



Pictish Arts Society AGM held online Friday 19th November 2021 at 9pm

1 Apologies for absence were received from Lilly Hurd.

2 Approval of Minutes of 2020 AGM (circulated via Newsletter 101) were approved as published and proposed by David McGovern and seconded by John Borland.

3 President's and Secretary's Joint Report (circulated via Newsletter 101) was accepted by the meeting. The report highlighted the success of online meetings which had allowed members and speakers from a' the airts to participate and had, no doubt, contributed to the welcome rise in membership. The Society's role in assisting with financing the recovery and conservation of the Conan Stone had given great satisfaction, as did our involvement in the 'Conan Stone in Context' conference with our partners, the North of Scotland Archaeological Society and the Scottish Society for Northern Studies. David Henry was warmly thanked on his retiral as newsletter publisher on its 100th issue. The Facebook page has attracted over 9,000 followers and the recently launched Instagram account has over 600 followers. Our thanks to David McGovern and Lilly Hurd for their work on social media. Members are exhorted to renew membership promptly and anyone wishing to join the committee is encouraged to contact the president.

4 Treasurer's Report, circulated by email on 19 November 2021, was accepted by the meeting. The Society's finances are in a healthy state and we are £2,300 better off than a year ago. With an increased membership, there have been more subscriptions which mitigated the loss of income from the annual conference, which was held online, rather than in-person. There have been no rental costs this year and the Society has made no donations. David McGovern asked if our commitment in principle to support an initiative at Aberlemno was acknowledged in the accounts. The Treasurer explained that the accounts do not show plans or debts.

5 Appointment of Independent Examiner:

The treasurer indicated that the current arrangements will remain in place for the coming year.

6 Other Honorary Officers' Reports:

a) Membership Secretary reported that current membership stands at a healthy 187. In 2019, pre-Covid membership was 127; this rose to 255 at the height of lockdown. The Society now has 19 Members in the USA, 2 in Australia and 1 in Canada. 84 members opt for a paper newsletter and 103 accept it online; the trend is moving in the direction of more online and less paper. Reminding members to renew membership is a time-consuming process with many final reminders going out. We are hoping to have an automatic online renewal facility ready for next year.

b) Editor reported that we have reverted to quarterly publication after the bi-monthly arrangements during the Covid lockdown. He encouraged members to submit copy for the newsletters.

7 Election of Honorary Officers:

- a) President: John Borland - Proposed: Elspeth Reid, Sec'd: David McGovern
- b) Vice-Presidents: David McGovern - Proposed John Borland, Sec'd: Barbara Thompson Kelly Kilpatrick - Proposed John Borland, Sec'd Hugh Coleman
- c) Secretary: Jennifer McKay - Proposed John Borland, Sec'd Elspeth Reid
- d) Treasurer: Hugh Coleman - Proposed John Borland, Sec'd Jennifer McKay
- e) Membership secretary: Elspeth Reid - Proposed John Borland, Sec'd Jennifer McKay
- f) Editor: John Borland - Proposed Sheila Hainey, Sec'd Hugh Coleman
- g) Events Organiser: Kelly Kilpatrick - Proposed John Borland, Sec'd Elspeth Reid
- h) Archivist: Elspeth Reid - proposed John Borland, Sec'd Pamela Cranston
- i) Online: David McGovern - Proposed John Borland, Sec'd Barbara Thompson Lilly Hurd - Proposed John Borland, Sec'd David McGovern

8 Election of Committee:

minimum six, maximum 12.

Sheila Hainey: Proposed John Borland, Sec'd Elspeth Reid

Nigel Ruckley: Proposed John Borland, Sec'd David McGovern

Barbara Thompson: Proposed John Borland, Sec'd Elspeth Reid

Sheila Fraser stood down from committee and was thanked for her service.

9 Any Other Competent Business

Spring lectures will resume online on 18th March 2022 with more to follow in April and May. Details of the programme will be published online and in the next newsletter.

The annual conference will be held in October. It is judged too early to make a decision on whether it will be held online or in-person.

A joint online conference with the Scottish Society for Northern Studies is being organised for the weekend of 5th and 6th March. Details and online booking will follow in the New Year. The Treasurer asked if the in-person meetings would be resumed at Brechin Museum. As there is no prospect of an early resumption of in-person meetings, he was asked to request a refund for bookings which were made pre-pandemic.

Doubt was expressed that Brechin Museum would ever be available and it was noted that property, including a £10 cash float, belonging to the Society should be retrieved from the museum attic.

Jen Wallace asked if Zoom meetings could be made more social. Post-talk break-out rooms were suggested as they had proved popular at the Conan Stone conference.

Holding hybrid in-person/online meetings was probably unlikely to be possible from Brechin Museum. Barbara Thompson suggested a move to the new community school campus at Forfar.

Jennifer McKay

Autumn Lecture Series

17 September 2021 – Dr Guto Rhys

The Pictish Language

Our 2021 autumn season opened with a Zoom talk by Guto Rhys on *The Pictish Language*. Contemporary evidence for a Pictish language is scant, to say the least. Bede, in his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (completed in 731) tells us that there were five languages spoken in Britain in his day: English, Brittonic, Gaelic, Pictish and Latin. Bede's work rapidly became widely known, and has remained the starting point for consideration of a Pictish language ever since. In recent times it has been suggested that Bede may have endowed the Picts with a distinctive language for reasons of his own: balancing the languages of Britain with the five opening books of the Old Testament, or perhaps distinguishing the Picts, on good terms with the Northumbrians, from the Britons, to whom Bede was hostile. Adomnán, in his *Vita Columbae* of around 697 twice refers to Columba's use of an interpreter when dealing with Picts, implying that they did not speak Columba's Gaelic.

Guto gave a rapid and detailed outline of the historiography of Pictish language studies, briefly summarised here. George Buchanan, in his *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* (1582) was the first to suggest that before the coming of the Saxons, all the inhabitants of Britain spoke a language that was 'not much different from each other'. Although Buchanan's work was suppressed, and unlikely to have influenced William Camden, the latter expressed similar views in his *Britannia* (1586) and associated this language with the Welsh of his day. By 1707, Edward Lhuyd was thinking in terms of two branches of Celtic: Brythonic and Goidelic. He was the first to attempt a grammar of early Brythonic and to recognise the influence of Rome on the development of language in Britain. He also suggested that Pictish culture and language was less likely to have felt that influence. Twenty years later, Thomas Innes went so far as to suggest that contact with Rome resulted in the dialects of a common language spoken by Britons and Picts diverging to the point where Bede heard them as different languages.

The later 18th century saw John Pinkerton (*Enquiry into the History of Scotland, 1789*) put forward the notion that Pictish was a Gothic language, that the Picts were of Germanic

origin, and that Pictish was the ancestor of the Scots of his day. This seems to have been based largely on his antipathy to the Celts, the speakers of Gaelic, whom he regarded as upstart latecomers, and his desire to prioritise Scots speakers.

The first solid, formal study of the grammar and linguistics of Celtic languages, *Grammatica Celtica*, was published by Johann Kaspar Zeuss in 1853. However, twenty years later William Skene still relied on a rough “sounds like” principle to suggest that Pictish was akin to Gaelic. He also expressed the idea that the scarcity of Pictish or Gaelic place-names in the west and north was due to the survival among the Picts of a non-Indo European language similar to Basque. Sir John Rhys went on to equate the language used on the Ogham stone of Pictland with this Basque survival, a view demolished by Alexander Mac Bain who was probably the first competent, informed linguist to study Pictish phonetics. He influenced the young William J Watson, who noted abundant remains of Pictish in the Gaelic described in his *Place-Names of Ross and Cromarty* (1906). However, Watson’s better known *History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (1926) deals with Pictish and British contributions to these names in the same chapter. In this work, Watson rather avoided Pictish, although he did identify a number of words of Welsh origin. The publication of Alan Orr Anderson’s *Early Sources of Scottish History* in 1922, a collection of texts, translations and commentaries provided an invaluable starting point for many future studies.

Thomas O’Rahilly concluded in his *Early Irish History and Mythology* (1946) that Pictish was a P-Celtic language more akin to Brythonic than Goidelic. Only a few years later, Kenneth Jackson’s *Language and History in Early Britain: a chronological survey of the Brittonic languages, first to twelfth century A.D.* (1953) contained a relative and absolute chronology of Brittonic sound changes down to 1200, providing an extremely useful tool for future studies. However, his contribution on ‘The Pictish Language’ to *The Problem of the Picts* (1955) was strongly influenced by the views of archaeologists such as Stuart Piggot, who also participated in *The Problem of the Picts*. Jackson advanced a two language theory, suggesting that the Picts spoke a Gallo-Brittonic more similar to Gaulish than any of the other languages spoken in Britain, while a non-Indo

European language persisted in the west and was retained as a ceremonial language eventually used in the ogham inscriptions of the east. Jackson’s views eclipsed those of O’Rahilly. Although he somewhat revised these views in an appendix to the 1981 revised edition of *The Problem of the Picts* he relied heavily on late textual forms and the original chapter was retained.

Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson’s *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland* (1973) made available the Pictish king lists, discussed for the first time by a competent linguist. WHF Nicolaisen suggested in his *Scottish Place-Names: their Study and Significance* (1976) that the Picts spoke a dialect of Northern Brittonic, not a separate language. Nicolaisen leaned heavily on toponymy, and made little use of other early evidence.

By 1983, John Koch, in his study of changes in the grammar and sound changes in Brittonic had identified numerous points of difference between Brittonic and Pictish, suggesting that these were at least distinct dialects by the Roman period. In the same year, Alfred Smyth argued strongly against the survival of a non-Indo European language in northern Britain, pointing among other evidence to the increasingly apparent Celticity of early names. Graham Isaac, in his 2005 paper *Scotland* appears to have placed too much reliance on garbled later medieval texts of Ptolemy’s *Geography* in deciding that some of the northern place-names there were not Celtic. With the publication of the five volume *The Place-Names of Fife*, Simon Taylor and Gilbert Márkus produced the first thorough Scottish county study of place-names, including detailed early forms. This approach enabled the identification of numerous place-names with Brittonic origins.

Before moving on, Guto noted the existence of some unconventional works on Pictish language and of popular depictions of Picts as semi-naked barbarians, yelling as they attack the walls of Roman Britain. There are some views of Picts that are no longer acceptable.

Rather than delving into the complexities of sound and grammar change, Guto went on to give an overview of current thinking about how language in northern Britain developed, and his thinking on Pictish. Languages are rarely monolithic and static. Different dialects can be spoken over a wide area, and change with time (the introduction of words from other language

or the need to describe new concepts are obvious examples of such change.) Changes occur in grammar as well, with, for example, the loss of endings indicating the declension of nouns noted in a number of languages. Changes in pronunciation can also be traced, and the date at which these occurred can often be determined. It is more than likely that the relationship of the Picts with the Romans of the province to the south was similar to that of other people who lived on the fringes of the Roman empire: friendly for the most part, with ordinary trading relationships and possibly the supply of young men as mercenaries for the Roman army. We have evidence to suggest that there was movement between the north and the province and that there was at least some awareness of spoken Latin.

In the years following the withdrawal of Rome, Neo-Brittonic developed rapidly in what has been described as the ‘highland zone’ of the former province and the area north of the wall. Native Romance speakers, learning Brittonic as adults, contributed elements of vocabulary and changes in pronunciation on the way. The spread of Christianity and the activities of war bands such as those celebrated in early poetry may well have contributed to this process. The evolving P-Celtic of southern Scotland and Cumbria has been described as ‘a shifting tangle’. The northern dialect seems to have accumulated fewer Latin loan words, a conclusion based on a comparison of place-names in Wales, Cumbria and Scotland. There seems to be a gradient of such loan words, becoming rarer the further north we travel.

Any study of language development among the Picts is fraught with problems. The evidence is scant: records of Pictish names mediated by non-Pictish speakers make it difficult to establish the original forms of words. The use of *Ptolemy’s Geography* is a case in point. This was originally written in Greek, using names supplied by (probable) Latin speakers, who may not have had any familiarity with Celtic languages. Over centuries, this was transcribed by monks for whom Latin, Greek and Celtic languages were alike non-native. We may be allowed tentative emendation of some of these to give Celtic names. To add to the difficulties of using garbled textual material, there has been a failure to recognise that Norse effaced almost all place-names in the northern and western

isles. There was never any need to assume that because there are place-names which are not Celtic they must be survivors of a non-Indo European tongue. Simon Rodway in 2019 put forward the suggestion that we see on the ogham stones the use of a long-dead language reserved for prestige inscriptions, rather like the use of Latin on funerary monuments of early modern times. There are problems with this: there is no earlier evidence for this supposed language than these seventh-century stones. A number of the inscriptions include the expression MAQQ or MAPP – looking very like a Celtic word meaning ‘son of’, which one might expect on memorial stones. In addition, there are also several Pictish names: Nehhton, Eddarnon and so on. The ogham inscriptions remain somewhat enigmatic.

Guto suggested that, in addition to place-names and king-lists, it is possible that we may identify words of Pictish origin in the vocabulary of Scots Gaelic. He gave several instances of such words, together with the criteria by which they may be recognised. In the first place, they have no equivalent in Irish Gaelic, either modern or ancient. There are usually Brittonic counterparts, in Welsh or Breton, but their early sound changes have not been carried through to the northern equivalent. Thus, for example, the short vowel of bad (*thicket*) in Scots Gaelic had been replaced by a long vowel in the Breton bod. Furthermore, it is apparent that a number of place-names with potentially Pictish elements were formed in a Gaelic-speaking milieu, perhaps adopted because they fitted a system of land-holding or taxation held over from a time before Gaelic became dominant.

A number of sound and grammar changes that can be identified as Neo-Brittonic developed under the influence of the Latin/Romance speakers present in Roman and post-Roman Britain, and some of these may have carried through into the language of the Picts – the loss of final syllables, the loss of medial unstressed vowels, lenition and so on were instanced. Pictish seems to have been an evolving language, with close connections to Neo-Brittonic. It may have retained some more conservative features, perhaps been less strongly influenced by Latin. However, we do not have as yet enough evidence for a wide enough area of Pictland to come to any definite conclusions.

15 October 2021 – Jen Wallace

*A new look at the Dupplin Cross:
a comparative approach*

The second speaker in our autumn lecture series was Jen Wallace, who coped admirably with our first technical glitch on Zoom and went on to prove that we can still learn a lot from careful study of even well-known stones. As steward at St Serf's in Dunning, she spends a great deal of time in the vicinity of the only intact free-standing cross in Pictland. There can be very few better qualified to give us **A new look at the Dupplin Cross: a comparative approach.** This three metre high freestanding cross, dated to the first half of the ninth century, once stood in its socket stone on the hillside overlooking Forteviot, a highly visible monument in the landscape. Dupplin Cross is associated with a documented royal site, which possessed a church but not necessarily any associated ecclesiastical establishment. It was probably erected by the successor of Constantine son of Fergus who died in 820 and whose name is inscribed on the cross.

Jen showed how she had begun by labelling each of the panels on the cross to make it easier to focus attention on each individual element and to compare them with examples on all forms of insular art – carved stone, manuscript, metalwork and so on. As indications of where to look for suitable comparators, both Canmore and *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* are useful, but both have their limitations. *ECMS* is now over a hundred years old and out of date, missing all material that has come to light since it was published, and some of the notes are incorrect. The quality of information on the Canmore database is variable. In addition there were a number of chance discoveries of some correlations. Beginning with the rider panel, we can be fairly sure that the figure represents Constantine himself. Jen compared him with other representations of riders on Pictish stones. The horse on the Dupplin Cross is shown with all four feet on the ground, whereas most Pictish horses are portrayed in mid-step. Leslie and Elisabeth Alcock suggested that the stationary horse was a statement of permanence, indicating stability and asserting the king's presence. The rider's head is disproportionately large, another unusual feature. This may be a deliberate attempt to draw attention to the importance of the man. His legs hang straight rather than being held



The Dupplin Cross, as illustrated in Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland Vol 1, 1856*

forward as is more common but this fits with the position of a rider on a stationary horse. Other features to note are that the head of the horse is held close to its body (perhaps because it is held on a tight rein, or, on the other hand, simply to fit into the panel). The horse and rider are alone in a clearly bounded panel, occupying a prominent position on the cross, higher than other human figures. The rider wears a moustache and carries over his shoulder an object which does not appear to be a spear – could it be a rod or sceptre?

Jen identified a handful of stones which share

the stationary horse, with its head held close to its body and bearing a rider with a disproportionately large head and straight hanging leg. On the Benvie cross slab, the rider may be a man of lesser rank emulating the king's pose; he appears to carry a definite spear not a rod of office. However, the rider on Forteviot 4 and the Dunkeld Apostles' Stone may represent Constantine himself.

A larger group of carved stones share some of the features of the rider at Dupplin. On the Mugdrum Cross there is a singular rider at the top, divided from a lower group by a border. On Kirriemuir 3, a rider with a large head carries an object which doesn't appear to be a spear. The Aldbar cross slab has some similarities, but the rider and horse are really quite different. The details at both Tullibole and Dunblane are too worn to be sure, but the horse on these stones appears to be stationary and the riders also have large heads. Possibly these stones once marked routes to major centres.

In some matters of decorative detail, Jen thinks we can detect the hand of the sculptor, not the request of the commissioner. For example, there is an unusual four-path spiral key pattern on the Dupplin Cross, examples of which we can find on the Invermay Cross and on two stones at St Andrews. Four-path spirals are known elsewhere – there are two examples in the early ninth-century Harley Golden Gospels. Triple spiral-centred key patterns appear on the Dupplin Cross, on a fragment at Leuchars, on a stone from St Andrews and on Kirriemuir 18. There is a hint of a repeating geographic pattern, similar to that of those horsemen most similar to the Dupplin rider. However, it should be noted that there are no riders at St Andrews. Across a wider area, step borders are found on Dupplin, Kirriemuir 3, and Benvie crosses as well as on the Govan sarcophagus.

Figurative art is more widespread, and we can imagine that as being at the behest of commissioning patrons. The imagery may have been chosen to convey specific meanings or propaganda. However, when it came to decorative elements, the craftsmen themselves were perhaps free to choose and experiment, recreating patterns they had seen elsewhere and spreading ideas among themselves in a manner reminiscent of scribes working on the borders of manuscript pages. Indeed, the craftsmen themselves may have moved around, and we may be able to identify individuals by the decorative elements in their work.

Jen is still working on the many design elements on the Dupplin Cross, and we look forward to hearing more from her in future.

Sheila Hainey

The PAS Newsletter mast-head

The recent achievement of attaining a century (or so) of Newsletters was seen as an appropriate moment to freshen up its appearance. This entailed losing its long-established mast-head, which had been in use for two-thirds of that run. It may be worth a moment's pause to consider how it came about.

When the PAS Newsletter began in 1998, the first two issues used plain block capitals for its title. This basic lack of Pictishness made me wonder if a more appropriate type of lettering could be used, and so I offered editor Stuart McHardy something different for No.3. As well as having the name in a familiar form, I utilised the initial P of PICTISH ARTS SOCIETY at the head of a vertical strip of writing, terminating with Y at the bottom, all the intervening letters being rendered in ogham. This duly appeared, with a credit inside the front cover.

The back page of the same issue featured a large-scale version of the name, now given in the form of a script developed from the inscription on the Drosten stone at St Vigean. The caption looks to be in the hand of Marianna Lines; the graphics are mine. It was redrawn (again by me) in the following issue, with some slight changes, though reverting to the previous version in the issue after that, seemingly being the one preferred by the editor. I also experimented with 'eroded Drosten', but it looked pretty weird! For Newsletter No.4, our name was put into an attractive quasi-Celtic script, and the strip of ogham was redrafted with a professional touch. That style was maintained through to the end of the series, with No.9 in 1991.

The new series of Newsletters maintained the Celtic-style lettering for the Society's name, and on some early issues the mast-head bore a Pictish symbol or two, such as the deer's head, the double-disc & Z-rod, the S-swathe paired with the mirror-case, and finishing with a couple of crescent & V-rods on Nos.15 and 16, as selected

by editor Nick Simpson. No.17 saw a dramatic change, with the adoption of the ‘swimming elephant’ at the mast-head (be it a dolphin or not ~ the Beastie as Marianna was wont to call it). That issue also saw the unveiling of a new PAS logo, reputedly drawn from “an indescribable number of submissions”, though the president, Stuart McHardy, was rather coy about saying who had been responsible, merely dismissing “rumours that it was drafted by an unnamed Committee member on the back of an envelope” as being beneath contempt. Tongue in cheek though these comments may have been, perhaps they reflect the means by which the concept was drafted, but I can reveal something about the detail.

The lettering in the quasi-Drosten script is in my hand, and the choice of Beastie (from Strathmartine 1) was also mine, now angled away from the horizontal, as first portrayed on my printed wedding invitations in 1974. The juxtaposition of script and symbol was someone else’s work. A joint effort, then. The Drosten-style script replaced the Celtic-style version two issues later, first appearing on No.19 in Autumn 1999. Apart from a few minor realignments of the Beastie, the Newsletter mast-head remained unchanged, appearing in identical form from No.34 through to No.100.

Graeme Cruickshank



“Drosten” inscription on St Vigeans 1, drawn by John Borland. Not to scale
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PAS online Conference 2021

(Saturday session)

Conference 2020, planned for Aberdeen, was cancelled due to the Covid19 pandemic. A year later, the meeting was held in the form of a Zoom conference over two days. We were fortunate in that all our invited speakers were still able and happy to talk to us. The Zoom format offered the benefit of allowing many members to join who would in normal times have found it prohibitive to travel the required distance.

Gordon Noble opened the proceedings with *The Northern Picts Project Update: Season 2020-2021*. The excitement felt by the team who were able to return to dig at Burghead after the problems of lockdown was immediately evident. Gordon rapidly reviewed the history of antiquarian and archaeological interest in the site, which Boece in 1527 described as an early Danish site, renamed ‘The Burg’. It was mapped by Roy in the mid-18th century, while Cordiner described it in *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland in 1786* as a peninsula made an island, defended by ditches and banks. He also noted the presence of a cross, carved in good relief. An estate plan dating from 1789 shows the defences and a graveyard. The early 19th century saw work begin on a new harbour and village. During the subsequent digging in relation to these works, thirty or more bull carvings were found around the entrance to the upper citadel. Fragments of carvings, from possible box shrines, cross slabs, and so on added to the undefaced cross reported by Cordiner. In 1809, the well with its rock-cut steps and basin was rediscovered and cleared to provide a source of water.

In the 1860s James MacDonald carried out excavations which by standards of the time were well recorded. He reported a number of findings associated with occupation of the site, and noted the timber framing of the walls. Hugh Young in the 1890s found evidence of internal buildings. Bones of domestic animals, including a poleaxed cattle skull, were among his finds deposited in the National Museum. In

the 1960s Alan Small worked on the upper citadel, noting the complex ramparts and obtaining the first radiocarbon dating evidence. Sporadic small-scale work associated with building works around the site continued from time to time. The southern ramparts have been practically removed, and it was thought that little of archaeological interest remained at the site.

The Northern Picts team began work in 2015, excavating in the unscheduled gardens of the Coastguard station buildings. They unearthed the floor and hearth of a ninth-century building and found a coin of King Alfred, pierced for suspension. Over the next few years work continued in the upper citadel, adding a plank-walled sunken-floored building to the tally of remains in this area. A geophysical survey and limited excavations were carried out in the lower citadel, with a number of interesting finds. Dating evidence was obtained suggesting that building of the ramparts dated to the late sixth century, with the site occupied until the tenth. The ramparts were of timber-framed construction – a huge undertaking.

The Burghead peninsula is under threat from coastal erosion: over the last hundred years severe undercutting of the cliff on the seaward edge has resulted in the loss of 7-8 metres of land. In the face of this threat, Gordon and his team have been granted permission to excavate the scheduled area from the Coastguard station buildings to the erosion edge in the upper citadel and to strip and record any features in the lower citadel. After a frustrating delay due to lockdown, the team were able to start work this summer. Almost the first thing to emerge was a 19th-century drainage pipe. However, the intact floor layers of medieval buildings were soon revealed. Two probable ninth-century Northumbrian coins were found: one from the floor of a building and one from the midden outside it. There were signs, too, of intermittent occupation prior to the seventh/eight centuries, and of a posthole construction, for which dates are not yet available, below the sunken floored

building. Episodes of sand blow on the peninsula have been useful in creating clear stratigraphy.

The work in the lower citadel revealed the presence of a great deal of well-preserved archaeology, including what appears to be a trench by Hugh Young through midden layers. Bone preservation in this area is good, and a number of artefacts including combs, elegant dress pins and a possible stylus for using on waxed tablets were recovered. Unworked bone included cattle skulls (as foundation deposits?), remains of other domesticates, wild animals, including red deer, and fish. Clay/silt layers may have formed working areas or floor surfaces, and midden material began accumulating early. An enigmatic area in the centre of the lower citadel was lacking in any signs of activity – as, indeed, Hugh Young had observed. The purpose of this clear area is an intriguing question.

Burghead was one of the largest forts in Pictland, if not the largest, dwarfing sites such as Dundurn and Dunadd. It was clearly a major settlement site. The faunal assemblage is so far second only to Portmahomack, with domestic cattle, pigs and sheep/goats contributing most of the animal bones. (Pig was far more common here than at Portmahomack.) The evidence suggests that animals were raised locally and the meat brought in to the fort, with cattle possibly from a wider area than the others. Analysis of strontium and oxygen isotopes should give a better idea of whence the animals were obtained.

In the years following 1809, it was reported that a graveyard with bodies laid out in rows was found on the seaward side of the lower rampart. The skull of a male aged at least 45, with poor teeth, and a human femur have been preserved in early museum material and are probably from this area. Radiocarbon dating place both in the seventh/eighth centuries, while isotope analysis confirmed that two individuals are represented. The skull belonged to an individual who appeared to have a marine component in his diet higher than has been found in contemporary re-

mains elsewhere in northern Britain.

Gordon also commented on the finely carved fragment of stone found at the site. In addition to the bulls from the upper citadel gateway, there are fragments associated with early Christian activity here that point to the possible location of an early church within the fort – an unusual juxtaposition. He noted that a possibly pagan carved head, first described in the 1980s, has been made available for further study.

Burghead promises to yield much more over the next few seasons. We look forward to hearing more from Gordon and his team.

Christine Cowart-Smith gave the second talk of the conference on **Freestanding Cross Developments in Pictland**. Before beginning, she was delighted to be able to share some of the highlights of a summer's fieldwork on Lindisfarne, where several pieces of carved stone were uncovered including two possible cross shafts.

Early medieval freestanding crosses are found across Britain and Ireland, but are very rare elsewhere in contemporary Europe. High crosses are commonly associated with Ireland and the west of Scotland, with the assumption often that they are rare and isolated in Pictland. Perhaps the best known examples are St John's on Iona, Kildalton and Ruthwell – the narrative scenes from the life of Christ has led the latter to be described as a preaching cross, a point to which Christian returned. Smaller freestanding crosses are also known in Wales and Cornwall, where they appear rather later in date, tenth or eleventh century.

Christine spent a little time on the crosses at Abercorn before going on to consider the monuments in eastern Pictland. Abercorn, with its Pictish name, sits on the south side of the Forth and was the site of an Anglian bishopric prior to the defeat of the Northumbrians at Dunnichen. The collection of carved stones there appears to date from an otherwise unrecorded period when an ecclesiastical centre was (re-)established in the eighth or ninth century. It

comprises a number of cross shafts, a cross head, and a number of grave markers. These probably date to a period before the community on Lindisfarne began erecting high crosses – a phase which postdates the Viking raids there. Abercorn tends to be left out of studies of Northumbrian material (perhaps because of modern boundaries) and of Pictish carved stones (because it has been regarded as Anglian in origin). Christine suggests that it sits in a boundary zone. She drew attention to the use of key pattern, extremely rare in a Northumbrian context but much more common in Pictish sculpture of the period. Another feature she remarked on is the central boss on the cross head found here. Examples of rosette bosses on cross heads are found at Carlisle and Hexham, but the bosses on these are much lower than that at Abercorn. The closest resemblance is with one at Edzell. The sculptors and their patrons at Abercorn seem to have adopted elements from both north and south.

Before dealing with the freestanding crosses of eastern Scotland, Christine took some time to reflect on representations of the cross on the cross slabs of Pictland. These crosses do not represent the crucifixion; figural representation is generally rare and confined to the shaft as with the riders at Rossie Priory and Fordoun. The Virgin and Child on the cross head at Brechin is most unusual.

Isabel Henderson drew attention to the apparent ease with which Pictish stone carvers moved between the concepts of cross slab and freestanding cross, with the height of the crosses on stones such as Aberlemno roadside or Fowlis Wester similar to that of several high crosses, while the high relief on some cross slabs appears almost as a half-way house between the slab and freestanding cross.

Representations of the crucifixion are found on freestanding crosses in Pictland – 2 examples at Monifieth, for example where the figure of Christ extended from the cross head onto the surviving shaft, or the missing arm of Strathmartine 8, where the crucified Christ was ac-

accompanied by a spear carrying soldier. The nearby Camus stone also bears a crucifixion on the cross head on the west face. Figuration on cross shafts in Pictland appears from the eighth or ninth century onwards, while the crucifixion begins to appear on the cross head quite early. The question of whether or not the freestanding cross carried figural representation is confounded by the number of missing cross heads. Were there once many more crucifixions on freestanding crosses in Pictland? It has been argued that any representation of the crucifixion on a cross head would have made it a target for iconoclasm (although the unfigured shaft may have survived). This has been offered as a reason for the relatively greater survival of complete crosses in Ireland than in Britain. However, iconoclasm does not account for the earlier demolition of carvings as at Whithorn and cannot be the only reason for the disappearance of stones or parts of stones elsewhere.

There are a number of other factors which make it difficult to interpret the available evidence. While it has been suggested that cross bases may indicate the former presence of now lost items, the slab-like proportions of some later freestanding crosses make it difficult to distinguish whether a base stone previously held a cross slab or a freestanding cross. Caution is required in using the distribution of cross bases as a proxy for the distribution of crosses.

The distribution of known freestanding crosses shows a tendency to a coastal pattern, but with some concentration in southern Pictland around the Tay. This includes groups associated with major ecclesiastical sites with royal patronage, such as at Forteviot and St Andrews. Kinneddar, an outlier in northern Pictland, has a collection of carved stone that argues for a community that was able to afford the services of highly skilled craftsmen: cross slabs, architectural and shrine fragments as well as freestanding crosses show work of high quality. The slender cross shafts here probably indicate that the crosses were smaller than those found in southern Pictland, such as at Dupplin or

Mugdrum, but are the product of fine workmanship. The site is important in evidencing the presence of innovative craftsmanship in the north-east at an early period. The fine elegance of the freestanding crosses at Kinneddar contrasts with the broadly contemporary and much sturdier cross shaft from Moreham in East Lothian. Contemporary freestanding crosses are known from coastal sites in East Lothian and south as far as Lindisfarne, with a similar distribution in south-west Scotland/north-west Cumbria.

A number of the crosses from southern Pictland, at Dull, Monifieth, and around Forteviot (including Dupplin and Invermay), may have marked boundaries of ecclesiastical estates and are unlikely to have been grave markers. Although there is a tendency to regard Pictland as having only a few freestanding crosses of little importance, Christine demonstrated that this is emphatically not the case. She also noted that there remains potential for further investigation of the relationship of freestanding crosses to the other sculptural fragments found in association with them on sites such as Kinneddar.

Time only allowed for a short selection from Christine's research for her PhD thesis: we look forward to hearing more from her at some time in the future.

Elizabeth Alexander was our third speaker, talking on **Old Testament Iconography in Pictland**. Elizabeth's PhD focussed on Old Testament representation in Anglo-Saxon art from the seventh to the mid-eleventh centuries, across the whole of Anglo-Saxon England and in all media. Previous studies had tended to examine individual items, or to restrict the area of study geographically or by medium. In taking a broad approach, she was able to identify choices and potential sources of Old Testament scenes and to draw parallels with other parts of the Insular world. Today, she examined the evidence from Pictland.

The themes represented are fairly restricted - eleven representations of David, two of Daniel,

one of Adam and Eve and one of Samson smiting the Philistines (or Cain killing Abel). Elizabeth only included those scenes which she could confidently identify.

David images tend to fall into two groups: David the Psalmist and David rending the jaws of the lion. These are common also in Irish and Anglo-Saxon art, while David rending the lion's jaws is rare in continental works. Representations of David and the Lion are shown in two main poses. In the 'Mithraic' pose the lion is on all fours, with David behind (sometimes with his knee on the lion's back). This is found elsewhere in Insular art, but not in Pictland, where the 'Gilgamesh' pose is favoured. This shows more vertical lines in its composition: David stands upright, with the forepaw of the lion frequently off the ground. This is the pose in eight of the Pictish carved Davids; five are accompanied by a harp and a lamb (Aberlemno Roadside, Aldbar, Gask, Kincardine and Nigg), two are fragments (St Andrews Sarcophagus and Kinnedar/Drainie 16) while on the Dupplin Cross a separate panel contains a harpist. In most of these, David grips the lion's jaw, the lion's tail is usually between its hind legs and it either has a raised forepaw or is rotated through 90°. This version is usually accompanied by a harp and a lamb. There is no consistency in the layout of the group, nor in details such as whether or not David is viewed full face or in profile.



St Andrews Sarcophagus as illustrated in Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland Vol 1, 1856*, showing David in the "Gilgamesh" pose, rending the lion's jaws.

While this image of David is relatively easy to identify, there is more difficulty in recognising David the Psalmist. The presence of David rending the jaws of the lion on another panel of the Dupplin Cross gives a degree of comfort in identifying the seated harpist there as the Psalmist. The harpist on Monifieth 4 is in company with ecclesiastical figures and there are parallels in Ireland to support the identification with the Psalmist, too. However, harpists were important figures in early medieval courts and an isolated harpist with none of David's other attributes could easily be a secular figure.

There is an alternative version of the Psalmist at Lethendy which shows David in the company of another musician. This is reminiscent of a scene portrayed in Carolingian manuscripts, where the entourage includes a scribe to take down the words, harpists to play the music, and dancers who perhaps indicate the divine inspiration behind the psalms. Not all of these need be present. An abbreviated version of the scene is known elsewhere in the Insular world – at Sockburn, County Durham, at Ardchattan in Argyll, on St Martin's Cross, Iona, and Kirk Michael 130 on the Isle of Man – where David is shown with a piper.

More than half of the Old Testament scenes in Pictland represent David and there seems to be a distinct preference for showing both sides of David's nature: the warrior and the Psalmist. This is not unique to Pictland, there being examples at Kells and Durrow in Ireland and one at Masham in Yorkshire. There are too few David figures in Anglo-Saxon art to judge whether or not there is a marked preference, but in Ireland it seems to have been less important to show David's dual nature.

The second most common biblical figure in Pictland is Daniel. On Meigle 2 he is shown with his arms stretched out to the side, with four profile lions, two on either side. Their tails are curved over their backs, and each raises a front paw, and they appear to be licking the central figure. A scene on the much worn Dunkeld stone has a similar arrangement. A number of

Irish High Crosses carry this version of the story too, suggesting that Pictland and Ireland had access to a similar representation of Daniel in the lions' den. In contrast, early Christian continental works show Daniel in the orans position accompanied by two lions in submissive pose. Other episodes from Daniel's story are not recorded in Pictland but are included in the Insular repertoire. For example, Daniel and the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace appears in Irish and Anglo-Saxon art.

Adam and Eve, on either side of a tree, round which winds a serpent, was a common theme in early Christian and in Insular art. However, only one example is known in Pictland, at Farnell. There, the coiling serpent is replaced by two large snakes flanking the couple – a feature unknown elsewhere. Elizabeth suggested that perhaps this might refer to the verse from Psalm 90 which begins 'Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk...', prefiguring the redemption. Finally, there is a unique scene on the Inchbrayock stone that may be interpreted as either Samson slaying the Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, or possibly the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. There is authority for the Samson story in the book of Judges chapter 15, verse 15. Abel's weapon is not mentioned in the biblical account of his attack on Cain. In an apocryphal version of the tale, known in both Anglo-Saxon England and Ireland, the weapon is described as a jawbone. This incident is not often portrayed in early Christian art, but there are half a dozen version in Insular art. In five of these, Cain wields a long straight weapon while Abel recoils. The one which does show a jawbone appears in an eleventh-century manuscript and is not therefore a useful comparator for Inchbrayock. Elizabeth accepts the identification of Samson as the figure wielding the jawbone here. Other elements of Samson's story are found elsewhere in Insular art – Samson carrying the gates of Gaza and Samson killing the lion are known from Yorkshire and Ireland respectively.

Overall, there is a very restricted range of Old

Testament scenes depicted across the Insular world, and these are drawn from only a few books (Genesis, Daniel, Judges and Samuel). The iconography suggests that there was some degree of interaction between Ireland, Pictland and Anglo-Saxon England, sharing the same designs. Perhaps the dominance of David in Pictish Old Testament iconography relates to his standing as the ideal king, and may reflect the commissioning of monuments by secular rulers.

Jane Geddes rounded off the morning's session with **Grave Markers and Corporate Identity at St Andrews**. A large group of carved stones, found in and about St Regulus, the burial ground around the cathedral and the chapel of St Mary's on the Rock, has languished in cramped, cold and ill-lit quarters in the cathedral museum since Hay Fleming published his record of 66 stones, mostly fragmentary, in 1931. Along with fragments of freestanding crosses and an altar tomb was a large number of upstanding gravestones. In 2019, Jane and John Borland were commissioned to produce a catalogue of the St Andrews stones. Jane commented on the fact that, such are the conditions of the present display, it was only once she had John's drawings to hand that she could begin to make sense of what they had been looking at. There were 52 grave markers which formed a distinct group. (A further 6 had been recorded and subsequently lost, making a total of 58.) Jane explored the potential of this set of stones to shed some light on the intellectual and cultural background behind the choices made by the patrons and commissioners of these particular monuments.

These are all dressed slabs of sandstone, roughly measuring 1metre high by 0.5 metres wide and carved in low relief. All have a beaded frame and carry a Latin cross whose arms extend as far as the frame. The armpits of the cross may be either round or square, and there may or may not be a ring around the cross head. It may be plain, with the surrounding quadrants decorated or vice versa, or decoration

may be present on both the cross and its background. Decoration may be present on 2 or sometimes 4 faces of the cross slab, and may include a selection of interlace, spirals and zigzag patterns. A few cases of vine scroll on side edges were noted. An exciting find was the traces of red pigment remaining in a central groove on the interlace of stone 601, painted to enhance the pattern. However, there are no inscriptions, no symbols and very little figurative art on any of them.

Jane suggested some comparisons with more recent graveyards where there is what might be termed a corporate identity of commemoration. In the present-day monks' cemetery at Nunraw, E Lothian, the graves group around a central large cross. Each burial is marked only by a simple, plain cross. These are the resting places of men who have given up their identity to God, their final sacrifice. In the well-tended cemeteries around former World War battlefields, uniform gravestones, alike in size and shape, make no distinction of rank. Each bears markers of corporate identity: crosses marking religious affiliations, regimental badges that show a group identity and the name of the dead. Here the message is 'their name liveth for evermore'. In the collection of gravestones at St Andrews, there is something between the two extremes of anonymity and identity. The limited repertoire of ornament is reminiscent perhaps of the later regimental badges, with the cross as the largest element. There is subtle variation between the stones, but, lacking names, these appear to be placed as acts of collective rather than individual commemoration, emphasising the membership of a unit. It is tempting to imagine one of the freestanding crosses, similarly ornamented, from the St Andrews collection as having once provided the focus of a monastic cemetery, like the large cross at Nunraw.

The St Andrews assemblage is a fairly homogeneous group. Each would have represented considerable investment of skill and time, and they were perhaps produced over a fairly short period of time. Can the choices that were made

over their design and production tell us anything about their date and what influences were operating at St Andrews? There is nothing to resemble these stones at Iona. Lindisfarne has a few round-topped grave markers but none with the sort of decoration seen at St Andrews. And the patrons or designers at St Andrews seem to have rejected such typically Pictish features as symbols and figural representation. Links to Monkwearmouth are attested in Nechtan's correspondence with Abbot Ceolfrith, and in the king's request for masons capable of building in the Roman manner in 710. Seven years later, Nechtan banished Ionan clergy from Pictland. The commissioners of the St Andrews gravestones conspicuously excluded influences from both Pictland and Iona in their design. At Monkwearmouth, however, rectangular dressed stones, carved with low relief frames and Latin crosses have been found, but these are undecorated. Jane suggested that those responsible for commissioning the St Andrews gravestones turned to manuscript exemplars for their design, specifically to the cross carpet pages known from Insular texts.



The cemetery at Nunraw Abbey, East Lothian.
Photograph: Jane Geddes

Alexander, in his *Insular Manuscripts, sixth to the ninth century*, notes that cross carpet pages appear from the seventh to the ninth centuries with the eighth century apparently seeing the

peak of production before they went out of fashion. The book page format, with its framing border fits easily into the rectangular shape of the gravestones. Relatively few cross carpet pages survive but an example in the Harburg Gospels, probably copied at Eternach from an exemplar from Lindisfarne, is closest to the scheme that we see on the St Andrews stones. Jane suggests that soon after the founding of the monastery in the first half of the eighth century, there was here a gospel book possibly from, or a copy of an example from, the scriptorium at Lindisfarne. The similarity of the proportions of the cross and the positioning of a similar range of ornament on a number of cross carpet pages with those of the St Andrews gravestones are striking to say the least. The foundation of the monastery here, whether by Onuist or Nechtan, took place at a time when there appears to have been a peaceful relationship with Northumbria, and at a time when Iona was not much in favour in Pictland. This would provide a suitable background for the influence of the Northumbria church to be felt.

With its powerful symbolism of Christ's resurrection and the life everlasting, the talismanic power of the cross remained. This emblem that required Christians to focus on Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, his power to redeem his believers and his promise of eternal life was entirely appropriate for a community of monks. The choice of decoration, informed by the ornate splendour of the cross carpet page, could only be made in a place where wealthy patrons had access to skilled craftsmen and the appropriate materials available to commemorate self-effacing monks whose names were omitted from the monuments but who rested in the hope of life everlasting, confident in their membership of a group who had offered up their lives to God.

This series of stones has been regarded as coming at the stale fag end of Pictish art. Mrs Curle suggested a date somewhere in the late ninth-early tenth century for their production, while RBK Stevenson regarded them as the 'dregs of

Pictland'. Isabel Henderson eventually took the view that the specific function of gravestones may have meant that they did not require Pictish symbols. Jane suggests an early date. If the monastery here was founded sometime in the reign of Onuist (725-61), and possibly early in that period, as we know of the death of Abbot Tuathalan in 747, then we may well be looking at the grave markers of the first generation of monks and their immediate followers. Any further symbols were neither necessary nor fitting. The political conditions of the time would be appropriate for the influences she has traced to be in operation at St Andrews, and the lack of personal identifiers entirely proper for this group of men. A generation or two after the foundation, patronage had greatly declined and production of ornate but anonymous gravestones ceased.

There is much to suggest that a team of skilled craftsmen based at St Andrews influenced craftsmen working at other sites in the region. They may themselves have been employed elsewhere by patrons who lacked reticence when it came to the design of cross slabs, requesting Pictish themes and symbols as well as ornate crosses, thus combining hunting scenes and symbols with the sort of decoration we find at St Andrews.

Jane noted that a stone found in 1978 in a garden in New Scone bears very close resemblance to the St Andrews series. In an area where there are no records or traces of any early church or monastery, this caused a few concerns as to its origins. However, Nigel Ruckley has examined the stone and been able to identify it as a carboniferous sandstone from Fife. It seems likely that this is an example of unrecorded antiquarian pilfering and that the stone was taken from St Andrews in more recent times.

Many questions still surround the collection of stones at St Andrews. Is there any significance in the distribution of find sites between St Rule's and St Mary's on the Rock? What was the nature of the relationship with Northumbria, and could the relics of St Andrew have been

brought from Hexam? With the new catalogue, and the prospect that the stones will be appropriately displayed in the future, we are at last in a position to start to find some answers.

Sheila Hainey

Review of Sunday session to follow.

Ian Fisher 1943-2021



Ian Fisher C Crown Copyright RCAHMS

It is with great sadness that we note the death of Ian Fisher. PAS members may know of Ian as the author of *Early Medieval Sculpture in the West Highlands and Islands*, published by RCAHMS and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 2001. The subject of *Early Medieval sculpture* appeared to have been his speciality, but as an Investigator with RCAHMS, Ian was tasked with analysing, researching and writing about a wide range of Scotland's historic built environment.

During the many years that I worked alongside Ian, we recorded Early and Late Medieval chapels, post-Reformation churches, vernacular building and country houses, indeed all types and periods of buildings, as well of course as sculptured stones. Ian's scholarly engagement was constant for all periods and types of monument and his knowledge encyclopaedic.

JB

Gaming Picts

If you fancy reliving the lives of the Picts in a game, then this could be for you. *Carved in Stone* is a new collaboration between tabletop roleplaying game designers and archaeologists. It brings to life the era of the Picts for storytellers, players, and heritage enthusiasts of all ages.



Dig It! and Edinburgh-based game design company Dungeons on a Dime have teamed up to combine the latest archaeological research with a new tabletop roleplaying game (TTRPG) that will enable the public to learn more about life in Pictland 1,300 years ago. For more information, visit:

<https://www.digitScotland.com/picts-to-be-brought-to-life-in-new-game-based-on-ground-breaking-research/>

Pit-/pett- Place-Names and Angus examples

Maps showing the location of *Pit-* place-names and the distribution of Pictish symbol stones closely correspond. Several hundred *Pit-* names are found within the traditional territories of Pictland and just over a dozen occur outside, mainly on the south side of the Firth of Forth (Mack, 2013, 33). Only the areas north of SE Sutherland, including the Northern Isles, are devoid of *Pit-* names, despite having symbol stones; this is thought to be the result of Norse domination. *Pit* means a piece of land and is spelled *pet/pett* in early manuscripts.

I assumed the maps were evidence that *Pit-* names were created by the Picts themselves, or

perhaps by their forefathers, for the places they inhabited. However, leading toponymists have long recognised Gaelic words, names and grammar in the ‘specifics’, i.e. what comes after the initial *Pit-* (the ‘generic’), such as *Pitelpie*. They are agreed that many *Pit-* names were coined later by Gaelic-speakers. Simon Taylor writes: ‘I would therefore argue that the map of *Pit*-names...depicts not “the settlement area of the Pictish people, i.e. of speakers of Celtic Pictish” (Nicolaisen 1976, 151), but rather the extent of Gaelic-speakers in the tenth century, as Alba is beginning to expand into areas outwith its core lands between the Dornoch Firth in the north and the Firth of Forth in the south’ (Taylor 2011, 79). And again, in his masterly five volumes of Fife place-names (Taylor and Márkus 2013, 5, 157): ‘The main conclusion...regarding language and context of *pett*-names, is that they were in fact chiefly coined by Gaelic-speakers, using *pett* as a loan-word.’

If I understand rightly, this does not mean that Gaelic-speakers were the first to create *Pit-/pett-* names, but that they adopted the traditional Pictish formula when making new names. New names would be needed for new areas of habitation/farming, and, it would seem, Gaelic-speakers must have renamed existing *pett-* places, ousting the Pictish ‘specific’ but retaining (or borrowing) the *pett-*. Have most traces of the Pictish language gone from *Pit*-names?

Toponymists are also agreed that the two languages can sometimes be indistinguishable. P-Celtic (Pictish) and Q-Celtic (Gaelic) were closely related, and a word or name known to be Gaelic may have been very similar in Pictish, or borrowed from Pictish. Thus it seems that we cannot always be certain of which ‘specifics’ date from which period, or which language is used in the ‘specific’. Only when a word is 1) known to be Brittonic, e.g. occurs in Welsh, and 2) does not occur in Irish/Gaelic, or

at least not with that particular meaning, can we be relatively sure that the word is Pictish. But that obviously excludes a lot of grey areas between the black and the white. Everything now ascribed to Gaelic may not be so.

A recurrent *Pit-/pett-* name is *Pittendreich*, counted by WJ Watson eight times between Lasswade and Banffshire, meaning ‘place of the favourable aspect’ in Gaelic, presumably a south-facing slope. But he also noted: ‘In Welsh the cognate term is *drych*, “aspect”, which probably accounts for Scottish Gaelic *dreach*’ (1926, 414). That would obviously suggest it is a Pictish place-name.

It is likely that much more Pictish lurks in *Pit-/pett-* place-names than we are currently able to discern. At least *Pitpointie* (*Petpoynt* 1492 RMS II, no.2158, see Aitchison below for earlier forms) is one Angus place-name largely deemed to be Pictish (‘place of the bridge’), although not everyone agrees. With only a meagre knowledge of actual Pictish vocabulary, mainly some individual words and a list of royal names, it is a hard task to differentiate satisfactorily between what was coined by the Picts in Pictish and what was introduced when Gaelic changed from the native speech of early missionaries, to the dominant language.

Of course place-names are not fixed, but they do seem by nature highly tenacious. *Pit-* names persist to the present day in considerable numbers and are present in the earliest records we have, although these are not early enough to predate the Gaelic-speaking period. Several *petts* are mentioned in the *Book of Deer*, possibly the oldest manuscript made in Scotland (10th century with 12th-century annotations): e.g. *pett inmullen*. That name (of whichever origin) is still current almost one millenium later, not now the one near Deer in Aberdeenshire, but Pitmullen in Fife (‘place of the mill’).

I find it hard to envisage a more or less blanket abolition or abandonment of traditional, exist-



ing Pictish place-names, despite several ensuing centuries of Gaelic. Generating new Gaelic *Pit-/pett-* names, supplanting some Pictish ‘specifics’, or adapting, translating, and assimilating them, all seem reasonable developments. But so is, to my mind, the continued use of existing place-names. Still, I cannot back it up at present, and it is easy to counter-argue by pointing to the north, where Norse incomers are thought to have eradicated the local place-names.

Pit-/pett- place-names in Angus

I have collected *Pit-* place-names in the county

of Angus (previously Forfarshire) using Arbroath Abbey and Brechin Cathedral registers, the first eleven volumes of *The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland* (=1306-1668), and maps from Timothy Pont’s onwards (from c.1600). It is interesting to see how early *pets/petts/pits* have survived on to recent Ordnance Survey maps. This is my first trawl. Further research and other sources may reveal more *pit-/pett-* names or remove one or two dubious names.

Most early Angus *Pit-* names are recognisable today despite varied spellings through the cen-

turies. Spelling started to become standardised only in the mid-18th century in Angus. The creation of maps also helped to give fixity to place-names. *Pettarache* (1314) develops into *Petkerach* (1360), then *Petcerrow* (1534) and *Pitkirrie* (1658), ending up nowadays as *Pitkerro* on the outskirts of Dundee. (1) *Pettintoskell* near *Estirdrum* (1410) was spelled *Pentashall* in 1570, became *Pentoskell* (1606), with the name living on today in the *Pantaskel* Burn near *East Drums*, to be found on Google maps.(2) *Petcouran* survives as *Pitcundrum*.(3) *Petmedy* as *Pitmudie*.(4) *Petcur* barely changed over six centuries, to *Pitcur*.(5) *Pitterlie* to *Pitairlie*.(6) Sometimes *Pit-* changed to *Pen-*, or *Pen-* to *Pit-*.

Petdynny in the 1500s had become *Balldinny* before the 1st edition OS map.(7) *Pont*'s early 17th-century *Pitdairdy* is now *Baldardo*, while his *Barskelly* is now *Pitskelly*. The notable 19th-century Angus antiquarian Andrew Jervise commented that many *Bal-* and *Pit-* names were interchangeable in his day, citing *Balgersho-Pitgersho* (Kettins), *Balmachie-Pitmachie* (Panbride), *Balargus-Pitargus* (Tealing), *Pitruchie-Baltruchie* (Forfar), *Balkeerie-Pitkeerie* (Newtyle) and *Balglassie-Pitglassie* (Aberlemno). Such dualism would have added to the difficulties facing early map-makers. Of these names, I have come across only *Pitreuchie* as a *Pit-* name, so it is the only one of Jervise's examples on my map; the earliest mention in the sources I used is *Pettreychyn* in 1321.(8) *Pont*'s *Petharrow* might have been miscopied. But mishearing and misunderstandings must have played a role in early geographers' recording of place-names. *Pont*'s *Patelpie* is Robert Edward's *Patalpin*, on their seventeenth-century maps. Also, shifts in pronunciation would account for some of the changes in spelling over time. East of Brechin, *Litilpetcorthy* in 1410 became *Litilpetforthie* by 1456, nowadays spelled *Pitforthie*.(9) *Petforkie* (1585), near Careston,

also turned into *Pitforthie*, as in the present-day *Pitforthie Den*.(10)

Some *pet/pett/pit* land-holdings appear only in documents, others only on maps. A fairly exact location of every one is known, except *Petcorpie* within Rescobie parish and *Pettarrows* N of Arbroath.(11) They often lend their name to surrounding topographical features, e.g. Bog of Pitkenedy, Pitlivie Wood, Pitairlie Moor, Pitlyal Loch, Pitscandy Hill.

Some Angus *Pit-*names are found in other counties, e.g. *Pitreuchie*, *Pitskelly*, *Petty*, *Pitlochry*, and some occur twice within Angus. Two *Pitmudies* still exist, but *Pittarrows* has disappeared from both locations, leaving *Pitaris Hill* near Maryton.(12) *Petforthe* near Kinell was yet another *Pitforthie* in Angus.(13)

Pittendreich has gone from Lundie but the one near Brechin remains. Not all sites could have enjoyed an especially 'favourable aspect'. *Pit-*names occur in the Angus glens: *Pitcarity* is well up Glen Prosen.(14) *Pitewan* and *Pitmudie* lie at the foot of Glenisla (15), with *Pitlochrie* until recently further up the glen near the Kirkton.(16) *Pitnocks* was once in Glen Clova (17), and possibly *Petrymochries* in Glen Ogil (or is this the name Peter/Petrie?).(18)

Elsbeth Reid

Grateful thanks to Davina Reid for mapwork.

RMS: Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum, The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland.

REB: Registrum Episcopatus Brechinensis, Brechin Cathedral Register Vol 1.

1) *Pettarache* (1314) *RMS I*, App.ii 648; *Petkerach* (1360) *REB I*, p18; *Petcerrow* (1534) *RMS III*, no.1423; *Pitkirrie* (1658) *RMS X*, no.658.

2) *Pettintoscall* (1410) *REB I* p28; *Pentashall* (1570) *REB* p301; *Pentoskell* (1606) *RMS VI*, no.1730.

3) *Petcouran* (c.1350), *RMS I*, App.ii 767.

4) *Petmedy* (1473), *RMS II*, no.1149 (i.e. *Pitmudie* near the Caterthuns).

- 5) *Petcur* (1524) *RMS* III, no.298.
- 6) *Petterlie* (1615) *RMS* VII, no.1351.
- 7) *Petdynny* (1528) *RMS* III, no.625. Later also *Petdouny* (1625) *RMS* VIII, no.898 and *Pitdonie* (1634) *RMS* IX, no.31.
- 8) *Petreychyn* (1321) *RMS* I, App.i 29.
- 9) *Litilpetcorthy* (1410) *REB* I, p28, via *Petforky*, became *Litilpetforthy* (1456) *REB* I, p182. WJ Watson (412): ‘the change of Gaelic initial *ch* into *f* in Scots is common’.
- 10) *Petforkie* (1585) *RMS* V, no.2052, at Careston.
- 11) *Petcorprie* (1606) ‘alias Annestoun’ in Rescobie parish, *RMS* VI, no.1768; *Pettarrous* (1601), *RMS* VI, no.1216 (i.e. near Inchok and a different Anniston; surviving possibly as Tarry/Tarriebank outside Arbroath?).
- 12) *Pettarrowis* (1484) *RMS* II, no.1610 (i.e. near Rossie).
- 13) *Petforthe* (1538) is in a list of places moving east from Pitmuies: ‘*Preschak, Freache, Petforthe et Braiklo*’, *RMS* III, no.1947, i.e. around the Kinnell area.
- 14) *Pettaride* (1477) *RMS* II, no.1560 becomes *Petcaridy* (1529) *RMS* III, no.885.
- 15) *Piteuin* and *Pitmidy* on Pont map, Sheet 28.
- 16) *Pitlochrie*, in *Glenilay* (1611) *RMS* IX, no.7 and on Pont, Sheet 28.
- 17) *Pitnocks*, see Davidson below.
- 18) *Petrymochries* on Pont, Sheet 30verso.

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Some familiar things seen in the East

After reading an article in PAS newsletter 91 (*‘Pilgrims from Pictland? How features of the East may have ended up on Meigle 1’*) about the possibility of Pictish pilgrims having visited the Holy Land, I was reminded of the time in 1993 when I visited the ancient Armenian church of Ahtmar (Turkish – Akdamar) on an island in Lake Van in what is now eastern Turkey, and the carvings I saw there.

Armenia was the first state to become officially Christian, in the early 4th century. The church, the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, was built in 915-921 to be the main church of the capital of the Armenian kingdom of Vaspurkan, originally one of the eight provinces of ancient Armenia. The province was centred on Lake Van until its last king surrendered it to the Byzantine Empire in 1021. The church remained the seat of a



Figurative carving and vine scroll frieze on Akdamar Church

bishop till 1895 but was desecrated, and the associated monastery destroyed during WWI. It was controversially restored as a museum in 2006. Many pictures of the church are available on the internet (search: Akdamar).

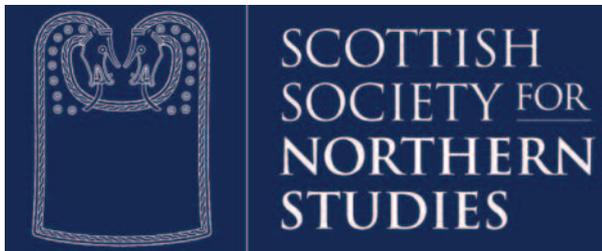
Ronald Campbell

Special Joint Online Conference

in partnership with the Scottish Society for Northern Studies

Saturday 5 & Sunday 6 March 2022

Details to follow early in the New Year



Cross slab from Akdamer Church

PAS Spring Lecture Series 2022

Friday 18 March – Frances Houston

Title TBC

Friday 15 April – Dr Catherine Swift

Munster visitors to Pictish kings

Friday 20 May – Dr Shirley Curtis-Summers

Title TBC

PAS Newsletter 103

Deadline for receipt of material is

Saturday 19 February 2022

Please email contributions to the editor:

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