



Notice of PAS AGM 2015

The Annual General Meeting of the Pictish Arts Society will be held in the Kinloch Memorial Hall in Meigle, Perthshire, on Saturday 3 October at 14.00 to consider the following business:

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Approval of the 2014 AGM Minutes (see Newsletter 73)
- 3 President's and Secretary's Joint Report (see this newsletter pp 2-3)
- 4 Treasurer's Report: Presentation and Approval of Annual Accounts
- 5 Appointment of an Independent Examiner
- 6 Other Honorary Officers' Reports:
 - a) Membership Secretary
 - b) Editor
- 7 Election of Honorary Officers:
 - a) President
 - b) Two Vice Presidents
 - c) Secretary
 - d) Treasurer
 - e) Membership Secretary
 - f) Editor
 - g) Events Organiser
 - h) Archivist
- 8 Election of Committee: minimum six, maximum twelve
- 9 Any other competent business

Note: Business will begin at 2pm prompt

Please send nominations for committee, and notes of any matters you wish to raise, to the Honorary Secretary, House of the Glens, Cortachy, Angus DD8 4QF.

PAS Newsletter 77

The deadline for receipt of material is

Saturday 14 November 2015

Please email contributions to the editor:

john.borland@rcahms.gov.uk

A Material World

**Pictish Arts Society Annual Conference
3-4 October 2015**

Kinloch Memorial Hall, Meigle

Programme

Saturday 3 October

09.30-10.00 Registration

10.00-10.20 Welcome

10.20-11.00 Victoria Whitworth
*Meigle 25: Pictish Grave-Markers
and the Bodystones Concept*

11.00-11.40 Kate Britton
*Isotopic Insights into
the Lost Lives at Lundin Links*

11.40-12.20 David Henry
*The Museum at Meigle:
'The ridiculous in such a paltry place'*

12.20-14.00 Lunch
and museum tours with Anna Ritchie

14.00-14.30 AGM

14.30-15.10 Alice Blackwell
*Scotland's earliest silver: The
Glenmorangie Research Project 2015-17*

15.10-15.50 Martin Goldberg
*Creative spirit:
recreating the past through Phase 2
of the Glenmorangie Research Project*

15.50-16.30 David McGovern,
Chris Grant, and Paul McDonald

*Steel Yourselves:
Re-approaching the 'Iron Age'*

PAS Conference Field Trip

Sunday 4 October

Departing from

Kinloch Memorial Hall, Meigle at **10.00**

A chance for delegates to visit some of the Pictish stones in eastern Perthshire, including a rare opportunity to access the Kinnaird family mausoleum at Rossie Priory with its outstanding cross-slab. Delegates are advised to bring appropriate footwear, waterproofs, and a packed lunch. The field trip aims to return to Meigle by 17.00. Participation in the field trip is by coach only and spaces are limited so pre-booking is essential.

Book using the enclosed form or online at:

www.thepictishartsociety.org.uk

President's and Secretary's Joint Report on 2014–15

The first two lectures in our 2014–15 series were also the last ones at Pictavia on the outskirts of Brechin, our venue of many years. Samuel Gerace shared with the audience his PhD research into house-shaped shrines. The following month we were brought up to date by Dr Clare Ellis who led a dig at Baliscate on the Isle of Mull and successfully found evidence of a monastic establishment at the site. For the last lecture before Christmas we gathered in our new venue, the upstairs gallery of Brechin Town House Museum to hear a familiar speaker, former PAS president Norman Atkinson. Who better to deliver a talk on the Dunnichen stone than one who was instrumental in its conservation?

Prof Jane Geddes opened the spring lectures in March with her talk on Tullich church, Aberdeenshire, which has a symbol stone and sixteen cross-marked stones. This was followed in April by Tasha Gefreh's talk on Iona, in which she highlighted the significance and use of the free-standing crosses by pilgrims. The final talk was given by Cynthia Thickpenny who discussed the davoch as a land unit in Speyside and the local Pictish symbol stones that might relate to that division of land. All in all, it was an excellent and wide-ranging series of talks.

Whilst we were concerned that a change of venue might result in the loss of some of our regulars, we did also wonder if moving to the centre of town might just attract some newcomers. In the end, neither scenario occurred. We are of course glad to have retained our regulars but in truth, numbers attending the winter/spring talks have dropped off over the last year or two. The committee has speculated and deliberated on this issue at some length. Ironically, since inserting the 3-month break in proceedings in the dead of winter in order to avoid its worst weather, the last two winters have been comparatively mild and for those months when talks occurred, we can confidently rule out severe weather for any disappointing turnouts. So what does that leave? Lack of engagement by members with the chosen speakers and their topics? Does the third Friday of the month clash with something else (and something better)? Has there been a marked shift in our membership demographic within travelling distance of Brechin? Member apathy?

If you live within travelling distance of Brechin and rarely/never attend our winter/spring talks, do please contact us and help shed some light on this. Ultimately, if we cannot get a reasonable turnout for the Brechin events, they will cease.

On a much more positive note, the Society's 2014 Conference was a great success by anyone's standards. We held it in Caithness Horizons Museum, Thurso, which saw an excellent turnout of PAS members as well as drawing in a number of locals. We enjoyed a splendid line-up of speakers who treated us to a veritable banquet of ideas and information, involving runes, a lost Pictish stone, brochs, S-dragons, Norse influence in the Caithness earldom, the Pictish stones of Orkney and Shetland, and a new interpretation of the fragment from Collieburn. And with the Friday afternoon visit to Dunrobin Castle Museum, the Sunday morning field trip around the Thurso area and Caithness Horizons itself, there were Pictish stones galore. If you weren't there, you should have been!

The PAS Committee wishes to thank all those speakers at evening lectures and the conference who gave so willingly of their time, as well as the conference chairpersons. We also need to thank the attendees, both members and guests.

The Society's online presence keeps on growing. Thanks to constant refreshing, our Facebook page generates lots of enthusiasm and has been 'liked' over 4,000 times. The website now carries 38 Newsletters from No.28 to No.65. More recent editions are received only by PAS members. There is also a handy index.

After the Committee's success in initiating the transfer of the Glamis fragments from the church floor to full public display in the Meffan, Forfar, we were hopeful of success in our aim of getting the large cross-slab Logierait 2 off the church floor and into a safe vertical position in an armature. Unfortunately, several deaths in the Logierait kirk session have left their number depleted and we have no progress to report yet.

The Pictish Arts Society is its members, so please continue to support it: renew your membership (punctually, please), come along to our events if you can, and submit news, views and articles to the newsletter.

*John Borland (President)
and Elspeth Reid (Honorary Secretary)*

Rodney's Stone, Brodie Castle: a lifetime expressed in new music

Avid readers of this newsletter will recall my last contribution concerning this spectacular, 8th-century cross-slab, explaining the construction of a temporary windscreen of woven willow by Fife artist Jon Warnes (Newsletter 67). Three years on, the screen is weathering well, its colour deepening to a rich brown and its woven sea monsters continuing to undulate happily (or fiercely?) around their carved companions. Since then, the National Trust for Scotland has continued the weaving motif at Brodie. Having drawn a Pictish theme into an entire term's curriculum, all the pupils from nearby Dyke School collaborated to create 50 woven willow animals inspired by the symbol stones, which, for a summer, lined the footpath approaching Rodney's Stone.

Our latest creative adventure uses the life history of the stone to weave new layers of meaning around it, with a commissioned piece of music by Paul Anderson, one of Scotland's foremost traditional fiddlers. Anderson's oeuvre amounts to more than 300 compositions in the Scottish style, and he has composed a suite of music to celebrate more than 1,000 years in which Rodney's Stone has moved both through the countryside and in and out of contemporary focus.

'As a traditional musician and composer who largely writes music about the history, landscape and people of my native Scotland, composing a suite of music relating to Brodie Castle's Rodney's Stone was an exciting proposition. I've



1 A Moray dolphin with joie-de-vivre: one of the woven willow animals leading the way to Rodney's Stone



2 Fiddler Paul Anderson and NTS Archaeologist Shannon Fraser at Rodney's Stone.

composed a number of pieces relating to standing stones and stone circles and I've always found these ancient monuments inspiring – I frequently compose music at the Tomnaverie stone circle near Tarland.

Rodney's Stone is interesting as it has been moved at least four times since it was first carved, and my work is an attempt to musically represent the stone's journey from its original site to its present site near Brodie Castle. I've composed four distinctive pieces of music in the traditional Scots idiom, relating to the four known sites which the Rodney's Stone has occupied. The hope is that these pieces become part of local tradition.'

The new composition will be premiered at Brodie Castle on the afternoon of Sunday 27 September. The weekend before, Paul Anderson will be conducting master classes for experienced musicians who wish to take part in the premiere. The day itself will include Pictish-themed activities, a short introduction to Rodney's Stone and its history, and the musical performance. Further details will be posted on the Pictish Arts Society website in the summer, and on the Brodie Castle section of the National Trust for Scotland's website:

<http://www.nts.org.uk/Property/Brodie-Castle/Events/>

We look forward to seeing you there!

Shannon Fraser

Shannon Fraser is the National Trust for Scotland's Archaeologist for Eastern Scotland. The grounds of Brodie Castle, near Forres, are open to the public year-round.

Little and Large on Glamis 1, Hunter's Hill

Glamis 1 stands on the shoulder of Hunter's Hill, Angus, with long views between trees to the north and east. It borders an old routeway and may mark the boundary of church ground, where you turn downhill towards Glamis church. In PAS Newsletter 61, Marianna Lines' photograph showed this cross-slab had narrowly escaped being hit by a toppling tree. A past hit may account for the broken top right panel, the area where this slab is at its thinnest. (1)

Glamis 1 has many points of interest, both in itself and in relation to nearby Glamis 2, standing impressively but inaccessibly in the old manse garden beside the church. For example, both have Class II fronts and Class I backs, and share some symbols.

But this article concerns itself mainly with the damaged top panel on the Hunter's Hill cross-slab (aka Thornton). The panel contains two figures facing each other. On the left, one with an animal-head, axe over its shoulder and pointing a weapon (?), is complete; while on the right, the figure has lost its top and back, leaving only a section from the waist down and a narrow slice of front.



1 Glamis 1, Hunter's Hill, Thornton

The top corner had already disappeared when the slab was 'drawn from nature and on stone' by PA Jastrzebski for Patrick Chalmers' *The Ancient Sculptured Monuments of Angus*, published in 1848.¹ A few years later 'in the immediate vicinity' Andrew Jervise 'made an unsuccessful search' in the hope of uncovering burials, but he found neither coffins, urns nor the missing fragment.² (2)



2 Detail of Plate 10, Chalmers 1848

Jastrzebski's illustration portrays two matched figures, with the same legs, tunic and pointed feet. In fact the figures are quite different. The waistline of the broken righthand figure is still visible and corresponds roughly to where the lefthand figure's knees would be, making the former much smaller in stature. Above its waist, the line of tunic bows out, so the little one is either rather portly or leaning forward. Above, it becomes unclear whether the carving represents an arm curving up from the right, or something pushed forward from a presumed opponent on the left. At any event they seem to make contact, but even with excellent photographs and the latest scan, it is difficult to see exactly how they are engaging.³



3 Detail of Plate 55, 2, Gordon 1726

We have two engravings from a time when the stone was still undamaged, thanks to eighteenth-century antiquarians, and we might expect the puzzle to be solved. Both show a tall and a small figure facing each other but not in contact. They appear to be in peaceable discussion. According to these engravings, the curve that we can still see today corresponds to the arm of the small figure on the right, held out and up.

Using the angel, top left, as a control, we can gauge how realistically or otherwise the respective illustrators chose to represent the carvings. Sandy Gordon did not attempt the fanciful.⁴ (3) Charles Cordiner's handiwork⁵ (4) brought harsh words from John Pinkerton: 'his imagination [is] strangely perverted by some fantastic ideas of the picturesque'; he also dismissed Gordon as 'too rude and inaccurate'.⁶



4 Cordiner 1795

What is noticeable is that both Gordon's and Cordiner's engravings show the two figures to have exactly the same animal head and face. Gordon wrote: 'the two assassins are represented with Swines Heads'. (He took them to be two confederates who, so the story went, were bribed to murder King Malcolm at Glamis.) Then in 1772 Thomas Pennant described them as 'two men with the heads of hogs' in *A Tour of Scotland*.⁷

This is strange, because judging from their feet, they are not of the same species. On the right, two human feet stand flat and evenly on the baseline. On the left, two clumpy lumps slope unevenly away from the ground, as though their owner is rocking backwards, an effect increased by the upward tilt of the animal-head. On this basis, they would not seem to be companions after all; and our modern eyes see a bird's head. Gordon added: 'and in their hands, the very same Kind of Axes as on the other Stone, in the Village



5 Inchbrayock 1, detail

of Glamis'. No sign of the little figure holding an axe appears in either engraving though. The prevalence in Pictish sculpture of animal-headed figures toting an axe has recently been discussed by Kelly Kilpatrick, whose article in *PSAS* 141 helpfully brings them all together on a double page of illustrations.⁸ Murthly depicts animal-headed combatants fighting with sword and shield, one bird-headed, one dog-headed with long (human) hair. There is an impression of tall and small in this scene, even if dog-man is on his hunkers.

However, I wish to turn to the two figures on the face of Inchbrayock 1, sometimes interpreted as Samson and Delilah, where unarmed Delilah is the tall dog-faced figure looming over and taking 'hold of the little man's long hair; and this unlikely squat figure is therefore Samson the strongman. Instead of sleeping unsuspecting in her lap, he is threatening her with a knife⁹ The Bible does tell their story rather differently. (5)

This cross-slab (in Montrose Museum) is in excellent condition and we can see the whole motif. Some kind of altercation is in progress but surely not hair cutting. While the tall animal-headed figure is axe-less, to me the scene is suggestive of that on Glamis 1, and I wonder whether they might be telling us in their different ways the same story of little and large.

Elsbeth Reid

Notes

- 1 Chalmers Plate 10; redrawn for John Stuart, *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, I, Plate 83.
- 2 Andrew Jervise, 'Notices descriptive of the localities of certain Sculptured Stone Monuments in Forfarshire, &c., Meikle, Essie, Glamis, Thornton, and Cossins. Part II', *PSAS* 2, 1855, p248.
- 3 See Canmore image SC01200664 for a very clear photograph by B Clayton. *ECMS* III, p221 shows the top very well. Graeme Cavers carried out two scans, aocarcha1-122647, available on: <archaeologydataservice.ac.uk>
- 4 Alexander Gordon, *Itinerarium Septentrionale*, 1726, Plate 55, 2.
- 5 Rev. Charles Cordiner, *Remarkable Ruins, and Romantic Prospects, of North Britain*, 1795 (completed 1788).
- 6 Quoted in Patrick Chalmers' preface from John Pinkerton's *An Enquiry into the History of Scotland. Advertisement to this Edition*, 1814, p11.
- 7 Pennant p174.
- 8 Another on the reverse of Eassie? Kelly Kilpatrick, 'The iconography of the Papil Stone: sculptural and literary comparisons with a Pictish motif', *PSAS* 141, pp 159-205.
- 9 On the reverse of Inchbrayock 1 is thought to be Samson killing a Philistine with the jawbone of an ass.

New Information Panel at Kirkton, Strathfillan

On the face of it, Scotland's Rural University College (SRUC) may seem an unlikely institution to champion our early medieval heritage. In addition to a herd of sheep numbering in excess of 1600, SRUC's Hill & Mountain Research Centre at Kirkton, near Crianlarich, also contains the ruins of Strathfillan Priory, gifted to the Augustinian order by King Robert I in the early 14th century. However, as its name suggests, the site has much earlier origins and four incised cross-slabs in the burial ground at Kirkton attest to a much earlier Christian settlement there.

The Research Centre is set within the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park and sits right on the West Highland Way so many tourists and hikers pass through it. In recognition of this, SRUC has already erected a number of information panels covering topics like St Fillan, the Augustinian priory and local wildlife. Working in partnership with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), SRUC's Dr John Holland is in the process of adding another information panel, this time covering the four early Christian cross-slabs. JB

Kirkton Burial Ground

The old burial ground of Kirkton in Strathfillan occupies a circular mound set within a square enclosure. Among the grave stones, which range from the 18th to the early 20th century, are four Early Medieval cross slabs which may date to around the 7th or 8th century. Simple incised cross slabs are common throughout the West Highlands but the three stones here bearing triple crosses form part of a small local group, with similar examples being found at Canisre, Fortingall and Old Parkilly.





Kirkton 1



Kirkton 2



Kirkton 3



Kirkton 4

Kirkton 1: This recumbent slab is covered with turf to protect it from the elements and is therefore not visible. It bears three linear Latin crosses, graduated in size with the largest at the top. In addition there are at least four shallow cup-shaped depressions on the stone, possibly of Bronze Age origin.

Kirkton 2: This recumbent slab, which can be seen on the slope down to the south east wall of the graveyard, is broken into two pieces. It also bears three linear crosses, the uppermost a Latin cross and the two below Greek or equal-armed crosses. The Latin cross is surrounded by a faint incised circle, an unusual motif with no close parallels.

Kirkton 3: This recumbent slab, also under turf for its preservation, is decorated with three small linear equal-armed crosses. Two of the crosses are badly worn, indicating that the stone has suffered in the past from surface erosion.

Kirkton 4: The fourth and final stone of Early Medieval date is also likely to have been a recumbent slab. It bears an incised cross within a circle, decorated with a circular depression or slot in each quadrant. The motif of a cross within a circle can be found at a number of locations, including Iona but an exact parallel for this one with the four slots can be found at Milton of Crathes on Deeside. However this stone also bears an unusual, indeed unique motif - the incised outline of a forearm and hand, perhaps a representation of St. Fillan's miraculous luminous arm. It is thought that one of St. Fillan's relics, known as the "Mayne", was an arm-bone of the saint. Perhaps this slab marked the burial place of one of the "Deacons" or guardians of this relic? This slab is covered with turf to protect it and is no longer visible.

- Exploring the Heart of Strathfillan -

For more information on the items on the Hill & Mountain Research Centre visit: www.sruc.ac.uk/RCM



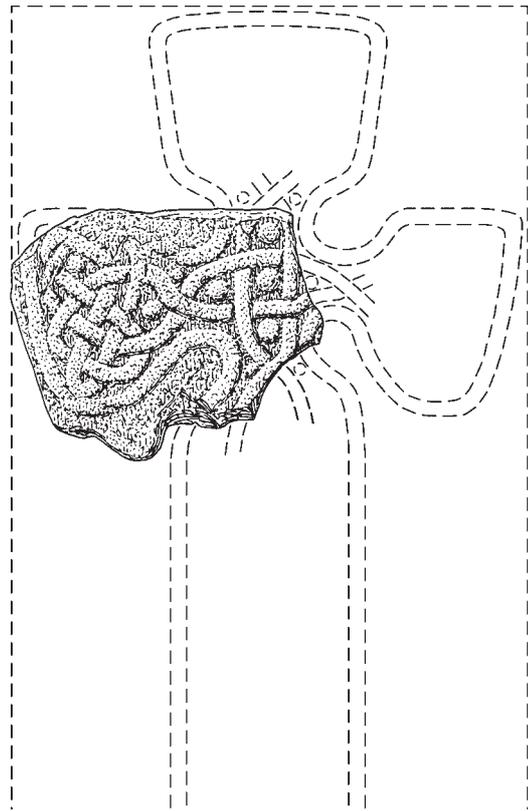
The use of pellet decoration within key pattern – a new example of this rare ornament

The use of pellet decoration within borders and panels of interlace on Pictish and other Early Medieval sculpture is by no means commonplace but it is a recognised phenomenon with examples found from Galloway to Sutherland.

On occasion, it is possible to view these pellets as part of a formal, symmetrical design within the interlace. Although just a small fragment, Forteviot 3 (1) seems to have a formal rather than random distribution of pellets. One can easily envisage this pattern being mirrored in the other arm of the cross and something similar replicated in the head and perhaps shaft.

Even within the lax layout and execution of St Vigean's 32 (2), one can see a likely formal layout of pellets at the centre of the cross. However, those on the arm appear to be more randomly placed and served perhaps as space-fillers in the larger gaps of the interlace. Only the discovery of the rest of this stone would confirm this.

The large carved fragment of what I believe to be the shaft of a freestanding cross from Collieburn (see Newsletter 73) has a number of pellets on both carved faces, interspersed within two panels of knotwork (3). At times, these come close to a formal layout but in fact stop short of that. It is possible that someone may be able to construe meaning from these seemingly irregular groupings of pellets but to me they appear to serve as decorative fillers for some of the larger spaces within the knots.



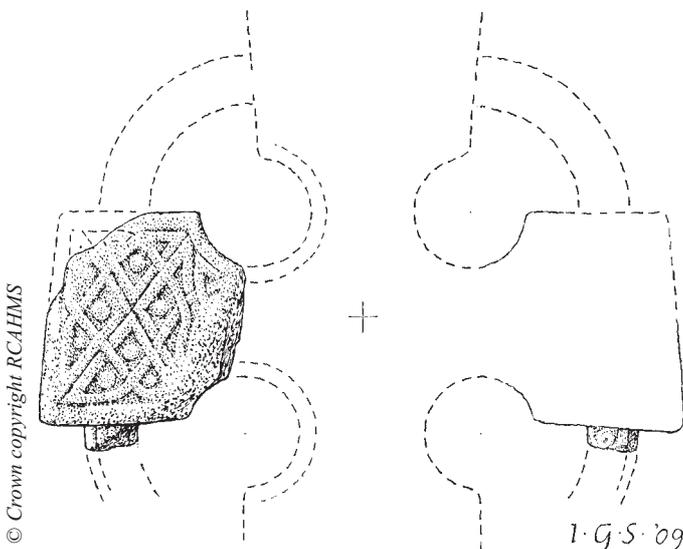
2 St Vigean's 32 cross-slab fragment drawn by John Borland. Scale 1:10. SC1051051

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The use of pellets within borders and panels of key pattern is much less common. In *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland (ECMS)*, Romilly Allen initially cites only one known example in Scotland: Rosemarkie 2 (4). This carved panel consists of four distinct areas of diagonal key pattern (one with spirals), all of which contain circular pellets in an almost-perfect formal layout. Allen comments that the drawing of Rosemarkie 2 in Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* (Vol. 1) omits the pellets.

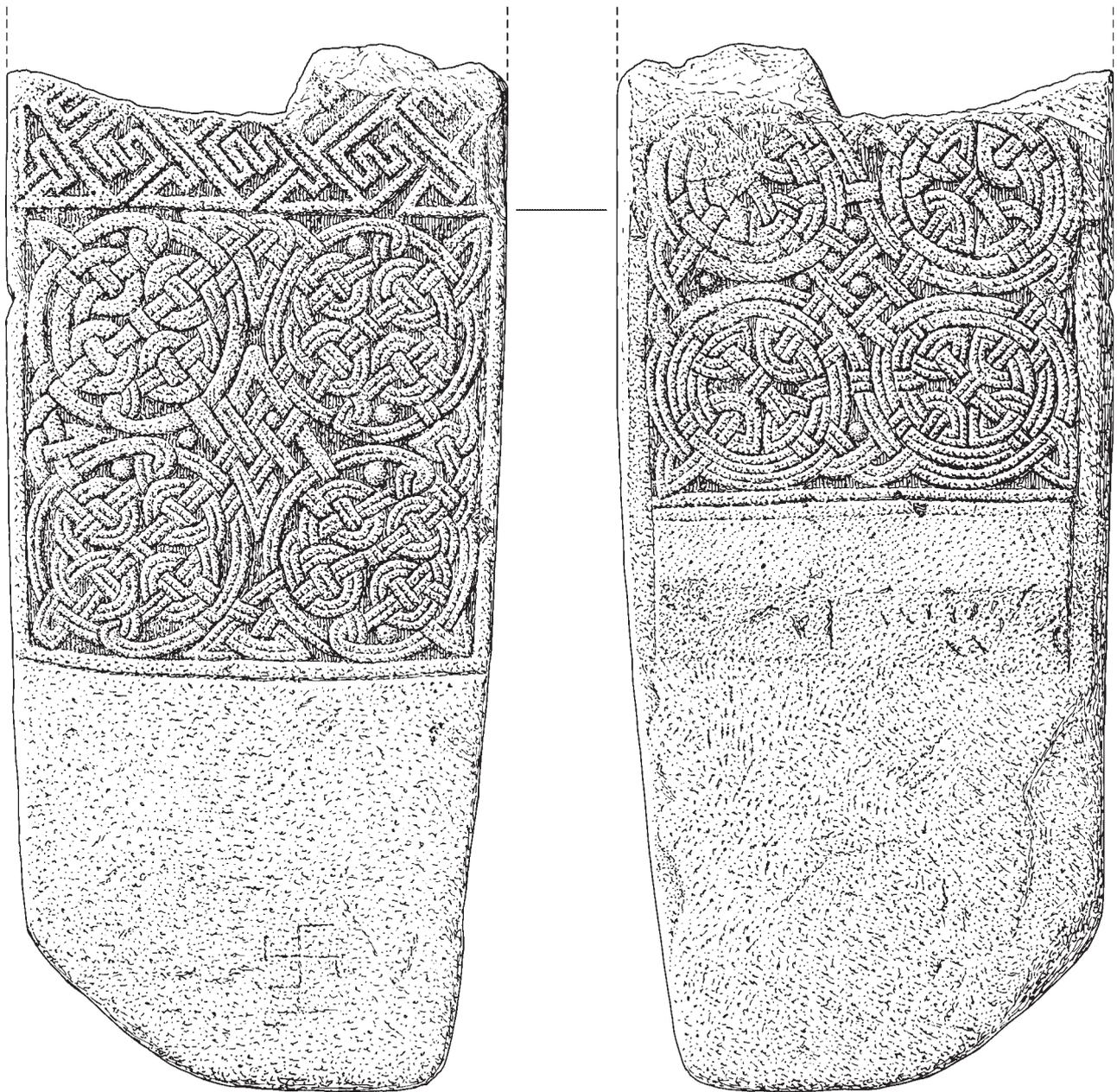
Clearly Allen's description of Rosemarkie 2 was prepared long before he recorded the stones at Govan because his record of Govan 34 (now numbered Govan 15) not only notes the presence of pellets within the key pattern but likens it to Rosemarkie 2 (5). So he did in fact know of two Scottish examples. The difference in quality between them is stark, Rosemarkie being crisp in both layout and execution, Govan being anything but.

When recording Fyvie 3 (6) many years ago, I was surprised to find its pellets absent from Allen's line drawing, given their prominence. Allen's modus operandi was to make rubbings from the stones and then, back at base, add clear outlines to them. These marked-up rubbings were used by him or his assistant as the basis



1 Forteviot 3 freestanding cross fragment drawn by I G Scott. Scale 1:10. SC1482631

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3 Collieburn possible freestanding cross shaft drawn by John Borland. Scale 1:10. SC1359424

for *ECMS*'s distinctive line drawings. It is inconceivable that the raised pellets on Fyvie 3 did not register on his rubbing; they sit on the same surface as the key pattern. One can only assume therefore that Allen did not recognise them for what they were and chose to ignore them when marking up the rubbing. He did note and understand the four circular dimples in the diagonal knot at the foot of the stone – pellets in negative – but not the eight circular/sub-circular pellets and the very large triangular one in the main panel of key pattern.

During recent work recording the Pictish sculpture at Fowlis Wester, I once again encountered pellets within a panel of key pattern. Fowlis Wester 2 (7) is a sumptuously detailed stone, unusual in several respects. It is carved

on only one face and is disproportionately thick for its diminutive height. The presence of a natural flaw on the right-hand side of the slab, which is respected by the raised margin framing the carving, suggests there were geological issues with the stone which perhaps prevented it being worked to a more usual thickness or being carved on the reverse. Having been built into the medieval church possibly as early as the 13th century, the slab was in a remarkably good state of repair when it was removed from the walls during remodelling in 1927. Now displayed within the church (which is open daily), the fine detail on Fowlis Wester 2 is a feast for the eye.

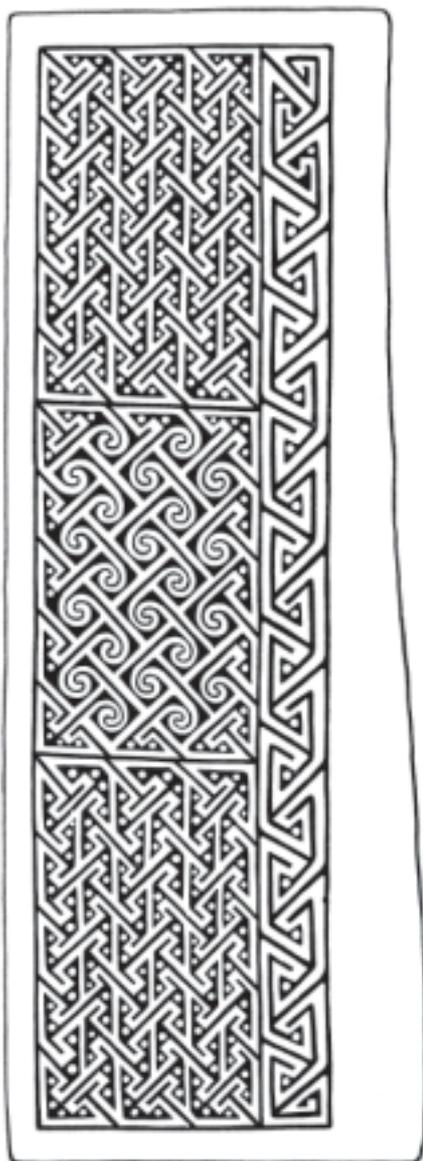
Central to the stone is a ringed cross rising from a rectangular base which consists of a square

panel of spirals at its centre, surrounded by a border of key pattern. Given that the whole panel is rectangular but the central component is square, the key pattern is thus two columns wide at the sides but three rows deep top and bottom (8). Unfortunately there are a couple of areas of damage to the panel, particularly the top right-hand edge.

Close examination reveals a number of circular, oval and triangular pellets occupying some of the gaps along the inner and outer edges of the panel, but restricted to just the bottom and right-hand side. The line drawing (9) makes their distribution, shape and size clearer. There are 15 pellets in total although the areas of damage mean we cannot be sure that this was the original

tally. If there were more, they could have numbered up to 18. Six of the 15 extant pellets are round or oval, the remaining nine tend towards rounded triangles, like wedges of cake. Slight differences in the angle and spacing of the key pattern on the bottom and right-hand side of the panel create slightly larger gaps and this is where the pellets occur. However, given that the pellets vary considerably in size (the round ones range from about 7–13mm in diameter) there is no reason why they couldn't have occupied twice as many gaps, particularly around the panel's outer edges.

So once again we come to the question of function. Does the number 15 (or perhaps 16, 17 or 18) have special significance? Or did the



4 Rosemarkie 2 carved panel. Not to scale. ECMS

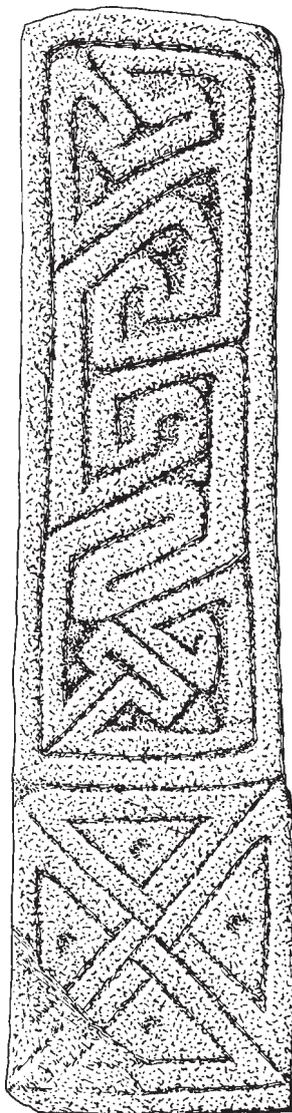


5 Govan 15 recumbent cross slab. SC1137235

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sculptor notice when the panel was being laid out that some of the triangular spaces were slightly bigger than others and decide to fill these (some of them at least) with additional ornament in order to trick the eye and maintain an appearance of ‘fullness’? Remember, even the figures on this slab are filled with ornament so the order of the day was clearly ‘busy’. If so, then given that these little circles, ovals and wedges of detail have thus far escaped the scrutinising eyes of antiquarians and modern scholars alike by simply merging into their surroundings, one would have to say that the sculptor’s tactic worked.

John Borland



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6 Fyvie 3 possible freestanding cross shaft drawn by John Borland. Scale 1:10, SC1090346



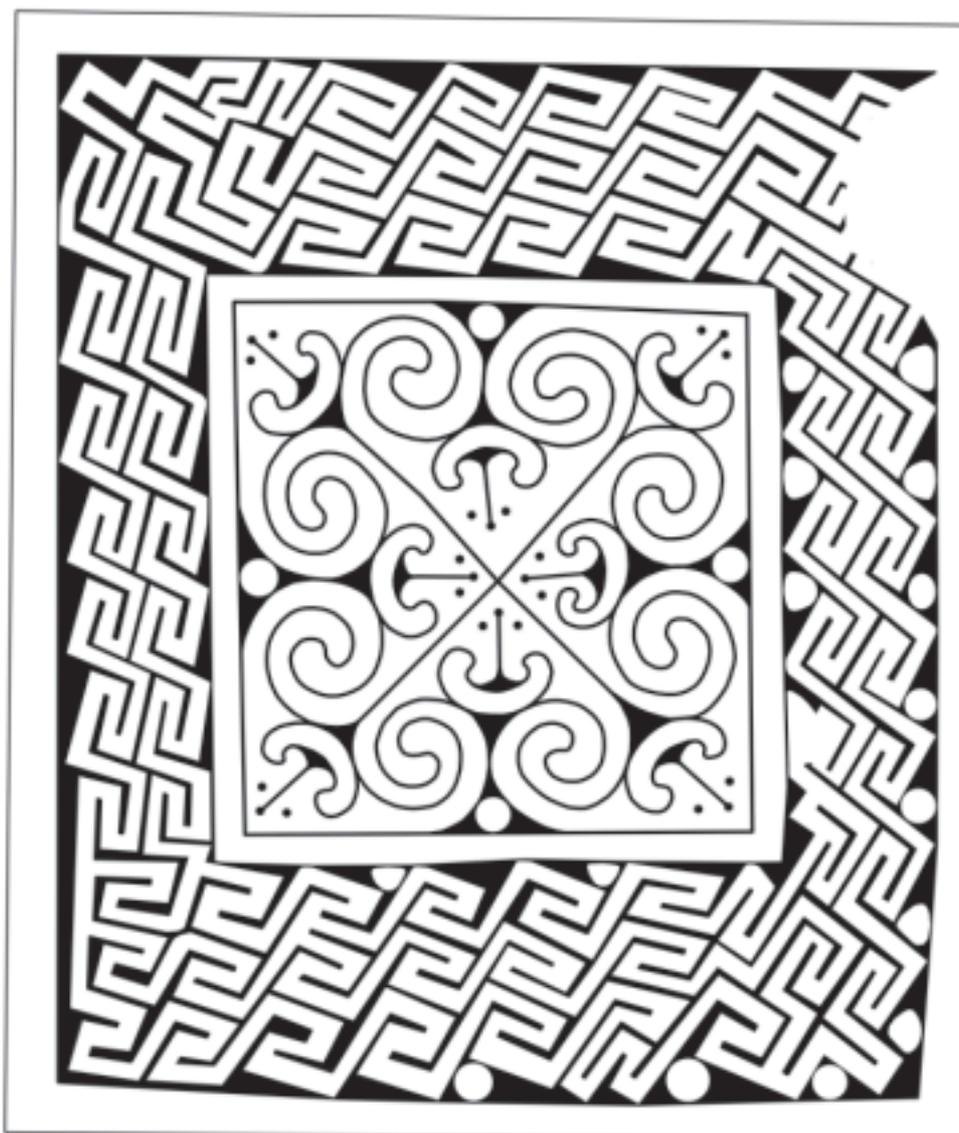
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7 Fowlis Wester 2 cross-slab, SC1448484



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8 Fowlis Wester 2 detail, SC1448484 C



9 Fowlis Wester 2 detail drawn by John Borland. Scale 1:2

PAS Events 2015–16

In addition to this year's conference at Meigle on 3 October and the field trip the following day (see page 1 for details), we have a full program of events lined up:

Lectures 2015

Brechin Town House Museum

18 September

David Henry

Resisting Temptation:
Farnell's 'forbidden fruit'

16 October

Joanna Hambly

From rubbings to lasers:
150 years of documentation and research
into the Wemyss Caves carvings

20 November

Dr Beccy Jones

On the March: Roman Camps in Scotland

22 January 2016

Joint PAS/PSNS Lecture
Perth Museum & Art Gallery

Martin Goldberg

Celtic Art and Early Medieval Scotland

In addition to a special 'artefact handling session' in Brechin Town House Museum in February, speakers lined up for the spring 2016 season of talks include John Sherriff, Cait McCullagh and David Strachan. Details to follow in the next Newsletter.

15th International Congress of Celtic Studies

13–17 July, University of Glasgow

The 15th International Congress of Celtic Studies brought together 500 delegates to deliver, listen to and participate in more than 300 papers and round table discussions, all ably choreographed by Kate Forsyth, the Congress Director.

To quote from the editorial for the latest issue of *British Archaeology*, ‘there never was a single British, let alone a pan-European folk. In that sense, there were no Celts Stand back and you see Celts. Get closer and they vanish’. However the term remains a useful catch-all. This certainly applied to the Congress proceedings, confirming that the field of Celtic Studies is the broadest of churches.

It clearly has a ‘Picts Corner’ with one of the five ‘key periods’ for the new *Celts* exhibition, opening at the British Museum on 24 September before transferring to the National Museum of Scotland from 10 March, being ‘later Celtic art in Britain and Ireland (AD250–800) blending iron age motifs reinvented in the Roman period, Anglo-Saxon art and classical Mediterranean designs, created in the crucible of the Roman provinces’. Some might argue with the last bit but several of the Celtic Congress papers and sessions focussed on matters of interest to PAS members.

Day one saw Steve Driscoll present the results from the SERF Project. It would have been good to hear more about comparanda from elsewhere implied by the paper’s title *Forteviot and Tara; Royal Twins Separated at Birth?* But this may be covered in the *Cradle of Scotland* exhibition that opens at the Hunterian Museum on 3 September during the European Association of Archaeologists Conference. It’s all happening in Glasgow!

Pictish Kings, Relics and Church Building was the title that Julianna Grigg of Monash University gave to her paper on suggesting that carved stones had a role in controlling community rituals. Kristen Erskine followed,

pointing out in her *From Groves to Churches* paper that ‘in the vast majority of cases the pre-Christian nemeton sites of Pictland were concluded in the Early Medieval period with chapels’. Cynthia Thickett of Glasgow University closed the session with her paper *How Old is the Davoch?*, already given to the PAS and reported in the last Newsletter (No 75).

More controversially, George Broderick of Mannheim University in *Pixti/Pexti, Picti* offered a different interpretation from the traditional derivation of the name. Instead of the Latin *picti*, ‘the painted’, he argued that it stems from the ‘five or so’ Pictish kingdoms. On safer ground, Martin Goldberg, one of the co-curators of the forthcoming *Celts* exhibition, talked about *A Monumental Difference in Early Medieval Insular Art* referring to the Hilton of Cadboll stone as ‘a microcosm of the medieval mind’.

A round table session was on *Language and the Picts* with one of the co-ordinators, Guto Rhys later asking the question *Bede Vindicated? Pictish as Indeed a Language Distinct from Brittonic*. He argued that the language of the Picts ‘may have escaped some, if not many, of the significant Latin influences which ... gave rise to Neo-Brittonic ... and that this conservatism would probably have made mutual-intelligibility with Brittonic very challenging’. His recently completed Glasgow University PhD, *Approaching the Pictish Language*, gives much more detail including interesting sections on island and river names.

Other papers indirectly related to Pictish studies included those by Clare Downham, Victoria Whitworth and Fiona Edmonds given in the *Contact and Interaction between Insular Churches in the Viking Age* session and by Rachel Barrowman, Aonghas Maccoinnich and Domhnall Uilleam Stiubhart in a session focussing on the Ness area of Lewis and the Dun Eistean excavation with books on the research findings about to be published.

Hopefully, we might hear about the results of the Dun Deardail excavation in Glen Nevis that has just started, at the next ICCS in 2019 to be held at Bangor in North Wales.

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Pictish Arts Society

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