Notice of
Pictish Arts Society
Annual General Meeting
5 October 2013

The Annual General Meeting of the Pictish Arts Society will be held at the A K Bell Library in Perth on Saturday 5 October at 1.45 pm to consider the following business:

1   Apologies for absence.

2   Approval of the 2012 AGM minute (see newsletter 65).

3   Annual Report – President.

4   Honorary Secretary's Report.

5   Treasurer's Report: Presentation and Approval of Annual Accounts.

6   Appointment of an Independent Examiner.

7   Determination of Subscription Rates.

8   Other Honorary Officers' Reports:

    (a) Membership Secretary.

    (b) Editor

9   Election of Honorary Officers:

    (a) President

    (b) Two Vice Presidents

    (c) Secretary

    (d) Treasurer

    (e) Membership Secretary

    (f) Editor

    (g) Events Organiser

    (h) Archivist

10   Election of Committee:

    (Minimum six, maximum twelve)

11   Any other competent business.

Note: business will begin at 1.45pm prompt.

Please send nominations for committee members, and note of any matters you wish to raise, to the Honorary Secretary at Pictavia.

PAS events 2013/14

This year our season of talks at Pictavia will have a slightly different timetable. As usual, they will be held on the third Friday of the month (7 for 7.30pm), but they will now run from September to November, before taking a three-month break (so that speakers and members don't have to run the gauntlet of winter travel). We will then resume in March until May.

In addition, we have an extra talk in October, arranged in conjunction with the Perth Society of Natural Science. It is hoped this will be the first in an occasional series of collaborative events.

And of course there is our annual conference on Saturday 5 October.

---

20 September – Pictavia

The contribution of old maps to understanding 'Pictish' history

Philip Roberts

---

16 October

Perth Museum & Art Gallery, 7.30pm

PAS/Perthsire Society of Natural Science Joint Event

Conventions and competence in carving Pictish symbols: towards a relative chronology

Martin Goldberg

---

18 October – Pictavia

The Archaeology of Fortriu Project: investigating the Tarbat Peninsula

Candy Hatherley

---

15 November – Pictavia

Iron Age remains in the Western Isles: recent survey

George Geddes

President's and Secretary's Report

The past year has seen several developments in the way PAS communicates with the world, thanks to the skills of David McGovern , whose report on developments with the website and social media appear elsewhere in this newsletter. This has enabled us to interact with a number of Pictish enthusiasts across the world, far in excess of our membership and there are signs that it is generating new members.

The Society has seen the first moves to developing joint meetings with other Societies, and we hope that members will come forward with other contacts in future.

In organisational terms, the roles of the Treasurer and the Membership Secretary are now taken by one individual, Hugh Coleman. This means that the record keeping and financial aspects of membership have been streamlined, and, hopefully, will function more smoothly.

The Newsletter continues to flourish, appearing four times a year and including short reports of new work in the field of Pictish Studies, reports of talks given at meetings of the Society, and other items which we hope are of interest to members. Again, the Newsletter Editor always welcomes contributions from members. In future, we hope that more members will choose to receive their newsletter by email. This has already allowed us to suggest reducing the cost of overseas membership to the same as that for UK members.

Once again, we have been very fortunate in hearing from a range of speakers on current aspects of Pictish studies. To single any one out would be invidious; we extend our thanks to them all.

Attendance numbers at the Pictavia talks during the 2011/12 season were consistently high but dwindled considerably during the 2012/13 season, despite an equally impressive line-up of speakers. Adverse weather conditions may have played a part in this during some months but only some. For this coming season we have rearranged the Pictavia series to run from September to November, and then from March through to May. It is hoped that by closing from December to February, speakers and members will avoid having to travel during the worst of the winter. However, like all aspects of the Society, the future of these talks relies on members' support.

John Borland & Sheila Hainey

PAS On-line

Over the last year PAS has raised its web profile by improving our website and establishing a thriving Social Media community.

Our website at **http://www.pictishartssociety. org.uk** has a fresh design and a simplified range of content. Membership can be bought and renewed online and, for the first time this year, PAS Conference registration can be carried out online too.

In order to generate interest in PAS membership via our social media channels, we plan to make all back-copies of the newsletters for download from our website.

There is also a small gallery, details of events and a choice of methods to contact the Society.

Our facebook page at **http://facebook.com/ ThePictishArtsSociety** allows us to reach out beyond our membership to an international audience. It has over 840 'likers' from across the globe and has started to generate new membership applications via the PAS website.

On average, our facebook posts reach around 1500 people each week and we encourage all members who use facebook to visit and contribute to the interesting discussions. We have facebook fans in 45 countries, including 322 in the USA and 223 in the UK. The next highest ranking countries in terms of 'likers' are Australia, Canada, Spain, Ireland and Italy. We even have a 'liker' at the research station in Antarctica!

Our Twitter account **@PictishArts** is a recent addition to our online presence. All posts by administrators on our facebook page are automatically published on our twitter feed in order to increase our reach.

We will be offering renewing members the option to receive their PAS newsletters by email. Although this will be convenient for some and will save the Society significant amounts of money, we appreciate it won't appeal to all so postal delivery will still be available.

By sending international members their PAS newsletters by email we will be able to reduce International Membership to the same rate as domestic.

We want our web presence to provide convenience for members and interest for all. Any ideas, comments and suggestions on our webpage or social media content are always very welcome.

David McGovern

Cossans under cover?

A PAS member has written to Historic Scotland voicing concern about the deteriorating St Orland's stone at Cossans, Angus. The reply indicates that Historic Scotland has its eye on this superb but damaged cross-slab and proposes to erect 'an in-situ shelter' which is currently at the design stage. This will be a welcome step to prevent further weathering, particularly as St Orland's is the only known Pictish cross-slab to depict a boat.

Volunteer! Your PAS Needs You

It's time for the annual call for members to stand for the committee again. If you can spare some time, and attend at least some of the committee meetings (held at Pictavia), please either make yourself known to a member of the committee at the conference, or get in touch either through the website or by letter to Pictish Arts Society, Pictavia, Haughmuir, Brechin, Angus DD9 6RL.

If you don't want to commit to committee membership, but can help out, please get in touch. We particularly welcome anyone who is willing to help organise joint meetings with other societies to help increase the geographical spread of the lectures series. The Newsletter editor is always on the lookout for new material, and we always appreciate hearing any news of anything affecting any of the stones in your area.

Something Fishy

In *PAS Newsletter 66* there appeared a review of artwork exhibited by Marianna Lines under the title 'Hanging Loose: Pictish Banners on show in Edinburgh'. It contained a word which came as a surprise to the writer — hippocamps, in relation to the pair of creatures at the bottom-right of the Aberlemno Churchyard cross-slab. I never know what best to call these beasts, and in the review as submitted I had actually used the term 'aqua-horses'.

Various monikers have been used over the years. To call them 'sea-horses' is too facile, because though their upper bodies are very similar to that creature, including pronounced dorsal fins, their lower bodies do not terminate in coiled tails. The term 'water-horses' is too loaded, conjuring up images of 'kelpies', of which there is no reliable illustration. Interestingly, though confusingly, the excellent organic seaweed ale produced by

the Williams Brothers of Fraoch fame is called 'Kelpie', using as its emblem not a swimming horse but the Pictish creature once known as a 'swimming elephant' (perish the name). The current version comes from Meigle 5.

The term 'hippocampus' bothers me. It is derived from the Greek, *hippos* meaning a horse, and *kampos* meaning a sea-monster. Although they are certainly horsey, there is nothing monstrous about the Aberlemno creatures; on the contrary, they are the most charming and benign of animals.

By contrast, Romilly Allen's 'hippocampus' has the upper body of a dog or wolf, and the lower body of a sea-horse (his 'prime example' coming from Ulbster), and it does not bear a close resemblance to the Aberlemno pair. These he inadvisedly classes as sea-horses, and when it comes to similar animals on Meigle 1 (single), and on Meigle 26 and Murthly (both paired), Allen sticks with this name, though in the text he reduces the accompanying Meigle 1 'hippocampus' (his version) to a 'serpentine creature'.

In the Royal Commission's book *The Pictish Symbol Stones of Scotland*, Iain Fraser refers to 'hippocamps' at Aberlemno, though the indexer didn't seem too keen on the word. A pair of Allen-type 'hippocampi' with bared teeth (making them more monstrous) appear on a stone which Allen never saw, Logierait 2 (only discovered in 1989), and these Fraser describes as 'S-dragons'. Another threatening pair with protruding tongues are to be seen on the Brodie stone, but Allen calls them 'fish monsters', and Fraser follows suit, despite them having coiled tails.

Little wonder, then, that so much confusion surrounds the nomenclature of these and similar creatures. Greek purists might like to use the term 'hippopsari', though I can't see that catching on. I used to call the Aberlemno pair 'marine horses', though without knowing if their habitat is in the sea or in rivers, that seemed too restrictive, hence the aqua-horses of my article. That's what I intend to stay with, for the meantime at least.

Graeme Cruickshank

Editor's Reply:

I did indeed use my editorial prerogative to replace Graeme's aqua-horses with hippocamps. Confusion reigns supreme when it comes to naming these creatures and the last thing they need is yet another name.   *JB*

The Congash sculptured stones and field clearance

I was pleasantly surprised to see no less than three articles on the Congash sculptured stones, the first by John Borland in Newsletter 64, the second by Ron Dutton in Newsletter 66, and the third by David Henry in Newsletter 67. All three refer to the stones as flanking an apparent entrance to Congash burial ground, and Ron Dutton asks whether this is the original position of the stones. If not the original position, this raises the question as to why the Congash stones came to be at the very edge of the the 'burial ground'. It may be no coincidence that the cross-marked stone described by John Borland is also at the edge of the 'burial ground'. In ECMS the
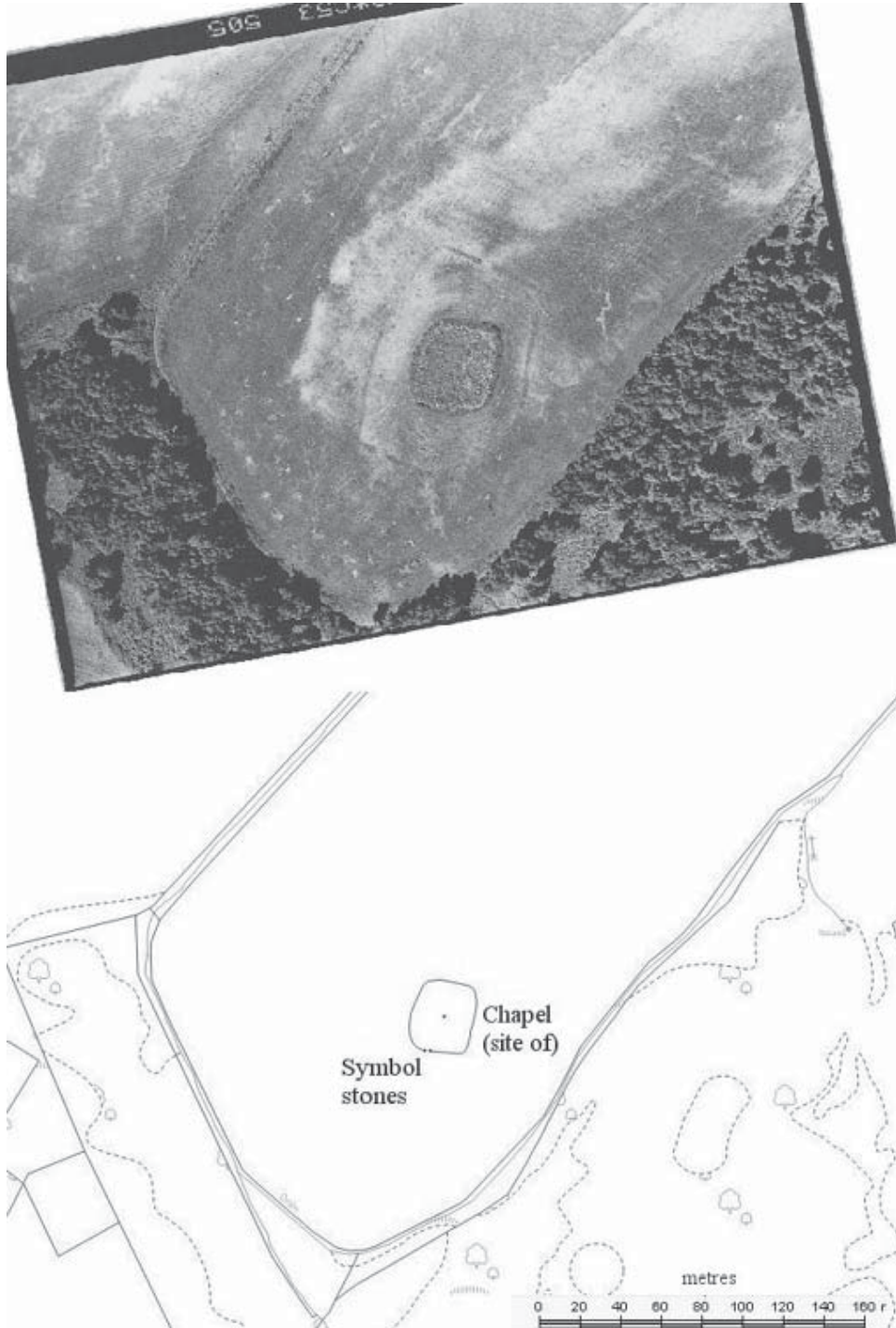

Figure 1 *Aerial photograph (modified) of the Congash chapel site with N upwards (original viewed from ESE) showing the cropmark of an outer enclosure. A crude allowance has been made for perspective shortening and rotation. For comparison, a portion of a modern OS map is also shown, the scale of which applies approximately to the aerial photograph, the web page for which is* **http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/images/l/505248/**.

Congash symbol stones were described as forming the jambs to the entrance to an 'old burial ground', which was filled with piles of stones of all sizes collected from the field in which it stands, and was thickly overgrown with birch trees. Is there any evidence that field clearance has continued since ECMS described the situation? What effect would this have on the environment of the sculptured stones (cross-marked stone included)? Stones from subsequent field clearance would tend to be deposited at the edge of the burial ground, being the easiest way to dump a cartload of stones, when the ground is filled with previous field clearance and thickly overgrown with birch trees. Clear space within the burial ground, such as an entrance pathway, would be especially vulnerable to the addition of field clearance. Each episode of field clearance would tend to increase the dimensions of the burial ground, and indeed, it is more than likely that the burial ground grew in size even before the Congash stones were recognised.

There are two possible reasons why the symbol stones and the cross-marked stone were discovered at the edge of the burial ground: (1) this was their original position; or (2) the symbol stones were found during field clearance and deliberately placed just outside the burial ground as being possibly pagan and inappropriate for hallowed ground (cf Strathmiglo). As a variant of the second possibility, they were deposited at the edge of the burial ground without being recognised as special, but subsequently erected in their current positions when the carvings were recognised.

There are three main strands of evidence to be considered: (i) direct measurement of the dimensions of the burial ground; (ii) photographs of the stones showing major re-arrangements of boulders in front of and to the side of the symbol stones; and (iii) aerial photographs suggesting that the dimensions of the burial ground have increased during the 20th century.

Direct measurement

The dimensions of the burial ground have increased by several metres. In both 1966 and in 2006 Canmore recorded the NNE-SSW dimension of the burial ground as 35m, which might seem to imply that no further stones had been added to the boundary near the incised stones over this period. However, the transverse dimension of the burial ground increased from 29m in 1966 to 31m in 2006, presumably due to field clearance. Because it is not entirely clear how these measurements were taken, this is not conclusive. There are no measurements prior to 1966 except those implied by large scale Ordnance Survey maps

Aerial photography compared to OS maps

The RCAHMS measurements of the burial ground do not quite square with measurements taken from the aerial photograph of 1995 in John Borland's article.

This shows the crop mark of an outer enclosure surrounding the cemetery. To allow easier

Figure 2 *1986 photo of Congash 1 with boulders obscuring the symbols. Original by Alison Campbell in RCAHMS (from a photocopy).*

comparison with the modern map below, and to allow the reader to visualise the relative sizes of outer enclosure and cemetery, Figure 1 shows this aerial photograph after it has been subjected to crude allowances for perspective and compass orientation. The cemetery in the OS map is visibly smaller than in the aerial photo. The N-S dimension in the aerial photo is approximately 41m, whereas the OS map N-S dimension is only 36m, which is reasonably consistent with the earlier RCAHMS figure of 35m

RCAHMS estimate the NE to SW dimension of the **outer** enclosure as 96m, by 67m transversely. Scaling down from these dimensions, we get rough estimates of the cemetery dimensions as about 40m NNE-SSW by 34m transversely. These figures are substantially more than the 35m by 31m quoted by RCAHMS for the dimensions of the cemetery in 1995. Further investigation is needed to resolve this discrepancy (only a small part of which can be due to the approximate allowance made for perspective).

Photographic evidence

Photographs in RCAHMS show that more stones have been deposited at the edges of the burial ground, so that the symbol stones are no longer at the very edge of the burial ground, but are now several feet within it. This provides evidence of field clearance both before 1966 and after. Most of these are visible on the Canmore web site under the Congash chapel entry **http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/15675/**.

One significant photo by Alison Campbell is not displayed on the web site, and is shown below in Figure 2. This shows two large boulders obscuring the view of Congash 1 to such an extent that the photograph had to be taken from above the stone in order to capture all the symbol carving. Presumably the two large boulders came from field clearance, but at some point after 1986 they have been removed (by photographers or archaeologists), so that there is now a clear view of both symbol stones once grass and weeds are cut back.

In short, there is ample evidence of field clearance adding stones around the two symbol stones by a process that would ultimately lead to the stones being well within the pile of clearance stones (or 'burial ground'). However, we may rely on photographers to clear away any stray boulders obscuring the symbol stones, thus maintaining a clear 'entrance' between them.

Bob Henery

The Scoonie hunt and other horsemen

The Scoonie cross-slab was unearthed in the old churchyard of Scoonie, just south of the A915 at Scoonie Brae, on the NE outskirts of Leven, Fife. In 1866 it was gifted to the Society of Antiquaries, according to Canmore's website. Today it is wall-mounted in a dimly lit spot in the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh, with its back containing a hunting scene on display. The cross side cannot be viewed as it is up against the wall, but Romilly Allen noted in 1903: 'The details shown in Stuart's Sculptured Stones of Scotland [1867] have entirely disappeared.'[1] Made of sandstone, this Class II cross-slab measures 1.06m x 0.7m x 0.1m (3'6" x 2'4" x 4").

© Bob Henery

Scoonie cross-slab

Its original height is uncertain as the stone is broken at the top and the Pictish beast was quite possibly the lower of two large symbols. The bottom section may be missing too. As the remaining stone is quite rectangular, pieces could have been neatly broken off to provide building material, as occurred at several church locations, where they are still being found.

A dominating Pictish beast hangs over the hunting scene like a protective shield, the end of its snout/beak touching the uppermost rider's face. Facing in the opposite direction to the huntsmen, it is tipped slightly forward so that its 'forelegs' droop lower than the rear 'legs', which touch the wounded stag's antlers. The

contiguity suggests a close connection between the message of the symbol(s) and the hunt.

There is no doubt about this being a hunt, given that the fleeing stag has a spear lodged in its side. Hunting scenes have been ascribed to other cross-slabs on the grounds that they depict multiple riders accompanied by dogs, although there is no quarry. This assumes that whatever message was conveyed by a hunting scene was understood implicitly even though the quarry is absent. St Orland's Stone, and cross-slabs at Rossie Priory and Fordoun have been thus described.[2]

But there are instances where the presence of dogs and horsemen does not connote a hunt, e.g. on the fragment retrieved from Dull churchyard they accompany a line of footsoldiers. Even running hounds do not necessarily equate with a hunt (see the panel below the military on the Dupplin cross). So some hunting scene attributions are possibly inaccurate.[3] Incontrovertible hunts are depicted on the cross-slabs known as Hilton of Cadboll, Elgin, Aberlemno 3, Kirriemuir 2, and within the melee on Shandwick.

The Scoonie hunting scene is interesting to modern eyes for its egalitarian depiction of huntsmen and their mounts. Three very similarly-sized, -coiffed and -accoutred riders on three very similar horses are arranged with the topmost figure on the left of the space directly behind the stag and above the second figure, while the lowest figure rides out in front, at a slight angle, as though containing the quarry by a flanking movement. More usual among the known Pictish cross-slabs is to find a size hierarchy of horsemen and/or a distinct range of trappings, where the pre-eminence of the topmost figure is emphasised by being the largest or by sitting on the largest saddle-cloth or by holding the hawk. The tableau is so arranged as

to highlight one principal participant, usually top centre. Being atop other riders or being the foremost rider is an easily understood message about social and political status. The Scoonie cross-slab does not fit neatly into that schema.[4]

Scoonie: Author's tracing omitting ogham

It is tempting to view the Scoonie cross-slab as an early stage in the development of hunt iconography, predating an emphasis on social differentiation. The hunt is fulfilled, the stag speared and the dogs move in. On some cross-slabs the deer, or both deer and hounds, are detached from their pursuers. When relegated to the bottom of a stone it would seem that the chase and its outcome, and whatever that signified to those 'reading' the pictures, are less relevant than the ranking of equestrians above.

In the neighbouring Fife parish of Largo is an example highlighting hierarchy and seemingly losing the coherence of the hunt motif. Three

Largo cross-slab, ECMS

horsemen are stacked vertically on Largo cross-slab, more or less on a par in size; however, the uppermost horseman is seated on a big square saddle-cloth, the middle figure on a smaller, triangular saddle-cloth, while the lowest figure has none. Distinctions in standing are made plain to see. Two deer placed at the bottom of the stone might be a cursory signifier of a hunt, one casting a backward look, but the deer are segregated from pursuit by a large intervening Pictish beast. (The Largo riders head into a large vertical double-disc and Z rod.)

Further north in Fife, the crumbling Mugdrum pillar was once a free-standing cross and so deemed later in the evolution of Pictish sculpture. Horsemen fill its tiered panels. Hounds and quarry are confined to the bottom panel – yet the spirited scene represents almost a third of the pillar height, suggesting that here the motif of the chase was going strong, still to current taste and with some enduring relevance.

Hunting scenes are thought to be vehicles for the Christian message. The stag is Christ the persecuted, or it is the Christian soul, or the hunt represents the Christian soul in pursuit of salvation.[5] It can always be interpreted to suit Christian iconography, but was that the original intention behind Scoonie's sun-embellished hunt? Recognisable Biblical allusions on cross-slabs are fairly common – and international

influences are clear – but did a cross-slab demand that all motifs contain Christian symbolism? Surely not, when Pictish symbols, and sometimes huge, repeated symbols, are allowed. Certainly not in the battlefield scene on the Aberlemno churchyard cross-slab.

It seems likely that secular images could co-exist alongside religious ones. Hunters and horsemen first appear in stone when the cross appears, but could represent native culture, given their conjunction with symbols. Religious connotations of the hunt may have built up as Biblical and apocryphal knowledge deepened, or at least as the wish to announce that knowledge increased by transmitting it on stone, 'whatever the social function of that traditional iconography may have been'.[6]

The relatively simple hunting activity on three sculptured stones from Fife (Scoonie, Largo, Mugdrum) stands in contrast to complex depictions on the much larger cross-slabs of Aberlemno 3 and Hilton of Cadboll whose central panels contain a compartmentalised hunt with many elements. On Aberlemno 3 there is no major variation in horseman size, but the topmost rider is in pride of place and his large head extends into the panel border above bringing it into close contact with a Z-rod belonging to a large double-disc. This feature where the principal rider's head touches or protrudes into the space above, is found elsewhere.

Hilton of Cadboll hunt

On Hilton of Cadboll, the topmost and largest figure sits sideways on the mount with an escort alongside, possibly a realistic touch since someone would need to control the horse. This principal figure is variously interpreted as a Pictish lady of prominence, perhaps a queen, presiding over a secular 'real' hunt; or she is the Virgin Mary, or he is Jesus, both sited above an allegorical hunt, this one for sinners' salvation.

As a major motif, the rider is second only to the cross itself and the traditional symbols. Possession of horses or participation in riding was obviously emblematic of elite status, while hunting deer would be an actual activity for the horse-owning and horse-riding stratum or strata of society. There are real-life social, secular reasons for the hunt: it affirms group identity, it can be a public parade of status and power, it provides training for battle, and it adds to the food supply.[7] This lends weight to the idea that large Pictish symbols are conjoined with hunting scenes. When symbols disappear from crosses, so in the rule do the multiple horsemen.

If the motif of riders allows social differentiation to be made visible, that may partially be the point – to aggrandise the chief. A leader and entourage usually proceed in descending order, the lower, the lowlier, with size/accoutrements diminishing. For example, on Meigle 4 the attendant riding behind and below is a half-size version of his leader, minus his leader's large saddle-cloth; on Meigle 1 the last rider on each diagonal register is similarly pint-sized.

There was no doubt a symbolic function to carving equestrian scenes on a cross-slab. On the one hand, it would have confirmed the high status of the horsemen (horsewomen) through association with the Christian cross. Occasionally the principal rider is even incorporated into the shaft or arm of the cross to drive home the point (always on horseback – a mount is a required badge of rank).[8] On the other hand, a display of armed hunters or horsemen behind the cross proclaims that the church has guardians to protect it. Of course the families controlling secular power may well have been the same ones as wielded ecclesiastical power, and interdependent.

Apart from definite hunting scenes and where hunting might be implied through synecdoche, some cross-slabs illustrate a procession or a military show of strength. On Meigle 2 the noticeably large, armed chief on his noticeably large saddle-cloth is set centrally above a lower row of horsemen. Here a three-abreast wall of armed cavalry, spear to the fore, presents a united front. Needless to say, they get no saddle-cloths, unlike the higher-ranking horseman following close on their heels.

Meigle 2

Meigle 5

Alternatively, one could read the 'story' on Meigle 2 in separate lines, as with the Aberlemno battlefield scene. At the top, the chief is preceded by an attendant angel signifying his Christian status and providing heavenly protection. In the register below, the chief is preceded by attendant warriors signifying his lordly status and providing earthly protection. Equally-sized saddle-cloths for both might support this second reading.

To return to the Scoonie cross-slab, the carving is mostly incised, which suggests it belongs to an early stage, although skill, or lack of it, is not necessarily proof of chronology.[9] The Scoonie hunt moves from left to right and there are later hunts, albeit in the minority, which also depict a left to right movement: Shandwick, where the hunting, fighting and assorted animals occur beneath a dominating Pictish beast; a lone huntsman on Nigg; the riders on Kirriemuir 2. The fragmentary Inchbrayock 3 is unusual in that riders would appear to move in opposite directions, one right-to-left, one left-to-right.

Noteworthy too is the gait of the Scoonie horses. They do not quite exhibit the high leg-action of the archetypal Pictish horse; yet the stag is in classic 'prancing' pose with the foreleg raised high. Here the pace is consistent. In other hunting scenes deer run for their lives at full pelt with hounds in racing pursuit; yet horses are out of synch. The horses are generally shown with the controlled and elegant gait of the Pictish trot.[10] Since the movement of deer and hounds is realistically portrayed, and since galloping horses are occasionally portrayed, the sculptors' preference for the high-stepping, measured trot indicates a feature of some significance, imbued with a symbolic function. It might be an indicator of social superiority, and even ethnicity.[11]

It seems significant that a horseman whose horse gallops belongs at the tail end of the cavalcade. On Fordoun the principal horseman, encom-passed within the lower arm of the cross, is preceded by another rider outside the cross, both riding in impeccable Pictish trot. Coming along behind is a rider at the gallop. On St Orland's Stone the cavalcade (moving left to right) is arranged in two registers of high-stepping steeds, with the exception of the rearmost one on the lower row. It is the only one to gallop.[12] Similarly the pint-sized, bottommost rider on Meigle 1 follows along behind at a gallop.

St Orland's Stone, ECMS

On the Rossie Priory cross-slab three central horses within a cross-shaft trot in typical style, but of the two peripheral horses, one gallops, the other stands still. Conceivably they were designed to fit the available space rather than to convey a different message about the riders, but nevertheless the outsiders are depicted differently from those in pride of place in classic pose inside the cross. Merely elegant variation, or a demonstration of inferior horsemanship or of an inferior horse, and so proof of a person of lesser distinction? Or again, the one at the back may have had a different function to perform for the group, such as a messenger.

There are two cross-slabs which pointedly highlight galloping. On the Aberlemno churchyard stone, the 'Northumbrian' leader abandons sword and shield to gallop off, signifying an ignominious rout. However, on Kirriemuir 2 the vigorous huntsman charges full gallop at a stag, with spear poised in the air to strike, displaying prowess, it would seem, unless the wildness of his movement was not becoming; on the same stone the upper horseman's mount walks in decorously controlled contrast, a picture of dignity and noble bearing (rather like age versus youth, or maybe two facets of a perfect proto-knight).

Meigle 11

© Bob Henery

Kirriemuir 2

The procession of three horses on the recumbent Meigle 11 exemplifies that very pronounced high-stepping of archetypal Pictish horse sculpture. But this distinctive gait of a century or more was to wane. Later, or presumed to be later, depictions of horses are either walking or static with all four hooves on the ground. This alters the shape of the space available to the sculptor, a possible reason for the rider's leg on the walking or stationary horse to dangle straight down, rather than being carved in the classic position with the leg well forward.

Or did the different configuration mean that something specific about horsemanship had changed – a new fashion, or military riding, or

the introduction of saddles, or the end of Pictish horse training? Girths are visible on the Kirriemuir 2 horses, but may hold in place traditional saddle-cloths not saddles. The two mounts that survive on the military face of Dunkeld 2 bear the large, bell-shaped feathered hooves of heavy 'Clydesdale' horses, one explanation for a change in step; but it does not apply to other stones, nor to the narrow side of Dunkeld 2 where a third horse, walking, has the customary small hooves of a riding horse, suggesting that two types of horse were in use.

Dunkeld 2 bell-shaped hooves Side panel, ECMS

The Dupplin free-standing cross is now thought to have been erected around 820, since it seems to refer to the death of Constantin. There the horse of the chieftain/king is in static pose; the leg dangles; a sole horseman is depicted. Is this now a sign of Scottic influence, bringing a change in artistic convention if not a change in the actual practice of horsemanship? It is the case that many stones from the west of Scotland depict a single horseman on a walking horse.

Dupplin cross

On Sueno's stone, considered to be late 9th or 10th century, the military leader's mount still shows a trace of raised foreleg, but those of the massed subordinate ranks have all four hooves on the ground.

The Scoonie cross-slab was found, like many other Pictish sculptured stones, at a church. Scoonie church stood 'on a small but conspicuous rounded hill, which may well be the eponymous sgonn'.[13] (Gaelic *sgonn* a lump-like hill). The Largo cross-slab was found in two locations, one part near the northern boundary of Largo parish, which may correspond to a very old territorial border. The other part was a mile away serving as a drain-cover to the south of Largo estate.[14] A third Fife monument, the Mugdrum pillar, was 'once a magnificent and conspicuous land-mark on the eponymous ridge (*druim*) of Mugdrum still in situ near the western boundary of Mugdrum's lands, and probably indicated to those travelling along the coastal route towards Abernethy from the east that they were entering the core lands of the church of Abernethy.'[15] Interestingly, these locations mirror recent findings from Aberdeenshire – where research suggests that Pictish sculpture is mainly found at church sites, near parish boundaries, and on route ways[16] – even though Aberdeenshire stones are predominantly Class I symbol stones. It would also suggest that sculptured stones served more than one function.

In seeking art-historical clues about how cross-slabs came into being, evolved and spread geographically and chronologically, we risk misreading their context and telescoping centuries. But rushing dogs, the fleeing deer, jaws tearing at its flesh, a spear in its flank, the fanfare of trumpets, a cavalcade on the move, created immensely vivid, action-packed images in stone, not to mention exotic creatures, contorted animals, Bible stories, and astoundingly intricate interlace on the cross. Although we still do not know for certain what they were for or whom they were for ('the monks, the local farmers, or visitors?'[17]) the sculptured stones were undoubtedly a wonder to behold.

Elspeth Reid

Notes:

1. JR Allen & J Anderson, *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, III, p.347. A photo on **http://nms.scran.ac.uk** under 'Scoonie' shows faint features on the cross.
2. *The Pictish Symbol Stones of Scotland*, ed I Fraser, RCAHMS, 2008
3. Dogs attacking deer without any hunters in sight, e.g. Meigle 12, St Vigeans 8 & Burghead 7
4. The ogham running down the right hand side of the hunting scene avoids slicing the stag's foreleg and head and may be contemporaneous. It can be read as EDDARRNON, similar to inscriptions at Brodie and at Newton, Culsalmond, and possibly in Roman lettering on Fordoun. It is perhaps an epitaph or a name, e.g. St Ethernan, the saint of the Isle of May.
5. L Alcock, Image and Icon in Pictish Sculpture. *The Age of Migrating Ideas*, eds RM Spearman & J Higgitt, 1993, p.233
6. G Henderson & I Henderson, *The Art of the Picts, Sculpture and Metalwork in Early Medieval Scotland*, 2004, p.129
7. A Carrington, The Equestrian Motif in the Early Medieval Pictish sculpture at Meigle, Perthshire. *Pictish Arts Society Journal* 8, 1995, pp.28-43
8. Balluderon, Edderton, Fordoun, Rossie Priory
9. R Beck, *Scotland's Native Horse, Its History, Breeding and Survival*, 1992: Scoonie horses 'clearly recognisable as native ponies'. In his view, the convexity of the crest on Pictish horses generally makes it obvious that these horses are meant to be stallions. On Kirriemuir 2 male attributes are noticeable.
10. Wikipedia has videos and photos of diagonal trotting and pace under 'Horse gait' **http://en.wikipedia.org**.
11. Beck, op cit, p.131, points out the 'advanced and sophisticated equitation' of this highly collected gait.
12. The chief horseman is absent and the hole left is surprisingly deep.
13. SR Taylor, *The Place-Names of Fife*, vol.2, p.527: 'a possible Pictish origin for this problematical name'.
14. Information from Canmore website **http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk**
15. Taylor, op cit, vol.4, p.642
16. M Gondek & G Noble, Together as One: The Landscape of the Symbol Stones at Rhynie, Aberdeenshire; and I Fraser & S Halliday, The Early Medieval Landscape of Donside, Aberdeenshire. *Pictish Progress, New Studies on Northern Britain in the Early Middle Ages*, eds S Driscoll, J Geddes & M Hall, 2010.
17. SM Foster & S Jones, Recovering the biography of the Hilton of Cadboll Pictish cross-slab. *A Fragmented Masterpiece*, 2008, p.209, in reference to Tarbat peninsula: 'We must also consider who the audiences for these messages might have been: the monks, the local farmers, or visitors?'.

More stones for Thurso

Caithness Horizons (formerly Thurso Museum) has been re-united with two stones from its collection. The Watenan Pictish symbol stone and the incised cross slab from St John's Point, Canisbay had been on long-term loan to the museum in Aukengill but following its remodelling as the Caithness Broch Centre, both stones were demoted to a damp outdoor store room.

They are now safe in Caithness Horizon's dry store room but the good news is that they won't be there for long. Following a successful bid for funding, Caithness Horizons intend to add them to their existing display which currently consists of two magnificent Pictish cross-slabs (the Ulbster Stone and the Skinnet cross-slab, both of which have recently been extensively conserved) and a Norse rune-inscribed cross from St Peter's Church, Thurso. A second rune-inscribed cross from St Peter's has also been awarded to the museum.
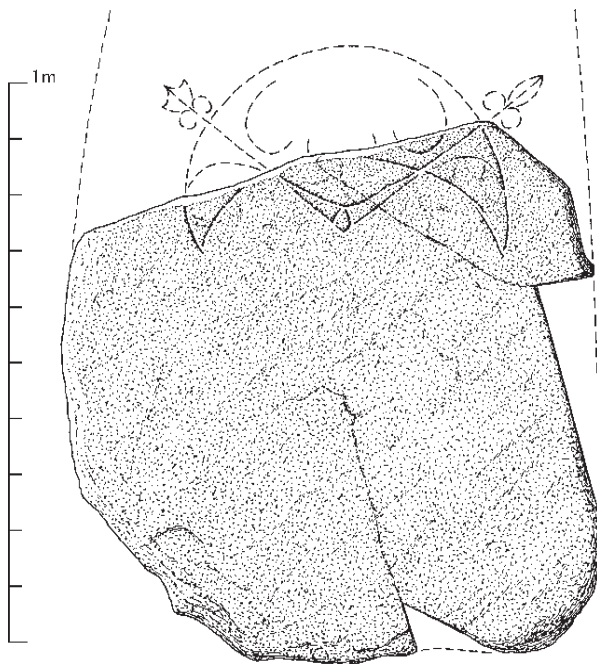
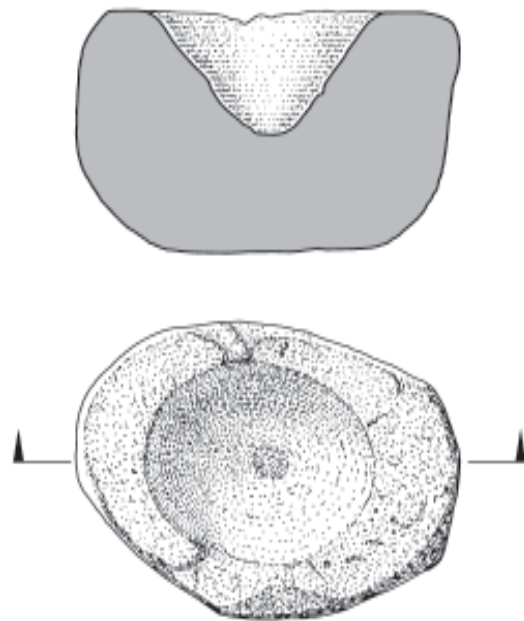

Fig 1 *Watenan Pictish symbol stone*

Fig 2 *St John's Point, Canisbay cross-slab, scale 1:10*

All drawings © Crown Copyright RCAHMS

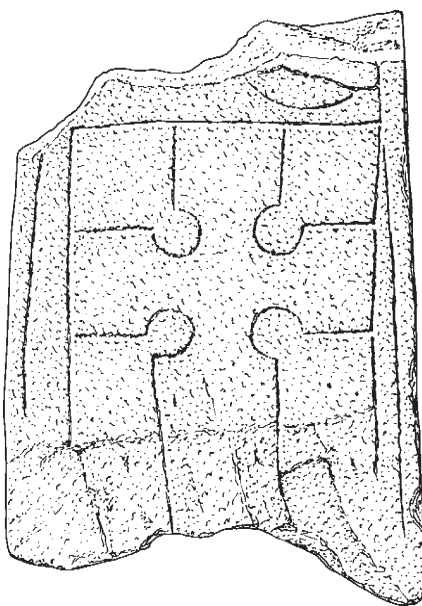**Fig 3** *Skinnet font, scale 1:10*

Following some detective work last year, RCAHMS tracked down a small crudely carved font from the Chapel at Skinnet to a back garden in Thurso. It too has now been taken into the museum's care and will go on display beside the Skinnet cross slab.

The resultant display: a Pictish symbol stone, an Early Christian simple cross, Pictish cross-slabs, an early font and Norse rune-inscribed crosses will give an excellent representation of the Early Medieval sculpture of Caithness and promises to make an already stunning display even better.

John Borland
RCAHMS

> **Caithness Horizons** is open:
> All year – Monday to Saturday 10am–6pm
> April to September – Sunday 11am–4pm
> October to March – Closed on Sunday