THE PICTISH ARTS SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER 61 WINTER 2011

PAS Conference 2011
'Picts on the move'

The 2011 conference was held on 1 October at the Carnegie Conference Centre in Dunfermline. This year, we explored the topic 'Picts on the Move', with seven speakers using evidence from archaeology, early historic documents and, of course, images from carved Pictish stones to examine transportation and mobility in Pictish times.

Our first speaker, Professor Jane Geddes of the History of Art Department at the University of Aberdeen, opened the morning with the question 'Who are the Hoodies? – An examination of the iconography of St Vigeans 11'. The face of the stone under consideration shows two enthroned male figures in conversation. Above them, two flying feet protruding from the edge of a long tunic are all that remains of a third figure. Below the seated figures, two hooded figures, grasping staffs walk towards each other.

Beginning with the upper figures, and comparing them with groups on other stones and early medieval examples from manuscript sources, Professor Geddes suggested that the two seated figures with the flying one above a represent the Trinity. This representation seems to be derived ultimately from a representation of two emperors surmounted by a flying victory on a gold solidus of Magnus Maximus, issued at London sometime between AD383-388. This formed the model for a number of Anglo-Saxon coin issues, with the group of figures clearly visible on coins of Alfred (871-99) and Ceolfrith (874-80). In Pictish representations, there is a far greater sense of movement in the flying beings than in Anglo-Saxon or continental representations. This type of image seems to have become fashionable in northern Europe around AD800, probably in response to a resurgence in the Adoptionist view that Jesus was born human and became divine at his baptism. This was declared heresy at the council of Nicaea, but resurfaced in Spain in the 8th century and was vigorously combatted by the Carolingian clergy. St Vigeans 11 may indicate that the church here was very much aware of current controversy in continental Europe.

Hooded figures elsewhere in Pictland have been seen as possibly apostle figures, or founding fathers of a religious site. Professor Geddes suggests that those at St Vigeans may represent rogation walkers: celebrants of a ritual procession round the fields to ask for protection for the crops. These processions originated in the church of Merovingian Gaul. Held three days before Ascension, they were distinct from the blessing of crops celebrated in the Roman church on 25th April (the Greater Litany). The latter seems to have replaced a pagan Roman festival with the same aim. Adomnan describes what appears to be a similar procession for the blessing of the crops, but gives no indication of the date on which it was celebrated.

Friction within the church caused by holding similar celebrations at different times was resolved in the early ninth century, when both the Greater Litany and Rogation were recognised by both the southern and northern areas of the church. If the hoodies on St Vigeans 11 do represent Rogation walkers, we may have here a programme of carving which links the church at St Vigeans with the resolution of controversies which exercised clerics in Carolingian Europe, at around the time when the stones were probably carved. The walkers on St Vigeans 11, as well as the Trinity, may be evidence for the close connection of the church in Pictland with mainland Europe.

Roger Mercer, a former Secretary of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and an Honorary Professor of the Universities of Durham and Edinburgh delivered the second talk. Describing 'Early Medieval Sea Transport in Northern Waters', he traced the evidence for sea transport around the coasts of Britain from the Bronze Age onwards.

Regular crossing of the North Sea required the technology to build sturdy boats and to sail close to the wind. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that most archaeological evidence points to early sea-borne trade following a path across the channel, looping on a north/south axis around Ireland or through the Irish Sea. Amber from Early Bronze Age sites in Britain probably came

from east coast beaches, rather than the Baltic. Archaeological evidence provides some evidence for the type of vessel in use. Remains of boats of planks sewn together with leather or withies and caulked with moss have been found in the Humber, at Dover, in south Wales and Ireland, dating from the period around 2000-750BC, and point to their involvement in this coastal trade. From Denmark, the Hjortspring boat was a clinker-built wooden vessel designed as a large canoe excavated from a moss in southern Denmark. The boat may have held around 30-40 men, and could have developed speeds of up to six knots under oar. Its shape was well adapted to use in creeks and sheltered waters, rather than in the open sea. Ireland has yielded the exquisite Broighter boat, a seven-inch long gold model found with a hoard of other gold items near Limavaddy in Northern Ireland. Dated to the first century AD, the boat has fittings including two sets of nine oars, a mast and steering oar.

In the early Roman period in Britain, the pattern of cross channel movement was still in evidence, although nailed, ribbed vessels are in evidence. By around the end of the second century AD, evidence for ships coming from the north-east begins to appear.

Denmark and the mouths of the Rhine and Elbe have been identified as the source of these seafarers. The Saxon shore forts of England seem to have been a response to this movement of raiding seafarers from the east.

The royal ship burial at Sutton Hoo, possibly that of Raedwald who died in AD624, contained evidence of a clinker-built, riveted boat, possibly similar to the Nydam boat from Southern Denmark. This had a keel and five strakes, with fifteen pairs of fairly short oars. These boats belong in the Scandinavian tradition, but may well have been the models for Alfred's navy, built in response to invasion from the Scandinavian area. As raiding across the North Sea increased, the Northern Isles became a logical stopping point on the way south through the Western Isles to Ireland and beyond to the continent. There is no reason to believe that, if they did not already have sufficient boats capable of action against the Norsemen, the Picts would have refrained from building some.

Although we have no archaeological evidence of seagoing boats from Pictish territories, it is possible to assess the materials and technologies that would have been required for their manufacture. There is no reason to believe that the Picts should have been exceptional among northern peoples in lacking the technologies required. Certainly the material: oak, willow, pine for wedges and oar blades, and iron were all available. It is worth noting that the Viking ships of Roskilde bear witness to the spread of shipbuilding. Skuldelev 2, a magnificent warship, was built of Irish oak from the Dublin area in the mid-eleventh century.

Liz Cole-Hamilton, whose area of expertise lies in maritime and coastal archaeology, then drew our attention to 'The Jonathan's Cave boat carving: a problem of contexts'.

The carving on the east wall of Jonathan's Cave, one of the Wemyss caves on the south coast of Fife, has long been accepted as a representation of a boat dating to the period of the Pictish symbols on the west wall of the cave. With raised prow and stern post, four oars are visible, and the single figure appears to handle a steering oar at the stern. The figure is indistinct, almost feminine in appearance, although this may be due to flaking of the rock in this area. The boat does seem to belong in the same tradition as the Scandinavian boats described in the previous paper.

However, there are some problems with this particular image. The attention of antiquaries was drawn to the carvings in the Wemyss caves by Sir James Simpson in *Notices of Some Ancient Sculptures on the Walls of Caves in Fife*, first published in 1866 and recently reissued. Although Simpson's detailed descriptions of the carvings he found on the walls of the caves at Wemyss sparked a great deal of interest, neither he nor such careful observers as John Stuart and Christian Maclagan (whose accounts of the caves appeared in 1876) or Romilly Allen (who described his observations in the *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*) mention the boat. Indeed, they both stated that there were no carvings on the eastern wall of Jonathan's cave.

The first to publish notice of the boat in Jonathan's cave was John Patrick, a baker who eventually became a highly respected photographer, with businesses in Fife before moving to Edinburgh in 1884. He took his sons into partnership, opened another branch in Kirkcaldy, and finally moved back to Fife to live with his daughter, Mrs Jessie Finlay, in 1917. Patrick was self-taught but well read, and respected in

antiquarian circles. He was 70 years old when his account of the Wemyss Caves was published in 1906. Patrick was one of those who believed that Pictish carvings were Viking in origin. His discovery of the boat in Jonathan's cave could be seen as lending weight to this belief. His daughter was to win the Chalmers-Jervise prize for 1924 awarded by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland for her account of the discovery in 1902. Her essay was the only entry that year and was not published. It is a rather fanciful account, containing details of her reactions at the time of discovery, which do not match with a location in Jonathan's Cave. That she and the family were, by 1902, already familiar with the caves at Wemyss is apparent from a talk given by herself and her brother to the Edinburgh Photographic Society in 1894.

We are left with a nagging suspicion that the boat may not be a genuine carving. Others who were intent on finding carved images had examined the walls of Jonathan's Cave, but none had noticed this single large feature on the east wall. That it should eventually be found by someone who almost certainly had visited the cave before, and who viewed the carvings with the eye of a respected photographer and artist, is noteworthy. Is it possible that it is an enhanced natural feature, which Patrick saw as only needing a little clarification to be a convincing boat? There is a real need for a method of dating the carving for any degree of certainty about the veracity of the claim that this is a Pictish boat.

The afternoon opened with Robert Mowat on 'Pictish Watercraft: An exercise in speculative archaeology'. Many members may be familiar with his magisterial monograph on 'The Logboats of Scotland', published in 1996. His first slide was of the logboat found on Carpow bank on the Tay in 2001 and excavated in 2006. This may have been dated to the late Bronze Age, but 'once you've seen one, you've pretty well seen the lot'. The logboat, changing little in form over many centuries, may have been a common workboat, but was certainly one particularly likely to be preserved for future recovery. In this paper, Mr Mowat went on to consider other types of watercraft that may well have been familiar to the Picts, but were less likely to leave traces in the archaeological record, and to suggest likely location where judicious excavation may yet recover traces of waterborne Picts.

He started by dealing with three important determinants of material culture: purpose (do I have a need for this object?), capability (can I use it?) and selection (do I have better use for my time or resources than making it?). Given the relatively high proportion of coastline and inland waters to total land area, the Picts could certainly have found a use for boats. Indeed, in the era before extensive draining of the land for agriculture, water transport was the most practical way of making most journeys.

There is no reason to believe that the Picts did not have access to the same tools and technologies as their neighbours, although there is a distinct shortage of these in the archaeological records. Indirect evidence for their existence is to be found in the heavy timber framework dating to around AD800, found by Alcock in his excavations at Dumbarton. In terms of materials, the northern limits of oak, elm and hazel at 3000BC were from Argyll, just north of the Trossachs and Strathmore. In the Pictish period, the limit may have been somewhat further south. Archaeologically, there is evidence for early waterborne trade.

The two Pictish boats – that from Jonathan's Cave (if we may accept it) and that from the Cossans stone could be skin boats. We know from literary sources that skin boats were in use in the west, and Tim Severin's 'Brendan' voyage showed how well large versions of such vessels could cope with the open sea. Typically, however, the materials of which these boats were constructed do not survive in the archaeological record in Scotland.

The intertidal zones of the great estuaries, which deeply indent the Scottish coast, were highly productive of fish and shellfish. Great stands of reeds not only provided useful material for thatching, but were also home to many bird species. They were also dangerous for anyone who attempted to harvest these resources on foot. Craft of shallow draught would have been invaluable in these areas, and around the boggy margins of many inland waters. Coracles, the traditional skin boats whose use survives in some parts of Britain today, are eminently practical in such situations: light, portable and stackable, much as are the modern workboats of the Royal Engineers. However, these very rarely leave any trace. Where the oak logboat has a high survival, it has some limitations from the point of view of the user. Over 90% of the original timber mass

has to be removed in fashioning the craft, and the maximum size is dictated by the size of the available trees.

The stability of a single logboat may leave something to be desired, but if larger or awkward loads are to be transported, two or more boats could be joined in the form of a catamaran to give greater capacity and stability.

Mr Mowat conjured up a magnificent image of the Sutton Hoo burial ship as a Viking 'Temeraire', an old warship on her last voyage. It seems quite reasonable to suppose that by the late sixth century the Picts were not only aware of such craft, but were capable of building them. It is possible that some traces may still be found. Waterfront excavations elsewhere have yielded evidence for older boats incorporated in the development of waterfront structures. Perhaps we should deliberately seek out possible locations for sites such as Kaupang in Norway, where an early historic period port and market settlement has been excavated. Two suggestions were on the seaward side of the basin at Montrose, and on the waterfront at Perth, both places where ports continued to develop through the Middle Ages.

Professor Ian Ralston, who has worked extensively on fortified sites in Britain and France, is perhaps best known to PAS members for his work on the fortified and hilltop sites of Angus and for his work at Burghead. He talked on 'Burghead and Other Promontories: The Picts and The Sea'. Burghead, at over two hectares in size, is one of many walled, coastal promontory sites. A number of these provided easy access to the sea, such as Dun Mingulay and the Mull of Galloway. There is a need for more exploratory work at a selection of such sites. One southern example of such a site, which clearly served as a port for traders, was Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour in Dorset. It seems likely that a judicious search would uncover evidence of others.

On the Cotentin peninsula of France, the tradition of small ports, where ships beached rather than anchored and were loaded or unloaded from the beach rather than alongside a wharf, have yielded evidence of early trade to metal detection in the intertidal zone. It is possible that such techniques, applied to the beaches in the vicinity of our northern coastal promontory sites, might prove fruitful.

Burghead is only one of a number of Pictish periods sites from the east coast. It is possible that along with Dunnicaer, Castle Point and Green Castle, it formed part of a single system. These sites would all be suitable targets for further work. It is worth noting that the Annals of Tigernach, at AD779 record the wreck of 150 Pictish ships on Ros (Troup Head?).

At the earlier site of Dunagoil and at Little Dunagoil on Bute, there is clear evidence for seaborne trade. This complex is only one of a series of important sites on or near the coastline.

In this brief paper, Professor Ralston pointed out a large number of target sites which would repay investigation into the extent of Pictish use of the sea. He reinforced the view of earlier speakers that the Picts had the materials and the technology to build their own boats to the standards known from archaeological sites elsewhere in Britain and northern Europe.

Currently a tutor the University of Glasgow's Open Programme, Irene Hughson's interest in Pictish horses dates back to a question asked of her by Professor Leslie Alcock: 'How long would it take a mounted messenger to get from Nechtansmere to Carlisle?' While an answer for 20th-century horses in a 20th-century landscape could be estimated, it was not so easy to answer the question for the messenger who carried the news of Ecgfrith's death to his Queen and St Cuthbert. Mrs Hughson shared her thoughts on 'The Picts on Horseback: evidence from the sculptured stones'. Starting with one of the liveliest of Pictish carvings, the handsome, spirited, little horse at Inverurie, we have the representation of 'a jaunty wee mare with *no* hairy fetlocks'. Indeed, all the horses shown on Pictish stones are obviously well trained, well set up, elegant, riding horses and definitely not the wee, hairy, stumpy ponies favoured by illustrators as 'Celtic ponies'. There is no evidence at all for these on the stones, which represent the largest and most consistent pictorial corpus for this whole period, although only for the later part of the Pictish era. The carving is generally of a high quality, and there is no reason not to accept their testimony as reliable witness.

There have been no wild horses in Scotland at least since the last Ice Age. There is evidence for domesticated horses by the mid 4th millennium BC in Ukraine. Although domestication almost certainly happened in the Western Steppes, it is likely that there was more than one centre at which this occurred, giving at least four different lineages that can be traced in the

modern horse. By the early Iron Age, the use of horses had spread east to China and as far west as Britain. The large, clean-limbed, elegant, Bactrian horses were preferred for riding; ponies were used to draw chariots and somewhat larger beasts drew carts. The Battle-Axe people brought Bactrian horses to middle Europe, where they became an integral part of Celtic cultural identity.

While the Picts had fine riding horses, there is little evidence for any smaller or sturdier beasts. It should be noted that bone does not survive well in the archaeological record, so this is yet another case where absence of evidence cannot be taken as evidence of absence. A reasonable amount of horse furniture has been found over the years, and the range of size of bits does suggest that there was probably a variety of equines, from little pack ponies to elegant riding horses, present in Pictish times.

Before considering what the Picts used horses for, it is worth noting that there is evidence from as early as 1200BC for fighting on horseback (recorded in a Hittite manual of horsemanship). While certain weapons such as the battleaxe and the mace would be difficult if not impossible to use without stirrups, they are not otherwise necessary. Indeed, stirrups can increase the danger of the rider being dislodged backwards and dragged with fatal consequence.

The adolescent hobby of raiding neighbours' cattle would have required well-trained horses, and, at least in part, would have provided a chance to practice the skills young Picts might require on a battlefield. There, the cavalry would probably have been at least as important in intimidating foot soldiers as in playing a direct role in the fighting. Images of mounted police in recent London riots were offered as an example.

Hunting was certainly a way of displaying equestrian skill. The hunt, displayed on several of the stones, may be seen as an integral part of Pictish culture. It provided a place for males to meet, and the excitement of the hunt would have been instrumental in the process of early historic networking and profile raising that helped to create and cement alliances.

Horses also had a processional value, adding to the ceremonial expression of power (another type of scene depicted on the stones). Here again, only fine riding horses appear – hairy wee ponies simply are not impressive.

The best estimate of size from the stone carvings is that the Pictish horses averaged about 14 hands high, slightly smaller than the average throughout most of the medieval period, compared with modern racehorses which average around 17 hands. The only carved stone which does show small hairy ponies is the Roman example from Bridgeness – an earlier example from a different culture.

Horses are delicate animals. They need just the right grass, or they will sicken. Their teeth and feet need care; they need shelter from the elements and protection from predators. Keeping fine riding ponies requires resources and leisure (or careful grooms who are dedicated to the care of their charges).

And how long would it take to get from Nechtansmere to Carlisle? The message could be carried in the time allotted by Bede, but would require at least two changes of mount. Although horses can cover long distances, care is required not to overwork them as this will inevitably lead to dehydration and deoxygenation of the muscles, leading to the horse foundering and possibly dying. This would be based on an Angus location for Nechtansmere rather than Badenoch, which would have been too far for the messenger to cover the distance in the allotted time.

The final paper of the day was given by John Borland, Measured Survey Manager at the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and was titled 'A new 'chariot' carving in Northern Pictland'. The image of a Pictish horse-drawn vehicle on Meigle 10, perhaps a chariot but more likely a carriage, has long been considered unique in Pictish art, making it both special and enigmatic.

In fact the carriage on Meigle 10 was probably never unique. A lost stone from Newtyle was described as having a similar horse-drawn vehicle but sadly it was never recorded pictorially. But even taking this second likely example into account, depictions of carriages or chariots remain rare and unusual. If the Pictish elite travelled by carriage, then we might expect them to occur as frequently as a hunt scene on cross-slabs. Or if Pictish chieftains used chariots to wage war, we might expect them to occur as frequently as mounted warriors or foot soldiers? So their rarity leaves unanswered questions.

The Hendersons tentatively put forward a biblical significance for the carriage on

Meigle 10, suggesting that if the man-eating beast on the right represents Hell, then the carriage transporting its occupants away from it could represent redemption, noting the carriage wheel has 12 spokes – a number with obvious Christian connotations. However they do concede this is speculative and not particularly persuasive.

Despite the rarity of carriage or chariot carvings in Pictland, there is a growing body of evidence from the archaeological record including linch pins, button and loop fasteners, harness components and terrets, dating from the Roman period up to the seventh century, suggesting that horse-drawn vehicles were not uncommon.

The enigma of Meigle 10 is further compounded by the fact that the stone was destroyed by fire in 1869, leaving us with only the antiquarian record, which thankfully is fulsome. Meigle 10 was examined and drawn by antiquarians on at least five occasions over a period of more than 100 years: Gordon in 1726, Pennant in 1772, Hibbert c1830, Chalmers in 1842 and Stuart in 1856. Graham Ritchie published an essay in *The worm, the germ and the thorn* comparing these records, rating the likely reliability of each antiquarian illustrator.

Drawing on Ritchie's paper, Mr Borland made a comparison of the Meigle 10 illustrations noting how the more perceptive documenters picked up on the fact that the carving depicted a vehicle being pulled by a pair of horses, side by side. He drew attention to a particular detail, a small doughnut-like feature apparently attached to the reins.

The newly discovered carriage carving is on the Skinnet cross slab, now on display in Caithness Horizons in Thurso. The stone was found in 1861 at Skinnet chapel, Halkirk by Thomas Muir who described it as 'one of the greatest wonders in all Caithness'. By the time Romilly Allen recorded the slab in the 1890s it was lying in a pile of six pieces on the floor of Thurso Museum. Although subsequently reconstructed, much of the carriage carving was lost, leading to it never properly being identified until now.

Detailed recording carried out by RCAHMS last winter noted that the rider-less horse carved in shallow relief in the bottom right-hand corner of the stone is in fact a pair of rider-less horses. Running from the horse's neck is an incised line, clearly reins complete with the same circular feature as on Meigle 10. We are uncertain just what his feature is but it is clearly represents part of the paraphernalia of tackle or harness.

The presence of this detail could be enough to say these horses are pulling a vehicle but other details confirm this. If we follow the line of the incised reins they come to hands and arms carved in relief. Below, the right angle of a leg bent at the knee is also carved in relief: clearly the hands, arms and leg of a seated driver. Behind him, the surface of the stone is missing, lost when this cross-slab was shattered into pieces but on the far left, just before the slab's raised margin is an arc with two converging lines, clearly part of a wheel and two spokes. It is not possible to tell if this vehicle had passengers or an ornate rail or canopy like Meigle 10. Nor can we say if it is a civil or military vehicle. However we can say that such carvings are not a phenomenon peculiar to the Meigle area or to southern Pictland.

Our thanks go to Anna Ritchie who ably handled the proceedings of the conference by kindly chairing both the morning and afternoon sessions. *SH & JB*

Minutes of annual general meeting held on 1 October 2011

The Annual General Meeting of the Pictish Arts Society was held at the Carnegie Conference Centre, Dunfermline on Saturday 1 October at 1.45 pm to consider the following business:

1. Apologies for absence were received from Susan Seright, Molly Rorke, Isabel Henderson, Stewart Mowatt and Andrew Munro.

2. The minute of the 2010 AGM was accepted without dissent.

3. The annual report of the President, published in Newsletter 59 was accepted without question.

4. The Honorary Secretary's report was subsumed in the President's report in Newsletter 59.

5. The treasurer's report and annual accounts were presented. Irene Hughson proposed that these be accepted, seconded by Liz Tosh. There was no demur.

6. Eileen Brownlie proposed that Isabel Kay be asked to act as external examiner again. Nigel Ruckley seconded this motion.

7. The suggestion that we make no change to subscription rates was accepted.

8. Other Honorary Officers' Reports:

(a) The Membership Secretary reported that one hundred and twenty members paid their

subscriptions last year. Some members had indicated that they would no longer subscribe as they are finding it difficult to attend events such as the conference and the lecture series. The Society, in order to continue, needs a larger and stronger membership.

(b) The Editor, David Henry, noted that he had not been able to produce another volume of the Journal. However, the four quarterly issues of the Newsletter had appeared on schedule. He announced that he was standing down from the editorship and the committee with effect from this meeting. Irene Hughson noted how much she appreciated the work David has done over the years. She felt that, in David's capable hands, this had proved a way of keeping the membership informed about current work and general matters important to those interested in the Picts. This was met with general applause. The President noted that the Newsletter has been a major vehicle for communication, and that we owe a huge debt to David who has carried out his role as Editor in a most professional manner, and formally thanked him for all his work. (*David took over editorship in 2003 and has been responsible for nearly half of the Society's Newsletters; 29 out of the total 60 produced since the first issue in 1993*.)

9. Election of Honorary Officers:

David Henry, as Vice-President, took over the chair for the election of the President.

It should be noted that no names had been put forward, and no volunteers came forward, to stand for committee seats. Existing committee members, with the exception of David Henry, had indicated that they were prepared to stand again, although several noted that this would be the last time that they would do so. In each case, proposer and seconder are noted in parentheses after the name of the committee member/ honorary officer.

(a) President: Norman Atkinson (Irene Hughson, Ron Dutton)

(b) Two Vice Presidents: Stewart Mowatt (Anna Ritchie, Sheila Hainey)

(c) Secretary: Sheila Hainey (John Borland, Norman Atkinson)

(d) Treasurer: Andrew Munro (Sheila Hainey, Eileen Brownlie)

(e) Membership Secretary: Eileen Brownlie (Irene Hughson, Kevin Tolmie)

(f) Editor: John Borland (Marianna Lines, Sheila Hainey)

(g) Events Organiser

(h) Archivist

10. Election of Committee

Liz Tosh, Nigel Ruckley

11. Any other competent business.

Sheila Fraser noted that she was willing to organise events but not to sit on the committee, and was thanked by the President.

Graeme Cruikshank noted that he had approached Dr Jack Burt, who had been responsible for editing the Journal in the past, and thought that he would be willing to take on this role. It was agreed that the committee should approach him.

Graeme also exhibited a piece of Pictish-inspired pottery, from the former Holy Loch pottery at Kilmun, showing symbols including a bull and a snake and Z-rod.

It was noted that the committee have powers to co-opt any volunteers who wish to stand. *SH*

Members' events

As reported in the minutes of the AGM, one of our members has indicated that she would be willing to organise a talk and or a field trip in her area. The committee recognises that our members are spread over a large area, and it is not always convenient for them to attend meetings and conferences. We are also aware of the necessity of local knowledge when organising field trips. In view of this situation, we would like to encourage members to arrange local events where possible, but in order to run these under the aegis of the Pictish Arts Society, there are several steps that must be taken first.

The committee, as Trustees of the Society, is ultimately responsible for overseeing events, talks and publications carrying the Society's imprimatur as well as for the spending of Society funds. The committee will therefore need information about any planned event before it can be sanctioned and to ensure among other things that is covered by the Society's insurance. We need to know: where you intend to meet, what you intend to do, whom you have invited to talk. We also need to know how many PAS members, guests and members of the public you expect to attend. A full estimate of the costs, including VAT and any offsetting charges you propose, together with a full risk assessment should be submitted at least three months in advance for the committee's approval. Without

such approval, the Society will not be held responsible for any costs or any liabilities.

Once approved, details of the event (what, when and where) should be submitted to the newsletter editor for publication. The organiser would be responsible for any additional local advertising.

PAS Committee

No such thing as bad press?

It's always encouraging when the press picks up on anything to do with matters Pictish but as the following contributions show, their grasp of such matters can leave a lot to be desired.

The Great British Press Part 1: The Picts of Aberlady?

Something of a stir was created recently when the *Edinburgh Evening News* put out a story, occupying most of a page and including two photographs, under the banner headline 'Village gets its Pictish cross back after 1500-year break' (3 October). The village in question is Aberlady in East Lothian, on the south side of the Firth of Forth!

Evidence for the Picts south of the Forth is scant indeed: a Class I symbol stone found in Princes Street Gardens below Edinburgh Castle, in use as a footbridge, and a couple of *Pit* place-names. Moreover, the Picts didn't really do free-standing crosses, the one at Dupplin (which is at least partly Pictish) being very much an exception.

In early historic times, Aberlady lay in the territory of the Angles, and they did produce crosses, with tall slender shafts. That is exactly what has been erected now, in replica form. The original Aberlady cross exists only in fragmentary form: a portion of the shaft, which is squarish in section with decoration on all four faces: one figural, one borrowed from an illuminated manuscript, and two vine-scrolls, all being overtly Northumbrian in origin. So where do the Picts fit in?

The answer would seem to lie with the man responsible for the modern replica, sculptor Barry Grove, well known for his reproductions of Pictish stones, most notably the giant at Hilton of Cadboll. Somehow, his reputation in this field has resulted in the 'Pictish' tag being applied to his latest creation at Aberlady, which has rather bemused the Aberlady Conservation and History Society, who commissioned the work. Their Secretary, Ian Malcolm, assured me that they were in no way responsible for the howler.

The story was picked up by the local press, the East Lothian News publishing a photograph whose caption twice referred to the cross as 'Pictish' (7 October). A rather more thoughtful article by Kristy Gibbins appeared on the same day in the *East Lothian Courier* and made no such specious claim, its two photographs showing just how un-Pictish the Grove sculpture is.

I had a brief rejoinder in the letters column of the *Edinburgh Evening News* (10 October) – no academic conspiracy, it would seem, just some form of misunderstanding.

However, it seems there is at least one Pict in East Lothian. A successful rock band, which has gained quite a following over the last fifteen years or so, has taken the name 'The Picts'. They record for Pict Records Ltd, and their trademark is a handsome crescent and V-rod. Although Glasgow-based, one of their number, David Murray, comes from Morham just outside Haddington, and their latest live gig was a 'Halloween boogie' in Morham Village Hall. Now there is a true example of an East Lothian village with Pictish credentials!

Graeme Cruickshank
'Mormaer of the Loudons'

Editorial note: Given his undoubted knowledge of the subject, it is highly unlikely that this confusion originates from Barry Grove himself. More likely his reputation for Pictish sculpture preceded him and the journalists just latched on to the P word. *JB*

The Great British Press Part 2: Metropolis of the Posh Picts

Members who were lucky enough to attend the first of this winter's talks at Pictavia in October would have heard Dr Gordon Noble of Aberdeen University talk about his excavation beside the Craw Stane at Rhynie back in the spring (see p.9 for a report on that talk).

With the exciting results Gordon's team got, both in terms of dating evidence and artefacts, it is not surprising that the University's publicity machine swung into action and the story was picked up by at least two national newspapers, the *Times* and the *Daily Mail*.

Living up to its reputation for quality journalism, the *Times* gave a factual rundown of the excavation. Picking up on the high status nature of many of the artefacts, they titled the article 'Regal remnants hint at the life of posh Picts'. The article even includes a brief but accurate

précis of who the Picts were for the paper's general readership.

Under a large and eye-catching banner headline,'City of the Picts – Lost metropolis is revealed after 1600 years', the *Daily Mail* also lives up (down?) to its journalistic reputation for sensationalism. The 'city' and 'metropolis' of the headline and strap line shrink in stature to become a 'fortified settlement' in the small print whilst the article's background information about the Picts has them as 'tattooed savage warriors' who interacted with the Romans in the fifth and sixth centuries. As the old adage goes, never let the facts get in the way of a good story.

Thanks to Gordon Noble and Sheila MacTavish for bringing both articles to my attention. *JB*

Pictavia talks:

Gordon Noble on 'Symbols in Context: 6-7th Century AD North East of Scotland and the Emerging Kingships of the Picts'

Gordon opened our autumn series at Pictavia on 21 October, reporting on some very new results from Aberdeenshire.

He started by observing that a number of possible power centres are known from the seventh century. Sites such as Dunadd and Dundurn appear in Irish Annals, and have produced archaeological evidence for their use at that period. Such 'nuclear forts, prominent high points surrounded by a series of massive walls have as yet to yield much evidence as to the nature of any internal buildings. Among the Pictish provinces, Ce (corresponding roughly to Aberdeenshire) lacks any of these apparent power centres and has generally been treated as peripheral to the spheres of influence of the Northern and Southern Picts. However, the area is rich in Class I symbol stones.

Eight such stones are known from the area around Rhynie: two were found in the old church (where the dedication to St Moluag implies an ancient foundation), and the others were found in fields near the village. The Craw Stane, with carvings of a salmon and a Pictish beast still stands in what is thought to be more or less its original position in a field just south of the village, where another stone with a beast, an ogee and small comb was also found.

Aerial photography revealed the existence of a number of cropmarks in the vicinity of the stones. In 2005, magnetometer surveying of the area suggested that the cropmarks represented the remains of two probable ditched enclosures and a third, palisaded one. The Craw Stane lies between the two ditches, at the southern end of the single eastern entrance. Two large sub-circular anomalies to the east and north of the stone were also noted. Resistivity survey the following year confirmed these finding and revealed other features.

A short programme of excavations in the spring of 2011 revealed the existence of two round houses dated to approximately 400-300BC, a double-ditched enclosure and a massive palisade with huge postholes. Closer to the stone, areas of burning were revealed. These appear to represent the remains of a large timber building with beam slots and postholes. A number of finds came from the destruction level in the ditch: ringheaded pins and amber beads. With these were fragments of pottery of a kind very rarely seen in Scotland. Prior to Gordon's discoveries at Rhynie, examples were known only from Dunbarton, Whithorn and the Mote of Mark. They belong to amphorae dated to the sixth century, and probably came from the eastern Mediterranean. It is likely that these were used in the wine trade. Also from the destruction layer in the ditch came fragments of glass, representing the remains of a sixth-century Gaulish drinking glass. These finds put the destruction of the site in or shortly after the sixth century. Carbon dating of timber associated with the hall also dated to the sixth century. Together, these pieces of dating evidence suggest that the site at Rhynie was short-lived.

Gordon went on to cite other examples of Aberdeenshire sites which appear to have dated to around this period and which were similar in size to the site at Rhynie. He noted that some of the larger and slightly later sites excavated in what had been Pictish territory, such as Dundurn, Clatchard Craig and Burghead appear to have evidence of earlier occupation, although the main development of each site appears to be later than the sixth century. Bennachie may well be part of this latter group. It is possible that these all started with small sites similar to Rhynie and survived and grew in importance over time, eventually becoming quite imposing. More work is needed, but already, it seems that the Picts of Ce were rather more prosperous that perhaps they have been given credit for. *SH*

Hunter's Hill, Glamis – a close shave

One might think that of all the Pictish stones still out in the open, Hunter's Hill cross slab is more sheltered than most, nestling within mature woodland south of Glamis village but as these pictures, taken recently by PAS member Marianna Lines show, such a setting brings its own perils. Had the direction of the wind been very slightly different, this might not have been a near miss and the stone's protective railing would have been of little use.

© *Marianna Lines*

PAS Pictavia lectures 2012

20 January – *Fraser Hunter*
Background to Burghead:
recent excavations at Clarkly Hill, Roseisle

17 February – *Stephen Gordon*
on the work of Historic Scotland's
stone conservation team

16 March – *Oliver O'Grady*
Recent excavations at Fortingall

Doors open 7pm for 7.30pm start

PAS Newsletter 62

The deadline for receipt of material is
Saturday 11 February 2012

Please email contributions to the editor
<pas.news@btconnect.com>

Pictish Arts Society,
c/o Pictavia, Haughmuir,
Brechin, Angus DD9 6RL
<www.pictish-arts-society.org>