THE PICTISH ARTS SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER 89 WINTER 2018

PAS AGM

Elgin Museum
Saturday 6 October 2018 at 17.00.

1. Apologies for absence were received from Sarah-Louise Coleman, Dr Barbara Crawford, Jennifer and Alex MacKay, David McGovern and Stewart Mowatt.

2. The Minutes of the 2017 AGM were approved as published, proposed by Peter Herbert and seconded by Anna Ritchie.

3. The President's and Secretary's Joint Report as published in Newsletter 88 was accepted by the meeting. John Borland ran through the previous year's activities, mentioning that attendance at Brechin Museum lectures was good and sometimes very good, while the current Elgin conference was a sell-out. A visit to the NMS storage facility in Edinburgh was an extra event, where participants had viewed the newly found symbol stone from Dyce, among others. He reported there was no progress regarding Logierait 2, a fine symbol stone that lies flat on the floor of Logierait Kirk. Attempts to get agreement about raising the stone foundered more than a year ago on one individual's veto.

Graeme Cruickshank asked if further consideration had been given to the idea of a one-day conference in place of the 6 Brechin lectures. John said that it took a great deal of time to organise a conference and a second conference would overstretch the committee's resources. Finding 8-10 academics/ archaeologists available on the same day was quite a task.

4. Copies of the Annual Accounts were"handed out by treasurer Hugh Coleman and showed that our funds were slightly improved. Funds are therefore available for a worthy project that safeguards Pictish sculpture, eg conservation, moving a stone to safety, providing specialised armature.

5. It was agreed to continue with the present Independent Examiner.

6a. Membership secretary Elspeth Reid reported that membership was healthy with some new members joining. At this point in the year we did not know how many existing members would not renew, but numbers were probably going to remain around 110. Only 1 member lived in the USA despite the thousands of US Facebook supporters. 2 members lived in France, 2 in Wales, 1 in Northern Ireland and 12 in England, the remainder being spread over Scotland. Although a majority of members opted for paper newsletters, the gap had narrowed between postal and electronic pdf newsletters.

b. The Newsletter editor John Borland was pleased that content was coming in but he encouraged all members to consider submitting, for example, a book review or an opinion piece. He had been obliged to write up Brechin lectures himself and asked if anyone could write one up in his stead. Sheila Hainey had carried out that function for many years but now lived too far away to attend the talks. Fortunately she will continue to report the Conference lectures.

7. Election of Honorary Officers. President John Borland was re-elected unopposed. Vice President David McGovern stood again and was re-elected. Stewart Mowatt stepped down as VP after many years but was elected to remain on the Committee. Elspeth Reid remained as Honorary and Membership secretary and Archivist; Hugh Coleman as Treasurer; John Borland as Editor. Committee members Sheila Hainey, Nigel Ruckley and Barbara Thompson offered themselves for re-election and were duly re-elected.

Following a newsletter plea for new committee members, nominations were received for Sheila Fraser and Bill Stephens, who were elected to the Committee. John asked Bill to take on the job of arranging Brechin speakers. Bill asked for time to consider [he has since accepted]. Sheila Hainey agreed to take on the role of organising speakers and location for next year's conference.

AOCB Elspeth explained that she held the archive of books, journals and some newsletters in her house temporarily while a proper home was sought for it. Pam Cranston suggested the universities of St Andrews and Dundee. A discussion followed about HES who had stored it in the past and then requested its removal. John offered to enquire at HES. It was agreed that community groups cannot guarantee longevity since they depend heavily on a few individuals. Barbara Thompson offered to sound out Angus Archives [who have subsequently agreed].

Elspeth said although the PAS series of Journals was complete in the archive, the newsletter collection had many gaps and she asked for donations of unwanted paper newsletters. Peter Herbert offered to scan Journals as pdfs for our website.

A question to Sheila Hainey about where she might hold the PAS Conference 2019 prompted a discussion of various possibilities. After staging a conference in the north, PAS usually chose a central belt location. Although Western Isles or Orkney were very appealing, there were too many logistical problems and financial constraints to pick them as venues.

Finally, David Henry proposed a vote of thanks to John Borland and the PAS Committee for all their efforts, which was underlined by a round of applause from the audience.

The AGM concluded. *ER*

PAS Conference 2018
Moray and Beyond

(morning session)

Our first speaker of the day was Steven Birch with a paper entitled *The Rosemarkie Caves Project*. Using a combination of volunteer and professional archaeologists and with close ties to the North of Scotland Archaeological Society, this project has been investigating nineteen caves which lie along the coast between Rosemarkie and the Cromarty Firth. For the most part, these caves lie at least three metres above the high water mark, raised above the waves as the land responded to the release of pressure after the last ice age.

One, Caird's Cave, was excavated in the early twentieth century and a collection of finds was later donated to the National Museum of Scotland. Among them was an elegant bone pin with an amber inlay, dated stylistically to the early medieval period. Radiocarbon dates obtained from some of the museum material and from the recent excavation suggest that the cave had been in use in at least two earlier phases as well as during the Pictish period (7th-8th centuries).

All the caves were surveyed in detail. Eight were test pitted, and dates for occupation layers were obtained. These showed that people had used the caves at various times from the Iron Age to the nineteenth or early twentieth century. Test pitting, however, gave no indication of the nature of use, so a large scale excavation of cave Learnie 2B was begun in 2016. This is one of a group of caves in the bluff below Learnie Farm, which all produced evidence of post-medieval occupation. In addition, Learnie 2B had yielded up a Roman coin (of Tetricus I, late 3rd century), as well as a late medieval wall at the entrance to the cave. Excavation revealed that the wall, monumental in build with substantial door checks, had been augmented by a wattle screen. A layer of rock fall material which had been brought to the cave covered the wall, perhaps preventing use of the cave for some activity such as smuggling. There was little indication as to why the wall had been built but some medieval red ware and Scottish red gritty ware lay below it. Beneath the pottery, layers of blown sand were interspersed with occupation layers suggesting episodic use of the cave. In the early medieval/Pictish period levels there was clear indication of metal working.

Towards the rear of the cave, post- and stake-holes indicated a structure that had screened off the back of the cave; in front of these a cobbled area may once have held an anvil while nearby a hearth, vitrified furnace material and a possible charcoal store were uncovered. Plentiful hammer-scale in this area indicated bloom refining and smithing rather than smelting of iron ore. Beyond the screen, in an alcove in the north wall, a post-medieval floor and earlier midden material were removed. As the work proceeded down to the early medieval horizon, animal bones appeared in increasing numbers. Below these, lay a well preserved human skeleton. This was no ordinary burial: a large beach cobble had pinned down the lower limbs which were splayed out, butterfly fashion. More stones had been used to pin down the arms. Distinct caches of bones from meat-bearing joints from at least eight different cattle and two horse bones lay above the head region. When these were removed, it became clear that the well-preserved skull had suffered severe damage to the cranium and jaw. A number of scientists were called in to examine the remains, including Prof. Dame Sue Black's team from Dundee University.

The man had died as the result of a frenzied attack. Powerful blows, from a spear or pole and a 'blunt instrument' had smashed into his jaw – right then left, perhaps knocking him back or down to strike his head on a hard surface. He was probably unconscious when the spear or pole was driven all the way through the skull, just in front of the temple. A final violent blow to the top of his head penetrated and set up fracture lines across the cranium.

We know quite a lot about this individual. He was probably between 25–35 years old, about 5'6"–5'9" tall, well-nourished and with excellent teeth. He had powerful forearms and a strong grip. The protein in his diet probably came mainly from freshwater fish and/or pig. His Y-chromosome belonged to a lineage common in Europe and with numerous representatives in Britain today. Viewing a reconstruction of his face, he would not look out of place in Rosemarkie today. And he probably died in the late fifth or sixth century, in the Pictish period. He was either naked or was stripped of any clothes or personal items before he was laid out in a deviant from of burial. No grave had been dug for him; his remains were probably visible for many years. So much we can determine, but we do not know who he was, who killed him, or why – was this murder, execution or sacrifice?

Dates obtained from the early metalworking in the cave suggest that this post-dated the man's death, but possibly only by tens of years. His remains would still have been clearly visible, and this perhaps was why the screen was erected. Certainly, no hammer-scale was found in the alcove where he lay. At the back of the cave there was other unusual early medieval activity: the articulated remains of a juvenile cow lay in a curved stone setting underlying a hearth. This was only a few metres from the man's body, but dates have not yet been obtained from this skeleton.

The main adjacent caves (Learnie 1A, 1B and 2C) were also excavated. Learnie 2B showed no signs of medieval occupation. However, below the post-medieval layer in 1B was a deposit of cobbles and talus, thinning towards the edges of the cave. This layer contained traces of exposure to very high temperatures, and the largest quantity of animal bones found in these excavations. In the Pictish

layers, there was more evidence of high temperature burning. Below a domestic hearth at the back of the cave was another hearth associated with slag, hammer-scale and other evidence of smithing which dated somewhat later than the similar activity in Learnie 2B. Immediately above the basal sand layer within the entrance, a curved line of postholes indicated a planned division of space. Pictish period activity in Learnie 1A took the form of metalworking in the entrance chamber.

In all these caves, there was evidence for craft activities ranging from leather and horn working to basketry and tin smithing in the relatively recent past. This probably reflects temporary occupation by itinerant craft workers who supplied their wares to the residents of Rosemarkie and its hinterland. However, in the Pictish period, the caves seem to have only been used by smiths. This raises a number of questions: were the smiths who worked here connected in some way to the religious establishment at Rosemarkie? Why were the caves chosen for such use – was there a sense of these as dark magical places or did itinerant smiths choose to work here for purely pragmatic reasons? Future work by the Rosemarkie Caves Project may help to suggest answers to these and other questions about the use of the caves throughout the past.

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The second paper of the morning from Jane Geddes was entitled *The St Andrews Sarcophagus and the Kineddar David: tombs for anointed Pictish Kings.* Jane began by acknowledging the work of many other scholars, notably Penny Dransart on the Kineddar David and Isabel Henderson and Sally Foster and colleagues on the St Andrews Sarcophagus. She pointed out that the latter is not, in fact, a sarcophagus designed to hold a dead and decaying body. It is a corner-post shrine, a repository for translated relics. The Kineddar fragment is also from a corner post shrine.

St Andrews Sarcophagus has been associated with the Pictish king Onuist son of Uurguist, who died in 761, and has been seen as symbolic of the interdependence of church and state. A consideration of its iconography in the light of certain biblical passages and commentaries and other books available in Pictish monasteries, and in the context of the Frankish innovation of anointed kingship, may lead to a deeper understanding of the evolving church /state relationship at this period.

Probably designed to be viewed in a public but restricted space such as a church or mausoleum, the St Andrews Sarcophagus was possibly set against a north wall with the long panel facing south. The dominant figure at the right of this panel would then look towards the east, potentially to the site of an altar. Isabel Henderson has given a detailed analysis of the carvings on the panels and corner posts of the sarcophagus.[1] Briefly, beginning with the long side panel, to the viewer's left, the lower of two registers contains a wolf and cub pursued by a hunting dog, with the huntsman following on foot but not yet moving in for the kill. In the upper register, a tree entangles several enigmatic animals in a manner unique among Pictish carvings. A quadruped grips the back of a hind; its head (above the hind's rump) is twisted to face out towards the viewer, and has sustained some damage. It is difficult to determine the nature of the beast. To the right of this group, a curious squatting figure may represent an ape or monkey. Above these animals, a lean quadruped stretches downwards to bite the hindquarters of what may be another wolf cub. To the right, a lion breaks out of the tree to confront a mounted huntsman, placed centrally in the upper register. His hair, much longer than the pedestrian hunter's below, his hawk on his left arm, and his sword raised in his right hand ready to strike the lion, as well as his place on horseback, mark him out as a man of noble or kingly status. Below him, a gryphon perches, biting the neck of a mule or horse whose knees have given way.

The right hand section of the panel is fully occupied by a human figure in the act of rending the jaws of a lion. Above his shoulders are small figures of a ram and (possibly) a dog, marking him as King David, the shepherd who killed the lion to protect his flock. He is shown as a comely and mature man. His flowing hair and full moustache are reminiscent of representations of Frankish kings. His full tunic, closed at the neck by a fastener incorporating tasselled drawstrings, and the pleated folds of the pallium which is arranged around his body and over his shoulders show marked classical influences. The neck fastener may hark back to the imperial brooches introduced by Constantine and given to provincial rulers as a badge of rank which were later copied and elaborated. An ornately sheathed knife or short sword lies closely on his thigh, but he uses only his hands to kill the lion which is held on up on its hind legs and balanced against its killer's thigh.

Interlace on the surviving end panel surrounds a cross with four squared terminals: two containing bosses composed of writhing snakes or reptiles and two containing two figures each, sitting facing each other. In the upper left the figures sit confronting, with a hand (or paw) resting on each other's thighs. This pair has cat-like ears. In the lower right the animals may be monkeys, possibly with a hand or paw resting below the other's thigh.

Whatever these scenes represent, they held meanings intelligible for their contemporary audience. The Bible and commentaries (especially those of St Augustine of Hippo), the works of writers such as Isidore of Seville and works such as the Physiologus, an early medieval text which attached Christian allegories to a number of animals often with illustrations, may all have been present in Pictish monastic libraries. It is highly likely that soon after the anointing of Pepin, king of the Franks in 754 by Pope Stephen II, news of the ceremony reached Onuist's realm. The surviving texts detailing the coronation services for Frankish kings are also worth

consulting for the influences behind the composition of such ceremonies.

The main panel may reflect several biblical passages. For example Psalm 21:4 refers to the king beset: 'They gaped upon me with their mouths as a ravening and roaring lion,' while Jeremiah 5:5-6 tells of the fate of great men who have rebelled against God: 'Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces, because their backslidings are many.'

The lion in these passages appears as a king-breaker, dealing out God's punishment where kings are weak and the people stray. The animals entangled in the tree may represent the wild beasts ready to deal with the unrighteous. The curious ape or ape/man hybrid appears to be a Pictish addition; the Physiologus equates apes or monkeys with the devil himself. The mounted lion-slayer is a familiar figure in representations of Royal hunts in Roman and Sassanian art. Here, we may have a version of a Royal Pictish hunting scene, with the mounted huntsman subduing the beasts that threaten the kingdom. The gryphon – half eagle, half lion – is a royal creature seen destroying the horse, symbol of the king's (mounted) enemies.

In Psalm 44:4 we are given the image of the king as a handsome, powerful man: 'Thou art beautiful above the sons of man: full of grace are thy lips, because the lord hath blessed thee forever'. In verse 5 he is exhorted to 'gird thee with thy sword upon thy thigh'. For Augustine, the imagery of bridegroom and bride in this psalm is a representation of the king and his kingdom (or Christ and his church). The king has been anointed by God and elevated above men; his kingdom is to forsake all and remain true only to him.

In contemplating this panel moving from left to right, we see the consequences of bad kingship and a people turning away from what is good, to the fight back and eventual triumph of a good king – David, whose gaze, directed to the altar, acknowledges the source of his power.

The moment when the king bows to receive the unction from the hands of the priest is rarely depicted on Royal monuments. It is more frequently to be found in monastic manuscripts, for example where Samuel is shown anointing Saul as Israel's first king. However, the snakes on the end panel may reference this part of the coronation ceremony. The snake, in sloughing off its old skin and appearing anew, was seen as a metaphor for baptism. The anointing of the king was a second baptism, and the snakes may act as a reminder of this. The figures which appear to touch each other's thighs may represent the form of oath taking which Abraham asked of his servant when he sent him to find a bride for Isaac; the implication need not have been spelled out.

In Frankish coronation ceremonies, the king was handed his sword by a bishop, reminding him of his duty to defend the church which had mediated his anointment. The ceremony of pouring unction over the bowed head of the king, this act of anointment or second baptism, elevated him, his right arm strengthened to defend the church and his people exhorted to remain true to the Lord's chosen. The king is equated with David, and perhaps also with Christ as the ruler of a kingdom under God.

In the absence of any surviving Pictish documents, we have little information about the relationship between church and state during Onuist's reign. The Annals of Ulster record the death of Tuathal·n, Abbot of Cennrigmonaid in 747, implying that the monastery at St Andrews was founded by that point. Onuist has been credited with establishing the cult of St Andrew here, perhaps in competition with the cults of St Columba at Iona, St Bride at Abernethy and St Cuthbert at Lindisfarne. Onuist may have felt the need of a different patron to protect him as he extended his hegemony over a wide territory through a long reign. He may even have been an 'early adopter' of the coronation rite. The anointing and legitimating of a king whose claim to royal power was doubtful in Pepin's case may have encouraged Onuist, whose claims were similarly dependent on force of arms, to follow suit.

However, dead men do not commission their own reliquary shrines. The imagery on the St Andrews Sarcophagus, and on what survives of the corner-post shrine from Kineddar, was commissioned by later men of rank and power to emphasise their own importance to church and state. Both northern and southern branches of Onuist's descendants may have enshrined relics of their illustrious ancestor in these magnificent monuments, culting the first anointed king of Pictland. At the same time, this would serve to remind their people of their own claims to power. The equation of Onuist with David, an anointed king, may have been of significance in the years following his death, and may explain the clusters of such imagery in the dioceses of both St Andrews and Kineddar.

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The third paper of the morning given by Derek Jennings was called *Let Dear be its name from now onwards: the search for the monastery of Deer.* The Book of Deer, now held in Cambridge University Library, is a small illuminated pocket gospel book, dating to the 9th or 10th century. Later notes added to it in the 11th and 12th centuries are the earliest examples of written Scots Gaelic. These include the legend of the foundation and naming of the monastery of Deer by Saints Columba and Drostan as well as records of grants of land to the monastery. One of the latter is dated to the reign of David I, possibly eighty years before the founding of the Cistercian Abbey of Deer, whose remains are now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The old monastery may have been demolished when the Abbey was established in 1219.

Over the past eight years, the Book of Deer Project

and the Friends of Aden Park have worked together with a large number of collaborators, volunteers and sponsors in a search for the early monastery of Deer. Late Columban traditions and the possible records in Irish Annals of the deaths of two Abbots of Deer in the seventh century led to speculation that Deer was a candidate for a counterpart among the Picts of the major Columban foundation of Lindisfarne in Anglian territory. This was long before the discovery of the monastery of Portmahomack. – It is possible that monks of Deer were trained in the scriptorium at Portmahomack, or even that monks from that site founded Deer.

The search for the early monastery initially focussed on three main areas: Aden Park, near Mintlaw and Old Deer, the village of Old Deer itself, and its church and churchyard. Three different archaeological companies have been involved in the work, as well as many volunteers and around three hundred schoolchildren each year.

An early discovery in Aden Park was the surviving part of a Bronze Age roundhouse village with an associated path network. The remainder of the site had been destroyed in relatively recent times to make way for an arboretum. More recently, an 'episcopal meeting place', thought to have been created during the 18th century when persecution was at its height, proved on excavation to be the site of a documented lost castle of the Keith family. However, no trace of the old monastery of Deer was found.

Small trenches in Old Deer uncovered evidence of the medieval village, but again, no trace of the early monastery. The churchyard of Old Deer seemed more promising: the earlier church here dated to the medieval period. The site itself, a mound known as the Tap o' Tillery lying in a bend of the South Ugie river, is of a type frequently used for early minsters (mother churches) such as the site of St Machar's in Aberdeen. The chance recovery of an 1870's lair plan of the graveyard enabled the identification of clear spaces where excavation was possible both within and outside the old church. Although the team dug down to depths of up to six feet, they found nothing that could indicate early medieval occupation. It is possible that they simply had not gone deep enough. Although care was taken to avoid burial plots, fragments of bone and a number of artefacts were recovered. These included two coins, which, following an old tradition, had probably been place on the eyelids of a corpse. A luckenbooth style brooch of James VI's reign may have been pinned to a baby's shawl - an amulet to protect against witches at a time when witchcraft trials were common.

The final area targeted was the vicinity of the Cistercian Abbey of Deer. The Cistercians had a preference for building on greenfield sites, which argued against the abbey covering the site of the monastery. This was not necessarily always the case: Culross Abbey may have been built over or close to an earlier Pictish foundation. Possibly this was true at Deer. A pointer to the possible existence of an early church in the vicinity was a symbol stone, subsequently inverted and carved with an incised outline cross which was found close to the Abbey. This was destroyed and said to have been buried in the foundations of a dower house around the same time as a family mausoleum was built on part of the abbey site. Four out of the five Pictish symbol stones known in Buchan have come from old church sites. Perhaps, whatever the original reason for erecting these stones, incoming monks or priests saw these as focal points where people gathered, and so chose to use them as preaching stones, later building their churches and monasteries beside them. It was at least possible that the symbol stone at Deer Abbey had stood near the Pictish monastery of Deer.

In 2017-18, excavations were carried out in a field to the west of the scheduled site of the abbey. One of the trenches contained evidence for small-scale industrial activity, with a furnace, slag and hearth possibly protected by a wicker screen. Dates obtained for this would have been compatible with activity associated with the building of the Cistercian abbey. Pottery dating to the 12th-14th centuries came from this area. Somewhat lower, an incised hnefatafl board edged with a Solomon's knot lay above layers radio-carbon dated to the 7th-8th centuries. Further excavation revealed post-holes of a building also dated to the late 7th-8th century. Perhaps this is indeed the site of the early Monastery of Deer. However, this level was only reached towards the end of the season, leaving us to await further exploration to see if this is indeed the place of which Columba said: 'Let Deer be its name from now onwards.'

The Book of Deer Project is largely community driven. As well as enthusiastic volunteers carrying out a whole range of tasks associated with the excavation, recording and the investigation of surviving records, it includes some expert fund raisers. Thanks to them, and their donors, investigations at the possible site of the early Pictish monastery of Deer will continue for several years to come.

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The final paper paper of the morning session from Craig Stanford was called *Norse Interactions in Moray*. A map of areas with known Norse connections shows modern Moray as a blank. Craig reviewed the evidence for potential interaction with Norse in this district and nearby, allowing for the fact that boundaries have changed over the centuries. Place-name evidence is scant indeed. It is possible that the old Norse 'Borg' (fort) is to be found in Burghead, while the personal name Kolbein may lie behind Culbin Sands. Ardanes and Swordanes near Banff are said to commemorate battles with Scandinavian invaders. Reyton, near Aboyne, is another that may incorporate a personal Norse name. Moray has not, however, been well-served in terms of place-name studies. It may well be that these

names have other derivations, or, indeed, that there are many more with Norse roots.

Historical sources for the period of Norse activity elsewhere in Britain contain few mentions that could certainly be taken as referring to places in or people from Moray. Annals, King-lists, Chronicles and later Icelandic Sagas were all consulted, with few results. In the 9th century, we know of a series of major conflicts in mainland Scotland, but the geographical locations of many of these are vague. For the 10th and 11th centuries, there are fewer mentions, and the focus is more clearly on southern Scotland. This may well be a bias in the sources, rather than a reflection of an absence of Norse activity in the north. However, in 904, Õmar was, according to the Annals of Ulster, slain in battle by the men of Fortriu. This may have been the battle referred to as taking place in that same year in the Chronicle of the Kings of Alba, where the Northmen were slain in Strath Erenn. Since the nineteenth century, this was accepted as Strathearn in Perthshire. However, as it seems probable that Fortriu lay north of the Mounth, it is at least worth considering the possibility that this battle was fought somewhere in the vicinity of the Findhorn – also originally known as the Earn.

The Orkneyinga Saga does suggest Norse activity in this general area, but requires to be approached with caution. The composition of this saga is much later than the period when Picts and Norse came into contact, and may contain much that is propaganda rather than sober fact. The same is probably true of later accounts of battles against Danes at Forres and Mortlach as well as at Ardanes and Swordanes.

Archaeological evidence is also sparse. Two possible pagan Norse burials appear in antiquarian accounts: a burial accompanied by sword, spear and other iron objects was recorded at Burghead in 1810, but nothing has been preserved. The 10th century sword found during railway building work at Gorton is now in the National Museum of Scotland, but there was no mention of any other remains. At Ballindalloch, a burial with a horse was claimed as Norse but is more likely to have been of Iron Age date.

Over recent years, a number of finds have been made by metal detectorists. Although these lack stratigraphic associations, they do at least extend the evidence for Norse interactions in Moray. Craig detailed several types of artefacts. First, there are several copper alloy ringed pins. These seem to have had early origins in Ireland, where the Viking settlers in Dublin picked up on this style and manufactured them from the 9th-12th centuries. A thread or cord was attached to the ring and used to secure the pin. These pins are found in Scandinavia, Iceland and even in Viking North America. The type with a polyhedral head is the most common in Moray, with examples from the Culbin Sands and from near Llanbryde. A baluster-headed version was found in the Doune of Relugas.

Metal strap ends, often with boss-capped rivets or indications of where rivets once held the tag to a leather strap, sometimes with incised decoration, were used in a wide range of situations – on dress fasteners, belts, horse harness and so on. An example from Clarkly Hill is of a type dating from the 9th-11th centuries, and has an insular distribution, being found in the Irish Sea milieu, Dublin and the Isle of Man, and in the Danelaw but not in Scandinavia. Again, this seems to be derived from a native form and popularised by Vikings. Similarly, a Norse bell, also from Clarkly Hill, is of a type common in the Danelaw and Irish Sea region. This too seems to be a native form which became popular with Norse settlers. The sword pommel from Clarkly Hill, however, is of a Norse type found in the Danelaw but not in Ireland. A bird brooch, another find detected at Clarkly Hill, is of a type found across the Viking world, in Scandinavia and in the Danelaw.

A stone with possible runic inscription at Knockando has been dismissed as a forgery on the basis of three weak arguments: Knockando is in the wrong neighbourhood for any Norse activity. As Craig has made clear, perhaps there is already evidence in Moray for more interaction with the Norse world than is generally recognised. Secondly, the inscription IA HAY and date 1714 appears on the stone. It was asserted that the forger had been good enough to leave his name and date on the stone. Given the location of the stone in the graveyard, it is far more likely to assume that this reflects re-use of the stone as a grave-marker, as was the case for the Brodie Stone. Finally, the runes look a bit odd. The latter argument, that the runes are not quite close enough to the younger Futhark, is perhaps the only one that is admissible. However, a colleague of Craig's working at the University of Bergen has suggested that the Knockando runes may be read as either 'sikvik' or 'sigvik,' meaning 'stream bay' or 'battle bay' respectively.

There is evidence to suggest that there were early Norse interactions with the people of Moray. So far, there is nothing to indicate whether the metal work finds arrived as a result of local people travelling and returning with Norse goods, or whether these came into Moray to be sold at temporary markets set up by Norse traders. They may reflect short term settlements, or they may have been worn by raiding Norsemen and reflect the violence dimly suggested in the historic record. At any rate, it is time for a reappraisal of the contents of Elgin Museum and others containing material from this area. Further study of place names and historic records may also prove valuable. Finally, excavation of sites of potential interest, such as the Northern Picts project dig at Burghead may reveal much more about the cultural identity of those involved in Norse interactions in Moray. *Sheila Hainey*

Footnote

1 See papers in *The St Andrews Sarcophagus* edited by Sally Foster (1998).

A report on the afternoon session
will appear in the next newsletter.

Elgin Museum

A private view for PAS conference-goers

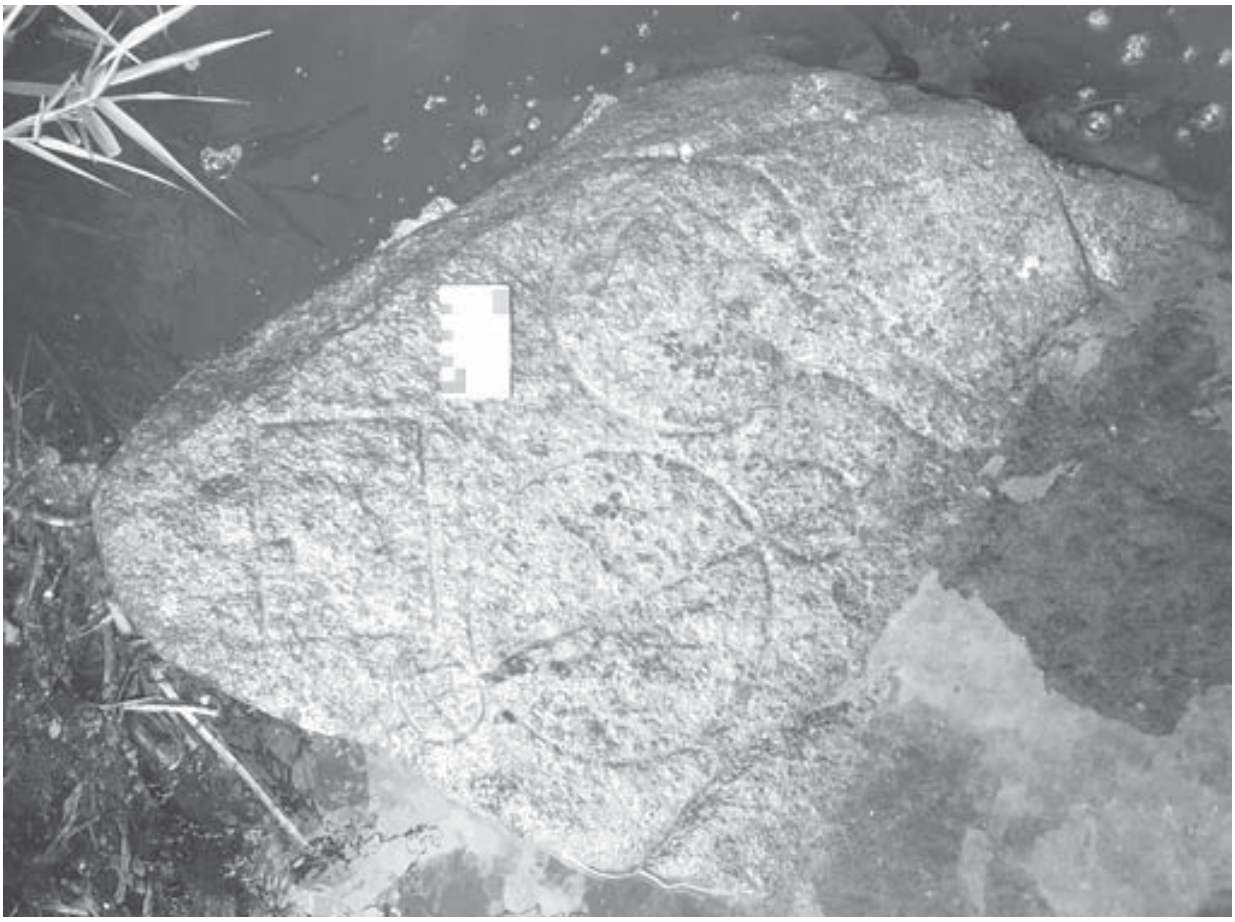
Elgin Museum – the venue for this year's PAS conference – is home to a splendid collection of Pictish sculpture including a large assemblage from nearby Kinneddar, two of the Burghead Bulls and the recently discovered symbol stone from Dandaleith. In addition they have an excellent display of local archaeological finds from the Iron Age and Pictish period. Given that our opportunity to visit the museum during the weekend's proceedings would be limited, the staff and volunteers kindly agreed to open up for us on the Friday evening, giving conference goers a private view. A similar event was staged in the Inverness Museum for the 2016 conference, when about 15 of us spent an enjoyable evening perusing their display.

It therefore came as a pleasant surprise to have over 30 people, including some of our speakers, turn up for the Elgin soirÈe. PAS laid on some refreshments and those in attendance spent a thoroughly enjoyable two hours, looking at and discussing the stones in great detail and of course renewing old acquaintances. As if the museum's display of sculpture wasn't good enough to begin with, Moray Society Vice President Janet Trythall brought those few fragments that aren't normally on display from the museum's store so that we could see the collection in full. Moreover, she even arranged to borrow a few more fragments from the Falconer Museum in Forres, including a recently discovered piece, which has a close parallel in one of the Kinneddar cross slabs. In welcoming us after-hours and in laying on additional sculpture for our eyes only, the Elgin Museum staff and volunteers did us proud on the night – a clear indication that they would do all they could to make Saturday's conference a success. *JB*

Exciting New Discovery!

In July, an angler fishing in the River Don was casting from the bank close to St Fergus' Church, Dyce, when he noticed carving on a stone protruding from the water. The stone would ordinarily have been submerged but was exposed due to this year's long hot summer. He notified archaeologists from Aberdeen University who examined it and confirmed it as a Pictish symbol stone. The surrounding area was surveyed and the stone subsequently removed to safety. It bears at least three symbols: a rectangle, a triple disc and a mirror. It is currently in storage whilst it is processed through the Crown Office's Treasure Trove Unit.

Whilst walking through Cupar, my HES colleague John Sherriff spotted a stone with a small incised equal armed cross, built into the churchyard wall on the east side of Ashlar Lane. *JB*



The new Dyce symbol stone, as it was found in the River Don

PAS supports Aberdeen University History undergrads' venture

In the spring of 2018 the Pictish Arts Society generously provided part of the funds for myself and fellow students Rory Hardie, Steven Lynch and James McEwan to collaborate with Strathnaver Museum in Sutherland on a project to provide them with new modern Pictish interpretations, based around the Farr Stone which is in the museum grounds.

THE ART OF THE PICTS

"Symbols on skin and on stone"

The Symbols

The Picts had a unique language of symbols that are visible from the Shetland islands to the Lothians.

These images are thought to have been tattooed across their bodies but also on jewelry and cave walls. The most distinctive and lasting legacy of the Picts and their symbols are the Standing Stones.

The truth is we still don't know exactly what the Pictish symbol stones were for. Some likely interpretations maybe that the stones were markers; for boundaries, important weddings, battles or burials.

Here at Strathnaver we are lucky to have a very fine example of a later Pictish Stone in the grounds of the museum, a complex work of early art known as the Farr Stone.

Stones are ordered into classes, based on their characteristics.

Class I stones are some of the earliest and and most primitive examples of Pictish stone art. Their symbols appear to be pre-Christian, so provide an insight into the indigenous culture in Northern Scotland. Many of these symbols are remarkable for their craftsmanship and artististry, such as the Burghead Bull (left).

Class I stones are often carved on boulders or rugged stones. We can hazard a guess that a symbol such as the Burghead Bull suggests power, fertility and strength. But what of symbols such as the double-disk and Z-rod? It could be a symbol balancing light and darkness, a Pictish Yin-Yang. But no one can be sure.

Class II Stones

Class II stones date to the period from the late 7th century to the 9th. This was a golden age for the carved stones, with many sublime examples of indigenous and Christian symbols partnering on stones.

In this period we see symbols being carved into prepared slabs of stone, sometimes stone that had been quarried and transported from many miles away. This shows the complex infrastructure existing at the time!

The Farr Stone

The Farr Stone, which stands outside the museum, is a class III stone. Class III stones mark the cross roads between Pictish and wider christian culture. The symbology of the early Picts is eclipsed by Celtic Christian crosses and the Farr Stone is a spectacular example of this final stage of Pictish rock art.

The Farr Stone is likely to be a grave marker in the christian tradition, its size, intricacy and skill suggest that it is the grave of a high-status Pictish individual.

The stone indicates that burials have been conducted in this very spot for at least one thousand years. This reveals the long history of settlement in Strathnaver, by those attracted to the Strath for its fertility and safety.

Rory, Ali, Steven and James in Strathnaver Museum with their finished information panels

The project went ahead with very satisfactory results. Two high-quality Pictish interpretation boards are now on permanent display at the museum, after extensive community outreach and input. A video containing interviews with tradition bearers, local historians and academics at the University of Aberdeen is also available to view there. The video and the boards allowed a new synthesis of information about Strathnaver's Pictish heritage to emerge, bringing together folklore, academic overviews, place-name evidence and locally-published fieldwork research from archaeologists. This inter-disciplinary synthesis allowed a holistic image of the Picts in the far north to emerge, one that took account of their legacy in the landscape and their role in modern culture and imagination.

The new research threw up interesting information, such as previously unrecorded legends relating to the Farr Stone. This all adds great value to the video and interpretation boards at Strathnaver museum.

Our aim was always to enhance community engagement with the Pictish heritage of their area and rekindle curiosity for the local history. This was achieved through a well-attended public talk at the Strathnaver pub, as well as several interviews with local journalists. Thank you again to the Pictish Arts Society for the project funding. It has provided great service to an isolated community and added another useful piece of research and interpretation to celebrate the heritage of the northern Picts.

Alistair Heather


THE PICTS

"The painted people"

Who were the Picts?

Battle of Dun Nechtain 685 AD

What happened to the Picts?

An Ulbster secret revealed

In my memoir of Marianna Lines and her work (*PAS Newsletter* 88), I mentioned how she had drawn out a secret from the Ulbster stone, now in Caithness Horizons (formerly Thurso Museum). Romilly Allen has left us a dramatic account (in *ECMS*) of the torrid time it had suffered at the hands of both man and nature, which I quoted; we are indeed fortunate that it has survived at all. That fortune doubles in value when it is appreciated what a very special specimen it is.

On a stone rich in imagery on both sides, all that Allan could make out above the larger of the two crosses were some 'traces of an animal', of which he was unable to provide any detail whatever. When he came to draw the stone, despite someof the other figures which were in poor shape being rendered onlyincompletely, in this instance he decided to leave the area completely blank. Modern techniques can do no better; the premier photographer of Pictish stones, Tom Gray, failed to reveal any coherent form at that location, and the most experienced of measured drawers, John Borland, was likewise unable to discern any trace of a creature there.

We have to go back well over a century and a half to find the stone in such a condition that anything of this central creature of the three at the top of the stone could be seen. John Stuart's first volume of *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, published in 1856, features an illustration of the Ulbster stone when it was evidently in better condition than at the time of Allen's visit some four decades later. As can be seen here, he was able to show (in Plate XL, left) most of the animal which is entirely absent in the other sources mentioned above, with one crucial omission: its head, which he represents merely with a smudge.

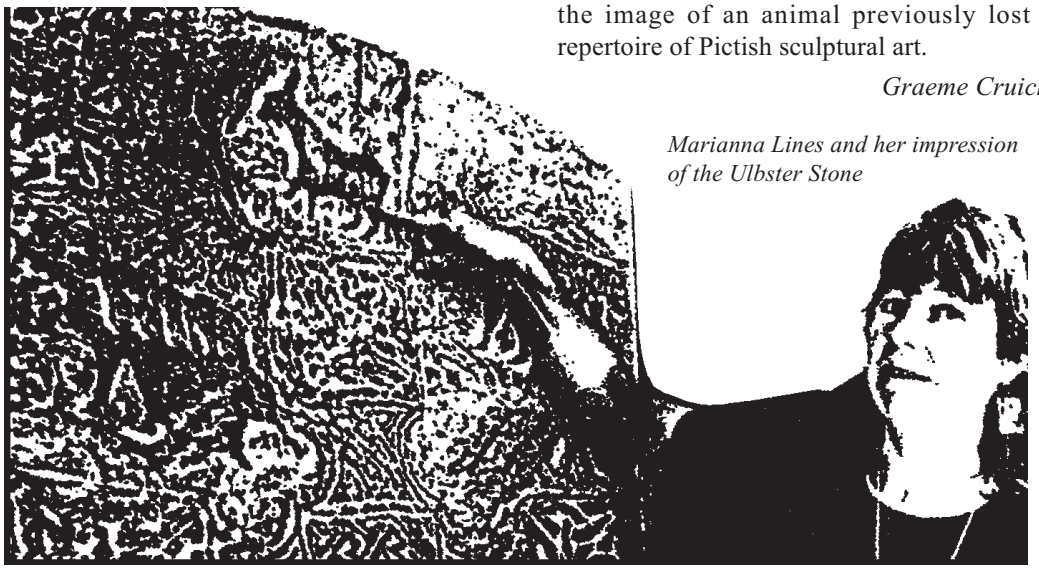
This is where Marianna's artwork comes into play. As described last time, and illustrated now, the central quadruped above the larger cross has a thick neck

The Ulbster Stone face A, as illustrated by P A Jastrzebski in Stuart's Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, vol 1*

and a large head of goatish appearance, with an exceptionally large horn. Even on this photocopy of a photocopy of a grainy photograph published in the*Caithness Courier* (10 Aug 1988) it gives an amazing degree of definition to this mysterious animal.

Marianna, seen here pointing to it, was clearly aware of the academic worth of the image which she had created. Of course, her method of making these impressions is open to manipulation, both accidental and deliberate, but her integrity as both an artist and a Pictophile would not have allowed her to perform any underhand manipulation; she let her fingertips do the talking, and the Ulbster goat comes across as the image of an animal previously lost to the repertoire of Pictish sculptural art.

Graeme Cruickshank



Marianna Lines and her impression of the Ulbster Stone

Autumn Lecture Series

21 September 2018 – John Borland

The Archers: An Everyday Story of Pictish Folk?

PAS President John Borland opened the 2018 autumn lecture series at Brechin Town House Museum by saying that it was always difficult to find a speaker for the September slot since lecturers were busy with students at the start of the academic year, while archaeologists were still involved with fieldwork. So he had been obliged to book his last choice – himself. This view was not shared by the audience since he drew a large crowd of members and non-members. The room was virtually full to capacity.

John's first slide displayed 20+ crescents and v-rods, arranged in rows and all drawn to scale. It was evident that they were all recognisably similar; even their sizes were within a range of 360–460mm wide. Yet despite consistency in form, individually they are all different. There is no sign of exact copying and no sign that stonecarvers used a template, as is often proposed. John's second slide compared a similar array of double discs and z-rods, carved within a range of 500–620mm wide. Again, there is a homogeneous Pictish style, but no two are a perfect match. A variety of decoration on the connecting bar, within the discs and at the z-rods terminals indicates there were no repeat patterns or exact overlay as would be expected from using a template.

Next, we were shown a comparative study of the notched rectangle and z-rod. With only a dozen incised examples known, this is much less common than the previous symbols. However five are to be found within a few kilometres of each other in the Spey Valley, with a sixth at Birnie nearby. This suggests that the symbol had an especial significance in the region, perhaps family heraldry. Yet theynare all quite different and thus there is again no evidence of itinerant workmen using a template. John concluded that symbols were individual pieces of art, created by stonecarvers with ability, who replicated the Pictish style but did not make copies.

We then looked at the Burghead bulls, all found at one site, in the fort. Only five out of c.20 remain, the others being probably used in making the harbour wall innmore modern times. Given the shape of the five stones, these did not form a frieze but could have been built into walls. The bulls are close in style and size and appear to have been contemporary with one another. They may even be the work of one hand but yet again, they are also varied.

With relief-carved cross slabs came figurative carving and ornament such as interlace, creating a very definite Pictish style, recognisable even from the smallest fragment. Among the numerous recurring themes on such sculpture is the hunt scene. John compared the hunt scenes on Kirriemuir 2, Inchbrayock, Elgin Cathedral and Shandwick. – These follow a set formula of components but each portrayal of the hunt is unique – there is seldom if ever any talk of possible templates here, given such diverse depictions.

Next we looked at the very different versions of how angels are depicted. Common details can be identified but once again we can safely rule out any notions of templates. When it came to clerics, the holy men were more formulaic but by no means identical. John made an analogy with baking, where different cooks can use the same ingredients but end up with very individual results.

So, John argued, if you do find images that are very close, if not identical, it is particularly noteworthy. He then introduced us to four bowmen – on the Drosten Stone at St Vigeans, the Shandwick cross slab, the Glenferness cross slab and on the lost panel Meigle 10 (of which there are five drawings providing a visual record).

The bowmen are all in an identical kneeling posture. From the three extant examples, it is clear that they are each holding a crossbow in the same grip. At St Vigeans, we can even see the bolt on the stock ready to shoot. These three bowmen all wear an identical and distinctive cape, with a concave peaked hood. On the Drosten Stone the hunter levels his weapon at an oncoming boar. On Shandwick he aims it at a retreating stag. On Glenferness the bowman points his bow in exactly the same way but the stone is so worn that his target is no longer visible. John pointed out that, unlike the first two, this bowman is facing left instead of right. Could this be evidence of a template being deliberately or accidentally reversed?

The Meigle hunter does not have these defining details. He is not shown wearing a cape with a peaked hood and it is not possible to say whether he holds a bow or a crossbow. However John argued that here, we are limited by the accuracy (or lack thereof) of the antiquarian illustrators. Showing the 19th century drawing of the Glenferness hunter by Polish artist P A Jastrzesbski (from Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotlan*d vol. 1), he demonstrated how this showed a generic kneeling figure with a bow. It does not record the peaked hood or the distinctive grip that shows he holds a crossbow. As chance would have it, Jastrzesbski's drawing of Meigle10 is the best (least sketchy) of the 5 records of this stone. So on the balance of probability, John thought it safe to conclude that, despite the lack of corroborating detail, this was a fourth example of our kneeling and hooded crossbowman.

Despite their wide geographical spread – Angus, Perthshire, Nairnshire and Easter Ross – were these figures carved by the same hand? Obviously not, given there are no other close similarities in these four sculptures. Was each bowman copied one from the other, possibly from memory? In that case, it would be helpful if we could determine a sequence of carving, but such information is not available.

It is not even certain which centuries they belong to. Or was each bowman copied from an image in a different medium, some portable object, for example? A portable artefact with multiple copies could explain the wide distribution of such a standardised figure.

Or did he belong to some oral tradition which included a verbal description? He might be a character from Pictish folklore, like a legendary huntsman, famous, perhaps with a name. Discussing this possibility, John concluded that a verbal transmission, even one that recorded much detail about the subject, would still result in more varied images, like those in hunt scenes.

John ended his talk leaving us to form our own conclusions, which led to a lively audience debate. A leatherworker among our members thought the cape would be made of leather, since it is protective, hard to see in the undergrowth, and passes smoothly through brushwood unlike woven cloth which snags. A stonecarver in the audience pointed out that a stonecarver's skill develops during his life, so that two stones which look different could still be the work of one hand at different stages of life. Others thought the close similarity of the four bowmen could simply be due to an accurate depiction of a crossbow hunter. *ER*

PAS Newsletter 90

The deadline for receipt of material is

Saturday 16 February 2019

Please email contributions to the editor:

john.borland@hes.scot

Spring 2019 Forthcoming lectures at Brechin Town House Museum

Please note there will be an additional lecture this spring so we will commence one month earlier than usual.

Friday 15 February

Dr Gordon Noble

The Development of the Pictish Symbol System

Friday 15 March

Dr James Bruhn

Title TBC

Friday 19 April

Dr Adrian Maldonado

Art after the Picts – carved stones of the 9-12th centuries

Friday 17 May

Dr Kelly Kilpatrick

Manuscripts and Writing in Pictland: New Thoughts on the Newton House Inscriptions

Doors open at 7.00pm for a 7.30 start.

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available after the talks, which are free to members and £3.00 to non-members. All are welcome