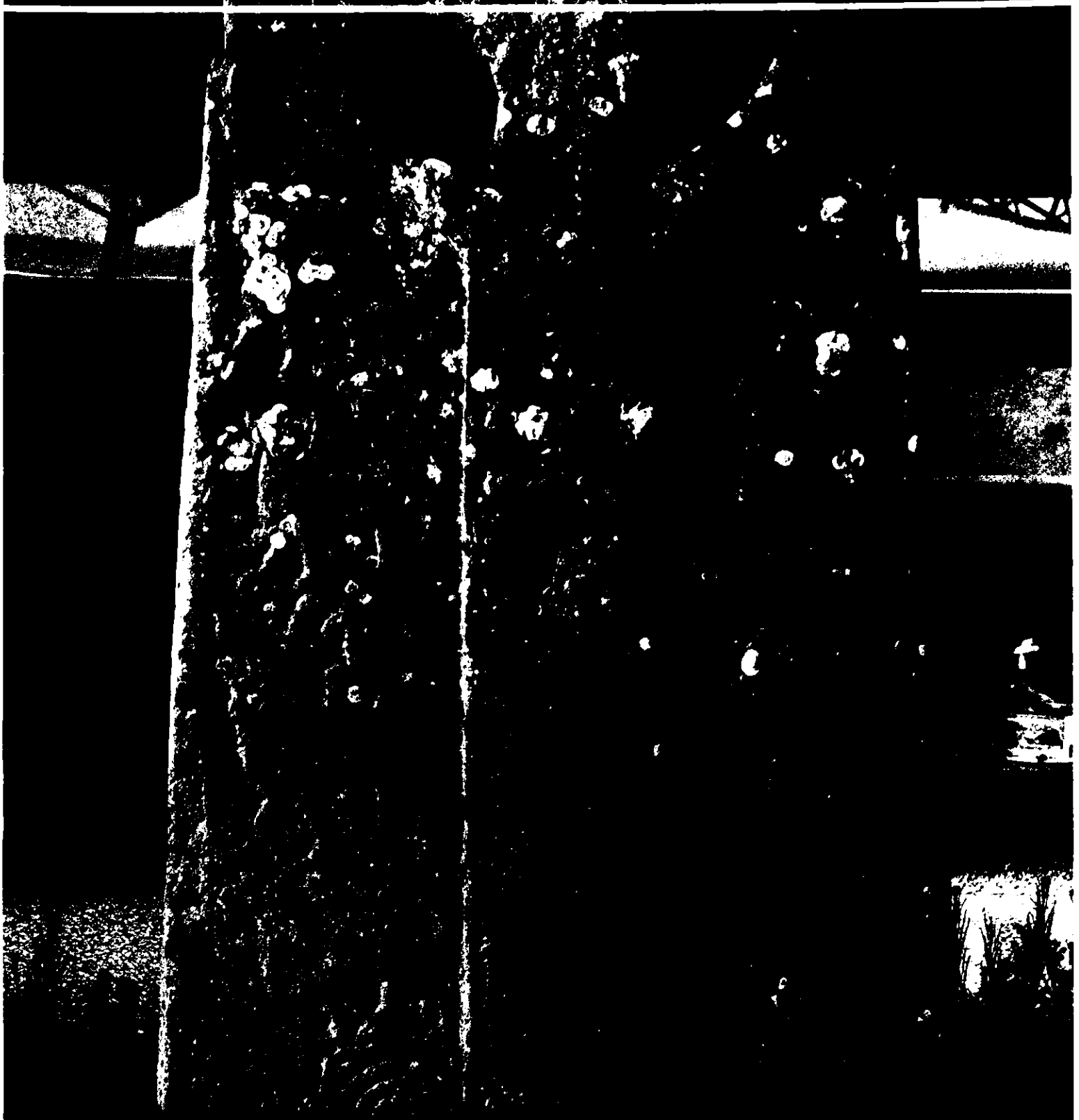
pictish arts society journal 3



spring 1993

editorial

In the Editorial in PAS Journal 2 it was stated that this publication was to have a glossy cover. This proved impossible in the event, and the Journal went to press before the wording could be changed. Apologies for this misleading information.

Certain changes in presentation have been carried through in the present edition. Some items of less permanent value, such as letters, have been printed in smaller type to save space and expense; also, at the request of more than one reader, a list of contributors' addresses has been appended.

I was again in the fortunate position of having more material sent in than could be accommodated in one edition, and it is to be hoped that this trend will continue. I hope that some members who probably expected to see certain items - such as descriptions of some interesting newly discovered stones - will be patient till the fourth edition comes out.

It is now the policy of the PAS Committee to ask the speakers from our lecture programme for texts or authoritative synopses of the papers they present to us for inclusion in the Journal. Our thanks to those speakers who have obliged us so far.

The fourth PAS Journal will be published in Summer 1993. Contributions should be sent to: Niall M Robertson, PAS Journal Editor, 28 Fairies Road, Perth, Tayside, PH1 1LZ (Tel: 0738 25022).

Niall M Robertson.

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Cover photograph - Borestone of Gask, Moncrieffe (Tom E Gray).

Ring-forts, Black castles, homesteads in atholl - pictish?

Text of a lecture given to the Pictish Arts Society on 4 March 1993.

* * * * * *

Ring-forts have long been recognised as a feature of the archaeological scene in north-west Perthshire. They consist of a circular stone wall 2-4m thick, enclosing an area 12-40m in diameter, and have a single narrow entrance about 1m wide. They occur on sites which have no natural defences, and to which no additional defences such as ditches have been added. They were first studied in detail by Prof Watson of place-names fame around 1912, and are found mainly in the Strathtummel/Strathtay region, with examples extending westwards towards Loch Awe. Watson excavated the fort at Borenich in Strathtummel (NN 845 601), but apart from confirming the nature of the structure, found little evidence of function, date etc. Since then there has been a general feeling, with some dissent, that ring-forts are relatively late in the archaeological record, and probably of western origin.

There was, and still is, no real indication of wall height. At Cashlie in Glen Lyon one of four examples incorporates in its wall an earthfast boulder nearly 4m high. This might suggest that the rest of the wall reached this height, but in no case do walls survive to 2m and most, if not all, are less. An example at Pitlochry, now vanished, was reported last century to have had walls 10ft high, but this was apparently hearsay. Moreover, the debris which might have accumulated from a collapsed wall of 3m is entirely absent from all sites; there is nothing like the broch mounds of the north. On the whole, it seems probable that walls were never higher than 2m.

The non-defensive nature of homestead sites has been mentioned, and the four examples at Cashlie in Glen Lyon (NN 475 416 etc) are typical. They occur on or near the river bank. Others can be found on low mounds as at Tullochcroisk (NN 711 578), but if defence was not of primary importance, outlook certainly was. At Dùn Geal above Fortingall (NN 746 476), the structure is perched on the edge of a steep drop into Glen Lyon, but it is overlooked from behind. Similarly, the site above Marble Lodge in Glen Tilt (NN 904 714) commands the entire Glen northwards, but is blind to the south. At Creag Odhar above Blair Atholl (NN 876 638), the outlook north takes in Glen Tilt and the Beinn a' Ghlo massif, while to the south the approach lies across a wide terrace which slopes down into Glen Fincastle.

Apart from Watson's investigations at Borenich, three other sites have been excavated: at Litigan near Aberfeldy (NN 766 497), at Queen's View, Strathtummel (NN 863 602), and at Chippermore in Wigtownshire (NX 296 483). Dr Margaret Stewart of Perth, Dr Horace Fairhurst of Glasgow University and myself were involved at Litigan, while Dr Stewart excavated Queen's View at the invitation of the Forestry Commission. This site has been preserved and is now part of a forest walk. Chippermore is reported in the Transactions of the Dumfries and Galloway Archaeological Society. Both Dr Stewart and Dr Fairhurst are no longer with us, and both died before the excavations could be written up. Consequently I compiled both reports from notes, plans, photographs etc. Both excavations were somewhat disappointing in the sense that neither provided definite answers to the questions we had been asking, but they did indicate the possible function of the then-named ring-forts.

Litigan proved to have been heavily robbed - a previous record mentions cartloads of stone from it having been used to build a nearby farm steading. The entrance had been demolished, although its possible location was established, but the rest of the structural details were clear. No occupation level could be recognised, but a series of postholes were uncovered complete with packing stones, and from these the level of the original floor could

Cashlie III homestead, Glen Lyon, Perthshire. Notice low level site near river (D B Taylor).

be ascertained. The postholes formed two concentric rings, suggesting that they had probably supported a roof, while the central hearth confirmed domestic occupation. There were few finds; some fragments of slag were found in the unstratified foot or so of soil above the undisturbed boulder clay, while a pocket of hazelnuts lying on the undisturbed gave a C14 date of 1000 AD.

Queen's View I homestead, Strathtummel, Perthshire. Detail of external wall (D B Tylor).

Queen's View was much more rewarding. It is 20m in diameter, surrounded by a wall 4m thick in places. The entrance, 1m wide, was intact, and the wall was 1.5m in height throughout. As at Litigan, a number of postholes survived intact, although here they made no recognisable pattern. Again, the original occupation floor could not be established with certainty, although there was no dubiety about the level of the underlying boulder clay. At some later date, a second entrance had been created in the east wall opposite the original one by the simple process of removing a length of walling, and the interior had been re-used by iron workers. The iron ore itself was not smelted here, since much of the debris - slag, black

ash etc - was identified as part of the smithing rather than the smelting process. Later still, a corn-drying kiln had been built on to the outside face of the wall. Dating material was not conclusive. A glass bead from underneath some wall tumble was dated by Margaret Guido to 600 AD. A stone lamp of a type regarded as post-Roman was also found in the interior. The slag was given a tentative date of around 1000 AD. Unfortunately, carbon samples set aside for dating purposes had disappeared when the report came to be written up.

A very detailed report on the pollen both inside and outside the structure was available, and from this it was possible to observe that the weeds of cultivation were entirely absent from the whole area except immediately around the entrance, where it was suggested that traffic had been so intense that the soil disturbance was similar to that created by primitive ploughing; this suggests that the homestead builders had been cattle herdsmen, operating in an open landscape without the tree cover that exists today. On all four sites excavated - Borenich, Litigan, Queen's View and Chippermore - the churned up nature of the interior was remarked on and this, of course, would be consistent with the suggested presence of cattle. It could well be that the timber structures inside served to separate the animal from the human occupants; and if you had cattle milling about in such a restricted area, thick walls would certainly be desirable.

It thus seems certain that whatever else these structures might have been, they were not fortifications. The name "ring-fort" has been abandoned by the Ordnance Survey and "homestead" substituted; this term too is unsatisfactory, since it can be applied to a variety of sites, but for want of a better it has been adopted, since it does at least indicate the function. However, such distinctions did not bother the local folk now or at any other time. In the Strathtay/Strathtummel area these structures are known as "Black Castles", and a number were given specific names - Caisteal an Deirge, Caisteal an Duibhe, Caisteal Mhic Reil in Glen Lyon, and perhaps more significantly, in Glen Quaich, Caisteal Dubh nan Crò "Black Castle of the Pens" (NN 867 367). There are others. This association with animal husbandry is also illustrated by the name Garrows in Glen Quaich (NN 826 401), where there are two homesteads, Balnagarrow in Angus (NO 373 572) where there is another, and Rob's Rede (NO 491 495), also in Angus (Gaelic *gàrradh* - "an enclosure"; rede - "a yard for animals"). It would be useful to know just when these names were given, but that is not possible at the moment.

Of the 67 homesteads known in north-west Perthshire, 51 are situated at heights above 200m, 46 have diameters greater than 15 metres, and 44 have walls 3m or more thick. They are found mainly west of the Tay/Tummel/Garry valleys, and those east of that boundary are immediately east of it. Half a dozen or so are found in Angus; Rob's Rede and Balnagarrow

have already been mentioned, and it is possible that the circular stone structures on Turin Hill near Forfar (NO 514 535) are also homesteads. Despite any cries of horror that might follow such a suggestion, had they been found in north-west Perthshire, there would have been little objection. Further north and south-east, however, the record contains no certain references to similar homesteads, and even allowing for the dangers of reading anything into distribution, one cannot help feeling that they are just not there.

Another feature of the siting of homesteads is the fact that many seem to be situated at the entrances to tracks and passes through the hills. This was pointed out by Watson in his original surveys of 1913-15, and still holds good despite many new discoveries, as indicated by the distribution pattern in the Strathtummel, Glen Lyon and Strathtay regions.

From what has been said, we seem to be dealing with a pastoral people, settled mainly in upland regions above the level of natural cultivation. Their homesteads certainly give the appearance of strength, but are not necessarily defensive, though they may have been refuges. Apart from the few examples in Angus, they are found mainly in the old Pictish province of Atholl. Dating is uncertain, but such indications as there are suggest the post-Roman period. As to who built them, we are not yet in a position to provide a definite answer.

Inevitably in such a survey, one looks around for other examples of the same structures away from the main concentration, and the results are interesting. As already indicated, there were few to the north or east of Atholl. Surprisingly, none are known in Strathearn, but Watson did include those around Dalmally. From there, there are homesteads at Dalavalich (NM 965 142) and Ford (NM 865 039) on Loch Awe-side, and Kintyre, the east shore of Loch Fyne and the Clyde estuary have typical homesteads similar to those in Atholl. There are a few isolated examples on the islands - Bute, Lismore, Islay and Skye. In Galloway, sixteen mainly large homesteads with massive walls are located around Luce Bay and in the Rinns. So there we sat on the butt end of Kintyre watching the reflection of the sun on the windscreens of cars on the coastal roads of Antrim, or in Portpatrick looking at the lights of Donaghadee; it began to look increasingly likely that we should have to make the crossing.

For Ireland also has its ring-forts, its cashels and its raths, hundreds if not thousands of them, and amongst its so-called cashels there are sites very similar to our homesteads. The names appear to be interchangeable, but basically the term ring-fort is applied to those structures which are massively and obviously defensive, such as the magnificent Grianan of Ailech in Donegal. This type of site requires no further consideration - if that is not too cavalier a treatment for such an impressive monument. The term *cashel* is generally applied to those sites which are surrounded by a stone wall 3m or more thick, but varying greatly in

diameter from about 20m at a site in Deer Park, Sligo, and the homestead-like site at Drumena, Down, to the extensive areas enclosed by the walls of monasteries such as Nendrum, south-east of Belfast. The latter can also be left aside for the purposes of this paper, except for the observation that in Scotland we too have our large cashels, such as that on Iona. Smaller examples also occur, such as Cashel Point on Loch Lomond and that most evocative of sites, Loch Chaluim Chille at the north end of Skye. There, on two islands in what was formerly a loch, there is a cashel of the type that we have been discussing, containing traces of internal buildings and, on another island linked by a causeway, the remains of a C13th church. The site can only be reached by means of a remarkable vehicle which can only be called a bog buggy, since C19th drainage works have been allowed to deteriorate and the loch is now a marsh. The cashel here might well be one of our homesteads, and this brings to the fore another fact about them - many of the sites contain traces of internal buildings, although it is not possible to say whether they are of the same period without excavation. Dùn Geal above Fortingall has a small rectangular building inside, and there are numerous other examples. We don't know the date or function of these buildings, but it is possible that some of them may have an ecclesiastical connection, a possibility reflected in traditional religious associations with homestead sites.

To return to Ireland, the name *rath* is given to those structures where the central area is enclosed by an earthen bank created by throwing up the material from a surrounding ditch. There may be more than one of these banks. It is generally thought that cashels were built where stone was available, and raths where the depth of soil lent itself to the other form of construction. Excavations at both types of site indicate that dating and function are similar, and they tie up well in date with the Scottish homesteads. If we can see similarities between homesteads and cashels, until recently there has been no suggestion of the appearance of raths in Scotland. However, aerial photography in the south-west has revealed a number of sites which look suspiciously like raths and would be worth investigating, and what looks like a multivallate rath survives as an upstanding monument at Dunshelt in Fife (NO 246 102).

By this time, no doubt, you are ahead of me. It is very tempting to speculate on the possibility of a crossing from Ireland to Galloway, nor do there seem to be any reasons why this should not have been the case. From Galloway, one could visualise a gentle infiltration northwards up the west coast to the head of Loch Fyne and the Clyde estuary. Loch Lomond has its cashel, Loch Awe has sites at Ford and Dalavalich, and so on to Dalmally. At Auch we have the homestead on Beinn a' Chaisteal (NN 352 365) which looks down into Glen Lyon and beyond into the Pictish province of Atholl. The question inevitably arises - why none in the west? Dál Riada was colonised by Scots from Ireland. The answer may be that that

region had already been settled, and that it was only in north-west Perthshire that the homestead builders could find land. Certainly, the archaeological record of Atholl has little evidence of established communities at that time.

All this is speculation of course, but in these circumstances quite legitimate. If what I have said is somewhere near the truth, then the homestead builders were Gaelic speakers, presumably Scots, and in the eastern part of Atholl must have come into contact with the Picts. Prof Nicolaisen has drawn attention to two homesteads situated at the confluence of the Tummel and the Tay. Both are called Pitcastle, a name which combines elements of both Pictish and Gaelic. The Picts themselves seem to have left few traces in Atholl, apart perhaps from the name.

This then is a possible - I would go further and say a likely - explanation of these monuments which are such a striking feature of the archaeological landscape of north-west Perthshire. I hope that as Pictish enthusiasts you are not too disappointed, and I can offer the consolation that it is still open to someone else to prove the contrary.

D B Taylor.

Chippermore III homestead, Luce Bay, Wigtownshire (D B Taylor).

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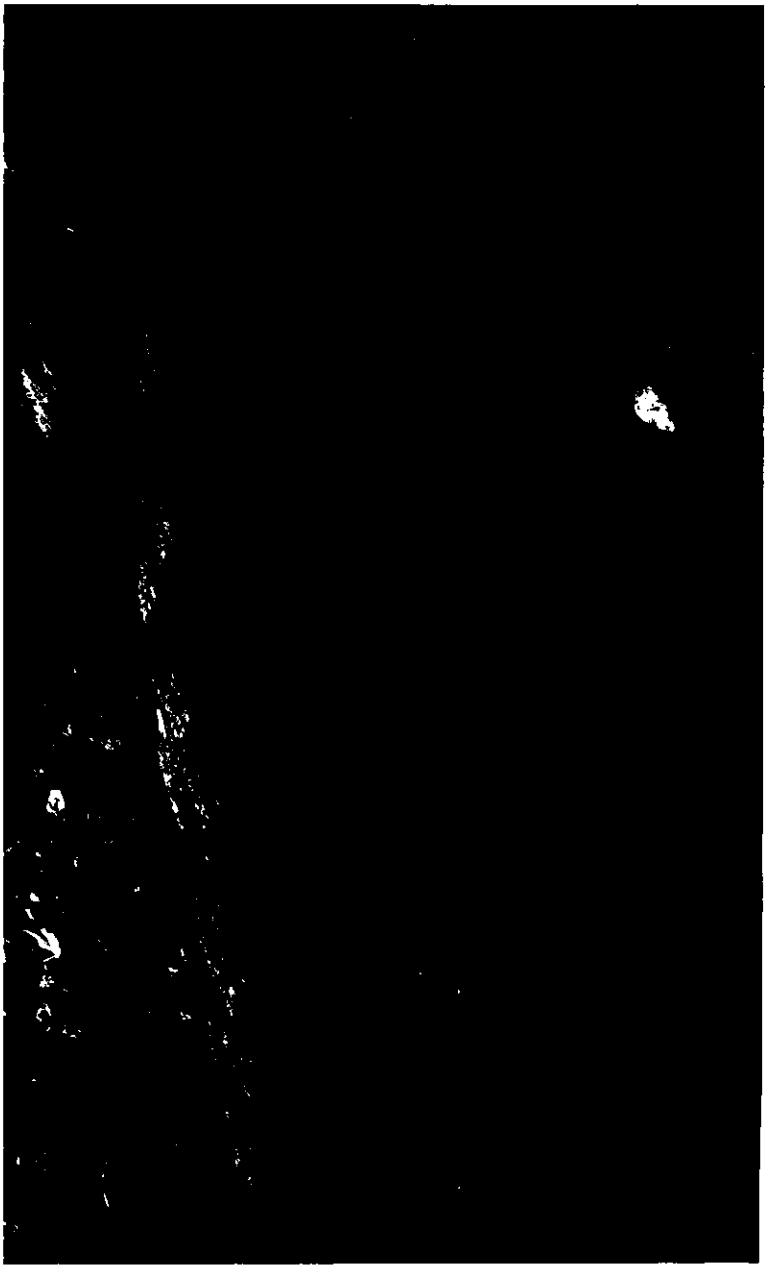
Undescribed Cross-slab Discovered at Dundurn

During his enlightening PAS lecture "Identifying Pictish Church Sites" on 2 April 1992, Aidan MacDonald mentioned that the early saint Fillan is listed in the Irish Martyrology of Tallaght as Faolán of Ráth Érenn in Alba; he suggested that Ráth Érenn is probably to be taken as the "Rath of Earn", that is, the great Pictish fort of Dundurn, near the east end of Loch Earn. Below the hill-fort, in an oval enclosure, is the roofless Mediaeval parish kirk of Dundurn, dedicated to St Fillan, and its graveyard. I had had a look round this interesting site before, but had not come across any EC carved stones; however, inspired by MacDonald's talk, I visited the old kirkyard the next day.

I am pleased to report that exactly what I hoped I might find - an Early Christian cross-slab - turned up, in a line of graveslabs and headstones just south of the church. The stone, of the simple or Class IV type, was half buried upside down in the ground, with only part of the shaft of the cross visible, made less obvious through weathering and the growth of lichen. The tapering slab, 125cm long, is carved on one side with a long-shafted outline cross with expanded arms. The cross-shaft also expands slightly, before tapering to a point, which is slightly recessed (not obvious in the photo). The weathered cross is incised in a broad shallow groove, giving it almost the appearance of being carved in relief. It seems likely that the cross-slab may have originally been intended to stand upright in the earth, probably at the head of a grave.

The stone was mentioned, but not correctly identified, in a study of the old kirkyard included in a survey of Perthshire graveyards (Mitchell and Mitchell, 1974, 123), as stone 23 (coulter).

Such simple cross-slabs are difficult to date but, if Fillan was indeed the founder of this early church site, his *floruit* might give a rough *terminus ante quem* for the date of the stone. Unfortunately, there seems to be some doubt as to the true identity of the saint commemorated at Dundurn, since hagiographical sources seem to mention more than one holy man of this name: Faolán of Ráth Érenn, who would seem to have lived around AD 500, according to his genealogy (Watson, 1926, 227, 285), and Faolán of Strathfillan, stated in the Breviary of Aberdeen to be the son of St Kentigerna (Old Irish Caintigern), who died in 734, which would mean that Faolán would have flourished c730-40 (Williams, Smyth and Kirby, 1991, 136). Mere geographical proximity might make one suspect that these two saints were



Dundurn Class IV cross-slab (Tom E Gray).

in fact the same person, but the situation is complicated by dedications to the saint(s) at Kilillan, Kintail (Watson, 1926, 284), and Fife (Pittenweem, Aberdour etc).

Professor Leslie Alcock has twice mentioned the site of St Fillan's Kirk as of possible EC significance:

> It is evident that before the Church can take its appropriate place in Pictish archaeology, a vigorous campaign of fieldwork is essential. One of the targets for this should be the systematic identification of circular graveyards, such as that on the valley floor below Dundurn . . Cross slabs of Henderson's suggested Class IV would also be highly relevant.
>
> (Alcock, 1987, 89).

Again, in the report on the excavation of Dundurn fort:

> . . in this account of the geographical setting of Dundurn, we should notice that on the valley floor, some 500m north-west of the fort itself, lies a graveyard whose wall overlies a very ruinous embanked enclosure of circular plan. This may mark the site of an ecclesiastical enclosure contemporary with the occupation of Dundurn itself.
>
> (Alcock, 1989, 196).

The Mediaeval parish of Dundurn was united with Comrie after the Reformation. The parish was revived in the C19th to serve the population of the growing village of St Fillans. The plain Victorian parish kirk in the village contains a "holy water stone" removed from the ruins of the ancient church, set on an iron pedestal and used as a font. This may well be another EC relic, though it is much smaller and more neatly carved than most "Celtic" fonts. The stone is round, about 34cm across, damaged at one side, and looks rather like a "bun"-shaped quern, with a small neat hole sunk in the top, with a suggestion of a slight rim round it.

Watson identified Ráth Érenn with Rottearns in Ardoch parish (Watson, 1926, 227), and early forms of the name certainly sound convincing (eg Raterne, 1488), but this identification involved him in supposing that part of Perthshire was once known as Éire, ie Ireland. The probability that Scottish place-names contain ancient names for Ireland is highly interesting and significant, the most important probably being the name of the River Earn itself. However, Watson does not seem to take sufficiently into account the fact that, as he recorded himself (Ibid) the hill of Dundurn is now known as *Dùn Fhaoláin* "St Fillan's Hill" in Gaelic, and has St Fillan's Seat - a partly man-made rock formation (Alcock, 1989, 198) - and Well at the top. Dundurn, "Fort of the Fist" was still, or was remembered to be, of sufficient importance in - say - the C12th to transfer its name to the Mediaeval parish.

Niall M Robertson.

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to clean or not to clean?

the conservation of historic stonework - an overview

Text of a lecture delivered to the Pictish Arts Society on 14 January 1993.

* * * * * *

As a relatively new member of the PAS, it was my pleasure to be invited to address the Society in January 1993.

Whereas I freely admit that my field of experience lies not with ancient monuments but with buildings, ancient and modern, the stone with which all are built does not really care for which purpose it is used. It will behave, weather, dirty and decay in the same manner regardless of the purpose of the construction. It will also react in much the same way to the interference of human agency, no matter how well-meaning, and building engineers have for many years appreciated that this, the most durable and traditional of construction materials, must be treated with due care and respect.

Seminars have been convened on this subject, and many textbooks written. Proceedings of the former and copies of the latter abound in colleges of technology and a variety of libraries. My intention, however, is to provide an overview which may serve as an introduction for non-engineers, and stimulate further reading and research among those concerned about the legacy created by our ancestors which it is our privilege to pass on to our descendants.

It has been suggested that, aesthetically, the visual impact of stonecleaning is probably the most dramatic restoration work we can attempt. Several and varied techniques are available. Choice of method will normally depend on the perceived quality of the result, but we must not underestimate the repercussions and must be aware of the consequences, for as yet no method has been developed which will safely remove surface dirt and staining which does not frequently cause permanent damage to detail, especially when dealing with sandstone and its near relatives. Indeed, experience with the cleaning of numerous Scottish buildings has supported this caveat (1).

A report by Historic Scotland's predecessor, Historic Buildings and Monuments, which looked into the possibility of cleaning Glasgow Cathedral in the late 1980's, concluded after scientific research that it did not advise the work, on the basis that the long-term effects were still too much in doubt, and that no method could be relied upon not to accelerate erosion and

decay. Nearer to home, Historic Scotland has now refused permission to stoneclean the Scott Monument in Edinburgh, since it considers that this could lead to further damage to its already doubtful structural condition.

I will now risk your wrath by asking you to consider whether you really do want to clean Pictish stones, and to give you a summary of the risks involved. So, what are the methods and their related advantages and disadvantages? If you must clean, which is the least of the evils? In considering them, remember the old maxim that "stone weathers dirty" - in other words, clean it today, and it will need it again next year, next decade, next century, ad infinitum.

Cleaning

Water washing is by far the most popular and simplest method. The problems associated with this normally stem from the large volume of water employed. This can cause further staining and migration of salts with subsequent efflorescence. The application is best done by a fine spray, applied not directly on the staining, but allowed to play across it for, say, ten seconds at a time, being shut off for four minutes between applications. As progressive softening occurs, surface dirt can be eased off with a fine, soft, bristle brush - not metal, since this can leave ferrous deposits behind. But water itself can cause problems, especially to the internal structure of the stone.

All stone, especially the softer varieties, naturally contains internal cracks, and is porous to varying degrees. It is an interesting feature that when water is absorbed it acts as a lubricant to the cracks, letting the internal surfaces slide smoothly together when stressed by factors such as wind movement and climatic changes. Over-absorption into the pores, however, has the opposite effect. Water cleaning should be programmed for the frost-free months because of the classical problem of "frost-heave". Frozen water expands, and the pressure this expansion places on its surroundings is incredibly fierce. Eventually the stone will break open, not merely on the surface, but outwards from the inside.

Air abrasive techniques, including sandblasting, are hardly likely even to be considered for standing stones, and other mechanical methods involve rubbing, which will inevitably remove some of the surface of the stone. It invariably leaves scour marks which then require further hand rubbing, thus taking off even more of the surface.

Steam cleaning used to be popular but has fallen into disuse, primarily because it involved using caustic soda which caused residual damage. It was also no more effective than using cold water.

Chemical cleaning involves water saturation and abrasion, but leaves behind soluble salts, and can cause severe staining and formation of a white bloom on the stone. Alkali cleaners use sodium hydroxide and acid cleaners hydrofluoric acid. As can be imagined, this can not only damage the stone, but also the cleaners.

Familiar in the monument conservation world is a poultice technique, frequently a magnesium silicate clay pack. This method, when applied to detail, will help soften encrustation, but it needs careful and thorough rinsing afterwards since it contains caustic materials, and even a speck left on too long may cause irreparable damage.

It can be seen that permanent damage to stonework from cleaning arises from many factors, but those which concern us come from the effects of water and chemicals. Natural damage arises from weathering and pollution, and also from a factor I have not yet mentioned - bacteria, either airborne or, more commonly, from vegetation and lichens. In natural untreated and unwashed stone, bacteria is the greatest enemy and the major cause of eventual deterioration, especially from lichens.

I have not seen the process or the results, but I believe that cleaning attempts have been made on Pictish stonework using applications of natural vegetable products such as potatoes and rhubarb, and here I will risk your wrath. Bear in mind my previous comments on the application of acids, alkalis and moisture. Vegetables may be good for us, but all contain some if not all of these substances to varying degrees. All certainly contain bacteria. Cleaning off natural lichen etc may remove harmful substances, but beware that the cure is not worse than the disease.

In short, if you must clean stone, the least of the evils must be the sparing use of clean, cold water in a fine spray as outlined above. It may not give ideal results, but until more scientific experimentation is carried out and more effective and safer methods are found, it will minimise the risks you take with the artefact you are trying to preserve.

Conservation

The conservation treatments most widely used today are water-repellent and dirt-inhibiting surface applications such as waxes, acrylic polymers and epoxy resins. The immediate result of these substances and consolidants is good, especially if the stone has just been cleaned, but a patchy appearance may develop after anything from two to eight years (2). These preparations are also expensive in monetary terms, and their protection does not last for ever, so, for maximum effect, application must be repeated at regular intervals depending on exposure. In the case of Pictish stones in fields or on hilltops, the recommendation would have to be every two years to avoid the aforementioned deterioration in appearance. One caveat is that they should not be applied to obviously decaying surfaces, or where moisture levels are likely to be excessive. When applied, they must also be allowed to dry thoroughly, so choose a dry, sunny day. These materials penetrate to just below the surface of the stone, and therefore are not true preservatives.

Lime-based treatments are used to protect against pollution, but are really only safe and effective on limestones. They too need reapplication every four to five years, again depending upon exposure. They can also blur carved detail. Hot lime poultices can be applied to close the texture of the stone, but their use is again only advised on limestone.

A silicate paint system was used on buildings from the 1890's with updated variations, but it is now thought that the sodium and potassium content risked formation of soluble salts with their associated risks.

One of the latest available conservation treatments involves silanes - a promising group which has produced excellent results. Indeed, scientific investigation has concluded that they may well have a genuine claim to be described as true "preservatives". The main reason for this is their ability to penetrate deeply into porous stone and a proven binding capacity. Reacting with water to form silica siloxanes, additives can be used to increase or decrease the speed of reaction, so depth of penetration can be controlled. Three hours after application, silane begins to penetrate to a final depth of 20-50 mm. Filling the spaces between sandstone grains, it forms a continuous coating and helps resist salt crystallisation, though some argue that frost resistance is not greatly increased and passage of moisture not greatly inhibited. Tests on buildings such as Wells Cathedral show a slight change in stone colour. However, weathering effects are retarded, and the sandstone has been proved to increase some 20% in strength after treatment (2). The drawback is that this treatment is horrendously expensive,

and it is generally held to be prohibitive for buildings. Its use is thus generally seen as limited by expense to statues and smaller stone objects.

With the aid of colleagues, I am currently investigating the possible funding and practical possibility of a research project on this subject with particular reference to PAS interests, so watch this space. We will surely need help with the field work and in situ experimentation.

Edith O Bowman, FSVA.

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early christian carvings discovered on the west lomond

I have always had a sneaking envy for those fortunate individuals who have walked across a field and found a stone axe, a flint arrow-head, a jug of Roman coins, or something similar. The nearest I had ever got to this was in my fossil-hunting youth, when I had the joy of bringing to light again a sea shell or shark's tooth which had lain in the petrified sand of an ancient beach for 300 million years or so. But oh, for a real find . . ! So I was overwhelmed when, searching for cup and ring carvings on the Lomond Hills a year past January, I rounded a group of boulders and found an ancient cross - not shown on the OS map - engraved on one of them. I regarded the cross with its simple ring for a moment, and then let my gaze wander over the rest of the stone. There are no words to describe what I felt when my eyes came to rest on a fish symbol incised on the upper half of the stone, its head pointing east. It's significance wasn't lost on me, and all that I had read about this venerable emblem came rushing back.

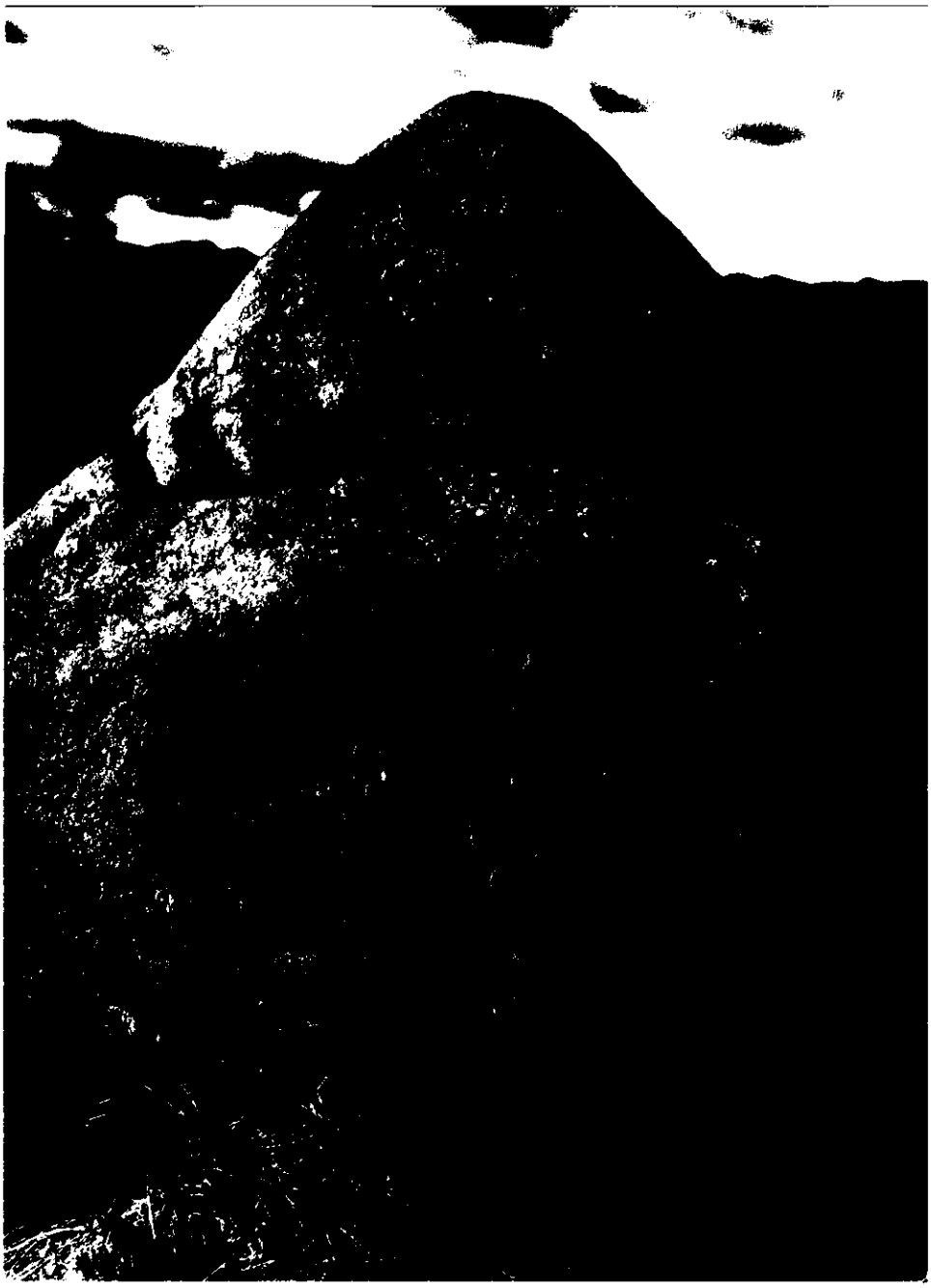
Ichthus - the symbol of the Early Christians in the catacombs of Rome; the Greek word for fish forming the acrostic *Iesous Christos Theou Uios Soter* - Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. I remembered more. Also called the *vesica piscis* the symbol later became part of the "Sacred Geometry" of Christian architecture (seen, for instance, on the west front of Dunblane Cathedral), and was the fundamental determining shape and proportion of the groundplan of many Gothic cathedrals.

I ran my fingers over the lichen which obscured the carving and reflected further on what I had learned.

The *vesica* is formed by the intersection of two equal circles, the circumference of each of which passes through the centre of the other. Representing a state of perfect equilibrium between equal forces, it was believed to be the image of the interpenetrating worlds of Heaven and Earth. Non-Christian associations for the shape (likened to a womb or vulva, and hence representing the Mother Goddess) are known. But in the form of a simple, stylised fish, it represents Christ, the Fisher of Men.

The cross and the fish - what on earth were they doing carved on a rock in Balharvie Moss on top of the West Lomond, miles from anywhere?

When I returned home, I got in touch with Mike King, Assistant Keeper of Human History at Perth Museum, who in turn contacted Peter Yeoman, Fife Regional Archaeologist. Arrangements were made for the carvings to be recorded for posterity by Tom E Gray, whose



Early Christian carvings, West Lomond, Fife (Tom E Gray).

photographs are reproduced here. I was later informed by Mr Yeoman that the stone may have been a form of shrine of a type used by travellers on a long-established route, and could date to between the C7th and C10th AD.

I have found my own stone axe, flint arrowhead and jug of Roman coins rolled into one, and it does feel good.

Ron Henderson.

Place-Name Addenda

Balharvie Moss	-	Gaelic *Baile na h-Eirbhe*, "wall-stead", or *Baile Tharbh*, "bull-stead".
Lomond	-	Possibly a Pictish name. Welsh *llumon*, "beacon". This would suit these prominent hills very well.

* * * * * *

The carvings have already been published by Peter Yeoman on page 32 of Discovery and Excavation in Scotland 1992, but are illustrated here for the first time. The earthfast boulder on which they are incised is about 140cm high. Yeoman describes it as partially dressed on the north side, which bears the carvings. The fish is 27cm long, and is simply formed by two curved lines which cross to form the tail, with a dot at the other end to indicate the eye. The outline Greek cross with expanded arms below it measures 24cm by 24cm, and is surrounded by a single ring. Both motifs are incised into the rock by pecking. The cross is a variant of common Early Mediaeval types, difficult to date with precision in this simple form, but the fish is an altogether rarer and more intriguing symbol. The finder's recognition of it as the Early Christian *Ichthus* symbol seems the best interpretation; certainly, in this primitive form, it is unlikely to be related to the much more sophisticated Pictish representations of salmon on the symbol stones.

The EC fish symbol is a rare one in Scotland and Ireland, nor are examples from Roman Britain common. In Scotland I know of only two other possible examples. The more sophisticated one is at Borthwick Mains, west of Hawick, set vertically on one face of a stone pillar, with gills, tail, eye and fins all indicated. This stone has sometimes been included on distribution maps of the Pictish Class I stones, but is now generally reckoned to be of Christian significance (Baldwin, 1985, 125). The Borthwick monument has already been described and illustrated, with references, in a PAS publication (Lines and Robertson, 1991, 19-20). The other fish is a possible representation scratched on a piece of wood excavated on Iona in 1979 (fully discussed by H Richardson in Barber, 1981, 375-7).

The EC fish from Ireland are also few and far between. A multiple-finned incised example occurs on a cross-slab at Fuerty, Co Roscommon, inscribed to one Aidacán, perhaps an abbot who died in 865 (Weir, 1980, 204). There is also a fish in relief on a unusual pillar in Clogher Cathedral, Co Tyrone (Richardson and Scarry, 1990, 33, Pl 48). These may both be of Christian significance. Various other representations of fish on the Irish high crosses appear

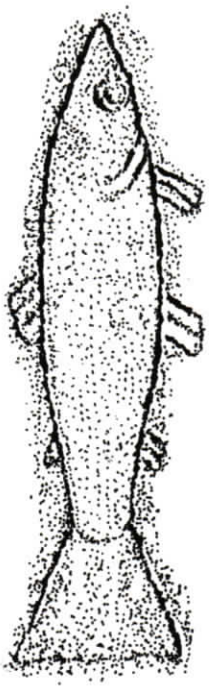
Detail of fish (Tom E Gray).

Detail of cross (Tom E Gray).

as part of Biblical scenes, such as the miracle of the loaves and fishes, seen for instance on the south face of the famous Cross of Moone, Co Kildare, and in Scotland on an Irish-influenced cross-slab at Dunkeld.

The closest parallel to the simple West Lomond fish from Roman Britain is a primitive representation scratched on a building block from a villa at Rockbourne, Hampshire, discussed with further references by Thomas (1985, 92, 106, Fig 5.12). The few other examples of the symbol known from Brittania are more complex and realistic. Prof Charles Thomas has been kind enough to comment on the Lomond carvings (pers comm, Dec 1992):

> The fish is a typical EC depiction with its crossed-lines tail and I would guess was somehow copied from a much earlier, perhaps even C4th-C5th object - an imported relic? - to accompany the ringed cross of much later date. An extraordinary combination.



i)

ii)

iii)

Examples of Early Christian fish symbols - i) Borthwick, ii) Fuerty, iii) Rockbourne (after Thomas, 1985). Not to scale.

In this connection, one might recall the fish engraved on the bowl of a spoon found in the Traprain Law hoard of Late Roman silver.

The site (NGR NO 2137 0696) can be reached by proceeding up the broad path that leads from Craigmead car-park above Falkland to the top of the West Lomond. After about a mile, a line of shooting stances comes into view on the north side of the path. Go along the

line of stances to the fourth one, and the boulder bearing the carvings can be seen about 60m to the west. With some smaller boulders, the carved rock forms a small natural (though very exposed) dell, with extensive views to the north.

The carvings' situation seems very out of the way today, but there is considerable evidence for settlement on the Lomonds in the past. The large hill-fort of Maiden Castle is nearby, and the remains of a settlement of unknown date, while on top of the East Lomond is another hill-fort, where a Pictish carving of a bull has been found. It could be speculated that the carvings mark a place of retreat in the wilderness for a Dark Age cleric, and that they were created as an aid to devotion.

Niall M Robertson.

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"there's no such thing as pictish art . ."

So said Dr Anthony Jackson, senior lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh, in a controversial lecture to the Friends of the Grampian Stones at Marischal College, Aberdeen, on Friday 19 March. Entitled "Totemism and Reincarnation", the announced subject matter apparently frightened away any notable Grampian archaeologists, but the house was well turned out, as any Pictish theme will draw a crowd these days. A small contingent of Pictish Arts Society members were on hand to balance the throng.

Jackson began by analysing comparative cosmologies of Hindu and Papuan cultures, and comparing Pictish tribalism with these model caste systems. There were four basic clans or castes in this hierarchical and dualistic society, who held a belief in reincarnation and the importance of the mother. In the "totem caste" system there was the Ancestral Ego, which lived in the Otherworld, and the little Ego which lived in this world. Where the two worlds overlapped was where rituals occurred, that shadowy area where communication can exist between the two worlds.

The dualistic cosmology of Pagan Europe, notably that of the ancient Celts, formed the basis of Jackson's argument about the nature of Pictish cosmology. Presumably, their symbols reflected this belief system. It was proposed that this original Prehistoric belief in reincarnation was shared by the Picts and all the Celtic peoples. When these people were persuaded to choose only one god (with the conversion to Christianity), this introduced a judgmental aspect into their world that had never existed before. No longer could the mystical worlds overlap and flow together when ancestor worship (totemism) took place. With reincarnation as a foundation of the belief system, there could be no judgement of one's present or past life, no punishment to fear; but in the new Christian teachings, Heaven and Hell were separate entities; the concept of original sin crept in, and the Druids, the ritual experts who legitimised the king and who taught reincarnation and possession (the power of the dead over the living), were put out of business.

Totems had emerged in this Druidic priest-led society as the interfaces between the world of the ancestors and that of men. The supernatural and everyday worlds were not separate. This is reflected somehow in the symbology of the Class I Pictish stones, where totems appear as a reminder of this non-physical reality. The totems are to be seen as paired, reflecting Dr Jackson's "paired symbols" theory about the Pictish stones. Certain animals were held in high regard in Celtic (and therefore Pictish) society as symbols of kingship, and were

divided into two classes, Flying (eagle, bee [?] etc) and Non-Flying (salmon, boar etc). The real animals represented in this system were congruent with the Celtic "special" animals, which were 12 in number, with geometric symbols comprising the other 16 out of a total 28 Pictish symbols. The debate about totemism was noted in the lecture: was it a religious or simply a human/secular classification? The use of animal totems (on the symbol stones) signified man's power over the animal world, while the use of the geometric symbols stood for man's power over mystical nature. In this regard, the symbols denoted some sort of divinatory skill, which was determined by the chosen totem. All the totems/symbols denoted a source of power to be used or dispelled.

The commonly occurring crescent and v-rod, and double disc and z-rod, found on 55% of all surviving Pictish stones, refer to divination, Moon and Sun, King and Druid-Priest [or church and state? - ML]. Due to the Pictish system of matrilinear succession, the symbol inheritance was linked with the kingship, and perhaps even a custom of tattooing the same totems on the body. "Ancestral spirits" were being represented, and it is Jackson's belief that it was the Druids' idea to translate the system into permanent visual form on the symbol stones to protect the matrilinear line, for the Druids would have the most to lose if the system was destroyed.

However, according to Jackson, the Christian take-over involved a clever use of the Druids' own magic medicine. The "magic" Ogham inscriptions, of Irish origin, found on some of the symbol stones, were put there by Christians, not by the Druids. Ogham, Dr Jackson claims, had gone out of use in its country of origin 400 years before it started being used in a Pictish context, and it was added to those stones with animal symbols at a later date as an "anti-magical device" to "cancel out" the power of the animal symbols, for "like cancels like" is a basic law of magic. Stones carved with the serpent symbol, such as Brandsbutt, and others with the eagle and Pictish beast were noted as having Ogham additions. "This," Jackson said, "explains the sudden appearance and disappearance of the symbol stones in the C7th".

The real eye-opener in the talk was when Jackson announced: "There is no such thing as Pictish art. There are only so-called Pictish symbols, which are boring and repetitive, but certainly these are not art. The stones were all carved by Anglo-Saxon masons". His argument is based on the Class II and Class III stones, which show the same patterns and motifs, especially interlace, as those found on contemporary carved stones in central England (ie Mercia) and Ireland. He further supports this rather amazing statement by reference to the Sutton Hoo treasures as being antecedent to the Pictish carvings, evidence that the Anglo-Saxons were the only ones who could have carved the Pictish stones, craftsmen being brought in from the south for this very purpose. "The masons who did this work in England

came up to carve Pictish stones in the same style as their own. It is not likely that Pictish masons went down south. The same argument can be extended to the Class I stones. It does not follow that suddenly the Picts began carving Class I stones out of nowhere. After all, Nechton invited Northumbrian masons up to build a stone church. The Picts could not possibly have carved these symbol stones," he said, "there is no evidence". And furthermore: "They are boring and repetitive symbols [stones too we gather - ML], and the Picts were not any special mystical tribe or group of people at all . . just another group of early Britons living in the north of the British Isles".

The audience was left reeling in the aisles. A rebuttal by the Pictish Arts Society would be in order . . or is there really any justification for a Pictish Arts Society when these so-called ancestral Picts could not even create their own symbol carvings (which weren't art anyway), and were surely no more than boring and repetitive people who all looked alike? According to Dr Jackson, if you've seen one crescent and v-rod, you've seen them all. This is somewhat reminiscent of one-time President Ronald Reagan's comment that: "All trees look alike".

My own point of view is that Jackson's anthropological cosmology is a helpful tool towards understanding the meaning of the symbols, which is what everyone wants to know. The overlay of Celtic mythology and religious belief onto Pictish culture is perhaps simplified but perfectly plausible, and a welcome relief from overcautious academic avoidance of a consideration of the spiritual forces that concerned this early nature-oriented people. The use of the term Druid is somewhat disturbing, for did Druids really exist in Pictish times around the C7th? The priestly caste might best be left unidentified rather than given such a romantically-laden name as Druid, but there seems no doubt that Pictland may well have been a shamanistic society. The final comment on the authorship of Pictish stone carving is an example of Anglocentric thinking which is highly irritating; it requires the rigorous scholarship of a Pictish champion like Dr Isabel Henderson to refute such nonsense once and for all. It is puzzling to be told on the one hand that the symbol stones are Druidic "propaganda", and on the other to hear that they were carved by southern Anglo-Saxons who had nothing to do with the royal and priestly ruling classes of the northern Picts, but were merely hired specialists in Dark Age graphics. Dr Jackson's forthcoming book, as yet untitled, will support these theories and other "even more exciting revelations", and is due to be published by Orkney Press later this year.

Marianna Lines.

more on the gododdin and the picts

In the article "The Gododdin and the Picts" in PAS Journal 2 (2-4), Tim J Clarkson puts the case for three named members of the Gododdin warband who rode to Catraeth being Picts. This would indeed seem to have been the situation, and the poem also contains a general comment (in stanza 5) which supports this view:

> . . dyffai Wynedd a Gogledd ran.
>
> . . the men of Gwynedd and the northern part came.

This would suggest that the Gododdin received assistance from their kin in Gwynedd (modern north Wales), and also from "men from the northern part". Aneirin was writing from the geographical standpoint of Din Eidyn (Edinburgh), so "the northern part" to him very likely meant Pictland. If warriors did come from distant places to take part in the expedition against the Angles, this could explain why it took a whole year to gather and prepare the warband for its excursion into Northumbria.

Mr Clarkson rightly queries the identification of Catraeth with Catterick, which is more southerly than might be expected. There is an explanation for this however, if one discounts Kenneth Jackson's theory that Aneirin's statement to the effect that the warband consisted of 300 men was only poetic licence, and that these 300 were actually warrior chiefs, each heading a small warband of his own, making up an army perhaps ten times the stated size. An army of 3 000 men would surely have been encountered by the Northumbrians at a more northerly location than Catterick, whereas 300 skilled and committed warriors might just have made it as far south as Catterick before their luck ran out and they were annihilated.

A most interesting aspect of the Gododdin warband containing Picts, is that it demonstrates a Pictish martial involvement against the Northumbrians which foreshadows the massive military conflicts between the two powers which dominated much of the history of northern Britain in the C7th . . or does it? Mr Clarkson uses Alfred Jarman's 1988 text, which is the only published version of Y Gododdin to quote the entire poem in Welsh and provide a simultaneous translation.

At least, that is what I thought until I came across a version by Joseph P Clancy, contained in his book The Earliest Welsh Poetry (Macmillan, 1970). This indicates that, for some reason, Jarman has omitted a couple of lines (from stanzas 45 and 46), both in quotation

and translation. These appear in the Clancy translation (which he places in stanzas 43 and 44) as follows:

> Ramparts ringing, the warband fighting
> With the Saxons and Irish and Picts.
> His gauntlet performed good work
> Against Saxons and Irish and Picts.

The first couplet is ambiguous as to which side the Picts were fighting on, but the second one makes it clear that they had joined the ranks of the Northumbrians against the Gododdin. This is surely an extremely unlikely circumstance. I wonder if Tim Clarkson can suggest a solution?

Graeme Cruickshank.

pictish dreaming

Early last summer in Fraserburgh I met a Native American from Alaska. He described himself with pride as being of the sea eagle subgroup of the sea eagle sept of the sea eagle clan, three times a sea eagle. "That's the important lineage from my mother. My father's is another story", he said.

In June I went to Orkney, returning by way of Sutherland and the Black Isle. On the trip I saw sights and visited buildings and artefacts from five millennia. I became aware of odd continuities. Visiting the Pier Arts Centre in Stromness I saw an exhibition of Australian Aboriginal paintings, mostly acrylics on canvas by the internationally renowned Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri. These paintings are valued by European collectors for their abstract qualities; however, they are more referential than any modern Western art. They tell the Dreaming stories of totemic animal ancestor spirits, beings who are the living animal, the kin group ancestor, and on the way to becoming deities at the same time. Every mark represents something. Concentric circles are camps or waterholes. A U-shape is a seated woman. The viewpoint is always from above. The nearest Scottish equivalent would be an Ordnance Survey map designed to show the journeys of Deirdre and the Children of Uisneach, that was at the same time a programme for the celebration of the myth.

In South Ronaldsay I saw the chambered cairn at Isbister, the "Tomb of the Eagles", where Neolithic people were buried with hundreds of bones and claws of sea eagles. A sea eagle appears again on the Pictish Class I stone from Knowe of Burrian on the Mainland of Orkney, now in Tankerness House Museum, Kirkwall, and yet again on the stone from the Brough of Birsay now in Edinburgh. The lost cist cover from the Broch of Oxtro near Birsay is reported to have had "an eagle boldly cut". Perhaps 3 000 years passed between the period when the megalithic tomb was in use and the Pictish works, but how long has the white-tailed eagle of the Native Australians been sung and painted? How long have North West Coast Indians claimed to be sea eagles on their mother's side?

Coming home to my own Pictish eagle in the kirk of Tyrie, I felt again that the Pictish symbols should be as readable as the Australian. I am an artist: symbols are my daily work. I live in the area of Pictland, and probably have a fair amount of the same DNA as the ancient people. It may be that I share many of their belief systems. So I thought I would try.

We are misled by the invasion theory of history, tinged with discredited Victorian notions of succeeding waves of superior races. New people arrived, but until modern times, the complete usurpation of one human stock by another was rare.

It is my theory that the Picts were eclectic syncretists, amalgamating pan-Indo-European and specifically Celtic religious ideas (the four quarter days, the lunar calendar, the pantheon of deities) with the spiritual ideas of earlier cultures (the solar year, totemic kin-groups based on matrilinear descent). My reason for believing this to be the case is my supposition that folk customs, especially the celebration of Beltane, Holloween, Lammas and Candlemass are survivals of Pictish belief, as well as Gaelic introductions. I would also stress the evidence of both the numerous witch trials of the C16th and C17th, of residents of what had been the land of the Picts, and the lesser offences that came before the kirk sessions in the C16th-C18th - offences such as stone and well veneration, the keeping uncultivated of the "Guid Man's grun", and the celebration of the old festivals. While the witch trials are largely an indication of the collective paranoid psychosis of the prosecuting establishment, just what the accused chose to confess is significant (especially the well-documented Aberdeen trials of 1597 and Isobel Gowdie's extensive confessions in the 1662 Auldearne case). Particularly relevant to my argument is the witches' favouring of certain places and times: in Aberdeen, the Fish Cross in Castlegate, St Catherine's Hill (now Adelphi), and a standing stone at a place called Craigleauch (somewhere near Lumphanan), and the four quarter days chosen for Sabbats or grand meetings. Some of the elements of the cult - the "Devil" having the appearance of a stag, dog, stallion, bull etc, the apparent form of the sexual rites - have parallels all over Western Europe. This commonality of belief does not invalidate the thesis that these elements reflect a pre-Indo-European belief system. If anything, it suggests the contrary.

In the trials recorded from the north-east of Scotland there are particular references to the faeries, and in Aberdeen to the "Queen of Elphin", that suggest to me a residual awareness on the part of the accused of a connection to an earlier culture.

It is also part of my premise that the Pictish symbol stones are an indicator of a threatened belief system. Before the C6th or thereabouts, what they say would have been so well known as to need no permanent expression. By analogy, until recent times the Aborigines made their images in paint on their own bodies, and in sand on the ground of the ritual site, where they were deliberately destroyed by the feet of the celebrants. The shift to a permanent non-verbal means of recording the Dreaming seems to me to be a response to the threat of loss of cultural heritage.

I do not have the space to demolish others' theories in detail. However, I do not feel that Class I stones would function well as memorials to dead individuals, nor as records of any kind of lineage alliance. However, I do acknowledge a debt to the work of Dr A Jackson, although I find his theory of cross-cousin marriages between lineage groups an untenable explanation for the Pictish symbol stones. I have found his table of pairings of symbols, their occurrences and frequencies a useful guide. I also believe his model for the Pictish year is on the right track (The Symbol Stones of Scotland, 217). I even agree with three out of four of the symbol placements in the diagram.

Class I stones should be considered first. Two symbols could tell an observer the kin groups of a person's parents; the observer could not, however, deduce from this which of a set of siblings the stone commemorated, or which of all the numerous individuals with that possible lineage.

It is my view that the symbol stones marked sacred sites, and proclaimed which rituals and groups were appropriate for them. Most can be seen as "invitations to a party", saying when it is and who is guest of honour, or who is permitted to come along. The five key Pictish symbols, with what I believe their meanings to be, are: double disc and z-rod (all solar rituals, solstices and equinoxes plus Lughnasadh, as Lugh was of and with the sun); crescent and v-rod (full moon, the esbats of modern witches); serpent and z-rod (Imbolc, St Brigid's Day); Pictish beast (Beltane, May Day); notched rectangle and z-rod (Samhain, Halloween, Day of the Dead).

A secondary function as memorials is quite likely. There is an analogy in the similarly mixed culture of Brittany, where bereavement, especially as a result of war or shipwreck, may inspire the erection or renewal of a calvary, although the main function of the cross is not to venerate a dead individual but to sanctify a place already regarded as in some way special.

I will expand on the attribution of particular symbols to particular days. The resemblance of the discs of the double disc to the solar symbols of other cultures has often been noted. The thing which most convinces me of its solar significance is its frequency. If we accept that it signifies both solstices then we have a possible explanation for the occasional inclusion of another disc within one of the discs (eg Edderton, Clach Biorach and Newton House). It may signify special relevance to either an eclipse, or just a full moon coinciding with the solstice. This symbol is perhaps the most important, with powers as a general good luck sign, hence its use on portable artefacts.

A disc might represent a solar symbol or a dinner plate, but the crescent is the most unambiguous lunar symbol. However, as the Picts wished to suggest the full moon in the crescent and v-rod symbol, they placed it horizontally, indicating the full moon as it rises.

The serpent represents Imbolc because it is sacred to Brigit, as it was to her Classical equivalent, Athene, being shown around the edge of the Hellenic deity's *aegis* in most representations. Imbolc is traditionally the time when adders emerge from hibernation. As the Gaelic rhyme collected by Carmichael in Carmina Gadelica says:

> Tomorrow is St Brigid's Day.
> The serpent comes from her hole.
> I shall'na scathe the serpent,
> And the serpent shall'na scathe me.

I am not suggesting, as the Romans did, that Athene, Minerva, Brigantia, and the later Brigit and St Brigid are the same entity. I am affirming that I see them as concepts developing from a common root, that root having a connection with a serpent. While St Brigid or Bride was a historical person (c450-523), as with King Arthur, her legend may have more to do with pre-existing religion than with history.

A sublimated animal totemism is perceptible in the anthropomorphic deities of the Greek, Roman, Celtic and Vedic pantheons, all the gods having particular animal associations, eg Lugh - the corvids; Esus - the bull and three cranes, Cernunnos - stags; Epona - the horse. It is my suspicion that as a result of a high degree of cultural conservatism, the Picts retained a more manifest emphasis on the totemic aspects of the pan-Celtic belief system (cultural conservatism can still be an evident trait in the area, as those who have seen, for instance, the cloutie well near Avoch in the Black Isle can confirm).

I have of course no proof that any of the Celtic deities were important in a Pictish context, in either animal or anthropomorphic form, but given a P-Celtic language it would seem more likely than the converse.

The Pictish beast symbol I associate with Beltane almost entirely on the grounds of frequency of occurrence. It is the third commonest symbol. I also have a most unscholarly artist's hunch that it relates to the weather and the cloud formations at that time of the year, analogous to the use of the elephant as a symbol of the monsoon in the Far East.

The notched rectangle and z-rod is Samhain, because it is the door of the "Big House"; Gwynn ap Nudd's castle; the Caer Pendryfan; Caer Fedwyd; the four-cornered castle; the castle of revelry as it is designated in the Welsh poem attributed to Taliesin, concerning the raid of Arthur and his followers "beyond the shore of the world" to the castle of the King of Annwn, "Lord of the Dead", "where bright wine is the drink of the host" in their search for the "cauldron". This image of a first destination for the dead, especially those violently killed, recurs again and again in the Celtic mind. It is Kynde Kittock's "ale house near Heaven", even

the "White Hotel" of D M Thomas' modern novel. If my translation is correct "Taliesin" also uses the name, the revolving, the kindly, the glass and the castle of riches.

Given such a concept (and its strength, persistence and wide dissemination in the later mediaeval Celtic context suggests an ancient origin to me), a connection to Samhain, with that day's association with ancestors and the dead, which persists even yet, seems obvious. I am aware that this still leaves the question why this symbol? I can only say because it looks like a gate tower, and it is the only one left that has a z- or v-rod. Perhaps circumstantial evidence could be found in the locations where this symbol is found; it can be shown to occur frequently near sites associated with violent deaths (battles), or sites traditionally associated with ancestors and the other world (fairy dwellings, Neolithic and Bronze Age burial mounds). The stone at Tyrie bears the notched rectangle and z-rod in addition to the eagle. It was not only found adjacent to a burial mound, but is near to Upper Boyndlie, a place with a mound, regarded as a howff (meeting place) of the Fairies in local folklore.

The most frequent extant symbol pair - double disc and z-rod with crescent and v-rod - would thus mean "the usual appropriate ritual here - solstices, full moon, Lughnasadh etc, all welcome". Of the five symbols discussed above, only the Pictish beast does not have a rod added to it, both because it would not look right, and because it did not have another meaning which could require a distinction to be made to the symbol.

What about the mirror and comb, often used as an argument for a memorial connection? The mirror could be an attribute symbol of femininity generally, indicating a woman's ritual, or female leadership of the rite, and/or the overseeing of the ritual by a goddess (or her human proxy). Thus, Hilton of Cadboll might read: meet here for the ritual Boxing Day hunt of red deer hinds led by Her Ladyship. The Maiden Stone would mark the place for Samhain and Beltane rites, either exclusively for women, or devoted to women's interests, though the cross side could be read, in spite of the absence of symbols, as a solstice site for the kelpie group.

What the appropriate rituals for the different festivals might have been can in part be inferred from five sources: Gaelic tradition; the quarter day customs of the historic period up to the beginning of the C19th; the stones of Class II; the reported rites of the witch cult; and the sensible use of comparative anthropology. The carvings on the Class II cross-slabs strongly suggest a ritual hunt. This is strengthened by the tradition of the faerie riding and the references to the "Devil" of the Aberdeen witches' "Christsonday" always being on horseback. If we really want to fly a kite (on the strength of fairy ballads such as "Tamlane" and the

goings on of the Queen of Elphin in the witches' accounts), we could see this riding as a way in which a matrilinear queen made public her choice of consort.

The carved stones would also give credence to rituals involving animal masks of deer, dog and some kind of bird. This conjecture is heavily supported by the witch evidence and comparative anthropology. The same comparisons suggest that this would be a sexual fertility ritual involving the female celebrants having intercourse with a masked man or men representing the deity/totem.

From Gaelic and historic tradition we have: the idea of fires for Beltane and Samhain; the making of new fire, the purification of cattle, and general sexual licence at Beltane; sacrifice and divination at Samhain (consulting the ancestors); feasting and dancing at all festivals (also popular among the witches); the tradition of marriage by "handfast" at Imbolc, dissolved after a year if the woman had not become pregnant; finally, horse-racing may have been associated with Lughnasadh or the summer solstice (later moved to Michaelmas; the Gaelic conception of St Michael was suspiciously like the god Lugh). The quarter days were also important in the past, as now, as a fixed time to make contracts (in using folk sources it is worth realising that Martinmas is Samhain by the Julian Calendar, cf "The Wife of Usher's Well").

Many of the other symbols I see as representing a lineage group, ie a totemic ancestor syncreted to a Celtic deity, and probably an inherited occupation or set of occupations associated with the ancestor/deity, all at the same time. For example, serpent without z-rod would represent a group seeing themselves as descending from a serpent ancestor equated with Brigantia. The use of this symbol might indicate a place reserved for rituals and meetings of members of this group, or a site important in the "serpent dreaming", or both.

In considering the Pictish attitude to occupations we must not be misled by modern aristocratic prejudices about "trade". Remember that Manawyddan in the Mabinogi of Wales was a cattleman. Lugh, like his Greek equivalent Apollo, was multiskilled - a warrior, carpenter, musician, poet and physician as well as a cattleman. Perhaps something of the nature of lineage occupation associations can be seen in a recent phenomenon, the secret society of the Horseman's Word. It survived in the North-East as long as there were horses and horsemen employed in agriculture, at least until the 1960's. The claim of the society that it began when the first horseman tamed the first horse might have some truth in it. Certainly, elements of the beliefs and practices of the horsemen may go back a long way before the economic situation that brought them to prominence in the late C18th to C20th.

The folklorist Hamish Henderson has argued for a connection between the Horseman's Word and the witch cult, and I agree with him. George Ewart Evans, working in East Anglia

(where an equivalent society may have been influenced by immigrants from North-East Scotland), saw in it connections with Celtic paganism generally (a similar case could be made for such survivals in the Millers' Word).

I would suggest that Pictland (like other isolated regions in Galicia, Italy and France) had a greater survival of the concept of place with regard to particular religious rituals than the rest of Western Europe. The threat of the loss of detailed knowledge of this was the impetus for the erection of the Pictish carved stones. This would not rule out burials by the stones, but the logic of the A + B, or A modified by B statement that can be made with the two symbols that occur on most surviving stones seems to me to rule out a personalised memorial message, as the symbols are too limited in number to function as personal identifiers, particularly as from a list of 168 pairs of symbols only 44 lack one of the five symbols I attribute to festivals.

The above postulated eclecticism would have made the acceptance of the Christian mythos comparatively easy at first. It is not hard for any Pagan to accept Christ, carpenter as he was, as a manifestation of Lugh, or other deities. The Pictish patrons of the Class II and III stones obviously delighted in the Biblical accounts of David as shepherd, musician and king, and the story of St Anthony and St Paul being fed by (Lugh's) raven in the desert. The difficulty would have come with the Church's insistence on exclusivity, and no doubt in the objections of the clergy to the ritual practices taking place at the festivals proclaimed on the symbol stones.

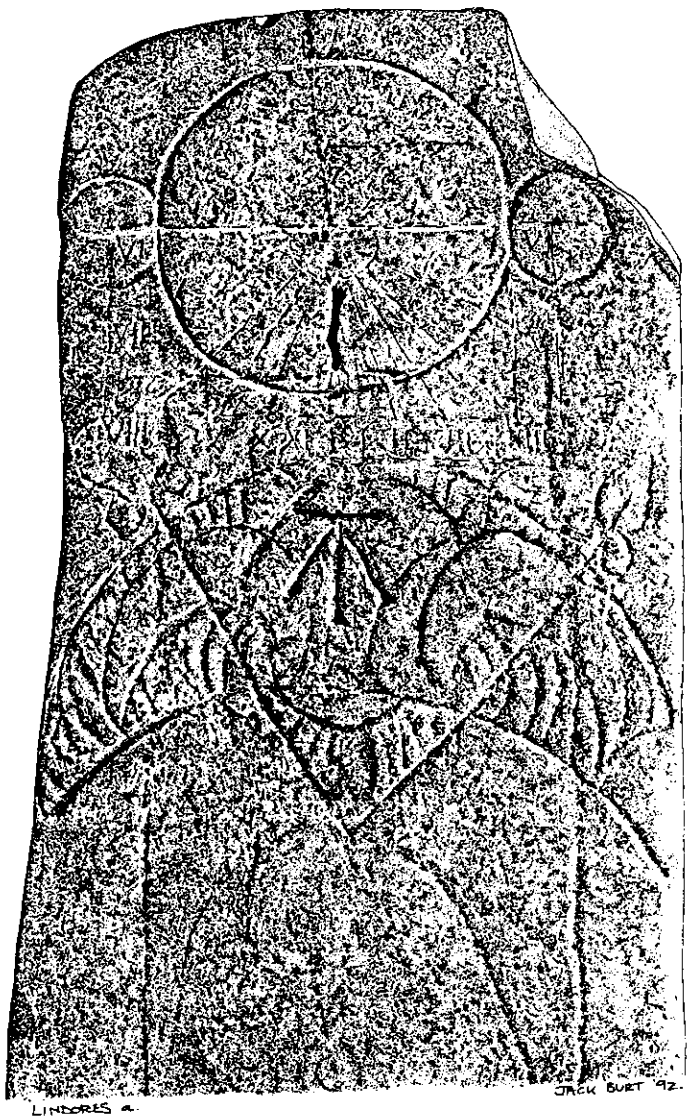
Where Class II fades into Class III we perhaps see the end of an integrated spiritual and social life, and the beginning of the underground keeping of festivals, particularly Beltane and Samhain (these having divinatory and erotic elements) that perisited for another 1 000 years. Where the Church had taken over the traditional sacred site, or where the place was too public and indiscreet, a new venue had to found.

The clandestine nature of the Pagan continuity favoured hilltops for outside ceremonies (where you can see who's coming). In time the significance of the symbols was forgotten, although the importance of some of the festival days was remembered until the present.

The core of underground Paganism may have received new converts around the time of the Reformation in 1559. The Calvinist concept of pre-election would have made many feel that they had nothing to lose. Unfortunately this was also the beginning of a century of witch persecutions and iconoclasm. I have a suspicion that between c1540 and the end of the 1600's both the people (and the books?) that could have told us what the symbols meant were burnt, and many of the stones themselves destroyed as works of idolatry.

All the above is necessarily conjectural. However, I am certain of one thing: contrary to the view of some art historians, the Pictish animal symbols cannot be dated by reference to Northumbrian and other manuscripts. The influence must be in the other direction. The boar on the famous statuette from Euffigneix, now in the Musée des Antiquités Nationales, St-Germaine-en-Laye, is perhaps C1st BC, and shows without any doubt to my mind the ancestry of the Pictish animal style, firmly placed in the Celtic world.

Davin Watson Hood.



groam house news

Good news from Rosemarkie. Up till now Groam House - a Gulbenkian Award-winning museum - has had one big disadvantage, its size.

Too small to cater for larger groups of visitors, schools or tours, it has also been too small to engender enough income to reach its potential as a Pictish centre and interpreter of local history.

Too small as well to mount changing exhibitions, historical or contemporary, so there is no incentive for visitors or local people to make return visits.

The Museum Trustees therefore made a decision to launch an Appeal to put back part of the original first floor of Groam House, which was removed before the Museum was opened in 1980, to increase the space available for displays. The estimate for this work comes to about £35 000.

Thanks to the truly generous support of statutory organisations, friends and members of our Trust, including the Pictish Arts Society, the Appeal has been given a good start. The Museum still has some £8 000 to raise, a large task for a small museum in a small community. However, the Trustees and the Fund-Raising Committee are full of optimism, and a range of activities has been planned.

We are also seeking support from anyone interested enough in our Pictish heritage to make us a personal donation. These will be most gratefully acknowledged by the Treasurer or Curator, Groam House Museum, High Street, Rosemarkie, and will be entered (if desired) in our Book of Benefactors.

Meanwhile, the Museum will be closed every weekend from 20 February to 1 May to allow the new floor to be designed and installed.

All being well, the Museum will be officially re-opened on 1 May by our 1993 Groam House Lecturer Dr Anna Ritchie, whose talk Perceptions of the Picts: From Eumenius to John Buchan will be delivered in the Gordon Hall, Rosemarkie, on Friday 30 April at 7.45 pm.

As part of our new display, we will be showing Historic Scotland's exhibition of Tom E Gray's magnificent photographs of Pictish stones, and we hope to display the excellent cast of the Dunfallandy Stone on loan from the National Museum of Scotland.

Elizabeth Marshall.

Curator, Groam House Museum.

archive report

Contributions to the PAS Archive of books, booklets and other interesting material have rather fallen off during the last six months, and I appeal to members to let me have relevant material. Any cash donations would also be gratefully received and would be used for the purchase of books.

PAS Archive

The classification and filing of all the Society's collected material is now up to date. The Archive is stored at the National Monuments Record in John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh. A comprehensive list of the books/booklets held has been prepared and is being kept up to date. This is contained in a red folder marked "Library List" which is available for consultation by members at Society meetings. Any member wishing to borrow an item should get in touch with me.

History of PAS

A Meetings Book is now available in which brief records of all meetings (ordinary, AGM's and Conferences) of the PAS are kept. The book is displayed at our meetings and is kept up to date by the Secretary as our events proceed. This is a useful record and programme planning tool, and is virtually a history of the Society.

Council for Scottish Archaeology (CSA)

PAS has joined CSA, and copies of the Council's newsletter Scottish Archaeological News (SAN) are now displayed in a blue folder at our meetings. It is gratifying to report that the latest SAN (no 11, Winter 1992/93) contains a full-page spread on PAS. In this the birth of the Society is reviewed and some of the personalities who have helped it to grow are highlighted. Moreover, we have been asked to contribute articles to future issues.

The Secretary and I in my capacity of (acting) Chairman attended the CSA AGM on 27 February. We were well received, and gave a ten minute presentation on the Society. We also displayed our small mobile exhibition on the Picts.

Eric H Nicoll, Archivist.

Additions To The Library

Brooks, N P & Whittington, G	-	Planning and growth in the medieval Scottish burgh: the example of St Andrews (Reprinted from Transactions of the Institute of Scottish Geographers, 1977).
Council for British Archaeology	-	Discovery and Excavation in Scotland 1967 (CBA Scottish Regional Group, 1968).
Council for Scottish Archaeology	-	Discovery and Excavation in Scotland 1992 (CSA, 1993).
Evans, J A, Murray, J C & Stones, J A	-	A Tale of Two Burghs: the archaeology of Old and New Aberdeen (Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums, 1987).
Hill, Peter H	-	Whithorn 4: Excavations at Whithorn Priory 1990-91 (The Whithorn Trust, 1992).
Jackson, Anthony	-	The Symbol Stones of Scotland (The Orkney Press, 1987).
Laing, Lloyd & Laing, Jenny	-	The Picts and the Scots (Alan Sutton, 1993).
Ramsay, Dorothy M	-	Honey in the Mead (Pittenhope Publishing, Glenrothes, 1991).
Thomas, Charles	-	Whithorn's Christian Beginnings (The Whithorn Trust, 1992).

Book Reviews

Argyll Volume 7: Mid Argyll and Cowal Medieval and Later Monuments (RCAHMS, 1992). (HB; 598 ps). Price £120.00.

The twenty-fifth report of Her Majesty's Commissioners on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland is something of a milestone. It marks the completion of the survey of the former county of Argyll. In deference to the enormous task of investigating and inventorying the rich physical heritage of what was the second largest county in Scotland, Argyll was arbitrarily divided into sections for recording and publishing. The first Inventory, Argyll 1: Kintyre, was published in 1971. Argyll 7 is now available, the last in the series, and the last in the line of this style of publication for the Royal Commission. Argyll 6 also covered the districts of Mid Argyll and Cowal, but was entirely devoted to the Prehistoric and secular Early Historic monuments (RCAHMS, 1988). The present volume covers the same area but deals with the Early Christian, Mediaeval and later monuments of the area. It gives the customary detailed and descriptive accounts of almost 300 individual monuments with archaeological and architectural commentaries.

Argyll 7 follows the standard formula of these excellent reference works with an introduction to the region, the inventory itself, notes, armorial, glossary, index and maps. It presents a rich array of evidence to illustrate the influencing factors which have moulded the communities of this area. From the Atlantic side has come Christianity, represented by a wealth of EC sites and carved stones, and the landownership and patronage of the Lords of the Isles. On the inland side, on the other hand, Cowal has acted as a bridgehead for Lowland families and ideas, demonstrated by the burgeoning power of the Campbells (despite their Gaelic origins) around upper Loch Fyne.

The outstandingly high concentration of EC monuments in Knapdale, the most remarkable in the West Highlands outside Iona, provides an ecclesiastical context for the duns and forts of the invading Scotti recorded in Argyll 6. It includes the remarkable collection of 29 carved cross-slabs at Cladh a' Bhile, Ellary, amongst them the fine pillar-stone illustrated here; the hermitage on Eilean Mór, possibly established in the C7th, which has an early marigold pattern and a pedestalled Chi-Rho cross incised on the wall of a cave, as well as other carved stones including a very beautiful broken cross of C9th or C10th date; the elaborate high cross at Keills, linked by its spiral ornament, "bird's nest" boss and high relief carving to crosses of the Iona group; and the fine EC cross-slab with snake and boss ornament at Kilfinan. There are also a large number of early chapels recorded in Cowal and Mediaeval ones in Knapdale.

Late Mediaeval grave-slabs in the Western Highlands were superbly covered in a separate RCAHMS volume (Steer and Bannerman, 1977). The area of Argyll 7 is well-endowed with rich collections at Keills, Kilmory Knap and Kilmartin, and a scattering of other sites such as Kilmodan, Kilmichael Glassary, Craignish or Kilberry. All have been meticulously described in the current volume with excellent photographs and reasonable drawings.

There are lengthy and definitive studies of Castle Sween, the earliest surviving stone castle in Scotland, the major stronghold of Castle Carrick, and the later strengths of Old Castle Lachlan and Carnasserie. Much of Argyll 7 is devoted to Inveraray, with almost 60 pages given to the Castle and its estate. The town too is described in detail with its full range of C18th and C19th public and domestic buildings. Farms, townships and sheilings, and industrial and transport monuments, including the Crinan Canal, all feature.

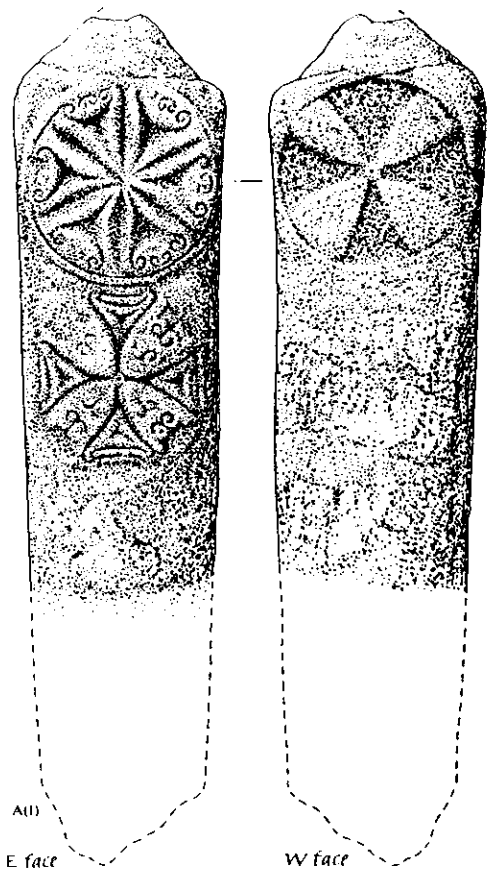
Although Dunadd was described in detail in Argyll 6 (RCAHMS, 1988, No 248), there is a second chance to read about the rock-carvings in the current volume (No 282). This has

been copied verbatim from the previous Inventory with a new photograph of the Ogham inscription and footprint to replace the fine one of the incised Pictish boar.

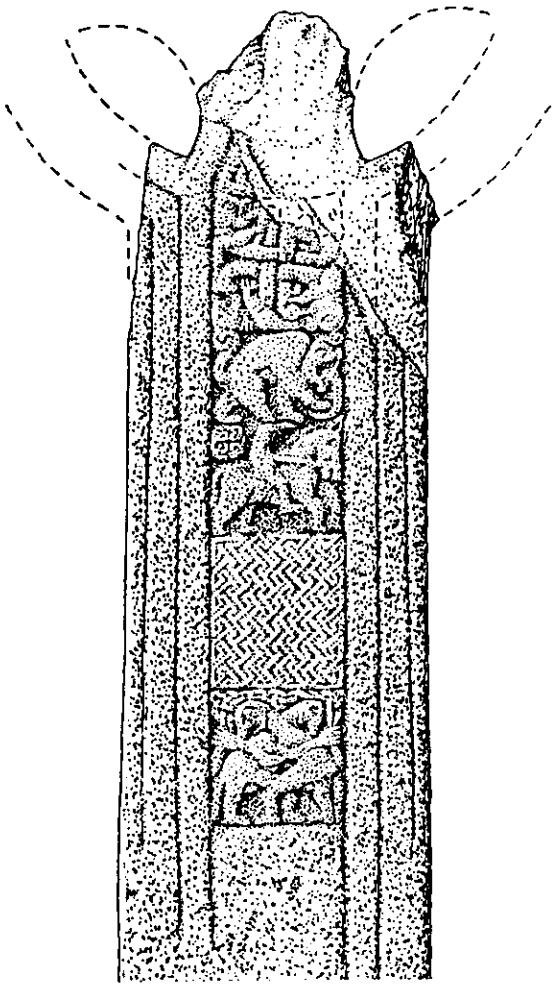
Up until the publication of Argyll 1, the RCAHMS county inventories started with a general introduction. These regional summaries were excellent pieces of scholarship, valuable to many readers. In the Chairman's Preface to Argyll 1 (RCAHMS, 1971, xxi), we were told that "the general section of the Introduction has been limited to a brief statement of physical and other factors affecting settlement in the region, since it was felt that the historical and linguistic background would be better discussed in the final volume of the series, in the wider context of the county as a whole". With the passage of twenty-one years and a change of all the Commissioners bar one, this seems to have been forgotten.

Difficult as it is to believe, given the Royal Commission's meticulous work, I am advised that there is at least one error in Argyll 7: note 43, p 537 refers to a Mediaeval graveslab built into a doocot at Kilspindie, Perthshire. The doocot in question is apparently at Kinnaird, further along the Sidlaws.

These minor flaws do not detract from the excellence of the work as a whole. It deserves much praise and commendation. I, for one, regret that this is to be the last Inventory in this style from the Royal Commission. It has now been decided that the "Inventory of Ancient and Historical Monuments and Constructions", which the Commissioners are charged by Royal Warrant to compile, should be construed as the archives of the National Monuments Record of Scotland (RCAHMS, 1990, vii). Consequently there has been a change in publication policy, hence the style of North-East Perth with its shift of emphasis to the landscape and its component parts. This uses a "window" method of taking the user from the general to the particular by using selected examples rather than giving detailed plans and descriptions of all monuments. Whilst accepting the reasons for this (for a full discussion see Halliday and Stevenson, 1991, 129-39), it will be difficult to emulate the county Inventories.



Pillar stone, Cladh a' Bhile, Ellary.



Cross, Eilean Mór.

The NMRS in Edinburgh is, after all, not as available to the people of Argyll as a copy of a book such as any of the volumes of Argyll in Lochgilphead Public Library. Argyll 7 is the last in a line of first rate reference works; it is itself a monument to the scholarship and thoroughness of the Royal Commission's staff.

Thanks are due to the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical monuments of Scotland for their kind permission to reproduce illustrations from Argyll 7 in this review.

Jack R F Burt.

References

Halliday, S P & Stevenson, J B	-	Surveying for the Future: RCAHMS Archaeological Survey 1908-1990 in Hanson, W S & Slater, E A, 1991.
Hanson, W S & Slater, E A	-	Scottish Archaeology: New Perceptions (Aberdeen U P, 1991).
RCAHMS	-	Argyll 1: Kintyre (HMSO, 1971).
	-	Argyll 6: Mid Argyll and Cowal Prehistoric and Early Historic Monuments (HMSO, 1988).
	-	North-East Perth: An Archaeological Landscape (HMSO, 1990).
Steer, K A & Bannerman, J W M	-	Late Medieval Monumental Sculpture in the West Highlands (RCAHMS, 1977).

Sacred Stones Sacred Places by Marianna Lines (Saint Andrew Press, 1992). (HB; 162 ps). £19.95.

Sacred Stones Sacred Places takes a look at a variety of ancient monuments that are united by one dominant factor: they are all in the care of the Kirk of Scotland and are in parishes where worship still takes place. Many such sites were already sacred to the inhabitants before the first Christian missionaries came to our land. There is a continuity of worship that in some cases can be thousands of years old. It is a continuity that the author is well aware of. In a perceptive preface she suggests that the Kirk itself provides a living link with the mist-shrouded ancient past when these artefacts were created, whether stone circles and cup-marks in 2500 BC or the Pictish stones of the C6th-C9th. Apart from the continuity, the other dominant aspect of this book is stone itself. All of the sites described have their own hymn in stone, whether it is the recumbent stone circle of Midmar in Aberdeenshire, or the Pictish stone at Glamis with its salmon and adder, or the beautiful C14th-C16th sculptured stones of Lochaline in Morvern.

The book covers mainland Scotland from Whithorn to Farr, and includes several of the Inner Hebrides. When dealing with periods of the distant past it is often a temptation to speculate and try to throw a bit of light on the Dark Ages. That temptation has been largely resisted in this work. Legend and story have their place here, however. This is perfectly fair when the subject matter is the continuity of sacredness in the chosen sites. There are a few surprises. Despite a recent conference held there, Govan is still not most peoples' idea of where ancient treasures are to be found, but in fact Govan Old Kirk has no less than 46 carved stones, some of them fragments, ranging from the magnificent C10th sarcophagus to the strange Norse grave-covers known as "hogbacks", and including the "Sun Stone" which the locals believe was used by the Druids to draw down power from the mighty Sun.

This book will be a great delight to new visitors to Scotland as well as to those of us natives actively interested in the past, particularly the Dark Ages. Although several of the illustrations of Ms Lines "impressions" of particular stones are fascinating, the photographs largely miss the opportunity to give the material presented an exciting visual dimension. In a period when many artists, including photographers, are turning to the Pictish and other Dark Age art traditions for inspiration, this is a shame. Perhaps I have been spoiled by seeing our PAS Secretary Tom E Gray's work; anyone else's contribution is bound to be diminished by comparison.

The Saint Andrew Press as well as the author deserve praise for the production of this work. To publish a book which will of necessity focus at times on our Pagan past, and which underlines the many strands of continuity with those distant times, was a courageous project for the publishing arm of the Kirk to undertake. As a guide to a whole range of fascinating remnants of Scotland's history this book is a little on the pricey side, but as an introduction to the wealth of our heritage over centuries and millennia it will be of use to tourist and native alike.

Stuart McHardy.

Honey in the Mead by Dorothy Macnab Ramsay (Pittenhope Publishing, 1991). (PB; 402 ps). Price £9.50.

At first glance, Honey in the Mead appears to be a genre novel, a romantic escapist saga, with Caterin the beautiful spirited heroine battling against her growing love for Gort, the enigmatic and aristocratic Welsh stranger. At this level the story succeeds. It moves along at a great pace, full of love, treachery and adventure, set in Dark Age Alba, against a glowingly described background of idyllic scenery, seasonal weather and everyday life in Pictish times.

If this were all, I could recommend Honey in the Mead as a good read for those who enjoy that sort of fiction, but there is much more to this book than the original poorly-designed cover and blurb suggested. Here is an excellently-researched attempt to portray life in the C6th, to put flesh on the bones of those people who are known to us only by name from the Lists of Pictish Kings or Adomnán's Life of Columba. Bridei, his magician Broichan, Cennelath, Aedán of Dál Riada, Artur his son and the Irish Kings march through these pages, along with bards and masons, warriors and monks, mothers and maidens, hillmen, cattlemen and huntsmen as seen through the intelligent eyes of Caterin, Bridei's daughter.

Although it is impossible for us today to perceive life through Pictish eyes, the author has created in the character of Caterin a credible attempt. She longs to love and to be loved. Above all, she is determined to be a great queen and mother to her people. To uphold the ancient traditions of her race, she enters a school for Druids where she learns the ancient history and pagan secrets of the past. While her father and her chosen husband-to-be battle with the Scots, she is captured and eventually sold as a slave in Ireland to a Viking family, where she learns degradation and humility. She visits great Tara, finds Columba, and is sheltered in a monastery, but has no great opinion of him, or of Christianity. She is protected by a Fife family, with whom she participates in the customs and festivals of village folk. From these adventures she grows up from being a wilful and arrogant child to become a wise and mature queen, in love with her victorious Welsh husband, the mother of his child and of her people.

The author deals credibly with the setting up of the symbol stones, the problem of language and the importance of the old religion and matrilinear succession. It becomes Caterin's ambition to banish slavery and to set up healing centres. She is finally immortalised as the Easter Ross Princess seen on the Hilton of Cadboll Stone.

Of course, one has to remember that this is fiction, and that Caterin has perhaps too modern an outlook to be truly a child of her times, but this is a novel to stretch the imagination, and if it introduces the Picts to a wider readership, then it has succeeded. I look forward to reading The Flame Within, second in this trilogy about Celtic Queens.

Elizabeth Marshall.

Honey in the Mead can be obtained directly from Pittenhope Publishing, 72 Marmion Drive, Glenrothes, Fife, KY6 2PG, at £9.50 + £1.70 p & p. The second volume in the trilogy, The Flame Within is now available at the same price.

Art of the Celts by Lloyd and Jennifer Laing (Thames and Hudson, 1992). (PB; 216 ps). Price £6.95.

This comprehensive introduction to the art of the Celtic peoples of Europe and the British Isles from the C5th BC to about AD 1200, offers an excellent perspective on the art styles and decorated artefacts from a wide range of contexts. To take the term Celtic in such a broad populist sense may cause some eyebrows to rise; the book covers the art of the prehistoric tribes of north-western Europe in the Iron Age, the distinctive British and Irish contribution also in prehistoric times, as well as the Insular art of Christian inspiration in Ireland and Scotland. There is a school of thought which sees these three strands as discrete topics, the study of which should be kept separate. The Laings are right, however, to offer this broad introduction, for readers will find it a clear picture of how the chronologically or geographically distinct areas of Celtic art fit together. Many will appreciate for the first time the chronological depth and indebtedness of Celtic art to influences from other styles, be they eastern or Gallo-Roman. The Laings are interesting too on the ways of appreciating artistic objects and styles that are at variance with Classical traditions.

Following a short introduction on the art of Hallstatt Europe, the volume is divided into three main sections of roughly equal size. The first charts the development of the styles of La Tène Europe, with a helpful discussion of the origin of classification of Early Style, Waldalgesheim, Plastic and Sword styles - all illustrated by dramatic photographs in monochrome and in colour. There are particularly thoughtful discussions of sculpture and coinage.

The art of the Iron Age communities of Britain and Ireland is comprehensively illustrated in the second section. The Witham shield is shown in colour in a way that allows ready appreciation of the outline of the long-legged appliqué figure of a boar that was the first feature of its decoration. Those interested in Celtic craftsmanship will find a range of plastic and linear motifs on insular metalwork, as well as rich enamel work.

The third main section summarises the art of Scotland and Ireland between about AD 400 and AD 1200. The difficulties of nomenclature (Celtic, Insular, Pictish, for example) and of inspiration and new influences are not glossed over. The stunning range of material - manuscripts, metalwork and sculpture - is concisely set into broad contexts. If the enthusiast for things Pictish might have preferred a longer discussion and a higher quality of illustration of Pictish material, it is the placing of Pictish art into a wider pattern of influences and traditions that is here important.

Finally, there is an engaging chapter on Celtic revivals, as well as a helpful glossary of terms and motifs. The volume is handsomely produced and is excellent value.

J N Graham Ritchie.

The High Crosses of Ireland by Peter Harbison (RGZM Mainz in association with the Royal Irish Academy Dublin, through Dr Rudolf Habelt GMBH, Bonn, 1992). (HB; 3 vols; 440 ps). £272.50.

The arts of the first millennium AD must be seen in as wide a context as possible, and Pictish art is no exception. A recently published set of volumes on The High Crosses of Ireland by Peter Harbison should be drawn to the attention of all those interested in the iconographic aspects of Pictish art. The three volumes of this important study incorporate a great deal of information both of a literary and a visual nature.

Peter Harbison, archaeological officer and editor for the Irish Tourist Board in Dublin, has had an important role in bringing the archaeology of Ireland to a wide audience through his Guide to the National Monuments of Ireland (1970), his part in Irish Art and Architecture (1978), and Pre-Christian Ireland: From the First Settlers to the Early Celts (1989).

The High Crosses of Ireland includes a descriptive catalogue of all the high crosses, which will be an invaluable preparation for any future archaeological visitor to Ireland. Perhaps even more valuable from a PAS point of view is the discussion of the iconographical study of themes of Old and New Testament subjects, as well as those relating to later saints like St Paul and St Anthony, that have distinct relevance to the study of Pictish art. Subsequent chapters cover prototypes, inscriptions and dating. The accompanying volume of photographs includes nearly 650 illustrations of the crosses, as general views and as details of the decorative and iconographic panels. Users of The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland will recognise the value of detailed illustration, and Harbison has gathered an impressive series of photographs - many his own. The third volume incorporates nearly 400 illustrations of comparative material from the Franks Casket, to Sorrento via St Vigeans and St Andrews.

This is an important volume to dip into for all those interested in the Christian aspects of Pictish art and its wider context. At £272.50 it is unlikely to be found on many private shelves, but it may be consulted in libraries, including the National Monuments Record of Scotland at 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh.

J N Graham Ritchie.

Current Archaeology No 131, October 1992.

As intimated in PAS Journal 1, 37, a second issue of this magazine has been produced devoted exclusively to the latest discoveries in Scottish archaeology. It includes articles on the Neolithic sites of Barnhouse and Maeshowe in Orkney, a Bronze Age village and post-Mediaeval settlement at Lairg in Sutherland, the excavations at Edinburgh Castle, the Viking boat burial at Scar on Sanday and, in the Pictish period, aerial archaeology in south-east Perthshire and the excavation of cropmark sites in Fife. There are also reviews of books from Scotland, some shorter items of interest, and an archaeological science diary.

Current Archaeology is published six times a year for a subscription of £12 (foreign postage £3 extra; US subscription $30). Back issues of the magazine are available at £2 each. Subscriptions and orders should be sent to: Current Archaeology, 9 Nassington Road, London, England, NW3 2TX.

letters

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23 November 1992

Sir,

Sueno's Stone

I am a recent member of the Society, and have, for more years than I care to remember, been interested in Scotland's heritage. A nation of craftsmen, who left to us, the present generation and generations to come, a vast amount of the finest stone carvings, which have for over 1000 years withstood the ravages of many a stormy winter; I refer, of course, to the Pictish stones.

Some time ago Kincardine and Deeside District Council decided to extend the burial ground round the old kirk of Tullich near Ballater (a site visited by members of the PAS during a field-trip in September 1990). I sent a letter to the architect in charge of the project, putting forward the idea that this would be a prime time to enclose the Pictish and EC stones preserved by the ruins of the old church in a show case with walls of clear plastic or a comparable material (armoured glass being to my mind too costly) to allow both the front and the back of the carved stones to be seen. I also pointed out that a grant towards this might be had from the Scottish Office. The outcome was that such a scheme would be expensive, and that to enclose the stones would cause fluctuations of temperature, resulting in condensation in the cases and possibly causing more damage to the stones than any acid rain that might fall on them in their present position.

You can imagine my surprise, therefore, when I saw an article and photograph in the Aberdeen Press and Journal of 14 October 1992: "It's history under glass at Forres . . .", about the official opening of a protective glass and steel structure which has been put up around Sueno's Stone [see also the article in PAS Journal 1, 26-7 - Ed]; it set my grey cells working overtime. How did Dark Age people transport so big a stone? How was such a long slab erected? No tower or hydrocon cranes in those days, only the combined brute strength of our ancestors. I wonder how many machines were used to erect this monstrosity of a protective cover, and at what cost? If this is an example of the best of today's design, by architects supposedly trained in the art - and it is the winning entry of a design competition - bring back the Pictish artisans. We in the present generation have a lot to learn from them in the art of design. I shudder to think what the 91 rejected designs were like.

At the official opening of this eyesore, Sir Hector Monro is reported to have said: " I am confident the stone is now safe for future generations, probably for another 1000 years". I hope he is right, for £150 000 is not chicken feed to spend on one stone. I have heard that the case has already been damaged twice - two of the glass panels were broken on 30 December 1991 and on 1 January 1992, with £2 500 having to be paid to repair the damage to each panel (and this before the official opening). If this is an example of the cost incurred by enclosing the Pictish stones for protection, a better way will have to be devised.

I would like to put forward an idea that has been in my mind since the PAS visited the St Vigeans Museum on a field-trip.

Disused buildings, such as redundant kirks, may fall into the A Category of listed buildings, and so fall quite cheaply onto the market as no exterior changes can be made. In many cases the proprietor is glad to sell so as to relieve him of the expense of maintenance and upkeep. A replica stone in some of the new plastic or synthetic materials can be made and placed on the original site, and the carved stone can be placed in the old building, now transformed into a museum, where it can be studied at leisure (to say nothing of the comfort of the student).

Perhaps my spectacles are too rose-coloured, but if a few members put their heads together a far better way to protect our Pictish stones will be found. Thank you for reading this letter; I look forward to your replies and to hearing any ideas readers may have on this subject.

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Sir,

In her review of Graeme Cruickshank's book The Battle of Dunnichen in the Autumn 1992 edition of the PAS Journal, Dr Ritchie writes that the Aberlemno Kirkyard cross-slab is usually dated on art-historical grounds to a century later than the Battle of Dunnichen, fought in 685. In my view a date in the last quarter of the C8th would be too late for the slab. There can be no certainty in these matters, but baldly stated the art-historical analogies for the carving are as follows:

1) For the panel of zoomorphic ornament to the left (facing) of the shaft of the cross - the background ornament of folio 26 verso of the Lindisfarne Gospels, dated, by a colophon written in the C10th, but of a very circumstantial character, to between 698 and 721.
2) For the zoomorphic motif under the right arm of the cross - a similar motif carved on a fragment of a panel at Monkwearmouth. The panel is no 9 in the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, Vol I: County Durham and Northumberland (Oxford, 1984), where it is dated to "the last quarter of the seventh to the first quarter of the eighth century".
3) For the general form and proportion of the cross-slab - the *Herebericht* slab at Monkwearmouth. The slab is no 5 in the Corpus, where it is dated to the first quarter of the C8th.

None of these dates are secure, but they converge on the first quarter of the C8th, the period when we know from Bede's Ecclesiastical History, Book 5, Chapter 21, that Northumbrian masons had been showing the Picts how to build in stone, a fact which would account for the monumental character of the cross-slabs.

A defensible date for the Aberlemno cross-slab is therefore within the first quarter of the C8th. If it had been erected immediately after the Battle of Dunnichen, then one would have expected the animal ornament on the slab to look more like that used in an earlier Insular Gospel Book, the Book of Durrow, which is conventionally dated to around the time of the Battle. The motif under the right arm of the cross could certainly be based on metalwork models such as those used by the artist of the Book of Durrow in the last quarter of the C7th. It is the panel of ornament to the left of the cross-shaft which suggests that the slab is later in date. If the slab dated to the last quarter of the C8th, as Dr Ritchie writes, then it is in a very old-fashioned style, both in its types of animal ornament and its panelled layout.

On balance, the most probable date on art-historical grounds for the Aberlemno Kirkyard cross-slab is within the first quarter of the C8th. Such a date would allow the slab to have been erected by a patron to the glory of God, and to keep in mind a great victory that served to validate his own position in Pictish society. Whether the victory was the Battle of Dunnichen, and the patron a kinsman of the victor, Bridei son of Bili, is another layer of speculation, but it is one that can certainly be entertained.

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Sir,

I have been examining some double disc and z-rod designs suitable for converting into jewellery, and while looking through the photos I took of stones in St Vigeans Museum on our Angus field-trip, it struck me that two of them - St Vigeans 3 and 5 - have some design features which lead me to believe that they may have been displayed upside down.

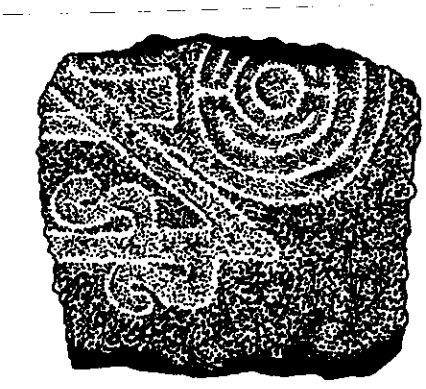
St Vigeans 3 is a Class II fragment displaying part of a double disc and z-rod in relief. The design lacks the usual rounded-off corners of the Z or rather S (incidentally, who first called it a z-rod? Though there are at least three examples of the z-rod actually being z-shaped, the majority have s-shaped rods). Anyway, it does show "curls" or "feathers" protruding from the shaft.

To the best of my knowledge, this design feature usually occurs on the top of the z-rod, not at the bottom, as displayed at St Vigeans. Examples include Aberlemno 1, Ackergill, Dunnichen, Keith Hall, Kintradwell 2, Picardy and Tullich. Although I accept that stones with "curls" on the lower part of the shaft do exist, these tend to be "paired" and not split up as per the example under discussion.

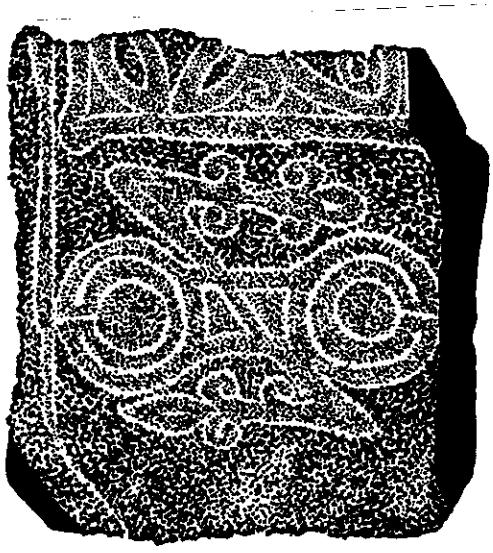
St Vigeans 5 shows a complete double disc and z-rod, again in relief. On this symbol "curls" appear on both upper and lower shafts, and are "paired" in both cases. The terminals of the z-rod are, however, markedly different: the top (as displayed) terminal is rounded, without showing signs of excessive weathering, while the lower one is most definitely pointed. In almost all the examples of the z-rod I have seen, it is the lower terminal which is rounded, and the upper which is pointed.

It therefore appears to me that both these stones may have been misinterpreted when they were displayed. What do you think?

Nick Simpson, PAS Events Organiser.



St Vigeans 3 (drawn by Nick Simpson).



St Vigeans 5 (drawn by Nick Simpson).

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