



Gilmerton Cove

One of Edinburgh's more unusual monuments lies behind a nondescript door in Gilmerton, Edinburgh. Beneath Ladbrokes, a complex of chambers arranged around a linear passageway have been carved out of the colourful bedrock. Six chambers are present, three of which contain benches and tables also carved from the rock. The largest of these rooms has a 'punch bowl' carved into one end of a table.

Myths surrounding the Cove suggested that it was a Masonic meeting place, a Covenanters hideout, a witches coven, a 'Hellfire Club' or an illicit drinking establishment.

CFA Archaeology Ltd conducted excavations at the Cove between April and November 2002 and have clarified aspects of the plan of the Cove and revealed a series of rock-cut features, including a complex drainage system, which were previously unknown. The original entrance at the rear of the Cove, for many years completely blocked, was also re-discovered; a hidden tunnel was uncovered; and through excavation, a well which was reputed to be in the Cove but which again had been completely blocked in, was revealed.

The Cove is first mentioned in 1782, when the Rev. Thomas Whyte claims the Cove was constructed by George Paterson, the local blacksmith, in 1724. Historical research, undertaken recently to complement the excavations, has revealed that George Paterson did indeed live in Gilmerton during the early part of the eighteenth century. The most famous story surrounding him is that in 1721 he was brought before the Kirk Session to answer charges that he had allowed the selling of alcohol within the Cove on the Sabbath. Further research indicates that the Cove was a well-known visitor attraction at that time and that it was a venue for the consumption of alcohol - a pub!

*Tim Neighbour,
CFA Archaeology Ltd*

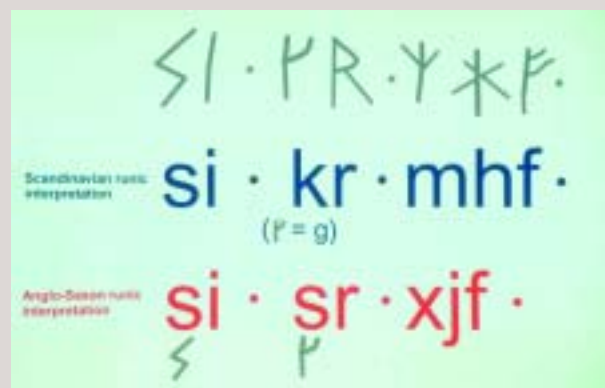
The Cove is now open to the public.
See www.gilmertoncove.org.uk for details.

Funding for the project came from Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and City of Edinburgh Council. Project managed jointly by Tim Neighbour of CFA and John Lawson of the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service. Historical research on the Cove was conducted by Richard Oram.

Runic Inscribed Stone (9th – 12th centuries AD)



Found in the upcast earth of a rabbit's burrow on the coast at Dalgety Bay, this palm-sized natural slate exhibits what is probably a Scandinavian rather than Anglo-Saxon runic inscription. Unfortunately, however, the inscription comprises three separate letter groupings rather than an immediately intelligible phrase or word and as such it is not possible to determine the meaning of the inscrip-



(Fife Archaeology unit)

tion. Indeed, all we can really say about this artefact is that the work of an individual with strong cultural links to Scandinavia – possibly the work of a Viking raider or maybe the work of a first or second generation Danish settler?

*Douglas Speirs,
Fife archaeology unit*