THE PICTISH ARTS SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER 84 AUTUMN 2017

It's that time of the year again!

Yes, it will soon be October which means two things: the PAS conference is imminent and it is membership renewal time again. This edition of the newsletter contains full details of the 2017 conference, a booking form and a membership renewal slip (for members who receive a pdf newsletter, these forms may appear as separate attachments).

It goes without saying that I hope you will renew your membership and that you do so promptly by post, on-line or in person if you come along to the conference or an autumn lecture. Chasing up late renewals is time-consuming for committee members and incurs additional postage expense for the Society so please help us renewing on time. Thanks! *JB*

Pictish Fife – PAS Annual Conference
Saturday 7th – Sunday 8th October 2017

SRUC Elmwood Campus (formerly Elmwood College) Carslogie Rd, Cupar, Fife KY15 4JB

Saturday 7 October Conference & AGM

09.00 Registration

09.30 Welcome

09.35 Fraser Hunter - *Rome and the Southern Picts - New insights from new finds*

10.20 Joanna Hambly - *Pictish Symbols in Fife Caves*

10.45 Tea/coffee

11.10 Peter Yeoman - *St Andrews before St Andrews - A Thousand Years of Sanctity on the May Island*

11.55 Meg Hyland - *Cross Slabs, Cists and Cill-Names: The Early Medieval Church in the East Neuk of Fife*

12.40 Lunch

13.30 Simon Taylor - *The Picts and their place-names: Fife and beyon d*

14.15 Edwina Proudfoot - *What do Pictish Stones tell us about the Picts? A look at the Picts in Fife*

15.00 Tea/coffee

15.25 Sally Foster - *Expiscation! George Buist and the early duplication of Pictish monuments and artefacts in Fife*

15.50 Oliver O'Grady & Joe FitzPatrick - *New findings from East Lomond Hillfort*

16.35 Closing Remarks

17.00–17.30 AGM

Sunday 8 October

PAS Conference Field Trip to the East Neuk. Coach departs from Fluthers Car Park, East Burnside, Cupar at 9.30 sharp and aims to return there by c17.00. The tour will include:

The symbol-bearing cross slab in Upper Largo.
A collection of fragments built into Abercrombie Church in the grounds of Balcaskie House.
The Skeith Stone on the outskirts of Kilrenny.
The Sauchope and Crail cross slabs.
The large assemblage of sculpture in St Andrews Cathedral Museum.
The Kilduncan cross slab in St Andrews Museum.

Participation in the field trip is by coach only and spaces are limited so pre-booking is essential. Delegates are advised to bring appropriate footwear, waterproofs and a packed lunch although there may be an opportunity to get something to eat in Crail. A **Conference booking form** is included in this Newsletter or book on-line at: **<www.thepictishartssociety.org.uk>**

President's and Secretary's combined report 2016-17

The split Winter/Spring lecture series (Sep-Nov and Mar-May) is now well-established and Brechin Town Museum has proved to be a successful venue with members and guests. Attendance numbers have remained at a steady level of 20–30 throughout, which far outshines the low attendance at Pictavia in the last years of its existence, despite a consistently high level of speakers. Although Pictavia was theoretically very handy for those coming by car, as it sits on the A92, our current town centre location doesn't really represent an inconvenience to travellers and does seem to have attracted more and regular local support.

However there is always room for more. If it is at all feasible, please do support the lecture series if you can and, of course, it is open to non-members so bring a friend!

Once again we have been fortunate in bringing well respected experts to Brechin: Norman Atkinson, Dr Alex Woolf, and Dr Adrian Maldonado in the Winter series and Dr Neil McGuigan and Sophie Nicol in the Spring. Jamie Humble was prevented from attending due to a bereavement but is re-scheduled to kick off the new season this September.

The Annual Conference was held in Inverness last year. We used the auditorium of the Highland Council HQ, which was fitted with an excellent audio loop to the joy of the hard-of-hearing. Our usual conference numbers were considerably boosted by an influx of interested locals from various archaeological and historical groups. There was plenty of new content from the speakers to hold everyone's interest.

We are very grateful to Dr Sheila Hainey who, although unable to attend in person, took our recordings of the talks and wrote up conference reports for the *Newsletter* in her customary accurate and detailed way, a time-consuming and difficult task.

The conference was followed immediately by the Society's AGM, at which point the crowds melted away and we were left with a very small band of members in the auditorium. As usual we worked our way through the agenda. We studied and accepted the accounts. Treasurer Hugh Coleman made a case for self-financing events as much as is possible. It would be good if income from the lecture evenings could cover hall hire and expenses, and if membership subscriptions could cover the running costs of the Society, such as insurance, equipment and printing. However, most of the above costs have increased greatly since the current membership fees were set so a modest increase from this October was agreed.

At the AGM a new Membership Secretary was elected, long-term member Bob Diamond, to replace Elspeth Reid. Other committee positions continued to be held by the same volunteers as in the previous year(s).

The committee was strengthened mid-year by the addition of Gordon Ewan, a jeweller and goldsmith with a workshop in Kirriemuir. As Barbara Thompson also volunteered to join the committee last year, the full complement of committee members has now reached 10.

We are entirely dependent on the speakers, chairpeople, and volunteers for the working of the Society and we wish to thank them all most sincerely. We also wish to thank members who come out to the talks and members who travel to the conferences and all those who support the Pictish cause year after year through their membership renewals. Oh yes, it's that time of year again!

John Borland & Elspeth Reid

Autumn 2017

Forthcoming lectures at Brechin Town House Museum

Friday 15 September

Jamie Humble

Excavations at the vitrified hillfort of Dun Deardail, Glen Nevis (postponed from April 2017)

Friday 20 October

David McGovern

Carving King Kenneth: Adventures of a Pictish Stonecarver

Friday 17 November

Dr James Bruhn

Negotiating Frontiers: The role of glass bangles in Late Iron Age and Roman period society in Britain

Contact details:

Please note the editor's new email address:

<**john.borland@hes.scot**>

PAS Newsletter 85

The deadline for receipt of material is

Saturday 18 November 2017

Please email contributions to the editor:

john.borland@hes.scot

Notice of PAS AGM 2017

The Annual General Meeting of the Pictish Arts Society will be held in SRUC Elmwood Campus (formerly Elmwood College), Carslogie Rd, Cupar, Fife, on Saturday 7 October at 17.00 to consider the following business:

1 Apologies for absence

2 Approval of the 2016 AGM Minutes (see this Newsletter)

3 President's and Secretary's Joint Report (see this newsletter)

4 Treasurer's Report: Presentation and Approval of Annual Accounts

5 Appointment of an Independent Examiner

6 Other Honorary Officers' Reports:

- a) Membership Secretary
- b) Editor

7 Election of Honorary Officers:

- a) President
- b) Two Vice Presidents
- c) Secretary
- d) Treasurer
- e) Membership Secretary
- f) Editor
- g) Events Organiser
- h) Archivist

8 Election of Committee: minimum six, maximum twelve

9 Any other competent business

Note: Business will begin at 17.00 prompt.

Please send nominations for committee, and notes of any matters you wish to raise, to the Honorary Secretary, House of the Glens, Cortachy, Angus DD8 4QF. Alternatively, email:

<**info@thepictishartssociety.org.uk**>

Skeith cross slab – one of the stones being visited in this year's conference field trip

Pictish Arts Society AGM
Highland Council HQ, Inverness
8 October 2016

The 2016 AGM of the Pictish Arts Society was held in the Highland Council HQ in Inverness on Saturday 8 October. It began at 4.30pm after the conference lectures were finished and many members did not, or were unable to, stay on for it. Members present numbered 18. Apologies for absence were received from Sheila Hainey, Stewart Mowatt and Bob Diamond. The Minutes of the 2015 AGM were accepted as published in *Newsletter* 77.

The President John Borland referred to the Annual Report for 2015–16, jointly prepared with Secretary Elspeth Reid, which had already been printed in *Newsletter* 80. He highlighted the impasse that seems to have arisen at Logierait. PAS would like to see the fine Pictish stone (Class II), which has been lying symbols-down 'inside the kirk for at least two decades', finally brought into an upright position to be displayed at last. The carvings may well be deteriorating under the considerable weight of the stone. PAS is keen to help with fund raising and could donate to the project if the go-ahead were given by Logierait Kirk Session. After initial agreement in principle, there have been long delays and now new suggestions to place the stone outside in a shelter. This would be a very expensive undertaking and perhaps prohibitively so. A further complication may arise if Logierait church were to be closed at some point, as has happened to many churches with dwindling congregations. At any event, it was agreed that PAS would continue to pursue the aim of erecting the Logierait stone, in the hope of eventual success, even if it took years to achieve.

The President introduced another current project of the Society, namely the setting up of an e-journal to continue the PAS tradition of published journals. Guidelines have been drawn up and the next step is to bring together an editorial board. That is now in train.

The venue for the conference and AGM in October 2017 was discussed next. Elgin was a possibility, because PAS had been invited and because there is a wealth of Pictish material in Elgin and environs. It could not be organised in conjunction with the Moray Society which had chosen a non-Pictish theme for their conference in November. The Western Isles were also suggested. Skye has Pictish sites. Iona and Argyle were also discussed as conference venues for a possible theme of Picts and their neighbours. The President's and Secretary's combined report 2015–16 was then accepted by the meeting.

Treasurer Hugh Coleman handed out copies of the Annual Accounts to everyone in the meeting and outlined the current finances. He explained that the

Society's year ran from September to September, but the tax year ran from 1 January. This skewed the figures to some extent, as did the fact that invoices from one year were sometimes not received until the following tax year. Thus the apparent £200 surplus of 2104 was in effect a loss of -£300, while the apparent loss of -£1,000 in 2015 was instead a loss of -£500. Rising costs have occurred in several areas, for example Brechin Museum, the venue for the lecture series, now charges for hiring their rooms which were previously free. The annual accounts were approved by the meeting. The present independent examiner of the accounts should continue in the role.

The Treasurer emphasised that any loss was to be taken seriously and he would carry out an analysis of expenditure to see where losses were being made and where savings might be possible. He proposed that membership subscriptions be changed to the following: members who received postal newsletters would be charged £20pa, up from £18; members who received pdf newsletters would be charged £18pa, up from £16. Joint membership, whether postal or pdf, would rise to £25pa, and the £14 option be discontinued. These proposals were accepted by the meeting. The new rates are to come into effect on 1 January 2017.

Ideas about raising income were offered by members. 1. To prompt people on Facebook to join as members. 2. To list Events on Facebook and issue reminders about them to nudge people to book. 3. To offer speakers on Pictish matters, and Barbara Thompson volunteered to speak in schools.

As Membership Secretary, Elspeth Reid reported that two long-standing members had died in the past year, Dr Arnold Fogg and Alastair Mack. Ten members had not renewed their subscription, mostly after being a member for only one year. Meanwhile 16 new members had joined. Membership was increasing gently and now stood at 124. However, it was not possible to know at this point how many existing members would not renew their membership, and so the total number might dip again. As happened last year, another former member re-joined.

Elspeth noted that the increased membership numbers were not yet evident in the Receipts of the Annual Accounts 2015. She said that the increase might be in some measure attributable to the lively PAS Facebook page that was in the hands of Vice-President David McGovern. From the floor David confirmed that Facebook 'likers' stood at over 5,000 and that when he posted a good photo of a Pictish subject many thousands more would view it. It was hard to gauge if 'likers' occasionally became members, but David's work fulfils part of the PAS mission, to raise public awareness of Pictish topics. David also mentioned that he bought a Facebook advert at £20 to publicise the Inverness conference. Despite many 'views' and 'clicks', it is not possible to tell if/how many people booked the conference because of the ad. David added that he would like to record appreciation of all John Borland's work in organising speakers for the conference.

Speaking as Editor, John Borland thanked all contributors to newsletters over the last year and asked the room for new submissions for future issues. At this point it came to light that some members had not received their newsletters for some time, which suggested a fault had occurred in the distribution system. It was agreed to find out if other members had also been affected and rectify the system. Some people had encountered problems booking via the PAS website and David McGovern undertook to sort out website glitches.

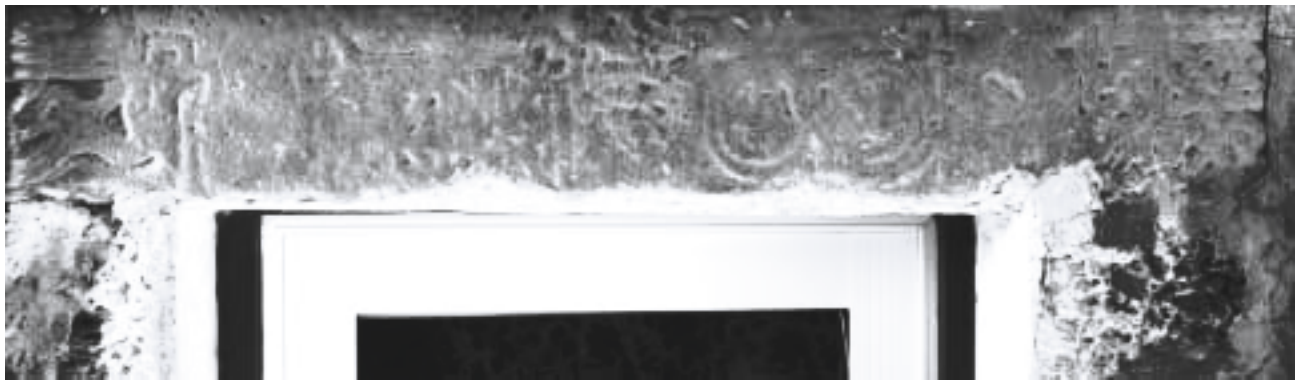
The election of Honorary Officers then followed. The President John Borland was re-elected, as were the two Vice-Presidents David McGovern and Stewart Mowatt. Elspeth Reid was re-elected as Secretary and Hugh Coleman as Treasurer. Elspeth Reid nominated Bob Diamond as Membership Secretary, seconded by John Borland. Bob had expressed his willingness to take on the role. Otherwise no Honorary Officer nominations had been received. John Borland was re-elected as Editor and Elspeth Reid remained as Archivist, after she had explained that the role consists of the not unpleasant task of housing ca. 100 books on Pictish topics in a bookcase provided, as well as about 10 boxfiles of archival material, but no nominations were forthcoming. It was thought that the Aberlemno community hall might be willing to house the collection on loan and David McGovern will approach them in due course.

The election of the Committee followed. The two existing members were re-elected: Sheila Hainey and Nigel Ruckley. In addition a new Committee member was nominated and elected: Barbara Thompson. Thanks to Barbara and Bob, the PAS team has risen to nine. Long-standing member Sheila Hainey is moving to south-west Scotland but will continue her work on the Committee from afar. Thanks are due to her for her years of service and her incomparable report-writing skill.

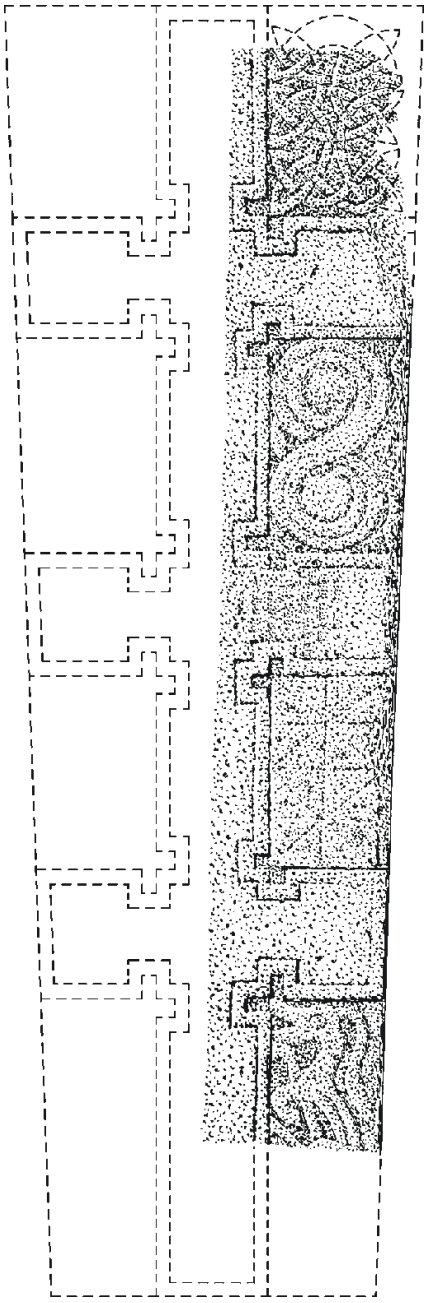
As there was no AOCB, the AGM concluded. *ER*

Largo cross slab – one of the stones being visited in this year's conference field trip

A new triple cross at Weem



1 *The Weem fragment built into the cottage doorway*



2 *Weem triple cross slab, reconstructed. Scale 1:10*

In 1992, a fragment of Pictish sculpture was identified in re-use as the door lintel of a cottage in the Perthshire village of Weem (**1**). Although no longer exposed to the elements, thanks to the addition of a conservatory, the carving was already very weathered, but some aspects of ornament could be identified, including animal facing right, a panel of interlace and a panel containing two roundels of vine scroll.

The carved surface measures 1.45m long by 240mm wide so perhaps not surprisingly, this stone was interpreted as the shaft of a freestanding cross. Although there is a small assemblage of early medieval sculpture in Weem, none of it has any Pictish ornament so it was speculated that this fragment may have originated from Dull, just a few miles away. A well-preserved socket stone in the upper burial ground at Dull supported both the freestanding cross interpretation and the theory of its origins there.

However, recent detailed recording and analysis by Historic Environment Scotland has identified other aspects of ornament on the Weem stone and we can now say with certainty that it is in fact a fragment of recumbent cross slab bearing a triple cross, a motif with a very strong presence in Highland Perthshire. Examples with incised linear crosses have been recorded at Kirton St Fillans (3), Fortingall (3), Comrie (1) and Old Faskally (1) and fragments of an ornamented Pictish slab with 3 ringed crosses have been found at Fortingall. Elsewhere, triple crosses are uncommon.

In addition the animal, the panel of interlace and panel of vine scroll already noted on the Weem slab, we can add a panel of angular knotwork and a triple cross with double-square hollows (**2**) *JB*

Colour my World (Pictish style)

The topic of whether Pictish stones were once coloured has arisen from time to time, though it seems as if authors have been a little coy about committing their thoughts on the matter to print, certainly in book form. A quick flick through the indices of a dozen books on the Picts, several with Symbol Stones in their titles, failed to find one single mention of the word 'colour'.

Now the debate is on again, thanks to a couple of high-profile developments which have occurred recently. In the Summer 2017 edition of *Historic Scotland* magazine, there appeared a snippet under the label of Think Tank which posed the question **'Were Pictish stones originally coloured?'**. The single-paragraph piece made a quite reasonable point: 'Some scholars believe it is possible that Pictish artists used mineral pigments to colour their sculptures. Although no proof survives, it would make sense'. We were informed that 'New interpretation panels consider this question at sites including Dunfallandy, "Maiden Stone" (the site being near Chapel o' Garioch), and Aberlemno'.

So far, so good – but there was more. The little piece was accompanied by three illustrations: a colour photograph of the Class I stone at Aberlemno (to what purpose, it may be wondered), and stipple drawings of both sides of the Dunfallandy stone. Here was the shock, for each sketch had been divided vertically, with one half appearing in a familiar shade of sandstone fawn, while the other half displayed colour solid areas of colour, applied to animals, people, symbols, and major decorative elements. The effect thus created appeared not merely colourful, but somewhat overpowering, even garish.

While still in a somewhat shaken state, I was sent by email an on-line piece put together by Steven McKenzie, BBC Scotland's Highlands and Islands reporter, dated 24th June. It was headed 'Scotland's carved Pictish stones re-imagined in colour'. The range of illustrations was greater than had appeared in the *Historic Scotland* magazine, and we now had: Knochnagael, the Maiden Stone (cross-side only), Dunfallandy (both sides), the Aberlemno Kirkyard stone (battle side only), and the complete information panel recently put up at Dyce, showing the two stones there (both one-sided, being Class I and Class I/II respectively). That made a total of seven sides which had been given the 'before and after' treatment in terms of colour/monochrome. The basic message would seem to be 'Just look at what a millennium of weathering can do to wipe out the Picts' pretty colours'. They also got a snippet of a mention in *The Scotsman* On-line on 27th June by Alison Campsie, though without comment. Perhaps the headline was regarded as comment enough: 'Scotland's Pictish stones like you have never seen before'. Too right.

The BBC piece begins by saying 'Archaeologists have been uncovering ornately-decorated Pictish stones across northern Scotland for many years' (without mentioning that many more have stood as field monuments for over a thousand years than have been found buried in the ground). It continues 'For many, the sculptures' mysterious carvings are impressive as they are, but some scholars suggest their ancient creators may also have painted the stones, bringing out [the designs] in vivid colours. Working with experts, Historic Environment Scotland (HES) has created new interpretation panels for some of the best-known Pictish stones'.

The reporter had sought the advice of HES, and by way of justification for the claim, he pointed out that although a thousand years of weathering would have removed any direct evidence, the Picts did use colour on other objects, such as metalwork, even though examples are extremely rare. Also, other contemporary cultures used colour on stonework; for example, Northumbria and Mercia, as had the Romans before them and in addition there were the colourfully-illuminated Early Christian manuscripts such as the Book of Kells, very possibly produced on Iona. HES did concede that any claim of the Picts doing likewise was 'speculative', yet insisted that 'The hypothesis is supported by many Pictish scholars as probable, or at the very least possible, and we drew on their advice throughout this project'. Really? Who are these 'many Pictish scholars', I wondered.

The Interpretation Officer with HES, Steve Farrar, was good enough to supply the answer, and the list is quite impressive. Headed by Isabel Henderson, a doyen of Pictish studies, it also includes university experts such as Stephen Driscoll, Katherine Forsyth, and Alex Woolf, plus various historians and archaeologists from HES's cultural heritage team. That represents a formidable array of opinion in favour of the colour hypothesis although whether they all gave their unswerving approval is unclear. It must be wondered, though, why the Pictish Arts Society was not consulted. The membership might not have displayed unanimity had opinions been sought, but the outcome would surely have been of interest, and might have influenced the way in which HES handled the matter. Steve Farrar's communication enabled the list of stones to be lengthened to include Brandsbutt (one sided) and Fowlis Wester (two sided, plus the one side of the Class III stone there as well). Special emphasis is accorded to Aberlemno, and rightly so. Three panels cover the Pictish group there, featuring the Class I stone (because of its angle of repose, the vertical dividing line is in reality a diagonal), and the two great cross-slabs at the Crosston and the Kirkton (both sides, in each case). According to my calculations, that gives a total of 11 stones, with 15 sides subjected to the 50/50 colour treatment. In addition, it is intended that

Cossans (St Orland's Stone) and Forres (Sueno's Stone) will be added next year.

The notion of Pictish stones being coloured is not outrageous, and a case can be made for it, but I am deeply concerned at the manner in which this unproven possibility is being presented to the public. It is one thing to debate the issue at a congress of Pictish scholars, quite another to feed it to an audience who may know little or nothing about Pictish art and culture. No thought seems to have been given to the gulf in perception between information contained in printed form, which can be studied at leisure at home or in a library and cogitated upon, and that appearing on an information board, with probably limited time to digest or even read it thoroughly, and in conditions which may be adverse, weather-wise. The old adage of 'a picture being worth a thousand words' could be adapted here to say 'a picture speaks a thousand times louder than does a text'. The average poorly-informed person, especially a child, is likely to view these panels and take away the impression that the erstwhile existence of colourful Pictish stones is a historical fact, and caveats like 'conjecture' and 'speculation' will go unnoticed or be disregarded. The danger is that following a site visit, the powerful image created by the use of strong colour might be all that is retained, and there is every likelihood that it will be the dominant impression left upon the memory.

There are other objections too. There is no difference in the application of colour between the Class I and Class II stones which have been selected. This seems highly unlikely if the Picts had actually used colour on their stones. The more primitive Class I stones are sculpted using linear incision only, and it would seem logical that colour, if used at all, would have been applied to the grooves and channels so created. This was the position taken by Historic Scotland (or one of its many predecessors) some decades ago, in a display in St Vigeans Museum. The choice of venue was odd, considering that the superb collection of Pictish stones which it houses contains not a single Class I example. Nonetheless, a large photograph of the Dunnichen stone (Class I) was mounted on a convenient section of wall, and the three symbols which it bears were each given a different colour, which was confined to the grooves only. That at least was logical. The new situation is quite different, with whole areas bounded by the grooves being blocked in with solid colour, while the background has been given an all-encompassing whitewash, regardless of the inherent roughness of the surface. Thus the symbols which appear on Knocknagael, Dyce 1, Brandsbutt, and Aberlemno (all Class Is), are presented to the viewer with an even more devastating impact.

Classic Class II stones represent a huge technical advance in their carving, and if colour was employed to enhance their designs, it might be expected that its application would have kept pace with such a development, but the treatment given by HES remains exactly the same, with areas of solid colour again being totally dominant. While there is no change with that aspect of the colouring, the background now varies – sometimes white (Dunfallandy, symbol/narrative side), sometimes crimson (Dunfallandy, cross side), or not at all (Maiden Stone). Is the viewer to deduce that such inconsistencies are historically or artistically significant? With so many more elements with which to contend, the use of colour on Class II stones becomes more fragmented and consequently more incoherent. There is also a danger that this mode of interpretation may result in misrepresentation. Take, for example, the Knocknagael boar. Its tusk is painted white, naturally it might be thought, but hardly in keeping with the rest of it, having a russet-red body, with golden-yellow spinal bristles and muscular scrolls. The problem is that the animal can now be interpreted as having its mouth open (the white being the background showing through the gap), with an upwardly-hooked lower jaw, a bit like a dying male salmon after spawning. Such an image somewhat spoils the appearance of this handsome boar, and robs him of his proud tusk. This misreading of the original image would be much less likely to occur were imaginary colour not involved.

The distortion of a historical narrative is even more serious. The dramatic four-part representation of the Battle of Dunnichen on the Aberlemno Kirkyard stone, if that is indeed what it is, gets the same treatment, though a huge opportunity has been missed. This is a situation where having a vertical central line separating the colour from the monochrome comes unstuck, because there is such a division in reality, but the vertical line is far from straight, instead following a somewhat wavering course. Nevertheless, it does separate the Picts from the Northumbrians fairly effectively, leaving all the Picts in colour and all the Northumbrians in monochrome, except for half of a horse of the latter plus its rider's foot. There is a lack of consistency throughout the series regarding which side of a stone should be coloured and which side left plain; so was it a deliberate decision to colour the Picts rather than the Northumbrians? The five Picts on view are all in colour, yet there is no semblance of cohesion in their ranks, because the main item of apparel which each individual is wearing has been given a different colour. In the midst of a battle, it might be supposed that it was vital to emphasise the team ethic by having them all turned out in the same colour of uniform. Quite the opposite stance has been adopted by HES.

If it was not wished to have all five Picts dressed in the same colour, then at least the cavalry and the infantry could have differentiated by being given one colour each, but not so. Of the two equestrian Picts, the upper one has a russet tunic and the lower a purple

1 *Knocknagael Boar Stone, as it appears on the new Historic Environment Scotland information panel. Courtesy HES*

3 *St Madoes cross slab, front, from an animation used in Perth Museum & Art Gallery's Picts and Pixels exhibition. Courtesy Perth Museum & Art Gallery*

4 *St Madoes cross slab, back, from an animation used in Perth Museum & Art Gallery's Picts and Pixels exhibition. Courtesy Perth Museum & Art Gallery*

2 *Aberlemno 2 battle scene, as it appears on the new Historic Environment Scotland information panel. Courtesy HES*

tunic. If the sword-bearing Pict in the first register is meant to represent Bruide, their king and leader on that fateful day, as is sometimes surmised, it could be argued that it would be inappropriate for him to be coloured the same as a horseman of lower rank. If that is accepted, then what could be the reason for differentiating, colour-wise, between the three foot-soldiers? They are wearing a much longer type of tunic, extending well below the knee rather than terminating above it, so there might be an argument for depicting them in different colours from the horsemen – but why should they be different from each other? Is this an attempt to signal that each is a specialist in a different branch of warfare, hence the swordsman is dressed in dull blue, the pikeman in pale green, and the spearman in greyish fawn? All three colours are weak, not what might be expected of fighting men, unless they are intended to simulate camouflage. In one respect, the five are united: they all have grey leggings; but then so does the one Northumbrian to intrude across the central reservation, so that chance goes a-begging as well. Is all this speculation about the significance of the colours used just whistling in the wind, and the choice amounts to nothing more than the whim of the person who was handed the box of crayons on that particular day? In a scene redolent with a number of codes, skilfully created by the insightful nature of the sculpture, the nature of the employment of colour here has truly missed the point.

Another problem is evident in the extensive area of blank stone below the battle-scene. This has been given a uniform wash of golden-yellow, the colourist apparently unaware that there are three quite different surfaces here: (a) the upper two-thirds, which is well dressed as if having the potential to contain an inscription, giving the name of the battle, perhaps, or that of its glorious victor; (b) the lower one-third, which is much rougher, almost certainly designed to sit below ground level; and (c) the bottom-left corner, where a sizeable portion of stone has been broken off. These comprise three different surfaces which have three separate stories to tell, yet they have each been given precisely the same colour treatment. Just when differentiation is called for, we are given unjustified unification. This carries with it a further uneasy complication; if the surface of the broken section is treated in the same fashion as the two original surfaces, this implies that the stone's colouring was subject to restoration, perhaps at a date long after its execution, maybe even beyond that of the Pictish state. The same remark applies to the area of damage sustained by the frame on the left side, between registers 2 and 3, but it does not seem to apply to the crude hole drilled or cut through one of the cross-rings, coming out right on the cordon which separates the symbols from the battle-scene, to the disfigurement of one of the former. There is no restoration of the paintwork evident here. All these considerations illustrate the hazards inherent in the ill-considered use of colour, apparently applied according to an irrational whim rather than a carefully-considered plan.

Although this current wave of excitement stemmed from the visual announcement in the Historic Scotland magazine, it is not entirely new to the Pictophile community. In 2010, Historic Scotland published a book entitled *The Picts*, by Jill Harden. The cover states that it includes Guides to St Vigeans and Meigle Museums, though it does much more than that, and indeed the preface expresses the hope that it will also act as 'a companion for visitors to Pictish sites and museums'. It adopts a broad inter-disciplinary approach, and within this richly-illustrated volume, one page is particularly eye-catching. Page 11 is headed 'Were the Stones Coloured?' The text, while admitting that archaeology has failed to answer that question, draws parallels with other objects, though it may be considered to be too much of a leap to say that although textiles may survive today only in shades of brown, 'dyes and pigments must have been used'. A claim of 'might well have been used' would have been quite acceptable, but the use of the imperative is unjustified. It continues: 'Pictish jewellery reflects a love of colour, [and] a great range of colours can also be seen in illustrated manuscripts of the period' (neglecting to mention that none of them are Pictish per se, a subtle omission which is likely to have gone unnoticed by the majority of general readers). It continues in forthright style: 'There is no reason to think that the Picts did not apply colour to their incised symbols'. No reason, that is, other than a complete lack of hard evidence.

Moving from Class I to Class II: 'Some of the sculptured cross-slabs could surely [an oxymoron] have been painted masterpieces, mimicking the splendour of the colourful, ornate, and shiny metalwork which clearly provided inspiration to the sculptors'. Just what and whose metalwork is being evoked to substantiate such a claim? The only example cited is the pair of silver 'plaques' from Norrie's Law, one of which is now known to be a 19th-century copy; the genuine one does indeed bear traces of red enamel on the engraved symbols (see the exceptional photograph in *Celts: Art and Identity*, p. 152), but this is rather slight evidence upon which to build a complex theory. By way of illustration, the example selected of a possibly coloured stone, illustrated using the 50/50 technique, is Hilton of Cadboll. This is a very interesting choice, because substantial parts of it could well slot into the 'applied colour' theory. The only surviving side has three large squares containing (i) Pictish symbols (artistically beautiful but meaningfully degenerate); (ii) a vigorous hunting scene, with another symbol (pair); and (iii) a complex spiral pattern. This trio is surrounded on three sides by a broad border of intensely inhabited vine-scroll, very similar to some illuminated manuscripts, and the same could be said

for the whorls and spirals in the double-discs in the top border, the left and right thirds of the large crescent, and the whole of the lower square panel. This, to my mind, provides the most convincing argument yet in support of the colour hypothesis. With the interlace on the twin discs it is less so, while the narrative scene descends once more into the realms of fantasy colouring.

Part 2 of the Pictish summer colour-fest came at Perth Museum, in an exhibition called **'Picts and Pixels'**. Not knowing what a 'pixel' is beyond something to do with computer graphics, and therefore beyond my ken, I wasn't going to go until I learned that colour was involved. Indeed, in among the conventional displays, there were three fascinating scans showing stones revolving in the fashion of Dr Who's TARDIS, and they bore more than a trace of colour! They were all from Perthshire, although only one could be regarded as properly Pictish, the other two being far removed in both form and artistic style from typically Pictish sculpture; Picto-Scottish at best, I reckon.

The St Madoes stone was presented in a stunning visual display, seen at first in its natural colouring, then with the suggested colours merging in. The explanatory panel of text claimed that this impressive cross-slab (which is actually housed under the same roof, only yards away in a nearby gallery) 'may originally have been painted, and through comparison with surviving colour traces on other sculptures and objects, including books, we have suggested a possible colour scheme'. Perhaps more should have been made of the speculative nature regarding the use of colour, and of the fact that none of those stones upon which traces of colour have survived are Pictish. Suggesting the possible application of colour is a bold step as it is; an attempt to justify a 'colour scheme' takes the hypothesis onto another level again.

Unlike the information boards prepared by Historic Environment Scotland, where choice of colour seems to have been made randomly, it is quickly evident that the colours selected for St Madoes are adhering to some form of plan. Adjacent to the cross are eight ferocious-looking beasts carved in high relief, grouped in four pairs in a symmetrical arrangement, and this is reflected in the choice of colours:

Pair A, comprising one animal on each of the stone's shoulders, are both painted in the *same* colour;

Pair B, comprising one animal in each of the upper corner panels, are both painted in the *same* colour (different from the first colour);

Pair C, comprising two animals in the panel to the left of the cross-shaft, are painted in *different* colours;

Pair D, comprising two animals in the panel to the right of the cross-shaft, are again painted in *different* colours, not using the same colours as the previous pair.

Thus eight animals are rendered in six different colours, there being a distinct pattern in the application of colouring; is this what the caption meant by a 'colour scheme'? If so, it would have been helpful had the visitor been supplied with some form of explanation.

It was when it came to the colouring of the cross that matters became more contentious. The cross on St Madoes is of Latin type, as almost all Pictish crosses are. As expected, the upper arm and the two side arms are all of the same shape and size, while the elongated cross-shaft is divided into three sections, the upper section corresponding with the three cross-arms, below which is a square panel then a rectangular panel. The colour scheme here envisages one single colour being applied to the three arms and also to the upper section of the shaft, with different colours for both the square and the rectangle below. This fundamentally alters our perception of the cross's form, because it effectively changes the Latin cross into a Greek cross. Were this so, it would have profound implications for the history of Christian art, and for the spread of Christianity itself. Is this concept really what the colourist meant to convey?

The strident colours also detract from the fineness of the sculpture. For the Greek cross, it was pink (not too bad), which then subtly changed to scarlet. For the two lower panels which complete the cross-shaft, it was royal blue and olive green respectively, and it is a little ironic that the standard of the interlace carving here rather deteriorates. This is evident on the square panel, where it deviates from its proper arrangement, and especially on the bottom panel, where it seems to degenerate into an incoherent jumble. Is it being suggested that the density of the colour is designed to obscure this deficiency? Probably not, as the delicate sculpture of the cross-arms (key pattern in the upper and lower, interlace on the left and right) is of a high order, yet it was subjected to the same degree of colourful onslaught as HES dished out to the rough surfaces of Class I symbols. The Picts would surely not have deliberately come close to obliterating such fine work of theirs in this fashion. The cluster of central bosses escaped such treatment, but if this stone was ever painted, it seems likely that their lithic artist would have wished to emulate the skill of the sculptor by following the delicate spiral embellishments which they bear, rather than just slapping on raw colour simply to fill in a given area.

Colour was used on the symbol/narrative side of St Madoes in a more logical fashion. The three panels at the top, in vertical alignment, each contain a cowled horseman (very poorly proportioned). The colouring here has been used to make a statement, and it works according to a system which remains constant: cloaks and hoods all in pale blue, knee breeches all in royal blue, and horse blankets all in crimson, the whole being suggestive of a team in uniform, as their near identical postures would

indicate. More than that, colour has been used not simply to cover unbroken areas, but to pick out small details – the eyes of the riders and their horses, the leather of bridles and reins, and the metal elements attached to them, and the book satchel which the bottom rider appears to be carrying. Here, colour serves a purpose, yet it must be appreciated that such a conclusion does nothing to lessen the speculative nature of the general hypothesis.

Beneath the equestrian trio, three symbols are likewise boxed up. With regard to the application of colour, each one was given a slightly different treatment:

(a) a crescent and V-rod – multiple colouring, the crescent in scarlet with golden-yellow edging, and the broken arrow in mauve;

(b) a double-disc – single colouring, solid gold (but very little of this symbol survives);

(c) a Pictish beast – dual colouring, grey (natural?), with a red eye (as with eyes of animals on the cross side).

All this was very pretty, but it was without meaning. As the digitised image revolved away from the viewer, so these vivid but imagined colours faded back to the natural colour of the stone, which could be taken as a metaphor for a lack of conviction that they ever actually existed. At least, that is the way it struck me at the time.

The other digital scan took on two stones, the Dupplin Cross (now increasingly referred to as Constantine's Cross, since his name would appear to be included in its fragmentary and hitherto unnoticed inscription), and the Forteviot Arch. No Pictish symbols here, of course. A full-size replica of the free-standing cross, unique in Pictland, stood close by the screen. In this display, selected elements were given the colour treatment (the cross being square in section, there are four faces to this stone, and in consequence a lot of material from which to choose). Some of them were given captions, and so we had a blue cap on top, visible on all four faces, which was captioned 'Church Shrine'. The huge central boss was in scarlet, captioned 'Garnet', with a 'Gold' surround – meaningful colours indeed, but that does not mean to say that colour was ever used. A small panel with key-pattern sculpture in black, sitting on a 'Red enamel' background, could possibly be based on reality, which is more than should be claimed for 'David the Shepherd' with animals, a scene rendered in four colours. On the Forteviot Arch, the main man was portrayed in puce robes with gold trim, gold also being used for his curly hair and large drooping moustache; he was also wearing pale blue leggings and brown hose. By contrast, his three companions shared common attire – pale blue robes with hoods up, and big drooping moustaches in brown. Thus an attempt was made to group those three together, and to differentiate them from the main figure. Fair enough, but the sculptor had already done that quite effectively. No need for colour here.

So what does this outburst of colour mean for Pictish studies? The responses which have reached me are fairly unanimous; a summary, put politely, would be 'Not impressed'. One person likened the exercise to that of a Kiddies' Colouring Book, available at all good newsagents! He was closer to the truth than he might have imagined, as Perth Museum actually laid out a desk with piles of paper carrying symbols, some individual (like a fine boar), others in a large and varied group (actually copied from Isabel Henderson's book on *The Picts*, Figure 13, improperly credited), plus other items of sculpture; adjacent was a pile of coloured pencils, and children were invited to engage in a spot of fun-time colouring. Try telling them that the Picts may well not have coloured their stones in reality; it would be tantamount to revealing the horrid truth about Santa Claus. Reports are coming in that the matter was discussed at the recent conference on Insular Art held in Glasgow, the respondents in general being somewhat critical. One delegate apparently said that colouring up a laser scan of a worn and damaged Pictish stone was the equivalent of slapping make-up on a mummy and passing it off as a living person! Another delegate reportedly criticised HES for not going the whole hog and rendering each drawing 100% in colour, rather than timidly adopting a 50/50 approach. That would have been reprehensible in my view, cementing in the public mind the certainty of the colour hypothesis. I even ventured into the dreaded Twittersphere, and found no praise, just criticism.

There is little doubt that the Picts would have had colour in their lives in some form or another. There is historical evidence that they had a fondness for body tattoos – it seems unlikely that these would have been in monochrome, and early modern artists used plentiful colour in their renditions of ancient Picts. Remember the poem about the 'Pingere Pict' in the *Newsletter* of Winter 1994? We have become used to seeing Pictish stones rendered in colour by artists like Marianna Lines and Leslie Reid, their subtle impressions using colour to enhance the visual experience, without any pretence that the ancient stones once had that precise appearance. What is worrying about developments at Historic Environment Scotland and Perth Museum is the effect these may have on the public attitude towards the Picts. They are so often described as a mysterious people, with some justification; what we do not want is for responsible institutions to create a new layer of myth upon a situation which already bears the weight of a great deal of uncertainty. So much about the Picts will never be known, which is part of the fascination of studying them; let us not concoct a modern myth when more than enough conjecture already exists.

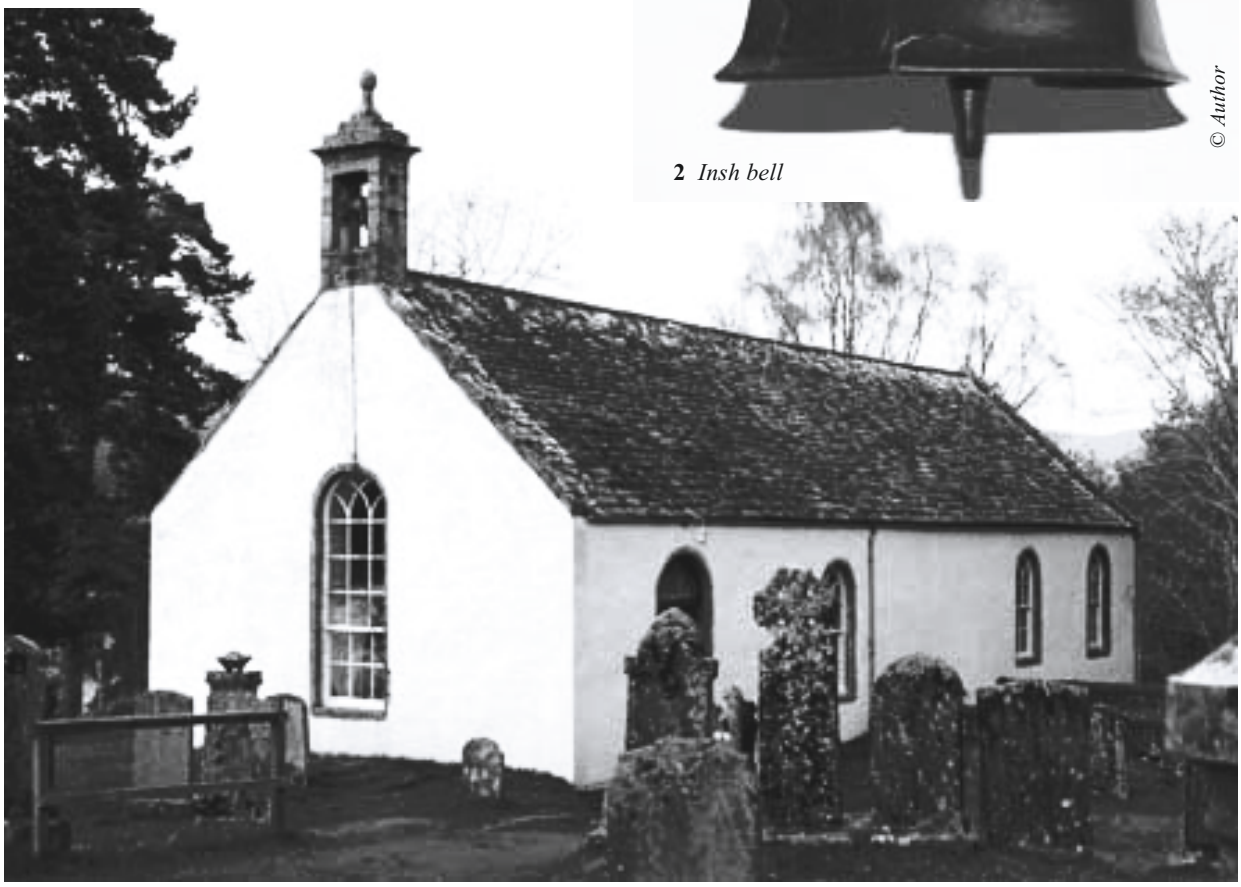
Graeme Cruickshank

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-40286318

Quadrangular Bells

Throughout Pictland and beyond, quadrangular handbells, whether made of iron or bronze, have long been synonymous with the early Celtic Church and its saints. A fine example of the bronze type is to be found on display in the parish church of Insh, in Badenoch, on the shores of Loch Insh (**1**, **2**). Though this particular bell has traditionally been associated with Saint Adomnan, any direct connection with the great man is usually discounted, on the generally accepted grounds that bronze quadrangular bells were produced at a somewhat later date than the iron ones, and certainly long after the death of Adomnan, in AD704.

2 *Insh bell*



1 *Loch Insh Church*

However, some of the original reasoning behind this dating convention‘is less than convincing. One influential early attempt at dating the bells was made by J. Romilly Allen in *Celtic Art in Pagan and Christian Times* (London, 1912, 197-8). It was Allen’s contention that the ecclesiastical quadrangular bells of the early Celtic Church were merely an adaption of the ordinary cattle bell. He then£reasoned that: ‘the bronze bells are of a later date than those of iron (1) because the rectangular shape is useless and meaningless in the case of a bronze bell, and results from copying an iron bell, in which the rectangular shape is necessitated by its method of construction; (2) because the bronze bells are of more refined shape and better manufacture than those of iron; and (3) because the bronze bells are in many cases ornamented.’

Taking his three points in reverse order, it is not surprising to find that it is the bronze bells rather than the iron ones that are ornamented.nThe decoration takes the form of engraved inscriptions and designs, and bronze is relatively easy to engrave (using iron tools), while the iron is a much harder metal and tools suitable for engraving it were less likely to have been readily available. The fact that many, if not all, of the iron bells were originally bronze coated would have made them unlikely candidates for engraving anyway, as the engraving

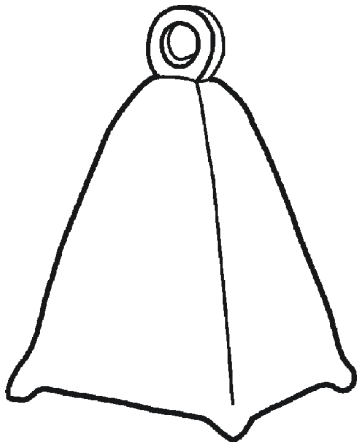
process would have damaged the thin coating of bronze. Furthermore, most of the iron bells are so badly corroded that it impossible to say for certain whether or not they were ever previously decorated. It is also necessary to take account of the fact that in some cases the decoration on the bronze bells may have been added many years after the manufacture of the bell – it appears to have been a common practice later in the medieval period to make 'improvements' to important relics.

Turning to his second point, that 'the bronze bells are of more refined shape and better manufacture', it is more helpful to consider this as two separate points. The refinement of the shape is, to a large extent, a subjective perception, and the matter really ought to be judged entirely from an Early Medieval perspective, when iron would probably have been considered a more modern material than bronze. In a pre-industrial society, sheet iron with crisp angular corners and prominent rivets might well have been regarded as ultra hi-tech and very fashionable. The smoother lines and more rounded corners of the bronze bells, which appear more refined to modern sensibilities, are just an inevitable consequence of the casting process, which is greatly facilitated by having smooth contours and no sharp corners. Hence, the 'more refined shape' is not necessarily the result of an aesthetically inspired decision, consciously made.

As to whether or not the bronze bells are of 'better manufacture', it is not entirely clear what Allen is referring to here. Sheet metalwork and casting involve two very different manufacturing techniques, and it is difficult to make a direct qualitative comparison between examples of each process. Producing an iron bell is arguably more technically demanding than producing a bronze one, particularly if the iron one is to be bronze coated, as many of them undoubtedly were. Several modern attempts to replicate this process, using only materials and tools known to have been available at the time, have been notably unsuccessful.

Allen's first point, which he apparently believed to be the strongest evidence for dating the bronze bells later than the iron ones, turns out to be the weakest. He fails to recognise that the adoption of the quadrangular form was a deliberate decision and not the result of manufacturing constraints. If the Church had wanted round bells, whether of iron or bronze, then there is no doubt that they could have produced them, with no great difficulty. Quadrangular was the desired form, and this shape was adopted quite deliberately, and not imposed on them by default. The reasons for this will be considered in more detail, and at some length, below.

It is important to note that the ecclesiastical bronze quadrangular bells from the Early Medieval are far from being the first examples of the type, and numerous small bronze quadrangular bells dating from the Roman period have been found throughout many parts of the British Isles, including several in Scotland (**3**). It has often been noted that the Scottish examples occur exclusively in association with Roman military establishments, and has been suggested that they might have fallen from livestock acquired by the army from the native population. Although it is known that such a trade in animals flourished at the time, there is no evidence that



3 *Drawing of Roman bell from Newstead*

livestock bells were used locally at such an early date, and even if they were, it seems most unlikely that farmers would have sold their animals with their valuable bells still attached. The principal objection to this theory, though, is the fact that no examples of the bells have ever been found on native sites in Scotland, as would be expected if they were in widespread use by the indigenous farmers. It is necessary to look elsewhere for a credible explanation.

In order to fully appreciate the purpose of quadrangular bells, whether of the Roman period or later, it is necessary to consider their earlier history. Bells appear to have originated in China, in the 3rd millennium BC. The earliest examples are known from graves, and were ceramic, with no handle or clapper. They looked very much like upside down drinking vessels, and their use as bells is only readily apparent from contemporary textual sources. In fact, they were dual purpose, being used in the funeral ritual to drink a toast to the departed one, and then, when empty, being struck as a bell, to drive away any evil spirits and so ease the passage of the deceased into the afterlife. It is tempting to wonder if the various 'beakers' and 'drinking vessels' so frequently found in prehistoric graves across Europe may have served a similar dual role.

Early in the 2nd millennium BC, ceramic bells in China began to be replaced by bronze ones. Whereas the ceramic bells had, of necessity, been round in shape, having been made on the potter's wheel, the introduction of bronze meant that it was possible to manufacture different shapes, and so a variety of types were developed, particularly during the Shang Dynasty, and adopted for various distinct purposes.

Some of the reasoning behind these developments was scientifically sound while some owed more to superstition. For example, longer bells were said to have an effect over greater distances, while the shorter ones exercised their influence only at close quarters. This belief is supported by the science, as the former type produce a low frequency sound, which travels far, while the latter type produces higher frequency sound waves, which do not travel nearly the same distance.

The introduction of the quadrangular shape, however, was based on a less than secure scientific footing. It was believed by the practitioners to be a useful refinement for protecting against evil spirits. How efficacious they were in this respect has never been convincingly demonstrated. It was said that the evil spirits would enter the bell and hide in the internal corners. Then, on ringing the bell, they would be driven off, never to return. Interestingly, the belief that evil spirits, or, in more recent times, often the devil, have a propensity to hide themselves in corners, is still current in the folklore of many parts of the world, including the British Isles. However, one thing which is beyond dispute, given the early date of their introduction, is the fact that the Chinese quadrangular bells could not possibly have been based on iron prototypes.

During the Han Dynasty, there was extensive trade between China and Rome, and it is quite likely that the idea of quadrangular bells, and the beliefs attached to them, were transferred at this time. Certainly, by the early first millennium, the practice of using quadrangular livestock bells'had been adopted in parts of southern Europe, where they were employed to repel the evil spirits which were thought to be responsible for disease in animals. However, the Roman quadrangular bells found in Britain were unlikely, as has often been alleged, to be from livestock. Given their distribution pattern, they were almost certainly worn by the soldiers themselves, presumably for their own protection, and not just from disease. It is notable that of the several bells which have been recovered from the inside of the Roman fort at Newstead, four of them were found in the barrack block. Not a location where one would expect to find sheep, surely?

Further support for this suggestion comes from an unexpected source – West Africa. The well-known collection of bronzes, produced mostly between the 13th–16th centuries, in the ancient kingdom of Benin, in present-day Nigeria, consists mainly of plaques depicting various figures and deities. Many of them feature warriors in full battle dress. On close inspection, several of these warriors can be seen to have a small quadrangular bell, worn on a thong or chain around their necks, the purpose of which was to offer protection from the evil intent of their enemies (**4**). It is not unreasonable to suppose that at least some Roman soldiers, perhaps just those of certain nationalities, used small quadrangular bells as amulets, in a similar way.

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4 *Bronze plaque depicting Benin Warrior wearing a bell*

In succeeding centuries, across much of Italy, farmers working their fields would occasionally come across these bells, which were highly valued by country folk, who apparently appreciated their supposed apotropaic properties, and took them home. They were kept by the hearth to attract any evil spirits lurking in the house, and periodically rung into the fire in order to dispel the spirits up the chimney. The small lugs on the corners of the bells, which have often puzzled recent observers, were probably intended to raise the rim above the surface on which they were placed, in order to allow the evil spirits to enter. This design feature would suggest that the bells were intended to be employed in a similar fashion in their original incarnation, back in Roman times, as well as being worn on the person, as indicated by the suspension loop provided. In more recent centuries, they were also recommended for carrying in the pocket when venturing out after dark, in order to deter witches.

Bells, particularly quadrangular ones, have long been associated with funeral rituals. A well-known illustration of the use of bells, though not necessarily quadrangular ones, appears on the Bayeux Tapestry, where Edward the Confessor's funeral cortege includes two men walking alongside the coffin, ringing handbells. This was also normal practice in Scotland and the north of England as late as the 19th century. Up until recent times, bells were quite often represented on gravestones, as part of the funerary paraphernalia, especially in north-east Scotland (**5**).

© Author

5 *Gravestone at Pluscarden Abbey depicting a handbell*

This association with funerary rituals closely mirrors their original use over four thousand years ago in China, and is a remarkable example of the persistence of burial practices, across the centuries, throughout the civilised world.

The quadrangular handbells of the early Christian Church were almost certainly drawing on these longstanding beliefs, and were being used for a similar purpose. They were originally rung before a service, probably in order to cleanse the church of evil spirits, in the same way that a censer is used, rather than simply to summon the faithful to prayer, as is often believed. This would have been seen as particularly important if, as is considered likely in many instances, the church was built over, or directly adjacent to, a pagan religious site.

If this understanding of their purpose is correct, then it is clear that the quadrangular shape of the bells was determined by their intended primary purpose, and not, as Allen had suggested, by manufacturing considerations. It does not necessarily follow from this that his suggestion that bronze bells are later than the iron ones is incorrect, just that his arguments do not support it. He may well be right in his conclusion, but for the wrong reasons.

Cormac Bourke, speaking at the 2012 PAS Conference, at Perth, suggested that several of the bronze bells were actually manufactured some time after the Early Medieval period. He also noted that a number of these later bells appeared to have been made by the same few craftsmen, or at least in the same workshops. By way of illustration, he mentioned that the Insh bell was likely to have been produced by the same hands as the one from Loch Shiel, which he considered to be one of the later examples.

Where does this leave Adomnan's bell at Loch Insh? If Bourke's dating is correct, then this is not an Early Medieval bell, but a later replica. But was it replacing an earlier relic, possibly genuinely associated with Adomnan, perhaps an iron one which had deteriorated beyond repair; or was it simply a new acquisition?

Many important bells, across various cultures, have legends attached to them, as well as miraculous attributes, such as the power of flight and the ability to ring of their own accord. The Insh bell is no exception. The story here is that if the bell is ever removed from its place in the church, it will eventually find its own way back home, flying through the air, ringing over and over, 'Tom Eodhnain, Tom Eodhnain', the name of the mound on which the church is located. Notwithstanding this remarkable ability, the present guardians of the bell have attached it securely to the wall of the building. Perhaps they are being mindful of a particular story which has the Insh bell performing this very feat of aerial homing on at least one occasion, following an unauthorised removal from the church, but only after being held against its will in Perth for a number of years.

It is tempting to speculate that this particular tale could have been invented by the medieval priest who, by whatever means and for whatever purpose, acquired the bell for the church. It would certainly have been a convenient way to explain to his no doubt astonished parishioners, the sudden appearance of 'Adomnan's' bell in their midst. However, for the rest of us, the puzzle of its origins remains.

Ron Dutton

LATE NEWS

Fortingall bell theft

On the evening of 8 September, it was discovered that the 7th-century quadrangular bell, which has been in the possession of Fortingall church for about 1200 years, was missing from its niche in the church wall behind the pulpit. The bronze-coated, iron bell had been stolen sometime that week and it is suspected that it became the target of a thief who imagined that, as it was kept behind a locked grille, it had a high monetary value.

The parish minister, Rev Anne Brennan, has made a plea for its return and hopes that the incident would not result in restricted access to the building, and that, despite the theft, the church would remain open to visitors and worshippers in the future. *DH*

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