THE PICTISH ARTS SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER 94 SPRING 2020

PAS Conference 2019

Field Trip: Around Angus

Following an excellent conference in Forfar the previous day several sites centred on the town were visited.

A gentle but persistent rain was falling as we assembled around our first port of call – the magnificent Glamis cross slab standing in the garden of the former manse. Since the Church of Scotland sold the manse a few years back, this once readily accessible sculpture is now on private property and can only be seen over locked gates but through the good offices of David McGovern, the owner granted us access. The wet weather did not dampen our spirits or hamper the vigorous discussion that ensued.

By the time we got to Eassie Church, the rain had all but ceased. Thanks to a colleague of mine from the HES Monument Conservation Unit in Arbroath, we had a key to the Eassie Stone's glass box, allowing us to get up close to the stone, albeit two or three at a time.

By the time we arrived at Brechin Cathedral, the Sunday service was over and we were able to go straight in. Unfortunately the spotlight that illuminates the Aldbar Stone was in need of a working bulb. Nevertheless, it, the Mary Stone, the recumbent and other fragments made a fascinating and highly contrasting assemblage which was topped off nicely by the Round Tower and its unique sculptured doorway.

After lunch we headed to St Vigeans. Despite having been re-furbished in 2008, this superb display of sculpture has become rather more difficult to access than it ought to be. Although fitted into a very cramped space, the grouping of the stones, the interpretation and the lighting show what can be achieved (and highlights the problems with outdated displays such as St Andrews Cathedral).

There was a brief chance to walk around the church before getting back into the bus and heading to the Camus Cross. The fact that this freestanding cross survives intact is astonishing, even more so considering its imagery of Christ crucified and Christ in Majesty.

Last stop (following the bus driver's bizarrely circuitous route) was Pitmuies House and the truncated cross slab at the Gardener's Cottage. This is one of only four Pictish cross slabs which have the four round hollows of the cross pierced – an interesting and select subgroup. As chance would have it, the current tenant of Gardener's Cottage is a friend of David McGovern and a fellow stone carver. So we had the added bonus of looking at examples of his work which adorned the garden.

Despite the less-than-perfect weather, the field trippers on this sell-out tour all seemed to have a great time and I for one can't wait for the 2020 conference field trip along Deeside.

John Borland

The field-trippers assembled round the Camus Cross. The shot was taken by Elizabeth Clemens who bravely scaled a conveniently placed (and aptly named) estate 'shooting platform'.

Hogbacks and/or kindred monuments

Jamie Barnes

Jamie's talk at Forfar was based on some of the work he had carried out for his recently completed PhD thesis entitled *Of Warriors and Beasts: The Hogbacks and Hammerhead Crosses of Viking Age Strathclyde and Northumbria*. At the time of the conference, a large proportion of this work was under prepublication embargo; Jamie therefore focussed largely on his work on Scottish hogbacks and kindred monuments. We look forward to hearing more at a later date.

Jamie paid tribute to the earlier work of James Lang, who devised and published classifications and catalogues of the hogbacks and kindred monuments in Scotland (see Lang, JT 'Hogback Monuments in Scotland', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 105, 1974, 206-35) and in England and Wales. More than forty years on, this geographic distinction remains. Also, there has been a tendency to lump together the kindred monuments with hogbacks in the literature. The time was right for a reclassification of the entire corpus (30 Scottish, 117 English and 2 Welsh hogbacks plus kindred monuments) and removing the artificial modern boundaries. This allowed Jamie to explore a number of aspects of these carved monuments, including examining relationships between Viking period Strathclyde (which stretched south of the Solway) and Northumbria.

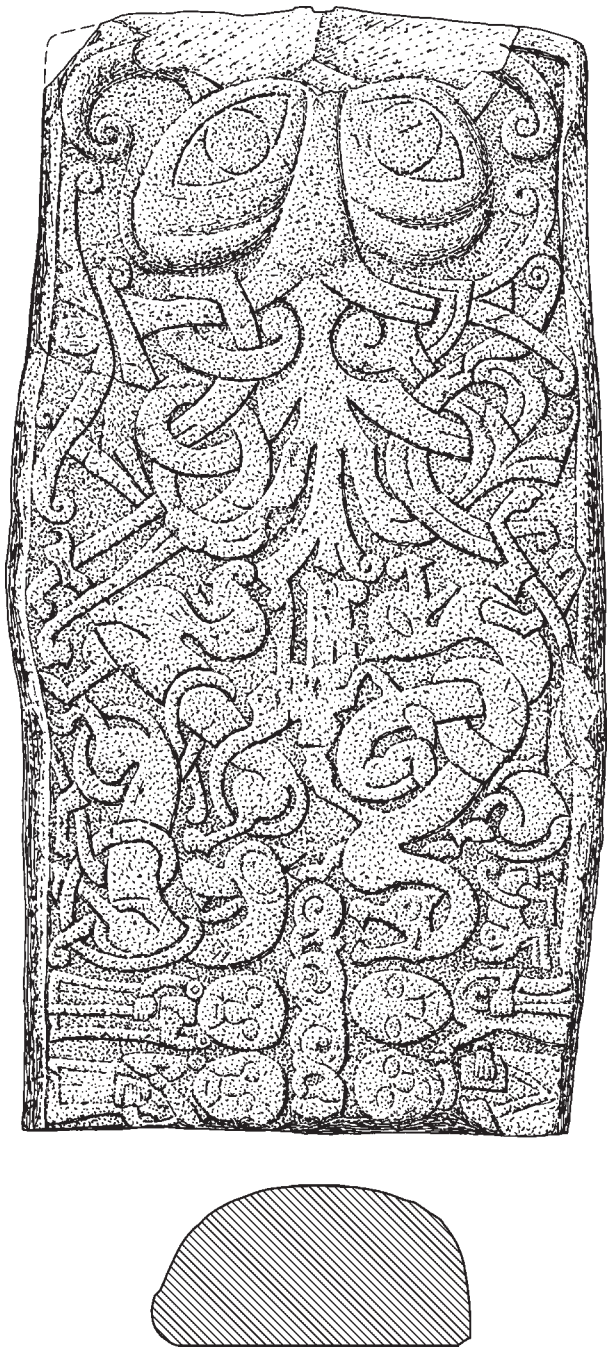
Hogback monuments date from around the late tenth century. They are recumbent stones, rectangular in ground plan, seemingly modelled on the Viking long house, with tegulated roof, curved ridge (hence the 'hogback') and somewhat bowed sides. Lang identified four main Scottish types; Type A has end-beasts, animal figures which clasp the ends of the ridge pole and face inwards towards each other, with tegulated 'roofs' and carved sides. Type B1 is a plain tegulated stone with a pronounced curve to the roof ridge, while B2 has a more level roof-ridge with straighter sides and less of a shoulder on the section near the ridge. B3 is distinguishable from later coped stones only by a very slight curve to the ridge, presenting a triangular section above a low plinth.

Jamie talked us through the catalogue of 30 Scottish hogbacks and 14 kindred monuments, illustrating each in turn. Some common features emerge: hogbacks are usually found close to water – by rivers, on estuaries or on islands. There is a strong association with ancient church or monastic sites. However, while hogbacks are often regarded as grave markers, there is little evidence to support this assertion. Viewing the corpus in this way, it became easier to appreciate the gradual change from Type B1 to B3, while the group of Scottish Type A monuments from Govan stands out quite dramatically from the rest. Elsewhere, hogbacks are rarely found in groups of more than two, and frequently sites only have a single example. At Govan, however, the group of five massive stones, elaborately carved with end-beasts that have in three cases been reworked so that the beast faces out instead of in, is qualitatively different from the majority. This group of hogbacks highlights Govan's place as a centre of power at a period of cultural, social, economic and religious change when Norse or Hiberno-Norse influence in Strathclyde was strengthening. Other points to note include the relative scarcity of hogback monuments in the north (four from Orkney and one from Shetland) and the Western Highlands and Islands, areas where Norse settlement and dominance is documented.

Passing on to the kindred monuments, the two at Abercorn accompany two hogbacks at this early Northumbrian monastic site and may also merit further study. The Brechin monument lacks a number of diagnostic 'hogback' characteristics, but has features reminiscent of both Ringerike and Pictish art styles. Does this point to a local cultural fusion of both Norse and Pictish ideas? At Meigle too, there is apparently a tradition of wedge-shaped recumbent monuments that share features in common with Meigle 25, which Jamie sees as a kindred monument rather than a hogback – the curved ridge is absent and the beast was originally carved facing out, not, as at Govan, recut. Again, this may reflect a milieu in which there was a cultural assimilation going on. At St Andrews and St Vigeans, tegulated monuments were probably house shrines.

Time constraints limited Jamie to summarising a few more points. There is no clear single origin for the hogback type. It appears to have arisen where recumbent shrine tombs were known, and to be influenced by the shape of the Scandinavian longhouse. It may have been Hiberno-Norse initially, perhaps developing in Cumbria and spreading north through

Strathclyde and east through the Eden valley route to Northumbria. This development may have been in response to pre-existing Christian traditions, and the variability in motifs need not have any chronological significance. Indeed, the stones at Govan seem to indicate a period of change at this important centre. Kindred monuments seem to have been put in place before, during and after the floruit of the hogbacks – perhaps this reflects the assimilation over time of the Hiberno-Norse invaders by the settled population. *Sheila Hainey*



Brechin 2 – *Developed view and profile, 1:10 scale. Drawing by John Borland SC10501664 © Crown Copyright HES*

PAS Conference 2019

Hirdmen and Hansel

Barbara Crawford

Professor Crawford is best known for her work exploring the history of Scandinavian links with Scotland over many centuries, drawing on archaeology and documentary studies to further our understanding of an often complex relationship. At Forfar, Barbara chose to change her published title to better reflect her topic, based on a paper she had written for a new book to be published in memory of the late Doreen Waugh. Although this was strictly speaking a venture into space and time that could hardly be described as Pictish, it was nevertheless a fascinating demonstration of how we can learn something of the survival of older social structures from more recent documents. She began by passing round transcripts of the document which she used in this study. The hirdmen and the hansel of the title both appear in this fifteenth century legal record, the former appearing much earlier in history; the latter reflecting customs still known in Scotland today.

In the medieval period, the hird was the personal military retinue of the Scandinavian kings. While there are many earlier references to the hird, the most detailed documentation appears in the thirteenth century. Strictly hierarchical in structure, the *hird* was governed by its own set of laws (*hirdskra*) and formed an exclusive aristocracy whose duties and rights were clearly laid down. The Earls of Orkney were themselves members of the Norwegian royal *hird*, but the question of whether or not they replicated the hird among their own followers has long been debated. The Orkneyinga Saga is probably at its most reliable when it covers near-contemporary events. In his last fight, trapped by the men of Dublin and fighting to the death, Swein Asleifson described himself as 'the holy Earl Rognvald's hirdman'. It seems that at least as far as the author of the Saga was concerned, there was nothing improbable in the suggestion that the later Norse Earls may have imitated the king in having a personal *hird*. After the death of Earl Jon Haakonson in 1230, the earldom passed into the hands of first the Angus and then the Sinclair families, Scots who held the Orcadian Earldom from the King of Norway. The late William Thompson suggested that the earl's network of followers became functionless after the Scots earls took over. He argued that the Norse king's hirdmen would have taken over functions such as tax-gathering and would have

played an important role in the 13th to 15th centuries before the islands were pledged to Scotland in 1468.

Having briefly outlined this background, Barbara directed our attention to our copies of a remarkable text, namely an 'Attestation by Henry Randall, Lawman of Orkney and others regarding the sale of the 12 pennyland of Tollop (Toab)'. Dated 1438-9, this legal document predates the transfer of the islands to the Scottish crown by some thirty years but was nevertheless written in Scots. At this early date it is possible that the writer was a churchman who had come north in the service of a Sinclair earl. While it is possible that some change in social structures was already underway, there is no evidence here of a new situation. The document refers to a transfer of land, with witnesses to the fact that the sale had been made willingly and that the transfer was confirmed. This took place before 'owr lord, the erle of Orkney' with witnesses swearing 'on the hirdman stein'. The inclusion of this Norse term suggests continuity in the way the Scots earls governed this Norwegian territory. Perhaps the preposition should have been 'at' rather than 'on', as there may have been some misunderstanding on the part of the scribe. '*Stein*' may have suggested 'stone', one, perhaps, which bound the swearer in some particularly powerful way. However, *stein* is more likely to represent the Norse '*stefna*', or court. It would be logical therefore for the witnesses to this transaction to swear in front of their lord at the hirdman's court. Be that as it may, this appears to be the only reference to such a court in Orkney in the whole Norse period. It appears at least possible that the officials named in the document were members of the Earl's *hird*, as the attestation tool place before 'our lord the erle of Orkney', although some have argued that they may have been representatives of the royal *hird*.

Moving on to '*hansel*' or '*handsel*;' the sellers (Johne and then Thomas) '*hanselde*' the transactions that saw Thomas and Wat take possession of the 'xii pennyland of Tollop'. In this document, and more generally in Scots, '*handsel*' was used to describe a process that confirmed the sale or transfer of a piece of land. Incidentally, although this seems to have been in Scots legal usage in the 15th century, the *Dictionary of the Older Scots Tongue* notes this document as the earliest such usage. It apparently derives from an expression meaning 'handshake', and indicates that the confirmation of the transaction involved the parties shaking hands.

Barbara then pondered the question of when and how '*handsel*' became the term for a gift given to bring good luck at an inauguration or at a special event. By the late 15th century, Dunbar was making reference to Handsel Monday, the first Monday of the New Year, when gifts were given. The idea of a *handsel* as a lucky omen appears in Old English by around 1200 and recurs in the fourteenth century 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.' '*Hanselen*' in Old English appears to have been a token of luck – good or bad. It also came to mean something given, especially at New Year, and also to initiate a contract, a custom that may have some basis in Roman Civil Law.

So '*hansel*' or '*handsel*' may be associated with luck, or with in a legal situation, when a transaction is confirmed by a gift, or with a gift to mark an auspicious occasion. The origin of the term, how it came to be used both in Scotland and England, and how it remained as a part of Scottish culture (and possible also in northern English culture as well) could all stand further investigation. Barbara asked for any other comment on the use of '*handsel'* and sparked a lively session as members recalled ways in which the term was, or still is, used across the country. *Sheila Hainey*

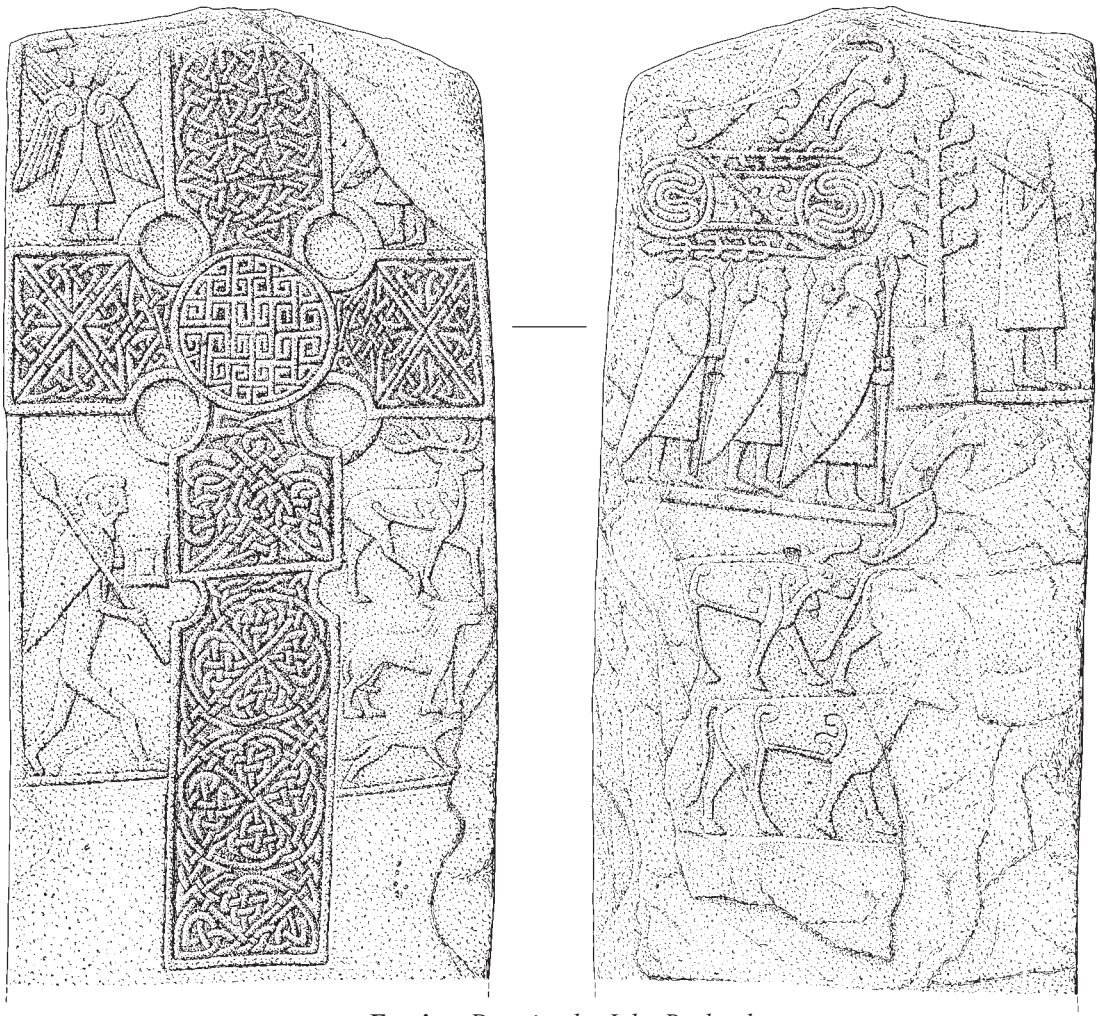
PAS Conference 2019

The Picts: Angus and Gowrie

Norman Atkinson

Our last speaker of the day was Norman Atkinson, who treated us to a trip round some of his favourite stones. Despite the title, this would not involve any great discussion of Pictish geography: the area in question was formerly known as Circinn, but it is not clear what it is currently to be called. Having been for many years involved with Angus Council (as a Museum Curator who rose to the rank of Director of Cultural Services) he was obliged to treat Angus as separate from its neighbour, Perth. Now he proposed to treat Strathmore as a whole, regarding it as the epicentre of Pictish cross slabs. Norman briefly referred to the Pictish king-lists, noting that these include kings who appear to have ruled over all of Pictland as well as those who governed in more restricted territories. Today, he would only deal with a small family group associated with the cross slabs.

The area has relatively few symbol stones when compared with neighbouring districts north of



Eassie – *Drawing by John Borland*

the Mounth. Possibly the best known of these is the so-called 'Serpent Stone' at Aberlemno. Norman prefers to see the symbol as an adder, the only snake in Pictland, rather than a serpent with biblical overtones that may be anachronistic. The stone has been damaged and possibly tilted by cattle using it as a rubbing post before the wall which separates it from the field was built. The area around Aberlemno was home to other symbol stones and some bearing crosses and symbols – including the Woodrae stone which was given as a gift to Sir Walter Scott and stood in the grounds of Abbotsford for many years before being donated to the National Museum of Scotland. The Dunnichen stone has been moved several times but is now in the Meffan. The badly damaged Keillor stone, boasts an animal that may be a wolf or a bear as one of its three symbols. While the Bruceton stone, visited several years ago on a PAS field trip, has two, an arch over a Pictish beast. These symbol stones seem to be qualitatively different from their northern counterparts, Isabel Henderson argued that symbol stones first appeared in the north; do these southern examples represent a movement of people into the area?

Compared with Highland Perthshire, where Niall Robertson has described some dozens of simple crosses, Norman can number only a handful from Angus. The difference appears real, as Norman has (in a spirit of competition?) spent years searching likely for any examples. One is St Drostan's stone from Tarfside in Glenesk. Norman pointed out that Drostan appears to have been a fairly common name in Pictish times, but this is possibly the St Drostan of the Aberdeen Breviary who is reported to have built a church in Glenesk. In the mid-nineteenth century, Jervise reported that it was said to have been moved to its present location about seventy years earlier, now being further up in the glen than the earlier church site and well associated with St Drostan.

The Ordnance Survey name book of 1862 records a 'defaced figure supposed to be a cross' built into St Andrew's Well (Lintrathen parish). By 1967 the well no longer existed, and there was no sign of the stone. Despite searches over many years, it was not to be found. Earlier this summer an estate worker who was busy sheep dipping found it: a stone incised with a small Greek cross with crossed terminals and a line which extends downwards, having no definite

terminal. It has been suggested that this form of cross may have been an earlier attribute of St Andrew than the Saltire. Norman showed a twelfth century wall painting from Seu d'Urgell, now preserved in the Museum of Catalan Art in Barcelona. St Peter, holding his keys, is accompanied by St Andrew holding a cross very similar to the example under discussion. Norman acknowledged the members of the fledgling Glenesk Local History Society who drew his attention to this new stone.

Moving on to the cross slabs, Norman began with so-called Priest's Stone from Invergowrie, with its central representation of St Peter and association with Restenneth. He then moved on to the great Aberlemno Churchyard cross slab, rated by Isabel Henderson as one of the top ten Dark Age monuments in Europe. With a brief diversion to discuss the possible sites of the battle of Dunnichen, which may well be represented in the battle scene on this stone (Norman favours a location in the vicinity of Rescobie loch, in the medieval shire of Dunnichen), he went on to consider the group to which this slab belongs. These are seven stones in Strathmore carved with quadrilobate equal armed crosses, represented as standing on pedestals. One at Eassie was part of Sunday's Field Trip, while the Rossie Priory stone was visited by PAS several years ago. The Cossans or St Orland's stone is unique in its represent-ation of a ship or boat, the only one on a Pictish stone. The Glamis Manse cross, also part of the Field Trip, although not quadrilobate, is very similar in style to this group. This last is a rarity among cross slabs in that the reverse carries only symbols. In contrast, the Aberlemno Roadside stone carries an outstanding hunting scene, complete with accompanying musicians, dramatically underlining the power and importance of the king or mormaer taking part in this impressive ceremonial hunt.

Time did not permit an exploration of the two well-known collections – Meigle in Gowrie and St Vigeans in Angus. Both seem to have been active centres at around the same time: a version of the St Andrews foundation legend states that it was written at Meigle in the reign of Ferat (or Uurad), around 839-842. This may be the same person as the Uoret whose name appears along with Drosten and Forcus on the Drosten Stone at St Vigeans. This Drostan may be the son of Uoret/Uurad, appearing himself in the king-lists around 845-848. These dates fit comfortably with the dates suggested for the carving of the cross slabs in both collections. However, at this period, Cinaed son of Alpin was, according to some accounts, already taking control in Pictland.

The two fragments 4 and 21 at St Vigeans together form parts of a cross slab showing a mounted cleric accompanied by a symbol. This has parallels elsewhere in Strathmore, indicating that the use of Pictish symbols was not restricted to secular contexts.

Having looked at three broad groups of stones, Norman ended with a fourth that may be termed the 'Kirriemuir School'. There are at least eighteen stones or fragments known from Kirriemuir, evidence that there was a centre here albeit of lesser importance than those at Meigle and St Vigeans. The patron here may have been of noble, not kingly rank, and the work may date rather later than the other groups. We had the opportunity on Friday evening to see the majority of these stones as they have been conserved and displayed in the Meffan Museum. Kirriemuir 1 is remarkable for the figure seated on an elaborately carved chair, facing out and accompanied by a loom on one side and a mirror on the other. This is probably a representation of Mary: there is an early St Mary dedication and Mary well here. The close association of mounted warrior and symbol on Kirriemuir 2 suggests that the use of symbols was still maintained possibly as late as the early tenth century. Other cross-slabs that seem to be stylistically related to the Kirriemuir group include that from Benvie (now in The McManus Museum, Dundee) and the curious little Inchbrayock cross slab now in Montrose Museum. Another in this group came from Wester Denoon. Also in the Meffan, it was unveiled by the then Provost of Forfar at a PAS conference here many years ago, This small cross slab fragment carries on the reverse a standing figure with a prominent penannular brooch.

There is an almost cartoon character in the lively representation of human figures in this group of stones, some of which show affinities with western and Irish stones (Mary's head dress on Kirriemuir 1 for example). Finally, there is a trace of humour to be seen on the Bullion stone. Currently in the National Museum, this carries the figure of a weary horse, trudging uphill, while his rider drinks from a large horn.

Sheila Hainey

The Conan Stone

Initially referred to as the 'Dingwall Cross Slab' but now called the 'Conan Stone', reflecting its findspot in the Logie Wester/Logiebride burial ground on the bank of the River Conan upstream from Conan Bridge and near to Conan House. We will be hearing more about the stone and where it was found at the Picts in the North conference arranged for 9 May but the burial ground is clearly ancient with the teinds of Urquhart and Logiebride mentioned in a 1256/57 letter from Pope Alexander IV to the Bishop of Ross and there is lots of archaeology in the vicinity with a ringed earthwork to the south-west and David's Fort to the south-east.

In his report on the discovery of the stone in the last *Newsletter*, John Borland mentioned that £13,643 had already been raised for its conservation and display with a target of £20,000 set. This has now been met and then some with £22,076 pledged when donations closed and the stone will be on display in Dingwall Museum by the time of the Picts in the North conference. *Bill Stephens*

Picts in the North: The Conan Stone in Context Conference

Jointly organised by the Pictish Arts Society, the Scottish Society for Northern Studies and the North of Scotland Archaeological Society, a day conference has been arranged for Saturday 9 May.

The speakers will be:

Anne MacInnes — *Survey of Logie Wester burial ground and the discovery of a Pictish Cross Slab*

Graciela Ainsworth — *Challenges faced by Sculpture Conservators, in particular on the Conan Stone*

John Borland — *Pictish Cross Slabs of Northern Scotland – the Conan Stone in context*

Kelly Kilpatrick — *The Pictish Gods*

Hugh Levy — *Towards Establishing the Rule Book of Pictish Symbol Usage*

Sally Foster — *Admitting new voices – letting St. John's Cross and its replica speak*

Eric Grant — *Barrow loads of barrows – investigating a monumental Pictish cemetery at Tarradale*

Gordon Noble —*Picts in the Highlands*

An optional field trip has also been arranged for the following day starting and finishing in Inverness visiting the following:

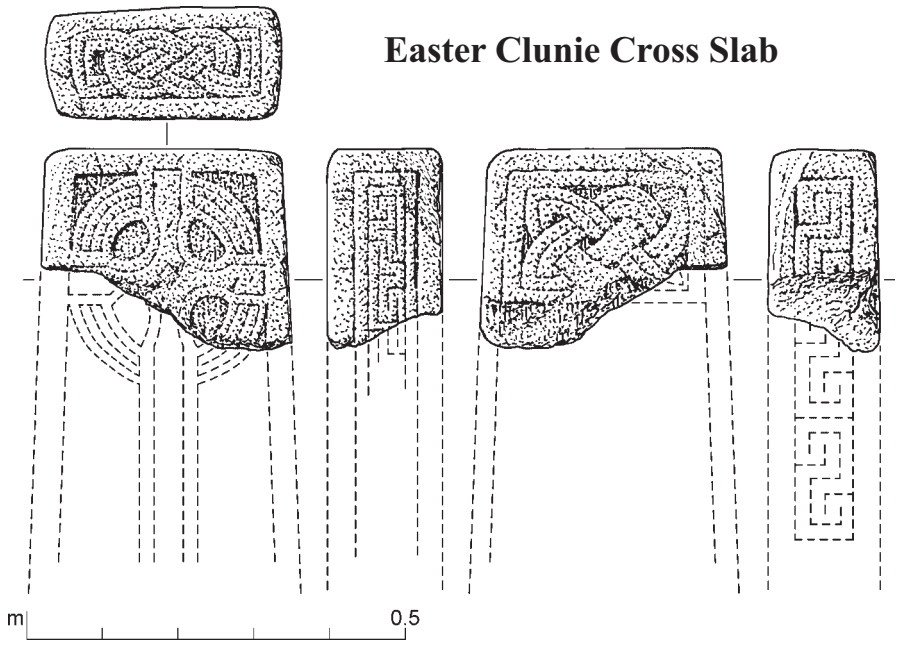
Tarbat Discovery Centre – Hilton of Cadboll Lady's Chapel and Seaboard Centre – Shandwick Stone – Nigg Stone – Dingwall Museum and the Conan Stone

Full details and booking arrangements are on

<https://www.ssns.org.uk/events/conanstone/>

Conference postponed until Spring 2021 details available next January

Easter Clunie Cross Slab



Easter Clunie *cross slab*
1:10 scale
Drawing by John Borland

The small cross slab from Easter Clunie in Fife (Canmore ID 30095) was first noted by the Ordnance Survey in 1970, lying in the farmhouse garden. It became better known in more recent times when it was included in Edwina Proudfoot's paper 'Abernethy and Mugdrum: towards reassessment', published in *The worm, the germ and the thorn: Pictish and related studies presented to Isabel Henderson* (Pinkfoot Press 1997).

That paper catalogued the early medieval sculpture between Abernethy and Mugdrum. At the time of writing, the Easter Clunie cross slab was still located in the farm's garden, along with a number of other later carved stone fragments, including a sundial. Concerned with the stone's safety (it is small and easily portable), Proudfoot opted not to give any details of its name or location, simply referring to it in her catalogue as '12 Abernethy Area'.

A faint incised cross carved into a lintel of a building at either Easter or Wester Clunie was noted in 1897 (Canmore ID 30141). Subsequent searches have failed to locate this cross and Proudfoot makes no mention of it in her catalogue.

She describes the Easter Clunie cross slab as being 'almost complete', with *face a* bearing an equal armed ringed cross. Whilst this is a possibility, it would when reconstructed make for an unusually small and virtually square slab. A Latin cross on a rectangular slab is much more likely.

The cross-slab now on display in Abernethy Museum

As Proudfoot notes, the slab is carved on all five sides. This is highly unusual. Obviously carving on the top edge of a slab is limited to those slabs where that surface is below eyelevel – there would be little point in ornamenting it otherwise. The overwhelming majority of Pictish cross slabs are in fact less than 1.5m high but very few feature such carving.

When the stone was recorded by HES in the winter of 2016 it was still located in the garden at Easter Clunie Farm. Whilst carrying out this work, I took the opportunity to tell the farm owner and his son just how important this small fragment was and suggested they might consider either loaning or gifting it to the nearby Abernethy Museum. So it came as a very pleasant surprise when I visited the museum late last summer and saw the Easter Clunie cross slab (and the sundial) on display, along with some of the Abernethy stones, all beautifully lit.

John Borland

Museum Opening Times:
Wednesday to Sunday 13.00–16.00 May to September

A Pictish power centre, King's Seat, Dunkeld

Last September Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust and Dunkeld & Birnam Historical Society, together with AOC Archaeology Ltd, returned for the third and final season of excavations as part of the King's Seat Hillfort Community Archaeology Project. The fort consists of a series of earthworks around a central 'citadel' enclosure measuring about 35 metres by 25 metres with the excavation uncovering many artefacts and structural remains which, combined with radiocarbon dating, suggesting it was an important centre influencing the trade and production of high-status goods from the Pictish period.

David Strachan, the Director of the Trust explains:

> We have uncovered lots of evidence of how people were living and working and the remains of a building with a large hearth on the summit with fragments of glass drinking vessels, gaming pieces, animal bone and horn. They paint a vivid picture of high-status people gathering and feasting, decorated in the latest high-status jewellery and ornamentation.

The excavations described in the recently published fieldwork report include extensive remains from metal working with Cath Maciver of AOC Archaeology noting:

> e crucibles, whetstones stone and clay moulds indicate craft production took place and what's particularly interesting is that evidence of this activity has been found in all of the trenches. There must have been a lot of iron and other metal working going on here making the site an important centre for production – not just the home of a small group of people making them for their own use.

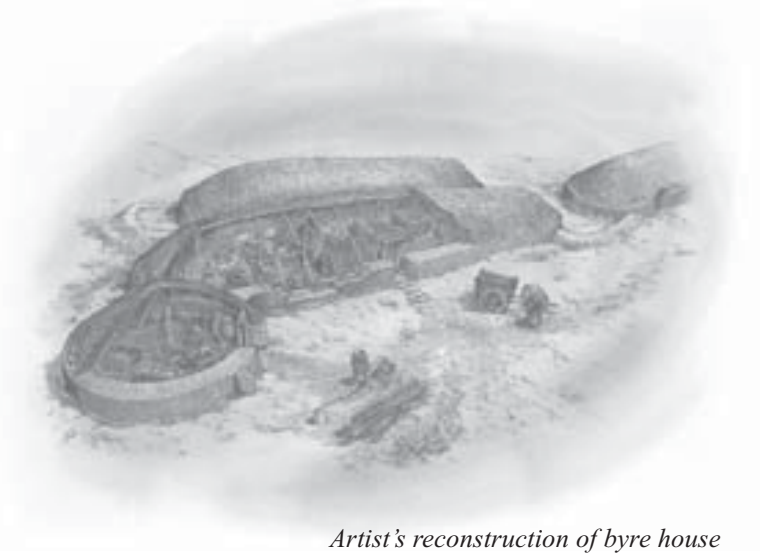
The artefacts uncovered are in keeping with other early historic royal sites in Scotland, including the early Dalriadic capital of Dunadd and the Pictish centre of Dundurn. The site's importance is reinforced by the discovery of fragments of high-status imported pottery from the continent and Anglo-Saxon glass beads. These suggest long-range trading routes existed between the people of King's Seat and Europe and considered to be of national significance as they extend the Early Medieval trade links and distribution of luxury table-wares in Scotland beyond previously understood limits.

The fieldwork report is a preliminary account of the excavation findings and further post-excavation analysis is ongoing with the results expected to be published later this year.

Bill Stephens

Based on P&KHT Press Release

A Pictish farming community, Lair, Glenshee



Artist's reconstruction of byre house

At the end of last year Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust launched the new publication *Early Medieval Settlement in Upland Perthshire: Excavations at Lair, Glenshee 2012-17*, the product of the Glenshee Archaeology Project. The Director of the Trust, David Strachan, explained:

> The project was developed in 2011 to target the early medieval turf buildings that survive in North East Perthshire The Glenshee Archaeology Project has successfully added considerable depth to our understanding of these Pictish houses and the people who built and lived in them

and in a subsequent *Scotsman* interview said:

> Our picture of the Picts has broadly focussed on material finds, high status sites and the Pictish carved stones. What we have got here is a picture of the everyday, of the upland farmers and how they lived.

He went on to point out:

> These longhouses are similar to the blackhouses found until relatively recently in the Western Isles. The remarkable thing is that the ones at Glen Shee date to before the Viking raids.

The artist's reconstruction reproduced in the book shows the longhouse with a byre at one end and living area at the other with a round-house annexe, as a workshop.

The excavations revealed evidence of metal working with the finds including an engraved spinning whorl and an 'extremely rare' green glass bead. Perhaps the most notable artefact was an early medieval padlock presumably used to protect their valuable possessions showing that from the late 6th century to the mid-9th century the three turf, timber and thatch buildings at Lair were home to a prosperous farming community.

Copies of the book, which runs to 202 pages, are available from Archaeopress, priced £29. It can also be accessed online.

Bill Stephens

Based on P&KHT Press Release of 26 November, 2019 and Scotsman article of 7 January, 2020

Doors to Different Worlds

In a paper subtitled, 'Conceptual connections between Gotlandic and Pictish Scupture', in *Tidens landskap* published last year by the Nordic Academic Press, Stephen Driscoll

> explores the possibility that a particular form of Pictish sculpture, the cross-slab, was intended like some of the *bildstenar*, to represent door-ways.

His survey of the Pictish sculpture corpus indicates that there are 56 examples where it is possible to identify how their tops were finished with pediments accounting for 18%, arches another 18% and animal ornament frames an additional 7%, the latter possibly inspired by timber church carvings.

The Gotlandic *bildstenar* have been interpreted as representations of buildings, physically positioned where these stood, and he asks if Pictish cross-slabs similarly represent buildings, or even replace them? He illustrates his argument with two examples, Aberlemno 2 and Meigle 1, concluding that:

> The cross-slabs offer a platform for presenting statements of iconographic complexity which blend ecclesiastical, cosmological and political themes. The sculpture offers a high degree of permanence (compared to the timber churches) and if we are right in thinking that the symbols embody personal or dynastic names, then they also serve as memorials. Finally, they were less expensive than a stone church.

Reading the Runes

Continuing the Scandinavian theme, last October it was reported that Swedish scientists had laser scanned Pictish Stones from Orkney and Shetland, using a technique developed to analyse runestones in Sweden that can identify specific methods of carving and even different sculptors. Described as a pilot project led by the National Museum of Scotland and the University of the Highlands and Islands, its focus is the Brough of Birsay and Cunningsburgh, early medieval power centres reflected in their monumental stone inscriptions and the only two sites in Europe having runes, ogham and Pictish symbols.

According to Adrian Maldonado:

> Nothing like this has been attempted in Scotland Like the recent discovery of Old English names on objects from the 'Viking' Galloway Hoard, the evidence of inscriptions shows multiple languages and alphabets were in use across early medieval Scotland. This fits into broader research showing the problematic nature of the ethnic labels commonly used, such as Anglo-Saxon, Pictish and Viking in this period.

Alexandra Sanmark adds:

> The project seeks to trace the establishment of writing as a technology of power in early medieval Britain. Archaeological evidence for literacy includes the Latin alphabet, runes, ogham and Pictish symbols. Scotland is unique in having evidence of all these forms of writing 00in stone monuments. This project will focus on sites where multiple writing systems are used.

Pictish Warrior Images

It would be interesting to compare the Swedish approach to that employed by Aberdeen University to reconstruct the recently discovered Tulloch Stone in 3D (see *PAS Newsletter 88* for Mark Hall's initial report on the find). The stone is inscribed with what 'is clearly a depiction of a warrior', according to Gordon Noble, carrying a spear with a kite-shaped blade and doorknob-style butt. The reconstructed image hedges its bets as to whether the warrior is barrel chested and/ or has a pronounced belly, perhaps after drinking too much heather ale. It certainly doesn't have the 'six-pack' stomach usually seen in Roman and Greek warrior figure sculpture!

A research article published in the latest issue of *Antiquity*, vol 94, 373: 127-144, and available to view online, Mark, Gordon and colleagues provide a detailed analysis of the Tulloch Stone and draw comparisons with other Pictish warrior representations on Rhynie 3 and the Collessie Stone as well as weapon-bearing depictions on Pictish stones elsewhere, 20 in total, and referred to as a 'rich sculptural corpus'.

> Comparative analysis reveals a materialisation of a martial ideology (try saying it quickly!) on carved stone monuments, probably associated with elite cemeteries, highlighting a regional expression of the warrior ethos in late Roman and post-Roman Europe.

Bill Stephens

Brechin Lecture 18 October 2019

The Early Medieval Sculpture of Highland Perthshire: an overview

John Borland

We were fortunate that John was able to stand in at the last minute when our advertised speaker, Alex Woolf had to postpone his visit to Brechin.

He began by defining 'Highland Perthshire' as west of the A9 and north of the A85, plus that part of Perthshire transferred to Stirlingshire in 1975. The area thus includes Drumalban, the 'spine' of Alba referred to by St Adomnán and was later to form the county boundary. The area thus set out includes mountains, glens and straths. While the same may be said for the other side of the A9, 'Highland Perthshire' has early medieval sculpture, lacking to the east.

John followed the lines of the straths running from west to east across his map, identifying sites with early medieval carving. He began at St Fillans, where a fourteenth century Augustinian priory followed an early Christian chapel. Four recumbent stones have been found here; three with incised triple crosses and a fourth with an encircled cross resembling one from Iona. These recumbents differ in shape from the rare examples west of Drumalban. The stone with the single cross also has an incised forearm and hand, possibly representing a reliquary. St Fillan was said to have had a miraculous arm which glowed so brightly in the dark that he needed no other light by which to write.

Moving on, an incised cross on a fine, river-washed stone at the chapel site at Suie, Glendochart, can find a broad parallel on Iona. Balqhuidder in Strathyre has an impressive assemblage, many of them uncovered by Niall Robertson, who found many of the carved stones in this area. The collection has not yet been published in detail, but again some of the crosses find parallels in the west. One of the Balquhidder stones may have an ogham inscription, while one is a skeumorph of a metal cross with the spike at the bottom of the shaft. Simple incised and shallow relief outline crosses are both found here. Still in Strathyre, at St Bride's Chapel, Loch Lubnaig, one latin cross finds a parallel on Iona, while a fragment with a barred terminal to the arm resembles one from Shetland.

In the shadow of the Pictish hillfort at Dundurn in Strathearn, another St Fillan's chapel was associated with an incised outline cross, probably originally upright but now prostrate. A holy water stoup hollowed out of a river-washed boulder was also found here. The graveyard of the old parish church at Comrie has a recumbent stone with three incised crosses (with later initials.) John noted some suggestions as to the significance of the triple cross design: perhaps it stands for the Trinity, or perhaps symbolises the three crosses at Calvary. The original meaning is, however, lost.

Still moving east, at Creiff there is the first Pictish stone on this journey. This cross slab has been extensively studied by Katherine Forsyth, Mark Hall, Isabel Henderson and others. It is carved in relief, with serpents twining around the central boss on the cross. Although the reverse has been extensively (and deliberately) damaged, the stone has been assigned to Class III. John pointed out that, since we have no way of knowing what was carved on the defaced side, we are unable to say that this stone really had no symbols. Its assignment to Class III must remain questionable: incomplete stones cannot be classified. Still in Strathearn, we have the fine monumental cross at Fowlis Wester, now in the church. The arms of the cross on this busy stone project out a little way, but it is plain that the original slab has been cut back to give this effect. A smaller finely carved cross slab, with figures possibly of monks or saints was protected to some extent by being built into the wall of an earlier church here. A simple incised equal armed cross now lies below the paved path leading to the church and is probably the earliest carved stone from the site.

At Killin, Niall found a simple incised cross on a rather unprepossessing stone. Duncroisk has a triple cross, with equal armed crosses and a circle above incised into a rock face. Odd encircled crosses are also present. Moving north of the Tay, at Fearnan there is an upright slab with a cross incised on two sides and a cross marked recumbent.

Cladh Bhranno in Glen Lyon boasts an outline cross with an odd shaft incised on a recumbent, a (probably early) font hollowed out from a large boulder and an early Christian bell now in the church at Innerwick. To the east, St Adomnán's cross has an incised cross on each side. A little further along the glen, we come to Fortingall where the saint's bell was recently stolen from the church. Oliver O'Grady's excavations here

led to the suggestion that a crop mark here indicates the remnant of a monastic vallum similar to that at Iona. And here again we encounter Pictish stones. These are all fragmentary, albeit of fine quality, and represent four cross slabs. One of these was a rare example of a Pictish triple cross, the crosses ringed as in the examples from St Andrews and Dunning. Recumbent slabs with incised triple crosses, simple crosses, outline crosses have all been found here together with a large boulder, hollowed to form a font. Fortingall has the largest collection of early medieval sculpture in Highland Perthshire.

Dull, in Strath Tay, was the site of another early Christian site with Pictish sculpture. The group here includes a possible shrine panel fragment with riders and foot soldiers in relief. Recumbents carry incised simple and outline crosses, one of which is a skeumorph of a wooden cross in false relief. Excavations below the floor of the present church revealed a fragment of slab with an incised outline cross with rounded armpits and an incomplete inscription. The lettering style gives a date of approximately the first quarter of the eighth century. Additionally, there is a socket stone for a free-standing cross. Another monumental boulder font was found here too. Possibly also from Dull, but now built in to a house in Camserney, is a fragment of a cross shaft with interlace.

At Shenavit there is a relief cross carved on a Bronze Age cup-and-ring marked stone, while at Weem, there was another boulder font in company with an incised outline skeumorph of a wooden cross and a rough free standing cross. Built into the lintel of a cottage in the village, a more elaborately carved stone was thought to have been a cut-down cross slab, perhaps from Dull, a couple of miles away. Recent work on the building has allowed a better view of this fragment, which appears to be from a Pictish style triple cross slab. Still in Strath Tay, the old chapel site at Tullypowrie has an upright slab marked with an outline cross on two faces. At Logierait, there are two weathered and defaced Pictish cross-slabs which we have long been seeking permission to have properly conserved and displayed. Both carry the serpent symbol, and superstition regarding devilish associations still persists.

Starting again in the west at Lassintullich, Rannoch, there is a relief outline cross with a comparator on Iona. At Tombreck, a simple cross with expanded terminals stands upright, while at Foss a curious recumbent with three crosses in different styles may be a variant of the triple cross. Struan boasts the only Class I Pictish symbol stone in the whole area, along with an incised outline skeumorph and an upright with a simple incised cross on each broad face. Kilamveonaig has a simple cross-marked slab, while Old Faskally has a triple cross marked recumbent, a cross-marked stone re-used as a lintel and a possible fragment of a representation of a free-standing cross. The stone at Wester Clunie is carved on both faces with a cross in Pictish style. At Dunfallandy, the small Pictish cross-slab is in very good condition. Ornamented with interlace, key pattern and bosses, the cross is flanked by beasts and angels. The reverse has two seated figures and a rider, all accompanied by symbols. The hammer, anvil and tongs below the rider may be a blacksmith reference – a profession rather than a name. The final easterly stones were incised crosses, Killiechangie a simple outline, West Haugh of Tulliemet an outline in Pictish style, and Staredam a small incised, latin cross, perhaps sanctifying an ancient pre-Christian marker.

The distribution of these cross marked stones follows the west-east alignment of the straths running across Highland Perthshire. These seem to have acted as conduits for the motifs, which recur again in Deeside, but there is a gap in the distribution that would suggest that there ought to be a missing link in Strathardle or thereabouts. Angus completely lacks these incised crosses with western affinities.

While Drumalban was thought to be the border between Scots and Picts, the line of west-most Pictish sculpture lies well to the east of this boundary. So far, the influence appears to be mainly from Iona and Dalriada, although there are some features that are local to Highland Perthshire – the recumbent monuments and the triple cross motif. This raises the question as to whether this area was under Pictish domination or under the sway of Dalriada.

As a cautionary note, John ended by remarking on the finds at Old Kilmadock, reported by Peter Herbert. These suggest that perhaps there are more Pictish stones further west in Highland Perthshire but we simply have not yet found them.

Sheila Hainey

Brechin Lecture 22 November 2019

New ways of looking at early medieval sculpture at St Andrews cathedral

Jane Geddes

Jane and John Borland have been collaborating on work on the stones in St Andrews cathedral museum. So far, John has produced some 70 drawings of the early medieval stones here, while Jane has completed a written catalogue which will be lavishly illustrated with drawings and some photographs. This is one of, if not *the* most important of our collection of early medieval stones in terms of what it can tell us about Scottish history. However, the stones are densely packed in damp, cold, poorly-lit conditions, in medieval buildings renovated in the late nineteenth century. It is difficult to see much of the individual stones. Even the St Andrews Sarcophagus, with a good claim to be the most important of Scotland's early medieval carved stones, is difficult to view. Access is poor, and even once the awkward steps down have been negotiated, the information offered on this great collection is inadequate. To complete the experience, dreary plainchant plays in the background. This is hardly a place in which a baffled visitor would be tempted to linger. And yet the collection includes a range of stone types and imagery that should be of great interest. Jane illustrated this point with reference to the variety of detail on the cross slabs, the single clasping animal on the roof of the St Leonard's shrine (named after the school grounds in which it was found), the traces of original red pigment applied to the median line of the interlace of a cross, and the great St Andrews sarcophagus itself. The significance of this impressive monument is that it appears to memorialise the first anointed Scottish king, Onuist.

In terms of visitor numbers, this collection has problems. Recent statistics recorded 1.7 million visitors to Edinburgh Castle in a single year; the town of St Andrews attracted some 666,300. Of these, 600,000 walked as far as the cathedral, but only 56,249 visited the museum. What can be done to improve the attraction of the Cathedral and to explain its importance in Scottish history? (Jane pointed out that St Andrews continued to be a significant place long after the Pictish period). Part of her remit is to produce a statement of significance for the collection here, trying to ensure that it comes top the HES list of sites needing to be renovated and re-presented. She also wished to see how other sites with significant collections of medieval sculpture addressed the problems of attracting, informing and engaging the public and how the best of these ideas could be applied here.

To assess how they performed, she listed the points taken into consideration at each of the sites visited. These were:

- **the product** – the objects themselves
- **the location** – how does that help to lead the visitor back in time?
- **narrative** – do the stones/objects lead the visitor into the story, rather than relying on text?
- **signage** – are the objects easily identified?
- **engagement** – can people be engaged at a variety of different levels? Does the display appeal to locals and visitors alike, to Christians and non-Christians, to people of all ages and abilities?
- **follow-up** – can the visitor easily access more information or good images of the objects?

The sites considered had some features in common with St Andrews. They were all church sites, each with a collection of stones and/or other objects that could be used to tell stories.

Beginning with Scottish sites, Jane first looked at Iona, the largest collection of early medieval stones in Scotland. There the location within the Abbey precinct is ideal for the display of stones from the site. The lighting is magnificent, programmed to allow the visitor to appreciate how the carvings would have appeared as the sunlight varied through the day, with space to see these clearly. The display is organised to take the visitor naturally through the story and engages the attention.

At Whithorn, a small museum is housed in an old cottage within the medieval precincts. This holds a group of medieval carved stones. Much use is made of natural light, allowing some details to be clearly seen, and local scenery is depicted in background mural paintings to give an impression of the original settings, but the available space is small. St Vigeans shares some of the problems of Whithorn; the museum here is across the road from the church and graveyard where most of the stones were found. Again, use has been made of old cottages, which imposes constraints on both space and lighting but efforts have been made to overcome these. The stones are displayed in something of a narrative sequence and there is a combination of artificial

and natural light. A good CD of images of the stones is available for visitors who wish to examine details at their leisure. The museum at Elgin cathedral also shows imaginative use of artificial lighting in a display of stones from within and around the cathedral. These are well laid out and labelled. All of these sites are in the care of Historic Environment Scotland.

Jane also went south of the border to examine a number of northern English sites. He first stop was at Hexham Abbey, which remains a working church. Some of the medieval stones here have been built into the walls of the crypt and the nave. While there is a definite sense of moving back in time as one descends into the crypt, the fact that this is a working church does impact on the possibilities for labelling and presentation of the fragments here. The church also contains a cross associated with Bishop Acca, who is of particular interest in relation to St Andrews. The church at Hexham shares a St Andrews dedication, and it is possible that it was Acca, who brought the saint's relics to our St Andrews when he was absent from Hexham for a period from 732. While the church objects still in use remain in the church, other items have found a home in an interpretation centre in a neighbouring building. This has high quality displays and interactive activities for children and adults alike, covering the history of the abbey from its foundation by St Wilfrid. Good use of mirror and drawing allow both sides of an early carved stone to be seen; other stones from the cathedral are beautifully arranged, well lit, clearly labelled with clearly printed information. A touchscreen panel allows access to a catalogue of the stones, with 3-D representation and 360° rotation, allowing viewing from all sides, and more detailed information. All the way through the exhibition, hands-on involvement is available for everyone from children to OAPs, with good wheelchair access throughout. This is an impressive and imaginative use of available material.

Next on the list was Durham cathedral where the three RIBA awards are for restoration work on the building, definitely not for the display. Durham holds a collection of carved stones gathered from a wide area of Northumbria as well as other treasures. These are displayed as part of a larger exhibition in some of the old monastic buildings. The first impression is unwelcome – prohibitions such as 'no photography,' 'no bags' and so on. The stones are grouped according to four themes on island displays in the middle of the library: memorials to the dead (including a display of hogbacks), religion old and new (Roman and early Christian), signposts and finally early monastic stones. The arrangement makes it difficult to get a good all round view of many of the stones, and the whole suffers from a lack of labelling and information. The dormitory contains a display of (mostly) replica items intended to convey what it was like to be a monk, with music which is triggered as one moves past the displays – unfortunately too often a cacophony of different periods of sacred music as several play simultaneously. A representation of St Cuthbert dominates the display, without any clear indication of why he should be there. In the monk's kitchen, there are some real treasures: Oswald's cross (backed into a niche and poorly lit), Flambard's crozier which again is difficult to view clearly and would be enhanced by a drawing beside it, embroidered stoles which would benefit from some magnification of the exquisite stitchery and Cuthbert's well-lit pectoral cross. The Pepper's Ghost technique is used in the display of fragments of St Cuthbert's coffin, giving a rotating 3-D drawing and explanation of the iconography. Jane was deeply disappointed at how little the displays told us of the history of this important cathedral but did acknowledge some good points.

The Undercroft at York Minster is a difficult space for exhibition. It holds only five of the forty-nine stones found here; the rest are in store or on display in York Museum. However, along with the other items in the Undercroft, these are well displayed and lit, with informative display panels conveying the story of the site from the Roman period to the present day. At Hartlepool, where an abbey was founded by Abbess Hieu (640-9) nine stones of a rather formulaic nature were recovered from the present-day churchyard. One of these is in the locked church, the rest have been dispersed to various museums.

Whitby abbey occupies a similar coastal headland site to St Andrews. Founded in the late seventh century and refounded after the Norman conquest, it was dissolved at the Reformation. Of the sixty-four stones found here, only three are on site, the rest being in store or in the British Museum. The Abbey House was opened in 2019, with the inside gutted to provide gallery space upstairs and shop etc. downstairs. The exhibition focusses on a few big themes, with items well displayed, clearly lit and with good labelling accompanied by high quality new artwork. Caedmon's poetry is praised, the Bram Stoker connection is highlighted, and the Synod of

Whitby gets the briefest of mentions. The guide book is informative, well-illustrated and on good quality paper.

There are many lessons that can be learned from these sites – both what works and what to avoid. But returning to St Andrews, what is there to promote here? The site itself remains significant and ideally the stones should remain here. The stones are not all similar, and it should be possible to display them to highlight the fact that they form a sequence, with a variety of ornament and good sharp carving. A number of forms are represented: cross slabs, free-standing crosses and so on, with the Sarcophagus outstanding in workmanship, concept and historical importance. More work is needed before Jane completes her project, and we look forward to hearing the outcome. *Sheila Hainey*

Pictish Perceptions

The Italian Connection

In a *Scotsman* review of an exhibition of art inspired by Italy in the City Arts Centre, Edinburgh, Duncan Macmillan, who is also Professor Emeritus of the History of Scottish Art at the University of Edinburgh, commented:

> Already in the eight century, the Pictish artist who made the great St Andrews Sarcophagus had surely seen the grandeur of Rome.

Another Professor Emeritus, Jane Geddes, telling us about the St Andrews sarcophagus during the PAS 2017 Field Trip

A Story for 24 February

In 2013 James Robertson set himself the task of writing a story for each day of the year, all exactly 365 words long, which were published the following year in the book '365'. The title of the story for 24 February is 'Stone' and is about a visit to a Pictish stone close to home describing the location, how the stone got there and the carvings.

> But you trace the lines with your finger and you know that men, if they did not transport here, stood it upright. Why? To mark the land? To leave *their* mark? It is not hard to imagine them imagining you imagining them. The mirror of time. And they would have seen, as you do looking north, that this is where there is, earth and sky, and that the stone will outlast its carvings and all of us too.

The stories inspired Aidan O'Rourke to compose a tune for each day with a selection recorded on two double CD's, accompanied by Kit Downes. The tune for 24 February, 'This morning you take a stroll out to the Pictish stone, two miles from home', didn't make the cut but it can be heard on the dedicated web site

<www.three-six-five.net>

along with a reading of the story by the author. There is also a pop-up 365: Stories+ Music installation, next hosted by Historic Environment Scotland at Huntingtower in Perthshire during the first two weeks of April.

Bill Stephens

Forthcoming Lectures

Brechin Town House Museum

~~Friday 20 March – *Dr Nicholas Evans*~~
~~The origins and growth of Pictish identity: Glass half full or half empty~~

Friday 17 April – *Dr Alex Woolf*
Rethinking the disappearance of the Picts: *From Pictland to Alba* 12 years on

Friday 15 May – *Juliette Mitchell*
Monumental Landscapes: the early medieval barrow and cairn cemeteries of northern and eastern Scotland

PAS Newsletter 95

The deadline for receipt of material is

Saturday 18 May 2020

Please email contributions to the editor:
<billstephens297@gmail.com>

Lecture cancelled or liable to cantellation. Keep up-to-date on Facebook