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EDITORIAL

There have been a number of interesting archaeological discoveries in recent months — such as the on-going work at Tarbat Old Church, Portmahomack (with the discovery of a number of new stones) or the recent excavations beside Sumburgh Airport in Shetland. There has also been a surge in the number of books published about the Picts — for example, two field guides appeared almost simultaneously ("like waiting for a bus ... "). We hope to publish full details of the new stones in due course and will continue to review new books.

Once again this *Pictish Arts Society Journal* presents a variety of stimulating contributions from our members.

Alastair Mack, author of the excellent new *Field Guide to the Pictish Symbol Stones* (reviewed on page 36), opens with observations regarding the find-spots of the eight Pictish stones so far found at Rhynie, Aberdeenshire — he suggests that they appear to be in two clusters, rather than one. Stimulated by a comment on page 1 of Alastair Mack's *Field Guide*, Professor Leslie Alcock argues for an estimation of the Pictish population, extrapolating from a reasoned figure for the population of neighbouring Dal Riata.

Stuart Kermack has developed a number of ideas in his attempt to explain the meaning of the Pictish symbols. The Picts must have had heroic tales and although, at present, we have not identified their content, the Pictish symbols may have related to them. The present paper is only the first part of Stuart's story — we have to wait for the next *Journal* for the 'corroborating evidence' when all will be illuminated with the help of Adomnán, his *Life of St Columba* and "an old-fashioned Scots lawyer".

No *Pictish Arts Society Journal*, or so it seems, would be complete without a paper or two by Craig Cessford. In 'The Crossbow Brooch from Carn Liath', he notes an incised double-disc symbol on a silver fibula brooch found during excavations of the buildings around the broch tower. If it really is a Pictish symbol, this could be the earliest dateable surviving example. This fact and a photograph of a replica of the brooch appeared in Anna Ritchie's *Picts* (1989, 51). However, in his paper, Craig discusses the full implications and importance of this find. Craig has also given us a couple of Shorter Notes — one on the multiple crescent and V-rod and one re-reading the St Madoes cross-slab.

Jim Macaulay's paper on 'Mirrors and Mirror Cases' was presented at a Member's Night of the Society last year. He intends to stimulate discussion by throwing up a number of ideas and urges us not to accept the obvious when looking at Pictish symbols. He doesn't!

Although there are a few book reviews in this *Journal* we have a slight back-log and hope to publish several more in *Journal* 12. Unfortunately, for some reason or another, some of the reviewers have been slow to return their contributions.

Comments about, or contributions to, the *Pictish Arts Society Journal* should be sent to;

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J.R.F. Burt
Editor

The Rhynie Cluster – or Clusters?

Alastair Mack

Rhynie 1, The Craw Stane, which stands at NJ 4971 2634, is within the faint remains of a circular multi-vallate enclosure that may contain or may have contained burials. The stone appears to have been one of the entrance uprights (Shepherd & Grieg 1996, Pl 56).

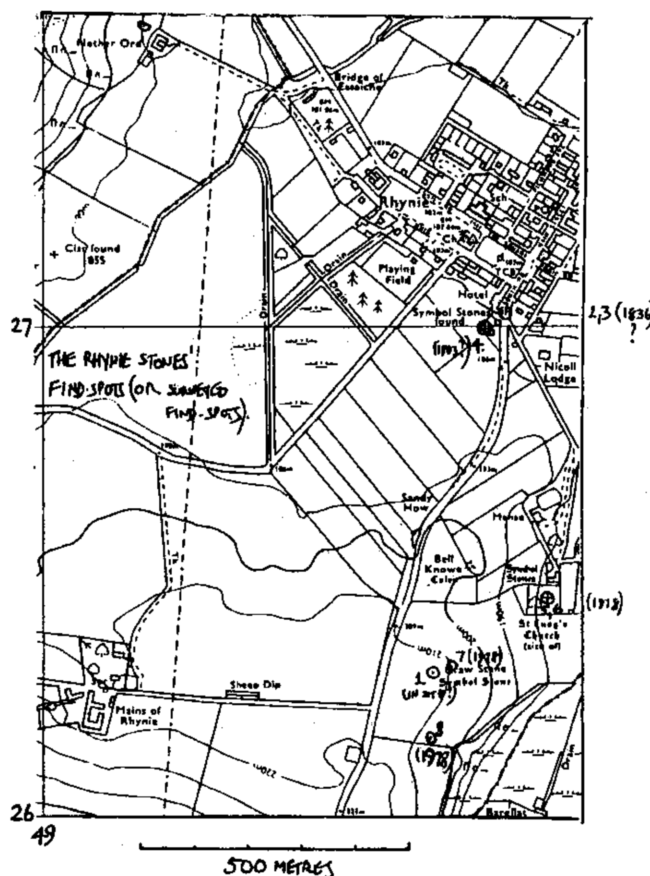

Fig. 1. Map of Rhynie, Aberdeenshire (surveyed 1969) showing the locations of find spots (or surveyed find-spots) of the Rhynie stones.

Rhynie 2 and **Rhynie 3** both stand at the NW side of The Square in Rhynie, at NJ 4980 2715. In 1829 James Logan (who also made excellent drawings of Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4) wrote that No. 2 'was discovered in ploughing a field near the village' (1829, 55) but gave no find spot for No. 3, and John Stuart wrote (concerning both 2 and 3), 'no precise information can be got regarding their original site, although they … seem to have stood near the village' (1856, 5). The Ordnance Survey Name Book entry by Sapper Robert Dickson agrees with Stuart's latter statement but is specific as to the find-spot of the stones — or at least *a* find-spot. Dickson wrote 'These stones were dug up near to the Plough Inn about 30 years ago', i.e. about 1836 (1866, 146). He also wrote that they were moved in or about 1836 from beside the road at the south end of the village and placed beside 'Harvie's Inn' (and also that in about 1864 they were moved to the 'Market Square') (*ibid.*, 130). The 6" O.S. Map surveyed in 1866 gave *c.* 1836 as the discovery date of Nos. 2 and 3 and their find-spot as NJ 4985 2702 — which is on or beside the road. Logan's earlier work however shows that the stones had been discovered before 1836, certainly by 1829. Romilly Allen's *ECMS* statement is simply that 'Nos. 2 and 3 are said to have been found in a field on the S. side of the village' (Allen & Anderson 1903, III, 182).

Rhynie 4 was reported by the Reverend James Milne in 1797 as 'A large stone ... standing on the Moor of Rhynie', part of which had 'been lately broken' (Withrington 1982, 489). In 1829 Logan wrote that a fragment of the stone 'is to be seen in the wall of a stable, having been taken from the materials of a former School-house' (1829, 55). Sapper Dickson wrote in his Name Book in 1866 that the fragment was 'built into the wall of a barn' (at NJ 4998 2715) and that 'It is supposed that this stone was raised and partly broken up ... about the year 1803' (1866, 149) (its site then having then been at NJ 4982 2699). Allen wrote 'No. 4 originally stood at the Mains of Rhynie' (Allen and Anderson 1903, III, 183), by which he may have meant *on* that farm's lands, that is to the south of the village. Perhaps Rhynie 4 did originally stand at NJ 4982 2699, at the south end of the village (and therefore near the reported find-spot of Nos. 2 and 3). This may have been the site that Milne described as 'on the Moor of Rhynie'.

Rhynie 5 and **Rhynie 6** (Fig. 2) were found when the kirk (which was at NJ 4992 2649) was pulled down in 1878 (*Ibid.*, 183, 184). They later stood at the entrance to the old kirkyard and are now, thanks to Ian Shepherd, in a shelter at the north end of the car-park outside the kirkyard (at NJ 4996 2660).

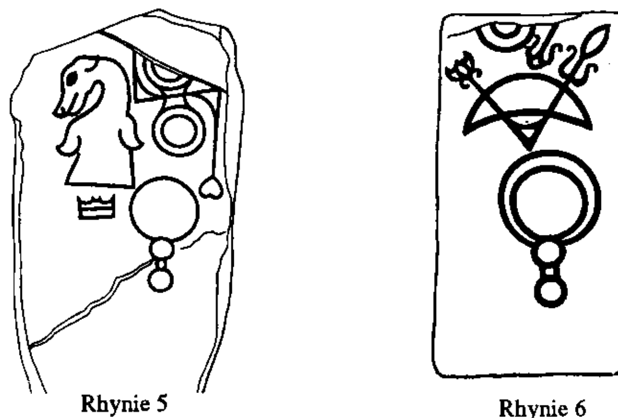

Fig. 2. Rhynie 5 and 6 (after Allen & Anderson 1903, Figs. 198 & 199)

Rhynie 7 (a figure-carved stone with no symbols) was ploughed up in 1978 at NJ 4976 2636 (Shepherd and Shepherd 1978, 211). It is now in Woodhill House in Aberdeen, the Aberdeenshire Council HQ.

Rhynie 8 (Fig. 3), which is a fragment and has also been trimmed, was picked up in 1978 at NJ *c*.497 262, lying on the field surface (*Ibid.*, 217). It is now, again thanks to Ian Shepherd, in the car-park shelter with Nos. 5 and 6.

Rhynie 7, which was found about 40 metres from the Craw Stane, may have once stood beside that stone or close to it, and it is also quite possible that the Rhynie 8 fragment, which was found about 150 metres south of the Craw Stane, is the remains of a stone which was originally erected near the Craw Stane. Perhaps Rhynie 5 and 6 once stood there too. If so, they may have fallen and then slipped downhill, as Ian Shepherd has said, towards the kirk site, which is only some 250 metres from the Craw Stane.

It is therefore possible that the eight Rhynie stones came from two sites or clusters. Nos. 2, 3 and 4 were not only apparently found (or at least have recorded find-spots) close to the south end of the village, but the same 1866 survey also recorded that 'Human Remains' were found at NJ 4985 2699, which is very close to all three. It seems that the road into the south end of Rhynie, the A 97, runs through what may have been a burial/memorial area. Less than half a mile further south stands the Craw Stane within the faint remains of a complex enclosure (Shepherd and Greig 1996, 43) which is thought to have been another such area, and from or from close to the latter came Rhynie 7 and 8 and

perhaps even Rhynie 5 and 6. It does seem that the original locations of the eight stones were in at least two distinctly separate sites. Although the recorded 'find-spot' of Rhynie 2 and 3 may not be their original location at least one of them was first found 'near the village' and was found without reference to the rather more distant Craw Stane. It is also most unlikely that Rhynie 4's original site was near the latter. Milne reported Rhynie 4 as standing, that is presumably where it was originally erected, and had it been standing near the Craw Stane he surely would have said so. What is surprising is that Milne's report does not mention the Craw Stane.

Fig 3. Rhynie 8. (Drawing by JRF Burt)

Nevertheless a recent writer has (to a degree) found otherwise (Foster 1996, 75). Her description of the Craw Stane site is *'a crop-mark enclosure which originally contained six, possibly eight stones'*. It is just possible that six of the eight known Rhynie stones were first erected there. The Craw Stane almost certainly was, Nos. 7 and 8 may once have been its neighbours, Nos. 5 and 6 may have originated there too and then drifted downhill, and, if only because it is less well-documented, even No. 3 may have come from that site. But it does seem unlikely that the other two Rhynie stones did. Rhynie 2 was 'ploughed up ... near the village' and was not, from that report, at all near the Craw Stane, and Rhynie 4 was not only reported standing but was so reported without any reference to the also standing (and no doubt well-known) Craw Stane. Both Nos. 2 and 4 seem to have been comparatively distant from the latter and are therefore unlikely to have been at any time among its presumed neighbours — and the same may be true of Rhynie 3.

The Rhynie stones' sites may however be more widespread. They can perhaps be compared to those of the Aberlemno stones. Aberlemno 1 and 3 share the roadside with the almost featureless No. 4, but while Aberlemno 2, the Kirkyard Cross-slab, may once have stood close to them another Aberlemno stone, the Flemington stone (Aberlemno 5) did not; it was found below ground at the other end of what may have been an extensive burial area. The roadside stones stand at what may have been the area's north-west edge, the kirk and the kirkyard are about three hundred metres to their south, perhaps on its southern edge, and in 1857 Andrew Jervise reported that he 'was told by an old parishioner, that ... several stone coffins were got in it [the field behind the roadside stones], containing bones, immediately south of the stone with the transfixed serpent [presumably Aberlemno 1]' (1857, 192). Aberlemno 5 was ploughed up about thirty metres east of the kirk (Boyd 1962), that is perhaps within the burial field's southern boundary — and at one or other of the field's extremities, or even between them, may once have stood the Woodrae cross-slab (Allen & Anderson, III, 242–45).

Aberlemno's kirk seems to be at the south end of an ancient burial ground; perhaps Rhynie's old kirk was near the middle of another which was even more extensive. There is a cairn, the Bell Knowe, at NJ 4979 2655 (about 150 metres WNW of the kirk-site), 200 metres south of the cairn is the Craw Stane enclosure, 450 metres due north of it are the reported find-spots of Rhynie 2, 3 and 4 (and of the 'Human Remains'), and, who knows, Rhynie 5 and 6 may once have stood close to what became the kirkyard, rather than close to the Craw Stane. The upper part of No. 6 is missing (by Allen's estimation three-fifths of the stone (*Ibid.*, 184)) and the remainder may have been trimmed for building purposes, but No. 5, which is virtually intact, is a substantial stone — its overall dimensions are *c.* 162 x 80 x 23 cm. The latter may be too large to have drifted far; the former may have been. Perhaps the pair did not drift downhill towards the kirk-site; they may have been there already.

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How many Picts were there?

Leslie Alcock

What song the Sirens sang, ... though puzzling, ... [is] not beyond all conjecture.
Sir Thomas Browne, (1658), *Urn Burial.*

Alastair Mack in his pioneering *Field Guide to the Pictish Symbol Stones*, has revived Professor Charles Thomas' estimate of the population of Pictland (Mack 1997, 1). Thomas defined Pictland as the coastal belt from the Forth to Caithness and Orkney, and suggested that this 'should have supported at the outside some 40,000 souls' (Thomas 1963, 66). In arriving at this figure, Thomas quoted Tacitus' estimate of the strength of the Caledonian force defeated by his father-in-law Agricola, namely, upwards of 30,000. Thomas had qualified reservations about this, but did not mention the principal objections to the acceptance of any military figures before the later Middle Ages: (1) the lack of reliable statistics until the development of written records of actual payments to stated numbers of troops; and (2) the normal practice of inflating the hostile force, whether in victory or defeat.

Thomas had, however, used a quite different calculation for his estimate. He assumed that there were about 4,500 square miles of land suitable for arable farming in Pictland; and he then estimated nine persons per square mile, thus arriving at the figure of 40,500 persons. He does not explain the basis of his estimates either of potential arable land or of population per square mile.

As it happens, there is a sounder inferential basis for an estimate, because we can know fairly accurately the muster for both the land and sea hostings of a contemporary neighbour of the Picts: namely Dal Riata. From this we can propose a figure for the population of that kingdom; and from that in turn we can attempt to extrapolate the size of the Pictish population.

Our knowledge of Dal Riata comes from the document known as *Senchus Fer nAlban*, 'History of the Men of Scotland' (Bannerman 1974). As we have it, the *Senchus* is a copy made in the tenth century, but from the internal evidence it is argued that the original survey was compiled in the late seventh century. The *Senchus* comprises a pseudo-history or ancestor legend of the colonization of Argyll from northern Ireland; a series of dynastic genealogies; and a civil, military and naval survey of Dal Riata. There would have been no point in compiling such a survey unless it had established fairly accurately the taxable and man-power resources of Dal Riata. Belief in its essential credibility is not fatally undermined by certain internal discrepancies noted by the principal commentators (Anderson 1973; 1980, 158–60; Bannerman 1974, 132–54).

For the purpose of the muster, Dal Riata as a whole was divided among the three kindreds of Loairn, nOengusa and nGabráin. The survey recorded, among other details, the expeditionary strength of each kindred; and also allocated ships for sea expeditions. By correlating the figures for the land and sea hostings, it is possible to allot 840 warriors to the kindred of nGabráin, 645 to nOengusa, and 630 to Loairn. These figures were then rounded down into notional units of hundreds, so that the total armed muster of Dal Riata would have amounted to about 2,000 men.

Acceptance of the *Senchus* figures for the land and sea military expeditions of late seventh century Dal Riata is only the first step towards an estimate for the population of Pictland. The second step is to calculate the population of Dal Riata itself. This may be estimated by accepting a dictum from the survey of the population of Scotland, made in 1755 by Alexander Webster, an Edinburgh minister (Kyd 1952). Two comments should be made on the date: first, that it is before the Industrial Revolution and other social movements which brought great changes to the distribution of population in Scotland; and, secondly, only nine years after Culloden, the country was still in a somewhat unsettled state.

Webster was interested, therefore, in the military potential of the country, expressed in the terms: 'By Fighting Men is meant those between Eighteen and Fifty six years of Age both Inclusive'. Having excluded the 'Blind and Lame, or otherwise diseased, the Author has supposed the Fighting Men ... to be only one fifth part of the number of the inhabitants'.

In applying Webster's generalisations to Dal Riata, we might first remark that, in an Early Historic context, a more likely age-bracket for 'fighting men' might be twelve or fourteen to forty or forty-five. Nevertheless, the one-fifth ratio seems to be a useful rule of thumb. So we might estimate the population of Dal Riata in the late seventh century as about ten thousand.

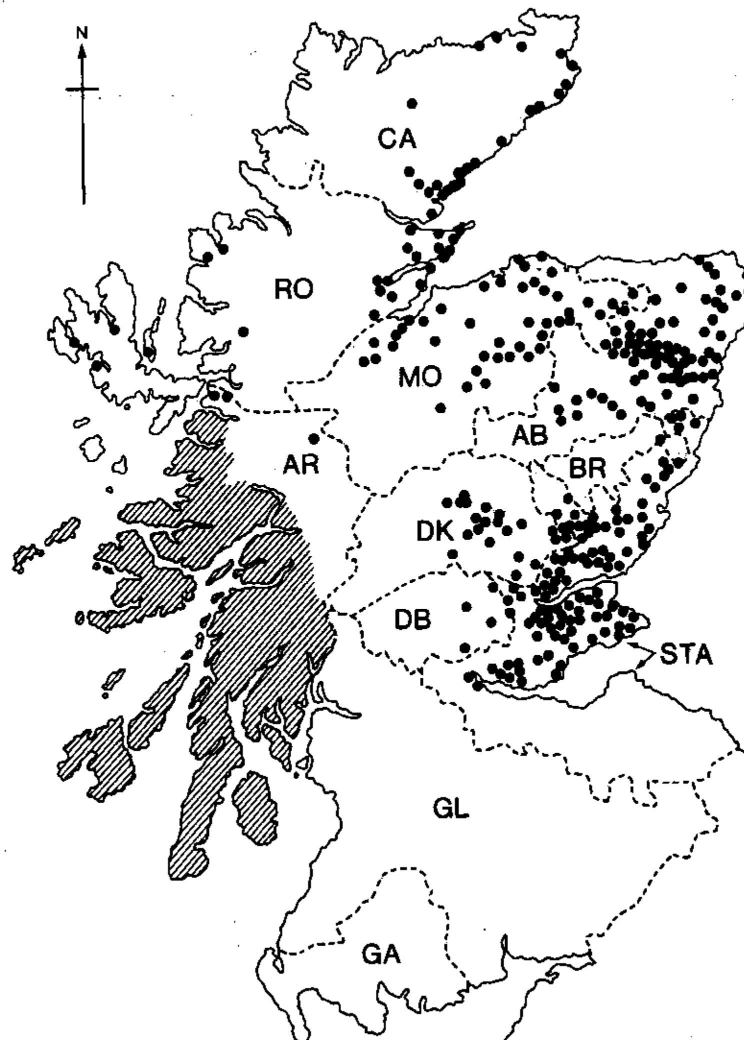

Fig. 4. Map of the diocesan areas of Scotland, plotted against Dal Riata (hatched) and the main areas of Pictish settlement (dotted). AB–Aberdeen; AR–Argyll; BR–Brechin; CA–Caithness; DB–Dunblane; DK–Dunkeld; GA–Galloway; GL–Glasgow; MO–Moray; RO–Ross; STA–St Andrews.

Before following Webster's calculations, however, we should consider a rather different late-eighteenth century reckoning by Samuel Johnson, which Dr Ian Ralston has kindly brought to my notice (Chapman 1924, 57). Johnston wrote of the population of Raasay 'The sixth part of the people is supposed capable of bearing arms. But [for reasons of home defence] let it be supposed that half as many [of a military expedition] might be permitted to stay at home', implying therefore a ratio of field army to total population of 1:9. Such a calculation would suggest a total population for Dal Riata of eighteen thousand. It is difficult to believe, however, that in Early Historic warfare one third of the potential field force would be left at home. The more modest figure of ten thousand is therefore preferred here.

Our next step is to estimate the likely ratio between the population of Dal Riata and that of Pictland. One way of attempting this might be by comparing the area of good-quality farming land in Dal Riata and that of Pictland. An obvious source would be the maps of agricultural land classes prepared by the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, or those published for instance in the *Historical Atlas of*

Scotland c. 400 – c. 1600 (McNeill & Nicholson 1975, Map 2). The visual impression which these convey is that, while eastern Scotland from the Firth of Forth to the Dornoch Firth has large areas classed as 'best' or 'medium' land, Dal Riata was overwhelmingly classed as 'harsh', with only tiny pockets of better land. On this basis, then, the Dal Riata/Pictland ratio would be extremely high.

Three comments may be made on the observation. The first is an objective one: the criteria used for determining the best quality land, especially by the Macaulay Institute, are based on the needs of mechanised arable farming on large, well-drained fields. In the West, by contrast, labour-intensive farming has made it possible historically to wrest a living from small pockets of land. The second comment, a subjective one, follows on from the first: namely, that in the West, farmers have accepted, and have adapted to, lower levels of expectation. And thirdly, lacking large areas for crop-growing, the West has provided extensive pastures, especially for beef-cattle.

For another approach to the medieval population of Scotland, and its density in various regions, we may turn to a valuation made for both ecclesiastical and secular purposes in 1366. It is claimed that 'it is possible to reconstruct a thirteenth (*sic:* an obvious error for fourteenth) century Valuation Roll for all the lands, spiritual as well as temporal, in the eleven dioceses' into which Scotland was divided (Cooper 1947, 5). The importance of the valuations is that they originate in hard monetary figures, recorded contemporaneously in writing; they refer to more or less recognisable territorial units; they presumably indicate the relative levels of agricultural wealth in each diocese; and while they cannot in themselves guide us to the size of the population of the seventh century, they can suggest the ratios of wealth between regions.

Our concern, then, is to compare the wealth of Dal Riata with that of Pictland. The figures are as follows: taking Pictland as comprising the eastern dioceses from Caithness to the Firth of Forth (and thus dividing the large St Andrews diocese at the Forth itself), the gross valuation is £30,890. Taking the diocese of Argyll as broadly equivalent to Dal Riata, the sum is £3,600. Dividing the valuation of Pictland by that of Dal Riata gives a figure of 8.56; and this is the figure by which the population of Dal Riata must be multiplied to arrive at an estimate for Pictland: 85,600. A conservative estimate might be 80,000.

This estimate is necessarily conjectural, and is not to be taken as established fact. The merits claimed for it are, that it starts from the contemporary record of the muster of the nearest neighbours of the Picts; it proceeds by way of Webster's reasonably argued one-in-five formula; and uses verifiable figures to establish an arguable ratio of wealth between the two kingdoms. Obviously it can be objected that seven centuries separate the medieval valuations from the hey day of the Picts; but there can have been no farming revolution over that period to alter radically the relative land-values to the East and West of Druim Alban.

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An attempt on the meaning of the Pictish symbols — Part I.

Stuart Kermack

Truth to tell, any attempt on the meaning of the Pictish symbols is generally regarded as a waste of time, if not actually demented (Henry 1996). Joseph Anderson set the tone in 1881 and, again in *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (Allen & Anderson 1903, I, xxxii), writing of the geometrical figures, 'There may have been a time in the process of development of the symbolism ... in which there may have been a more evident suggestion of some association of ideas between the thing seen and the thing signified. But it is plain that when once a break has taken place in the transmission of the knowledge of the arbitrary significance of such conventional symbols that significance would almost certainly be irrecoverably lost'. Lack of evidence, in short, which I find defeatist. Evidence used to be my business, and there is, in my opinion, a good deal more of it available here than is usually credited, although some of it is covert and some over-looked. Proof on a balance of probabilities, the normal civil standard, is surely sufficient. Pictish studies are not (yet!) a criminal matter, requiring proof beyond reasonable doubt.

Dr Anderson seems to have anticipated Saussure (Cuddon 1992 *sub nom.* signifier/signified), so I shall start with "things seen".

Things seen

Anderson's co-author, J Romilly Allen, identified, named and classified 46 symbols (Allen & Anderson 1903, II, 58ff), in many ways, the very essence of 'meaning', and I shall take these as my base-line.

Beasts, Birds, Fish, Reptiles and Plants

These are mostly clear enough. There is no mistaking the aggressive males — 'Bull', 'Boar', 'Horse', 'Stag' and 'Wolf' — though I agree with Niall Robertson (1993) that 'these must have a different function to the classic symbol stones.' The 'Bird', the 'Fish' and the 'Serpent' are also beyond doubt; indeed, they are so well drawn that Norman Atkinson has been able to refine them to the local golden eagle, salmon and adder.

The 'Bull's Head' and 'Serpent' from Mortlach are, I think, interesting, for they are found together elsewhere, in a universal legend. Hu Gadarn yoked two bulls to haul the monster *Avanc* out of the River Conw. Thor used a bull's head for bait to fish for the 'World Serpent' wound round the tree Yggdrasil. The 'Dragon' was similarly wound round the tree where hung the Golden Fleece, which Jason slew after yoking the fire-breathing brazen-footed bulls and ploughing with them. The monster Ladon was round the apple-tree of the island of the Hesperides where roamed the cattle And sheep of Atlas, who gave its fruit to Hercules. There could also be at one remove a connection with the horned god, which on Meigle 22 has snakes for legs.

The 'Beast's Heads' are, in my opinion, correctly identified as such by Romilly Allen, and Stuart McHardy (1996) has proposed them as animal masks and costumes. According to McHardy these costumes were commonly worn by a prophetess. A late example in Greenland in *The Saga of Eiric the Red* (Jones 1986, 213) wore a black lambskin hood lined with white cat-skin, hairy calf-skin shoes and cat-skin gloves, white inside and furry.

There is no difficulty in recognising the fabulous 'Hippocampus' and the 'Centaur', taken, appar-

ently, from the widely-diffused *Physiologus* along with the rather more difficult Lion and many other such on the stones, according to Dr Anderson (Allen & Anderson 1903, I, xiv). Graeme Cruickshank suggests that the 'Beast with Long Jaws, Crest and Scroll Feet', the so-called 'Pictish Beast' (our 'Beastie') is a freshwater dolphin, now extinct in Europe. It seems to be obviously aquatic though not, in my opinion, a 'Swimming Elephant'. In the absence of positive evidence I think it is best also relegated to the fabulous, at present.

I do not agree with Romilly Allen's 'Flower'. I see a fire fanned by the wind, I can offer no authority, apart from the strikingly similar smoke from a factory chimney, which is the road sign for 'high winds'.

Articles of Known Use

The 'Hammer' and the 'Pincers' are obvious. Romilly Allen qualifies his "Anvil?" with a question-mark and some prefer a crucible, which is more likely if it is drawn to scale with the other metalworking tools with which it always appears, though on only two occasions. The Crozier is found only once, but behind a cleric, so there cannot be much doubt about it.

The Shears are clearly drawn. They could be relevant for weaving. Niall Robertson is surely correct in his identification of a loom beside the woman on Kirriemuir 2 (1991, 9). I would also, humbly submit the 'Notched Rectangle with a Curved End' as a beater, and the 'Double-Crescent' as a 'swift' for winding yarn (Enright 1983, 51) or a spindle, viewed from above. Combs were also used in weaving as Anderson himself pointed out (1873).

On the other hand they are used mostly for hair, as are shears. Both crop up together several times in that connection in the story of Culhwch and Olwen, crucially between the ears of the Boar Twrch Trwyth, which are required to cut the beard of Ysbadden Chief Giant. Culhwch and his companions also set off to interview the giant "With all pomp and with brave combs set in their hair" (Jones & Jones 1949, 112), i.e. their combs are, on this occasion used to adorn their hair, rather than dress it. On the stones, the 'Comb' appears with the 'Mirror' forty times out of forty-one, which suggests hairdressing. The 'Mirror', however, occurs 69 times in ECMS and RCAHMS, being the commonest symbol. Romilly Allen is prepared to say the comb is "missing" in the remaining 28 cases, but, with respect, I do not see why this is necessarily so. Both the 'Comb' and the 'Mirror' are unhesitatingly identified by the experts from many actual artefacts although the Mirror is generally no more than a complicated arrangement of circles, to which I refer below in connection with the Sun. None of this invalidates the opinion of Romilly Allen and Anderson that the 'Mirror' and 'Comb', are qualifiers tacked on, as they almost invariably are, to other symbols which somehow introduce a female element, with which I agree (see also, Robertson 1996).

Other qualifiers which appear to modify existing symbols are the V-rod which can be attached to the 'Crescent', (in one case the 'Arch'); and the Z-shaped one which crosses the 'Double-disc', 'Notched Rectangle' and 'Serpent' respectively. The clue is, I think, the so-called 'Bow and Arrow': obviously, in my opinion, an arrow, but in no way a bow. It only occurs on Congash 2 where its true character appears after comparison with its complement, obviously a 'Double-disc and Z-rod'. The latter is, however, so declined that the interior of the figure has been remodelled entirely, cutting out the middle of the rod and joining the remaining parts of the shaft to the figure by lines running from its edge. I submit the lower symbol, the so-called 'Bow and Arrow' has suffered a similar fate, and can be restored if the "lobes" which are attached by lines to the edge of the figure are replaced within it, and the rod bent into its normal acute angle, when the familiar 'Crescent and V-rod', crudely drawn, will be apparent. This shows, in my submission that the V-rod is in fact a broken arrow, and I would agree with Mack (1997, 6; see also Thomas 1963, 51) the Z-shaped rod is a Celtic spear, with a knob on its butt, broken in two places. These conclusions become much more probable in the light of other parts of the paper.

Conventional Geometrical Forms

Allen rather gives up here but, perhaps surprisingly, Anderson is more adventurous. At I xxxiii, the page next after his defeatist remark, he describes his co-author's 'Notched Rectangle' as "a house-like object" the 'notch' being the door, surely "an association between the thing seen and the thing identified". I endorse this *apercu* enthusiastically, and would point to Clynemilton 2 (Fig. 5) which even shows the lintel. "House-like", however, is, I feel, too tentative for the Dark Ages and I am prepared to be a bit more definite.

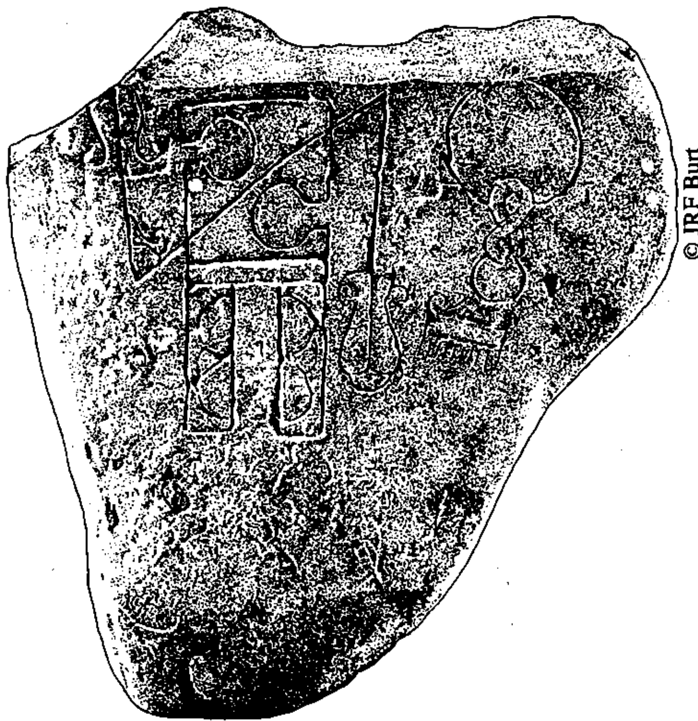

Fig. 5. Clynemilton 2

Sueno's Stone is generally classed III, i.e. without symbols, but with the greatest of respect I beg to differ. To my eyes, right in the middle of the battle, presumably beside the victor, is a symbol, a notched rectangle, "remarkably like a broch" (MacKie 1975, 204). I respectfully agree it is a broch. But I still see a symbol, I submit, in short, that it is the Missing Pictish Link, and, if it is indeed Kenneth MacAlpin standing beside it (Sellar 1993, 107) a Scot has contemptuously given the Pictish game away by drawing the 'Notched Rectangle' symbol representationally.

Dr MacKie's opinion is, I think, corroborated by the internal details of the figure. To read it aright, one must pick an example not yet "declined", by artists who did not appreciate its subtleties, say Clynemilton 2 (Fig. 5) or Arndilly (Allen & Anderson 1903, III, 40 and 155). A draftsman, nowadays, faced with the third dimension, will place a "section" beside his original drawing, taken from a different angle. the Pictish artist, obviously, had the same problem and, I submit, solved it in much the same way, with one exception. Denied the luxury of space, I maintain he put his section *inside* his original outline *à la* Cubism. Thus, here, we have the building drawn *en face* and, within the lower part of the figure, on either side of what I claim to be the door, are two pairs of semi-circles. I propose that these show the faces of the two walls of the broch circling round behind the building. Then, above, there are two keyhole shapes, representing, in my opinion, the two faces of the wall of the passage and guard-cell, replicating exactly the drawings of, for instance, Dun Mor, Vaul, Tiree by Dr Euan MacKie (1974, 13). MacKie calculated this cell to be 10 to 12 feet high, and must have interrupted the gallery above, although it was only 5'11" in diameter and the passage only 2'8" high. He thought this rather bizarre structure had been imported from South Britain. Given its "liminal" position, by which the Celts set such store one wonders if this cell had a function additional to defence. After all, every castle had its chapel.

Other childlike drawings are Inveravon 1 and Drumbuie 2, this time of a tree. Romilly Allen classifies the first correctly in my opinion, under his 'Circular Disc and Rectangle' and all of these, I submit, are trees, as are their brothers with 'Square' indentations. The trunks can be easily identified swelling to grip the ground while the foliage has become the familiar concentric discs. I do not agree

that these are "mirror-cases".

Following Professor Thomas's suggestion (1963) that the symbols might be familiar objects viewed from an unusual angle, most people now, I think, read the Triple Disc and Cross-bar as a Cauldron viewed from the top, with a bar passing through two side-lugs. Some see a Christian hanging-bowl, but these have no cross-bar.

The other Discs, Circular, Paired, Double, Connected, are all, in my submission, likely to be the sun. Many examples have internal features, suggesting spinning, or swastikas, or some such conventional signs. The sun is often treated as a cart dragged across the heavens, as in the find from Trundholm, Denmark (Glob 1974, 103), and, so, I believe, it is in the double-disc, which are, also the wheels. It is also a chariot dismantled by removing the lynch-pins and the wheels placed at either end of the chassis. The clue is the two elegant curved lines within the figure between the discs which are, I think, the semi-circular sides (*clarrs*) between which the *eirr* (hero/chariotman) stood behind the charioteer. There is a passage in an Irish law tract showing chariots were basically a knockdown framework (*crett*), and, significantly, in chariot burials, for instance at Vix (Joffroy 1962) the wheels are just so detached and leaning against the wall, perhaps, because otherwise the structure would collapse when the thongs which bound it together had rotted through (*pers. comm.* V. Holt), but, also, I think, because they are sun-symbols. Such burials are common in Irish literature, though none have actually turned up there to date; nor, of course, in Scotland, worse luck. I suggest, diffidently, that such a flimsy structure would readily rot away, leaving only the metal lynch-pins and it may be relevant that these objects have been found here as far as the Laws of Monifieth, and there even appears to be a special Scottish model (Piggot 1951, 34). An easily dismantled vehicle would be, of course, much more portable, especially by boat, as shown, I think by the following symbol.

The Crescent is, surely, the waning/waxing moon, but, as usual, also a boat. The boat on St Orland's stone and, especially, in Jonathan's cave, is basically a crescent, though on its back, of course. The boat in the symbol is upside-down, I think, because it transports the sun back to its starting point by sailing under the Earth, or some such. Boats are upturned, on the shore to provide shelter and people were buried in boats, as they were in chariots so I rather think the symbol is also a burial mound (below).

Romilly Allen acutely observes of *inter alia* the Tullich stone (Allen & Anderson 1903, III, 187) (Fig. 6), "the handle of the Mirror is of the double disc pattern", and this could be said of many, if not all, the Mirrors, to some extent, in respect that they, nearly all, terminate in a disc, and, many of them, are joined to the "face" of the mirror by one or two lines and another disc. This "face" is, itself, a disc, if not two. In my opinion, all these discs are also sun-symbols. The exception, which, I would argue, rather elegantly proves the rule, is Fyvie 1, where the handle ends in a crescent (*Ibid.*, 165), for the Moon, presumably. One could see how a mirror could be a sort of hand-held celestial body, bringing the Sun or Moon down to earth in its reflection.

There is a good chance that the jagged L-shaped 'Rectangular Figure', the 'Stepped Rectangular Figure' and the 'Stepped Rectangle with Curved Ends' with abrupt internal details stand for the other light in the sky, the thunderbolt, but it could be many other things.

The 'Triple Oval' and 'Triquetra' may have something to do with the number three (Triple Goddess, Trinity etc.); the 'Arch' could be a torque, another door (cf. the Forteviot Arch), cave, or even building; I have toyed with the idea that the 'Rectangular Figure' with its lovely internal curves is the sea, or, better still, a whirlpool: but this is no more than speculation. I can think of nothing useful to say about the S-shaped figure.

Fig. 6. Tullich (after Allen & Anderson)

The Cross, I am sure, is used in a Christian context (Reiss 1987).

Mack (1997) adds to Romilly Allen's list the 'Beast', the 'Square', the 'Sword' and the 'Wheel', all very rare. He says the last "may represent a chariot-wheel" which fits well with my Disks/Sun/ Chariot. Otherwise I have nothing to add. Professor Thomas (1994) intriguingly suggests the 'Beast', along with the 'Lion', is a black wild-cat, still unknown to Science.

Things Signified: I. The Pagans

So much for the "real" evidence, where things speak for themselves (from *res*). Turning to historical sources, the Picts left little of their own in writing if one excludes their symbols (cf. Forsyth *forthcoming*). One is thrown back, mostly on the *apologia* of their enemies. *Ex hypothesi* there is no direct statement by the Picts as to what their symbols mean, which is not entirely a bad thing, because it excludes fraud or mistake. The corresponding danger for indirect, circumstantial evidence is misinterpretation, and the safeguard is corroboration, to which, as an old-fashioned Scots lawyer, I am thirled.

However, I am quite prepared to find it in other relevant cultures and mythologies. I think it is clear from the incorporation of material from the *Physiologus* the animal costumes, the Bull's Head and Serpent, and the Cross that the Picts and their symbols and sculptures were not isolated from the mainstream of mythology and iconography. Rather the reverse, for, according to the *Book of Lecan* (Skene 1867, 328), "Six of them (Picts) remained in the possession of Breaghmagh, and from them are derived every spell, and every charm and every sneezing (*sregh*) and the voices of birds and all omens and all talismans that are made". "The voices of birds" can surely be associated with the bird-headed humans on the stones at Papil and Thornton, although they are not, strictly, symbols. I do not, therefore, shrink in the rest of this paper from drawing analogies with other cultures. It may be, of course, that being on the periphery the Picts were way behind the times compared with such trend-setters as the Greeks.

A Silver Race

Robert Graves is not afraid to take a similar line when he says that Hesiod's Silver Race "records matriarchal conditions – such as those surviving in classical times among the Picts" (1955, 3b). That race would spend a hundred years playing childishly in its mother's care, and was put away by Zeus because it would not honour the gods on Olympus (West 1988, 40). Graves cites no authority, but, I would argue that the Mother Goddess lingered on among the Picts in legends, in their matrilineal succession and in their symbols. Such Mothers have to sustain their children with aliment and wisdom. This they did in Pictland, in my opinion, with the aid of magic Cauldrons, prophetic Beasts' costumes and weaving implements which also wove spells. These attributes were, I suggest, real objects, probably passed down from each Goddess or high priestess to her successor with their magic Mirrors and Combs. Later, they became symbols, Romilly Allen's 'Triple Disc and Cross-Bar', 'Beasts' Heads,' 'Shears' and other weaving tools.

Delba

Two consecutive entries in Cormac's *Glossary* (Stokes 1868, 94) read:

> IDOL i.e. *ab idolo ... forma* in the Latin *unde dicitur idolum* i.e. the forms and representations of the idols or the creatures which the heathen used to make formerly.
>
> INDELBA i.e. the names of the altars of those idols, because they were wont to carve on them the forms (*delba*) of the elements they adored there, *verbi gratia, figura solis [,i, figuir na greine — B].*

It is not difficult, I submit, to identify these "*delba*" "forms and representations of ... creatures ... forms of the elements" among the symbols, *viz.*: Bird/Air; Serpent/Earth; Salmon and the aquatic

Pictish Beast/Water (or more specifically, Rivers, which were the aspect of the element venerated by the Celts (Watson 1926, 425)); and Fire fanned by Wind.

Cormac's example *(verbi gratia)* of a *delba*, is the Sun *(figura solis, figuir na greine* in the Book of Lecan, Stokes' Irish Codex B). I hope to argue, in another article, that sun-worship under-lay the legend that the Picts had travelled here from Scythia or Thrace, as the Sun does every day. It seems reasonable to add the Moon. Both appear to have been counted elements in those days. "Sun and Moon and all the other elements of God" (Low 1966, 169) were guarantors of the *Cain Adomnain*. On the same lines Cruithnechan, the eponymous ancestor of the Picts, swore by "the Heaven and the Earth, the Sun and the Moon, the Sea and the Land, the Dew and the Elements" *(Tract of the Picts,* Skene 1867, 329). The magic Mirror of the Goddess as a hand-held Sun or Moon, fits in well here, because she could have brought these celestial beings down to Earth by reflection.

For real evidence there is an altar encircled by a ram-horned snake and bearing a solar wheel, from Lypiatt Park, Gloucestershire, Wessex (Green 1992, 197). It is just possible that the same theme is developed in the Romano-British Temple Precinct at Bath, also in Wessex. From the very first, in about AD 65–75, the altar there stood directly in line between the door at the West end and the famous "Gorgon's Head" on the temple of Sulis Minerva, "to be seen adorning T-shirts and shopping-bags from Manhattan to Sydney" (Freeland n.d., l). Freeland's theory is that this roundel represents, not only Minerva's grisly *aegis* but also the round Sun and the elements, by virtue of fiery locks above, airy wings to the side, snaky beard below and watery moustaches in the middle. Later additions to the precinct place representations of the Moon and the Sun directly to the North and South of the altar. Other relevant finds at the site include a mask supposedly worn by the priest at the sacrifices and the only reference in Britain to an augur who would specialise in interpreting the flights of birds; as well as, nearby, engravings of hooded *cucullati* and the Triple Goddess. The Gorgon, herself, of course, lost her head through the use of a mirror. The correspondence between these symbols at Bath and the Pictish ones seem to me rather striking but I concede my enthusiasm for the subject may have run away with me, and it is not an essential part of my argument.

Decora for Demi-gods

Hesiod had adapted his races from Eastern models and was forced as a Greek to intercalate a race of Demi-gods for the Myceneans who fought in the siege of Thebes, the expedition of the Argonauts, and the Trojan War.

It may have occurred to the classically-minded that Macpherson, who searched among the Gaelic bards for a Celtic Homer, might have been better employed with the Pictish symbols where he would have found: the judgement of Paris (silver plaques (Kermack 1996)), the contrary winds and the windy plains of Troy ('Flower'), the ships and the camp upon the shore ('Crescent'), the chariots and the spears ('Double-disc and Z-rod'), the defensive Scamander ('Salmon' and 'Beast' etc.), the walls and gates of Ilium ('Notched Rectangle'), the Wooden Horse ('Animal Heads') and Troy burned ('Flower'), Achilles' enurned ashes ('Triple Discs') beneath a mound ('Crescent') and Penelope weaving ('Double-crescent and Comb'). I am not suggesting that the Picts had somehow shared in the story, just that their symbols repeated the preoccupations of a Heroic society. Undoubtedly, Tacitus, the stylist, had Homer in mind when he described the Brittanni gathering for the battle of Mons Graupius like the ships at Aulis *(Agricola*, ch. 29) :

> Already more than thirty thousand armed men were on view, and still the stream flowed in of all who were in their prime and of those whose age was still 'rude and green' *(cruda et viridis senectus)*, famous warriors, wearing their several decorations *(sua quisque decora gestantes)*."

Cruda et viridis senectus (age still rude and green) is from Virgil (Aeneid 6, 304) and "expresses" the Illiad at II, 13, 79 (Ogilvie & Richmond 1967, 252). But, surely, the phrase which catches the eye as true reporting rather than conventional fine writing is *sua quisque decora gestantes*. Loeb translates as above, Mattingley (rev. Handford 1970, 79) "every man wearing the decorations he had

earned". Ogilvie and Richmond (*loc. cit.*) say "military decorations", and add "The Romans were perhaps impressed by the fine torques worn by Celtic warriors". One differs from such authorities with trepidation, but I cannot find any reference to torques, or anything "military" and how did a Pict "earn" a decoration? When used as a noun *Decorum* means in Latin, according to Lewis and Short (1979) much what it does in English "that which is seemly, suitable, seemliness, fitness, propriety, decorum". As an adjective either "becoming, fitting, seemly etc.," or, "especially in Tacitus," "decorated, ornamented, adorned; elegant, fine beautiful, handsome". It is, of course a plural noun here. *Sua quisque* means "each his own". My suggestion is that each of these warriors were wearing their own suitable adornment, peculiar to himself: something like a heraldic coat-of-arms. Their individual symbols, in other words, now pressed into military service.

It is my further contention that this change of use added new meanings to the figures, 'putting a spin' on them relating to war and the gods, rather than nature and the Goddess. The most obvious change, I think, must be the development of the Sun into a chariot and the Moon into a warship, referred to above. This, I submit, is borne out by their qualifiers, the Spear (Z-rod) and the Arrow (V-rod) which are the weapons appropriate to these new functions. There were, I suggest, real objects, like the Mirror and Comb, denoting power, which were then endorsed on its owner's symbol. It could be, too, that the thunderbolt, the weapon of the gods, the other light in the sky was introduced at this point. Clues to other changes, can, I think be found in myth.

The Picts who developed the harp must have had their lays and heroic tales, though, at present, we have not identified their content. Presumably, they will have had much in common with universal legends of the same type, to judge by the Bull's Head and Serpent. The story of Ossian's Boar Hunt, and his 'Achilles' heel' is told about Glenshee, and there is a famous Pictish Boar carved in the living rock at Dunadd, the Scottish fort. I think we may glean some notion as to the spin which was put on the symbols from these sort of heroic tales, especially, for some reason, those about Finn, who fought with water-snakes as Thor fished for the World Serpent.

For instance, there is the well-known story of Finn placing his finger in his mouth when he burnt it on the Salmon of Wisdom which he was cooking for an old woman and thereby learnt the language of animals and birds, i.e. took over the Salmon and its Wisdom from the Goddess.

I think the Bird which commutes between heaven and earth now transmitted messages from the gods and augury, the study of their flight, became an occult science at which, as we have seen the Picts were expert. Finn received his hereditary attributes in a crane-skin bag and was rescued by his grandmother in the form of a crane. Cranes are especially prophetic birds because they not only fly but dance and figure, in my opinion, as such in the *Vita Columbae*. Cranes have recently been identified on the Rossie Stone (Gray 1997, 5).

Finn fought with water snakes as Thor fished for the World Serpent. This exhausts the *delba* animals, but one can note, too, that Finn's wife was turned into a fawn, which seems to relate to the Beasts' Heads, the prophetic garments of the Goddess. Other inter-related tales may give us an idea of what happened to the Cauldron of the Goddess. A Cauldron appears frequently with the Dagda, a male god, notably at the Second Battle of Moytura, where it became in effect, a field-hospital which brought slaughtered warriors back to life. Again, at a battle described in the second branch of the Welsh Mabinog, but alleged, significantly, to have taken place in Ireland, one side enjoyed the advantage of a similar Cauldron of Rebirth, though it was broken and they lost eventually. In some versions it is a Well of regeneration, and in others a pit in the ground. Stuart McHardy (1996) suggests this cauldron figures on Glamis 2, with someone being stuffed into it; and it is just possible, I think, that it is shown full of people on the cross-slab at Monymusk (Allen & Anderson 1903, III, 193). More certainly, the *Book of Lecan* (Skene 1867, 326) tells the same story of the Picts, fighting again in Ireland and against Britons, as in the Mabinog, who had poisoned weapons. The Pictish Druid ordered "Thrice fifty cows of the plains/ To be milked by him into one pit", so that, whenever a man was injured he had only to lie in the new milk, and the poison could not harm him. The Dagda, too, is said to have filled his cauldron with his porridge made from eighty gallons of milk. We shall see that this

connection with milk also features in the Christianisation of the Cauldron in Adomnán, mentioned below.

Although weaving seems to have remained a feminine activity, the heroic "web of battle" became an "especially frequent" analogy, according to Enright (1990, 66), quoting two examples. The first is in the *Tain Bo Culaigne* which describes Queen Mebd foretelling terrible slaughter, "with a weaving beam in her hand". The second is surely relevant, because, although it relates to a prophesy of the Battle of Clontarf and is in *Njal's Saga*, it took place in Caithness. Twelve riders disappeared into a bower there where they found women, singing a ghastly, prophetic song, and weaving at a loom where men's heads were weights, their intestines the weft and warp, a sword the beater, and an arrow the shuttle. Finally, the women/valkyries, rip up the cloth, but each retains a little bit.

The Royal Symbol

The leader of the Picts at Mons Graupius at AD 84 was Calgacus, no more than "pre-eminent by birth among the chieftains" (*Agricola*, ch 29) but at Dunnichen in AD 685 it was King Bruide son of Bile, "fighting for the heritage of his grandfather" according to perhaps a contemporary verse (Cruickshank 1991, 22). In my opinion the Broch/Notched Rectangle was minted for this new institution of monarchy, Kings and castles go together. The Sultan is the *Sublime Porte* (*pers comm*, Niall Robertson) and the Pharaoh was 'Royal House'. Frequently, their fortress is their blazon, even in Scottish Royal Burghs, Edinburgh, say, or Forfar (McCulloch n.d.) [Its latest manifestation is at least official, if rather surprising – the logo of Historic Scotland.] The door is always the crux – to such an extent that the Palace of Westminster has reduced its symbol to a portcullis. I have already drawn attention to the 'notch' on the Pictish symbol, and the detail on the 'rectangle', representing, in my opinion, the liminal chamber.

More particularly, I refer again to Sueno's Stone and the usurper, Kenneth MacAlpin, who, presumably, wished to secure the Pictish Royal Symbol, which he reduced to the Pictish Missing Link. I would, too, rely on Graeme Cruickshank's exhaustive opinion (1991) which has convinced me at least, that the Battle-stone in Aberlemno Kirkyard commemorates the Battle of Dunnichen. (I do not myself see how one can get round that Coppergate helmet.) One would, therefore, expect it to bear the symbols of the victor, since he was a Pict, Bruide, son of Bile, which, since Bruide was a king, would, on my hypothesis, include the symbol of the royal lineage. And so it does, in my estimation: a huge 'Notched Rectangle'. My final, and best, piece of evidence is, however, in Adomnán, (Columba inscribing the Cross on the door of Bruide's fortress) which I shall come to in due course.

The Goddess, of course, would have had nothing to do with the fortress symbol: rather, it seems, the reverse. In the Second Branch of the Mabiongi, Rhianion, the Queen, has, for seven years, to transport on her back, any traveller who requests the service, to the door of the King's fortress. This humiliation is, I think, to emphasise the subservience of the Goddess to the King who had displaced her and his symbol.

None the less, the matriarchs must have remained a force to be reckoned with, to be judged by their image on the stones (e.g. Hilton of Cadboll and Kirriemuir 1). Succession remained in their hands and there is also the alleged conversation reported by Dio Cassius when the wife of a Caledonian chieftain boasted that she took her pick of the available males. The new meanings for the symbols were, I think, in addition to, and not in substitution for, the old ones. "Each symbol does not have one meaning and one meaning only ... symbols have multifarious meanings, a circle is not just the Sun or a Cauldron, or a representation of the circle of time – it is all these things and probably many more" (McHardy 1996). Shape-changing was a characteristic of Celtic society and I have no doubt that the Picts were well able to hold both meanings in their minds at once.

The Priestly Symbol

But it is priests who minister to kings. Broichan, the pagan priest at the Pictish royal court, Columba's adversary, was even the king's foster-father, and Boia, St David's enemy, was both a British king and a priest. Significantly, Broichan and his confrères commanded the elements by raising a storm of wind and a mist. Adomnán calls them *magi*, that is Druids (Skene 1887, II, 115). Trostan, one of the supposed six brothers of the Cruithneach that came out of Thrace, who worked the trick with the milk in the pit, was also a Druid (*Book of Lecan*, Skene 1867, 326–27). Hesiod had a terrible Bronze Race fashioned out of Ash trees, which Graves attributes to a tree cult. Trees were at the heart of Druidism, especially in their sacred groves or *nemetons* (Davidson 1993, 68), for instance the horrid grove at Nemi near Marseilles, which Caesar felled.

We have many examples of these *nemetons* in Scotland (Watson 1926, 246–50) and even of sacred trees there, for instance, the yew at Fortingal by Duneaves (*Tigh-neimhidh)*, growing yet, though damaged by Beltane fires; and the Chestnut at Finavon (*Fid-nemed*), from a nut supposedly dropped by a Roman soldier, but still alive in 1740, when it was said to be one of the largest trees in the kingdom (Jervise 1882, 206, 424; Pennant 1776, II, 165).

I have noticed, too, that the names of two trees seem to cluster at Scottish nemetons. Fearn, alder, at Navar and Newmore is one, The other is the very ancient *leamhain*, Leven, elm-water, *viz*, Finavon/ Lemno, Navar/Lethnot, Navitie/Leven, Tarrnavie/Carlownie, Roseneath etc./Leven. (The derivation of the names are from Watson (1926) except Lethnot which is from Jervise (1882, 125).

This cult was, in my submission, the origin of the Tree symbol, which brought together all the other symbolic elements, from the eagle perched on its top-most branches which reached to the sky and the Sun and Moon, to the snake which coiled around its roots waiting to struggle with Fraoch, Thor, Jason, Heracles *et al.*, and its berries which dropped into the river to feed the Salmon of Wisdom.

As *axis mundi* too, it linked different worlds (Watson 1981, 69), Elysian fields, Valhalla, Islands of the Blest, and the like, to which fallen heroes were transported, surely significantly for the symbols, in chariots and warships with which they were buried, along with cauldrons of supplies for the journey.

Many of the conclusions I have reached so far, are, I maintain, corroborated in the second part of this essay where I consider SS Columba and Adomnán and the Christianisation of the Pictish symbols.

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The Crossbow Brooch from Carn Liath

Craig Cessford

The broch at Carn Liath (*Gaelic,* 'grey hill'), Sutherland [NC 870013] on the north-east coast of Scotland, situated on the edge of a terrace overlooking a flat coastal strip, was rather crudely cleared out in 1868 under the authority of the 3rd Duke of Sutherland. Amongst the most impressive artefacts discovered was a silver crossbow brooch (Fig. 7). Little is known about the context of the brooch but it was recovered from some outbuildings located between the broch and the ramparts. The brooch is particularly important as it is decorated with a double-disc symbol which may well be the earliest dateable surviving example of a Pictish symbol.

Following the fort's clearance the site attracted a considerable amount of antiquarian interest (Anderson 1883, 221–23; Joass 1890, 102–07) and, while no further excavation took place, there was some analysis of the finds (Anon 1873) and some carvings were discovered on a lintel at the site (Wise 1881). The substantial physical remains meant that the site continued to be mentioned throughout the twentieth century (e.g., RCAHMS 1911, no. 270; Young 1962, 182; MacKie 1975, 216; Close-Brooks 1986, no. 83) and eventually further excavations took place in 1972 and during the 1980s — but these were severely hampered by the disruption caused by the 1868 clearance (Love 1989). The main occupation of the broch appears to belong to the pre-Roman Iron Age and the crossbow brooch represents a later secondary period of re-use which is very poorly understood. Other finds from outside the broch which may belong to the same period include some ingots made of an alloy of copper, zinc and tin (Anon 1873).

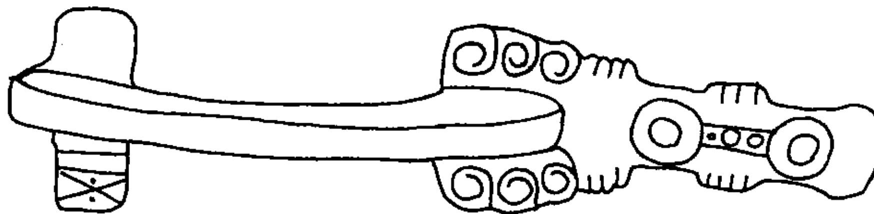

Fig. 7. The Carn Liath brooch, © Craig Cessford

The brooch (Fig. 7) is a local native copy of a late Roman crossbow brooch, described in 1883 as 'a silver fibula of peculiar form ... commonly associated with other objects of a late Roman character' (Anderson 1883, 223) and in 1890 as 'one supposed fibula said to be of Roman type' (Joass 1890) Such brooches were imported into Scotland as is shown by a magnificent gold example with niello-inlaid ornament from the Moray Firth area found in 1887 (Curle, 1932, 392, no. 77; Johns 1996, 167) and an incomplete gold example from Erickstanebrae found in the 1780s (Curle 1932, 370–71 no. 32; Johns 1996, 168). That there was at least one native group or individual in the general area of Carn Liath with access to valuable Roman goods is shown by the hoard of five bronze bowls, a colander and a strainer found at Helmsdale in 1869 (Spearman 1990). These were manufactured in the late second century and probably deposited in the third or fourth century, at roughly the same time that the prototype for the Carn Liath brooch must have been imported.

Apart from the Carn Liath brooch no silver crossbow brooches are known from Scotland but examples are known from England (Johns 1996, 168–70) and could easily have been imported into Scotland. Of particular interest is a silver crossbow brooch from Sussex with a bow shaped like a boar and a monogram cross which is probably an early fifth century native product (ibid, 169–70). This obviously parallels the Carn Liath brooch which is also a native silver product of roughly the same period with a symbol on it.

Crossbow brooches were a distinct item of late Roman court and governmental dress and were

important status symbols (James 1996; Johns 1996, 166). The Carn Liath brooch has been largely ignored by scholars studying the Pictish symbols. This omission can be principally traced back to that magnificent corpus, *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland,* which describes the Pictish symbols on metalwork from Norrie's Law, Monifieth, Parkhill and Whitecleugh (Allen and Anderson 1903, I, lxxxiii–lxxxvii; II, 101–02; III, 199, 280–81, 368–69, 472–73) but which fails to mention the Carn Liath brooch despite one of the authors having previously described it (Anderson 1883, 223). It is unclear if Anderson had actually seen the brooch and decided that the decoration was not a double-disc symbol or if he was relying solely on second-hand information for his earlier description of it. Whatever the cause, this omission led to the Carn Liath brooch being generally overlooked; for example by Professor Charles Thomas in his discussion of Pictish symbols on artefacts or *art mobilier* (1963, 44–48). A notable exception was the work of James Curle on Roman objects from Scotland (Curle 1932, 338, 392 no. 78, fig 36.5–6) who described the double-disc as "two incised circles with hollow centres, which appear to have been filled with enamel, joined together by parallel lines". These and other details provide "a frail link between provincial Roman design and the symbols which are characteristic of the sculptured stones of the north and east of Scotland" (*ibid,* 338). Curle also noted that the left arm of the brooch was decorated with a saltire and two pellets which are paralleled by the Pictish metalwork from Norrie's Law (ibid). Curle's perspicacious observations were overlooked for over half a century until the symbol on the brooch was rediscovered by Anna Ritchie (1989, 51) and Lloyd and Jennifer Laing (1993, 107, 114, fig 88). The placement of the double-disc symbol on the brooch may well have been inspired by Roman crossbow brooches as "the comparatively large areas they provide for decoration were used for a wide variety of ornamentation including inscriptions" (Johns 1996, 167) which frequently included "deeply cut circle-and-dot motifs" as well as lines, chevrons and spirals (ibid, 168).

The dating of the Carn Liath brooch is problematical because of the lack of an accurate context for its discovery. The majority of the dating evidence for the site belongs to the pre-Roman Bronze and Iron Ages — so the brooch must represent a later period of re-occupation of the site. Unfortunately no other structures or artefacts can be confidently assigned to this period so the site does not provide any independent dating evidence for the brooch. The brooch is a native copy of a Roman brooch type. Crossbow brooches evolved from earlier P-shaped brooches in the earlier 3rd century AD but the more elaborate examples, upon which the Carn Liath brooch is based do not emerge until the 4th century AD. As its Roman prototypes date to between the early fourth to fifth centuries AD the Carn Liath brooch cannot pre-date the early 4th century AD. The manufacture of the brooch from Erickstanebrae can be dated quite accurately to AD 303 because of an inscription 'IOVIAVG/VOTXX' referring to the twentieth anniversary of Diocletian's succession in AD 283 (Johns 1996, 168) but none of the other crossbow brooches from Scotland can be closely dated. It is impossible to accurately estimate how long the exemplar on which the Carn Liath brooch is based may have survived in Pictish hands. Roman material is known from much later seventh and eighth century Pictish hoards (Stevenson 1956), so it is conceivable that the Carn Liath brooch may have been manufactured much later than the fifth century using an archaic brooch as a prototype. It is, however, more probable that the brooch was manufactured whilst crossbow brooches were still in more general use as symbols which would support a relatively early date no later than the fifth or early sixth century AD. Curle suggested that the saltire and pellet decoration is paralleled by elements in the Norrie's Law hoard (Curle 1932, 338) and parallels between Norrie's Law and Carn Liath have also been suggested more recently by the Laings (Laing & Laing 1993, 107 and fig 88). The Norrie's Law hoard is generally dated to the late seventh or earlier eighth century (Graham-Campbell 1991, 256) although an early fifth century date has also been proposed (Laing 1994, 35). In any case I do not believe that the decorative parallels are strong enough to attach a great deal of weight to. The evidence suggests that the Carn Liath brooch was probably manufactured some time between the early fourth and early sixth centuries AD by a Pictish craftsman.

The majority of the surviving Pictish symbols are stone carvings and are generally dated to the seventh century AD or later. There is, however, a considerable amount of evidence that these symbols on stone were based on earlier proto- or *ur-* symbols (Laing & Laing 1993, 106–07; Alcock 1996;

Cessford 1996). Particularly important is a double-disc found on a small stone plaque at Pool on the island of Sanday, Orkney, in a context carbon-dated to broadly the sixth century AD (Hunter 1990, 185, 187). Other possible examples of the double-disc occurring as a proto-symbol occur on the walls of Jonathan's Cave, East Wemyss, and on a stone plaque from a sea stack at Dunnicaer (Alcock 1992, 276-92; Alcock 1996). The evidence suggests that the double-disc is the commonest form of proto-symbol. Most of the double-disc symbols on later stone carvings have Z-rods whereas the earlier proto-symbols generally lack this feature as does the example on the Carn Liath brooch. Many of the proto-double-discs have thick connecting bars which are as thick as the discs but on the Carn Liath brooch the bar is much narrower. This may, however, simply be a reflection of the Carn Liath symbol having been executed by a metalworker with greater artistic ability that the individuals responsible for carving the Sanday, Jonathan's Cave and Dunnicaer symbols. The bar on the Carn Liath brooch is made up of parallel lines rather than the concave arcs of most sculptural examples. When the brooch was worn the double-disc would have been displayed vertically with the discs at top and bottom whereas sculptural double-discs are usually portrayed horizontally. As well as being the most common form of proto-symbol the double-disc is the commonest form of symbol on pieces of metalwork with double-discs with Z-rods occurring on the two silver leaf shaped plaques from Norrie's Law, the silver chain from Whitecleugh, the bronze crescent shaped plaque from Monifieth (Thomas 1963, 45) and possibly on a pair of bronze objects from a Viking grave on Ballinabby, Jura (Laing & Laing 1993, 116, fig 91). This symbol also occurs on other small objects such as a sandstone disc from Jarlshof (Thomas 1963, 45).

Most Pictish symbols occur in pairs, possibly representing personal names (Samson 1992). The Carn Liath brooch is unusual in having only a single symbol but this is paralleled by a number of other examples such as the sandstone disc from Jarlshof.

The broch of Carn Liath is located in an area well known for Pictish symbol stones, nearby examples include the two stones from Dunrobin (Dunrobin 1 and The Dairy Park Stone) plus the two stones from Craigton (Craigton 1 and The Golspie Stone) and the stone from Golspie. This concentration of stones suggests that the area was an important Pictish centre. Is it possible that the some of the nearby symbol stones relate to individuals who occupied Carn Liath?

The double-disc symbol on the crossbow brooch from Carn Liath is of considerable importance. The probable fourth to early sixth century AD date of manufacture for this object makes it possibly the earliest dateable Pictish symbol, although the Pool slab could well be contemporary with it. The occurrence of the symbol on a silver crossbow brooch, a high status Roman artefact type with important symbolic connotations, suggests that the double-disc symbol was linked to the important individual who wore the brooch. The discovery of two ornate gold crossbow brooches from Scotland at Erickstanebrae and the Moray Firth is intriguing. Were these simply loot or trade items? Whilst these are certainly possible mechanisms by which such items could have ended up in Scotland the valuable brooches may also have been gifts from the Roman authorities to tribal leaders, possibly to cement treaties, military alliances or friendly relations. The single symbol is unlikely to be a personal name and may be indicative of a particular social rank or position. That the double-disc was an especially important social symbol is supported by the fact that it is particularly common as a proto-symbol and occurs on valuable pieces of metalwork. The proto-double-discs also have important implications for typological studies of the double-disc symbol. Murray argued that the double-disc symbol originated in Aberdeenshire at a rather later date than the crescent and V-rod symbol and that the 'prototype' or 'correct form' of this symbol had a curving bar, decorated discs, and a Z-rod (Murray 1986). The Carn Liath, Pool and Dunnicaer proto-symbols directly contradict all these conclusions. It is impossible to determine the exact origins of the double-disc symbol but it has been suggested that it can be traced back to Bronze Age art (Thomas 1963, 61) and comparisons have been made with Roman altars (Laing & Laing 1984, 269) so even the relatively early examples from Carn Liath and Pool are probably in reality quite late developments of the symbol.

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Mirrors and Mirror Cases

Jim Macaulay

These speculations on mirrors and mirror symbols are intended to stimulate discussion and encourage members not to accept the obvious when looking at Pictish symbols.

What is it we are actually looking at when we see a 'mirror' or a 'mirror-case'? What image comes to mind when we read the word 'mirror'? Sutherland uses the term 'looking glass' (1994, 120) – perhaps we should think simply in terms of a reflective surface as there is no evidence that glass mirrors were ever used by the Picts.

As mirror artefacts have been found all over the world, on sites dating back to 6000 BC, it appears that mankind has always been keen to see its reflection. Possibly pandering to our vanity was not the mirrors only function. Idries Shah observes that mirrors were among the most important instruments of magic arts in China (1956). They could reveal the true shape of a demon, and Celestial happiness is supposed to attend the owner of one of these 'priceless objects'. It is also said that reflective surfaces have been used by spirits in order to see distant objects and by human mystics, the future.

Mirrors have been found in Korea, cast in bronze and dating to the 3rd century BC, and in Aztec Mexico where black volcanic glass was used as the reflective surface. In Egypt, the Pharos lighthouse at Alexandria is supposed to have employed reflective surfaces to increase the power of the light. On a recent visit to Oxford's Pitt-Rivers Museum, I noted mirrors from Ancient Greece, Hawaii, Manchuria, and Nubia in addition to those lands already mentioned. Mirrors were made from brass, bronze, copper, iron pyrites, silver and stone. Their shapes varied from square, to ovate, to circular and, in the case of the iron pyrites, just a small irregular lump of rock approximately 1½" x 2".

The old superstition about bad luck if a mirror was broken surely started after the introduction of silvered glass. It is unlikely that bronze mirrors were as easily damaged although their polished surface could become scratched. There is a cracked bronze Etruscan mirror in the Ashmolean Museum — presumably it had been polished so much that it thinned and so was easily damaged when buried. I was surprised how thin a number of metal mirrors were, but I suppose that reflected the cost of the metal. The Roman belief that seven years' bad luck would follow the smashing of a mirror is thought to be based on their idea that seven years is the length of time that life takes to renew itself. Perhaps less well known is their practice of burying the broken pieces in order to break that seven year cycle. In addition, it seems that a death in the family could be foretold by having a mirror break.

In Europe about 500/400 BC the Etruscans pioneered an export trade in cast bronze mirrors, and it is considered that Celtic craftsmen were influenced by their designs (Laing & Laing 1992, 114). In continental Europe and England some 2000 mirrors survive from this date. Now here is the real mystery regarding Pictish mirrors – there are none! So what happened to the 'hand mirror' shaped objects carved on their stones, where have they gone?

Only one bronze mirror is on display in a Scottish museum – the Balmaclellan bronze mirror, found in Kirkcudbrightshire (Stuart 1867, x) – but there is little Pictish about it or its design. In his recent work on the Pictish mirror symbol, Craig Cessford notes that 3 mirror handles, 2 of them also from SW Scotland, are known (1997). However, what has been found are bronze patera handles, which, in plan view, look very like the mirror handles of Clynemilton 1, Aberlemno 1, Meigle 1, and possibly Ardlair.

If no metal mirrors have been found, what about those made from other materials, e.g. stone? The possibility of making a stone mirror intrigued me, so I asked myself what stone was flat by nature, readily obtainable in Scotland, easy to work and polish? Slate! Using all the tools available and from a roofing slate, I made a six inch diameter mirror in only 3 hours, including decoration. I then had to find out if it worked. I knew I would be unable to see anything in dry slate no matter how smoothly polished but I intended to use it wet. Did it work? Yes – but only in good light. Outside I was able to

see myself reasonably clearly. However, how it would have fared inside a Pictish house by the light of an oil lamp would be another matter.

The trouble with the stone mirror when using water as a reflective surface was that the water ran off when held up. Next I tried vegetable oil, spread thinly with a finger. The surface was a little uneven – avoided by heating the slate, reducing the oil's viscosity. This worked better. I also tried bees wax. But, even after heating this remained dull.

Before considereding the oil, I took the slate mirror to Dr Sheridan at the Royal Museum to see if there was anything like it there. There was not, but they had a number of highly polished stone 'pancake-shaped' objects, *c*. 4" in diameter. Two suggested uses for these are: a mirror; or a surface on or by which, pigments could be ground. No trace of pigment was found on any and although the surface was smooth, they were small and slightly convex. The size would make their use as mirrors a bit doubtful. (This was before I went to Oxford to see the collections there, and where I was surprised to note their Hawaiian stone mirror is almost a twin of the Scottish ones). Since starting to put down these notes and after seeing the Hawaiian one, I have made a copy, and when I gave it the oil treatment, found that it worked well.

During my visit to Queen Street I learned that they also held many roughly circular objects, each *c*.130mm in diameter, made from thin slate and designated 'pot covers'. The only cover I was able to see, had at least one surface undressed and too rough to have acted as a mirror, but I did not see the reverse side. As these objects were thought to be pot lids, I could not help but wonder how many of the rest have been examined to see if one surface has been smoothed and polished. I am pretty certain the idea of an alternative use for the objects, as mirrors, may not have been considered. When the transfer to the new building in Chambers Street is eventually opened they could perhaps be properly examined.

Wondering what happened to all the missing Pictish mirrors, I reached the conclusion that when old or damaged, they were melted down and turned into 'horse brasses' or jewellery, presumably some time after glass mirrors were introduced. On the other hand what happened to all the glass mirrors? When they broke they could not be turned into 'horse glasses'. Although mirrors made from polished silver are known, not one of these has been found in Scotland. And as far as I can determine, no hoards of shattered glass mirror shards, buried to counter the ensuing bad luck have been found.

Jackson points out that the 'mirror and comb symbol' is different from the others in that while most symbols come in pairs, this one is placed at the bottom of a symbol pair almost touching the lower one and is itself not part of a pairing (1984, 19). Why? What function could the mirror symbol have served?

Perhaps the Picts also saw an element of magic attached to mirrors, but what sort of magic was it and how was it used? Assuming the Picts considered there was an element of wonder or magic connected to the mirror I felt I should see what difference the coming of Christianity made to the use of the 'magical' symbol, if such it was. I decided to find out what percentage of the so-called Class I, II and III stones have mirror symbols as that may give an indication of the Church's influence. The Church would have frowned on the use of a 'magic' symbol (even if it had been 'sanitised' by pretending it was a vanity mirror by the simple expedient of adding the comb) and would eventually ban its use.

I found that there are 24 Pictish symbol stones with mirrors but without combs. A number of these are cut on natural undressed rock, suggesting that they are some of the earliest symbols, and I do not doubt that some of these isolated stones had some sort of prior religious significance. However, it must be noted that at least half of them are reported as being damaged so when new, a comb may have been present. The figures are: total number of stones with mirror symbols = 61 (Cessford 1997). Of which Class I = 48; Class II = 13; Class III = 0. So it is clear that with the coming of the cross the use of the mirror symbol died out — does this give us a clue as to its use?

When working in the Far East I saw many Chinese graves and grave stones decorated with a small

mirror and was told that together with the geographical siting of the grave, this was in accordance with 'Fung Sui'. The mirror was being used to turn aside 'bad luck'. In a collection of essays on some recent discoveries in Chinese archaeology, entitled *The Discovery of a Missing King's Tomb*, translated by Zuo Boyang, Du Naisong's essay on 'An introduction to Ancient Chinese Bronze Mirrors' says "the ancient people were superstitious. Archaeologists have found that mirrors are often placed on top of a grave, or at the four corners of a coffin; the people believed that so doing might [get] rid of evil spirits."

I suggest that the Pictish use of the mirror symbol was the same as the Chinese — of both ancient and modern times — to protect the spirit of the dead by reflecting back or turning aside bad luck/evil spirits, keeping them away from the grave. I realise that this would imply that Pictish stones bearing mirror symbols were grave markers and that stones without mirror symbols (before the conversion to Christianity) may have served another function.

Why was the mirror symbol applied less to Class II and not at all to Class III? I suggest that the protective 'new magic' of the cross was felt superior to the mirror's powers — no longer trusted, the mirror symbol was phased out. Perhaps later there were more mirrors in the general community and they were no longer held in such mystical esteem. The fact that the mirror symbol served a different type of function from the paired symbols may explain why it is usually on its own.

Assuming the foregoing to be nonsense, what else could the mirror symbol represent, particularly when no comb is present? The shaft of the Manx cross slab from Glionroy has 'a cup shaped ring 5" in outer diameter, having a long shaft or handle with double-bead and spiral ending; around the cup are four small pellets' (Kermode 1907, 124, Pl XV) Kermode calls it 'cup shaped' because the middle of the large ring has been scooped out, giving the appearance of a ladle[1]. There is a Roman ladle called a patera, which is a fairly common artefact, and which in plan view looks very like the mirror symbol. A number of these have been found in Scotland.

Alternatively *The Work of Angels* illustrates a metal pan, thought to have been used in the melting of glass, which in plan view would look like a Pictish mirror, although the end of handle, in the illustration, is bifurcated (Youngs 1989, 205).

Here is my list of improbable, alternative uses for the object represented by the symbol we call a 'mirror'. When the 'mirror' is depicted it is always drawn as if one is looking down on it, never sideways. Simply, the mirror is carved as a large disc joined to a smaller one by lines, curved or straight. The following objects, looked at in plan view, fit this description;—

	Item	Use
1	a. Hand held mirrors b. Hung mirrors	Domestic Magical
2	a. Ladles with long handles and small bowls b. Ladles with short handles and large bowls	Domestic Industrial
3	Spoons	Domestic or Church
4	Pan (cooking)	Domestic
5	Crucible	Domestic
6	Strainer: usually short handled, possibly Roman origin	Domestic
7	Fat skimmer	Domestic
8	Bed warmer	Domestic
9	Door handle	Domestic
10	Assembled sprinkler (Swallowcliff)	Domestic or Church
11	Hanging bowl mount	Domestic
12	Butter pat	Domestic
13	Lace making frame	Domestic
14	Fan [as made in Benin]	Domestic
15	Pot lid or cover	Domestic
16	Surface onto which could be painted a maze pattern, or intricate knot design	Chuch (meditation)
17	Game bat	Domestic

Admittedly there are some extravagent suggestions and not for a moment do I consider most of them as the articles that lie behind the symbols, but if a mirror could be depicted I have to ask why it and not any of the rest — unless it had exclusive magical associations.

Generally the carvings which I think represent mirrors, are identified by their handle shape; the indication of a retaining ring round the edge of the large disc; and the presence of the comb symbol.

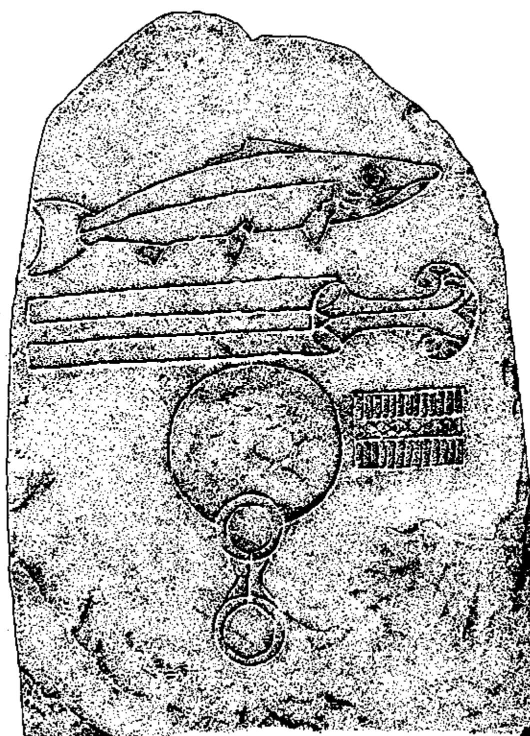

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Fig. 8. Symbol stone from Dunrobin, Sutherland

Many mirrors were made in three parts: (1) The disc, which would be polished on one side and decorated on the other. This was probably cast but may have been hammered out from an ingot; (2) the retraining ring which covers, strengthens and protects the edge of the reflective surface and secures it to the handle; (3) the handle, which seems to have been a casting. Not all handles were fixed so that the mirror was held vertically. This has been surmised as some handles on Continental European mirrors incorporate faces which can only be recognised when the handle is placed above the reflective surface (Laing & Laing 1992, 114).

Some mirror symbols do not have an extended handle but simply look like two differently sized and intersecting discs. When this symbol is carved it looks like a large disc, with a smaller disc below it, usually touching or cutting into it. However this may simply have been a shorthand way of indicating the 'normal' mirror. Examples of this type symbol are Clatt 1 [incomplete], Easterton of Roseisle, Glamis 2, Keith Hall and Park. Of these, the last two are accompanied by a comb; only Glamis 2 seems as if it never had one. The others are damaged in the area of the handle so the comb could have been carved but is now lost. I also note that the smaller disc is normally carved below the larger one and would think that if it was supposed to represent a hanging mirror the smaller hanging ring would be placed at the top. The smaller disc is usually blank, suggesting it is not a ring but a solid disc.

It may seem a bit far fetched to go from the long handled symbol, e.g. on Rosemarkie 1, to these intersecting discs, but there may well be a half-way stage in the change, e.g. the mirrors on the Maiden Stone or Inverurie 2, perhaps Birkle Hill, Keiss. These rather squat, dumpy-handled mirrors are actually more like the Balmaclellan mirror than Rosemarkie 1's.

If Picts imported expensive, ornate, bronze mirrors just to see the reflection of their faces, why is none of the elegant decoration on the back displayed? After all the same craftsmen loved to carve intricate curves on crescent and double-disc symbols? So why is it always the reflective surface that faces us (in line with my suggestion of the magical properties of the mirror and its protective ability) — or is it?

Consider the symbols on the following stones: Birkle Hill, Inverurie 2, and Walton (Fig. 9) —if these are mirrors, we may well be looking at their decorated backs. None of these stones is complete, most are but small fragments and so they may also have been graced with 'normal' mirror symbols. The fact that the Walton symbol is not circular, but slightly oval does not rule it out from being a mirror, as a number of the mirrors on display in Oxford are just that very shape. Regarding the dubious Walton stone, it has been thought it represents a 'terret', but authentic or not, I would now propose that it is not a terret but the decorated back of a mirror.

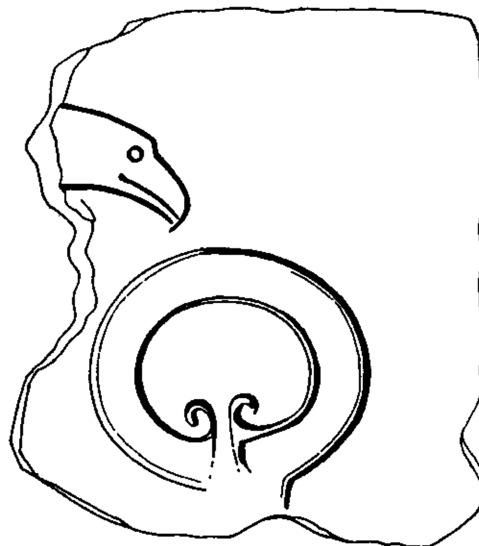

Fig. 9. Walton, Fife.

Of the rest, the symbols which look as if they may be some sort of 'pan' are those on Drumbuie 2, Rosemarkie 1 and St Vigeans 1. As they all come with combs that would seem to rule them out. Other stones on which the symbol may not be a mirror are: Clatt 1, Keillor, Mireton of Insch and St Vigeans 2.

However, this idea of classifying mirror styles made me think there was: the possibility of recognising particular carvers by the way they deal with often repeated symbols. I think I have detected 18 different styles of 'mirror' design. Of these, one style has 6 examples another 5, two types have 4 examples each, three more types with 3, and two of 2 each. The rest have only 1 example each[2]. In the group with 6 examples, the stones are Boutrie, Daviot, Inveravon 2, Newbigging of Leslie, Rhynie 6, Tullich (Fig. 6). In the group of 5, Clatt 1, Easterton of Roseisle, Glamis 2, Keith Hall, Park. With the two groups of 4, the stones are Kintradwell 3, Knockando 2, Mireton of Insch and Rhynie 5; then Drimmies, Kintore, Sandness, and Tillytarmont. Geographically, in the group of 6, 5 are from Aberdeenshire, 1 from Banffshire. The group of 5, two from Aberdeenshire and one each from Caithness, Elginshire and Forfarshire.

To sum up, although I set out to show that not all mirror symbols represented mirrors, I have come to the conclusion that most, if not all, do just that. Further, the early use of mirrors may have been for purposes other than vanity.

Writing about the mirror symbol, Sir Cyril Fox noted 'the Pictish symbolism was initiated before the use and knowledge of these forms died out'. I take it from this rather cryptic quotation he is saying that later Picts, of the Class III stones period, recalled the meaning of the symbols from story and legend, and that the rock carved symbols may have been looked upon differently from the everyday household objects that the mirrors had become. The magical powers credited to the symbols, would have harked back to the time when their ancestors first imported them. Much as the first weapons made from iron would have been treated as objects of awe and wonder in earlier times.

That is all very well for the mirrors but what are we to make of the mirror cases? Are they simply what they seem? Boxes or covers made to protect a polished surface, or are they too, as Fox suggests, an object remembered; the form of which is a figment of the later Pictish stone carver's imagination. Could it be they are a quite separate symbol and in reality have nothing to do with the mirror?

However before going down this track we should look at Inveravon 1 (Allen & Anderson 1903, fig

158), where it will be noted that both the mirror and case terminate in a semicircular decoration, possibly indicating that the case had been made to fit the mirror. It is a pity that Fyvie 1 has been cut, as that mirror also has a handle which terminates in a crescent shape and it would have been nice to see the 'mirror case' associated with it. Likewise on Rosemarkie 1, there are another two symbols with the same external outline, the slightly larger (left) one having an additional ring decorating its centre. These could easily be identified as mirror and its fancy, protective case. Now here is a problem. If as Fox may be suggesting, the later Picts were only remembering the symbolic significance of mirrors, is it likely that they would, in addition, remember to carve a case in which to keep it and then go to the bother of carving it?

Looking more closely at the shapes that comprise the 'mirror case' symbols, I note they come in two main designs:— type 1: those with handles that have a rectangular notch at their end; and type 2: those with no notch. Some of the ends are flat while others are curved. Examples of type 1 are Broch of Burrain, Kintradwell 1, St Peter's Kirk, Sandside House. Also I understand there is another from St Andrews (Greens), but I have no illustration for it. Examples of type 2 are Arndilly, Covesea Cave, Drumbuie 2 (with mirror), Dyce 2, Fetterangus, Inveravon 1, Inverurie 1, Knocknagael, Meigle 5, Rosemarkie 1, Tillytarmont (with mirror), Westfield Farm. [I understand there are also 'no notch' mirror case symbols at Brough of Birsay, Nether Corskie and Newton of Lewesk, but I have not been able to find photographs of them either.]

The group of possible non-'mirror case' symbols are those that follow the designs on Fetterangus, Knocknagael, Covesea Cave, Inverurie 1, Dyce 2, and Meigle 5. They might possibly depict chafing dishes, used to carry hot embers or glowing peat from fire to fire. If they are not chafing dishes perhaps some might be oil lamps, however as there is not a hole to hold the wick this may not be so[4]. I feel that although a few may indeed be mirror cases, the majority represent something else.

During my recent visit to Oxford, I saw an actual mirror complete with case. The 'mirror case' symbols on Pictish stones are nothing like the real thing. This was simply a circular cover in bronze, to fit over the polished face of the mirror. The covers were small, thin and undistinguished. The closest thing to a pair, comprising a mirror and its case, on our stones, are the pairs of discs seen on the following stones: Hilton of Cadboll, Inchbrayock 1, Longforgan, Stonehaven 5, Tullibole and Westfield Farm. The presence of the two discs on the Hilton stone poses rather a problem for I was going to suggest that the discs represented a mirror and its cover or case, but of course there is also a standard mirror and comb; so clearly both cannot be mirrors. Or can they? Compare the decoration of the Hilton stone with that on the Rosemarkie cross-slab. On top of both, double-disc and Z-rod, under them; both have the crescent and V-rod and under that on the Rosemarkie, a mirror and a mirror case; while the Hilton stone has the two decorated discs. It is these that I suggest are a another representation of the mirror and mirror case. Now if one of the twin disc symbols is a mirror cover/case, what is everything else that, up till now, we have been calling 'mirror cases'?

First let us now look at something rather strange in the world of double-disc and Z-rods, because I feel there may be a connection with so-called 'mirror cases'. Start with the symbols on the following stones Meigle 7, Elgin, and St Vigeans 6. From them it can be seen that the area between the discs is empty! Now the Glenferness symbol, although like the others only a drawing, is unclear as to the condition of the central slot, but is somewhat representative of most of the other double-discs with Z-rods. Finally, look at the double-disc on the Ulbster stone; is the centre a pierced slot or simply a recess? I think there is enough evidence to claim that it is an empty space, and if that is indeed the case, I see notched ended mirror cases as, representing half a double disc, each notch forming half the empty space between the discs. Now if this is correct with so called 'notched mirror cases', might it not also apply to the symbols with curved and flat ends? I would now refer you to the 'mirror case' and the 'double-disc and Z-rod' on Dyce 2. The decoration and style on both the handle of the mirror case and its disc bear a striking similarity with those of the double-discs, discs and connecting parts. In fact it was after noting these similarities that I started looking for other instances.

What if the supposed mirror case symbol was actually intended to be just half of a double disc

symbol, what would that mean? Is there any evidence to show 'mirror cases' even look like half double-discs? See for yourself:—

Fetterangus looks like half of Keillor or Logie Elphinstone 2's double-disc,
Tillytarmont's mirror case looks like half of Tullich's double-disc,
Drumbuie's mirror-case looks like half of Shandwick's double-disc.

And there are other examples.

That may mean that a double-disc is in fact simply a combination of two so called 'mirror cases' like Arndilly or Inverurie 1 or Tillytarmont. Of these three, only Tillytarmount 1 comes with a mirror, but the other two are on stones which have been cut. So, what then does the 'mirror case'/half double-disc symbol stand for? How about this for a wild suggestion? —A symbol stone is a grave marker and a 'mirror case' represents an individual who has died, or has been killed. Then a double-disc would record the passing of two people, possibly a married couple who died either together, or separately, but who are joined in death and are now interred together. Perhaps the Z-rod was added to record that the death was not peaceful, a result of war, or inter-family feud. If they died at different times, the symbols would have been carved on the death of the second person.

If there is a 'mirror case' but no double-disc, then the grave would have been for a single individual. Although how the person would have been commemorated if killed in fighting would be another problem. Possibly a crescent and V-rod would have been used for this purpose. Now what stones have (a) mirror case without a mirror and also a double-disc and Z-rod, or (b) a mirror case without the mirror and also a crescent and V-rod? :—

(a) Doocot Cave, Dyce 2, Inverurie 1, Inverurie 3, Westfield 1;
(b) Doocot Cave, Advie, Broch of Burrian, Inverurie 1, St Peter's Kirk.

To speculate further; if the symbol previously known as a mirror case indicated the death of an individual, then that person would probably be female, since none of the mirror cases come with a Z-rod so presumably she did not get killed fighting (assuming that the Z-rod stands for death in war — unless Pictish women went to war, like Queen Buddicea). But assuming that not to be the case how then would a single male, killed fighting, be marked? Perhaps he was not considered a 'man' and therefore not ready to go to war until he married and produced an heir, or perhaps, like the Masai not until he killed, not a lion, but in the Pictish case a wild boar, with his bare hands, and therefore, being a 'non-person' his death went unmarked.

In support of this theory I note that there is not one stone where the 'mirror case' is not used other than to make a pair with second symbol. There are seven instances where it appears on its own without a mirror; Arndilly, Dyce 2, Inverurie 2, Fetterangus, Kintradwell 1, Knocknagael and Meigle 5. It also appears on Covesea Cave without a mirror, but that may be a special case.

All this is of course speculative nonsense but it is wonderful how you can invent a social code for the Picts from a wild imagination and a few unexplained, but repeated marks on a rock.

NOTES

1. Incidentally so has the symbol on the Kirriemuir 1 stone, but it comes complete with comb whereas the Manx one does not.

2. There are also 7 other stones which are reported to have 'mirrors' but for which I am unable to trace an illustration: Clach Ard, Cullaird, Inchyra, Keillor(?), Kinbelthmont, Nether Corskie, and Snizort.

3. See the illustration on page 62 of the National Museum of Antiquities acquisition book, under the reference AR-3.

4. See the illustration of the lamp found at Binny Craig, West Lothian, some time before 1868. [Now in the National Museum of Antiquities. Reference AQ 8. their item no. 326] and compare it with the Fetter Angus stone.

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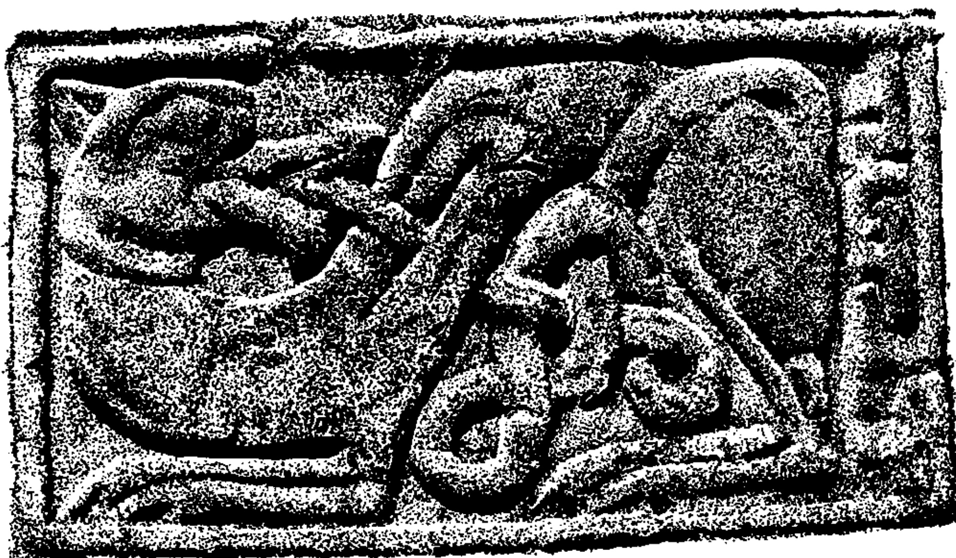

Fig. 10. Panel from the Dupplin Cross. © JRF Burt

SHORTER NOTES

The multiple crescent and V-rod — an anomalous symbol grouping

Craig Cessford

Pictish symbols normally occur in pairs, or in pairs accompanied by the mirror and/or comb or symbols of metalworking tools. There are, however, a number of stones with larger number of symbols, e.g. Dunfallandy or Ubster. In general these simply seem to, be multiples of conventional pairs of symbols where two or more symbol sets occur on a single stone. There is a notable exception to this — three stones where there are groups of three symbols consisting of two of three crescents with V-rods and a single double-disc and Z-rod or wheel.

Ignoring the reverse of the Dingwall stone, which has a conventional pairing of a disc and a crescent with V-rod, there is a grouping of a double-disc with Z-rod above two crescents with V-rods on one face (Allen & Anderson 1903, III, 56–57). At the top of Knockando 1 is a wheel symbol with two crescents with V-rods beside each other beneath (ibid, III, 127–28). Finally on Rosemarkie 1 the top of the rear of this stone is dominated by three large crescents with V-rods the uppermost example almost entirely missing, and a double-disc with Z-rod. This stone also has two smaller mirrors plus a comb (ibid, 63–68)

These three stones seem to form a distinct group within the Pictish symbols where there is an association of three or four symbols consisting of two or three crescents with V-rods and another symbol, either a crescent with V-rod or a wheel. This distinct group also has the anomaly that when it is accompanied by the mirror and comb symbol there are two mirrors which is unique. This prompts the question 'what is going on?' As far as I know, the only attempted explanations are by Professors Charles Thomas and Isobel Henderson. Thomas proposed that Dingwall and Knockando 1, were in effect artistic errors where the second crescent with V-rod was a 'better' or 'more successful' redrawing of the first (1963, 86). This seems rather implausible — would whoever these stones were carved for have accepted such a shoddy final result with a redundant poorly carved symbol and why did Pictish carvers only have problems with the crescent with V-rod? Henderson, when discussing Rosemarkie 1, suggested that the symbols "subsumed three records made previously on incised monuments" (1990, 11). This explanation is plausible and finds some support from the Dingwall stone. The other side of Dingwall has a disc and a crescent with V-rod — was this symbol grouping and one from another stone 'subsumed' by the double-disc with Z-rod and pair of crescents with V-rods on Dingwall? This does not, however, explain why these stones did not simply repeat the normal symbol pairings of the other stones when they 'subsumed' them. One possibility is that these atypical symbol groupings are a form of visual pun combining a number of symbol groupings which had elements in common, a phenomenon that I believe is demonstrated on St Madoes 1.

The Dingwall and Rosemarkie stones are located quite close together in Ross and Cromany and Knockando 1 is not very far away in Moray. This suggests some sort of geographical element to this group of stones. It should also be noted that on all three stones with two or three crescents with V-rods the crescents on a stone are of identical shape but are decorated differently, as are the two mirrors on Rosemarkie 1. Are these decorative differences simply artistic embellishment, or did they convey some meaning?

Isobel Henderson draws a parallel between Rosemarkie 1 and the two double disc symbols at Torgorm (1990, 11). The surviving fragment from Torgorm is quite small (Allen & Anderson 1903, III, 106–7) and the double-discs may simply be parts of two normal symbol pairs.

At present I can come up with no more convincing explanation for this group of symbols than Isobel Henderson's subsumation theory, plus the idea that the anomalous symbol groupings may be a form of visual pun. I believe that these three stones represent a distinct group which do not follow the normal conventions which governed the way that the Pictish symbols were used. As such, I believe they deserve more attention and that any future attempts to understand the Pictish symbols must include this group and not simply ignore it.

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Re-reading St Madoes 1

Craig Cessford

The rear of the superb eighth century cross-slab St Madoes 1 is divided into six panels. The upper three panels which are arranged vertically all depict similar hooded horsemen (Allen & Anderson 1903, III, 292–96; also Robertson 1992). The lower three panels which are arranged in a triangle contain a crescent with v-rod, a double-disc with Z-rod, and a Pictish beast. Recently Alastair Mack has suggested that we should equate one rider with one symbol (1997, 55–56) but this makes little sense given the normal occurrence of Pictish symbols in pairs and the arrangement of the horsemen panels vertically and the symbol-panels triangularly.

I pefer to think of the stone as a form of visual pun based on the fact that the three figures, who wee presumably related somehow given the fact that they were commemorated on a single stone and are all portrayed almost identically, had similar, names/ranks/titles or whatever the symbols denote which used just three symbols between them. For the sake of argument reading the symbols clockwise fom upper left this vould make the three riders *cresent with V-rod plus double-dicc with Z-rod, double-disc with Z-rod plus Pictish beast* and *Pictish beast plus crescent with V-rod.* Who these three figures were is unclear although their distinctive form of dress with peaked hoods plus the book satchel the lowest figure is carrying suggests that they may he religious figures (Allen & Anderson 1903, III, 295). Are we looking at three members of a monastic community with similar names?

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Age of the Picts by W. A. Cummins (Alan Sutton, Stroud, 1995). HB 166pp; £18.99 ISBN 0-7509-0924-2.

This slim, well illustrated, and reasonably priced volume seems quite likely to become a standard introduction to the Picts for the semi-popular market for some time to come, and Dr Cummins is to be congratulated on his achievement. The work is divided into eighteen brief but well focused chapters followed up by three appendices; two laying out the structure and calibration of the different versions of the so-called 'Pictish Chronicle' and one attempting to explain the catalogue of 'thirty Brudes' that appears in some versions of this king list.

Cummins, as he tells us in his first chapter, 'The Professor and the Pictophile', deliberately sets out to review the various problems of the Picts as they stand now, forty years after Wainwright's groundbreaking and influential book was published. The real strength of the present volume is that the author lays all his cards on the table. As each 'problem' is tackled the author sets out the primary evidence and clearly distinguishes it from the hypotheses developed to produce explanations, and whilst this reviewer finds himself frequently disagreeing with Cummins' preferred solutions to many of this problems he cannot but admire his evenhandedness and professionalism. Cummins' discussion of the problems inherent in using medieval documents as historical sources, especially in Chapter 3, 'Pictish Chronology', is amongst the best introductions to this thorny subject I have yet encountered. He attempts, successfully I believe, to make the reader aware of the nature of the relationships of different manuscripts to one another and to any hypothetical original, illustrating as he does so, how variant reading of the same narrative confuse interpretation and how the historian sets about dealing with these problems. For this virtue alone, the book is worth reading.

In Chapter 7, 'What were the Picts?', the question of Pictish origins and language are tackled. The author points out, quite rightly, that the Picts did not exist in the early Roman period when northern Britain was inhabited by a whole series of tribes such as the Caledones, Verturiones, Venicones etc. Pictish identity emerged as and when the peoples south of the Roman frontier zone became, effectively Romans, from a northern perspective. Cummins argues that it was the threat from the South which created the motive for a greater degree of unity amongst the northerners, and it could be further argued that the coining of the term *Picti* by Roman writers at this time served the need to distinguish between 'civilised' and 'uncivilised' Britons.

On the question of language Cummins, to my view correctly, gives no consideration to the non-Indo-European hypothesis. In a fairly lengthy examination of place names the author points out that the British elements, such as 'Aber' and 'Pit', are largely confined to the eastern lowlands and that most of the 'Pit' names contain a Gaelic element. He also notes that the distribution of the early Gaelic element *sliabh,* confined, outside of Wigtownshire, to a few examples in Argyll and in the upper Straths of Tay and Spey, usually taken as evidence of an early settlement, looks, in fact more like a residual distribution. He argues that the top end of valley systems and isolated peninsulas are where one would expect a language to linger on rather than originate. This argument, he further claims, could apply to the distribution of Gaelic names south of the Forth, particularly in the upper reaches of the Clyde and Tweed systems. His conclusion is that the language of northern Britain was probably originally closer to an early form of Gaelic than anything else and that it subsequently picked up various British elements so that by the time of the Picts it was something of a mixed language. Certainly Celtic, but standing somewhere between Irish and British. To some extent this argument relies upon the only alternative hypothesis for Gaelicization being that the language switch did not begin until after Kenneth mac Alpin became king of the Picts and that Gaelic spread after 850 or not at all.

This reader is of the school that believes Pictish to have been a northern variant of the British language, albeit a conservative one and thus marginally closer to Gaelic than Old Welsh would have

been. Nevertheless, Cummins makes some interesting points and it would be valuable to read the opinions of place-names scholars such as Simon Taylor and Richard Cox on such matters. Certainly the early spread of Gaelic is worth more consideration than scholars have allotted it. The possibility that the rise of a centralised Pictish state based on Fortrenn and Circinn, and producing the concentrations of Class II monuments and accounting for the late surviving Pictish place-names in this region, might coincide with a Gaelic conquest of some Highland regions on its fringes may be worth considering. Eighth century Atholl might, perhaps have possessed a Gaelic speaking population ruled by a Pictish sub-king imposed by Fortrenn.

Unsurprisingly Cummins is of the pro-Matriliny party. The persistence of belief in Pictish matriliny has become something of an Article of Faith amongst Pictophiles despite the absence of any historical evidence. Bede merely states that the female line was resorted to in time of doubt, common practice amongst the Welsh and the Romans, and of course the ideology underpinning the claims of the Maid of Norway to the Scots throne on the death of her grandfather. The Irish and Anglo-Saxons preferred to follow the male line, however far back it had to be traced. Had traditional Gaelic custom prevailed in the thirteenth century, Alexander III would have been succeeded not by his grand daughter by Duncan III, Earl of Fife, indeed had Gaelic custom prevailed earlier in Scots history Malcolm II would have been succeeded by neither Duncan I nor by Mac Beth but by Mac Duff. The cases of doubt mentioned by Bede were exactly such cases as that following the death of Malcolm II when British rather than Irish custom was followed. This is not the place, however, to engage in a debate that will probably run on for decades. Cummins is in very good company in his allegiance to matriliny.

In Chapter 17 Cummins presents us with a plausible, if partial, explanation of the symbols but his examination of Sueno's Stone is more fanciful. One of the frustrations, and, let us be honest, attractions of Dark Age History is that we shall never have all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, and perhaps, ultimately, this is where Dr Cummins falls down. Despite showing an awareness of the problems of the source materially, and explaining these problems very clearly, he is compelled, it seems to find a solution to everything. Nevertheless, as an introduction to the Picts, in all their guises, this is a good book and the author always allows us to see when his own ideas deviate from the consensus. For serious, if at times over cautious scholarship, one should turn to the essays in the Society's own *Pictish Panorama,* but for a good read or an introductory gift to a fledgling Pictophile Cummins' volume would be an admirable choice.

Alex Woolf

Photographing Carved Stones: A Practical Guide to Recording Scotland's Past by Tom E. Gray and Leslie M. Ferguson (The Pinkfoot Press, Balgavies 1997). PB 32pp. £ 3.00. ISBN 1-874012-14-8.

The National Committee on the Carved Stones of Scotland supported by Historic Scotland have produced this 32-page booklet giving practical advice on recording stones by the non-destructive method of photography. The booklet is edited by Anna Ritchie and published by the Pinkfoot Press.

Following a brief Introduction by Ingval Maxwell, the major part of the text, 'Photographic recording of carved stones', is a detailed account by Tom E Gray – well known for his huge contribution to the photo-archives of Pictish sculpture. It is well and clearly written, giving guidance on equipment, techniques, lighting, indexing and copyright, with a glossary of technical terms. Tom gives away many of the secrets of how he achieves his excellent, award-winning, results. The text is illustrated with several fine examples of his work.

Lesley Ferguson of the Royal Commission, who has responsibility for the archaeological archive in the National Monument Record of Scotland (NMRS) in Edinburgh, has an interesting section detailing the importance of continually recording carved stones — they move, get lost, or weather away.

She gives examples of the value of photography — such as a lost stone from Clatt, Aberdeenshire recorded by photography in 1905; and the use of comparative time-lapse photography to monitor deterioration of a stone's condition. Advice is also given on how to properly record a stone with a sample 'carved stone recording form'.

This useful little booklet provides an invaluable source of practical advice on photographing carved stones, often a challenging task.

J.R.F. Burt

The Recessed Platforms of Argyll, Bute and Inverness by Elizabeth B. Rennie (BAR British Series 253, Oxford 1997). PB; 195 pp. £ 32.00. ISBN 0-86054-849-X.

Recessed platforms are a fairly common type of site on the West Coast of Scotland, typically a group of circular platforms (some 7–10m diameter) recessed into the hillside with the earth at the front forming a platform. Their location with regards to slope, altitude and type of land-use is very variable.

Until 'Betty's' work the received opinion was that these Groups of platforms were charcoal burners' sites. However as a result of the dedicated work of a small band of 'amateurs', working to a very professional standard, many more sites were discovered, and new evidence as to there real purpose elucidated.

The first part of the report (some 117 pages) gives a description of most of the Groups of sites discovered during the twenty or so years of survey. Although brief most of the site descriptions are perfectly adequate. This forms, as it were, the database for the subsequent discussion about the functions of the platforms.

In the second part of the report the details of the excavations of ten of the sites, are outlined. This work was crucial to the understanding of the real functioning of these platforms.

Finally there is the detailed discussion of what might be the true nature of these recessed platforms. Betty first of all considers the evidence for how charcoal burners actually worked and the archaeological evidence which would be left behind. From this she convincingly argues that although some sites were undoubtedly reused by colliers, the sites predate the 18th century charcoal industry by several centuries at least. The C14 dates obtained from the excavations give an intriguing scatter of two site giving Neolithic dates and the others giving dates around Medieval times.

In addition to dating evidence there is a detailed argument that in the West of Scotland charcoal was made in pits and not in pyres on platforms.

The alternative explanation is that the platforms appear to be foundations for round timber structures. These structures are clustered into groups with different sized platforms (with a constant size ratio) which seems to indicate that each cluster represents a settlement consisting of dwellings, sheds for stock and workshops. such settlements it is postulated were not dissimilar to the 17th and 18th century Highland townships.

There is some interesting speculation as to whether some of the groups of platforms found at high altitude might not be sheiling sites.

Also the marked differences between the open position of sites in Kintyre and Knapdale, and the secluded position of the Northern Groups of platforms is commented upon. An association of some of the sites with Early Christian sites e.g. Lephinchapel is also discussed.

All in all this publication represents a great deal of dedicated work, carried to a successful conclusion in the face of scepticism from the archaeological establishment. As a result of the substantial amount of field survey, a new type of monument has been 'discovered', and our understanding of how people lived in the West of Scotland during the first millennium AD advanced.

Bob Diamond

Field Guide to the Pictish Symbol Stones by Alastair Mack (The Pinkfoot Press, Balgavies). HB, 194 pp. £14.50. ISBN 1-874012-06-7.

This field guide has been obsessively well researched and contains mounds of detailed information on Pictish symbol stones and, indeed, Pictish symbols. This is the painstaking work of a dedicated and erudite enthusiast. Location maps, details of museums (with opening times and charges) and a helpful index make this book eminently user-friendly. This is an essential tool for anyone with an interest in Scotland's early history. It is, however, a book generally geared towards those already interested in the Picts rather than the uninitiated tourist. It will appeal greatly to the membership of our Society.

In his introduction Alastair Mack dates Class I stones from the 5th or 6th century to the 8th and Class II mid- or late 7th to the 9th century. He opines the symbol stones were almost certainly gravestones and 'by the time they were being carved on stone the majority ... [of symbols were] family and therefore personal badges'.

Before detailing the stones, the symbols themselves are first examined with a note of the frequency and locality of occurrence by class (I or II) and by present local authority area. This is also visually presented by a distribution map for each symbol shown by class.

The core of the Field Guide comprises detailed entries for each and every symbol stone, including lost stones. The stones are presented in a standard format giving name (and number where applicable), class, clarity of carving (except, for some reason, for stones in museums), accessibility, the stone's symbols, its size, an OS grid reference (of present position) and 'principal reference/s' for the stone. There are then notes of discovery and a description of the stone with particular emphasis to the symbols. Entries include directions on how to find the stones, and there are some maps of the more elusive ones. The entries are divided into sections, each being the present local authority area. Highland is subdivided into seven administrative areas. Within each section entries are listed more-or-less alphabetically (except Crichie before Craigmyle, p. 73). Stones in museums are listed *en bloc* under the name of the museum (e.g. Rosemarkie 1 appears under Groam House Museum).

The details of each symbol stone appear well set out and are accurate throughout. There are a few minor points of interpretation that may be questioned, such as the inclusion of carvings on living rock at Anwoth (p. 137) or Dunadd (p. 136) — are these really Pictish symbol *stones*? The carvings at Covesea and in the Fife coastal caves are rightly excluded. The case of bovines *vs.* bulls on the stones from East Lomond Hill, Kingsmills and Lochadrill has been cogently argued by Leslie Alcock in the past — Mack sees all as bulls. Some would question if these 'bull stones' are actually symbol stones or stone plaques, stelæ? And are the fine hippocamps of Ness, Orkney and the Ulbster Stone really the same symbol as the 'fish-monsters' of Upper Manbean and Anwoth? Why include the reconstructed stone on the Brough of Birsay (p. 132) when the original stone has already been detailed under Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh (p. 30)? Why is there no proper entry for Burghead 5 — the best example of the Burghead bulls? These, and others, are matters of opinion.

Three out of four of the so-called 'principal reference/s' are from Allen and Anderson's *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (1903) — still generally regarded as the best reference book of Pictish stones, and recently re-released (1993) by the same publisher as this *Field Guide*. As a bonus there is a voucher in the *Guide* for a £10 discount on the price of the reprint of that seminal work. Of the other references, I would not however necessarily agree that that (and there is usually only one) given by Mack is the best for each stone. To give one example, Mack cites Robert Stevenson's entry in *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland 1971* for the stones from Westfield Farm, Fife in preference to the more detailed paper by J.N.G. Ritchie and P.R. Ritchie in *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* with its high quality plates. Again, however, deciding what is a 'principal reference' is purely a matter of opinion. References chosen by Alastair Mack are nevertheless sound.

In summary, this is an excellent guide to the symbol stones and a tremendous source of information — do not venture into Pictland without it.

J.R.F. Burt

PAPER CLIPS

Craig Cessford, 'A Lost Pictish Poem?', *Scottish Literary Journal*, 23 no. 2 (Nov. 1996), 7–15.

We know little of many aspects of Pictish culture. However, Craig Cessford presents his evidence that the Picts composed poetry, suggesting that there was a poem commemorating the battle of Dunnichen.

The Aberlemno kirkyard cross-slab has a narrative 'strip cartoon' of a battle and it probably dates *c.* 100 years after the battle of Dunnichen. If the depiction on the stone is that battle, the information behind the carving must have been transmitted somehow — perhaps by oral poetry. The *Gododdin* is used as a standard against which to measure other evidence. Many of the scenes on the Aberlemno stone have parallel themes in the *Gododdin* corpus and various examples of these are discussed, e.g. throwing a spear from horseback, ravens gnawing the head of a fallen warrior. Cessford submits that the Aberlemno carving represents "a poem in stone" — a poem composed at the time of the battle and used as an inspiration for the sculpture around a century later when the stone was carved. He puts forward six constituent elements present in the original poem.

Craig Cessford, 'The Pictish Mirror Symbol and Archaeological Evidence for Mirrors in Scotland', *Oxford J Archaeol*, 16(1) (March 1997), 99–119.

In this paper Cessford the examines archaeological evidence for mirrors in Iron Age, Roman and Early Historic Scotland and he compares this with the various forms of the mirror symbol which appear on Pictish symbol stones. Three different handle types (bar, 'shaped' and triangular) which occur in the archaeological record are all represented on Pictish sculpture, as are other mirror types which have not yet been uncovered archaeologically in Scotland (e.g. figure-of-eight handle, flowering handle). Mirrors were more widespread and common than the archaeological examples imply.

The Pictish mirror symbol, alone or with the comb symbol, is usually thought to have acted as a qualifier for another pair of symbols and to be feminine; but Cessford argues that evidence does not support this and suggests the mirror symbol acted as a status qualifier for particular individuals rather than for other symbols, and was probably linked to royalty. The evidence is, however, insufficient for a definite specific interpretation.

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Fig. 11. Detail from Fowlis Wester 2