**The founding of The Association of Certificated Field Archaeologists**

I expect that if six people involved in an act that took place almost thirty three years ago were required to write their recollections of that event then the essays received, though similar in substance, might reasonable be quite different in detail.With this proviso in mind I’m about to set down my account of how and why ACFA was established.

In 1976, Lionel Masters and his colleague Eddy Peltenburg in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education (DACE) of the University of Glasgow,established a course studying field archaeology, both in practice and theory, each of three full academic years. A decade later there were several small groups of graduates exercising their new skill individually around the West of Scotland and beyond. The courses proved popular from the outset despite being a huge sacrifice of evenings, weekend and Easter holidays and were fully unsupported financially. Each new class often comprised eighteen students, but in one case only nine graduated, having survived the rigours of the Scottish winter weather, written essays, examinations and family commitments. One lady, a geography graduate, working in the strategical planning department of the Regional Council, went to do a doctorate degree and became the first director of WOSAS (West of Scotland Archaeological Services),when it was set up.

In 1987 a decision was taken to commence open-cast coal extraction over a large area of land near Dalmellington in South Ayrshire. Archaeological study in advance of major works was in it’s infancy at that time and the professional was not set up to meet the the expected demand. A phone call or two were made in October between Lionel and some of his active ex- students regarding forming a group to undertake this project. The suggestion met with enthusiastic unanimity, here was something real and tangible that was being sought. A meeting was rapidly called, a simple constitution agreed, a committee elected and ACFA was speedily born. Meanwhile discussions were taking place between the principals, British Coal, Regional Council and Dalmellington Conservation Trust, resulting in ACFA being invited to conduct an intensive field survey of the 750 ha. area prior to extraction and travelling expenses were available. Reward at last for many.

The survey began without delay and continued throughout the winter at most weekends until about the end of March the following year when British Coal began their operations. Winter that year was not benign,,with lots of cold sleety rain and winds. Several times, I recall hard driving in the dark against blizzards, over the moor to Eaglesham on the old notorious A77. Then the work was gradually assessed and a report prepared. This did not follow the pattern that eventually evolved. Apples were known as fruit and Macs were usually for wearing when it rained. Only a few pioneers knew about them, or even possessed a computer. But with luck,and perhaps parental pressure Lionel’s son David, produced a very professional document. It contained maps and some simplified layout drawings but masses of detail drawings of mine buildings and features, mill farms and photographs could not be used the technology was absent

It was an intense period. We learned a hugely from the exercise, not least being, that a Director and or compiler was essential and that they must know and become familiar with the whole site before the compiling stage. We learned about ourselves, our various strengths and abilities.