

## Lecture Summaries

### The Excavations of the Baroque palace and garden of the Earls of Mar at Alloa

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Excavations were carried out by the Scottish Urban Archaeological Trust on the site of Alloa House between October 1989 and October 1990, under the auspices of the Alloa Tower Building Preservation Trust. The Trust was set up in 1988 to renovate Alloa Tower and improve the area around it, and as part of the initiative it was decided to excavate the remains of the 18th-century house with a view to consolidation and display.

The site has a great historical importance. The house was in large measure the work of the 6th Earl of Mar, perhaps the most famous representative of a family who were a great power in Scotland for many years. When Mar succeeded to the title in 1689, he inherited 'more debts than estate' but over the next 25 years he transformed Alloa and its industry. He also enlarged and improved his own estate, laying out elaborate gardens which were considered the finest in Scotland. He demolished some of the ancillary buildings which had grown up around the Tower, enlarging and adding to others to form a more coherent classical mansion. This work included many alterations to the Tower itself, changing the medieval fortress into an elegant adjunct to the house.

Mar's successful political career came to an end after the ill-fated Battle of Sheriffmuir. He spent the rest of his life in exile, where he continued to elaborate and change the plans of Alloa House. These drawings were of great help in planning the excavation strategy and in identifying the excavated features.

The House underwent considerable alterations in the late 18th century, as contemporary illustrations show. It was completely destroyed by fire in 1800.

The excavations revealed that most of the house was built directly on to the bedrock. The walls were extensively robbed, but enough has survived to allow a virtually complete reconstruction of the plan. The house consisted of three fairly distinct parts. The first was a relatively narrow range on the west side, abutting the Tower on the north end and running some 40 m south. Behind or east of the range was the central block, focused on the great waiting hall. Finally, two wings led off the main building, one from the north-east corner and one from the south-east. The south-east wing lay at an oblique angle to the rest of the building, and may be part of an earlier structure.

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Most of the remains corresponded quite closely to Mar's plan of 1727, although there were exceptions. For example, abutting the front range on the west side was a low rectangular plinth with a step on the outer side flanked by two column bases. Two narrow wing walls ran off the north-west and the south-west corners, with a slightly wider wall abutting the south wing. This structure bears no resemblance to any of Mar's designs for porches, nor to the porch shown on later illustrations, after the alterations.

Portions of the south-east wing were very well preserved, as several of the rooms had cellars. Their outlines follow Mar's plan, but a number of features have been added or altered. Below the 'waiting hall' in the central block are the wine cellars, consisting of a north-south corridor with three vaulted rooms leading off it. Two of these rooms have brick bins for wine bottles, the third has stone benches for beer barrels. The cellars appear to have continued in use after the destruction of the house.

In addition to the building, two sets of drains were found. One began in the wine cellar beneath the central block, and ran through the court between the north-east and the south-east wings. The other ran between the front range and the south-east wing. It was comprised of a fine series of rock cut channels, still retaining a small portion of the original stone vaulted cover. There were relatively few finds, mostly of standard 18th-century types.

The consolidation and display of the site will be completed in Spring 1993. The renovated Tower should be open to the public in 1994 and will house most of the interpretive and display material on the site.

## The Neolithic settlement of Eilean Domhnuill, Loch Olabhat, North Uist

Ian Armit\*

The site of Eilean Domhnuill, Loch Olabhat, North Uist, is providing an insight into the Neolithic of the Western Isles and highlighting the diversity of Scottish regional traditions in this period. A series of excavations has been conducted on the site since 1986, funded by the National Museums of Scotland, the Russell Trust, the Munro Trust and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. These excavations have been part of the Loch Olabhat Research Project which has also included a wide-ranging programme of survey and excavation of sites of other periods.

Eilean Domhnuill is an islet in Loch Olabhat, a small, shallow loch in the bleak peatlands of the north-west corner of North Uist. Until the current programme of excavations it was regarded as one of the many island duns and brochs of the Hebridean Iron Age. An earlier *sondage*, by the local antiquary Erskine Beveridge, revealed nothing to allow him to distinguish the site from the many Iron Age sites he had examined in the area.

Initially the focus of the present excavations was on the neighbouring promontory of Eilean Olabhat, a later prehistoric/Early Historic settlement and industrial site. A trial trench was excavated on Eilean Domhnuill to confirm its presumed later prehistoric date, as background information for the excavations at Eilean Olabhat. The recovery of quantities of

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decorated Neolithic pottery, however, was to change the direction of the entire research programme.

Eilean Domhnuill is a multi-phase, partially water-logged settlement of the Hebridean Neolithic. It is effectively a man-made islet or crannog. There is no evidence of any outcrop rock in the excavated areas and all of the excavated deposits are anthropogenic; mainly midden material and structural and occupation debris. Whether the islet was wholly man-made or originally founded on a consolidated outcrop, for much of its use (and certainly for all of the excavated phases) it was a wholly artificial environment, created and maintained by a Neolithic community.

Excavations have revealed 12 phases of occupation with every indication that substantial quantities of material remained unexcavated in the lower, waterlogged layers. A series of successive domestic structures has been recovered although these were poorly preserved as each structure was built from the debris of its predecessor. These structures were rectilinear or elongated oval in shape and generally defined by stone alignments. Most were slight and many may never have had coursed stone walls. Inside these structures was thick occupation debris, while redeposited domestic midden formed around the periphery of the islet. The combination of these deposits gradually built the islet up in a way analogous to a 'tell' settlement. Although few internal features were present, charred stakes did survive in the lower levels and wattlework hurdle fragments have been found both on land and in the underwater trench.

Divers, working off the side of the islet, have recovered evidence for undisturbed occupation deposits stratified well below the lowest levels excavated on land. In these early phases, the islet had been much larger than it appears now and the preservation of organic materials from these phases is extremely good.

Initially a timber causeway linked the islet to the shore. This gave access to an entrance facade of stone slabs, surmounted by a timber palisade. Over time the level of the loch rose and caused periodic rebuilding of the entrance and perimeter features. Periods of abandonment were also recorded, equating with periods of total flooding. The last structures to occupy the site, prior to its final drowning by the loch waters, were two substantial and conjoining rectilinear buildings with stone and earth walls. These were associated with a stone causeway which replaced the earlier timber version. The closest parallels for these structures are the Neolithic houses from Knap of Howar in Orkney. In both cases two conjoined rectilinear structures dominate a settlement with earlier occupation. The location of the two sites is very different however, and the Knap of Howar structures are somewhat larger, suggesting that similarities of form may well be superficial.

It is possible that the loch level rise which characterises the occupation of Eilean Domhnuill may have been caused by the inhabitants of the islet. Deforestation of the site catchment, for example, or over-exploitation of local soils for agriculture, may have increased the flow of water and sediment into the loch. It was the final drowning of the islet which preserved the Neolithic deposits from disturbance by later occupation. The walls around nearby Eilean Olabhat show that later prehistoric loch levels would have covered the Neolithic site. This long-term flooding has led to excellent preservation of organic materials in the lower levels of the site, giving a remarkable opportunity for environmental reconstruction.

## The furnishing of the Palace of Holyroodhouse for the French Princes in 1796

Margaret Swain\*

In 1796 Charles, Comte d'Artois, heir apparent to the Bourbon throne of France, was sent by the British Government to reside in the Palace of Holyroodhouse, once an Abbey, and still a debtor's sanctuary, as a refuge against his creditors. The palace was, however, fully occupied by tenants of 'grace and favour' apartments. Only the Royal Suite on the first floor, *neglected and forlorn since 1707, remained unoccupied*. Until this could be put in order, the Comte d'Artois, his sons and suite, occupied the well-furnished rooms allotted to Lord Adam Gordon, Commander in Chief, North Britain.

The Government commissioned the fitting up of the Royal Suite to the Edinburgh firm of Young, Trotter & Hamilton, led by an enterprising young man, William Trotter, who was to become Lord Provost of Edinburgh, and a member of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. A prompt start was made. Repairs were made to chimneys and walls; tapestries were taken down, cleaned and repaired. Some were re-hung, others laid aside. Walls were hung with new paper, curtains of printed cotton were matched by bedhangings and chair covers, and good mahogany furniture was supplied, of the type being made for New Town houses.

The French Princes left Holyroodhouse finally in 1814. George IV visited Holyrood in 1822, when the firm of Trotter was again entrusted with the re-furnishing of the Royal Apartments. The earlier furniture was stored. The Comte d'Artois, now Charles X of France, abdicated in 1830 and returned to exile in Edinburgh. His old furniture, some damaged, was brought down from the attics. He stayed for only two years. In 1841 Queen Victoria visited Edinburgh but stayed at Dalkeith Palace. Only in 1851 did she take up residence in Holyroodhouse, when it was re-furnished, though it was not till 1860 that the Duke of Argyle and the Earl of Breadalbane were persuaded to relinquish their apartments to make room for the Queen's growing family.

An account (Laing MS II 448/29) in the Library of the University of Edinburgh lists the furnishings supplied in 1796, and many of the items are described so exactly that it has been possible to identify pieces of furniture: bookcases, wardrobes, tables and chairs, supplied by Young, Trotter & Hamilton in 1796.

## Disease in Scotland's past: the evidence from the bones

Juliet Cross†

The history of a people is often seen only in terms of written or spoken records, artefacts and monuments. What is often forgotten is the story told by the skeletons themselves. The study of human skeletal material offers a great opportunity to assess the physical appearance, health status and lifestyle of past populations. This information can be used with collaborative evidence from archaeological or documentary sources to build a picture of the past.

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The health status of a community provides an indication of the degree of success that it has had in adapting to its environment. However, an assessment of health status from skeletal material is limited as only those diseases or pathological conditions that directly affect the skeleton or dentition may be identified. Many of the diseases that would have had a significant effect on a population, eg influenza and gastro-enteritis, do not leave any diagnostic signs on bone or teeth. For this reason, the cause of death can rarely be determined.

Leprosy, tuberculosis and syphilis are examples of diseases that do leave characteristic signs on bone. Some of the cancers, eg leukaemia, may also be diagnosed. Other pathological conditions include fractures and osteo-arthritis. Congenital anomalies such as *spina bifida occulta*, an asymptomatic form of spina bifida, may be observed in both children and adults. A number of nutritional deficiencies leave life-long marks on the bones and teeth. For example, iron-deficiency anaemia in early childhood results in pitting of the orbits in the skull.

Finally, the dentition may also provide a record of the health status of an individual. Dental caries, root abscesses and tooth loss are obvious examples. A record of chronic gum disease, such as gingivitis or periodontitis, may be observed from the destruction and collapse of the bony tooth socket.

## Scottish Place-Names: signposts to the past

W F H Nicolaisen\*

Seventy-five years ago Professor W J Watson delivered his six Rhind Lectures on 'The Celtic Place-Names of Scotland', a turning point in the study of Scottish place-names, especially of the Celtic variety. It might have seemed appropriate to look critically at Watson's November 1916 approach from a May 1991 perspective but there is so little in his lectures (which are mainly available to us in the expanded book version of 1926, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*) that needs drastic updating that there would be no real benefit to be derived from such an exercise. Watson is still an excellent guide in this complex field of research.

Instead, concentrating on some general principles and especially pursuing the important distinction between words and names, this presentation uses the underlying theme of 'signposts' pointing them to names such as *Inverlochry*, *Melrose*, *Glenfinnan*, *Gairloch*, *Blair Atholl*, *Port Askaig*, *Shieldaig*, *Ullapool*, in order to introduce another metaphor, that of place names as 'linguistic ruins', and contrasts their undiminished functionality and knowable onomastic contents with their semantic opacity as words. It stresses that etymology is an attempt to restore the 'ruinous' linguistic state of names to the words they once were or are supposed to have been. Much exciting, often satisfying, sometimes frustrating, detective work goes into this process on many levels because it is one of the paradoxes of names that, while we use them quite satisfactorily we feel put out, even threatened, by their lexical meaninglessness. Names such as Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh therefore continue to be popularly reinterpreted in terms which scholars such as William Watson and Kenneth Jackson conclusively refuted years ago. However, the keenness with which name derivations are demanded and fought over and the way in which ignorance in these matters is regarded as

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failure can only lead to a better understanding of individual names unless etymology is seen to be the mere beginning and not the chief end of onomastic enquiry.

Much more attention has to be paid to the relationship of names to each other and to name usage. In this paper, the Gaelic and Norse names of the Isle of Arran are used as paradigms to show how their cumulative evidence can provide insights which even intensive analysis of individual names cannot offer. For these reasons, it is very important that spatial, temporal and socio-onomastic patterns be established, as long as it is realised that names are only 'signposts' to pasts that never were.

## The Sources of the Early Medieval Animal Ornament of the British Isles

Carola Hicks\*

The same animals could be used as symbols in both pagan and Christian art, although not necessarily with the same meaning. It was the deliberate policy of the first missionaries to the Anglo-Saxons to incorporate former cults into the rituals of the early church, and this included animal decoration. Early biblical commentators debated the allegorical role of animals. They also drew upon the classical texts which were to provide the ultimate sources for the medieval bestiary, which can be derived from the cumulative accretions to the writings of Aristotle, Pliny, Solinus, the Physiologus and Isidore of Seville. Although the bestiary was not fully developed until the 12th century, there are enough examples of animal subjects in Insular art to suggest that the moral lessons they taught were already well recognized through familiarity with illustrations of such texts.

Particular scenes and subjects which can be traced from Classical or even Oriental sources into Anglo-Saxon, Irish and Pictish art include Adam naming the animals, the deer hunt, the predatory bird, the centaur, the mermaid, the griffin, the dragon, and the lion. Such motifs are so well established in Insular, and subsequently Romanesque art that their exotic backgrounds or meanings are not immediately clear; they have become an essential part of Christian teaching, as symbols of good or evil.

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## The Norse, the Northern Isles and the North Atlantic: connections and context

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The island groups of Shetland and Orkney have formed part of a dynamic cultural unit at many periods of the past, not least in the Viking and Late Norse periods. At this time, some of the most important external connections were across the North Atlantic, both eastwards to the Norwegian ‘homelands’, and westwards to the other Norse settlements of the West: Faroe, Iceland, Greenland and North America. Increasingly, aspects of the material culture of these apparently peripheral areas are seeming to relate and interconnect.

As argued in my Jarrow Lecture for 1989 (‘Church and Monastery in the Far North: An Archaeological Evaluation’), an evaluation of the evidence from certain key sites in the context of the Church in the Northern Isles suggests that an Early Christian and monastic model has become something of a straightjacket. One can take a somewhat sceptical view of some of the evidence presented in the past from St Ninian’s Isle, Papil, the Brough of Deerness and the Brough of Birsay. Instead, it is possible, taking into account the results of some recent archaeological work, to examine the evidence in terms of *Norse* Christianity. While there may be a limited range of archaeological examples, it is nevertheless possible to demonstrate a range and vitality that may be surprising to those accustomed to view the Scandinavian Viking contribution to European civilisation as negative and destructive.

The evidence from Orkney and Shetland fits easily into a wider Christian context of the North Atlantic. Despite some premature identifications of particular archaeological structures with specific historical references, and what may seem to be misguided attempts to ‘validate’ the archaeological material in terms of the evidence from another discipline, the complexity that is emerging, for instance in Birsay in Orkney and Brattahlíð on Greenland, raises interesting issues. Indeed in considering such a far-flung Norse settlement as Brattahlíð, it merely reinforces the point that *no* part of the known world of the day was considered to be beyond Christian gaze or missionary concern.

Even if some of the evidence that has been cited in the past in favour of the presence of pre-Norse monks or priests is equivocal, there can be no doubt that the Norse islands of the North Atlantic were very much part of the wider Christian community, and were also a Christian community in themselves. The small chapels of Orkney and Shetland are echoed by similar structures in the other island groups, and we need not assume that the apparently simple timber buildings with turf or stone cladding around the outside were ‘primitive’. We do well to remember that timber was in short supply in all these islands and had to be imported, thereby implying considerable resources being expended on securing this medium. The aspirations were considerable: grand buildings such as Kirkwall Cathedral, Kirkjubøur in the Faroes and the Bishop’s Cathedral and Palace in Greenland at Garðar demonstrate this clearly enough, as do furnishings such as roods and crucifixion plaques, determinedly attempting to keep in the mainstream of European developments.

Turning, more briefly, to aspects of settlement, again it is significant that whereas in the past the agenda has all too often been quasi-historical, the approach now is one where the archaeology is treated in its own terms first, leading later to a more meaningful interconnec-

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tion and articulation of both the written and material 'texts'. Exemplifying this approach is the Birsay Bay Project, concerned to look at individual sites in a wider geographical and chronological setting, and emphasizing their complex and presumably interactive archaeological histories. Similarly, at the other end of the North Atlantic region – Brattahlíð – the same considerations of widening the archaeological agenda have arisen: apart from the re-evaluation of identifications of particular buildings, there has been a widening of the immediate geographical context of the site to include the adjacent valley of Qordlotoq. Equally, the more recent work at L'Anse Aux Meadows in Newfoundland has been less concerned with the quasi-historical issues of Vinland and more with chronology and context for the excavated site.

One of the areas in which the archaeological agenda has been dramatically widened in the North Atlantic region is that of environmental archaeology. Projects in and around Sandnes in the 'Western Settlement' of Greenland, palaeobotanical work near Brattahlíð and in the Faroes, work on insects in Iceland and Greenland, large-scale environmental sampling projects at Birsay and Orphir in Orkney, Freswick in Caithness and Sandwick in Shetland all herald a new – and hopefully integrated – approach to the bioarchaeology of the North Atlantic. Similarly, important aspects of the exploitation of the natural resources (water-supply, steatite, timber) and the evident large-scale farming and hunting activities are now being worked upon.

Finally, both in relation to the Church and to Norse settlement in the North Atlantic region, questions inevitably arise about the contact and connections with Native peoples. Again the quasi-historical agenda has tended in the past to dominate, and it is time to examine the archaeological evidence for its own sake, before coming to wide-ranging generalizations. If there are traditions in the quasi-historical sources of hostility between Norse and Native, there are also archaeological indications of a far more complex picture. Buckquoy, Birsay and Pool in Orkney, and Ellesmere Island and L'Anse Aux Meadows across the other side of the North Atlantic have all produced material that requires a more measured consideration of the issues. The Norse archaeology of the North Atlantic from Norway via the Northern Isles to Newfoundland has certainly entered a new phase, and one which promises many exciting results in the near future. The picture may not be as simple as in the past, but it will have the merit of focusing upon the one category of information that is constantly expanding: that from archaeology.

## New light on Neolithic rock carving: the petroglyphs at Greenland, Dunbartonshire

Euan W Mackie\*

The cup-and-ring carved rock at Greenland, Auchentorlie (NS/434 746) is a scheduled site and now in a quarry. Its long term future being uncertain the author was asked in 1983 by the then Scottish Development Department (Ancient Monuments) to make a record of it. The work was carried out for three weeks in the summer of 1984 and involved completely de-turfing the outcrop, washing it and laying a 1 metre square grid over it; the carvings were

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recorded (1) by direct tracing, (2) by photography, (3) on a 1:10 plan of the whole rock and (4) by making latex moulds (with fibreglass backing) of the main groups of carvings.

The carvings included cups, ovals, cups with single rings, cups with multiple rings and one possible spiral; they are not evenly distributed over the surface of the outcrop for two reasons, firstly because the original surface of the rock has been badly damaged and secondly because even on the remaining carved surfaces different motifs are concentrated in different areas. A metrological study by A Davis provided convincing support for the use of the 'megalithic inch' (2.07 cm) in laying out the rings but not for any sophisticated geometrical designs within them.

The outcrop, of metamorphosed sandstone among basalt formations, had been quarried in ancient times, presumably to obtain flat slabs for building; the contrast between the original, glaciated surface, mainly with worn carvings, and the fresh, flat quarried surfaces was very clear. The largest double disc symbol on the site is on one of these fresh surfaces and shows that the quarrying had taken place while cup-and-ring carving was a living tradition. Thus the dating of the quarrying was of prime importance.

What building activity in the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age – the usual date given to this tradition of rock carving – would require neat, flat quarried stone slabs? Short cist graves are the obvious answer but none are known nearby. The small two period hillfort Sheep Hill is however only 200 m to the south and was partially excavated by the writer in 1968–71. In its first, late Bronze Age phase it was a timber-framed dun which was eventually burned and vitrified; the later, larger enclosure was built with its debris and had stone revetted ramparts with rubble and earth cores. Pottery and clay moulds associated with the earlier dun suggest a date in the eighth or seventh centuries BC. Although only the boulder plinth of this wall remained, and its core was of basalt rubble, the sandstone from the carved outcrop would have been ideal material for the wall-faces, just as at Dun Lagaidh on Loch Broom.

Although the evidence is still circumstantial, the case for the phase II carvings at Greenland, including the large double disc, being dated to the late Bronze Age seems strong, and this may require some re-appraisal of the length of time this 'late Neolithic' or 'early Bronze Age' tradition continued to flourish. May the Pictish double disc symbol be related for example? If Sheep Hill is ever completely excavated it will be possible to test the hypothesis by looking for carved fragments in the debris.

## On the Drawing Room from Hamilton Palace

Godfrey Evans\*

This short paper celebrated the arrival and initial inspection of the Drawing Room from Scotland's largest and greatest 'powerhouse' which has been transferred by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, to the National Museums of Scotland for inclusion in the new Museum of Scotland.

The Drawing Room was the second in a sequence of parade rooms on the first floor of the west wing of Hamilton Palace, Hamilton in Lanarkshire, built by William, 3rd Duke of Hamilton, and his wife Anne between 1693 and 1701. William Morgan was responsible for the

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carvings and panelling and originally there were relief plaster ceilings by Thomas Aliburne or Albourn. The rooms were overhauled and redecorated by Alexander, 10th Duke of Hamilton, in the second quarter of the 19th century, when he was adding and fitting out the great Neoclassical north block.

Along with many other rooms, the Drawing Room was included in the clearance sales in November 1919, prior to the demolition of the Palace, and was subsequently bought by the newspaper proprietor William Randolph Hearst. In 1956 (five years after Hearst's death) the Hearst Foundation gifted the room to the Metropolitan Museum. Realizing that they did not have the space to display the room, in October 1990 the Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum very kindly agreed to permanently transfer the room to NMS, and on 6 August 1991, 13 crates of woodwork and black marble arrived in Edinburgh inside a 40-foot ocean-going container.

The woodwork was laid out in the ground-floor exhibition gallery and Main Hall of the Chambers Street museum in November 1991 and it was discovered that we have most of the parts of the fireplace or south wall, the window or east wall and the west wall. Unfortunately, there is relatively little of the north wall. At the same time it became apparent that the room has been altered, probably for Hearst. Thirty-two parts of the impressive black marble fireplace were received and a further 15 parts have been discovered at the Metropolitan Museum. They should arrive in Edinburgh in September 1992 and will, hopefully, virtually complete the fireplace wall.

It is intended to reconstruct the Drawing Room in the new Museum of Scotland and use it as the setting for the two magnificent Napoleonic silver-gilt services acquired by the 10th Duke of Hamilton: the travelling service of Napoleon's favourite sister, the Princess Pauline Borghese, and the Emperor's own tea service of 1810. Together they should form an unforgettable spectacle, with the warm oak and lustrous black marble providing a perfect foil for the sparkling silver-gilt and fascinating small items. The display will also serve as a vivid and poignant reminder of the almost regal palace and collection that once existed on the outskirts of Hamilton.

## Excavations at Skara Brae and Rinyo: research and redemption

Colin Richards\*

Summary of paper presented at the V G Childe Centenary Conference, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia, September 1990, for which Mr Richards received a Young Fellow's Bursary from the Society.

V G Childe is mainly remembered for his synthetic and theoretical archaeological works. Although he directed excavations at Skara Brae and Rinyo, this fieldwork has been relegated to minimal status in general discussions of his method and theory, particularly his changing views on culture and processes of evolution and change. In this paper it is argued that these views were influenced through a physical engagement with archaeological material to a far greater degree than has previously been acknowledged.

Childe excavated at Skara Brae on behalf of the Ministry of Works for three years from 1928. Complete excavation was hampered by the main objective of the work which was

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conservation of the monument. A large proportion of the upper deposits were excavated, revealing a prehistoric settlement complex of unparalleled preservation. From the evidence observed in hut 7, the first building excavated, Childe eventually concluded that the occupants had left in great haste. This observation from the initial hut encountered, combined with the presence of an overlying layer of sterile sand, gave Childe the everlasting impression that he had uncovered a prehistoric 'Pompeii'. This assumption was to have a profound effect on the social interpretation of the site as a whole.

Hut 7 is, in fact, unlike the other dwellings. For example, it is the only building to have formal human burials; the approach to it is demarcated by a series of threshold slabs and incised decorated stones, and the door-bar is controlled from outside the hut entrance. All these features suggest that the structure was of a special nature, perhaps being of ritual significance. Yet for Childe it was accepted as a dwelling typical of the settlement.

Childe proposed that the village was abandoned during a furious storm of hurricane strength and that the inhabitants had been forced to flee as the village was destroyed about them. This portrayal of the main abandonment of Skara Brae had the reflexive effect of dictating interpretation of material culture throughout the settlement. Hence, when commenting on the floor deposits of animal bones and rubbish, Childe was forced into making depreciatory judgements on the living standards and social condition of the inhabitants.

The view of hut 7 as a typical dwelling effectively eliminated any suggestion of variation between houses. The possibility of hut 8 being a working area was eventually rejected in favour of non-specialized communality, the village as a whole conforming to Childe's view of Stone Age society as essentially self-sufficient and lacking any social organization other than kinship ties.

Although Skara Brae was recognized by Childe as being Neolithic in character, he settled on a Pictish date for the settlement on the basis of a correlation in the distribution of stone balls and Pictish symbol stones. This wayward date may have been influenced by Childe's own experiences of a highly parochial Scotland, the implication being that Skara Brae represented an archaic isolated survival of an inward-looking culture. The correct late Neolithic date of Skara Brae became clear after 'Grooved Ware' was discovered by Stuart Piggott at Clacton, Essex. This chronological shift did nothing to alter Childe's conception of Neolithic Orkney; the 'Skara Brae culture' now merely sat next to the 'Megalithic culture' apparently maintaining cultural isolation.

Over the winter of 1937–8, a second settlement of similar nature to Skara Brae was discovered at Rinyo, Rousay. Childe and Grant began excavations in the summer of 1938. Similarities in house architecture and pottery style established the presence of the 'Skara Brae culture'. In their first report the authors remarked on the total absence of artefacts normally associated with, the now contemporary, 'Megalithic culture' of the chambered tomb builders. These results sustained the belief in the existence of discrete cultural identities.

In 1944, Childe gave the Rhind lectures to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, subsequently published under the title of *Scotland before the Scots*. In the lecture he noted that the Megalithic culture compared favourably against the archaic Skara Brae culture. Although from their tools and products the two cultures were on a technologically similar level, the economy of the Megalithic culture was identified as being more progressive. Childe again used the supposed uniformities of house architecture at Skara Brae and Rinyo to suggest that the inhabitants were essentially egalitarian and organized on a clan basis. These assumptions led directly to the recognition of a state of 'primitive communism' since there appeared to be no ruling or exploited classes and no private property apart from personal items. By invoking

primitive communism, Childe effectively removed any mechanism for change, dooming the insular, archaic Skara Brae culture to an unchanging self-perpetuating future. In these ideas we are seeing not only the hand of Marx but also the corollary of Childe's initial impressions of Skara Brae.

*Childe and Grant returned to Rinyo in the summer of 1946. Beneath the floor of house G, in a build-up of midden material, both Grooved Ware and Unstan Ware were recovered. Little comment was provided in the published report to account for this cultural association which ran against Childe's view of Neolithic Orkney.*

In 1951 Childe undertook further excavations at the megalithic tomb of Quoyness, Sanday. Here again, items from both the Skara Brae and Megalithic cultures were clearly associated in contexts within the tomb. The presence of Grooved Ware within a megalithic tomb must have severely shaken Childe's confidence in the cultural definition he had consistently placed on associated material 'culture'. The inevitable conclusion in the Quoyness report was that the inhabitants of Skara Brae and Rinyo buried their dead kinsman or chiefs within megalithic tombs, an admittance that the two cultural groups in Neolithic Orkney were one and the same and that they may have had more social stratification than Childe had previously acknowledged.

In view of the unexpected results from the excavations at Rinyo and Quoyness we can provide an alternative view on Childe's changing attitude to 'culture' and its identification, noticeable in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The dissatisfaction with cultural definition has tended to be seen as an intellectual move on the part of Childe, being attributed to contact with work being undertaken by anthropologists in America. Here we may link this change in attitude to his own observations in the field. In practice, the integrity of discrete assemblages of archaeological material, which he had consistently interpreted as representing distinct cultural groups, was lost. His ideas were undermined, so to speak, before his very eyes.

Contemporary archaeology has finally reached a point where it can begin to accept that excavation is an act of interpretation and is therefore theoretical in nature. It was Childe's engagement with archaeological evidence which challenged his assumptions and beliefs. His redemption comes in both the flexibility of thinking which allowed revision of the concept of archaeological cultures and the maintenance of such a problem in the Orcadian Neolithic. Megalithic tombs in Orkney can now be divided into two types of architecture, one, including Quoyness, was undoubtedly built and used by the same people who inhabited the villages of similar nature to Skara Brae and Rinyo. The second category remains distinct in terms of house and tomb architecture and material culture, particularly Unstan Ware; this is Childe's 'Megalithic culture'.