The Pictish Arts Society
NEWSLETTER 67 SUMMER 2013

Pictavia lectures

Christian symbolism on the Hunterston brooch and related motifs in early medieval art

The January lecture at Pictavia was given by Alice Blackwell, the Glenmorangie research officer at the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh. Given the difficult road conditions on a snowy night we were relieved that she arrived safely and are very grateful for her commitment to our lecture programme.

Alice began by telling us that little is known about brooches in a Scottish context, such as if they were worn by both genders or where on the body they were positioned. Unlike Anglo-Saxon and Viking brooches, we lack accompanied burials to give basic information. Texts from Ireland describe brooches as worn by both men and women, on the shoulder by men and on the chest by women, but what about Scotland? On Christian sculpture, figures wearing brooches may be identified as women, and possibly all depictions of the Virgin.

Alice showed us the disparity in size between the very small penannular brooch from Castlehill Dalry and the very large pseudo-penannular Hunterston brooch. Brooches have an outward-facing perspective, expressing social status, rank or office in the Roman tradition, and were used in legal situations as pledges, given as politically motivated gifts, and perhaps as bride-price. But there is also a personal perspective, connected with protecting the wearer from spiritual or physical harm, and so we looked at the Hunterston brooch upside down, i.e. from the point of view of the wearer looking down on it. A procession of gold filigree animals runs round the hoop; those at the top orientated for an audience, but by the time they get to the terminal they are orientated to the wearer looking down.

The Hunterston Brooch

The open terminals on the old penannular design were linked on the pseudo-penannular brooch, by a 'closing panel'. The Hunterston brooch terminals can be read as abstract animals. Decorative amber inserts pick out the eye, top and bottom of an open jaw, and an ear or cheek. These beasts flank a Christian cross on the central 'closing panel' of this pseudo-penannular brooch. It is an embedded version of a beast design which is made explicit on some penannular brooches, e.g. that from St Ninian's Isle. The fragment from Dunbeath has a filigree beast with gaping jaws next to the terminal which has similar gaping jaws in abstract form with amber studs for eye, top and bottom of jaw, and cheek.

On the pseudo-penannular 'Tara' brooch the (one remaining) eye of the abstract beasts that form the terminals consists of a blue stud inlaid with a red ring to represent an iris and with a central blue pupil, the only place on the brooch where two colours of glass are used like this. This feature is also found on the Sutton Hoo purse lid, there used for the eyes of unambiguous birds.

Alice also gave examples of later brooch-pins designed with pairs of opposed beasts reaching round the annular hoop and orientated the same way (i.e. upside down to the audience). What do these beasts flank? On the Hunterston brooch it is a cross; on the Birnie (Moray) and the Armoy and 'Tara' ring-brooches (both Ireland) the animal heads appear to bite a lozenge shape. This lozenge has been interpreted as a Christian symbol. On 'Tara' there are five tiny gold pellets arranged in the centre of the lozenge to form a cross – four around a central fifth pellet.

On the Grousehall ring-brooch the pair of beasts reach towards a human head, similar to a shrine crest from Killua Castle, where the head placed between the animals' jaws is lozenge-shaped within a lozenge frame. These are Irish examples. Alice suggested that Hunterston and 'Tara' brooches, and ring-brooches from Birnie, Armoy and Grousehall, all feature variations of the same motif: opposed beasts (inherent in the design or explicit in its decoration) flanking a central element of cross, lozenge or head, which are symbols of Christ.

Although figures flanked by beasts are often linked with imagery of Daniel in the lion's den, Alice suggested that the recognition of Christ by two living things lies at the heart of the beast motif. The Old Testament Canticle of Habakkuk (3:1–19): *in medio duorum animalium in notesceris* ('You will be known in the midst of two living things') finds visual expression in Insular art. Not only is it a central Christian concept – the recognition of Christ – but this specific Habakkuk text would have been familiar to an Early Christian monastic audience – we were told that it was chanted every Friday and formed a key part in commemorating Christ's death on Easter Friday. Panels on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses present a literal rendering of the recognition of Christ by two animals – a figural representation of Christ stands upon two creatures whose paws form a cross, to make their recognition of the identity of Christ unmistakable. Early Christian commentary interpreted Habakkuk's 'two animals' more widely, to include humans and angels. Bede, for example, mused on this phrase and compared it to Christ's transfiguration and recognition by Moses and Elijah, and the two thieves associated with his Crucifixion.

Two opposed beasts either side of a Christian symbol also feature on ecclesiastical metalwork, such as the Moylough belt shrine, and on the roof beam of the Monymusk reliquary – where the central panel of interlace hides a cross in reverse, i.e. the spaces between the strands of interlace make the shape of a cross, the only piece of Christian symbolism found on the reliquary to date.

Alice suggested that the Maiden Stone might also feature a version of this motif, with its hippocamp-style animals flanking a figure standing atop the cross. On the Skinnet stone similar beasts flank and bite into the cross.

On the page depicting the Arrest of Christ in the Book of Kells, Christ is flanked by two human figures – while at the top of the page two beast heads meeting in the centre reference the scene below. On the Dunfallandy stone (where two seated figures flank a small cross) two opposed beast heads make a frame for the whole side. At the top they reach to lick or bite the floating human head. This has been interpreted as damnation imagery, the head subject to the mouths or scorching breath of dragons (Hendersons). But the upper half of this face of the stone provides an interesting parallel to the Arrest page in Kells – two open-mouthed beasts provide a frame, below which two human figures flank Christ/a cross. Perhaps these are allusions to the Habakkuk text – the concept of recognition between two living things. Many pairings may reference the Habakkuk text. For instance, flanking the cross on Kirriemuir 1 is a pair of book-clutching ecclesiastics, under a pair of animal-headed figures; on Kirriemuir 2 a pair of angels flank the upper cross-arm.

The Hunterston and 'Tara' brooches are recognised as objects carrying Christian iconography; yet brooches are also seen as ways of demonstrating secular power and status. So are they secular or Christian objects? Surviving hoards, like the one from St Ninian's Isle, Shetland, indicate this traditional division is complicated, since it is in many ways a suite of Pictish secular material – brooches and sword fittings. But the silver dishes have caused some to hesitate. Many carry cross-based motifs and may have had a role in church rites. Alice pointed out that the inclusion of a porpoise bone may be significant – is it a relic? The Ardagh hoard of chalices and brooches from Ireland contains undeniable church plate alongside brooches, and makes us question the relationship between the two.

In exploring the secular/Christian question Alice referred to the St Ninian's Isle sword chapes. One features an inscription that runs across both faces of the object, translated as 'in the name of God the highest', continuing on the back 'property of the son of the holy spirit'. This is interpreted as a protective inscription, protecting the owner, and is written so as to be able to be read by the wearer of the scabbard when looking down at it. The chapes are decorated with three raised flower-shaped studs, made up of four petals, which therefore inevitably form a cross.

These mounts seem particularly well worn, perhaps subject to repeated, focused wear, deliberate touching of a cross-based motif with a protective Christian meaning – perhaps a reassuring thing to do whilst faced with a situation requiring the drawing of a sword. (This pattern of wear is also seen on the Monymusk reliquary roof beam and other Church objects.)

The chape embodies flanking beast heads in its very form, the animal heads linked by a single body forming a horseshoe shape. It has been suggested in a variety of contexts, including Anglo-Saxon art, that a U-shaped double headed animal motif was an old longstanding protective symbol – on the Franks casket it appears above an image of a doorway, a classic place for protective imagery to ward off evil. (Nailing a horseshoe over a door is still practised today.) There is nothing problematic about Early Christianity assuming older motifs and concepts and incorporating them in its art. Pre-Christian superstition was integrated into Christianity and employed on personal objects, e.g. 14th-century brooches were believed to save the wearer from violent death, the Christian element providing perceived real as well as spiritual protection.

Alice finished her talk with a discussion about the pseudo-penannular brooch form. Closing the gap between the terminals of the penannular style of brooch increased the surface available for decoration, while maintaining a visual connection with the penannular brooch. The outline of the original penannular form remains clearly visible to those who are familiar with it. Alice put forward the idea that this adaptation of the penannular brooch form provided a means to convey the important concept of Christ recognised by two living things, in such a way as to put the symbol of Christ at the centre, highlighted precisely because it was the part of the design that was added to the existing traditional brooch design. The closing of the gap gives the beasts something to bite – a symbol of Christ in cross, lozenge or figural form. *ER*

Spaces and Places in the Pictish Landscape

In February, Strat Halliday, formerly with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and now working on the Atlas of the hillforts of Britain and Ireland project, gave a lavishly illustrated talk on 'Spaces and Places in the Pictish Landscape'. An early interest in the archaeology of ancient land use developed in the Borders, where Strat recorded field systems and cord rig in association with (probable) Iron Age settlements. In the Cheviots, this grew into a broader awareness of the inter-relationship between landscape and early settlement patterns. Over time, and throughout his work with RCAHMS, technological advances in surveying practice led to a more detailed description of the landscape and revealed much more in the way of early settlement in areas such as North-East Perthshire (published in1990). It was during this survey that the Pitcarmick-type buildings, turf long-houses of the Pictish period, were first recognised. Later, in Donside (*In the Shadow of Bennachie,* 2007), the relationship between a number of Pictish stones and the landscape became evident.

There are a number of problems associated with the study of ancient landscapes. There is a question of being able to recognise ancient territories associated with settlements or other units of ownership. Problems of survival, caused in large part by subsequent use (ploughing, draining and so forth) mean that there is often very little left of early landscapes. This is especially true in the improved lowlands, although less so in areas of rough grazing in the hill country. While the fragmentary nature or total lack of evidence is one issue, another invidious problem arises from a too-hasty labelling of what does survive. Strat quoted the example of the 'Celtic Fields' of southern England – small fields associated with settlements and field clearance cairns on the downlands and moors of southern England. Crawford's labelling of these as 'Celtic' implies an Iron Age origin, but in reality, many of these date back to the middle Bronze Age. Such landscapes are extremely rare in Scotland.

A number of area studies, such as at Lairg in Sutherland or at Machrie in Arran have consistently demonstrated the dynamic aspect of landscape. The constant process of change experienced over centuries has led to a situation where the more data we accumulate on a particular area, the less coherent it appears.

Against this cautionary background, Strat began a consideration of elements of the Pictish landscape. Such elements as carved stones, souterrains, forts and place-names have been regarded as of the Pictish period for some considerable time. However, although these have long been catalogued and studied, there are still problems of interpretation. Are the present day Pit-names evidence that the Picts used this

name form on the best land, or do they reflect a greater conservatism of names reflecting perhaps the ownership history of such land?

It is only recently that Murray Cook's work on the hillforts around Strathdon has shown that these do date firmly within the Pictish period, but the dates obtained from these sites cluster within the fifth to seventh centuries. There is, so far, no evidence of these being occupied during the Roman period. At Fraser Hunter's site at Birnie, the converse is true – the break in occupation there seems to come in the third century. Where good dating evidence has been available, as at Ardownie, it seems that at these too, there may be a break in the use of a site that spans the late Roman/early Pictish period.

Back on Donside, the Pictish stones seem to favour locations at or near parish boundaries. In the case of the Kintore stones, the favoured position seems to be on the watercourses. Rightly or wrongly, this appears to hint at a socio-political dimension to the already uneven character of spaces in this landscape. Other remains suggest that parish boundaries were of early significance: long cist cemeteries, for example, frequently sit on or near the edge of parishes.

Alasdair Ross's work on the davochs of Moray may hold a clue to the origins of these territorial units. There the parish structure appears to have been imposed on a division of the land into davochs. The davoch is a unit which includes all the resources necessary for an independent settlement; arable and pasture land (with seasonal grazing and provision for a hay crop), woodland, water and fishing. As with parishes, davochs were not necessarily unitary patches: detached segments of the davoch could be separated from the main body of the territory by over twenty kilometres. The important feature seems to have been that the needs of the community occupying the davoch could be met from its resources. The origins of this type of unit seem to extend back at least as far as the Pictish period. They tell us nothing about whether the original occupants regarded themselves as an extended family, or had evolved more complex power structures, nor do they tell us anything about the original relationship between neighbouring davochs. However, the Pictish stones which mark parish boundaries, and those Pit- place-names, are concentrated in areas later in ecclesiastical or royal ownership. This fact may have led to a conservation of Pictish features, and need not necessarily indicate the reason for them being there in the first place.

It is at least probable that the davoch represented a fundamental unit of the Pictish landscape further afield than Moray. Including, as the unit does, a range of resources it seems at least probable that there would be an accompanying range of structures within the territory devoted to the management and harvesting of those resources. The Pitcarmick-type house may be an element in this pattern. However, the known distribution of this type is limited, at least in part by the fact the area surveyed by RCAHMS which led to their identification was limited. Also, the nature of the materials used in construction of these houses makes them particularly vulnerable to the erasure of traces of their existence by later farming activity. Glenshee illustrates how the topography and later land use can combine to provide a fringe of remains between the more recently cultivated land and the steep ground unsuitable for any building.

The rectangular pattern of the Pitcarmick house is not unknown in the lowlands. Several examples have been excavated and given dates within the Pictish period. However, with no upstanding remains, how could these potential Pictish sites be identified? It is highly likely that indications of Pictish period buildings are among the unlovely splodges for which no identification has been proposed on the thousands of aerial photographs in RCAHMS archives. Some of these, in Fife and in Angus, have been excavated, and do give dates in the Pictish/medieval period. The ugly mess of straight lines (enclosures?) and hazy blobs which show up on a number of sites may be worthy targets for further investigation – although one at least, at Myres Castle in Fife, proved to be earthworks of a later village.

In recent years, the uneven texture of the Pictish landscape has become more obvious. The davoch – a unit based on resources available, itself dictates an unevenness in the distribution of places. More clues as to what to look for, and more excavation work, have begun to fill some of the spaces. However, much more remains to be done before we are in a position to make definitive statements about spaces and places in the landscape as they appeared in Pictish times.

SH

Pictish *Adventus* Ceremonies

Martin Goldberg is Curator of the Early Historic and Viking collections in the Department of Scottish History and Archaeology, National Museums Scotland, although he previously specialised in Iron Age and Roman religion. For the last talk of the 2012–13 series in March, in a lecture entitled 'Pictish *Adventus* Ceremonies', Martin offered an *adventus* as the inspiration for rider and hunt imagery, inherited from a Roman imperial past where ceremonies were structured to receive kings, bishops and nobles. *Adventus* means literally 'coming' or 'entry'.

The Picts were enthusiastic about depicting riders on their stones. Possible models have been seen in Late Antique sarcophagi and Roman Imperial traditions. Hunting scenes with their clear details of riders, weapons, and horse equipment have been thought of as contemporary snapshots, perhaps where the patron is putting a stamp on the monument that he commissioned. Displayed is perhaps an element of peripatetic kingship where king and retinue tour to receive hospitality and renders. But hunting scenes were about more than hunting, said Martin; they were not just about subsistence or the aristocratic life, and the above interpretations are unhelpful because of the distinction they make between secular and religious spheres. Rather, religion suffused all life. Divisions between what is Pictish and what Christian overlooked the fact that cross-slabs present intertwined ideologies and a Pictish version of Christianity. There is layer upon layer of meaning.

Looking first at the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab, Martin examined its panels: surrounding all is a vine-scroll border, with its international Christian context and long history, recognisable from the Eastern Mediterranean and Roman mosaic floors, and the border includes at its top a Pictish symbol; in the top panel are local Pictish symbols; then the hunt scene; finally, at the bottom the spiral panel. Martin described the bottom panel as 'the past re-imagined', as Celtic art of triskele shapes and trumpet pattern had been around for many years but had now gained new purpose, being constructed around a small central cross.

Our speaker pointed out similarities between the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab and Aberlemno 3, such as the two trumpeters and shared symbols, the latter being also found on the Elgin cross-slab and St Orland's Stone at Cossans.

Variation in hunting format, as on Kirriemuir 2, and abbreviation, as on Inchbrayock 1, are found on smaller stones. Considering Balluderon and Migvie, Martin wondered if here the rider is a symbol. A Christological element to the rider appearing within the cross itself, as at Rossie Priory and Fordoun, was also considered.

Martin went on to discuss *adventus* origins and show us a slide of 'the harried deer' on a Roman sarcophagus from Arles connoting the 'soul's *adventus*', where mounted huntsmen with dogs chase deer into a net; and the Imperial imagery of 'the majestic rider' on the Arras medallion portraying Constantius' entry into Londinium AD297. Both motifs are to be found on Hilton of Cadboll and Aberlemno 3.

A recurrent Late Antique theme is returning from the hunt. The Imperial majestic rider in the Late Antique period is commemorated returning from war, e.g. by a triumphal arch, coinage, panegyrics, and glorified as a god with pagan sacrifices. Ceremonies may have developed in early Christian times in a related form for the reception of lordship and bishops by the community.

We were then shown a detail of Jesus' *adventus* on the wooden door lintel of the Al-Muallaqa Coptic church in Cairo, dated by inscription to AD735. Jesus sits sideways on an ass at His entry to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, gates in the background emphasising the entry theme. On the Early Christian sarcophagus of Junnius Bassius (4th century) Jesus rides astride an 'ass'. On both of these pieces of sculpture cloaks are being laid at his feet. On the 6th–7th century Byzantine relief woodcarving of the Entry into Jerusalem in the Bode Museum, Jesus sits sideways on the animal facing out, with an angel before and behind him. Martin introduced the eschatological model of '*Ecco mitto angelum meum*' (Behold I send my messenger/angel before you) referring to John the Baptist as precursor of Christ. Such Eastern Mediterranean motifs had made their way to Pictland.

Thus the long flowing robes and halo of Jesus in Eastern Mediterranean style can also be seen in the sideways-sitting mounted figure on the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab, acclaimed by the fanfare of trumpets. Martin sees a further example of *adventus* imagery on Meigle 1 in the sideways-sitting mounted figure leading the lower diagonal register, preceded by an angel. Note the camel, evidencing familiarity with a

Near Eastern scene. Rather than being depictions of women, these are suggested to be Jesus.

After pointing out the angel in front of the main rider on Meigle 2, Martin went on to wonder how that stone was used, since the cross-slab's tenons were perhaps intended for a structural framework. It may have been positioned inside a building rather that out in the landscape, since it is in very good condition. Woodwrae also has a top tenon.

The free-standing Dupplin cross has vine-scroll, a majestic rider, David rending the lion's jaws, and harrying hounds, and its iconography refers to Christian leadership. An inscription on it is now interpreted as referring to 'Constantine son of Fergus'. (We learned that its landscape context, set on a high ridge across from the Invermay fragment, makes the two crosses almost equidistant from the palace at Forteviot.)

The motif of David rending the lion's jaw is also found on the Nigg cross-slab, the St Andrews sarcophagus and Aberlemno 3 – it may signify the harrowing of hell, where Jesus frees pre-Christian souls from hell, before he rises to heaven. It is not in the Bible but is in a very popular Nicodemus apocryphal passage, and 6th-century sermons discuss Jesus in hell. This is more Easter imagery reflecting a moment in the liturgical year. The cross-slabs at Nigg, Hilton of Cadboll and Shandwick, all on the Tarbat peninsula, might be different stations for the Christian community to visit for different ceremonies connected to the Easter Vigil. The landscape context of the Hilton of Cadboll and Shandwick slabs is at prime landing sites.

Psalm 42 of the Easter Vigil runs 'as the deer pants for flowing streams so my soul pants for thee, O lord'. The deer is associated with becoming a Christian through adult baptism. We were shown a slide of the apse mosaic at San Clemente, Rome, where deer drink at the four rivers of Paradise. A 4th–5th century Roman mosaic at Hinton St Mary has a vegetal motif with deer harried by dogs, and in the centre of the rectangle, Christ. Martin sees references to the Christian meaning of the deer within the hunt scene on the Hilton of Cadboll.

Martin brought all strands together in his conclusion and emphasised the complexity of layer upon layer of meaning on the cross-slabs, with many Christian motifs ultimately derived from the Eastern Mediterranean, not from Carolingian models. *ER*

Stones on the move

The threats facing Scotland's unique corpus of Pictish sculpture do not diminish. For many, the danger of erosion from the elements remains constant. The Kinellar symbol stone in Aberdeenshire, once thought to be safe within the church vestibule, is about to be turfed back outside again as that church is sold. Meanwhile the Glamis manse cross-slab currently stands behind locked gates.

It is therefore very encouraging to report some good news, thanks to a community-led project at Inveraven in Moray. The Inveraven Pictish Stone Project is reported here from two perspectives, first from Sven Bjarnason, former Minister of Inveraven parish Church and then from Trisha Lawson.

The Inveraven Pictish Stone Project

Inveraven has been at the heart of the community as a place of worship for perhaps as many as fifteen centuries. The earliest recorded church, dedicated to St Peter, was built around 1108 – the nearby St Peter's Well being credited with many miraculous cures. However, the presence of four Pictish symbol stones suggests this may have been a site of Pictish ritual as early as the 6th or 7th century. The stones include representations of the 'Pictish Beast', perhaps the most iconic and enigmatic of all the Pictish Symbols.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the stones were mounted on the south wall of Inveraven Church, safe from being moved but exposed to the ravages of the weather. More recently, the church office-bearers became anxious to preserve them from further deterioration.

The north porch of Inveraven kirk

The old display, on the south wall, ...

and the new, in the north porch

After consultations with Historic Scotland, the Church decided to develop proposals to conserve the stones and relocate them where they would be sheltered from the elements.

A grant aid from the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland enabled the congregation to engage a firm of Conservation Architects, Groves-Raines Architects Ltd. Edinburgh, to work with them on developing a plan for the preservation of the stones and renovation of the church. The lead architect was Niall Braidwood RIAS RIBA.

The north porch of the church had not been in use for a number of years and offered an ideal display area for the stones, being separate from the church and accessible to visitors at all times. Tenders were sought for the removal of the stones from the south wall, their conservation and installation in the north porch. This became phase one of the renovation of the church however such plans placed a heavy financial burden on a small rural congregation.

Historic Scotland offered a generous grant should the project go ahead. Various other funding bodies were approached and much-appreciated support was received from the Wolfson Foundation, the Pilgrim Trust, the Manifold Trust, the Strathmartine Trust and the William & Jane Morris Foundation of the Antiquaries of London.

G&A Construction, Dufftown were appointed as main contractors and stone conservation was undertaken by Ainsworth Conservation, Edinburgh. Work started in the spring of 2011 and was completed in December of that year at a cost of over £50.000.

Sensor-operated lighting was installed within the porch and interpretation panels were located outside. Access to the church was improved, the car park resurfaced and new tourist signposting was located on the main road.

So Inveraven's Pictish monuments have been better presented *in situ*, preserved for future generations and drawn to the attention of the wider public and visitors to the area. Phase two of the restoration of the church is now complete.

SB

'This is the most attractive presentation of any small collection of Pictish Stones in Scotland.'

Those words were written recently in the visitors' book in the church at Inveraven. I wonder what the thoughts of people who carved the stones so many years ago would have been. Pride one hopes. Certainly pride is what is felt by the small community that lives in the parish of Inveraven in 2013.

The symbol stones, which had previously been mounted on the south wall of the church, had originally been unearthed from the foundations of an earlier church building and from a corner of the graveyard. The present church had been re-harled with Portland cement in the 1990s and the state of the stones, which had been thankfully protected at the time more by luck than design, did cause concern as the water retention and weathering of the wall behind was felt to be detrimental to their longevity.

It was felt important that the stones, if they were to be preserved for the appreciation of future generations, should also continue to be accessible where they were found and thus the idea of placing them in the unused Victorian north porch was agreed upon. This porch is easily closed off from the main body of the church, allowing the display to remain open at all times (unless, of course, the snow comes in from the north when the doors can be closed).

The stones were removed from their plinths on the south wall with great care by specialist workers from Ainsworth Conservation and taken to Edinburgh to be conserved. Their eventual

return to Inveraven was welcomed but needed considerable effort, especially handling the largest of the stones, which had to be hoisted into the porch in an ingenious way before being fitted onto its bronze mounts. Another of the stones was found to be longer than thought as its pointed base had been concreted in, and an adjustment had to be made rather quickly for its place amidst the other three.

The sensor-operated lighting in the porch is a great success, and the carving details of the stones are accentuated beautifully. When the stones were on the south wall, it was only in the low light of spring and autumn that the carvings could be really seen – now they can be appreciated all year round.

Since the brown tourist attraction signs have been erected on the A95 (on the line of 1792 toll road) it has been a great surprise to see just how many people have followed the narrow road that winds down to the church to discover a little haven and a legacy of ancient times beside an old course of the River Spey. For some, it is their first introduction to Pictish art, for others we hope that the placing of our four symbols stones is both appropriate and respectful. *TL*

Rodney's Stone: Art and heritage conservation in the landscape

Rodney's Stone is a highly-accomplished cross-slab, likely to have been carved at some point during the first three quarters of the 8th century. Named in commemoration of the 18th-century naval hero Admiral Sir George Rodney, it is situated in the grounds of Brodie Castle, Moray, now owned by the National Trust for Scotland.

The monument's life history is complex and peripatetic. At various times since its creation it has occupied at least four different locations and has served as a recumbent grave marker, hidden under shifting sands, rested propped against a church wall, and stood by a village thoroughfare. It was placed in its current position in the 1830s by William, 22nd Brodie of Brodie, forming part of a picturesque landscape design which softened the linear formality of the 18th-century policies. Its placement alongside one of the estate's new, curving entrance drives fit into a wider, contemporary phenomenon in which antiquities were introduced into landscaping schemes as contemplative foci, embodying Romantic philosophical conceptions of the

historical past and its relationship to place and landscape.

Around 1970 a commercial plantation of Sitka Spruce was established within a few metres of Rodney's Stone. Over the decades, the trees grew to form a dark, solid mass behind the monument, creating a rather claustrophobic setting. The plantation also created more serious problems, the lack of air movement and light in the immediate environs encouraging the growth of moss and algae on the stone.

The situation altered drastically in 2005, when a winter storm blew down a substantial part of the plantation, necessitating the felling of the remaining trees. The area was replanted with a mixture of native broadleaved trees at a greater distance from the stone, thus allowing it more space to breathe and greatly improving conditions in terms of aesthetics and conservation conditions. Specialist conservation assessment confirmed that in present climatic conditions the stone could remain in its current location. However, given that the removal of the plantation had opened Rodney's Stone up to the prevailing wind once more, and that the new woodland would take some 15 years to give

renewed protection, I felt it advisable to mitigate the potential for erosion of the carvings by providing temporary protection in the form of a windbreak.

Having considered various options, I decided a dried willow screen would be the best solution. Among other positive considerations, the textures and colours of natural materials would be appropriate in a landscape context, and the screen would naturally degrade over time – indeed, it will probably need to be replaced once over the 15-year period. At a philosophical level, I found particularly appealing the fact that the withy-weaving craft tradition would be entirely familiar to the communities for whom the monument was created, and that the screen's woven texture would complement the interlace patterns of the cross and the biting beasts surrounding it.

The result has been a wonderful blend of functional conservation measures and artistic endeavour. Over a period of three weeks, Fife artist Jon Warnes created a sculptural willow screen behind Rodney's Stone, phasing the work to allow as many people as possible the opportunity to see the work in progress. The sinuous form of the windbreak mimics the curlicues of the Pictish beast and great sea monsters depicted on the stone; the latter are also reflected in the openwork designs woven into the screen, which permit glimpses of the cross slab from the woodland trails approaching the site. The great challenge was not to overwhelm the monument – thus we chose to drop the height of the windbreak at either end, and to keep the area immediately behind the stone very plain.

The setting of Rodney's Stone has changed yet again, as the willow screen has created an intimate, almost theatrical space in which to appreciate the monument. This will, of course, represent the briefest of moments in its ongoing life history, but its protective function should help to ensure that we will be able to enjoy its wonderful carvings for many years to come.

Shannon Fraser

Shannon Fraser is the National Trust for Scotland's Archaeologist for Eastern Scotland. The grounds of Brodie Castle, near Forres, are open to the public year round.

Congash: Who did what and when?

Ron Dutton's article about the Congash stones (*PAS Newsletter* 66) sheds some fresh light on them but also poses a few interesting questions. Although there is much speculation throughout his piece, this does not influence his conclusion which is admirably circumspect and un-contentious. The evidence on which it is based is clear enough, although gleaned from two 'rather fuzzy photographs' (his figures 3 and 4), their lack of quality being due probably to poor reproduction rather than any defect in the original negatives. It should be noted that the reproductions themselves have deteriorated further having gone through yet another method of reproduction and printing to appear in *PAS Newsletter*.

Romilly Allen visited Congash sometime during the last ten days of July 1890 when he was staying at Nairn to record the carved stones in the area. He was obviously impressed with the Congash stones and their site, as he reported:

> Of the other stones seen whilst at Nairn, the two at Congash appeared to me of the greatest interest, as being *in situ*, and forming the jambs of the entrance to a small enclosure, which, from the name of the field, "Parc an Chapel [Caipel]," was probably an ancient burial ground. The place would be well worth exploring thoroughly. (1891, 427)

Writing later in ECMS he appears less certain about their position:

> The two stones at Congash, which seem to be *in situ*, are placed vertically on each side of the entrance to an enclosure containing a small chapel. (ECMS, II, 24)

Further on, in the ECMS catalogue entry for Congash, he seems to have lost his enthusiasm for the stones being *in situ,* but more confident about the site:

> The two symbols [sic] form the jambs of the entrance to what has evidently been an old burial-ground 7. (ECMS, III, 97)

At that time, not only was the enclosure 'filled' with field clearance but it was also 'thickly overgrown with birch trees' (ibid). Trees growing at the site are variously indicated on the nineteenth-century OS maps.

Allen's drawings of the Congash symbol stones (ECMS, III, figs 98 & 99a) show nothing of their surroundings or setting other than indicating the ground level, which, in the case of Congash 2 is immediately below the termination of the lower symbol. They also have in outline the hidden portion of each stone below the ground, which can only have been determined by excavating in front of the stones, but they would not have had to be moved for his specific purposes:

> My method has been to make sketches of the stones, with all the necessary dimensions and notes, supplemented by rubbings of the sculptured designs. (1891, 423)

Photography he left to others. Not that he wasn't interested in the medium – quite the contrary – in fact he had a grand plan for its use:

> I would urge upon the Society [of Antiquaries of Scotland] the desirability of forming a complete collection of permanent prints and negatives, not only of the early Sculptured Stones, but of other classes of national antiquities. Amateur photographers might render very valuable assistance, in contributing specimens of their work towards such a collection. (1897, 152)

To understand how he was going to achieve this for the sculptured stones, it is worth quoting in full his eminently practical approach:

> As so few photographs were already available, it was obviously necessary to have the greater part of the stones, more particularly those in remote districts, taken specially. In order to do this two courses were open — (1) to secure the services of a competent photographer and get him to take the whole of the stones, in which case it would be necessary to pay his travelling and hotel expenses in addition to the cost of procuring the negatives; or (2) to employ the best local photographer in each district. Whichever alternative was adopted, the photographer would require to have a knowledge of the stones before-hand, or to receive directions from someone who was thoroughly acquainted with the positions, surroundings, size, and condition of the monuments, so as to be able to say whether preparations would have to be made previously by cleaning the surfaces of the monuments, by removing the earth accumulated round the base, or by any other precaution to secure a satisfactory result. **If it had been possible to find someone who combined a knowledge of archaeology with the skill of an accomplished photographer, and also was a man of resource in devising special expedients to meet each difficulty, he might have been entrusted to carry out the whole of the work**. Unfortunately, however, such a person was not forthcoming, and as it would have doubled the travelling expenses to send a professional photographer round to all the stones under the personal supervision of an archaeologist, it was decided to employ a local photographer in each district and to give him the necessary instructions by letter. I accordingly ascertained the names of the best-known local photographers, and got them to give estimates for taking negatives of certain stones in their own immediate neighbourhoods. (Allen 1894, 153–54)

In 1894, Allen reported on the work he had done the previous year 'in getting together a fairly representative series of photographs of the sculptured stones of Scotland with symbols and Celtic ornament, earlier than A.D. 1100'. This dealt exclusively with 'the monuments in the northern half of Scotland' and he hoped to complete the southern half by the end of the year (1894, 15). He provides 'a list of the monuments of which I have been able to purchase photographic prints, or of which I have been given prints by amateurs', but the Congash stones are absent from it.

Someone who did possess all the qualities that Allen was looking for (see section in bold type above) was Robert C Graham of Skipness. He spent many years visiting Islay to record the island's early medieval and medieval sculptured stones culminating in 1895 with the publication of his book *The Carved Stones of Islay*.

Where possible, he directly photographed 'large standing crosses, and stones where the cutting was very deep', otherwise he made paper moulds which were then cast in plaster to be photographed in studio conditions – 'undoubtedly the best way of reproducing these time-worn and weather-beaten designs, as there is always a possibility of error in the most skilled free-hand drawing' (1895, vi). He seems to have pioneered this method for reproducing images of carved stones, which soon after was adopted by John Stirling Maxwell for his volume on the Govan stones (1899). Romilly Allen was a keen advocate too, especially 'where the stone is unfavourably situated, or much weathered, or overgrown by lichen', then satisfactory results can be obtained by 'the only effective method — making casts and photographing from the cast' (ECMS, I, vi). An example is the photograph of a cast made by Graham of the cross-slab at Kilfinan, Argyll, reproduced in ECMS (III, fig.409).

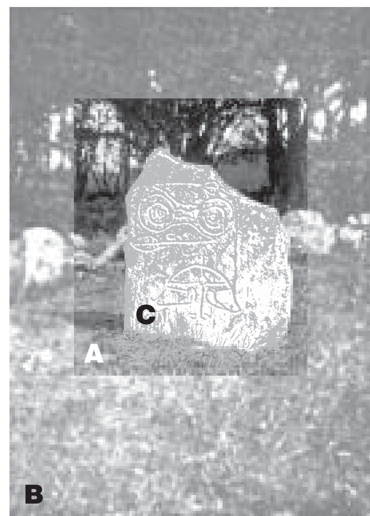
Graham's Islay survey furnished him with an excellent pedigree, proving him to be a skilful and resourceful recorder. No one at that time better understood the practicalities and problems of photographing carved stones. Faced with the difficulties presented by the siting of Congash 2, he surely would not have hesitated to move it to achieve a good result and, one imagines, he would have reset it when he had finished. To move the stone, he must have had the blessing of John McAinsh, the farmer of Congash, whose 'courtesy' on the occasion of Allen's visit was acknowledged, and who took a proprietorial interest in the stones, Allen stating that they 'are looked after carefully by him' (ECMS, III, 97).

The photograph of Congash 2 credited to Graham in ECMS still exists and a digital copy of it (Item SC 910734) can be viewed online at Canmore:

<http://www.rcahms.gov.ukcanmore.html>.

The broad date for the collection it is in is given as 1890–1903. Allen had no photograph of the Congash stones by 1894, so the one of Congash 2 was probably taken after that and certainly well before publication of ECMS in 1903. Ron Dutton states that Graham was 'active locally in the summer of 1895', so that date for the photograph seems to be a reasonable speculation. According to Allen (ECMS III, 105) in August 1895 Graham made 'a long hunt' for the lost Lynchurn symbol stone at the farm where it was discovered on the west bank of the Spey not far north of Boat of Garten. He certainly photographed stones at other Speyside sites and supplied Allen with rubbings and photographs of the Knockando stones (ECMS III, 128) and a photograph of Inveraven 1, which was reproduced in ECMS (III, fig.158). He was probably working independently then as there is no record of his photographs being commissioned by Allen as was the case with professional photographers.

When the background is restored to the Congash 2 cut-out in ECMS, it becomes obvious that the photograph is identical to the one reproduced in Forsyth's book, although the digital copy is more drastically cropped. It is shown here superimposed in the illustration below. The quality of the original photograph is good and clearly shows trees growing at the site and, to the left of the symbol stone, what seems to be the trunk of a fallen birch.



Three images from one source:
A *The cropped original*
B *Reproduction in Forsyth*
C *Area of ECMS cut-out*

At the time, photographs of carved stones were extremely rare and apparently none existed of the Congash stones. It is unthinkable, therefore that Graham did not photograph both stones on his visit and one can only conclude that he too was responsible for the image of Congash 1 reproduced by Forsyth.

Dutton's surmise that the Congash pictures would need to have been taken by a 'photographer with a passionate interest in the stones' is spot on, but his 'analysis' of the 'photographs' (in reality the reproductions of them in Forsyth's book) leading him to suggest that the camera was 'unsophisticated' is not borne out by the surviving original photograph of Congash 2, which is of fine quality. Graham, the 'photographer laird'[1] – a man of means and of serious intent, would not have lugged inferior equipment around Scotland. He was an excellent photographer who also secured the best possible means of reproducing his work, as attested by the magnificent photogravure plates in *The Carved Stones of Islay*. Although, nowadays, he would be regarded as an 'enthusiastic amateur', he was thoroughly professional in his approach to recording carved stones. It was a passion he shared with Romilly Allen and the two men had great respect for one another apparent in their very enthusiastic and complimentary published reviews of each other's major work (Allen 1895[2]; Graham 1904). *DH*

Notes

1 Described thus in the caption of a photograph taken in 1881, reproduced in Graham, A 1993.

2 Although *The Reliquary's* reviewer of Graham's *magnum opus* is anonymous, Allen was the journal's editor and the review bears his unmistakable stamp of authority.

References

ECMS = Allen, J R & Anderson, J *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*. Edinburgh: Soc Antiq Scot, 1903.

Allen, J Romilly, 1891. Report on the Sculptured Stones older than A.D. 1100, with Symbols and Celtic Ornament, in the District of Scotland, North of the River Dee; obtained under the Victoria Jubilee Gift of His Excellency Dr. R. H. Gunning, F.S.A. Scot. *PSAS*, 25 (1890–91), 422–31.

—— 1894. Report on the Photographs of the Sculptured Stones earlier than A.D. 1100, in the district of Scotland north of the River Dee, obtained under the Jubilee Gift of His Excellency Dr R. H. Gunning, F.S.A. Scot. *PSAS*, 28 (1893–94), 150–77.

—— 1895 (ed). 'The Carved Stones of Islay'. *The Reliquary and Illustrated Archaeologist*, new series, 1 (1895), 242–44.

—— 1897. Report on the Photography of the Sculptured Stones earlier than A.D. 1100, in the District of Scotland south of the river Dee; obtained under the Jubilee Gift of His Excellency Dr. R. H. Gunning, LL.D., F.S.A. Scot. *PSAS*, 31 (1896–97), 147–52.

Graham, Angus 1993. (Joanna Gordon ed) *Skipness: Memories of a Highland Estate* Edinburgh: Canongate.

Graham, Robert C, 1895. *The Carved Stones of Islay*. Glasgow: Maclehose.

—— 1904. 'The Catalogue of the The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland'. *The Scottish Historical Review*, 1, no.1 (1904), 58–61.

Maxwell, John Stirling, 1899. *Sculptured Stones in the Kirkyard of Govan.* Glasgow: Privately published.

Ann Watters MBE, 1926–2013

Ann Watters was a stalwart of Kirkcaldy civic life, running at least two or three organisations at one time, like a kindly general. In Pictish circles, Ann was synonymous with the Save Wemyss Ancient Caves Society (SWACS).

A founder member and driving force of the society, she helped draw the world's attention to these precious yet often neglected caves on the Fife coast. When Channel 4's Time Team came to Fife to excavate and make a programme on the Wemyss Caves in 2004, Ann mobilised a whole team of volunteers to assist, determined to get the whole community involved.

For many years, she ran Open Days for the caves, with guided tours and slide shows in the basement of East Wemyss School, which became a permanent exhibition and visitor centre.

Although we didn't always see eye to eye on the origin of some of the cave's carvings, I had the privilege of working with her for many years as a member of the steering committee of SWACS and as a guide. She was never deterred by politics or pressure and persisted with her vision.

Ann spoke at PAS events in the early years of the Society, and always took the opportunity to present the importance of the Wemyss Caves on the world stage. As some say, she was a force to be reckoned with! *ML*

PAS Newsletter 68

The deadline for receipt of material is

Saturday 17 Auguat 2013

Please email contributions to the editor

john.borland@rcahms.gov.uk

PAS Annual Conference – Saturday 5 October 2013 – AK Bell Library, Perth

Southern Picts, Southern Neighbours

Programme:

9.30 – 10.00 Registration & coffee

10.00 Welcome

Morning session: Chair **Jill Harden**

10.10 **Christopher Bowles:** Trusty's Hill, Galloway: The Context for a Pictish Inscription in Southern Scotland

10.50 **Katherine Forsyth:** How 'Pictish' are the symbols at Trusty's Hill?

11.30 **Nicholas Evans:** Bede and Northumbrian Views of Pictish History and Society

12.10 **Adrian Maldonado:** Whithorn, Kirkmadrine and the archaeology of *Magnum monasterium*

12.50 – 14.00 Lunch

Help us celebrate PAS's 25th anniversary!

14.00 AGM

Afternoon session: Chair **Barbara Crawford**

14.40 **Peter Drummond:** Some Brittonic hill- and settlement-names in southern Scotland

15.20 **Courtney Buchanan:** Scandinavians in Strathclyde (title TBC)

16.00 **Anne Crone:** Auldhame – an Anglian monastic settlement (title TBC)

16.40 Closing remarks

Please book early using the fom below

PAS Annual Conference Booking Borm

Southern Picts, Southern Neighbours

Saturday 5 October 2013 – A K Bell Library, Perth

Name ....

Address ....

....

.... Postcode ....

Contact phone/email...

Fee (includes lunch) £25 (concession £20)

Number for Conference: Full .... Concession ....

Total Enclosed £ ....

Please detach and return completed form with remittance (made payable to: Pictish Arts Society) to:

Hugh Coleman (PAS Treasurer), 19 Urie Crescent, Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire AB39 2DY

If you wish tickets to be posted to you, please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope