch the code. Due to a shortage of time this did not happen. IR will contact VQ to request that the money be used for a seminar to discuss the assemblages problem.

The panel reiterated its great concern at the high number of assemblages which no museum wished to acquire. SC and IR are writing an article for the Society of Antiquaries newsletter to highlight the problems with assemblages. Time permitting, the article will be shown to the Panel before being published.

g. Meeting the NDMD SR

IR met with NCMD. The details of this discussion are outlined in the AGM minutes.

ACTION: RS to contact David Sears at VQ to inform him of the critical importance of the SLA

ACTION: SC will find out if the Trustees receive an induction pack

ACTION: Panel to create a protocol document, with clear guidelines for the wording of labels accompanying TTU objects

ACTION: IR will contact the Crown Office for advice on who should be present on TTU interview panels.

ACTION: IR will contact VQ to request that the money be used to fund seminar on assemblages issue.

2. Minutes of meeting on 7 October 2009

Page 5 – MGS changed to NLA

Action under Chairman’s remarks (page 1) to be expanded

Page 2 – Sentence expanded to read ‘It was agreed that all cases which NMS are prepared to accept will go to NMS, in its position of Museum of last resort.

Page 5 – Under Report on medieval finds from Bannockburn – line 3 ‘and location’ to be removed.

It was asked that minutes to be sent out earlier to remind Panel of Actions.

3. New cases

Treasure Trove Cases SAFAP Meeting 03 February 2010

CO.TT. no	Object(s)	Reward	Museum
175/09	Assemblage of 19 th century pottery Sherds, Carstairs, South Lanarkshire	n/a	Glasgow*
176/09	Roman excavation assemblage, Carriden, Falkirk	n/a	Falkirk
177/09	Two carved stones from watching brief,	n/a	Dunbeath

	Broubster, Highland		
178/09	Post-medieval assemblage, Dunfermline, Fife	n/a	no bid
179/09	Medieval assemblage, Stenhousemuir, Falkirk	n/a	Falkirk
180/09	Medieval-19 th century assemblage, Perth, Perth and Kinross	n/a	Perth
181/09	Medieval-19 th century assemblage, Perth, Perth and Kinross	n/a	Perth
182/09	19 th century assemblage, Meigle, Perth and Kinross	n/a	no bid
183/09	Medieval-19 th century assemblage, Arbroath, Angus	n/a	Angus
184/09	Iron Age assemblage, Breckness Broch, Orkney	n/a	Orkney
185/09	Assemblage of modern material, Colonsay, Argyll and Bute	n/a	Argyll & Bute
186/09	Medieval assemblage, Newbattle Abbey, Midlothian	n/a	no bid
187/09	Bronze Age assemblage, Castle Kennedy, Dumfries and Galloway	n/a	Stranraer
188/09	Medieval assemblage, Houndwood, Scottish Borders	n/a	no bid
189/09	Neolithic, Iron Age and Early Historic Assemblage, Forres, Moray	n/a	Forres
190/09	Medieval assemblage, Waverley Vaults, Edinburgh	n/a	Edinburgh
191/09	Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age assemblage, Cambuslang, South Lanarkshire	n/a	Glasgow
192/09	Bronze Age assemblage, Helmsdale, Highland	n/a	Inverness*
193/09	Modern assemblage, Eoropie, Isle of	n/a	no bid

Lewis, Western Isles			
194/09	Neolithic assemblage, Milton Wood, Aberdeenshire	n/a	Marischal
195/09	Multi-period prehistoric assemblage, Stranraer, Dumfries and Galloway	n/a	Stranraer
196/09	Post-medieval assemblage, Prestonpans, East Lothian	n/a	E Lothian
197/09	Prehistoric assemblage, Whithorn, Dumfries and Galloway	n/a	Stranraer
198/09	Post-medieval-modern assemblage, Craigievar Castle, Aberdeenshire	n/a	Aberdeen *-shire
199/09	Post-medieval assemblage, St Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh	n/a	Edinburgh
200/09	Medieval and post-medieval assemblage Elgin, Moray	n/a	Marischal
201/09	Neolithic-medieval assemblage, Kintore, Aberdeenshire	n/a	Marischal
202/09	Neolithic assemblage, Crathes Castle, Aberdeenshire	n/a	Marischal
203/09	Medieval assemblage, Forfar, Angus	n/a	Angus
204/09	Post-medieval- modern assemblage, Skail House, Orkney	n/a	Orkney
205/09	Medieval weight and annular brooch, Dornoch, Highland	£510	History -links
206/09	17 th century gold and enamel finger ring, Carriden, Falkirk	£650	NMS*
207/09	17 th century lead alloy seal matrix, Locharbriggs, Dumfries and Galloway	£90	Dumfries
208/09	Post-medieval lead alloy test-piece, Mortonhall, Edinburgh	£90	Edinburgh
209/09	Medieval zoomorphic strap fitting, Ballinbreich, Fife	£40	NMS*

* These cases were accepted by the relevant institutions in the absence of bids from local museums.

Single bids for all assemblages from 175/09 to 204/09 were accepted. There were 8 cases with no bids

It was reported by SC that due to the TTU having only staff member the response time for finders had greatly increased with result that less objects were being submitted. If the TTU were fully staffed an ideal response time of 1-2 weeks would be met. However, at present the response time can be considerably longer, especially if, as is often the case, submitting museums or finders provide inadequate information. The view of the Panel is that this is very damaging to the reputation of the TTU and staffing needs to be increased as a matter of urgency.

ACTION: SC to provide periodic updates on response time to enquiries.

4. Matters arising from the previous minutes (not considered elsewhere)

The Panel's letter to Jane Carmichael, sent 14 June remains unanswered.

A new Web Designer for the TTU site will shortly be in post. SC to investigate whether the website could be hosted by the Scottish Government.

A discussion followed regarding what can be done about the reluctance of museums to accept excavation assemblages. SC had consulted a variety of museums regarding the issues which made them reluctant to accept material and tabled these responses. These varied from costs of storage to the low quality of material and all expressed concern that they were not involved at an earlier stage to liaise with excavators regarding what material should be kept during excavation and which should be disposed of.

It was suggested that a repository warehouse, like those in France, would be an ideal solution but it was agreed that there is unlikely to be funding available. The Chairman reported that the subject has been broached with many organisations but that no individual organisation wants to make a decision. It was suggested that SAFAP hold a seminar to discuss what should be done with unclaimed objects. The Panel also agreed that there needs to be a second tier of museums who are willing to act in a 'last resort' capacity regionally. SC reported that Kelvingrove, Marischal and –to a lesser degree- Inverness museums have expressed interest in acting in this regard. In line with the undertaking given at the CO AGM SC had circulated the details of unallocated assemblages to these museums. The Panel agreed a deadline of the 30th June for these museums to express an interest in the material.

Under the Code of Practice finds can only be allocated to museums which meet NLA standards. This means that there is no mechanism to allocate finds which have not been claimed by a museum to educational institutions. As such, if a finder wished to

pass a find to an educational institution they would have to organise that themselves after the item had first been disclaimed. It was agreed a list of recommended institutions and organisations should be compiled to which excavators could offer unwanted assemblages.

ACTION: SC to check if TTU site could be translated to a GSI site
SC and IR to approach institutions who may accept unwanted assemblages

Services TTU provides to NMS

A document outlining the services TTU provides to NMS was circulated to the Panel. An important point was made that due to a shortage of curatorial expertise in NMS, TTU staff now have to look elsewhere for advice on objects.

ACTION: Panel members to return comments about this draft document to SC by 30 June 2010

5. QLTR business

Human remains

For the first time assemblages have come to the Panel which solely consist of human remains. A discussion followed about allocating human remains. AS pointed out that no-one can own human remains, they can only be in possession of them. As some museums have clauses in their collecting policies stating that they won't take human remains, problems inevitably arise when assemblages include both objects and human remains as assemblages cannot be split.

AB met with Historic Scotland who said that if any human remains come to TTU from HS digs HS should be contacted and they will take responsibility. The problem remains of what to do with skeletal material which has come from non HS digs. AB to contact Norman McFadyen for guidance.

ACTION – AB to contact Norman McFadyen for advice on what TTU should do with assemblages which contain skeletal material and do not come from HS digs.

6. TTU contribution at Nighthawking Seminar

Along with Sally Foster of Historic Scotland SC took part in this seminar, which was attended by a wide variety of archaeological groups and metal detectorists. Both SC and SF emphasised that the situation can be very different in Scotland, and that the notion of nighthawking may not be automatically applicable in Scotland. The panel agreed that the concept of nighthawking as applied to England is not immediately applicable in Scotland where a more pressing problem in itself may be under reporting.

7. Prestonpans rally

SC did not attend the rally as minimum recording standards to the satisfaction of the local authority archaeologist had not been met. A majority of the finds have now been submitted to the TTU.

ACTION: IR to contact Alastair Hackett to discuss creating a leaflet for all metal detectorist clubs with clear best practice guidelines.

8. NMS and provision of numismatic services to TTU

Although formally retired, Nick Holmes continues to identify coins as part of his research, but will cease to do so by late 2010. At this point the TTU will lose any recourse to in-house expertise with coinage with the exception of Fraser Hunter who can identify Roman coins; these only make up a small number of coins in the TTU. The lack of numismatic expertise at NMS will pose real problems for the operation of the TTU as they form a major category of objects submitted. If no coin expert is available at NMS, there will almost certainly be a drop in submissions of coins and objects to the TTU.

The Panel discussed the cost of employing an external expert to identify coins. It was agreed that although this would be useful it would not be ideal due to the volume of coins which would have to be examined before they could be claimed and SC emphasised the logistical and other difficulties of doing this. The Panel agreed that a coin identification service has to be included in the SLA.

The Panel wished to express their regret at the demise of the NMS coin identification service, which will adversely affect TTU function and lead to less reporting.

ACTION; AB to write to Patrick Berry to let him know that the TTU may need funds to employ an external coin expert.

9. AOCB

Scottish Field

IR to write a response to the Scottish Field article about the Stirlingshire Gold expressing the disappointment felt by the Panel. IR will also offer Scottish Field a positive TTU story and a link to the TTU website which will outline the inaccuracies made in the published article.

ACTION: IR to draft letter to Scottish Field and show it to AB before submission.

ACTION: SC to provide material for proposed article for IR

Next meeting

June 9th, 10.45
Board Room

ACTIONS

ACTION: RS to contact David Seers at VQ to inform him of the critical importance of the SLA

ACTION: SC will find out if the Trustees receive an induction pack

ACTION: Panel to create a protocol document, with clear guidelines for the wording of labels accompanying TTU objects

ACTION: IR will contact the Crown Office for advice on who should be present on TTU interview panels.

ACTION: IR will contact VQ to request that the money be used now conference to highlight assemblages problem.

ACTION: SC to provide periodic updates on response time to enquiries.

ACTION: SC to check if TTU site could be translated to a GSI site

ACTION – AB to contact Norman McFadyen for advice on what TTU should do with assemblages which contain skeletal material and do not come from HS digs.

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