THE PICTISH ARTS SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER 70 SPRING 2014

PAS Conference 2014
Northern Picts, Northern Neighbours
Saturday 4 October
Caithness Horizons, Thurso

Speakers/topics already booked include:

Ragnhild Ljosland (UHI)
Norse Inscriptions

Anna Ritchie
Sculpture of Orkney & Shetland

Graeme Cavers (AOC)
Baillie Hill Lidar Survey

Victoria Whitworth (UHI)
Sculpture of Caithness

Cait McCullough (Inv Mus)
Early Christianity in northern Pictland

Donna Heddle (UHI)
Norse place-names of Caithness

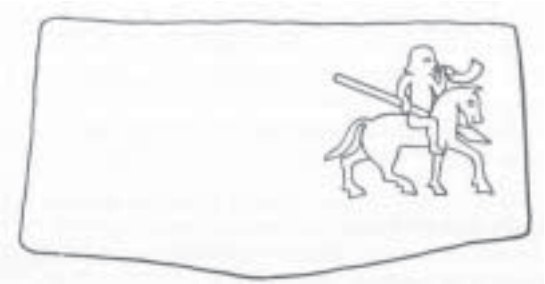
David Henry
A lost Pictish symbol stone from Caithness

More details and booking form in the next newsletter

3 *The Bullion Stone, Invergowrie, now in NMS*

Not Blowing but Drinking

The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland by J Romilly Allen and Joseph Anderson is 111 years old this year and thanks to the Pinkfoot Press 1993 reprint, we can all pore over what is still the most exhaustive inventory of Pictish sculpture available. Invaluable as it is however, ECMS does contain the occasional mistake, for example the outline of a horseman blowing a horn on the stone known as Dunkeld 1 (**1**).



1 *Dunkeld 1, ECMS III, Figure 302*

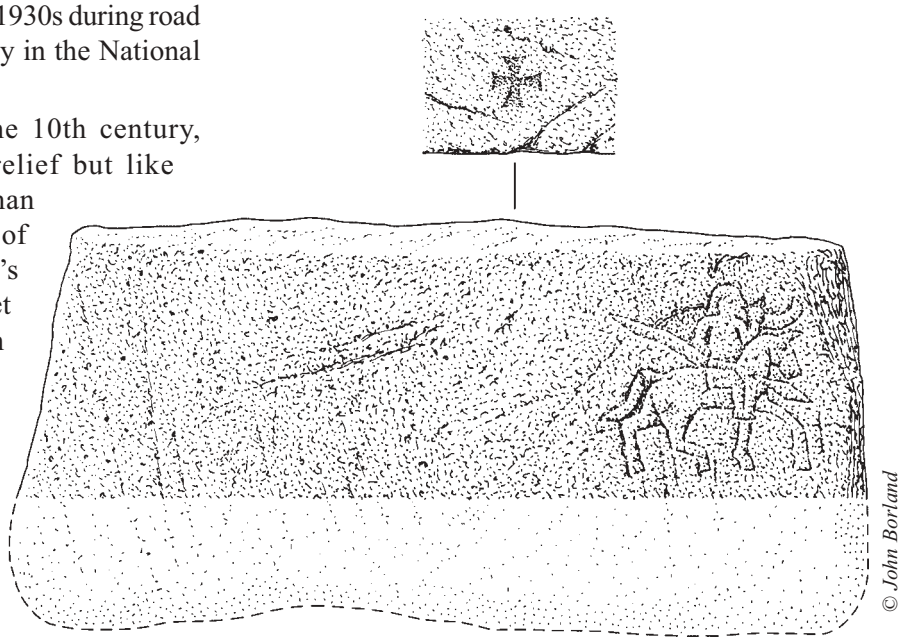
At the time of recording, Allen noted that this large block of grey sandstone lay 'flat on the ground, imbedded in it, in the King's Park'. Nowadays it can be viewed in Dunkeld Cathedral's tower room (**2**). The incised horseman, who fills the top right hand corner of the block, is in fact holding the broad end of a horn and so is not blowing but drinking. The Cathedral's brochure calls it an 'unfinished carving' in reference to the uneven incisions. The overall quality of the figure is certainly poor by most Pictish standards: a beginner's practice piece?

2 *Dunkeld 1, detail*

Most other Pictish horsemen are integrated into the motifs on cross-slabs, recumbent stones or architectural pieces so this lone depiction is unusual, as is the fact that the rider is drinking from a horn. The only other comparable carving is the Bullion Stone, which was found on the outskirts of Invergowrie in the 1930s during road building and is now on display in the National Museum of Scotland (**3**).

This large slab, dated to the 10th century, is carved in well-defined relief but like Dunkeld 1 depicts a horseman drinking from a horn, the end of which is decorated with a bird's head. The carved panel is set into the slab at an angle, so, in rather humorous style, the horse appears to trudge uphill with its head down whilst its rider drinks deeply from the horn, under the watchful gaze of the bird on the end.

As a postscript, when Dunkeld 1 was cleaned and redisplayed recently, Historic Scotland's stone conservators noted for the first time a small Maltese cross incised on the block's flat top, suggesting it may have acted as a boundary stone (**4**). *John Borland & Elspeth Reid*



4 *Dunkeld 1 with detail of cross on its top*

Book reviews

Asterix and the Picts
Jean-Yves Ferri, Rene Goscinny,
Albert Uderzo and Didier Conrad

Finally, Asterix and Obelix meet the Picts. The two heroes journey from their little village in Gaul, in the company of a heart-broken young Pictish warrior. Washed up on the wintry beach after the machinations of his wicked uncle have sent him forth frozen in a block of ice, the handsome red-head rapidly attracts the attention of all the women in the village. The men swiftly decide that the best thing to do is to return him to his home, where he can reclaim his sweetheart (and with her, the kingdom). The Druid is given plenty of work to do, brewing potions, the sacred animal of the tribe (Nessie) comes to the rescue, the young Princess gets her man, and all the mayhem that we have come to expect of Asterix keeps the story rollicking along. Plenty of platitudes about the Picts and, of course, a few problems with chronology etc., but it's nice to see that the Picts have registered on the French consciousness. With a choice of translations (English, Scots, Gaelic or Welsh), what's not to like? *SH*

From Holy Island to Durham: the context and meaning of the Lindisfarne Gospels
Richard Gameson
Third Millennium Publishing

Between 1 July and 30 September 2013, thousands of people queued for a glimpse of an old book on show at the Palace Green Library Durham. No ordinary book this, to inspire so many pilgrims. The Lindisfarne Gospels had briefly been returned to within a few yards of the cathedral where it had been treasured until the dissolution of the associated monastic foundation.

Richard Gameson's book was produced to mark the occasion. In five chapters of scholarly argument and vivid illustration, Gameson traces the history of this very special book: how it was created and by whom, how it was cherished and endowed with new meaning as a relic associated retrospectively with St Cuthbert and how it endured when so many of its contemporaries have disappeared.

For those who have followed with interest the growing evidence for the existence of early monastic settlements among the Picts, there is much here of interest. The Lindisfarne Gospels

and the other surviving books and fragments which were probably produced at Lindisfarne or at one of its daughter houses contain in their pages evidence for the range of skills that were required for the production of such books. We are reminded that these skills were not acquired without much practice. Evidence for the manufacture of vellum, or for the production of ornament for book covers, implies that book production was a feature of life and not a rare event in monastic settlements. It gives reason to reflect on all that that implies for the physical, intellectual and spiritual life of such establishments. Lindisfarne's lovely book was not an isolated work of art.

Gameson's careful arguments, drawing evidence for contemporary writers at each stage of its history as well as from art history and archaeology draw the reader deep into the wider world of Insular monasticism in the early eighth century. Lavishly illustrated and well produced, it is a fitting tribute to a magnificent survivor.

SH

Hilton of Cadboll Jigsaw

The Museum of Scotland have invited internet users to help piece together the fragments of the Hilton of Cadboll cross face. They hope to interest computer gamers, and those accustomed to manipulate computer images generally, to take up the challenge of piecing together the virtual fragments of this stone. To this end, the 'most significant' 800 fragments have been catalogued and photographed and made available to the public via the web site:

http://www.pictishpuzzle.co.uk/

The task is described thus:

> Love jigsaws, archaeology, Pictish symbols or online games? Then you could be the missing piece in our puzzle! We need your help to piece together the missing face of the Hilton of Cadboll stone, a Pictish puzzle that's lain in fragments for over 400 years.

Those taking up the challenge are given instructions on how to match up the images, but are left with a rather incomplete jigsaw, with only 800 pieces available from a total of over 11,000, and with no picture on the box to show them what they are aiming at. Barry Grove has carved a very impressive replica of the Hilton slab, and his reconstruction of the cross face incorporates much information derived from the recovered fragments, including interlace, key designs, fantastic beasts, angels, etc. etc. No doubt he was also guided by some important Pictish cross slabs in the neighbourhood, notably those at Rosemarkie and Nigg. His cross face would make an excellent picture to guide the internet gamers, helping them to avoid 'matching' fragments that clearly belong to different key patterns for example.

My aim is not to fit the pieces together, nor even look at the whole set of fragments, but concentrate instead on those involving key patterns, and even then with the less ambitious aim of identifying the key patterns involved. There seem to be only three, namely ECMS[1] key patterns 957, 958, and 980. For each class of key I will give idealised diagrams that show the general pattern, with some variants where it looks like there is more than one panel within that class. Fortunately the three basic key patterns differ so radically from each other it is relatively easy to allocate most large fragments to their proper key designs.

For each key, I will display images of fragments that can be reasonably identified as belonging to that pattern. Each fragment will be displayed in the correct orientation for the given key (a rotation of 180 degrees is frequently possible also), and, if we were in possession of all fragments, this would be of considerable help in matching up the fragments.

There are a few fragments that do not exactly match any of the above listed patterns. One possible reason is a departure from the ideal pattern necessitated by non rectangular panels, or borders with interlace. But there is always the possibility that some panel of key work was lost to erosion or wear before the deliberate removal of all traces of carving, so, in principle, we should keep open the possibility of other key patterns being relevant.

Of course this is just a small part in the matching process, and the process of matching up the given thumbnail images with an idealised pattern is by no means certain. Also I should point out that other features would be helpful in matching the pieces, including the colour of the stone, and the width or depth of carving. Information on some of these matters, as well as descriptions of the fragments, can be seen in a database on a much larger set of fragments available as a download from the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) website:

http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/

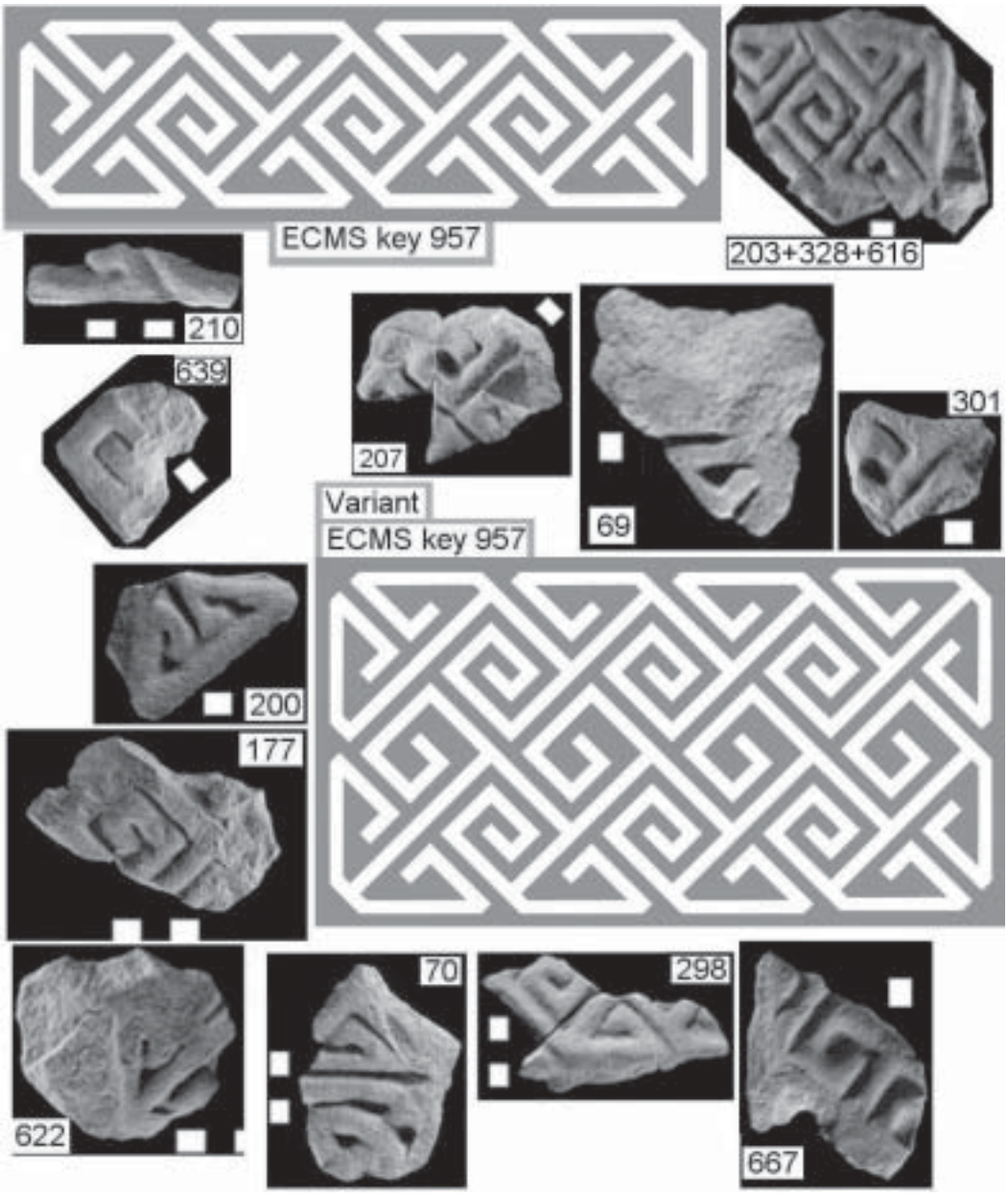
The specific database in question can be found by clicking on ARCHIVES, searching for 'Hilton', and then selecting 'Downloads'.

ECMS Key 957

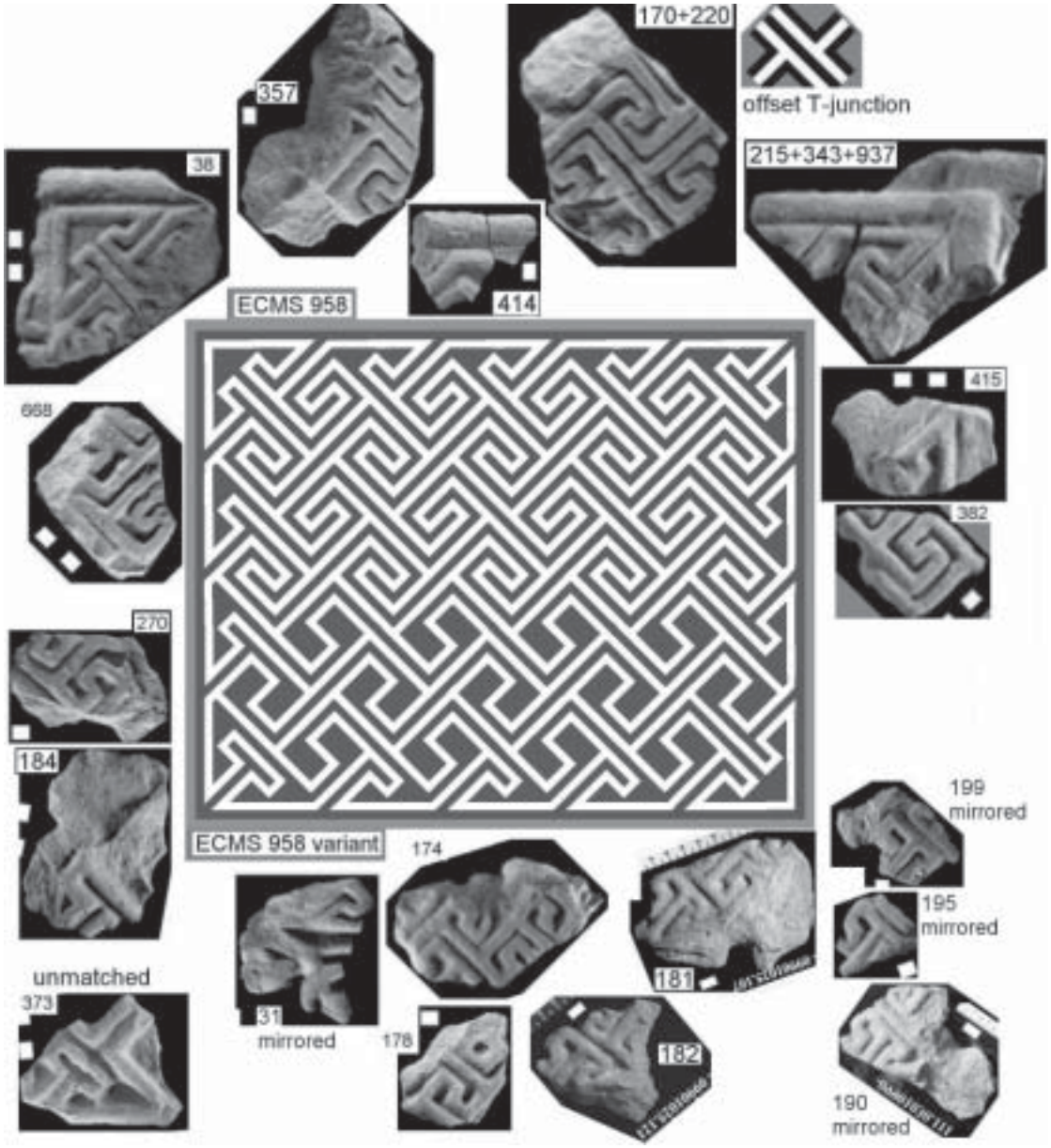
This key pattern has single spirals terminating in every bay, so it is easy to identify internal fragments belonging to this type. Figure 1 shows ECMS key 957 and a variant. In this and subsequent figures the images of the fragments are displayed at roughly the same scale, which can be judged from the white rectangles, which are 10 mm long.

Fragment no. 203 might form one complete end of a long thin panel, which has clockwise square spirals in the centre and anticlockwise triangular spirals along the top and bottom. However, fragments 177 and 667 have an anticlockwise square spiral, so do not fit ECMS key 957[2] as published. Either a new key design is required, or, at the very least, some modification of key 957 to incorporate alternating clockwise and anticlockwise spirals. A suitable variant of key 957 is shown also.

Fragment 203 is a compound, formed from three original fragments (nos. 203, 328, and 616). The angles in these fragments seem rather irregular – perhaps the carving has been fitted into an awkward space, at a junction with other panels. In addition fragment 203 has a rectangular turn bottom right, suggestive of a continuing design in a larger panel. It is noteworthy that two more corner pieces survive (fragments 200 and 622).



1 *Key 957 pattern. The small panel has clockwise spirals in the square bays. The larger panel has alternating clockwise and anticlockwise spirals in the square bays.*



2 *Key 958 pattern. The upper and lower halves differ only in the number of twists in the internal spirals. Some suitably oriented fragments that partially match this pattern or a variant of it are shown. Fragments 31, 190, and 195, and possibly 199 also, would fit a mirrored version of the variant. Fragment 373 seems to be a corner piece of this type, but does not match the corners illustrated.*

Fragment 298 is also a compound (original fragments 298, 1023, and 2212).

Fragment 70 lies at the bottom of the key panel where it seems to meet a section of interlace.

Discriminants by which fragments can be allocated to this key are: (i) single spirals terminating in every bay (as in fragment 177); (ii) 45 degree angles along the border, ending in a single turn spiral, like a hook (fragments 69, 70, 200, 210, and 298); (iii) a hint of 135 degree angles along the border (203 and 298).

ECMS key 958

This key seems to relate to the largest number of fragments. The key and a variant are shown alongside their main matching fragments in Figure 2. The diagram for ECMS key 958 follows that in ECMS fairly closely, except the lower half which has fewer turns in the internal spirals.

The diagnostic feature of key 958 is the offset between two T-junctions, with double spirals in all internal bays. Three out of four corner pieces have been found (fragments 38, 937, and 184), but there is very likely more than one panel, with more corners to be found. Fragments 38 and 31 are similar in that they both have interlace or scroll alongside the key work, and for this reason it is tempting to place 31 to the left of the pattern. But close examination of 31 reveals that it is a fit to the lower border of the mirrored variant.

Fragment 174 has offset T-junctions (bottom left), with fewer turns in the internal spirals, so it also matches the variant panel. There are in all perhaps a dozen or so fragments with spirals with fewer turns (nos. 174, 175, 178, 190, 195, 199, 211, 213, 221, 270, 617, 641, 650, 654), so it seems there is a substantial panel of this variant. Fragments 190 and 182 have been joined together in the Pictishpuzzle database, though one is virtually a mirror image of the other. Fragments 190, 195, and 199 fit the variant key when mirrored. Fragment 373, though it looks like a corner piece of the correct type, does not quite fit.

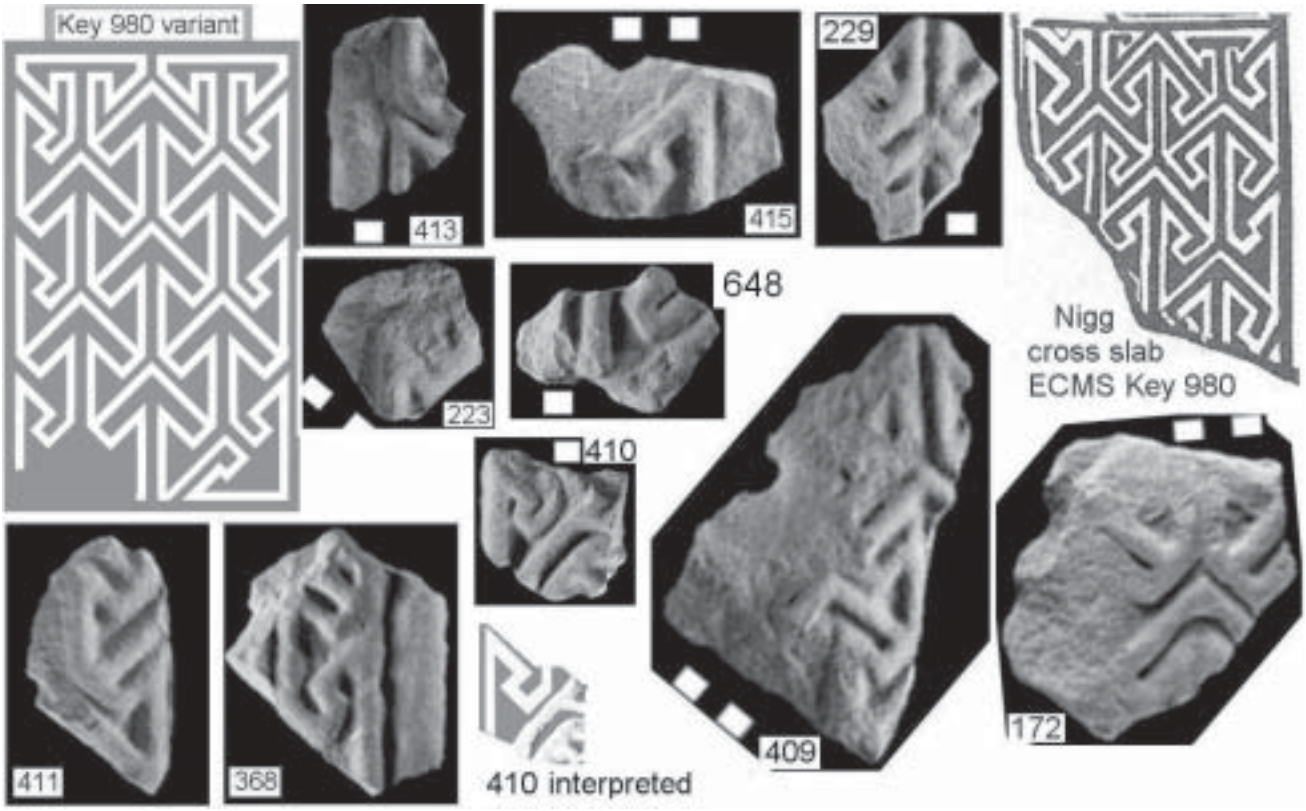
Discriminants by which fragments can be allocated to this key are: (i) successive segments go first anticlockwise then clockwise or vice versa; (ii) offset T-junctions; (iii) each internal bay has a double spiral, usually with four clockwise turns followed by three anticlockwise turns (or vice versa) between T-junctions. The variant form has three clockwise turns followed by two anticlockwise turns (or vice versa) between T-junctions.

ECMS Key 980

Fragments 409, 410, 411, 413, 415, 416, and 417 all seem to have similarly angled sections of key design, i.e. internal angles of 45 and 90 degrees. The relevant key is ECMS design 980, or rather a variant of it. Fragments 409, 172, and 229 show the diagnostic feature of the key, with large arrow-shaped features pointing upwards, parallel to the sides.

The closest match on other slabs is on the cross slab at Nigg, close by Hilton of Cadboll, but the agreement is not perfect. Fortunately we can establish the main structure of the key pattern on the Hilton of Cadboll slab, even if not every detail. In particular, fragments 409, 411, and 172 are particularly helpful in establishing the internal structure of the pattern, while fragment 368 gives the structure of the vertical side panel. By analogy, the top border might well look like that on the Nigg cross slab, which is clearly in the same class of key design. The character of the bottom border is open to debate. Fragment 410 may show a boundary between key pattern and interlace or vine pattern (see the interpretation in Figure 3), i.e. it is possible that there is no formal border at the bottom of key 980.

The similarity of fragments 413 and 414, together with the fact that fragments 409, 411, 413, and 415 can all be linked to this key pattern, suggest that fragment 414 should also be so



3 *Key 980 pattern and variant and relevant fragments of Hilton of Cadboll. Though broadly similar, fragment 409 shows a clear departure from the pattern on the Nigg cross slab.*

linked, perhaps along the bottom edge, but it is not clear how this would be achieved. Fragment 414 appears in Figure 2 as a possible border element of Key 958.

Discriminants by which fragments can be allocated to this key are: (i) internal angles of 45 degrees; (ii) mirror image symmetry about vertical axis (229); (iii) parallel vertical lines (i.e. parallel to the borders as in 368); (iv) arrow shapes; (v) angles at borders of 135 degrees (368).

General Remarks

The standard procedure in solving any jigsaw puzzle is first to separate out the pieces that share a common feature (like colour and pattern), and try to match up pieces with this common feature. In the present case, we could concentrate on one particular key pattern at a time. Perhaps the best help we can give the online puzzlers is to identify the key patterns used on the cross face. Ideally we would then identify which key design is relevant to each fragment, and give the proper orientation of the fragment, so that its potential locations in the overall design can be pinpointed. As key designs usually have some form of symmetry, e.g. rotational or mirror image, each fragment will probably have a small number of potential locations. Prospects do not look good, however, as we were only able to identify the design on 100 fragments among 191. Even this is an optimistic estimate, as half of the fragments we have identified are invisible to the online fraternity. Perhaps it would help if full information on every fragment were to become available, or at least if the various databases were cross referenced in a consistent and reliable manner. It would also help if we had higher resolution images, rather than working with thumbnails, but some fragments are so worn that their interpretation is dubious at best, and this should be borne in mind when comparing the idealised key patterns with my own interpretation of the fragments.

Bob Henery

Notes

1 *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, Romilly Allen and Joseph Anderson, part II, pp.347–55.

2 Oddly enough ECMS cites the Kingoldrum stone as an example of key 957, though it has one square bay with an anticlockwise spiral, the other square bays having clockwise spirals.

Pictavia, 15 November 2013

George Geddes

Iron Age Remains in the Western Isles: recent survey

George, whose personal history includes work with the National Trust for Scotland on St Kilda, gave a detailed account of survey work undertaken by a Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland team in the Uists in 2012–13. He began by briefly sketching the history and development of RCAHMS, which was established in 1908 to produce an Inventory ofmonuments of historical interest up to 1707. Initially, the survey work was carried out by a single individual, with the staff numbers rising slowly. With a very slim budget for transport and accommodation, it is a matter of wonder that so many monuments were recorded in a series of County surveys which were published form 1909 onwards. Today, RCAHMS' remit covers the whole of Scotland's built environment and includes not only structures and monuments but historic landscapes. RCAMHS is also the custodian of the National Monuments Record of Scotland, and curates collections of documents, photographs and other illustrations relating to its work. It also undertakes education and outreach work, encouraging individuals and local interest groups to contribute to the collection and use of data held in its open database, Canmore. (To obtain access to the information on Canmore, visit the website at: **www.RCAHMS.gov.uk**).

The first RCAHMS surveyors to the Western Isles recorded around 700 sites. Today that total is nearer 15,000. The growth in numbers in no way reflects on the skill of the pioneers: some of the increase is due to changes in technology, some to the removal of the date restriction on sites to be recorded. The use of aerial survey techniques and the increasing involvement of wider public in identifying ancient sites have also contributed. The accessibility of sites is also a major factor. George noted the example of the area around Balranald in North Uist. There, proximity to access roads and accommodation for survey staff made it relatively easy to survey an area fairly typical of the variety and character of earlier land usage in the Uists. Machar, blacklands, croftlands and the higher peatlands all carry structures related to occupation and

exploitation of the resources of the area. These are reasonably well documented, with the density of sites diminishing as the land rises away from the low, fertile ground by the sea to the high peatland. One site here shows how the focus on early sites could lead those responsible for the early record to ignore potentially interesting later features. Dun Scarie near Balranald was recorded as the remains of a dun with later buildings which, according to an Ordnance Survey record of the 1960s, 'obliterated the features of the dun'. Careful survey in 2012 revealed a group of buildings, probably from the later medieval period which occupied the same site as the earlier dun, a small causewayed island in Loch Scaridh. This George compared with the better known Dun an Sticer, where the later buildings were not shown in RCAHMS's 1928 Inventory of the area.

Usinish, in South Uist, is far less accessible. George focussed on survey work carried out here by RCAHMS at the instigation of Deborah Anderson, the Regional Architect for the Western Isles Council. A township of half-a-dozen houses at Usinish was abandoned, probably in the early nineteenth century. The area around Usinish Bay is difficult of access: there are no roads into the area, and the country is rough moorland. Early work in identifying and surveying ancient remains here was carried out by Captain F.W.L. Thomas, of the Royal Navy, in the 1860s. He identified a number of structures later to be known as wheelhouses[1] and souterrains, as well as round houses and cairns. His descriptions often included sketch plans. Sporadic later visits by members of the Ordnance Survey and archaeologist had left a rather confused record of the sites in the area. In addition, aerial photography had revealed the existence of more sites than had previously been noted, and there was some question as to the accuracy of the existing map records. George's slides made very clear some of the problems: the vegetation on the rough moorland can, for much of the year, obliterate the low traces of ancient buildings. The terrain itself is confusing, with little in the way of clear landmarks. Trying to locate sites accurately without the use of GPS is problematic.

The RCAHMS team managed to get their equipment transported in to a local bothy, and started work on survey of the area. They rapidly expanded our knowledge of ancient sites existing in the area, confirming some of Thomas' early work and adding fresh information about some of his sites. They also observed hitherto undiscovered sites – roundhouses, wheelhouses, souterrains, shieling huts and walls, caves adapted for use and later medieval and post-medieval buildings as well as an unrecorded Neolithic chambered cairn. George's illustrations of the area were spectacular, as he rapidly worked his way through the various interesting locations. Fortunately, a detailed record is already available on Canmore. The sites he covered: Uamh Iosal (1&2), Buaile Ormacleit, Uamh Ghrantaich, Scalavat (1&2) or simply Usinish can all be entered in the place search to view reports of the 2013 expedition as well as earlier records. In five weeks of work, the team had doubled the number of recorded sites, carried out twenty measured surveys of nationally significant sites and mapped these over an area of about 60 square kilometres. Their work stimulated local interest, with a boatload of locals sailing round to Usinish Bay to visit the workers. They also have provided a better foundation for planning the management and protection of these sites, as well as allowing for better research design into studying the history and prehistory of the area.

Sheila Hainey

Note

1 Elsewhere in the western isles, such buildings have been shown to have remained in use into the Pictish period.

Where are the Pictish books?

Although no Pictish books have been found so far in Scotland, evidence of them exists. Quite a number of Pictish sculptured stones display figures carrying books, for instance on the Meigle 14 fragment (**1**). The three ecclesiastics on the Invergowrie cross-slab each clasp a book (**2**), as do those on both sides of St Vigeans 11. One of the apostles on the 'apostle-dragon' fragment at Tarbat demonstratively holds out a book across his body to his neighbour. The angels on Aberlemno 3 are bowed over books (**3**), like Saints Paul and Antony at Nigg, each kneeling before his opened book (**4**).[1]

Contemporary writings do survive elsewhere. The early 8th-century books of Adomnan and Bede tell us that Columba brought Christianity to northern Picts in the later 6th century. Missionaries, foreign and domestic, spread the word, which may be indicated by three Shetland sculptured stones. The 'Monks stone' found at

Photos © Bob Henery, E Reid and Tarbat Discovery Centre

Papil, Burra, features a procession of walking monks with croziers heading towards a cross. Behind them rides a horseman, followed by another monk on foot with a rectangular satchel hanging on straps' from the shoulder (**5**).[2] On the Papil cross-slab a pair of monks stands either side of the cross, the outer one of each pair with satchel at his side (**6**). Both front and back of the Bressay cross-slab honour these pedestrians, again with satchels in view. These most likely represent book satchels containing sacred texts.

Pictish sculptors created visual effects in stone that parallel illuminators decorating folios in a scriptorium. For example, the Hendersons have highlighted a striking resemblance between the front of the Rosemarkie cross-slab and the Augsburg Gospels carpet page.[3] It seems certain that 'there was access to a range of illuminated gospel texts in eastern Scotland in the early medieval period …'.[4]

It fell to Martin Carver from York University and his team to confirm this conclusion archaeologically.[5] In the 1990s they began excavating a site at Portmahomack, on the Tarbat peninsula (Ross-shire). Aerial photography had revealed the crop-mark of an enclosure shaped very like that on Iona, while a stone with a relief-carved Latin inscription had been found earlier. All the signs pointed to a monastery with literate inhabitants.

Among many discoveries, the team uncovered a stone-lined tank, and, thanks to further finds – a large number of cattle bones (metapodials, from the ends of legs), some of which had been sharpened, pieces of pumice, and an anchor-shaped knife (lunellum), known for scraping animal skin – they deduced its specific purpose (**7**).

The stone basin had been a tawing pool, where hides were soaked in a lime solution and worked until ready to be stretched on a frame, fixed in position by cattle-bone pegs, and kept taut until dry. Rough pumice rubbers and the knife were needed to thin and smooth the skins to turn them into vellum or parchment for writing and painting.[6]

According to radiocarbon dating, the vellum workshop at Portmahomack flourished for about 100 years, from late 7th to late 8th century, until it was destroyed, probably by raiding Vikings. The excavators discovered more than a hundred fragments of burned and hammered sculpture.[7] We are lucky that even a portion of the 'apostle-dragon stone' survives with its book-clutching apostle.[8]

So where are the books that were made in Pictland? Vellum is tough stuff and very durable. The most recent discovery of an early medieval book occurred in 2006 in Ireland. Out of a bog came a mangled brown blob, miraculously spotted by the driver of a bulldozer stripping peat. Once the conservators had dealt with it, it proved to be an early 8th-century psalter with over a hundred pages of psalms and illuminations inside a leather pouch. Remarkably, six years earlier a leather book satchel dated to between the 7th and 9th centuries had been recovered a mere 100m away.[9]

Portmahomack monastery cannot have been the sole centre making manuscripts; other similar monastic communities in Pictland must have been working along similar lines.

By unknown routes through time and space, manuscripts occasionally reach the sanctuary of a library collection. The journey taken by the Book of Kells and where it started are still uncertain and disputed. The Book of Deer peregrinated for centuries before it finally came to rest at Cambridge University.[10] No one is certain whether this small vellum book, dated to the 10th century, was manufactured locally in Deer, Buchan, or not. If experts are not yet able to determine categorically whether a manuscript stems originally from Pictland/Scotland or Dalriata/Ireland, then somewhere there may be manuscripts of Pictish manufacture awaiting correct attribution.[11] Otherwise, we can only hope for another flukey find, this time in a Scottish bog.

Elspeth Reid

Notes

1 Books on Aldbar, Brechin, Camuston, Lethendy. Also on lost Skellybogs fragment: Katherine Forsyth, 'The Stones of Deer', in *Studies on the Book of Deer*, ed. K Forsyth, 2008, 413–15.

2 It is often suggested that the rectangle symbol on Class I symbol stones and one Class II cross-slab might represent a satchel.

3 George Henderson and Isabel Henderson, *The Art of the Picts: Sculpture and Metalwork in Early Medieval Scotland*, 2004, Cap 8 'Losses', 215–17.

4 Isabel Henderson, 'Understanding the figurative style and decorative programme' in *Studies on the Book of Deer*, 58–59.

5 Martin Carver, 2008a, *Portmahomack, monastery of the Picts*, and 2008b, *The Pictish monastery at Portmahomack*, Jarrow Lecture.

6 Carver, 2008a, 124–25. (Vellum is correctly applied only to calf skin, whereas parchment is made from other pelts, e.g. of goats, sheep, deer. It takes a lot of skins to make one book.)

7 Ibid., 138.

8 The site of a scriptorium remained elusive. Carver considered its probable location was nearer the church.

9 The Fadden More Psalter, see website of National Museum of Ireland. (Lost en route, hidden there for safety, or appropriated and discarded as 'valueless'?)

10 Patrick Zutshi, 'The Book of Deer after c.1150' in *Studies on the Book of Deer*, 98–104.

11 For historical examples of erroneous Pictish attribution, Richard Sharpe, 'In quest of Pictish manuscripts' in *The Innes Review*, 59 (Autumn 2008), 145–67.

Correspondence

Although I missed engineer Philip Robert's talk on the contribution of old maps to understanding Pictish history last September, I read the review in Newsletter 69 with interest. Even without seeing his maps, I was convinced by the first part of his talk, on Ptolemy's map of Britain, and by how he straightened Scotland's broken back by means of an algorithm.

In the second part, however, looking for clues to the route of Roman roads, he adduces Rome farm, Old Scone, Perthshire, as possible evidence of popular memory of a Roman road starting from there.

According to *The Concise Scots Dictionary*, the Scots word rome/room dates from the 1600s; one of its meanings is 'a piece of land rented from a landowner'. In this meaning it now survives only in place names in Lowland Scotland.

A quick look through Groome's *Gazetteer of Scotland*, online, gave these place names in addition to his Rome farm at Old Scone, Perthshire:

Rome: a hillside farm, Lethnot, Angus.

Rome Hill: sheep pasture north-east of Abingdon, Southern Uplands.

Brig o Rome / Brig o Ruim: a packhorse bridge near Alyth, Perthshire.

Old Rome: site of a quarry, now landfill? Shewalton, Irvine, Ayrshire.

Old Rome: Kilmaurs, north-west of Kilmarnock, Ayrshire.

We have to be cautious with popular etymo-

logies. Rottal, in Glen Clova, Angus, has its own 'Roman Road.' The track takes its name from a vanished smallholding called Romans. The ground may have been rented from the landowner at some distant period, but not by Romans.

Going on to the third part of the talk, 'Montreathmont Moor', also in Angus, has never been pronounced as spelled. The form is a late gentrification of 'Monrumman', the local pronunciation and its spelling on old maps. The meaning is unknown, but, hazarding a guess as baseless as Philip's 'Romans v Picts battle', might it refer to Scottish St Rumon (not to be confused with Cornish St Rumon or Breton St Ruman), the patron saint of Cuikston kirk on the north east of Montreathmont Moor?

Or has anyone a better popular etymology?

Flora E Davidson

'Mr Angus' retires

Norman Atkinson's retirement from Angus Council was marked on the evening of 28 September last year, by a large gathering in Montrose Museum of present and former colleagues, other work associates, and members of his family who celebrated his distinguished working life. Norman joined Angus Council Cultural Services Department about 40 years ago as District Curator later becoming Director of Cultural Services (a post renamed Senior Service Manager by the time of his retiral). The present District Curator, Willie Milne, paid tribute to his many achievements in that period. Rachel Benvie, Curator of Montrose and Brechin museums, Norman's longest-serving staff appointee, added her personal recollections of working with her 'boss'.

In his turn, Norman, ever the easy communicator, characteristically turned the focus away from himself and, in a tour de force of inclusion, managed to outline the contribution made by each and every person present there that evening. In his lengthy period of employment there were absent friends too to be acknowledged, but, despite a few tears being shed for them, the party was a very genial and happy event reflecting the general warmth and high regard that people have for Norman.

PAS members will be aware of Norman's great contribution to the Society as a founder member, Vice-president for three years and President for ten years from 2002 to 2012. However, they may not know much of his working life which he spent passionately promoting and displaying the rich history, heritage and environment of Angus and its people.

The Courier

Norman admiring the Aberlemno battle-scene shortly before the first ever PAS conference, which was held in Letham, Angus in May 1992

Angus Council has seven fully accredited museums, all of which have either been significantly redeveloped or created in Norman's time.

Montrose Museum was the first to be revamped by him and its new displays opened in 1981. The building itself, dating to 1842, is significant being one of the oldest purpose-built museums in the country. A jewel in its collection is the Pictish cross-slab, Inchbrayock 1.

The studio and sculptures of William Lamb, who died in 1951, can also be found in Montrose. Bequeathed to the local authority, Lamb's studio was later redeveloped by Norman who had the building and displays conserved and restored in 1978. He also instigated an 11-year programme of casting in bronze about 45 of the fragile plaster sculptures, ensuring their better preservation for the future. Examples of Lamb's sculpture were also erected at sites in the town.

The Signal Tower Museum in Arbroath was first redeveloped in 1990 with innovative displays and was runner-up in the Museum of the Year Award in that year. More recently, in 2011, the

unique building was again significantly redeveloped to coincide with the bicentenary of the building of the Bell Rock Lighthouse. The Signal Tower building was the shore station for the construction of the lighthouse and the new displays concentrate on telling the story of the building, the history of the lighthouse, and Arbroath's maritime past.

Norman's vision led to the early 17th-century Town House in Kirriemuir being renovated and conserved to emerge as the Gateway to the Glens Museum in 2001. Its imaginative displays and use of multi-media to tell the story of local history were duly recognised as winner of the Museum of the Year Award in the same year.

A small room in the Meffan Institute in Forfar served as the town's museum until 1992 when the ground floor of the building was transformed to create a new museum and a flexible-space art gallery. The Meffan Museum and Art Gallery was again extended in 1995 to include the Forfar Story and the magnificent and well-displayed collection of local Pictish stones. This is complemented by an interactive-screen catalogue of all the early medieval carved stones of Angus. One notable exhibit – the Dunnichen Stone – stands as an enduring symbol of Norman's dedication and determination to have it retuned from Dundee for display in a suitable venue near to its original location.

In Brechin, a museum of sorts was housed in a room in the library. Norman planned the establishment of a proper museum in the old Town House in the centre of the city and, after sensitive renovation of the distinctive building, the new facility was opened in 2003.

Just to the west of Brechin is Pictavia (HQ of PAS for many years) the Angus Pictish Heritage Centre, an idea first proposed and devised by Norman as early as 1986. It eventually opened in 1999, managed by the Economic Development Team of the Council. It is a matter of regret that they have failed to run it according to Norman's original vision of its function.

In recent years, all the museums have undergone extensive work installing ramps and lifts to provide access to all.

Arguably the most valuable historical collection in Angus is its archive. The collection was held in a room in Montrose Library until its transfer to a new centre near Forfar in 2005. Norman had come to an agreement with the Hunter Foundation at Restenneth to renovate their private historical library to a facility incorporating the library, a research centre and the Angus Archive. This new facility beside the medieval priory has become a vibrant hub for historical and genealogical research in Angus.

This impressive record of achievement has not been made by a remote administrator; Norman has always been a hands-on manager and is well known locally beyond his official duties, in various guises – as a lecturer, leader of walks and field-trips, influential member of several committees and groups, curatorial and wildlife advisor and a host of other posts and interests.

His first love was ornithology, his skill being apparent at an early age when, as a teenager, he became the first person to twice become UK Young Birdwatcher of the Year. Later he was involved in ornithological research mainly among coastal bird colonies, particularly migrant waders and wildfowl. He discovered that little terns recognise the pattern of stones around their nests not their location, therefore the nests and their contents, eggs or young, could safely be moved and placed out of danger above high-water mark.

His work for the Scottish Wildlife Trust was influential in establishing the Local Nature Reserves, Balgavies Loch and Montrose Basin with its acclaimed visitor centre.

Norman made a most important voluntary contribution to the community in a completely different field by serving a seven-year period as radio commentator for all of Arbroath FC's games at Gayfield, their windswept home ground on the edge of the North Sea. His ability to engagingly describe the matches on Angus Community Radio was much appreciated especially by those in hospital and older people no longer able to attend the ground. He was well qualified for this task having the gift of the gab and having spent many years as a youth football coach and league administrator.

Of necessity, this is a rather dilute and selective account of Norman's work. The benefits that he brought to PAS cannot be overstated and he steered the Society through difficult times and ensured its continuance and prosperity. The Honorary Membership conferred on him at the last AGM is but a modest token of recognition of his efforts on our behalf. *DH*

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Please email contributions to the editor
john.borland@rcahms.gov.uk