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Editorial

These Proceedings have been published continuously since 1851 but there has never been an annual volume of such a size as this one. The circumstances are, however, commensurately unusual. Over half of the articles published here stem from the backlog of reports that had built up from the projects financed by Historic Scotland, and by its predecessors, over the last two decades. The introductory paper by Gordon Barclay and Olwyn Owen provides the background to this publicly-funded activity, the results of which should be widely known. In the face of this tidal wave of newly accessible archaeological information, the Publications Committee and the Council of the Society felt that we had a duty to respond, by providing the means to disseminate the results of this excavation and research.

The work financed by Historic Scotland, some of which is published here, covers much of the breadth of the Society’s own sphere of interest which was set out, in 1780, in Law 1: ‘the study of the antiquities and history of Scotland, more especially by means of archaeological research’. It was an inevitable consequence of this broad canvas that the Proceedings should come to be regarded as the national archaeological journal of Scotland. Now, in the 1990s, the Publications Committee hopes that Fellows will agree that the majority of the papers that appear in the Proceedings are of national importance - difficult though it is to define such a concept in practical terms – but we are confident that all of the articles that we publish are of national interest. This does not mean that each and every article on a Scottish archaeological subject should be submitted to the Proceedings. Regional journals provide the place for topics of regional interest and they are a key factor in the maintenance of a healthy spectrum of archaeological publishing; we wish to see these journals thrive in Scotland, as elsewhere.

Our Fellows are by no means confined to Scotland but are scattered throughout Europe and North America, and across the wider world. (The societies with which we exchange our publications extend this range even farther.) In consequence, the vision of the Publications Committee has been to continue to provide a national journal for Scotland, but also to see the Proceedings as a journal with an international role, presenting the particular contribution of Scotland within the archaeology and history of Europe. In pursuit of this, papers that offer an overview of the state of knowledge, on any theme within the Society’s sphere, are particularly welcome. Indeed, an element of synthesis and an appreciation of context should be present in any paper accepted for publication. The series of commissioned Review Articles that has appeared in recent volumes has played a major role in advancing our understanding in this way; it is our hope that these wide-ranging syntheses can be reinstated among the contents of each volume once the backlog of reports has been cleared.

The Society is indebted to Historic Scotland for its substantial financial support for the production of this volume, and to the members of its staff (particularly Gordon Barclay, Olwyn Owen, and Patrick Ashmore) who have pursued so assiduously the goal of ensuring that the results of their grant-aided excavations and research could be brought to the point of publication. The editorial work required by the Society to see this volume through the press has demanded far more input than the Editor could cope with alone; much of the effort was put in by Anna Ritchie. Her professional care and diligence in this task have ensured its successful outcome.

Humphrey Welfare