

Hidden depths: thirty years of archaeology in Scottish towns

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It is an honour to give this Presidential Lecture; it is also something of a personal indulgence as, having been involved in one way or another with the archaeology of Scottish towns over the past 30 years, much of my professional life is enmeshed in it. Significantly, it also provides an opportunity to demonstrate to many and remind some who like me witnessed it, the fundamentally important, indeed pivotal role the Society played in the early years of urban archaeology; there are hidden depths here too. There is really too much to cover in a single lecture and this will therefore inevitably be a personal overview. At the outset I want to acknowledge the support and encouragement of many friends and colleagues, too numerous to mention, who have played an integral part in the development of urban archaeology during the last 30 years. Indeed I acknowledge all who have or are contributing to the better understanding of the archaeology of Scottish towns.

Today the topography and built heritage of our towns and cities are greatly valued. These are things which help give them their individual form and character, making each one different and contributing to our sense of place, belonging and cultural identity. Each town with its unique combination of physical setting, or surviving street pattern, some with several upstanding historic buildings, and most with hidden archaeological deposits, provides a magnificent resource with which to study the past. Towns in Scotland are essentially regarded

as a creation of the medieval period, particularly from the late 11th century onwards, but in reality towns provide us with the opportunity to study many hundreds if not thousands of years of human activity. By its very nature the town is the most complex of human settlements and as a consequence of its success and survival an historic town today will have had to change and develop over the centuries. This will certainly have affected the survival, or otherwise, of structures and material with which to study its past. Likewise, future changes and developments will also inevitably threaten the archaeological levels hidden beneath streets and more modern buildings. Now however we are used to seeing building recording and archaeological excavation going on in advance of developments occasionally with part of the historic environment retained if possible; for example, Queensberry House was incorporated into the new Scottish Parliament building development. As a result of three decades of excavation and other recording work we possess a considerable amount of evidence, which once lay hidden, for the layout and development of our medieval towns, for the structures built within them, for the inhabitants themselves and for their clothing and personal possessions, along with the everyday items they made and used. Currently, we promote the philosophy of sustainable development aiming to facilitate development and growth but in so doing not to erode, or destroy without record, environmental

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assets such as the above- and below-ground archaeology of our towns.

This was not always the case, however, for at a Council for British Archaeology conference on urban archaeology in 1971 Nicholas Brooks, then of St Andrews University, stated that apart from excavations in Dumbarton and St Andrews there had been no rescue archaeological work in Scottish towns. He cited Dundee, Stirling and Aberdeen as the subjects of massive post-war developments which had probably destroyed all or much of the archaeological evidence for their medieval past; in smaller towns such as Elgin, the threats were large-scale. He saw this position as a result of two major factors, namely the lack of archaeologists specializing in medieval and later periods, and indifference. Apart from tiny steps taken by Glasgow and St Andrews, local authorities both large and small were totally ignorant of the need for urban archaeology and of the destructiveness of modern building techniques; there was no real public awareness of the archaeological potential of towns and those few existing professional archaeologists had done little to change this; there had been no attempt to interest conservationists and architectural historians in urban excavation either as a tool of research or to complement recording of standing buildings prior to site development. It was as if in Scotland there was hardly any widespread realization of the problems or indeed their scale. The only positive thing noted then was that Scotland had Roxburgh, a town abandoned in the 16th century and thought since then to have lain totally undisturbed; it presented opportunities for future systematic research and excavation such as occurred almost nowhere else in Britain.

In response to this sorry state and a resolution passed at its own conference the previous year the Society's Medieval Urban Archaeology Committee was formed. The convener was Grant Simpson and the members were Nicholas Brooks, Archie Duncan, Geoffrey Stell, and Eric Talbot with Basil Skinner and Audrey Henshall in attendance. These people were as

Grant Simpson has put it, 'the midwives who assisted at the birth of Scotland's medieval urban archaeology as a modern discipline'. John Gerrard, Stewart Cruden and Frank Tindall were quickly co-opted, and I joined in 1973. The Committee wanted to publicize the urgent need for urban archaeological work and therefore 18 months later, on St Andrews Day 1972, launched the booklet *Scotland's Medieval Burghs: an archaeological heritage in danger*, in which 77 threatened burghs were listed. The situation regarding what was then known of the character and appearance of Scottish medieval towns was summed up in the words of past president Professor Stuart Piggott in the foreword, 'Our ignorance is almost complete'.

In 1973 the first excavations took place in Aberdeen, demonstrating the richness of surviving archaeological levels and lending weight to the need there for a permanent archaeological team. By the end of the year three local authority appointments had been made, in Dundee, East Lothian and Edinburgh, but state funding for rescue archaeology amounted to only £22,500, being 2.8% of the UK total. In England regional archaeology units were being set up but the view within the Scottish Development Department (SDD)¹ was that 'the concept of regional Archaeological Units is one that will be canvassed with interested parties, including the local authority associations, but there is no question of any slavish adoption of the English model as a matter of principle or mere uniformity'. This attitude, amongst other things, unfortunately meant that chances were missed then to get people and structures for rescue work into position, something archaeology in Scotland has suffered from ever since.

In 1974 excavations took place in Aberdeen, Dumfries, Edinburgh, St Andrews and Glasgow and the Society published its report, *Archaeology and Local Government – An Environmental Problem*. It described the destruction of archaeological sites both in towns and in the countryside and considered the resources within both central and local government to be

inadequate to rescue this loss of archaeological information. Meanwhile external forces were, on the march, for in November 1974 an organization called Rescue – A Trust for British Archaeology, held a public meeting in Perth to draw attention to its likely archaeological potential and the threat to it from modern development. Rescue was an organization which was publicizing the threats to archaeological sites, both rural and urban, and urging the creation of archaeology units to deal with the problem. In so doing it had upset a few apple-carts and put some establishment backs up south of the border and was intent on having the same effect in Scotland. A Perth Archaeological Committee was therefore quickly set up partly, ‘to disarm criticism of incoming experts’! Perth’s archaeological potential still had to be tested and so it was in 1975 that I found myself directing the excavation of more than two metres depth of medieval midden in St Ann’s Lane. This work helped generate the positive attitudes which would lead later in the year to the Perth High Street excavation, probably still the largest ever urban excavation in Scotland. Unusually for its time, the excavation was preceded by recording the detail of the upstanding buildings prior to demolition. Subsequently, two seasons of excavation affirmed the great depth, quality and importance of Perth’s archaeological remains. This major excavation was also probably the first to be, in part, run and funded as a Manpower Services Commission, Job Creation Scheme. During the late 1970s and 1980s a number of urban excavation projects were conducted under such government-sponsored schemes which aimed to reduce the number of unemployed young people by giving them work experience and training.

By the end of 1975 excavations had taken place in 11 towns but there were still too few archaeologists and the Society proposed the establishment of two posts to function under its direction but be state-funded for a period of three years. The proposal was taken up quite quickly by SDD but it took some time to sort out the details. The Society wanted the archaeologists

to work in Ayr or Aberdeen or possibly Perth linked with St Andrews, dependent on what local authority appointments might be made. The SDD wanted work in several towns starting with Elgin but the Society argued that what was required for Elgin was a separate, ‘Perth type’ organization. Finally, agreement was reached that the archaeologists would work in one town and Aberdeen was chosen. The two appointments were made at the end of 1976 and a sub-committee (of the Society’s Urban Committee) set up to advise and have control of the work but immediate direction came from the newly formed Aberdeen Archaeological Rescue Group. The Urban Committee had suggested a third post for documentary research work but this was rejected because SDD instead set up its Burgh Survey project in an attempt to survey and identify areas of archaeological sensitivity in towns. Between 1976 and 1983, 53 burgh surveys were rapidly produced but with speed detail was sacrificed and therefore more detailed reports were later commissioned for the cities of Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow.

By 1978 the rescue effort meant survey and excavation had added significantly to knowledge of some towns but not others. Only in Perth and Aberdeen had major additions to knowledge been made and significantly there had been only one publication. The state funding for rescue work had increased in 1977–8 to £142,000, 6.5% of the UK total, but it was clear that there could never be the resources to meet all threats; urban work because of its scale was expensive and was in competition with the rescue needs of other sites. Priorities would have to be established and therefore the Urban Committee produced the document *A Policy for Urban Excavation in Scotland*. This called for a research strategy and tactical considerations. As there had been an overemphasis on east-coast towns work was needed in towns of the south-west, the Borders and west-central Scotland. Research criteria for future work were proposed and towns were graded into four groups on the basis of potential threat,

potential richness of archaeological remains and quality of historical source material. Again lack of personnel was seen as a major problem but this time it was SDD who suggested setting up, for a three-year period, an Urban Archaeology Unit funded by them but administered by the Society. Reaching agreement on this was swift and so in the summer of 1978 a team of six comprising a director, an administrator, two archaeologists to work in Perth and two to work in other towns was appointed. It is important to note that this step should be put in the context of the Society already employing the two Aberdeen archaeologists in addition to three rural Field Surveyors (funded by SDD and administered by RCAHMS) to inspect and list field monuments, primarily for use by planning authorities, in areas most at risk and least well recorded. The Society was therefore a major archaeological employer at this time. The purpose of the Urban Unit was to follow up the work of the Burgh Survey in assessing, by means of limited excavation, the archaeological potential of a number of towns and to monitor, assess and, when needed, excavate sites in Perth. The agreement concerning the Unit was extended for a fourth year until 1982. By then the Society, having already in 1979 (after three years) seen its two Aberdeen archaeologists successfully transferred to employment with Aberdeen District Council, felt it was appropriate to relinquish its responsibility for the Urban Unit. This was achieved by setting up an independent company limited by guarantee and so it was that the Scottish Urban Archaeological Trust (SUAT) came in to being with its base in Perth where it remains still. With the transfer of its responsibilities to SUAT the Society considered its founding role and initial aims in respect of urban archaeology had been achieved. The Urban Committee in turn no longer had a real sense of purpose and was wound up. But for a period of ten years, from 1971 to 1981, the endeavour and sheer commitment of the Society's Presidents, office bearers, Council, staff, and especially the conveners (Dr Grant Simpson, Professor Leslie

Alcock and Dr Ronald Cant) and members of the Urban Archaeology Committee were enormous and achieved significant results.

Looking back over this early period of urban work however some of the shortcomings and mistakes are clear. In most cases the amount of material recovered had not been anticipated and the implications had not been considered in terms of the resources required for conservation, storage, post-excavation analysis, reporting and publication, resulting in legacies which are still being coped with today. But these were excavations for which success has to be measured in terms of raising awareness as much as anything else; they were important public relations exercises, raising the profile of urban archaeology and encouraging action at both local and national level.

What of the significant changes and developments since then? In terms of funding the early excavations were mostly state financed but the later 1970s saw the start of Job Creation projects which increased dramatically in the 1980s and in that decade probably provided the main source of funding for fieldwork, if not post-excavation. In the 1990s the impact of development on archaeology and its funding changed dramatically as the result of the introduction, in 1994, of *National Planning Policy Guideline 5* and *Planning Advice Note 42*, advising that archaeological sites should be preserved in situ. This requires developers to prepare mitigation strategies showing how the archaeological resource is to be protected and where this is impossible there should be archaeological excavation prior to development. Urban excavations are now predominantly, if not exclusively, developer-funded. This is not a perfect situation but a better understanding and appreciation on the part of developers as to their responsibilities to urban archaeology in the planning and development process should now be possible thanks to the excellent Technical Advice Note, *Development and Archaeology in Historic Towns and Cities*, recently published by Historic Scotland.

In terms of revealing archaeological hidden depths the past 30 years have been most successful. Work in Aberdeen has certainly disproved the 1970s fear that most of its archaeology had been swept away. There, the richness of the archaeology matches the richness of the documentary sources and provides excellent opportunities to integrate archaeological and documentary evidence. So far there is no evidence for town walls or gates but there are traces of medieval streets and the remains of nearly 50 buildings have been excavated. Nearly all the buildings are secular and of wood or clay construction and most have been excavated in backland areas. The evidence for these buildings is often just in the form of post-holes. Stone construction, as opposed to stone foundations, is rare before the 15th century (in Castlegate there was evidence of a stone structure dating to the 13/14th century) as are buildings on street frontages. A rich diversity of material and artefacts has been recovered ranging from ceramic table ware and exotic vessel glass to wooden bowls, leather shoes and metalwork. In Stirling the small amount of archaeological work undertaken has shown that contrary to early expectation significant pockets of archaeological evidence survive. This is also surprisingly true of Dundee, a city long been regarded as having no surviving archaeology. Even in 1988 when its burgh survey was published the authors understandably suggested that 'it was unlikely that archaeological deposits of any considerable depth or extent survive beneath modern Dundee'. But excavations in the last 15 years have proved this a misconception. The archaeological material does vary in quality and quantity but pockets of considerable archaeological evidence do survive, including deposits over 1.3m deep and some waterlogged material in excavations on the Murraygate. The 1960s Overgate Centre, now itself pulled down and replaced, did not destroy all the archaeology, as excavations in advance of the present development revealed evidence of a medieval cemetery near St Mary's Tower. Dundee's standing structures also repay attention.

Behind the 18th-century High Street frontage of the building known as Gardyne's Land there is a five-storey tower with elements dating to the 16th century. A survey of cellars and buildings in the town centre is desperately needed and historians have suggested that a reappraisal of the city's documentary sources would be worthwhile. In Elgin archaeological work before and after the relief-road, which was the major threat in the 1970s, has produced evidence of property boundaries and craft industries mostly from the north side of the High Street. Here too there is the distinct potential that many upstanding 17th- and 18th-century buildings may contain traces of earlier structures. In St Andrews where some of the earliest urban excavations took place, the importance of studying upstanding buildings in detail was also recognized early on, with the survey of St John's House in South Street in the 1970s. By the late 1990s 41 archaeological interventions had been carried out by several organizations, paid for by developer funding. This process may be cost effective but it is not conducive to relating new work to what has gone before and St Andrews is a good example of a town where there is a real need for an urban database and an agreed research agenda.

In Perth about 60 excavations and 150 watching briefs have taken place. In quantitative terms this is a unique situation for a Scottish town. It demonstrates the richness and depth of deposits which have provided evidence of the nature and construction of buildings, especially those located in the backlands. Although archaeological material has been shown to survive below modern cellars, as yet there has been no excavation of a property on the medieval street frontage or clearly belonging to a rich merchant. There is evidence to suggest some streets were wider in the medieval period than they are today, with the possibility that the extra space was used as 'forelands' for trading in front of the owner's house. There is evidence for wattle pathways and cobbled roads but hardly any for the town's wall and ditch defences. There has been no excavation of a large-scale

industrial area but there is considerable evidence for crafts provided by metalworking moulds, horn cores, grain-drying kilns and post-medieval metalworking. In Perth, as in Aberdeen, there is a variety of artefacts surviving in rich abundance due to the wonderful preservation of organic and other material, that relates directly to the people of the medieval town: for example bone combs, woollen textiles and even a wooden toilet seat.

As I have already hinted, in the late 1970s urban archaeologists were criticized for their poor publication record. The massive publicity and raised profile attained by many urban excavations along with the large amounts of money spent on them rightly lead to high expectation in terms of publishing the results, although there was little understanding of how complex and expensive urban post-excavation work was, compared with small-scale rural archaeology. From about 1982 onwards there was a great outpouring of excavation reports; for confirmation of this one only has to look through the Society's *Proceedings* from that time, including the massive double volumes of the 1990s. It is however through the Society's monograph series that much urban work has been published, with two volumes devoted to work in Aberdeen (1982; 2001) and one on Perth (1987). The Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee has also produced two urban monographs, on St Andrews (2000) and the Perth Development Study (2004). Publication of some early, important excavation projects is still awaited, Perth High Street, Elgin relief road, and Glasgow Job Creation projects being the main ones but progress is currently being made with all three.

In general terms, therefore, much has been achieved in the last 30 years, with archaeological interventions in over 60 towns and over 70 burgh surveys undertaken. For some towns the archaeological potential remains to be tested and in others the areas of archaeological sensitivity cannot assuredly be identified. The excavated material, although probably more varied in date and type than might at first have

been expected, is only a small part of the overall material potentially still surviving and it remains uncertain if it is representative of the total. Although there has now been archaeological work in towns throughout the country, the greatest emphasis remains within east-coast towns. For Perth and Aberdeen there is a great deal of information but there is uncertainty as to how typical of Scottish towns these two are. Smaller towns have been shown to hold substantial remains and further study may reveal that they can provide a more balanced picture of medieval urban settlement.

The time is probably right to analyse and review the existing evidence. Comparative studies on Perth and Aberdeen would be useful as would works of synthesis on the evidence for particular crafts and industries. The syntheses by Catherine Smith on animal bone (commissioned by Historic Scotland and published in the *Proceedings*), linking the archaeological evidence from urban excavations to historical references and providing fascinating accounts of dogs, cats, horses and pigs and the attitude towards them in the medieval period are excellent examples of such works. This volume of the *Proceedings* contains a review by Russel Coleman of the evidence for backland activity from 30 years of urban excavation. Further work on existing material and some reassessment of material from early excavations in the light of new knowledge is also needed. Currently there are such research initiatives on medieval pottery. This is generally the most prolific find from excavations, and to have the ability to date and source different Scottish produced fabrics and vessel types would be very advantageous. Unfortunately there is only one kiln site known for White Gritty Ware and two for Redwares but Historic Scotland has sponsored pilot studies using chemical sourcing on both these native fabrics with encouraging results and a larger study of Redwares is about to start. A review of imported medieval pottery is also underway prompting re-examination of many collections country-wide to check

identifications. Although absolute dating of most pottery is still impossible, radiocarbon dates have been obtained for a group of charcoal-encrusted Shelly Ware cooking vessels from the earliest levels of the Perth High Street excavations dating to AD 940–1020, potentially 120 years prior to Perth's first royal charter. The recent successful *Environment of Medieval Aberdeen Project*, which analysed 150 samples collected over 25 years, has shown that there may be opportunities elsewhere to learn more of the medieval urban environment by re-evaluating and re-analysing samples containing insect and seed assemblages stored from earlier excavations. In future, where conditions permit, more might be done in respect of collecting the necessary samples to analyse plant and invertebrate macrofossils or parasite eggs.

Much of this begs the questions, can and should research strategies and frameworks be prepared? In very general terms this could be done but perhaps only specifically for Perth, Aberdeen and maybe St Andrews. In reality very basic questions still need to be asked but future work ought to be carried out to agreed and established research themes which are regularly reviewed. To achieve this a series of short research papers defining current problems and shortcomings in order to focus minds and aid discussion might be prepared. I hate to suggest another 'talking shop' but convening an urban research forum might possibly be an initiative the Society might be persuaded to take in conjunction with other organizations. Several research themes are immediately obvious and might be adapted to suit towns generally, individual towns or significant groups of towns; for example, the nature of pre-charter settlements and town origins, natural topography, urban topography, buildings and structures, the economics of urban growth and decline, urban peripheries and rural hinterlands. Deserted burghs such as Rattray, where some important work has already been undertaken, and Roxburgh present their own unique opportunities for research work. Recently at Roxburgh

much useful information came out of a Time Team project; the small-scale exploratory work demonstrated that contrary to common belief there had been ploughing in the 18th century on some parts of the site, where only features cut into the subsoil survive; other features seen on aerial photographs were confirmed. This work, along with historical research and some further non-destructive archaeological work, should enable better research decisions and plans to be made for this important site.

Urban excavation to date has inevitably been rescue driven and it has been impossible to dictate where within towns excavations take place, and the opportunities and means should therefore be created to carry out some research excavation in towns. Selective research work might lead to better-informed planning and development decisions and allow more relevant questions to be asked of rescue excavation work and fill gaps in knowledge created by it. Agreed research strategies would lead to appropriate research designs for the rescue excavation opportunities and future interventions even if carried out by different contractors would take cognizance of what has gone before as well as current research needs.

I venture to suggest that urban archaeology has in a sense, to come of age academically. One of the problems with work being almost totally rescue based and carried out by commercial units is that there are few who have the time or finance to undertake deeper research. This is a serious omission in urban studies, for which academic direction is needed, and with it the strength and credibility to be taken seriously I sense that research and writing on Scottish history is in good shape judging by the quality and quantity on bookshop shelves and it is flourishing in our universities – for example, the specialist Centre for Scottish Urban History at the University of Edinburgh – but in relative terms one cannot say the same for medieval and later urban archaeology. Might it be possible for universities to attract funding for limited periods to employ research fellows or encourage

research students to work on archaeological material or for the National Museums to do the same in respect of research associates to work on relevant collections? Museums, generally, must also face curatorial issues such as conservation, storage and accessibility of material from urban excavations. Many have found themselves swamped by the considerable quantities of material, particularly from the early years, finds and samples that were often inadequately boxed and documented. More resources are required adequately to store, preserve, manage and make accessible the artefactual and paper archives for the future. The Scottish Museum Archaeologists group is actively discussing these issues and rightly encouraging serious debate about what material might be disposed of or even re-buried. Various methods and techniques – both traditional and new – to provide access to collections can be further explored. Funding for projects will not come easily and may not come from the traditional sources as government funding for archaeology has been falling in real terms for the last ten years, and local government museum and archaeology services are also under-funded, with no apparent prospect of change. Alternative sources of funding will therefore have to be sought and explored; for example, the Heritage Lottery Fund/Historic Scotland-funded Aberdeen Environmental Project, already mentioned, from which emanated an exhibition and a schools programme to encourage young people to explore the project's themes.

Finally, and very briefly, I want to consider the protection of the urban archaeological resource. In terms of future management and protection strategies it is probably only in respect of Perth and Aberdeen that the detailed information sufficient for development control can be provided. There is still a need for further excavation and archaeological monitoring of developments and more survey work such as the Burgh Survey 15 further volumes of which are currently in various stages of production, 16 having been completed in the 1990s (with more detail than the very early surveys and with

colour-coded maps defining areas of known archaeological importance). More survey work to reveal the hidden depths of standing buildings is also needed. This could provide one of the most significant sources of information in an urban context in future. For example the 1977 burgh survey of Brechin highlighted the lack of information about early building construction and materials in the town, but recent work on behalf of Tayside Building Preservation Trust behind an unprepossessing frontage at 68–74 High St revealed an intact timber-framed roof of native oak and dated pre-1717. Analysis of the timbers showed that an earlier roof had been dismantled and some timbers, dating to 1470 and imported from Scandinavia, had been re-used in the later roof. This survival raises hopes that more may be found in other towns.

There is a need to handle and manage information more effectively, ideally in an urban database both for Scotland as a whole and for individual towns. This is currently being explored but integrating information on buildings with the sites and monuments records (SMRs) that the majority of local authorities have, will not be easy. Eventually a move towards more comprehensive historic environment records (HERs) which integrate, store and provide access to information on archaeology, the built environment and historic landscapes may be required; one of the first, for a Scottish town, might be developed in Dundee through the recently set up Dundee Historic Environment Trust. Just such an historic environment approach of integrating archaeology with other subjects was taken in the recently-published Perth Development Study. This was the first publication of its kind for a Scottish town, that brought together results of below-ground archaeology, the assessment of Listed and other historic buildings, accounts of the pre-burghal, medieval and modern town, and the effect of population change in the 18th and 19th centuries. A significant part of the study is the assessment of the Tay flood regime in relation to a contour survey of

Perth and the conclusions to be drawn for the situation and early development of the town. The multidisciplinary nature of this publication may prove to be a way forward for other towns. Undoubtedly multidisciplinary and partnership approaches to the management, protection and interpretation of the urban historic environment will be crucial. If all involved pull in the same direction, albeit on parallel roads, the ultimate goal of urban growth and regeneration combined with the preservation of a valued and protected cultural resource will be achieved.

Thirty years ago the problems were seen as indifference and a lack of appropriately skilled personnel and to some extent these problems remain. All local authorities now have access to archaeological advice but all cannot claim to have adequate resources for archaeology, and the provision and maintenance of a SMR is still not a statutory requirement. Only Aberdeen has its team of City Archaeologists, and despite its successes it has faced difficulties of survival as a result of local authority funding crises. The number of conservation staff within planning departments is decreasing and there are still very few medieval archaeologists within universities or museums. There are, of course, a number of independent archaeological units and contractors, of which SUAT probably has the greatest experience of urban work. Lack of awareness or indifference about urban archaeology is not as great now as it was 30 years ago, but those of us who care passionately about the archaeology of our towns must still promote its importance in wider contexts and convince others of its value. There is clearly much public awareness of the subject particularly as a result of excavations which go on right under people's noses. But of the local urban research committees established in the 1970s how many now exist and with a strong sense of purpose? New ways of involving

and interacting with the community need to be found. Too often the 'heritage lobby' is perceived as negative, wishing to prevent progress; protagonists are accused of living in as well as working with the past. There is a real need to influence those who make the decisions affecting towns, the planners, local councillors, civil servants, members of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Ministers who *say* arts and culture are at the heart of Scottish life but must prove that they believe history, archaeology and heritage are 'culture', by their actions.

I hope I have demonstrated that a great deal has been achieved in the past 30 years and our ignorance of Scottish medieval towns is much less complete. Inevitably there remains a lot to do and the Society may once more see its way to playing a part, but as David Breeze wrote in the foreword to the 2000 Burgh Survey review, 'The future of our towns and cities is not only the concern of those responsible for decisions affecting them, but a shared endeavour between all who live and work in towns, or use and enjoy them.' In respect of the still hidden depths of archaeology in our towns this is a message we must *all* heed in order to hand on an urban heritage for the future; a future which lies with the children of today and they of course have a right of access to enjoy and appreciate the archaeology of their towns.

NOTE

- 1 Throughout the period under review the state ancient monuments service was embedded in or loaned to different parts of the Department of the Environment and the Scottish Office (Scottish Development Dept). I have used the latter, abbreviated to SDD for the period before Historic Scotland was set up as an Executive Agency in 1991.