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CONTENTS

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

EDITORIAL

Welcome to this 10th edition of *Pictish Arts Society Journal*. Again we present a variety of interesting contributions from our members.

The Society's former Honorary Treasurer James Macaulay opens with his critical review of the Pictish crossbow based on observations he has made as a stone carver and as an erstwhile hunter of wild boar. The subject was last reviewed by John Gilbert in *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 107 (1975–76) but not to the same degree of detail.

Kyle A. Gray from America presents a new look at the Pictish King List and asks are the 'progenitors' in the King List females?

As the Abernethy Project is about to launched by the Pictish Arts Society, Craig Cessford's paper on 'the stones of *Apurfeirt* and *Ceirfuill*' is timely. The first place-name has been equated with the mouth of the River Farg, while *Ceirfuill* has been identified with Carpow. It will be interesting to see how these ideas will develop in the course of the Society's forthcoming research and field work. Watch this space ...

In *Pictish Arts Society Journal* 5 (Spring 1994), Niall Robertson reviewed a book by Elizabeth B. Rennie, *Cowal: A Historical Guide*. In his review Niall wrote "She ... introduces some interesting ideas of her own, such as the suggestion, of which there seems to be evidence well worth considering, that the boundary between the Scots of Dál Riada and the Britons of Strathclyde ran through the peninsula". Here, in the present *Journal*, Elizabeth presents further evidence following map and field-work in the summer of 1996 and she now suggests 'a possible boundary between Dal Riata and Pictland'.

Stuart Kermack talks of pebbles, apples, nuts and Paradise in a thought-provoking paper stimulated by a combination of a visit to the Isle of May and his study of Adomnan's *Vita Columba*.

Ian Scott was lucky enough to see the St Andrews sarcophagus in bits before it was sent to the British Museum for an exhibition. He reports briefly on this.

Craig Cessford replies to Prof. Leslie Alcock's paper on '*Ur*-symbols' in *Journal* 9 with his alternative ideas about the development of scripts.

As part of its useful function the *Journal* again contains a number of relevant book reviews. David Henry's witty review of Edward Peterson's *The Message of Scotland's Symbol Stones* is perhaps rather longer than usual. However, in it David takes the opportunity to address some of the wider issues involved in the subject of the interpretation of the symbols with reference to other recent publications as well such as Inga Gilbert's *The Symbolism of the Pictish Stones in Scotland*.

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J.R.F. Burt
Editor

A Review of the Pictish Crossbow

James S Macaulay

Having decided to carve a copy of the destroyed Meigle 10 stone (Allan and Anderson 1903, III, 331), I felt I should try to find out more about the crossbowman and his weapon. Then, perhaps, I could understand what was taking place: certain aspects of the carving did not make sense. In addition I looked at the other three stones which carry carvings of cross-bows and here too things did not seem correct.

The four stones are:-

1. The Shandwick Stone, (fig. 1), back, panel 3, a hunting scene (Allan and Anderson 1903, III, fig. 69); in the bottom right hand corner a kneeling crossbow man is about to shoot at a deer. This figure is so similar to the one carved on St. Vigeans 1 (*ibid*, fig. 250B; Ritchie 1989, 45) [see fig. 2 below], that I feel, either it was carved by the same craftsman, or one craftsman had seen the other's work — the bow is the same, the posture is the same and the dress is the same. And while on the subject of dress, the St Vigeans archer wears a cloak, which is cut away at the front, just above the elbows, presumably to allow the freedom of movement an archer needs. In addition there is a nice little detail of hemming, run around the edge of the cloak. Now while there may be nothing remarkable about that, a look at the detail of the cloaks worn by the clerics on St Vigeans 7 (Allan and Anderson 1903, III, fig. 278; Ritchie and Breeze 1991, 3) shows them to be the same. Same cut away, same hood, same hemming detail. Why is a cleric wearing a huntsman's cloak or why is a huntsman wearing a cleric's cloak? Perhaps a cleric was hunting. Perhaps clerics had boar-hunting rights. If they did not who had?

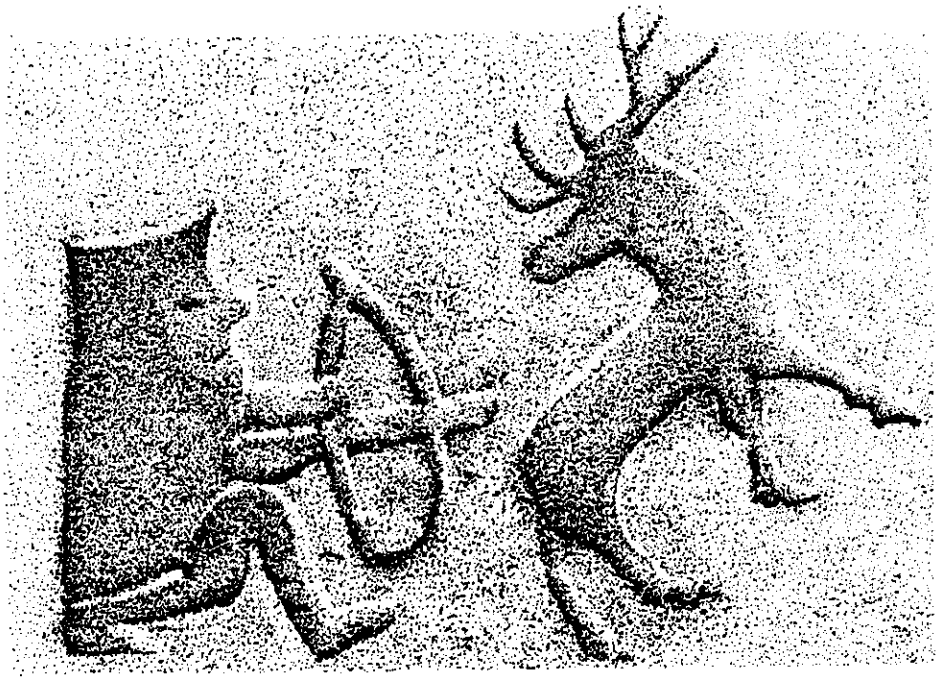

Fig. 1. Detail of scene with crossbowman from Shandwick Stone, Easter Ross, © J.R.F. Burt

To me they look like the same garment, but different people have different ideas. For instance in her book, *In Search of the Picts*, Elizabeth Sutherland sees the garment as 'an animal skin for disguise' (1995, 183) and later as 'a hooded deerskin disguise' (*ibid*, 185). The suggestion that the hunter is probably disguised also came from John Gilbert in his article on 'Crossbows on Pictish stones' (1976, 316). Now it may be that the approved method of shooting at wild boars was to kneel down in front of the charging animal and wait for it to get into range. I do not know if either of these writers has actually been on a wild boar hunt, but I have. During the years when I worked in Malaya, and in particular over one 4 year period I hunted almost every possible weekend, and the last thing I would have done, would have been

to stand on level ground facing an oncoming boar! They are quick, agile, intelligent and very dangerous, so even although I was using a powerful shotgun, I always tried to be up on a log, boulder or ant hill. That the Pictish boars were considered equally as fierce as the Malay animals, can be assumed from the comment by C.A. Gordon in his article on 'The Pictish Animals Observed', when he states that 'the wild boar is celebrated for its ferocity' (1966, 216). Another writer considering the history of the crossbow uses a 14th century illustration which shows three bowmen standing behind trees while in the act of shooting at deer and boar (Payne-Gallwey 1903). So why are all the Pictish bowmen kneeling? I cannot offer a suitable explanation, other than that of artistic convenience. Or perhaps ignorance on the part of the carver. Certainly his lack of knowledge as to the method of cocking the crossbow would lend weight to that argument. Bob Bryden, a former P.A.S. Member and something of an expert on weapons, actually had a crossbow made following the Pictish shape. I say shape because his weapon operated with a metal prod ('prod' is evidently the technical name for the actual bow — the part which bends and thus provides the spring to propel the bolt). Incidentally, he claimed that he could cock the bow and fire bolts more quickly than anticipated, several in a minute. The method of cocking the type of crossbows carved on the four stones, was to place the end of the stock on the ground, stand on the curve of the prod with a foot on either side of the stock and reaching down, pull up the cord until it caught on the nut. The 'nut' is part of a crossbow's trigger mechanism. Its function is to hold the string, in the cocked position, until the bowman is ready to fire. Two such nuts are illustrated in the short note by Arthur MacGregor in *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* (1976, 318). One nut was found during the excavation of Buston Crannog, Ayrshire (Munro 1882, 217, fig. 216), and the second during excavations at Urquhart Castle between 1912 and 1922 (Simpson 1930, 59). This latter nut is dated to the medieval or early post medieval period. It may be because no nuts attributable to Pictish dates have been found, that Sutherland implies that the Pictish crossbow had no trigger and was fired by pulling the cord back with one hand, then holding it cocked until the time came to loose the bolt. Not, I fear, very practical — if the cord is pulled to one side of the central stock prior to release, then the apogee of the cord is at the fingers and not directly behind the bolt. It will not fire true. I feel that if crossbows had been in regular use by hunting Picts, then they would have used nuts and triggers. It is more than likely that the carver was not a hunter and did not fully understand the firing mechanism, thinking the firing method to be similar to that of the short bow. The two nuts recovered were made from antler and probably turned on a lathe (Samson 1982, 474–75). It occurs to me to wonder why the Picts and later, seemingly, the Scots continued to use antler as a material for crossbow triggers when as long ago as the Han Dynasty (206 BC – AD 220), the Chinese, who are credited with the invention of the crossbow, were making bronze alloy trigger mechanisms. These castings are not nearly as complicated as the cast bronze ornaments credited to the Pictish and Roman craftsmen of approximately the same period. Sutherland states that the 'bow [is] drawn and resting on the ground' and 'the stock was used to enable both hands to be kept close to the body' (1995, 183). Not so, the stock is the backbone of the weapon. To it is attached the prod. In it lies the trigger mechanism and along it the marksman sights his target. It is the guide by means of which the bolt is directed and it is the handle by which the bow is held. So why then are all four Pictish bowmen carved with the bow turned at right angles to the normal firing position? A position in which the bolt would fall out before firing. I would like to suggest this is in order to show the viewer of the stone that here we have the latest technology. A demonstration of the dictum 'if you have got it flaunt it'. The bow would have to be turned in this manner because if it were to be held in the normal position it would only look like a short spear.

2. On a panel at the back of the **Glenferness** stone (Allen and Anderson 1903, III, fig. 120) is a similarly posed bowman but facing in the opposite direction. There is a space where the target would have been but the carving is very worn here. An important difference, however, is that this bowman is carved with only one arm. He is engaged in pulling back the string, prior to firing an ordinary looking arrow rather than the expected crossbow bolt. Also there is no central stock, so against what resistance is he pulling the string? On the matter of this bowman's dress, Allen thinks he is wearing a cap, but, since there is no obvious division between the collar and the bottom of the cap (*ibid*, 116), I feel it more likely to be the cowl of a cloak of similar design to that worn by the others. This cannot simply be an ordinary bow and arrow, for without a second hand and arm he could not have bent the bow. I feel once again the artisan had no real knowledge of his subject.

3. The Boar shooter of **St Vigeans 1** (fig. 2). See my comments above regarding the style of dress. Note also the large curving tusks on the boar. Artistic licence, and the necessity to condense the action into the cramped confines of a small stone, probably account for the juxtaposition of the protagonists.

4. The archer on the now destroyed **Meigle 10** who, according to the drawing in *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (Allen and Anderson 1903, III, fig. 344), is shooting past a very large dog at a monster. This monster is engaged in chewing on the head of a fallen man. Now, while this is a monster, Skene gives it a more porcine snout. Is the distinction important? It may be — one of the early functions of the crossbow seems to have been as a tool for hunting (although the Roman army employed the crossbow as an official weapon, certainly in the 4th century, if not before). As the Roman crossbow is thought to have used a string made from animal sinew it is likely that the damp British climate caused the sinew to stretch and so make the weapon inefficient. It is known that the crossbow became almost inoperable in heavy rain, such was the extent of the string's elongation. Later, continental crossbow-men coated sinew strings with bees' wax to waterproof them. It is reported that, on the Continent, troops started using strings made from hemp and flax, which, if anything, became tighter when wet. This latter material was available to Pictish bow-men (Gordon 1966, 220). So would you go shooting monsters at close range with a small bolt? Even if you had great faith in your weapon, I doubt if you would try it more than once. Were not for the addition of the monster, Meigle 10 presents rather a simple domestic scene. Incidentally the small creature positioned above the monster, shown in both Allen (1903, fig. 344) and Chalmers (1848, pl. 18) as a dog, looks much more like a small pony in Skene, and it even seems to have fetlocks and a bushy tail. On the other hand suppose Skene was correct and the fallen man, possibly a traditionally armed hunter, was being attacked by his quarry, the giant boar. He now has to be rescued by a crossbowman. The stone could then be interpreted as follows. Old style hunting weapons are no good when facing the charge of a giant boar. Better get up to date! Change to the crossbow. While the fallen man is depicted as carrying no hunting weapons by Chalmers, he is shown trying to stab the animal with a dagger by both Skene and Allen. Were the Picts like the Masai, and manhood could only be attained after killing a boar with nothing but a spear or dagger? Are we looking at a failed initiation ceremony?

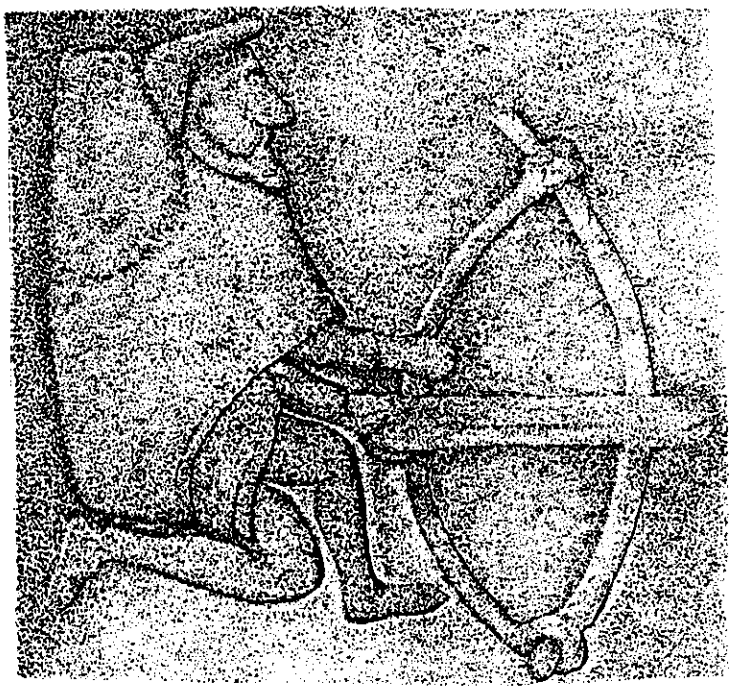

Fig. 2. Detail of the crossbowman on St Vigeans 1, © JRF Burt.

But enough of the crossbow, what of the bow and arrow?

Laing and Laing claim that 'the only weapons probably used in combat were the sword, spear and possibly the axe' (1984, 281). Only Sueno's Stone connects the short bow with war, and there are just two other bows depicted. One is on the Ruthwell Cross (Allen & Anderson 1903, III, fig. 467B), and the other is scratched on a slate at Jarlshof amongst a jumble of other graffiti. But here also the artist has got it wrong, the arrow is going away from the bow not the string. It would appear that the bow was not taken seriously as a weapon. If so one wonders why? Was it considered unmanly, unsporting — not like the good old man-to-man hand-to-hand combat of past days? Was it banned for use by troops as, at a later date, was the crossbow

when the Church considered the wounds it caused too barbaric. (However the crossbow could, in all conscience, be used against the infidels.) Or was the timber of native trees not suitable? Unlikely as the yew was there to provide excellent bow wood. In this regard a prod of yew wood 123 cm long was found, in a remarkable state of preservation, in the muddy silt at the bottom of the inner moat of Birkhamstead Castle. It has been estimated that a pull of 150lbs would be required to bend it. This means that it came from a later bow, one with a mechanical cocking device.

The unrealistic carved details covering the construction and operation of the crossbow on the four stones is perhaps because: (1), the crossbow was known about but not very widely distributed; (2), perhaps there was only one itinerant smith going about demonstrating his unusual weapon and skill; (3), one bow was captured from a Roman; (4), the bow was brought by a deserting Roman?; (5), do we know that the bow depicted was of an early type? Yes, because there is no stirrup — this was necessary when bows became more powerful and thus more difficult to bend. Compound or steel bows required the bowman to employ a hook, suspended from his belt, with which to pull up the string. None is in evidence; (6), where are the stones? Is the bow's use limited to a single tribe or district? Can this be deduced from the distribution of the stones showing crossbowmen? Apparently not:–

Stone	**County**	**Tribe**
Shandwick	Easter Ross	Decantae
Glenferness	Moray	Caledonii
Meigle 10	Perth	Venicones
St Vigeans 1	Angus	Venicones

Of the four stones Meigle 10 stands out as being different. Not just on account of the chariot, but also because its shape. It is lying down. The uncarved band at the bottom makes it look as if it could have been part of a sarcophagus, but its reported length of 3ft render it too wide for an end yet too short for a side. Of course, it is broken both at the top and at the sides and could have been any size. Unfortunately no thickness is given, so why was it carved? The subject appears narrative yet it is not religious.

When I started looking at crossbows it was simply because I was intending to carve one. I therefore wanted to know more about them. Well I now know more, but it has presented me with additional questions on the subject of Pictish clothes, Pictish shooting rights, initiation rites, how Picts hunted boars, why certain materials were not used, what plants and trees grew during the time of the Picts. Was the subject matter of the stones intended to impress, like antlers on a stag? Who brought back the first crossbow, or more likely in view of the antler nut, the idea, of the crossbow? But like everything else Pictish it is what we do not know that intrigues and keeps us scratching at the itch caused by our ignorance.

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Fig. 3. Fragment of cross-slab at Rosemarkie, Easter Ross, © JRF Burt

A New Look at the Pictish King List

Kyle A Gray

Mystery. Who doesn't love a good one? The enigmatic Picts offer more than their fair share. While the symbol stones present the most obvious and engaging mystery, I recently found myself drawn to a more accessible riddle. Why does the Pictish King List — a Dark Age compilation of the names of purported monarchs of ancient Pictavia — contain such seemingly strange naming patterns? Why don't any of the nearly thirty separate Pictish male names on the 'king side' of the list (which repeat often within the 'king side' itself) appear until very late on the 'progenitor side' of the list? And why is no Pictish king recorded as a father of a succeeding Pictish king? While several theories have been offered, none seems to answer all of the questions. This paper poses a potential solution to the mysteries of the Pictish King List.

The Problem

The problem was recognised early on by Skene. The Pictish King List — after the enigmatic list of 'Brudes' — records sixty-two kings of Pictavia, thirty-nine of whom are further identified by a Latin parental, fraternal or grandson/nephew designation; i.e., 'filius', 'frater' or 'nepos' (Skene 1867, ci–ciii)[1]. Those kings are as follows:

1. Gilgidi
2. Tharain
3. Morleo
4. Deocilunon
5. Cimoiod filius Arcois
6. Deoord
7. Bliesblituth
8. Dectotr'ic frater Diu
9. Usconbuts
10. Carvost
11. Deo
12. Vist
13. Ru
14. Gartnaith
15. Breth filius Buthut
16. Vipoig
17. Canutulachama
18. Wradech
19. Gartnaich
20. Talore filius Achiver
21. Drust filius Erp
22. Talore filius Aniel
23. Nechton filius Erip (Wirp)
24. Drest
25. Galanan
26. Drest filius Gyrom (Girom)
27. Drest filius Wdrost
28. Garthnach filius Girom
29. Cailtram filius Girom
30. Talorg filius Muircholaich
31. Drest filius Munait
32. Galam
33. Briduo
34. Bridei filius Mailchon
35. Gartnart filius Domelch
36. Nectu nepos Uerd (Uerb)
37. Cinioch filius Lutrin
38. Garnard filius Wid (Uuid)
39. Breidei filius Wid (Uuid)
40. Talore frater eorum
41. Tallorcen filius Enfret
42. Gartnait filius Donnel (Donuel)
43. Drest frater ejus
44. Bredei filius Bili
45. Taran filius Entifidich
46. Bredei filius Derelei
47. Nechton filius Derelei
48. Drest, and
49. Elpin (co-reigned)
50. Onnist filius Urguist
51. Bredei filius Wirguist
52. Ciniod filius Wredech
53. Elpin filius Wroid (Uuroid)
54. Drest filius Talorgen
55. Talorgen filius Onnist
56. Canaul filius Tarl'a
57. Castantin filius Wrguist
58. Unuist filius Wrguist
59. Drest filius Constantini, and
60. Talorgen filius Wthoil (co-reigned)
61. Wrad filius Bargoit
62. Bred

Over the five or more centuries this list may represent[2], twenty-nine separate male names are used for Pictish kings, with decided preferences for Drust/Drest (nine repeats), Bredei (seven variations), Gartnait (six variations), Ciniod (three variations) and Nechton (three variations). However, until Drest filius Talorgen (no. 54), none of the 'king side' names appears on the 'progenitor side' of the list. Likewise, until Talorgen filius Onnist (no. 55), no listed king is

recorded as the possible son of a preceding king. Moreover, no listed king is ever directly succeeded by his son. Given the prevalence of Drests, Bredeis and Gartnaits on the list, the absence of any sons of Drest, Bredei or Gartnait is particularly puzzling. It would be like finding an English patrilineal list with no sons of John, William or Henry listed. In short, until very late in the list there is no obvious correlation between the 'king side' names and the 'progenitor' names.

Skene's explanation for this mystery is a twist on the matrilineal succession that many scholars accept was the norm among the Picts. He suggests that the 'progenitor side' lists the names of foreigners who sired sons on polyandrous Pictish princesses (1867, cii–ciii). This theory of Pictish exogamy has been soundly rejected by later scholars for a variety of solid reasons (e.g. M. Anderson 1973, 167; Henderson 1967, 32). In particular Skene's theory fails to explain why the 'progenitor side' names are not recognisable from Gaelic, Saxon, Norse or other non-Pictish source languages of potential foreign fathers, but instead appear to be Pictish names.

Like Skene, Marjorie Anderson also believes the Picts were matrilineal. She explains the riddles in the King List by suggesting that the names of Pictish princes in line for kingship were chosen from a limited list of royal names. Thus, non-royal father names in the 'progenitor side' would not be the same as royal son names on the 'king side' (1973, 166). While intriguing, problems with this theory also exist. Twenty-nine names, many which do not repeat, seem more than a few too many for a limited, repeating 'royal name list', especially when fewer names than that appear among the none name-limited progenitors. Moreover, this theory also fails to explain the lack of even one Pictish prince who sired a future king on one of his royal female cousins or nieces, thereby earning himself a spot on the 'progenitor list'.

Alfred Smyth rejects matriliny altogether, offering a third explanation for the King List's peculiarities (1984, 67–83). He postulates that an oscillating group of overlords shared the kingship, and that brothers and cousins succeeded each other, not sons. This theory rejects the solid evidence that the Picts were a matrilineal people (e.g. Cummins 1995, 31–36; M. Anderson 1987, 9–10). More importantly, it fails to explain why even if sons did not immediately succeed their fathers, some sons of earlier kings do not show up later in the list? Or why such common names as Drest, Bredei, Gartnait, etc., do not appear on the 'progenitor side', even if those fathers were not kings themselves? In fact, in the Dál Riatan King Lists — and also the Scottish King Lists from Kenneth Mac Alpin to Malcolm Ceann Mor — where the oscillating practice of tanistry often kept sons from directly succeeding fathers, sons of former kings nevertheless often became kings, and common names (e.g. Conall, Domnall, Malcolm and Kenneth) frequently appear on both sides of those lists (M. Anderson 1973, 164, 228; Bingham 1985, 8, 165–66).

Thus, the offered theories, intriguing though they may be, do not begin to explain all the mysteries of the Pictish King List. There is one simple explanation, however, that seems to have been overlooked.

A Proposed Solution

Imagine, if you would, a parallel earth which turned out somewhat differently from our own. There, patriarchal-minded Hispanic historians knowing next to nothing about the English language, its Germanic ancestors, or naming patterns of either (all having long since died out or changed too much to be useful), come across an ancient English King List containing thirty-nine 'name-pairs' which look something like this:

1. Conrad filius Astrid
2. Delwin frater Dagmar
3. Penda filius Bertha
4. Terrill filius Aldith
5. Dunstan filius Ethel
6. Terrill filius Audrey
7. Norbert filius Ethel
8. Dunstan filius Gertrude
9. Dunstan filius Winifred
10. Garth filius Gertrude
11. Canute filius Gertrude
12. Terrill filius Mildred
13. Dunstan filius Maud
14. Brant filius Matilde
15. Garth filius Daralis
16. Norbert nepos Ethel
17. Kendrick filius Louise
18. Garth filius Hedwig
19. Brant filius Hedwig
20. Terrill frater eorum
21. Terrill filius Esteban
22. Garth filius Denise
23. Dunstan frater ejus
24. Brant filius Bartolomeo
25. Terrill filius Edith
26. Brant filius Didrika

27. Norbert filius Didrika
28. Alfred filius Frederik
29. Brant filius Frederik
30. Kendrik filius Wilfred
31. Alfred filius Hedwig
32. Dunstan filius Terrill
33. Terrill filius Alaric
34. Kendal filius Thordis
35. Canstantin filius Frederik
36. Alfred filius Frederik
37. Dunstan filius Constantin
38. Terrill filius Wanda
39. Waldemar filius Brunhild

Looking at this list, our hypothetical historians see two foreign male names on the 'progenitor side' that they recognise from their own background, i.e. Bartolomeo and Esteban (no.s 21 and 24). Likewise, late in the list they see some names similar to male ones they recognise from other historic sources, e.g. Constantin (no. 37) for Constantine and Frederik (no.s 28, 29, 35 and 36) for Federico. Knowing that filius means 'son of' in Latin, the historians then make the seemingly logical assumption that **all** the unrecognised names on the 'progenitor side' of the hypothetical list are likewise male names, or patronymics. They make this assumption even though, with only two exceptions towards the very end of the list, none of the male names on the 'king side' appears on the 'progenitor side', and none of the kings is listed as the father of an immediate successor-king. Moreover, although several names on the 'king side' are often repeated (e.g. Dunstan, Brant and Garth), with only one exception near the end those repeating common names do not appear on the 'progenitor side'.

Knowing a bit more about English and its Germanic roots than our hypothetical historians, astute readers will realise that the assumption that the 'progenitor side' of this hypothetical list contains patronymics, is quite wrong. This is because such Germanic names as Astrid, Dagmar, Bertha, Winifred, Maud, etc. — even though they have many attributes and endings similar to the male Germanic names on the 'king side' — are actually *female* names. Likewise, although quite similar to male names, Denise (Denis), Didrika (Dietrich) and Louise (Louis) are also female. Thus, except in two isolated circumstances early on, and a little more often towards the end, our hypothetical list actually gives us *matronymics*, or the names of the king's mothers.

Moving back to the actual Pictish King List, there is strong external evidence that the kingship was, in fact, matrilineal (e.g. M. Anderson 1987, 9–10; Cummins 1995, 31–36; Wainwright 1955, 26–30). From that starting point, then, one could reasonably expect to see matronymics in the thirty-nine name pairs contained in the Pictish King List. Do we? Although the assumption in the past has been no, I propose that the answer actually may be yes.

From his staunchly patriarchal Victorian background, Skene seems to have simply assumed that the 'filius', 'frater' and 'nepos' names on the 'progenitor side' were the names of fathers, brothers and grandfathers (uncles). (1867, ci). He made this assumption even though those Latin terms equally apply to sons of mothers, brothers of sisters, and grandsons (or nephews) of grandmothers (or aunts). As far as I could ascertain, all subsequent studies have simply assumed as Skene did, with little or no analysis, that the names on the 'progenitor side' of the List are names of fathers, brothers, grandfathers or uncles (e.g. A. Anderson 1922, 122; M. Anderson 1973, 167; Cummins 1995, 34; Diack 1944, 32; Sharpe 1995, 238; Smyth 1984, 58; Sutherland 1994, 62).

There is solid evidence that a few of the names on the 'progenitor side' are, in fact, names of fathers. As with the preceding hypothetical list, two early 'progenitor' names in the Pictish King List are fairly certain to be male, namely the foreign Saxon and Strathclydian names Enfret (no. 41) and Bili (no. 44)(e.g. Cummins 1995, 34). And, as with the hypothetical list, Constantini (no. 57) is recognisable as the male name Constantine; Onnist (no. 55) as Angus; Urgusit (Wrguist) (no.s 50, 51, 57 & 58) as Fergus[3]; and Talorgen (no. 54) and Wredrech (no. 52) as earlier 'king side' male names. But what about the rest? Since very little is known about Pictish names, they could as easily be female as male[4]. In the early Celtic world, it was not unheard of even in patrilineal cultures for males to be described as sons of their mothers. For example, a poem in the Welsh *Black Book of Carmarthen*, — which uses many formulations already archaic in early 13th century Wales when it was written down — describes various Welsh heroes as the sons of their mothers (Davies 1993, 117; Squire 1905, 258). In a Pictish society where kingship rights come through mothers, such a listing would be logical and not unexpected.

Let's look, then, at the possible female progenitor names from the name pairs in the Pictish King List:

1. Arcois
2. Diu
3. Buthut
4. Achivir
5. Erp
6. Aniel
7. Erip (same as no. 5?)
8. Gyrom (same as no. 10?)
9. Wdrost
10. Girom (2)
11. Muircholaich
12. Munait
13. Mailcon (Melcon)
14. Domelch
15. Uerb (same as no. 5?)
16. Lutrin
17. Wid (Uurid)(3) (same as 20?)
18. Donnel (Donuel)
19. Entifidich
20. Wroid (Uuroid)
21. Derelei (2)
22. Tarl'a
23. Wthoil
24. Bargoit

None of them stands out as obviously male. Speculation has linked Mailcon with the Welsh name Maelgwyn (e.g. A.O. Anderson 1922, cxxiii; Cummins 1995, 35; Laing 1993, 15). But, Mailcon would seem to have almost as much in common with the Irish female name Melangell, especially in the alternate Melcon spelling offered by one of the more Gaelicised versions of the List.

Alfred Smyth and Marjorie Anderson have also speculated that Donnel (no.s 42 & 43) may be Domnall Brec of Dál Riada (M.O. Anderson 1973, 167; Smyth 1984, 70). However, the Gaelic spelling for the name Donald at that time would have been closer to a variation of Domnall, which is how the name is written in the Dál Riatan King Lists (e.g. *ibid*, 229). Moreover, Donuel is the more likely Pictish spelling (*ibid*, 172; M.O. Anderson 1987, 10; Skene 1867, 28). The original P-Celtic name Dôn — as opposed to the Q-Celtic Donn — was female (e.g. Gantz 1976, 99; Squire 1905, 252). Also, the female name Donada appears in later Scottish history (Bingham 1985, 13; Ellis 1980, 2). Thus, like Mailcon, Donnel could as easily be female as male.

Whatever may be true of Mailcon and Donnel, many of the other names on the 'progenitor side' of the Pictish King List seem quite likely to be female. Early Celtic sources like the Irish *Tain Bo Culaigne* and the Welsh *Mabinogion*, contain several female names facially similar to 'progenitor side' names[5]. Perhaps the most striking evidence comes from Derelei parent of the brother kings Bredei and Nechton (nos. 46 & 47). In discussing Derelei, Marjorie Anderson has theorised '[i]t is just possible that in this case the mother's name has been given instead of the father's' (1973, 175). In fact, early Welsh gives us the female name Teleri, daughter of Peul in *Culhwch and Olwen* (Gantz 1976, 148). Since the Pictish Drest becomes Trystan in Welsh, Derelei could easily be the same name as the Welsh Teleri. Likewise, Derelei also seems to have much in common phonetically with the Irish female name Derbforgaill (e.g. Green 1996, 175).

Alan O. Anderson had similar thoughts about Domelch, parent of Gartnan (no. 35), and Uerb, grandparent or uncle/aunt of Nectu (no. 36), suggesting that both might be female (1922, 122). And indeed, Uerb — which seems to be the same as Erp/Erip (nos. 21 & 23) — has clear cognates in both early Irish and Welsh. As A.O. Anderson explained, Ferb is an Irish woman's name, which changes the Pictish 'U' to 'F', just as Pictish Uurguist becomes Irish Fergus (1922, 122). Early Welsh also gives us the phonetically similar female name Eheubryd, daughter of Kyvwlch in *Culhwch and Olwen* (Gantz 1976, 147).

Buthot, parent of Breth (no. 15), is another name which has a striking female Celtic cognate. Bethoc, the 10th century daughter of Malcolm II and mother of Duncan I, was named for an earlier Celtic saint (Bingham 1985, 15; Ellis 1980, 16). If Buthot is indeed a royal Pictish female name, finding a female cognate in the later royal Scottish line is not surprising. Pictish male names apparently continued to be used for centuries after Kenneth Mac Alpin's time, for example, Gartnait, Earl of Mar in the era of Robert the Bruce (Scott 1989, 82, 251).

Likewise, Entifidich — parent of Taran (no. 45) — has a seeming Welsh cognate in Enrhydreg daughter of Tuduathar from *The Mabinogion* (Gantz 1976, 148). Wid and Wroid, respective parents of Garnard, Bridei and Elpin (nos. 38, 39 & 53), also have phonetic kin in P-Celtic sources. The likely Pictish spellings of Wid and Wroid are Uuid and Uuroid (M.O. Anderson 1973, 231–32; Skene 1867, 28–29). These names are similar to the Welsh female name Eurneid, daughter of Clydno in *Culhwch and Olwen* and to Urith, an early Christian-era Devonshire Celt (Gantz 1976, 148; Toulson 1993, 183). Interestingly, Eurneid is described in *Culhwch and Olwen* as the daughter of a man from Edinburgh (Gantz 1976, 148). Perhaps the spelling of her name at home was actually Uuroid, just like the 8th century parent of Elpin.

Other matchings can also be made. For example, the early Arcois (no. 5) is comparable to the Gaulish name Artio, and Aniel (no. 22) is like the Irish female names Aine or Anu (Dames 1992, 267; Green 1996, 165). Gyrom and Girom (nos. 26, 28 & 29) are quite similar to the

Welsh Garym and Garam (Gantz 1976, 147). Munait (no. 31) is akin to the Irish female name Monenna, and Lutrin (no. 37) seems similar to the Irish Latiarin (Condren 1989, 101; Dames 1992, 114). Tarl'a (no. 56, alternate spelling Tang) is similar to the Welsh Tlachtga or Tangwystl (Condren 1989, 29; Davies 1993, 139). Finally, Bargoit (no. 61) seems related to Birgit, Brigit, Brigantia and other versions of that common Irish female name (Green 1996, 196).

Thus, the majority of the 'progenitor side' names on the Pictish King List could well be female. The fact that a few male names do appear on the 'progenitor side' does not detract from this thesis. First, it must be remembered that it was likely Christian monks who wrote down the list we have. Patriarchalists at heart, such men would record the father's name if they knew it. A Pictish king via the female line, whose father also happened to be foreign royalty, would likely flaunt his dual royal blood, thus explaining why 'Enfret' and 'Bili' (nos. 41 & 44) came to be known and recorded. Second, Celtic ancestor lists with some fathers and some mothers listed do exist (e.g. Squire 1979, 258). And third, the appearance of male names on both sides of the list near the very end is easily explained by the breakdown of the matrilinear system at this late date (M.O. Anderson 1973, 195). Given the Picts' conversion to patriarchal Christianity, it is surprising the old system lasted as long as it did.

Moreover, many things we know about the Picts lend support to this thesis. Foremost is the solid evidence of Pictish matriliny, which will not be repeated here (e.g. M.O. Anderson 1987, 9–10; Cummins 1995, 31–36). In a matrilineal society, names of mothers would logically be recorded more often than names of fathers. Also, if the 'progenitor side' names are mostly female, it would solve several mysteries.

For example, the 'Drosten Stone' now in St Vigeans' Museum has an inscription which has long stumped Pictish studies experts. It reads 'drosten ipeuoret ettfor cus'(Allen and Anderson 1903, III, 236). If 'ipe' means 'son of' in Pictish as many have speculated, and 'ett' simply means 'and' in Latin, then why would Drosten be identified as the son of two males, Uoret and Forcus? (e.g. Ritchie 1989, 36–37). However, if Uoret (cf no. 38 Wid/Uuid and no. 53 Wroid/Uuroid) is a female name, then Drosten's Pictish mother is simply listed first, per the apparent custom in Pictavia, and his Irish father Forcus (cf Forcus mac Muirchertach, an Irish prince *c.*540 CE), is listed second. A simple explanation for a magnificently carved stone.

Another puzzle is why Dectotr'ic (no. 8) is listed as the brother of Diu, when Diu is not recorded as a former king? Why not record his father instead, since who would care who Dectotr'ic's brother was if he was not a preceding king? However, if Dectotr'ic's *sister* Diu was of the Pictish royal line, that would matter greatly because it would establish Dectotr'ic's matrilineal blood right to be king. Yet, as a female, Diu would not be listed earlier in the King List. Thus, if Diu is a royal female name, there is no mystery why Dectotr'ic is identified as her brother.

The riddle of different names used by the Pictish King List, the Irish Annals and certain verses of the *Yellow Book of Lecan* to describe two Pictish kings, is also solved by this theory. The 'Scelo Cano meic Gartnain' in the *Yellow Book* tells of a Pictish king named Gartnan mac Aeda meic Gabran (Sutherland 1994, 53). Known dates for certain events and persons in 'Cano's Tale' make it likely that Gartnan mac Aeda is the Gartnart filius Domelch (no. 35) of the Pictish King List (A.O. Anderson 1922, 122; Sutherland 1994, 53). The only way Gartnan could be the son of Aeda (a historical king of the Dál Riatan Scots consecrated by St Columba) and of Domelch, is if Domelch was Gartnan's mother. Indeed, A.O. Anderson speculated to just this effect (1922, 122).

According to the *Yellow Book*, Cano mac Gartnan had a son named Nechtan, and the *Annals of Ulster* list a Nechtan mac Cano who died around the same time as Nectu nepos Uerb (no. 36), Gartnan's successor in the Pictish King List (A.O. Anderson 1922, 122). If these two Nechtans are the same person, which seems likely, then Gartnan's grandson succeeded him not because of his direct patrilineal descent from Gartnan — which is not even mentioned in the King List — but because Nectan son of Cano was also the grandson, or possibly nephew, of Uerb. Uerb must have been a Pictish female of royal blood who gave Nectan his matrilineal rights. Why else mention this Uerb when Nechtan's patrilineal right to the kingship through Gartnan was so clear? Certainly there would be no need to name another male because Nectan could easily have been recorded as Nectu nepos Gartnan. Indeed, why not record him as Nectu filius Cano if the practice of the List's scribe really was to record fathers on the 'progenitor side'? The fact that neither of these two obvious options was chosen seems powerful evidence that a Pictish king's female antecedents were crucial, and it was those female names that were recorded for posterity in the King List. Domelch and Uerb were two such royal Pictish women.

Finally, acceptance of the theory that the 'progenitor side' names are mostly female would neatly and simply explain the mysteries of the King List that so puzzled Skene and his followers. No progenitors were kings themselves because — except for a few male foreigners who for lack of Pictish royal blood were not kingship material — they were women who by virtue of their gender could not be kings. And no son is listed as succeeding his father as king because fathers generally were not recorded. Likewise, just as no King Gertrude, Bertha, Astrid, etc., would be expected in the hypothetical English king list above, female names from the 'progenitor side' of the Pictish King List would logically not appear on the 'king side', and male names from the 'king side', no matter how common among males, would not appear on the 'mother side'. Like oil and water, male and female Pictish names simply did not mix.

Conclusion

Are the 'progenitors' in the Pictish King List females? While it seems possible, even probable, we will likely never know for certain. However, this proposal has the advantage of solving many mysteries of the Pictish King List. Perhaps Marjorie Anderson had it right when she stated that '[i]t has proved difficult to get away from a patrilineal point of view' (1987, 10). The assertion that kings are identified in the Pictish King List as sons of their mothers seems somehow obvious and simple from a matrilineal point of view. And as William of Occam taught us long ago, the simplest answer to a mystery is often the best solution of all.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, the 'King List' referred to in this paper is the Latin list from the Poppleton manuscript generally felt to be the oldest, and most Pictish, of the various versions (Broun 1995, 3). It appears first in Skene, and is called List A by Marjorie Anderson in *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland.*

2. While some of the reign lengths recorded by the King List — and likely some of the kings themselves — are mythical fabrications, the last 300 years of reigns from *c* 554–584 for Breidei filius Mailcon (no. 34) to *c* 846–847 for Bred (no. 62) appear to be fairly accurate (Cummins 1995, 147–48).

3. Although it seems likely that Uurguist is indeed the Pictish equivalent of the Irish male name Fergus, that is not entirely certain. Writing in 1527, Hector Boece took Uurguist to be the female name Fergusiane, and some versions of the King List render Uurguist as Fergusane, Fergusa or Fergusagin (e.g. Boece 1527, 139, v.2; Skene 1867, 150, 173, 201).

4. As was true with early (and current) Germanic names, some Celtic names were used for both genders in the Dark Ages, e.g. Kentigern/Caintigern and Erc (A.O. Anderson 1922, 4; Smyth 1984, 82). Also, many gender-differentiated names were quite similar (e.g. Owein/olwen, Bradwen/Branwen, Gawain/Goewin, Kelyddon/Kelemon, Ailill/Aille, Muirchertach/Muireartach, Aedan/Aidin). Likewise, the one clearly Pictish female name recorded — Drusticc/Dustric — is quite similar to the Drust variant of the male Pictish name Drest (A.O. Anderson 1922, 7). Thus, except in the rare case where a name and that person's gender are recorded, it is difficult, if not impossible, to tell whether any given Pictish name is male or female.

5. Because Pictish was likely a P-Celtic language akin to Welsh, with some Q-Celtic attributes similar to Irish Gaelic, searching for names similar to Pictish ones among early Welsh and Irish sources is an accepted technique (e.g. A.O. Anderson 1922, 122; M.O. Anderson 1973, 175; Forsyth 1995, 9–10; Smyth 1984, 65).

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The stones of *Apurfeirt* and *Ceirfuill*

Craig Cessford

According to Version A of the *Chronicle of the Picts*, Nechton [*Nectonius*] the great [*magnus*], son of Erp (Wirp), who was king of all the provinces of the Picts [*rex omnium provinciarum Pictorum*] gave Abernethy [*Apurnethige*] along with its territories to the Church as a dedication to St Bridget [*Sancte Brigide*] in the presence of *Darlugdach/Dairlugdach* the Abbess of Kildare [*abbatissa Cilledara*] (Anderson 1922, cxxi, 122; Chadwick 1949, 9–11; Skene 1867, 6). The authenticity of this tradition is debatable and it could well be a later invention, although it may incorporate genuinely early traditional elements preserved at Abernethy. The story as it stands is later than events it purports to describe and it is likely to be related to contemporary land ownership. By claiming that the land was an ancient royal grant it strengthened the church at Abernethy's claim to ownership. The date of the foundation of Abernethy is unclear but it may be seventh century (Foster 1996, 89; Smyth 1984, 82–83).

Regardless of its story's genuineness it is still of interest because it gives the boundaries of the territory attached to Abernethy:

> *'que posite sunt a lapide in Apurfeirt usque ad lapidem juxta Ceirfuill, id est, Lethfoss, et inde in altum usque ad Athan'*
>
> (Skene 1867, 6)

> 'which extend from the stone in Apurfeirt as far as the stone beside Ceirfuill, that is, Lethfoss, and thence upwards as far as Athan'
>
> (Anderson 1922, 122)

Skene equated *Apurfeirt* with the mouth of the River Farg where it joined the River Earn, *Ceirfuill* with Carpow and *Athan* with Hatton (1867, 432, 433, 440). Anderson simply repeats Skene's identifications although he points out that *Apurfeirt* must be a misspelling of *Apurfeirc* for this identification to be correct (1922, 122). Watson confirmed the identification of *Ceirfuill* with Carpow (1926, 370) but did not discuss the other two place-names. Skene's geographical identifications of *Apurfiert* and *Ceirfuill* are probably correct but the equation of *Athan* with Hatton is much more problematical. Hatton is a relatively common place-name in this area and is a contraction of Hall Toun (RCAHMS 1994, 119). Whilst the placename *Athan* could conceivably have given rise to Hatton there is no supporting evidence for this and geographically Hatton does not appear to make much sense in conjunction with the other two locations in terms of delimiting territorial boundaries for Abernethy.

Both *Apurfeirt* and *Ceirfuill* can be identified with a reasonable degree of certainty and in both cases they are located with reference to a *lapide/lapidem* [stone]. The term *lapidem* does not occur in Latin inscriptions on sculpture in either northern or southern Scotland (Okasha 1985; Thomas 1992) but is found on a number of sixth to eleventh century inscriptions from Wales (Nash-Williams 1950, nos. 35, 61, 101, 182, 253). The stone at *Apurfeirt* is described as being *in* [in] *Apurfeirt* while the stone at *Ceirfuill* is *juxta* [beside] *Ceirfuill*. These stones must have been prominent and easily identifiable landmarks to have functioned as acceptable territorial boundaries. Additionally as the territories were supposed to have been granted by the Pictish king Nechton they would have helped support this claim if they were of some antiquity and perhaps believed to be Pictish. Are the two *lapide/lapidem* referred to therefore Pictish stones? Abernethy itself has of course produced a number of sculptural fragments including a Class I stone with tuning fork, crescent and V-rod and hammer plus anvil symbols (Allen and Anderson 1903, III, 282) (fig. 4)as well as a number of later pieces (*ibid*, III, 308–10). There is also the magnificent round tower which probably dates to the period *c.* AD 1090 to 1130 (Fernie 1986). As far as I am aware, however, the area at the junction of the rivers Farg and Earn has not produced any sculptural remains, perhaps they await discovery. A fragment of a cross-shaft was found forming the lintel of a well at Old Carpow House (Allen and Anderson 1903, III, 311–13; Laing 1878) which lies just to the west of the Severan fortress of Carpow. Although there is no evidence to show exactly where the stone stood originally, before being incorporated into the well in the early seventeenth century, it is unlikely to have been moved a great distance. It may well, therefore, have originally been sited *juxta Ceirfuill* [beside Carpow]. The fragment which survives, which was subsequently moved to Mugdrum, is a small part of an upright cross-slab of Old Red Sandstone. The front has part of a cross with an ornamental

border and an interlaced sea-monster. The rear also has part of a decorated cross and a fine depiction of a stag and an unidentified animal plus some interlace. The original cross-slab would undoubtedly have been prominent and a well known local landmark which could well have been thought of as old and Pictish by the time the Abernethy foundation story was written down. The cross-slab is of course later than the supposed seventh century foundation date for Abernethy but, as the story itself as it survives is much later, this is not a problem.

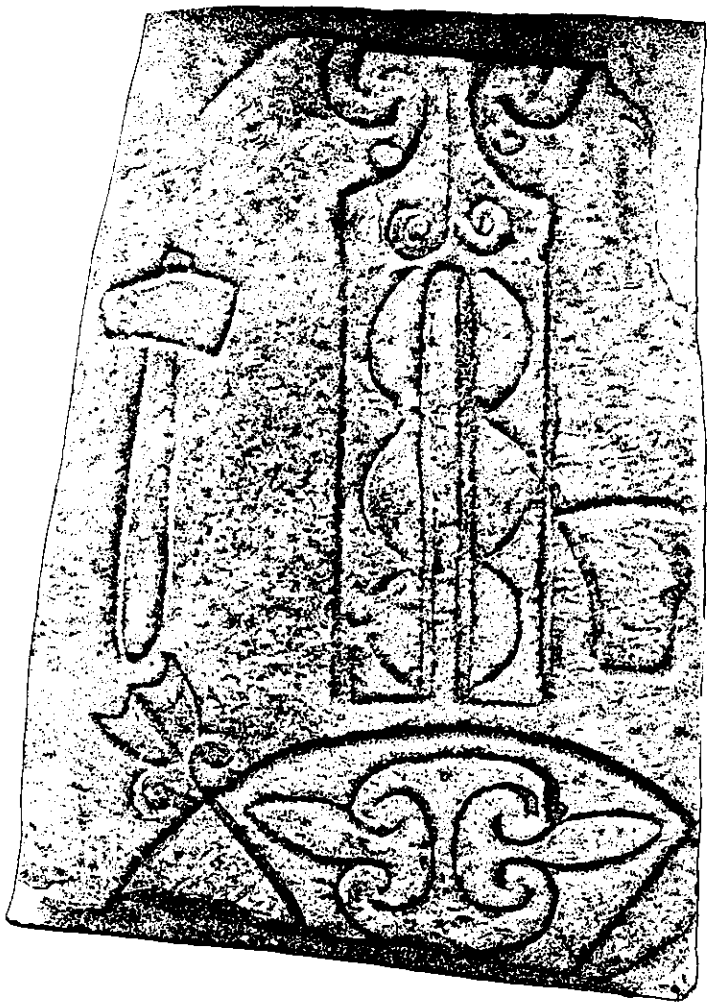

Fig. 4. Class I stone with tuning fork, crescent and V-rod and hammer plus anvil symbols at Abernethy

The stone from *Ceirfuill* is not described as being at the site but *juxta* [beside] it. There is no evidence that the fortress of Carpow was occupied after the Severan period (Birley 1963) and it was probably abandoned in AD 210 or 211. It is likely that the fortress of Carpow continued to be a landmark and possibly a focal point in the landscape, but there is no reason to assume this large, low lying and difficult to defend site was occupied by any local group after the Romans abandoned it. It may, however, have continued in use for burials, either inside or just outside the fortress, a pattern known from Inchtuthil (Abercromby *et al* 1902, 197–202) and Hadrian's Wall (Dark 1992). This would explain the presence of early Historic sculpture *juxta Ceirfuill*.

One site which is usually overlooked in the discussion of Abernethy is the nearby hillfort of Castle Law which lies to the south-west. Castle Law was excavated between 1896 and 1898 and produced evidence of occupation during the pre-Roman Iron Age such as a La Tène fibula (Christison 1899). This small univallate hillfort which only encloses an area of 15.5m by 41.5m with timber-framed stone walls up to 6m thick is a strong naturally defensible position and occupies a strategic location. It therefore fits all the criteria for early Historic re-occupation. One of the pieces of dating evidence was a bronze spiral finger ring (Christison 1899, 31) but these also occur on early Historic sites (Clarke 1971, 25–28, Appendix II). The discovery of another bronze spiral finger ring at the early third century Severan fort at Carpow

(Birley 1963, 206–207) shows that the example from Castle Law may be of later date than it is traditionally ascribed. It has been suggested that Castle Law may have been occupied by the Picts in the early Historic period (Walker and Ritchie 1987, 132) and while there is no prove of this, it is certainly possible, especially given the early date of the excavations, and must be borne in mind in any consideration of the Abernethy area.

Whether or not the story of Nechton giving Abernethy to the church is genuine or not, its description of Abernethy's territorial boundaries includes important references to stones acting as boundary markers. Current opinion suggests that the majority of Pictish stones were associated with burials. This, however, was only their primary function. Once erected such stones would have become prominent local landmarks and may therefore, have subsequently acquired other secondary functions, such as acting as territorial boundary markers. This would be especially true one such stones became accepted as old and permanent features of the landscape. The *lapidem juxta Ceirfuill* may possibly be identified with a fragment of a cross-slab from the well at Old Carpow House while the *lapide in Apurfeirt* cannot be equated with any known stone and may indicate the location of one which still awaits discovery.

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A possible boundary between Dal Riata and Pictland

Elizabeth B Rennie

Traditionally the boundary between the territories of the Scotii and the Picts was *Drum Alban*. Whether the name is a general geographic term or an agreed boundary recognised by the two peoples, is not known and has never been studied. When the monks of the Celtic Church were expelled beyond 'Dorsum Brittaniae' in AD 717 were they merely sent home to the West or had they to cross a known and accepted border between Pictland and Dal Riada? By accepting that there is an association amongst certain field monuments and of place-names on Ordnance Survey (OS) maps, it is possible to suggest that there was an actual boundary which may have been mutually agreed upon by the leaders of the two peoples — perhaps even by Columba and Bredei.

Three monuments — two mounds and a stone — formed the stating point to the reasearch:

1. On the hill slope on the west side of Glen Falloch, 200m above the falls (NN 3375 2160), there is a stone or rather a mound crowned by an upright stone, called on OS maps *Clach nam Breatann*. It is quoted in *Highland Papers* Vol IV that 'The Clach nam Breatann in Glen Falloch ... marks the boundaries of the three ancient kingdoms of Strathclyde, Dalriada and Pictland. The fact that the three modern counties of Dumbarton, Argyll and Perth meet near the site of this ancient landmark is no more than historical development'. Kirby also notes this monument marks the frontier of the Kingdom of Strathclyde (1971, 80)[1].

2. On a hillside to the east of Loch Arienas in Morven there is a mound which has the appearance of being man-made, although it has not the appearance of a burial cairn. It resembles *Clach nam Breatann* in Glen Falloch in size and form of construction. Adjacent to this mound a greatly spread and flattened turf dyke runs more or less east–west. This dyke was noticed by a field worker as being different and of a more archaic appearance than the field dykes etc. of the area. The ancient dyke has been traced for over a mile running in a westerly direction.

3. On the hills above and to the north-west of Lochgoilhead at an altitude of 350m (NN 2165 0245) there is a great erratic boulder known locally as *Clach a' Bhreatunnaich*. Traditionally it is said to mark the boundary between the Scots and the Britons.

The first and third of these monuments — the *Clach nam Breatain* and *Clach a' Bhreatunnaich* — are authenticated by tradition. The second — the mound in Morven — gains any authenticity from its similarity to the first and its position in a line of boundary place-names.

Between these three markers and extending from them, to near Ardmamurchan in the North-west and to near Toward Point in the South, there is a line of place-names containing the Gaelic word for boundary, *criche*. A second place-name also meaning a boundary — viz. *fola* or *foadla*[2] seems to be incorporated in the names of two burns which run into Loch Eck; on the east side *Allt na Foadhalach* (NS 144 934) and on the west *Allt Fala Mor* (NS 137 930). It is possible that the name Falloch may also stem from the same root and that Glen Falloch may mean 'Boundary Glen'.

The list of the place-names is given running from west to south-east. Their geographic positions and their association forming the boundary is shown on the attached map (fig. 5).

It is significant that the postulated line passes through the most southerly of the high summits of the Grampians. If the boundary is authentic, its position crossing the high hills is rational, as boundaries in pre-historic times were not the waterways. The waterways were the means of access into an area — the mountains were the barriers and much more difficult to cross. The suggested boundary-line might mark the furthest initial 'drive' of the Scotti into Alba, beyond which it was difficult to travel. However, at points boundaries have to cross low ground and in the suggested Dalriadan boundary it is significant that here on the low ground are fortified sites — e.g. on Loch Linnhe – Glen Sanda Castle, Castle Coeffin, Tirefuar Broch and perhaps Barcaldine Castle; in Glen Strae – Castles homestead and the Dun, Barr a' Chaistealan.

It is of interest that Columba and Moluag are said to have contested the ownership of Lismore, where, as now seems probable, Lismore was on the boundary of the two kingdoms.

Cnoc Aingeal or Aingil in Lismore, translated as 'hill of fire' (Dwelly 1988), may be a site for signal fires as well as perhaps a boundary cairn like the mound on Morven. Further, on the east side of Loch Linnhe, almost opposite Cnoc Aingeal, is Ardentinny — 'the headland of fire' (NM 888 418).

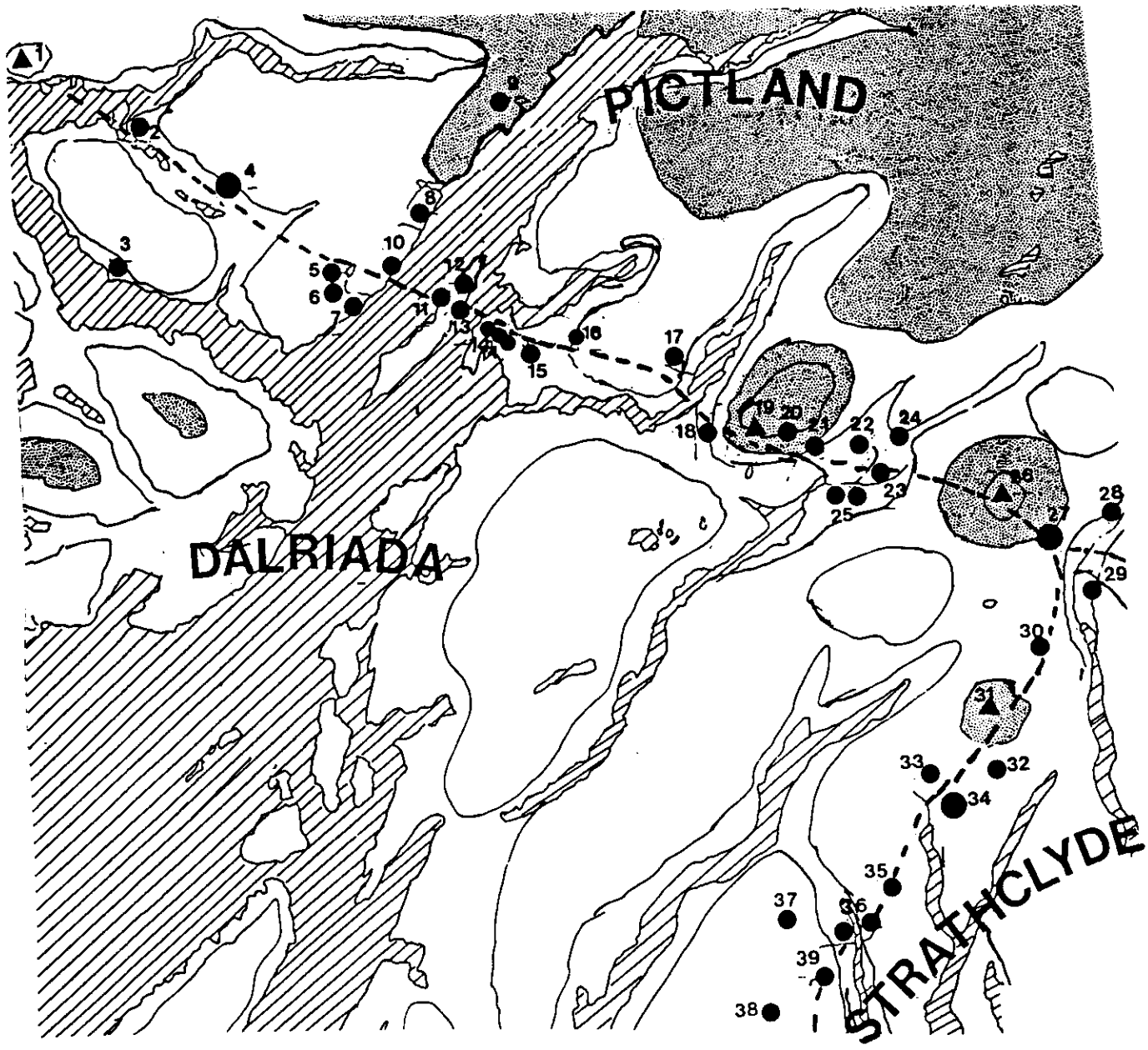

Fig. 5. A Postulated boundary of Dal Riata © E B Rennie 1996

To the inhabitants of Cowal it may come as a surprise that the postulated boundary divides Cowal, implying that the 'Cowal Coast', the Holy Loch and Loch Goil were not in Dal Riada — at least not in the time of the first settlement. The suggestion however, that the west shore of the Firth of Clyde was originally part of the Kingdom of Strathclyde, is borne out by three other pieces of evidence:

1. A distribution map of known prehistoric monuments of Cowal shows a clear demarcation between the monuments (and presumably peoples) of the west and east of the Cowal peninsula from 2000 BC until the turn of the era.

2. A distribution map of fortified points — hillforts, vitrified forts and duns — on the Firth of Clyde shows that these are concentrated around the gateways into the upper Firth. They cover

the openings, both the waterways and low ground approaches. The lack of forts around the upper Firth is significant suggesting it to be a 'closed' waterway under the command of a single authority or tribe. That tribe must have had jurisdiction over both sides of the river. In Roman times this tribe was most likely the *Damnonii*; but in later centuries the same territory would be part of the Kingdom of Strathclyde.

3. As waterways were the access routes and mountains were barriers, it follows that peoples living west and north of the Firth of Clyde would give allegiance to the authority living on the same waterway, i.e. to Alcluith, Dumbarton Rock, rather than to the authority living over the mountains of Dunadd, perhaps a day's journey away.

Thus, the proposition of a postulated boundary on the hills to the west of Dunoon gains support from this evidence. It seems likely that the territory known as 'Cowal' may originally have been the lands around Loch Fyne extending eastwards only as far as Glendaruel, as suggested by Dr W.D. Lamont.

The linear combination of place-names, stones and mounds starting at Ardnamurchan Point and crossing the highest summits to the south of the Highlands indicates, powerfully, that this is a **real** boundary line which must have been known to, and accepted by, the Picts and Scots between the 6th and 9th centuries AD.

No	Place	Grid Ref	Notes
1	Ben Hiant	NM 538 632	1729ft. Dominates the landscape. In Gaelic *a' Bheinn Sheunta*, the sacred peak (Watson 1926, 268).
2	Coire na Criche	NM 630 565	a corrie with burn through it joins Loch Teacus immediately N of Rahoy vitrified fort.
3	Clach na Criche	NM 604 467	stone 1 mile W of Fiunary.
4	mound	NM 688 519	a 'mound' or 'cairn' 4m high x 8m diameter (?) stands on rough grass moorland. It is grass covered and studded with large boulders some set on top of others. Beside the mound is a very denuded and spread turf dyke which does not resemble local field dykes. It runs approx. E–W and can be traced for about 1 mile westward.
5	Loch na Clach	NM 785 465	see no. 6.
6	Meal nan Clach	NM 785 458	these two features are together within an area of ½ mile suggesting an impressive stone in the vicinity.
7	Allt na Criche	NM 788 445	this burn flows into Loch Linnhe immediately S of no. 6. It forms part of the drainage system from the loch. A modern boundary runs up the burn from Loch Linnhe then turns N to cross the Meall and the side of the loch.
8	Allt na Criche	NM 841 493 NM 841 521	two burns with this name are shown on the 6" OS County series maps of *c.* 1870.
9	Lochan na Criche Bun Allt na Criche	NM 922 570	these two features are shown on many maps of the area, e.g. OS 1:50 000, sheet 49.
10	Glensanda Castle	NM 823 468	also called 'Caisteal na Gruagaich' (Maiden Castle). The position of the castle and other adjacent features suggests that the site had a much earlier use than the 15th century tower house whose ruin now stands on the rock (RCAHMS 1980, 37, 202–5, figs. 224-6).
11	Castle Coeffin, Lismore	NM 853 437	set on a limestone promontary across Loch Linnhe from Glen Sanda — also with features that suggest earlier occupation.
12	Cnoc Aingeal or Aingil, Lismore	NM 864 440	cairn described as the largest in Lorn, *c.* 7.3m high, with a diameter of 42.7m (RCAHMS 1975, 49). One of the translations of *aingeal* is of fire, light (Dwelly 1988).

13	Tirefour Broch, Lismore	NM 867 429	This well preserved broch stands in a prominent position on the highest point of an elongated limestone ridge on the E side of Lismore (RCAHMS 1975, 75–77, fig. 44). It commands an extensive prospect in all directions.
14	Barcaldine Cairns and (former) standing stone, Castle Farm, Barcaldine.	NM 911 402	One of these three cairns, the kerbed SW one, is recorded as being large and different from the others of the area (RCAHMS 1975, 48, fig. 18). It stands on an artificial platform and with this measures 22m diameter x 1.2m high. Other cairns form a near alignment with the Barcaldine ones and Tirefuar Broch across Loch Linnhe.
15	Achnacree Moss, Cairns, River and Farms	NM 930 365	The name 'Achnacree' may contain the Gaelic root *criche*. W.J. Watson interprets the River Cree in Galloway as 'boundary river' (1926, 182), Acnacree may mean 'field of the boundary'. There are two impressive chambered cairns here 700m apart (RCAHMS 1975, 37–40, figs. 7–8).
16	Clach Dhonuill	NM 957 390	Not shown on Pathfinder map but an adjacent burn is *Eas Clach Dhonuill*. This is of local significance.
17	Allt Criche	NN 035 358	burn running of E shoulder of Beinn Mheadonach into the W side of Loch Etive.
18	Allt Criche	NN 045 339	burn running N in deep crevasse on the W shoulder of Ben Cruachan, into upper Loch Etive about 1 mile S of Sron Nodha.
19	Ben Cruachan	NN 070 305	this high 3700ft peak (1126m) could be the sacred mountain of the pagan Celts and their ancestors. It is visible from all around. The root of 'cruachain' might be 'criche'. Watson (1926, 23) and Dwelly (1988, 271) both translate the 'Rough Bounds' of Moidart as *na Garbh Chrìochan*. '*Coire Creachainn*', describing a corry cutting into the E shoulder of the Ben, suggests that the names are interchangable. Thus, Ben Cruachan may possibly mean 'boundary mountain'. 'Cruachan' is more usually translated as 'peaks, or stacks'.
20	Coire Creachain	NN 118 296	this is a deep gash cut into the E shoulder of Ben Cruachan and runs into Glen Strae.
21	Castles homestead	NN 138 296	circular dun built on a deliberately prepared level platform (RCAHMS 1975, no. 161, 81–82, fig. 56).
22	Clach Diontaichd	NN 164 308	marked on maps beside a hill of the same name. 'Diontachd' is translated as 'defended; protected; fortified' (Dwelly 1988, 340).
23	Allt na Criche	NN 164 286	burn flowing into Allt Donachain and eventually into the Orchy.
24	Na Cruachan	NN 181 302	spur of hill on SW shoulder of Ben Donachain. See no. 19.
25	Lower and Upper Kinachreachan	NN 144 276 NN 156 275	farm and district names. Within Upper Kinachreachan is a dun, Barr a' Chaistealan (RCAHMS 1975, 80). The name Kinachreachan may contain the root 'criche'.
26	Ben Lui (Laoigh)	NN 265 264	3708ft (1130m) peak, the 'Mountain of the Calf'. A magnificent mountain considered by some as the finest in the Southern Highlands.
27	Clach nam Breaton	NN 337 216	A mound traditionally said to be the boundary between the territory of the Picts, the Scotti and the Britons of Strathclyde and to mark the remination of Druim Alban (Kirby 1971, 80; Watson 1926, 15, 208, 387). The mound (or cairn) appears to be man-made as it is not formed by a rock outcrop. It is circular, *c* 18m diameter x 8m high. Near to its base and encircling it is a series of boulders, *c* 1m in size, set into the sides.

28	Glen Falloch	NN 320 200 to NN 385 250	A meaning for this name is linked with the interpretation of no. 36. *Fola* and *fodhla* are obsolete Gaelic words meaning 'boundary'. 'Falloch' may stem from the same root, making Glen Falloch 'the boundary glen'.
29	Allt Criche	NN 333 207	Burn that flows from the E side of Glen Falloch.
30	Cnap na Criche	NN 280 154	
31	Ben Ime	NN 255 085	3318ft (1011m) mountain peak, the 'butter mountain', the highest of the 'Arrochar Alps'. Its highest top is crowned by a large cairn.
32	Ceann an Tuirc	NN 248 051	There may be a stone called 'Minuirc' where a battle was fought in AD 717 between Britons and the men of Dal Riata (Watson 1926, 387).
33	Allt Criche	NN 205 036	A burn on W slope of Ben Donich, 2774 ft, the highst hill south of Gleann Mor.
34	Clach a' Bhreatunnaich	NN 217 025	A stone described as the demarcation mark between Scots and Britons. The rock is a huge erratic boulder standing 12m high with a base 14m x 10m.
35	Cnoc na Tricriche, Craig Dubh na Criche	NS 170 966 NS 179 966	These two points are within ½ mile apart on the high ground between Loch Eck and Loch Goil.
36	Allt na Faodhalach Allt Fala Mor	NS 145 935 NS 137 930	See no. 28. names based on the root *fola* or *fodha*, a boundary. The present parish boundary runs along both burns and crosses Loch Eck from burn mouth to burn mouth.
37	Sron Criche	NS 099 952	The position of this 'criche' name suggests that the name may have migrated towards the 'sron' (point) of the ridge to which it geographically belongs. The ridge is an impressive feature, 4 miles long, with Sron Criche at the N and 'Creachan' at the S (NS 080 882). This ridge may form the boundary.
38	Creachan	NS 080 882	see no. 36
39	Beinn Mhor	NS 108 908	'The big mountain', the most southerly of the 'Arrochar Alps'.
40	Meall Criche Allt Meall Criche	NS 104 805	contains the Gaelic name *crìoch* = boundary.
41	Allt na Criche	NS 134 815	a long burn flowing N down the crest of the most easterly ridge of the Cowal hills from the summit of Bishop's Seat.
42	Bishop's Seat	NS 131 775	the most easterly of the high lands of Cowal.

NOTES

1. David Kirby describes in detail the boundaries of the Kingdom of Strathclyde, i.e. from the western side of Glen Falloch at *the Clach nam Breatain* in the west, and nearly to Stirling in the east.

2. In the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Antiquities,* vol 60, p. 177 *Ban Boglach na Fola* is translated as 'a farm boundary, known to have been in existance for many centuries'. *Fodla tire*, division of land, is the title of a tract in Vol 4 of the *Ancient Laws of Ireland.*

3. It is a matter of concern that no 'fort' has yet been found to 'cover' Strath Eachaig; both a hillfort and a dun are recorded further to the north in Strath Cur (Strachur).

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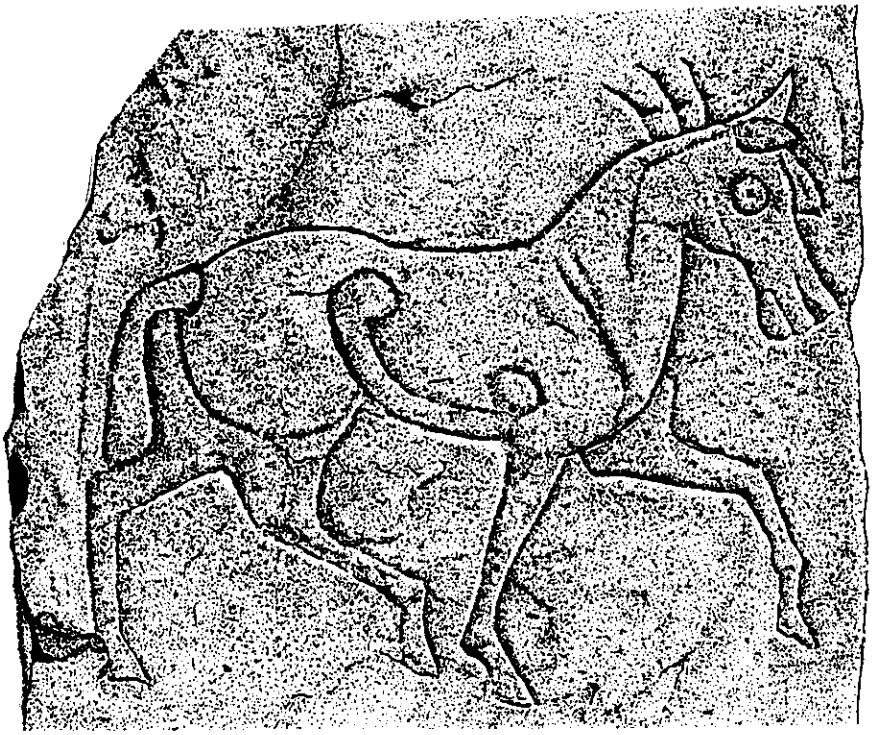

Fig. 6. Inverurie 4 © JRF Burt

Passports to Paradise

Stuart Kermack

The Pictish Arts Society was fortunate last summer [1996] on its field trip to the Isle of May in having Peter Yeoman, Archaeologist for Fife, to show us round the *Secrets of Fife's Holy Island*, the title of his informative booklet. Among the secrets he pointed out to us was a huge cairn he had uncovered and the white quartzite pebbles associated with the 5th century burials there, apparently taken from the "pilgrims' haven" on the W side of the island. These pebbles have prompted my article.

As Mr Yeoman states (p. 5) such stones are a 'grave offering tradition often found with much more ancient burials.' Robert Graves (1995, 11–12) refers to the 'mound of sea-shells, or quartz or white marble under which dead kings were buried'. This is most apt to introduce another discovery on the Isle of May: 'the skeleton of [an] important young man ... buried close to the high altar of the church with a scallop shell in his mouth.' Yeoman (p. 20) speculates that the young man may have been buried with a souvenir of his pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella; and, amazingly, right on cue, a metal-detector has turned up a model lead shell at St Monans which, according to the excellent Fife Archaeological Service, looks as if it could have come from the same source. Such a direct link would be sufficiently interesting in itself; it would be 'especially fascinating' if it was indirect, through a similar surviving ritual or belief. The official explanation linking the shells and the relics of St James strikes me as particularly forced.

The Isle of May was 'Holy' to Christians because of its connection with an alleged St Ethernan (later Adrian), who, Yeoman thinks (p. 6), "was probably an Irish or Pictish monk." Professor Kenneth Jackson (1955, 140) says the name is 'apparently not Celtic'. There seems good reason to claim it as Pictish for Jackson equates it with EDDARRNONN written in ogham on both the Scoonie and Brodie stones — especially if 'DD' is pronounced 'th' as in Welsh. Scoonie is on the north shore of the Forth, near the Isle of May. The word appears each time along with the 'beast with long jaws, crest and scroll-feet' (Allen & Anderson 1903, ii, 72), than which there is nothing more Pictish. Our obviously aquatic *Beastie* seems very appropriate for an island. It does, of course, raise the question, which I shall not attempt to answer, whether Ethernan was really a Saint, or, rather, some sort of Christianised mythological monster. More relevant to this inquiry is my theory, which I justify elsewhere, that the Beast figures, along with the other Pictish symbols, in St Adomnan's *Vita Columba* where it is, I maintain, none other than the Monster baffled by St Columba in the River Ness. Nessie, as all the world knows her, was later flitted to the Loch; where s\he became Scotland's best-known inhabitant, bar none, but was ruined mythologically, because the Celts venerated rivers, not lochs.

It is, I think, no accident that the Ness crops up again in II.33 of the *Vita* when Columba takes from it a white stone (Ah-hah!) which he blesses and sends to Broichan, foster-father to the Pictish king and chief *magus*, i.e. Druid (Skene 1887, II, 110–19), in return for the release of an Irish female slave. The stone is dipped in water where, contrary to nature, it floats like an apple or a 'nut' (*quasi pomum vel nux*). The resulting potion revives Broichan, who had been breathing with difficulty and was near to death because an angel had struck him heavily and broken the glass vessel from which he was drinking. The stone subsequently cures many more folk, but, strange to say, can never be found when the time has come for them to die: which was the case with Brude, the Pictish king, although he kept it in his treasury.

In my submission, it is very significant that Adomnan compares Columba's white stone to an apple or a *nux*. For these were also 'grave-offering tradition' like white stones. It is an apple that the Goddess awards to her mate, as a "passport to the Elysian fields, the apple orchards of the west ... a similar gift is frequently made in Irish and Welsh myth; as well as by the three Hesperides, to Heracles; and by Eve 'the mother of all living' to Adam ... all Neolithic and Bronze Age paradises were orchard islands; *paradise* itself means 'orchard' (Graves 1955, 21–22). I refer scoffers to my neighbour, Mrs MacInnes, a twentieth-century Hesperid, and her pride and joy, a fruitful apple-tree, which she raised from a pip, even in today's climate, in her garden at 10 Linshader, Uig, Isle of Lewis, a few hundred yards from the Callanish stones. You cannot go very much farther west than that. The patriarchs, of course, stood the story on its head in various ways, so that, for instance, Yaweb expelled Adam from the garden because he accepted the apple, or the hero, Paris, took centre-stage and awarded it to the goddess, rather than *vice versa.* Adomnán, I submit, has come up with another variation on the theme, in which

Columba demonstrates his superiority over both Briochan and the apple/white stone, and the Goddess, the slave-girl is relegated to a bit part.

So much for the apple — what about the *nux*, "a nut; ... (IIA): a fruit with hard shell or rind' (Lewis & Short). Watson (1981) claims a tree was the door to the Celtic Afterworld. and the apple from the Goddess had become also, I think, any fruit of a sacred tree from the groves or *nemetons* of the Druids (Davidson 1993, 68). We have many examples of these nemetons in Scotland and even of sacred trees, e.g. the yew at Fortingall by Duneaves, still growing, though damaged by Beltane fires; and the Chestnut at Finavon, Earl Beardie's 'coxin tree' where he hanged poor Jockie Barefit for cutting a walking stick from it. Supposed to have grown from a nut dropped by a Roman soldier, it was still alive in 1740, when it was said to be one of the largest trees in the kingdom (Jervise 1882, 206, 424; Pennant 1776, II, 165). Both the Yew and the Chestnut have a *nux* within a fleshy cover.

I have noticed, too, that the names of two water-side trees seem to cluster at Scottish nemetons. Fearn, alder-water, *Vernodubron* is one. The other name is the very ancient *leamhain*, Leven, elm-water, *viz.* Finavon/Lemno, Navar/Lethnot, Navitie/Leven, Tarrnavie/Carlownie, Roseneath etc./Leven[1]. The female catkin of the alder "forms a characteristic woody fruit looking somewhat like a small pine cone" (Oxford Encyclopaedia of Trees, p. 140) and the elm has flat, papery, winged *samara* round its seed, 'elm-money'. Both sound like *nuces*.

One can dimly perceive why a passport to an island should float — some kind of spiritual buoyancy aid or Afterlife-jacket. Apples will undoubtedly do so — think of Hallowe'en and dookin for them. So, according to the Royal Botanic Gardens, will the *nuces* of yew, chestnut, alder and elm, although the chestnut must be reduced to its "hard rind". Elm-money I can corroborate personally because I have often seen a green carpet of it on the Lemno at Finavon, especially where it enters the South Esk beside the ancient oratory of Aikenhatt, the original Aberlemno; hence, presumably, 'elm-water'. For what it is worth, St Tuetheren's[2] Fair was held in Forfar, nearby.

In the legend the tree which bears the fruit is generally guarded by some sort of snake, usually wound round its trunk, often in association with a bull. The monster Ladon was round the apple tree in the Hesperides, where roamed the cattle and sheep of Atlas, who gave its golden fruit to Hercules; and the Dragon round the tree where hung the Golden Fleece (equivalent to its fruit) which Jason slew after yoking the fire-breathing brazen-footed bulls and ploughing with them. One can see remnants of the tale in the stories of Hu Gadarn who yoked two bulls to haul the monster *Avanc* out of the River Conw, and Thor who fished for the World Serpent curled round the foot of the tree Yggdrasil with a bull's head for bait, as shown, *inter alia* on a stone at Gosforth, Cumbria (Davidson 1993, 50). Lithographers in the Pictish Arts Society will already have thought of the Pictish stone at Mortlach with its unique symbol of a Bull's head and Serpent (Allen and Anderson 1903, III, 155–56, fig. 162A). Surely this shows that the Picts were in touch with this universal myth.

The king kept the white stone in his treasury, I think, because the fruit or its equivalent was often gold or silver, the colour of the path of the moon or setting-sun provides to any island in the West. The apples of the Hesperides were gold and so was the one Paris awarded to Aphrodite. The lead scallop-shell found in Fife showed signs, I believe, of being gilded. Here in our museum in Edinburgh, indisputably Pictish, we have the lovely silver 'plaques' from the hoard at Norrie's Law (Allen and Anderson 1903, I, lxxxiii) which look to me exactly like the *samara* of some tree, but I cannot determine which. If only the nodule was in the middle rather than the end, they would be almost perfect replicas of 'elm-money'. Perhaps they are fabulous. In any event, I am putting them forward as further possible examples of passports to Paradise.

On the other hand the Christians did not hold with grave goods and so those buried with their white stones in the cairn on the Isle of May must have been, by my reckoning, at least semi-pagan. Entry to Columba's Heaven was by baptism and natural goodness (Adomnan, I.33, III.14) and that was why, I suggest, his blessed stone could not be found by anyone about to die, even the king. The reader may recall that, according to Graves, the story had started with a king under a mound of quartz, but, now, wrote Alcuin, "The King of Heaven will have no part with so-called kings who are heathen and damned. For the one King reigns eternally in heaven, the other, the heathen, is damned and groans in hell."

NOTES

1. The derivation of the names are from W.J. Watson (1926) except Lethnot which is from Jervise (1882, 125) Unfortunately Watson will not allow Lyon (Duneaves) or Livet (Nevie).

2. i.e. probably St Ethernan's (Watson 1926, 321).

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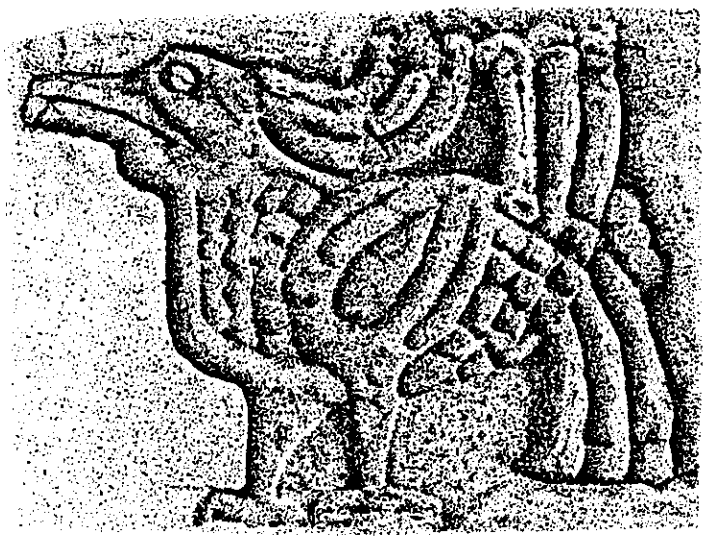

Fig. 7. Detail from side panel of St Vigeans 8. © Jack Burt.

SHORTER NOTES

The St Andrews sarcophagus

Ian G Scott

Before their transportation to the British Museum exhibition in London, the stones which make up the sarcophagus were laid out after cleaning at the conservation workshop at South Gyle, Edinburgh.

An invitation to view these on Friday 8th November 1996 was extended to a necessarily limited number of specialists and happily two representatives of the Pictish Arts Society.

This most welcome gesture by Historic Scotland was warmly accepted by Niall Robertson and myself. It was a revelation to see these stones on the bench and to be able to discuss them in such company.

We look forward to seeing how they are set up for exhibition both in London and on their return.

Fig. 8. Part of the St Andrews sarcophagus © I.G. Scott 8 IX 96

Ur-Symbols or formal and utilitarian scripts?

Craig Cessford

Leslie Alcock's article '*Ur-Symbols in the Pictograph-system of the Picts*' (1996) demonstrated that symbols on the small slabs at Dunnicaer, Kincardineshire, at Sanday, Orkney Isles,and on cave walls at Covesea, Moray and at East Wemyss, Fife are recognisably different from the symbols on Class I and II stones. He concluded that these are *ur*–symbols, ancestral to the other symbols, and further that they pre-date them. This is certainly one possibility and the list could conceivably be extended to include other symbols such as the double triangle plus three dots and S-shape plus two groups of three dots on the Parkhill silver chain (fig. 10). It is, however, possible that Alcock's *ur*-symbols could be contemporary with the other symbols.

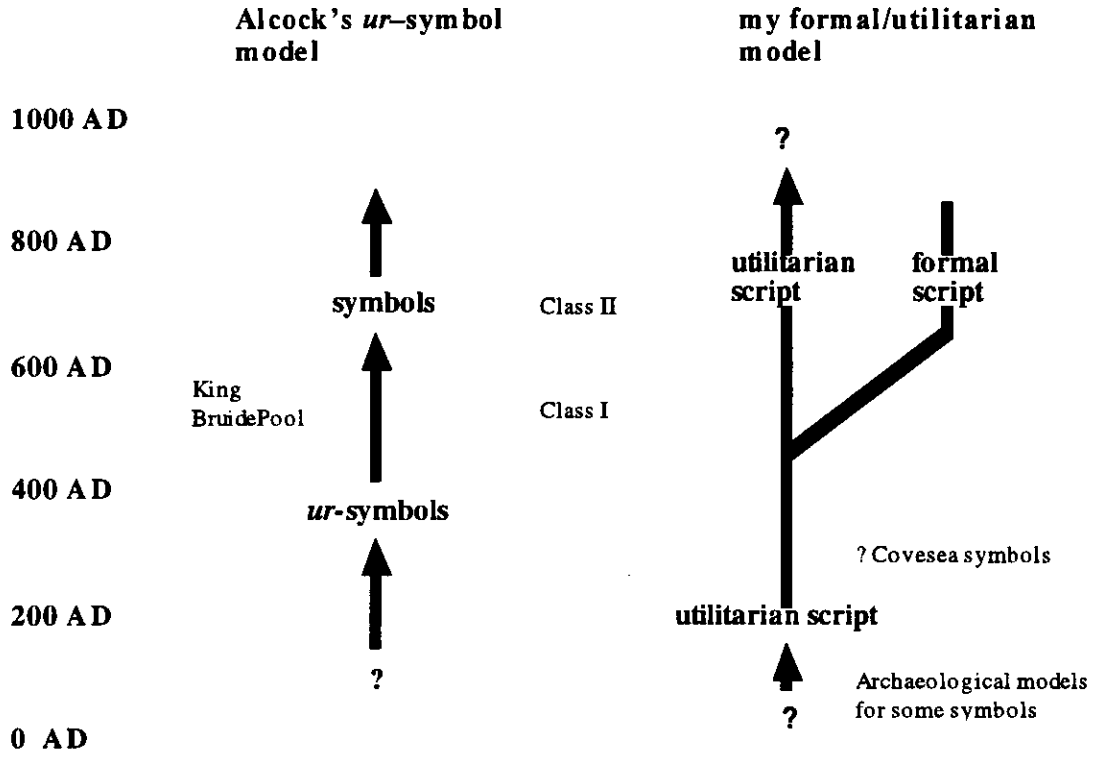

Fig. 9. Leslie Alcock's *ur*-model seen against my proposed model

Fig. 10. Symbols from the terminals of the Parkhill silver chain. © Craig Cessford.

Early writing systems, a group to which the Pictish symbols clearly belong, have often been interpreted as ceremonial rather than utilitarian, but this is likely to be a result of survival bias

(Postgate, Wang & Wilkinson 1995). Ceremonial texts survive because they were written on durable materials, predominantly stone, whereas more utilitarian texts were written on perishable materials instead. Carving a text on stone requires much more effort than writing on perishable alternatives — it takes up more space and is less portable. This dichotomy between ceremonial texts on durable materials and utilitarian texts on perishable materials can lead to the development of different versions of the same script with a formal version for ceremonial purposes and a utilitarian version for more mundane purposes (*ibid*, 477–78). The majority of Pictish symbols occur on Class I and II stones and can be interpreted as ceremonial texts in a formal script. Symbols on small slabs and cave walls could be examples of a more utilitarian script. The utilitarian script presumably occurred primarily on perishable materials such as wood, leather, vellum or human skin (in the case of tattoos) which have not survived. Occasionally, however, the utilitarian script could be carved in stone on small slabs or cave walls. I would favour the view that symbols on cave walls and slabs are related to pagan religious practices (Cessford 1995).

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BOOK REVIEWS

Iona: The Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery by Thomas O Clancy and Gilbert Markus (Edinburgh University Press, 1995). £12.95. ISBN 0 7486 0531 2.

This book brings together and provides translations for a number of Latin and Gaelic poems associated with the monastery of Iona. Previous publication of the poems has largely been confined to journals such as *Eriu* and *Peritia* which can be difficult to find and have not always included English translations. The book consists of four parts beginning with an introduction which looks at the history of Iona, the life and work of the monastery and Iona's role as a literary centre. Part Two, which forms the main focus of the book, is a discussion and translation of the various poems. Then follows a section on *The Alphabet of Devotion*, a work by a contemporary of Columba which considers religious life. Part Four discusses some of the books known to have been present at Iona.

The poems include two probably composed by Columba himself and one other that may have been; one by Dallan Forgaill, a contemporary of Columba; two by Beccan mac Luigdech, a seventh century hermit linked with Rhum and Iona; some verses by Columba's biographer, Adomnán; and a poem by Cu Chuimne, a late seventh/early eighth century monk from Iona.. All these works shed considerable light on sixth to eighth century Scotland and contain a wealth of interesting information and ideas. In addition two are of particular relevance to the Picts. The *Amra Choluimb Chille* (pp 96–128) is a Gaelic elegy to Columba composed by Dallan Forgaill shortly after the saint's death. It describes Columba as the teacher of the tribes of the Tay (I.15) and states that he converted the fierce ones who lived on the Tay (VIII.5–6). These inhabitants of the *Toi* [Tay] are obviously Picts and the statement that Columba lit up the East (II.9) may also be a reference to the Picts. By placing Columba's activities at the Tay this poem provides an interesting contrast to Adomnán's *Life of Columba* which was written a century later and linked the saint with the Moray Firth area instead. This is briefly discussed (pp 118–19) with the suggestion that Adomnán and Bede may both have had reasons for not mentioning Columba's activities in southern Pictish territory. If one accepts that after the death of Bridei in 584 power shifted southwards, then at the time that this poem was composed it is possible that power was centred on the Tay region and the tribes of the Tay may simply have been a Scottic term for the Picts in general. One of the verses possibly composed by Adomnán (pp 164–68) is concerned with the death Bruide mac Bile, describing him as the son of the king of Dumbarton and stating that he was buried in an oak coffin, presumably on Iona.

This is an important and reasonably priced work which should bring these previously neglected poems to the greater prominence which they undoubtedly deserve. Minor quibbles include the ideas that the Picts practised matrilineal succession and that the Pictish language included non-Indo-European elements (p 6) , neither of which is generally accepted anymore. Nonetheless this criticism in no way detracts from the core of the book which is the poetry itself.

Craig Cessford

EXPLORING SCOTLAND'S HERITAGE

New editions of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland's highly successful *Exploring Scotland's Heritage* guides have been, or will shortly be, published by HMSO. The complete set of nine handbooks has been revised and redesigned under the expert general editorship of Anna Ritchie, to update them and to include more monuments, museums and visitor centres. Major changes have been made to the 'Excursions' sections which have been greatly expanded and now appear in full-colour.

The Highlands by Joanna Close-Brooks was published in October 1995, followed by *Glasgow, Clydeside and Stirling* by Jack Stevenson in November 1995. The three titles reviewed below were published on 29 February 1996 and other guides in the series were due to be be published later in 1996 or in 1997.

Aberdeen and North-east Scotland by Ian Shepherd (HMSO for RCAHMS, 1996). PB, 176 pages. £10.95 ISBN 0 11 485290 6.

This is the second edition of Aberdeenshire Regional Archaeologist Ian Shepherd's *Grampian* (1986). The change of title merely reflects the change in local government organisation.

After an Introduction to the land and its use from first habitation to the 19th century, there follows a sequence of twelve Excursions. In common with the other titles in *Exploring Scotland's Heritage* series, this is the section of the book which sees most change — it is now lavishly illustrated in full-colour (including photographs of Pictish stones at Migvie, Kintore and Chapel of Garioch) and has been slightly expanded. The maps are now much clearer. The routes are well thought out and most would comfortably occupy a full day. There are useful snippets of practical information, e.g. the key to gain access to the Fordoun Pictish stone is at Minty's shop in the High Street — how frustrating it is to go to see a monument without this sort of information and be disappointed!

As in the previous edition, the gazetteer has monuments grouped according to their character and date and they are arranged in six sections in reverse chronology: Three Burghs; the Landscape of Improvement; Baronial Residences; Prelates and Presbyteries; Tribal Defence and Display; and Ancestors of Ancestors. Each section has its own introduction and then details of "each major monument" giving date, grid reference, local directions and an indication of ease of access. The gazetteer is well illustrated with black-and-white plates, although occasionally they have not reproduced well (e.g. Sueno's Stone, p 132).

The penultimate section will appeal most to Pictish enthusiasts. Several Pictish stones and hillforts achieve the required "most interesting and best preserved" status to merit their own entry in the gazetteer. I am not quite sure how these entries are actually chosen — the Pictish stones at Rhynie Old Churchyard (p 136) and the one in Kintore churchyard (pp 136–37) are included, whereas the stones at Fyvie Kirk and, surprisingly, in Inverurie Churchyard are not — however these latter Pictish sites are visited on the 'Excursions'. I am also slightly surprised that Ian Shepherd has not given more information about his revelations of Sculptor's Cave at Covesea (presumably because of its difficult access) following his recent lecture to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, or of Kinneddar, an important ecclesiastical site near Burghead.

There are a only a few minor changes to the text of the first edition. Some of the entries have been updated, e.g. there is now an additional stone at Rhynie churchyard — the stone discovered at Barflat in 1978 (although it is not mentioned that they have been moved to the far end of the carpark and placed in a sort of glorified bus-shelter rather than remaining at the entrance of the churchyard), and with road construction and development, e.g. the Inverurie bypass, some local directions have been necessarily modified. However, no new sites have been added.

The Museums section has been expanded to include Duff House, recently restored and now a handsome Country House Gallery, and also a number of new visitor centres. The Bibliography has also been enlarged.

Aberdeen and North-east Scotland is a interesting, authoritative, and well-presented introduction to the rich heritage of this area and it will have a wide appeal.

Argyll and the Western Isles by Graham Ritchie and Mary Harman (HMSO for RCAHMS, 1996). PB, 156 pages. £10.95 ISBN 0 11 485287 6.

Argyll and the Western Isles was written by Graham Ritchie, now Head of Archaeology in the Royal Commission, and Mary Harman who works for a conservation organisation in the Western Isles. This historically rich area contains a huge variety of prehistoric and historic monuments. Many of these reflect an area where the past has been dominated by the sea.

The second, revised, edition has been brought up to date, recording such matters as the recent excavations at the Council Isle on Loch Finlaggan, Islay, to the placement of St John's Cross in the Abbey Museum, Iona and the new visitor centre and carpark facilities at Callanish, Isle of Lewis, which, amongst other things, have now considerably enhanced accessibility from the 'restricted for all disabled' category to the current 'easy access for all'.

The biggest improvement in the second edition of *Argyll and the Western Isles* is the greatly expanded Excursions section with new tours of North Uist, South Uist, Bute, North Mull, South Mull, South Islay, the Kilmartin area and Skye Castles, and walking tours of Iona and the town

of Inveraray. Illustrated in full-colour with helpful maps, this expansion is a welcome addition which really does help one 'explore Scotland's heritage'.

The gazetteer is divided into seven sections ranging from 19th and early 20th century architecture to prehistoric monuments. As one would expect, the Picts do not feature greatly in this volume. Nevertheless, a number of Class I stones have been found in the northern part of the area — Clach Ard, Tote; Fiskavaig, Loch Bracadale; Dunvegan, — all on Skye; Strome Shunnamal, Benbecula; Pabbay Beach, Pabbay; and the hybrid Class I/II cross-slab on Raasay — of these only Clach Ard has an entry in the gazetteer (p 122).

Fife, Perthshire and Angus by Bruce Walker and Graham Ritchie (HMSO for RCAHMS, 1996). PB, 184 pages. £10.95. ISBN 0 11 495286 8.

Fife, Perthshire and Angus is the new title (following local government reform) and second edition of *Fife and Tayside* (1987). It includes Dundee and Kinross too and has been written by Bruce Walker, an architect seconded to Historic Scotland, and Graham Ritchie, Head of Archaeology at the Royal Commission. The area has a number of outstanding monuments ranging from earliest prehistoric times to the present century and is particularly noted for its Pictish sculpture with collections at Meigle, St Vigeans, Dundee and Forfar as well as a number in the field.

After a general Introduction, the Excursions section has been enlarged, modified an enhanced by colour photographs and better maps. A new excursion, to the Isle of May, has been added (pp 31–32).

The gazetteer is in ten sections: Agriculture; Fishing and Industry; Transport; Towns and Townscape; Stately Homes; Fortified Houses; Military Architecture; Religious Buildings; Pictish Monuments; Roman Tayside; and Prehistoric Monuments. Several monuments have been added to the gazetteer in this edition, e.g. Cleaven Dyke Cursus Monument/Bank Barrow (p 171), Dunkeld Cathedral (pp 128–29) and the Secret Bunker near Crail (p 113). However, some former entries have been abandoned including the Benvie cross-slab which is now displayed in the McManus Galleries, Dundee rather than in the old churchyard, 5km west of Dundee. One monument which I had expected to be included but is not is Abbot House in Dunfermline, the recently-restored extended 16th century Z-plan tower-house, incorporating an earlier building, which now houses the highly acclaimed, award-winning, Dunfermline Heritage Centre. Surely this should have been included in the 'South-west Fife' excursion (if it does not merit an entry in the gazetteer in its own right).

Monuments of Pictish interest are not confined to the 'Pictish Monuments' section — there is an area of overlap with 'Religious Buildings', e.g. the so-called St Andrews Sarcophagus is illustrated and discussed under St Andrews Cathedral (p 131) and the Abernethy Class I stone appears with the round tower (p 134), both in the latter section. Similarly forts used by the Picts appear in the 'Prehistoric Monuments' section, e.g. Dundurn Fort (p 163) and East Lomond Hill (pp 164–65).

The *Exploring Scotland's Heritage* handbooks are indispensable guides for anyone with an interest in history, archaeology or architecture visiting any of the areas concerned. At £10.95 each these volume they represent trully remarkable good value for money.

J.R.F. Burt

Picts, Gaels and Scots by Sally M. Foster (Historic Scotland/ B.T. Batsford, London, 1996). PB 128pp, 88 illustrations and 12 colour plates; £15.99 [£25 hardback]. ISBN 0 7134 7846 6 [0 7134 7485 8 hardback].

This addition to the successful Historic Scotland series is a well written and illustrated discussion of the Picts and Scots. It begins with an introduction (Chapter 1, *Setting the scene*) which looks at who the Picts, Dal Riatans and there neighbours were – based mainly on documentary sources, discusses the history of their study and dispels the myth that the Picts were particularly different from their neighbours. Chapter 2, *Communicating with the past*, introduces the various sources of evidence including documentary, linguistic, inscriptions, archaeology, art-history and place-names. After these two essentially introductory chapters we arrive at the main part of the book. Foster believes that the changes in the nature of kingship during the Early Historic period are the key to understanding it. She identifies four main sources of power which leaders utilised and discusses these in subsequent chapters. *The residence of power* (Chapter 3) looks at political power by considering social structure, territorial divisions, inheritance patterns, political links between different ethnic groups, the nature of kingship, regalia and sculptural representations. There is also a discussion of power centres which discusses forts, cult centres, the hierarchical use of space, occupation of Roman sites, buildings, unenclosed sites, the relationship with the prehistoric landscape and how power centres related to one another and changed over time. *Agriculture, industry and trade* (Chapter 4) looks at economic activities including farming, low status settlements, landscape divisions, craft working, a discussion of several hoards and long-distance trade. Religion is considered in Chapter 5, *The strength of belief*, which discusses pagan beliefs, particularly the meaning of the Pictish symbols, and Christianity which covers sub-Roman, Columban and Catholic varieties. There is also a consideration on literacy and writing. The final chapter of the four, Chapter 6 *From 'wandering thieves' to lords of war*, considers warfare. It considers fighting on land and sea, military organisation and the role of the church. Chapter 7, *Alba: the emergence of the Scottish nation*, draws the previous chapters together and looks at the consolidation of the Pictish nation suggesting that leaders used political, economic, religious and military power with the aid of the church and aristocracy to expand their authority and that this is linked to the rise of the Pictish symbol stones. The unification of the Picts and Dal Riatan's is then discussed with a consideration of what happens afterwards. The book concludes with a list of museums and sites to visit, suggestions for further reading and a glossary.

The core of the book is contained in Chapters 3 to 7 which, although presented in a fashionable quasi-theoretical manner, basically covers familiar ground being broadly similar to other recent books (e.g. Laing and Laing 1993) though with some differences. Foster's organisation of the material is interesting although perhaps not particularly well suited to a work specifically aimed at a wide readership. It also leads to some incongruities, for example high status settlement sites are discussed in one chapter and low status settlements in another. Foster's general argument is initially quite appealing but ultimately problematical. All the factors Foster describes also applied to other Celtic areas such as Ireland and Wales which did not develop centralised kingship and remained divided into numerous small kingdoms. The picture presented is also highly idealised with all factors working in one single direction towards consolidation and groups such as the aristocracy and the Church always co-operating with the kings' aims and not being in conflict with them.

The consideration of warfare (Chapter 6) is rather short and unsatisfactory. The *Gododdin* poem contains a wealth of information on tactics and weapon handling (*contra* p.102) (see *Discussions in Northern History* 27, pp. 236–41 and 29, pp. 185–96 and *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 30, pp. 13–40), sculptural depictions of axes seem more related to ritual than warfare (*contra* p.103), the Culbin Sands sword pommel is omitted from a list of weapons (p.103). Finally, the consideration of the Church's attitude to warfare (pp.106–7) only considers one side of the story by looking at Columba's militaristic reputation and ignores other aspects such as that represented by Adomnán's Law of the Innocents.

It is possible to challenge a number of the points of detail in the book. Brennan (1991, 31–35) has shown that there is no evidence that hanging bowls were suspended from tripods (*contra* illustration 39) and it is unlikely that Columba was first based at Hinba (*contra* pp. 79–80)(Sharpe 1995, 18–19). The statement concerning spiral ring-pins that "only two of which ever reached Scotland" (p.29) is nonsense, what it should say is that only two have been found so far. The Index has a number of errors, for example Agricola is listed under p.102 but not p.13, and the most recent other book on the Picts and Scots (Laing and Laing 1993) is

strangely omitted from the further reading list. The work is generally well illustrated with a good mix of photographs and drawings although the illustration of Hilton of Cadboll (illus. 70) is lit from a rather unusual angle. Problems, however, arise with some of the maps. Dumbarton Rock and Whithorn have been transposed on illustration 44, there is no way to link silver chains with and without symbols on illustration 47 and the symbols on illustration 4, particularly that for souterrain areas, have been poorly selected resulting in confusion.

This book, while not ideally suited as an introductory text on the Picts, for which I would have to recommend either Laing and Laing (1993) or Ritchie (1989) instead, is undoubtedly a welcome addition to the collection of anyone already interested in them as it contains much of value even if it is possible to disagree with some of the ideas presented.

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Craig Cessford.

Barking — up the wrong tree.

The Message of Scotland's Symbol Stones by Edward Peterson (PCD Ruthven Books, Ruthven, 1996). HB, 162 pages. £15.00 ISBN 0 9526998 0 X.

This book should carry a health warning on the front cover. Instead, it bears the author's watercolour of a fanciful Picto-Minoan scene. This lurid illustration, curiously described as a 'surreal photograph', goes some way towards alerting the unsuspecting reader to the disturbing nature of the contents of the book, but it does not fully prepare one for entry into the *unreal,* rather than *surreal,* world of Mr Peterson. This distinction has to be made, as we are here not dealing with an exploration or expression of the subconscious, but with a conscious attempt by the author to subvert reality through his imaginings, which manifest themselves mainly as carved images of animals, birds and fish on standing stones, on Pictish and Early Christian sculpture and in examples of modern ironwork. I do not dispute that Mr Peterson sees these creatures and I am sure he only wishes to communicate and share his revealing 'discoveries', but his undoubtedly sincerely held beliefs are not in themselves a sufficient base on which to build a hypothesis which attempts to explain the meaning of the Pictish symbol stones.

Peterson's wandering pen roves over a wide area (from Egypt to Vancouver Island) and covers many millennia (24,000 BC to the present day), and, in not confining himself to the boundaries of Pictland or within the Pictish historical period, he proposes many untenable strands of social and cultural continuity or relationship. The book looks to be conventionally divided into chapters, but, as Peterson jumps from topic to topic, their sequence defies logic, as shown by the following confusing sub-sequence of four headings – 'Arrival of the Celts', 'Abernethy', 'Early Christianity', 'Ancient Penmon Priory Cross'. Indeed, there is no rational underlying structure to the work and it becomes a frustrating read trying to keep up with the maddening pace as one daft notion overtakes another. These exponential eccentricities take on the guise of a boundless, uncontrolled, meandering interlace – difficult to follow and almost impossible to unravel – and this reviewer apologises for being unable to supply a cogent summary of the book. Mercifully, the volume is divided into two parts allowing a tentative résumé of the main contents which, must readily be admitted, falls far short of doing justice to the wide scope of Peterson's eclectic enquiry: Part I (pp.1–69) deals with early Christianity and the saints who were responsible for bringing it to the British Isles; Part II (pp.70–149) is a detailed discussion

of symbols, both real and imagined, occurring on several Pictish and other stones, with some modern examples of 'Pictish artwork'.

Part 1 opens with an idiosyncratic potted history of early habitation in this country. This is important ground for Peterson as he directly links early burial practices with the Pictish symbols. I deliberately ignore the rest of Part I, save to point out that it contains the spawning ground for the 'discovery' which permeates Peterson's subsequent text – that many standing stones are shaped like fish or marine mammals – leading him to the conclusion that such stones were erected to sea-gods or that they had undergone 'religious modification', by deliberate reshaping, to represent seals or whales in order to act as tribal totems or 'secret' Christian symbols. To better appreciate this concept, the author invites the reader to rotate a figure (p.22) to find a whale, 'one of the first creatures created by God'. Subsequently, one is no longer troubled by this task as many of the illustrations have already been conveniently pre-rotated through 90 degrees. (Did the inspiration for this come, perhaps, from Ptolemy's map of Britain in which the whole of Scotland suffers a similar fate?) For a magician, like Peterson, working with images on a computer, it takes the merest click of a mouse to reveal a whale, but for the Picts, and sundry other vertical peoples, this awkward stone-viewing position must have led to them developing a most peculiar gait, which, as far as I am aware, is not confirmed by the osteology of the archaeological record.

However uncomfortable, this is also Peterson's preferred stance for reading some of the actual symbols on the stones; the Dunnichen 'flower' symbol 'when rotated to its true to life [horizontal] position becomes the Vibrant Sea Mammal' (p.88), or it metamorphoses into the 'Dunnichen Whale' to sport alongside the 'Ruthwell Whale' on page 69 – 'the two mammals ... mouths wide open, in a Pictish warning challenge, as they are about to launch a Christian crusade against paganism'. Reluctant to release a genuinely realistic-looking whale from the net of his argument, Peterson is unconcerned about the validity of using a 'restored' motif from the Ruthwell Cross reconstruction as, for him, it 'retains the original design features', nor is he surprised by his own contention that this archetypically Anglian work bears Pictish symbols and is the work of Picts. This small example of Peterson's divergence from received wisdom and his obsession with whales well illustrate the difficulties he will have in converting many to his cause.

Peterson has abandoned scholarship, ignored fact and worked up a lather of wild speculation having no regard to the evidence available. From the worn natural surfaces and in the faults, fractures and blemishes of standing stones he has dreamed up a fantastic menagerie of previously unrecognised 'Pictish' animal symbols. As well as whales, there are seals, fish, cats, rams, and hares; these also appear to occur within well-attested symbols, such as the crescent-and-V-rod, proving to Peterson the brilliance of the Pictish artist's ability to incorporate a design within a design. If this is not enough to raise an eyebrow, it will come as no surprise to discover that Peterson introduces an 'eyebrow' symbol as well, with no less than six page references for it in the index.

Like conjuring pictures from the flames of a fire, Peterson has imagined seeing something on one stone and gone on and on finding more and more on stone after stone, each time seeing each successive 'discovery' as confirmation and proof of his original notion. His inability to have been more cautious when confronted by such an astonishing mass of 'new' material clearly illustrates that he had embarked on a reckless and snowballing course of self-deception.

Seeking to justify his claims in a rambling conclusion, the author assures us that 'the ancient recurring symbols' of the 'cat's head' and 'the seal' (which he now also finds on standing stones and in megalithic tombs in England and Wales) are 'not a figment of my imagination, but are a living witness of the close relationship held between the indigenous peoples of these islands and those of the Eastern Mediterranean countries'. Peterson seems to have no lack of confidence in his own judgement and elsewhere he has claimed to have made a 'big breakthrough' having 'cracked' the meaning of the symbols. Consequently, he is always dogmatic, even when introducing cats. For instance, writing about an almost featureless stone as a new 'discovery', he states that 'this is a Pictish Altar Stone, shaped as a whale with its circular eye highlighted in the centre ... the stone also shows three Pictish sun or star symbols, and the heads of several wild cats and possibly a seal. ... Mortlach Church now has a third Pictish stone to display and write about!' (p.114). There is no hint of uncertainty in these preposterous propositions, only the arrogance of the visionary.

Pictish studies, in particular the rich seam provided by the symbols, have long attracted the imaginative speculator and cranky theorist and have acted as a grindstone for many a blunt axe. It is easy to understand the compulsive attraction of the symbols themselves and the need to give meaning to a system that was widely used by our forebears as recently as the early

historic period. It is galling too to realise that these symbols, which now hold so much allure, probably had about as much mystique for their contemporary audience as road signs have for us today.

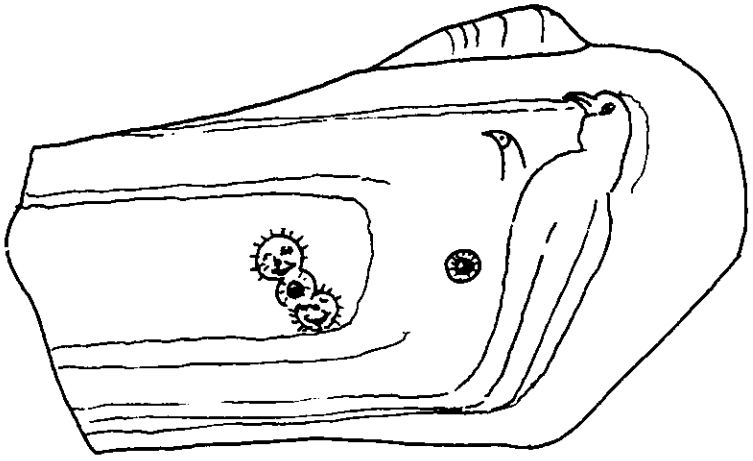


Fig. 11. The Mortlach 'Altar Stone' from Peterson's book.

In the publicity for another recently published book – Inga Gilbert's *The Symbolism of the Pictish Stones in Scotland* (Dorchester, 1995) – it is stated that the 'symbols on the Pictish stones... have remained a mystery through the ages' and then it boasts that 'here is the new approach that has long been needed to explain their meaning'. In like-manner, Peterson's own publicity for *The Message of Scotland's Symbol Stones* contends that 'these hieroglyphic and zoomorphic carvings... have until now defied translation'. Even allowing for publicist's hyperbole, these are both quite remarkable statements implying that nothing has yet been achieved and that only their respective authors now understands the meaning of the symbols (which, naturally, we can all become privy to by purchasing their books). How do individuals con themselves into believing that they can 'solve a mystery' which has defied generations of enthusiastic scholars and speculators? They apparently learn nothing from the fate of the attempts of their predecessors.

For instance, just over a century ago, the Earl of Southesk, a noted collector of seals, was convinced of the superiority of his 'Scandinavian Theory' over others (*Origins of Pictish Symbolism*, Edinburgh, 1893), but how many now subscribe to his Norse solar symbols? 90 years on, Anthony Jackson, by adopting a novel approach (*The Symbol Stones of Scotland*, Stromness, 1984), was similarly dismissive of all previous theories. Presumably he still supports his own involved interpretation, but I have yet to meet anyone else who does. By contrast, the clearest and most logical modern analysis and interpretation, which was published by Charles Thomas in 1963 ('The interpretation of the Pictish symbols', *Archaeol J*, 120 (1963), 31–97), has had many adherents – but they should note that Thomas is no longer happy with his own conclusions.

These instructive examples should cool the ardour of even the most committed symbol-chaser, but Peterson is undeterred – for him the symbols are sexy and his pursuit of them is unashamedly promiscuous. Frustrated by normal experience of them he fantasises to achieve satisfaction, as in his description of Abernethy 1, 'there are many other earlier ill-defined pagan tribal symbols inscribed on the Abernethy stone, such as the heads of a number of seals. Two seals are facing the royal symbol of the sheep's horns, positioned on either side of this emblem as if in support of the Pictish royal family' (p.71; for a lengthier discussion of Abernethy 1 see pp.78–81). It is interesting to compare Peterson's unfettered approach to that of yet another recent writer whose courtship of the symbols is relatively restrained until he embraces the same stone. The blurb on the dust cover of W.A. Cummins' *The Age of the Picts* (Stroud, 1995) promises – surprise! surprise! – 'new and controversial interpretations of ... Pictish symbols', but Cummins basically believes that the symbols are the Pictish lithic equivalent of Cash's Woven Tapes. On Abernethy 1, he perceives only what would normally be regarded as the Pictish symbols but, in attempting to link them with an historic event, he gets carried away, seeing the stone as a 'foundation stone' bearing the message 'Nechtan built this church for St Bride' (pp.132–133).

Whatever the cognitive dissimilarity of these two interpretations, they are phenomenologically identical, both arising from the same motive and having the same purpose – that of supplying the author with a convenient exemplar of his argument. However, without convincing supporting evidence, such assignation of meaning, projected **onto** the passive symbols and tailored to fit a particular hypothesis, can only obscure the integral 'meaning' of the symbols themselves. It is alarming to note that those authors who address the symbols in the recent plethora of Pictish publications appear to have no specialist knowledge of semiotics or of early writing systems, nor do they display any real understanding of the art-historical context of the creation of the symbols and the influences on, and developments of Pictish art. No matter what other specialist skills may be brought to bear on the problems of interpretation, I would suggest that a solid grasp of the 'language' of pictorial communication and an extensive visual 'vocabulary' were prerequisites for any serious attempt. No one would embark on a translation of, for example, the *Agricola* with little or no understanding of Latin. Until such times as we have an incontrovertible starting point for interpreting the symbols, the imposition of an overlay of presumed comprehension on a particular set of symbols will ultimately reveal only the message of the author not the meaning of those symbols. Such serendipitous indulgences are as valuable as most lottery tickets, and publishers of work in this category – *symbollocks* – should avoid making lavish claims, like the examples quoted above, which are clearly breaching the Code of the Advertising Standards Authority.

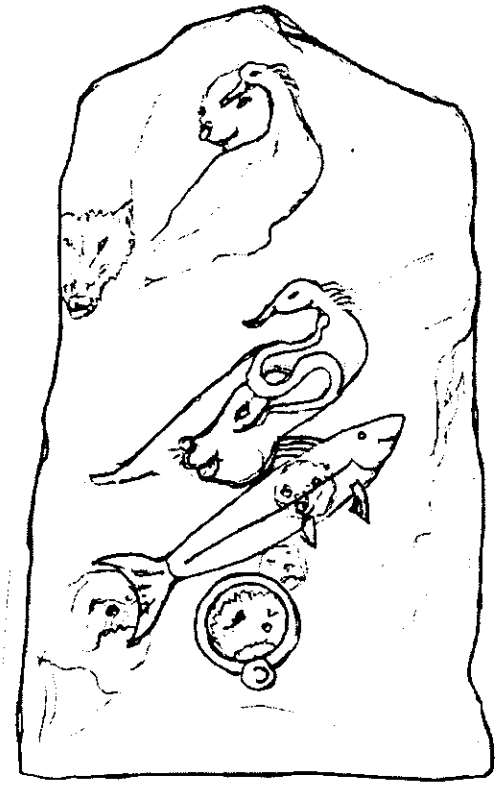
Peterson hopes, rather immodestly, that his publication will be considered as 'a significant step forward in understanding the ancient message left to us by the Picts' (p.ix). This is a forlorn hope that will not be endorsed by the academics whom he seeks to influence but who, he contends, will not listen. Hopefully, he will graciously accept that, unlike his own ubiquitous amphibians, the elusive seal of approval will never surface. As consensus is essential, no individual can ever 'crack' the meaning of the symbols; it is more likely that only through cooperation, in all relevant fields, and by the application of rigorous academic discipline in collecting and analysing hundreds, more probably hundreds of thousands of seemingly insignificant observations and discoveries that any 'significant step' will be made.

What is significant, is that most modern Pictish scholars have steered clear of tackling the meaning of the symbols; perhaps they better understand the inherent pitfalls (and possible risk of professional suicide), whereas the amateur, with nothing to lose, can see only glory in success and a reputation to be gained. Is that what drove Mr Peterson to write and, more importantly, to actually self-publish a book about his 'enjoyable hobby'? His enterprise and achievement in producing the book has to be remarked on, but the saving grace of most of his equally-obsessed fellow Pictophiles is that they are not rushing into print.

Had the single-minded Mr Peterson sought to cooperate more before publishing, he might have been persuaded to substitute the photographs reproduced on pages 95 and 116. The first shows a rubbing on fabric of Clach Ard, Skye; the other shows Aberlemno 1, Angus, with its symbols disfigured by heavy charcoaling, which, I deduce, is not the work of the author as it does not include his own additional designs as outlined in his drawing of the same stone (p.117). Taking rubbings and the chalking or charcoaling of sculptured stones damages the fragile carved surfaces. Publishing photographs of deliberately defaced stones appears to condone these practices and can only encourage others to follow suit; care should be taken not to put stones at risk by inadvertently revealing how to acquire an attractive wall-hanging or an enhanced photograph.

But the real danger of *The Message of Scotland's Symbol Stones* is that were it to be accepted by the uninitiated as an authoritative work, it could be highly detrimental to Pictish studies. To those with any knowledge of the Picts it will not present a problem, indeed, had it been published as a humorous antidote to Pictomania – a 'Pictish Joke-Book of the Dead' perhaps – it would probably have attained cult status among the *cognoscenti*, with Peterson hailed thereafter as the McGonagall of Pictish studies. This may yet happen, but it would not serve the serious purpose of the author's real agenda which is, as I (rather mistily) perceive, an attempt to explain the basis of present-day society in Scotland through the incredibly early spread of Christianity throughout an inexplicably united Pictish nation.

The misleading title, *The Message of Scotland's Symbol Stones*, pays homage to Anthony Jackson's inaccurate title, *The Symbol Stones of Scotland*, the volume which, albeit unwittingly, apparently inspired Peterson to publish (thus providing yet another reason to regret the presence of the 1984 publication). But it is unlikely that this latest, somewhat ungrateful challenge will supplant Peterson in Jackson's rôle as the bogeyman of stone-gropers and symbol-grapplers. Or, to put it symbolically – when did a nut ever crack a hammer?



Sketch of Glamis No.2 Stone

Fig. 12. Peterson's interpretation of Glamis 2.

I once informed Mr Peterson that whenever I felt speculation getting the better of me I reached for *The Antiquary* (the book, not the whisky), where, with great good humour and perception, Scott describes the foibles of 'antiquarians' and the traps waiting to ensnare them. "Read chapter four," I advised, "it is a marvellous tonic."

Forget it Eddie – pass the bottle! I think I heard a seal bark!

David Henry

PAPER CLIPS

Craig Cessford, 'Pictish Raiders at Trusty's Hill?', *Trans Dumfriessh and Galloway Nat Hist and Antiq Soc*, LXIX (1994), 81–88.

In this paper Cessford reviews the 'Pictish' symbols cut into the rock-fast boulder at Trusty's Hill, Kirkcudbrightshire. It is impossible to accurately determine why the symbols were carved and their dating is also difficult.

Whereas, he states, it has hitherto generally been accepted that the symbols *are* Pictish and were left by a raiding party, the idea that they simply record the death of the leader of the raiders is challenged and other possibilities examined. For example, other groups may have adopted Pictish symbols and used them for their own purposes — the argument that the symbols on the Whitecleugh silver chain are of British rather than Pictish origin used by the aristocracy of the Gododdin for their own use, is given as an example. Or, there is the possibility that there may have been a small scale Pictish settlement in the area and that some of these Picts may have been allies of the Britons rather than aggressors. Comparisons are made with the carving of the Pictish boar and ogham at Dunadd — a possible example of a cross cultural exchange, maybe the Scottish use of Pictish symbols, a Pictish cultural hegemony or a military alliance.

Cessford believes that the symbols of the double-disc and Z-rod and the S-dragon or hippocamp are likely to represent a Pictish personal name. The other two symbols, a dagger-like object and a circle with rudimentary human facial features and two spiral horns, may have been added later. He suggests that the dagger may indicate a message such as 'we killed' or 'death to ...', and the horned figure represents 'heathen' or 'devil'.

Elisabeth Okasha, 'The Early Christian Carved and Inscribed Stones of south-west Britain' in Crawford, B.E. (ed) *Scotland in Dark Age Britain*, St Andrews (1996), 21–35.

This paper, presented at the second Day Conference on Scotland in the 'Dark Ages', in February 1995, describes and compares the carved and inscribed stones of south-west Britain, i.e. Devon and Cornwall, with the inscriptions of Pictland.

In south-west Britain there are 79 inscribed stones (of which 10 are now lost) dating from the 5th or 6th to the 11th century. Most are pillar stones but some are crosses and other monuments. The script used is roman, either capital or insular, and six stones also have an ogham text. Many commemorate an individual, mostly with a Celtic name. Non-Celtic names are English or Latin.

There are 45 Pictish inscriptions dating from the 7th to 9th centuries. Inscriptions on stone occur on a range of monuments — pillar stones, cross-slabs and symbol stones. They also occur on other objects, e.g. the St Ninian's isle chape or the knife handle from N Uist. Only one script, either roman or ogham is used on any one stone — the Newton stone is seen as "doubtful". The languages used are Latin and Pictish, and the personal names are Pictish, early Gaelic or Latin.

The number and diversity of surviving inscribed monuments suggest to the author that literacy was more widespread and of a higher standard in Pictland than in south-west Britain. Generally texts in Latin were inscribed in roman script while texts in Pictish were inscribed in ogham.

Unfortunately no manuscript records survive from either area. However, in Pictland, literacy may have played a significant rôle in society.

Katherine Forsyth, 'The ogham-inscribed spindle-whorl from Buckquoy: evidence for the Irish language in pre-Viking Orkney?' *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* 125 (1995), 677–96.

Six spindle whorls were recovered from Buckquoy, Orkney in Anna Ritchie's rescue excavation of 1970 — one chalk/limestone whorl was carved with an ogham inscription on one face. The inscription has previously been described by Prof Kenneth Jackson as being "unintelligible, like all other 'Pictish' inscriptions". The interpretation is re-examined and a new meaning proposed.

The ogham text appears to have been carved straight onto the whorl by its composor, rather than being elaborately laid out. Forsyth argues that the inscription should be read anti-clockwise as ENDDACTANIM_. This, or rather, ENDDACTANIMV as it happens, was one of the eight original readings proposed by Jackson in his appendix to Ritchie's excavation report. However, the reading is now interpreted by Forsyth as BENDDACT ANIM L, the Old Irish for 'a blessing on the soul of L', derived from a formula well attested in the Irish epigraphic record

The whorl is thus seen as providing important evidence of a knowledge of the Irish language in Orkney in the 8th century, the pre-Viking period. The implications of, and a possible historical context for, this Irish influence in Orkney are discussed. If the text represents a Christian phrase written in Old Irish, it is important linguistically and also as an indication of the spread of Irish Christianity to Orkney.

The spindle-whorl was probably an intimate and personal item possibly made by a man and given to a woman. Perhaps it was a talismatic charm. Difficulties in both reading and interpretation are acknowledged.

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