

this will frequently be the case with books in the Scandinavian languages. Space imposes some restrictions in the issue of 6-month tickets and eligibility for these tickets depends on a number of circumstances. Enquiries about tickets should be made in the Library or by letter to the Librarian.

The staff in charge of Scandinavian purchasing will be very pleased to give help personally or by letter on any Scandinavian matter. They would also welcome suggestions for purchases. Norwegian and Danish queries should be addressed to Dr. Isabel Henderson, Swedish and Finnish queries to Mr. Stephen Holland and Icelandic queries to Mrs Elizabeth Thomson.

NORTHERN STUDIES
IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES OF SCOTLAND
EDINBURGH

John Baldwin

The National Museum is concerned with man in Scotland - tracing his evolution from earliest times to the present day. In the later periods, this extends beyond archaeological investigation to historical, literary and linguistic study, and work with field informants. Study is related primarily to the material objects - man's tools, techniques and what he has produced.

Archaeological excavation, in conjunction with the Department of the Environment, was re-started last summer at Skara Brae, Orkney, in an attempt to reconstruct further aspects of the way-of-life of the settlement and to obtain a more general picture of the Orkney environment around 2000 B.C. This continues in 1973, and involves co-operation with individuals and institutions in England and Scotland in the analysis of the excavated material. There is also regular contact with qualified teams from elsewhere - the Norwegian party operating at Westness on Rousay; groups and individuals from Southampton, Belfast and Cambridge at Quanterness, on Foula, and in North Uist; the University of Edinburgh at Buckquoy. Several of these projects are concerned with Norse settlement sites. Work in Sutherland, Caithness and Orkney by the University of Glasgow, the Country Life Section of the National Museum and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, has confirmed the continuation of building types into the 18th and 19th centuries, leading in turn to re-appraisals of Rousell's work in the 1930s.

In the later mediaeval and modern periods, a comparison of painted decoration in buildings in Scotland and Scandinavia, for instance, or of silver

tankards or brooches, would be suitable fields for research, although it is on a more work-a-day level that study is presently concentrated - investigations into the material culture of ordinary, localised communities in Shetland, Orkney, the Hebrides and mainland Scotland. Based on both documentary and oral sources, this work aims at recording as much detail as possible of life and work in such communities. Equipment, methods of use, technology, social and environmental background can all help determine an underlying cultural base and cross-fertilisation. Recent studies have covered the native sheep on North Ronaldsay, the Scottish currach, methods of land transport in Scotland and the Faroe Islands, and sea-bird fowling - again in a Scottish and Faroese context.

For such material to be of maximum value to society, however, and not just to an academic minority, we have a responsibility to ensure its easy availability to the widest cross-section of the community - Scottish, Scandinavian, or otherwise. There are already a number of good regional and local museums, as well as libraries and local history/antiquarian groups, with which the Museum maintains regular contact and which possess material of interest to the student of northern culture. With the re-housing of the National Museum in purpose-built premises at

the end of George IV Bridge, however, (hopefully by 1977), and with the future development of a national 'open air' folk museum, one of the aims of the Scottish Country Life Museums Trust, the place of Scottish material within the fuller northern context should become more generally appreciated.

EMPTY ISLANDS OR INTEGRATION ?

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ESTIMATE OF THE NORSE IMPACT ON THE NORTHERN ISLES

Anna Ritchie

The study of place-names, ogam inscriptions and Pictish symbols has long contradicted Snorri Sturluson's belief that Orkney and Shetland were uninhabited when the first Norse colonists arrived (Egil's Saga). An apparent lack of archaeological evidence for settlements has, however, given rise to the idea that by the 8th century the native population was sparse and at such a low ebb in cultural terms that it was wholly submerged and replaced by Norse culture. Current research is now indicating that the Northern Isles were participating in the mainstream of 7th and 8th century Pictish culture, and that the Norse colonisation of the 9th century was a peaceful process of integration with the native population.