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# **The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: Fieldwork, Rescue and Archive**



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**Human Geography PhD**

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**2017**



## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work throughout, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Sobolewski', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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**Dedicated to my Grandmother, Teresa Sobolewska**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role and work of the *Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland* from a geographical perspective in the period 1908 – c.1975, with especial reference to the historical geographies behind the production of the national inventory of Scotland's ancient and historic built monuments. The thesis examines the sites of practice where the Commission produced the national inventory to explore the *doing* of the inventory. Fieldwork is a central concern of the thesis. Attention is paid to the spatial aspects of Commission's work both in the field "out there" and in the office "in here". The thesis discusses the methods and technologies which fostered the development of fieldwork practices rooted in the office and in the field. The Commission was always 'doing fieldwork' and this thesis brings into focus the relationship between the different spaces and places where the Commission undertook what might be labelled as work in the field.

The thesis is comprised of nine chapters. An introduction and literature review are followed by an examination of the history of antiquarianism relevant to the establishment of the Commission. A further two chapters provide an overview of the Commission's history, arranged chronologically, and its archive, understood in relation to relevant archival theory. Three chapters consider the development of the Commission with particular attention paid to fieldwork techniques and methods, the development of rescue archaeology, and the associated technologies which facilitated the Commission's work within a rescue paradigm before turning, finally, to examine the Commission's database, *Canmore*. Examining the Commission in this manner has drawn attention to the ways in which geographers and others conceive of fieldwork and how the development of the Commission was inherently linked to ways of doing work in the field.

Through examining the history and geography of the Commission's work the concern of this thesis is to study how 'antiquarian research' was carried out in the field "in here" and "out there" simultaneously. The thesis suggests that narrow definitions of fieldwork overlook the nuances of how ancient Scotland was revealed through suites of different practice. The thesis argues that more fine-grained approaches to understanding the how of the *doing* of fieldwork might lead to reconceptualisation of the place of work in the field, recognising that different practices helped constitute both ancient and historical Scotland as the object of the Commission's work and the Commission itself.



## LAY SUMMARY

This thesis explores the history of the *Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, narrating particular moments which tell of how the organisation produced knowledge about the country's past. By focusing on the geography of the Commission's antiquarian and archaeological fieldwork – that is, the places where such work was done – this thesis argues that it was through the close relationship between traditional field sites “out there” and sites “in here” that both the Commission and the national inventory of Scotland were constituted. Producing eighteen inventories across twenty-five volumes over its lifetime, the Commission was founded in 1908 to document and record the ancient and historical built history of Scotland. These records together comprised a ‘national inventory’, which, whilst intended as a completed record of the nation's monuments, was never fulfilled. Indeed, the Commission itself was never intended to become a permanent institution. However, as I explore here, the adoption of new practices, the acquisition of other institutions and the emergence of ‘rescue archaeology’ (securing monuments against potential threats) gleaned the organisation purpose and permanency beyond the compilation of a national inventory. There are a number of existing histories of the Commission with which this thesis converses. herein contrast to these accounts, my focus here has been to explore the day-to-day practices of the organisation. I examine the techniques, instruments and technologies which permitted the production of antiquarian and archaeological knowledge. Drawing predominantly on material held in the Commission's archive, but also oral history, I explore how the national inventory was produced during the period 1908-c.1980. In attending to the historical geographies of the Commission this thesis presents three important arcs to the organisation's history: its fieldwork, the adoption of rescue archaeology, and the development of its archive and digital database. The substantive chapters of the thesis explore each aspect in turn. I narrate the Commission's work in the field, from the first survey of Berwickshire in 1908 until the various surveys of Argyll during the 1960s and 1970s. I examine the development of rescue archaeology between 1941 and 1975, foreground the motives and methods of this approach. Finally, I end my exploration of the Commission's history by considering the development of the organisation's digital database, *Canmore*. Taken as a whole, this thesis is concerned with the geographies of fieldwork practice, and how different sites of fieldwork interacted with one another. I attend to the spaces where antiquarian and archaeological knowledge of Scotland's past was constituted, and the traffic between them. By focusing on these relationships, and considering those instruments, techniques and technologies that facilitated them, I argue that the story of the Commission challenges us to reconceptualise the place and practice of fieldwork.

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## **ACRONYMS**

**HMSO:** His/Her Majesty's Stationary Office

**MLS:** Marginal Land Survey

**NMRS:** National Monuments Record of Scotland

**OS:** Ordnance Survey

**RCAHMS:** Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland

**SNBR:** Scottish National Building Record

# 1. THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE ANCIENT AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF SCOTLAND: FIELDWORK, RESCUE, ARCHIVE

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

When the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland was established in 1908, the potential for irrecoverable loss of Scotland's ancient built history was manifest. There was no legal framework in place to ensure that ancient and historic monuments, throughout Britain, were protected. Nor was there a formal record of their existence. The Commission sought to create an inventory of Scotland's ancient and historic built monuments, which was as complete as possible. It was intended that the inventory would record this history before it was lost, removed from the landscape either intentionally or otherwise. From February 1908, the Commission began this project of inventorization, one that would never be completed, but which continues today under the auspices of Historic Environment Scotland.<sup>1</sup> The national inventorization was a response to the perceived threat that Scotland's monuments might be destroyed or damaged. Moreover, the Commission's county-by-county inventory was envisaged to respond to the failings of the Ancient Monuments Act 1882. The Commission's inventories were to be based on fieldwork, each site physically inspected in the field before it was documented and recorded in the final publication. The organisation embodied a commitment to fieldwork. But the task of creating a complete national inventory was to prove an impossible one. The end-in-view of completeness ensured that the national inventory was a project that ultimately outlasted the Commission itself when it was merged with Historic Scotland in October 2015. Now operating within Historic Environment Scotland, the former Commission continues to maintain and update an inventory of Scotland's ancient and historic monuments that is as complete as possible.

This thesis is, in part, a response to the 2015 merger. At the time of writing Historic Environment Scotland is focusing on the future of the Scottish heritage sector. This thesis exists as a brief moment of reflection on what came before: the origins of this organisation. It is my intention that this thesis will serve not only an intellectual purpose, but that it captures some of the legacy of the Commission, drawing attention to the organisation, its practices, its methods, its fieldwork and its stories. I should make clear that I do not intend to provide a full history of the Commission; rather what is presented here is a view into the operational nexus and fieldwork practices of the Commission. In doing so, this thesis serves to examine three themes within the organisation's history and operational practice; fieldwork, rescue, and the archive. In exploring these themes I draw on the 'small stories' of day-to-day life at the Commission that speak to the doing of the national inventory of Scotland. It is my hope

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<sup>1</sup> G. Brown, *The Care of Ancient Monuments*, Edinburgh, 1905.



that these narrative moments, scattered throughout this thesis, capture the legacy of the Commission between 1908 and the 1970-1980s.<sup>2</sup>

The commencement of the first inventory of the county of Berwickshire in August 1908 began the Commission project. The Commission was tasked, by Royal Warrant (see Fig. 1), with making ‘an inventory of the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Constructions connected with or illustrative of the contemporary culture, civilisation and conditions of life of the people in Scotland from the earliest times to the year 1707’.<sup>3</sup> From 1908-2015 eighteen inventories were completed, totalling twenty-six separate inventory volumes including a revision of the very first inventory produced. The inventory programme ran from 1908 until 1992 when the Commission moved away from the county-by-county survey programme towards localised small-scale inventories.

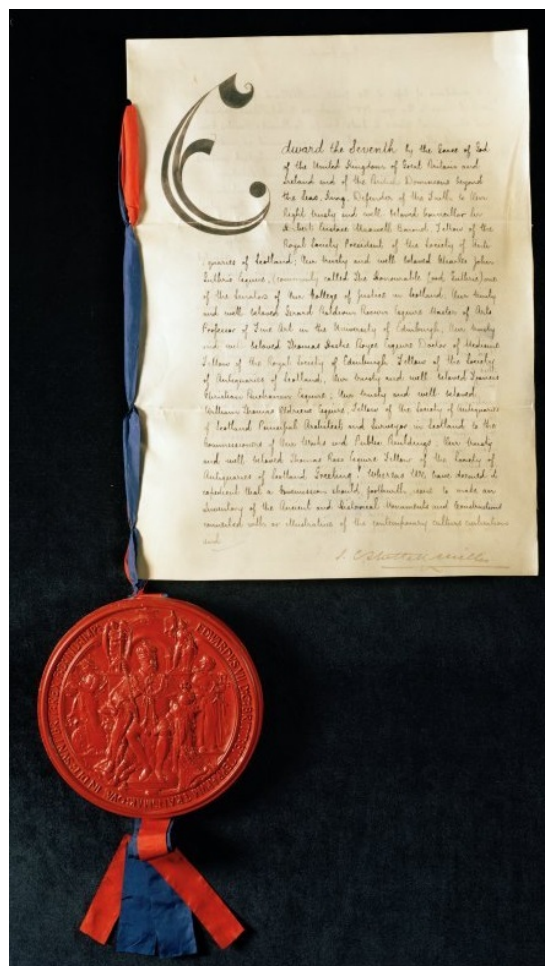


Figure 1.1: The Royal Warrant. Source: *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, SC 01508320.

<sup>2</sup> H. Lorimer, Telling small stories: spaces of knowledge and the practice of geography, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28(2) (2003) 197-217.

<sup>3</sup> Why exactly 1707 (the date of the union between Scotland and England) was chosen as the endpoint for the Commission’s remit is unclear. There is no evidence in the archive to justify an explanation of why this date was chosen and, as such, I do not offer unfounded reflection on the significance of 1707.

The survey of Berwickshire in August 1908 was the beginning of a process of evolving fieldwork techniques and practices. Throughout the national inventory programme, the Commission developed and honed its practices in the field and within the fields of antiquarianism, and later, archaeology. The county-by-county programme was punctuated by particular moments where significant changes to the field-working practices of the Commission occurred. Back in the Edinburgh office – a field site in of itself – the Commission also changed how it went about the task of completing the county-by-county inventory programme. The Commission was an organisation that was defined by its fieldwork. It was through a commitment to working in the field, visiting and surveying each site that was to be included in its published inventories, that the organisation would establish itself as one committed to fieldwork and gain its authority as one of Scotland’s foremost archaeological and heritage institutions.

Through examining the development of the Commission into one of Scotland’s authorities on the nation’s ancient built history, this thesis begins with a focused review of relevant literature, drawing on the ‘spatial turn’ in the history of science and the recognition of the role of the local in the production of knowledge. This provides the broad conceptual foundation for the arguments presented by the thesis. Attention is also paid to the ways in which authority and credibility in its staff and procedures were constructed and how this creates a sense of trust in knowledge. I then provide a history of the development of antiquarianism in Scotland focusing particularly on the influence of the Ancient Monuments Act 1882 and its causal impact on the establishment of the Commission in 1908. Before moving towards my empirical chapters, I provide a chronological history of the Commission. The period 1908-1975 is intended to serve as a framework for the subsequent arguments presented. This is not an exhaustive history; rather, it is a history of those moments within the development of the Commission that are of particular importance – forming as they do the foundation of later arguments – to the subsequent empirical discussions. The chronology is to be considered a reference resource for the reader. This is complemented with an examination of the relevant archival theory, which serves as something of a methodology. Discussion of the theory guided my own ‘archival rummaging’ and how I used the fragmented and disparate material to construct this history of the Commission.

## **1.2 CENTRAL CONCERN**

The central concern of this thesis focuses on recovering the history and geography of the development of the Commission’s fieldwork practices. This becomes a discussion of the ways in which developments within antiquarianism, and later archaeology – as well as what would become the wider heritage sector during the 1980s and 1990s – affected the ways in which the Commission carried out its work, notably

through rescue archaeology and aerial photography.<sup>4</sup> This discussion focuses on fieldwork that takes place outside, in the field, and also non-field-based fieldwork, that is, work that was undertaken inside, in the office, but which was actively part of the Commission's fieldwork routine. Attention to these processes of knowledge making and to the development of fieldwork practice allows us to avoid forgetting local practices and day-to-day events. The county-by-county system that the Commission's fieldwork followed provides a platform well suited to geographical study, the work of the organisation defined by the regions that it surveyed. There was an in-built regionality to the work of the Commission, a regionality that had a meaningful effect on the antiquarian knowledge it produced. The individual regions of Scotland required particular solutions and adaptation of practices in order to ensure the timely production of the inventory in question. Particular regional practices lead to an evolution and adaptation of fieldwork and, as a result, shaped the nature of the Commission's published work in a constantly evolving process. Each inventory led to the evolution of the next. These historical geographies of practice are told through the Commission's archive, further supplemented with the oral history, testimony, and stories of significant individuals within the Commission's history.

Through telling the history of the Commission, I wish to draw attention to a number of geographies in which the Commission's national inventory, and fieldwork more broadly, are rooted. Each of the empirical chapters presented, engage with particular geographies that I have identified from material in the Commission's archive. There are, however, several arguably smaller themes recurring through the thesis which, while apparently minor, draw the thesis together and give coherence to the material presented. This thematic approach overcomes any chronological gaps by drawing together the fragmented nature of the material in the archive. Geographies of knowledge, knowledge making, identity, reception, reputation and authority, run throughout the thesis, while larger thematic questions concern themselves with geographies of fieldwork, rescue, collecting and excavating, records and recording, and administration. These themes are examined in turn, first through exploring the Commission's fieldwork, subsequently considering its relationship with rescue archaeology, and then by addressing the development of *Canmore*, the evolution of the Commission's archive and its digital database.

Thus, my intellectual claim here is grounded in the need to attend to the office/field relationship. Through telling the history of the Commission and paying particular attention to the day-to-day techniques, practices, and inventorization, I examine the ways in which what was labelled fieldwork was carried out across a variety of sites both "in here" in the office, and "out there" in the field. My argument demonstrates that the work of the Commission was never truly fieldwork carried out beyond

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to clarify here the use of the terms 'antiquarianism' and 'archaeology'. I have chosen here to use the terms broadly inline with what I identify as a shift in Commission practice from antiquarianism towards archaeology around WWII. Note: the use of the term 'archaeology' by the Commission was, throughout its history, associated with the act of excavation. As such, 'archaeology' appears more frequently in the archive post-WWII.

the walls of the office: rather, that fieldwork was produced through the relationship between office, field and sites in-between. There was, I will demonstrate, a certain ubiquity to the places where the Commission undertook its work. Studying the Commission and attending to its practices in this way allows one to study the relationship between sites of fieldwork in a similar manner to Dean Bond who has recently directed the attention of geographers to the study-field relationship by considering Danish geographical fieldwork between 1761-1767. For Bond, an attention to ‘armchair geography’ (that is, scholarly activity in the study) could complicate ‘understandings of the relationship between the study, the field, and learned authority’. He further notes that ‘questions about the trustworthiness, authority and credibility of geography’s practitioners were bound up with questions about where knowledge was made and who made it’. For Bond, this has implications for how we understand the distinction between study and field. I seek to tackle similar implications here albeit between the field “out there”, and the Commission’s office “in here”.<sup>5</sup> In what follows each section presents a summary of the relevant chapter.

### 1.3 PLACING AN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE COMMISSION

Here I provide a brief summary of chapter two which outlines the relevant literature. Historical geographers are by now familiar with the contention that, as Naylor has it, ‘place is central to the making and remaking of science’.<sup>6</sup> Understanding the geography of science is key to an understanding of processes which make, re-make and mobilise scientific knowledge. It provides the conceptual basis for this thesis which examines the various sites where the Commission produced knowledge. For Withers, it is ‘only in local context’ that we can ‘see how far the nature of science [is] consequential upon the social relations at work there, and not elsewhere – or anywhere else’.<sup>7</sup> Thus, for David Livingstone, historians of science ‘have to take with much greater seriousness the regional geographies of scientific endeavours’.<sup>8</sup> This argument forms the conceptual basis for my study of the Commission’s history and practice. In the context of the early Commission, local and regional knowledge (at county level) was the basis by which a national picture of Scotland’s antiquarian remains could be established. The pursuit of rescue archaeology from 1941 onwards would also be bound by questions of the region. Regionality provided the foundation for the Commission’s fieldwork preparations and was, indeed, an organising method for the field staff who operated in teams within the various regions of Scotland being surveyed.

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<sup>5</sup> D. Bond, Enlightenment geography in the study: A.F. Büsching, J.D. Michaelis and the place of geographical knowledge in the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia, 1761-1767, *Journal of Historical Geography* 51 (2016) 64-76, 65.

<sup>6</sup> S. Naylor, Introduction: historical geographies of science: places, contexts, cartographies, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 38 (2005) 1-12, 6.

<sup>7</sup> S. Naylor, *Regionalizing Science: Placing Knowledges in Victorian England*, London, 2010, 2.

<sup>8</sup> D. Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge*, Chicago, 2003, 134.

Moreover, attending to the finer details of the everyday at the Commission, that is, the way in which knowledge was produced, allows the opportunity, as Naylor suggests, to ‘recover the actions and voices of those otherwise only faintly recorded in, lost to or even excised from the historical record’.<sup>9</sup> Such recovery allows for the telling of forgotten histories: for example, how exactly the Commission produced its inventories, or how it interacted with government. Much of these stories have, hitherto, gone untold in official histories of the Commission. Within the context of this thesis, attending to the finer details of the everyday serves a two-part function. Firstly, it facilitates a more detailed understanding of how work in the field was done. Secondly, it permits the recovery of stories that help to capture the legacy of the Commission, particularly in those cases where such histories have not been recorded by existing histories of the organisation. Naylor notes that ‘taking inspiration from work in postcolonial studies, historians and geographers of science have inquired into localities such as public houses, provincial scientific societies, fieldsites, drawing rooms, and even the laboratories of the famous, only to find a supporting cast of actors whose scientific abilities and influence were often far beyond their social standing’.<sup>10</sup> This is as true of the Commission as of any of the examples highlighted by Naylor. Chapters three and four follow the literature review offered in chapter two by providing first, brief history of the Commission (intended as a reference resource for the reader) and second, a history of antiquarianism intended to contextualise the establishment and practice of the Commission.

#### **1.4 ARCHIVAL MATERIAL AND LIMITATIONS**

Here I speak to some of the challenges faced in conducting this research while speaking to the broader themes of chapter five. To tell the history of the Commission, I have drawn predominantly on the material held by the Commission in its own archive, particularly those archival records that form the manuscript stores and business affairs archive. I have also drawn heavily on material that was, at the time of research and writing, uncatalogued and, which is in some cases, still to be accessioned. Additional material has been consulted in other national archives, notably the National Archives. However, the centralised nature of the Commission and its relationship to central government – discussed within the thesis – both ensured and continues to ensure that unlike, other Civil Service bodies, the Commission held its own archive rather than following protocol and archiving its records within The National Archives at Kew. Despite the wealth of the material consulted, the fragmented nature of the archive and the traces left behind – discussed in chapter three – have dictated the shape of the argument and the history of the Commission that I have told. Put simply, the material pertaining to

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<sup>9</sup> Naylor, *Regionalizing Science*, 2-3.

<sup>10</sup> Naylor, *Regionalizing Science*, 3.

the history of the Commission prior to 1945 tells of the human story of the Commission. It draws on personal journals, diaries, letters and the organisation's minute book. By contrast, the material drawn upon to construct the history of the Commission following 1945 relies less on personal memoirs and testimony and more upon the institutional traces left behind in the archive. Administrative paperwork is the mainstay of the archive material following WWII. To supplement this, I conducted a small selection of oral histories and correspondence with former members of staff who supplied personal testimony that fleshed out the day-to-day activities of the Commission.

The archive has also dictated the time periods that the thesis explores and so it is worth clarifying here the exact time period that this thesis examines. Here I have used the county-by-county inventory programme as a guide. This has provided a certain start – the establishment of the Commission in 1908 – but a less certain end. While the inventory programme ceased with the publication of Argyll volume seven in 1992, the demise of the inventory programme has its beginnings in the 1980s. Even then, the end point of this thesis is not a fixed date. Each of the empirical chapters has a natural end point; the chapter on fieldwork ends with the Commission recognising in the 1980s that something must replace the national inventory, coming to a head with the advances made during the early Argyll volumes that drove forward the remainder of that inventory. The subsequent chapter tackles the development of rescue archaeology, following a similar path ending in the 1980s while looking forward to the Commission that was to exist from 1992 onwards. The final chapter, for which one of the main focal points is a discussion of what was to come after the inventory and the development of the *Canmore* database, finds an end point sometime around 1992 with the conclusion of the county-by-county programme and the laying of the foundations for the era of digitised information. It is unhelpful to use the conclusion of the inventory, as determined by the final publication, as a conclusive end point. Instead, 1992 was really the beginning of the next stage in the history of the Commission, one which found its foundations in the work of the Commission during the 1970s and 1980s. The fixed end point for the thesis is in showing how the county-by-county inventory programme was unsustainable and that something had to take its place. The question of what the Commission should do next first appeared during the 1980s. It is for this reason that I have chosen to use this moment as a loose end point. It is worth noting that the various archival threads of the Commission's history which inform this thesis are such that it becomes problematic to identify a single moment of conclusion.

## **1.5 FIELDWORK BEHIND THE INVENTORY**

In this section I present a synthesis of chapter six. The Commission's national inventory was the product of years of meticulous fieldwork that took place both in the field and in the offices of the Commission. Fieldwork was engrained into the inventory and the very ethos of the organisation. It was intended, after all, that the staff of the Commission would physically inspect each site in the field before recording it.

It was an epistemic practice rooted in fieldwork conducted at each site. There is, then, a geography of an inventory, but there are also particular geographies at play here. Geographies of fieldwork were played out at each of the sites that were inspected. I explore how these geographies of fieldwork are played out in the variety of sites where the Commission undertook the work of *doing* an inventory. I begin by exploring the work of the Commission during its first survey of Berwickshire in 1908. Not only was this the first inventory of the Commission, but it also established the ethos for the Commission's future work.

While chapter six broadly attends to the question of how fieldwork is defined and where it takes place, it also examines the way in which fieldwork practice developed, and how this changed the way in which the Commission produced knowledge. It is an examination of the sites of practice where the antiquarian knowledge of the Commission was produced. This chapter also explores the role of non-field based fieldwork, that is, the work that took place in the office, but which can be understood as part of the Commission's fieldwork practice. This narrative forms the basis of subsequent discussions on how we as geographers have defined fieldwork. Finally, I examine the role of technology in the production of the inventories, in particular photography. Visualisation fundamentally changed not only how the Commission produced its inventories both in the field and in preparing for fieldwork, but it also helped to further complicate the distinction between office and field. Thus, this examination of photography is both a discussion of it as a method, and of the influence it had on the site of practice.

## **1.6 RESCUING FOR THE NATION**

Here I provide a summary of chapter seven where I consider the development of rescue archaeology. The potential for the loss of monuments had always been a concern of Commission staff. It was the fear of loss, after all, that underpinned the very establishment of the Commission in 1908. But, fieldwork carried out under the county-by-county inventory was a form of implicit rescue. Sites that were in direct, and immediate danger, were not sought out: they were recorded as part of the county survey. Explicit rescue, whereby members of the Commission would actively seek monuments in immediate danger would not become a reality until 1941. This period of the Commission's history is the focus of chapter seven in looking at rescue archaeology, and rescue fieldwork more generally, undertaken by the Commission from 1941-1975. I also consider what the conduct of rescue, the adoption of the rescue paradigm meant to the Commission. This is, in a way, an extension of the previous chapter in that it is an exploration of a particular form of fieldwork, one which, while different to the inventory programme, contributed to the knowledge being produced by the Commission. The main focus of this chapter, however, is the development of rescue as a paradigm that brought in a series of significant changes to fieldwork practice, notably aerial photography. While photography certainly shifted fieldwork towards

the office, aerial photography established a series of fieldwork practices firmly within the office space. Fieldwork, as represented in the published inventories, was often the product of work carried out at a desk, rather than out of doors in situ. More broadly, the development of rescue archaeology within the Commission can be closely attributed to the work and drive of a handful of individuals and thus this chapter explores the role of individual ethos in shaping the way in which the Commission undertook its work and produced the inventories. My conceptual concern in this chapter is about the role of influential individuals in the organisation, and how the act of rescue archaeology ‘rescued’ the Commission itself.

## **1.7 CANMORE AND THE AGE OF THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE**

This section briefly considers the role of chapter eight in bringing together the arguments of the previous chapters, drawing on the role of the inventory and rescue archaeology in shaping the Commission’s archive and, in doing so, highlighting the way that the materiality of site began to change. The chapter begins with the sheer volume of material that was produced by rescue surveys. This forms the foundation for a discussion that focuses on how sites that had been surveyed became more than just a physical location and then became the archive. It is this process which facilitated a changing materiality: a physical site became an archived record with a database ID number. A simple identification number became what the site was known as. My concern here is how this changing materiality alters the nature of that site, how it is interacted with, and how, when sites are compared, difference is flattened in favour of analytical value. In short, this chapter is a commentary on the role that the inventory and rescue archaeology played in re-purposing the sites that had been physically inspected in the field – from sites of antiquarian interest to sites of national significance and analytical promise – to records in a database.

## **1.8 CONCLUSION**

On 1 October 2015 the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland ceased to exist, merging with Historic Scotland. It now forms part of a new Scottish Government body, Historic Environment Scotland. This was the deferred conclusion to an organisation which had, for 107 years dutifully carried out the task that it had been asked to complete. In the Commission’s final report, published as *An Inventory for the Nation*, it was noted that ‘by establishing and maintaining national standards in surveying, recording and curating, and providing guidance on these matters to others, [we]



hereby deliver our final report, setting out how, over the past 107 years, we have carried out your Majesty's intentions'.<sup>11</sup>

The merger with Historic Scotland and the Commission in 2015 served as the catalyst for this thesis which is part of a collaborative doctoral partnership between the Commission and the University of Edinburgh. The implications of the merger at the start of the PhD in 2013 were not yet fully known. The thesis thus sought to capitalise on what appeared to be a final opportunity to study the history of the Commission, the people who worked there and how the organisation became one of Scotland's archaeological institutions. It was an opportunity to capture the legacy of the Commission ensuring that its contribution to Scottish heritage was not lost to history. What I have claimed to achieve here is to cast light on the practices of daily life at the Commission, bringing its work to life in ways that attend not only to the development of the institution, but also tell of the individuals who helped shape what the Commission became. This collaboration has allowed for almost unrestricted access to the Commission's archive, which has allowed me to draw on material that has not been seen since it was filed away. Material has also been consulted from a number of uncatalogued sources, permitting me to construct a history of the Commission that draws on archival material that has remain untouched and untold.

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<sup>11</sup> RCAHMS, *An Inventory for the Nation*, Edinburgh, 2015.



## **2. ESTABLISHING THE FIELD AND SITES OF PRACTICE: FIELDWORK AND THE PLACE OF KNOWLEDGE**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter examines the literature relevant to the key themes of the thesis. Sites of practice and fieldwork are perhaps the most important and form the foundation for my analysis of the empirical material that appears in the following chapters. My history and geography of the Commission, therefore, is situated in sites of practice: where the Commission began its work of creating the national inventory of Scotland; the fieldwork it undertook to do this; and the locality of its work. Where – both in the field, office and laterally archive – the Commission undertook its work is central to understanding how the institution functioned. I begin by addressing the spatial turn in the historical geographies of science over the course of the last twenty-five years, with a particular attentiveness to understanding sites of practice. Reviewing the literature from Ophir and Shapin’s seminal 1991 text onwards, I consider their claims while focusing on the nature of the sites where knowledge was made and the role of site in the production of scientific knowledge. I then consider the themes that pertain most closely to the empirical chapters; sites of practice (chapter six), fieldwork (chapter seven), and the mobility of knowledge (chapter eight).

### **2.2 THE ‘SPATIAL TURN’ IN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHIES OF SCIENCE**

Historical geographers of science are by now well versed in the claim that the local is a legitimate site of scholarship. Drawing on a body of literature that finds its origins in the 1991 work of Ophir and Shapin, Simon Naylor has noted that it is now recognised that knowledge ‘is and always has been locally produced’. For Naylor, ‘place is central to the making and remaking of science’.<sup>1</sup> This seems obvious, Shapin commenting that ‘where else could science take place but in places?’<sup>2</sup> It might be taken for granted that understanding the local origins of science is central to an understanding of processes that make, re-make and mobilise scientific knowledge, particularly as science moves through space. Yet, as Ophir and Shapin noted, ‘a generation ago scientific ideas floated free in the air, as historians gazed up at them in wonder and admiration. From time to time, historians agreed, the ideas that made up the body of scientific truth became incarnate: they were embedded into the fleshy forms of human culture and

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<sup>1</sup> S. Naylor, Introduction: historical geographies of science: places, contexts, cartographies, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 38 (2005) 1-12, 6.

<sup>2</sup> S. Shapin, Placing the view from nowhere: historical and sociological problems in the location of science, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 23(1) (1998), 5-12.

attached to particular times and places'.<sup>3</sup> Science was a universal constant, unaffected by the vagaries of the local. Ophir and Shapin's argument pushed against the universalism of science and Emile Durkheim's contention that 'the truths of science are independent of any local context'.<sup>4</sup> What was to be known as the spatial turn sought to challenge the belief that scientific knowledge was produced universally and without the local exerting influence, leading Ophir and Shapin to question whether 'knowledge in general has an irremediably local dimension?'<sup>5</sup> If the social processes that facilitated the production of knowledge were inspected then it would become possible, Ophir and Shapin argued, to 'discover different patterns of scientific judgment', suggesting a process that was not universal, but laced with the traits of the local.<sup>6</sup> Knowledge is not made from nothing, nor devoid of local influence. Ophir and Shapin concluded their introduction to the spatial turn by suggesting that 'perhaps the days in which ideas floated free in the air are truly nearing an end. Perhaps, indeed, what we believed to be a heavenly place for knowledge, we will come to see as at the result of lateral movements between mundane places'.<sup>7</sup> It had been, as Jan Golinski notes, too easy to forget the 'local practices' engrained in the historical roots of knowledge.<sup>8</sup> Now it was recognised that 'local knowledge [...] could and did contribute to knowledge [...] at the national level' despite its local origins.<sup>9</sup>

The sociology of scientific knowledge (SSK) within science studies sought to shed further light on the social processes of knowledge production. 'The very achievement of SSK', notes Shapin, is its recognition of the 'possibility, legitimacy, and interest of a thoroughly sociological (and social historical) understanding of scientific knowledge'.<sup>10</sup> SSK argues that knowledge is the product of social factors, not a taken-for-granted process. Further, attentiveness to the social processes which construct knowledge has seen 'sociologists and historians [...] become intensely interested in the specific process of argumentation and political action whereby claims come to be accepted as true or rejected as false'.<sup>11</sup> Historical geographies of science that draw on SSK and recognise the significance of the local are, therefore, equally interested in the local origins of knowledge and how those origins influence subsequent reception. What SSK achieved was to 'create a legitimate space for sociology where none had previously been permitted, in the interpretation or explanation of scientific knowledge'.<sup>12</sup> Shapin argues that 'SSK set out to construct an "anti-epistemology," to break down the legitimacy of the distinction between "contexts of discovery and justification," and to develop an anti-individualistic and

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<sup>3</sup> A. Ophir, S. Shapin, The place of knowledge: a methodological survey, *Science in Context* 4 (1991), 3-21.

<sup>4</sup> Durkheim 1972 cited in Ophir and Shapin, The place of knowledge, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ophir and Shapin, The place of knowledge, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Ophir and Shapin, The place of knowledge, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Ophir and Shapin, The place of knowledge, 16.

<sup>8</sup> J. Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge: Constructivism and the History of Science*, London, 2005, 100.

<sup>9</sup> C.W.J. Withers and D. Finnegan, Natural history societies, fieldwork and local knowledge in nineteenth-century Scotland towards a historical geography of civic science, *Cultural Geographies* 10 (2003) 334-353, 342.

<sup>10</sup> S. Shapin, Here and everywhere: sociology of scientific knowledge, *Annual Review of Sociology* 21 (1995), 289-321, 291.

<sup>11</sup> Shapin, Here and everywhere, 305.

<sup>12</sup> Shapin, Here and everywhere, 297.

anti-empiricist framework for the sociology of knowledge in which “social factors” counted not as contaminants, but as constitutive of the very idea of scientific knowledge’.<sup>13</sup> Considered alongside the work of Ophir and Shapin, SSK can be seen as part of a wider movement towards understanding the sociology of scientific knowledge production. As Castree and Braun have suggested, ‘if any one position characterises science studies, it is that scientific knowledges are made in historical specific social situated practices’.<sup>14</sup> SSK’s aim was (and is) to uncover the local and spatial nature of scientific knowledge and its production.

Nine years after Ophir and Shapin’s call for an attention to the spatial concerns of scientific knowledge, Livingstone noted that ‘we have become accustomed to the idea that scientific endeavour takes place in specialized locations [...] but the place of scientific inquiry in designated spaces cannot be reduced simply to the requirements of instrument[s...] there is a history here of much wider dimensions’. ‘Spaces of science’ contended Livingstone, ‘are far from merely incidental’.<sup>15</sup> Ophir and Shapin had drawn scholarly attention to those social influences that challenged universalism when considering knowledge production; Livingstone sought to focus that attention more specifically upon the sites where knowledge was produced and what took place within those sites. The spatial turn offered the opportunity to explore in detail the various places where knowledge was made, be it the library, the laboratory or the university. We need not limit ourselves to those sites that might traditionally be associated with knowledge production, Livingstone further argues; ‘the hospital, the asylum, the body, the public house, the coffee shop, the court, the cathedral, the tent, the ship, and a myriad others’ could all be seen as ‘sites of scientific discourse’.<sup>16</sup>

Livingstone has devoted considerable attention to the sites of practice where scientific knowledge is produced. For Livingstone ‘scientific knowledge is made in a lot of different places’, leading him to ask in the introduction to *Putting Science in its Place* whether ‘the location of scientific endeavour make[s] any difference to the conduct of science? And even more important, can it affect the content of science?’ Livingstone suggests that the ‘answer to these questions is yes [...] Issues of space – location, place, site, migration, region – are at the heart of scientific endeavour’.<sup>17</sup> Recognition of the spatial turn drew focus to those particular sites. Each site influences the nature of the knowledge produced in a manner that fundamentally marks the final product as something that was born of a particular – local – place. Livingstone concludes by arguing that ‘the impact of place on science is inescapable’.<sup>18</sup> In each locale, different forces exert themselves upon the production of knowledge such that these processes

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<sup>13</sup> Shapin, *Here and everywhere*, 297.

<sup>14</sup> Castree and Braun cited in B. Greenhough, *Tales of an island-laboratory: defining the field in geography and science studies*, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 31(2) (2006), 224-237, 224.

<sup>15</sup> D. Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place; geographies of scientific knowledge*, University Press Chicago, Chicago, 2003, 286.

<sup>16</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 294.

<sup>17</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 1-5.

<sup>18</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 186.

become impossible to ignore. 'In different areas different repertoires of practical rationality have been in operation, and forms of explanation, modes of practice, methods of justification, and traditions of inquiry central to one area have been outlawed or marginalized in others. The *where* of scientific endeavour thus insinuates itself into science at all these levels'.<sup>19</sup> The spatial turn, as an intellectual claim, had, as I have shown here, focused on the contention that scientific knowledge had a spatial dimension that should be taken seriously. Livingstone firmly focused the attention of the spatial turn towards individual, and often very different, sites of practice that produced knowledge. For David Matless, the spatial turn offered the chance to pay 'attention to local circumstance and ways of thinking' that went beyond universalism, but he notes that 'the debate over the nature of the local [which] has itself shaped the processes of knowledge under scrutiny, scientific or otherwise, has been downplayed'.<sup>20</sup> It was this attention to the nature of the local and its ability to shape knowledge, and be shaped by that process, that Livingstone sought to address. It mattered not just that knowledge was produced in sites of practice, but *exactly* where and *exactly* what those sites were.

Following Livingstone's contention that the spatial turn should consider seriously the specificities of the sites where knowledge is produced, Simon Naylor drew attention to the ways in which different sites of practice might form particular forms of knowledge. Naylor also contended that 'it is not simply the case that science can be spatialized; it is also that science itself creates spaces and places for its own activities and in turn spatializes the world in a wide variety of ways'.<sup>21</sup> This argument follows a recognition that scientific knowledge production and its relationship with space flowed in both directions: knowledge production shaped, and is shaped, by its local origins. Naylor has it that 'place is central to the making and remaking of science'.<sup>22</sup> Diarmid Finnegan later commented that science itself can 'significantly reconfigure the particular places in which those [scientific] activities occur'.<sup>23</sup> Attention to the specificities of the individual sites where knowledge is made reveals the influences upon its production. For Naylor 'space is much more than just a container for scientific endeavour; rather [...] geography has been central to the shaping of scientific cultures in a wide variety of ways' which if examined may produce 'nuanced accounts of science's history'.<sup>24</sup> Scientific knowledge is 'embedded in wider networks of social relations and political powers, and shaped by the local

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<sup>19</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 180-181.

<sup>20</sup> D. Matless, Original theories: science and the currency of the local, *cultural geographies* 10(3) (2003) 354-378, 362.

<sup>21</sup> Naylor, Historical geographies of science, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Naylor, Historical geographies of science, 6.

<sup>23</sup> D. Finnegan, Placing Science in an Age of Oratory: Spaces of Scientific Speech in Mid-Victorian Edinburgh. In D. Livingstone, C.W.J. Withers, (eds) *Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Science*, Chicago, 2011, 153-177, 154.

<sup>24</sup> Naylor, Historical Geographies of Science, 12.

environment in which its practitioners [are at work]'.<sup>25</sup> It is a process of constant production as space shapes scientific knowledge, and scientific knowledge shapes space.

Following the emergence of scholarly endeavour in the wake of Ophir and Shapin's seminal paper, Richard Powell in 2007 provided an overview of the scholarly field that sought to engage with the specific localisms of science considered here. Powell noted that engagement with the spatial turn and the recognition of the spatial specificities of knowledge production has led to the 'relationship between the history of science and the history of geography [becoming a] locus of various theoretical debates' since 1991.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, for Powell 'Livingstone's pleas for conversation between historians of science and historians of geography are beginning to be met'.<sup>27</sup> Despite such progress, Powell argued that 'localism remains under theorized', and that how knowledge moves and tells of its achievements required further investigation.<sup>28</sup> Further engagement with the spatial turn was to come, but Powell predicted 'that the prospectus for geographers of science is bright indeed'.<sup>29</sup> What began as an intellectual claim pushing against the universalism of science gained traction as a legitimate school of thought – one that sought to address the specific spatialities of knowledge production. As Livingstone commented, 'the growth of scientific knowledge has been intimately bound up with geographical movement' and ignoring the role of movement in the production of knowledge would only lead to failing to understand the intricacy of knowledge production.<sup>30</sup>

The growing body of literature that concerned itself with the spatial turn led Finnegan to comment that there had been an 'infusion of spatial vocabulary into historical accounts of science'.<sup>31</sup> Science was recognised now, as a 'local accomplishment [and] precisely where scientific activities took place' has become 'an important subject for historical enquiry'.<sup>32</sup> Ophir and Shapin's call for attention in this area had been answered. Finnegan notes that such enquires began to take seriously the 'regional identity' of science and to consider 'that the regionality of science can be approached in a way that analyses rather than assumes the boundaries and character of different regional spaces'.<sup>33</sup> Naylor's 2010 work *Regionalizing Science* embodied a regional approach to the study of historical geographies of science and knowledge production. Naylor examines the relationship between local and global through an exploration of the region as an intermediary in the process of knowledge production. This examination heeds Finnegan's warning that 'concentrating on the movement between the local and the global may

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<sup>25</sup> D. Livingstone, Reading the heavens, planting the earth: cultures of British science, *History Workshop Journal* 54 (2002), 234-241.

<sup>26</sup> R.C. Powell, Geographies of science: histories, localities, practices, futures, *Progress in Human Geography* 31(3) (2007) 309-329, 311.

<sup>27</sup> Powell, Geographies of science, 322.

<sup>28</sup> Powell, Geographies of science, 312.

<sup>29</sup> Powell, Geographies of science, 323.

<sup>30</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 177.

<sup>31</sup> D. Finnegan, The spatial turn: geographical approaches in the history of science, *Journal of the History of Biology* 41 (2008), 369-388, 369.

<sup>32</sup> Finnegan, The spatial turn, 370.

<sup>33</sup> Finnegan, The spatial turn, 372.

miss the ways in which science becomes entangled with national concerns or regional identities'.<sup>34</sup> Finnegan notes that a 'scaling up from a local or regional account of science to the transitional and global need not entail a move away from the local or the regional' but rather it can be seen as a 'dynamic conglomeration of practices, materials, and people differently assembled in different places and relying on the translation and transformation' of knowledge across a variety of scales.<sup>35</sup> This concern with the 'spatiality of scientific knowledge' across scales – be it local, regional or global – ensures for Finnegan 'that geographical motifs will continue to guide and inspire new work on the historical sociology of science'.<sup>36</sup> Finnegan's claim echoed that of Livingstone, writing in 2003, that 'if we are to make sense of those practices called "science" [...] then we will have to take with much greater seriousness the regional geographies of scientific endeavours'.<sup>37</sup> The region offered a different scale through which to explore the production of scientific knowledge.

I have shown here that, as Withers has it, 'local setting *did* matter' in understanding the process of knowledge production.<sup>38</sup> Understanding the 'matter of the *place* in which science is made', was a means to understand what Thomas Gieryn calls the "truth spot" in knowledge production.<sup>39</sup> Withers goes on to clarify the claim of the spatial turn noting that 'the recognition that science is produced in place is hardly novel or metaphysically challenging: things have to be *somewhere*'.<sup>40</sup> What is of importance is that we understand the production of knowledge as occurring '*through place*' rather than simply '*in place*'.<sup>41</sup> This recognises Ophir and Shapin's original call to challenge the universalism of science whilst drawing our attention to regional study (as Finnegan and Naylor do), and to the complex relations that appear throughout place that contributes to knowledge (Livingstone's *Putting Science in its Place*). Withers, in reviewing the field and those works that follow the claims of the spatial turn, notes that 'understanding science's claims to knowledge is thus a matter of understanding its mobility, of travel between places not just epistemic practice in place'.<sup>42</sup> It is 'only in local context [that one can] see how far the nature of science [is] consequential upon the social relations at work'.<sup>43</sup> Science was, as Finnegan suggests, 'no less than any other subject [...] knotted together with local conditions, politics and protocols'.<sup>44</sup>

For Withers and Livingstone, writing in 2011, 'where things happen is crucial to knowing how and why they happen', with all forms of knowledge bearing 'the stamp of the environments within which

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<sup>34</sup> Finnegan, *The spatial turn*, 384.

<sup>35</sup> Finnegan, *The spatial turn*, 384-385.

<sup>36</sup> Finnegan, *The spatial turn*, 385.

<sup>37</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 134.

<sup>38</sup> C. W. J. Withers, Place and the "spatial turn" in geography and history, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70(4) (2009) 637-658, 651.

<sup>39</sup> Tomas Gieryn (emphasis added) cited in Withers, Place and the "spatial turn" in geography and history, 652.

<sup>40</sup> Withers, Place and the "spatial turn" in geography and history, 653.

<sup>41</sup> Withers, Place and the "spatial turn" in geography and history, 653.

<sup>42</sup> Withers, Place and the "spatial turn" in geography and history, 653.

<sup>43</sup> Withers Place and the "spatial turn" in geography and history.

<sup>44</sup> Finnegan, *Placing Science in an Age of Oratory*, 153.



they are constructed'.<sup>45</sup> Ophir and Shapin's claim that became the spatial turn had been vindicated and had fostered considerable scholarly endeavour in exploring, as Withers and Livingstone have it, 'why was science promoted *there* and not somewhere else? Why should science there have taken *that* form? How does science travel – within and between communities of practitioners for example, or from "expert" to "lay" audiences? How is science communicated over distance?'<sup>46</sup> But there was also a need to consider who those practitioners were: 'coming to terms with science's *somewhere* is as vital as surveying and explaining its *sometime* and *somebodies*.'<sup>47</sup> Moreover the individual sites where knowledge production was practiced were, as Withers and Livingstone note, not easily defined, "'the laboratory,'" or "the field" do not reduce to simple definition'.<sup>48</sup> It is this concern that I examine in the follow discussions; how do we define the field?; how do we define sites of practice?; how does region influence the production of knowledge?

Knowledge in whatever form it takes, be it antiquarian or scientific, does not simply appear fully-fledged, nor immaculately conceived. It is a process that as Shapin noted, is deeply historic and rooted in previous forms of knowledge, space and spaces.<sup>49</sup> Shapin notes not only that knowledge 'belong[s] to place', but that it also bears the marks of where it was produced and where it has travelled through.<sup>50</sup> Even if science appears to be placeless, it can always be traced back to particular places and spaces. That is, knowledge can always be traced back to the environment that made it. Knowledge is always built from something or from somewhere.

The literature outlined here forms one conceptual framework for my examination of the work of the Commission. It is also helpful to turn to a detailed examination of the key thematic areas that map onto the empirical chapters. I first examine scholarly efforts to explore sites of practice, before considering the role of fieldwork and finally discuss the role of the region and the mobility of knowledge in supporting my analysis of the work of the Commission.

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<sup>45</sup> D. Livingstone and C.W.J. Withers, Thinking Geographically about Nineteenth-Century Science, in: C.W.J. Withers, D. Livingstone (eds), *Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Science*, London, 2011, 1-19, 1.

<sup>46</sup> Withers and Livingstone, Thinking Geographically about Nineteenth-Century Science, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Withers and Livingstone, Thinking Geographically about Nineteenth-Century Science, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Withers and Livingstone, Thinking Geographically about Nineteenth-Century Science, 3.

<sup>49</sup> S. Shapin, *Never Pure: Historical Studies of Science*, Baltimore, 2010, 5.

<sup>50</sup> Shapin, *Never Pure*, 5.

### 2.3 THE FIELD AS SITE OF STUDY

The field is a place of learning where a domain of disciplinary knowledge is acquired through situated epistemic practice in place; the discipline or field is made through *fieldwork*. Antiquarians and archaeologists thus learned their own discipline through fieldwork in place. The field was not only a site of knowledge production, but also a place for improvised experimentation.

The Commission had been tasked with creating the national inventory of Scotland, but it was only in the field that it could develop, test and hone the techniques that would permit its creation. The field is not an isolated area of study; a site of knowledge production where the local is granted epistemic admission. It is during fieldwork that local cultures and local ideas are allowed to shape theories of the past. We might think of the field as a place where knowledge is ‘constituted through a range of embodied practices’ including ‘practices of travelling, dwelling, seeing, collection, recording, and narrating’.<sup>51</sup> The field, Driver argues, is ‘produced *in situ* through [...] embodied spatial practices’. Like Driver, Livingstone notes, ‘that science is a cultural *practice*, then, is exemplified with particular clarity in the field. For here hands-on experience, routine improvisation, and performative rationality are highly valued. The calibre of the science produced is a direct reflection of the quality of practical reasoning and proficiency at manipulation. This reminds us that rationality is not independent of the customs and practices that constitute a tradition of inquiry. To the contrary, it is embedded in them’.<sup>52</sup> The field is always being constructed and then reconstructed, produced and reproduced through ‘both physical movement across a landscape and other sorts of cultural work in a variety of sites’.<sup>53</sup>

For knowledge to be worked with, it has to travel beyond the contexts of its discovery. Within the context of the Commission, the transmission of techniques for field survey between staff members, amateur experts, and other antiquarians played a crucial role in shaping the forms of knowledge that appeared in the final published inventories. In particular, the movement of tacit skills – those forms of knowledge learned or acquired through experience – from amateur expert to fieldworker is of interest in this thesis. Golinski has noted that whilst skills that are ‘directly tied’ to instrumentation are more clearly rooted in a ‘specific locality’, tacit skills are less easily placed and present a challenge when trying to trace their source. For Livingstone, it is important that we attend to those ‘new technologies and their accompanying mechanical skills’ which moved from site to site.<sup>54</sup> In particular, I would draw attention to those fieldwork techniques which could be written down and compiled into a field manual as ‘detachable’ from a locality and transferable across multiple sites of practice.<sup>55</sup> Even skills or

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<sup>51</sup> F. Driver, Editorial: field-work in geography, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 25(3) (2000) 267-268, 267.

<sup>52</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 45.

<sup>53</sup> Driver, Editorial: field-work in geography, 267.

<sup>54</sup> J. Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 76. Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 139.

<sup>55</sup> Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 76.

techniques not tied to specific sites are still grounded in ‘the local’. These techniques still bear the hallmarks of knowledge formed at a particular site. These may not be tangible, their specificity masked by an ability to be easily transferred, but these were techniques that were, as Golinski argues, ‘learned in connection with particular exemplars of practice [...] presumably in differently configured practical settings’.<sup>56</sup> Staff members’ personal journals, diaries and field notebooks, for example, constitute these embodied practices of fieldwork that also contained guidance on how an individual might *do* fieldwork (see chapter six). They were both documents of record, and fieldwork manuals.

Fieldworkers did not simply arrive in the field, carry out their fieldwork and then return to Edinburgh. Instead, they spent months travelling, dwelling, seeing and collecting, all while recording the ancient monuments in the county. Their endeavours would then be narrated in whatever form they had to hand, so providing an account of the day’s fieldwork. The field notebook served, as Bourguet has noted, to ‘help the fieldwork avoid the twin dangers of an unruly observation in the field and an unreliable memory’ while also helping ‘the [fieldworker] to gather as precise and accurate information as he could’.<sup>57</sup> The field notebook served as more than just a place where notes could be taken. For Bourguet, the field notebook ‘functioned as a mobile and portable field, a space of knowledge standing for the real terrain he [sic] had visited, and to be investigated anew’.<sup>58</sup> A journal, for example, and the entries contained within, constituted a place of production, where accounts of the field were reproduced from rudimentary notes. Each of the staff members’ journal, notebook or sketchbook entries was a reflection of the fieldwork undertaken that day, of the places and spaces occupied and scrutinized. Recording became an account of those embodied practices that occurred during each fieldwork season.<sup>59</sup> As Richard Powell has argued for polar scientists, we might also claim for many antiquarians, practice in the field was ‘as an epistemic approach to understanding’ the past and ‘became an important part of individual identity’.<sup>60</sup> Through work in the field, an individual’s understanding of the past and what it meant to be an antiquarian or Secretary of the Commission was explored and defined. An attentiveness to fieldwork permits the examination of embodied practices that permit the production of knowledge. For the Commission, fieldwork was the origin for knowledge that would appear in the inventory. It was also through fieldwork that the Commission’s staff learned of the fields of knowledge to which they were contributing. Exploration of the field as a site of study allows me to understand the ways in which

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<sup>56</sup> Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 77.

<sup>57</sup> M. Bourguet, A portable world: the notebooks of European travellers (Eighteenth to Nineteenth Centuries), *Intellectual History Review* 20(3) (2010) 377-400, 381-2.

<sup>58</sup> Bourguet, A portable world, 383.

<sup>59</sup> These methods of recording will be returned to later in a more detailed discussion of the memory practices that were employed by the Commission’s staff.

<sup>60</sup> R. Powell, Becoming a geographical scientist: oral histories of Arctic fieldwork, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33(4) (2008) 548-565, 560.

the Commission learnt of the field of antiquarianism through fieldwork in a similar manner to Simon Naylor's examination of Victorian antiquarianism in Cornwall.<sup>61</sup>

The importance of the field as a site of knowledge production has seen renewed inquiry from geographers in the wake of Felix Driver's 2000 paper where it was noted that it was 'strange' that 'geography [had] barely touched on the significance of' fieldwork in the 'making of geographical knowledge'. Perhaps, as Driver has it, 'it is time [geographers] did so. Dewsbury and Naylor similarly noted that 'research on the field as one of the pre-eminent sites of academic investigation is curiously limited'.<sup>62</sup> Their contention here is supported by the claim that 'the field as a site to be studied remains a rather undefined space' and the very process of defining the field is laced with 'pragmatic, political, technological and material' concerns.<sup>63</sup> As such, how the field is defined and what occurs within those boundaries has become of particular interest.

The field is a place where knowledge is produced, yet is often taken for granted. It exists with little attention paid to how it was formed, and what that formation might mean for the knowledge produced therein. Withers and Finnegan note that the field 'is constituted as the field by the activities of the scientific investigator'.<sup>64</sup> It is constructed and planned by those that undertake fieldwork. With this in mind, we can conceive of the field not as something 'given', but rather, as something produced. Cultures of field and of fieldwork may be thought of, as does Phillip Crang, as places where the field is taken as 'an imagined place' and where we might explore 'the relations between the intimacies of the field and its centrality to claims for public authority'. Moreover, 'the overlayings of techniques, methodologies [...] and regionalized and otherwise spatialized identities' may also make themselves known through a study of the field and fieldwork.<sup>65</sup> A consideration of the field is, therefore, laced with many of the concerns that underwrite the claims of the spatial turn: that attention must be paid to the spatial specificities that facilitate the production of knowledge.

Driver's call for more considered scholarship examining, engaging and defining both the field and fieldwork has, despite the challenge of defining the object of study, led to a resurgence of interest in the sites of fieldwork.<sup>66</sup> Fraser MacDonald has noted that, following Driver's call, recent research 'has

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<sup>61</sup> S. Naylor, Collecting quoits: field cultures in the history of Cornish antiquarianism, *Cultural Geographies* 10 (2003) 309-333.

<sup>62</sup> J.D. Dewsbury, S. Naylor, Practising geographical knowledge: fields, bodies and dissemination, *Area* 34(3) (2002), 253-260, 255.

<sup>63</sup> Dewsbury, Naylor, Practising geographical knowledge, 255.

<sup>64</sup> C. W. J. Withers and D. Finnegan, Natural history societies, fieldwork and local knowledge in nineteenth-century Scotland: towards a historical geography of civic science, *Cultural Geographies* 10 (2003), 334-353, 335.

<sup>65</sup> P. Crang, Introduction: field Cultures, *Cultural Geographies* 10 (2003) 251-252, 252.

<sup>66</sup> Driver, Editorial: field-work in geography, 268. See also S. Cant, British speleologies; H. Lorimer, The geographic field course as active archive, *Cultural Geographies* 10(3) (2003) 278-308; H. Lorimer & Nick Spedding, Locating field science: a geographical family expedition to Glen Roy, Scotland, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 38(1) (2005) 13-33; F. MacDonald, Doomsday fieldwork, or, how to rescue Gaelic culture? The salvage paradigm in geography, archaeology, and folklore, 1955-1962, *Environment and Planning*

helped reclaim the field as a worthy object of scholarship' that should no longer be dismissed as a site of chaotic endeavour in favour of the 'ordered world of the laboratory'.<sup>67</sup>

The very importance of the field and fieldwork in producing knowledge has not always been recognised when compared to the trusted site of the laboratory. For Livingstone, 'the idea that the world should be its own laboratory, and that the best way to study some part of nature is to go there and experience it first-hand, is anything but the obvious claim it appears to be'. The field is not the controlled site that the laboratory is; variability and uncertainty are prominent features of fieldwork. 'The observations of the fieldworker [can be] "broken and fleeting"', notes Livingstone, where by contrast the 'bench-tied student of nature [has] the time to spread out samples, to collate and analyze them, and thereby come to reliable conclusions'.<sup>68</sup> Reliability was a product of the controlled nature of the laboratory, office or the desk when compared to the unruly field; 'the armchair naturalist could easily triumph over the fragmentary and precarious claims of the fieldwork'. Livingstone is quick to note, however, that lack of detachment from the field emboldens fieldworkers' claims of authenticity. 'It was *presence*, not absence, *closeness*, not distance', argues Livingstone, 'that underwrote [fieldworkers] claims to authenticity'.<sup>69</sup> Residential presence in the field could triumph over informed theory from the armchair. Conducting fieldwork, however, presents particular challenges to the investigator, as Livingstone notes:

The investigator here [in the field] is likely to be the visitor rather than the resident – precisely the converse of the laboratory world. The settled inhabitants of the field site are not scientific experts engaged in research. And there are likely to be other transient sojourners such as tourists, campers, foragers, artists, and hunters, to name but a few. The variegated nature of the field's dynamic human geography makes for an unstable network of social relations. The field thus discloses precisely the kind of sociology that the laboratory seeks to escape, with its formal and informal disciplines geared to maintain stability.<sup>70</sup>

It is worth noting however that the field may not be devoid, as Livingstone has it, of other 'scientific experts'.<sup>71</sup> Dewi Jones and Jeremy Vetter have drawn our attention to those in-the-field experts who may not be recognised scholars, professionals or otherwise accredited, but who hold a specialist knowledge, or authority, over the field site.<sup>72</sup> The role of 'expert' in the field is considered in chapter

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D: *Society and Space* 29 (2011) 309-335; S. Naylor, The field, the museum and the lecture hall: the spaces of natural history in Victorian Cornwall, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 27(4) (2002), 494-513.

<sup>67</sup> MacDonald, Domesday fieldwork, or, how to rescue Gaelic culture?, 312.

<sup>68</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 40.

<sup>69</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 41.

<sup>70</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 42.

<sup>71</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 42.

<sup>72</sup> D. Jones, "Nature-formed botanists": notes of some nineteenth century botanical guides of Snowdonia, *Archives of Natural History* 29(1) (2002) 31-50 and J. Vetter, Introduction: Lay Participation in the History of Scientific Observation, *Science in Context* 24(2) (2011) 127-141.

<sup>72</sup> C. W. J. Withers, Mapping, trusting: making geographical knowledge in the late seventeenth century, *Isis* 90(3) (1999), 497-521, 507.

six, but it is worth highlighting here how the notion of expert and of expertise further unsettles the process of knowledge production in the field. For Livingstone, ‘absence from home and presence in the field, as the necessary precondition of bona fide knowledge, was the outcome of historical negotiations that gave the field sciences their distinctive place in the scientific division of labour [...] fieldwork literally grounded the claims of the scientist’.<sup>73</sup>

What are these means of establishing trust or authority in fieldwork, particularly when a new claim is made? Trust is assured, according to Livingstone, if those observing the production of knowledge in the local are ‘properly trained eyewitnesses’.<sup>74</sup> Witnessing then becomes a crucial question, as Livingstone queries; ‘how is it that we acquire knowledge of distant peoples, places, and processes when the eyes and minds and bodies of others – not ours – are necessarily involved in firsthand witnessing?’<sup>75</sup> Shapin has it that witnessing is ‘the most powerful technology for constituting matters of fact’.<sup>76</sup> It is a process that can validate or undermine the claims of fieldwork.

Witnessing is less of a problem in the restricted site of the laboratory where those able to access this place of knowledge production are assumed to be trustworthy. The laboratory is ‘restricted to qualified people’ and so the knowledge must have been made by someone of authority who can be trusted.<sup>77</sup> ‘The social qualities’ of those known to occupy these spaces, were as Kohler has it, an assurance of credibility. This, of course, is an assumption, particularly once in the field. In cases where this is not guaranteed, the need for Livingstone’s eyewitnesses becomes apparent, allowing for reassurance reliant upon standardisation and repetition, and the expertise of the witness. The eyewitness confirms these motions of repetition, permitting the knowledge produced a degree of authority, and assurance that the processes of production were sound. However, the eye witness may not need to be present. This is what Shapin has labelled ‘virtual witnessing’, the process of replicating the production of knowledge over and over.<sup>78</sup> It was ‘through virtual witnessing [that] the multiplication of witnesses could be in principle unlimited.’ As Shapin concludes, it was ‘the most powerful technology for constituting matters of fact’. Further, it was a method that ensured that trust could be held in the knowledge produced and that things had been done, and done the way that it had been claimed.<sup>79</sup> Replication and repetition was, and still is, vital to the movement of knowledge and confirming its trustworthiness.

As Driver has it ‘every geographer teacher knows [...] fieldwork planning involves significant investments of time and resources on the part of both staff and students’, yet geographers ‘barely touch on the significance of these investments’ in the production of knowledge.<sup>80</sup> I explore in detail the role

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<sup>73</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 48.

<sup>74</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 148

<sup>75</sup> Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place*, 140

<sup>76</sup> Shapin, *Never Pure*, 97

<sup>77</sup> R. Kohler, *Landscapes and Labscapes: Exploring the Lab-Field Border in Biology*, Chicago, 2.

<sup>78</sup> Shapin, *Never Pure*, 97

<sup>79</sup> Shapin, *Never Pure*, 97-98

<sup>80</sup> Driver, Editorial: field-work in geography, 268.

of preparation in advance of fieldwork in chapter six, examining the boundary between what we might call ‘office-based’ and ‘in-the-field’ fieldwork. It is here, in particular, that this thesis makes a key contribution to the existing literature on fieldwork which focuses on the sites of fieldwork and what I will call office work (but can be seen as desk or laboratory work) as often disparate sites. Instead, I argue for a more nuanced understanding of fieldwork that recognises its ubiquity. That is, work that may be described as ‘fieldwork’ might take place in both the office, the field, and between these two spaces.

In part, this ubiquity exists because of the difficulties I have already alluded to of simply defining the field and the site of fieldwork. Beth Greenhough has observed that ‘fields are paradoxical spaces neither fully defined by (as in cartography) nor definitive of (through the practice of field research) geographical knowledge’.<sup>81</sup> The field becomes a site of negotiation, renegotiation, and circulation of ideas.<sup>82</sup> Greenhough argues it is possible to use the field as a ‘key site for re-thinking the scientific (or otherwise) practices of [...] the geographical (or otherwise) practice of science studies’.<sup>83</sup> It becomes possible, therefore, as Greenhough alludes to, that disciplines may lose their identity in the field as practice blurs between multiple forms of knowledge. We might question at this point what happens to the identity of the fieldworker if the discipline that they adhere to is threatened by the multitude of actors and effects of the field. Furthermore, although the fieldwork might create artificial boundaries around sites of practice, the field is always open, and allows unknowns to pass through it. Nothing can be controlled with any certainty in the field. Greenhough notes that the field ‘is also the site where those objectives [of the field study] are brought into question by encounters with the subjects and spaces of research’.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, it may even lead the fieldworker to question the boundaries they have created, and whether knowledge production should take place in those spaces. These boundaries, whether real (the walls of a laboratory) or artificial (lines drawn on the map) play a significant role in defining the spaces in which we study science and the ways in which we do so.<sup>85</sup>

The county inventories of the Commission seem at first to provide a simple means of defining the field. County boundaries neatly organised ‘the field’ by scale, creating a boundary around fieldwork practices. The field is a consequence of the practices that sustain it.<sup>86</sup> This process of constructing the field began in the office, where staff members mapped out the field of study and the areas selected for fieldwork before they set foot outdoors. With the field constantly negotiated, and the boundaries marked out on a map, the fieldworker was ready to begin the process of work in the field whereby they found out all they could about the new site of production they were to visit. Only once this process was completed

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<sup>81</sup> Greenhough, *Tales of an island-laboratory*, 224.

<sup>82</sup> B. Latour, *Pandora’s Hope, Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Cambridge, 1999

<sup>83</sup> Greenhough, *Tales of an island-laboratory*, 224.

<sup>84</sup> Greenhough, *Tales of an island-laboratory*, 234.

<sup>85</sup> Greenhough, *Tales of an island-laboratory*, 234.

<sup>86</sup> Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 27. Kohler, *Landscapes and Labscapes*, 10; J. Law, *After Method, mess in social science research*, Routledge, London, 2004, 19; Greenhough, *Tales of an island-laboratory*, 225.

would the Commission's staff enter the field – the site of production – where their preconceptions of these spaces would begin to change how they interacted with it. In what follows – see chapter six and eight – I want to show how this process not only resulted in the creation of knowledge, but also changed how that field site was interacted with in future, and so presented the results as a new 'manual' for future researchers and fieldworkers.

## 2.4 SITES OF PRACTICE: WHERE KNOWLEDGE WAS MADE

In this section I attend more specifically to sites of practice and consider how individual sites of knowledge production shape (and are shaped) by the processes by which knowledge is made. We might think here, as Livingstone does, of laboratories, but we may also consider other spaces where knowledge is made, the library or the public house for example. Each site of knowledge production is 'embedded in wider systems of meaning, authority, and identity' ensuring that attention to the situatedness of science and the individual site of practice is necessary to understand the processes that construct knowledge.<sup>87</sup> Science has to 'simultaneously [conform] to local expectations and customs,' but also reconfigure itself 'according to agendas forged elsewhere'.<sup>88</sup> It is within the sites of practice where knowledge reconfigures itself according to these agendas, part of a process whereby the knowledge made shapes and is shaped by the space in which it is produced. Science and scientific knowledge is in a constant state of flux, ever changing and adapting to the spaces and places in which it is made, discussed and reproduced.

The sites that we take to be places of knowledge production do not have to conform to those usually associated with knowledge making, for example the laboratory and the office. Acknowledging those sites that we might not ordinarily associate with scientific knowledge production yet furthers the contention that sites of knowledge making do not follow universal constants. While Livingstone and Shapin have paid attention to the role of the laboratory as site, it is also possible to consider, as does Anne Secord the role of vernacular sites. Secord draws our attention to the role of the pub in her 1994 examination of botanists who made use of local pubs as sites to discuss their work. The pub, a site that ostensibly shares little with the laboratory, was, as Secord has it, a legitimate site of knowledge production.<sup>89</sup> For Secord scientific practice was 'associated with specific sites from which "the people" were excluded'. Defined sites of scientific practice, the laboratory for example, ensured that 'popular science was marginalized' as it became possible to limit who accessed a particular site of knowledge

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<sup>87</sup> C.W.J. Withers, D. Livingstone, *Thinking Geographically about Nineteenth-Century Science*, 5. See also, Finnegan, *Placing Science in an Age of Oratory: Spaces of Scientific Speech in Mid-Victorian Edinburgh*, 155.

<sup>89</sup> A. Secord, Science in the pub: artisan botanists in early nineteenth-century Lancashire, *History of Science* 32(3) (1994) 269-315.



production.<sup>90</sup> At play, as Naylor notes, was a ‘clear social geography’ that dictated how science was done.<sup>91</sup> I have already noted how, as Naylor puts it, ‘where science is done affects the reliability, veracity and very shape of the knowledge produced’: Secord’s analysis of the pub as a site of knowledge production contends that despite knowledge being produced in the pub it was no less reliable than other forms of knowledge.<sup>92</sup>

Making use of the pub as a meeting place influenced how the knowledge produced was received. What such work achieved was less to promote scientific endeavour, broadly defined, but rather to unite individuals with shared common interest in a manner that did not exclude them from actively taking part in the processes of knowledge production. The ability to access a shared site of knowledge discussion, in whatever format that may take, was of significant aid to those inquisitive individuals who found themselves outside of the traditional scientific social hierarchy as Naylor comments:

Unless someone with intellectual leanings was lucky enough to be born into a large city like London, Edinburgh or Birmingham, the university towns of Oxford and Cambridge, or somewhere fashionable like Bath, they were likely doomed to spend much of their scholarly life in isolation from their peers with no access to a library or museum – unless of course they possessed the wealth to build their own or the connections to make use of those who did.<sup>93</sup>

Finnegan echoes Secord’s sentiment, acknowledging that local scientific and scholarly societies contributed, as did the pub as a place of discussion, to the establishment of ‘credibility in both scientific and civic terms’ whilst also permitting those, who as Naylor has it, had ‘intellectual leanings’, the opportunity to discuss their work. These were the sites of practices where local knowledge was made. As Finnegan has it, ‘those setting the agenda for the societies attempted to speak to the interests of a larger scientific public and the imagined concerns of a more local audience. Forming a local collection, it was argued, had moral and scientific currency both for the “scientific visitor” and for the inquisitive townspeople’.<sup>94</sup> Here the local sites of practice served to reorder the social hierarchies that contributed to knowledge production whilst allowing those who might not have access to restricted sites of knowledge making (laboratories or universities) the opportunity to do so.

Naylor has also considered the role of civic societies in the production of local knowledge noting that The Penzance Natural History and Antiquarian Society ‘turned Cornishmen and women into natural historians and Cornwall into a site of civic pride and a scientifically delimited space’.<sup>95</sup> Naylor argues

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<sup>90</sup> Secord, *Science in the pub*, 297.

<sup>91</sup> Naylor, *Historical geographies of science*.

<sup>92</sup> Naylor, *The field, the museum and the lecture hall*, 494.

<sup>93</sup> S. Naylor, *Regionalizing Science: Placing Knowledges in Victorian England*, Pickering & Chatto, London, 2010, 14.

<sup>94</sup> D. Finnegan, *Natural history societies in late-Victorian Scotland and the pursuit of local civic science*, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 38(1) (2005) 53-72, 71.

<sup>95</sup> Naylor, *The field, the museum and the lecture hall*, 509.

that through attentiveness to such local societies it is possible to understand how they contributed to the shaping of a civic, or national identity while also exploring the ways in which local science was made and attained credibility and authority. As Naylor has it, ‘through such an approach [...] we can gain better understandings of the formation of local knowledges as they operated within networks of wider-ranging intellectual cultures’.<sup>96</sup>

The role of societies, however, went beyond simply providing a place where science could be discussed and knowledge produced. They also served to make credible the knowledge that had been made in the field. These sites of practice were also places of authority and credibility. Once produced in the field, knowledge was debated between members of a society, or between interested individuals in the pub. It was through discussion and debate that knowledge was accrued and deemed credible. Societies, as Naylor and Finnegan examine, as well as pubs, as Secord explores, served the same epistemic function: to validate the findings of work carried out in the field. Sites of practice were also sites of knowledge making. Such sites served, as Withers and Finnegan argue, ‘as a means of making the social world scientific and the scientific world social’.<sup>97</sup> For Shapin, examining the role of the house as a site of scientific knowledge making, ‘the showing of experimental phenomena in public spaces to a relevant public of gentlemen witnesses was an obligatory move in that setting for the construction of reliable knowledge. What underwrote assent to knowledge claims was the word of a gentleman, the conventions regulating access to a gentleman's house, and the social relations within it’.<sup>98</sup> It is worth noting that here, as argued by Naylor, there is a social hierarchy at play which influenced the reception of knowledge even if vernacular sites like the pub were also sites of knowledge production. Shapin has it that:

The separation between the laboratory and the house means that a new privacy surrounds the making of knowledge whose status as open and public is often insisted upon. The implications of this disjunction are both obvious and enormously consequential. Public assent to scientific claims is no longer based upon public familiarity with the phenomena or upon public acquaintance with those who make the claims. We now believe scientists not because we know them, and not because of our direct experience of their work. Instead, we believe them because of their visible display of the emblems of recognized expertise and because their claims are vouched for by other experts we do not know. Practices used in the wider society to assess the creditworthiness of individuals are no longer adequate to assess the credibility of scientific claims. We can, it is true, make the occasional trip to places where scientific knowledge is made. However, when we do so, we come as visitors, as guests in a house where nobody lives.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Naylor, *The field, the museum and the lecture hall*, 509.

<sup>97</sup> C.W.J. Withers and D. Finnegan, *Natural history societies, fieldwork and local knowledge in nineteenth-century Scotland towards a historical geography of civic science*, *Cultural Geographies* 10 (2003) 334-353, 335.

<sup>98</sup> S. Shapin, *House of experiment in seventeenth-century England*, *Isis* 77 (1988) 373-404, 404.

<sup>99</sup> S. Shapin, *House of experiment in seventeenth-century England*, 404.

For Withers and Finnegan, ‘local knowledge of particular fields could and did contribute to knowledge of natural science at the national level’.<sup>100</sup> Local societies, meetings in pubs, discussions in private homes or chance meetings all served to facilitate the movement of knowledge from the local to the national. Wherever knowledge was produced, the pub, the society, the home or the laboratory, there were processes at work that instilled credibility, ensuring that knowledge produced was also the product of local endeavour rooted in local sites of practice.

I have discussed sites of practice thus far within the context of scholarly societies or as a generalised space where there was an exchange of knowledge taking place. Such spaces served, as I have detailed here, to provide an opportunity for the creation, transmission and exchange of knowledge. They were what Latour labels ‘centres of calculation’, that is sites where knowledge is accumulated through circulatory methods and constructed and then disseminated as credible knowledge.<sup>101</sup> Within the context of this thesis such sites served as knowledge bases for the Commission and its staff, sources of reliable antiquarian theory that could aid in the Commission’s fieldwork. Such spaces, like the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, offered the staff of the Commission the opportunity to engage in debate and disseminate the antiquarian knowledge created by the national inventory. In what follows, however, I would like to shift my attention to a particular space of knowledge production and the practices that took place within that site, namely the office. While this will be explored in detail in chapters six, eight and to a lesser extent seven, I look to provide a brief overview of the relevant literature in what follows.

In examining the relationship between the two sites of practice central to this thesis (office and field), I pay particular attention to Latour’s ‘circulating reference’ and to how the movement of knowledge occurred between sites and how this influenced the final accepted form the knowledge took. Through a series of successive stages, knowledge circulates between varying spaces and sites of practice. Along this journey, there are what Latour labels a series of circulating references that help to construct forms of knowledge. As Latour has it ‘the sciences do not speak of the world but, rather, construct representations that seem always to push it away, but also bring it closer’.<sup>102</sup> Preparing for fieldwork by mapping out the field site becomes a way of keeping track, a way in which that fieldwork can ‘oversee... [their] small world’.<sup>103</sup> I have already discussed how the field and laboratory are two distinct places of practice (although for the purpose of this thesis I consider both as sites of fieldwork), but for Latour, the laboratory is ‘always a preconstructed universe’ one which looks to replicate the field “out there”.<sup>104</sup> There is an attempt in conducting the making of knowledge to replicate the field of study wherever the site of practice may be. Being out in the field necessitated an attempt to replicate the rigour of the

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<sup>100</sup> Withers and Finnegan, *Natural History Societies*, 342.

<sup>101</sup> B. Latour, *Science in Action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1987.

<sup>102</sup> B. Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 30.

<sup>103</sup> Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 29

<sup>104</sup> Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 30.

laboratory while being in the laboratory requires the replication of the particularities of the field. Although it should be noted that herein lies the failure of the laboratory to replicate the field: variabilities can be controlled in the laboratory and will never in actuality reflect those found when doing fieldwork that takes place beyond the confines of the laboratory.

My interest in Latour's circulating reference is focused more specifically on how we might understand the ways in which fieldworkers prepare to enter the field. It is the office as site of practice that I am most concerned with here, and Latour's approach to these preparations offers a valuable insight into how we might examine the office as part of the knowledge making process. It is in the office, in preparation for entering the field, that Latour begins his examination of circulating references. Further, and despite Latour's focus on soil scientists, it is possible to draw comparison to the work of the Commission. Preparation begins with the map, a tool that allows scientists to 'master the world', but only because when presented in the form of a map the site of fieldwork 'comes to them in the form of a two-dimensional, superimposable, combinable inscription'.<sup>105</sup> The map is something understood by the scientist, something that permits control over the area of study. It is an attempt to prescribe the control of the laboratory world (or office in this instance) to the unruliness of the field. While Kohler contends that those who undertake laboratory work hope to eliminate place from their work, it is less clear cut if we understand that circulating references ensure an increasing challenge in deciphering what is and is not fieldwork. This is true of field scientists – for example, Latour and his examination of soil scientists, and Kohler's examination of field biologists – and in the case of the Commission within the fields of antiquarianism and archaeology. These preparations allow the fieldworker to transform the field site into a laboratory as the world "out there" is 'rendered as a diagram' which can be understood by the fieldworker.<sup>106</sup> This preparation becomes an integral process of fieldwork preparations, one that ensures that the office as a site of practice is linked to later work undertaken in the field.<sup>107</sup>

Finally, the office, as site of practice, is not limited just to preparations before fieldwork. It is also a site where references circulating from field to office return to be processed and made into knowledge (this is not dissimilar to understanding the office, as what Latour labels, a centre of calculation). References or artefacts from the field can be brought back to the office in a way that brings the field into the office. Here these artefacts are repurposed, re-understood so that they might become part of the knowledge making process. Despite this they are, as Latour has it, 'immutable mobiles' and will always tell of their local origins. Such 'inscriptions' can never truly be removed from actors or objects used in the process of making new knowledges.<sup>108</sup> Staff members' field notebooks, journals, sketches, photographs and laterally the use of aerial photography all aided in circulating references from office to field and back

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<sup>105</sup> Latour, *Pandora's Hope*, 29.

<sup>106</sup> Latour, *Pandora's Hope*, 43.

<sup>107</sup> Latour, *Pandora's Hope*, 29.

<sup>108</sup> Latour, *Pandora's Hope*.

again. This process helps cloud the boundary and delineation between office and field and it is this unclear distinction between these sites of practice that is examined in the following chapters. I have detailed here the debates that have informed my examination of field and office. What is clear is that these sites of practice (office or field) are either held strictly apart or in close proximity with very little said of those practices, and ways of doing fieldwork, that cloud the distinction between these two sites to such an extent that it is necessary to think instead of a third site of practice where knowledge is actually made: a space between “out there” and “in here” where knowledge is brought together.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

Ophir and Shapin’s 1991 paper shifted the attention of historians of science, and, more recently, historical geographers of science, towards the spatial particularities of the sites of knowledge production. What became the spatial turn, denied science was universal and instead claimed that, irrespective of its character science was born in local origins that irredeemably shaped the nature of the knowledge produced. Historical geographers of science, as I have detailed here, have since paid attention to the placing of knowledge production and understanding the ways that the local both shapes, and is shaped by, the processes that construct knowledge. The Commission’s fieldwork practices, and approach to conducting work “out there” in the field are understood within the framework provided by the spatial turn. The places of knowledge making are varied. Where this thesis contributes to the spatial turn, and particularly to the body of literature that focuses on fieldwork, is in understanding those spaces of knowledge production that are less easily defined, perhaps overlooked, because they exist somewhere between the field “out there” and “in here”. There is little literature that adequately tackles what I label the ubiquity of fieldwork within the review of literature provided here, most dealing with the sites of fieldwork in a binary manner, laboratory or field, archive or office, coffee shop or pub.

In the following chapters, I examine the sites in the field where the Commission’s antiquarian and archaeological knowledge was made before exploring the sites of practice where, what we might think of as fieldwork “in here”, was undertaken. I draw on the work of the scholars detailed in this review to understand how the Commission produced the National Inventory of Scotland while exploring the sites of practice where this was achieved. In doing so I attend to the particular technologies that enabled the Commission to undertake this work.



### 3. A BRIEF HISTORY OF SCOTTISH ANTIQUARIANISM

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the development of the history of antiquarianism in order to outline the background to the establishment of the Commission and to place later discussion of its organisation of antiquarian fieldwork in broader context. I begin by examining some key developments in British antiquarian history, then look in more detail at the development of antiquarian thought and practice in Scotland. This is not to be considered an exhaustive exploration of antiquarian developments; rather it is to highlight key moments, traces of which can be found in the history and working practices of the Commission. The development of the Ancient Monuments Act of 1882 is explored in greater detail in the following chapter which details explicitly with the history of antiquarianism immediately prior to the Commission's establishment.

In the eighteenth century, the progress of antiquarianism in Scotland took place against a backdrop of political concern. The development of antiquarianism was politically charged. Fear of the political implications that an intense study of Scotland's past might have on the Union stifled the development of antiquarian endeavours in a Scotland only just unified with England.<sup>1</sup> Even in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, Scotland still retained a strong self-reliance. This is despite antiquarianism being sidelined for fears that, in a sensitive time for cultural politics in Scotland, a study of the past could renew feelings of nationalism and undermine the fledgling union.<sup>2</sup> Despite this worry, Scotland had, for the first one hundred years of its unification, managed to avoid becoming *too* British; Scotland was not culturally part of Britain. The 1832 Reform Bill would set in motion a process of 'liberal ascendancy in Scotland and a general heightening of pro-union sentiment'. England had, for nearly a century after the Union, been 'content to let Scotland run her own affairs so long as they did not spill over into the southern country'.<sup>3</sup> The 1832 Reform Bill would bring about the end of this arrangement; it would mark the beginning of 'increasing English encroachment on distinctive Scottish institutions'.<sup>4</sup> Whilst during the eighteenth century the study of antiquities was subdued because it might rekindle a nationalistic spirit, it was for the very same reason that it saw a resurgence some one hundred years later. Antiquities now had the opportunity to help retain Scotland's identity, heritage and idea of nation in the face of reforms which were an attempt to dilute Scotland and bring it more in line with England,

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<sup>1</sup> R. Cant, David Stuart Erskine, 11th Earl of Buchan: Founder of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. In: A.S. Bell (ed), *The Scottish Antiquarian Tradition, Essays to make the bicentenary of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland 1780-1980*, Edinburgh, 1981, 1-31.

<sup>2</sup> S. Manning, Antiquarianism, the Scottish science of man and the emergence of modern disciplinarity, *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* (2004) 57-76, 59.

<sup>3</sup> M. Ash, *The Strange Death of Scottish History*, Edinburgh, 1980, 135-6.

<sup>4</sup> Ash, *The Strange Death of Scottish History*, 136.

Great Britain and the Empire. It was, as Susan Manning has it, a period where Scottish antiquarianism became ‘inseparable from the cultural politics of post-Union Scotland’.<sup>5</sup> But while political will may have hindered the development of Scottish antiquarianism, it did not stop it. The latter half of the eighteenth century saw the establishment of the Highlands Society and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1778 and 1780 respectively.<sup>6</sup> The foundation of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland came about through the determination of its founder, the Earl of Buchan who ‘had identified a need for a forum in which to encourage and develop antiquarianism within Scotland, which he saw as crucial to maintaining a spirit of Scottish patriotism’.<sup>7</sup> Rosemary Sweet has noted that ‘it was certainly true that there was little organised antiquarian activity in Scotland – the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh did not devote much attention to antiquities, and since the days of Sir Robert Sibbald, antiquarian research had been somewhat overshadowed in the world of the Edinburgh literati by other disciplines’.<sup>8</sup>

Scottish society, despite the union between Scotland and England in 1707, had been ‘left largely to her own affairs’ during much of the eighteenth century. Many of the nation’s institutions had been left intact and unintentionally retained the Scottish identity, leading Ash to comment that ‘Scots looked [towards such institutions] as surrogates for their lost national independence’.<sup>9</sup> Local antiquarian societies served as a conduit for Scots to explore their history. Clarke’s observation that ‘some aspects of the prehistoric and early historic past have become significant ingredients in the maintenance of national identity’ highlights the role that antiquarianism would play, particularly in a post-unification Scotland.<sup>10</sup>

### 3.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANTIQUARIANISM

Antiquarianism in Scotland has one origin, in the establishment of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1780.<sup>11</sup> There are, however, earlier beginnings to what was later to become antiquarianism, both in Scotland, and the UK. John Leland’s appointment as the King of England’s antiquary in 1533 is an earlier formal recognition of the foundations of antiquarianism. Study of what we now recognise as antiquarianism began to take hold towards the end of the 1600s. It was during this period that ‘the study of ancient Britons really gained legitimacy and momentum’.<sup>12</sup> We can trace earlier antiquarian

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<sup>5</sup> Manning, *Antiquarianism, the Scottish science of man and the emergence of modern disciplinary*, 59.

<sup>6</sup> S. Naylor, *Collecting quoits: field cultures in the history of Cornish antiquarianism*, *Cultural Geographies* 10 (2003) 309-333, 310.

<sup>7</sup> R. Sweet, *Antiquaries, The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, London, 2004, 111.

<sup>8</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 111.

<sup>9</sup> Ash, *The Strange Death of Scottish History*, 124.

<sup>10</sup> D. Clarke, *Presenting a national perspective of prehistory and early history in the Museum of Scotland*. In J. Atkinson, *et al* (eds), *Nationalism and Archaeology: Scottish Archaeological Forum*, Glasgow, 1996, 68.

<sup>11</sup> Cant, David Steuart Erskine, 11th Earl of Buchan: Founder of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. In A.S. Bell (ed), *The Scottish Antiquarian Tradition*.

<sup>12</sup> Naylor, *Collecting quoits*, 310.



endeavours to William Camden. Camden's *Britannia* (first published in 1586) was intended to be a topographical and historical survey of Britain with the intention that it also included antiquities, particularly the records of Roman Britain. As Camden produced the various editions of *Britannia*, he became increasingly interested in the 'antiquities of the native Britons'.<sup>13</sup> *Britannia* was, therefore, one of the first publications that provided a record of Britain's ancient history and can be considered one of the first antiquarian texts documenting the antiquities of Britain. For Sweet, Camden's 'influence over antiquarianism and history throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries cannot be overestimated, [he] had set the pattern for future antiquaries to follow'.<sup>14</sup> What would later become Scottish antiquarianism, however, finds one origin in the work of Timothy Pont whose maps would later be used by Joan Blaeu to produce maps for his 1654 *Atlas Novus*. Pont's fieldwork and, in particular, his chorographical work was used by Blaeu to add the detail missing in Camden's maps. As a result, Blaeu's maps, thanks to the work of Pont, were some of the first to include sites of interest (for example Crannogs, the Antonine Wall, Burg of Mousa) to antiquarians and included drawings of ancient monuments that were found during the course of his fieldwork. These works served as foundations for what would we might now label antiquarian endeavour.

While early Scottish antiquarian efforts came about from mapping, English antiquarians were working towards renewing English interest in England. Local county histories produced by scholarly individuals in England during the early 1700s were an early foray into what would later become an antiquarian endeavour, albeit in an uncoordinated individual manner. These histories of regional areas of England served to acquaint the English with their own country, a point that the Cornish antiquarian William Borlase (Fig 3.1) pressed when studying the antiquities of Cornwall.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 120.

<sup>14</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 124.

<sup>15</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 36.

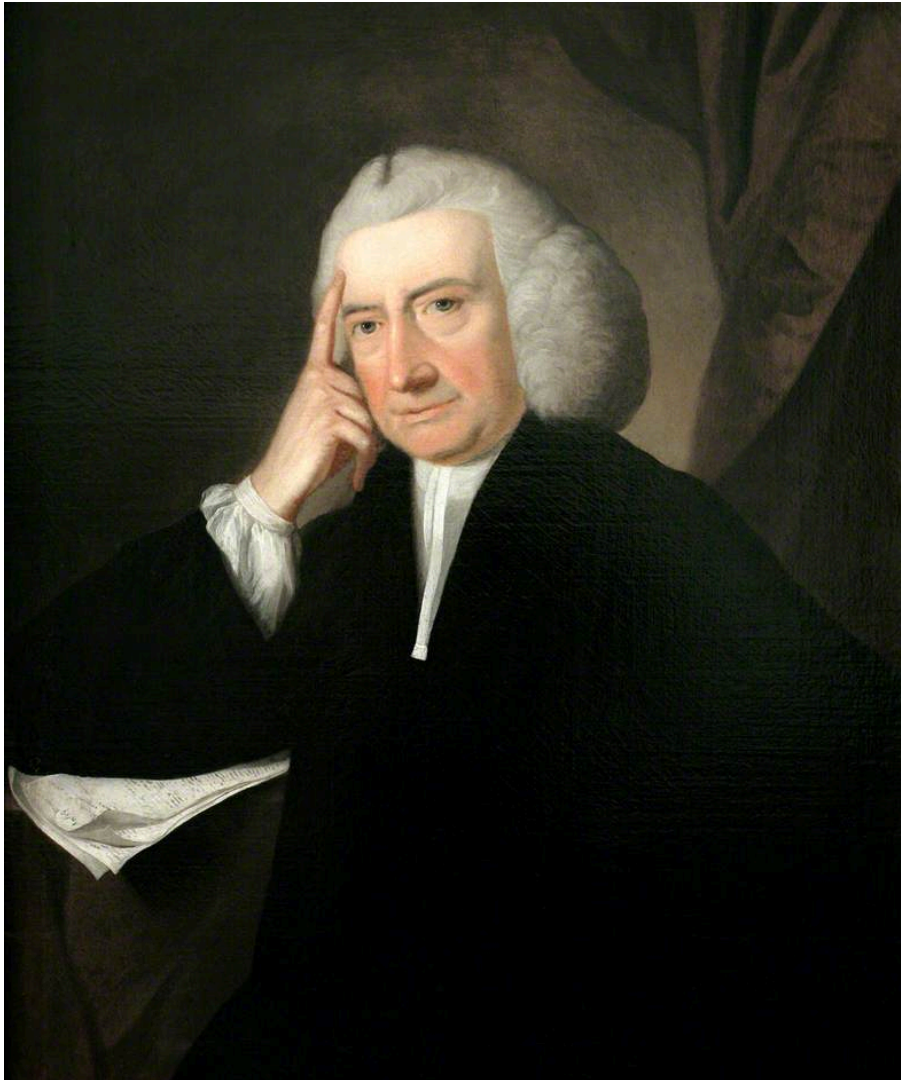


Figure 3.1: William Borlase (1696-1772) painted by Allan Ramsay. Source: Royal Cornwall Museum.  
Source: <http://artuk.org/discover/artworks/dr-william-borlase-16961772-14449> Last Accessed: 9/8/16

County histories could reinvigorate the interest of the local populace in their past. The purpose of the county histories was two-fold; firstly, to discover the county identity and secondly, to explore the county's history. In this, the county histories produced in England were not always successful. Richard Gough, director of the Society of Antiquaries of London from 1771 to 1791, and who hoped to revise Camden's *Britannia*, noted that 'he was hard put to find anyone who could pronounce authoritatively upon' the question of individual county boundaries, never mind their history or identity. In Scotland, Sir Robert Sibbald's (Fig 3.2) histories of Moray (although not technically a county) and of Stirlingshire and Renfrewshire were the only steps towards creating county histories of the country.<sup>16</sup> These works were originally intended to be published as part of Sibbald's *Scotia Illustrata* which ultimately was never published (it is worth noting however that certain regional studies undertaken as part of this work were later published, including Stirlingshire, Linlithgowshire, Fife and Kinross and the Northern

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<sup>16</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 43.

Isles).<sup>17</sup> Sibbald's attention had been directed towards what were, as Withers notes, 'comparisons or contrasts with other places'.<sup>18</sup> Here we can draw comparison to Sibbald's atlas and the later inventories of the Commission, which although designed to provide a record, were also a tool used to understand and analyse Scotland's past. Arguably the county histories were the forebear of the Commission's national inventory and, indeed, the inventory programme suggested by the Ancient Monuments Act 1882.



*Figure 3.2: Sir Robert Sibbald (1641-1722) painted by John Alexander or Willem Verelst. Source: Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. Source: <http://artuk.org/discover/artworks/sir-robert-sibbald-16411722-186123/search/keyword:sir-robert-sibbald> Last Accessed 9/8/16*

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<sup>17</sup> C. W. J. Withers, Geography, science and national identity in early modern Britain: The Case of Scotland and the work of Sir Robert Sibbald (1641-1722), *Annals of Science* 53(1) (1996) 29-73, 52.

<sup>18</sup> Withers, Geography, science and national identity in early modern Britain, 52.

The *Statistical Account of Scotland* provides a further foundation for the later inventorization of Scotland's monuments undertaken by the Commission. Like the work of Curle in 1908, and Sibbald and Martin before, the Statistical Account relied upon the knowledge of trusted sources, notably clergymen. Indeed, it was noted in the subtitle of the publication that the information contained within was 'drawn up from the communications of the ministers'. It was noted by Sir John Sinclair, the overall editor of the account, that the clergy had 'so many useful facts and important observations' that it was only right that their contribution be noted in full. Organised by parish, the Statistical Account sought to record the key and notable features of each parish. It was, for all intents and purposes, an inventory of everyday life.

There were sixty-six categories recorded including; the name of the parish and its origin, the climate, the number of schools and scholars, the character of the people, and the wages and price of labour. Significantly, within the context of this thesis the account also included a list of known antiquities – a direct foreshadowing of the inventory some 117 years later.<sup>19</sup> Similar practices would form the basis of the *New* or "Second" *Statistical Account of Scotland* undertaken between 1831 and 1845.<sup>20</sup>

The Ordnance Survey's Original Object Name Books, used to establish place names, also serves as an important predecessor to the Commission's inventory. The Name Books served an important role within the Scottish Highlands as they sought to establish the English names of Gaelic Scotland. Gaelic Scotland had to be mapped and named by an English-speaking body.<sup>21</sup> Like the Statistical Accounts, and the work of Sibbald, the production of the Name Books was reliant upon individuals who acted as an authority on Scottish place names. Clergymen and schoolmasters, among other trusted individuals, were all used to authorise the landscape. This placed emphasis on social processes which dictated who could and could not offer authority over a place name.<sup>22</sup> Trust had to be sought and established in the same manner that the Commission would later do in order to produce the national inventory.

The ranks of the antiquarian community were made up of both the learned gentry and amateur scholars of the associated professions. This disparate make-up was apparent in the work produced by antiquarians during the 1700 and 1800s. Sinclair, Sibbald and others had an interest in antiquities, and produced works of value to antiquarians, but did not describe themselves as antiquarians. Those who offered assistance to the Ordnance Survey in producing the Original Object Name Books may also have considered themselves antiquarians as much as local historians and may even have aided the Commission during its early surveys. Thus, exactly what the work of an antiquarian should look like was not always clear. The appointment in 1784 of John Carter, a professional draughtsman, to the

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<sup>19</sup> See J. Sinclair, *The Statistical Account of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1791.

<sup>20</sup> C. W. J. Withers. *Geography, Science and National Identity: Scotland since 1520*, Cambridge, 2001, 247.

<sup>21</sup> C. W. J. Withers, Authorizing landscape: 'authority', naming and the Ordnance Survey's mapping of the Scottish Highlands in the nineteenth century, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26(4) (2000) 532-554, 532..

<sup>22</sup> Withers, Authorizing landscape.

Society of Antiquaries of London led to particular consternation when he declared that the work of the amateur gentlemen could not possibly compare with his own and was, therefore, unhelpful in furthering the cause of the Society.<sup>23</sup> William Roy, an officer of the British Army, spent much of his time during the 1750s and 1760s identifying Roman sites in Scotland. His military training and background equipped him admirably to locate the sites of the former Roman army, believing that a military mindset was crucial to locating the camps of the former Roman Empire.<sup>24</sup> Roy's maps would form the foundation of Ordnance Survey's maps, but he also 'harboured a fascination for antiquities'.<sup>25</sup> The Military Survey undertaken by Roy in 1747 was designed to 'provide a picture of northern Scotland for military purposes following the 1745-6 Jacobite rebellion'.<sup>26</sup> Withers has noted that 'the essential features of the Military Survey are well understood: the use of standard scale and agreed practices of survey amongst organised teams [...] with an emphasis on speed' and not necessarily including all details.<sup>27</sup> The Commission would later follow a similar approach, working in teams to complete the survey of Scotland's antiquities before adopting standard scales (discussed in chapter six) and pursuing forms of survey whereby speed became an essential factor (see the discussion of rescue in chapter eight).

Roy's attentiveness to Scotland's antiquities meant that his maps included small sketches of antiquarian sites. During the Military Survey, Roy also recorded sites of Roman antiquity: his *Military Antiquities* was published posthumously by the Society of Antiquaries in 1793.<sup>28</sup> Originally this publication had existed as a series of essays, eventually published as the *Military Antiquities of the Romans in North Britain*. Alongside Roy's recordings of Roman sites, he prefaced the volume with a national survey entitled the *Mappa Britanniae Septentrionalis*. This was a 'minutely detailed map of north Britain, based on information that Roy had collected during the Military Survey of Scotland'.<sup>29</sup> It represented an inventory of sorts, of sites of antiquity recorded in unparalleled detail. Such was the demand that 'Roy was persuaded to engrave and publish the *Mappa* separately'.<sup>30</sup>

Antiquarians in this period evidence their interest to varying degrees. Some, like Richard Gough, 'pursued antiquarianism with a whole-hearted dedication'. For those like Gough, 'it was an all-consuming interest, even obsession, which structured his politics, his friendships and his life'.<sup>31</sup> Significantly, Gough's approach to antiquarianism represented a shift away from the likes of Stukeley, Borlase and Sibbald for whom the classic texts had been used to devise theories rather than facts. Gough sought instead to focus on deductions based on empirical evidence rather than implicit assumptions that

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<sup>23</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 59.

<sup>24</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 181.

<sup>25</sup> R. Hewitt, *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey*, London, 2010, 35.

<sup>26</sup> Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity*, 150.

<sup>27</sup> Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity*, 150.

<sup>28</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 181.

<sup>29</sup> Hewitt, *Map of a Nation*, 36.

<sup>30</sup> Hewitt, *Map of a Nation*, 36.

<sup>31</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 78.

drew on religion, folklore and classical authorities to decipher the past. Sweet remarks that ‘Gough was no advocate for obfuscating detail, disconnected facts or rambling disquisitions, but he was very wary of the dangers inherent in drawing generalisations, which he associated with a theoretical or conjectural approach’.<sup>32</sup> Gough would later undertake a revision of Camden’s *Britannia* to rectify the ‘numerous errors’ in pursuit of a more accurate form of antiquarianism.<sup>33</sup> Gough also bemoaned, privately, the poor quality of papers published by the Society of Antiquaries.<sup>34</sup> Thomas Pennant, the Welsh naturalist and antiquarian, who, although aligning himself with Richard Gough, was quick to suggest that ‘the publication of all brother antiquaries’ were beneficial, both ‘good and bad’.<sup>35</sup>

However one defines an antiquarian, or their work, it is clear that for those passionate and committed antiquaries, this pursuit ‘represented a frame of mind and a way of life’.<sup>36</sup> Antiquarians tended not to be interested in consolidating the status of their activity by demonstration of its scientific principles, but sought instead to understand the relics of the past that surrounded them with the classic texts that might help them comprehend these distant lost worlds (the move away from such an approach, and towards a more scientific approach to survey and antiquarianism, is discussed in chapter six).<sup>37</sup> Monuments were understood and explained by identifying references to them in ancient records and antiquarians sought to discover which individual or what peoples constructed the monument and why.<sup>38</sup> It was a study of the past through classical texts. Moreover, a study of antiquities offered an opportunity for antiquarians to transport themselves back through time. The antiquarians ‘could relive past scenes in [their] imagination [and they] could restore the historical edifice from the fragments of time’.<sup>39</sup> This led to some confusion, however. William Stukeley (Fig 3.3) in particular became infamous for his fascination with Druidism and his attempts to explain monuments through Druid histories and folklore.<sup>40</sup> Stonehenge, for example, was ‘alternatively attributed to the Danes, Saxons, Romans and ancient Britons’ depending on who was examining it and what they happened to be influenced by at that particular time.<sup>41</sup> For Sweet, ‘the phrase ‘must have been’ cropped up with telling frequency as antiquaries and histories ‘supposed’ events to have taken place, or ‘presumed’ a state of affairs in the more obscure periods of the nation’s history...[such] conjecture [was] powerfully attractive’.<sup>42</sup> Gough sought to push against these theoretical understandings of the past and to rely upon fieldwork to tell of the nation’s antiquities as Pont and Roy had done previously. Sibbald, by contrast, compiled knowledge of antiquities and undertook his ‘fieldwork’ in his study. It was a format that would become familiar to

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<sup>32</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 19.

<sup>33</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 62.

<sup>34</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 96.

<sup>35</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 61.

<sup>36</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 31.

<sup>37</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 33; B. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, Cambridge, 2007, 86.

<sup>38</sup> Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, 118.

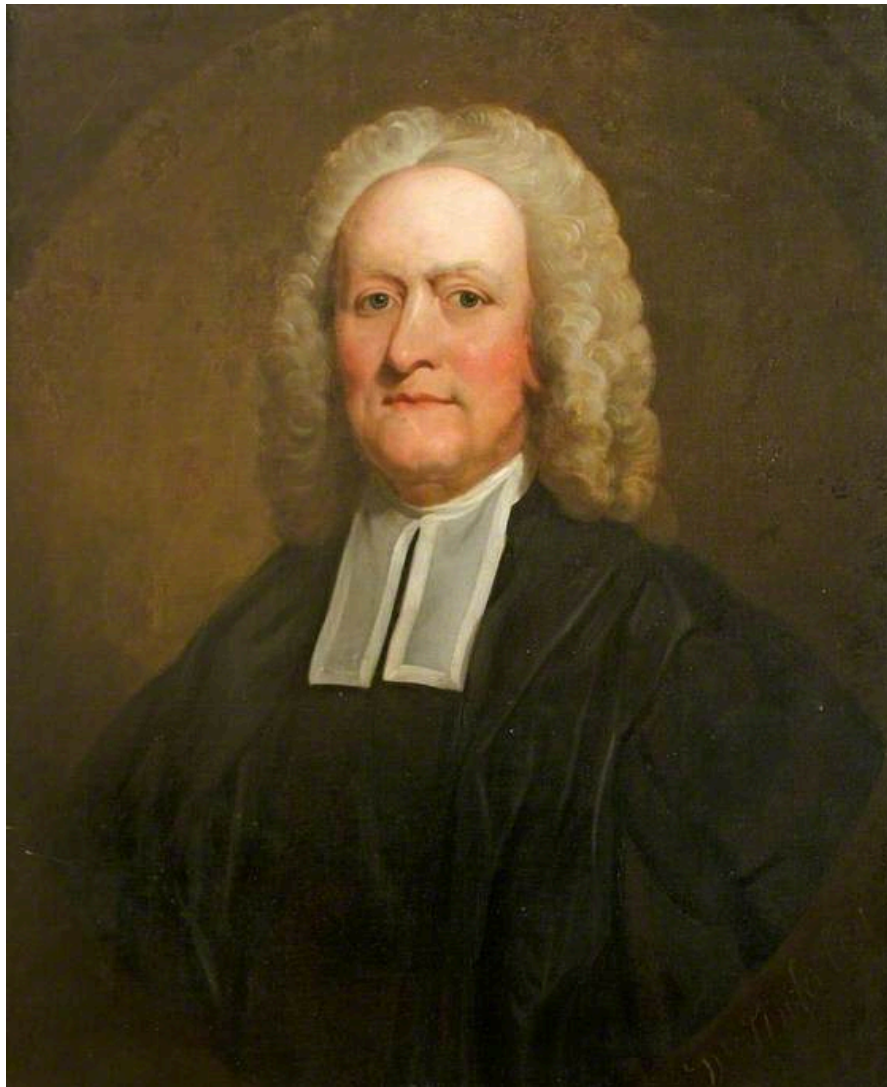
<sup>39</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 33.

<sup>40</sup> S. Piggott, *William Stukeley: An Eighteenth-Century Antiquary*, Oxford, 1950.

<sup>41</sup> Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, 118.

<sup>42</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 19.

the Commission. Work was undertaken in the field, but fieldwork continued once in the office as material was compiled, analysed and understood. For other antiquarians, however, ‘antiquities represented one of many interests’ and they often pursued a study of antiquarianism alongside ‘a professional career, scientific inquiry, or an appreciation of the arts’.<sup>43</sup> It was perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that the perceived quality of their publications differed significantly depending on who was examining them (or who they were written for). It is also noteworthy that the Commission directed its staff only to document what could be recorded objectively in the field; that is, folklore was not to be included in the inventories.<sup>44</sup>



*Figure 3.3: William Stukeley (1687-1765). Source: Lydiard House. Source:*

*<http://artuk.org/discover/artworks/william-stukeley-16871765-65254/search/keyword:william-stukeley> Last*

*Accessed 9/8/16*

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<sup>43</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 78.

<sup>44</sup> This became a point of interest during the first survey of Berwickshire (1908). This will be considered in chapter six with particular attentiveness to why folkloric details were not included.

The development of formal associations and of societies was a driving force in the development of antiquarianism and for individuals who, by the late nineteenth century, found themselves part of Scotland's antiquarian movement. The growth of societies, however, would see nineteenth-century antiquarianism move away from individuals such as Camden and Stukeley and towards forms of antiquarianism that demanded field observations for its reasoning about the past. Nineteenth-century societies – those that concerned themselves with natural history – began to promote more scientific approaches to knowledge making.<sup>45</sup> Accurate field surveys, sketches and detailed drawings became commonplace as emphasis was placed on fieldwork and reasoned enquiry not speculative understandings.<sup>46</sup> The rise of the societies was, as Stuart Piggott has suggested, an 'answer to an intellectual and emotional need'.<sup>47</sup> For those who could afford to join their local or national societies there was an opportunity to further enhance their knowledge and an 'entrée into educated and respectable social circles'.<sup>48</sup> The respectability afforded to a member of a society and, therefore, their trustworthiness, should not be overlooked here. Membership provided individuals with a confirmation of their character, allowing them to contribute to the knowledge production of their society and others. It was a way of establishing credibility.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly the majority of members of the Society of Antiquaries (later 'of London'), established in 1707, were credible, trustworthy individuals from among the cosmopolitan elite.<sup>50</sup>

The Society of Antiquaries was, as Sweet notes, 'established upon the assumption that the cultivation of history and antiquities was essential to the construction of national honour'.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately for the Society, early efforts to undertake a survey of the nation's antiquities (similar in format to Sinclair's Statistical Account) resulted in 'repeated failure' due to a lack of response and coordination.<sup>52</sup> There is an intellectual lineage here: Sibbald relied upon questionnaires sent to parishes, as had Sinclair and now the Society of Antiquaries. It was a tried and tested method. However, that did not, necessarily, ensure success. As Sweet notes, a similar fate would befall the efforts of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in the earlier 1780s. Despite this, the Society of Antiquaries had established a reputation by the 1760s such that it served as a place where young antiquarians like Gough could be enthused and 'antiquarian research could be encouraged and promoted [while] information and expertise could be shared, topics of inquiry identified, [and] assistance with publication offered'.<sup>53</sup> The establishment of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries in 1780 served a similar purpose, and initially served, in the eyes of its founder

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<sup>45</sup> D. Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain*, London 1976, 163.

<sup>46</sup> S. Naylor, *Regionalizing Science: Placing Knowledges in Victorian England*, London, 2010, 125-6.

<sup>47</sup> S. Piggott, *Ruins in a Landscape, Essays in Antiquarianism*, Edinburgh, 1976, 193.

<sup>48</sup> Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional*, 40.

<sup>49</sup> A. Secord, Corresponding interests: artisans and gentlemen in nineteenth-century natural history, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 27 (1994) 383-398, 392.

<sup>50</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 82.

<sup>51</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 83.

<sup>52</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 90.

<sup>53</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 94.



the Earl of Buchan, to provide ‘a forum in which to encourage and develop antiquarianism in Scotland, which he saw as crucial to maintaining a spirit of Scottish patriotism’.<sup>54</sup>

Credibility was key, not only for the proliferation of societies, but also more generally within the context of knowledge production. The acceptance of a commentator’s written word, or an individual’s societal status, and knowing when to place trust, were important factors in ‘practices of knowing’. Such practices were especially important within the spaces of discussion provided by societies where ideas and theories could be discussed, debated and formed into credible knowledge. Such practices had, as Withers notes, informed the work of Sibbald, Martin and Robert Woodrow in their geographical works undertaken throughout Scotland.<sup>55</sup> The placing of trust in informants and written word when it came from an individual of the correct social standing was as important to Sibbald and Martin as it would later be to the Commission. The early work of Alexander Ormiston Curle as Commission Secretary was reliant on such sources. This reliance on networks of knowledge, like antiquarian societies, will be explored in further detail in chapter six, but it is important to recognise that these were established practices of ensuring the production of reliable and credible knowledge.

Relying on what amounted to little more than word of mouth (albeit from what we might describe as trusted sources) was one method of establishing credibility. However, Christian Jurgensen Thomsen’s progressive model of classification offered a means to assess in an analytical manner the antiquities being discovered by those undertaking fieldwork. It created a sense of objectivity, its credibility not a question of social standing, or simply placing trust in an individual based on instinct or because they seemed trustworthy. Thomsen’s system of classification – that antiquities should be arranged from bronze to Iron Age – created a means of analysing ‘form and function’ between similar antiquities. Deductions could then be made from a standardised system rather than the intellectual guessing of theoretically-driven antiquarians.<sup>56</sup>

The late nineteenth century would also see a number of technological changes which had a direct impact both on antiquities and how the public engaged with the nation’s ancient monuments. The development of photography and its role in antiquarianism cannot be overlooked, particularly as it would become a crucial element within fieldwork practices. Individuals such as O.G.S. Crawford would pioneer the use of photography in archaeology.<sup>57</sup> The camera enabled antiquarians to capture the fidelity of ancient monuments, a detail which they could use to justify claims not only of credibility, but also of being ‘scientific’. Other technological advances had less to do with ways of recording and ensuring trust in knowledge produced, but with the task of moving. The advent of the steam train, for example, allowed

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<sup>54</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 111.

<sup>55</sup> C. W. J. Withers, Reporting, mapping, trusting: making geographical knowledge in the late seventeenth century, *Isis*, 90(3) (1999) 497-521, 520.

<sup>56</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 152.

<sup>57</sup> K. Hauser, *Bloody Old Britain: O.G.S. Crawford and the Archaeology of Modern Life*, London, 2008, 36.

for access in ways that was not possible before.<sup>58</sup> They permitted the movement of individuals, and with them, knowledge. Sir Robert Peel opined, railways “are creating new demands for knowledge, they are fertilising the intellectual”: the railway became fundamental not only in developing the economy of the United Kingdom, but also in facilitating the movement of knowledge.<sup>59</sup> For antiquarians, and later the Commission, the advent of technology that heightened mobility was crucial in increasing a capacity for fieldwork during a single field season (see chapter seven).

Despite the growth in antiquarian societies, and a wider awareness of British antiquities, the United Kingdom had no formal means of protecting and preserving monuments. The now little-known antiquarian Gerard Baldwin Brown noted that late nineteenth-century United Kingdom was lagging behind its European counterparts: its failure to act was to the detriment of the nation’s ancient history.<sup>60</sup> Denmark, by contrast, established as early as 1807, provision to ‘schedule important monuments standing on farmland by royal proclamation’.<sup>61</sup> Prior to 1882, there was in the United Kingdom no organised national effort to protect or preserve the nation’s ancient and historic monuments. Antiquarians were recording, excavating, and documenting, but not protecting, repairing, or conserving the monuments: they had no legal authority by which to do so. Although Stukeley had, in the 1740s, advocated the recording of national antiquities as a means of ensuring their preservation, little had been achieved since then.<sup>62</sup> It had largely been left to concerned individuals. In Scotland, Baldwin Brown and others were recording Old Town Edinburgh and the Royal Mile, but little more.<sup>63</sup> There was little effort at a national level to protect or record monuments. The potential for unsalvageable loss was manifest.

### 3.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the development of antiquarianism in the United Kingdom. I have traced a lineage of antiquarian thinking beginning in the 1500s, which nevertheless informed the work of the Commission from its establishment in 1908. Sibbald’s use of questionnaires to create networks of informants throughout Scotland, later used by Sinclair, the Society of Antiquaries and others, was a precursor to the work that Curle would undertake during the Commission’s first field

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<sup>58</sup> Hauser, *Bloody Old Britain*, 5.

<sup>59</sup> G. Morton, *Ourselves and Others: Scotland 1832-1914*, Edinburgh, 2012, 105-6.

<sup>60</sup> G. Brown, *The Care of Ancient Monuments*, Edinburgh, 1905; M. Cooper, Gerard Baldwin Brown, Edinburgh, and the Care of Ancient Monuments, *The Historic Environment* 4(2) (2013) 156-77, 156.

<sup>61</sup> C. Chippendale, The making of the first Ancient Monuments Act, 1882, and its administration under Pitt-Rivers, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 136(1) (1982) 1-55, 3.

<sup>62</sup> Piggott, *William Stukeley*.

<sup>63</sup> M. Cooper, Gerard Baldwin Brown and the preservation of Edinburgh's Old Town, *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* 58 (2014) 134-154.

season. There is also a traceable history of inventorization and while the *Statistical Account of Scotland* was not an inventory in the sense of the Commission's work, it still represented a survey of key features of parishes that would later constitute a record. It was, at its core, a process of creating an inventory. The county histories undertaken in England, and, to a lesser extent, by Sibbald in Scotland, were a significant step towards exploring the history of the various counties and regions of the nation. While these were not strictly antiquarian endeavours – although Richard Gough called for county histories that included a list of local monuments – they did foreshadow the inventory programme suggested by the Ancient Monuments Act 1882 and, indeed, the Commission's county-by-county inventory programme.

Antiquarian studies could ensure that Scotland's national history and antiquities were not lost in the wake of unification. A growing interest in antiquaries led to the establishment of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1780 as antiquarians sought to create forums for learned scholars to share their studies of the nation's past. The work of antiquarians during the nineteenth century was based on the realisation that while the various antiquarian societies throughout the nation were undertaking fieldwork – documenting and recording sites of antiquities – there was no unified direction or institutional coordination of this. The lack of an inventory, as some European nations were undertaking, was of particular concern. The loss of monuments without any record of their being recorded led antiquarians such as Baldwin Brown and learned individuals to argue for the creation of an inventory scheme that would document Scotland's and Britain's ancient monuments. This was the backdrop to the establishment of the Commission in 1908.



## 4. A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE COMMISSION

This chapter outlines the history of the Commission, drawing attention to key events and personnel which pertain to the analysis that follows. In addition to the chronological history presented here, I have included as an appendix a series of short biographies for the key Commission Secretaries between 1908 and 1975. The purpose of this section is to introduce the Commission's chronological development and to present a timeline of the organisation's evolving structure.

### 4.1 THE ANCIENT MONUMENTS ACT: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE COMMISSION

The Ancient Monuments Act 1882 was the first step towards a more structured response to the recording of the loss of Britain's historic monuments. The legislation took Sir John Lubbock almost a decade to progress from a bill to an Act on the Statute Book.<sup>1</sup> Earlier drafts included the legal provision to bring monuments under state control and out of private ownership. Leading aristocratic landowners were often not supportive of legislation that might allow individuals to have access to their land in order to record ancient monuments, perhaps even to bring them under state control without landowners' prior permission. Many saw it as a breach of their right to 'own' such monuments. Mr. George Bentinck MP was reported as commentating that he could not imagine anything more objectionable than this bill, which proposed to legalise 'daylight burglary' by Act of Parliament.<sup>2</sup> Prior to the Act, however, 'the survival of ancient monuments depended on the whim of their owners'. Landowners could 'abolish [monuments] for the sake of five shillings' worth of building material.<sup>3</sup> Yet, some MPs saw the need for change and 'looked upon the bill as providing a necessary protection against the indifference, caprice, carelessness, or it might be imbecility, of the proprietors of ancient monuments. As to the question of expense [...the MP] undertook to say he did not know anything which would pay so well as the preservation of our ancient monuments'.<sup>4</sup> By 1882 the Act was passed, albeit with concessions that Lubbock feared might see it prove less than successful in protecting monuments.<sup>5</sup> In essence, the Act only 'restrained owners from casually injuring and destroying monuments', giving them the option,

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<sup>1</sup> M. Bowden, *Pitt Rivers; The Life and Archaeological Work of Lieutenant-General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers, DCL, FRS, FSA*, Cambridge, 1991, 95.

<sup>2</sup> Miscellaneous newspaper clippings on the Ancient Monuments Act 1882, shelfmark MS604, Aberdeen University Archive Special Collections [hereafter AUASC].

<sup>3</sup> C. Chippendale, The making of the first Ancient Monuments Act, 1882, and its administration under Pitt-Rivers, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 136(1) (1982) 1-55, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Miscellaneous newspaper clippings on the Ancient Monuments Act 1882, shelfmark MS604, AUASC.

<sup>5</sup> M. Thompson, *Darwin's Pupil; The Place of Sir John Lubbock, Lord Avebury, 1834-1913, In Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, Eley, 2009, 69.

should they desire, of ‘state purchase at a fair price’.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the Act marked a significant step in ‘rolling back the landowner’s *absolute* right to treat [their] property, and any historical relics that may lie on it or under it, as [they] wish[ed]’.<sup>7</sup>

The passing of the Ancient Monuments Act of 1882 raised awareness in Scotland’s political community of the damage caused to the ancient monuments of the United Kingdom. But the legislation lacked legal provision to place threatened monuments into protection without the consent of the landowner. Without the legal provision to actively acquire monuments, the Act had become reliant on the goodwill and active co-operation of the landowner. Those landed persons who happened to find monuments on their property, and who had an interest in protecting these monuments could seek the assistance of the Ministry of Works. This was an act dependent on their own volition, rather than a response to the threat of their property being forcibly taken over by the Ministry of Works. Goodwill, however, was not enough to save monuments, and too often the Act failed to protect the monuments it had been created to save. It was not easy to convince landowners sceptical of the ‘value’ of monuments on their estates to freely surrender their property to the state.

Some twenty years after the Ancient Monuments Act passed through Parliament, Gerard Baldwin Brown – professor of fine art at the University of Edinburgh – felt compelled to write a damning verdict of the country’s attitude towards its ancient monuments and their conservation. Brown’s book *The Care of Ancient Monuments* was published in 1905, and came to the attention of the Secretary of State for Scotland, Sir John Sinclair, later Lord Pentland, whose own interests saw him look to establish the Royal Commission in response to Brown’s criticism.<sup>8</sup> Brown’s book served as a seminal text for the Commission. It provided much of the foundational logic of the organisation with the eight-point procedure – a checklist of expectations that the Commissioners felt that each inventory should achieve – which was laid out in the first meeting of the organisation – being taken predominantly from Brown’s book. Brown would serve as one of the first Commissioners and in addition to his work, provide a foundation for the Commission. The Commission held its first meeting in Edinburgh in February 1908, at which the Chairman and Commissioners formally appointed Alexander Ormiston Curle as the first Secretary of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.

Before this meeting, however, Sir John Sinclair spent considerable time ensuring that the correct individuals for the job were appointed to the roles of Chairman and Commissioners. Despite being a Civil Service organisation by designation, Royal Commissions were not organised as a Civil Service department. The Commission was arranged so that the Secretary would report to the Commissioners and the Chairman. The Chairman of the Commission, who for the majority of its history was a

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<sup>6</sup> Chippendale, *The making of the first Ancient Monuments Act*, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Chippendale, *The making of the first Ancient Monuments Act*, 1 [emphasis added].

<sup>8</sup> J. Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: the first 80 years*, *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* 36 (1992) 13-77, 3.

gentlemen of landed origin, was nominally in control and oversaw the organisation as a whole. In practice, he was nothing more than a figurehead, representing the Commission to Government and society. The Commission's first Chairman, Sir Herbert Maxwell, had been appointed in recognition of having been one of the few landed gentlemen to have supported the Ancient Monuments Act of 1882.<sup>9</sup> Maxwell, therefore, could act as a conduit, a means of convincing other members of the gentry to cooperate with the Commission.

Alongside the Chairman sat the Commissioners who were appointed for their ability to complement the work of the Commission's staff, acting as a panel of advisors. Like the Chairman, these individuals were often landed gentlemen, but were also more likely to be of the antiquarian establishment. Maxwell also served as the President of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, while Commissioner Thomas Ross was one of the Society's Vice-Presidents. Authoritative figures in their field, their role was to guide the Commission's work and ensure that the Secretary was preparing the county inventories to their satisfaction.<sup>10</sup> Such was the hands-on approach and interest of many of the Commissioners that it was not unusual in the early years of the organisation to find Commissioners in the field, contributing to the work of the Commission's inventory programme. Thomas Ross and William T. Oldrieve served alongside Brown; both were well-known respected architects in Scotland. The ranks of the Commissioners were completed by Charles J. Guthrie, Society Fellow, Thomas H. Bryce, Professor of Anatomy at the University of Glasgow and Society Fellow, and Francis C. Buchanan. Commission minutes show that Buchanan only attended one meeting and little is known of him. Indeed, Angus Graham, a future Secretary, later noted that 'nothing seems to be remembered except that his colleagues showed signs of relief when he died'.<sup>11</sup>

The Secretary, sitting in the organisation as he did, ranked below the Chairman and the Commissioners, oversaw the day-to-day running of the Commission and orchestrated the task of creating the national inventory of Scotland. For the first four years of the Commission's history the Secretary was its sole representative in the field. Ostensibly the Secretary *was* the Commission. The Secretary had a secretary to assist in the administration of the Commission and, importantly, the filing of documents and correspondence. Over time this would change, as the Commission expanded and brought on new staff. Draughtsman, architects, investigators and photographers would begin to establish roles within the Commission, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s (the arrival of new staff members will be examined in chapter six). Staff numbers at the Commission did not exceed seven until the late 1950s. It was a tight-knit operation, directed by the personality of a few individuals (this became particularly important during the advent of rescue archaeology, see chapter seven), and this ensured that the work of the Commission was often dictated by personal desires and motivations.

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<sup>9</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*.

<sup>10</sup> See *Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Proceedings for 1908-9*.

<sup>11</sup> Angus Graham's *Antiquarian Personalities and Episodes*, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS7402/4.

Alexander Ormiston Curle was one of the Commission's most important and influential Secretaries despite holding the post for only five years. Curle's appointment was based on his position within the antiquarian community and his commitment to fieldwork. His approach to the work of the Commission was later recognised by the Commissioners in their first report where they noted, that they felt they 'cannot conclude this their first Report without making cordial acknowledgement of the degree in which their [the Commissioners] labours have been facilitated by the unremitting energy and special knowledge of their Secretary, Mr A. O. Curle. They feel that without the assistance of one so well skilled in archaeology they could not have accomplished nearly so much'.<sup>12</sup> Curle's prior legal training had provided him with a rigorous, meticulous and methodical approach to his work. He had also held numerous positions within the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and was well known and respected within Scotland's antiquarian community: at the time of his appointment to the Commission he was also one of the Secretaries of the Society. The appointment of Curle was, however, a departure from Civil Service protocol; the Secretary of a Royal Commission would usually be appointed from a senior Civil Service position. The Secretary of the Commission was expected to carry out the fieldwork himself; experience of working in the field was essential. The English and Welsh Commissions, also established in 1908, did not follow the Scottish Commission in appointing archaeologists as their respective Secretaries. The English Commission appointed a Civil Service accountant as its first Secretary, and the Welsh Commission made a similar appointment. This was a decision that both Commissions would come to regret, with the Secretaries of the English and Welsh establishments making visits to Edinburgh to meet with Curle, both seeking his counsel on how to create a national inventory of a nation's monuments, since it had become apparent to them that something more than a listing was required.

#### **4.2 THE EARLY YEARS OF THE COMMISSION: THE CURLE INVENTORIES (1908-1913)**

Curle began the Commission's first inventory in Berwickshire, south east Scotland. He had spent much of the spring of 1908 preparing for the first Commission survey (the survey of Berwickshire and its influence on the Commission will be explored in detail in chapter six). This began in August of 1908. Equipped with Ordnance Survey maps, a notebook and journal, a set of ranging poles, and some measuring tapes, he undertook the survey of Berwickshire from August to November. This was the beginning of the Commission's project, the first step towards completing the national inventory of Scotland. It was one of the first 'complete' county inventories of monuments in the United Kingdom. This constituted a landmark achievement, one which the Ancient Monuments Act of 1882 had failed to

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<sup>12</sup> RCAHMS, *First Report and Inventory of Monuments and Constructions in the County of Berwick*, 1909, Edinburgh, 1909.



achieve.<sup>13</sup> Curle was to use this time not only to complete the inventory of Berwickshire, but also to establish the working practices of the Commission.

When Curle began the survey of Berwickshire, it was the beginning of an eighty-four year process. His personal journal at the time, titled ‘the journal of a wandering antiquary’, belie a sense of uncertainty. But Curle had prepared meticulously before leaving Edinburgh. Following the instructions of the Commissioners to ensure a ‘complete’ inventory, he began by scouring the literature for any reference to Berwickshire’s ancient monuments. This was followed by identifying ancient monuments marked on the Ordnance Survey, noting their location and marking them up for survey. By the time Curle was ready to leave Edinburgh to conduct the survey of the county, he had planned which monuments to survey and visited them one after the other in a pre-ordained sequence. Such was Curle’s confidence in his methods that he proclaimed upon the conclusion of the survey and notwithstanding subsequent adverse reviews, that there could not be any other inventory more complete than his inventory of Berwickshire.<sup>14</sup> The nation’s inventory had begun.

The inventory of Berwickshire was sent to press in April 1909. Less than a month later, Curle was once again in the field, this time in Sutherland. Curle set about preparing himself in the same way as he had done before. Literature, maps and local sources were all consulted beforehand. It soon became clear that the inventory of Sutherland would not be so easily completed. The survey of Berwickshire took three months to complete: that for Sutherland took nearly two years. It was an arduous process that saw Curle realise that the production of the inventory by one man alone was to prove an impossible task. Nevertheless, Curle remarked that the survey had never been anything but the most ‘pleasurable’ undertaking, even when he had found himself ‘wriggling out of a cairn like a worm’.<sup>15</sup>

The most significant outcome of the survey of Sutherland, however, was not the inventory itself, but the consequences it had for the Commission. Curle had already reacted to the critical reviews of the Berwickshire inventory. Accordingly, the inventory of Sutherland included more detailed notes, drawings and some photographs. In the aftermath of two years spent surveying it became clear not only to Curle but also to the Commissioners, that a national inventory of Scotland could not be completed by one individual. In 1912 the Commission sought to employ a draughtsman and an architect to complement Curle’s work. Both would be employed by early 1914. By then, Curle had completed the inventories of three other counties Wigtownshire, Caithness and Kirkcudbright.

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<sup>13</sup> It had been a provision of the Act to establish and inventory of monuments, but this had ground to a halt during the 1890s as the scale of the task that lay ahead of the Inspector of Ancient Monuments, General Pitt Rivers, became clear.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Ormiston Curle’s personal journal, ‘Notes on Berwickshire 1908’, shelfmark MS36/2, 1.

<sup>15</sup> A.O. Curle’s 1909 notes from Sutherland, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS36/9.

### 4.3 WILLIAM MACKAY MACKENZIE AND THE GREAT WAR (1913-1919)

Curle resigned from the post of Secretary in 1913 to further his career in Scottish antiquarianism assuming the post of Director of the National Museum of Antiquities that summer alongside his appointment as a Commissioner. To replace Curle, the Chairman and Commissioners appointed William Mackay Mackenzie, a decision apparently against the tone that the Commissioners had set only five years earlier when they had sought a secretary skilled in fieldwork. Mackenzie was a renowned academic and was more comfortable behind his books than out in the field.<sup>16</sup> The appointments of Charles S.T. Calder, George P.H. Watson, A.L. MacGibbon and J. Graham Callander allowed Mackenzie to remain in the relative comfort of the office, only venturing into the field on the rarest occasions, most notably his appearance on the survey of the Western Isles. Mackenzie was, however, committed to the Commission's work and presided over a period where the organisation completed inventories at a rate which would not be matched in the future. His arrival at the Commission was also marked by the first office move of the organisation, from St Andrew Square in Edinburgh to 15 Queen Street.<sup>17</sup> With a staff of six it had become necessary for the Commission to move to new premises. Not long after his appointment and the expansion of the Commission, however, Mackenzie was having to defend the very existence of the organisation during war time.

Initially, the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 had little effect on the Commission. As war intensified on the Western Front it became increasingly difficult for the Commission to function, not least because of troop activity across the country. The most significant loss to the Commission was the drafting of both Calder and Watson into the army. This effectively ended Commission fieldwork, although Mackenzie argued that the organisation could continue to work on proofing, editing and publishing the material it was yet to send to press. This appeased the Government, but only bought the Commission borrowed time. By 1916 the Treasury was demanding the shutdown of the Commission for reasons of cost saving. Mackenzie begrudgingly agreed. For the final two years of the War, the Commission existed only in name; documents, drawings and maps were all safely stored away until hostilities ceased.<sup>18</sup>

The Commission restarted its inventory programme in early 1919, though not without hindrance. Public expenditure in the years immediately after the War was severely cut and the Royal Commissions were particularly hard done by. Commission funding was frozen between 1914 and 1920 at £1693, briefly rising to £2000 in 1920 before settling at £1500 for the following five years.<sup>19</sup> With only five staff members and a restricted budget, the Commissioners chose to combine the post of clerk and typist,

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<sup>16</sup> Angus Graham's *Antiquarian Personalities and Episodes*, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS7402/4.

<sup>17</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 8.

<sup>18</sup> See folder titled 'Suspension of Commission', RCAHMS, shelfmark 100/B.

<sup>19</sup> See *Commission Estimates in Minute Book, 1908-1952*, RCAHMS.

reducing the staff to four.<sup>20</sup> Not until 1925 did the Commission benefit from more favourable financial agreement with the Government though funding would not return to pre-war levels until 1926.<sup>21</sup> The work of the Commission was further interrupted in the inter-war years with the Commission relocating four times in twenty years.<sup>22</sup>

The Commission continued its work during the inter-war period in much the same manner it had before 1914. During this inter-war period two inventories were of particular note: the Western Isles, and Orkney and Shetland. They represent two of the largest inventories that the Commission undertook before those of Peeblesshire and Argyll. The Western Isles inventory, delayed by the First World War, took some twenty years to complete (this was because it was undertaken only by Calder and Watson and because of the difficulty of traversing the terrain). Commission staff were already working in the Western Isles before the outbreak of World War 1 carrying out preliminary surveys. The inventory of Orkney and Shetland posed a similar problem, but this inventory, like those of Curle, was the work of one individual, Charles Calder. Calder began working on the inventory in the 1920s, but it was not published until 1946 despite being completed before 1939.

Despite the rate at which the Commission published inventories between 1919 and 1939, there was little change at the organisation. Under Mackenzie's stewardship the Commission continued with its fieldwork as it had under Curle. Much of this can be attributed to Mackenzie's ambivalence towards fieldwork. Instead, he sought to focus on more academic understandings that could be drawn from the Commission's work. Unfortunately for Mackenzie the 'old guard' among the Commissioners were 'running out of steam' and this allowed Curle and the newly appointed George MacDonald to exert their considerable influence.<sup>23</sup> MacDonald was quick to grow tired of what he saw as Mackenzie's failure to run the Commission efficiently. Attention was drawn towards the lag time between fieldwork and publication, and MacDonald attributed this to Mackenzie's academic nature and pursuit of analytical detail rather than working up field surveys.<sup>24</sup> Mackenzie's continued ambivalence toward fieldwork alienated him from the staff. It was not productive for an organisation so focused on fieldwork to be led by someone with so little interest in it.<sup>25</sup> Mackenzie's unwillingness to engage with fieldwork and ineptitude in administrative matters led to his being ushered out of the Commission by mid-1935. John Dunbar would later write that Mackenzie whilst facing the 'full blast of Sir George's reforming zeal soon began to savour the attractions of scholarly retirement'.<sup>26</sup> It is worth reiterating, however, that despite Commissioner concerns that Mackenzie was not up to the job, he still oversaw a period of

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<sup>20</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> See *Commission Estimates in Minute Book, 1908-1952*, RCAHMS.

<sup>22</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 15.

<sup>23</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Angus Graham's *Antiquarian Personalities and Episodes*, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS7402/4

<sup>25</sup> Angus Graham's *Antiquarian Personalities and Episodes*, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS7402/4

<sup>26</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 18.

intense activity at the Commission during which seven inventories were completed and published, with a further three in various stages of completion by the time of his resignation in 1935.

The departure of Mackenzie in 1935 left the Commission again seeking a Secretary. As an established member of staff, it seemed certain that Watson would assume the role. Instead, it fell to a relatively unknown individual, Angus Graham who had returned to Scotland in 1933 having worked in the Canadian Forestry Commission. A wounded veteran of the First World War, he was an able and active field archaeologist, despite never fully recovering from his wounds. His appointment to the Commission, however, had little to do with his archaeological prowess and more to do with his friendship with Joseph Anderson and Alexander Curle. In the meantime, George Macdonald had assumed the role of Chairman, ensuring that the changes required under Mackenzie were now being implemented (this period, 1919-1935, is explored in chapter six with attention paid to the Commission's shift in focus towards academic rigour).

#### **4.4 ANGUS GRAHAM AND WWII (1935-1947)**

Angus Graham's tenure as Secretary began in 1935. One of the first tasks he faced at the Commission was to reinvigorate the organisation which, under Mackenzie, had become stale. Staff had continued to produce the inventories in much the same way that they had done twenty years earlier and Graham felt that the Commission's fieldwork staff should be bolstered by professionally-trained archaeologists. In the late 1930s, Graham recruited a handful of academically-trained archaeologists in order to reintroduce academic rigour to the work of the Commission. Despite this, the Commission faced a number of setbacks. The first of these was the loss of archaeologist James Corrie. Corrie had been working on the inventory of Roxburghshire when he had fallen terminally ill. He had been accompanied by the newly-appointed Kenneth Steer in the final months of his time at the Commission, who was to work with Corrie to ensure the completion of the inventory. Corrie's death in 1939 was a major setback. Like many staff, Corrie kept as many notes in his head as he did on paper: his passing hindered publication of the Roxburghshire inventory.<sup>27</sup> Kenneth Steer's first task after WWII would be to redo as much of the inventory as possible to complement and complete Corrie's work so that the Roxburghshire inventory could be published in a timely fashion. The second setback that Graham faced was WWII. Yet, despite fears that the War would lead to a second war-led shutdown, WWII actually offered the Commission an opportunity.

By 1941 the Commission had only a handful of staff, and Graham and Watson were the only individuals carrying out fieldwork. Since 1939, the office had been run by a skeleton staff as Graham tried to

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<sup>27</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*.

continue with inventory work, slowly piecing together the Edinburgh inventory while writing up the Roxburghshire inventory.<sup>28</sup> It soon became clear to Graham that the war might demand something new of the Commission. While working on the inventory of Edinburgh, Graham realised that many buildings were at threat of enemy action (particularly those that formed the Old Town area of the city): during the Great War, Scotland's capital had been attacked by German Zeppelins.<sup>29</sup> In response, Graham began to survey buildings on an emergency basis, seeking out Edinburgh's as yet unrecorded historic buildings and carrying out a rudimentary survey with the assistance of Baldwin Brown, an expert on Edinburgh's historical buildings.<sup>30</sup> Graham's efforts were noticed by the Scottish Office who suggested that the Commission might expand this programme to cover Scotland and document any buildings and monuments that were at threat from enemy action. Buildings and monuments along the coast were quickly surveyed to create a paper record of them. This was accompanied by Graham's own photographs, beginning in the field season of 1941, with Graham travelling around the country in search of threatened sites.

As the war in Europe intensified, so did the emergency survey programme. Accompanied by the Abercromby Professor of Archaeology, Vere Gordon Childe of the University of Edinburgh – recently appointed as a Commissioner – Graham and Watson were surveying buildings and monuments across the country.<sup>31</sup> They followed a simple system that differed little from the procedure used for the traditional inventory programme, mapping sites from the O.S. maps and visiting them in predetermined sequence. By 1942, and in recognition of the success of the emergency survey work being undertaken by the Commission, the Government suggested that they might expand this survey to cover those sites that might be damaged by friendly troop movements, camps and training grounds. This concern was of heightened importance as the Allies regrouped and began to prepare for the assault on Europe. To ensure that surveys were completed as quickly as possible, Graham and Childe only took photographs accompanied by written notes. The necessity for such a survey was no better demonstrated than when a Polish artillery company while on exercise, shelled a 'prominently placed, but entirely inoffensive, chambered cairn' as they were preparing to head to the front.<sup>32</sup> By the end of the War, Graham, Childe, and to a lesser extent, Watson, had taken some 2300 photographs and compiled a two-volume collection of notes which formed the paper record of the emergency surveys.<sup>33</sup> This record shared little with its inventory cousins, but it was arguably the first en masse emergency survey work that had been carried

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<sup>28</sup> See Graham's personal diaries, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS36/24.

<sup>29</sup> 'The Diary of A.O. Curle 1913-54', shelfmark MS33, RCAHMS.

<sup>30</sup> M. Cooper, Gerard Baldwin Brown, Edinburgh, and the Care of Ancient Monuments, *The Historic Environment* 4(2) (2013) 156-77, 156.

<sup>31</sup> It is worth noting that Vere Gordon Childe was appointed in the hope that his work on European prehistory might allow the Commission to benefit from these developing ideas. But, his arrival in 1942 and subsequent departure in 1946 did not allow Childe, or the Commission, the time necessary to allow these ideas to filter into the work of the organisation.

<sup>32</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 20.

<sup>33</sup> Progress Report 1939-1941, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/3.

out, certainly in the United Kingdom, and it would set a precedent for future rescue work (see chapter seven).

#### **4.5 POST-WAR (1947-1957)**

The Commission returned to full strength in 1947 with the majority of staff returning from military service and resuming survey work by 1949. Unlike the inter-war years, the financial climate was ‘more favourable’ allowing the Commission to increase its staff and ‘broaden the range of skills available’ with the aim of ‘raising the standards of recording and publication’.<sup>34</sup> By 1948 the Commission’s funding had almost doubled from what it had been in 1938. By 1958 it reached £14,433 per year.<sup>35</sup> This allowed Graham and his successor to realise the full potential of the Commission to address the inventory programme as well as other areas of archaeology.

In 1946, the Commission returned to its pre-war offices before moving to South Bridge in Edinburgh’s Old Town by the end of 1947. This was followed by a move to Coates Gardens at the western edge of Edinburgh’s New Town in 1957. Change was also afoot among the Commissioners with the majority now being academics rather than from the antiquarian establishment. As staff numbers increased and day-to-day organisation was taken over by a fledgling system of internal management, the Commissioners became more distanced from the majority of the staff. In the post-war years it became increasingly rare to see a Commissioner with staff in the field. Commissioners assumed the role of proof readers and advisors rather than active ‘agents’ in the field (see chapter 6), only interacting with the Commission when they arrived at Coates Gardens for the Commissioners’ meetings.

Perhaps the most significant development in the aftermath of WWII came during the 1950s in the form of aerial photography. While the Commission had flirted with the use of aerial photography before the war – Graham was well aware of its potential thanks to his correspondence with O.G.S. Crawford and J.K. St Joseph – its use was still not common within the Commission. This would quickly change. The first inventory to make significant use of aerial photography – some aerial photographs had appeared in the Fife inventory of 1933 – was that of Roxburghshire. This should not come as any surprise as the inventory was now, in the main, the product of Kenneth Steer who had returned from WWII after serving as an intelligence officer with the army and who had specialised in the use of aerial photography. Steer first used aerial photographs to complete the survey of Roxburghshire and to cover those monuments previously surveyed by Corrie. Not only did this save time, but ensured that an already delayed inventory was published sooner rather than later.

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<sup>34</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 23.

<sup>35</sup> See *Commission Estimates in Minute Book, 1908-1952*, RCAHMS.

Steer was determined to that the Commission made full use of the aerial photography resources available post-war. Shortly after the completion of the fieldwork for the inventory of Roxburghshire, he was already proposing other uses for the wealth of aerial photographs that covered the United Kingdom. By 1949 Steer had persuaded Graham and the Commissioners that they could use aerial photography to complete a survey of the so called marginal lands. Known as the Marginal Land Survey (MLS) it was hoped that this programme would document buildings and sites that were threatened from the Government's programme of self-sustainability in the advent of the Cold War (the influence of the MLS is examined in chapter seven, and its implications for the future of the Commission form the foundations of chapter eight). Afforestation, industrial development and agricultural development all placed strain on the marginal lands of the United Kingdom, and it was feared that any monuments to be found in these areas would be destroyed or damaged. It was argued that their being located in marginal lands had led to their being overlooked in favour of other monuments and so it was, indeed, prudent to secure a record of these sites. Aerial photography, Steer argued, would allow the Commission to quickly locate sites before sending field survey teams to document them. During the five years of the survey, some 300 unrecorded or unknown monuments were discovered.<sup>36</sup> Such was the success of this programme that the Commission did little else other than the MLS until 1955.<sup>37</sup> Commission minutes at the time are littered with the concerns of the Commissioners that the MLS was too distracting, diverting attention away from the traditional inventory programme; the MLS did not fall within the remit of the Royal Warrant to which the Commission was supposed to adhere.<sup>38</sup> But, the MLS did prove that the Commission could be flexible, and that it could break away from its traditional inventory programme. It would prove a valuable lesson in the years to come when the Commission tackled projects that fell outside the boundaries of the inventory programme. By the close of 1955, the MLS was complete and the Commission could refocus on the inventory programme, albeit with a new awareness of how helpful aerial photography could be. The MLS served as a 'dummy run' for a technique that would later be adopted by the Commission and used alongside the inventory programme to ensure the timely survey of monuments during any particular fieldwork season (see chapter seven).

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<sup>36</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 25.

<sup>37</sup> It is worth noting that despite the success of the MLS programme, and the desire among staff and Commissioners that it should be completed as swiftly as possible, Steer never proposed an end date to the project. The open ended nature of the MLS meant that it was able to envelop other Commission projects, notably the inventory programme. Although the MLS would ultimately provide a source of knowledge of the inventories – staff were able to consult the MLS upon its completion for monuments that might require fuller survey before being published in the inventories – it sapped at the organisation's resources ensuring that for the six years that the MLS took place the inventory programme was stalled.

<sup>38</sup> See Programmes of Work and Progress Reports, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/3.

#### 4.6 GRAHAM RETIRES, KENNETH STEER AND ‘RESCUE’ TAKE OVER (1957-1975)

Angus Graham retired as Secretary in 1957, taking up a role as one of the Commissioners. Kenneth Steer became the Commission’s fourth Secretary. Existing histories of the Commission often have it that Steer was one of the most pioneering of the organisation’s secretaries somewhat ignoring the groundwork laid down by Graham. Steer was a product of Graham’s desire to improve the Commission’s academic credentials. By 1957 he was well established at the Commission and within the wider antiquarian community, but it would be during his time as Secretary that he would make his mark. As Secretary he oversaw, organised and instigated a number of changes that shaped the Commission into what we see today. Prior to Steer’s arrival staff numbers never exceeded ten. It was only by 1961 that staff numbers ventured into double figures. Future organisational mergers were significant not only because of the influx of staff that they brought with them, but because of the effect they had upon the role of the Secretary. It was during this period that this position would become one almost wholly concerned with management – not in the field, but in the office.

One of Steer’s first actions was to oversee the appointment of a photographer. Before 1957 the Commission had never had a full-time photographer and those members of staff that did take photographs never had any formal training (this is explored in detail in chapter six). Photographs were taken by staff members with their own cameras with no guarantee of quality and as accompaniments to detailed drawings. As the Commissioners recognised the importance of photographs to the inventories – not least because favourable reviews commended the existence of photographs alongside drawings – it was decided that they could no longer rely on ad hoc photography and should, instead, employ a full time professional photographer.<sup>39</sup> Geoffrey Quick was appointed in September 1957 having previously worked as a photographer at the Science Museum in London. Quick became the head photographer at the Commission and ran the photographic department from 1957 until his retirement in 1992. He developed a number of new techniques that advanced the quality of the Commission’s work and set new standards for photography within what was becoming the ‘heritage sector’. Quick’s appointment, and later the appointment of Ian Scott in 1959, marked the start of a ‘sustained endeavour to raise [the] standards of archaeological and architectural recording’, which would eventually see the Commission producing a quality of work that was as high (if not higher) than similar work being undertaken across both the United Kingdom and the continent.<sup>40</sup>

The expansion in numbers of the staff at the Commission during this period was one of a number of significant changes that were to occur during Steer’s tenure as Secretary. Under Steer’s leadership the Commission would begin what would become its most challenging undertaking: the inventory of

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<sup>39</sup> See Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>40</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 33.



Argyll, begun in the late 1960s, the Commission not publishing the final volume of the inventory until 1992.<sup>41</sup> It was a sizeable undertaking for an organisation of the size of the Commission, one which is reflected in the length of the survey itself.<sup>42</sup> The policy of the Commission – laid out during the early meetings of the Commission in 1908 – had been to undertake one inventory close to Edinburgh while another was undertaken that would require staff to work away from the capital.<sup>43</sup> This policy allowed the Commission to have two inventories in progress at any given time.<sup>44</sup> During the 1960s, Commission staff were surveying both Peeblesshire and Argyll. With the completion of the inventory of Peeblesshire in 1967, the staff's attention was directed towards Argyll. It is against this context that we might understand the significance of the Argyll inventory. Occupying the Commission for nearly forty years, the inventory dominated its work and defined the organisation itself. Many of the techniques and advances made by the Commission during this inventory are still being used by the organisation – in its current guise as part of Historic Environment Scotland – even in the face of the latest digital survey methods. Today, the Argyll inventory has an infamous, even revered, reputation because of the amount of time it took to complete.<sup>45</sup>

While Argyll may have been dictating the everyday work of the Commission, the organisation was changing in other ways between 1960 and 1975. Its traditional role as an institution dedicated to survey was beginning to change. In 1966, the Commission absorbed the Scottish National Building Record (SNBR), which would become the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) and result in the Commission becoming one of Scotland's national collections in the 1990s. Managing the National Building Records throughout the country had been the cause of a debate – England and Wales each had their own version of the NMRS and were also debating what to do with them – and the Secretaries of the three Ancient Monuments Commissions had been involved in what became a heated discussion over how best to resolve the issue of the SNBR.<sup>46</sup> Following debate with the Ancient Monuments Board it was decided that the respective Commissions should absorb the Building Records of their nations. This might seem insignificant since both the NMRS and the Commission were concerned with documenting buildings; however the two organisations served different purposes and the absorption of one into the

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<sup>41</sup> Preliminary work had already been underway for some time, but it was not until the 1960s that the staff of the Commission were regularly in the field surveying in Argyll with the teams split between field seasons in Peeblesshire and Argyll.

<sup>42</sup> It is worth noting that when the Commission began this survey the staff numbered no more than ten individuals. Although the organisation would expand rapidly during the course of the Argyll survey there was always a demand for more staff members to ensure speedy completion of the inventory.

<sup>43</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 2.

<sup>44</sup> Over time the Commission would also send staff to what might be considered smaller or minor inventories. Notably staff were engaged in surveys of Lanarkshire and Perthshire whilst undertaking the inventories of Peeblesshire and Argyll. This policy was only made possible by the slow increase in the number of field staff.

<sup>45</sup> Argyll would be the final county-by-county inventory: in its aftermath, the Commission began to focus on much smaller, local, inventories.

<sup>46</sup> See Future of SNBR Folder, The National Archive Kew, shelfmark WORK 14/2824

other caused conflict.<sup>47</sup> Bringing the NMRS under the administration of the Commission was also significant because it ensured that for the first time it had a function that was permanent in nature: that of maintaining an archive. The NMRS would eventually become the official repository for all government-funded excavations and has latterly become one of Scotland's largest collections of photographs, maps and drawings of buildings from prehistoric to contemporary times.<sup>48</sup> For Steer, it was a development that saw him spending more of his time in administration rather than working in the field as his predecessors had. The absorption of the NMRS saw the role of Secretary finally become that of an administrator rather than an active field agent.<sup>49</sup>

Steer also oversaw the development of Commission's relationship to what, at the time, was labelled as 'rescue archaeology'. Like the NMRS, the pursuit of rescue archaeology, or perhaps better, 'rescue projects', was one which saw the Commission diverge from its traditional inventory programme. Rescue is, of course, the very reason that the Commission was brought into existence, an inventory being an attempt to rescue monuments from the threat of loss and preserve their memory in published inventories. In the aftermath of the emergency surveys of WWII and the MLS of the 1950s, the Commission found itself engaged in other acts of rescue archaeology.<sup>50</sup> Discovering monuments at risk, and worth rescuing had, until the advent of aerial photography, relied upon word of mouth and simply knowing which monuments might be at risk.<sup>51</sup> Prior to the 1960s the Commission responded to threat rather than pre-emptively recording a site for fear of threat or for its own sake. The growing use of aerial photography at the Commission allowed the organisation to replicate the MLS programme nationwide, or at least use aerial photography to identify potential sites across the nation. This became more pressing with the Town and Country Planning Acts of 1969 and 1972 which provided the Commission with the legal framework to ensure that monuments or buildings were properly recorded in the face of potentially destructive development.<sup>52</sup> Planners would have to notify the Commission of any future work in order to allow the organisation time to record any threatened sites or buildings if necessary. The provisions of the Town and Country Planning Acts gave the Commission, for the first time, a remit to carry out a country-wide survey of any historic building that might be lost in the face of development.

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<sup>47</sup> The differences between the SNBR and the Commission had become clear during the Emergency Surveys of the WWII. The SNBR viewed buildings holistically, taking photographs of the building in its entirety, while the Commission was interested in architectural details of interest and refrained from documenting the entire building.

<sup>48</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 35.

<sup>49</sup> Steer was initially hostile to the absorption of the SNBR on the grounds that it would distract the Commission from its inventory programme.

<sup>50</sup> Staff members were often keen to pursue their own rescue projects or lobby the Commission to engage more frequently with potential sites in need of rescue.

<sup>51</sup> Even in its first year of operation the Commission was responding to requests for what 'rescue' surveys of particular sites, notably Newark Castle in Ayrshire during 1909.

<sup>52</sup> See meeting 24/2/1960, see Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

With the arrival of other organisations and the general expansion of the Commission's remit, the body was, by 1975, operating far beyond the scope of the original Royal Warrant. This period was further complicated by staff-led excavations. It had been Commission policy since its inception to only survey monuments. It proved impossible, however, to prohibit curious archaeologists from conducting even the most rudimentary excavations, particularly if something caught their eye during a survey. Alexander Ormiston Curle had indulged in the excavation of a chambered cairn as early as 1909, although he chalked this up as work undertaken during his holiday.<sup>53</sup> Most excavations undertaken by the Commission before WWII were carried out during an individual's holiday time. In the case of Curle and Angus Graham, it was often difficult to discern where official work ended and holidays began.<sup>54</sup> With the advent of rescue archaeology in the 1950s, excavations began to take over the Commission's work. Such was the proliferation of excavations among staff members that the Commissioners believed that the inventory programme was often falling behind schedule in favour of staff-led digs. Excavations, on Commission time, were, for the most part, brought to an end in the late 1960s, staff being instructed to focus on the national inventory and the developing rescue projects.<sup>55</sup>

During the 1970s the Commission developed its own aerial photography department (see chapter seven). Staff had been continually developing new techniques and testing new technologies to improve the quality of the survey and find new methods of survey that would make their life in the field easier. The most noticeable of these developments occurred with aerial photography. In 1975, the Commission established its aerial photography unit. Backed by Steer, Gordon Maxwell, a senior archaeological investigator outlined a proposal for the aerial photography unit and, with the help of Steer, won favour with the Rescue Committee of the Ancient Monuments Board.<sup>56</sup> This ensured that the Commission was not only concerned with rescuing buildings, but also actively involved in rescue archaeology.<sup>57</sup> The Commission had already proved that aerial photography could play a vital role in facilitating the rescue of sites across the country, so the question of acquiring funding was less fraught with difficulty. It was also argued that it was becoming financially unviable to continue to make use of J.K. St Joseph's Cambridge University Aerial Photography Department, and that for £1500 per annum, the Commission could establish its own department.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Alexander Ormiston Curle, Exploration of a chambered cairn at Achaidh, Spinningdale, in the parish of Creich, Sutherland, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Soeland* (1909) 44, 104-111.

<sup>54</sup> Interviews with former staff members reveal a degree of confusion when it came to discerning what work had been undertaken for whom and when, and whether or not it was official business of the Commission.

<sup>55</sup> Programme of Work 1953, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/3.

<sup>56</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 38.

<sup>57</sup> The Commission was now part of a larger UK-wide rescue project which was no better highlighted than in the small print of the arrangements with the Rescue Committee whereby the Commission's AP Unit had to be made available for any rescue project that the Ancient Monuments Board felt should be pursued.

<sup>58</sup> Total Commission expenditure at the time was around £233700, funding for the AP Unit accounted for 0.6% of the organisation's funding.

The completion of the inventory programme in 1992 saw the end of the county-by-county system of fieldwork. The arrival of new members of staff who had been educated in landscape archaeology saw a shift away from the “postage stamp” mentality of surveying the nation’s monuments towards a more considered view of an entire county’s ancient history.<sup>59</sup> In particular one might draw attention to *Canmore*, the Commission’s digital archive. This was the Commission’s, and now Historic Environment Scotland’s, online database. It has become the inventory, a list that is as complete as possible of the sites surveyed and recorded by the Commission which might be considered the national inventory of Scotland. During the 1980s, and certainly into the 1990s, the Commission was looking towards digital records as the future of the national inventory. This served two purposes. Whilst the inventory programme had been comprehensive in its documenting of Scotland’s ancient monuments, it was in an analogue format, and therefore not easily updateable. If only in minor details the inventories were often out of date only months after they were published. Revisions were simply impracticable. A digital system, however, would allow site records to be stored, updated and edited on a real time basis, ensuring that records were always up-to-date or, at least, capable of being amended. The county-by-county inventory system, exemplified by the paper bound volumes, was a product of the previous century. In the wake of the completion of the inventory programme, a new modern Commission was looking toward a system of recording fit for the next century rather than being an echo of the previous one. The era of the printed, hardback-bound, volume inventory was over. A new memory practice was required (this forms the basis of my examination of the development of the Commission’s database service, *Canmore*, in chapter eight).

#### 4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined in brief the history of the Commission, drawing attention to key moments in the organisation’s development and signposting those moments examined in later chapters. In the introduction, I outlined the period with which this chapter concerns itself, concluding that while this examination of the Commission’s history begins in 1908, the exact end point for the study is less certain. This in part is attributed to the nature of the archival material that I have examined; there simply is not enough of the ‘right’ material in the ‘right’ format for me to explore after the ‘ending’ phase of my thesis in the 1980s. The development of *Canmore* and the pursuit of the new online database in the Commission’s self-proclaimed ‘era of information’ saw a period where material was kept as a digital record rather than an analogue one. The minutes of the Commission, internal and external correspondence, memos and decisions which in the past were recorded on paper, were now stored

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<sup>59</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

digitally. This digital world has yet to be archived by the Commission, or made fully accessible to allow research to be carried out into this period of the organisation.

This digital information technology brought about new ways of managing information and transformed internal management practices. While the Commission adopted new digital memory practices, these new practices paralleled a breakdown of traditional internal management practices. The mundane day-to-day documents that account for everyday life in the Commission were either lost to the digital ‘cloud’ or, if they were in paper format, simply lost. Put bluntly, the digital era, the obsession with going digital and maintaining a digital record of Scotland’s monuments, took precedence over maintaining traditional forms of internal management practices. In this new digital era, the Commission changed from an organisation reliant on paper to one which employed new digital practices in managing its inventories and throughout the organisation.



## 5. RESEARCHING THE PAST FROM THE PRESENT: EXAMINING THE COMMISSION'S ARCHIVE

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main resource for this research has been the archive held by the former Commission, now Historic Environment Scotland. I have drawn principally on the Commission's manuscript archive and its uncatalogued human resources – also known as business administration or corporate affairs – records. In addition, I have made use of material that has been accessioned (but not catalogued) within the archive and made use of material from the National Archive at Kew and the University of Aberdeen archives. My reading of the archive, and the resulting historical narrative that I have crafted, reflects these disparate fragmented sources. The richness of more personal archive sources for the early years of the Commission (especially prior to WWII) compared with the clerical and administrative paperwork of the post-war years has influenced the history that is possible to tell. I have drawn, where possible, on personal testimony from staff members who served at the Commission from the 1950s to supplement the archival material.

This chapter explores some of the archival theory and practical considerations relating to the archive that has guided me in researching the work of the Commission. I begin by exploring the formation of the Commission's archive, and how its establishment created a particular archival space. I examine both the politics of the archive and the role of memory in the Commission's history before considering the ways in which I have constructed the narrative framework of the thesis.

The study of the Commission represents an opportunity to study smaller, local, stories which can be used as a window to view wider, 'sometimes global, historical geographies' of 'shifting relations between society and environment'.<sup>1</sup> Set against the context of the Commission, these smaller local stories allow us a view the world of twentieth-century antiquarianism. The archive of the Commission is littered with such 'small stories', moments of day-to-day life at the organisation and how the staff undertook completion of the national inventory. These moments have been overlooked in previous histories of the Commission: while they may only tell of one or two incidents during fieldwork, or of life in the office, they nevertheless document the workings of the Commission, in ways which illustrate the quotidian nature of Commission practice. These 'personal archive[s]' tell stories, which individually may mean little. Taken together, however, these stories are capable of providing a narrative, 'a more complex network of knowledge and action'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> H. Lorimer, Caught in the Nick of Time: Archives and Fieldwork. In: DeLyser *et al* (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Human Geography*, London, 2009, 267.

<sup>2</sup> H. Lorimer, The geographical field course as active archive, *Cultural Geographies* 10 (2003), 278-308, 303.

## 5.2 ARCHIVAL CONSIDERATIONS

The political nature of the archive might lead us to be tempted to assume that there may always be a desire to marginalise or silence those whose views did not conform to that of the institution or whose ethos did not echo that of the institution or prominent individuals of the time.<sup>3</sup> This may be true in cases where the researcher's reading of material in the archive does not paint an institution, or the archive itself, in a favourable light. The 'archive [is not] an unproblematic space' where we may study free from challenge.<sup>4</sup> In the context of this research there have been moments when the politics of the institution have attempted to shape interpretations of the archival material, problematizing the task of constructing a history of the Commission which recognises, but is not guided by institutional memories, or indeed challenges *my* history of the organisation.<sup>5</sup> Although it has been suggested that the historical geographer is in a position where 'theoretically' he [sic] may have a 'greater degree of impartiality' due to 'distancing' from the 'object of study', such impartiality may be threatened not only by the politics of the researcher, but also by the institution.<sup>6</sup> It is crucial, therefore, to ask 'whom, when, why, how was the archive created? Who did the appraisal, when, why, how?'.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the construction of a history of the Commission from its archive ensures that the researcher becomes an 'active agent' in 'protecting evidence in the face of [...] changing societal organisations'.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the Commission's archive, and the history it might tell, are an example, on an institutional scale, of Berger's observation that 'national archives were important for the legitimation of nation-states'.<sup>9</sup>

Although the archives of the Commission are not national in the same sense as the National Records of Scotland (they have, however, formed part of Scotland's national collections since the early 1990s), they are linked with the history of Scotland's past as records of antiquarianism and archaeology. The Commission's documents tell of the individuals and the organisations that strove to understand Scotland's past through which the histories of Scotland may then be constructed and told. Antiquarianism, after all, seeks to understand the past. The archive provides legitimacy and identity: it

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<sup>3</sup> T. Cook, Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms, *Archival Science* 13 (2013), 95-120, 101.

Cook, Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms, 101.

<sup>4</sup> C. W. J. Withers, Constructing 'the geographical archive', *Area* 34(3) (2002), 303-311, 303.

<sup>5</sup> This issue of contesting the findings of this thesis has become particularly prevalent when discussing the needs of the institution versus the concerns of the staff. Later chapters consider the role of the institution in creating a record of a site, such that the record becomes more important than the site and should that site be destroyed, the institution, as its own entity, is not concerned. This has been rebutted by staff who argue that they, as members of staff, are concerned with the fate of monuments. The question of defining the needs of the institution versus that of the staff has, in the case of this research, proven particularly challenging.

<sup>6</sup> A. R. H. Baker, The dead don't answer questionnaires: researching and writing historical geography, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 21(2) (1997), 231-243, 232.

<sup>7</sup> E. Ketelaar, Tacit narratives: the meaning of archives, *Archival Science* 1 (2001), 131-141, 140.

<sup>8</sup> Cook, Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms, 113.

<sup>9</sup> S. Berger, The role of national archives in constructing national master narratives in Europe, *Archival Science* 13 (2013), 1-22, 2.



is the evidence supporting historical enquiry and helps to dispel any ‘insecurity’ that may stem from a lack of understanding of who we *really* are.<sup>10</sup> The work of Dritsas and Haig considers the archive in achieving and protecting a Rhodesian identity. We may reasonably compare the Commission’s archive, in defining an identity for the Commission as an institution. The creation of the Rhodesian archive was a response to the fear that the ‘collective memory [of the country] was in danger of being lost’ in much the same way as this research is a response to the fear that the history of the Commission will be ‘lost’ in light of its amalgamation with Historic Scotland.

For Thomas Osborne, the public archive, or even the institutional archive, plays an important role in shaping a sense of identity, be that of a nation or, as in the case of the Commission, an institution. Identity is shaped through knowledge produced in the archive. How the archive achieves this is, as Osborne notes, subject to the power relations between the public, the archive, and the archivist.<sup>11</sup> ‘It is not’ as Harvey-Brown notes, ‘that archivists do not tell the whole truth about reality. It is that they *cannot* tell it’.<sup>12</sup> For Osborne the archive is ‘never innocent’; it has an agency over those who use the archive, and the material which is accessioned therein.<sup>13</sup> Access and control leads to an oversight over the way in which the archive functions and, in the case of public archives, the relationship of the archive to public memory. It becomes a process of monitoring how the public interacts with the archive. This relationship can also be applied to an institution, but what is added to the archive is controlled by how the institution wishes to remember its past. The agency of this process of remembering, shapes and moulds understandings of the past. The archive, however, is never able to fully predict who might seek to use the archival space, and while it is there to ‘serve memory’, its ‘*ultimate* ends are necessarily indeterminate’. The material in an archive may have been ‘deposited for many purposes, but one of its potentialities is that it awaits a constituency or public whose limits are of necessity unknown’.<sup>14</sup> That is, we can never be sure *how* the archive will serve memory. With this in mind it becomes impossible to predict, exactly, the ways in which the archive might shape an individual’s understanding of the past. There is an overriding process of selection that dictates how researchers interact with archival material.

### 5.3 COLLABORATION WITH THE PAST

The archives of an institution, therefore, present a number of challenges to the researcher, perhaps especially one working in collaboration. The ‘political nature of the system’ is something that the ‘organisational memory system [is] very aware of’ and it is an issue to which the researcher must be

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<sup>10</sup> L. Dritsas and J. Haig, An archive of identity: the Central African Archives and Southern Rhodesian history, *Archival Science* 14(1) (2014), 35-54.

<sup>11</sup> T. Osborne, The ordinariness of the archive, *History of the Human Sciences* 12(2) (1999) 51-64, 55-56.

<sup>12</sup> Harvey-Brown cited in H. Freshwater, The allure of the archive, *Poetics Today* 24(4) (2003) 729-758, 740.

<sup>13</sup> Osborne, The ordinariness of the archive, 56.

<sup>14</sup> Osborne, The ordinariness of the archive, 55.

alert.<sup>15</sup> It should be noted, however, that this ‘memory system’ may, as in the case of Commission, be a relatively new feature within the organisation (despite the Commissioners raising, tentatively, the issue of the process of archiving as early as 1951, no real steps towards the creation of an archive were taken until the late 1960s when the Commission absorbed the Scottish National Building Record). Prior collections of archival material may not have relied on any organisational system of memory and so we must question how they came to being.

For Blouin, archives become a ‘vehicle through which power preserves itself through history’. The question of what an organisation stores to maintain power should, therefore, be at the forefront of the mind of the researcher.<sup>16</sup> The archivist is ‘an active selector of the archive’ and this process, filtered through academic history, can eventually ‘consciously’ create ‘public memory’.<sup>17</sup> The institution, or the archivist, plays an active and deliberate role in shaping what might later become a public resource capable of shaping public knowledge. Cook contends that ‘far from neutral and objective, and guarding what was inherited or received, the archivist determined what would be received by archives, with inevitable subjectivity entering that decision-making process’.<sup>18</sup> For the Commission, this means to hold power over the antiquarian history and archaeology of Scotland. The assumption that the archivist holds an authority of knowledge over the contents of their archive, however, does not always hold true. The archivist serves to oversee the collections and the material contained within the archive. It is a role that requires an understanding of the collection, but not what is within that collection. Their authority is, then, a practical one, allowing the careful navigation of the materials held within the collection.

The archive is rarely the product of a conscious decision to collect material. More often than not the record keeping is born out of serendipity; someone decided that something was worth keeping and over time this slowly built into a collection of material. Latterly, that collection of “stuff” may be ordered and indexed and eventually form something that we would recognise as an archive. The fact that gaps exist in the archive are a human product, the consequence of someone making a choice which has resulted in some material not being archived, thrown away or being lost. Whether or not there was a strategy behind the process is, however, less clear. What was kept, what survived, and what was discarded simply remains in the archive through serendipity; much of the Commission’s archive, and certainly the material pertinent to this thesis exists by chance rather than by being catalogued and archived by an archivist (the reasons behind this will be considered in chapter eight). Only recently has much of the material accessioned been entered into the archive: many of the files referenced in this thesis remain uncatalogued. Finally, some of the material that exists in the archive may not have been

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<sup>15</sup> E. Ketelaar, Sharing: collected memories in communities of records, *Archives and Manuscripts* 33 (2005), 44-61, 44.

<sup>16</sup> F. Blouin, Archivists, mediation, and constructs of social memory, *Archival Issues* 24(2) (1999), 101-112, 106.

<sup>17</sup> Cook, Evidence, memory, identity and community: four shifting archival paradigms, 108.

<sup>18</sup> Cook, Evidence, memory, identity and community: four shifting archival paradigms, 108.

collected as a conscious reflection of institutional strategy. It may simply be ‘leftovers’, ‘stuff’ that just happen to have found its way into the archive: ‘the archive is made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past *and* from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve that just ended up there’.<sup>19</sup>

Even after material has been indexed and catalogued, it awaits interpretation. ‘Nothing happens to this stuff’ until someone makes use of it.<sup>20</sup> The individual researcher must always be aware that this ‘stuff’ is not the product of carefully managed processes of archiving, but often, the outcome of ad hoc decisions resulting in the collection of material considered of value, but not necessarily of long term analytical significance.

The records stored in the archive are, therefore, a reflection of a politicised process, one where the organisation and those who act as archivists make conscious decisions to record and store some materials over others. This may not be the result of attempts to hide some unwanted past of the organisation, but rather a reflection that an organisation’s archive will only hold what is deemed of value, what paints the picture that others wish people to see. It may ignore, deliberately or otherwise, records which could have played a role in developing a richer, deeper history, not because it seeks to ignore or hide this history, but because its importance within the organisation was not recognised by the organization in the same way that might have been recognised by an outside researcher who might have attributed importance to it. As Blouin states:

For in actual archives, though the bundles may be mountainous, there isn’t, in fact, very much there. The archive is not potentially made up of everything, as is human memory; and it is not the fathomless and timeless place in which nothing goes away, as is the unconscious. The archive is made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and from the used fragmentation that no one intended to preserve and just ended up there.<sup>21</sup>

The archival researcher must, therefore, be alert to these processes and understand not only how their own work interacts and alters the context of the material held by the archive, but also how the very processes that constructed that archive will influence how the researcher uses the archival material. It is important to recognise that the archive is a particular knowledge space where power is held by the archivist, the material itself and the researcher.<sup>22</sup>

The process of selection in the archive is two-fold. First, we might think of the ways in which material ends up in the archive before we consider the processes which affect our own choice of what material to make use of when conducting archival research. It is an entirely constructed and subjective process,

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<sup>19</sup> C. Steedman, The space of memory: in an archive, *History of the Human Sciences* 11(4) (1998) 65-83, 67.

<sup>20</sup> Steedman, The space of memory, 67.

<sup>21</sup> Blouin, Archivists, mediation, and constructs of social memory, 106.

<sup>22</sup> T. Osborne, The ordinariness of the archive, *History of the Human Sciences* 12(2) (1999) 51-64, 63.

one which shapes both the memories held in the archive and the nature of the knowledge produced by those memories. The archive is, as Steedman notes, ‘made up from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past *and* from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and just ended up there’.<sup>23</sup> Thus, however one examines the archive it is never a site of unity or wholeness, fragmentation always prevails. It is a haphazard process that requires particular attentiveness to the *how* behind something being or not being in an archival record. In discussing institutional archives Bradley notes that ‘there is an arbitrariness here, despite the cataloguing practices of a series of archivists [and thus] the historian is presented with another role [...to] dig through the accreted layers to uncover the crucial potsherd, the gold filament’.<sup>24</sup> The researcher must attempt to make something whole from the archive. This ensures that each archive, and each experience of research in the archive, is unique, informed by the individual character of the particular archive in question.<sup>25</sup>

It is worth, at this point, drawing attention to what Freshwater describes as ‘curators control’, that is, those ‘voices [...] given the opportunity to speak’ from the archive. For Freshwater, the archival researchers ‘serve as a conduit between the past and the contemporary public’, and thus ‘their attitude toward the material they study ought to be a central concern for archive theory’. This relationship, between the public archive and the researcher, is of particular relevance to this thesis, not least because of its collaborative nature, but more particularly because one of the aims of this project is to capture moments of the Commission’s past which might serve to remember the legacy of the organisation.

‘The collection and storage of text in an archive means that curators of facts and information now authorize and oversee what was once a performance of individual recitation. It might be expected that there is a high price to pay for this guardianship’. Moreover, Freshwater continues, ‘every archive has undergone a process of selection, during which recorded information may have been excluded and discarded as well as preserved’.<sup>26</sup> As Bowker argues, ‘the archive, consistently and actively engages in the forgetting of other sets [of information]. This exclusionary principle is, I argue, the source of the archive’s jussive power.’ Bowker continues this point noting that ‘the act of rendering memorable does not mean that at any stage it will be remembered’. For Bowker, ‘one of the main jobs that paper archives do is to consolidate a classification system that makes it possible to forget the particular’.<sup>27</sup> Drawing on government archives, and the ways in which authorized guardianship dictates how the researcher engages with the material to hand, Freshwater alludes to the ways in which the ‘stuff’ of institutions becomes archived. It is a process that follows Bowker’s analysis that sheer volume of paper permits the telling of particular stories over others. Governmental ‘bureaucratic detritus was produced and compiled

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<sup>23</sup> Steedman, *The space of memory*, 67.

<sup>24</sup> H. Bradley, *The seductions of the archive: voices lost and found*, *History of the Human Sciences* 12(2) (1999) 107-122, 113.

<sup>25</sup> Osborne, *The ordinariness of the archive*, 53-54.

<sup>26</sup> Freshwater, *The allure of the archive*, 739.

<sup>27</sup> G. Bowker, *Memory Practices in the Sciences*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2008, 17.

by men who had no apprehension of its future use. They were not aware that their notes, memos, and reports would one day come under public scrutiny and no doubt would have been very surprised to learn that they would be of academic interest'.<sup>28</sup> This is no less true of the Commission, its Secretaries and staff. There is little in the material held in the archive to indicate that the Commission Secretaries, Commissioners, or indeed staff, were aware of the potential of their letters, minutes and other general work to enter an archive. This is, in part, attributed to the fact that the Commission never envisaged the creation of a proper archive until the late 1970s. Perhaps certain members of staff did not envisage their personal writings appearing in the archive, and this is where it is possible to see evidence of official paperwork not telling the whole story. The typical writings of the Commission tend to hold, as Freshwater writes of government archives, 'many dry, formal letters, which indicate that their writers were well aware of their possible participation in the public sphere'. Through this process 'it seems possible to make the past live and suppressed voices speak'.<sup>29</sup> It may be that these voices were not *suppressed*; rather they were overlooked or ignored in the process of constructing the archive, masked by the other materials given preference during the process of accession and cataloguing. The personal interests, and expertise of the archivist in charge of this process may contribute to the drowning out of some voices rather than others in the materials of archive. It is, as Freshwater argues, the very construction of the archive as a series of fragments that 'scatters the contribution of each individual', a process which presents a challenge to the archival researcher who hopes to construct a full and complete story. This uniqueness, a product of aforementioned fragmentation, creates what Helen Freshwater calls, an archival 'allure' which draws the researchers to particular stories held within the archive.<sup>30</sup>

This thesis tries to cast light on the everyday activities of the Commission, the day-to-day practices that facilitated the production of the national inventory, the undertaking of 'rescue' work and, laterally, the creation of the archive. In doing so, I have attended to what Osborne labels the 'ordinariness' of the archive; the mundane.<sup>31</sup> Through exploring such mundane material I hope to uncover what Lorimer calls the (extra)ordinary in the ordinariness of the archival records.<sup>32</sup> For Osborne the 'mundane can be anywhere', in the files of an institution, personal family records or in local libraries.<sup>33</sup> The archive allows for the exploration of the 'ongoing mundane facts' in a way which other methods of historical research may not so easily capture.<sup>34</sup> 'Through an examination of the archive's contents, one perceives the ebb and flow of daily life in the office: working relationships develop and shift, and the balance of power changes over time'.<sup>35</sup> Freshwater notes here that the archive can tell of the day-to-day, or the

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<sup>28</sup> Freshwater, *The allure of the archive*, 736

<sup>29</sup> Freshwater, *The allure of the archive*, 738.

<sup>30</sup> Freshwater, *The allure of the archive*.

<sup>31</sup> Osborne, *The ordinariness of the archive*.

<sup>32</sup> H. Lorimer, *Telling small stories: spaces of knowledge and the practice of geography*, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28(2) (2003) 197-217.

<sup>33</sup> Osborne, *The ordinariness of the archive*, 59.

<sup>34</sup> Osborne, *The ordinariness of the archive*, 60.

<sup>35</sup> Freshwater, *The allure of the archive*, 737.

mundane as Osborne labels it, allowing for an understanding of how, in this case, an institution functioned and developed over time. It is an attention to the smaller stories that permits the fuller understanding of an institution. It is the mundane nature of the archive, and the opportunity to explore the daily life that can prove to be, as Freshwater describes it, an ‘allure’ for the archival researcher.<sup>36</sup> For Harriet Bradley, this ‘allure’ is also the seduction of the archive; an opportunity to uncover the ordinary. Bradley contests Osborne’s description of the archive as a site of the ordinary, as a site of ‘banality’, and instead she ‘stress[es] the pleasures, seductions and illusions of archival work’.<sup>37</sup> For Bradley, like Lorimer, the ‘thrill’ of the archive is finding the (extra)ordinary and creating, as Steedman alludes to, a ‘dream world’ where the historical researcher is able to recreate the past in their minds.<sup>38</sup> For Bowker ‘what is stored in the archive is not facts, but disaggregated classifications that can at will be reassembled to take the form of facts about the world’.<sup>39</sup>

My role is, therefore, connected to an institution’s desire to preserve its memory, to leave a reminder of its role in the development of antiquarianism in Scotland. Doing so also ensures that this research is intrinsically linked to the internal politics of the Commission and subject to its influences. This raises the question of how researchers interact with the politics of the archive, and how they account for the agenda of an archivist versus the agenda of the researcher. Whilst both may ultimately share the same end, it is always likely that there will be a degree of disagreement, perhaps even contestation, over the manner and the style in which that end is presented and interpreted. This is particularly prevalent, as is the case with this research, when the institution and researcher are in collaboration. In the case of the institution there are internal politics which may seek to imprint a particular interpretation of the archive upon the researcher. The conventional and accepted view of the archive and the material held therein may be the view which the institution wishes the researcher to hold, even if it goes against the researcher’s reading of the material. These politics likely shaped what the archive holds, defining what was and was not kept. As Ketelaar remarks, by ‘remember[ing] some things’ we must forget ‘a lot’.<sup>40</sup> The researcher, therefore, needs to be aware that while much may remain, that material exists because of a process that dictated that some material would not survive in the archive. Cook notes that ‘archives are constructed memories about the past’.<sup>41</sup>

With memory comes the inevitable privileging of certain records and records’ creators. The archive is, as Steedman notes, ‘made from selected and consciously chosen documentation’ which may have been selected through a ‘wanting’ that a particular history may be created.<sup>42</sup> What is (left in) the archive is a particular selection of material that portrays a certain history. Osborne draws our attention to the

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<sup>36</sup> Freshwater, *The allure of the archive*.

<sup>37</sup> H. Bradley, *The seductions of the archive*, 109.

<sup>38</sup> Steedman, *The space of memory*.

<sup>39</sup> Bowker, *Memory Practices in the Sciences*, 18.

<sup>40</sup> Ketelaar, *Tacit narratives*, 136.

<sup>41</sup> Cook, *Evidence, memory, identity, and community: four shifting archival paradigms*, 101.

<sup>42</sup> Steedman, *The space of memory*, 72.

differing reasons why material ends up in the archive, a process worthy of further examination.<sup>43</sup> Steedman, in discussing the space of memory in an archive, highlights the ways in which ‘stuff’ simply happens to end up in the archive, the consequence of a haphazard method of archival accession and collection.<sup>44</sup> Memory is defined and chosen by the archivist or institution to represent what they deem important, worthy of being remembered. Whilst this may permit the creation of a legacy and prevent the loss of a collective memory, the researcher must be alert to the notion that whilst these materials exist, others which may tell a different story, or at the very least present a different version of the same history, do not.

## 5.4 CONCLUSION

Archival research is central to this thesis. No research which relies upon archival research should be undertaken without considering how the archive in question came to being, what has structured the processes of record keeping which formed that archive, and how the politics of the archive shaped the research. This section has provided a brief insight into the archival theory governing my exploration of the Commission’s history through both its institutional archive and other supporting archives that I have visited during my research. The archive has offered an opportunity to explore the Commission’s history in previously unexplored ways. Many of the materials which this thesis has utilised have not been viewed since they were filed for storage; particularly the material in the business administration archive. My own reading of the institution’s history may differ from that of previous histories of the Commission and current and former staff members’ recollections. But, in so doing, I have told of a different legacy of the Commission. This is part of the research process. No one individual’s reading of an archive and its sources is likely to be the same as another’s. The challenge of the fragmented archive is certainly not unfamiliar to the archival researcher: thinking through the archive as a source from which narrative history may be made has helped overcome the challenge of the fragmented material.

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<sup>43</sup> Osborne, *The ordinariness of the archive*.

<sup>44</sup> Steedman, *The space of memory*.





## 6. THE “POSTAGE STAMP MENTALITY” OF COLLECTING: FIELDWORK AND INVENTORY<sup>1</sup>

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the Commission’s fieldwork, the sites of practice where fieldwork occurred and the ways of *doing* that the Commission employed in the field. I conceive of ‘doing’ in two broad ways; firstly, in relation to the work that took place in the field “out there”, and, secondly, as the work done in the office, whether in preparation for fieldwork or office-based enquiry. I return to the theme of the office in chapters seven and eight.

This chapter begins by examining the work of the Commission’s first Secretary Alexander Ormiston Curle, and by exploring the ways in which he did fieldwork. I examine the history of the Commission after the First World War and the innovations adopted during the surveys of the 1950s and 1960s. The story of how the Commission produced the county inventories is, I contend, dictated by sites of fieldwork investigation. My attention here centres on the sites, the further analysis of which is the subject matter of the chapter following, which explores the Commission’s role in ‘rescue’ projects. The role of the office as a site of fieldwork “in here” is central to this thesis. While the rescue projects of the Commission followed many of the fieldwork practices that directed the county-by-county inventory programme, there are, as I shall show, some aspects of fieldwork that were unique to the Commission’s national inventory project.

Since its inception, the Commission has had fieldwork at its heart. Such was its focus on fieldwork that when the Chairman and Commissioners were establishing the Commission, they explicitly requested that the future Secretary be skilled in fieldwork.<sup>2</sup> Work in the field dominated the ethos of the organisation, this emphasis clear from the first meeting in 1908. Only through rigorous fieldwork would the national inventory of Scotland be created. The term encompassed processes evident in county-by-county survey, itself part of the county-by-county inventory programme that allowed the Commission to locate and record historic sites. For the Commission’s national inventory to be successful, monuments *had* to be physically inspected. The county-by-county inventory programme, based on fieldwork, began in 1908 and ended in 1992. Even then, after publishing twenty-five inventory volumes, the Commission did not have a complete field-based inventory record of Scotland (see Table 1). This chapter explores the fieldwork practices of the Commission and how these changed over time. It follows their

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<sup>1</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15. The phrase was used by Stuart Piggott in conversation with draughtsman Ian Scott to describe the work of the Commission not long after Scott’s appointment in 1959.

<sup>2</sup> J. Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: the first 80 years*, *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* 36 (1992) 13-77, 3.

development during the county-by-county inventory programme from the first survey in 1908 until the surveys of Argyll during the 1960s and 1970s.

<b>COMMISSION INVENTORIES (1908-1992)</b>	
<b>Title</b>	<b>Date of Publication</b>
Berwickshire	1909
Sutherland	1911
Caithness	1911
Wigtownshire	1912
Kirkcudbright	1914
Berwickshire (revised)	1915
Dumfries	1920
East Lothian	1924
Western Isles	1928
Midlothian and West Lothian	1929
Fife, Kinross and Clackmannanshire	1933
Orkney and Shetland	1946
Edinburgh	1951
Roxburghshire	1956
Selkirkshire	1957
Stirlingshire	1963
Peeblesshire (two volumes)	1967
Argyll Vol. 1 (Kintyre)	1971
Argyll Vol. 2 (Lorn)	1975
Lanarkshire	1978
Argyll Vol. 3 (Mull, Tiree, Coll & Northern Argyll)	1980
Argyll Vol. 4 (Iona)	1982
Argyll Vol. 5 (Islay, Jura, Colonsay & Oronsay)	1984
Argyll Vol. 6 (Mid Argyll & Cowal)	1988
Argyll Vol. 7 (Mid Argyll & Cowal)	1992

*Table 6.1: List of Commission Inventory Publications*

## 6.2 ESTABLISHING PRACTICE IN THE FIELD: THE FIRST SECRETARY AT WORK (1908-1909)

Alexander Ormiston Curle began the first season of fieldwork for the Commission on 2 August 1908. He took up residence in The Anchorage, an inn in the Berwickshire fishing village of St Abbs. This would be his base for the survey of the county's ancient monuments, his antiquarian 'office in the field', a place from which he could begin his 'inspection of ancient monuments'.<sup>3</sup> Curle's arrival in St Abbs marked the commencement of the first inventory of Scotland's ancient and historic monuments undertaken by the newly-established Commission. It was also the beginning of his time as a self-proclaimed 'wandering antiquary'.<sup>4</sup>

Curle's work began with him cycling to the fishing village of Eyemouth. Strapped along the crossbar of his bicycle were his surveying rods. Initially awkwardly placed, Curle was able to arrange them 'more comfortably as the day went on'.<sup>5</sup> Safely stowed in his canvas bag was all the necessary equipment for field survey in the 1900s: a notebook, clinometer, measuring tapes and a set of 6-inches-to-the-mile Ordnance Survey maps (hereafter "OS") (Fig 6.1). Curle had backed his maps with linen to make them more durable while working in the field.<sup>6</sup>



*Figure 6.1: A.O. Curle's compass and surveying pins.*

*Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 371005.*

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Ormiston Curle's personal journal, 'Notes on Berwickshire 1908', shelfmark MS36/2, 1, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Edinburgh [hereafter RCAHMS].

<sup>4</sup> Curle, 'Notes on Berwickshire 1908'.

<sup>5</sup> Curle, 'Notes on Berwickshire 1908', 2.

<sup>6</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 2. See also RCAHMS, *An Inventory for the Nation*, Edinburgh, 2015, 7.

Before reaching Eyemouth, Curle stopped at Coldingham to have a cyclometer fitted to his bicycle, the one piece of equipment he had overlooked. Eyemouth, it transpired, was devoid of ancient monuments.<sup>7</sup> Only the town's fort was recorded and included in the final published inventory. Curle conducted a rudimentary survey and moved on; only basic notes were taken. He continued to nearby Chester Hill to document an ancient fort. In the late afternoon, a little outside the village of Ayton, Curle found the first monument that 'justified greater attention'.<sup>8</sup>

Like many of the monuments Curle found during his travels in Berwickshire, Chester Hill Fort was simply noted on his OS map as a 'site'. Yet its location was not *quite* accurate. Curle took it upon himself to ensure the correct location was noted and marked on his map. He took the basic measurements of the fort and roughly sketched its remains in his notebook. Curle noted that he was unsure whether he obtained the correct diameter, as it had been difficult to find a 'right angle to the central diameter'.<sup>9</sup> He measured the relative distances between significant features and the height of two mounds found within the boundaries of the fort. Without an assistant these rough details were the most Curle could hope to record, but his efforts were 'something better than the word "site"'.<sup>10</sup> Curle's simple measurements – the diameter of the feature, the height of mounds and their relevant distances – were enough to set a new standard for inventorization. It may not have been accurate. Curle admitted as much – but it was a survey. What had been established were the basic categories for a record. This was the first survey by the Commission, the first product of fieldwork at its first site of practice. The speed at which the Berwickshire inventory was undertaken and published between 1908 and 1909 suggests a desire on the part of the Commissioners to publish the inventory within the first year of the Commission's establishment. It was more important, therefore, that Curle ensured monuments were recorded in sufficient detail in order to permit timely publication. The later work of James Craw in conducting the re-drafting of the Berwickshire inventory and revised publication in 1915 suggests that the Commission had always suspected that the Berwickshire inventory would be revisited. Accuracy, therefore, played only a supporting role to completeness of coverage in the completion of the survey.<sup>11</sup> Creating the record was the main objective in view.

After his first day of surveying, Curle returned to Coldingham to have his bicycle repaired. He continued his survey on 4 August 1908. On passing through the village of Ayton and onwards up the 'rough and hilly road to Lamberton Moor', he was headed for the Fort of Habchester, one of many monuments

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<sup>7</sup> The Royal Warrant dictated that the Commission could only survey those monuments that pre-dated 1707. This was later adjusted in 1948 to allow the Commission to survey any monument of historical and cultural significance. Curle, operating within the strictest sense of the Royal Warrant, was unable to record sites in Eyemouth that would later be recorded by the Commission.

<sup>8</sup> Curle, 'Notes on Berwickshire 1908', 4.

<sup>9</sup> Curle, 'Notes on Berwickshire 1908', 4.

<sup>10</sup> Curle, 'Notes on Berwickshire 1908', 4.

<sup>11</sup> The pursuit of a more accurate form of survey would become more apparent during fieldwork undertaken during the Peeblesshire and Argyll inventories during the 1960s and 1970s. This will be discussed later in this chapter with particular focus on photography and standardisation of drawings.

identified from OS maps (Figs 6.2 and 6.3).<sup>12</sup> Curle spotted the fort's 'conspicuous ramparts' from a distance and made the remainder of the journey on foot. He noted that 'though one half [of the fort] has been entirely obliterated it is still a most striking fort with two ramparts'. Curle sought to conduct a more detailed survey than he had at Chester Hill Fort. For the first time, he made use of his surveyor's staff and clinometer 'and found them both most handy'. He recorded, as he had at Chester Hill, the basic measurements of the site: 'the height of the inner rampart from the foot of the ditch I found to be 12 feet'. The outer rampart stood 10 feet in breadth, and the surrounding ditches were 6 feet deep.<sup>13</sup> With measurements taken, and noted, Curle recorded what he took to be the character of the fort (the nature of the site itself, as a way of classifying it). With each passing survey, Curle was laying down the practices of the fieldwork that would create a nation's inventory on a case-by-case basis. The map, which served to locate sites like Habchester, was a guide, both to the route that Curle would take around the county and to the sites that he would visit. It served two functions; the navigation of, and between, sites.



*Figure 6.2: Extract of 1st edition 6-inch OS map (Berwickshire, Sheet XII) centred on Habchester fort. Curle would have been using a similar map to locate his monuments and plan his route around them. He would have then made additional notes on his field map which would then be sent to the OS Source. Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, DP 221438.*

<sup>12</sup> Curle, 'Notes on Berwickshire 1908', 4.

<sup>13</sup> Curle, 'Notes on Berwickshire 1908', 5.

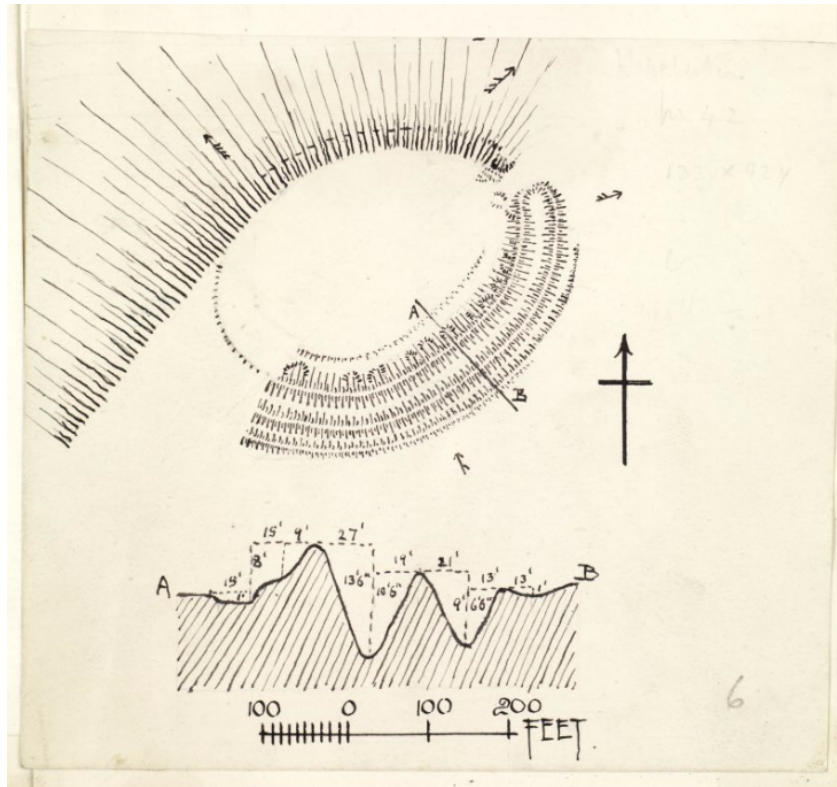


Figure 6.3: Publication drawing; plan and ditch section, Habchester. Although this drawing of Habchester Fort is taken from the revised version of the Berwickshire inventory it gives a sense of scale to the site which Curle first encountered in 1908. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, DP 229124.

From Habchester Fort, Curle made his way across Lambertton Moor, a ‘deserted place overgrown with nettles and weeds and nothing of interest’.<sup>14</sup> Curle came across an inscription on the wall of a local house. Keen to record the inscription, and without any paper to hand, he had to improvise. Curle unwrapped his sandwiches and using tufts of grass, attempted to make a rubbing of the inscription with the sandwich wrapping. It was, Curle recalled, a less than satisfactory attempt without enough natural light to ensure ‘a successful copy’.<sup>15</sup> His sandwich papers had become a field instrument, an object of recording. By repurposing his sandwich papers Curle had created a rudimentary field technology. Not perfectly suited to the task, it did however, permit the creation of, what Latour labels, an ‘inscription’. In so doing, Curle was able to take the inscription back to the office where time allowed a more rigorous analysis to be carried out. For Latour, it is ‘thanks to inscriptions [that] we are able to oversee and control a situation’.<sup>16</sup> Removed from the time constraints of being in the field, the inscription could continue to be part of the fieldwork process. This rudimentary recording of the inscription though no longer ‘out there’, was now ‘in here’ being inspected by someone more knowledgeable than Curle. This

<sup>14</sup> Curle, ‘Notes on Berwickshire 1908’, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Curle, ‘Notes on Berwickshire 1908’, 6.

<sup>16</sup> B. Latour, *Pandora’s Hope, Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Cambridge, 1999, 65 and 307.

improvisation was part of the fieldwork. Curle was, for the most part, able to rely on his existing knowledge and experience, of antiquarian fieldwork. When presented with such challenges in the field, particularly those he had not prepared for, Curle improvised.

The surveys of Chester Hill Fort and of Habchester Fort now seem insignificant. Although they were the first two sites which Curle surveyed, they were only two of the 259 monuments that would eventually be included in the 1909 inventory of Berwickshire. Yet the significance of Chester Hill Fort and Habchester Fort goes beyond their being the first two sites of practice for the Commission, or even the first sites at which Curle did fieldwork. These sites helped define the Commission and its object of study. In his office, Curle was pioneering a way of creating a national inventory. It was at these sites that the Commission's county-by-county inventory programme began, and the way of completing the national inventory was defined. Curle did not – could not – have known what was to come over the next eighty-four years in the evolution of the Commission in field-based work, but in studying Curle's work we can see how he was creating a way of exacting that fieldwork. The practices that Curle established during his Berwickshire field survey would dictate the Commission's fieldwork procedure until WWII.

The Commission's story, and the history of its county inventory programme, however, does not begin at Chester Hill Fort. It begins, rather, at Curle's desk in the Commission's office at 29 St Andrew Square, Edinburgh, in February 1908. It was here that Curle first engaged with the field, and thus began the inventory programme. The office was the first site of practice in the creation of Scotland's national inventory. It was office-based, "in here", fieldwork. Moreover, it hinted at the ubiquity of the Commission's later fieldwork practices. Curle's work in the field was not restricted only to the field. From the moment he began planning the Berwickshire inventory, to the moment of its publication, Curle was undertaking fieldwork.

### **6.3 MAPPING THE FIELD: INTRODUCING THE OFFICE (1908)**

The Commission met for the first time on 26 February 1908 and laid out Curle's tasks. Curle was instructed to purchase the entire series of 6 inch-to-one mile OS maps for Scotland. He was to procure three sets of this series (this was later reduced to a single set on cost grounds). From these maps, Curle was to draw up a list of monuments based on those he could locate on the maps.<sup>17</sup> This was the first stage of the survey process.

Curle's use of the OS maps to document Scotland's ancient history in the face of potential loss was not dissimilar to the very origins of the Ordnance Survey itself. The Ordnance Survey's foundations lay in

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<sup>17</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 4.

the need to map Scotland following the Jacobite rising: without detailed maps of the Scottish Highlands it was proving impossible to locate the remaining Jacobite dissenters. There was a ‘vital need for a good map of Scotland to facilitate the opening up of hitherto inaccessible areas of the Highlands’.<sup>18</sup> Curle was to use the map not to seek out dissenters, but to locate monuments as yet unknown, ‘hiding’ in the Scottish landscape. The similarities to the work of Ordnance Survey and its origins did not end there for the national inventory of Scotland’s antiquities. The Military Survey (1747-1755) that formed the foundations of the OS maps ‘was the product of a small team of young and inexperienced map-makers, and the eight years and six months it took to complete was ridiculously swift for such an enormous’ survey.<sup>19</sup> Like the national inventory that confronted Curle, the creation of a map of Britain was a mammoth task, initially undertaken by small parties of surveyors. This led to inaccuracies in the maps, but William Roy (who orchestrated the Military Survey), like Curle, was able to justify these inaccuracies on the basis that it was at least a map: ‘rather to be considered as a magnificent sketch, than a very accurate map of a country’.<sup>20</sup> Roy and his Military Survey laid down the practices that would later form the foundations of the Ordnance Survey, in the same manner that Curle did for the Commission and the national inventory. The first OS maps, produced in the early 1800s were of such a small scale that ‘they had little practical utility to most and [were] likely to have served [...] as rhetorical images of power and ownership’.<sup>21</sup> They asserted authority over the landscape even as they were shaped by it.

Having collated his list of monuments, Curle was then to inspect them in the field, surveying each monument and documenting them for inclusion in what would become the published inventory. A monument would appear in the inventory only if physically inspected. Curle was given a rough procedure to follow, one which the Commissioners believed would fulfil the needs of the Royal Warrant and facilitate the creation of the national inventory. The minutes of that meeting recorded what Curle was to do:

Thereafter a more detailed inventory is to be undertaken by counties, in which will be stated the class to which the monument belongs, the parish in which it is situated, the number of the Ordnance Survey sheet on which it has been noted, (if such is the case), its local name, its situation, a general description drawing attention to its characteristic features and noting any peculiarities observable, stating also whether excavations at any time have been undertaken in connection with it, and if so what relics were discovered and where they are now preserved. It will also contain a list of references to printed descriptions etc. In conclusion there will be furnished for the use of the Commissioners the name of the proprietor and a statement as to the present condition of the monument.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> R. Hewitt, *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey*, London, 2010, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Hewitt, *Map of a Nation*, 40.

<sup>20</sup> Hewitt, *Map of a Nation*, 41.

<sup>21</sup> Hewitt, *Map of a Nation*, 167.

<sup>22</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 3.



This was an eight-point guide for Curle to complete. Having completed the process of listing monuments, the Commissioners would decide which of the monuments should be drawn to the attention of the Ministry of Works with a recommendation for preservation.<sup>23</sup> It was an example of the Commission's objective to rescue sites of antiquarian importance before they were lost.<sup>24</sup> However, Curle was given only vague guidance as to how he was to undertake his inspection. In particular, Curle was afforded little guidance as to how he might undertake fieldwork. Curle had to decide for himself how, exactly, he would go about achieving the Commission's aim. The Commissioners did not lay down either how he should produce the inventory or conduct himself in the field. Curle had been selected by the Commissioners because of his own fieldwork experience, but they appeared indifferent to the practicalities of producing the inventory in the field. This was not unusual. The recording process set in motion by the Ancient Monuments Act 1882, and envisaged by Sir John Lubbock, had failed because it had been left to Pitt Rivers alone to document Britain's monuments.<sup>25</sup> From February 1908 Curle was, to all intents and purposes, on his own.

Angus Graham, Secretary from 1935 to 1957, would comment in retrospect that the eight point guide that the Commission had provided to Curle showed 'splendid naivety' on the part of the Commission, the lack of clarity only leading to ambiguity.<sup>26</sup> For Graham the language of the Royal Warrant was 'thoroughly imprecise'.<sup>27</sup> But this lack of precision afforded Curle the opportunity and scope to develop his own ways of creating the inventory. Curle was allowed to establish his own practices and create his own way of inventorising and, in so doing, defined the Commission's way of inventorising. Establishing practice began in the office. Curle, drawing on his legal training, began to prepare for the upcoming field season. These clerical procedures of preparation by Curle also helped establish the Commission's fieldwork practices, while he began his preparations, by following the format agreed at the Commission's first meeting. He consulted the OS maps of Scotland and listed monuments and their locations. Any sites not present on the maps, but for which evidence could be found in other literature, were marked up on the map (Fig 6.4).

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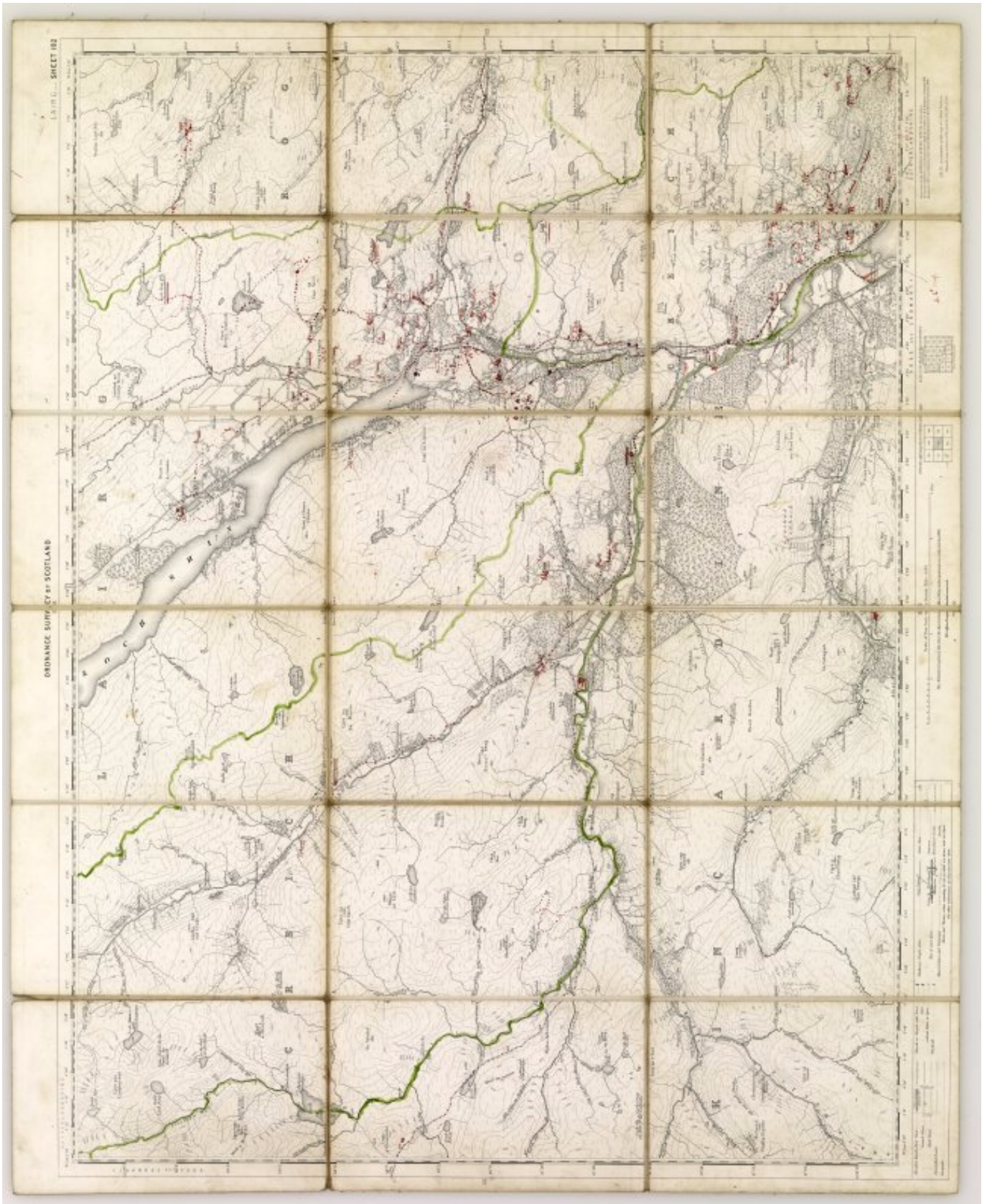
<sup>23</sup> This was a hangover from the Ancient Monuments Act 1882 (which would be updated in 1913) by which the Commission did not have any power to bring under protection those monuments it believed were in danger. However, it could recommend monuments for protection which the Ministry of Works would then follow up.

<sup>24</sup> The theme of rescue, whether implicit or explicit, runs throughout the history of the Commission. While I do not have the space here to discuss the role of rescue it will be returned to in a subsequent chapter where I will explore the developing role of rescue during the Commission history from 1908 – c.1980.

<sup>25</sup> M. Bowden, *Pitt Rivers; The life and archaeological work of Lieutenant-General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers, DCL, FRS, FSA*, Cambridge 1991.

<sup>26</sup> Angus Graham's unpublished papers on the history of the Royal Commission, shelfmark MS7402/4, RCAHMS.

<sup>27</sup> Angus Graham's unpublished papers on the history of the Royal Commission, shelfmark MS7402/4, RCAHMS.



*Figure 6.4: Curle's fieldwork map, with his red pencil markings clearly visible. While this map is of the Kincardine area (near Stirling) it is indicative of his fieldwork preparations. Source: The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.*

This process presented Curle with a map and list of monuments that was as complete as possible.<sup>28</sup> To further augment these lists, Curle was able to ‘draw on information acquired locally’ to ensure that he was as prepared as he could be before leaving for the field.<sup>29</sup> This was done by contacting school masters, parish ministers and other trusted sources in the county. Landed gentlemen, known to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland were also contacted by Curle, following an established practice (see chapter three). Sir Robert Sibbald, during work undertaken in the production of *Scotia Illustrata* (1684), had relied upon questionnaires and information compiled from others to complete and supplement his own work and knowledge. It was, as Charles Withers has noted, an attempt to draw on ‘national self-knowledge’. Like Sibbald, Curle relied on the ‘leading groups within Scottish society’ because they could be considered ‘reliable sources’ based on their ‘social position’.<sup>30</sup>

Curle was also to supply his lists to ‘certain other interested persons who may be able to supplement them with names of monuments un-noted’.<sup>31</sup> It is not clear who these ‘certain’ persons were. It is possible that the Commissioners already had individuals derived from their contacts with the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Curle supplied these local contacts with the lists that he had drawn up as well as OS maps for their immediate area to be marked with the location of hitherto unknown monuments. In collating this distributed labour, Curle thus enrolled credible sources into the service (if not the pay) of the Commission. Curle also sent out letters to school masters, ministers, wealthy landowners, known antiquarians and other trusted sources throughout Scotland. This was an established procedure, a means of gathering information in a timely manner before entering the field.<sup>32</sup> Landowners and gentlemen, often known to the antiquarian establishment, were what Anne Secord has called ‘reliable sources’ with ‘no reason to lie’. Curle did not need to question their credibility or ‘moral status’.<sup>33</sup> To correspond with the elite was an established procedure, an epistemic process that served many functions. It broadcast the purpose of the Commission and cemented Curle’s own authority as its appointed Secretary. Letter writing constituted a first survey of relevant information that would inform fieldwork planning. It established a network of credible information on which the project would later depend.<sup>34</sup>

Replies trickled back. Most respondents had never heard of the Commission, but Curle persisted, and, hoping to ‘arouse local interest’, wrote to the chief reporters of *The Scotsman*, the *Glasgow Herald*, the

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<sup>28</sup> The Commissioners believed that by consulting all available materials, be it maps, literature or the papers of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and then by consulting the locally acquired information, the inventory could be considered ‘as complete as possible’.

<sup>29</sup> Copy of letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> January 1909 signed by A.O. Curle, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

<sup>30</sup> C. W. J. Withers. *Geography, Science and National Identity: Scotland since 1520*, Cambridge, 2001, 77.

<sup>31</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 2

<sup>32</sup> A. Fox, Printed questionnaires, research networks, and the discovery of the British Isles, 1650-1800, *The Historical Journal* 53(3) (2010) 593-621, 600.

<sup>33</sup> A. Secord, Corresponding interests: artisans and gentlemen in nineteenth-century natural history, *British Journal for the History of Science* 27 (1994) 383-308, 384.

<sup>34</sup> I should note that I am not drawing on a Latourian sense of ‘network’.

*Evening Dispatch*, and the *Evening News*.<sup>35</sup> This may have been an attempt by Curle to access the local knowledge held by individuals who, perhaps as a result of their livelihood or their own inquisitive nature, might have valuable knowledge of local antiquities, but were not part of the gentry or members of a scholarly society or the elites. Such ‘self-educated’ antiquarians (or, indeed, archaeologists) would prove vital, particularly during the survey of Sutherland from 1909 to 1911.<sup>36</sup> As word got around of this new Commission, amateur antiquarians across the country began to respond. Some supplied miniature inventories of their own. Others acknowledged the work and presence of the Commission, but did little else. Some were hostile towards the Commission’s initial efforts. The Carnegie Dunfermline Trust saw the work of the Commission as encroaching on its own local inventory programme and was reluctant to cooperate.<sup>37</sup> Over time, however, Scotland’s amateur antiquarians began to send in their own archaeological notes and sketches, even offering to aid Curle in the field. These ‘amateur experts’ were only distinguishable from Curle in not being employed professionally to undertake antiquarian pursuits.<sup>38</sup> They were what Collins and Evans have called ‘experience-based experts’ who built up their knowledge through practice and experience.<sup>39</sup> Thus began the creation of Curle’s trusted antiquarian ‘networks’, his laboriously maintained circle of correspondents which would prove essential to his work in the field. In time, some contacts that Curle fostered in the field would become valuable allies of the Commission.

By early July 1908, Curle was nearing the end of his preparations. The lists he was drawing up were nearly complete. They would ‘form the basis from which the Commissioners will proceed in framing the Inventory after the existence and character of the monuments have been duly verified’. Curle ended his duty by informing the editors that it would be through his own ‘personal enquiry’ that the inventory will be made ‘as complete as possible’.<sup>40</sup>

These, in sum, were Curle’s initial enquiries as he looked to understand the county he would soon survey. Contacting potential observers in the field and collating their labours was only one of his methods, and was not the only method that relied on individuals beyond the Commission. Curle also held the position of Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries for Scotland, his main role within the society being to respond to incoming correspondence and maintain the society’s network of correspondents. Curle was, thus, already in regular contact with individuals who could both aid him in the field and had

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<sup>35</sup> Copy of a letter sent signed by A.O. Curle dated 4<sup>th</sup> July 1908, uncatalogued material, RCAHMS.

<sup>36</sup> D. Jones, “Nature-formed botanists”: notes of some nineteenth century botanical guides of Snowdonia, *Archives of Natural History* 29(1) (2002) 31-50.

<sup>37</sup> Noted in the Commission’s Minute Book 1908-1952, RCAHMS. See D. Finnegan, *Natural History Societies and Civic Culture in Victorian Scotland*, London, 2009, 178.

<sup>38</sup> J. Vetter, Introduction: lay participation in the history of scientific observation, *Science in Context* 24(2) (2011) 127-141, 130.

<sup>39</sup> H. Collins, and R. Evans, *Rethinking Expertise*, Chicago, 2007, 142.

<sup>40</sup> Copy of a letter sent to the chief reporters of *The Scotsman*, the *Glasgow Herald*, the *Evening Dispatch Edinburgh*, and the *Edinburgh Evening News*. Signed by A.O. Curle dated 4<sup>th</sup> July 1908, uncatalogued material, RCAHMS.

access to the Society's fellows. This allowed him to draw on an established network of antiquarian fellows who Curle could trust as to their information. Fieldwork was thus rooted in epistolary networks, but it was the occupants of these networks that were of most value to Curle.

Mapping out his area of fieldwork was the last stage of Curle's preparations. Drawing on the information he acquired from the OS maps – information acquired from local correspondents and from reference literatures – he began to plan out his fieldwork. The list of monuments that Curle drew up was organised to provide Curle with a rough route through the county. The map became a means by which Curle could 'oversee...his small world', as well as creating a sense of knowing; Curle was able to master the field before even leaving his desk.<sup>41</sup> This beginning of a relationship between office work and fieldwork already blurs our understanding of work that takes place "in here" and "out there". It was a process whereby knowledge made in the office was 'integrated' with knowledge that would later be made in the field and, in doing so, it would permit the creation of accurate knowledge of Scotland's ancient and historic monuments. The fieldwork practices of the Commission would take place both in the field, traditionally thought of as the place of fieldwork, and within the walls of the office. Commission staff were never other than in the field, be that indoors or outdoors. Conceiving of fieldwork as something that only takes place "out there" becomes too narrow to conceptualise the work of the Commission, particularly, as I discuss later, during the inventories that took place following WWII.

Sitting at his desk with the OS map laid out (Fig 6.5), and equipped with knowledge from existing maps, correspondence, and literature, Curle could plot a route around the county, identifying sites to be surveyed and, with the aid of local knowledge, areas to be explored. Curle's own hand-drawn lines, rather than the predefined lines of the county map defined his area of fieldwork. With a red pencil he marked out the areas that he wished to explore. Each red line created an imaginary boundary of travel in the field, one that contained Curle's work, both defining and limiting the extent of his fieldwork. His map was a tool that gave order to the unruliness of the field, allowing Curle to orchestrate systematic survey.

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<sup>41</sup> Latour, *Pandora's Hope*, 29.



*Figure 6.5: OS Index map of the county of Berwickshire. Using this map, and more detailed 6 inch to a mile maps Curle plotted out his route through the county and mapped out his field of study. Source: The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.*

Curle's pencil lines on the map constituted an inscribed rehearsal. They anticipated what was to come, what he might discover, who he might meet. These inscriptions marked out and defined the sites of fieldwork. But this practice of preparation also defined what was not to come: the inscribed route drew on the correspondence he had received, the sources consulted and the OS maps scrutinised for monuments.

In these ways, Curle's work in the office created a template, a system, a way of inventorising. Although he had been given a rough guide, and knew what the Commissioners expected in an inventory, he had relative freedom to design his fieldwork. Berwickshire would become the 'proving ground' for his system, a survey space that would either validate his template or expose its weaknesses. This was the template with which Curle arrived in Berwickshire and began, at St Abbs, to implement the survey's work. Curle would use this template again in his survey of Sutherland a year later, but Sutherland would put Curle and this template to the test. The survey of Sutherland would lead to Curle, and indeed the Commission, adapting their practices.

Curle completed the survey of Berwickshire in early November 1908, taking a little over three months. It took another five months to produce and publish the Commission's first inventory.<sup>42</sup> Publication in 1909 was a significant step for the Commission. This showed – to themselves and others – that it could complete and publish a county inventory in a little over a year. In only fourteen months, the Commission had gone from its first meeting to publishing the first of what would be twenty-five inventory volumes.

Despite this, the first inventory was less than favourably received. Future Commission Secretary Kenneth Steer later opined that much of these criticisms could be attributed to the fact that the drawings were deplorable and the written work superficial.<sup>43</sup> In addition, he noted that 'Lord Pentland, who was thinking in terms of a simple hand-list of monuments, complained that [the inventory] was too long, whereas in the opinion of many scholars it was too superficial – the lack of illustrations being especially deplored'. The work of the Commission had direct relevance to the antiquarians who had called for the adoption of an inventory, and to those antiquarian scholars at the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland who sought a detailed, fieldwork-derived reference resource. Beyond these interested parties, the wider public audience was less easily defined. The landed gentleman and scholar were perhaps one audience, but the reach of the inventory was, in 1908, relatively limited. It would be unfair, however, to draw connections between the criticism levelled at the Berwickshire inventory and Curle's fieldwork practice. His journals contain much information that was not included in the published inventory for fear of the publication falling outwith the parameters of the Commission's Royal Warrant directing the organisation's remit, or what the Commissioner's felt should be present in the final inventory. Attention focused on the lack of drawings. The visualisation offered by sketch drawings added additional ways of seeing the monuments that Curle was documenting in the inventory. It was easier for the reader to visualise a monument if supplied with its depiction rather than its dimensions alone.

Despite the criticism, publication of the inventory of Berwickshire in 1909 emboldened Curle in his methods. It proved to the Commission that meticulous preparation, both in office-based research and in fostering local sources of knowledge, worked.<sup>44</sup> It was hoped that this system could be applied across Scotland as a template to fit all the nation's counties. For reasons, I go on to explore, however, inventory fieldwork in Sutherland would cast this system into doubt. It would both confirm the success of Curle's method whilst also revealing the limitations of his office-based preparation. Curle would use his experiences in Sutherland to further hone his template for fieldwork and so establish a model which would go largely unchanged until the 1940s. If Berwickshire had been a proving ground, Sutherland was a space which would help hone Curle's techniques further.

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<sup>42</sup> Curle, 'Notes on Berwickshire 1908'.

<sup>43</sup> K.A. Steer, *Recording Scotland's Heritage*, London, 1975, 2.

<sup>44</sup> The criticism later levelled at the Berwickshire inventory focused on the publication of the inventory rather than Curle's method of fieldwork. Curle's fieldwork and preparations had been validated through his success at finding and surveying monuments.

#### 6.4 THE SURVEY OF SUTHERLAND: TESTING TIMES, TESTING PRACTICE (1909-1911)

Sutherland would prove a different proposition from Berwickshire. Its geography posed new challenges, the rugged landscape delaying the speed at which Curle could survey. It could take days just to reach monuments, never mind record sites. The archaeology of the county was also different from Berwickshire, whose monuments evidenced archaeological characteristics that Curle knew through his own published works.<sup>45</sup> This familiarity provided him with some certainty, evidenced not least by the speed with which he travelled, identified and documented the sites. By contrast, the archaeology of Sutherland was both remote and ‘other’. He could not rely on his previous work to help understand it. More than in Berwickshire, Curle was reliant on fieldwork practices that drew on local observers and informants.

The survey of Sutherland, therefore, provides a different way to consider ideas of the field, fieldwork, trust, and the notion of ‘expert’ and ‘amateur’. The survey also challenged Curle’s office-based preparation. Sutherland exposed the limitations of Curle’s preparatory methods, demanding a fluidity not built into the fieldwork template. The preparations that Curle had undertaken in the office before entering the field limited the number of monuments he was likely to record. Pencil lines constituted, as much as they defined, the field area. But pencil lines, and the preparations they represented, could be defeated by the power of the knowledge afforded to Curle by previously unconsulted local informants. It was only through the chance meeting of individuals in the field while undertaking the Sutherland inventory that Curle was able to record many of the monuments that appeared in the final publication. Following Curle’s resignation, this issue was to be overcome through the adoption of preliminary surveys, designed to ensure that no monuments were missed during the office-based preparation phase of the inventory fieldwork. Facts had been established in regard to the monuments that Curle might encounter in the field, but they required further investigation to garner accuracy. The first stage of fieldwork had begun in the office, but the knowledge would not be fully constructed until the site had been physically inspected.<sup>46</sup> Careful planning could permit the creation of accurate knowledge. The office and field were part of an integrated process of knowledge cultivation, and fieldwork took place in both.<sup>47</sup> But, there was also a need to be reactive, both to the landscape and the challenges that navigating the geography of Sutherland presented and to the people that Curle met as he travelled. Curle had to recognise the limits of his preparations.

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<sup>45</sup> Before his appointment in 1908 Curle published eight papers in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*. The majority focused on Roman archaeology in the borders, although Curle had ventured as far north as the Cairngorms. Curle’s commitment to fieldwork is clear from these publications.

<sup>46</sup> D. Bond, Enlightenment geography in the study: A.F. Büsching, J.D. Michaelis and the place of geographical knowledge in the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia, 1761-1767, *Journal of Historical Geography* 51 (2016) 64-76, 67.

<sup>47</sup> Bond, Enlightenment geography in the study, 71.



Curle arrived in Sutherland on 15 May 1909. The following day he set out for Klibreck. After asking a local shepherd for directions to the farmhouse indicated on the OS map in the Klibreck area, he was also told by a shepherd of a set of standing stones rumoured to be nearby. Arriving at the farmhouse, the shepherd guided Curle to the south west and towards what appeared to be a hut circle and some cairns.<sup>48</sup> Having located the site, Curle identified the ancient monuments and began his survey. It was indicative of what was to come in Sutherland that the first site Curle surveyed was not one that he had prepared for, but one he happened to come across after a chance meeting. This element of serendipity would often inform his fieldwork encounters in Sutherland. The standing stones of Klibreck exposed Curle to another challenge overlooked in his preparations. Curle noted in his journal that ‘locally the cairns are supposed to be the graves of King Harald’s warriors’ and that this site was where ‘they made their last stand’.<sup>49</sup> This site would be indicative of numerous similar sites encountered in Sutherland. Folklore and ancient monuments were inseparable. This particular tale was unlikely, but one which Curle duly noted. Curle had to apply his own sense of objectivity to decide where these tales should be included or not.

Several days later, Curle again faced the challenge of unravelling fact from fiction. He had found a small chambered cairn half a mile north west of Spinningdale in southern Sutherland.<sup>50</sup> As a feature marked on the OS map, Curle had dutifully marked it out for survey during his office-based preparations. It was not long before Curle found out the local legend. The cairn had been at the epicentre of a mysterious disease that had plagued the people and their village. Fearful of its wrath, the inhabitants took action. They encircled the source of the outbreak, but as they began to close in on the source they were confronted by what they saw as the disease in the apparition of an animal. Trying to escape, this unknown animal plunged into the earth, disappearing from view. Fearful of its return the locals had hastily erected the cairn in a supposed attempt to prevent its re-emergence.<sup>51</sup> It was a tale that provided meaning to what, otherwise, was an unremarkable cairn. The published inventory only noted its rudimentary measurements: ninety inches wide, twelve inches tall.<sup>52</sup> There was no space in the Commission’s inventory for tales of lore.<sup>53</sup> The entanglement of folklore with the antiquarian knowledge that Curle sought became a frequent, but unrecorded, feature of the Sutherland survey.

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<sup>48</sup> Curle’s 1909 notes from Sutherland, 2.

<sup>49</sup> Curle’s 1909 notes from Sutherland, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Curle, Notes on Sutherland 1909, 240.

<sup>51</sup> Curle, Notes on Sutherland 1909, 240.

<sup>52</sup> See RCAHMS, *Second Report*; see also RCAHMS’s current database last accessed 29/07/14.

<http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/13993/details/achaidh/>

<sup>53</sup> Curle later returned to excavate the site, accompanied by Thomas Bryce. It is not entirely clear why Curle decided to return to this site, or why he thought it necessary to excavate it: I tentatively suggest that it was the tale of lore that intrigued him. This work later appeared in *the Proceeding of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 1909-10. What is interesting about the paper that appeared in 1909 was the attention that Curle paid to the folkloric tale of the disease and the cairn at Spinningdale. The archive is silent on the reasons why none of this material was noted by the Commission or why he felt necessary to include it in the paper for the Society.

Yet, for Curle, these tales of lore could not be ignored. Folklore tales constituted the relationship between the people and the monuments, and the ‘mysteries [they...] entombed’.<sup>54</sup> Ruins had stories to tell. Not only had these monuments become part of the landscape, they had become part of the culture and the locals were more than willing to include Curle in that history. These stories permitted ‘the telling of local histories, allowing for the inclusion of inhabitants usually entered in the margins’.<sup>55</sup> This posed a challenge for Curle. He drew on the assistance of local guides to help locate monuments around Sutherland not found through his preparations, but now had to separate those folkloric tales from fact. It was a question of judging what he was told – was it of value, or simply local hearsay? It was also an opportunity for him to apply the procedures of the Commission whilst also using his own judgment to separate fact from fiction. The challenges posed by drawing on local informants, whatever their background, was no better exemplified through those sites of folkloric significance. Curle had to rely on these local informants as he could not rely on the fellows of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland to aid him in the field, separated as they were from the field by their lack of presence during day-to-day fieldwork.

This lack of presence limited the effectiveness of Curle’s networks. The Reverend J.M. Joass, who the Commission had hoped would be invaluable in aiding Curle during the Sutherland inventory, proved somewhat unhelpful aside from pointing Curle in the right direction in the opening days of the survey.<sup>56</sup> Despite his credible knowledge of antiquarian sites throughout the county of Sutherland, Joass lacked that tacit knowledge held by less privileged individuals. In most cases the input of fellows, whilst welcomed by Curle, was retrospective assistance. Correspondents that Curle could access through the Society lacked the flexibility that fieldwork often demanded. Correspondents might take days, sometimes weeks, to reply to queries for which Curle sought immediate answers. Despite the breadth of its membership the Society’s knowledge did not have national reach. Curle, therefore, had to rely on his nascent collection of local observers and informants who might better meet the practical challenges of working in the field. This network was made up of those who did not hold any professional qualification, but who were ‘amateur experts’ with intimate knowledge of their locality.<sup>57</sup>

These were the perfect individuals to act as Curle’s local aids in the field, what Jones has labelled ‘self-educated’ guides.<sup>58</sup> Locals’ tacit knowledge made them experts. Initially, their trustworthiness could be

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<sup>54</sup> D. Harvey, Monument and myth, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69 (1979) 362-381, 381.

<sup>55</sup> C. DeSilvey, Observed decay: telling stories with mutable things, *Journal of Material Culture* 11(3) (2006) 318-338, 336.

<sup>56</sup> Angus Graham’s unpublished papers on the history of the Royal Commission, shelfmark MS7402/4, RCAHMS.

<sup>57</sup> Vetter, Introduction, 130.

<sup>58</sup> Jones, Nature-formed botanists.

doubted. Often it would simply be ignored for its perceived lack of authority.<sup>59</sup> The knowledge claims of those Curle encountered in the field had to be established before their trustworthiness could be assured. The fieldwork encounter required extemporary contact beyond meticulous office-based planning.

Curle continued the survey of Sutherland throughout 1909 and 1910, eventually completing the fieldwork for the inventory in late October 1910. The inventory was ready for publication in early 1911. In the summary to his field notebook for the survey of Sutherland, Curle noted that his fieldwork had been ‘arduous by reason of the extent of ground to be traversed and the larger number of hitherto non-recorded monuments to be noted and described’. It was, however, precisely because so many of the monuments that Curle had recorded were unknown to him, and indeed antiquarians, that his ‘interest [was] all the greater’.<sup>60</sup>

The inventory of Sutherland was subsequently published in 1911. Curle was then in the field carrying out the survey of Caithness and, later, Wigtownshire. His experiences during the survey of Sutherland and his lobbying of the Commissioners in early 1911 resulted in funding being made available via the Scottish Office in order to hire additional fieldwork staff. By 1914, the Commission would boast a fieldwork staff of three, excluding the Secretary. With more staff at its disposal, the Commission could afford to send staff out to conduct preliminary surveys to locate monuments in advance of the fieldwork season. This was an attempt not only to circumvent chance discoveries in the field, but also to ensure that time spent during fieldwork was used effectively. It was a significant step from the work of the lone surveyor of six years before. Curle’s fieldwork in both Berwickshire and Sutherland cannot be ignored. It was during these surveys that he established the Commission’s fieldwork practices. Curle had been committed to ensuring that a tried and tested method of doing fieldwork was laid down for the surveys and staff that would follow him in the future.

## **6.5 WAR, UPHEAVAL, AND PERFECTING PRACTICE (1913-1935)**

By August 1914, the inventories of Caithness, Wigtownshire, and Kirkcudbright had been published. Curle had completed all five, and in 1913 resigned from the position of Commission Secretary to take up the position of Director of the National Museum of Antiquities. He remained in this post until 1931. Even after retiring from the role, Curle remained committed to antiquarianism and archaeology, undertaking the excavation of Jarlshof and aiding Commission work in Shetland. Jarlshof, now

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<sup>59</sup> Following a series of letters in 1911 from a Mr Fulton of Forres the Commission discussed the merit of the material he was providing. As he was ‘not known’ to the Commissioners, his work was ignored. See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS.

<sup>60</sup> Curle, Notes on Sutherland 1910, RCAHMS.

significant as one of the best known Norse settlements in Northern Europe, was excavated and documented using the practices that Curle developed in the field during his time as Secretary.<sup>61</sup> Upon his resignation, Curle was appointed Commissioner, a position which he held until his death in 1955, ensuring constant oversight of the Commission and its fieldwork.

Curle was replaced by William Mackay Mackenzie, who would preside over one of the most productive periods in the Commission's history (the Commission would publish more inventories under Mackenzie than under any other Secretary).<sup>62</sup> But Mackenzie's time at the Commission would not pass uneventfully. Two major tasks lay ahead of him when he arrived in 1913. There was an immediate need to respond to the shortcomings of the Berwickshire inventory, and to bring that publication up to the same standard as subsequent inventories.<sup>63</sup> Using the techniques developed during the surveys of Sutherland, Caithness and Wigtownshire, in response to the reviews the Commission received, and by including detailing drawings, the Commission would republish the Berwickshire inventory. This was done with the aid of James Craw in 1913 and 1914, who had been selected by Curle to assist the Commission in this endeavour. Craw had the proofs of the re-issue of the Berwickshire inventory ready by March 1914.<sup>64</sup> The re-issue of the Berwickshire inventory was also seen as an opportunity to consider printing the illustrations in colour, a move that was swiftly rejected by the Stationary Office as too costly.<sup>65</sup> The Berwickshire re-issue would finally appear in July 1915.<sup>66</sup> Although Craw nominally worked for the Commission, he was independent from the organisation, and while Craw was undertaking this work, the Commission was preparing to undertake a preliminary survey of the Western Isles. The preliminary survey had been designed to overcome the limitations of office-based preparations in advance of the field survey proper. Staff were to travel quickly between sites, confirming their existence and noting the locations of sites hitherto unknown. The following field survey would then record these sites.

The fourth of August 1914 – the outbreak of WWI – was another day in the field for Commission staff. The Commission's field staff, G.P.H. Watson, A.L. MacGibbon and J. Graham Callandar, were carrying out work in the Inner and Outer Hebrides in what was one of the Commission's first preliminary field surveys.<sup>67</sup> Together, they formed the first field survey team within the Commission. Secretary

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<sup>61</sup> Graham Ritchie, James Curle (1862-1944) and Alexander Ormiston Curle (1866-1955), 34.

<sup>62</sup> Mackenzie was also responsible for setting in motion a number of surveys prematurely with the result that five inventories started between 1920 and 1939 remained unpublished until the 1950s.

<sup>63</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the Berwickshire reviews, the Commission had responded. The Commission's response was reflected in the differences that could be seen in the final published Sutherland inventory compared to the Berwickshire inventory. The Commissioners felt it necessary to redo the Berwickshire inventory to bring it in line with the subsequent publications. This would be overseen by Mackenzie.

<sup>64</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 68.

<sup>65</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 72.

<sup>66</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 85.

<sup>67</sup> The preliminary survey of the Western Isles was the first of these pre-survey field excursions. This preliminary work would become one of the key ways in which the Commission prepared for fieldwork.

Mackenzie, normally found behind his desk, had elected to join them in the field.<sup>68</sup> The undertaking of these preliminary surveys was the most significant change to the fieldwork process in the wake of Curle's resignation. By undertaking a preliminary survey of the field, the Commission aimed to reduce the likelihood of overlooking monuments and the inconvenience and disruption of chance discoveries. This practice served two functions: it allowed field staff to do away with the need to rely on locals in order to find those monuments for which there was no reference, and it permitted a more targeted and efficient survey method as staff could travel directly between sites already mapped. This was the beginning of a shift away from relying, as Curle had done, on 'information acquired locally' on an ad hoc basis. The combined expertise of Callander as archaeologist and Watson and MacGibbon as architects saw the Commission field an experienced staff when surveying the Western Isles.<sup>69</sup> It was an extension of their office-based preparations.

The Commission went about its work without hindrance during the remainder of 1914. Watson, MacGibbon, and Callander worked their way systematically through the islands of the Inner and Outer Hebrides. It was an endeavour that they hoped would pay dividends in future months, eliminating the need to search for monuments during the official field survey. Having already visited the sites in advance, it was hoped that the field survey proper could be undertaken in a timely and efficient manner. Surveys would become more accurate with less time in the field wasted searching for as yet unknown monuments. Having completed a detailed search for monuments in the office, and then during the preliminary survey, staff could enter the field with assurance that their prior fieldwork, both office and field based, had equipped them with a sound knowledge of what to expect during the survey. The staff were even joined by Alexander Ormiston Curle who helped oversee fieldwork on the Isle of Skye.<sup>70</sup> As the fieldwork season drew to a close in late September, the Commission staff began working on the publication of their latest inventories. The survey of Dumfriesshire had just been completed, and all that was left to do was the write up and publish the inventory. This task was left up to Mackenzie, while the field staff began preparing for future surveys, scouring maps and reference texts following Curle's template.

The appointment of Watson, MacGibbon, and Callander allowed the Commission to undertake survey work in several counties during the same season with relative ease. The preliminary survey of the Western Isles was undertaken at the same time as the preliminary survey of the Lothians. This contemporaneous work was an attempt to increase the inventory production rate and ensure that the Commission would complete the national inventory as quickly as possible. The Commission, before 1914, had an annual budget of £900. From 1915, Mackenzie had £1693 to run the Commission. He had

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<sup>68</sup> See Callander's field notebook for 1914 while working in the Western Isles. Callander details the rare appearance of Mackenzie in the field. RCAHMS, shelfmark MS36/63.

<sup>69</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 78.

<sup>70</sup> See Curle's personal diary, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS33.

to submit an estimate to the Treasury detailing how the Commission would spend its budget. Conducting the survey of the Western Isles was a costly business: hiring of boats to move between islands and the expense of finding accommodation eroded the Commission budget. The Commissioners instructed Mackenzie to contact the Fishery Boards to see if they would be able to assist the Commission in travelling between the various islands although it seems that hiring boats from local fisherman on an extemporary basis was seen as the most cost efficient method of surveying in the Western Isles.<sup>71</sup>

The onset of the First World War would soon affect the Commission's work in the field. Watson and only-just-appointed Charles S.T. Calder had been drafted into the army, putting a halt to fieldwork. MacGibbon had died only months earlier.<sup>72</sup> This left only Mackenzie and his secretary and typist, Helen McLaren (appointed in 1908). Yet, work on producing the inventories continued. The national inventory was, for now, unhindered by war. Mackenzie wrote the introduction for the Dumfriesshire inventory and prepared it to go to press whilst also planning the continuing surveys of the Lothians. Even so Mackenzie was under pressure from the Treasury in justifying why the Commission should continue to operate during the war.

John Bradbury, Secretary to the Treasury, wrote to Sir Herbert Maxwell on 31 August 1915. His letter, although written in a personal capacity, proposed the official shutdown of the Commission until the conclusion of the war:

Now however the expenditure in connection with the war has grown to such alarming proportions, and the necessity in present circumstances of restricting all expenditure not directly necessary for the purposes of the war, has become so vital that we feel obliged to propose to you that the work of your Commission should be suspended for the remainder of the war. We make this proposal with much regret, but I feel sure that in the present circumstances you will recognise that we have no alternative, and that you will be prepared to co-operate with us in the matter, as I may mention the Royal Commission in England has already done.

I am writing unofficially in the first instance, as I think you will prefer this course. If however you would desire to have an official letter from the Treasury, I will at once have one sent.<sup>73</sup>

The shutdown of the Commission seemed imminent and unavoidable. Mackenzie would have to justify why an organisation that did not contribute to the war effort should be allowed to continue without restriction. Over the following months there was a flurry of activity as the Commissioners began contacting their counterparts in England and Wales. They frantically sought any reason to avoid the

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<sup>71</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 68.

<sup>72</sup> See folder titled 'Suspension of Commission', RCAHMS, shelfmark 100/B.

<sup>73</sup> Letter dated 31 August 1915, from the Treasury to the Commission, RCAHMS, shelfmark 100/B.

cessation of the Commission.<sup>74</sup> The English Commission, it seemed, had found reprieve with the Treasury, and was expected to continue to operate by carrying out limited surveys in areas that might be damaged in the course of German air raids. Anything more was looking increasingly unlikely. The English Commissioners hoped their Commission could ‘crawl along, here a little and there a little’, but substantial surveys would have to wait until the conclusion of the war.<sup>75</sup>

For Mackenzie, the Commission could continue to operate: complete shutdown was unnecessary. There was ‘sufficient material in hand to keep the publication side of the Commission at work for at least two years’.<sup>76</sup> The Commission’s work could continue unabated, Mackenzie argued, through focusing on work that could be undertaken in the office at minimal expense. It was, however, fruitless labour: despite further discussions between the Commission and the Treasury, the Commission was told to wind down its operations. It is not clear exactly when the Commission was formally suspended, but there was no work undertaken between 1916 and 1919. The Commission was mothballed for the remainder of the war while Mackenzie and the Commissioners hoped for the safe return of their staff.

The Commission met for the first time in the aftermath of the Great War on 15 July 1919, three years after it had been shut down, and nearly four years since its staff had last been in the field. Mackenzie and Commissioner Baldwin Brown provided verbal reports on the progress of the Commission to the Chairman and those Commissioners present. The survey of East Lothian was shortly to be completed, the majority of the fieldwork having been undertaken before the outbreak of the war. Baldwin Brown reported that the survey of the City of Edinburgh was now underway. The publication of the survey of Dumfriesshire, which Mackenzie had pushed so hard to be completed during the war, would be yet further delayed. The proofs of the inventory, sent to His Majesty’s Stationary Office (hereafter “HMSO”) for printing had been destroyed in a fire in 1916.<sup>77</sup> The main focus was the swift completion of the surveys of the Western Isles and Edinburgh and the start of the preliminary survey of Orkney and Shetland (Fig 6.6).<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> See ‘Suspension of Commission’, RCAHMS, shelfmark 100/B.

<sup>75</sup> Letter dated 21 September 1915 from Prof. Haverfield to Lord Guthrie, RCAHMS, shelfmark 100/B.

<sup>76</sup> Letter dated 19 August 1915, RCAHMS, shelfmark 100/B.

<sup>77</sup> J. Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: the first 80 years*, *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* 36 (1992) 13-77.

<sup>78</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 94.



*Figure 6.6: View of RCAHMS surveyors wading out to a dun in 1924, Dun Nighean Righ Lochlainn, North Uist. G.P.H. Watson (middle) carrying his war wound with a local ghille leading him to the Dun while C.S.T. Calder provides support with a rope tie. The photograph was taken by William Mackay Mackenzie in a rare venture into the field. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1131201.*

Completing these surveys would not be easy, not least because of the challenges each region posed. The survey of the Western Isles, in particular, was hampered simply because of the difficulty the Commission staff faced getting between islands. At a time when the Commission had limited access to mechanised transport, difficulties of access could delay the progress of each inventory. The Commission's work was further hampered by constraints on the budget. The Treasury imposed a restriction of £100 for travelling expenses while conducting surveys, a restriction which severely hampered the ability of the Commission's staff to complete the Western Isles survey.<sup>79</sup> Mackenzie would make a special request in December of 1924 for funding to be made available for the hire of a 'special boat', as this was the only way that the Commission's work in the area 'could be accomplished', not the first time that the Secretary had to adjust the budget in order to conduct fieldwork.<sup>80</sup>

To assist in the survey of Sutherland in 1909, Curle requested a camera from HMSO. This request took three years to resolve as the Treasury first sought to block it, then demanded to know what it would be used for, and then argued over how much the Commission should be allowed to pay for this new gadget. Curle justified his request on 17 March 1909 for a camera 'not exceeding £16' on the basis that the

<sup>79</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 108.

<sup>80</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 114.



Commission was buying prints at £5 per print.<sup>81</sup> The acquisition of the camera was to be financially beneficial for the Commission, and was finally granted on 28 April 1911.<sup>82</sup> This was indicative of the relationship between the Treasury and the Commission, a relationship founded on negotiation over every detail, which meant that cost could often constrain the successful completion of a field season. Budgets were agreed on a yearly basis, so while the Commissioners could make a long term plan for the Commission, the Secretary was constrained to planning on a year-by-year basis depending on allocated funds from the Treasury. The ‘unrelieved financial stringency’ that the Government had adopted in the aftermath of the war hit the Commission hard.<sup>83</sup> Further, the Commission was not allowed to begin any new field surveys. The Scottish Office instructed the Commission to complete what it had already started before moving onto any new surveys. Budget negotiations placed an unseen constraint upon fieldwork. While the Secretary and staff could predict what might be achieved on a year-to-year basis, the question of how fieldwork would be funded could not be resolved till the completion of budgeting with the Treasury.

This, in particular, directly affected how the Commission did fieldwork: it became impossible to carry out preliminary surveys and complete all the necessary preparations. One of the few alternations to the system that Curle pioneered was now to be curtailed, albeit temporarily. The fieldwork staff of the Commission had to become reliant on the methods and practices that Curle had employed before the war, and paying close attention to OS maps and reference material returned to the fore of office-based preparations. During the preliminary survey of 1914, the Commission’s field staff had already been fostering local contacts in the field that would be able to help during the full survey of the region, in the likely knowledge that the Commission would have restricted resources in the aftermath of the First World War. Callander had been working with a local stalker on Harris and corresponding with a solicitor in Portree on Skye.<sup>84</sup> These individuals were, as Jones has it, self-taught local experts.<sup>85</sup> They passed on ‘special skills [which] overlapped or contested with [the] scientific expertise’ of the Commission’s staff.<sup>86</sup> For the Commission, operating in these Gaelic-speaking areas of Scotland, these local experts were often invaluable particularly when, as Withers has noted, local guides were able to ‘translate local knowledge into a form acceptable to distant authorities’.<sup>87</sup> Just as Curle had done in Berwickshire and Sutherland, the Commission was drawing on informed laypersons able to supplement their own knowledge. Watson and Calder continued to survey the Western Isles until 1928; one of most time-consuming of the Commission’s pre-1939 surveys.

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<sup>81</sup> Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS.

<sup>82</sup> Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS.

<sup>83</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 13.

<sup>84</sup> Callanders notebook, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS36/63.

<sup>85</sup> D. Jones, “Nature-formed botanists”.

<sup>86</sup> Vetter, Introduction, 135.

<sup>87</sup> C. W. J. Withers, Mapping, trusting: making geographical knowledge in the late seventeenth century, *Isis* 90(3) (1999), 497-521, 507.

Watson and Calder were joined by John Corrie, an amateur antiquarian who had shown sufficient skill and aptitude to be considered for a permanent position as a Commission archaeologist. Corrie replaced J. Graham Callander who had left the Commission in the aftermath of the war to take up a position at the National Museum of Antiquities.<sup>88</sup> Like Curle, Callander was appointed as a Commissioner in order to ensure continuity in fieldwork.<sup>89</sup> Corrie joined the Commission on 1 April 1925 and was immediately set to work in surveying the county of Roxburghshire.<sup>90</sup> This was an unusual appointment, the Commission in the past having tended to recruit individuals with some professional experience. Corrie's appointment signalled a general upturn in the economy and prospects within the Commission, so allowing it to commit more resources to fieldwork and inventory production. This also set a precedent in the appointment of trained archaeologists who could aid the Commission's fieldwork. It was the beginning of a pursuit of academic rigour which would reinforce the claim to authority on Scotland's ancient monuments that the Commission made through its inventories.

More significant changes were afoot. Whilst Curle had established the working practices of the Commission, comments from the reviewers of the Commission's publications clearly shaped how the fieldwork was represented. Their comments and expectations over what the Commission's inventories should achieve had a direct impact upon the Commission's fieldwork. Future Secretary John Dunbar later remarked that during the inter-war era it was not 'surprising that there was some slowing in the production rate of the county *Inventories*. The post-1918 volumes also required a higher degree of preparation, because the new format encouraged the use of more elaborate illustrations while the descriptive text became correspondingly more detailed'.<sup>91</sup> It became necessary to include more and more detailed drawings and to ensure that they were undertaken in the field. The Commissioners believed that detailed drawings would greatly enhance the quality of the publications. It was no longer sufficient for staff in the field to make quick sketches. Instead, they had to create detailed drawings. As a consequence, significant time was spent ensuring that fieldwork carried out prior to the war was produced and published to these new standards. Minimal fieldwork was undertaken before 1925, with the only fieldwork occurring in the Lothians and the Western Isles.<sup>92</sup> Not until 1925 did the Commission undertake fieldwork in a county new to them.

Preparations for these surveys began in late 1924, with Mackenzie and the field staff planning for the forthcoming field season.<sup>93</sup> The survey of Fife would begin that year, followed by Orkney and Shetland

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<sup>88</sup> See Commission Minute Books and Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 13.

<sup>89</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS.

<sup>90</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 120.

<sup>91</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 15.

<sup>92</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 105.

<sup>93</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 116.

in 1928, and Roxburghshire in 1935.<sup>94</sup> It was a somewhat ‘leisurely pace of publication’, as Dunbar would later note.<sup>95</sup> There was also, as Dunbar has commented, much to be said for the management of the Commission’s fieldwork and staff during this period. Graham later noted that Mackenzie’s lack of interest in fieldwork had hampered the relationship between the Secretary and his field staff to the detriment of the progress of the national inventory.<sup>96</sup> Responsibility for the Commission’s work ultimately lay with the Commissioners. However, many of the long-serving Commissioners were losing interest in the Commission project. The original appointments had been for life and the most prominent of the original Commissioners, Thomas Ross, Baldwin Brown and Thomas Bryce, were all towards the end of their careers. Their interest in the Commission’s project was slowly waning, and with it the support that the Commissioners once provided, particularly to the Secretary.<sup>97</sup>

Despite this, the surveys that the Commission began in 1925 were still being undertaken. The survey of Fife was completed within two field seasons and included forty-five photographs.<sup>98</sup> Progress in Orkney and Shetland was less rapid. The survey did not begin in earnest until 1928, but almost immediately ground to a halt through a ‘shortage of funds’.<sup>99</sup> Mackenzie failed to calculate the costs of undertaking surveys in such an isolated location; he had not adequately predicted the challenges of the field (perhaps as a consequence of not being fieldwork orientated himself).

Mackenzie’s troubles came to a head early in the 1930s, he having done little to endear himself to the Commissioners, often insisting that the reports of field staff should be published as they were. Simply taking field notes and publishing them was all that Mackenzie felt was required.<sup>100</sup> This had met with little resistance from the old guard among the Commissioners who were, by 1930, rather detached from proceedings at the Commission, but the appointment as Chairman of prominent antiquarian George Macdonald saw Mackenzie’s approach face scrutiny.<sup>101</sup> Aligned with Curle, Macdonald began to edge Mackenzie out of the Commission. Macdonald, whose appointment as Chairman in 1934 saw him ‘stood at the head of every conceivable tree, scholastic, antiquarian and official’ had, in Graham’s words, ‘no patience whatsoever with Mackenzie’s method[s]’ and dealt with him in a ‘merciless way’.<sup>102</sup> Mackenzie, facing the ‘full blast’ of Macdonald’s ‘reforming zeal’, resigned in 1935.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 15, and See *Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952*, RCAHMS, 116.

<sup>95</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 15.

<sup>96</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and Graham Angus Graham’s Antiquarian Personalities and Episodes*, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS Note: here I have had to rely on the comments of Graham and Dunbar whose commentary on this period is derived from ‘office legend’.

<sup>97</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 15.

<sup>98</sup> See *Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952*, RCAHMS, 121.

<sup>99</sup> See *Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952*, RCAHMS, 144.

<sup>100</sup> *Angus Graham’s Antiquarian Personalities and Episodes*, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS7402/4.

<sup>101</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 15.

<sup>102</sup> *Angus Graham’s Antiquarian Personalities and Episodes*, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS7402/4.

<sup>103</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 18.

The departure of Mackenzie in 1935 brought to an end a particular era in the history of the Commission's fieldwork. His time as Secretary had been interrupted almost immediately by the outbreak of WWI. Yet, despite the concerns of the Commissioners that inventories were not being published in a timely manner, the Commission still published seven county inventories under Mackenzie's leadership. Mackenzie deployed his fieldwork staff in the same manner as Curle, the only change to this process being the deployment of field staff to conduct preliminary surveys. This was another layer of preparation. The development of fieldwork practice allowed staff to enter the field with a greater sense of authority over the county whose monuments they were recording. This built on Curle's system of fieldwork beginning only once all preparations had been made, but with a heightened sense of assuredness that the staff were aware of all known monuments of the county. This ensured completeness in an inventory. However, Mackenzie had done little to advance the techniques that fieldwork staff employed, preferring instead that the Commission and its staff stick to established methods. He made tentative steps towards investigating the potential of aerial photography. In the minutes of the Commission meeting in October 1923, the Secretary raised the question of how the Commission might use aerial photography, to which the Commissioners referred him to pioneering archaeologist O.G.S. Crawford who might better inform Mackenzie as to how the Commission might use this resource.<sup>104</sup> Little of note was accomplished.

For these reasons, we may think of the Commission becoming insular in the period 1919-1935. It focused on the honing of established practices. Beyond recommending that Mackenzie contact O.G.S. Crawford, the Commissioners appeared disengaged from the idea of innovating fieldwork techniques.<sup>105</sup> The departure of Mackenzie, however, and the arrival of Angus Graham as Secretary would herald a new era for the Commission.

## **6.6 INNOVATION AND CHANGE AT THE COMMISSION (1935-1975)**

The most immediate question after Mackenzie's resignation was who should replace him. For George Macdonald and the Commissioners, this would be an individual experienced not only in fieldwork, but also in managing people. The role of Secretary was shifting towards one of staff management. Managerial expertise was becoming as significant as being an expert in the field. John Dunbar, the Commission's first historian and its fifth Secretary, would later remark that Mackenzie was 'not cut out to manage even a small office [and] his reluctance to undertake fieldwork distanced him from staff'.<sup>106</sup> In Dunbar's eyes, Mackenzie also failed to adopt a 'systematic approach' to fieldwork with survey

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<sup>104</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 110.

<sup>105</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 114.

<sup>106</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 17.

teams being too thinly spread across the country.<sup>107</sup> Mackenzie's scattered approach to inventORIZATION ensured that his staff never focused on a single inventory, being unable to devote enough time to complete one inventory before moving onto the next.<sup>108</sup> The inventories of Orkney and Shetland, Edinburgh, Roxburghshire and Selkirkshire would all be initiated by Mackenzie, but none would be published before his resignation. The pursuit of a systematic practice of fieldwork would prove definitive for the Commission after 1935, as they sought to standardise their fieldwork practices across the fieldwork staff. There was a need to ensure rigour and this could be achieved by introducing a systematic system of survey. This would be a move away from a practice which had become haphazard in nature. Fieldwork innovations were designed with the purpose of creating standardised ways of producing a national inventory for Scotland. These changes altered the fundamentals of the Commission's way of *doing* fieldwork. The adoption of aerial photography, of standardised scales and new innovations in recording would create new inventORIZATION practices, in the office, as well as the outdoors field site. Standardised scales – for drawings to appear in publications – sought to make the work of the inventories more analytical in nature. A standardised scale, for example, could allow for comparisons to be drawn between similar sites in ways that inventories prior to the introduction of standard scales could not easily permit. These developing fieldwork practices would, I contend, begin to trouble the traditional distinction between fieldwork and office-based work.

The appointment of Angus Graham in August 1935 was a surprise to some in the Commission, not least because he was almost completely unknown to many Scottish antiquarians. Graham's own personal interest in innovative techniques, particularly photography, would see a number of changes brought to the Commission that would set in motion a shift towards a systematic practice of inventORIZATION. Graham's obituary would later comment that while he was not 'himself an innovator', his 'main strength as Secretary was his readiness to entertain new ideas, and to act promptly to put them into effect as soon as he was convinced that they were sound'.<sup>109</sup> It was this willingness that saw Graham drive forward numerous changes to the Commission's fieldwork practices. At the forefront of Graham's concerns was the maintenance of its reputation for high quality fieldwork. Graham believed that if the Commission worked more readily with academic archaeology, it could reinforce its academic rigour and institutional authority. This would see the nature of the published inventory change from being a reference text that only listed monuments towards one that not only documented the existence of Scotland's ancient monuments, but also passed analytical comment.<sup>110</sup> Analytical comments, however, were restricted to the introductions of the inventories. The appointment of Kenneth Steer in 1935, the Commission's first

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<sup>107</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 17.

<sup>108</sup> Angus Graham's Antiquarian Personalities and Episodes, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS7402/4.

<sup>109</sup> J. Dunbar, Angus Graham, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 111 (1981) 1-6, 2.

<sup>110</sup> This was most readily seen in the introductions to the Commission's work which began to focus on interpreting the counties' monuments rather than simply listing the monuments present.

professionally-trained archaeologist, was illustrative of Graham's approach to the Commission and its fieldwork.<sup>111</sup>

Graham also proved a strong advocate of new technology, and sought to embrace innovative methods of survey. Mackenzie may have been aware of developments, particularly in aerial photography, but did not embrace them. Bruce Trigger has noted that while professionalization had been taking hold within archaeology from the second half of the nineteenth century, it remained in its infancy.<sup>112</sup> Full-time positions in archaeology were becoming available as the discipline became fully-fledged, but the professionalization of archaeology was only always emergent.<sup>113</sup> The appointment of Steer was important in this regard. It represented the formal acknowledgment of the new world of professionalised archaeology by the Commission, and would be the first of a series of academic appointments, both within the staff and among the Commissioners. For Graham, these developing technologies (particularly photography), aided the work of the Commission, adding another layer of complexity and detail to the inventories and addressing the concerns raised by reviewers regarding the inventories produced during the 1920s and 1930s. Even so, the structured nature of the inventory did not change. It remained, at its core, a list of monuments.

Graham sought to ensure that the Commission's work was overseen by pre-eminent academics in the field who could pass valuable critical comment on their work. He sought a guiding influence that could shore up the image of the Commission and its inventories, and restore their authority over the field of Scottish antiquities. For Graham, the obvious choice was Professor Vere Gordon Childe, then Abercromby Professor of Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh and an expert in pre-history with particular interest in Skara Brae, Orkney. The possibility of appointing Childe was first raised at the meeting of the Commissioners in November 1941.<sup>114</sup> The appointment was not easy, not least because the Government considered him an 'extreme socialist' who may be taking part in 'revolutionary activity', and in the 1930s and 1940s, both MI5 and Special Branch monitored Childe and his 'Communist' ways.<sup>115</sup> The pursuit of such a figure was itself, therefore, likely to be scrutinised. Childe's academic work, however, caught the attention of the Commission as it sought to refocus its inventories. His expert knowledge of prehistory, it was hoped, could be used to add an academic sensibility to the findings of the Commission's fieldwork and provide an analytical bent to the introductions of the inventories. The Scottish Office, however, was determined to block Childe's appointment on several grounds: his expertise predated the concerns of the Commission; he was not Scottish by birth; he was apparently 'too modest and shy to make a useful member of the Commission'.<sup>116</sup> Graham was quick to

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<sup>111</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS.

<sup>112</sup> B. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, Cambridge, 2007, 187.

<sup>113</sup> Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, 187.

<sup>114</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS, 217.

<sup>115</sup> See Childe's files, The National Archive Kew, shelfmark KV 2/2148.

<sup>116</sup> Letter to T. McQueen Walker at the Scottish Office 20 January 1942, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

address these concerns and offer a strong rebuttal to the Scottish Office's concerns, noting that the very Royal Warrant to which the Commission payed obedience demanded that they concern themselves with monuments predating 1707. This would make Childe the ideal individual to oversee and guide the work of the Commission. Graham also made an example of the inventory of Orkney and Shetland, where some seventy per cent of the sites recorded were prehistoric.<sup>117</sup> Finally, Graham addressed the concern of Childe's modesty and nationality, suggesting that his demeanour had done little to diminish his value to the work of the Society of Antiquaries of London or the Prehistoric Society and that 'his Chair at Edinburgh University is surely sufficient guarantee of his standing in his adopted county'.<sup>118</sup> Graham's firm stance on the appointment of Childe eventually succeeded: Vere Gordon Childe was appointed as a Commissioner in 1942. Not long after his appointment, Childe was, with Graham, hurriedly working his way around Scotland conducting the emergency surveys of WWII.

World War II would delay many of the changes that Graham wished to implement at the Commission.<sup>119</sup> Despite the Commission remaining operational during WWII, it did not follow its regular inventory programme being without the staff to do so. I return below to the Commission's function during WWII, but it is worth noting briefly here that Graham and his remaining staff were not focused on the national inventory between 1941 and 1945, but instead worked on a larger rescue project. The emergency survey of WWII was the first of the Commission's rescue surveys, the first 'diversion' from the regular county-by-county inventory programme.

The Commission resumed regular survey work in 1947, its first task to get the Edinburgh inventory to press. The inventory of Edinburgh placed considerable strain on the Commission's pre-war resources, and it was hoped that its publication would be well received. The *Times Literary Supplement*, however, bemoaned the quality of the photographs noting that they were 'neither very good in themselves nor well reproduced, nor do they compare favourably with those in previous volumes'.<sup>120</sup> It was not, however, the review itself that caused most angst, but rather, the response of local Edinburgh architect Alexander Esmé Gordon. The Royal Institute of British Architects was to hold its conference in Edinburgh in 1952 and Gordon, concerned that some members might use the Commission's work as a reference text to become acquainted with the city and its architecture, wrote to raise his concerns. Gordon sought to 'query the scholarship and authority' of the Commission's publication.<sup>121</sup> This was a degree of scrutiny to which the Commissioners were not accustomed. Gordon's analysis focused on a single description of St. Giles Cathedral, noting, 'it is to be deplored that misstatements, although small, should find their way into a book that has such an air of final authority. Having examined the full

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<sup>117</sup> Letter to T. McQueen Walker.

<sup>118</sup> Letter to T. McQueen Walker.

<sup>119</sup> WWII would also bring about a number of innovations whose implementation would have been somewhat delayed if not for the technological advances brought by war.

<sup>120</sup> *Times Literary Supplement* review of the Edinburgh Inventory, 1952, part of a review file, RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/5.

<sup>121</sup> *Times Literary Supplement* review of the Edinburgh Inventory, 1952.

description of but one building – one of importance and great historic monument in this city’s history – and ended in so many queries, I am, unlike the reviewer, left wondering about the remaining 250 descriptions’.<sup>122</sup> Gordon’s comments were the first to really challenge the methods of the Commission. His criticism asked questions not only of the Commission’s way of doing fieldwork, but also of the manner with which it presented itself as authoritative. It was an open challenge to the Commission as the body in charge of recording ancient monuments. The Commission was not used to such criticism, much less to comments that warned people away from their work as a reference text. This was the first time that the Commission’s authority over the antiquities of Scotland had been challenged. When the Commission had been established, fieldwork instilled a sense of trust in the work of the organisation. Trust would lead to credibility, and credibility would lead to authority. Gordon’s comments chipped away at this authority. By questioning the quality, and extent of the Commission’s fieldwork, the organisation’s credibility had the potential to be undermined. Graham was quick to react, producing a document which detailed twenty points on which the Commission could rebut Gordon’s claims. This seemed enough to satisfy the Commissioners, with the Chairman Lord Wemyss commentating that it would be best ‘to ignore the whole thing’. Graham’s attentiveness to rebutting Gordon’s points was, as Wemyss put it ‘ammunition in the locker, in the case it is required later’.<sup>123</sup> However, the Commissioners could not ignore the concerns raised over the quality of the photography that the Commission sought to rectify.<sup>124</sup>

The inventory of Roxburghshire, initiated before the war, would prove one of the first opportunities to implement Graham’s changes. Technological innovations altered the way in which the Commission interacted with the field as a site of practice. Innovations in aerial photography in particular changed the nature of the Commission’s fieldwork. Aerial photography gave the Commission a sense of distance from the field and the local knowledge to be found there. This distance separated the field staff from local sources of information. The Commission would move towards being less reliant on such local knowledge. Instead, it would rely on its office-based preparations, distancing itself from the unreliable knowledge of local people that Curle and others had relied upon before WWII. The use of aerial photography changed how the field was defined by the Commission, its advent allowing practitioners to construct the field as a product of the fieldwork’s preconceptions, and to treat its photographed representation as a portable image of the site.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> *Times Literary Supplement* review of the Edinburgh Inventory, 1952.

<sup>123</sup> Letter from Chairman Lord Wemyss to Graham dated 30<sup>th</sup> June 1952, part of a review file, RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/5.

<sup>124</sup> *The Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* review of the Edinburgh Inventory, 1952, part of a review file, RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/5.

<sup>125</sup> B. Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 27; R. Kohler, *Landscapes and Labscapes: Exploring the Lab-Field Border in Biology*, Chicago, 10; J. Law, *After Method, Mess in Social Science Research*, London, 2004, 19. The Commission’s adoption of aerial photography will be discussed in the following chapter, with specific focus on its relation to rescue archaeology projects.



The significance of the Roxburghshire inventory, where aerial photography was first put into action, is not immediately obvious when considering the published material. The publication process would go largely unchanged until the Peeblesshire inventory in 1966. The Roxburghshire inventory looked like any other Commission inventory, but Roxburghshire established the validity of aerial photography and allowed Steer to make his mark at the Commission itself. The survey of Roxburghshire had been started by John Corrie in the late 1920s, but his death immediately prior to WWII was a major setback for the Commission.<sup>126</sup> This setback was made worse by Corrie's fieldwork procedure: he kept most of his notes in his head and only a few notes in his notebook. By writing down and recording the sites of ancient monuments a national record could be created. Through the task of writing, an antiquarian knowledge of the nation's past could be archived.<sup>127</sup> Corrie's approach undermined this principle. The value of the field notebook lay not only in its ability to record what the fieldwork saw, but to recall it at a later date. The notebook 'shifted in role and function: from a recording device, which helped [the fieldworker] to select and store [their] observations, it became a resource for retrieving them'.<sup>128</sup> Without the notebook this process of recollection was haphazard, reliant only on the memories of the fieldworker. Unfortunately, this was not unusual for the staff of the pre-war Commission.

This was the first example of the lack of a standardised system of surveying, or documenting what had been surveyed, hampering the Commission's progress. At no point had the Commission defined a standardised point-by-point way of recording and doing fieldwork. Each member of staff could record and survey sites as they pleased. Perhaps the only thing that was standardised was the methods of preparation for fieldwork that Curle had set out. Here then a failure to record systematically resulted in a delay to the publication of an inventory. Steer's solution was to deploy aerial photography as a fieldwork tool, one which allowed staff to quickly conduct effective fieldwork from the office.

The adoption and employment of aerial photography in the work on Roxburghshire did not add another step to the Commission's way of doing fieldwork. What it did do was alter the process of preparation for fieldwork. It shifted the emphasis 'back' towards office preparation, since preliminary surveys could now be undertaken at desks as staff pored over aerial photographs. Aerial photography also shifted the spaces of fieldwork from the field 'out there' to the office space. A trained archaeologist using aerial photographs could carry out fieldwork which once had to be done in the field. Basic measurements, the character of the site and the context of the location could be read from the photograph. This work could then appear in the inventory under the guise that it had been carried out in the field 'out there'. For the audience of the Commission's work it was the very fact that the Commission had sent staff into the field that created credibility and trust in their work. While the analysis of aerial photographs can be

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<sup>126</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS.

<sup>127</sup> M. Bourguet, A portable world: the notebooks of European travellers (Eighteenth to Nineteenth Centuries), *Intellectual History Review* 20(3) (2010) 377-400, 378

<sup>128</sup> Bourguet, A portable world, 395.

conceptualised as fieldwork, the sense of what fieldwork means, in lay terms, places emphasis on the need to physically be ‘out there’, in the field. Aerial photography was a means to remotely measure the past at a distance.

This was in part a fortuitous development; Graham had an active interest in aerial photography while Steer had served as an intelligence officer during the war, and was trained to analyse such photographs. Prior to his appointment as Secretary at the Commission, Graham had been in regular correspondence with both O.G.S. Crawford and J.K. St Joseph, the founding figures in using aerial photographic interpretation of archaeological features. Aerial photography found other nationwide uses beyond archaeology. Aerial photographs were used to revise OS maps, to produce ‘photomaps’ for planners rebuilding post-war Britain while returning servicemen, like Steer, brought aerial photographs into their own departments or areas of interest, be it geology, biology or archaeology. Aerial photography, as Peter Collier has noted, held the potential for governments to quickly and efficiently survey their lands, and to secure their resources.<sup>129</sup> Graham was eager to form a relationship between the Commission, Crawford and St Joseph, which would allow the field staff to draw on the pair’s expertise, and to have access to their aerial photographs.<sup>130</sup> Such was the success of this relationship that the Commission relied on St Joseph for much of its aerial photographs, until the establishment of its own aerial photography department in 1976.<sup>131</sup> This relationship allowed the Commission access to St Joseph’s catalogue of aerial photographs: in return, St Joseph would be seconded as a member of staff while undertaking fieldwork in Scotland. It proved a fruitful arrangement for both parties; the Commission was furnished with the aerial photographs it required and St Joseph was able to rely on a trained aid in the field.

Both archaeologist Richard ‘Dick’ Feachem, and Commissioner Stuart Piggott saw the value in working with St Joseph and pursuing the use of aerial photography. Having requested access to RAF survey photographs of Roxburghshire, Steer set to work.<sup>132</sup> While this survey was not begun from scratch, the process of reviewing what Corrie had already recorded varied from the usual system. Steer pored over the aerial photographs, identifying the sites that Corrie had surveyed and taking as many notes as possible from the photographs. In doing so Steer was able to locate monuments that Corrie had missed. This was, perhaps, the greatest advantage of aerial photography, and also the one which had the most significant impact. The local in this case can be viewed, as Finnegan does, as a site of ‘experimental

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<sup>129</sup> P. Collier, *Aerial Photography in Geography and Exploration*. In (eds) F. MacDonald and C.W.J. Withers, *Geography, Technology and Instruments of Exploration*, London, 2016, 183-199.

<sup>130</sup> See Graham’s personal diaries, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS36/24.

<sup>131</sup> See Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>132</sup> Gordon Maxwell’s personal recollections, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material. The photographs that the Commission used were taken during reconnaissance training flights during the war. These photographs were from RAF reconnaissance training flights during WW2. These were supplemented by additional photographs taken by the RAF during 1946-7.

procedure' rather than a site of 'universal constants'.<sup>133</sup> It was in these local sites where the Commission was experimenting with new techniques of survey. Steer's pursuit of aerial photography, and the use of Roxburghshire as a site to test it, was not dissimilar to the way in which Curle used Berwickshire as a testbed for the Commission's future practices. The use of aerial photography created a more systematic method of surveying, as each photograph was subjected to detailed individual analysis, ensuring that the county was surveyed from the air before the staff left the office to seek correspondence with the photograph on the ground.

By identifying sites from the air, Steer could do away with being wholly reliant either on maps or upon locals' knowledge. With sufficient aerial coverage of a county, preliminary work could be undertaken through study of the aerial photographs, removing the need to undertake preliminary surveys, the purpose of which was to locate monuments not known to the locals or for which no reference could be found. In this way aerial photographs did away with what Matt Dyce notes as the specificity of maps and instead focused on the 'generality' of survey photography. Aerial photographs were not tied to existing knowledge in the same way that maps relied on prior work having been undertaken in the area in order to ensure accuracy. It was a new scientific way of seeing, allowing those who analysed the photographs the opportunity to re-see the landscape.<sup>134</sup> In these ways, interaction between office and field shifted back towards features perhaps more evocative of Curle during his survey of Berwickshire, one where the Commission prepared meticulously in the office. The office, as a site of practice, controlled the fieldwork process and the aerial photograph both permitted this control and enabled the Commission's staff to establish preliminary authority over the field sites they would later visit.

This control was enabled by, and permitted, the adoption of aerial photography. Using a stereoscope, Steer and other members of the Commission trained to read aerial photographs, identifying and discerning the characteristics of the monuments before leaving the office. Often all that was left to do once in the field was to record the monument, either by drawing or photographing it. Each site was to be documented. Field staff followed a simple formula: find the site, and then survey it. Equipped with knowledge from the aerial photography, staff arrived with a sense of the site and of the monument. Their objective was to complete a process of record that had begun in the office. This new practice allowed the Commission's field staff to enter the area of fieldwork with an authoritative overview of the area being surveyed.<sup>135</sup> It facilitated an increase in the rate of systematic survey that did away with the need for local guides to lead staff around the fieldwork area.

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<sup>133</sup> D. Finnegan, The spatial turn: geographical approaches in the history of science, *Journal of the History of Biology* 41 (2008), 369-388, 370.

<sup>134</sup> M. Dyce, Canada between the photography and the map: Aerial photography, geographical vision and the state, *Journal of Historical Geography* 39 (2013), 69-84, 73

<sup>135</sup> Steer would continue to pioneer the use of the aerial photography throughout the 1950s. The development of the Marginal Land Survey will be explored in a subsequent chapter, but it was this survey programme, in particular, that would drive home the need for aerial photography at the Commission.

The use of aerial photography thus redefined the way the Commission imagined the field. Curle's method had required the staff to plot and plan routes through the counties being surveyed. This was a two-part process: to plan the most efficient route around the sites to be recorded and to create moments where the staff might interact with the holders of local knowledge, or respond to already-held local knowledge. The authority provided by aerial photographic preparations removed a need for this method.

The field was now defined by the photograph: the field area was to be plotted each time the staff members arrived at a pre-located site. Field staff would carry prints of the aerial photographs and locate the monuments with OS maps in the field using the prints to orientate themselves. Staff travelled from one site to another directly: there was no need to wander in the landscape. As far as the staff were aware, all the monuments to be recorded had been identified on the aerial photographs. Once the staff had arrived at the site they recorded and drew up the monument before moving on (Fig 6.7). Sites were points on a map to be picked off, one-by-one. The establishment of this practice, whereby staff would consult the aerial photographs and then move into the field and record each site systematically, set in motion a method of fieldwork that would become the foundation for the Peeblesshire (1967) and Argyll inventory volumes (1971-1992).



*Figure 6.7: Surveyor Ian Scott and Archaeologist Alistair MacLaren at The Dunion, Jedburgh. Together they are consulting on the location of the monument according to aerial photographic information before Scott draws the monument while Maclaren records it. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1098663.*

This practice of systematically ‘picking off’ site by site was aided by the mobilisation of the Commission’s field staff. Prior to WWII the Commission relied on staff members’ personal vehicles if they wanted to travel by car during surveys. In his own personal recollections, Steer recalled how a second-hand Lanchester saloon car given to him by his father proved ‘a valuable aid when [the] fieldwork [season] resumed’ allowing him to ‘make a rapid reconnaissance of the area to be surveyed’.<sup>136</sup> This mobility initially aided the Commission’s preliminary surveys, before becoming a full time part of the post-war fieldwork practice.<sup>137</sup> Residential field survey teams could record numerous sites in a day using aerial photographs as a guide thanks to the mobility afforded by the Commission’s vehicles. Not long after Steer’s return to the Commission in 1947, the organisation acquired a small fleet of vehicles including an ex-army Willys Jeep (Fig 6.8).<sup>138</sup> This allowed the Commission to access more remote sites. The speed of movement achieved with the Jeep was part of a simple equation: greater speed of travel meant more sites could be surveyed in a day.

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<sup>136</sup> K.A. Steer’s personal recollections, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

<sup>137</sup> Steer’s recollections in this case refer to preliminary survey work in Roxburghshire and the Scottish Border counties.

<sup>138</sup> J. Dunbar and G. Maxwell, Kenneth Arthur Steer 12 November 1913 – 20 February 2007, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 137 (2007) 1-4.



*Figure 6.8: The Commission's ex-Army Jeep in 1953 supporting the Scottish Summer School in Archaeology. The Jeep would prove to be a great help to the Commission in the field, allowing them to easily access remote sites. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1096824.*

As with aerial photography, an increase in staff mobility evolved the interaction between site and Commission staff. Travelling directly from site to site without the opportunity for meeting local people, meant that staff were more isolated in their approach to fieldwork.<sup>139</sup> Systematisation precluded serendipity, and in this sense, proved a revolutionary method of field survey. It was a practice that would be developed with the Marginal Land Survey (see chapter seven) and honed during the Stirlingshire and Peeblesshire inventories. By the time the Commission began its survey of Argyll in the late 1960s, this method of preparation and recording had been perfected. Yet, even then, the practicalities of geography could hinder travel (Figs 6.9 and 6.10).

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<sup>139</sup> See Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15. Here Scott recalls how staff would regularly avoid interacting with those members of the public who came up with fantastical theories, or relied on folklore, to explain the monuments that they might find in their local area.



*Figure 6.9: The Commission's Land Rover being craned from a ferry onto a smaller boat to transport it to the island of Coll during the Argyll survey in 1967. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1098516.*



*Figure 6.10: Sometimes sites to be recorded presented a particular challenge when trying to gain access. Here Geoffrey Stell is being winched from a Royal Navy Sea King helicopter during the survey of Skerryvore Lighthouse, 1974. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland SC 154955.*



The Land Rover would later be accompanied by other customised vehicles. The Commission's Commer van was equipped with everything that the field staff might need away from the office, including a makeshift drawing table, map storage and allowed staff to analyse aerial photographs while in the field (Fig 6.11). The Commer van served to make the practice of analysing aerial photographs 'detachable' from the office and transferable across the multiple sites of practice where the Commission was undertaking fieldwork.<sup>140</sup> As Jan Golinski notes, skills that are 'directly tied' to instrumentation are more likely to be rooted in a 'specific locality'.<sup>141</sup> The Commer van challenged this by linking instrumentation to mobility. The vehicles of the Commission were also sites of discussion, sites of planning that brought office culture into the field. Taking shelter from the rain, staff members might plan out the following day's survey, or conduct retrospective analysis.



*Figure 6.11: The Commission's custom fitted Commer van in the field during the 1966 field season. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1096820.*

The practices that Steer would develop and hone following his appointment as Secretary in 1957 were ones driven by mobility (speed of movement), and aerial photography (completeness of coverage). He combined this with a continued move towards a more structured and systematic way of organising his field staff, who until this point had worked in self-appointed teams or simply worked together on an ad hoc basis. Steer's solution to this was to pair field staff together creating three field teams. This was

<sup>140</sup> Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge: Constructivism and the History of Science*, Chicago, 2005, 76.

<sup>141</sup> Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 76.

aided by the appointment in 1959 of draughtsman Ian Scott, bringing the total field staff to six. Scott would be paired with Alistair Maclaren. Dick Feachem worked with his wife, Megan, and Steer focused on Roman sites while Geoffrey Hay and John Dunbar completed the field team with their focus on architecture.<sup>142</sup> Working in pairs, the Commission's field staff could more easily achieve the Commissioner's plan that staff should work across two counties at once. When Scott was appointed in 1959, he was despatched with Maclaren to survey Peeblesshire and Argyll, travelling daily to the former in the Commission's Land Rover and working residentially in the latter. They were joined by the Feachems. As work in Argyll continued, it became necessary to make more complex arrangements owing to the diversity of the county's archaeology. The work of the Commission's staff in Argyll thus also saw the Commissioners employ more field staff to help lessen the burden on Steer's original complement of six. In 1973 it became necessary to supplement the existing fieldwork team with a second inventory team helping towards the conclusion of the Argyll inventory: this was to be a 'short-term contract' and the two additional staff members were responsible for 'intensive surveys' to complete the remaining inventory volumes.<sup>143</sup>

Despite the systematic nature of Steer's aerial photography methods and the acquisition of vehicles creating a new form of mobility around the use of aerial photographs, and the ease with which the Commission could travel between sites, the organisation still lacked a standardised way of recording sites in the field. Staff members recorded sites as they saw fit. Of particular concern, and hindrance to the process of standardisation, was the drawing of monuments according to the scales that the staff member preferred or thought best. There was no standard scale, no fieldwork checklist to work from. This deficit particularly limited the analytical value of the inventories. Drawings of a church might appear alongside a drawing of an outhouse. Drawn to different scales, these two buildings of dramatically different dimensions might appear to be similar in size. This had been done, in the past, to draw out the finer architectural detail to be found in the design of the buildings, but did little to assist comparisons. A standard scale was required to enable readers to compare sites and get a sense of their size in relation to other surveyed sites. The Ordnance Survey's archaeological department had already moved towards a field manual with a checklist to ensure that work was carried out in a standardised format. This defined both what was surveyed and how: it provided structure and standardisation to the OS's work.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15. Note, although Megan Feachem was not a member of Commission staff she often accompanied the field teams during this period.

<sup>143</sup> See Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, Meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1973, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>144</sup> See Ordnance Survey Archaeological Division's fieldwork instructions, The National Archive Kew, shelfmark, OS45/103.

The Commission's lack of such a system can, in part, be attributed to individual personalities. By the late 1950s, it was apparent that not adhering to a standardised system (particularly in respect of measurements and scales) caused unnecessary delay to the production of inventories and reduced their scholarly value. Standardisation in drawings followed the appointment of draughtsman Ian Scott in 1959. While these changes may seem, at first, quite distinct from fieldwork, many had a direct correlation with the way in which staff carried out work in the field. Scott sought to introduce a standardised linear scale, a standard font for labelling drawings, and a standard style of drawing. Following this process of standardisation would facilitate the production of the inventory and aid in its comparative and analytical value. The simplification of the drawing process, that is how those drawings were converted from field sketch to publishable drawing, yet further linked the field and the office. The two were bound by a common goal: producing the inventory, and the use of uniform scales and standardised drawings further solidified the link between these two seemingly distinct sites of practice. Before Scott arrived most, if not all, of the drawings that were published in the inventories were produced either by Calder or by Geoffrey Hay.<sup>145</sup> These two men had different styles and approached the production of drawings differently. Hay was a perfectionist. Calder had a 'matter of fact', workmanlike style to his drawing (Figs 6.12, 6.13, 6.14 and 6.15).<sup>146</sup> Drawings, even those left without initials, could be easily traced to their creator simply by their styles.

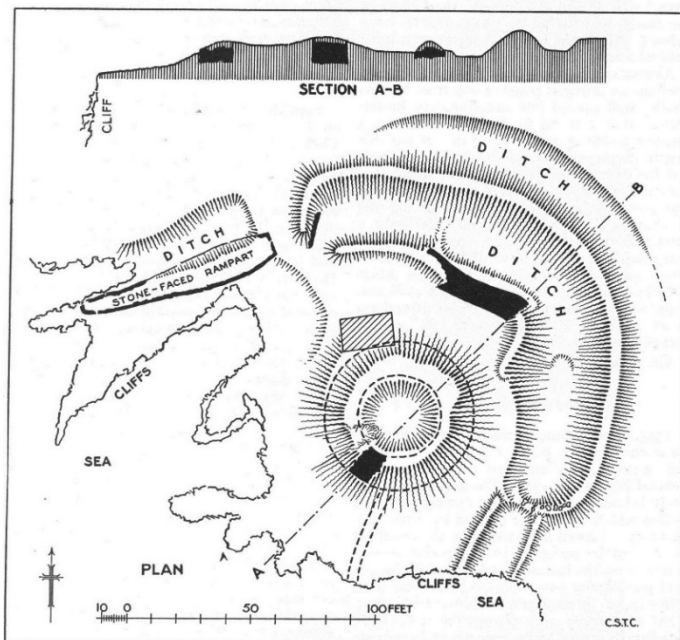


FIG. 659.—Broch of Hoga Ness (No. 1543).

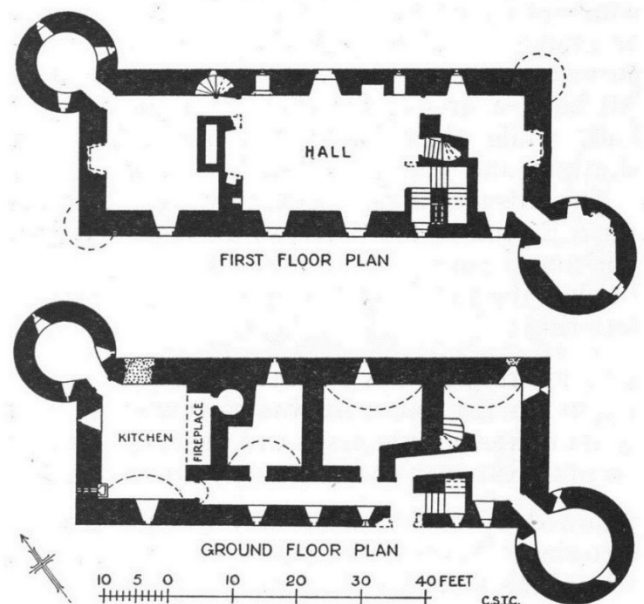


FIG. 652.—Muness Castle (No. 1543).

Figure 6.12: drawings by Charles S.T Calder taken from the *Orkney and Shetland Inventory* (1946). Calder has a particularly workmanlike approach to his work. His heavy-handed approach was quite distinct to the work of the Commission's other draughtsmen. Note here the 'tadpole' style of Calder, evident in the image on the right. This distinctive technique was fine for marking out contour lines, but it was over simplistic in conveying a sense of the landscape of a site.

*Images adapted from the Orkney and Shetland publication.*

<sup>145</sup> Note: Hay was appointed in November 1953 as an architect. See Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>146</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

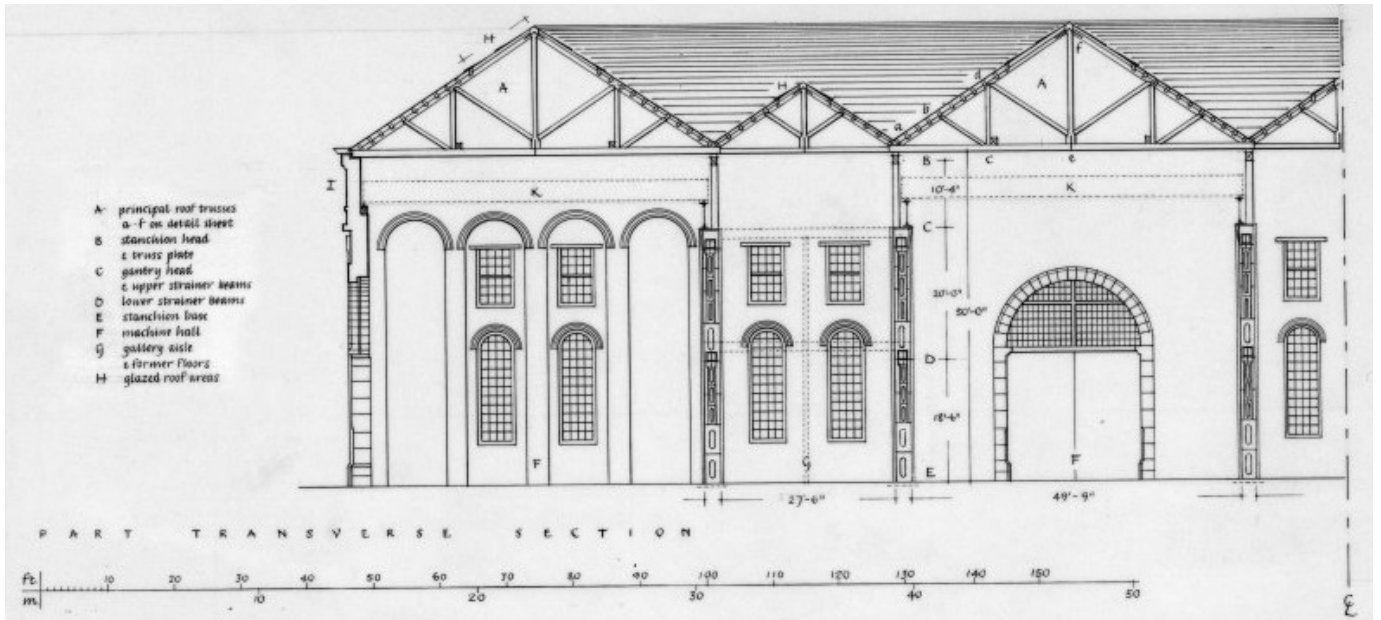


Figure 6.13: An example of the drawings of Geoffrey Hay. While of a different subject to Calder's there is a definite finesse to Hay's drawings not present in the work of Charles S.T. Calder. Also evident is Hay's differing use of scales in order to best portray the architecture of the site in question.

Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland

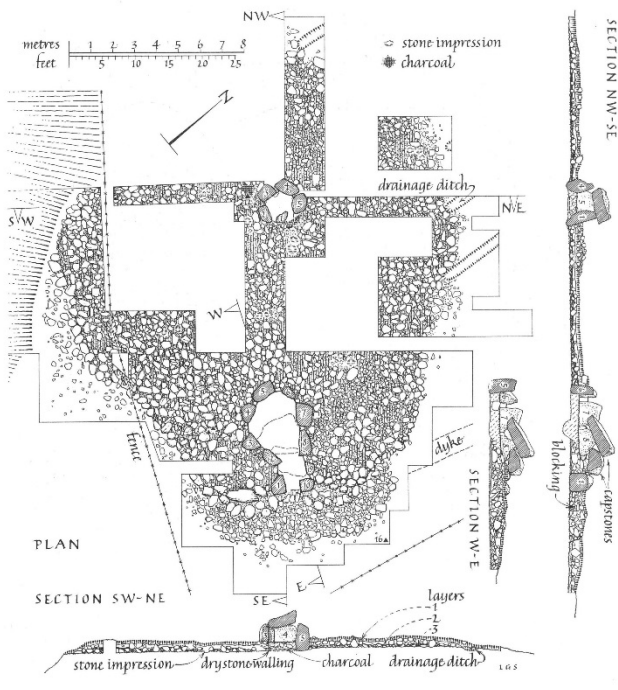


Fig. 8. Chambered cairn, Achnacreebeg (No. 2); scale 1:150

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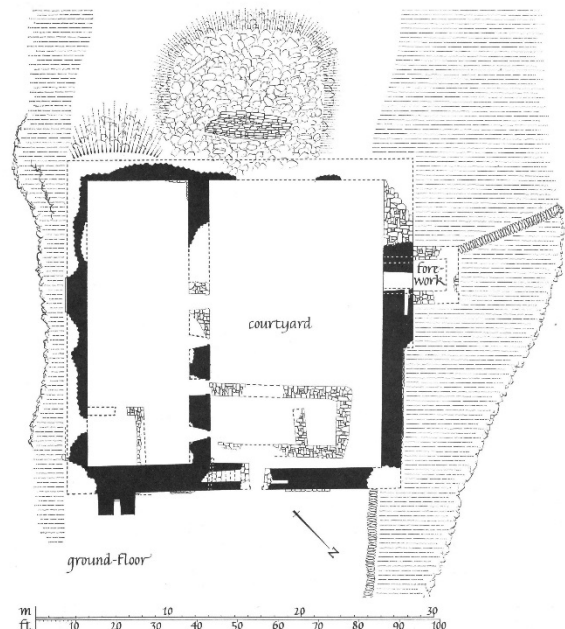


Fig. 159. Achadun Castle, Lismore (No. 276); ground-floor plan

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Figure 6.14: This third set of drawings is taken from the work of Ian Scott. Again a third style of drawing is evident, accompanied (although not evident in the image on the left) by a standardised scale to aid in comparison.

Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.



*Figure 6.15: Charles S.T. Calder drawing in the field c1947. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1121381.*

It was Scott who tackled the questions of scales and of standardisation. Commission practice with regard to non-photographic illustrations relied on a committee made up of a draughtsman, Steer, Feachem and photographer Geoffrey Quick, who would decide which drawings would be given a full, middle, or double column in the published inventory. It was this committee of staff members that decided what the inventory in its published format would look like. From this an appropriate reduction scale would be chosen, usually the scale that the drawing had been made to in the field.<sup>147</sup> Scales were then adjusted to ensure the drawing fitted its allocated space in the inventory. It was, as Scott recalled, a ‘nightmare

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<sup>147</sup> Note: the reduction scale was used to fit the drawings into the inventory: however, applying a non-standardised reduction scale to a non-standard field scale created unnecessary complication. Scott’s solution was to create a uniform scale of reduction, so easing the publication process.

[...] just trying to get them all the same size'.<sup>148</sup> Not until the production of the Peeblesshire inventory did a standardised scale appear.<sup>149</sup> Once the drawings had been reduced it was possible, with printing blocks, to fit the drawings onto the pages of the inventory and position them to best effect. This did away with hours spent debating which drawings should be at what scale simply so that they fitted on the page, and proved to be an aid in the field since the Commission draughtsman could now take templates into the field to see how the drawing would appear in the inventory.<sup>150</sup> They could then decide, still outdoors, exactly how they would go about drawing the site. With the development of a standardised scale, the production process could begin in situ: the survey team could make decisions on *how* they would draw a site after having worked out how it would appear in the final inventory.

Implementing such change did not prove easy. Only following the support of Feachem did Scott push through the new standardisation for drawing.<sup>151</sup> The idea had faced particular dissent from Hay who saw no benefit in drawing buildings to one scale. Despite the advantage of being able to compare buildings when using the same scale, Hay believed it was necessary to draw each building to its own scale in order to allow their individual details to be identified clearly. Eventually he relented. The ability to compare buildings and sites against one another using the same scale not only benefited the production process, but also enhanced the academic value of the inventories. Being able to compare sites, and draw comparisons between them lessened the “postage stamp” mentality of the previous inventories.<sup>152</sup> It also allowed the Commission to make tentative conclusions from its findings, adding an element of archaeological and architectural analysis to its work.

Scott also found support for his changes from Stuart Piggott who had been appointed as a Commissioner in 1946, following the departure of Vere Gordon Childe (Fig 6.16). The fact that Piggott held the Abercromby Chair of Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh, as had Childe, yet further solidified the Commission’s desire to enhance its academic status.

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<sup>148</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

<sup>149</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

<sup>150</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

<sup>151</sup> Within the Commission’s hierarchy, Feachem was the most senior member of staff other than the Secretary. This was emphasised by the position of his office within the Commission building. Feachem was the only member of staff, other than Steer’s secretary, to share the floor with the Secretary.

<sup>152</sup> This was not Scott’s only drawing innovation. His drawing techniques and desire to render objects whole from the fragments that remained saw his work become increasingly important to the Commission when undertaking rescue projects. This is addressed in chapter seven.



*Figure 6.16: Changing of the guard. Piggott (L) in conversation with Childe (R). Piggott was crucial in advocating the use of standardised scales of drawings, not least because he recognised their academic merit in permitting more detailed analysis of the sites being recorded by the Commission. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 428929.*

Scott found particular favour with Piggott owing to the former's keen eye for reconstructing monuments from fragments. Scott would draw each fragmented piece before arranging them into what appeared to be their original positions, allowing for a more informed interpretation of the monument or artefact. Being able to create such drawings allowed archaeologists like Piggott to solve archaeological questions while providing academic significance to the Commission's inventories.<sup>153</sup> To this end Scott would eventually undertake projects for Piggott.

The particulars of a region's archaeology and ancient history were also a factor in defining new field methods for the Commission and, in some cases, bringing about the adoption of new technologies.

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<sup>153</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

Unlike the adoption of aerial photography, which fundamentally changed the fieldwork process, the changes in method that the Commission employed in the wake of regional differences were more subtle. The survey of Argyll, for example, forced Scott to find new way of drawing and recording the cup and ring markings throughout the county (Fig 6.17).



*Figure 6.17: An example of the cup and ring markings that the Commission encountered throughout Argyll. Scott's method allowed the field staff to ensure that detailed drawings were made in the field by making the details of the marking clearly visible. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 336486.*

The standard at the time was for chalk to be used to line the cups and rings producing a drawing which only showed the indentations themselves and none of the surface detail. Working with Quick, Scott realised that if the chalk was used as if it were light being cast across the surface, then the chalk could be used to reveal more detail. Moreover, this would make it easier for the field staff to make comprehensive drawings of the site. It also made it easier, as Scott recalled, for the more experienced members of the field staff to direct junior staff members as to what exactly they were to draw.<sup>154</sup> This simple innovation significantly enhanced the accuracy of the drawings being produced. The technique was later used on standing stones when staff wished to make rubbings of the monuments. Where staff could not rely on photography, using chalk and rubbings proved a worthy backup. These were, admittedly, small innovations, but within the context of the inventories and the Commission's fieldwork

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<sup>154</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.



they represented a significant step forward in the ability of the field staff to make detailed recordings in the field.

## **6.7 CAMERAS AND G.B. QUICK: FIELDWORK AND PHOTOGRAPHY (1957 – c1970s)**

The emergency survey the Commission undertook during the WWII and the increase in the quantity of photographs in the published inventories convinced Graham and the Commissioners of the need for a professional photographer.<sup>155</sup> This view also followed criticism of the Edinburgh inventory which deplored the quality of the Commission's photographs. The photographs included in the Edinburgh inventory had been taken by staff members on their own cameras, without training in photography. Graham raised this concern on 9 November 1956 during a meeting of the Commissioners. The minutes note that it was hoped that the post would be filled by 1 August 1957.<sup>156</sup> After initially failing to recruit a photographer, it was decided on 16 April 1957 that the application should be open to those outwith the Civil Service.<sup>157</sup>

Recruitment began in June. The specification listed two requirements: the candidate 'must have passed the Intermediate Examination of the Institute of British Photographers, or have obtained the City and Guilds Final Certificate in Photography'. 'Considerable and wide experience as a photographer [was] essential' noted the specification.<sup>158</sup> Geoffrey Quick was appointed shortly after and started work at the Commission in September 1957. He had, by all accounts, been rather lucky. Quick worked at the London Science Museum, and, at 25 years of age, was one of the youngest applicants.<sup>159</sup>

Quick established a photographic office within the Commission's premises at No.7 Coates Gardens, Edinburgh. He arrived on his first day at nine o'clock. To his surprise, the Commission was locked up and it was another twenty minutes before staff began to trickle in. Quick recalled that it was a 'very lax sort of arrangement, I couldn't believe my eyes, anyway I went in and introduced myself and we got started. But I had no photographic department, I was shown the basement which was a dreadful mess, broken glass on the floor, you were crunching about in it'.<sup>160</sup> Steer allowed Quick the chance to overhaul the basement of the building to convert it into his own photographic office and laboratory. Quick's first morning was spent working with staff from the Ministry of Works. He put together a plan of the

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<sup>155</sup> An analysis of the emergency survey as the beginning of the Commission's rescue archaeology programme will appear in the following chapter

<sup>156</sup> See Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>157</sup> See Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>158</sup> Civil Service File, The National Archives Kew, shelfmark CSC6/62/32.

<sup>159</sup> Interview conversation with Geoff Quick, 19/5/15.

<sup>160</sup> Interview conversation with Geoff Quick, 19/5/15.

basement, placing the 13 amp sockets, light fixtures and planning out two dark rooms, a studio, a small office and a library for the negatives (Fig 6.18). Finally, he ordered the photographic equipment required.<sup>161</sup>



*Figure 6.18: The room that would become G.B. Quick's office in No.7 Coates Gardens. It was a scene not dissimilar to this that Quick recalls being greeted by when he first arrived at the Commission. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1516512.*

Quick's work in the field began almost immediately (Fig 6.19). Having been asked to review the photographs taken by the Commission's field staff during the Selkirkshire inventory, he rejected them all. They had the appearance of having been taken on a 'wet Sunday afternoon'.<sup>162</sup> Quick decided to retake the photographs in their entirety. However, the first project that Quick began from scratch was the Stirling Heads publication. This was a stand-alone publication designed to highlight the historical value of the Stirling Heads, a series of carved oak medallions with the images of kings, queens, nobles, Roman emperors and characters from mythology. While this was not an inventory volume per se – it was intended to accompany the Stirlingshire inventory – it was an opportunity for Quick to prove himself and his methods of visualisation in the field. It was also a chance for the Commission to show off its new photographic capabilities and validate Quick's appointment.

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<sup>161</sup> Interview conversation with Geoff Quick, 19/5/15.

<sup>162</sup> Interview conversation with Geoff Quick, 19/5/15.



*Figure 6.19: G.B. Quick in 1960 using the inherited Gandolfi half-plate camera at Mumrills. Quick was not overly enamoured by the Gandolfi, but had to make use of it as the Commission could not afford another camera. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1096815.*

Quick completed the fieldwork and photography for the Stirling Heads publication in late 1958. His photographs were well received by the Commissioners, who commended him both on the quality of his photographs and the publication itself.<sup>163</sup> The potential for photography had been proven, and Quick would now begin to work on photographing sites through Peeblesshire and Argyll. It was during these surveys that he pioneered the photography of ancient monuments and archaeological remains in Scotland, work which would later inspire others throughout the UK.

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<sup>163</sup> Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

Quick first tried to apply the techniques he learned at the London Science Museum and during his time with London photographic firm Wallace & Heaton. A long exposure was used while a light was moved around in a circular motion over the object to produce an even light across it. The results were a ‘corking success’, recalled Quick, ‘because the image leaped out’ making every detail, no matter how faint, visible.<sup>164</sup> The technique, however, had its limitations; it only worked indoors. When testing it outdoors on Iona, Quick noted how ‘every insect [...] in the vicinity would come to see what was going on’ while the wind buffeted the cameras on their tripods.<sup>165</sup> The result was a distinctly blurred image of little use to Quick or the Commission. It was then that Quick decided to experiment with flashbulbs to replicate the effect. Sets of flashbulbs would be placed at each corner of the monument being photographed to ensure that an even light was cast across it (Fig 6.20). Quick hoped that this would be sufficient to reveal all the detail.



*Figure 6.20: G.B. Quick in the field on Iona, c.1970s. Here you can see Quick's method for photographing finely engraved monuments. The flashbulbs are clearly visible at each of the four sides of the stone with the camera suspended from a tripod above. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1101042.*

<sup>164</sup> Interview conversation with Geoff Quick, 19/5/15.

<sup>165</sup> Interview conversation with Geoff Quick, 19/5/15.

It turned out to be successful, providing Quick with an even light. The technique worked as well indoors as out. The flashbulb method thus pioneered would become the universal standard for photographing ancient monuments with fine engraved detail. Such was the success of his method that Quick was invited to give a talk to the Royal Photographic Society's history group: this was later published in their magazine.<sup>166</sup> This was validation of Quick's techniques and fieldwork method. Staff members from the English and Welsh Commissions were sent to Scotland to be trained in the method which Quick pioneered.<sup>167</sup> Thanks to him, the Commission could now publish photographs of unprecedented detail. It was another step in the development of the Commission's fieldwork and 'indoor' practice.

The techniques Quick pioneered were to be further enhanced when Ian Scott joined the Commission in 1959. The pair worked together to unite the two visual recording methods of the Commission – drawing and photography. Scott's drawing ability was paired with Quick's photographic prowess to produce high quality images and photo-like drawings. The first opportunity to trial their skills came during the survey of Iona – part of the Argyll inventory – when, confronted by large numbers of standing stones and crosses, Scott began to trace the drawings from Quick's photographs.<sup>168</sup> While the use of tracing paper was hardly revolutionary, the manner with which the pair created these images resulted in a new way of recording significantly expediting the rate at which fieldwork could be undertaken. This method bridged the gap between the outdoors and the office.

Quick carried out fieldwork while based in Iona, taking photographs of standing stones and crosses while working with the Commission's archaeologists (Fig 6.21). This allowed him to move quickly around the fieldwork area documenting sites. To record the intricate detail, however, the Commissioners urged that the standing stones be drawn by Scott. This would have been time consuming. To expedite the process and ensure the prompt publication of the inventory, Scott traced the images that Quick took in the field. In order to facilitate this, Quick had to change the way the photographs were developed. He opted to develop them with a blue tinge, allowing the details Scott was to draw to be traced more clearly. Scott was then able to stay in the office, systematically working his way through the blue-tinged photographs Quick had taken in the field. This was, recalled Quick, a process of constant experimentation, adjustments being made each time an image was processed in order to produce the best effect for tracing. Thus the details that Scott wished to draw became clearly visible.<sup>169</sup>

This development in fieldwork was not dissimilar to the use of aerial photography. Both blurred the distinction between the office and the outdoors. The practice of tracing, and the use of aerial photography, created and developed an epistemic fieldwork practice that did not necessarily have to be

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<sup>166</sup> Interview conversation with Geoff Quick, 19/5/15.

<sup>167</sup> Interview conversation with Geoff Quick, 19/5/15.

<sup>168</sup> See Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15. Scott and Quick also worked together to 'touch-up' photographs taken by Quick to remove artefacts that could distract the viewer when analysing the monument in question.

<sup>169</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15 and Interview conversation with Geoff Quick, 19/5/15.

conducted in the field, but could be simply carried out wherever the field staff were. Scott did not have to visit the sites he drew and images of stone crosses appeared in the inventory under the guise that they had been drawn in the field rather than the office. It was a blurring of the distinction between out there and in here, between work in the field and in the office. What this procedure afforded field staff, however, was a degree of flexibility – one which would allow them to take on other recording roles particularly in the 1960s and 1970s. This would become increasingly important as the Commission moved towards undertaking more rescue orientated projects and excavations throughout Scotland, issues discussed in the following chapter.



*Figure 6.21: Geoffrey Quick photographing St Martin's Cross, Iona, c1972. It was during the Iona field seasons that Quick and Scott developed their innovative method of photographing and tracing monuments to produce the drawings that would appear in the Commission's inventory. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1469805.*

## 6.8 CONCLUSION

The publication of the final volume of the Argyll inventory in 1992 brought to an end the county-by-county inventory programme which had dominated the work of the Commission for eighty-four years. From an initial staff of three, the Commission had, by 1992, expanded to sixty-seven staff. Inventories that were once the work of one or two individuals became the work of teams of individuals, each working in various departments of the Commission be it surveying, photography, or drawing. Together they produced the national inventory of Scotland. The history of this inventory, of the county-by-county programme, began with Alexander Ormiston Curle in Berwickshire. While the inventory published in 1909 shares little resemblance to the final volume of the Argyll inventory, little at its core had changed. The fieldwork experience of the Commission and its staff was one of periodic innovation and evolution, rather than of outright revolution. Curle established the fieldwork ethos that underwrote the inventories for which he was responsible, and those that were subsequently published. Each of the Commission's Secretaries refined the way of doing fieldwork.

When the Argyll fieldwork began to draw to a close during the 1980s, it was apparent that the Commission would have to refocus its attention. The inventory of Argyll had dominated life at the Commission, constituting some twenty-two years of intensive in-the-field survey work and another ten years before of office work. This ended when the final volume was published in 1992. In 1982 the Commissioners put together a sub-committee to discuss 'A Policy for the post-Argyll Inventories' to devise a new system of doing an inventory. In the same meeting of 1 April 1982, the Commissioners finalised plans for absorption of the Ordnance Survey Archaeological Record. The foundations for change at the Commission were being laid down.<sup>170</sup> These propositions were finalised on 22 November 1985 with the Commissioners reporting:

Following the completion of the Argyll series of published Inventories, work on a separate programme of Systematic Topographic Survey would cease and resources would be concentrated on an enhanced programme of National Archaeology. This would comprise (1) detailed area survey leading to enhanced Lists and (2) the provision and publication of enhanced data relating to monuments identified during the course of aerial survey. Both parts of the programme would be managed in 24-month cycles, with publication in alternate years.<sup>171</sup>

Argyll was the last of the county-by-county inventories, the Commissioners deciding that fieldwork should focus on smaller localised surveys that were less resource intensive and cheaper to produce. This new approach was allied to the move towards a digital database system, *Canmore*, which would allow a full integration of the organisation's records, including the newly-acquired materials of the Ordnance Survey Archaeological Record. By 1987, testing of the database system that would become *Canmore*

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<sup>170</sup> Commission Minutes 1 April 1982, RCAHMS, shelfmark unit ID 22090.

<sup>171</sup> Commission Minutes 22 November 1985, RCAHMS, shelfmark unit ID 22090.

was underway, although it was noted that the system designed by the Scottish Offices Computer Services was less than ideal for the Commission's needs.<sup>172</sup> This began moves toward a more efficient way of conducting fieldwork, away from the 'postage stamp mentality of collecting' and recording Scotland's history.

The disorganised original process did not follow a single methodology, frequently proving ad hoc and serendipitous, but it was organised in county-by-county inventories that served as a memory 'bank' for Scotland's past. Even with the introduction of a more systematic surveying, there remained an element of good fortune that dictated whether a monument was recorded or not. What the Commission recorded through fieldwork and published in its inventories, however, served to save Scotland's monuments and ancient history from being irrecoverably damaged or lost. The inventory became a memory device, a way of recording that protected the ancient monuments found in the volumes' pages. The production of this memory device, of the national inventory of Scotland, was achieved through the Commission's work in both the field and the office. The relationship between these two sites was not simple. Considering the role of office and field as sites of practice, or "in here" versus "out there" does not fully explain the Commission's approach to fieldwork. What we might consider fieldwork was undertaken in both office and field. Aerial photographs consulted in the office, or stone crosses drawn at the draughtsman's table, both were comparable to an archaeologist in the field measuring and sketching a site. Both were fieldwork, yet took place indoors: some outdoors. Indeed, fieldwork – the work that constituted the field of antiquarian studies carried out in increasingly modern ways – took place between the indoors and the outdoors.

The Commission's fieldwork began in the office. It was the first site of practice. In the office, field staff first engaged with the area in which they were to undertake their respective outdoors fieldwork. Within the office, staff could search and sift through reference material, contact individuals in the field, consult maps and inspect aerial photographs. These practices served to ensure the 'completeness' of the inventory. Taken together, these practices constituted a process that served several functions. They provided the Commission's staff with a sense of authority over the emergent field of antiquarianism that informed and directed their fieldwork. They developed a way of knowing the sites that were to be recorded. They facilitated the gathering of credible information that later fieldwork would and could rely upon. These preparations, the foundations of the Commission's fieldwork, were originally developed and tested by Curle in his surveys of Berwickshire and Sutherland, then later honed by Mackenzie and the Commission's field staff during the 1920s and 1930s. Even after 1945, aerial photography served the same purpose as the Commission's other preparations; that of understanding the area to be surveyed and of ensuring completeness. For the duration of the county-by-county

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<sup>172</sup> Commission Minutes 20 November 1987, RCAHMS, shelfmark unit ID 22090.



inventory programme, the Commission followed the same method of preparation with the same attention to detail as had Curle in 1908.

Innovation was not confined to methods of preparation or to the office. The use of professional photography from the 1950s onwards was indicative of the Commission's reach and authority over Scotland's ancient monuments. Innovations within the drawing office served the same purpose, reaffirming the Commission as *the* archaeological institution and authority in Scotland. Advances in photography and the introduction of standardised scales in representation not only enhanced the quality of the images and drawings reproduced in the inventory, but also changed the Commission's fieldwork practice and the evolved dynamic between office and field. These developments blurred the distinction between fieldwork in the outdoors and fieldwork in the office. Work that would appear to have been carried out in the field, drawings traced from blue tinted photographs, for example, were produced in the office. Technology also afforded staff time, it permitted fieldwork to continue after the Commission's staff had returned to the office. Here more detailed analysis could be undertaken. This was particularly true of photography as a means of inscription.<sup>173</sup> Whether stills photography, or aerial, undertaking fieldwork in the office from these images afforded the Commission's staff the time to carry out detailed analysis. It permitted discussion and debate allowing various members of staff the opportunity to comment and assess the work that had been undertaken beyond the confines of the office. It was fieldwork, but it was also a form of work that was constrained by boundaries of the field. Such endeavour, enabled by inscriptions, captured the ubiquity of the Commission's way of doing an inventory. The field had been brought into the office.

The adoption of standardised scales shifted the site of inventory production towards the field itself. Staff tasked with drawing sites while recording them for the inventory could now position the site they were going to draw in the inventory, and so sense how it might appear in the final published volume. This distinction was important, one which formed the foundations of the Commission's claims of authority over the field. The tracing of photographs and the use of aerial photography to note dimensions, for example, did not fit with an understanding of fieldwork as those practices that take place outdoors. By the 1960s the Commission had credibility for and authority in its work by making evident a commitment to fieldwork. While conceptually work undertaken in the office (like sketching from photographs) was no less fieldwork than physically visiting the site, making it obvious that the Commission had not necessarily inspected every site to the same standard eroded the Commission's fieldwork authority. If it was common knowledge that the Commission had undertaken from their offices much of what would once have been undertaken by physical inspection, perhaps their fieldwork was not as credible as first thought. Physical inspection, that is, having been in the field and seen the monument being documented

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<sup>173</sup> Latour, *Pandora's Hope*.

was crucial to the Commission's claim to authority; as Gieryn notes for field observations, 'being' there [is] an essential part of claiming authority for an observation or discovery'.<sup>174</sup>

This analysis of the Commission's fieldwork practices permits, I contend, an opportunity to explore, and problematise, the boundary between the field and the office. While geographers and others have considered both spaces, the relationship between the two, and what happens when fieldwork takes place in both simultaneously, is less well explored. I have shown here an attentiveness to this process by which an epistemic space of knowledge production was created which, for the Commission, is where fieldwork tended to take place. Fieldwork was neither bound to the outdoors, nor to the indoor spaces of Commission work. Instead, the Commission's work was undertaken in an undefined space between the field and the office. The innovations that facilitated this, that is the use of aerial photography, tracing from photographs and the basic preparations that had been carried out since the work of Curle, served the same functions – completeness and the assurance of authority. But they were also a reflection of the nature of the Commission's practice of doing an inventory. Whether in field, study, office or archive the Commission's fieldwork was always ongoing. It was a practice whereby fieldwork took place in a variety of sites, sometimes in all of them at once, sometimes between them and, sometimes, in none.

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<sup>174</sup> T. Gieryn, City as truth-spot: laboratories and field-sites in Urban Studies, *Social Studies of Science* 63(1) (2006) 5-38, 6.

## 7. SAVED FOR THE NATION: RESCUE ARCHAEOLOGY, 1941-c.1980

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the adoption and development of rescue archaeology within the work of the Commission, from its origins in the emergency surveys of WWII and Marginal Land Surveys (hereafter ‘MLS’) of the immediate post-war era through to its development as one of the main projects of the Commission. Despite complementing the national survey the MLS often competed with it too. I argue that after the completion of the national inventory in 1992, the pursuit of rescue became a key foundation in the continued development, and indeed existence, of the Commission. The organisation’s ability to transition out of the national inventory towards a more rescue orientated form of survey post-1992 was facilitated by the pursuit, adoption and validation of rescue between 1941 and c.1980. I begin by examining the first emergency survey that was undertaken between 1941 and 1943 before exploring the MLS between 1950 and 1955. These surveys initiated and established the rescue approach, and made it clear that the Commission could do more than record and list Scotland’s ancient and historical monuments. I then examine the development of rescue and focus on two key themes: the authenticity of rescue archaeology (an issue explored further in the following chapter), and the salvage paradigm within the creation of a complete and authentic history of the Commission.

The Commission’s county-by-county inventory programme began in response to fears that Scotland’s ancient monuments were at risk of being lost. The potential for unsalvageable loss was indeed great. From its inception, the national inventory was implicitly tied to the idea of rescue. Monuments recorded in the inventory were rescued from an uncertain fate, their memory preserved in the published county inventories. Rescue would, after 1950, become a key development for the Commission.

The events of WWII changed how the Commission employed and undertook what would later be called rescue in the field. It was the first instance of the organisation approaching fieldwork explicitly to rescue sites from a threat. Through emergency survey in WWII, the action of rescue would become and change from a practice achieved through the county-by-county programme towards one more explicit and in view. From 1941 onward the Commission’s staff began actively seeking out sites in need of rescue. This form of rescue gained particular momentum following the war as sites of significance were sought out in the face of imminent loss. The Commission thus worked within what has been labelled a ‘salvage paradigm’.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> F. MacDonald, Doomsday fieldwork, or, how to rescue Gaelic culture? The salvage paradigm in geography, archaeology, and folklore, 1955-1962, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29 (2011) 309-335.

The term ‘salvage paradigm’ has peripherally been applied within anthropology, yet it also provides a valuable lens for exploring the phenomena of rescue archaeology. James Clifford has noted that the salvage paradigm reflects a ‘desire to rescue something ‘authentic’ out of destructive historical changes’. This ‘authentic past’ is a selective ‘value [...] maintained in a present relentlessly careering forward’.<sup>2</sup> The salvage paradigm is then associated with ideas of authenticity, of at once creating the past and of saving it. Within the Commission, rescue was also linked to a moral quest on the part of antiquarians to ensure that monuments were saved from an uncertain fate.

This question of authenticity and the desire to rescue something authentic is of particular interest in considering the role of excavation. As Richard Bradley has noted, excavation is a process which leads those who do it regularly to ‘recognise similar phenomena in one project after another, even when they are investigating the remains of entirely different periods’.<sup>3</sup> Salvage, by contrast, implies an act which, as Caitlin DeSilvey has noted, ‘makes do with the materials at hand [...] to craft stories’. Salvage implies an act of retrieval which does not necessarily form the most authentic record.<sup>4</sup> This consequence of excavation undermines the notion of an authentic past being created. Since much of rescue archaeology (which we might place within the salvage paradigm) sought to produce an authentic record of the site, we may begin to question the value of rescue archaeology, or, at the least the authenticity of the record it creates.

The Commission’s pursuit of rescue was made possible, I shall show, through new technology (particularly aerial photography) and followed the realisation that the county-by-county inventory could not record all of Scotland’s monuments facing either destruction or loss. There was a need for flexibility to allow staff to respond to the need to rescue, or to seek out sites under threat. This new fieldwork ethos was, I show, established during the emergency survey of WWII and consolidated during the Marginal Land Survey of the 1950s. These two surveys, and the later merger with the Scottish National Building Record, would establish the Commission’s claim that it could achieve the production of the national inventory while also salvaging monuments and sites. Rescue afforded a forward-looking vision. The pursuit of rescue added institutional purpose to the Commission project in the aftermath of the completion of the national inventory.

Pursuing rescue archaeology was to be an expression of the staff’s desire to achieve something more than lists monuments. Carrying out excavations, documenting buildings before their destruction, and surveying ancient sites all afforded the Commission’s staff an opportunity to engage with the archaeology or architecture that they were recording. Sites could be ‘rescued’ in the face of a real threat

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<sup>2</sup> J. Clifford, *The others: beyond the ‘salvage’ paradigm*, *Third Text* (1989) 73-78, 73.

<sup>3</sup> R. Bradley, *Seeing things: perception, experience and the constraints of excavation*, *Journal of Social Archaeology* (2003) 151-168, 155.

<sup>4</sup> C. DeSilvey, *Salvage memory: constellating material histories on a hardscrabble homestead*, *cultural geographies* (2007) 401-424, 421.

(demolition for example) or perceived threats as was the case during the Marginal Land Survey when sites were recorded because they might be lost. This rescue work went beyond simply recording the sites, allowing the Commission's staff the chance to really understand what they were recording. Sites that were rescued through excavation, for example, could either become sites of analysis, or of archaeological interrogation. Rescue was now permitting staff to do more than just create lists. They could go beyond the inventory and answer archaeological questions posed by rescued sites. Rescue did not necessarily follow the same model that the county-by-county inventory did. There was scope to permit excavation and exploration of sites, the only pressure on the time and resources of the Commission was whether another site was in need of immediate rescue.

The adoption of rescue by the Commission was not without its problems. Despite undertaking rescue projects across Scotland, the Commission's resources were still finite. As the organisation took on more rescue-based fieldwork, this was not, initially, accompanied by an increase in staff or budget. Not until the 1970s did the Commission employ a dedicated rescue field team. Prior to that, the Secretary had to engage in a delicate balancing act between achieving the national inventory and carrying out rescue projects. The merger with the Scottish National Building Record (hereafter "SNBR") which would later become the National Monuments Record of Scotland (hereafter "NMRS") yet further complicated this balance.

## **7.2 WHAT DID RESCUE MEAN AT THE COMMISSION? A NEW FORM OF SURVEY**

During the months that followed the establishment of the Commission, the organisation's first Secretary, Alexander Ormiston Curle, was busy preparing for the first inventory of the county-by-county national inventory. His time was not wholly devoted to fieldwork preparations, nor even planning the national inventory. Word had spread of the new Commission and many presumed that this new organisation would not only record monuments for the inventory, but also protect and preserve them. It was not long before Curle and the Commission were sent letters asking that they provide guidance on preservation, restoration and what we might now label rescue. It is not altogether clear exactly how the Commission, nor the wider community of institutions under the umbrella of the Ancient Monuments Board, defined rescue archaeology. Rescue archaeology was broadly conceived of as an act of fieldwork that salvaged antiquities and sites of archaeological or historical importance. Here rescue was taken to mean rescuing a site from danger of damage or loss. Curle was engaged in correspondence detailing the damage being inflicted on chambered cairns that were being destroyed for the provision of road material, while also fielding requests for assistance in preserving the roof of

Glasgow cathedral.<sup>5</sup> A year later, in 1909, Curle was being asked to assist in the preservation of Newark Castle.<sup>6</sup> Each time Curle was forced to respond that the Commission did not permit him to engage in activities other than the national inventory. While the Commission represented a move towards caring for Scotland's monuments, and protecting them from harm, it did not have the mandate to assist in these cases. Such cases were to be passed to the Ministry of Works for protection. To do so would have required an additional mandate, one that would mean engaging explicitly with the idea of rescue and would have meant going beyond the remit of the Royal Warrant which governed the Commission. Yet, the very process of creating the national inventory was a process of rescue. Sites recorded were rescued from an uncertain fate. There was always a sense, in the work of the Commission, that the institution was rescuing monuments because its national inventory preserved their future and protected their past. But this was implicit rescue relying on a moral consciousness on the part of Commission staff to play a role in saving sites of historical significance from being destroyed.

To understand how the Commission defined and practised 'rescue', we can turn to the Department of Environment document titled *Rescue Archaeology in England*. While this does not cover Scotland as such, the Commission and its rescue projects were overseen by the Ancient Monuments Board for Scotland. This was part of a national institution with individual boards for each of the home nations of the UK, and as such it would have been aware of this document. It is also worth noting here that *Rescue Archaeology in England* was published in the 1970s, by which point the Commission had been undertaking rescue orientated projects in a number of guises.<sup>7</sup> The document did, however, lay out a clear indication of what rescue archaeology entailed, and thus a way of understanding how the Commission undertook this work before and after its publication:

The particular purpose of rescue archaeology is the speedy investigation of the evidence contained by sites which are shortly to be destroyed, archaeologically speaking, by urban re-development, new roads, mineral extraction and various other forms of development. Sites threatened by afforestation and farming may also come within its scope, although preservation of such sites undisturbed is more often practical without serious economic loss, as was recognised in the Field Monuments Act 1972. Rescue archaeology includes survey and identification of sites; excavation in appropriate cases; conservation, treatment and scientific study of artefacts and their material recovered in excavations; and last, but far from least, preparation and prompt publication of reports on the knowledge obtained.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Letter dated February 12 1909, sent by A.O. Curle to Sir Hugh Shaw Stewart, owner of Newark Castle, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

<sup>6</sup> Series of letters from 1909, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

<sup>7</sup> I address each of these in turn. Effectively, the Commission had been undertaking what we might now call rescue work since WWII with much of this beginning during the 1950s and 1960s. By the 1970s rescue was a fully-fledged function of the Commission. The Commission had also been working with the Ministry of Works and the Ancient Monuments Board carrying out rescue work across Scotland.

<sup>8</sup> Department of Environment, 'Rescue Archaeology in England', RCAHMS, shelfmark 112/3/4.

Whether rescue, or salvage, this practice was directed at the rapid recording of sites which faced imminent threat. Having adopted rescue, the Commission's work could now be considered as both rescue and salvage archaeology. The Commission engaged in both proactive rescue work (looking to 'save' a site before it was lost) and salvage work (whereby sites were saved after having already been damaged). Such work became particularly important following the Town and Country Planning Act 1969 which provided legal provision for the Commission to record sites in advance of development projects (for example, new town construction and infrastructure). It went beyond simply listing for an inventory. Through the pursuit of rescue, fieldwork practice revolving around swift response and rapid recording of sites, created a new way of seeing the field and interacting with the fieldwork process for the Commission. The place of fieldwork, when practising rescue, was no longer constrained by the county boundaries. Instead it was open, constantly developing in response to the threat often in a regional format. To facilitate these practices, the Commission would make use of new technologies and foster links with other organisations to ensure that they were alert to any threats or areas that were likely to require their attention. In doing so, the Commission looked to be able to react to these threats and record sites before either damage could be done or the site lost forever. To this end the Department of Environment offered an explanation for the expansion and development of rescue and the organisations that were taking part in this relatively new form of survey:

The growth of rescue archaeology has outstripped the excavating capacity of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, so this work has been taken over by many local organisations. These vary in constitution, some covering a town, a district, a county or, exceptionally, a region, or a particular archaeological problem such as a motorway. They have been initiated and supported by universities, museums and learned societies; by local authorities and the Department. Techniques and new scientific methods developed with this increase in activity.<sup>9</sup>

In one sense, rescue archaeology opened the door for the Commission. It was an opportunity for the organisation to become a national authority on rescue archaeology in both Scotland and in the UK. Rescue offered the Commission the chance to rescue itself from dissolution following the completion of the national inventory. Defining rescue as a constant threat could save the Commission itself. The various archaeological institutions of the UK had been brought together in the name of rescue with the explicit purpose of recording sites that *had* to be rescued from the, albeit loosely defined, threat of development. These were sites of national importance for which a record did not yet exist. It was, therefore, crucial that the Commission should survey and document such sites so that there was a permanent record of the site. The Commission was almost placed at the disposal of the Ancient Monuments Board, required to undertake rescue projects as and when asked. Rescue archaeology also allowed the Commission to explore new fieldwork tools, for example aerial photography, and justify their expense. The Commission itself had become complicit in this paradigm, not least because the

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<sup>9</sup> Department of Environment, 'Rescue Archaeology in England', RCAHMS, shelfmark 112/3/4.

funding was available for it to undertake projects, but also because it gave reason for being. Aware that the national inventory would eventually come to an end, the need to rescue threatened sites and document sites that were hitherto unknown provided longevity to the Commission's project.

The advent of a rescue ethos afforded the Commission a number of opportunities, not least of these being able to influence planning legislation such that the organisation became a gatekeeper for developers who wished to carry out construction on sites where rescue might be required. The Commission targeted a number of developments it felt posed the most significant threat to Scotland's ancient monuments. Developments in the form of 'urban sprawl, oil platform construction sites, mineral extraction' and forestry were all identified as threats to ancient monuments.<sup>10</sup> Steer drew attention to the fact that 'more than half the visible field monuments in Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peeblesshire were not recorded on the OS maps or in archaeological literature', and it was likely that this remained true for the other counties yet to be surveyed.<sup>11</sup> The threats that Steer drew attention to were, largely, the same threats he had identified when proposing the Marginal Land Survey in 1949, opining then that a rescue orientated strategy was the only way to record these sites to prevent them being destroyed before the county-by-county programme was complete.<sup>12</sup>

Steer noted at the end of his letter to the Scottish Woodland Owners Association that one of the most significant challenges the Commission faced in undertaking a rescue project was the lack of staff. With the Commission expanding, not least after the merger of the SNBR, senior staff members (including fieldwork staff) were forced to conduct managerial roles. This placed increasing pressure on those remaining fieldwork staff to conduct both the national inventory and rescue projects. It was a scenario further exacerbated by the Town and Country Planning Act 1969, which required the Commission to document threatened buildings.<sup>13</sup> Ian Scott, head of the drawing office, noted that following the merger with the SNBR and the undertaking of more architectural rescue projects, he was forced to move staff away from the inventories or even rescue archaeology projects to the list of sites to be surveyed as a result of the Town and Country Planning Act 1969. Steer also pointed to the Commission's isolation in its task of creating the national inventory (and now rescue) in the same letter. Attention was drawn first to the Commission's staffing levels: it simply did not have the number of people needed to ensure that both rescue and inventory work could be achieved. As Steer noted, 'the three archaeologists on the staff are all engaged on Inventory work, and to transfer them to emergency recording would mean that the production of Inventories, which remains the Commission's primary task, would come to a standstill'.<sup>14</sup> If the Commission was to continue in this work then an increase in staff was necessary.

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<sup>10</sup> Steer to the Scottish Woodland Owners Association 7 October 1974, RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/9.

<sup>11</sup> Steer to the Scottish Woodland Owners Association 7 October 1974, RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/9.

<sup>12</sup> Steer proposed these in 1949, find the correct reference in the minute book.

<sup>13</sup> The Act was designed to give the relevant authorities the time required to undertake rescue surveys.

<sup>14</sup> Letter Dated 16 November 1973 part of file titled 'Afforestation', RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/9.



In this respect, the Commission did attempt to engage in fostering future archaeologists and their work as a way of alleviating the staff shortage. One such initiative was the Rescue Scholarship awarded to undergraduate archaeologists in the UK. The recipient of this scholarship in 1975 was a Miss Angela Jackson who hoped to carry out rescue work in rural Dumfriesshire. Realising that this fell broadly in line with the interests of the Commission, she hoped to make use of their resources and support. During the 1975 field season between March and October, the Commission supported Jackson's 'survey of monuments threatened by afforestation', which though not a major endeavour on the part of the Commission, and did not distract it from either producing the inventories or conducting rescue surveys, was indicative of two issues.<sup>15</sup> Firstly, the Commission was willing to embrace the contribution of other individuals working towards common goals; Steer himself had noted in 1973 that 'the sheer number of [rescue] sites, coupled with the comparative lack of local societies and private individuals undertaking fieldwork in Scotland, has meant that a large proportion of field monuments are as yet unrecognised'. It is not unreasonable to suggest that he saw initiatives like the Rescue Scholarship as a way of addressing this concern.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, it was evident that the Commission wished to support the next generation of archaeologists, and took it upon itself to have a role, albeit a minor one in this process. The Commission was moving away from being an insular organisation – concerned only with its own work – towards greater transparency.

Steer was not alone in recognising the value of smaller archaeological societies and the efforts of interested individuals in attending to those sites in need of rescue. Smaller societies not only encouraged the next generation of archaeologists, but also carried out and supported small-scale rescue orientated fieldwork. The potential of these societies in adding to the rescue work of the UK was recognised by the Ordnance Survey Archaeology Advisory Committee when the Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey faced being disbanded. The Director General of the Ordnance Survey received two letters in late 1977 from the Cornwall Archaeology Society and Portsmouth Local Studies Committee, who wrote to express their concerns regarding the loss of the Archaeology Division. Both groups focused on the loss of adequate rescue provisions, noting that the Ordnance Survey provided a set of invaluable skills that aided local groups in rescuing sites before it was too late. The Cornwall Archaeology Society noted that they were 'deeply concerned with surveys and watching briefs on monuments that are being destroyed by inevitable development', and that they 'urged' the Ordnance Survey not to 'withdraw this valuable service'.<sup>17</sup> However, the disbanding of the Archaeology Division of Ordnance Survey in England was to be balanced with the creation of a central archaeological service, rather than having archaeology officers in each of England's counties. By contrast, in Scotland it was being proposed that the

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<sup>15</sup> Progress Report 1975, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/4.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Steer to Civil Service, 16 November 1973, RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/9.

<sup>17</sup> See Letters held in SNBR folder, The National Archive Kew, shelfmark OS1/1544.

Archaeology Division be disbanded altogether. Then President of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Robert Stevenson, wrote to the Director General noting that:

Much more public money is being spent at present on archaeology than ever before, so this is the wrong time to prune severely what has been by international standards one of Britain's most notable archaeological achievements. To cut down the Scottish branch unreplaced, and to prepare to remove its records to Southampton, at a time when the Government is pressing a Devolution Bill is almost incredible. We submit that you should countermand these moves.<sup>18</sup>

The Society was most concerned that the disbanding of the Archaeology Division in Scotland would put at risk those ancient monuments yet to be recorded or in need of rescue. Alongside the Archaeology Division, only the Commission was undertaking similar rescue projects (having absorbed the SNBR ten years previously). It was a move that the Society believed would only jeopardise Scotland's ancient monuments:

The Director General of the Ordnance Survey has confirmed in a letter to The Times that instead of having specialised field archaeology sections (with experienced office staff helping them, and public and individual enquirers, to verify and check information from all sources), they will "reduce duplications" and "improve the reliability of archaeological classification" by obtaining their archaeological information from local professional archaeological sources, in particular, "most county authorities in England, Wales and Scotland". But as you know such archaeological sources are almost non-existent in Scotland. Even if a majority of Scottish planning authorities gradually come to have archaeological staff, this is unlikely to exceed one or two officers per Region...<sup>19</sup>

The pursuit of rescue work was unavoidable: the Commission had to respond to what was required both of it and the wider community of ancient monuments bodies within Scotland and the UK. It should be noted that this concern was being raised after the establishment of the Town and Country Planning Act 1969 which had allowed the Commission to proactively document sites and rescue significant archaeology in the wake of planning permission being granted. It was clear that the loss of the Archaeology Division in Scotland would place the nation's threatened monuments at considerable risk. The Archaeology Division question would not be answered until the Division was absorbed into the Commission in 1983, thus securing the work of the Ordnance Survey and increasing the resources available to then Secretary John Dunbar.

The adoption of what I call here a rescue paradigm by the Commission was a natural progression both for the institution and for antiquarian and archaeological institutions more generally. Rescue had always featured as an implicit function of the Commission project; recording sites in the inventory rescued them from loss. The national inventory rescued sites and committed them to record and memory, but over

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<sup>18</sup> Letters in SNBR folder, The National Archive Kew, shelfmark OS1/1544.

<sup>19</sup> Letters in SNBR folder, The National Archive Kew, shelfmark OS1/1544.

time the Commission became more active in what I might term here as explicit rescue fieldwork. That is, the Commission's field staff were actively involved in locating and recording sites deemed in need of being rescued. It was this practice that formed the basis of the Commission's paradigm also bringing about a change in the way the organisation undertook its work. The adoption of rescue changed the nature of the Commission, such that it became dominated not by the national inventory programme, but rather its rapidly expanding rescue programme (and supporting record services), particularly after 1975. This expansion into rescue was supported by a wider shift in the field of archaeology, and the national bodies that oversaw the work of the Commission and actively encouraged its rescue efforts. The political climate sought rescue fieldwork from the various archaeological institutions of the UK, a paradigm the Commission was able to adopt and use to great effect. The following sections provide a more detailed discussion and analysis of the Commission's rescue endeavours, focusing on the origins of rescue and the consequences of the adoption of this paradigm.

### **7.3 THE EMERGENCY SURVEY: THE BEGINNINGS OF THE COMMISSION'S RESCUE PROJECT**

With the outbreak of WWII it seemed as if the Commission might once again have to defend its existence at a time of war. The question facing Angus Graham was whether the Commission would be shut down for the duration of the war or whether it would be possible for the organisation to continue to operate despite the conflict raging in Europe. It was clear, almost from the outset, that the Commission's staff would be greatly reduced, leaving the organisation with a skeleton crew should it continue to operate.

During the 'Phony War', September to May 1940, the Commission was handed a lifeline. The threat of aerial bombardment, which enjoyed only limited success during WWI, was a real and apparent danger following advances in aircraft technology. The notion of an emergency survey to document sites at threat of bombing gave the Commission a much needed reason for continued operation at a time of conflict. The Commission could put its resources to work, not for the county-by-county inventory programme, but to protect and preserve Scotland's heritage in time of war.

Chairman Sir John Stirling Maxwell in a letter to Graham on March 12 1940 discussed undertaking a survey that would document sites at greatest threat from enemy air raids.<sup>20</sup> It was, Maxwell added, suggested by the Treasury that this survey begin as soon as possible and that Graham should create 'a

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<sup>20</sup> Letter dated 12 March 1940 from Maxwell to Graham, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

useful, but not exhaustive body of notes, plus a good many photographs of the most important buildings in the regions which seem to be in the greatest danger' (Fig 7.1).<sup>21</sup>

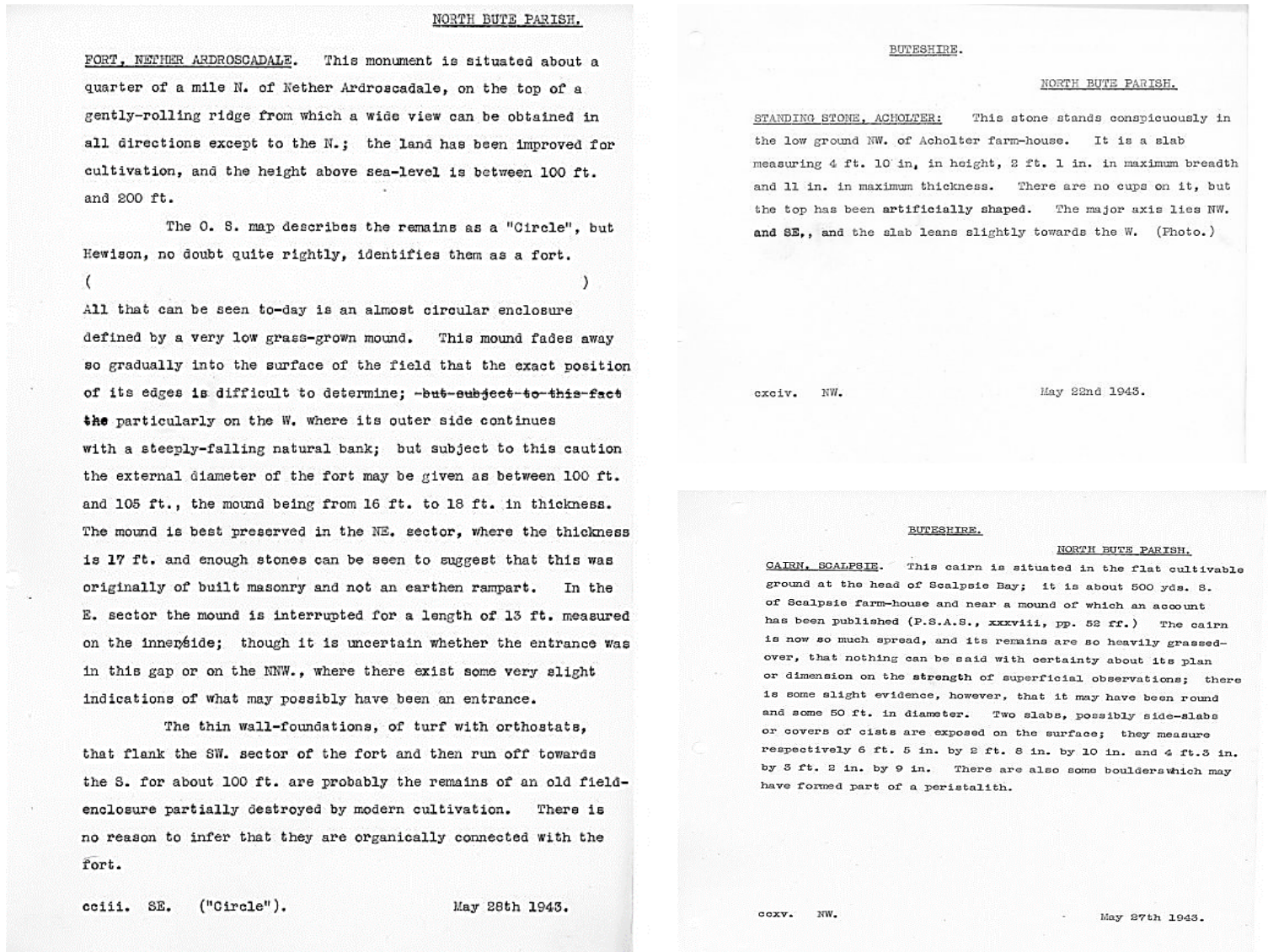


Figure 7.1: Extracts from the Commission's emergency survey. Sites that were recorded had relatively short written descriptions collected together after documenting the monument in the field. These short written descriptions were to accompany the photographs when the necessary detail could not be conveyed by the image itself. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1173033 & 1157652 & 1160006.

There was clear emphasis on speed and accuracy in recording these sites. Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Kilmarnock – particularly the industrial areas – were believed to be most at risk from German attack and were thus to be the initial focus of the emergency survey. Following this letter, Graham soon contacted his own sources in order to make preliminary enquiries and assess the feasibility of such a

<sup>21</sup> Letter dated 12 March 1940 from Maxwell to Graham, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

survey.<sup>22</sup> Graham's confidante William Douglas Simpson, the University of Aberdeen's librarian and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, was asked to consider which buildings in Aberdeen were most at risk and should be recorded. Graham noted that the Commission would only be able to dedicate 'three weeks, at most, in Aberdeen, and it will therefore be manifestly impossible to do the work on the Commission's usual scale'.<sup>23</sup> The emergency survey of WWII was to be driven by speed, not necessarily comprehensiveness. There was little time to spend recording sites and buildings to the standard expected for the inventories, nor was it expected that the emergency survey should achieve such levels of quality. This would be the common thread with all future rescue surveys undertaken by the Commission. Accuracy played a supporting role to speed. Accuracy could record a monument, but a swift survey would save a monument from being lost. This, however, went against what the Commission hoped to achieve: an accurate and complete survey. The rescue paradigm – within which salvaging the past was an important factor – undermined accuracy, authenticity and completeness. To rescue simply meant to save what was left, to make do with the remains to hand.

The proposition of an emergency survey seems not to have come as a surprise to Graham and the Commission. It had become clear to Graham and to Commissioner Baldwin Brown, who was assisting in the survey of Edinburgh, that the city might be targeted by the Luftwaffe and that the Commission's effort to complete the survey of the city should be expedited. Even before the outbreak of war in 1939, the Commission was undertaking the survey with the need to rescue buildings throughout Edinburgh in mind. With war approaching, it became increasingly difficult to conduct fieldwork without interference. The sight of the Commission's staff wandering through the streets of Edinburgh equipped with pen and notebook and a camera served only to stir up the 'spy-mania that possesses the inhabitants', wrote Graham.<sup>24</sup> Such was the concern that Graham was required by the Deputy Chief-Constable of Edinburgh to cease all activity during August 1940 until a solution could be sought. Graham and the staff members that remained, however, continued to conduct interior surveys of the buildings of Edinburgh, away from the prying eyes of ordinary citizens. Surveys of the exterior of buildings would have to wait for fear of the 'danger of personal attack by over-enthusiastic citizens' noted Graham.<sup>25</sup> His solution was to request that staff be granted permits so that they be allowed to photograph Edinburgh. Such permits would be essential when the Commission began the emergency survey proper throughout Scotland. The Commission's experience in Edinburgh also made it evident that to carry out their work in a timely manner using a fieldwork methodology that revolved around photography was the only viable means to complete the emergency survey.<sup>26</sup> Photography offered a means of rapid visualisation that the traditional means of recording, drawing, could not.

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<sup>22</sup> Graham's personal diaries, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS36.

<sup>23</sup> Letter to Douglas Simpson 12 March 1940, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

<sup>24</sup> Letter to Gatliff 17 August 1940, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

<sup>25</sup> Letter to Gatliff 17 August 1940, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

<sup>26</sup> Letter to Gatliff 17 August 1940, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

It did not take long for Herbert Gatliff at the Scottish Office to respond to Graham's concern that the Commission's staff were unlikely to be able to go about their work without disruption even if it was an official duty:

Thank you for your letter of the 19th August, 1940 about your special photographic and recording work. I am disturbed to hear that your activities have been so much hampered. The position seems to be worse than it is here which surprises me for, in my experience, the Scotch have usually been far more sensible than the English about matters of this kind. Perhaps you have been particularly unfortunate and no doubt June was the very worst moment; many people must be realising now that they were rather silly then. What I would particularly like to know is what sort of permit you used. It is hard to believe that if you had a special permit with photograph such as we issue from here, the police would have refused to accept it accompanied by some document giving you authority to work in the particular place in question and I should think that any unauthorised person who made himself even mildly unpleasant when you produced such a pass, would render himself liable to very serious action.<sup>27</sup>

Yet even with the permit Graham had been issued with, he made it clear that it was impossible to go about his work without disruption for fear of being arrested or attacked. At a time of war, fieldwork that required the recording of buildings, particularly those in sensitive areas, posed a unique challenge. The lack of cooperation from the police force did little to settle Graham's qualms. He recalled two incidents in his response to Gatliff that undermined his belief that the emergency survey could continue at present without further support from the relevant authorities:

Interference began with the first photograph that I took; a crowd collected, and a policeman marched me off to his post while he verified my statements by telephone to the Chief Constable's office. After this the Chief Constable, though he refused to give me any permit or to enforce my letter from Scottish Command, put a note about my activities in police orders, so that the next time that an excited inhabitant should call for the police I was able to clear myself without difficulty. But you will understand that it is extremely difficult to do satisfactory work under such conditions, while there was an obvious risk of damage to our extremely costly camera and its special lenses in the event of a sudden attack being made by people who preferred to take the law into their own hands.

I got into more serious trouble, however when I was arrested by a military policeman for photographing the old Bridge of Balgownie, one of the items on the list that I had sent to the Chief Constable. This bridge spans the river Don, which marks the boundary between the city and the county of Aberdeen; and the soldier took me across the bridge out of the city, and handed me over to a member of the county police, who of course knew nothing about me. It was my bad luck that this officer should have been a stupid and ignorant man of intolerant temper and abusive tongue,

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<sup>27</sup> Letter from Gatliff to Graham, August 1940, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

and I had a very unpleasant time with him until a detective eventually arrived from his headquarters and he recognised the genuineness of my letter from Scottish Command.<sup>28</sup>

Even with the correct paperwork, Graham was not able to escape scrutiny while at work in the field. The equipment with which His Majesty's Stationary Office had furnished Graham did little to dissuade suspicions of espionage. The Commission, always wanting to achieve the highest quality, had requested prior to the war that it be supplied with Leica cameras and lenses, known to provide the best image quality (Fig 7.2). Even to the layperson the Leica was unmistakably German. It was only after Graham pointed out to the police, the Civil Service stamp on the camera's body that he was able to prove his innocence.



*Figure 7.2: Graham's Leica camera that was used during the emergency survey. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, DP 208553.*

Graham continued his emergency survey work throughout 1941, photographing buildings and monuments across Scotland. It was a simple method: arrive in the field, photograph the site, move on. Descriptions, if any, were written retrospectively. The photograph was the main fieldwork tool. It enabled a rapid visualisation of Scotland's threatened buildings, quickly and accurately recording them. There was little fuss; all that was required was some film and the click of a shutter. Graham continued

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<sup>28</sup> Letter from Gatliff to Graham, August 1940, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

throughout 1941 and early 1942 so that by the summer of 1942 he had amassed a collection of over 2300 photographs.<sup>29</sup> The use of photography, perhaps more so than any other fieldwork technique, evidenced an approach whereby speed was the most important element of a survey. The instantaneous recording by the camera embodied the notion that during a rescue survey speed triumphed over accuracy, and yet the images produced were themselves accurate. The use of the camera permitted not only a timely survey, speed weighing heavier in the minds of Graham and Childe, but it also achieved with relative ease the necessary coverage of Scotland's at threat monuments. Here speed and coverage worked together to ensure that a record of Scotland's monuments that could be destroyed or damaged was created. Accuracy, however, remained in a supporting role.

By November 1941, Graham was ready to update the Commissioners on his progress since April 1939. He began with 'the developments arising from the war', noting that 'the usual precautions against air-raid damage have been taken in the office'. Items of value had been moved from 27 York Place to museum vaults across Scotland.<sup>30</sup> The movement of Commission documents caused Graham particular difficulty. With the proofs of inventories moved off site, he was unable to continue with the production of the inventories. Even writing the various introductions was not possible. The Orkney and Shetland inventory, for example, was nearing publication, but completion was halted until after the war. Half of the proofs had been stored in Edinburgh, the remainder in Manchester.<sup>31</sup> Graham, however, was not satisfied by these precautions and 'persuaded the Stationary Office to bind six copies, which [were] distributed to places of supposed safety in the country'. Graham concluded that 'the risk of complete destruction of the whole of this work has thus been considerably reduced'. The very inventory that was set to rescue the sites of Orkney and Shetland from obscurity now required rescue. Even after being committed to paper, Scotland's national monuments were not out of danger in time of war.<sup>32</sup>

The Edinburgh inventory remained Graham's focus, and by 1941 he had, with the aid of Watson, completed the survey of Edinburgh, including those monuments that were dated after 1707 and, therefore, not part of the original inventory.<sup>33</sup> All that was left to do was complete the photographic record of Edinburgh's New Town, but the burgeoning collection of photographs presented Graham with another challenge; how to catalogue and store them. Little consideration had been paid to what might be done with all these photographs after they had been taken. By 1942 Graham was forced to cobble together a rudimentary system of filing to deal with the vast quantity of photographs he had amassed,

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<sup>29</sup> Progress Report 1939-1941, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/3.

<sup>30</sup> Progress Report 1939-1941, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/3.

<sup>31</sup> Progress Report 1939-1941, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/3.

<sup>32</sup> In many ways the war highlighted the fragility of the inventory as a means of recording sites and documenting them. Any record, be it paper in the form of the published inventory, or the digital records that would follow in 1992 could be lost or damaged themselves. This salvaging of the sites from the field to a place of store serves only to store and preserve their memory until these new sites of safety are, themselves, threatened.

<sup>33</sup> The remaining members of staff had been called up for military service, including Charles Calder who found himself working as a bomb disposal expert during 1941 (see letter dated 8 July 1941 between Calder and Graham).



a task which he believed would take ‘weeks rather than days of work’ (Fig 7.3).<sup>34</sup> Graham’s efforts to complete this survey in Edinburgh also led him to liaise with the Scottish National Building Record and National Buildings Record Council. Formed in 1942, the SNBR was undertaking its own survey of Scotland’s national buildings in response to the threat of German bombing.<sup>35</sup>

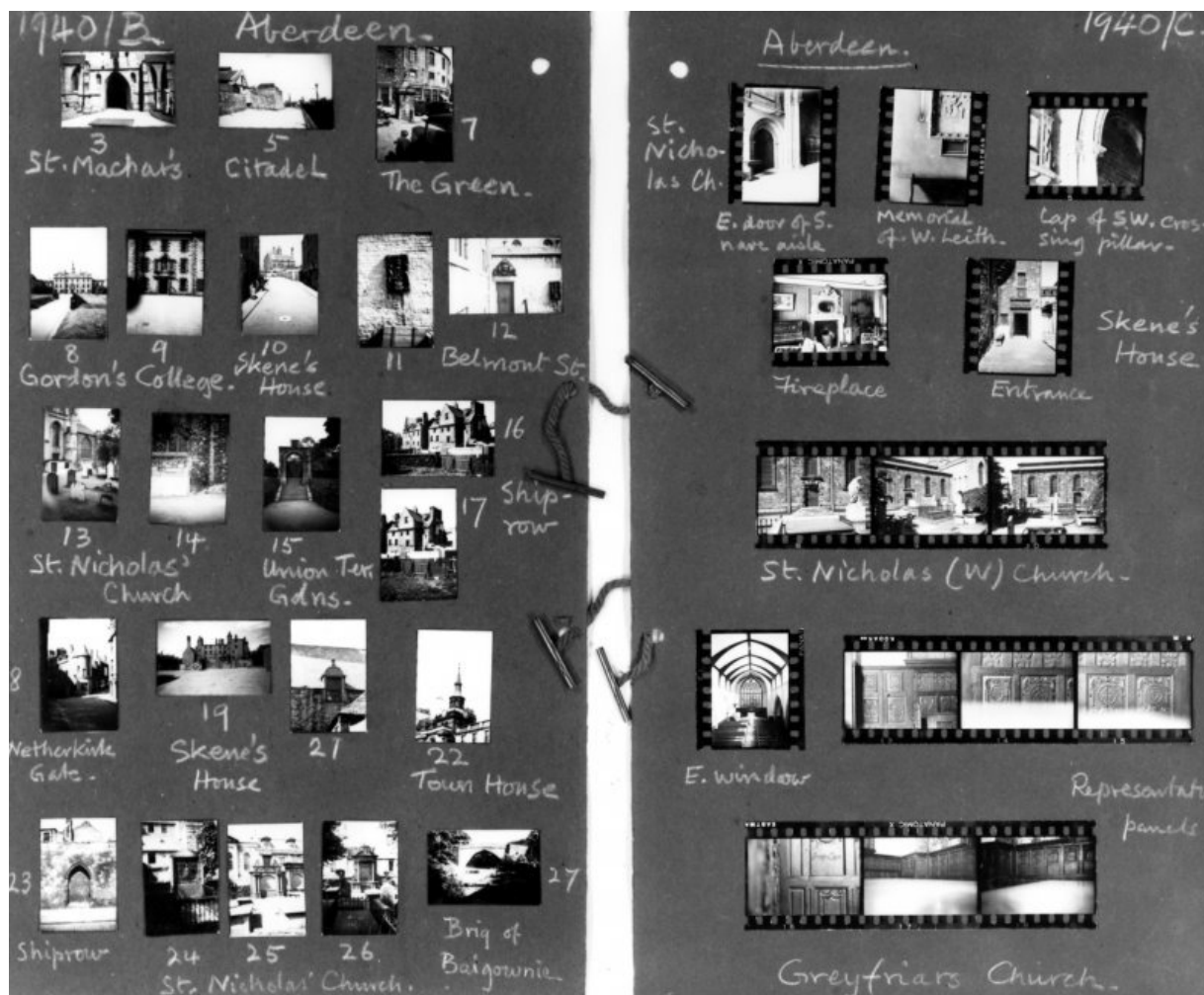


Figure 7.3: Extract Graham’s emergency survey album. This photographic collection was accompanied first by written notes, and later a typed collection of notes for each site visited. These albums were foolscap in size.

Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 371893

The SNBR’s survey focused on documenting the exteriors of buildings in their entirety. Like the Commission, the SNBR also had to tackle the issue of staffing. Its staff was composed of individuals with experience not relevant to the war effort, rather a skeleton core of individuals working to help document Scotland’s buildings. Even then it seemed an impossible task. The arrival of the Polish Army

<sup>34</sup> Progress Report 1939-1941, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/3.

<sup>35</sup> It should be noted, however, that the SNBR would take photographs of the full extent of building’s exteriors. By contrast, the Commission and Graham would focus on particular exterior details of architectural importance, and on interior details of national significance. Nevertheless, there was a need to ensure that toes were not being stepped on and that time was not wasted on unnecessary duplication.

in Scotland on 5 August 1940, however, offered an unexpected solution. The SNBR's Secretary, visiting Perth, met a group of Polish officers who, helpfully, were trained architects.<sup>36</sup> After much wrangling with the Treasury and the relevant military authorities, it was agreed that a handful of Polish officers would be brought on by the SNBR to aid in the completion of their survey of threatened buildings. Such was the quality of the work of one of these officers, Lieutenant Jankovski, that it was decided to bring him into the pay of the SNBR. It was also arranged that any Polish students who came to Edinburgh to escape the war during the summer months were to work under Jankovski, aiding in the completion of the SNBR's survey. Jankovski was a valuable addition, allowing the SNBR to produce accurate drawings to complement their comprehensive photographic survey. The SNBR's official record of buildings remained as a compendium of photographs arranged per building by city. This system made do with what was available at a time when there was not the budget to publish the records in the same way as the Commission.

The Treasury, impressed by Graham's efforts in recording the threatened buildings of Scotland, suggested that the Commission's emergency survey should be expanded. The UK's rural regions were being transformed into troop training grounds and staging areas, swathes of the nation's countryside now dedicated to the war effort. Monuments and sites of archaeological importance were now just as likely to be at threat from troop movement and training as they were from bombing. The immediacy of this issue was made clear when it was rumoured that a Polish artillery company had begun using a chambered cairn for artillery practice.<sup>37</sup> There was little time to waste if Graham was to ensure that Scotland's ancient monuments were not almost literally wiped from the map. The expansion of RAF Lossiemouth also threatened to destroy ancient earthworks. Graham's solution was to ask the Station Commander to have the engineers draw up a sketch of the site before he visited.<sup>38</sup> Most significantly, the expansion of the survey served to prove that Graham's emergency survey worked.

How Graham and the Commission would record these sites was not altogether clear. Graham could not simply wander into troop training areas and record without hindrance. Surveying publicly accessible buildings had been hard enough. The first stage in this second phase of the emergency survey involved communication. Graham was to contact the relevant military authorities so that the Commission might gain access to any sites in danger. He noted that 'it would be highly desirable for [Commission] representatives to visit the training areas and prepare descriptions for future use'.<sup>39</sup> Graham would not be working alone, however – he was to be joined by recently-appointed Commissioner Vere Gordon Childe. Childe began working with Graham during 1942, and was instrumental in the completion of this second phase of the emergency survey. Both Graham and Childe had access to a car and the mobility

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<sup>36</sup> Reports and Agendae of the SNBR, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS68/1-2.

<sup>37</sup> RCAHMS, *An Inventory for the Nation*, Edinburgh, 2015, 33

<sup>38</sup> Letter dated 13 October 1943, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

<sup>39</sup> Letter dated 29 June 1942, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

this afforded during both the emergency survey and in later rescue projects proved crucial. It allowed Graham and Childe to travel considerable distances between sites without reducing the amount of time available to record them. The car, and the transition between places of recording, afforded the pair an opportunity to consolidate their findings and plan their recording. In this way it served as a mobile in-the-field office. The car if not strictly an instrument of survey, greatly facilitated it and proved valuable to the production of rescue fieldwork. Like the camera, the car facilitated a speed to survey work that was otherwise impossible.

The second half of the emergency survey began in earnest in July 1942. It took nearly twenty-five years to record the monuments and sites of eleven of Scotland's counties. Now the Commission was expected to document the remaining monuments, albeit only those in immediate danger, as quickly as possible:

We restricted ourselves to uninventoried counties and, as the areas in question were very large, we chose for examination those about which the least amount of information was already available in archaeological literature. Owing to the mobility given by a car, and to the fact that we were working at war-time pressure, we managed to visit two hundred and fifty-six monuments before the weather became too bad, preparing descriptions and plans suitable for use in future inventories and taking some two hundred and fifty photographs. As a result, we feel that a good deal of military damage can now be done in these areas without really serious loss to science.<sup>40</sup>

Graham and Childe continued with the emergency survey, throughout 1943, coming to a conclusion of sorts late that year. Around 636 monuments had been recorded and photographed, and such was the success of the survey that Graham was asked to conduct a similar survey in Northern England. This was a much shorter venture, but its significance ought not to be overlooked. At a time when the Commissions of England and Scotland did not work together, indeed, were often at loggerheads, the arrangement whereby the Secretary of the Scottish Commission undertook work in England is of note.<sup>41</sup> Graham wrote to the English Commission in October 1943 to ask for guidance as to what they would like him to achieve. His letter also evidenced how he and Childe had achieved the Scottish emergency survey, and how the Scottish Commission undertook fieldwork in general:

Perhaps I had better give you an idea of what I should be able to do, based on my experience of similar work in Scotland. I use a 5" x 4" Sanderson camera, for which I have a wide angle and a telephoto lens as well as an ordinary one; and for small details I use a Leica, for which I also have three lenses. In the past I have always used film pack with the Sanderson, but now that this is unobtainable I have had to fall back upon glass plates, and have only an insufficient supply of dark slides. It would be a great help if you could lend me at least six dark slides of 5" x 4" size, and a changing bag, or a container for cut film if you happen to possess such a thing. I fear that, as I am

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<sup>40</sup> Letter dated 4 December 1942, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

<sup>41</sup> There appears to be no other case where the English Commission worked with, or allowed work to be done on their behalf, by the Scottish Commission.

not an architect, I could not attempt any verbal description of the buildings, but should have to confine myself to photography.

Another point which occurs to me is this. I have often found in Scotland that excellent photographs have already been taken by local people, of the more obvious features of churches and castles - e.g. general external views, east windows, etc. In such cases I have saved time and material by not reduplicating work which has already been well done. If you would like me to follow this same principle in the work that I do for you, would you kindly give me a note of the aspects or features of any building which I can ignore as having been adequately recorded by someone else?

...If, in addition to photographic records of buildings, you want descriptions, plans, etc. of any prehistoric monuments which may be, for example, endangered by troops in training, please send me marked one-inch O.S. maps in addition to a list.<sup>42</sup>

Graham's letter to the English Commission not only confirmed the quality and success of his work in Scotland, but also validated the Scottish Commission's early approach to rescue work. Furthermore, it set apart the Scottish Commission as *the* national authority on rescue fieldwork during WWII. Graham and Childe had, over the course of three years, pioneered a way of doing impromptu emergency survey work with limited support. It was a different proposition to the Commission's county-by-county programme. Time could not be dedicated to a detailed search through literature and other sources. Graham and Childe could not spend hours poring over maps, or engaging in the clerical procedures of communication that the Commission usually conducted in advance of fieldwork. The emergency survey was reliant on attentiveness to danger, to know what monuments had to be recorded and deciding which could be overlooked. With speed and accuracy as its foundations, the emergency survey represented a new way of doing fieldwork, creating an innovative way of understanding what the Commission did. It was, I argue, the beginning of a shift whereby rescue was seen as an explicit aim.

Unlike the rescue surveys that the Commission undertook following WWII, the emergency survey was the response to a particular need. The survey and fieldwork was designed around the need to rescue sites from a real and perceivable threat from both German attack and damage caused by British and Allied forces. Here the threat of bombing, artillery shelling, and troop movement provided Graham and the Commission with a reason to continue fieldwork during WWII. It was vital that fieldwork be undertaken with speed and accuracy, and mobility and ease of visualisation formed the tenets of this method of recording. The emergency survey proved that the Commission could do more than just survey county-by-county. It could produce results under time pressure. The work of Graham and Childe laid down the foundations for the post-war Commission, and set a premise for future rescue projects. In

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<sup>42</sup> Letter to A.W. Clapham 14 October 1943 (Corpus Christi College, Oxford), RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.

doing so, it was becomingly clear that the Commission had the resources and ability to undertake more than just the county-by-county inventory.

#### **7.4 THE MARGINAL LAND SURVEY: AN EXAMPLE OF RESCUE**

The Commission resumed normal operations in 1946. Following the disruption of WWII, it was time to refocus on the national inventory of Scotland and to continue county-by-county survey. Staff tasked with completing the pre-war inventories began work on the inventories of Selkirkshire and Stirlingshire.<sup>43</sup> If the days of the emergency survey seemed quite distant, it would not be long before the Commission was once again stalling the inventory programme to conduct a rescue-orientated project, one that would rival the national inventory and challenge the Royal Warrant.

Kenneth Steer (Fig 7.4), the Commission's Assistant Archaeologist who had served in Military Intelligence during the war, and who had been head of the Air Photographic Interpretation Unit of the 56<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, returned in 1946 with plans for a nationwide rescue project.<sup>44</sup> Steer was not new to rescue or salvaging items of historical significance from irrecoverable loss; he had, as noted, served as part of the Fine Arts and Archives programme, known in popular culture as the 'Monuments Men'.<sup>45</sup> Steer, therefore, returned to the Commission with first-hand experience of rescue, able to combine his intimate knowledge of how to read aerial photographs with the archaeological expertise that allowed him to use aerial photographs to survey the nation from the air. With these skills Steer soon proposed his own national rescue programme.

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<sup>43</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS.

<sup>44</sup> J. Dunbar and G. Maxwell, Kenneth Arthur Steer 12 November 1913 – 20 February 2007, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 137 (2007) 1-4.

<sup>45</sup> Dunbar and Maxwell, Kenneth Arthur Steer 12 November 1913 – 20 February 2007.



*Figure 7.4: Kenneth Steer, Commission Secretary 1957-1975, and orchestrator of the Marginal Land Survey. Here Steer is in the field with Dick Feachem (standing) in 1952 excavating a Roman fort at Oakwood near Selkirk. It is likely that excavation was undertaken as part of the MLS. Source: The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1096823.*

Steer's Marginal Land Survey was proposed in response to the Government's post-war and Cold War policy of self-sustainability. In reaction the post-war Government embarked upon policies that would allow the UK to become self-sufficient and sustainable should the nation be gripped by war in the future. Supplies of food, energy and timber became the target of these policies, swathes of land across the UK was to be dedicated to agriculture, forestry, and the construction of dams. This was to take place in the so-called 'marginal lands' of the country.

Steer began by persuading the Commissioners that this Marginal Land Survey was something the Commission should undertake in order to ensure that Scotland's monuments were not lost in the face

of post-war development. The Commissioners and Chairman agreed to Steer's plan in November 1949. By the fieldwork season of 1950 the MLS was underway.<sup>46</sup> In a throwback to the opening survey of the Commission, the Secretary (like Curle before) sent letters to the editors of *The Times*, *Scotsman* and *Glasgow Herald* to explain the risks that Scotland's monuments faced from post-war development and why a survey like the MLS was necessary.<sup>47</sup> There was a need to raise awareness of the need to rescue sites, and of the role of the Commission in rescuing them. Significantly the threats identified by Steer were, for the most part, hypothetical. Gaining authorisation for the MLS was reliant on identifying the potential of these threats, not on them becoming a reality.

The basis for the MLS relied on the supply of Royal Air Force aerial photographs taken during war time reconnaissance training flights. These were later supplemented by training flights undertaken in 1946 and 1947 as squadrons were slowly being demobilised.<sup>48</sup> The MLS ushered in a period of change, spearheaded by its use of aerial photography and in fieldwork. At the conclusion of the MLS, aerial photographs would be used in rescue projects, the county-by-county inventory and in smaller local surveys. The notion that the RAF's aerial photographic catalogue could be used for the benefit of British archaeological endeavour was first raised by the Council for British Archaeology in 1945. The Council noted that 'the stock of photographic records of the British Isles accumulated by the Royal Air Force, during and before the war, must contain a very large number of photographs potentially valuable for archaeological study'.<sup>49</sup> It was an untapped resource that Steer was determined to use in carrying out the MLS. With these photographs, Steer and the Commission's staff could conduct a visual survey of the areas of Scotland labelled marginal lands.<sup>50</sup> This was a form of fieldwork where the initial locating of the sites to be recorded took place in the office. It constituted a rapid assessment of Scotland's ancient monuments and archaeological sites, enabling individual sites to be located on a map for more detailed inspection and recording. The staff had no need to leave the office other than to travel to record already located and analysed sites. Aerial photography firmly shifted elements of the Commission's fieldwork from field to office. Putting aside the taking of the photograph, the analysis of the aerial overhead was, fundamentally, an office-based form of fieldwork.

Perhaps in an effort to prove the potential of his programme, Steer's first choice was the county of Berwickshire, site of the first inventory of the Commission. Steer began his marginal land survey where the Commission itself had begun. It also served to prove just how many monuments had gone unrecorded – some fifty previously unknown or overlooked monuments were identified by Steer. There was a similar story when analysing the aerial photographs of Roxburghshire. The perspective offered

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<sup>46</sup> See Commission Minute Book, 1908-1952, RCAHMS.

<sup>47</sup> See Commission Minute Book meeting of 5 April 1950, 1908-1952, RCAHMS.

<sup>48</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author.

<sup>49</sup> Uncatalogued J.K. St Joseph Files, RCAHMS.

<sup>50</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author.

by aerial photography allowed the Commission to identify sites that had been overlooked during ground work survey.

Following this adoption of aerial photography by the Commission, the organisation's fieldwork was conceived of through three practices of recording as a three-stage process: analysis conducted in the office, field survey, then possible excavation. Aerial photography permitted an initial above-ground survey – the first visualisation of the sites of fieldwork. Staff on the ground then used maps, notebooks and sketches to record sites on the surface. This process would be completed by excavation.

There was a spatial aspect to the Commission's rescue surveys, one which can be used to understand the difference between the regular county-by-county inventory work and localised rescue projects. The 'traditional' inventory programme had a predefined frame of reference, one that contained and constrained the survey being undertaken. County boundaries marked out the areas for survey. Staff needed only to limit their archaeology to the county boundaries even if the archaeological features being recorded did not conform to these boundaries. The Commission's rescue fieldwork did not abide by such spatial scales, and rescue was conducted where it was required. To give one example, Ian Scott recalled undertaking survey work in Argyll before receiving a phone call in the evening requesting his assistance with a rescue survey in Perthshire. His work in Argyll had to be suspended while he travelled to Perthshire and undertook this rescue survey before returning to continue with the national inventory.<sup>51</sup> Inventorization took place on a local scale, whereas rescue often took place at a regional level. There had to be flexibility in the field, particularly so when the Commission did not have the staff to create individual field survey teams specific to each form of fieldwork they undertook.

The Commission was better able to meet this challenge because of its vehicles. It was inconceivable to Graham that he could complete the survey within reasonable time without the motorcar, allowing him and Childe to move between sites with relative ease; it reduced the 'downtime' of walking or cycling between monuments.<sup>52</sup> Time saved was time used to record.

During rescue work, the Land Rover and the Commission's other vehicles assumed a role that extended beyond ease of travel. The Commission's vehicles became impromptu offices in the field. Any of the Commission's vehicles could go from being a shelter from the rain to a place of archaeological debate that might lead to future excavations and discoveries. This mobile office served to move both staff and their ideas and experiences from site to site. Mobile centres of calculation and accumulation, they moved through the field rescuing sites from damage, loss and obscurity (Fig 7.5).

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<sup>51</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

<sup>52</sup> Graham's personal diaries, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS36.





*Figure 7.5: The Commission's Austin Morris J4 that replaced the Commer Van in 1972. Like the Commer, the J4 was specially outfitted with everything the Commission's staff might need in the field when undertaking surveys. Vehicles like the J4 became an integral part of the Commission's practice in the field. They were a mobile office that transported staff and the Commission, throughout Scotland. Source: photograph author's own from Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland uncatalogued material.*

For the county-by-county programme, the Commission's office remained the centre of calculation and accumulation, the place where knowledge of the field was returned to, analysed, and transformed into the published county inventory. In contrast, there was in most cases no need to publish the findings of rescue surveys. The purpose of such fieldwork was only to rescue the sites; that is to create a paper record of a site's existence that could be used as a future reference.<sup>53</sup> In a sense rescue was no different to the inventory; it was time pressure that created the difference. The Commission had no interest or need to care for a monument after it had been recorded. This was not in the Royal Warrant: the impartiality was what set the Commission apart.<sup>54</sup> The Commission was known to record sites rather

<sup>53</sup> While the main focus of rescue surveys was to document the sites before they were lost permanently rescue survey work did appear in smaller, more specific, publications of the Commission.

<sup>54</sup> See J. Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: the first 80 years*, *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* 36 (1992) 13-77.

than recommend them for protection and, this impartiality was an important identifying factor. While any site recorded during the process of the rescue survey may have been included in the national inventory, that fact was not usually an explicit purpose of such fieldwork since rescue surveys were often carried out in regions that had already been recorded for the national inventory. Data from the survey was collected and stored in the Commission's vehicles before being returned to the office. Before it returned, each vehicle was a miniature mobile archive of the fieldwork staffs' endeavours. Such was the recognised long-term value of these records that short-term strategies for caring for them were required. The Commission's vehicles fulfilled this role. In the field, the Commission's Land Rover, or Commer van, or indeed any other vehicle that the staff used for fieldwork effectively *was* the Commission. The Commission's vehicles, particularly the specially equipped Commer vans, were mobile offices that 'embodied a number of technologies' that were vital to the success of the organisation's work in the field.<sup>55</sup> As Antony Adler has noted in his examination of ships as laboratories technology can be used to make 'particular design [...] modifications' to allow for survey work to undertaken.<sup>56</sup> This is no less true for the Commission's vehicles which were specially modified so that they could become instruments of fieldwork modified for the explicit purpose of undertaking survey work. The vehicles became a fundamental component of the Commission's rescue fieldwork.

Despite the innovations of the MLS, the Commission's fieldwork practice appears to have gone unchanged during this first rescue survey. Despite making use of aerial photography, the Commission's field staff undertook the surveys of sites in much the same way that they did for sites in the inventory. Field staff continued to work in pairs and recorded sites region-by-region having analysed the aerial photographs.<sup>57</sup> Although the MLS was a rescue survey in which speed was more important than absolute accuracy, the Commission's practice when it came down to recording the individual sites remained the same. The site was drawn, documented, and a recording inscribed on paper.

By 1955 the MLS was drawing to a close, the Commissioners believing that the Commission's staff should refocus on the completion of the county-by-county inventory. The Commission, in the minds of the Commissioners, had been too distracted by the glamour of excavation rather than the grind of completing the national inventory. Even as the MLS programme drew to a close and attention returned to the inventory programme, the Commission still attended to questions of rescue.<sup>58</sup> Between 1955 and 1960, it conducted numerous excavations across Scotland, with four separate excavation projects in 1959 alone (Fig 7.6).<sup>59</sup> Between 1957 and 1975, the Commission's staff published fifty publications in

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<sup>55</sup> S. Turchetti, K. Dean, S. Naylor, M. Siegert, Accidents and opportunities: a history of the radio echo-sounding of Antarctica, 1958-79, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 41(3) (2008) 417-444, 404.

<sup>56</sup> A. Adler, The ship as laboratory: making space for field science at sea, *Journal of the History of Biology* 47 (2014) 333-362, 336.

<sup>57</sup> Programme of Work 9/11/56, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/3. Note: there appears to be no apparent reasoning from the archival material that explains the order in which regions were surveyed.

<sup>58</sup> See Programmes of Work and Progress Reports, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/3.

<sup>59</sup> See Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, 17/4/59, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, many of which allowed Commission staff to explore sites recorded during the course of the county inventories. Many were the product of individual excavation projects, or the outcome of rescue surveys. It was, in total, a significant research output on the part of Commission staff.

During this period, the Secretary also instructed Dick Feachem, Commission archaeologist, to undertake a preliminary survey of Forestry Commission plantations for fear that mass afforestation would put monuments at risk of destruction.<sup>60</sup> Despite the Commissioners' desire that the county-by-county inventory return to the fore as the main focus after the MLS, such was the need to record threatened sites that the Commission was almost entirely devoted to rescue work. Mounting concern in 1960 prompted the Commissioners to table a proposal for a dedicated emergency survey team tasked with reacting to any threats to Scotland's ancient monuments. Unfortunately, the Commission did not receive the funding.<sup>61</sup> Not until the 1970s was the Commission able to gain the necessary funding required to employ two additional archaeologists for the purpose of 'making intensive surveys of areas' threatened by development.<sup>62</sup> For the foreseeable future, the Commission would have to make do with the staff members it had. The Commission did not have the resources required to carry out survey work for the national inventory of Scotland at the same time as surveying sites in need of rescue. For the Commission to continue both rescue and inventory work, the role of Secretary had become one of constantly balancing the needs of the national inventory and the threat of sites being destroyed before they could be salvaged. This was to be compounded following the merger with the SNBR, which necessitated additional management of the archive.

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<sup>60</sup> See Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, 17/4/59. Note also that by the 1980s afforestation would become one of the most significant threats that Scotland's monuments faced and *the* main focus of the Commission's rescue efforts.

<sup>61</sup> See Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, 17/4/59, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>62</sup> See Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, 14/11/73, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.



*Figure 7.6: Dick Feachem and local workman at the Commission's excavation at Drimore in 1956. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1360466*

The MLS, however, was not undertaken in isolation. During the 1950s, the Commission was actively engaged in a number of rescue projects, often undertaken in conjunction with the Ministry of Works. These so called 'salvage-excavations' were carried out on an ad hoc basis, the Commission simply making staff available when the Ministry of Works or Ancient Monuments Board requested. The Commission had to be flexible, and it was noted in the Programme of Work for 1956 that 'the general programme will be modified to make some collaboration possible' when undertaking emergency survey work.<sup>63</sup> Once again, the national inventory played second fiddle to the needs of rescue.

One of the most significant of these was the Commission's fieldwork in North and particularly South Uist. This rescue archaeology project had come about in response to the Ministry of Defence's plan to construct a missile testing range, airfield and supporting infrastructure on the Uists and Benbecula. While many of the sites had been documented in the Western Isles survey – published in 1928 – there were a number of sites in need of excavation lest they be destroyed by construction. These sites were previously unknown to the Commission even after the completion of the Western Isles survey.

Alistair MacLaren and Dick Feachem were the first members of staff to be despatched to the Uists. Feachem began at Drimore on South Uist where the Ministry of Defence proposed to establish a missile testing range. It became a race against time to ensure that the remains of a wheel-house located within

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<sup>63</sup> Programme of work 9/11/56, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/3.

the area of the range was properly excavated and recorded. MacLaren and Feachem had to rely on local aid to make good time and excavate the site. The survey was deemed so important that even the Commission's newly-purchased Land Rover was despatched to the islands to aid fieldwork (Fig 7.7).



*Figure 7.7: Alistair MacLaren at work at Drimore accompanied by the Commission's first Land Rover. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1360467.*

This excavation did not fall within the bounds of the county-by-county inventory, nor was it part of the MLS. This was fieldwork conducted by the Commission's staff, on the behalf of Ancient Monuments Board for the Ministry of Works, who had requested the assistance of Graham's archaeologists. The Commission had become part of this larger national salvage paradigm, a national consciousness that recognised the dangers posed to the nation's past.

The Marginal Land Survey was, by all accounts, a departure from the Commission's regular fieldwork. It is particularly noteworthy that from 1952 to 1956 the national inventory was all but suspended.<sup>64</sup> The MLS served a number of purposes, and permanently changed how the Commission went about its work. The pursuit of this particular rescue project opened the door for future rescue endeavours and established a new working practice for the Commission. It shifted fieldwork away from recording the archaeology of Scotland via county boundaries towards a more fluid system that allowed the Commission to be proactive and record monuments as and when needed. Rescue work gained parity

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<sup>64</sup> Programme of Work Long Term 1952-1961, RCAHMS, shelfmarkk 102/3.

with the traditional inventory programme. The county-by-county programme was proactive, the Commission systematically going from county to county listing the monuments. While the emergency survey of WWII had been reactive, the MLS had shown that the Commission could pursue rescue work in the same manner with which it undertook the inventory. Steer proved that the Commission did not need to be rigidly structured by the national inventory, but that the organisation and its staff could pursue other forms of fieldwork.

In the Commissioners' meeting of 4 November 1955, the Secretary was awarded the power to interrupt the regular programme whenever he saw fit provided it was believed urgent rescue work was required.<sup>65</sup> This recognition of the value of rescue and the success of the MLS paved the way for future rescue and excavation fieldwork. The MLS also allowed Steer to draw attention to the potential of aerial photography, not only for inventory work, but also for the purposes of rescue. It permitted a new way of seeing the field and of visualising the Commission's sites of practice. Arguably the most significant outcome of the MLS was to open the door to future rescue projects, and for the conduct of rescue to be co-existent with county-by-county inventory work.

## **7.5 EXCAVATION AND RESCUE: EXTENDING THE REMIT OF THE COMMISSION**

The county-by-county inventory programme was, at its core, a listing process. Neither staff nor Commissioners pretended otherwise. The organisation existed to locate, record and document sites. There was no reason or need to try and understand the origin or provenance of the sites that were recorded in the pages of the national inventory volumes beyond fulfilling the needs of the description of the site. Excavation was not deemed to fall within the Commission's remit. Since Curle's work in 1908, however, members of staff had undertaken excavations of sites that had been recorded for the national inventory. Curle undertook two excavations during the survey of Sutherland, which were later published in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*. Later, Charles Calder had been so taken by the archaeology of Orkney and Shetland while undertaking fieldwork that even after the publication of the inventory in 1928 – almost wholly the product of Calder's work – he continued to carry out surveys and excavations in the Northern Isles. Calder worked on the archaeology of Orkney and Shetland until his retirement in 1962.<sup>66</sup> The Commissioners felt that his expertise built up over years of recording in the county was unmatched within the organisation.<sup>67</sup> Calder had been employed in 1915 not as an

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<sup>65</sup> See Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>66</sup> Programme of Work, April – October 1960, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/3.

<sup>67</sup> See minutes 15 April 1953, Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

archaeologist, but as a draughtsman. His expertise had built up over time as an ‘experience-based expert’.<sup>68</sup>

Fieldwork carried out for the inventory located sites for potential future excavation. If, nominally, the work produced a list furnished with descriptions, drawings and photographs, the inventory also had life after publication. Sites identified during the inventory fieldwork were marked up for later excavation when a more detailed archaeological examination of the site could be undertaken. The inventory sparked the imagination and archaeological inquisitiveness of the staff members who sought to do something more than follow the “postage stamp mentality”.<sup>69</sup> Ian Scott commented that staff ‘strayed into excavation, for [a] very good reason, to solve problems’. Sites could be excavated and investigated, and problems solved before publishing the findings in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*.<sup>70</sup> Excavation allowed the Commission and its staff to solve archaeological problems and to contribute to debates within archaeology in a manner which creating the national inventory simply did not allow. Despite this, excavation remained, in the strictest sense of the Royal Warrant, unofficial.<sup>71</sup>

During the early 1950s, this was limited (by lack of time and resources) to one excavation a year, although this number soon increased.<sup>72</sup> Staff members continued to undertake excavations while working on Commission time, or during fieldwork that should have been dedicated to the production of the national inventory. It seemed impossible to dissuade the Commission’s curious archaeologists from straying into excavation. Codifying when it was, and was not, acceptable for Commission staff to carry out excavations was not made clear until the 1970s, partly because time had to be redirected towards the inventory.

Steer clarified the Commission’s approach to excavation, which was not directly tied to rescue, in a letter to the Scottish Woodland Owners Association – Steer, incidentally, was enquiring about access for a rescue survey – ‘excavation is not a principal part of the Commission’s work, small-scale investigations being only occasionally undertaken in order to clarify the interpretation of a particular monument or class of a monument’.<sup>73</sup> Steer further clarified the Commission’s position in *Recording Scotland’s Heritage* (1975):

In the course of fieldwork no attempt is made at large-scale excavation since this would inevitably delay the production of the Inventory, but a number of highly profitable short excavations with limited aims have been undertaken within recent years – notably on several types of Neolithic and

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<sup>68</sup> H. Collins and R. Evans, *Rethinking Expertise*, Chicago, 2007, 142.

<sup>69</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

<sup>70</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15. Note: the majority of Commission work that was not published by the organisation itself would later appear in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*.

<sup>71</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

<sup>72</sup> Programme of Work 1953, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/3.

<sup>73</sup> Letter from Steer to the Scottish Woodland Owners Association 7<sup>th</sup> October 1974, RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/9.

Bronze Age burial-cairns in Argyll and Lanarkshire, on Early Iron Age habitation sites in Stirlingshire, on Roman forts both on and to the rear of the Antonine Wall, and on a castle and township in Peeblesshire. Occasionally, too, through the co-operation of other archaeologists, it has been possible to arrange for more extensive excavations to be conducted by independently organised groups of volunteers in conjunction with the Commission's surveys<sup>74</sup>

Officially, the relationship was clear; excavation, if required, followed inventory.

The excavation that had been undertaken in Drimore did not follow this system. Nor did subsequent excavations after 1975. Excavation often followed the archaeological interests of the staff. When rescue became a concern, excavation could occur without it supporting or being part of the inventory. Rescue archaeology became significant enough to promote excavation for the sake of salvaging archaeology from threat. The excavation of the Drimore wheel-house was just the first of such rescue projects (Fig 7.8 & 7.9). Traprain Law, near Haddington, East Lothian, site of one of the most influential Celtic tribes in Scotland in Roman times, was excavated in 1962 by Steer in response to fears that the site was being damaged and that 'rescue [was] in order to save this site from destruction'.<sup>75</sup> Working with the Ancient Monuments Board, the Commission hoped to find 'any way to avoid the site from being destroyed, or at the very least, document it before it is destroyed'.<sup>76</sup> This particular excavation was, in part, driven forward by Steer's interest in the Roman history of the site. Traprain Law represented, albeit on a local scale, a shift toward an explicit desire to proactively seek out and rescue sites from the threat of being lost or damaged outwith the confines of the national inventory.

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<sup>74</sup> K.A. Steer, *Recording Scotland's Heritage*, London, 1975, 3-4.

<sup>75</sup> Letter including extract of Progress Report for 1962, RCAHMS, shelfmark 110/12/1.

<sup>76</sup> Letter including extract of Progress Report for 1962, RCAHMS, shelfmark 110/12/1.



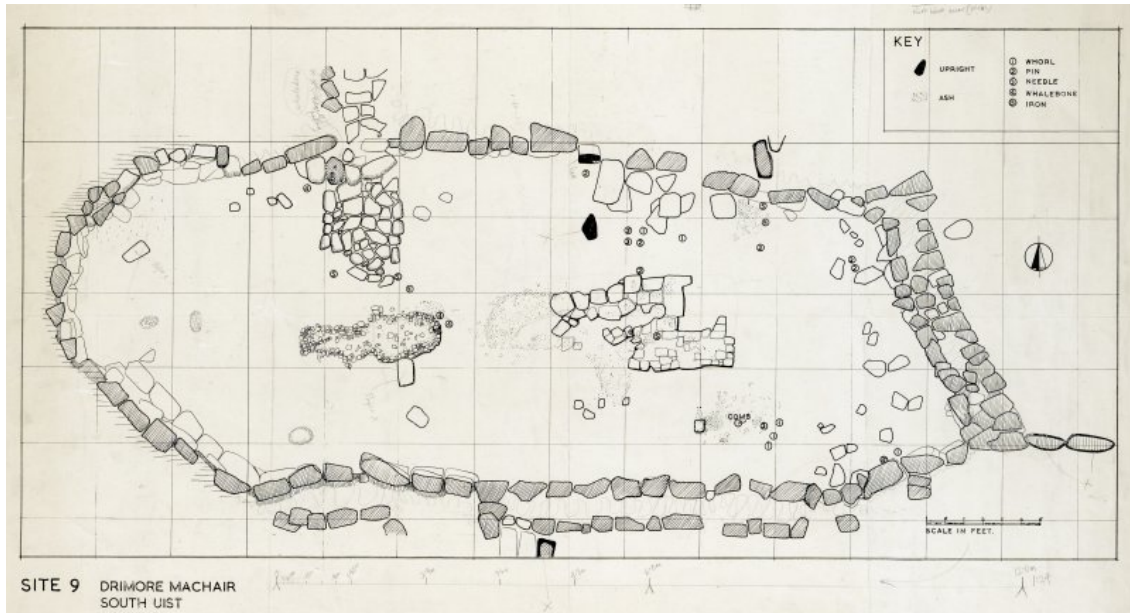


Figure 7.8: Inked plan of the excavation of Drimore, South Uist. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, DP 209372.



Figure 7.9: Drimore after the excavation was completed in 1956 by MacLaren and Feachem. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1468573.

The integration of excavation into the daily work of the Commission did not go unopposed. During the 1950s and 1960s, staff members faced considerable resistance from ‘old guard’ Commissioners who believed staff should focus on completing the national inventory. There was an understandable request: after all the Commission had been established to produce and complete a national inventory of Scotland. Such was the concern raised by the Commissioners and the Chairman that staff were restricted from carrying out non-inventory work during Commission hours, a move that was later amended to allow one afternoon per week in which they could carry out their own field research, plan for, and carry out excavations. The arrival of a new breed of Commissioners, with academic background and not from the antiquarian establishment, provided the staff with the freedom they desired. As staff changed during the 1960s, there was less opposition to excavation projects, although personal excavation projects and research papers were still kept under control. In 1978, the Commissioners sought to limit staff to half a day per week of research time for their own independent projects.<sup>77</sup> Academics like Stuart Piggott saw no reason to block excavations; rather, he encouraged them.<sup>78</sup> This, combined with the wider rescue and salvage paradigm that the Commission was adopting, provided the foundation for a new era of excavation work.<sup>79</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that rescue and inventory fieldwork were fundamentally two different types of field survey, despite excavation sometimes blurring the distinction. How each was carried out in the field seems, on the surface, very similar. However, the inventory needed only to record and list what was there. Documenting the remains of a monument, its features and character was sufficient – there was no need to reconstruct or imagine a monument or site in its whole or original form. A rescue survey, however, might do exactly that. The interior of buildings which had already been pulled apart and damaged might need to be reconstructed so that they could be recorded as a whole, damaged fragments placed together so that the complete artefact could be recorded. This reconstructing or salvaging element of rescue ensured that the Commission’s staff had to develop and adopt differing practices depending on whether they were undertaking work for the inventory or part of the Commission’s rescue projects.

Rescue fieldwork went beyond simply recording sites. Particularly after the MLS survey, rescue often led to excavation. What followed was a new way of doing fieldwork for the Commission, a new way of exploring the field. Excavations demanded more than just a keen eye for drawing and an ability to describe what was being seen. They required the ability to conduct archaeological digs and excavate sites in a way which often reconstructed the sites being rescued.

Reconstruction, however, became part of the curious paradox of rescue archaeology. The wheelhouse excavated at Drimore was unearthed from the protection afforded by being buried so that it might be recorded and documented. When this was completed, the site was reburied; it was better protected

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<sup>77</sup> See series of meetings in 1978, Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>78</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

<sup>79</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

underground than it was after having been rescued. In order to rescue sites, they had to be constructed and exposed through excavation.<sup>80</sup> With all rescue projects there is an element of artificiality, the archaeologist as creator – reconstructing the site as they understand it to be (see also chapter eight).

## 7.6 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY UNIT

The First World War was the first opportunity for air power to reveal its potential as a weapon of war. It also presented the opportunity for aerial photography to stake its claim as a new form of tactical reconnaissance. The verticality of aerial photography offered a new way of visualising the world below, but as the use of aerial photography increased during the second half of WWI, it became clear that being able to read these photographs was not the same as being able to read a map. The individual analysing the photograph had to have an awareness of the landscape and the landforms that they were viewing. Individuals had to be trained to understand what exactly they were looking at when presented with an aerial photograph. Archaeologists were soon to be found bolstering the ranks of the observer corps. As Kitty Hauser puts it, ‘in a war bound as this one was to the physical terrain, geography and archaeological fieldwork weren’t bad training for intelligence work’.<sup>81</sup> Having the ability to read the landscape was of significant tactical value to military planners. O.G.S. Crawford, a young archaeologist, had found himself in the opening years of the war mapping and photographing the Somme front, but soon joined the Observer Corps and used his archaeological expertise and existing knowledge to better use. It was the beginning of a lifetime relationship between Crawford and aerial photography, one which pioneered the use of aerial photographs by archaeologists.

Vertical photographs were the standard format of the aerial photograph, and were perhaps the most valuable to the military tactician.<sup>82</sup> The oblique image could also reveal valuable information on topography, and it was the oblique image that would prove of greatest interest to Crawford, becoming a valuable tool for archaeologists. If furnished with both obliques and verticals of the same area, the individual analysing the aerial photographs was able to more carefully decipher the landscape and record the sites and nature of any landforms or earthworks that were found.<sup>83</sup> The Commission later emphasised the acquisition of oblique images, noting that they were just as valuable, if not more, than high altitude vertical images.<sup>84</sup> The casting of shadows could reveal the location of gun emplacements, bunkers, and

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<sup>80</sup> MacDonald, *Doomsday fieldwork, or, how to rescue Gaelic culture?*

<sup>81</sup> Kitty Hauser, *Bloody Old Britain, O.G.S. Crawford and the Archaeology of Modern Life*, London, 2008, 37.

<sup>82</sup> Martyn Barber, *A History of Aerial Photography and Archaeology: Mata Hari’s glass eye and other stories*, Swindon, 2011, 101.

<sup>83</sup> Gordon Maxwell, *Personal Memoir*, held by author.

<sup>84</sup> See Afforestation Folder, RCAHMS, shelfmark 109/3.

fortifications, earth mounds and other features such as prehistoric field systems and other structures that left cropmarks on the landscape.<sup>85</sup>

Crawford pioneered aerial photography during the 1920s. He would later inspire J.K. St Joseph, the two later working together when carrying out surveys of Scotland from the air. Crawford's appointment as the archaeology officer of the Ordnance Survey gave him the opportunity to explore the potential for aerial photography. His *Report on air reconnaissance of Roman Scotland, June 6-12, 1939* offers an insight into his techniques. During the course of his fieldwork, Crawford discovered fifty-five new Roman sites in Scotland during the course of 20 hours and fifty-one minutes of flying time. These were discovered while surveying existing sites. Crawford was also careful to note that 'several of the new discoveries were actually made by the pilot [...] it is essential that the pilot, in work of this kind, should be so qualified: otherwise he cannot identify the new sites and is therefore unable to manoeuvre the aeroplane'.<sup>86</sup> It was from this meeting that St Joseph's interest in aerial photography would flourish, and, after serving as an intelligence officer in WWII, he too became convinced of the value of aerial photographs.<sup>87</sup> Gordon Maxwell, later the head of the Commission's aerial photography unit (and who would be trained by St Joseph), cited this meeting in 1939 between St Joseph and Crawford as one of the most significant moments in the history of both aerial photography and archaeology in the U.K.<sup>88</sup> Significantly, Crawford used this report to highlight how important aerial photography was to archaeological survey in the future:

I wish to correct any impression that may exist that "air travel" is merely an alternative method of transport. It is a new technical method of research, complementary to field-work; just as air survey is complementary to ground survey and inseparable from it...none of [the sites] found could have been found by ground-work, so that the question of an "alternative" method of transport does not arise. It is not a question of time or distance between two points, but rather of an entirely different technique, and I might repeat of one that is of more value than groundwork, though inseparable from it.<sup>89</sup>

Crawford was advocating an approach to fieldwork which allowed observers to see the landscape from a different perspective. He recognised that aerial photography might allow archaeologists to truly unlock the secrets of the landscape, revealing sites that would otherwise have gone unseen or been overlooked.

If WWI had brought aerial photography to the attention of archaeologists, WWII confirmed its value as an archaeological tool. During WWII, the RAF and USAAF expended considerable effort photographing Western Europe. However, aerial photographic coverage was not limited only to reconnaissance over Nazi-occupied Europe. The RAF and USAAF also undertook photographic surveys

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<sup>85</sup> Barber, *A History of Aerial Photography and Archaeology*, 134.

<sup>86</sup> O.G.S. Crawford, Air Reconnaissance Report, The National Archive Kew, shelfmark OS 3/58.

<sup>87</sup> Barber, *A History of Aerial Photography and Archaeology*.

<sup>88</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author.

<sup>89</sup> O.G.S. Crawford Air Reconnaissance Report, The National Archive Kew, shelfmark OS 3/58.

of the British Isles, primarily to assess the effectiveness of defensive and camouflage schemes as well as training aircrew and testing equipment.<sup>90</sup> These photographs were later assessed by ‘M’ Section – responsible for all aerial photographs taken over the UK– at RAF Medmenham, among them future Commissioner Stuart Piggott who noted that his duties left him enough time to make use of these aerial photographs for the purpose of archaeological research.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, following the conclusion of hostilities in Europe, the RAF had to task aircrews awaiting demobilisation with something to do. The solution was to complete a full survey of the UK from the air thus completing the aerial photographic coverage of the country.<sup>92</sup> It was through the various intelligence units of the Allies that archaeologists were exposed to the value of aerial photography, including St Joseph, Kenneth Steer and another future Commissioner, Ian Richmond. Although the Commission’s endeavours into aerial photography were forged during the War, it had been aware of the value of aerial photography to the inventory programme since the 1930s. The Fife inventory, published in 1933, featured aerial photographs taken in 1932 by Wing Commander GSM Insall (Fig 7.10).<sup>93</sup>



*Figure 7.10: Oblique aerial view of an unidentified fort. Published in RCAHMS Fife Inventory (1933). Taken by Wing Commander Insall. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1122344.*

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<sup>90</sup> Barber, *A History of Aerial Photography and Archaeology*, 204.

<sup>91</sup> Barber, *A History of Aerial Photography and Archaeology*, 200.

<sup>92</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author.

<sup>93</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author, see also Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

Following the MLS it became routine to ‘request to borrow large numbers of vertical prints from the Central Register of Air Photography, then held by the Department of Health for Scotland in Edinburgh’ before undertaking inventory fieldwork.<sup>94</sup> Steer had vindicated Crawford’s 1939 claim over the advantages of aerial photography. Gordon Maxwell later noted that by viewing photographs stereoscopically and at high resolution an ‘immensely increased harvest of hitherto unrecognised monuments’ could be recognised and recorded.<sup>95</sup>

By the 1960s, aerial photography was part of the Commission’s fieldwork repertoire, yet there was no in-house facility for producing aerial photographs, nor a dedicated team to analyse and catalogue the photographs. Photographs were acquired from St Joseph and the Cambridge University Aerial Photography Department – established in 1948 – or from the RAF’s catalogue.<sup>96</sup> This was, in most cases, sufficient for the completion of a county survey. With the increase in targeted rescue projects, however, it was becoming apparent that more detailed aerial photographs were required, and it was no longer sufficient to rely on external sources. The Commission needed an on-demand system for acquiring aerial photographs for sites yet undocumented. It could no longer rely on St Joseph or the archive of RAF photographs. Though it did not require a new way of accessing aerial photographs, the Commission desired its own independent system.

It was time, as Dunbar commented, for ‘a permanent Scottish-based operation’ to facilitate aerial photography.<sup>97</sup> The MLS and later rescue projects had highlighted just how many monuments could go undiscovered using traditional methods, as had Crawford in 1939. During preparations for the Peeblesshire and Argyll inventories, it was clear that the lack of aerial photographic coverage of the counties had resulted in monuments going unrecorded. Steer sought to establish a permanent aerial photography capability within the Commission to address this.

The seeds for the establishment of the aerial photography unit were sown in the early 1970s. Steer’s role within the Commission at this time had become significantly more managerial particularly since the absorption of the SNBR. Ironically, this freed time to organise the training of staff members who were then to form the aerial photography cohort.<sup>98</sup> Having been appointed as an investigator at the Commission in 1963, Gordon Maxwell spent the following decade learning the ‘working methods in the field and office: how to ‘see’ the faintest of traces on the ground, how to interpret them, how to produce a written description in English that was precise, intelligible and followed the ‘house style’.<sup>99</sup> His own interests saw him specialize in Roman and later Iron Age sites. Due to his junior position

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<sup>94</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author.

<sup>95</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author.

<sup>96</sup> Barber, *A History of Aerial Photography and Archaeology*, 217.

<sup>97</sup> J. Dunbar, The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: the first 80 years, *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* 36 (1992) 13-77, 38.

<sup>98</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

<sup>99</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author.

within the fieldwork team, he was made responsible for ‘pre-field work scanning of the vertical and other air photographs’.<sup>100</sup> This would latterly lead to Maxwell working with St Joseph. Working closely with St Joseph enabled Maxwell to gain valuable training in the ability to read aerial photographs. This ultimately positioned Maxwell perfectly to oversee the establishment of (and head up) the aerial photography unit. Maxwell later remarked that during a review of the Commission’s performance when asked what qualified him to head the aerial photography unit that ‘there was no alternative to confessing to no professional claims other than a combined passion for aviation and archaeology’.<sup>101</sup>

The requirements for establishment of the aerial photography unit were now in position, establishment which events in 1974 set in motion. The Commission was invited to attend the Aerial Reconnaissance for Archaeology Conference, where Maxwell was tasked with representing the organisation. In his report, Maxwell ‘concluded with the plea for Scotland to be brought up to date with its own air survey programme, (in parallel with the English Commission)’.<sup>102</sup> Concurrently, although in an unrelated development, the Commission received a request from the Rescue Committee of the Ancient Monuments Board of Scotland for indications of additional work that RCAHMS might undertake to give extra protection to archaeological monuments deemed vulnerable to the (then) rising tide of development across the country (with the tacit assumption that external funding would be made available’.<sup>103</sup> Following discussion with senior investigators, Steer crafted the Commission’s proposition, keen to acquire external funding for the project. To this end he turned to the Ancient Monuments Board with a plan to tie the establishment of the Commission’s aerial photography unit to the increasing support for rescue-orientated archaeology. Steer detailed his plan in a letter to the Ancient Monuments Board for Scotland in December 1975. It was not straightforward.

The Commission had until then used photographs supplied by Cambridge University. Supplied with a small grant from the Treasury, staff were able to order photographs from Cambridge. The Commission’s staff could also request aerial photographs of specific sites and ‘automatically received prints of significant new discoveries’.<sup>104</sup> All this was achieved for £100 per annum.<sup>105</sup> The Commission also maintained a close working relationship with St Joseph, the Director of the department at Cambridge.<sup>106</sup> The arrangement with St Joseph had been fruitful for both parties, the Commission entering into a yearly agreement in 1956 that a member of the Commission’s staff would be seconded to St Joseph when working in Scotland.<sup>107</sup> However, neither the department nor St Joseph had complete coverage of Scotland. This led them to carry out their own aerial surveys. The Commission sought to establish its

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<sup>100</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author.

<sup>101</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author.

<sup>102</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author.

<sup>103</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author.

<sup>104</sup> Meeting 30/4/67, see Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>105</sup> Meeting 30/4/67, see Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>106</sup> Letter to A.M. Thomson, Ancient Monuments Board dated 17 November 1975, RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/9.

<sup>107</sup> Meeting 24/4/56, see Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

aerial photography unit in line with that of the English Commission. The unit was to be made up of existing members of staff, photographers working with investigators to ensure that photographs were taken of exactly what the Commission needed to record.<sup>108</sup> Steer was also quick to quash any fears over the experience of the staff who might make up such a unit, noting that ‘staffing presents no problem, since one of our senior photographers is particularly interested in the techniques involved, and has already received some training at the hands of Professor St Joseph, while we can arrange for at least one Investigator or Research Assistant to be available to take part in this work during the critical months of June and July’.<sup>109</sup> There was, however, one area that Steer was unable to resolve without the assistance of the Ancient Monuments Board: the question of how such a unit was to be funded. Steer proposed a solution:

We ourselves are likely to have only very limited funds available for the hire of the aircraft in the next financial year, and in any case we feel that this is properly a charge which should be borne under the ‘survey’ sub-head of the Rescue Archaeology budget. In return for a subvention from this source, we would of course be glad to submit our annual programme to the Ancient Monuments Board Committee for Rescue Archaeology for approval, and also to keep the programme sufficiently flexible to accommodate any special demands required by the Inspectorate.<sup>110</sup>

Steer was successful in lobbying the Ancient Monuments Board for Scotland, and the Commission’s Air Photograph Unit was established in 1976 (Fig 7.11). The significance of its establishment cannot be overstated. The unit represented a move towards a new era at the Commission whereby rescue was formally recognised as an explicit aim of the organisation, and therefore very much a part of this new aerial photography unit. After all, the need for a new instrument of rescue had justified the pursuit and adoption of aerial photography.

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<sup>108</sup> This was not the first time that the Commission’s staff had worked with J.K. St Joseph. During 1938 Watson and Calder carried out fieldwork with J.K. St Joseph at Woden Law Hill Fort in the Scottish Borders, Meeting 24/4/56, see Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>109</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author.

<sup>110</sup> Letter to A.M. Thomson, Ancient Monuments Board dated 17th November 1975, RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/9





*Figure 7.11: The Commission's aerial photography unit in action. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 369925*

With its own aerial photographic unit, the Commission was able to react to what was required by the inventory staff and rapidly set in motion surveys of sites in need of rescue. The development of this technology and the steady move towards rescue-orientated projects ensured that the county-by-county inventory could exist alongside rescue archaeology. Technologies that were developed and driven by the needs of rescue survey eventually filtered through to the county-by-county inventory programme. Aerial photography was the best example of this process. While the use of aerial photography had originated in inventory work, it was proven and proliferated under the banner of rescue.

The Commission documented 500 crop sites in the east of Scotland in the first year of its aerial photography unit (Fig 7.12). Most were new discoveries despite surveys having already been undertaken in the regions concerned. The Commission had spent seventy-seven hours flying for a total cost of £2176.<sup>111</sup> Following analysis by the Commission, and consultation with the Ordnance Survey, it was confirmed that around '70% of the sites visible on [the aerial photographs] were not known to the Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey' or the Commission itself.<sup>112</sup> The Commission wasted no time in heralding its success. Maxwell was despatched to give an interview on BBC Radio,

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<sup>111</sup> See report from March to October 1977, Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>112</sup> See report from March to October 1977, Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

Radio Forth and Radio Inverness. The establishment of the aerial photography unit had been a success. Maxwell later opined:

The first operational flight took place in June 1976, at the beginning of a summer which, like the following year's, turned out to be one of superb flying weather over a landscape so affected by persistent dry conditions as to produce precisely the copious harvest of cropmark sites that was needed to justify the RCAHMS's initial proposals. The results showed also how unnecessary were the well-intentioned words of advice from the Commission Secretary, given as a farewell from the office when we left for our first sortie: 'For Heaven's sake, Gordon, don't waste time flying over areas without cropmarks!' We didn't need to worry; the cropmarks, which for decades formed the prime targets of our Rescue-oriented mission, were everywhere and so was a bright, revolutionary archaeological future.<sup>113</sup>



*Figure 7.12: Cropmarks at Craigie Burn showing a possible henge monument. It was aerial photographs like these that the Commission was able to produce and analyse after the establishment of its aerial photography unit in 1976. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 505096.*

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<sup>113</sup> Gordon Maxwell, Personal Memoir, held by author.

Equipped with its newfound ability, the Commission took on an increased role in the world of rescue. Rescue projects across Scotland received greater attention from the Commission after the success of the MLS and later merger with the SNBR in 1966 (explained in greater detail in chapter 8). Rescue projects were subsequently proposed for St. Kilda, as well as Forestry Commission land across Scotland.<sup>114</sup> Surveying Forestry Commission land, however, posed its own particular challenge. It required Commission staff to liaise with the Forestry Commission to ensure that they were granted access, but also so that members of the Forestry Commission's staff knew what to look out for should they uncover a site of interest that was not identifiable on the aerial photographs, or not listed on the O.S. maps. The Commission was also careful to ensure that it also contacted private landowners who might also be able to aid in the location, and therefore protection, of unrecorded monuments. A letter from Steer to the head of the Scottish Woodland Owners Association requested that the Commission wished to be given 'advance notice of ploughing schedules for the not too far distant future in order that the land concerned can be checked'. Having done so, the Commission would 'then visit the land in question armed with the details of any recorded sites which would then be noted (and where necessary surveyed)' before ploughing could commence.<sup>115</sup> The Commission's rescue programme was reliant on such arrangements. Even with the establishment of the aerial photography unit in 1976, the organisation was not a panopticon, able to watch over the entirety of Scotland's regions, recorded or otherwise. Without such arrangements in place, monuments could slip through the Commission's net. Aerial photography still presented the best opportunity to ensure the completeness that the Commission sought.

Although the Commission's adoption and development is most often attributed to Steer, the pursuit and establishment of the aerial photography unit pointed towards the future of the Commission after the inventory programme was complete. John Dunbar, originally the Commission's historian, was appointed Secretary in 1975 and oversaw the building of the foundations of the post-inventory Commission. Following Steer's departure, Dunbar and the Commissioners drew up a six-point list of developments. The inventory formed only one of these points, with a focus on ensuring that the techniques used by the inventory team were kept up-to-date. It was also noted that a second inventory team was going to be necessary if the Commission were to complete the Argyll inventory in a timely manner.<sup>116</sup> The remainder of the developments focused on the development of rescue archaeology, threatened building surveys and the maintenance of the Commission's archive (Fig 7.13).<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Programme of Work 1963-64, RCAHMS, shelfmark 102/3.

<sup>115</sup> Letter from Steer to the Scottish Woodland Owners Association 7<sup>th</sup> October 1974, RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/9.

<sup>116</sup> Meeting 13/7/77, see Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

<sup>117</sup> Meeting 13/7/77, see Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.



*Figure 7.13: Throwing caution to the wind, Commission staff members Sam Scott and Douglas Fleming undertake a survey of Neidpath Castle c1966. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1096819.*

These roles provided the Commission with a long-term life after the completion of the inventory programme, Dunbar ensuring that suitable foundations were laid. The Commission's publications after the completion of the county-by-county inventory programme in 1992 were indicative of the move towards rescue and small-scale archaeological surveys of significant sites. It was a shift away from a meta-data recording of Scotland's ancient history towards the recording and analysis of the nation's heritage. This work finds its roots in the emergency survey and the MLS, both of which laid the foundations for a Commission that could exist after the completion of the national inventory. It should be noted, however, that the national inventory was never completed as it was envisioned. Instead, the move towards small scale surveys was seen as a way of better understanding Scotland's history and ancient monuments. The development and pursuit of a landscape archaeology approach during the 1980s pushed against the "postage stamp mentality" which had, until that point, dominated the Commission. The arrival of new members of staff trained in contemporary archaeological methods and ways of understanding brought about a new era for the Commission, one where smaller localised surveys would dominate as the organisation moved away from the county-by-county inventory. It had been a steady shift away from the county-by-county inventory and towards a new era of fieldwork. During this process of evolution, the Commission had to find a balance between the national inventory and carrying out rescue projects throughout Scotland. By the 1980s rescue archaeology had cemented its place in the Commission's repertoire as the organisation entered a new era of digitising its findings on a site-by-site basis rather than pursuing a county-defined system. The Commission's rescue surveys gained such momentum that, by 1989, the question was raised as to whether the Commission wished to remain 'exclusively threat-driven' and whether its field staff should be tasked with conducting smaller inventory style surveys of, as yet, unrecorded regions.<sup>118</sup> Rescue had come full circle. By the conclusion of the county-by-county programme in 1992, it was the main focus of the Commission's endeavours.

## 7.7 CONCLUSION

When the Commission began the national inventory of Scotland in 1908, it was not intended to be a permanent institution of Scottish archaeology. The Commission existed to complete the inventory and make as complete as possible a list of Scotland's ancient monuments. Even during those early days the Commission and its Secretary were unconsciously laying the foundations for a future relationship with what would later be called 'rescue archaeology'. The national inventory was implicitly linked to the notion of rescuing a site both from threat, but particularly from loss. Simply by carrying out the national inventory and recording lists of monuments, the Commission was rescuing sites. This was not an explicit aim, nor was it even how the Commission envisaged or understood its work, the county-by-

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<sup>118</sup> See meeting April 1989, see Commission Minutes, 1950-1980s, RCAHMS, shelfmark Unit ID 22090.

county inventory programme constituting the sole focus of the Commission. Even after the Commission recommenced the county-by-county inventory programme after 1945, it looked certain that the events of the emergency survey were a ‘one-off’, a momentary distraction from their duties as dictated by the Royal Warrant. Graham and Childe had completed the emergency survey. Now it was time to move on.

This laid the foundations for the Commission to take a more active role in rescue fieldwork. What Graham and Childe had done was to create a new ethos for the organisation, or at the very least prove the potential of rescue work and the role that the Commission could take in developing rescue archaeology. It was a significant moment: the first time that the Commission had deviated from the Royal Warrant and the national inventory. It was to prove indicative of the post-war Commission and its role in documenting and recording Scotland’s ancient history and national monuments. Rescue was no longer to be something that existed in the background, which lingered as an implicit aim of the Commission’s work. From 1947 rescue would slowly develop into a task of equal importance and significance to the traditional county-by-county inventory programme.

The Marginal Land Survey cemented the Commission’s relationship with rescue archaeology and provided the foundations for future endeavours. It also, crucially, proved to the Commissioners and to the wider public that the Commission could do more than simply record monuments for the inventories. The Commission was able to undertake rescue work at a national scale, particularly since it was able to make use of the aerial photographs that covered the country. It was this survey, through the vision of Steer, which enabled the Commission to adopt an explicit role in rescue archaeology. The Commission became proactive, seeking out sites in need of rescue and forging relationships with other organisations that might aid them in salvaging sites from loss or threat. This was, in many ways, comparable to Curle’s procedures where information garnered from the field was treated in the same manner as expert knowledge from within the established spaces of antiquarianism and archaeology. The Commission became more open in its pursuit of rescue. It had to react to developments that took place outside of the world of Scottish archaeology if it was to be successful in embracing a role of rescue.

The adoption of aerial photography changed how the Commission interacted with the field. Survey was carried out in the office, and then sites were documented in the field. It was a process that depended upon speed and the need to carry out survey work before it was too late. Aerial photography was fundamental to how the Commission undertook rescue work, in a way, not all that surprising. The founding figures of aerial photography, particularly O.G.S. Crawford, had envisaged the use of aerial photography because it had the ability to evidence sites not clearly visible from the ground. The adoption of the aerial photograph filtered into every aspect of the organisation’s work and influenced how the organisation conducted its national inventory. Aerial photography, and the ability to carry out on-demand surveys from the air, made the Commission one of the leading national rescue organisations.

The Commission's merger with the SNBR and the creation of the NMRS was the driving force behind the changing role of the organisation during the 1970s and 1980s. The development of the NMRS shaped the form of the Commission after the completion of the national inventory in 1992, but the merger with the SNBR and the creation of the NMRS changed how the Commission operated and redefined its role. The establishment of the Commission as one of Scotland's national collections with a mandate to document and record the nation's buildings and monuments, and then make that information available, saw the Commission establish itself as an organisation with a permanent role. The county-by-county inventory was envisaged as a role that had a defined end point. Once each county had been surveyed, the inventory was complete and the Commission would be shutdown. The arrival of the SNBR and the formation of the NMRS changed this.

This creation of a permanent role for the Commission as one of Scotland's heritage institutions is the most lasting effect of the adoption of rescue fieldwork and rescue projects. Rescue secured the Commission as one of Scotland's permanent heritage institutions, responsible for fundamentally altering the Commission's project. It moved the organisation away from focusing only on the recording of monuments to be included in an inventory towards an organisation that focused on recording monuments in the face of threats. Rescue also afforded the Commission the opportunity to become more connected with the wider heritage community in the UK after 1945. The Commission adopted an integrated approach to rescue, recognising that it did not have all the resources needed to undertake those rescue projects it sought to carry out.

Rescue, ultimately, served a dual purpose for the Commission. Documenting and recording monuments was not the only interest of the Commission when undertaking rescue projects. The pursuit of rescue became not only the saviour of at threat monuments throughout Scotland, but also the organisation itself. The Commission was rescuing itself. During WWII the threat was clear and identifiable. German aerial bombardment had caused damaged during the Great War and might again. It was not difficult to justify why an emergency survey (which would form the foundation for future Commission rescue projects) should be undertaken. In order to justify the Marginal Land Survey, however, Steer made reference to presumed, perhaps even assumed, threats. These potential threats were altogether less clear, less identifiable and some did not materialise. That is, threat was manifested in order to permit the continued existence of the Commission. To rescue itself the Commission had to create a need to conduct rescue in the field. Undertaking rescue surveys and continually identifying threats justified the existence of the Commission beyond the assumed completion of the national inventory. The rescue paradigm was pursued to rescue the Commission itself.

The relationship with rescue would continue beyond the adoption of rescue as a practice of fieldwork survey. Not only did the Commission rescue itself, but it also sought to 'rescue' other heritage organisations in Scotland, particularly those that might aid its own project. This had begun with the

SNBR, but later acquisitions made by the Commission followed a similar pattern. The Ordnance Survey Archaeology Division was 'rescued' and the material saved laterally became the foundation for the *Canmore* database (see chapter eight). Each time another organisation was brought under the Commission's remit, or indeed a collection of materials (for example the National Collection of Aerial Photography), it justified the continued existence of the organisation. Rescue was undertaken in the name of salvation; preservation of the organisation was key.



## 8. ARCHIVED AND RECORDED: THE CHANGING MATERIALITY OF SITE

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

The Commission's published inventories are a printed record of both adversity and triumph in the field – a consequence, as John Dunbar had it, of the heroic days of archaeological fieldwork.<sup>1</sup> Each drawing, photograph and description was part of a fieldwork practice that created the idea of meticulously detailed work in the world beyond the office. For the public, the published county volumes represented not only the national inventory of Scotland, but also the expertise required to produce such knowledge. The reputation of fieldwork lent authority to the work of the Commission: if someone had spent time in the field mastering Scotland's archaeology, then the work of the Commission was surely as complete as possible. Trust, authority and credibility were fostered through fieldwork. This thesis has already considered that fieldwork was not strictly bound to the "out there" (see chapter six and seven). The development of the Commission's archive in 1966 (following the merger with the SNBR) provides a means to further examine this relationship between field-based and office-based work. This chapter further explores the relationship between office and field and analyses where the Commission's fieldwork took place, how this was perceived by those who read and used the inventories, and perhaps more importantly, the relationship between the archive, records held within it, and the site of the monument itself. In so doing this chapter attends to how we might define fieldwork that takes place across a variety of sites all of which permitted the continued documenting and recording of Scotland's ancient history.

Stuart Piggott's review of the Orkney and Shetland inventory was particularly telling with regard to the Commission's relationship to the public. Although Piggott was appointed a Commissioner in 1946, the year in which the Orkney and Shetland inventory was published, Piggott noted in closing the review, that his lack of involvement in the production of the inventory 'left him free to make [...] criticisms'. Piggott praised the inventory as having 'permanent value as work of accessible reference,' but remained altogether less convinced of the inventory's value to the public. It did little to tell the public of their nation's history, it only documented what remained in the landscape. There was no explanation, no attempt to understand. He noted that 'one of the Commission's tasks should be to interpret the material records [...] for the benefit of the public who buys and attempts to understand its published volumes'.<sup>2</sup> The work of the inventory both in the field and in production was 'beyond praise', but for Piggott its

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<sup>1</sup> J. Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: the first 80 years*, *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* 36 (1992) 13-77, 20.

<sup>2</sup> S. Piggott, *Review of Orkney and Shetland Inventory*, published in *The Antiquaries Journal*, 1947, RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/5.

public value was doubtful. Twenty years later little had changed. The Peeblesshire inventory was noted as having done much to ‘increase our understanding of the Iron Age in the Solway-Type province,’ it should be considered only as a ‘guide to further work in this area’.<sup>3</sup> Here, the public is not mentioned, the inventory in this case only considered useful to those archaeologists who might carry out further investigation. Either the Commission was out of touch with the public for whom it was producing the inventories, or it was altogether unaware of who its public was.

Thumbing through the inventories of the Commission, it is easy to imagine fieldwork’s central place as “out there” in the field. Fieldwork was the basis of the Commission’s work, but it was not necessarily, as I have discussed, restricted to somewhere “out there”. Rather it took place in somewhat ubiquitous manner somewhere between “out there” and “in here”, between the fieldwork practices of the office and the field. The Commission’s authority in the field of archaeology was predicated on its prowess in the field. A commitment to fieldwork had seen the Commission’s published inventories heralded as *the* authority on Scotland’s ancient and historic monuments.<sup>4</sup> The inventory, and potential replacements, had to reflect this rigour in fieldwork.

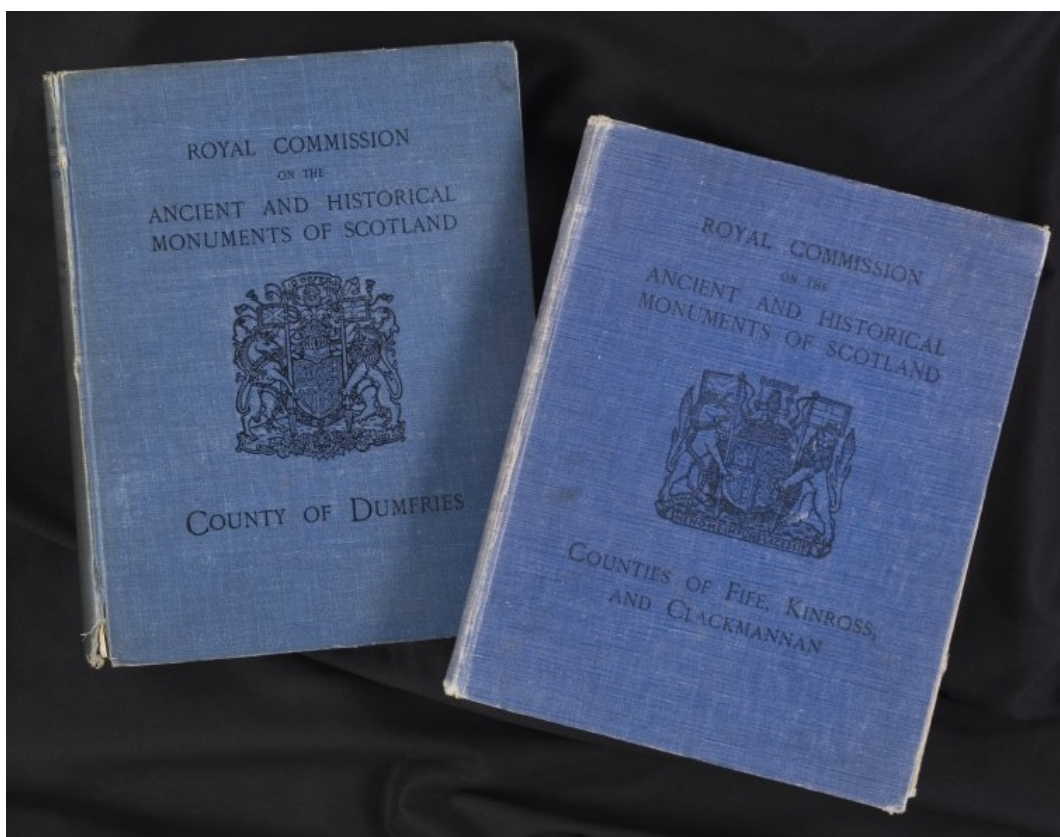
The production of the individual inventory volumes is revealing of the processes of knowledge production, obscured by the inventory itself as a ‘field’ printed volume, which made them possible. The practices that took place in the office – still part of the field, but a different location – not least those memory practices and forms of archiving that facilitated the collection and analysis of the material – are equally important in understanding the history and production of the inventory and what came after. These forms of memory practice, the record management practices of the Commission and the development of the archive, were crucial in defining the work of the institution and how the public interacted with the fieldwork knowledge that had been produced since 1908. This chapter explores those practices that took place in the Commission’s office, in particular the work of memory that informed the creation, structure, and development of the organisation’s archive.

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<sup>3</sup> Review of the Peeblesshire Inventory published in *Current Archaeology* September 1967, RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/5.

<sup>4</sup> See Peeblesshire review from *Current Archaeology* September 1967 and Piggott’s comments in 1946 review, part of a review file, RCAHMS, shelfmark 103/5.

The national inventory of Scotland comprised twenty-five neatly-bound publications which contained the work of the Commission (Fig 8.1). Each volume served not only as a record of the sites documented and surveyed in the field, but also as a testament to the hours spent in the office and the field meticulously creating the national inventory. Each county volume could publish only what was known at the date of its completion. Later fieldwork and conceptualisation altered knowledge and content: a process of evolution rather than revolution building and adapting the techniques both in office and field to permit the publication of a national inventory. *Canmore* offered a potential solution to the constant task of revising an inventory that was already as complete as possible; a database to allow new information to be added and current information updated.<sup>5</sup> Completeness was impossible within the rigid structure of the bound inventory volumes. *Canmore* would instead allow for a national inventory that was constantly in production. It represented the ultimate form of a constantly evolving inventory, a database permitting adjustment, addition, redaction and deletion.<sup>6</sup>



*Figure 8.1: The front covers of the inventories of Dumfries (1920) and Fife, Kinross and Clackmannan (1933). Published 13 years apart, the format remained the same and serves here to show the general nature of what an inventory volume looked like. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, DP 047889.*

<sup>5</sup> The initial basis for *Canmore* was the OS Record Cards, which became part of the Commission's collection in 1983, and had been used before that as part of fieldwork analysis and preparations.

<sup>6</sup> *Canmore* allows public users to make additions to the database, including the uploading of photographs.

The product of hours, days, months and years of research and fieldwork was translated into a written volume of knowledge of a county's ancient history and historic sites. The 'mess' created by the production of the inventory, however, was not reflected in its final published form. While the inventory was ordered, all the material, the files, drawings, notes, papers and collections of 'stuff' that had helped to create the inventory had piled up in the corner of offices, or in filing cabinets, folders and boxes. The inventory disguised its own making.<sup>7</sup> Record management was a necessity, thus having an archive was fast becoming imperative to the Commission.

The record of a monument is more than its published account. Field notebooks, drawings, sketches, letters, and newspaper cuttings all had to go somewhere, particularly ones forming part of a fuller record of the site. The problem created by accumulation was exacerbated when the Commission began to pursue rescue projects. Rescuing could mean finding something in the field and 'rescuing' it to the (presumed) safety of the Commission's archive. The Commission could only create records of sites and surveys of its work if the system of data management allowed it to do so. Otherwise, knowledge recovered from the field might be lost after its retrieval and upon placement in the office. A means of cataloguing and archiving worthy fragments saved from the field was a necessity. As the Commission transitioned away from the national inventory programme it required a new ordering system for cataloguing the fragmented bundles of stuff created by rescue fieldwork.

## **8.2 'MOUNTAINS OF STUFF': CREATING THE INVENTORY AND A RECORD**

At a meeting of the Standing Committee on Recording of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings on 23 January 1963, it was proposed, given the wealth of material being collected by the various bodies that existed under the Ancient Monuments Board that it might be 'advantageous to try to concentrate this recorded material at certain central points'.<sup>8</sup> A centralised archive was duly envisaged. This was an early attempt to centralise the Commission and other ancient monument and historical building organisations into a single archive documenting Scotland's heritage. It was the beginning of the formation of a heritage sector in Scotland. Steer was quick to make clear that if the Commission lost its working documents – the reference resources used in the months of planning proceeding the field season – it would be unable to function. Thus other organisations in Scotland would be unwilling to support a

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<sup>7</sup> C. Steedman, The space of memory: in an archive, *History of the Human Sciences* 11(4) (1998) 65-83.

<sup>8</sup> Standing Committee on Recording of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings Meeting, National Archive Kew, shelfmark 14/2824.

central archive, particularly so if it were to be located outside of Scotland.<sup>9</sup> Although relatively minor, the issue did not come to fruition, rather setting a tone for the Commission.

Steer and the Commission were unwilling to give up their independence to carry out the work of the Scottish national inventory as they saw fit (being distinct was crucial to shaping the institution that the Commission was to become), but it was also at this meeting of January 23 that the possibility of the SNBR's integration into the Commission was raised. It was an interesting proposition: the working practice of the Commission at this time simply had no need for an archive. A records management system (which might eventually lead to an archive), was, like the materials of fieldwork, surplus to requirement in a system designed around the publication of the inventory. By contrast the ethos of the SNBR was built around one of record keeping and the need to maintain an archive. A clash of purpose emerged in 1966: the Commission, uninterested in an archive, and the SNBR, for whom archiving was central. For Kenneth Steer there was a sense that the arrival of the SNBR and its archive was unwelcome, that it might divert attention from the county-by-county programme and the production of the inventory.<sup>10</sup>

Some elements of record management had been introduced by Helen McLaren, the Commission's secretary and one of its longest serving members of staff. Since her appointment in 1908, McLaren, had developed her own method of filing when cataloguing the Commission's paperwork and correspondence – some of the traces of her work are still visible today among the files re-archived under new revisions of the archival system. Her dutiful attention to the clerical papers of the organisation was not, however, extended to the wealth of paperwork produced as a result of fieldwork. McLaren's efforts were later added to in the 1950s by Nan Muir who initially paid much attention to the collection of photographic negatives held by the Commission.<sup>11</sup> Responsibility for the "stuff" produced by the field staff was up to the member of staff in question. Once the record was complete, those resources which had helped create it were no longer worthy of being saved. The scribbled notes of a fieldworker, while of interest to historical research today, and of value to this thesis, had no utility. Only the completed record was of importance.

The SNBR, by contrast to the Commission, existed to document and record Scotland's national buildings of importance, and to archive them for reference. The SNBR revolved around the concept of archiving: for the SNBR, their archive was their inventory, and they could ill afford to carry out repeat surveys or, as in the case of the Commission, re-do entire inventories.<sup>12</sup> Following its establishment in 1941, the SNBR followed this pattern of work until the 1960s when it became clear that, as a result of

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<sup>9</sup> Standing Committee on Recording of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings Meeting, National Archive Kew, shelfmark 14/2824.

<sup>10</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

<sup>11</sup> Interview conversation with Geoff Quick, 19/5/15.

<sup>12</sup> The Commission re-did both the Berwickshire inventory, and to a lesser extent, the inventory of Roxburghshire.

their remit overlapping with the Commission, merger was, after much political wrangling, on the cards.<sup>13</sup>

The merger with the SNBR in 1966 required considerable investment from the Commission's senior staff members, particularly the Secretary (a process later repeated when the Commission absorbed the Ordnance Survey Scottish Archaeology Branch in the 1980s). Careful management was required to secure the Commission's position. The absorption of the SNBR in 1966 looked to provide a solution to the problem of where all this 'stuff' was to go. It was, in many ways, a novel system for the Commission. For the SNBR, the record of a site was stored as a folder, full of drawings, photographs, sketches and plans.

This was a significant step away from the Commission's usual use of the inventory as the official output of its work. The SNBR folders were organised, catalogued and arranged, the process of organising them providing meaning and structure. It legitimised their being kept in the archive, and also facilitated the archive as a site of reference. By adopting this system, the SNBR was able to create records that were made up of the various materials produced during the course of fieldwork. This became the record of the documented building, preserved through its retention in the archive. For the Commission, however, it was the inventory that provided structure and meaning to the records created. The inventory was after all a means of applying order to the products of fieldwork. Having produced the inventory, the material which had facilitated that publication became obsolete. The record in the inventory was the evidence of a site, not the accumulation of 'stuff' that contributed to printed pages of the national inventory. It is this practice and attitude of mind that explains the fragmented nature of the archival traces of the period prior to the merger in 1966. It is worth noting, however, that despite the development of a formal record management process following the absorption of the SNBR, much of the Commission's fieldwork materials avoided the clutches of the archive. Whether stored in the offices or homes of staff members, the field notebooks, sketchbooks and other field materials of the inventory were kept outside of the archive. For former draughtsman Ian Scott (recalling his colleagues' attitude), it was often felt that fieldwork notes were the property of the individual and of no interest to the institution.<sup>14</sup> Staff members believed they had a right to keep their field notes: they believed that after publication no one would be interested in their scribbled notes as they had been superseded by the inventory.

The SNBR's merger into the Commission brought with it not only a new role for the organisation, but also created a clash in the ethos of two organisations that undertook and recorded the product of their fieldwork in different ways. The Commission with its inventories, and the SNBR with its bounded volumes of photographs, approached their fieldwork with similar intentions, but the way in which they published could not have been more different. For the SNBR, the visual record was crucial. For the

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<sup>13</sup> See Future of SNBR Folder, The National Archive Kew, shelfmark WORK 14/2824.

<sup>14</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

Commission, the inventory was all about detail: precise recording of an archaeological site or historic building. There was a need, following the merger, to find a way for the two to co-exist. The outcome of this negotiation would be the creation of the Commission archive and library. There were two different ways of understanding what should and should not be recorded, and what constituted a record for publication and a record for the archive. It was necessary to integrate the SNBR's archival system with the Commission inventory, a process that would require careful management to ensure that both strands of the organisation could continue their work while contributing to the continued existence of the Commission.

### **8.3 ESTABLISHING THE COMMISSION'S ARCHIVE**

The Commission's regular county-by-county inventory programme had a clear output. The recording and fieldwork of each county produced a published inventory of monuments. There existed a purpose to the fieldwork, and a way of storing and organising the recordings of that endeavour. The Commission's foray into rescue was, however, less well organised, at least in terms of documenting the work that had been done. There was no clear output for the sites surveyed for rescue unless they happened to be included in a later inventory. Members of staff were encouraged by Commissioners to publish material their archaeological research in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries, but institutionally there was no official output for knowledge produced through rescue. While the emergency survey and the MLS were both organised in a manuscript format upon the conclusion of the surveys, other forms of rescue were less well organised. The Commission and its staff spent hours planning and preparing for the field, but there is little evidence to suggest that time was spent designing a system to deal with this material once it had been recorded. Upon appointment as the Commission's photographer in 1957, Geoff Quick was so horrified at the lack of a filing system for the photographic negatives that he immediately revamped the organisation's haphazard method of archiving negatives. Having devised a numerically-based system that followed the county inventories, Quick was content that at least some form of archiving was in place to better allow the Commission to document its sites (interestingly this system would later be at odds with the SNBR's system for archiving negatives, as devised by the officer in charge of the SNBR, Kitty Cruft).<sup>15</sup> This, it appears, had been the Commission's way of archiving its material, individuals collecting and binding it as was required in the moment. There was no forward-looking system of archiving that might one day become a reference source. There was no expectation of the need for an archive.

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<sup>15</sup> Interview conversation with Geoff Quick, 19/5/15.

While on paper the merger of the SNBR and the Commission seemed straightforward, fundamental differences had to be addressed in the way the two organisations operated. There was need to locate a new office into which the two organisations could move. There was not enough space in the Commission's existing office for both organisations. The move to a new office at 52-54 Melville Street, Edinburgh, represented not only a change of scenery for the staff, but also a shift in the ethos and purpose of the Commission. Melville Street had been purposefully sought out to house both the Commission's staff and its newly-adopted archive and library. Future Secretary John Dunbar later opined that 'of all the tasks that fell upon the Commission during this period, the one that ultimately exerted the greatest influence upon its work and outlook was the administration of' the SNBR, or the National Monuments Record of Scotland as it would be known, following its absorption into the Commission.<sup>16</sup> The Commission and Steer now assumed responsibility for an archive of national significance and, in doing so, a role that was permanent rather than temporary. It was never envisioned from the outset of the Commission in 1908 that the organisation would become a permanent one, it simply existed to complete a national inventory of Scotland, a task deemed finite in nature. Ticking off each county one-by-one would eventually lead to the completion of the national inventory and the completion of the Commission's task. There would be no need, having completed the inventory, for the Commission to exist. The absorption of the SNBR fundamentally altered this. Rescuing sites, and maintaining the accompanying archive was not the focus of the Commission, but it created a long-term purpose for it.

Following the absorption of the SNBR into the Commission and the creation of the NMRS, it was decided to take advantage of the skills of the new members of staff and expand the newly-formed library into a reference library for the public (Fig 8.2).

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<sup>16</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 35.





*Figure 8.2: The Commission's original library formed in 1966 following the merger with the SNBR.  
Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 00357513.*

Under Kitty Cruft, who oversaw the NMRS library and archive, the Commission began to create a resource of national significance. In 1966, the Treasury approved a grant of £1000 and annual expenditure of £200 (later raised to £250) to be used to make good any gaps in the library and purchase new books.<sup>17</sup> By 1970, the library had some 2400 books and 700 pamphlets, increased from only 1200 total items in 1966. The numbers of visitors to the library also increased. In a letter to HMSO, the Commission noted that 'the number of visitors using the library during the first 9 months of 1970 being

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<sup>17</sup> Letter to the HMSO dated 14 October 1970 from Steer, RCAHMS, shelfmark 112/1.

about 500 as against 160 during a similar period in 1968. The library was becoming more widely recognised as a research centre by students of Scottish architectural history and allied subjects, and this in turn helped to attract valuable gifts and loans of related material to the Record – chiefly drawings and photographs'.<sup>18</sup> Steer and the Commissioners saw the development of the library as a project of similar importance to the county-by-county inventory, not least because of the permanency it offered. It was a shift of thinking, away from the traditional county-by-county inventory programme, towards what would come next.

The rescue-orientated role of the Commission after merger with the SNBR brought the organisation into more regular contact with the public. When conducting the national inventory, particularly post-war, the Commission had become less reliant on information acquired from laypersons. The Commission's staff had no real need to interact with the public in order to complete their fieldwork, save for access to land.<sup>19</sup> However, if the Commission was now explicitly to seek out sites to be rescued as part of its repertoire following the merger, it had to have a dialogue with members of the public able to provide information or forewarning of sites potentially in need of rescue. The merger with the SNBR returned the Commission to the public eye.<sup>20</sup> For Dunbar, the NMRS was the 'public face of the Royal Commission'.<sup>21</sup>

The development of the Commission's library and archive was an extension of the organisation's developing rescue programme. It was, of course, aided by the absorption of the SNBR and later creation of the NMRS. The library now became the public face of the Commission, allowing it to display its work and document the rescue surveys undertaken throughout Scotland. The library sought to rescue plans, drawings, photographs and anything else that spoke to Scotland's ancient and built history, then record them within the archive. This was the final stage of rescue, although it was, in many ways, just another way of continuing the Commission's role as the recorder of the national inventory. Most significantly, the library and the accompanying archive provided the Commission with permanency. The maintenance of one of Scotland's national collections gave the Commission a reason to exist after the national inventory was completed. Finally, it provided a framework for making the findings of future surveys available to the public through the *Canmore* system that documented Scotland's ancient and built history on a site-by-site basis.

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<sup>18</sup> Letter to the HMSO dated 14 October 1970 from Steer, RCAHMS, shelfmark 112/1.

<sup>19</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

<sup>20</sup> This relationship between the Commission and the public was not limited to an open dialogue whereby the public informed the Commission of sites in need to rescue. The library was to be a reference resource of interested individuals. The Commission made its materials available for individuals to consult through its library.

<sup>21</sup> Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 35.

#### 8.4 ARCHIVING THE SITES OF FIELDWORK

Having explored the Commission's archive and library, it is worth dwelling on what might be considered a record, particularly in the case of rescue archaeology and the Commission after WWII. That is to say, what we mean by record when it is created and held by an institution. While the question of the site is central to an understanding of the Commission and the national inventory, an interrogation of the idea of site when contextualised by rescue archaeology allows for an examination of the way in which sites changed through the fieldwork process. Here I explore the ways in which the pursuit of rescue archaeology and the development of the Commission's archive changed the relationship between record and site, such that a site came to be known by its record and its 'archival traces'. The record is constructed from the 'traces [...] left over' by the site and the fieldwork that created the record.<sup>22</sup> The relationship between the archive and the site of excavation, or even just the original archaeological site, changed the materiality of the site. Becoming an archivable record altered the materiality of the archaeological site such that it became more than just a physical location. It became a paper record with an archival presence.

Such sites were to become known by their record in the archive, rather than their actual physical location. These changing materialities offered the chance for new interpretations to be made, ones that might never otherwise have been achieved through 'more direct forms of representation' (visiting the site). But these new materialities also open up the past for present 're-telling', changing understandings of the original object.<sup>23</sup> The creation of a record accessible through *Canmore* allowed the database user that chance for new interpretations (this was, after all, an aim of *Canmore*: to encourage analysis), but in doing so it distanced the user from the original site. The materiality of the record accessed via *Canmore* presents the opportunity for a re-telling of the site based only on traces that remain in the archived record. Records of sites had been 'translated' and 'transition[ed]' to become what Latour calls 'graspable', according to the needs of the archive and the researcher. The messiness of the field was sorted: these records might become useable when set in their new contexts.<sup>24</sup>

The subsequent development of *Canmore* furthered this change in materiality of the site as it 'flattened' the differences between sites recorded by the Commission in order to make comparable (analytical) records. Flattening of difference permitted easy comparison. *Canmore* brought sites into easy comparison by assimilating them according to their shared characteristics, not according to what made them unique as archaeological features. Archaeological sites across and within counties which shared similar characteristics could be compared after their individual natures (location, peculiarities, current

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<sup>22</sup> A. Menne-Haritz, Access – the reformulation of an archival paradigm, *Archival Science* 1 (2001) 57-82, 68.

<sup>23</sup> C. DeSilvey, Salvage memory: material histories on a hardscrabble homestead, *cultural geographies* 14(3) (2007) 401-424, 420.

<sup>24</sup> B. Latour, *Pandora's Hope, Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Cambridge, 1999, 51.

physical condition) was flattened out. While sites exist as individual records, they can also be made to exist as grouped records, able to be compared and analysed based on their commonalities. *Canmore* was the final stage in a cycle of ‘circulating references’ from field to office to archive. Analysed in the office, from the records stored in the archive and accessed via *Canmore* the user is, as Latour has it, placed ‘at a good distance [...] neither very far from nor very to close to the field [...] instead] a small number of pertinent features’ have been transported to the office that creates a mirrored image of work undertaken in the field.<sup>25</sup> Returning to the ‘calm and cool office’ the fieldwork is ‘able to discern emerging patterns that no predecessor could see’.<sup>26</sup> The site of fieldwork, constituted in the office, fostered analytical intensity permitting new nuanced understandings of preliminary work carried out beyond the walls of the office. Even then, pursued to their origin these ‘archival traces’ led to the original site. By mirroring the field through records held in the archive the Commission could always trace back to the original site once documented in the field. Even working from the archive the Commission’s staff, and laterally other users of *Canmore*, were still in the field.

This presented its own challenge. The ability to compare records creates a ‘sameness’ as sites lose their uniqueness by being known only through comparison. Tim Yarrow has argued, following Latour, that the archived record holds the traces of the individuals who despite ‘no longer being present’ are still visible through their ‘thoughts and actions’, telling of the fieldwork that produced the record.<sup>27</sup> Whilst Lucas has suggested that the archive creates sameness – flattening differences between sites – the archive also holds clues to the stories of the processes of fieldwork which created the now archived record.<sup>28</sup> As a system of record keeping, *Canmore* sought to place these traces at the fingertips of the user, such that they would have no need to physically inspect the site. *Canmore* presented the user with a record that was ‘as complete as possible’ in the way in which the original Chairman and Commissioners had envisaged. Sites became *Canmore* ID numbers.

The relationship between site and record, while significant within the context of the national inventory, may be seen more clearly through the lens of rescue archaeology, not least because of the sheer quantity of material produced by rescue projects. In excavating sites across Scotland, the Commission acted not only to rescue sites of archaeological significance, it also created volumes of material ‘stuff’ which when ordered and catalogued, could form a detailed record of the sites surveyed.

Exploring the development of rescue as record facilitates a wider discussion around how excavation is perceived as an act of rescue, and how that relates to what is then ‘rescued’ by the archive. The hubris and debris of excavation promotes an act of salvation; excavation saves the site from uncertainty or

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<sup>25</sup> Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 36.

<sup>26</sup> Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 38.

<sup>27</sup> T. Yarrow, Artefactual persons: the relational capacities of persons and things in the practice of excavation, *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 36(1) (2003) 65-73, 69.

<sup>28</sup> G. Lucas, Destruction and rhetoric of excavation, *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 34(1) (2001), 35-46.

destruction. Excavation is an act of retrieval, recording, and interpretation so as to understand the past. Yet excavation is a destructive act in itself. No matter how careful the process, excavation destroys and then recreates the site in new contexts, altering how it is understood. This practice, and the stuff excavation produces, is undertaken – “out there” – in the field. But, as I have noted, it is in the office that the excavated site may accrue further, even new, meaning(s). The site is recreated and re-understood through the creation of its record and its accession to the archive. The archival record, if taken fully and in accessible ways, allows for new comparisons, new interpretations, and new theories to be made by those who make use of the archive. Records arranged and structured in the same manner allowed for comparisons to be drawn within particular categories. By flattening difference, seemingly disparate sites could be brought into comparative analysis. It was a move away from the broad-brush approach of the inventory system towards a more fine-grained analysis. The creation of *Canmore* sought to allow users not only access to the wealth of information stored by the Commission, but also the ability to quickly and easily compare differing sites. *Canmore* was intended to facilitate new interpretations and understandings of Scotland’s ancient history, archaeology and architecture because of its integration of archived material into a standard format.

There is, however, as Gavin Lucas alludes, a paradox when considering the role of excavation, particularly when rescue is cited as the motivation behind fieldwork. This paradox focuses on the destructive nature of excavation. Mortimer Wheeler wrote in 1954 that at best ‘excavation is destruction’ while Philip Barker noted that ‘every archaeological site is itself a document [...] but it is destroyed by the very process which enables us to read it’.<sup>29</sup> Lucas acknowledges that this paradox – whereby excavation leads to destruction – is ‘usually resolved by an appeal to the fact that the record [which has been created] *justifies* the act of excavation and tacitly gives excavation its scientific or academic status’.<sup>30</sup> The agency of the physical site was replaced by creation of that site’s record.

The Commission justified its rescue programme because the institution was saving sites from potential loss. They sought to create not only a record, but also an authentic and credible record of the site based on field survey. The national inventory programme, and by implication the extension of the Commission’s fieldwork, sought to produce authentic records of the sites being surveyed and documented. The process of establishing an authentic record can be complicated if we consider the differences between rescue and salvage, and the forms of authenticity that each form of survey produces. Authenticity in either is difficult to achieve, but both rescue and salvage imply saving a site before it is damaged or destroyed. Salvage and rescue have to make do with remains.

Authenticity is, however, produced by fieldwork having made the record. Creating a record as a product of fieldwork generates authenticity. It is an authentic record in that the record does what the Commission

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<sup>29</sup> M. Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth* (1954) cited in Lucas, Destruction and rhetoric of excavation, 35.

<sup>30</sup> Lucas, Destruction and rhetoric of excavation, 35.

asks of it (that is, the record becomes part of the inventory, or the database), though not necessarily an authentic record of the site itself. Survey in the field was only the first step in a fieldwork process that would save recorded sites.

This relationship between record and site informs the manner with which the record of the site is understood. The archival form taken by the site records and supplements the physical location in the field.<sup>31</sup> Encounter is firstly through the record and secondly, and rarely, with the actual site. While this was significant for the Commission within the context of its county-by-county inventory programme, it was during the organisation's later efforts within the rescue paradigm that this relationship between rescue, fieldwork and archive was noteworthy. For those sites that were surveyed within the rescue paradigm, it was the archive which provided their salvation.

If we recognise that the site of excavation, and the archaeology it contains, is only a means to acquire 'raw material' producing the knowledge which becomes archival record, then we can begin to understand the wealth of "stuff" that an archaeological dig may produce. The archaeological record of a site becomes, as Lucas notes, a resource, in the case of the Commission, available via the archive or the inventory volumes. Each excavated site becomes 'raw material involved [...] in a process of knowledge production'.<sup>32</sup> The raw materials of the archaeological record include not only the site itself, but all the products of the fieldwork – drawings, sketches, notes, photographs – that 'revealed' that site. All such 'stuff' had to be sorted, interpreted, and catalogued in order that a record of it might be made. As fieldworkers produced the county-by-county inventory or carried out rescue surveys, they also produced related paperwork, all of which had potential as archivable material. To manage this, a system of ordering had to be implemented to structure the products of fieldwork.

This system changed the nature of the site which moved through a number of stages from physical site in the field, to a record in the archive. This journey, from the "out there" of the field to the "in here" of the archive begins in the office with analysis of aerial photography, maps, and other written sources before being physically inspected by a member of the Commission. Now recorded the site is entered into the wider records management keeping process of the Commission. The site record then becomes archivable, and is known now as a record: 'site' is discarded. The site's materiality has changed from a physical entity to an archivable record. Before being committed to the archive, however, the record passes through a process of archivisation. It is this process that decides what elements of the record are to be preserved. By this stage, the record that remains of the site is a carefully managed one, moulded by the archival process.

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<sup>31</sup> Lucas, *Destruction and rhetoric of excavation*.

<sup>32</sup> Lucas, *Destruction and rhetoric of excavation*, 37.

Within the archive, the record reflects a new value. The ‘material traces of past human activity’ tell of the ways in which the record was constructed, but also, as Joyce has argued, shorten the ‘possible life span’ of sites that were ‘not built with the intention that they survive forever’.<sup>33</sup> The record which tells of the excavation of a site and the human traces that facilitated that record – created only to extend the life of the site as an archival record – serves to shorten the lifespan of the now excavated site. It might hold value because of who surveyed it (was it the first example of a site surveyed by Curle, or the first use of aerial photography by Steer?). Following the development and integration of the Commission’s records into the *Canmore* database, however, the record’s value was its ability for comparison with other records of other sites and the facilitation of future, often retrospective, work.

The construction of the archive served to ensure that an archival record, ‘simply’ its textual making, supplemented or perhaps even replaced the site it was recording. It added a layer of knowledge to that site, the archaeological site and the historical building now represented through images and texts stowed safely in the files and folders of the archive. There is then a relationship between the text, the records of the site, and the site itself. It is this relationship that allows the archive to assume the role of an archaeological site such that, drawing on Lucas’s argument, I suggest that the archive ‘displaces’ the site itself. For Lucas ‘the archive comes to stand in for the site, not as a copy of an original, but simply as a substitute – it is a metaphorical rather than representational relation’.<sup>34</sup> So while the archival record offers the ‘possibility of repetition’ whereby we can always visit and revisit the archive comparing sites between one another within the archive space, it detaches us from the physical site. The archive becomes a place where, as Lucas has it, we may re-excavate a site, ‘re-analysing an object over and over again’.<sup>35</sup> Permitting the comparison of multiple sites in the detail, which the Commission’s archive allowed for, served only to enhance the analytical comparisons that could be made through working with archival records.

Uniqueness is forgone in favour of analytical comparison and understanding. The records were repurposed for use within the archival site able to be, as Latour has it, ‘reassembled, reunited, redistributed according to entirely new principles that depend on the researcher’ and their needs.<sup>36</sup> Conceiving of the file or the archive as serving to create sameness, however, does a disservice to the material that the archive holds. As the Commission moved towards the adoption of *Canmore*, and as sites were ‘detached’ from the field and categorised into databases, the ‘age of information’ did permit the Commission to tell the story of fieldwork. This was achieved through the filing system, or the file structure. Each entry within *Canmore* contains information not only about the site, but about previous Commission work at that site and when it was undertaken. Each digital record is a layered record of all

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<sup>33</sup> R. Joyce, The monumental and the trace: archaeological conservation and the materiality of the past, *Proceedings of the Archaeological Congress* (2003) 13-17, 17.

<sup>34</sup> Lucas, Destruction and rhetoric of excavation, 43.

<sup>35</sup> Lucas, Destruction and rhetoric of excavation, 44.

<sup>36</sup> Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 39.

research that has taken place at, or in relation to, that site. *Canmore* allowed for comparative change at any recorded site to be seen as photographs and drawings from various periods which can be compared easily, all accessed through the original *Canmore* ID. The original materiality of the site became lost behind the imagery and *new* visualisations available through *Canmore*.

Paying close attention to the archival record alone serves only to distance the physical archaeological site from scrutiny. Public interaction with the site shifts from the place out there to the archive or the online database record. The paper record of the site, stored in the archive, became a surrogate for the physical site. It is removed from its 'natural' context in the landscape and situated in the framework of an archival record system where it becomes a site of scholarly analysis rather than an historical site to be found in the national landscape. This removal from the site's 'natural' context becomes more problematic when, as Koltun has suggested, the move from physical to digital record may also permit the record to take on a 'new life'. The adoption of a 'new life' for the digital record may, as Koltun poses, 'render all other media obsolete'.<sup>37</sup>

The adoption of the *Canmore* information system during the 1990s was the comprehensive interpretation of an era of information.<sup>38</sup> *Canmore* allowed for the wealth of knowledge contained within the Commission's archive to be easily accessed, compared and analysed. The online database allowed users to draw comparison between sites across Scotland and access all of the known information about each site. This was the ultimate form of the Commission's records; the most complete form that the national inventory would take (Fig 8.3). Here it was not a question of flattening difference, rather, it was to make all available information known and accessible so as to make an inventory that was as complete as possible.

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<sup>37</sup> L. Koltun, The promise and threat of digital options in an archival age, *Archivaria* 47 (1999) 114-135, 117.

<sup>38</sup> RCAHMS, *An Inventory for the Nation*, Edinburgh, 2015.





*Sites recorded by 1908*



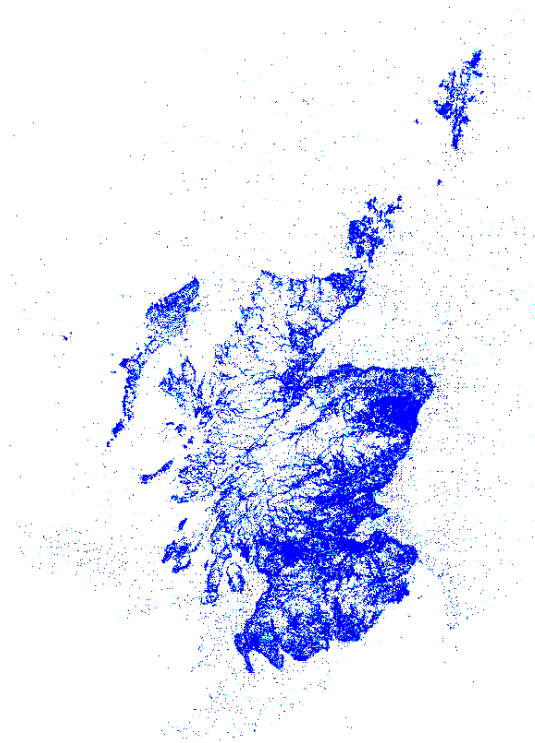
*Sites recorded by 1938*



*Sites recorded by 1968*



*Sites recorded by 1998*



*Sites recorded by 2015*

*Figure 8.3: Distribution map showing sites surveyed by the Commission between 1908 (top left) and 2015 (bottom right). Source: Historic Environment Scotland.*

*Canmore* also represented the ultimate state that many of Scotland's archaeological sites would take. Archaeological sites were no longer known by their physical presence, but by their *Canmore* ID, their space within the database. Sites became detached from the field, existing instead as artificially designated ID numbers tied to hyperlinks, photographs and written texts, with only an Ordnance Survey map showing the site's original location in the field. Arguably, this could be seen as 'rescuing' the site. Decades of work were now consigned to a digital record that did little, if anything at all, to make known the process of its own making, even if these processes had been recorded – the hours of fieldwork that produced the knowledge now so conveniently re-sited online.

Both the site and the work that took place there had become a multiple-artefact, of both the original site in the field and the fieldwork that produced the record. Conveyed via the written description (or as images contained within the record), the site's paper record is an artefact of that moment of knowledge production. The archivable record then becomes the site itself. The materiality of the site changed from physical location to archival shelfmark. The record had new purpose, one which did not, necessarily, recognise where it came from.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Latour, Pandora's Hope, 49.

## 8.5 CONCLUSION: ARCHIVING THE LEGACY OF THE COMMISSION

The merger between the SNBR and the Commission in 1966 and the formation of the NMRS saw the foundations of the archive that would later become one of Scotland's national collections. This archive ensured that 'stuff' from many field sites now had a single shared home. Cataloguing and archiving the buildings surveyed by the SNBR (and bringing in the Commission's notes and paperwork produced by the county-by-county inventory programme) helped create a permanent function for the Commission. Maintenance of the archive as a site of record was a constant task, one that would have to continue even after completion of the national inventory. While rescue and the maintenance of its accompanying archive were not the focus of the Commission's work it was clear that the creation of a permanent physical record that could be interrogated over time laid down the foundations for the organisation after the national inventory was completed.

Merger with the SNBR forced the Commission's hand as a formal archive. It was a significant change for the Commission, not least because it would set in motion a shift away from the national inventory alone. The adoption of the archival system heralded a new era for the Commission, one which placed emphasis on the archive and the creation of records rather than focusing on the national inventory and the publication process. The Commission shifted away from the inventory as a way of projecting its work, and towards more localised work that could be integrated into *Canmore*. It was a move towards detailed analysis and interpretation, not only inventorization.

An inventory of Scotland's monuments is always incomplete. Adoption of the archive, and its eventual development into a national collection, gave the Commission the allure of permanency that the organisation desired. For an organisation which was never intended to exist beyond the conclusion of the national inventory, this new role as a national collection secured its place within Scotland's emerging heritage sector. The adoption of a database system made the linear nature of the inventories redundant. Under the protection offered by its national collection status, the Commission could continue to operate, undertaking inventory work, rescue projects and other archaeological and architectural survey work safe in the knowledge that the organisation was not to disappear in the immediate future.

The development of *Canmore* as a database symbolised the Commission's own development towards the new era of the Scottish heritage sector. *Canmore* was, in many ways, the final evolution of the inventory, representing a structured and ordered system whereby anyone could quickly and easily find information on a particular historical site in Scotland. It repurposed the national inventory as an analytical information tool, allowing comparisons to be made easily and for future retrospective archival based fieldwork.

However, the development of the Commission's database and its eventual transformation into *Canmore* was not unproblematic, not least because of the changing nature of the site records stored within the

archive. The records produced by the Commission, initially through the fieldwork that supported the national inventory and later through rescue archaeology and smaller excavations, were exposed to changing materialities as the Commission's record management process evolved. This began with records appearing in the form of the inventory or in scholarly articles, usually in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*. Following the decision to drop the county-by-county inventory programme in the wake of the Argyll inventory in the 1980s, and the move towards the establishment of a digital database, the materials from the Commission's records and their relationship to the physical site in the field began to evolve. *Canmore* permitted new ways of analysing new and existing fieldwork. As an extension of fieldwork *Canmore* facilitated new analytical intensity as the office (free from any time constraints) allowed staff members the opportunity to interrogate in detail the materials collected "out there". What *Canmore* really achieved, however, was to create the inventory that the Commissioners had envisaged in 1908: a database that was as complete as possible, up-dateable, a national inventory open and accessible to all.

## 9. CONCLUSION – BUT NOT AN ENDING?: THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION IN RETROSPECT

### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis has traced the historical geography of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and its impact on the broader concerns of how and where antiquarian (and later archaeological) knowledge was produced. Previous chapters have examined the Commission and its work through a series of sites of knowledge production, that in differing ways functioned in accordance with the organisation's aim: the creation of a national inventory of Scotland's ancient and historical monuments. This thesis has excavated the contribution to this endeavour of hitherto overlooked individuals. It has highlighted the day-to-day working practices of the Commission. The conceptual end in view has been to examine the in-the-field and out-of-field practices by which the Commission worked in line with its purpose since 1908 to collate the nation's monuments. Yet, always more than a scholarly endeavour, this thesis has also sought to capture and reflect upon the legacy of the Commission amidst the present day context of its merger with Historic Scotland, forming Historic Environment Scotland in October 2015. These have been the joined central aims of this project: to identify the Commission's role in how and where the knowledge of Scotland's ancient and historic built history was produced; and to establish the legacy of the Commission.

My approach has been moulded by the material available to me – much of it residing within the Commission's archives. There are other ways the Commission's story could be told. In October 2015, *An Inventory for a Nation* was published by the Commission, to celebrate the history of the organisation at the 'moment' of its demise. This publication serves as both a celebration and a final, official, institutional history. While it tackles the history of the Commission in broad terms, and draws on much of the material presented within this thesis, it does not attend to the *how* behind the Commission's work. *How* was the national inventory produced? *How* did the Commission become involved with rescue archaeology? *How* did *Canmore* develop? My focus across this thesis has, in contrast, been on a history of its practice: the *doing* of the Commission's work and the processes underlying its aims. In so doing, this history of the Commission, in attending to the doing of the inventory, explores a different legacy of the organisation, one which attends to the Commission's everyday practices in a manner which previous works have overlooked.

By way of concluding this thesis, this chapter seeks to do two things. In line with the first aim of this project, I draw together and consolidate the core conceptual claims developed over the course of preceding sections. Drawing on an initial approach that considers sites of fieldwork defined by a traditional of boundary of "in here" versus "out there", I close with a more nuanced account that

considers the simultaneous operation of these sites as epistemic spaces of knowledge production. Despite considerable attention having been paid to sites of fieldwork, what is altogether less well explored is how these sites interact with each other. I consider how we might think about fieldwork that does not take place neatly at any one of these sites, but which occurs at all of them, between them, or potentially at none of them. I tease out the relationships *between* these sites and what they tell of the epistemic practices from which the Commission, and the national inventory, are constituted. I do so in order to emphasise what I argue to be *the ubiquity of the field*. Subsequently, to respond to the second of the aims of this thesis, I apply my conceptual contribution in order to offer my alternative account of the Commission's history and legacy. This narrative proposes alternative spaces, figures, practices and relationships to emphasise a history of the Commission that unfolds in the relationships between field, office, *Canmore*, and the archive.

## 9.2 THE COMMISSION AS A SITE OF PRACTICE

In this first section, I will briefly summarise the established body of literature that explores the historical geographies of science and knowledge making. I have also drawn on literature that attempts to tackle the field as a site of knowledge production, focusing on such work that has appeared in the wake of Driver's 2000 call for geographers to pay greater attention to the field and 'field-work'.<sup>1</sup> My thesis has raised questions over how geographers and others have defined the field and the sites of fieldwork. While, as MacDonald notes, the field has been reclaimed as a site of scholarship for geographers, there are still questions of how we define sites of fieldwork.<sup>2</sup> Where does the field begin? Where does it end? Can the field be as easily defined by such binary definitions as 'indoors' or 'outdoors', or is the concept of fieldwork site more fluid, unable to be easily bound to particular places? Does fieldwork have to be field-based? Dean Bond, in his examination of the Danish Expedition to Arabia, has drawn geographers' attention to the themes I have examined here. He asserts that 'useful' and trustworthy knowledge was produced through work undertaken in *both* the study and the field. Appreciating that fieldwork that took place across these two sites revealed important geographies of knowledge production to be explored.<sup>3</sup> What becomes important is how fieldwork at such different sites took place, and how certain other practices permitted work to take place *between* these sites. Rather than proposing any single definition

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<sup>1</sup> F. Driver, Editorial: field-work in geography, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 25(3) (2000) 267-268.

<sup>2</sup> F. MacDonald, Domsday fieldwork, or, how to rescue Gaelic culture? The salvage paradigm in geography, archaeology, and folklore, 1955-1962, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29 (2011) 309-335, 312.

<sup>3</sup> D. Bond, Enlightenment geography in the study: A.F. Büsching, J.D. Michaelis and the place of geographical knowledge in the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia, 1761-1767, *Journal of Historical Geography* 51 (2016) 64-76, 75 & 68.

of fieldwork, however, I have asserted the need to further explore the boundaries between the sites that variously constitute ‘the field’.

In examining the Commission’s fieldwork practices, I have considered the office, field, archive and *Canmore*, much as Golinski considers ‘libraries, clinics, and museums; [where] objects of knowledge are constituted within epistemic spaces that are other than the space occupied by the site’. ‘The sciences practiced in heterogeneous, “doubled” settings are distinguished from those pursued in “nonheterotopic” sites. Oceanography, geography, and the other fieldwork sciences make their objects of knowledge at places away from the routine workplaces of their practitioners. Their pursuit requires travel and the transportation of representational artefacts back from the field setting’.<sup>4</sup> The work of the Commission, operating within the field of antiquarianism, and then more specifically archaeology, was not dissimilar to the work of the disciplines that Golinski describes. And yet, I want to make an important distinction. The Commission undertook its fieldwork not sequentially, at one site after another, but *simultaneously* within and between the spaces of the office, the field, the archive and *Canmore*. The processes of fieldwork at each site occurred at once both in the field and in the ‘routine workplaces of their practitioners’. The object of the Commission’s knowledge, the national inventory, was constituted across these spaces.

Following a Latourian approach, I have conceived of the field less as a well defined space and more as a complicated mix of sites where fieldwork is undertaken. The field occurs somewhere between field and office, “out there” and “in here”.<sup>5</sup> I argue that in trying to understand the Commission’s epistemic practice of work-in-the-field, the variety of sites where this took place has to be considered in a more nuanced way. Fieldwork takes place in a variety of interlinked sites, acting together to constitute knowledge in and for the Commission. In the case of the Commission, fieldwork took place in both the office and the field (be that at the base of a monument or in the back of a van). Laterally, such work would also take place in the archive. These sites were the sites where the Commission brought its practices, and knowledge, together. Isolated sites of fieldwork become sites where the Commission’s knowledge was produced through inscriptions and circulating references. The adoption of new technology would allow those at the Commission to make links between what may have seemed quite disparate field sites.<sup>6</sup>

Notwithstanding its historical chronology, this thesis is, first and foremost, a geographical exploration of the Commission’s practices and defining purpose. Further, it is an examination of an institution, which, broadly conceived, had its foundations in fieldwork and thus its history provides an empirical lens through which to explore how the boundaries of fieldwork might themselves be defined. The Commission was rooted in fieldwork; the production of the national inventory was inconceivable

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<sup>4</sup> J. Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge: Constructivism and the History of Science*, London, 2005, 101.

<sup>5</sup> B. Latour, *Pandora’s Hope, Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Cambridge, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*.

without work being undertaken in the field. However, beyond operating within the field of antiquarianism and archaeology, it was never clear exactly how the site of fieldwork was constituted or where. The epistemic limits to the Commission's field of concern might only be effectively bounded by the publication of its inventory and its subsequent dissolution in the formation of Historic Environment Scotland.

More broadly, however, my thesis has been informed by the assertion that scientific knowledge 'is and always has been locally produced; constructed, contested, negotiated and consumed by a group of interested parties across a complex array of sites'.<sup>7</sup> Following the claims made by Ophir and Shapin in 1991, historians and historical geographers of science have contested that knowledge has undeniably local features.<sup>8</sup> We cannot ignore the local processes that shape and make knowledge. The geography of science allows us to locate the sites of knowledge making and consider the effect of place upon the construction of science. The spatial turn, and a focus on the geography of knowledge, has also shed light on the mobility of knowledge; that is how does knowledge made at one site move between sites. We might think of Livingstone, Kohler, Shapin and Latour here, but as Naylor and Finnegan have shown, the museum and local societies were just as important as traditional field sites and laboratories. Such sites are, what Livingstone describes as, 'venues of science'.<sup>9</sup> Yet, while individual sites of knowledge production feature prominently, sites that serve as hosts for a number of different processes and spaces of knowledge production appear less frequently. The Commission is of particular note in this regard. It was a host site for a variety of different practices that undertook fieldwork across disparate field sites. The Commission practised fieldwork within the walls of the institution and outside in the field that was Scotland.

The Commission did not exist in isolation, nor did it create insulated sites of fieldwork production. The Commission was a place of interaction, of discussion, a place for knowledge making rooted in wider networks of antiquarian pursuit throughout Scotland – in the present, and by virtue of its purpose, in the past. Exploring the history of the Commission's fieldwork and the geographical implications of its field and office-based work has meant examining the social relationships that existed on local scales within the Commission, and on regional and national scales with other individuals, societies, and institutions. There is also a connecting narrative thread that traces the role of government and the political landscape which affected the ways in which the Commission conducted the production of the national inventory of Scotland. What has been revealed as a geography of antiquarian, and later archaeological, knowledge production was also a geography of identity formation, of reception, and of reputation, and of institutional authority. Other geographies have had central roles: geographies of rescue, of fieldwork,

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<sup>7</sup> S. Naylor, Historical geographies of science: places, contexts, cartographies, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 38 (2005) 1-12, 6.

<sup>8</sup> A. Ophir, S. Shapin, The place of knowledge: a methodological survey, *Science in Context* 4 (1991), 3-21.

<sup>9</sup> D. Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge*, University Press Chicago, Chicago, 2003.



of collection, and of records, recording, and administration. Thinking geographically about the Commission's work has disclosed both the practices and the places which co-constituted the institution.

This historical geography of the Commission has, therefore, identified the organisation as itself a site whose purpose was fieldwork. But, the Commission was also a site of practice where the national inventory of Scotland was produced. This dual distinction is of particular importance in considering how we might examine the various sites of knowledge production which constituted the inventory. Here I want to complicate understandings of fieldwork that base their analysis upon a distinction between field spaces "in here" versus "out there". I offer an alternative conceptualising of the field, grounded in the empirical material presented in the previous chapters, as ubiquitous. Such a claim reframes how we, as geographers, interact with and study those sites where knowledge is made through what we understand to be fieldwork. Through an appreciation of the ubiquity of the field, an account of the day-to-day practices of the Commission's work can reveal a more nuanced picture of work done across and between various 'fields' at once. Recognising the geographical ubiquity of the work of the Commission stresses that the production of the inventory was not tied to a single site of practice nor dictated by a single spatially bound form of fieldwork.

### **9.3 FINDING FOUNDATION IN ANTIQUARIAN ENDEAVOUR**

I have, thus far, reflected on the conceptual claims of this thesis. Here, and in the following sections, I will now attend to the legacy of the Commission and consider, in retrospect, the particularities of organisation. What I have done throughout this thesis is to narrate in places the small stories, hitherto, unseen or overlooked by previous histories of the Commission. Thus, what I present is not only my 'history' of the Commission as much as an alternative examination, shedding light on the ordinary and extraordinary of one of Scotland's foremost heritage institutions. I begin by considering the links between the Commission's project, nation, and identity.

The Commission was part of a lineage of antiquarian endeavour which I have traced here to the work of William Camden, Timothy Pont, Robert Sibbald, Martin Martin, William Roy, William Stukeley, Richard Gough, and John Sinclair among others. Their work foreshadows that of the Commission. Curle undertook the first survey in much the same way that Sibbald and Sinclair respectively undertook the publication of *Scotia Illustrata* (1684) and *the Statistical Account of Scotland* (1791-1799). Curle, and, later, Mackenzie and Graham, would have to tackle the question of what constituted trusted knowledge in the same way that Martin did (by placing trust in informed locals). Stukeley and Gough represent the development of antiquarianism as it moved toward knowledge derived from fieldwork rather than from speculative theory. The Commission furthered the cause of Scottish antiquarianism in a manner similar to Stukeley and Gough's contributions to British antiquarianism. Such antiquarian endeavours did little,

however, to address fears of loss of monuments and certainly did not move towards a national listing of monuments. Sir John Lubbock's determination to realise the Ancient Monuments Act 1882 laid the foundation for the idea of an inventory, and while it was ultimately unsuccessful in all its intended goals (the Act itself lacking in legal provision to offer any real protection for monuments), it was a first step. The Act represented a recognition among antiquarians and other interested parties that something had to be done for the sake of the UK's ancient monuments for which the threat of loss was manifest. Gerard Baldwin Brown, whose contribution to the Commission, antiquarianism, and conservation has hitherto gone largely unnoticed by historians was perhaps the most important figure in establishing the Commission and the idea of an inventory.<sup>10</sup> Brown should, in every way, be seen as the father of the Commission.

Brown's *Care of Ancient Monuments* (1905) was the seminal text for the Commission. Brown's work laid down what a commission on ancient monuments might look like and placed the failings of British antiquarianism into context in relation to its European counterparts, while also providing practical advice on how one might go about producing an inventory. Such was the influence of this book that he was appointed a Commissioner and his work formed the basis for the 'procedures' that would guide the Commission in fulfilling the national inventory and the Royal Warrant.

The inventory – and its constitutive processes – was always for and of the nation. Born out of the concerns of Scottish antiquarians, and building on the foundations provided by the Ancient Monuments Act 1882, the national inventory was always seen as a resource for Scotland. This is not in itself surprising given that the Scottish Commission was the first of three, the English and Welsh Commissions following shortly after the establishment of the Scottish Commission in 1908. This sense of national purpose never left the Commission. The Commission's identity was constant, albeit differently expressed throughout its history. Curle advised the secretaries of the English and Welsh Commissions as to how they might go about their work, asserting the Scottish Commission's authority over the practice of doing an inventory. Graham stood his ground against the will of the government to ensure that Vere Gordon Childe was appointed, while undertaking rescue work on the behalf of the English Commission, such was the success of his emergency survey. Steer would later pioneer the Marginal Land Survey and the development of rescue work. Tied to all this was the adoption of aerial photography, the successes of Geoffrey Quick in standard stills photography and, finally, Steer's staunch defence of the potential for a centralised archive and the need for the Scottish Commission to retain access to its own records, precisely because they were the records of the Scottish Commission. All these episodes helped shape the Commission an identity constructed around the notion that it was the Scottish Commission.

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<sup>10</sup> See, M. Cooper, Gerard Baldwin Brown, Edinburgh, and the care of ancient monuments, *The Historic Environment* 4(2) (2013) 156-77.

Yet, the Commission never completed the inventory as either Brown or the Royal Warrant had envisaged. Royal Commissions were not intended to be permanent: they were created to investigate a particular problem, complete the task, and be dissolved. This was the road map for the Commission: completion would lead to cessation. Yet its purpose could never be complete due to the very nature of the task set by the Commissioners whose operating procedures continually conspired to re-invent what the Commission was. The purpose of the constant re-definition of the Commission's task, not least in light of rescue archaeology, was to ensure the longevity of the organisation. It was only the eventual dissolution of the Commission in October 2015 which in effect would see the creation of a permanent boundary to its work. Only then was the field of the Commission's purpose constrained.

#### **9.4 FIELDWORK: AT WORK IN OFFICE AND THE OUTDOORS**

In examining the Commission's fieldwork practices and the places where it produced knowledge, I have addressed how the sites of field, office, and archive, interacted. Having explored these practices, I have then sought to define fieldwork that takes place not so much in one of these sites, but across all of them. I have traced the Commission's fieldwork from 1908 and the first survey in Berwickshire, through to the final stages of the Argyll inventory, concluding my consideration of fieldwork with the emergence of *Canmore*.

The Commission's fieldwork practices began with Curle. Although he was a pioneer and an innovator, Curle was also a borrower of existing established practices. Curle began his fieldwork in 1908 with almost no prior guidance. He had only the Royal Warrant and an eight-point guide roughly drawn up from the work of Brown to guide him. 'Inventorizing', a term of Brown's making, was a relatively new concept as envisaged by the Commission.<sup>11</sup> But the technique was similar to that of Sibbald, Martin, and Sinclair. Such was the similarity that the work carried out by these individuals might now, in hindsight, be considered inventorizing. This fact, however, does not downplay Curle's importance. He innovated with respect to fieldwork practices that went beyond simply documenting the place of site. These practices became the foundation for all future inventories. During the survey of Berwickshire (1908) and Sutherland (1909-11), Curle established the ethos of the Commission, his status forever cemented in the Commission in what was later referred to as 'the heroic days of fieldwork'.<sup>12</sup> Between 1908 and 1913, Curle effectively was the Commission, the personal embodiment of the organisation's work.

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<sup>11</sup> G. Brown, *The Care of Ancient Monuments*, Edinburgh, 1905.

<sup>12</sup> J. Dunbar, The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: the first 80 years, *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* 36 (1992) 13-77, 3.

The fieldwork practices that Curle adopted and developed during the first surveys of the Commission established an ethos which arguably drove the work of the Commission until WWII. From the moment that Curle began the survey of Berwickshire, he initiated practices that would ensure links between indoor and outdoor practice which would become a permanent fixture in the Commission's procedure. Curle's fieldwork practice, and that which would become the Commission's practice, was facilitated through the close functioning of work that took place in the field and the office (and laterally the archive). Here the work of the field that was antiquarianism and which would become archaeological research and rescue took place in all of these sites at once, that is, the 'field-work' of the Commission was not always bound to a single place.<sup>13</sup> The work of the Commission occurred across a variety of places all at once. It was a process of simultaneous production. This is not to suggest that practitioners of fieldwork entered the field without prior preparation or that fieldwork took place without work away from field sites. Instead, I argue that for the Commission, office and field, were mutually constituted epistemic spaces.<sup>14</sup> As Golinski has noted 'the local setting where scientific knowledge originates is crucial, but the wider realm beyond its walls can also be viewed as an arena in which knowledge is constructed'.<sup>15</sup> The local context was the Commission, the site where the inventory was eventually produced. But it was in the epistemic 'arena [...] beyond [the physical] walls' of the Commission where the objects of the organisation's knowledge, which permitted the publication of the inventory, were produced. Thus, for Golinski it is the 'standardization of techniques, instruments, materials, and skills' combined with the 'the effect of combined material, social, and discursive "technologies"' that facilitated the production of knowledge within this arena.<sup>16</sup> Standardisation was achieved in the drawing and field recording practices of the Commission. New instruments, like aerial photography, and the skills to read the data generated by these instruments all worked together to produce the knowledge of Scotland's past within the Commission's 'arena'.

Between 1908 and 1982 what defined where the office and field lay became increasingly difficult to establish. The field was in constant production and appeared in situ whenever, and wherever, the Commission was producing the knowledge that constituted the national inventory of Scotland. The fieldwork that produced the inventory was published under the auspices of having been produced in the field "out there" as the consequence of a physical inspection. Yet, this 'inspection' was at different times and in different places, produced in the office, in a field in Argyll or Sutherland and in the back of the Commission's Land Rover or Commer van. The Commission produced the national inventory of Scotland in different intellectual ways and in a variety of linked spaces, all of which constituted an 'inspection' even if it was not, necessarily, physical.

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<sup>13</sup> Driver, Editorial: field-work in geography.

<sup>14</sup> Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 101.

<sup>15</sup> Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 37.

<sup>16</sup> Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 37.

Aerial photography proved a significant impetus to change in the Commission's practices of fieldwork and, consequently, where we might place those practices. The adoption of aerial photography reflected an increase in funding and parallel changes in antiquarian work elsewhere. Such changes were driven by a Commission which sought greater academic rigour, an attentiveness to standardisation and concern that the inventory should be used not only as a reference resource, but also as an analytical tool. These changes echoed a steady move away from work that could be classified as antiquarian in nature and, instead, towards a more strictly archaeological approach. This itself was indicative of the changing approach and background of members of staff and of the Commissioners. By the 1960s the old guard among the Commissioners was retiring, replaced with appointments from the academic cohorts of archaeology. It brought about a new approach to the work of the Commission, one that was grounded in academic scholarship rather than antiquarian theory. It was Stuart Piggott who most readily looked to push against what he saw as the 'postage stamp mentality of collecting' and to advocate for a more analytical approach to the work of the Commission.<sup>17</sup>

Yet despite the forcefulness of a new breed of Commissioner and staff, who were driven by archaeological rigour, it was new technologies, that facilitated the greatest change to fieldwork practice. Aerial photography and photography more generally, together with the increasing mobility afforded by the Commission's vehicles, shifted the Commission's in-the-field practices. It was, as I have argued, a process whereby technologies adopted in order to hasten the process of fieldwork (whilst also making the practice of survey more efficient) yet furthered the relationship between field and office. Technology held the power to collapse the field "out there" into the office. Aerial photography, for example, could be used as another tool of planning and preparation, one which could permit significant gains in knowledge in the field. But it was not just a method of planning, rather it was itself a form of fieldwork, part of a series of integrated processes carried out in both the office and the field. We might also consider photography and the ability to instantly capture still images of significant historic and ancient sites in a similar manner. In both examples, the effect of these technologies was twofold: the facilitation of greater analytical interrogation, and the bringing of field into office by collapsing an entire field space into a series of easily handled aerial photographs capable of being passed between staff members, inscribed upon, and used as instruments of fieldwork.

The office had, from the days of Curle, functioned as a site with which the field interacted. Before even beginning the physical survey of Berwickshire, the first step taken by Curle was to bring the field into the office, to control the site of fieldwork through maps.<sup>18</sup> Curle's dutiful preparations with map and pencil, plotted and tracked out a route through the counties that he would survey. The pencil line was an inscribed rehearsal of steps that would be taken during the field season. It was an imaginary of what

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<sup>17</sup> Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15. The phrase was used by Stuart Piggott in conversation with then draughtsman Ian Scott.

<sup>18</sup> Latour, *Pandora's Hope*.

he might find and what might be recorded. The field was brought into the office, and office moved, albeit briefly, into the field. Jointly, in these twin places, the work of the Commission – the field that was, and would become, Scottish antiquarianism – was being shaped. With the adoption of aerial photography following WWII, the office, as a site of preparation, had renewed purpose. Not only could staff visually inspect the landscape they were to document before even leaving for the field, but they could also begin to conduct rudimentary fieldwork. Sites, and the practices of recording, could be interacted with and undertaken in the office. Here the field, out there, was both mapped and collapsed, into the office. Technology served to collapse the field into something manageable, something that could be interacted with in the office. Once the field had been brought into the office through the aerial photograph, the office could become the site of fieldwork, not just preparation.

By collapsing the field, out there, into the office, a greater analytical intensity could be brought to bear upon the site in question. In the office, by making use of photographs, drawings and sketches, the field could be constructed through a series of ‘representations’ which, if manipulated and reorganised, permitted analysis in new ways.<sup>19</sup> Such pursuits of knowledge, based on reinterpreting outdoor-field-made-knowledge required the ‘travel and transportation of representational artefacts back from the field setting’, in this example, photographs, drawings and notes. Thus, the office could, as Golinski continues, bring ‘into proximity objects that are initially distant from one another’ and in doing so manipulate them in a manner which creates new understandings.<sup>20</sup> The credibility of the office permits the opportunity to study something, in this case a site, in great analytical detail where the pressures of time, weather, or outside interaction, are not present to interfere. Here, in the site that was the office, the practice of fieldwork was enhanced through the credibility lent to such work by being removed from the variability of an outdoor field site. The use of the aerial photograph allowed for a sustained attention to the object in question in a manner which, prior to the adoption of aerial photography, was impossible to achieve without physically being at the site. Moreover, aerial photography could reveal sites simply not visible when viewed from the ground. This was equally true for the use of stills photography and the use of flash photography as a form of visualisation that allowed the Commission’s staff to see monuments in new ways. The analysis of the object could be attended to with greater intensity for a prolonged period of time. It had been frozen in time, frozen in the field, but relocated in the office for further fieldwork to be undertaken. For Gieryn, ‘field scientists often immerse themselves in a site for long periods of time, developing embodied ways of feeling, seeing, and understanding – that become analogs to the cold precise instruments of the lab’.<sup>21</sup> By bringing the field into the office, the

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<sup>19</sup> Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 98. See also, Latour, *Pandora’s Hope*, 36.

<sup>20</sup> Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 101.

<sup>21</sup> T. Gieryn, City as truth-spot: laboratories and field-sites in Urban Studies, *Social Studies of Science* 63(1) (2006) 5-38, 6

Commission was able to achieve this immersion. Laterally, the archive would permit the opportunity to revisit the field through the records of both fieldwork and field sites.

But, the relationship between office and field was not as simple as the field being collapsed into the office. The reverse also held. The adoption of specially equipped vehicles created the opportunity for the Commission to bring the office into the field. Such were the modifications undertaken to these vehicles, particularly the trio of Commer vans acquired in the 1960s and 1970, that they might be considered instruments of fieldwork themselves. Significantly, they permitted the quick and efficient movement of inscriptions from field to office while allowing the opportunity for limited analysis of such inscriptions before they had left the field outdoors. By constituting the office in the vehicle, and by the very presence of that vehicle in the field outdoors, the Commission was able to undertake both office-based and field-based fieldwork at once. These vehicles acted as mobile offices in the field, moving both through the field, while permitting in situ analysis of field sites. The vans allowed staff members to analyse aerial photographs, maps, drawing and other information as an in-field office. Office-based preparations were no longer bound to the office in much the same way that analysis of aerial photographs, before entering the field, ensured that fieldwork was no longer bound only to the field. But, to suggest that fieldwork was either done “out there” or “in here” is to over simplify the work of the Commission. Rather I return here to an adaption of an earlier statement: fieldwork did not take place in one site, but in and between all of them. It was only when these sites of fieldwork were brought into union as a single site of epistemic practice that the knowledge of the national inventory of Scotland was produced.

The Commission’s vehicles also served as a link forward to rescue archaeology and its adoption by the Commission. In this context, not only were the vans used as mobile offices, but they were also, as I have alluded to, mobile archives. They served to ensure the safe depository of photographs, drawings, sketches and notes before they could be stored permanently in the Commission’s archive. These vehicles facilitated the movement of inscriptions from field to the fixed office. While any inscriptions from the field could be analysed while the van was in situ, what it really served to do was ensure the safe passage of the inscription to the analytical depth and, almost, assured credibility afforded by the office. Moving from site to site, the recordings made by staff, and the materials taken into the field, were safely stored in the Commission’s Commer vans.

## **9.5 RESCUE FOR THE NATION**

From its inception the national inventory was a response to the threat of loss. Initially, the threat of loss had been twofold; firstly, damage and destruction being caused wilfully, or otherwise, by landlords who had little interest or care for monuments that happened to be on their grounds; and secondly from as yet

unknown sources of destruction (this could be monuments, for example cairns, being destroyed for road materials, or being damaged by uninformed members of the public who were not aware of the antiquarian significance of sites that they happened to stumble across). Loss could, therefore, be the consequence of wilful destruction or wilful ignorance. Defining loss also defined the need for the Commission: there was, after all, no need for the organisation to exist had there not been the requirement to respond to the threat of loss. Following the conclusion of the national inventory programme in 1992, it was necessary that the Commission continue to define potential threats to monuments to justify the continued existence of the organisation.

Antiquarians feared the potential loss of monuments throughout Scotland, and so a record of them was necessary. It was one thing to lose a monument, it was another to lose a monument of which there was no record. The inventory represented an implicit form of rescue. Indeed, staff would not have referred to their work as 'rescue'; they were simply surveying and listing. While there may have been an underlying moral incentive to rescue sites out of a sense of duty to protect Scotland's national heritage, to the established practice of antiquarianism and to the emergent field of archaeology, the Commission did not, as originally intended, exist to actively rescue sites from threat of damage or loss. It existed only to record those remaining sites that could be physically located and recorded.

Yet, rescue as an explicit act to locate and save monuments would become a necessity for the Commission, more particularly because the Commission wanted it to be so. Rescue gave reason for the continued existence of the Commission. The Commission, therefore, had a vested interest in seeking to demonstrate that rescue was something that was necessary and should be attended to. Successive Secretaries of the Commission had to manifest the threat of loss to ensure the organisation continued to exist, particularly following the conclusion of the national inventory programme. The object of the Commission's concern was bounded by, in the first instance, by the Royal Warrant and then by the potential dissolution of the organisation following the completion of the inventory. By defining a threat and identifying sites that required rescuing, the Commission was able to postpone its dissolution beyond the completion of the inventory in 1992.

The potential threat of damage from bombing during WWII presented a real threat to historic sites throughout Scotland. Under Graham, the Commission would undertake an emergency survey of historic sites of interest throughout Scotland, and later, at the request of the English Commission, in northern England. It was the first time that the Commission was explicitly engaged in rescue. Staff in the field actively and purposefully sought out sites to be 'rescued' from a threat rather than simply recording them, as the production of the inventory required. More significantly, rescue would set in motion a series of changes that redefined both the nature of the Commission itself and the way in which fieldwork was undertaken. The pursuit of rescue can be associated with the adoption of the SNBR in 1966, as well as the development of aerial photography. It led to new ways of archiving material and new systems of



record management, ultimately contributing to the establishment of the *Canmore* database. Rescue (defined both as a practice and an ideal) is, then, perhaps the most important narrative thread in the history of the Commission. Rescue fundamentally renewed the purpose of the Commission and ushered in the new fieldwork technologies already discussed.

Adoption of rescue was, however, as much about saving monuments from loss as it was about saving the Commission from redundancy. Rescue justified the existence of the organisation: it ‘rescued’ the Commission from being shut down upon completion of the national inventory. There was, therefore, a vested interest in pursuing rescue, justifying it as a paradigm that the Commission should adopt and follow, and continually highlighting potential threats to which rescue could respond. Identifiable threats need not necessarily have materialised; they only had to seem real enough in order for the Commission’s desire to carry out rescue in response to be justifiable. But rescue was not restricted to potentially at threat monuments in the field. The Commission also ‘rescued’ other organisations (or at least their staff, expertise and knowledge) in order to further strengthen its own position and continue to protect its existence. Some of these mergers were brought to them, the SNBR for example. Others represented conscious decisions to absorb another organisation (the Ordnance Survey’s Archaeology branch in Scotland). Outwardly such absorption looked to be a move to protect the wider Scottish heritage sector, but it did just as much to protect the Commission’s existence. Rescue, therefore, rescued the Commission.

Graham’s emergency survey, assisted by Childe, laid the foundations for what would come following the end of WWII. Graham had shown that it was possible for the Commission to undertake a rescue survey (although it should be noted that the emergency survey was the only work undertaken by the Commission during WWII). Steer and his Marginal Land Survey would show that it was possible for rescue to become just as important a task as the county-by-county inventory. Moreover, his approach afforded new opportunities, changing the geography of how the Commission went about its work, in office and field. Aerial photography proved key in shaping the new practices by which the Commission produced the inventory. The role that aerial photography played in altering the ways in which the Commission undertook fieldwork has already been discussed, but it is worth noting that this was tied explicitly to the needs of rescue. Indeed, it was Steer’s Marginal Land Survey which effectively validated the pursuit of rescue through aerial photography.

From the outset of the first survey in Berwickshire, it was intended that the Commission’s fieldwork would appear in the inventory. That was the final product of the work undertaken in field and office, and, once the record was stored securely on the printed page, the material that had made the production of that record possible was then surplus to requirement. The inventory was the final product; everything prior was done to support the final publication. Field notes had purpose once they were included in the inventory and, more importantly, made secure within the record constituted by the inventory

publication. The sites that the Commission ‘rescued’ had an altogether less certain fate. Unless they happened to be part of a soon-to-be completed inventory then there was no system in place to secure their record. Overtime, the Commission, aided by the merger with the SNBR, would put in place new forms of record management that would secure the sites surveyed by rescue. This change in practice was a direct consequence of the need to have a way of safely storing the record of documented sites. The pursuit of rescue is the link between fieldwork and *Canmore*. It was the adoption of the rescue paradigm that brought the technological developments (aerial photography for example) and the change in practice (a move away from inventorization) to the Commission, and it was these developments that enriched and linked the organisation’s traditional fieldwork and *Canmore*, as a new ‘arena’ of knowledge production.<sup>22</sup>

The question of what happened to these records was explored in the final empirical chapter of this thesis, where I looked at recording processes as ones of record management, archiving and documenting that created records of sites. In the event of a site’s destruction, there would remain a recorded reference to it. *Canmore* was a product both of the inventory and of rescue projects. *Canmore* (and the development of a database system for maintaining the records of the Commission) draws together the threads of the Commission’s constitutive practices that have been the subject of study here. *Canmore* represented the final form of the inventory.

## **9.6 CANMORE: AN INVENTORY FOR THE FUTURE**

*Canmore* represents the field state assumed by the monument’s record created by the Commission between 1908 and 2015. It was – and is – a database that finally offered the opportunity to be what the original Commissioners, without the benefit of technological advance, sought the first inventories to be – as complete as possible. With *Canmore*, the Commission had the ability to maintain a database that was as complete as possible whilst also being up-dateable. It was a national inventory open and accessible to anyone who sought to make use of it, But *Canmore* also changed the nature of the material that the Commission produced. It repurposed the national inventory as an analytical information tool, one which could be easily used for comparisons to be made. In many ways this was a reflection of the more academic and rigorous Commission that Graham and Steer had looked to create. Certainly, it responded to the call for academic reflection that Piggott sought during the 1960s.<sup>23</sup> Rather than simply being a list, following what Piggott labelled the ‘postage stamp mentality’, *Canmore* was more than

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<sup>22</sup> Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 37.

<sup>23</sup> See Interview conversation with Ian Scott, 1/5/15.

just an inventory; it was an approximation of the field, a site of intense analytical scrutiny and a site of fieldwork.

*Canmore* served as the access point to the Commission's archive, the most visible point of entry to the records stored within an archive that represents the entirety of the Commission's project. The archive, and by extension *Canmore*, is a record not only of fieldwork, but also of the field. What is stored in the archive tells of the Commission's fieldwork, but also of the field that the organisation recorded and operated within. It is a record not only of the individual sites compiled within the inventory, but also of how the inventory was produced. As this thesis has discussed, the archive has served as a site of fieldwork for my own research, but it also existed as one of the Commission's contemporary sites of fieldwork in the production of its inventory. Like the field outdoors and the office indoors, the archive became another field site.

Even for those working within the Commission today, the archive serves as a valuable fieldwork resource either in answering unresolved archaeological questions or challenging established assumptions. I recall a conversation with a fellow doctoral student working in collaboration with the Commission. In this case he was investigating the classifications used to define Scotland's various castles and happened upon a particular site where the conventional understanding of an archaeological site at Auchencass, near Moffat in the Scottish Borders, did not fit with the existing drawings and sketches of it. A quick reference to *Canmore* revealed that the site had originally been surveyed on 12 May 1912 by Curle. All subsequent understanding of it had been based on an interpretation of his fieldwork. For the sake of clarity, Curle's original field notes, and journal entries, were requested from the archive. It transpired that the assumptions made of this site had been based upon a misunderstanding of Curle's field notes. Somewhere in the timeline of the record of this site there had been a disconnect between the work of Curle and the established understanding of the site itself. The archive served here as an approximation of the field, as Curle had interacted with it in 1912, allowing new research to be conducted, drawing on the work of Curle, some 105 years later. Not only was the site recorded, but also the processes which came to make that record, such that new fieldwork could be carried out within the field site of the archive. Within the archive the field was 'frozen'. Records of sites from their initial survey to the present day offer a cross section of the records themselves, but also the practices that established the record (Fig 9.1). Thus, future fieldwork can be carried out, or initiated from material held within the archive. The archive, as a fieldwork resource, has become a site of work-in-the-field, and a site of new analytical endeavour made possible through its recording of the field "out there".

## Habchester


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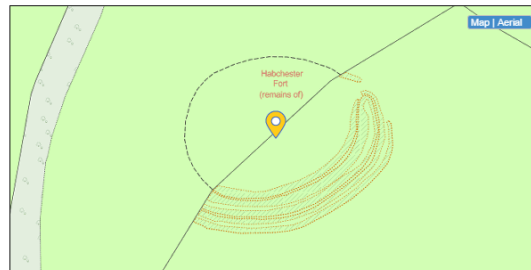
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## Fort (Period Unassigned)

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**Classification** Fort (Period Unassigned)  
**Alternative Name(s)** Bastleridge  
**Canmore ID** 60069  
**Site Number** NT95NW 4  
**NGR** NT 9442 5881  
**Datum** OSGB36 - NGR  
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Event ID 724631

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Type Archaeology Notes

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NT95NW 4 9442 5881.

(NT 9444 5877). Habchester (NAT)

Hill Fort (NR.) (Remains of)

OS 6"map. (1957).

This oval fort measures 380' by 270' within two bold ramparts with external ditches. The NW sector has been ploughed away, but at the surviving entrance in the NE, the ramparts join round the head of the inner ditch. The NW sector of the defences is represented by the crest of a natural steep scarp, and it is probable that, in its original state, the fort would have been bounded on this side by only the inner rampart. Another feature is a quarry ditch at the inner foot of the remaining part of the inner rampart.

R W Feachem 1963; RCAHMS 1915, visited 1908.

A fort as described and planned.

Resurveyed at 1/2500.

Visited by OS (JFC) 24 November 1954 and (RD) 13 August 1970.

Listed.

RCAHMS 1980.

This oval fort is visible on vertical air photographs (106G/Scot/UK 15, 5265-5266, flown 15 April 1946 and OS 70 366, 140-141, flown 19 September 1970), which clearly show the ramparts with external ditches. The surviving remains of the NW sector are also just visible in the images from the spring and autumn.

Information from RCAHMS (DE), March 2006

## Related Site(s)



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Habchester  
 Fort (Period Unassigned)  
 Canmore ID 60069 |

Figure 9.1: The above images are taken from the Canmore page for Habchester Fort (as discussed in chapter six). Worthy of note here is the top image which has the basic details of the site, but provides links to further pages which tell the story of the site. This is the first stage in exploring the approximation of the field held by the archive. The second image is taken from the 'Archaeology Notes' for the site. Notably this also includes reference to all previous visits to the site, including Curle's 1908 survey. Any future work carried out at this site can easily recall when (or indeed if) a site has previously been recorded and by whom. Such knowledge can then help form the basis of new understandings, or form the foundation for future fieldwork. Source: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/60069/habchester> and <https://canmore.org.uk/event/724631>. Last Accessed 12/04/2017

The effect of *Canmore* was more significant than simply offering new ways of interacting with the materials produced by the Commission's fieldwork. *Canmore* changed the relationship between the field, office, and archive. It entered them into a dialogue that ensured that the records of sites were in a process of constant circulation between these three spaces of the Commission's work. These processes of production also altered the nature of the sites that had been recorded. They became more than sites or records, more than simply fieldwork locations for the Commission. The transition from site to record to archive changed how the Commission and the public interacted both with the records and the physical site. The materiality of the site had been altered. In the field a site was fixed, in situ. Within *Canmore*, however, difference was flattened, ensuring that the database served not only as a system of record management, but also as an analytical tool. Site records were to be made similar, becoming just another *Canmore* ID number, so that comparisons could be made between them. Within *Canmore* sites were not unique, simply part of a collection of sites, ordered and categorised according to their similarities.

What *Canmore* did achieve, however, was to secure the future of the past. Once the record had become a digital record within *Canmore*, the rescuing of the site was complete. Decades of work from the first inventory of 1908, and all the material that had been collated as part of the fieldwork process, was now part of the record, consigned to the digital record in *Canmore* that now re-sited recorded monuments within a digital space. For Bowker, 'only an open past can unlock the present and free the future'; *Canmore* achieved exactly that.<sup>24</sup> *Canmore* became both a record of fieldwork already undertaken and a site of future archaeological endeavour.

## 9.7 RESCUING GEOGRAPHIES OF 'FIELD(WORK)'

This historical geography of the Commission began, as noted, by focusing on the 'smaller stories' of the organisation, the everyday details of how the Commission undertook its work in the field and office. In following this approach I have revealed a different legacy of the Commission through attention to the ordinary as much as the extraordinary in its work. This conceptual focus drove my initial investigations of the Commission's history. I began, perhaps unsurprisingly, with Alexander Ormiston Curle. I have ended with a discussion of the Commission's digitised archive. Across all these stories, the core of this thesis has been a recognition that place, and more broadly geography, matters to the doing of antiquarian fieldwork and the construction of knowledge.

The history of the Commission is dominated by the sites where knowledge was made and the production of the inventory took place. It was an institution dominated by fieldwork, and it is with reference to the work undertaken by the Commission in the field that I examined the production of antiquarian, and

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<sup>24</sup> G. Bowker, *Memory Practices in the Sciences*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2008, 230.

later, archaeological knowledge. In particular, my interest here has been to explore the role of fieldwork, that is, work that took place nominally in the field, but was both “in here” and “out there” at once. The field is, as Outram notes, ‘pivotal in its union of spatial metaphor and epistemological assumptions’.<sup>25</sup> Yet it is possible to problematise the relationship between the sites that we take to constitute the field. For the Commission, it was a process of co-production between these sites. Material was being produced through processes which we might consider fieldwork in both the office and field in the same moment. Whether producing the inventory, or undertaking rescue work, a strictly binary approach to the Commission’s fieldwork does little other than mask the nuances of the ways in which it produced knowledge. Instead, I argue for an approach to understanding fieldwork, in the context of the Commission, that recognises the dispersed nature of its in-the-field knowledge production. Whether in the field outdoors, in the office, or in the archive, knowledge was being produced.

Each of these sites are ‘embedded in wider systems of meaning, authority, and identity’ ensuring that attention to the situatedness of science and the individual sites of practice is necessary to understand the processes which construct knowledge.<sup>26</sup> In this case, the credibility of fieldwork was linked to the authority of knowledge made away from the field. In the example of the Commission, the movement of fieldwork into the office space permitted analysis that was not possible in the field outdoors, in most cases due to time constraints. Yet, in doing so, the analytical potential of the office that could be brought to bear upon knowledge part-produced, achieved a higher level of analytical depth owing to the credibility afforded by the office. This was a credibility not necessarily found when analysing a monument or site in situ, rather, it required the movement of inscriptions to the authority offered by the office. In the office, knowledge could be debated, and interacted with, by the full complement of the Commission’s field staff – not merely those who had originally recorded a site in the field. Thus the office offered what Vetter describes as ‘an intensity and regularity of interaction among a critical mass’ of staff members.<sup>27</sup> Drawing here on Outram, it was possible for the Commission to make ‘correct assessment’ of sites recorded in the office due to it being ‘a highly controlled orderly environment that screened out the inessential or the background detail’ whilst permitting discussion between those who had, and had not, physically inspected the site.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, having encountered such analysis, office produced knowledge is used as the model from which the legitimacy of field knowledge can be verified. Yet work that was carried out in the office can be, and was, as I have argued here, part of fieldwork. Geographers should not be surprised at the labelling of work that does not take place out in the field as fieldwork.

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<sup>25</sup> D. Outram, *New Spaces in Natural History*. In N. Jardine, J.A. Secord, E.C. Spary (eds) *Cultures of Natural History*, Cambridge, 1996, 249-265, 259.

<sup>26</sup> C.W.J. Withers, D. Livingstone, Thinking geographically about nineteenth-century science, 5.

<sup>27</sup> J. Vetter, Labs in the field? Rocky Mountain biological stations in the early twentieth century, *Journal of the History of Biology* 45(4) (2012) 587-611, 607.

<sup>28</sup> Outram, *New Spaces in Natural History*, 263.

Despite this, there seems to be a lack of dialogue between sites of fieldwork when they do not conform to the “in here” “out there” model. My claim here is that this dialogue should exist and should focus not only on where science is made, but on how the sites where knowledge is produced operate in collaboration with one another. Kohler and Vetter note that, ‘once the “view from nowhere” and then the “view from everywhere,” science may come to be the view from somewhere [...] all field is somewhere’.<sup>29</sup> I have sought to extend claims to science’s situatedness, to consider the work done between these different sites of knowledge production. There is a ubiquity to fieldwork that geographers should be alert to. Attention paid solely to atomised geographical sites risks ignoring the fieldwork done across and between them. The sites where the Commission practiced antiquarianism, and later archaeology, are better understood as ‘hybrid places where lab and field overlapped’.<sup>30</sup> The sites of office, historical monument or archive can be considered together in terms of a unified ‘epistemic space’ of fieldwork that was not bounded as such. These were field sites that were everywhere.

Exactly how this ubiquity comes to be is not altogether clear. For Greenhough simply considering fieldwork ‘raises questions about the very acts of boundary-work which define our laboratories and spaces in which we study science’.<sup>31</sup> She notes that even if boundaries are applied, what constitutes fieldwork (or field-based science) can leak across these artificial divisions.<sup>32</sup> Recognising this, Greenhough suggests that the field (site) is ‘actively constructed through the practices and associations made through [...] the research of the scientist we seek to study’.<sup>33</sup> That is, it is through practising and performing these practices in different sites that ‘the field’ comes into being. Rather than seeking to explain away the occasions where field sites leak across assumed boundaries we should recognise that this is how sites of fieldwork are formed. In considering the Commission’s fieldwork practices, I have argued that it was the adoption of new innovations and technologies that facilitated the bringing together of field, office and archive as the space of indoor and outdoor fieldwork. For Kohler and Vetter new technologies, which are remote to the field itself (we might think of aerial photography) have the potential to ‘fundamentally’ change how we define field and the work that takes place there.<sup>34</sup> Sites of practice that once appeared isolated, became sites of co-constitution as technology allowed fieldwork to be undertaken wherever staff happened to be, even if they were remote from the monument being recorded. Here boundaries were not clear, yet the product of this fieldwork was. Wherever, and however, the Commission undertook its fieldwork, new innovations continued to serve the same

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<sup>29</sup> R. Kohler, J. Vetter, *The Field*. In B. Lightman (ed) *A Companion to the History of Science*, New Jersey, 2016, 282-295, 290.

<sup>30</sup> Vetter, *Labs in the field?*, 609 and Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 101.

<sup>31</sup> B. Greenhough, *Tales of an island-laboratory: defining the field in geography and science studies*, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 31(2) (2006), 224-237, 234.

<sup>32</sup> Greenhough, *Tales of an island-laboratory*, 235.

<sup>33</sup> Greenhough, *Tales of an island-laboratory*, 234.

<sup>34</sup> Kohler and Vetter, *The Field*, 289.

function as Curle's techniques had done in 1908; the pursuit of completeness, and the assurance of accuracy and authority.

For Bond 'to produce the most useful knowledge' it is necessary to be 'guided'.<sup>35</sup> The office and field work together to constitute knowledge, the office guiding the field as much as the field guides the office. These were integrated sites of fieldwork, and the most useful knowledge was produced only when fieldwork undertaken in *both* contributed to the field(work). Drawing together insights from previous chapters, this concluding discussion has argued that the production of fieldwork takes place both in and between office, field, and archive. For the Commission, the field was to be found in a Commer van as much as in the personal studies of staff members or institutional based rooms. The Commission ultimately established its legitimacy by undertaking a place-based inventorization of Scotland's ancient and historical monuments. As I have argued, however, attention to such practices fundamentally challenge the distinction between 'the office' and 'the field'. "Postage stamp mentality" or not, the Commission undertook an inventorization of the nation made possible only through the ubiquity of its fieldwork practices. Whether conducting an inventory survey, or a rescue project, the Commission's field was always at hand.

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<sup>35</sup> Bond, Enlightenment geography in the study, 74.



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MS33 – A.O. Curle Diary Personal Diary

MS36 – RCAHMS Emergency Survey

MS36/2 – Notes on Berwickshire

MS36/7 – Notes on Sutherland

MS36/9 – Notes on Sutherland

MS36/24 – A.G. Collection

MS36/62 – Field Notebook of J.G. Callander

MS36/63 – Field Notebook of J.G. Callander

MS36/64 – Field Notebook of J.G. Callander

MS36/65 – Field Notebook of J.G. Callander

MS36/66 – Field Notebook of J.G. Callander

MS68/1-2 – Records relating to the formation of the National Buildings Records

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<sup>1</sup> I have arranged the material presented here by archive, and then (where applicable) by store within that archive. Note: archival references were correct at time of collection/research.

MS7401/15-29 – Angus Graham Materials

MS7402/4 – Angus Graham Personal Recollections

*Accessioned Material*

Unit ID 22090 – Commission Minutes 1952 - 1992

*Print Room*

Commission Minute Books 1908-1952

*Uncatalogued Material*

JK St Joseph Files

K.A. Steer's Personal Recollections

Correspondence Files (various) 1908-1959

*Business Affairs Store*

102/3 – Programme of Work

102/4 – Progress Reports and Inventory Progress Reports

103/5 – Reviews

103/9 – Field Survey of Monuments (Forestry Commission Correspondence 1977-8)

109/3 – Aerial Photographs – General and CUCAP

110/3/1/C – Mr Dunbar's Inventory Notes and Research Papers

110/3/2 – General (Lorn)

110/9 – Ancient Mons. Board (various)

110/12/1 – Ancient Mons. Board (various)

110/19/6 – Wilderness Plantation Excavations

110/28 – Notes on Roxburghshire

110/30/3/13 – Stirling Heads Reviews

110/30/9 – Stirlingshire

111/1 – General, Archaeologists, Archaeology

111/1/G – Rescue Scholarship

112/1 – General

112/3/1 – General and Correspondence Arising from Meetings

112/3/4 – Committee for Research Archaeology (includes Field Survey Sub-Committee)

### **National Archives Kew**

CSC 6/62/32 – Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments (Scotland) Senior  
Photographer

KV 2/2148 – Vere Gordon Childe: Australian. A Left-wing peace campaigner since at least 1917...

OS 1/1544 – Ordnance Survey Archaeology Advisory Committee

OS 3/58 – Report on air reconnaissance of Roman Scotland by O.G.S. Crawford, Archaeology Officer

OS 45/103 – Archaeology Division instructions

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## APPENDIX I

### THE SECRETARIES AND KEY STAFF MEMBERS

I have included a timeline of the Commission Secretaries between 1908 and 1992 and other members of staff, Chairmen, and Commissioners who appear throughout the thesis and are discussed in relevant chapters: I have chosen to provide biographies for each Secretary, given their importance to the institution's development.

### SECRETARIES

<b>COMMISSION SECRETARIES 1908-1992</b>	
Alexander Ormiston Curle	1908-1913
William Mackay Mackenzie	1913-1935
Angus Graham	1935-1957
Kenneth Steer	1957-1975
John Dunbar	1975-1992

The Commission was structured as follows: overseeing the Commission was its chairman, intended to be a member of the landed gentry. The selection of Herbert Maxwell as the first Chairman of the Commission was attributed to his cooperation with the provisions of the Ancient Monuments Act 1882: he was one of only a handful of landowners willing handover monuments to the protection of the state. Beneath the Chairman sat the Commissioners. They acted to advise on and assist the work of the Commission. Usually they were leading experts in the fields of antiquarianism, archaeology and architecture and they were to guide the day-to-day work of the Secretary. The Secretary had direct oversight over the day-to-day operations of the Commission and was to lead fieldwork and ensure the production of the inventories. Overtime the Secretary's role became a managerial position, overseeing the various departments and projects of the Commission. What follows below is a series of short biographies of the first four Secretaries of the Commission, between 1908 and 1975.



*Figure 1: Alexander Ormiston Curle. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 371006.*

Curle (see Fig.1) was born into a large family of three sons and four daughters. His father, a practising solicitor in their home town of Melrose, had close family ties to Sir Walter Scott, the family firm having become one of the more renowned Scottish county law practices often relying on their family and factorial connections in the Scottish borders for business.<sup>1</sup> Curle's father possessed an interest in

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<sup>1</sup> Ritchie, James Curle (1862-1944) and Alexander Ormiston Curle (1866-1955), 20.

antiquarian matters that he passed down to Alexander and his eldest brother. Even as young boys they created their own rudimentary antiquarian collections. Alexander favoured early tobacco bowls.

Curle eventually followed his father into the legal profession, studying at Cambridge before returning to Scotland to practise. Yet he still found time to pursue his antiquarian hobby, publishing eleven papers in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquities of Scotland* between 1896 and 1908. This work established his reputation within Scotland's antiquarian community.

Curle was appointed Secretary of the Commission in February 1908. Curle was responsible for the first five of the Commission's surveys between 1908 and 1913 – the inventories of Berwickshire, Sutherland, Caithness, Wigtown and Kirkcudbright. He was also responsible for the appointment of the Commission's first fieldwork staff. While Curle's time at the Commission was brief compared to his successors, his role in establishing the practices of the Commission and its ethos cannot be overstated (see chapter six).

In the summer of 1913, Curle resigned from the position of Secretary, taking up the position of Director of the National Museum of Antiquities. This prestigious role consolidated his place in the antiquarian establishment. Even after retiring from that role in 1931 he remained committed to antiquarianism and archaeology, undertaking the excavation of Jarlshof and aiding Commission work in Shetland. Jarlshof, now significant for being one of the best known Norse settlements in Northern Europe, was excavated and documented using the practices that Curle developed in the field during his time as Secretary at the Commission.<sup>2</sup> Shortly after resigning from the role of Secretary, Curle was appointed as a Commissioner and served in this capacity until his death in 1955.

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<sup>2</sup> R. J. N. Graham, James Curle (1862-1944) and Alexander Ormiston Curle (1866-1955): pillars of the establishment, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 132 (2002) 19-41, 34.

WILLIAM MACKAY MACKENZIE

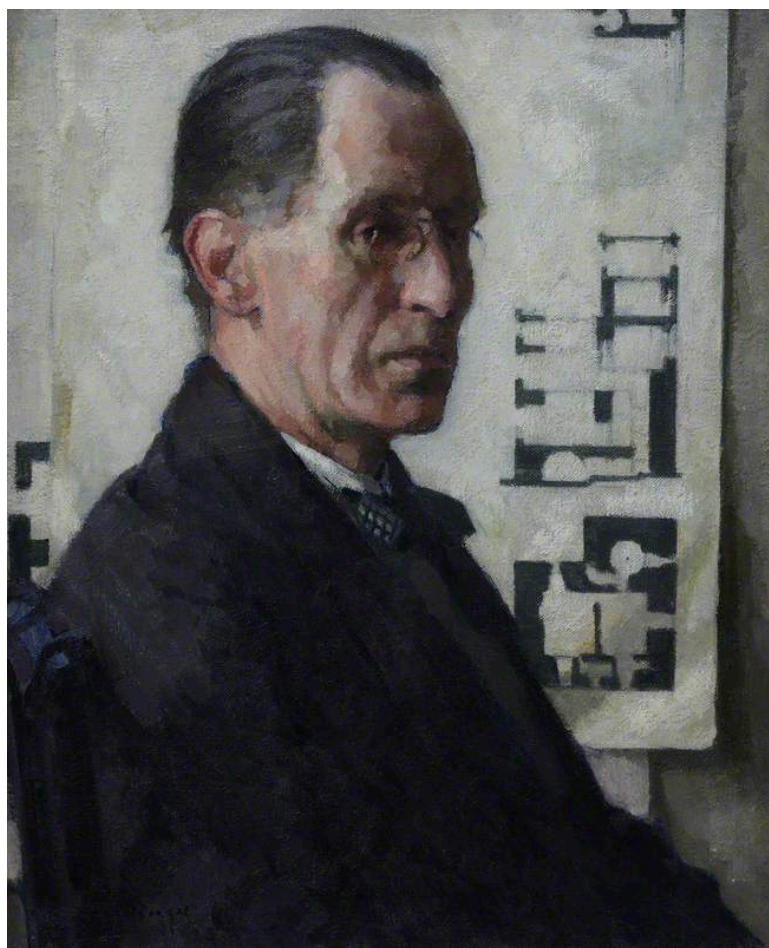


Figure 1: William Mackay Mackenzie painted by David Foggie in 1914. Source: National Galleries of Scotland, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, PG 2312

William Mackay Mackenzie (see Fig. 2), born in 1871 in Edinburgh, was appointed Secretary in 1913 and served until 1935. He was an expert on Scottish folklore. Future Secretary Angus Graham considered that ‘Mackenzie was a dedicated scholar, deeply learned in Scottish medieval history’.<sup>3</sup> He was appointed as a Commissioner in 1942. Relatively little has been written about Mackenzie compared to the other Secretaries, despite his tenure being one of the longest. It is notable that he is listed only as being Secretary in the Commission’s latest history *An Inventory for the Nation* (2015).

Mackenzie oversaw one of the most productive periods of the Commission’s history. Although his methods would put him at odds with members of the fieldwork staff and some of the Commissioners, the Commission published six inventories and began work on a further three under his leadership (see chapter 6).

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<sup>3</sup> Angus Graham’s *Antiquarian Personalities and Episodes*, RCAHMS, shelfmark MS7402/4.

ANGUS GRAHAM

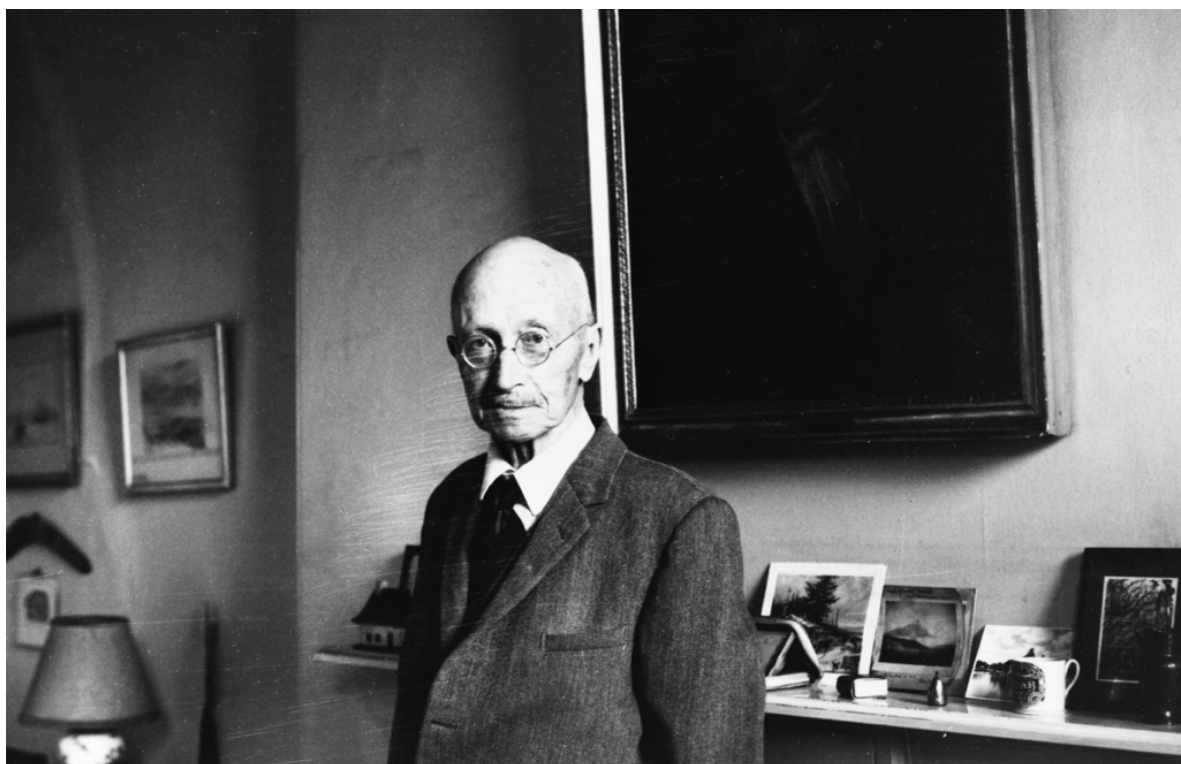


Figure 3: Angus Graham. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1128482.

Angus Graham was born 3 April 1892 at Skipness (he would later publish *Skipness: Memories of a Highland Estate* about his childhood and upbringing) and educated at Winchester and New College, Oxford. He served in the First World War during which he was wounded and from which he would never fully recover.<sup>4</sup>

Following the First World War, Graham returned to Oxford and studied forestry, taking up a position with the Forestry Commission before departing for Canada in 1922 to work as a ‘scientific advisor to Price Bros & Co Ltd’ and, later, as ‘Secretary-treasurer of the Quebec Forest Industries Association Ltd’.<sup>5</sup> The economic depression in Canada in the early 1930s and Graham’s worsening health saw him return to the UK in 1934. As John Dunbar, future Secretary wrote, he returned ‘ill and unemployed (and with a Canadian accent, fortunately only in French).’<sup>6</sup>

Graham was appointed Secretary of the Commission in 1935, having undertaken fieldwork in Shetland immediately after returning to Scotland. His appointment benefitted from his close personal relationship to Curle. Graham’s endurance in the field (despite his ill health) endeared him to the remaining

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<sup>4</sup> J. Dunbar, Angus Graham, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (1981) 111, 1-6, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Dunbar, Angus Graham, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Dunbar, Angus Graham, 1.

Commissioners who sought to find a suitable replacement for the fieldwork-shy Mackenzie.<sup>7</sup> Dunbar noted that Graham ‘was not himself an innovator [but that] his main strength as Secretary was his readiness to entertain new ideas, and to act promptly to put them into effect as soon as he was convinced that they were sound’.<sup>8</sup>

Graham was responsible for the adoption of aerial photography, four-wheel-drive vehicles and the creation of the photographic department (see chapters six and seven). The Commission’s first foray into ‘rescue’ archaeology came with Graham’s work during the emergency surveys of WWII, laying the groundwork for future rescue endeavours, not least the Marginal Land Surveys in 1955. Graham retired in 1957, allowing Kenneth Steer, who Graham had appointed in 1939 as the Commission’s first academic archaeologist, to take over. Graham continued to work closely with the Commission assisting in the editing and writing up of the inventories and was made a Commissioner in 1960, a post he held until 1974.<sup>9</sup>

Kenneth Steer, Graham’s successor, later wrote of a particular moment while Graham was in the field during WWII undertaking an emergency survey:

In an age before it became conventional to wear unconventional dress, [Graham’s] field work uniform – consisting of a beret, Home Guard greatcoat, and Canadian foresters’ high boots laced up at the front – frequently raised eyebrows, especially when garnished with accoutrements such as a camera, map case and field-glasses. Thus attired he happened on one occasion to a visit to Stirling Castle in company with his friend, Sir Ian Richmond [later a Commissioner], and as they were walking back down the Esplanade they encountered two privates of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders returning to barracks. The soldiers stared incredulously at Graham, and then, as the parties drew level, grinned hugely, did a smart ‘eyes right’, and accorded him the type of salute normally reserved for generals. Graham pondered on this incident until they reached the foot of the Esplanade, and then said quietly to Richmond:

“Ian do I look conspicuous?”

Characteristically, Richmond was ready with the perfect answer.

“Don’t worry, Angus,” he replied soothingly. “All distinguished men are conspicuous!”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Steer’s personal memoirs, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material; and Dunbar, *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Dunbar, *Angus Graham*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Dunbar, *Angus Graham*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Steer’s personal memoirs, RCAHMS, uncatalogued material.



*KENNETH STEER*



*Figure 2: Kenneth Steer. Source: Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, SC 1058563.*

Kenneth Steer, born 12 November 1913 in Rotherham, ‘played a leading role in the post-war expansion of Scottish archaeology, gaining distinction not only as an administrator and policy maker, but also as a field archaeologist and excavator’.<sup>11</sup> Steer read history at Durham University, stayed on as a Research Fellow between 1936 and 1938, and completed a PhD on *The Archaeology of Roman Durham*. He was

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<sup>11</sup> J. Dunbar and G. Maxwell, Kenneth Arthur Steer 12 November 1913 – 20 February 2007, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 137 (2007) 1-4, 1.

appointed as the Commission's first academically-trained archaeologist in 1939.<sup>12</sup> Steer's opportunity to make an impact at the Commission was brought to a halt with the outbreak of WWII. He was seconded to the Scottish Government and called up for service in 1941. Where he served as an intelligence officer. In the immediate aftermath of the war, Steer found himself part of the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives Office, North Rhine Region now memorialised in the 2014 film *The Monuments Men*.<sup>13</sup> Here he brought his archaeological knowledge to bear aiding in the repair of war-damaged historic monuments.

Steer returned to the Commission in 1947 and was tasked with completing the pre-war inventories – notably that of Roxburghshire – which would see the first significant use of aerial photography in a Commission inventory (see chapter seven). In 1949 Steer pushed through his Marginal Land Survey, an attempt to rescue threatened sites in the outlying, and as yet un-surveyed, regions of Scotland. It was also an opportunity for Steer to highlight to the Commission the value of aerial photography, using knowledge developed while serving in the military.

Steer was appointed Secretary in 1957 and served in this role until 1975. He oversaw a period of significant change at the Commission and laid the foundations for the future of the organisation, overseeing the merger with the SNBR and the adoption of rescue archaeology proper during the 1970s. It was during Steer's tenure that the Commission begun the Argyll inventory, the largest survey to date, pursued the development of rescue archaeology and established the aerial photography department. Steer's tenure was also marked by the absorption of the SNBR in 1966 and the subsequent development of the Commission's archive and library. Steer retired in 1975, having overseen the most significant changes in the Commission since its inception in 1908.

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<sup>12</sup> Dunbar and Maxwell, Kenneth Arthur Steer, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Dunbar and Maxwell, Kenneth Arthur Steer, 1.