pictish arts society

journal 1

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editorial

Since the Pictish Arts Society was founded in 1988, nine Newsletters of increasing length have been produced, chiefly for distribution to the subscribing members of the Society. The PAS Committee has decided that it is time to upgrade our publication to a Journal and, as Editor, I have endevoured to improve presentation, reproduction and binding for the first edition of this new magazine.

The aim of the PAS Journal is to cover all aspects of Scottish Early Mediaeval studies: art history, archaeology, new discoveries, linguistics, museum news, book reviews and any other relevant topic. It is not the intention to confine our field of study to the Picts alone: papers on any of the early peoples and periods of Scottish history and prehistory will be very welcome. Some of the objectives of the PAS, outlined in our Constitution, are:

To affirm the importance of Pictish culture to Scotland's history and prehistory.

To further awareness and understanding of the art and symbolism of the Pictish stones.

To promote interest in all aspects of the early history of Scotland and to encourage the development of research and field work.

It is hoped that PAS members will continue to send articles, illustrations and letters to the PAS Journal; contributions from scholars who are not members of the Society, but who study the Pictish period or related fields, will also be gratefully received. Contributions can be of any length. Illustrated papers are especially welcome.

It is hoped to produce the Journal three times a year. PAS members will continue to be sent it as part of their subscription to the Society, as well as receiving news of our lecture programme (given at the School of Scottish Studies, 27 George Square, Edinburgh), and our field-trips to sites of interest. Information on subscribing to the PAS can be obtained from the Membership Secretary, Deirdre Nolan, 17 Perth St, Edinburgh EH3 (Tel: 031-556 8342). Contributions for the PAS Journal should be sent to the Editor, Niall M Robertson, 28 Fairies Rd, Perth, Tayside, PH1 1LZ (Tel: 0738 25022).

Many thanks to all those who have helped get this first PAS Journal off the ground, including all contributors, illustrators and advertisers. It is hoped to produce the second edition of the magazine in the Autumn.

Niall M Robertson.

Pictish Arts Society Journal

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Cover photograph - Aberlemno Kirkyard (Tom E. Gray).

focus on dunnichen

In Search of Dun Nechtain and the Lost Warrior

The Pictish Arts Society plans to hold its first annual conference in Letham, Angus, on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 May, taking over the Electric Temple (alias the Village Hall) from the colourful "Robbie the Pict". Robbie, who chose the hall for its proximity to the Dunnichen battle site, has decided to move into a larger venue in Forfar or Dundee. Dunnichen Hill, as most members of the Society will be aware, is under threat from quarrying plans proposed by Laird Bros (Forfar) Ltd, so as the future of the hill hangs in the balance, I thought it appropriate to take another close look at this key historic battle site.

Most of you will be familiar with Graeme Cruickshank's excellent work in compiling and reconstructing the evidence for Dunnichen as the site of the Battle of Nechtansmere (to use its English name) in 685 (Cruickshank, 1991).

The name Dunnichen derives from *Dun Nechtain* (also found as *Dun Neachtain*) or Nechtan's Fort. The parish was recorded as *Dunechtyn* during the late C12th (Jervise, 1885, 216), and in the form *Dunnychtyne* in 1372 (Warden, 1882, 188). So where is it? Unfortunately the fort has gone to ground, or rather the ground has gone from under the fort.

There is a brief passage in The Statistical Account of Scotland, published in 1791, which reads:

> On the south side of the hill is an eminence, now called Cashells, or Castle-hill, with visible remains of the foundation of some antient building.

(SAS Vol I, 1791, 419).

The name Cashells appears to come from the Gaelic word *caiseal*, meaning "a circular stone fortress" - the Castle Hill. This was Dun Nechtain. More information is included in The New statistical Account of Scotland:

> From the south side of . . [Dunnichen] hill a low shoulder is projected, on which there once stood a fort built with dry stone, without any cement. It is agreed on all hands that the parish derived its name from this fort or castle. The foundation of a similar fort is still visible on the hill of Dumbarrow, a detached part of this parish.

(NSA Vol XI, 1845, 142).

Dun Nechtain:

> Stood on a small plateau which has its own water supply and which projects from the south side of the hill near but below the summit, overlooking Nechtan's Moss and the surrounding valley.

(Wainwright, 1948, 82-7).

Unfortunately hill-forts in rich farming country offer easy pickings for stone robbers, and some years later most of the stones were removed to "build fences". In the New Statistical Account it is said that:

> [On the floor of the fort] was found a thick bed of wood ashes, mixed with numerous bones, which seem to have belonged to the animals on which the inhabitants fed.

(NSA Vol XI, 1845, 146).

It is also recorded that "a number of small gold bullets" were found, which were attributed to the coinage of the times.

It was about this time that some bampot came up with the idea of turning the Castle Hill into the Castle Quarry. This led to further destruction of Dun Nechtain, and its area was nearly obliterated by the quarrying operations (does this sound familiar?).

Dave Henry, a local PAS member and hardened "Save Dunnichen Hill" campaigner, has discovered an interesting wee bit of poetry written in 1881 for the Annual Gathering of the Natives of Dunnichen:

> Or ower Dunnichen's bonny hill,
> Wi lichtsome heart, we'll wander still;
> Whaur kilted Romans showed their skill
> In marshall lore;
> Their trenched-up camp Time's failed to fill
> Sin' days of yore.

John Y Gray, 1881.

The author seems to have confused his history a bit, what with his "kilted Romans" an' a', but he does suggest the existence of some kind of fortified settlement that "Time's failed to fill" being still visible as recently as 1881. Hill-forts and other antiquities were often erroneously attributed to the Romans in days gone by; their true origin having been forgotten, they were ascribed to the best known ancient people. More recently still, local historian Alan Reid wrote what seems to be the only account of the fort which says anything about its internal layout: "Dunnichen . . a picturesque hill on which may be traced the formation of the *rath* enclosing a number of hut circles" (Reid, 1902, 276).

Closest to home, F T Wainwright identified "A few stones and the broken line of what appears to have been a stone wall or earthwork" (Wainwright, 1948). These scant broken remains are probably all that exists of Nechtan's Fort today.

It is interesting to note that the Ordinance Survey has located the "Castle Hill" not on the hill at Dunnichen but just to the south-west of the present village, upon a rather insignificant rise which was almost certainly not the location of Dun Nechtain, but was in fact the site of a later Mediaeval tower. This was confirmed by locals in the area who still site the Castle Hill as being on Dunnichen Hill.

There is evidence to suggest the existence of an Early Mediaeval chapel east of present day

Dunnichen village. There is a description of the site in the New Statistical Account which states:

> The earliest place of worship in the parish was situated in the shallow lake, or Mire of Dunnichen, on what has some appearance of having been an artificial island, and of which some of the foundations are still visible. A deep ditch had separated it from the solid land; and this ditch seems to have been crossed by a draw-bridge.

(NSA Vol XI, 1845, 152).

Today all that remains visible of the site is the ditch, which appears as no more than a dip in the field.

Close to both the old chapel and the modern parish kirk lay a spring, St Causnan's Well, renamed the Camperdown Well in 1802, just to the north of the Dunnichen-Friockheim road. The ancient chapel was dedicated to St Causnan, Cousan or Cowsland, a worn-down form of Constantine, a person about whom there seems to be a lot of confusion. It appears that there were two saints of this name, as well as several Dark Age kings. Perhaps Norman Atkinson will unravel the St Constantine connection during the Dunnichen conference.

While researching Dun Nechtain I came across a brief written passage which caused a bit of a stir among the members of the PAS Committee. It concerns a poor chiel who got himself clapped in stone, buried by time, ploughed up, then lost again.

The last person to record this Pict was the Rev James Headrick of Dunnichen parish who wrote in the 1840's:

> A good many years ago, on the East Mains of Dunnichen, there was turned up with the plough a large flat stone, on which is cut a rude outline of an armed warrior's head and shoulders.

(Ibid, 146).

SOWHAURISITNOO!! There is no mention of this stone in Stuart's Sculptured Stones of Scotland, but in 1902 Reid wrote that: "[The fort on Dunnichen Hill] with several ancient monuments of the 'standing stone' order, and bearing rude sculptures . . form the antiquities of the parish" (Reid, 1902, 276).

Every year we discover new stones and recover lost ones, so here's hoping that we can find time out over the Dunnichen weekend to search for the lost warrior and to explore many of the area's other antiquities.

Nick Simpson.

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the "swimming elephant" symbol

During the PAS Members' Night on Thursday 9 January Miss E C Irvine-Fortescue presented her opinions on the meaning of the Pictish symbols. These included a view that the Pictish beast was a dead animal, and represented a skinned sheep, or possibly a dead wolf (see Miss Irvine-Fortescue's paper elsewhere in this PAS Journal). Interestingly, during the discussion following her talk, she also suggested a possible provenance for the term "swimming elephant".

In Prof W P Ker's book The Dark Ages (Blackwood, 1904) there are synopses of Dark Age texts, both oral and written. Amongst the latter, in the chapter on Latin Authors, is a reference to St Gregory the Great, Pope from 590 to 604. His work includes the Moralia, a commentary on the Book of Job, in which he states that the Holy Scripture has something for all minds:

Habet in publico unde parvulos nutriat, servat in secreto unde mentes sublimium in admiratione suspendat. Quasi quidam quippe est fluvius ut ita dixerim planus et altus in quo et agnus ambulet at elephas natet.

Or, in free translation:

It has in public whence it may nourish the small and weak; it may serve in secret, whence it may suspend in admiration the minds of the great and lofty. It is like a river with pools and shallows, in which in one place the lamb may wade, and in another the elephant may swim.

According to Ker this proposition was generally accepted; it is a favourite quotation with Boccaccio, who used and applied it in his theory of the art of poetry, in his life of Dante and in his Florentine lectures - a sufficient proof of the authority of St Gregory. Might it be that some scholar has read the unusual reference to the swimming elephant and applied it to the unidentified symbol on the Pictish stones?

Eric H Nicoll.

groam house news

Greetings from Groam House.

In 1992 we hope to add to our knowledge and appreciation of the Picts. Do come and visit us in Rosemarkie sometime during the season. You will be made most welcome.

Poster Competition Results

Out of the 60 or so entrants, from many parts of the world, the overall winner was Kenneth Steven, a 19 year old artist who comes from Lasswade. Look out for his eye-catching design of interlaced beasts this Summer, and if any of you would like to display the poster for us, please let the Curator know.

Being open at weekends throughout the Winter has brought a steady trickle of visitors and school parties into the Museum. We are looking forward to May 1 when we open our doors daily.

Unveiling of Pictish Picture

On May 1 we celebrate the unveiling of a large picture commissioned from Tain artist Mike Taylor. This is a colourful and detailed impression of our Cross-slab on the day - sometime between 750 AD and 800 AD - it was erected within the monastery of Rosemarkie.

Our reason for commissioning this work was to show the Cross-slab within its context of time and space. The artist has had advice from Mediaeval historians and archaeologists in order to make the reconstruction as accurate as possible, but of course it is only an impression, albeit a powerful one.

An exhibition of Celtic leatherwork crafted by the Gunns from Stromeferry will be displayed in May. Their work is exquisite, full of imagination and skill.

Publication of Lecture No 3

On May 15, Groam House Lecture No 3, entitled Curadan, Boniface and the Early Church at Rosemarkie by Aidan MacDonald of the Department of Archaeology, University College, Cork, will be launched. This contains much new research and may be obtained from the Curator after May 15, price around £3.00.

Groam House Children's Week - July 6-12 1992

The Museum will be holding twice daily fun-and-learning sessions for children aged 7 upwards based on the Picts and local folklore, with Duncan Williamson story-telling in the old tradition. Ring the Curator for further details on (0381) 20961.

Groam House Lecture No 4

Groam House Museum Trust invites you to the fourth in the annual series of Groam House Lectures. Prof Leslie Alcock, OBE, will speak on:

THE NEIGHBOURS OF THE PICTS: Angles, Britons and Scots at War and at Home

in the Gordon Memorial Hall, Rosemarkie, Black Isle, Ross-shire, on Friday 15 May 1992, at 7.45 pm.

Wine and refreshments will be available; there will be an entrance charge of £2.00 (concessions £1.00) to help towards the publication costs of the Lecture.

Information on accomodation and publication, can be obtained from the Curator at the appropriate address (see below).

The Art and Function of Rosemarkie's Pictish Monuments

by Dr Isabel Henderson. Groam House Lecture Series No 1.

Second Edition 1991: price £ 2.95.

Available from the Curator, Groam House Museum, High Street, Rosemarkie, Ross-shire, IV10 8UF. Cost incl p & p £3.30.

The new edition contains photographs of the recently discovered stones, improved illustrations of the rest of the collection, and a corrected text.

Elizabeth Marshall.

Curator, Groam House Museum, Rosemarkie.

Words, Logos, Symbols and Beasts

It seems to be the accepted norm nowadays that each and every corporate symbol is categorised as a "logo" whether or not it essentially derives from an actual "word". The term logo derives from the Greek logos, meaning word, so a logo is essentially a word - stylised, designed or otherwise - that has evolved into a symbol.
Let me exemplify and contrast by discussing two well known oil company symbols, those of Shell and British Petroleum; the Shell insignia displayed at each filling station is clearly a symbol, therefore, and the B.P. initials in the green shields are arguably a logo.

What has this to do with the Picts?

I recall a report in recent years of an exhibition in the Capital entitled LOGOS which exhibited in some form or other a number of Pictish symbols as examples. However, far from being, categorically, symbols having evolved from words, several of the Pictish designs are the complete and utter opposite - they are words which have evolved from symbols. There are many of the symbols, mostly geometric, which remain unidentified but yet are known by given and accepted names, such as the "rectangular design with z-rod" which, it has been suggested, is a representation of a dwelling or a chariot; the "double disc and z-rod", which it has been suggested depicts solar or astronomical/calendrical events; the "flower" symbol of Dunnichen, again unidentified, whose only real comparison can perhaps be seen on Celtic metalwork. Let me contrast these, for perspective, with: the "crescent" which is arguably the Moon and exists in other cultures from Islam to native Australian art, and the "mirror" - repeatedly cited as a determinative symbol, but a clear depiction of dated archaeological discoveries - underlined by the frequent association in Pictish stone art by a "comb". The majority of animal designs in Pictish art are well known, of course, for their accuracy in portraying species, most of which survive to the present day in Scotland or slightly further afield. However, there is one crucial example of an animal symbol which has become a word - the Pictish beast - and which has, indeed, had more than its fair share of names, being called over the years, the "swimming elephant", the "bear" and the "cetus". Perhaps it is actually a cetacean; informed opinion seems to hold two main sources of inspiration for this design - one of being derived from metalwork or illuminated manuscripts, and another from Mediterranean ceramic art depicting dolphins. A mysterious placement of the jawbone of another cetacean - in this case the porpoise - was found in the St. Ninian's Isle hoard of Pictish siver in Shetland in the 1950's. However, the Pictish beast (or beastie as we frequently hear) is perhaps the ideal symbol (with a small "s" and not, please, the logo) for the Pictish Arts Society as it represents the tantalising notion that we may ever decode and identify the repetitive elements of this unique corpus!

J David Moir.
Aberdeen.

kindling of the ancient fires

Marianna Lines has long been fascinated by Scotland's midwinter fire festivals. In this article she describes three of the most spectacular, and speculates about the echoes of an ancient past which they may contain.

* * * * * *

The great longship masquerading as a dragon burns in a funeral pyre of torches, cheered by the crowd, as a Norse lament is played. Another year of sacrifice to Odin, another Midwinter ritual to herald the return of the sun. Shetland burns its dark vapours away every year on the last Tuesday in January, and waits for the precious light to come back into its soul.

The year begins with wild fireballs in the Northeast as spirit messages are sent to the fish of the North Sea for Stonehaven's fruitful harvest, and protection is sought from the pagan gods of old, still reeking around the harbours of darkest Scottish winters. Then, 11 days later, on Auld New Year, the proper time for bringing in a good spell, the Clavie Barrel walks the streets of Burghead like a pyromaniac dream, blazing with demonic fire. The sea god is honoured once again, and good luck in the fishing/good fortune in life is insured for another year to come.

Fire-worshipping ceremonies are relics from the mists of ancient times, when the powerful element of fire was used for cleansing, banishing of evil spirits, divination and communication with other villages and tribes. Great bonfires (derived from "bone fire", the sacrificial flame) were part of every Celtic ceremony in early Britain; special fires were lit four times a year at the festivals of Samhain, Imbolc, Beltane and Lughnasa (Lammas) to initiate the coming season of earth rituals for the sowing, growing and harvesting of the crops. Of all the four elements which the ancients believed were basic to life on earth, Fire is the most potent. Ritual fires have been lit in Britain since at least the Bronze Age, as traces found at many stone circles attest. Fire worship and sun worship are closely akin.

January is the darkest month of the year in this northern hemisphere. Depressing, cold and dreich, it is the time when the heart, and the hearth, need quckening the most, and when hope is often at its lowest ebb. What better time for the great fires to be ritually burned, a magic three times over, for Scotland, like an old seer, to auspiciously begin another cycle on the treadwheel of life. These fires go far deeper than the banal Guy Fawkes bonfire, a confused ritual that evolved out of the Celts' Samhain fires of November, and later All Hallows and Martinmas. The fire festivals of January are an indigenous part of this country's heritage - a national ceremony important in its own way as Armistice Day, though seen by relatively few and understood by even fewer. Invisible powers are at work, much like lighting a candle to remember a friend.

At least three major fire festivals survive in Scotland to this day. Most prominent are those at Stonehaven, Burghead and Lerwick in Shetland, although Comrie in Perthshire also carries out

a fire ceremony at New Year. Like the timeworn Pictish stones, they tell a fragmented story of a lost civilisation.
At the stroke of midnight a mass of gyrating fireballs appear like demons out of hell to throng the streets of the old fishing community of Stonehaven, in the heart of ancient Pictland. Forty odd figures swing the great baskets of molten fire in procession as has been done for centuries. The timelessness of this moment of hallowing fire is greater than the awareness of the New Year which has just burst upon us; ancient rituals are strong in the blood in these parts.

Many miles along the coast, on the Moray Firth, lies Burghead, a modern village with Pictish roots. The houses of the present settlement are built over the ruins of the greatest of Pictish forts, whose Dark Age ramparts once commanded the North Sea like the horns of a bull. The famous Burghead bulls, superb carved stones once set in the walls of the fort, perhaps as a tribal totem, are the most impressive relics of ancient Burghead. Did this Taurean community consort with the god of fire by means of another unique symbol, the Clavie, set alight since "time immemorial" on the Auld New Year? In Burghead the "true" New Year is remembered from the old Julian calender, used before the adoption of the Gregorian calender in the C18th. The Clavie King and his traditional crew of eleven men carry a burning inferno of tar and faggots around the old boundaries of the village three times sunwise, passing out burning offerings to the oldest residents, before setting it on its final resting place on Doorie Hill, the outlook point to the north where many a beacon fire would have raged in Pictish times. Located just inside the ancient ramparts of the Pictish fort, the Hill was used as a burning place for the bodies of witches in the C17th. As the symbolism of the burning Yule Log, a protection against witchcraft, has attached itself to the Clavie, this location is more than appropriate. Hundreds of spectators line its path as it processes to the Hill, but an inner throng of bolder "firewalkers" dare to hang close to the Clavie itself, basking in its glow to the last.

The Lerwick based Up-Helly-Aa marks the end of the Yule season, much as Twelfth Night does in the Christian calender, though Yuletide in Shetland lasted for 24 days. Although its origins may have something to do with the "saining" fires thought necessary at this time of year for protection against "da trows" (the trolls), the present carnival celebration, that begins with the burning of a Viking ship, was introduced in 1889. Once experienced, it is remembered forever, the ultimate fire spectacular.
The act of burning the boat is borrowed from the pagan Norse tradition of the king's cremation in a funeral pyre on the sea, the boat being the eternal symbol of the soul on its journey to the next world. The King is substituted for the sun, and with the burning a sympathetic magic happens: the great Fire calls the sun to return to earth, and with New Year and lengthening days the sun is reborn in full glory once more. Something was sacrificed to the gods in those most ancient of times - even now, a "sacred" bottle of whisky may be offered. There are many mixed traditions bound up in the Up-Helly-Aa ceremonies, for it is both pagan and Christian. It is the Carnival - the last great feast before the 40 days of fasting

in Lent - with its guizing and mumming and masked players: it is the Mid-Winter Solstice replayed yet again, and it is New Year for real.

Whichever ceremony one chooses to celebrate with, the fire must be lit from the embers of the old. The silent rules of ritual carry on. To most of the people participating in these festivals, there may perhaps be no apparent meaning to the old custom, its original purpose is so lost in time. It's just something that has to be done. And thank Goddess for that.

Marianna Lines.

CSA Adopt a Monument Scheme

The Council for Scottish Archaeology is encouraging local societies to adopt a monument in their area that they feel particularly strongly about. Preference will be given to comparatively simple sites, such as a standing stone, small cairn or settlement. It is not intended to encourage societies to look after buildings or ruins.

The first concern is that the owner/occupier should be interested in and sympathetic to the proposal. Having chosen a suitable site which has a supportive owner/occupier, the local society should contact CSA. Someone from CSA will then arrange to come out, view the site and discuss the proposal further with representatives of the society and the landowner.

The intention is not to purchase the site, merely to look after it, keep it accessible to the public, and provide an interpretation board so that everyone can understand and enjoy it. A management agreement, a legal document already drafted by CSA, would eventually be signed by the two parties (with CSA acting as a guarantor). It details the work that would be undertaken (usually a minimum of five years) and the legal situation regarding insurance etc.

Fundraising would have to be undertaken to finance each scheme. This would cover the costs of any fencing, footpath construction, parking facilities and interpretation that was deemed necessary. The extent of this varies with each site - Carden Tower, near Auchterderran in central Fife, as detailed in our newsletter Scottish Archaeological News, is costing a substantial sum, but it is envisaged that other schemes would not be so expensive. CSA would provide considerable advice and help in seeking funds to see the project through. We recommend liaison with Regional and District Councils at the stage of a second site meeting, once it has been agreed that the site is indeed an appropriate one for the Adopt-a-Monument scheme, particularly bearing in mind the means of access.

At present we have two pilot projects underway. Carden Tower should be completed by the end of the financial year. A site near Aberfeldy is to be completed during 1992. We have also been approached by the Ayrshire Society to look at a site in their area and, if appropriate, it will be programmed for 1992/3. A similar timescale might be feasible for any proposal any other society might like to make.

Jill Harden.
Director, Council for
Scottish Archaeology.

further thoughts on the Bullion stone

During a talk and slide show entitled "Painted People and Picture Stones" given in Fortrose last Autumn, I was quoting from Davin Hood's delightful piece on the Bullion Stone which appeared in PAS Newsletter 6 (Summer 1990). He was making the point that such monuments were intended to last. Who would commission such an unflattering portrait of this bibulous, balding, pot-bellied warrior and his plodding over-burdened horse?
One of the audience, Dr Ida Gordon, a retired lecturer in Icelandic, offered a plausible and ingenious explanation based on her knowledge of the Icelandic sagas.

Bullion Stone (drawn by N M Robertson).

Dr Gordon later wrote that the event: "occurs in an incident in the saga of Gisli Sursson (written in the 13th century, almost certainly by a monk) about events, part historical and part fictional, of the late 10th century. The incident takes place in Norway in Gisli's youth.

A man named Kolbjorn is challenged to a *holmgang* (a form of duel usually fought on an island), and Gisli is to be his second - his opponent Skeggi's second is a man named Thorkel. But when the time comes Kolbjorn is afraid to go and Gisli calls him a miserable coward and says he will go in his stead:

> He set off with eleven men to the island. Meanwhile Skeggi and Thorkel had gone to the place where the duel was to be held and had marked it out with hazel rods ready for the combat and had recited the rules in readiness for Kolbjorn's arrival. And when he did not appear, nor any one to take his place, Skeggi ordered his carpenter, a man named Ref, to make effigies [*mannlikan*] of Kolbjorn and Gisli: 'And one shall stand behind the other, and the insult [*nij*] shall stand there for ever to shame them [or to their disgrace].

Gislasaga Surssonar, Íslenzk Fornrit, Vestfirðinga Sögur (Reykjavik, 1943, 9-10).

NB *nij* is used most often as a legal term for 'libel' both written and in the form of effigies, which often occur in conjunction with a horse's head or bone. Don't ask me why!"

So, Dr Gordon wonders, could the Bullion Stone have been carved as an insult "to stand there for ever to shame" the rider. Why not? If some stones were raised in celebration of brave men and noble events, could the opposite not also be possible?

Elizabeth Marshall, Groam House Museum.

a novice looks at the symbol stones

I am doubtful if I should ever have looked twice at a symbol stone if I had not been inspired by Dr Anna Ritchie's lectures on Scotland in the Dark Ages in Autumn 1990, and by the ancient and beautiful artefacts described as The Work of Angels in the Royal Scottish Museum's recent exhibition. Nevertheless, every country-bred Scot must be conscious of shadows in the "dark backward and abyss of time" in which standing stones are not simply museum objects but markers of places ower the muir, ayont the wid, vestigial, strange yet half-remembered. It is sad that media-culture, motorways, ever-spreading townscapes and concrete are separating people from this elusive awareness.

I have learned that our native culture is no longer neglected or dismissed as barbarous, but that there is still controversy about our ancient memorials. Now, although a novice, lacking the systematised erudition of scholars of the subject, I have presumed, perhaps impertinently, to add to the controversy.

Omitting both the reasoning and the references, my interpretations of the symbols are, briefly, as follows:

The double disc is composed of two stylised wheels and represents a machine for spinning. The z-rod is part of the machinery, with the cross-rod connecting the wheels, and the end-rods being a spindle-control-rod, with hooks to control the thread, and either a distaff (for flax) or some kind of key or handle (there is no sign of a treadle). Some wheels appear to be notched; is this significant?

The snake is the spun thread coiling like a snake. This metaphorical idea need not interfere with traditional interpretations in other contexts.

The mirror may be some kind of smaller wheel, or a frame for lace-making, knot-work or darning (so also the single mounted disc). The comb would be used for carding raw wool.

The crescent may be part of the machinery which I cannot identify, or alternatively a lace-making pillow; it has the same shape. The v-rods may be knitting-needles, crochet-hooks or perhaps composite quantities of the pins used in lace-making.

The rectangles may in some cases represent looms.

The tuning-fork may be a retting tool for bashing or breaking the fermented flax; similarly the axes, shown being carried by men and centaurs, could be mallets.

The Pictish beast is a dead sheep or wolf; it has been skinned, and the wool or hair would be used as a staple material for spinning.

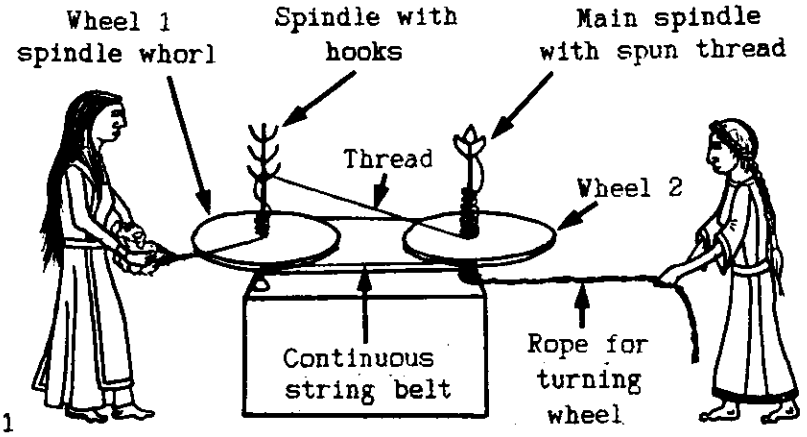
The fish always represents water. Again, this need not interfere with other connotations (eg Christian) in other contexts.

All the literature which I have read on the subject refers to stone-carving in conjunction with metalwork and illuminated manuscripts; my impression is that the sculptors' designs are considered to have been borrowed from these sources. But I do not see how this can be proved. Certainly, one or two symbol stones show the smith's hammer, anvil and tongs; others

depict men carrying book-satchels (no pens or paint pots?). But I suggest, alternatively, that metal-workers, scribes and sculptors were all drawing on the same source, and that source was a wide-spread, much respected Cloth or Fabric Culture during a "Textile Age" (as we talk of a "Plastic" or "Nuclear" Age today) of which no traces could, apparently, have survived - except, most cogently, on the symbol stones. Possibly such an emphasis on cloth could have been stimulated by a sudden advance in the technology of spinning and weaving - not as great as the C18th Industrial Revolution which ended countless centuries of dependence on hand-craft, but nevertheless significant. But it might not have survived the C9th eclipse of the Picts - see my last paragraph, below.

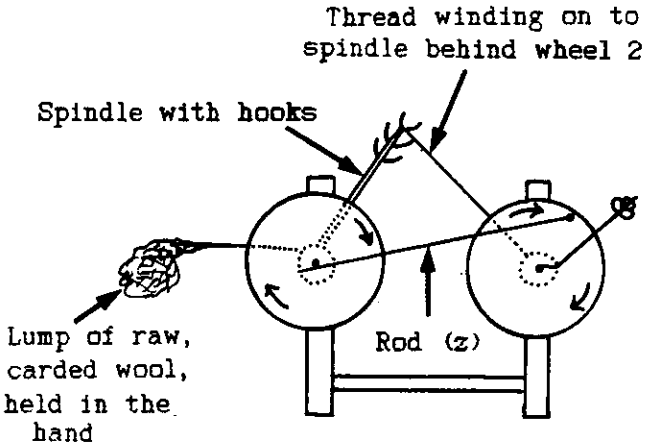
Could it be that stones with the double disc and crescent symbols, representing spinning and cloth production, were set up to indicate that cloth was made in certain places, or coincidentally that clothes are important for civilised people?
As regards the burial memorial theory, remember that cloth is used for shrouds. Possibly Easter Ross, Moray. Donside and Angus were centres of a flourishing industry. Cloth or fabric-making could have been a secret and/or sacred craft mystery: hence the fact that no-one is shown actually doing the work. With the coming of Christianity, this work could have been dedicated to God - hence the recording, on the actual crosses, of the most elaborate and

SKETCHED DIAGRAMS OF POSSIBLE DOUBLE DISC SPINNING WHEELS



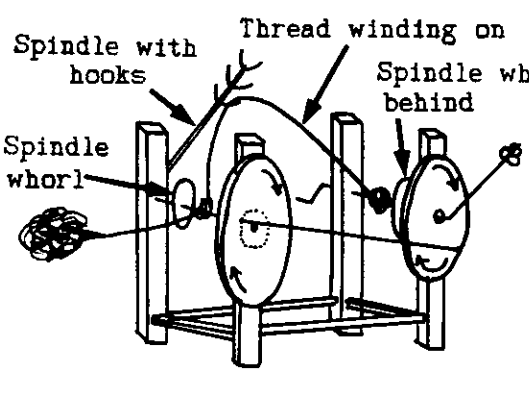
DESIGN 1

A continuous string belt connects the two wheels. As the Picts would not have gear wheels, this machine must be turned by unwinding a rope. (But some discs have patterns which might be interpreted as wheel-cogs?).



FRONT VIEW

A metal rod connects the two wheels



PERSPECTIVE VIEW FROM LEFT

"Bridge" behind?

The frame would need extra support perhaps a "bridge" board on the far side (omitted for sake of clarity).

DESIGN 2

beautiful patterns that the yarn-workers could produce. Cloth represents civilisation vis-a-vis the naked savage, and depends on technology.

I mentioned that the snake symbol could represent the spun yarn; I suggest that snakes are carved precisely for that purpose in most cases. In one of these, I took a piece of string and with it tried to copy the loops of the snakes' intertwining coils. This produced a motif like a part of the fabric carved on the adjacent cross.
The hybrid animals (eg the bird-headed lizard) represent mixed yarns (eg yarn of wool, hair or fibre softened by adding bird down or chopped feathers). The horse with fish-tails refer to horse-hair soaked in water, which is surprisingly soft. The centaur may represent flax, but I have been unable to substantiate this interpretation. All the hunted animals may have provided wool or hair for cloth-making.

All this suggests a carefully worked out code to indicate the kind of yarn used in the sculptors' pictures and vignettes. Each stone should be read, back and front, as a complete entity. One must distinguish between the complete scenes showing hunting incidents or a battle, and what appear to be (but are not) haphazard arrangements. In the animal cartoons, the images may be hieroglyphs in which each constituent represents:
1) An object, or either a metaphorical or metonymical (word-sign) idea.
2) A single sound or letter (alphabetical sign).
3) A syllabic sound (Firth, 1937, 40-52; Murray, 1962, 225-31.).
Much detailed linguistic knowledge is necessary in order to establish coherence for 2) and 3); my knowledge is limited. The animals might also refer to date-charts (MacBain, 1982, 164, 192). Pictures of animals should not be confused with those of animal masks, which must refer to pre-Christian religious rites in a superceded animal culture. Completely subjective interpretations of the picture stones are possible but unreliable without literary or historical corroboration.

There is surely a link between the hieroglyphs and the craft-symbols. It may be objected that spinning-wheels, invented in the East, did not reach Britain until the Middle Ages, but an enterprising Pict might have hit on the idea; or, if the Picts came from Scythia, they might have brought with them knowledge from the same source as that which led to the Indian developments in cloth-making. The Pictish efforts could have been destroyed by jealous Scots, Pictish Luddites using hand-spindles, the Roman Church in its efforts to suppress Paganism and apparently heretical practices (any craft-mystery - eg the Masons - attracts suspicion and sometimes disapproval), or because the technology may not have worked well enough to be completely economic. Only the stones remain (for how long?), and they are only a proportion of the original number. Let us preserve from oblivion these relics of a long-lost culture which once was ours.

E C Irvine Fortescue.

Lack of space in the Journal has necessitated the omission of a long bibliography, but the following specific references in the abridged text should be included; a full list of works consulted is available.

Firth, J R - The Tongues of Men and Speech (OUP, 1937).

MacBain, A - Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language (Gairm, 1982).

Murray, M A - The Splendour that was Egypt (Four Square, 1962).

conferences and lectures in 1992

The 1992 Groam House Lecture

Gordon Memorial Hall, Rosemarkie, Friday 15 May, 7.45 pm.

The fourth in this annual series of Lectures will be given by Prof Leslie Alcock, OBE, Hon Professorial Research Fellow, Glasgow University, who will speak on:

"The Neighbours of the Picts: Angles, Britons & Scots at War and at Home".

Entry £2.00 (concessions £1.00). The money raised from this charge will be used to help defray the cost of publishing the lecture.

Wine and refreshments will be served.

The 1992 Jarrow Lecture

St Paul's Church, Jarrow, Friday 22 May, 7.30 pm.

To be given by Dr David Kirby and entitled:

"Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica Gentes Anglorum: It's Contemporary Setting".

The Jarrow Lectures were instituted in 1958, and present research not only on the Venerable Bede and his writings, but on Early Mediaeval North Britain in general. Details and prices of the Lectures still in print can be obtained from St Paul's House, 12 High Back Close, Monkton Village, Jarrow, Tyne and Wear, NE32 5PA. Tel: (091) 489-0645.

First International Conference on Celtic Folklore

University of Wales, College of Cardiff, Wales, Sunday 19 - Thursday 23 July.

The focus of this inaugural conference will be the folk tradition of the Celtic countries. Proposed sessions include: narrative folklore; material culture; folksong; music and dance; dialect; folklore and the rise of national consciousness.

The conference will cover all areas in which Celtic languages are spoken or have provided a significant impetus to cultural development. Papers may cover either historical or contemporary aspects of folk culture, orality and literacy, and the history of folklore studies. Delegates can present their papers either in English or Welsh.

Further information on this conference is available from Dr J Wood, Folklore Society, University College London, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT (Tel: 071-387 5894).

The Book of Kells

Trinity College, Dublin, Eire, Sunday 6 - Wednesday 9 September.

This international conference will celebrate the quatercentenary of Trinity College through discussion of the College's greatest treasure, the Book of Kells, and will expand on work published to accompany the recent printing of a full-colour facsimile of the manuscript. The conference will include sections on historical background, texts, palaeography,

iconography, decoration, liturgy and pigments. The proceedings of the conference will be published, probably in 1993.

This conference will be limited to 200 participants, and the fee will be £55.

The Whithorn Lecture

St Ninian's Priory Church, Whithorn, Saturday 19 September, 7.45 pm.

Prof Charles Thomas, CBE, who will speak on:

"Whithorn's Christian Beginnings: When? Where? Whence and by Whom?"

There will be no admission charge.

For full details of this inaugural lecture, see under Dumfries and Galloway in the Regions section of this PAS Journal.

Regions

Dumfries and Galloway

The Whithorn Lecture

The Friends of the Whithorn Trust, the voluntary body which supports the work of excavation at the archaeological site at Whithorn, have invested a valuable legacy (the D R MacDonald bequest) to endow an annual lecture series to explore the history of Whithorn and its national and international relationships.

The series aims to provide a focus for the increasing specialist interest in the findings of the excavation, to place it in a broad comparative perspective through analyses of its relation to other sites in Britain, Ireland and the continent and, through publication of the Lectures in each subsequent year, to provide a permanent record of debates available to those involved in the field.

The unusually extended and continuous chronology of the site at Whithorn, ranging from the Early Christian period, through the Anglian occupation, and the Hiberno-Norse settlement to High Mediaeval, offers a unique insight into the unfolding of a religious community as it became transformed by the successive aspirations and languages of the cultures which occupied it. The archaeological record gives a clear insight, as excavation enters its sixth year, into the religious and ritual practices of what must be Scotland's most continuously occupied graveyard, and into the growing permanence of the ecclesiastical structures, from the open-air shrines of the early period to the fully developed precints of the Northumbrians, with their large ranges of church buildings, and the flourishing Mediaeval cathedral. Evidence recently uncovered suggests a marginal position for Whithorn as an economic centre on the fringes of the Roman Empire, and points to a complex dependence of religious and spiritual on secular and economic power and, conversely, to the needs and prosperity of the religious community as the underpinning for coastal and continental trade.

The Lectures aim, for the first few years at least, to reflect this sequence, in beginning with the questions of origin, in an inaugural Lecture by Prof Charles Thomas, CBE, entitled: Whithorn's Christian Beginnings: When? Where? Whence and by Whom?, to be given at St Ninian's Priory Church, Whithorn on Saturday 19 September 1992 at 7.45pm. The lecturer in 1993 will be Prof Leslie Alcock, OBE, who will be speaking on the purely secular aspects of Whithorn's economy and social structure, the development of urbanisation and related topics. Other Lectures already arranged will address: Whithorn's social and economic links with Europe; the Anglian settlement and the Norse deposits; literary sources which, for over a century, have given rise to controversy over the person of Whithorn's founding saint, Nynia or Ninian, the significance of his mission and the ethnology of early North Britain. These and other topics will be re-examined in the light of recent discoveries.

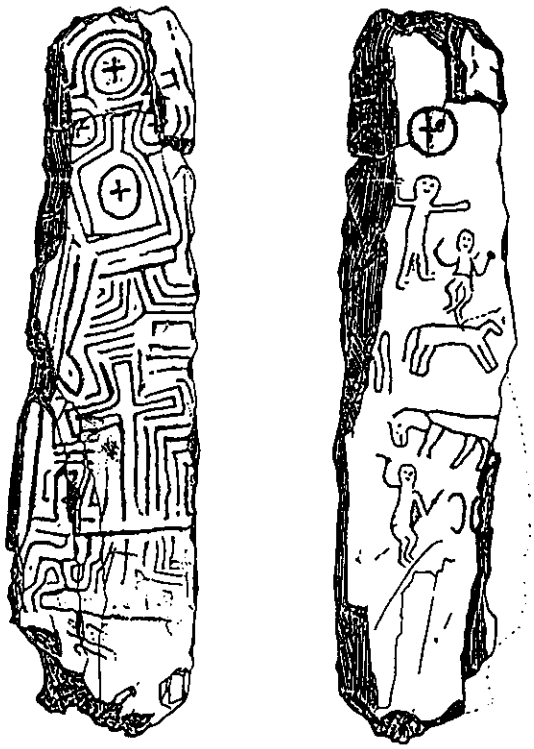
Likewise, the artistic and architectural achievements and influences of the ecclesiastical centre (in particular, Whithorn's position as a staging post between Ireland and Britain in conveying such influence) will be assessed in future years. No doubt future Lectures will be affected by the findings of phase 11 of the excavation as it proceeds from 1992; indeed, one of the unusual features of the series is that it co-exists with a live dig.

The venue for the Lecture each year will be St Ninian's Priory Church, which stands within site of the nave of the Mediaeval cathedral, of the excavation field and of the museum housing the Whithorn school crosses. Those wishing to subscribe on a regular basis to the Lectures in their published form, or to receive information on accommodation in the area for the inaugural Lecture weekend should get in touch with the Lecture Secretary, Julia H Muir Watt, 3 George Street, Whithorn, Wigtownshire, DG8 8NS (Tel: 09885 475).

The estimated cost of the published Lectures, which will vary according to length and number of illustrations, will be £3-£4.

Early Christian Stone Discovered in Whithorn

As reported in The Scotsman on March 7, a "1,000-year-old carved slab" has been found by Wigtown District Council. The stone was discovered in Whithorn, the site of the earliest known Christian settlement in Scotland, associated with St Nynia (cC5th-C6th AD) and Candida Casa. Packard Harrington, the records officer for the Whithorn Dig team, was conducting a "watching brief" on local property renovations in the town when the 1.5m long stone of "greywacky schist" turned up on 26 February, during the demolition of premises at 62 George Street in Whithorn, opposite the site of the dig. As the planned housing



development site fronts on to Kings Road, which is thought to have been an early road from the Isle of Whithorn to the Early Christian site at Whithorn, it was considered vital to monitor the building work. The pillar stone had been re-used as a door lintel in the manse of the Free Church, which had later been converted into an ironmonger's shop, and was found in near pristine condition.

The underside had been imbedded in concrete; it shows a pecked design of crosses and geometric lines. The other side is covered with animals and human figures in a sort of random hunting scene.

According to Peter Hill, Director of the Whithorn excavations, the carved stone: "belongs to the family of 10th-11th century stones from Whithorn . . [and is] possibly from a graveyard of the elite". Mr Harrington describes the stone as being of Viking Age period, and of Hiberno-Norse style, similar to carved stones on the Isle of Man and as far away as Wales. He cites W G Collingwood's Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age (London, 1927) for evidence of this style of carving. "This stone might be the first example of its kind found at Whithorn", Harrington speculates, but adds that the style is not uncommon elsewhere.

Unfortunately the stone was damaged in the act of discovery - two splinters were broken off one side. Further finds included two large millstones found in the floor of the sheds behind the house being demolished. At present the stone rests in the office of the Whithorn Dig, although ownership is claimed by Wigtown District Council. Further reports will be made when more is known.

Marianna Lines.

fife

St Andrews Museum

The new St Andrews Museum, which opened in the Summer of last year, is situated in Kinburn House, a large mid-C19th Gothic mansion at the west end of the city. Two floors of the building are open to the public: on the ground floor is a temporary exhibition area, and a small shop and cafe.

Upstairs are displays on the history of St Andrews. There are relatively few objects on show, though some of those which are are quite important. Dark Age St Andrews is illustrated by one of the better examples of the St Andrews school of cross-slabs (no 23), of which so many can be seen in the Cathedral Museum at the other end of the town. Though broken in two and cemented together, this is one of the better preserved stones of this type, most of which have been found re-used as building stone in the walls of the Cathedral and Priory. In a small case fixed to the wall beside the cross-slab is a much rarer object, a small enamelled mount, said to be a decorative fitting for a box, which was found in 1980 near the remains of the Culdee church of St Mary on the Rock. The mount's flat surface, which measures only

22 mm square, shows cells filled with yellow enamel in a swastika and T-fret pattern. It dates from around 700-900 AD. The cross-slab is on loan from Historic Scotland, the mount from the Scottish Urban Archaeological Trust (SUAT).
The accompanying short text states St Andrews' ancient name to have been Cennrighmonaid, the site of a bishopric from 908 AD.

Another Early Christian connection is mentioned in the next section of the exhibition, which deals with the Mediaeval Priory. The text records that in the sanctuary of the Cathedral was kept the *Morbrac* or "Great Reliquary", which held the relics of St Andrew. This Gaelic name is highly interesting, and was surely coined at an early stage in St Andrews' existence as a religious site. Compare the ancient name of the Monymusk Reliquary, the *Brecbennoch* ("Blessed Shrine") of St Columba. The display case illustrating the Mediaeval Church here has several important pieces: a wooden figure of St Andrew, only about a foot high, probably early C16th and unprovenanced, one of the few religious images to survive the Scottish Reformation; a bronze pyx, (a small round box for holding the consecrated host), found in a grave near the Cathedral, engraved with motifs often found in EC art, a "marigold" design and an equal-armed Celtic cross, though the label dates it 1100-1200; a pilgrim badge with the figure of St Andrew, and a mould for making two similar tokens, both c1300-1400.

Domestic life in St Andrews in the Middle Ages is illustrated by finds from excavations carried out in the city by SUAT. Though only a small selection of finds are on show, this is one of the best displays of its kind in Scotland. Finds include barrel padlocks, an iron arrowhead, small bronze ring brooches, a tinned iron rowel from a spur, a bronze harness fitting, spindle whorls, gaming tokens, and many varieties of Scottish and imported pottery. Nearby is a reconstruction of a Mediaeval house. This is too small to be very effective, though the replica pottery looks convincing. Attempts to give the gallery a Mediaeval feel by surrounding the displays with painted stone arches and two unexplained mannequins dressed as monks, look like bad stage scenery, and do little to enhance the Museum. Five C16th carved wooden panels, mounted in cases near the Mediaeval finds, do more.

I shall pass over the displays covering more modern times - on the University, the spread of the city, St Andrews' rise as a tourist resort etc. It is a pity that the huge hoard of Bronze Age metalwork and other artefacts that was unearthed in the city in 1990 will apparently not come to this new museum, which seems the very place for it. It would certainly make a splendid centrepiece for the collection.

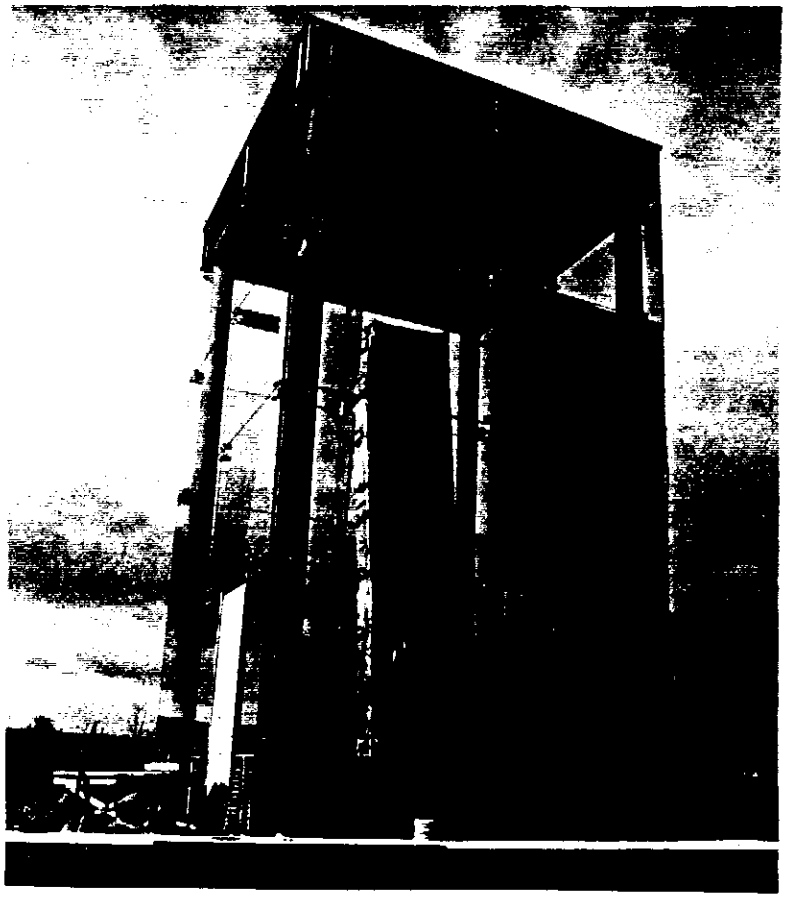
St Andrews Museum is open Mon-Fri 11.00-4.00, Sat-Sun 2.00-5.00 up to 31 March, thereafter Mon-Fri 11.00-6.00. It's address is Kinburn Park, Double Dykes Road, St Andrews. Tel: (0334) 77706. There are parking spaces right by the Museum. There is no entrance charge.

Niall M Robertson.

Sueno's Stone, Forres

The six metre high Class III sculptured cross-slab at Forres known as Sueno's Stone has recently been encased in a tall rectangular glass surround. Since work began the stone itself has been covered in blue plastic sheeting. The design and construction would appear to be against current scientific opinion, which holds that glass encasement of monuments of this nature creates an internal micro-climate submitting the stone to excessive temperature fluctuation which might prove destructive.
The cost is believed to have been in the region of £110 000.

The stone had lain buried for centuries until re-erection in the C18th. Held to be Pictish in form and to date from the C9th-C10th, the stone is unique in portraying (on the present east-facing side) a series of panels, the length of the stone, depicting military figures in various activities. In recent years the wearing away of the surfaces has been the subject of much debate - primarily, as with other sedimentary rock, the rapid deterioration of surface detail.



Sueno's Stone in its new shelter (J D Moir).

Local opinion on the construction can best be described as "mixed". As seems to be the case with many stones at high risk being considered for permanent protection, local feeling tends to be that such stones should maintain their profile in the landscape as they have done traditionally, yet there seems to be fear and alarm against the emplacement of replicas, however faithful to the original stone.

A massive pane of glass in the upper east-facing quadrant of the encasement had been smashed during the festive season and has been replaced by a large sheet of plywood. Replacement costs for this alone will be in the region of £2 500.

J D Moir.

Lothian

RCAHMS Office Move

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland has moved from:-

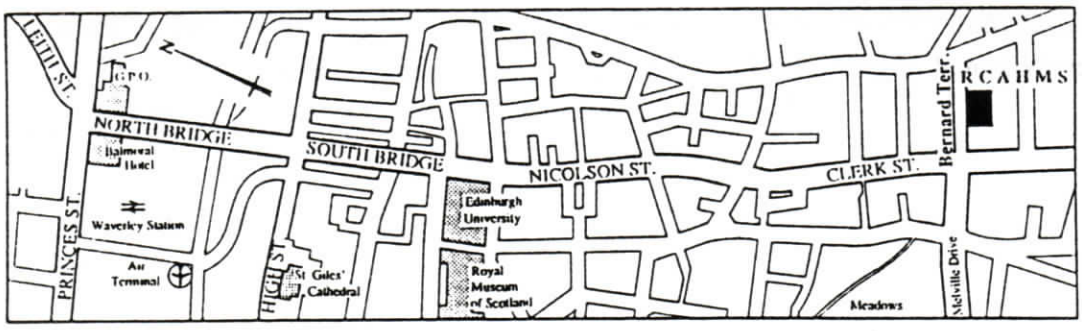
54 Melville Street to: John Sinclair House
16 Bernard Terrace
Edinburgh EH8 9NX
Tel: 031-662 1456
Fax: 031-662 1477
031-662 1499

The National Monuments Record of Scotland is housed at the Commission, and is open to the public from Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm. The new premises will be ready for public use from the start of March.

See further under Archive Report.

Niall M Robertson.

RCAHMS



Dark Age Sculpture Gallery Re-Opened

The Dark Age sculpture gallery in the Queen Street Museum, Edinburgh, which contains the most comprehensive collection of Early Mediaeval stones in Scotland, was re-opened in December 1991, after being closed to the public for over a year for re-wiring and re-display. Most of the artistically important stones remain, though a few have gone into storage, and a small number have been brought out for the first time. The lighting has definitely been improved, with every stone properly lit at an acute angle to bring out its carved detail, except for the East Lomond bull stone and the "Daniel" fragment from Rosemarkie, which for some reason are displayed lying almost flat.

The text accompanying the display has also been revised, and now includes illustrations of sculptures which remain on their original sites, and Early Mediaeval works of art in other media (such as jewellery and manuscripts) to compare with the stones on show. Class I symbol stones, for instance, are compared to the Pictish-influenced Evangelist symbols in the Book of Durrow and the Corpus Christi Gospel fragment.

The sculptures have been grouped more definitely than before into types: Ogham stones, Pictish cross-slabs, Northumbrian sculpture, shrines, etc. The tiny Ogham stone from Poltalloch has been set up vertically in the correct position, but I note that the Ogham alphabet illustrated in the accompanying text has been displayed the wrong way up. The layout of the casts of the St Andrews shrine has been improved by displaying them in their correct relationship to each other on a rectangular stand; the shrine panels from Gellyburn and Dull are mounted on the wall above this. Nearby is a modern casting of the Govan sarcophagus, made at the same time as those which featured in the Work of Angels exhibition last year, which is a great improvement on the old plaster cast that was formerly on show.

An innovation I was pleased to see is the display case in the middle of the gallery floor in which are displayed several fragments of cross-slabs of superlative quality from Tarbat in Ross-shire, not hitherto on display. With them is the equally delicate inscribed cross-fragment from Lethnot in Angus.

The artificial pebbles which formerly surrounded the stones have been replaced by a form of astro-turf, which has unfortunately concealed more of the lower part of the individual stones. More distressingly, the lowest panel of the Hilton of Cadboll stone, one of the finest panels of Insular ornament in the British Isles, has been entirely concealed. Apparently this was done for the sake of safety, since the 70-year old wooden plinth which supports the 4-ton slab has had to be reinforced. It seems that we will not see the whole of the Hilton stone, which the Museum Reporter correctly describes as the "centrepiece" of the gallery, before the opening of the new National Museum in Chambers Street, several years from now.

Niall M Robertson.

Logierait Kirk Pictish Cross-Slab Update

The congregation of Grandtully, Logierait and Strathtay parish are hoping this summer to be able to place their "new" Pictish cross-slab in a site where it will be both protected, and readily seen and enjoyed by visitors. Since the stone was identified in 1989, the congregation has been occupied with extensive renovations to the Logierait Church building, now successfully completed.

The question of the best site for the stone is presently being gone into with the appropriate authorities and advisers. There is a disused boiler room which might be converted into a

Logierait 2 Pictish Cross-slab (Tom E Gray).

"stone room", but which unfortunately has the disadvantage of some very steep narrow steps in the approach, and which would also need to be refloored. Alternatively, the stone might either be mounted inside the kirk behind the pulpit, where it is presently lying, or be housed outside beside the previously known Pictish cross-slab, in a manner similar to the Dunfallandy Stone. The Session Room, which is another possibility, is too small to allow photographic access to both sides of the stone.

In any case, to do the job properly, as the congregation would very much like to do, a substantial sum of money is going to be required. Since this work is not strictly necessary in terms of fabric maintenance, and the Church is bound by the Charities Law not to divert donated monies to other than Church purposes (even national heritage), raising this sum is going to be a problem. The congregation themselves see the cross-slab as an important witness to the ongoing message of Christ in the parish, and a living memorial to those who have gone before, but the legally and administratively minded tend not to see things in the same way. The congregation is therefore seeking any financial help there is to accomplish what they feel to be their responsibility, and indeed their wish. Any donations can be made to the congregation, Pictish Stone account, and sent to me at:

Strathtay manse, Pitlochry, PH9 0PG.

In the meantime, if anyone would like to come and see the cross-slab, a key for the kirk is kept at the Logierait Hotel between the hours of 10am and 3pm; otherwise by arrangement with Miss Annie Dewar, Hillhead (telephone Ballinluig 339), the author of our wee parish history booklet.

We are very grateful for, and encouraged by, the interest and support the Pictish Arts Society has given and is still giving us. Thank you very much. It is good to have friends who feel the same way as we do about our stone.

Irene B Miller, Minister.

Logierait 2, the Class II Pictish cross-slab with which Rev Miller's article is concerned, was identified during a PAS field-trip in October 1989, as described in PAS Newsletter 4 (Winter 1989), pages 2-5. It was the first Class II stone to be found for four decades, and its discovery has been the PAS' major contribution to Scottish archaeology so far. It is extremely gratifying that, from the first, the Minister and congregation of Logierait Kirk have looked on this new addition to the Pictish heritage as an asset to their church and not an added burden on their slender resources. The PAS Committee is firmly of the belief that they deserve every assistance in their plan to set up the stone for permanent preservation and display, and have already given a donation of £20 from PAS funds to help with this purpose. We hope that the membership will be generous in giving to a cause which accords so well with the reason the PAS was founded.

Those members who were on the North Perthshire field-trip on the day the cross-slab was identified will well remember the excitement of its discovery. It will be marvellous if we can help with the display of what is in a sense "our" Pictish stone.

Niall M Robertson.

A Modern Interpretation of Pictish Sculpture in Perth

The new Safeway supermarket in Caledonian Road in Perth has been decorated with ceramic reliefs portraying motifs adapted from the Pictish sculptures of Tayside. There is a different design, made up of four conjoined tiles, set into the capital of each of the fifty columns around the exterior of the bulding, and an eye-level display of some of the motifs, along with an explanatory plaque, within the tower that marks the supermarket's entrance.

The tiles were made by Elizabeth and Tom Westman of Westman's Pottery on Skye, and the commission came through the architects, Wilson and Womerley Associates; the idea was to have some distinctive form of decoration incorporated in the supermarket, just as Perth Market, the building that previously stood on the site, was decorated with carved stone animal heads (these sculptures were salvaged from the old market when it was demolished, and have been built into the new premises on the western edge of Perth). The architects asked Dr Helen Bennett of the crafts division of the Scottish Development Agency to put forward possible designers whose work could enhance the new Safeway's, and the Westmans' proposals were considered the best put forward.

Members who visit the store will recognise several familiar designs on its walls, slightly adapted to the different medium of ceramic art. These include the Bullion horseman, the Glamis centaur, the Meigle Cernunnos, the Aberlemno Kirkyard cross-slab's sea-horses, the spiral design from the centre of the same stone, and panels of interlace from cross-slabs at Dunfallandy, Glamis and St Vigeans. The designs are in relief, picked out by a background of purple paint, and certainly add interest to an otherwise unremarkable commercial building.

Niall M Robertson.

Book Reviews

A Guide to Ogam by Damian McManus (Maynooth Monographs No 4, 1991). (HB; 211 ps). Price £24.00.

This book sums up, for both the general reader and for expert linguists, everything (for all practical purposes) that is currently known about Irish language Ogam. Chapters One, Two and Three introduce and explain how Ogam originated and how it was used. This is general information that everyone interested in Ogam in whatever language should know. Chapters Four, Five and six, on the other hand, are for persons with some expertise in linguistics. These chapters build on the comprehensive collection of diagrams and photographs of Ogam inscriptions (as updated by recent finds and certain more critical readings) that are contained in the first volume of R A S Macalister's two volume work Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum (1942, 1949), which is the standard work in the field. After this, Chapters Seven and Eight discuss, for both the general reader and the expert, what is known as Scholastic Ogam. The book is rounded out by two appendices, extensive notes and an exhaustive bibliography.

In discussing the origin and use of Ogam, McManus refreshingly presents simple and down to earth answers to questions which are notorious for arguments that generate more heat than light, and for theories which frequently incorporate unbridled flights of imagination. "[Ogam] is not", he writes, "the creation of a dilettante whiling away his leisure time toying with ciphers, but a carefully planned and co-ordinated writing system designed as a vehicle for a language with a phonemic structure of its own". To demonstrate this, McManus divides consideration of the origin of the Ogam alphabet into two areas: its signary and its internal structure.

"The characters", he explains, "of the Ogam signary are not alphabetical graphemes; they are integral parts of a linear code which by its very nature is inflexible, and is clearly unconnected in origin with alphabetical writing". The origin of Ogam therefore has to be a tally system. This is a system in which successive units are counted by making marks on stone or wood. However, tally systems for effectively dealing with any more than two or three marks need to incorporate three principles: ordering, grouping and abstraction. Thus, while a long row of tally marks might be in order, it would be quite unwieldy to handle. To facilitate counting, such a row would need to be divided in some manner into groups. The next step would be to use some other symbol, in lieu of a number of tally marks, to represent such a group.

Roman numerals are a good example of a well developed tally system. Here, five single tally marks are abstracted into the character "V". As a result, the sequence "VII", for the number seven, consists of the "V" as the rank marker (for five units) plus two marks. The designers of Ogam, instead of devising symbols for a rank marker, ingeniously decided to employ a system of having up to five marks above the stem line, five marks below the stem line, five marks

diagonally across the stem line and (originally) five notches on the stem line itself. While this method limited the number of units that could be accomodated, the twenty position sequence thus obtained was sufficient for their needs. That such a sequence might also be used for telegraphic or cryptographic purposes did not diminish its utility. Moreover, by locating the inscription along the edge of a standing stone, an Ogam inscription was able to use the edge itself (the arris) as the stem line.

In dealing with the internal structure of the Ogam alphabet, McManus explains that the distinguishing characteristics are: "the inventory of phonemes to which it caters, the sequence in which they are arranged alphabetically and the names which they bear". Failure to realise this intention of Ogam's internal structure is what has led to the innumerable frustrating and convoluted efforts to align the Ogam alphabet with the Greek and Latin alphabets. The designers of Ogam understood, as did Greek and Latin grammarians, that letters rather than sounds were the smallest parts of speach. They also realised that there was a difference between vowels (or vocales) and consonants. Moreover, as the Latin grammarian Varro (whose era was contemporary with the development of Ogam) had pointed out, the identification of consonants which are semi-vocales began with "e", such as "ef", "el", "em", "en", etc, while those which are mutae ended with "e" - "be", "ce", "de", "ge", etc. The terms used to designate the letters were therefore of the utmost importance.
Then, as now, the memorisation of the letters of the alphabet was propaedeutic to learning to read and write. The terms originally adopted to designate Ogam letters are, as McManus points out, words which indicated sounds of Primitive Irish as those sounds were perceived by the designers of Ogam. Because of this, these letter names do not necessarily have the same phonetic values that are attached to them in the alphabetical lists of Scholastic Ogam in Mediaeval manuscripts. Scholastic Ogam values are the result of a revision of Ogam in the Old Irish period to make it compatible with the Latin alphabet. It should be noted that the original Ogam letter names were <u>not</u> all the names of trees or plants, as has sometimes been suggested.

The linguistic upheavals which accompanied the transition from Primitive Irish to Archaic Irish to Early Old Irish to Old Irish (of the seventh century), when the original use of Ogam went into decline, resulted in four of the original letters becoming redundant. These letters, which were re-aligned in Scholastic Ogam with phonetic values of H, Q, NG and Z, represented sounds that did not belong to Primitive Irish and, in the case of NG, for which there was not even a comparable letter in the Latin alphabet. In Chapter Three McManus traces both the changes of phonetic value and the modification in names which accompanied the redundancy and re-designation. In Chapter Seven he again picks up the story with the addition of the five new symbols: EA, OI, UI, IO and AE, collectively known as the *forfeda*. These he describes

as "having no internal consistency and little or no relevance to Irish". However, each *forfid* was "now pressed into service to denote a dipthong or a digraph beginning with its initial vowel and was thus distinguished from the letter name in [original Ogam] . . which denoted the pure vowel".

Having demonstrated that the original Ogam alphabet was designed to record the sounds of Primitive Irish (for which there was no other written script), it logically follows that its use was confined to situations where something had to be written out. In essence its use was similar to that of the Romans in carving inscriptions in capital letters on monuments. Hence it is a convenient distinction to refer to the original Ogam alphabet as monumental Ogam, and to the later Scholastic Ogam as manuscript Ogam. In examples cited from the Early Irish law tracts, it is indicated that Ogam inscriptions were persuasive evidence in legal proceedings for inheritance and ownership of land. Eventually the word *ogam* became a generic term for writing. Then, as McManus says: "At some time in the seventh century Ogam fell into decline in its capacity as a monument script and, from the eighth century on, was replaced by conventional script in the form of Irish semi-uncial". However, this demise of original Ogam did not mean that inscriptions in semi-uncials continued the Ogam tradition in a superficially modified guise. There was an entirely new beginning: "not only in script and orthographical conventions but also in distribution and the general choice of recumbent slabs as opposed to the more common standing pillar of the earlier period".

Chapters Four, Five and Six contain, as previously mentioned, quite detailed information on the names used in the inscriptions, how it is possible to date inscriptions by analysing their grammar, and the difference between Irish inscriptions and Ogam inscriptions in Wales and on the Isle of Mann. Regretably, McManus does not discuss Pictish Ogam inscriptions. This is quite understandable in view of the type of analysis being undertaken, since there is no equivalent Pictish language basis from which to work. However, since Pictish Ogam appears to have been borrowed from Irish Ogam, McManus' explanation of exactly what was being borrowed is a very necessary first step towards the eventual translation of Pictish Ogam.

Bill Grant.

The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe by Marija Gimbutas (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991). (PB; 528 ps). Price £20.99.

The newest book by the eminent archaeologist Marija Gimbutas, entitled The Civilization of the Goddess, is the culmination of her life's work in Neolithic archaeology. In it she describes a civilization that flourished in Central, Northern and Western Europe duting the Early and Late Neolithic ages which she amply documents with magnificent and provocative illustrations, and proves the existence of a matriarchal religion and high culture which prevailed in Old Europe from at least the Upper Palaeolithic until 3500 BC, when the Indo-Europeans took over. We in the Pictish Arts Society might think that such proof is unnecessary, but the body of archaeological knowledge has until now tended either to debunk such an idea, or been unwilling to state the facts outright.

Gimbutas has overseen digs in Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Yugoslavia, Romania and Moldavia. She speaks twenty-five languages and has done linguistic analysis to add meaning and interpretation to what has been uncovered. To me the most striking statement in the book is: "No doubt the understanding of paternity was available in the Neolithic. It simply was given no importance". This is because the magic and mystery of feminine birth-giving and death-dealing power was seen to be the ultimate reality.

The finds themselves are fascinating. At one site in Greece, Achilleon, hundreds of small figurines of the Pregnant Goddess were found near the bread ovens in the courtyard of every house. Two storey temples were unearthed, the bottom level of which was devoted to crafting ritual implements, sacred cloth was woven and Goddess figurines in the birth position, very like sheela-na-gigs, were found.

Every page of this book holds illustrations of animal and gynomorphic pottery and religious statues, village reconstructions, grave excavations and even a full-fledged undeciphered script, not used for accounting like the much later Sumerian cuneiform that is often called the first writing.

Gimbutas shows that this wide-spread Neolithic Goddess-worshipping culture was destroyed by three waves of invasion by horse-riding, warring herders from the Russian steppes. These invaders spoke Indo-European languages from which all modern European languages except Basque, Finnish, Magyar and Maltese derive, worshipped a sky god and considered herds, wives and children to be the personal property of valorised, dominant males.

Male archaeologist are already attempting to discredit her latest work, as they have been doing for years but, until more women do the painstaking exegetical work both in archaeology and theology, bringing to it their particular vision, we can be very grateful that Marija Gimbutas has paved the way in The Civilization of the Goddess. I am sure that this book will prove to be a watershed in the history of knowledge.

Marija will be in Edinburgh in September while on a trip around Scotland to see ancient sites, especially the Pictish stones which interest her very much. I hope to persuade her to join us for a reception to talk about her work. More of this as the time approaches.

Chessie Stevenson
18 Royal Circus
Edinburgh EH3 6SS

Grampian: A Country in Miniature by Ross Leckie (Canongate, 1991). (PB; 144 ps). £12.95.

This beautiful newly published book has been written by Ross Leckie, an early member of the PAS, an active member of FOGS (Friends of Grampian Stones), and a one-time politician. A sturdy, soft cover volume, the book is a portrait of the life and history of Grampian and its people, with excellent colour and black and white photographs by Jonathan Basan and others.

Chapter headings encompass a refreshing study of the North East of Scotland: Barrows, Cairns, Stones and Circles of the Moon; Battles and Bloodshed; Churches, Clerics and Catechism; Forts, Castles and Civilisation; The Age of Improvement; Fishing; Whisky; Parks, Gardens and Flora; A Cultured Land; Rest and Recreation. Of particular interest to Pictophiles is the coverage (plus a few photos) of the Pictish Stones of Grampian. Unfortunately, this subject is rendered incomplete for any studious Pictish antiquarian who knows the catechism of ancient stones. The section on the stones lists only nine major (ie well-known) stones or groupings (eg Logie Elphinstone), while a further two are noted later in the text. Important stones such as the Deeside collection, Inverurie (Brandsbutt plus the Old Kirkyard stones), Elgin, Monymusk and the lesser Rhynie stones, not to mention the important Burghead bulls, are ignored. What is included is adequately covered, but the omissions are blatantly obvious and reduce the value of a well-produced tome. A "comprehensive guide" it is not. The book is written in a readable, spirited style, but I must conclude that it stikes me as being a fairly tourist-orientated exercise rather than a serious work.

Marianna Lines.

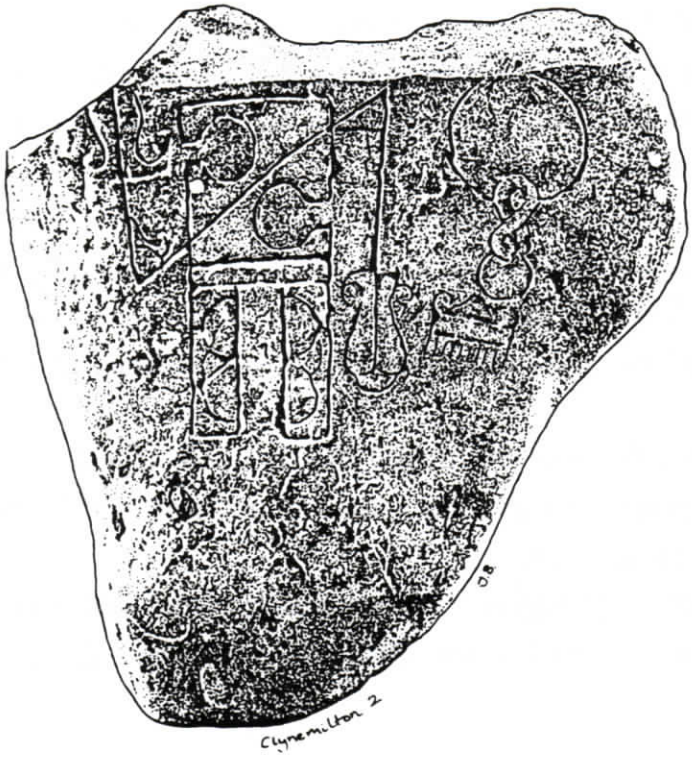
Current Archaeology Magazine.

The December 1991 issue of this popular archaeological magazine is devoted to articles on current research in Scotland, including more than one on the Picts. Anna Ritchie, in an article reviewing books on Scottish archaeology published in recent years, has included a most welcome plug for the Society: "A rising source of interest in Scottish studies are the Picts. The Pictish Arts Society, founded in 1988 and based in Edinburgh at the School of Scottish Studies in the University, is the leading focus . . [The PAS] has an important role to play in bringing together lay Pictophiles (of whom there are many) . . and professional archaeologists and art historians". Many thanks for the publicity, Anna.

Another issue devoted to Scottish archaeology will be produced in the summer.

Current Archaeology is published six times a year for a subscription of £12 (foreign postage £3 extra; US subscription $24). Back issues of the magazine are available at £2 each. Subscriptions and orders should be sent to:

Current Archaeology
9 Nassington Road
London NW3 2TX
England



archive report

My appeals for archival material have continued to produce a good response from members. In particular, we are indebted to Dr Anna Ritchie for a generous donation of books, and to others, including the Whithorn Trust, Niall M Robertson, Deirdre Nolan, Stuart McHardy and Adele Stewart for various interesting items. Where new acquisitions are in the form of books/booklets, they have been added to the Library List appended to the end of this article.

Future of PAS Archive

Until recently, the PAS has kept most of its archival material at the School of Scottish Studies in George Square, Edinburgh. However, owing to changes within the University, this arrangement will no longer be possible. Fortunately, we have been able to arrange to store our material with the National Monuments Record in John Sinclair House, where your Archivist will be able to continue classifying and filing the Society's collected material. The Royal Commission's courtesy in this matter is much appreciated. Progress will be reported in subsequent PAS Journals.

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland

The Royal Commission was created by Royal Warrant of 7 February 1908 "to make an Inventory of the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Constructions connected with or illustrative of the contemporary culture of the people of Scotland from the earliest times . . and to specify those which seem most worthy of preservation."

After the Second World War the Commission became responsible for recording monuments threatened with destruction and for maintaining the National Monuments Record. In 1983 the Commission assumed responsibility for the supply of archaeological information to the Ordnance Survey for mapping purposes.

The Commission is an independent non-departmental government body financed by Parliament through the Scottish Office and is directed by Commissioners appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of the Secretary of State for Scotland. Within its overall remit of recording Scotland's archaeological and architectural heritage, the Commission operates in four broad fields of survey:

i) Archaeology - The objective is to identify and classify archaeological sites and monuments. This involves a Listing programme and also a series of archaeological Inventories, providing in-depth assessment of selected areas.

An annual programme of Aerial Survey is implemented to record ancient monuments that no longer survive above ground and which are particularly vulnerable to destruction in the course of land development.

ii) Topographic - The objective is to provide authoritative regional Inventories illustrated by drawings and photographs, and in which the wider cultural significance of the monuments is assessed.

iii) Pre-Afforestation - The objective is to carry out strategic survey of field monuments in advance of afforestation, the Secretary of State having made additional funding available to the Commission for this purpose fom 1989-90 onwards.

iv) Architectural - The objective is to record historic buildings for which Listed Building consent for demolition has been granted, for those undergoing alterations and restoration, and for those threatened with vandalism or decay. Industrial recording is also undertaken.

The National Monuments Record of Scotland

This branch of the Royal Commission is now located in the Commission's magnificent new premises in John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX.

The NMRS stems from the amalgamation of two important collections of architectural and archaeological records. It is the successor of the Scottish National Buildings record, which was set up in 1941 as a private body to record historically important buildings in anticipation of their possible destruction by enemy action. In 1954 the Record was taken over by the Ministry of Works, and in 1966 it was transferred to the Commission.

The NMRS collection is open to the public during normal office hours, and its objective is to provide an information service based on its central archive of pictorial and documentary material relating to archaeological sites, monuments and historic buildings throughout Scotland. The collection contains about 400 000 drawings, 600 000 photographs, 70 000 maps and 12 000 books and periodicals.

The Mythological Bookshop

Tony Bonning, who is a specialist in Myth, Legend and Folklore, and runs The Mythological Bookshop (174A High Street, Townhead, Biggar, Lanarkshire, ML12 6DH. Tel: 031-447 6750) has sent me a copy of his current catalogue 92/1. This contains particulars of over 350 books, and members may be interested to know that there are sections covering Celtic/Scottish/Irish and Worldwide topics.

Tony organised the first Festival of Myth, Legend and Folklore in Edinburgh during August. This was a many-faceted exploration of these subjects, and included an Arts and Crafts exhibition at Adam House in Chambers Street in which several PAS members participated.

Eric H Nicoll.

Library List

Breeze, David	-	Hadrian's Wall: A Souvenir Guide to the Roman Wall (English Heritage, 1987).
Breeze, David & Donaldson,Gordon	-	A Queen's Progress (HMSO, 1987).
Brooke, Daphne	-	The Medieval Cult of Saint Ninian (The Whithorn Trust,1990).
	-	The Search for St Ninian (The Whithorn Trust, 1990).
Burt, Jack	-	The Pictish Stones of Orkney (J Burt, 1991).
Close-Brooks, Joanna	-	Exploring Scotland's Heritage: The Highlands (HMSO, 1986).
Hill, Peter H	-	Whithorn 3: Excavations at Whithorn Priory 1988-1990, Interim Report (The Whithorn Trust, 1991).
Hill, Peter & Pollock, D	-	The Whithorn Dig (The Whithorn Trust, 1991).
Hughes, Kathleen	-	Early Christianity in Pictland (Jarrow Lecture, 1970).
Magnusson, Magnus (Ed)	-	Echoes in Stone (SDD, 1987).
McHardy, Stuart	-	Strange Secrets of Ancient Scotland (Lang Syne, 1989).
Nowakowski, J A & Thomas, C	-	Excavations at Tintagel Parish Church, Cornwall, Spring 1990, Interim Report (Cornwall Archl Unit, 1990).
Ritchie, Anna	-	Exploring Scotland's Heritage: Orkney and Shetland (HMSO, 1985).
Shepherd, Ian A G	-	Exploring Scotland's Heritage: Grampian (HMSO, 1986).
Walkden, Gordon	-	About Banchory: A New Descriptive and Historical Guide (Banchory, 1987).

Letters

The Pinkfoot Press
Balgavies
Forfar
Angus DD8 2TH

Dear PAS,

In reply to Jill Adron's question about symbolic representations of gender (PAS Newsletter 9, 42), I enclose two depictions of heraldic mermaids.

I hope they serve to highlight the problems involved in interpreting symbols. "Obvious answers" are usually those favouring one's own prejudices.

David Henry.

Extract from a Letter by Dr Isabel Henderson to the Editor

I was amused by the Romilly Allen letter [reproduced in PAS Newsletter 9, 18-9]. What a splendid man he was! I wrote a little bit about the early recording of Pictish sculpture in the Introduction to Graham Ritchie's Pictish Symbol Stones - A Handlist 1985. JRA was very keen on setting up a photographic archive and thought amateurs could usefully contribute to it (PSAS 21, 1896-7, 147-52). John Pinkerton writing in 1814 called for the publication of the sculpture "in plates of a just size" but nothing systematic got underway until Stuart. Allen did so much for other parts of the British Isles. I wanted an account of his work to be part of Insular Art 2 [The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Britain and Ireland, Edinburgh 3-6 January 1991] but nobody had time to do it. There will have to be a superspecial Allen celebration in 2003 [on the centenary of the publication of The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland].

Dr Isabel Henderson.

Items to be featured in future editions of the PAS Journal

An introduction to Pictish Ogham - Bill Grant.
The Early Mediaeval sculpture of Forteviot - Tom Gray and N M Robertson.
A lost stone from Inverkeithing - Jack Burt.
Early Christian carvings discovered on the West Lomond - Tom Gray and N M Robertson.
What's in a Name? - The ancient names of the Picts - Stuart McHardy.
Reading the Stones - Pictish sculpture as graphic art - N M Robertson.
A new symbol stone identified at Forres - Tom Gray.

Third Finlaystone Celtic Art and Craft Fair

Finlaystone is a well-established visitor attraction about twenty minutes drive west of Glasgow, featuring a permanent exhibition on Celtic art. The third annual Celtic Art and Craft Fair will take place on Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 September 1992. The event is being organised on a non-profit basis, exhibition fees being used to cover the cost of advertising, etc. Besides being a very worthwhile selling event for craftspeople, the Fair also gives an excellent opportunity to meet and share interests with fellow enthusiasts for Celtic and Pictish art. As part of a policy of promoting greater understanding and awareness of the Celtic heritage, exhibition space will be made available free of charge for non-commercial educational activities.
For further information, contact:
Jane MacMillan, Finlaystone, Langbank, Renfrewshire, PA14 6TJ (Tel: 0475 54 285).

Wanted

Artist, working in the Edinburgh area, wants to borrow, or use on site, an overhead projector to produce Batik wall-hangings.
Please contact Nick Simpson on 031-662 0562. Cheers!