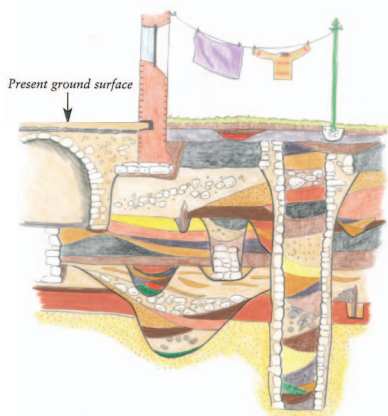




ARCHAEOLOGY IN TOWNS

The origins of some of Scotland's towns probably lie in the first millennium AD, but they become visible to history only in the 12th century, when King David I created the first royal burghs. Most major burghs could boast a royal castle or abbey, and the townsfolk of places as diverse as Perth, St Andrews and Aberdeen were given special privileges and allowed to trade freely - they alone could trade overseas. Although a handful of early burghs failed and were abandoned, most flourished, becoming the busy towns and cities of modern Scotland.

When a burgh was founded, the available land was divided into long narrow plots or rigs on either side of the main street or a grid of streets. The rig boundaries may still be visible in the layout of the town today. Each rig had its house end-on to the street, and the area behind each house was known as its backland. Individual backlands were marked out by wattle fences or shallow ditches, often with paths alongside.



Beneath the drying greens of today, there may be old cellars, pits, layers of rubble and rubbish and even disused wells.



This industrial scale drying kiln was found during excavations at Forth Street Lane, North Berwick in what would have been backlands south of High Street.

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Water culverts and drains might cut across several backlands, and wells and cisterns provided water. The backlands were used to grow crops, keep animals and provide space for storage and industrial activities. Open-air hearths and ovens were common, as fire was a constant hazard to the houses.

Most buildings in medieval towns were made of wood. Upright wall posts were set into wooden sill beams on rough stone foundations, and the spaces between the posts filled with woven rods (wattle) covered with clay (daub). Roofs were mostly thatched with straw or heather, but some were covered with wooden shingles or clay tiles. Each wooden building lasted only 20 years or so before it had to be replaced – sometimes by total rebuilding, but more often by piecemeal repair. Some buildings were dwellings, perhaps with a byre at one end; others were workshops or stores. The disposal of rubbish was a problem and much was dumped in the backlands in pits, or even in the street. Some houses had earth closets; excavated cess-pits have yielded mosses that were used like modern toilet tissue.

Other than churches and castles, it was rare for medieval town buildings to be of stone, although there are exceptions: Peebles has produced evidence of extensive medieval stone buildings. The tolbooth was the civic centre of each burgh, where tolls or taxes were collected. Most tolbooths and townhouses in use today are built on the site of their medieval forerunner. By the 15th century, wooden structures - houses, workshops, bridges - were being replaced in stone. The main or market street had the tall market cross, sculpted in stone with the burgh coat-of-arms, symbolic of burgh status, and the tron (public weigh-beam).

The major burgh churches have tended to remain in use, so opportunities to excavate within and outside them are limited. Fragments of window-glass and burials may give clues to the whereabouts of long-vanished lesser churches and graveyards. Most major burghs had at least one friary, normally on the cheaper land outside the burgh boundary. Skeletons provide valuable

information about life span, diet, disease and occupational hazards. Leprosy was a severe problem from the 12th to 18th centuries, and every large burgh had a leper hospital.

Throughout their history, towns have relied on the surrounding countryside. Their fields and orchards lay outside the town boundaries, as did the grazing land for their cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. Their economy was based on both import and export, bringing in raw materials such as wood, stone and iron, and selling manufactured goods to local as well as distant markets. Scotland's wealth as a medieval nation depended on the export of raw wool, sheepskins, hides and fish, and the east coast ports were the means by which these exports reached Europe.

Historical documents tend to tell of great people and events, rather than ordinary folk. This is why the archaeology of towns is important - because it illuminates everyday life.



The wall painting was uncovered during renovation of this 16th-century merchant's house, which shows that archaeological evidence can be present within buildings, as well as below the ground.

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There has been a market cross on High Street, Haddington, since medieval times.
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The archaeology of a historic town is also present in the street names and layout, and in its standing buildings. Careful excavation can unravel the story of the town. The depth of deposits varies but in some towns, such as Perth and North Berwick, long sequences of rubbish and demolished buildings lie buried up to 4m deep beneath the streets and buildings of today. Sometimes deposits are waterlogged and contain the well-preserved remains of timber, leather and textiles. The survival of large pieces of timber allows dating by counting the tree growth-rings (dendrochronology).

The build-up of refuse in towns, and the frequency with which timber buildings were replaced, means that urban excavations often retrieve an enormous amount of information, from structures to furniture, household possessions, industrial debris and food refuse. Common industries were iron-smithing, brewing, coopering (making barrels for beer, salted meat and fish), tanning and leather-working, bone working, dyeing and weaving woollen cloth. Food processing was vital and no










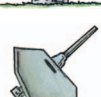
part of the animal was wasted. Bones were made into implements and horn was in great demand for spoons and cups. Corn had to be dried before it could be milled into flour, and circular corn-drying kilns are common. Broken pottery is useful for dating and identifying trade networks, as different potteries produced distinctive fabrics, glazes and vessel shapes. Foreign imports included silks from Spain and Italy, fine dyed cloth from the Low Countries, ivory and spices from Africa and wine from France. Often there are also traces of prehistoric activity long before the town was founded: flint and stone tools turn up beneath or mixed into later deposits.

The fact that historic towns and cities are still living places today can make it difficult to preserve their archaeology. Excavations are usually carried out ahead of redevelopment, which is an essential opportunity to retrieve as much information as possible before it is destroyed forever. But excavation and analysis of the results is expensive, and sometimes it makes good financial sense to redesign the foundations of new buildings in such a way that the archaeology can be preserved where it lies.



Pottery fragments have been pieced together to make a 14th-century jug.
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TIME-LINE

End of the last Ice Age Wildlife colonises land Mesolithic hunting settlers		12,500	
		8500	Flint scatters Shell mounds, rock shelters
Neolithic farming settlers		4000	Chambered tombs and houses Cupmarked rocks
		3000	Stone circles, henges, and standing stones
Metal technology (gold, copper)		2000	Burial mounds and short cists Hut-circles
Climate deteriorating Fortifications begin		1000	Burnt mounds Hillforts
Iron-working technology		500 200 BC ▲	Crannogs Duns, brochs, wheelhouses, and earth-houses
		▼ AD	
Roman army in Scotland		79	
Waning of Roman influence		200 400	Roman camps, forts and roads, Antonine Wall
Introduction of Christianity Picts, Gaels, Britons and Anglians Start of the Viking Age		600	Long cist graves
		800	Early Christian and Pictish carved stones, chapels
Emergence of Scottish nation		1000 1100	Pagan Viking graves and settlements
First burghs		1200 1500	Stone-built churches Mottes, abbeys, stone-built castles
Reformation of the Church		1600	Tower-houses Deserted villages and farms
Agricultural improvements & Industrial Revolution		1800 1900	Coal mines and heavy industries
Two World Wars		2000	Gun batteries and airfields

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH:

By the 15th century, Scotland's wealthiest burghs had ports to control access, and a few had town walls around them. Timber buildings were beginning to be replaced in stone, or in a combination of timber and stone, and long rigs stretched back from the street frontages.

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Historic Scotland is an agency within the Scottish Government responsible for administering the legislation that protects ancient monuments (buildings, ruins, archaeological sites and landscapes). It provides general advice on the conservation and protection of Scotland's heritage.

Historic Scotland's Education Service encourages the use of the built heritage as a learning and teaching resource.

Over 300 historic properties looked after by Historic Scotland are open to the public for enjoyment and education. For information, including free leaflets, telephone 0131 668 8600.

Our data service website contains details of scheduled monuments and has GIS datasets available to download:
<http://data.historic-scotland.gov.uk>

The following leaflets are available from Historic Scotland:

Scheduled ancient monuments: a guide for owners, occupiers and land managers

Managing Scotland's archaeological heritage

Grants for Ancient Monuments: a guide to grants available for the preservation, maintenance and management of ancient monuments

Archaeology on farm and croft (produced jointly with Archaeology Scotland)

Scotland's listed buildings: a guide for owners and occupiers

The carved stones of Scotland: a guide to helping in their protection

Metal detecting - yes or no? Metal detecting, scheduled ancient monuments and the law

A leaflet on *Treasure Trove in Scotland* is available from the National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh

A number of *Historic Scotland Technical Advice Notes*, on topics such as the use of lime mortars, the conservation of thatching and stonecleaning, are available. Catalogue from and orders to:

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