

## **2. Renfrewshire's historic monuments - a heritage under threat: A summary of local archaeological problems with a bibliography and brief site list.**

Gordon McCrae

It is said that the past is another country. If this is true, the more distant past often seems like an alien planet. The recent welcome flood of books and pamphlets about the history of our area has done little to change this perception. The study and reinterpretation of medieval, Roman and prehistoric Renfrewshire remains sadly neglected. This may be due, in part, to the problems which confront a local historian trying to make sense of the archaeological record. These problems include (a) - lack of a current bibliography of sources, or an accessible site list, for use as an introduction to local monuments; (b) the fact that much important information is only available in out-of-print books and obscure periodicals; (c) the difficulty of dealing with the large gaps in the archaeological record; which is compounded by (d) ,recent wholesale reinterpretation of classes of monuments due to advances in archaeological techniques. Finally (e) the scientific and technical nature of these techniques which make them the exclusive preserve of 'experts'.

Another persistent problem, since the demise of the Renfrewshire Archaeological Society, has been the lack of a local forum for people interested in discussion, fieldwork and preservation. Various bodies have sponsored investigations over the years - Paisley Museum, Glasgow Archaeological Society, Renfrewshire Natural History Society, The Ancient Monuments Inspectorate, The Ordnance Survey, and, more recently, the Regional Archaeologist and the Scottish Urban Archaeological Trust. Most of the fieldwork, however, has relied on the efforts of individuals - notably Frank Newall, Sylvia Clark and Dr T.C. Welsh.

One result of the lack of a strategy for tackling the problems of understanding the remains of pre-industrial Renfrewshire has been that the monuments themselves have suffered. Two short surveys were published c.1970 listing the most significant buildings and sites. These were "Buildings of archaeological or historic interest in the County of Renfrew" by Andrew Wilson (1) and "Renfrewshire Roundabout" published by the Paisley Museum Natural History Club (2). The first book lists 46 monuments, of which 2 (Blythswood Testimonial School and Ranfurly Castle) are in a vandalised state, and 1 (The 'Wallace' buildings) has been demolished. The second booklet lists 44 (many of which are included in Wilson's list) ,of which 12 have been demolished (Castle Semple House, Cathcart Castle), 2 are ruinous (Ferguslie Mills and Millbank Mill) and 3 others have deteriorated considerably (Peel of Semple, Elliston Castle and Duchal Castle). Thus in the 20 years since these brief lists were published, 3 monuments have been demolished, 4 have become ruinous and the condition of 3 others has deteriorated.

The pace of this destruction is increasing, due to neglect, vandalism and 'development'. There is an urgent need for a wider understanding of the local archaeological record so that significant monuments can be identified, recorded and, if possible preserved. What follows is a brief chronological summary of some of the problems encountered in attempting to understand the archaeology of Renfrewshire,

together with a preliminary list of sites and references, plus a few suggested ways by which it might be possible to protect this vulnerable heritage.

Men and women have lived in Renfrewshire for 6-8000 years. Archaeologists divide this time-span into several periods based on their interpretation of the surviving remains. These take the form of field monuments such as hillforts, enclosures, castles, farms, houses, burial sites, and smaller finds - or artefacts - like flints, pottery and coins. Starting from the earliest times, the main periods and typical surviving sites could be approximately summarised as follows:-

<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIOD</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>HISTORICAL EVENTS</b>	<b>TYPICAL SITES</b>	<b>SEE NOTE NUMBER</b>
Mesolithic	c.6000BC	First human settlement	Scatters of Shells & Flints on Old Shoreline	1
Neolithic	c.4000BC	First Farmers	Chambered Cairns	
Bronze Age	c.2000BC	First Metalworkers	Standing Stones, Cist Burials, Round-Cairns, Moorland Hut Circles	2
Late Bronze Age	c.1100BC +c.700BC	Climatic Decline and 'Invasions'	Fortified Farmsteads, Palisaded/ Vitrified Forts	3
Iron Age	c. 400 BC 80-(400AD)	Roman Military activity	Hill Forts Forts & Roads	4
Dark Ages	400 – 1000AD		Hill Forts and Crosses	5
Middle Ages	11 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> centuries	Anglo-Norman settlement	Ringworks, Mottes, Stone Castles	6
	14 <sup>th</sup> – 17 <sup>th</sup> centuries		Tower Houses, Churches, Corn Mills	7 8
Post-Medieval/ Industrial	Late 18 <sup>th</sup> century	Industrial/ Agricultural Revolution	Water powered textile mills	9

This list should only be taken as a broad generalisation. Many of the types of monuments noted survived, in different forms, throughout successive periods e.g. water mills long predate the Industrial Revolution; Circular huts could date from 4000 BC to medieval times; hillforts of various sorts were occupied from the late Bronze Age until the Dark Ages. Similarly, the list takes little account of 'small finds' like pottery and metal-work which often indicate, by a change of style, the arrival of newcomers like the 'Beaker People' or the Celts. It is simply intended as a starting point for readers unfamiliar with the terms and periods discussed below. Locations and references of sites mentioned in the article are listed at the end.

1. The first problem we encounter is the large gap at the very beginning of the archaeological record. Where were the Mesolithic settlements in Renfrewshire?

Sometime around 8000 years ago the first human settlers moved into what is now Scotland, as the area warmed up after the final retreat of the ice. The climate became warm, wet and temperate and oak and hazel woodlands covered the land. Our ancestors moved northwards along the coast and survived by hunting, fishing and gathering. Most of their settlement sites have been identified by the discovery of surface finds associated with these activities i.e. scatters of shells and bones; the blackened remains of fires and fragments of flint and stone tools. There are many such sites in Ayrshire and Galloway and in Argyll, but at the time of writing, none have been discovered in Renfrewshire. If these faint traces of the first inhabitants of the county are discoverable we have to ask ourselves three questions -When did the weather become warm enough to make settlement here likely? Where was the coast when this happened? and, where, on that coastline, are the earliest settlers likely to have stopped?

The study of the late glacial shoreline is a well developed branch of geological enquiry and at the end of the Ice Age, when human settlers appeared, the sea level was much higher than it is today. This had the effect of flooding the low land to the north of Paisley and, when the waters subsided, left 'raised beach' deposits around the higher ground to the northwest of the county. Careful studies of the composition of peat from Linwood, Paisley and Barochan Mosses have revealed that the old coastline at the time of the first settlers corresponded approximately to the present 8m contour. Many of the earliest sites have been found at river mouths, since these locations were abundant in wildlife and provided fresh water and an access along the river to the wooded interior. It therefore seems that the most likely places to find remains of flint, shells, bone or black burnt material, would be broken ground in the Valleys of the Gryfe, Black Cart, Dargavel or Barochan Burns where they cross the 8m contour - or on the raised beach to the north-west of the county.

2. The second problem concerns Bronze Age settlement of the upland areas to the west of the county. In general, our understanding of past ages may be said to be influenced by the way that historians and archaeologists interpret the available evidence. Apart from a few excavations, what is known about the Bronze Ages in Renfrewshire is based on surface indications of the shape of hut circles, fortified hilltops and burial monuments, and chance finds of weapons, pottery and tools. Reliance on this sort of evidence has led historians to emphasise DISCONTINUITIES. For example, the coming of the Bronze Age 'Beaker' People, who introduced new types of pottery, weapons and monuments, was thought to have been an invasion - an abrupt end to the indigenous Neolithic society.

Recent advances in archaeological techniques have produced new types of evidence which emphasise CONTINUITIES. David Hunt in the report "Early Farming Communities in Scotland: Aspects of Economy and Settlement 4500-1250 BC"(3) concludes "The 'three age' system ... now poses serious problems for the

understanding of social and economic change in the period. The terms 'Mesolithic', 'Neolithic' and 'Bronze Age' are essentially redundant but are unlikely to be exorcised from the literature in the foreseeable future". Hunt also notes "The modern methods of environmental analysis are capable of providing detailed insights into a wide variety of prehistoric processes and activities. Radiocarbon 14 has enabled the development of objective dating, effectively breaking the circular hypotheses linking artefact-, cultural change, and chronological peg. Climatic fluctuations during the period under consideration, highlight the distortions to the general trends attendant on the Scottish situation. Pollen analysis poses a range of subtle problems, and only very few analyses currently available can provide the detailed information of economy and settlement prehistorians seek". Hunt also cites the importance of soil analysis and the computerised locational analysis of finds and sites. He sums up "Throughout the period 4500 -1250 BC the impact of man's activities was great, resulting in widespread and not infrequently irreversible changes in woodland composition and soils. The apparent withdrawal of permanent settlement from many marginal areas in the first millennium BC may be related to such activities".

Research methods which emphasise the environment of prehistoric peoples, rather than types of sites and finds, have revealed extensive clearance of mixed oak and hazel woodland to make way for cereals and rough grass, an expanding farming population, and a temperate, warm, dry continental climate. This period of population growth may have lasted from 4500 BC until about the 12th century BC. About that time the weather became markedly colder and wetter, with particular declines c.1200 and c.700 BC. The resultant rise of the water table in the low land, and growth of peat on the high land, put considerable pressure on the remaining cultivateable terrain. These developments are reflected in the archaeological record, by abandoned moorland Bronze Age sites and the introduction of 'fortified' farmsteads.

In the past few years archaeological reports have suggested that this environmental disaster was even more dramatic than it first appeared. Examination of evidence from compacted ice in Greenland, tree rings in Ireland, minute particles of volcanic ash in Scottish peat; satellite photos of volcanic sulphur emissions and (more familiar) radiocarbon dating, all point to a volcanic eruption, c.1150, at Mount Hekla on Iceland. Sulphur and ash from the eruption seems to have blocked out the sunlight, causing a 'Volcanic Winter' which covered the northern hemisphere for a period of up to two decades. The overfarmed uplands, already experiencing climatic decline, and possibly peat growth, became deserted. If this happened within a generation, what may exist on the moorlands to the west of Renfrewshire is a 'snapshot' of a Bronze Age community. Similarly, the evolution of the fortified Bronze Age farm site may be the result of pressure on cultivateable land as well as the accepted, traditional explanation of invasion and more sophisticated tribal weaponry.

Frank Newall summarised the results of years of fieldwork on prehistoric sites in Renfrewshire in a pioneering article published by the Society of Antiquaries in 1964 (4). The article was entitled "Early Open Settlement in Renfrewshire". He identified, from surface indications, five classes of settlement found in the upland area to the northwest of the county.

These he described as huts, houses, crofts, large houses and homesteads. He noted several similarities in the situation of these sites.

"Settlement is governed by the peat terrace and its effluent streams. No site lies south of a line where peat today exceeds 1 ft. in depth, and most lie in the shelter of the forward edge of the plateau near the point where streams begin to flow in recognisable beds. Thus they are confined to the 700-ft. and 900-ft. contours. But a number of houses ('Green Water D') and homesteads occupy local rises overlooking once-cultivated land. In the cases of classes (a), (b) and (c) it seems probable that the district was exploited by pastoralists grazing stock on the slopes before them, and perhaps drawing fuel from the moor behind, for small peat cuttings occasionally lie in the vicinity".

Mr Newall went on to draw parallels with excavated Bronze Age hut circles in Ayrshire, and Iron Age, or Roman Native, settlements, in Northern England. He writes -

"In Renfrewshire, then, there may be a sequence of occupation from the Bronze Age to Post-Roman times. With the homesteads and perhaps the large house units we probably enter the Post-Roman Iron Age".

After noting the series of fortified sites, like Knockmade, on the 5-600 ft contour, he concludes -

"Excavation alone may establish the significance of this and establish a proper temporal and structural relationship. The logical sequel to the survey is the series of planned excavations at each of the type sites, now begun at Knapps".

Since that paragraph was written, almost 30 years ago, three sites (at Knapps, Craigmearloch and Knockmade) have been excavated and Mr Newall re-examined the problems in three further articles (5). The Knockmade excavation, which took place in 1959, 1960 and 1967, revealed a stone-based, stockaded turf rampart (similar to Craigmearloch c.5-700 BC), enclosing a hut with hearth and cobbled surfaces. Pottery was recovered dateable to the Celtic Iron Age, suggesting re-occupation or a long period of occupation (6). Despite these excavations the basic issues raised by Mr Newall concerning upland pre-historic settlements remain unresolved.

Can new archaeological techniques which examine the environment of prehistoric settlements uncover the sequence of events leading to abandonment and fortification? Should the area be resurveyed, given the problems of relying totally on surface indications of settlement? A recent surface survey of Machrie Moor, on Arran, which was followed by trenching for forestry revealed that the initial survey had failed to detect over 80% of 'features' later revealed by forestry operations (7). This discrepancy obviously undermines any theories or conservation strategies which might have been based on the initial surface survey.

Given that several hut circle sites in Renfrewshire have already been disturbed (as at Lurg Moor) - and others are under threat, from drainage, power lines and forestry, it is important to know in advance what evidence should be recovered from a site which is at risk of destruction.

3. The third problem concerns the unravelling of the story of Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age fortification in Renfrewshire. When were the larger hillforts built and occupied? and what, if any, was their relationship with one another?

Around 700-600 BC the weather seems to have become wetter and colder. Also about this time, or shortly after, the first Iron Age settlers appeared in the area. They brought with them a more sophisticated culture and a more highly developed tribal society, capable of constructing larger and more complicated hillforts. Several local sites illustrate the general sequence of hillfort development in southern Scotland - from wooden palisaded structures; timber-framed, stone-walled forts; hillforts with multiple ramparts; to large 'tribal capitals'. Craigmarloch started off as a palisaded enclosure but when it was destroyed in the 6th century BC it had timber-laced stone walls. The destruction resulted in the phenomenon of "vitrification". Dunwan, and the 4<sup>1/2</sup> acre stone-walled Duncarnock may be later, as is the large, 17<sup>1/2</sup> acre, Iron Age fort of the Damnonii at Walls Hill.

This site was excavated in 1960 by Frank Newall for Paisley Museum. It is not clear what happened to the fort or its inhabitants in the late 1st century when the Romans appeared in Renfrewshire. Traprain Law in East Lothian, the tribal capital of the Votadini, continued in occupation throughout the Roman Period - a fact attested by the considerable amount of Roman material discovered during the excavation. No Roman pottery or coins were discovered during the excavation of Walls Hill. This might be evidence of Roman policy, applied in other parts of the empire, to favour one tribe against another. Whatever the case, any information about the fort's construction or abandonment would throw further light on the Romans, and the Damnonii, in Renfrewshire.

These sites, like the Bronze Age sites described above, are also under threat. Almost all trace of the presumed Bronze Age/Iron Age fortification at Barr Hill, Kilbarchan, has disappeared due to quarrying; Duncarnock has been threatened with similar operations in recent years and there was in the past twelve months a proposal to use land in the vicinity of Walls Hill for dumping waste. Once again there is a need for a general understanding of the significance of these monuments so that they can be preserved or recorded if the "developers" move in.

4. The Roman occupation was a brief interlude in the archaeology of the county, but a surprising amount of evidence survives from this short period. It is largely due to the pioneering work of Frank Newall and others, that a clear picture has emerged of the Agricolan occupation (at Barochan Fort) and the subsequent Antonine occupation (at the forts at Whitemoss, Lurg and Outerwards). Two small problems remain - the possibility of finding another signal station (according to Mr Newall, in the vicinity of Neilston Parish); and the curiously large number of finds of Roman artefacts on display at Formakin House, all of which are claimed, without provenance

or documentation, to have been discovered in the estate grounds.

5. Sub-Roman and 'Dark Age' times present us with other problems of interpretation and preservation. The Roman armies finally withdrew from the south of Britain in the early years of the fifth century AD. From the abandonment of the Antonine Wall, c.160-170 AD, until the final withdrawal of Roman troops, our area was part of what has been called 'the hidden frontier'. This consisted of territory beyond the military frontier which was controlled by tribal alliances, subsidies, 'exploratores' or scouts, and occasional punitive expeditions. The hillfort at Dumbarton Rock ('the fort of the Britons') was the tribal centre of the emergent British kingdom. Its hegemony seems to have survived from the sub-Roman period until sometime after it was successfully besieged by the Vikings in 870 AD. An excavation conducted by Professor Alcock of Glasgow University identified the destruction levels associated with the siege.

Large parts of Renfrewshire appear, from placename evidence, to have been part of the British Kingdom - but where are the Dark Age sites? As yet no local settlement site can be definitely attributed to this period on the basis of archaeological evidence. This may be due, in part, to the fact that Dark Age sites may have been occupied and reoccupied down to the present time. The recent excavation in Paisley raises hopes that it might be the start of a policy of investigating the origins of the town, as development sites become available - although Victorian cellars and foundations may have removed much of the evidence. It is also possible, as Frank Newall has suggested, that some hut circles, identified as prehistoric, may in fact be sub-Roman or Dark Age. The main question is how it might be possible to identify hut types from this period.

Along with the problem of settlements there is also a problem of preservation. The most significant surviving monuments from Dark Age times are a series of stone crosses and slabs decorated with incised or relief Celtic intertwined patterns and depictions of Biblical scenes. There are several examples at Inchinnan and Govan Parish Churches and individual examples at Capelrig, Barochan (now in Paisley Abbey), Arthurlie, Lochwinnoch Cemetery and Stanely Reservoir. In most cases only a part of the cross shaft survives, although the Barochan Cross is more or less complete. The purpose, origin and exact date of these monuments is not clear. Some writers have put forward the view that they were set up on the edges of estates, which might indicate purposes which were not only religious. A comparison with crosses in other areas and with early Irish illuminated manuscripts suggests that they could be dated, on stylistic grounds, to the 10th century. Earlier, more complete examples are to be found to the south in the Bewcastle Cross and the Ruthven Cross, in Dumfriesshire. A survey of the distribution and decoration of Renfrewshire examples is overdue.

Considering the importance and rarity of these enigmatic Dark Age survivals, it is surprising to note that one of them, a guardianship monument at Stanely, has, in the last 20 years, been systematically vandalised. The interlace and carved panels are now almost indistinguishable. There is an urgent need for preservation of the remaining fragment.

6. In the Middle Ages more plentiful written evidence can be used to supplement archaeological sources. From early charters it seems that Anglo-Norman families and their retainers were settled in strategic places in particular areas of Scotland as a means of strengthening the royal power. Since the settlement may have been opposed they often constructed a temporary stronghold known as a motte and bailey. This consisted of a stockade on top of an earth mound associated with a larger, lower, stockaded enclosure. The Bayeux Tapestry depicts the Norman invaders constructing a motte and there are many examples to be found in the south (e.g. Clifford's Tower in York). There are at least three quite distinct examples in Renfrewshire at Ranfurly, and Denniston and Pennyfersal near Kilmacolm. Two, more questionable, examples are the 'Tumulus' on the Newton Mearns to Eaglesham road and 'Gryffe Castle' in Bridge of Weir (mentioned in a charter of c1450 as the 'hundred shilling land of Gryffe Castle').

Eric Talbot excavated Mearns Castle in the early 70's and discovered traces of an earlier circular earthwork surrounding the existing tower. He suggested that these 'Ringworks' (surmounted by a wooden stockade) were constructed by early Anglo-Norman settlers as a place of refuge, instead of the more typical motte and bailey. He detected examples at Pollok Park, Camphill and Crookston in Glasgow and Castlehead in Paisley.

The archaeological problem posed by these early Anglo-Norman defensive structures is firstly - identifying that they belong to this period (in the case of 'Gryffe Castle', the Eaglesham 'tumulus' and the unexcavated ringworks) ; secondly - discovering why there are two different types of fortification; and thirdly - understanding their strategic position with reference to non-Anglo-Norman estate centres which might not be mentioned in the charter evidence, since they represent a different, pre-existing, power structure.

7. The later Middle Ages provide another example of a class of monument in urgent need of recording and preservation. The Tower House is probably the most conspicuous survival from late Medieval times. These buildings were constructed between 1350 and 1650 as defendable residences of local Lairds. Typical examples consist of 3, 4 or 5 storeys with a vault at the lowest level providing a stone floor for the hall on the first storey. This was a single chamber with a large fire-place and stairs leading up to smaller chambers in the upper two storeys. Rooms, presses and spiral stairways were often set into the walls which could be several feet thick.

Windows were small in the earlier periods and enlarged and embellished in later times. Attics had crow-stepped gables and there was generally a corbelled or machicolated walkway round the edge of the roof. Early examples were simple towers sometimes entered by a wooden stairway to a door at the first floor level. The plans of later towers are more elaborate. L and T shaped towers gave way to Z shaped towers (in the case of Claypotts Tower in Dundee). The additional wing was called a 'jam' and these often developed into courtyards. In the more peaceful years which followed the 17th century gunloops gave way to ornamental windows and towers which were still estate centres became the core of mansion houses.



Renfrewshire has many examples of tower houses in all states of development and survival. Early examples include Inverkip (also called Ardgowan); Stanely (where the jam is clearly an addition to the original tower) and Levan, at Gourrock, which is an early L-shaped example. Also of interest, though ruinous, is Auchenbathie, where the remains of the surrounding farmtown can still be distinguished. Newark, at Port Glasgow, developed into a mansion house, as did Johnstone Castle. In other cases the estate centre moved and the tower house has all but disappeared, as at Craighends, in Houston.

The search for tower houses is made easier by the Poll Tax Roll of 1695 (a copy of which is available in the Reference Department of Paisley Central Library). This records the tax assessment of landowners and notes the estate centres where a tower, if it existed, may have been sited. The early 17th century maps of Blaeu and Speed also indicate the houses of prominent landowners.

There are several fortified, and unfortified, medieval houses surviving in Renfrewshire which cannot strictly be called tower houses. These include Blackhall in Paisley, which was one of the earliest fiefs of the Stewarts; Caldwell Tower, Uplawmoor, and the Peel Tower in Castle Semple Loch, both of which were products of conflicts between local magnates; and Cowden Hall in Neilston, which, like Kilallan (or Kilellan) Manse and the Place of Paisley, are examples of unfortified 16/17th domestic architecture.

A survey of these important late Medieval monuments would provide the basis for further interpretation and preservation. Although some buildings, like Levan and Blackhall have recently been re-occupied, and others, like Barr and Caldwell have been repaired - structures like Cowden Hall and Castle Semple Peel are rapidly deteriorating and need urgent action if they are to avoid the fate of Cathcart Castle, which was demolished by the local authority.

8. Other medieval survivals - churches, watermills and traces of the buildings and field systems of pre-improvement agriculture - are also in need of care and attention. Medieval churches have fared better than most. Parts of earlier churches are incorporated into the present parish churches of Neilston (a gothic window); Kilmacolm (13th century stonework); Mearnskirk (parts of a 16th century building) and Renfrew (the 15th century Ross Tomb). The two most notable medieval religious sites are Paisley Abbey (West Front; 13th/15th century Nave; 15th century St Mirren Chapel and frieze) and the Collegiate Church at Castle Semple, which during its brief occupation was remodelled following the death of Lord Semple at Flodden. Of particular note are the tombs and the remodelled east end.

Many late medieval farm sites can still be distinguished (for example, in upland areas in Neilston and Lochwinnoch parishes) and more can be found with the help of Ainslie's map and the 1695 Poll Tax Roll. A survey of these sites, even on a parish basis would provide important information about local patterns of ownership and changes in land use in marginal areas.

9. The final category in this brief survey of monuments at risk, is the disappearing water mill. Water mills have existed in Scotland since the middle ages, but in the late 18th century the application of water power to textile manufacture transformed the economy. Renfrewshire was in the forefront of these revolutionary changes, and on rivers like the Calder, the Levern and the Black and White Carts there are many remains of dams, lades and mills. Surface features can be checked against Ainslie's map of 1789 and the Old and New Statistical Accounts. Newspapers and trade directories provide further evidence. John Shaw's "Water Power in Scotland"(8) gives a useful summary of water power in the Cart basin and Coldstream Mill (in Beith parish) is worth a visit if you want to see a local water mill in action.

So great was the demand for water power that very small burns in Renfrewshire supported a surprising number of industrial sites e.g. the Rowbank Burn in Lochwinnoch parish and the Espedair Burn in Paisley had many mills along their courses. Several sites identified on the Espedair Burn in a survey conducted c.1970 by Dr Clark have now gone. These structures, like pre-improvement agricultural sites, are often destroyed by proprietors and "developers". In this way, evidence of the first Industrial Revolution is rapidly being destroyed, without record.

10. There are other questions, about other periods, but the final problem to be considered here, is this - What should be done, with the limited resources available, to increase awareness of Renfrewshire's archaeological heritage in such a way that significant monuments can be adequately recorded and protected? The problem has been tackled in the past by museums, individuals and societies and such records as exist are the results of their efforts. Official and voluntary bodies have interests in the problem. There is a role for them all. Specialised jobs like excavation must come under the supervision of experienced archaeologists; The museum has the obligation to preserve and interpret; The legal protection of monuments is the responsibility of statutory bodies; The surveying of sites should be conducted to proper standards by trained personnel. The local history society has a crucial role to play in this process.

Dr T.C. Welsh, a noted Renfrewshire field worker, discussed this point in a recent article(9).

"The task of recording and monitoring history on the ground is best tackled by local societies. However, there must be a conducive environment for such activities, providing facilities for discussion, learning and above all publication of field observations, even if these must remain as opinions rather than statements of fact. If the need for such research is one day recognised, there will undoubtedly be enormous regret at the quantity of individual effort in the past, which was never recorded in print, or at best received very restrictive summary publication. At the present time, archaeological journals do not allow the publication of detailed descriptions of surface features, unless a substantial portion of the work included excavation. If surface observation and interpretation is not deemed to be archaeology, do we discard a great quantity of our archaeological heritage as being beyond the pale?"

Amongst the problems likely to be encountered in this interpretative, non-excavation archaeology today are a lack of feed-back, and a great difficulty in learning to understand the features on the ground, and developing skills. In order to test one's efforts in fieldwork, the opinions of experienced archaeologists, both to point out errors, and to suggest how techniques may be improved, is very necessary. Just the opportunity to discuss features on the ground is a useful way of learning. This is sometimes possible on organised visits to archaeological sites where both expert and novice are present. However, it is seldom possible for that expertise to be available to individuals who think they have made a discovery, and wish to sound out their ideas on someone with better trained eyes. What is needed, when such opportunities arise, is sympathetic interest, an understanding of what the individual is trying to achieve, and constructive criticism. What is often, and regrettably encountered, is an intolerance of time-wasting amateurs, a ready attention to the most likely mistakes, and a haste to be dismissive. Isolation only reinforces untrained notions on archaeological interpretation.

There is also a tendency for regional societies and archaeology classes to give most of their attention to excavation. While undoubtedly the popular understanding of archaeology must predominate, if there is a need for observation in the field, as proposed here, this pursuit should also be catered for and encouraged. It may be necessary to develop new structures for the discussion and teaching of observation archaeology. Some societies do provide opportunities for systematic fieldwork for the plotting of artifact distributions over large areas. This work is important and valuable, but it should not be the only observation fieldwork available. Subjective as it may be, the interpretation of the landscape is a vital discipline

As Dr Welsh points out "The coming together of local history and local archaeology requires cultivation". It certainly does. At the simplest level a local history society can provide a forum for the discussion of archaeological matters, where, to answer Dr Welsh, professionals and amateurs can meet and learn from one another, and a strategy for tackling archaeological problems could be evolved. The Society could also function as a formal link with official bodies - for example, reporting discoveries; enlisting expert help; commenting on planning applications; monitoring developments affecting monuments, and campaigning for the protection of antiquities.

If the Renfrewshire Local History Forum and local societies were willing to take up these activities it would be a step towards confronting the problems of interpretation listed above, and away of protecting Renfrewshire's ancient monuments from the ever-present dangers of development, vandalism and neglect.

G. McCrae 10.9.90

<b>NOTES</b>	
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### BIBLIOGRAPHY AND BRIEF SITE LIST

The sites and references are grouped chronologically and each group numbered to correspond to the order of problems discussed in the article.

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