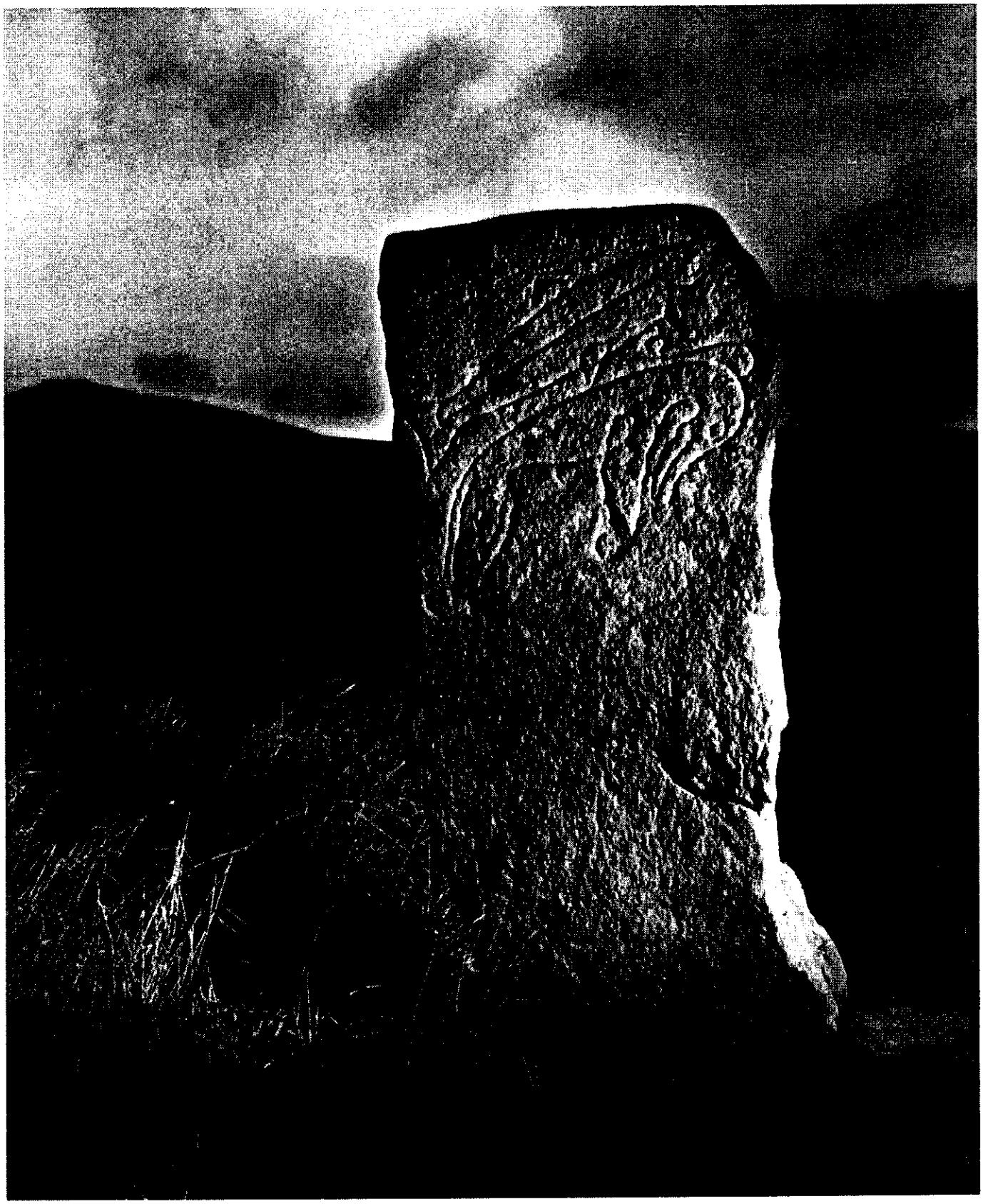
pictish arts society journal 12



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to *Journal 12*, my fifth and final edition as Editor. Many thanks to all who have contributed to the *Journal* and to others for their support.

Once again we have a fine selection of interesting articles and reviews.

Further contributions, including book and paper reviews, are always welcome. Comments about, or contributions to, the *Pictish Arts Society Journal* should be sent to the incoming editor;

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An attempt on the meaning of the Pictish symbols — Part II

Stuart O. Kermack

In the first part of this paper I suggested that the Pictish symbols could be identified and classified as follows (Allen and Anderson's nomenclature (1903, II, 57–79) in brackets where necessary):–

1. Attributes of the Goddess:
   a. Cauldron (Triple Disc and Cross-Bar); b. Robes (Beast's Head); c. Weaving equipment (perhaps) (Notched Rectangle with Curved Ends; Shears; Double Crescent; Comb (perhaps));
2. *Delba* i.e. "representations of creatures ... forms of elements" [Cormac's *Glossary* (Stokes 1868, 94)]
   a. Air (Bird); b. Fire (Flower); c. Water (Beast with Long Jaws etc.; Fish; Hippocampus (perhaps); Sea-Horse (perhaps)); d. Earth (Serpent); e. Moon, also Ship (Crescent, Bow and Arrow); f Sun also Chariot (Discs, various, especially Double); g. Lightning (perhaps) (L-shaped and Stepped Rectangles);
3. The Royal Broch (Notched Rectangle;
4. The Druid's Tree (Circular Disc and Rectangle);
5. Smith's Equipment
   a. Hammer; b. Anvil; c. Pincers; to which I now add, d. Horseshoe;
6. Male Animals:
   a. Boar; b. Bull; c. Stag; d. Wolf;
7. Broken Arrow and Spear (V- and Z-rod);
8. Christian:
   a. Cross; b. Crozier;
9. Bull and Serpent myth.

Since writing Part I, I have discovered that the Chinese included wood and metal among the elements, which would subsume 4 and 5 under 2, but I feel that is rather too far-fetched at present.

On my interpretation, most of these representations are not straight-forward. For instance, the cauldron is viewed from the top, the fire is bent, the other elements are animals, the sun is multiple, the chariot dismantled, the moon is turned upside-down, so is the ship, the broch is drawn from several aspects at once, the tree is diagrammatic, the horse-shoe ambiguous. This suggests to me that they were covert, deliberately concealed from all but initiates. I concede, however, it also leaves me open to the charge that I have stretched my argument beyond reason. My reply is that these features are corroborated by many anecdotes concerning St Columba, especially those contained in the *Vita Columbae* by his successor, Saint Adomnan.

Things Signified: 2. Christianisation

That the symbols survived the advent of Christianity is proved by the Class II stones, on which, by definition, they appear along with the Christian Cross, albeit generally on the opposite side. My hypothesis is that they were 'Christianised', a system whereby numinous pagan institutions were converted with a view to conversion of the pagans themselves. Pope Gregory set out the principle for temples and festivals in his letter to Mellitus (Bede i:30): that the Church should take them over and even make them more enjoyable, so that the people, "flocking more readily to their accustomed resorts, may come to know and adore the true God." One thinks of Samhain and All Hallows' Eve and the Scottish term-days, rationalised recently, but still approximating to Celtic festivals. It was, of course, applied to trees and rocks and wells, even gods and goddesses (Bride, St Bridget). Its success seems rather to bear out Jung and the Roman assumption that all peoples worshipped the same gods but under different names.

The *Vita Columbae*, in fact, describes the process in relation to a well "which the heathen venerated as a god." Columba, however, blessed it and drank from it. "And from that day the demons withdrew from it and many infirmities among the people were cured by the same well." (ii:11). There are many such incidents in the *Vita* which *ex facie* appear "as inconsequential as thistledown blowing on the wind" or illogical, or even to reflect rather badly on the Holy Man. On the contrary, in my opinion, they are all deeply serious and should be scrutinised in every detail as if they were clues in a crossword puzzle. This is an approach which I understand has yielded dividends from the Book of Kells, and when applied to Adomnan's hagiography the solution will, I maintain, often turn out to be a symbol, as I have interpreted them.

Professor Meek (1997) has shown that many of Adomnan's tales are parables which rely on the Scriptures, the object being to build up Columba as a Christ-like figure (see, also, Picard 1982). An obvious, and explicit, example is that he turned water into communion wine (ii:1). My case is that Adomnan had a complementary, but negative, agenda drawing on a similar reservoir of information about the pagan Pictish symbols to show that they, and what they stood for, are subservient to the Saint. Not that Adomnan makes the point directly, as he did with the water-wine miracle. One wonders, in fact, if it was, somehow, taboo, or at least, unlucky, to refer to the symbols overtly (cf. "the Scottish Play") in the same way as I have suggested their representation may have been covert.

In any event, it would have been uncharacteristically undiplomatic for Adomnan to have announced, crassly, that he was out to Christianise the symbols. It is, however, just arguable that, at significant junctures in his narrative, the Saint dropped hints that all was not what it seemed. For instance, at the end of Book i he writes, "Holy and apostolic men, shunning vain glory, very often hasten to conceal, as well as they can, such secrets as are manifested to them ..." Then, in ii 1, at the start of the next book, which contains most of what I interpret as references to symbols, after describing how Columba had concealed his part in the miracle turning water into wine, Adomnan says, "Let this miracle of God, that was shown through our Columba, illumine like a lantern the opening of this book, so that we may pass forward to the other miracles of power that are shown through him." This is followed directly by the chapter that I claim is about the tree symbol. There are other rather similar observations at iii 7, iii 16, and ii 34. I freely concede, however, that all of these remarks are capable of straight-forward interpretation, and, for the avoidance of doubt, I should make it clear that I do not rely on them.

Dr Higgitt has put it to me that the tales would need to be specially minted for the symbols. With the greatest respect, I do not agree that this is a logical necessity. Professor Meek (see below.) and others have shown that Adomnan was very derivative, and I do not see why he should not borrow any tale which suited his purpose. Indeed, I would go further. There is, for instance, a story about St Bridget, a bishop and a carriage without linch-pins, from which I would argue that the church of St Bridget was also confronted by a sun-chariot cult, which it confounded with an anecdote similar to ii 43 in the *Vita*. I am not maintaining that the Picts had invented a unique religion for themselves, quite the contrary.

I shall now go through the figures in turn, starting each exegesis with a précis of the parts of the *Vita* which I think are relevant.

The Attributes of the Mother Goddess

TRIPLE DISC (WITH CROSS-BAR) – Field-hospital – Cauldron

> ii:16 — A boy was carrying on his back a milk-vessel past the Holy Man, who, as was the custom, made the sign of the Cross. The vessel at once became violently agitated so that the *gergenna* (cross-bar) which passed through two lugs to hold on the lid was thrown far off, and most of the milk spilt. The Saint explained that there had been a devil in the bucket from the first, and rebuked the boy for not making the holy sign to expel it before he put in the milk. The bucket was found completely refilled under the Saint's holy hand.

The clues in ii:16 are surely (i) the milk, referring back to the legend about the Pictish Druid and the pit he filled with milk already quoted, and (ii) the *gergenna* (a rare word of Gaulish origin (Kuno Meyer 1892)), prominent in the symbol as drawn by Romilly Allen (1903, II, 59). My submission, therefore is that this is a tale to Christianise the Cauldron of the Goddess, which was also a burial urn.

BEAST'S HEAD, BIRD-HEADED HUMANS – Prophetic robes

> iii:23 — The monastery's old white milk-horse, inspired by God to anticipate that Columba is about to die, laid his head in the Saint's bosom, weeping aloud and letting tears fall freely, like a human being. The Holy Man would not let it be driven away, since, brute though it was, God had revealed to it what its rational human attendant did not know, that its master was going to leave it; and he blessed his servant, the horse.
>
> ii:24 – An evildoer in Hinba, called Right Hand, thought he had killed Columba with a spear, but, in fact, another monk was hidden in the Saint's cowl, which, in any event, protected him like the strongest armour. A year later, to the day, as the Holy Man discerns, Right Hand is killed by enemies in the 'island called Long'.

This white horse, which knows the future and weeps like a human-being refers, I think, to the prophetic animal garb worn by the goddess, probably as Epona. The animal costume symbol on Rhynie is almost certainly a horse; white was the spiritual colour. See also "Bird", below.

I suggest that the key to ii:24 is that the man died exactly a year after he had attacked the monk hidden in Columba's cowl. If so, it could refer to some annual ceremony involving masks and weapons, something like the hobbyhorse, and Morris Dancers, or even masked theatre, as in classical Greece. At least a few years ago, the villagers of Findhorn (not the Community) swathed themselves from top to toe in cloths and went round the houses inviting people to identify them. Davidson ((1993) 120) describes the *Cuculatti*, hooded figures, familiar spirits, found in the North of England and at Cirencester and Bath.

DOUBLE CRESCENT; NOTCHED RECTANGLE WITH CURVED END; COMB; SHEARS; LOOM – Web of Battle – Weaving spells

> iii:1 – Between Columba's conception and his birth, an angel visited his mother in a dream, and gave her a marvellous robe embroidered with flowers of many colours; but took it away from her immediately. When she asked why, he told her the robe was of glorious honour and she could not keep it. She observed the cloth recede from her in flight and grow ever larger till it covered the whole landscape. And a voice said, "Do not grieve, you will bear a son who will be numbered amongst the saints, and will bring innumerable souls to heaven".
>
> i:33 – The Holy Man struck with his staff a plot of ground beside the sea, and said, "Strange to say, today, here in this place an old pagan who has preserved natural goodness throughout his life will be baptised, and die and be buried". After about an hour, Artbranan arrived and the Saint's prophecy was fulfilled.

I am assuming that these symbols are all connected with weaving. The story of this Annunciation associating motherhood, cloth and prophecy, recalls the protoevaglium of James that Mary was one of the seven virgins of the tribe of David chosen to weave a new curtain for the Temple when the angel came to her (Enright 1990, 58). Graves (1955, 48 and 204) discussing the Fates and the Danaids, attributes the notion originally to the swaddling bands of infants which bore, woven into them, family and clan marks, which fixed their status in life, surely very relevant.

Queen Mebd is recorded as striking the ground with her magic weaving beam when she prophesied, and I think that Columba has inherited the gesture with his staff in i:33.

Delba

I have already quoted the reference in the *Cain Adomnan* to the "sun and the moon and the other elements *of God*". Fire and water are explicitly contrary elements (*contraria elementa*) in ii:9.

BIRD – Augury – Air

> i:48 – Columba instructed a brother that, in three days, after the ninth hour, a crane from the North of Ireland, tossed by winds through long circuits in the air, would crash-land on the beach on the West coast of Iona. It is to receive tender loving care for three days as a guest "because it comes from the district of our fathers". The bird arrived as the Saint had foretold, and when its three days as a pilgrim were up, it flew to a height, and after studying the way for a while, took its way back to Ireland in a straight line of flight.

I suggest this tale concerns prophecy from the flight of birds. The clues are (i) the meticulous account of his journey, its time, place and direction; and (ii) that it came from the district of the monks' fathers, i.e. not only the North of Ireland but, for Christian clerics, from Heaven. The crane is a very prophetic bird, because it dances, and its dance was interpreted to foretell the future as well as its flight. Tom Gray has recently identified these birds on the Rossie Stone (Gray 1997). According to O'Donnell's *Bethna Coluim Cille* the Saint had a pet crane who pecked out the eye of a monk who keeked through his keyhole when he was copying St Jerome's psalter. He was also nicknamed "crane Columba" in the *Old Irish Life* (Skene 1887, II, 498), perhaps because he prophesied, by two women, mother and daughter, who sound like aspects of the Goddess. Anyway he took it as such an insult that he turned them into herons which have the same name as 'crane' in Old Irish. He has also attributed to him the verse (Finlay 1979, 24, 154):

> I adore not the voice of birds,
> nor the *sreod*, nor a destiny on the earthly world,
> nor a son, nor chance, nor woman:
> my *drui* is Christ, the Son of God.

which seems to me to have echoes of the Picts expertise in "every spell, and every charm and every sneezing (*sregh)* and the voices of birds and all omens and all talismans that are made", which I have already quoted (Skene 1867, 328). I have also referred to the bird-headed men above the Cross on e.g. Glamis 1 and Papil. Similarly on Kirriemuir 1 to "the left and right of the top arm of the cross the symbols of two of the four Evangelists (treated in the same way as on the crosses at Ilkley, Yorkshire, and Halton, Lancashire, the bodies being human and the heads those of the symbolic creatures" (Allen & Anderson 1903, III, 227) Comparing these with the bird-headed men, might we have here the beginnings of some sort of Mystery Plays, and could the symbols in the North of England bear this out? All this is, of course, relevant to the prophetic animal robes and bird-headed humans, above.

FLOWER – Fire fanned by wind

> ii:7 – Columba blessed a piece of rock-salt for Colcu's sister and foster-mother who was suffering from an inflammation of the eyes. She hung it on the wall above her bed. The whole village was burned down accidentally, but the wall, the salt and the two pegs from which it hung were untouched.
>
> i:34 – Crossing the spine of Britain the Holy Man's party lodged on the bank of a stream which flowed into a lake but put their boat in a hut beyond it. They had hardly got to sleep before the Saint roused them and told them to shift it to a nearer hut. He roused them again to see that the first hut had been set on fire by a hostile pursuer.
>
> iii:2, – The priest, Cruithnechan, Columba's foster-father, marvelled to see a ball of fire standing over the boy's face.

ii:34 – Broichan, the chief Druid, is allowed by God to raise a contrary wind and a dark mist to impede the Holy Man's departure by boat down Loch Ness; but he, calling on Christ the Lord, ordered the sail to be hoisted, and the boat set off at great speed, sailing against the wind, which, however, to the surprise of a great assembly, soon turned favourable and moderated, so that the Saint enjoyed a pleasant trip down the Loch. (There is, incidentally, reference elsewhere to oars, but not in this tale.)

ii:39 – Libran, wishing to return from Ireland to Iona, found a ship already in the Foyle, outward bound, with a fair wind. He ran along the Foyle beside it and called on Saint Columba, "Does it please you, that these sailors who will not receive me, your associate, are sailing away with full sails and a fair wind?" On an instant the wind was changed to a contrary one so the sailors came to land and took Libran aboard on the promise of a fair wind which was granted.

ii:45 – On occasions after Columba's death when: (1) timbers had to be transported for the "great house" and shipbuilding, the monks adopted the plan of laying garments and books of the Saint on the altar, with psalms and fasting and invocation of his name, so that on the day planned for the operation, the wind, which had previously been contrary changed to a favourable one and all came safely to Iona; (2) the wind Favonius, also called Zephyrus, sprang up, so that the twelve curachs which were towing oak timbers for the monastery by rowing, had to seek shelter at the island of Airthraig, and Columba was upbraided saying, "Is this hindrance to us pleasing to you, Holy one? We expected some consolation of help in our labours to be given by you, seeing as we thought you were in high favour with God." Within a minute, Favonius fell, and the wind Vulturnus rose so we (*sic*) made home that day, by sailing; (3) on returning from a synod in Ireland, we (*sic*) were delayed on the island of Saine in the country of the tribe Loern by contrary winds. The next day was the festive day of St Columba, and again we rebuked him saying, "Does it please you that we spend your special day amongst strangers? Surely tomorrow it will be easy for you to obtain a favourable wind of the Lord, so that we can celebrate in your church on Iona." The contrary wind died overnight, and we set off in the morning, and immediately Notus, the south wind sprang up behind us, bringing us to Io after the third hour, so that after washing our hands and feet, we were able to get to the church on time.

There are several other tales about storms, winds and ships, but, unfortunately, I can find none combining Wind and Fire.

The piece of rock salt hanging by two pegs, and the boat in a hut suggests myths to me but I do not recognise them.

The Druids were supposed to have power over the weather, which Adomnan obviously feels he must justify as being permitted by his God. It seemed also customary to importune the Saint for a fair wind, almost impertinently, sort of whistling for a wind. It is, also, I think, notable that winds never shift direction, but one dies away and another replaces it, as if they are separate entities, one from another, shown, also, by their classical names.

BEAST WITH LONG JAWS, CREST, AND SCROLL FEET: SEA-HORSE; HIPPOCAMPUS – Nes – Rivers

ii:27 – Columba and his followers came upon a man being buried on the banks of the River Ness. He had been attacked, while swimming in the river, by a monster lying there, which killed him before his comrades could rescue him with hooks from a boat. The Saint, however called for a volunteer to swim over for the boat and a young man, Lugne mac Min, stripped to his tunic and dived in. The monster was almost upon him when the Saint raised his holy hand and commanded it to retire, which it did, baffled.

ii:8 – A young man fell from a horse into the Boyne and was drowned. He was found after twenty days still clutching his skin satchel of books under his arm, all of which were damaged or even rotten, except a page written by the hand of St Columba which was as dry as if it had been in a coffer.

ii:9 – A skin-satchel containing a book of hymns for the week, written by the hand of the Saint slipped from the shoulder of a boy who had fallen from a bridge, and lay submerged in a certain river in Lagin, in Ireland from Christmas till the days of Easter were concluded, when it was found on the bank by some women who took it to Iogenan, a Pict by race, to whom it had formerly belonged, and it turned out to be as clean and dry as if it had been in a coffer. "Other things too, we have heard about books written by the hand of St Columba which lying in water, have been able to remain completely unharmed."

Watson explains (1926, 425) how the pagan Celts venerated rivers, and the Monster here is obviously the tutelary deity of the River Ness. I think (s)he is most likely to be our Beastie since (s)he lies between two undoubted symbolic Beasts, the Boar and the Serpent. (S)he has become, of course, far and away the best-known inhabitant of Scotland, having been flitted from the River to the Loch, which, incidentally, makes nonsense of both the narrative and the mythology.

The ancient Celts also threw treasure into water as offerings and I wonder if the curiously repeated ii:8 and ii:9 are related to this: books, monastic treasures, falling in rivers for exactly specified periods. The Boyne is very numinous though the river in Lagin is not named. All three stories concern young men in the water, perhaps a hint here of ritual drowning, which Lugne, naturally, escaped, though the unfortunate pagan who preceded him did not. But why were the others not spared through their possession of Columba's work?

Perhaps brave, young Lugne's tunic was introduced to authorise acceptable monastic swim-wear for the delectable beaches of Iona and Tiree, which could have been a touchy subject. There seems to be a reference to carnal love between monks in i:36.

FISH – River

ii:19 – Columba told his companions, keen fishermen, to cast their net once more to catch a huge fish provided for him in the River Sele; which they did. Again, on the River Bo he advised them to delay their trip for a couple of days and then they would catch two big fish.

If this River Sele is the Blackwater in Meath, it had been cursed by St Patrick and should have contained no fish, but it might have been the Sheil in Lochaber.

SERPENT (and Z-shaped rod) – World Serpent – Earth

ii:28 & iii:23 – Columba, shortly to die, blessed the soil (*terrula*) of Iona and consoles the Brothers that thereby the venom of all the serpents on the island will be powerless to harm man or beast so long as its inhabitants observe the commandments of Christ.

The important point to note is that the Saint blessed the *soil* of Iona, in accordance with the identification of this symbol with the element, earth; and the Afterworld under the earth. It echoes St Patrick's expulsion of snakes from Ireland. On the other hand, according to Bede, the whole of Ireland was anathema to serpents all of which suggests to me that snakes represented something very anti-Christian, presumably the pagan Afterworld. The prophecy means, presumably, that Christians have nothing to fear from the Underworld.

CRESCENT – Warship – Moon

i:41 – Columba sent men to apprehend Erc mocu Druidi, a thief from Coll who was hiding on Mull under his boat which he had covered with grass, waiting to steal the community's seals. The Saint told him he was wasting his time because he could have anything necessary for the asking, and killed wethers for him. Later, foreseeing Erc's death, Columba arranged for him to be sent supplies by Baithene but the man died before they arrived, so they were used, instead, to furnish his funeral.

i:47 – Gore, of the corcu Reti (Dal Reti?), working with his knife on a spear-shaft under an upturned boat, started up when he heard a fight, inadvertently dropped his knife on the ground, and fatally stabbed himself on the knee. It is not said that the boat had anything to do with it. Columba had enigmatically foretold to the man that he would be killed by his "travelling companion" which turned out to be his knife.

ii:12 – During a storm at sea the sailors told Columcille he was no good at bailing the boat and would be better employed in putting up a prayer for their safety; and the tempest stilled as soon as the Saint extended his arms to heaven, standing in the prow of the ship.

ii:18 – When ordered to sail from Iona to Ireland, a monk, Trenan mocu Moie, asked for an extra hand to make up the complement of his crew, but Columba, before he blessed the voyage, told him that he would have fair winds and as he approached the harbour, a man would run in advance of the others and grasp their prow, and he would accompany them in Ireland and return to Iona with them. It all turned out as the Saint had foretold; and the man who grasped the prow was Laisran mocu Muntir, the gardener and a holy man.

i:33 – Artbranan arrives in the prow of a little ship, is baptised, dies and goes to heaven.

The first three stories are heavily ironic, almost comical. The clues in the first two are the boats, turned upside down, like the Crescent Moon in the symbol. I think it is significant that the boat plays no part in i:47, although, of course, it so easily could, if Gore had banged his head on it, or whatever. This is because, in my opinion, it is there solely as a symbol, I would also draw attention to the grass on the top of Erc's boat, which strongly suggests to me a ship-burial mound. Both stories deal with death, and Erc has a funeral, the only person, I think who has one, apart from Columba himself, and the boy he raised from the dead. There may be something in Erc's descent from a Druid and his stealing seals from the Christians, (which incidentally he could not do nowadays since seals are wild animals which belong to no-one, and, therefore cannot be stolen) but is given wethers, sometimes a Christian symbol.

There are two Pictish ships drawn representationally, one in Jonathan's cave and one on St Orland's stone both of which are roughly crescent-shaped and both carry large, some say supernatural, figures in the prow, I have included the latter tales because of their emphasis on the prow of the boat, suggesting it is somehow sacred.

DOUBLE-DISC – Chariot – Sun

ii:43 – Compelled by ecclesiastical affairs, Columba entered a carriage in Ireland which had been blessed by him previously and had been yoked but, negligently, the necessary linch-pins had not been inserted. The driver was Colman, Euchuid's son, the founder of the monastery of Snam Iuthir. Although the day's driving covered a long distance the wheels remained firmly in place.

i:3 – When the Holy Man visited the monastery of Clonmacnoise a huge crowd went out to greet him beyond the boundary-wall of the monastery bowing their faces to the earth, and kissing him with all reverence. Such was the crush that led him to the church there, singing hymns and praises that they had to bind together a "barrier" (*pyramis*) of branches, which they caused to be carried about the Saint as he walked, by four men keeping step with him, so that the elder St Columba should not be troubled as he walked.

> i:28 – Lugbe was quite unable to look upon Columcille because his face was flushed with marvellous redness but the Holy Man recalled him by clapping his hands, and explained he had apprehended sulphurous flames had been poured down from heaven on a city of the Roman dominion within the borders of Italy, which had killed 3000 men, apart from women and children. This was later confirmed by sailors from Gaul.

One may ask why Colum Cille's Sainthood did not in itself protect him from mishap in his carriage, and ii:43 is so trivial it must be about a symbol. It may be connected in some way with the lost Meigle 10 (Allen & Anderson 1903, III, 331), showing one large and two small men in a two-wheeled horse-drawn carriage. The Andersons say in a footnote (26) to i:3, "The 'pyramid' was probably a four-sided frame of branches. In Adomnan's *De Locis*, pp.257, 259, low walls round two tombs are described as *lapidea pyramidis*." My idea is that both these anecdotes refer to chariot burial, in which the linch-pins are removed and the chassis is used as a bier, carried by four bearers (giving rise according to Davidson (1993, 33) to Odin's eight-legged horse, Sleipner). The dismantled wheels are placed in the tomb separately because they are, in fact, sun-symbols, and explain Columba travelling a long distance in a day. In the symbol they are at each end of the chassis. I feel the identity of the driver may be significant. Columba has conquered death by walking instead of being carried on a bier and riding when he should have been lying in his tomb. The stories neatly complement Erc's ship-burial.

In I:28 the Saint seems to have become the Sun itself. The fire and brimstone is, I think, part of another agenda.

L-SHAPED AND STEPPED RECTANGLES (WITH CURVED ENDS) – Thunder and lightning

> i:37 – The Saint began to sing the 44th Psalm outside King Bruide's fortress, and his voice was so raised in the air, "like a terrible peal of thunder", that both King and people were filled with intolerable dread.
>
> iii:I5 – Columba, writing in his hut, suddenly called out, "Help! Help!" Later, he explained he had been aware of a brother falling from the top of the great house being constructed in Durrow and had sent an angel from Iona which had caught the man in time, so that he landed unharmed. Then he added this utterance, "Marvellous is the speed of angels' flight, equal I think to the speed of lightning."

The structure of iii:15 serves to emphasise the comparison with lightning. The two stories, are aimed, I think, to show the superiority of Christian power over the weapons of the pagan gods.

NOTCHED RECTANGLE (with Z-shaped rod) – Royal Broch

> ii:34 – King Bruide did not open the gate of his fortress at the first arrival of the Blessed Man; so, Columba imprinted the sign of the Cross upon the doors, knocked and laid his hand on them. At once the bars drew back, and the doors opened themselves. Thereafter the King venerated him.
>
> i:37 – The Saint began to sing the 44th Psalm outside King Bruide's fortress, and his voice was so raised in the air, "like a terrible peal of thunder", that both King and people were filled with intolerable dread.

These stories are, surely, a clear demonstration of the superiority of the Christian King over the Pictish one and his symbol. Psalm 44 (presumably as numbered in the Vulgate, i.e. 45 in the Authorised version) is a very ancient song in praise of the king of Israel which would have put down the King of the Picts.

CIRCULAR DISC AND RECTANGLE (WITH SQUARE INDENTATION) – Tree – *Axis Mundi* – (Apples of the Hesperides)

i:23 – Baithene wanted to help to compare a psalter he had written, but Columba without looking at it could tell him that it had only one mistake: the omission of a vowel: "I".

ii:2 – A tree on the southern side of Columba's monastery at Durrow bore much fruit, but the inhabitants complained that it was bitter and more hurtful than pleasing. The Saint visited it and blessed it and commanded it to become sweet, which it did, on an instant.

ii:33 – Broichan, the druid *(magus)* foster-father to the king, falls sick breathing deeply, because he has been struck by an angel, breaking the glass vessel from which he has been drinking; but Columba, in return for the release of a slave-girl, cures him, with water in which had been dipped a white stone he had blessed from the River Ness, which will not sink but floats like an apple or a nut (*pomum vel nux*). The stone was kept among the king's treasures and effected many cures when it was placed in water, and floated, although, strange to say, it could never be found, if sought by someone whose time had come; and so it was when it was looked for on the day of King Bruide's death.

In my submission, "the vowel 'I' is a play on "I", *Ioua*, now Iona, "yew-tree island" (Watson 1926, 89). (The pun is elaborated in a lost life of St Brendan of Birr, quoted in Usher's *Whole Works* VI 240 (Sharpe 1995, 354n.): "Go (Latin "I") into (Irish "I") the Island (Irish "I") of Iona (Irish "I")". "I" in ogham is yew, the tree of death and the Winter Solstice, according to Graves (1948, 177). Columba is also connected with a yew on an islet off Lismore on the other side of Mull from Iona, which survived to the middle of the nineteenth century in contrast to the clump of alders which his rival Moluag has on the main island there (Carmichael n.d., 39, 42–43). Columba, when he first arrived on Iona, met two "bishops, who were not bishops", perhaps of a yew cult, and expelled them.

In Ireland Columba seems more associated with oaks. The plain of Durrow is "the plain of the Oak-tree"; Derry is *Daire Calcig* (ii:39) *a roberito Calgachi* (i:2) *in robereto Calcagi* (i:20) i.e. "the oak-wood of Calgach". In the *Old Irish Life* (Skene 1887, II) Columba is supposed to have sheltered under an oak at Kells – which brought leprosy on a man who used its bark after it fell down. "Druid" may be derived from the word for an oak tree. A poem says that Kells was occupied by pagan priests before Columba replaced them. Durrow was given to Columba by Aedh, son of Brenand, king of Tethba, and Derry by Aedh, son of Ainmire, king of Eriu. The underlying thesis seems to be that the Columbans were presented by kings to royal duns connected with sacred trees, replacing the pagan priests/Druids who had been there before them, thus converting their fruit from bitter to sweet on the complaint of the inhabitants.

St Buite of Monasterboice, who had died the day Columba was born ascended to heaven by a glass ladder, which was discovered when it was struck by the *bachall* (staff) of the younger Saint "so that the sound was heard throughout the whole church" (*Old Irish Life*, Skene 1887, II, 487), recalling Watson (1981, 68–9) that a tree connected different worlds and was the door to heaven. According to Graves, its fruit was the hero's passport to the Afterworld, as was a silver plaque found at Norrie's Law, or a white stone, as suggested by ii:33 (Kermack 1996). I take it, however, that the Christians disapproved of the practice since Columba's stone was not to be found if someone was on the point of death.

HAMMER, ANVIL, PINCERS, HORSESHOE

ii:13 – During a storm at sea, Columcille is importuned to pray for his companions but refuses, because, he says St Cainnech will do so. Abbot Cainnech was in the refectory of his monastery, called in Latin, "the field of the Cow" and in Irish *Ached bou* (Aghaboe) breaking the holy, but unconsecrated, bread after the ninth hour for the evening meal; but "he suddenly abandoned the small table, and with one shoe on his foot, and the other left behind through the excess of his haste," went hurriedly to the oratory of the church and successfully prayed for the safe deliverance of his fellow Saint and his companions. Columba observed all this from afar, and said, from his pure heart, "Now your swift running to the church, wearing only one shoe, has greatly helped us."

ii:29 – Columba, without looking, inadvertently blesses a dagger intended for killing cows and bulls which thereafter was not able to wound any flesh. Skilled monks heated it in a fire and used it to overlay all the tools in the monastery, so they could not wound either.

iii:9 – Columba approves of a smith, saying he has not laboured in vain but will go to heaven for the charitable use of the product of his work.

There is more than a hint of the Eucharist in ii:13 but I think the point of the story must be Cainnech's single shoe. Ian Fisher has also told me of a folk-story about Columba being chased by the Evil One with one shoe untied. I have, therefore, decided, since writing Part I, that it refers to the Horseshoe symbol, which fits very appropriately with the rest of a smith's equipment, Hammer, Anvil/Crucible, and Tongs, about which there can be no dispute. I have, therefore, decided to propose it as such, on a balance of probabilities.

ii:29 shows Columba in a bad light and is also illogical for he could have blessed the monastery tools collectively, without troubling the skilled monks. The smith's intervention must, accordingly, be the point of the tale; which it is, if it is about these symbols. The smith was, of course a familiar figure in Celtic stories, and receives such favourable notice in both stories, perhaps they were particularly Christian, which would explain why The Horseman flaunts his tools on the Dunfallandy, lineage.

BOAR

ii:26 – Out for a walk in Skye, the Saint, by raising his hand, without making a sign, but with invocation of the name of God, causes a Boar, which was being pursued by dogs, to fall dead.

I have already explained that I think these male animal symbols are different. This is the same story as the Loch Ness Monster, except that the Boar drops dead, whereas, perhaps because s/he is a goddess or god, Nessie lives on to become a superstar. The Boar, however, is totally forgotten, even by the Scottish Landowners' Federation, although this is, surely, the first record of a day's sport ruined by a rambler.

BULL

ii:17 – The Saint commands and allows a rustic sorcerer to draw milk from a bull by diabolic art, then blesses it and points out it is blood bleached by demons. The bull meanwhile had shrunk but was restored to health by Columba's blessing.

This is only a small part of ii:17. The full story is complex and appears loaded with implications – none of which I understand. There must be something significant about milk, judging by this tale and the Cauldron.

Christian Additions

CROSS

The Cross is everywhere in the *Vita* because it is the way that Columba confers his blessing which often results in a miracle.

CROZIER

ii:14 – When St Cainnech, founder Abbot of Aghaboe sails from Iona he leaves his staff behind at the harbour, by mistake. It is given to St Columba who takes it into his oratory where he remains praying for a long time. Cainnech is most distressed at his loss; but, on arriving at the island of Oidech, and kneeling down to pray, finds his valued staff on the ground beside him.

I have already referred to Queen Mebd and her weaving-beam. The Saint's staff was, I suggest the Christian symbol of authority, replacing the heroic spear and sword or 'rods', and the mirror and comb of the Goddess. The staff of St Fillan and St Moluag are still extant, the latter in the hands of the Livingstones of Lismore, its hereditary *dewars* or keepers. These staffs had a habit of coming home. The Deuchars of Angus had a sword reputedly brought back from the battle of Harlaw still grasped by the amputated hand of their ancestor (Jervise 1882, 231).

In my submission these correspondences between symbols and stories glorifying Columba cannot be dismissed as coincidence. It may be that in the Dark Ages suitable subjects for stories were in short supply and ships and carriages and cauldrons and documents and animals were likely to crop up. But boats that are upside-down, with grass on the top, carriages without linch-pins, a "pyramid" carried by four men, a lachrymose horse, the soil of Iona, the vowel 'I', a *milk*-pail with a *gergenna*? *Scintilla*, perhaps, but they seem to me most significant.

Here I would like to pray in aid something akin to the "Moorov doctrine", a principle of the Scots law of criminal evidence, though now, I believe, incorporated into English law as "similar facts". Moorov was a draper who was accused on eight individual charges of sexually assaulting, on separate occasions, eight of his female assistants, for whom he had advertised individually, over a number of years. It was held (*Moorov v H.M. Advocate* 1930 J.C. 68) that when an accused is charged with a series of similar offences, closely linked in time, character, and circumstances, the evidence of one witness as to each offence can be taken as mutually corroborative, each offence being treated as if it were an element in a single course of conduct. There must be some nexus linking the offences, some underlying unity which makes them part of one course of conduct (Renton and Brown para.18-63). This is not, I emphasise, anything to do with analogy, it is the underlying course of conduct which counts.

I submit there is such a nexus here, an underlying unity connected by time, place and circumstance linking all the symbols and all the stories to allow me to make use of my quasi-Moorov doctrine and establish a sufficient case, convincing on a balance of probabilities, that the Columban church set about taking over the Pictish symbols and substituting stories in honour of their founder.

If so, the scheme succeeded brilliantly. The *Vita* enjoyed an enviable medieval penetration, from Salamanca to Switzerland, coming out, as a "condensed book" as early as the ninth century. More than thirty editions have been published to date, the latest, so far as I know, in 1995, a new translation for Penguin, their second. I bumped into a young Finn on the Cairo Underground the other day; "You come from Scotland?" he said, "I should very much like to see Loch Ness." The begetter of Nessie needs no lessons in hype.

In contrast the Pictish symbols suffered "a break in the transmission of the knowledge of their arbitrary significance" and, deprived of the oxygen of publicity, their meaning has been a mystery for a thousand years. But I maintain it is not, as Dr Anderson claimed, irrecoverable. Indeed, it seems to me he might have achieved the breakthrough himself if he had only followed his insight into the "house-like symbol" up to the door of Bruide's fortress in ii:34.

I hope to publish my understanding of the function of the symbols in Part III.

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Niall M Robertson

The Skeith Stone, Upper Kilrenny, Fife.

Ross Trench-Jellicoe

It has been claimed that the process of winning knowledge can be a painful business and this may well be true if we accept the story recounted in Norse legend of Odin's self-immolation, hanging himself on the tree Yggdrassil for nine days, in order to gain wisdom. Pictish studies, too, can have their trials although fortunately not requiring such extreme sacrifice as Odin's. A good example was the 1996 Pictish Arts Society's trip around eastern Fife on Sunday, 26th May, which followed a fine day conference at the Watts, Cupar, on the previous day and, more significantly, an excellent post-conference party, which extended far into the small hours at Marianna Lines' new home in Collessie – presided over by the mysterious Collessie Man.

Even spectacular Sunday morning views in bright sunlight across fields of waving crops and then beyond, out over the Firth of Forth, with the May and the Bass Rock in the distance, perhaps failed to dull the pain in some members' minds as they walked westwards up the low rise on an old track out of Upper Kilrenny. Soon, however, all was dispelled as the company reached the Skeith Stone and clustered around, animatedly discussing its siting, shape, decoration and present condition.

In the 19th century, John Stuart (1867, 59, Pl.124) dismissed this large unshaped, lump of rusty-coloured stone in three lines of text, although his accompanying illustration remains valuable (Fig. 1) Romilly Allen (Allen & Anderson 1903, part III, 374) gave it even shorter shrift. Although largely ignored, it is an important monument because it appears to stand beside an old trackway which leads into Kilrenny, a site which Simon Taylor (1996, 99) has identified as dedicated to the Pictish saint, Ethernan (death recorded in the *Annals of Ulster*[1] in the year AD 669 (Mac Airt & Mac Niocaill 1983, 138–9)), also because of its position close to The May, an island which has strong Ethernan connections (Yeoman 1996) and, perhaps most significantly, because of its unusual decoration (Trench-Jellicoe forthcoming).

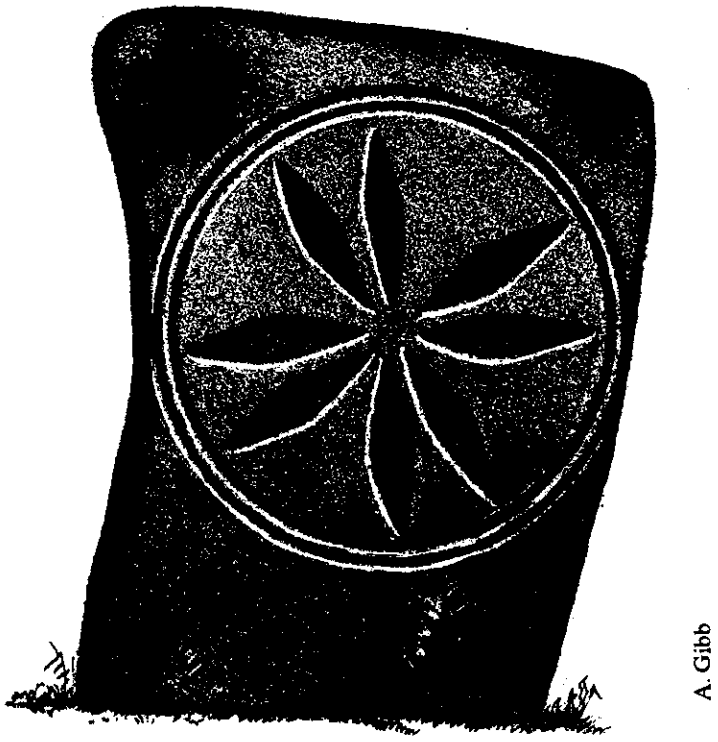


Fig. 1. Illustration of the The Skeith Stone from Stuart 1867 [and reversed by the lithographer in error].

More of the Skeith Stone is visible in Stuart's drawing than can be seen today [2] and the stone has been moved relatively recently (Royal Commission archive). Extensive wear and damage on the carved surface makes it difficult to recognise the form of the design at first sight but the main element is a large circle formed from two lines set closely together. All of the decoration appears carved out (incised); that within the circle is formed from eight, radiating leaf-shaped foils. Wear has made the cuts uneven but, if viewed in positive mode rather than the negative, the foils become the arm pits of a double cross (in false relief), designed using a compass. The larger cross-of-arcs stands upright but behind lies a second motif, a saltire-of-arcs with narrower arms. It was noticed during the Pictish Arts Society visit that the right edge of the upper cross arm was decorated with a very worn *Rho*-hook, lying in the foil next to the arm. This *Rho*-hook is part of a *Chi-Rho* motif, visually a '+' plus '*P*', symbols which are derived from the first letters of Christ's name in Greek – CH *(X)*R*(P)[istos].* Outside the circle, the spaces left available on the stone are decorated with four circular-cum-oval shapes positioned roughly in the four quarters although the lower two are today virtually hidden in the ground. The overall design, therefore, comprises a cross-of-arcs with *Rho*-hook attached to the upper arm, over a saltire-of-arcs surrounded by a narrow circle flanked by four 'rings'[3].

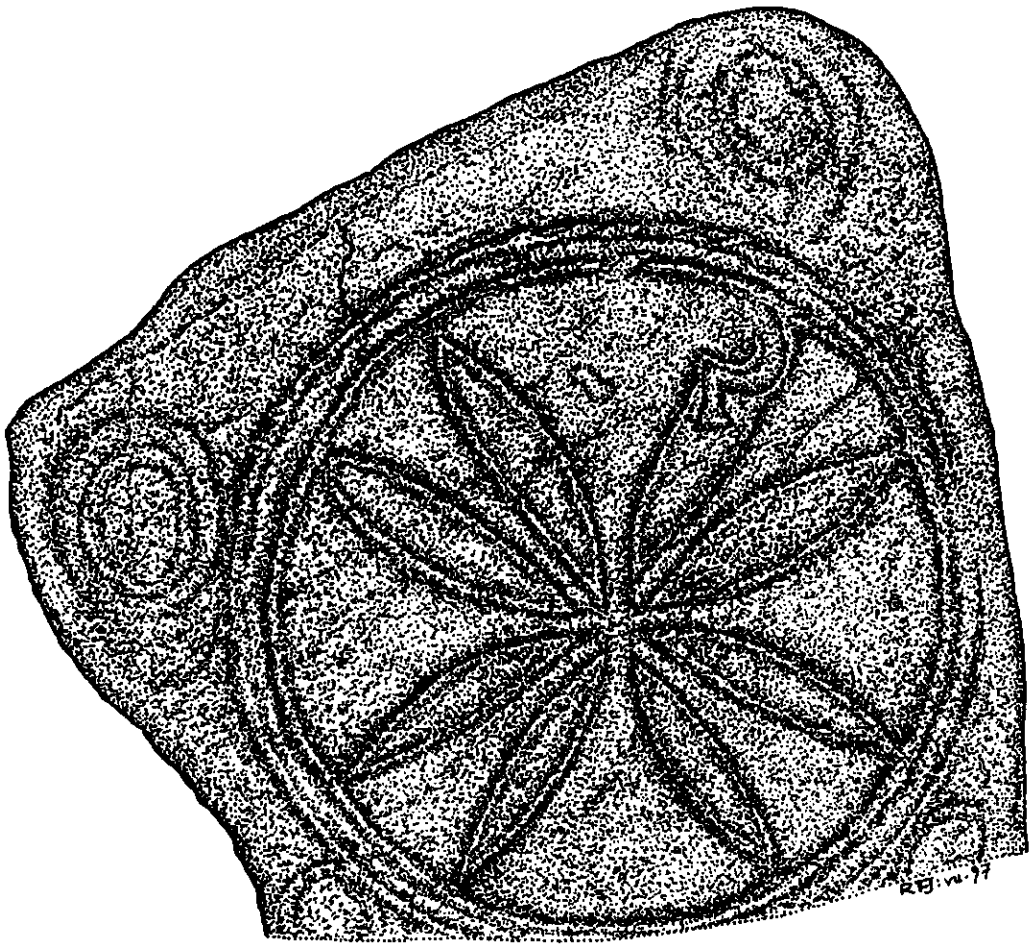


Fig. 2. The Skeith Stone, Upper Kilrenny.

*Chi-Rho*s are fairly rare beasts in the British Isles, rarer still when attached to crosses-of-arcs and unique in the design found at Skeith coupled with a saltire. So what is known about the *Chi-Rho*? As a symbol, it was adopted by Constantine after he became Roman emperor and made Christianity the official religion in the early fourth century. The original, *Constantinian* type was closer in form to the Greek letters: '*X*' for *Chi* and '*P*' for *Rho* combined than the later, *developed* type. Only two examples of the Constantinian type are known from post-Roman northern Britain; one, probably belonging to the fifth century, recently re-discovered by Derek Craig (1997, 614–6), was carved at the top of the Whithorn, '*LATINUS*' stone, the other, an archaeism, can be dated to exactly AD 685 as it appears on

the dedication slab for Bede's monastery, founded by Benedict Biscop, at Jarrow (Cramp 1984, 113–4, Illus. 524). On the Atlantic side of the British Isles the later, *developed* form of *Chi-Rho*, discussed above (+ *P*), can be found, attached to an ordinary cross (not cross-of-arcs), in Cornwall, west Wales, Ireland, the Isle of Man and western Scotland, suggesting that the western seaboard is the route by which it was transmitted into Britain, probably arriving alongside traded goods from Francia. None of these examples is a satisfactory parallel for the Skeith motif. Only two other examples are known of the particular type of arciform *Chi-Rho* within a circle, like that found at Skeith, and both are carved in incised technique. The most significant appears on the *'LOCI PETRI APUSTOLI'* stone found near Whithorn (Allen & Anderson 1903, III, Figs 534–5; Craig 1997, 616–7) but another distributionally important version appears on a fragment recovered from an early Christian monastery at Maughold, Isle of Man, some 25 miles distant (Trench-Jellicoe 1981, 202–3). Both monuments have been dated to the seventh century and seem to belong to the period before Northumbrian influence affected Whithorn, within a phase which is considered still to be 'Ninianic'. Other, less useful parallels for the Skeith Stone, of crosses with curved arms but attenuated Rho-hook and no circle, occur in the Western Isles at Iona, on the *Lapis Echodi* Stone (RCAHMS 1982, no.22), on Raasay (Galbraith 1933, 318–20) and on Eilean Mór, Argyll (RCAHMS 1992, no. 33).

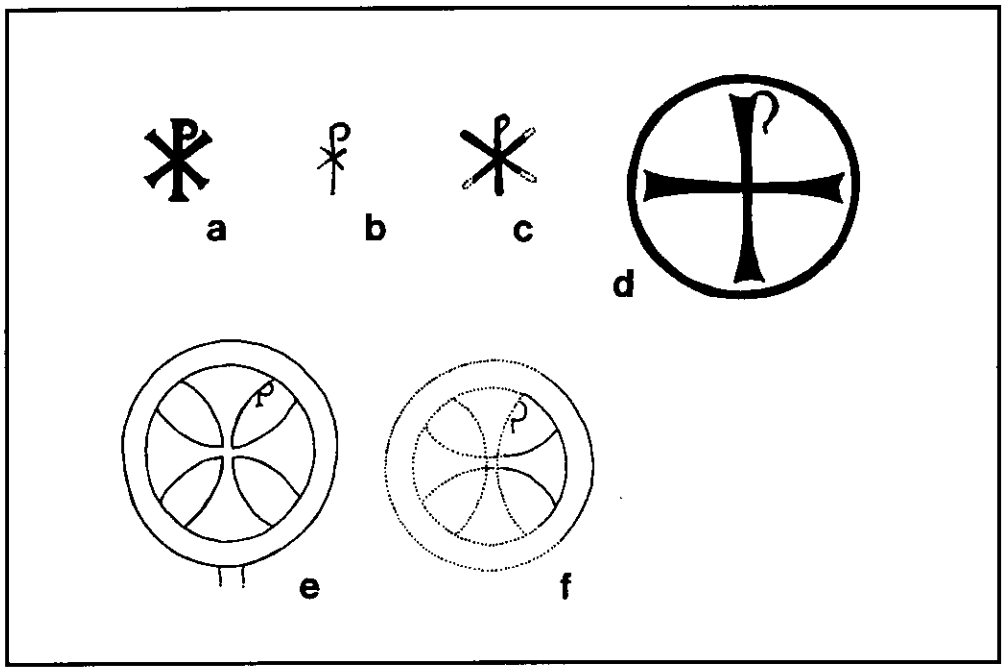
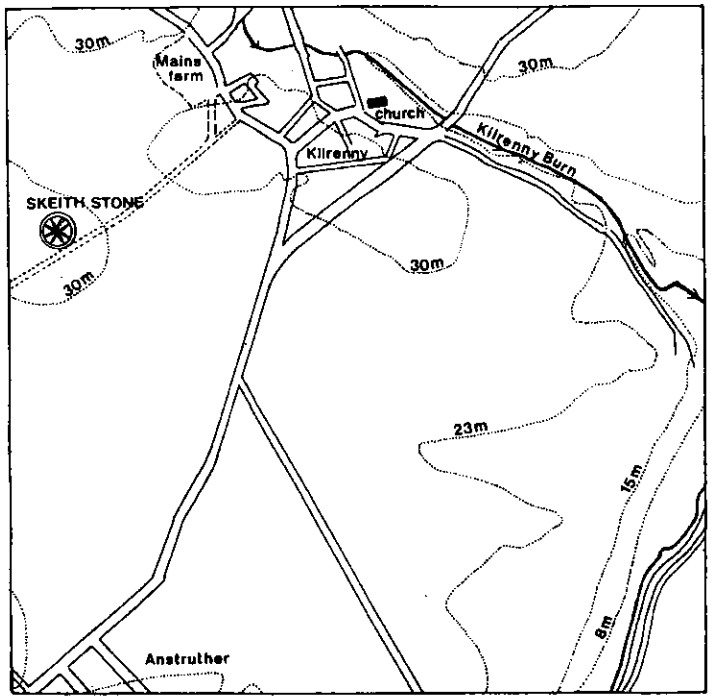


Fig. 3. Chi-Rho parallels for the Skeith Stone, Fife.
a. Constantinian chi-rho; b. Jarrow 17; c. Whithorn, Galloway 'LATINUS stone; d. Kirkmadrine, Galloway; e. Whithorn, Galloway 'LOCI PETRI APUSTOLI' slab; f. Maughold, Isle of Man, altar frontal.

The evidence available suggests that the closest parallels for the Skeith Stone appear in the northern Irish Sea province within a culture in receipt of Christian ideas emanating from southern Britain and the continent. Links between Ninianic Whithorn and Fife prior to extensive Northumbrian Christian influence seem to be recorded in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* when he states: 'The southern Picts ... had ... long ago given up the errors of idolatry and received the true faith through the preaching of the Word by the reverend and holy man Bishop Ninian ...' (Bede 1969, 222–3). The decoration on the Skeith Stone is, therefore, not only important because it is the first example that can be verified of a *Chi-Rho*[4], a specifically Christian emblem, in Pictland but also because it seems to demonstrate contact between the northern Irish Sea area and Fife during the seventh century and so is derived from an area otherwise suspected to be the source of southern Pictish Christianity. Moreover as both Whithorn

and Maughold are considered to be examples of early monastic settlements (both also have examples of literacy), the possible connection with Ethernan at Kilrenny suggests that we ought also to think of Kilrenny not only as a potentially Pictish monastery but also one of early date, perhaps functioning before AD 650.

The wider significance of the design decorating the Skeith Stone, the potential of the Kilrenny site as a Pictish monastery and its relationships with St Ethernan and the Isle of May will be considered in a forthcoming article (Trench-Jellicoe forthcoming). Grateful thanks to Isabel Henderson, Derek Craig, Ian Fisher, Charles Thomas and Simon Taylor for answering queries, likewise to minster Fife Blair, Sonny Corstophine and Eugene D'Espermil, all of Kilrenny and, finally, to the members of the Pictish Arts Society who took me bunberrying in the east neuk o' Fife on a delightful day — after the effects of the party had worn off!



Location Map 1. The Skeith Stone within the Kilrenny area

NOTES

1. s.a. 669(2) *Itarnan 7 Corindu apud Pictores defuncti sunt:* Itarnan (Etharnan) & Corindu died amongst the Picts (also appears in the *Annals of Tigernach* under 668)
2. For a recent photograph (by E.V.W. Proudfoot) see Fig. 17 in Nicoll, E.H. (ed.) *A Pictish Pano rama,* Balgavies.
3. Similar rings appear on a slab at Dyce, Aberdeens (Allen & Anderson 1903, part 3, Fig.212) and this is a motif which may have developed later into bosses within the angle of cross arms.
4. Isabel Henderson (pers com) has kindly pointed out another potential, lost example of a cross-of-arcs perhaps also with *Rho*-hook on St Nathalan's Cross at Tullich, Aberdeenshire. This was not recorded by Allen (Allen & Anderson 1903).

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The Early Medieval Sculptures from St Blane's, Kingarth, Bute

Lloyd Laing

The Early Christian monastic site of St Blane's, Kingarth, Isle of Bute, at the southern end of that island, was the focus of a programme of consolidation and excavation in the late 19th century, sponsored by the Third Marquess of Bute. The excavation, carried out in 1896, was under the direction of Charles Weir Schultz, architect to the 3rd Marquess (Anderson 1900; Stamp 1981, 41–2). As part of his programme of work Schultz had a series of watercolour drawings prepared by his assistant, Mortimer Pechell, of the medieval sculptured stones on the site, many of which he found incorporated into the walls of the medieval church when he consolidated and restored it. These drawings are now preserved in the archive at Mount Stuart, Bute. They were reproduced by Anderson in his summary report on Schultz's work at Kingarth (1900), and also by Allen and Anderson in *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (1903, III, 407–12). These are not however totally accurate, but in the case of the stones which are now missing, remain the only record of them.

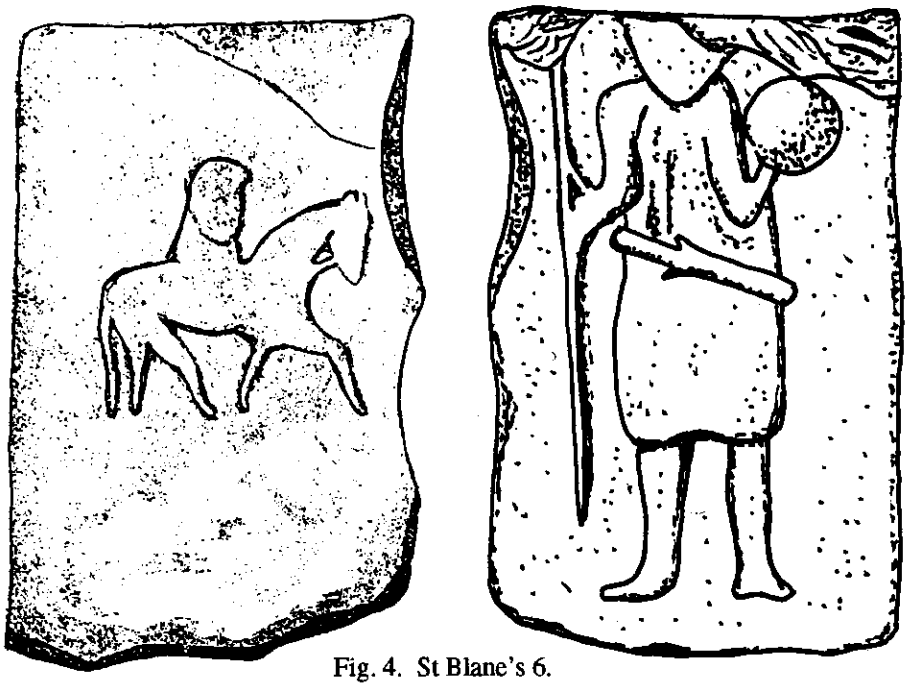

Fig. 4. St Blane's 6.

Despite the suggestion made by many commentators that the monastery of St Blane's was sacked by the Vikings (e.g. Radford 1967, 116), it now seems probable that there was no major break in activity on the site, and that during the Viking Age the monastery flourished, perhaps associated with a cult centred on St Blane, coming under the influence of the Norse church in Strathclyde. The loss of interest in Kingarth in the Irish sources at this period may have been due to Kingarth (and Bute) being transferred from Dalriada to Strathclyde. The history is difficult to disentangle, since Strathclyde does not appear in the sources between 760 and c.860, apart from two brief mentions, or between 872 and 924 — though between 878 and 889 the son of a Strathclyde prince seems to have ruled in Scotland by virtue of descent from Kenneth mac Alpin (Kirby 1962, 84–5). The story however is one of constant conflict between Dalriada and the Britons to the south, as the Scots tried to extend influence further south into Cumbria. Smyth has argued that from 872 to 1018 Strathclyde was a satellite of Scottish overlords (1984, 229). There is toponymic evidence for Strathclyde Britons in Cowal, and it

seems likely that some areas, such as Bute, were sometimes part of Dalriada, sometimes part of Strathclyde. In Gorman's Martyrology Blane is described as 'triumphant Blane of the Britons' (quoted in Watson 1926, 164). It is to this period, rather than to the monastery of the sixth to ninth centuries, that the sculptures at Kingarth mostly belong, though a series of later grave slabs continue the story of activity on the site into the later Middle Ages.

The Sculptures

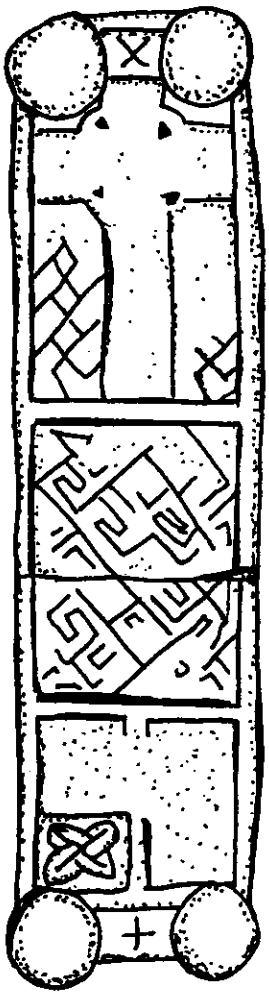

Fig. 5. St Blanes 4.

A study of the nineteenth century work carried out for the Third Marquess and a reappraisal of the site in the light of fieldwork carried out there in 1997 is forthcoming, but that study does not discuss the important assemblage of sculpture which is the subject of this note.

The sculptures from Kingarth represent for the most part a very homogeneous group which can be assigned to the tenth to eleventh century, and which show strong Viking influence. They are related to the monuments of Strathclyde, especially those of the Govan school. They have been conveniently numbered by Allen & Anderson (1903, 407–11), and that numbering is followed here.

The key monument of the group is a slab, now lost, with round 'bosses' on the corners (St Blane's 4, Fig. 5) which has been compared with monuments at Govan and Inchinnan, Renfrewshire, and has been identified as a kind of skeuomorphic corner-post shrine in which the posts are represented by bosses (Thomas 1994, 25; Bailey 1994, 114; Craig 1994, 80). This monument may have been associated with the shrine of St Blane himself, to which he may have been translated in the tenth century. A tradition which dates back to the medieval chronicler, Fordun, alleged that St Blane was buried at Kingarth rather than at Dunblane (*Scotichronicon*, xi, 21), the other major site associated with him, and modern tradition associates the hogback stone outside the south wall of the church with the grave of the saint. The hogback could be a later replacement for an earlier shrine and Hewison, in his account of the site, noted that a long-cist was found beneath the hogback in the nineteenth century containing two pieces of bronze though devoid of a burial (1893, 188).

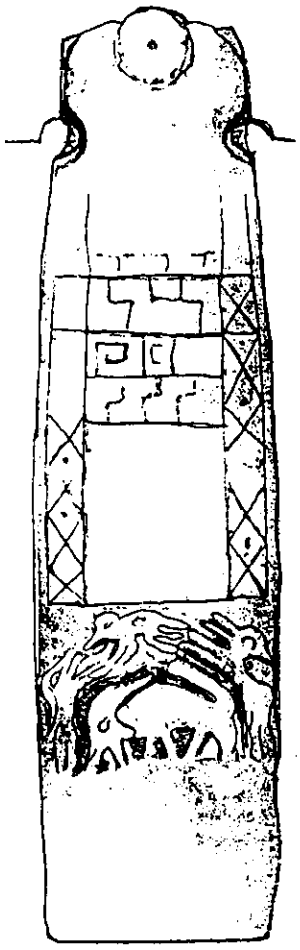

Fig. 6. St Blane's 1.

The alignment of the steps between the upper and lower churchyard at Kingarth is orientated on this supposed 'grave' of St Blane, not on the entrance to the later medieval church. If St Blane's 4 is not to be associated with a shrine of the Saint, it might have been associated with a shrine of Kingarth's other saint, Cattan.

Fig 7. St Blane's 2

St Blane's 2 and one face of St Blane's 6 (now lost) have a warrior on horseback, which can be compared with similar figures at Mountblow, Dunbarton (Batey 1994, 63, pl 35), Govan 29, Govan 4 and Govan 5 (Fisher 1994), and also appear on the Govan sarcophagus (Spearman 1994). Additionally, a mounted warrior appears on another stone from Rothesay, No. 2 (Allen & Anderson 1903, 416, fig 434), which is probably a product of the Kingarth 'School'. Such figures have been recognised as characteristic of the Strathclyde 'style'.

It is difficult to determine what the figure in front of the horseman on St Blane's 2 (Fig. 7) might be, but it could be interpreted as a falcon, in which case the figure is a huntsman rather than a warrior. If it is a falconer it can be equated with three representations of mounted falconry in Pictish art at St Andrews, Elgin and Fowlis Wester, recently discussed by Carrington who has pointed out that falconry is a feature of aristocratic Carolingian society: a falconer appears to be represented on the Northumbrian Bewcastle cross, and also on Stockburn 3, Co Durham (Carrington 1996, 462–3). The former has been seen as the earliest representation of falconry in Britain, the latter, of the tenth century, is probably roughly contemporary with St Blane's 2.

A full-length figure of a warrior appears on the front of St Blane's 6 (Fig. 4). This stone depicted a frontal figure holding a small, round shield of the type encountered on Pictish monuments, a spear and, at his waist, a dirk or short sword. This weapon is difficult to match in the repertoire of early medieval swords or daggers, as the quillons appear to turn upwards, a feature not encountered either on later medieval weapons. In style it is quite close to that of an incised slab from Egwysicsan, Glamorgan, which Nash-Williams dated to the seventh to ninth century, but which has a sword with a round pommel of late medieval date (Nash-Williams 1950, no 195). Unless the depiction is much later than the horseman on the front of the slab, it must be assumed to be of tenth or eleventh century date.

The figures on the worn and damaged shaft (St Blane's 1, Fig. 6) are equally problematic – they appear to represent a grazing animal flanked by two rampant animals with a bird between. There is no ready parallel in the assemblage of stones from Scotland, or, as far as I have been able to ascertain, in sculpture elsewhere in Britain, though it is notable that the rampant animal on the left has a 'pigtail' of the type usually associated with the Jellinge style.

One of the medieval slabs included by Allen & Anderson is rather different in character — St Blane's 3 (Fig. 10). This has a low relief cross with double-strand interlaced head, somewhat reminiscent of the slab from Papil, Shetland (Thomas 1973, 42, pl xv). This is however more probably a late medieval grave slab in the West Highland style, and can be compared with other medieval monuments in the churchyard (such as Anderson 1900, figs 32, 34, 35) which have crosses with similarly interlaced heads.

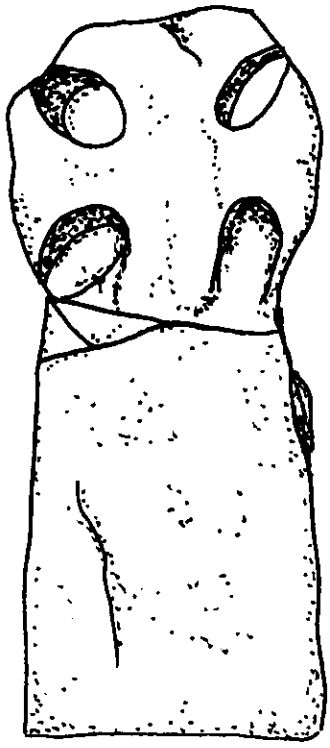

Fig. 8. St Blane's (unnumbered)

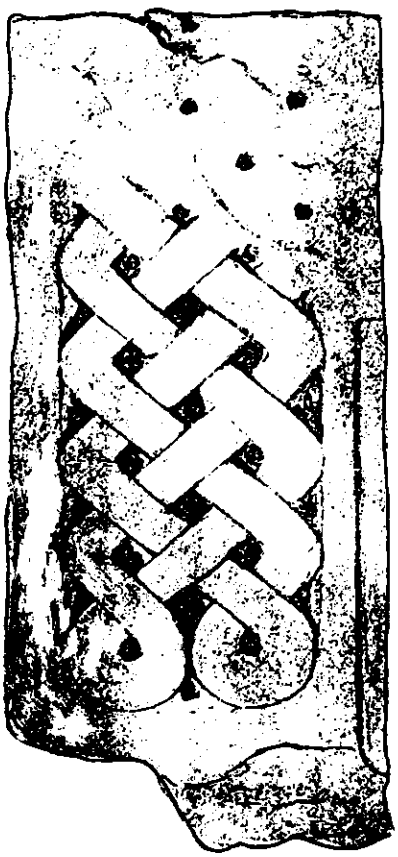

Fig. 9. St Blane's 8.

In the churchyard there is a series of ten small wheel-headed cross-decorated upright grave markers, variously weathered. One of the larger ones is figured here (fig 8). These are comparable to similar monuments in Wales (e.g. Nash-Williams 1950, 251a – Neath, Glamorgan), but which are also found in Argyll and other parts of the West Highlands and Islands. Dating is difficult, but they appear to belong to the tenth century and later.

A fragmentary cross shaft (no. 8, fig. 9), now lost, is decorated with interlace and is again in keeping with the Strathclyde tradition of sculpture of the tenth century. A further two fragments (one in RMS – GQ 43, acquired in 1972; the other missing) display similar interlace.

The remaining two cross-incised slabs are virtually undatable.

The monument described traditionally as St Blane's shrine is a hogback (Hewison 1893, 188). What appears to be another hogback is apparent in the upper churchyard (now mostly buried except its ridge) and Hewison refers to hogback stones in the plural. It is noteworthy that Kingarth does not appear on the published maps of hogback monuments (e.g. Lang 1974, fig 2), though it is clear that 'St Blane's Sarcophagus' is closely related to the Govan monuments, notably Govan 4 (Lang 1994, 127–8).

Additionally there is a series of five medieval grave slabs of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries and a number of other, now totally weathered, slabs that are likely to be of similar date.

The assemblage as a whole points to a very flourishing community at Kingarth in the tenth to eleventh centuries which looked mainly towards Strathclyde but was also receptive to influences from a much wider arena.

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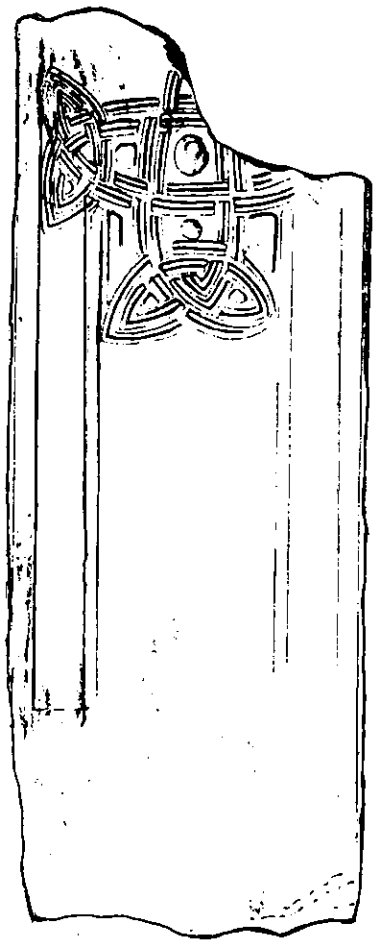

Fig.10. St Blane's 3.

Tattoo Redux: Picti, Pechts and the Motherland

Kyle A. Gray

In the year 787 CE, Bishop George of Ostia ventured into Northumbria as a legate of Pope Hadrian. In his written report, Bishop George informed the Pope that he had instructed King Aelfwold, his bishops, abbots and nobles that they must observe the Nicene creed and other such orthodox niceties, and do their duty as faithful Christians to cast away the remnants of paganism. The first such pagan remnant to be wiped out was described as follows:

> Deus enim formavit hominem pulchrum in decore et specie, pagani vero diabolico instinctu cicatrices teterrimas superinduxerunt, dicente Prudentio;
>
> 'Tinxit et innocuam maculis sordentibus humum.'
>
> Domino enim videtur facere injuriam, qui creaturam suam foedat et deturpat.
>
> Certe si pro Deo aliquis hanc tincturae injuriam sustineret, magnam inde remunerationem acciperet. Sed quisquis ex superstitione gentilium id agit, non ei proficit ad salutem, sicut nec Judaeis circumcisio corporis sine credulitate cordis.

Translation:

> For God made man noble in grace and form, but the pagans with their diabolical instinct put most hideous scars (marks) upon themselves, as Prudentius says;
>
> 'He stained (dyed) the innocent earth with foul disgraces.'
>
> For he who defiles and disfigures his own creature, clearly does injury to the Lord.
>
> Certainly if one were to suffer this injury of staining (dyeing) on behalf of God, he would receive for it great reward. But whoever does this from the superstition of the gentiles, it does not lead him to salvation, just as circumcision of the body without faithfulness of the heart does not for the Jews.

(Haddan & Stubbs 1871, 458; Whitelock 1979, 838; VanAmburg 1997).[1]

Hideous scars, dyeing and disfiguring the body with the injury of staining – what is going on here? It certainly sounds like some folks in northern Britain in the late 8th century were tattooing themselves. Indeed, one expert on tattooing speaks of this synod in Northumbria as having 'forbade all forms of tattooing,' and that from this time until the voyages of discovery during the Renaissance 'there is no evidence of tattooing in Europe' (Ebensten 1955, 14).

In 1984, Charles Thomas looked at a small part of Bishop George's report, calling it a 'curious document' written by papal legates on a visit to Mercia, not Northumbria, in 786, not 787 (Thomas 1984, 182). Thomas used the report as possible evidence of tattooing among 'Old World' peoples other than the Picts (*Id.*). While this diatribe of the Roman Church does seem, on first blush, to have been aimed at Northumbrians or Mercians, there is no evidence of which I am aware that the Angles tattooed themselves. There is good evidence, however, that their northern Pictish neighbours engaged in such a practice, at least in pre-Christian times (*Id.* at 181–3; Thomas 1963, 88–93; Diack 1944, 24–7).

A decade later, Elizabeth Sutherland looked anew at Thomas' comment on the papal legates' 'visit to Mercia in 786' and their condemnation of the 'injury of staining' (Sutherland 1994, 78). She questioned if '[p]erhaps this was a reference to Mercian neighbours, the Picts' (*Id.*) In fact, as the entire report and supporting contemporaneous documents make clear, the legate's capitulary against tattooing was actually prepared during a separate meeting with the Northumbrians in 787 (Haddan & Stubbs 1871, 443–62). The Northumbrians, of course, were much closer neighbors of the Picts than the Mercians. In this full context, Sutherland's question is a good one. I hope to answer it by addressing below the issue of whether this report of an 8th-century Italian bishop is Christian-era proof that the

'Picti' were truly the painted men of classical lore.[2]

Whose Tattoos?

Bishop George's comments on tattooing were written during his sojourn in Northumbria. Traveling from Rome, George and his fellow legate, Bishop Theophylact of Todi, first went to Canterbury (called Dorovernia in George's report) in 786 (Whitelock 1979, 836–7). The legates then journeyed on to Mercia, meeting with both the kings of Mercia and the West Saxons (*Id.* at 837). As set down in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the legates' task among the English, nearly two-hundred years after St. Augustine's first mission to Kent, was 'to renew the faith and the peace which St. Gregory had sent us by Augustine the Bishop' (Haddan & Stubbs 1871, 444).

After their meeting with Kings Offa and Cynewulf, the legates left Mercia (Whitelock 1979, 837). Theophylact traveled to Wales, while George went on to York (*Id.*). In York, George met with Archbishop Eanbald, but was informed that King Aelfwold of Northumbria was 'dwelling far to the north' (*Id.*). Messengers were sent out far and wide to call together for council 'all the chief men of the region, both ecclesiastical and secular' (*Id.*). This synod of the northern provinces was duly held on 'the 4th of the nones of September' 787 at Pincahala (or Wincanheale), somewhere to the north of York (Haddan & Stubbs 1871, 444). At that synod, where the papal legate was to inform the northern Christians of the Pope's concerns regarding unorthodox practices among the English which were already suspected, 'it was related' to George that 'there were other, no less serious vices requiring correction there' (Whitelock 1979, 837).

Thus, it was in Northumbria, not Mercia, where George composed and orally presented to the assembled crowd a 'capitulary concerning the various matters,' including the 'hideous scars' of the 'injury of staining' (*Id.*, 837, 839). The chief ecclesiastical and secular men of the region attended this northern synod. From the far north, the bishops of Hexham, Lindisfarne and Whithorn heard and approved George's capitulary (*Id.*). It was only upon George's return to the south that Mercians and other southern English signed that document (*Id.*, 839–40).

While no Picts are signatories to the capitulary, it seems likely some (complete with tattoos?) could have been in attendance at Pincahala in 787. There is much scholarly speculation regarding the sharing of ideas and artisans between the Northumbrian and Pictish Christian communities in these decades after Nechtan sought the advice of Bede's abbot and then expelled the Columban clergy in 717 (Hudson 1994a, 151–2; Anderson 1987, 7; Henderson 1984, 81–4). While the exact nature of the contacts is not clear, given the similarities between Pictish and Northumbrian art, the creation of a new bishopric at Whithorn and various chronicle entries about contacts between the two races, most scholars are confident a good deal of interaction took place between the Picts and Northumbrians throughout the 8th century (*Id.*; and Foster 1996, 78; Cummins 1995, 40, 89–98; Laing & Laing 1993, 153; Ritchie 1989, 29–31; Chadwick 1960, 134-37).

Opinions differ on the state of native bishoprics and monasteries in Pictavia in the 7th and 8th centuries (Morris 1996, 58–65; Morris 1989, 821–3; Henderson 1982, 104–5; Hughes 1980, 51–2; Brown 1972; Donaldson 1952, 107). In any event, religious-minded Picts could readily have taken up vocations in monasteries to the south and been in the retinues from Lindisfarne, Hexham or Whithorn that met with Bishop George. In these early years of the European Church, Irish, English, Frankish and other European monks often resided in monasteries and courts far from their native lands (Fletcher 1997, 160–284; Brown 1980, 27–32; Chadwick 1960, 136–8). A good example from the late 8th century is Alcuin of York, who had a storied career in his native Northumbria (including taking part in Bishop George's mission), then in the Frankish court of Charlemagne and finally as abbot of St. Martins in Tours (Fletcher 1997, 180–275; Bullough 1965, 99–112).[3]

Whithorn, in particular, with its connections to the story of St. Ninian and an early conversion of the southern Picts, might have attracted Pictish Christians (Hughes 1980, 49; Macquarrie 1997, 52; Chadwick 1960, 134–5). Although many of the details of this early conversion tale are now thought to be fiction, the stories of St. Ninian clearly carried great weight in the 8th century, with the first bishop of Whithorn having the intriguing name of Peohthelm, meaning 'shield (guardian) of the Picts' (Bede

III.4; Macquarrie 1997, 50–67; Fletcher 1997, 80; Hughes 1980, 49-52; Chadwick 1960, 134). In fact, the Bishop of Whithorn who signed George's capitulary did so under the old name from Ninian's time, *Candida Casa* (Whitelock 1979, 839; Bede III.4). Thus, a call to all the ecclesiastics of the 'regio' could well have included some Picts, especially to meet with the first papal representative to visit Britain since Augustine's mission nearly two hundred years before. (Whitelock 1979, 837).[4]

Even if tattooed Picts were not physically present at the synod in Pincahala, Northumbrians residing at or near Hexham, Whithorn and Lindisfarne were certainly in a position to relay contemporaneous, firsthand knowledge of the Picts to Bishop George. A century earlier, Hexham's first bishop, Wilfrid, castigated the 'bestial tribes of Picts' who fought against the Northumbrians (Whitelock 1979, 754–5), and interaction of the Picts and Northumbrians from that time on was quite active (Cummins 1995, 89–98; Hudson 1994a, 151–2; Smyth 1984, 119–22). A bishop of Whithorn named Peohtwine ('Pict-friend') had died only a decade earlier in 777, and Lindisfarne was the major monastic foundation closest to the Pictish border (Whitelock 1979, 269). With Christianity emerging from its infancy in Pictavia (Hughes 1980, 38–52), Northumbrian bishops on the borders might well have felt some responsibility to inform Bishop George of the non-conforming practices of their northern neighbours.

Whether by viewing tattoos on visiting Picts, or hearing of the practice from others, tattooing was clearly brought to the attention of Bishop George (Whitelock 1979, 838). If these northern tattooists were not Picts, but Northumbrians, a reassessment is due of the assumption by Pictish scholars that tattooing at this late date would be 'an extraordinary custom' (Ritchie 1994, 5). In fact, if the Mercians or Northumbrians did tattoo themselves, the practice must have been more widespread than is generally assumed (Thomas 1984, 182). In light of the rest of the capitulary, however, such a reassessment seems unnecessary.

Bishop George attacks 'the injury of staining' first, in great detail, leaving this sin set off alone in the text of '*reliquias pagnorum rituum*' (Haddan & Stubbs 1871, 458). George then goes on separately to assail a whole list of other pagan remnants, including over-dressing, casting of lots, eating of horseflesh, the docking of horses' tails and ears and the slitting of their nostrils (Whitelock 1979, 838). Bishop George calls the dressing issue a fashion of the gentiles 'whom, by the help of God, your fathers expelled by arms from the country' (*Id.*). This would seem to be a reference to the defeat of King Penda of Mercia and his pagan forces by the Christian King Oswy of Northumbria in 655 (Bede, III.24; Campbell 1982, 46). The rest of the pagan remnants follow on the heels of George's exasperation about this 'dumbfounding thing, that you imitate the example of those [expelled pagans] whose life you have always detested' (*Id.*). Tattooing, however, is not called a vice of the expelled Mercians, but is decried as a 'superstition' of some unnamed gentiles (Whitelock 1979, 838).

In the mind of Bishop George, then, tattooing seems separate from the Germanic pagan remnants. In fact, Germanic pagans are known to have engaged in many horse-related rituals, including mutilation and the eating of horseflesh (Davidson 1988, 55–6). One study of pagan Europe concludes that it was Bishop George's attack on the pagan nature of such practices which began the taboo on eating horseflesh still current in Britain today (Jones & Pennick, 140). Bede himself told how the Northumbrian nobility kept special horses with 'royal trappings,' giving a glimpse of the importance of horses in Northumbrian society (Bede, III.14; Campbell 1979, 11). As for the fancy clothing of the nobility and clergy, this is a recurring motif in critical letters from Alcuin of York to the Northumbrian elite after the visit of Bishop George (Whitelock 1979, 843, 845, 852, 854). Those letters do not mention tattooing or anything like it. Surely they would have if tattooing had truly been a Northumbrian custom denounced by papal legates.

Compared to Pictish history, early Northumbrian history is blessed with much documentation (Whitelock 1979). If the Northumbrians had engaged in an unusual practice like tattooing, other mention of it would almost certainly appear in the voluminous documentary record, especially – as Anna Ritchie points out in a different context – in Bede's many writings on his homeland (Ritchie 1994, 5). All-in-all, it seems most likely that Bishop George's attack on tattooing was aimed not at the

Mercians or Northumbrians, but at the Picts. It was an issue doomed to be lost in the Viking onslaught, which would begin at Lindisfarne a short six years later, and the subsequent upheaval to all things Pictish caused by Kenneth mac Alpin and the Dalriadan Scots. It is an issue which plagues Pictish studies to this very day.

Picti or Pechts?

Is *Picti* a descriptive Latin nickname for a painted people, or is it a Latinized version of a native term like *Pecht*? (McHardy 1992, 14–6). This question has driven much scholarly speculation (*Id.*; and Ritchie 1994, 5; Anderson 1987, 7; Smyth 1984, 33, 77; Henderson 1967, 33; Thomas, 1963, 88–93; Chadwick 1958; Wainwright 1955; Diack 1944). Obviously, the answer is closely tied to the answer to the question addressed above: Did the Picts tattoo or otherwise paint themselves, thereby earning a descriptive Latin name from the Roman legions patrolling the northern British border? (Anderson 1987, 7; Smyth 1984, 57). Although 'current opinion favours a derivation from the Picts' own name for themselves rather than the nickname 'the painted ones'' (Ritchie 1994, 5), Bishop George's report points in the other direction. As explained below, I suggest that the evidence best supports a third alternative: *Picti or Pechts*? Yes, both.

Latin Nickname

As has long been recognized, the term *Picti* is easily explained as a derivation of the Latin root words *pictus* or *pingo*, and their various derivations (including *pictor* and *pictura*), all of which have something to do with painting and making decorations (Nicolaisen 1996, 4; Anderson 1987, 7; Smyth 1984, 33,77; Thomas 1963, 88; Chadwick 1958, 152; Diack 1944, 25). In fact, *pingo* is the Latin term for tattoo, a word of Tahitian derivation which did not enter the European lexicon until the mid-16th century (Morwood 1995; Ebensten 1955, 14). Along with the term *Picti* itself, which Romans apparently used as shorthand to their audience at home, there are many statements from classical works about painted Britons (Ritchie 1992, 5; Chadwick 1958).

Regarding tattoos in particular, in the 5th century CE, Claudian twice described the natives living in Caledonia as having 'iron-marked' (tattooed) faces or bodies, and called them the 'not falsely-named' Picti (Chadwick 1958, 150–1). Earlier, Herodian reported (in Greek) that the Britanni 'mark their bodies with varied signs and with figures of all kinds,' and Solinus stated that these same British 'barbarians' have creatures represented on their bodies by 'cunningly wrought marks' which 'drink in as much of the dye as possible through the scars [*cicatrices*] which record this' (*Id.*, 158, 160–1).

Into the Christian era, Jordanes reported in 551 CE that the Caledonians have iron-painted bodies (*'ferro pingunt corpora'*) (Chadwick 1958, 153). And Isidore of Seville put the following entry into his *Origines* (a kind of encyclopedia) around 600 CE:

> The race of the Picts has a name derived from the appearance of their bodies. These are played upon by a needle working with small pricks and by the squeezed-out sap of a native plant, so that they bear the resultant marks [*cicatrices*] according to the personal rank of the individual, their painted limbs being tattooed to show their high birth.

(Ritchie 1994, 5; Diack 1944, 26).[5]

This impressive array of evidence for tattooing has been dismissed in the past as not containing proof from actual eyewitnesses of Picts bearing tattoos (e.g., Ritchie 1994, 5; Chadwick 1958, 162–3). In particular, Isidore of Seville's statement is doubted because 'tattooing was no longer practiced at the time he was writing, around 600, otherwise Adomnán or later Bede would have mentioned such an extraordinary custom' (Ritchie 1994, 5). Bishop George's condemnation of tattooing does not suffer from the first complaint, and may refocus the second.

First, George must have either observed tattooed Picts himself, or been told about them by reliable eyewitnesses. There can be no suggestion that George was mouthing the much earlier statements of Claudian and the others, as Chadwick proposes for Jordanes and Isidore (Chadwick 1958, 162–3). Bishop George was in Northumbria personally, on the border of Pictavia, speaking with men who had every reason to know the current practices of their neighbors (Whitelock 1979, 837). As evidenced by the early Christian penitentials, churchmen kept busy prohibiting conduct which was actually occurring (Gies & Gies 1987, 61–5). If tattooing was not a current problem in the northern '*regio*,' there was no reason for anyone to bring a long-discarded practice to the attention of a papal legate, much less for him to condemn it.

Second, the idea that neither Bede nor Adomnán mentioned tattooing may need to be re-examined. Both Bede and Adomnán used the term Picti exclusively when discussing the natives of non-Dalriadic Scotland, as did Patrick and Gildas (Farmer 1990; Anderson 1987, 7; Winterbottom 1978; Anderson & Anderson 1961; Bieler 1953). They were all accomplished Latin speakers and must have known the meaning of what they were saying. In other words, every time they mentioned the *Picti*, these men – from the three different races (Irish, British and English) surrounding Pictavia – may well have been commenting that the Picts painted or tattooed themselves.

Perhaps an analogy is in order on this point. Europeans referred to Native Americans as *redskins* in documents countless times, but did not always feel compelled to explain that these tribal peoples had skin, which compared to the paler European skin tone, looked red.[6] The nickname spoke for itself. Only an encyclopediest – like Isidore – or a distant foreigner – like George of Ostia – should be expected to engage in further comment on a well-known fact. If, as Bishop George's capitulary suggests, the Picts did tattoo themselves in the 7th and 8th centuries when Adamnán and Bede were writing, then the fact that those writers used the term *Picti* may, itself, speak volumes.

Irish natives of Adamnán's time may have also used a similar descriptive term for the Picts. *Cruithni*, the Gaelic for Pict, seems to be an Irish word with the same sense as Picti, namely people of the *cruth* or designs (Anderson 1987, 12; Zimmer 1898, 7). Although the pre-9th century evidence is sparse, this Irish word may have been in use fairly early, at a time prior to Kenneth mac Alpin's victories over the Picts (Anderson 1987, 12). In the *Senchus Fer nAlbain*, which Bannerman dates as 7th century, a Dalriadan named Galan is said to have a '*cruthnech mathair*' or Pictish mother (Bannerman 1974, 42).[7]

Zimmer suggested that *Picti* could be a Latin translation of the name used by the Irish and British tribes to describe their northern neighbours; *Cruithni* in Gaelic and *Priteni* in Cymric (Zimmer 1898, 7). Nicolaisen likewise asserts that the Latin *Picti* is 'a secondary reinterpretation in the medium of another language' (Nicolaisen 1996, 5). Thomas disagrees, believing it to be much more likely that the term *Picti* sprang spontaneously from the Romans to describe something observed by both these foreign soldiers and the southern Britons (Thomas 1984, 182). In any event, similar terms were apparently used by non-Picts to describe the northern Britons as 'people of the designs' (Henderson 1992, 45).

It seems unlikely that all of the Picts' closest neighbours would have called them by names invoking tattooing if the Picts, in fact, did not tattoo themselves. It also seems unlikely that a descriptive name from classical times would have remained current centuries later in the Christian-era, if the custom the name so obviously described had died out long ago. Interestingly, despite its wide usage in the Irish Annals, Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, hagiography, and other Latin documents of the time, there is no documentary evidence of the term *Picti* being used to the face of a Pict.

The Andersons noted this curious fact long ago, pointing out that although Bede popularized the phrase '*rex Pictorum*' in his many Latin works, Bede's abbot, Ceolfrith, did not use that title when responding to King Nechtan's request for information on the Easter-dating controversy (Anderson & Anderson 1961, 61). Instead, he used the non-specific phrase, 'most excellent and illustrious lord' (Bede V.21). The Andersons suggested this is because in making friendly overtures to his northern neighbors, Ceolfrith specifically chose not to use the 'perhaps offensive title of *rex Pictorum*' (Anderson

& Anderson 1961, 61).

A later Northumbrian letter from Bishop George's time contains a similarly ambiguous phrase. In 796, Osbald, a Northumbrian noble, went into exile after being implicated in the murder of King Ethelred (Whitelock, 274, 852). Using Bede's Latin phraseology, as did all other chronicles from this era, the *Historia Regum* attributed to Simeon of Durham tells us that Osbald's exile was with the 'King of the Picts' (*Id.* 274). That chronicle was not written for Pictish eyes. However, Alcuin wrote Osbald a letter in 796 to be delivered to him in his exile, certainly knowing that the missive might well be read or heard by any number of Picts in the course of its delivery and proposed frequent 'read[ing] in [Osbald's] presence' (*Id.* 853). Carefully avoiding the term *Picti*, at the end of his letter Alcuin instructs Osbald 'if you can at all exhort *the race among whom you are exiled* concerning its salvation, do not neglect to do so'(*Id.*) (emphasis added).

Alcuin's use of such a cumbersome, neutral phrase as 'the race among whom you are exiled' is quite curious if the usual, useful shorthand among Latin writers – *Picti* – was not a problem to put into his letter. Given the exiled Osbald's precarious circumstances, however, Alcuin's phraseology becomes perfectly understandable if *Picti* was a term the folk upon whom Osbald had become dependent did not like. A self-name which arose from a native term would likely not be insulting, a descriptive nickname easily could be. [8]

Arguing from the non-tattooing camp, Anna Ritchie recently suggested that a tattooed 'Pictish-looking figure' in the Book of Kells, an insular illuminated manuscript ca. 800, might represent 'a gentle monkish joke, a play on the name of the Picts' (Ritchie 1994, 10–1). Bishop George's evidence of tattooing in the time period when most scholars believe the Book of Kells was created may turn the joke into something much more serious. Julian Brown believes that the Book of Kells was created in an unknown monastery in eastern Pictavia around the time of Bishop George's late 8th century visit to Northumbria (Brown 1972, 316). In Isabel Henderson's opinion, '[t]he political and ecclesiastical conditions of the eighth century and the quality of the art, intellectually as well as artistically, make Professor Brown's inclusion of eastern Scotland as one of the possible provenances for the Book of Kells entirely reasonable and fair' (Henderson 1984, 105).

Whether the Book of Kells was produced in Iona or someplace farther to the east, it seems clear that some of the artists behind that masterwork had an extensive knowledge of the Picts and their art (*Id.*). Anyone who studies the Pictish stones has seen a distinct style for the male figure; 'the hair is long, the nose prominent and the chin bearded or pointed' (*Id.*, 94). Anna Ritchie recognized it in a figure from the gospel of St. Mark, Book of Kells: 'a wholly Pictish-looking figure with his beard and formal hair-style [who] appears to be naked and covered with body-painting' (Ritchie 1994, 10). Such 'Pictish-looking figures' abound in the Book of Kells (e.g., Meehan 1994, 20, 30, 43, 51, 66, 70). Remarkably, most of these figures seem to be covered in blue or green body paint, and have blond or red hair (*Id.*).

To bring this discussion full circle back to the early writers who created the *Picti* mystique: Tacitus reported that the Caledonians had 'reddish hair,' Claudian describes the 'iron-marked' Britons as being wrapped in a 'sea-green mantle,' Gildas said the Picti 'cover[ed] their villainous faces with hair,' and Isidore stated that the *genti Pictorum* put tattoos on their 'painted limbs' (Ritchie 1994, 3; Winterbottom 1978, 23; Chadwick 1958, 150; Diack 1944, 26; Zimmer 1898, 2–3). Those descriptions fit like a glove the 'Pictish-looking' figures in the Book of Kells, which were being drawn and colored at the same time Bishop George composed his capitulary against tattooing. If, as some believe, the Pictish stones were originally painted with the bright colors used in illuminated manuscript production, then the similarity between the Picts on the symbol stones, and the 'Pictish-looking' figures in the Book Of Kells, would be truly remarkable (Cessford 1996; Ritchie & Ritchie 1991, 163).

Taken in its full context, the condemnation of tattooing in the 8th-century legate's report is powerful evidence that Charles Thomas is right: *Picti* is a nickname used by soldiers to describe the tattooed Picts 'which arose spontaneously, in camp Latin, in Roman and Romanized mouths' (Thomas 1984,

182). It is a nickname which outlasted the Roman legions because the term's description of a pagan practice still fit its bearers long into the Christian-era.

Bishop George's report of tattooing in the 8th century is also relevant to the theory of Thomas and Diack that tattoos provided the exemplars for the enigmatic symbols carved on Pictish stones after the classical era (Thomas 1984, 181; Thomas 1963, 93; Diack 1944, 28).[9] In 1992, Isabel Henderson suggested that 'if the report[s] of body decoration can be shown to be based on anything other than one raveler's sensational tale,' then the idea of Diack and Thomas that tattooing forms the bridge between the initial pagan creation of the Pictish symbols and their transposition into stone, should be seriously considered (Henderson 1992, 45). The legate's capitulary against tattooing seems to be just that missing evidence.

Native Self-Name

If *Picti* is a Latin nickname, does that mean the historical Picts did not have a name they called themselves? The short answer is we simply do not know (Nicolaisen 1996, 5). One of the reasons a nickname arises is the lack of a single term for foreigners to use to encompass related, tribal peoples. Columbus' geographically inept term 'Indians' arose from just such a need, and is still in use today. In the classical era, Ptolemy listed over a dozen tribes living in the Pictish areas of Scotland (Smyth 1984, 41). The Romans also described the Picts under various tribal names, including *Caledonii* and *Maeatae*, and *Dicalydonas* and *Verturiones* (*Id.* at 6; Anderson 1987, 7; and Smyth 1984, 13). One need not cogitate on such names for too long to see how attractive the shorthand term *Picti* must have been to non-natives.

This tribal nature of the Picts apparently continued into the Christian-era. A recent translation of the Welsh poem *Y Gododdin* suggests that in the unknown poet's description of a Pictish warrior from beyond Bannock as 'the young son of Cian from *Maen Gwyngwn*,' the enigmatic phrase *Maen Gwyngwn* means 'the Stone of the *Venicones*, a tribe in southern Pictland' (Koch & Carey 1995, 317; Clarkson 1992, 2-4).[10] *Y Gododdin* likely had its beginnings in 6th-century Strathclyde (Koch & Carey 1995, 296-7). Adomnán also used a tribal name to describe Picts defeated in battle by King Aedan of Dalriada circa 590 (Sutherland 1994, 52–3; Adomnán, I.8, 9). The *Miathi* mentioned by Adamnán are likely the *Maeatae* tribe from Roman times (Smyth 1984, 42).

Although the number of tribes seems to have decreased in the 7th and 8th centuries, there is still good evidence that the Picts were not yet a single, unified people. Eddius Stephanus tells of the '*populi bestiales Pictorum*,' (bestial tribes of the Picts) cursed by Bishop Wilfrid of Hexham ca. 670 (Whitelock 1979, 755; Henderson 1967, 54). While Bede refers to the Picti as a nation, he also speaks of southern and northern Picts in 731 (Bede I.1, III.4). As late as 782, the Irish annals speak of a Pictish king 'on this side of [the] Monoth' (Mac Airt &Mac Niocaill 1983, 237). Thus, a unifying nickname for the Picts might well have proved useful throughout the entire history of the Pictish people.

Interestingly, though, in the Christian-era another term for the Picts begins to emerge. Although sharing a first consonant with *Picti*, the term is clearly somewhat different. In Welsh, the term is a variation of 'Peith,' surfacing in such words as *Peith-wyr* (Peith-people, or Picts) and the name *Peithen* (Pict-sprung?) (Nicolaisen 1996, 5; McHardy 1992, 14–5). The name *Peteova* can also be added into this Welsh mix. She was the daughter of Cau, a Pictish king who appears in Welsh hagiography and early Arthurian stories, a literary figure who Nora Chadwick called part of the lost literature of Celtic Scotland (Chadwick 1951, 124).

In Old English, the term is a variation of 'Peohtas' or 'Pehtas,' showing up in chronicle notations and such interesting personal names as *Peohthelm* (Pict-shield), *Peohtwine* (Pict-friend) and *Peohtred* (Pict-counseled) (Nicolaisen 1996, 5). Seemingly close linguistic kin can also be found in the Old Scots term 'Pecht' (*Id.*). Peothelm and Peohtwine were 8th-century bishops at Whithorn, a place – as explained earlier – with ties to Pictavia (Whitelock 1979, 267, 742). Peohtred was a heretical cleric in

9th-century Northumbria who got on the wrong side of the Bishop of Lindisfarne (*Id.* at 875). Henry Howorth suggested that these could be clerical names taken in religion (Howorth 1917, 38). If so, it is noteworthy that these Pict-related clergy did not use the term *Picti*, perhaps recognizing it to be insulting and of no help in whatever proselytizing activities they had in mind. For whatever reason, *Peoht* seems to have lacked a similar derogatory connotation.

Perhaps the most intriguing of these terms comes from relative latecomers on the Pictish scene, the Norse Vikings. The Old Norse words for the Picts are variations of 'Pettar' or 'Pettir,' and the term shows up in their name for the Pentland Firth; *Petlandsfjordr* (Nicolaisen 1996, 5). The *Historia Norvegiae*, which may have been written in Orkney ca. 1200, uses the term 'Peti' (Morris 1989, 7–8). This appears to be a conflation of the Norse 'Pett' with a Latin plural ending. Could it be that the Norse missed the period of *Picti* usage all together, and employed only a term the Picts used themselves?

The common bond among these Welsh, English and Norse terms seems to be a 'Peth' or 'Pett' sound, lacking the hard 'c' that makes *Picti* what it is; a Latin term for painting or designs which became our modern English word 'picture.' The only potential exception is the Old Scots 'Pecht,' which keeps the 'et' of the Welsh, English and Norse, but throws in a 'c.' However, since we do not know û at least as far as I was able to ascertain û whether a 'ch' in Old Scots is a hard or soft aspiration, 'Pecht' may well be a 'pett' sound as well.

Of course, to those who study the Picts, the term 'pett' jumps out as the original spelling of the 'pit' place names that cover the Pictish landscape (Nicolaisen 1996, 7; McNeill & MacQueen 1996, 50–1). Like *Peith*, *Peoht*, *Pecht* and *Pettar*, the Pictish word *pett* does not seem to have been in use until the post-Roman, early Christian-era. As Nicolaisen explains, '*Pit*-names in which *pet(t)* serves as a generic are, from a chronological point of view, rather late newcomers on the Pictish scene' (Nicolaisen 96, 9). He suggests that the Romano-Gaulish evidence shows that the term was latent throughout early Pictish times, with "the actualization' of the place name as we know it not happening until, 'let us say, the seventh or eighth century' (*Id.*)

John Marsden recently asked whether 'the many place names incorporating the elements Pit – or Pet – can be taken as evidence for some form of 'Pict' having been the name by which native tribes beyond the Forth called themselves?' (Marsden 1997). In light of the foregoing discussion, that is a very interesting question.

Keeping Professor Thomas' exhortation in mind that scholarly debate is moved forward by the offering of hypotheses which can then either be attacked or used by others (Thomas 1987, 169), I would like to offer the following possible answer to Marsden's question:

> 1. *Picti* is exactly what it seems; a Latin term for a northern people who tattooed themselves. It was used long into the Christian-era as a useful shorthand, in part because some tattooing was still occurring as late as the 8th century. Although useful, the nickname *Picti* was not used in addressing the Picts themselves, who considered it insulting.
>
> 2. The Picts, an amalgamation of several tribes with common practices – e.g., the use of a P-Celtic language and the following of such customs as tattooing and matrilineal succession – did not initially have one self-name, but called themselves by their tribal designations, such as *Maeatae* or *Verturiones*, into the early Christian-era.
>
> 3. Whether through unified battles against foreigners, a practice of Pictish overkings, or a simple melding through time, the Pictish tribes eventually became unified enough to use a common term for themselves; a term something like *Pettwyr* or people of the *petts*. The English and Welsh used this term intermittently with the older *Picti*, and the later arriving Norse Vikings used it exclusively, calling the Pictish territory they invaded by the revealing name of *Petland*.

Left unanswered in the above hypothesis is the question of what does the term 'pett' mean and why did the Picts use it to describe themselves? *Pett* is apparently a Pictish word for portion of land. Indeed, there is a Gaulish cognate 'petia' which seems to mean much the same (Nicolaisen 1996, 7). So, if the various 'pett' terms do reflect a native self-name, then the Picts may have named themselves after the way they divided up their most precious resource, their tribal lands. Thus, the answer to Marsden's question may be that the Picts did indeed call themselves by a name related to the ubiquitous 'pit' place names: the Picts were the *Pettwyr*, or People of the Place of the Petts. [11]

The Motherland

In the spirit of suggesting hypotheses, I would like to make one more which is admittedly lacking much by way of proof, but does have a certain attraction to it, especially in the light of my personal belief that the evidence for the Picts being a matrilineal people is quite strong. Taking the above analysis about the Pettwyr one step further, one question seems to logically follow: Why would a people name themselves after the way they divided up their land?

Land often plays a role in distinguishing the identity of a people (Cowan 1984, 114). Generally this means that 'territories were named for peoples or kindreds' (*Id.*) If the above hypothesis about the *Pettwyr* is correct, however, the Picts named themselves for their territory, not vice versa. Could it be, then, that there was something different in the way the Picts divided land, something which set them apart from their neighbors, something with which they would strongly identify themselves? One answer that comes to mind is matriliny; i.e., that Pictish land rights descended not from fathers, but through mothers.

I will not repeat the persuasive evidence for royal Pictish matriliny here (e.g., Gray 1996, 7–12; Anderson 1987, 9–10; Cummins 1995, 31–6; Sellar 1985; Miller 1982, 133–61). However, one interesting historic document should be noted, which suggests that all Pictish inheritance rights, not just the right to kingship, passed through mother-right. In *The History of the Descendants of Ir*, the Irish writer reported that for the *Cruithni* on 'the plains of *Fortrenn* ... [t]he royal succession ... *and all inherited property* came through the mothers' (Dobbs 1923, 65) (emphasis added). Gearóid Mac Eoin dates this Old Irish tale of Pictish property succession to the 9th or 8th century, possibly earlier, and Molly Miller believes it may give a true picture of succession rights 'while the kingdom was still that of the Picts or called Pictavia' (Miller 1982, 144–5; Mac Eoin 1964, 151–3).

If the Picts remained matrilineal as late as the 8th and 9th centuries, they did so despite being surrounded by patrilineal peoples on all sides. In short, they engaged in what Professor Thomas describes as 'isolated conservatism' (Thomas 1963, 89). Could the Picts, as a stubbornly matrilineal people, have elected to call themselves after the one thing which would have clearly set them apart from their neighbours?

Matrilineal societies which survived into modern times kept their ancient custom in the face of sometimes aggressive, generally disapproving, opposition from patriarchal cultures (Lepowsky 1993, 30; Schönenberger 1991, 225–83; Sanday 1990, 143; Axtell 1981, 154–7). Often matriliny has survived because it became in the minds of the men and women who practice it a defining characteristic of their race (Sanday 1990, 154; Stone 1997, 129–32; Witherspoon 1975, 15–22). As explained by a social scientist among the Islamic, but matrilineal, Minangkabau, no matter the outside pressures the Minangkabau 'safeguard their matrilineal social system [because] it is a sacred system; it has been religiously legitimated' (Sanday 1990, 143).

If the Picts felt their matrilineal inheritance system was defining – even sacred – might they not have called themselves after the most obvious manifestation of that system, the 'pett' form of land division? They would not be the only matrilineal folk to take such a name. The Vanatinai – a fascinating egalitarian, matrilineal society in the New Guinea island chain – call themselves and their island after their native terms *vana*, meaning land or place, and *tinai*, meaning mother (Lepowsky 1993, 19).[12]

Although we have little direct evidence of how the Dalriadan takeover of Pictavia in the mid-9th century occurred, we do know two things: The Pictish language was wiped out (Wormald 1996, 132). And, the one roughly contemporaneous record of Kenneth mac Alpin's actions – the *Old Scottish Chronicle* – states that he 'destroyed' the Picts, who were well-deserving of being made

> alien from, and void of, their heritage, by reason of their wickedness; because they not only spurned the Lord's mass and precept, but they wished to be held equal to others in the law of justice. [13]

(Hudson 1991, 14–5; Smyth 1984, 188; Anderson 1973, 249; Henderson 1967, 98).[14]

The Latin term used for heritage, '*hereditate*,' has strong connotations of inheritance or heirship rights (Morwood 1995; Anderson 1973, 249). Could it be that the heritage the Dalriadans made the Picts 'alien from' was their matrilineal system of inheritance? Certainly, from Kenneth's time forward the Scottish royal line is a patrilineal one.15 With the matriliny that defined it, and the language which enshrined it, both succumbing to the Dalriadans, the name *Pettwyr* would disappear as well.

Could the *Peohtas/Pechts* be the people of the land of mother-right? Besides the evidence of Pictish matriliny, a strange piece of Celtic etymology lends credence to this theory. After the Dalriadic Gaels took over Pictavia, they quickly added Gaelic tags to the 'Pett' place names they moved into, e.g., *Pett meic Cobroig*, or Cobroch's son's portion (Nicolaisen 1996, 7–9). Interestingly, this process later led to a change in the Pictish 'pett' to the Gaelic 'baile' (place) among Gaelic speakers because the Gaelic 'peit' has 'colloquially potential obscene connotations through reference to the female genitals' (*Id.* 14-15). Indeed, 'peit' or 'pit' in Gaelic is a still a slang term for vulva (e.g., O Donaill 1992). Since 'p' terms are unusual in old 'q' Gaelic, it seems quite possible that this slang term arose from the Pictish term 'pett' (Nicolaisen 1996, 26).[16]

Why would the Dalriadan Scots turn a word for land division into a vulgar term for a woman's reproductive organs? Perhaps the contemporaneous views of the Irish can offer an explanation. Even today, matriliny is viewed by some as an unlikely custom which can be dismissed offhand, even in the face of powerful evidence (e.g., Hutton 1991, 149; 339). Over a millennium ago, the Irish had much stronger feelings.

While there is evidence of matriliny (and a high status of women) in ancient Irish history, by the time of Patrick's 5th century arrival, the Irish were clearly patrilineal (Dexter 1997, 218–36; Condren 1989, 27). Christianity strengthened the concept of father-right, and by the 7th century Irish 'society was patriarchal and every aspect of social, legal, political and cultural life was dominated by men' (Ó Cróinín 1995, 128). The 7th-century Dalriadan document, the *Senchus fer nAlban*, leaves little doubt of this. Meaning the 'History of the Men of Scotland,' the *Senchus* has small room for anything to do with women, but instead 'the scribe derives the male members of the kindred which he is concerned to enumerate' (Bannerman 1974, 70).

That most Irish of tales, the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, gives a clear Christian-era picture of the Irish viewpoint against women having any involvement in patriarchal perquisites. In telling Queen Mebh that the disastrous defeat of the Connaught forces she led into Ulster was her fault, Fergus acerbically comments as follows:

> We followed the rump of a misguiding woman. It is the usual thing for a herd led by a mare to be strayed and destroyed.

(Kinsella 1969, 251).[17] This antagonistic view of women straying into men's roles, and the men who let them do so, is also spelled out in the old Irish law tracts, where '[c]ontempt was the lot for a man who moved to his wife's *tuath* [tribal land/petty kingdom],' rather than taking a wife back to his own land as was expected. Such a man was derided as one ''who follows the buttocks of his wife across a boundary,' a phrase which shows how little he was respected' (Charles-Edwards 1971, 116).

The *Táin* 'belonged to the common stock of Irish literature already by the middle of the seventh century,' and the law tracts began to be written down at that time as well (Ó Cróinín 1995, 46, 124).

Even more interesting is similar evidence regarding the precise issue of matriliny. The *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, or Book of the Taking of Ireland, is 'a rich source of origin myth' written down in the 12th century, which contains much early material (Cowan 1984, 120). The *Lebor Gabála* sets forth the tale of Lug and Bres, two early kings of the T•ath D_ Danann, the former the son of a foreign mother and a *Túath Dé Danann* father, the other the son of a foreign father and a *Túath Dé Danann* mother (MacAlister 1941).

In a fascinating article, Tomás Ó Cathasaigh tells how the story of Bres and Lug, set out fully in the *Cath Maige Tuired*, is a clear attack on the concept of matrilineal succession (Ó Cathasaigh 1986, 147–51). It was the women of the *Túath Dé Danann* who convinced their menfolk to name Bres king because they had raised him as a '*gormac* or sister's son' (*Id.*, 147). Bres' reign was a disaster, which was blamed on his status as a matrilineal heir. As Ó Cathasaigh explains, 'it is on the advice of the womenfolk that [Bres] is made king. The clear burden of the narrative is that the *Túath Dé Danann* erred in taking this advice, and that it is not appropriate for a sister's son to be elected to the kingship' (*Id.* 148).

Lug, the patrilineal heir, then becomes the 'savior king' of the *Túath Dé Danann* by leading them to victory over the *Fomoiri*, the tribe of his mother (*Id.* 150). In the decisive battle, Lug urges the *Túath Dé Danann* that it is preferable to die 'defending their athardae' than to be under bondage. *Athardae* means patrimony or fatherland (*Id.* 151). It is only after Lug defeats his maternal grandfather Balar in battle that the *Túath Dé Danann* consider themselves free (*Id.*).

As emigrants from Antrim, the Dalriadan Scots of Kenneth mac Alpin's time shared in the common stock of Irish racial identity tales, including the stories of Bres and Lug included in the *Lebor Gabála* (Cowan 1984, 120–2). The *Cath Maige Tuired* was apparently composed in the early 9th century, at virtually the same time Kenneth began his move into Pictavia (Gray 1982, 11). Such a strong bias against matrilineal succession could explain the virulence of the Dalriadan Scots against the *hereditate* of the Picts reflected in the *Old Scottish Chronicle*, and give context to why the patrilineal Gaels were unwilling to hold the matrilineal Picts 'equal to others in the law of justice' (Hudson 1991, 14–5 ; Anderson 1973, 149–50, 249). If the intriguing 'pett' words are related to matriliny, the Irish Gaelic term *piteog* – meaning a male sissy (mother's boy?) – may give us an accurate feeling for what the patrilineal Gaels thought of the matrilineal customs of the Picts they conquered, and the Pictish men who lived under them.

As early as the 6th century, Gildas referred to his nation as fatherland (patriae) in his *De Excidio Britanniae*, with the term *genetrix* (motherland) only slipping in once (Cowan 1984, 114; Winterbottom 1978, 97). Bede often used the term fatherland, and Irish myth spoke of dying for the *athardae*, or fatherland. (Ó Cathasaigh 1986, 151; Cowan 1984, 114). Patriarchal societies all, by the 6th century the English, Irish and Welsh followed patrilineal descent patterns. A people who, to the contrary, traced their personal and territorial descent through their mothers might well call themselves by a name which invoked that difference. If the Picts did have a native self-name related to the term pett, then Scotland (at least the Pictish portions thereof) is truly the motherland, as those of us of Scottish descent living elsewhere have known all along.

NOTES

1. A Note on the Translation: A reference in Ebensten's book on tattoos to a church council in Northumberland in 787 having outlawed tattooing sent me, on a circuitous route, to the Latin report of Bishop George in the Haddan & Stubbs treatise. My initial search for an English version having proved unfruitful, a Ph.D. candidate in Roman History at the University of Michigan, David E. VanAmburg, provided me with a translation of the tattooing paragraphs (the first two full paragraphs of ch.19 of the legate's report). Months later, upon reading some follow-up material I came across a translation of part of Bishop George's report in Dorothy Whitelock's *English Historical Documents c. 500-1042*. The English translation of paragraph 19 of that report contained in this article combines the translations of Whitelock, VanAmburg and this writer.

2. As far as I have been able to ascertain, Thomas and Sutherland are the only scholars to have looked at Bishop George's report in the context of the question of Pictish tattooing. Thomas' bibliography suggests that he reviewed only Whitelock's partial translation, and not the entire report and supporting documents contained in Haddan & Stubbs (Thomas 1984, 187). Sutherland's bibliography contains a reference to Thomas, but not to Whitelock or Haddan & Stubbs (Sutherland 1994, 250).

3. Alcuin traveled with Bishop George from Pincahala to Mercia, where the chapters of George's capitulary were expounded to King Offa and his council (Whitelock 1979, 839).

4. The Latin term *'regio'* apparently did not have a set meaning in early medieval Latin. Even the usually precise Bede used the term to mean different things, but normally used the word provincia when speaking of a kingdom (Campbell 1979, 3-4). Gildas used *'regio'* in such a manner as to either mean the north or the whole of Britain (Lapidge and Dumville 1984, 102). Thus, the use of *'regio'* in Bishop George's report suggests that more than the ecclesiastics of King Aelfwold's Northumbria were called to council.

5. Interestingly, Solinus (ca. 250 CE), Isidore (ca. 600 CE) and George (ca. 787 CE) all use the same term *'cicatrices'* for mark or scar, *i.e.*, the actual tattoo. Three Latin speakers from different eras reached for a word to describe something strange to them, and chose a word that clearly conveys what tattooing does, *i.e.*, leave behind a colored scar or mark.

6. The appellation *redskin* eventually became an insult, rather than a descriptive, term. Ironically, before that was fully recognized by Americans of European descent, the football team of the nation's capital was called the 'Washington Redskins,' a name which is still in use today, much to the dismay of many.

7. It seems likely Galan's mother was a Scottish Pict and not an Irish *Cruithni* because Galan and his brothers are said to have divided land in Islay (Bannerman 1974, 42). Also, Galan is quite similar to the name 'Galam,' which appears in the Pictish King List (Gray 1996, 7).

8. *Redskin* is far from the only descriptive term to become an insult. Another example from North America involves the last native tribes to venture from Asia to the American continent. The Inuit (a native term meaning 'the folk') were called Eskimos for hundreds of years, which was an English corruption of a Spanish word for another tribal folk – the Micmac – that was erroneously thought to mean 'eater of raw meat.' Although the term is insulting to the Inuit, it is only in the recent decades that the Canadian and American governments have dropped the term Eskimo from official discourse. Another example is the old English term *wahl* (foreigner) becoming the modern term Welsh, the English name for the distinctly non-foreign *Cymry*. The term Scot could be yet a third example, but for the fact that no one really knows just what the Romans meant when they called the early Irish the *Scotti*. The list of sometimes descriptive, often scurrilous, nicknames one group of people has slapped upon another is long and, unfortunately, still growing. Sometimes the process can go the other way, however. In the 17th century, the French adopted an unknown Algonquin term into the word *Iroquois*, to describe a group of several tribal peoples. That term was in turn used by the Native Americans to describe their (for a time) powerful political confederation when dealing with French and British colonial interests.

9. Bishop George's late evidence of tattooing also lends credence to Thomas' theory that the Picts were a socially conservative people who held onto ancient customs – like matrilineal descent – long after those customs had been abandoned by other Europeans (Thomas 1984, 183).

10. If Koch and Carey's translation of *'Maen Gwyngwn'* is correct, it would support the theory that at least some of the Pictish stones were territorial markers (Cessford 1996, 16).

11. I have left out mention in this discussion of the term *Pexa* from an 8th century map, which in turn may be based on a military map from Flavian times, *c.* 69-96 CE (Nicolaisen 1996, 5). Rivet and Smith have speculated that *Pexa* may stand for *Pectia* or Pictavia (*Id.*, and McHardy 1992, 15–16). If so, this would seem to me to be a somewhat early usage of the term *Picti* prior to Eumenius' coining of the term *c.* 297 CE. Eumenius used the term casually, as if his audience would understand it easily, making it likely that the term had been in use for some time (Ritchie 1994, 3-4). On the other hand,

it seems doubtful that *Pexa* would instead be an incredibly early usage (by half a millennium or more) of the 'Peht' term, which otherwise does not seem to come into usage until the 6th century. Nicolaisen's rough timeline for emergence of pett in its guise as a Pictish place name – 7th to 8th century – is consistent with a self-name based on *pett* coming into use in the 6th century (Nicolaisen 1996, 9).

12. This interesting fact was not discovered until the late 1970s, when anthropologist Maria Lepowsky lived with the *Vanatinai* and apparently became the first non-native to learn their language (Lepowsky 1993, 19).

13. Hudson suggests that '[t]he animosity of the writer [of this section of the Old Scottish Chronicle] towards the Picts is so pronounced that the section may have been composed by someone in whose memory the Pictish wars were still fresh, *i.e.*, it may have been composed by an exact contemporary of the Scottish conquest' (Hudson 1991, 15).

14. The last sentence is M.O. Anderson's translation. A.O. Anderson and Skene translated the Latin as 'they refused to be held equal to others in the law of justice' (Smyth 1984, 188). Some have argued that Kenneth's emergence as a Dalriadan king of Pictavia may have been part of a relatively peaceful and gradual process, and that the documentary evidence of a violent, dramatic takeover is later myth-making (e.g. Hudson 1994b, 34–6; Anderson 1982, 108–15). I tend to agree with the other camp, which sees a violent takeover as well-supported in the documentary evidence, and the only explanation for the fate of all things uniquely Pictish, including the Pictish language (e.g. Marsden 1997, 125–35; Wormald 1996, 131–53). As Wormald puts it, '[w]e might fairly wonder whether a culture whose art ... shows every sign of vigorous attachment to a broadly indigenous repertoire, is likely to have lamely abandoned its speech' (*Id.* 133). The same can be said for the disappearance of matriliny and tattooing, and the lack of Pictish symbols on the Class III carved stones.

15. Some Pictish scholars have argued that the shadowy reign of Eochaid son of Rhun, possibly from 878 to 889, represents a short-lived resurgence of Pictish matrilineal succession (e.g. Anderson 1982, 123–5). Eochaid was apparently the son of a king of the Britons of Strathclyde and Kenneth mac Alpin's daughter. He reigned even though two sons of Kenneth's sons – i.e., patrilineal heirs – were living in 878. If Eochaid's reign does represent a detour back to matriliny, it was soon treated like the rest of the Pictish heritage cursed in the *Old Scottish Chronicle*, with virtually all mention of Eochaid and his reign being wiped from the documentary evidence (*Id.*).

16. As was recently pointed out, the definitive study has yet to be done to establish whether there is 'a significant Pictish substrata in Gaelic' (Wormald 1996, 132). Along with '*peit*,' the intriguing Scots Gaelic word *piuthar* might be a good place to start such a linguistic search. This 'p' word for sister seems to have no counterpart in Irish Gaelic. The Irish Gaelic for sister is *deirfiúr*, and the word for brother is *deartháir* (O Donaill 1992). If the root for these Irish Gaelic terms is the same as *derbfine*, the defining term for Irish *patrilineal* succession(O Croinin 1995, 65–6), then the contrast with *piuthar* could be telling. Another question is whether the 'piut' of *piuthar* could be related to 'pett,' perhaps designating a sister as the one who holds, or owns, the matrilineage's land? Matrilineal societies tend to vest land ownership in women (Schönenberger 1991, 94–5). For example, the Navajo live in residential units in various combinations of men, women and children, all of whom trace their residential rights, by descent or marriage, to the 'head mother,' and the Minangkabau men 'leave their sisters and mothers securely in control of the matrilineal property' (Witherspoon 1975, 101; Sanday 1990, 145).

17. The versions of the *Táin* current in 9th-century Ireland had been written down, and reinterpreted, by clerics bent on making statements of Christian interest, not on glorifying the pagan past (e.g. McCone 1990). That bias is evident in the portrayals of Queen Medh, which seem to be an attempt to turn a powerful pre-Christian Goddess into a figure of contempt (Dexter 1997, 225).

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SHORTER NOTES

Field Guide update

Alastair Mack

[Last year The Pinkfoot Press published Alastair Mack's highly successful *Field Guide to the Pictish Symbol Stones*, reviewed in Journal 11. With new discoveries and stones moving location, such guides inevitably need constant revision and updating. Below Alastair gives details of three stones not included in the *Field Guide*.

— Ed.]

Ardjachie (HIGHLAND) (Ross and Cromarty)

Symbol: **Wheel**

125 x 67 x 35 cm exposed size Present location NH 780 822

Reference: Macnamara, E 1971

Found at NH 746 845, in a field on Ardjachie Farm, this stone now stands outside Tain and District Museum in Castle Brae, Tain, facing north-east.

Near the top of the stone is a wheel incised, its grooves shallow and rounded. The rim is a single line and the 'hub' a plain disc, and there are twelve 'spokes'. As it is very like the wheel on Knockando 1 (Moray) it can be accepted as a symbol. The Knockando wheel is above two crescents and V-rods and may be an 'additional' symbol. The Ardjachie wheel may give the same kind of information, perhaps that the person commemorated was descended from a wheelwright. The absence of other symbols may show that he or she (presumably 'he' as there is no mirror) was not of sufficiently noble birth to be entitled to any 'family' symbols.

The reverse face is very irregilar, but the carved face is weathered and fairly smooth. Despite lichen it can be seen that there are no other symbols. There are two near-horizontal lines below the wheel but these seem to be natural faults. There are a number of cup-marks on the face, six of which are in a circle with one in the centre. This formation is to the wheel's right and similar in size but is presumably unrelated. The stone may be a re-used standing stone.

Ballintomb (HIGHLAND) (Badenoch and Strathspey)(Fig. 11).

Symbols: **Crescent and V-rod; Divided Rectangle and Z-rod**

105 x 67 x 14 cm exposed size Present location NH 995 253

The stone, an oblong slab, stands in the inner face of the garden wall of Finlarig farmhouse, half a mile NW of Dulnain Bridge. (It is 20m down the wall from the house-front and faces SW.) It was found on Ballintomb Farm, half a mile SE of Dulnain Bridge, either in use as the doorstep of a cottage or ploughed up near the standing stones about 500m E of the steadings. A burial was found near the standing stones. ('Ballintomb' is Baile an Tuim, *'stead of the knoll'.)*

The stone is incised with two symbols, a **crescent and V-rod** over a **divided rectangle and Z-rod**. Some of the latter is obscured by natural fissures.

The crescent of the crescent and V-rod contains a *dome-and-wing* pattern. The *dome* is the upper part of an almost *pelta*-like shape between the wings. It is like a vertical hour-glass with the upper end larger than the other. The wings are comma-shaped, and there is a smaller wing of similar shape in

each of the crescent's points. The closest match to this is the decoration in the crescent and V-rod on Kintradwell 3, Sutherland (*ECMS*, III, 44–5) (Allan's fig. 42 omits the dome/pelta in Kintradwell 3's symbol; see the excellent photograph on p.4 of Joanna Close-Brooks' *Pictish Stones in Dunrobin Castle Museum*). There is however another small wing below the right-hand large wing, and the remains of another below the left. The left rod-end is flighted and has two pairs of curlicues. The other is an almost worn-away curlicued arrowhead. This V-rod is almost standard in type and therefore differs from all other known Badenoch and Strathspey examples on Advie (Joass 1906), Finlarig (*ECMS*, III, 101), Inverallan (*ibid.*, 101–2) and the destroyed Lynchurn stone (*ibid.*, 105). They are unique in that their visible rod-ends, if visible, are left-hand pointed and right-hand flighted.

The divided rectangle and Z-rod is quite uniquely decorated, having only one (and very large) 'chariot wheel' re-entrant. around which are four small spirals. This re-entrant, the 'opening' to which is on the left side of the rectangle and does not break the side, is above the almost horizontal mid-arm of the rod. The legs are plain and are not line-separated from the rectangle's body. The rod is a backward-Z, its left (upper) end a long and curlicued arrowhead and the right almost an exact replica of the Z-rod's flighted end.

This combination of symbols is repeated on two other Badenoch and Strathspey stones, Finlarig and Inverallan, both of which were found within two miles of Ballintomb. Mill of Newton (Aberdeenshire) is the only other known example (*ECMS*, III, 179–80). (On both Finlarig and Mill of Newton the divided rectangle and Z-rod is the upper symbol.)

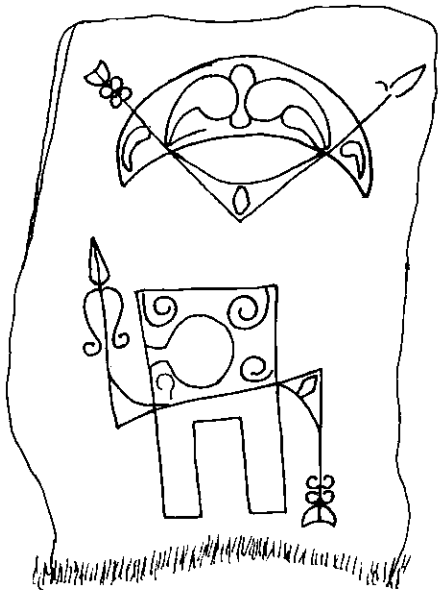

Fig. 11. Ballintomb, © A. Mack

No less than four more of the eleven known *divided rectangles and Z-rods* have Z-rods with a flighted end. These are on Inverallan, Arndilly (Moray) (*ECMS*, III, 151–2), Aberlemno 2 (Angus) (*ibid.*, 209–14) and Mill of Newton. The first two are also like Ballintomb's in that the other end of their Z-rods are curlicued arrowheads. The sole southern example of the Class II Aberlemno 2 stone has a somewhat blunt left-hand rod-end or head, and the left-hand rod-end on Mill of Newton seems to be no more than curlicues. In three more divided rectangles and Z-rods, those on Birnie (Moray) (*ibid.*, 118, 119), Clynemilton 2 (Sutherland) (*ibid.*, 40–1) and Tyrie (Aberdeenshire) (*ibid.*, 187–8), the rod ends are all heavily curlicued and, if sufficiently visible, almost equally ball-ended and ball-'pointed'. The perhaps corrupt Z-rod ends on the Class II Maiden Stone (Aberdeenshire) (*ibid.*, 190–1) are only curlicues, and so apparently is the one remaining on the Finlarig fragment. The one exception is the surviviong rod-end of the divided rectangle and Z-rod on Cullaird (Inverness) (Stevenson 1959, 39–40). This may be spear-headed rather than arrow-headed; there are no curlicues behind the diamond shaped head, and on the shaft behind it are floriations. The floriations are like those on the upper arms of many double-disc Z-rods, and most of the Z-rods have no curlicues behind the head. Such rods may be representations of broken spears (Thomas 1963, 51).

As a majority (four out of seven) of the Class I divided rectangle and Z-rod rods with visible reverse ends are flighted it may be that the rod originally represented a broken arrow. The three in the minority, the ends of which are not only heavily curlicued but virtually repeat each other, are surely too formalised to be called anything other than a Z-rod, and although the Cullaird rod, the reverse end of which is missing, may represent a spear, it is, if a spear, a unique exception. The divided rectangle and Z-rod on Ballintomb, weith its certainly arrow-like rod, may therefore be one of the earlier examples of the symbol.

Breck of Hillwell (SHETLAND)

Symbols: **Crescent; Rectangle**

Present location: The Shetland Museum, Lerwick, Shetland

This stonewas found in use as a field drain cover at HU 371 146, that is at Breck of Hillwell, Dunrossness Parish, South Mainland, Shetland. It is a red sandstone slab, possibly broken at the top and bottom, with the remains of incised symbols on the lower part of its face. The upper is part of a ***crescent,*** *half of which survives and contains hatched decoration. Below are the traces of what may have been a* ***rectangle.***

There are therefore now two known Shetland symbol stones, both Class I and both with rectangles. The other is the lost Sandness stone. (Cunningsburgh, 'Lerwick' and Uyea are not symbol stones.) The symbols on the Sandness stone were, in order from the top, a small rectangle, a small and plain horseshoe and a larger plain-headed and twin-boss-handled mirror (*ECMS,* III, 4); if the lower incisions of the Breck of Hillwell are the remains of a rectangle, the two Shetland symbol stones have (or had) a symbol in common.

If the Breck stone's upper symbol is indeed a **crescent** *without* a **V-rod,** it is one of only two *certain* Class I examples, the other being on the Daviot (Aberdeenshire) stone (*ibid.,* 161–2). The crescent on Tillytarmont 3 (Aberdeenshire) is featureless and very faint (Ferguson 1956, 224), and the other known Class I 'crescents', one on Dunnicaer 3 (Aberdeenshire) (*ECMS,* III, 201) and one on the Roskeen Standing Stone (Easter Ross) (*ibid.,* 60, 61) are at best dubious examples of the symbol.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Settlements at Skaill, Deerness, Orkney, Excavations by Peter Gelling of the Prehistoric, Pictish, Viking and Later Periods, 1963–1981 by Simon Buteux (Archeopress, Oxford, 1997: BAR, British Series 260). 276pp; £28.00; ISBN 0 86054 864 3.

Peter Gelling, in a lecture on his work at Skaill to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, once commented on the longevity of occupation on the site, which was virtually unbroken from the Bronze Age to the present day. It is therefore a welcome event to see the publication of Gelling's long programme of work, which he had finished shortly before his untimely death at the age of 58 in 1983. Buteux, a team from Gelling's old Department at Birmingham University, and other contributors, have put together the report from the site archive, openly admitting that there are gaps in the data and that some criticism could be voiced about aspects of the excavation itself. That they have been able to construct this report is greatly to their credit, and Skaill is likely to become a major site in future discussions of early Orkney.

There are many facets of Skaill that are important and interesting — early prehistorians will be grateful for the plan of ard cultivation furrows belonging to the earliest prehistoric occupation on the site (probably Early to Middle Bronze Age), and for the data on the two later Bronze Age houses, associated with Flat Rimmed Ware that appears to continue into the subsequent Iron Age. At the other end of the time-scale the later medieval and post-medieval remains are of some interest, particularly the tower-like building of the twelfth century which has affinities with Cubbie Roo's castle on Wyre. It is however with the remains of the central period of occupation in the later Iron Age and early medieval period that readers of this journal will be most concerned, for the implications are wide for Pictish studies.

Skaill was occupied throughout Late Iron Age I (LIA I, c. AD 200–625) and Late Iron Age II (LIA II, c. AD 625–800), as well as in the Viking period. The excavations have shed important new light on this key era, the 'Pictish' period in Orkney, as well as on the Pictish/Viking interface.

Buteux argues that there is a clear break culturally in Orkney between the monumental building of the Middle Iron Age 'broch' period and LIA II, with its notable lack of monumentality. This is reflected both in the ceramic assemblage, and in the presence in LIA II of important numbers of dress-related artefacts (combs, pins and brooches), which have been seen as a phenomenon of the later seventh and eighth centuries. Prior to the excavations at Skaill and at Pool on Sanday, no site was known to have been occupied for certain in the transitional phase, LIA I. The occupation of the Site 6 round house at Skaill was confined to LIA I, and both in architectural terms and in material assemblage can be seen to look back to the MIA. The artefacts from this house are in themselves interesting: a Class E penannular brooch, two Class E pins, and, from the overlying deposit, a Type G1 penannular brooch. The excavators go along with the assumption that brooch and pins could belong to the fifth century, but further south they are 'Roman' artefacts, and there is no real reason to believe they outlived the fourth century, even in Orkney, which provides a useful starting date for the commencement of LIA I.

At some point in LIA I there was a major break at Skaill, which is also reflected in the sequence at Pool, Sanday. On both sites were constructed carefully-laid paving associated with, in the case of Skaill, cellular units. Very high quality pottery was produced in this phase. Buteux has seen this as mirroring political and social changes in Orkney, which he has equated with the period of the 'subregulus' of Orkney who was subject to Bridei at the time of Columba's visit. This points to a degree of political centralisation in Orkney which he has seen as becoming assimilated into the Pictish world in the sixth century, though it might be argued that the process had begun a century or more earlier. Buteux has also argued in support of growing Christian influence in Orkney, emanating from Iona, and indicated at Skaill by a cross-incised slab incorporated into one of the 'Viking' period

houses, though the date of this slab is unlikely to be earlier than the eighth century.

The other main interest of the Skaill excavations lies in the fact that they indicate contacts with Scandinavia stretching back into the pre-Viking age, with steatite and more significantly reindeer antler being imported in LIA II. The assemblage of the Viking period at Skaill also shows considerable cultural survival from the Pictish period, and a degree of integration between the native culture and the new one introduced by the Norse.

This volume has all the usual defects of a BAR — crowded print, small margins, poorly-reproduced photographs, and in some cases ridiculously large illustrations (e.g. figs. 8.9, 8.14 – 8.21). The arrangement is also somewhat confusing in places, though the general discussion pulls much of the key material together.

L. Laing.

The Gododdin of Aneirin. Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain by John Thomas Koch (Univ. of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1997). PB cxliv + 262pp; £14.95; ISBN 07083 1374 4.

This book does not simply represent another translation of the *Gododdin* corpus but is an endeavours 'to recover (so far as is possible) the more original state of the verses' (p. ix). This is an ambitious goal and this new work, if not perhaps entirely successful, is nonetheless a valiant attempt and provides a major advance in the state of our knowledge.

The book consists of three main sections: a major historical introduction; a reconstruction of the text with facing English translation; and a copious set of notes. The historical introduction in effect represents a major reappraisal of both the Gododdin corpus and the early historic period in north Britain. In some respects Koch's conclusions represent a radical departure from traditionally held views with important historical implications. The reconstructed text and translation, although obviously similar to previous editions of the *Gododdin*, contains much that is new and interesting. The final notes section, despite being quite technical, holds many informative snippets. In places parts of this work are, however, for the non-linguist at least, quite difficult to follow.

The Gddoddin of Aneirin is nevertheless an important work which contains much to appeal to everyone interested in the early history of north Britain regardless of how familiar they already are with the *Gododdin*.

Craig Cessford

The Pictish Guide by Elizabeth Sutherland (Birlinn, Edinburgh, 1997). £7.99. ISBN 1-874744-66-1.

Guides to the Pictish stones are obviously like buses, none for ages then two come along at once. Elizabeth Sutherland's book starts with a short introduction followed by brief descriptions of the different classes of stone and the various symbols. The main body of the book consists of thirteen geographical lists of stones in particular areas and ends with a short conclusion and list of recommended further reading. There is no index, a rather remarkable omission from a book of this type. The book is illustrated with nineteen black and white photographs of stones by Tom E. Gray. These are well reproduced and as well as many old favourites include a few which have rarely, if ever, been published before such as the stone from Tote, Skye.

The introduction, at only four pages long is quite superficial and riddled with errors. For example, the Picts were a 'united nation' that was defeated by Kenneth Mac Alpin, probably got their name from Roman soldiers, were 'principally cowboys' and 'spoke a form of Gaelic, which was not the same as

Irish Gaelic, more akin to Welsh'. It is difficult to know what to make of this mish-mash which contains obvious errors, views that have been discredited for over twenty years and some total gibberish concerning the Pictish language. The meanings given for some of the symbols are highly questionable.

The main body of the book, by which it should really be judged, is the thirteen geographical lists. These all start with a map – unfortunately these are largely blank showing only the stones themselves and a few towns but totally omitting such minor features as roads which would have served to make them useful. A clue regarding the reliability of the guide is given by the first entry which states that the National Museums of Scotland are in Chamber Street (*sic*). There are numerous minor errors, suggesting that the book was not checked thoroughly enough prior to publication. For a guidebook in particular it is not acceptable that so many stones are either incorrectly described or placed in the wrong location. Among the more serious errors are:

Inorrectly described:

Aberlemno 3 — described as having 'a hunting scene with four mounted men, three of them huntsmen with long horns'. As the photograph in the book itself shows, it is not the mounted figures who have the horns but two figures on foot.

Ackergill 1 — the ogham inscription reads NEHTERI not NEHTETRE.

Balluderon [not 'Balludernon'] — is carved on one side only, not both sides as described here.

Bourtie — the double-disc originally had a Z-rod, although this is no longer visible.

Fowlis Wester — the top of the back has a double-disc with z-rod, and a possible double disc, not just a double-disc and the 'beast' is probably a hound lacking its head.

Kingoldrum — there is a single enthroned figure at the top of the stone, not two.

Knockando 1 — both crescents have Z-rods.

Moniack/Balblair — does not have any symbols so is not 'C.I or II'.

Monifieth 2 — the right lower symbol is a crescent and V-rod, not a double-disc and Z-rod.

Newton House — the ogham inscription reads IDDARQNNN not EDDARRNONN.

Raasay — as the photograph in the book shows there is also a tuning fork symbol.

Rhynie 2 — double-disc and z-rod and an unidentifiable symbol, not a double-disc and z-rod.

Rothiebrisbane — also has a horseshoe symbol.

Scoonie — found in the churchyard, not in the church.

Sands of Evie — mirror on its own, does not have a triple-disc symbol.

St Vigeans 5 — the 'small portion of a decorated rectangular symbol' is probably the base of a cross.

Wrong Location:

Arndilly —the stone is not built into a wall close to the house, it is built into the side wall of Arndilly House.

Broch of Oxtro — HY254268 is the location of Oxtro broch, not Boardhouse (HY249275).

Drainie — this stone used to be in the Moray Society Museum but now appears lost.

Dunnichen replica — this stands beside the church at NO509488, not NO516496 which is where the stone was originally found on Dunnichen Hill.

Glamis 4 — is in the church at Glamis, not the Meffan Institute.

Huntly 2 — Leys of Drummuies not Drummies.

Kinblethmont House — NO641472 not NO638473.

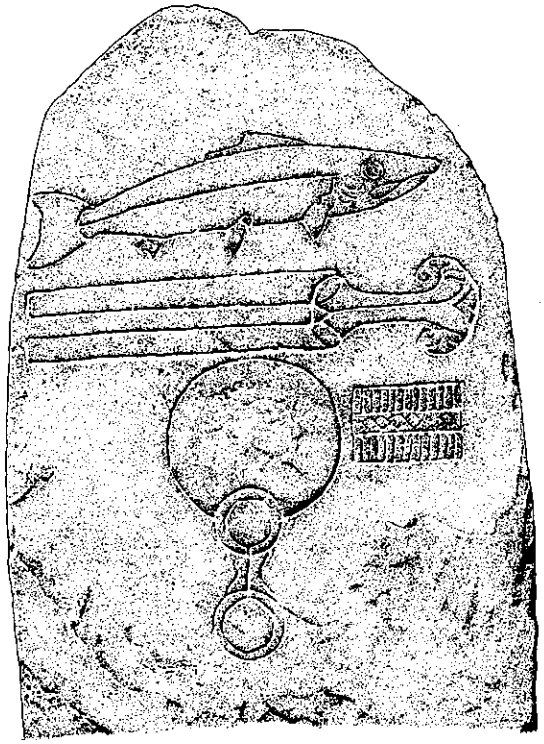
Longforgan — in the back of the church.

Rhynie 8 — is now in a shelter beside the churchyard (NO500265), not in Grampian Regional Council HQ.

One praiseworthy point about this book is that it does not limit itself to stones alone but lists some 'Pictish sites without stones' at the end of each geographical section, such as Norrie's Law and Clatchard Craig. This is rather spoiled, however, by the fact that the descriptions are generally too superficial to be interesting. Clatchard Craig for instance is an "inland fortress destroyed this century by quarrying after detailed excavation', surely a rather more informative entry would have been possible. More worrying, Burghead is listed as a site without stones. The conclusion is rather short and inconclusive while the list of suggested further reading has some notable ommissions such as Sally Foster's *Picts, Scots and Gaels* and *A Pictish Panorama.*

A guide book which does not have decent quality maps, lacks an index, does not give full details about access to many of the stones and whose descriptions of the stones physical appearance and location are not reliable is, in my opinion, unacceptable. Although more expensive, Alastair Mack's *Field Guide to the Pictish Symbols* is more detailed and reliable, has more useful maps and is indexed.

Craig Cessford.



Dunrobin ©JRF Burt

PAPER CLIPS

Hawkes, Jane 1997 **'Columban Virgins: Iconic Images of the Virgin and Child in Insular Sculpture'** in Bourke, Cormac (ed.) *Studies in the Cult of Saint Columba,* Dublin, 107–35.

Examines and compares depictions of the Virgin and Child in Insular sculptural art. In Scotland, apart from the Iona Group crosses of St Martin, St Oran and Kildalton on Islay, the only other example is the 9th century fragment at Brechin, Angus. There are more numerous examples from Anglo-Saxon England and Ireland indicating the scheme was popular in the insular world. Arrangements and iconographic details used show some remarkable similarities suggesting a limited number of models behind their production. Some of the earliest versions survive in 'Columban' contexts, raising a question about the possible rôle of these 'Columban' images in the production of Virgin and Child schemes elsewhere in the Insular world.

The Brechin example is unusual having the Child portrayed as a baby swathed tightly in swaddling clothes from which one hand emerges clasping a book. Here the image does not present a copying of the Iona scheme – rather the reproduction of a scheme closely associated with Iona itself. The cross-slab may be contemporary with the presumed establishment of the Céli Dé community at Brechin.

Proudfoot, Edwina 1996 **'Excavations at the long cist cemetery on the Hallow Hill, St Andrews, Fife, 1975–7', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot,* 126 (1996), 387–454; fiche 2:A2–E13.**

Further excavations of the long cist cemetery at Hallow Hill, St Andrews, first discovered in 1861, were undertaken from 1975–77. The aim was to establish the limits of the cemetery (which was not defined with certainty), record all cists and other features and to conduct a limited sampling programme for post excavation analyses. This long-awaited paper presents the full excavation report.

The excavations revealed a complex of long cists and other graves of an unenclosed burial ground of Early Christian date. Of 145 graves examined, 122 burials were in long cists, 10 in dug-graves and 13 in boulder-edged ones. Clusters of graves and long cists can be recognised but the long-cists are generally arranged into organised rows. The total number of graves in the cemetery may have been somewhere between 200 and 500. Other features included a cobbled road, possibly of prehistoric origin, through the site, post-holes and possible structural remains. Any buildings on the Hallow Hill were likely of prehistoric or early historic date, perhaps contemporary with the long cists.

The site has been equated on topographic [on sloping ground surrounded by water] and toponymic evidence [*-namin* from *nemed* for a holy place or from *namin* for St Náemhán or saints, 'allhallow' might thus have been a deliberate transliteration of *Eglesnamin* into English] with the lost historical Early Christian site of *Eglesnamin.*

Radiocarbon dates for a number of cists calibrated generally to between the 6th and 9th centuries AD and suggest that the cemetery ceased to be used at some time during the 9th century. The cemetery probably represents a Pictish community.

Henderson, Isabel 1997 **'Variations on an Old Theme: Panelled Zoomorhic Ornament on Pictish Sculpture at Nigg, Easter Ross, and St Andrews, Fife and in the Book of Kells'** in Karkov, C.E., Ryan, M. and Farrell, R.T. (eds.) *The Insular Tradition,* Albany, 143–66.

A study of Pictish art and its place within the Insular tradition discussing in detail the zoomorphic ornament of the Nigg cross-slab and the St Andrews sarcophagus.

Zoomorphic ornament on the cross-head at Nigg, which has the 'controlled invention and technical brillance' of the rest of the monument's sculpture, has parallels in the Book of Kells. The characteristic of the Nigg composition is a 'balanced asymmetry' – 'a deceptive symmetry created by using the same motif within symmetrical constructions that support markedly varied internal arrangements' (p. 147). The discussion is illustrated by analytic drawings by Ian G. Scott.

The St Andrews sarcophagus has a number of specific links – stylistic and iconographic – with the decorative and figurative art of the Nigg cross-slab, implying a common knowledge of artistic models used, including the animal style outside the boss tradition. The ornament on the St Ninian's Isle Treasure from Shetland can also be related to the Nigg cross-slab.

There are features of panelled zoomophic ornament in the Book of Kells that suggest that the Nigg sculptor shared artistic familiarity with the Kells' artists. Comparisons reveal animal ornament at a similar stage of development in both.

The animal ornament at Nigg and St Andrews is seen as a development of the Tara/Lindisfarne/Aberlemno animal style.

http://www.kapnobatai.demon.co.uk/pictarts