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Table of Contents

Note: 'f' appended to page number indicates that part of the report is on microfiche in the envelope at the back of the volume.

Page

xi	EDITORIAL
xiii	OBITUARY Eric Birley
	ARTICLES AND REPORTS
1f	Historic Scotland's Backlog Project and the Projects Database Gordon J Barclay & Olwyn Owen
9	The excavation of a Neolithic and Iron Age settlement at Wardend of Durris, Aberdeenshire C J Russell-White
29	Excavation of a Neolithic enclosure and an Iron Age settlement at Douglasmuir, Angus Jill Kendrick
69	The excavation of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Early Historic features near Ratho, Edinburgh Andrea N Smith
139f	Carn Dubh, Moulin, Perthshire: survey and excavation of an archaeological landscape 1987-90 J S Rideout
197f	The excavation of a kerbed cairn at Beech Hill House, Coupar Angus, Perthshire Sylvia Stevenson
237	Two Orcadian cist burials: excavations at Midskaill, Egilsay, and Linga Fiold, Sandwick Hazel Moore & Graeme Wilson
253f	Excavation of a cairn at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis Joanna Close-Brooks
279f	A cist burial adjacent to the Bronze Age cairn at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis A J Dunwell, T Neighbour & T G Cowie
289	The excavation of three cairns at Stoneyburn Farm, Crawford, Lanarkshire, 1991 Iain Banks

- 345 Middle Bronze Age dirks and rapiers from Scotland: some finds old and new
Brendan O'Connor & Trevor Cowie
- 369 Excavation at Lintshie Gutter Unenclosed Platform Settlement, Crawford, Lanarkshire, 1991
John Terry
- 429f The Iron Age in Shetland: excavations at five sites threatened by coastal erosion
Stephen P Carter, Roderick P J McCullagh & Ann MacSween
- 483f Excavations of an enclosure system at Rough Castle, Falkirk
Ian D Máté
- 499 Westerton: a Roman watchtower on the Gask frontier
W S Hanson & J G P Friell
- 521f Excavations at Inveravon on the Antonine Wall, 1991
Andrew Dunwell & Ian Ralston
- 577 The Antonine frontier in Callendar Park, Falkirk: its form and structural sequence
G B Bailey
- 601 Some excavations on the line of the Antonine Wall 1985–93
L J F Keppie, G B Bailey, A J Dunwell, J H McBrien & K Speller
- 673 Some possible dating evidence for a souterrain near Alyth, Perthshire
Alan Small & J D Bateson
- 677 The ogham-inscribed spindle whorl from Buckquoy: evidence for the Irish language in pre-Viking Orkney?
Katherine Forsyth
- 697f Excavations at Sueno's Stone, Forres, Moray
R P J McCullagh
- 719f A Viking Age cemetery at Cnip, Uig, Isle of Lewis
A J Dunwell, T G Cowie, M F Bruce, T Neighbour & A R Rees
- 753 A traveller's end? – an associated group of Early Historic artefacts from Carronbridge, Dumfries & Galloway
Olwyn Owen & Richard Welander
- 771 A hoard of Hiberno-Viking arm-rings, probably from Scotland
James Graham-Campbell & John Sheehan
- 779f The excavation of a cemetery and putative chapel site at Newhall Point, Balblair, Ross & Cromarty, 1985
David Reed

- 793 Jedburgh Abbey church: the Romanesque fabric
Malcolm Thurlby
- 813 Towards an architectural history of Kilwinning Abbey
J Philip McAleer
- 881 Archaeological excavations at Cockpen medieval parish church, Midlothian, 1993
Jerry O’Sullivan
- 901 *Lion hunt: a royal tomb-effigy at Arbroath Abbey*
G S Gimson
- 917 Four excavations in Perth, 1979–84
David Bowler, Adrian Cox & Catherine Smith
- 1001 Medieval features and finds from Balfarg/Balbirnie, Fife
C J Russell-White
- 1023 Excavations at the former Lauder Technical College, Dunfermline
John Lewis
- 1045f Abbey, market and cemetery: topographical notes on Coupar Angus in Perthshire, with a description of archaeological excavations on glebe land by the parish church
Jerry O’Sullivan
- 1069 Craignethan: the castle of the Bastard of Arran
Charles McKean
- 1091 Excavations on Dundee Law, 1993
Stephen T Driscoll
- 1109 Excavations at Balgonie Castle, Markinch, Fife
R S Will & T N Dixon
- 1119 Excavations at Hillslap Tower, Roxburghshire, 1983–4
John Cannel & John Lewis
- 1131 Tobacco pipemakers in 17th-century Stirling
Dennis B Gallagher & John Harrison
- 1143 Preserving the Bishop’s Castle, Glasgow, 1688–1741
Athol L Murray
- 1163 The Piper to the Laird of Grant
Hugh Cheape
- 1175 The Marchmont or St Ronan’s Arrow
John Burnett & George R Dalglish

1187	A medal of the Newtongrange Lothian Cricket Club, 1887 John Burnett
1193	LECTURE SUMMARIES
1201	MEETINGS OF THE SOCIETY, 1994–5
1213	INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONTRIBUTORS
1215	INDEX

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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