



Society of Antiquaries
of **Scotland**

The Scottish Antiquarian Tradition: Essays to mark the bicentenary of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland 1780-1980

Edited by A S Bell

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Erratum

In the original publication of *The Scottish Antiquarian Tradition* plate 4 'Sir George Steuart Mackenzie, 7th Bt, of Coul' was attributed to Sir John Watson Gordon. However it is now attributed to Sir Henry Raeburn.

The Museum, its Beginnings and its Development

Part I: to 1858: the Society's own Museum

R. B. K. Stevenson

I suspect that that Society [a bright constellation of Caledonian Naturalists and Antiquaries in the late seventeenth century], as well as all others which are instituted for the study and collection of Antiquities and the objects of Natural History, failed on account of their having no house in property, nor any private interests to care for their books, museum, and other necessary appurtenances; and that having met in taverns, their meetings degenerated into convivial and anomalous conversations. All these hazards I mean, with your approbation, to guard against, and ever to exclude.

Lord Buchan, 14 November 1780.*

For much of the two centuries following Lord Buchan's Introductory Address, the Museum, and the need to care for it, was indeed central to the varying fortunes of the Society. For much of the first century his belief, that looking after a museum and having to house it would be what held his society together, proved to be true, as in successive generations a few men rose to the challenge. To show the converse, that collections needed a society, he went on to cite 'the Balfourian and Sibbaldian museums', given as his hearers knew to Edinburgh University, which had been dispersed through, as we might say, the lack of a home of their own and of the personal involvement of an interested membership. Another factor in survival is quality, which he did not mention. Perhaps those vanished university collections were less

* This chapter draws very largely on the minute-books and other records retained by the Society, and the printing of detailed references would be impracticable. An annotated copy giving specific references will be deposited in the library of the Museum and Society. For a general bibliographical note to both parts of this chapter, see p. 210.

remarkable than those that were more fortunate, the Ashmolean then a century old at Oxford, and Dr William Hunter's which was to be bequeathed to Glasgow in 1783.

The Earliest Years, to 1787

Curiously, perhaps, the Founder did not elaborate on the value of collections for study, except to say that it was impossible to proceed further with historical annals and disquisitions than the material already collected would permit. However, in editing and printing Buchan's Address in his *Account* of the Society a year or so later, the encyclopaedic William Smellie explained that the labours of some individuals, 'unassisted by powerful patronage', had excited a taste for antiquarian enquiries 'which for some years past has continued to diffuse itself over the nation':

An Association accordingly, similar to the Antiquarian Society of London, was projected by several gentlemen of eminence and learning, some of whom had made private collections, and were anxious that these, and others which they knew to be scattered through the country, should be preserved in a secure and permanent repository . . . They considered that some useful materials, which had been amassed by interested Antiquaries, were now perishing in the possession of persons who knew not their values; that others still existing, in public libraries, depended upon the fate of single copies, and were subject to obliteration, to fire, and other causes of destruction; and that it was an object of national importance to bring all these, either in their original form, or by an accurate transcript, into one great repository, which should be rendered accessible to the republic of letters.

In Lord Buchan's interesting discourse [Smellie continued], it was hinted, that the objects of the Society were not limited to Antiquities alone, but that they were to extend to the Natural productions of the country. This conjunction requires explanation. The penury of Scottish Antiquities, it was thought, would neither afford sufficient scope to the researches, nor gratify the tastes of such a number of men as were necessary to carry the views of the Society into execution . . . Besides, though this branch of the institution has not yet been fully unfolded, the donations received during the last twelve months show that Natural productions of every kind will form the most numerous, as well as the most ornamental part of our collections.

In this development the Society could be said to be following the wide scope of the British Museum, nationally owned from the start, which had opened some twenty years earlier. It comprised the historical and literary books and manuscripts of the Royal, Cottonian and Harleian libraries, and those of Sir Hans Sloane including his natural history collections and curiosities, to which the classical antiquities of

Sir William Hamilton had been added in 1772. The London Antiquaries, chartered in 1753 though active since 1707, accumulated miscellaneous antiquities and works of art, as adjuncts to their library and rooms rather than as a museum. The Scottish Antiquaries, like those of London but in contrast to the British Museum and those university museums of Oxford and Glasgow, formed their collections without having any major nucleus from individual collectors who had had the concentrated interest, the money, and perhaps the time, which societies — and in later days museum staffs — cannot devote to systematic acquisition. We shall see how far they succeeded over the years in overcoming this disadvantage by collecting collections, valuable if more modest.

By concentrating, though not exclusively, on things Scottish, little more than thirty years after the last of the Jacobite risings which had strained the relations of even loyalist Scots with England, they were running a conscious risk. Again it was Smellie rather than Buchan who was explicit on this point:

Till we were happily united with England, not in government only, but in loyalty and affection to a common Sovereign, it was not, perhaps, altogether consistent with political wisdom, to call attention of the Scots to the ancient honours and constitution of their independent monarchy. Not many years have elapsed since the jealousies of the two nations were succeeded by a warm and mutual attachment to the same family and constitution. During this short period, however, it will be allowed, that the progress of the Scots, in every species of art and science, has been rapid.

Looking back we can see that the romantic and unpolitical enthusiasm for things Scottish, originally fired through western Europe by Macpherson's Ossianic poetry of the 1760s, to which Buchan referred devoutly in his Address, matched by the self-confidence and success of the Scots themselves, kept national pride clear of the suspicions of nationalism for a very long time afterwards. Recently it has again become a practical problem, how far it would be actually counter-productive to stress the Museum's Scottishness strongly.

'Soon after the institution of the Society,' Smellie tells us, 'the number and value of the donations, daily received, rendered the purchase of a repository necessary at a more early period than was expected. The funds of the Society were by no means adequate to such an expense.' The expectations of the Founder had in fact been more sanguine, and well before the donations could have justified it he had in January 1781 inspected a house with the Secretary. The reference to a

self-contained house shows indeed that he had selected it before the initial Address. The purchase price estimated on that occasion (£800) was offered in February, but not accepted. In March entry was successfully negotiated, the price of £1,000 to be paid up in full by Martinmas 1782 (guaranteed by Lord Buchan, from whom the first £100 also came); in the meantime 5% p.a. was to be paid regularly on whatever was outstanding.

This 'large and commodious' house, with some open ground on every side, was a rarity in the Old Town of closely packed tenements up to fifteen storeys high, or even in the growing New Town of long terraces. It was 'not liable to the communication of fire from neighbouring edifices', and was to survive a conflagration in 1829. It lay almost straight down from the east end of St Giles' and a short way up from the Cowgate, immediately west of the fish-market. The coach-house and stables, with the main gate between them, were on the Cowgate. As Buchan said in February, the property would 'admit all the additions the Society may require for centuries to come'. Extending to about 60 feet by 150, it may be compared with the 65 by 110 of the Museum's building of 1890 in Queen Street, which was not seriously supplemented until 1953. Seventy years ago C. B. Boog Watson elucidated its history — built about 1742 by Alexander Lockhart, advocate (later a judge, Lord Covington), it was square with a central cupola; sold in 1766 to Colonel Campbell of Barbreck, in the service of the East India Company, it was rented as the Post Office for two or three years before the Antiquaries' occupation. It was then in fair condition, for only £10 was spent at the time of moving in, while later repairs to chimney heads cost £14 18s 2d. Three years later £1 17s 8d was paid for painting the principal staircase 'straw colour in Syze' to do away with the gloomy appearance.

By November 1782 only part of the purchase price had been paid, and a loan of £600 was needed, to be obtained by Lord Buchan on the Society's behalf from the Royal Bank. In reporting this debt to the Anniversary Meeting he hoped that there might be an increase of fees or voluntary contributions to extinguish it. But there was little response to his plea that the Society, 'consisting of between two and three hundred persons' (though only eighty were on the roll of ordinary members), should not 'permit themselves to be accused of sordid inattention to [its] pecuniary interest'. Even the loan was delayed for a year, partly because the Earl hoped that it would be obtained by the Society itself once it was a chartered body, and it was not until 13

November 1783 that £575 then outstanding was paid, and he held the title deeds.

The Society did not occupy all the premises on its own. The two out-buildings, or 'pavilions', were let out at £4 each. For the 'great gate' between them the magistrates were asked to provide a lamp. The main building was referred to as the Museum, but part of it was lived in by the Secretary and his family, rent-free. He was James Cummyng, who worked in the office of Lyon King of Arms as keeper of records, for which he received no salary though he had once held for a short time the paid post of herald painter. His work for the Society was also unpaid. One honorarium of £50 was voted him by the Council in 1782, but 'out of arrears due to the Funds', which then mounted instead of decreasing; payment was finally made early in 1784. A letter from Lord Buchan to the Home Secretary for government support for Cummyng, in the form of 'some small office in the Scottish civil list', got no reply. The Society provided a 'proper stove' and a bookcase for his study.

The Hall for meetings, and in which at first the museum or repository was to be set up (only from the fireplace to the south-east corner), measured $36\frac{3}{4}$ feet by $16\frac{1}{2}$ and $10\frac{1}{2}$ high. Iron bars were ordered when an acquisition of coins was being considered. Dirt was guarded against by making the windows fit better, and 'as open fires occasion dirt' the hall was to be fitted with stoves in the form of urns, a large vase at one end and a smaller at the other. The expense of coals, candles and other incidentals (£9) was incurred by Mrs Cummyng and repaid, and it was estimated that an additional servant for her might cost the Society £10 or more a year. Several additional rooms came to be occupied by museum objects, so in winter 1784 arrangements were made 'for heating and drying the different rooms of the Museum in rotation'. Further details are lost because normal current expenses early ceased to be included in the Council's minutes, and no financial books remain though correspondence and communications were kept, and later bound. A students' room, for which five chairs were presented, subsequently reported as being little used, was probably the same as the reading room to be open twice a week, mentioned as being on the Parlour floor of the building.

The payment of window light and house duties, amounting to £6 19s 0d for the first year, was deferred by agreement with the Town's Assessor, until it could be discovered what was done in London. Payment of £19 15s 4d had to be made in June 1784, six months after a court action against the Society. Later still it was ascertained that taxes

were paid by the British Museum and by the Royal and Antiquarian Societies. A further attempt at exemption was made by an appeal to the Barons of Exchequer in Edinburgh, at least one of whom was a member, but this was simply referred to their officials. After 'nuisances and encroachments on the Society's property' were mentioned, evergreens to cover the walls of the area were received from Sir Alexander Dick of Prestonfield. This was perhaps as much in psychological warfare as for amenity, as it appears that the encroachments were some sort of boundary dispute, since an unspecified decision by the Dean of Guild Court on the Society's complaints was reported next year.

Smellie's *Account*, published in May 1782, traced progress up to April of that year. An excellent feature of it, repeated in its second part ending in June 1784, is the descriptive list of donors and donations to the museum and library which was laid before each meeting of the Society and minuted. Purchases seem to have been exceptional, but unfortunately they were only referred to in general terms in the minutes and not published. Donation lists in substantially the same form were continued (though long after the events) in later volumes of *Transactions*, and in annually issued *Proceedings* from 1852 up to 1939. There can be few museums or libraries of such age with so full a serial publication of their earlier accessions. This record would be prouder if it did not contain uncomfortable evidence of what (from a variety of causes over the years) had disappeared or lost its identity, even if most of the missing items were of very minor consequence. Yet a check on certain classes of accessions, using 1781 as a random example, shows a respectably high survival rate for what was not readily perishable (thus out of 41 prehistoric and later complete museum objects from Britain, other than flints, 37 survive), so that the first half century can be absolved from later imputations of serious carelessness. There have been transfers and disposals, particularly in the second century, almost all long after the items had become irrelevant to the main interests of the Society (with some sad exceptions), or when they could clearly be better looked after elsewhere. The basic facilities for preservation — space and people's time — have never been adequate to the size of the task, as much because of reasonable hopes disappointed as of an over-optimistic biting off of more than could be chewed.

The earliest mix can be indicated by the number of donations in 1781 and 1782 that contained one or more items from twelve arbitrary categories: books, broadsheets, maps and transcripts 34 and 42; drawings, prints etc. 14 and 21; manuscripts 10 and 25; objects —

Roman and prehistoric 11 and 18, Viking and medieval 7 and 3, later 13 and 22, plus specifically foreign and ethnographical 11 and 14; coins and medals 44 (1729 items) and 91; natural history — animal 20 and 24, vegetable 6 and 2, mineral 14 and 14; money, for the building (not listed later) 8 and 2.

Two items from those years that have, perhaps fortunately, disappeared silently, are 'the scalp of a French soldier . . . the queue tied with pink ribbon', and a 'hand-grenade, charged' found near Hawick. On the other hand, of the very first objects minuted, on 16 January 1781, fifty-one of the fifty-three pieces of late bronze age weapons and cauldron are still present (several then inevitably destructive analyses were made in 1850 for Daniel Wilson), but not the lump of fused metal or the 'sculls and other human bones together with the horns of animals of the deer and elk species' dredged up with them from Duddingston Loch, Edinburgh. This entry in the *Account* is more detailed than the Secretary's early minute, but in line with his full listing of manuscripts in March. It seems possible that we owe to William Smellie not only the description of the bones but of the artefacts, and the good standard of more than the natural history in the entries that followed. As he used to spend weekends at Prestonfield, the gift of the hoard by Sir Alexander Dick was probably also due to him.

The Duddingston weapons, and various bronze axes that have come down to us from small hoards at Nairn and Dingwall, as well as a decorated cauldron of later date from Stirlingshire — the spread from the start was national as intended — were all described as Roman. This was not, of course, through ignorance of the absence of iron in Homeric times, but because it was known from classical literature that the Romans still used bronze for armour. A long paper by the reverend donor of the Nairn find was read to the Society in 1783, on Roman weapons of copper and iron, specifically arguing this case. Nearer the mark was the ascription to the Romans of the extremely fine and rare heavy bronze collar of the second century AD, ornamented with Celtic spirals, from Stichill in Roxburghshire, which the landowners had preserved for thirty-five years. It was listed as a *cestus* (knuckle-duster or girdle). Roman glass from forts in Perthshire and Dumfriesshire was correctly identified, and kept even in small fragments. On the other hand a more than life-sized marble head of a Roman, found in the wilds of the upper Tweed, was for well over a century supposed to represent a medieval priest.

A good descriptive paper on the earthworks at Birrenswark in

Dumfriesshire, identifying the Roman camps as besieging the native fort, may be credited to Dr Robert Clapperton, though the later editor omitted his name; he donated an enamelled bridle-bit from the back of the hill, and tiles and bricks from the baths at Birrens. The first excavation report, a rarity in the volumes of *Transactions* and very detailed, was contributed by Adam Cardonnel in 1783, on Roman military baths found at Inveresk near Edinburgh, illustrated by a view of the hypocaust. He praised a local resident, James Wedderburn, for 'endeavouring to preserve for the inspection of the curious, under the unskilled hands of the workmen, such of the buildings as are most worthy of preservation, and collecting together specimens of the different things found'. Some mortar and tiles were given to the Museum; three of the hypocaust's stone pillars were added eighty years later. Besides accounts of the finding of prehistoric objects that were donated, descriptive field surveys were presented with early papers, on the 'druidical' stones and 'Norwegian' brochs of the island of Lewis, and on iron age forts as on Hill o' Noth in Aberdeenshire. John Williams, a mineral surveyor, and author of the first monograph on such vitrified forts (a subject liable to excite controversy to this day) was an early active member of the Society, as an Associated Artist, but his papers were on current not antiquarian subjects.

The first paper to use the Museum's collections for typological study, 'On the warlike and domestic instruments used by the Scots before the discovery of metals', was delivered in 1782 by W. C. Little of Liberton, an advocate much concerned with the business side of the Council. He discussed stone axes and jet ornaments, placed for functional reasons what are now called leaf-shaped flint arrowheads earlier than those with barbs, and illustrated examples with their museum-numbers. Two of the arrowheads and one of the ornaments came from the Rev. Donald McQueen of Skye, along with two Viking silver bracelets — 'fibulae of white metal with which the sagum was fastened'; described as very learned, McQueen figures prominently in Johnson's and Boswell's accounts of their tour to the Hebrides a few years earlier.

More recent objects received in these first six years are even more varied and no less interesting. Medieval antiquities include an inscribed fragment of West Highland stone cross from Eilean Mor, to which another piece was added in 1936; two seal matrices and an octagonal latten flagon, separate finds; not to speak of several common three-legged pots, 'Roman camp-kettles', that have now lost their provenances. An openwork ivory representing two mailed knights among

interlace foliage, given by Lord Macdonald as the 'handle of a durk', may be a chessman, of still uncertain date.

Among the weapons are a two-handed sword almost six feet long, and a unique sporran-top given by MacNab of MacNab — the four little pistols concealed in it inspired Sir Walter Scott to give Rob Roy one in his novel. More sinister, because more practical, are thumbkins as used to torture seventeenth-century Covenanters, and a lockable brass collar found in the Firth of Forth, inscribed with the sentence on a man reprieved from the death penalty but given as perpetual servant to Erskine of Alva, an exhibit supported by the entry in the judicial records. One of the many and varied donations from Lord Buchan was the guidon of the dragoons raised in 1688 by his ancestor Lord Cardross, one of the oldest flags of a British cavalry regiment. In contrast to all these was what should have been the beginning of the present country life collections, a light wooden plough from Orkney, which has not survived.

Even at this early stage the Museum attracted information that was not only valuable in itself but also led to material additions, notably a letter along with a drawing sent in 1785 by an otherwise unknown Oxford scholar William Thomson. He recorded his visit to a man in Killin, who although only a day labourer was there the envied possessor of a Relic, the head of St Fillan's crozier. The letter with a later note pencilled on, both published in 1831, led directly to a search in Canada by Daniel Wilson, after which the last Scottish-born Dewar (Keeper) returned the relic in 1877 — to the Museum, 'there to remain in all time to come, for the use, benefit and enjoyment of the Scottish nation'. When the fourteenth-century silver reliquary was opened, the much older bronze head was found inside.

Many of the objects in the early donations were not, and often could not be, sufficiently described to be distinguishable from others of the same kind. The old markings for this purpose, alleged to have been changed in 1818 without cross-referencing, could have been paper numbers stuck on. For in the minutes each donation was given a number, perhaps when the first *Account* was being prepared in 1782 but starting from the beginning, and reaching 700 by June 1784. The system was continued till 1821, though omitted by the 1831 editor.

Soon after the first *Account* had been published an audit was made. A sub-committee of two was appointed to check what the Secretary had been doing. They were described as Curators, and this soon became a

regular office on the Council. They reported that 'Having made an exact and careful survey of every book, manuscript, medal, seal or other curiosity in the custody of Mr Cummyng, Secretary' they found all corresponded to the inventories, and 'the most minute article may be come at in a very short time'. They recommended that a more complete arrangement should be made, starting with the manuscripts and books, then coins by country beginning with Greek and Roman. There should be a separate printed inventory of 'other Effects', but this does not seem to have been done. They ended by advising that things should be shown to visitors 'on only one day a week, as the labour of the Secretary is daily increasing'.

An early gift of manuscripts, announced in Lord Buchan's annual Anniversary address but omitted from the donation list in the *Account*, consisted of 'thirteen volumes' of papers of the seventeenth century poet and writer William Drummond of Hawthornden and of his uncle William Fowler, secretary to James VI's queen, given by Dr Abernethy-Drummond. These have been deposited on loan in the National Library since 1934, along with many others of the Antiquaries' manuscripts; those from 1781-84 form in all 49 numbered lots, some quite bulky. There is an Antiphoner taken from Cadiz in the English raid of 1596, and two or three other religious works, one said by Buchan possibly to have come from Iona. A seventeenth-century Gaelic translation of Gordon's *Lilium Medicinæ* (1574) was given by the Rev. Donald McQueen, who contributed a paper on it, never printed; apparently he thought the manuscript much older than it was. Henry Erskine, one of Buchan's advocate brothers, gave two volumes of MacFarlan of MacFarlan's collection of Scottish Airs, c. 1740. Volume I, recorded as given separately, has long been lost (p. 57). Lord Buchan tried to buy MacFarlan's 'collections on Scottish antiquities and natural history' (now the Geographical Collections) to keep them in Scotland, but found the price too high, and expressed satisfaction at their being bought by the Advocates. Less happy was the failure to obtain the mass of papers left by the author of *Diplomatum et Numismatum Scotiae Thesaurus*, James Anderson, which were stored in the attics of George Heriot's school, and which it seems have not been heard of since.

The number of early gifts among the very many charters, writs and other miscellaneous and formal documents deposited in 1935 in the Scottish Record Office has not been ascertained, partly because re-arrangement and binding in the early nineteenth century has altered the composition of lots not fully described on receipt: already in 1785 they

were to be re-arranged by date and subject. One 'large collection of old Scots law deeds' went missing before 1820, when the Council inquired whether the executors of Alexander Jeffrey knew its whereabouts.

The selection of manuscripts retained as exhibits by the Museum also includes early donations. Such are a letter signed by Mary Queen of Scots, the large decorated copy of the National Covenant, 1638 and a plainer copy, a bound copy of the printed Solemn League and Covenant signed in Newbattle parish, 1643 (another copy seems to have long vanished), a Quartermaster's commission superscribed by Cromwell, Dr Pitcairn's elaborately illuminated diploma from the College of Aberdeen, 1699, and the Loyal Address of 102 heads of Highland clans and chief heritors to George I on his accession, which the Secretary of State for Scottish Affairs, the Earl of Mar, was prevented from presenting (given, along with a communication on the subject, by Lord Buchan). In short the initial manuscript donations to the Society go far to explain why members of the Faculty of Advocates, jealous for their much older library, joined in the protest against the Antiquaries' petition for a Royal Charter.

Source and date of donation are generally of rather less consequence for library volumes than for museum exhibits, for which pedigree is often a major part of their significance, and there are as yet no convenient lists to show the history of the older books now on the shelves of the joint library of the Society and the National Museum. There was no original marking system. Prints and drawings for which a magazine portfolio was to be bought in 1781, mainly of people and with a few portraits in oils, were a part of the library much encouraged by Lord Buchan. Having kept alive his advocacy of a national collection, the survivors now form part of the history of the National Portrait Gallery.

On the whole books were not collected for their own sake. Yet there were exceptions, as in later generations too. Most of these, together with books and pamphlets more strictly historical in the political sense than directly relevant to antiquities, were transferred outright to the other libraries about 1950 (see p. 204). From 1781-4 the National Library received three fifteenth-century items, nine sixteenth, and a first folio Shakespeare. A large part of the early gifts were naturally current or relatively recent works, often given by the authors. Those that were then relevant as being on natural history shaded off into purely medical, in line with the interests of some of the members. Thus Dr John Aitken gave five of his volumes, such as *Elements of the*

Theory and Practice of Surgery, and *Outlines of the Theory and Cure of Fever*, as well as a *Description of Double-shot Firearms*, the only one kept for the Museum. Fifty-five volumes, unspecified but probably in part to do with coins and medals, were bought in 1784 from the Society's bookseller, William Creech. He also donated volumes, among them Lord Kames's *Sketches of the History of Man*, handsomely bound in red Turkey (not traced), and Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae* and *Amoenitates Academicæ*. By November 1783 there were said to be 292 volumes on the shelves.

Before coming to the natural history collection we must look at the beginnings of the other most numerous, but in the long run sadly maltreated collection, that of coins and historical medals. By 1783 it numbered 2,200, of which the majority had been listed, sometimes in detail. 'Proper caskets' were soon got for 'one of the largest drawers . . . for the reception of the more valuable coins'. Later the drawers were to be subdivided for coins by country and reign. The proposal that the President (the meeting chairman, not the titular nobleman) should keep the key, and that opening required the presence of two Vice-presidents, is unlikely ever to have been implemented — there was a distinct tendency to pass resolutions and not act on them.

Besides the quantity of miscellaneous coins, many of them foreign, given a few or one at a time, some groups of recently found hoards were received, notably two Roman (Fife and Linlithgow) and one Anglo-Saxon (Tiree), besides single coins from other Anglo-Saxon hoards (Orkney and N. Uist). More came from a William the Lion hoard at Dyke in Moray, James V and Mary from Corstorphine near Edinburgh, while unspecified and unlocalised hoards were doubtless represented by a hundred and twenty-three 'pennies Scots' of Charles I, and forty-nine of 'Edward I', listed by mint, with six of Alexander III and one Robert.

If any coins from these hoard groups retained their donation number, this was lost sooner or later. Neither the potential importance of such association, nor the detail of varieties and individual dies into which later numismatists would want to go, was even suspected. The ninety-six coins from Dyke were said to represent twenty-four varieties, and the bulk were considered to be useful for exchange — Buchan thought that in this way they might make the Society's series of Scottish coins complete — but there is no evidence that any were discarded till much later. The discrepancy between ninety coins from Tiree and sixty-four listed Anglo-Saxons present in 1831 has been

thought simply due to loss. (After late nineteenth-century duplicate sales, and possibly some exchanges in 1831, fifty-three can more or less certainly be recognised.)

Another explanation might be provided by a minute of March 1783, when the Council decided to let Dr William Hunter (who however died that month) have duplicates from this series, no doubt in part return for the fine representation of Scottish coins he had given in 1781, one hundred and nine coins from William the Lion to Anne, twenty-four of them gold, with two dies of seventeenth-century royal privy seals. These formed in effect the nucleus of the Antiquaries' contribution to the present national collection. The Council then agreed in principle that other duplicates might be exchanged with the concurrence of the donors. They had also been considering buying from James Cummyng another collection of Scottish coins more than twice as large, proposing to give him a bond with yearly interest on it for them. This did not go through, as a posthumous auction catalogue shows. Cummyng read seven papers to the Society, one on prices of provisions in sixteenth-century Glasgow. Another, on the silver coins of the first four Jameses, dealt in particular with the groats that have an arched or imperial crown, a feature that interested him more than their remarkable Renaissance portrait, which he assigned to James IV rather than James II; only recently has James III at the end of his reign been wholly accepted as correct. Though Adam Cardonnel did not write on coins for the Society, Buchan claimed that his *Numismata Scotica* (1786) owed a great deal to their collection.

Ethnography was perhaps considered, as in some American museums today, as linked to natural history, for it is not easy to see what it had originally to do with the Society's concern with Scotland. Later the worldwide arts of mankind were retained for comparison with Scottish archaeology, with emphasis on stone and bone artefacts. Little other than the least perishable has indeed survived from the eighteenth century, so that only a fine Tahitian warrior's gorget, and reed pan-pipes from Tonga, remain with half a dozen imperishables out of the feathered finery, textiles and implements given in July 1781. The long descriptive entry in the *Account* records that they came from Captain Cook's last expedition (which had returned only nine months earlier) and had been given by his widow to the donor, Sir John Pringle, Bart., MD. Pringle (1707-82), who had recently returned to Edinburgh, was an important figure in the history of military medicine and had presented to Cook the gold medal of the Royal Society of

London (of which he was President) for his paper on anti-scurvy measures. He and Cook may have been linked by more than this shared interest; for James Cook senior, a farm labourer, came from Ednam in Roxburghshire, where he was a contemporary of Pringle's elder brothers at Stichill House nearby.

That the Society at first appreciated what they had been given appears from the Curators' report in July 1782: 'It is absolutely necessary that a Repository be fitted up without delay for the reception of a variety of articles lying in the Otaheite Room, which are gradually spoiling by being exposed to the air.' In addition to the Cook collection there would have been there a couple of bows from the Caribbean, three Chinese ladies' shoes, and 'several pieces of (American) Indian dress', shoes, garters, hose and a pouch, all decorated with coloured porcupine quills. A dozen gifts in the following four years were not notable, though there were three other Tahitian items from separate donors, and a Canadian 'iceboat' five feet long, which had to be painted before being left outside in winter — one hopes not with 'all its furnishings and tacklings . . . furnished with bells', yet sooner or later it all vanished like much of the rest.

The 'west room on the principal floor of the Museum' was to be fitted up with shelves and a glass case, sufficiently commodious for 'the articles in natural history' which needed protection from dust. Lord Buchan added that the Secretary should provide proper phials for the better preservation of the animals in spirits. The jaws of a whale, 16 feet long, were set up as an arch on the slope beyond the house, forerunners of quite a number still to be seen around Scotland. By 1783 the Society had been given, as well as many lesser items, the jaws of a shark, five alligators up to 7½ feet long, exotic birds, several recent monstrosities, and more significantly also six ancient stag and *bos primigenius* heads from different parts of Scotland which are still in the Museum. There were mineral and pebble collections, and a *hortus siccus* of six hundred Jamaican plants from Lord Buchan (passed on in 1870 to the Regius Professor of Botany). He also gave one of two smaller collections of 'Scots plants'.

So Smellie was quite justified in emphasising the size and visual impact of that part of the Antiquaries' Museum, even though the initial impetus was not kept up. He himself was, with Lord Buchan, the key figure in this development, and in its immediate important consequences. He was, further, much the most regular attender of Council meetings, along with the Secretary whom he later succeeded. Now in

his early forties, Smellie was a man of remarkable diligence and attainments. As an apprentice printer in Edinburgh he had been given generous day-release, three hours daily, for university classes, and had attended all the medical classes, also chemistry and botany. Before setting up on his own in 1765 he edited the *Scots Magazine* for five or six years. He planned, compiled, and wrote much of the Dictionary of Arts and Sciences that was published in parts from 1771 — the three-volume first edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Not a good business man, he lost the benefit of later editions by declining to produce the second, in 1776, because the proprietors insisted on introducing a system of general biography. His venture of publishing, and contributing to, the *Edinburgh Magazine and Review* was short-lived (1773-6), and ended in some acrimony. Shortly before that Smellie had unsuccessfully applied for the Regius Chair of Natural History at Edinburgh. He edited and printed various medical books, and as part of his regular business had for long a virtual monopoly of printing medical and legal theses, in Latin. Finally in 1782 there was published his adaptation and translation of Comte de Buffon's *Natural History of the Earth, and of Man and of Quadrupeds*, in eight volumes with engravings by Andrew Bell, who was also a regular attender of the Society's meetings and principal proprietor of the *Britannica*.

Lord Buchan had said little about natural history in his opening address, but he had sent Smellie a special invitation, primarily because of this interest:

Although . . . the investigation of [Antiquities] appears at first to be a little out of your *beat*; yet as it is meant to widen the field of enquiry to the pursuits connected with it, whether natural, moral, or political; I beg leave, as a mark of the very high and well founded opinion I have of your literary talents, to invite you to make one of us on the 14th.

The early appointment to be Superintendent or Keeper of Natural History alongside the Secretary's responsibilities for all the collections may have been an afterthought, but it was an important part of Buchan's plan to have him publicise the Society's activities and edit its publications. In Smellie's view, 'to excite a taste for natural history' was a main reason for the plan for accounts of the parishes of Scotland which he edited in August 1781, and then printed and circulated for the Society; it was also published in the *Caledonian Mercury* (see p. 17). At the same time he read a paper to the Society 'on methods to be employed for the preservation of quadrupeds, birds, fishes, insects and plants'. Some of this, published by his biographer, makes clear that he

had the practical aim of getting fresh specimens to the Museum in a suitable state for more complete conservation, and of showing the range of detailed observations that might come with them. However, this advice does not seem to have been published at the time, and did not result in any flow of material.

The Charter and natural history

Opposition to the granting of a Royal Charter to the new Society, and the consequent foundation of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in rivalry to it, stemmed largely from the natural history collection, and from the personal involvement with it of both Buchan and Smellie. This opposition, as documented in the 1784 *Account*, was most fully stated by Principal Robertson for Edinburgh University. He claimed that they had a Museum which contained those objects of natural history which were exhibited by the professor of the subject to his students; and that the Society's Museum would not only divert many specimens from it, but enable a lectureship in natural history to be instituted in opposition to the university's professorship. The University proposed instead a comprehensive Royal Society of Scotland, with a final proposition 'that whatever collection of antiquities, records, manuscripts shall be acquired by the Royal Society shall be deposited in the library of the Faculty of Advocates, and all the objects of natural history acquired by it, shall be deposited in the Museum of the University of Edinburgh'. Written support for these proposals came from 'some of the Curators of the Advocates' Library', confirmed by a large majority at a Faculty meeting. They rightly pointed out that their Library had 'for a century past been the general repository of ancient manuscripts and monuments illustrating the history and antiquities of Scotland'. They urged delay in the matter of the Antiquaries' charter, so as to ensure a Society which 'will promote inquiries regularly on history and antiquities, [but] may at the same time be conducted as not to interfere, in any degree, with the Advocates' Library'. The Philosophical Society of Edinburgh, which was planning to become the new Royal Society (which it did, bringing with it Smellie, but not Buchan, who resigned), also wrote a protest to the Lord Advocate. A further personal antagonism may have partly motivated the vice-president who signed it, William Cullen, one of the leading medical professors of his time, for he was known to have been extremely angered by an article by Smellie in the original *Britannica*.

From the Antiquaries' long reply it emerges that one root of this quarrel went back to when 'a spirited young nobleman' (identified elsewhere as Lord Buchan, then Lord Cardross, in 1766) gave a collection of natural objects to Edinburgh University. For this was afterwards sold by the late professor's executors, when 'most of the articles were purchased by a Russian and are irrecoverably lost to this country'. To make matters worse, it was declared that 'the College Museum is a very ominous repository', because earlier still it had been given the Museums of Sir Andrew Balfour and Sir Robert Sibbald, and 'neither of these two collections have now the vestige of existence'. The lectures to which the University objected were a series which Smellie hoped to deliver, preferably in the Society's Hall but on his own account, on lines said to be quite different from the University's course. (They were later written, and published in 1790-99 as the *Philosophy of Natural History*.) The Society claimed that its own Museum was open to the public, unlike the immensely valuable library of the Advocates, generous as the Faculty were to the public at all times. It also rejected the University's argument that in a 'narrow' country like Scotland, as already in others that were larger, a single Society was fully sufficient for all branches of science, erudition and taste. (Yet the same argument had been published by Smellie in his first *Account* to justify the Antiquaries' combination of natural history with antiquities.)

Faced with these conflicting proposals and personalities (with political undertones to which Dr Shapin has drawn attention), the Lord Advocate, Henry Dundas, recommended to the King that the Charter should be granted. It was signed on 29 March 1783 — and a charter instituting the Royal Society of Edinburgh on the same day. The objects of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland were very briefly stated as the investigation of ancient things, and of natural and civil history in general, and the powers granted were almost equally wide; and in so far as the Monarch is perpetually Patron, the Society was, as it continues to be, a Royal one (Appendix, p. 275). There were, however, no provisions for any financial support from the Crown or Government. The Society as a chartered body was now entitled to buy its own house and borrow for the purpose, but its credit was in reality no greater than before. The idea of a petition to the Treasury for a grant, suggested by a Baron of Exchequer, does not seem to have been supported by other influential members. So Lord Buchan had to continue to be responsible in his own name.

Recession, 1787-93

It was natural that the initial flood of donations should peak in the second and third years of the Museum. The number of donors halved in the next two years, to still over one hundred in each and nearly 1,000 items, even if of lesser quality. This might have been a welcome period of consolidation, despite a further drop in number and interest in 1786. But the whole scene was to change dramatically for the worse in the course of a few years, leaving new men to hold on to the Museum while the ideas and ideals of the Founder were ultimately more often developed elsewhere.

The immediate cause was finance. Appeals and threats in Buchan's Anniversary Addresses, and circulars issued by the Council, failed to get half the necessary capital donations, or even to stimulate more members to pay their subscriptions. Already at the beginning of 1785 the Council had minuted that as 'funds would not allow the house to be cared for properly, it was expedient to ask Lord Buchan to sell it and rent a temporary house in the new town, until convenient and proper to purchase or build one in a situation safer and better than the present'. Alternatively some of the area in front of the Museum might be feued for building. It would get more difficult later to move out the collected 'effects'. Security as well as finance was seriously on their minds about then, without a specific reason being recorded. They noted that there was 'no defensive weapon in the Museum, to be used in case of an attempt on it by Housebreakers', and wished to recommend to the members that a blunderbuss and large pistols should be purchased; but they must have quickly had second thoughts, as the question was not put to the next meeting. Their other proposal was accepted, to pay half-a-crown annually to the fund for prosecution of housebreakers, 'the Rogue fund in this county'.

The Council, despairingly it would seem, almost gave up meeting in 1786, and left the Founder to shed as best he could the £600 outstanding bank loan and the mounting costs. Intimation came in January 1787 that the house and grounds had been sold at a considerable loss, for £765, with entry at Whitsun. (The purchaser was Patrick Heron of Heron, who had given several Roman coins to the Museum five years earlier, and owned an inn in Glasgow. He transformed the place into the 'British Inn', which after some ten years gave way to a printing house before being demolished about 1830.) Several members of Council quickly went to inspect an empty house near the head of the

Cowgate. They reported that it was commodious and could be bought or rented. Buchan optimistically told the meeting that he had applied to the Duke of Hamilton for apartments in the Palace of Holyroodhouse to accommodate the Society, but nothing more was heard of this. Next month, after it had been agreed to rent a house on the west side of Milne's Square, several other houses were visited. A house on the front Land of Chessel's Buildings — a flat looking on to the upper part of the Canongate from the south — was considered to be 'as proper as any that was to let in the old Town at present', and the decision was left to Buchan, Little, and Smellie. In May its lease was fixed, for three years at 30 guineas. Living space required for the Secretary may have been less than before, as Mrs Cummyng had died in 1785 and one son at least was grown up. (He had run a 'minor society of antiquaries' at the Museum in 1783-85, of which the minute book is in the Bodleian Library.) In June the removal of the Museum was advertised in the newspapers; and the Council discussed what was to be a recurrent theme, of prosecuting members 'residing in Town who are in arrears to the funds'.

Just when they learned that they had to move, the Council were embarrassed by the arrival from Sweden of a granite boulder 5½ feet high, an eleventh-century tombstone incised with runes on a shackled serpent surrounding a large cross. It was a gift from A. B. (later Sir Alexander) Seton, the heir of a Stockholm merchant. They sought the advice of a marble cutter on the practicability of having the face sliced off. Evidently this was not feasible, for it is still complete (p. 57). In the following month two large gilt brooches from Caithness came with other ornaments, found in a Viking woman's grave, recorded as intruded into the ruins of a Pictish house (in fact a broch). Two years later another pair came from Islay.

Altogether 1787 was a year notable for those links with Scandinavian archaeology and archaeologists which were to be strengthened in later generations. For there was also a visit from Professor Thorkelin, who had 'explored this country for many months at the desire of the Antiquarian Society of Copenhagen in order to collect accounts of all the Norwegian and Danish remains to be found here', and who had discovered several hitherto undescribed Danish [iron age?] forts while on a tour of the northern coasts and western isles with George Dempster of Dunnichen. Stimulated by a communication from Dempster on the present state of Gaelic poetry in the western Highlands, a forerunner of a literary phase in the Society, the Council wrote

to the ministers of the Synod of Glenelg asking them 'to write down from the recital of the old Bards these songs in the Gaelic language'. They asked for them to be transmitted to the Society, addressed to George Dempster MP. It does not appear than any came, in spite of his right of free postage.

Lord Buchan in his annual address in 1787 referred to these matters, and to the relief from heavy public taxes and bank interest as a result of the move. A lessened commitment to natural history is shown by the suggestion to 'learned correspondents proposing to send valuable specimens' that they should 'in so far as they do not come within our plan' present them to the University of Edinburgh in the Society's name, for the instruction of students. He spoke too of a 'prospect of combining with other public bodies to erect a new building for their permanent and proper accommodation'. More positively, past papers selected for publication were now being prepared for the press.

The first volume of *Transactions* when it finally appeared was dated 1792, but unrecorded in the minute book. The agreement with William Creech was that he should be publisher, but that the Society retain the copyright. A handsome volume of 570 pages, it contained a very short version of the *Accounts*, two long accounts of parishes (see p. 17), and forty-six papers, a dozen relevant to the Museum. More than a quarter of the papers had been delivered in the new premises despite the cancellation of a number of meetings from 1788 onwards, and attendances as low as half a dozen. There were no lists of donations or of communications. Silent intimation was given, to anyone who read the lists of members and office-bearers attentively, that Lord Buchan was no longer first Vice-President.

The evidence of what exactly led to the Founder's resignation from the Society in November 1790 is lost with the several letters exchanged that summer. One may infer that there had been a growing uneasiness among members that the Society was financially no less dependent upon Buchan than it had been before the house was sold. While many stayed away, those who remained most involved came, it seems, to feel that his very individual methods of sponsorship were no longer worth the disadvantages, both within the Society and in the impression they made on outsiders. The correspondence in 1790 began in February with a request that the Earl should account for the sums in his keeping belonging to the Society, starting with the £500 believed present in 1783. In March Buchan came and presented a general accmpt of the state of the funds, without vouchers which were 'in the country'. What

they covered is not stated, but presumably at least the house sale in 1787 and his expenditure out of the balance left following the repayment of the £600 loan from the £750 received; he had been paying, under pressure, rent on the premises in Chessel's Buildings, now due again. Of Buchan's letters that followed the reference of this account to the auditors, it is only known that in the last one he advised that members in arrears with their subscriptions should indeed be sued for them. The active members of Council who received this were highly responsible people, who had been office-bearers for ten years, including Smellie and William Tytler of Woodhouselee, WS. With the few other members able or willing to attend a subsequent business meeting, they were clearly in varying degrees fed up with the way the Earl was dealing with the finances. They had thought, apparently, to put further pressure on him to have things straightened out, by taking his advice so literally as to have Buchan himself sent the lawyer's letter for all in arrears.

When Samuel Hibbert and David Laing in 1831 published their sequel to the 1784 *Account*, they stated in a footnote that Buchan 'was treated unquestionably with anything but the consideration to which as the Founder, and principal benefactor of the Society, he was in common courtesy entitled'. Unfortunately they not only failed to take into consideration the immediate background, but in trying to find instead of 'petty jealousies' a serious enough case for the rift, they assumed that there must have been a real demand not just for one guinea but for a special £20 per annum which Buchan had, on unfulfilled conditions, offered and allowed to be minuted eight years before, and which was certainly still remembered. It seems more consistent with the strong feelings roused on both sides to suggest that the rift was over the proper accounting and management of the balance of the Society's capital, and because some of it was believed still due. Buchan indeed paid two further instalments of rent after his resignation was accepted. There is no sign in the minutes of the 'trifling or factious spirit' alleged in 1831, when the persistent efforts to keep the Museum together were underestimated.

Unsatisfactory premises away from the growing New Town were one major hindrance to attendance at the meetings, and to attracting new members, or donations of any consequence for the Museum and library. In the next two and a half years the most notable gift was from Sir John Sinclair, 'a specimen' of the *Statistical Account*, which, in a way, the Society had inspired. Sir John, now a Vice-President, also

came himself to propose that application should be made to the King for a moderate annuity. A delegation was planned, to write and speak about it to the Duke of Montrose, who had newly agreed to become titular President. But at this point, in the summer of 1792, all activities ceased owing to the Secretary's illness, followed by his death in January.

A letter by Smellie in April, replying to an enquiry from Buchan, relates the next moves:

After the decease of our late Secretary, Mr Fergusson of Craigdarroch and Mr John Dundas were the only Antiquarians who appeared to look after the interests of the Society. Along with Mr Robert Bell WS, who was Mr Cummyng's agent, we sealed every repository that contained any of the effects belonging to the Society. Immediately after the interment, we procured a meeting of the Council, who ordered me in case of accident, to carry the cabinet of coins etc to my own house, where they now lie under lock and key; and, what is a better security, they are four stories high, and the stair is at least an angle of 60 degrees; so much the worse for my poor limbs.

At a subsequent meeting of the Council I was elected Secretary to the Society; and was empowered to hire the house, and a noble one for the purpose, built by Mr Home Rigg, at the foot of Gossfords close, Lawn-market, behind which is an excellent little area, for receiving the *runic* stones, and such heavy articles. That house is now hired, or taken, as we say, and the entry is to be at Whitsunday next.

I have now given, my Lord, a concise and, I hope, a satisfactory account of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. I shall only remark upon the whole, that the present is the crisis of the *fever*. I shall exert all my powers; and I am happy to find that many of our most respectable members exhibit an unusual keenness. Your Lordship's exertions, I am confident, will not be withdrawn.

Holding on, 1793-1813

Sadly, however, Smellie's powers were failing, and the basic struggles to keep the Society alive and its collections housed were to be very long drawn out. While these were unresolved, meetings sometimes ceased, and collecting was even more inhibited. The extreme span of the interests which it had been trying to foster meant that there was insufficient support and follow-through for the few intellectual tasks occasionally put forward. It should not be forgotten, too, that the times were unpropitious. Already in 1782 Lord Buchan in his Address had stressed that they were 'cultivating the Arts of Peace and Tranquillity in the midst of a dangerous and expensive War', and looking back the writers of the 1831 *Account* noted the growing inconvenience of the Old Town situation, and suggested that 'The volunteering

system and the agitated state of the country in general in regard to the threatened French Invasion, had the effect of withdrawing people's minds in a great degree from scientific pursuits of every description'. They might have added 'in regard to politics': Thomas Muir, advocate, elected member in 1787 and Curator for the next year, was transported for sedition in 1793.

William Smellie's biographer recorded that he 'was much indisposed for a considerable time before his death, and bore his illness with the utmost patience'. By 1793 he was 'suffering from a feebleness in my limbs and want of an appetite', so he 'took a room at the Citadel of Leith and bathed my limbs in sea water a very little heated'; but his digestion grew worse and in May 1794 he wrote, 'my former debilitated limbs are hardly able to support my small tabernacle. My drink is port, or rather port and water'. He died in June 1795.

His son Alexander, formally associated for a few weeks as Assistant Secretary, then began what was to be nearly thirty years continuously as Secretary of the Society, with a reappearance much later. He succeeded to the printing business, and to the 'use of the Society's house'; the 'key of the Museum', temporarily removed, was returned. He was voted ten pounds a year, which his father had had, 'for coal and candles'. 'The small room adjoining the Museum' was to be fitted up with shelves, a carpet, table and two chairs, 'for the reception of the Society's books', which sounds as if William had kept them beside his own.

This house was the fourth to be occupied by the Society. It will be clearer if at this point the tales of accommodation and finance are mainly told separately, before we scan the collection of things and information. After Cummyng's death at Chessel's Buildings a move had been made to another flat, at the bottom of Gosford's Close off the Lawnmarket; the upper part of Victoria Street now runs across the site, opposite the National Library. It was 'more convenient' though still in the Old Town and at nearly twice the rent — £50, plus £5 for 'damage to walls by hanging up the Society's Effects'. Just over a year later in March 1794, with rent outstanding for two houses, it was decided 'that a house be bought for the accommodation of their curiosities etc, as this would save them from being destroyed in moving them from place to place'. A house 'in the Castle Hill lately possessed by Mr Rae, surgeon, would be very convenient' and 'the money might be got on the subject'. Built about 1740 uphill from his manse by the Rev. Dr Alexander Webster (famous for his census of

Scotland in 1755) for occupation as a banking house by William Hogg, it was on the south side of the present approach to the Esplanade just above the Tolbooth Kirk. After twice raising their bid over the 'upset price of £550' in the traditional — and continuing — Scots practice, the agreed price was £630, 'to include income from an insurance' (£4 p.a.). There was some open ground at the back of the property, approached through the 'outer gate' which had later to be repaired. Immediate repairs to window frames were required, as well as some wright work and white washing of the passages.

Remarkably, perhaps, the Society stayed at Castle Hill for twenty years, with periods of suspended animation, to be roused again by financial pressure. Due credit must be given to those who did not give up in 1793-5, and then held on. Soon after Cummyng died the landlord at Chessel's Buildings got a sequestration order on the collections, 'the Effects'. An urgent Council meeting gathered guarantees from four of those present, which allowed money to be borrowed to pay off arrears of rent, and move. Some months later a vexatious prosecution was raised against the Society on behalf of Cummyng's heirs, groundlessly claiming £1,200 as twelve years' salary unpaid. Sir John Sinclair was asked to revive the approach to the Government, for an annual £100, but it is not clear how far this went; and William Smellie, having reported as Secretary that most of the members had 'refused' to pay their subscriptions, tried in a circular letter to stem desertions with a patriotic call and to 'inlist fresh troops'. Whether or not his tone was right for the times, one might have thought it better to wait till the further move to Castle Hill, already being negotiated, could be mentioned and used as a stimulus.

The Council, including John Dundas WS and Gilbert Innes of Stow, who were mainstays throughout many years, met in May with the outgoing and incoming Lord Provosts of Edinburgh, both members from early days — Thomas Elder, wine merchant and sometime Postmaster General of Scotland, and Sir John Stirling, banker. They discussed finance, underwrote a credit of £100, and adjourned for six months for the accounts to be investigated and the removal completed. At the Museum in November 1794 those four and four others agreed to raise funds on their personal security to pay off over £800, but the 'bill of £100' was to be kept unexpended. For their repayment the Society would pledge its 'whole moveable effects and property'. The next regular meeting was held (uniquely) in a tavern, the Douglas in Anchor

Close, presumably with a dinner — there is rarely evidence for the Society's convivial side, initiated by Lord Buchan. It was agreed that members should be visited personally by Council, and the election of fresh troops began. At forty-seven in the next five years, those elected were more numerous than in the previous eleven, or in the following fifteen: no fewer than five Dundases including the Lord Advocate, Robert Dundas of Arniston, a high proportion of other lawyers, among them Walter Scott, and several other young men who were to be key figures of the later truer revival. By the end of 1795, £800 had been borrowed from the Edinburgh Friendly Insurance Society and presumably spent; the process in the Court of Session against unpaying members was in doubt and would be dropped; reinstatement without payment of arrears would be allowed.

It is not known how well the annual guineas came in (life membership twelve guineas, entrance two), and though in 1800 'the cash book was being kept very correctly by the Secretary', by 1805 the £40 interest on the loan was two years in arrears, the disposition of the house had not yet been registered, and £45 was still owing to Innes and Dundas for payments in 1796 and 1803. So they and four others advanced £100. (This may have been an episode in the life of the 1794 bill of credit, stated in 1812 to have been 'repeatedly renewed and lies at present in the Royal Bank'.) It was soon overspent, while Alexander Smellie agreed to give up (for the present) the ten guineas p.a. for heat etc. Two years later annual income was reported as £50 or £60, including the £4 from the Friendly Society insurance (share), subscription arrears £172, debt £114 additional to the whole principal of the house-loan. When in 1810 a demand for over £30 for taxes was considered, the Council decided that (until the Society was flourishing again) the Secretary would have to pay a proportion. A letter to the Duke of Montrose, the titular president, about procuring an annual sum from His Majesty, was considered in draft but probably not sent. Soon the Secretary was asked for a rent of £25 plus tenant's taxes, to begin at Whitsun 1811, but this was balanced later by £25 for salary, coals, candles and cleaning. The annual deficits were now small, yet the total debt was large and the taxes heavy.

The impetus provided by the 1794 crisis did not last long — in the years 1808-13 only two papers were read and 31 donations of any kind received. Yet the whole period had not been quite fruitless. After the standstill of two and a half years during which William Smellie had moved the collections twice, a trickle of books and coins had started to

come in before his death. Alexander succeeded to the responsibilities for the collections and, 'once the Museum was properly arranged', was to open it for three hours one day a week, when any friends might be brought. He seems to have been more of a caretaker than a keeper. A succession of supervising Curators was appointed, but the office of Superintendent of Natural History was left vacant for several years till John Graham Dalyell was elected at the age of thirty. Though a lifelong naturalist in addition to historical writer, he apparently continued a policy of not seriously adding to that side of things, yet retained the office for most of the thirteen years that he was a Vice-President, from 1805.

Two notable antiquities were early received. One is the Covenanters' flag carried at Bothwell Brig and then, refurbished, briefly in Edinburgh in 1745. The second indicates that the Museum was not cramped, and was now thought viable enough for the Lord Provost and Magistrates of Edinburgh to pass on what Lord Buchan had written asking for in 1781 and probably again in 1789 — The Maiden, Scotland's beheading machine of 1564, unused since 1697, so that in 1797 its move to the Museum was perhaps a symbolic contrast to recent Terror elsewhere. Scott's first, and for many years only, attendance was for the donation. In line with the original, and present, policy of the Museum a series of newly struck specimens and a pair of dies of 'provincial halfpennies' and other tokens, with a communication on them, were accepted from James Wright junior. He had himself designed and had them made, when what one might call the medallic souvenir craze coincided with the shortage of small change at the end of the eighteenth century. Thereafter donations became fewer and of less interest, except the Gown of Repentance from West Calder. 'About 108' base-metal coins of Queen Mary, with no location, was the first gift from the Barons of Exchequer, exercising in 1808 the Scottish Crown's claim to ownerless things, rather than only treasure in the strictest sense as in England.

There is not much evidence of the activity of the successive pairs of Curators over these years, other than their being provided with keys when Sir George Steuart Mackenzie of Coull was one in 1800 (the time when, only twenty years old, he discovered the chemical identity of diamond and carbon). A suggestion that at each meeting 'part of the curiosities' should be examined 'in the order of the catalogue', with the original description read, was only once followed. Dr James Miller, already probably preparing the 4th edition of the *Encyclopaedia*

Britannica, tried to get the books catalogued, but whether the special committee of nine, including Constable and Scott, ever met is not evident. A catalogue, however, was to be compared with the books eighteen months later, in 1808, before the Secretary was given the key. Earlier it was agreed that a regular catalogue of manuscripts should be made, and the policy that they should not be borrowed was restated. Yet in 1806 a member of Council was granted extension of the loan of one volume of MacFarlan's musical collection; by 1819 it was being pursued in vain.

A paper unusual in being relevant to the Museum was passed on from the Literary and Antiquarian Society of Perth in 1798 — an observant typological discussion by the Rev. John Dow of stone and 'brass' *celts* in which they are, as we know, correctly arranged, and the functions of the thin butt of the bronze axe and its stop-ridge are deduced. It is interesting that he mentions examples of varied kinds of find-association and refers to other countries of northern and western Europe. Most communications in the decade to 1807 were historical or, predominantly, literary and linguistic. It was a time when a few members, with an extreme episcopalian the Rev. Donald Macintosh as prime mover, discussed Gaelic poetry and the authenticity of Ossian in a dozen papers, and co-operated with the Highland Society of London under Sir John Sinclair in publishing Macpherson's 'originals'; and when the pioneer linguist Professor Alexander Murray spread his account of the history and language of the Picts over five meetings, Macintosh had earlier written about some 'druidical' stone circles in the Highlands, and presented a wooden pot-hook, already a rarity.

A committee optimistically set up 'to survey the antiquities of the city of Edinburgh' had its single report presented by Dalyell in 1802. This may have stimulated a new member, the Board of Ordnance's Store-keeper at the Castle, to take 'the very great trouble' to move the Runic Stone, after seventeen years at Chessel's Buildings, to the 'area behind the Society's house'.

Revival with the Geologists, 1813-26

Early in 1813 the future pattern of sharing a building with a kindred body was set. The Society moved to the New Town following an offer from the Royal Society of two south rooms on the bedroom storey of 42 George Street for Library and 'Cabinet', and the use of its hall for meetings. Laing commented in 1831 that, as he remembered it,

with Urquhart the perfumer on the ground floor and a common stair, neither Society can have been very flourishing. In fact the Royal Society was itself making a new start. It had acquired the property in 1810, when compelled to leave its rooms in the College because of a fundamental quarrel with the University. This was over the use of the Hutton geological collection, lost to it at a time when geological theory was central to its activity and to its new scientific reputation; a revised charter to allow it to hold its own collections was obtained in 1811.

The catalyst for change at the Antiquaries was evidently Sir George S. Mackenzie, though this is not brought out in the 1831 *Account*. At the end of 1812 he rejoined the Society after an absence of five years, during which he had travelled and published on Iceland and Faroe. He then appears as the Royal Society's representative in the negotiations, along with Thomas Allan, banker, and a notable mineralogist like himself. With John Dundas and Gilbert Innes for the Antiquaries was Henry Jardine, King's Remembrancer at the Exchequer. It was agreed that the Antiquaries should pay £42 rent for a minimum of five years, to include fire, the services of the porter, and cleaning and painting the rooms. Moving and fitting up was paid for by the Antiquaries. Though the Secretary quickly moved out his own furniture, shifting the collections may have taken much longer, for there was an unexplained six month's delay in considering an offer of £600 for the old house, which was then accepted with immediate entry.

In December, in 'the Museum', Mackenzie was elected senior Vice-President and took the Chair. He also became a Curator along with Andrew Coventry, professor of agriculture in the university, with Dalryell still in charge of natural history. Smellie ceased to be acting Treasurer, and was joined as Secretary by John Jamieson DD, author of the *Scottish Dictionary*, who seems later to have been given chief credit for the Society's revival; this may well have been justified in the matter of stimulating and editing communications. The revival flagged somewhat after a few years, at least as far as the Museum was concerned, but soon got its second wind, as we shall see.

The sale of the house and its insurance had netted nearly £750. Debts, including what was by then an overdraft in the Royal Bank, amounted to £1,048. All were to be paid off except £350, part of the loan from the Friendly Insurance still retained on the security of the 'Obligants in the Bond' of 1794, to whom the pledge of moveable effects and property was renewed; five years later the accounts in the hands of one of them, Gilbert Innes, had still not been cleared up.

In December 1815 new statutes and bye-laws were adopted, which are in essence still in force. Apart from a general tightening of the formulation, the most substantial changes were to reduce the number of vice-presidents and secretaries, abolish censors and the class of associated artists, restrict honorary members to twenty-five, and provide for failure to pay fees. The number of ordinary members was unlimited and of corresponding members unspecified. Instead of two Curators and a Superintendent, a committee of the Council was to have custody of the 'property of the Society'; in practice this was a weakness, and a single Curator was appointed from 1822. The Secretary's primary responsibility for the Museum had evidently faded.

While the statutes were being rewritten, various moves were made toward bringing the Society to wider notice. A letter to the clergy was prepared for printing, asking them to communicate even short notices on remains of antiquity, ancient writings capable of throwing light on the general and local history of Scotland, etymology of names illustrating parochial antiquity, manners and customs. Further, Mackenzie stressed the importance of establishing a connection with learned societies abroad, particularly with Denmark from which there had come a volume of the Royal Commission for Antiquities. Count Bedemar was then elected an honorary member; by 1815 this had been reciprocated by Mackenzie's being made an honorary member of the Copenhagen Antiquaries, who sent nine stone and bronze artefacts for the Museum. Another contact was established by the receipt of the first Report of the Newcastle Antiquaries. Arrangements were started too for publishing a first part of the second volume of *Transactions*, but apparently an agreement with Constable fell through.

Although Laing in 1861 withdrew the suggestion, made in the 1831 *Account*, that neglect by Cummyng had caused the loss of no inconsiderable part of the Museum (and in 1843 overcame his doubts over the care of the Hawthornden manuscripts), he did not modify the strictures that at the removal in 1813 the Museum continued to receive no degree of attention whatever, that no means of finding accommodation for it had been resorted to, and that it might soon have been forgotten but for some later efforts. While doubtless things were stowed away *en masse* on arrival at George Street, and the problems were underestimated, the rooms which had been rented (other than the share of the hall) were specifically for the collections, and these had been reviewed beforehand. For the minutes of the Council that authorised the final negotiations go on: 'a number of articles which were in a

perishing state to be given away gratis, viz. a number of bottles containing objects of natural history, alligators, horns, an old gown, velvet bag etc etc'. (These sound like the Lord Treasurer's robe and purse given in 1783.) A year later Mackenzie asked for a committee to help him 'to complete the arrangement of the Books and Museum', because he could not do this by himself as he intended to leave town soon; Dalyell, Innes, Allan (now an Antiquary), Jardine and the Treasurer were appointed, to meet weekly, two to be a quorum. After nine months Mackenzie and the first three of the committee were appointed along with three others — one being Dr Brunton, minister of the Tron Kirk and professor of oriental languages — to 'examine such articles in the Museum which might appear useless and which of course ought to be removed'. There is no further report or evidence of what was discarded in those years, and while most was probably trivial natural history specimens, some may have been deteriorated ethnographical material, always very vulnerable in museum purges.

Mackenzie did not hand in his key of the Museum until October 1815, when he wrote to the Society's solicitor about minor matters, and told him of his 'determination not to hold any office in the Society, tho' I shall be ready to give any assistance in my power'. He does not explain why but adds that this 'will I hope ultimately be for the good of the Society, tho' I am still of the opinion that it ought to break up'. He became a Vice-President again three years later, having continued to be a regular attender, councillor and selector of papers for publication, and the significance of his last phrase is not known.

It can hardly refer simply to the component parts of the collections, but conceivably to a merger with the Royal Society, once mooted tentatively many years earlier. As in London, there were quite a number of members common to both bodies — some two dozen in the early 1820s, when the Royal numbered just under 200 and the Antiquaries' ordinary members probably many fewer. All through this period it seems that the Royal's Literary Class as such was dormant compared with the Physical Class, though still continuing to have office-bearers of its own, including some leading Antiquaries, and that members of both classes used the Antiquaries as an outlet for the less scientific side of their interests, some already before the Societies shared a house. Such in the Physical Class were David Brewster, even before his researches into light were at their height in his early thirties or his subsequent guiding Secretaryship of the Royal from 1819, Patrick Neill the printer and, rather later, Robert Stevenson of the lighthouses, while Dr

Andrew Duncan senior, professor of the theory of physic, an original Antiquary, was a fairly frequent attender for two decades from 1807. Prominent Antiquaries in the Literary Class were Henry Jardine, John Jamieson and Alexander Brunton. Another way of judging the membership of the Antiquaries at this time is to note that although there might have been twenty or fewer at a meeting, between a quarter to a third of these appear in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Rather few donations were recorded from 1813 to 1818. Among them were a coin of Henry VIII forwarded officially by Jardine from the Exchequer, two prehistoric urns given by Lord Buchan from separate finds, the Danish prehistoric specimens already mentioned, and the popular but perhaps apocryphal Jenny Geddes' stool. Good drawings of inscribed Roman altars at Birrens, Dumfriesshire, were received, and also an illustrated account of the Ruthwell Cross and its runes. John Stuart, professor of Greek in Aberdeen and a corresponding member, reported briefly on the subterraneous habitations — now known as souterrains — near Kildrummy. Worried by the need 'to prevent the total loss and destruction of our remaining monuments of antiquity', he suggested that a small sum of money 'might be collected sufficient to defray the expenses of two or three well qualified persons' or even two or three active young men, 'who might perambulate the whole of Scotland in the course of one or two summers, and make out correct drawings and descriptions of them, to be afterwards either published or deposited in their archives'.

One of the urns given by Buchan, a 'food-vessel' in modern terms, was the starting point of a paper in 1815 by Dr Jamieson on Ancient Sepulture, which ranged over classical and other literary references but also recorded finds from various places in Scotland, and considered, on the basis of the material evidence, whether there were two *ages* in Britain (his italics), characterised by inhumation and cremation, perhaps respectively Pictish and Celtic. Jamieson also wrote about sites of castles in Forfarshire, and on the vitrified fort at Finavon. These papers were among those published in 1818 along with older ones, including the 1783 Inveresk excavation report and the typological discussion of 'celts' of 1797. This was *Transactions* II, 1, of 288 pages, edited by Jamieson, sold to members for a guinea and a half.

The second stage of the revival was already under way. It began soon after James Skene of Rubislaw, advocate and geologist, joined the Society, and it coincided with the return to office of Sir George Mackenzie. In 1817 several of the periodic Council meetings failed to

get a quorum, but a new committee for arranging the Museum may have met, consisting of Mackenzie, Brewster, and James Haig, a merchant. Late in 1818 another committee was appointed, with no minuted explanation, 'to look out for a house to the Society'. The reason is unlikely to have been financial, as the cash balance at the time was £60, with subscription arrears of £51 9s 0d. On Dalryell's then retiring from his long vice-presidency, warmly thanked for his unremitting zeal and attention to the Society's affairs, Mackenzie became third Vice-President. The next ordinary meeting next month, with Mackenzie in the chair, decided that though a house in Frederick Street was available at £50 p.a. it was not expedient to move. A committee of five, quite new except for Allan, was also appointed to arrange the Museum and make a catalogue under Skene as convener; thanks were voted it two months later. The 1831 Account says that Skene spent about six months of nearly daily attendance, but that he was perplexed by 'the old markings of a great proportion of the collection having been removed for the purpose of substituting new ones; to which a table of reference had either not been prepared, or, if it had been prepared, had soon disappeared'. However, the accession numbers in the Minute Book continue uninterrupted till 1820, when they jump from 1336 to 3337, presumably on the introduction of a new system. Late next year they stop entirely, at 3356. Purchases had never been included, and at this period it was the rule that there should be none.

At the end of 1819 Skene's committee was reappointed. The use of a third room was soon granted by the Royal Society; their Museum too was curated by Allan, succeeded by Skene. A long report by Skene to the Antiquaries was minuted in full, though without its lists. He explained that:

As inconveniences arising from the disorder into which the Society's collections had fallen are likely to be most experienced from the inaccessible nature of the library, I was induced to make the books the first subject of arrangement . . . and [now] present a complete catalogue of all the books actually in possession in alphabetical order both of authors and subject, and shelf references; also donors as far as ascertained from the minute book.

Skene's catalogue does not survive. Manuscripts that were bound, and as many of the loose papers as could be arranged in volumes were to be added by John Dillon, soon to succeed Jamieson as Secretary; later Brewster helped him. Books had not been protected by any distinctive mark, and there had been an unaccountable relaxation of rules in recent years. Another list, 'very long, a sort of obituary of books that

are not', included 'some of the most valuable'; Skene proposed that it should be circulated in order to recover them. He also proposed that 'books foreign to our researches should be exchanged . . . we might at least establish a respectable nucleus instead of the meagre and heterogeneous assemblage that now cumber our shelves of Law, Medicine, Midwifery and all sorts of rubbish'. The usefulness of the library was soon being increased by publications of other societies, to whom Transactions were being sent — from the Society of Antiquaries of Copenhagen (1822), from the Society of Antiquaries of London all their 'expensive and splendid works' (1824) — in addition to the series already begun from the Newcastle Antiquaries and, much earlier, from the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia (1802) and the Asiatic Society (exchange stopped 1825).

Skene next turned to the collection of coins and medals, 'which consists of Scottish and English Coins pretty complete, Roman, Greek, a mass of foreign coins of most of the European nations, and a few Oriental, with a collection of Medals commemorating particular events. Considerable progress has been made in the general arrangement of the whole [the coins numbering about 4,500], but the only series which is completed, with a descriptive catalogue, is the Scottish'. Skene listed the Scottish denominations not represented, balanced by a summary of 492 which were 'duplicates' according to the elementary standards of the time, which 'may be used as a fund of barter for those coins wanted to complete the collection, or [preferably] sold for the same purpose'. This disaster did not take place till fifty years later, though three sixteenth-century 'dollars' were exchanged in 1823 for a 'half-guinea' of Charles I.

The coin report, catalogue and lists were printed in *Transactions* II.2 (1822), in which there was reprinted from the *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* (edited by Brewster) a full account of the Society's 1821-22 session, containing extracts from the report 'in the hopes that it may be the means of obtaining some of those deficiencies'. Brewster's account added a sort of manifesto on the aims of the Society and its Museum: '. . . subjects of antiquity . . . when collected together supply a very valuable record of ancient manners and history, offering facilities to antiquarian research . . . The importance of ancient coins, *and the particular circumstances under which they may be found* [my italics], are only valuable when collected into a series, as evidences of ancient history'.

This second half of the *Transactions* vol. II has many more illus-

trations than the first, fifteen compared to four, most of them engraved by W. H. Lizars, who was a member. One is of the Swedish stone and its runes (p. 49 above), at last provenanced as from Lilla Ramsjø i Vittinge, in Uppland; by then it was at or near its present position north of the Esplanade. Others illustrate Jardine's report as Remembrancer on the opening of Robert the Bruce's tomb at Dunfermline, including prominently the inscribed coffin-plate, which was a hoax, but not a small carved head or several fragments of alabaster also given to the Museum. Further papers and illustrations show the Society attracting records of fieldwork: sculptured stones in the North East with a discussion of their 'so often repeated symbols', a plan (only) of the entrenchment — a henge — at Contin, Ross-shire, a map of Largs as the site of the battle, in a long historical paper, and a range of medieval tomb sculpture. A useful comparative study dealt with cross-slabs and runes in the Isle of Man. Less satisfactory is an account of howking in the theatre at Milo, from which a half-ton Parian marble cornice is stated to have been presented to the Edinburgh Museum, as the University's Museum was then sometimes called. (Lord Elgin, elected President a couple of years later, had nothing to do with it.)

The 1822 *Transactions* were prefaced by a copy of a revised circular for the Parochial Ministers of Scotland: the Society was 'desirous of obtaining information regarding the National Antiquities . . . If drawings could be obtained of such objects as may be particularly interesting, it would make the Memoirs more acceptable'. Ancient writings and place-names were also asked about. The last sentence brings in a notable addition: 'I take the opportunity to mention that the Barons of Exchequer, for the purpose of preserving the remains of Antiquity, have signified their intention of allowing the value of such Coins, and other articles of Gold and Silver, as may be discovered, and transmitted to their Lordships.' Sadly this major concession in Treasure Trove administration seems in practice to have been withdrawn, and did not have any significant result until revived later (see also p. 72). A 'golden rod' found near Inverness was exhibited to the Society in 1824 by the Remembrancer, but not seen again.

Such exhibitions of antiquities, ethnographical objects and documents, in addition to what was being donated, were becoming a useful custom. Notes on some of them and their associations, and on other prehistoric and later discoveries and sites, with or without donations of finds, were indeed a feature of the following years — some came from parish ministers, presumably due to the circulated letter, some resulted

from the growth of Edinburgh's New Town. (Between 1823 and 1827 one of the Secretaries was specifically responsible for obtaining communications for the meetings, and preparing them for publication; he was Samuel Hibbert, another geologist-antiquary, with a medical degree.) Temporary exhibition was not infrequently a first step to acquisition for the Museum, possibly long afterwards, and in the interval helped to ensure inclusion in Wilson's *Prehistoric Annals* (1851). Similarly, the Anglo-Saxon drinking-horn mount from Burghead, Moray, was given in 1861 after a drawing was shown in 1826. *Transactions* III.1 (1828), in which it was illustrated, was exchanged more widely than the previous part, to Norway and France, Dublin and Inverness. Notices of archaeological donations then included jet ornaments (parts of an early bronze-age set of spacer-plate necklace and bracelet) from a grave at Assynt in Ross-shire, and 'apparently plates of copper armour' (three later bronze-age razors) from near Dunbar.

These were discoveries made during agricultural improvements. In contrast, two notices (from the same writers) mark the beginning of more scientific archaeological digging in Scotland where, despite Sir John Clerk of Penicuik's exploration of cairns before 1726, 'barrow-opening' never developed as a landowner's pursuit as in England. In the first, Sir George S. Mackenzie illustrated in 1825 a section he got cut through the rampart of a vitrified fort at Dun Fionn near Inverness (not published till *Transactions* IV.1, in 1831, in a sort of symposium on such sites). Earlier the same year our first careful account of an excavated barrow — a stratified sand and cairn structure, containing a cist without identifiable grave-goods — at Machrihanish in Kintyre was communicated by Alexander Seton, son of the donor of the Swedish runic stone and nephew of Henry Jardine. Though the report, published in 1828, was listed in 1831 as 'drawn up' by the landowner, this is not stated in it, and the author and excavator-in-charge was no doubt Seton. For not only did he submit various other notices, give the Museum a papier maché cast of the early Christian inscription of the Catstane near Edinburgh, and become a corresponding member, but he carried out in the next three years before his death in 1828 serious pioneer excavation in the cemetery of what is now turning out to be a most important Viking period trading-site, Birka near Stockholm. A monograph on his finds there, and on Seton himself, was published in 1945.

In short, during this decade or so of revival there was growing in

Edinburgh, in a geological atmosphere, an intellectual awareness of the value of antiquities as material evidence, able to supplement literary evidence, rather than as instinctively collected curiosities. This was fostered by the Antiquaries' intimate association with the Royal Society. That there was still lacking a framework in which to systematise observations on early times, other than vaguely Ancient British, Pictish, Roman, and even more speculatively Danish, was in part due to the shortage of material, and of recurrent associations. The same decade also saw of course the strengthening of a national romantic consciousness, developed from the earlier literary preoccupations, fanned by Scott's poetry and novels, and expressed in George IV's visit to Edinburgh in 1822, when seven of the Society's Council presented the loyal address to their Patron at Holyroodhouse.

In the Royal Institution Building, 1826-44

At this time of new-found confidence a major development was being prepared. Already in January 1822 formal discussions had been started by a letter from the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts (founded in 1819), 'as to the propriety of adopting a general plan for having a suitable building for the accommodation of the various societies in this place'. Space for the Antiquaries, annual rent (£100 p.a. plus interior repairs etc), and the intention to take up a 19-year lease were soon agreed, though the much better-off London societies were rent-free in Somerset House. The architect, W. H. Playfair, joined the Society, as did his rival William Burn. Besides the two royal societies, the Institution had interested the Government's century-old Board of Trustees for Fisheries, Manufactures and Improvements. This was in course of losing its regulation of the linen industry, and for some time had been only nominally concerned with fisheries, so that its Drawing Academy was a chief function. For this, and because of its affinity with the Institution's exhibitions of paintings, the Board had quickly taken over the project, which would also provide space for its own offices and for a gallery of sculpture casts for its drawing pupils.

Several of the most faithful of the Antiquaries were on the Board — Gilbert Innes, Henry Jardine, Sir Robert Dundas the Society's Agent — and Lord Meadowbank, one of the judges, was a leading member of all the bodies concerned. However, to make the move the Antiquaries had to borrow; they increased their bond to the Friendly Insurance to £600, after having brought it down to £200 in 1824. So the Board was taking

no chances, and required as security 'an assignation to the Board's Cashier of their whole effects and Museum, and of the Annual Subscriptions of their Members' — which were providently raised to two guineas for new entrants in 1825.

The classical building at the foot of The Mound in the centre of Princes Street, since then much enlarged, and much altered inside to house the Royal Scottish Academy, was given the Institution's name (Royal in 1827). The Society moved in during 1826, to two or three of the smaller rooms of the first floor on the west side. A considerable number of glass cases were needed for 'the various interesting and highly valuable articles of the Museum'. The cost of the cases and of fitting up the rooms was estimated at £200. The hall measured about 20 by 24 feet. Entered from it was a Museum room 32 by 12 feet, beyond which was the Royal Society's museum of the same size. The Royal's library and hall were on the ground floor below. James Skene was still (honorary) Curator in both Societies; for the Antiquaries he had an Assistant, Alexander Macdonald of the Register House staff, who would succeed him in 1836. A gallery alongside the two museum rooms may have been shared. These first floor rooms all had rooflights, and there may have been no artificial light for exhibitions, though there was for the picture galleries. A sub-let by the Antiquaries to the Society of Arts for Scotland of some use of their hall and cupboard-space (granted free to the Bannatyne Club's annual meeting) marks the step forward from candles, for at £21 p.a. it was to include 'coal and gass'. Stoves instead of grates were installed in 1828 in the Museum and Library 'because of smoke'.

The Anniverary meeting on 30 November 1826 inaugurated the New Rooms. In December Skene gave a report, primarily as Curator, with reflections also on the state of the Society and on the state of antiquarian studies in general — to be considered with a paper by Hibbert which unfortunately has not survived, 'a general view of the leading objects of Inquiry in the subject of Scottish Antiquities and the importance, in a national point of view, of that study'. Skene wrote with some confidence that 'at a period which is likely to prove conspicuous as an era in the history of this Society we conceive that some advantage in promoting its views might thence arise'. After looking back on the Society's 'state of hopeless decay' from which it had gradually emerged to a period of plentiful communications and new accommodation, Skene looked south and then overseas:

On the Continent, indeed, there is scarcely a town of any note that cannot boast

of an establishment in full activity, where local Antiquities are accurately investigated with a view to the elucidation of history, and where a common repository is formed, to which everyone feels the propriety of contributing. With us, on the contrary, objects of curiosity and interest are not infrequently assigned to dusty garrets, where they are as little useful to their owners as satisfactory to the public. When we consider that the relics of our common ancestors . . . are objects of general interest, to the means of consultation or inspection of which the public have a peculiar claim, we ought not to forget that it is a gratification which is only attainable from the arrangements of such an establishment as this; and that, while the accumulation of these relics into one general repository affords the most likely means of eliciting light upon their general origin, it becomes, at the same time, the means of converting what is otherwise useless lumber into valuable records of ancient history.

He went on to ask for some occasional donation from each member of the Society or their friends, to give a character of respectability to the Museum and Library, without which the

elegant apartment for the arrangement and display of the collections will only tend the more to expose their poverty. Nor can I suppose any person . . . so indifferent to the creditable appearance of a *national collection* [my italics], as to contemplate these bare walls without experiencing a desire to contribute . . . Monuments obviously intended by some former race of inhabitants as historical memorials to their posterity are to be found in every quarter of the country, and many more have been destroyed under our eyes, . . . upon the elucidation of which the Antiquary might profitably be employed. Of the historical periods of a later day, which still remain the subject of controversy, the field is unbounded.

He ended by emphasising the importance of prompt publication of communications in the *Transactions*.

Upon completion of the arrangement of the Museum, 'in which some few of the Office-bearers took an active share', it was

freely opened to the inspection of the Public. A considerable advantage was the result. As a greater extent was obtained for the display of the various articles of the Museum, and much care was exercised in their exposure and arrangement, the Public soon perceived that their donations were duly appreciated, and valuable additions began rapidly to flow in.

Either to encourage or control admission, tickets were printed in 1827 (as already some years earlier), 'to be signed and dated by any Fellow of the Society, to be delivered to his friends for their visiting the Museum at the times and days to be determined'. The assistant curator, the assistant secretary, and a member of Council 'undertook to give attendance of one of them on each public day, for the better security of the Museum and to show attention to strangers'.

One of the first donations received in the new building was the small

twelfth-century bronze shrine with an exquisite crucifix on the front, found at Kilmichael Glassary, Argyll, with the little iron bell inside. Then there was the highly decorated gold 'ornament' from Shaw Hill (Cairnmuir), Peeblesshire, which remained enigmatic till a complete massive torc of the first century BC was found in Norfolk in 1950. A small bronze cannon, the only Scottish cast cannon now known from its period, by James Monteath, Edinburgh, 1642, was given (with permission from the Governor General and Council of India) by Captain L. Carmichael who had found it in the Rajput fortress of Bhurtpore when stormed in 1828. The now fine collection of Scottish charms was started conspicuously by a calf-heart full of pins, brought in by Sir Walter Scott, and a slab of ivory from Argyll, Barbreck's Bone, which cured all degrees of madness.

A donation list was left out in December 1826 and there is evidence of later omissions; however, in the four years beginning 1827, 304 donations are recorded, of which 140 contained books, 104 antiquities (including classical Mediterranean), 42 ethnographical material (with some Egyptian — two mummies were on loan for some years), 25 manuscripts and 16 drawings. The classical antiquities were becoming prominent. Thirty-two Roman pots from Colchester were given by E. W. A. Drummond Hay, who succeeded Hibbert as Secretary in 1827. (His bequest in 1846 of 2,600 Roman coins probably provided much of the unprovenanced part of the existing collection. He may too have influenced the Colonial Office's gift of a collection of antiquities from Cyrene in 1830, which included a four-foot statue of Æsculapius; these were described and some illustrated in a long-delayed part of the *Transactions* (IV.3) in 1857.)

Among the books was a Book of Common Order with full Metrical Psalms, in Gothic type and lacking its title-page, given through David Laing. Still unique and inadequately published, it appears to be the very first edition ordered by the General Assembly in 1562, and if so is evidence that the Scots spelling into which it was transposed was deliberately rejected by the Reformed Kirk in favour of the English of England.

Items of Natural History (with skeletal evidence for animal species in early Scotland among the exceptions) were relinquished in 1828 when 'the Antiquarian and Royal Societies in this place' transferred 'to the Museum of each whatever articles might be in their possession but more particularly adapted to the Enquiries of the other'. Burmese idols in marble and other articles came to the Antiquaries, but the full list

then made has not been traced. From another source came a Malay dugout canoe which was suspended from the roof of the staircase.

At the meeting at which the exchange was announced Robert Bald (a mining engineer and a pillar of the Society), described the Museum of northern antiquities in Copenhagen, where 15,000 articles 'had been collected in less than 16 years under the supervision of Professor Thomsen' (whom Seton too had visited on his way to Sweden three years earlier). The seminal arrangement of weapons and tools by Stone, Bronze, and Iron Ages is not mentioned in the brief minutes. It was being defended by Thomsen against criticism from Austria already in 1824, and is unlikely to have escaped Bald's comment to his audience of 83 people. A couple of years later several leading Danish antiquaries were elected honorary fellows or corresponding members, though Thomsen himself was not until 1846. A larger number of scholars in different parts of France were also elected, though connections with that country were less obviously close.

The size of Bald's audience was minuted because exceptional, but there was an even fuller meeting next month to hear about the Society's first official involvement in fieldwork, when the Secretary reported on his visit to Alloa with Bald, 'for the purpose of prosecuting their enquiries into the discovery of an ancient British cemetery'. He produced 'two bracelets weighing about six ounces of the finest gold, [found] with the remains of a human body in one of several stone cists' — an extremely rare late bronze-age find. The Council were unhappy at paying the finders 'full value about £20', and rather more than half was subscribed by Fellows at a maximum of 10s each. The Exchequer does not seem to have been directly concerned.

A more complex outside activity involved the Society being granted by the King temporary possession of the great gun Mons (as she should strictly be called). Though her return from exile in the Tower of London is generally credited to Sir Walter Scott, this was not really the case. Other members of the Society, particularly the indefatigable Drummond Hay, on the initiative of Graham Dalyell, together with the Duke of Gordon, Governor of Edinburgh Castle, serving Officers, and the Edinburgh and Leith Steam Packet Company, achieved the difficult task over a period of twelve months in 1828-29. (The full story has recently been published elsewhere.)*

* In David Caldwell (ed): *Scottish Weapons and Fortifications* (Edinburgh 1981).

Peripeteia with the Historians

Sadly this Silver Age was to last only a few more years. Drummond Hay's expected posting, to be Consul in Tangier, came through. He was given a great send-off dinner in May 1829, and it was said that 'the numerous additions of distinguished individuals both in this country and on the Continent to the lists of the Society's members, and the walls of their Museum which had been enriched by many valuable donations, bore testimony to Mr Hay's zealous discharge of the duties of his office'. He was succeeded as Secretary by the much younger Donald Gregory, historian of the Highlands and founder of the Iona publishing club, one of quite a number of record historians of a generation later than Dalrymple who were more or less active members of the Society. So that at the time of Lord Buchan's death the Society was closely linked through them with the surge of archive publications which he had wished it to undertake; besides Laing with the Bannatyne, they included Pitcairn, Fraser Tytler, Maidment and Thomas Thomson. But the Society was only one channel for all the money and energy needed, and somehow became a backwater. On Gregory's premature death in 1836, W. F. Skene, James's son, became Secretary. Unfortunately he had to give this up — and history too for a long while — for professional reasons in 1838.

Though in his 1861 *Account* Laing blamed the serious decline on Alexander Smellie's return to the Secretaryship after Skene, that was a symptom and aggravating factor rather than a cause, for the decline can be traced further back. The actual proposal of Smellie came from Dalrymple, who himself was a Vice-President again from 1835 to 1841 with a statutory year's gap, and it may indicate a final reaction by the old guard after the scientific group had moved away. The other active Vice-President then was Jardine, now Sir Henry, more or less continuously in office from 1817 to 1845. Brunton, who was among other things university librarian, lasted longer still, as Secretary for Foreign Correspondence from 1813 to 1854.

Up to 1834 all seems to have been well. Prehistoric finds, some important, kept coming to the Museum: gold rings and bracelets from Banffshire, rare bronze-age archers' wristguards from Skye, what is still the largest bronze spearhead from Scotland, found in Fife, pieces of tripartite-disc wooden wheels (probably bronze-age) from moss-reclamation near Stirling. Other times were not neglected, for example an old-fashioned wooden lock from Orkney, engravings of the Nigg and

Hilton of Cadboll sculptured stones, Anglo-Saxon copper coins from the Hexham hoard. Eight tenth-century silver coins, selected by Jamieson, were acquired from a find on Inchkenneth, and several fragments, together with drawings of the silver bracelets, from another in Shetland. Though the Sheriff-Substitute investigated the latter, neither seems to have been subject to a treasure trove claim; yet in the same year coins from three sixteenth-century hoards and a single Roman gold coin found near Arbroath were given by the Barons of Exchequer. Also in 1831 the magnificent Hunterston Brooch 'lately found' was exhibited, as were some of the ivory chessmen discovered that year in Lewis, again without overt interest from the Exchequer. (The Society did attempt to raise some money for the chessmen, by a scheme for individual members to buy most for themselves, but they left Scotland and almost all — ninety-eight pieces, not solely chessmen — were promptly bought by the British Museum for £84.) In contrast, after a small medieval bronze seal had been dug up in Parliament Square in 1833, the Remembrancer reclaimed it from the Society, 'in order to vindicate the right of the Crown to articles found in the above manner', and the Barons then directed it to be placed in the Museum.

The Museum was temporarily closed from October 'because of works going on'. Following proposals considered the year before, a third or more was added to its accommodation as a result of an extra third being added to the whole building at the southern end. The Royal Society moved its Museum southward, allowing that of the Antiquaries to have the space vacated.

Up to 1834 quite regularly, and a couple of times in 1837, the series of important exhibits from landowners continued, located perhaps during the search for archives as well as by social contacts — notably the mazer and gold brooch inherited from the Bannatynes of Kames in Bute, the Brooch of Lorne and the Glenlyon Brooch, the Burnett of Leys ivory horn, a Viking sword and shield-boss from Rousay, and Prince Charles Edward's silver-hilted sword.

Reports of field-work as well as notes on antiquities came in, and were often published along with historical papers, but after 1832 the balance of communications was shifting in favour of the latter, and foreign archaeology. *Transactions* III.2 was published in 1831 — free to Fellows — and with it the Appendix containing the *Account* from 1784 by the editors Hibbert and Laing, and lists of donations and communications to date. For these the title was changed to *Archaeologia Scotica* (with new title-pages for the earlier volumes), positively

inviting comparison at last with the London Antiquaries. Volume IV.1 and a revised II.2 came from the same editors, still in 1831. The former with 216 pages had 'illustrations superior and less expensive than anything before . . . seven engraved copper plates, numerous wood cuts and two litho engravings' — coloured maps showing the string of real and supposed Roman sites north of the Forth, in the search for Mons Graupius. There was much on vitrified forts, as communicated five or more years before, by Hibbert drawing particularly on Mackenzie. A vigorous full-size multiview engraving by W. Penny of the Museum's bell-shrine and bell, and a facsimile page of its Drummond of Hawthornden manuscripts (accompanying many extracts) certainly set a new standard for the Society. A temporarily exhibited bronze-age hoard from Yorkshire and pull-out plates of wood-panels at Speke Hall, in Lancashire, illustrate wider enquiries.

Part 2, issued only two years later, started with good engravings of the Shaw Hill gold, had the Banffshire gold and its pot drawn by James Skene, a sketch of the pre-Norman sculptured arch then still at Forteviot with notes on earthworks nearby by W. F. Skene, and at the end the Ruthwell Cross, with all sides and inscriptions drawn and described by Dr Henry Duncan — the runes were still baffling. Between these papers Laing's notes and extracts of the Drummond manuscripts were continued. So were the descriptions and discussions of vitrified and other forts, and for good measure vitrified cairns (burnt mounds) in Orkney. Hibbert recommended 'that Members of this Society be encouraged to continue the investigation', but the difficulty of extracting information from such sites short of thorough excavation, the scarcity of datable artefacts to be found (and the great range of date now revealed by carbon 14), more than excuse the fading out of this first in any way concerted archaeological campaign and listing in Scotland. Yet nearly a generation was to go by before another subject — brochs — was attempted as broadly.

A printed address-list of 1831 survives, issued with the billet for the Annual Meeting on St Andrew's Day at Three o'clock afternoon, and dinner at the British Hotel, Queen Street, at half-past Five *precisely*, from the Museum of the Antiquaries of Scotland. It lists 194 Fellows including four MPs, overwhelmingly in Edinburgh. Cash in hand had recently been over £140, with income estimated at £350 excluding arrears and sale of publications, and rent, taxes, wages etc at £150. The Treasurer, Thomas Allan, died in 1833, and next May the Council were told that arrears had been accumulating seriously; in October, that his

firm had failed. The actual loss to the Society was small, if any, but it became clear that subscriptions and arrears were in disorder; the increase to two guineas had been unpopular, and some thought that Fellows who had paid the lower rate for upwards of eighteen years should pay nothing more. In an attempt at useful activity in 1835, a committee was appointed to inspect graves discovered a few miles from Edinburgh, but only one member went. Next year two meetings failed to get a quorum, and Gregory the Secretary died.

Before the Anniversary meeting W. F. Skene as joint acting Treasurer reported arrears of £235, and three resignations, with more expected, of supporters of the eighteen years' principle — unnamed but noted as Sir G. S. Mackenzie, Robert Scott-Moncrieff (Treasurer 1815-25), and James Skene, who despite this was re-elected Curator. W. F. Skene, aged twenty-seven, was made Secretary, and David Laing Treasurer. Thomas Thomson, Depute Clerk Register, and W. B. D. D. Turnbull, founder of the Abbotsford Club, joined the Council. Alexander Macdonald, by then a Principal Keeper of Records, became formally Curator next year; Robert Frazer, jeweller, later succeeded him as Assistant. Though with resignations (Brewster claimed to have intimated his in 1830) and strikings-off, no more than 30 names appear to have been removed, the reality was much worse, for a slightly later estimate of income was 'not much above £150'. All that sum was needed, with nothing left for publication, since the Board of Manufactures were pressing for a year's arrears of rent, and there were old accounts unpaid.

As the Friendly Insurance declined to increase its loan (by then only £200), a cash credit was obtained from the Commercial Bank — an encouragement while the Council was preparing an Address to the Queen on her accession. The subscription was settled at two guineas for the first twelve years, reducing then to one, with provisions for compounding. There was even hope of printing a catalogue of the Museum for sale to strangers. A major consignment of treasure trove came early in 1838, though Jardine was no longer Remembrancer. It included coins from fourteen sources, notably twenty-three gold coins of James I and II found in 1815, and two English nobles from the recent find in Glasgow Cathedral. Best of all was the first and largest of the Pictish silver chains, dug up in 1808 from the Caledonian Canal. About then W. F. Skene pointed out that on silver in the Norrie's Law Hoard in Fife there were the same symbols as on the Sculptured Stones of Scotland. John Stuart, who was to use that as the title of his volumes

twenty years later, gave a stone vessel and described the Druidical Circle near where it was found. Dalyell presented, besides other things, a bust of himself.

After Smellie's return to office the Treasurer wished to reduce the subscription to one guinea for all; once lowered, and the entrance fee reduced to two guineas (1843), dues remained unchanged for over a century. The trouble was that new members were not joining, and old were not paying. Ordinary meetings were down to four, or in 1840 even two. Donations correspondingly dropped, with more that were unsuitable, such as three separate gifts of fragments from the wreck of the *Royal George*. The Clerks of the Justiciary Court also cleared their cupboards of old evidence, giving in 1841 two spring-guns declared murderous in 1826, coining implements from 1814, and Deacon Brodie's dark lantern and skeleton keys of 1788 — curiosities perhaps, but of perennial interest. These came soon after Frazer had rearranged the Museum, and had been thanked for the great labour bestowed and the taste displayed. Kemp, the architect of the Scott Monument, was also thanked for displaying drawings of a Norman Hall he wished erected alongside it, 'suitable for the Museum of the Society' with rooms for meetings.

Retreat to 24 George Street and new efforts, 1844-50

The position was already serious when in 1841 the Edinburgh Friendly Insurance Society, then being wound up, pressed harder for repayment of the £200 bond. Two representatives of the original Obligants of 1794 offered to pay £25 each; Innes's heir had already made a gift of £50. The rent of the Royal Society of Arts, previously reduced, was raised to £25; the Botanical Society was paying £10. It was now decided to insure the Museum and Library, for £500 (premium not stated), a wise precaution — that year 'upwards of 4,000 persons had visited the Museum, admission to which is entirely gratuitous and open to everyone who presents an order from a Fellow'. (In addition, at least in 1843, 'very many strangers [were] admitted during Her Majesty's visit [to Edinburgh]'. Prince Albert, to whom a special diploma of Honorary Fellowship had been sent in 1840, also came.)

As income was 'quite inadequate to meet costs', particularly the £100 rent to the Government's Board, successive efforts were made which it is easy to criticise as tactically unsound or even back to front. A deputation sent in 1844 to ask the advice of the Lord Advocate, as head

of Scottish administration, was too late, since early the previous year the Treasury had turned down a direct written appeal. That Memorial (which had not been sent before the President, the new Lord Elgin, had gone as governor to Jamaica) explained that the rent was mainly for the rooms of the well-attended Museum, but it failed to explain its character or purpose. The Treasury had not been asked for free accommodation with the Society of Antiquaries of London as precedent, but for cash in the form of an annual grant of £100.

Meanwhile the chance of future accommodation in a building which was being reconstructed was rightly seized. The Board agreed that their lease might be cancelled in just over a year (Whitsun 1844), but refused to reduce the rent in the interval. As total debts had mounted to near £500, the Treasury were then asked to remit arrears (£150), and also refused. Rather frantically prestige was sought by electing foreign royalty as Honorary Fellows, including the Crown Prince of Denmark who did visit the Museum and made a gift of 'various objects of antiquity', and the King of Saxony who does not seem to have fitted in a visit while in Edinburgh. When in June 1844 it became unlikely that the Board would allow the collections to be moved without payment, a petition for help in getting an annual £300 was sent to the Queen; and so was a fuller letter to the Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel, in which it was stated that the Society's subscriptions were not sufficient

to preserve, exhibit and add to the Museum. They consider themselves in some measure representing their countrymen, for whom they wish to preserve a Museum so closely connected with their past history and most patriotic feelings. . . . [They] consider the refusal of their application by their Lordships [of the Treasury] a slight offered to Scotland, and they cannot help comparing as others have done before, the very stinted measure of support which the Scientific Institutions of Scotland receive from the Government, with the munificent grants of public money annually made to those in England, and all the more to those in Ireland . . .

Following rebuffs, a letter came from the Board explaining that 'because of their pecuniary engagements' the Trustees needed to have the arrears paid, or sufficient security; and that it was their 'intention to proceed immediately to convert the Society's present apartments into a continuation of the Statue Gallery, so as to provide more extensive accommodation for the School of Design, which is an object of the Board's most anxious solicitude'. Neither selling off part of the Museum nor complete refusal to allow sub-lets to continue was mentioned in writing, but Laing records them in his 1861 *Account*.

One can now see that space, not money, was what the Board had wanted all along. It seems that pressure to move was also put on the Royal Society even though it had by then a £300 Government grant, but it stayed. The Royal Institution itself had been declining at the same time as the Antiquaries, but the Royal Scottish Academy was developing, using rooms in the building. The Board then wanted these, because it had been enlarging its Drawing Academy to include a school of painting and a life class. The Trustees also had their eye on the University's collection, the Torrie Bequest, as a step towards forming a National Gallery of Scotland; transfer on loan was agreed, and Play-fair began to design new buildings, in 1845.

It was the Edinburgh Life Assurance Company which was rebuilding its premises at 22-24 George Street. In January 1843 Turnbull, who became interim Joint Secretary, found that the Company would alter its upper apartments at No. 24, with a large hall lighted from the roof, to suit the Museum. The lease was agreed for twenty years starting Whitsunday 1844, £60 for the first five years and £65 for the next fifteen, the Society to be responsible for the expense of all the interior fittings needed for the Museum. On 31st May the rooms at The Mound were closed, to prepare for removal. A committee of seven, appointed to assist the office-bearers (not just the Curators) in this and in preparing a printed catalogue for sale to visitors, included Hibbert (by then Hibbert-Ware) and J. M. Mitchell, a Leith merchant. A publication committee for *Archaeologia Scotica* was also named, optimistically. The impasse over moving until arrears of rent were paid was resolved in December by a loan of £400 from the new landlords. The Secretary, Treasurer and Curators were personally responsible as Obligants, and the collections (notably coins) were assigned to them 'in security and relief of the Obligation'.

Seven months later a special meeting of the Society inspected the newly installed Museum and library, which would be open to the public on Tuesdays and Fridays from 10 till 4, and on public holidays. Robert Frazer, by then effectively the only Curator, was thanked for his trouble over the arrangement. He had just retired from his jeweller's and seal-engraver's business, selling his private museum, from which the mysterious early nineteenth-century miniature coffins found on Arthur's Seat were many years later to reach the Museum. He could devote much time to the collections over some fourteen years, preparing for their next move. The opening meeting also agreed that the Secretary, W. B. D. D. Turnbull, should take several unspecified

articles to the meeting in Winchester of the new British Archaeological Institute; though he could not go, this way of making the Museum more widely known was approved next year for the York meeting.

A further sign that a fresh leaf was being turned was that the new President, the Marquess of Breadalbane, came to take the chair in person in February 1846. He heard the first draft of an address to the Government, and Mitchell read the second instalment of his paper on the state of archaeology in Scandinavia. Two members proposed at that same meeting were to have major roles in the development of archaeology in Scotland, Professor J. Y. Simpson (shortly to publish his experiments with chloroform) and Daniel Wilson, described as artist.

A successful drive for new members, some of them influential, had started in 1844 after a decade of stagnation. Around the time of its climax in 1848 (though it was long maintained), a striking number of artists of one kind or another joined the Society. This partly reflected and reinforced the Society's concern with the ancient buildings of Edinburgh, shown already before Wilson joined. Even more it can be seen as a consequence of the popularity of historical painting with its new stress on historical accuracy in period details, and the rise of the artist antiquaries and collectors. The social success of such painting, and of the Royal Scottish Academy, was a feature of the mid-nineteenth century. The older antiquaries who were themselves collectors, such as Laing and J. T. Gibson Craig, were able to bring the Society and its Museum into Edinburgh's lively cultural scene. Special evening exhibitions for members and their friends, following a scheme submitted by Daniel Wilson as acting Secretary, stimulated interest by setting out in the Museum new accessions along with loans — topographical illustrations, portraits, manuscripts and objets d'art. At the initial *conversazione* in 1848, attended by thirty or forty people, the portions of painted ceiling newly rescued from Mary of Guise's house on Castle Hill and mounted on the ceiling of the Museum, could be compared with the more varied scenes on the seventeenth-century panels from Dean House lent by Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe. These, and the naive Samson and lion carved on a door from Amisfield Castle shown at one of the four *conversaciones* next session, were to be acquired for the Museum before long. On another occasion finds from bishops' tombs in Kirkwall cathedral were exhibited (fifteen years before being given by the Exchequer), while James Ballantine, one of the recent Fellows, showed his series of Scottish kings and queens in stained glass, made

for the House of Lords.

There is no information on how much the Museum's arrangement was altered during its time at 24 George Street. From the beginning there the Copenhagen arrangement by stone and bronze periods was familiar to members, and it must have been discussed during the visit of young J. J. A. Worsaae. His published lectures in 1846 to the Royal Irish Academy, an 'Account of the Formation of the Museum of Antiquities at Copenhagen and the Classification of the Antiquities found in the North and West of Europe', contained a reference to the Danish treasure trove law which the Society promptly brought to the attention of the Lord Advocate. Another exceptional consequence of his visit was an exchange of 'duplicate' bronze objects with the Royal Museum of Antiquities, the Society sending to Copenhagen a particularly fine Viking brooch and four minor items.

So it is probable that the rather mechanical arrangement of the contents of the nine cases, some quite large, according to material as shown in Wilson's *Synopsis*, the catalogue published in 1849, was set out by Frazer and the committee before Wilson became Secretary at the end of 1847: I-IV stone (with bone and ivory), V-VII bronze, VIII ornaments of gold, silver and bronze, with some beads, IX pottery. This would help to explain the occasional discrepancies that result from Wilson's decision to make the broader ideas explicit by using the Periods as headings, under the rubric Celtic; for example the bronze brooches known to be Viking are catalogued under Bronze Period, and the bone pin and jet armlet found with them are placed under Stone Period, cross-referenced. Foreign and ethnographic stone implements were given prominence for comparison. Roman finds, again arranged by material, mainly from abroad along with 'Etruscan' and Greek, occupied five cases; medieval bronze cooking pots found in Scotland were still considered Roman, supported by a note that a coin of Hadrian had been found near one of them. In this and other sections there was much that was freestanding or fastened on the walls. Five more cases contained medieval and later objects, mainly from Scotland, but armour, of which Scotland is notably short, and pole-weapons were soon added from the Tower of London. An Egyptian case, and one India and Mexico, completed the hall. Some portraits and documents were shown in the Council Room, though the Library and its listed manuscripts were restricted. In the lobby were the insignia of the Edinburgh convivial Cape Club (1793-1843). The coin collection, not mentioned, was up till 1849 being arranged by William Ferguson

WS, who had provided John Lindsay in Cork, an honorary member, with much information for his *Coinage of Scotland* (1845). The idea of selling some duplicates to finance a show case for the rest was discussed, and apparently negated.

Fifteen hundred copies of the catalogue, the *Synopsis*, were printed, having over 150 pages, fifteen small illustrations and the Kilmichael Glassary bell-shrine as frontispiece. Paper-covered copies were sold at the Museum for one shilling. One hundred and fifty copies were to be bound for Fellows not in arrears, and for presentation to other Societies. It was decided to send two special copies to Balmoral for the Queen and Prince Albert, with an address.

After five years of careful preparation, involving the Lord Advocate and two MPs, William Gibson Craig (City of Edinburgh) and Joseph Hume (Montrose Burghs), the Society's submission to the Government about accommodation for the Museum reached its final form in 1849 and was signed by the Marquess of Breadalbane and three other principal office-bearers, Robert Chambers, Laing and Wilson. Prospects were brighter than ever before, and the annual dinner was this time held in the Archers' Hall at 6 pm with the President in the chair. The old order was passing: the oldest member and last of the original Obligants, Sir William Miller of Glenlee, had died during the year, as had Alexander Smellie and Sir George Steuart Mackenzie.

The Conveyance and the Proceedings, Excavators and Artists, 1851-58

Over a year later the Government's agreement in principle was notified to the Board of Manufactures, who wrote in April 1851, after conferring with the Society's representatives, that the Board were prepared to offer to the Society certain accommodation in the Royal Institution free of rent, but not until the new National Gallery had been completed and opened for the reception of pictures. This was conditional on the Society making over the collections for ever to the free use and admission of the public. The arrangements would be made by the Board, but were to be free of all expense to them; a grant from public funds would be sought for alterations and fittings. In reply the Society specified the terms on which they would make over their collections as National Property, adding the need for staff. The conditional sanction of the Treasury, where Sir William Gibson Craig by then looked after Scottish affairs, was given in a detailed Minute dated 1 July 1851, after which the Board's law-agents drafted a Conveyance

embodying the various terms. Two adjustments requested by the Society were made, and the Council did not finally insist on a third, intended to guarantee free access to the collections for members, which indeed might merely have been troublesome to interpret.

The Conveyance was signed on behalf of the Society in November 1851, by Breadalbane, Laing and Wilson. It was to take effect only when Parliament had voted funds to adapt apartments in the Royal Institution, or another public building in Edinburgh, to receive the collections. Then it would give and make over to the Board, for behoof of the public, and subject to the general direction and control of the Lords of the Treasury, 'the entire collection of antiquities, coins, medals, portraits, manuscripts and books belonging to the said Society of Antiquaries, *with all such additions as may be hereafter made thereto*, together with the cabinets . . . in which they were contained'. (The phrase in italics here continues to be in force; the one following it was to be important on a later occasion (p. 160).) Fit and proper accommodation was to be provided at all times, after the completion of the National Gallery, for the preservation and exhibition of the collection, and also for the Society's meetings, free of all expense to them.

On administration it was expressly 'declared that the charge and management of the said Collection of Antiquities and others above transferred shall remain with the said Society of Antiquaries subject to such regulation and direction as may from time to time be prescribed' by the Board with the consent and approval of the Treasury; and that the Society shall 'annually elect two Members of the Board . . . being Members of the Society of Antiquaries to be Members of the Council of the said Society'. The Treasury's Minute had not provided for this valuable representation of the Board on the Council.

Although several years, over seven in fact, were to go by before the Society could give up George Street and move the collections at its own expense, the financial worry was lifted. Publication was immediately put in hand, starting with the current session and Daniel Wilson's address at the anniversary meeting, on the past, present and future of the Museum, and on attitudes to antiquities in Scotland and other countries. *Proceedings* I.1, in a more modest and practical format than that of *Archaeologia Scotica*, was distributed to members before the end of 1852. In this first annual part, as on to 1939, lists of additions to the Museum and other exhibits at the meeting of the month, with good illustrations, preceded the communications, many of which were notes or discussion about finds or donations. They included a retrospective

account of finds at the later famous Roman site on the Tweed at Newstead, where the new railway cutting had discovered pottery and animal remains in pits. (Details of these were held over for the larger pages of *Archaeologia Scotica* IV.3 (1857), so that the Samian pottery could be illustrated full-size, in colour; most of the other papers there were far less recent.) The author, J. A. Smith MD, was to join Laing as editor for the Society after Wilson left, and became a prolific contributor.

Other contributions to the earliest *Proceedings* show how archaeology was developing, as well as what was coming to the Museum. A revised date for 'Roman camp kettles' was implied in a note, probably by Wilson, on a ewer found with several of them in Banchory Loch in Aberdeenshire. He compared it to those in medieval illuminated manuscripts, while the landowner pointed to Roman camps in the area. Some samples from coin hoards, given by the Lords of the Treasury through the Queen's Remembrancer, gave rise to a good catalogue by a young doctor, W. H. Scott, of the Anglo-Saxon coins from Machrie in Islay. If he had lived, Scott would perhaps have brought about a more archaeological appreciation of the Museum's coin collection, of which he was briefly curator. Fragmentary coins and details of unintelligible inscriptions were important to him, and might have led to association and provenance being safeguarded in the numismatic section as they were in the rest of the Museum, and would have ensured that the samples from the Greek coins found anomalously near Shotts in Lanarkshire, and the seventeenth-century dollars from Selkirkshire, were not disposed of later as simply foreign. Wilson recorded a grave in East Lothian which he considered to be Anglo-Saxon because it had grave-goods (a jar, dagger, comb and bodkin), but which surprisingly proves to be sixteenth or seventeenth-century. He also catalogued a hundred Roman coins which had been found at Portmoak in Fife with five hundred or so others, an iron sword and a 'beautiful silver ornament' only tantalisingly mentioned — a good example of the failures of the treasure trove law on which he kept insisting. Much in the *Proceedings*, then as later, was of course less directly relevant to the Museum, such as a Shetland folk-tale ('ballad'), cromlechs in India, the physical ethnography of Scotland, a Clanranald manuscript (given a century later), or historical documents on the burial of the Regent Moray, whose monument in St Giles was restored by the city on the Society's prompting.

Altogether the first volume was a landmark in the history of the

Society, the start of modern times, and the beginning of an orderly accumulation, and constant review, of information on and related to the collections, which the physical organisation of the objects would only slowly emulate. Angus Graham has traced and systematically sampled the variety in subject matter and changes in emphasis to be found in the *Proceedings* over their first eighty years, and in the *Archaeologia*, in a most valuable paper, 'Records and Opinions 1780-1930' (*Proceedings* 1969-70), which complements the present essays. He explained in it that he had made 'no attempt to deal with the sheaves of reports on relics, bones and curios that regularly reached the Museum, as they outrun any hope of analysis'. Major trends which he noted, however, generally produced corresponding intakes into the collections; other less obvious trends and abortive interests can also be recognised in the Museum's growth. The influence of the Danish Three Ages (which he missed) was evident, as we have seen, in the *Synopsis*, and in accessions of stone and bronze artefacts from Denmark.

Graham particularly stressed that by 1852-53 the importance of excavation was being recognised, biased towards the recovery of relics. Most of these excavations were in the far North. In Orkney two chambered cairns were opened in 1849, followed by other burial mounds, with few or no relics, and from 1853 there was a long drawn out campaign of partial excavation of brochs by James Farrer, an English MP, reported on by George Petrie the local sheriff-clerk, a corresponding member of the Society. In Caithness a similar series of monuments was investigated somewhat more satisfactorily. The exceptionally thorough investigation of a broch at Kettleburn, where a young local landowner, A. H. Rhind, employed a number of men for nearly three months, exposed the whole plan of the massive structure surrounded by slighter buildings within a circular wall. There was recovered a quantity of the things we should now expect — a wide range of faunal remains, pottery, objects of stone, bronze and iron, none very exciting. Yet thirty years later Joseph Anderson described the gift of these finds as having given 'a new character to the [Museum's] collection of Scottish antiquities, and a new direction to Scottish archaeology': they were at last an assemblage of evidence from a single site of a particular kind, and sufficient for 'the condition and culture of the occupants of the structure [to be] truly disclosed by [their] study, in so far as the objects are capable of affording such indications'. Part of Rhind's report appeared in the *Proceedings* and part was published by the Archaeological Institute of Great Britain. It

was already being realised, and by the time Anderson wrote was being taken for granted, that the relics supplied the necessary key to assigning the different kinds of monument to a Period, the only sort of date then possible. To gather such evidence into the Museum and preserve it for study became a major aim of the Society.

To compare and contrast the remains of Scotland's distant past with those of early and primitive cultures elsewhere was seen to be a way of learning more about both, particularly when there was as yet so relatively little from Scotland to study. For a long time it stayed less clear that things from historical periods could similarly be evidence yielding new information, rather than be simply illustrations of what was known from books. Art and the artists, whose arrival has already been mentioned, formed a bridge between the two attitudes and two parts of the collections, particularly significant in the 1850s. Beside Wilson as Secretary, now turned writer and historian, were Sir John Watson Gordon PRSA and W. B. Johnston, first Curator of the National Gallery, both on the Council; Alexander Christie of the School of Art held various offices in the Society including that of librarian, and read a paper on the Bayeux Tapestry; James Drummond was a Curator or councillor for many years. Accessions, as well as exhibits at meetings and conversaziones, reflected their interests. Renaissance carved panels, dated stylistically, were acquired from various parts of Scotland, and a set of photographs of those at Edzell. (Panels among other things were bought at C. K. Sharpe's sale, for which nearly £60 was raised following a circular, while other members bought and donated items from the auction.) Tomb effigies, seals and heraldic sculpture were discussed, and illustrated in the *Proceedings*, and casts of some were naturally added to the Museum, as study and drawing of casts was a normal part of art training. The Board of Manufactures had indeed been anxious to secure special access to the collections for their students.

Another important factor in the artistic studies of that time was the publication of monographs on pre-twelfth-century sculptured stones. This was not undertaken by the Society, but first for Angus by Patrick Chalmers in 1846 (when he also became a Fellow), and for Scotland as a whole by the Spalding Club in Aberdeen, in two volumes in 1856 and 1867; their editor was John Stuart, advocate, who came south to the Register House in Edinburgh and was Secretary of the Society from 1855 to 1877, also remaining Secretary to the Club. Early in the 1850s the Museum was given part of an Anglian cross-shaft from Dumfries-

shire boldly carved with saints in architectural niches, and a finely incised symbol stone from Orkney, and purchased a set of casts of the (Pictish) sculptures at St Vigean in Angus.

Readier access for the general public to see all this was implicit in the Conveyance, even while transfer and public finance hung fire. The opening days were therefore changed in 1854 to Wednesday, for which an order signed by a member was still needed, and Saturday completely free, like public holidays. In consequence attendance jumped that year to over 22,000, nearly double the 1851 figure, steadying then to 17,000 and upwards.

Part II of this chapter, covering the history of the National Museum to 1954, begins on page 142.