

Pictish Stones Preservation - in the Field or the Museum?

I was interested to read the rumour recorded in the last Newsletter ("Dark Gossip") about possible plans to move the stones at Aberlemno and Cossans into a central location, described as a "customised barn". This raises the next question of whether it is more important to keep Pictish Stones in or near their original locations, where they can be appreciated as part of a living landscape, or to remove them to a place where they can be protected from weathering, pollution and other threats. This is a problem with no easy solution, both approaches having much to recommend them, and I think that every case has to be looked at individually.

The great majority of Pictish Class I and II stones were, I am sure, public monuments, in the sense that they were meant to stand in the open air and be seen by passers by, and where they were originally placed was no doubt of great significance. The fact is, however, that nearly all have certainly or probably been moved: not necessarily very far, except for those which have been gathered into museums, but the surviving stones no longer make up the complex social and ritual landscape that we may imagine they once did. A very strong case can therefore be made for retaining those few stones which seem to be in their original positions in their landscape setting, as this is in itself part of their archaeological value. In particular, the several Class I stones which appear to be re-used Bronze Age standing stones should probably remain where they have always stood, despite the inevitable gradual degrading of their added Pictish carvings. It was gratifying to read in the last Newsletter of the re-erection on its original site of such a stone at Collessie in Fife.

Turning to the particular stones in question, however, I am inclined to the view that preservation must be the overriding consideration, which inevitably means bringing the stones under cover. I suppose that what is in mind is a stone museum or lapidarium comparable to those existing at Meigle and St Vigean, presumably located at Aberlemno (though the note in the last Newsletter did not actually specify this). A "customised barn" is not itself objectionable: a vernacular building built of local stone could well provide an attractive setting in which to view Pictish sculpture, if it was done up with imagination. The Meigle and St Vigean collections are, of course, also displayed in converted buildings (a former school and a cottage respectively), as is the collection in Groam House Museum. One would hope that a building big enough to do the stones justice would be chosen, with lighting installed in it in a way that shows the carvings to advantage (both qualities that are at present too little in evidence at St Vigean, incidentally, which is both cramped and dark, and badly in need of rearrangement).

As to the landscape value of the stones, the great roadside cross-slab (Aberlemno 3) has stood in its present position since the 16th century, and quite likely since it was first erected, and it certainly looks very impressive on its bank above the Fofar-Brechin road, forming a sort of open air gallery of Pictish sculpture with the two symbol stones that also stand there. On the other hand, all these stones are particularly vulnerable both to the pollution from the exhausts of passing vehicles, and (the nightmare scenario!) conceivably from the vehicles themselves, since a traffic accident is always a possibility. Aberlemno 3 is also in a rather exposed position in regard to weathering, a fact perhaps reflected in its being more worn than the older Kirkyard cross-slab.

As to the Kirkyard stones itself (Aberlemno 2), there is the strongest case to be made for removing it into a sheltered space. It is certainly not in its original position (the hole drilled through it will have been made to help move it at some point), though it perhaps came from no further away than the roadside beside the other stones. The cross-slab's present position, which it has probably occupied for several centuries, west of the kirk among ordinary graveslabs, is not unattractive, but a setting without distractions might enable the stone's beauty to be appreciated even more. Let us not be modest about the best of our Pictish heritage: Aberlemno 2 is one of the greatest masterpieces to survive from any period in Scotland's history, and one of the finest creations of the Celtic peoples. It is a work of art of world importance, and should no more be left outside to suffer attentions of weather, pollution or (another nightmare scenario) a maniac with a hammer, than Michelangelo's David is in Florence, or the caryatids of the Erechtheum in Athens, sculptures which have been removed to museums and replaced by copies in their original settings.

Still almost miraculously well-preserved, its present condition cannot last much longer, and Aberlemno 2 is not only one of the supreme works of Pictish art, but a historical document of huge importance. I fully accept Greame Cruickshank's convincing theory that the unique battle scene on the back represents the Battle of Dunnichen in 685, and this representation of Pictish warfare, equipment and tactics can only be compared in significance to that which the Bayeux Tapestry has for understanding the Norman Conquest to English historians, with the important difference that not only was the stone carved some 350 years earlier, but that it is still in the country of origin (and indeed not far from the actual battlefield). Given these facts, a degree of interpretation of Aberlemno 2 greater than is possible in its present location would be very desirable. A museum setting would provide the exhibition space necessary to allow the Kirkyard slab and the other Aberlemno stones to be properly explained to visitors.

The cross-slab known as St Orland's Stone at Cossans near Fofar is also one which should be removed to the safety of a museum. It should not necessarily come to Aberlemno (though if it was placed in a lapidarium there it would help to make it a distinguished collection of Pictish art indeed); the Meffan Institute in Fofar, with its newly displayed and by no means minor collection of Pictish and Early Christian stones might seem more appropriate, or perhaps even the Kirk at Glamis, both of which are certainly nearer to Cossans.

Be that as it may, St Orland's Stone should undoubtedly be moved. Already considerably worn, it has broken in half in the past and is only held together by metal struts. Its position on a slight ridge among open fields makes it particularly vulnerable to weathering, and (an unusual threat which I can testify to from personal experience) to being knocked down or shattered by the sonic booms of low (and I mean low) flying military aircraft. It is also rather difficult to get to at present, and I am informed that the farmer does not encourage visitors, ever, though the cross-slab is supposedly in State care as an Ancient Monument.

A further consideration (not in itself relevant to the question of whether the stones should be moved or not, but worth keeping in mind), is that if they are taken up, there will be the chance to do excavations on both sites. I believe there are old reports of burials found near both St Orland's Stone and the Aberlemno roadside cross-slab, and the opportunity to investigate two Pictish cemeteries, with all that could be learned from the human remains about life and death in the Dark Ages, would be a valuable contribution to Pictish archaeology. The discovery of undescribed sculptured stones and the foundations of early church buildings would also be a possibility.

To sum up then, contra your anonymous contributor in the last Newsletter, I think that moving these Angus stones into a museum would on the whole be an excellent idea. At least they wouldn't have those ugly boxes round them for a third of the year.

Niall M Robertson



Detail from the rapidly eroding Aberlemno 3 - by Tom E Gray

Dupplin Cross Inquiry

Notice has been given that there is to be a Public Inquiry (as detailed in the Town & Planning Acts) to discuss the two applications for Scheduled Monument Consent to relocate the Dupplin Cross. Basically the two opposing applications are -

- (1) To move the stone to the Royal Museum, Chambers Street, Edinburgh.
- (2) To move the stone to the nearby church at Forteviot.

The obvious consideration being what's best for the Dupplin Cross. The Secretary of State has appointed a Mr J G Grainger to oversee the report and the meeting will be held on **Tuesday, 12th December, at 10am** in the **Salutation Hotel, 34 South Street, Perth.**

Anyone who wishes to express an interest in the discussions should write ASAP, detailing their interest or viewpoint to -

Scottish Office Inquiry Reporters

Attn. J G Grainger

2 Greenside Lane, Edinburgh, EH1 3AG.

Although the outcome of the inquiry is not expected for some time a fuller update of the debate will be published in the next Spring Newsletter.

Forward to the Past - Archaeolink Update

As the last Newsletter went to press the wheels of fate were already rolling across the hills of Garioch for Archaeolink, the team who plan to put Dark Age Scottish History firmly back into Grampian. Despite all the uncertainty over who would be funding the project it seems the final players on the field for the £3.6+million archaeological heritage centre will be Grampian Enterprise Ltd, Grampian Regional Council and Gordon District Council. The whole project being propped up by £2million from the European Regional Development Fund. Details of the project, now under construction, have finally reached me and the following list of proposed "themes" to be included at the complex has been copied from the Grampian Enterprise release of 13th November 1995.

1. **Introduction to the exhibition and changing landscapes.**

An introduction to the exhibition will tell the history of the landscape and how it has changed. Visitors, through the use of interactive film techniques, will be able to choose different scenarios to see how the different factors influence the way the land develops.

2. **The audio-visual presentation.**

This will take visitors on a 17 minute trip through the ages, bringing to life the use of sites and historic events. The life of hunter gatherers, a stone circle ritual, the Roman battle at Mons Grampius, and the Picts will all be explored.

3. **Interactive challenge area.**

Visitors will be presented with a tailor made challenge that will require them to visit archaeological sites and win a small prize.

4. **Gallery of Myths and Legends.**

Highly interactive displays will suggest the basis of the myths and legends of the area including Jock of Bennachie, the Cult of the Head and will also depict how the seasons and festivals were celebrated.

5. **Children's Room.**

Activities will include storytelling, reconstruction of "ancient pots", a dressing up area, musical instruments. Open to all children visiting the attraction, it is expected that this room will be of particular interest to school groups.

6. **Shop and Restaurant.**

The restaurant will have seating for approximately 80 people, with additional seating for the summer in a courtyard which will also form the arena for acts, shows and special events. In the winter visitors can dine in an inglenook heated by a solid-fuel stove.

Reconstructions of historical buildings, which are currently in the initial planning stages, will include a Neolithic timber hall, iron age farm with agricultural and craft demonstrations in progress, and a Roman marching camp.

So there you have it, the almost final plans for Berryhill, Oyne. I have to wonder who has been researching the background history. The inclusion of "Mons Grampius" surely being questionable. Perhaps they have renamed the battle "Grampius" rather than the more usual "Graupius" to add weight to claiming the battle as a local event. I know that there are many who favour a more southerly site, and others even further north. The inclusion of a Roman marching camp is almost certainly to be seen as an attempt to lead up to the inclusion of Mons Graupius as one of the "main" themes. It will be interesting to see how the influence the Romans had over the native Picts is interpreted and also the Roman account of the Battle, Who won? Who left Pictland and took up dyke building? Questions I'm sure we'd all like answers for!

Putting my Roman gripes aside, with Ian Shepherd, Grampian Regional Archaeologist, and Marian Nagahiro, from Friends of Grampian Stones, as advisers on authenticity our indigenous ancestors should get a good look-in. I must admit to looking forward to the prospect of a stone circle ritual re-enactment although I'm sure there are now laws against such things, wasn't the Criminal Justice Bill introduced to stop just such activities? With so much emphasis going on the interactive side of the display we can but pray that the Archaeolink team manage to strike the right balance between technology and history. So many interactive displays are rushed in their production that within a few years they become obsolete and inactive displays plagued by technical breakdowns. Such a fate for the Oyne project would certainly leave a lasting black mark on the area. With a little care the Berryhill site should have all the potential for one of the most exciting and informative new displays under construction. Nick.S₃



Full Moon at the heel stone Auquhorhies, Portlethen, Aberdeenshire - by Tom E Gray

Editorial Offerings

Musings from the Battlefront editorial- Now that Samhain (All Hallows Eve or Halloween) is past and we're firmly into the Celtic New Year I thought it was time to dust down the Newsletter and give it a face lift for the forthcoming year. In an effort to help keep PAS publication costs to a minimum, while trying to constrain the Newsletter to a size which can still stapled together, I have had to opt for a smaller type size throughout most of the publication. This will leave lots of extra space for your informative articles..... of which the supply seems to have dried up as we grind towards the festive season go on tell me what's happening out there in the rest of Scotland - no news - no Newsletter!

Thanks must go to Stuart McHardy, Marianna Lines and all the other members who have contributed throughout the year, and to Davy Moir for the hilarious cartoons and captions supplied (even though many were too controversial for publication). (Ed.)

Ogham Baffles Critics

Droochie's wee mailbag contained an interesting note by Herrn Robertson for a correction to the last cartoon. It seems that Ogham enthusiasts have struck out at poor mac Chisel and have slandered his ogham writings as mis-spelt gibberish.

Mr Chisel's ancestors have been quoted as saying that they have every confidence in the writings of the auld Chisels and that if he carved LROSI then he meant to carve LROSI - "jist acause ye canny unerstan it disny mak it rang" this literal translation by staff at the editorial will also no doubt baffle plain English enthusiasts who will write to tell me that surely I meant to say "Just because you don't understand it doesn't make it a circular formation dance or Iron Age circular ditch and rampart" eh? rang! After all that we'll return to normality and plain-ish spik and get on with the rest of the newsletter. Droochie

Tarbat Stone Correction

I was flattered by Stuart McHardy's very complimentary article on my discovery of a new Pictish carving at Tarbat Old Kirk in the last PAS Newsletter, but must in fairness correct one misapprehension: the simple cross-slab found at Tarbat in 1994 was in fact spotted by David Henry of the Pinkfoot Press and not me, though I was present at the time. David has already found a remarkable number of Bronze Age cup-marked stones in his home territory of Angus, but this was his first Early Christian Discovery. The finding of both stones is described in an article in the forthcoming PAS Journal 9. In the meantime, some may be wondering how David and I have managed to find fair a number of undescribed carvings with (apparent) ease. The answer's simple: watch the stones...

Niall M Robertson

News from the Mews

PAS Secretary + Acting Membership Secretary and invaluable committee store of information Eileen Brownlie has now moved to her new address at -

12 Dean Park Mews, Edinburgh, EH4 1ED

Tel. (Home) 0131 332 0277

(Office) 0131 554 3441

Lost Picts

Eileen reports that after the last mailing there have been a number of Journals returned for the following people marked "gone away".

Neil Munro (Edinburgh)

Maureen Leonard (Liverpool)

Linda Ellen Eller (Aberdeen)

Dr Kirsten Anderson (Edinburgh)

Kathleen Madigan (Avoch, Black Isle)

Alan Robert Crawford (Collessie)

Mr & Mrs J Black (Dunning)

Anne McLeod (Abedeen)

Denis Kennedy (Arbroath)

If you know of a current address or contact for any of these members please contact Eileen at the address given above, and remember to let us know if you move.

The post of **Membership Secretary** for the session 95/96 is still vacant and begging for someone with a few spare hours each week to come forward. Anyone who can help should contact Eileen (address as above).

Selts or Kelts - what's in a name?

When recently watching the Halloween STV program "The Strange Show" I couldn't help myself as I winced at the stories of the so called "Selts" (Celts). The stories were generally OK although a couple of the witches should have got off the bus, but what I couldn't work out was why everyone referred to the "Selts". Several of the guests on the program used the Selt pronunciation and I was left wondering if I was witness to some linguistic distinction within our own borders, some people being unable to pronounce the "K" sound (that would make us a Pistish Arts Society - very festive!). Perhaps I am wrong in thinking that the Celts are Kelts and not Selts as the programme would have me believe, and I'd be glad to hear from anyone who can illuminate me as to the apparent difference or even correctness of either.

Having been involved in numerous craft fair events I can safely say that the "Selts" are all over Europe and definitely in America. I'm sorry but the day that any Scottish University has a Department of "Seltic" Studies will surely indicate football madness and not the study of the tribal conglomerate that made up the great Celtic Peoples - if in doubt write it Kelt.

Well enough of all that - am aff tae git "PIST". Nick.S

Pictish Arts Society - Looking to the future?

Since the birth of the Pictish Arts Society in 1985, by a handful of devoted individuals, we have grown to be over 400 strong. This is a remarkable achievement for any "specialist" society especially at a time when most groups are seeing a decrease in numbers. The larger we become the more important it will be to ensure the continued long term development and promotion of the PAS - it's surely part of our responsibility on the committee to you as members. However the continuing success of the Society brings its own problems. When I first served on the committee every time there was a change of Membership Secretary a small box containing all the files needed for our mailing list and subscription details was passed onto the new office bearer, now the whole thing has to be kept on a database just to ensure that we don't have to spend hours labelling envelopes by hand - and the hard-copy of the database requires a large and substantial box to transfer all the files around.

Perhaps one of the things that has worked well for the Society in the past is the informal nature of the committee structure. There are no paid posts in the Society with all committee members donating some of their free time to keeping the ball rolling. Which, although fine up till now, is no guarantee to the continuing success of the PAS in the future. It would only take a few key members to become "unavailable" for the general running of the society and the production of publications to grind to a halt. Currently we typeset and produce all our own work, but should these facilities be unavailable the commercial production cost of just one Journal and Newsletter could seriously jeopardise the future financial position of the PAS as it stands.

We are currently looking into long term funding strategies not just for publications and research but also to help the Society consolidate its current position. It is my own view that we can no longer totally rely on a volunteer committee to see the Society through the next five years and that we must therefore take steps to ensure that the general "book-keeping" of the Society doesn't fall by the way as the committee struggle on with an increasing workload. Whether this means purchasing equipment, to ensure we can always continue to publish our own material and maintain the membership database, or whether we may need to hire a part-time secretary at some point in the future, we don't yet know.

However, this isn't supposed to be a gloomy piece of scratchings, but more of an insight to the Society as it stands. As we approach the millennium there will be a lot of cultural activity as well as a lot of historical soul searching as people look for their own identity. Let us all ensure that the PAS is still alive and active as a forum for Pictish and Early Scottish studies in the year 2000. PAS Chairman Stuart McHardy will be writing to members in the Spring asking for your views on a variety of proposals aimed at securing a long term role for the PAS in Early Scottish Studies. If you have any suggestions you would like to contribute to the debate before then please don't hesitate to drop us a note.

Nick S.

three wise men ... and a pict ?

While we have been contemplating the fate of our own stone carved heritage it seems that some entrepreneurial Gaels have been having a hoot over the Lewis Chessmen. The Isle of Lewis local chess club asked for permission to use the pieces in a real game and were reported to be "surprised" when permission was refused. There was then a lot of publicity about the apparent refusal of the local authorities to return the pieces, which were on loan to the recently refurbished Museum nan Eilean in Stornaway. This was then followed by a long media silence (certainly among the Central papers) which suggested that initial reports were exaggerated (as usual).

The Island exhibition was a great success and it is estimated that thousands of visitors from around the world went to see the display. The Chessmen have now moved on to Edinburgh where they will be on display until the 12th January at the Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street. The latest media reports indicate that negotiations between Island representatives and the British Museum continue over the return of at least part of the Lewis collection.

Nick S.

(Illustration adapted by Davy Moir)



Pictish Panorama

I am pleased to report that the Pictish Panorama has now sold over 200 copies, and copies are still steadily being sold. For members there is still an offer open to them. As you will see in this Newsletter you can purchase the book for £26 plus £4 postage and packing. We are very pleased to report that in October Dr Jack Burt collected on behalf of the Society a Glenfiddich "Living Scotland" Award for the publication of the Pictish Panorama. Congratulations once more to Jack and all involved with the publication of the Bibliography for this award. We also as a Society are very grateful to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland who have given a Grant to allow investigation into the development of the Bibliography on computer. Finally many thanks are due to all who have supported the fund raising for the publication, whether by donation, giving raffle prizes or buying raffle tickets and of course by supporting the book and its publication by buying a copy. Thanks to you all.

Eileen Brownlie

Archaeology in Lothian

As a Society based in Edinburgh it has come to our attention that Lothian is well behind many other Scottish regions when it comes to the provision of a Regional Archaeologist. Following on from the article in the last Spring PAS Newsletter we are hoping to encourage as many members in the Lothian area as possible to write to their new shadow councillors expressing concern over the lack of an archaeological policy at regional level and the provision of a Regional Archaeologist to oversee the preservation and care of existing monuments, as well as the development and protection of new sites. As we move toward the handover to the new unitary councils we hope that they will have the sense to consider our archaeological heritage as an asset to be encouraged and developed and not to be ignored, or left to the already overstretched national bodies. While this appeal is really directed at our Lothian members please feel free to write to your own local councillors inquiring as to the provision of archaeological services within your own region. You may be surprised at the response.

Nick S.

What Price for Art?

It was discovered recently that groups of students from one of Scotland's Art colleges had been rubbing Pictish and other early stones as part of their project work. Unfortunately the lady speaking to the student became so irate at the thought of all that stone-rubbing that the student decided it was probably better to keep quiet and beat a hasty retreat. So we don't know which college the student attended or which stones they had been rubbing. However it seems probable that the colleges either in Aberdeen or Dundee are to blame. We are in the process of writing to colleges indicating our concern and directing them to consult the Carved Stones Committee for advice on such practises.

Carnyx takes to the Hills

There are still some strange and mystical beasts roaming in the wilds of Scotland (if you believe in wild Haggis stories) and if you're around the Highlands and N.E. Scotland, between April and June next year, you might be lucky enough to catch the grunt and roar of the wild Carnyx as it echoes across the land.

As part of the Highland Festival there is to be a tour of the Deskford Carnyx replica around schools and community venues. John Kenny will perform several "concerts" around the country, from Elgin to Oban, as part of the pan-Highland event, playing a newly commissioned composition. There will also be workshop sessions around the schools presenting Celtic Art and the Carnyx.

Further details of the Highland Festival will be announced in the new year.

Nick S.



Not a Carnyx in sight - Pictish Boar from Dunadd, Argyll, a significant site that saw its fair share of both ceremony and war.

Prehistoric Finds

It seems that when British Gas decided to lay its controversial new pipeline between Galloway and Northern Ireland they not only dredged up hundreds of dumped phosphorus shells but also a large scattering of ancient history.

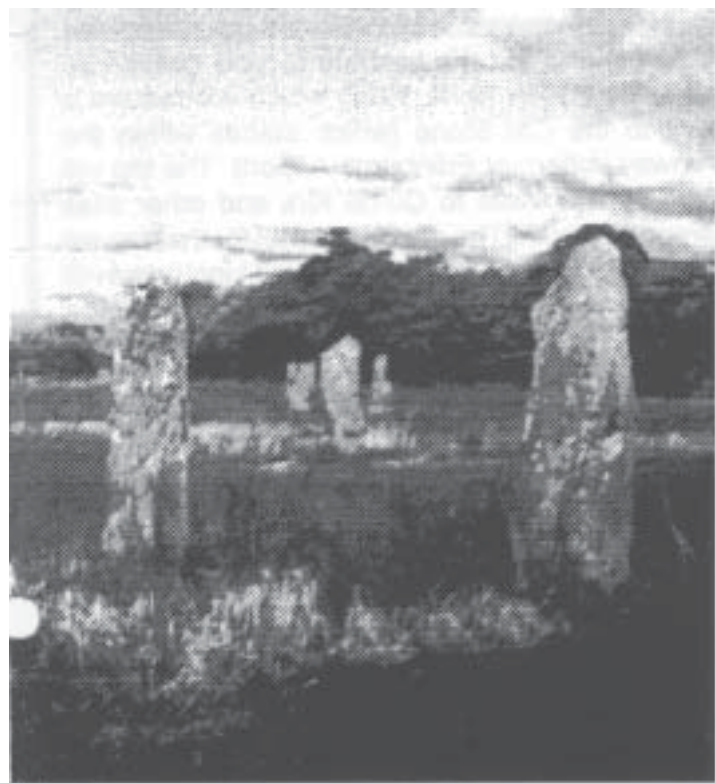
The discovery of over several hundred Bronze and early Iron Age artefacts, ranging from pottery, flint tools and scrapers to fragments of a shale bracelet took place near Stranraer. The excavation site, over 4,000sq meters in size, which is believed to be of national significance, also uncovered evidence of early houses likely to be about 2,500-4000 years old and a series of rubbish dumps.

As is common these days the company responsible for laying the pipeline Premier Transco footed the £50,000 bill for excavation work undertaken over an eight week period by Glasgow University. The artefacts discovered may go on display in Stranraer after analysis.

Kilmartin's Balls n' Bells

The new Centre for Archaeology and Landscape Interpretation in the Kilmartin valley looks like it should prove a popular hands-on experience. The centre will aim to give visitors the unusual opportunity of handling and playing a selection of replica artifacts. There are already a number of Pictish Stone Carved Balls on loan from Jim Macaulay as well as rumours of possible stone replica commissions.

In a recent visit by Marianna Lines to the Forteviot Church she was surprised to find John Purser and John Creed meticulously measuring up the Celtic Bell in preparation for another bout of astounding replication. It appears that the Kilmartin project have commissioned a number of Dark Age replicas from the pair, who's work brought such delights as the Carnyx and the triple pipes, and we can now look forward to adding the Celtic Bell to the growing number of ancestral instruments that have been re-produced. Nick.S



Ancient Stone alignments in the Kilmartin valey - is that a Pictish Band I hear?

Blackford Deer Discovery

There has been an interesting discovery (or more accurately a re-discovery) of the carving of a deer on the rocks at Blackford Hill, Edinburgh. PAS member Sheila Fraser had heard of the deer carving from a friend Keith Bland (described as a bug enthusiast at Edinburgh University) who had discovered the carving in the 1970's. Following further discussions it was discovered that no-one seemed to know of the stone. It was reported to the RCAHMS who had no record of it either. Officials turned up in the form of Lynn Ferguson and a photographer, accompanied by PAS Treasurer and Picti-style stone carver Jim Macaulay, who had recently visited the site.

The carving is on a vertical wall at the entrance to a natural "scrape" (the hollow being too shallow to be called a cave as such) and is about four inches across. There have also been rumours that there is the faint suggestion of a second symbol of some kind underneath the deer. Jim thought that it didn't look very Pictish but did appear old (although it was difficult to believe that the carving had gone unnoticed if it is indeed an antiquity). Given the recent discovery of the contemporary "Beastie" carved by Leslie Alan Reid we are awaiting the "expert" opinion before passing any comments on its possible origin (perhaps you may know of the stone yourself). A fully illustrated report will appear in the Spring Newsletter. Nick.S

Pictish Prose Appeal

PAS Archivist Eric Nicoll, who worked with Jack Burt on the Pictish Panorama publication, is to begin a new compilation of **Pictish Poetry and Prose**. If you know of any Pictish verse (both traditional or contemporary works) Eric would like to hear from you. We'd also be interested in hearing about Paintings and other artworks. At the moment the plan is to publish the work as an occasional paper which would be a supplement on "Pictish Arts" to compliment the Bibliography. If you can help please contact -

Eric H Nicoll, 35 Wardie Road,
Edinburgh, EH5 3LJ Tel. 0131-552-4574

THE WILD HAGGIS

AN THE GREETIN-FACED NYAFF

by Stuart McHardy

When Vicki, Leon and Roderick head up the glen for their summer holidays,
they are looking forward to barbecues and fun in the sun.

But one day, Roderick's dad tells them...

....stories o banshees an bogles an worse
o the undied, the demons an aw o the curst

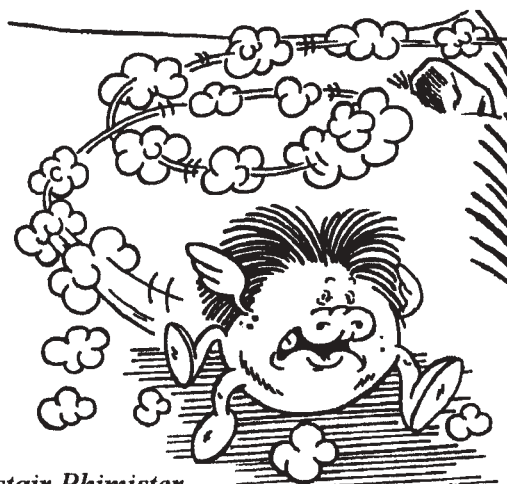
as well as the tale o the Wild Haggis an the Greetin-faced Nyaffff...

Available from all good book stores

Price £4.95 ISBN: 1 899827 04 8

Published by Scottish Children's Press

Illustrated by Alistair Phimister



what's on

pictish arts society programme

Thursday, 7th December, 1995

Dr. Nick Dixon, University of Edinburgh
Dept. of Underwater Archaeology, on "Crannogs"

Thursday, 11th January, 1996 - Members Night

Niall M Robertson -

"Historic Towns of Eastern Germany"

Also bring along any photo of a stone or site etc. which is puzzling you, and we'll try and find an answer.

Thursday, 1st February, 1996

Stuart Kermack -

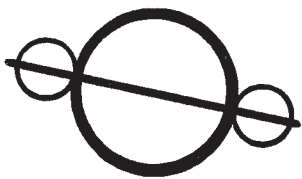
"Adomnan and the Symbols"

Further details of Away and Spring Meetings will be published in the New Year.

All meetings to be held in the School of
Scottish Studies, 27 George Square,
Edinburgh, at 7.30 pm

PAS Annual Conference

THE PICTS IN FIB (FIFE)



Next years preferred location for the PAS annual conference is to be St. Andrews, or nearby Cupar. As usual we plan the event as a weekend picti-break with a series of prominent speakers delivering talks over two days.

This year we plan to hold the event at the end of May, and hope to have 2 mornings of talks complemented by two short field visits in the afternoon sessions. This would possibly include a guided tour of the St. Andrews Cathedral site and a field visit around some of the stones of Fife. Further details will be announced shortly.

field trips 1996

Following over a years rest from the field circuit there are some fresh ideas and places to visit planned for 1996.

For starters there are plans for a visit to the N.E. where there will be a chance to visit the **Barbarians Entwined** exhibition in Aberdeen as well as some of the many stones and pre-historic sites to be found in the area. It will also be an ideal opportunity to catch up with members and events in the Aberdeenshire area. Scotland being Scotland we've decided to hold off the event until at least March to allow the worst of our wonderful winter to pass.

There is also to be a field trip around Lothian on **Saturday, 27th April, 1996**, which will feature a visit to the Cat Stone (which stands within the runway pattern at Edinburgh Airport). The trip will also include visits to Currie Kirk and other sites around Lothian. The estimated cost for the day will be about £5 (bring your own packed lunch) and will depart from the School of Scottish Studies, George Square, Edinburgh. Anyone who is interested in attending should contact -

**Sheila Fraser 0131 449 6592 or
Eileen Brownlie 0131 332 0277**

One of the highlights of the next year is to be an Autumn visit to the Isle of May excavations. Peter Yeoman, Fife Regional Archaeologist, has kindly offered to guide members around the site for the day. Although there are no firm dates organised we hope to hold the trip in August. Members who would be interested in attending should contact Eileen Brownlie as soon as possible, so that we can estimate the size of boat required!

Details of all PAS Field Trips should be ready for the Spring Newsletter. Anyone who is interested in helping to organise a field trip in and around their own area should contact -

**Amanda Stuart 0131 228 3812 or
Eileen Brownlie 0131 332 0277**



out n' about

Inveravon

Held at Inveravon School at 7.30 pm, price £2.00
Wednesday, December 6th **Jill Harden**
"Flights into the past: aerial archaeology in N. Scotland"

Aberdeen

A series of lectures to be held at the Marischal Museum to coincide with the exhibition **Barbarians Entwined, the Vikings and the Picts**. Meetings start at 7.30pm and cost £3.50.

Tuesday, January 23rd, 1996 **Dr Anna Ritchie**
"What happened to the Picts in the 9th Century?"
Tuesday, February 27th **Dr Alan Small**
"A Pictish-Scandinavian Interface on the Tay?"

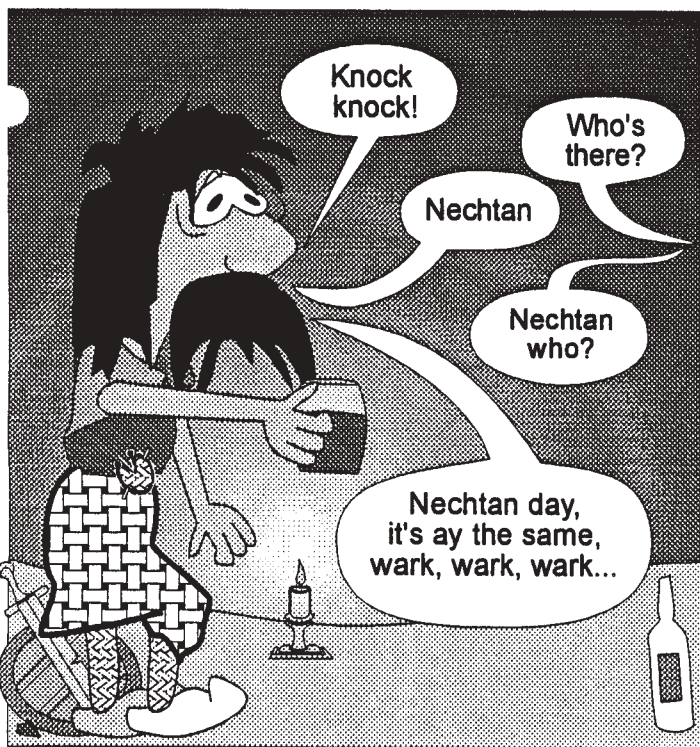
Stonehaven

Held at Arduthie Primary School at 7.30pm price £2.00.

Thursday, December 7th **John Shaw**
"Celtic Culture and Language"
Thursday, February 15th, 1996 **Charles Hunt**
"Collectors and Museums in N.E. Scotland"

Inverurie

A series of lectures by Fiona Slaven on the **"Illuminated Manuscripts"** to be held at Inverurie Academy on Wednesday nights - Price £14.00 (series) (concession £7.00) Lecture dates on - Jan 31, February 7, 14, 21, 28, and March 6, 13.



Dröochie's Pictish Joke Corner is offering a Prize (one of the new PAS sweatshirts which will be produced in the spring) for the best Joke submitted before the beginning of March 1996. (entrails to the editor please).

9

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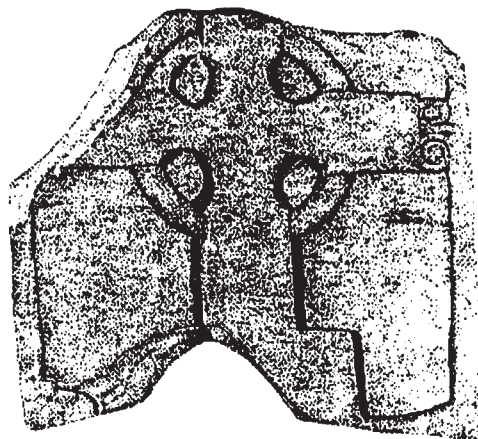


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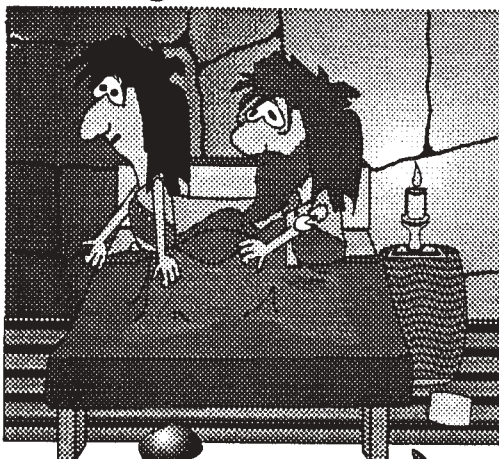
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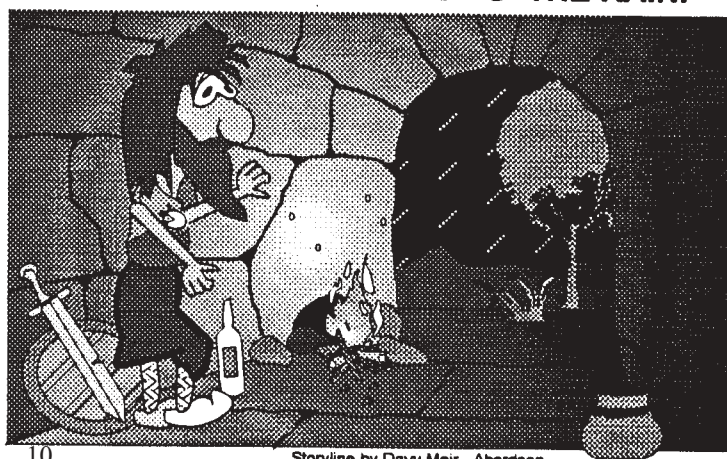
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Letters & things

Graeme Cruickshank
21 Warrender Park Tce.
Edinburgh

In the last issue of the PAS Newsletter, a letter from Jim Macaulay comments on one of the papers delivered during the "Pictish Panorama" conference last June - that which examined the classification and suggested a re-classification of Pictish Stones. He asks the question "Why bother?" - in the first sentence of himself; in the last sentence, of "someone out there". Hackles having subsided, the author of that paper is bound to respond.

For a start, when I was asked to address the conference, the topic was selected for me, so the PAS committee must have felt that it was worth an airing. The Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland kindly funded my survey, so they must have felt that it had some merit. Of those that knew of my work before the presentation, a warm supporter has been Professor Charles Thomas, who publicly encouraged it (during the first Buchan Lecture of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, held in Dundee some years ago); one of the great luminaries of Pictish Studies is hardly likely to bother about something which is of no account.

I was keenly aware that many in the audience might be wondering about the need for such a reassessment, and so I immediately addressed, and attempted to answer, that very point, in the hope of providing a satisfactory explanation of why such an exercise is worthwhile. I went on to examine the work of various scholars of last century and thus towards such an end. Mr Macaulay claims to have been able to follow most of my reasoning, but it appears that I completely failed to convince him of the justification for such a line of study.

There is not the space here to reiterate what I said at the time, and it will all appear in print in due course. Most of Mr Macaulay's other questions are surely rhetorical, and the answers universally acknowledged (though not at the intellectual nadir suggested). The whole point of considering a reclassification is to get away from the blinkered tagging which Mr Macaulay rightfully sees as a hindrance (though I do not intend to get drawn into such trivia as "class 2" versus "class II"). I dealt only with Pictish symbol-stones, of which we currently have but two classes, not three or four. Certainly every stone may be considered unique, but surely not in all five of the qualities mentioned - function, for example.

I was at great pains to point out that my ten suggested categories (not classes) were in no way intended as a practical way of identifying certain types of stones, and made a joke at my own expense to emphasise this

point. What I did suggest as a realistic way of classifying these stones was to see them as illustrating a number of progressive phases, though I had not the time to develop this approach.

To the basic question: why bother?, I would respond that such an endeavour can allow us to formulate a view not just of the development of Pictish stone-cut art, but of Pictish society in general. Of course, it is quite legitimate to enjoy a Pictish stone simply for what it is, unencumbered by considerations of its place in the wider scheme of things, and no-one should be compelled to go beyond that. On the other hand, students of the Picts in general, and the Pictish Arts Society in particular, may be looking for something more.

Miss-information at Largo

Following our report in the last Newsletter that the Largo stone had been moved inside the church I must report that the stone has stood stone still and in fact there are no plans to move the stone at present.

This latest information has come from Tom E Grey who, after speaking to Rosemary Frew has confirmed that there were plans to move the stone into the church and a place had been found that would be suitable for the placement of the stone. However upon closer inspection under the floor a number of graves were found and it was decided that relocating the stone would be unsuitable. This has led to a re-appraisal of the current situation and the latest plans are to improve the protective cage that encloses the stone at its current location. The original miss-information was gleaned from the imagination of a certain GP living close enough to Largo to know better, so there you have it, another Pictish mystery solved.

As well as providing Pictish Arts Society news and gossip the newsletter serves as a forum to stimulate the debate on the future and care of our Pictish heritage. The views of individual contributors are not to be taken as the views of the PAS unless they are explicitly expressed as such.

Contributions -

If you know of any local Exhibitions, Talks, Displays or News of Dark Age interest please let me know.

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Edinburgh, EH3 9PJ
Tel. 0131-228-3812
Fax. 0131-229-7426



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