THE PICTISH ARTS SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER 60 AUTUMN 2011

PAS Conference 2011

Saturday 1 October, in the Wallace Suite, Carnegie Conference Centre, Dunfermline

Details of the conference appeared in the last newsletter. Please note that we will meet in the Wallace Suite rather than Conference Suite 6 as previously stated. There is still time to reserve a place, but we need to give the caterers advance notice of numbers, so, if you wish to attend, please contact Eileen Brownlie on 0131 332 0277. If Eileen is not available, leave a message on the answer machine.

The conference centre is on Halbeath Road (A 823), close to the M90 (take exit 3 for Dunfermline. The centre has ample parking, with more across the road at a supermarket. For those coming by train, get off at Queen Margaret Rail Halt, which is 10 minutes walk away, at Dunfermline Town Centre (10 minutes by taxi) or Inverkeithing (5 minutes by taxi). Buses X24/ X26/X27 (Glasgow to St Andrews) all stop close to the Centre. Anyone with a disability who is intending to travel via St Margaret's Halt should contact Eileen so that we can arrange assistance with transport. The centre itself has an excellent website, with details of how to get there, at <**www.carnegieconferencecentre.co.uk**>

PAS AGM

A reminder that the PAS AGM will be held during the conference in the Wallace Suite starting at 1.45pm. The agenda was published in PAS Newsletter 59. The future of the Society depends on your attendance and participation on the day.

PAS annual subscription

Annual subscriptions are due for payment in September. The rates are unchanged for the coming year. See the enclosed renewal form.

PAS lecture programme 2011–12

Following the disruption to last season's lecture series caused by alterations to Pictavia, we will be returning there this year. We are very grateful to Angus Council Cultural Services for providing the venue for our last three lectures, and to the staff of Brechin Museum who stored our equipment for some months and helped prepare the upper gallery for our meetings.

This season's programme has not been finalised but all the dates are given below. As usual all meetings are on Friday evenings at Pictavia; doors open at 7 for a 7.30 start.

21 October
Gordon Noble
Recent excavations at Rhynie

18 November

9 December

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

17 February
Stephen Gordon

16 March

Fortingall excavation

Aerial photographs showing the crop marks of a faint line in fields around the village of Fortingall seem to indicate an ancient boundary believed to be the vallum enclosing a Pictish monastery.

A recent excavation by Breadalbane Heritage Society directed by Oliver O'Grady opened up two exploratory trenches to reveal a wide bank faced with large upright stones that may have once stood as high as two metres.

According to O'Grady,

> Definitive results from the dig, still await radio-carbon dating, but as well as the monastic enclosure, the archaeological team found the remains of a substantial road passing though one of the enclosure's main entrances. A geophysical survey carried out within the enclosed area indicates the remains of a major settlement with many internal divisions and possible dwellings.

O'Grady thinks that Fortingall could have once been a major cultural and religious centre –

> Early Christian monasteries were important sites for the development of intellectual life in Scotland. They are likely to have been focal points for trade, metalwork and crafts as well as for prayer.

Slag deposits were found during the dig, a clear indication of metal-working in the monastery. A single glass bead with three red ringlets and a green herringbone motif, found embedded in the surface of the road, has been identified by Ewan Campbell as a 6th-century Anglo-Saxon bead, a most unusual find in Scotland.

St Adamnan, Columba's biographer and abbot of Iona from 679 AD, has long been associated with Fortingall in place-names and legend, but the discovery of a prehistoric flint scraper suggests that the origins of the site at Fortingall could be much older. Christian missionaries may have built on a prehistoric monument centred around the famous Fortingall yew.

The tree, believed to be between 3,000 and 5,000 years old and the oldest tree in Europe may well have been a focus for pre-Christian worship. There are records of it being venerated in seasonal festivals well into the medieval period. O'Grady believes that 'the yew alone makes Fortingall a site of national and international interest. It gives us an unbroken link straight back through the Middle Ages to the people of the Iron Age'.

Cotterton 2

Following the report of the discovery of the symbol stone at Cotterton in the last Newsletter (59, pp.2-3), a fragment of another possible symbol stone has been identified by Cait McCullagh built into the SSW facing wall of Cotterton farmhouse at NH 62170 52140. Serving as a windowsill and partially covered by harling it bears several incised lines which could represent plumage or scales and could be part of a salmon or goose symbol. A triangular incision suggests the fin of a fish. Details are available in Highland Council's Historic Environment Record (ref: MHG 55050), which includes two photographs of the fragment. <**http://her.highland.gov.uk/home.html**>

Editorial opportunity

Having been PAS Newsletter editor for eight years and responsible for producing 29 issues, David Henry has decided to step down. He is keen to stress that no phone or computer hackers or corrupt police officers have been involved in gathering material for PAS News Corp during his tenure of the office. It is hoped that another editor will be appointed at the AGM and nominations for the post are being sought.

© Frank Bradford

The Sanday scross-slab in situ

Cross-slab discovered in Orkney

The surprise find of a Pictish cross-slab has been made on Sanday, Orkney.

The carved stone was discovered by builder Justin Thomas while renovating a property at Appiehouse, near Lady village.

The stone was lying prone, under the floor of the house, and it appears to have been damaged during the construction of the building, possibly in the 19th century.

Approximately 4ft 6in long, the stone is now undergoing conservation in Edinburgh.

For more information and photographs visit: <**www.orkneyjar.com/.../sanday-symbol-stone-is-a-first-for-orkney/**>

TAFAC Conference, 5 November

Abertay University, Bell Street, Dundee

The programme includes Alice Blackwell's paper containing startling revelations about the Norrie's Law silver hoard, which will be of great interest to PAS members. This forms part of an ongoing NMS research programme into silver in Early Historic Scotland.

Nicolaisen's name Studies

In the Beginning was the Name:
Selected Essays by
Professor W.F.H. Nicolaisen

Published by the Scottish Place-Name Society
ISBN 978 0 9565172 2 7
393pp; price £12.00 + P&P

Professor W.F.H. Nicolaisen has been an influential figure in name research on both sides of the Atlantic for the past half-century. In recognition of his achievements, the Scottish Place-Name Society has published this eclectic collection of essays. Essays on place-names from all parts of Scotland predominate, but there are also essays which demonstrate Professor Nicolaisen's much wider interests in names from different parts of the world, names in literature and names in folklore. A full bibliography of all Professor Nicolaisen's publications is also included.

For further information on ordering this comprehensive volume, consult the SPNS website: <**http://www.spns.org.uk/news:/**>

Coinciding with this publication is the issue of a reprint of Professor Nicolaisen's classic work

Scottish Place-names

W.F.H. Nicolaisen

Published by John Donald
ISBN 978 1 906566 36 4
pbk 216 x 138mm; 320pp; illuss; 21maps
Price: £20.00

The result of 20 years' meticulous research, this book remains the only comprehensive and systematic study of Scottish place-names. From names which date from the dawn of time – such as the river names Tay and Avon – to more modern place-names, such as Fort William and Helensburgh, Nicolaisen brings to life the rich tapestry of history which has shaped Scotland over thousands of years.

When first published in 1976, *Scottish Place-names* was welcomed by reviewers for its innovative thinking and for setting new standards in place-name studies in Scotland. Three further printings within a few years responded to an obvious demand for the kind of overview and methodological guide it provided. The revised edition, first published in 2001, responded to the huge surge of interest in, and study of, Scottish place-names and included an updated preface and additional bibliography.

The Art of the Picts

By George Henderson and Isabel Henderson is now available in paperback. Please see the enclosed copy of the flyer for details of the special offer (including free UK delivery) available online and by telephone from Thames and Hudson until 1 January 2012.

Back to the Dark-Ages at St Vigeans Museum

PAS members will be surprised to learn that access to the much-heralded, new-look museum, which re-opened in June 2009, has reverted to a previous method of admission – only by prior arrangement with Arbroath Abbey staff, and now with an Historic Scotland steward in attendance.
Tel: 01241 878756 A. £4.50; Ch. £2.70; Con. £3.60

Hilton of Cadboll female

Further to Ron Dutton's article in PAS Newsletter 59, I tried to imitate 'Those able to escape the prison of their preconceptions and look at this panel with fresh eyes' though not, I'm afraid, with 'the practised eye of an artist'.

Fig.1: The writer does not mention the mirror and comb alongside the uppermost rider, generally thought to indicate a female. If the uppermost rider was male, why has he no spear like the others? – Fig.2: What was the 'superimposed original male rider' wearing below the waist – surely a unique garment?

The writer draws attention to the absence of a saddlecloth on the uppermost horse and asks, re Fig.4: 'Why does the lower body profile of her horse differ from every other Pictish horse?' – Because it is masked by her skirt, which possibly masks a saddlecloth too. How could the lower part of the skirt be carved in relief if the stone had originally been cut away to delineate the horse's original 'thin abdomen tapering markedly towards the groin area'?

Page 7: 'Why does she have the torso of a male rider in profile?' 'Why is her head offset to one side?' – She is not quite in profile. The upper part of her body is turned three-quarter-face because, sitting sideways, she would not otherwise be balanced, so her right shoulder is only partly visible and the hair on the left side of her head is more visible than that on the right side. *Flora Davidson*

The Female Rider: Some Relevant Findings of the Hilton of Cadboll Project

The Sixth International Conference on Insular Art held in York in July revealed that there is a lot of revisionism about, with a whole raft of new evidence about contacts with Egypt, raising the stakes for the importance of the Nigg cross-slab in its knowledge and adaptation of Paul and Antony iconography, and the revelation of what may be a surprising metal analysis for some of the Norrie's Law silver, with more analyses promised for other Pictish silver in the NMS collections.

Ron Dutton's paper in the last Newsletter offered a similar reappraisal of an iconic image – the female rider in the hunting scene panel on the reverse of the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab. Such revisions, of course, depend on the strength of the evidence. In the case of the instances cited above, new discoveries are the evidence. Dutton's evidence largely consists of personal observation and interpretation of the carved surfaces of the image of the female rider. This is much weaker evidence, for the surfaces are worn and interpretation of them is difficult hard work.

Dutton's paper was published in the Society's Newsletter, for the Journal is regrettably at present in abeyance. The informality of the Newsletter, essentially for communications between members of the Society, perhaps justifies his lack of references. He can assume that most members know the excellent contributions of Catriona Black, Craig Cessford and Ross Trench-Jellicoe in Journals 5 & 7 on aspects of the female rider. Incidentally, it is less certain that he knows the latter author's work on the Virgin's hairstyle as portrayed on Scottish early medieval monuments, a matter of relevance for his dismissal of the option of the Virgin as the identity of the female rider. He has looked at least at parts of *A Fragmented Masterpiece*, the publication of the multi-disciplinary project on the Hilton slab, as that monument is perceived after the finding of the lower portion carved on both sides and of the thousands of fragments with carved surfaces from the front of the upper-portion, now in NMS. The discovery by the project archaeologists that the slab was re-erected in the 12th century is central to Dutton's general interpretation, but it is my awareness of just how careful the project was in the matter of interpretation of surfaces that has prompted me to respond selectively to his claims.

Strangely his paper does not illustrate, for comparison, the current appearance of the female rider. There is no reference to Tom Gray's excellent photograph of the hunting scene on the cover of Journal 4, used, with due acknowledgement, by the writers on the topic in the Journals of the 1990s. Astonishingly there is no reference to the interpretative drawings by Ian G. Scott provided in *A Fragmented Masterpiece*. This evidence is simply suppressed. Scott's knowledge of the surfaces and patterns of wear of the surviving elements of the Hilton slab is unparalleled, for it was his job to examine and draw all the new material as well as the pre-existing faces. The result, of course, was that the joining up of what was so often blithely referred to as pieces of 'the jig-saw' was due to his informed, painstaking, work. The importance of the female rider made it imperative that the project generally should have the closest possible access to that particular image. NMS, under the supervision of Andy Heald, responded to this need by agreeing to its inspection by means of a cherry picker. Scott asked for detailed photographs to be taken with the varied directional lighting he had used himself for the fragments, and I included a list of desirable observations to be recorded or photographed. In particular I wanted photographs of the never described top face of the whole monument, which proved to have interesting results. It was on the basis of this unique inspection that Scott's drawing was made.

The verbal account of Scott's current detailed interpretation of the female figure's entire composition, pose, hairstyle and drapery, is paraphrased by me on p.188 of *A Fragmented Masterpiece*, and although his published drawing provides the detail of his findings, it deserves reading in full. In summary, Scott regards further modification of the description to be probable, but that 'the basic identification of a penannular brooch can stand.' In my discussion of the putative 'brooch', I footnoted all the articles in the Society's Journals, concluding 'It has to be said that in different lights and in different photographic reproductions all these interpretations are defensible'. So nobody's mind was made up or is made up. However, had reworking and wear patterns

been as obvious as Ron Dutton implies, then they would have been recognised. One thing is indisputable: Ian Scott's observations are scrupulous. He draws what he sees without preconceptions or pretensions of infallibility.

I should like to comment briefly on a few general issues asserted by Ron Dutton. We do not know very much about the working practices of early medieval sculptors but that they were mere copyists of content and style is an unsustainable view. Insular art, in particular, is defined by assimilation coupled with distinctive creative synthesis in all media. The vine-scroll on the reverse of the Hilton slab has its origins in Northumbria, but the form it takes is original, inventive, and Pictish.

The Picts did not only depict profile human figures. They developed a frontal style which is most frequently represented on the small slabs of Angus and Perthshire but which is present in the north, as can be seen in the Apostles fragment at Portmahomack, particularly in the well-preserved ovoid detached head. The form of the female rider's head, therefore, contrary to Dutton's view, has a context. *A Fragmented Masterpiece* illustrates a small range of possible frontal ovoid heads similar to the head of the female rider, but they are very worn and certainty is not possible – see illustration 4.16 on p.109 with discussion on p.96. Certainty, so dominant in Dutton's paper, is rare when interpreting worn sculpture. Pictish sculptors also depicted figures with heads in three-quarter view, as at Nigg and the cross slab in Elgin Cathedral grounds. Feet position too come in a variety of forms.

The adoption of varying levels in Pictish sculpture in order to convey dimension within the constraints of carving in relief is one of its most remarkable features. The clearest examples are at Nigg and on the front panel of the St Andrews Sarcophagus, but there is plenty of evidence for this trait elsewhere, and indeed among the Hilton fragments.

Finally, Ron Dutton in an Addendum to his paper gives advice to 'those still engaged in trying to piece together the fragments of the cross-face'. Sadly there are no such persons. The project has long since come to an end. Interested parties can apparently have access to the full data on the web, see *A Fragmented Masterpiece*, p.390, and their storage in NMS should make individual fragments retrievable. Dutton suggests that 'they (sic) particularly need to look out for pieces of saddlecloth and a spare leg'. If he had thought to ask me, or Ian Scott, or Meggen Gondeck, he would have been told that there was possibly one such fragment, NMS X.IB 355.340, which is illustrated in *A Fragmented Masterpiece*, again in illustration 4.16 on p.109, with a brief discussion on p.96, which includes the possibility that if a single leg is depicted, the pad of relief on which it sits 'could be a broad horse-cloth'. The two sides of A4 used for the draft handwritten catalogue entry by Meggen Gondeck, preserved in a corner of my study, is a fine reminder of the extreme care with which the cataloguers worked. The short description field reads 'Fragment carved with a human leg on a background of relief.' The keywords for searching the data base are 'human leg, foot, drapery, (unlikely horse+rider?)'. Whether this fragment lends any support to his thesis is something Ron Dutton will have to work out for himself. *Isabel Henderson*

Reflecting on cross-slabs and symbol stones

There are few examples of Early Medieval sculpture quite so impressive as the finest of the Pictish cross-slabs. Their production represented a considerable investment, both in terms of the highly skilled labour employed in their carving, and the enormous logistical effort expended in the transportation and erection of these often huge monoliths. This is a clear indication of their great importance to those who created them – but for what purpose?

Their role has been much debated, and many suggestions have been put forward – boundary markers, memorials to important people or events, high-status gravestones, teaching aids, and many more. But there are problems with all of these ideas, and no wholly convincing case has ever been made for any of them. However, if we consider them in their broader historical and ecclesiastical context, and avoid regarding them as the unfathomable work of those mysterious Picts, then it is not difficult to find convincing clues as to their likely use.

Like the cross-slabs, whose purpose they surely share, free-standing crosses of all shapes and sizes have long been a feature of churchyards everywhere, both medieval and later, and large and impressive examples are often to be found standing amongst the gravestones. However, it

is the exceptions to this arrangement which provide important clues to their precise purpose.

Large crosses were far from being unique to churchyards, and were also commonly located at traditional market sites in town centres, the 'mercat cross', where they provided Christ's protection to those doing business there – an early form of consumer protection. They were also to be found at the summit of mountain passes, offering protection to travellers, and at the quaysides of fishing ports, protecting those who ventured onto the waves. What is clear from these examples is that the primary, perhaps the only, purpose of large free-standing crosses and, by extension, cross-slabs, was to provide protection. It seems likely that they were frequently located in burial grounds in order to offer protection to the souls of the Christians interred there.

There are numerous instances, particularly in the north and west of the country, where a medieval chapel has been built on a rocky site unsuited to burials. In these cases, a separate burial ground was created some distance from the chapel site. It is usual to find a single large cross, or at least the remains of one, located at the centre of the burial ground, surrounded by graves marked, if at all, only by small plain stones. This suggests that the primary association of the large crosses is with the burial ground rather than the church. It just so happens that, in most cases, the burial ground is adjacent to the church, which is why we usually find the crosses there. If the burial ground happens to be located at some distance from the church, then that is where the cross will be found, too.

Though the frequent association of Pictish cross-slabs and symbol stones with burials has often been noted, it has sometimes been assumed that they commemorated, or even marked the individual graves, of important people. This is almost certainly an erroneous judgement. It is far more likely that they were erected for the protection of all those buried around the stone. This would explain why no grave, high-status or otherwise, has ever been found directly beneath any in situ cross-slab. In this context, it is not necessary to make any great distinction between cross-slabs and symbol stones, as it is likely that they served a similar purpose. Individual burials were sometimes marked by uncarved stones, and it is quite possible that some of the simple cross-marked stones served a similar purpose, but certainly not the cross-slabs or, it is suggested here, symbol stones.

The use of cross-slabs and symbol stones to protect Early Christian burial grounds in this way might also provide an explanation for one rather puzzling aspect of their symbols, namely the mirrors and combs which supplement the 'regular' symbols on a good proportion of the stones. It has long been accepted that the mirror and comb are, in some way, different from the rest of the symbols, and there is a view, popular amongst Pictish enthusiasts, including some academics, that the mirror and comb symbols can be seen as gender determinants, indicating a female. However, if we accept that the stones relate to groups of graves, usually a mixture of both genders, and do not mark individual burials, then it is clear that this is unlikely to be the case.

Furthermore, the gender theory involves a very doubtful assumption concerning the association of mirrors with females, which the body of archaeological evidence does not support. Throughout Europe and Asia, the great majority of known Iron Age mirrors have been recovered as grave goods, and in those graves where it has been possible to establish the gender of the occupant through reliable forensic methods, many of them have proved to be male.

In this context, it is important not to be misled by those instances where a mirror-accompanied burial has been inferred to be female solely on the evidence of that mirror, as this produces a somewhat circular argument. If mirrors are assumed, a priori, to indicate female, then all burials accompanied by mirrors must be female, and the resulting high number of 'female' burials containing mirrors demonstrates the truth of the original assertion that mirrors indicate female. This is not sound reasoning.

The archaeological record provides yet further evidence for mirrors not being gender specific. The positioning of the mirrors within the graves is far from arbitrary. In some cultures mirrors were placed on the chest of the body, with the reflective side facing away from the deceased. In others, they were routinely positioned by the legs, or, in some cases, there were four mirrors, one at each corner of the coffin. In some Chinese burials, the custom was to place a mirror and comb in a lacquered box along with the body. Placement practices were very varied overall, but extremely consistent within a given culture.

This deliberate uniformity within each society strongly suggests a ritual, or at least superstitious, motivation for the practice. This is perhaps not too surprising considering the many magical properties, including a widespread belief in a reflection-death relationship, that have often been assigned to mirrors, throughout the ages and across different cultures. But it does make it much less likely that they were the personal effects of the interred individuals during life, and, consequently, they are an unreliable indicator of gender. The equating of mirrors with femininity would appear to be a classic case of modern commentators trying to impose inappropriate contemporary values on an earlier society.

Indeed, it is possible to make a convincing case for the possibility that, throughout Iron Age Europe, mirrors were manufactured specifically for use as grave goods, rather than as personal items for everyday use. They are normally only found accompanying burials, and rarely in domestic or other contexts. With the adoption of Christian burial practices, they all but disappear from the archaeological record. Mirrors, it would seem, are essentially pagan, a point reinforced by the fact that though the cross-slabs are undoubtedly Christian, the mirrors carved on them are often of the native, and usually pagan, La Tène or Romano-British styles.

But, if mirrors were not being used to indicate gender, what was their purpose? Their pagan nature might suggest a possible explanation. If, as was likely, the practice of depositing mirrors, combs and other goods in graves had been a long-standing tradition amongst some of the Pictish communities, then the Church would have found it difficult to dissuade their new converts from indulging in this age-old practice, a practice which was entirely incompatible with the Christian faith. In such circumstances, it would not be surprising if the Church, rather than risk alienating these new recruits by attempting to ban the belief outright, had adopted its usual tactic of putting a different (Christian) interpretation on it. Then, in order to prevent the inclusion of grave-goods in the burials, they allowed a substitute mirror, and sometimes also a comb, to be carved on the cross-slab or symbol stone. This would assuage the superstitious fears of those converts who still adhered to some of their deeply held pagan beliefs, without the need to violate the Church's ban on grave goods.

These carved mirrors and combs would supplement the protection provided by the cross, and confer those benefits, believed by the converts to be inherent in mirrors and combs, without the need for interring the actual items within the individual graves. They could then work their magic for the benefit of everyone buried within the area protected by the stone, including all those who would not have been able to afford such lavish grave items, anyway – a useful incentive in persuading the poor to convert.

There is an example of something similar occurring in more recent times. The ritual of ringing bells at funeral ceremonies has a very long history and still persists today, even if the purpose is sometimes forgotten. They were rung at the time of burial in order to dispel evil spirits, thereby ensuring a safe passage to the afterlife. When individual carved headstones became popular, in the 16th and 17th centuries, a custom developed in some parts of the country to have a bell carved on the stone to provide continued protection after burial.

Just as these carved bells were believed to offer the same benefits as the tolling of an actual bell, so might the newly converted Picts have believed that a carved mirror on a cross-slab or symbol stone could confer the appropriate benefits, just as if those same articles had been interred with the deceased. It is perhaps no more than coincidence that the later practice of carving bells on gravestones was most prevalent in the former Pictish territories of north-eastern Scotland.

Not all Pictish stones connected with burial sites would necessarily have had mirrors or combs carved on them. It would depend on the nature and strength of local pre-Christian burial customs and beliefs, and the degree to which the local Church authority was prepared to compromise in adapting to them. Nevertheless, it is perhaps significant that there are no examples of mirrors or combs on any of those stones which are thought to have been unconnected with burial sites.

In summary, there is ample evidence to indicate a predominantly protective role for cross-slabs and symbol stones, and those which are connected with burial grounds, whatever their

purpose, would certainly appear to relate to all the graves lying within their orbit, and not just to individual burials. This fact, together with the archaeological evidence from a wide range of burials, renders the belief that the mirror symbols indicate gender somewhat untenable, and there is no contrary evidence which would support such a belief. A possible explanation for the mirror and comb symbols has been proposed here. Whatever its merits or shortcomings, in the light of all the available evidence I find it certainly more plausible than any of the existing gender related theories. *Ron Dutton*

Myth-making at Pictavia

Pictavia has been running some events to which 'families are invited to listen to the myths and legends of a warrior tribe who lived in Scotland nearly two thousand years ago'.

A spokesperson explained that,

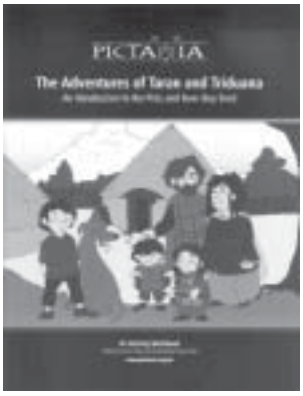
> The Picts loved to sit around the fire sharing stories of their brave warriors, great battles and intrepid hunters … a Pictish storyteller will be recounting the mythical stories of her tribe … The ancient inscriptions on the standing stones across Angus … tell some wonderful stories and legend has it that many of the tattoos the Picts painted on their bodies had a story to tell. … It's wonderful that this regular event is letting children of all ages experience the magical tales of the Picts.

Well, it's not really wonderful at all that young minds are being contaminated by ill-conceived fantasies purporting to have their origins in Pictish culture.

© Pictavia

*Tall storyteller: This photograph, from the current Pictavia leaflet, was reproduced in the local press and captioned, '*Another Pict, Fergus the Pict, explains to children at Pictavia the significance of his tribe's face painting tradition*'. Judging from Fergus's own cosmetic enhancement, this 'tradition' (had it ever existed) appears to be in sad decline.*

Extreme cultural displacement is evident in the Pictavia publication *The Adventures of Taran and Triduana,* whose characters seem to have stepped right out from a Disney-type animation.



© Pictavia/Sharrie Reid

One can only imagine them speaking in raucous voices typical of American cartoon films. Although aimed at children, it seems patronising and disrespectful to them to present the Picts in the guise of inhabitants of one of the less edifying forms of modern popular culture.

© Pictavia/Sharrie Reid

The 'village stonemason' (p.17), one of the book's many illustrations by Sharrie Reid

It is ironic that PAS, which has done so much to further knowledge of Pictish art and history, is housed in a centre whose activities appear to perpetuate and promote some rather fanciful ideas about the Picts. *D H*

Solution to crossword in PAS News 59

ACROSS: 1 Vellum, 5 Pewter, 10 Train, 11 Awl, 12 Excel, 13 Gut, 14 Risk, 15 Bear, 16 Saudi, 17 Castle, 19 Immodest, 20 Ancestor, 23 Nectar, 26 India, 27 Ship, 28 Tail, 30 Tot, 32 Tones, 33 Ell, 34 Lotus, 35 Cedars, 36 Report. **DOWN:** 2 Elapses, 3 Lone, 4 Moated, 5 Pilgrim, 6 Whetstone, 7 Exclude, 8 Star, 9 Cloister, 17 Chariots, 18 Lost at sea, 21 Cadence, 22 Oysters, 24 Traitor, 25 Pillar, 29 List, 31 Clap.

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The deadline for receipt of material is Saturday 12 November
Please email contributions to the editor <pas.news@btconnect.com>