PAS AGM

Reid Hall, Forfar,
Saturday 5 October 2019 at 17.30.

1 Apologies for absence were received from Sarah-Louise Coleman, Graeme Cruickshank, John and Phyllis Mackay, Alex and Jennifer McKay, Stewart Mowatt and Anna Ritchie.

2 The Minutes of the 2018 AGM were approved as published, proposed by Sheila Hainey and seconded by Hugh Coleman.

3 The President's and Secretary's Joint Report as published in Newsletter 92 was accepted by the meeting. John Borland ran through the previous year's activities, mentioning that Brechin Museum lectures were well attended and boosted by many non-members turning up. Perhaps increased media coverage of several new finds has created more general curiosity about Pictish history. The latest discovery of a Class II cross slab in Easter Ross has led to collaboration with the North of Scotland Archaeology Society (NOSAS), the original finders. Since the stone was earth-fast, it did not qualify as treasure trove. Fortunately the landowner agreed to let the stone be removed, but that is an expensive operation, which PAS was proud to contribute to – thanks to our past and present members. The secretary of NOSAS, Jonie Guest, stood up and expressed warm thanks from NOSAS for our speedy and generous contribution. Once conserved, the stone will be displayed in Dingwall Museum. David Henry raised the question of the viability of local museums as they are often closed down. However, it was agreed that the alternative, i.e. community-run projects, were quite often unsustainable in the long term. First of all grant applications will need to be made and funds found. John Borland mentioned that in Angus the museums were moving to winter opening hours, which would fortunately not affect the Brechin lectures on Friday evenings.

4 Copies of the Annual Accounts were handed out by the Treasurer Hugh Coleman and showed that our funds had once again slightly increased. The accounts were approved (proposed by David McGovern, seconded by Pam Cranston). Funds are therefore available for a worthy project that safeguards Pictish sculpture. The newly discovered 'Dingwall' stone with its fine symbols and carving is a worthy candidate. As it requires costly conservation, a fund-raising campaign will be launched in continued collaboration with NOSAS. But other Pictish stones are languishing in unsatisfactory conditions, notably the one on the floor of Logierait kirk and the Carpow fragemnt stored in an outhouse. The recently-found Barmuckity stone is another one that might require financial assistance.

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

6a Membership secretary Elspeth Reid reported that membership was somewhere between stable and increasing. At this point in the year we have 127 members but cannot say how many existing members will decide not to renew. The gap between the majority who opt for traditional paper newsletters and the smaller group who prefer to receive pdf copies continues to narrow; electronic copies are very much on the rise. We have 2 members in France, 2 in the USA, 1 in Australia, and the rest within the UK.

6b Newsletter Editor John Borland exhorted members to contribute, noting that small articles were also wanted. When relevant news stories appear, it would be an opportunity for someone to write up a paragraph on the subject or even paraphrase the story, preferably informing John so that more than one person did not work on the same thing. Given the lack of contributors though, this was not considered to be a great risk! He was pleased to announce that a new Editor would be in charge after the AGM elections: Bill Stevens was taking on the role. Brechin lectures are always reported in the newsletters – Sheila Hainey has offered to carry out that task. As she lives on the west coast of Scotland, far too far away to attend the talks, she will work from voice recordings. This prompted a discussion on filming the lectures with a digital camera. Iain MacIlleChiar suggested posting the filmed lectures online. There were some objections as this might erode attendance at lectures. A further idea was to store the filmed lectures on Dropbox for the use of members. This might encourage new members from overseas.

7 Election of Honorary Officers. President John Borland was re-elected unopposed, as was Vice President David McGovern. Elspeth Reid and Jennifer MacKay were elected Joint Honorary Secretary. Hugh Coleman remained as Treasurer and Elspeth Reid as Membership Secretary and Archivist. Bill Stevens was elected the new Newsletter Editor. Committee members Sheila Hainey, Nigel Ruckley and Barbara Thompson were duly re-elected. Sheila Fraser was elected as a new member. Stewart Mowatt has finally left the committee after long years of faithful service. Kelly Kilpatrick has kindly agreed to organise speakers for future lecture series.

AOCB Elspeth Reid said that the PAS book collection had been donated to Angus Archives at

Restenneth, including a complete series of journals and newsletters. She retained a complete set of both to answer queries that come in, mostly from students.

The next conference will be held in Aberdeen with the kind help of Jane Geddes of Aberdeen University.

Crowdfunding was discussed as a way to raise the necessary funds for conserving and displaying in Dingwall the newly discovered cross slab.

The AGM concluded.   *ER*

The Meffan Institute, Forfar

A private view for PAS conference-goers

It has become a tradition of late to mark the PAS annual conference with a get-together on the eve of the conference: Caithness Horizons in Thurso, Inverness Museum and Elgin Museum have all hosted Friday evening private views for PAS conference-goers. So for this year's Forfar-based conference, the venue for our soirée had to be the Meffan Institute. Formerly run by Angus Council, the Meffan (and all other Angus Museums, including our lecture venue, Brechin Town House) is now run by ANGUSalive.

It is home to an exceptional collection of Pictish sculpture and despite being 'weel kent' by most, the 35 conference-goers who assembled there enjoyed looking at the display once more and discussing it all in great detail. Wine, soft drinks and nibbles helped to create a convivial atmosphere. A good time was had by all and the gathering whetted our appetites for the coming conference and fieldtrip.

PAS Conference 2019

Reid Hall, Forfar (morning session)

Rebecca Jones was a leading member of the team that delivered the successful nomination of the Antonine Wall as a World Heritage Site (inscribed in 2008). She opened the morning session with a talk on *Rome's North-Western Frontier: The Antonine Wall*, bringing us up to date with recent work and current thinking.

Hadrian, whose Wall originally marked Rome's north-western frontier, was largely responsible for defining the boundaries of the empire. The *limes* – the frontier defences – were not of uniform design, and the vast building project that was largely carried out by the army did little to endear Hadrian to his soldiers. It is unclear why his successor, Antoninus Pius, chose to push north of Hadrian's boundary in Britain: was it to gain a prestigious (if easy) victory? Was it a response to trouble along the border? Or was it that the Forth-Clyde isthmus was shorter and therefore seen as easier to defend than the Solway-Tyne line? Whatever the reason, three years after Hadrian's death in AD139, work started on a new wall. Occupation here was to be relatively short-

lived; after not much more than twenty years, the army withdrew to Hadrian's Wall. However, during these years, a network of roads and forts had provided defence in depth behind Rome's north-western boundary.

At the time when building began, Lollius Urbicus was governor of the province of Britannia. Rome's adversaries here were described as 'barbarians' or peoples of Caledonia, but not at this time as 'Picts'. They first appear in much later accounts.

The frontier comprised a number of components. Of these, the best preserved today is the ditch than ran along the northern side of the wall. Upcast from this formed a bank on the northern side, which is also preserved in places. The wall itself was built of turf, raised on a kerbed, cobbled footing provided with drainage channels at intervals. The original height, estimated from the number of layers of turves revealed in early excavations, was of the order of three metres. On the south side of the wall lay a number of forts and fortlets linked by a road.

Some comparisons with Hadrian's Wall are inevitable. The Antonine Wall is only about half the length, is of turf rather than stone, and its forts and fortlets are much closer together. The smaller Antonine forts often have annexes, which have been shown in a number of cases to contain bathhouses. Was this a deliberate move to reduce fire risk among the accommodation and administrative buildings of the fort proper? The use of stone is relatively rare on the Antonine frontier – most buildings were of timber-framed, wattle and daub construction. At Rough Castle, the best preserved fort on the Wall, the annexe was larger than the fort itself. Early excavations at this site revealed a pattern of pits laid out to the north of the ditch, apparently to strengthen the defences. These '*lilia*' (after similar defences described by Caesar) were thought to be unique. However, they have been found at half a dozen other Antonine Wall sites, and indeed, at a few places on Hadrian's Wall.

A number of small fortlets has been identified. These generally held only a few barrack blocks, lacking all the ancillary buildings normally to be found in a fort (headquarters, granaries, bathhouse, etc.). Occasionally, it appears that a fortlet was replaced by a fort. Archaeologists have long speculated over the planning and building sequence of the Wall: were the fortlets replaced as a change to an original plan, or was this simply an intended progression from a temporary to a more permanent structure?

At some sites, for example Balmuildy, the fort has stone wing walls, which raised the question of whether or not the original intention had been to build the Wall in stone. It has also been suggested that originally forts would have been as far apart as on Hadrian's Wall. However, there is no evidence that would reliably allow us to distinguish between forts

that were part of the original plan and those that were added later as plans changed. At Rough Castle, the foundations of the fort appear to butt up against the Wall, a feature which has been used to advance the argument that the fort is a later construction. However, the turves appear to be bonded into the Wall which would constitute a strong argument that the two were of contemporary build. It has also been suggested that annexes were later additions, but a number of these are demonstrably contemporary with their adjacent forts.

Some features so far appear to be unique to the Antonine frontier. Distance stones, recording the lengths built by various work groups, are known elsewhere. On the north-west frontier, these often carry elaborately sculpted designs of brutally victorious Romans and defeated barbarians, designs not found elsewhere. The celebration of aggressive dominion was obvious.

Small enclosures underlying some of the forts were believed to represent an earlier phase of activity. That on Croy Hill was the first to be shown of Antonine date. It seems likely, judging by the locations, that these were small surveyors' camps, set up in places which would be natural sites for permanent forts. These are unknown elsewhere.

Work on preparing the nomination for World Heritage Site status began in 2002. New work on the monument was added to the large quantity of data accumulated over many years. The Ordnance Survey had begun mapping the Wall in the 1950s. The remains were re-surveyed by the RCAHMS using GPS to allow recording at a far subtler level, including very slight traces. For example, a small area of wall footing revealed in a farm track could be noted. Earlier plans and details from old excavations could be overlaid, together with data from old and new aerial photographs gathered since the 1940s. Stray finds from around the Wall, reported over the last few hundred years were also added to the data base.

The team also collated information from excavations and stray finds that tell us something about the people who built and lived along the frontier. For example, there is evidence that civilian potters travelled with the army and worked at Antonine Wall forts. One of them, Serrius, stamped his name on his pots. At Bearsden, some of the soldiers used pottery designed for cooking in a style native to North Africa. These men may well have travelled with the army from Mauretania. At Bar Hill an altar dedication was the first indication of the presence of archers from Syria. Palaeoenvironmental evidence can tell us something about diet and living conditions. At Bearsden, examination of material from the latrine outflow revealed fig seeds, suggesting that these had been imported. The soldiers' diet there appeared to be largely vegetarian and it appears that many carried a burden of intestinal worms. Other evidence, such as the gaming counters and board from the bathhouse, tells us something about how soldiers could spend their leisure time. Perhaps more enlightening is the discovery in waterlogged deposits of well-preserved leather shoes. Women and children were present and their shoes are some of the most evocative finds from the Wall. Memorial stones also tell us something about the people who died here. Someone by the name of Salmanes erected a stone in memory of his fifteen year-old namesake: neither had military rank and their name indicates a Middle Eastern origin. Perhaps a merchant and his son?

Although the Antonine Wall was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2008, work goes on. A collaborative effort is designed to ensure that as much as possible of the European frontier which has not yet achieved that status will do so over the next few years. At the moment, an extension of this project into the Middle East and North Africa is difficult because of the uneasy situation in much of the region. At home, work on promoting a greater understanding and awareness of the Antonine Wall continues. Lidar survey is helping to increase understanding of the topographical setting of the Wall. Dr Louise Campbell's work at Glasgow has revealed the vivid (and often gory) colouring of the distance slabs.

It is unfortunate that the Roman frontier ran through what is now one of the most densely developed stretches of Scotland. However, we are lucky in that we have Roy's map, which details much that has been lost in fairly recent times, as well as detailed antiquarian and archaeological reports of finds and excavations along the Wall. All of this information feeds into a series of events and activities aimed at raising awareness of the Antonine Wall, These include the opening of Roman themed children's playparks, the erection of replica distance stones, a quest-style game (Go Roman) with characters whose names were taken from Roman tombstones. A clear and easily navigated website (www.antoninewall.org) gives details of events, links to local groups interested in the Wall, an interactive map and help with planning trips, as well as a useful app to accompany visits. Both website and app are updated with any new discoveries.

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Our second speaker of the morning, **Neil McGuigan,** researched politics and religion in the Forth/Tyne region in the period 850–1150 using only contemporary evidence for his doctorate at St Andrews. He used similar techniques to prepare his paper on *Cats, Orcs and Irishmen: the Northern Pictish Church after AD850.*

The names 'Cat' and 'Orc' for the people of the north of Scotland and the Orkney islands respectively appear to be very old, and may well have been current in the 9th century, 'Orc' may mean 'pig' or 'whale' – the latter perhaps more likely in the context of

Orkney, 'Insi Orc' in Old Irish. The name appears to predate the Roman period. Cat, 'Cait' in Old Irish or 'Cataibh' in Scots Gaelic, meaning 'cat people' was possibly a post-Roman name. Territorially it was applied to Sutherland (a name which derives from Norse) and probably included Caithness before the 13th century. Confusingly 'Insi Cat' in Old Irish refers to Shetland. 'Cat' as a division of Pictish territory is attested in a verse dated to about 850, listing the seven sons of the Pict and their territories.

Prior to that period, there are a few scattered references to Orkney in the Annals of Ulster: Aedán son of Gábran's expedition to Orc under the year 580, Bruide's destructive attack in 682 and a victory over the Orcs in which the son of Artablair fell in 709. The Annals, with their Ionan perspective, mention Orkney only rarely.

Adomnón's *Life of Saint Columba* includes an episode that took place at the court of Bruide. In the presence of an Orcadian regulus (petty king) who had given hostages to Bruide, Columba requested that the latter ensure that the Orcadian would see that nothing untoward should happen to 'our people' should they land in the Orkneys. Columba had apparently foreseen that Cormac and his companions would indeed reach there within a few months. At least by Adomnón's time (early eighth century), there was some association between Orkney and monks from Iona. Possibly Adomnán was reminding Bruide's successors that they had a duty to protect Cormac's successors (as monks or perhaps as bishops in the islands). The evidence of Pictish carved stones suggests that at least before the Viking period, Cat and Orc were culturally similar to the Picts somewhat further south. Neil briefly considered the use of church dedications to trace links to Iona and the Irish churches. While this seemed promising for Cat, with a reasonable scattering of dedications with such links, Orc was a different matter. There a preponderance of dedications to Saint Magnus could be explained in one of several ways: earlier churches could have disappeared with a disappearance of Christianity in the wake of a cataclysmic Viking takeover of the islands, with the dedications to the islands' own saint reflecting a period of conversion following on from Olaf Tryggvason's establishment of Christianity in Norway at the end of the tenth century. Or re-dedication could have accompanied a twelfth-century reorganisation of the parish structure, dependent on the mother church in Kirkwall. With no contemporary documentary evidence to support either view, Neil left this line of enquiry aside.

Instead, he turned to two continental sources which seem to shed some light on the question of continuity of links to the Irish churches during the period of Viking dominance. The first of these, the *Life of Saint Findan*, was commissioned by a tenth or eleventh-century abbot of Rheinau, where the Saint spent his last years and died in the 870s. Findan was a Leinsterman, who was captured and carried off by Northmen. He managed to escape from them when they called at an uninhabited island in the Orkneys. Miraculously borne up across the waves, he came to an inhabited territory where strangers took him to the bishop of the local *civitas*. The *Life* does not identify this as either one of the Orkney Islands or the neighbouring shoreline of Caithness. We are told, however, that this bishop had studied in Ireland. Findan spent two years with the bishop, before going on pilgrimage to Tours and Rome and then serving as a priest in Allemania before entering the monastery at Rheinau. We may infer from this that in Caithness (or possibly Orkney) there was a see occupied by a bishop who had studied in Ireland and who presumably knew Latin. A member of his household was able to go on pilgrimage to Rome – all this around the middle of the ninth century.

A later continental writer, Adam of Bremen, writing a history of the bishops of Bremen around 1075 recorded that Adalbert of Bremen, on the pope's order, ordained Thorulf a bishop for the cure of Blascona in the Orkney Islands. Adam regards this event (sometime between 1056–1061) as worthy of comment because until then, Orkney had been ruled by English and Scottish bishops. One of these he named as Henry, who later served as treasurer to King Cnut (died 1035). Blascona was therefore a bishop's see in the Orkneys, possibly a latinisation of an older (Celtic?) name which disappeared from records sometime after 1075.

Neil suggested that the hierarchy of a local church may have been useful to incoming Viking rulers. Although they may not have accepted the religion, the usefulness of bishops' links to a wider European network may have had some value. It is possible that the transfer of the see to Kirkwall in the twelfth century finally put an end to the Celtic church in the northern isles.

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Cynthia Thickpenny, our third speaker of the morning, brought together her skill in examining patterns with her expertise as a horsewoman to give a spirited exposition of *The Pictish Seat: Rider Position in Relief Carved Equestrian Scenes*. The first point to which Cynthia called our attention was that Pictish sculptors were experts in representing horses in motion. Indeed, they displayed a skill in observation and reproduction that was rarely seen elsewhere in art before Muybridge's pioneering stop-motion photographic studies of horses trotting and galloping in the late 1870s. The present work involved an analysis of the gait and the rider's position on 28 stones, which portray a total of 70 riders. Having explained the four basic gaits common to all breeds, Cynthia noted that most Pictish horse and rider pairs are represented at the trot, with a few walking (as on the Bullion stone) or galloping (Aberlemno 2).

The riders are shown in a position which is unusual for those accustomed to seeing modern riding styles: the Picts appear to lean back from the vertical, and their legs are extended over their horses' shoulders. In a majority of cases, the toes 'flop' downwards although in some the toes point upwards.

She then addressed the question of whether or not the Picts had saddles, and also whether or not they had stirrups or other foot supports. She explained how a saddle is constructed and used, and its effect of raising the rider above the horse's back and narrowing the gap between the rider's legs. Saddles had been introduced to the Romans by the second century, but it was the seventh century before stirrups were brought west from the steppes. Although these were known in Scandinavia by the eighth century, and to the Franks by at least the late ninth, it is around AD1000 before we have any archaeological evidence for stirrups in England. The skill with which Picts carved other features of the riders' dress and equipment, to say nothing of the accuracy of representation of the horses, would suggest that saddles and stirrups are lacking simply because the Picts did not use them. The stones show riders using bareback pads, sometimes with elaborate drapes, but not with any form of toe-hold. Indeed, the use of a stirrup or toe support with a bareback pad is likely to cause stress and damage to the horse, making the use of such a device inadvisable.

Why did the Picts adopt their typical seat? Cynthia gave us a quick history of how the modern riding position came into being in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century. Earlier riders all tended to have their knees forward of their hips, instead of feet, knees and hips aligning as in the modern seat –'the Pictish seat was perhaps exaggerated rather than unusual. She went on to show how the Pictish seat is in fact natural for a rider at a trot who has not been schooled to ride in the modern style. For a fuller explanation, and to learn where it is possible to see twenty-first century riders trotting bareback, Pictish style, see Cynthia's own account in a forthcoming *Newsletter*.

<p style="text-align:center">*******</p>

The final speaker of the morning session was **Alex Woolf**, who gave us *Picts and Other Britons: Ethnic Identity in Roman and Late Antique Britain*. Alex began by exploring ways of understanding ethnicity and identity before going on to reflect on how these concepts may have been applied in Roman and Late Antique Britain. The first possibility – one that has coloured approaches to Pictish studies – is to create an essentialist definition, setting up a list of artefacts made exclusively by a group which is thus defined. So 'Picts' all do a certain suite of things (manufacture or social behaviour) in an exclusively Pictish manner, not to be found elsewhere among their contemporaries. The problem with this is that it is almost impossible to define a set of attributes that make up Pictishness.

As we move further from the rather racist approaches of earlier centuries, it becomes possible to define ethnicity in far more nuanced terms. Alex considered two broad categories of ethnicity: (1) ethnolinguistic continua and (2) self-defining population groups. An ethnolinguistic continuum is defined by a closely related group of languages. People living at one edge of the continuum will probably be able to understand their nearer neighbours, but not those who live on the opposite edge. Such a continuous gradation of understanding was probably the norm for all ethno-linguistic continua before large states began to crystallise and impose their standard languages on their inhabitants. Self-defining population groups are usually much smaller, seeing themselves as belonging to an identifiable kin or territorially-based unit for example.

The two categories are distinct, but are often confused or conflated. Indeed one can transform into the other. The first can be transformed into the second: the Old Irish 'Goídel' appears to be a seventh-century borrowing from an early form of the Welsh 'Gwyddel'. This seems to reflect a period when the Gaels of Ireland first came into contact with strangers they could not understand, as opposed to the strangers whom they regularly encountered. This kind of awareness develops naturally at the edges of continua, where one group meets another whose language is incomprehensible. The second may also transform into the first. With the establishment of Roman dominion over a large part of Europe, North Africa and part of the Middle East, Latin came to be widely spoken. Over time, and over a wide geographical area, this developed into the Romance family of languages.

Ptolemy's map of Britain includes a list of peoples living in Britain, with somewhat vague descriptions of their localities. Alex pointed out that we have no certainty about the boundaries of the hypothetical space occupied by these groups. We may feel on more certain ground when constructing maps of pre-Roman Iron Age kingdoms in southern England according to where we find coins struck by individual rulers, although there are a number of problems with this approach too. For instance, coin finds may mark trade routes used by people who have travelled some considerable distance. What we cannot now know is how individuals living in regions associated with Ptolemy's different peoples identified themselves. Did Boudicca's Eceni (or Iceni) living in what is now East Anglia all think of themselves as Eceni? (Perhaps it would be more accurate to refer to them as her husband Prasutagus' people, as his wife would probably have been an outsider.) Within the lands occupied by the Eceni, were there groups who had been dominated or subjugated by Prasutagus' folk,

and did they resent such imposed identity rather than feel loyalty to it?

At the beginning of the Roman period, would the term 'Briton' have carried any meaning for the ancient Britons? The information we get from Roman sources is very sparse and sheds little light on various population groups. We know the names and locations of some of the capitals, but not the boundaries of territories. For example, we know the names of leaders and the locations of capitals of the Trinovantes, and the Catuvellauni, and numismatic evidence points to where individuals had coins struck. However we are still far from sure whether Trinovantes defeated Catuvellauni or vice versa. Cunobelinus who died around AD40, issued coins from both Camulodunum/Colchester, in Trinovantian territory and Verlamion/St Albans, capital of the Catuvellauni. Far less do we have any indication of whether or not either people would have seen themselves as Britons. However, stories and genealogies of Cunobelinus' family persisted, appearing in Welsh genealogies and in the Four Branches of the Mabinogi, of which the earliest version survives from the fourteenth century. These writings suggest that this family was remembered as important in whatever political developments were taking place in late pre-Roman Britain.

From an early period, the concept of 'Pretani' as an identifier existed. This appears to derive from a source common to verbs meaning 'to shape' or 'to form', suggesting a meaning such as 'the created people' or possibly simply mortals. In Old Irish, it became 'Cruithne', and both forms are known from later writings. However, by the late sixth century, a written British language appears to have evolved, and the Britons of the south-west appear to have identified themselves as different from the Romance speakers of Late Antique Britain. With the departure of Roman authority, there was no resurgence of small British-speaking kingdoms in those parts of the country where Roman culture (evidenced by the presence of towns, villas and so on) had been most obviously adopted. Old English took in very few British loan words. The 'ict' to 'echt' transition occurred by the sixth century and is evident in the modification of Latin loan words, such as 'Pict' to 'Pecht'. 'Wahl' and its cognates were only, and widely, used on the continent to denote Romance speakers; 'Welsh' in Britain would originally have implied 'Roman'.

When thinking of ethnic identity, there are only ever two real groups: them and us. In order to construct a self-identity, all that is needed is a definition of the other. Why were the Picts not Britons? Was there an absence of contact with the other, in this case the Romance speakers against whom the Britons were contrasted? The Picts were still regarded as Pretani throughout the Late Antique period, but the Britons were not. Why were they not viewed as Pretani?

Theirs was a new identity created within the milieu of Roman Britain and in distinction to a Romanised population group.

Would we really expect the Picts to have a name for themselves in the absence of neighbours sufficiently different in language at least to force an assessment of self versus other? What would make them create an endonym – a self-identifying group name, rather than be known by an exonym, a name bestowed by outsiders?

There are other ways of approaching the question of identity. There is emic versus etic identity; the identity where the group decides the important signifiers versus the identity where important signifiers are imposed by outside observers. Material culture has been used as an indicator of identity, but Alex noted that this can be fraught with problems, especially when applied to ancient objects. We generally have no means of knowing whether, say, brooches made in East Anglia were distributed as trade items, functioned as badges of rank within a particular society, were given as gifts to allies, etc. '

Alex raised more questions than it is at present possible to answer, concerning concepts of identity in the evolving world of post-Roman and Late Antique Britain: who were the Picts, and who were the others?

The morning session complete, we gave our thanks to all the speakers and our Chair, Anna Ritchie.

Sheila Hainey

Autumn Lecture Series
20 September 2019 – Dr Alan Macniven
The Vikings in the Northeast?
A contextualised overview

Alan Macniven opened the winter season of PAS lectures at Brechin. As a Scandinavist, Alan's first thought was that focussing on Vikings in the Northeast, broadly the area around the Moray Firth, Moray and Aberdeenshire north of the Mounth, was an obvious topic for a Pictish Arts Society talk. However Graham-Campbell and Batey's comprehensive *Vikings in Scotland* includes only a few paragraphs on archaeological finds of Viking origin in this area. He quickly broadened his definition to include Angus, Fife, Kinross and part of Perthshire. Opening with a brief overview of more recent connections, he then covered four major phases of the Viking era.

Energy has played a dominant role of late: a new interconnector, with a terminus near Peterhead, will share green energy with Scandinavia as the oil fields of the North Sea decline in importance. In earlier centuries, Scot and Scandinavian shared in the relentless pursuit of whale and seal for their oil.

Earlier still, surviving port records from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century show that over a third of ships arriving in Dundee were of Scandinavian (mainly Norwegian) origin. South of the Tay, such ships were second only to those from the Netherlands. Timber and timber products, along with wheat from the Baltic, were imported; exports included raw and finished hides, wool and wool products and barrels of herring. Despite local production of the two last, the Scandinavians set a high value on the higher quality goods from Scotland.

Other links were important, too. In the chaos of post-Reformation Europe, the Swedish king Gustav Adolph (the 'Lion of the North') joined in the Thirty Years War. His practice of funding his campaigns by invading and pillaging Germans states one by one, using some of his loot to pay for the next campaign was highly effective, and allowed him to hire mercenaries from Germany, the Netherlands and Scotland. Successful soldiers could be rewarded with lands in Scandinavia. Some were even ennobled. Other kings formed marriage alliances. James VI's father-in-law, Christian of Denmark, shared James' views on witches and encouraged him to publish *Daemonologie*, influencing the long, grim series of witch trials and persecution that James set in train. Further back, Alexander III bestowed his daughter's hand on Erik of Norway, and was briefly succeeded by the daughter of that marriage.

Earlier still, Hakon Hakonarson set sail from Norway. In 1262, he harried Moray, before sailing round to the Western Isles to reinforce his authority there. After the battle of Largs, he sailed north to the Orkneys, where he fell ill and died. Was he a Viking? Alan would argue that Hakon was a typical medieval high king, with lands in Norway, Iceland, Greenland and Scotland and as far south as the Isle of Man.

Who were the Vikings? Alan showed examples of accounts of raids that were, on the face of it, typical of the violence and rapacity we have come to associate with the Vikings. One was a simple episode of Border reiving, while one was a description of a raid on Northumbria by King Malcolm. The third described the harrowing of Irish monasteries by Fedelmid, a ninth-century king of Cashel. Violence alone did not define Vikings. We tend to think of them as coming from Scandinavia, that is as Norse, Danish or Swedish. To their contemporaries, they were gentiles, pagans, foreigners who arrived in ships. Sometimes they were referred to as Normanni or Danari (then a generic name for Scandinavians). So Vikings were pagans, culturally different from the people of these islands, who arrived by ship from Scandinavia, to do violence, to rob, and, as we shall see, much more besides.

The first of the four phases of the Viking era, beginning in the late eighth century, opened with a series of raids. Most of our evidence is of activity in Ireland, with a few attacks recorded in the Western Isles, notably on Iona. There are no early references to attacks on the Northeast. This does not mean that no attacks took place; it may simply reflect the paucity of contemporary sources for the period. For a period of roughly forty years, there are ample records of plundering, of slave raids, and of general Viking mayhem in Ireland. Excavations at Portmahomack suggest that similar unpleasantness was indeed occurring in the Northeast around the same time. Archaeological evidence from Scandinavia supports these accounts, especially in the form of valuable Irish good in prestigious furnished graves from the early ninth century.

In the late eighth, ninth and tenth centuries, Ireland, with the west of Scotland, was a land of opportunity. The men who sought to take advantage of this were already relatively wealthy: their boats were expensive, cutting-edge military equipment. The crews' weapons were not the possessions of poor men either. Perhaps the beginning of consolidation of power in the Viking homelands disrupted the chain of power in a kin-based society, driving regional warlords abroad. The Frankish Annals of St Bertin could record by 844 that the western isles were settled by Norsemen without resistance. The impact of repeated raiding had devastated the earlier inhabitants.

Vikings came to the islands, from Shetland to the Inner Hebrides, and settled in numbers. There is evidence in the form of many place name coined in Old Norse and later reclothed in Gaelic which became attached to the landscape. There were changes in architecture too. Perhaps not in the houses of ordinary folk – there is a dearth of evidence for those, but large longhouses make an appearance about this time. Other signs of attachment to the land include furnished pagan burial. (Christian burials of the period were unfurnished.) The whole gamut of Viking pagan burial types is represented: boat burials, cremations and inhumations, all with diagnostic jewellery, weapons and other goods.

As far as the Northeast is concerned, the vocabulary includes many words of Scandinavian origin, a fact true of the Scots language in general. This does not appear to be linked to Viking activity. It comes from a time when David I began a programme of developing new burghs. He encouraged burghers from Anglo-Danish speaking areas to settle here in the twelfth century. Their language was rapidly adopted by the local people who joined them in the new settlements, and it continued to develop independently of changes in the south. Simon Taylor, in his studies of Fife place names identified some that might appear of Viking origin, but which are more likely to belong to this later period

Lacking documentary or place-name evidence for Viking activity in the Northeast in this early phase,

is there any evidence at all? The answer is yes, some. Over the years, a number of objects which appear to have been of Scandinavian origin have turned up as stray finds or as the result of metal detecting. However, many of these have gone missing over the years, leaving descriptions or illustrations of varying quality but only a few of the objects themselves and rarely with good information about the context of the find. There are a few items which would suggest at least a temporary residence: some apparently state-of-the–art Scandinavian military equipment – swords and spearheads, as well as a number of small personal items. It is often difficult to date these or to specify where they were made. With this kind of evidence it is impossible to state that it demonstrates a Scandinavian presence. For example, ring pins in a range of metals originated in Ireland, were extremely popular in the Norse world, and a scattering have been found in the Northeast. We generally cannot determine who brought them there, or where they were made. A silver drinking horn mount from Burghead, with its dog's head finial, is of a type common in the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian worlds. However, such objects were not unknown to the Picts – think of the figure on the Bullion stone, with his large drinking horn and its bird's head finial. Such items may have been brought here by way of trade or loot, or possibly even made here by non-Vikings. To date, there is no conclusive evidence of Viking settlement or burial in the Northeast.

By the middle of the ninth century, the first phase of raiding and early settlement was giving way to a second phase of Viking activity. This was radically different: new Viking kingdoms based in Dublin and York came into being. Massive raiding parties began to appear, setting local politics off in new directions. At this period, Scotland lacked some of the attractions of Ireland, namely the large monastic settlements. By the ninth century, a number of these had developed, importing oil and wine in quantities for liturgical purposes. The monasteries also needed ink, vellum, precious metals and stones to adorn the great books, skilled masons to carve their monumental stones, as well as a whole range of other craftsmen. Large, settled communities, trading with continental ports, grew up around the monasteries. These included a military component, necessary for protection against more than just the Viking newcomers. The opportunities such Irish towns provided for would-be kings were obvious and

The Gorton Sword from Moray

The bird-head drinking-horn terminal from Lismore, Ireland

attractive, and lacking entirely in Northeast Scotland. By the mid-ninth century, Viking settlements were growing up in Ireland. The great Danish army recorded by the Anglo-Saxon chronicle in the 860s included Ivar from Dublin. In 866, his brother, Olafr led his forces from Dublin into Pictland, wreaking destruction and billeting his forces on a rural population overwinter, resulting in starvation for their hosts. Ivar and Olafr appear to have been motivated by a need to protect access to the Viking kingdom of York when they attacked Dumbarton in 871. The Britons of Strathclyde lost out after a siege that lasted four months, giving the Dublin Vikings access to the Clyde/Forth route to the east. Many prisoners were carried off – Picts and Britons among them.

Further raiding in Pictland in 875 further weakened the population, with a cumulative drop in numbers that may have contributed to a shift in cultural focus. This shift was not simply an aggressive takeover of the Picts by the Scots of Dàl Riata. After all Cináed

mac Ailpin and two of his successors were described in their obituary notices in the Annals of Ulster as kings of the Picts, not of the Scots. It has been pointed out the Cenèl Loairn disappeared from the West, apparently migrating to Moray. Were they encouraged to move into underpopulated territory? Sometime in the late ninth or early tenth century, the separation between Picts and Scot disappears and a new kingdom, with a new name 'Alba' appears. Was this a new concept, a kingdom forged from the needs of the disparate peoples by then inhabiting the Northeast to unite to resist a common enemy?

Something similar seems to have happened down south, where Wessex alone remained free. Her rulers made use of the chronicles to legitimise their claim to be rulers of a single, country-wide 'England' in opposition to a common enemy. Dublin and York continued to fight back. After taking York in 927, the Anglo-Saxon Athelstan continued a policy of aggression towards his neighbours, culminating in the battle of Brunanburh which saw him opposed by the combined forces of Dublin, Strathclyde and Alba. Athelstan claimed victory, although losses on both sides were heavy.

In the third phase, the Viking age was coming to an end. The Jarldom of Orkney was established in the late ninth century. From around this period, there was a change in the control of military organisations. Raiding into Caithness, across the Moray Firth, in the Western Isles and in Ireland from a base in Orkney began. By 1014, Sigurd of Orkney, in alliance with Sigtrygg Silkbeard of Dublin and his Irish allies, fought at the battle of Clontarf against the forces of Brian, High King of Ireland whose forces included men of Alba amongst whom was Donald Mormaer of Mar. By this time the Orcadians were officially Christian, after Olaf Tryggvason, king of Norway left his subjects little option but to convert. Can we still call the five nations over which he ruled Viking? After all, Norway, Orkney, Shetland, the Faroes and Iceland with Greenland were all Christian by the beginning of the eleventh century.

In the final phase, we have moved beyond a world of minor regional warlords and medium-scale entrepreneurs. By the late tenth or eleventh century dominion was concentrated in the hands of massively powerful men, such as Sweyn Forkbeard whose rule extended over Norway, Denmark and England. His son Cnut also ruled over most of Scandinavia as well as England, and both knew how to use and value the institutions of the church. These men were not Vikings.

Later writers, from Hector Boece to Holinshed and Shakespeare have offered us stories of associations of these late Scandinavian kings with the Northeast. A tenth-century Danish Sueno was said to have been defeated by Malcolm II and the event commemorated on Sueno's Stone. Another of Malcolm's battles against the Danes was supposed to have been celebrated by the extension of the church at Mortlach and the erection of the Battle Stone there. At this period, according to the later historians, the invaders were anachronistically destroying towns, kirks and cities. A late account tells of a battle against the Danes near Culross in the reign of Duncan, while at Kinghorn another battle is said to have been fought at Quarrel Braes. Contemporary notice of these events is lacking; we seem to have a collection of local legends accounting for place names.

Where should we look for traces of Viking activity? They arrived by boat, but they were neither the first nor the last to do so. The Romans circumnavigated Britain, and Athelstan took a fleet as far north as Dunottar. Once landed, the Vikings travelled by land, on horse or on foot and we know that they made use of the Roman roadways that were still serviceable for centuries. The Stanegate at Hadrian's Wall and the Ribble valley provided alternative routes between Dublin and York. Evidence in the form of Anglo-Danish funerary monuments – the hogback stones - can be found along these routes. There are clear suggestions that Vikings were aware of the existence of previously created roads. There appears also to have been an awareness of strategic sites that at an earlier period were chosen for Roman forts. It is at least possible that Viking raiders combined the use of water transport with the exploitation of pre-existing land routes during their forays into Pictland. As it seems unlikely that the Vikings ever settled in the Northeast, it is possible that we might find traces of their transient presence around what we know to have been Roman sites. They probably used the roads: they may have camped at strategically important sites, just as the earlier invaders did.

Sheila Hainey

Sponsor a Pictish Stone

The North of Scotland Archaeological Society and the Pictish Arts Society combine forces to save an important new discovery

In March 2019 NoSAS member Anne MacInnes was carrying out a graveyard survey in Easter Ross when she chanced upon a Pictish cross slab with symbols, only partly covered by the turf. She called in the Highland Council Regional Archaeologist, Kirsty Cameron, who in turn got in touch with Historic Environment Scotland.

HES survey staff travelled up in early April to record what was visible – the symbol-bearing side and two narrow edges – and it became immediately apparent that this was an important and unusual discovery. The eastern seaboard of Easter Ross is home to a wealth of Christian Pictish sculpture, with assemblages at Rosemarkie and Portmahomack and impressive single monuments at Nigg, Shandwick and Hilton of Cadboll. Yet despite such a strong local tradition, the new discovery appears to display stronger artistic connections with sculpture in southern Pictland. Much of the figurative carving and perhaps even the symbols have their closest parallels on sculpture in Perthshire and Angus.

As the new stone was in re-use as an 18th century gravestone and was still earth-fast, it was not declared Treasure Trove. This meant there was neither legal claim to recover it nor any grant available to do so. At this stage in the proceedings, once we had finished recording it, we simply had to cover it back up and walk away. Kirsty Cameron took on the role of intermediary and secured the landowner's permission

to remove the stone. It then fell to NoSAS and PAS to cover the £3000 cost. This was finally achieved in late August, at which point news of the discovery was made public.

The lifting of the stone let us see for the first time the face with the cross and this too proved to be a revelation. Flanking and surmounting the cross are two ferocious beasts, their gaping mouths full of teeth. Each beast is biting the tail of (or perhaps regurgitating?) a serpent which coils below, filling each of the top two quadrants of the cross. The carving of the beasts and serpents is deep and bold, adding to their dominant appearance.

Opposing beasts are not uncommon on Pictish cross slabs. A pair of toothless sea creatures surmounts the cross on the Battle Stone at Mortlach, whilst the more ferocious pair with teeth that surmounts the cross on Logierait 2 hold a disc between their mouths. On the reverse of the Brodie Stone, two large and toothy sea creatures oppose each other, filling the top half of the slab. But none of these look quite like the creatures on the new stone. Indeed it is worth noting that the creatures on Logierait 2 and Brodie (and indeed most other examples) display generic 'pointy' teeth, in keeping with the notion of fantastical creatures. The creatures on the new cross slab however have fangs or incisors at the front, an eye tooth behind the upper fang then premolars and molars. Whether or not they represent fantastical beasts, it would seem their dental attributes are based on real anatomy.

The new 'Dingwall' cross slab drawn by John Borland.

Detail of the two beasts surmounting the cross on the 'Dingwall' stone

Having safely recovered the stone, NoSAS and PAS have now set about raising £20,000 to cover the cost of professional conservation and subsequent display in Dingwall Museum. To this end, a crowd-funding appeal was launched on 12 October using the JustGiving website. At the time of writing, the total amount donated is £13,643 (plus a further £726 in Gift Aid). To donate or check on progress, go to

<**https://www.justgiving.com/ campaign/SponsorAPictishStone**>

or simply google Sponsor a Pictish stone. Thus far, many of the donations have been generous ones but small donations (hopefully many of them) are also welcome.

John Borland

A note from the new Editor of the *Pictish Arts Society Newsletter*

At our AGM in Forfar I agreed to become *Newsletter* Editor and look forward to receiving all your articles, photographs and news items.

On average, just over half the *Newsletter* is taken up with PAS conference and lecture reports providing a valuable written record and allowing those unable to attend to find out what the speakers said. There's also a lot going on of interest at non-PAS events and it would be good to include a short report of these as well, even if no more than details of the speaker and title of the talk.

It's always annoying to find out about something you'd have liked to have gone to after it's happened and I'd also like to include more details of forthcoming events. However, given the *Newsletter* publication frequency it may be better for those happening soon to be listed on the PAS web site.

The same applies to books and papers published elsewhere. Including an abstract or review in the *Newsletter* would be nice but, again, speaker, title and publication details are better than nothing. If you're aware of anything that you think other PAS members would be interested in, please let me know.

'To see oursels as ithers see us', as Robert Burns memorably said, is always interesting to find out and I'd like to introduce a regular 'Pictish Perceptions' feature to the *Newsletter*. So, if you come across any comment, poetry or image on the Picts or their art from non-specialists, however outlandish, send it to me.

The copy deadline notice for the next *Newsletter* appears below, but in the meantime if you've any thoughts or ideas don't hesitate to get in touch at

<**billstephens297@gmail.com**>

Bill Stephens

A note from the outgoing editor

I took over the role of *Newsletter* Editor from David Henry at the 2011 AGM and after 8 years of (mostly) pleasurable service, I pass the baton to Bill Stephens. In my time I have not often been in the position of having to pick and choose content – occasionally but not often. So if Bill has but one problem, I hope it is that he is inundated with copy and has to select what goes forward and what is kept back for next time. Good luck Bill! *JB*

The camera never lies?

While watching a re-run of an episode of Britain's Best Walks with Julia Bradbury recently, eagle-eyed PAS member Hugh Levey spotted what looked like a spiral or series of concentric circles incised on a stone. The stone in question was being moved into position by someone repairing a footpath in the Loch Lomond National Park. Hugh managed to get a picture from his tv screen and sent it to me for consideration. I was pretty convinced. I even thought I could make out peck marks within the incised groove.

Taking up the cause, I contacted West of Scotland Archaeological Services to alert them to the possibility that this carved stone was now shoring up the edge of a footpath on a hillside. It seems Hugh wasn't the only one who spotted this. When the series was first aired a couple of years earlier, WoSAS received another alert.

So they went out to investigate and even contacted the organisation which did the work. It transpired that the 'carving' was no more than a series of marks left on the dusty stone by a wet bucket! So much for peck marks. But full marks to Hugh and the other diligent viewer for raising a query. Better to be sure.

John Borland

The carved stone that isn't