



## PAS winter programme

On 11 December last, Andy Heald was to have talked about 'Early Historic metal work and metal-working'. Unfortunately he was unable to come to Pictavia, but he managed to send his text and Powerpoint presentation, so we were able to view that and hear his lecture, mainly read by Sheila Hainey, until symptoms of a worsening cold forced her to retire and hand over the task to David Henry.

On 15 January, Heather Pulliam was booked to speak on: 'Mother's milk and baby's breath: Pictish art and the Book of Kells'. However, bad luck continued to disrupt our planned programme as again the speaker had to cancel. Fortunately, our President, Norman Atkinson stepped into the breach, at the last minute, and delivered an illustrated lecture on 'The place-names of Dunnichen parish'.

This was easily the best attended event of this season, and it was clear that many of the audience had come specially to hear something about the Book of Kells, no doubt encouraged by our press releases. So it was a tribute to Norman that he was able to convert their initial disappointment to enthusiasm for a somewhat different subject, to judge from the interest and appreciation shown after the talk.

On 19 February, we welcomed a return visit of Fraser Hunter, who brought us up-to-date with progress of the excavations at the important Iron Age and Pictish site at Birnie, Moray, which have taken place over the last 12 years. Details of this year's excavation and open day will be given in the next PAS Newsletter.

The jinx struck our arrangements again as holidays and illness meant that only one committee member was left to handle the house-keeping and run the show. An appeal to the audience for some self-service to remove and stack chairs at the end of the evening was so successful, that it should become a regular feature of our meetings. Please remember that a huge amount of work is done for the Society by the mere handful of members who comprise the committee, and offers of help from the membership are always welcome.

## Last lecture of the 2009–10 series

19 March, 7.30pm at Pictavia

Alastair Becket

*Excavations at Victoria Park,  
Arbroath*

Doors open at 7pm. Tea, coffee, and biscuits are available before and after.

## Inchtuthil excavations

At the Dunkeld Conference last October, Birgitta Hoffman gave us an exciting account of recent work carried out at Inchtuthil, the most northerly fortress in the Roman Empire. She has offered to invite members of the Society to visit the site when the excavation programme begins again this year. We should have further details in the next newsletter.

## A most unusual sight



© Marianna Lines

*'Mute stone, mute swan'  
Winter solstice, 21 December 2009.*

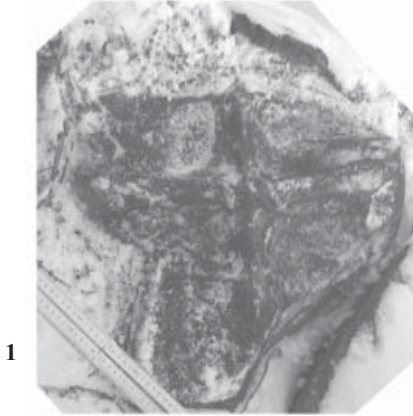
This photograph by Marianna Lines, showing an immature Mute Swan lurking beside the Collessie stone, must be something of a rarity as there is no real area of standing water nearby.

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## When is a cross not a cross?

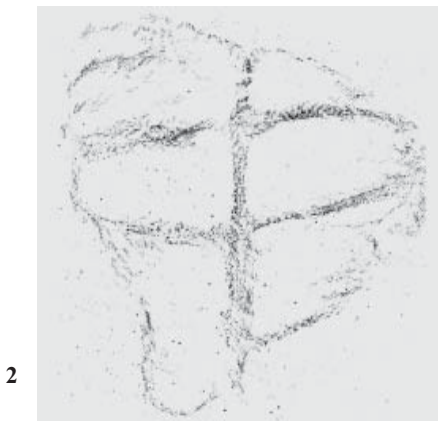
### Glendochart find review

The small cross found in Glendochart, Stirlingshire, reported in PAS Newsletter 50 (Spring 2009, p.5), may in fact be entirely natural.



Lorna Main © Stirling Council

When removed from the ground, what appeared to be a shaped slab with tenon (1) was in fact a much larger irregular block of stone measuring in the region of 600mm long, wide and thick. On closer inspection, the relief-carved cross was in fact formed from three geological intrusions, giving the impression of a shaft and two transoms (2).



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This stone clearly needs to be examined by a trained geologist but to my eye, neither the raised 'cross' nor the recessed background show any signs of being worked and it appears that the intrusions, being a harder igneous rock or mineral (?quartz) have been left standing proud when the softer host rock has eroded.

Still, full marks to the eagle-eyed landowner who spotted it in the first place and who brought it to the attention of Stirlingshire's Regional Archaeologist.

*John Borland*

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## PAS Conference 2010

Although it is only February, arrangements for this year's conference on Saturday 2 October are progressing well. The venue is the lecture theatre in the AK Bell Library in Perth, which, as many of you will know, is only a short walk from both the bus and rail stations in Perth, and convenient for car parks and Park and Ride.

This year, the conference will focus on the archaeology of early monastic sites in Scotland. Confirmed speakers include Martin Carver, York University; Lloyd Laing, Nottingham University; Strat Halliday, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland; and Sarah Thomas, Glasgow University. Full details of the programme, together with the booking form, will appear in PAS Newsletter 55.

As this promises to be a very popular conference theme, early booking is advised.

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## The McManus Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum reopens to the public

Housed in a splendid Gothic Revival-style building and displaying Dundee's main collection the facility is managed and operated by Dundee City Council's Leisure & Communities Department.

The building has been closed to the public to undergo an exciting and extensive refurbishment programme, entitled 'Who We Are'.

Funded by Dundee City Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Union, Historic Scotland, and with additional contributions from The McManus Fundraising Appeal, the project has brought the 143-year-old facility into the 21st century, to provide a greatly improved visitor experience and a 'must see' attraction in the heart of the City and Tayside, with:

- Beautiful open gallery spaces with state-of-the-art displays and interactives
- New retail area and cafe with an outdoor terrace
- New top-lit atrium, with a lift and a spectacular staircase
- Creative Learning Suite, with the latest equipment for workshops and classes

This project is now complete, and the 're-vitalised' McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum reopened to the public on Sunday 28 February 2010.

**Two of a kind:  
a cross-carved stone and a font  
from Inchmarnock on the Dee**

The small cross-carved stone from the island chapel site of Inchmarnock on the River Dee in Aberdeenshire is well documented but perhaps not well known (1). Decorated with a relief-carved cross with round hollows set within a sunken panel, it is carved on a water-worn boulder and is one of a number of ‘Pillow Stones’, which includes the so-called ‘Columba’s Pillow’ from Iona.

Having recorded the Inchmarnock cross a number of years ago, I recently discovered a reference in the Royal Commission’s archive to a font from the same site. Records show that the island of Inchmarnock, which lies about 5 km downstream of Ballater, was prone to flooding when the Dee was in spate. The severe inundation of 1829 left graves exposed but by the early 20th century subsequent floods had removed all traces of chapel and burial ground. However an account published in 1925 states that a font was removed from the island some 12 years earlier and given to the Roman Catholic Chapel in Ballater.

The nearby early chapel site at Tullich boasts a massive font which must weigh in at around a ton – similar fonts can be found at Fortingall and Dull in Perthshire. I did wonder if the Inchmarnock font might be of similarly monumental proportions but perhaps the fact that it was removed from the island should have been a clue that it wasn’t.

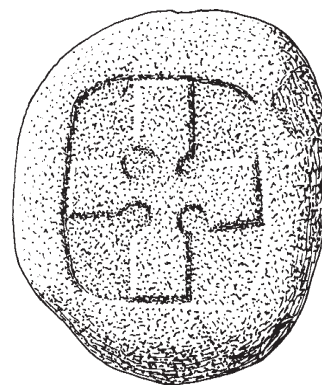
In fact the Inchmarnock font is remarkably similar in size and form to its fellow cross stone. Carved from another water-worn stone, almost square in plan with one side lying at an angle, it has rounded corners and edges and a circular, dished bowl placed asymmetrically within its shape (2). It is unclear if it originally had a drain hole or was damaged, but the bottom of the bowl has a modern cement repair.

The absence of ornament makes the dating of plain simple fonts almost impossible with any degree of certainty. However those carved from massive unshaped stones do not sit comfortably beside Norman or later medieval examples and are often found in association with other early medieval sculpture. Although much smaller, the Inchmarnock font is equally difficult to date but

its similarity in size, form and nature to the ‘pillow’ cross make it a possibility, arguably a probability, that it too has early medieval origins.

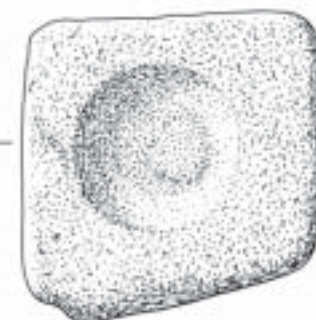
The modern fate of both cross and font is also remarkably similar. Both were removed to the relative safety of a church – the cross to St Nicholas’s in Aberdeen, the font to St Nathalan’s in Ballater – where now they lie, ignored and neglected. In an ideal world, they would be reunited close to their original location (Ballater would be an obvious choice) and displayed to the public with a little more care and imagination, as befits such relics of the early Christian Church in Pictland.

*John Borland*



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1 *Inchmarnock cross-carved stone. Maximum dimensions: 500mm x 420mm; cross 290mm x 250mm (Scale 1:10)*



© Crown Copyright: RCAHMS

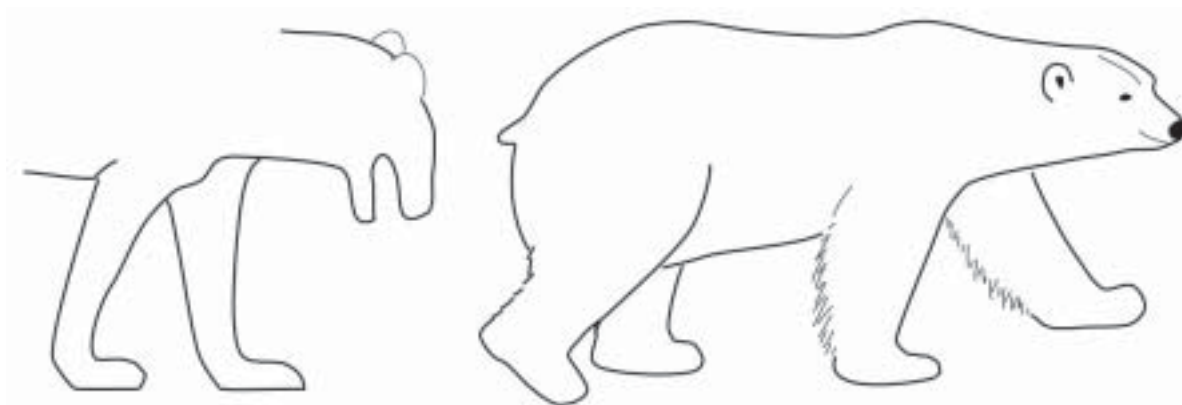
2 *Inchmarnock font. Maximum dimensions: 410mm x 400mm x 140mm; bowl 220mm diameter x 80mm deep (Scale 1:10)*

The deadline for receipt of contributions to  
**PAS Newsletter 55 is 15 May 2010.**  
Send articles, reviews, pictures etc. by email  
to <[pas.news@btconnect.com](mailto:pas.news@btconnect.com)> or post to  
**The Editor, PAS News** at the Pictavia address



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## The Bear Truth



1 Old Scatness animal foreparts (left) and bear

The Old Scatness bear, discovered in 2002, has aroused a great deal of interest amongst Pictish scholars. Most of the excitement has centred around the facts that it is a bear, that it is an entirely naturalistic rendering, and that it is 'undoubtedly' Pictish. While all the enthusiasm is understandable, it would, perhaps, benefit from a rational review of the evidence.

On examining the stone, it is immediately obvious that some areas of the carving are badly worn, and one part missing entirely. However, the head, neck and forelimbs remain relatively intact and legible, and provide a useful starting point for attempting to confirm its species and authorship.

Firstly, considering the facial profile, from forehead to nose, it is quite clear that it does not accurately correspond to that of the European brown bear, or to any other species of bear. This is a problem. But it is when attention is turned towards the line of the jaw and lower neck that even greater difficulties arise. The Old Scatness animal is clearly in motion, striding purposefully forward. It is a fact of nature that a moving bear holds its head up as it proceeds, and this posture results in a straight and almost horizontal neck/jawline, a configuration noticeably absent from the Old Scatness animal (1). Normally, a bear will only lower its head when it is stationary, which this animal is clearly not. And even when it does lower its head, it does so principally by flexing the neck at a point close to the shoulder, with the head hardly moving at all in relation to the neck. This results in the jaw remaining more or less in line with the neck (2). But this is not what we observe in the Old Scatness animal. Here, the head is held with the jaw almost at a right angle to the neck, a position which, though anatomically possible for a bear, is normally only adopted when standing upright on its hind legs. Furthermore, the jaw appears to be far too short to be that of any known bear species, and the neck is too long. On the visual evidence of the head and neck, the Old Scatness carving cannot possibly be of a bear.

This conclusion is further strengthened by the depiction of the front limbs. For all their sturdiness, they are still far too slender to be those of a bear, and show none of the characteristic shagginess. The lower line of the midriff, too, is set far higher than would be expected for a bear. The case for this animal being a bear appears untenable.



2 Bear with head lowered

If it is not a bear, then what animal is it? On the basis of appearances, the most obvious candidate would be one of the large cats, such as the leopard (3). There is some evidence, to be discussed later, which lends support to the big cat hypothesis.

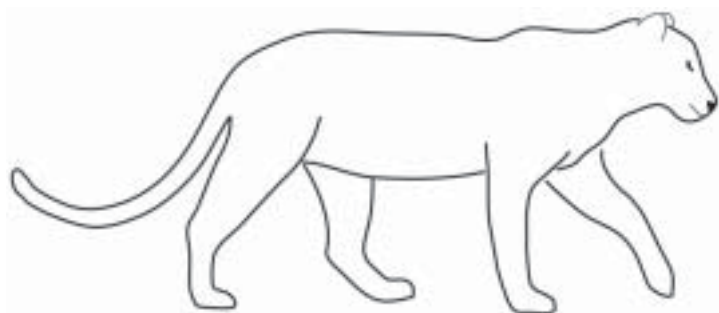
Despite its relatively poor state of preservation, it is just possible to delineate the remaining portion of the Old Scatness animal with a reasonable degree of confidence - and with a surprising result (4). Here, in direct contradiction to the evidence from the front end, the hindquarters are revealed as being decidedly bearlike.

Strangely, though, they fit rather awkwardly with the front portion of the animal, appearing out of scale. And most oddly, the relative position of the limbs is completely out of sequence. The right rear leg is extended forward, while the right front leg is extended rearward, both with the paw firmly planted on the ground. This is an entirely unnatural position, and one which would render the animal unstable. Any belief that the design is taken from nature must surely be thrown into serious doubt by these anomalies.

Indeed, looking again at the more legible foreparts of the animal, and subjecting them to a critical eye, it can be seen that, despite any first impressions to the contrary, it is not a naturalistic rendering.

There is a considerable degree of stylization present; not enough to obscure the fact that it is not a bear, but sufficient to show that it is not drawn from nature. The animal has clearly been copied from a pre-existing design.

Compelling evidence for this is to be found in the manner in which the front paws are depicted. They are not presented in natural perspective, but are both placed on the same horizontal plane. This artistic device, often employed to flatten an image to make it



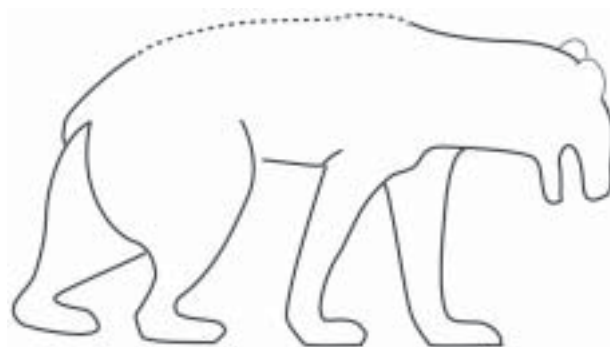
3 Typical large cat (leopard)

more suitable for low relief, is usually a fairly secure indication that, at some point in its evolution, the motif has been taken from a decorative setting, such as a frieze or a plaque. Unlike the front paws, the rear ones are not aligned on the same plane, as consistency would require, thus adding yet another anomaly between the front and rear portions of the carving.

The fact that the Old Scatness animal is copied from another design, rather than being drawn from nature, should come as no surprise. Indeed, it would be a cause for surprise if it was otherwise. Copying was standard practice for artists and craftsmen throughout most of history, and the Early Medieval was no exception. As was the case with the scribes of the period, the ability of an artist to produce an accurate copy was highly appreciated, while originality was frowned upon. Creativity was reserved for the task of adapting existing motifs to new designs and media. So widespread was the practice of accurate copying in the ancient world, it is possible to provenance some of the more popular motifs back through many centuries, and across whole continents.

In fact, the Old Scatness animal demonstrates characteristics which strongly suggest a connection with the art of the Eurasian steppes. This would not be unusual for Pictish art, much of which shows an affinity with artefacts from that region.

In steppes art, there are what might be termed 'generic motifs', which were regularly employed, often being adapted slightly to suit a particular design project. A number of these generic motifs are of big cats, of indeterminate species, and usually just referred to as 'felines'. Some of these designs contain stylistic elements which are also found in the Old Scatness animal, a similarity which is unlikely to be due to chance alone.



4 Old Scatness animal complete

The mouth, which is certainly not a naturalistic depiction, provides a good example. It is a stylised representation remarkably similar to a form found throughout steppes art, across several periods, various media, and a large geographical range, and usually associated with feline motifs.

The mouth, which is certainly not a naturalistic depiction, provides a good example. It is a stylised representation remarkably similar to a form found throughout steppes art, across several periods, various media, and a large geographical range, and usually associated with feline motifs.

In steppes art, disparities between the front and rear halves of an animal are not unusual, which might also account for the dual identity of the Old Scatness animal. The motives behind such modifications are not always clear. In some instances, it seems to be an attempt to enhance the

dynamic qualities of the resulting image, while on other occasions it is done in order to combine the attributes of both animals.

The Old Scatness animal, for whatever reason, certainly appears to have been adapted from two separate designs, a bear and feline. Whether that adaptation took place elsewhere, and was faithfully copied by the Old Scatness carver, or whether the adaptation was a native initiative is open to question. The concept of composite animals is not entirely unknown in Pictish art. The centaurs which feature on several stones are an obvious, if borrowed, example, and the 'Pictish beast' symbol, which is surely a native design, might also conceivably fall into this category.

In the absence of any incontrovertible evidence, these issues must remain shrouded in a degree of doubt, and open to further debate. What is certain, however, is that, on the visual evidence available, any suggestion that the Old Scatness animal is a bear can be no more than half right – the rear half - and suggestions that it is taken from nature are wholly wrong. Furthermore, the view that it is a native design is probably mistaken, although, once again, it could be partly right. On these matters, at least, the visual evidence speaks for itself.

Ron Dutton

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### Abertay Historical Society evening lecture series

**Wednesday 12 May 2010**, at Discovery Point, Dundee, 6.30pm (Preceded by AGM at 6pm). Refreshments available from 6pm.

Free to members – non-members welcome, but to make small donation to the society.

*The St Vigean's Museum Redisplay Project:  
Interpreting and presenting  
a carved stone collection*

Kirsty Owen (Historic Scotland)

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### Meikle Museum 2010 opening arrangements

Summer

1 April–30 September

Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat Sun 09.30–17.30

Winter: closed

Admission: A £3.20; Ch £1.60; Con £2.70

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### The Mail symbol-bearing fragment:



which way up?



© Shetland Museums and Archives

Which way up should the fragment be seen? Anna Ritchie has written (2010, 187) 'it is impossible to be certain...!' but that 'It is possible that the incomplete panel of interlace ... represents the base of a cross ...'. If it is part of the *base* of a cross, the visible arm of the Mail *double-disc and Z-rod* must be the symbol's *upper* arm.

An alternative is that the interlace may be decoration within something like a *rectangle* symbol. Of the perhaps 17 *rectangles* on other symbol stones or fragments, all but five are on 'northern' stones (Clynekirkton 1 and 2, Craigton 2 (Golspie) and Little Ferry Links 1 (Sutherland), Ackergill 1 (Links of Keiss Bay) (Caithness), Benbecula (Western Isles), Broch of Gurness, Firth and South Ronaldsay (Orkney) and Breck of Hillwell, Cunningsburgh, and Sandness (Shetland). (All but Breck of Hillwell and Broch of Gurness are described and illustrated in *ECMS* III. For Breck of Hillwell and Broch of Gurness, see Fraser 2008, 132–3: fig 194; 114–5: fig 165).)

The *rectangle* is not only a very common 'northern' symbol (it is overtaken in numbers north of Inverness only by the two most common of all the Pictish symbols, the *crescent and V-rod* and the *mirror or mirror-and-comb*) but is the only symbol with more than one example on Shetland symbol stones. Not only is the Mail *double-disc and Z-rod* the only Shetland

example of that symbol but the others: the *crescent* on Breck of Hillwell, the unique *bear* on Old Scatness Broch 1, the *salmon* shown in part on Old Scatness Broch 2 (ibid, 134–5, figs 198.1 and 198.4) and the *horseshoe* and *mirror* on Sandness, appear only once each. Nor could any of these five symbols have contained the interlace on the Mail fragment. The only known Shetland symbol that could have contained such decoration is the *rectangle*.

However, this ‘solution’ does not solve the ‘which-way-up’ question. If the interlace on the fragment is part of a *rectangle* (or part of some other symbol or device) rather than part of a cross-base, it could be above or below the *double-disc and Z-rod*.

The visible arm of the Mail *Z-rod* has a leaf-shaped terminal preceded by reverse-facing basal spirals (Ritchie 2010, 187) and it is simply incised, not at all apparently ‘corrupt’ in design. But, although it is certainly part of a Class II symbol, there are no floriated or other decoration on it, as is common on almost all Class II *Z-rod* upper arms. While many of the Class II *double-disc and Z-rods* have both arms floriated or curlicued, at least three, Elgin, Glenferness and Rosemarkie are shown, in Romilly Allen’s line-drawings, to have lower arms without decoration other than the spirals before their terminals (*ECMS* III, 134: fig 137A; 97: fig 120; 65: fig 62). But the terminals are flight-like (on Elgin and Glenferness) or complex (on Rosemarkie), whereas the Mail terminal is clearly a spearhead or arrowhead. Perhaps the visible arm of the Mail symbol is the upper arm.

There are no floriations on it, but neither are there any, or any apparent, on the upper arms of the only two other known Northern Isles *double-disc and Z-rods* (which are incised on steatite discs from Eswick and Jarlshof (Fraser 2008, 139 and 140)) Perhaps this ‘refinement’ did not reach the Northern Isles.

There is, however, another ‘Class-II-type’ *double-disc and Z-rod* to take into account. It is incised in pseudo-relief on each of the Norrie’s Law silver plaques, one of which is illustrated in *ECMS* III (369: fig 387). Although the Norrie’s Law *Z-rods* are true-Zs and although the arms are double-lined or in pseudo-relief (other than the forward half of the upper arms, which are single-lined), the lower arms are undecorated – other in that they too have

reverse-facing basal spirals preceding leaf-shaped terminals. They are, in effect, double-lined replicas of the Mail symbol’s visible arm. Nor are there any spandrels at the angles of the Norrie’s Law *Z-rods*, just as there is none at the angle of Mail’s (Ritchie 2010, 187, and illus 1 and 2).

Not only might these similarities point towards the Mail symbol’s visible arm being its lower arm but there is another faintly-seen similarity. Dr Ritchie also wrote that although the ‘surface of the stone has flaked away beneath the double disc, and the lower horizontal bar has largely been lost, there is a suggestion of a leaf-shaped terminal beneath the left-hand disc’ (ibid).

The suggestion of ‘a leaf-shaped terminal’ appears to be that of a terminal similar in size to the terminal of the visible horizontal bar, similar in size as are the Norrie’s Law *Z-rod* arms’ terminals similar in size to each other. If so, the *Z-rod* of the Mail symbol is like the Norrie’s Law *Z-rods* in three respects. All three have *Z-rod* arms with leaf-shaped terminals which, when visible, are preceded by reverse-facing spirals, none contains spandrels and all three have an undecorated horizontal arm.

There may have been a fourth similarity. The almost-vanished horizontal arm of the Mail symbol’s *Z-rod* may have had floriations like those on the Norrie’s Law upper arms. There is no proof of this, but it cannot be disproved. Flaking and trimming has destroyed all but the arm’s suggested terminal. Because of the other similarities, it is quite likely that the visible *Z-rod* horizontal arm of the Mail symbol was the symbol’s *lower* arm.

It is therefore very possible that the Mail fragment should be seen the other way up, with the patch of interlace *beneath* the *double-disc and Z-rod*

#### References

- ECMS* III = *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* Part III (Edinburgh, 1903). Facsimile edition, 2 vols (Balgavies, Angus, 1993).
- Fraser, I (ed) 2008 *The Pictish Symbol Stones of Scotland* (Edinburgh).
- Ritchie, A 2010 ‘A fragment of a Pictish symbol-bearing slab with carving in relief from Mail, Cunningsburgh, Shetland’, *Proceedings of the Antiquaries of Scotland* 138, 185–92.
- Alastair Mack



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## The Shire of Dunnichen

Dunnichen church and shire were donated to Arbroath Abbey by King William I in 1178<sup>1</sup> and I have previously outlined the history of the church.<sup>2</sup>

The shire of Dunnichen has however, been ignored by recent writers, and, as I have pointed out in lectures to PAS (May 2003 and January 2010) it is of considerable interest to the debate regarding the battle-site of Dunnichen in 685.

The place-name appears in the Aberbrothoc Registrum (*Liber S. Tho*) on no fewer than thirty-seven occasions between 1178 and 1536, initially as *Dunectin*. Watson translates this as ‘Nechtan’s fort’<sup>3</sup> and this most likely relates to the fort the remains of which are described in the field known as the Cashel park, not from the modern name Dunnichen Hill which does not appear until the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1868.

David Henry has examined the traditions and the development of these in some degree of thoroughness in his booklet on Dunnichen Hillfort,<sup>4</sup> and I concur with his conclusion regarding the site of the putative ‘fort’. This was also the find spot of the Pictish Symbol Stone<sup>5</sup> in 1805, not the site usually quoted – e.g. RCAHMS,<sup>6</sup> which relates to the East Mains of Dunnichen which had no Cashel park!

The shire is mentioned in six charters – 1178x82; 1182; 1200; 1211x14; 1214x18 and 1321, as well as also being referred to as lands (six occasions) from 1226x9 – 1536 and the barony (five occasions) 1483 – 1528. In addition to these, the most useful document<sup>7</sup> is an undated charter describing the marches of Dunnichen, possibly dating to 1280x1300.

A translation of this was published by Andrew Jervise in 1879 *Epitaphs and Inscriptions*,<sup>8</sup> which I include in full below. This was mentioned by Alex J. Warden in his *Angus or Forfarshire* in 1885, but this document has been either ignored or missed by all subsequent historians.

as beginning at the tree of the forest nearest to the head of the cornlands of Hochterlony [Auchterlony], thence by the head of the same to the King’s highway leading to Forfar, and along that road until opposite the head of a certain black burn on the east of Ochtirforfar, keeping the said black burn as far as Gelly, thence along

by Tyschergate [Fishergait] to the burn of Haldynhorse, then on as far as the loch of Roskolby, keeping the same to the march the burn of Tubirmanyn, past the well of the same, and crossing the moors by a grey stone to the white road, which formed the march as far as the burn and forest of Balmadych [Balmadies], thence by the head of the cornlands of the same – as oxen move in carts [*carucis*] – until it came to the nearest tree of the said forest of Ochterlony.

In attempting to trace these marches, it is important to take account of the fact that the lands of Ouchterlownie were not added to the ownership of Arbroath Abbey until 1226x1239, when John of Ouchterlony gave them to the Abbey in exchange for lands in Kingoldrum.<sup>9</sup> The lands of Ouchterlownie were clearly maintained as a distinct entity, as is shown by the perambulation of the lands of Ouchterlony and Forfar in 1457.<sup>10</sup>

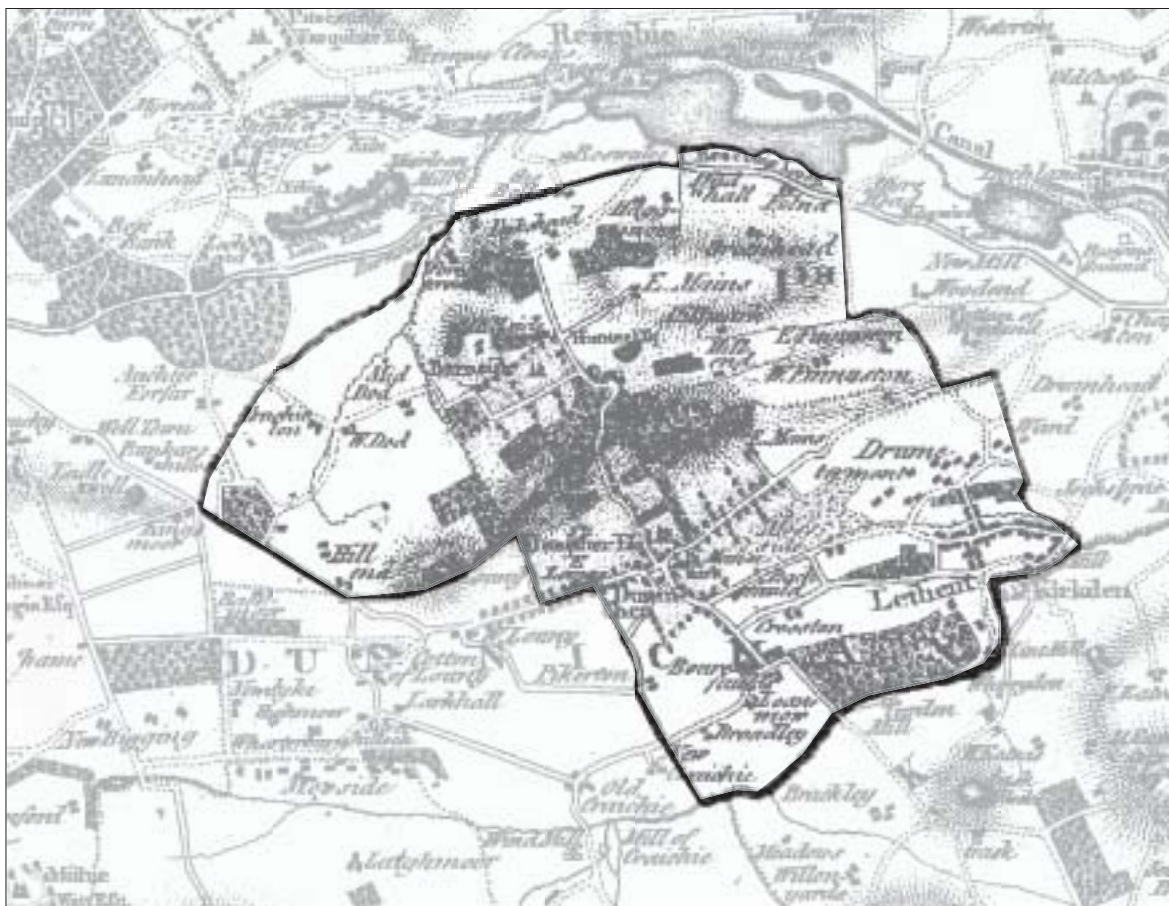
The lands in the parish of Dunnichen to the south of Craichie, namely those of Tulloes were also maintained as a separate entity, and these are outlined in a document 1329.<sup>11</sup>

Bearing these two distinct lands within the parish of Dunnichen in mind, and using the parish boundary as first delineated in the map of Angus by John Ainslie in 1794, it is possible to trace the approximate boundary of the shire of Dunnichen, albeit accepting that some lost place-names make the precise boundary difficult to pin down (1).

Lownie, formerly Ouchterlownie until the 17th century, lies to the west of Dunnichen, and what is now known as West Mains of Dunnichen was marked as Lownie on Ainslie’s map. I therefore take the ‘head of the cornlands of Hochterlony’ to be what is now known as Lownie Hill, so that the boundary of Dunnichen and Lownie follows the parish boundary along that ridge now known as Lownie Hill. This meets the B9128 road to Forfar at Hillend, which in the document is described as the ‘King’s highway leading to Forfar’. Continuing west towards Forfar on the B9128 there are two burns which are to the east of Ochterforfar, the first known as ‘the Strippie’, just east of the present village of Kingsmuir, and the second which issues behind Kingsmuir School. I think that the latter is the more likely bet, and although it was bisected by the railway in 1870, it is the larger of the two and flows north-eastwards past Auchterforfar.

The next place-name mentioned in the document is Gelly, now lost, but I consider this to be in the





1 Extent of the Shire of Dunnichen. (Adaptation of John Ainslie's Map of the County of Forfar or Shire of Angus, 1794)

vicinity of Burnside Mill, since the document then mentions the fishergate which is the A932, the road from Arbroath to Forfar, which is mentioned in an earlier document in the Registrum. This was the road upon which the fish from Auchmithie were brought to Forfar, known as the Cadger's Road. We then proceed along the A932 in an easterly direction until we come to the burn of Haldynhorse. This too is a lost place-name, but since the boundary continues to Rescobie Loch, I would suggest that it must be the burn which rises above Hagmuir and flows north into the loch.

Interestingly, a cup and ring-marked stone, now in the grounds of Reswallie House bears no fewer than three inscribed letter Ds (2), and John Sheriff suggests that this may have been used as a Dunnichen boundary marker,<sup>12</sup> which makes even more sense upon reading this document.

The southern shore of the Loch of Rescobie is then the march until we reach the burn of Tubirmanyn, sadly another lost place-name, but I would suggest that this is the burn some way east of Fonah, which rises from the hills to the south.

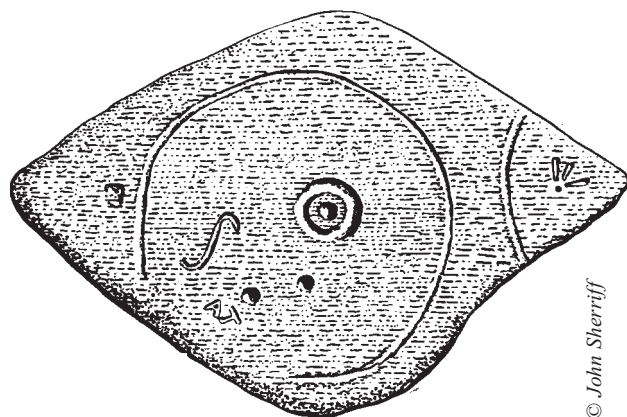
The march then proceeds 'crossing the moor by a grey stone to the white road' according to Jervise's translation, but here I disagree with his word 'grey'. I interpret *Lapidum grav*<sup>13</sup> as 'engraved stone' which I identify as the Girdle Stone (3). The Girdle Stone does indeed bear engravings, hence its name, and was considered



© John Sheriff

2 Cup and ring marked stone with three Ds at Reswallie

a parish boundary marker, dividing the parishes of Dunnichen and Rescobie. The Girdle Stone also bears cup and ring markings and is therefore likely to have been an important marker for centuries.



3 The Girdle Stone – ‘Lapidum grav’

The white road ‘which formed the march as far as the burn and forest of Balmadych’ seems to follow the parish boundary, and the burn is of course the Vinney, which is still the parish boundary on the south side of Dunnichen. The estate to the east is now known as Balmadies.

It is a little difficult to be exact about the last section, but the head of the cornlands of Balmadies to the forest of Ochterlony must be split by the Vinney, although the Abbey may not have had the same concern about being as precise here, given that they possessed much of the adjoining land.

Whatever the precise southern boundary of the shire may have been, this document importantly gives us a fairly clear picture of the northern boundary, demonstrating clearly that the shire contained territory to the north of the parish boundary. Even more importantly especially from the point of view of those interested in the site of ‘Nechtansmere’ the shire boundary skirts the southern shore of what we now know as Rescobie Loch.

John T. Ewen, in his *Place-names of Angus* simply refers to Restenneth Loch as formerly Nechtansmere,<sup>14</sup> but the document would suggest that the loch to its west, now Rescobie, is the more likely to have been so known. The suggestion that Dunachton in Badenoch is the site of the battle of Dunnichen by Woolf<sup>15</sup> is based entirely upon his reading of the account by Bede. Dunnichen in Angus has much stronger credentials for this claim. Apart from the document which this article publicises, which lends support to the site(s) of the battle identified

by Alcock<sup>16</sup> and Fraser,<sup>17</sup> there are a number of other factors which support the importance of the Angus site, as opposed to the northern Dunachton.

In the vicinity of Dunnichen we also have the dark-age hill-forts of both Turin and Finavon, plus the very important church, St Peter’s of Restenneth. While we cannot push the foundation of Restenneth earlier than the reign of David I on documentary evidence,<sup>18</sup> the Nechtan legend in the Aberdeen Breviary is nonetheless of interest. Architectural historians continue to debate the dating of the surviving ruins, although recent suggestions support 11th century or earlier. Restenneth was however, held in high royal esteem during the reign of Robert I, so much so that apart from holding an inquest in 1321x2 in order to return lands lost during the Wars of Independence,<sup>19</sup> King Robert also had his son Prince John buried there.

#### Abbreviation

*Liber S. Tho* = *Liber S. Thome de Aberbrothoc. Registrorum Abbacie de Aberbrothoc*, vol I (1178–1329); vol II (1329–1536), C Innes and P Chalmers (eds) (Edinburgh, 1848–56).

#### Notes

- 1 *Liber S. Tho*, I, no 10.
- 2 ‘Dunnichen Parish Church’, *Pictish Arts Society Newsletter*, 48 (Autumn 2008), 2.
- 3 Watson, W J *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, 239, 313 (Edinburgh, 1926). Facsimile edition (Edinburgh, 1993).
- 4 Henry, D *Dunnichen Hillfort: The building of a modern myth* (Brechin, 2009).
- 5 Chalmers, P *The Ancient Sculptured Monuments of Angus* (Edinburgh, 1848).
- 6 RCAHMS *The Archaeological Sites and Monuments of the Lunan Valley and Montrose Basin* (Edinburgh, 1978).
- 7 *Liber S. Tho*, I, no 232.
- 8 Jervise, A *Epitaphs and Inscriptions from burial grounds and buildings in the north east of Scotland*, vol II (Edinburgh, 1879), 406.
- 9 *Liber S. Tho*, I, no 306.
- 10 *Liber S. Tho*, II, no 112.
- 11 *Liber S. Tho*, I, no 2.
- 12 *Prehistoric sculpture in Angus*, Sherriff, J R (Forfar, 1984).
- 13 I am grateful to David McKenzie for pointing out this translation.
- 14 Ewen, J T *The place-names of Angus* (Edinburgh [nd] ?1940).
- 15 Woolf, A ‘Dún Nechtáin, Fortriu and the geography of the Picts’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 85 (2006), 182–201.
- 16 Alcock, L ‘The Site of the ‘Battle of Dunnichen’’ *Scottish Historical Review*, 75 (1996), 130–42.

- 17 Fraser, J E *The Battle of Dunnichen, 685* (Stroud, 2002).
- 18 Barrow, Geoffrey W S (ed) *The Acts of Malcolm IV King of Scots 1153–1165* (= *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, 1), (Edinburgh, 1960).
- 19 Duncan, A A M (ed) *The Acts of Robert I, 1306–1329* (= *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, 5), (Edinburgh, 1987).

*Norman Atkinson*

Saint Causnan's, March 2010

The author and editor are grateful to John Sherriff for permitting reproduction of two of the drawings which originally accompanied his paper 'Prehistoric rock-carving in Angus', in *Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal*, 1 (1995), 11–22.

## ***A New History of the Picts***

**Stuart McHardy**

Luath Press ISBN 9781906307653 £14.99

Official Launch: 1 April at 6.30pm

Blackwell's, South Bridge, Edinburgh

When the Romans came north to what is now modern Scotland they encountered the fierce and proud warrior society known as the Picts, who despite their lack of discipline and arms, managed to prevent the undefeated Roman Army from conquering the northern part of Britain, just as they later repulsed the Angles and the Vikings.

*A New History of the Picts* is an accessible history of the Picts, who are so often misunderstood. New historical analysis, recently discovered evidence and an innovative Scottish perspective will expose long held assumptions about Scotland's native people. This controversial text contests that Scottish history has long since been dominated and distorted by misleading perspectives.

*A New History of the Picts* will discredit the idea that the Picts were a strange historical anomaly and show them to be the descendants of the original inhabitants of the land, living in a series of loose tribal confederations gradually brought together by external forces to create one of the earliest states in Europe: a people, who after repulsing all invaders, merged with their cousins, the Scots of Argyll, to create modern Scotland.

Focusing on the essential tribal nature of Pictish society several radical suggestions are put forward. The Picts, from the Roman point of view, were all of the tribes north of Hadrian's Wall. This included the Scots. We should see the Picts as Scotland's indigenous people. The name Pict is based on a native name,

akin to Pecht. The basis of their society was kinship not kingship. Folklore and the oral tradition in general can help us see the Picts more clearly. The late Highland clan system arose from the tribal societies of the Picts and Scots.

## **Groam House Museum**

### **Annual Academic Lecture**

**30 April 2010**

*Pictish brooches and Pictish hens:  
status and currency in early Scotland*

Dr Catherine Swift

(Director of Irish Studies, Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick)

### **2010 opening times**

1 January – 5 March: closed

6 March – 25 April: weekend afternoons only (2.00–4.00pm), except

Easter, 2–11 April: open daily (2.00–4.30pm)

1 May – 31 October: open daily (Mon–Sat: 10.00am– 5.00pm; Sun: 2.00–4.30pm)

6 November – 5 December: weekend afternoons only (2.00–4.00pm)

### **George Bain - Games and Gatherings**

**Exhibition runs until 11 April**

The Museum holds a special exhibition each year either on a local history subject or based on its nationally important George Bain Collection. To mark Homecoming Scotland 2009 this new exhibition, which opened last May, is entitled George Bain – Games and Gatherings.

Whilst Bain (1881–1968) was primarily famous as the 'father of modern Celtic Art', the exhibition includes a number of drawings of contemporary events. Some of the most interesting and charming of these are his well-observed sketches of the varied activities to be found at Highland Games and these form the focus of the new exhibition.

## **St Vigeans Museum**

### **2010 opening arrangements**

Summer: 1 April–30 September

Tues, Wed, Thurs, Sat, Sun 10.00–15.00  
(closed Mon & Fri)

Winter: 1 October – 1 March

Tues, Wed, Thurs, Sat, Sun 10.00–13.00  
(closed Mon & Fri)

Admission: A £3.70; Ch £1.85; Con £3.00

Tel: 01241 433 739



## Pictish Cross Word

Compiled by Ron Dutton

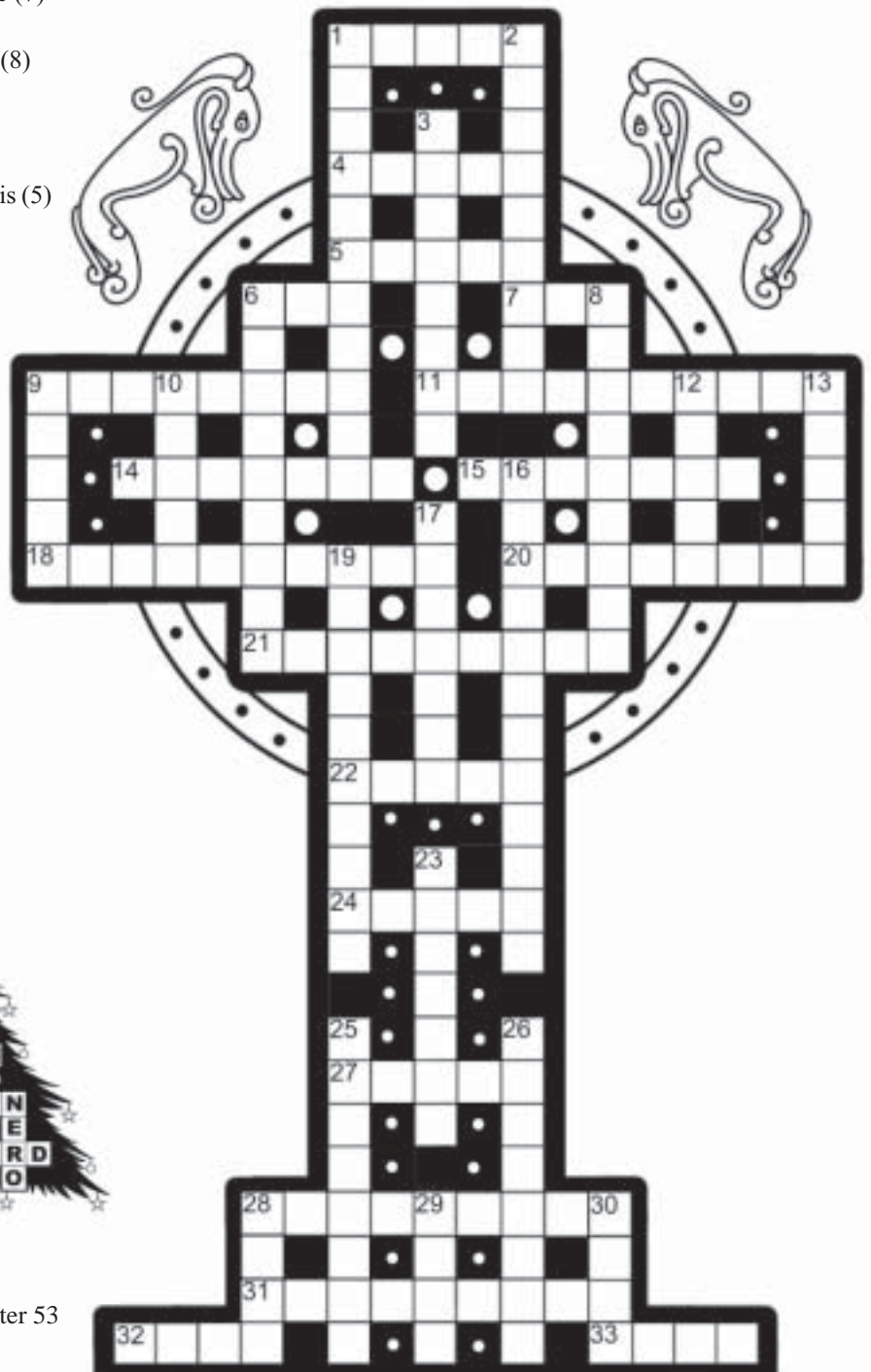
### ACROSS

- 1 Ancient keepsake (5)
- 4 Repugnance (5)
- 5 Approaches (5)
- 6 In the past (3)
- 7 Male apparel finishes all square (3)
- 9 Successful takeover (8)
- 11 Indian Ocean paradise (10)
- 14 Discussed (7)
- 15 St Crispin drops in and writes these (7)
- 18 Can be counted on (10)
- 20 Wet weather for current monarch? (8)
- 21 Orkney island (9)
- 22 Shot a plant popular with slugs (5)
- 24 Twixt dusk and dawn (5)
- 27 Traditional accompaniment to haggis (5)
- 28 Settlement in Fife (9)
- 31 Arctic mammal (9)
- 32 Step around domestic animals (4)
- 33 Dramatic start for moderate measure of amber nectar (4)

### DOWN

- 1 Inspect the enemy's position (11)
- 2 Branch of science (9)
- 3 In contention at the end (8)
- 6 Name of three medieval Scottish kings (9)
- 8 The icy tin gives cultural identity (9)
- 9 Better (5)
- 10 Line (5)

- 12 St Jerome put the gospels into this (5)
- 13 Move to and fro (5)
- 16 Major religion (12)
- 17 Roars (7)
- 19 Traditional exclusion order (10)
- 23 Instigates conflagration (7)
- 25 Forth island (8)
- 26 Fruit bush grown against a wall (8)
- 28 Oral margins (4)
- 29 Spiritual teacher (4)
- 30 Unit of imperial measure (4)



Solution to crossword in PAS Newsletter 53