pictish arts society journal 9

spring 96

EDITORIAL

The *Pictish Arts Society Journal* seems to be going from strength to strength. This present volume has a rich diversity of contributions from the emeritus professor to the absolute amateur.

Professor Leslie Alcock opens with a new look at the primitive, rudimentary symbols which he terms *ur*-symbols. The fully developed pictographs must be seen as far too elaborate to have originated all at once. The *ur*-symbols, on the other hand, found on cave walls and moveable slabs could have been subsequently modified, decorated and stereotyped.

The prolific Craig Cessford, assuming that Pictish stones were originally brightly painted, suggests which colours were applied to Pictish stones by looking at those documented in contemporary poetry.

Niall M. Robertson reports on his so-called 'find of a lifetime' — an elaborately decorated slab found in the crypt of the Old Parish Church at Tarbat, Easter Ross in 1995. A simple cross-slab found by David Henry at Tarbat the year before is also noted.

Michael Newton shows that evidence and resonances of the Picts can be found within the huge corpus of Gaelic lore, but much work still requires to be carried out in this field.

Graeme Cruickshank provides us with a review of the 1995 International Congress of Celtic Studies which was held in Edinburgh. He was disappointed at the low level of Pictish coverage and by organisational problems at the conference. Graeme gives details of relevant papers.

Jim Brodie presents his own interpretation of the Pictish symbols which has an emphasis on arable agriculture.

We have shorter notes on 'Vanora's Grave' at Meigle by Sheila McGregor, an interpretation of part of the Meigle 2 cross-slab by Katrin Thier and Eva Grau-du Mont, and a note on Pictish silver with respect to the Gododdin poem — Craig Cessford again!

Peter Yeoman reports on the 1995 excavations on the Isle of May. A Pictish Arts Society Field Trip is being organised to visit this interesting site in August 1996. Further details will be available in due course.

Apart from our usual Book Reviews, starting in this volume I have instigated a new section entitled 'Paper Clips'. In her article in *A Pictish Panorama*, Isabel Henderson remarked that keeping up with the literature is a formidable task — one of the current problems of the Picts! In this new section I propose to give brief reviews of some topical papers relating to Pictish studies and I hope that this will be a helpful follow-on from *A Pictish Bibliography*. Copies of the *Panorama* are still available — please contact the Secretary for details.

Comments about, or contributions to, the *Pictish Arts Society Journal* should be sent to;

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Cover design by Nick Simpson, photograph by Tom E Gray.

Ur–Symbols in the Pictograph-system of the Picts

Leslie Alcock

'The feeble subjectivism of stylistic analysis and typology',
(Professor Rosemary Cramp 1974).

In or around the fifth century AD, two Insular Celtic peoples invented symbols which enabled them to make permanent public statements — literally written in the rock — about individual families, and possibly about status as well; these statements may also have asserted a claim to land. The Irish symbols, twenty groupings of lines and dots, were alphabetic in the sense that each symbol represented a sound in the Irish language. This was the Ogam script (McManus 1991).

The Picts, by contrast, created 25 (or more on some reckoning: but 'realistic' animals are deliberately excluded from this note). Unlike other systems of writing throughout Europe, these symbols were not alphabetic. Instead, they may have represented elements in two- or three-element titles — like that which Adomnán translated into Latin as *primarius cohortis* (VC I.33); or two paired names, like Oengus [son of] Wuirguist; or two element individual names, like Wuir-guist. From the limited number of combinations which this system allows, Samson has convincingly argued that this third explanation is the most likely (1992).

While the Ogam alphabetic system is conceptually more sophisticated than that of the Pictish one, the individual pictographs are considerably more complicated than the bundles of one to five lines or dots of Ogam. Though each symbol is quite stereotyped, there is considerable variety between the symbols. Moreover, many of them have open fields which lend themselves to considerable variety.

Consequently, the main study of the Pictish symbols (with certain honourable exceptions: Thomas 1963; Henderson 1971) has been concentrated not on their social function, or on the kind of statements which they are making, but on artistic aspects, conceived in terms of modern aesthetics. In particular, typological analysis has been deployed to establish place of origin, stylistic development and chronology.

One of the leading principles of that analysis has been that of the 'declining symbol': the belief that the most elaborately decorated of any symbol must be the one first invented, with subsequent versions falling away from the original (Stevenson 1955, 1980, fig 15; Henderson 1967, fig 18; critical analysis by Murray 1986). In methodological terms, this approach has been very reasonably condemned, in relation to rather more elaborate sculpture, by Professor Rosemary Cramp, author of the motto which heads this paper (Cramp 1974, 133).

The inspiration of the present study is the belief that the fully developed pictographs, as presented in the tables of Romilly Allen (Allen & Anderson 1903, II, 57–128) and their derivatives (e.g. Stevenson 1955, 1980, fig 14; Henderson 1967, fig 12; Jackson 1984, fig 2; Samson 1992, fig 4) are too elaborate to have originated all at once, as though they had sprung fully formed from the head of some Pictish Zeus.

The first discovery of what are here classed as *ur*-symbols, (though they were not recognised as such at the time), was made at Dunnicaer off the Kincardine coast early in the nineteenth century, and was published in the *Proceedings* of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (Thomson 1860), and in Stuart's two volumes on the sculptured stones of Scotland (1856, pl xli; 1867, pl xv). The format and location of these symbols was itself uncanonical, in that they were inscribed not on boulders or rough stele, but on quite small slabs or plaques, which had originally been set up on an almost unclimbable sea stack (recent account, Alcock & Alcock 1992, 276–81).

The two best examples of *ur*-symbols were: first, two contiguous circles, each with a dot in the centre; and second, a crescent, not with a V-rod, but impaled on an equilateral triangle. Of the two circles, Allen himself commented that this was 'perhaps intended for the double disc symbol', and of the crescent-and-triangle, he suggested that it 'may be the earliest form of the crescent and V-shaped rod symbol' (Allen & Anderson 1903, III, 201). These comments fit very well the concept of the *ur*-symbol.

At Dunnicaer, there is another equilateral triangle on a slab which also bears a rather poorly drawn salmon. There may also be a triangle with a dot at Court Cave, East Wemyss (Ritchie & Stevenson 1993, fig 25.3g), while in the Sculptor's Cave, Covesea there is a pentagram also with a central dot, and another without the dot (Allen and Anderson 1903, III, fig 135A). Neither the triangle nor the pentagram appear in the standard Pictish Class I repertory, but it may be that they were *ur*-symbols which were not adopted canonically.

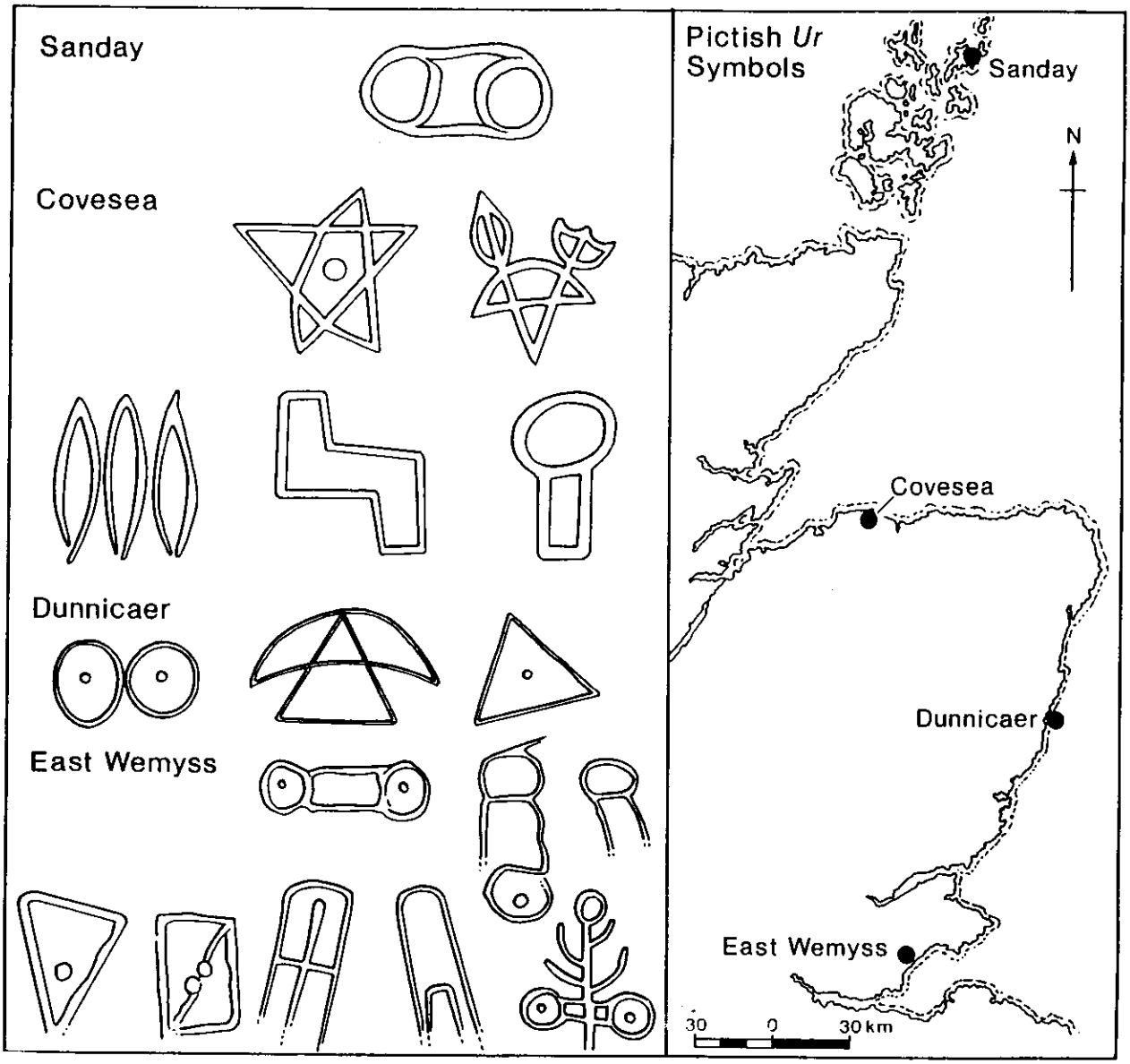

Fig. 1. Characteristic *ur*-symbols and their distribution.

Another plaque with an *ur*-symbol has recently been discovered in a Pictish settlement at Pool on the island of Sanday, Orkney (Hunter 1990, 185–87, with ill 10.8). In this case, the symbol is a primitive form of the double-disc in which the bar which joins the discs is as wide as the diameter of the discs themselves. The find-circumstances suggest that the plaque had been deliberately buried in the floor of a building. A full account of the discovery is eagerly awaited, especially the documentation of the series of radiocarbon dates which 'indicated that a date in the fifth or sixth-century was applicable' (Hunter 1986).

At least one double disc on the wall of Jonathan's Cave, East Wemyss has this same feature of a very wide bar between the discs (Ritchie and Stevenson 1993, fig 25.5d). Moreover, the overall assemblage of the symbols in the East Wemyss caves differs in interesting ways from the canonical Class I assemblage as set out by Allen (Allen and Anderson 1903, II, 58–79). For instance, in Allen's list there are only four occurrences of double discs as against twenty-five double discs with Z-rods: at East Wemyss there is only one with a Z-rod against at least nine

without. On the other hand, two of the East Wemyss double discs are crossed vertically by a branched rod, rather like a skeletal Christmas tree (Ritchie and Stevenson 1993, fig 25.3c, fig 25.3f). It may be surmised that these two are *ur*-forms of the Z-rod.

Very common in Allen's list are crescents, especially with V-rods, but they appear to be totally absent from East Wemyss. There is indeed one from Covesea, but unlike the canonical form the crescent lacks ornamental infilling. This is a common feature among the *ur*-symbols. We have already seen it in the case of the double disc and the crescent with triangle at Dunnicaer. To these we can add the two double discs with very idiosyncratic floriated Z-rods from that site. At Covesea the triple oval, step, rectangle and rectangle with disc symbols, all canonical in their outlines, likewise lack internal decoration.

The overall differences between the symbols in the caves and on the Dunnicaer and Sanday plaques on the one hand, and those on slabs and boulders in the open air on the other, have been treated here as evidence that a varied range of pictographs might be ancestral to the canonical Class I symbols. Several explanations and arguments to the contrary are possible: (1) that the use of caves was casual, and the pictographs are merely scribbles; (2) that the caves were often dark, which inhibited open-air standards of craftmanship; (3) that the rock surface was rough, again inhibiting good standards; (4) that the cave symbols are at the end, rather than at the beginning of the sequence.

These counter-arguments are untenable: (1) caves are often dark, mysterious, even numinous places, and the Sculptor's Cave was certainly used for burials; (2) the darkness of French and Iberian caves did not inhibit the skills of Upper Palæolithic painters and engravers; (3) the intractable nature of crystalline granite was not an obstacle to the sculptor of the richly-ornamented Elgin cross-stele; (4) it would surely be a remarkable typological sequence in which the final phase abandoned totally the decorated infilling, while retaining the stereotyped forms of earlier phases.

In conclusion, a case has been argued that, before the appearance of the 'stereotyped' symbols (Stevenson's expression: 1955, 99) of Allen's classified list (Allen & Anderson 1903, II, 57), there is evidence throughout Pictland that pictographs were being carved both on the living rock and on movable plaques and slabs. What the meaning of those symbols was, we cannot begin to guess. Nevertheless, we can infer that the *ur*-symbols were subsequently modified, embellished and stereotyped, in order to make public and permanent statements which could be understood throughout Pictland.

What we cannot demonstrate is what the social imperative was which required and regularised symbols; still less, what the social power or authority was which could enforce the acceptance of the newly-devised stereotypes. Almost 30 years ago, Henderson (1967, 112) invoked the power of a king wielding wide authority, and it would be difficult to query this in general terms: but this poses the question, which king? It may be questioned whether either our historical knowledge of Pictish royalty, or our archaeological knowledge of artefact chronology is full enough, or sound enough, to answer that question. But a moderately informed guess might now favour Bruide son of Maelchon (*c*.556-584) more strongly than was the case in 1967.

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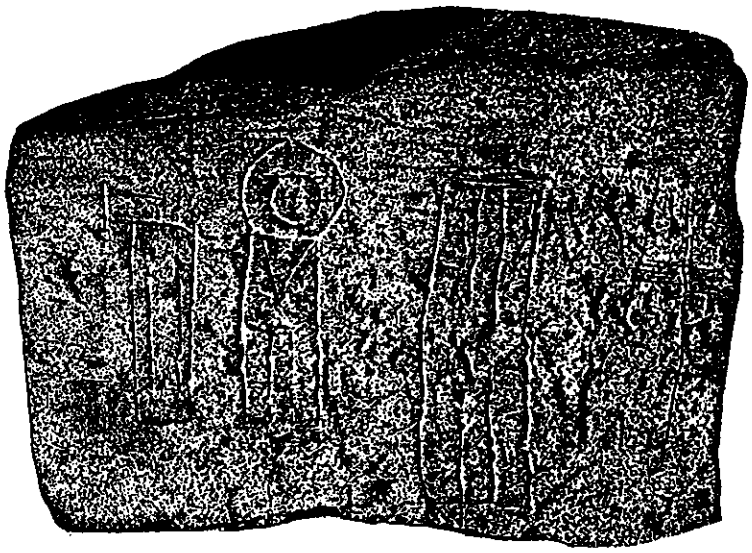

Stone found during excavations of the Broch of Gurness, Aikerness, Orkney in 1935 (drawn by JRF Burt © 1991).

Colouring the Stones

Craig Cessford

The Pictish symbol stones as they survive are monochrome carvings but it is likely that they were originally painted with bright colours (c.f. Richardson 1964; Thomas 1963, 31; Ritchie 1989, 33). Certainly Pictish symbols carved on silver objects made full use of colour by utilising vivid red enamel which would have stood out in sharp contrast from the silver background (Bateson 1981, 61). The Northumbrian neighbours of the Picts painted their sculpture (Cramp and Croyn 1990; Lang 1990). Most of the surviving Northumbrian evidence is of a white [limewash] gesso base with red [haematite] on top, though there is also evidence of black [carbon]. Unfortunately no traces of paint on Pictish sculpture survive (although one, possibly two, of the St Andrews school slabs have a vestige), yet the entire visual impact of the Pictish symbols could be altered by the addition of colours. It might also have important implications for our understanding of the meaning of the symbols. Could identical carvings have been painted with different colours and thus been given different meanings? Were there parts of the designs that were just painted and not carved for which no traces survive?

Can we attempt to decide what colours the Picts used? One approach would be to use the Northumbrian evidence. Unfortunately this is so scanty that it is not a very useful source and it is likely that it is biased in favour of mineral based pigments such as haematite [red] that survive well. In general the Anglo-Saxon evidence suggests the use of white, black, blackish, red, dark red, reddish brown, pink, yellow, cream, grey-brown, green, blue and purple derived from a limited range of pigments that were mixed together to provide as wide a range of colours as possible (Cather *et al* 1990, xiv–xv). This list provides a good starting point for considering colour on Pictish sculpture but does not take us very far.

The raw materials from which pigments are derived have occasionally been found in excavations. At Coppergate in York pieces of haematite and orpiment [yellow] were recovered. However, these pigments could be used on materials other than stone, such as wood or leather (Tweddle 1990, 152–53). Orpiment has been found at Dunadd and though it could have been used in manuscripts (Campbell 1987, 113) it may have been intended for sculpture.

If we assume that because Pictish sculpture was relatively naturalistic the colours used were also realistic, educated guesses could be made about some of them, in particular artefacts or animal species. However, as Nerys Ann Jones has shown the horse colours in the *Gododdin* poem concentrate on the unusual rather than the typical (1993, 5–6) and colours on sculpture may also have done this. Certainly Anglo-Saxon art often used colour in a non-naturalistic way showing a 'tendency to use colour in an abstract, even expressionistic, manner' (Alexander 1975, 153). One possible approach is to use contemporary poetry. If we think of Pictish sculpture as a visual public statement by the Pictish aristocracy, then heroic poetry, which often describes the colour of items, is also an aristocratic statement and both may have treated colour in a similar manner. One problem is that Celtic colour terms are often vague and difficult to translate accurately as there is often a range of slightly different meanings. For example a term may mean blue, greenish-blue or green. The objects in Table 1 occur on Pictish sculpture and have colour descriptions in the *Gododdin* poem.

This list, while it only covers a small selection of the objects depicted on Pictish sculpture, nonetheless provides a vivid impression of how colourful the sculpture may once have been. This comes out most forcefully on the Aberlemno battle scene (see Trench-Jellicoe 1994, fig. 5). It depicts horses (white/grey/sorrel/bay/red), men (red), armour (dark blue/red), clothing (red/purple/yellow), swords (blue/red), spears (yellow/red), shields (white), saddles (yellow), harnesses (dark blue), cheeks (white), foreheads (grey), hair (grey), a corpse (red), a raven (black) and a torc (yellow). Imagining the scene painted in these colours produces a very different impression from the monument we see today.

Table 1

Object	Term	Colour
Armour	creuled	blood stained (red)
	gwrmgaen	dark blue
	gwrmseirch	dark blue
Blades	coch	red
	glas	blue
	lledrudd	blood stained (red)
	rhudd	blood stained (red)
Cheeks	gwyn	white
Clothing	adwyar	blood stained (red)
	aur	gold (yellow)[1]
	brithwe	blood stained (red)
	porffor	purple
	rhudd	blood stained (red)
Corpses	cochwedd	blood stained (red)
Forehead	talfrith	grey
Hair	cynllwyd	grey
Harness	gwrmseirch	dark blue
Horns	glas	pale
Horses	can	white
	ceinion	white
	cochre	sorrel
	erchlas	dapple grey
	gweilion	grey
	lledrudd	blood stained (red)
	meinell	bay
	meinllwyd	grey
Men	lledrudd	blood stained (red)
	gworudd	bloodied (red)
Ravens	du	black
Saddles	gell	yellow
Shields	calch	chalked (white)
	gwyn	white
Sockets	gwrmwn	dark blue
Spears	creuddai	blood covered (red)
	gell	yellow
	gwyarllyd	blood stained (red)
	hiriell	yellow
	rhudd	blood stained (red)
Swords	coch	red
	glas	blue[2]
	glasog	blue
Torcs	aur	gold (yellow)[1]

(Jarman 1988)

NOTES

1. Though see Cessford, C 'Pictish Silver and the Gododdin poem' in this edition of *Pictish Arts Soc J.*
2. Also in the Fragmentary Irish Annals verse on the Battle of Dunnichen, see Cruickshank 1991, 22.

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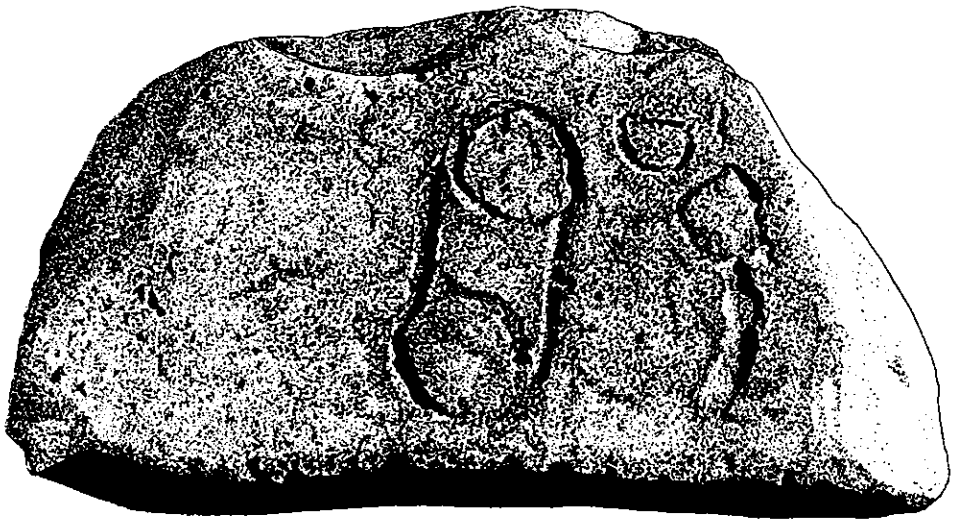

Stone found built into a 6th century domestic structure at Pool, Sanday
(drawn by JRF Burt, © 1991)

New Discoveries of Pictish Carved Stones at Tarbat, Easter Ross

Niall M Robertson

The second season of excavations on the site of a probable Pictish monastery around Tarbat Old Parish Church, Portmahomack, took place between 14th August and 8th September 1995. Under the direction of Professor Martin Carver of the University of York, students and volunteers (including the writer) opened up a large area in the second field south of the kirkyard, expanding the trench opened there in 1994 and uncovering many interesting structures. The weather during the first two weeks of the excavation was unusually dry (so much so that the cropmark of the huge ditch that encloses the putative monastery was visible from ground level). The weather was more changeable in the last two weeks, which leads us obliquely to the discovery of the most important new stone to be mentioned here.

During the excavation (which will hopefully be covered in detail in future editions of this journal), the clearance of the Old Parish Church's Medieval crypt was completed under the direction of freelance archaeologist Jill Harden, with the help of volunteers from Easter Ross and members of the dig crew. This had been ongoing for a number of years as a necessary precursor to the architectural programme of works required to save this 18th century Grade A listed building with its earlier, Medieval crypt. The barrel-vaulted crypt, which is now entered through a trap-door in the floor at the centre of the building, was largely filled up with various rubbish in the 18th century, during the rebuilding of the kirk which produced the present building. The fill included kirkyard earth full of animal bone, building rubble and architectural fragments, small pieces of ironwork and leather and other items. It also included two small pieces of Pictish carved stones: the smaller one shows part of the edge of a panel of chip-carved spiral ornament, and the other consists of three conjoining fragments of a thin slab sheared off a thicker monument, with part of an incised design of concentric circles and interlace.

As the original floor and walls of the crypt were gradually uncovered, it became obvious, from the dressing visible on the edges of several stones, that the vault had various re-used slabs built into it. On Saturday 2nd September work on the excavation was rained off for most of the day, and I took the opportunity to observe the continuing work in the crypt, and to have a look for any carved stones that might be built into the now visible walls.

Jill was there, trowelling the last of the crypt fill with a couple of local helpers. Also present was Elizabeth Marshall, former Curator of Groam House Museum in Rosemarkie, who happened to be visiting the Old Parish Church, in which an exhibition on the history of the site was on display during the dig. I took a torch and started peering through the gaps between the stones forming the vault, to try to spot any carvings on the inner faces. I soon noticed a promising slab, from which the rubbish had only recently been dug away, about two feet up at the south-east corner of the chamber, a relatively long piece of grey fine-grained sandstone whose edge had obviously been carefully dressed.

Nothing was visible on the top of the slab, which was completely covered by clay bonding, but by lying on my back on the floor and looking upwards I could light the underside with the torch, the clay having fallen away. I found Dark Age carvings looking back at me. Elizabeth asked me if I'd found a Pictish stone and there was considerable excitement when I said 'Yes!'

The stone is still *in situ* and removing it would require the propping up of the rest of the vault, so the drawing reproduced here (fig. 2) is rather impressionistic. On the lower face (which I saw first), are parts of two panels. The upper panel, below what is probably the original upper edge of the slab, outlined on both faces by a wide plain margin, contains two animals in relief of which only the hindquarters are presently visible. The lower beast has a long tail, while the upper animal lacks one. The exact identity of these creatures must remain unclear until the slab is removed from the wall. A narrow margin separates the upper panel from a larger one containing certainly two and possibly originally three ecclesiastics in false relief (i.e. with the background sunk to let the figures stand out). It is only possible to see the figure nearest the edge at all clearly: he faces outwards, and large oval eyes, a nose and a mouth are visible, as is an apparently forked beard. He is holding up a book, and the drapery of his robe is indicated by very shallow incised lines.

The next figure is shown very approximately in the drawing, a reflection of the difficulty of seeing shallow incised carving by torchlight through a gap only about one centimetre wide. The figure does not seem to be exactly the same as the outermost one, however. The ecclesiastics/monks/saints are separated by a sunken area. A second recessed area appears beyond the second figure, with the edge of a possible third figure barely visible beyond. A row of three ecclesiastics would be an interesting parallel to the well-known image on the Invergowrie 1 cross-slab (Allen and Anderson 1903, fig. 266B), but the carving at Tarbat is considerably more delicate and not so stylised.

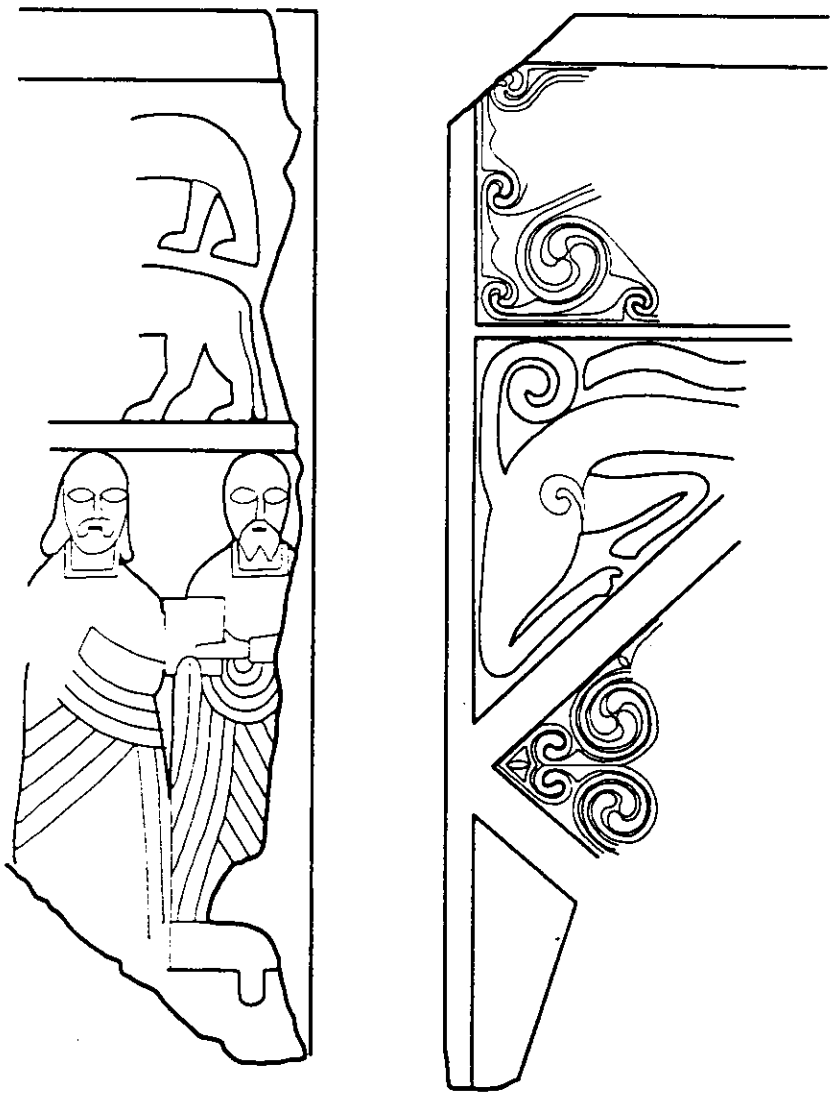

Fig. 2. The new stone discovered by NM Robertson in 1995.

(Scale 1:5)

Jill used a leaf trowel to clean the clay bonding off the upper face of the slab. The stones making up the lower part of the vault are bedded in clay, which can be removed with minimal risk of damage. The upper surface soon proved to have carvings of high quality as well, on several panels divided by plain margins. Below an upper rectangular panel, of fine scroll-work in low relief, is a presumably triangular panel, into which a leaping beast with a curly tail and a Pictish-style joint scroll has been fitted. This defines a possibly diamond-shaped area containing similar scrollwork to the upper panel. A diamond-shaped panel would be otherwise

unknown in Early Medieval sculpture in Scotland with the exception of one on the inscribed stone from Tarbat, Tarbat 10 (Allen and Anderson, 1903, III, 94–95; Higgitt 1982).

An obliquely sloping margin which appears to start from the lower edge of the putatively diamond-shaped panel is also very unusual, though how it fits into the overall design is presently impossible to say.

The flat triple-scrolled roundels on the two panels are strongly reminiscent of those on the spiral ornament panel on the Shandwick Stone, located only a few miles from Portmahomack (Allen and Anderson 1903, III, 68–73), and one of the interesting things about the newly discovered stone is the way it expands the number of motifs known in the corpus of sculpture from Tarbat.

The animals on both sides are reminiscent of the lively beast art of Class II cross-slabs from Angus and Perthshire, while the 'rib-robed', book-holding ecclesiastics have parallels not only at Invergowrie but also in Meigle 29 (Allan and Anderson 1903, fig. 355), Meigle A1 and 14 (Ashmore 1995, 17; Stuart 1856, pl. 93, no. 10), Lethendy (Fisher and Greenhill 1972) and probably also in Fortingall 1 (Allen and Anderson 1903, fig. 553). Monks with books — in this case carried in book satchels — are also found on two stones from Papil in Shetland (Laing 1993). All these (except Lethendy) are likely sites of major early churches or monasteries, and the occurrence of ecclesiastics at Tarbat lends further strength to the arguments that it was the site of a Pictish monastery.

Detailed artistic analysis must wait for a decision as to whether the slab will be removed from the vault and (hopefully) put on display in the projected museum ('Tarbat Discovery Centre', due to open by 1998) in the Old Parish Church, but it has clearly been a major monument with carving of a notably high standard. It has suffered some damage, particularly on the lower edge, but the carving elsewhere is crisp and unweathered. The stone has been part of a larger slab with has been cut into two or more pieces — presumably to render it into conveniently sized blocks for re-use as building material in the crypt. The ascertainable dimensions of the rediscovered piece are broken length 710mm, broken width 240mm, thickness 180mm.

The original form of the monument is an intriguing question. If there were originally a row of three figures on one side, balanced by a symmetrical diamond-shaped panel on the other, the proportions of the stone would have been distinctly tall and narrow — especially if a considerable length is missing below the break. Perhaps it was a 'pillar stone' rather than a cross-slab. Could it even have been a cross-shaft ? — for, if it was a cross-slab, where is the cross?[1].

The discovery of this stone naturally prompted a search for other early carvings in the crypt walls, but no other certain examples were found. It is likely that more exist, however, and since the vault will have to be repointed at some stage in the restoration of the Old Parish Church, there is a good chance that further stones will be identified. One interesting slab was noted re-used as a lintel in the north-east air vent — a long, thin, finely dressed stone, probably tapering, with a small edge-roll along the two visible arrises. This is likely to have been a cross-shaft, of later date than the possibly 8th century Pictish carving.

More carved stones are likely to be revealed above ground too, since it is hoped that the church restoration will involve stripping the walls of external harling and the interior wood lining and plaster. Considering a parallel, most of the Pictish and Early Medieval stones now in the museum at St Vigeans were found in the course of a comparable programme of restoration and rebuilding in the church there in 1871 (Duke 1873). Partial unblocking of an arch at the west end of Tarbat Old has already revealed a tiny fragment of carved interlace of the highest quality re-used as one of the stones forming the arch.

The final stone to be described here is a much simpler one, identified on 14th May 1994. David Henry and I had travelled north the previous day to attend the annual Groam House Lecture in Rosemarkie. Having spent the night in the village, we set off on the 14th to see some of the local Pictish sites, including Tarbat Old Parish Church. The church itself was shut, but we had a look round the large kirkyard for any ancient sculptures that might be lying about. Before five minutes had passed, David had found a simple cross-slab built sideways into the inner face of the southern kirkyard wall, a metre or two east of a large mural monument. It is perhaps surprising that no-one had recorded the stone before, but perhaps the sun was in a particularly helpful position to show it up when we were there.

We considered that the cross-slab should be removed from the wall, where it was vulnerable to weathering and vandalism, and be handed into the care of some responsible person. We carefully took it out of the wall — it was only loosely mortared in position — and handed it

over to Ian Fisher of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland later the same day at an event at Edderton. Ian took it south to Edinburgh to be properly recorded for the National Monuments Record, and it was returned to Tarbat on the occasion of the Pictish Arts Society field-trip there during the 1994 Dingwall Conference.[2]

The stone is a small narrow slab of Isabel Henderson's Class IV type (i.e. having a cross but no other ornament) (Henderson 1987), carved on one face with a plain long-shafted cross in relief, the upper arm of the cross being longer than the side arms. The stone may originally have been a little longer, with a plain butt to insert into the ground or a socket stone. The present dimensions, kindly supplied by Ian Fisher, are: length 335mm, maximum width 130mm, width of top arm 65mm, height of side arm 60mm.

The stone was probably originally used as a grave-marker, but its extreme simplicity makes it impossible to date closely, except as 'Early Christian', and it could have been carved at any time between the 8th and 12th centuries.

NOTES

1. It is suggested above that we seem to have the original top edge of the slab, but it is at present inaccessible and it is at least conceivable that it might contain a socket for the arms of a multi-piece cross.

2. This cross-slab, and the fragments from the crypt fill, are at present preserved in the Old Parish Church. The church is open to visitors during the annual excavations (projected to continue for an annual eight week season for the next eight years) and may be open for viewing at other times by arrangement with Tarbat Historic Trust. Public access to the crypt is not at present possible for safety reasons. The Tarbat Historic Trust plan to open Tarbat Discovery Centre in 1998. Further details from Friends of Tarbat Historic Trust, Seaforth, Portmahomack, Ross-shire, IV20 1YL.

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Some Gleanings on the Picts from Gaelic Sources

Michael Newton

It has become increasingly clear, I believe, that the Picts were a Celtic people. Except for the Northern Isles and the tip of Caithness, all of the Pictish peoples in Scotland were eventually Gaelicised. As Gaels were simply another kind of Celt, and there was much ethnically and linguistically in common between P-Celts and Q-Celts, the transition would likely be an untraumatic one, and there would be a large influence from a previously P-Celtic Pictish past on Scottish Gaelic language and culture. I think this is well borne out by the evidence.

In the course of my studies on Gaelic, I have come across a number of references to Picts, both from old oral and written sources in Gaelic, and in scholarly discussions about Gaelic, some of which date from the flurry of activity a century ago and have yet to be re-examined.

The point that I am making is that the most likely place to find evidence and resonances of the Picts is in the huge corpus of Gaelic lore, much of which has had little attention paid to it. Although it is impossible for me without detailed investigation to prove how much of the 'Pictish' material is due to genuine continuity, and how much of it is simply later pseudo-historical invention, it at least demonstrates that the consciousness of a Pictish past was never forgotten in the Gaelic tradition, and was a frequent topic for reflection. I wish to merely indicate the wealth of available information to suggest the importance of the Gaelic record to inspire others to follow it up and make a more thorough investigation.

The Oral Tradition

The Gaelic oral tradition is a rich repository of history, tradition and communal memory, certainly one of the most impressive in all of Europe. Although Celts of all sorts have been literate since contact with Christianity brought by the Roman Empire, the main stream of historical consciousness in Gaelic culture has been through the 'oral tradition'. Since a great many Scottish Gaelic manuscripts have perished or been destroyed through the ages, we can only speculate what percentage of it has survived.

One of the common, and often amusing, practices in Gaelic culture was the giving of nick-names to people of particular places or areas. These names were often comical or even derisory, relating to local practices, anecdotes or caricatures. Amongst the nicknames enumerated in an article on the subject was *Piocaich*, given to the people of the isle of Luing (Friseal 1975, 96).

The name *Piocaich* (plural) itself is interesting, as it suggests 'corruption' from a learned, literary source. The Gaelic name for the Picts is *Cruithnich* (plural), and is still in use today, although it would be interesting to know when, and how, this came into use in Gaelic, and if Gaelic speakers understood the two terms to mean the same thing.

Interestingly, some of the older Gaelic speakers still have tales or traditions relating to the *Cruithnich* and events of that time. During research in Strath, Skye, I have heard several anecdotes mentioning them. John MacInnes, having done decades of field-work amongst Gaelic speakers, says this about Raasay:

> A commoner tradition connects Dun Bhorghdail with the Cruithnich. Although the name Cruithneach was, and no doubt still is, known to *seanchaidhean* in other parts, it has always seemed to me that it was a more familiar term in Raasay than elsewhere in the Gàidhealtachd. Some regarded the Cruithnich as people who kept to themselves and were not greatly trusted. One can never, of course, discount entirely the influence of book-learning in forming such attitudes, no matter how remote the source may be. At the same time, this assessment of the Cruithnich — who were not, so far as I could make out, firmly identified, by those who knew the name, as the 'Picts' of the school text-books — is remarkably like some of the familiar stereotyped descriptions of 'aboriginal' and 'savage' people. (MacInnes 1985, 12)

Memory of a Pictish origin or connection has occasionally remained in the oral tradition, and been saved in the written record. To name just one example, on p.173 of MSS. 397 of the Scottish National Library (one of the Robertson Collection), the Rev. Charles Robertson records a Gaelic verse about a tower of Pictish associations near Ben Hope.

An interesting genre of the Gaelic oral tradition is that of the *seanfhacail*, or proverb. These often relate to events in history. In examining Gaelic proverbs for cultural survivals of an ancient origin, Henderson points to these two:

> The common Gadhelic says: 'it is mother-affinity (friendship) that is nearest' *Is e càirdeas na mathar as dilse*; 'I will not say brother save to the son my mother has bore' *Cha chan mi brathair ach ris a' mhac a rug mo mhathair*, point back to the Pictish social system, according to which descent was reckoned in the female line. (Henderson 1911, 4)

Although in modern times 'clans' are usually the object of mockery and 'debunking', there is no doubt that they were central in the fabric of pre-anglicised Scottish society. A great deal of traditions relating to clans — mythic origins and founders, feuds, homelands — was fortunately recorded by zealous collectors.

Of course it goes without saying in a traditional society that precendent and antiquity are of utmost important, and so some seanchies may have overstated the claims of their clans in the fashion of their day. However, there is much to be gleaned from these sources, whether it is historical fact, symbol or archetype.

The MacGregors, the eldest branch of *Sìol Ailpein*, are often lauded for their indigenousness in Gaelic tradition. In a stanza about them, they are styled:

Sliochd nan Rìghre dùchasach	Stock of the native kings
Bha shìos an Dùnstainnis	Who were down in Dunstaffnage
Aig an robh crùn na h-Alb' o thùs	Who had the Scottish crown from the start
's aig am bheil dùchas fathast ris	And who still have right to inherit it.

from *Cuairtear nan Gleann* No. 40, June 1843, 110

Greater attention and analysis deserves to be given to the animal symbolism in Gaelic tradition. Much of it relates to animals associated with specific clans (MacInnes 1981, 143, 160), and the relevance to Pictish stone symbolism is obvious. It is likely that the symbolism in the Scottish Gaelic tradition would be different in Scotland due to different flora and fauna, as well as an pre-existing Pictish cultural substratum — the example of the *Epidii* is one such well known continuity. Very little research of this kind has yet been done (see MacKay 1931 for an interesting, though rather fanciful, example).

Certainly one of the stars of the Gaelic oral tradition is song. Few places in Europe can boast of a musical tradition as diverse, rich and colourful. There are a number of specialisations within the tradition, and one such is *òran luaidh*, or 'waulking song'. In a wide-ranging survey of the Scottish Gaelic oral tradition, John MacInnes emphasises its essential Scottishness, and comments '... for Scotland at least the idea of a chorus is deep-rooted and suggests that it may indeed be a native one' (MacInnes 1968, 39).

Story and Narrative

Alba has figured largely in ancient Gaelic literature from its first surviving attestations, and in its archaistic mythology. It should noted, of course, that the notion of Ireland and Scotland as different countries is a very recent one, as up until the destruction of Gaelic culture in the 17th and 18th century they were considered as one cultural region. It should be remembered as well that Scotland gets its name from its Gaelic origins.

The mythical aboriginals of Gaeldom, the Firbolgs, the Tuatha De Dananns, the Fomoire and the Cruithnich themselves, all have strong associations with Scotland. In a survey of early literature, it is stated that 'Even in the earliest Irish tradition of which we have any knowledge, Ireland is represented as intimately connected with Scotland and as having a common race of inhabitants with her' (O'Growney 1894, 242). Even the later heroes of Gaeldom, Deirde, Cu Chulainn and the Fianna, all have strong connections and localisations within Scotland, which have lingered on to the present day.

It is interesting to note that the Gaelic term now used for a foreigner, a non-Gael, is *Gall*, and was first brought into the language to describe visitors from Gaul. It has been used later to mean Scandanavian invaders, Anglo-Saxon-Norman invaders, and in the later vernacular as the

non-Gaelic speakers in the Lowlands and the tip of Caithness — but I am not aware of it being used to describe any of the Picts or P-Celts.

There were a few folktales recorded during the busy activity of the 19th century — instigated primarily by John Francis Campbell of Islay — which relate to the Picts, or occur in their day.

In the Campbell collection in the National Library of Scotland are three related tales collected pre-1870 by John Dewar (MS 50.2.19, leaves 129-131). These fragments relate to an episode in the war between Kenneth MacAlpine and the Picts in which Alpine (Kenneth's father) was decapitated and his head placed on a spike, and a Norseman named Corcal retrieved it so that Alpine's body could be buried in Iona. Corcal was rewarded with land in Lorne.

There is also a tale in the Carmichael-Watson collection of Edinburgh University (MS 112-K, printed with translation in *An Gàidheal,* 23 (1927), 7) called *Sgrìos nam Piocach*, 'The Destruction of the Picts' (collected in 1865 by Carmichael in Uist). It tells not how they were destroyed but how Kenneth MacAlpine tricked chiefs into supporting him against the Picts by disguising a fellow conniver as an angel (wearing a salmon skin) delivering the divine message of Kenneth's success.

There is a strange character, commonly in the guise of a 'wild-man', who appears far and wide in various genres of the Scottish Gaelic oral tradition, called the 'Ciuthach'. In reviewing the materials relating to him, no less a scholar than W. J. Watson concluded '... Ciuthach was a hero of the Picts' (1914).

References in Poetry

One of the primary purposes of poets and *seanchaidhean* was to record and enumerate genealogies and origins. One's ancestors and antecedents had to be enumerated and praised as exemplars which one was expected to follow.

Thus it is little wonder that some poetry written for royal patrons and occasions often mentions the Picts when enumerating Scottish origins. The poem commonly called the *Duan Albanach*, dated by Professor Kenneth Jackson to about the death of Malcolm III in 1093, gives, in its fifth and sixth quatrains, the place of the Picts in the history of Scotland.

The Picts are occasionally mentioned in other poems, such as this praise poem to a Grant chief of Glenmorison:

Tha thu theaghlach nan Rìgh is còir a bhi 'm Prìs	You are of the family of kings that deserves praise
Air Piocaich do rinn iad buadhachadh.	They conquered the Picts

(Sinclair 1887, 107).

A common motif in Gaelic poetry, especially if written in a time of cultural cataclysm, is that of the man who has outlived his peers and seen his world change drastically. This is usually 'Oisin after the Fianna', but a less common representative is 'Maol-Chiaran', a man whose name is given as purely Gaelic, although a footnote in a manuscript mentions something else:

> One of the McLagan MSS, has:
> *Och nan och gur mi mar an t-Oisein*
> *Is mi mar choslas Mhaol-Chiarain*
> with the note, *Am fear mu dheireadh de na Cruithnich* — the last of the *Cruithne* or 'Picts'.
>
> (Watson 1918, 298, line 3676).

Place-Names

In a courageous impromptu lecture at the Pictish Arts Society Conference 1995, Professor Nicolaisen mentioned the importance of *Aber-* names, since these are genuine P-Celtic survivals, and the need to examine what we might learn from their other elements.

Watson lists seven Scottish water names which seem to derive from *tarbh*, 'bull', among them *Obar Thairbh*, English 'Abertarff' (1926, 453). This of course brings to mind the Pictish bull carvings at Burghead, and the water associations of the nearby well.

In connection to *Aber-* names and supernatural water creatures, there are very interesting traditions relating to *Obar Pheallaidh*, English 'Aberfeldy', and its Gaelic etymology.

According to local lore, 'Peallaidh' was one of thirteen *uruisg*s whose abode was along Loch Tay (Gillies 1938, 340–6). The name *uruisg* itself reinforces the being's water associations, and the name *Peallaidh* is interesting in that it begins with a 'P' (unusual for a Gaelic word), and that it appears in other Gaelic lore. In a notebook in the Rev. Charles Robertson Collection in the National Library of Scotland (NLS MS. 463), it is noted that *Peallan* is the name of the genius of fords in the Hebrides, while *Piullaidh* is used as a nick-name for the Devil in Lewis.

Watson gives us a number of examples of place-name elements, now well known, which have been borrowed from Pictish into Scottish Gaelic, such as *monadh* (1926, 391), *bad* (*ibid*, 424) and *dobhar* (*ibid*, 454). Watson also gives examples of how the semantic fields of Gaelic words were influenced by their P-Celtic reflexes. He sites *strath* (*ibid*, 428) and *tom* (*ibid*, 423).

Gaelic was spoken in large communities all over the Highlands, from Caithness to Perthshire, well into this century. Some of these areas, for example those in the centre of the country, to a large degree undisturbed by Viking invaders or the urbanising, Anglicising influences of the burghs until the 19th century, could well contain Pictish relics and substrata.

I cannot myself comment on how much or how little of the material I have listed represents authentic Pictish survivals. This will have to be left to one willing and capable of doing very painstaking research. I hope that I have shown the importance of the Gaelic tradition, its remarkable scope and range, its consciousness of a Pictish past, and its central position in Pictish and Scottish studies.

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The Picts as Celts?

A Pictish perspective to the 10th International Congress of Celtic Studies, Edinburgh, July 1995

Graeme Cruickshank

Pick up any book on the Celts, and you'll be lucky if the Picts are accorded more than a couple of paragraphs. Apply the same test to books on Celtic Art, and the chances are you'll find that the Picts don't get a mention at all. Whether the Picts are Celts, and Pictish Art a branch of Celtic Art, are issues mostly avoided by students of the respective topics (philologists excepted). It was therefore something of a welcome surprise to find that the programme of the 10th International Congress of Celtic Studies contained a number of papers of direct Pictish interest, though any significance to be inferred from this should be tempered by the location of the conference — the second time that this quadrennial event has come to Scotland, being based in Edinburgh on both occasions.

It was not necessary to read the programme to be aware of a Pictish element, however, as the conference logo was none other than the Pictish dolphin symbol — though the choice was a little curious: the oddly proportioned example on the edge-face of Meigle 5. It gave the impression of being computer-generated — a future avenue for Pictish art?

The logo did not flatter to deceive, however, and there was indeed a paper devoted to this very creature. **The 'Pictish beast' — the origins and evolution of the symbol** was the ambitious title of a discourse delivered by Catriona Black from Peebles. The start was promising: to the long-standing chicken-and-egg question, "Were the Pictish animal symbols the motivating force behind the animals of the Insular manuscripts, or were they ultimately inherited from Anglo-Saxon artistic conventions seen in such sites as Sutton Hoo?", a fairly confident answer was given in favour of the former proposition.

However, much in the paper was depressingly old-hat. The title itself betrayed this by its use of the vague term 'Pictish beast', several decades old, and surely replaced in the minds of the majority of Pictish students by 'dolphin'. Considering the answer given to the question posed (above), there was a puzzling dependence on art-historical parallels, with shades of the outdated ancestor/pedigree approach.

Where there were novel expressions, they were not wholly acceptable, such as the notion that the creature's 'tail' (if that is what it is) is a "lappet in reverse", the reason for this treatment being a desire to achieve symmetry. Most perplexing of all, however, was the main plank of the talk (backed up by a handout) which sought to create a pattern of influences with reference to two of the most striking features of the beastie (to use the term preferred by Marianna Lines) — the joint-scrolls and the head-lappet. This seemed to lead to the unlikely situation of giving an affirmative answer to ***both*** options proposed in the aforementioned question: that the dolphin's lappet was responsible, at least in part, for similar representations in English manuscript art, whereas the scroll (transmitted by other Pictish animals such as the wolf and the bull), while able to make the same claim, had as its ultimate source the material culture of the Anglo-Saxons. If that reasoning gives you an ominous sinking feeling, it's because you've been taken for a ride on a cultural Ferris-wheel.

Central to this whole argument was the premise that the archetypal Pictish dolphin appears on "the Golspie stone". Such a contention would surely stagger the majority of Pictish Arts Society members, because the well-known and frequently-illustrated Golspie stone is a cross-slab — there is no arguing with that. It might not be pure Class II, but if one allows for the existence of an overlap category, then it must be fairly late in the Class I/II phase. However, the speaker had already established that "the 'Pictish beast' [is] the most commonly found animal symbol of the Class I stones" — so how can Golspie possibly be regarded as the prototype?

An alternative possibility is that what was meant is the other, little-regarded, Golspie stone, only discovered in 1942 and therefore not in *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (see *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* LXXVII, 26–30), which is indeed a Class I stone. The notion that this stone depicts the archetypal dolphin was floated back in 1958 by Isabel Henderson (see *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* XCI, 51–53). It would make much better sense if this was the stone referred to in the talk, but such was not made clear (if it was mentioned at all, I missed it), and the handout

simply calls it "Golspie". Even so, Henderson's assertion has been refuted by Gordon Murray in a detailed and carefully-considered appraisal of this symbol, published in *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 116, 243–49 who argues for an origin centre in Aberdeenshire or in Angus/Perthshire. The problem of this Pictish creature remains with us.

The next speaker was Katherine Forsyth, currently of Oxford University. There was an initial disappointment that her original choice of title, the intriguing question 'Who taught the Picts to write?', was abandoned in favour of **The three writing systems of the Picts**. While sounding more prosaic, this title is certainly not lacking in controversy. A reasonably cogent argument was put forward to substantiate the case that "the formal characteristics of the Pictish symbol system allow it to be classified as 'writing'." The number 3 is reached by adding the Roman alphabet and the ogham alphabet, but then a huge conceptual leap was made by suggesting that all three were equally available to the Picts, and that their preference for symbols was the result of a considered assessment and a conscious choice. The theory is certainly bold, and no less interesting for that, but I could not help but feel that the elements of proof necessary to make it demonstrably feasible were woefully inadequate.

When it came down to providing actual examples, certain statements were made which not merely lacked universal agreement but flew in the face of reason. The large number of extant Class I stones was described as "an accident of archaeological survival"; accidental or not (and I would regard that as too simplistically dismissive), archaeology has nothing to do with the vast majority of them.

The bizarre claim was made that there are only four recognisable object symbols — the mirror, comb, hammer and bucket. (Yes, bucket. Struggling to think what this might be, the best I could come up with was the object associated with the hammer and tongs on the Dunfallandy stone, usually referred to as an anvil). If these are the only four, are all other non-animal symbols to be dismissed as abstract? Is it seriously being denied that the triple-disc symbol represents an aerial view of a ring-handled cauldron (the Class I examples adding the cross-bar)? And what of all the other symbols for which reasonable interpretations have been made? Are the mirror-case, the book satchel, the bronze armlet, the hinged bronze collar, the broken arrow, the broken spear, the half-sword, the fastening pin, the swathe of textile, the tongs, the shears, etc. all to be disregarded without consideration, condemned as non-representational abstract devices?

Another questionable assertion was that the Picts should be regarded in the same light as other contemporary peoples in their use of writing, and that the system of symbols was not a unique invention of the Picts which had been conceived independently, but that "the stimulus was derived from alphabetical literacy". As a theory, it may have possibilities, but as both the ogham and Roman alphabets are imports, it seems that a philologist has joined the art historical camp which can see nothing original in any noteworthy aspect of Pictish culture, and seeks an external explanation for each of its achievements.

This Pictish double-header should have been one of the highlights of the conference for Pictophiles, but apart from the failings of the papers presented, the session suffered from the style of its handling. The choice of chairman was hardly appropriate — a professor from Australia who admitted at the start that he knew but little concerning the Picts, and whose attitude exhibited a disinclination to change that situation. He proceeded to break conference rules by refusing to allow discussion at the end of the first paper, calling instead for a prolonged interval. Because of the frenetic nature of the conference proceedings, with seven or eight papers being delivered simultaneously in adjoining venues up to nine times a day for four days (over 240 papers), there was much dashing around on the part of delegates. When it eventually came to a discussion of the Pictish dolphin (in which there was much interest, not least because of its logo status), the chairman's tactics meant that around a third of those who had heard the paper and may have wished to be involved had already left for another venue, and fully a third of those present for the discussion had not heard the paper being delivered. Finally, the chairman decided to guillotine discussion on both papers, despite the fact that the next item on the programme was a 35-minute coffee break. What a pity.

Another Pictish double-header was fronted by Irene Hughson from Barrhead, best-known for her work on the Govan stones. Her solidly presented paper, **Pictish horses and Pictish society: evidence from the sculptured stones**, dealt with a crucial aspect, or rather aspects, of Pictish culture. It is indeed a weighty subject, and that was to the disadvantage of its treatment in a necessarily compressed paper, because once a significant proportion of the allotted time had been spent dealing with the horse in ancient times, there was not much opportunity to engage in a detailed examination of horses on Pictish stones.

Several of the major equine Pictish stones were mentioned, and illustrated in a hand-out, but no particularly novel findings or penetrative analysis was offered. When it came to the Kirkton of Aberlemno stone, the inclusion of two different types of horse was noted, but no mention made that one type may well not be Pictish. A few valid social comments were made, such as the horseman, being a symbol of authority, would have his status strengthened by being represented in stone; and, on a more practical level, that every horse-owning family would have had a full-time groom. Pity indeed that such an appealing and weighty subject had to be compressed into a mere 35 minutes — and I am sure that no-one was more frustrated at this than the speaker herself — but she succeeded well in expressing her basic tenet: when dealing with horses, the work of the Pictish sculptor resulted in "a vigorous, naturalistic animal portrayal ... almost stereotyped, yet sparkling with vitality".

This was followed by a paper by Ann Carrington from Canada which posed the question **The Eassie and Kirriemuir no. 2 cross-slab chase motifs — a part of the Pictish 'David cycle'?** This is really getting down to the nitty-gritty of Pictish stone-cut art, and I looked forward to a detailed consideration of this very specialised topic — but alas it got derailed. Pictish equestrian hunting scenes are fairly common, but foot hunts are less so, and this paper sought to compare two of the latter, which appear on the stones named in the title, with three others, which appear on the St Andrews 'sarcophagus' (how I wish we could lose that term — much better to call it a reliquary), and the cross-slabs at Nigg and Crosston of Aberlemno, all three of which contain David images.

So far, so good, but the astonishing claim was then made that these three latter stones could have acted as models for the first two. Dating Pictish stones is notoriously difficult, principally because of a severe lack of dateable evidence; the example at Kirkton of Aberlemno is one of the few where an absolute date may even be postulated. However, relative chronology is quite another matter, and I see no great problem in establishing a relative sequence for the five stones mentioned. Why not try it yourself? In alphabetical order, they are: Aberlemno 3, Eassie, Kirriemuir 2, Nigg and St Andrews. Now put them in date order. Want to compare your assessment with mine? Later ...

Suffice it to say at this point that for one stone to act as a model for another, the first must predate the second, and I am quite certain that that is not the case with any of the possible combinations under consideration here. I was so distressed at what I considered to be a severe distortion of the relative chronology of these Pictish stones, that I found it difficult to concentrate on the rest of the paper, which did contain items of interest, such as the observation that two distinct types of hunting dogs were employed by the Picts, characterised as the greyhound and the mastiff, and that they may be seen together on certain stones, e.g. Eassie and Rossie Priory. The subject of the Pictish foot hunt is interesting and deserves further investigation, but surely this is not the way.

That was about it as far as a front-line consideration of aspects of the stones of the Picts was concerned, though two other aspects of Pictish culture did receive an airing. Charles MacQuarrie from Seattle, U.S.A., concocted the punny title **Stigmata or stigmatization? Picts, Celts, and the body as (pre)text**. Scarcely had one recovered from that title, than the next wave hit — a most professionally presented and graphically replete handout. All this set a pace which the paper itself would be hard-put to match, and indeed, polished though it was, it did not contain a great deal of substance. The general conclusion that some tribes of insular Celts practised tattooing, though this decreased markedly under the twin influences of Romanization and Christianization, was fairly predictable; references to the Picts were rather sparse.

Even more esoteric was a paper by Alex Woolf of Sheffield entitled **Moravia and Albania: explaining away the Picts in post-union Scotia**. The essence of his approach was to construct a Pictish history for the Scottic period which went something like this: The year 843 (or whatever date is favoured as marking the take-over by the Scots) should not be regarded as signalling the obliteration of the Picts from the Scottish cultural landscape. In such circumstances, there can be both upward and downward 'ethnic replacement', with the language and culture of the invaders superseding — or otherwise — the native element. Scotia (defined as the area lying between the Spey and the Forth) saw a considerable Pictish resistance to downward ethnic replacement: Scottic expansion into Pictland was farm-by-farm in the north and west of the region, while in central and eastern areas it was more akin to the Norman take-over of England. Not until 906/7, with the creation of the kingdom of Alba, did the concept of the Pictish nation disappear.

Such a historical framework would have profound repercussions for the chronology of the later phases of Pictish art, but it struck me as being based upon rather flimsy foundations, the product of what the speaker termed 'historical anthropology'. In the absence of concrete

evidence for much of the projected construct, I found myself less than wholly convinced about its dependability.

In addition to the formal papers read, the conference did offer a few other Pictish slants. A day was set aside for outings, one of the five destinations being 'Pictland' (though as this has been part of my professional work for several years now, I deemed it inappropriate for me to attend). The registration lobby was decorated with a number of Pictish hangings by Marianna Lines, while David Henry of the Pinkfoot Press manned his station in the bookshop with several Pictish titles on sale. Not least to note, Bruce Williams of Heather Ale Ltd made an appearance, dispensing free glasses of the delectable 'Fraoch'; Monday lunchtime is not everyone's idea of prime drinking time, but that did not prevent copious quantities of this tasty Pictish beverage from being consumed! Half a dozen Pictish Arts Society members were among the 500-odd conference delegates, and their opinions of how Pictish topics had been treated tended to accord with my own. The pity was that none of the major luminaries in the field of Pictish studies was in evidence, with the exception of Charles Thomas, but sadly neither the paper he delivered nor the session he chaired had anything to do with the Picts.

So should we regard the Picts as Celts? If the subject-matter of the papers at this conference is anything to go by, not to any great extent; in numerical terms, less than 2.5% of the papers concerned the Picts. The picture is much the same when considered in the context of the museological interpretation of material culture. The very first talk in the conference programme was by Hugh Cheape of the national museums service about the creation of a new national museum for Scotland. In a polished performance, which would have been (and I suspect already has been) appreciated by a range of differing audiences, he outlined the thinking behind the development of the new displays. Although the title of his talk was **Celtic connections and the Museum of Scotland**, I found it difficult to separate what was essentially Celtic from what was more generally Scottish, and almost impossible to identify what was specifically Pictish among the Celtic elements.

Indeed the Picts were referred to just once during the presentation, when they were named as contributing to the section entitled 'Scotland defined'. There was no word about the number or nature of the Pictish objects to be incorporated in the displays; the slide on the screen at that point showed a fine example of early medieval stone carving ... but it was of the ringed high-cross at Kildalton on Islay. Was that symptomatic of the basic message for Pictophiles projected by this conference, I mused — that the Picts must be regarded and treated as a separate, independent entity, or else be subsumed by the Celts?

P.S. Oh yes, the relative chronology of the five stones showing foot hunting-scenes. I reckon the order to be: Eassie, Kirriemuir 2, Aberlemno 3, Nigg and St Andrews —and I am quite happy to defend that selection.

Ancient Pictorial Carvings on Stones in Scotland — some observations on their meaning.

James Brodie

Suggestions regarding the significance of symbols carved on stones in Scotland which are generally attributed to the Picts, and the purpose of the stones which bear them, have ranged widely for many years over possibilities such as territorial markers, heraldic devices, marriage contracts and funerary monuments, etc., without there having been produced an entirely convincing case for their support. In view of the limited number of symbols discovered so far, and their general distribution, this is perhaps not surprising.

The following account is a simple attempt to interpret the meaning of some of the common symbols found on Class I stones (Allen and Anderson 1903, I, xi, xxxii; II, 4), and thereby to provide an explanation for their distribution and the role of these stones in pre-Christian tribal society in Scotland.

Introduction

In the *Moray Book* Alan Small (1976) refers to the destruction of symbol-bearing stones 'notably at the time of the Reformation', and having drawn attention to this type of stone at Inveravon 'three of which are said to have come from the foundations of the old church and the most recent being located in the churchyard', then provides other examples of the peculiar interest which Christians have shown towards these monuments over the years, e.g. two stones from the early Christian site at Mortlach and the stone at Brodie Castle discovered while digging in the foundations of the church of Dyke and Moy. Hence his conclusion that 'it surely is significant that in any attempted interpretation of the stones in this area that so many of them are associated with sites of early churches'. In relation to stones bearing either two or three symbols Charles Thomas (1963) says, 'one is constantly struck by the very large number which come from churchyards. They are encountered below ground in grave-digging, they are noticed lying in ancient burial-grounds, and they are even found built into the fabric of dilapidated chapelries as grounders, coigns, window-sills and door-jambs'.

In his book *Scottish Kirkyards* Dane Love (1989) mentions the logical manner in which Christian missionaries introduced their new God to the pagans, gradually phasing out old forms of worship, and says that 'Patrick, the Bishop of the Hebrides, is known to have told Orlygus, one of his missionaries, to travel across Scotland and build a church wherever he found standing-stones or stone-circles'.

This remarkably common practice of burying symbol stones in graveyards and beneath and within the walls of early Christian buildings perhaps suggests that the in-coming wished to dominate and suppress the messages which the symbols conveyed to local people. As it seems unlikely that stones used only for utilitarian purposes, e.g. boundary-markers, etc., would be gathered together in such a manner, it is difficult not to conclude that symbol stones had a primary function relating to the worship of pagan gods. The last verse of Hymn 192 in the Modern Oxford Church Hymnary reveals one early Christian's attitude towards non-believers of the day, and thereby reinforces the concept of a strong connection between symbol stones and the practice of pagan ritual:

> And idol forms shall perish, And error shall decay,
> And Christ shall wield his sceptre, Our Lord and God for aye
>
> St Germanus, *c.*634–*c.*734.

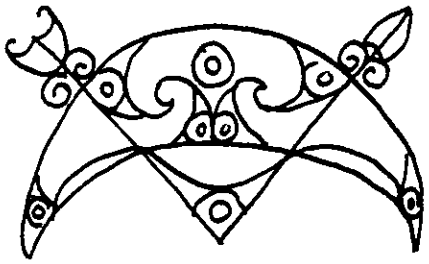
Southesk (1893) quotes Skene as saying 'it may be remarked that the religion of the Picts at the time of Columba's mission, chiefly, if not entirely, consisted in the worship of the elements, of the sun, the moon, and the earth, the air, the lightning, and the winds, and the waters of clear springs and flowing rivers', and on completion of his substantial treatise on the origins of the symbols said 'using all means of comparison, and working both inductively and deductively, I am led to conclude that the Pictish symbols embodied ideas connected with the worship of the Elemental Powers'.

Analysis

On the assumption of such a link, and bearing in mind the requirements for human survival in a natural world, it can be inferred from examination of different versions of some symbols that the 'V' and 'Z' rods have nothing to do with actual rods, arrows, sceptres, kings or divining instruments, etc., but can be interpreted as representations of dormant seeds and growing plants respectively, and that other symbols can be associated with these popular motifs according to pagan beliefs.

V and Z-rod. In Fig. 1 the base (root) of the 'rod' is clearly shown as not pointing outwards in a growth mode and the point (shoot) of the 'rod' has no leaf; in other words the 'V' represents the inactive components of a plant, i.e. a seed. According to Sutherland (1994, 106) the crescent phase of the moon was believed in old Highland tradition to be a time for sowing and planting, and the moon also encouraged growth.

Fig. 1



In Fig. 2 the **Serpent** has its head below the 'seed', and as a mystical creature of the earth associated with re-birth, appears to signify the awakening of the seed to make it grow, shown by the now outward pointing 'root'. Fig. 3 **Bow and Arrow** may represent the appearance of the first green shoots of the plant above ground and the tunnels formerly occupied by the snake which is by now also living above ground.

Fig. 2

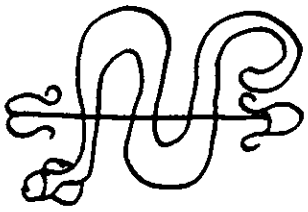


Fig. 3

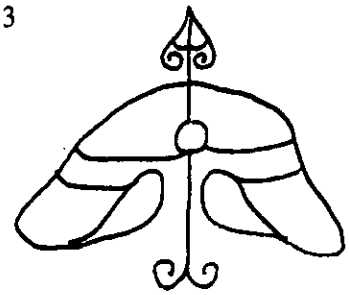


Fig. 4 relates the emergent snake with its head up in early spring to the growing seedling which sprouts its first green leaves and pushes roots down into the soil, while Fig. 5 is a more elaborate version of Fig. 4 which also acknowledges the contribution of the sun in providing warmth and energy for growth (see Fig. 7 and discussion below).

Fig. 4

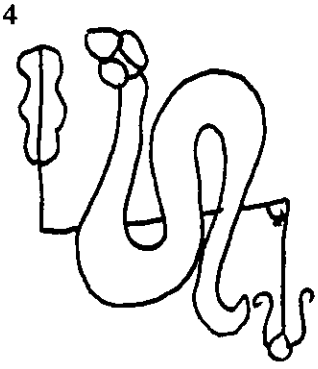


Fig. 5

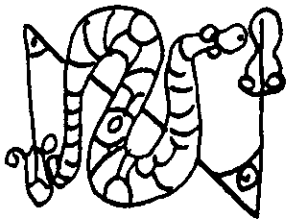
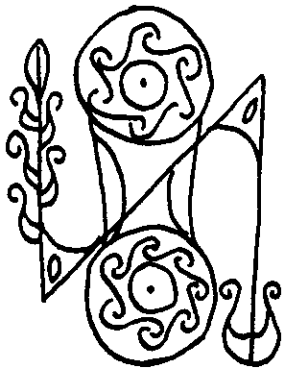


Fig. 6 brings into play the full power of the sun, represented by the joined 'double-disc', and a growing cereal plant (or grass) with alternating leaves is shown to be flourishing under its benign influence.

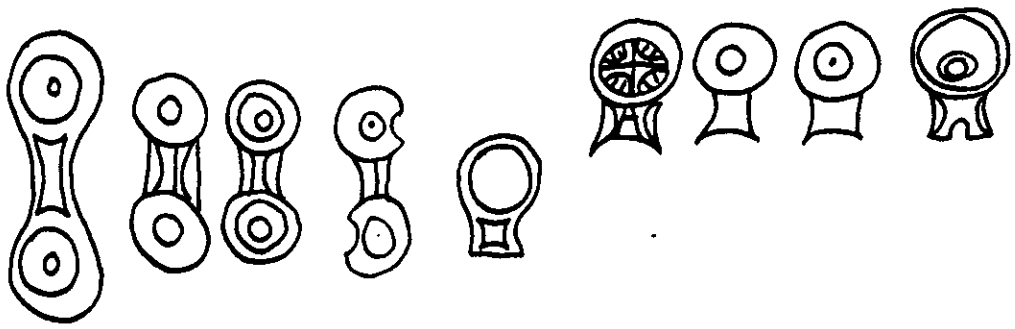
Fig. 6



The choice of the shape of an arrow to represent a 'cereal' plant is perhaps not surprising when one considers that both oat and barley seeds are very similar in shape to early arrow heads, while Langer and Hill (1982) point out that early wheats were very different from those grown today, with brittle spikes which at maturity broke up into separate spikelets each 'shaped like the head of an arrow', an adaptation which enabled seed to become more easily buried in soil.

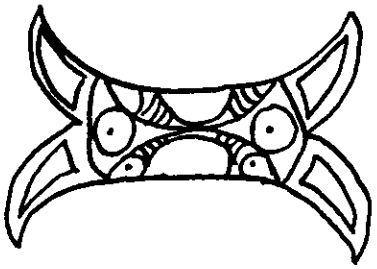
Sun. Representations of the sun take the form of either double-discs joined together, or single discs. In the examples shown below, Fig. 7, it is interesting to note the notches on the fourth double-disc which give the figure a rotational quality, emphasising the concept of the sun's presence in two worlds, and also the inner circle with dot which as the 'eye' is used to denote the sun on other motifs, e.g. on the body of the snake in Fig. 5 above. The similarities in design of many of these sun 'heads' and the layouts of henges, stone-circles, ring-cairns and the 'rings' of cup-and-ring markings, are sufficiently close to suggest a strong functional relationship; an association previously noted by Southesk and Thomas in relation to cup-and-ring marks. According to Browne (1921, 23) 'we cannot look upon the stone-circle otherwise than as a symbol of the magic art which was the religion of our far off ancestors'.

Fig. 7



Moon. In Jackson's table of paired symbols (1989, 21–23) the moon is represented as a single crescent overlain by a 'V-rod' (as in Fig. 1) on 75% of occasions, and when not overlain in this way is accompanied by symbols for the sun or moon either with or without 'V' or 'Z' rods. The double-crescent appears only twice in the group of 90 pairings and is matched on one occasion with the 'Sun', once with the 'Snake and Z-rod', and once with the 'Tuning-fork' symbol. It is likely therefore that the main, if not the entire, power of the Moon lay in its relationship with the cultivation of crops, particularly at sowing-time and germination. The example below shows two crescent-moons, two suns and two rainbows.

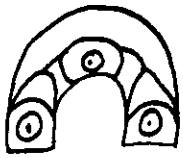
Fig. 8



Arch or horse-shoe. The proportions of this symbol normally do not match even those of a broad Clydesdale horse-shoe, while in Fig. 9.1 below the clear shape of a key-stone is evident, and in Fig. 9.2 the sun's eye is prominent across the arch. Features which support the view expressed by Campbell (1860, 270) that in folk-lore a bridge or arch may equate with a rainbow.

Fig. 9.1

Fig. 9.2



Beast. In general appearance the head of the 'Pictish beast' is similar to that of several species of diving duck, and also mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (the most frequently occurring duck in the fossil record of the British Ice Ages, being domesticated in some parts of Britain as early as the Iron Age) with its slightly upturned slender beak, while the mane is drawn to the back of the shoulder as for a horse. In some cases an oval equine eye is cut (as on Meigle 5) rather than a bead-like duck-eye. In conformation the 'beast' certainly appears suited to fulfil the requirements of life as a water-horse, or kelpie,as suggested by Sutherland (1994, 87–88), which in folk-lore could strike the water like thunder and dive into pools like a flash of lightning, both events heralding the approach of rain.

Fig. 10.

Flower. This symbol occurs only on a few occasions, normally in the swirling form shown in Fig. 11.1 below, and with one exception accompanies a motif containing a dormant or growing plant. However, the usual bag-like body shown in Fig. 11.1 is represented as a man-made conical wooden churn in a figure drawn on the back of a cross-slab in Dunrobin Castle Museum (Fig. 11.2), suggesting that the 'flower' symbol is made up of a container for holding a fluid and usually two swishing arms on top with fan shaped tips which sometimes show a dot (hole?) in the middle of each end.. Structurally the 'flower' appears to have the capacity to act as a sprinkler. Perhaps 'cloud' might be a more appropriate title.

Fig.11.1

Fig.11.2

Goose. At a time when the world was thought to be flat (**Rectangle** ? Fig. 12), and the sun, moon and stars lived both overhead and in an 'under-world', the autumn arrival of migrant geese from their Arctic breeding grounds, and their spring-time departure, must have had a magical quality (as would be the case with migratory **Salmon**), and so it may not be surprising that the goose features in Celtic folklore, the sun itself being drawn across the sky by a goose (Sutherland 1994, 99). The shown in Fig. 13 with its body pointing to the right but with its head pointing to the left perhaps alludes to the rising and setting points of the sun and to the trajectory of the sun across the sky. Regarding the **Salmon**, Browne refers to the view expressed by the minister at Clatt in 1840 who believed that 'as the salmon was held sacred by the Druids it is highly probable that this emblematic representation was connected with the ceremonies of their worship' (1921, 147).

Fig. 12

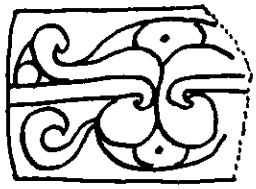
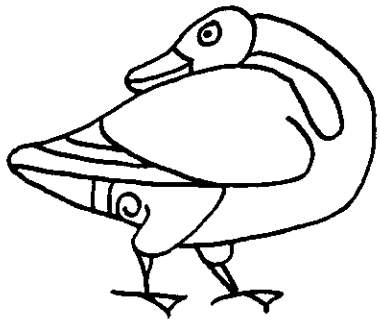


Fig. 13



Notched rectangle. Normally crossed by a 'Z-rod' when carved on stone, this symbol is occasionally inscribed without one as in Fig. 14.1 below, e.g. on the Whitecleugh silver chain found in south Lanarkshire, on the wall of Jonathan's Cave at East Wemyss, Fife and on a Class I symbol stone at Westfield Farm, Fife. One version of this symbol (Fig. 14.2) crossed with a 'Z-rod' in 'dormant' form contains two 'divided-circles', or ovals, in its lower section, while another version (Fig. 14.3) crossed by a 'Z-rod' in an early growth mode now shows three fused 'divided-circles' in its lower section. Angle markings in this last figure are clearly different, indicating a two-part aspect to this growing seedling.

Fig. 14.1

Fig. 14.2

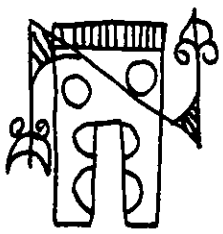
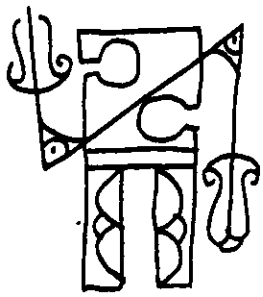


Fig. 14.3



The sequence of development of the symbols shown above can be readily compared with that of mammalian reproductive events, from pairing to fertilisation and embryonic development. In this case the shape of the background symbol implies that the 'notched rectangle' in all its varied forms is concerned with human fertility. Perhaps the ten heavy silver chains found so far are the equivalent of present-day clerical 'dog-collars' which would be worn by pagan priests on ceremonial occasions.

Tuning Fork. From the example carved on a smooth stone in Dunrobin Castle Museum (Fig. 15.1) it can be calculated that if this object is designed for single-handed use then it would measure roughly 76cm (30") long by 13cm (5") wide with a gap between the prongs of 4cm (1.5"). The version shown on part of a slab at Abernethy (Fig. 15.2) has different proportions but in addition also shows three 'divided-circles', or ovals, cut in a similar manner to the two cut on the 'notched-rectangle' of Fig. 14.2 above. It has been suggested in the foregoing paragraph that the 'divided-circles' in Fig. 14.2 might possibly be interpreted as standing for a male 'seed' and a female 'seed' which together combine in Fig. 14.3, and so if

the 'divided circles' on the 'Tuning Fork' symbol are similarly interpreted as standing for seeds then perhaps the 'Tuning Fork' with its crescent-topped handle represents an implement for digging over soil prior to planting seeds. A 'digging-stick' which pre-dates the plough.

Fig. 15.1

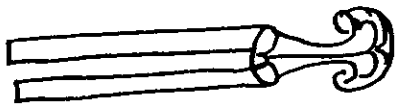


Fig. 15.2

Triple-Disc and Cross-Bar. Normally shown as below (Fig. 16) this symbol appears on a cross-slab at Glamis Manse without a bar but with two clearly depicted loops holding the side-rings, as in the manner of a cauldron. A cooking pot such as this would hold a special place in every home and must have had great significance to those who used it, with its closeness to fire, and its provision of nutrition from plants, animals and water.

Fig. 16

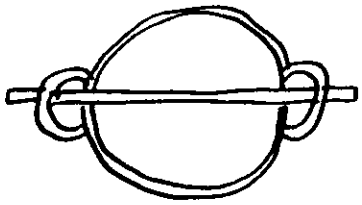
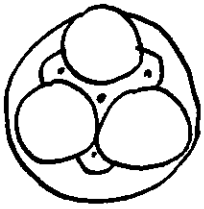


Fig. 17



Three Discs in a Circle. It has been suggested that this portrays three pots in a circular kiln (Jackson 1984, 133) but this seems unlikely as the essential feature of the figure is its balance and continuity, with the distribution of dots being such that two always separate each inner circle no matter which direction of rotation is taken. Three people linking arms can form a wheel, or unbroken chain, and in the case of a father, mother and child, provide a link in the chain-of-life. Although it is easy to speculate about triple-Goddesses such as Brigit and Arianrhod it may be more appropriate to look for a less sophisticated answer and to see this symbol as purely relating to human fertility and the continuity of family life. In this particular diagram (Fig. 17) the inner circles actually decrease in 1mm intervals from largest to smallest.

Fig. 18

Mirror and Comb. In terms of frequency of occurence on Class I stones this symbol can be placed with the Sun and Moon to form a group of much greater importance than the other signs. With its power to reflect even the sun a mirror must have been regarded with high esteem, and thereby as a fitting item to represent a phenomenon vital to human survival. By a process of elimination of natural factors required to maintain plant life it seems possible that this

symbol is associated with soil-fertility, and so it may not be by chance that the **Mirror** regularly appears on the lower half of each stone below the other symbols.

Discussion

Towards the end of the Bronze Age in Scotland the area of land under cultivation became greatly reduced due to deteriorating climatic conditions which, according to Barker (1985, 212), 'forced people to abandon their upland farms in the face of the expansion of blanket bog and rough grazing, and, on the lowlands, to specialise increasingly in stock-keeping; agricultural trends which inevitably stimulated the emergence of a more warlike society'. By the fourth century AD cattle were of prime importance to the northern tribes (Sutherland 1994, 92), but this interpretation of the meaning of the symbols is not in keeping with this position as it reveals a bias towards an arable interest rather than to cattle.

Examination of figures presented by Sutherland for frequency of occurrence of each symbol on Class I stones shows that approximately 67% of all occurrences (including suns) relate to the growing of crops, while less than 5% relate to animals which could be domesticated (horse, boar, cattle, goose), and some of these may not equate with animal husbandry. When attempting to relate groups of symbols to Pictish marriage and descent, Jackson calculated that the 'crescent and V-rod' was found in 75% of all pairs of symbols, and that the 'double-disc and Z-rod' occurred in 40% of pairings (1989, 11); while Thomas points out that selective rules appear to be at work in so far as Object rather than Animal symbols predominate, and that within each group of stones bearing either two, three or four symbols there is a quite disproportionate emphasis on the occurrence of the 'crescent and V-rod' and 'double-disc and Z-rod' (1963, 36–38).

It is evident therefore, that although the Picts were essentially stock-farmers their religious beliefs related to a symbolism which placed greater emphasis on crops than on stock, a way of life that existed long before the historical time of the Picts. The jumbled manner in which many symbols are carved, e.g. turned from left to right and up-side down, rods with both ends the same shape, incorrectly constructed symbols (notched-rectangle with a Z-rod the wrong way up), etc., reveals that some Pictish sculptors lacked familiarity with the precise nature of the original material and so points to an earlier date for the creation of the symbols.

Representations of the sun as concentric circles appear from the earliest days on stone, potentially from the middle of the 4th millennium BC onwards (Ritchie 1988, 58), and then on bone combs, wooden boxes and jewellery etc., right up until the interface years with Christianity, when even a cockerel in the Book of Kells appears to show the 'eye' of the sun on one wing. Symbols relating to crop production were probably created during the late Neolithic and/or early Bronze Age when climatic conditions were favourable for arable farming, while items such as cauldrons and tools suggest a middle Bronze Age/Iron Age origin.

Thomas sought to order symbols into sequences which would provide meaningful statements, but such arrangements are not a requirement as each symbol is capable of making an expansive statement either in its own right or in some cases through its relationship with a 'set' of symbols to which it belongs, e.g. in the case of Figs. 1 to 6 any one symbol conveys the message of concern for crop growth although on occasion more than one of the group may be displayed on the same stone. Individual symbols on a stone may or may not be linked by an overall theme.

The meanings of a few minor symbols remain unsolved at the moment (by this method of analysis), but nevertheless it is possible to perceive the sentiment behind the various symbols on a majority of stones, and from these to appreciate how important diverse elements of the natural environment were to different groups of people in different parts of the country, e.g. the Craw Stane near the River Bogie at Rhynie pairs the 'beast', which brings rain, with the 'salmon' which runs when water-levels rise in the river; the Picardy Stone near Insch with 'double-disc' and 'serpent' both crossed with a 'Z-rod', above a 'mirror and comb', is one example of several entirely relating to crops; and Aberlemno 2 showing 'notched rectangle with Z-rod' and 'triple-disc with cross-bar', reveals concern for successful human reproduction and nutrition for family survival; and so on. Eagles (lords of the sky), salmon (king of fishes), stags (monarchs of the glen), predatory wolves and strong aggressive bulls and boars, are all powerful symbols of survival in a tough uncompromising world and so would have great appeal as totems, complementing those relating to a pastoral or settled agricultural life.

Richard Carlyon (1981) says of the pagan priests that, 'there is evidence to suggest that they were attempting to regularise the haphazard plethora of Celtic local divinities into some order' but that this attempt was stopped by the Romans. However, as the Romans were not in a position of strength north of Antonine's Wall priests would be able to pursue their interests relatively freely for many more years among the northern tribes than amongst those in the south, and so it may be that the symbols surviving from Pictish times are those which were selected to form a 'standard' set, ultimately carved in stone to resist the destructive forces prevailing elsewhere.

Emperor Constantine declared Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire early in the 4th century AD and Ross (1991, 107) says that 'the new faith was energetically proselytised throughout the area controlled by Rome, and beyond'. This dramatic step possibly initiated the erection of symbol stones during this century in those areas of Scotland where it was safe to do so; while suppression of pagan religious activities by Roman army patrols amongst the southern tribes may account for the relatively large number of heavy silver chains found in these parts.

The range and number of symbols existing in the past must have been an impressive sight for travellers in a strange land, particularly if painted in a variety of colours (see Cessford, this volume, pp 6–8), and so if classical sources are correct in suggesting that Iron Age people described themselves as Priteni, roughly meaning 'the picture people' (Ross 1991, 121), then they certainly chose an appropriate title.

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I wish to thank N.M. Robertson, I. Ashman and H. Jackson for providing sufficient details in their drawings to allow comparisons to be made between parts of different symbols, and also Dr J.R.F. Burt for providing literature references relating to Pictish art, and for helpful advice during the preparation of this paper.

SHORTER NOTES

Vanora's Grave at Meigle

Vanora, whose startling and lurid 'grave' at Meigle was a popular destination for tourists in the 9th and 10th centuries, was neither a saint or a virgin but the erring wife of King Arthur, Queen Guinevere herself, who was abducted by Mordred, returned to Arthur and torn apart in punishment by wild beasts, as Dr Anna Ritchie informed the meeting of Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee (TAFAC) 1994 in Kirkcaldy (5 November 1994, 'Meigle and lay patronage in Tayside in the 9th and 10th centuries AD'). The word 'Vanora' is only remotely similar to the name 'Guinevere' but was apparently felt to be close enough at the time. The concentration of pictorial stones at Meigle has often been noted and existing monuments may have been collected here from a wider area, or new stones specially created for the purpose, and they were built into a huge, colourful and spectacular 'folly', Vanora's Grave, that must have been one of the sights of Scotland in its day. The pictorial stones at Meigle are presumably much earlier than the attraction they were vandalised to create, but the local fashion seems to have favoured biting beasts, rather as Burghead favoured bulls, and this may have been one factor in suggesting the link with Guinevere. Dr Anna Ritchie attributed the venture to lay patronage rather than the church, in other words, a design of the local landlord rather than a clerical endeavour, and, indeed, the only Christian content in the monument or the story seems to have been the few carved crosses incorporated among the Pictish symbols and slavering beasts, though no doubt a pious moral was added by the resident guide.

In addition to the biting beasts, Vanora's appearance at Meigle was probably suggested by a local placename, a common finding in the development of Early Christian sites in Scotland, though Vanora can hardly be described as typical, being neither a saint nor a virgin nor even a respectable mother figure. This hypothetical name is now lost, but may be represented by 'Vanora's Grave'. The suggestion is supported by the Irish village called Kilfenora, in the Burren, a name which could be understood as 'Fenora's Grave', and which also became a religious centre. The church development at Kilfenora followed different lines and it became a very short-lived cathedral but both the churches at Meigle and Kilfenora are right in the middle of huge circular enclosures. The enclosure at Kilfenora clearly predates the medieval church, and is arguably earlier than any religious activity there, though this is difficult to prove in the case of a boundary feature. At Kilfenora there is also what appears to be a smaller central enclosure, partly scraped out of a limestone shelf.

There is no acknowledgement at Kilfenora of any Christian meaning in the name despite its Kil prefix; an association of names in Kil- with the church and with burial grounds is made in Ireland but the association with saints appears to have been a later development in Scotland. In fact Irish *keels* or *killeens* were specifically unconsecrated (pre-Christian) burial grounds used for the burial of unbaptised children, strangers, drowned seamen and suicides. They are all circular or oval enclosures, usually much smaller than that at Kilfenora. Some have continued in use as consecrated burial sites with the addition of a Christian church and later carved stones and other decorations, like Kilfenora itself. However, nothing in the history of Kilfenora suggests a link with a person called Fenora. Looking rather for a domestic origin for the huge enclosure within which this tiny church sits, the first step is to substitute *m* or *b*, for the aspirated *v* and *f* now found, representing *mh* or *bh*. This produces Banora or Manora, and both, as it turns out, are words for a sheep-fold, *mainnir* (manyir), or *banair*. The word probably developed into English manor and suggests a site or centre of particular importance, such as the seat of a tribal chief, as does the later prestigious if short-lived development at both these sites. This does not prove that all *keels* were originally sheep-pens, but it allows that possibility, and it does suggest that both Kilfenora and Meigle originally were. Banyer Hall in Norfolk, and Benziecott, Benzieclett, and Benziaroth in Orkney may also preserve the memory of the *banair* or *mainnir*, as it once was.

Sheila McGregor

Pictish Silver and the Gododdin poem

Craig Cessford

After stone, the most common surviving medium for Pictish art is silver, which has been recovered in considerable quantities in hoards such as that found at Norrie's Law, Fife. Pictish symbols occur on a number of pieces of silver such as the two leaf-shaped plaques and a hand-pin from Norrie's Law, and the chains from Whitecleugh, Lanarkshire and Parkhill, Aberdeenshire. An understanding of silver in Early Historic Scotland may therefore shed some light on Pictish art. One obvious approach is to consider the portrayal of silver in any relevant documents. Unfortunately, Scotland does not posses any sources which deal with silver in as much detail as the Ulster Cycle (Mallory 1986); the most reliable works, such as Adomnán's *Life of Columba,* do not mention silver at all. One document which does however mention silver is the *Gododdin* poem.

The term in the *Gododdin* normally translated as 'silver' is *ariant/aryant* [G.P.C. 203] which occurs three times in verses A.LV, A.LXV and the *Gorchan of Cynfelyn*. In a rather corrupted part of verse A.LV the reciter of the poem is described as *gwas chwant y aryant heb emwyt*, 'a youth desirous of silver' (Williams 1938, l.642; Jackson 1969, 138), which refers to either a reward or prize for poetic ability (Jackson 1969, 137; Jarman 1988, lxiii). We are told of Gwaednerth in verse A.LXV that *aryant am y eud eur dylyi* 'there was silver around his mead, gold was his due' (Williams 1938, l.798; Jarman 1988, l.626) — implying the use of silver drinking vessels or goblets (Jackson 1969, 142; Jarman 1988, n.626), and that these were less valuable than examples made of gold. According to the *Gorchan of Cynfelyn* the poet Aneirin was ransomed from his captors with *o eur pur a dur ac aryant* 'pure gold, steel and silver' (Jarman 1988, l.1128). This list might be taken to imply that gold was the most valuable material, followed by steel weapons, with silver in third place. Are any of the well known Pictish silver hoards linked with the payment of such ransoms? The poet Taliesin also mentions *ariant* in his poem praising Cynon when he describes horse-harnesses decorated with silver (Williams 1968, 1,18).

A much more common term in the *Gododdin* poem is *aur* which is translated as 'gold' by both Jackson and Jarman but can also mean 'fine', 'splendid' [G.P.C. 237] or 'excellent' [pers. comm. JEC Williams 1992]. It is therefore possible that many of the items in the *Gododdin* that are thought of as golden could actually have been made of other valuable materials such as silver. This means that the passage concerning Gwaednerth could instead be translated as 'there was silver around his mead, excellence was his due'. This alternative translation is poetically preferable as it removes the implications that Gwaednerth drank from inferior vessels and that silver was not particularly valuable. Items described as *aur* in the *Gododdin* include another reference to drinking vessels [A.XXI], torcs [A.XXVIII, A.XXI, B.XXII, A.XLII, B.LXVI, B.XC, B.XCI, B.XCVIII], a filigreed or chased shield [A.XXIX], clothing [A.XVI, B.CIII] and fringes of painstaking workmanship [A.I]. In addition Edinburgh is described as the home of many *euruchog* which could mean silversmiths, goldsmiths or even brass-workers [G.P.C. 1261]. Were the items described as *aur* made of gold or were they instead splendid objects made of silver? Archaeologically there are no golden equivalents from Scotland for the *aur* of the *Gododdin* but several of them are paralleled by pieces of Pictish silver.

Collections of silver drinking vessels have been recovered in Pictish hoards at St Ninian's Isle, Shetland (Small *et al* 1973) and the Broch of Burgar, Orkney (Graham-Campbell 1985) both of which were deposited around AD 800. There were seven shallow rounded silver bowls in the St Ninian's Isle treasure and eight bowls in the Broch of Burgar hoard. The Burgar hoard has been lost, presumably melted down like so many early discoveries of Pictish silver, but one of the vessels is described as a vase or beaker which 'bulged out about the middle, the mouth and bottom being considerably narrower' (Graham-Campbell 1985, 249). This unusually shaped vessel has few parallels and might well have been based upon an E2 pottery vessel. E-ware vessels were imported into 7th century Scotland alongside cargoes of wine (Cessford 1994; Thomas 1990) and occur at a number of important Pictish sites such as Clatchard Craig, Fife and Craig Phadraig, Inverness-shire. They spawned a number of wooden imitations (Earwood 1993, 94–97) suggesting that there was a high demand for such vessels. Imported wine was an expensive luxury product and some of its lustre may have rubbed off onto the rather mundane pottery vessels imported with it. If E2 beakers were associated with wine drinking it is quite possible that they could have been copied in silver. Another possibility

is that the *Gododdin* poet may have been inspired by Late Roman drinking vessels such as the flagons, goblets and various types of bowl which formed a considerable part of the 5th century hoard discovered in the territory of the kingdom of Gododdin at Traprain Law (Curle 1923). Such items could have become heirlooms and continued in use for long periods of time.

There are also silver Pictish parallels for other items of *aur* in the *Gododdin* poem. Two circular items with twisted hoops and sub-rectangular terminals from the 7th century Norrie's Law hoard are probably a pair of torcs which represent an amalgamation of native and Roman military influences (Cessford 1995). Some thin fragments of silver with répoussé decoration, also from the Norrie's Law hoard, may well be parts of a parade shield (Graham-Campbell 1991, 247–49). The leader of the three figures depicted on the Pictish carving from Birsay is carrying an elaborate shield which could have been decorated with silver (Ritchie 1989, 54). He also has a fringe at the bottom of his robe which considering the evidence of the *Gododdin* could have been made of silver.

The *Gododdin* poem mentions silver drinking vessels and shows that silver could be used for both rewarding poets and ransoming prisoners. Silver drinking vessels are well illustrated by Late Roman and Pictish examples from hoards in Scotland which means that criticism of their presence in the *Gododdin* poem (Alcock 1983, 13) is hardly fair. Pictish hoards also provide silver parallels for items such as shields and torcs which are described in the *Gododdin* as *aur* suggesting that this term should, in at least some instances, be translated as 'splendid' rather than 'gold' and refers to items actually made of silver.

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A Note on Meigle 2

Katrin Thier
Eva Grau-du Mont

On a visit to Meigle Museum in February 1995, we noticed a detail on the reverse of stone No. 2, which we would like to discuss here. We would appreciate any comments.

In the bottom left-hand corner of the reverse side of the stone, there is the representation of a human standing behind an animal holding a long narrow object across his shoulder. Since Allen and Anderson's *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, this has been interpreted as a club. Looking more closely, however, we noticed that the object's lower edge is completely, the upper edge mostly straight, and at first glance the whole thing seems to taper like the blade of a sword. Moreover, between the hand on the left and the body of the person, a short line projects downward and to the left. It appears to be continued upward along the outline of the hand, but there it is even more obscure than the hand. Still, it does give the impression of a cross-guard. The other hand grips the end of the object, making it impossible to determine whether or not there is a pommel. The end of the blade poses some problems. It is so badly worn that it is much lower than the surface of the figure holding it. The lower edge is still straight, but the upper edge is bulging outwards irregularly, giving rise to the only serious doubt that the object might really be a club and not a sword. However, it is impossible to have a clear idea as to what this part looked like when it was new. Finally, the way of holding the object resting on the shoulder may indicate a club. But it is also feasible to rest a sword like this. It is not dangerous if the weapon is laid on the blade, especially if the bearer is wearing armour. This point cannot be determined with the carving in its present state. It is probably safe to see artistic licence in the fact that the weapon seems to lie edge-down, since a sword from the side is difficult to depict.

In conclusion, we think that the figure is holding a sword on his shoulder, as the overall impression indicates. We are aware of the problems posed by this interpretation, and we are open to comments.

Meigle 2 detail, scale 1:2 © Katrin Thier, 1995.

NEWS ITEMS

The National Committee on Carved Stones in Scotland

At the 1995 Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee (TAFAC) annual November Conference, held this year at Dundee University, Dr Richard Fawcett, an Historic Scotland Inspector of Ancient Monuments, presented a paper on 'The Work of the National Committee on Carved Stones in Scotland'.

This committee was set up by him over two years ago as a *sequela* to Historic Scotland's 1992 'Policy on Carved Stones' (see Maxwell 1994, 9–10). As many bodies are concerned with the condition and protection of carved stones it seemed appropriate to develop a combined initiative to determine how the stones should be best protected. The Committee consists of representatives of Historic Scotland, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, the Scottish Museums Council, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, the Council for Scottish Archaeology, and the Association of Regional and Island Archaeologists. It is independently chaired by John Higgitt of the Department of Fine Arts of Edinburgh University. All types of carved stone are considered, whether scheduled or not, and regardless of date.

The Committee is 'the forum for discussion on matters of recording, preservation and protecting carved stones', Dr Fawcett reported. He stated however that most of the Committee's time had been taken up considering individual cases, and quoted both the Aberlemno stones, shut away in boxes over winter, and the recent resurrection of the Newton (Collessie) Stone (Lines 1995) as examples.

Dr Fawcett then outlined some of the work of the Committee:

- the production of a leaflet, 'Carved Stones in Scotland, Threats and Protection'.
- the contacting of all Scottish Local Authority departments to enquire what policies they apply to conserving stones — in response only 30% replied, most of them saying they actually had no particular policies to cover the whole range of carved stones.
- the organisation of a one-day conference on 'Post-Reformation grave-stones', stones which have in themselves posed particular problems.

He promised that, once the new Local Authorities are in place after 1st April 1996, the Committee will approach them. They hope to produce booklets of advice on 'good practice in recording stones' and also on 'techniques to photograph stones'. The help of Pictish Arts Society Historiographer, Tom E. Gray (the CSA representative on the Committee) was gratefully acknowledged in this last respect.

Dr Fawcett however admitted that the Committee has great difficulty in knowing just what advice to give to owners of stones since they themselves 'know very little about the process of decay — fundamental to knowing what to do about it'. The Committee seems to be 'pinning hopes on a research project' — i.e. research into carved stone decay conducted by the Building Research Establishment of Historic Scotland led by Ingval Maxwell. This research will monitor the decay of a wide range of Historic Scotland sites including the cup-and-ring marks at Kilmichael Glassary, St Martin's Cross on Iona, and the fabric of both Dunkeld Cathedral and Huntly Castle. If the Committee 'can understand why stones are decaying, then it will be able to make a more informed decision about what to do', Dr Fawcett reported.

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J.R.F. Burt

Isle of May: in Search of St Ethernan

The fourth season of excavations at St Ethernan's Priory took place over 6 weeks in July and August 1995. Excavations continued in the cemetery, the church, the east range, and the south range. The cloister garth was investigated for the first time, as was the west range following structural consolidation.

Part of the 1994 cemetery excavation trench was reopened and enlarged to encompass an area 11m x 6m. Numerous graves spanning a long period of time, possibly with Early Christian origins were excavated and the skeletons lifted. The earliest burials, excavated in 1994, have produced radiocarbon dates spanning the 6th to 11th centuries AD. Various burial types were recorded in 1995, including further long cists (stone slab-lined graves) with well preserved extended inhumations, as well as multiple burials within and beneath cists. The skeletons of at least 3 children were found. Many of the cists and later shallow graves were dug into a possible large burial cairn, 25m north-south, comprised principally of rounded beach stones. This may have originated as a raised beach which became much altered and enlarged as a place of burial. Some of the later burials presumed to be of 14th to 16th century date, were very shallow indeed having been buried in graves in the top of the burial cairn, covered with shell sand and reused cist slabs. A 5m wide paved roadway was found sealing part of the west side of the burial cairn, apparently heading towards the west door of the church. This roadway was partly sealed by the stone foundations of an ancillary building of the monastery located to the north-west of the church.

Although the monastery was established in the 1140s, evidence has been found to suggest that the conventual church was not constructed until some time in the 13th century. One of the principal aims of the excavation has therefore been to identify any remains of a pre-Benedictine church, which had been constructed to contain the shrine of the Saints and Martyrs associated with the island, and would have been available for immediate use by the colonising Benedictine brethren. The excavations did reveal part of a stone structure within and beneath the later church. The older structure may be the east end square apse of an 11th century church, with one corner of dressed masonry surviving above foundations. Both churches were built on the raised beach burial cairn which originally extended to beyond the south wall of the monastery church. This may have been altered to form a terrace for building on, and at some time had been provided with a double revetment wall along the seaward side. At least two levels of extended inhumations survived within the cairn, and these were on the same alignment as the long cist burials. It is interesting to note that these were orientated north-east – south-west, as opposed to the true east–west arrangement of the later burials which mirrored the alignment of the monastery church.

Excavations within the cloister garth, which measured 8m east–west by 10m, revealed two phases of stone-lined and capped drains. These drains were found to continue beneath and through the walls of the east range where they joined with the main drain under the floor of the Chapter House, to then debouch down the slope to the east. A significant amount of disturbed human bone was found within the cloister garth, indicating that the pre-Benedictine burial ground had originally extended this far.

A small quantity of prehistoric material has been found during each season of excavations, and in 1995 this was augmented by the discovery of a sherd of Beaker pottery. A number of sherds of very course, thick walled late Iron Age (or Pictish?) pottery were also recovered.

The excavation is publicised by a free colour leaflet and an exhibition in the Scottish Fisheries Museum, Anstruther. The good weather, coupled with the high media profile of the project and the general allure of the May, resulted in 2300 visitors coming out during the excavation. All were given a guided tour, and free access to the site and to the archaeologists!

The final season of excavations will take place in August 1996. It is proposed that consolidation, display and interpretation of the site will continue into Summer 1997.

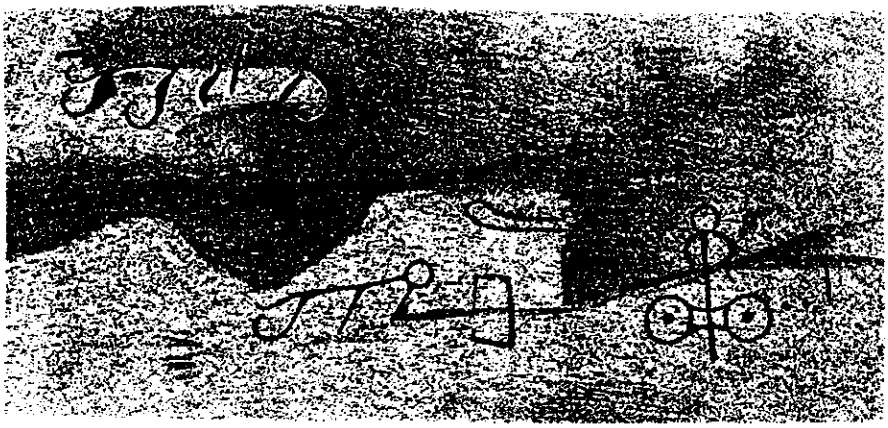
The project is jointly led by Fife Regional Council and Scottish Natural Heritage. The archaeological team and post-excavation facilities are provided by Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division.

Sponsors: Fife Regional Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, North-east Fife District Council, Historic Scotland, The Russell Trust, The Hunter Archaeological Trust, The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and St Andrews and North-east Fife Tourist Board.

Peter Yeoman

Wemyss Caves Saved

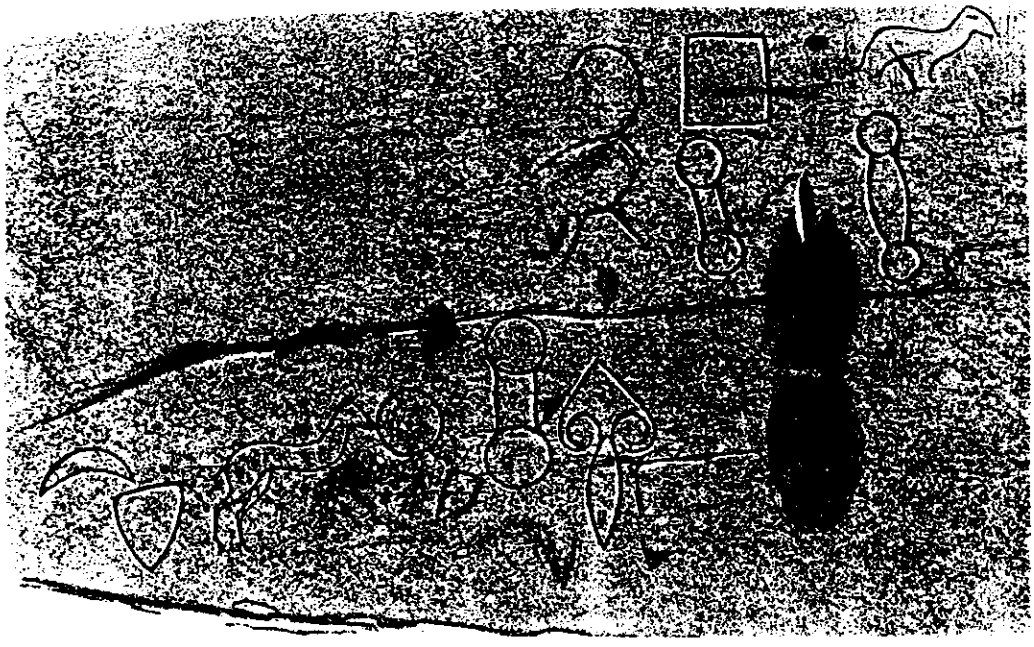
The threat posed by coastal erosion to the caves at East Wemyss in Fife and their unique heritage of Pictish carvings has quite rightly been one of the best publicised heritage issues of recent years. A local pressure group was formed in the late '80s and it is particularly thanks to the effective actions of Save the Wemyss Ancient Caves Society (SWACS) that Fife Regional Council, financially assisted by Historic Scotland and Kirkcaldy District Council, are executing a two year programme of coastal protection works costing around £100 000.



Carvings in Court Cave, East Wemyss (after Gibb)

Since 1989 Fife Regional Council has taken positive steps to secure the conservation and protection of these nationally important caves. This most recent phase of positive action commenced with engineering works beginning in 1994 with the provision of rock armouring and groynes in front of Jonathan's Cave and Sliding (Sloping) Cave. These measures have effectively halted erosion. In 1995 further rock armouring in areas west from Jonathan's Cave towards Court Cave was put into place. The engineering works have now been completed. This important Pictish site will be further elevated to 'heritage attraction' status by the provision of car-parking, paths and interpretative boards — to be completed by March 1996.

Peter Yeoman, the Fife Regional Council Archaeologist, is particularly keen to acknowledge the considerable efforts of Gordon Barclay of Historic Scotland in giving this work such a high priority, and for organising the provision of the lion's share of the funding.



Carvings in Jonathan's Cave, East Wemyss (after Gibb)

BOOK REVIEWS

The Ochils: Placenames, History and Tradition by Angus Watson (Perth & Kinross District Libraries, Perth, 1995). £10.95. ISBN 0-905452-16-X.

This gazetteer of the Ochil Hills, the range running from Stirling to the southern bank of the Tay, is a welcome addition to place-name study in Scotland. At a time when place-names are beginning to attract far more attention from both scholars and the interested public alike, this type of book fills a major gap. The classic texts on Scottish place-names, W.J. Watson's *Celtic Placenames of Scotland*, first published in 1926 with a recent, welcome reprint by Birlinn Press, currently available, and W.F.H. Nicolaisen's *Scottish Place-names*, Batsford 1976/79, are by their nature incapable of being used intensively at a local level. Recent academic work, such as Simon Taylor's efforts in Fife, which provided the basis of a recent enlightening Pictish Arts Society talk, are a step in the direction of an eventual definitive database of Scottish place-names which is currently being mooted at the School of Scottish Studies. Until that can be brought about the approach followed by Angus Watson is a more than acceptable stop-gap. By restricting himself to a definable geographical area he has provided a work which will be of interest to local inhabitants, hill-walkers and other outdoor enthusiastists, and all those with an interest in our nation's past. The scholarship is to be commended — the author appears to have been assiduous in his pursuit of old sources — a necessity in dealing with place-names which are susceptible to all the vagaries of a constantly changing linguistic situation with all its attendant complications of dealing with several languages which have influenced this area. The languages are Pictish — although the author is careful to refer to P-Celtic forms which I find an admirably cautious approach (e.g. "The Ochil Hills: ... derivation: 'Ochil' is generally accepted as deriving from P-Celtic 'Ochel', earlier 'Uxellos', high") — Gaelic (which provides a great deal of the original nomenclature), Scots and lastly English.

The layout, in standard gazetteer form, refers to most early forms of the individual names and their sources, whether literary or cartographic, and is backed by short notes on history and folklore. Toponymy, the study of place-names, is, like all language studies, dependant on a great deal of interpretation and, as Professor Nicolaisen said at our recent conference, definitive readings are not guaranteed. It is therefore with no sense of attacking Angus Watson's work that I mention a couple of the instances where my own interpretation differs from his. He has Aitkenhall (p.18) as 'derivation: from the surname? Scots "Hall" was usually applied to a reasonably substantial dwelling.' That is fine – as far as it goes, but another reading of the Scots form, based on a great many other instances in aa' the airts o' Scotland, would suggest Aikenhall as deriving initially from something like *Aiken Haugh* – meaning the low-lying flat-land by the river where the oaks grow. The most famous "re-interpretation" of this type is Sauchiehall, where the original is *Sauchie Haugh* with *Sauchie* meaning 'willows'. On p. 88 he has *Kerlynlyn* as deriving from Scots 'carlin', an old woman. Again fine, but the term *Carlin* also has a very significant aspect of association, not only with witchcraft, but with the ancient worship of the Mother Goddess. It corresponds very closely with a similarly used word in Gaelic, *Cailleach*. Given that the earliest mention of Kerlynlyn is from 1320, there is a strong possibility that the name means more than just 'an old woman'.

A reference to Craig Bran (p.32) says 'This is one of the very few surviving Ochils Gaelic names that may contain a mythological reference'. I must beg to differ as I find a great many hints to mythological and legendary material (e.g. Carlin, above). The fact that the author does not draw attention to the pre-Christian original of St Bride – the Goddess Bride, who seems to have existed amongst the P-Celtic peoples as well as in Gaelic tradition, being the most obvious. However, this admirable book provides those of us with a particular interest in this field with opportunities for fascinating research and it is a welcome source-book indeed.

The presentation of the book is excellent — one slight cavail being the lack of place-names on the map of the Ochils on the endpapers (but, as I am assured that this was due to a mix-up at the printers, no fault should accrue to the author or his able illustrator, Ken Laing). Nor should any opprobrium be attached to Perth and Kinross District Libraries whose archives have provided interesting old photographs throughout the text. The new District Librarian, Mike Moir, is to be congratulated on continuing the publishing policy of his predecessor, F.J. Guthrie and *The Ochils* will, I hope, serve as a model for future publications. A wee bonus for Pictish enthusiasts is the back page photograph of the Abernethy symbol stone by the author himself.

Stuart McHardy

Earl & Mormaer: Norse-Pictish relationships in Northern Scotland by Barbara E Crawford (Groam House Museum Trust, Rosemarkie, 1995). PB; 30pp, £4.50. ISBN 09515 778 5 9.

The fifth published Groam House lecture is the first to examine the important topic of the impact of the Vikings on Easter Ross. The title 'Norse-Pictish relationships' is a little disingenuous, since the Picts are hardly mentioned (neither, as it happens, is Rosemarkie itself); it was rather their (partial) descendants, the Picto-Scottish 'natives' of Northern Scotland, ruled by the Mormaers of Moray, who opposed the expansionist aims of the Norse Earls of Orkney.

Powerful élite groups – 'warlords' – are focused on, and the author reminds us of the great impact the rulers of societies necessarily have on the rise and fall of cultures. Easter Ross or the Firthlands' – a term to keep in mind for future use – were part of a frontier zone between Celtic- and Norse-speaking peoples between the ninth and twelfth centuries, and their rulers, Celtic Mormaers or Norse Earls, competed constantly for control of the land and its resources.

The best ideas are often in retrospect the simplest and most obvious once thought of: Dr Crawford puts forward the convincing, but apparently never before mooted, idea that the Earls of Orkney fought so hard to extend their rule over the northern Scottish mainland because they wished to be able to exploit its resources of timber. Clearly, the maintenance of their northern 'sea kingdom' would have been impossible without a constant supply of good quality wood for building and repairing ships – a resource naturally unobtainable in the Northern Isles themselves. Examples of the large size of Early Medieval fleets and their great wastage through losses arising from battles or bad weather are quoted from *Orkneyinga Saga.* This is the Booklet's central topic.

Around this theme the author builds up a picture of the political and military struggles over Easter Ross between Norsemen and Celts, and the evidence for the Vikings in the area to be derived from archaeology and place-names. Political history is heavily dependant on the *Saga,* a lively but difficult source, and the archaeological evidence is, if anything, even less helpful. Place-names provide valuable evidence for Norse settlement and timber exploitation, though their exact original meanings are often uncertain. Norse settlement and the origins of the town of Dingwall – hub of Viking Ross and still the administrative centre today – are also covered. It would be interesting to know if their are remains of a Norse settlement under the modern town.

This booklet has fewer illustrations than most previous Groam House Lectures – five maps or plans and one photograph. The front cover has an appropriate line drawing of Norse shipwrights at work.

Dr Crawford's lecture exemplifies the multi-disciplinary approach she herself recommends, and she has put together a number of fascinating ideas about the history of Easter Ross that will help to illuminate a lively but obscure period. It is to be hoped that the Groam House Lecture series will continue to field such innovative work in the future.

Earl & Mormaer: Norse-Pictish relationships in Northern Scotland can be obtained from Groam House Museum, High Street, Rosemarkie, IV10 8UF, price £4.50, including postage.

Available at the same price are the first four published Groam House Lectures:

The art and function of Rosemarkie's Pictish monuments by Isabel Henderson.

Curadán, Boniface and the early church of Rosemarkie by Aidan MacDonald.

The neighbours of the Picts: Angles, Britons & Scots at war and at home by Leslie Alcock.

Perceptions of the Picts: from Eumenius to John Buchan by Anna Ritchie.

Niall M Robertson

The Viking Age Gold and Silver of Scotland by James Graham-Campbell (National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1995). HB; viii and 260pp, 65 figures and 75 plates; £55. ISBN 0-948636-62-8.

This is an impressive volume by an author who over the last twenty years has made the field of Viking gold and silver in Scotland his own. Its main part consists of a comprehensive and fully illustrated catalogue of thirty-four hoards and twenty-five single finds. It is attractively produced and illustrated with very few noticeable errors. Pictish hoards are omitted (pp. 3–4) and there is very little native material in this corpus. Pictish silver presumably fell into Viking hands but it was not deposited in Viking hoards in Scotland of the period *c.* 850–950 (Chapter III), possibly because of its relatively low silver content (p. 26), even although Pictish brooches have been found in Scandinavia and an interlace strip and comb fragment from the 10th century hoard from Cuerdale, Lancashire, are probably Pictish (p. 26 for further references to these). Two silver Pictish finds from the Brough of Birsay are included as single finds, a pin head [S21] and the terminal of a penannular brooch [S22], as these come from Norse contexts (pp. 162–63). I am not entirely convinced by the argument that Pictish silver is absent from these hoards because of its low precious metal content. Perhaps the Vikings were less successful at raiding than is generally thought, or the Picts were particularly skilled at hiding things, and relations between the two groups may not have been so uniformly hostile as they are normally portrayed. The Norse material previously erroneously associated with the Pictish hoards at the Broch of Burgar [15] (p. 103) and Norrie's Law [S8] (p. 157) is also included. Finds of coins are also listed, though in less detail. some of these are of Pictish interest such as an Alfredian example [*c.* AD 871–75] from Burghead (p. 86).

While there is little in this volume directly to do with the Picts it is important for comparison with Pictish material. For this Chapter VI which deals with 'Contents and Contexts' is the most useful part (pp. 57–62). The hoards contain a fairly restricted range of material — mainly neck/arm/finger rings, brooches, pins and ring-money (p. 57). Even though we possess far less Pictish material it includes a much wider range of material including leaf-shaped plaques, sword pommels and chapes, combs and bowls. Additionally, while there are a few pieces of exceptional quality in the Viking hoards, in general the Pictish material appears to be of far higher artistic quality. Viking hoards were buried in stone vessels, cloth bags, cattle horns and wooden vessels while prehistoric or natural mounds, peat bogs, churches and monastic sites seem to have been preferred locations for deposition (pp. 59–61). Pictish hoards were probably buried in similar containers and locations, for example the St Ninian's Isle hoard was found in a larchwood box under a medieval chapel. The section on why hoards were deposited (pp. 61–62) is rather tentative and unsatisfactory. While this is, of course, a difficult question, recent work on prehistoric hoarding has managed to advance much further than this. In particular, Richard Bradley's ideas concerning Late Bronze Age material, which he considers comparable to Viking hoards (1990, 147–48 and 194–95), are not mentioned. Also omitted is Anna Ritchie's 1993 publication, *Viking Scotland*, which, while not intended to be highly academic, does raise a number of relevant ideas.

This book is primarily meant to be a catalogue so the relative lack of discussion on the implications of the material is understandable. These minor criticisms should not deflect from the fact that this is an important and definitive work which while rather expensive is nevertheless good value.

REFERENCES

Bradley, Richard 1990 *The Passage of Arms*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Ritchie, Anna 1993 *Viking Scotland*, Batsford, London/ Historic Scotland, Edinburgh.

Craig Cessford.

PAPER CLIPS

Lloyd Laing, 'The Hoard of Pictish Silver from Norrie's Law, Fife', *Studia Celtica,* XXVIII (1994), 11–38.

This paper provides a long-awaited catalogue of the surviving fragments of the Norrie's Law silver hoard which was discovered in Fife *c.*1819. In the detailed discussion Lloyd Laing builds on his previous suggestions, first aired in a joint paper co-authored by his wife 'The date and origin of Pictish symbols' in *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* 114 (1984), and so challenges Professor James Graham-Campbell's proposed deposition date of sometime in the second half of the 7th century.

Forty of the most notable items are catalogued (in addition there are 53 surviving small pieces of plate). The lost 'shield' and 'armour' are also discussed. Laing argues again that the Byzantine coin supposedly associated with the hoard, and as such used by some previous scholars for dating, was actually an unprovenanced rogue — its attribution to the site was probably invented in the 19th century to make the "valueless" antiquity more marketable.

The oldest object of the hoard is the sub-circular repoussé silver plate which stylistically belongs to the late-1st to 2nd century AD. The two penannular rings may have been torcs, but if so they must have been worn as ornaments on the chest, possibly suspended from leather hoops. They cannot be flexed sufficiently to admit the neck and be worn in the traditional manner. They have often been interpreted as penannular brooches (of Fowler's Class H). The hand-pins are now compared with closely similar examples from Tripontium (Warwickshire), Gaulcross (Banffshire) and Long Sutton (Somerset). It is clear that these pins form a distinct group, and a fourth–fifth century date is well reasoned. The two leaf-shaped silver plaques are highly suggestive of a surviving tradition of Roman-style votive plaques in Pictland. The Roman coins, the spoon bowl and some other pieces of scrap metal are dated to the mid to late 4th century AD.

It is suggested that the hoard, mainly composed of Roman hack silver and objects made from it, is a collection of material recovered from a shrine and deposited in the 5th century. The character and number of objects suggests that they were made for a votive offering. Perhaps Christian Picts had looted a pagan shrine.

Anna Ritchie, 'Meigle and lay patronage in Tayside in the 9th and 10th centuries AD', *Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal,* 1 (1995), 1–10.

Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee launched a new annual journal at its 1995 conference in November. The well-produced first volume opens with a Pictish paper given by Anna Ritchie at the 1994 conference.

In this Dr Ritchie reviews the history of the collection of sculptured stones at Meigle. Its sheer size implies considerable patronage. It is cogently argued that there was a special form of lay patronage, probably royal, at Meigle, and that this was part of a wider sphere of lay patronage in Tayside in the 9th and 10th centuries. If there had been a monastery at Meigle, as is suggested in RCAHMS's *South-east Perth: an archaeological landscape,* one would expect far more Biblical iconography within the large corpus of sculpture than the sole (surviving) representation of 'Daniel in the Lion's Den' on Meigle 2.

The church built at Meigle in the 8th or 9th century displayed sophistication, as the two architectural fragments, Meigle 10 and Meigle 22, attest — this in itself suggests wealthy lay patronage. At Meigle there seems to have been a break between the end of royal patronage *c.*1000 and a new phase of lay patronage associated with the Knights Templar beginning in the 12th century.

Elsewhere in Tayside, St Vigeans is likely to have been another church site with secular patronage. It too has a collection of sculpture of monumental size but with little Biblical

iconography. At Aberlemno however, where two great cross-slabs are at some distance from the site of the early church (at Aikenhatt), there is likely to have been lay patronage of a different sort. This, it is suggested, resulted in the erection of prayer crosses along a major route of communication to Brechin.

Val Turner, 'The Mail stone: an incised Pictish figure from Mail, Cunningsburgh, Shetland', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* 124 (1994), 315–25.

This is the formal report, a description with analysis, of the stone bearing a lightly incised figure of an animal-headed man, discovered in August 1992, and previously reported by Niall M. Robertson in *Pictish Arts Society Journal* 2, pp. 27–28.

The Mail figure is not an isolated find. Ogham-bearing and runic stones have been found in the vicinity. The sheltered bay, its rich hinterland, the number of brochs in the vicinity and the proximity to soapstone quarries at Catpund 'all testify to the likely importance of this area during Pictish times'.

The soft nature of the sandstone has allowed the lines of the figure to be lightly, yet finely, incised. Its most distinctive feature is the dog-like muzzle with 15 triangular teeth. Could this be a mask? The figure wears a tunic belted at the waist. A deeply incised axe, blade foremost, held in its right hand rests on the right shoulder. Another implement held in the left hand is interpreted as 'a club or possibly a sword'.

The stone is considered within the context of other Pictish figurative art. The closest parallel is considered to be Rhynie 7, 'Rhynie Man' — the fine stone from Barflat, now in the foyer of Grampian Regional Council HQ in Aberdeen. Certainly the axe and triangular teeth bear similarities but there is a marked difference in technique and expertise between the two carvings. Other examples used for comparisons are Strathmartine 7, Balblair, Collessie Man, Rhynie 3, Rossie Priory, the Papil cross-slab, the Murthly slab, the Brough of Birsay warriors, Glamis 2, Golspie 2 and Inchbrayock 1.

In the discussion, possible interpretations of animal-headed figures carved on Pictish sculpture are given as representations of masked humans, gods, or tribal totems of power. We do not know enough about Pictish beliefs to know what they meant to them.

If the Mail figure is taken as an isolated figure then it could be presumed to be a symbol rather than a portrait, and thus early in the sequence of Pictish art. However the stone may have been part of a cross-slab or Class III stone. The various possibilities are discussed and, on balance, a date in the early 7th century is postulated.

As Val Turner puts it, 'In any event the stone is at the same time both distinctively Pictish and exceptional, and thus it is a notable addition to a group of enigmatic figures which demonstrate the unique character of Pictish culture.'

The paper contains an excellent drawing of the Mail stone by Lynnie Ritchie.

CORRIGENDA

'Of Pictish Helmets and Other Objects' by Graeme Cruickshank, *Pictish Arts Soc J*, 7 (Spring 1995), pp.22–28.

Unfortunately, when the then editor was absent overseas, the above article was printed with a number of typesetting errors (perhaps as a result of an unsupervised computer "spell-check"). Those errors concerning grammar and punctuation, some of which change the sense of what was written, would be difficult to rectify without reprinting the whole article. However, the original manuscript has been deposited within the Pictish Arts Society Archive, and is thus available for consultation by all members of the Society. Some of the more readily correctable errors printed in *Journal 7* are listed below.

p.22 line 16: for 'pictish' read 'Pictish'
line 17: for 'inventory' read 'infantry'
line 18: for 'inventory men of' read 'infantryman to'
p.23 line 1: for 'carefully' read 'carelessly'
line 3: for 'dwelling' read 'duelling'
p.24 line 11: for 'sloppy' read 'floppy'

and most important of all, in regard to the dolphin symbol:
p.26 line 12: for 'grotesque' read 'botoesque', i.e. resembling the boto, details of which will appear at a future date.

Apologies to Graeme Cruickshank and all misled readers.

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