ScARF | Scottish Archaeological Research Framework

# Medieval Scotland:
# A Future for its Past



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ScARF Summary Medieval Panel Document
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**ScARF Summary Medieval Panel Report**

Mark Hall & Neil Price (eds)

With panel contributions from: Colleen Batey, Alice Blackwell, Ewan Campbell, David Caldwell, Martin Carver, Piers Dixon, Richard Fawcett, Derek Hall, Heather James, Catherine Smith, Judith Stones, Sarah Thomas, Alex Woolf and Peter Yeoman.

For contributions, images, feedback, critical comment and participation at workshops: Tom Addymann, Derek Alexander, Sue Anderson, Beverley Ballin Smith, David Bowler, Niall Brady, Stuart Campbell, Alison Cameron, Jonathon Cox, Barbara Crawford, Anne Crone, Stephen Driscoll, Katherine Forsyth, Sally Foster, Julie Franklin, Shannon Fraser, Strat Halliday, Jane Geddes, Martin Goldberg, Meggen Gondek, Moira Grieg, George Haggarty, Mhairi Hastie, David Hinton, Fraser Hunter, Alison Kyle, John Lawson, Chris Lowe, Hugh McBrien, Adrian Maldonado, Roger Mercer, Coralie Mills, Chris Morris, Charles Murray, Hilary Murray, Gordon Noble, Richard Oram, Tony Pollard, Niall Sharples, Douglas Speirs, Lisbeth Thoms, Marlo Willows and Sarah Winlow.

# Executive Summary

*Why research Medieval Scotland?*

Scotland's medieval archaeology is extremely rich. Through its improved understanding, study and conservation, fascinating and critical aspects of the past can be explored, such as the development of towns, the arrival and integration of new peoples, how people farmed the land, and the development of political and religious systems. These multi-dimensional stories are played out at various levels:  local, regional, national and international (principally but not solely European). Some of the issues and challenges faced by people then are equally familiar today, some will seem strange and exotic, and they fuse together in an intricate story that is the root from which modern Scotland has grown.

In order to investigate these topics, there are a range of strategies to call upon, from survey and excavation, to artefact and environmental analysis and documentary history. Combining these approaches reveal the richness of the past, and the complexity and breadth of life in medieval Scotland.

*Panel Task and Remit*

The Medieval Panel was tasked critically to review the current state of knowledge regarding Medieval Scotland, and to consider how that knowledge could be added to, re-evaluated and accessed. The key aim was to develop a template for maintaining a relevant, responsive and inclusive research framework. The Medieval period is treated as a whole, rather than divided into unrelated Early and Late episodes. This allows the exploration of topics over a millennium and more, allowing themes from the origins of the post-Roman kingdoms and the arrival of Christianity to the Union of the Crowns and the impact of the Reformation (approximately 600 – 1600 AD), to be traced.

The result is this report, outlining the different areas of research into Medieval life and highlighting the research topics to be aspired to. The report is structured by theme: *From Northern Britain to the idea of Scotland - Tribes, Kingdoms, States?*; *Lifestyles and living spaces*; *Mentalities - Ethnicity, Identity, Gender and Spirituality*; *Empowerment*; and *Parameters*. Each theme comprises a critical review of current understanding and sets out a short section of future areas of research. The document is reinforced by material on-line which provides further detail and resources. The Medieval Scottish Archaeological Research Framework is intended as a resource to be utilised by all, and built upon and kept updated both by those it may help to inspire and inform, and, it is hoped, by those who are brought to identify any of the errors and omissions that it may reveal.

*Future Research*

The main recommendations of the panel report can be summarised under five key headings. Underpinning all five areas is the recognition that human narratives remain crucial for ensuring the widest access to our shared past. There is no wish to see political and economic narratives abandoned but the need is recognised for there to be an expansion to more social narratives to fully explore the potential of the diverse evidence base. The questions that can be asked are here framed in a national context but they need to be supported and improved a) by the development of regional research frameworks, and b) by an enhanced study of Scotland's international context through time.

1. **From North Britain to the Idea of Scotland**: Understanding why, where and how 'Scotland' emerges provides a focal point of research. Investigating state formation requires work from

a variety of sources, exploring the relationships between centres of consumption - royal, ecclesiastical and urban - and their hinterlands. Working from site-specific work to regional analysis, researchers can explore how what would become 'Scotland' came to be, and whence sprang its inspiration.

2. **Lifestyles and Living Spaces**: Holistic approaches to exploring medieval settlement should be promoted, combining landscape studies with artefactual, environmental, and documentary work. Understanding the role of individual sites within wider local, regional and national settlement systems should be promoted, and chronological frameworks developed to chart the changing nature of Medieval settlement.

3. **Mentalities**: The holistic understanding of medieval belief (particularly, but not exclusively, in its early medieval or early historic phase) needs to broaden its contextual understanding with reference to prehistoric or inherited belief systems and frames of reference. Collaborative approaches should draw on international parallels and analogues in pursuit of defining and contrasting local or regional belief systems through integrated studies of portable material culture, monumentality and landscape.

4. **Empowerment**: Revisiting museum collections and renewing the study of newly retrieved artefacts is vital to a broader understanding of the dynamics of writing within society. Text needs to be seen less as a metaphor and more as a technological and social innovation in material culture which will help the understanding of it as an experienced, imaginatively rich reality of life. In archaeological terms, the study of the relatively neglected cultural areas of sensory perception, memory, learning and play needs to be promoted to enrich the understanding of past social behaviours.

5. **Parameters**: Multi-disciplinary, collaborative, and cross-sector approaches should be encouraged in order to release the research potential of all sectors of archaeology. Creative solutions should be sought to the challenges of transmitting the importance of archaeological work and conserving the resource for current and future research.

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# 1    Introduction

## 1.1    In the beginning was the framework

In fairy stories it is both necessary and straightforward to start at the beginning. In archaeology and history it is rarely so easy, for beginnings (or origins) are generally the most elusive and the most impenetrably mist-enshrouded area of any subject of enquiry. To provide a framework for the continued, evolving understanding of Scottish archaeology might, superficially considered, seem to originate in a contemporary desire to guide that understanding and the wise expenditure of limited resources in order to achieve it. In this light it would simply become the latest in a series of UK-wide regional research frameworks and primarily fed by the impetus given to such frameworks by *English Heritage* from the late 1980s. However this would be to belie the richer context from which this initiative stems. It is no accident that it is being led by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Founded in 1780, the Society is Scotland's oldest learned archaeological society and one which has long recognised the need to promote such continued understanding as the framework would seek (Bell 1981). The Society was founded in the Enlightenment spirit of enquiry that fuelled similar if less long-lived organisations. Shortly after the founding of the Society, for example, the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society (hereafter PLAS) was born in 1784 and like the Society of Antiquaries, was also fuelled by the cultural politics of the 11th Earl of Buchan (Allan 2003 and specifically on the Society's library Allan 2002). One of the first actions of the PLAS was to issue a *Preliminary Discourse* (PLAS 1784) and a list of *Subjects for Illustration*: areas of research to which the membership (all male) were encouraged to direct their thinking, clearly with some of the anxiety that is felt today about limiting thought, for it is at pains to point out that the selection of subjects 'is by no means intended to circumscribe members in their choice, but merely to furnish hints to those who may have the

opportunity of throwing light upon the ancient history of this Country' (McComie 1787, 1). The notion of deliberately directed research is often thought of as a recent phenomenon, but clearly it is not and can be seen to make an appearance in the mid 20th century. Grounding his argument in both medieval charters and prehistoric flints Marc Bloch in his posthumously published *The Historian's Craft* (1954) made the case for directed research in the following terms:

> *'Every historical research supposes that the inquiry has a direction at the very first step. Mere passive observation, even supposing that such a thing were possible, has never contributed anything productive to any science.'*

Describing the importance of cross-examining evidence he continues with remarks that might easily describe the nature of a successful research framework in that it should be:

> *'Very elastic so that it may change its direction or improvise freely for any contingency, yet be able, from the outset, to act as a magnet drawing findings out of the document' (we might say site or landscape or artefact[1]) 'Even when he has settled his itinerary the explorer is well aware that he will not follow it exactly. Without it however he would risk wandering perpetually at random.'*

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[1] In his call for a closer unity between archaeology and history Professor Lord Smail reminds us that the word 'document' has as one of its meanings 'that which teaches' (2009, 22). Though the implication, certainly in medieval Latin, is one of a written text, still, landscapes, sites and artefacts (and not just the archaeological texts written about them) can be legitimately defined as documents.

More recently still, the widely recognised need for research and research frameworks or agendas has been strongly advocated across the profession and academia. Focussing on a broader chronological context, Andrews and Barrett (1999) stress the need for a new research agenda for archaeology as a whole, to facilitate effective, efficient and valuable enquiry. They build upon the idea that the value of archaeology is directly related to its contribution to understanding the past, as elucidated by Carver (1996; and his earlier 1993 which emphasised its importance in the context of early medieval towns). Crucially Andrews and Barrett emphasise the need for research frameworks to base their principles in 'understanding … how humans inhabited the material conditions which archaeologists recover' (1999, 40).

To return briefly to the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society's seminal *Subjects for Illustration;* the subjects encompass antiquities, onomastics, philosophy and fine arts and of 39 areas listed at least 25 are entirely or in part concerned with Scotland's medieval past. Many are at the root of current, more archaeologically focused, enquiry and demonstrate the pivotal place of medieval life and culture in the on-going making of Scotland and in our understanding of that process.

## 1.2    *Defining the Medieval*

The medieval period is perhaps when, looking back, things first appear different whilst retaining a sense of what might be called ancestral familiarity – a paradox which is not exclusive to the medieval past but perhaps where its balance seems to bring it into sharpest focus. Its transitional quality is suggested by the name it is given - 'medieval'. Before that, the chronological schema of which it is part is based on ethnicity and (largely) technological innovation. The latter runs from Stone, through Bronze to Iron, though perhaps implicit in the labelling of all (a labelling which does not remotely do justice to the complexity of analysis that takes place under those banners), is the innovation of writing. The period label 'Prehistory' is traditionally the period par excellence of archaeological enquiry, where the evidence is unassisted/ unsullied (depending upon one's standpoint) by text. However, it has always seemed ironic that it should continue to be defined with a label that means the absence of written texts, with a connotation of unfulfilment confirmed by the progressive notion that labels the Later and Roman Iron Ages as 'Protohistoric', the early medieval as 'Early Historic' and the medieval and later as 'Historic', and thus somehow complete, somehow finished. In reality there is no single point in time, no strict chronological divide before and after which text appeared. Whether viewed on a European and Mediterranean to global scale, text comes in at vastly different points in time and had a huge array of contexts and uses. Archaeology then, is as much about the study of the written word and its production as it is about any other innovation of material culture. This theme is returned to below after dealing with the question of periodisation and the strong overlap between medieval and the written word.

Medieval is, of course, an historical term borrowed by archaeology. This framework does not set out to overly define with fixed dates what is meant by medieval, preferring instead to emphasise a fluid chronology as a reflection of how the different themes that could be said to make-up the medieval cultural package begin and end (or change) at different times. Periodisation can be seen as an illusion which helps to manageably slice up the past for analysis and understanding. Within the kindred discipline of history the problem of the term medieval was recognised whilst medieval archaeology (at least in the UK) was yet in its infancy. Perhaps most notably (and useful for the current purpose) it was addressed by French historian Marc Bloch. In his archaeology-friendly *The Historian's Craft*, mentioned above and published posthumously in 1954, he cogently

records the changing etymology of the term medieval. It comes into use by at least the thirteenth-century, having arisen from the (semi-heretical) prophesy that described the time between Christ's Incarnation (and the New Law it brought) and the kingdom of God still to come with Christ's *Second Coming*: a definition which would define the current time as still medieval. These intervening years up to the second coming, form the *medium aevum* or Middle Age. Nevertheless, even within that Middle Age, its meaning changed for some. Renaissance scholars adapted the idea, seeing the Middle Age(s) as closed; a label then for the time between Antiquity and the new revelation of the Renaissance. From being a time of supernatural waiting and anticipation it became an Intermediate Age that was entirely historical, complete and humane. It carried this meaning in comparatively limited, learned circles, not gaining common currency until the end of the seventeenth century, when it was used by German historian Christopher Keller to describe the time between the Fall of Rome and the Renaissance. This view has tended to hold for Continental scholars but it is an increasingly questioned and problematical one.

Elizabeth Brown (1991) in her essay 'On 1500', builds on both Bloch's analysis and that of another French historian Ségal, with whom she agrees that the term Middle Age/s should now be abandoned. An alternate strategy adopted by other scholars is to extend the Middle Ages/medieval to include the Renaissance and the Reformation because of their pre-1500 continuities. The Society for Medieval Archaeology was founded in 1957 and defines its chronological boundaries of study as between c. 400 AD and 1500 AD but latterly has recognised these post 1500 continuities by, for example, hosting a joint conference with the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology: *The Archaeology of Reformation* (see Gaimster and Gilchrist 2003). Scotland adds further reflexes to the scenario. It is only comparatively recently that the term 'early medieval' was applied, by many, to Scotland;

the terms medieval and Middle Ages had previously only been applied to the twelfth century and later, the period from Roman occupation to the twelfth century labelled as either the end of the Long Iron Age or as the Early Historic. The different labelling seems to have partly arisen from perceived differences in material culture between Scotland and elsewhere (particularly England) - including the presumed absence of ceramics, the non-minting of coins[2] and architectural innovations such as castles – and also a desire to signal the time when the documentary record becomes more abundant. This different labelling is not unique to Scotland. In Scandinavia the Vikings have been seen more as an Iron Age coda, a prelude to the Middle Ages, whilst at the same time their impact on the rest of Europe is widely perceived as a medieval phenomenon. This framework is not seeking to tidy-up these ambivalences; they are clearly healthier than a straight-jacket of uniform imposition. However, given the approach adopted by ScARF, which is to predominantly adhere to the convenience of period (mitigated by cross-period themes), there is no good reason not to go with the more widely accepted and understood medieval concept, appropriately problematised. Broadly speaking, the chronological horizons used are the fifth century AD (when the post-Roman kingdoms are becoming visible and Christianity is advancing) and the early seventeenth (when, well into the rigours of the Reformation, Scotland dispenses with an independent monarchy).

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[2] The $C^{14}$dating of carbon deposits on ceramics from the Perth High street has now confirmed ceramic use before the twelfth century; there are still no known coins minted before the twelfth century but coins were circulating/in-use (if not as a money economy), as finds of Continental, Islamic and Anglo-Saxon coins testify.

**Figure 1: Distribution map of sites mentioned in the text**

**Figure** 2**: Inset from Figure 1**

## 1.3    *Appropriating the Medieval*

To blur the periodisation effect the ScARF framework does encompass some key themes (including maritime archaeology and archaeological science) that cut across all the period foci. Within the medieval element of the framework there are further cross-cutting themes which link human behaviour then with human behaviour in earlier and later times. These include the range of issues that reflect medieval re-use and appropriation of the prehistoric and Roman past, and also the similar treatment of the medieval past in succeeding centuries. This way of being encompasses the landscape and the monumental scale – including the siting of early medieval power centres within areas of large-scale prehistoric monuments as has been argued for Forteviot and Scone (Driscoll 1998a, 170-73; Driscoll 1998b). It also embraces the re-configuration of cup-marked stones as Pictish sculptures[3], the conversion

of some monastic churches to parish churches and the secularisation of some monasteries – as it does the more portable scale of material culture – including the apotropaic use of Bronze Age arrowheads as elf-shot amulets or more prosaically as strike-a-lights, and the appropriation and melting for reuse of Roman silver by the Picts. Such demonstrations of appropriation inform our understanding of the process of cultural biography – the way that material culture has use-lives, reflecting the ways people change and re-use it. Such dynamics not only operate across periods but within them, helping to break down a period as a monolithic block: thus some early medieval sculptures are redefined to endorse economic activity (as market crosses) or changed attitudes of justice and punishment (some have jougs fixed to them) and others were used to make manifest heroic tales and Romances (as with the Meigle stones and King Arthur).

The 2008 special issue of the journal *Early Medieval Europe* deals with three reception case studies, exploring in various ways the appropriation of early medieval material culture in the 19th and 20th-century 'construction of myths of European origins and modern aesthetic responses towards the Middle Ages' (Effros and Williams 2008, 1). In some respects Scotland led the way in the 19th

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[3]    Itself part of a wider phenomenon as demonstrated by the recent identification of a cup-marked stone at St Nons Chapel and Holy Well, St Davids, Pembrokeshire, Wales as being the cult stone bearing Non's fingerprints (impressed during the pangs of giving birth to David; Catling 2008).

century in this ethnogenesis myth-making, not least through the fiction of Sir Walter Scott and also his role in the re-invention of Highland costume and customs in connection with the Royal Visit of George IV in 1822[4]. In the later 19th century he was followed by R. L. Stevenson and J. Buchan, both writers who, for example, exploited the folk-myth of the Picts as wee dark folk, something which has re-surfaced more recently in the Discworld novels of Terry Pratchett (Bartlett 2001, 14-15; Trevor-Roper 1983; Pratchett, 2003 a and b, 2004 and 2006[5]; Pratchett & Simpson 2008, 71-84 and Hall 2008). Wider issues of identity are reflected upon in the small number of films either set in the medieval period in Scotland or set in contemporary times with a medieval past evident. Most notable of the latter is *I Know Where I'm Going* (UK 1945), set in the Western Isles it is a story of personal and social identity which at key points pivots around the ruins of a medieval castle and stories of the medieval past (Hall 2009a). There is plenty of scope for further work on how perceptions of the medieval past or specific medieval monuments or pieces of material culture are influenced by such films as *Braveheart* (US 1995), *King Arthur* (US 2004), *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (UK 1975) and *The Stone of Destiny* (UK/CAN 2008).

Appropriations are often attributed to human flexibility and imagination but they do have their seamier side and whether there are

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[4] Scott's influence is still palpable in the ethnogenesis of individual lives: in the closing decades of the 20th century Perth Museum was regularly contacted by an American enquirer adamant that he was the descendant of Scott's heroine of medieval Perth, Katherine Glover, or *The Fair Maid of Perth*.

[5] Pratchett has utilised other aspects of Scotland's medieval past including borrowing the title of his *Monstrous Regiment* (about female soldiers) from John Knox's misogynist, reformation diatribe *The Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558).

acceptable limits to appropriation should be considered. In reality, of course, the study of the past has no power to limit human behaviour. However, should morally and historically indefensible positions (such as white supremacists in New Zealand claiming a pre-existing Celtic culture for those islands before the advent of Maori populations) be supinely tolerated as eccentric or actively contradicted at every available opportunity? Equally thorny, if less 'politically turbulent', is the complexity of local communities using their medieval past to help define themselves in the present, (for example combining the clearly solid, such as the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab, with the opaquely chimerical, the implausible and unhistorical stories applied to the sculpture). This can wrankle a sense of objectivity and prod a desire to dispel ignorance, whilst often missing the point of their (i.e. the stories) purpose. However the Hilton and neighbouring communities neither can nor should be denied their stories – such phenomena are a given of human nature (Hall 2008) and can form the basis of a dialogue for everyone's mutual benefit. Scotland has many such examples and not least amongst them the cult of William Wallace, renewed in the 19th century, with the construction of the Wallace Monument, Stirling and in the late 20th with the release of the film *Braveheart* (US 1995) – all its elements can be seen in microcosm in the creation and recreation of Wallace's Sword (Caldwell 2007). Such monuments as the Hilton cross-slab or artefacts such as Wallace's Sword of course stand ready to absorb whatever veneer of story and understanding that people want to apply to them, all grist to the mill of their cultural biography.

The three issues outlined above influenced the drawing up of the key themes by the Medieval Panel's co-chairmen. These were the foundation of the Panel's discussions in its meetings and in support of which the Panel identified the research priorities which could be pursued to take them forward. What now follows is an outline of those themes and the research questions identified by the Panel.

## 1.4 The Challenge of Fieldwork in Scottish Medieval Archaeology

Over a thousand years separates the end of the western Roman empire from the Renaissance. This so-called "Middle" age is a period crucial for the history of Britain, creating the territorial, ethnic and religious loyalties still in existence today. The documentation gradually increases from none to sparse to plentiful, but rarely becomes coherent or objective, and historians and art historians struggle to go beyond the sequence of events, the evidence of high status proclamations and propaganda into the varied lives and thoughts of ordinary people.

This is archaeology's *forte*, and a wealth of medieval material culture has survived. However, it is no easier to read than the other kinds of evidence and is particularly challenging in Scotland. Few buildings from before 1200 remain standing. With few exceptions, the cemeteries contain no grave goods. Over half of the period is aceramic. The use of organic materials is undetectable other than for a short period in limited places (e.g. 12$^{th}$ century Perth). Bone disappears in acid soils. The locations of the majority of sites have not survived, even as placenames, and physically they are hard to find. For the period 400-1100 there are fewer than 10 houses known on the Scottish mainland (e.g. Pitcarmick, Portmahomack). These are all different and placed in time only through radiocarbon dating. Those parts of Scotland that are cultivated produce cropmarks, and the less cultivated uplands produce shallow earthworks – and a great many buried structures have been located in this way – round houses, long houses and field boundaries. But as intensive survey shows (e.g. RCAHMS 1990, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994d) the remains of habitations from the Bronze Age to the Clearances are often located in the same area, and the signature of the first millennium AD remains undistinguished. When buildings are excavated that prove to belong to the early Middle Ages, they normally have no surviving artefacts in them. Surprisingly, there are a similar tiny number of excavated villages from the later medieval period (e.g. Rattray, Yeoman 1995). Compared with England and Wales, even Abbeys or Castles or towns have been excavated on a similarly diminutive scale.

The risks and challenges here are great. One risk is that, having no clear medieval archaeology of her own, Scotland will have recourse to analogy from the sparse documentation or from better excavated England/Wales/Ireland. Medieval Scotland may therefore fail to develop the detail of its own personality. The country is territorially distinctive – like Ireland, Norway, Denmark or Holland - and is therefore very likely to have developed its own solutions to subsistence, economic production, social control and spiritual practice. Knowing about this is not only instructive for the comparisons it gives Scotland with the rest of Europe – it also offers an insight to the independent and differential role that Scotland played in the continental interactions of the day; something that may be of great significance to the political agenda today.

**Figure 3: Area excavation at Portmahomack, Easter Ross. Good definition is possible on the sandy subsoil, but it requires a broad open area, a large workforce, a supply of water and a tower © Martin Carver.**

How could the challenge be met? In the RCAHMS, Scotland has probably the best archaeological archive in the world. There is every advantage in supporting its continued reconnaissance operations for the planning of both new research and necessary conservation. The current penchant for exploring landscapes experientially has a potential for medieval monumentality, especially if compared with the elements of the prehistoric repertoire in the same place (Carver 2009a). Scotland is well-endowed with records of 19th and 20th century agriculture, fishing and living, which are probably more evocative of medieval practices than is the case in other countries (e.g. Fenton 1999).

However much progress can be made through survey or analogy alone: for the Middle Ages, high quality excavation is needed. Excavation in Scotland has to move beyond the mechanistic techniques of trial trenches recorded by single context planning and stratigraphic diagrams alone to a multi-method approach served by a multi-conceptual recording system. Scotland has a

excellent monitoring procedures in place to ensure that information is not lost. Now it needs to modernise the concept of excavation itself.

Certain initiatives point the way forward: intensive soil mapping followed by targeted area excavation as at Lairg (McCullagh and Tipping 1998) has been shown to be effective on soils with little observable strata. 'Strip and map' as at Portmahomack is much more informative than trenches as well as less damaging (Carver 2009b, passim). When buildings are located and excavated, their function and use of space (in the absence of finds) may be revealed by chemical and physical micro-mapping, as pioneered by Helen Smith, Hjulstro and Isaakson (2009), Andy Herries (2009), Karen Milek (2006) and others. These approaches to "nano-excavation" are teaching archaeologists to recognise patterns of living (and dying) that otherwise? cannot be seen. The adDNA (ancient dirt DNA) initiative in Greenland showed how, in theory at least, the grazing

history of a piece of land could be mapped from a single sample (Hebsgaard *et al.* 2009).

There are several implications here. Whether an investigation is prompted by research or mitigation it must be on an appropriate scale, at an appropriate level of skill and at appropriate level of cost. In most cases each of these levels will need to be higher than in lowland England. Project designs should only be accepted if they have taken account of modern methods of environmental inquiry and on-site remote mapping methods.

In research, this will also mean Historic Scotland relaxing its attitude to the excavation of scheduled sites. While accepting that most should be conserved, one or two should be released for large scale investigation. Attempts to compromise by issuing permission to dig a small trench are intensely damaging – as at Iona where little has been learnt from numerous interventions and the site has suffered 'death by a thousand cuts' (O'Sullivan 1999). Research in Scotland would also benefit from a more international outlook. Archaeologists in Ireland and Scandinavia, in particular, have similar problems of archaeological visibility and have often surmounted them. Scandinavia also has an outstanding tradition of maritime and underwater archaeology, both underdeveloped and both crucial for medieval Scotland. Yet one rarely sees Scandinavian or Irish universities or field companies operating on Scottish soil. Large scale research excavation is necessary, as it has been everywhere else, to establish the basic norms of size and character of settlements and cemeteries. These can help to give context and make sense of sites encountered during development.

Where appropriate, companies may have to accept that a large volunteer component is necessary in their designs, both for fieldwork (to execute large scale trowelling operations like strip-and-map) and to make more intimate contact with local conditions, practices and histories. Competitive tender,

which can drive down the price and the standards of investigation must be appropriately moderated by informed peer/curatorial intervention (Carver 2011). In this way there is a far greater chance that creative solutions will be applied to archaeological problems.

### 1.5     History of Research
With antiquarian interest in the medieval countryside, it was not until the 1950s and 60s that medieval settlement studies fully emerged (Dalglish 2011, 272). The work of Horace Fairhurst (e.g. 1960, 1963, 1969a, 1969b, 1971) was highly influential, integrating archaeological methods in the investigation of rural settlement. Since the 1970s a lack of fieldwork was an issue [with some notable exceptions, especially excavations at Scandinavian settlements and field survey in Caithness and Sutherland (Mercer 1981)]. This changed with the emergence of developer-funded archaeology in the 1990s. Responding to this upsurge in activity, the *Medieval or Later Rural Settlement Group* (MoLRS; Hingley 1993; Corser 1993; Dixon 1993) was formed in order to advise on management and preservation of the resource. In 2007, MoLRS was renamed the *Historic Rural Settlement Group* (HRSG), focused to a greater extent on research issues, and produced a research framework (Dalglish & Dixon, 2008).

RCAHMS has undertaken a number of surveys including of regions (e.g. in Argyll [1971-92]) of particular field systems (Dixon, 1994; Halliday, 2003) and of island/crannog sites and lochs (Morrison 1980, 1985). Combining archaeological work with records, maps and the reconstruction of economic activity has been increasingly undertaken (e.g. Campbell 2000, 2002, 2004; Boardman 2006; Crawford 1983; Dodgson 1980, 1993, 2000; Whyte 1981, 1985, 2000). RCAHMS has also combined archaeology with historical geography in this way (e.g. RCAHMS, 1997a; 2001; 2007), including the First Edition Survey Project (FESP; RCAHMS 2002).

More recently, other projects have included the National Trust for Scotland's Ben Lawers Landscape History Project[6], and Scotland's Rural Past[7] (SRP) based at RCAHMS. The Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot Project (SERF; see Section 2.6) has explored hillforts within the wider medieval settlement system, complementing work by Leslie Alcock at sites such as Dunollie, Forteviot and South Cadbury (Alcock & Alcock 1987, 1992; Alcock 1995). Castle and Manorial estates are beginning to be explored (e.g. Dalglish 2002; Rutherford 1998; Dixon 1997; Stell 2006; Breen and Forsythe 2008) and there have been a number of regional studies (see Section 3.3).



**Figure 4: Horace Fairhurst at Rosal, Stratnaver. Although Rosal appears in documentary evidence from 1296, Fairhurst's work only uncovered 18th century remains, possibly as locations and materials we re-used. Fairhurst's work was pioneering and remains influential, © RCAHMS**

*Urban archaeology*

Whilst urban archaeology at it broadest can be said to have begun by the early 1920s (when the first plans of an urban site – St John's Place in Perth – were made (Hall and Owen 1998), the first set of formal urban excavations took place in Aberdeen (St Nicholas Church 1974, Queen Street midden, Queen Street frontage, Broad Street and Shore Brae all pre 1976), Perth (St Ann's Lane 1975 and then Perth High Street 1975-77) and Elgin (in advance of the relief road 1976-78). The Aberdeen Unit was formed in 1976

(Murray 1982). The Elgin and Perth High Street projects were both funded through the Manpower Services Commission (MSC).

The Urban Archaeology Unit (UAU) was formed in 1978 under the auspices of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Its main HQ was first in Falkirk (shared with the Central Unit (later AOC) and then at Blackness Castle). In 1981 the MSC funded Border Burghs Archaeological Project (BBAP) was set up under the overall supervision of Piers Dixon and this resulted in important excavations in the burghs of Peebles and Kelso. These excavations and their associated specialist reports were published as SAIR 2 in 2003 (http://www.sair.org.uk/sair2/).

In 1982 the UAU became the Scottish Urban Archaeological Trust Ltd (SUAT) largely due to the advent of developer funded rescue archaeology and moved wholesale to Perth although the unit continued to supervise the MSC funded excavations at Whitefriars, and another MSC scheme for excavations at Blackfriars in Perth.

Throughout the 1980s a large element of SUAT's work was funded through a combination of Manpower Services Commission schemes in Ayr, Glasgow, Kirkintilloch, Alloa and Perth and funding from SDD Ancient Monuments to operate the monitoring and excavation of redevelopment in Scotland's medieval burghs.

With the reorganisation of local authorities and the appointment of local authority archaeologists in the early 1990s funding for the monitoring project was ended. SUAT's[8] work then concentrated on developer funded archaeology coupled with funded research projects from Historic Scotland's archaeology programme. Several other archaeological organisations where working in medieval towns by this date (e.g. City of Edinburgh

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[6] http://www.benlawers.org.uk/

[7] http://www.scotlandsruralpast.org.uk/

[8] In July 2009 SUAT ceased trading due to the effects of the global recession.

Council Archaeology Service, GUARD, Headland Archaeology, Kirkdale Archaeology, Rathmell Archaeology). Since 1995, the Scottish Burgh Surveys[9] have been published (developing from unpublished rapid surveys from the 1970s) designed to provide information on the topography, history and archaeology of the burghs and to help guide development and research.
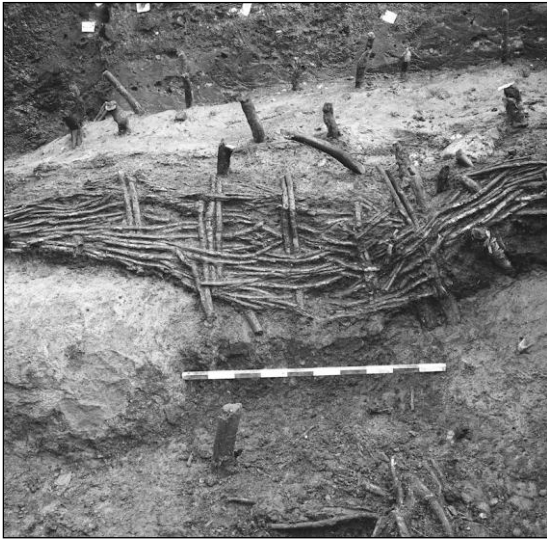


**Figure 5: It was the excavations at 75-95 High Street in Perth between 1975 and 1977 that first highlighted the remarkable preservative qualities of the anaerobic middens of that burgh. The remains of up to 27 medieval wooden buildings were recovered. This photograph shows a collapsed wattle fence which had acted as a property boundary between burgage plots © RCAHMS.**

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[9] For a comprehensive list of Scottish Burghs: http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/archaeology/scottish-burgh-surveys.htm

# 2. From North Britain to the idea of Scotland: Tribes, Kingdoms, States?

## *2.1 Beginnings*

Ethnogenesis is, of course, pivotal to any understanding of how Scotland came into existence and has continued to develop. Not only do researchers and archaeologists have to get to grips with the diverse cultural groupings of Picts, Britons, Anglo-Saxons, Gaels and Scandinavians but also how these groupings were to be variously fused into the several kingdoms and lordships – Alba, the Isles, Galloway and Orkney amongst them – and ultimately into the kingdom of Scotland (surviving as an independent monarchy until 1603 when it was joined with the English crown). This process is not a simple linear trajectory of increasing unification and eventual loss of power but one that recognises continuing and changing cultural groupings, notably the later medieval emergence of the Highland/Lowland divide and the clan system. Jope's (1963) still valuable exploration of medieval regional cultures in Britain usefully serves as a reminder that there also needs to be a focus on how medieval people conceptualised their identity and their ethnicity. Scotland's universities (St Andrews and Glasgow for example) had in common with other European universities a system of nations – ethno-regional groupings into which students were placed, primarily so that they remained subject to the legal codes of their own provinces. The differing nations deployed by the two Scottish universities included Lothian, Britain (which equated to Galloway), Clydesdale, Teviotdale, Albany and Rothesay (Jope 1963, 346-7). So, in fact, the framework needs to encompass more than ethnogenesis – the origins of peoples - and might do better to concentrate on a broader concept which does not deny the importance of origins but keeps it in balance with the perpetual hybridising reality of ethnic identity (even when it claims an unchanging core of tradition). Ethno-evolution seems an appropriately scientific term to use but its implication of gradual change from simple to complex cannot account for the varied trajectories of the cultural expressions of ethnic identity. Flux is an acceptable term meaning continuous change but in some medieval contexts carries the medical meaning of an abnormal discharge of blood or excrement from the body, and so is perhaps best avoided. A more appropriate term for change, accommodating hybridity and more than a one-speed gradual change, along with the nuance of classical learning changed in the medieval period, might be ethno-metamorphosis.

The ethnogenesis debate has a further, cognitive dimension in that the very idea of Scotland began in the mind before it began to be played out in material culture and in historical action. The origins of the Scots and Scottish identity can be tracked through the archaeological record of the disparate peoples of early medieval northern Britain, and it may be possible to study this phenomenon in more detail as study moves closer to the creation of Alba and the complex networks of international contacts that were steadily increasing at this time. The world beyond Scotland's borders comes into particular focus here, as national identity is partly a reflection of distinctions made with other ideological or ethnic groupings.

There was nothing predetermined or predestined or even certain about this process of state formation and kingdom enlargement and the process was still playing out at the end of our period: the 1603 Union of the Crowns was an act of aggrandisement perhaps no monarch could have resisted but it seduced Scotland's king south to London and from that flowed considerable political, economic and social changes.

## *2.2 Politics and Power Structures*
Archaeological and related evidence can show how the material culture of the past

functioned to reflect and impose a dominant social ideology and its attendant social hierarchisation. Such explorations should always take cognizance of any material culture that reflects resistance to dominant ideologies.

A key development in the archaeology of early medieval Scotland in particular has been the recognition of a previously-unsuspected sophistication in the power structures and evolving polities of the region, which more than any other factor laid the foundations for the medieval kingdom. This is reflected especially in the material links with the Norse communities of the Irish Sea cultural sphere, in the complex external ties of the Picts, and in relations with the north Britons. Within Scotland the development of power centres and their relationship with pre-existing monumental landscapes, perhaps psychological as much as physical, can also be looked at more closely. It is clear that the power maps of early Scotland will repay careful attention.

The term *state* is laden with controversy and there is an extensive theoretical literature discussing its definition. Some scholars would claim that states only exist in the modern world and can reinforce their claims with a text-analytical paper trail of key terminology. In the present case the term 'state formation' is used loosely to describe the process which Scandinavians have come to know as *riksammling*, 'kingdom gathering'. At some point in the period between about AD 800 and AD 1200 a polity emerged in the east midlands of present day Scotland that can be fairly identified as the predecessor of the modern state. Historians have variously termed this polity 'the Kingdom of Scone', 'the Scoto-Pictish kingdom', 'Scotia' and 'Alba'.



**Figure 6: Excavations at Rhynie under progress. The Craw Stane, a Class I Pictish symbol stone is in the foreground, Tap O'Noth hillfort is in the background © Rhynie Environs Archaeological Project/University of Aberdeen.**

The evidence for this polity includes later royal inaugurations at Scone which seem in some way to be connected to an event taking place in c.906 recorded in the *Chronicle of the Kings of Alba* (CKA). *CKA* and other sources seem to show kings from the ninth to the eleventh-century spending a disproportionate amount of time in the east midlands of Scotland and sites such as Scone, Rathinveramon, Forteviot and Forfar recur in the text more regularly than other places whilst Dunkeld, Abernethy and St Andrews clearly emerge as the chief churches of the kingdom (the king retaining an *aula* or hall at St Andrews at least into the mid-twelfth century). When the charter record takes off in the twelfth century it is clear that the kings enjoyed direct lordship in large parts of this territory including Gowrie, Stormont, Kinross, Fothriff ('Dunfermline shire'), and the East Neuk of Fife. This is in contradistinction to the appearance of *mormair* ruling many other parts of the kingdom as a layer between the kings and the commons. [The East Neuk aside, the 'map' of royal direct control seems to correspond to a fair degree with parishes, contiguous and detached, of the diocese of Dunkeld].

The problem which the textual sources do not elucidate is why and how this region - a central transit zone along the Tay basin, with a corridor leading to the south-east via Dunfermline – emerged, and indeed when precisely it developed in this way. The emergence of power structures in other areas also forms an important area for further study.



**Figure 7: A Scoto-Norman object in a Gallo-Norse world? Seal matrices were essential items in the new world of charters and land grants. This example from Dunstaffnage Castle bears a (partial inscription) indicating the owner was a member of a principal family of Clan Donald. The design shows not a European symbol of lordship such a mounted knight, but rather an equivalent local symbol of martial nobility; a west highland galley,© S. Campbell.**

## 2.3   Norse Scotland

The seminal publication of the multi-period excavations at Jarlshof in Shetland by JRC Hamilton (1956) marked the beginning of larger -scale excavation publications of Viking and Late Norse settlement in Scotland. For generations the accepted dating of the published Jarlshof stratigraphy provided a basis for more recent studies of the period, most particularly in relation to material culture. More recent investigations at the site (Dockrill, Bond and Batey 2004) will in due course enable a more refined dating sequence. However, this is just one strand of the revision which has taken place in more recent decades. The study of Norse Scotland through major excavation programmes since the late 1970s has revolutionised our understanding of the nature of the Norse settlement, the areas occupied and the people who died and were buried in the pagan tradition.



**Figure 8: The multi period site of Jarlshof, Shetland, seen from the air. The site appears to have been in almost constant use for almost four thousand years; with later developments being built upon and around the older structures. Today, the Norse buildings are some of the most visble elements of the site. ©RCAHMS**

It is customary to view the areas settled by the Norse as being confined to the Northern and Western Isles, however ongoing research by S. Taylor at Glasgow University is broadening this perspective. The identification of Norse place-names in Fife, for example suggests some presence (Taylor 1995; 2004) and the stray finds recorded through the Treasure Trove procedure (e.g. Buchanan, PhD thesis, University of Glasgow[10]) and the re-visiting of museum collections (e.g. Hall 2007c, 391-93) are going some way towards fleshing out this suggestion. Likewise, place name study in Argyll and the West Coast of Scotland also indicates Norse activity, and is the subject of ongoing research (e.g. Bankier, PhD thesis, University of Glasgow[11]).

A number of synthetic works on the Scandinavian impact on Scotland have been published, most notably by Barbara Crawford (1987), Anna Ritchie (1993), Olwyn Owen (1999) and James Graham-Campbell and Colleen Batey (1998). Additionally over-arching syntheses on hoards (Graham Campbell 1995) and on the pagan graves of Viking-age Scotland (Graham-Campbell and Paterson forthcoming), bring together both antiquarian finds and more recent discoveries.

The available evidence and the potential areas for further research can be sub-divided into the three main sub-sections: The Picto-Norse interface; the Viking-age; and the Late Norse period.

### Picto-Norse Interface

One of the major issues relating to Norse Scotland has been the date and nature of the arrival of the first Scandinavians on Scottish shores. Iain Crawford's major excavations at the Udal in N Uist unfortunately remain largely unpublished to date (although this is in hand). However his initial interpretation of the cross- over period between Pict and Norse was that this had been a violent interaction

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[10]

http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/archaeology/research/students/cbuchanan/#d.en.111543

[11]

http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/archaeology/research/students/studentresearch/#d.en.40857

(Crawford 1981) *contra* such sites as Buckquoy (Ritchie 1977; Brundle *et al.* 2003) or Skaill (Buteux 1997) in Orkney. Excavations at Buckquoy by Anna Ritchie suggested a more peaceful integration and the point is well made that it is highly likely that different situations may well have pertained to different areas and at different stages in Norse intrusion.

In the Northern Isles, the publication of the excavations on the Brough of Birsay which began in the 1930s (Curle 1982) but were completed in more recent times by John Hunter and Chris Morris (Hunter 1986; Morris 1996 and forthcoming), and of nearby sites on Mainland Orkney in the Birsay Bay area (Morris 1989; 1996) have provided considerably more data on the interface and together with other discoveries on Sanday at Pool (Hunter 2007) have provided a much more detailed picture of the changes which took place in this period. In the Western Isles the excavations at Bornais in South Uist, (Sharples 2005), have identified deposits covering the $8^{th}$ to $10^{th}$ century interface which is significantly different to that exposed on the Udal (Sharples 2005 and further forthcoming volumes).

More recent excavations by Martin Carver at Portmahomack (Carver 2008) encompassed evidence of the cross over period, and publication of that work sought to bring together the massive destruction of fine carved stone sculpture with the coincident arrival of the Norse.

Excavations at Old Scatness in Shetland by Steve Dockrill and Julie Bond *et al.* have shown that the first Norse settlers used pre-existing structures as their homes (Dockrill *et al.* 2010). The number of sites which have been excavated (and published) and which provide data on this crucial interface period is however relatively limited in number in comparison to the Late Norse sites in the country.

The main research questions revolve around the location of relevant sites, issues of political and social interaction, the introduction of new crops, the transformation of the fishing industries and the assimilation or otherwise of artefactual forms.
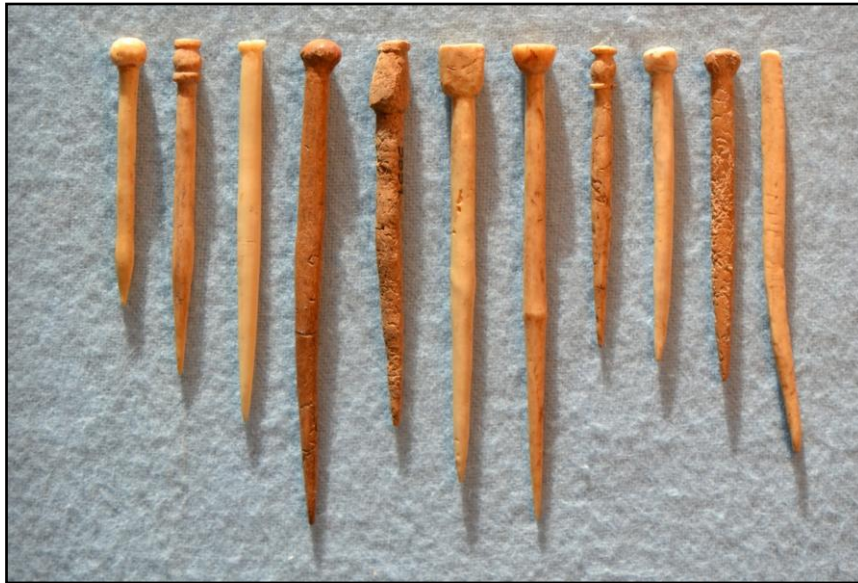
**Figure 9: Selected at random from the Udal worked bone assemblage are, from the left,:**
**four bone pins from Iain Crawford's Early Medieval (Pictish) phase, the next three are Viking, with the four**
**on the right being from the Norse or late Norse period. Although there are differences, the similarities in**
**styles across these phases are more striking © Beverly Ballin Smith)**



**Figure 10: Excavator revealing the carving on a broken slab of Pictish sculpture re-used as a drain cover in**
**the 9th century revived settlement at Portmahomack following a Viking raid © Martin Carver.**

*The Viking Age*
This is defined as the period of initial settlement following on from a period of Viking (raiding) activities and initial contact.

The number of excavated/identified sites which can be identified as primary settlements, apart from those which have an interface with the Pictish data, is very limited. Rescue excavations at Norwick in Shetland have revealed material which has been complemented by C14 dates indicating an origin pre 950AD (Ballin Smith 2007). Although this is slightly contentious, the primary location of the structures on a broad sandy bay without an apparent preceding Pictish or Iron Age settlement phase, does set it apart from previously examined sites. Other Viking-age settlements have been noted at Whithorn in the SW of Scotland (Hill 1997), although the specifically Scandinavian nature of that settlement is still under discussion.

An area where there has been a marked expansion of data is that of pagan Viking graves. The picture will be further expanded with the publication of the corpus being prepared by Graham-Campbell and Paterson (noted above). Excavations at Westness revealed a cemetery which included two boat graves (Kaland 1993; Sellevold 1999), at Kneep in Lewis a scattered assemblage of graves from the period (Dunwell *et al.* 1995; Cowie *et al.* 1993; Welander *et al.* 1987) and more recently at Mid Ross, Loch Lomondside a new Viking cemetery has been identified (Batey forthcoming). A child's grave at Balnakeil in Sutherland (Batey and Peterson forthcoming) yielded unexpected riches which have provided significant further detail through conservation. The exemplary publication and excavation of the Scar boat burial (Owen and Dalland 1999) provides a milestone in our understanding of this rich body of material. However the cutting edge work by Montgomery on isotopic analysis of teeth from the Kneep graves (Montgomery and Evans 2006), enables the identification of the childhood home-region of individuals,

thus enabling a much deeper consideration, allowing identification of native women in Viking dress and highlighting the links with ongoing similar research in Iceland.

Important research areas include: whether the date of arrival of the Norse in Scotland can be more accurately defined; whether one should expect to find non-indigenous building forms; and how the Viking age economic base developed and differed from the Pictish and Late Norse.

A programme of isotopic analysis needs to be undertaken on the pagan burial assemblage to identify the origins of those buried in this way. In Iceland it has been possible to identify elements within the population of the Viking age which spent their early years in the British Isles rather than in Norway. This needs to be tied in more with the artefactual considerations in Scotland rather than simply through diet etc. There should also be an increased focus on scientific examination of the sources of steatite. This work has commenced, but needs broadening and resources to support its development (Clelland *et al.* 2009). Similarly detailed analysis of imported whetstones would also be valuable.

*The Late Norse Period*

This is defined as the period of close political ties with Scandinavia, the period of the Norðreyar and Suðreyar (the Northern and Southern Earldoms). This period historically terminates in 1468AD.

The majority of the information available for the study of Norse Scotland is derived from several large excavation programmes that are largely focused on the Northern and Western Isles. The environment of these areas has been particularly conducive to the preservation of stone-built architecture and deep well stratified sediment sequences containing deposits rich in artefacts, animal bones and plant remains. The region

therefore provides a major resource for interpreting economic and social practices using archaeological data.

The preponderance of this data in the Northern Isles is derived from several sites which are known from references in *Orkneyinga Saga,* which is thought to have been compiled in Iceland in the 13th century. These include earldom sites, such as the Brough of Birsay (Hunter 1986; Morris 1996), the Earl's Bu, Orphir (Batey 1993) Westness Rousay (Kaland 1993), Tuquoy Westray (Owen 1993 and forthcoming), all in Orkney. In Shetland, work at Sandwick on Unst (Bigelow 1985; 1987), and more recently at a number of nearby sites (notably Hamar and Underhoull by Bond *et al.* and Belmont by Larsen *et al.*) have broadened the debate about the nature of settlement hierarchies in the region. Also in Shetland, excavations at The Biggings by Barbara Crawford (1999) have striven to synthesise the evidence of the archaeology and of a unique historical document relating to the site. In addition, excavations at the Brough of Deerness, Orkney (Morris with Emery 1986) and Kebister, Shetland (Owen and Lowe 1999) have seen complementary information revealed. Within recent years, current projects being undertaken at the Brough of Deerness (Barrett and Slater 2009), and at Snusgar in West Mainland Orkney (by Griffiths *et al.* 2007) are broadening the scope of data.

In South Uist, the complete excavation of a small settlement at Cille Pheadair by Parker Pearson (Brennand *et al.* 1997) and the extensive excavation of the large settlement complex at Bornais (Sharples 2005) have exposed settlement sequences that span the Norse period (11th to 14th centures). These provide clear evidence for the development of a distinct regional style of architecture that evolves from the longhouses of the Viking

period and have recovered substantial economic and artefactual datasets that document important changes in the societies of Atlantic Scotland in the period when the islands were incorporated into the Kingdom of Scotland.

The major environmental programme at Freswick Links, Caithness undertaken by Batey and Morris in the 1980s (Morris *et al.* 1995) forged ahead in the establishment of methodologies for investigating environmental aspects of Late Norse economies and which has subsequently formed the basis of comparable work being undertaken in the Norse North Atlantic. Building on some of this work, Barrett has further studied in depth the Norse fish trade (Barrett 1997) and the potential impact of a fish-rich diet on the Norse population (Barrett *et al.* 2001a).

Elsewhere in Scotland, the role of Govan on the River Clyde is being re-assessed by Driscoll *et al.* Long known for its fine collection of carved stones, including the distinctive hogbacks (Ritchie 1994) the environs of the church have been examined and the possible location of a Moot Hill identified (Doomster Hill: Dalglish and Driscoll 2009). The detailed consideration of central meeting places, commonly named as Thing sites is currently being undertaken by Sanmark, and this will provide an important over-arching study which will enable a consideration of the political landscape for the period. Another aspect of study which is underway is the examination of early church/chapel sites by Morris (Morris 2007; Morris *et al.* 2008), including the excavation of the Norse chapel at the Brough of Deerness (Morris with Emery 1986).

**Figure 11: One of five hogbacks from Govan. Hogbacks are a type of burial monument; an innovation of Anglo-Scandinavian cultural contact with their forms echoing boat-shaped Scandinavian houses (and perhaps also reflecting something of house-shaped shrines). Hogbacks survive most widely in Northern England and Central Scotland and are mainly 10th century in date. The five examples from Govan are the key Scottish group and reflect 10th century Hiberno-Norse influence in the kingdom of Strathclyde. Typically the ends of hogbacks are fashioned as inward-looking bears or other animals. This example from Govan (like two of its fellows) has been recut , probably before the end of the 11th century, to give the impression of a single, outward-looking bear.© Northlight Heritage (Ross Clark)**

Important research areas would include: exploring the impact of widespread maritime exploitation on Late Norse communities and their supply networks; addressing what happened at the "end" of the Late Norse period; assessing if all Late Norse sites were of high status and whether there is a failure to recognise sites of lower or less permanent status; charting the development of regional styles of architecture; and reconstructing the nature of trade networks – for example, the changing nature of contacts with Scandinavia, England and Ireland, the importance of coinage and the operation of the fishing economies.

### 2.4 The Highland Lowland Divide: Clans and kinship across the social spectrum

As well as the broader considerations of ethnic and political identity, culminating in the creation of Scotland as a nation state, the identity-creation within these groupings must also be reviewed, of which the most fundamental, in a Scottish context, is the development of the clan system with its political overlays of kinship, power ambitions

and military expression. Allegiance and signalled identity are clearly crucial here, and also provide useful material aids to their archaeological detection and analysis. From the armies of the Bruce to the disaster of Culloden, the threads of ancestral and familial loyalty are fundamental to any archaeology of Medieval Scotland.

This is one of the fundamental questions relating to the socio-economic history of late medieval Scotland. By the middle of the 16th century the country north of the Forth was divided between Gaelic-speaking highlanders and Scots-speaking lowlanders whose whole lifestyles and economic strategies were at variance, leading to frequent clashes of culture and arms. The 12th century written sources betray no evidence for this divide and indeed the large territorial lordships of the Anglo-Norman era (and apparently before) mostly contain a mixture of upland and lowland and it seems likely that transhumance across this range of landscapes underpinned much of the social and economic framework of the kingdom. The break-up of these provincial identities and social formations

was, presumably, in some sense, the product of the development of 'sub-urban' agricultural strategies in the hinterland of the burghs but the rate and extent of such development is unclear. Textually there are hints from Aberdeenshire and the Mearns of a linguistic and cultural divide between coastal and mountain Scots by the end of the 14th century (John of Fordoun) and at about the same time, or a little later, there begins to be fragmentary evidence that kindreds from the West Highlands, such as Clan Gregor and Clan Chattan were penetrating the upper part of the Eastern river systems. By the 16th century the literary record of the eastern highlands (e.g. The Book of the Dean of Lismore) seems to consist entirely of west coast and Irish traditions. The complete absence of any tales, songs or poems relating to the kings and earls of the Scottish kingdom is one of the mysteries of Scottish Gaelic studies, although this is often not appreciated by scholars in this area who have largely been content to engage in a post-colonial discourse that constructs these elites as 'other' within the kingdom.

The question raised is what happened to the eastern highlands when the eastern lowlands moved away from a transhumance economy? When did this transition occur, was it regular across the east or did it take place over a long time, and what are the implications for interpreting settlement patterns before and after this change? Were 10th to 12th century upland settlements seasonally occupied by the same families who occupied lowland settlements? Did west Highlanders move into unoccupied or under-occupied lands, or was it simply a proportion of investment that was withdrawn (by institutions or individuals) which exposed residual occupiers to west highland aggression? What are the key dates, and can this then be tied to other transformations? How old was the twelfth-century pattern?

Once again settlement hierarchies and morphology, and perhaps aspects of material culture (such as 'kitchen-ware;' and utensils), may provide clues, but it should also be realised that each site must be built into a regional 'map' of land use and settlement. Site-focused analysis colours the interpretation of villages and communities, and assumptions based on West Highland norms may discourage research from identifying quite substantial summer residences because they do not look like the shielings of the Isle of Lewis in the 19th century. The changing character of lordship and a growing market economy must be built into models, but the chronology to be drawn from textual evidence is patchy whereas integrated regional settlement studies can allows models and analyses to be refined.

## 2.5    Peoples and Territories

Distribution maps (which it must always be remembered are maps of recognition and recovery) that relate to the late prehistoric and protohistoric periods often show that certain material cultural patterns coincide with certain natural zones. Some of these zones map onto territories defined by protohistoric parameters including certain placename elements and surviving art. Although these broad concordances are well known, smaller scales of study, perhaps particularly in boundary areas could be fruitful.

Networks of trade, communication and political and religious influence also provide a promising research area. In Ireland Tomás Ó Carragáin has made much of this round the edge of Inishmurray and on Inveragh and Dingle connecting the monastic and pre-monastic pilgrim interests (2003; O'Sullivan and Ó Carragáin 2008). There are many obvious foci for similar studies in Scotland such as St Vigeans, Meigle, St Andrews, Whithorn and Applecross. In each case the monastic centre has yet to be studied with its prehistoric context.

## 2.6    Archaeological strategies

For a variety of reasons the rural region around the Tay/Earn confluence, so important for the political narrative of medieval Scotland has generally not received much

archaeological attention. This is beginning to change now with the long awaited writing up of the material uncovered at Perth over the last three decades and more, and with the Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot (SERF)[12] project, and it would be useful to direct such work to answering specific questions.

The RCAHMS survey of the Bennachie area shows that Scotland is unquestionably a world leader in the survey of archaeological landscapes (2007). This and other recent volumes provide brilliant platforms for new research. The exemplary quality of this work argues for any work initiated by other agencies to be carried out if not in partnership with RCAHMS at least with their advice. The RCAHMS survey agenda and this framework seek to reinforce each other. The Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot (SERF)[13] in Perthshire is actively demonstrating the sort of fruitful co-operation envisaged here (with an RCAHMS team surveying Castle Law, Forgandenny, for example).

Previous work, including that of the late Leslie and Elizabeth Alcock (1987, 1992) at various royal sites (e.g. Forteviot; Dundurn; Dunollie; Dunnottar; Urquhart Castle), and of Lane and Campbell (2000) at Dunnadd have provided valuable insight into the nature and occupation of these places. These investigations were generally minimalist in scale. The resources required and on-site limitations at other potential sites (particularly for urban or ecclesiastical locations) have been seen as a potential challenge for archaeological work. Martin Carver's (2008) work at Portmahomack, and more recently the ongoing work at Scone by

Oliver O'Grady and Peter Yeoman[14], have demonstrated that this need not be the case. Not least, the Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot (SERF)[15] project has dramatically expanded current knowledge of Royal Forteviot, including the extension of its biography as a centre for ceremony and ritual back into earlier prehistory, which suggests that its later importance was due in large part to an early medieval perception that the place had an important, ancestral past.

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http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/archaeology/research/projects/serf/
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http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/archaeology/research/projects/serf/

[14] The Moothill and Abbey of Scone Survey (MASS) Project
15

http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/archaeology/research/projects/serf/

## The Idea of Scotland



**Figure 12: The magnificent 'Dupplin' Cross, which marked the boundary of the royal estate at Forteviot, and commemorates King Constantine mac Fergus (d. 820) in the earliest known inscription to a Scottish king. ©S Driscoll.**

The Strathearn Environs & Royal Forteviot (SERF) project is a long-term study of the archaeology and history of a remarkable landscape at the heart of Scotland in Strathearn. The project involves excavation, field survey, historical analysis, a training field school, community involvement, and archaeological monitoring. Initiated by members of the Department of Archaeology, University of Glasgow, SERF seeks to explore the early prehistoric origins of the Pictish royal centre at Forteviot and document the area's subsequent evolution. Forteviot occupies a special place in the history of Scotland, being located at the geographical and historical heart of Scotland.

The death of *Cinaed mac Alpin*, one of the first kings of a united Scotland, was recorded at the 'palace' of Forteviot in AD 858 and at this time it is clear that this site was the most important royal centre in a fledgling Scottish nation. Forteviot is also the location of the largest and most extensive concentration of prehistoric ritual monuments identified by aerial photography in mainland Scotland. The Project was designed to answer the key question of why this area was so important to the early Scottish kings, and whether the extensive prehistoric monuments played a role in the choice of this power centre.

The results of the first five years of fieldwork have begun to answer this question. Evidence has been found of first millennium AD involvement in all of the prehistoric monuments so far excavated. The type of activity varied, but included deposition of Roman and Norse period artefacts in the silted up ditches, massive pits dug in the centres of henges, and extensive Pictish style burial grounds surrounding and respecting the prehistoric monuments, which would have survived as upstanding earthworks at this period.

The further importance of the site has been evaluated through a reconsideration of the exceptional collection of carved stone monuments found around the church, and the early medieval bell. Trial excavations around the church show a medieval foundation, and hint at the presence of a royal monastic establishment.

Work continues on the challenge of discovering the topography of the royal settlement and estate, the subsequent development of the medieval and post-medieval village, and the relationship to later medieval landholdings. In conjunction with this work, a wider programme of excavation on all of the hillforts of the surrounding area is uncovering surprising details of the first millennium BC settlement pattern and its relationship to the early medieval power centre.

Such projects can be built upon investigations into the basis of power in this region. Is there evidence of precocious land management strategies as revealed in settlement hierarchies and morphologies in the English East midlands such as at Raunds and Goltho? Do the hinterlands of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Abernethy present a fundamentally different pattern of settlement to other areas of comparable environmental potential? Is there a moment of change, of nascent manorialisation, as appears to be the case in tenth-century Southumbria and Burgundy and if so is this linked to different patterns of consumption and production?

Equally, researchers should also look to the Tay itself as the umbilical cord of the kingdom. It is tempting to see early Perth (Hall, Hall & Cook 2006) as the Sigtuna to Scone's Uppsala and perhaps to explain its absence from the textual record by reference to the Middle Saxon *emporia* (Hamwic, after all, is only known textually from one annal in a Frankish chronicle). The *wic* was essentially a dependent settlement perhaps largely inhabited by aliens, landless men or men whose lands and main residences lay elsewhere. The *emporia* of Middle Saxon England and Viking-Age Scandinavia seem to have functioned as not always elective 'enterprise zones' for merchants, allowing the role of redistributive chiefdom to be monopolised by one member of the local elite who was thus catapulted into medieval kingship. Such concerted mercantile enterprises, however, required quite complex resource allocation and this in turn led to, or perhaps sprang from, tenurial revolution in the hinterland. Thus the key to an examination of state formation lies in understanding the transformation of rural settlement hierarchies and morphologies. Historic Land-use Assessment (HLA; Herring 2009; RCAHMS 2006, HLAmap[16]), utilising GIS to assess and map the origins of the modern landscape, including the relict remains of past landscapes wherever these are extensive enough to map, offers one route into these topics. The results feed two useful areas: resource management (it shows where little is, or can be, known) and research (it shows which types of land correlate with which type of site).

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[16] http://hla.rcahms.gov.uk/

**The Pictish Shell Midden at the Sands of Forvie, Aberdeenshire**

The existence of a range of shell middens and occupation material at Sands of Forvie, along both shores of the Ythan estuary has been recognised for over a century (Jamieson 1865; Dalrymple 1868). These have generally been presumed to relate to the extensive prehistoric activity known at the sands (e.g. Hawke-Smith 1980; Warren 2005). However, recent excavations undertaken by the University of Aberdeen, have suggested that at least one of these middens is much later and has shown that evidence for Early Medieval activity in eastern Scotland may be found in unexpected contexts and locations.

Excavations were carried out in Easter 2010 on one of the largest shell middens at the Sands of Forvie (Midden A) in response to its erosion and as part of a testing programme to ascertain the nature of archaeological activity at Forvie. During the excavations at Midden A it was found that the shell sequence extended down through some 2.9m of deposits and extended for over 35m in length. This sequence was established through two main columns excavated to the lowest deposits. The most visible and obvious part of the midden was a c.0.6m band of shell dump in the upper portions of the eroding section. This upper midden lay on top of a sand dune (c.1.3m deep at greatest height) that had formed above a series of earlier deposits. One major feature was also located with the layers of sand blow- a fire pit preserved intact. This consisted of a layer of fire-cracked stones on top of a charcoal deposit- interpreted as a steaming pit for opening of the mussels for consumption as found in many ethnographic contexts (e.g. Parmalee and Klippel 1974). There was very little in the way of material culture at the midden apart from one or two stone tools. There were also nice little human touches- e.g. stacked mussel shells- perhaps a form of culinary art!

Six radiocarbon dates were obtained from the midden from the lowest levels to the upper parts of the upper midden deposits. The dates from the midden were a surprise to say the least, suggesting that the lowest charcoal rich layer was formed 325 to 555 cal AD with all the layers above this rapidly forming in the period 715 – 985 cal AD. There was no indication of Early Medieval activity in the midden or known from the immediate area, but the Sands of Forvie excavations show that there was very extensive shellfish gathering in this period creating very large shell mound deposits. This evidence finds some parallel in Denmark where a range of large mussel middens are known to date from the Iron and Viking Ages and appear to represent a renewed and specialize period of shell midden creation (Andersen 2007, 40). The Early Medieval period in Britain is also one where marine protein consumption becomes visible once again after millennia of limited use and it is in this light that the evidence for large-scale consumption of shellfish at Forvie might be placed (e.g. Barrett and Richards 2004). Only further work will help elucidate the full significance of the findings at Forvie, suffice to say the excavation results have massive implications for the importance of the sea in first millennium AD society in this part of Scotland, which can be situated alongside extensive evidence for the coastal fortification in this period (Ralston 2004).



**Figure 13: Excavations at Sands of Forvie first millennium AD shell midden ©University of Aberdeen**

## 2.7    Conflict archaeology

A decisive factor in this political process was naturally one of organised violence, and the archaeology of conflict offers particular opportunities in Scotland, not least through specialised expertise here in the form of Glasgow University's Centre for Battlefield Archaeology[17]. The archaeology of conflict has grown in sophistication in recent decades, to the point at which conflict-related material culture can be traced in many aspects of the archaeological record. The ethnic complexities of early Scotland can be especially illuminated here, as well as the major arcs of international tension and stress that affected the development of the nation.

An important recent development in the field has been the preparation of an Inventory of Scottish Battlefields by Historic Scotland[18], work which has largely been carried out by the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology, with early collaboration by Glenn Foard of the Battlefield Trust's Resource Centre[19]. The aim of the Inventory is to highlight the importance of the battlefields included within it (currently numbering over 20) and to make them a material consideration in the planning process. This concern with the conservation and management of battlefields is a key indicator of the importance now being placed on these sites. It should be noted however that the Inventory is not exhaustive and numerous other sites of conflict, including battlefields which currently cannot be located, skirmishes and siege sites, exist in Scotland – many of these have the potential to add to knowledge through their archaeological traces.

Feeding into the Battlefield's Inventory but also representing a vital development in its own right is the increasing number of archaeological investigation of battlefields, using a well-tested suite of methodologies – though standardization of these by archaeological contractors is vital if meaningful evaluations and mitigation works are to be carried out on battlefields. Again, it is presumed that the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology will place a key role here. The exact site of few medieval battles has been identified archaeologically, though a large project is currently underway at Bannockburn in advance of the 700th anniversary.

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[17] http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/humanities/research/archaeologyresearch/battlefieldarchaeology/

[18] http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/heritage/battlefields/battlefieldsunderconsideration.htm

[19] http://www.battlefieldstrust.com/resource-centre/

## 2.8    The Future

The framework has identified the following key future research areas and issues:

- Investigating the formation of polities will require considerable amounts of data to be gathered and integrated, and considerable advances can be made. This will hinge on understanding and questioning the relationships between centres of consumption, royal, ecclesiastical and urban and their hinterlands and the recognition that integrated economic activity underpins social identities and trajectories. Active critique of the concepts of progress and chronological development underpinning these trajectories on a national scale should be encouraged.

- Examining other regional foci and considering how and why they rise and fall should be promoted. The development of regional frameworks investigating other areas is to be endorsed in order to develop a more rounded picture of the trajectory of power across Scotland. Studies into the nature of the interaction between polities, and how this is materially manifested, should be encouraged. Taking the arrival of the Vikings as an example, the available evidence and the potential areas for further research can be sub-divided into three main areas: the Picto-Norse interface; the Viking-age and the Late Norse period, with the main research questions revolving around the location of relevant sites, issues of political and social interaction, maritime supply networks, the introduction of new crops, the transformation of the fishing industries and the assimilation or otherwise of artefactual forms.

- Alignment with RCAHMS programmes, such as Historic Land-use Assessment (HLA), to ensure research starts with best understanding of the research area is a key starting point to approaching past territories. This should incorporate comparisons between prehistoric and protohistoric distributions. Understanding and mapping the changing parochial structure would aid our research into both the distribution of churches, ecclesiastical organisation and the structure of landownership and rural settlement.

- Settlement hierarchies, morphology and aspects of material culture, must be built into regional maps of land use and settlement in order to answer questions of clan, kinship and the emergence of a Highland-Lowland divide. Intensification of lordship and a growing market economy must be built into social models, but the chronology drawn from textual evidence is sporadic and anecdotal whereas integrated regional settlement studies allows models and analyses to be refined.

# 3.  Lifestyles and Living spaces

## *3.1   Critiquing the urban-rural dichotomy*

This section has deliberately refrained from employing the traditional terminologies of urban and rural settlement, in order to move away from the reductionist straitjacket that these categories have occasionally imposed. This is particularly relevant for the urban debate in Scotland, which has moved far beyond the 'checklists' of town profiles that were common in medieval archaeology during the 70s and 80s. The urban concept has at least as much to do with mental constraints as with physical or economic ones, and a crucial question for early Scotland must be the lack of urban centres among all ethnicities. Why *are* there no Pictish towns or Viking foundations?

Entering what might be called an explicitly cognitive arena, it is important to understand the renegotiation of urban form, and the way in which the town is shaped according to requirement and circumstances (Price 2010). The question of definition – what is a town? – has occupied medieval archaeologists for decades, but a crucial characteristic of the urban mind is that it resists the easy check-listing of allegedly diagnostic attributes that have for so long dogged the study of towns. A multiscalar analysis is crucial to a broad appreciation of cognitive urbanism, not least in understanding the imbalances of town metabolism in different areas and cultures. At the most basic level, what constitutes the urban is not merely a matter of socio-economic choice in any given context but also affects the actual shape of the 'towns' themselves, which may appear in utterly variant form dependent on circumstance. Not least, the supposed urban-rural divide is called into question.

According to the constituents of their identities (themselves subject to contextual variation) the various peoples of early medieval Scotland may have lived side by side, but yet still have inhabited cognitively different worlds. In all this work, the role of communication and choice must be stressed, conscious or otherwise, and the questions this raises are endless. In a Scottish context, this crucially connects with what is known of the mobility inherent in its medieval cultures. What did medieval people tell each other about their experience of urban life? Did they think of it in something approximating those terms, or did they not feel that a distinction existed? What did those who had never seen a 'town' think such an entity looked like? Did a town confer reputation, and if so, to whom and in what way? To what degree does the urban preclude or presuppose the rural, perhaps fused in the notion of hinterland, or is there indeed a border at all? Were city-dwellers aware of an external dependence, if it existed? Are there circumstances in which urban living can be perceived as a kind of mental discourse, an ideal image of circumstance externalised and given a physical reality? And if so, when and why does this happen, and what form could it take?

To take an external perspective, that of the Scandinavians, there can be seen clearly the multivariate reality that lay behind previously simplified paradigms of medieval urbanism, usually based on supposed descent from, or rejection of, Roman models (Clarke & Simms 1985; Brink & Price 2008). In the eighth to eleventh centuries AD, Scandinavians travelled to cities such as Byzantium, and partially founded substantial towns like Novgorod and Kiev (Price 2000a), and yet in their homelands made do with single-street beach markets for centuries (see Skre 2007 for the type-site at Kaupang). In their North Atlantic colonies such as Iceland and Greenland, pressing environmental constraints meant that towns never developed, and urbanism is largely a modern phenomenon there (Fitzhugh & Ward 2000; Barrett 2003). In terms of Scandinavian cultural contacts, the societies of Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Frankia were firmly

urban (Price 2000b), as were the Arab Caliphates in the Middle East and Iberia (Price 2008). In Ireland the situation was different again, in that the native elites (whose power was based on control of people rather than territory, together with influence over uninhabited but numinous sites of prehistoric significance) did not build towns themselves but enthusiastically allowed the Vikings to do so around the coasts (Valente 2008). The resulting symbiotic relationship of urban Norse and rural Hibernians was not without its conflicts, but was generally of mutual benefit and resulted in a number of hybrid identities across the social scale. In Scotland the Vikings did not adopt or create urban trading centres.

In all these disparate cases, it should be remembered that the Scandinavians involved were often the same individuals, moving with apparent ease through the immense cultural range of their military and commercial activities. The cognitive space of the Vikings is not easy to chart with accuracy (Price 1998), but clearly their urban perceptions were shifting, usefully inconsistent and above all adaptable in context (Hillerdal 2009: 41-83, 201-288).

Interestingly, it is clear that the Viking Age Scandinavians did not possess, or coin, a specific term for what would now be called towns. This applies not only to such places in their homelands, where an urban definition is in any case arguable, but even to massive conurbations such as Byzantium. *Garðr*, later *gård*, is the term from which the modern English 'yard' derives, and literally denotes an enclosed space, most often with connotations of habitation. In more tangible, cognitive terms, it appears to have generally meant something close to 'settlement'. As well denoting individual farms – the most common usage of the term – *garðr* was also employed at a variety of levels from the cosmic to the undeniably urban. The different worlds inhabited by humans and supernatural beings are generally named in this way, including *Ásgarðr* ('Place of the Æsir [gods]') and

*Miðgarðr* (the 'Middle Place', where mortals live). Larger settlements of different kinds were also so named, thus Byzantium was *Mikligarðr*, the 'Great Place', Novgorod was *Holmgarðr*, the 'Settlement on the Island', and so on. In most instances there is nonetheless a sense of boundedness and enclosure, ranging from a domestic fence to a defensive palisade or a city wall, which is not found in places given other kinds of names.

There are intriguing parallels for this ambiguity among some of the Vikings' cultural contacts, for example in the complex melting pot of Ireland. Here again, terminology is problematic, with a broad semantic range in evidence. The sort of language that would refer to urban centres in Latin (*civitas*, *urbes*) was co-opted in Ireland for ecclesiastical centres, and this extended to Irish words such as *cathair*, which could describe a city, a monastic settlement or even a high-status dwelling. *Baile* was used to denote an urban site in the Middle Ages, and still today, but this also embraces 'townlands' as an administrative unit. When the Viking ports are explicitly mentioned in the sources, words emphasising defence (*dún*) are often employed, rather than anything with economic overtones. Crucially, there is no shift in terminology when the Viking coastal 'towns' take on serious urban status in the High Middle Ages, though the word *longphort* is exclusively used to refer to the defended camps of the early incursions. Not until the Anglo-Norman influences of the 1170s and later do can the importation of English urban terminology be seen, and this clearly comes from outside. In short, there is no specific word for 'town' in the early medieval Irish sources either. The question of an urban language, or at least terminology, is important here when considering how Viking Age Scandinavians (and those they encountered) understood the nature of these settlements.

All of this takes on new meaning in the context of the other peoples of early Scotland. The Picts and Scots definitively rejected urban centres. Technologically and socially, they

could easily have developed towns, but chose not to do so. They clearly enjoyed close trading links with urban cultures to which they regularly travelled, but still without pursuing a similar agenda in their home environment. A possible explanation may lie in precisely this elusive question of urban definition and urban form – a concept that begins in the mind long before it is articulated in reality. In searching for these sites, are researchers looking in the wrong place, or not recognising what is seen? Maybe Pictish 'towns' appear quite differently to what might be expected. Should the concept of monastic urbanism be revived, for example in connection with centres such as Whithorn and Portmahomack, or should notions of what urbanism might mean in regional and/or environmental context be completely revisited? These questions can all be explored in depth through a closer engagement with the archaeological data coupled with a conscious decision to refrain from their immediate labelling and categorisation..

### 3.2 Environmental factors, land-use and regionality

Landscape and the characteristic variety of the Scottish environment plays a major role here, and current thinking should not shy from such an acknowledgement in fear of an overly reductionist label. The physical challenges of life in the North pose unique constraints on populations living there – as can be seen throughout the high latitudes of the northern hemisphere – but they equally make possible modes of life and subsistence that are not found elsewhere. In exploring medieval Scotland these factors need to be made more integral to our understanding of the period, and also to extend our comparative range to the other landscapes familiar to settlers in this region (how did Scandinavians perceive Scotland as a physical environment, for example?). In all this care must be taken to consider the regionality of Scotland's ancient geography, so obvious to our modern minds. What differences can be perceived in highland and lowland landscapes,

or in the different island groups, not just in terms of settlement form but also in more subtle aspects of the lives lived in their circle? How was the land used, and to what degree did this reflect conscious choice? Questions of success and failure in human environmental adaptation can also be considered, along with the diverse impacts that settlement had on the land- and seascapes.

Wood and turf were common materials for construction in most parts of the highlands and many parts of the lowlands too (Dunbar & Fairhurst 1971, 242). The origins of cruck construction need to be more widely researched and also the variations in timber and turf construction, including the so-called creel houses. A late 16th century survey of the wood used in settlements in Strathavon, Moray, for construction suggests that the couples were jointed A-frames, not single blades, and the walls may well have been of wickerwork or creel. In England crucks have been shown to have developed from post-set structures in the high medieval period and the excavations at Springwood Park, Kelso suggests that this transition was occurring at a similar time in south-east Scotland (Dixon 1998, 2002a). Another approach has been opened up recently by dendrochronology, in particular, the work by Anne Crone on surviving crucks in Perthshire (Crone and Mills 2003), dating the timber used in vernacular buildings, previously the domain of architectural historians.

Recent research into woodland management on Loch Katrine by Coralie Mills, Peter Quelch and Mairi Stewart (2009), using dendrochronology, tree-forms and documents, provides good evidence that pollarding of ash trees was carried on during the 18th century. Presumably managed by the nearby pre-improvement farm tenants, and occupying otherwise useless steep and rocky ground, they could have supplied many useful products including leafy hay, small wood for tools and construction, and fuel. Further work is required to understand this management practice, which arguably is of greater antiquity

and has the potential to fill a gap in the understanding of the medieval rural economy of the Highlands. The more widespread upland wood pasture types, such as alder and birch, are as yet little studied and are a particular priority for further research. Not all wood-pasture trees were necessarily pollarded or as old as the Katrine ash trees; for example, some squat oak wood pasture trees at Katrine were shown through dendrochronology to originate in graze-damaged remnants of 19th century coppice, by which time traditional mixed farming practices had been largely replaced by sheep (Mills 2011).

There are many other types of historic wooded cultural landscapes which merit a similarly holistic research approach, for example remnant oak coppices, with related archaeological remains, many originating the late 18th and 19th centuries for tanbark and charcoal production (Mills 2011). Other wooded cultural landscapes such as deer parks, designed landscapes, historic plantations, and indeed our semi-natural woods, merit a similarly integrated research approach. Furthermore, chronology building in woodlands which produced timber facilitates the dating and provenancing of native timber in historic buildings and archaeological sites, making the connection between the built heritage and its landscape (Mills 2008; Crone & Mills 2011). Woods often preserve exceptionally intact archaeological landscapes (e.g. the medieval rigged field system under the late medieval plantation at Balgownie, Fife; Mills & Quelch 2011), and the historic trees, with their inherent dating potential, can provide a firm chronological framework for the archaeological landscape. There are many remnant wooded cultural landscapes Scotland, but the veteran trees are being lost all the time to natural processes of storm damage and decay, a process which is likely to accelerate with climate change. Further dendrochronological research, combined with archaeological, documentary and tree-form studies, is required to understand the age and evolution of these important cultural landscapes, while we still have the historic trees to study.

Palaeoenvironmental research for the medieval period is still in its infancy (cf. Centre for Environmental History and Policy, Stirling University[20]) and further local studies are needed in conjunction with field survey and documentary research to understand the changing face of the rural landscape, particularly for lowland areas. The survival of botanical remains is a stumbling block here since suitable wet sumps for sampling near to settlements are rare in the Lowlands. Looking at crannog sites offers one avenue of pursuing this, providing the waterlogged material necessary (see Shelley 2009).

Archaeologists have long pursued the topographical and design aspects of medieval towns (e.g. Lynch, Spearman and Stell 1988; Bowler 2004) but have paid less attention to the role of weather in town development. The 1209/10 flood of the river Tay so washed away the royal castle of Perth that the decision was made not to rebuild it, which significantly altered the development trajectory of that part of the town, partly as an industrial suburb, partly as a Dominican friary. The frequent washing away of the bridge over the Tay also ensured the longevity of the practice of ferrying people across the river down to comparatively recent times.

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[20] http://www.cehp.stir.ac.uk/
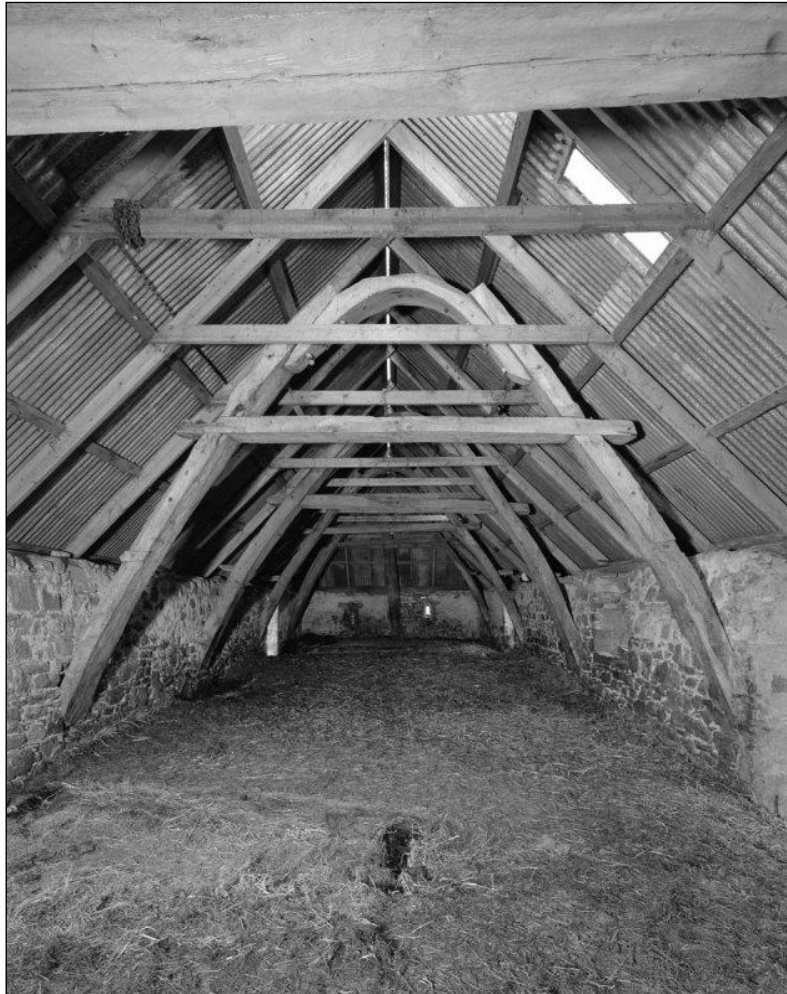
**Figure 14 Corrimony Cruck Barn, Highland. The cruck-framed barn at Corrimony is a rare survivor of a once common type of rural architecture. Such a structure offers opportunities for dendro-chronological research to date the building and learn about the changing climate as well as the craftsmanship and architecture of the building itself, whose origins are poorly understood © Copyright RCAHMS**

### 3.3 Settlement and the material culture of daily life

Within these larger landscapes what has traditionally been the backbone of all archaeological enquiry must also be reviewed, namely the material repertoire of life in the form of household objects and the artefactual record in general. The pursuit of a cultural biography of objects, now an entirely commonplace approach in archaeology by contrast to its somewhat radical perception in the late 1980s, seems a productive road to travel here. As with the above considerations in charting the material worlds of early Scotland, regionality and ethnic variation must be prominent factors, and it must be

seen that the full range of theoretical tools are employed to create multi-facetted interpretations that reflect this most diverse of regions. Published research on medieval standing buildings in Scotland has largely been limited to castles and ecclesiastical buildings due to the accidents of survival. Opportunities for recording and research should be taken where urban buildings may be hidden behind later facades and rural structures incorporated into later country houses or remain concealed in deserted or degraded farmsteads.

Aside from the recognition of regional variation in the post-medieval settlement pattern (Fenton & Walker 1981, Bruntskill

1981, Naismith 1989, Atkinson 1995) little is known about medieval rural settlement in Scotland. This has led to such statements as 'archaeology of the medieval farming communities is one of the greatest mysteries of our past' (Yeoman 1995, 108). One reason for this is that while numerous prehistoric sites are known and many have been excavated, very few sites of the medieval period relating to the rural society have been found and excavated, especially in the Highlands.

The term 'Medieval or Later Rural Settlement' (MoLRS) was coined in the 1990s to cover pre-Improvement /pre-Clearance settlement in Scotland and also the medieval and post-Clearance settlements (Hingley 1993). An initial Historic Scotland sponsored seminar included useful 'where we are now' type reviews (especially Corser 1993, Dixon 1993 discussed below). There was some discussion of the 'way forward' which consisted of the creation of an advisory group, the main priorities of which were the preservation and management of the known resource, which is essentially post-medieval in date. Research into the unknown was considered secondary. A review of progress in MoLRS research *'10 Years On'*, based on a joint conference sponsored by Historic Scotland and the Medieval Settlement Research Group (Govan 2003) highlighted the issues affecting the location of medieval settlement in both highland and lowland areas (Lelong 2003 and Dixon 2003). The term 'MoLRS' has now being replaced with 'Historic Rural Settlement' (National Trust Research Seminar held in March 2007) which reflects an attempt to widen the scope of the studies, and a research framework was published by the Historic Rural Settlement Group in 2008 (Dalglish & Dixon 2008). In addition, the RCAHMS project (sponsored by Historic Scotland) to record all deserted rural settlements shown as such on the 1st edition of OS 1:10650 map produced a corpus of 28000 sites across Scotland and may represent a valuable research resource in this regard.

One of the main problems bedevilling medieval settlement is the ephemeral nature of the evidence. The majority of structures occupied by the Scottish population in the medieval and into the post-medieval period may have been predominantly of organic materials such as timber, turf, soil, branches and peat (Walker *et al.* 1996).



**Figure 15: Eldbotle, East Lothian. View of a medieval building under excavation at the deserted village of Eldbotle. This site has survived due to sand-blow covering the site. The superstructure of the buildings are typically of perishable materials that do not survive © Piers Dixon**

**Figure 16: Springwood Park, Kelso, Scottish Borders. View of the row of 14<sup>th</sup> century buildings under excavation. This site has been preserved because the buildings were set into the slope and it has been covered by plough soil. The superstructure of the buildings was largely made of perishable materials © Piers Dixon**

A variety of approaches have been applied in recent years to the study of medieval/Post-medieval, pre-Improvement/post-Improvement settlement and their associated field systems. Work at Bragar and Gásig in Lewis utilised geophysical survey and phosphate analysis to tentatively identify potential hearths, walls, ditches and anthropogenic enhancement of soils usually as a result of manuring (Banks & Atkinson 2000). A semi-automated classification of field systems utilising computerised image recognition techniques, has been coupled with examination of soil signatures within identified functional areas, and followed by radiocarbon dating of features to identify and characterise relict field systems associated with settlement (Chrystall & McCullagh 2000). Morphological analyses of medieval and later field-systems recorded by RCAHMS field teams have been carried out and published, including the varieties of rig and assessments of their method of formation and period of origin. (Dixon 1994; Halliday 2003). The approach of historians and historical geographers (Campbell 2000, 2002, 2004; Boardman 2006; Crawford 1983 Dodgson 1980, 1993, 2000; Whyte 1981, 1995, 2000;) has highlighted the potential contribution of the historical records and historic maps to an understanding of the location and nature of rural settlement, the organisation of society,

and the medieval economy. An approach which combines traditional archaeological survey with historical geography has also been developed most successfully in Scotland by the Royal Commission (e.g. RCAHMS 1997a, 2001 & 2007 and others) and by individual researchers (James 2009). Other studies have examined historical documents, place names and compared surviving remains of settlement and house types on Islay (Caldwell *et al.* 2000), and undertaken topographic survey and excavation of a site at Easter Raitts, Badenoch (Lelong & Wood 2000; Lelong *forthcoming*).

Early rural settlement studies were concerned with the architecture of upstanding vernacular houses and the numerous stone-built deserted settlements seen within the Scottish landscape - although these structures are now acknowledged to date no earlier than the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century (Fenton & Walker 1981, Crawford 1983, RCAHMS 1992, 32-36). Some early work on vernacular architecture took place, fortuitously, in Argyll (e.g. Gailey 1962a; 1962b), including work prompted by an interest in contemporary thatched domestic houses (Sinclair 1953). Sinclair identified three 'types' which he termed (due to their broad geographic spread): 'Dalriadic'; 'Skye'; and 'Hebridean'. Sinclair's work was useful in that it recorded structures which have since disappeared and highlighted the variety of

structural forms, (which he then over-simplified into three 'types') and thus recognised that rural vernacular housing was not a static remnant of the past. The more recent work by Bruce Walker and others in the field of vernacular building studies (Walker & McGregor 1993; Walker & MacGregor 1996; Walker, MacGregor & Little 1996, Dixon 2002a) has highlighted the range of building techniques and materials used in the late 18th and 19th centuries. This provides a useful way of understanding the likely requirements of earlier vernacular architecture.

Horace Fairhurst's work provided a specifically archaeological element to the study of rural settlement that was lacking in earlier work (Fairhurst 1960, 1963). His work at Lix in Perthshire (1971), Rosal in Sutherland (1969a) and Loch Glashan in Argyll (1969b) have been particularly useful in providing morphological information and dating evidence for pre-Improvement settlement. At both Lix and Rosal the visible ruins could be dated only as far back as the late 18th and 19th centuries despite the documentary evidence for earlier occupation in 1559 in the case of Lix (Drummond Papers 1569) and in 1269 for Rosal (*Registrum Episcopatus Moraviensis* 1837).

Fairhurst's work was ahead of its time in that he was interested in the archaeology of rural settlement. Fairhurst identified a wide variety of structures in the landscape, as Gailey had done, but was only able to excavate small trenches across a small proportion of them and his analysis of the pottery assemblage was unsophisticated. However, he did identify stone foundations, turf-walled structures and sub-floor depressions which could have been the remains of medieval timber framed cruck-built buildings. The 1970s and 1980s saw increasing numbers of archaeological field surveys being undertaken in Scotland. While this greatly increased the amount of data recorded and enabled suggestions to be made about chronology and process based on the morphological differences, without excavation

still no real chronological framework could be established.

Fieldwork was also undertaken in the late 1970s in Caithness and Sutherland (Mercer 1980) where three types of pre-Clearance settlement were identified: Numerous shielings near streams were set in large mounds of debris, which suggested a long period of use; Individual farmsteads of the immediate pre-Clearance period were characterised by compartmentalised long houses, some with bow-shaped walls perhaps indicating a Norse influence. These structures were associated with other smaller rectangular houses; finally there were small rectilinear and sub-rectilinear houses concentrated in large numbers and associated with large enclosures. This type was, however, found in only one area of south Sutherland at Dalchork where it is known from documentary evidence that 'cottar towns' existed.

A survey on the shores of Loch Tay, Perthshire, incorporated a study of historic maps including Pont, Roy's Military map and an estate plan of 1769 which enabled recognition of *four* types of structures in this area (Morrison 1980): shielings, round or oval in shape, built of drystone or turf in the hills above the head dykes; low, hip-ended, drystone longhouses or byre-dwellings clustered together with accompanying outhouses, barns, kilns and smaller 'cottars' houses as depicted on a 1769 survey of the estate; clustered or isolated 19th-century buildings as depicted on the 1st edition O.S. map, but not depicted on the 1769 survey; and low-turf covered 'rectangular and sub-rectangular structures and straggling field dykes' not shown on either the 1769 plans or later maps, which could be pre-18th-century settlements.

The RCAHMS have undertaken extensive archaeological surveys in Argyll between 1971 and 1992 but included only a small number of the more outstanding or exceptional remains of pre-Improvement settlement in these publications (RCAHMS 1971, 1975, 1980,

1982, 1984, 1988 & 1992). Such exceptional shieling sites included Talatoll (Kintyre) and Douglas Water (Loch Fyne). The site of Talatoll was unusually extensive in that there were at least 43 structures lying across open moorland (RCAHMS 1971, 200). These surveys have shown that shielings display variable construction - some are clearly little more than temporary huts, while others are much more substantial and are similar to the structures found in the townships. This may be evidence for more permanent occupation of the shieling grounds at some point in time. The illustration by Pennant of beehive and tepee shaped shielings on Jura in 1772 show how varied the construction of such structures could be (Pennant 1790).

In highland Perthshire, long turf and timber houses of the late first millennium have been identified by survey (RCAHMS 1990) and dated by excavation at Pitcarmick (Barrett & Downes 1994). Outside highland Perthshire, early medieval buildings are rarely found, with Viking settlements providing the best parallels for date in the Outer Isles. Lowland equivalents, however, have been difficult to locate or identify and there is little idea of either the buildings or the pattern of settlement at this time. The post-set buildings used as kiln barns, at the monastic site of Hoddom, Dumfriesshire, dating to the 7th to 9th centuries, are akin to middle Saxon houses in southern England although the excavators interpreted the post-holes as slots for crucks (Lowe 2006). This important site shows the potential, but more excavation of sites of this period is urgently needed. The early medieval phases found in one part of the site at Eldbotle, East Lothian suggests that known medieval village sites are a good starting point for locating settlements of this period in the south-east Lowlands, if not elsewhere.

The Ben Lawers Landscape History Project[21] has been very productive in providing multi-disciplinary information on the rural settlement landscape of the central highlands.

Although an excellent achievement in getting to grips with shielings and peripheral settlements on the outfield areas, less attention was devoted to the settlement foci and it still remains an unfulfilled aspiration to excavate a highland rural settlement focus *in extenso*. Recent survey work by RCAHMS as part of the Project has updated and refined this analysis, and shown that there is a degree of continuity in settlement from the mid-18th century through the Improvement Period to the later-19th century in the settlement foci (Boyle 2003, 2009).

Research into medieval settlement in the Northern and Western Isles has increasingly focused on Scandinavian settlement. Pre-Norse settlement is characterised by cellular buildings in isolated farmsteads (Parker Pearson 2004; Dalglish 2011), for example, Buckquoy in Orkney (Ritchie 1977; Brundle et al 2003). It is not a simple story of replacement by Norse settlement however as at many sites there is continuity of location and use, such as at Skaill, Shetland (Buteux 1997) and Buckquoy (Ritchie 1977; Brundle et al 2003). Similar long-term patterns of settlement and use of resources – isolated farmsteads focused on mixed farming/fishing – also persisted over the Norse 'transition' at sites in South Uist, including Cille Pheadair (Brennand *et al.* 1997) and Bornais (Sharples 2005 and forthcoming). There are exceptions however, at sites such as Norwick, Shetland, where an early Viking settlement (possibly pre 950AD; Ballin Smith 2007) had no precursor. The nature of the settlement record pre- and post- Norse impacts is a current area of debate.

Apart from Whithorn, Scandinavian settlement appears to concentrate in the Northern and Western Isles (see Section 2.3 for further summary of Viking/Norse presence and influences). Later Norse influences resulted in long rectangular houses, sometimes with byres under the same roofs. Several sites on Shetland have been extensively excavated, including Jarlshof (Hamilton 1956; Dockrill, Bond and Batey

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[21] http://www.benlawers.org.uk/

2004), the Udal (Sharples 2005; forthcoming), the Biggings[22], (Crawford 1999), and Kebister (Owen and Lowe 1999). On Orkney, excavation has taken place on sites including the Brough of Deerness, (Morris with Emery 1986; Barrett & Slater 2009) and in West Mainland (Griffiths *et al.* 2007).

In the Western Isles, excavations at Cille Pheadair (Brennand et al 1997) and Bornais (Sharples 2005 and forthcoming) have traced settlement evolution over the 11th to 14th centuries AD, illustrating the development of regional architectural traditions from the earlier longhouse form. Some settlements became more complex, with the addition of new buildings to sites such as Jarlshof (Ritchie 2003) possibly reflecting an extended family. The group of settlement mounds at Bornais, (Sharples 2005 and forthcoming) probably suggest a local power centre, as does the Brough of Birsay (Curle 1982; (Hunter 1986; Morris 1996, forthcoming) in Orkney. Later Norse sites demonstrate the concentration of political power, as at the Earldom sites in Orkney, including the Brough of Birsay (Hunter 1986; Morris 1996), the Earl's Bu (Batey 1993), Westness, (Kaland 1993), and Tuquoy (Owen 1993 and forthcoming). The complexity of settlement hierarchies has also been explored at sites such as Sandwick (Bigelow 1985; 1987), Hamar and Underhoull (Bond *et al.* 2007, 2008), all in the Shetland Isles.

Extensive survey of the machair plain on the island of South Uist has been able to plot the distribution of Norse settlement mounds (Sharples and Parker Pearson 1997). The distribution of these settlements is comparable with the Iron Age settlement and indicates the relative continuity of settlement location on the island from the first millennium BC across the Viking period. However, it contrasts dramatically with the

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[22] A stofa has been partially reconstructed at Papa Stour, see http://www.shetland-heritage.co.uk/downloads/resources/geographicleaflets/Papa_Stour.pdf and http://shetlopedia.com/Papa_Stour_Stofa

post medieval settlement pattern which appears to almost completely avoid the machair plain. There appears to be a major disruption in the settlement pattern in the 14th to 15th centuries which may be explained as either the result of climatic or political developments.

Some pre-Improvement settlements are found clustered around medieval hall-houses. Such examples are Finlaggan, Islay, Ardtornish Castle (Morvern), Aros Castle (Mull) and Dun Ara Castle (Mull). The RCAHMS has assumed that the structures are contemporary with the hall-houses, implying a close relationship between the lord and at least some of the local population. However, without excavation it is impossible to say what the relationship is between the hall-house and the townships. It is probable that several of these structures post-date the medieval lordly occupation of the hall-house.

Surveys have also identified crannogs and fortified islands as potential types of medieval site. Underwater surveys of crannogs in Loch Tay (Dixon 1982; 1984), Loch Awe (Hardy, McArdle & Miles 1973; Dixon 1984; Morrison 1985; Holley 2000; Taylor 2003) and the Lake of Menteith (Henderson 1994) have generally found crannogs to date from the later prehistoric to the early-medieval periods. Dry land surveys have also shown that crannogs extend into south-west Scotland (Barber & Crone 1993) and the central Inner Hebrides (Holley 2000). Of the 23 radiocarbon dates from Scottish crannogs in south-west Scotland only one site (Lochrutton) produced two medieval dates of the 11th to 13th centuries (Crone 1993, 246) which suggests that in the south-west of Scotland re-use of crannogs in the medieval period was not a common phenomenon. In the west of Scotland, however, there is more evidence that crannogs were utilised for settlement well into the medieval period. At the Moss of Achnacree, Lorn, a crannog was excavated in the 19th century and produced artefacts including two wooden double-sided combs, a wooden ladle, fragments of antler and skin

shoe soles which were thought to be medieval in date. Sites classified as fortified islands may also have been originally built on crannogs as well as on suitably located rocky islands (RCAHMS 1975, 94-95). At several sites in Kintyre, Mull, Tiree, Coll, Loch Lomond and Mid-Argyll there is evidence for crannogs and islands being occupied by stone buildings (RCAHMS 1963; RCAHMS 1971; RCAHMS 1980). Several examples have been surveyed by the RCAHMS, as at Eilean na Circe, N Knapdale (RCAHMS 1992, 303), Eilean Tigh, S Knapdale (RCAHMS 1992, 303), Loch a'Bhàillidh, S Knapdale (RCAHMS 1992, 304) and Loch an Daimh, Craignish (RCAHMS 1992, 305). At Loch na Buaile, Tiree (RCAHMS 1980, 122) the island was occupied by an oval-shaped, turf-built rather than a stone built structure (which is similar to one found at MacEwan's Castle, Cowal (see below) which is medieval in date). Some sites had outer revetments walls offering some degree of defence, which otherwise was provided by their island location. Documentary evidence suggests that these lightly fortified islands were often associated with clan chiefs and used as chiefly residences in the medieval period and persisted in use as refuges into the 16th and 17th centuries. A more recent survey by the RCAHMS found an example of a late-medieval farmstead occupying an 'island' at Eilean a'Bharain, Loch Tromlee (NMRS unpublished archive). This potentially important medieval site provides an example of a chiefly residence which may once have been more common throughout Argyll.
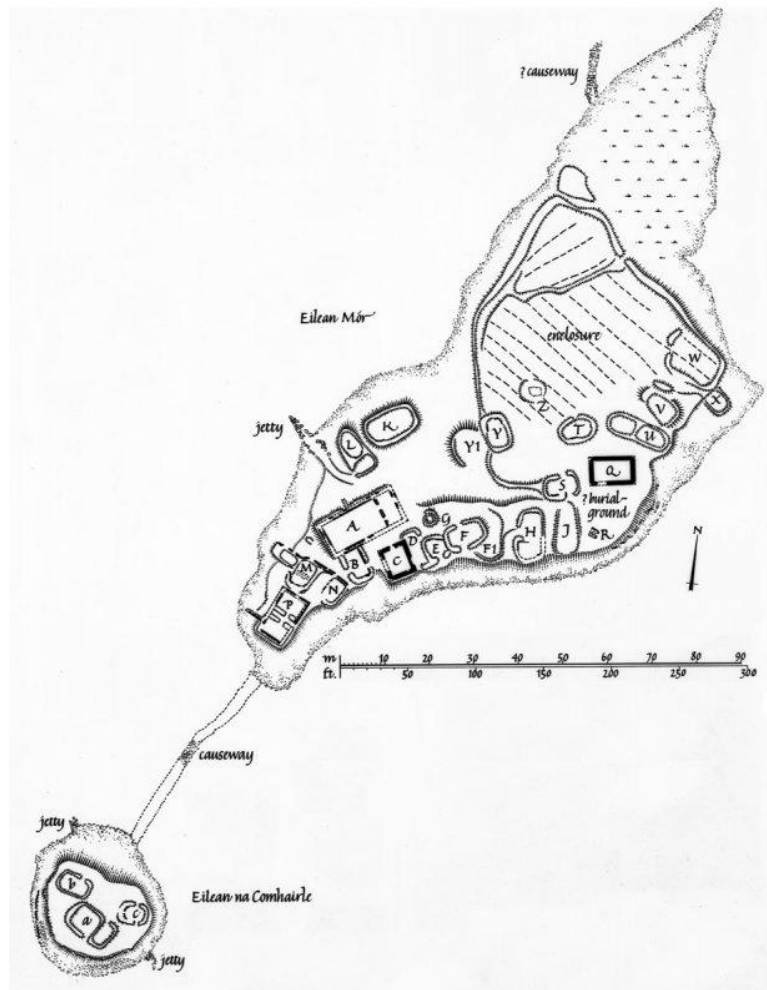


**Figure 17: : Plan of Finlaggan castle and chapel, Islay. The principal court of the Lordship of the Isles, Finlaggan was of particular importance during the 14th century. There is evidence that the island of Eilean Mor was artificially extended in the Medieval period, © RCAHMS.**

Even within the Lowlands, the remains of rural settlement are still relatively rare. One such site was excavated at Springwood Park, Kelso (Dixon 1998). This site was originally found due to scatters of medieval pottery within a ploughed field. It consisted of three periods, the first included building terraces, post-set structures and ditches, and the later phases included cruck-framed structures with clay walls, stone footings and cobbled areas. The settlement has been dated from the pottery and four coins to between the late 12th and 14th centuries. The walls of one of the later buildings was 1.2m wide, but only survived one course high. This site was located close to the royal burgh of Roxburgh, Roxburgh Castle and Kelso Abbey, which may explain why it was unusually rich in material culture (Martin & Oram 2007).

The study of rural settlement in the lowland shires of Scotland has been ill served by archaeology. The techniques available are different to those in upland and highland areas since upstanding remains are relatively rare. Furthermore, the best-preserved lowland village sites that have been excavated survive as a result of sand blow or soil drift. Few of these will ever be excavated, and it is necessary to use the techniques of field survey and landscape analysis aided by documentary sources as has been done by RCAHMS in Donside (RCAHMS 2007). In Donside it has been possible to identify a phase of 12th-13th century colonisation of villages (*villa*) by Flemish and Anglo-French incomers into an established Pictish settlement pattern of davochs, the basic territorial units of the northeast. A late- and post-medieval expansionary phase was also revealed by the splitting of many touns and the establishment of new farms in waste areas such as former hunting forests. No late medieval contraction was evident. The settlement pattern was also shown to be more complex than expected with a socially based hierarchy of estate centres, fermtouns, cottertouns and crofts. More regional settlement studies that use these techniques are clearly needed (RCAHMS 2007).

Turning to the study of the later use of hillforts, work in the Moray Firth (Craig Phadrig (Inverness), Portknockie (Moray), Burghead (Moray)) remains unpublished and it would be good to reinvigorate this series of projects emphasising the prehistoric context (as at Traprain Law) and the protohistoric settlement context (with the SERF project beginning to address this). Whether protohistoric people are re-using a hillfort for defence or legitimation or are 'making reference' to earlier religious loyalties is perhaps more likely to emerge from studying the surrounding territory (see above) rather than the site itself. However, if a hillfort site is to be examined small-scale excavation must be superceded by a range of new approaches, including the use of survey techniques such as Lidar[23] and laser scanning, TST[24] survey, and area excavation. The excavation of collapsed and compacted rubble deposits has made huge strides since Alcock's pioneering work at South Cadbury (e.g. Cadbury Congresbury, and see Lelong 2007 for an example from Lothian). But for the technique to succeed, a tower, spoil extraction systems, large on-site shelters and a reliable water supply to allow constant spraying are all desirable. Therefore investigating a hillfort for its early historic role

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[23] Lidar and Laser Scanner survey - Lidar survey is carried out from the air and provides an accurate form of topographical survey over a wide area that can penetrate beneath the tree canopy (Bewley et al 2005; Devereux et al 2005; Challis et al 2008). Laser scanning is a form of ground survey that is a more accurate form of topographical survey, but is more practical for a small area. However, ground observation in conjunction with the above is always preferable in the interpretation of field remains even in woodland.

[24] TST, GPS survey: Survey with TST controlled to GPS can be as accurate as GPS. Both can achieve centimetre accuracy and the generation of DTMs (Digital Terrain Models) is routinely possible. This makes deposit modelling, ie with augers, practical. The result would be to indicate where strata have survived, and thus where a dated sequence would be possible (it mostly is not).

is not to be undertaken without a proper commitment of time and resources.

Few manorial estate centres of the 12th to 14th centuries have been examined and unless marked by moated enclosures or mottes are often difficult to locate. While the earthwork and stone castle sites that belonged to the aristocratic elite of the 12th to 14th centuries are more easily identified, those of the lesser knights and landowners have been poorly researched. There has been some consideration of the social aspects of castle use (Tabraham 1988; Rutherford 1998) and of their historical and social context (Dalglish 2002). The detailed work undertaken at Castle Tioram has been unprecedented, prompted by the owners desire to redevelop the site

(Murray *et al.* unpub, Stell 2006). Stell's work with respect to Tioram is a good example of analysis of the cultural significance of castles. However very little work has considered castles in Scotland from a cultural landscape perspective – Dunstaffnage being a notable, rare example (Breen & Forsythe 2008) as is the RCAHMS study of the landscape around Hermitage Castle (Dixon 1997, 352-4). Ireland provides something of a model approach here from which Scotland could learn (see for example McNeill 2003; Loeber 2001; Kenyon & O'Conor 2003, O'Conor & Murphy 2006; O'Conor & De Meulemeester 2007 and O'Conor 2008).



**Figure 18: Aerial photograph of Craig Phadrig, near Inverness. The hillfort was constructed during the Iron Age but was likely re-used, although the nature and dynamics of this are not fully understood, © RCAHMS.**

**Figure 19:   Historic buildings such as Dunstaffnage Castle are invaluable documents of the ages that produced them. Through careful analysis of the structural and archaeological evidence, combined with a study of relevant written records, it is possible to build up a detailed picture of the sequence of domestic requirements, social aspirations and architectural tastes of the generations of individuals for whom they were built. © RCAHMS**

### 3.4 Demography

Until very recently, opportunities for any excavation of medieval Scottish skeletal populations had been limited to work on Scotland's mendicant friaries (Stones 1987) with only occasional opportunities to investigate a large population from a major church or cathedral (see St Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, Henderson 2006). This makes the excavations at St Nicholas Church[25], Aberdeen all the more important.

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**Health in Medieval Scotland**

The health of populations in medieval Scotland is being addressed by Marlo Willows in a doctoral study at Edinburgh University. Comparisons between four study populations help to reveal patterns of health, trauma, and disease in rural, urban, lay, and monastic areas. These populations are compared to other British sites in order to better understand the health status of medieval Scotland. The analysis addresses questions regarding the lifestyle of people living in medieval Scotland: Did these individuals lead violent or non-violent lives? What was their diet and did it lead to nutritional deficiencies? How prevalent was disease and which types of diseases were most prevalent? Were individuals in medieval Scotland more or less healthy than at other periods in Scotland?

One of the study populations is located at a Benedictine priory founded in the 12th century, and most known for religious pilgrimage, on the Isle of May (Roberts and Battley, 2008). The skeletal analysis found significantly higher percentages of infectious disease, trauma, metabolic disease, joint disease, and other pathological conditions. The skeletal and statistical analysis leads to the conclusion that some individuals buried on the Isle of May were not part of the monastic community; rather they travelled to the island for the purpose of healing. The burials linked to this healing tradition predate the monastery foundation; therefore the tradition is likely connected to earlier Celtic or even pagan traditions.



**Figure 20: Cervical vertebrae from an 8 year old child with tuberculosis. This child was most likely brought to the Isle of May with a parent for a chance to be cured © Marlo Willows.**

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[25] See the Society of Antiquaries recorded lecture on this topic at http://www.socantscot.org/article.asp?aid=1379

### 3.5 Living with Animals and Sustaining Cereals

A remaining gap in current knowledge is archaeological data on animal husbandry, particularly in rural areas earlier in the period. Notable exceptions are the midden site at Eyemouth in Berwickshire (Dixon 1986), Freswick Links, Caithness (Batey, Morris and Rackham 1995), Bornais in South Uist (Sharples 2005), and the recently excavated Eldbottle village, East Lothian - all of them coastal settlements preserved by sand. The highland and upland areas of Scotland are particularly poor in this respect, largely due to poor bone preservation, areas in which animal husbandry predominated over arable production. Similarly, archaeological data for crop production is limited to the Lowlands and the Outer Isles. Evidence from later urban sites is much more plentiful (e.g. at Perth, Hodgson *et al. 2011* )

Although zoologists had studied bones from early excavations of the late 19th century, which were reported on in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, the earliest approach was merely to identify the species present, without quantifying the material (e.g. Smith, 1878). In most cases only a non-random sample of bones appears to have been studied – for example, particular parts of the skeleton only. These early reports are tantalising, particularly when it is appreciated that most of the material described was not considered of sufficient value to warrant storing it for the future. However, from the 1930s onwards, workers, foremost of these, Marjory Platt, were studying bones from Ministry of Works excavations such as Jarlshof and the broch of Midhowe, Rousay and were taking a more analytical approach (Platt 1934a, 1934b, 1956). However, although it is clear that by this date metrical data were collected and analysed, the publications often contained only a brief, and in this respect, still sometimes unsatisfactory summary of the results. It was not until the 1970s when the first large scale rescue excavations were

carried out that environmental archaeology in Scotland began to develop adequately (Hodgson *et al.* 2011).

Regardless of geographical location, early medieval animal assemblages are scanty. Of those which have produced large quantities of bone, the multi-period castle site at Dunbar is probably the most prolific (Perry 2000), while results from Portmahomack are eagerly awaited. Bones have not survived well at any of the Alcocks' (1992) excavations of early sites (for example Dunottar and Dunollie,) while those from Urquhart Castle are probably from the later medieval or perhaps post-medieval period (Smith unpublished a).

In the Western Isles the large assemblages of bone recovered from the excavations at Bornais and Cille Pheadair indicate the importance of sheep though only to a slightly greater extent than cattle (Sharples *et al* forthcoming). Surprisingly, pig and red deer are a significant feature of the assemblages throughout the period and pigs are particularly important in the Viking period which is a pattern repeated in the Faroes and Iceland and may represent the importance of feasting. The importance of fish in the Viking economy is also demonstrated by a substantial increase in herring fishing (Sharples 2005) which contrasts dramatically with the pre-Norse interest in saithe and salmon and probably indicates a shift from line fishing from the shore to deep sea fishing from boats.

The geographical coverage of the mainland is, therefore, patchy. The north-east has been more widely studied than the west, and the far north hardly at all, a result of the uneven nature of rescue archaeology, and the variable preservation of environmental remains over Scotland. More acid soils, such as occur in the uplands and in the west, are far less conducive to preservation of bone.

Given these limitations, it has been possible to use environmental data to gain an insight into that part of the medieval economy based

on primary products derived from animals and plants. Animal products would include bone, hides, wool, woolfells as well as foodstuffs such as meat, salmon, and salt fish. Plant remains indicate the the prevalence of barley and oats with some wheat as cereals, flax, hemp, pulses, fodder crops and a vast range of herbs, roots and leaves that would serve curative, flavouring as well as nutritional purposes. Many of these appear in later medieval documentary sources such as the Exchequer Rolls and the Rental Books of religious houses. Results from Perth appear to suggest an 11th/12th century economy based mainly on cattle rather than sheep, the bias towards sheep occurring only very gradually with time. It has so far been assumed that this relates both to the high status accorded to the owning of cattle in the early Highlands as well as to the value of hides to the export economy with respect to wool. Further south, for example in the Lothians and Borders, sheep would appear to become more numerous at an earlier stage, and it is suspected that this is connected to the economic influence of the great Abbeys (e.g. Jedburgh Friary assemblage, Dixon *et al.* 2000). In the west, results from Glasgow so far appear to follow the more Highland pattern of a cattle-dominated economy (Smith unpublished b). In Edinburgh, information, apart from the High Street excavations of the 1970s, was sparse until relatively recently, with assemblages having been recovered from sites in the Cowgate and in the Canongate in advance of the Holyrood Parliament building. On the west coast, assemblages are much fewer, the unpublished MSC excavations in Ayr and Glasgow in the 1980s being the exception rather than the rule. In the Highlands, there are only good results from a small number of sites in Inverness, notably Castle Street (Wordsworth 1982). Aberdeen and Perth were centres for trade in cattle products and Roxburgh too was an entrepot, while Berwick was used for the international trade in sheep products, wool and woolfells. As for non-urban sites, these are far fewer across Scotland. Castle sites, such as Urquhart Castle in Inverness-shire,

where bone was well preserved, seem to be the exception rather than the rule, although archive reports on other castle assemblages lurk in the grey literature (for example Stirling Castle (Thoms nd)).

Natural resources included turf and peat, wood products including charcoal, water, bog iron, other building materials, clay, stone and coverings like reed or heather, sea coal and salt. Fishing is both a fluvial and coastal activity but rarely in the medieval period one carried out in fishponds due to the abundance of river fish, especially salmon. A variety of structures including cruives or yairs were used to trap fish in the inter-tidal zones and along rivers (Hale 2005). Evidence for the former is better known, through coastal surveys, than the latter, while deep-sea fishing is mainly studied through the resultant fish-processing waste at sites like Eyemouth or Freswick Links, where the calcareous sand environment preserves the bone assemblage (Dixon 1986; Batey *et al.* 1995).

Developments in scientific techniques[26] have changed the way environmental remains are examined. Previously, the comparative anatomical approach, where archaeological specimens were identified by direct comparison with a reference collection, was entirely dominant. Recent advances in scientific approaches include techniques allowing for better ageing of populations (by for example the thin-sectioning of teeth) to DNA analysis, lipid analysis and stable isotope analysis. All of these techniques however require the availability of specialist knowledge, equipment and lab space and the establishment of comparative datasets still remains an essential first step. For example, an important dating question which has arisen with regard to sites in the Northern Isles (Ballin Smith 1995), is to distinguish red deer from reindeer antler with the requirement to recognise the likely presence of foreign antler by traditional means confirmation.

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[26] Follow the link to the Science panel report at www.scottishheritagehub.com

Stable isotope analysis has not yet been used to determine the origin of sheep flocks whose bones have been recovered in the burghs, but it has great potential to unlock the relationships between the consuming burghs and the supplying hinterlands. Did great flocks of sheep indeed walk to the markets of Perth from Highland Perthshire, as is suspected? Did the goats of Argyll end up in Glasgow? Can the documentary sources which record border disputes of burghs such as Perth and Auchterarder regarding the extent of their hinterlands be elucidated by data suggesting who was selling produce and where? Testing the chemical origins of the bones may indeed supply some of the answers. Lipid analysis of fats encrusted on pottery is currently also providing clues to industrial processes such as fish liver oil exploitation as well as food production and dairying (Mulville and Outram 2005).



**Figure 21: Goat Horn Cores from Perth High Street. When first excavated, separating horn cores into males, females and castrates was determined by their morphology (appearance) and partial or difficult specimens could only be described as sheep/goat. In future, techniques such as DNA analysis can be used to determine species and gender and stable isotope analysis may be used to locate the animal's place of origin © Catherine Smith.**

**Figure 22: Cattle Mandible from Perth High Street. Stable isotope analysis may be used to locate the place of origin of cattle, sheep and goats and has great potential to unlock the relationships between the consuming burghs and the supplying hinterlands © Catherine Smith.**

As with analysis of the bone assemblages, archaeological research into agricultural practices and the range of crops grown in medieval Scotland has been very limited. There is a tendency amongst historians and archaeologists to model medieval Scottish agriculture using English templates, which generally privilege arable regimes and especially the production of cereals, over mixed or principally pastoral regimes. This is reflected in a bias towards recording and analysis of evidence for arable systems (Dixon 1994; Dodgshon 1994).

Most recent work has focused on non-excavational recording of field systems, palynological analysis of soils and sediments and identification of plant remains from a variety of contexts. It has mainly taken place in the south-eastern Lowlands and the Northern and Western Isles and most of mainland Scotland outside of the south east is poorly represented. Geoarchaeaological research is significantly more advanced and more geographically widespread. Recent work in this respect has been undertaken on processes of soil formation (anthrosols, hortosols or technosols) in a variety of urban, peri-urban and rural contexts, but mainly in the north-eastern and south-eastern Lowlands (e.g. Nairn, St Andrews, Lauder and Eldbotle), Hebrides (Pabbay) and Northern Isles (Papa Stour): the Highlands and western Lowlands, however, still remain under-researched (Davidson and Simpson 1994; Carter 2001; Golding, Davidson & Wilson 2010; Oram forthcoming).

**Figure 23: Rig, Stewarton Cottage, Scottish Borders. This aerial photograph shows several phases and types of rig cultivation from the medieval and later periods typical of a Lowland context. Elsewhere in Scotland field systems often display different types of rig due to the different techniques of cultivation © RCAHMS**

Historical sources, principally but not exclusively from monastic and royal estate records, have yielded considerable data on agricultural practice, especially on processes of clearance and manuring of arable land (Golding, Davidson & Wilson 2010; Oram forthcoming), and have shed some light on both the range of generic crops produced and also on processing methods. For example, rye, which is also known from archaeological contexts, has been revealed as an important cereal type grown; wheat is now understood as being a regionally significant crop in parts

of Lothian, the Merse and eastern Galloway; and there is extensive reference to malting of oats as well as of barley. How extensive the growth of such species and the use of such practices was in less well documented regions remains to be tested by archaeological investigation. One important deficiency for the modern scholar in most of the medieval records lies in the Latin terminology which does not reveal the variants of barley (bere) and oats (black, grey and white oats) adapted to the Scottish climate. Such distinctions can be distinguished from archaeological data

(Dixon forthcoming) and do begin to appear in late 15th- and early 16th-century records written in Scots. It remains to be established if this represented a recent development made in response to the impacts of long-term climate change or simply clearer recording of long-established practices. Peas have also been recognised as a significant element in Lowland arable crops, well-attested in historical records and from excavated contexts, their presence raising some questions over traditional thinking on medieval soil conditions (e.g nitrogen levels).

While knowledge of field crops grown is far from complete, understanding of medieval Scottish horticulture is woefully deficient. Soil-formation processes in urban backlands, peri-urban fields and fermtoun kailyards is relatively well understood, but what was grown in those soils remains more a subject of tradition than of scientific research. Documentary sources illustrate the planting of fruit trees; however other than within monastic herb gardens – and even here modern descriptions are based on analogy with English or continental examples rather than empiric evidence from Scotland – there is an extremely limited understanding of what medieval gardeners/horticulturalists were growing by way of vegetables or herbs. Amongst other 'crops' generally overlooked in archaeological and historical analyses of medieval husbandry practices, hay is perhaps the most significant. Over-dependence on Improvement-era literature has led to archaeological and historical acceptance of claims that hay production was negligible or at low level in most Highland and Hebridean areas before the late 18th century. This view has, consequently, coloured assumptions about fodder supplies, livestock management and the over-wintering of animals (McCormick 1998). Research on grazing has tended to focus on the physical structures of shieling huts at summer pastures and less on the ecology of the surrounding grassland (but see, for example, Tipping 1999, 2004) or on the documentary records of souming levels (Ross 2006), over-grazing, climate events and

pathogens which had an impact on carrying capacities and, consequently, on livestock numbers over time (Oram & Adderley 2008, 2010a, 2010b). Awareness of the impact of historic climate change on pasture and on fodder supplies is essential for better understanding of shifts in livestock species preference or age profiles displayed in the bone assemblages.

While short-range transhumance (less than 10 miles) between summer and winter pastures is a well recognised feature of Scottish medieval livestock regimes, longer-range seasonal stock-movement – such as that from the Laich of Moray into the northern Cairngorm glens - is less well-known. Consequently, there is little understanding of how such long-distance movement was organised and regulated, and what archaeological imprint it might have left, e.g. in terms of overnight enclosures for animals, encampments or more permanent structures for the drovers, and other necessary infrastructure (dyked loans etc). A long-distance trade in cattle (and other livestock) is a well-known feature of the post-medieval agricultural economy in Scotland, but this droving trade can be shown from documentary records to have been functioning by the later 12th century in some parts of the country and was an important dimension of royal estate-management in the 14th and 15th centuries, with the royal household being supplied with live cattle driven from pastures in Bute and fattened in the Torwood near Stirling. Monastic records in particular provide considerable insight into large-scale cattle management. Although Melrose Abbey, for example, has long been known as a wool-producer, its cattle operations have been less well recognised (Fawcett and Oram 2004). The abbey developed a complex of cattle farms, complete with byres capable of housing up to 120 animals, in the hills immediately north of Melrose, although, as yet no medieval structural remains have been identified in this area. The most important of its cattle-stations, however, was at Mauchline, where

the abbey maintained an administrative and processing centre around which lay a series of satellite properties. From Mauchline, the herds were either disposed of through local burgh markets or were driven south down through Nithsdale and across the Solway fords for disposal at the Carlisle market. The abbey built up a chain of properties to act as overnight breaks on route or negotiated access to water or grazing at designated stopping-places. With the exception of the late medieval 'Abbot's Tower' at Mauchline, nothing is known of the physical form of the main cattle station there or of any of the abbey's overnight stopping-places (Fawcett & Oram 2004; Hall 2006). Valuable though better understanding of the form of such sites would be, perhaps of greater value would be the mapping through isotope analysis of the point of origin of the livestock being consumed.

### 3.6 Commerce, industry and manufacturing

When one looks to internal and external economies, the socio-political sophistication of the early Scottish polities was clearly reflected in equally advanced structures of manufacturing and commerce, in which the concept of industrial production is not inappropriate. In addition to handicrafts and specialised cottage industries, recent revelations in this field include the recognition of deep-sea fishing industries as a key economic component of Scottish life from at least the Viking Age. This in turn has implications for a carefully ordered export market of supply and demand, the latter partly constrained by ideology and religion in the form of Christian requirements for greater proportions of fish in daily diet as a result of restrictions on the consumption of meat. Environmental archaeology clearly has a major role to play here. It needs to be asked if there are specifically 'Scottish' (or 'Pictish', or 'Gaelic' etc) products, and if so, what additional burden of identity and ideology they might carry in additional to the blunt realities of mercantile aspiration. Significant elements of industry and manufacturing of course took place in the countryside. Monastic granges (Hall, 2006), for example, have a huge potential for advancing understanding of the contribution of the reformed monasteries to medieval agriculture and industry in Scotland, but have been little studied.

It is now generally agreed that David I's new burghs were not all founded on greenfield sites, indeed many of them must have already existed as thriving settlements and by giving them burgh status the king was able to exploit this. Frustratingly, archaeological evidence for these early settlements has so far been very limited, and like much of Scottish medieval archaeology the burgh of Perth has produced the first tantalising glimpses. In 1992 excavations at 80-86 High Street (directly across the High Street from the 1975-77 High Street excavations) located a narrow wattle lined ditch running from E to W across the site. This feature predated the laying out of the High Street burgage plots and its lining was radiocarbon dated to 998-1039 AD, at least a century earlier than the burghs foundation date (Moloney & Coleman 1997, 707). It has been suggested that this feature may represent an enclosure around an earlier version of St John's Church (Moloney & Coleman 1997, 710).

**Figure 24: Provisioning the burghs: Artist's impression of market stalls in medieval Perth by Maureen Rooney Mitchell (reproduced by kind permission of Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee). A synthetic approach to the analysis of food-stuffs of plant and animal origin (cereals, vegetables, fruits, meat, milk products, freshwater and marine fish and shellfish) is an aim for the future.**

Post excavation work on the large assemblage of pottery from the excavations at 75 High Street included the submission of carbonised sherds of London Sandy Shelly Ware pottery for C14 dating. Perth has produced the largest assemblage of this imported fabric type from the earliest phases at the Perth High Street excavations and the subject of its origin and date has been the matter of much debate. Put simply, in London Sandy Shelly Ware was not dated to before 1150 AD (Pearce *et al.* 1985), its presence from early potentially preburghal deposits in Perth suggested to all involved that it ought to be of an earlier date. Fifteen carbonised sherds were submitted and all returned calibrated dates between AD 940 and 1020 (Hall, Hall and Cook 2005). Chemical sourcing has confirmed that this fabric was manufactured in the Thames Basin (Vince forthcoming). The combination of the date from 80-86 High Street and the consistency of the dates from 75 High Street strongly suggests the presence of an 11th century pre charter settlement on the site of what was to become Perth. Further dating of Sandy Shelly Wares from Bergen and London has now returned similar dates (Hall, Cook and Hamilton in 2010).

Over 30 years of rescue excavation in Perth have provided enough evidence that the nature and preservation of its archaeological deposits make it unique in a Scottish context (Bowler 2004). Organic material such as silk, leather and wooden artefacts and structures survive in its anaerobic midden deposits that do not always survive in other burghs, thus enabling a fairly accurate picture of everyday life in a thriving cosmopolitan Scottish town to be reconstructed (Hall 2002). What is of interest is Perth's relationship with the ecclesiastical burgh of Scone, particularly as there is a charter of King Alexander I (1107-1124) informing English merchants that the canons of Scone Abbey might bring a ship to Scone custom free (Lawrie 1905, no XLVIII). It is to be hoped that the ongoing Moothill and Abbey of Scone Survey (MASS) project may shed some light on this important early centre.

Continuing study of the vast assemblages of pottery from excavations in medieval Perth has provided intriguing evidence for the apparent European connections of the burgh. In 2004 chemical sourcing (ICPS) of a group of greyware fabrics from Perth indicated that at least some of them may originate from a

production center on Mors Island in Northern Jutland (Hall and Chenery 2005), thus suggesting early links across the North Sea. The range of imported pottery fabrics from Perth could also be taken to suggest links with large parts of Northern Europe and occasionally Iberia. Excavations at the Horsecross in Perth located the first identifiable sherds of Ely Type ware from East Anglia.

Intriguingly the property ownership for this part of the extra mural settlement indicates that one Thomas de Lyn occupied the site, Kings Lynn is only 24 kms away from Ely (Cox *et al.* 2007).
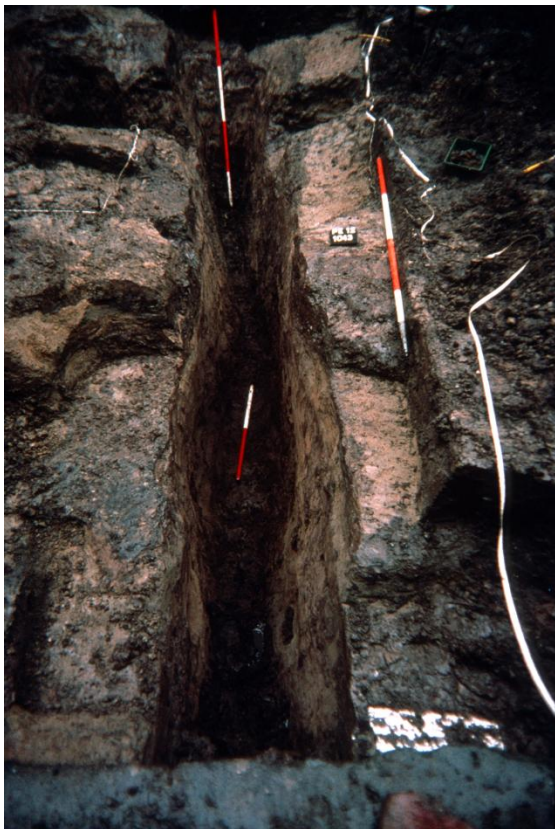


**Figure 25: Conditions for preservation in the burghs can be remarkable, as highlighted by excavations on Perth High Street (ditch 80-86 High Street pictured). The anaerobic soil conditions have preserved material including leather, bone, wood and plant remains, providing evidence for a range of different elements of Medieval life, © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.**

Roxburgh was an important early foundation by David I as a royal burgh on what appears to be a new site and grew into an economic hub for the south of Scotland. Its desertion in the 15th century presents a unique opportunity for the study of medieval urban development in Scotland. Limited trenching in 2003 has confirmed the existence of defences on the east of the burgh, St. James churchyard beside the Tweed as well as two of the main streets (Martin & Oram 2007). RCAHMS has recently resurveyed the site and combined the aerial photography of cropmarks with GPS derived terrain modelling in a GIS to tease out as much as possible of the archaeology of the site without excavation that provides a basis for further research(RCAHMS 2007, 18-19).

Dunfermline was made a royal burgh in 1124-7. From observations along the line of Dunfermline's medieval High Street it is clear that deposit survival along the top of that ridge is virtually non-existent. Limited excavations on the North side of the High Street have also indicated that recent development has cut back into the hill slope, thus destroying medieval deposits and structures (Hall and MacGavin 1981, 10). However, in recent years it has become obvious that the reverse may be true on the southern down-hill slope of the High Street, and excavations in the Abbots House are probably the best example of what may survive (Coleman 1996a). Recent important work on a new burgh survey has also indicated the presence of upstanding late medieval buildings on the Maygate (Dennison and Stronach 2007).

Elgin was made a royal burgh in 1130-1153, and like Dunfermline, has a High Street that runs along a ridge, and from limited excavation in its vicinity archaeological survival is not very good (Hall *et al.* 1998). The first major excavations in the burgh which took place in advance of the construction of the new relief road discovered evidence that survival was better the further down the hill slope to the North one progressed. In places, survival can be very good with wood and

organic materials surviving - recent excavations by Charlie and Hilary Murray towards the western end of the High Street being the best example of this.

St Andrew's was designated an ecclesiastical burgh in 1124-1444. During the late 1970s and early to mid 1980s St Andrews was subject to quite an intensive campaign of rescue excavation. Unfortunately, very few of these sites were directly on street frontages so evidence for building types in the medieval burgh is limited to a site in the South Street backlands (Cachart 2000). Good evidence for backland activities and limited industry has been recovered in association with important groups of medieval ceramics (Rains & Hall 1997). The biggest surprise from St Andrews is the presence of a deep deposit of 'garden' soil that seals the medieval deposits. Whether this material has been imported into the burgh or represents an oxidised midden is still the subject of some debate (Carter 2001).

North Berwick was designated a baronial burgh in 1381. Rescue excavations there have indicated the presence of deep deposits of wind-blown sand which often seal medieval deposits sometimes up to a depth of 4m. The most striking survival in recent years is probably the stone built medieval corn dryer from Forth Street Lane (Cromwell). More importantly, the chance of archaeological survival in a much smaller burgh is very high (Hall and Bowler 1997).

Many of the burghs were hives of activity with different parts of them apparently being used by different occupations. This may be reflected by some of the street and vennel names that still survive to this day, Skinnergate and Horner's Vennel in Perth being good examples. Documentary evidence that exists for 13th century Scotland is very useful for giving an idea of the number and types of trades or professions that existed in the medieval burghs. To take Perth as an example, various people mentioned in these charters include their trade in their name Willelmus galeator (helmet maker) and

Robertus faber (smith) being good examples. These trade names are associated with a limited range of industrial process involving cloth or clothing, metal work and leather work. It is out of this wide range of professions that the Guildry Incorporation developed, an organisation that still exists today in many Scottish towns.



**Figure 26: Aerial photograph of Roxburgh with cropmark remains indicating the layout of the burgh. Analyses of aerial photographs, Lidar, GPS survey, earthwork survey and documentary sources have been combined to provide an interpretation of the layout and development of the burgh and nearby castle. © RCAHMS**

There is certainly documentary evidence for the export of wool from Scotland to the Low Countries and Flanders, much of which may well have been coming from the major monastic estates of the Borders. In the 15th century, Bruges was the Scottish staple port. Staple status gave Bruges a monopoly in the Scots trade of certain products in return for privileges being extended to Scottish merchants. This connection was of tremendous importance. Initially wool was the Scots' primary export, with the livelihoods of thousands of shepherds, lairds and landowners dependent on the market in Bruges. Later in the 16th century the wool trade declined and the Scots exported other raw materials such as coal, salt, malt, hides, skins, tallow and salmon. Then, as the harbour at Bruges silted up, the focus of Scots trade moved north to the Dutch ports of Middleburg and Veere, with Veere gaining staple status in 1541.

By 1380 the opening of the Sound of Skagerrack to shipping allowed for direct contact between Scotland and the Baltic and animal skins and hides and cheap cloth and salt were all exported from Scotland. In the later Middle Ages there was a large scale emigration of Scots to northern Europe, some of whom were students heading for universities in Germany, France and the Baltic region and many of the others were merchants who settled in the coastal ports. There are tantalising pieces of evidence which may suggest that there were even earlier contacts between the Baltic States and Scotland. For example a type of imported pottery found in early levels in Perth has been identified as possibly originating in Jutland. Such important early influences are still the subject of ongoing research.

Archaeological excavation has now recovered evidence for metalworking industries of the burgh of Perth as evidenced by the smelting and working of iron for the manufacture of knives, horseshoes and even barrel padlocks at the Meal Vennel. Important evidence for the source of the raw material for this industry has also been recovered with the suggestion that 'bog iron' was probably the most commonly used (Cox 1996) and that this would have been available to both urban and rural smiths alike. Excavations at King Edward Street (Bowler *et al.* 1995, 931-38) located a small workshop on the High Street frontage, which contained a small hearth and possible evidence for the working of either gold or silver. Leather working was also a staple industry in the Scottish medieval burgh producing shoes, belts, scabbards and maybe even pieces of clothing. The area around the Skinnergate in Perth was certainly the focus of this industry and many hundreds of pieces of leather have been recovered from excavations in the burgh. Slight traces of horn working associated with rubbish pits containing discarded animal horns from which the cores have been removed have been discovered. So far, little detailed information for the actual processes and the nature of the workshops for both these industries has been recovered. Evidence for corn drying being carried out within the burgh limits has been recovered

from both Perth and St Andrews (Cox 1996; Hall 1997) and from one of the three excavations at Canal Street in Perth there is excavated evidence for a malting kiln and a 'coble' (a clay lined pit for steeping grain) (Coleman 1996b). Intriguingly, on this site these activities are still listed as taking place in the 17th Century Rental Books of King James VI Hospital suggesting a long tradition of specific manufacturing types in areas of the medieval burgh (Milne 1891).

Despite a wealth of evidence from Scotland the archaeological analysis of particularly rural and beach market sites lags behind their study in other parts of the UK and Europe. In the UK important work has been carried out for example at Meols, Cheshire and Llanbedrgoch, Anglesey (Griffiths 2003, Griffiths et al 2007). The focus of most of the wider work has been on the early medieval period (e.g. Pestell & Ulmschneider 2003) but certainly, in Scotland, it has been shown from other sources that there is a rich seam for the *longue durée* of such activity (Black 2000), stretching from the Late Iron Age through to the 19th century. Significant assemblages of artefacts have been recovered from several sites over many years, including Culbin Sands, Moray and Glenluce Sands, Wigtown, which certainly strongly suggest beach market activity comparable to that at Meols but the detailed re-examination of such assemblages is long over- due. Black's pivotal paper laid out many of the key areas of investigation, including the longevity and nature of fairs, the evidence of saints' names and place names, calendar customs, social gatherings, Sunday markets, the fencing of fairs and broad linkages between fairs and religious practice. Archaeologically fairs might be expected to leave physical traces, as with post holes for perimeter defining fences, animal stalls and tents (an interpretation offered for some of the post holes excavated on the South Inch, Perth – Roy 2002) and scatters of objects at fair sites.

Investigation of the context of traded imports in the pre-Norse period (Campbell 2007) has

shown that trading sites tend to be associated with secular, often royal, power centres, unlike in contemporary southern and eastern Britain, and also possibly on nearby offshore islands such as the Isle of Whithorn, and Eilean da Mheinn near Dunadd. There is also the possibility of beach market sites at places such as Luce Bay and Stevenson Sands, perhaps comparable to Meols or Bantham, but the quantity of material recovered from these sites is comparatively very small.

The sanctioning of fair activity by the Church (and often under its control) has left the common urban phenomenon of the mercat cross and in more rural localities understanding the multi-dimensional functioning of early medieval sculpture allows one to see how their purposes of use and re-use sometimes included that of market cross. A case-study of fairs and markets in Perthshire between AD 700-1900 (Hall 2004) identified several examples of Pictish cross-slabs used in this way, including those at Pittensorn and Crieff/Strowan. This market function of cross-slabs often carries on through the medieval period and into post-medieval and modern times, often in the face of Reformation kirk opposition. Examples include the towering cross-slab now in Fowlis Wester kirk, Perthshire (linked to a Sunday shoe market in the churchyard until the 18th century) and St Devenic's Cross, Creich, Sutherland, standing beside the ruined church of St Devenic which was used as a market cross until the 17th century. In the Perthshire case-study referred to above, the author noted that archaeology needed more fully to address fairs and markets and that a co-ordinated research framework might help to offset the current lack of recognition of flimsy traces of fair activity and a related lack of intensive follow-up of metal-detector assemblages in the country. The national framework is now in place but it needs to be supported by research questions at a regional level to bring out the nuanced dynamics of scale, place and practice.

### 3.7    The Future

The framework has identified the following key future research areas and issues:

- The broad range of medieval settlement should be approached holistically, incorporating the diverse nature of different types of site through appropriate scales of fieldwork. Attention to under-studied areas, the incorporation of material studies, the examination of literary sources, the promotion of collaborative working and the study of the environmental and land-use context of settlement are all prerequisites to further progress. The lack of early medieval settlement is a critical gap and High status later medieval settlement, such as castles, should be approached as sites within the wider medieval landscape. More work is required to consider what our expectations of settlement are - parallels with areas such as Ireland and Scandinavia should be employed to help consider the range of possibilities.

- Integrated landscape studies, based on models such as those adopted by SERF or the Donside project, are required to address a range of settlement-related questions, to approach regional variation, and to consider low-status settlement. Excavation should be combined with survey to develop chronological frameworks and chart the changing nature of medieval settlement. Regional variation, such as between the Gaelic west and the Anglo-Norman lowlands should be explored.

- Future investigations of Scottish burghs should include collaborative work on the importation of food and other materials essential to their population, analysis of the nature of the sites' origin and subsequent development, and consideration of their role within the wider settlement system including routes of communication and work on more inland settlements. Monastic granges remain little studied but have a huge potential for understanding the contribution of the reformed monasteries to agriculture and industry. Coastal sites, such as beachmarkets, with the potential for evidence of trade and other kinds of contact should be researched in the context of coastal erosion/sea level rise.

- Interdisciplinary environmental research projects combining geoarchaeology, palaeoenvironmental studies and historical documentary analysis, should be pursued at whole system or landscape level. Such studies are essential to understand processes of anthropogenic environmental change, human responses to such changes, and their archaeological manifestation across the broad span of the 'medieval warm period' and the beginning of the 'Little Ice Age'. Such work is essential for establishing the context, dynamics and mechanisms for expansion of rural settlement, cultivation and pasture, its environmental impacts, and the circumstances which produced contraction, abandonment or changes in land-use.

- Climatic assessments for the medieval period need to extend to the exploration of direct and indirect effects of weather systems on topography, and resultant effects on society, including animal husbandry, land management and demography.

# 4.  Mentalities: Identity, Ethnicity, Gender and Spirituality

## 4.1  Identity

There is no entirely satisfactory way of addressing the question of identity, be it as perceived by others or by the individual (either singly or in a network of family and community). The recognition of its complexity and its rootedness in both an individual's mind and in a series of inherited, learnt values provides a starting point. The net result of such an equation will, on some scale, always lead to change. Change can be incremental or immediate, resisted or complicit and, however engendered helps to build identity and personhood. Particularly at the social level, identity encompasses gender, ethnicity, class/status (whether ascribed or achieved) and spirituality.

It has become clear in recent years that the complexity of identity and ethnicity has been underestimated in previous studies[27] (which often exhibited a simplistic understanding of ethnicity as directly reflected by material culture) and for example) and that nuanced, sophisticated demonstrations of nested identity should now be sought. Amongst the most cogent statements on the fluidity of identity and the dangers inherent in defining identity from too few objects are those by Halsall (1995) and Geary (1985, 48-9):

> *'No one characteristic be it law, language, custom or birth, can be considered a sufficient index by which to assign ethnicity, nor was it any different for contemporaries. Self-perception and the perception of others represented a choice in a variety of somewhat arbitrary characteristics, which could be seen differently by different people. The real … barriers were between slave and free, free and noble. Within the elite a person or faction could be Burgundian by birth, roman by language and Frankish by dress. Likewise someone born of a father from Francia and a mother from Alamania could properly be termed a Frank or an Alamanian … from different perspectives. His own perception of himself might change during his lifetime depending on how he viewed his relationship to the Frankish King and his local faction.'*

On a Europe-wide level the analysis of identity and ethnicity has generally risen to this challenge, including a fuller recognition of the gender element of the debate. Material culture has clearly demonstrated its effectiveness as a source of evidence for addressing the process of acculturation and how people used material culture to imagine or re-imagine, make and order their world and so to both define their place in that world and their network of relationships: social, natural and supernatural (Alkemade 1997). Whilst Scotland has made some significant contributions to these debates in recent years – notably in the analysis of Pictish/early medieval art (e.g. Henderson & Henderson 2004, e.g. Foster & Cross 2005), and in the case-study analysis of later medieval artefacts (e.g. Hall 2001, e.g. Hall 2005) – there remains much still to do in testing the archaeological evidence, for example, with respect to ethno-political groupings (Pict, Briton, Gael, Scot,

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[27] The revised edition of Megaw and Megaw's *Celtic Art* (2001) has a rather pure and simplistic notion of a contained Celtic identity which in its early medieval dimension dismisses the Picts as '…to the north of the old Antonine Wall the Picts (the surviving pre-Celtic population) still remained… .' (p. 246). If there was a Celtic culture much recent work has demonstrated how the Picts were fully engaged with it, particularly its Insular dimension (see for example Alcock 2003 and Henderson & Henderson 2004).

Anglo-Saxon, Viking) and their interactions, and in combining that evidence with other approaches[28]

It has become clear that individuals or groups could readily seek to "buy into" a defined ethnic or other identity through the acquisition or use of appropriated material culture. This does not, however, mean that such behaviour was automatically accepted by the recipient group or community. Today, for example, an individual of non-Scottish origin might choose to wear full Highland dress to demonstrate their new-found affiliation but many Scots might reject such a person as in any sense Scottish – the clothes (or material culture) do not always make the man (or woman). It seems axiomatic that this rejection-reflex could have worked in the past and needs to be sought and placed alongside the enforcement of identity on others (e.g. slavery).

In recent years the archaeology of gender and sexuality has made great advances in the discipline (for example, Gilchrist 1994 and 1995), but these have not been substantially applied to Medieval Scotland. As one of the cornerstones of identity, gender will perhaps prove to be an especially productive point of entry to ethnic distinctions in early Scotland, and as a means of mapping personal relations at the level perhaps of households within a settlement, or individual graves (and thus individuals themselves) within cemeteries of various kinds. Religious concepts of gender and somatics, particularly with reference to early monasticism and the different branches of the Celtic and Scottish churches, must be incorporated. The gendered archaeology of power must form a major component of this, and gendered readings of situated material culture across the full spectrum of the data-sets should be attempted (following Gilchrist

1994, esp. 188-93, for example). Not least, some consideration could profitably be devoted to the engendering of the archaeological process itself and its implications for models of early Scottish societies.

The archaeological study of identity - including religion, belief, intellect and ideology - is a relatively new, and still exploratory, enterprise. Ways of recovering ideas from cultural material and creating a vocabulary for expressing the results are still being developed. The rationale has to begin with the idea of 'agency' – i.e. that cultural expression is a result of human thought, not (or not only) the ineluctable flow of the centuries. However 'expression' and 'agency' are not everywhere and in all material; both need to be precisely located. So far it has proved acceptable to believe it to be found in sites of high investment: rich burials and large ritual places – so-called 'monuments'. The agency that motivates monument construction is fairly self-evident: trouble was taken to construct something in which the symbolic is subservient to the practical.

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[28] Certainly the historical evidence demonstrates a royal elite inter-mixing and fluidity of belonging across these ethnicities, something which appears to have done little to discourage political strife and violence.

**Ethnicity in the burghs**

It is clear from documentary evidence that many of the occupants of the early burghs of Scotland were not native Scots, for example when King Edward I of England made his progress North to receive the submission of the burghs the names of the burgesses are largely Flemish and English and a grant of land in the Garioch, Aberdeenshire by Earl David (1171-1199) specifically identifies 'omnibus probis hominibus totius terrae suae, Francis, Anglis, Flamingis et Scottis' (All of the men in all of your land, the French, the English, the Flemings and the Scots) (Rot. Scacc. Reg. Scot I, lxxxii). When mentioned in the documents the names of Perth burgesses are commonly trade related such as lorimer (metalworker), galeator (helmet maker) or faber (smith) but there are also references to people with surnames that are not Scottish, e.g.Richard of Leicester and in the mid 13th century the families of Scarborough, De Stamford and La Bataille are also mentioned. David I seems to have used Flemings to lay out some of his burghs for example, Mainard the Fleming who laid out Berwick was invited to lay out St Andrews, and Ranulf, who was also Flemish, laid out Haddington and Glasgow. The evidence would seem suggest that many of these new towns could even be regarded as 'plantations' with few Scottish inhabitants in their early years of occupation.



**Figure 27: From the mid to late 14th century imported ceramic heating systems from Northern Germany became popular in Scotland, this photograph shows the only Scottish tile that is not from a monastery and comes from excavations on the Skinnergate in Perth ©SUAT Ltd.**

### 4.2 The Inheritance of the prehistoric past

In Scotland, the early medieval/protohistoric period has a huge quantity and variety of monuments: standing stones, cist burials, burial mounds, hillforts and ritual centres set in curvilinear enclosures. These monuments are not prehistoric types, but they seem to make reference to prehistoric types. For that reason it is perhaps justified to assume that there is an intellectual link between the ideas embodied in each. Agency and expression can also be sought in the wider landscape. The central tenets of archaeological phenomenology and landscape archaeology aver, basically and simply, that people in the past were aware of their landscape and related to the feelings it gave them (Fleming 2005). This leads to the reasonable

assumption that what could be seen from a settlement or a monument - was an important part of the identity of that settlement or monument and its founders and occupants. What could be seen must remain uncertain due to the inevitable lack of any precise knowledge relating to the state of contemporary vegetation or other obstacles to intervisibility. Prehistoric monuments, whether visible or known to exist from first or second hand acquaintance, must have posed a formidable challenge to the medieval imagination. Certainly, toponymic evidence, and the traces of the 'blessing', 'conversion', vandalisation or iconoclasm of prehistoric sites during this period must bear powerful witness to the impact of such sites on the medieval consciousness.

The premise that protohistoric and medieval people were intensely aware of the landscape and its prehistoric content can therefore be accepted and pursued in two ways. The first approach takes the view that there was no continuity of thinking and that where monuments were 're-used' or 'adopted' it was simply as convenient or prominent landscape features in order to validate folk memory or legitimate the origin of a new regime (Bradley 1987).

The second approach, founded upon a better understanding of aboriginal and traditional cultures recognises that oral tradition can preserve genealogico-cum-historical information over many centuries and may allow long-term survival of a tradition reflecting ancestral reality. Consequently protohistoric and even medieval populations may have had a clearer view of their distant past than we currently allow and this is clearly a proposition that requires further investigation involving critical assessment of early texts and far more critical approaches to medieval 'disturbance' of prehistoric sites.

### 4.3    Spirituality

Protohistoric or early medieval people were both prehistorically aware and intellectually

active, and considering that many would live in rural communities that were detached from others to a greater or lesser extent, it is possible to assume that local expression could be given to cosmic belief. This expression will have been influenced both by the deep time of the locality and by incoming ideas. Amongst the incoming ideas were those of Christians whose differential impact upon isolated societies, themselves subject to variant beliefs, may have led to religious ideas and practices that varied from place to place. It must be a priority of future research into the religious archaeology of the period to rediscover this degree of local variation and emphasis without bowing to preconceptions that surround the scholar at every turn. This is a possible thread that can be followed across the whole medieval period feeding into the concept of successive reformations: forceful reformation characters occur as much in early Christian conversion times (and at several points in between) as in the 16th century Reformation (and later).

Such strictures apply to any retrospectively imagined "Celtic Christianity". Institutionalised Christianity simply cannot be assumed from the earliest date. There may, indeed, be themes shared between the western parts of these islands but the differences are equally significant. Ronald Hutton puts it nicely: "Just as in every previous period, a great range of individual idiosyncrasy operated within a few widespread similarities" (Hutton 1991, 235).

It can certainly be agreed that there was no monolithic Christianity before the 12th century but there was a degree of institutional Christianity, with a semi-autonomous 'chain of command' stretching back to Rome. That said, throughout this period there can also be seen a fundamental split between a 'magical' and a 'priestly' approach (though with many individuals exercising both). Even after the 12th century when there can be seen across Europe a Christian Church exercising more control this was not absolute – reform and

heresy and political subjugation continued manifestly to influence events and belief.

Looking specifically at the material culture of religion offers valuable clues as to how it was actually practised, and reveals that, even during the later medieval period, it was suffused with magical practices and "unorthodoxy" (or idiosyncrasy). In the study of medieval religion there should be no assumptions about what that religion was, and resist expressing it in crude, all-embracing terms such as "Paganism" or "Christianity". No 'orthodoxy' of an 'institutionalised' paganism has been defined for early medieval Europe (Carver 2003, Carver and Semple, forthcoming). It would also, as has been said,

not be prudent to assume that Christianity in the 4-8th century had already achieved the uniformity or social control that it would do in the later Middle Ages. Polities of the 4-8$^{th}$ century are famously fragmented and their Christian materiality famously diverse, and an explanation for this may possibly be found in the diversity of previous proto- and prehistoric practices. What is sought therefore are local expressions of cosmology, and the relevance of prehistoric archaeology to early historic Scotland requires consequent emphasis (Carver 2009a).

**The development of the early church**

The introduction and evolution of Christianity in Scotland (from the late 5th century) lies at the heart of understanding society and settlement in early medieval Scotland. This new religion results in secular authorities relinquishing control of sacred beliefs and rites of passage, such as burial or inauguration, to emerging ecclesiastical authorities with whom they develop a mature mutual dependency. The evidence for these transformative, new institutional beliefs lies in our surviving monuments, if they can only be given meaning: religious sites are places where communities, lay people, lords and kings consciously and conspicuously communicated with each other over extended periods.

The archaeological evidence – mainly carved stones, ruined and dilapidated building foundations and earthworks in western and northern Scotland, some cropmarks in eastern and southern Scotland, and rare ecclesiastical artefacts  - is supplemented by a small number of documentary sources (notably Adomán's *Life of Columba*) and scarcely tapped place-name potential (a Leverhulme-funded project commenced in 2010 to look at the commemoration of saints). Overall, good quality archaeological evidence is very scarce, although a small number of archaeological excavations over the last 25 years highlight the extraordinary quality and potential of what survives, notably at Whithorn, Hoddam, Portmahomack, Inchmarnock, Isle of May, Govan and Inchmarnock. Although relatively large in some cases, these excavations have explored only a small fraction of the total sites

The body of evidence for undeveloped and developed cemeteries (the latter with a church) has increased, and ongoing research by Adrian Maldonado is reviewing early burial evidence. The manifestation of saints' cults probably holds the key, as Stephen Driscoll (2000) suggests, to recognising ancient polities. Place-name evidence is crucial, but various aspects of material culture support or have the potential to illustrate this. There are lamentably few dated church structures, but Pictish carved stones, in particular, testify to elaborate stone fittings, wooden and stone furniture and burial architecture that certainly belonged in fine, if not stone, buildings. The eighth-century minster church at Whithorn reveals how large, complex, and sophisticated a timber church might be. The scale, complexity and diversity of 'church' forms and functions has been expanded, Whithorn again showing the potential for the survival of fragile and slight evidence for the division of church interiors, as well as the use of clay-bonding for what is interpreted as a mortuary chapel doubling as a gateway to the inner precinct. The *corpus* of sculpture possibly designed for internal spaces increases. At larger sites that have been excavated there is clear evidence for a very structured use of space, with patterns emerging of where different activities occurred, e.g. the location of the monastic schoolhouse at Incharmarnock, or agricultural buildings at Hoddam and Portmahomack. Much more is known about the economic and technological function of sites, whether vellum manufacture (unique so far to Portmahomack), fine metalworking, smithying, tanning of leather or corn-drying.

Overall the evidence exhibits enormous variability over time and space. In defining questions for the future, the challenge is to make these new insights methodologically possible to pursue. A fundamental question is who in society is initiating new places of burial and/or new churches, and who are the key decision makers in the rise and fall of these places over time and what motivated them? What sort of places did they create and transform? Just how extensive were these sites? What range of activities took place at them? How did ecclesiastical lordship and their estates (e.g. Portmahomack and the Tarbat peninsula) differ in their management and expression from secular lordship? Did they have the same ecological and environmental footprint, for instance?

Understanding regional expressions of Christianity through work on saints' dedications and cults, sculpture, burials and landscape offers the best potential, including the potential to track networks of patronage. Through a landscape approach, it should be possible to explore the question of how regional prehistoric character (see Carver 2009a) and specific local circumstances affected local manifestations of Christian practice. It should also be possible to explore the relationship between the church and contemporary, especially lordly, settlement. Looking at how early church sites are incorporated into later settlement patterns may also shed light on the nature of the early church in a place or region.

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**Figure 28: Reconstruction of 'Casa Ernani' at Inchmarnock in the 9th century (Lowe, 2008, 259), with depictions of the instruction of young scholars, a cut-away view of the workshop, and the church in the background (see O'Carragáin, 2009, 1184 for a brief critique of the depiction of the church architecture). With gratitude to Headland Archaeology, Chris Lowe, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and the artist David Simon for permission to reproduce**

### 4.3.1  Ritual enclosures

'Ritual enclosures' would include those already designated monasteries on literary or other grounds (Iona, Portmahomack, Hoddom) and cognate curvilinear enclosures that have their Irish analogue in the rath. The uncertainty lies in whether the curvilinear enclosure adopted by monasteries (the "monastic vallum") correlates in any way with a prehistoric predecessor The monastic signals are generally taken to be standing stones, burials and a church (if any churches of the 4-8th centuries in Scotland were known).

There are of course prehistoric enclosures, (oval, circular and semi-circular) which can have nothing to with Christianity. Many of them have standing stones and burials. They are generally considered to have had ritual functions and there is a large literature on their possible use as calendars. This is no

longer considered an outlandish subject, even if its precise details are still far from clear:

> "Religious specialization is now hardly to be doubted at the stone circles of Stonehenge and Avebury……..observations of the sun and moon at such sites was part of the calendrical interest seen over much of Britain, especially in the Highland Zone……. Specialist observers or seers, in effect a priesthood, were a feature of this society" (Renfrew, 1973, 55; repr 1984, 242); endorsed in 1996].

The implications here are that the ritual enclosures that are designated as monasteries are successor sites as much as they are innovation, and it is the duty of researchers to study them as such. This means that every monastery requires an appreciation of its local prehistoric context. It also means that there should be an awareness of its ambient intellectual inheritance as well as the currency of new ideas from the continent. Within this inheritance there may possibly have been a local calendrical 'system' at least in localities where there were henges. If that possibility is accepted then it would be a valuable research project to investigate possible links between astro-archaeological phenomena in localities and possible calendrical variation, including the date of Easter, and its acceptance in early medieval Britain. This is to say no more than that studying protohistory and prehistory together may offer some unexpected rewards. What may be less rewarding is to consider the monastery as a Christian paragon, untouched by anything that preceded it and thus to be studied in isolation from its pre-existing social and intellectual context.

One strand of contemporary early medieval Conversion Period thought (which includes Gregory the Great and St Patrick) did not argue for the wanton destruction of paganism but saw Christianity as the completion of a long process, a perfection of human religious thought, suggesting that they saw paganism as the natural precursor of Christianity. Even from the later middle ages there is a train of Christian thought that recognised certain elements of paganism and certain of its practitioners as worthy, almost pre-figurers of Christianity. The rhetoric of monasteries being founded in desert locations perhaps needs more nuanced interpretation – the idea of 'desert' could well have encompassed that which is pagan or uninformed by Christianity , a desert then would be seen as an absence of Christ not necessarily as an absence of "pagan" communities.

A potentially more interesting divide is not between Christianity and paganism but between 'magicians' and 'priests'. Such a segregation between those who advocated and practiced direct action or magic and those who preferred a more spiritual, contemplative, preparation for the after-life is an approach that can be applied to both religious camps.

### 4.3.2 Iconography

Sculptured stones are perhaps the most substantial and visible remains of early Christianity in Scotland. Some of this sculpture features complex iconographical scenes and significant attention has been devoted to their identification. However, unlike other parts of early Christendom, Scotland appears to lack examples of portable iconography other than illuminated books. There are no early Christian iconography-bearing ampullae, pilgrim tokens, or articles of metalwork for instance.

This is a significant difference in the Scottish expression and communication of early Christianity, and as such the reasons behind this should be a research priority. There are few early historic Scottish objects whose main or sole decoration is Christian in nature; for instance there does not appear to be a strong tradition of pectoral cross pendants. Christian imagery instead appears to have been integrated with other types of decoration on

for instance the elaborate penannular
brooches from Hunterston and Rogart.
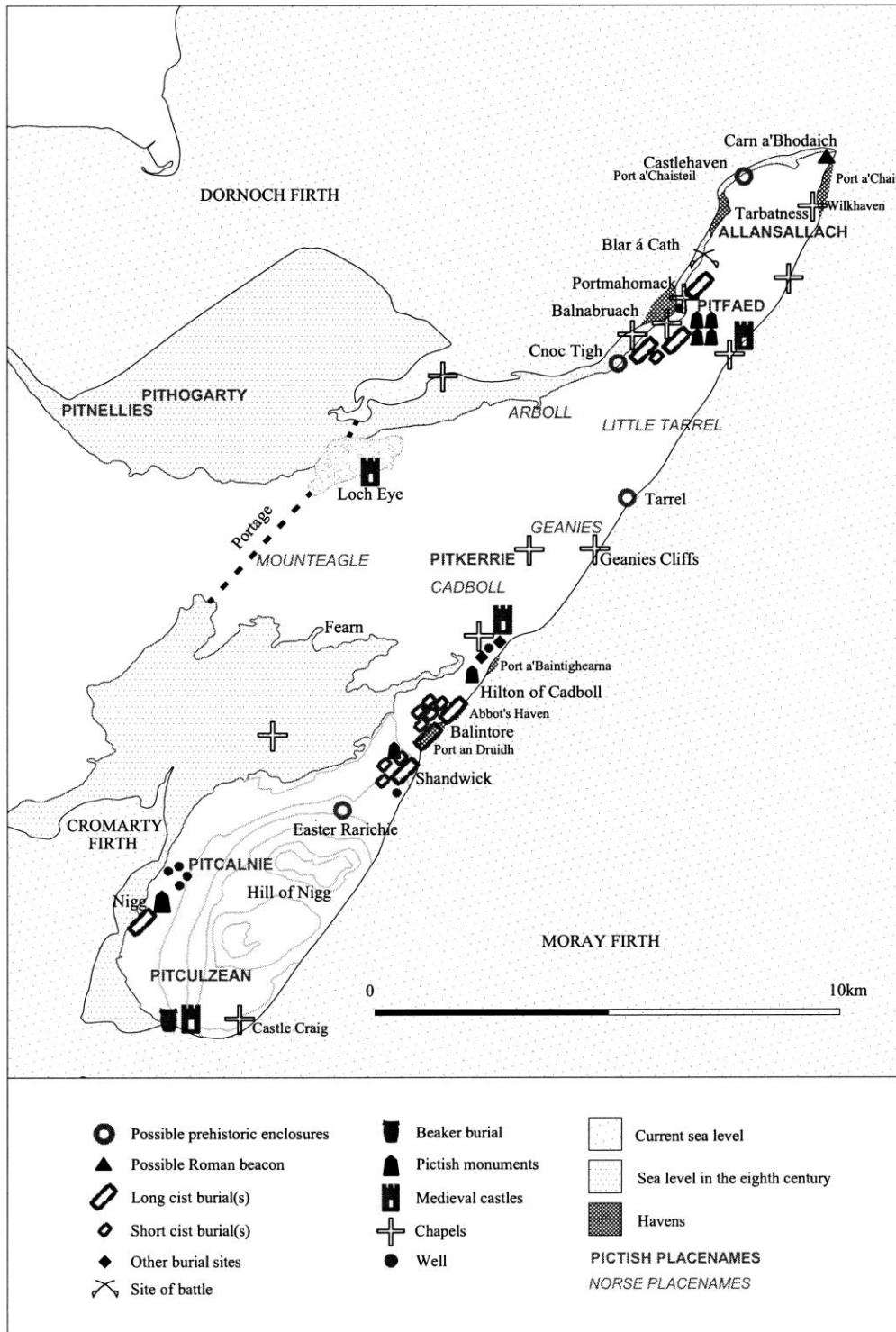


**Figure 29: Ritual space - the Tarbat peninsula, showing the location of Bronze Age and Iron cists, early medieval monastery and standing stones and medieval wells and chapels © Martin Carver.**

**Figure 30: The Hunterston brooch was probably made around AD700 at a royal site such as Dunadd, Argyll. It represents a considerable technical achievement by a crafts person familiar with a range of techniques and styles of decorative metalwork. The centre of the brooch displays Christian imagery, while other forms of decorative style adorn the rest of the brooch, ©ScARF**

Although iconography on sculptured stones has been the subject of substantial work, more recent approaches to the context and use of such monuments are continuing to bear fruit. Some useful approaches include: considering the selection and combination of iconographical scenes, their physical positioning with regards to potential audience(s); the performance of church rituals, and the themes which whole iconographical programmes might explore (such as the seasons, the liturgical year, the role of a monastic or community-orientated church). The potential impact of lost pigments or other embellishments (such as metal bosses or glass insets) on the meaning and communication of messages in Christian sculpture should not be forgotten. The selection and creative representation of iconographical schemes on sculptured stones and in illuminated manuscripts were Christian intellectual exercises, both for the creators and the audiences. It asked both groups to question what they knew in order to identify and understand the scenes portrayed, as well as the wider themes communicated by multiple scenes presented together.

### 4.4 The Medieval Church

Christianity was both a conservative and a dynamic force; its controlling hierarchy sought to command it's believers in their thought and practice and at the same time had to accept the 'popular' incorporation of magical and social practices. Diversity, contestation, politics and patronage run through the development of the evolving medieval Church, whether this is identified with its practitioners, it's hierarchies, it's buildings or it's material culture. In many ways it is difficult not to see the Church as the physical space which defined the practices that took place there but of course, whilst that forms a vital component, it was always more than that, in being a varying suite of beliefs and practices that to varying degrees controlled, determined, destroyed and made bearable people's lives. Archaeology is well placed in particular to elucidate the material conditions of the Church and how these affected people's lives; to chart its developing importance as a storehouse of spiritual, ritual and political power; to elucidate its exploitation of social links and patronage to retain its hegemonic position; and to chart the changes and uses made by believers to received orthodoxies.

#### 4.4.1 Liturgical use
In Corbusian terms a church may perhaps be regarded as essentially a machine for praying in. If the buildings erected for that purpose in the middle ages are to be adequately understood, it is important that the development and range of the liturgy, and the ways in which it influenced the design, furnishings and range of uses of the churches is understood.

In recent decades there has been a welcome renewal of scholarly interest in the medieval liturgy (for example, Hefferman and Matter 2001). There has also been an increasing interest in the ways the liturgy was reflected in church buildings (as in Draper 1987; Klukas 1989; Reynolds 1989) and as seen most

recently in a general study by Allan Doig (2008).

However, it should be said that in Scotland there has so far been only limited evidence of this renewal of interest. Such interest as there has been is best seen in the work of the late Monsignor David McRoberts (1957), and to a narrower extent in the collection of essays edited by D. Forrester, and D. Murray (1984) and in the work of Gordon Donaldson (1990). A major reason for the limited interest in the inter-relationship of liturgical practices and architectural forms is that, between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, nearly all Scottish churches underwent one or more major rebuildings and reorderings to fit them for the changing forms of reformed worship. This largely obscured the visible evidence for the ways in which they had hitherto been furnished and used in the middle ages. Perversely enough, the efforts to re-medievalise many churches in the course of the ecclesiological revival at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often added a further measure of confusion to the picture.

Nevertheless, there have been a number of studies of individual aspects of church fixtures and furnishings (for example Brydall 1895; Hannah 1936; McRoberts 1965; Richardson 1928; Richardson 1929; Walker 1887). These papers look at the particular furnishings in isolation, though a number of scholars have made a serious effort to understand how some of the more portable items that are known to have found their way into church treasuries reflected and conditioned liturgical requirements. A great deal of valuable work was carried out by Bishop John Dowden (1899) and by Francis Eeles (1917 and 1956). However, as with the study of liturgy, the most important contribution to the understanding of how churches were fitted out to provide it's setting, based largely on a study of the documentation, was made by David McRoberts. This was in his 1969/70 Rhind lectures on the furnishings of medieval churches, which have now been edited by Stephen Holmes (McRoberts and Holmes forthcoming 2012).

Much work remains to be done, and in carrying out this work it would almost certainly be simplistic to make a general assumption that architectural form invariably – or even commonly - follows function. A recent study of churches associated with the cults of saints, for example, appears to suggest that a particular range of functions did not necessarily lead to the adoption of particular architectural forms in that case (Fawcett 2007). If a clearer understanding of the relationship between liturgy and architecture is to be developed a range of approaches is required:

**Figure 31: Lincluden Collegiate Church (Kirkcudbrightshire), the piscina and sedilia in the presbytery area, early 15th century. Lincluden was one of two colleges founded by the third earl of Douglas, where prayers were to be offered for his family's welfare in life and their salvation after death. But most of the existing church was built for Princess Margaret, daughter of Robert III and wife of the fourth earl of Douglas, and was probably the work of the French mason John Morow. The collegiate churches founded for the great magnate families, which were amongst the most splendid buildings of later medieval Scotland, made provision for a magnificent daily round of worship, the best pointers to which are now liturgical fixtures such as these. Research into all aspects of the collegiate churches will be the subject of a PhD studentship attached to the second phase of the Corpus of Scottish Medieval Parish Churches project which is based at the Universities of St Andrews and Stirling. ©R. Fawcett**

- *The development of a clearer understanding of the development of the medieval liturgy:* In 1957 McRoberts (1957) suggested the following sequence;
  - a Sarum-dominated liturgy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries
  - independent developments in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries
  - finally, after an abortive attempt to develop specifically Scottish practices, a period of decline dominated by Roman liturgy in the sixteenth century. The later medieval period is to be more closely examined in an Edinburgh University PhD by Stephen Holmes, which has the provisional title of *The interpretation of liturgy in Scotland 1510-1645*.

- *The analysis of the documentation associated with church furnishings:* Further work on church inventories is likely to be particularly helpful in this area, and the list of such inventories published by McRoberts (McRoberts 1953) is a valuable starting point. It must also be reiterated that McRoberts' Rhind lectures were based on the inventories, as was much of the work of John Dowden

(1899) and Francis Eeles (1917 and 1959).

- *Consideration of the evidence of surviving liturgical furnishings*: McRoberts' Rhind lectures are again of prime importance as a starting point here (McRoberts 2009). More recently the present writer has briefly discussed some of the surviving material (Fawcett 2002). This area of work must extend beyond the surviving fixtures and furnishings, however, to give closer consideration to the structural archaeology for evidence of the previous location of missing features, such as the evidence for how furnishings were located and fixed in place, or the enlargement of windows associated with altars.

- *The more systematic spatial analysis of church buildings*: A leading exponent of this approach in England has been Pamela Graves (1989; 2000). The less complex spatial articulation of the majority of Scottish churches may mean that this approach is less rewarding than in England, though there is probably more scope for investigation than has been assumed.

- *More sensitive analysis of evidence located in the course of excavation*: This should extend to more careful analysis of fugitive evidence such as wear patterns on floor surfaces which has sometimes made it possible to identify indicators of traffic routes and of areas of increased footfall around parts of enhanced liturgical significance. Such approaches could perhaps be more stringently and consistently applied in investigations at later medieval sites.

### 4.4.2 Surviving structures

The view currently taken of Scottish medieval church buildings is inevitably conditioned by the fact that a relatively small proportion of the churches that were built has survived in a complete state. One commentator writing in 1939 calculated that only about sixty substantially medieval churches remained in use for worship by then (Anderson 1939). That was certainly a rather pessimistic view, since it is certain that many parish churches which now appear to be of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century date are in fact essentially remodelled medieval structures. Indeed, when a post-medieval church is known to occupy the site of its medieval predecessor, if it is aligned from east to west, and if it is significantly longer along that axis than from north to south, the assumption should probably be that there is underlying medieval fabric, or that it was conditioned by a medieval plan. This was clearly demonstrated in the rather over enthusiastic restoration of Fowlis Wester (Perthshire) in 1927, when a church that appeared to be entirely of 1802 was found to have incorporated the greater part of the masonry of its medieval predecessor. Perhaps more importantly for our present purposes, since the view expressed in 1939 was based purely on churches that had remained in use until that time, it ignored both the large number of churches that have been abandoned but of which there are structural remains, and those churches which are only known through archaeological investigation.

So far as the earliest churches are concerned, there has been the tentative suggestion that a number of sub-Roman D-ended structures, including those identified at Traprain Law and The Dod could have been churches (Smith 1996). There is, however, the major problem that many sites continued in use over very long periods, with the consequence that the first buildings were overlain and largely obscured by those that succeeded them. There is the further problem that the earliest church buildings appear to have been predominantly of timber, and have left few traces. Adomnan's description of St Columba's monastery on Iona, founded in about 563, suggests that the oratory and associated

buildings were of timber and wattle (Adomnan, 109-15), while the Venerable Bede evidently thought it remarkable that St Ninian should have built a church of stone in the fifth century, and that King Nechtan should have sought advice on how to build in stone, in the Roman manner, in about 710 (Bede, 264-65). At Whitmuirhaugh near Sprouston, Roxburgh, an E-W oriented post-built structure within an Anglian settlement thought to have been occupied between the seventh and ninth centuries may be a church (Smith 1991), while at Whithorn in the years around 800 two axially aligned buildings interpreted as oratories appear to have been joined together to form a larger church (Hill 1997, 26-48).

Nevertheless, there may have been partly or wholly stone-built churches from an earlier date than is generally appreciated. In the east of the country, at Dunbar, it has been suggested that an L-shaped length of wall could have been part of a church like that at Escomb (Alcock 2003, 214-17), while in the west, on Ardwall Isle, a timber oratory may have been replaced by a clay-bonded masonry structure as early as the eighth century (Thomas 1966). In some areas masonry was perhaps used because it was the most easily available material, and that is especially likely in the north and west. On the Argyll island site of Eileach an Naoimh is a pair of conjoined beehive cells of the Irish pattern which, if not as early as the traditionally ascribed sixth-century date, must still be relatively early in the sequence of masonry structures (RCAHMS 1982, 41-42). Perhaps the most remarkable stone-built early monastic sites are those of Sgòr nam Ban-Naomha, at the foot of cliffs on the south coast of Canna (Dunbar and Fisher 1974) and at the Kame of Isbister in Shetland (Lamb 1974).

Over an extended period excavation has continued to locate other early stone-built churches. At Iona the so-called St Columba's Shrine is known to have had Irish-style antae when first discovered (RCAHMS 1982, 41-42), and the same feature was found at Chapel Finian, which dates from the tenth or

eleventh centuries (Radford 1951). In the east of the country, but likely to be of a similar date range, is a possible reliquary chapel found below later churches on the Isle of May in the forth estuary (James and Yeoman 2008), and a ninth or tenth century date has been postulated for the earliest part of an estate church excavated at The Hirsel, Roxburgh (Cramp 1985). The dating of the earliest stone-built churches remains highly contentious, and is only likely to be clarified through extensive further research and investigation. Even the best preserved of such buildings have been the subject of intense controversy, as in the case of the square tower at Restenneth, and the round towers at Abernethy and Brechin. There is a growing consensus, however, that none of these contain anything earlier than the eleventh century (Fernie 1986). There may be scope however to cast new light on the interiors of pre 11th century churches if the on-going reassessment of some of Scotland's early medieval sculptural elements as church screens and furnishings is completed.

This reassessment will include the St Andrews sarcophagus, (see Blackwell, forthcoming ) where the discovery of the sarcophagus elements as a buried sculptural group (see Foster 1998, 45-47) may have influenced its interpretation as a burial monument (albeit the specialised form of accessible, burial monument that is a shrine). It is possible that this phenomenon is a reverencing, through careful burial of that which has gone before. Similar concerns are evidenced, for example, by the recent discovery of the buried angel sculpture in Lichfield cathedral (Rodwell et al 2008, esp. 58-60,) which, in turn, recalls several other examples of carefully buried architectural furnishings in major churches. The fragments of wall paintings carefully buried in the church of St Susanna, Rome (Basile 2004) may reflect similar sentiments. Re-interpretation of the sarcophagus parts as screen and altar elements would thus not only allow a closer understanding of the lay-out of early churches in Scotland but demonstrate

how subsequent re-modelling reverenced what it was replacing.

Moving on to the better documented provision of churches from the twelfth to the mid-sixteenth centuries, a higher proportion has survived, and, although it is certainly true that more has been lost than has survived. Here some basic statistics about the numbers of church buildings that are likely to have existed at the time of the Reformation will be offered (the numbers of foundations are based largely on Cowan & Easson 1976, and Cowan 1967). Complete accuracy cannot be claimed for all of these figures. In particular, account must be taken of the following points:

- the numbers of parish churches fluctuated to some extent in the course of the middle ages, as new parishes were formed and others suppressed;
- there is no idea of the numbers of parochial or private chapels that supplemented the cure of souls provided by the parish churches;
- there is only a very inadequate notion of the numbers of the hospitals.

The figures do, however, at least give some idea of the ecclesiastical buildings that existed across late medieval Scotland.

Of the cathedral, monastic and collegiate churches, only those in Table 2 remain wholly or partly in use for parochial worship.

**Table 1: Church buildings at the time of the reformation (based on Cowan 7 Easson 1976 and Cowan 1976)**

|  | Number of Foundations | Number of which have *architecturally significant* remains | Number of which have *slight remains*, even if only discovered through excavation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cathedrals | 13 | 12 | 1? |
| Parish churches | approx.1,136 | (not known) | - |
| Benedictine houses | 7 | 5 | 0 |
| Cluniac houses | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Tironensian houses | 7 | 4 | 1 |
| Cistercian houses | 11 | 9 | 2 |
| Valliscaulian houses | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Carthusian house | 1 | 0 | - |
| Augustinian houses | 20 (including 1 cathedral priory) | 11 | 3 |
| Premonstratensian houses | 6 (including 1 cathedral priory) | 4 | 0 |
| Gilbertine house | 1 | 0 | |
| Trinitarian houses | 7 | 2 | 0 |
| Dominican friaries | 15 | 3 | 1 |
| Franciscan conventual friaries | 7 | 1 | 1 |
| Franciscan observant friaries | 9 | 1 | 1 |
| Carmelite friaries | 10 | 2 | 3 |
| Benedictine nunnery | 1 | 1 | |
| Cistercian nunneries | 8 | 1 | 4 |
| Augustinian nunneries | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Dominican nunnery | 1 | | - |
| Franciscan nunneries | 2 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Templar preceptories | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Hospitaller preceptories | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Secular colleges | 42 | 28 | 2 |
| Academic colleges | 7 | 3 | 0 |
| Hospitals | approx. 145 | 4 | 1 |

**Table 2: Church buildings currently (2012) still in use for parochial worship.**

| | Building status |
|---|---|
| Aberdeen Cathedral | (nave only) |
| Aberdeen King's College Chapel | |
| Aberdeen St Nicholas Collegiate Church | (largely rebuilt) |
| Biggar Collegiate Church | |
| Bothwell Collegiate Church | (nave rebuilt) |
| Brechin Cathedral | (largely complete, but truncated choir restored from ruin) |
| Coldingham Benedictine Priory | (choir only) |
| Corstorphine Collegiate Church | |
| Crail Collegiate Church | (chancel truncated) |
| Cullen Collegiate Church | |
| Culross Cistercian Abbey | (presbytery, transepts and monks' choir) |
| Dalkeith Collegiate Church (nave only) | |
| Dornoch Cathedral | (complete, but nave restored from ruin) |
| Dunblane Cathedral | (complete, but nave restored from ruin) |
| Dunkeld Cathedral | (choir only) |
| Edinburgh St Giles' Collegiate Church | |
| Elgin Observant Franciscan Friary | (restored from ruin) |
| Fearn Premonstratensian Abbey | (nave truncated) |
| Fowlis Easter Collegiate Church | |
| Glasgow Cathedral | (complete, apart from west towers and sacristy) |
| Haddington St Mary's Collegiate Church | (complete, but choir restored from ruin) |
| Iona Benedictine Abbey | (complete, but restored from ruin) |
| Kilmun Collegiate Church | (ruined tower attached to modern church) |
| Kirkcudbright Conventual Franciscan Friary | (fragments in later church) |
| Kirkwall Cathedral | |
| Lismore Cathedral | (choir only) |
| Monymusk Augustinian Priory | (largely complete, but chancel truncated) |
| Paisley Cluniac Abbey | (complete, but choir restored from ruin) |
| Pluscarden Priory | (choir and transepts restored from ruin) |
| Restalrig Collegiate Church | (church restored, attached chapel partly restored) |
| Roslin Collegiate Church | (only chancel completed) |
| St Andrews St Leonard's College Chapel | (partly restored from ruin) |
| St Andrews St Salvator's College Chapel | |
| St Bothans Cistercian Nunnery | (fragments in later church) |
| St Monans Dominican Friary | (choir and transepts) |
| South Queensferry Carmelite Friary | (choir, crossing and transeptal chapel) |
| Stirling Holy Rude Collegiate Church | |

The greatest areas of uncertainty are those associated with the parish churches and with the chapels of various kinds located within those parishes. So far as the parishes are concerned, Ian Cowan's work on the documentation has at least established with a reasonable degree of accuracy the numbers that existed (Cowan 1967), and those parishes are illustrated cartographically in *The Atlas of Scottish History* (McNeill & MacQueen 1996, 347-60). In the majority of cases the location of the churches that served those parishes can be ascertained. In an attempt to assess the scale of survival and loss, Richard Fawcett, Richard Oram and Julian Luxford have been looking at the parishes in the dioceses of Dunblane and Dunkeld, an area that has not so far been intensively researched. A principal aim of this AHRC-funded project has been to determine which churches are likely to embody medieval fabric, even if that is not immediately apparent, and to put together a short account of the medieval history of each parish. The detailed results of this project have now been disseminated online[29]. Of the 105 parishes that existed in the two dioceses in the course of the middle ages, the provisional findings suggest that: 14 churches that remain in use have retained a significant and identifiable element of their medieval appearance; 22 ruined churches have retained a significant and identifiable element of their medieval appearance; 17 churches appear to occupy the footprint of their medieval predecessors and probably incorporate some medieval fabric; and 26 churches are thought to be wholly or partly on the site of their medieval predecessor.

It must be stressed that these figures are as yet provisional, and it cannot be known how far they would be reflected in the other dioceses. A second phase of the project, again funded by AHRC and led by Fawcett, Oram and Luxford, is to investigate the dioceses of St Andrews and Brechin, and it is hoped that it might be possible to extend the study to the other nine dioceses in due course. There has so far been very little work on either the documentation or the architectural survival of chapels, of which there were probably very large numbers. Perhaps the most important architectural and archaeological contribution in this area so far has been made by the Royal Commission of Ancient Monuments in its work across Argyll (RCAHMS 1971-92), an area where the small numbers of very large parishes necessitated the provision of many chapels, and where limited development pressures have resulted in relatively high survival rates. But it is also known that some of the more densely distributed Aberdeenshire parishes also had significant numbers of dependent chapels, and it is certain that close study of the documentation would be very fruitful in that area. The possibilities of unconsidered aspects of the early medieval church in Scotland are raised by innovative new studies of church form and usage before 1100 in both Ireland (Ó Carragáin 2009) and Anglo-Saxon England (Hare 2009).

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[29] http://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/corpusofscottishchurches

**Figure 32:Dalmeny Parish Church (West Lothian), mid-12th century. One of the finest of the churches built to meet the needs of the network of parishes that was beginning to take shape across Scotland from the earlier twelfth century. The architectural details suggest it may have been built by a master mason initially brought to Scotland from England to work on David I's major new monastic foundation at Dunfermline. The church will be one of those investigated in the course of the second phase of the Corpus of Scottish Medieval Parish Churches project, based at the Universities of St Andrews and Stirling. The architectural sculpture will be analysed for the Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture. ©R Fawcett**

### 4.4.3    Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland

Pilgrimage and the cults of saints were as popular with the Pictish, Irish, Norse and Scots peoples of Scotland as with any others in Christendom, with major shrines at the heart of important reliquary churches at Tain, Iona, Kirkwall, Whithorn, Glasgow, Dunkeld, Dunfermline and St Andrews. Most of these shrines are now monuments in the care of Historic Scotland. Scotland had more than its fair share of patron saints, ranging from an apostle of Christ, through national, indigenous saints such as Ninian, Columba and Kentigern, to a multiplicity of lesser holy men and martyrs. From the earliest times Scots were recognised on the pilgrimage roads of Europe

by their characteristic clothing, which included the tying of their shoes around their neck to make the journey even harder! The archaeology of pilgrimage can illustrate an aspect of medieval life which can still be readily understood and even replicated, providing a rare 'shiver of contact'. Much can still be seen of the paths, churches and shrines, as experienced by our medieval forebears. By revisiting these, armed with an understanding of the remains, it is possible to reconnect with their lives, reaching a better understanding of the personal faith and devotion of these people who, during the first 1000 years of Christianity, shaped the land and national identity which has been inherited by people today. The Reformation in 1559-60 attempted to remove all traces of the

shrines, although a surprisingly large body of evidence has survived. A review of the hagiographic accounts of early Christian pilgrimage suggests, in addition to a strong emphasis on place (the shrine), and the saint's relics, a prominent role for natural objects and substances such as holy water (but not oil as in other areas of Christendom), bread, salt, natural pebbles and specifically white stones. The extent to which this is solely a product of a few documentary sources, or whether it reflects more general Scottish phenomena, and how different it is to other parts of early Christendom would all repay closer scrutiny.

Pilgrimage in Scotland is as old as Christianity itself, when the Church positively encouraged the development of the cults of saints to help bolster the faith of newly converted peoples. Many of the early missionaries were elected saints, with some, like Columba of Iona (died 597), regarded as saints even during their own lifetime. Their places of burial became



**Figure 33: St Thomas Becket pilgrimage ampulla. This is one of two Becket ampulla recovered from excavations on the Perth High Street. It is a pivotal piece for shedding light on religion and belief (the cult of saints, the Scots on pilgrimage and the use of pilgrimage souvenirs as amulets about the home and work place) and politics (the crowns of Scotland and England contested for the holy support of the martyred Becket), © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.**

renowned as the source of miracles, quickly attracting the attention of far-flung communities. Possibly the oldest shrine of all was the tomb of St Ninian at Whithorn in Galloway. He is believed to have been the leader of Romanised Christians here in the 5th century, and recent excavations around his hilltop shrine have revealed intensive phases of church-building from then up to the Reformation. Devotion to Ninian remained constant throughout a period of more than 1000 years, transcending numerous shifts in power within the region. The other important early cult was that of Kentigern, also known as Mungo, who is believed to have died around 612, and whose burial place inspired the creation of Glasgow Cathedral. This is the most complete, large medieval reliquary church to survive in Scotland, enabling the modern visitor to easily replicate the experience of the medieval pilgrims.

What was the motivation for pilgrimage? – Pilgrims' motivation was to attain the greatest prize of all - salvation of their immortal souls. The Church taught them that they were destined for the fiery pit, unless they took positive action to remove their sin. Pilgrimage can therefore be seen as a metaphor for medieval life - a journey to achieve salvation, with pilgrimage acting as a bridge between this world and the next. The shrines containing the bones of saints played a crucial role in the forgiveness of sin, in the expiation of a crime (even manslaughter), and in the witnessing of vows and contracts. The effectiveness of the pilgrimage was multiplied if the penitent was present during an auspicious festival such as Easter, or the feast day of an individual saint. Not all would have lived up to the pious ideal; for some pilgrimage represented an excuse for travel and fun, which would otherwise have been

impossible within a society where most were bound by rigid ties to land, family and service.

Preparation for pilgrimage: This might have been the only occasion when poor peasants were permitted to travel far distant from their parish. Written permission had to be granted by the parish priest, and warm clothing obtained, forming the universally recognised pilgrim's garb. This consisted of a rough tunic and a heavy cloak, along with a broad-brimmed hat, a wooden staff, a water bottle, and a small satchel for food, known as a scrip. Safe-conducts were obtained from the English Crown for foreign pilgrimages, especially during the long centuries of conflict between the two countries from the later 13th century on. These safe-conducts could be for periods of years, especially for pilgrimages to Rome or the Holy Land, and there was a good likelihood that the individual might never return, having fallen prey to misadventure along the way. The property and estates of pilgrims, especially lordly ones, was placed under the protection of the King, and no legal claims against the pilgrim could be settled until his or her safe return. The night before departure, the pilgrim's staff and scrip were placed on the high altar to absorb the protection of the Holy Spirit. In 1427 James I issued a general safe conduct for the benefit of pilgrims from England and the Isle of Man coming to St Ninian's shrine at Whithorn, specifying the conditions of their visa:-

> *'they are to come by sea or land and to return by the same route, to bear themselves as pilgrims, and to remain in Scotland for no more than 15 days; they are to wear openly one (pilgrim's) badge as they came, and another (to be received from the prior of Whithorn) on their return journey.'*

A complex network of ferries, roads, bridges, fords, chapels, hospitals, and inns, were created and maintained to ease the way for pilgrims, the support of this infrastructure being a recognised act of piety. Travel was slow, arduous and often dangerous, and it was generally believed that the harder the journey, the greater the benefit to the soul. This was an integral part of the pilgrimage, as illustrated by the encounter on the way to Whithorn in July 1504 between James IV and some *'puir folk from Tain passand to Whithern'*. James himself was a devout pilgrim, well acquainted with Tain in Easter Ross from his annual visits to the great shrine of St Duthac. This shows that it was not sufficient for the folk of Tain to attend their own shrine, but instead they chose to journey hundreds of miles across the spine of Scotland to another famous shrine in Galloway. Pilgrims' ferries were provided on the two crossings of the Forth for *bona fide* pilgrims to the shrine of the Apostle at St Andrews, who qualified for free passage by displaying the appropriate demeanour, garb, and pilgrim's badge. The most famous was the western crossing known to this day as the Queen's Ferry, endowed by St Margaret, wife of Malcolm Canmore, in the later 11th century. Her biographer, writing shortly after her death in 1093, recorded that she not only provided ships for the crossing, but also established hostels on either side of the Forth provided with staff who were instructed to *'wait upon the pilgrims with great care'.*

Scots pilgrims badges provide reliable evidence of the movement of people, of real and arduous journeys, while also underlining the tangible devotion to individual saints. There is also a significant body of pilgrimage artefacts which illustrate Scots' pilgrimage abroad, to shrines in England, Europe and the Holy Land.

Pilgrimage helps the dicipline to understand the design and function of many of the great churches and cathedrals of medieval Scotland, not only their use in the sometimes exclusive worship of monks or clergy, but also their role in popular religion. Great reliquary churches were built as a housing for the relics of the saint, thus making them accessible to the faithful, while at the same time providing security for the relics themselves, along with the enormous wealth represented by the

precious metals and jewels gifted as offerings to adorn the shrines by successive generations. A pilgrim to St Andrews in the 15th century would have been drawn towards the Cathedral by the distant view of tall spires and towers. Having passed through the burgh gates they would have mingled with the crowds who came not just for the religious services, but also for the secular festivities and markets. Their sense of anticipation would be further heightened as they entered the sacred space of the Cathedral through the north door, and joined the shuffling throng following the well-worn one-way route towards the great shrine. As they moved east around the side of the high altar, their senses were assaulted by the concentration of rich decoration glinting with golden candlelight, of statues, wall-hangings, tomb effigies, and incense, proclaiming their long-awaited arrival at the shrine chapel - in great contrast to the stark ruins which confront the visitor to St Andrews today. The pilgrims then found themselves in the presence of the relics of the first chosen Apostle of Christ, housed in a great jewelled box called a *chasse*, raised up for security and visibility. The psychological effect of this experience - the huge scale of the building, coupled with the spiritual impact and the crush of unwashed humanity - would have been overwhelming for many of the ordinary country folk. And thus the stage was set for miracles of healing.

**St Nicholas East (Mither) Kirk, Aberdeen**

Between January and December 2006 one of the most extensive excavations in a medieval parish church took place at Aberdeen's St Nicholas East Kirk in advance of building work by the church. Post-excavation has still to be completed at this site.



**Figure 34: Site showing 15th-century sleeper walls © Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums Collections**

*Earliest apsidal church*

The earliest structure excavated on this site was a semi-circular wall and mortar floor. This apse formed the east end of a church which may have been constructed in the late 11th or early 12th century. Associated with the apse was a group of burials of 25 babies and children. Very few of the burials intercut and some had been marked with stones or mussel shells. All had their heads to the west although several were slightly off the E-W alignment giving the appearance that they were radiating from the apse. The burials took place in stone and wooden coffins and some had pillow and cheek stones.

**Figure 35: Apse with child burials © Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums Collections**

*The mid 12th-century east end*

The mid 12th-century east end was constructed over the earlier apse; several courses of ashlar masonry including buttresses survived as well as one section of internal plastered wall. A stone coffin associated with this church had been sealed by the later 12th-century building work. A series of deep-cut burials associated with the 12th-century churches included several graves which contained coarse textile preserved under the body. Several burials contained the remains of twigs placed at the side of the body and one had two scallop shells next to the head. Pilgrims bought scallop shells in the cathedral at Santiago de Compostela in north-west Spain and would have attached them to their hat or cloak. Four burials had been disturbed by the construction of this mid 12th-century church and the body was then 'folded' over out of the way of the new wall. One of these individuals was interred with a lead cross suspended on a copper alloy chain around the neck. Over 300 burials were associated with the 12th-century churches.



**Figure 36: Skeleton 129 with Silk hat © Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums Collections**

*Consolidating the 12th-century east end*

In the late 12th century, the east end gable wall was rebuilt 1m east of the earlier structure. On each of the corners, pilaster buttresses date this wall to the late 12th century. Other buttresses had been damaged by 15th-century building operations.



**Figure 37: Late 12th-century east end with pilaster buttress © Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums Collections**

*The 'sacristy'*

A two-storey building 4m wide had been added on to the north side of the 12th-century church; the length of the building was lost when the north wall of the 15th-century church was built. Two steps suggested that this building could be entered from the graveyard.

*The 15th-century church*
This excavation has shown that the building of the early 19th-century East Kirk utilised the walls and foundations of the 15th-century east end, or choir. A sloping corridor was constructed adjacent, and attached to, the south wall of the 15th-century choir to allow access through the west wall of St Mary's Chapel. At the north side of the choir a flight of stairs probably went out of use at the Reformation when a vaulted roof was built creating a division between St Mary's and the choir.

A series of pier bases dug through the walls of the 12th-century choir would have supported the 15th-century church. No pier fragments were found *in situ* but hundreds of fragments of carved stone from the 15th-century east end were recovered. One carved stone face probably from a ceiling boss had been reused in the manufacture of a 19th-century wall. Several masons' marks were recorded including a star and an M with a tail.

Nearly 500 burials came from the post-15th century period.  These included the burial of a middle-aged female who had suffered from rickets, or osteomalacia, a softening or weakening of the bones caused by lack of vitamin D. This woman was buried with a lead religious badge decorated with an image of Our Lady of Pity (or pieta), the image of the Virgin Mary with the body of Christ supported on her knees.   Several areas of up to six burials together suggests family burial 'vaults'.

*Two 19th-century churches*
Foundation trenches for walls to support the floors and pews of the 1874 East Kirk were very substantial and had cut through many burials; larger bones had often been carefully reinterred.

Areas of burning on the internal face of the south wall and in soil layers were the result of the 1874 fire, showing that the walls were retained but the roof and internal fittings were rebuilt.

*The human remains*

At the end of the excavation there were 939 separate skeletons and over 3.5 metric tonnes of disarticulated material recovered.  Overall preservation was better in the pre than the post 15th-century assemblage as the bone condition in the later coffined burials was poor.  About 50% of deaths occurred in infancy with 25% occurring under 3 years of age. Once past childhood there was a good chance of living to 35 years although only 3% reached over the age of 50.  After the 15th century there was a lower proportion of childhood deaths, stature increased for both men and women and there was a significant drop in individuals with sinusitis, which possibly suggests better ventilation in living accommodation.  Generally more males than females suffered fractured bones and there was a reduction in all types of fractures after the 15th century.  There were slightly lower rates of osteoporosis than nationally reported with more females than males affected but there was a high prevalence of rickets, infantile scurvy and of orbitalia in non adults and females.  The bones suggest that life in general became less severe after the 15th century – height increased, osteoarthritis, evidence of trauma and number of child burials decrease as a percentage of the burial population, which may, however, equally reflect a changed socio-economic status for the individuals buried.



**Figure 38: 12th century church east end and associated burials © Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums Collections**

### 4.5 Burials

Human remains are able to furnish an extraordinary variety of information in terms of birth experience, ethnic origin nutrition, lifestyle, belief systems, trauma undergone, the ageing process and manner and cause of death and funerary deposition.  In recent times, however, there has been a reaction that has seen the close questioning of precisely how this information can be interpreted and used.  It is clear now that the mode of burial (e.g. cist burial in the 1st mill. AD) cannot be used as a safe indicator of date (as has been demonstrated by C14 dating) or of ethnic affiliation, and neither can the inclusion or replication of objects, procedures or rites in funerary process be simplistically

interpreted as necessarily indicators of individual adherence to an organised belief. Slabs of stone and token stone inclusion is widespread in the protohistoric period, in contexts that suggest their proponents are no strangers to British or Christian ideas, but no direct evidence for their being either (Carver *et al.* 2009). However, burials certainly reflect less well-defined allegiance, for example, "identity" or "ideological alignment" - terms which can strengthen where the evidence appears to be stronger. This framework regards it as key to study burials for their own message, not for their conformity.

The *cult of relics*. This is said to have been a Christian importation and most commentators have followed Charles Thomas (1971, 1973) in treating it as such. That this may not be the case may be suggested, both because the practice does not seem to relate specifically to the teaching of Christ, and because of the appearance of apparently related deposits in earlier, prehistoric, contexts in Britain (e.g. Ann Woodward's 1993 study of Cotswold-Severn tombs where she seems to define a cult of relics in the Neolithic). The "virtue' inherent in holy remains seems close to sympathetic magic (which is not a Christian invention). Christianity defined its own sense of holy places and holy persons, evolving the cult of saints as another aspect of the magic/priestly divide, many people reasonably expecting that, if God existed, then they ought to be able to experience him in direct ways. Christianity habitually built on prior attitudes and human practices and, therefore should not be defined only by its orthodox position but by how it was actually practiced within and by recipient communities and those observing them.

This implies three things:
1. Higher standards of grave and cemetery excavation, because archaeologists may find themselves having to argue on the basis of a detailed reconstruction of the whole process and sequence of acts from

shrouding the corpse to back-filling the grave, the precise degree to which the ritual reflects variety within or around the Christian core. The type of stones included, size of grave, whether the body or the stones went in first, whether any bones are missing that might have been curated as relics, and so on - matters that require very careful dissection;

2.

3. A far greater emphasis on contextually scrupulous radiocarbon dating following the precepts by Patrick Ashmore on behalf of Historic Scotland.

4. Protohistoric and early medieval burials need to be examined in the context of the prehistoric burials of the same area, to discern and interpret the differences and similarities between them.

In the west and east parts of Scotland the whole study of protohistoric burial, and thus the utility of casual discoveries, has been gravely inhibited by the lack of any *developed cemetery archaeology*. Scotland has no equivalent to Cannington or Spong Hill. The Hallow Hill, St Andrews excavation, was not a designed project, and Pictish and Scottish burial in general has barely been explored. The cemetery at Ackergill, famous in its day, is a national disgrace, having never been properly written up and then chronically pillaged since. Meanwhile there are sites of great potential that are protected, but not properly studied: e.g. Whitebridge and Garbeg. Large scale excavation may not be appropriate at such precious resources, but research could be advanced by using non-destructive precision survey, caedmium vapour magnetometry and soil sounding radar, and then testing selected anomalies by excavation with microstratigraphic and chemical plotting – all well developed techniques.

### 4.5.1   Human Remains[30]

*Early medieval Burials*

In terms of quantity, the archaeological record for early medieval Scotland is dominated by burials. At present, the National Monuments Record contains over 150 confirmed early medieval burial sites in Scotland, against a wide background of unconfirmed antiquarian reports and cropmark sites; in all they represent thousands of individuals. This body of data has yet to be exploited in a systematic way.

Burial sites in Scotland are plagued by poor bone preservation due to acid soils. Where preservation is suitable, radiocarbon dates and studies of health and disease are now undertaken as a matter of course. Dates for these cemeteries cluster mainly in the 5-7th centuries, as elsewhere in Britain. As far as can be discerned, the skeletal evidence indicates that the cemeteries were mainly used for adults, as children and infants are underrepresented. In terms of health and disease, it seems very few of these individuals suffered a violent death or physical trauma other than the strains of a pre-modern agrarian lifestyle.

But generalisations like these mask some slowly emerging discrepancies. An increasing number of inhumations have been dated to the early centuries AD, showing the Iron Age origins of the mortuary rites involved (see above). Yet few studies have compared populations across the first millennium AD, making it difficult to see what, if any, continuities from the Iron Age to the early medieval period exist. Most of the discussion of these sites focuses on the square barrows and long cists of the developed mid-first millennium tradition. Some comparison to Iron Age and, at the other end of the chronological spectrum, to Viking Age burial populations is still needed.

Within the mid-first millennium *floruit* of cemeteries, the potential to extract yet more information from the skeletal evidence remains relatively untapped. While individual sites have been carefully analysed for date, demographics, diet and disease, these results have not been synthesised on a regional basis. Furthermore, the numerous burials excavated before modern scientific techniques were widely available have not been re-examined, with a few notable exceptions, e.g. Lundin Links, Fife (Greig *et al.* 2000)[31].

As a result, discussions of these sites still revolve on the old narratives of conversion to Christianity and ethnicity, even though studies of early medieval cemeteries have proven time and again that burials are poor markers of religious or political affiliation. The focus of study has largely turned to what they can reveal about relationships within populations, or rather, perceptions of age, gender and other socially-determined identities (Lucy 2002). Skeletal analyses of sites in the 4-6th centuries in England, bridging the traditional boundary between the late Roman and Anglo-Saxon period, have begun to emphasise the way grave goods marked age and gender differences rather than ethnic identities (Gowland 2007). The lack of grave goods in Scottish burials has been seen as a barrier to such bio-cultural studies, but the variety of grave types known here show similar potential e.g. the distinctions between log coffins, long cists, cists reusing Roman masonry, cists made with carefully worked slabs, square-ditched graves and post-defined graves, all found in the cemetery at Thornybank, Midlothian (Rees 2002), are unlikely to be random choices.

The study of trace elements in tooth enamel to identify diet and geographical origins is also beginning to throw up new and unexpected

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[30] Follow the link to the Science panel report at www.scottishheritagehub.com

[31] Follow the link to the Science panel report at www.scottishheritagehub.com

insight. For instance, island populations like those of Orkney seem to have avoided eating fish until the influx of Norse settlers from the 9th century (Barrett and Richards 2004). Discoveries like these may help to identify 'indigenous' people in future explorations, but not until it is recognised how mobile these people were. Preliminary stable isotope analysis of the cemetery near the royal hillfort of Bamburgh, Northumberland indicates non-local origins for the deceased, some of whom may have come from as far as western Scotland (Groves 2003); similarly, the 'Anglo-Saxon' community at West Heslerton, East Yorkshire may have had more migrants from Western Britain than Scandinavia or the Low Countries (Budd *et al.* 2004). Within Scotland, these kinds of scientific analyses are mainly employed in sites believed to incorporate migrant populations, like the Viking-period cemeteries of the Orkneys. In pre-Viking Scotland, however, research is still largely ignorant of internal social distinctions. For instance, the apparent clusters of shale and sandstone cists at the Catstane, Midlothian (Cowie 1978) may well be to do with the different geographical origins of the deceased, but little is known of the 'catchment areas' of these cemeteries. Without more rigorous scientific studies across a number of sites, there is lacking a clear control group for determining what a migrant would look like in the first place.

Another gap is the funerary ritual itself. If the 'catchment area' of a cemetery is quite wide, a long procession should be posited, and such effort is likely to extend to an elaborate burial rite including the use of organic materials like faunal and floral deposits. Despite regular excavation of long cist and other graves in Scotland, low survival of organic materials means little is known of what, if anything, was actually deposited in the grave. A hint of what may be found comes from Hermisgarth, Orkney, where a long cist was found to contain evidence for a bundle of cloth, calling to mind the soft linings of many Anglo-Saxon graves (Downes and Morris 1997; Harrington 2007). Only careful excavation will reveal

more such finds; Bronze Age graves have been excavated with the help of dedicated conservation teams, often by lifting entire grave fills as box-samples for excavation in laboratory conditions (ie., Hunter, 2000). Pollen analysis of these soils may reveal organic materials that were part of the burial ritual, allowing new questions to be asked of the seemingly simple funerary remains.

The strategy for the future study of medieval burial must then be two-pronged.
1. Account must be taken of museum collections to see what early medieval skeletal material still survives in storage. These should then be sampled and submitted to specialists for radiometric, bio-cultural and isotopic analysis. These data would ideally be synthesised on a regional or chronological basis, including targeted studies of age and gender correlated with burial type (long cist, dug grave, barrow, cairn, etc).
2. Any future excavation of human remains will need to operate to a set standard devised with the advice of osteologists and other specialists. Funding should be provided for box-excavation of entire grave fills, especially on sites where bone preservation is low. Dedicated studies of trace elements and biometric markers should be commissioned with a view to comparing sites across regions and time periods.

*4.5.2 Relics*
Museums and other public and private collections today include many relics associated with people and events that reinforce the continuing importance placed on commemoration and the need to identify objects which encapsulate or recall those things and people that our society holds dear. In medieval times some relics were little more than souvenirs, like the pieces of porphyry brought back by pilgrims from churches in Rome. Others had added importance for their

curative or amuletic qualities, like the Coigrich or crosier shrine of St Fillan. The hog-backed crystal that decorates it was dipped in water which was then considered to be efficacious in curing diseased cattle (Glenn 2003, 110-11). St Margaret's sark was worn by later Scottish queens during child birth to ensure safe births (Dunlop 2005, 92).

Other relics had an important ceremonial role, especially saintly ones preserved and venerated in churches. In Scotland there was a tradition of saintly relics being given into the care of hereditary keepers who were provided with land in return for looking after and providing a service with their relic. This might be leading contingents of men to war, as with the keepers of St Moluag's crosier on the island of Lismore, and the keepers of the Brecbennach, a battle standard associated with Arbroath Abbey (Caldwell 2002, 270-74). Weapons in particular were often believed to have belonged to famous ancestors and heroes of the past, and were marked or decorated accordingly. In the early 16th century King James IV of Scotland had a sword which was allegedly William Wallace's (Caldwell 2007, 170).

## 4.6    The Future

The framework has identified the following key future research areas and issues:

- Knowledge of the prehistoric period is fundamental to the protohistoric period: these must be studied together.  "Early historic" or early medieval projects, whether driven by research or by site-threat mitigation, must, in addition, have a strong prehistoric programme. For example, medieval sites, including monastic enclosures and burials, should be studied with prehistoric ritual practices in mind.

- Belief was regional and creative until at least the later 8th century.  In this first protohistoric period research should be seeking  to define, compare and contrast these local systems through integrated studies of portable material culture, monumentality and landscape.  This will lead to an intellectual mapping and history of this most inventive religious phase in Scotland.

- Collaborative working should be promoted, particularly with Scandinavia and Ireland in mind, as there is a strong case for including Scandinavian and Irish prehistory as an analogic basis for the story of Scotland, as well as the necessary Classics and Anglo-Saxon archaeology or medieval history. Pictish and Irish sculpture for example needs to be studied in a broader art historical context (i.e. making use of European prehistoric imagery as well as Mediterranean Classical imagery), as well as in a broader local context.

- The need for a new *corpus* of Scotland's early medieval sculpture would revitalise this area of interdisciplinary study and promote its wider international comparison and understanding.

- There is a need to identify and classify medieval relics and create a corpus.

- The study, survey and excavation of a number of types of site would considerably improve our understanding of Medieval Scotland, including:
  - **Cemeteries –** full excavation of an early medieval cemetery with well-preserved skeletal remains, an extensive programme of dating (incorporating first millennium AD to explore continuities/discontinuities with the Iron Age), and

subsequent post-excavation analysis taking account of the fluidity of their ethnic signals (e.g. Pictish, British, Gaelic/Scots, Scandinavian etc.).

o **Early churches** - excavation of early churches particularly where they are not overlain by medieval structures is a priority as there are almost no pre-12th century stone church buildings. An abandoned church, with documentary or carved stone evidence of early medieval origins would represent an ideal site for exploration.

## 5. Empowerment

### 5.1 Word-power

This wide-ranging theme is concerned with the widest possible impacts of the written word in literate and non-literate contexts, much of it stemming from the cultural importance of the Bible and its associated texts. It is very much concerned with the written word as a constructed artefact but also in the interface of language and materiality, including the naming of people, places and things. It is concerned with the deployment of scripts (including inscriptions – on sculptures and portable objects), their contexts of production and dissemination (including monastic and non-monastic production and the material evidence for books), their spectrum of meanings (from literate and intellectual to amuletic and apotropaic, the intersection of writers, patrons and audiences and the interface with orality and music. Scotland boasts one of the

pre-eminent examples of complex book culture, *The Murthly Hours*. This book was commissioned and produced in Paris in the 13th century for an English noblewoman before passing via marriage to the MacDougall's of Lorne in the early 15th century and similarly, at a later date to the Stewarts of Grandtully and Perthshire. On its journey it acquired an amuletic function, supporting and supported by its religious text and images. In the late 14th or early 15th century Gaelic texts were added to it and reciting them in combination with touching the book or drinking water blessed by the hand that had just touched it was a cure for the sick (Higgitt 2000). Thus the changing, varied content of a text was transmitted not just through literacy but through a range of sensory perceptions, an issue returned to below.



**Figure 39: Two pages from the Murthly Hours. Right: folio 170r, from the Office of the Dead for Matins (or night-time). Material-text here shows and tells us about Christianity-wide rituals for the dead, including the apotropaic use of hand bells. Left: folio iiv, an originally blank page to which French, Latin and Gaelic texts were added, all of them prayers or charms. The Gaelic text was added last, in the late14th-early 15th century, above and below the French and Latin. All the additions were written on the page to protect the book's owner from either spiritual or physical dangers. The reproduction is made with the permission of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.**

The roles of the written word and the transition from orality to text, has generally been the province of historians and anthropologists. The best of this work (including McKitterick 1989, 1990; Clanchy 1993; Goody 1977, 1986) recognises the materiality of the written word and deserves the engagement of archaeologists. To paraphrase Ong (1982, 82, 91) as critiqued by Ingold (2007, 27), writing (hand-written or printed), in representing words, turns them into things. The scribe is someone who works with their hands and the act of inscribing – words, musical notation, graffiti – is a work of material culture. The act of inscription is both a visual representation of verbal sound and a physical echo of the hand movements that produced it. Even silent forms of communication, whether signed language or the range of gestures that frequently support verbal communication are not themselves acts of material culture, but they do have a dimension manifest in material culture. Monastic sign languages for silent communication were explained in written form in medieval manuscripts for example (Banham 1991, Sherlock 1989, Sherlock and Zajac 1988 and Barakat 1975). To turn Ingold's phrase around (2007, 28) 'signed words are no less thing-like than spoken ones.' The study of text is not the study of the inevitable rise of the paramountcy of written evidence nor is it about the written word as a benchmark of progressive civilisation but the study of a technology, a 'technology of the intellect' its potentialities 'dependent upon the kind of system that obtains in any particular society' (Goody 1968, 3). For medieval Scotland there are numerous examples of medieval texts – the Declaration of Arbroath and the already mentioned Murthly Hours included – almost the sole preserve of historical analysis. A number of approaches can be indicated:

- A wider, material cultural analysis of this 'technology of the intellect' remains highly desirable. A solid foundation for the early medieval period has been laid by the work of Forsyth for example both in her analysis of the inscriptions of Pictland and the implications for our understanding of multi-lingual, socially stratified literacy (Forsyth 1998, 39-61) and in her contribution to the interdisciplinary understanding of the 10th century Book of Deer manuscript (Forsyth 2008, 398-438).

- An archaeological approach to the materiality of word power for the whole medieval period in Scotland would have the advantage of bringing together materials (sculpture, manuscripts, metalwork for example) that are normally treated separately by diverse specialists, into a more integrated social analysis of the different forms of literacy and deployments (including illiterate) of word power. Many excavations of medieval sites in Scotland produce some evidence (be it a single, humble book clasp) that bear on the understanding of literacy (be it intellectual or magical).

- Revisiting museum collections with a fresh eye to reassess those objects with inscriptions will be a vital contribution to this work (as demonstrated for example by Hall and Owen 1998). An innovative new approach to the Icelandic Sagas endorses this call for a wider analysis of books and manuscripts as artefacts or 'cultural material.' Rich in information about identity, meaning and the application of power in the 13th century, sagas have 'a place in the landscape and can be explored and experienced as a cultural artefact. The saga writer, like an architect or a builder of a castle, manipulates the landscape and gives it meaning' (Hjaltalín 2009, 243).

If one is considering writing then one also has to consider reading, which anthropologist Tim Ingold (2007, 15) has characterised as

listening to remember, an act which allows writing to speak with past voices. Certainly in a medieval context, what links the materialisation of thought that is writing and reading with wider aspects of material culture is principally the act of remembering. From Late Antiquity to the Renaissance, writing was most valued as a memory aid. It enabled the creation of mental pathways along which the voices of the past could be retrieved and recontextualised in the present. Writing therefore was not primarily a recording exercise but one of retrieval and remembrance (Carruthers 1990, 1998, Ingold 2007, 15). Writing and inscribing are further enmeshed in material culture through their exemplary status as lines. Lines, as Ingold (2007) has demonstrated encompass many facets of human culture, whether as a thread or as a trace. Approaching the manifestation of lines places writing and inscribing in the context of various other human activities including weaving, drawing, singing, storytelling and walking. A further vital element to memory is commemoration, encompassing keeping chronicles, writing histories, acknowledging and celebrating Saint's days, having prayers said for the dead. For archaeologists in particular, commemorative acts can be accessed through burial monuments and relics (both secular and sacred).

**Writing beyond the book**



**Figure 40: Image of graveslab from Kilnave church, Islay, an example of West Highland sculpture © RCAHMS**

With respect to grave monuments, at a practical archaeological level there is little understanding of the relationship of monuments to the people commemorated – how or when the monuments were commissioned, and the actual physical relationship between monument and dead body. It is

important to understand that, thanks to the monuments, from time to time medieval archaeologists will actually be dealing with the physical remains of known people. That might suggest that a much greater degree of analysis and research should be directed at such interments than the bulk of unidentifiable ones.

There has been no adequate survey of grave monuments across Scotland. There is little or no understanding of the dating, symbolism and regional types of the generality of slabs. Only the effigies have been better served with interpretative research, up to now concentrating on the arms and armour on the military images. In many cases grave monuments are at risk from the elements or the hand of man. There is clearly a need for comprehensive regional surveys as a first step to developing a research strategy. Such surveys need to involve geologists to identify the types of rock used and their sources.

A thorough (rather than comprehensive) regional survey has already been made of medieval sculpture – essentially comprehending slabs, effigies and commemorative crosses – in the West Highlands and Islands. The work has been carried out by RCAHMS and published in their Argyll Inventories, and there is a valuable work of synthesis and interpretation by Steer & Bannerman (1977). There is much to criticise in this work, especially suspect and vague dating and a misplaced attempt to identify various schools of work. Nevertheless, it can provide a sound basis for further work. In framing a research strategy for medieval West Highland sculpture, it should be borne in mind that with over 900 examples surviving it has to be the densest concentration of its type anywhere in the medieval European world. Caldwell has argued in two papers (both Caldwell forthcoming) that this is because much of it was commissioned by a professional caste of warriors, many of whom grew rich in the wars in Ireland but had no families or land. The distribution of West Highland sculpture is one of the most obvious, clear-cut examples of artefacts/monuments defining a regional culture in medieval Britain.

There are so many ways to research and understand medieval artefacts, but unless it is appreciated that many of them have qualities beyond their mere functionality, and were often cherished out of any obvious context of time and place, the past will never fully be understood.

Research in this field up to now has largely been concentrated on a few well known surviving relics in museum collections. There is a need to identify and classify medieval relics and create a corpus. Much of this work will be documentary, and will identify relics that no longer survive. Perhaps the most important reason for gaining a greater understanding of our relics is that, by definition, they were valued. They provide a contrast to so many of our artefacts which are mundane and of pan-European type.

### 5.2    Standing stones

The carvings on early medieval/protohistoric stones are endlessly fascinating and they are, or should be, assured of a bright future in the art historical field. The time is now ripe to make more attempts to relate protohistoric and prehistoric images, rather than assume that every aspect of the iconography has its origins in the Levant, and in the Bible in particular. There should also be an expectation that communities have been able to articulate the ambiguity that allowed both interpretations to be possible in a certain circumstances. It should not be a surprise if missionaries related what local communities knew to what stories were in the Bible so as to persuade more readily. A recent inspiring work on Gallic images was that of Natalia Venclova (2002), who studied descriptions of the so-called Celtic tonsure and found its

resemblance on Iron Age and late Bronze Age statuary. Another line of inquiry might be to compare the sequence in the Pictish forms of standing stones and their iconography with the remarkably similar sequence on the Baltic island of Gotland, where a transition from symbol, to picture, to cross and from incised to relief carving can be observed, but which mostly took place before there was a Christian



**Figure 41: Pictish standing stone (number 1) at Aberlemno, dating to around the 7th century AD.©RCAHMS**

At the same time a greater emphasis on archaeological approaches and prehistoric contexts will bear fruit in a different area. Initial work has been undertaken in locating the stone used for carving in both Tarbat and Strathmore, for example (Miller and Ruckley 2005; Miller 2008, 289-94). The procurement of stone and the control of quarries no doubt had, or came to have, significance. Extraordinary as it may seem there is scarcely a single Pictish stone which has a known context, for example it is not known in what kind of place the great monuments of Moray or Angus stand or even if they are still in situ. One of the few exceptions is Portmahomack where there is an excellent ecclesiastical context for the site's early medieval sculpture. The association of the so-called Class I stones with burial grounds, while likely, has never been confirmed in a primary context.

church on the island. The forces powering these transitions do not depend on Christianity, though they do depend on the intellectual concerns of the day. Questions should be directed at finding the balance between indigenous motifs and stories, and Christian introduced and appropriated ones.

It would be a reasonable working assumption that all Pictish stones belong in a ritual context of some kind: i.e. they mark an enclosure, a burial or a feature in the landscape (Carver 2005). To explore their immediate context would seem a key priority. In heritage management there is a need to be sure that in conserving a stone in situ, one is not simply conserving the tip of an iceberg. And in research terms the investigation of the immediate context of the only artefacts that are ipso facto Pictish has the capacity to unlock the whole period. Among the candidates for major research investment, including evaluation, project design, excavation and area survey are Aberlemno and Shandwick – but there are dozens of others. The best conjuncture would be achieved where an unencumbered standing stone lay in an area well served by RCAHMS – so Rhynie.

The tactile links between the written word and monumental expression can be seen in a Scandinavian parallel that is of relevance to understanding Pictish stone sculpture and the Viking presence in Scotland. At the tenth-century royal seat of Jelling in Jutland, Denmark, King Harald Bluetooth erected the country's archetypal rune stone in the form of a massive three-sided block with complex inscriptions recording his rise to power, land claims and religious proclamations. In this sculpted document announcing Denmark's conversion to Christianity, the rows of runes are laid out horizontally instead of using the more usual vertical scheme, with illustrative panels at the beginning, and it is clear that the overall design of the monument is mimicking the pages of an illuminated manuscript – literally a book in stone (Roesdahl 1999).

## 5.3    Sensory perception

Memory leads to another crucial area of empowerment, how people perceived their worlds. There is a growing body of theoretical and contextually applied studies of medieval culture that demonstrate the value and insights offered by memory and sensory perception analysis. Material culture clearly functioned in complex ways in order to aid and develop memory. Sensory stimulation was an important aspect of this and a given piece of material culture was not restricted to stimulating a particular sense, be it sight, touch, hearing, taste, smell or indeed any of the at least 21 senses science suggests humans possess (Durie 2005, 36, quoted in Rifkin 2009, 585). Certainly the main, familiar senses tend to be analysed in isolation from each other as opposed to as a suite of varying skills possessed by human beings. Most analysis has gone to seeing and visual culture, not least because society culturally values this sense above the others. Anthropology and geography have led the way in exploring the interplay of the senses, cautioning against an over emphasis on seeing and vision, which archaeology has taken on board. Whilst a recent volume of *World Archaeology* focused on seeing and visibility it also acknowledged the need to recognise and study all the senses operating in balance (Frieman & Gittings 2007) and that 'invisibility' has cultural significance (Frontijn, 2007). There are numerous examples of medieval material culture where the object was essentially invisible to the human eye through acts of deposition and burial ritual or through placement in inaccessible parts of churches, but which were presumably thought to be visible in the supernatural plane or remained in some sense 'visible' through other senses. It is important to recognise that the cultural understanding of, say seeing, did vary through time and social context (Giles 2007). The interplay of sensory perception could be promoted in sophisticated ways by material culture, and sometimes explicitly as in the case of Anglo-Saxon metalwork that actually depicts one or more of the senses (such as the Alfred Jewel and the Fuller brooch –Webster & Backhouse 1991: 280-283).

Other material forms that are thought of as primarily visual would also have stimulated aural perception. Numerous pilgrim badges are known to have been cast in to the fabric of church bells in the 15th and 16th centuries so as to spread the apotropaic protection of one or several saints to all who heard the sound (Hall 2005 for references) whilst at the same time aurally reminding the community that the church was there, structuring their lives (see Magnusson-Staaf 1996 for a Scandinavian parallel). In his study of the Bayeux Tapestry, Brilliant (2007) demonstrated that its repertoire of memory invocations included making sounds (of battle, of feasting, of conversation) visible. It did so by deploying recognisable gestures and scene arrangements that enabled viewers to "'hear' through seeing" (p. 76). The Tapestry can thus be understood to have sought 'to make sound visible' (2007 74), deploying sensory strategies akin to those used by written accounts of the Battle of Hastings (2007 74). Such approaches might be usefully deployed in studying Scotland's medieval material culture, not least its early medieval/Pictish sculpture and its figurative repertoire. The external phenomena which give rise to our internal perceptions can also be studied, as for example with luminosity, which Bille and Sorensen (2007) have demonstrated links people, things, colours, shininess and places, allowing light to be thought of as having an 'active social role' (2007 264). That social role was not restricted to seeing but influenced the other senses. In their study of the light available in Arctic dwellings Dawson *et al.* (2007) concluded that the available light was a determining factor as to where activities were carried out, its low levels 'elevating touch to the same level as sight when performing intricate and detailed tasks' such as carving and sewing (2007 31). In the open air, and within buildings, light was a tool of colour which worked on painted and unpainted objects. Whether painted or not, early

medieval sculpture was subject to daily and seasonal changes in sunlight that could have been essential to the understanding of its carved imagery (see, for example, O' Carragain's forthcoming study of this aspect with respect to the crosses at Ruthwell and Bewcastle). Gothic stained glass, of course, was highly coloured but gained an abstract fluidity from the changing direction of sunlight painting the interior space of cathedrals.

### 5.4 Education and the national universities

Any review of stereotypically 'Scottish' traits today would include an unusual emphasis on the quality of individual education, and the reality behind this particular form of personal empowerment can be seen in the wide establishment of medieval grammar schools and the fact that for many centuries Scotland had more universities than England. The archaeology of educational institutions is a much-neglected field, though one that is opening up in the United States as universities begin to excavate their campuses (Skowronek & Lewis 2010). Few of the Scottish national universities have seriously explored their past through excavation and survey as opposed to archive study. The archaeology of medieval schools has been similarly overlooked, again with academic potential in their links with modern-day successors. The huge potential for the interdisciplinary analysis of medieval education has recently been demonstrated on a Europe-wide (including the UK) scale for the later medieval period by Willemsen (2008). In a fruitful combination of excavated material and sites with artistic and literary depictions of the period, Willemsen sheds fascinating and invaluable new light on the daily experience of education from both the perspective of the pupil and the teacher. It is particularly important in promoting the importance of school as a life-phase and childhood as an important area of study.

**Education**

The archaeological analysis of medieval education is in its infancy in Scotland. But the evidence is accumulating and archaeology is revealing important aspects at both ends of the medieval period. Excavations on the island of Inchmarnock, off Bute, at the remote (but well connected by sea) chapel site of St Marnock revealed rich evidence for monastic-based teaching on the island, during the 7th-11th centuries, succeeded by post-12th century teaching activity in the context of a proprietorial church. The key evidence for a schooling practice is a large assemblage of slates variously incised with graffiti, pictures, inscriptions, letter-forms and board games (an aspect of elite education and not unexpected if fostering was an element of the schooling practice on Inchmarnock), concentrated enough to be interpreted as pointing to a school-house sited between the workshop area and the living quarters of the monastery, and in sight of the church and cemetery (Lowe 2008, figures 6.15 & 9.7 and p. 114-116 & 257-263). The key evidence for later schooling practice is a group of six slates inscribed with Gothic letter forms, dating to the 13th-15th centuries (Lowe 2008, 149-151), though it should also be acknowledged that some of the gaming boards are also post-1200, notably the merels boards and at least one fragmentary stone bearing two unrecognised designs for haretavl ('hare and hounds') and probably alquerque. The stone was excavated from a child's grave of 17th/18th century date (Lowe 2008,169, IS.61) but could easily represent reuse of a medieval graffiti.

For the later medieval period elsewhere in Scotland there are several important pieces of material culture (notably the 15th century maces from the Universities of St Andrews and Glasgow – Caldwell 1982, 88-90) but it is only recently that excavation has started to contribute to our understanding of the medieval origin and development of universities in Scotland though there is some way to go to compete with some of the results achieved for the Continent. In Rostock, Germany, for example, extensive excavations have shone new light on the university buildings (for teaching, faculty and professors houses) and the study of magic at the university (Münch and Mulsow 2005).

**Figure 42: A painting from c.1640 showing red-gowned students outside King's College chapel in the University of Aberdeen. Current archaeological excavations are focussing on the site of the late medieval grammar school that can be seen here as a low building abutting the street wall in front of the College, © University of Aberdeen**

At King's College, archaeologists from the University of Aberdeen have begun investigating the buried history of their institution, focusing on the site of a late medieval grammar school. The building is depicted on Parson Gordon's coloured map of Old Aberdeen from 1661, and on several contemporary paintings, showing a single-storey stone structure located near the chapel founded by Bishop Elphinstone. Documentary records indicate that the school was in existence at least from the Reformation, and aimed to provide remedial tuition in Latin for students – some as young as 11 – whose existing skills were not up to the task of university studies (Stevenson & Davidson 2008, 134f). In oblique light conditions sub-surface features are clearly visible on the College lawns, and geophysical surveys have confirmed the presence of buried masonry structures where the school is believed to have stood. Full-scale excavations are planned to begin soon, incorporated into a new research programme for the archaeology of the King's College campus and its environs.

## 5.5 Playtime

This section is concluded with an aspect of human behaviour that could fit almost anywhere in this framework given its relevance, which makes it the more striking that it is a relatively neglected area of study: play. This tends to get dismissed by many as a childish activity of no great import – a misapprehension on two counts: that childhood is unimportant; and that play is only restricted to childhood. In reality it is a pivotal area of human culture that is relevant to every stage of life. In part this is because it enables an escape from life into 'play-time' but it also has the ability to reflect social hierarchies and human ingenuity. It is an important area of study, relevant to a greater understanding of lifeways, mentalities and empowerment. The release that comes from

play is hugely important to humans, whether child or adult, not least in its metaphorical and psychological role in 'Worldmaking' (for the concept of which see Goodman 1978).

Work has begun on the material culture analysis of board and dice games in Scotland. The presence of such begins to be clearly testified to from the time of the Roman incursion. In the second half of the first millennium AD there is plentiful evidence for the cross-cultural (Pictish, Gaelic, Scottish, Irish, Viking, British, Anglo-Saxon) pursuit of games, particularly the *tafl* variants *hnefatafl* and *fidcheall* (which may both be innovations deriving from a Roman game) (Hall 2007d; Hall & Forsyth 2011). The medieval social relevance of gaming is aptly demonstrated by the assemblage of slate-incised boards excavated at St Marnock's monastery, Inchmarnock, off Bute (Lowe 2008). There they formed part of a large slate assemblage that evidenced the school function of the monastery and the proprietorial church that succeeded it.

During both phases board games were clearly amongst the teaching aids and the subjects being taught. The evidence for later medieval gaming has also been reviewed recently (Hall 2010 forthcoming) and in a Scottish context the early-late transition in gaming terms is marked by the advent and expansion of chess.

The earliest evidence for chess in Scotland may be an abstract piece (with ring-and-dot decoration), an antiquarian find from Coldingham churchyard. An 11th-12th century date for this is not unlikely. This and slightly later abstract pieces from Rothesay Castle, Bute and Kirkwall, Orkney may speak of an Anglo-Norman influence in the spread of the game. In contrast, the figurative Lewis chessmen (part of a wider hoard of gaming pieces) speak of a Scandinavian influence and from a time - late 12th-early 13th century – when the popularity of hnefatafl was waning in favour of chess. The robust Lewis pieces are replete with visual and tactile reference to social hierarchy, patronage, exchange and

trade patterns and then high esteem in which play was held. More widely they signal that the island of Lewis was not a cultural backwater but a place that mattered in the North Sea world (Caldwell *et al.* 2009). Abstract chess pieces (deriving from Islamic pieces) were never replaced by figurative pieces, rather they shared the same chronological trajectory (with, no doubt, fashionable ups-and-downs) as abstract jet chess bishop from a 14th century context in Meal Vennel, Perth, shows (Hall 2010 forthcoming). The material from Scotland is diverse socially, spatially and materially and contributes to the wider European study of medieval mentalities (Hall 2009b).

In recovering the spatial architecture of play in the medieval urban environment archaeologists have much ground to make up and can only do so in an inter-disciplinary context. There are two main aspects to play spaces, the formal and the informal. The informal encompasses those spaces – urban and rural domestic, castles, monasteries and churches – where gaming equipment and toys are found and requires a flexible mind-set on what can be interpreted as a plaything and the setting it is used in (which for children for example, can be almost anything and almost anywhere; Crawford 2009; Lewis 2009; Hall 2010).

**Figure 43: Jet chess bishop of abstract form from a 14<sup>th</sup> century context in Perth (Meal Vennel), probably the possession of a burgess. Being made of jet would also have given the piece an amuletic quality, © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.**

The formal encompasses both teaching spaces (see Education boxed example above) the routes and locales of medieval civic and religious rituals (including Corpus Christi), for, as Lilley (2009) has observed social space 'carries and constricts social and cultural meanings so it [is] appropriate to consider where processions went in the city: which streets or lanes they followed, which marketplaces and churches they stopped at … these routes are the clearest maps to the significant power structures within a community since they are always deliberately designed with reference to places that are important.' (p. 164).

Archaeology needs to more closely collaborate on elucidating the performed geographies of processions (always acts of play) and their meanings.

The evidence for Perth's processional and performing spaces is admittedly slight (Hall 2005, 223-4) but it is unequivocal in its certainty and sufficient to draw parallels with other European cities, including Chester (which also had a performing space just outside the town wall), York, Bruges (like Bruges, Perth had a relic of the Holy Blood), Rome, Wurzburg and Frankfurt (Lilley 2009, 158-87; Rubin 1991, 267-9; Dyer 2007;

Noreen 2007; Brown 1997; Boogaart 2001). Such performances were not restricted to cities, smaller urban entities and parish centres had their play places and in Cornwall many still survive (e.g. St Just); in Scotland they became perhaps an unseen casualty of Reformation zeal.

The known incident of social performance in Perth incorporating the river Tay was when the Glover Incorporation, in all their livery, performed a sword dance on a floating platform in the river, to celebrate Charles II's coronation in Scone in 1633 (Bennett 1985). It should serve to remind that it was unlikely to have been a one off but part of a long-standing, medieval tradition of civic performance and once more link Perth to wider European practice: pageantry and performance on and around the river Rhine at Basle, Switzerland and on the river Adige at Trento, northern Italy are but two examples.

Certainly before the Reformation in Scotland (and in some parts of it well after) such rituals, performances, plays and pageants had a dual function of seeking to establish and reinforce a hierarchical, social cohesion (under God) and through the recitation of Psalms, prayers and hymns that accompanied and were integral to processions (especially of relics, themselves powerful agents) sought God's apotropaic protection for the town or city, against all evil and misfortune.

**Figure 44: The Perth Glovers Dance Dress. In a strong medieval tradition the Glovers performed a sword dance for King Charles II in 1633. This is the sole surviving costume with additions, repairs and alterations made over the subsequent 300 years. It was donated to Perth Museum in 1944, © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.**

## 5.6    The Future

The framework has identified the following key future research areas and issues:

- Revisiting museum collections with a fresh eye to reassess those objects with inscriptions is key to understanding the deployment of the written word.

- There is clearly a need for comprehensive regional surveys of grave monuments across Scotland to improve the understanding of their dating, symbolism and regional types. Such surveys need to involve geologists to identify the types of rock used and their sources;

- The need for an emboldened practice of archaeology which rather than seeing archaeology as text, takes on text as material culture/archaeology. Text is a technological, material culture innovation linked into a network of signs, symbols and thought processes. As useful as metaphor is, archaeology as text can only ever be a metaphor where as text as archaeology or material culture is an experienced, imaginatively rich, reality of life.

- Scottish studies of material culture and monumentality need to develop a greater understanding of the ways in which they reflect sensory perception, memory and play cultures at work. In archaeological terms these are relatively neglected areas that offer the potential to enrich understanding of past social behaviours.

# 6. Parameters: Material Histories and Textual Archaeologies

## 6.1 Material culture

The basic issues of this subject area, including its methodologies and ethics, are succinctly expressed by John Moreland:

> *"Archaeologists must recognise that people in the historical past wove or constructed their identities, not just from the objects they created, possessed and lived within, but through texts as well. As products of human creativity, they too were created and distributed within social relationships, and were crucial weapons in attempts to reproduce or transform them. As such, the 'silent majority' [i.e. the 'people without history' with whom archaeologists are often said to engage], although illiterate, were deeply entangled in the webs created by writing. Equally, however, historians must recognise that their exclusive focus on the written sources provides them with access to only one thread in the fabric of human identity - hardly a reliable basis for the reconstruction of the whole"* (Moreland 2001: 83f).

The inference of the intangible from the material is fundamental to any cognitive archaeology, but is also at the heart of the problems inherent in any attempt to recover the mentalities of past societies. By the same token, there is little argument that the world-views of ancient cultures are fundamental to their very nature, and that they cannot be fully understood in terms of material empiricism alone. In a sense, the mind-set of a culture as articulated in physical form is the sum of all material culture, in that the artefactual record is a reflection of a view of the world and the ways in which any given people interact with it. Suffice to say here that, again in the context of ethnicity and power-politics, one needs to be alert to variations in the material expressions of attitudes and ideas as much as the cruder imperatives of economic subsistence and prosperity. Of necessity the character of archaeology and of the Scottish evidence favours the study of early historic Scotland as a prehistoric period. The aim will be to complement documentary evidence, not to replicate it.

In order for material culture studies to grow and contribute to archaeological analysis it is vital that the potential of existing museum collections, excavated assemblages, and stray find material allocated through Scottish Treasure Trove is pursued. A huge amount of material in museum collections remains unstudied and would benefit from re-examination and re-interpretation (or in some cases examination and interpretation for the first time). This may be seen as a general rather than period-specific issue, although there are certainly period-specific dimensions which may need considered. Many non-National museums struggle to prioritise collections research but the allocation of Treasure Trove to museums can seem almost futile if they are not then studied and interpreted. This undoubtedly needs more museum-based archaeologists and additional resources to begin to effect a change but Perth Museum, for example, has been able to demonstrate some of the possibilities (e.g. Hall *et al.* 1998; Hall *et al.* 2000; Bateson & Hall 2002; Hall 2002; Hall 2005a; Hall *et al.* 2005; Dickinson *et al.* 2006 and Hall 2007a and b).

An example is the re-evaluation of the assemblages from early excavations, and particularly examples where an early/medieval site type has been greatly

affected by antiquarian excavation: for example crannogs. While the lack of archaeological context in these cases is a limitation, it is not sufficient justification for ignoring what information does exist. In many cases, antiquarian excavations provide a far broader sample of material than is available from recently excavated sites. The re-evaluation of some of the finds excavated by Munro from Lochspouts Crannog (Blackwell forthcoming) include a Christian jet pendant, possibly of early medieval origin, and what has been described as a rock crystal amulet which is very similar in shape and dimensions to the piece mounted on the base of the Ardagh Chalice. Previous work has not flagged up other possible early historic material from the site, making this is a new addition to the list of sites utilised during the early historic period. Beyond this, one can start looking at a range of questions including where these objects came from, how they might have been used, and where and how other similar pieces were used. More broadly, there is a constant need to re-evaluate objects in museum collections as has been demonstrated by Hall (including 1998, 2001, 2004, 2005b and 2007c and see Crone, Hall & Fawcett 2000) for a range of antiquarian and later found medieval objects in the Perth Museum collections. Pooling expertise across institutions is another means by which collections can be re-evaluated, as the recent new analysis of the Lewis chessmen has shown (Caldwell, Hall & Wilkinson 2009).

It is vital to make the most of excavated assemblages when they are first published. Every object should have a comprehensive description by a specialist in that field, clear context/stratigraphic information, and ideally be illustrated. An example where this potential was missed is the Castle Park, Dunbar report where broken links between contexts and finds can make it difficult to reconstruct their find position. Some significant objects (including some Anglo-Saxon glass beads) were not identified or illustrated, and others, including the buckle which was used as the main dating evidence

for Northumbrian activity, were only very briefly discussed. The Dundonald Castle report is another case in point, with links between the objects and their contexts in some cases completely lacking.

Three examples of these issues-in-action can be taken by examining three key groups of artefacts:

**Early medieval glass beads:** A relatively limited amount of work has been done on Scottish glass beads. As part of the Glenmorangie sponsored Early Historic Scotland Research Project, Blackwell has identified over 50 early historic imported glass beads from Scotland held in existing museum collections; the vast majority had just not been identified previously. Most of the small number that had previously been identified as imported were erroneous beads of later date. Once a body of material has been identified, it will be relevant to multiple different themes and interpretations – which in the case of these beads might include how they relate to other kinds of imports, the mechanisms for distribution and re-distribution, and the possible uses and social significance of them. The re-assessment of glass beads (or indeed other artefact categories) could be advanced under multiple thematic headings or via the outlining of research priorities for object types, and then over-arching priorities for groups of material. This second approach was adopted by the compilers of *Understanding the British Iron Age: an agenda for action* (2001) . Within that structure, their 'Material culture' section briefly reviewed general issues (data collection, need for basic studies of technology, dating etc), the production, distribution, use and deposition of material culture in the period, and research priorities by material type (glass, bone etc). Some aspects of the later 'Processes of change' section highlighted thematic priorities relating to material culture.

**Pottery:** The manufacture of medieval pottery in Scotland appears to be a late phenomenon probably given impetus by the founding of

burghs and thus the appearance of a ready captive market. The earliest identified industry is the Scottish Whiteware one, for several years this was thought to be concentrated on the Scottish East Coast but recent chemical sourcing has indicated that it was actually more widespread (Jones *et al.* 2006). Typological work has indicated that it is possible to assign regional vessel groupings to this industry but no more than three production sites have been definitely located and only one of them, Colstoun, has ever been properly investigated (Hall 2004). The Scottish Redware industry is the other major source of pottery excavated from our medieval burghs but again currently only two production sites are known: at Rattray (Aberdeenshire) and Stenhousemuir (Falkirk), although both sites have seen excavation (Murray and Murray 1993; Hall and Hunter 2001 and Hall 2007). Rattray is of interest as it may be indicative of a local industry which was only set up to supply the burgh and whose products did not travel any further afield. The production site at Stenhousemuir has always been thought to date to the 15th and 16th centuries - recent rescue excavation has located evidence for earlier production. Based on the style and decoration on some of the vessels, this site's production has been linked with the Knights of St John at Torphichen Preceptory. Interestingly, land directly adjacent to the Colstoun production centre was also owned by that military order, hinting that suggestions of a monastic involvement or impetus to pottery manufacture in Scotland may not be so far away from the truth (Hall 2006). The frustrations of the lack of Scottish pottery production centres have been tempered in recent years by the arrival of Inductively Coupled Mass Spectroscopy (ICPMS). This technique essentially allows for the analysis of shards of pottery in such a way that they can be compared with each other and an attempt made to identify the location of production sites. Of the two native industries, the Scottish Redware is the one that had produced the most consistent results, with the ability to separate groups of samples from sites that are often quite close to each other (Spynie/Elgin). Surprisingly, there is also the suggestion that redware pottery and tiles are being manufactured on different sites (Haggarty, Hall & Chenery 2011). Without a doubt the appearance of this technique has revolutionised the study of ceramics and it is important that samples are continued to be fed into the database.

**Figure** 45**: Remarkably only one medieval tile kiln has ever been located in Scotland in the grounds of North Berwick nunnery, the group of highly decorated tiles in this photograph were recovered from the 1929 excavations. A recent Historic Scotland funded programme of chemical sourcing has suggested that tiles were being produced across medieval Scotland contrary to earlier views that the Scots imported all their floor tiles from the Low Countries ©National Museums Scotland.**

**Figure 46: The introduction of coinage by successive Scottish monarchs in the 12th century had considerable political, economic and social connotations. In spite of this, comparatively little is known about these early issues and this example of a penny of William the Lion is only one of five known from this striking. The increasing popularity of metal detecting has the potential to greatly increase our understanding of these issues, © S.Campbell.**

**Coins:** Coins, or a wider study of numismatics, have to be considered a separate topic given the specialist nature of the work. The coins minted in Scotland from the 12th century to the beginning of the 18th century are generally well understood, but form only a small fraction of the currency in use. The use of English currency is a constant of the period from the 13th-17th centuries, with a smaller amount of continental issues also present. Since 1978, Donal Bateson and Nick Holmes have been keeping a record of pre 1700 coin finds from Scotland, which is published in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*. The growth of metal detecting as a hobby has inevitably meant increasing numbers of discoveries which have added much needed nuance and detail to the use and distribution of coinage in Scotland, and has also allowed some rare or unknown specimens thus recovered to be claimed as Treasure Trove. With the notable exception of the major study by Gemmill and Mayhew in 1995 there has been little attempt to assess what money meant in practice, and surely a lot more could be done with coin distributions and study in terms of assessing the nature of the economy and regional trends. A significant, but hopefully short term, problem that has to be overcome is the lack of numismatists. National Museums Scotland (NMS) no longer has one, and the largest and best collection of Scottish coins is therefore closed, although NMS continues to acquire rare or significant specimens via the Treasure Trove process. There is a lack elsewhere of appropriate numismatic knowledge, either professional or amateur.

Arguably, it has been easy to label and dismiss 'stray finds' because of their lack of archaeological stratigraphic context. However, different types of context can of course be reconstructed. For instance the location of finds may inform on senses of

landscape, particularly if deliberate deposition is a possibility. After Christianity individual finds are assumed to be accidental losses, but is this justified? Alternatives include disposal through manuring, and deliberate (votive) deposition in the landscape. When three brooches are found deliberate deposition is usually assumed (i.e. a hoard), but when it is only one brooch it is described as a casual loss. Distributions of types of object (e.g. penannular brooches), or material from a particular period can be very useful and potentially give a wider picture than that achieved by considering excavated sites alone. Stray finds may also indicate 'productive' sites, or what may otherwise be invisible sites, such as fairs or meeting places. Often new Treasure Trove finds are circulated to the small number of experts, and following this they are sometimes published. But this should not be seen as the job done – it is important to emphasise the importance of re-visiting material and subjecting it to multiple perspectives and interpretative frameworks.

In discussions of material culture one generally speaks of Archaeologists excavating phases and processes, but every so often particular events in time are uncovered. Obvious categories of these include: the deposition of hoards, shipwrecks, and battles. Archaeologists have often tended to be cautious about the identification of excavated features, for example burnt deposits in urban excavations, with recorded events - but where such a correlation is well founded there ought to be advantages in maximising what can be recovered from the archaeological record. A considerable element of serendipity is usual in the discovery of hoards and shipwrecks and it would therefore be difficult to draw up a research strategy which depended on their discovery. Hoards, in which the sole or main component is coins, are by no means unusual for the medieval period and have invariably been claimed as Treasure Trove to allow work to be done on them, although the bulk of their contents are not normally retained for the nation.

No medieval ship wrecks have been recovered from Scottish waters – at least ones of earlier date than the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed only 8 wreck sites have been designated in Scottish waters through the 1973 Protection of Wrecks Act, and a new Scottish Marine Act will probably not lead to a significant increase in designations or more money being poured into the discovery and research of new wreck sites. And yet, it surely has to be a major aim that medieval wrecks be discovered and researched. What is necessary is having the skills and resources to deal with hoards and ship wrecks when they come along. An issue that has to be addressed in the case of shipwrecks is our capacity to deal with water-logged finds and timbers. NMS is the only institution north of York that has a large freeze drier unit, but through staff changes has all but lost staff experienced in using it, and thanks to other major commitments over the next few years, conserving water-logged material will remain a very low priority. Until reasonable access to skilled conservation of water-logged material can be guaranteed it is difficult to see how a proactive programme to discover wrecks can be contemplated.

The other approach to medieval material culture (indeed to monuments and sites as well) that would benefit our understanding of the period (both as a period and as part of a much longer durée) is cultural biography. The value of this approach has certainly been demonstrated for the early medieval/protohistoric period, notably through its application to the understanding of Pictish sculpture, including Hilton of Cadboll (James *et al.* 2008b) and St Madoes/Inchyra (Hall forthcoming). It requires an interdisciplinary outlook (see below) and the facility to recover the dynamics of human behaviour particularly with respect to appropriation and re-use, and in "real" past-time, i.e. not broken-up with hindsight inflected period determinants. For the later medieval period in Scotland little has been done in the way of cultural biography and yet there is a huge potential, not least –

to take one example – with respect to the cult of saints' relics.

## 6.2    *Encounters*

Scotland's role in the world – both on the wide international scene and closer to home – has always been a defining aspect of the region's (and, later, the nation's) identity. Its population has been supplemented through immigration from many different lands, in migratory patterns that feed constantly back and forth rather than in one direction. Its ethnicities have been partly constructed not only through the creation of hybrid identities but also through simple inter-breeding among this diverse populace. All of this involves, of course, a continual transference not only of genes but also of ideas and their material correlates, i.e. the objects of the archaeological record. As with many of the exploratory categories set out in this document, this again is a cross-cutting theme echoing the content and conclusions of other sections. Examples include:

**Scotland in Britain and Ireland**: embracing not only links south of the Border but also within the Irish Sea region, taking its most dramatic form in the wars with England and the long process of state-development in Scotland;

**Mercenaries and the export of aggression:** reflecting the extreme prevalence of Scottish fighting forces in Continental armies during much of the Middle Ages, a position shared only with the Germans and Swiss. The interest of this field is matched by its difficulties, a case in point being excavations of foreign battlefields were Scots fought. The Battle of Good Friday, fought between the Danes and Swedes at Uppsala on 6th April 1520, involved a nominally 'Danish' army largely comprised of Scottish mercenaries. Bodies from the battle were excavated from a mass grave in 2001, but without ready possibility of identifying their nationality (Syse 2003).

**Crusaders and pilgrims,** and the steady movement of individuals to the Middle East with both peaceful and aggressive intent (or both, according to circumstance) bringing with them new conduits for material culture and ideas that in turn led to the creation of genuinely new identities characteristic of these groups, linking to similar crusader-pilgrims of other nations.

**Figure 47: In 2001, builders widening a cycle track in the town of Uppsala, Uppland province, Sweden, uncovered what soon proved to be a mass grave of casualties from the Battle of Good Friday, fought on 6th April 1520 between an occupying force of Danes and an informal Swedish peasant assembly. The conflict is of relevance in the present context because the nominally 'Danish' army was largely composed of Scottish mercenaries. Attacking in heavy snow and across the frozen Fyris River, the Swedish force initially prevailed but failed to consolidate their situation. As the peasants prematurely turned to plundering the town, the Scots troops regrouped on the castle hill and then counter-attacked through the streets to achieve a total victory. Remains of some 60 individuals were found in the mass grave at the foot of the castle hill, most with blade injuries or other clear signs of trauma (Syse 2003). The corpses were interred in several layers, in some of which miscellaneous body parts had been reassembled in broadly anatomical position (i.e. several heads in a pile, connecting to piles of torsos and limbs). As the Swedish bodies are recorded as having been left on the field, it is likely that the occupants of the grave were from the Danish/Scottish army, though no isotope analyses have been undertaken that might illuminate their geographic origin. The image shows some of the crania as first found in grave A2, © Uppland Museum.**

### 6.3    Collaborative studies

Collaboration within and beyond archaeology is essential for investigating Scotland's medieval past. The form this takes can vary, from working with archaeological specialists, those in neighbouring disciplines such as history and anthropology, and scientists. Engaging with local knowledge is essential to understanding local conditions, while experimental archaeology allows an engagement with past processes. Working with craftsmen also provides an experiential component to approaching the past.

For a while it was fashionable for disciplinary naiveté to hold the floor – it seemed appropriate for disciplines such as archaeology and anthropology to look inwards at what their contribution was so as

to be able to say clearly what archaeology or what anthropology was and what they were not. This is perhaps best typified by the work of anthropologist Max Gluckman *et al.* (1964), advocating deliberate naiveté as a research procedure, deliberately and with discipline ignoring the work of other fields of enquiry. However, as observed by Silverman (1979, 413-14) this made a huge assumption that disciplinary colleagues could agree on the boundaries of their discipline, particularly with respect to anthropology and, one could add, archaeology. Archaeology, like anthropology, rarely studies problems 'confined within sharp disciplinary boundaries' (ibid, 414) but has sometimes betrayed the same anxiety about overlapping with history in particular. A key advocate of this anxiety about archaeology as the hand-maiden of history has been Austin (e.g. Austin 1997; Austin & Thomas 1997), though his stance has softened more recently (2007). Whilst it remains important for any discipline to understand the parameters of its operation, it must equally recognise that the unknowable past lies outside its parameters. A multi-disciplinary interface must surely be the goal in order to maximise the potential for a fuller understanding of the past - an approach long-championed by archaeologists working on medieval Scotland (e.g. Wainwright 1955; Alcock 1983, 2003; Austin & Alcock 1997) and is a bench-mark of the St Andrews Dark Age Studies Conference series, which commenced in 1993, under the guiding hand of Barbara Crawford and, more recently, Alex Woolf (Crawford 1993, 1996, 1998, 2002; and Woolf 2006).

Humanities- and Science-based perspectives, which for the purposes of the document mainly embraces the extraordinary advances made in archaeological science in the last few decades, to the extent that the spectacular discoveries of the future are as, if not more, likely to be made in the laboratory as in the excavation trench. The integration of humanities scholarship with the natural and physical sciences has not always been smooth, and the Framework could usefully explore new avenues of collaboration and the development of new theoretical perspectives.

Archaeology and textual scholarship has experienced similar problems of integration, even though the cliché of archaeology as an expensive way of finding out what the historians already know is thankfully past. Many archaeologists have worked well with historians, and it is becoming more common to find them also working proactively with textual sources. The Framework would do Scottish medieval archaeology a great service if it could integrate its overall approaches more closely with those of other regions and time periods that involve a similar multiplicity of data types. Ethnological study of traditional practices is also a vital source of interpretation for excavators of medieval and later structures and their artefacts. Ethnology has a tradition of research that goes back to the 19th century, but its best known exponent in recent years has been Sandy Fenton, who has produced many works on the subject, including *A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology* in 14 volumes.

Beyond working with colleagues in other academic disciplines or co-ordinated working across the archaeology sector, there are major benefits to working with people with local knowledge (for instance of particular land or weather conditions) or with what might be regarded as 'traditional' skills. These skills can be hugely helpful in the understanding of earlier spaces, places, objects and manufacturing processes. A good example of this in practice is the work of the Glenmorangie Research Project on Early Historic Scotland, based at the National Museums Scotland. As part of an ongoing partnership with The Glenmorangie Company, the museum has been commissioning contemporary artists and craftworkers to produce versions of early historic objects that are more reconstructions than replicas. Two such commissions have been delivered: the recreation of a Pictish throne and a pair of early Christian book satchels. Partnership with master wood and leather workers was

essential in reconstructing the designs from very fragmentary archaeological remains. Manufacture gave often unexpected insights into the processes, tools, resource management necessary to create such pieces. Aiding the formation of links between archaeological and non-archaeological specialists should be encouraged wherever possible.

Experimental archaeology is a potential way of addressing gaps in our knowledge of, for example, pottery production and the use of

kilns. Future applications should be explored along with the potential of engaging public and school participation.

Existing inter-disciplinary collaboration in Scotland has demonstrated that the Early Historic period is a project with international potential and that a collaborative ethic and approach needs to be enhanced over the whole of the medieval period in Scotland so that its international value is equally developed.

### 6.4    The Future

The framework has identified the following key future research areas and issues:

- Collaborative approaches should be encouraged, both within archaeology, and with those working in other disciplines including history and the environmental sciences. The discipline needs to consider how it can best release the research potential of information from all sectors and address gaps in knowledge.

- Access to data should be promoted and creative solutions are required to record, make available and disseminate a range of types of data to different audiences. Digitisation of existing resources and journals such as *The Old Statistical Account* (OSA) and the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* offers an example of what can be done.

- Cultural biography should be more widely applied. This approach offers huge potential in recovering the life histories of objects (and therefore the social dynamics of their human creators, users and reusers) both within a period of study and beyond, thereby linking the medieval into much longer patterns of behaviour. It also has the potential to link the personal scale to the wider landscape palimpsest scale.

- The existing material in museums and new material retrieved through the Treasure Trove procedure are a major resource of largely untapped potential. Addressing this should include systematic scientific analyses (such as the current work on the Monymusk reliquary) and dating programmes. Storage facilities are urgently required, both for existing analysis and potential future techniques. Monitoring of remains that degrade, and evaluation of collections to free space for better stratified, well-preserved material should be pursued.

- Given the chronological problems, priority should be given to obtaining large suites (30+) of well-contexted and identified samples in order to obtain dates from well-stratified sites with plentiful artefacts (e.g. at sites such as Beirgh or the Udal).  This would be a very cost-effective strategy.

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**Internet Resources**

A Corpus of Scottish Medieval Parish Churches: http://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/~cmas/sites.php

RCAHMS Canmore: http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/

The Historic Rural Settlement Group: http://www.molrs.org.uk/html/research.asp