



## **PAS 2009/10 programme**

The dates for our Winter programme of Friday evening lectures at Pictavia are as follows:

### **2009**

16 October : 20 November : 11 December

### **2010**

15 January : 19 February : 19 March

Doors open at 7pm, with tea and coffee available before and after the lectures, which start at 7.30. Further details will be published in PAS Newsletter 52

## **PAS AGM**

The Annual General Meeting of the Pictish Arts Society was held at Pictavia, Brechin, on Saturday 23 May, 2009

President Norman Atkinson welcomed a quorate meeting (there were 15 present and apologies received from a further five). The 2008 minute, which had appeared in the newsletter following last year's meeting, was approved.

The President and Secretary then gave their reports. The Society has enjoyed another successful year. Our annual conference, held on 4 October attracted a near capacity crowd to the church hall at St Vigeans. Historic Scotland had just finished the redesign of the museum and the redisplay of the stones there, and we were privileged to get a preview of the 'new' museum.

Many of our speakers had worked on the related research project, looking again at the stones and placing them in a local and wider context. The scope of scholarship applied to the Pictish stones matches the sympathetic and innovative treatment of the displays, and we have had some very positive feedback from those who attended. Historic Scotland hopes to publish this work soon.

On the Sunday, around twenty of the attendees then visited Meigle museum, where perfect viewing conditions, with bright, raking light picking out the features of the stones made for a memorable visit.

The winter programme at Pictavia continues to be well supported, with average audiences in the thirties. We had five talks, most of which have been reported in the newsletter, and an evening of music and poetry in December. At that we also unveiled the 'Pictish Princess', Eric Nicoll's last carving which his widow has kindly donated to us. We are investigating the purchase of a secure display case to enable the lady to be displayed on a permanent basis.

The committee met six times, and dealt with a variety of issues.

Although the conference was a success, there were a few problems which the committee are taking steps to address. In particular, we are investigating the possibility of acquiring a portable PA system that would improve audibility of speakers in such venues, as well as addressing ongoing problems at Pictavia.

A major project which is getting under way is the redesign of the website. After much discussion, it was agreed that we should commission this to a specification that will allow simple updating of vital information to be done in a timely fashion, and to allow future development of the site. We have therefore commissioned Tayads.com to create a new website and to train one member of the committee to keep it updated. In turn, other members of the committee will also be trained to the same standard. Rather than go live with a complicated and complex site, we will begin by addressing some basic needs and adding to the site as we develop. The major theme of the committee's efforts this year has been to focus on delivering consistent, achievable levels of service to our members. The website is seen as an important service, and we have been painfully aware that we had problems with it. While we

## **PAS Conference**

**3 October 2009**

**Duchess Ann Hall, Dunkeld**

All details and booking form will be included in PAS Newsletter 52 due to be published in early September.

are immensely grateful to members who have run it over the years, it is unfair to load responsibility on individuals.

The Newsletter, under the capable editorship of David Henry, has celebrated its 50th edition, and is appearing on a regular quarterly basis. We have had some positive feedback which suggests that this is developing well. It is a member's magazine, and the editor is always happy to receive any articles, news, etc. The newsletter, Pictavia programme and the conference are running successfully. Experience over the years suggests that it makes a great deal of sense to try to establish achievable and sustainable ways of reaching the membership, and this is what the committee has tried to do. The President thanked his committee for all their work, and also the membership for their contribution to the success of the society.

The Treasurer's report shows the Society to be in a fairly healthy position, with £10,476.08 in the bank account at the end of the year and total net assets, including equipment, of £13,013.08. There are some major items of expenditure in the pipeline (website and PA equipment), and our incoming resources showed only a very small surplus in 2008. This year, however, the rise in membership fees which was agreed at the AGM in 2008 will come into effect, cushioning the Society against any further rises in costs of delivering the newsletter, conference and website. The Pictavia lecture series has more or less covered its costs since the outset, thanks to the generosity of Angus Council in allowing us use of the premises in return for co-operation with events run here by the Council.

The President noted that our external examiner had done a very thorough job in going through the accounts, and suggested that he be approached to do the same next year.

Joy Mowatt gave the Membership Secretary's report. At the AGM we had a total of 141 members: 96 individual, 37 family, 1 corporate, 3 reciprocal, 3 honorary, and 3 'free' (the latter are to individuals who help out with the Society in various ways).

Although the numbers are considerably lower than the peak of some years ago, all are members in good standing. There has been a great deal of work over the last few years to ensure that we are not sending out newsletters to people who have not paid membership fees after due reminders. This has made a major contribution

to bringing costs under control. We will need to produce new membership leaflets in the near future. The last ones, thanks to Marianna Lines, Ron Dutton and Bob Henery, have been very popular, and we have only around 400 left. There has been a necessary delay as we needed to update details of the website, etc and we are more or less in a position to go ahead with this.

David Henry gave the Editor's report. He is satisfied that the newsletter continues to appear regularly, and noted that he had received more contributions than usual for this edition. Although he stressed that we should not promise any regular Journal in the foreseeable future, he is investigating the possibility of producing another one. The Society has to accept that we are responsible for a number of articles going astray. Unfortunately, as the committee does not have details of what is missing, it is impossible to contact the authors to apologise personally and to see what can be done to retrieve the situation. We were assured, however, that some of these papers will be in the committee's hands soon.

Eileen Brownlie spoke as Events Organiser. She is keen to organise a trip to the Dunadd/Kilberry/Kilmartin area as a weekend event next Spring, following on the success of the Dunbeath/Caithness weekend last year. She would also like to have suggestions from any members who think that their own local area could provide a suitable venue for a PAS event.

The library is gradually being organised. The books have been catalogued on the Society's computer and access to the catalogue will eventually be made available on the website. Norman, preparing to move house, has donated a large collection of papers on Pictish topics, which we have begun to catalogue. The long term aim is to cover as much of the Bibliography published in the *Pictish Panorama*, and any subsequently published material, to allow the Pictish Arts Society to provide a study resource for the membership.

The President then demitting the chair, the elections for a new committee were then held.

The following Honorary Officers and Committee Members were elected:

*President* – Norman Atkinson

*Vice Presidents* – David Henry and  
Stewart Mowatt

*Secretary* – Sheila Hainey

*Treasurer* – Andrew Monro  
*Membership Secretary* – Joy Mowatt  
*Editor* – David Henry  
*Events Organiser* – Eileen Brownlie  
*Committee Members* – John Borland,  
Nigel Ruckley and Liz Tosh

One final item of business was considered. In view of the small turnout that usually attends the AGM, it was suggested that we should in future hold the AGM at the annual conference in October. This would allow a larger proportion of the membership to participate, and meanwhile we could celebrate Dunnichen Day with a more stone-focused event.

Sheila Hainey

## Ian Shepherd

12 March 1951 – 15 May 2009



*Ian at Pictavia, 15 February 2008*

We are saddened by news of the death last month of Ian Shepherd. His funeral service was held in King's College Chapel, Aberdeen University, on 18 May.

In 2005 Ian was admitted to hospital following attacks of dizziness, and was found to have a brain tumour. Its removal was complicated by a haemorrhage but he was able to return to work a few months later. However, after becoming ill again, he returned to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary but his condition was too advanced to operate and he died there.

Ian was born in Forres but attended school in Edinburgh and subsequently graduated from Edinburgh University. He became the first archaeologist in Scottish local government when he joined the former Grampian Regional Council – the beginning of a distinguished career with the local authority which lasted for about 35 years. Latterly he served as Aberdeenshire Council's principal archaeologist.

He pioneered aerial photographic surveys of archaeological sites, was an editor and author of authoritative works, and gained national and international recognition in his field.

Ian was an acknowledged expert not only in the archaeology of north-east Scotland, but of its architecture too, as testified by his 1994 publication, *Gordon: an illustrated architectural guide*. He was a driving influence for initiatives across Moray and Aberdeenshire, ranging from the North East Scotland Preservation Trust and Pitsligo Castle Trust to Burghead Trust, and he had helped establish Oyne's Archaeolink Prehistory Park.

Fellow council archaeologist Moira Greig said,

Archaeology has lost a unique individual who was highly respected both internationally as well as at home in Scotland.

Together they published *Grampian's Past: Its Archaeology from the Air* in 1996, and Ian had been co-editing a new work, *Beakers and Bodies in NE Scotland*.

He was editor of the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* for eight years from 1982, and convener of its Scotland's Research Committee from 1999 until this year.

Since becoming ill, Ian showed great spirit and resilience. We are fortunate to have had him talk to the Society on many occasions, most recently in February 2008, when we heard his revised views on Rhynie Man (PAS Newsletter 46, 1).

Ian is survived by his wife Lekky, and their two daughters, Bryony and Sunniva.

A fine appreciation written by Ian's lifelong friend and colleague, Ian Ralston, appeared in *The Scotsman* 2 June 2009.

## Shandwick shelter door smashed

Susan Lynch, a visitor to the Shandwick stone in mid April, discovered that the glass door of its shelter (the infamous erstwhile Glasgow greenhouse) had shattered. She was careful not to disturb the scene and, having satisfied herself that there was no damage to the stone although there was some broken glass around its base, she used her iPhone to notify the caretaker and police and email photographs of the damage to them.

Subsequent investigations revealed that no sinister forces had been at work and that the accident was due to a corroded top hinge of the door giving way in a high wind.

## Exciting find in Sutherland

A major new Pictish symbol stone has been found at Borrobol, deep in the heart of Sutherland. It was spotted, by great good luck, at the edge of a field filling a gap in the fence. Such a find is always an exciting event but the Borrobol symbol stone adds significantly to knowledge. Strathdonan is famous for the wealth of its prehistoric archaeology, and, as the focus in the east of the cult of St Donan, testified to both in written sources and by the cross-marked stone on the site of the old church, it plays an important part in the history of the early medieval church in Scotland. All that was needed to link up this evidence was a Pictish presence, and now we have it.

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*The Borrobol Pictish symbol stone*

The Borrobol symbol stone is carved in incision with a fine large example of the 'crescent and V-rod' symbol and above it an equally impressive representation of a stag. The upper portion of the slab has long since been broken off, perhaps by a plough when the stone was hidden in the earth, so that the head and shoulders of the stag are lost, but its hindquarters and strong slim legs, widely pacing as it moves across the surface of the slab, are recognisably among the masterpieces of Pictish naturalistic animal art. The only other surviving stag carved in this early period

of Pictish art is on a comparatively miniature scale on a stone from Grantown-on-Spey, now in the national collection in Edinburgh. The decoration of the 'crescent' symbol at Borrobol has a close parallel in a symbol stone from Kintradwell. It is now in the Dunrobin Castle Museum collection where the many examples from find-spots on the coast of Sutherland can be seen. The only other symbol stone away from the coast is a small fragment at Langdale in Strathnaver, which though described and drawn in the early 20th century is now lost. So the Borrobol symbol stone is a historic find, its design and quality filling in the hitherto puzzling gap between the very fine incised animal designs of the Northern Isles around AD600, and the same skilful workmanship in Ross-shire and on the shores of the Moray Firth. The Borrobol symbol stone therefore establishes the social and political unity of the northern provinces of Scotland in the very early Middle Ages. That more Pictish sculpture is there in Strathdonan to be found is highly likely.

The Treasure Trove panel will be assigning the symbol stone to an appropriate museum at its meeting in October

*George and Isabel Henderson*

Text for a press release in *The Northern Times* June, 2009



© George Henderson

*A reconstruction of the Borrobol Pictish symbol stone. The grey area represents the possible extent of the missing upper portion of the stone.*

## The lost Balglassie stone?

I believe that the Balglassie stone, described as ‘lost’ from 1856 onwards, is the stone illustrated below.



© Bob Henery

*Aberlemno 4*

John Stuart (1856, 31) described the Balglassie stone as follows:

I am also informed by Mr Jervise, that, on the Gallowlaw of Balglassie, in the same Parish [Aberlemno], a rudely incised Stone was found by a farmer about ten years ago, bearing, according to the farmer’s recollection, the representations of a battle-axe and cross-bow. It formed the cover of a cist containing human bones, and was destroyed.

It seems to me that the farmer did very well in recalling ‘a battle-axe and cross-bow’ as the carving on the above stone, especially as there may have been ten years between finding the stone and describing it to Jervise. If you agree with me that the farmer’s description might reasonably apply to the above stone, then we have identified the **Balglassie** stone with **Aberlemno 4**, one of the roadside stones at Aberlemno. There is a photograph and a drawing of **Aberlemno 4** in the recently published *Pictish Symbol Stones of Scotland* (Fraser 2008, no.51.4).

How reliable is Stuart’s account of the **Balglassie** stone? How reliable an authority is Jervise, for that matter, and should we be concerned about the fact that Jervise, having seen **Aberlemno 4**, did not identify it with the **Balglassie** stone? In describing the Aberlemno stones, Jervise (1854, 192–3) makes two telling errors. He describes the *serpent* on **Aberlemno 1** as being a ‘*transfixed serpent*’, which I take to be the symbol more commonly known as the *serpent and Z-rod*. Also, he fails to see any carving on the **Aberlemno 4** stone, describing it as UNEMBELLISHED (in capital letters). Immediately after describing the Aberlemno stones, on the very next page, Jervise repeats the farmer’s account of the Balglassie stone, adding that its dimensions were ‘about 4 by 2 feet’ (compare this with an approximate 6 feet from the scaled drawing in Fraser 2008). Rather surprisingly, Jervise does not say that the stone was destroyed. The stone was found on the Gallow Law of Balglassie, ‘at the bottom of that ridge (the Hill of Angus), towards the river South Esk’.

### Where is the Gallow Law of Balglassie?

Elsewhere Jervise (ibid) gives the location of an ancient causeway as ‘South of the Gallow Law, in the direction of the ford that crosses the river Esk at Nether Careston ...’. The two descriptions of Gallow Law place it at about NO 531575. It is interesting that Jackson (1984, Table 2B) gave NO 535577, i.e. the location of Balglassie farm, as the find spot of **Aberlemno 5** (his name for what most other people call **Aberlemno 4**).

So the timeline for the **Balglassie** stone looks something like this:

About **1846** discovered at Balglassie, in use as the cover of a cist;

Between **1846** and **1856** removed to Aberlemno;

In **1856** described by Jervise in PSAS as the unembellished **Aberlemno 4**.

Ian Armit (1998, 140) believes that **Aberlemno 1** and **Aberlemno 4** have been ‘moved in recent times’, giving some support to this timeline. Two difficulties remain. Stuart says that the Balglassie stone was destroyed, but Jervise does not say so in his PSAS paper. Also, **Aberlemno 4** is at least two feet taller than the **Balglassie** stone, if we trust the farmer’s account as relayed by Jervise in his PSAS paper.

As a postscript, we may point out some natural grooves on **Aberlemno 4** that might give the impression of a handle for the ‘battle-axe’. Hold the illustration of it at an angle, and look at it from below to see the ‘handle’.

#### References:

- Armit, I 1998 *Scotland's Hidden History*, Stroud: Tempus.
- Fraser, I (ed) 2008 *The Pictish Symbol Stones of Scotland*, Edinburgh: RCAHMS.
- Jackson, A 1984 *The Symbol Stones of Scotland*, Stromness.
- Jervise, A 1854–57 ‘Notices descriptive of the Localities of certain sculptured stone monuments in Forfarshire &c. (Part I)’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 2, 187–99.
- Stuart, J 1856 *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, Spalding Club, Aberdeen.

*Bob Henery*

It is hoped to publish a response to this article in the next Newsletter.

## How I discovered the Dupplin Cross

In the early 1990s my wife, Joyce, worked in the Education Service of Grampian Region, and lived a few hundred yards from the Brandsbutt stone in Inverurie for two years. I was at Loughborough University, where we had gone after completing studies at Aberdeen University in 1961: we were married in King’s College Chapel in 1960. Most weekends I parked my car outside Newark railway station and caught the train to Aberdeen. I read a lot of PhD theses and wrote many papers on the train. I saw a notice about PAS pinned up somewhere and I joined. I hadn’t been much into archaeology in 1961 despite having afternoon tea on one occasion with Joyce’s friend’s parents, Dr and Mrs W Douglas Simpson!

The first PAS annual conference that I attended was held at Bridge of Earn, and I visited numerous Roman forts on the way up by car. I had decided that it would be appropriate to get B&B accommodation as near to Forteviot as possible, and I booked in at Bankhead Farm, Forgandenny. The farmer’s wife said that they had a stone on their farm, but I couldn’t see anything about Bankhead Farm in my Pictish Trail booklet. I attended and enjoyed the



© Arnold Fogg

*The Dupplin Cross at its former site in the grounds of Dupplin Castle overlooking the ancient Pictish royal centre of Forteviot*

conference and also the field trip on the Sunday, which included a visit to see a stone in the extensive grounds of a private house, and the Celtic bell at Forteviot Church. On the Monday, as I was preparing to head south, via Fowlis Wester, the farmer’s wife again mentioned the stone on their farm. I looked out my Ordnance Survey map and saw that something was marked nearby. After leaving the farm I drove my car up a side road, waving to the farmer on his tractor in a field, parked, and continued along the side of another field to find a magnificent Pictish Cross. It was a gorgeous morning and I took numerous photographs of the stone, and admired its beautiful setting for quite some time, before continuing on my way.

Several months later, in Loughborough, Joyce came through from another room holding up an opened copy of the Guardian. This had a half-page photograph of two archaeologists looking at ‘my stone’, with the story about the possibility of it being taken indoors. On my train journeys to Aberdeen I stopped off in Edinburgh frequently and went to the museum in Queen Street. I never saw the Dupplin Cross when it was at the new museum in Edinburgh, but we



*The Dupplin Cross now in St Serf's church at Dunning*

called in to see it in St Serf's church in Dunning on our way from Aberdeen to the Isle of Arran last year. I thought it was looking very well, and the steward was very pleasant. I also visited the new museum in Edinburgh last year. I was a little disappointed because only a fraction of what had been on display at Queen Street was now on display as far as I could see. I missed the 'hundreds' of stone axes and the fuller display of the St Ninian's treasure that had been on view at Queen Street.

It was some years later that I found out that PAS had wanted to visit the Dupplin Cross as part of the field trip from Bridge of Earn but permission had not been granted by the landowner. So, it had been my good luck to have stayed at Bankhead farm. We moved our main house to Aberdeen in 2007 via Malton, North Yorkshire.

*Arnold Fogg*

**St Serf's Church & Dupplin Cross**, Dunning Village, Perthshire. (Historic Scotland) OS grid ref NO 019144, on the B9141 from the A9. PH2 ORG.Tel: 01764 684497

Open: April–September seven days a week. Admission free (Donations welcome).

How to get there: From Perth Bus Station at Leonard Street, take Stagecoach Perth bus no 17 to Dunning Village (38 mins). Walk to St Serf's church and Dupplin Cross.

This picturesque parish church houses the Dupplin Cross, a masterpiece of Pictish stone-carving. It is one of a few complete, freestanding early medieval crosses that survive in Scotland. Carved from a single block of red sandstone, it formerly stood in the grounds of Dupplin Castle overlooking the ancient Pictish royal centre of Forteviot. It is carved on four sides with images depicting military and religious ideas of kingship, and dates from the 9th century, the time of the Picto-Scottish kingdom of Kenneth Mac Alpin.

The cross is unique in that it mentions a named king (King Constantine). This provides the only depiction of a named king in early medieval Scotland.

The design of the cross represents the artistic traditions of the different people of Scotland who were being brought together during this period. It includes a rare inscription on the rear with the longest Roman alphabet inscription known from early medieval Scotland. The cross was inserted into a rectangular stone plinth on which is cut an Irish/Scottish Ogham inscription. Ogham is a primitive early-medieval alphabet.

### **Behind the scenes at the museum**

Following Christina Donald's talk at Pictavia in February (*PAS Newsletter* 50, pp.3–4), two of our committee members have taken advantage of the opportunity to visit the McManus Collections Unit, housed in the former Barrack Street museum, Dundee. Enthusiastic staff in this impressive Carnegie-endowed library, once home to the Tay whale, offer regular, free, guided tours of the facility used for cleaning, restoring and storing the diverse exhibits. During the current closure of the McManus Galleries and Museum, of course, this is a particularly busy place.

The small group was shown around the natural history store before visiting the archaeology section which was of most interest, with its stone cists and model of Finavon fort. An amphora handle from Carpow Roman fort, Fife, clearly shows the name of the olive-oil producer from Andalucía. Further from home, the group was 'treated' to an Egyptian mummified head, currently the favourite exhibit of their tour guide.

The reconstruction of 'Pictoria' was mentioned at some length, given that the group was pressed for time. The guide mentioned the continuing

revision of ideas, as more information is uncovered. Gone are the days when history was a thing of the past! The re-setting of 'Pictoria' at the centre of the early history exhibition is assured – what a relief that she has been proven (by isotope testing of teeth) to be a 'local' girl! Everyone looks forward to seeing her again soon, although exactly how soon was the subject of coy prevarication.

Time ran out before much could be made of the costume collection or the armour and weapons, but there are plans for further tours over the summer and also for the graceful lower rotunda to be available by appointment for the public to access its library.

(To book a place, tel 01382 432364, Mon–Fri, 9am–4.30pm)

Liz Tosh

## Dun Nechtan battle-site **shock**

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### PICTISH CONQUEST [2000] THE BATTLE OF DUNNICHEN 685 AND THE BIRTH OF SCOTLAND

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ISBN 13: 9780752439624  
Author: FRASER, BROTHER JAMES E.  
Category: British & Irish History: C 500 To C 1000  
Published: 10/00/2000  
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Keyword TAGS: 1000 | 685 | Battle | Birth | British | Conquest | Dunnichen | Humanities | Irish | Pictish | Scotland

Forget the claims of any inland site such as Dunnichen or Dunachton, as this new evidence online suggests that the battle actually took place in the height of summer on a sandy beach close to white cliffs somewhere on the south coast of England. Contrary to what were previously thought to have been the battle tactics, it seems that the day was won by a Pictish Amazon hurling a large spherical object at the enemy, prior to giving birth to Scotland.

How could Bede have got it so wrong?

Counsellors are on hand as experts come to terms with the trauma and disappointment of realising

that they were misguided in believing that the battle is represented on the Aberlemno kirkyard stone. However, as a first step in their rehabilitation, they are being encouraged to come up with alternative ideas as to which clash of arms it could be. So far, there is no consensus, but the following contenders have emerged: 'The Battle of Aberlemno', 'Battle of Hastings', 'Culloden', 'Mons Graupius', 'Jenkin's Ear', 'Grosvenor Square', 'The Rumble in the Jungle', 'Star Wars', 'The Miners' Strike', and 'Battle of the Bulge'. Innate prejudice insures that a less obvious proposal, 'A Christian allegorical conflict', is unlikely to receive much support from those in (or out of) the know.

A quick perusal of BritBooks's 'Terms and Conditions' suggests that there might be no need to panic after all:

- COVER PICTURE - the jacket picture shown is provided by the publisher. Occasionally the book supplied will have a slightly different cover picture due to the publisher reprinting the book. We will always supply the book bearing the ISBN shown.  
- AVAILABILITY - all our stock inventory is listed on eBay

Frère Jacques, Frère Jacques, dormez vous?

## Centurion: dumbing down the Picts

The action of this Hollywood blockbuster takes place in AD119. The Roman Centurion, Quintas Dias (Michael Fassbender), is the sole survivor of a Pictish raid on a frontier fort, who joins the Ninth Legion to march north to 'wipe the Picts



Olga Kurylenko as Queen Etain in Centurion

from the face of the earth' and destroy their leader, Gorlacus. This act of vengeance is balanced by the understandable wrath of the Pictish queen, Etain (Olga Kurylenko), towards the Romans, who had butchered her family and also cut out her tongue. This latter act apparently carried out with such surgical precision that the outrage left no blemish on Olga's pouting lips and perfect set of teeth!

Rendering the leading 'Pictish' lady speechless, neatly avoids the thorny question of the Pictish language and the intriguing prospect of some interesting Pictish dialogue being uttered by the Lithuanian model and sometime 'Bond girl' who plays the part.

Alex Woolf, interviewed for a recent press article (*Sunday Express* 22 March 2009), dismissed the idea of a Pictish warrior queen as 'male fantasy', and rightly took the filmmakers to task over their distorted view and general ignorance of Pictish history.

We have learned since that a craftsman was commissioned to make 'Roman' tent pegs for the production. There seems to be little point in attempting to authentically reproduce minor props while taking huge liberties with the history.

However, one interesting coincidence worth noting is that the battle scenes were filmed on location in Scotland on the Glenfeshie estate, an area of 'inaccessible mountains' a mere spear's throw from Dunachton.

The film is due for release later this year and should prove to be an entertaining diversion.

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## **New-look St Vigean Museum now open**

Guests gathered in St Vigean church hall on Thursday 4 June to hear the parish minister, Rev Ian Gough, officially declare open the new-look St Vigean Museum. He acknowledged his distinguished 19th-century predecessor, Rev William Duke, whose efforts in gathering together and recording the carved stones from the church and churchyard ensured the preservation of the collection.

The celebrations continued with the cutting of a giant Drosten Stone cake and the opportunity to tour the museum.

As we saw at our conference last October, visitors now have the chance to appreciate one of the finest collections of Pictish carved stones. Historic Scotland has carried out a major modernisation so that the 38 stones, many decorated with superb carvings of animals, warriors, saints, angels and fabulous beasts can be enjoyed to the full.

The collection includes some of the latest and finest surviving examples of Pictish art, including carved and decorated crosses, which

were all previously contained in the small cottage number 3, Kirkstyle, St Vigean. The museum has been enlarged by extending the exhibition space into the adjoining cottage, number 4, which was previously used as a store, thereby doubling the display area. The stones are now presented so that the carvers' skills can be fully appreciated.

An audio-visual display has been installed which uses the latest research to tell the 1,200-year story of the stones.

Educational resources have been introduced so school groups can make use of the collection as part of their studies.

Peter Yeoman, Historic Scotland head of cultural resources, said:

The museum has been absolutely transformed and we are delighted that it is open to the public again.

The St Vigean stones are a magnificent part of Scotland's heritage and we'd like everyone to be able to enjoy them. They are especially significant because the Picts left little behind and much of what we know about them is through their art and craftsmanship. These stones provide a direct link with their world, telling us about the ideas and beliefs of those who carved them. Above all the stones tell us about a time when this small Angus village was an important place of faith and politics in the early medieval world."

In the past visitors had to collect the keys to the museum from Arbroath Abbey, but a member of staff is now on site to provide help and information.

Historic Scotland also commissioned new research into the stones and their past.

A computer database containing research results and pictures is available at the site for visitors who want to know about them in depth.

A CD-Rom containing the information from the database, and accompanying booklet, have been produced and is now on sale for £4.95 from Arbroath Abbey, St Vigean and Meigle Museum and also via the website.

The museum is in the village of St Vigean, one mile from Arbroath off the A92.

St Vigean may be a small village now, but it was once a royal centre with an important monastery. Indeed, Arbroath is just the port which served St Vigean, which was a cult centre of the Irish saint Fechin, who died around AD664. His name was changed to Vigean in the local tongue. It may also have been a significant

pilgrimage centre, perhaps due to the presence of relics of the saint.

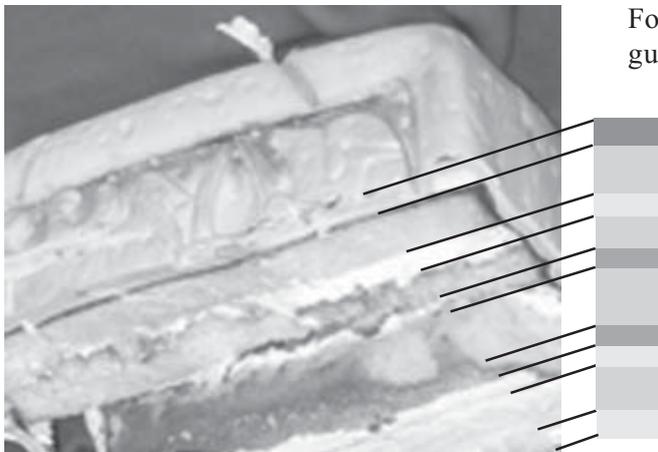
The stones are the first rank of importance alongside the Early Medieval carved stone collections at Meigle, St Andrews, Whithorn and Iona, all in the care of Historic Scotland.

Many of the stones come from the decades shortly before AD843 when the Pictish kingdom was united with Gaelic Dal Riata under a single monarch – leading to the birth of Scotland.

The museum is open all year round from April to October on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 3pm and from November to March from 10am to 1pm. Special visits can also be arranged at other times. Entry costs £3.70 for adults; £3 concessions and £1.85 children. Telephone 01241 878756.

### The Drosten Stone – astonishing results of research

A geological analysis of a section through the Drosten Stone has revealed it to comprise repeated alternating layers of sponge, cream and jam contained within a thick outer coating of modelled icing.



*A view of the spongy stratification within the outer decorated layer*



© Nigel Ruckley

*The lost Drosten Confection only minutes before its wilful destruction.  
(Thanks to Nigel Ruckley for supplying the photographs.)*

“So much did it resemble a cake,” declared an excited geologist, “that I was tempted to taste a piece of it (just a thin section, mind you) and was pleasantly surprised to find that it appeared to be edible and had a delicious flavour to boot.”

Following this brave leap into the unknown, guests attending the grand opening of the refurbished St Vigeans museum were encouraged to try some for themselves and, in an abandoned feeding frenzy, the whole slab was soon devoured. One over-enthusiastic partaker described the after-effects as “like having a stone sitting in my stomach.”

When, on a Friday and again on a Monday, a party of angry visitors stormed the closed museum to try and gain entry by force, it is rumoured that a Historic Scotland grandee countered, “Let them eat cake!”

### Caithness Horizons and Visitor Centre

The Ulbster stone, having undergone conservation work in Edinburgh, has returned to Caithness where it now takes pride of place at the entrance to Caithness Horizons and Visitor Centre, which opened on 1 December 2008. Also on display are the fine Skinnet cross-slab and the rune-inscribed cross from old St Peter’s.

The Centre is set in the extensively refurbished former Thurso town hall and Carnegie library,

and it houses a magnificent collection laying out the history of Caithness, together with the Dounreay Exhibition. The centre has a cafe, art gallery, tourist information, shop and much more. Open Mon–Sat 10.00am–8.00pm; Sun 11.00–4.00pm. Telephone: 01847 806086

We would appreciate a report from any member visiting the new museum this year.

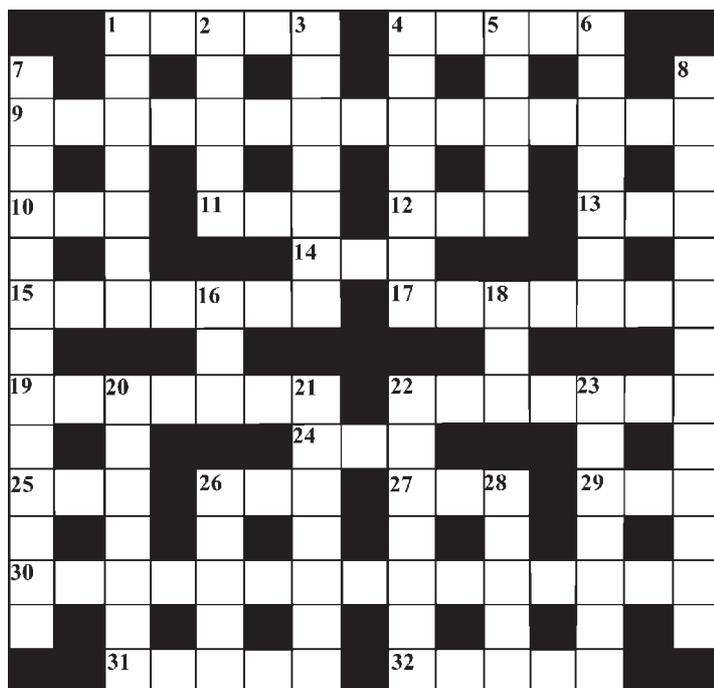
## Crossword

### Across

- 1 Inclines (5)
- 4 Regal headwear (5)
- 9 Raises liquid in a roundabout way (10,5)
- 10 Crazy fruit (3)
- 11 Botanical lifeblood (3)
- 12 Abbreviated gang of pictophiles (3)
- 13 Ailing (3)
- 14 The Sun King, to his close friends (3)
- 15 Garden stick stuffed with Japanese currency becomes hot (7)
- 17 Most famous artist of 20<sup>th</sup> century (7)
- 19 Small one (7)
- 22 Journalistic piece (7)
- 24 Fish (3)
- 25 Furry insect (3)
- 26 Concealed (3)
- 27 (See 6 down) (3)
- 29 Aquatic propulsion device (3)
- 30 Italian job in southern Pictland (5,10)
- 31 Takes a chance (5)
- 32 Confused roles ensure he's not a winner (5)

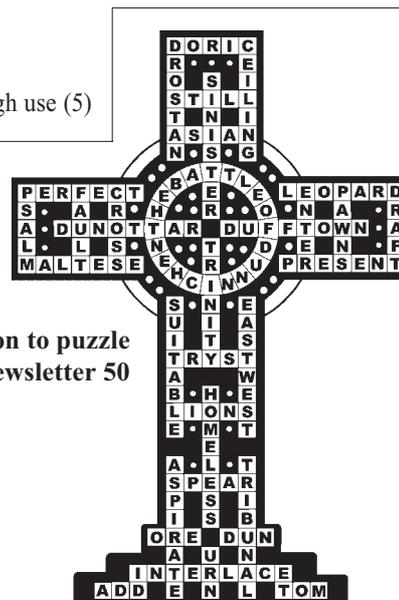
### Down

- 1 Stretch of water famous for its crannogs (4,3)
- 2 A young woman out of place (5)
- 3 The pinnacle of church architecture (7)
- 4 Approach with stealth (5-2)
- 5 Band, and confused, so is a green island (5)
- 6 (+ 27 across) The legislation that produced Pictish pendants? (7,3)
- 7 Illustrious bishop of Lindisfarne (5,8)
- 8 New metro deal represents a move in the right direction (1,7,5)
- 16 None whatsoever (3)
- 18 A sacred animal of ancient Egypt (3)
- 20 The confused Mr Reade never actually achieves anything (7)



Compiled by Ron Dutton

- 21 Decreases (7)
- 22 A blatant exaggeration of the Burghead symbols, perhaps? (3,4)
- 23 Bishop's staff (7)
- 26 Stag's mate (5)
- 28 Deteriorates through use (5)

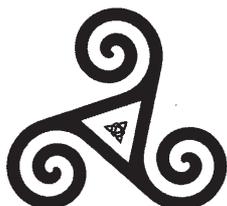


Solution to puzzle  
in PAS Newsletter 50

## Canongate Jerseys & Crafts

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Office Tel: 01463 811883

- 16 July** *Dr Alasdair Ross*  
Townships, timber, and trees in the late-medieval Highlands
- 27 August** *Dr Jane Geddes*  
New Discoveries of early medieval sculpture at St Vigeans
- 10 September** *Dr David H Caldwell*  
Discovering the real Robinson Crusoe – excavations on a Pacific Island
- 27 October** *Professor Mick Aston*  
The Making of Time Team

## Cultural Icons of Medieval Scotland

Conference at  
**King's College, University of Aberdeen**  
22–23 July 2009  
Free of charge and open to all



Highlighting the cultural achievements of the medieval North and the objects which help us define the identity and early history of Scotland.

**Wednesday 22 July, 6pm**  
**Public Lecture**

King's College (Room KCG 8)

*Professor David Dumville (Aberdeen)*

The Book of Deer: A monument  
of North-Eastern book production

This conference is sponsored by the Research Institute of Irish-Scottish Studies, Aberdeen; and The Book of Deer Project.

Admission to the events is free and requires no pre-booking.

All lecture halls and facilities are on ground-floor level and are accessible for wheel chair users.

To reserve seats for visitors with impaired mobility or hearing, please contact [cel049@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:cel049@abdn.ac.uk)

**Thursday 23 July 2009**

James McKay Hall

**Conference**

8.45–9.15 am Registration

9.15 *Alex Woolf (St Andrews)*

Introduction

9.30 *Heather Pulliam (Edinburgh)*  
The Book of Deer and Pictish Art

10.00 *Dauvit Broun (Glasgow)*  
Gaelic notes in the Book of Deer

10.45 Tea/Coffee

11.10 *Ewan Campbell (Glasgow)*  
The Stone of Destiny

11.40 *Jane Geddes (Aberdeen)*  
The Pictish Stones of St Vigeans

12.10 *Ragnall Ó Floinn*  
*(National Museum of Ireland)*  
The Monymusk Reliquary

13.00 Lunch break

14.15 *Susan Youngs (Oxford)*  
St Ninian's Isle Hoard

14.45 *Gareth Williams (British Museum)*  
Skail silver hoard, Orkney

15.30 Tea/Coffee

16.00 *Ted Cowan (Glasgow)*  
The Declaration of Arbroath

16.30 *Jane Stevenson (Aberdeen)*  
The Aberdeen Breviary

17.15 *Louise Yeoman (BBC)*  
Closing remarks

17.30 End of Conference

**Pictish Arts Society, c/o Pictavia, Haughmuir, Brechin, Angus DD9 6RL**

The deadline for receipt of contributions to PAS Newsletter 52 is 15 August  
email copy and pictures to [pas.news@btconnect.com](mailto:pas.news@btconnect.com) or post to The Editor at the Pictavia address