A big thank you to the Pictish Arts Society from Elgin Museum

The Kinloss Stone, a small fragment of a small cross slab, was found in 2017 on the beach at Kinloss, Moray near the mouth of the River Findhorn, by a visitor to the area. It was declared to Treasure Trove and allocated to Elgin Museum in 2019. Three years later it is conserved and on display, thanks to an ICON Tru Vue Conservation & Exhibition Grant, topped up by the Pictish Arts Society.

What immediately struck us, when first shown a photo of the stone, was the similarity with the design of the central boss of the cross on our Class II stone, Drainie 32. From that moment, the hope was that we could display the two stones together, and at last this has been achieved. Some PAS members have seen the

The new Kinloss fragment, displayed above Drainie 32.

stone already as we were able to borrow it from the Falconer Museum, where it had ended up before allocation, for the PAS Conference held in Elgin Museum in 2018. We had it on display with some of our smaller fragments from store, and some other fragments borrowed from the Falconer (See PAS Newsletter 89 Winter 2018 p.7).

As an initial step, John Borland kindly took the stone down from Moray to the Treasure Trove Unit, Edinburgh for processing. As the finder could not be traced, when it came to allocation to an Accredited Museum, and Elgin Museum's bid was successful, there was no finder fee to pay. Once the grant from ICON was confirmed, we were able to arrange for the conservation team (Graciela Ainsworth Sculpture Conservation Ltd) to start work. The PAS's welcome offer to make up the grant deficit of some £450 was also approved. Between lockdowns, the stone was collected and conservation begun – this largely involved desalination. Graciela's company had conserved our other stones and carried out the major project of their re-display to include the Dandaleith Stone, acquired in 2013.

Display of the stones is in bespoke stainless-steel clamps onto a backing board on a raised plinth. To display the Kinloss fragment to best effect, it needed to be sited close to Drainie 32 so that their similar stylistic features could be appreciated. Although a relatively small fragment, this was no small task as most of the other stones had to be removed from the display so that the conservators could access the rear of the backing and secure the bolts for the new clamps. Thankfully one of the specialist team had been involved in the earlier re-display project and was familiar with the setup. Amazingly, this was all done in a morning.

The stone is now available for staff and ad hoc visitors to enjoy. The museum will not open to the public for the 2022 season until after Easter but we will publicise the good news of the Kinloss Stone's instatement through our social media, website and newsletter, with due reference to the funders. Our carved stone collection

The Elgin Museum display of Pictish sculpture being dismantled to accommodate the new acquisition.

is much appreciated by the many like yourselves with a special interest in the Picts and, for example, our regular archaeology student visitors from Gordon Noble's department at Aberdeen University. One final task is to include a description and illustration of the stone in the third edition of our in-house publication: *The Pictish and Early Medieval Carved Stones in Elgin Museum.*

There are still plenty of unanswered questions as to how the fragment turned up on the beach just east of the mouth of the River Findhorn. Given the strength of the longshore drift westwards, has it come from the Pictish fort site at Burghead or the carved stone workshop at the early Christian settlement at Kinneddar, Lossiemouth? Or down the River Findhorn perhaps from Relugas? Or en route by sea from Portmahomack, the boat capsizing in the tricky Findhorn entrance? And where is the rest of the stone? Any suggestions gratefully received. We look forward to seeing you all back in Elgin Museum to enjoy this small but fascinating piece of stonework that you have helped to bring to light.

Janet Trythall (Elgin Museum Volunteer and Moray Society Board member)

For more information about Elgin Museum, including a virtual visit to their collection of Pictish stones, a 3D interactive model of the amazing Dandaleith Stone and much more, visit:

https://elginmuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/archaeology/

The Elgin Museum assemblage of Pictish sculpture, complete with the new fragment from Kinloss.

PAS online Conference 2021
(Sunday session, 3 October)

The Sunday session of our 2021 online conference got underway with Hugh Levey's paper ***Towards Establishing the 'Rule-Book' of Pictish Symbol Usage.*** Hugh began by describing how he set up a database on which to collate his work. First, he outlined the types of artefact on which we find Pictish symbols: on Class I and Class II stones, on portable objects (jewellery, gaming pieces, etc.), on the walls of caves and carved into living rock. Such organic materials as wood and vellum were available in Pictland, and it is possible that symbols were depicted on them, but the perishable nature of such items leaves us with no evidence. The circular definition of symbols as designs that appear on Class I stones, while Class I stones only carry symbols is rather unhelpful. On the premise that before we look for meaning, we should understand the syntax of symbol usage, Hugh set out to create a database of all symbol-bearing artefacts. Taking Ian Fraser's 2008 *The Symbol Stones of Scotland* as his starting point and adding more recent finds reported in *Discovery and Excavation Scotland*, on Canmore and elsewhere, he examined each of the items personally. He described the factors recorded for each, and the details noted for all the symbols present. This allowed him to capture such data as the location of symbols on the object, their positions relative to each other, the condition of the item, and so on. He re-examined each symbol and noted his confidence in his identification of each one.

Before discussing his findings, Hugh made it plain in advance that his use of 'never' and 'always' only refers to the data currently available. The nature of the evidence is such that a new discovery at any time could contradict this usage.

He examined the occurrence of each of the symbols and was able to assign them to one of three main categories; 'pairing' symbols, which usually appeared in the company of another pairing symbol, 'auxiliary' symbols, which supplement pairs, and 'lone' symbols, which appear in isolation. The pairing symbols represent fauna (eagle, fish, snake, beastie, etc.) or are non-representational of real-world items. Auxiliary symbols include the mirror and comb as well as tools such as pincers and hammer. Finally the lone symbols show specific animals.

Complete Class I and Class II stones conform pretty closely to a set of rules that requires a pair, with or without auxiliary or a lone symbol (95.2% of Class I and 93.5% of Class II). These are large objects that were set in obvious locations, widely visible and following generally understood rules. Only 61.5% of portable objects follow this pattern, perhaps because these had a more personal meaning. The large silver chains with two symbols were made to be seen, again implying a public display. Only about 50% of symbols on the walls of caves were assessed as being paired, while of the two examples on living rock (both outside Pictland) only one has a pair of symbols.

Auxiliary symbols always appear as subsidiary to a

symbol pair and are all representational. Sixty-eight of these are mirrors, forty-four are combs (always with a mirror). There are three definite examples of pincers, that at Dunfallandy in company with a hammer and anvil. (The other two are paired with hammers). Hugh illustrated the difficulty sometimes of confidently distinguishing the so-called "tuning fork" (a pairing symbol) from the pincers (an auxiliary) and proposed that the symbol on Kintore 3 usually considered a "tuning fork" might well be a fourth example of pincers.

He went on to define a form that appears on both the Cargill stone and the slab from Pool as a symbol, naming it the 'placard' from its resemblance to the modern object. He stressed, however, that in general abstract symbol names are modern mnemonics, which are useful in discussion but convey nothing of original function.

Three potential modifiers were also noted - small differences that might alter the meaning of a basic symbol. These were the 'bar' which appears on six of seventeen triple discs, the notch (on two of twenty-seven arches, seven of twenty-eight mirror cases, three of twenty-nine double discs, one of fourteen crescents and one of seven ovals) and finally the 'bulbous' modifier. This last, a swelling on the edge of a symbol, appears five times, four of these in the vicinity of Inverurie. Hugh suggested that it may have had a local meaning. These modifiers only appear on Class I stones. He thought it possible that the V-rod and Z-rod may also be modifiers. Alternatively, it is possible that rodded/unrodded symbols may be distinct rather than modified.

Triangles have been found on cave walls at Wemyss, on portable objects from Dunnicaer and on the Parkhill silver chain. Archaeological dating for activity at Dunnicaer and Wemyss places this in the same early time horizon proposed for the Parkhill chain. Is this an example of a proto-symbol, designed to be a pairing symbol but which did not survive in use?

Hugh suggested that the three symbols on the St Madoes stone, accompanying the three riders, may be a shorthand version of two pairs. Each is within its own frame, but the Pictish beast appears below the other two, and Hugh thought that it might pair with each of them.

In summary, Hugh proposes a basic syntax which comprised a system of paired symbols, which could be supported or modified by auxiliaries. These may have been part of the same or a complementary system, while the lone symbols may belong to a separate system. Class I and Class II stones adhere strongly to these rules, but they do not necessarily apply to symbols found on portable objects, cave walls or living rock.

The second paper of the afternoon from Dr Kelly Kilpatrick was entitled *Pictish Myth and Religion*. Kelly began by noting that very little of Pictish culture seems accessible to us today. Apart from the king lists, our written sources for the period were all compiled outside Pictish territory. However, we do have the evidence of the sometimes enigmatic sculptured stones. Bede rejoiced in 731 that all the peoples of Britain were Christian. Adomnán, in his account of St Columba's life, gives us hints of multiple gods, some associated with natural features and a religion presided over by a caste of 'magi' who perhaps paralleled the druids of Irish literature. Columba encountered and contested with some of these pagan Picts. From linguistic and onomastic evidence the Picts appear to have shared much in common with the other pre-Roman peoples of Britain. Kelly argued that visual evidence for pre-Christian Pictish beliefs, from the early incised stones to the elaborate later relief sculptures, has largely gone unrecognised.

For example, the early incised, weapon-bearing figures persist on later monuments in company with a range of otherworldly creatures and the Christian cross. The beast-headed man with sword and round shield on the Murthly stone has a strong resemblance to that on the recently found Conan stone. Their opponents are different, although still fantastic creatures. The hybrid creatures and weird animals found on many sculptured stones belong to a world of supernatural beings and mythical monsters. These unworldly scenes would seem to reflect a tradition rooted in a pre-Christian religion. Figures such as the beast-headed, weapon-carrying 'formidable man' first appear on pre-Christian incised stones and continue on later relief stones - no longer worshipped, but still remembered.

On incised stones, the solitary left-facing spear carrier holds a knob-butted spear. These are principally known from archaeological contexts in Ireland and Scotland, although a few examples are known from England. They date mainly from 100 BC to AD 100, although they may continue as late as the fourth century in Scotland. One example of this figure, in the Court Cave at Wemyss, is front facing. Although locally nicknamed 'Thor', Helen McKay has suggested that this might be a representation of Cocidius. About 20 dedications and shrines to this Celtic god have been found in the area around Hadrian's Wall. Frequently associated with the Roman Mars, Cocidius' name means 'reddish' and may indicate that he was of warlike nature. The Cocidius –Mars dedications and the shrine of Fanum Cocidii (Bewcastle) are examples of the cultural fu-

sion seen across the Roman Empire. Alastair Mack suggested that the figure on the Collessie stone may have been a god. It does seem likely that cultural connections were much stronger across Britain in pre-Roman times, but it is worth considering how Romano-British religious customs may have affected the Picts (or their close ancestors). Roman influence elsewhere in the Celtic world had seen the veneration of representations of gods in sacred spaces: nemeta or shrines. Was this also the case in pre-Christian Pictland? It is worth noting that the figures on stones at Collessie, Rhynie and Tulloch were close to burial sites or cemeteries. Did these dictate the location of the carved stones, or were the burials placed in proximity to a sacred space, marked by the carved stone? Activity in the Wemyss caves has been dated to the first to fifth centuries AD. A pre-Christian date is also most likely for the spear-carrying figures incised on stones. Do these reflect a period when the Picts (or their ancestors) were in conflict with Rome, and actively seeking the aid of a warrior god?

Classical writers, such as Livy, have commented on Celtic warriors going naked into battle, so that their wounds would show more clearly against their bare skin. Do the naked spear carriers belong to this tradition? Recent photogrammetry of the Collessie stone has revealed what appear to be torc terminals at his neck. Torcs went out of fashion in the third century, and the rectangular shield in his hand resembles one shown on the second-century Bridgeness distance slab. A time of war or the threat of invasion would seem to be a likely background to the erection of stones incised with figure of a familiar war god.

A second category of incised figure that carries on to later relief-carved stone is that of a beast-headed man carrying an axe or club. Examples have been found at Mail, Balblair and the Rhynie Barflat stone. This would appear to be another important figure in Pictish mythology. A miniature axe found at Rhynie may be of relevance here; similar miniature axes have been found elsewhere in the Celtic world, often at sacred sites where they may have been votive offerings. So far we have no name for this weapon carrier.

In modern times, the presence of the cross on later stones has influenced the interpretation of other scenes on the stone. Kelly pointed out that it is simplistic to assume that conversion was a rapid and absolute event. While the old gods may have dwindled into legend, stories associated with their doings need not have been incompatible with the Christian message. We recognise events and stories from Scandinavian mythology on insular Scandinavian Christian stones, such as the representation of Ragnarok on Thorwald's Cross on the Isle of Man. We have later medieval texts to shed light on the story, which, with its message of the creation of a new and better world after an apocalyptic destruction of the present, chimes easily with Christian belief. How many of the elements to be found on later Pictish stones - weapon-brandishing men or hybrid beings, cauldrons, centaurs, serpents, hippocamps and so on - had their place in a mythology not incompatible with the Christian message is difficult to guess in the absence of surviving Pictish traditions. Kelly suggested that we might look to neighbouring Celtic lands where some legends have been preserved. Stories of the Dagda, the primary god in pre-Christian Ireland, have been passed down in the twelfth-century *Cath Maige Tuired*, which preserves earlier material. The 'Good God' appears as a large, pot-bellied figure wearing a short, dun-brown tunic and carrying a lorg - a weapon with one end that killed and the other that cured. Indo-European gods carrying striking weapons are often thunder gods: Thor, Zeus or Taranis for example. The Dagda, and possibly the Pictish weapon-carriers, may belong to this group. The Dagda possessed a magical cauldron, which produced a never-ending supply of food. Other potent cauldrons feature in Welsh lore including one which had the power to restore to life the bodies of dead warriors. Other suggestive legends include the Irish accounts of the Morrigan, a goddess of death and battle who appeared as a either a woman or a crow, but who does not seem to have been a hybrid. In both Welsh and Irish mythology, the otherworld is often seen as an island across the sea. It is possible that the sea serpent that surrounds the world in Norse lore is part of this tradition and may be represented on some of our Pictish carved stones.

Kelly summarised her work so far: it is likely that we can identify the striding, spear-carrying figure of the incised stones and the Wemyss cave as Cocidius, a warrior god. Veneration for him seems to have increased in the face of Roman incursions in the north. Likewise, there seems to have been a long tradition concerning the axe or club bearer whose identity is tantalisingly hidden. But it would appear from the incised stones that pre-Christian Picts worshipped their gods at sacred sites, and continued to carve at least some stories from their mythology after their conversion to Christianity.

The third paper of the afternoon, *Sueno's Stone - recent research and recording*, was delivered jointly by PAS President John Borland and Ruth Loggie, drawing upon John's recent (but not yet complete) measured survey of this monumentally

large cross slab and Ruth's recent research, considering aspects of the programme of the stone and comparisons with other artwork and written material.

Sueno's Stone, a 6.5 metre pillar of sandstone carved on all four faces stands just off the A96 on the outskirts of Forres. Since 1991, it has been protected from the elements by a glass box, within which John laboured to study and draw the carvings. His task was not made any easier by the company of spiders and flies, or the intense heat that can build up on a sunny day. And, of course, the height of the monument and the narrow confines of the box made it extremely difficult to get close to the upper half of the stone. Fortunately he had access to casts made in the 1950's and now held in the National Museum of Scotland - these showing that noticeable erosion had taken place in the ensuing forty years or so before the stone was enclosed.

Face A carries a cross on a long shaft, rising from a base that extends across the width of the stone. Working from the casts, John noted for the first time a series of five bosses around the centre of the cross. The shaft and background carry interlace, giving a richly ornamented appearance. However, each consists of just one knot, repeated again and again. Below the cross base is a scene comprising two taller flanking figures looming over a central front-facing figure. Two small figures occupy the upper corners of the scene. Based on its similarity to the image on the thirteenth-century Scone Abbey seal, it has been suggested that this represents the anointing of the central king, but the two flanking figures seem to dominate and to be the most important in this panel. Below this there is a blank area of stone on which John could find no trace of inscription, although on Face B two truncated figures show that carving continues below the level of the current stepped base.

Face C has been interpreted as illustrating a battle and its aftermath. The highest part of this shows a central horseman dominating a pair of riders, above two rows of three horsemen each. Below these are a group of standing men, the central figure again dominating and perhaps representing a chief or king. In the next register, battle has commenced, with two figures at the left of this panel already in retreat. Below this is a strange broch-like shape, with a pile of horizontal headless bodies, their hands apparently tied together, severed heads to the left and beneath it while more warriors are grouped to the right. In the next panel the battle continues. The mass grave excavated at Repton suggests that certainly by the Viking period, beheading the defeated in battle was a commonplace. Below this we have an arched object and more headless bodies and scenes of beheading. Below this, the battle apparently concludes. The victors are led by a prominent figure wearing something akin to a crown. He is lopping the head off his

opponent whilst the rest of the vanquished foes flee the field. A further panel below this scene was uncovered when the surrounding collar stones were removed in 1926. The photograph taken then is of poor quality but it appears to reiterate the theme of a triumphant victor and a defeated foe in rout.

Ruth commented that Sueno's Stone is remarkable for its size and its lack of Pictish symbols, although it does appear to be the work of a Pictish stone carver. Debates over the years have tended to focus on the scenes shown on Face C: whether or not a specific event was shown and commemorated and when or why the stone was raised.

Two radiocarbon dates were obtained from postholes uncovered during excavation ahead of the erection of the glass box. These postholes were thought to be associated with the raising of the stone. One sample gave a late fourth-century date, while the other was dated to the eleventh-twelfth centuries. It is possible that the stone may have been erected (or re-erected) in the eleventh century, with the earlier date representing re-deposited material.

John's new drawings are invaluable in allowing art historical comparison to see if it is possible to identify influences and inspiration. The scene below the base of the cross has been likened to the anointing of Solomon by Zadok and Nathan (1 Kings, 1:30-39, as illustrated in the ninth-century Bible of St Pauls without the Walls f. 188v). The flanking 'anointing' figures seem to have their hair dressed in a style known from Pictish stones. It is possible that some of the wear on the central figure has resulted from people kneeling and touching it.

Face B has two panels. Ruth compared the upper, showing vine scroll inhabited by small human figures with the animal-inhabited vine scroll on the Bewcastle cross. She suggested that the humans on Sueno's Stone as opposed to the animals of Bewcastle may refer to the battle scene, emphasising its importance. The lower panel's vine scroll is reminiscent of the Jellinge style. The interlace creatures and men seen on Face D are similar to figures on stones such as Meigle 6 and Pittensorn, as well as to some of the figures from the Book of Kells. These comparisons suggest either a late amalgamation of styles from the north of England, Book of Kells and Pictland, or perhaps a contemporary blending of all three.

Ruth commented on the cut marks seen on Sueno's Stone. Such blade grooves are found on freestanding crosses, cross pillars and cross slabs across the insular world, with examples on the Kilnasaggart Pillar in County Armagh, Maen Achwyfan at Whiteford, North Wales, or, indeed, on the Lethendy Stone in Perthshire. It is believed that such marks were made in witness to oath-taking ceremonies.

It seems that the central placing or relatively large size of an individual within a group on early me-

dieval stones indicates that we are looking at a chief or a king. In the final visible panel on Face C, the dominant figure leading the attack apparently wears a crown, in which case this would be a very early example. The Anglo-Saxon Edgar was the first to be recorded as crowned with a diadem in 973AD. Various suggestions have been put forward as to why Sueno's Stone was erected. It has been suggested that it commemorates a victory of Scots over Picts, or Scots over Norsemen, or is a monument to Dubh, details of whose death in 967 are scant, to say the least. It may represent a single battle, or a group of battles, a sort of generalised depiction of an eventual conquest. It has been compared to Trajan's Column in Rome, with the suggestion that a traveller may have seen that and brought back the idea of such a monument to Forres.

Ruth finds the idea that the stone celebrates the successes of Cinead mac Ailpin (ruled Alba 843-858) compelling. It stood not only as a monument to a series of victories, but as a clear warning to any who would attempt to oppose this successful warrior as the new kingdom of Alba emerged in the ninth century. The stone may have been set in a location of some significance, close to the seventh-century Pictish barrow cemetery at Greshop. It is quite possible that this was, or became, an important assembly site. Sueno's Stone was probably carved by a Pictish sculptor in the late ninth century, retaining its political significance until at least the eleventh or twelfth centuries. The scenes on the stone may represent a series of events defining the end of an era and the beginnings of a new political structure. Such a monument could easily have been at the centre of ceremonial events for many generations.

John Borland returned on his own to give the fourth and final paper of the day: *Tullich – A major ecclesiastical site in the heart of Pictland. But where were the Picts?* Aberdeenshire has some pretensions to being the home of the Pictish symbol stone, boasting at least 76 examples. This is an unrivalled county assemblage, but the stones are far from evenly distributed. The Don valley has at least 46, from Dyce via Kintore, Inverurie and through the Garioch to Rhynie. By contrast, there are very few cross slabs along the Don: one at Dyce, one at Monymusk and the Maiden Stone. Three cross slabs do not argue for a strong Pictish Christian presence. In addition, there are only nine simple crosses on a total of five sites. (John drew attention to Dyce 4, similar to a recently discovered cross from Lindisfarne referred to by Christine Cowart-Smith in her earlier paper.)

North of the Don, Aberdeenshire has only 14 symbol stones. Two likely cross slabs are known, at Fyvie and Ravenscraig Castle. Only three simple crosses have been recognised, at Ruthven, Ellon and Old Deer where the reverse of a symbol stone was used for a relief-carved outline cross.

To the south of the Don, in the catchment of the Dee, things are rather different. Here only five symbol stones have been recorded, compared with the 46 or so on Donside. The fragment from Coynach Hill is described in Canmore as a symbol stone, but John believes that this is more likely to be an incised fragment from a cross slab (two pairs of human legs seem unlikely subject matter for a Class I stone). The fragment from Birse is also likely to be from a cross slab, and shows a double spiral ornament at the foot of the cross along with a comb and likely mirror, carved in shallow relief. This detail on the cross is reminiscent of the fragment from Aboyne and of the cross slab at Loch Kinnord.

John raised again the problems with Allen's classification system. The allocation of Classes I, II and III has carried an implication of chronological sequence which is neither helpful nor likely to be meaningful. There is no reason to assume that Allen's Class I preceded his Class II and then gave way to Class III; it is likely that there was considerable temporal overlap. The carving of the Aboyne, Kinnord and Birse stones strongly suggests that these were more or less contemporary, perhaps even carved by the same hand. As Jane Geddes made plain in her talk in the previous session of the conference, the absence of symbols does not necessarily imply a late date for a stone. After all, the commissioner would dictate the programme of the carving to suit a specific purpose which did not necessarily require the presence of symbols. The cross on the final cross slab from the Dee catchment, at Migvie, has the appearance of representing a wall hanging or tapestry.

The Dee and the Don run almost parallel to one another; the Dee is somewhat longer (at 140 km to the Don's 131km) and it has much the larger catchment. The discrepancy in the number of symbols stones is stark: five on Deeside compared to at least 46 in the Don valley. It is unlikely that this is simply a reflection of differential preservation or discovery. Neither has many cross slabs: five for Deeside and three for Donside. However, Deeside has many simple crosses, from its lower reaches all the way upstream to St Nathalan's at Tullich where until fairly recently the tally was 14, more than the Don valley and northern Aberdeenshire combined. The site is also home to one of the five symbol stones on Deeside, suggesting that the church may have been located at an older Pictish ritual site.

There is nothing stylistically Pictish about these crosses. Many of the motifs show clear linkage

westwards through Highland Perthshire and back to Iona itself. All the stones appear to have been sourced locally. Tullich also boasts a monumentally large font. Although these large hollowed stones are difficult to date, it is worth comparing this to examples at Dull and Fortingall, other sites with similar collections of simple crosses. Other sites in Highland Perthshire also have this combination of font and early medieval simple crosses. It is tempting to associate these fonts with baptism as part of a conversion ritual.

Excavations at Tullich in 2013 uncovered another two slabs with simple crosses, fitting the general pattern of the other 14 stones. The carvers here worked with a limited palette of motifs to provide a range of variants on a common theme, similar but not identical. Radiocarbon dating evidence was obtained which placed activity here between the mid-seventh to later ninth centuries. In other words, we have a church site with plenty of examples of carved crosses none of which show any Pictish features, yet located in the heart of Pictish territory and comfortably in the Pictish period. In 2019, a programme of stabilisation and restoration was carried out on the existing church, which dates back to the fourteenth century. This revealed another five of these simple crosses in the same non-Pictish style, strengthening the links to Dalriada, or at least to Highland Perthshire. Some were probably recumbent grave markers with a simple cross at one end, others upright cross slabs, all recycled into the later church building. However, Tullich 21 showed something in the way of Pictish affinities. The shape of this undecorated cross bears resemblance to one on a possibly incomplete cross slab from Drainie (Moray), and is very similar in form to the cross at Clynekirkton (Sutherland) with its double square hollows.

Then fragments Tullich 22, 23, 24 and 25a & b were recovered from the wall core of the church. These chunks of fine-grained yellow sandstone bear finely carved Pictish ornament. Either the cross or the unworked slab and a skilled craftsman were brought to the site or a source of sandstone was found locally among the glacial till. But along with the style of cross on Tullich 21, these yellow sandstone fragments and their diagonal key pattern certainly make a Moray connection possible. Further geological examination of the stone and a detailed analysis of the ornament may reveal its origin. Other shattered fragments of this (and possibly other) monument(s) may still rest in the wall core, broken up for reuse in the fourteenth century.

So, despite the earlier lack of evidence, it would appear that at St Nathalan's church at Tullich, in the heart of Pictland, Picts *were* there.

And finally…Jane Geddes' virtual tour of Tullich.

We usually conclude our conferences with a Field Trip on the following day, visiting the Pictish stones in the vicinity of the conference venue. Clearly, that was not on the cards this time. Instead, Jane Geddes bravely offered to take us on a virtual trip to St Nathalan's church, Tullich and its environs.

The setting is idyllic: with the valley floor widening to provide a strip of fertile land, and with fords close to the confluence of Tullich Burn and the Dee. On a slight rise, the site commands these fords and the Pass of Ballater to the west, controlling the routes through Deeside at this point. Less obviously, its west end lies on a geological fault line that runs north-south from a nick in Crannoch Hill to the spring that supplies the Pannanich Wells. The present ruin dates back to a period when the church and its surrounding territory had been granted to the Knights Hospitallers in 1312. There is evidence in the form of a blocked doorway of a fifteenth- century remodelling of the church. The entire settlement was abandoned after the foundation of Ballater, a new spa town to service the healing waters of Pannanich Wells in the late eighteenth century; Tullich and two other parishes were amalgamated, now served by a single church in the new town. However, the burial ground surrounding Tullich church has remained in use, although extension outside of the old walls has become necessary. Downstream of the site, the green valley narrows, so that there is barely room for the road and the line of a nineteenth- century railway between hills and river. The hillock of Tom Beithe, now crowned by a monument to a local Farquharson laird, seems to close off this end of the valley, and its summit offers the first view of Lochnagar for a traveller moving upstream. Here, or very close by, stood the East Cross, which was described as similar to the Skeith Stone in Fife - a marigold cross. In what seems an act of wanton vandalism, this was shattered to make way for the railway. Jane evoked a piquant image of Saint Nathalan (d. *c.* 678), sitting looking out over the valley to Lochnagar, quietly praying in this tranquil retreat. In the foreground, his monks and his converts worshipped and were buried at the little church which he founded here.

Back at the church site, a nineteenth-century wall encloses the church and burial ground. Just outside the wall, a dip in the ground betrays the presence of a palaeochannel which partly surrounds it. Two of the cross-marked stones were found here during excavations; most of the crosses came either from the older part of the burial ground or from the church itself, as indeed did the fragments of the Pictish cross slab described by John Borland in an earlier paper.

Aberdeenshire Council have created a shelter which contains most of the stones (two are on display in the former Ballater Station). Just outside the enclosure wall, its glass front posed some technical challenges when it came to filming the stones, but Jane managed to capture the display. We are indeed grateful to her for this tour, which served to whet the appetite for a 'real' visit to the site in the near future.

Sheila Hainey

Autumn Lecture Series
19 November 2021 –
Professor Roger Stalley
Irish High Crosses and the Art of the Picts

Our 2021 autumn season closed with Roger Stalley talking about *Irish High Crosses and the Art of the Picts*. Roger began by acknowledging that Scottish writers seem to have been more interested in Irish sculpture than vice versa. Allen and Anderson led the way, assiduously studying Irish carvings as well as Scottish. Allen's systematic recording of interlace patterns, for example, enabled him to recognise the similarities between that on Meigle 4 and on Kell's ruined cross. On the whole, there has however been a tendency to focus on specific features or themes, such as animal ornament rather than addressing broader questions relating to the nature of patronage and so on.

The Pictish preference for cross slabs contrasts with the prevalence of free-standing crosses in Ireland. Both had their own technical problems, and the approach to the design of ring-headed crosses was different again. Also, the Irish were more inclined to place figural or scriptural panels on their stones. Roger showed the magnificent example of Muiredach's Cross at Monasterboice, with around twenty panels featuring scriptural scenes. These Irish crosses are generally found at well-established monasteries, being treated as a frame for the pictures held within, a form not well suited to larger Pictish narratives as we see at Aberlemno.

By bundling together both Irish and Pictish carvings as "Insular," we run a grave risk of concentrating on similarities and downplaying any differences. One of the problems we face in making comparisons is the difficulty of assigning dates to stones. At Monasterboice, there is a request to 'pray for Muiredach, who caused this cross to be made.' This was almost certainly Abbot Muiredach who died in 923. Work from the hand of the 'Muiredach Master' who carved

this cross is to be found at Kells, Duleek, Durrow and Clonmacnoise as well as other crosses at Monasterboice. In Pictland, we can be reasonably confident that the Dupplin cross dates to the early 800s, but it is more difficult to identify the work of individual masons by style, although it has been suggested that the work of one man can be found at Aberlemno, Rossie Priory, Eassie and Glamis.

At Fahan Mura in Donegal, there is a pedimented cross slab with a Latin cross on both sides. One side has confronted figures, with two facing birds whose necks entwine at the gable in a fashion similar to those at Aberlemno. This stone seems to show at least an awareness of Pictish monuments. Fahan was founded by St Columba (d. 597), and the first abbot, Mura, was one of his disciples. The cross slab has projecting tenons, as seen on Meigle 3, where it has been suggested that these helped to lock the stone into another structure. It is hard to imagine this at Fahan, but perhaps they were meant to assist in moving or lifting the stone (and possibly to be removed at a later date.)

Another small cross slab at Drumhallagh, Donegal, features possible angels on the upper quadrants and confronted monks in the lower, with an interlace that adds to Pictish flavour. It is possible that in the seventh to eighth centuries these figures may have been common Christian themes, but Roger feels that this may not be the only explanation for their appearance in both Pictish and Irish contexts.

When was the idea of the free standing ringed cross first established in Ireland? Ahenny, Tipperary is often described as home to the oldest of these, as the use of interlace ornament was seen as earlier than figural panels representing biblical scenes. The argument is not very convincing. The carver at Ahenny was technically very accomplished. The use of different levels of relief (as also seen at Aberlemno) is quite demanding and difficult to cut, so that it is hard to believe that these skills came from nowhere. Roger noted in passing that the crosses at Ahenny and, to a lesser extent, at Kilkieran are suffering from heavy lichen growth. The preservation of Irish high crosses is a problem.

A cross at Bealin, West Meath was raised around 800, having been commissioned by Tuathgail, Abbot of Clonmacnoise who died in 827. (Bealin may be the site of Iseal Chiarain, a dependency of Clonmacnoise.) This probably came early in the sequence of free-standing ringed crosses. Ornament on a group of monuments associated with Clonmacnoise is dominated by interlace and ani-

mal designs, with less in the way of overtly Christian imagery. There are echoes of Lindisfarne in some of the zoomorphic ornament. This group shares more in common with Pictish stones than others in Ireland. Features such as deer and individual horsemen may be isolated elements from the hunt, just as they appear to be on Pictish stones. It looks as if Pictish and Irish patrons were interested in similar themes and wanted them carved on their crosses or cross slabs.

The Banagher Pillar Stone, County Offaly, shows a single rider carrying a crozier. His leg is held in the Pictish riding position while a trapped deer is reminiscent of Edderton. At Kells there is another rider whose tonsure proclaims him to be a churchman. It appears that in Ireland there was a preparedness to present ecclesiastics as mounted figures. The theme of the hunt persisted, not only among the Clonmacnoise group. The Kells market cross, one of the Muiredach Master group, shows a standing figure plunging a spear into a deer's back. This panel sits below others which carry biblical scenes: is there some specifically Christian allusion here? Snake bosses on the underside of one of the projecting arms are very like the snake bosses at Nigg. The Kells market cross probably dates to around 900.

Roger also noted similarities between deeply modelled horsemen on the bases of crosses at Kells and Clonmacnoise and those on several Pictish cross slabs. There has been a tendency to integrate the scenes on Irish high crosses with the overtly Christian panels on the same stones. However, he reflected that a re-assessment might be in order. At Clonmacnoise, some figures on the 'arrest of Christ' scene compare well with warriors represented on the Dupplin cross. Perhaps it is time to review the interpretation of some of the scenes on Irish high crosses in the light of similar scenes on Pictish stones.

He then went on to consider how the crosses were actually made, and the implications this has both for dating and what we have been able to learn about patronage. For example Muiredach's Cross required a block of yellow sandstone of around 4 x 0.55 x 2.14 metres and was imported to Monasterboice from the ancient quarry at Carrickleck, fourteen miles away. Weighing around ten tons, it is likely that the block was roughly shaped at the quarry. Evidence for this practice comes from Ballintubber, where a cross was in the process of being roughed out but the stone appears to have fractured when being turned and so remains at the quarry. If a stone was roughly shaped at the quarry, then the designer, perhaps the master mason himself, must have supervised the work. Castlekeeran, Kells and Monasterboice

all imported stone for crosses from Carrickleck. From Barry Grove's experience in carving the new Hilton of Cadboll stone, where one face was carved with the stone laid horizontal and the other carved after it had been erected, and from later medieval evidence, it seems likely that the high crosses were not carved in the vertical position. Indeed, this would have been most difficult for those which were in segments. For many of the high crosses, there are two mortice and tenon joints, one uniting the shaft to the base and a high level joint that held the cross-head to the shaft. When we consider that the Tall Cross at Monasterboice is around seven metres high, the technical challenges involved become apparent. We should envisage a team of skilled workmen using a crane (probably based on Vitruvius' tripod) and scaffolding to allow them to raise and position a heavy worked cross-head on its shaft, with no room for error. The mortice and tenon joint was a weak point in the structure, where breakage often occurred. The unfinished cross at Kells, broken while carving was in progress, suggests that the sculptor worked on site. The question also arises as to how the massive cross slabs of Pictland were erected. These stones are evidence of the possession of a considerable degree of technological sophistication among the Irish and the Picts.

Inscriptions on several high crosses tell us something about the patrons who commissioned these spectacular monuments. Roger had already introduced us to Abbot Muiredach of Monasterboice, who died in 923. He was not simply a pious monk: this powerful (and wealthy) man was also Chief Steward of the Southern Uí Néill and chief counsellor of all the men of Brega. The High King of Ireland from 879 until his death in 916 was Flann Sinna, also of the Southern Uí Néill. He was associated with the rebuilding of the church at Clonmacnoise, to which he had some sort of family claim, as he counted Ciaran, the founder, among his ancestors. A panel on the Cross of Scriptures here harks back to the original foundation story, while the inscription requests a prayer for Flann Sinna and Abbot Colman. He was also a benefactor at Durrow, commissioning a shrine for the Book of Durrow. Connections between Durrow and Armagh lie in their belonging to the Columban familia, with Mael Brigte of Armagh (d. 927) who also was Abbot of Iona succeeded in that role by Dubthach of Durrow. Both sites boast high crosses. Connections between aristocratic families and individual monasteries are documented, indicating relationships between patrons that may have inspired the commissioning of many of the crosses.

At Old Kilcullen, a figure is shown holding an axe - perhaps a reference to MacTáil 'son of the adze', the founder whose father appears to have been a smith. Roger suggested that panels such as this should alert us to the possibility of local significance for some of the scenes on high crosses. It has been suggested that a figure on Muiredach's cross, holding a crozier and flabellum may be St Buite, the founder of Monasterboice, overcoming a demon. The Hendersons considered that Pictish art is best understood as a response to local conditions and local resources, and this applies to Irish art too. We should be confident that the elaborate programme of Muiredach's cross has some scenes specific to Monasterboice.

Roger raised a final question. Why did the traditions of carving high crosses and cross slabs disappear? The question arises both in Ireland and Pictland/Scotland at around the same time. In the early tenth century we have evidence from both areas of highly sophisticated work which appears to have vanished very quickly. Why and how did it all end? Does the key lie with patronage? For some reason, powerful men and wealthy monasteries stopped commissioning these carved crosses. Did something cause them to lose interest, or did they lose access to the resources needed to create such elaborate works? Questions for another day.

Sheila Hainey
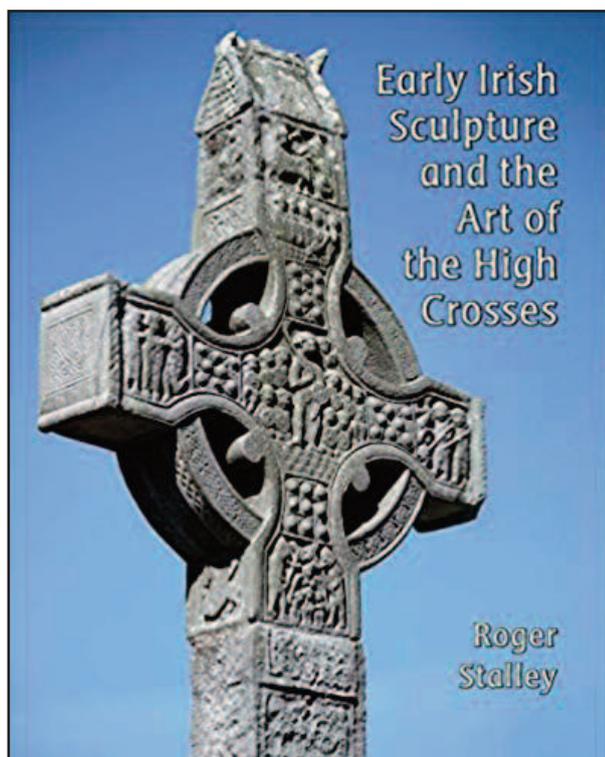
Roger Stalley's book, *Early Irish Sculpture and the Art of the High Crosses,* is published by Yale University Press.

Nothing lasts forever. Some things barely last a decade.

In PASN 67 (summer 2013) we told you a good news story of people power. A group of locals from Inveravon, Moray, led by Tricia Lawson and their former minister, Rev. Sven Bjarnason, obtained Scheduled Monument Consent and funding to remove the four Pictish symbol stones clamped to the south wall of Inveravon Church. The stones were conserved and then redisplayed inside the disused vestibule on the north side of the church.

Inveravon Pictish stones as they used to be displayed, clamped to the outer wall on the south side of the church.

Preserved and stabilised, safe from further weathering, the stones were now indoors in a purpose-designed display on the site where they were found, beautifully lit so that visitors could appreciate them. And being now entirely separate from the church, the former vestibule and its display could be accessed without opening the church. You could not wish for a better outcome. PAS members who attended the 2018 conference in Elgin may remember visiting the site on our Sunday field trip.

Inveravon Pictish stones as they are now displayed under cover, in the former vestibule on the north side of the church.

Fast forward a mere nine years and the worrying news is that Inveravon Church is now on the Church of Scotland's shortlist for closure. It seems an ageing and dwindling congregation, having loosened its ties with the kirk during the recent Covid pandemic, hasn't returned in sufficient numbers. An exact timescale is not yet known but it seems that within a couple of years, the church will be closed.

With the church building likely to be sold, options such as retaining the vestibule in church ownership or giving it to a trust are possible but are they realistic? Such an arrangement would have practical and no doubt legal complications. Yet it seems unthinkable that a new private owner of a former church might also buy their own collection of Pictish sculpture. Anyone trying to access the Glamis Manse stone since the manse was sold by the Church of Scotland will know how unsatisfactory that situation is. And, perhaps considering them totally safe in their indoor setting, Historic Environment Scotland apparently de-scheduled the stones in 2018. Anyone want to buy a rural Speyside church, complete with its own Pictish symbol stone display, and gift it to the nation?
JB

Too close for comfort!

Back in the winter of 2011, the late Marianna Lines reported a near miss for the Hunter's Hill (Glamis 1) Pictish cross slab in the woods to the south of Glamis village (PASN 61). As her photo below shows, a single storm-damaged tree had fallen close to the stone. At the time, it seemed shocking enough.

Glamis 1, Hunter's Hill in the winter of 2011, its "protective" railing offering little protection.

The picture below, taken by Craig Anderson, is in an altogether different league. It shows the aftermath of Storm Arwen, which hit the east of Scotland on the 26th of November 2021. Look closely at the centre of the picture and you'll see a forlorn but apparently undamaged Camus Cross, standing amidst the arboreal devastation that was once Camustane Wood near Monikie in Angus.
JB

Camus Cross surrounded by fallen trees. © Craig Anderson

Thank you, Elspeth!

For many years now, Elspeth Reid has proof-read all the copy going into the PASN, ensuring that the (many) typos that get past me don't make it into print. PASN 102 was Elspeth's last so on behalf of the membership, and especially from me, I say a huge thank you. With this edition, we welcome Jane Geddes to this invaluable role.
JB

Forthcoming Events
PAS Spring Lecture Series 2022

Friday 18 March – Frances Houston
Dalerb: looking towards the future site of the Scottish Crannog Centre

Friday 15 April – Dr Catherine Swift
Royal Munster exiles at pre-Norman Scottish courts

Friday 20 May – Dr Shirley Curtis-Summers
Set in stone and seeped in bone: diet and health in medieval Scotland