

## Authenticity, artistry, and archaeology

Thirteen years ago, a husband-and-wife team of underwater archaeologists began an epic journey to rediscover ancient technology and gain an insight into prehistoric life in Scotland. We set out to build an authentic life-size recreation of an early Iron Age crannog – a type of dwelling often built on a platform above the water of a loch. Our crannog was going to be on Loch Tay, based directly on evidence from our underwater excavation of one of the 18 loch-dwellings preserved there.

From the moment in June, 1994 that we managed to swing the first massive alder tree upright in four metres of water, standing more than 12 metres high and pointed at its base like some giant pencil, we knew that the journey would last a lifetime.

We built the loch-dwelling as the focal point for the Scottish Crannog Centre to run as an educational resource, doubling as a heritage attraction. The story, or theme, of the crannog reconstruction is just one of many others we tell. Our archaeological evidence allows us to paint a very detailed and accurate picture of the lives of early Iron Age loch-dwellers, and this dedication to authenticity underpins almost all the interpretation we provide. We have improved the site, and the visitor experience, since we opened in 1997, but we have not changed the structure of the visit: simply because it seems to work for well over 26,000 people each year.

We offer a self-guided exhibition, a guided – but unscripted – crannog tour, and a range of hands-on ancient crafts and technologies based on our archaeological discoveries. Ours is an extremely personal approach; we rely on the passion and enthusiasm of our costumed guides to bring the past to life for visitors of all ages, interest levels, and expertise.

We are delighted to have received several awards for our work. The most recent accolade was to become a partner in LiveARCH, a European initiative featuring living history and archaeology parks across Europe ([www.liveARCH.eu](http://www.liveARCH.eu)). As one of eight international partners concentrating on different themes, we are focusing on interpretation techniques and the interaction with visitors.

So, come visit, come try, come learn, come enjoy. We look forward to inspiring you!

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