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The 50th edition of PAS Newsletter

Excuses for blowing our own trumpet, but we have cause for celebrating this notable achievement. Actually, it's really many more than the 50th issue, as the Newsletter was instigated in 1988 and the current numbering sequence only introduced in 1993, the year after PAS Journal was first published. Several members have been responsible for voluntarily editing and producing the Newsletter, principally Nick Simpson, whose many years of selfless dedication to the job kept it alive and kicking into the 21st century. The present incumbent, David Henry, has been editor since Issue 33, Summer 2004, achieving an uninterrupted run of 17 quarterly editions. The continuation of this ambitious publishing schedule very much depends on the support of members, whose contributions are vital to the future success of the publication.

Pictish Arts Society AGM and Field Trip

The Annual General Meeting of the Pictish Arts Society will be held at the Pictavia Visitor Centre, Brechin, on Saturday 23 May, 2009 at 10.00am to consider the following business:

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Approval of the 2008 AGM minute
- 3 Annual Report – President
- 4 Honorary Secretary's Report
- 5 Treasurer's Report: Presentation and Approval of Annual Accounts
- 6 Appointment of an Independent Examiner.
- 7 Determination of Subscription Rates
- 8 Other Honorary Officers' Reports:
 - (a) Membership Secretary
 - (b) Editor
 - (c) Events Organiser
 - (d) Archivist
- 9 Election of Honorary Officers
 - (a) President
 - 9 Election of Honorary Officers (cont)
 - (b) Two Vice Presidents
 - (c) Secretary
 - (d) Treasurer
 - (e) Membership Secretary
 - (f) Editor
 - (g) Events Organiser
 - (h) Archivist
 - 10 Election of Committee
(Minimum six, maximum twelve)
 - 11 Any other competent business

Note: tea and coffee will be available from 10.00am, business will begin at 10.30 prompt. Please send nominations for committee members, and note of any matters you wish to raise, to the Honorary Secretary at Pictavia. The AGM will be followed by a trip to view a some stones in the Brechin area.

PAS lecture – Pictavia – Friday 20 March at 7.30pm

Excavations at St Orland's Stone *David Murray* (Kirkdale Archaeology)

PAS Conference 2009

PLEASE NOTE DATE

Our annual conference this year will be held on Saturday **3 October** at the Duchess Ann Hall in Dunkeld. Details of the programme and booking arrangements will appear in the next newsletter.

‘Pictish Princess’ by Eric Nicoll

At the December meeting at Pictavia, PAS President, Norman Atkinson, unveiled the wood sculpture, ‘Pictish Princess’, which was carved by Eric Nicoll shortly before his death in 2006 (PAS Newsletter 38, 2). Eric was a former Chairman of PAS, and his widow, Helen, has generously donated the sculpture to the Society. Arrangements are being made to have the piece displayed at Pictavia. The Pictish Arts Society is very grateful to Helen Nicoll for this gift, which is not only a fine example of Eric’s craftsmanship, but an enduring reminder of the dedicated service he gave to the Society over many years.



© Joy Mowatt

‘Pictish Princess’, woodcarving by Eric Nicoll

Catriona and the clarsach

As on a previous occasion, Catriona Ross entertained us at our Social Evening, on 12 December last year, with her spirited clarsach playing.



© Joy Mowatt

Catriona Ross playing at Pictavia

She originally got the opportunity to try this uncommon instrument at the annual *Fèis Obar Dheathain* (Festival Aberdeen) which is a youth music and art festival with a Gaelic theme taking place in Aberdeen over a three-day period each February. Luckily she was subsequently able to hire a small learner’s instrument from the organising committee for a period of a few months and was able to get tuition in Aberdeen from the well known clarsach player and teacher, Lu McClintock.

After some time, it became apparent that she really enjoyed playing and that the small clarsach had a limited range and poor sound quality, so it was time for her parents to bite the bullet and order a full-size 34-string ‘Glencoe’ model clarsach from Starfish Designs in North Ballachulish. It took about six months for the hand-made instrument to be ready, in fact in the final stages when an instrument is finished, it is tuned daily for three weeks to allow the wood to settle down. Although a basic 22-string learner clarsach (made in Pakistan of all places) can be bought for under £400, a larger price-tag is on the more serious instruments, Catriona’s one cost in the region of £3,000 with it’s carry bag. While

this is obviously a big outlay, the instruments hold their value, as wood in an older clarsach is considered to have fully settled down and needs less frequent tuning.

Catriona has had the opportunity to play at diverse venues such as the Archaeolink pre-history park in Aberdeenshire, Gillies Furniture store in Aberdeen, at various school events, and she even made an appearance on Gaelic TV!

Above all, Catriona loves the unique and beautiful sound that this traditional instrument makes and, as we have witnessed, she thoroughly enjoys playing it.

Thanks to Catriona's father and Joy Mowatt for supplying this information.

PAS website – www.pictart.org

Cath Drain, who has been running the website, has had to withdraw because of ill-health. The committee has decided that this presents a good opportunity to consider our options and review the site, and update its content and presentation.

To allow time for this to be done, we are temporarily closing the site, except for one page giving information about how to contact the Society. Meanwhile we are looking for ideas for reconstructing the site and for volunteers to help achieve this and maintain the site when it is up and running. If you can advise or help, please contact Stewart Mowatt:

<smowatt@tiscali.co.uk>

or by mail to the Pictavia address.

Our thanks to Cath for all the work she has done on our behalf, and we wish her a speedy return to good health.

Pictish paint?



"Further forward, we have come across original paintwork which dates from the 8th century and covers a sizeable part of this area of the museum."

Brechin Advertiser, 5 February 2009

This astonishing discovery is reported in a front-page article reporting on renovations at Brechin Town House museum. Archaeologists have uncovered a wall which could be part of the original 15th-century tolbooth. The paintwork is on another 'are[a]' – part of the 18th-century phase of the building. Aspiring proof-readers please apply direct to Angus County Press.

Pictoria at Pictavia

Christina Donald, Curator of Early History at Dundee Art Gallery and Museum, gave the February talk at Pictavia on the subject of 'Pictoria, the lady from Lundin Links'.

One of the female skeletons excavated from a Pictish cemetery at Lundin Links in 1965–61,¹ Pictoria was on display for many years in the McManus Galleries and Museum in central Dundee. The building is currently undergoing extensive renovations, and the skeleton has been the subject of some interesting investigations in preparation for redisplay in the new museum. Her name was suggested by a participant in one of the workshops related to the project. As Christina pointed out, naming the skeleton encourages us to think of her as an individual, without implying anything about her status or the social organisation of the group to which she belonged.

Pictoria was unearthed, along with twenty-one other skeletons from a more extensive cemetery by the seashore. Erosion over many years has made it impossible to tell just how many burials may once have been included in this area, a factor which restricts some of the inferences that may legitimately be drawn from the findings here. Some of the burials, including Pictoria's, appear to have been in simple long cists; others were more elaborate, with Pictish cairns raised over them. Two groups were contained in complex cairns, one of which is shaped somewhat like the Pictish double-disc symbol. The long gap between excavation and publication (over thirty years) allowed the inclusion of details of radiocarbon dating and anatomical re-examination of most of the inclusion of the results of radiocarbon dating and further anatomical investigations of some of the skeletons.

The skeleton in question had been displayed lying in the rebuilt cist in which she had been buried. Christina hoped that by posing, and perhaps answering some questions, and by including a reconstruction of her head in the display, it would change the emphasis from a dead culture to a reflection on the once-vibrant individual.

Is it possible to answer questions such as: what did she look like? How old was she when she died, and how and when did she die? Had she

any children? Was she a native of the Lundin Links area, or had she come here later in life? What was her social status – was she perhaps a member of an elite group in her society?

It became obvious just how restricted the museum curator is by the difficulties of financing the investigations which are needed to examine these questions, and how dependent they can be on fitting in with other people's research programmes. Caroline Wilkinson and Janice Aitken of Dundee University were able to undertake a digital reconstruction of Pictoria's head. Using techniques from the fields of forensic science and forensic art, they were able to build up the contours of the head, and to supply colouring typical of northern Europeans to create a surprisingly life-like image which will be displayed along with the skeleton in the renovated museum. Unfortunately, we have nothing to suggest the hairstyle or the clothes worn by Pictoria in life. She predated the clothed figures carved on Pictish stones by as much as two or three centuries, and archaeology has provided no clues as to the clothes of her period in Fife.

Examination of her skeleton revealed that Pictoria was about 5'4" tall, and that she was probably in her late 20s or early 30s when she died. She probably lived sometime between AD450–650. It was not possible to determine what caused her death, nor was it possible to get a definitive answer to the question of whether or not she had children. However, analysis of collagen from a rib bone revealed that there was no evidence the Pictoria had included marine foods in her diet, despite the seaside location of her cemetery. This was true for all the skeletons recovered at Lundin Links, with no difference between the males and females. A similar situation was noted at the Pictish

cemetery at Redcastle in Angus. Although generally well-nourished, there were signs of a slight iron deficiency. Pictoria's left shoulder bore marks of unusual muscle development, suggesting heavy use before she was fully grown. It is not entirely clear what caused this, and Christina hopes that further work will narrow down the possibilities. The lack of squatting facets on her leg bones suggest that she may have used some form of chair or seat. Stable isotope analysis of tooth enamel indicated that Pictoria grew up close to Lundin Links and ate meat as well as plant foods.

In future, Christina hopes to be able to have more reconstructions from this group carried out, and to have further stable isotope analysis to determine whether or not they were all native to the area and shared similar diets. Further pathological examinations of the remains may also indicate whether or not characteristics such as Pictoria's unusual left shoulder development were common. Perhaps a combination of DNA analysis and study of skeletal traits may indicate whether one or more family groups can be identified here.

Pictoria's remains, well protected from vibration damage, will go on display along with the digital reconstruction. Already, a great deal more can be said about this individual than about the skeleton which lay in her cist in the museum for many years. We will never know her real name, but we are in a position to answer at least some of the questions about her and to ask more about what life was like for her in Pictish Fife.

1 Greig, C, Greig, M and Ashmore, P, 'Excavations of a cairn cemetery at Lundin Links, Fife in 1965–6', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 130, pt 2 (2000), 585–636. At time of this newsletter going to press, this was not yet available on the internet.

Sheila Hainey

Pictavia alert

Members of the committee were alarmed recently by a rumour that Pictavia was going to be closed as part of a cost-cutting measure by Angus Council. However, we are reassured, following the action of a local journalist, who managed to elicit a positive response from the council.

No plans to close Pictavia

ANGUS Council have stated that they have no immediate plans to close local visitor centre Pictavia.

A spokesperson for Angus Council said: "There are no plans to close Pictavia, which is making a significant contribution to the Angus economy with associated expenditure by visitors estimated at around £812,000 over the 12-month period to August 2008. The visitor attraction is achieving its original purpose, which is to draw in visitors to Angus and orientate them around the county.

"This is shown by visitor responses to

survey questionnaires showing that 94% are "first time" visitors. Visitor satisfaction is excellent, with 100% satisfaction expressed in recent surveys.

"As with all such tourist attractions, we are constantly examining new ways to increase its appeal."

Pictavia is adjacent to a VisitScotland Tourist Information Centre and is situated on the grounds of Brechin Castle Centre.

The "Brechiner" had been contacted by a source who claimed that Angus Council had planned to close the facility as part of its budget review.

Skara Brae sea wall gets a stronger toe

Stonehenge inspires tests for new paths at Orkney site

Work is about to begin on strengthening the foundations of the sea wall near the Neolithic village of Skara Brae. The waves have undermined a section of the concrete toe on which the protective walling was built and could cause damage if left unrepaired. Historic Scotland has started a project which will involve digging two metres down, insert a new reinforced concrete toe with steel securing rods to bond the existing toe to the underlying bed rock.

Stephen Watt, Historic Scotland district architect, said:

This is an important piece of work along a 15-metre stretch of wall and will involve a considerable amount of highly skilled work. The area affected is a bit beyond Skara Brae itself, but it is important because it stops the sea outflanking us. These are interim measures which help protect an enormously important part of Scotland's heritage. We are currently working with a number of other groups and organisations to put together a strategy to protect the entire bay from the effects of natural erosion.

This year Historic Scotland will also be trying out two alternative surfacing materials on paths at Skara Brae. Both have been a success at Stonehenge and may prove a hard-wearing and visually sympathetic alternative to the existing hard stone paths used in Orkney. Mr Watt said:

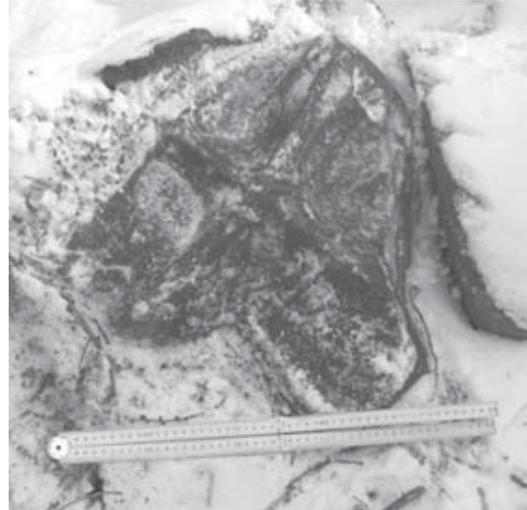
A group of us travelled to Stonehenge last summer to see what we could learn from their experience in developing path surfaces that are long-lasting, easy for visitors to use, and do not look out of place near an ancient monument. We were very impressed with what we found. In some places they have a special turf which can take a lot of wear and tear and elsewhere they have artificial green matting which is coloured to blend in with the surroundings and is very slip resistant. We are going to try these out in a couple of areas and monitor them for 18 months to see if they would be appropriate at Skara Brae.

A stretch of artificial matting will be laid in coming weeks and turf will be introduced in the spring – neither project will interfere the Skara Brae visitor experience.

Historic Scotland press release 20 January 2009

Two new EC finds come to light

Glendochart, Stirlingshire



Lorna Main © Copyright Stirling Council

A small relief-carved cross was found in December 2008 during track improvements in forestry. The nearby early chapel site of Suie has a pillar bearing two incised crosses.

Information supplied by Lorna Main, Regional Archaeologist for Stirling Council.

Inchinnan, Renfrewshire



Steve Wallace, © Crown Copyright: RCAHMS

In January of this year, a fragment of relief-carved sculpture was discovered at the edge of the Black Cart Water, Inchinnan, bearing what may be part of a cross and possible figurative carving. Nearby, Inchinnan New Parish Church houses a small collection of early medieval sculpture: a recumbent cross-slab, part of a large freestanding cross, and a shrine or sarcophagus lid.

Information supplied by Stephen Clancy.

John Borland

Beakers, Bones & Birnie

Moray Society Conference, Saturday 25 April, St Giles Church, Elgin High Street

The morning session will focus on work at Birnie and the afternoon will be devoted to features of the local Bronze Age. Guided archaeological walks in the area are planned for Sunday 26th.

For details, contact: <curator@elginmuseum.org.uk> or telephone 01343 543675.

Pictish-Cross-Word

Compiled by Ron Dutton

ACROSS

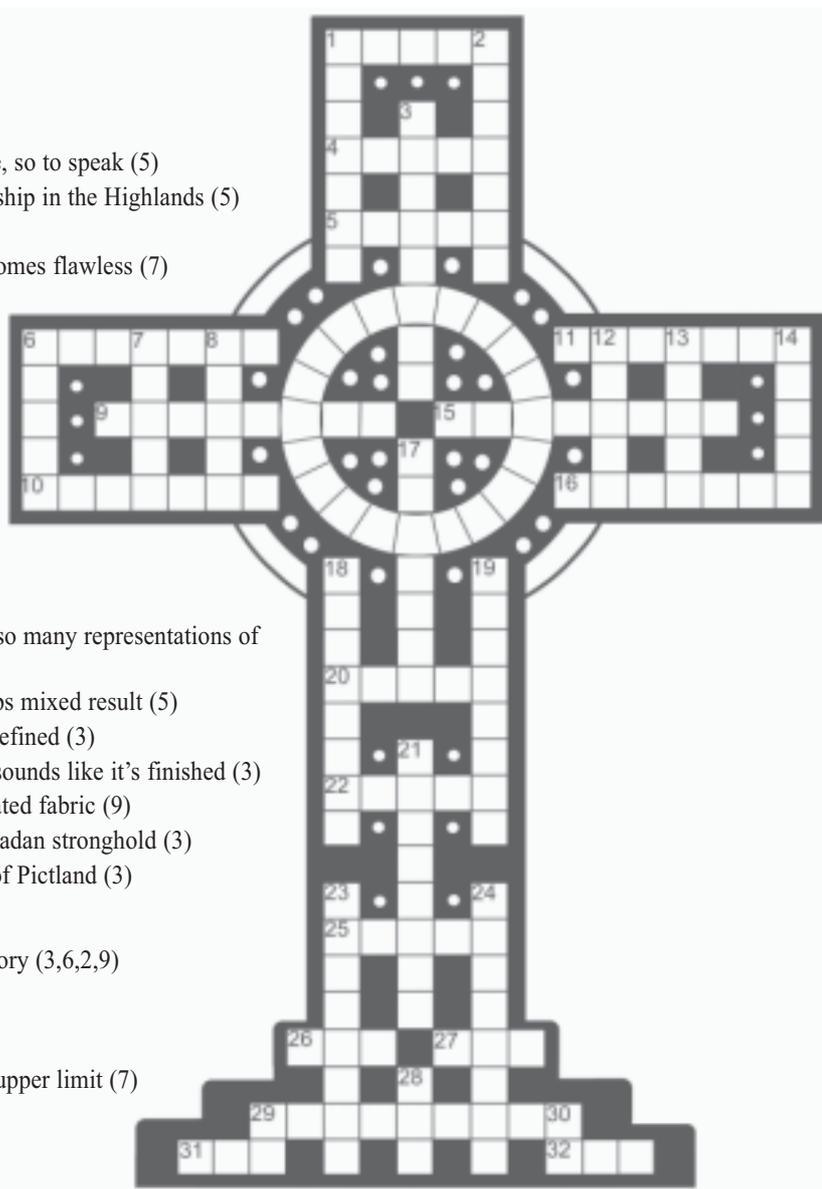
- 1 A classical style in Aberdeenshire, so to speak (5)
- 4 Even now, evidence of spirit worship in the Highlands (5)
- 5 From as far east as Ian? (5)
- 6 Latin through terminal effect becomes flawless (7)
- 9 Turn toad into Pictish fort (8)
- 10 Symmetrical cross with insular name (7)
- 11 An animal frequently spotted in Pictish times (7)
- 15 Home to distilleries and Pictish stones, this settlement sounds non-functional (8)
- 16 Gift is here now (7)
- 20 Clandestine meeting of poets (5)
- 22 St Mark's share of the blame for so many representations of these (5)
- 25 Equipment of Pictish warrior reaps mixed result (5)
- 26 Minced culinary fish ovary is unrefined (3)
- 27 This typically iron-age structure sounds like it's finished (3)
- 29 Entwinement between the perforated fabric (9)
- 31 Augment river flowing past Dalriadan stronghold (3)
- 32 Name of eminence across much of Pictland (3)

ROUNDEL(clockwise)

- 15 A seminal moment in Pictish history (3,6,2,9)

DOWN

- 1 Deer's patron saint? (7)
- 2 Shattered ice and heather set the upper limit (7)
- 3 Left with dark overtones (8)
- 6 Biblical song (5)
- 7 Glitch of seismic proportions (5)
- 8 Irritated by having to traverse? (5)
- 12 Go into the center if you lose a hundred (5)
- 13 On board, they're more expendable than the rest (5)
- 14 Early attempt sounds like an unwelcome breeze (5)
- 17 Unitarian anathema (7)
- 18 The attire is competent and right for the purpose (8)
- 19 The conventional way to align a church (4-4)
- 21 A confused mole, she's become a big issue (8)
- 23 Failure to do this links hasp and pirate together (8)
- 24 Turn bail into judicial authority (8)
- 28 Runabout vessel (3)
- 29 Psychologically and legally, you're nobody without it (2)
- 30 Classical conjunction that's out of this world (2)



Solution to puzzle in PAS News 49



The Mugdrum Cross

I got involved again with this lovely, haunting stone, which I occasionally take folk to visit as it is only 10 minutes up the road from Collessie (home of the warrior stone), as I was asked to speak to the Newburgh History Group about the art of the cross on my Mugdrum textile hanging, the original of which is now on permanent exhibition at the Laing Museum in Newburgh.

The Mugdrum Cross is a rather lonely old stone that hides amongst the trees of Mugdrum Estate on the outskirts of Newburgh. It has had a shady history, not just from overgrown trees, but also from history in general. According to Isabel Henderson, the tall, broken shaft of a once glorious cross is 'undoubtedly Pictish' and presents the Kingship theme of the Royal Hunt on late stones.

A series of horsemen, singular and grouped, hazily appear above a panel of deer and dogs, the deer being in the final stage of defeat with crossed legs, having forfeited their chances. Only one side is sculpted, and one edge displays a rather fine 'inhabited vine scroll' motif with medieval style fantastic creatures such as the griffin and the winged horse.

Recently, a local history buff, Janet Bayne, has been looking at the Mugdrum Cross with fresh eyes and she sees a different set of historical puzzles, and considers that the stone is not Pictish at all, that it is not on its original site, that its socket stone is wrong, and that it might well be one and the same as the now lost Macduff's Cross, of which only the base survives. These proposals are worthy of consideration, so perhaps she might be invited to present her case at a future PAS meeting and give us a chance to examine the evidence.

Marianna Lines



FREE ADMISSION TO MUSEUM FOR 2009

Talks

Mostly on Thursdays in Fortrose Community Theatre (01381 621252) at 7.30pm. Admission £3.00 (Members £1.50) Please check dates beforehand to avoid disappointment.

26 June Annual Academic Lecture

Pict Apart: unity and division among the Picts, 650–850

Dr James Fraser

Lecturer in Early Scottish History and Culture, The University of Edinburgh

16 July Townships, timber, and trees in the late-medieval Highlands

Dr Alasdair Ross, Lecturer in History, Research Centre for Environmental History, The University of Stirling

27 August New Discoveries of early medieval sculpture at St Vigeans

Dr Jane Geddes, Senior Lecturer, History of Art, Aberdeen University

10 September Discovering the real Robinson Crusoe – excavations on a Pacific Island

Dr David H Caldwell, Keeper of Scotland and Europe, National Museums Scotland

27 October The Making of Time Team *Professor Mick Aston, Emeritus Professor at Bristol University, and Honorary Visiting Professor at Durham and Exeter Universities*

Venue, time and admission cost to be announced.

Exhibitions in Groam House Museum

Until 13 April 2009

Rosehaugh – then and now

1 May 2009–11 April 2010

George Bain: Games and Gatherings

To mark Scotland's Year of Homecoming

Opening hours 2009

7–29 March: Weekend only (2.00–4.00pm)

4–13 April: Easter, daily (2.00–4.30pm)

18–26 April: Weekend only (2.00–4.00pm)

1 May–31 October: Daily (Mon–Sat 10.00am–5.00pm; Sun: 2.00–4.30pm)

1–6 December: Weekend only (2.00–4.00pm)

Groam House Museum

High Street, Rosemarkie, Ross-shire
IV10 8UF

Museum Tel: 01381 620961; Office Tel: 01463 811883 Email: curator@groamhouse.org.uk
[www: groamhouse.org.uk](http://www.groamhouse.org.uk)

Cultural Icons of Medieval Scotland

Conference at the University of Aberdeen
22–23 July 2009

Free of charge and open to all

Pictish Stones of St Vigean

Book of Deer :: St Ninian's Isle Hoard

Monyusk Reliquary :: Stone of Destiny

Skail Silver Hoard :: Aberdeen Breviary

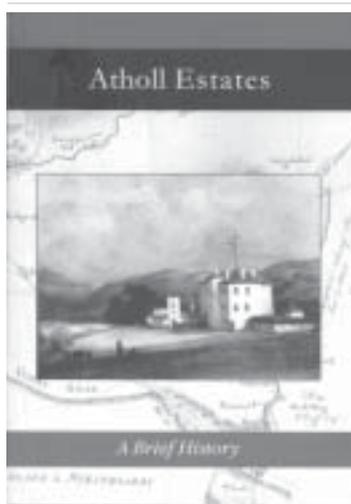
Declaration of Arbroath

Speakers: Dauvit Broun (Glasgow), Ewan Campbell (Glasgow), Ted Cowan (Glasgow), Peter Davidson (Aberdeen), David Dumville (Aberdeen), Jane Geddes (Aberdeen), Ragnall Ó Floinn (National Museum of Ireland), Heather Pulliam (Edinburgh), Gareth Williams (British Museum), Alex Woolf (St Andrews), Louise Yeoman (BBC), Susan Youngs (Oxford)

For details see:

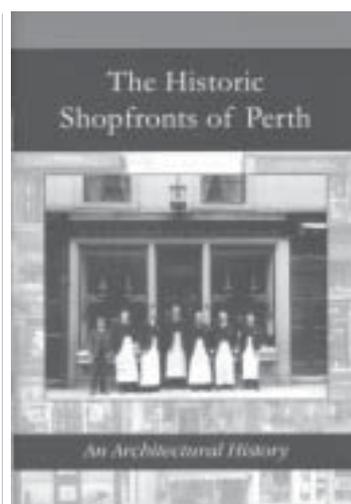
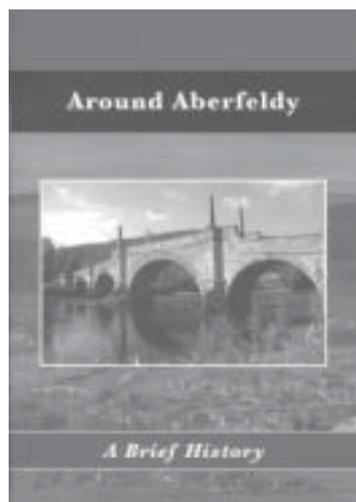
www.abdn.ac.uk/celtic/Deerconfdetail.pdf

Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust: latest publications



Written by Blair Castle archivist Jane Anderson, and produced in partnership with Atholl Estates, *Atholl Estates: a brief history* is a colourful account of the estate, the castle and the life of those who lived and worked there. The 36-page full-colour booklet is also richly illustrated with over fifty historic maps and early photographs from the remarkable archive at the castle.

Written by Clare Thomas of Breadalbane Heritage Society and David Strachan of Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust, *Around Aberfeldy: a brief history* is an account of the changing landscape and lives of those who have occupied upper Strathtay since the end of the last Ice Age. The 36-page full-colour booklet is richly illustrated with historic maps, reconstruction drawings, and early photographs, and also includes a gazetteer of the important sites and monuments in the area.



Written by Dr Lindsay Lennie of Historic Scotland, *The Historic Shopfronts of Perth: An Architectural History*, is a comprehensive account of the development of shops in Perth. Using a rich array of images and archive material, this 36-page full-colour booklet brings to life the changing face of the shopfronts and streets of Perth.

< www.pkht.org.uk >

Price £3 each – from the Trust's Office, the AK Bell Library, and Perth Museum and Art Gallery.
Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust, The Lodge, 4 York Place, Perth, PH2 8EP

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• Harris Tweed bags, hats & purses

• Handwoven shawls

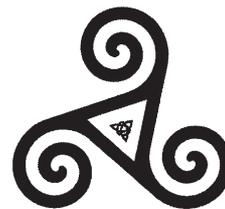
• Jewellery

• Carved stones & wall hangings

• Books (Celtic art & history)

• Stained glass

• Textiles (Throws, Scarves and Serapes)



164 - 166 Canongate Edinburgh EH8 8DD Tel 0131 557 2967 Email - canongatejandc@aol.com

www.canongatecrafts.co.uk

Pictish Arts Society, c/o Pictavia, Haughmuir, Brechin, Angus DD9 6RL

The deadline for PAS Newsletter 51 is 16 May 2009. Send contributions to
<pas.news@btconnect.com> or to The Editor, PAS News at above address.