



PAS Winter Programme 2007–08 at Pictavia near Brechin

14 December

An Evening of Words and Music

This will be similar to an extra event we slotted in two years ago which members thought was a good idea to repeat. We have some entertainers lined up, including a local, young clarsach player, so you will not have to do a party piece. However, if you wish to join in, you will be very welcome to bring along your instruments or stories. Refreshments will be provided.

As normal for our events, non-members are also welcome. JM

18 January

Emma Sanderson

Pictish Perceptions

15 February

Ian Shepherd

*Rhynie Man Reviewed: Saint or
Sacral King*

14 March

John Sherriff

*Searching for the Picts: possible
avenues of research*

Meetings are on Friday evenings. Doors open at 7.00 and lectures begin at 7.30. Tea and coffee are available before and after, at a nominal charge. Talks and questions normally finish around 8.30, with an opportunity for a more informal session afterwards.

Winter excursion

In the bleak mid-winter the weather in Pictland can be a bit cruel, so we are planning an indoor 'field-trip' to see the Pictish stones housed in the National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh. If you are interested in joining this group on the afternoon of Sunday 13 January 2008, please contact events organiser Eileen Brownlie: <eileencbrownlie@hotmail.com> or telephone: 07818 273 775

PAS annual subscription

Those who have not yet paid their current subscription will receive a renewal form with this mailing. Please keep up to date with payments.

PAS conference, Perth

The AK Bell Library in Perth was once more the venue for our conference on 6 October. The programme began with Jennifer Webster, whose talk was entitled 'St Vigeans: Stones and Stories'. Jennifer works with Historic Scotland. Currently, Historic Scotland is extending and refurbishing the museum at St Vigeans. The intention is to create a fitting home for the major collection of Pictish carved stones associated with the early Christian site here. At the moment, the stones have been removed to Historic Scotland's conservation labs at Saughton, where they will be closely studied as well as prepared for redisplay. Jennifer is currently working on plans for the new museum, including the displays and the information to be made available. She has promised to keep us informed of progress, and the first of her articles appears in this newsletter.

The next talk was by Kelly Kilpatrick, on 'Symbol Commissioners in Stone: semiotic theory and the origins of Pictish symbol stones.' Kelly briefly outlined the aspects of semiotic theory that she has been using to examine Pictish stones, and compared them with the carved and painted stones of Gotland and runes stones from elsewhere in Scandinavia. Her work so far leads to the suggestion that aristocratic commissioners may have procured the setting up of symbol stones in order to commemorate people or events. Again, we hope that Kelly will write more on the subject as the work progresses.

Steve Driscoll, Professor of Archaeology at Glasgow and Research Director of GUARD (Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division) returned to earlier interests with the setting up of 'The Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot Project.' The somewhat cumbersome title gives the acronym 'Serf' and among the splendid artefacts of the Royal Forteviot period is the Dupplin Cross, now housed at St Serf's church in Dunning. The report on the first season's work revealed how broad a scale is encompassed by this ambitious project, which will continue to involve local volunteers and train archaeology students in work on a range of sites within the Strathearn area covering a long time range of periods from Neolithic to

nineteenth century. Around Forteviot itself, geophysical survey and test pitting in search of the Pictish period royal site have begun. Promising areas for excavation in future seasons have been identified; to date a large post-marked Neolithic enclosure has been revealed. Work has begun on the hillfort at Jacksstairs Wood, from which dating evidence should be available.

Lunch was followed by the launch of Alastair Mack's new book, 'Symbols and Pictures: The Pictish Legacy in Stone' (see elsewhere in this newsletter for a review). Sheila Hainey then addressed the problem of 'Early Picts, Early Symbols', questioning just who were the Roman's Picts, and whether or not they were already using symbols, and what was the relationship of these Picts to those of our present concepts, defined by place names, symbols stones and archaeological markers such as the Pictish graves.

Alex Woolf rounded off the day by asking the question 'Who carved Pictish Sculpture and for Whom?' The Picts had no towns or cities; there is little evidence for the sort of social organisation that would support the existence of many craftsmen supplying a wide market. However, the spread of monastic Christianity did bring into being the sort of communities which not only had resources to allow for the support of specialists, but created a demand for the production of works of art such as the sculptured stones. The church in the north nurtured craftsmen trained to create objects of great beauty; the evidence of the importance of sculptors in this endeavour is clear at places such as St Vigean, Meigle and Portmahomack among others. Lay patronage may have assisted in the support of such craftsmen, but the church was the major player.

Thanks to all our speakers, to David Henry and John Borland who ably chaired the two sessions, and to all involved in the organisation of another successful conference.

Sheila Hainey

Pictavia lectures

The winter 2007–08 season got off to a brilliant start with a very good attendance of members and non-members alike and with our new National Lottery-funded projection equipment in operation for the first time.

Ross Murray *Culduthel: Excavation of a high status Iron Age settlement* (19 October)



© Joy Mowatt

Sheila Hainey, PAS Secretary, flanked by Ross Murray (l) and George Geddes

Culduthel is to the south-west of the rapidly expanding city of Inverness. The multi-period site excavated by Headland Archaeology is located on a terrace overlooking the city and with views north across the end of the Great Glen. Originally, in advance of housing development, the Headland team set out to investigate a palisaded enclosure, visible on aerial photographs. The enclosure was fairly well preserved, although little in the way of internal features had survived. Fortunately, the archaeologists were retained to observe the removal of topsoil across more of the site. To the north-west of the enclosure, they discovered traces of metalworking and several large buildings. A concentrated programme of developer-funded excavation followed over the next nine months.

Ross managed to convey something of the rising excitement of his team as they dug through the onset of a Highland winter. Remains of at least seventeen buildings were uncovered; some overlapping and others possibly in simultaneous use. A number of features make the Iron Age phase at Culduthel very special in the annals of northern archaeology. The site has abundant evidence for all stages for the processes involved in iron-working from 'ore to artefact'. Eight furnaces were uncovered, some clearly within roundhouse structures that appear to have been given over to the manufacturing process.

The quality and range of evidence for the processes followed here are so far unparalleled at mainland sites in Scotland. In addition, evidence for working of copper alloys was also

obtained. Glass working was also carried on at the site, with evidence for the production of beads and enamel for decorating metalwork. A fine cruciform harness mount in copper alloy, together with a bow-and-fantail brooch, suggest that some of the activity in this area dates to 1st–3rd centuries AD. Radiocarbon dates from some of the material recovered from the site may yet extend this range.

If the wealth of industrial evidence did not provide excitement enough, two of the roundhouses were very large (18 and 19.5m in diameter). Internal rings of massive posts supported the roofs, while the outer edges were marked by ring-grooves that once held timber walling. In one, a broad ring-ditch, up to four metres wide, close inside the outer wall, held evidence for collapsed dry stone walling and wooden flooring. It is possible that this structure also contained an upper floor. It was certainly modified over its use, finally being given an elaborate façade.

Culduthel has provided a wealth of material which will require a period of intense examination and analyses before we can learn all it has to tell us about those who worked here and occupied the massive buildings of its Iron Age period. Discovery of the site generates a further series of questions: how rare was the industrial complex at Culduthel in contemporary terms? Given that there was no indication of the existence of such a site before Ross's team made their startling series of discoveries, how could we set out to find such sites? The site also provides a sobering reminder of how little we know about northern Britain in the Iron Age.

However, Ross's story was not simply about an Iron Age site at Culduthel. The team uncovered evidence of use of the site at many periods, finding pits containing fragments of late Neolithic Grooved Ware and others with pottery of mid-Neolithic and Bronze Age date. Structures include possible Bronze Age cairns and modern agricultural lined storage pits. Further phases of housing development in adjoining areas may yet lead to more discoveries. Meantime, we look forward to hearing the results of the post-excavation analyses of the Iron Age artefacts and ecological samples already recovered.

Anyone wishing to learn more about the site at Culduthel will find articles by Ross Murray

in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, Volume 7 (2006), and in issue 212 of *Current Archaeology*. Also check on the web at www.hi-arts.co.uk/culduthel-ironworks-site-tube.html

Sheila Hainey

Irene Hughson *The Stones of Govan*
(16 November)



Irene Hughson with PAS President Norman Atkinson

Another sizeable audience attended the presentation by Irene Hughson which tied in with Anna Ritchie's booklet '*Govan and its Carved Stones*' which you received with the last newsletter. Irene's style of delivering her talk before showing her illustrations was very well received. She got the audience's attention right from the start and a few attendees were obviously very familiar with her subject as heads nodded in agreement with her comments.

For those of us for whom Govan is unknown territory, it piqued our interest and may well have encouraged some visits in the new year.

Joy Mowatt

You'll've had your tea?

Unfortunately the arrangements between PAS and Brechin Castle Centre regarding the late opening of their restaurant on 16 November, and the offer of a discount to PAS members from their high-tea bill, have been well and truly suppered following a change of date by the Centre's management. Apologies to anyone who came early to the November meeting at Pictavia in the hope of having a subsidised meal beforehand. Rest assured that this lapse in etiquette is not symptomatic of a general adoption of the mores and manners of Morningside by the normally hospitable people of Angus.

Volunteers wanted

As you are aware, we now have our IT equipment for our lectures and also have the software to proceed with cataloguing and digitising the materials we hold in Pictavia. I plan to set aside days in the New Year with the intention of getting this done for the start of the tourist season. This is a prelude to our aim of setting Pictavia up as a reference facility.

Pictavia is open on Saturday and Sunday throughout the winter and on every day from Easter. Additionally I can access Pictavia on a Tuesday or Wednesday with prior planning.

I am now appealing for volunteers to help with the process. Our software makes it straightforward to input the information, so some keyboard skills are required. Contact me at <membership@pictart.org> or in writing to our Pictavia address where mail is collected weekly.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Joy Mowatt, Membership Secretary

St Vigeans redisplay

St Vigeans Museum of Pictish Carved Stones is undergoing an exciting and dramatic change. Building on the success of the new displays at our Whithorn Museum, Historic Scotland staff are now working on a redisplay for the museum in St Vigeans, a small village near Arbroath.

There are over 30 Pictish carved stones in the St Vigeans collection, dating from the 8th and 9th centuries. They are a vital part of the culture and history of the village, as they were recovered from the walls and floors of the church and the churchyard in restoration work carried out in the early 19th century. The stones represent the chief evidence for a royal monastery and palace which might have stood there. It is essential for the integrity of the collection that this link remains and so the stones will be redisplayed in the same building.

The carved stones detail Christian Pictish iconography covering the last 100 years of the Pictish kingdom, possibly centred around 800. Studying these stones is helping to document a period of great cultural, political and linguistic change. Of special interest is the Drosten Stone.

It has one of a small but now growing number of Roman-letter inscriptions from this period which are being found in Scotland. The inscription is placed low on the cross, possibly for use in prayer.



The Drosten Stone

© Historic Scotland

The aims of the project are to improve the visitor experience and access to the museum, together with creating better conditions for the care and security of the collection.

The stones will be displayed in a larger space than before. This will be achieved by expanding into an adjacent cottage, which was previously used by Historic Scotland for storage. This allows us to display the stones to their best advantage, ensuring all carved faces can easily be seen. In order to fully reveal the intricate

carved details, a specialist lighting designer will be employed. Recent academic research, commissioned by Historic Scotland, has increased our understanding of many of the stones. This information will be incorporated into the exhibitions, through the use of audio and graphics.

The stones were moved to our Conservation Centre in Edinburgh in September. The condition of the stones has been continually monitored whilst in the care of Historic Scotland, but our collections and conservation teams are taking advantage of the redisplay to carry out inspection, conservation and gentle cleaning.



© Historic Scotland

Alan McKenzie, working on the conservation of one of the stones

Old fixings will carefully be replaced with new methods of presentation which can be reversed in future. We will follow the latest best practice techniques and epoxy resin 'shoes' will be fitted to all of the small stones. These shoes will give a solid base through which the stones can be firmly fixed into the display. Larger stones require more substantial mounts and these will be individually made for each artefact by our specialist mount maker. These mounting methods were shown to be very successful in our Whithorn Museum in Dumfries and Galloway. Here, Historic Scotland was highly commended in the Museums and Heritage Award for Excellence 2006 in the Conservation category.



© Historic Scotland

One of the St Vigean stones with an epoxy resin 'shoe' applied

With the removal of old display bases which hid parts of the stones, it is now possible to see the complete carvings for the first time since the 1960s. This has allowed access for more research to be carried out on the collection – an exciting prospect for everyone involved. At a recent research day, Historic Scotland staff gathered with the project research team, including Dr Jane Geddes, Dr Simon Taylor and Professor Thomas Clancy, to look at the stones in detail. They inspected areas which were previously difficult to see, discussed new theories and generally had a very enjoyable few hours discussing what was found. Dr Isabel and Professor George Henderson have also been closely involved in guiding the research. The results of this study will now be incorporated into the displays and a detailed catalogue will be published to make the information accessible.

The next step is to finalise how the stones will be displayed. In the Interpretation Unit, we are collating the research and working very closely with our Edinburgh based design team, StudioMB, to create the exhibition. The aim of the design approach is to create a rich and vibrant atmosphere to complement the vivid storytelling in the stone carvings. It is planned that the museum will be finished by the end of 2008, ready to open officially in Easter 2009. So there is a busy time ahead.

As I indicated at the recent Pictish Arts Society Conference, there will be a Community Consultation Evening in St Vigean. This will be particularly appealing to those who live locally, and/or who have an interest in Pictish stones. Members of Historic Scotland's project team will be there to discuss the ideas behind the new exhibition. The date for the evening has now been set for February 2008, and an invitation will be sent out to you through the

Pictish Arts Society website. If you have any comments, or you would like to get in touch with me before then, please do so, my contact details are below. Until then, we will keep up to date with any new developments on the Pictish Arts Society website.

To finish, a quick word of thanks to everyone who gave me such a warm welcome at the PAS Conference in October. I thoroughly enjoyed the day of fascinating talks and discussions. Since the conference we have all felt encouraged with the positive feedback we have received and are taking all comments onboard. Thanks again and see you soon.

Jennifer Webster

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PAS Conference 2008 at St Vigean

Our conference next year will be held on 4 October at St Vigean church hall. We will confirm the date in the next newsletter, and give details of transport links and possible accommodation in the area. Historic Scotland should be in a position to provide conducted tours of the newly-refurbished museum, and the conference will focus on the history of St Vigean and its large collection of Pictish stones. There will also be a Field Trip on the Sunday, helping to set St Vigean in a local context.

St Fergus' Church, Dyce

In recent years the presentation of one of Scotland's best smaller collections of Pictish and early Christian stones has been greatly improved by Historic Scotland, who look after the site at St Fergus' Church, Dyce, north-east of Aberdeen (NJ 875 154). The late medieval building stands in a neat graveyard containing mainly Victorian or 20th-century stones a little south of the steep bank of the River Don. The kirk's dedication, and its collection of carved stones, hint at a very much earlier origin for the site than its present tidied-up appearance suggests.

Until recently the stones at Dyce were cemented into an alcove formed out of a doorway slapped through the east gable of the church, perhaps in

the early 19th century. This arrangement was far from ideal as regards both the visibility and preservation of the stones. In addition, the roofless but otherwise complete church was thickly overgrown with ivy, obscuring any features of architectural interest. A programme of restoration was therefore carried out, with the stones removed from the alcove, conserved and recorded, and replaced at the other end of the kirk against the inner wall, with a slated lean-to roof to protect them from the weather. The collection consists of an incised symbol stone, a cross-slab with symbols, and four small early Christian cross-slabs, probably grave-markers. The two larger stones stand free against the wall with their lower ends held by concrete podia, and the four smaller cross-slabs are clamped to the wall beside them, three stones to each side of a recent doorway in the gable. An information board is fixed to the adjacent south wall.

An exciting discovery was made when the Pictish cross-slab was removed from its matrix. Its right side bears a previously unrecorded ogham inscription, which strangely, despite the stone having been known since at least the mid-19th century, had evidently never been noticed. Not only is the inscription 'new', it is a particularly long and clear example, one of the finest recorded Pictish oghams. A transcription is given on the information board. The side of the cross-slab is now visible so it can be easily 'read'.

The Dyce stones are all in good condition, except for one of the small cross-slabs, which has lost a portion of its surface, and the large cross-slab, which lacks a fragment of its lower left corner. All the stones are slabs of the local granite. The symbol stone is a classic example, showing the 'Pictish beast' above the double disc and Z-rod, the carvings strongly cut and almost unweathered. The Pictish cross-slab, one of the small number from the north-east, is a beautiful piece of craftsmanship, with a cross decorated with interlace and hollows at the angles and four symbols. All the grave-markers, two of which are particularly tiny examples of their class, have different designs of cross.

The church itself was also consolidated. The ivy was stripped from the granite rubble walls and they were repointed. The building can now be appreciated as an unusually complete example of a small late-medieval parish church, with three original pointed doors (all blocked), an elaborate bell-cote and an eastern gable-finial.

An unusual feature is a small grotesque head placed on the side, rather than the end (as would be more usual), of the lowest stone of the north-west gable-coping.



The grotesque head

Two hitherto unrecorded carved stones were found below the ivy. When the church was in use they were probably also unseen, concealed below plaster or harling. They have been left in situ, but are fairly easy to see. The first is set in the inner east gable, and may be part of another small cross-slab, though it is perhaps too incomplete to be certain of its exact character. The second is set in the exterior south wall, above a blocked medieval window. It seems to show two parallel lines ending in a lightly



The carved stone in the east gable

incised leaf- or spearhead-shaped element. The 'leaf' has a mason's mark rather like an elaborate 'W' incised on it, and there is a tiny cross incised on the 'shaft'. Two rather enigmatic finds, though at this site it would certainly be tempting to associate them with the early medieval collection.



The carved stone in the south wall

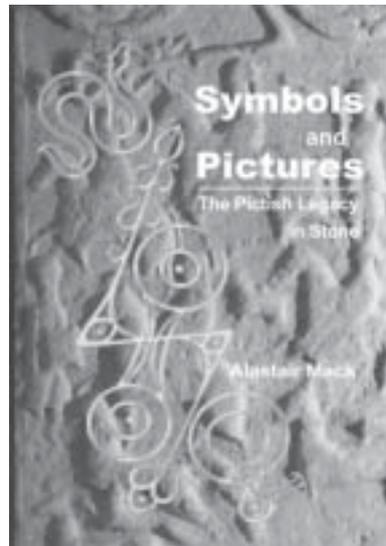
Photographs © Niall M Robertson

A final stone to notice at Dyce is an odd, rounded, granite boulder shaped rather like a miniature chair, which lies by the west doorway. This is likely to have been the early medieval font of the site, its present peculiar shape owing to much of the rounded rim having broken off at some point.

All in all, St Fergus' has one of the finest smaller collections of Dark Age stones, and the site has been greatly improved by its restoration and new positioning. Though one has to go through a rather depressing landscape of abandoned quarries to get to it, the old kirkyard itself is attractive and well-kept, and with a fine view over the Don.

Niall M Robertson

Book review



Symbols and Pictures: The Pictish Legacy in Stone *Alastair Mack*

The Pinkfoot Press, Brechin, 2007

ISBN 978 1 874012 48 1

250mm; xvi, 303pp; 145 b/w illuss; 5 maps; hbk £24.99

Alastair Mack's *Symbols and Pictures...* is an expansion of the subject of his previous publications, *The Field Guide to the Pictish Symbol Stones* (1997) and *The Association of Pictish Symbol Stones with Ecclesiastical, Burial, and 'Memorial Areas'* (2002). The core of the thesis of the latter here remains the same, except the arguments are extended and the author tackles head-on the problems connected with the Pictish symbol stones, contributing valuable research in the field of

Pictish history. This work combines a significant amount of primary and secondary evidence relating to the Picts, and presents new and stimulating arguments about these enigmatic early medieval monuments. This is an essential book for the study of Pictish symbol stones, and as such, is a fantastic introduction to Pictish studies and research in the history of early medieval Scotland at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

The book begins with an introduction to the theories to be addressed throughout the work by reviewing the history of many well-known symbol stones. The author introduces the obvious problems cleverly by using the stones themselves to illustrate the issues he wishes to examine throughout the work. Primary sources pertaining to the Picts from Classical and early medieval sources are also introduced in the second chapter, setting the stage for many of the modern hypotheses relating to Pictish history. The third chapter is sub-divided into two parts, and tackles the problems associated with the surviving evidence for the language spoken by the Picts. Section 3a 'Who were the Picts—and What Language did they Speak?' begins with a review of primary sources, including the early Ptolemaic records and Classical commentaries on the tribes of late Iron Age Scotland, establishing a brief history for the development of the Pictish kingdom in the early medieval period. Concerning the Pictish language, certain Pictish, or theoretically Pictish place-naming elements are also considered where Pictish linguistic elements survive in the place-name record. Section 3b 'Pictish Oghams' is a thorough analysis of all known Pictish ogham and Latin inscriptions. Section 3b is very useful to students of early medieval epigraphic history, in that it includes reviews of every known Pictish inscription, including those discovered recently, followed by previous translations. A significant amount of the scholarly work on Pictish inscriptions is scrupulously critiqued, especially where attributes of this preceding scholarship is in all likelihood false or misleading. There is a certain line of argument that I reserve some criticism for, however, regarding these chapters. The underlying premise that certain areas of Pictland may have retained a non-Indo-European dialect in the early medieval period is more controversial than appears in Mack's account.

The fourth chapter, 'Pictures of the Picts' is a very useful assessment of the Pictish stones that should be particularly interesting for the student of early medieval social history. Methods of stone carving are briefly discussed in the beginning of this chapter. The remainder examines many facets of Pictish society that are recoverable through their symbol stones, particularly the iconography on Class II monuments. Certain aspects of the Picts, such as their riding gear, the weapons they used, musical instruments, clothing and hairstyles (for men and women) and how the Picts perceived their enemies are all discussed. The importance of these elements on the Pictish stones is sufficiently described by the author (p113),

The pictures of the Picts, the scenes and figures on their stones, give information about the Picts unparalleled by what is known about the appearance and pastimes of the other contemporary peoples of Britain.

The fifth chapter, 'The Purpose of the Stones' is an excellent contribution to Pictish studies. This chapter elaborates in great detail the author's theory that the Pictish symbol stones were memorial monuments to the dead. By closely analysing their findspots, Mack illustrates that the vast majority of the symbol stones are located near burial or ecclesiastical sites. This thorough analysis of all the known Pictish symbol stones is put forth very credibly, and serves as a valid and convincing attempt towards solving at least one of the Pictish problems, namely, what was the purpose of the Pictish symbol stones for the society that created them? The following two chapters, chapter six, 'Some Multi-Symbolled Stones' and chapter seven 'Oddly-Symbolled Stones', likewise re-enforce the theory discussed in the fifth chapter, and propose rational methodologies for interpreting these types of symbol stones. The eighth chapter of the work, 'The Symbols' is not only a review of the symbols, but it deals with the plausible origins of the Pictish symbols. Possible ideas for where the Picts could have received their inspiration for certain symbols, such as the geometric symbols and the 'elephant' or 'Pictish beast', is discussed by a comparative analysis with objects found in the archaeological record. Though there are no definite conclusions to this chapter, the author is nevertheless enthusiastic in this venture, and proposes rational suggestions.

The final chapter, 'Other Interpretations' begins with supporting evidence to the author's conclusion that the symbol stones served as funerary monuments. Other elements, including the meaning of the Pictish symbols are addressed in comparison with previous scholarship, much of which has led to presuppositions that the symbols were familial badges, personal names, or a writing system. The author's ultimate conclusion to the work is that the symbol stones themselves were connected with burials or served a funerary purpose, though the meaning of the symbols still remains elusive.

Content apart, the format of this work is very well thought out, and is very user friendly. Throughout the work, all Pictish symbol stones mentioned are emphasized in bold with quick references to the illustrations. This book is also very well illustrated and includes pictures of almost half of the symbol stones. Another respectable characteristic of this book is the author's review of previous work in the field, which is thorough and fair. The appendices also constitute a useful reference in their own right, listing every known symbol stone, as well as their findspots. The appendices also include statistics about the symbols, as well as a brief bibliography to stones discovered since 1977. The statistical analysis of the findspots of symbol stones discussed throughout the work and in the appendices add much weight to Mack's central thesis that the stones served as memorials to the dead. This is an element of Pictish studies that has been frequently debated over the years, which must be taken more seriously in light of the book's conclusions. This book is an admirable contribution to Pictish studies and should set the agenda for scholarly debate for many years to come. This is an essential book for everyone with an interest in the Picts and their symbol stones.

Kelly A Kilpatrick

PAS Offer – Please see the enclosed form

The Pictish reader

Two articles which should be of interest to PAS members are published in *Medieval Archaeology* 51 (2007):

'Reading the multiple lives of Pictish symbol stones' by David V Clarke (19-39) deals with those symbol stones showing evidence of re-use

(Easterton of Roseisle, Moray; Logie Elphinstone 2, Aberdeenshire; Dingwall, Easter Ross; St Peters, South Ronaldsay, Orkney) and also considers their relationship to ogham inscriptions. Clarke talks about 'how we view the wider corpus of Pictish stones'; he rejects their use as burial markers and suggests that 'they were created in response, and as a rejection of, Christian missionary activity'. The article includes two useful appendices.

Ewan Campbell and Andy Heald have contributed a note: 'A 'Pictish' brooch mould from North Uist: implications for the organisation of non-ferrous metalworking in the later first millennium AD' (172-8). The use of quotes around the word Pictish is significant and the authors note that the find-site is unusual for objects of this type as the mould comes from an isolated and low-status site at Cnoc a' Comhdhalach, North Uist, Western Isles, while similar moulds are usually found on high-status, even royal sites.

The volume contains reviews, by Mark Hall, of Éamonn Ó Carragáin's *Ritual and the Rood* (about the Ruthwell Cross); Chris Lowe's *Excavations at Hoddom ...* (includes sculpture); and Nick Aitchison's *Forteviot a Pictish and Royal Centre* (contains a chapter on the sculpture and four chapters specifically on the Forteviot arch); plus *The Art of the Picts* by Isabel and George Henderson.

Another major publication which appeared late in November as this Newsletter goes to press is volume 2 (vols 1 and 3 to follow) of *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales* by Nancy Edwards, Reader at the University of Wales, Bangor. Volume 2 deals with South-West Wales (Cardiganshire, Pembrokeshire & Carmarthenshire). The work runs to 568 pages with itemised entries for each sculpture with copious illustrations and including a 119 page introduction generally describing the sculptures' historical/archaeological background, geology, ogham and Roman inscriptions, monumental and cross forms, iconography and ornament. The typological groupings of the sculpture and their implication is also discussed. Published by University of Wales Press, ISBN 13-978-07083-1963-5. This is the first update of the 1950, one volume, Welsh corpus *Early Christian Monuments of Wales*.

Ross Trench Jellicoe

Boxing Day at Aberlemno



A new box has been constructed for Aberlemno 3; it appears to be much more stable than the previous one and has firmer ground fixings

The practice of erecting protective shelters round the Aberlemno stones in the first week of October continues. This year the boxes were put up one day, were painted the next and had their respective information panels attached a few days later. Remember that these panels, in leaflet form, can be downloaded as PDFs from the Historic Scotland website:

<www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/properties>



Photographs © D Henry

Boxes in the landscape. A view from the site of Aberlemno 1

Govan between the covers

Sir John Stirling Maxwell's *Sculptured Stones in the Kirkyard of Govan*, was the first comprehensive record of the Govan collection of early medieval carved stones. Intended for private circulation, the book was printed in 1899 in an edition of seventy-five copies.

Stirling Maxwell's informative introductory 'Note' to the volume is a masterpiece of brevity:

These twenty-seven plates of the Early Sculptured Monuments in the Parish Kirkyard of Govan, are printed in order to preserve their designs, and to bring them within the reach of students. The collection includes all the forty-six stones of this class which are to be seen within the Kirkyard, as well as one (plate VII) which was removed

thence some years ago to Jordanhill, near Partick, where it still remains.

The map shows the present position of the stones in the Kirkyard. The sarcophagus, and some others, were moved by the Heritors to the small house, which was built for the purpose in 1858. All the monuments are of sandstone.

The photogravures have been made by Messrs. Annan of Glasgow from casts made by Mr. J. W. Small of Stirling.¹

Apart from this note and a plan of the kirkyard plotting the position of each monument, also the dimensions of the stones given on the plates, there is no further description or discussion of the monuments – an omission due perhaps in deference to Romilly Allen, anticipating his forthcoming descriptive catalogue of the collection in ECMS. Here, the plates alone sufficed to tell their story to interested 'antiquaries and art students', yet afforded them the unique opportunity to study the collection with an open mind, unincumbered by anyone else's opinions.

The printed plates are quite superb, sumptuous even. The images of the casts of the stones are very clear; each emerging from a background frame of rich, warm, velvety black, in turn lying on a barely perceptible rectangle of plate-tone – the subtle ghost of the copper plate – whispering its presence on the parchment-like paper on which it is printed. Modern printing methods never achieve this sensual quality.

Photogravure is a photo-reproductive process in which a photographic image is transferred and etched onto a copper plate, which is then intaglio printed, by hand pulling, on an etching press. It was developed by photographers as a permanent method of reproducing their pictures. It involves a great deal of skill and judgement at every stage and is very labour-intensive both in preparation and printing and, consequently, very much more expensive than machine printing.

T & R Annan and Sons was the foremost photogravure printing establishment in Britain and specialised in reproducing works of art as well as their own photographs. In the early 1880s, Thomas Annan, the great pioneer photographer, and his son James Craig travelled to Vienna to learn the process from Karl Klic, who had developed the original invention of William Henry Fox Talbot. The Annans returned with a license to use the process and had perfected its techniques long before publication made it freely available, thereby stealing a march on potential competitors.

¹ A pencilled note in a copy of Stirling Maxwell's states that: 'The casts were actually made by Mr. Robert Foster of Stirling who died in 1926'.



Plate VIII, the so-called 'Sun Stone'. The overall tone here indicates the extent of the copper plate not the page size. (The plates are a uniform size: 226 x 175mm, on trimmed page size 277 x 217mm)

The letterpress printing, finishing and binding was done by James MacLehose and Sons, a Glasgow firm particularly well known for fine bindings. The demy quarto book has front and back bevelled boards, in greenish-tan cloth, centrally stamped with a gilt device of the arms of Stirling Maxwell within a holly wreath; the spine bears an abbreviated title, SCVLPTVRED STONES AT GOVAN, in gilt Roman capitals, with 'GLASGOW 1899' at the tail.

At that time, Sir John Stirling Maxwell, Bart. (1866–1956), the owner of the Pollok estate, was MP for the College Division of Glasgow. He had inherited a passion for the arts from his father,² and was particularly interested in the built heritage and garden design. Later, he was the author of a 'handy book on Scots architecture', *Shrines and Homes of Scotland*, published in 1937, and a founder member of the National Trust for Scotland. Some years after his death, Pollok House and its collections were gifted to the City of Glasgow and were subsequently transferred to the Trust.

In planning his volume on the Govan stones, Stirling Maxwell was following the example of R C Graham, whose corpus *The Carved Stones of Islay* was published by MacLehose in 1895.

² Sir William Stirling Maxwell was the first art historian to use photographic reproductions in a publication. The small 4th edition (25 copies) of his *Annals of the Artists of Spain* has Talbotype reproductions, a process invented by Fox Talbot prior to his development of photogravure.

Graham adopted Romilly Allen's desideratum for best practice in photographing the sculpture, by having casts made of the stones. These casts could then be manipulated and properly lit for photographing in optimum conditions in the studio, ensuring better and more uniform results. Graham even spread the word by including a useful chapter (VI) on the technique of 'paper moulding and plaster casting', which consists mainly of a previously published paper by A P Maudslay.

For his mighty project, Stirling Maxwell commissioned the best possible work available; certainly James Craig Annan, who had taken over running the business on his father's death in 1887, was a master craftsman, and the MacLehose firm was very highly regarded, as, no doubt, was Robert Foster, the Stirling caster.

Romilly Allen fully acknowledged the undertaking and praised its creator's enterprise and 'great liberality' in defraying its expense. One can but agree with Allen's statement (*PSAS* 31, p148 fn):

Sir John Stirling Maxwell has set a noble example, well worthy of imitation, and deserves the best thanks of all Scottish antiquaries.

No other illustrated book on early medieval carved stones surpasses its quality.

DH



Armorial bookplate of Sir John Stirling Maxwell. 133x96mm; engraving by 'C[harles] W[illiam] Sherborn RE 1902'. A prolific painter-etcher, Sherborn (1831–1911) was renowned for his bookplates, which are now much sought after

© D Henry

Govan footnote 16/11/07

Irene Hughson told us that one of the consequences of being Secretary to the Friends of Govan Old, was that she received a mixed bag of mail, including enquiries from people about eligibility for a bus pass or other such issues of concern to local aged residents.

First Contact: Rome and Northern Britain

A TAFAC special conference 31 May 2008

Dewar's Rinks Conference Centre, Perth

Key speakers will debate the timetable, nature and significance of Rome's first contact with Scotland, particularly in the context of contact with Northern Britain. A confirmed programme and abstracts will shortly be available for those who book a place.

Provisional list of speakers and themes is:

David Breeze (Historic Scotland/UNESCO)
Frontiers of the Roman Empire)

Scene setting

Pete Wilson (English Heritage)

*Pushing North? The Humber frontier
and the expansion into Yorkshire
reconsidered*

David Shotter (Lancaster University)

When did the Romans invade Scotland?

David Woolliscroft (Liverpool University/

Roman Gask Project)

*70AD and all that: when did the Romans
reach Perthshire?*

Gordon Maxwell (formerly RCAHMS)

Agricola and sons: text and translation

Birgitta Hoffmann (Liverpool University/Roman
Gask Project)

*Cardean: the changing face of a Flavian
fort in Scotland*

Bill Hanson (Glasgow University)

*The fort at Elginhaugh and its
implications for Agricola's role in the
conquest of Scotland*

Rebecca Jones (RCAHMS)

*Chasing the Army: the problems of
dating temporary camps*

Questions and summing up led by David
Breeze

Advance booking only on a first come, first
served basis. The first 5 students of archaeology

at any UK university (proof required) will be
eligible for a free place, courtesy of sponsorship
by RCAHMS, to celebrate their centenary.

To book or for further details contact:

Mark A Hall, Perth Museum & Art Gallery,
78 George Street, Perth, PH1 5LB

Tel: 01738 632 488

Email: <mahall@pkc.gov.uk>

Conference fee is £15 and cheques should be
made payable to Tayside and Fife Archaeo-
logical Committee

Groam House Museum

Exhibition programme featuring the life and
work of George Bain:

George Bain – A Highland Homecoming
has now ended its season's touring

Theory into Practice:

George Bain and the Celtic Art Revival

Groam House Museum, Rosemarkie

1 May 2007 – April 2008

(but check below for seasonal opening times)
An exhibition reflecting the ancient influences
that informed Bain's Mastery of Celtic Art will
be displayed for a year amidst the Museum's
collection of Pictish sculptured stones and
accompanied by decorated metalwork and
jewellery objects, specially loaned by the
National Museums of Scotland.

Free admission to the museum in 2007

Opening hours:

until 9 Dec weekends only 1400–1600
then closed until 1 March 2008

1–30 Mar daily 1400–1630 closed weekends

31 Mar–30 Apr weekends only 1400–1600

1 May–31 Oct normal daily hours

Next year's academic lecture will be given by

Andy Heald (title to be announced)

Groam House Museum, High Street,

Rosemarkie, Ross-shire IV10 8UF

Tel: Museum 01381 620961

Office 01463 811883

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address. The deadline for receipt of contributions
to PAS Newsletter 46 is 16 February 2008.
