THE PICTISH ARTS SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER 66 SPRING 2013

Pictavia lectures 2012

19 October — Dr Sally Foster, formerly of Historic Scotland and now a lecturer in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Aberdeen, opened the winter season with 'Embodied Energies, Embedded Stories: the Replication of Scottish Early Medieval Sculpture in the 19th Century'.

Sally briefly mentioned two projects that sparked her interest in this subject. The first was work on the St Andrews Sarcophagus, in connection with a conference held on this spectacular object in 1997, and published in 1998. The second was the creation of what was intended as a temporary (now a permanent) exhibition of cast replicas of six Irish high crosses, created in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, along with contemporary replicas of manuscripts and metal working. These are in the possession of the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin.

Current attitudes towards plaster cast replicas of sculptures vary. The Metropolitan Museum of New York has sold off all its casts whilst other museums are conserving and redisplaying theirs. Many, however, languish in unsuitable storerooms, bulky, fragile, and often un-conserved. Sometimes they are seen as valuable, sometimes as more or less disposable.

Throughout most of the nineteenth century and down to the outbreak of the First World War, cast replicas of sculpture were eagerly collected across Europe, with multiple casts often made from the same mould. Sally offered some insights into this phenomenon, based on her studies of casts made of early medieval sculpture from Scotland.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, several forces drove the appetite for casts. Art schools valued them for their use in educating sculptors and other artists in the classical and medieval traditions. The ability to study replicas of the best regarded works from all over Europe meant that young artists could learn much without having to travel, at costs usually beyond the means of all but a very few. For antiquaries, the presence of cast replicas in museums also afforded a chance to study aspects of ancient sculptures without the costs of travel. Casts, from moulds taken direct from the object itself, were much more accurate than many of the sketches of carved stones which were published throughout the nineteenth century. Also, the presence of casts in museums meant that a much wider section of the public could learn to value the originals, and could be encouraged to learn more about the past.

The story of the casts of St Andrews Sarcophagus is an early example of Scots at work in this field. Fragments of the Sarcophagus came to light in 1833, while a grave was being dug in the burial ground between St Rule's Tower and the ruined cathedral. Some fragments were collected around this time but several years passed before an attempt was made to search for others that had been disregarded at the time of discovery. George Buist, a St Andrews native and graduate, was an early champion of the Sarcophagus. Towards the end of the 1830s, he was editor of the *Fifeshire Journal*, based in Cupar, the county town of Fife. He also was the founder and Keeper of the Cupar Museum, on behalf to the Fifeshire Scientific, Literary and Antiquarian Society. Presumably in the latter role, he had the Sarcophagus transported to the Cupar workshop of William Ross, where moulds were made and a cast prepared for the Cupar Museum, probably around 1838/9. It appears that some attempt at reconstruction was made before the moulds were made. Subsequently, Buist drew the attention of the newly founded Literary and Philosophical Society of St Andrews to the Sarcophagus, and the Society soon secured the fragments for its new museum. The Sarcophagus remained in St Andrews, with no record of any further cast, or, indeed, of any conservation work, until 1996, when it was taken to Historic Scotland's conservation lab in Edinburgh, before going on loan to the British Museum and the National Museum of Scotland before returning home. It was revealed that the Sarcophagus had been dismantled before burial, with some of the surfaces exposed to the downwash of soil particles and consequently eroded, while much of the carving was preserved in good condition. However, it appears that at sometime after its discovery, and possibly before it left Wilson's workshop, the Sarcophagus was painted with a lead-based paint, possibly to 'improve' its appearance. Wilson probably used techniques to prepare his moulds that were developed in Italy, possibly using gelatine. Such moulds could be reused, but only within a fairly short space of time after preparation. It seems that at least two copies, in addition to the Cupar one, were made. Casts from Wilson's workshop went to Newcastle, the National Museum of Ireland, the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland and Dundee. It is possible that some of these were sections of the dismantled Cupar cast, disposed of when the Museum there closed. However, this seems to be an early example of the commoditisation of early medieval sculpture, with casts being prepared for sale. It is unclear whether this was at Buist's

direction or at Ross's initiative. The enthusiasm for the Sarcophagus in antiquarian circles was notable.

The Great Exhibition of 1851 stimulated interest in the acquisition of casts by museums, expanding demand from classical sculpture to include a taste for the early medieval. The Victoria and Albert Museum, established in 1852 as the Museum of Manufactures, included casts among its earliest collections as part of its stated aim of the 'improvement of public taste in Design'. Fifteen years later, its first director was instrumental in persuading 15 European heads of state to sign the 'International Convention of promoting universally Reproductions of Works of Art'. The exchange of copies of fine works of sculpture allowed the V&A to build up a magnificent collection, much of which is still on display in the Cast Courts in the museum at South Kensington.

As well as collecting and displaying its own casts, the V&A was responsible for administering grants made to provincial museums under the control of the Department of Science and Education to help build up their collections. This included the acquisition of casts. Members of staff of the V&A were encouraged to offer help and advice on selection and display, and at least one (R F Martin) is known to have worked with museums in Dundee and Aberdeen on the presentation of their casts and preparation of catalogues.

When an International Exhibition was planned for Glasgow in 1901, casts were prepared from a number of stones to represent early medieval Christian art in Scotland. It seems that Romilly Allen and Joseph Anderson, who's magisterial *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* was to appear in 1903, may have been influential in the selection of stones to be replicated. These included examples from Meigle and St Vigeans, Iona and Aberlemno and the Ruthwell cross. Many of these were prepared in the workshops of DBJ McKenzie and Sons, while Sir John Stirling Maxwell commissioned Foster to make casts of several of the Govan stones.

Copies of a number of these casts (taken from the same moulds) turned up in several museums. In the north-east, the Aberdeen Sculpture and Art Gallery opened in 1905 thanks to local patronage. One of the aims of the gallery was to improve by example the designs of masons working in granite. It was towards this end that casts of early Christian monuments, which were purchased by individual sponsors, were placed in the Celtic Court of the Gallery. Dundee's collection of cast replicas of early crosses and cross-slabs had also been partly intended to improve art education. In 1911, it was relocated, and for the first time, casts were exhibited with photographs of the stones in their original locations.

McKenzie and Sons' workshop replicated casts from single moulds, and their work appears in Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow. It would seem that they met the high standards set by the V&A. The focus on a relatively small number of stones to represent the corpus of early medieval sculpture in Scotland is noteworthy. Only two were included in the V&A's own collection (Ruthwell and Nigg). The Scottish museums seem to have chosen from a group of only about a dozen. Why this should be so still remains to be explored.

Sally showed that these elegant survivors of the Victorian Age have a story to tell. Not only can we learn something about the cultural values of the nineteenth century (as reflected in the fashion for casts, the choice of which items should be copied, the places where they were exhibited and the aim of those who commissioned them) but also about the reaction in the twentieth century, when for many years these were rejected as objects of any value. The casts have a life and a history of their own, and more remains to be told. *SH*

16 November — Martin Cook was the speaker at the second lecture of our winter season. He is a project manager at AOC Archaeology Group and has directed over 25 excavations across Scotland. He spoke about two barrow sites, both excavated in 2012.

The area surrounding Bankhead of Kinloch, Perthshire, is rich in prehistoric and medieval activity with cropmark evidence for enclosures and roundhouses, the collection of Pictish stones at Meigle, the remains of St Moloc's church at Alyth and scheduled medieval settlements at Hallyards and Coupar Grange.

An agricultural development at the farm required archaeological attention because of cropmarks within close proximity. Trenches revealed instantly recognisable remnants of round and square barrows, indicating a probable Pictish cemetery. There is a clear distribution of such barrow sites in east and north-east Scotland.

The site contained a small square barrow, two round barrows and a large double square barrow. Each barrow contained a central grave, aligned ENE to WSW. The bodies were extended with their heads at the west, an orientation which neither proved nor disproved a Christian context for burial.

The small square barrow comprised four enclosing linear ditches, each around 5.4m long, and the central grave measured 2.2m x 0.8m and up to 0.5m in depth. Virtually no bone survived in the acidic soil and evidence for a body was identified in the form of a skull stain and teeth.

One round barrow had an enclosing round ditch around 9m in diameter with a central grave measuring 2.35m x 1m x 0.5m in depth. Here a body stain was evident in addition to small fragments of skull and teeth. The body was positioned a little above the cut

edge, suggesting the grave may have been lined with a wooden coffin or a layer of organic material, or the body may have been wrapped up. The other round barrow comprised an enclosing ditch around 9.2m in diameter, with a central grave measuring 2.2m by 0.9m x 0.5m in depth. Staining suggests the body was extended with hands over the pelvis. It was also positioned a little above the cut edge, suggesting a coffin, organic lining or body wrapping. Once again small fragments of skull and teeth were recovered.

The double square barrow measured 15.8m east to west by 7.6m north to south, the eastern square slightly smaller than the western one. It remains unclear whether this represents two contemporary burials or two separate graves, one pre-dating the other. In the western barrow, two large granite stones indicated where the grave was but there was no evidence of a body. This was the smallest grave, measuring 1.4m x 0.8m x 0.6m in depth, possibly that of a child or small adult. The eastern grave measured 2.2m x 0.8m x 0.5m in depth and contained a body stain as well as teeth and skull fragments. The body was extended, head at the west and the arms at the side.

No contemporary artefacts were recovered from any of these graves but artefacts from such barrows are rare, as grave goods were not generally left with burials during this period.

With only 2 or 3 grams of skeletal remains per grave, this is likely to be too small a sample for radiocarbon dating to be successful. Prior to the completion of post-excavation analyses, there is no evidence to suggest precisely when the Bankhead of Kinloch cemetery was begun, but it could represent an area set aside for burials, presumably for a family group, perhaps over generations. Interestingly, the barrows were not located on a prominent high point but rather on lower-lying ground, putting potentially well-drained agricultural land out of use. Each barrow was probably marked by a mound made from displaced material from the grave and ditches. A single piece of Victorian white ceramic was recovered from one grave, left on purpose as a sign of antiquarian investigation, indicating that the features were clearly upstanding and visible to the naked eye until quite recently, before being ploughed out.

As post-excavation analyses had not yet begun, Martin was unable to say more about this site and moved on to talk about Greshop, where archaeological works are underway in advance of a Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Although there had been heavy ploughing over the area, Greshop Farm is a palimpsest of cropmark features with elements of prehistoric and early historic activity. No round barrows were encountered but full excavation was required of three square barrows which were going to be removed by a flood prevention scheme. A monumental square barrow, measuring 30m in width, was of particular interest as it dwarfs the majority of other examples. At about three times the usual size, was it for a very important person? This barrow had two concentric sets of ditches, creating an internal space of around 7.5m square. Positioned centrally and parallel to the ditches lay the grave. It was orientated ENE to WSW and measured 2.1m long with a maximum width of 0.5m and a depth of 0.2m. No skeletal material was recovered, but the shape of the grave suggested a single adult burial lying outstretched with head to the south-west. The outer ditches were on a grander scale than the inner ditches and enclosed an area almost 25m square.

The second barrow was the only one to have a continuous ditch surrounding an area around 7m square with a central burial. The third square barrow was the most common type with four segmented ditches surrounding a central burial. All three graves were aligned ENE to WSW and all were devoid of any surviving human bone, body stain, grave goods or grave furniture.

Round barrows appear in Scotland from the Early Bronze Age onwards, while square barrows have been identified in England from the Iron Age. However, the combination of both in Scotland is generally indicative of Pictish activity. It is not yet known what the significance of round versus square barrow is. Examples that have been dated by either radiocarbon dating or artefactual evidence suggest an origin in the Early Historic period, between the 4th and 9th centuries AD, as at Redcastle and Forteviot.

Martin Cook is warmly thanked for making his lecture notes available to this Newsletter. *ER*

14 December — Murray Cook, Stirling Council archaeologist, programme manager at Oxford Archaeology North, and a co-director of Rampart Scotland, delivered the December 2012 lecture at Pictavia on 'New Evidence for Pictish potentates in Aberdeenshire: The Hillforts of Strathdon.' Although RCAHMS now prefers to call the Don Valley system 'Donside', Murray is keeping to the term 'Strathdon'.

In the six years between 2005 and 2011 he has been involved in key-hole excavations on six Aberdeenshire hillforts. Between 1999 and 2006 he had worked on the largest excavation undertaken in Scotland so far. At Kintore more Neolithic pottery was recovered than previously known in Aberdeenshire, 50 roundhouses were excavated, and many artefacts and internal features from the Roman marching camp were found.

Noticeable was a gap in the Pictish settlement record from circa AD250 to AD600. Disputed pollen evidence identifies a drop in cereal production and an increase in tree regeneration in Northern Scotland in that period. This was perhaps due to the Romans reducing population numbers. Murray added that

Fraser Hunter's excavations at Birnie and accompanying review of metalwork and Roman imports identify a diminution in the quantity of imported goods around AD250.

Previously published distributionnmaps, amongst them Prof Alcock's, show a blank in the Strathdon and North East corner, except for some coastal sites. This was due to lack of evidence. The area has almost no historical accounts before the 7th century, so we rely heavily on the archaeological record – but no excavations took place after 1977. RCAHMS's Donside volume describes Pictish Aberdeenshire as peripheral to Moray and Angus; James Fraser described the area recently as without kings or centralised areas of authority. However there are circa 20 hillforts in Strathdon.

Murray set out to establish dates for these hillforts. Given the expense of excavation, he turned to local volunteers and followed Alcock's approach of key-hole excavation: small trenches targeted at key locations to recover dating evidence. Of the six sites they excavated, four had evidence of Pictish fortifications: both phases of Maiden Castle (bank and ditch and stone enclosure), Cairnmore and Hill of Barra. Radiocarbon dates of charcoal ranged from the 5th to 7th centuries AD. Imported glass, crucibles, and brooch and pin moulds were recovered. If these results were extrapolated he suggested, roughly 50% of Strathdon's hillforts would be Pictish.

The sites range in size (big, like Hill of Barra, smaller like Cairnmore and small like Maiden Castle) which might suggest a possible hierarchy. However, the rich material culture was found at the smaller sites. Murray concluded that the bulk of Strathdon hillforts were constructed between the late-4th and mid-7th centuries AD. In the 8th and 9th centuries only the large, impressive hill of Mither Tap of Bennachie continued in use.

Alex Woolf and James Fraser have suggested that the kingdom of Fortriu, the dominant Pictish kingdom of the 7th and 8th centuries AD, and its predecessor tribe the Verturiones (who overran the Roman province of Britannia with help from others in AD367)Äwas located north of the Mounth – rather than south of the Mounth as traditionally thought. Murray goes along with this view.

He presented the following chronology:

1st century: roundhouses, souterrains, imported Roman goods

AD70–80: Roman invasion for conquest, Agricola establishes Gask Ridge, marching camps in Aberdeenshire

2nd century: roundhouses, souterrains, imported Roman goods

Late 2nd century: Caledonians breaking treaties, records of bribes paid to native tribes

Circa AD200: Birnie coin hoards

208–212: Roman invasion of Scotland by Septimus Severus, marching camps in Aberdeenshire

Up to c.250: roundhouses, souterrains, Roman goods which then cease

250–650: no houses, just pits and ovens, pollen evidence for decrease in cereal production and increase in trees

380–650: Hillforts of Strathdon

4th century: Pictish wars, 367 Verturiones involved in the Barbarian Conspiracy

7th-8th centuries: lost Middle Irish poems about Bennachie? The Ravaging of the Plain of Ce and The Massacre of Bennachie (Ce being one of the potential Pictish tribes)

680s: Bridei son of Beli, first confirmed king of Fortriu attacks Dunottar and Dundurn

650–1000: no more hillforts, unenclosed settlement returns, rectangular structures

Seen from the Roman point of view, the 1st century was about expanding the empire and tax-base. The late-2nd and early-3rd centuries were about bribing and hammering peoples beyond the frontier. The 4th century seems to be about smashing persistent resistance. In this context the 4th-century dice tower found in Froitzheim, Germany, is of interest. It says 'PICTOS VICTOS HOSTIS DELETA LVDITE SECVRI', translated as 'The Picts Defeated, The Enemy Wiped Out, Play In Safety'.

Murray offered an interpretation of the above Strathdon chronology, suggesting it indicated that the area was buffeted by Roman incursions and pressures from Moray to the north and Angus to the south. Settlement disappeared in the late-3rd and 4th centuries, coinciding with economic collapse. Here was a situation where the raids and the withdrawal of Roman tribute destabilised native society, leading to the abandonment of traditional dwellings and agriculture, and a subsequent focus on all-out war with Rome.

This was probably a flattish society with a high degree of cooperation against the enemy. The military ethos provided the context for the construction of lots of small hillforts, although the bulk of the population probably lived in open settlements. These hillforts represent the first emergence of a more hierarchical settlement system that would eventuate in kingdoms.

We do not know how these forts were organised but Strathdon was likely to have come under the influence or hegemony of Fortriu as it emerged to dominate Pictland, (accepting it as existing north of the Mounth). Fortriu carried out attacks on surroundingnprovinces including Orkney and Dunottar. Gradually this resulted in a focus of resources to a smaller number of larger, more impressive hillforts.

Was this concentration achieved willingly or by force? Murray theorised that Late Iron Age and Early Medieval sources contain examples of charismatic individuals who drew support from within and outwith their kin-groups to form large if perhaps temporary war-bands, e.g. Calgacos, leader of the Caledonian resistance to Agricola in the 1st century AD; and Mynyddawg, ruler of the Gododdin, who assembled a warrior band in the 6th century. Under this model, the construction of hillforts may have stopped as wealth and attention became focussed around a royal court. Alternatively, voices of dissent may have been crushed and beaten into submission, with hillforts being constructed in a last wave of resistance. The reality may have been a hybrid: some individuals willingly participated in the creation of Fortriu for reasons of kinship, glory, extra territory, etc whilst others had to be bribed or beaten into compliance.

Christianity was introduced into the North-East during the 5th and 6th centuries. No doubt this had a large impact on existing power structures. The distribution of Class I symbol stones is different from those that bear Christian iconography. Murray called attention to Bennachie, the hill with internal occupation that dominated the region for the period. The most common translation of the name is Hill of the Ce, one of the Pictish tribes mentioned in contemporary sources. However an alternative translation in an early Christian context is Hill of Blessing [Beannacht], for the site sits amongst a concentration of Class II stones.

Murray Cook concluded by pointing out that all the evidence now showed that Strathdon could no longer be considered 'peripheral'. He is warmly thanked for making his lecture notes and slides available to this Newsletter. *ER*

Hanging Loose: Pictish Banners on show in Edinburgh

The Scottish Storytelling Centre at the foot of Edinburgh's High Street recently hosted a spectacular exhibition of the work of Pictish artist Marianna Lines (running from 18th January to 16th February 2013). These are vintage pieces, most of the artwork being executed around a quarter of a century ago. Many PAS members will be familiar with Marianna's technique of recreating the sculpture seen on Pictish stones by making impressions through the application of natural dyes obtained from flower petals, plants, and vegetables onto cotton calico sheets. These are then converted into hangings, which provide not only a record of this unique body of Pictish sculpture, but become art objects in their own right. Encompassing both objectives, the results sometimes achieve a level of insight which neither drawing nor photography can match.

Pictish sculpture was executed in two basic ways: incision and relief (and an amalgam of the two may also be detected). There is no doubt that incised motifs respond best to this treatment, and one gazes in wonder at the precision of some of the impressions, notably such Aberdeenshire classics as Tillytarmont, Broomend of Crichie, and the wolf stone from Newbigging Leslie (now under NTS protection at Leith Hall). When it comes to relief sculpture, the results are more mixed; the Brodie stone in Moray responds well, but the one at Kettins in Perthshire, the original high relief already heavily weathered, inevitably lacks both precision and cohesion, yet still contains elements of interest. By contrast, low relief can produce excellent results, such as at Golspie.

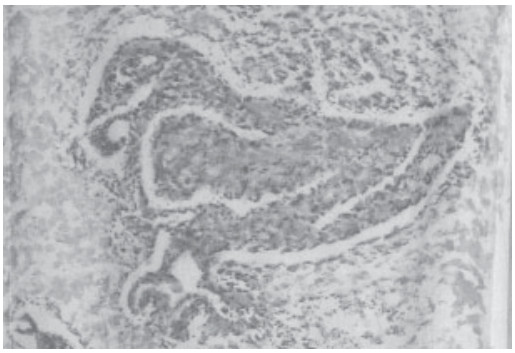
Marianna's hanging of symbols at Dunrobin

Most of the stones, especially when they are now fragmentary, are of manageable proportions, but some demand extra attention. The Maiden Stone from Chapel of Garioch, including the lovely patch of interlace round the bottom corner, required two pieces of cloth sewn together to be accommodated, while the mighty monument at Shandwick had to be limited to its bottom half, though an impression of the complete stone could be viewed as a photo-reduction. Sometimes the problem of size was resolved by only having a small portion on the cloth, such as both bottom quadrants at Glamis Manse (separately), and the delightful hippocamps from Aberlemno Churchyard. Reproducing Collessie man from Fife (in Melville Fields, not far from the artist's base of operations) is a considerable achievement in itself, given the height of the pillar and the problem of accessibility to the whole figure.

The artwork on view is not simply confined to impressions. On the Dunrobin stone (Sutherland), the salmon is enhanced by the appliqué technique, while the stone at Tullich (Aberdeenshire) has actually been painted onto cloth from a photograph, because the original impression has gone overseas. Different again is an etching on cloth, being a sensitively-rendered collage of Pictish animals which has proved to be a highly popular postcard reproduction. Perhaps the most appealing piece of artwork is devoted to the Kintore stone, beautifully coloured with subtle hues applied to both the infill of the symbols and to the rough stone background.

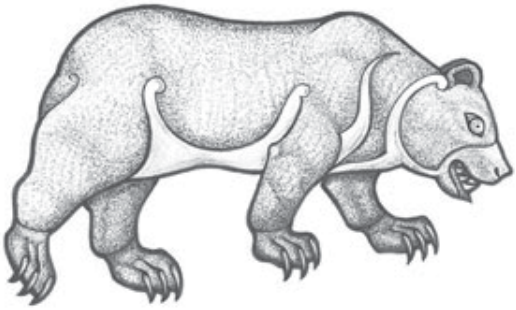
The title of the exhibition is 'Pictish Stone Stories', though the minimal captioning is limited to identifying the stones – the viewer is left to concoct their own stories of what is going on in some of the scenes. For example, who is the (masked?) Rhynie man, the best preserved of several from that vicinity, and what is he up to? Is the Collessie man a proto-Pict, standing defiantly against the legions of Rome? Why is the Golspie man attacking a harmless-looking dog with an axe and a knife? What are the two men of Glamis fighting over, and is the cauldron scene above them depicting a ritual execution? What is going on in the battle scene at Aberlemno kirkyard? Ah, now there is one story which can be told with a fair measure of confidence that it might just be historically accurate. Some guy who thinks he has the answer was asked to tell the story at the launch of the exhibition, and then had to repeat it an hour or so later in a different style to the monthly story-telling group which had assembled.

As the publicity material announced, 'These figures have their own unique stories to tell, with tales as colourful as the hangings' Not only does the exhibition produce a visual feast, but it also stimulates the imagination of what the Picts meant by it all, their arcane symbols and their narrative scenes, and Marianna Lines deserves the warmest praise for delivering such a treat for the edification of enthusiasts and the public alike. *GC*



Marianna's take on the elusive (?)eagle symbol at Mortlach

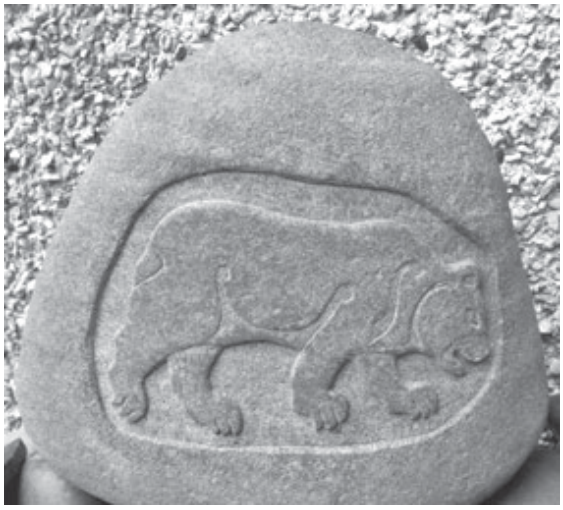
A Pictish bear recreated



© Craig Low

Craig Low, a very talented artist from Christchurch, New Zealand, has drawn a series of designs based on Pictish stones. His particular gift is to 're-imagine' the original carvings using a mixture of keen observation (from photographs) and comparison with other Pictish images.

In October 2012, Craig shared with me his initial drawings of the bear on the Drosten Stone in St Vigeans museum. Taking inspiration from the bear on Meigle 26, he used its body scroll and facial markings to fill in missing detail on the Drosten Stone bear. I wasn't initially convinced that body scroll detail had ever existed on the Drosten bear but I think I can now see evidence of that detail, now worn away.



© David McGovern

Using Craig's excellent, detailed drawing I started to carve the reconstructed Drosten bear in old Angus sandstone in November 2012. The Drosten bear is superbly naturalistic and perhaps the original artist had encountered bears in the Angus glens and was drawing from memory. Looking in detail at Pictish bears from St Vigeans, Meigle and Scatness makes me wonder why there aren't more bears on our symbol stones.

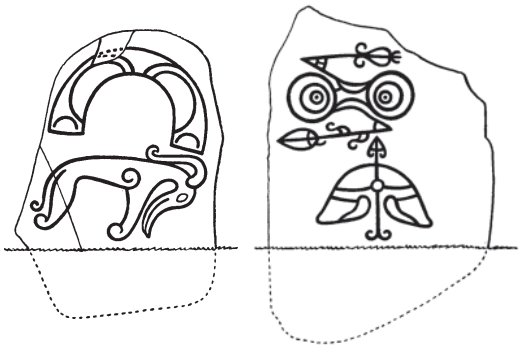
We hope to include more of Craig's work in future PAS newsletters. *DM*

The Curious Case of the Congash Stones

The two Pictish symbol stones mentioned in John Borland's feature on the Congash burial ground in the last PAS Newsletter (No. 64) have sometimes been the source of speculation as to whether or not they are in their original positions. Given their present locations, embedded in the bank which surrounds the ancient burial ground, and flanking its entrance, it might seem likely that they are indeed *in situ* (**1**).

1 *The Congash stones in their present position*

But this view is seriously compromised when we consider that Allen's drawings in ECMS show the symbols in their entirety, despite the fact that they are currently partially buried and appear to have been so for some considerable time. As John Borland puts it, 'Allen clearly exposed or removed both symbol stones for recording and in doing so, may have destroyed any chance of us knowing whether or not they are *in situ*'.



2 *Congash 1 and 2, ECMS figures 98 & 99a (half size)*

However, it is now possible to shine a little more light on the matter. Tucked away in the appendices of a book published locally in 1900 is some definitive evidence which answers the question as to whether they were merely exposed or whether they were physically removed. This publication, *In The Shadow Of Cairngorm,* by The Reverend William Forsyth, contains two rather fuzzy photographs (pp.378-79), each of them depicting one of the two symbol stones. The first photo shows Congash 1 in its present location, but with the earth at its base cleared away to expose the entire face of the stone (**3**). The second is of Congash 2, but not in its current location. Instead, it is shown free-standing in the field a short distance from the burial ground enclosure (**4**).

Close examination of the vegetation at the base of this second stone reveals that this was not its regular abode. If it was, we would expect to see the grass growing slightly longer close up against the stone, where it would be inaccessible to grazing animals. And from what we now know of the lower profile of the stone, it is clear that in this photograph it is not inserted very far into the ground, and certainly not far enough to prevent it, for very long, from being easily toppled by those same animals. The uniformly grazed turf suggests that the stone had only recently been deposited in this location, a view reinforced by its colouration – the lower portion is considerably lighter than the upper part, almost certainly an indication that this part of the stone had been below ground level until very recently, but probably not at this precise location.

Running across the background of the photograph is the boundary bank of the burial ground, lying directly beneath the row of light-coloured boulders. These boulders are not part of the original structure; they are there as the result of more recent field clearance – all except the large one on the extreme left of the picture. This stone is recognisable as the upper

3 *Congash 1, from Rev W Forsyth's* In The Shadow Of Cairngorm *(1900), p.378*

portion of Congash 1*,* in profile, indicating that the subject of the photograph, Congash 2*,* is positioned just a few metres away from its traditional location, but rotated to face southwest, rather than east as at present.

On the evidence, it seems quite likely that it was temporarily removed from its position at the entrance to the burial ground, before subsequently being returned to that location, where it has remained to this day. The degree of correlation between the light/dark boundary visible on the stone in the photograph, and the position of the present-day soil height against the stone, would serve to support such a hypothesis. Though the degree of physical manoeuvring involved might appear to be somewhat extreme, simply as a means to get a photograph, it makes more sense when we examine the circumstances.

It has to be borne in mind that the cameras of the day were still relatively primitive. They were very heavy and bulky, and required long exposure times, making the use of a tripod mandatory. Lenses were often rather simple affairs with a limited focal range. Zoom, and sometimes focus, was achieved by varying the distance between camera and subject. Given these limitations, in rough terrain it was frequently difficult, if not impossible, to find a suitable position for photographing the chosen subject. Moving the subject to a more advantageous location may well have been the easier option. This appears to have been the case with the Congash stones.

4 *Congash 2, from Rev W Forsyth's* In The Shadow Of Cairngorm *(1900), p.379*

Figure 1 illustrates the problem posed by the positions of the stones at Congash. Congash 2 is partially obscured, even in its present condition. Exposing the lower portion of the stone in order to fully reveal the symbols would serve no purpose for the photographer, as it would still remain inaccessible to his lens. The solution was to move it to a more suitable location. The bank behind Congash 2 is low and relatively flat and as Figure 3 shows, with the stone removed it would then be possible to erect a camera and tripod there and to get an uninterrupted view of the now fully exposed Congash 1, without the need to move it too.

This still does not answer the question of who took the photographs, and when. To go to such lengths in order to get a picture, it would probably need to be a photographer with a passionate interest in the stones. Unfortunately, Forsyth gives no clues as to his identity, or when the pictures were taken. His book was published in 1900 and the preface, dated Christmas 1899, includes the words, 'The labour of many years is ended.' In this context, it should be noted that his ministry in the area had extended to thirty-six years by that point, and he appears to have been working on the book for most of that period. The fact that the photographs are relegated to an appendix, rather than appearing alongside the relevant text in the main body of the book, might suggest that they only became available at a late stage in the project. However, this would not preclude the possibility of them having been taken much earlier.

Analysis of the two photographs suggests that they were taken with a camera that was technically unsophisticated, even by late-19th century standards. This could be an indication of an early date for their production, or it could be that they were taken as late as the end of the century, by an enthusiastic amateur using less sophisticated equipment. A date somewhere in the last decade or two of the 19th century might be a reasonable working assumption.

Interestingly, this includes the time when Allen was undertaking his fieldwork for ECMS. Were the photographs taken, perhaps at the instigation of Reverend Forsyth, while Allen had the stones exposed in order to record them? The minister would almost certainly have been aware of Allen's presence and activities, for the normal procedure was for Allen to contact local 'appropriate persons' ahead of his forays. It is almost inconceivable that Allen, in his quest to locate and record early Christian monuments, had not, sooner or later, made the acquaintance of the long-serving parish minister with such an interest in local and church history, and so a degree of cooperation seems quite possible. It should be noted, however, that Allen's working methods would not have necessitated the complete removal of one of the stones (assuming they were in their current

5 *Congash 2, ECMS figure 99, 'from a photograph by Mr R. C. Graham, of Skipness'*

positions at that time). That can only have been done primarily for the benefit of the photographer.

Turning to the description of the Congash stones in ECMS, we find, in addition to Allen's drawings of the symbols, a rather intriguing illustration of Congash 2 (**5**). It is not immediately clear whether this picture is a photograph or a painting. Closer inspection shows it to be something of a hybrid. It is certainly based on a photograph, but it has been heavily modified by the retouching brush. As well as blocking out the background, the artist has hand painted the vegetation beneath the stone and enhanced, not always accurately, the highlights and shadows on the symbols.

The highlighting is done in such a way as to suggest that the light was coming from the right side of the stone and shining down from an elevation corresponding to the middle of the day in the summer months. If the stone was in its present east-facing location when photographed, that would place the sun high in the northern sky – clearly impossible. In fact, the angle of the lighting is almost exactly the same as that of the same stone in Forsyth's illustration. The immediate conclusion must be that the stone was photographed in a similar, if not the same, position as in the Forsyth picture.

Allen credits the ECMS picture to R C Graham. Could he also be responsible for the photograph in Forsyth? Alternatively, could the ECMS picture be based on the one in Forsyth? This latter possibility can be easily dismissed. Though the lighting on the symbols in Graham's picture has been enhanced to make it look as if they have been picked out by bright sunlight, the same has not been done to the stone itself. This is apparent when comparing the top and right hand edges of the stone with those of the same stone under natural strong sunlight, as it is shown in the Forsyth picture (**4**). It is clear that the ECMS photograph was not taken in bright sunlight, though the one in Forsyth was. They are two separate photographs and it is also quite possible that they were not taken around the same time.

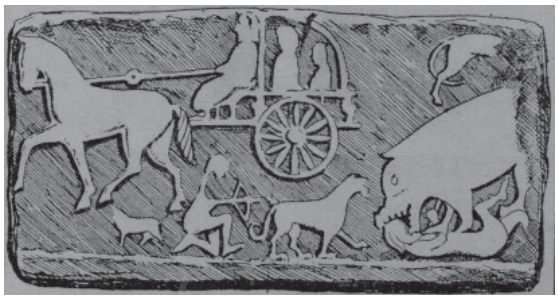
There is another more surprising difference between the two photographs, which points towards the likelihood that they were not even taken in the same year. It was earlier pointed out that the photograph in Forsyth displays a noticeable difference in tone between the upper and lower portions of the stone, suggesting that the lighter lower part had only recently been removed from beneath the surface of the ground. This feature is barely discernible on Graham's stone. The darkening of previously clean stone is a natural process due to fungal growth on the surface, and takes place slowly over several years. This would imply that the stone had remained wholly above ground for at least a year or two, perhaps longer, before Graham photographed it. It is worth noting that Graham was active locally in the summer of 1895, five years after Allen's expedition to the area.

There is a further curious anomaly to consider. As already mentioned above, the top edge of the stone in Graham's illustration escaped the attention of the retouching brush. Nevertheless, even on a stone photographed in poor light we would still expect the top edge to appear lighter than the rest of the stone, as is the case in Figure 1. In Graham's photograph it is actually darker than the face of the stone. The only circumstance in which this would naturally occur is if the stone was lying flat on the ground when photographed. It would, therefore, not be unreasonable to speculate that, following the taking of the earlier Forsyth photograph, the stone was left standing in the field, only to eventually fall over for whatever reason. Or perhaps it was simply laid down rather than being returned to its original location. If Graham did photograph it in a horizontal position, that would go some way to explaining why the painted grass was added to the image – it was necessary in order to create the illusion of an upright stone.

Whatever the true circumstances surrounding the two symbol stones at Congash, the photographs in Forsyth's book prove beyond doubt that the base of Congash 1 was exposed and that Congash 2 was moved temporarily, though possibly for an extended period, on at least one occasion in the latter part of the 19th century.

Ron Dutton

Meigle 10 – alive and well?



When something is repeated in print with authority, it can become the authorised version, whether it was ever true in the first place or not. It is often repeated that the stone illustrated above (known as Meigle10) was destroyed in the fire that burned down Meigle Church in 1869.[1] It is the one and only stone recorded pictorially to show a complete Pictish wheeled vehicle, a kind of covered cart. It is pulled by two high-stepping horses with braided tails, possibly with a single shaft between them, the traces passing through a ring over the horses' backs to the driver who sits separately from the two rear passengers. Features such as the 12-spoked wheel and ornamental open sides differentiate it from non-Pictish representations of chariots. Lloyd and Jennifer Laing have made a good case for 'a native source' for this vehicle being a true representation of a cart in use in Pictland, although this has also been disputed.[2]

In the hope that this important stone may have survived the church fire, we decided to look at contemporary accounts and see where it was located at the time.

Patrick Chalmers commissioned a lithographer to draw the stone (Meigle 10) and when the illustration appeared in Chalmers' 1848 collection of sculptured stones, it was described as 'Within the Church of Meigle' (Plate 18, No.1).[3] Some years later John Stuart commissioned another lithographer to record Meigle 10 and in Stuart's 1856 collection of sculptured stones, it is again described as 'In the Church of Meigle' (Plate 76, No.6). Unfortunately this is where confusion begins, because in the preface to his book Stuart very specifically contradicts this: 'The oblong stone in the upper part of Plate LXXVI, is placed on a mound in the churchyard.'[4] There is more room for confusion because Stuart's illustration No 6 was placed on the page out of sequence, above No 5 – but it seems clear that he said what he meant, that Meigle 10 was no longer in the church.[5]

If the stone was now to be found in the churchyard, had it been recently evicted from the church by the new minister who took up his post in 1853, so that Stuart provided the new location in his preface without the added complication of changing the Plate subtitle?[6] (Without a cross on it or obvious Christian symbolism, the stone might have seemed out of place inside.[7]) Romilly Allen in *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* accepts Stuart's mound location over later versions that put Meigle 10 back in the church, even though the antiquarian, Andrew Jervise, stated in1859 that the stone is 'now preserved within the church'.[8]

If Meigle 10 was indeed inside the church when the fire raged, it may have been destroyed there, although other stones that were said to be inside the church survived. For example, the cross-slab Meigle 3, we are told by Stuart, was 'In the Church of Meigle' and although it was originally thought to have perished in the fire, it was later recovered (minus a base piece). Meigle 15, a fragment which was 'built into the Church-Wall at Meigle', also survived. It is surprising that no remnant of Meigle 10 was ever recovered, since at '3 feet long by 1 foot and 6 inches high' it was a substantial stone and roughly twice the size of the cross-slab Meigle 3.

The antiquarian W Galloway was not correct when he noted that the lost stones were all stated by Dr Stuart to have been 'built into the walls of the church' as we have checked Stuart's two volumes, but Galloway serves as a source of later accounts.[9]

While some small fragments built into the church fabric before the fire have not been seen again, the fire conversely brought several other stones to light, namely Meigle 6, 7, 26 and 27. The large recumbent Meigle 26 was discovered down in the Drumkilbo vault below the church, serving as a door lintel. It was found by a 'merchant of Meigle' who 'got it rescued from its precarious position'.[10] So after the fire there were interested citizens poking about in the rubble, and yet no part or whole of Meigle 10 was reported found on the site.

If, on the other hand, Meigle 10 had not been in the church but lying untended on a mound in the churchyard, it may have suffered a different fate. Galloway deplores the treatment of sculptured stones at Meigle:

> They seem to have been used without scruple, at various periods, as ordinary building material, and are all in a more or less fragmentary state.
>
> … This disregard paid to the relics of a remote past, has been only too prevalent in every age. Even the new church of Meigle, erected on the site of that so recently destroyed, is not innocent of the charge. I am credibly informed that, during its progress, a mason having unwittingly broken up a cross-sculptured stone, built the fragments into the wall rather than let the misadventure become known. Other relics may have perished in a like manner; and, doubtless, had a thorough exploration of the site been made prior to the erection of the new edifice, many things of permanent value to the archaeologist would have been revealed.[11]

This echoes an earlier lament from a previous minister of Meigle Church, Dr James Playfair, that 'Many other stones have been carried off, or broken in pieces, by the inhabitants of this place.'[12]

Confirmation of this charge came in 1858, when an old kiln '100 yds north of the churchyard' was demolished.[13] There were recovered from the foundations two large fragments of cross-slab Meigle 4, the cross-slab Meigle 5 and the cross-slab Meigle 23. Another piece was apparently discovered, which Jervise says is the hogback Meigle 25. A S Aglen, rector of Alyth and Meigle mis-numbered it, making it uncertain which stone was meant and Allen in *ECMS* identifies the stone retrieved from the demolished kiln as Meigle 24 – which was subsequently lost.[14] This stone appears in Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* Vol 2 as Plate 7, No.4, and has on one side part of a circular cross akin to Meigle 33. There is no suggestion that rescued stones were then put into the church to 'preserve' them.

Given the number of extant fragments belonging to different stones, these surviving pieces amounting to only a small fraction of the original, complete slabs, there must be in and around Meigle a large number of Pictish carved stones still to be uncovered. The rebuilding of the church swallowed up some sculptured fragments, and seemingly conceals a mason's unfortunate handiwork; other stones may be entombed in the closed up vault under the church.

However if Meigle 10 – that neatly rectangular slab of even thickness – was in fact left lying unspoken-for and temptingly on the mound in the churchyard, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that someone saw a good use for it and carted it off in traditional style. Turn it over and you have a smooth surface for a nice bit of paving. Is it perhaps lying face down in the locality to this day, awaiting discovery?

Sir George Kinloch proposed housing the sculptured stones to protect them from the weather and, as local historian A J Warden put it, 'from the destructive hands of thoughtless or evil disposed persons'.[15] By the time Warden published his fourth volume in 1884, the old schoolhouse adjacent to the churchyard had become a museum dedicated to preserving the sculptured stones – as it is today – but too late for some.[16] Even in 1888 a visitor approaching the schoolhouse observed a Pictish fragment ìlying outside among some broken pieces of ordinary tombs.[17]

It is only thanks to those antiquarians who recognised the cultural importance of Pictish stones that we know of Meigle 10's existence and have any images at all of a Pictish wheeled vehicle.[18] How exciting it would be if Sally Foster, who recently gave a talk to the Pictish Arts Society about casts of Pictish stones, came across a replica of Meigle 10 lurking in a museum store. After all a cast of Meigle 18 was said to have been made.[19] It is admittedly a rather slim chance that we will one day come across the real Meigle 10 or even a replica of it, but we have not seen conclusive proof that it disintegrated in the Meigle Church fire of 1869, and that it is therefore gone forever. What is certain is that numerous bits of Pictish sculptured stone were put to new uses and currently lie hidden in the vicinity, waiting to be revealed. Meigle 10 could be one of them.

Dr Elspeth Reid and Flora Davidson

1 'On Sabbath morning, 28th March, 1869, it was accidentally burned down by the overheating of the warming apparatus.' AJ Warden, *Angus or Forfarshire,* Vol 4 (1884), p.333.
The illustration is from the cover of A S Aglen's *The Sculptured Stones at Meigle* (nd [c.1895] reprinted 1923), taken from John Stuart, *Sculptured Stones of Scotland,* 1 (1856). The artist was A. Gibb.
We have used *ECMS* numbering for the Meigle stones. Chalmers, Stuart, Galloway and Aglen each have their own individual numbering systems.

2 Lloyd Laing and Jennifer Laing, 'Archaeological notes on some Scottish early Christian sculptures'. *PSAS,* 114 (1984), p.277f. According to JNG Ritchie 'It seems rather more likely that the scene derives from a classical source rather than representing any native vehicle', 'Recording Early Christian Monuments in Scotland'. *The Worm, the Germ and the Thorn*, ed. D Henry (1997), p.127.

3 Patrick Chalmers. *The Ancient Sculptured Stones of the County of Angus* (1848). P A Jastresbski was the artist.

4 Stuart, op cit, p.24.

5 Stuart's Plate 76, No.5, shows two sides of Meigle 11, subtitled 'In the Church-Yard of Meigle No.5', but J Romilly Allen and Joseph Anderson, *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, III (Edinburgh, 1903, reprinted by The Pinkfoot Press in 1993) say that 'No.11 was built into a wall of the old church, inside' (p.330). Described by Anna Ritchie in *Meigle Museum, Pictish Carved Stones* (1997) as 'The most massive of all the Meigle recumbents, this great block of sandstone …', it could not be easily confused with Meigle 10.

6 *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae*, 5 (1925), p.271: John Nicoll was assistant from 1850 and minister from 1853–97.

7 No one has accepted Anderson's view that the Ascension of Elijah is depicted, *ECMS*, III, p.331, fn.1.

8 Andrew Jervise, 'Notices descriptive of the localities of certain sculptured stone monuments in Forfarshire … Part II'. *PSAS,* 2 (1859), p.245.

9 Warden, op cit, vol 1, p.35.

10 William Galloway, 'Notice of several sculptured stones at Meigle, Perthshire, still undescribed'. *PSAS,* 12 (1878), p.430f.

11 Galloway, ibid, p.425.

12 From *The Statistical Account of Scotland* Vol 1 (1791), p.507. Meigle minister from 1777 to 1800, Playfair later became Principal of St Andrews University.

13 Jervise, p.243, fn.5; Warden, vol.1, p.34.

14 Jervise, p.244, fn.; Aglen, pp.4, 15; Allen, *ECMS,* III, pp.329, 338.

15 Warden, vol.4, p.347.

16 The introduction to *The Pictish Symbol Stones of Scotland*, ed. I Fraser (RCAHMS 2008) mentions that in 1871 the minister at St Vigeans, William Duke, took photographs of recently discovered stones in his charge (p.4). It seems that care of the Meigle stones fell to concerned private individuals.

17 John J Reid, 'Notice of a fragment of a monumental sculptured stone found at Meigle, 1888'. *PSAS,* 23 (1889), p.232 (=Meigle 8).

18 Thanks to antiquarians' drawings of the horse-drawn vehicle, we can discern on the damaged Skinnet stone traces of a similar wheeled vehicle (*ECMS,* III, pp.30–33) as discussed by John Borland in his paper 'A New 'Chariot' Carving in Northern Pictland' at the PAS Conference 2011, and reported in PAS Newsletter 61. Ritchie, op cit, p.120f, for drawings of Meigle 10 by Gordon, Pennant, Chalmers, Stuart, and Allen and Anderson.

19 Galloway, p.425; *ECMS,* III, p.331.

Dates for your diary

Friday 15 March 2013

7.30pm at Pictavia

Martin Goldberg

(National Museum of Scotland)

Pictish *Adventus* Ceremonies

Saturday 5 October 2013

PAS Conference

Southern Picts, Southern Neighbours

AK Bell Library, Perth

Speakers include

Adrian Maldonado
(University of Glasgow)

Chris Bowles
(Scottish Borders Council)

Ronan Toolis
(GUARD Archaeology Ltd)

Katherine Forsyth
(University of Glasgow)

Nicholas Evans
(University of Edinburgh)

Anne Crone
(AOC Archaeology)

Peter Drummond
(University of Glasgow)

Come along and mark the Pictish Arts Society's 25th Anniversary!

Early Medieval Meigle

Scottish Society for Northern Studies

Day Conference

Saturday 13 April, 2013

Kinloch Memorial Hall, Meigle

PROGRAMME

10.00–10.30—*Coffee/tea and registration*

10.30—Chairman's welcome

10.35—Mark Hall (Perth Museum)
The Meigle Stones: A Biographical Overview

11.15—Nick Evans (University of Edinburgh)
Meigle in its Pictish and Viking Historical Context

11.55—Peter Drummond (University of Glasgow)
Medieval Meigle: The Place-Name Evidence
(drawing on research by Simon Taylor)

12.35—*Light lunch*

13.45—Elizabeth Pierce (University of Glasgow)
Hunting Hogbacks: Seeking Archaeological Context

14.25—Martin Goldberg (National Museums of Scotland)
Pictish Adventus *Ceremonies*

15.15—Anna Ritchie (Independent Scholar)

Visit to Meigle Museum, Kirkyard and Sculptured Stones

Conference fee (includes coffee/tea and light lunch):
SSNS Members: £18; Non-Members: £23;
Registered Students: £8

Fee includes entry to Meigle Museum: Friends of Historic Scotland might like to bring their membership cards.

Full details and application form accessinble through PAS Facebook page. Booking to be made by 30 March 2013 to:

Gillian Zealand, 6 Kirk Road, Fowlis, Dundee DD2 5SB (tel. 01382 581152)

email <**agzealand@btinternet.com**>
(No acknowledgement will be sent unless SAE enclosed)

PAS Newsletter 67

The deadline for receipt of material is

Saturday 11 May 2013

Please email contributions to the editor

john.borland@rcahms.gov.uk