



THE PICTISH ARTS SOCIETY

Newsletter
Issue 2003
Autumn

The Winter Season 2003-2004

The equinox approaches, winter looms, and with it come thoughts of our winter programmes. Not only has the venue changed for the Edinburgh sessions, we have decided to hold our talks on the first Tuesday of the month to avoid the worst of the traffic. The new venue is the Friends Meeting House in Victoria Street, convenient for both public transport and car parking. (see map on last page of newsletter).

At Pictavia, building work is under way to improve access and facilities. The first two talks will be held at The Meffan, West High Street Forfar, and we will return to Pictavia in December.

Edinburgh

All talks will be held in the Library, Quaker Meeting House, Victoria Terrace at 7.30pm. Doors open at 7pm. Admission is free, but members and guests are asked to donate towards the cost of hiring the hall.

Tuesday, 7th October : Norman Atkinson *Pictish Kings*

Tuesday, 4th November : Robert Henery *Mirrors and Horsemen*

Tuesday, 2nd December: Dr Suzanne Miller *The story from within -geological tools to interpret carved stones*

Tuesday, 6th January: Members Night with David McKenzie and Iain Fraser

Tuesday, 3rd February: Ingval Maxwell *Scale of problems, methods for maintaining replication: a strategic overview ?*

Tuesday, 2nd March: Strat Halliday *Beating the Bounds in a Pictish Landscape*

Pictavia.

All talks begin at 7.30 pm. Note that the first two lectures will be held in The Meffan, Forfar. The remaining four will see us return to Pictavia. Admission is free to Pictish Arts Society members, or £2 payable on the night. Refreshments will be served after the lecture, when Pictavia will be open.

Friday, 17th October: Dr Suzanne Miller. *The story from within -geological tools to interpret carved stones*
At The Meffan

Friday, 14th November: Niall Robertson. *Pictish Stones as an illustration of contemporary material culture*
At The Meffan

Friday, 12th December: Dr Jane Geddes. *The mysterious art of the Book of Deer*

Friday 16th January 2004: Ian Shepherd. *The Northern and Southern Picts- where do we draw the line?*

Friday 20th February 2004: Mark Hall. *Place, Purpose and Patronage: Early Medieval Sculpture in Strathearn and Strathmore*

Friday 19th March 2004: Dr James Fraser. *The Origins of Pictishness: When is a Pict not a Pict?*



Conference Report



Blue skies and calm seas greeted a somewhat smaller than usual turnout of Pictophiles in Portmahomack for this year's annual conference on the weekend of 6th–7th September. The Carnegie Hall in the centre of the village provided the base for Saturday's events. The day was mostly given over to a series of talks.

John Wood, (Highland Council Archaeologist) modestly noted that the Highland Pictish Trail (enclosed) covers only a sample of the stones in his area. The bulk of his talk was a reconsideration of Bede's description of the Picts, their language, and the origin myth. Several thought-provoking points were made, leading to some lively discussion.

Kate Collard, of Tarbat Historic Trust, gave a lavishly illustrated description of some of the recent discoveries made by Professor Martin Carver's team from York University. This group has been working on the site of the Pictish monastery underlying and adjacent to the old church of Tarbat, now converted into a visitor centre. The evidence suggests that the monastery here had early origins, and supported a community of monks wealthy enough to commission or produce carved stones of high quality. The evidence also suggests that the community here was capable of producing lavishly bound books written on vellum prepared on site. Unusually, the evidence points to the metalworking activities on the site being solely ecclesiastic in nature. At other contemporary sites in Scotland, metalworking includes the production of jewellery and tools with secular associations. Gary Nayar was on hand to deal with some of the points raised.

Doug Scot's photography poignantly illustrated the relationship of stone settings—from early cup and ring marked rocks through to some surprisingly well known Pictish stones—with the landscape and significant solar and lunar events. The evidence at the very least for the continued importance of these relationships, if not of an underlying set of religious beliefs is compelling. The question of whether or not stones should be removed from their original settings takes on more complexity when this evidence is taken into account.

After lunch at the Caledonian Hotel, Gordon MacIntyre demonstrated the types of tools used in hunting, butchery, working with wood and in general husbandry which would have done duty as weapons in the rare event that the ordinary farming folk found themselves caught up in battle. He made the point that swords were rare, specialised items of military equipment and not everyday possessions. Swords and armour were expensive items, requiring good metal and a deal of time to make. Battlefields were unpleasant places—even for those familiar with killing and butchering both game and domesticated animals. Gordon evoked the unheroic side of the warrior tales in a dramatically understated performance. He also proved that, with the right helmet, Norman could take a dunt on the head from an axe and still go on to give the final talk of the afternoon.

Norman Atkinson' examined the carved eagles and their place in the broader tradition of insular art. Once again, the ability of the Pictish artist to reproduce faithfully the characteristics of familiar models was clear, as Norman pointed out the species characteristics in evidence. The fine, almost calligraphic quality of the Burrian eagle stands very early in a tradition spreading as far as Walton.

A short break for coffee gave the chance for closer contact with Gordon's tools and weapons, before the party headed off to Hilton. The golden late afternoon light gave ample opportunity to examine the new Hilton of Cadboll stone. Barry Grove stopped work on the cross face to answer a host of questions about the design and the technical difficulties of working the stone, and has promised to tell us more about the experience when the work is complete.

Emma Sanderson then took us through the story of the discovery of the basal portion of the original stone, uncovered on September 11th 2001, and allowed us plenty of time to examine this large, well preserved fragment.

Thanks are due to all who participated in the day's events. We had an interesting and thoroughly enjoyable day, which was followed by a great deal of discussion in the bars of Portmahomack that evening!

Sunday's field trip started with a visit to Tarbat Discovery Centre, where we were met by Kate Collard. Kate, assisted again by Gary, gave us a "virtual tour", pointing out where the various phases of excavation had been carried out, and then remaining on hand to answer any questions as we spent time in the Centre itself. Over the course of a couple of centuries, gravediggers in the churchyard had recovered a tantalising number of carved stone fragments, which suggested that the site had possessed at least one stone of the quality of that of Hilton of Cadboll. Tarbat Old Church was acquired by Tarbat Historic Trust in 1980, and much planning and effort has gone into converting it to a Visitor Centre which is not only intimately connected with the ongoing archaeological work on the monastic site, but firmly rooted in the community itself.

Over the years since digging began in 1991, evidence has accumulated of a monastic site which flourished here roughly from the sixth to the tenth centuries. The remains of around two hundred individuals, mostly male, well nourished and of fairly advanced years, have been uncovered. Evidence has been found for the manufacture of vellum and leather, and of wood and

metal working—all crafts necessary to the production of the sorts of works exemplified by the Book of Kells or the Lindisfane Gospels. It is noteworthy that all of the decorative metal work here appears to have been produced strictly for ecclesiastical consumption. And then, the stones. So far, around forty fragments of carved stone have been uncovered at the site, and a selection are on display in the Visitor Centre. The fresh quality of a number of these is notable; many were found in a layer which betokened general destruction and burning at the site. Although the central part of the monastery lies out of reach of the archaeologists under the present graveyard, each season has added to the detailed picture of the monastery here, and we may expect further revelations as the dig proceeds.

The stones and their setting alone are well worth the trip to Portmahomack. Once again our thanks are due to Kate, who manages the Centre and to the members of the Tarbat Historic Trust who have put so much effort into creating and maintaining it.

Next stop was Tain museum, home to the Ardjachie stone, with its curious “spoked wheel “ symbol and cupmarks, and the two stones from Edderton rediscovered by Doug Scott. On then to Edderton itself to see Clach Biorach and Edderton 2.

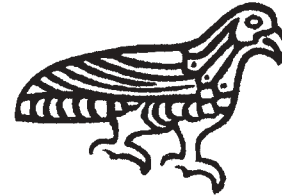
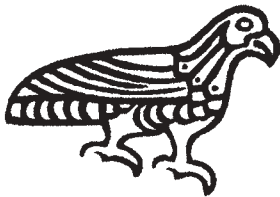
Unusually for the Picts, there was still time for an unscheduled visit to Kincardine, where Ross Trench-Jellicoe introduced the stone before all set off on the journey home.

There are still a few copies of Niall Robertson’s “The Firthlands of Easter Ross”, the Field guide covering the stones at Tain, Edderton and Hilton of Cadboll , available from the secretary at a cost of £2.50 including post and package.

Members interested in knowing more about The Tarbat Historic Trust should contact:

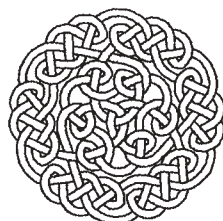
Tarbat Discovery Centre,
Tarbatness Road,
Portmahomack,
Ross-shire, IV20 1YA
or check the website at www.tarbat-discovery.co.uk .

SH



Stones in the National Museum.

Sheila Fraser has organised a visit to the National Museum of Scotland (Chambers Street, Edinburgh) Tuesday 9th December 6.00 – 7.00pm with Dr. Alison Sheridan. Members will have a chance to see the stones on display and to ask questions of Alison, who is Assistant Keeper of Archaeology at the Museum. There will be no charge for this event. Places must be booked with Sheila Fraser (01506 650 953) or email sheilafraser@btinternet.com, by 1st December.



Pict-sticking - A New Highland Hobby?

Not the pastime indulged in by bored Roman cavalry officers stationed on the Antonine Wall, (the origin of the simile “he screamed like a stuck Pict”), Pict-sticking, properly punctuated “Pict”-sticking, refers to the practice of adorning blue parking signs in the Highlands with Pict car stickers. While these are available, Back by Popular Demand, from the P.A.S., at the price of £1.20, including p&p (UK only), and while they can be a decorative and useful addition to a windscreen or suitcase, as far as we are aware no member of the society is responsible for adding them to parking signs on the Ullapool to Inverness road. We should emphasise that their presence does not necessarily indicate some interesting dark age carving in the vicinity, so members are advised not to go hunting for Pictish stones half way up Ben Wyvis, or at the foot of the Corrieshalloch Gorge. Since the stickers seem to be making a statement, we should be grateful for further clarification about them, so that it can be disseminated to all our readers.

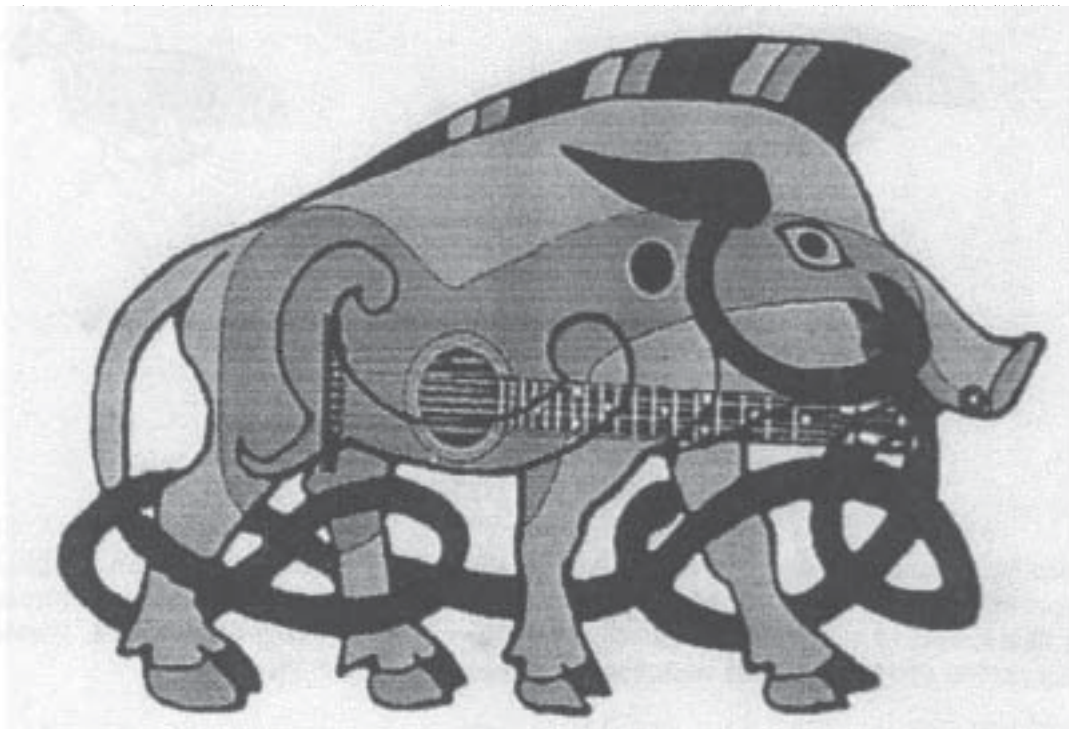
(note: there is a temporary delay in dealing with any merchandise orders while renovations take place at Pictavia.)

MR



Auchtermuchty.....

The handsome logo of the Auchtermuchty Festival (held during the first ten days of August) appears on T-shirts sported by several PAS members recently. What better expression of a Festival given over to tradition in Fife’s Pictish heartland?



(Views expressed as to the relative importance of the seven provinces of the Picts are not necessarily to be taken as accepted by all members of the PAS—ed.)

A Roving Pict in Fife TELLS WHAT'S ON OFFER ... The restored and beautifully cleaned up Kilduncan Stone has been placed as centre of attraction at the St. Andrews Museum in St. Andrews as part of an exhibition called 'Treasure Trove'. This stunning example of late Pictish Art in stone is certainly a good example of that, as it turned up at Kilduncan House near Kingsbarns in Fife last year when the owners were doing renovations. After, we are told, a considerable sum passed hands, the stone was turned over to Fife Council and the Museums service. The confronting sea monster creatures, very reminiscent of the Brodie Stone at Brodie Castle in Morayshire, are shown above an animal creature with a dog's head and upward swirling lioness tail, while the other side has a beautiful intricate cross with lozenges that are symbols of infinity in themselves. Ross Trench-Jellicoe is working hard on interpreting this stone with all of its cross references and has been travelling the country examining cousins to the Kilduncan. It will be on show in the current exhibition until the 5th of October, after which it will be on permanent exhibition in the upstairs gallery of the museum.

ARCHAEOLOGY MONTH in Fife included an Open Sunday Day in September at the great caves in East Wemyss on the Fife coast near Kirkcaldy. As a tour guide for the day, I found much enthusiasm from the general public who turned out in large numbers to be shown around the caves. Hard hats and chocolate cake and tea provided by SWACS, the hosting organisation for the caves. Some of the carvings are definitely getting fainter just in the last few years. If anyone in the Society would like a tour and we could organise a suitable day for a small group, do call - 01337 810283. Thanks ... Marianna Lines

The new edition of Rolling Stone has been held over to the next newsletter, when Norman will consider, among other things, the stones of Fife. If anyone from other parts of Pictland has any news, do let Sheila Hainey know!



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Winter Views

A fine thing it is on a crisp frosty day to watch the play of low sunlight on Pictish stone carvings. Winter can provide great conditions for examining stones, with the oblique light picking out detail that is less clear in summer conditions, with the sun overhead. Such conditions are, however, rare in these northern parts, and we are more likely to see grey, wet days when thoughts of tramping a muddy countryside can be less than appealing. At this time of year, visiting stones in museums and other indoor locations is a welcome alternative. Sadly, a number of sites are either closed or have restricted opening hours. The following list covers most museums with Pictish stones in their collections, and the information was checked before going to print. If you intend to make a special trip, it may be worth double-checking by phone.

Arbroath Abbey Oct-Mar mon-sun 09.30-16.00 charge

Signal Tower, Lady Loan, Arbroath 01241 875 598 all year mon-sat 10.00-17.00 free

Dunbeath Heritage Centre, The Old School, Dunbeath 01593 731 233
by appointment Oct-Easter charge

Dunrobin Castle Museum, Golspie 01408 633 177 closed for winter

Elgin Museum, 1, High Street, Elgin 01343 543 675 due to re-open September

Falconer Museum, Tolbooth Street, Forres 01309 673 701
Nov-Mar mon-thur 11.00-12.30,13.00-15.30 free

Gateway to the Glens, The Town House, 32, High Street, Kirriemuir all year
mon, tue, wed, fri, sat 10.00-17.00 thur 13.00-17.00 free

Gairloch Heritage Museum, Achtercairn, Gairloch 014457 12287
by arrangement in winter charge

Groam House Museum, High Street, Rosemarkie 01381 620 961
Oct-Apr sat & sun 14.00-16.00 free

Inverness Museum & Art Gallery, Castle Wynd, Inverness 01463 237 114
all year mon-sat 09.00-17.00 free

Carnegie Museum, The Square, Inverurie 01771 622 906
mon, wed-fri 14.00-16.30 sat 10.00-13.00, 14.00-16.00 free

Marischal College, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen 01223 273 131
all year mon-fri 10.00-17.00 sun 14.00-17.00 free

McManus Galleries, Albert Square, Dundee 01382 432 020
all year mon-sat 10.30-17.00 free

Meffen Institute, 20, West High Street, Forfar
all year mon-sat 10.00-17.00 free

Meikle Dundee Road, Meikle 01888 640 612 closed for winter

Montrose Museum, Panmure Place, Montrose 01674 673 232
all year mon-sat 10.00-17.00 free

Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh 0131 225 7534
all year mon-sat 10.00-17.00(tue-20.00) sun 13.00-6.30 free

Nairn Museum, Viewfield House, Viewfield Drive, Nairn 01667 456 7914
closed for winter

Laing Museum, High Street, Newburgh 01337 883 017
closed for winter

Pictavia Visitor Centre, Haughmuir by Brechin
closed for alteration

Perth Museum and Art Gallery, 78, George Street, Perth 01738 632 488
all year mon-sat 10.00-17.00 sun 13.00-16.30 free

St Andrews Cathedral Visitor Centre, North Street, St Andrews 01334 472 563

St Andrews Museum, Kinburn House, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews 01334 412 690
Oct-March mon-fr 10.30-16.00 sat, sun 12.00-17.00 free

St Vigeans, Kirkstyle, St Vigeans all year daily 09.30-16.00, free
Keys from Mrs Ramsay, Kirkstyle house or Arbroath Abbey. Proof of identity required.

Shetland Museum, Lower Hillhead, Lerwick 01595 675 057
all year mon, wed, fri 10.00- tue, thur, sat 10.00-17.00 free

Tain & District Museum, Tower Street, Tain 0182 894 089
to end Oct daily 10.00-18.00 Nov-Mar, sat 12.00-06.00 charge

Tarbat Discovery Centre, Tarbatness Road, Portmahomack 01862 871 351
Sept-23 Dec23 14.00-17.00 charge

Tankerness House Museum, Broad Street, Kirkwall 01856 873 191
Oct-March mon-sat 10.30-12.30, 13.30-17.00

A number of stones are held inside churches. For a comprehensive list, see Alistair Mack's Field Guide to Pictish Stones. Remember that the Dupplin Cross has been placed in St Serf's church in Dunning, returning at least to the part of the world where it belongs. Many churches maintain the centuries old tradition of being open at least during daylight hours. Sadly, considerations of security have forced a growing number to lock their doors, and application must be made to a local church officer (often the session clerk) for entry. In all cases, working churches primarily serve their local communities, and services can happen at times other than Sunday mornings. The advice for those planning to make special trips to view stones remains that it is best to check if possible before setting out.

For some of us, the best option will be to curl up by the fire, surrounded by books and all those photographs of stones that we have been meaning to sort through and put into proper order one of these days. Whatever you choose, enjoy the winter!
SH

Picts and Bobs—Sheila Fraser's sideways look at things Pictish
Cairnpapple Exhibition

Broxburn Library 28th July – 8 November. A display of objects found during the first main excavation in 1947 – 48. The museum Development officer can be contacted on 01506 776 347

FOUR o'clock in the morning in mid-December, 1978. A group of students at St Andrews, stumbling through the snow after a drinking session, discover a horribly mutilated woman in her death throes in an ancient Pictish cemetery. From the crime fiction writer Val McDermid's latest book, *THE DISTANT ECHO*, HarperCollins, £17.99.

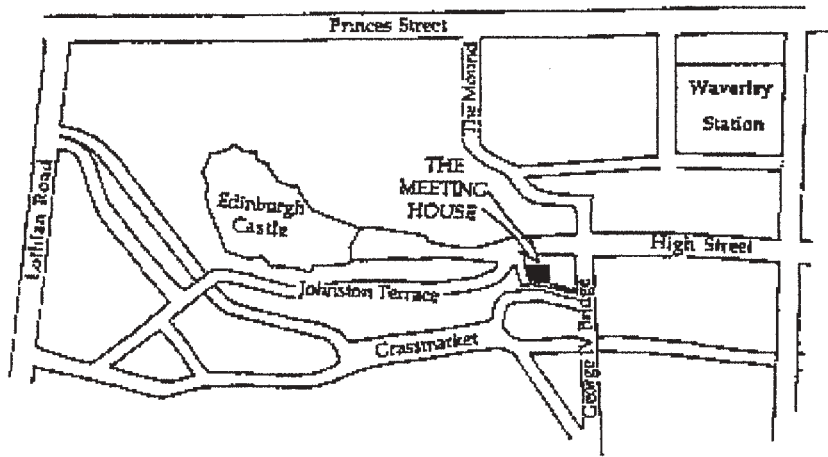
Deocillimon; Onuis and Wirguist are all male pictish names. If you are looking to name a baby with a pictish name this is your web site – www.kabalarains.com/male/pictshm.htm has hundred of pictish names. I was glad they identified the difference of male and female it looked a bit the same to me. If you have a child with a Pictish name please let me know we could start a potential members list.

How to get to the Friends Meeting House.

The Friends Meeting House is in Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh. This is off George IV Bridge, the pedestrian way above Victoria Street. Alternatively, take the broad flight of steps that leads down from the Johnston Terrace / Lawnmarket junction.

Both George IV Bridge and Johnston Terrace are well served by buses. On street car parking is available in Johnston Terrace and in the Grassmarket. There are large car parks at Castle Terrace (the link between Johnston Terrace and Lothian Road on the map), and near the entrance to George Square, which is just off the map heading away from Princes Street.

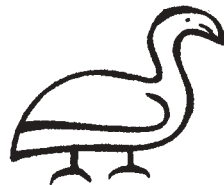
From Waverly station to Victoria Terrace is a short walk, but it is quite a steep one so allow time for a gentle stroll if you can. We hope that the new venue and change of day will be more convenient for as many of you as possible, and look forward to seeing you on the first Tuesday of the month.



How to get to the Meffen.

For strangers to Forfar, the Meffen is really quite easy to find. From the A90, Forfar, take the A929 into the centre of Forfar. Carry straight on and the Meffen is on your left hand side a few yards before the Town and County Hall at the junction with Castle Street. (The building sits in the middle of the junction.)

If there are any problems with parking, a left hand turn at the first set of traffic lights (before the Meffen) followed by a right turn (signposted) takes you to the Myre car park, and the Meffen is a short walk up a footpath to West High Street. From any other direction, follow the signs for Glamis. Pass the Towne and County Hall and the Meffen is on the right hand side.



It's your newsletter.....can we have some more of your news?

Articles, notes of any Pict-related news in your area, queries or newsletter correspondence should be sent to: The Newsletter Editor, c/o Sheila Hainey, Torr of Kedlock Farmhouse, Kedlock Feus, Cupar, KY15 4PY..

