THE PICTISH ARTS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 57 WINTER 2010

PAS AGM report

The Annual General Meeting of the Pictish Arts society was held on 2 October 2010 at the AK Bell Library Lecture Theatre in Perth. Apologies were received from eight members and there were 49 members in attendance.

The report of the 2009 AGM was published in *Newsletter 51* and the Office Bearers reports were published in *Newsletter 56*. This innovation was made to allow members more time to reflect on these reports and to raise any relevant questions, but in the event none were forthcoming. The motions to accept these reports were carried without dissent.

The President, on behalf of the Treasurer noted the Society's gratitude to Alan Johnston for acting as Independent Examiner over the past few years. As Alan has indicated that he will be unavailable to carry out this role in future, the meeting was asked for any proposals as a replacement. None were forthcoming and it was agreed to leave it to the incoming committee to find and appoint a suitable person to act as Independent Examiner for next year.

The meeting agreed to accept the Treasurer's recommendation that the membership fees should remain unaltered.

The President paid tribute to Joy Mowatt for the enthusiasm, care and precision which she brought to the huge amount of work she did for the Society over her years as a member of the committee and wished her well for the future.

There being no other business, elections for the committee were held, with the following results:

President: Norman Atkinson

Vice Presidents: David Henry, Stewart Mowatt

Treasurer: Andrew Munro

Secretary: Sheila Hainey

Membership Secretary: Eileen Brownlie

Editor: David Henry

Committee Members: John Borland, Nigel Ruckley, Liz Tosh

Before the meeting closed, David Henry's achievements as Newsletter editor were commended by John Borland on behalf of the committee. *SH*

PAS Conference 2010

This year's annual conference, held at the A K Bell Library, Perth, on 2 October, examined some of the evidence for Christianity in the Pictish period. An audience of around 60 gathered to hear six contrasting talks on this general theme. The following report can give only a flavour of what was an enjoyably concentrated day.

The opening speaker was **Adrian Maldonado**, currently working towards a PhD at Glasgow University, who addressed the question of 'The Chicken and the Egg: the relationship between burial and early Christianity'. As a key part of his thesis work, Adrian had created a database comprising details of burials found in present-day Scotland which can be dated to the first millennium AD. So far, around 300 burials have been radiocarbon dated to the period AD1-1001. These are clustered largely around the Forth, in Tayside, and in Angus, with a scattering further north, and so are not necessarily representative. However, the data may still yield some useful insights. Certain features of burial practice originate in the early part of the millennium and are widespread by 400. The body was placed supine, extended and usually in a more or less east-west orientation without grave goods. The grave itself may have been simple and unlined (the 'dug' grave) or lined and covered with slabs of stone (the long cist). The cist may have been built of boulders, or the body may have been placed in a coffin hewn from a log. In general, the graves were flat and unmarked, although barrows of the so called Pictish type are fairly common in the north of Scotland and spread south through the borders and over into Antrim. While isolated burials are known, a growing number of cemeteries has been recognised. Is it possible to distinguish whether or not the form of burial and the cemetery came before the population accepted Christianity, or was conversion followed by the adoption of a burial rite consistent with the new religion? Was pre-existing practice adopted by Christians in a two-way process by which the people 'converted' religious practices into something familiar at the same time as they themselves accepted conversion of beliefs? 282 of the dated burials

fall into the early medieval period (AD400-800), and, of these, 204 were at sites with no associated churches. A cluster of dates suggest that a number of cemeteries were first used in the fifth century, round the time at which sites associated with churches also appear. (The conversion period is taken here as roughly AD400-650). Although as time passed a larger proportion of individuals were buried at church sites, the use of non-church sites continued on throughout the millennium.

In general, the non-church sites were un-enclosed, comprising clusters of burials of different dates (suggesting perhaps family areas), and on land that was set aside for burial. All types of burial – dug grave, cist and coffin – were used with no obvious pattern to their distribution. The locations of such cemeteries suggest a preference for significant and accessible points in the landscape, possibly near territorial boundaries. Inscribed stones may have marked the site rather than commemorate individuals, whose graves were unmarked.

Although the same burial types appeared at church sites, there are some significant differences. The church cemeteries were to be found within enclosures surrounding churches, often in areas which showed signs of industrial use. Separation by gender and age was common, and increasingly a preference for burial close to the church may have appeared. The display of status through increasingly elaborate variations on the form of burial also appeared. Concern with the salvation of the individual was shown by the use of grave-markers asking for prayers for the soul of the deceased.

As the use of church cemeteries became more commonplace, there appears to have been a change in emphasis. Individual salvation became prioritised over the individual's place in the community

Martin Carver, who as Professor of Archaeology at York University headed the team which excavated the monastic site at Portmahomack between 1994 and 2007 spoke next on 'Pictish Sculpture and Pictish People on the Tarbat Peninsula, Easter Ross'.

Over many years, a number of fragments of carved stones had been found in the area around Tarbat Old Church. An aerial photograph taken in the early 1980s revealed the presence of a D-shaped ditch enclosing an area around the church, confirmed by excavation by Jill Harden (who spoke later in the day). Martin's team from York subsequently became involved in revealing the existence of a hitherto unknown monastery of the Pictish period, complete with evidence for workshops including one where vellum was prepared. Details of the excavations, together with an illustrated catalogue of carved stones found at the site are available on the.University of York's website at <www.york.ac.uk/archaeology/staff/sites/tarbat/sculpture.html>

This early monastery came to a violent end about AD800. Fire swept through the workshops, and four great carved stone monuments, whose locations are suggested by the scatter of fragments were deliberately smashed before being buried. The site was reused by metal-workers, and it seems that there was a gap of many years before a church was built on the site now occupied by Tarbat Old Church (now the Tarbat Discovery Centre).

The great fragmented cross-slabs of Portmahomack date to around the same period as the stones at Hilton of Cadboll, Shandwick and Nigg. Martin argued that the position of these stones may mark points of access to the monastic estate, places where travellers by water would land. The Nigg stone may have been at one end of what, with water levels only a little higher, would have been a clear portage route across the peninsula, as the 'Tarbat' name implies. More controversially, he suggested that the stones may have also commemorated individuals. Only one of the great stones at the monastery bore Pictish symbols as do those at Shandwick, Nigg and Hilton. The stones do seem to have been created at a time and in a milieu which was familiar and at ease with the use of latin script. There is evidence of a long history of the community on the peninsula before the arrival of the monks at Portmahomack; perhaps the use of Pictish symbols indicates that individuals so remembered belong to this community and its history, holy individuals associated with the peninsula who were adopted into the new religion. (Another case of the new religion adapting old beliefs and practices?) Perhaps the differences in the distribution of 'Class I' and 'Class II' stones that can be seen in the north have their origins in a change in the use of stones to marking a territory now defined by church associations. Indeed, the presence of symbol-marked cross slabs may indicate the presence of more hidden sites such as Portmahomack.

Martin raised the intriguing question that some early medieval practices, such as the veneration of relics and the importance of pilgrimage may have their roots in aspects of pre-Christian belief and practice.

Lloyd Laing, whose many publications include several focussing on the Picts, and who has only very recently retired from the department of Archaeology at Nottingham University, was unable to attend, but generously sent his presentation to the conference. 'Pictish and Norse Christians at Ballachly, Dunbeath, Caithness', traced work at a site near the mouth of Dunbeath water. The site has a long history of use, with evidence from the late Mesolithic period onwards. At least one of the substantial walls on the site, which is overlooked by a broch situated on an eminence to the west, may be of earlier Iron Age date. In the later medieval period, Ballachly was the site of a burgh of barony, Magnusburgh.

There is evidence to suggest that there was a monastery here from around the seventh century. The earliest evidence for this is a slab bearing a Chi-Rho cross and a salmon, which was found built into a 19th-century wall in the garden of the croft at Ballachly. Two other fragments, one with interlace and the other cross-marked, have been also been recovered. Another stone, marked with Anglian runes, was recovered from the beach at the entrance to the strath.

The Chapel Hill, a small eminence which dominates the site, seems to have been the original focus of monastic activity. Excavation on the hilltop revealed evidence for a cobbled surface with a central culvert and adjacent stone lined hearths with associated fragments of late Iron Age (Pictish) pottery. This was overlain by a later, possibly 12th-century baptistry which was later modified and used as a (documented) priest's house.

Excavations of the area below Chapel Hill, which is believed to be the site of a church destroyed by floods in the early 19th century, failed to reveal any trace of it. The reports of the flood refer to 'stone coffins' being swept away to the sea, and remains of two badly-disturbed long cists were recovered.

An early photograph taken by Lloyd Laing in 1968 showed the cropmark of a potential monastic vallum surrounding the chapel area. Excavations showed the area to have been surrounded by a ditch and substantial stone wall. The ditch had been filled with flood material, which yielded radiocarbon dates of around the 11th century. The top of the ditch fill yielded late Iron Age pottery. Evidence for manufacture of copper alloy and glassworking also came from this area, with an unfinished bead. A fragment of window glass, comparable to that known at Whithorn and Jarrow was also recovered.

The afternoon session opened with **Strat Halliday** presenting the first half of a paper on 'Rona – not just a Saint's Isle'. Strat posed the question: what did monks find when they set out to found new monasteries on isolated western islands? Were they able simply to take land, or were they granted it by people who already had rights in the land?

He gave examples of other islands before considering Rona, noting the evidence for early agriculture on Canna, St Kilda and Rona, and later evidence for the exploitation of seabirds on St Kilda and Sulisgeir (off Rona). While much needs to be done, these islands were at least potentially productive, and may well have been inhabited when the first monks arrived. **Jill Harden** then went on to focus on Rona, with a brief review of the documented history of the island, and of the legends attached to St Ronan and his sister. She described the chapel of St Ronan, attached to the only surviving oratory in the Western Isles, corbelled in a shape reminiscent of the Monymusk Reliquary, and noted the need for care of this unique site. Although there is evidence for earlier occupation of the island, it is not clear whether there was anyone living there when the monks arrived to build the oratory and the monastery. There are many questions which need more work before we can get to any real answers: did the monks really seek isolation, requiring islands devoid of people for settlement? How would any resident population have viewed the arrival of a coracle containing up to a dozen strangers looking for solitude? Which of the many possible St Ronans is the one associated with Rona? Rona boasts some unique features and also bears some interesting comparisons with other Western Isles sites and with Irish monastic sites too. Jill made very clear the exciting possibilities for further work on this isolated early site.

Sarah Thomas was also unable to present her paper on 'The late medieval re-use of early chapel sites – a case study of Cladh Aruisg and Glen Hinnisdal chapels on Skye', and Niall

Robertson stepped in to read it on her behalf. Sarah studied potential chapel sites in the Hebrides, examining features which may separate early from late medieval sites. Length: breadth ratios of 1.5:1 or less, the presence or absence of enclosures, the presence of early medieval cross slabs, proximity to running water, peripherality of location and the presences of associated structures may all be features of early sites. Some have some early features combined with later proportions, which may indicate re-use. Sarah examined two of this group: Cladh Aruisg and Glen Hinnisdal, both on Skye.

These sites both appear to have been reused in the later Middle Ages, and the question arises as to how these were used. Neither appears to have been the private chapel of a dominant household, nor do they seem to have been dependent chapels, as they both lack evidence for fonts or burials in this period. They are also too small to be used for communal worship. It is possible that they were small cult chapels, in use only for a short period of time so that even the memory of their dedication has vanished. Some excavation at these sites would help to clarify the position.

Last speaker of the day, **Stephen Thompson** told us about 'An early medieval complex in just three days? Time Team's excavation at Baliscate, Mull'. The site was in an area of Forestry Commission plantation, and was partly obscured by the planting. Although three days only allowed for a partial exploration of the site, it became obvious that this was more than a simple chapel. Construction of an artificial revetted stone terrace had provided a platform for a chapel at the centre of a larger enclosure. Proximity to a setting of standing stones and the presence of a cairn within the enclosure hinted at use of an earlier site. Traces of possible wooden buildings suggested a precursor to the stone chapel. A grave which appeared to extend beneath the chapel floor and possibly beneath the wall contained the remains of an individual who was between 10 and 15 years old. Almost certainly this was not a founding saint. The remains gave a radiocarbon date of AD610-669. Other remains were found which were possibly contemporaneous with the stone-built chapel. That appeared to have been of a single phase. In front of the chapel, and in line with the probable entrance to the enclosure, lay what appear to be the remains of a *leacht*, an external altar or shrine which may have held the base of a stone cross. Examples of leachts are known from Ireland. The location here suggests that it was meant to impress arrivals within the precinct. Three days seem to have been enough to add Baliscate to the list of early Christian monasteries – how many more remain to be discovered? *SH*

More about Pictish symbols as language

Our paper 'Pictish symbols revealed as a written language through the application of Shannon entropy' has instigated some discussion in the *PAS Newsletter*. I apologise if the rather scientific nature of its writing has made it hard to follow and lead to any misunderstandings. Unfortunately, even when one is hoping to write a paper that is accessible to a wide readership, the peer review process of the science journals forces one into a narrow and arcane prose. So my thanks to *PAS Newsletter* editor for letting me try and explain it in a non-technical manner. I should say upfront that the paper uses a numerical approach to tackle a specific question and that the method it uses may seem very strange to those less familiar with such techniques.

There are many instances in the archaeological record of symbols inscribed on stone, metal and pottery, where the small number of samples and the short length of the inscriptions has lead to discussion as to whether they are writing and if so, what type? The Indus valley script is one example, the Pictish symbols are another. The problem is two-fold: without a large sample to work from, traditional techniques for linguistic evaluation cannot be used and the short length of the inscriptions would imply that, even if the inscriptions were writing, they are of a very limited format.

Our paper, *Pictish symbols revealed as a written language through the application of Shannon entropy* describes a technique that tackles these specific problems and answers the question of writing types. Over the past century, many different meanings for the Pictish symbols have been proposed – the paper does not attempt to identify any meaning. Rather, it asks a more fundamental question, if the Pictish symbols are writing, what character type (e.g. letter, words etc) do they represent? Whilst the answer to this question may seem 'obvious' the paper, due to

its quantitative nature, allows a level of statistical certainty to be given to the answer.

So what does the method in the paper do? Firstly, it asks if the symbols might be random (i.e. not communicating information). Having shown that it is unlikely that the symbols are random, the method then asks at what level of information are the symbols communicating? A number of different types of writing show strong directionality in the placement of the symbols – scripts containing heraldic, letter, syllabic, logographic (word) or code (e.g. morse code) characters[1]. The method is able to discriminate between these types of scripts and thus assign a classification of character type to the symbols.

So how does the method do this classification? It measures a level of information, and a level of repetition, conveyed by the symbols and pairs of symbols in a small script (for the whole of the script). It then compares these measurements to the values obtained from other samples of small scripts where the symbols are either heraldic, letter, syllabic, logographic or code, it then classifies them on the basis of these values. In order to do the classification, over 400 scripts sets of small size from a wide variety of languages (English, Irish, Welsh, Norse, Turkish, Basque, Finnish, Korean, Latin, Anglo-Saxon, Old Norse, Ancient Irish, Old Irish, Old Welsh, hieroglyphic Egyptian, Mycenaean, Chinese and heraldic) covering a large variety of text types (prose, poetry, inscriptions, lists) were analysed using the different character types (heraldry, letter, syllable, logograph, code).

Using the information and repetition parameters developed to handle the small sample sizes[2], this dataset was able to classify the different character types at >99% confidence. The dataset was chosen to be as broad as possible in order to confidently pinpoint a basic information property of writing – the type of character that symbols in a text represent. It is able to do this because the character types (e.g. letter, word etc), due to grammar, syntax and spelling rules, convey information at different levels and this holds across the languages examined.

Because we are dealing with an unknown system in a quantitative manner, the technique must analyse the whole of the script set and do so without any a priori assumptions regarding the symbols, other than the assumption that there are different symbol types. Thus the analysis includes all the symbols in a script set, regardless of whether they appear only as a single symbol on an inscription or in a string of symbols[3]. Similarly, symbols that appear in specific places in a string of symbols are also included, their regular positioning will affect the observed distribution of symbol pairs and the level of information calculated[4]. Thus the analysis includes without preference all the symbol data regardless of how 'archetypal' 'standard', 'special' 'rare' or 'atypical' the data is. Once the type of character that the symbols represent is known (from the method), then any data thought to be 'special' can be excluded or focused on separately – and discussion to identify grammar, syntax, spelling rules and the like can then follow. The analysis also makes no a priori assumptions about possible meanings or differences in meanings between symbols – by initially using a quantitative approach, discussions around meaning would only occur after the character type of the symbols has been determined.

The method in the paper investigated the Pictish Symbols but it can be applied to other unknown scripts. Taking Fischer's reading[5] of the Phaistos Disk and utilising all the symbols and the segment bars, the technique shows that it is unlikely that the script is random. The values obtained for the level of information and repetition are such that the method classifies the Phaistos Disk symbols as syllabic. Rerunning the script without the bars gives a similar result. These results are similar to those already arrived at by linguists.

So what happens when the technique is applied to the Pictish Symbols? We looked at Mack's and ECMS's classifications of the different symbols types. The method found that, using either of the corpora, the symbols were unlikely to be random or heraldic. Where they differed was that using Mack's classification, the symbols appear to be operating at the syllable level, whereas with the ECMS classification the symbols appear to be operating at the word level. At first glance this may appear surprising, but actually it shows the power of the technique and highlights an underlying question that still needs answering, namely what was the corpus of different symbol types actually used by the Picts[6]? By using this approach, the effect of broadening the symbol corpus through the inclusion of new modifiers (such as suggested by K. Forsyth) or internal decoration can be

investigated. This would, hopefully, lead to a discussion on what is likely to be the actual symbol corpus. Once a symbol corpus has been agreed and the character type classification determined, then a discussion of the specific symbol arrangements and atypical data can be undertaken to try and tease out the underlying rules and syntax for that character type.

How has the paper been received? A few comments have come from outside the Medieval and Celtic academic community on: a) the definition of writing; b) the definition of random; c) whether the dataset of 400 scripts includes certain text types. All of these have been successfully answered – in summary: a) we include lists (e.g. King lists) as examples of writing, but we recognise that others do not consider them writing since they define writing differently; b) there is a second type of random system, that wasn't included in the original analysis since it is a fundamental principal that entropy is able to differentiate between this type of random system and writing, but for completeness we have now shown this differentiation (and that the Pictish symbols are not this type of random system)[7]; c) although we cannot include every language and text in the dataset, we have covered all the different types of text (such as defective systems) so far suggested. Over the last few years, the analysis has been presented at a couple of Medievalist conferences and has been warmly received, indeed many of the text examples used in the dataset came from suggestions from this community. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Cathy Swift and Katherine Forsyth for their encouragement and commenting on the work. And I'd also like to thank a number of people for help over the last decade, my thanks to Bob Henery, John Borland, Dougie Scott, Marianna Lines, Niall Robertson, Alastair Carty, Anne Brundle and Norman Atkinson.

Notes

1 Directional writing is split into lexigraphic writing (letter characters, syllable characters, word characters) where the characters correspond to a spoken sound and identifying-mnemonic sematographic writing (e.g. heraldic characters) where the characters do not correspond to a spoken sound, but combine to represent a person, place etc. The other two classes of sematographic writing (primitive art and descriptive-representational) are not investigated by this method as they tend to be pictorial.

2 These parameters are more complex than the standard Shannon entropy, which is often quoted. The paper shows that Shannon entropy alone cannot be used in small samples to differentiate between the level of information in texts. Thus any analysis undertaken or conclusions drawn on the basis of standard Shannon entropy values are not supported by the work in this paper.

3 Entropy calculations include the information that a symbol is at the start or end of a piece of an inscription (this is a relevant bit of information), thus each separate text or inscription is bracketed by a start and a stop symbol. This means that single symbols on an inscription are included in the calculation since they form 2 symbols pairs: start-symbol and symbol-stop.

4 Many stone inscriptions have a declamatory statement that has a fixed position in the text, e.g. *Dis Manibus* at the start of Roman inscriptions, *anm* and *oroit do* at the start of Irish inscriptions. This means, for example, that the symbol pair start-*anm* will have a large frequency within the symbol pair calculations.

5 Steven Roger Fischer, *Glyphbreaker*, Copernicus, NY 1997

6 Mack applies very stringent criteria to what is a different symbol type and this leads to a smaller, more limited symbol set than some others, such as Katherine Forsyth's (as given in 'Some thoughts on Pictish symbols as a formal Writing System' in *The worm, the germ, and the thorn*, David Henry (ed), Pinkfoot Press, Balgavies, 1997). If Mack's symbol set is not the actual one, then it has had the effect of simplifying the symbol vocabulary thereby losing information and misclassifying the symbols (e.g. if 'r', 'n', 'm' are all taken as the different renderings of the same symbol, then one would be unable to differentiate between words such as 'rear', 'near' and 'mean' or if 'b' and 'd' are taken to be the same symbol, then bad, dad, dab etc will be taken as the same word).

7 Rob Lee, Philip Jonathan, Pauline Ziman, 'Pictish Symbol Stones' Significance, v7.4, December 2010.

Rob Lee

• • • Membership renewal • • •

If you have not already paid your annual subscription (due September 2010), please do so now, as this is the last notification you will receive, otherwise you will be removed from the mailing list. If you have been identified as a lapsed subscriber, you will find a renewal form enclosed with this Newsletter.

Pictavia lecture programme

10 December *Jane Geddes*
A Long Walk to God:
understanding St Vigeans 11

21 January *Kirsty Owen*
Interpreting and Presenting
the Eassie Cross-slab

18 February *Jill Harden*
A challenging journey:
an overview of the Picts

Aberlemno window

© Andy Thomson Photography

Earlier this year, a stained glass window was unveiled in the service room of William Black Funeral Directors, in Brechin. Jodie Jackson, a local schoolgirl, won a competition to design the window on the theme of 'peaceful place', and her painting, featuring three of the Aberlemno stones was realised in glass by Kirriemuir craftswoman, Maureen Crosbie of Gallus Glass.

The 'window', actually lit by a light-box, is very colourful and inspires contemplation. Judging from the details on the stones, early illustrations have been used as the models*, and it is surprising to find here that the presence of images of a battle and deer-hunt do not appear to detract from the theme of peace.

* *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* John Stuart (ed), Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1856, plates 71, 79, 80

Scots composer Morris Pert

On Saturday 6 November, the ashes of the Arbroath-born award-winning composer Morris Pert were interred in the Western Cemetery, Arbroath. Later, in the afternoon, the soprano, Chloe Foston and pianist, Mark Spalding gave a memorial recital of some of his music in St Vigean's Church; one of the pieces played was 'The Drostan Stone' – a short piano piece in which the names Drostan, Voret and Forcus are encrypted in a musical alphabet. Some footage of this concert is presently on Youtube under 'Morris Pert–4 Japanese Verses' – more, including Drostan will follow in the weeks to come. It is also on the composer's website <www.morrispert.com>.

It is proposed that in April 2011, to mark the anniversary of the composer's death, concerts will be given in Edinburgh, Arbroath and Kinlochbervie; these will include the music from the memorial recital and also a performance of 'Ankh', an extended composition for carnyx and electronics, to be performed by the virtuoso trombonist John Kenny, whose recording of the piece will hopefully be available by then. Other performances of Pert's music will possibly take place in Dundee, Aberdeen and elsewhere next year.

Morris Pert was an extremely wide-ranging and accomplished musician who, like many Scottish composers, has not received due recognition. He worked in the fields of contemporary classical music receiving commissions from the BBC and London Sinfonietta, as a virtuoso percussionist, and as a session musician with the likes of Paul McCartney, Kate Bush, Phil Collins and Mike Oldfield. In his compositions, Pictish culture was a major source of inspiration: the titles of two of his symphonies are 'The Ancient Kindred' and 'Beltane Rites'. An 'Anthem for the Cruithne' is also audible on his MySpace page. Dates and venues of concerts will be published later. *Mark Spalding*

PAS Newsletter index

Often, in the course of editing *PAS Newsletter*, I have to refer to previous articles and, with 57 issues to trawl through, it has become an increasingly tedious and time-consuming affair trying to locate specific subject matter. For many years it has been my intention to simplify this task by creating some sort of index and at last I have managed to partially complete this – at least for issues 32 to 57 inclusive, covering the period Winter 2003 to Winter 2010, which coincides with the time that I have been editor.

We hope the selective index will be useful to members and also, perhaps, inspire one or two of you to volunteer to help complete the job by tackling issues 1 to 31. All you need is a word processor and some free time – enquiries or offers to the editor at: <pas.news@btconnect.com>

For ease of use, entries have been arranged under the following headings: STONES/ARTICLES/PUBLICATIONS/REPORTS/MUSEUMS/PLACES/PEOPLE. Each entry is followed by the issue number(s) and page number(s) thus, under the heading, STONES

Kirriemuir No 18 32.8; *34.2-3

The presence of an asterisk * indicates that the subject is illustrated with a photograph or drawing. The general arrangement is alphabetic but multiple references are listed in order of publication.

The success of a publication like *PAS Newsletter* depends on the membership to keep it lively, interesting and pertinent. It is apparent from the index that we owe a great debt to certain salwart contributors for repeatedly supplying material for the benefit of the membership. However, probably the most prolific contributor, who has kept us informed by writing most of the reports about the activities of the Society in the period covered by the index, is an unsung heroine, our Secretary, Sheila Hainey. Sheila has always given much more to the Society than would be expected from her role as Secretary and we are extremely grateful to her for her dedication to the cause and unflagging spirit. *DH*

Conservation and protection of the Inveraven stones

© Joy Mowatt

Inveraven 3 currently clamped to the south wall of the church with a protective flat cap balanced on top. This finely-incised fragment, measuring 330 x 200 x 150mm, bearing the head of a Pictish beast, is the only surviving part of what must have been a sizeable monument

Working in the Spey Valley a few years ago[1] I took the opportunity to record the small collection of Early Medieval sculpture at Inveraven Church – four Pictish symbol stones clamped to the kirk's south wall. Whilst doing this I learned that the local community were in the process of applying for Scheduled Monument consent to have the stones removed from their iron restraints, have them professionally conserved and then redisplayed inside the kirk's unused old vestibule. This would keep them on site and readily accessible to all but shelter them from the elements.

I was keen to help with this ambitious and commendable venture so offered my services to help in the design and production of an interpretation panel and leaflets. When I reported this to the PAS Committee, it too was keen to assist. As chance would have it, the Society had just been left a bequest of £500 from late member Margaret Evans,[2] so the Committee decided it would be a fitting tribute to Margaret to donate her bequest to Inveraven's fund towards the cost of printing the panel and leaflets.

Work is progressing and designs have been drawn up for the conversion of the vestibule and, although a final timetable has not yet been set, visitors will hopefully soon be able to see this fine collection of stones redisplayed at Inveraven Church, along with an interpretation panel and information leaflet produced with the aid of the Pictish Arts Society and in memory of a Pictish enthusiast.

John Borland

1 *See* Borland, John 'Pictish Symbol Stones in the Central Highlands: Contrast and Compare' *PAS Newsletter* 41, 10-12.

2 *PAS Newsletter* 55, 7.

© The Northern Scot

John Borland at work in Inveraven kirkyard, recording the carved stones for the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland

PAS Newsletter 58
The deadline for contributions is
Saturday 19 February
Please email contributions to the editor
<pas.news@btconnect.com>