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**Medieval Material Culture: Explorations of Play,
Performance and Biographical Trajectories**

By:

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“Life is full of customs whose roots can no longer be traced ...” &

“Matter is matter, neither noble nor vile, infinitely transformable,
and its proximate origin is of no importance whatsoever.”

Primo Levi, *The Periodic Table* (1975), p.123 & 151

“Consider a blind man with a stick. Where does the blind man’s self begin?
At the tip of the stick? At the handle of the stick? Or at some point halfway
up the stick?”

Gregory Bateson (1973), p. 318 (in Malafouris 2013, p.4)

“Every individual is connected to others, loosely or closely, by a unique
combination of filaments, which stretch across the frontiers of space and time.
Every individual assembles past loyalties, present needs and visions of the future
in a web of different contours, with the help of heterogeneous elements borrowed
from other individuals; and this constant give-and-take has been the main stimulus
of humanity’s energy.”

Theodore Zeldin (1998), p. 466

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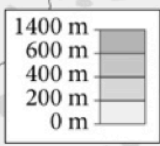
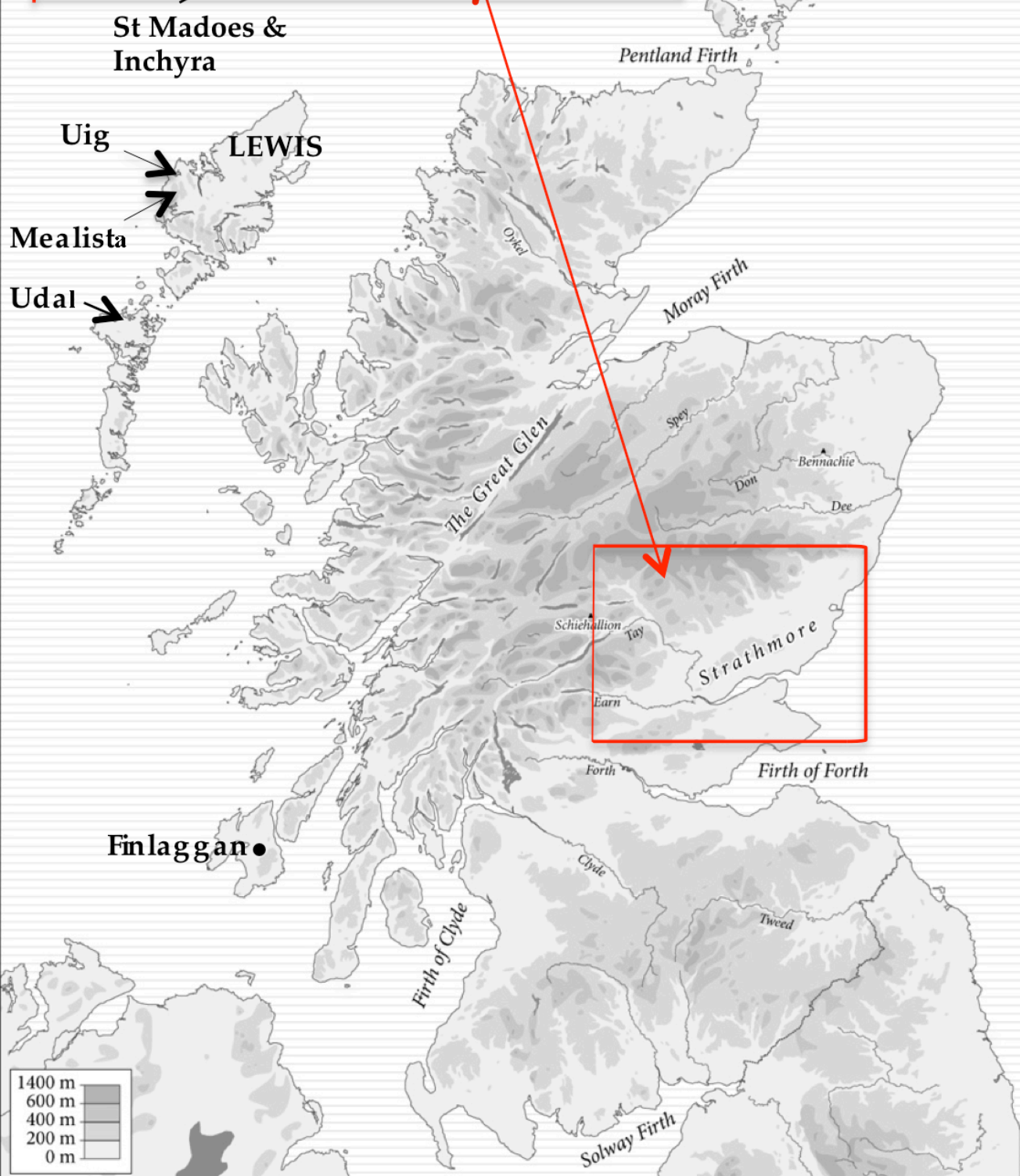
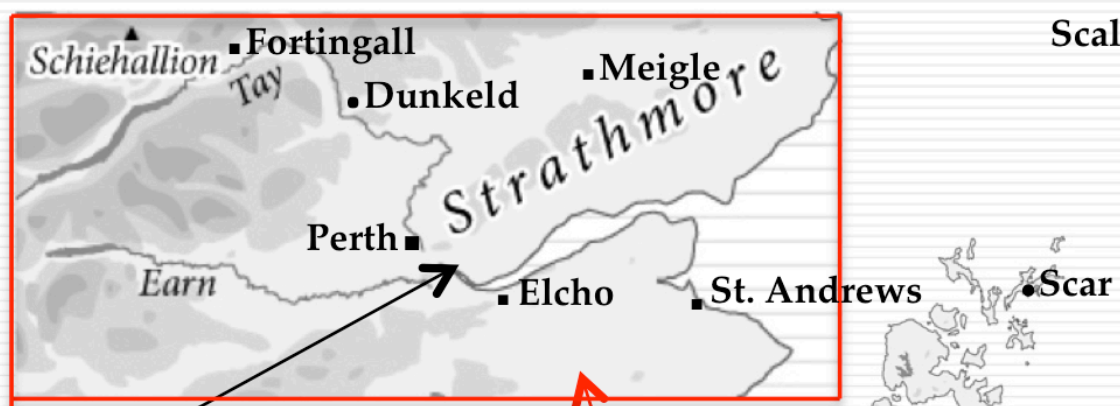
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CHAPTER ONE

EXPLORING MEDIEVAL MATERIAL CULTURE THROUGH
PLAY, PERFORMANCE AND BIOGRAPHICAL TRAJECTORIES



1.1 Abstract

My ten publications submitted here are offered for validation as a PhD by Publication. They represent a sample of my on-going research into elements of the medieval material culture of Scotland, set in a European context. The main body of evidence on which they draw is the archaeology (both excavated material and stray finds) of the medieval burgh of Perth. This material comprises a vital element of the archaeological collections of Perth Museum & Art Gallery, where I have been based for 22 years as the curator of the archaeology collections. This collection not only provided many of the key strands of evidence I have explored but also the wider inspiration to look at further examples and contrasts from Scotland and Europe. The submitted papers explore this evidence through three overlapping or entangled contexts – medieval Perth, medieval Scotland and medieval Europe –and through three overlapping themes: play, performance (encompassing belief and magic) and biographical trajectories. This work (which also connects to other published research of mine, including Hall 2001a-b; 2003; 2005c-e; 2006; 2011a; 2012a; 2013a and b; 2014a; 2015a-b; 2016b; 2017 and forthcoming a and b) is underpinned by the recognition that museum collections of medieval material culture exist as trace elements of biographical trajectories and that they are always amenable to fresh understanding. Their preservation in museum collections creates the facility to study both neglected objects, for example the general run of board game kit discussed in Publications 1 and 3, and objects which might seem to be fully known, for example the Lewis chessmen or medieval coinage discussed in Publications 4 and 10 respectively.

The following synopsis of these publications outlines their themes and issues in the context of the wider debates to which they contribute. The discussion focuses upon the contribution that my publications have sought to make to the key, overlapping and interwoven themes that are their focus: play and performance (Publications 1, 2, 3 and 4, published respectively as Hall 2007; 2016a; 2014b and 2014c), sacrality, magic and performance with particular respect to the town and country debate (Publications 5, 6 and 7, published respectively as Hall 2011b; 2005a and 2005b) and biographical trajectories and performance (Publications 8, 9 and 10, published respectively as Hall 2012b; 2014d and 2012c).

1.2 Introduction: Performance, Biography and Material Culture

This PhD by Publication presents a selection of my published research papers, designated here Publications 1-10. They share an exploration of the meaning of medieval material culture in a Scottish and a European context. Since 1995 I have served as the curator of archaeological collections at Perth Museum & Art Gallery and this has entailed caring for a chronologically diverse range of material culture, brought together as a developing collection since the late eighteenth century. Within those collections, perhaps the most significant element is the medieval material culture that the Museum has acquired as a

result of excavations and casual finds, notably several decades of excavation in the medieval burgh of Perth itself but also including a significant corpus of key pieces of Pictish sculpture from across Perthshire. Attuned with an already burgeoning interest in ancient board games and a wider interest in medieval archaeology and history this curatorial role led to a research initiative to contribute to the analysis of medieval material culture as a critical contribution to understanding and interpreting the collections. In turn this was linked to understanding how that material culture fitted into and reflected the medieval landscapes of Perthshire and also sought to contextualise them within a Scottish and European framework. This led to studies of additional objects from within those contexts, including the so-called Lewis chessmen and various North European gaming pieces of the Viking Age. That these pursuits were more widely recognised by my peers has been reflected in my contributions being sought as a member of the Council of the Society for Medieval Archaeology (2003-2006), as a member of the Finds Research Group 700-1700 AD committee (2010-2015), as the Chair of the National Committee for the Carved Stones of Scotland (2004-2008), as the Co-Chair of the Medieval Panel for the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF Medieval Panel) (2008-2011) and (on-going since 2014) as a member of Scotland's Strategic Archaeology Committee.

The main themes that the material from Perth suggested to me were play and playfulness, sacrality and magic, the relations between town and country and the biographical trajectories of material culture. These over-lapping frameworks, linked by the concept of performance as the articulation of being in the world, encompass all the publications submitted here.

Publications 1-4 deal primarily with aspects of play (as articulated through board games) and performance. Publication 1 explores the extensive but hitherto largely over-looked evidence for board games in early medieval Scotland, primarily amongst the Picts but also the wider North Sea region (and acknowledging the roots of both in Roman play). Publication 2 offers an analysis of the use of board games in Migration and Viking Age mortuary practice (including examples from Scotland). Publication 3 documents and interprets a full range of board and dice game evidence from across medieval Scotland (originally published as a contribution to a study of such evidence from across North Europe), and Publication 4 offers new thinking on the meanings embedded in the Lewis hoard of gaming pieces (often referred to simply as the Lewis chessmen).

Publications 5, 6 and 7 deal primarily with aspects of sacrality, magic and performance as linked to the debate exploring the relationships between town and country. Publication 5 provides a detailed case study of the primarily archaeological evidence for the practice and performance of the cult of saints (fusing

magic and devotion) in the everyday lives of a craft-community living on the Perth High Street. Publication 6 broadens out the study of materially based spiritual practice and performance with an exploration of the cult of saints in medieval Perthshire. Publication 7 adds the most explicit exploration (among the papers submitted here) of the relationship between town and country as seen through a study of cultural practices that were shared but not necessarily identical in both Perth and parts of Perthshire (and echoing patterns found throughout Europe). The line of argument within the town-and-country debate that I have pursued recognises that town and country were certainly distinct but that the relationship between them was less one of counter-distinction and more one of complex inter-relationships, as also argued in Dyer and Lilley 2012 (which in making that argument drew upon Hall 2005b [Publication 7] and Hall 2001, as well as the work of several other authors).

Publications 8, 9 and 10 examine aspects of early medieval, Pictish sculpture and medieval coinage through the lenses of biographical trajectory, performance and magic. Publication 8 begins a more explicit series of explorations of cultural biography or, biographical trajectories, as evidenced by Pictish sculpture, in this cases the group of sculptures from St Madoes, Perthshire (and now in the collections of Perth Museum & Art Gallery). Publication 9 applies the biographical lens at a wider collection level of Pictish sculpture, exploring the large corpus of stones from Meigle, Perthshire (and on display there in a site museum operated by Historic Environment Scotland) and Publication 10 concludes the biographical approach with a change of focus to look at the re-use and appropriation of medieval coinage and its varying performative roles (rooted in the corpus of medieval coin finds from Perth but drawing on a wider pool of evidence).

As my research on these themes has progressed I have come to see them as very closely entwined and so, although separated out for discussion here under their discreet headings, that entwining is recognised in the structuring of the discussion. This gives an overview of the submitted papers but inevitably it also recognises that my thinking behind these papers has not fossilised and continues to develop.

For the sake of clarity the papers put forward here are all sole-authored examples of my work, so as to leave no doubt, in the context of a PhD submission, about the nature and focus of my contribution to the discipline. That said, I would also wish to acknowledge the high value I place on working collaboratively with colleagues as a thread in my professional and academic practice.

Inter-disciplinary, collaborative approaches remain central to my methodology, offering the potential of a more holistic understanding of medieval society and its material culture. The themes offered here as the

frame-work in which to situate my research have all proved amenable to collaborative, inter-disciplinary approaches, whether around the trajectory of board games within cultures of play, whether around the performative qualities of the material culture of Romance and cultural beliefs or whether around the biographical trajectory of early medieval or Pictish sculpture. From within my wider bibliography these approaches are exemplified by several papers. Thus, for example, Hall and Forsyth 2011, explores the idea that Rome introduced board games to the rest of Europe; Caldwell and Hall 2014 and Caldwell, Hall and Wilkinson 2009 and 2010, develop new insights into the meanings that flow from the Lewis chessmen (which we redefine as the Lewis hoard of gaming pieces); Hall and Owen 1998, deals with a Tristan and Iseult mirror case from Perth; Hall and Spencer 2012 gives a broader assessment of the devotional material culture found on the Perth High Street and Hall et al., 2000, offers the first biographical assessment of a Pictish cross-slab.

1.3 Play, Playfulness and Procession

Play is a broad term for a range of activities that are not about work (Publications 1-3; Hall 2011a; Hall 2014a). Work's most direct opposite are games of chance, which seek to bring reward without subsistence or effort (Caillois 1958, 145-60) and encompass a range of, sometimes ambiguous, activities. In medieval Perth, for example, these included board and dice games, buzz-bones, ice skates, football, golf, tennis, cock-fighting, dog-fighting and cat-tossing (Publications 3 and 7; Hall 2002, 297-98; Smith 1998; Penny 1836). It remains useful to think of play as a space and time with its own rules and conditions (Huizinga 1950), but as Caillois (1958) has demonstrated such activities and our understanding of them are conditioned by historical and social contexts. I have explored their variability in particular across Publications 1 and 2, where we see the contrast between play in life and play in death. I have long recognised that the value of play and the understanding of its social dynamics is not one traditionally recognised in archaeological excavation reports that record such material, where any discussion is generally brief and content to assume "childish play" at work (an issue I went on more fully to explore in 2014a). My aim has always been to both encourage the cataloguing of the extent of the corpus of play materials and explore the wider ramifications of its historical and social value. Publications 1 and 2 dealt with aspects of the early medieval evidence for board games in Scotland. Publication 1 explored the nature of the evidence within a Pictish context (fig. 1). Its coverage spans late Roman times to the twelfth century. Publication 2 looked for the meaning behind the deployment of complete or partial elements of board games within Viking mortuary practice (and looking back to Migration Period practice in Scandinavia). Both contributions placed the evidence within a European context. In Publication 1 I raised the possibility that board games could be seen as a Roman introduction to 'Celtic' Britain (an argument further elaborated in Hall & Forsyth 2011).



Figure 1: Pictish, anthropomorphic, conical, stone gaming pieces from Scalloway and Mail, Shetland. Courtesy of National Museums Scotland

Critically I stressed that this was not just a case of simple copying but also one of innovation. When introduced to the Picts, the Roman games were developed in and reflected their new cultural context, a trajectory they partially shared with neighbouring Irish, Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian adaptations. Publication 2 discussed two examples of boat burials with board games from Scotland (Scar – see fig. 2 – and Westness, both in Orkney), which are a part of a wider Scandinavian phenomenon that can be tracked from Orkney to Russia and from Iceland to Brittany. It appears to be a cultural practice that travels from Norway and Sweden in particular, as part of the Viking Diaspora. The initial impetus for Publication 2 was a conference exploring biographical citation in the Viking Age, once again emphasising the overlap between play, performance and biographical trajectories.

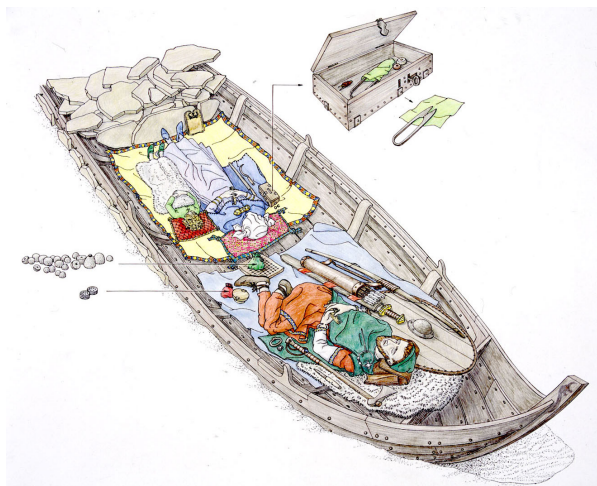


Figure 2: Viking boat burial from Scar, Orkney. Drawn by Christina Unwin and courtesy Historic Environment Scotland

My research into board games as an aspect of play recognised that play both afforded a release in the pleasures of the moment, but was also entangled and enmeshed in the rest of life and its pursuit was

certainly not value free. This is a continuing area of focus for my research and I have particularly written – including Publication 3 – about the condemnation (or not) of board and dice games by both church and state because of the disruption to social order that gambling could bring. I situated the understanding of the dice found in Perth and other parts of Scotland within the context of the Church’s anxiety over the use of dice both as tools of gambling and tools of divination. Gambling brought chance to play in life and this was perceived to be against God’s order. Divination when it sought to unveil the future to an individual’s advantage was equally troubling (though it was permitted when the objective was to divine the will of God, e.g. through randomly accessing Bible texts), not least because at Christ’s crucifixion dice/lots were used to determine the fate of Christ’s clothing. There is a double blasphemy perceived to be at play here, that of making Christ’s garments (and so Christ) subject to fate and in wider gambling in calling on God or a saint to help the gambler acquire money through chance. Because of this association the dice became one of the Passion symbols or *arma Christi* (fig. 3). As such they served to re-present that Passion as an interior, contemplative re-performance whilst the associative, visual, relic quality of the dice also turned them (like the other *arma Christi*) into amulets against sin and suffering. This performance quality (or agency) is shared by many other apotropaic devices and forms a central thread in medieval ideas about sacrality and the supernatural (see below). But they performed in another way too, as part of the communal, dramatic performance of the Passion that was the Corpus Christi play (the performance of which in Perth I discussed in Publication 7/Hall 2005b). Their most explicit inclusion is to be found in the Wakefield cycle of plays, which includes a fifteenth-century *Play of the Dice* (Stevens and Cawley 1994, vol. 1). Players engaged in the parts of the gambling soldiers are known to have added a further visual fusion of dice and garments through their wearing of dice stitched to their clothing.



Figure 3: *Arma Christi* panel (tunic, dice and scourge) on Meigle parish church font. Photography by Mark A Hall

Though the evidence from Perth is slight in comparison with many other places, it is sufficient to show that the typical medieval ritual form – the procession – was as important there as elsewhere. Publication 7

includes a detailed discussion of the evidence from Perth for the patronage of the Corpus Christi Play by its trade incorporations, evidence that had hitherto been neglected in the wider understanding of the social topography of the medieval town, including how its spaces were used for the performance of procession and drama. The fusion of drama and ritual celebration was both religious and seasonal (with Christian feasts and the year's episodic passage deeply entwined), it was communally enacted in the open and so socially defining. My argument is that such activity was not necessarily play but certainly it was a performance exhibiting playfulness, that is, 'the capacity to use play outside the context of play ... that respects the purposes and goals of that non-play context or situation' (Sicart 2014, 21). Performing the Corpus Christi play then, was a form of play: it required the use of props to add to its re-presenting, authenticity and drama, and such material culture is another example of a biographical stage which objects move in and out of, as with children's improvised playthings. Yet, excavation in medieval towns is rarely alive to any of the objects recovered having had this fluidity of identity.

Belief and the desire to be touched by sacrality often escaped the confines of authority especially through pilgrimage and procession, the key means by which public ceremony was orchestrated and enacted and where private-belief /spirituality took a back seat, at least until pilgrims had the opportunity to directly confront a saint and his/her relics. The devout and needy did not need orthodox approval to witness and perceive the active power of the saints and in that sense the church frequently followed where the laity led, accepting unofficial saints if not always canonising them. Publications 6 and 7 cite the little-known case of St William of Perth as an illuminating insight into unofficial saints and the impact of their sacrality. St William's legend casts him as a baker in Perth who undertakes a pilgrimage in the early thirteenth century. Leaving Rochester, Kent, for Canterbury, Kent, he is murdered by an orphan boy he had taken under his wing. Made a saint by popular acclaim, a chapel was built on the site of his murder, wall paintings were made in other churches and a shrine was established in Rochester Cathedral. Oddly there is no evidence of any dedications to William anywhere in Scotland, but this did not stop Scottish pilgrims flocking to his shrine in Rochester, their offerings, along with those from elite patrons such as Edward I, being plentiful enough to undertake major restorations of the Cathedral (Publication 7). Whether real or invented by Rochester, William's sacrality certainly seems to have accommodated all needs – of (Scottish) pilgrims on route to Canterbury and of the Cathedral's need for income generation. He is amongst the earliest examples of England's penchant for unofficial saints, of which there were several with flourishing pilgrimage cults, spanning the social hierarchy and often politically contested. They included the royal saint Henry VI, whose execution in the tower of London in 1471 led to popular acclaim as a martyr and a flourishing cult across the country despite royal attempts to suppress it, and the more humble John Schorn, rector of North Marston, Bucks., from c. 1282-1315 and who remained a

popular saint until the Reformation (fuller discussion in Hall forthcoming b)).

My explorations of pilgrimage view the whole process as one of ritualised movement, performance and perception and part of a wider medieval culture of ritualised processions invoking the sacred. That visual culture was a route to engaging with the supernatural (Marks 2004; Giles 2007) is undeniable, but it is increasingly being balanced by an understanding of other sensory perceptions (Woolgar 2006; Day 2013) especially hearing (e.g. Williams 2013). The intangible sound made by tangible instruments was another means of defining a sacral territory and an important aspect of integrated activity in both pilgrimage and processional activities was the making of sounds: the use of instruments to make music and noise as a fundamental tool of engagement with the supernatural and pivotal in averting the actions of demons and ill-luck. As I discussed in Publications 5, 6 and 7 one of the ways this is evidenced is in the use of horns and the application of pilgrim badges to church bells, citing examples in Perth and Dunning, Perthshire. The ringing of the bells aurally spread the apotropaic power of the saints, creating an ephemeral veil of sacrality as discussed in Publication 7. Rogation processions were but one of many variations on the processional form, including Sunday Mass, Feast Days (especially Christmas, Easter and Corpus Christi) and relic processions, and what links these is not just their religious intent but the very act of procession, ‘the most ubiquitous and versatile public performance mode’ (Ashley and Hüsken 2001, 7). At times liturgical orthodoxy could be fused with heterodoxy as with the Corpus Christi procession, where the drama enacted was so often controlled as well as enacted by the townsfolk (through the guilds) rather than the clergy and as demonstrated by my discussion of the Perth Corpus Christi play in Publication 7.

1.4 Sacrality, Magic and Performance in Town and Country

The theme of town and country is one I have explored in Publications 5, 6 and 7, in relation both to a broad range of material culture from Perth and Perthshire and also specifically to the evidence of board games (Hall 2015b). Rather than frame this as a case of binary opposition (an approach as redundant for town and country as it is for elite and popular or tangible/material and intangible/immaterial), I adopted a hinterland approach of a town in its surrounding countryside and open to arrange of international contacts. Hinterland studies have helped to break down this opposition mentality and encouraged instead the exploration of networks of contact and culture across a given landscape/seascape. This is not to efface the differences between towns and smaller scale urban settlements and habitations but to recognise the interdependencies (see Christie and Stamper 2012).

My own exploration of the situational pairing of town and country has also focussed on the contextualising of towns as places and spaces in the country not rigorously divided from it, as detailed in

Publications 6 and 7 (also Crone *et al.* 2000; Hall and Owen 1998; Hall 2003; Hall 2005a and b; Hall 2015b). Publication 7 grew out of the research on an ivory knife handle and the European-wide cultural affinities it suggested (Hall 2001a). The legal, bounded identity of a burgh relied on a permeable membrane of contacts and exchanges that enabled it to flourish (see also Ewen 1990). Most recently, of the many cultural links that connected town and country across Europe, I have explored those around the pursuit of play (e.g. Hall 2015b). To say (as I have in Publications 3 and 7) that play is shared across the urban and the rural, on the face of it, seems rather banal and belies the rich diversity of the contexts in which such material is found archaeologically, including monasteries, islands, castles, churches, shipwrecks, burials, houses, and workshops. This rich diversity is something I have explored in the Publications presented here (1, 2, 3 and 4) and is also something which I have developed in subsequent papers (notably Hall 2015b; Hall 2016b and Hall 2017).



Figure 4: Elements of the Lewis hoard of gaming pieces. Courtesy of the British Museum Without doubt one of the most significant examples of play in the country, linked to elite status rather than any town and country divide, is the late-twelfth- to early-thirteenth-century Lewis hoard of gaming pieces, from the Hebridean Isle of Lewis, Scotland (fig. 4). The project to re-evaluate the Lewis hoard of gaming pieces was devised by David Caldwell (then of National Museums Scotland) and me, and to which I invited Caroline Wilkinson's contribution as a forensic anthropologist. The gaming pieces are held in the British Museum and National Museums Scotland and the project ably demonstrates my advocacy in re-visiting museum collections. The project is represented here by Publication 4 (part of Caldwell and Hall 2014a and developing out of Caldwell, Hall and Wilkinson 2009 & 2010).

There is a national, geographic spread in board games (Publication 3; Hall 2011) beneath which lies the role of play in supporting elements of regional and local identity. In the region of the Western Isles (pivotal to the medieval Kingdom of the Isles), the Lewis gaming pieces (Publication 4) may be

unique in their quality but not in their evidential testimony to board game pursuits. The Lewis project and my prior research on Pictish games (Publication 1) has led to a wider study of play in the Hebrides (Hall 2017) (fig. 5) in which I show that the playing of board games was both prevalent and stratified throughout society, with notable examples from the Late Iron Age, Pictish, Norse and later medieval phases at Bornais, South Uist (Sharples 2005; Sharples 2012 and Sharples forthcoming and Publication 1) and Inchmarnock, off Bute (Ritchie 2008 and discussed by me in Publication 3).



Figure 5: A selection of the Norse and later medieval gaming kit from the North Mound, Udal, North Uist, Outer Hebrides. Photography Mark A Hall and courtesy Udal Archaeology Project

On present evidence, board and dice games began to appear in the Western Isles – that is people started to make, exchange, acquire, play and adapt them – in the early first millennium AD, in the shape of the parallelepiped dice discussed in Publication 1. This phase is one of the roots for the later flourishing of play in the Isles, which adds distinctive colour to the cultural hybridity that marks the early and late medieval centuries. Seeking to track the game types and their development reveals a flux of entanglements and transformations that are pivotal to evolving identities, with each cultural grouping or ethnicity playing and exchanging variations of the same game types. Specifics changed within broad cultural contexts, which meant identity could adapt and develop whilst not abandoning its roots and could even create a sense of rootedness (helped by the permanence of play). The cultural and ethnic transitions that took place in the Isles between the ninth and fifteenth centuries were not determined by board games but board games were part of the Isles, an entangled network of sea, land and people and the objects they moved around, abandoned, redefined and preserved within that space.

The significance of board games, especially chess and tables, to castle and courtly life is well attested (Vale 2001, 170-79; Creighton 2012; Darvill 1988; Grandet and Goret 2012), in studies that I have drawn upon – notably in Publication 3 (also Hall 2015b) – in exploring performance, context

and evidence types. Arthurian tales and romances, for example, powerfully reflect the social significance of board games in the elite playground of the castle. Magical chessboards occur in several, including the Dutch, late-thirteenth-century *Roman van Walewein*, in which Walewein (Gawain) pursues a flying chessboard, which appears at Arthur's castle and, eventually returns there (fig. 6).



Figure 6: Walewein pursues the flying chessboard, MS. LTK 195 f.120v. © Leiden University Library, Leiden, Netherlands (accessed through Wikimedia Open Commons)

On the face of it, the book enshrining Walewein's tale (Besamusca 1993; Besamusca and Cooper 1999) is an elite piece of material culture and confirms the rhetoric of the late medieval satire of chess as the game of nobles, as I suggested in Hall 2001. But such stories as *Walewein* were not confined to the playgrounds of the elite and can be detected in other forms of material culture, in both town and country. Metal-detecting and excavation in the Netherlands has produced a rich assortment of lead-alloy religious and secular badges, predominantly of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They include at least six badges depicting chessboards (Hall 2001; van Beuningen *et al.* 1993, cat.1004-05; 2001, cat. 2008; 2012, cat. 3357-3359 and summarised in Publication 3), which I have recently suggested (Hall 2015b) are credibly identifiable as a popular expression of the socially widespread impact of Walewein's tale and its flying chessboard. All of my published work has acknowledged the often ambiguous, polysemic quality of medieval material culture and games are no exception. As well as being part of the performance of social aping and referencing the popularity of the idea of heroic, magical chessboards, they were also entangled in the performance of belief. The same badges may also have commemorated pilgrimage to the shrines of saints whose lives included chess episodes. The so-called St Rupert's gaming board, a double board for chess and tables, also served as a reliquary and was kept (from the sixteenth century) in the church of Sts Peter and Alexander, Aschaffenburg, Germany (Jenderko-Sichelschmidt *et al.* 1994, 84-86, cat. 70) and

which I have discussed in Publication 3 (and see Hall 2009; Hall 2012d; and Hall 2016b) in relation to the Church's attitudes towards play. A shared conclusion across Publications 1-4 about medieval play is that all levels of society sought to play but that social elites regarded it as their right and privilege, in part an attempt to control freedom through access to free or leisure time. The combined evidence of historical sources and archaeology illuminates a long-lived tradition of board games, available to all but particularly visible as an essential aspect of court and elite lifestyles. Viewed in its European context one way in which elite entitlement and ownership was proclaimed in the face of widespread games play was in the making of lavish boards and pieces well beyond the pockets of all but royalty and nobility (and later the mercantile *nouveaux riches*). My argument is that playing such games contributed to individual and group identities. It was not the sole determinant of that identity and worked in conjunction with other aspects of cultural behaviour to create identities (both individual and communal/social) that in part overlapped (we might say they were the same in some respects) and in part competed with the identities of others.

Belief was fundamental to both the social and the individual sense of identity in the medieval period and how that was articulated and performed. Relics, the material manifestation of the cult of saints, were the key way in which medieval Christianity was articulated and performed (Bagnoli *et. al* 2011; Spencer 1998). This has been a key research theme that I have pursued in trying to understand the social dynamics of the medieval town of Perth, here represented by Publications 6, 7 and 10. I have explored the early medieval dynamic of the cult of saints in Perthshire in Publications 6, 8 and 9, with a particular focus on the role and changing meanings of Pictish sculpture. The Pictish sculptures from Dunkeld are analysed in Publication 6 for the role they play in the developing cult there of St Columba. In that instance, the evidence of sculpture, seal matrices and later medieval text references certainly testify to primary relics (i.e. body parts) but the majority of the Perthshire evidence relates to secondary or touch relics.



Figure 7: Pilgrim badge from the shrine of St Andrew, St Andrews, Fife, excavated from the Perth High Street. Courtesy of Perth Museum & Art Gallery

Perth has the highest concentration of medieval pilgrimage souvenirs from the whole of Scotland, most of them from well-stratified archaeological contexts (Hall and Spencer 2012) (fig. 7). In my initial analysis of them – Publication 5 – I chose to eschew the conventional approach of focussing on the location of the shrines represented by the souvenirs to explore, instead, how such material culture might reveal something of how their owners used those objects in the daily practice of their devotion, fusing Christian orthodoxy with magical heterodoxy.

These ideas, expressed in Publications 5, 6, 7 and 10, were further explored in the exhibition I curated at Perth Museum & Art Gallery in 2015. The centre-piece of *Breadalbane Bling: Medieval Power Dressing in Glenlyon and Beyond* was the loan of two brooches from the collections of the British Museum: the Pictish Breadalbane brooch and the late medieval Glenlyon brooch (fig. 8). Most closely linked to my own research is the Glenlyon brooch (figure 3), of gem-encrusted gilt silver, made c. 1500 and passed on as an heirloom of the Campbells of Glenlyon, Perthshire. It incorporates a relic chamber and its inscriptions include one invoking the Three Magi or Kings. It conceivably commemorates a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Three Kings in Cologne Cathedral and so able to facilitate for its owners the recall and re-presencing of the sacrality witnessed in Cologne. As an aspect of its heirloom capacity it accrued through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a mythic association with Robert the Bruce, which was used to affirm the family's right to its lands. Its two aspects – supernatural and mytho-political – would have reinforced each other in linking the family to its lands. Both BM brooches were of the rarest and highest quality but share a psychological background with a socially diverse range of quotidian material culture, several examples of which I have discussed in Publications 5, 6, 7 and 10, displayed alongside the brooches to contextualise them and explore their shared meanings. Thus, over one hundred, primarily metalwork, items from Perth and Perthshire (crossing the town and country divide) were displayed to explore the themes of status and social aping and belief, magic and pilgrimage.



Figure 8: The Glenlyon brooch. Courtesy of the British Museum

Many of the displayed objects, whilst not themselves relics, and often mundane-seeming, were nevertheless perceived as channels to the supernatural, creating an aura of sacrality in the everyday world. These objects were part of a set of heterodox practices that hybridised Christianity and magic to varying degrees. Objects and magical phrases were combined to create ritualised objects, thus invested they were able to create ‘moments of sacralisation’ (Jones 2007, 104) through their newly bestowed protective powers. They could become relics but often occupied an ambiguous space of not being relics but still able to perform as magical conduits to the supernatural.



Figure 9: Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead from the post-hole of a medieval hall, Perth High Street. Photography Paul Adair, courtesy Perth Museum & Art Gallery

To cite but one key example from Perth – taking its place alongside a range of pilgrimage items, dress accessories and mirrors able to transmit the supernatural, all of them discussed in Publication 5 – is the Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead found in the posthole of a twelfth-century timber hall building (fig. 9). In that Publication (and in Publication 7) I explored how popular belief saw such objects (and also Neolithic stone axeheads) as thunder and lightning bolts and as disease-spreading elfshot. In terms of sympathetic magic the arrowhead worked as a charm, averting the threat of fire from lightning strikes or disease from elfshot. The range of objects discussed in Publication 5 as revealing popular attitudes towards sacrality and its deployment also include a silver penny. This, along with my seeing the Nin Judas reliquary (Domijan 1983), led me to undertake a wider assessment of Perth’s medieval coinage – Publication 10 – as exemplars of material culture fluidity (and so biographical trajectories) and popular sacrality, which I now turn to in the final theme of this discussion.

1.5 Biographical trajectories and magical transformations: Pictish sculpture and medieval coinage

Publications 1-10 all advocate my foundational concern with a human society that is materially invested and entangled. My research then has sought to understand the social through its material conditions (as Durkheim (1951 [1897], 313-14 and quoted in Olsen 2003, 97 and Jones 2007, 224) observed artefacts are social facts. People and communities make choices, they take action through agency rooted in beliefs, desires and emotions, and I discussed some examples of this around daily magico-devotional practice above, drawn from Publication 5. A single, universal theory of explanation for social behaviour is of course illusory but it has seemed to me that within the broad area of social theory that a cluster, or network, of theories – encompassing distributed agency, personhood, performance, actor networks, memory work, and biographical trajectories – offered useful insights on human-thing relationships and overlaps. What I think connects this network or web of theories is their social concern with material culture as bound-in with ‘how people present themselves as persons; the manner in which the world is made intelligible and the broader relationships with earthly and cosmic powers’ (Gosden 2013, 55). Publications 8, 9 and 10 deal most explicitly with these ideas in their seeking to understand how objects can acquire biographical trajectories through the changing and multiple uses to which people put them.

Biographical analysis is not straightforward. It can create a falsely smooth historical curve, especially when it elides over the frequently extensive periods of evidence-absence in an object’s biography. In reality objects have episodes of disconnection and dislocation. This is an aspect I have sought to acknowledge in a recent application of biographical theory to medieval material culture, specifically monumental sculpture (Hall 2015a), a broad overview that critically draws upon the work of various case studies including those presented here as Publications 8 and 9. The concept of cultural biography (as reviewed in Publications 8, 9 and 10 and drawing on, for example, Appadurai 1986; Gosden and Marshall 1999; Schiffer 1999) and its application to archaeological case studies (Meskell 2004; Olson *et al.* 2006; Joy 2009) is now well established. Within the study of Pictish/early medieval sculpture in Scotland the application of the biographical approach was untested until I applied it (e.g. Hall *et al.* 2000), developing a strong biographical emphasis in Publications 8 and 9, through case studies of assemblages of sculpture from St Madoes (fig. 11) and Meigle (fig.10) respectively. Through such biographical approaches I have been seeking to understand the re-meaning and re-imagining of things, how people relate to and give meaning to the layered landscapes they live in and inherit – the late medieval/post-medieval re-imagining of many of the Meigle sculptures as an aspect of the Europe-wide cult of Arthur (discussed in Publication 9) is a case in point (fig. 10).



Figure 10: Pictish cross-slab, Meigle, Perthshire, with figures traditionally interpreted as the execution of Queen Vanora (Guinevere). Photography Mark A Hall

As a medievalist, the question of what makes something medieval and how that time, that people, that material culture relates to what preceded it and what has followed is of abiding interest. It is an approach I have worked on to try and reveal something of the complexity of how material culture was used and reused and changed by people. Publication 10, for example, deals with the very striking example of medieval coins and their parallel and appropriated uses beyond those of money. The focus was the corpus of medieval coin finds from Perth but set within a Scottish and European context and exploring their apotropaic, amuletic and jewellery functions both in daily life and in burial practices. This was a new departure for Scottish medieval and numismatic studies, where coin analysis has focussed on monetary issues and on archaeological dating. One metric of the success of my approach was the invitation to speak at an international conference, *The Archaeology of Money*, at the University of Tübingen, Germany, in 2013. This resulted in a further publication (Hall 2016c), extending my initial exploration of the issues (Hall 2012c). My research, then, has pursued a biographical approach as a way of integrating the individual and the social, reflecting lived lives through its concern with the humanity of materiality. My approach has been to try and chart changes in the meanings of material culture, their accumulation of a biography (Hoskins 1998; Thomas 1991; Hahn and Weiss 2013). The examples I have worked on – be they Pictish sculpture, medieval coins, Bronze Age arrow heads, pilgrimage souvenirs or gaming pieces –

have given me the understanding that it is the movement of people through the performance of their lives that drives the biographical momentum of material culture and its human-imparted agency, an agency perceived and invoked by human thought and action (Gell 1998; Miller 2005, 11-15; Chua & Elliott 2013).

The question of agency is a productive fault line that runs through material culture studies. In terms of early medieval sculpture the fault is clearly demarcated by Cramp (2010, 21), who, contra Moreland (1999, 198), rejects the concept of sculptures having biographies. I have contended through my published research – including Publications 8 and 9 – that whilst inanimate sculptures do not have self-agency, their materiality has and does influence human behaviour, and that such influence is enhanced and expanded by human perceptions of independent action by such monuments (as it does with other forms of object such as coins or amulets). My biographical focus has sought then to reveal something of how medieval people related to and understood their predecessors and how they deployed their memories and imaginations to do so. The agency, even personhood, of Pictish sculpture, for example, derives from imaginative (and sometimes a lack of it) human investment in their dwelling spaces; it is this that allows them to perform in the social networks in which they are enmeshed (Law and Hassard 1999; Schechner 2006; Latour 2007). The meaning of such monuments may fluctuate over time but they seem to remain a vital component in the performative strategy of a community's construction of its social memory (Connerton 1989; Jones 2007), always important to a community's self-understanding in the present. My study of the Meigle sculptures (Publication 9) includes an example of this, where the late medieval use of the sculptures to evoke the presence of King Arthur or rather his Queen, Vanora (Guinevere) (fig. 10) is "remembered" by the Women's Institute and its mid-twentieth-century creation of an emblem incorporating Queen Vanora. I have traced other examples including a discussion of commemorative funerary rituals through a study of Pictish masking practices (Hall 2013a), a strand which I also re-visited in Publication 9 with respect to one of the sculptures from Meigle.

My research, as already indicated, has always recognised that the biographical approach gives glimpses rather than the complete story. This is certainly linked to the partial survival of evidence but perhaps more fundamentally the broader, determining issue is the reality of change: the past becomes the present through a constant series of changes, creating and preserving memory through repetitions, appropriations, transformations and losses (Lucas 2010; Olivier 2008, esp. 267-274), mechanisms by which individuals and communities projected or imprinted themselves onto the world (Meskell 2005, 51). A huge amount of Christian material culture, for example – and including the cult of saints objects analysed in Publications 5 and 6 and summarily discussed above – was about making the life and sacrifice of Christ a historical

reality, one always present and active in people's lives. Believers certainly accepted the future, heavenly, promise of Christianity but many also wanted the sacred in the here and now. Publication 5 and 7 reveal that daily devotional practice was part of the magical work of medieval Christian art, perceived by believers as opening up a doorway to the supernatural, both as an historical presence and a future destination. The realities of material and human behaviour mean that the archaeological record is as complete as it could be and what is critical is how we reconstitute the stories it embodies. Cultural or material biography provides a suitable framework to do that task.

The papers included here on the cult of saints and its magical practices – Publications 5 and 6 fit within this framework of analysis but the strand of my research that has most explicitly addressed the biographical understanding of material culture is that dealing with Pictish sculpture, represented here by Publications 8 and 9, analysing the sculptures from St Madoes and from Meigle respectively. In Publication 8, I argued that it is possible to take Meigle's collection of over thirty sculptures as a whole and formulate a biographical trajectory spotlighting episodes of use, reuse and performance in the early medieval, later medieval and post-medieval/modern periods. The later medieval use, for example, seems to have focused on Meigle as a place of Arthurian mystery and pilgrimage, with much of the sculpture reinvented as elements of the tomb of Queen Vanora (Guinevere) (an issue originally discussed in Publication 7). With the St Madoes paper the biographical trajectory of three pieces of sculpture (one symbol stone [Inchyra] and two cross-slabs – see fig. 11) helps to articulate the Christianization of a prehistoric cemetery and the introduction of a flourishing cult dedicated to St Aedán or Maedoc. The biographical trajectory documented includes a very clear lapse in the memory function described by Connerton above: the main St Madoes cross-slab was re-discovered in the nineteenth century, prone and overgrown in the Christian cemetery. A twentieth century re-valuing of the Inchyra Symbol Stone included the additions of modern graffiti, declarations of human interest in using the sculpture to impart and absorb meaning, something also demonstrated by the addition of all three pieces of sculpture to the collections of Perth Museum & Art Gallery.



Figure 11: The broad faces of the Pictish cross-slab from St Madoes, Perthshire. Courtesy of Perth Museum & Art Gallery

The second element of medieval material culture that I have explicitly explored through the lens of cultural biography is that of coinage. In Publication 10 I observed that the conventional view of coins has barely engaged with their sacral and magical significance. Their economic agency has served to limit their understanding in other ways and obscure their recognition as a hugely flexible piece of material culture thanks to their crucial quality as a means of exchange. The pivotal role of the *arma Christi* in medieval devotional culture (touched on above) is also instructive in helping to grasp the wider, biographical trajectory of medieval coinage. Pivotal in persuading me to look afresh at coins was the *arma* of Judas's thirty pieces of silver. I had briefly studied a reliquary of one of Judas's thirty pieces in Nin Cathedral, Croatia (Domijan 1983), which made it clear that any ancient coin (in that instance an obol) could, re-imagined, fulfil this purpose. I also posited that depositing coins in watery places or fixing them to holy trees is not primarily a financial transaction but a spiritual and memorialising one. Perhaps the most prolific offering at medieval pilgrimage shrines was bent coins and tokens – such coin bending in the name of a particular saint constituted a pilgrimage vow or if made over a sick person or animal would be done so to avert further illness; both represent bargains struck with the saints to deliver a touch of sacrality in return for the coin (see also Merrifield 1987, 90-92; Duffy 1992, 183-186). In Publication 10 I cited examples of bent silver pennies from Finlaggan, Islay (see fig.12), Chalgrove, Oxfordshire and St. Aldates, Oxford, all embedded in the mortar of wall constructions (ecclesiastic and domestic).



Figure 12: Bent silver penny folded into the mortar of the church at Finlaggan, Islay.
Courtesy of National Museums Scotland

They demonstrate that coins could be used to invoke supernatural protection as a physical form of prayer and also as a commemorative act linking construction to personal and communal memory (Hall 2012a, 79-81). That practice, of embedded, bent coins, presents clear evidence of non-monetary use but I also considered that apotropaic use working without necessarily changing the shape and function of the coin. The vast majority of medieval British coins combine the portrait of the issuing king and a cross of some form or other on the reverse, a model that goes back to the earliest Christian coinage following the conversion of Constantine. Both portrait and cross confirmed the authority of the coin issuer but also gave the coins the facility to act as portable agents of sacrality. Their use of the cross symbol firmly links them to the cult of the Holy Rood (and in some instances to specific saints such as Andrew). I argued further that as a consequence coins and copies of coins (with the same apotropaic agency) were frequently worn as jewellery (Koldeweij 2006) and made suitable protective amulets to place in the graves of the Christian deceased.

1.6 Conclusion

This extended essay has outlined the themes and their connecting framework of a group of papers that explore a variety of aspects of medieval material culture: specifically play, performance and biographical trajectories. This selection of my ten previously published journal papers and book chapters is submitted here for the degree of PhD by Publication. On the surface they represent diverse subjects, not just geographically and temporally (spanning as they do the whole medieval period from Late Antiquity to the end of the sixteenth century, and with strands reaching out beyond those permeable boundaries), but they are closely related in their theme and social significance: play (especially board games), pilgrimage and the cult of saints, the hybridisation of magic and faith, the interdependence of town and country and the

bringing together of a shared network of theories that underpin the social interpretation of medieval things.

Beneath that surface diversity there is certainly difference rather than sameness or homogeneity but, as I have sought to demonstrate, there is also a pattern of interconnections, affordances and reinforcements. Play, magic and faith were not clearly bounded, separate areas of life but mutually supportive, not least through a shared rhetoric of performance and ritual that emphasised bodily engagement with the world and the supernatural and one that transcended any, primarily economic, separation of town and country. Through this lens of performance (including procession) I have presented a rich variety of single and groups of objects (playing pieces, relics and reliquaries, monumental crosses, pilgrim badges and souvenirs, brooches, coins etc.) with a view to testing their facility to reveal intimate portraits of socially engaged communities. The performance lens makes a very direct link with the reception of the medieval past in the movies. This refashioning and appropriation reveals a good deal about popular perceptions of the medieval past and its continuities, contrasts and inventions with and about that past make it a valid approach to be integrated with other medieval studies (see for example Hall 2014a, on medieval childhood).

My own engagement with the medieval past is a material one, largely determined through the curation of its material culture (its objects, things or stuff) in a museum context, a performance of practicalities that seeks to establish lines of communication between that past materiality and the present. My understanding of this process has been aided immeasurably by a network of theories – cultural and material biography, personhood, performance, entanglement, actor network, embodiment and memory, play and playfulness key amongst them. Whilst not always being in complete harmony (creating a beneficial tension), nevertheless they collectively afford a more holistic grasp than any single one of them into recovering the intimate and communal relationships with the created material world and its almost continual re-invention, appropriation and agency. Humans and their communities persist and through their creation of networks of social entanglements, made manifest in their biographical trajectories, as these communities are created, redefined, repurposed and remembered.

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1.8 Declaration of contribution & impact

I affirm that I am the sole author of all the Publications submitted here for consideration as a PhD. All the contributions have grown out of the candidate’s curatorial role with respect to archaeological collections in several museums. The fertile soil of collections care and study is the starting point for all these ideas, watered with a mixture of participation in peer debates across the UK and in Europe, engagement with social theories (some of which I led on in their application in Scottish archaeology, notably biographical approaches to Pictish sculpture) and participating in the wider development of archaeology in Scotland (including co-chairing the Medieval Panel of the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework, chairing the National Committee for the Carved Stones of Scotland and serving on the Strategic Archaeology Committee to produce a National Archaeology Strategy for Scotland).

The impact of these papers and their underpinning ideas can be measured in both their acceptance by peer-reviewed journals, by anecdotal comments from students that my papers have inspired them to do a PhD and by invitations to contribute to major book series (for example, the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Childhood* and *Oxford Handbook of the Later Medieval Archaeology of Britain*). Various of the papers have also led to invitations to speak on various European stages, including the *Spiele und Sport im mittelalterlichen Nordeuropa* conference at the Georg-August Universität Göttingen, Germany in 2010 and, most recently, Hall 2016a, which generated national media coverage and an invitation to speak at the LXVI Spoleto Medieval Conference (with the theme of play in early medieval Europe) in 2017. Publications 3 and 5 (Hall 2014 and Hall 2011b) have also been republished as leading contributions to medieval studies in the Medieval Archaeology volume of the Critical Concepts in Archaeology (Gilchrist and Watson [eds] 2017).

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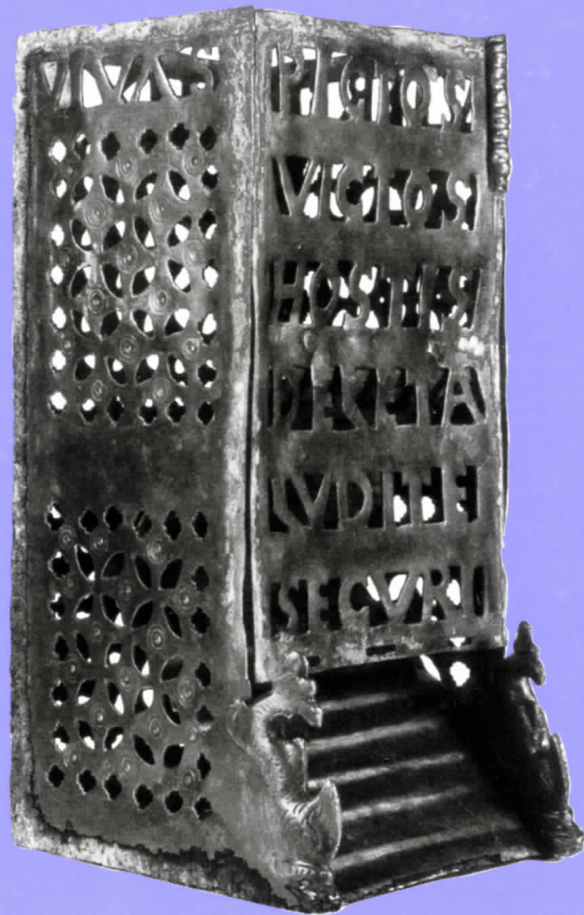
CHAPTER TWO

SUBMITTED RESEARCH PAPERS

CHAPTER 2.1

Playtime in Pictland: The Material Culture of Gaming in Early Medieval Scotland, 2007, Rosemarkie: Groam House Trust (= The Groam House Museum Academic Lecture for 2006)

**Playtime in Pictland:
The Material Culture
of Gaming in Early
Medieval Scotland**



Mark Hall

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore two things: the nature of the evidence for board and dice games in early medieval Scotland, particularly Pictland, and the significance of that evidence. It does not purport to be a catalogue of all the evidence – which space and time precludes – but it does endeavour to cite all the key pieces of evidence. It includes an appendix giving an outline, provisional catalogue of such material from First Millennium AD Scotland.

Before dealing with the evidence I would like to set the scene by outlining the wider contexts in which I have sought to place this study: Pictish studies and the history of leisure.

I apply the term Pictish studies in its broadest sense, one characterised by the inter-disciplinary approach advocated by (amongst others) Leslie Alcock and which reminds us that the Picts were intertwined with their neighbours: Britons, Scots, Angles and Irish and that they lived in a European context.¹ In terms of the contribution to Pictish studies made by the Groam House Academic Lecture Series I wish to plot a course between the socio-economic archaeology typified by John Hunter's 1996 analysis of three Orkney sites (Skail, Howe, and Pool) and Barbara Crawford's avowedly non-material culture approach focussing on the historically evidenced aspects of society's elites.² In truth both approaches are necessary for a holistic understanding of a society or a culture or a people.

Leisure-time, to varying degrees is an element of culture shared by all levels of society, however stratified. That said the leisure-time available to and the absences of the wealth needed to acquire much material culture by the socially disadvantaged means that the socially disadvantaged make less of or a more opaque showing in the archaeological record. Leisure is the free time (or the time not devoted to one's occupation and survival needs) at the disposal of an individual or group of people and so can be deemed to be a measure of the strictures on time applied within a given society. An alternative name for leisure is recreation, which indicates the pursuit of a pleasurable activity or the process of an individual's entertainment and relaxation.³ The linguistic root of this word is the same as re-create, which in its modern form is spelt the same, with the addition of a hyphen. This is significant because it imbues recreation with one of its key meanings, that of repetition, a re-use of or re-fashioning of reality through the pursuit of one's pleasurable desires. It carries then a sense of recreating the world through the reordering of reality – in terms of the present study – on the gaming board or through the role of the dice. Leisure, of course, covers much more than gaming and in the context of early medieval society it includes hunting pursuits and horseracing but both are outside the scope of this present paper.⁴

An excursion to China

I alluded above to the prevalence; perhaps pursuit would be a less loaded description, of gaming within early medieval, Insular society. Let me support this with reference to a geographically distant but temporally contemporary culture: Tang Dynasty China, a period conventionally dated to AD 618-906. I want to briefly examine two pieces of material culture. The first is a three-colour, Tang Dynasty horse and rider pottery figurine, measuring 38x52cm and excavated in Xi'an, Shaanxi province in 1975. The rider may be a male merchant with his pack but is just as likely to be a woman dressed as a man. This was a fashionable practice during the Tang dynasty when women had greater freedom to mix socially (more than at any other time in Chinese history). At the same time polo was very popular and was played by the women of the palace. The Emperor Xuanzong was noted as a skilled player and his palace included a polo field. In 799 Han Yu wrote a tract against the playing of polo, seeking to persuade his superior Zhang Jianfeng (735-800) to give it up. One strand of his argument was that horses should be kept for fighting off rebel attacks and not for play. Zhang countered that polo enhanced his performance as a military governor and other governors insisted it was good military training. There are echoes here of the Roman argument about dicing games being important for the art of war and for learning strategy.⁵ The second object is a gilded, silver jar (part of a tea service), 28cm high and excavated at Famen temple (Buddhist), Shaanxi Province in 1987. It is decorated all over, including its pedestal foot, but the main decorative element is four scenes or cartouches, each of religious significance and able to bear Daoist, Confucian or Buddhist interpretations. For our purposes the key scene is the one depicting two old men playing Chinese chess, with an on-looker. The modern version of Chinese chess (Xingqu) was developed in the late Tang Dynasty but was probably played sometime before that. The aim was to checkmate your opponent's king (suggesting a common origin with European chess, either in India or China). The depiction in this cartouche is similar to many late Ming Dynasty (AD 1368-1641) scenes of the Han dynasty (206 BC – AD 220/263) woodcutter Wang Zhi who stumbles on two Daoist immortals playing the game.⁶ This Chinese excursion has, I hope, given us an instructive parallel picture that we can hold in our minds as we now return to Pictland (encompassing both wider Pictish society, in which the image of the horse and rider is an important leitmotif and where religious symbols and scenes have a fluidity across belief systems, and the more focussed element we are exploring here of gaming). Two points to note in particular are that gaming is an ideal media for metaphor and in its deployment in art (or indeed in the minds of players and on-lookers) is usefully ambiguous and malleable. Secondly, games as modes of expression can be projected back into the past.

Roman Influences

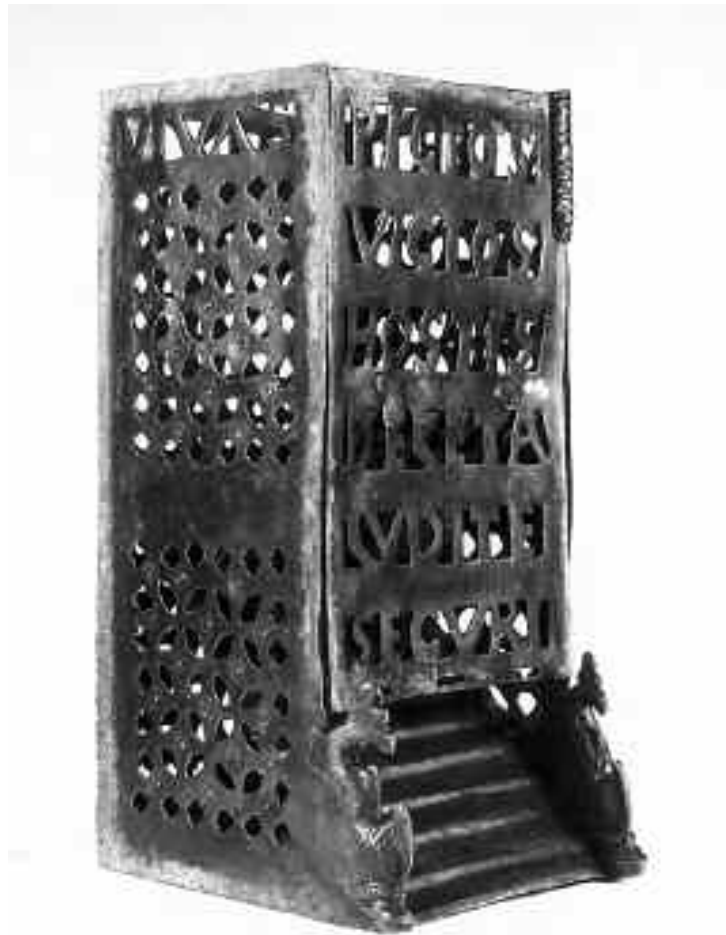
The Romans are frequently a good starting point in a discussion about the Picts and so it is when we look at the question of Pictish gaming. The evidence does support the idea of the Romans as contributors to the making or rather the evolutionary re-defining of the Picts⁷ and also gives us an early Roman epigraphic reference to the Picts.

In her 1993 Groam House lecture Anna Ritchie dealt with the two earliest written references to the Picts from two anonymous Roman writers, one in 297 AD (and often mistakenly referred to as Eumenius) and the other in 310 AD, both seemingly

written in the context of the British victories of Constantius Chlorus.⁸ Constantius's son, Constantine, assumed the purple in York in 306 AD, at his father's death-bed. His taking the title Britannicus Maximus in 314 is likely to signify further campaigning against the Picts. This has received interpretive corroboration from fieldwork at the Roman villa site of Vettweib-Froitzheim, Germany, in the early 1980s.⁹ Prior to excavation casual finds included a copper alloy dice tower (see Illus. 1), with openwork, geometric sides and a set of interior baffles that direct dice dropped into the tower out onto its flight of steps, the steps flanked by a pair of dolphins. It bears two inscriptions. One runs around the upper edge of the sides and back, reading *VTERE FELIX VIVAS* ('Use happily, may you live') – a form of good luck message appropriate to the playing of a board game. The second inscription fills the front panel and is a descending sequence of six words:

PICTOS/VICTOS/HOSTIS/DELETA/LUDITE/SECURI

which translates as 'The Picts defeated, the enemy wiped out, play without fear'. This hexagram is typical of similar inscriptions on Roman game boards



ILLUS 1 Froitzheim dice tower (© Rheinisches Landesmuseum Bonn, inv. 85.265).

(including from Rome and Trier¹⁰) generally accepted as being for the games of XII Scripta and Alea or Tabula (tables), the Roman progenitors of backgammon. The style of the inscriptions links boards and dice tower to the same type of game. The inscription on the Froitzheim dice tower may be a reference to either the Valentinian campaign of Theodosius against the Picts, in AD 368/9,¹¹ or to the Constantian/Constantinian campaigns of the late third - early 4th century.¹²

Further confirmation of campaigning against the Picts at the end of the 3rd century is suggested by an alea board from Trier and one from the catacomb of SS Marco and Marcellino, Rome. Both boards, which bear inscriptions referring to victories against the Parthians and the Britons, have been dated to 297 AD.¹³ There seems to be some conflict here between ‘the Constantinian Panegyric’ referring to the Picts as the enemies of the Britons (by then the friends of Rome) and these gaming boards referring to the Britons as being defeated by Rome. Did the military see the terms Briton and Pict as interchangeable or overlapping? Or do we read these boards as a very specific reference to the Britons of the usurper-emperors Carausius and Allectus, the latter whom Constantius defeated in 296 AD (and as a consequence of which the Emperor Diocletian adopted the title ‘Britannicus Maximus’)? We need also to bear in mind the caution sounded by Martin Henig, that the term Picts (and we can extend this to Britons and Parthians) was a literary/epigraphic topos and so difficult to securely tie to a particular date.¹⁴

Returning to Britain the evidence for Roman gaming is prolific, not only from military sites (for example Corbridge, Northumberland¹⁵ - see Illus. 2) but also from non-military sites. One of the most significant of these is the so-called



*ILLUS 2 Gaming equipment from Roman Corbridge, Northumberland
(© English Heritage photo library).*

Doctor's Grave from Colchester. This grave was part of a burial complex at Stanway on the outskirts of Colchester, Essex. The site history extends from the 2nd/3rd century BC to the 60s AD. The incumbent of the Doctor's Grave appears to have been a Briton buried in the 50s AD. The grave finds include pottery, rings, medical instruments, some rods (suggested to be for divination, and possibly analogous to the use of wooden strips for divination by the Germans, as recorded by Tacitus) and a gaming board with playing pieces laid upon it, which has been reconstructed tentatively as a game of Ludus Latrunculorum (see Illus. 3). This used to be translated as 'the game of little soldiers' but is now generally accepted as 'the game of little robbers' (the robbers being mercenary soldiers). The game does not involve dice but a board on which two opposing players move alternately to try and take their opponents piece. The Colchester lay-out may be for a conventional opening of the game or it may reflect any divinatory role the game had when deployed by a doctor or druid.¹⁶ A more accurate label might be shaman, a role which fuses those of 'doctors, priests, social workers and mystics'.¹⁷ Indeed the nature of the finds in the so-called Doctor's Grave, as described above, and including the hallucinogenic drug Artemisia (preserved in the spout of one of the bronze vessels) led to the suggestion that the incumbent may have been a shaman.¹⁸ Given the notions of luck and fortune so intimately bound up with the playing of games, such games could certainly be adopted to serve in the shamanic/druidic tool-kit. It is striking to note that the series of possibly entropic motifs (i.e. images seen at times of

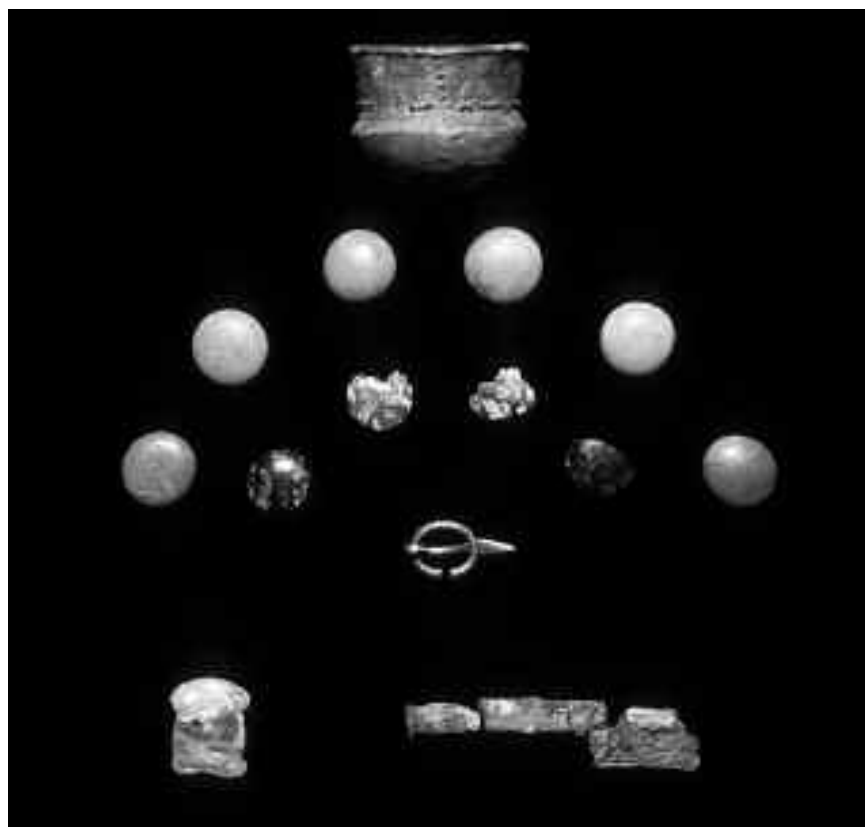


ILLUS 3 Stanway: the gaming board as excavated (© Colchester Archaeological Trust).

neurological disturbance or “trance”) recorded at Val Camonica, northern Italy, included two designs which are identical to the designs of morris/merels boards.¹⁹ It is a topic that merits deeper exploration but for our purposes it seems clear enough that it is another layer of meaning through which the social significance of board and dice games can be understood.²⁰ We will return to the question of divination below when we consider the use of dice and astragali.

Colchester may seem a long way from Pictland but links between the two places are evidenced at a slightly later date (AD 222-35), when Colchester attracted at least one possible “Pictish” (?) visitor. His name was Lossio Veda and on an inscribed plaque from Colchester he styled himself a Caledonian, the grandson of Veopogenus, a name that could imply a chief of the Venicones (now Fife). Anthony Birley has suggested that Veda may have been a merchant (possibly a slave-trader), a Roman-employed mercenary or a noble hostage.²¹

I am not suggesting that the Colchester Doctor (or shaman or druid) was a Pict but simply trying to demonstrate the fluidity of cultural exchange between Romans and British communities. Gaming deserves to be regarded as an important avenue and example of such cultural exchange. There are a small number of rich British/Romano-British burials from Southern Britain – notably Colchester, St Albans and Welwyn, Herts. – which included sets of gaming



*ILLUS 4 Glass counters and other finds from Waulkmill, Tarland, Aberdeenshire
(© Trustees of NMS).*

pieces.²² The rarity of such burials is taken as a sign of their social exclusivity. There are indications of a similar inclusion of gaming material in some elite burials in Pictland, perhaps the best example of which is that from Tarland, Aberdeenshire, or more specifically Waulkmill, near Tarland (see Illus. 4), the former site of a stone circle where a cist burial was found in 1898. The finds included seven brownish quartzite counters, four dark blue glass counters and two vari-coloured counters. The style of these pieces makes them typical Roman gaming counters. Unfortunately the precise details of the context were not recorded, their finding being accidental. We know they were associated with a burial and that the other finds included a miniature bronze cauldron, giving a terminus post quem date of the late 2nd to the early third century AD. It seems reasonable to describe the incumbent as a Pict and one that was a consumer of Roman material culture.²³

Gaming in the Scottish Iron Age

Tarland is the most coherent and substantial group of Roman counters from a non-Roman context in Scotland but several other pieces are known from various sites including Traprain Law, Camelon and Buchlyvie²⁴ all of them demonstrative of contact with Rome. Hunter²⁵ posited the suggestion that board games were an innovation arising out of Roman contact, which on the presently available evidence seems a very reasonable deduction. Even the most clearly non-Roman elements of the gaming assemblage from Scotland – the paralleloiped dice, stone balls and various sized stone discs – have complexities of function and chronology which make their meaning opaque. Stone discs (see for example Illus. 5) are a ubiquitous group that occur widely on sites from at least the late Bronze Age though to the post-medieval period. Their general uniformity of shape has tended to obscure their diverse and multi-functional uses: rubbers and burnishers, pot lids and stands and unfinished spindle whorls included.²⁶ A very small number are incised with Pictish symbols and I will return to these later. Stone balls (see Illus. 6) are a rather enigmatic group – many have been found but the majority are poorly contextualised. Nevertheless it is possible to discern two distinct groupings. One is a typically SE Scottish type (largely from hillforts) with a few outliers, broadly dating from the third century BC to the fourth/fifth century AD. The second is what can be labelled an Atlantic/Orcadian tradition, where the balls tend to be slightly larger (e.g. Howe). Both groups comprise variously sized plain balls or marbles predominantly of stone and clay (with some of glass) that have evaded certainty of explanation but which are generally interpreted as gaming pieces. Even more enigmatic is the bronze ball from Walston, Lanarkshire. This small (diameter 37mm) ball is decorated with tripartite coils some ending in bird's heads, some in knobs and which Robert Stevenson suggested could be 7th century AD in date. I note in passing that the Irish tale



ILLUS 5 Traprain Law counters (© Trustees of NMS).



ILLUS 6 Traprain Law stone and clay balls (© Trustees of NMS).

cycle, the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* makes reference to ‘hurley’ balls of both bronze and silver, though these have been regarded as fantastical literary embellishments.²⁷ The only other copper alloy ball that I know of from early medieval Britain is the small (diameter 12mm), plain and crudely cast example found wrapped in silk in the Anglo-Saxon smith burial at Tattershall Thorpe, Lincolnshire and suggested as a possible amulet. Its suggested date of deposition is late 7th century.²⁸

The third indigenous gaming-equipment element, parallelepiped dice (see *Illus. 18*) are rectangular or elongated cuboid dice numbered on their four long faces only. Apart from one die that may date to the late first century BC²⁹ these dice are generally thought to date from the second quarter of the first millennium AD. However the greater number of such dice are from unstratified contexts. This dating scheme has not been radically changed by the excavation of Scalloway Broch during 1989-90. Here four parallelepiped dice were recovered and dated to the end of phase 2, which ran from 100 BC to AD 500. The distribution of these dice in Scotland is – with the exception of two from Caithness – confined to the Western and Northern Isles. It can be tempting to see this as a cultural indicator but it may equally be an indication of the availability of raw materials with mainland dice predominantly made of wood and so less likely to survive in the archaeological record. A small, but clear, group of wooden gaming artefacts from crannog sites demonstrates the use of wood for such material culture (see *table 2b* and the *Appendix* entries for the crannogs of Loch Glashan, Argyll and Lochlee, Ayr). No doubt other examples await (re-)identification in museum collections but what is also required is a long-term research excavation of at least one Scottish crannog. The probable use of wood is further reinforced by the evidence from crannogs in Ireland and also the water-logged deposits in Dublin.³⁰

I think we can accept these three elements - dice, discs and balls – as indigenous (though not uniquely so – similar dice are found on the Continent and in southern Britain). Present evidence does not indicate the existence of any indigenous gaming boards, either from indigenous or Roman sites. Were they in use we might expect them to turn up on Roman as well as indigenous sites (though of course we also have to allow for the poor survival of examples made of wood and given that we should note the flattened sphere from Kaimes Hill, Midloathian, possibly made to sit on a board – see entry in *Appendix*). Cultural interaction is after all a two way street and the Romans were great assimilators, and not just of other people’s deities: recent excavation of the 4th century Roman fort at Abu Sha’ar in Egypt revealed 20 gaming boards and a dedicated gaming room. The games evidenced are typically Roman and seen elsewhere in the Empire. But half the boards at Abu Sha’ar are for the game Mancala, which is



*ILLUS 7 Ludus Latrunculi board from Bearsden Roman Fort
(© Hunterian Museum & Art Gallery, University of Glasgow).*

an African game that may have originated in pre-Dynastic Egypt. It was clearly adopted by the Roman garrison – though this may be because it included Egyptian/African troops. The label Roman can be ethnically obscuring (if another example of assimilation) and warns us against the simplistic application of the term Roman as a mark of identity.³¹

Board quest

A lack of gaming boards in pre-Roman North Europe receives some - admittedly cautious - support from Tacitus and his account of the Germans, whose gaming he describes thus:

“They play at dice – surprisingly enough – when they are sober, making a serious business of it; and they are so reckless in their anxiety to win, however often they lose, that when everything else is gone they will stake their personal liberty on a last decisive throw. A loser willingly discharges his debt by becoming a slave: even though he may be the younger and stronger man, he allows himself to be bound and sold by the winner. Such is their stubborn persistence in a vicious practice – though they call it ‘honour’. Slaves of this description are disposed of by way of trade, since even their owners want to escape the shame of such a victory.”³²

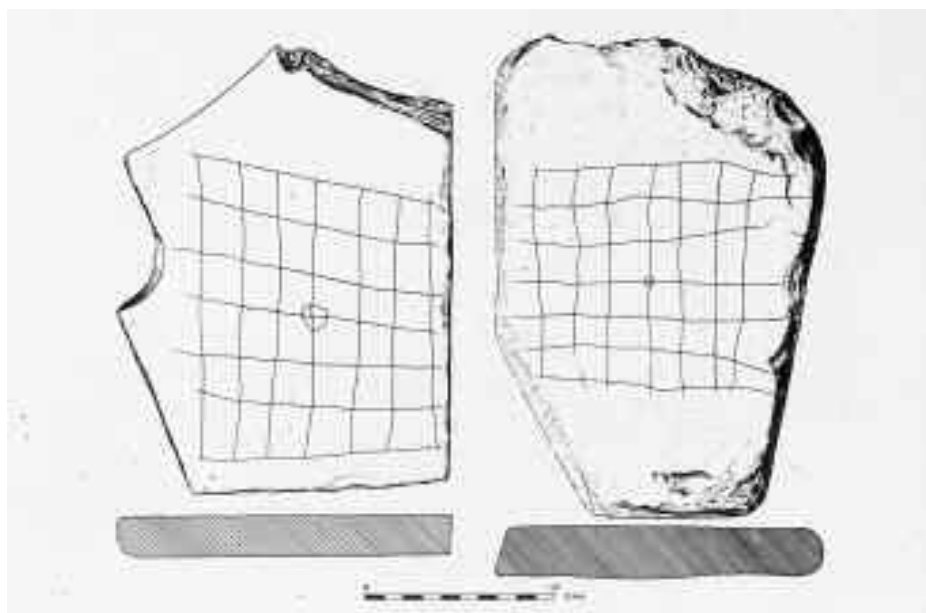
My reading of the evidence suggests that the Roman expansion in Europe was accompanied by the spread of board games; on the Continent this included three, six and nine men's morris (found as incised boards) whilst in Britain it included the kinds of glass counters we have been discussing, more conventional cuboid dice and boards for the games *Latrunculi*, *XII Scripta* – more fully *Duodecim Scripta* (e.g. from Holt, Wales³³) and (later) *Tabula*.

I do not know of any *XII Scripta* boards from Scotland but there are at least four for *Latrunculi*, all of stone, – a second century example from the fort at Bearsden (see *Illus. 7*) on the Antonine Wall, a mid second century example from the fort at Inveravon, a late first-second century example from Birrens and one from Inveresk.³⁴ The other side of the Inveravon board bears a curious design of parallel arrangements of incised circles. This is not readily identifiable as a board game although its three lines of circles has a hint of *XII Scripta* about it (and double-sided boards are a common feature of gaming in all periods). *XII Scripta* was a race game for two players around a board of three rows or twelve lines (hence *Duodecim Scripta*). It was later joined by a variation – *Alea* – which deployed two rows instead of three but with the moves still controlled by dice or *astragali* (knucklebones), which was certainly being widely played by the time of the emperor Claudius, whose addiction to the game was such that, according to Suetonius ‘he published a book on the subject and used to play while out driving, on a special board fitted to his carriage which prevented the game from upsetting’ (presumably a reference to a pegged board).³⁵

As a term *Alea* initially meant lots in general, either dice or *astragali* and later came to mean the game described above. By the fourth century the name, in wide currency, had changed to *Tabula*, meaning ‘board’ or ‘plank’, and indicating the prevalence of wooden boards, a contrast with the surviving archaeological evidence, which in the main is of stone boards. The Latin name developed a wide currency and was adopted into several languages: *Tablas* (Spain), *Tavoli* (Italian), *Table* or *Tavli* (Greek), *[wurf]zabel* (German), *Tafl* (Sweden), *Taefel* (Anglo-Saxon) and *Tawl[brwdd]* (Welsh). These are all plural versions of the name: the game was so called because *Tabula* referred to the separate quarters of the board, the boards as a whole came to take the form of two separate halves hinged together. *Tabulae* also came to refer to the playing pieces or *tablesmen*.

This discussion of nomenclature is useful because it brings into play one of the difficulties of the evidence – the often non-specific naming of board games, the giving of new names to old games and the transfer of old names to new games. The *tafl* group in Britain and Scandinavia, for example, includes the variant

hnefatafl or king's table. This is not the application of the generic Tabula name to a backgammon variant but to a game that is more like Latrunculi, in that the pieces move in the same way and capture by sandwiching an opponent's piece between two of your own men. The evidence is such that we cannot preclude that the name hnefatafl masks a number of variations on a game, including the possibility of dice used to govern moves (compare the several variations on games that would otherwise be unknown, recorded in the Alfonso Codex – a 13th century royal gaming treatise from Spain). In hnefatafl a king piece and his defenders occupy the centre of the board whilst the attacking and numerically superior force occupies the edges. To win the king must reach one of the four safe corner squares, the attacker seeks to neutralise the king by surrounding him on four sides. In the Gaelic world of Ireland and Dal Riata there is uncertainty about what the game was called – the names *fidcheall* and *brandubh* are used in a number of sources but in a rather – for us - vague way. *Fidcheall* means 'wood sense' and feels like an equivalent to Tables' 'board', both signifying no more than a wooden board. *Brandubh* means '(black) raven', which could possibly be a reference to a key piece. In later medieval texts *fidcheall* gets translated as chess – a new game with an old name. From Ireland we have the most spectacular surviving example of a hnefatafl board, from the crannog site of Ballinderry, and dating to the 10th century.³⁶ It is made of yew wood, with an elaborately carved frame, including two opposed handles, and a playing surface of 49 peg holes. The central hole and the four corner holes are differentiated from the rest of the holes. The marking out of important points (squares or cells on a non-pegged board) suggests that hnefatafl is the game for which it was



ILLUS 8 Hnefatafl boards from Buckquoy, Orkney (courtesy Anna Ritchie).

used. The use of pegged pieces, of course, gives the game greater stability either on land (remember Claudius's coach) or at sea (the communication super-highway of the Insular world). The Old Irish poem, 'Scela Cano mac Gartnain', tells of King Cano and the people of Skye's departure for Ireland in 668 and talks of '... a royal retinue sailing in currachs, complete with fifty well-armed warriors, fifty well-dressed ladies and fifty liveried gillies each with the silver leads of two greyhounds in his right hand, a musical instrument in his left and the board of a fidcheall game on his back, along with the gold and silver playing men.' Both fidcheall and brandubh are listed in Irish law texts of the 7th and 8th centuries as games to be taught to boys of noble birth – along with how to swim, ride a horse and throw a spear, part of their training for a life of leisure, hunting and warfare.³⁷

From Pictland we have, dating to the 8th/9th century, several far less elaborate incised and graffiti examples from Birsay, Howe and Buckquoy (see Illus. 8), Orkney for example. From Dal Riata comes a surface find from the hillfort of Dun Chonallaich, nr. Kilmartin. Anna Ritchie assessed this class of board as one strand of material culture that was shared across the Insular world of the Picts, Scots and Irish and demonstrative of direct links between these three cultures.³⁸ But the game was also shared with the Scandinavian world. An incised stone board was excavated from the Viking levels at Jarlshof, Shetland and the 10th century Hiberno-Norse, wooden example from Ballinderry has already been mentioned. The late 9th/10th century boat burial from Scar, Sanday, Orkney did not include a surviving board but did include 22 lathe-turned, whalebone pieces of domed, hemi-spherical form with flat bases, including an obvious king piece. There are similar sets from pagan Norse graves at Westness, Rousay, Orkney (comprising twenty-four hemispherical pieces and a king piece seemingly adapted from a bead or a needle-case – see Illus 9) and (but incomplete) Balnakeil, Sutherland (fourteen conical pieces).³⁹

Hnefatafl in focus

The game of hnefatafl is traditionally ascribed a Scandinavian origin, with the earliest evidence a 5th century AD board fragment from a grave at Wimose, Funen.⁴⁰ But we have indicated the nomenclature problem above and some of the Pictish evidence does appear to be of a pre-Viking date. The evidence is not confined to boards, there are also examples of pegged pieces that may best be seen as hnefatafl-type pieces, including one from Clatchard Craig, Newburgh, Fife (see Illus. 11). This is made of a hollow long bone, perforated for a pin, also bone. Similar examples are known from the brochs at Burrian and Birsay, Orkneys and also from Buston Crannog, Ayrshire and Corbridge, Northumberland. Formerly these were identified as pin-heads but may be better identified as pegged gaming pieces along with the globular, flat-based so called



ILLUS 9 Gaming set from Westness, Rousay, Orkney (© Trustees of NMS).



ILLUS 10 Globular bone pegged paying piece from Clatchard Craig, Fife (© Trustees of NMS).



*ILLUS 11 Shale pegged pieces from Crichie, Aberdeenshire
(© Marischal Museum, University of Aberdeen).*

pin-heads of shale from various sites including Traprain Law (at least 14), Mote of Mark, Birsay and Hill of Crichie, Aberdeenshire⁴¹ (see Illus. 11) and the 13 knobs found as part of a hoard of bronze objects, under a large stone near the hillfort of Bruce's Camp, Aberdeenshire (and probably dating to the 3rd-7th century⁴²).

Also worthy of note are the two wooden, domed pieces from the crannog of Loch Glashan, Argyll. Both are highly polished to bring out the decorative effects of the grain. One bears cut-marks and appears to be unfinished, and so indicative of on-site manufacture. This might account for their lack of pegs or peg sockets⁴³ though they do not have to have been pegged pieces. Towards the end of our period the range of shapes for pegged pieces had evolved to include pieces such as the piriform type shown in Illus. 12. There are variations in the shape but all are comfortably described by the term piriform and frequently made of bone or antler and notably common in Scandinavia between 9th-13th centuries. This particular example comes from Perth, an unstratified find made during the Horsecross excavations of 2003. Given that Perth appears to have been thriving by the early 11th century, this piece could be early medieval but could equally have been lost as late as the 13th century, not improbable given the Scandinavian presence in Perth in 1266 when it saw the sealing of the Treaty of Perth, by which the king of Norway ceded the Orkneys and the Hebrides to the



ILLUS 12 Piriform bone piece from Perth (© Perth Museum & Art Gallery).



ILLUS 13 Bone playing piece from Birsay, Orkney (© Trustees of NMS).

king of Scotland. The Norwegian party included two bishops, several noblemen, the son of the Norwegian king's chancellor and their retinue. This piece then is a useful reminder of the fluidity and artificiality of cultural and period boundaries, particularly for the categorisation of material culture.⁴⁴

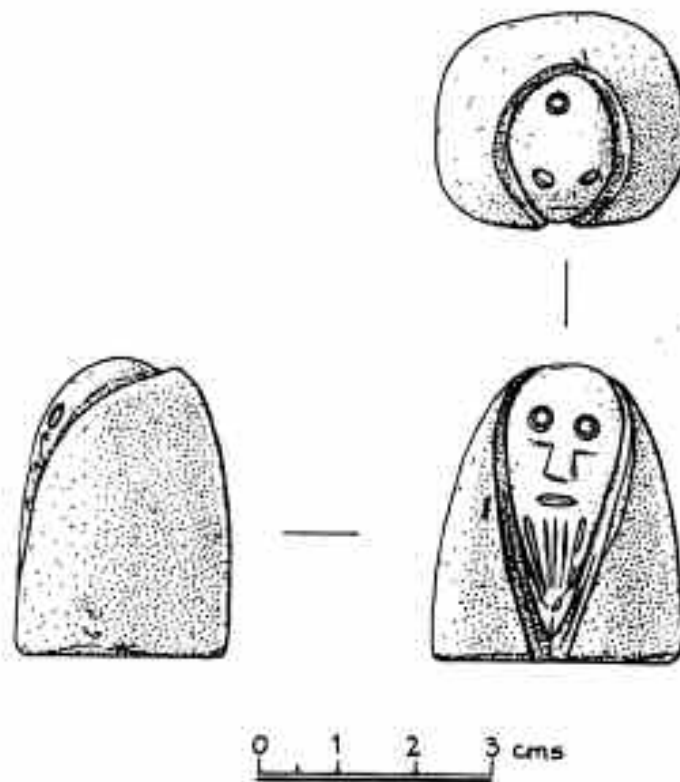
There are also a number of, to varying degrees elusive, non-pegged pieces that may be associated with hnefatafl. From Birsay's Norse assemblage there is a conical piece with ring and dot ornament, broken at its narrow end (see Illus. 13). From Cnip comes a plain conical piece with a bifurcated upper end, giving it a broad v-notch (see Illus. 14). Similar bifurcated pieces from England (from London and Woodperry, Oxfordshire, all three with ring and dot ornament) were identified as chess knights (London) and an hnefatafl pawn or chess knight (Woodperry).⁴⁵ The dating of Cnip to the 1st century BC – 1st century AD makes a chess identification impossible. But perhaps the most notable of the range of conical pieces comes from the broch sites of Scalloway and Mail, Shetland. They are both of stone and their form and style suggest they would make ideal hnefi (king) pieces (see Illus. 15). Because of the early and pre-Viking date – i.e. 6th century – of the Scalloway piece (an excavation that also recovered four plainer, conical pieces) the excavators have been reluctant to accept a tafl identification. There is now a third piece, in the Ashmolean Museum (see Illus. 16), but alas he has no context and so does not help with dating.⁴⁶ The



ILLUS 14 Bone playing piece from Cnip, Isle of Lewis ((© Trustees of NMS).



*ILLUS 15 Conical stone playing pieces/figurines from Mail and Scalloway, Shetlands
(© Crown Copyright Reproduced Courtesy of Historic Scotland).*



*ILLUS 16 Conical playing piece/figurine in the Ashmolean Museum (drawn by Keith Bennett,
© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford).*

minimalist, low relief faces of these pieces, so elegantly economical in their execution, are echoed by the face on the crucified Christ of Kingoldrum 3 sculpture fragment, Angus.⁴⁷ Plain, conical pieces are known from elsewhere, including Roman Spain. An extensive assemblage of Roman gaming equipment from Barcelona includes a conical pottery piece of similar size and shape to the Scalloway pieces, along with a cylindrical bone piece with a small knob on the top, dated to the 1st-4th century AD. There are several conical pieces from Ireland, dated to the first half of the First Millennium, which would also be compatible with a gaming function. The Spanish and Irish pieces would certainly make a good match as ‘pawns’ to the Mail, Scalloway and Ashmolean Museum style ‘king’ pieces.⁴⁸ King may be a misnomer, of course, for all three may have been pawns accompanying more elaborate king pieces; their uniform suggestion of hooded garments, their lack of ostentation and their Northern Isles find spots also provoke the speculative thought that they could be representations of *papar*, that is monks or priests.⁴⁹ Their elliptical figurative qualities also suggest a potential for amuletic or shamanistic practice, one that is not necessarily exclusive of gaming use as the earlier discussion on the gaming/shamanism cross-over sought to demonstrate. A potentially fruitful area for more detailed, future exploration is how the three Scottish pieces discussed here compare with other stone figurines of a similar esoteric nature, including for example the Romano-British/Iron Age examples from Garton Slack, Yorkshire and also the so-called Deal man. The latter is a chalk figurine found deliberately placed in a “ritual shaft”. The facial features of the Deal figurine are stylistically similar to the Scottish examples and, in all four cases, are the only anthropomorphic features, making the figures overall appear genderless. This is an attribute that has been suggested as a depiction of shamanistic liminality and asexuality. Some of the Garton Slack figurines are broken, a feature interpreted by Stead (via ethnographic parallels) to the shamanistic breaking of cult images after the departure of the spirits occupying them for particular rituals. It is impossible to know whether the broken cones from Scalloway (see appendix entry) were ever anthropomorphic.⁵⁰

An excursion to Anglo-Saxon England

Let us push our exploration further by looking at the evidence from Anglo-Saxon England. One of the commonest forms of pre 8th century gaming evidence is sets of counters, usually of bone, from several inhumation and cremation cemeteries. Their geographic range encompasses Kent to Northumbria and the counters are invariably plano-convex in form, sometimes bearing dots or similar markings on their upper surface. There are substantial numbers of them in total but usually they are a small proportion of the finds from any one cemetery site. At Spong Hill, Norfolk for example, counters come

from less than 50 of the 1,000 burial urns. Where it is possible to tell generally they are associated with male burials, though occasionally – but nothing like a complete set – with female burials. Such pieces (along with other types and occasional re-used Roman pieces) were fully considered by Youngs in her brilliant contribution to the Sutton Hoo final excavation report.⁵¹ She observed that the counters were unlike Roman bone counters and so probably not influenced by Roman models. That said even within Roman models – particularly glass and bone counters – there is a marked difference. Across the Roman and Anglo-Saxon series there is a similarity of size and the surviving sets or near-sets are similarly proportioned. Youngs does find other correlations with Roman gaming. In the Saxon homeland a richly furnished Germanic grave of c300 AD from Leuna, Saxony includes black and white glass counters found on a double-sided board. The two games marked out were XII Scripta and Latrunculi. Of four fragments of 5th century boards from Vimose, Denmark, three are for tabula and the fourth Latrunculi.⁵² It seems a reasonable deduction that migrating Anglo-Saxons brought Roman-derived games with them to Britain, though undoubtedly they would also have found these games or localised versions of them being played in Britain. The most recent and significant find from Anglo-Saxon England comprises 57 bone hemispherical counters/pieces and two dice. These were found on the floor of the burial chamber of the so-called Prittlewell Prince. This 7th century high status Anglo-Saxon male burial was excavated in 2003. The association of such pieces with dice is very rare and may indicate that the Anglo-Saxons did indeed roll dice to introduce chance into their board games.⁵³

The royal burial at Sutton Hoo included at least five ivory, flat-based, conical-topped cylindrical gaming pieces, unlike others from Anglo-Saxon contexts. Indeed Youngs notes that the closest parallels are Mediterranean or Late Antique examples, including fifteen ivory and fifteen ebony pieces with a XII Scripta board (with five dice and a dice-tower) from a rich burial in Qustul, Nubia, Africa; four examples from a 7th century Lombardic grave in Cividale and an undated example from Carthage.⁵⁴ The Sutton Hoo pieces are then consistent with both Latrunculi and the tafl group. That said in an Anglo-Saxon context hnefatafl, as far as surviving literary references indicate is rather opaque until the 10th century and later. Certainly by that time it had attracted the interest of the Church and clearly carried sophisticated connotations. The key piece of evidence in this regard is f5b from Corpus Christi College Oxon 122, an 11th century copy of a 10th century Irish Gospel Book. It shows the layout for hnefatafl in the form of an allegory on the harmony of the Gospels, known as *Alea Evangelii* – ‘the Game of the Gospels/Evangelists’. Its title caption notes that the game was brought to Ireland by Dubinsi, Bishop of Bangor (d. 953), from the court of king Athelstan (r. 925-40).⁵⁵ It argues for a degree of

intellectual sophistication around hnefatafl and its adoption into Christian-ecclesiastical learning and supports a degree of cross-cultural (Hiberno-Saxon) understanding and enjoyment of board games.

The most recent finds of hnefatafl boards from Scotland support this Christianising of the game. They were found by excavation at the ecclesiastical site of St Marnock's chapel, Inchmarnock, Bute. In total 35 incised gaming boards were found, along with a number of other slates bearing graffiti designs, inscriptions and lettering: clear indications of a monastic school function. The majority of the gaming boards appear to be for hnefatafl and are pre 12th century, though there is at least one nine men's morris (or merels) board and one alquerque board, both suggestive of a 12th century or later date.⁵⁶ The material probably reflects two strands of activity – the leisure time of the monks and lay brothers and the teaching of board games, including to secular, elite pupils. Some of the boards appear to represent the activity of practising the lay-out rather than producing a useable board. A parallel from Northern Ireland may be the double-sided slate hnefatafl board from Downpatrick Cathedral, whilst returning to Scotland there is a single slate board from Whithorn Priory.⁵⁷ Before leaving hnefatafl a brief note of caution: when we have as we do from Pictland and elsewhere boards clearly marked out for hnefatafl or a variant thereof this should not blind us to those same boards being used for other games, such as fox and geese (of which there are several variants). By the later medieval period such hunt or chase games certainly have their own designs of board, but the basic grid lay-out of the tafl boards would permit the playing of fox and geese.⁵⁸

Astragali and Phalanges

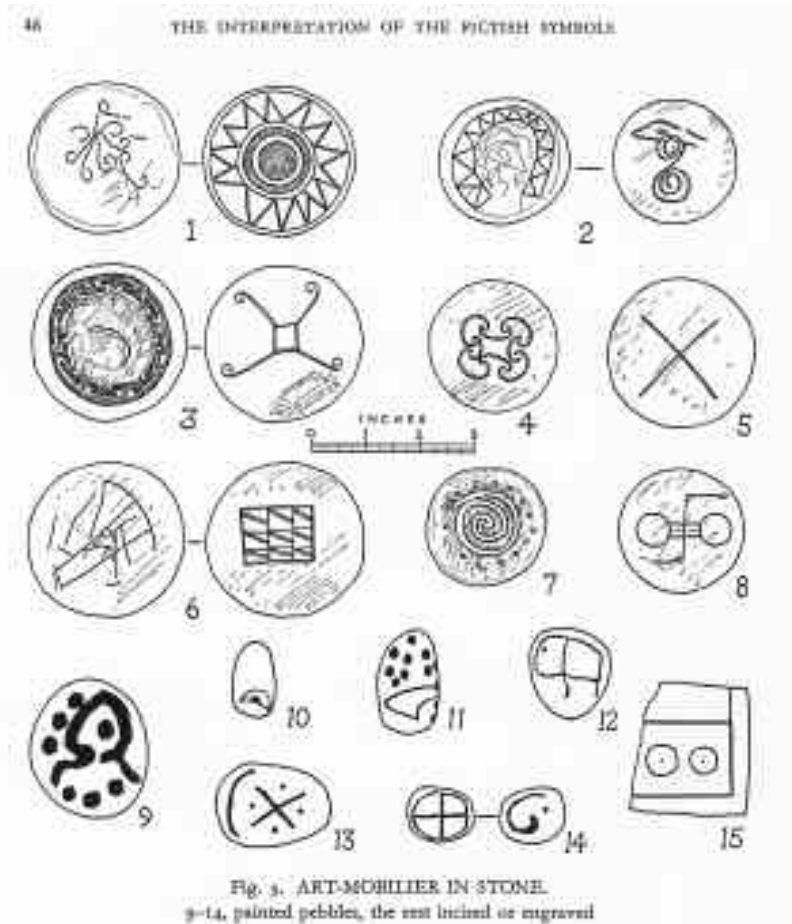
One other area of gaming practice shared between Pictland and Anglo-Saxon England, and again with Roman antecedents, is the use of astragali. These are a form of casting-lot, a means of making a decision by leaving it to fate, possibly deriving from divination and soothsaying practice. Gambling on the outcome of cast lots is one of the earliest forms of gaming and the three forms of lot-casting: divinatory, decision-making and gaming share an impulse to determine the future which probably meant they were inextricably intertwined from the start. Like the parallelopiped dice we examined earlier astragali are a form of quaternary lot, that is where each astragalus has four possible faces. The word comes from the Greek for knucklebone, particularly those of sheep and goats. Their irregular shape means that on a hard surface four outcomes are possible, traditionally designated flat, concave, convex and sinuous and associated with the numbers 1, 3, 4 and 6. The Romans called them *talus* if actual knucklebones and *alea* if artificial ones in wood, metal etc. The Romans used the 1-3-4-6 numbering in race and dice games, including XII Scripta.⁵⁹

Astragali have been found in early Anglo-Saxon contexts, notably the 6th century cremation cemetery of Caistor-by-Norwich, where urn N59 held at least 36, 15 of them identifiable as sheep and two as roe deer, one of which, the largest, is inscribed with runes, possibly reading RASHAN. Found with them were 33 bone counters. The presence of astragali suggests the possibility of magical divination through lot casting and raises once more the question of shamanism. Indeed, citing ethnographic parallels Meaney suggested that even the bone counters may have had a divinatory or magical function.⁶⁰ That said it is perhaps more likely that the numbers involved meant they were being used as playing pieces.⁶¹ There are several examples of astragali, encompassing what I take to be a cultural equivalent, phalanges, from sites in the Northern Isles. Perhaps the most notable is the three (a magical number, raising the prospect of divination) from the Broch of Burrian, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, found with three parallelepiped dice and three conical-style gaming pieces. Like the Caistor astragali two of the Burrian phalanges are distinctively marked, one with a crescent and V rod on one broad face and a disc with an indented rectangle on the other, the second has a confused looking design which has not adequately been deciphered.⁶² Worth noting here is the recent recognition of a cattle phalange at Bu Sands, Orkney, bearing two incised figures, which Lawrence suggests is more likely to be a gaming piece, possibly a form of skittle, drawing an analogy with Macgregor's observation of the 20th century use of cattle phalanges in Friesland as skittle-like targets in a throwing game. He also discusses its suitability as a king-piece for hnefatafl and for use as a divinatory lot.⁶³

Pictish decorated stone discs

Bearing in mind the Roman use of astragali for controlling moves in XII Scripta/tabula it is of note that the Northern Isles distribution of astragali is also echoed by the finds of decorated stone discs, the majority from the Shetlands.⁶⁴

Illustration 17 shows the whole range of discs as reviewed by Charles Thomas in 1961.⁶⁵ They do seem to have wider cultural linkages beyond that suggested by the use of Pictish symbols. Number 7 for example, from Stemster, Bower, Caithness bears a spiraliform serpent within a beaded border, not unlike the much larger coiled serpent on the Meigle 26 recumbent slab (which, along with Kinnell and Strathmartine 2, the Hendersons interpret as a Christian resurrection symbol) but also the 10/11th century wooden relief disc examples in wood from Dublin.⁶⁶ Number 6 for example, from Ness of Burgi, Shetland, has a motif of a rectangle divided into nine compartments which is echoed by the same design on two astragali recently excavated at Bornais, South Uist⁶⁷ (see Illus. 18). In their recent analysis of



ILLUS 17 Decorated sandstone discs (drawing reused with the permission of Charles Thomas).

Pictish art the Hendersons refer to these pieces in the context of Pictish symbol-art on portable objects, suggesting that the discs may have been linked to lost metal discs.⁶⁸ Certainly since their excavation they have been suggested to be gaming pieces. From Jarlshof we also have slate boards incised for hnefatafl and a Latrunculi-like game. The discs are too large for any of these boards but they, at 5-7cm in diameter (and 2cm thick) are large but still suitable for backgammon-style tables game. This is perhaps to follow the suggestion of gaming-pieces to its logical conclusion and I would be the first to admit that the conclusion is unsatisfactory. The vast majority of known tablesmen are, to varying degrees, smaller than these discs. If tablesmen they would be the earliest dated examples from Europe, depending on where you place your cultural boundaries: from Barcelona, Spain comes two bone 'tablesman', 35 mm in diameter and with ring-and-dot decoration, which have been archaeologically dated to the 2nd-4th century and the 2nd -7th century respectively.⁶⁹ They are then either firmly Roman or from the time of the Roman-Visigothic transition. Tablesmen similar to these, but not identical, are found in Scotland (as elsewhere) but they are generally dated to



ILLUS 18 Astragali from Bornais, South Uist (with two parallelepiped dice above) (© John Morgan, HISAR, Cardiff University).

the 11th-12th century and are poorly provenanced antiquarian finds. They comprise several, probably bone, discs decorated with ring and dot and simple interlace, from Queen Margaret's Inch, Loch of Forfar, Angus⁷⁰ and a single, bone tablesman from St Mary's Chapel, Kirkhill/Hallowhill, St Andrews – found in 1860 amongst the long cists of Hallowhill, both sides decorated with a broad strap interlace, with single pellets scattered through the field.⁷¹

These pieces are not as spectacular as, for example, the late 11th century Gloucester tabulae set (both board and pieces⁷²). The board itself, with what we might call its Insular art inheritance exhibited in its decoration, along with other evidence (including an 11th century capital-carving from Toulouse,⁷³ showing two people playing the game) demonstrate that the medieval variant of tables was well established by the 11th century. Even if we retain the 11th century dating of the St Andrews and Forfar pieces we can still see them as part of a European style of tablesmen visible in the archaeological record by the 9th century (leaving aside the Roman/Romano-Visigothic pieces discussed above). The earliest is a piece from Mikulcice, Czechoslovakia, which bears a crouching archer on one side and a pair of fabulous reptiles on the other. The earliest ring and dot

type appears to be an example from the Isle of Aumont, NE France, dated to the 11th century and found with two further antler discs, one showing two fabulous beasts and the other an equal-armed cross with expanded terminals set within a series of concentric circles.⁷⁴ A 10th-11th century example excavated in Dublin is carved in the late style which Lang describes as reflecting the ‘West Viking animal ornament in the Irish Sea province’, but that its image of a beast devouring a man is unique. It is perhaps less unique if regarded as part of the inheritance from Insular art – Pictish art for example has a number of men being either swallowed by or vomited from the mouth of a fabulous beast.⁷⁵ The Dublin piece can be regarded as indicative of the social diversity of such art, though not necessarily to a universally accepted reception of its meaning. The Dublin assemblage also includes a unique figurine, identified as a possible wooden ‘king-pin’ of a board game. It is cylindrical, and carved with the hunched sitting human figure with a skull-like face, decoration includes a triquetra and basket-plait. Lang notes that many of its motifs ‘could be of Insular origin but revived in a West Viking context ...’ and that its ‘...York connections are to be expected during the second quarter of the tenth century and that it is therefore unwise to fit an ethnic label to the style of the figure.’⁷⁶

The only other potentially early (on the watershed between early and later medieval) Scottish tables are the fourteen surely unfinished examples from the Lewis chess hoard; one can only guess what their final imagery was to be. They are the less well-known component of the Lewis hoard, the chess-pieces of which have an iconic status⁷⁷ but they do remind us that the times were changing and that Scotland was in tune with these changes. But Lewis is a story for another day: suffice to say their transitional quality is a suitable place to stop and draw things together with some closing remarks.

DISCUSSION

My principal aim has been to demonstrate that there is a rich diversity of certain and some less certain or ambiguous evidence for the playing of board games and the use of dice in First Millennium AD Scotland. I have attempted to summarise this evidence in a provisional form in tables 1-2b (to be used and explored by the reader in conjunction with the appendix). Precise rules and the exact range of games remain elusive, even for the pivotal Roman games in play. There is nothing for this period comparable to the 13th century gaming treatise of King Alfonso X, the Wise, of Castille, though this would change if a copy of the Emperor Claudius’s gaming treatise should ever come

to light. I want to draw this paper to a close by developing some broader points out of the material presented above. In doing so let me commence with this lengthy quote from Terry Pratchett's Discworld novel, *Going Postal*:

“As they stood up, Reacher Gilt leaned across the table and said: ‘May I congratulate you, my lord?’ ‘I am delighted to feel that you feel inclined to congratulate me on anything, Mr Gilt,’ said Vetinari. ‘To what do we owe this unique occurrence?’ ‘This my lord,’ said Gilt, gesturing to the little side table on which had been set the rough-hewn piece of stone. ‘Is this not an original Hnaflbaflsniflwhifltafl slab? Llamedos bluestone, isn’t it? And the pieces look like basalt, which is the very devil to carve. A valuable antique, I think.’ ‘It was a present to me from the Low King of the Dwarfs,’ said Vetinari. ‘It is indeed very old.’ ‘And you have a game in progress, I see. You’re playing the dwarf side, yes?’ ‘Yes I play by clacks [*that’s telegraph for the uninitiated*] against an old friend in Uberwald,’ said Vetinari. ‘Happily for me, your breakdown yesterday has given me an extra day to think of my next move.’ Their eyes met. Reacher Gilt laughed hugely. Vetinari smiled. ... Gilt and Vetinari maintained smiles, maintained eye contact. ‘We should play a game,’ said Gilt. ‘I have a rather nice board myself. I play the troll side for preference.’ ‘Ruthless, initially outnumbered, inevitably defeated in the hands of the careless player?’ said Vetinari. ‘Indeed. Just as the dwarfs rely on guile, feint and swift changes of position. A man can learn all of an opponent’s weaknesses on that board,’ said Gilt. ‘Really?’ said Vetinari, raising his eyebrows. ‘Should he not be trying to learn his own?’ ‘Oh, that’s just Thud! That’s easy!’ yapped a voice. Both men turned to look at Horsefry, who has been made perky by sheer relief. ‘I used to play it when I was a kid,’ he bumbled. ‘Its boring. The dwarfs always win!’ Gilt and Vetinari shared a look. It said: while I loathe you and every aspect of your personal philosophy to a depth unplumbable by any line, I’ll credit you at least with not being Crispin Horsefry. ‘Appearances are deceptive, Crispin,’ said Gilt jovially. ‘A troll player need never lose, if he puts his mind to it.’ ‘I know I once got a dwarf stuck up my nose and Mummy had to get it out with a hairpin,’ said Horsefry, as if this were a source of immense pride. Gilt put his arm round the man’s shoulders. That’s very interesting Crispin,’ he said. ‘Do you think it’s likely to happen again?’”⁷⁸

This, I hope, strikes the reader as more than just a little light relief: my real reason for including it is that it encapsulates a number of pertinent issues around how we can see gaming functioning in society, in terms of social and intellectual status, ethnicity and identity and its susceptibility to serve in a metaphorical capacity. The gaming evidence of the Picts and their neighbours does tell us about the importance attached to the pursuit of leisure activities. The concept of such leisure pursuits tells us about the social structuring of time and the nature of the materials tells us about similar pursuits in different social contexts and how such materiality gives us clues about social status and identity. The evidence is frequently poorly provenanced but there is sufficient contextualised material to see that it comes from a range of sites and contexts: caches of objects, human burials, crannogs, round-houses, hillforts and brochs, Roman forts, (particularly their bathhouses) and ecclesiastical sites. At one level we can see elites demonstrating their power and privilege, at another we can see both emulation/aspiration of and

	SKELETAL MATERIAL				STONE				GLASS			C & CERLAMYIC	METALS	WOOD	BOARDS	
	Dice	Counters	Astragali & Phalanges	Other Incl. pin-heads	Counters	Discs	Balls	Other Incl. pin-heads	Counters	Marbles	Other					
Iron Age c. 500 BC - 100 AD				9	2	21 13+ 5 (?)	73 5+ 5 (?)	2				1				
Roman Iron Age c. 50-400	23 9 (?)	5 8+	1 (?)	5 3+ 4 (?)	29 13+ 9 (?)	11 19+ 12 (?)	11 8 (?) 6 (?)	14 6 (?)	69 11+ 1 (?)	6		29 3+	3			7 1 (?)
Pictish c. 400-900		3	8	22 1+ 4 (?)	10 3+ (?) 7 (?)	8 10+ 6+ (?) 3 (?)	1 (?)	6 (?)			1 (?)	1	1 (?)			4 3 (?)
Scottic/ British/ Anglian . c. 400 - 900			1	6	6	3 5+		17			1			4		1 35 (?)
Scandinavian c. 800 - 1100	1 (cuboid)			69	4	128										14 1+
Alban c. 900 - 1100	1 (?)			5 30+ 1 (?)												35 (?) 3 (?)
Unclear Cultural Horizon/ Unstrat./ Stray Finds	4		1		2	3	3	1					1			2

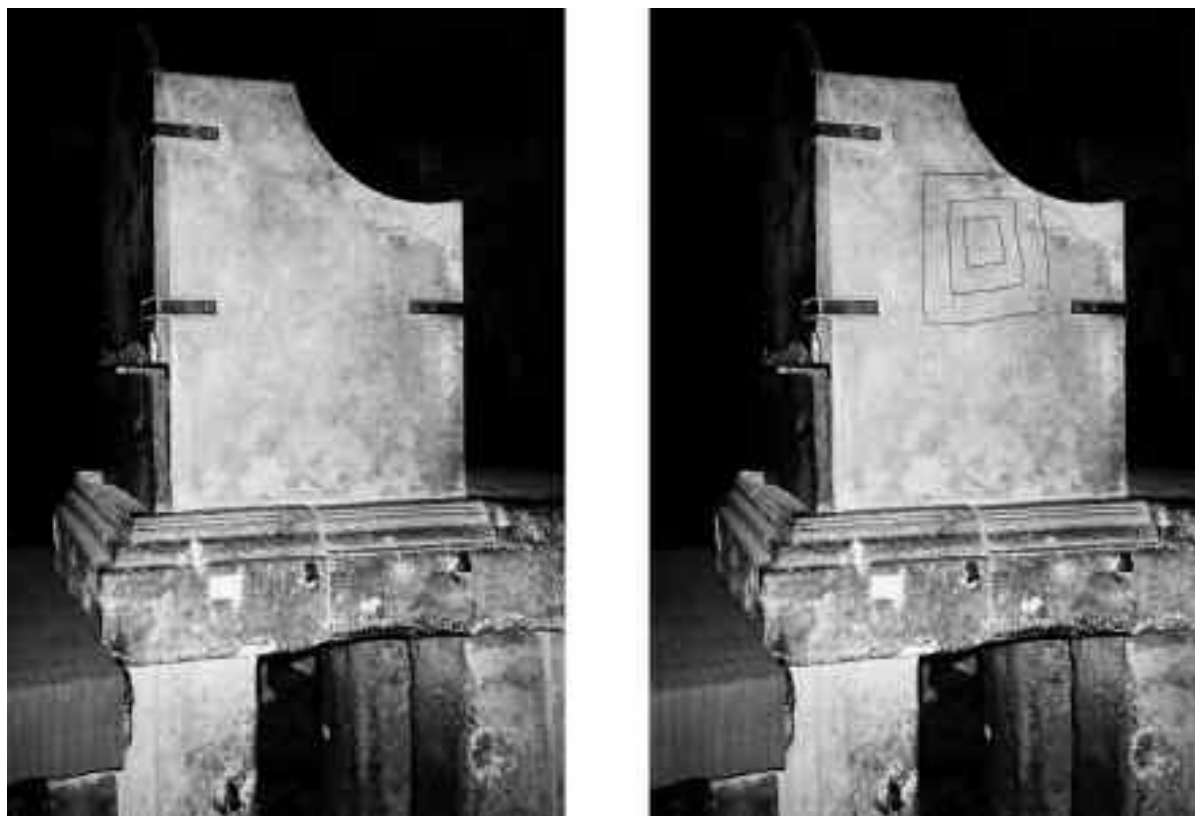
TABLE 1: The Temporal Distribution of Gaming Equipment in First Millennium AD Scotland. N.B. in this and the subsequent tables, upto three figures are given for each entry: a definite total, a minimum of additional numbers and a possible figure. This is in acknowledgment of the uncertainties, including both quantities contexts and cultural designations, reported in the sources.

	SKELETAL MATERIAL				STONE				GLASS			C & E R L A A M Y I C	M E T A L	W O O D	B O A R D S		
	Dice	Counters	Astragali & Phalanges	Other	Counters	Dises	Balls	Other	Counters	Marbles	Other						
B U R I A S								13									
Roman Iron Age																	
Scandinavian			63														
Round-houses & souterrains					3	5		6					1			1	
Wheel-houses	2			10													
Brochs	14	4	5	19	24	10	2 (?)	6	1				13			3 (4)	
Roman forts	2	5		1+	8+	2	2	5+	47				4			4	
Hillforts, Duns & coastal promontories	1	8+		5	35	45	71	20	8				3+	3 (lead)		1 (?)	
Ecclesiastical	1			8	3+	13+	5+	3 (?)									36
Cranngs			1	1 (?)	1	2			2								3+
Caves	1	1		30+													4
Open settlements	1	2	1	18	3	132										1 (?)	20
Hoards																	1+
No clear context	2		1		1	7	3	1								1	

TABLE 2a: Spatial distribution of First Millennium AD Gaming Equipment from Scotland: the type-of-site context.

resistance to that power. Outside this dynamic of power relationships (but not completely divorced from them) we also have the question of shamanism/medicine and the role of games in helping to determine the future. One might also expect a degree of inter-changeability between amuletic figurines and gaming pieces, given the association of such pieces with fate and any perception of supernatural forces evoked or controlled through movements on the board.

It would be unwise however to see all this material only in terms of the possible reflection of elite status – the diverse range and quality of the



ILLUS 19: Merels board on Charlemagne's throne Aachen, with (right) high-lighted version of the board. Original photograph courtesy of I G Scott, amended by M Hall & P Adair.

materials involved argues that association with elites is too narrow a perception. They suggest, rather, that playing such games was socially widespread and would certainly warrant further exploration in the context of both a late prehistoric, pre-Christian society with a flatter, less socially distanced hierarchy and the transition from such a society to one made more hierarchical by the war-band, kingship and the Church.⁷⁹ There is an irony here though, in that gaming is a pursuit of humans locked in competition and competition tends to favour or support hierarchical stratification. That said one might also argue that an implication of Tacitus' account of the Germanic pursuit of dice games – especially if we switch off the Roman world-view filter – is a less stratified society, or at least easy mobility between the strata.

In the light of such an observation, it is possible to suggest that some of the gaming material under examination – particularly from the first half of the First Millennium – may have been in some way communally owned. That said, it seems clear enough that gaming pursuits came to be associated (though never exclusively) with elites. The story of Cano is but one written account from a large body of Gaelic material, including the Ulster Cycle, which carries this implication, with gaming frequently mentioned in association with the activities of heroes and kings.⁸⁰ By the closing centuries of the First Millennium skill on the gaming board was certainly one of the attributes taught to social elites. I do not want to overplay my hand in arguing

for too much restriction in the social spread of gaming. The nature of gaming as a key aspect of play means that it is an endemic cultural pursuit of human societies. Its importance is fully demonstrated by the precise context of Viking burials (e.g Scar, Westness etc), where it was clearly deemed critical to take the status and pleasure of gaming into the next world and the equally precise contexts of the hearth-side in Dun Cuier, Hebrides and Broch of Gurness, Orkney reflect its daily importance in the home.

Ethnic and cultural identity is, of course, many-stranded and accepting Roman influence upon it should no longer be a cause for panic. I have presented a view of gaming material culture that allows it to demonstrate cultural exchange and interaction between Northern Britain and Rome. It is not a simplistic story of enforced imperialism but one that included the choosing to take something from Rome and to give it an indigenous cultural stamp. Gaming appears to have been an ideal medium for this: similar pieces could be used in varying games, various games could be played on the same board, for example. The influence of Rome can be detected over a longer temporality too. The “heirs of Rome” reflex informs much early medieval scholarship today⁸¹ and can be applied to the playing of games too. The Sutton Hoo playing pieces are one example. Another is the magnificent marble throne of Charlemagne in Aachen Cathedral (see Illus 19). Charlemagne’s use of Roman spolia is well known⁸² but what has been little remarked upon is how this throne may demonstrate it in gaming terms: one of the side panels of the throne is incised with a Roman merels (or morris) board. Both examples support the thesis that there is what we might call a universality of regional identities being imposed on in-coming cultural fashions and practices in a complex intertwining of internal and external ideas and material culture. It is not restricted to the Romano – British (or to be more specific Pictish) interface and we can see this at the end of our period with the appearance of chess.

I hope that this discussion has demonstrated that there is value in playing the game of chasing down the wider social relevancies and contexts of board and dice games. But it does need to be done in the light of the fundamental relevance of the material in demonstrating the human propensity for play, that subtle combination of recreation and re-creation: escaping the world and re-fashioning it to our liking; it is about being and becoming.

NOTES

1. Alcock 2003. Before this, of course, Alcock had delivered the 1992 Groam House lecture, *The Neighbours of the Picts: Angles, Britons and Scots at war and at home* (published in 1992).
2. Hunter 1997 and Crawford 1995.
3. The definitions of leisure and recreation are adapted from the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 8th ed., 1990. For further discussion and references to the theory of play see Hall forthcoming a. An engaging social portrait of gaming set within a wider context of entertainment (albeit with limited direct evidence) is explored in Gardner 2004, 255-62. One of the pieces of evidence cited is the 11th century Swedish runestone from Ockelbo, which shows two men (one drinking) playing a board game and which Gardner describes as possibly nine men's morris, following Graham-Campbell et al 1994, 65, but fails to acknowledge that Graham-Campbell also suggests hnefatafl as a possibility. Indeed, although the design of the board is stylised it seems clear enough that the game of hnefatafl is intended: the king's cells or points at the centre and the four corners are clearly delineated. The only other possible board depicted in Scandinavian sculpture occurs on the 8th century picture-stone from Ardre VIII, Gotland, Sweden: the grided pattern of a board is visible bottom left, see Price 2004, fig. 4 and Rosedahl & Wilson 1992, illus. p.2 (cat. 1). Perhaps the most stimulating exploration of a wider context of leisure, that of ancient Rome, is Toner 1995.
4. For hunting generally see Alcock, op. cit in n.1 and references there. I know of no direct evidence for horse-racing in Pictland or early medieval Scotland but by analogy with Ireland, England and the Continent it can be reasonably inferred. In this wider context horse racing was often an element of fair/market gatherings, e.g. see Black 2000, with references to horse-racing, sports and feats of arms at Tara at p. 16. Horse-racing was sufficiently prevalent to attract ecclesiastical condemnation; the 747 Council of Clofesho (held in England) includes several canons that address correct ecclesiastical behaviour and tradition, including that 'the litanies must be performed without games and horse-races', see Cubitt 1992, quote at 198. That Pictish sculpture may depict examples of feats of arms or ritualised combat is suggested by such pieces as the Murthly panel, see Henderson & Henderson 2004, fig. 182, there interpreted as a diversification from the single 'armed' symbolic figure.
5. For the horse and rider see Michaelson 1999, 72-3. For Pictish horse and rider depictions, including females, in the context of hunting, see Henderson & Henderson 2004, 125-9. For the riding warrior more generally in early medieval art see Henderson 1977, 158-68. For the Roman board-game / war

- metaphor see, for example, Purcell 1995, 25-6.
6. For the jar see Michaelson 1999, cat. 114. Superficially the lay-out of the board and the small domed counter playing pieces resembles some of the material we will be looking at from Britain and Europe, especially from Roman contexts, which prompts speculation about the Silk Road as a multi-directional avenue by which games crossed cultural boundaries. My point about the cultural universality of play could also have been served by travelling West to Mesoamerica in the “early medieval” period. There, what archaeologists call, the Mesoamerican ball game was well established by the 7th/8th century AD. Large numbers of elaborate stone-built ball courts survive. The game attracted high stakes gambling, was perceived as a link between the surface of the earth and the underworld and was sometimes associated with human sacrifice. Its popularity lasted until the 16th century. A parallel phenomenon is evidenced for the Hohokam culture (present day Arizona, USA) by an extensive series of perhaps more socially inclusive ball courts, used c. 700 AD – 1250 AD. See Scarre (ed.) 2005, 599 & 693.
 7. For contrasting overviews of the role of Rome in the creation of Pictland see Breeze 1994, 13-20 and Hunter 2005, 235-44 and Hunter forthcoming b. Breeze is a useful review of the evidence though not ultimately persuasive in its conclusion that ‘the legacy of Rome ‘ was ‘the creation of the Pictish state.’ A state does not seem apparent though what does is a competing network of tribes with a shared cultural outlook, labelled by the Romans Pictish and that fed off that Roman power-base. It was mature enough to absorb what it wanted from Roman culture, to accept others or to resist. Both – the Roman Empire and Pictland – rubbed along with the other until such intermittent times when violence was the preferred or the provoked option. More persuasive in its social complexity is Hunter’s call for a re-assessment of the evidence to unravel the Roman influence from the on-going internal politics of NE Scotland.
 8. Ritchie 1994. The 297 AD panegyric is to Constantius as Caesar (under the emperor Diocletian) and mentions the Picts incidentally as an enemy of the Britons. The 310 panegyric is to Constantius as Emperor (AD 305-6), who died in York after defeating the Picts. Usefully bracketed with these two references is the Verona List of 314, which included Picti, Caledoni and Scotti – see Breeze 1982, 153. Though the 297 AD text is often credited to Eumenius – the chief secretary (or “magister memoriae”) of Constantine I - this is an oft-repeated misunderstanding. Eumenius is only known with any certainty to have delivered one panegyric in 297/298 advocating the rebuilding of a school in Lyons. The authorship of the remaining eleven *Panegyria Latini* with which it is grouped (including the one in question) is unknown. For a clear, concise statement on the authorship of the Panegyrics see Rivet & Smith 1979, 78-9 & 438, see also the Eumenius entry in

- Hornblower & Spawforth 1996, 568. An earlier mention (by almost a century) of the term Pict, in the form *Pexa*, occurs in the Ravenna Cosmography, see Rivet & Smith 1979, 196 & 438-40. I am grateful to Isabel Henderson for bringing the Eumenius mis-attribution and the *Pexa* reference to my attention.
9. Horn 1985.
 10. For examples and further references see Schädler 1995 and also Purcell 1995, 23-26.
 11. Schädler 1995, 158ff.
 12. The Constantinian connection is explored in Hartley et al, 2006, cat. 69 (M Henig). See also n.9 above and Table 1 – Roman conflict with the Picts, in Maxwell 1987, 43.
 13. Purcell 1995, 25; Schädler 1995, 81.
 14. Henig, op. cit. in n. 12 (Hartley et al), cat. 69.
 15. Examples include Bishop & Dore 1988, Allason-Jones & Bishop 1988 and Potter 1979.
 16. The Stanway excavations are pending full publication but there is a detailed interim report on the Colchester Archaeological Trust website: <http://www.catuk.org/excavations/stanway.html> and follow the links to the Doctor's grave and the gaming board. For a digest see Crummy 1996, 14 and Crummy 2002. For Tacitus's description of Germanic lot casting see *Germania* (ch. 10).
 17. Vitebsky 1995, 10, quoted in Aldhouse-Green & Aldhouse-Green 2005, 161.
 18. Aldhouse-Green & Aldhouse-Green 2005, 123-4, 150 & pl. 23.
 19. Ibid, 127 & fig. 56. See also Berger 2004, 11-14 for a discussion of symbolic meanings.
 20. See Aldhouse-Green & Aldhouse-Green 2005 for a broad assessment of shamanism in the material culture record and for a circum-polar focus see Price 2004. This analysis of Viking Age shamanism hints at a relationship between gaming and several of the functions of a shaman, including finding game and hunting rituals, divination, instilling fear or confusion in an enemy and bestowing good or bad fortune.
 21. For the inscription as a whole see Collingwood & Wright 1965, no. 91. For the Voepegnus element see Koch 1980. For Veda's putative identities see Birley 1992, 128. I am grateful to both Katherine Forsyth (Glasgow University) and Philip Wise (Colchester Museum) for email discussions about Veda. The plaque was part of a larger monument set up by Veda, for it talks of his setting up 'this gift from his own resources'.
 22. Stead 1967; Stead & Rigby 1989; high status burials continued to be made with accompanying gaming pieces throughout the Roman occupation, e.g. see Meates 1987, 123-44 (30 glass counters and a board found on the lid of

- a coffin). For further gaming sets from 'England' see the Roman Finds Group Finds Archive Spring 2001 at www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk/oldfinds3.html#counters (consulted on 6/3/2006). See also Cotton 2001, 27-31 which explores both funerary and non-funerary contexts for sets of gaming counters.
23. Ralston & Inglis 1984.
 24. Hunter 1998, 337-8; Curle & Cree 1916 and Proudfoot 1980. Other counters await identification in antiquarian excavation assemblages. In his survey of crannogs Munro 1882, 233, listed, from Buston Crannog: 'another small flattened object about the size of a shilling made of a white, compact vitreous substance... rounded on one side... flattened on the other.' Munro suggests it was a brooch setting but it is almost certainly a Roman gaming counter.
 25. Fraser, *ibid*, 337.
 26. Stone discs are reviewed in the context of the later medieval Finlaggan assemblage in Hall forthcoming b.
 27. Stone balls have been recently reviewed by Clarke 2005, 96-104, esp. 98-101. See also Willis in Main, *op. cit.* in n. 18, 332 and Cool 1982, 92-100 (for an analysis of stone balls from several hill-fort sites). For the Walston bronze ball see Allen & Anderson 1903, i, lxxiii, fig.7; MacGregor 1976, ii, no. 360; RCAHMS 1978, 30 and Stevenson 1977, 371. For the Táin references see Mallory 1992, 146.
 28. Hinton 2000, cat. 74.
 29. MacGregor 1975, 86-8 referencing Mackie's analysis of a die from Clickhimin – Mackie 1971, 68.
 30. The most useful study of the parallelopiped dice remains Clarke 1970; see p. 218 for his comments on the respective use of wood and bone. For the Scalloway examples see Sharples 1998, 174, 205. For a summary of relevant finds from crannogs and from Dublin see Earwood 1993, 122-24.
 31. For Abu Sha'ar see Mulvin & Sidebottom 2004. At the appropriate political level Rome considered it a powerful gesture to treat an enemies games as trophies. The gaming board of king Mithridates of Parthia (measuring 4x3 ft and composed of two slabs of precious stone adorned with a moon of gold) was included as a set piece of the triple triumph of Pompey in 61 BC - Pliny *Historia Naturalis*, 37, 13 as quoted in Purcell, *op. cit.* in n. 5, 25.
 32. Tacitus *The Germania*, ch. 24.
 33. Grimes 1930.
 34. For Inveravon see Dunwell & Ralston 1996, 562-65 and illus. 26. For Bearsden see Keppie 2004, illus. 21 and Breeze forthcoming. For Birrens see Robertson 1975. For Inveresk see Hunter in Leslie and Will forthcoming.
 35. Suetonius is quoted in Parlett 1999, 72.

36. For Ballinderry see O' Neill Hencken 1933, who, on artistic grounds, suggested manufacture in the Isle of Man; it is now generally accepted as having been made in Ireland; Ballinderry is situated between Dublin and Limerick, see Graham-Campbell 1980, 23 and Wallace & O' Floinn 2002, 231 and pl. 6: 22. The clear case for equating brandubh (and probably fidcheall if we take into account the Alea Evangelii link – see n. 54 below) with hnefatafl is made by MacWhite 1947. For discussions of other First Millennium AD Irish material see Raftery 1983, 227-31 and 1984, 247-50 and Breen 2003 (but see Hall 2006 fn.15 for a variant view of some of the evidence). Whilst the game/s of tafl as we understand them do not require colour differentiation of the playing board cells nevertheless the high status of the Ballinderry board makes one wonder whether it was not painted as a further reflection of its importance.
37. The story of Cano is quoted by Mac Lean 1997, 174. For the Irish law texts see for example Kelly 1997, 452. The status of gaming was maintained and deployed in gift exchange. I am grateful to Cathy Swift for bringing the 11-12th century Irish text, *Lebor na Cert*, to my attention. It details numerous occasions on which prestigious 'fidchill' boards were given by high-kings to regional kings and by regional kings to others, see Dillon 1962.
38. Ritchie 1987, 61-2. For the Howe material see Ballin-Smith 1994, illus 106. For an additional example from Red Craig house, Birsay see Brundle 2004 and Morris 1989.
39. For Scar see Owen & Dalland 1999, 127-32; for Westness see Kaland 1990; for Balnakeil see Low, Batey & Gourlay 2000. Both Westness and Balnakeil are forthcoming in Graham-Campbell and Patterson and I am grateful to Caroline Patterson for allowing me to read her catalogue entries for these sites.
40. Murray 1951, 55-64; Parlett 1999, 196-204.
41. Close-Brooks 1987, 166 and illus. 28; her comparisons include the pegged pieces from Ballinderry; the Clatchard assemblage also includes a small clay ball similar to one from Traprain Law and a stone disc.
42. Close-Brooks, *ibid*, for the suggestion and references. Further examples and dating – taken across North Britain a date range of 2nd – 9th century can be arrived at – are noted by Hunter 2006, 104-07. For details of Crichtie see Ralston & Inglis 1984, 57 and Callander 1927, 243-46.
43. Crone & Campbell 2005, 42, 53-4 and fig. 30. The initial, more tentative identification as gaming pieces was made by Earwood, 1990, 92 and fig. 13.
44. For examples of piriform pieces see McLees 1990; Rosedahl & Wilson 1992. Arguments for the early development of Perth are outlined in Hall et al 2006.
45. For Birsay see Curle 1982, illus 38, no. 251, where Curle suggests it may have been part of a handle. Illus 38 no. 271 is a hemispherical pegged piece.

- For the Woodperry comparison see Murray 1951, fig. 24c, where he suggests the hnefatafl identification in contrast to the original publication of the piece as for chess, in *Archaeological Journal* for 1896, 122. MacGregor holds with the chess identification and cites it as a knight alongside the two London pieces: MacGregor 1985, 138, fig. 73b. For Cnip see Fraser forthcoming b. The lack of closely dateable contexts for most of these pieces serves to emphasise the problem of their indivisibility of use: some playing pieces may have functioned across more than one type of game.
46. Mail, Cunningsburgh see *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 58(1923-4), 17. For both Mail and Scalloway see Wilson & Watson 1998, 174-5. I am grateful to Susan Youngs for information about the piece in the Ashmolean Museum.
 47. Allen & Anderson 1903, 258, fig. 268. See also Henderson & Henderson 2004, 145, where they suggest Kingoldrum 3 is not necessarily Pictish.
 48. De Heredia Bercero no date, figs 15 & 16, p. 187. Thanks to Mike King for bringing this publication to my attention. For the Irish material see Raftery, 1983 and 1984.
 49. The most recent and wide-ranging analysis of the North Atlantic *papar* is Crawford (ed.) 2002.
 50. For the Garton Slack figures see Stead 1988, 9-29; for the Deal man see Parfitt & Green 1987, 295-98 and for both see Aldhouse-Green & Aldhouse-Green 2005, 166-67. By happy coincidence during the final stages of writing this text Anna Ritchie kindly informed me that in her forthcoming book (Ritchie, Scott & Gray 2006, 62-3) she puts forward the idea of the Mail and Scalloway figurines being shamanistic rather than playing pieces.
 51. Youngs 1983. As this paper went to press a fresh examination of the Anglo-Saxon context for tafl and other games was published – Payne 2006 – which explores some of the issues raised here and adds fresh insights based on textual sources.
 52. Ibid, 862-3.
 53. The post-excavation analysis of the finds from Prittlewell is on-going but see Hirst et al. 2004, 37 and for website updates see www.molas.org.uk/pages/projects/molasp.asp and follow links to Prittlewell Prince.
 54. Ibid, 870 and fn. 3.
 55. For a discussion of the document see Robinson 1923, 69-71, 171-81 and frontispiece illustration, for a discussion of the game see Murray 1951, 61-2. In the early Irish text, *Sans Cormaic*, references are made to the Gospels in connection with the play of fidcheall, which suggests that the game may be equated with hnefatafl in its guise as *Alea Evangelii*. In Ireland the intellectual climate that recognised secular, political realities and fused gaming and religion was clearly established before *Alea Evangelii*. The mid-8th century poems of the monk Blathmac, all of them devotions to the Virgin

- and Christ, at one point analogise Christ spreading the stars of heaven to the pieces on a gaming board (*'fidchill'*), Carney (ed.) 1964, 65, stanza 192.
56. The excavation of St Marnock's Chapel, Inchmarnock took place over four seasons, 2000-04. My knowledge of the gaming boards comes from the interim reports, discussion with the project manager, Chris Lowe (Headland Archaeology) and attending the Inchmarnock Research Seminar, held at NMS in 2003. The final report is forthcoming as Lowe 2006. The post 12th century boards and a number of other later inscribed slates (one as late as the 15th century) suggest that this school function continued with the change from monastic to proprietorial (?) church.
 57. Hall 2001a. The Whithorn board is in Hill 1997, 449: it was recovered from a 12th/13th century burial context, probably redeposited. The site also surrendered two nine men's morris boards from 12th century contexts.
 58. For fox and geese and its variants see Murray 1951, 101-06 and Parlett 1999, 187-89.
 59. For an introduction to the history of astragali and other lots see Parlett 1999, 19-27, on which my account is based.
 60. Meaney 1981, 259-62. For a literary-evidenced discussion of Anglo-Saxon divination and lot casting see Griffiths 1996, 129-46.
 61. Myres & Green 1973, 98-100 & 114-17; see also Meaney *ibid*.
 62. MacGregor 1974, 86-88, fig. 18 and p. 103. See also Henderson & Henderson 2004, 171 and pl. 251.
 63. The Bu Sands phalange was initially published on-line as, Lawrence 2004 and subsequently more fully as Lawrence 2006, 309-18. The skittles analogy follows MacGregor 1974.
 64. For the Jarlshof discs see Hamilton 1956, 84. A perforated bone disc, plain and slightly smaller, was also found; see p. 71, fig. 37.9. For the discs from Scatness see Smith 1883, figs. 1 & 2. For the discs as a group see Ritchie 1997, 41.
 65. Thomas 1963, 45ff and fig. 3, 1-8. Sandstone discs were still in use as gaming pieces (either tables or draughts) in the 16th century – there are at least 15 excavated at Sandal Castle, Wakefield but not included in the final excavation report – Mayes & Butler 1983.
 66. Henderson & Henderson 2004, 199, pl. 292 (Meigle 26); Allen & Anderson 1903, 226 (Kinnell), 232 (Strathmartine no. 2 – which is not spiraliform). For the Dublin spirals see Lang 1988, cat. DW20-21, fig. 22-23 & p. 15.
 67. One of the astragali is preliminarily published in Sharples 2003, fig. 3. The second, with various other pieces of gaming equipment, is forthcoming in the publication of the Bornais mounds 1 and 2, by N Sharples. One could speculate that the chequer designs are symbolic representations of a gaming board, possibly with an amuletic effect as well as reinforcing their use as play items. Compare for example later medieval symbolic representations of boards as lead badges, as discussed in Hall 2001b.

68. Henderson & Henderson 2004, 88, 222 and figs 113-17.
69. De Heredia Bercero nd, cat. 202, 203.
70. Munro 1882, 20-5, fig. 7; Stuart 1865, fig. 5.
71. Hay-Fleming 1909, 412 and repeated in Hay-Fleming 1931, 197-8, fig. 15.
72. Darvill 1988; Watkins 1985.
73. Kluge-Pinsker 1991, fig. 31. See also Weir & Jerman 1986, pl. 17.
74. Kluge-Pinsker 1991, cat. B4 & B9, also p.68-72 (early dating) and 32 (Gloucester board).
75. For the Dublin piece see Lang 1988, cat. DW13, fig.21 and p. 15. For devouring and vomiting see Henderson 1997, esp. 44-50. There are Roman and Celtic precedents for apotropaic coiled snakes in the series of snake bracelets and rings from Roman Britain (and elsewhere), in silver, copper alloy and gold; see for example Johns 1996, 37-38, 44-47 and 109-11. For the Scottish series of Celtic serpentine armlets and bracelets see Anderson 1883, 156-61 and MacGregor 1976.
76. Lang 1988, cat. DW2, fig. 9, plate II & p. 7.
77. The most recent analysis of the Lewis chess pieces is Robinson 2004. Still important is Madden 1832.
78. Pratchett 2005, 100-02.
79. Having struggled with this line of interpretation I must acknowledge that in committing it to print I was influenced by J D Hill's exploration of the nature of late Iron Age society in a talk given to the First Millennium Studies Group at Edinburgh University on 4 April 2006, in which he suggested some more thought-out possibilities for less hierarchical social structures.
80. For the Ulster Cycle see Mallory 1993 and 1992, 146-7. For wider occurrences see, for example, MacWhite 1947, and for an Old Irish charm in the 9th century, the *Codex Sancti Pauli*, which talks of a desire to play board games beside the fire, in the hall see Oskamp 1979 and McCone 1990, 207-09. Note also the appendix entries following for Dan Cuier and Broch of Gurness, for dice and pieces found beside the hearth. The elite pursuit of games was so widespread in Ireland that it became open to satire, see Clancy 2001, 35-6.
81. See, for example, Webster & Brown 1997. An informative recent example is the observation that the design of late Roman shields may have inspired the designs of Anglo-Saxon saucer and disc brooches, in Dickinson 2005, 163, and following Inker 2003, 117-19. In a Scottish context one could refer to, for example, the possible "reliquary occurrence" of high status Roman pottery in the early medieval layers at Alt Clut or Dumbarton Castle, see Alcock 1990, 115-16; but this is not a universally accepted interpretation.
82. See in particular Peacock 1997 and more generally, Greenhalgh 1989. I have yet to see the Aachen throne in person and remain grateful to both Philip Wise and Annemarieke Willemsen for bringing the merels board to my attention.

APPENDIX: AN OUTLINE CATALOGUE OF GAMING EQUIPMENT FROM FIRST MILLENNIUM AD SCOTLAND.

This brief, provisional listing is arranged alphabetically by county and site, followed by the site name, the equipment found and its material, where known the context and date and the key references. It is primarily based on an extensive literature search and requires further work to ensure full coverage of unpublished material in museum collections and in the archives of the NMRS. It clearly fleshes out the skeleton information of tables 1 and 2 and brings out some of the complexities of appropriation and reuse and of (overlapping) chronology that the tables do not address. That said, it is not an exhaustive catalogue but rather a representative sampling. One category not included here is that of painted stone pebbles. These have sometimes been posited as gaming pieces but I am inclined to follow Ritchie in her preferred interpretations of the pebbles as charmstones or decoy-eggs (Ritchie 1972 & 1998 and see the Bu Sands, Orkney entry below for stone eggs which may in fact have more in common with the pebbles than with gaming pieces).

ABERDEENSHIRE

Crichie: Found casually under a large stone (a probable cist cover) nr Bruce's Camp hillfort, thirteen shale, so-called "pin-heads" (but probably hemispherical socketed gaming pieces), dating to first half of the First Millennium AD. Callander 1927, 245; Ralston & Inglis 1984, 57-58.

Cairn, Cairnhill, Monquhitter: A hoard where the finds included two green (with inlaid white spirals) glass balls, the size of small marbles. Anderson 1902, 678 & fig. 4-5. Curle 1932 (296), parallels them with similar finds from Buston Crannog, Mote of Mark and Traprain Law. He suggests probable native manufacture and cites a reference to glass balls for game playing at the time of Hadrian. Dating 2nd-3rd century.

Waulkmill, Tarland: From a burial context beside the stone circle of Waulkmill comes a set of Romano-British glass, plano-convex gaming pieces; suggested date 2nd-3rd century AD. Coles 1905, 216-17; Curle 1932, 390-91.

Dalladies, Kincardineshire: Iron Age unenclosed settlement occupied primarily from early to mid First Millennium AD, with finds including several small stone discs and a carved stone ball: 'a schist-pebble in origin...its decoration roughly executed to form what was intended to be two spirals centred on the opposing faces of the pebbles.' Watkins 1980, 156-9.

ANGUS

Cardean Roman fort, nr. Meigle: Excavations at this Roman fort of the first century AD have produced four glass counters (one fragmentary), see

Robertson forthcoming (ed. Hoffmann).

Hurly Hawkin: A fort, broch and souterrain, extensively excavated and with gaming material possibilities including a ball or marble of green glass with black and turquoise/yellow eyes; a bone peg from the broch floor; a large assemblage of stone discs divided into four size categories (all seen as functioning as lids, grinders or in other manufacturing processes) and several circular, flat pebbles suggested as counters. Henshall 1982, 231-2 no. 55, 63; 234ff and 241 no. 176.

St Margaret's Inch, Loch of Forfar: A crannog discovered in 1781 during drainage works. The finds included 30/40 bone/horn tablemen, oddly described as 'table-men for chess' (Stuart 1866, 140). In a later note Stuart (1874, 33) writes of '30 or 40 disks of bone, some of them plain and others finely carvedAll these are relics of an early period and agree in character with those found in many of the Irish crannogs'. Probably 10th/11th century in date. See also Munro 1882, fig. 7.

ARGYLL & BUTE

Balloch Hill hillfort, Argyll: Several stone discs of indeterminate use were labelled 'counters and burnishers'. Peltenburg 1982, 188.

Dùn A Fheurain, Gallanch, Argyll: Iron Age finds from this dun site include a so-called globular pin-head of bone, which could be a pegged playing piece, and a shale disc. Ritchie 1971, 103 & figs 2.19, 4.40.

Dùn Chonallaich, Argyll: Fort and dun site where a stone gaming board of early medieval date was found in 1983 during surveying of the rubble of the fort wall, SSE of the summit area. The board design is of 6x6 cells and suitable for hnefatafl. The back of the board has been used as a sharpening stone. RCAHMS 1988, 160-61; Ritchie 1987, 62 & fig. 2.

Dùn, Kildonan Bay, Kintyre, Argyll: Amongst several large stone discs interpreted as pot lids there are also two shale and six schist discs thought too small to be pot lids but that 'may have been used in a game'. There is also a rather enigmatic half of a glass paste disc, red, with yellow markings. 3rd-6th century AD in date. Fairhurst 1939, 214.

Dunadd hillfort, Argyll: There are a number of plain discs from this site and also one inscribed INOMINE, the size and shape of which is suitable for a playing piece. The inscription may pre-date the shaping of the disc but its implications for literacy at this important royal power-centre are not incompatible with gaming. Anderson 1905, 311-12 & fig. 32; Lane & Campbell 2000, 253-54 & fig. 7.15. Several other stone discs and small polished pebbles are recorded from the site in Craw 1930, 120-22.

Loch Glashan crannog, Argyll: Two intricately grained wooden ball-like gaming pieces of 6th-8th century AD with evidence of on-site manufacture. Earwood 1990, 92 and Crone & Campbell 2005, 53-54.

Isle of Bute: From an unknown cave site, a bone parallelepiped die with 3, 6, 4, 5 numbering; Clarke 1970, 229, no. 1.

Little Dunagoil, Bute: A fortified coastal site at the southern tip of Bute and adjacent to a large vitrified fort approx dated to 3rd century BC to 1st century AD. Excavation revealed that Little Dunagoil was occupied between the 6th-12th centuries AD, possibly as the secular ‘twin’ site to St Blane’s monastery, close by. Finds from longhouse E included a disc 25mm in diameter associated ‘with a less well finished disc, 15 white chuckie stones and a piece of lignite with an incised pattern ... Had these objects to do with some game?’ Marshall 1964, 39 & plate 27.

Inchmarnock, Bute: Excavations at St Marnock’s chapel on the small island of Inchmarnock, immediately west of Bute, have produced 35 incised slate gaming boards. The majority probably date to the 8th-10th centuries and the majority appear to be for hnefatafl. The two clear exceptions, one for nine men’s morris and the other alquerque, are almost certainly post 1100. Lowe (ed.) forthcoming 2006.

AYRSHIRE

Buston Crannog, nr. Kilmaurs: The possible gaming material unrecognised in the 19th century includes a round glass ‘marble’, variegated blue and white; a plano-convex white glass paste counter (Munro compares this with brooch settings, as they were described at the time in the York Museum); three bone, globular knobs (one decorated) with the remains of projecting iron pins (i. e. pegged playing pieces); a bone knucklebone which Munro describes as of unknown use; and an ornamented ‘button-like’ stone object; Munro 1882, 216-217, 233 & 235.

Dundonald Castle: Excavations on castle hill have revealed phases of occupation spanning the late Iron Age to the 14th century. The gaming material comprises a slate and a stone disc and a shale socketed piece of the “pin-head” variety, see Hunter 2006, 104-07. A predominantly late medieval assemblage of inscribed slates includes three gaming boards, Caldwell 2006, 109-10.

Lochlee Crannog, Tarbolton: Excavations in 1878-79 recovered a plain stone disc (75mm in diam.) and two wooden pins/pegs c. 80mm long. Munro 1882, 105-6 & 119-20.

BORDERS

Cockburn Law, nr Duns, Berwickshire: Hillfort and broch that has produced two stone balls. Cool 1982, 95-6, fn. 4.

Coldingham Priory, Berwickshire: Recent excavations have reinvigorated the idea that the site of the later medieval priory was also that of the early medieval St Abbs monastery. Slender evidence for Iron Age occupation includes a small stone ball, typical of those from SE Scotland, Franklin in Stronach 2006, 411-12.

Fast Castle, Berwickshire: A promontory cliff-top site dominated by a late medieval castle but with occupation extending back to the Iron Age, with finds including two stone balls which Fraser 2001, 178, dated to the 5th-1st century BC.

Bonchester Hill, Hobkirk, Roxburghshire: Early Iron Age hillfort of c. 1st century BC - 2nd century AD, where excavations found 2 stone balls - Piggott 1952, 122 & fig. 6.6 - along with a stone bead or counter with an incomplete (?) perforation, possibly of the mid First Millennium AD, and two perforated discs, Piggott 1951, 122, 129 & fig. 6 no. 3, 4, 5; Cool 1982, 95-6.

The Dunion/Dunian Hill, Roxburghshire: An Iron Age hillfort predominantly dated to 2nd century BC – 2nd century AD. Five stone balls from houses 2-4 and three further balls with no context. Ten stone discs mostly from houses 2 & 3 plus two further unstratified discs. Rideout 1992, 97, 102.

Edgerston, nr Jedburgh, Roxburghshire: Two stone balls from this Iron Age hillfort, Cool 1982, 95-6, fn. 4.

Newstead (Trimontium Roman fort), Roxburghshire: At least 11 plano-convex glass playing counters in black, white, yellow and blue; at least 8 bone examples decorated with concentric rings; at least 5 stone examples and a number of reused pottery pieces and a bone die from the Bath-house well. Curle 1911, 338-9 & pl. XCIII. See also Miscellaneous note below.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

Birrens (Blatobulgium) Roman fort, Ecclefechan, Dumfries-shire: Fort of 1st and 2nd century AD. Principal find a red sandstone board found heavily cracked and re-used as a flooring slab in the Antonine period; measures 390x225x40mm with a board design of approx. 11x15 cells, probably for Ludus Latruncolorum. A further fragment of flooring is described in the report as having a few scratchings. Also found were several stone discs and counters, two bone counters (Antonine) and a lead hemispherical playing piece with a basal hollowing (Antonine). Robertson 1975, 100-03, 108, 130, 135-7. 140 and figs 26, 29.9-10, 44.3, 47.1-3, and 48.6.

Carronbridge, Dumfries-shire: Excavations in the early 1990s investigated a double-ditched, square Romano-British/ Iron Age enclosure and a Roman temporary camp; finds included two shaped sandstone balls (unstratified). Clarke 1994, 269.

Borness Cave, Kirkcudbrightshire: Excavation of a cave site with Romano-British occupation was carried out in the 1870s; finds include several short bone pegs for which no identification was given but a speculation on clothing fasteners made. They would be suitable as gaming pegs. A domed, hemisphere of bone with ring and dot decoration was also found and again remained unidentified – it is almost certainly a gaming piece. Corrie et al 1874, 493, 496-7 & pl. xvii & xxii.

Mote of Mark, Rockcliffe, Dalbeattie, Kirkcudbrightshire: Excavations at this late Iron Age vitrified fort site on the SW coast found what was interpreted as the head of a jet pin (Curle 1914, 161-2 & fig. 15.11). Its size, shape and socket suggest it is a gaming piece (cf similar from Crichton, Aberdeenshire). The most recent work at Mote of Mark has now been published and includes a further jet piece which the excavators interpret as a pin-head, also a glass boss comparable to an example from Dundurn, Perthshire (see entry below) and a group of five pebbles interpreted as gaming pieces: Laing and Longley 2006, 93-6 & 101-2.

Whithorn Priory, Whithorn, Wigtonshire: Monastery and early church site of 6th-16th century. Excavated finds include seven antler gaming pieces – five with cylindrical bases cut from tine tips and two barrel-shaped pieces cut from tine sections, dated to c. 845-c.1050 (Hill 1997, 487 & fig. 10.132); several stone gaming discs (including one cross-marked) and three stone boards (one double-sided) appear to be post 11th century; a single hnefatafl board incised on stone, from a late (post 1200) context in the graveyard was probably displaced from an earlier context; two fragments of possible boards from an earlier context (Hill 1997, 447-9); a group of lead discs catalogued as weights, including three of 9th century date, could include gaming pieces (two cross incised discs amongst them, one of which is suggested could be a counter, Hill 1997, 392-3) and three convex domes of burnt bone (1) and animal tooth (2) dated to c. 730-845 AD.

EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE

Bearsden Roman fort, Dunbartonshire: Excavations at this Antonine Wall fort produced a fragment of an incised, stone board (for Ludus Latruncolorum) of 8x5 surviving cells and at least four gaming counters (two plano-convex glass, one bone – with concentric circle ornament – and a re-used sherd of Samian). Keppie 2004 pl. 21 & Breeze forthcoming.

FALKIRK

Camelon Roman fort, Falkirk: Excavations in 1900 at this Antonine Wall fort recovered 12 plano-convex, glass playing counters, six of them white and six of them dark blue. Anderson 1901, 397.

Camelon Round-house, Falkirk: Excavations at his native site recovered two plano-convex gaming counters, one dark blue and one white, both found on the floor of the house near the east-interior postholes and dated to 1st/2nd century AD. Proudfoot 1978, 125. Note that the glass and colours are the same as for the Roman fort at Camelon.

Mumrills Roman fort, Falkirk: Antonine Wall fort excavated by Macdonald & Curle, who note (1929, 549) the absence of glass gaming pieces from the fort, with only one playing piece, fashioned from a Samian sherd.

FIFE

Clatchard Craig, Newburgh: A Pictish hillfort of the 6th-8th centuries. Excavated gaming finds include a fired clay ball from the fill of rampart 3 and a hollow bone knob and a short broken pin, conventionally interpreted as a pinhead but re-identified by Close-Brooks as a pegged gaming piece. Close-Brooks 1986, cat. 105, 114.

St Mary's Chapel / Hallow Hill, St Andrews: During the excavation of the long cist cemetery in 1860 the finds included 'an ornamental table-man of bone', both sides decorated with a triple-strand plait of interlace (c. 6mm wide), one side has a central pellet (d: 4mm). Fleming 1909, 412.

HIGHLAND

Bower, Stemster, Caithness: Stray find from this broch site of a sandstone disc incised on one side with a coiled snake (within a dimpled border) and on the other by a curvilinear jumble. Thomas 1963, 47, fig. 3.7.

Everley broch, Keiss Bay, Caithness: Finds included 'two rudely formed discs of slaty stone', Anderson 1901, 143.

Hillhead Broch, Keiss Bay, Caithness: two bone paralleloiped dice, one from an unknown context and numbered 3, 5, 4, 6 and one with very worn numbering; Clarke 1970, 229, no. 2 & 3.

Road Broch, Keiss Bay, Caithness: Finds from this broch included a sandstone disc bearing crude, inscription-like designs incised on both sides - Barry 1895, 274, figs 2 & 3, later said to also bear the figure of a bird - Anderson 1901, 137 & fig. 18.

Shirza Head, Keiss, Caithness: Finds from this broch site included several slaty stone discs of various sizes. Anderson 1901, 145.

Wester Broch, Keiss Bay, Caithness: Finds from this broch included several slaty stone discs of various sizes, most too large to be gaming pieces, possible uses as bakestones and lids is noted. Anderson 1901, 121.

Yarhouse, Caithness: Excavated in the 1860s, Anderson (1890, 140) records that this broch site, along with those at **Brounaben, Old Stirkoke** and **Bowermadden** produced several stone balls, faceted and approx. 80mm in diameter. He also notes several stone discs, most of them large enough to be lids.

Portmahomack/Tarbat, Easter Ross: On-going excavations at this early medieval Pictish monastery with finds including a slate with a grided design which may be a gaming board (pers. comm. Cecily Spall & Martin Carver).

Broch of Dùn Mor Vaul, Tiree, Inner Hebrides: Primarily a broch site but with occupation from the mid First Millennium BC through to the Norse period. Finds from the broch (dating to the late decades of First Millennium BC to the mid 2nd century AD, with post-broch occupation down to the late 3rd century AD) include: a solid bone, damaged paralleloiped die with surviving numbering of

3, 4, 4, 2, and a fragment of a second die, both from the site annex (Mackie 1974, 144 and fig. 19; Clarke 1970, 231 nos 19-20); various stone discs and counters; of the flat circular/oval stones Mackie says (1974, 135-6) they are: '... too small to have served any practical purpose. They seem best explained as counters for a game.' A glass counter (lost) of plano-convex form and opaque white in colour, decorated with three green spots and a red triangle (Mackie 1974, 148) is probably a Roman glass gaming counter and twelve pot sherds re-fashioned as discs or counters can be interpreted as gaming pieces, Mackie 1974, 151-2.

Dùn Ardtreck, Skye, Inner Hebrides: A small D-shaped drystone stronghold excavated in 1968 and with a first millennium BC to c. 500 AD chronology. From phase 3 (c. 2nd century AD – c. 500 AD) came two small, rounded, water-worn pebbles with a flat underside, possibly used as gaming counters. Mackie 2000, 393.

Balnakeil, Sutherland: Viking burial revealed by wind-blow in sand-dunes. The burial was that of an 8-13 year old boy with grave goods including weapons, a needle-case and fourteen conical, bone gaming pieces. Low, Batey & Gourlay 2000 & Graham-Campbell & Patterson forthcoming.

SOUTH LANARKSHIRE

Crawford Roman fort: With 1st and 2nd century occupation; excavated in 1961. From the debris overlying the Flavian Principia comes a hemispherical lead object, possibly a playing piece or a weight (1 uncia) re-used as a playing piece; found with it was a bun-shaped piece of white vitreous glass paste. Maxwell 1972, 186 no. 3, 189 no. 11.

Hyndford, nr. Lanark: A crannog site investigated in 1898, yielding a large Roman assemblage. Possible gaming pieces comprise a highly polished stone disc 75mm in diam (probably too large for a gaming piece) and a 'small hemispherical object of red enamel' (glass?) 'in form and size like a half-shell of a hazel-nut.' Munro 1899, 380 & fig. 3, 385.

Walston: Findspot (unknown circumstances) of a bronze ball, 37mm in diameter, cast in two halves, each half decorated with three incised coils; one trio terminates in bird-heads (and higher in tin content) and the other in simple knobs. MacGregor 1976 ii, cat. 350; Allen & Anderson 1903, fig. 7; Stevenson 1977, 371.

LOTHIANS

EAST LOTHIAN

Broxmouth: Iron Age hillfort (Hill 1982). From the Late Assemblage (c. 100BC-100AD) a bone, domed piece - Cool 1982(96 & fig.1.3) - which she compares to jet 'domes' used as pin-heads, from Traprain Law; identification as a gaming piece is a strong possibility as suggested by Hunter 2006. Of the

several stone balls from the site Cool 1982 (95-6) refutes the traditional identification as sling stones for these and similar examples from Traprain Law, Kaimes Hil, Craigs Quarry Dirleton, Castlelaw, Braidwood, Bonchester, Cockburn Law, Edgerston, N Berwick Law and St Germaines, in favour of a gaming interpretation (a boules type game).

Craig's Quarry, Dirleton: Iron Age hillfort of 3rd century BC – 2nd (?) century AD; excavations in 1958 found 12 stone balls from the floor of house 1, adding to the three found in earlier trial excavations, Piggott 1959, 70; Piggott 1952, 195-6. See also Cool 1982, 95-6, fn. 4 (who notes only the 12 balls). Also found was a sawn-off antler tine, c. 30mm high, with a conical form suitable for a gaming piece; the surfaces have been worked into narrow facets, Piggott 1959, 76 no. 5 & fig. 6.5.

Inveresk Roman fort, Musselburgh: Antonine fort which has produced a stone board for Ludus Latrunculorum, see Hunter in Leslie and Will forthcoming.

North Berwick Law: Two stone balls from the hillfort. Cool 1982, 95-6, fn. 4.

St Germaines, Tranent: Iron Age settlements occupied from the First Millennium BC to the Roman Iron Age. The only items of gaming note are a stone disc, 'too small to have been a pot lid and it seems more likely that it was a gaming counter', Gleeson 1998, 240 no. 822 and the stone balls already noted, Cool 1982.

Traprain Law, Haddington: Hillfort and later settlement, with large-scale Roman interaction and a huge range of gaming material. Curle's first report (1915, 139ff) records several small sandstone discs (p. 191 & fig. 38) and notes an imperforate ball of glass (clear, greenish and with six ornamental discs of red and white opaque vitreous paste) which he compares to two similar items from Monquhitter cairn and Buston crannog and also a glass disc from Mote of Mark. Curle 1916 (128 & fig 38) records 21 playing pieces (13 stone discs, 3 Samian counters, 3 Roman glass counters and 2 water-worn pebbles). Curle 1920 (72, 83 & fig. 11 and 88 & fig 18) records 24 playing pieces (10 stone counters, 6 quartz pebble playing-men, 2 re-used Samian counters, 4 shale/jet pieces and 2 pebbles) and 1 clay and 3 stone balls. Curle 1922 records a further 7 playing pieces of stone, slate and jet. Cree 1923 records 13 small discs and Cree 1924 (272-3) records 7 further clay balls and reviews all 80 playing pieces, more than 50% of them attributed to the first half of the 4th century. Three stone balls were found by Bersu's 1947 excavations – Close-Brooks 1983, 222 & fig. 98, 41-3. A single sandstone ball and a possible limestone counter were recorded in the late 1990s – Rees & Hunter 2000, 432, where they suggest that the chronology of such balls should be extended to the Roman Iron Age given the nature of the activity on Traprain Law.

MIDLOTHIAN

Braidwood: Hillfort and associated round houses, where 3 stone balls were found unstratified in Hut 1, assumed to be early Iron Age. Stevenson 1950, 10.

Castlelaw: Iron Age hillfort of late First Millennium BC – early First Millennium AD, excavated in the early 1930s, the finds including 3 stone balls

from the occupation area of Section II. Childe 1933, 385-6; Cool 1982, 95-6 (who gives seven balls in fn. 4).

Cramond Roman fort, Edinburgh: a second – early third century AD fort overlooking the Forth & Almond Rivers. Gaming material comprises six discs/counters (one of ivory, one a re-used Samian sherd, one a re-used flue tile, two of shale and one of sandstone) mainly associated with the Bath House (Holmes 2003, 120-21 & illus. 19); a small bun-shaped lead object with a pierced base; a bone die (Antonine); a bone counter with concentric circles decoration (Antonine) and a second such counter (Severan), Rae & Rae 1974, 195-97.

Kaimes Hill, Ratho, Edinburgh: Kaimes Hill is a volcanic intrusion that has attracted multi-period occupation including Iron Age round houses and ramparts. The finds include a flattened, fired clay sphere with fingernail-impression decoration on which Hunter (2005, 105 & illus. 39) comments: ‘flattening and the undecorated side imply it was designed to sit on a surface for use as a gaming counter... for a board game rather than a marble or boule.’; six stone discs (including probably pot lids and whorls) and one stone counter, two stone domes and 32 stone balls catalogued as gaming material, Clarke 2005, 98-101.

WEST LOTHIAN

Inveravon Roman fort, Linlithgowshire: Antonine Wall fort excavated in 1991 with gaming material comprising two chipped stone discs and 15 fragments of a sandstone board measuring 360x220mm when re-fitted. One side bears an incised grided pattern of at least 16x13 cells (cf. Birrens). The opposing face has a pattern of seven compass drawn circles. Dunwell & Ralston 1991, 562 & 565 & illus. 26.

ORKNEY ISLANDS

Bu Broch, Burray: A putative stone gaming counter comes from phase IIIb – the abandonment and decay of the broch; Hedges 1987a, fig. 1.32 & SF cat. 122.

Bu Sands, Burray: A stray find of a cattle phalange incised with two Pictish figures, dated to the 7th-9th century on art-historical grounds. Lawrence 2006. From Bu Sands, again a casual find, also comes a stone egg. This is one of only five from Scotland – two each also from Cairnhill, Monquhitter, Aberdeenshire and Traprain Law – which Hunter 1993, 331-33 has suggested may mimic certain seabirds eggs and have an amuletic function. A gaming function remains a possibility (but see Appendix introduction).

Brough of Birsay, Mainland: Extensively excavated Pictish and Norse settlement. Gaming assemblage comprises an unstratified cylindrical antler piece bearing ring and dot ornament suggested by Curle as a handle fragment of Norse date; three bone globular headed “pins” with iron shanks from the

lower Norse horizon and one from the Pictish horizon (probably pegged playing pieces); several stone discs too irregular to be spindle whorls; femur head playing piece from area II (mid-Norse); fragment of a whalebone gaming board from area I; a conical/piriform antler playing piece; a barrel-shaped stone object no identification given but its shape and size make a gaming piece feasible; a round pebble incised with lines and an ox phalange with two perforations from the Pictish horizon. Curle 1982, cat. 251, 259-62, 527-8, 537, 539, 546, 591, 271, 274, 275, 594, 595 and 272. Rescue excavations recovered a siltstone disc interpreted as a gaming piece and a broken, silver, spatula terminal identified as a possible stylus could also be a “pegged” style gaming piece. Hunter 1986, 192 & fig. 86.5202; 187 & fig. 81. The surface find of a slate, incised gaming board was allocated via Treasure Trove to Orkney Museum in 2004, Campbell 2005, 94-5.

Broch of Birsay, Mainland: A globular pin-head (which could be reinterpreted as a gaming piece). Stevenson 1955, 292.

Red Craig house, Birsay, Mainland: An incised gaming board; broken, with a surviving grid of 7x5 cells. Dated to the Late Iron Age/Pictish period and found in a dump of organic material that formed part of an occupation level of a cellular house. Graffiti on one side of the boards includes a small “D” shape. Brundle 2004.

Buckquoy, Mainland: excavations at the Pictish and Viking age farmsteads of the Buckquoy promontory on the north side of the Bay of Birsay in 1970-71 recovered three sandstone gaming boards (for hnefatafl), two unstratified and one from phase IVc of the mid-Norse farmstead. Sterckx 1973; Ritchie 1977; Ritchie 1987, 60-63. A further fragment was found in a late Pictish house at Buckquoy: Morris 1983, 128-31.

Broch of Ayre, St Mary’s Holm, Mainland: Two parallelepiped bone dice, one with slightly concave long sides, the other with slightly convex. The latter has numbered end terminals intact. One is damaged and was found at the lowest level of an outbuilding passageway; numbering: 3, 4, 5, 6 or 3, 6, 5, 6. the second is unstratified; numbering: 3, 4, 5, 6. Sutherland-Graeme 1914, 42, 43, 51 & fig. 10; Clarke 1970, 230, nos. 6-7.

Gurness Broch, Mainland: A range of possible gaming equipment was identified in the 1980s re-evaluation of this broch site excavated in the early 1930s. The material is spread through the broch, post-broch, Pictish and Norse periods. They include: two complete and two incomplete globular bone pin-heads of the type it is possible to re-interpret as pegged gaming pieces, Hedges 1987b, fig. 2.26, SF cat. 119-122, Hedges 1987c, 17; two bone parallelepiped dice both with numbering 3, 4, 5, 6 (one found in wall debris inside the broch and the other in an associated layer SE of the central hearth), Hedges 1987b, fig. 2.36, SF cat. 191, 192, Hedges 1987c, 19, Clarke 1970, 230, nos. 11-12; one possible bone and two ivory playing pieces, one of them piriform with an acorn-

like terminal, comparable to the pieces from Sandwick Bay and Brough of Birsay, Hedges 1987b, fig. 2.36, SF cat. 193-95, Hedges 1987c, 19; two circular pebbles (one white, one black) and a polished granite disc, all unstratified, which may have been used as counters, Hedges 1987b, fig. 2.46, SF cat. 302-04; and several incised/graffiti-marked stones, the one that is most probably a gaming board is a laminated piece of sandstone with four groups of incised parallel lines, possibly a L. Latrunculi type design, Hedges 1987b, fig. 2.53, SF cat. 310.

Lavacroon, Orphir, Mainland: Fieldwalking of a mound near Earl's Bu, Orphir recovered a finds assemblage with a Norse focus and including an undecorated stone disc similar to one from Jarlshof and suggested to be a gaming piece. Batey 1986, 293 & illus. 8.17.

Broch of Lingro, Scarpa, Mainland: A bone parallelepiped die, now lost, reportedly and not reliably found with two coins of Crispina. Clarke 1970, 231 no. 13; Anderson 1883, 244.

Howe, Stromness, Mainland: Gaming material finds from the broch element of a complex multi-period site includes two boards, one an incised siltstone board of 7x7 cells (probably 7th-8th century, possibly 9th); seven stone and bone counters/discs and a cut and trimmed piece of bone that may be a gaming piece (Late Iron Age). Ballin-Smith (ed.) 1994, 177,188 & figs 92 & 106.

Broch of Burrian, North Ronaldsay: Excavated in 1870-71 but not fully published until Macgregor 1974. Seven items were catalogued by Macgregor (1974, nos 111-117) as various types of bone pin-head, one of which – no. 113 - he describes as a possible gaming piece by comparison with material from the Frisian terps. Dating is uncertain, c. 5th-9th centuries AD (?). Other material includes a small, irregular sandstone ball (fig 20); three parallelepiped dice (one unstratified with no clear numbering, one fragmentary with numbering surviving as 6, 2, 2 and one restored with numbering 3, 4, 5, 6); three incised astragali (one with a crescent and z-rod and a mirror symbols) and three variously conical antler tine gaming pieces (fig 16, & p. 86-88). See also Clarke 1970, 230, nos. 8-10; Traill 1890, 355-6; Thomas 1963, 48, Henderson & Henderson 2004, 171 & pl. 251.

St Tredwell's Chapel, Papa Westray: An unstratified bone parallelepiped die from a structure beside the chapel. Numbering is 3, 6, 4, and 5. Clarke 1970, 231, no 15.

Midhowe Broch, Rousay: Finds include a walrus-ivory "pin-head" perforated longitudinally and vertically to receive an iron stem (which can be re-identified as a pegged gaming piece); 'the proximal end of an ox-femur roughly dressed to a bobbin-like shape' (possibly a gaming piece); a carefully sawn-off tine point (again, possibly a gaming piece) and a vertebra playing piece. Callander & Grant 1934, 489, 490 & 495.

Westness, Rousay: A Viking farmstead and cemetery (on the site of an earlier Pictish cemetery). One of the oval or boat-shaped male graves included twenty-

five bone gaming pieces, one cylindrical and the remainder hemi-spherical. Kaland 1990, Graham-Campbell & Patterson forthcoming.

Peter Kirk, Newark, Sanday: an unstratified bone die with the numbering 3, 6, 5, 4. Clarke 1970, 231, no 14.

Pool, Sanday: A broch site with the finds including a cattle phalange incised with a crescent and v-rod symbol. Henderson & Henderson 2004, 171 & pl. 251; Hunter forthcoming.

Scar, Sanday: Viking boat burial of the late 9th -10th century. Finds include 24 lathe turned, whalebone, hemispherical playing pieces, including a “king” piece. Owen & Dalland 1999, 127-32.

Stywick Bay, Links of Skail, Sanday: A bone paralleliped die with numbering 3, 5, 4, 6. Antiquarian find from a probable broch site. Clarke 1970, 231, no. 17.

Unknown provenance, Sanday: a bone paralleliped die with numbering 3, 6, 5, 4. Clarke 1970, 231, no. 16.

PERTH & KINROSS

Dundurn hillfort, Strathearn, Perthshire: Excavations at the early medieval hillfort revealed a 6th-9th century AD occupation sequence. None of the material has been published as gaming equipment but one of the pieces prompts the speculation: SF 26, a decorative glass boss of 8th – early 9th century date; approx. 15mm high and comprising a boss of swirling white and dark brown glass inlaid with vitreous discs and smaller bosses of white and blue spirals. It is described as having had a copper alloy tube or rod set in its base to fix it to a larger object; could it have been a pegged playing piece? Alcock et al. 1989, illus. 14.26 and pl. 216.

Newmill souterrain, Bankfoot, Perthshire: a souterrain associated with a round house with occupation dated as late as the 9th century AD; the souterrain was destroyed c. 200 AD. The finds include a fragment of slate from the upper fill of a posthole bearing an incised grid pattern indicative of a gaming board. Watkins 1980, 190 & fig. 11E.

Strageath Roman fort, nr. Muthill, Perthshire: Fort of the 1st and 2nd century AD. Excavated finds include several pierced lead and stone discs and two of baked clay, from the Antonine layers. Some of these may be fishing weights. The stones are probably local river pebbles from the Earn. Also two spherical granite balls (possibly sling stones) and 24 plano-convex glass counters (for accounting or gaming or both) mostly of Antonine date (colours: 7 blue, 17 white; diameters 13-20mm). Frere & Wilkes 1989, 157, 188, 190 (discs), 187 (balls) and 196, 200- 201 & fig 102 (glass).

SHETLAND ISLES

Burland: Excavation of a craft-working building on an islet beside a broch has recovered small stone and steatite gaming counters. The building dates to c.

400-900 AD. See Moore & Wilson in prep.

Clickhimin: Broch and later site, with twelve stone counters - Hamilton 1968, 80, 84 & figs 35, 147 – and a fragmentary bone paralleloiped die with incomplete number – Hamilton 1968, 116, 118 & fig. 49.5; Clarke 1970, 231, no. 18.

Dunrossness, Lerwick: A sandstone disc incised with s scrolls on one side and a zig-zag pattern around concentric rings on the other. Thomas 1963, 47, fig. 3.1.

Gletness, Nesting: an unstratified surface find of a soapstone disc incised with a quadrilobate setting of four peltas. Thomas, 1963, 47, fig. 3.4; Corrie 1933, 82-3 & fig. 13.

Jarlshof, Sumburgh: Extensively excavated multi-period site with important Pictish and Norse levels, with significant amounts of gaming material. Several plain discs and gaming board fragments were initially reported in PSAS LXX and further incised slates, stone discs and a perforated femur head are reported in Curle 1936a, 261, 266-269. All the material: various sized discs (plain and incised) and incised gaming boards were drawn together by Hamilton 1956, along with a 9th century or later conical playing piece, a cuboid bone die (both pl. 37), a steatite disc fashioned from a steatite vessel sherd and a bone tablesman of the 11th or 12th century (fig. 87). For an old find of a sandstone disc bearing a simple incised cross/saltire on one side see Thomas 1963, 47, fig. 3.5. An additional counter from Jarlshof was donated to the National Museum in 1968 – PSAS 101, 293 no. 18. See also Curle 1936b; Thomas 1963, 45-46 & figs 3.2 & 3.8; Henderson & Henderson 2004, 86, pl. 113-116

Mail: Unstratified from the broch of Mail, a conical stone with an incised hooded face. PSAS 1924, 17 (where ‘Broch of Main’ is given) & Wilson & Watson 1998, 174 & fig. 112.

Ness of Burgi, Scatness: Sandstone disc incised with key pattern on one side and on the other a small, partially worn square with a line running out of each corner terminating in a spiral. A second disc is carved on one side with a square of 3x3 cells, each cell cut by a left-right diagonal line. Thomas 1963, 47 & fig. 3.3; Henderson & Henderson 2004, 88 & pl. 117; Smith 1883, 296-7.

Old Scatness: On-going excavations at this broch site have produced a range of gaming equipment, predominantly stone counters of round and domed forms. Dockrill, Bond & Turner forthcoming.

Scalloway: Excavation at this broch and later site has produced an assemblage of 36 gaming pieces (Sharples gives 41 but I have taken out the 5 painted pebbles – see opening comment): 5 paralleloiped bone dice; 5 stone, conical gaming pieces; 1 polished cattle tooth; 1 modified cattle phalange; 7 stone balls; 9 small rounded pebbles; 7 stone counters and 1 pottery counter. One of the conical pieces is incised with a hooded face (cf Mail and Ashmolean Museum), one has geometric incisions on the top and the other three are plain (and variously damaged). Sharples 1998 (ed.), 172-80.

Sandwick Bay, Unst: A conical, cetacean bone gaming piece with a perforated base to receive a peg, probably Norse, 9/10th century. PSAS 66, 216, fig. 3.

Sandwick North, Unst: A Norse farmstead with 11th-13th century AD finds assemblage, including 8 fragments of soapstone and schist gaming boards, identified for hnefatafl or nine men's morris, along with a single soapstone counter/disc, one side decorated with an incised pattern. Hansen 1996 and Hansen forthcoming.

Underhoull, Unst: From the Norse phase farmhouse comes several fragments of gaming boards and three playing counters. Small 1967, 244 & fig. 16.

STIRLING

The Fairy Knowe, Buchlyvie, Stirlingshire: Site of a timber round-house (400BC-AD 250) and a broch (occupied and destroyed in the pre-Antonine period). The finds date predominantly to the 1st/2nd century AD and the gaming material comprises a fired clay ball (Willis 1998, 332 no. 475); a plano-convex white glass counter (Hunter 1998, 337-8), and three stone discs and a flattened –sphere sandstone ball (Clarke 1978, 379, 382, 386 and 388).

WESTERN ISLES

Dun Cuier, Barra, Outer Hebrides: Excavations at this dun dated principally to the 5th-7th centuries AD recovered four different types of dice/gaming piece. Three of the pieces came from the central hearth area. The material comprises, five paralleloiped bone dice, two conical pieces cut from antler tines (one is identified as a toggle and the other as a gaming piece – it was found on the paving slabs to the north of the entrance), several stone discs and groups of small pebbles scattered widely and which Young describes as ‘probably for use as “chuckie” stones’. Six of the bone pieces are similar to paralleloiped dice but with less than four sides on each piece bearing numbering and displaying differing methods of numbering, though one may be a true paralleloiped die (Clarke 1970 cat 27). Young 1956, 300, 304, 317, 319-20, 324 & fig. 13. 5-10. Clarke 1970, 232 nos 22-27.

Cnip, Lewis, Outer Hebrides: An Iron Age roundhouse/wheelhouse of the 1st century BC -1st century AD. From phase 2 of the central area of wheelhouse 1 came an antler gaming piece of tapering conical form, terminating in two thin prongs. Hunter forthcoming a. The size and style of the piece certainly suggests a gaming purpose. The precise form is unique for this date – the closest parallels are somewhat later chess pieces.

Bac Mhic Connain, Vallay, North Uist, Outer Hebrides: Wheelhouse site from where comes an unstratified bone paralleloiped die; Clarke 1970, 229, no. 4. Possible gaming pieces include a single, un-socketed femur head (possibly unfinished?), a globular so-called pin-head and a possible unfinished example, originally excavated in the 1930s but poorly provenanced. Hallén 1994, 213, 215.

Foshigarry, North Uist, Outer Hebrides: Wheel-house complex, finds include: a bone parallelepiped die from Site C and numbered 3, 6, 4, 5, Clarke 1970, 230, no. 5; two antler femur heads with basal sockets (possibly pegged playing pieces) and a 'socketed pin-head' (or pegged playing piece?), Hallén 1994, 213, 215.

Machair Leathann, North Uist: A wheelhouse site with finds including a cetacean disc, ovoid in section, decorated with ring and dot, Beveridge 1911, plate facing p.227.

Sollas, North Uist: A wheelhouse and other Iron Age structures were excavated in 1957 and published in 1991. The gaming material includes a probable bone peg, two ceramic discs and a bone piece. Campbell 1991, 158, 164 & illus 21-2.

Drimore Machair, South Uist, Outer Hebrides: A Norse hall-house where excavation recovered a bone/ivory gaming piece of conical form with a socketed, flat base. Maclaren 1974, 17 cat. 37.

Bornais, South Uist, Outer Hebrides: Mounds 1 and 2 of this complex multi-period site are pending publication but the gaming material (courtesy of Niall Sharples) includes two bone parallelepiped dice, two decorated astragali, a tall, pointed conical piece, a smaller conical piece and five irregularly conical pieces. Dating is likely to span 2nd century AD – 8th century AD. Sharples 2003, fig. 3. 1-2 & 9; Sharples forthcoming.

SCOTLAND – UNKNOWN PROVENANCE (?)

- In the Ashmolean Museum, a face-incised, truncated conical figurine comparable to the two pieces from Mail and Scalloway. Three ring and dot motifs on the top of the head. Presumed to be Scottish by analogy with the Scalloway and Mail pieces. Youngs forthcoming.
- In the Hunterian Museum a solid bone parallelepiped dice with 3, 5, 4, 6 numbering; Clarke 1970, 232 no. 21.

MISCELLANEOUS

Perth Museum & Art Gallery holds the James Roberts collection, amassed by James Roberts from field-walking excursions across Scotland during the first half of the 20th century. It was donated to the Museum in 1962 and is registered under the number 6/1962. It includes the following poorly provenanced material:

- Two sandstone discs from the Culbin Sands, Morayshire.
- One small sandstone ball from Rink, Roxburgh (collected in 1903).
- Four complete and one half plano-convex glass counters, various sizes. Three are black, one is white and the half is blue. All but one of the black counters are from Newstead, collected between 1900-1910, the fourth is almost certainly from Newstead.

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CHAPTER 2.2

‘Board Games in Boat Burials: Play in the Performance of Migration and Viking Age Mortuary Practice’, in *European Journal of Archaeology* 19.3 (2016), 439-455

Board Games in Boat Burials: Play in the Performance of Migration and Viking Age Mortuary Practice

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This contribution explores an aspect of boat burials in the second half of the first millennium AD across Northern Europe, specifically boat burials that included equipment for board games (surviving variously as boards and playing pieces, playing pieces only, or dice and playing pieces). Entangled aspects of identity, gender, cosmogony, performance, and commemoration are considered within a framework of cultural citation and connection between death and play. The crux of this article's citational thrust is the notion of quoting life in the rituals surrounding death. This was done both in the service of the deceased and in the service of those wanting to remember the deceased, the argument distills around the biographical trajectories or the different social and individual uses to which people put ostensibly simple things such as gaming pieces.

Keywords: Migration period, Viking Age, afterlife, board games, boat burials, ship burials, performance, play, remembrance

CASTING-OFF: BIOGRAPHY AND CITATION

This article explores one of the manifestations of play: board games. As with all manifestations of play, to fully understand board games we have to understand the social contexts in which they are deployed. Games have play, symbolic, and metaphorical values and their amenability to cultural transfer and change makes them a worthwhile case study of cultural biography (not hagiography, as cautioned by [Burström, 2014](#)). The biographical lens adopted for this paper is that of cultural citation, drawing in particular on its active and performing aspects, implied in the philological trajectory set out by [Barnhart \(1988\)](#). Suffice it to say here that the

concept of citing and citation is deeply rooted in European culture, linked with performing and doing. A deep-seated, flexible concept of summoning can be seen in the archaeological record in the form and use of material culture and in the contexts in which it is found. Memes ([DeMarrais et al., 2004](#); [Lake, 1998](#)) and biographical entities with agency, itineraries, and trajectories ([Hahn & Weiss, 2013](#)) form the deeper background of complex human materiality and cultural behaviour. Here the focus is on the roles of board games, whose biographical trajectory gave them funerary performative and symbolic values. The period concerned is the Viking Age but inevitably, given the theme, I refer back to Late Roman/

Vendel/Migration period examples and contexts as these helped to shape Viking Age cultural forms (as has been so astutely argued by Hedeager, 2011). The Scandinavian burial rite in the Viking Age and the immediately preceding Late Iron Age is heterogeneous and changing (Schönbäck, 1981; Crumlin-Pedersen & Thye, 1995; Olsen et al., 1995; Schön, 1999 [including a fifth century Continental Saxon boat burial with gaming pieces]; Ballard et al., 2003; Carver, 2005; Gerds, 2006; Larsson, 2007; Svanberg, 2003). Within it gaming pieces and ships are not automatically associated with each other. They are a particular element in specific circumstances, linked to actual or aspiring maritime identities, something also reflected in the survival of board games in shipwrecks and their use on board the ship, mentioned in several Icelandic Sagas and other historical sources (e.g. Caldwell et al., 2009). In life, strategic thinking and fighting ability were fundamental to success on the gaming board and such success accentuated the status of a warrior. Placing the gaming kit in the grave served to remember or commemorate that status and skill and to make it available for the deceased in the afterlife.

DEATH AND PLAY

The association of board games with, particularly, elite burial rites is as old as the invention of such games in the Neolithic of the Near and Middle East (Finkel, 2007; Woolley, 1934), in part due to their links with divination (Becker, 2007; Culin, 1891; David, 1998: 13–20; Finkel, 2007; Gilmour, 1997: 171–73; Shimizu, 2014). The early establishment of the idea of board games (for divination and play) as appropriate for the burial of warrior elites may have been crucial in establishing them as a cross-cultural meme, a

persistently recurring reification of an enduring idea.

The Celtic and Germanic/Scandinavian worlds clearly enjoyed the materiality of the Roman game of *ludus latruncolorum* ('the game of little soldiers', a strategic capture game; see Hall & Forsyth, 2011) judging from the numerous boards and playing pieces recovered from Late Roman/Iron Age graves (e.g. Jacobsen & Wiener, 2013). In non-Roman hands *ludus latruncolorum* developed into the *tafl* group of games, including *hnefatafl* (see below) (Hall & Forsyth, 2011; Solberg, 2007; Whittaker, 2006). The argument presented here suggests that through their occurrence in burial contexts board games helped to cite the social order and privilege of the living. They also expressed the aspiration for it to continue in the afterlife and their appeal is such that they came to signify identity, primarily for male elites. Inclusion of gaming equipment in graves is not limited to any single ethnicity, although local variations of a game may well have added to a sense of ethnic identity in support of the package of funerary rituals being followed. But it does seem to have more in common with an elite, warrior lifestyle (male or female) across northern Europe. Warrior mentality is certainly projected by the burial evidence generally rich in weapons. However, that same burial evidence also reveals cross-cultural value and use by travellers and traders. None of these categories of occupation are mutually exclusive: the grave assemblage from the farm at Egge in Norway is that of an individual who may have been both a trader and a warrior (Sørheim, 1997; see Table 1).

Across the Baltic region, the tradition of boat burial is certainly not restricted to males but the inclusion of board games in such burials is almost exclusively so. Solberg (2007: 267) has observed that the signal of female burials with gaming

Table 1. Summary of the board-game evidence from boat burials in the Late Roman/Migration periods and the Viking age (c. 150–1000 AD)

Country	Site	Date	Gaming kit	Burial type	Gender	Disturbed	Reference	
Sweden	Valsgårde	c. 630–680	63 playing pieces	Mound 6, inhumation	Male	No	Ardwisson 1954; Ardwisson 1977, 79–80; Ardwisson 1983; fig. 2a–b;	
		c. 600–640	36/7 playing pieces (bone), 3 die, with board	Mound 7, inhumation	Male	No	Herschend 2001, 68–73; Carver 2005, 304, table 4	
	Vendel	c. 560–600	31 playing pieces (bone) with board	Mound 8, inhumation	Male	No	Ardwisson 1983; fig. 2a–b	
		c. 750–800	36 playing pieces	Mound 13, inhumation	Male	No		
	Vallentuna, Rickeby	c. 720–750	2 playing pieces	Mound III, inhumation	Male	Robbed	Sjösvärd et al. 1983, 138, 142–49	
		c. 720	15 playing pieces	Mound VII, inhumation	Male	Robbed		
			c. 560–600	17 playing pieces	Mound XII, inhumation	Male	?	Sjösvärd et al. 1983, 134
			c. 560–600	2 playing pieces	Mound XIV, inhumation	Male	?	
			c. 600–650	800 fragments giving a minimum 48 pieces, board fragments and 3 dice (1 with a runic inscription)	Mound, Construction 1 – cremation	Male	No	Williams and Rundkvist 2008
			c. 600–800	gaming pieces in upper cremation	Mound, double cremation	?	No (?)	
Skamby, Östergötland		800–900	23 playing pieces (amber)	Mound – inhumation (with stone setting)	Male (?)	No	Nordahl 2001; Klevnäs 2007	
		c. 900	23 playing pieces (bone)	Mound, grave 1	Male	Robbed		
Gamla Uppsala	Årby, Uppland	c. 900–920	Wooden board for nine men's morris	Grave	? Female	Uncertain	Arbman 1940 in Cederlund (ed.) 1993, fig. 24 & p. 35–36, 58–9.	
		885–975	3 playing pieces and 5 fragments of 1 die	Mound, cremation	Male	No	Pettersson & Wikell 2013a, no pagination; Pettersson & Wikell 2013b, 77–88.	
Norway	Gokstad, Sandefjord, Vestfold	c. 900	1 playing piece (horn) and 1 edge of a double-sided wooden board for hnefatafl & nine men's morris	Mound, inhumation	Male	No	Nicolaysen 1882, 46–47	
		779	18 ivory playing pieces and 17 glass (12 blue, 4 yellow, 1 black)	Mound, inhumation	Male	Robbed	Shetelig 1912; Solberg 2007: 267;	
	Åkra, Karmøy	900–930	3 bone gaming pieces	Grave, inhumation	Uncertain	No (?)	Solberg 2007, 267	
		950–1000	15 bone playing pieces and 2 bone dice	Mound, cremation	Male	No	Sørheim 1997	
	Myklebostad, Eid, Sogn og Fjordane	800–900	6 bone playing pieces and 3 dice	Mound, cremation	Male	No	Shetelig 1905; Shetelig 1917;	
	900–1000	Gaming pieces observed in situ but not preserved	Grave, inhumation	Male	No	Müller-Wille 1970; Solberg 2007: 267		

Continued

Table 1. Continued

Country	Site	Date	Gaming kit	Burial type	Gender	Disturbed	Reference
	Hauge, Gloppen, Sogn og Fjordane. Gjemmestad, Gloppen, Sogn og Fjordane	900-1000	Amber gaming piece	Grave B 5405, inhumation	Male	No	Shetelig 1917; Müller-Wille 1970; Solberg 2007: 267
		900-1000	14 gaming pieces and 1 die, all bone	Grave B 11390, inhumation	Male	No	
Denmark	Ladby im Fyn	900-1000	Gaming board (frag. including corners)	Mound, cremation	Unknown	Yes	Sørensen 2001
Germany	Hedeby, Schleswig	800-900	Gaming board (12 fragments)	Mound, inhumations	Male (3)	Yes	Arents & Eisenschmidt 2010, 1 (174-5) & 2 (123); Hilberg & Kalmring 2014
Poland	Weklice, Elbląg	150-300	Possible blue glass gaming piece	Grave 452, inhumation	Female	Yes	Lund-Hansen & Bitner-Wróblewska 2010: 304-05
Iceland	Baldursheimar	900-1000	24 bone gaming pieces and 1 die	Mound, inhumation, (ship is putative)	Male	No	Kálund 1882
Estonia	Saalme, Saaremaa Island	c. 750 c. 750	75 playing pieces (whale bone) 300 + playing pieces (whale bone and walrus tusk [2]) and 6 dice	Saalme I inhumations Saalme II inhumations	Male (7) Male (33)	No No	Peets <i>et al.</i> 2010; Peets <i>et al.</i> 2012
Russia	Gnězdovo, near Smolensk	800-1000	Several playing pieces	Mound, cremations	Male & Female	?	Duczko 2004, 105, 155-88
Ukraine	Chernaja Mogila, Chernigov	800-1000	Many playing pieces, 31 beaver astragali and a beard-puller figurine	Mound, cremation	Male	?	Duczko 2004, 238-41.
	Karovel, Chernigov	800-1000	Several playing pieces	Mound, cremation	Male	?	Duczko 2004, 245
France	Ile de Groix, Brittany	900-1000	19 bone playing pieces and 2 bone dice	Mound, cremation	Male	No	Du Chatelier & Le Pontois 1909; Müller-Wille 1978; Price 1989
England	Sutton Hoo	600-630 600-630	5/6 playing pieces (ivory) Uncertain	Mound 1, inhumation Mound 2, inhumation	Male Male	Robbed Robbed	Youngs 1983; Carver 2005, 153-77
Scotland	Westness, Rousay, Orkney	800-900	25 bone playing pieces, 1 die	Boat-shape stone setting – inhumation (including boat planks)	Male	No	Kaland 1995
	Scar, Sanday, Orkney	875-950	22 whalebone playing pieces	Mound (?), inhumation	Male (2) Female	No	Owen & Dalland 1999

boards (and not restricted to boat burials) is much stronger in the Late Roman/Migration period than it is in the Viking Age. The earliest known female boat burial with a possible gaming kit is the Roman Iron Age example from Weklice in Poland (Natuniewicz-Sekula & Seehusen, 2010: 288–89). There are a couple of female burials potentially with games (notably Årby: Cederlund, 1993; see Table 1) but the only certain Scandinavian, Viking Age female-gendered grave assemblages with a board game element seems to be the double cremation, female and male, of Gnëzdovo in Russia (Duzcko, 2004: 105, 155–88; see Table 1) and the elderly woman in the triple burial, with a male and child, found at Scar,

Sanday, Orkney (Owen & Dalland, 1999: 152–53) (Figure 1). However, in the Scar burial the gaming pieces were understood by the excavators to have been so placed as to imply a direct association with the mature male of the group and we cannot be certain that the pieces committed to the Gnëzdovo cremation were not intended for the man only.

At the time of writing at least 36 examples of boat burials with board games have been identified and are summarily catalogued in Table 1. This includes the spectacular burial and location of Baldursheimar in Iceland (Kälund, 1882). Its initial poor recovery in 1860 and brief reporting in 1882 suggest a boat that has survived in poor condition (perhaps only

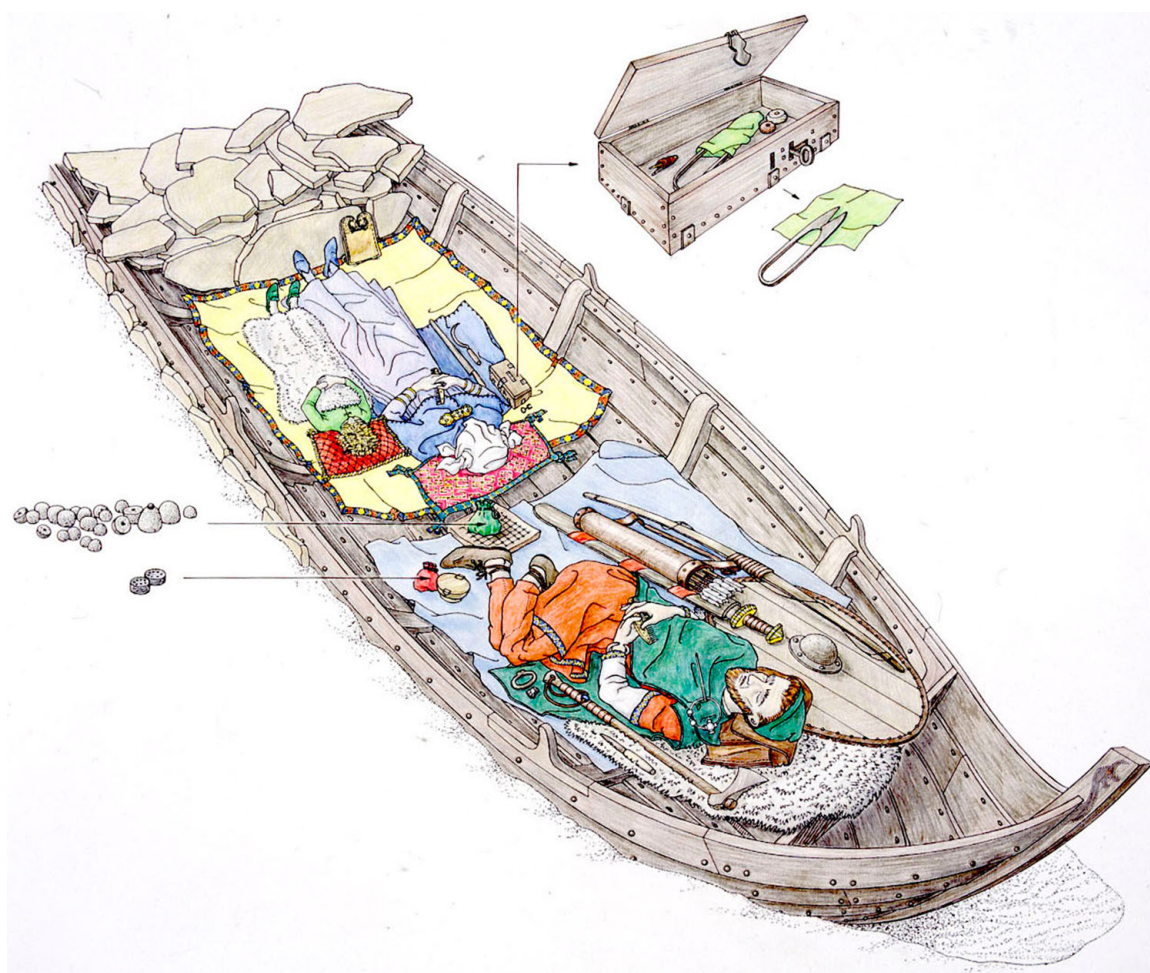


FIGURE 1 Reconstruction drawing of the Scar boat burial on Sanday in Orkney. By permission and courtesy Historic Scotland.

as rivets?) which was missed at the time of discovery. The table lists a mixture of playing pieces, dice, astragali, and boards (usually as fragments).

The playing pieces most likely relate primarily to a version/versions of *hnefatafl*, in which a centrally placed king with defenders must try to reach the edge of the board and safety to win the game. All pieces move orthogonally as the rook does in chess. The dice may be related to an unknown variant of this game but more probably they were linked to a different game (perhaps the backgammon ancestor: *tabula/alea*) or possibly to a divinatory rite. The boards represent at least two games, *hnefatafl* and nine men's morris. In the case of the Gokstad ship (built around AD 890 and buried under a mound at Sandefjord, Vestfold, Norway; Nicolaysen, 1882: 46–47) they feature on either side of the same board. Such double-sidedness is a tradition as old as board games (see de Voogt et al., 2013: 1718). The limited survival of gaming boards from boat burials in the Scandinavian homelands does not necessarily indicate that they were rarely included in the burials; rather the wood was readily consumed by cremation fires or decayed in the conditions prevailing in inhumation burials.

COSMOGONY, REMEMBRANCE AND THE AFTERLIFE

Several perspectives on the burial traditions of Scandinavia have articulated their performance quality and motivation. Ekengren (2006: 112) concludes that the rituals being followed were not a straightforward 'expression of everyday social realities' but rather 'a stock of objects invested with distinctive meanings through the mortuary practices.' The meanings of these objects deployed in the grave were not entirely reliant on their

'lived-world' functions but contingent on 'the interactive and creative process of ritual, and the convergence of different symbols and contexts in the moment of ritual performance that the meaning of the objects was created' (Ekengren, 2006: 113). Jennbert's analysis of objects deployed in a mortuary setting includes gaming equipment (particularly that from the Ladby ship burial, Denmark; see Table 1); the author suggests that the inclusion of board games articulated a key rhetoric of active remembrance, that of negotiation and communication. The rituals were metaphorical, 'material parallels to skaldic poetry' (Jennbert, 2006: 137), an idea first put forward by Andrén (1993: 49–50) who also observed that Snorri Sturluson had a similar thought, writing that women were 'poetically paraphrased by all kinds of women's clothes, golden objects, precious stones and glass beads'. The idea was developed for the interpretation of the Sutton Hoo ship burials (Carver, 2000, 2005) and extended into drama and myth-making through the performance aspects of funerary rituals (Price, 2010, 2014; Price & Mortimer, 2014; Tolkien, 2014). Carver has suggested that burial practice was not practice but rather the resourced enactment of 'a statement which can emerge at any time from a hidden mind-set' and that an appropriate analogy for how this might be understood and articulated is poetry. So understood, poetry is a prime medium of citation, one that can be carried over into material culture. Burial 'is a palimpsest of allusions, constructed in a certain time and place [...] It is the allusions themselves that must first be studied' (Carver, 2000: 37). Price reminds us that these fabulous burials are about the treatment of society's elites and that these elites include an element of spin or propaganda in their game of retaining power; however, the burials' rootedness in drama and poetry

was not limited to elite practice but entangled the whole of society (Price, 2010: 148–51). The funerary rituals were not poetry but they were poetical and shared reference points in their citations of life and afterlife expectations.

Acts of the Living, Gifts for the Dead

It may seem too obvious, even banal, to say that the practitioners of the burial rites under discussion did not know what happened at death; they knew what they wanted to, desired to or hoped might happen, but uncertainty reigned and what happened ‘none can report with truth, not lords in their halls nor mighty men beneath the sky’ (Tolkien, 1983: 60, glossing *Beowulf* lines 50–52, the ship funeral of Scyld). An interpretation of the meaning of gaming equipment in the burial rite does not have to be the search for an either/or explanation (see Ballard et al., 2003; Williams, 2010). Thus equipping the deceased in burial would have seen them provided for in afterlife both as an act of remembrance and to make sure the dead were not lacking in anything, ensuring that they would move on and not — disturbingly — be drawn back to the living world. The leaving of mourning gifts in or around the grave would have also been fuelled similarly by commemoration and anxiety (for details see Price, 2010).

The furnishing of burials to reflect the deceased’s life and the afterlife to come is readily deductible from the prevalence of gaming equipment in daily life. Its specific association with ships and boats is supported by gaming pieces and boards (Hall, 2007) and by other associations between ships and play (Gardęła, 2012: 241; Grimm, 2014; Pentz, 2014: 221–22, 226). The magical power of ships is attested by the ship of the gods, *Skidbladnir*. This

vessel is mentioned in several poetic texts of the thirteenth century AD and said to belong to both Freyr (as in *Skálskaparmál*) and Odin (as in *Ynglinga saga*); it had the ability to be folded up and placed in a pouch or purse (Faulkes, 1998; Hollander, 2007; Simek, 2007). A range of early and late medieval shipwrecks testify to the use of board games on board ships and boats as do various sagas and romances (Caldwell et al., 2009: 166–67). *Króka-Refs saga* tells us that board games as high-status gifts were transported by ship (for a translation and discussion see Caldwell et al., 2009: 180; Murray, 1913: 444). It seems a valid speculation that board games were probably a staple element of a ship’s equipment, reminding us of how life on board ship could be a microcosm of that on land — in both contexts board games allowed social bonding, supported diplomacy, and relieved boredom — and how ideas moved through the movement of people, not just the narrowly defined exchange of goods.

The habitual practice of play may be sufficient (but see below) to suggest its incorporation in the rituals of remembrance to be enacted when sending the dead to the afterlife, recalling a life lived and shaping the afterlife to come. As Herschend (2001: 73) put it, the complexity of boat burials ‘structure[s] both reality and fiction’. Within the overall boat burial ritual, board games added resonance because of the performance value of games, which added to the drama inherent in funerary rituals and also linked into the wider cosmology of Viking beliefs. Arwidsson’s study (1983: 76) of the evidence from Valsgårde suggested to her that the grave-ships were loaded as they were in life, for a long journey; hence game boards, dice, and playing pieces, with other personal possessions, were placed amidships. This could have been in a real expectation of an afterlife journey or

a metaphor that dealt with the fear of the unknown. Herschend (2001: 68–73) developed this further by interpreting the chamber of the Valsgårde 8 mound (see below) as a representation of the hall in which the deceased had lived and was now departing on a new journey (see also Williams et al., 2010 and Skamby discussion below). In a similar vein, Larsson's study of Swedish boat burials finds a reciprocity in their layout with the spatial organization of farmsteads (Larsson, 2007: 280–81) and detects a deeper concern underpinning both, with cardinal directions playing a significant role. The reciprocity was further entangled by the phenomenon of boat parts being used in the construction of a wide range of buildings and monuments and in the use of the boat/ship-shape as a design model (Duzcko, 2004: 87; Larsson, 2007: 52–3, 285–86; Pentz, 2014: 224).

The presence of gaming pieces within boat burials does not have to automatically or only signal the placing there of the deceased's possessions. Such depositional acts can be signals of mourning but also of victory. In Saalme, Estonia, the remains of two mass-inhumation ship burials dated to around AD 750 have recently been excavated (Peets et al., 2010, 2012). Over 300 gaming pieces and six dice were recovered, mostly scattered amongst the 33 male skeletons arranged four layers deep. A discrete group was found around the head of Skeleton XIV and an apparently complete set (the only one identified) in the lap of skeleton XXXII. The king piece was designated by its larger size with an iron tack pinned through the top; uniquely it appears to have been placed in or at least very close to the mouth of skeleton XIV (Figure 2). Does this designate the leader of the dead war band or perhaps a captured 'king' or leader taken in battle? Such understandings certainly evoke the rhetoric of a warrior lifestyle and warn us that the more

mundane notion of the burial rite recreating the living space of the deceased can never entirely explain the evidence.

Additional performative dimensions to the placing of gaming pieces are hinted at in other boat burials. This seems to be a deeply rooted phenomenon or tradition and can be detected in one of the earliest examples, the Migration period Mound 8 of Valsgårde, dated to the late sixth century AD (see Table 1). Valsgårde 8 is a ship burial with a male inhumation and includes a board and 31 pieces; most of these were grouped together in the central area of the board (not currently locatable, Herschend *pers. comm.*) but there remains a hint that they were laid out as if a game were in progress. Indeed it appears to show a winning position, the probable king piece having been positioned on the bottom right corner square (Figure 3). Herschend (2001: 71) wonders if the opponent of the deceased was those left alive (and possibly their future generations), who watched the rituals performed. This may have been a factor involved in leaving the mound open for several years. The opponents may also have been envisioned as supernatural: either one of the gods or warriors already in the afterlife. In the context of a burial rite overwhelmingly associated with male warriors (or aspirant warriors), the inclusion of a gaming board certainly acts as a citation of the warrior lifestyle. Just as in life, where success on the gaming board — which needed strategic thinking as well as fighting ability — could be seen to confirm and add to the status of an accomplished warrior, in death the inclusion of a board game signalled ability and success as a warrior and by implication preparedness for the challenge ahead. Strategic skill in life was not only the preserve of the warrior; merchants and farmers also needed to be successful, as was proposed for Egge in Norway.



FIGURE 2 *The king piece and its 'owner' from the Saalme II boat burial.*
Photographs by permission of Liina Maldre.

The ninth-century Skamby boat burial in Sweden (see Table 1) included 23 well-preserved amber gaming pieces, possibly laid out on the top of the grave's cover or roof, perhaps as a mourning gift (Rundkvist & Williams, 2008). It has however also been suggested that at Skamby the landscape and ceremonial contexts may refer to a belief that the dead in some way

continued to occupy the grave (Williams, 2014; Williams et al., 2010), implying that the deceased used the gaming pieces while they waited for their ship to the afterlife to come in (an anonymous referee reminded me that the provision of entertainment for the deceased is recorded in Ibn Fadlan's description of a Rus' funeral. The deceased is placed in a temporary

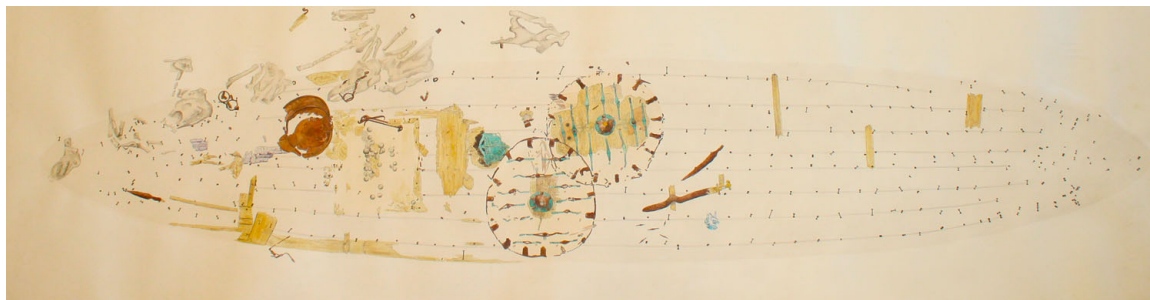


FIGURE 3 *Layout of the Valsgärde 8 ship burial.*

Photograph by Frands Herschend, by permission and courtesy of Museum Gustavianum, University of Uppsala (with thanks to John Worley).

chamber grave provisioned with food, drink, and a musical instrument, before being cremated on his ship). The finding of 15 playing pieces and 2 dice in a bowl-like shield boss within the already cited boat burial at the farm of Egge in Norway is thought to represent the means by which the playing pieces that survived the cremation ceremony were carried to the mound for interment. There is a clear effort to witness, collect and bury here that emphasizes a drama, a transformative performance around the deceased (see Williams, 2010: 72–74). The drama of the ceremony could, of course, be on a much bigger scale, as the dragging of the Ile de Groix ship along a prescribed route (Price, 1989: 64/382–65/383) or the leaving open of the Valsgärde 8 mound for several years illustrate (Arwidsson, 1954; Herschend, 2001: 68–73).

Entropy and Cosmology

The board game evidence is significant in revealing the complexity of the burial performance and how the vestiges of those performances become entangled in the entropy effects of the archaeological record. Thus, on a pragmatic level, the finding of the gaming pieces inside the cauldron of the Ile de Groix burial in Britanny (see Table 1; Price, 1989: 64/382–

65/383) can be read as a consequence of a board and pieces being placed on top of the cauldron, their remains falling inside as a consequence of the cremation. It is also conceivable that the association of the cauldron with other objects (including gaming pieces) served as a cosmological citation. Cauldrons have a deep symbolic value in European folklore (witness, for example, the Gundestrup cauldron, found in a Swedish bog; Farley & Hunter, 2015: 262–71), and in Scandinavian mythology the *Hymiskviða* tells the story of the giant Hymir's cauldron stolen by Thor and Týr, to make beer (Davidson, 1993; Larrington, 2014: 74–79). So the combination of cauldron and gaming pieces in the Ile de Groix assemblage may, amongst other things, have worked to invoke or cite heroic feasting and entertainment with the gods.

Clearly when the adopted burial rites were enacted the audience or celebrants comprised mourners and (in the case of victory in battle) enemies but this does not mean we should dispense with a consideration of the afterlife. The best-known textual reference to Scandinavian gaming is found in *Völuspá*, the story of the world from creation to Ragnarök (most recently and authoritatively translated by Larrington, 2014). It may have been composed at the time of Iceland's conversion to Christianity or it may be a pre-Christian text

that became Christianized through several redactions (Nordal, 1973; Pétursson, 2006: 316–17). Gaming in *Völuspá* embeds a suggestion of divination, a seeking to know what was to come (for a related, wider discussion of fate, see Taggart, 2013: 29–32). At the dawn of creation the Aesir play with golden playing pieces on a splendid plain, until three giants steal them. Ragnarök arrives and afterwards the Aesir, on a new plain on a newly created Earth, discuss the past and speculate that golden playing pieces will be found in the grass. The conventional interpretation holds that the playing of board games was an expression of merri-ness and idleness in a youthful paradise that amounted to a golden age, one shattered by the giants and their theft, with fate then following its course until Ragnarök destroys all. A second golden age is ushered in by a newly created paradise symbolized by the rediscovery of the golden gaming pieces. However, as Teichert (2014, following the scepticism expressed by van Hamel, 1934) has shown, this picture does not match what *Völuspá* tells us; indeed we are not dealing with a paradise but a world full of violence and conflicts, introduced by the gnawing world serpent at the foot of *Yggdrasil*. The notion of a golden age is an interpretation introduced by the Christian and Classicizing writer Snorri Sturluson in his *Gylfaginning* (Faulkes, 2005), his prose paraphrase of *Völuspá*. Seduced by the easy link between a golden age and the golden gaming pieces he essentially inverts the meaning of the board-gaming motif; in *Völuspá* it is a motif of violence and conflict. Both mentions prefigure conflict, first with the giants and then with the reappearance of the serpent in the new world. Just as golden treasure is deceitful and not to be trusted so play and merri-ness cannot last. This is consistent with the poem's sense of decay and destruction,

embedded in the moment of creation of the universe.

This cosmological reflex may not have been restricted to the funerary/afterlife arena: Pennick (1984: 10) interprets the Ballinderry gaming board, with its carved head handle, as a possible depiction of the giant Ymir from whose broken body the world was fashioned. This would make the central, defined king point of the board the navel. So when board games are included in burials it is not inconceivable that they are citing a pastime in life that can articulate remembrance but also perhaps an awareness that the afterlife will not be a time of relaxation only and that fate is still to be contended with. The inclusion of gaming equipment may signal the loss of one game but suggest other games — for the deceased and for the living — are about to begin.

CONCLUSION

This case study of performance through the citation of living to aid living-on in social and individual memory as well as in some kind of believed-in (and lived-in?) afterlife (see Williams 2001, 2006, 2013) has explored the link between board games and boat burials in the Viking Age and the preceding Migration period. The practitioners were part of an organic enterprise that developed a social, public realm which sought continuity between past and present; in other words, fashioning the present to give meaning to the past and the future. Burial with gaming pieces is a persistent phenomenon across time and culture and this is partly a question of non-linear diffusion, partly of reference or citation. The gaming equipment cites the playing of games as a gesture of entertainment and status and it cites the cultural contexts in which the play takes place — at home, on board ship, and in the hall of

the gods. The placing of gaming equipment in the grave mirrors the two worlds of the living and the dead, representing both with pragmatism in the manner of a *document-vérité*, metaphor, and poetic licence. To extend Carver's metaphor (2000, 2005) — that the furnishing of a grave is a form of poem — then the playing of a game is a stanza in one version of that poem. Stanza though may be a limiting trope to express this and we may do better to think of the gaming kit as providing the structuring rhythm of an enacted poem, and the board as a microcosm of carefully positioned movements articulating by degrees skill, strategy, victory, loss, triumph, and a desire to see and control the future. Cosmology and the quotidian are entangled in death as in life.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Jeux de société: jeu et performance dans les pratiques funéraires de l'époque des grandes migrations et de l'époque viking

Cet article a pour but d'explorer un aspect des sépultures à bateaux de la seconde moitié du premier millénaire apr. J.-C. en Europe septentrionale, et plus particulièrement les tombes à navires qui contiennent des éléments de jeux de société (conservés sous forme de plateaux et de pièces à jouer, de pièces à verser seules, ou de dés et de pièces à jouer). L'examen porte sur les aspects du jeu qui entremêlent des notions d'identité, de genre, de cosmogonie, de performance et de commémoration dans un cadre formé par les références culturelles et les liens entre la mort et le jeu. L'idée essentielle derrière l'usage de ces références consiste à invoquer la vie dans la mort pour servir le mort tout autant que ceux qui désirent le commémorer, et ces notions se concrétisent autour des divers usages auxquels on a pu soumettre des objets apparemment tout simples. Translation by Madeleine Hummler

Mots-clés: période des grandes migrations, époque viking, au-delà, jeux de société, sépultures à bateaux, tombes à navires, performance, jeu, commémoration

Brettspiele in Schiffsbestattungen: Spiel und Aufführung in den Grabsitten der Völkerwanderungszeit und der Wikingerzeit

Dieser Artikel versucht, einen Aspekt der Schiffsbestattungen der zweiten Hälfte des ersten Jahrtausends n.Chr. in Nordeuropa zu untersuchen, namentlich die Bootbestattungen, die Elemente von Brettspielen (verschiedentlich als Spielbretter mit Spielsteinen, nur als Spielsteine oder als Würfel und Spielsteine erhalten) enthielten.

Stichworte: Völkerwanderungszeit, Wikingerzeit, Jenseits, Brettspiele, Schiffsbestattungen, Bootbestattungen, Aufführung, Spiel, Erinnerung

CHAPTER 2.3

‘Board of the Kings: The Material Culture of Playtime in Scotland AD 1-1600’, in Teichert, M (ed.) 2014 *Sport und Spiel bei den Germanen, Nordeuropa von der römischen Kaiserzeit bis zum Mittelalter*, Berlin & Boston: De Gruyter (= Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde Band 88), 163-196

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Mark A Hall

Board of the Kings: the Material Culture of Playtime in Scotland AD 1–1600

This paper is an introduction to board and dice games in medieval Scotland, set within a European historical context and a theoretical context that addresses both leisure and play.

Theorising play

Leisure-time, to varying degrees is an element of culture shared by all levels of society. It is the free time (or the time not devoted to one's occupation and survival needs) at the disposal of an individual or group of people and so can be deemed to be a measure of the strictures on time applied within a given society. An alternative name for leisure is recreation, which indicates the pursuit of a pleasurable activity or the process of an individual's entertainment and relaxation. The linguistic root of this word is the same as re-create, which in its modern form is spelt the same, with the addition of a hyphen. This is significant because it imbues recreation with one of its key meanings, that of repetition, a re-use of or re-fashioning of reality through the pursuit of one's pleasurable desires. It carries then a sense of recreating the world through the reordering of reality – in terms of the present study – on the gaming board or through the role of the dice. Leisure, of course, covers much more than gaming and in the context of medieval society it includes hunting pursuits and horseracing but both are outside the scope of this present paper, though aspects of them are dealt with by other chapters in this book. The other key word to which board and dice games are subordinate is play. Play is primarily a free activity bounded by its own space and time where it can unfold its own inner order. An older view of play argued that it pre-figured culture and civilisation, as the archetypal opposite of that which is rational, controlled and systematised, as outlined by Huizinga's *Homo Ludens A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1950). It is a view that remains useful in some of its detail but that has been for many superseded by a more functional approach which sees forms of play as embedded and interwoven with social structures. It thus has a greater concern with particular forms of play and their social contexts as typified by Callois's *Les jeux et les homes* (1958).¹ This paper explores board and dice games as clear examples of play forms with cultural and cross-cultural contexts.

¹ See Borst 1991, p. 195–214 for an insightful medieval case study.

Games and play have a complex role in the everyday for they are, as enacted or performed, or even manufactured, part of the every day but in their purpose are meant to enable an escape from the everyday. Play can be viewed as a performed metaphor of the human condition, both mirroring specific situations in life (as between competing ethnic and national groups for example) and the broader structures of human existence – the struggle to know what is coming. Board games, like other forms of play, are both a quotidian, everyday practice and an area contested as the preserve of social elites. The amenability of play to these and other approaches is testimony to the ambiguous nature of play, in exploration of which Sutton-Smith² identified seven key, inter-disciplinary, overlapping narratives about the meaning of play which he labelled as the rhetorics of play. They are:

- progress
- fate
- power
- identity (at a community level)
- the imaginary
- self-absorption
- frivolous

Three of these rhetorics (progress, the imaginary and the self) Sutton-Smith classifies as modern or individual rhetorics and the other four as ancient or communal ones. As a psychologist, Sutton-Smith pays particular attention to the role of play in children's lives, including the assumed rather than proven notion that play is adaptive and developmental for children (and animals, but not adults), a notion that often misses the point of play's enjoyment, which chimes well with philosopher John Gray's observation that "the point of playing is that play has no point"³. The child's play context is explored further in Hall forthcoming. In the present paper I shall not dwell on the notion of distinguishing child from adult play save to refute the still common idea that play – including board games – can be safely dismissed as a child's even a childish activity of little consequence. Whether played by child or adult in the medieval period board games were fundamental to the enjoyment of life, to a sense of identity, to a sense of rebellion or subversion and to an engagement with metaphor and a desire to manipulate the future. The "ingrainedness" of play is in part rooted in its forming a constituent element of sacred work or ritual duty in pre-Industrial societies.⁴ Although by the close of the medieval period play had begun to be seen as a separate space in opposition to work (e.g. through the evolving work ethic of the Protestant Reformation, which sought to establish work as a Christian virtue and play as its

² Sutton-Smith 1997.

³ Gray 2002, p. 196.

⁴ See Turner, 1982, p. 31–32.

enemy⁵) it was essentially the Industrial revolution that turned play into a leisure commodity, de-coupling it from its interconnection with work, and their joint support of ritual and myth.⁶

A compendium in time and space

Let us now examine some of the key pieces of evidence for the pursuit of board games and dicing. I shall adopt the convenience of chronology and begin with the Picts and their contemporaries. Currently there is no evidence for the playing of board games in Scotland before the Roman phase of the Iron Age. The earliest board games in Scotland appear to be Roman ones. Archaeology shows that they were being played on and around Hadrian's and the Antonine Wall, including the forts at Corbridge and Bearsden. The evidence suggests that these games or at least the gaming equipment penetrated indigenous society. The best example is the elite, Pictish burial from Waulkmill, Tarland, Aberdeenshire, an accidentally discovered and poorly recorded cist burial beside a stone circle. The finds included seven brownish quartzite counters, four dark blue glass counters and two vari-coloured counters. The style of these pieces makes them typical Roman gaming counters. The group is dated broadly to the first half of the First Millennium AD. There seems no doubt that the incumbent was a Pict, and a consumer of Roman material culture. Tarland is the most coherent and substantial group of Roman counters from non-Roman contexts in Scotland, perhaps the equivalent of the small group of rich burials including gaming equipment from the south of Britain, including and St Albans and Welwyn, Herts. In Scotland several other pieces are known from various sites including Camelon, Buchlyvie and Traprain Law, all of them demonstrative of contact with Rome.⁷ The Scottish evidence fits into a wider European pattern, a pattern that demonstrates that board games can be seen as a Roman introduction to Northern Europe.⁸ The games were not simply copied but adapted and innovated upon. Thus it can be deduced that the Roman game *Ludus Latruncularum* probably gave rise to at least two indigenous variants, *fidcheall* and *gwyddbwyll* in Ireland and Britain and *hnefatafl* in the Scandinavian world.

When dealing with the early Picts and their interface with Rome we have a good reminder of how gaming can tell us about wider societal issues. One of the earliest epigraphic references to the Picts is made in a gaming context. In 1983 a copper alloy *pyragus* or dicing tower was found in the early 1980s near Vettweiss-Froitzheim Germany⁹,

⁵ See Norbeck 1971.

⁶ See Turner 1962, p. 32.

⁷ For references to the Roman – Iron Age material see Hall 2007.

⁸ Hall and Forsyth 2011, which focusses upon Britain and Ireland.

⁹ Horn 1985; Hartley et al 2006, p. 135.

bearing two inscription, including a hexagram – the style typical of those used in the Roman games of *XII Scripta* and *alea* – which can be translated as ‘The Picts defeated, the enemy wiped out, play without fear!’ The cup may date to the early 4th century and refer to the Roman campaigning in Britain in the late 3rd-early 4th century. Such inscriptions were part of a wider, literate culture that invoked the Picts as a stock enemy against whom Rome proved herself. Chadwick cites several panegyrists who did this and suggests that the Roman use of the word *Picti* occurs first in connection with praise for Constantius Chlorus and his victory over the tribes in Northern Britain.¹⁰ At a slightly later date chief amongst these panegyrists was Claudian (c. 370–c.410 AD), who used the Picts very much as a trope: “The Pict has been overcome and Britain is safe [...] He conquered ... the well-named Pict [...] Thule was warm with the blood of the Picts” are just three of his constructions.¹¹ Additional confirmation of campaigning against the Picts at the end of the 3rd century is suggested by a Roman gaming board, for *alea*, from Trier and one from the catacomb of SS Marco and Marcellino, Rome. Both bear inscriptions referring to victories against the Parthians and the Britons, both dated to 297 AD.¹² The second Froitzheim inscription runs around the upper edge of the sides and back and translates as ‘Use happily, may you live’ – a form of good luck message appropriate to the playing of a board game. I have recently considered this evidence and that more generally for First Millennium AD Scotland in more detail elsewhere¹³ and here I will confine my comments on the games played by the Picts and their neighbours, to the *tafl* group, of which the commonest forms appear to have been *hnefatafl* (king’s table) and *fidcheall*, as introduced above.¹⁴ The game represented by these variants were (and remain) a contest between two unequal forces. The king piece of the defending side occupies the central cell or intersection, surrounded by his defenders. The aim is to get the king to one of the four corner cells and so secure victory. The usually larger attacking force is arranged along the edges of the board and has to try and capture the king piece by surrounding it on four sides. All the pieces move orthogonally as the rook pieces in chess.

Hnefatafl has generally been held to be of Scandinavian origin, with the earliest board fragment dated to the 5th century AD, from a grave at Vimose, Funen and it seems to have been carried by the Vikings to all the counties they raided or settled. Whilst *hnefatafl* is undoubtedly the Scandinavian variant of the game its spread by the Vikings may be an overly simplified account. Accepting the Roman inspiration of the game the Vikings may well have encountered variants elsewhere, as with *fidcheall*

¹⁰ Chadwick 1958, p. 147–151.

¹¹ For full quotations and details see Chadwick 1958, p. 150–151.

¹² For a more fully consideration of both items see Purcell 1995.

¹³ See Hall 2007.

¹⁴ Murray 1952, p. 55–64; Parlett 1999, p. 196–204; Payne 2006 for a new analysis of the Anglo-Saxon evidence and Forsyth and Hall and Forsyth 2011 explores some of the Irish evidence, with more to follow in Forsyth/Hall (in preparation)..

in Ireland. There are a number of boards from sites in Scotland that suggest that a variant of the game more akin to *fidcheall* or *gwyddbwyll* to give it its British name, was known prior to the arrival of the Vikings. Pictish phases at Buckquoy, Howe and Birsay, Orkney have produced such boards incised on stone. And there is a surface find of a stone board from Dun Chonallaich, nr. Kilmartin, Argyll, which is presumed to be Dalriadic.¹⁵ The broch site at Scalloway, Shetland has also produced gaming pieces¹⁶ that could have been used in a *fidcheall/tafl*-type game, notably one that could readily be a king piece (though a pawn is not impossible if it is from a very elaborate set). Comparison with other later Iron Age figurines suggests that these pieces may also have had a ritual function, possibly as part of the tool-kit of a shaman or druid, which does not rule out use as gaming pieces as there is a reinforcing cross-over between games play and fortune prediction or divination and magic.¹⁷

The evidence for board games also extends to a range of other playing pieces, several of them (in bone and shale) of the pegged variety, many of them formerly identified as pin heads (for the full range see Hall 2007, 13–19). Non-pegged pieces include single pieces each from Cnip and Birsay discussed further below, under chess. The majority of the pegged pieces are of a pre 12th century date and a number are consistent with the piriform shape common in Scandinavia between the 9th and 13th century. A probably later example was recovered from a bore-hole in Perth and could relate to the 1266 visit to Perth of high status Scandinavians for the signing of the Treaty of Perth, which ceded the Hebrides to the Scottish crown. From Scotland, a similar, more elaborate piriform piece (with an acorn terminal) and a peg socket, of late Pictish-early Norse date, was recovered from the church site at Birsay, Orkney.¹⁸ It was found under one of the stone seats in the NE corner of the church. From a building adjacent to the church was found a fragment of a whalebone gaming board with peg holes (Curle 1982, 89 and 110), of *fidcheall* rather than *hnefatafl* type (none of the squares have the special designations associated with the latter). A second, plain hemispherical bone piece comes from a midden in the later, Mid-Norse phase of the site.¹⁹ From the Norse and Pictish levels there are four further pegged pieces²⁰ of the type formerly identified as pins (and reclassified by Close-Brooks²¹) and a piece Curle identifies as a nail²² is more probably a pegged gaming piece.

¹⁵ For all these boards see Hall 2007, p. 12–13.

¹⁶ Wilson /Watson 1998, p. 174–175.

¹⁷ Hall 2007, p. 5–6 and 19.

¹⁸ Curle 1982, p. 89 and 110.

¹⁹ Curle 1982, no. 271.

²⁰ Curle 1982, ill. 38 nos. 259–62; p. 110.

²¹ Close-Brooks 1987, p. 166.

²² Curle 1982, p. 110, no. 266.

By comparison, the evidence from Anglo-Saxon England (including Sutton Hoo) includes a large number of playing pieces, some of which were undoubtedly for *tafl* games.²³ There developed an Anglo-Irish connection, for by the early 10th century it was known in elite Christian circles of both countries. The cornerstone of the evidence is a folio from an 11th century copy of a 10th century Irish Gospel Book (Corpus Christi College Oxon 122g). This illumination shows the layout for *hnefatafl* in the shape of an allegorical game on the harmony of the Gospels, known as *Alea Evangelii* – “The Game of the Gospels” or “Evangelists”. Its title caption notes that the game was brought to Ireland by Dubinsi, Bishop of Bangor (d. 953), from the court of King Athelstan (r. 925–40).²⁴ Perhaps then we should not be surprised to find assemblages of incised board games from ecclesiastical sites (including Raholp and Downpatrick, Co. Down, Tintagel Cornwall and Whithorn Galloway) and particularly notable in this regard are the *hnefatafl/fidcheall* boards from the island monastery of Inchmarnock, Bute. Excavation there by Headland Archaeology has recovered some 35 gaming boards along with a number of other slates with graffiti designs and inscriptions and lettering, clear indication of a monastic school function. The majority of the boards appear to be for a *tafl* or *fidcheall* variant (and probably of 9th/10th century date). Additionally there are at least one *merels* (or nine men’s morris) board (illus. 8), two *alquerque* boards and a *haretafl* (or ‘hare and hounds’) board, not all identified in the final report²⁵ and all suggestive of a 12th century or later date, which fits in with the later medieval inscribed slates (including a 15th century example). They suggest a school function persisted with the change from a monastic to a proprietorial church. The material probably reflects two strands of activity – the leisure time of the monks and lay brothers and the teaching of board games, including to secular, elite pupils. A parallel from Ireland may be the double-sided slate *hnefatafl/fidcheall* board from Downpatrick Cathedral, Northern Ireland²⁶ and from Scotland, the board from Whithorn Priory²⁷. Textual references certainly indicate that such board games were an essential aspect of court or elite lifestyles. In the Old Irish tale (*Scela Cano meic Gartnain*), describing Cano’s departure for Ireland with the people of Skye in 688 we learn of: “...a royal retinue sailing in currachs, complete with fifty well-armed warriors, fifty well-dressed ladies and fifty liveried gillies each with the silver leads of two greyhounds in his right hand, a musical instrument in his left and the board of a fidchell game on his back, along with gold and silver playing men.”²⁸ Both *fidcheall* and its variant *brandubh* (possibly derived directly from *hnefatafl*) are listed in Irish law texts of the 7th and 8th centuries as games to be taught to boys of noble birth – along with how to swim, ride a horse and

²³ Youngs 1983, p. 854–874; Hall 2007, p. 19–21.

²⁴ Robinson 1923, p. 69–71; Murray 1952, p. 61–62.

²⁵ Lowe 2008.

²⁶ Hall 2001.

²⁷ Hill 1997, p. 447–449.

²⁸ MacLean 1997, p. 174.

throw a spear, part of their training for a life of leisure, hunting and warfare.²⁹ Though not necessarily all of the slates found at Inchmarnock were used in a teaching context, still the quantity and focus of the material may suggest secular elite pupils being taught the everyday business of an elite lifestyle. Of course, the ecclesiastics on site may also have been learning and playing the game. Parallel but later evidence suggestive of this idea takes the shape of a 14th century misericord from Montbenoit, France.³⁰ This can be read as both a reference to Dominican anti-gaming tracts and sermons but also as indicative of the monastic pursuit of these games.

The board shown in the Montbenoit misericord is probably for chess. Finds of chess pieces are comparatively rare in Scotland. The most well known pieces, the most substantial component of the Lewis hoard of gaming pieces, come from Uig Parish, on the Isle of Lewis. Their recent re-examination³¹ demonstrates that their presence on Lewis is less the result of an accident (with the implication of geographic irrelevance) and more because they were meant to be there, their cultural significance fully in tune with the politics, religion and culture of the Western Isles and their position along the sea-lanes connecting the Scandinavian and Irish Sea worlds. Whilst the hoard certainly includes chess pieces, its smaller number of disc-pieces or tablemen have received less attention and some of the geometric pawns in particular could have as equally have been used for *hnefatafl* as for chess, quite probably interchangeably so.

The Lewis pieces aside, chess pieces from Scotland are only known as single finds. There is a figurative walrus ivory rook, possibly from Skye but certainly the Western Isles and an abstract bone/walrus ivory knight from Rothesay Castle, Bute (illus. 2a, on display in Bute Museum, Rothesay). It was recovered during moat clearance work at the Castle, in 1872 (at the instigation of the 3rd Marquess of Bute). In addition, Wilson³² describes an elaborate walrus ivory figurative queen piece in the collection at Penicuik House and supposedly collected in the North of Scotland in 1682 and possibly no longer extant is a piece from Dunstaffnage Castle, a walrus ivory king piece. This is described by Pennant³³ (1776, 409) as an ‘ivory image’ or ‘inauguration sculpture’, made in memory of the Stone of Destiny. Until recently, there appeared to be only one certain chess piece from the North and East of Scotland, an abstract jet bishop piece from the Meal Vennel site in Perth (illus. 2b).³⁴ But we can now add two further certain abstract pieces to the tally from Kirkwall, Orkney (illus. 3a) and from Coldingham, Borders (illus. 3b). The Kirkwall piece (unpublished but on display in Tankerness House Museum, Kirkwall) is an ivory king or queen piece of cylindrical

²⁹ Kelly 1997, p. 452.

³⁰ Béthmont-Gallerand 2001, 183 and fig. 1.

³¹ Caldwell/Hall/Wilkinson 2009.

³² Wilson 1863, 357–358

³³ Pennant 1776, p. 409.

³⁴ Hall 2002, p. 298; Cox 1998, p. 182.

form with a knopped projection on top. It was excavated in 1974 and could be as early as 10th-11th century in date. The Coldingham piece is a stray find from the parish church (formerly the Priory) donated to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1893 (Anon. 894, 51). A king or queen piece, it is made of antler, of truncated, conical form (with flattened off front), decorated with ring-and-dot (two rows on the top) and horizontal lines and chevrons. In addition there are two uncertain pieces that previously I have accepted as probably for *hnefatafl* from Cnip, Lewis and Birsay, Orkney.³⁵ The piece from Cnip is a plain, bone conical example, with a bifurcated terminal (illus. 4a). It is securely associated with the central occupation area of wheelhouse 1, phase 2, which is dated to AD1-AD 100 (and followed by phase 3, dated to AD100-250).³⁶ Archaeologically this makes a chess identification impossible given the early date but the eroding nature of the sand-dune site may suggest that the piece has dropped in from a later phase. Its distinctive form is certainly unique for an early gaming piece (including *tafl* variations) but is very like some abstract chess rook pieces. From Novgorod, Russia, there is a simple, wooden pronged piece that is identified as a castle (“ladya”) and described as a cylinder with a large groove in its upper part³⁷, which may date to the 12th or 13th century (a similar date for the Cnip piece would make it contemporary with the Lewis chess pieces). Similarly, there is a wooden rook piece from Carlisle, misidentified in the as yet unpublished report as a bishop (info supplied by Tim Padley, Tullie House Museum, Carlisle); two bone pieces from West Cotton, Raunds, Northamptonshire and a bone example from Thetford, Norfolk. The two examples from West Cotton are damaged or unfinished but clearly have the bi-furcated tops that suggest they are rooks³⁸ and are suggested to relate to the village’s 12th century hall (ibid 28). The Thetford example was originally identified as a cord puller (Rogerson and Dallas 1984, 182, fig. 199, 96) but Chapman suggests a more plausible identification is a top bi-furcated rook (and further cites an example from Deddington Castle, Oxfordshire, communicated to him by Richard Ivens via a pers. comm.)³⁹ The piece from Brough of Birsay, of conical form with ring-and-dot decoration (illus. 4b), was published by Curle (1982, 110, no. 2251 and illus. 38) as an unfinished handle.⁴⁰ The form though suggests a gaming piece is much more likely. It is unstratified from the Norse horizons of Area 11 of the site – it could have served equally well as a pawn for *hnefatafl* or chess.

The clearest evidence for the localised manufacture of chess pieces in Scotland comes from a reference to Kirkcudbright, Galloway, south west Scotland. In the mid 12th century, the monk Reginald of Durham (biographer of St Cuthbert) travelled to

³⁵ Hall 2007, p. 16–17.

³⁶ Hunter 2006, 148–50, colour pl. 8.

³⁷ Rybina 2007, 355 and fig 21.1 m.

³⁸ Chapman 2010, cat. 50 and 51.

³⁹ Chapman 2005, p. 5.

⁴⁰ Curle 1982, p. 110, no. 2251 and illus. 38.

Kirkcudbright and met there a carver who made ‘combs, tablemen, chess, dice, spigots and other such articles of horn and bone’ (*Reg. Dunelm.* Cap. Lxxxviii⁴¹). Also in the 12th century, John of Salisbury visited, and met an ivory carver, of whom John, horrified, tells us made ten different types of dice game.⁴² The chess pieces listed above are generally dated to the 11th – 13th centuries; chess pieces from the end of the medieval period are much rarer finds (I know of none from Scotland). That the status of the game was maintained though is indicated by the variety of text references, often to royal possessions. These include inventories, Romance tales and moral treatises, a number of which are quoted in the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* and the *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*.⁴³ Chess boards are even rarer physically than the pieces. An incised board on a sandstone masonry block from Melrose Abbey, Borders, and probably cut by masons, is likely to be for a variant of chess (illus. 5). The board is incomplete because the block was fashioned into a vault rib in the late 14th-early 15th century (pers. comm. Mary Márkus). That rather abbreviated discussion of chess has carried us into the later medieval period where there are several other games to take note of. I will begin with the finds from the excavations at Finlaggan, Islay⁴⁴ which helps to make the case that such pastimes were not confined to the amusements of the elite but were more widely played.

The Finlaggan evidence includes a single fragment of a graffito gaming board (illus. 6) incised on a slate. Its use as a gaming board presumably predates any use as a building slate, possibly having been scratched out to pass the time during construction work. It is probably a fragment from an *alquerque* board. This is a war or leaping-capture game widely played in Mediterranean and Asian cultures. It is probably of pre-Medieval origin. It seems to have entered Europe via Spain. 10th century Arabic manuscripts mention a game called ‘Quirkat’ or ‘El-Quirkat’, introduced to Spain via the Islamic Conquest. Once played in Spain it became known as *alquerque*. It is a game for two players, each with twelve pieces arranged on a board of twenty-five points. Through alternate moves each player tries to capture the other player’s pieces by jumping over them.⁴⁵ Incised or graffiti *alquerque* boards are comparatively rare in Britain. Examples have been recorded from the cloisters of Norwich Cathedral, from Norwich Castle and from St Mary’s Church, Cavendish, Suffolk.⁴⁶ There are at least five other Scottish sites that have produced evidence for this game: single, slate-incised examples come from Dundonald Castle, Ayrshire⁴⁷ and from Ballumbie Church,

⁴¹ Quoted in Murray 1913, p. 420 and McLean c. 1984, p. 13.

⁴² McLean c.1984, p. 103.

⁴³ Craigie 1937, p. 513; Jamieson 1882, p. 490.

⁴⁴ To be discussed in more detail in Hall forthcoming b.

⁴⁵ Murray 1952, p. 65–71; Parlett 1999, p. 243–247.

⁴⁶ Murray 1952, p. 66.

⁴⁷ Caldwell 2004, p. 107–109.

Angus (excavated in 2006⁴⁸), whilst Inchmarnock has a clutch of one complete board and 10 fragments of other boards⁴⁹. The most recent find is the corner of a slate board for *alquerque* from excavations at Kilwinning Abbey in 2011. There may also be a variant or incomplete example from Carrick Castle, which survives as a slate-incised fragment.⁵⁰ The Spanish *Alfonso Codex* of 1283 (a gaming compendium compiled for King Alfonso X of Leon and Castille) describes three variations of *alquerque*, for three, nine and twelve pieces per player, of whom there were usually two but sometimes four. It also has parallels with the chase game of *Fox and Geese* (sometimes referred to as *Tod and Lambs* in Scotland). The Spanish variant of this, *Catch the Hare* is also recorded in the Alfonso manuscript as being played on the *alquerque* board. There is no accessible edition of the Codex translated into English but there is a good online introduction (Historic Games) and a new German translation⁵¹ and useful contextual discussions⁵². It is worth a passing speculation that a copy of this manuscript could have spent time in Scotland. King Edward I, a known ardent player of chess (the main subject of the Codex) was also married to Eleanor of Castille, Alfonso's sister. Recently one of the Codex miniatures has been suggested to depict Edward playing against his then fiancée, Eleanor.⁵³ A copy of Alfonso's book would surely have been an eminently suitable gift to a brother monarch (and we might note that Edward's gifts to Eleanor included a chess set). To pile speculation upon speculation it seems conceivable that Edward would have taken any copy of the book with him during his visits to Scotland (Olivia Constable, pers. comm., disagrees with me here suggesting a copy of such a luxurious manuscript so late in Alfonso's life would seem unlikely).

The Finlaggan excavations also recovered three bone, playing pieces, readily identifiable as tablesmen (illus. 8). *Tables* was not a single game but a family.⁵⁴ The medieval variations probably derived from the Roman game of *tabula* and surviving today as backgammon. Popular throughout the medieval period from at least the 11th century onwards, their popularity is demonstrated by the finds of pieces and boards notably, for example, the set from Gloucester⁵⁵ and by the medieval depictions of the game (e.g. the misericord in Manchester Cathedral, of late 15th century date⁵⁶. There are a range of decorated discs from across Europe, of pre 11th century date, and including a series of stone discs incised with Pictish symbols (of 7th/8th century date), which may relate to the playing of Roman-derived tables games.⁵⁷ The two smaller, well dec-

48 Hall forthcoming c.

49 Ritchie 2008, p. 126–127.

50 For Carrick see Ewart / Baker 1998, p. 975 and illus. 23; for Kilwinning see Hall forthcoming 2013.

51 Schädler 2009.

52 Constable 2007 and Carpenter 1998.

53 Yalom 2004, p. 61

54 Murray 1942, p. 57–69.

55 Watkins 1985, Watkins / Steward 1984.

56 Hall 2009, p. 65.

57 For fuller discussion see Hall 2007.

orated, Finlaggan pieces were found together. Though one is zoomorphic (possibly depicting a unicorn) and the other of interlace design this does not argue against a close association because they may well represent opposing sides of the same set of pieces (the one side fabulous beasts and the other of geometric or abstract forms). We cannot rule out the pieces representing two sets, with each side in each set being of similar design but distinguished by colour. Sets may also have been of mixed media. Egan, in his discussion of the London pieces suggested that black stained wooden discs could have been opposed by bone or ivory pieces rather than pale wooden ones.⁵⁸ In contrast the third piece is about as third as big again as the other two and more simply decorated. Both ‘groups’ fit into recognised series. If the combined weight of evidence for both pieces suggests a pre 15th century date what does the wider picture of such playing pieces suggest? From Scotland there is a small tally of figurative bone gaming pieces, including from Iona Abbey; the Bishop’s Palace, Kirkwall, Orkney; Dalcross Castle, Inverness-shire; Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire; Urquhart Castle and Melrose Abbey.⁵⁹ The animals and monsters depicted include mermaids, rabbits, a grotesque, a horseman, a centaur and an eagle. None of these pieces has a fully secure archaeological context and on artistic grounds have been dated to the 11th–12th centuries, and so considered to be Romanesque. However, recently the pieces from Iona, and also a large interlace disc from Rhum have been re-dated to the 15th – 16th century, in line with the West Highland art tradition.⁶⁰ Other related material includes the Rhum disc just mentioned and also the blank ivory discs found with the Lewis chessmen, possibly unfinished tablemen. From Rothesay Castle, Bute comes a bone tablesman (not published but on display in the Bute Museum, Rothesay) decorated with a floral motif within concentric circles, comparable to wooden examples from Threave⁶¹ and Perth⁶². Also of note for this discussion is a stone disc from Carrick Castle, Argyll which is crudely decorated with the head of a queen.⁶³ This could be imitating the more elaborate bone tablesmen described above, though it is also possible that this represents an improvised queen piece for a low-status chess set.

The larger piece from Finlaggan (illus. 8) has its upper surface incised with two concentric circles just inside the rim and a central compass point within a small circle. The simpler geometric style of decoration on this piece distinguishes it from the other two bone playing pieces and again is consistent with a wider series of such pieces. These simpler forms of tablesmen come in a variety of materials –skeletal, stone, re-used pottery and wood – with a variety of ring and dot and/or concentric circle dec-

58 Egan 1998, p. 294.

59 Glenn 2003, p. 184 [Iona], 182–183 [Kirkwall], 183 [Urquhart]; Kluge-Pinsker 1991, cat’s. B59 [Iona], B60 [Kirkwall], B57 [Dalcross], B58 [Stonehaven], B56 [Urquhart]; B55 [Melrose]; Hall forthcoming b.

60 Glenn 2003, p. 184–185.

61 Good / Tabraham 1981, p. 119.

62 Bogdan forthcoming.

63 Ewart / Baker 1998, p. 975, illus. 23.

oration. Examples across these various media include pieces from Perth High Street⁶⁴, Urquhart Castle⁶⁵ and Aberdeen⁶⁶. They range in date from the 12th-15th century. Outside Scotland the picture is similar and a brief list could cite Goltho in Lincolnshire, Loughor Castle in Glamorgan, London, York and Trondheim, Norway.⁶⁷ Illus. 9 shows some of the cruder pottery counters/playing pieces from Perth, demonstrative of the wider range of gaming pieces used (not necessarily exclusively for one type of game). The larger piece from Finlaggan is less accomplished than the two smaller pieces and may, like the series of stone discs from the site, indicate gaming practised across all social levels at Finlaggan. The Lord of the Isles and his elite companions were peripatetic in their occupation of Finlaggan and so it would have been for their prized sets of chess and tables. What was not peripatetic was the poorer quality material culture of the permanent occupants who kept the site maintained and ticking over in readiness for the return of their Lord.

I noted above the merelles boards from Inchmarnock (illus. 7). Merelles, particularly its variant Nine Men's Morris, was one of the most popular medieval board games. In terms of archaeological evidence the boards most often survive as graffiti-incised designs on stone. The evidence has been reviewed several times, including for Scotland by Robertson in the 1960s.⁶⁸ His paper dealt with later medieval examples primarily from monastic sites, notably Arbroath and Dryburgh. More recent finds – including St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall⁶⁹; Jedburgh Abbey⁷⁰ and Inchmarnock⁷¹ – maintain this predominantly monastic distribution. The game was played by Romans and Vikings but the known British examples date from the later medieval period, with no boards dating with any certainty earlier than the 11th/12th century. It was certainly a game known to the Vikings – they introduced it to the Faroes for example, where there is a 10th century board from Toftanes.⁷² The accepted convention is that the game was a Norman introduction to mainland Britain. The Normans played the game presumably because their Viking forebears did. The evidence for the game in pre 11th century Normandy/Brittany is however opaque. I know of no surviving boards for merels. There is gaming evidence, mostly in the form of dice and playing pieces (e.g. from the 10th century ship burial from the Ile de Croix⁷³) though the latter are generally of the type associated with *hnefatafl*. By the later medieval period various satires portray

64 The ceramic discs remain unpublished, for the bone and wood discs see MacGregor, Hall and Smith *et al.* 2011, p. 102, 106 and illus. 52; Curteis and Morris *et al.* 2012, p. 256–57.

65 Samson 1982, p. 475.

66 MacGregor 1982, p. 180–182.

67 For a discussion and references to these pieces see Hall forthcoming b.

68 Robertson 1967.

69 Anon 2002, p. 44.

70 Lewis / Ewart 1995, p. 105–110.

71 Lowe 2008.

72 Hansen 1998, fig. 11b.

73 Price 1989, p. 97 and 415.

merels as the game of the peasantry and urban poor, in contrast with backgammon, as the game of the urban rich and chess as the game of the aristocratic and church elites.⁷⁴ This was not an absolute hierarchy; archaeological evidence (including a number of lead badges and toys depicting chess boards from the Netherlands⁷⁵) indicates that chess was popular at all levels of society.

The overwhelming majority of the gaming material culture from late medieval Scotland (in contrast with the First Millennium AD) is related to urban or proto-urban sites, leaving a want of evidence from rural, peasant sites. Such sites when they are excavated are notoriously lacking in almost any material culture and it is tempting to see the lack of gaming evidence likewise as a symptom of material poverty. One way to test this and explore the question more fully would be to identify and excavate rural settlement sites in proximity to or dependent upon some of the towns, castles and churches discussed in this paper as producing gaming evidence (i.e. more hinterland studies at various scales). This has been done, for example, and albeit on a very small scale, in Sweden. There, a notable contrast was found between the royal castle of Edsholm and the neighbouring farms of Skramle and Djupsundet, in the bailiwick of Värmland.⁷⁶ One of the contrasts between the materially impoverished farms and the castle was thrown-up by the gaming evidence from the castle. This comprises at least two chess pieces and a die (all of horn). Their presence in the castle and absence from the two farms was interpreted as being less likely to mean that farm-dwellers had no nor needed no leisure time than that they chose not to indulge in such pursuits. The evidence from the castle also supports nuances of interpretation beyond thrift versus luxury. In one of the castle buildings interpreted as a possible tavern or barrack were found together a coin, a pair of dice and a third of a wine mug – eloquent testimony to the boredom-defeating life of the soldiers stationed there.

Dice and devotion

In Scotland dice are the oldest form of clearly identifiable gaming material culture (albeit some of them would have been used for divination, which shared aspects of performance and contesting the future with gaming). The dice in question are a particular form known as parallelopiped and are common to the first millennium AD (and primarily a late Iron Age phenomenon) of Britain, Ireland and Western Europe.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Hall 2001.

⁷⁵ Hall 2001.

⁷⁶ Svensson 1995.

⁷⁷ MacGregor 1985, p. 129–131; Raftery 1984, p. 247–248.

Such dice, rectangular or elongated cubes in shape, are generally numbered (with ring-and-dot motifs) on their four long faces, usually to represent the numbers 3, 4, 5 and 6 (in varying orders) and not 1 and 2. The shape may reflect the earlier tradition of lot forms where specific numbering was not marked but different faces could be distinguished by differences in shape or colour. Casting sets of such lots was a form of fortune-telling or divination. The dice are generally made from the shafts of small long bones (typically the metapodials of sheep)⁷⁸ – the appropriateness of using these bones may ultimately derive from the appropriateness of the animal in sacrifice, which would have authenticated the further use of elements of the carcass for divination. Clarke catalogued 20 definite examples from Scotland (mainly from broch and wheelhouse sites in the Northern and Western Isles, with the exception of two from Caithness) and suggested a date range in the second quarter of the first millennium AD for the majority (though generally they come from unstratified contexts).⁷⁹ Their predominantly Western and Northern Isles distribution may be a cultural indicator but it may equally be an indication of the availability of raw materials with mainland dice predominantly made of wood and so less likely to survive in the archaeological record. The excavation of five dice from Scalloway broch pushes the dating range into the middle of the first millennium AD. Four of them were recovered from phase 2, which is broadly dated to 100 BC – 500AD, but they are stratigraphically linked to the end of this phase giving them a late 5th century date.⁸⁰ The fifth example comes from the start of phase 3 (500–600 AD) giving the whole group a tight dating and a hint of continuity in practice across a time of transition.

Usually the ends of such dice are open, but even when solid and intact – as with some antler examples – they are not generally numbered (*ibid.*) but there are two Scottish examples of end-numbered dice: from the Broch of Ayre, Orkney (where one of the ends is marked with a single dot within a double circle⁸¹) and from Scalloway broch, Shetland (where both ends are marked with four ring-and-dots⁸²). These may be symbolic in a non-numerical way or be decorative rather than additional dice values; a die from Bute has its ends decorated with a tri-lobed petal or leaf within a circle⁸³. If the dice were being used in a set then the marking of the ends might distinguish particular die from others in the set.

Raftery noted that there were 16 parallelepiped dice from Iron Age and Early Medieval Ireland – all of them bone except for one wooden example from Ballinderry Crannog.⁸⁴ He suggested the Irish material comprised two size differentiated groups,

78 MacGregor 1985, p. 129.

79 Clarke 1970.

80 Smith /Wilson 1998, p. 174.

81 Clarke 1970, p. 30 no. 7.

82 Smith /Wilson 1998, p. 174.

83 Clarke 1970, p. 229 no. 1.

84 Raftery 1984, p. 247.

one small, one large, with the smaller examples being earlier in date, i.e. earlier part of the first millennium AD, a pattern which has also been recognised for the Scottish material⁸⁵; more recently both large and small examples have been excavated at Bornais, South Uist [Sharples] may clarify further the size / date linkage). Such dice could have been used for gambling games, for controlling the moves in board games (with or without gambling) or for divination or fortune-telling (and none of these options excludes the others). The dice from the Knowth ‘gamblers’ burial were interred alongside two sets of gaming pieces.⁸⁶ These uses might add to any intrinsic appeal to keep the die as an heirloom. A perhaps predominant use without gaming boards is suggested by the lack of any survival of such boards and may be given tentative support (with due caution about over-generalising) by Tacitus’s account of the Germans (ch. 24), whose gaming he describes as essentially gambling with dice.

Overlapping with the use of dice in Pictland (as it did in Anglo-Saxon England) and again with Roman antecedents, was the use of astragali. These are a form of cast-lot, a means of making a decision by leaving it to fate, possibly deriving from divination and soothsaying practice. Gambling on the outcome of cast lots is one of the earliest forms of gaming and the three forms of lot-casting: divinatory, decision-making and gaming share an impulse to determine the future which probably meant they were inextricably intertwined from the start. Like the paralleloiped dice astragali are a form of quaternary lot, that is where each astragal has four possible faces. The word comes from the Greek for knucklebone, particularly those of sheep and goats. Their irregular shape means that on a hard surface four outcomes are possible, traditionally designated flat, concave, convex and sinuous and associated with the numbers 1, 3, 4 and 6 (the Romans used the 1–3–4–6 numbering in race and dice games, including *XII Scripta*). There are several examples of astragali from sites in the Northern Isles. Perhaps the most notable is the three from the Broch of Burrian, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, found with 3 paralleloiped dice and 3 conical-style gaming pieces.⁸⁷ Two of the Burrian astragali are distinctively marked, one with a crescent and V-rod on one broad face and a disc with an indented rectangle on the other. The second has a confused looking design which has not adequately been deciphered.

By the second half of the first millennium AD the Roman introduced cubic die had become the commonest form and it is this form with which we are still familiar today. The use of such dice in the medieval period perhaps attracted the greatest level of condemnation from ecclesiastical and secular authorities. That condemnation was though far from universal and (as Purdie has observed) demonstrates the complexity

⁸⁵ Smith and Wilson 1998, p. 174.

⁸⁶ For a fresh analysis of this gaming material see Hall / Forsyth 2011.

⁸⁷ MacGregor 1974, p. 86–88.

of the place of dice usage in medieval society⁸⁸. Despite the widespread condemnation the popularity of dice throughout society remained constant, and “periodic royal and civic prohibitions occurred alongside state-sanctioned gambling parlours”⁸⁹ (illus. 10). Concern over their criminal context was part of a wider European pattern where the repression of three offensive behaviours was particularly targeted: prostitution, gambling and blasphemy.⁹⁰ Games and gambling were widely perceived as having a strong link to violence and to varying degrees most forms of games were the subject of legal attention because they were amenable to gambling, and it was gambling (and the violence it could lead to) that was the real concern. Gambling was most readily associated with dice and was seen to lead to theft, brawling and murder. The East Window of St Peter Mancroft, Norwich, includes a scene of two dice players with daggers drawn. Gambling also disturbed divine order through blasphemy. Gambling was perceived as an attack on sustenance and sociability: on production, commerce and the family. These problems are neatly summarised in Chaucer’s word-picture of tavern life and gambling in *The Pardoner’s Tale*, “the very mother of lying, of deceit and cursed swearing, of blasphemy and manslaughter.”⁹¹ The fight was still being fought by the Reformed church: An entry for November 11 1611 in the Kirk Session Register of St John’s Perth records the account of an informer recounting his Sunday time spent gambling with dice and drinking in the house of Walter Young, who was a Deacon of the Kirk. He blamed his wife, refused to allow her to be questioned and was locked-up⁹² (note also the details of prohibitions by the Kirk on golf, football and nine-pins⁹³).

The worst offender in terms of dice games was probably hazard – it offered huge rewards for the winner but could reduce the loser to absolute poverty. The game involved rolling dice and betting on predicted sequential outcomes. In a study of gaming as depicted on misericords examples from Ely and Gloucester Cathedrals were interpreted as depicting board games but in fact it is more likely that both are representations of dice games – the depiction of a plain board on which to role the dice, the two players being shown with dice, and the money that is clearly being gambled, all in fact point to hazard.⁹⁴ Its presence on misericords probably supported church moralising about the game but Church condemnation of the game (and/or for its world-turned-upside-down celebration) did not stop its play or its popularity. The latter was such that some individuals used references to the game to signal something of their identity. A seal matrix depicting a dog and a hare playing with dice across a

88 Purdie 2008, p. 183.

89 Purdie 2008, p. 184.

90 Dean 2001; MacIntosh 1998, esp. p. 70, 77–78, 90, 96–107)

91 Coghill 1992, p. 155.

92 Lawson 1848, p. 266–67.

93 Lawson 1848, pp. 188, 200 and 242.

94 Hall 2009, p. 64.

board and carrying the inscription HASARD INHODISMMIN ('Hazard thy hood is mine') was used to seal at least two documents in 1296 and 1301 respectively and relating to property in Essex (Nat Archives DL 25/1684 and 1685, available online⁹⁵; Harvey & MacGuinness 1996, 115). It is not clear who the owner of the matrix was, possibly one Hugh le Beltere of Newport, Essex or Adam Charman, of Rickling, Essex. The inscription presumably means if you play me at hazard I will win everything including your hood (an equivalent to a much later gambling phrase 'lose your shirt'). The game was included in comic, satirical tales about the saints. The French tale, 'St Peter and the Minstrel', is about a minstrel from Sens, who loses everything at dice and winds up in Hell. The Devil leaves him in charge whilst going out to collect more souls and St Peter takes advantage, visiting with a board and three dice to play hazard, staking money against the souls in the minstrel's care. St Peter wins and the Devil kicks the minstrel out of Hell; St Peter lets him in to heaven.⁹⁶ In Scotland the word 'hazard' is known from at least the 13th century and *DST* records several instances of it applied to dice and the gambling upon them, including expenditure/losses by the king, in both Perth and Linlithgow.

In some respects the link to blasphemy promoted greater concern than gambling because it was a direct sin against God: the blasphemous imploring of aid from God or the saints that often accompanied the rolling of the dice made the dice, in inverting the prayer mode, a blasphemous act. In Florence in 1501 a gambler was hanged for the sacrilegious act of defacing an image of the Virgin Mary with horse dung.⁹⁷ This recalls a much earlier incident of the late 12th century recorded (and derived from an earlier French source) in Walter Bower's early 15th century *Scotichronicon*: During the siege of Châteauroux by Philip of France, mercenaries were playing dice in front of the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, one of them, frustrated at losing his winnings, blasphemed and then broke an arm off a near-by statue of the Virgin, blood was seen to pour from the arm and it was treated as a miraculous relic.⁹⁸ Bower notes "he wretched mercenary was that very day snatched away by the Devil to that place to which he was already leading him and ended his life in a most miserable fashion." This destination Hell is graphically indicated by Brueghel's magnificent painting, *Triumph of Death*, which includes, bottom right, cards, money and a backgammon board all over-turned in the face of the advancing army of death. As an aside here I should point out that although we have no cards surviving from medieval Scotland, they were certainly being played, no doubt including Tarot. James IV in particular appears to have been a profligate spender of money on playing at cards, as he was on dice (see below). Returning to Brueghel's painting, it was painted in c.1562, when

⁹⁵ See also Harvey /MacGuinness 1996, p. 115.

⁹⁶ Brewer 2008, p. 110–111.

⁹⁷ Dean 2001, p. 57.

⁹⁸ Corner et. al. 1994, p. 375.

gaming was still seen as an example of the general folly and wickedness of mankind, rather in the tradition of Hieronymus Bosch and his contemporaries, which also developed from earlier outlooks (as evidenced for example by the stained glass windows in Norwich – showing a bishop being taken away by death against the background of a chess board – and Chartres – where the Prodigal Son window shows him playing chess with dice⁹⁹).

The connection between gambling and dice also has other reflexes for not only were dice frequently used as tools of divination and fortune telling¹⁰⁰, itself a root of gambling but they had a role in so-doing in the life of Christ: dice were used at the crucifixion to cast lots, to gamble for Christ's clothing, thus making his clothing subject to fate. This made dice doubly open to clerical condemnation, being perceived as an inversion of prayer the only legitimate means of trying to influence the future.¹⁰¹ It also meant that dice were frequently depicted in a wide range of artistic media as *Arma Christi* or instruments of Christ's passion. A probably early 16th century bench end from the Cathedral of St Magnus, Kirkwall, Orkney shows the three dice cast for Christ's robe.¹⁰² In Norwich Cathedral a 15th century Nave roof boss shows three dice being cast for Christ's garments, with violence about to erupt.¹⁰³ A 15th century octagonal font in Meigle parish church, Perthshire, shows them beside Christ's clothing.¹⁰⁴ (Many illuminated manuscripts and printed books also show the Passion dice (for example the mid 14th century ivory devotional book now in the V & A Museum¹⁰⁵) and often this is in connection with the Mass of St Gregory. Examples include: on a chantry chapel reredos at Hexham Abbey, Robert Campin's c.1430 painting of the Mass and a 1539 feathers on panel depiction from Mexico (school of Peter of Ghent).¹⁰⁶ Gambling and dicing then could be seen as immoral and socially disturbing acts requiring the attentions of the Church and secular legal authorities. There were though in the medieval period variant views. Even divination was not universally frowned upon, as some thought that casting lots for example was a way to divine the will of God (something Augustine of Hippo approved of in his commentary on Psalm 30). There are several Biblical precedents for the use of lots and the *Lex Frisionum* indicates that in Frisia lots were kept in a reliquary on the altar, one of them marked with a cross and used to determine guilt or innocence. More broadly on gaming, during the canonisation enquiry into St Thomas Cantilupe, Bishop of Hereford, evidence was taken from Hugh le

99 Hall 2009, p. 70.

100 See for example Braekman 1980 and note that the two operate in similar ways using constitutive rather than regulative rules; cf. Ahern 1982.

101 Purdie 2008, p. 184.

102 Caldwell 1984, p. 107–108.

103 Rose / Hedgecoe 1997, pl. p. 108.

104 RCAHMS 1994, p. 24 and fig. c.

105 MacGregor and Langmuir 2000, pl. 48.

106 The St. Gregory's mass theme is discussed in Hall 2009.

Barber, one of Cantilupe's servants. Part of his evidence recounts how he, Hugh, became blind. He prayed for recovery, hoping that he could at least see sufficiently again to see the Host being raised, to move around and "to play at chess and dice"¹⁰⁷. Barber goes on to name Dom Philip Walense rector of the church at Stretton, as someone Hugh used to play chess and dice with, both at his home and when they were both in London. That such evidence could be taken to support a proposed canonisation of a venerable ecclesiastic shows that such games were not entirely frowned upon by the Church.

A broader gaming parallel is provided by one of the miracle stories of St Osmund of Salisbury. When a girl was struck on the head by a quoit she apparently dies but recovered and offered the quoit at the tomb of Bishop Osmund.¹⁰⁸ Indeed there is further evidence of their incorporation in the cult of saints. The museum collections in Aschaffenburg, Bavaria include a double-sided gaming board from the church of Sts Peter and Alexander. The edges of the boards have glass compartments for keeping relics. This board, which dates to circa 1300, probably arrived in Aschaffenburg in the 16th century when Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg fled the Reformation in the Halle area. Contemporary documentation of 1531, listing the relics that the Cardinal brought with him includes the gaming board (for both chess and backgammon) of Saint Rupert.¹⁰⁹ Of course there were Church divisions on how much the pursuit of games should be tolerated or condemned. There are several 15–16th century examples of elaborate double gaming boards like that from Aschaffenburg, as well as dice and cards, being burnt as part of back to basics, fire and brimstone, campaigns to force people to give up perceived decadent pursuits (ibid, cat. 71 (Bamberg, Germany); and an Italian woodcut, as the bonfire burns a pope looks on and hair and long-toed shoes are cut¹¹⁰);). At a more personal level of reforming zeal it is worth noting the suggestion that the circumstances of the disposal of the Gloucester *tabulae* set in the early 12th century may be associated with Walter of Gloucester retiring to Llanthony Priory (Stewart 1992). The more inclusive view of games is one that chimes well with the admittedly slight and almost casual remarks of St Thomas Aquinas. In his *Summa Theologica* (I and II, 32, 1 and 13), he expressed approval of women's hairstyles and of games and diversions, including verbal play and dramatic representations: "It is good that women should adorn themselves in order to cultivate the love of their husbands and games give delight in that they lighten the fatigue of our labours."¹¹¹ There was, of course, a clear distinction between frivolous and useful games (though equally some games can be found in both of these camps), which Rabelais's *Litany of Games*, satirises. Smith, in his discussion of this list contrasts it with John of Salisbury's com-

¹⁰⁷ Jancey 1982, p. 200.

¹⁰⁸ Malden 1901.

¹⁰⁹ Jenderko-Sichelschmidt / Marquart / Ermischer 1994, p. 84–86.

¹¹⁰ See Muzzarelli 2006, fig. 2.12, and Paton 1992, p. 307–336.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Eco 1986, p. 98–99.

ments on frivolous and useful games, in *Policraticus*¹¹² though we should also remember that in the same work (I.5) John condemns the dice gamester (as he did on his trip to Kirkcudbright, mentioned above). This apparent contradiction between seeing gaming as both evil and good should occasion no surprise being yet another everyday manifestation of the thread of contradictory-opposites that runs through medieval culture.

Above I outlined the interpretive possibilities for the 14th century misericord from Montbenoit, France, and here I draw on the second, that it represents monastic pursuit of those games. It meshes with other evidence. A twelfth-thirteenth century story recorded by Caesarius of Heisterbach, about a monastery in Bonn, sheds a useful confirmatory light on such monastic practice, mentioning that the monks played games in the cloisters after vespers; many medieval cloisters in England are certainly incised with gaming boards. On-going excavations at Kilwinning Abbey, Ayrshire have recovered from the cloister area several slate-incised gaming boards (pers. comm. Tom Rees; illus. 11).

The 14th-15th century reliquary known as Charlemagne's chess set, from the Collegiate Church of Santa Maria, Roncesvalles (Orreaga), Navarre, Spain takes the form of a chessboard.¹¹³ More well known are the late 11th century chess pieces from South Italy, for many centuries in the treasury of St Denis, Paris, preserved as Charlemagne's chessmen, because they were perceived as relics of Charlemagne. An episode in the tale of Raimond de Montpezat sees him delivered from prison by St Foy and in token of the miracle he takes a chessboard which hangs on the wall of his dungeon and gives it to the shrine of St Foy in Conques. It may be that the series of lead gaming-board badges from the Low Countries (part of a wider series of badges) and which I have previously interpreted as an indication of the social spread of the game counter to the late medieval satire of chess being the game of church and aristocratic elites in fact has something to do with pilgrimage after all.¹¹⁴

End game

This contribution has hopefully introduced the reader to the broad range of evidence for board and dice games in medieval Scotland and indicated how that evidence might be understood in a European context. Such a review enables us to see that we can go beyond simply saying that our medieval forebears' experiences encompassed the playing of games. The diversity of the surviving evidence and the diversity of the board and dice games played (and we by no means know the whole range played) elo-

¹¹² Smith 1934, vol 1, ch. Xxii and p. 112ff.

¹¹³ Heredia 1982; Roux 2007, p. 153.

¹¹⁴ Hall 2001.

quently speak of everyday experiences in a variety of social contexts – urban, rural, ecclesiastical, domestic and lordly-residence (and each by no means limited to a single social class) – by people with nested identities and in varied positions on the moral spectrum. The pursuit of games was morally contested and this opened it up to a rich vein of metaphorical interpretations. Not least the Scottish evidence makes a significant case study to the regional diversity of the everyday European experience.

Finally, I hope that this discussion has demonstrated the value of playing the game of chasing down the wider social relevance and contexts of board and dice games, something that has to be done in the light of the fundamental relevance of the material in demonstrating the human propensity for play, that subtle combination of recreation and re-creation: escaping the world and re-fashioning it to our liking; it is about being and becoming.

Acknowledgements

This paper stems from on-going research, the initial impetus for which was an exploration of gaming in early medieval Scotland and presented as the 2006 Groam House Academic Lecture.¹¹⁵ followed by a study of board and dice games as an everyday experience in medieval Scotland, with several lectures given in Pitlochry, Dundee and Glasgow and published in 2011. This paper develops that previous work and I am grateful to Matthias Teichert for his invitation to the Göttingen conference. I am grateful to Mary Markus, Tom Rees and Derek Hall for information about the boards from Melrose and Kilwinning Abbeys, to Sheila Garson (Orkney Museum) and I G Scott for information about the Kirkwall chess piece, to Anne Spiers for details of the Rothesay chess piece and to David Caldwell and Jackie Moran for access to and information on the Coldingham chess piece.

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¹¹⁵ Hall 2007.

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Illustrations

- Illustration 1: 1a: Set of pieces for hnefatafl from Viking ship burial excavated in Westness, Orkney. © National Museums Scotland. 1b: The figurative cone playing piece from Scalloway Broch, Shetland. © National Museums Scotland
- Illustration 2: 2a (left): Bone chess knight from Rothesay Castle, Bute, © The Bute Museum, Rothesay, Isle of Bute; 2b (right): Jet chess bishop from excavations in Perth, © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland
- Illustration 3: 3a: Chess piece from Kirkwall, Orkney © Tankerness House Museum, Orkney Council, Scotland. 3b: Chess piece from Coldingham, Borders, Photography M A Hall courtesy NMS.
- Illustration 4: 4a: Gaming piece from Cnip, Lewis © National Museums Scotland. 4b: Gaming piece from Birsay, Orkney © National Museums Scotland.
- Illustration 5: Remains of board, possibly for chess, incised in sandstone masonry block, Melrose abbey. Drawing by Mary Markus, courtesy Historic Scotland.
- Illustration 6: Fragment of a slate gaming board from excavations in Finlaggan, Islay. © National Museums Scotland.
- Illustration 7: Slate incised Nine Men’s Morris board from Inchmarnock, off Bute, Scotland. © Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd and with thanks to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland for permission to reproduce.
- Illustration 8: Two bone, decorated tablesmen from excavations in Finlaggan, Islay, © National Museums Scotland

Illustration 9: Improvised, reused pottery gaming pieces from excavations in Perth. © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.

Illustration 10: A selection of bone die from excavations in Perth, © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.

Illustration 11: Multiple NMM boards incised on a slate excavated at Kilwinning Abbey. Photography Mark Hall, courtesy Tom Reess, Rathmell Archaeology.



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Illustration 1a



Illustration 1b





Illustration 2a-b



Illustration 3a-b





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Illustration 4a-b

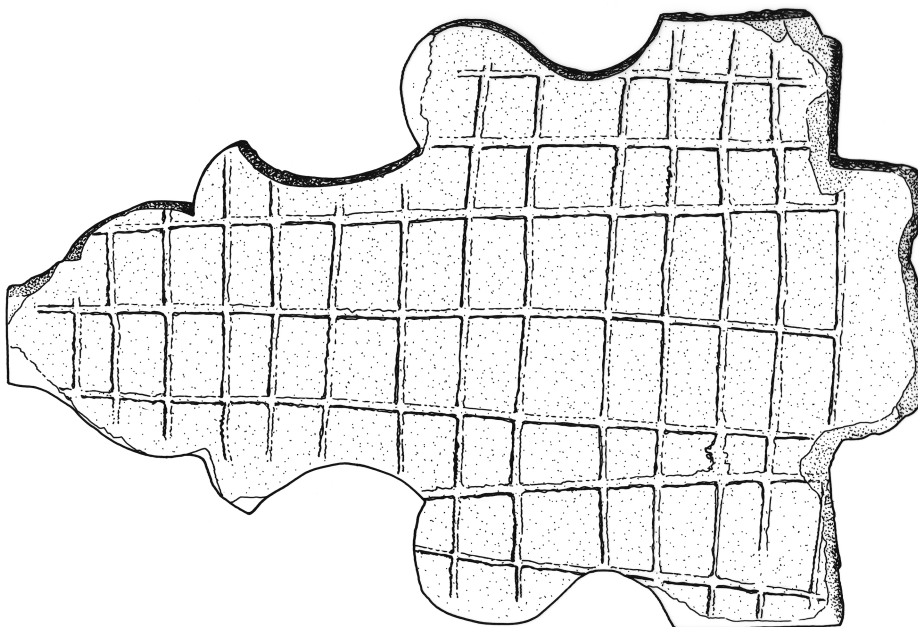


Illustration 5

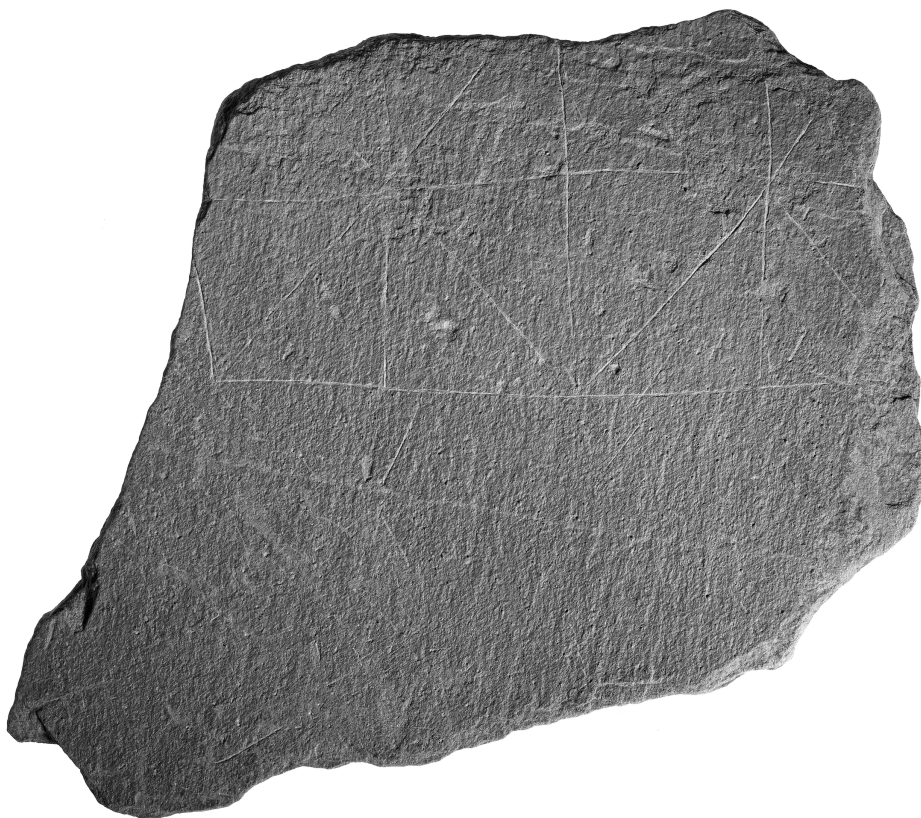


Illustration 6





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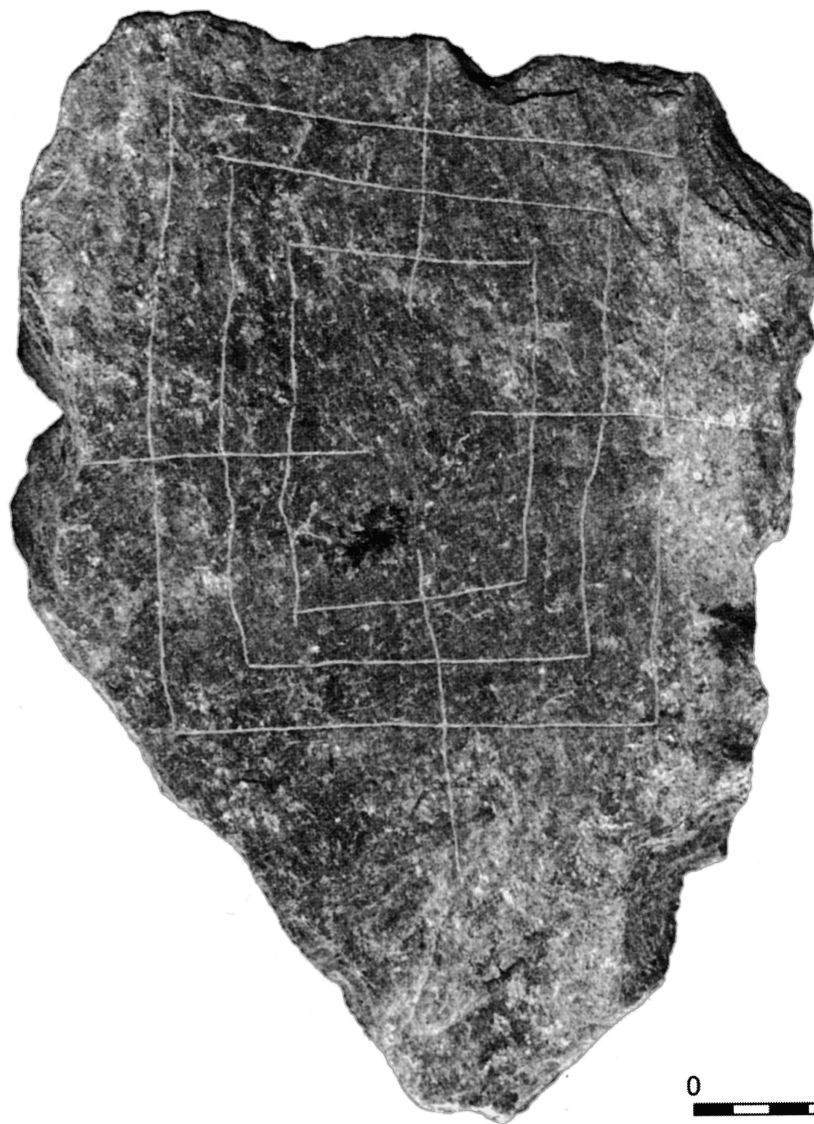


Illustration 7





Illustration 8

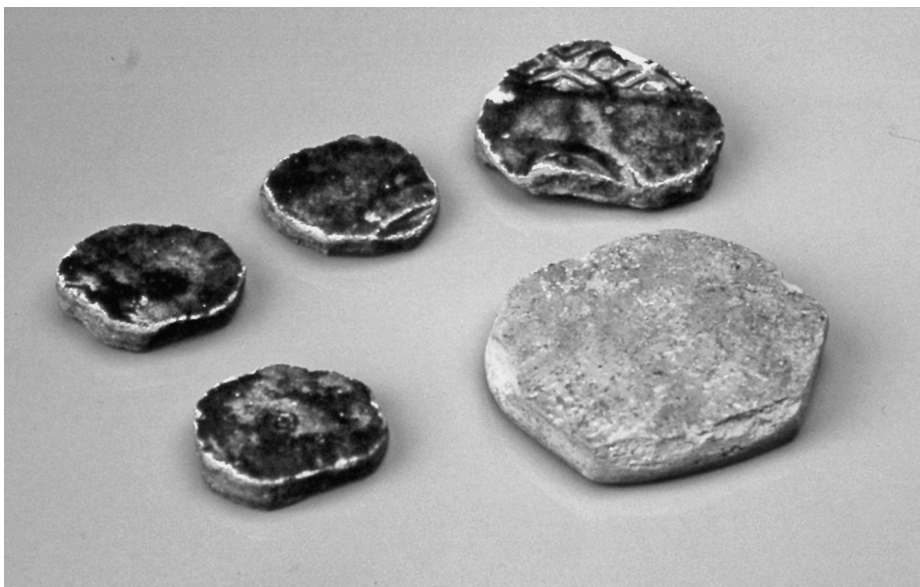


Illustration 9



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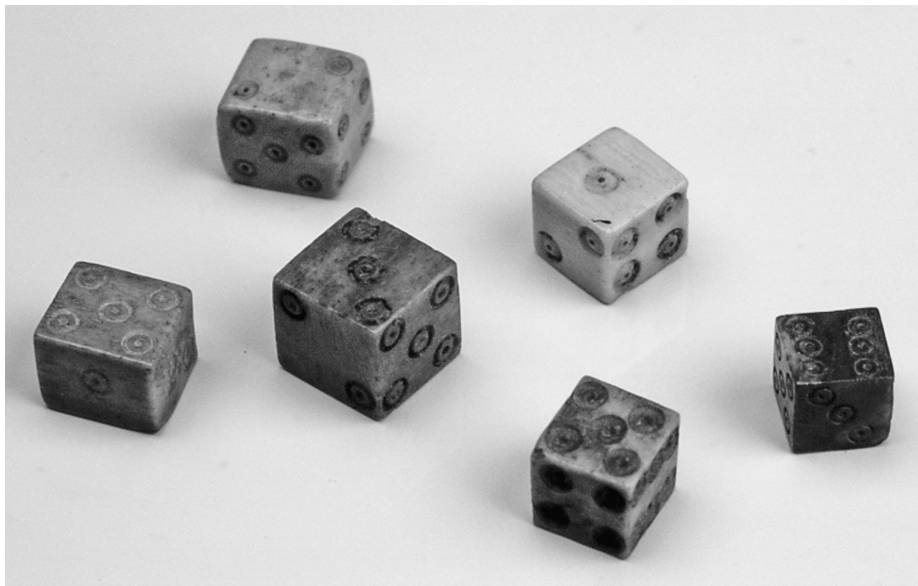


Illustration 10



Illustration 11



CHAPTER 2.4

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Section 3: The game context

CHAPTER 3.1

‘To you he left ... his brown ivory chessmen’: cultural value in the Lewis hoard of gaming pieces



Mark A Hall

PLAYING WITH COLOUR: ‘With your hands, and your feet, and your raiment all red’¹

THE role of colour in metaphorically condensing the physical properties of objects (Jones and Bradley 1999: 113, following Miller 1985) is a hitherto rarely explored aspect of the material culture of medieval board games. This condensing role is argued to stem from their associative evocation of ‘fluids or substances (in the human body), seasons or times (by mimicking certain colours of light or vegetation), or even places (by prompting us to think of particular colours of soil or rocks)’ (Giles 2008: 73).

These associations are long-lived. Giles notes from Pliny’s *Natural History* his observation on the appeal of coral to the Gauls, who regarded it as a powerful amulet, especially to protect infants:

Its ‘redness’ was seen as analogous to human fluids and skin, and made an excellent remedy in powdered form for those who brought up blood, whilst also being useful to ‘efface’ the cavities of ulcers and scars: effectively replacing fluids or making flesh with a like substance. (2008: 73)

It fulfilled much the same role throughout the Medieval Period (Jones 2002: 13–15). These associations go some way to explaining the prominence of red in the two key colour triads – red-white-black and red-yellow-blue – but we need to dip a little deeper to understand red’s medieval meanings. The quote which forms the title of this paper comes from the second verse of a mid-13th century praise poem to Aonghas Mór of Islay, son of Donald and a great-grandson of Somerled, progen-



Illus. 1
Opposite page and above
Lewis foot soldiers with
cross shields.

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itor of the Lordship of the Isles. The first two verses (of 31) help to establish the cultural context to be explored:

*Purchase your father's poem, Aenghus
the house of the king is yours,
You are the tree's root and blossom:
all say it's right you buy it.*

*To you he left his position,
yours each mail shirt, each treasure,
His hats, his staves, his slender swords
Yours, his brown ivory chess sets.*

Clancy 1998: 288–91, my emphasis

The poem also describes Aonghas as king of Lewis – flattery, perhaps, as part of the poet's aim to persuade Aonghas to do his kingly duty and settle his father's debts, hence the long listing of possessions he inherits from his father, Domhnaill or Donald (the eponym of Clan Donald), including his ivory chess sets. It should be noted that the word 'chess' is a translator's choice; the terminology could equally apply to playing pieces for *hnefatafl*, for example (an issue I will return to in a forthcoming paper, Caldwell and Hall). The poem, then, is an acknowledgment of the importance of chess and board games as an élite pursuit, as an indication of élite status, and as carriers of social identity across familial generations (to which I will return at the end of this paper). But the quote also refers to colour and so is eminently suitable to the theme of colour as symbolic value and sensory perception that I wish to explore here through the colouring of chess pieces.

The quote refers to ivory chessmen, and on the face of it this rather suggests ivory chess pieces of natural unadorned colour. The original language of Aonghas Mór's address is Gaelic and I am grateful to Thomas Clancy for his comment on both the colour term used and the term for chess:

In the Gaelic, the chessmen are called 'foirne donna de/ad' or 'ivory, brown sets of chessmen'. The word for chessmen is 'foirenn', originally meaning 'a number of people, band, company' and thence a set of chessmen'. In fact the poem uses the plural, 'foirne' so I have realised it must refer to sets of chessmen. The colour word is 'donn', the Dictionary of the Irish Language says this means generally, dun or brown, apparently a light brown inclining to yellow or red but ... I sense it is often a darker colour It is used of oak trees a lot, so could be the natural colour of ivory

There has been over the years a lot of work on colour terms in Gaelic,





and Lazar-Meyn's analysis (1994) notes the term *donn* as being used to mean 'unsaturated brown through grey' and in that sense is often applied to hair, facial complexion, cloaks and shields. The red tinge comes in with references to dried blood and again to cloaks and shields, with the term *donnderg* (brown-red).² In her study of martial objects in the British and Irish Iron Age, Giles (2008) emphasises the agency of colour – especially red – as one aspect of the performance of warfare, which is in accord with these nuances of terminology. Giles elucidated key associations of red as including (human) blood and the states of anger and violence (2008: 73). In his reply to me, Thomas also went on to note a second possible meaning for *donn*, that of 'lordly, noble'. Though he doubts this is the meaning being referred to here, we should acknowledge that such a meaning would be a very apt description for the chess pieces as a king's property, and would also fit well with the fact multiple sets are being referred to (an important aspect of high status gift-giving – see Caldwell, Hall and Wilkinson 2009: 176–8), and of course could also describe the make-up of the Lewis hoard. Such sets of playing pieces may have been handed on for several generations within families – their use over such an extended period would inevitably lead to wear and colour loss, and loss might also come about through the paying off of family debts.

Recent scientific analysis by Jim Tate at National Museums Scotland has demonstrated the trace-presence of red colouration on some of the Lewis pieces. This work is reported in detail in this volume, but essentially XRF analysis has revealed traces of mercury on various parts of the surface of individual pieces in the Museum's collection. The mercury comes from traces of cinnabar, a mineral well known to have been used as a red pigment in the Medieval Period. In his 1832 report on the chess pieces acquired by the British Museum, Madden says (p. 212), 'For the sake of distinction, part of them were originally stained of a dark red or beet-root colour; but from having been so long subject to the action of the salt-water, the colouring matter, in most cases, has been discharged'. No traces of this colour can now convincingly be seen on the British Museum pieces. However, this is the first time that the National Museums Scotland pieces have been analytically examined and it may be that the traces we have found reflect the rather different treatment the two groups of chess pieces have received since they were found. Applied new, the red colourant would have been bright and vivid, but after many years of handling and heirloom transfer the Lewis gaming pieces might well be very aptly described as ivory pieces that are light brown with a hint of red. The medieval reality was that unadorned ivory pieces were probably more unusual than painted ones, but the latter only survive with faint traces





of their colouration. A brief summary of some of them and the range of colours they exhibit follows. (For a closer look at black, see Hall forthcoming).

The National Museums Scotland collection also includes a mid-13th-century Gothic style ivory chess piece found on the Isle of Skye (Glenn 2003: 178–81) which is closely related to two pieces in the Ashmolean and Victoria and Albert museums (Alexander and Binski 1987, cat. nos 145, 146). In the Ashmolean collection is a knight that bears traces of green paint and gilding; while the V&A example, which may be a rook or a king, bears traces of black paint. Both date to the mid-13th century. In the Louvre, Paris, is a rook piece, transitional from the Islamic abstract form to the European figurative one. It bears traces of gilding (Wichmann and Wichmann 1964: 281 and pls 31–2).³

In the Musée de Cluny, Paris, are several abstract chess pieces of Scandinavian origin which visual examination shows to have been painted/stained green, although Wichmann and Wichmann (1964: 289, no. 74) describe the colouring as brownish-black. Also in the Musée de Cluny is a splendid vizier or queen piece currently thought to be of late 11th-century date and for many centuries part of the Treasury of Reims Cathedral (Antoine et al. 2003: 42; Dectot 2009: 44 no. 29). It bears traces of red and black paint. Some do not accept that this is a chess piece, arguing that such a function is incompatible with its iconography – a church with the Virgin and Child – and it's hollowing out, preferring to see it as a reliquary. There is no real reason why it cannot have served as both, either simultaneously or in succession. This piece is certainly compatible with poems and stories of the 12th and 13th century that link chess with God, Christ and the Virgin Mary, including a 13th-century Anglo-Norman poem that has Jesus (= king), the Virgin (= queen), the apostles (= rooks) and bishops (= bishops or confessor 'aufins') ranged against the black pieces of the devil on a chessboard.

Gautier de Coincy's *The Miracles of Our Lady* includes several verses where Mary appears in the guise of a chess queen, to God's king (Murray 1913: 749). A small antler figurine of late 12th-century date, excavated at the imperial palace site of Tileda, Germany, depicting the Mother and Child, has generally been seen as a Marian relic (Maraszek et al. 2001: 224–5) but would function readily as a chess piece as imagined by the aforementioned poems, and again, it could have been both chess piece and relic. The aforementioned rook in the Louvre is further demonstration that chess and religion, or if you like the secular and the holy, were not seen as incompatible. Its depiction of knights in combat is contrasted with a depiction of Adam and Eve on the opposite face.

Of course, on the chess board the fundamental purpose of colour





is to distinguish the pieces in play, one side from the other, and the opposition of black and white is one that is very familiar to us and seems natural. At Rievaulx Abbey, Yorkshire, both a 'black' jet piece and a 'white' bone piece were found (Dunning 1965: 60–1); although they came from different parts of the site (the jet piece from the area between the dorter and the frater, the bone piece from the exterior of the north side of the nave) and have a size disparity, they remain suggestive of black and white sets. There is of course a very long history to the association (not necessarily oppositional) of black and white: from the Neolithic dolmen in Couriac, France, came a necklace of alternate jet and chalk beads (Muller 1980: 9). Jet was often combined in this way with bones, teeth, amber, etc. But on the chessboard the opposition of black and white is not a fixed, unanimous one.

Well beyond the 12th century, chess was played with red and white pieces as much as with black and white. Red-black-white predominates in the illuminations of the 13th century *Alfonso Codex* (the games book of King Alfonso X, 'the Wise', of Castille). The depictions of chess show black and white pieces on red and white/pale chequer boards (see Schädler and Calvo 2009: 85–190 for reproductions of the illuminations).

In the United Kingdom, as well as pieces being painted black, chess (and other gaming) pieces were made from black substances, i.e. jet and similar (Hall forthcoming). With the exception of two pieces from Dublin, eight pieces unprovenanced in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and six pieces found in Trondheim (with the Norwegian and Irish examples almost certainly imported from York; McLees 1990: 188 ff; Hall forthcoming), all the known examples are United Kingdom finds, with the most notable Scottish example being the bishop piece from Perth (Hall 2011), and this despite active medieval jet working industries in France, Germany and Spain. There are two clear types of black abstract pieces – plain and inlaid with tin or silver and it is perfectly possible that such sets could have opposed each other on the chessboard, as well as being alternate black choices to range against bone, wood or stone pieces.

There are several red abstract chess pieces, either painted or made from red stones such as jasper or serpentine. They include a lightly mottled red abstract chess rook from Hulton Abbey, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, made from red serpentine (the principal, workable source for which in the United Kingdom is the Lizard Point, Cornwall) (the piece is on display in the Potteries Museum and summarily published in Wise 1985: 51 and fig. 30). A 14th/15th-century wooden rook from Novgorod, Russia, bears traces of red paint (Rybina 2007, fig. 21.1 n. and photo. 28). A group of eight domed, chalk pawns (probably





for *hnefatafl*) from York, and dated to *c.*930/5–*c.*975, includes two that carried traces of a colourant, red ochre (Mainman and Rogers 2000: 2566–7). This long-lived use of red as a colourant has some support from the Icelandic *Saga of Fridthjof the Bold*, written *c.*1300 and set in the 8th century, which includes a reference to red pieces used for the defender's or king's side. This was not always the case, and other references are to the king's side being white or fair, and the glass *hnefatafl* pieces excavated in Birka contrast blue and black pieces with a vari-coloured king piece (Helmfrid 2005: 10).

Other materials used to distinguish sets of chess pieces included precious metals, gemstones and crystal. Edward I's second wife, Margaret of France, had in a casket in 1300 'a chessboard of jasper and crystal with crystal images bound with silver and with pieces of jasper and crystal ... A chessboard of red and green jasper bound with silver gilt with the pieces of jasper and crystal ... A set of tables of nutmeg with metal stems and the pieces of the same [made] of ginger and nutmeg bound with silver tallies.' Five years before this, in 1295–6, an inventory of Edward I's plate and jewels refers to a box or chest containing a chess set (*familia*) of jasper and crystal. This is quite possibly an earlier reference to the same board described later as belonging to Margaret. The use of the term *familia* corresponded to the French *maisnie* or *mesnie* – the common word for describing 13th-century chessmen in vernacular French texts. Hence an inventory such as that of the goods of Beatrice, lady of Kortrijk (d.1288), listed an '*eschalier qui est dou testament monseigneur Rogier [de Mortagne, d.1275] et est li maisnie aveuc*' ('chessboard which is from the testament of my lord Rogier and the chessmen that come with it'). The overtones of rank and hierarchy important in such usages applied especially well in courtly or household contexts. The terms *familia* and *maisnie* were also, and primarily, used to describe the domestic household or permanent establishment of a ruler or noble.⁴ It is a comparable analogy to the Gaelic term *foirenn* discussed above.

In attempting to make any assessment of the range of colour meanings in chess and other playing pieces, it is necessary to have some sense of the wider context of colour meanings, which were never fixed and always subject to a variety of interpretations. For the Medieval Period, I follow in particular the work of Herman Pleij (2004); and, for her analysis of colour used to define otherness, Ruth Mellinkoff (1993, especially pp. 33–56, 145–60), summarising just some of the possibilities here.

Colour, of course, is not a substance but a quality made manifest by light, and our perception of it as reflected by an object. In the Middle Ages, colour was closely connected with its wearer: colour said some-





thing significant about the very essence of a person or thing. This colour connection could be revealed (by light and heat) or applied at will by adding layers of colour, and therefore layers of meaning, to an object (Pleij 2004: 9–11).

The medieval penchant for showiness was based on ethical, aesthetic, medical and scientific considerations, all elements of a pervasive theology that meant that colour was viewed as an important part of God's grand design, set down in nature (*ibid.* 4–5). Because of their divine power of expression, specific colours could be linked to certain social classes or age groups. The powerful, ambiguous language of colour was brought to bear on every facet of life. Such colour extravagances could have a socially destabilising effect because of the jealousy they provoked in the less fortunate, exacerbated by the clerics who increasingly blamed the devil for this colourful poisoning of God's plan. The anticour movements presumably explain the rise in the popularity of blue, whose reflection of heavenly hues made it a very otherworldly colour. Black joined blue as a means of expressing worldly rejection and humility. At the end of the Middle Ages, black and blue became the colours of princes and the urban aristocracy. Bright colours gradually came to represent worldly pleasures, which every civilised, God-fearing person was supposed to avoid. Black, dark blue, and later white, became non-colours, deployed to defeat the devil and his arsenal of colourful weapons (*ibid.* 6).

Several theologians, notably Bernard of Clairvaux, interpreted colour as a worldly gloss and a concealment of true nature and so unnecessary, even dangerous, because the devil tended to use such earthly elements to bait his traps. Many other scholars took a more positive outlook, constantly linking colours with brilliance, luminosity and intensity. Hugh of St Victor, describing the effects of stained glass in cathedrals, wrote: 'What is more beautiful than light, which, itself colourless, nonetheless brings out clearly the colour of all things?' (*ibid.* 11). Because of the strong desire to achieve eternal salvation, to reach the New Jerusalem, there was no single fixity in the meaning of colours, rather there was variance and contradiction as people sought desperately to reach salvation.

Everything therefore was linked to everything else, which is why colours were assigned to the four elements, the four seasons, the four points of the compass, the four temperaments, the stages of human life, the seven planets, the periods of sacred history, precious stones, feast days, ecclesiastical vestments, and much, much more. The techniques used to determine the place and meaning of simple associations, were usually based on presumed word derivations. (Ibid.)





The mid-14th-century Dutch verse, 'On six colours and the twelve year stages of life, the one explained by the other', includes 'Black-sable' (the text uses the common colour name in parallel with the heraldic tincture name), equated with the age-stage 60–72, and indicating simplicity and acquiescence. The first stage, 0–12 years, is associated with white-silver, indicating the stage 'when the child is pure and untainted, in fact angelic'. The second stage, 12–24, was marked by the colour green/vermillion, linking it to the season of growth, comparable to the spring, a season bursting with energy (*ibid.* 95). There may, then, have been a link between green chess pieces and the game's more youthful players, bursting with princely energy and accomplishment.

Thomas Aquinas assigned colours to moral values/virtues including white for purity and red for love. There were many differences in interpretation, but the dominant tone was white, red and black – sometimes joined by green or yellowish green. These colours were associated with the gifts of the Holy Spirit – piety, fortitude, charity and hope (*ibid.* 16). For centuries, red, not black, was thought to be the opposite of white. The devil/demons were often portrayed in red and black, but we should note there was no single fixed colour for the devil or demons – they came in all colours (*ibid.* pls 18, 19), a further signal that a vigorously applied 'uniform system of colour significances did not and cannot exist' (Mellinkoff 1993: 37).

Red was the colour of love and exuberance, but in the context of hair, red-headedness was a powerful sign of despised otherness (Mellinkoff 1993: 145–59). It was seen as characteristic of recalcitrant servants, rebellious sons, perjured brothers, adulterous women, executioners, whores, usurers, money-changers, counterfeiters, acrobats, clowns, barber-surgeons, swindling smiths, greedy millers, blood-thirsty butchers, heretics, Jews, Muslims, Bohemians, hypocrites, lepers, the weak and the infirm, suicides, beggars, vagabonds and the destitute. Blushing red faces were taken as indicative of lunacy, aggression, slyness and betrayal, and so a 14th-century etiquette book advises travellers not to lodge with red-heads. Occasionally red-headedness is linked to heroes, when it represents valour and ardour, though red-knights (e.g. *Walewein*) are sometimes of negative import.

The purpose of this lengthy excursion into medieval colour is to demonstrate that there is no set group of meanings that remain fixed in time and context, but there may be allusions to be teased out if we compare, say, the social status of sites where pieces are found with the available range of meanings – the mentalities deployed in castle sites, for example, are likely to have been different to those in monastic ones, though one has to allow that the individuality of the people using the pieces at either type of site makes it very hazardous to suggest straight-





forward uniformity in this respect. Can we really get beyond the shared mentality of enjoying the game?

Heraldry, holiness and heirlooms

All the knights and warders carry large, kite-shaped shields, consistent with evolving 12th and early 13th century types (see Caldwell, Hall and Wilkinson 2009: 195 for full analysis). Most of the shields have geometric decoration. Systematic designs, the beginnings of heraldry, had appeared in Europe by the middle of the 12th century (for a valuable recent analysis of the development of heraldry between 1050–1250, see Crouch 2002, especially 28–37). The preponderance and variety of cross designs [illus. 1, 2] on the shields of the Lewis chessmen, rather than a wider range of patterns, might suggest that most of these are non-heraldic, but possibly proto-heraldic, that is concerned with depicting devices of recognition but without indicating family and lineage.

Early heraldry was not quite as fixed as we might imagine and there must have remained competition over the adoption of particular symbols. It is noticeable that there is no duplication of the heraldry on either of the knights or the so-called warders in the Lewis hoard. This does not necessarily mean that known individuals were being depicted or presented through their heraldry, but that it was another way in which the general tenor of society was reflected in the chess pieces. In this respect they match the kinds of designs one sees in illuminated manuscripts of the 12th and early 13th century, for example *The Chronicle of Worcester* (Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 157) and *The History of Jerusalem* (Berlin, SMPK Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Lat. fol. 677). The former was written c.1130–40 by the monks John and Florence of Worcester, and pp. 382–3 tell of the visions of Henry I in Normandy, illustrated with an image of knights bearing heraldic shields, haunting the king's dreams (Zarnecki, Holt and Holland 1984: 102–3, cat. 33). The latter was written in 1140 by Albert von Aachen and the initial 'P' illumination at the start of book 2 (fol. 12r) includes a knight with a Cross-decorated kite-shaped shield (Leenen 2010: 131).

But such designs are not confined to manuscripts. The St Olav altar frontal of c.1300 in Trondheim Cathedral has various Cross-decorated shields borne by knights in combat (Ekroll 2002: 16–17; Blom 1994, front cover). In the same cathedral the graveslab of Riddar Bjørn Finnsson, dated to 1250–1300, shows him with a shield bearing a simple decoration of small roundels (Ekroll 2001: 17, 42, no. 28), and shows that, even by the close of the 13th century, precise heraldic







conventions were not yet universally established. Indeed, in some respects heraldry remained widely non-specific throughout the Medieval Period. Its significance was such that elements were widely copied to form generic devices – most notably horse harness pendants – decorated with heraldic motifs but not linked to a specific noble household, part of the wider aspect social aping in medieval culture.

What became a staple of heraldic symbolism is the chess or chequer-board design, known in heraldry as ‘checky’ or ‘chequey’ and, when just a single line of chequers, ‘compony’. A 12th-century woven band of silk, silver-gilt and silk brocading, probably from a belt, excavated at Old Sarum Castle, Wiltshire (Crowfoot 1991: 50–53), includes, for example, a shield bearing a checky design, the cells composed of alternating gold and an unidentified colour. Several leather scabbards excavated in London bear checky and checky-like designs (Wilmot 1987, cat. nos 429, 433, 437; with 429 and 437 not unlike the design on the Lewis shields). Wilmott’s discussion of the scabbards suggests that a significant number were not simply decorative but related to the heraldry of specific individuals, whilst acknowledging the problem of absence of inscriptions and colours and the fact that contemporary medieval heraldic sources are not comprehensive in their coverage. He also reminds us that simple designs of early heraldry were not simply decorative but were often meant to be recognised. One obvious route for this design into the symbol-stock of heraldry is from the popularity of chess amongst social élites, including those of Flanders, Normandy and Brittany, but especially the Vermandois family (see below) whose use of chequey designs was passed onto their Stewart descendants in 12th-century Renfrewshire, Scotland (Malden and Malden 2012). The early connotation of chequey presumably was that it signified proficiency (whether self-declared or real) and love of chess, and possibly an adoption of episodes from romantic tales involving the game, or even contemporary stories evolving from the actions of the nobility or a saint linked to the nobility.

This kind of invention was as common and as contested in the Middle Ages as now. The great 12th-century French knight Godfrey the Bearded gained the nickname ‘knight of the white swan’. When two of his grandchildren became rulers of Jerusalem, the idea quickly circulated that they were descended from a swan. This presumably had a satisfying symbolism: about Christian knights being as pure white as the most elegant of birds. The literal belief in their conception by swan’s semen inspired a 13th-century poem, scorned by the historian William of Tyre, who vociferously denied its credibility. Fellow historian Lambert of Andres took entirely the opposite view and wrote that the swan was both flesh-and-blood and divine. What

Illus. 2
Opposite page and below

Lewis knights with cross shields.

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3



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to one was ignorance, to the other was piety (Dunbabin 1992: 2). Regardless of whether rooted in piety or ignorance and fancy, such stories would be apt sources for heraldic embellishment.

Checky as a heraldic symbol, that is declaring lineage and familial ties, does appear to be the earliest example of such. In the early 12th century it occurs across several seals of the descendants of Norman baron Roger de Beaumont (d.1093), but interestingly they have more to do with matrilineal than male lines – they do not express the link back to Roger as much as to Isabel of Vermandois, the wife of one of Roger's sons, because she could trace her line back to Charlemagne (further links between Charlemagne and chess are explored below). The link expressed by checky shields extended to the de Warenne Earls of Surrey and the Earls of Warwick through a daughter and a granddaughter of Isabel (Crouch 2002: 29–31). It came to have a wider mythic significance fusing the Tristan and Arthurian romance cycles with chess origins. A 1463 version of the *Prose Tristan* (manuscript Bibliothèque nationale fr. 99) includes an illumination (fol. 143) showing the knight Palamède jousting Tristan and Perceval (Pastoureau 1990, illus. 8). Palamède bears a checky shield (in silver and black), and his horse wears a matching caparison. His name derives from that of Palamedes, a Greek hero from the Trojan War cycle (the subject of a play by Sophocles; he also figures in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Virgil's *Aeneid*), who is said to have invented the game *peSSI* (Purcell 1995, especially 3, 7–8, 11, 28–32), which in medieval times was equated with chess.⁵

Three of the Lewis knights are noteworthy in having a checky design on their shields [illus. 3]. At the time of writing I am aware of only eight other chess pieces bearing a checky design; one, the slightly later knight piece from Skye, has been mentioned above [illus. 4]; another, an early 13th-century German ivory bishop (with traces of painting), is seated on a throne, the throne decorated with checky (Murray 1913, drawing p. 762; Wichmann and Wichmann 1964, pl. 67), and the remainder are all in the so-called Charlemagne chess set, in the Bibliothèque nationale de France. They were made in Southern Italy in the late 11th century and probably gilded [illus. 5]. The relevant pieces are a pawn in the form of a foot soldier moving forward behind a checky shield, a cruder, smaller version of the same decorating the





top of a queen piece, two of the knights, one of the bishops (in the form of an elephant), and one of the rooks (in the form of a chariot) (Wichmann and Wichmann 1964, pls 29, 24, 28, 27 respectively, and pp. 280–1; Pastoureau 1994, pl. on p. 29 shows the two knights together). The pattern is applied to shields in the case of the pawn, queen and knight pieces, and in the case of the bishop to the elephant's caparison, and in the case of the rook to the bodywork of the chariot. The generic nature of the depictions is very similar to that found in manuscripts. A good example is a sole surviving leaf illuminated c.1160–80 and stylistically related to the Winchester Bible. It shows the story of David from the Book of Samuel. The upper scene shows David defeating Goliath, who is shown with a kite-shaped shield adorned with a checky design (Zarnecki, Holt and Holland 1984: 65 and pl. 57). But checky heraldry is one of those (simple) designs that gets deployed or aped outside the strict confines of heraldry, e.g. the later medieval horse harness excavated in Winchester (Hinton 1990, cat. 3907 and fig. 336).

Deployed on the chessboard, such symbols again reflect the society which played chess, and in such a context seem very likely also to have a wryly humorous, visually punning intent – referencing chess symbolically on a knight's shield. It was at this time that chess was being defined as a specifically knightly attribute. Petrus Alfonsi, in his *Disciplina Clericalis* (c.1100–25), lists chess as one of the seven skills of a good knight (Eales 1986: 15; Vale 2001: 171); and in the Chanson *Huon of Bordeaux* (c.1200) the knight-hero (disguised as a minstrel) intones nine attributes, including unsurpassed skill at chess and tables (Murray 1913: 738). For the élites of the North Sea world, the *Orkneyinga Saga* lists board games as the first of nine key skills or attributes of a nobleman.⁶

The references to the Charlemagne chess set above introduces us to a second context for the gifting and heirloom function of high status chess pieces, within the Church. Church treasuries formed a considerable repository for chess sets, frequently as a material proof of a cathedral, abbey or church's status and linkages, and as relics of saints. For many centuries the Charlemagne set was in the treasury of St Denis, Paris, where the pieces were perceived and promoted as relics of Charlemagne, particularly leading up to and following his 12th-century canonisation: the very pieces that he played with, hence the story attached to them that

Illus. 3 (opposite); 4 and 5 (below)

(3) Three Lewis knights with checky shields; (4) Skye knight with checky shield; (5) pawn in Charlemagne set.

Sources: (3) © Photography: National Museums Scotland / courtesy of The British Museum; (4) © National Museums Scotland; (5) Bibliothèque nationale de France





they were royal Byzantine gifts⁷ to Charlemagne (Pastoureau 1990). Their size suggests they may have been for display rather than play, and in the context of a church treasury display as relics of the St and King Charlemagne, this seems logical, particularly as St Denis served as the reliquary church of the French monarchy.

Charlemagne's church at Aachen has a set of semi-precious stone and rock-crystal chess pieces built into the ambo donated by Henry II (973–1024) (himself canonised in the 12th century) (Kluge-Pinsker 1991: 34–35, figs 15 and 16). The cult of Charlemagne was widespread – the Dom treasury, Osnabrück, also has chess pieces which are said to have belonged to Charlemagne (Murray 1913: 765 and pl. opp. p. 766; Kluge-Pinsker 1991: 37–38) and in the Collegiate Church of Santa Maria, Roncesvalles (Orreaga), Navarre, Spain, there is a reliquary known as Charlemagne's chess set, of 14th/15th-century date, in the form of a chessboard (Gautier and Heredia 1982: 58–72), no doubt expressing a link back to the story of Roland as much as to Charlemagne. The misnomer linking these, particularly the set in Paris, to Charlemagne is often remarked upon. The criticism seems misguided, however. The 11th-, 12th- and 13th-century tellings of the Charlemagne cycle of romances (including *Oger de Danmarche*, *Renaud de Montaubon*, *Huon of Bordeaux* and *Garin de Montglone*) are replete with chess incidents, including those of boards and pieces as weapons, when the game becomes acrimonious. In the cultural context it seems perfectly natural for chess sets to become those of Charlemagne and his heroes. The treasury of St Maussac has a set of crystal chessmen that carry the legend (current by the 13th century) of having been gifted by King Pippin (Charlemagne's father) in AD 764 on the occasion of the translation of the bones of St Stremon, the pieces given to be used to adorn the saint's new reliquary (Murray 1913: 403–4).

Gaming relics were not confined to Charlemagne. In England, King Canute's gifts to Hyde Abbey seem to have included silver chessmen (certainly playing pieces), lost with his other gifts when the abbey was destroyed in 1144 (Murray 1913: 44). Burgos Cathedral has what is described as El Cid's chess set, one of several relics of this heroic saint whose cult has been shown to mirror that of Charlemagne's (Smith 1976 and 1980: 45; Russell 1958: 61). The now lost Lewis-style chess piece from Trondheim (McLees and Ekroll 1990) was found during excavations in the church of St Olav in the 19th century, perhaps it had a secondary relic function at that church. The mid-18th-century *Royal Danish Statistical Account of Iceland* noted that they played a game known as 'Saint Olav's Tafl' (apparently played blindfolded whilst reciting an old ballad, learnt by heart, with total silence from the spectators) (Madden 1832: 288).





Several other (now partial) chess sets are known to have been bequeathed by various nobles to various churches in France, Spain and Italy (including Nîmes, Valois, Åger and Genoa), which Murray (1913: 403–6; see also Gamer 1954: 738) took as being simply a bequest of portable wealth to those churches to be used as they saw fit as raw materials.

The Abbey of St Maurice d'Augaune, Valais, Switzerland, had several Islamic pieces in its treasury and Köln Cathedral Treasury had three complete sets, now lost (Pastoureau 1990: 19). This widespread survival of several of the pieces and the known disappearance of others from the late 16th century suggests that raw material re-use was not necessarily the case and that they could have had a relic function, either in their known right (as with the various Charlemagne sets, for example) or as an element in reliquaries or other furnishings. When incorporated into reliquaries they always retain their form as chess pieces, suggesting that was part of their ongoing meaning. Examples include the reliquary-shrine of St Mauritius, in the Abbey of St Maurice d'Agaune, in Schweizer Wallis (Schädler 2010) and the reliquary-shrine of the church of San Millán de la Cogolla, Spain (Kluge-Pinsker 1991: 35). The case is further made by more closely defined associations of games with saints. In *The Book of the Miracles of St Foy*, one of the stories is of Raimond de Montpezat, who was delivered from prison by St Foy and in token of the miracle took a chess board that was hanging on the wall of his dungeon and gave it to the shrine of St Foy in Conques (Murray 1913: 756). Alas, it does not survive among the Conques relics as presently known (Gabroit-Chopin and Taburet-Delahaye 2001). A double-sided board, for chess and tables of c.1300, now in the Aschaffenburg Museum, may have started out as just that but came to function primarily as a reliquary, having on its edges, glass compartments for keeping relics. It was found (along with many other relics) in the mid-19th century within the altar of St Valentine in the convent church of St Peter and Alexander, Aschaffenburg. It is probably the relic referred to as St Rupert's gaming board, listed in a 1531 list of relics belonging to Cardinal Albrecht, who fled from Halle during the heat of the Reformation and sought refuge in Aschaffenburg. The relic had been kept at his residence in the Moritzburg, Halle. The St Rupert concerned is not the well-known saint from Salzburg but a more obscure, aristocratic saint (the son of a duke with royal lineage) from Bingen (Hüseler 1957: 620–22; Lauter 1999).

This concern with chess (and, more generally, board games), whether by secular élites or ecclesiastical élites, and the heraldic allusions that could be made through it, would certainly underscore the suitability of such pieces to be passed on as heirlooms, whether within and across





families or within church treasuries. In the case of Lewis, a secular context seems most likely, but we cannot discount the possibility that they had been part of a church treasury or were destined for one. The significant number of bishops in the Lewis hoard may indicate ecclesiastical influence but we do not have enough information to say whether this was a determining factor in the make-up of the hoard. Future field-work may help to clarify this question.

The colour discussion above is rooted in a Gaelic poem which, in its line ‘yours, his brown ivory chessmen’, clearly signals that chess sets (or rather sets of playing pieces) were being passed on to the next generation of a family. The passing on of chess sets is also clearly signalled in the French documentary record of wills and testaments. It is given additional credence by the great value attached to giving chess or gaming sets as gifts. The Irish *Lebor na Cert* (*Book of Rights*) frequently lists the giving of multiple sets of gaming pieces (along with weapons, slaves, hunting dogs, ships, etc.) as stipends to Irish sub-kings. The multiplicity – the giving of sets rather than a set – suggests that the gift was less about the desire to play and more about the desire to show status through the giving and receiving of plenty. There may also have been an element of signifying status in office. In later medieval Wales, on admission to office a chancellor ‘received a gold ring, a harp and a game from the king ... a judge of court received playing pieces made of sea-animal bone from the king ...’. These were expected to be retained for life.⁸ Such cultural value attaching to chess sets – helping to reinforce a family’s sense of itself and the performance of its status and inter-family ties – would almost inevitably lead to their becoming heirlooms. The inevitability is heightened by the natural inclination to keep such appealing items that have associations with pleasure and enjoyment.

Play, of course, is a performance and the heraldry or proto-heraldry on chessmen adds to the debate about their performance value. Indeed, Nanouschka Burström (*pers comm*) posits that the utilisation of heraldry on chess pieces may be a further dimension to the keeping of multiple sets: which could be used for chess tournaments with several people in the retinue active at the same time and so using their designated pieces. By the later Middle Ages, dancing and games were a fixed part of many public events. A 16th-century fresco in the guests’ feasting hall of St George’s monastery, Stein am Rhein, Switzerland, shows the 1516 outdoor exhibition at Zurzach. It includes the detail of a very large table bearing a ‘giant’-size 8 x 8 chess board, accompanied by players and spectators (Planck 2004, pl. on p. 21). No playing pieces are shown, but they must have been very large, a key element of ostentatious display and performance. The performative role of chess





pieces was extended by their social display and by its additional performative role as heirlooms. There are several examples of this applying to even single pieces (generally dismissed as being ‘residual’ when found on archaeological sites⁹). These include the jet chess piece from Perth mentioned above and the bone, octagonally-faceted, pawn (with ring and dot decoration) from Winchester, stylistically dated to the 11th/12th century but recovered from a 13th/14th century context (Brown 1990, cat. 2239; for further examples, see Hall forthcoming). Designation as heirlooms is surely a significant factor in the chronological depth and the deposition scenario for the Lewis hoard of gaming pieces.

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Notes

- 1 The quote is from Thomas Babington Macaulay’s 1824 poem, ‘The Battle of Naseby’, lines 3–4, consulted online on 29 April 2011 at: <http://www.kobobooks.com/content/The-Battle-Of-Naseby-1824-/sc-2i4SP9vWPE6agvIwuqkgA/page1.html#1>
- 2 The multiplicity of red terms is not confined to Gaelic. Medieval Latin, for example, had some thirty terms for ‘red’ (Cage 1990: 110, following Maier and Suntrup 1987).
- 3 Images and basic details can also be found online at: http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=5170&langue=en

- 4 The inventory of 1295–6 also lists an ivory chess set (*‘une familie de ebore ad scaccarius’*) (Vale 2001: 173, n.37). The importance of chess in signalling status extended to the lower, financially stretched, echelons of the nobility; for one French gentleman a chessboard was his only item of luxury furniture (Perroy 1962: 29).
- 5 The name means ‘the handy or counting one’ (Hornblower and Spawforth 1996: 1099). The name was adopted for the French title of the first periodical devoted to chess: *Le Palamède*, which was issued between 1836 and 1839 and again between 1841 and 1847 (Murray 1913: 886).
- 6 The listing of the skills is made in a poem by Kali





Kolsson, before he is made Earl Rognvald. See Pálsson & Edwards 1978, ch. 58 (alternative translation in Bibire 1988: 226, which also appears in Clancy 1998: 190). The word being translated as chess in both cases is *tafl*, which does not specifically mean chess; before chess it meant 'tables' (primarily but not only *hnefatafl*) and so culturally we should think of it as meaning board games. The idea that the playing of games was one of the marks of a great man became an aspect of the panegyric code detectable in Gaelic poetry, although in material surviving from the 17th century onwards the games cited are tables (i.e. backgammon), dice and cards; see Caldwell et al. 2009: 177, 180–81.

- 7 These later stories of Charlemagne and his Byzantine gifts of chess and elephants would have been fuelled by the circulating material culture carrying depictions of elephants, including an elephant-and-mahout chess piece (representing a king) of 9th-/10th-century date from south Italy (part of the St Denis Charlemagne set) (Pastoureau 1990, fig. 40; Wichmann and Wichmann 1964: 1–3, 274), and the famous shroud of St Josse, 9th-century Iranian in origin, brought back to France following the first crusade and later donated to St Josse Abbey, near Caen, Normandy, as a wrap for St Josse's bones (Hattstein and Delius 2007: 120. The cloth is in the Louvre and accessible online at: www.louvre.fr/en/mediamages/saint-josse-shroud) Spurious invention often has a compelling, narrative truth of its own and still adheres to Charlemagne in the 21st century: in the film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989), Dr Henry Jones quotes Charlemagne after using his umbrella to scare a flock of seagulls into the air and so bring down a German fighter plane, explaining afterwards: 'I suddenly remembered my Charlemagne, "Let my armies be the rocks and the trees and the birds in the sky".' This is a completely spurious invention by scriptwriters, but it is one that is widely held to be true.
- 8 For a fuller discussion of the *Lebor na Cert*, with references, see Caldwell et al 2009: 176–7; the quote concerning the Welsh evidence is also used there and comes from Schädler 2007: 375.
- 9 In some instances, residuality seems unlikely even without invoking heirloom practice. A jet heptagonally-faceted domed pawn from York is published as a residual *hnefatafl* piece in later

medieval layers (Mainman and Rogers 2000: 567) but in fact it is comparable with later medieval chess pieces of domed and faceted form, some of which may be heirlooms within the Later Medieval Period as discussed above for the Winchester piece.

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CHAPTER 2.5

‘The Cult of Saints in Medieval Perth: Everyday Ritual and the Materiality of Belief’, in *Journal of Material Culture* 16 (1) (March 2011), 80-104

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Abstract

This article explores everyday ritual practice in medieval Perth, particularly with respect to the cult of saints (including saints' dedications) and as evidenced by material culture. The author deliberately focuses on one site, the Perth High Street plot excavated in 1975–1977, and its rich crop of devotional and ritual objects in an attempt to understand ritual and religious practice in a particular time and place.

Keywords

materiality, medieval, Perth, religion, ritual

Introduction

The aim of this article is to explore the conjunction of saints' dedications, ritual practice and material culture, with a view to further illuminating the cult of saints as practised in medieval Perth. In part, it builds upon previous studies by the author (Hall, 2005, 2007a, 2007b) of the cult of saints in medieval Perth and its hinterland that explore the dynamics of such practice in urban and rural Scotland and within the wider historical framework of Christian and cult practices across Europe. These studies identify some key foci for cult practice in Perthshire, including Perth, Scone and Dunkeld, whilst identifying a much wider pattern of behaviour with links to mainland Europe. This article does not seek to revisit or contradict this generally accepted view but is concerned instead to explore a different focus, in some respects beneath the radar of historical context: the closer analysis of the archaeological context of several items of devotional and related

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material culture (including pilgrimage souvenirs) from the Perth High Street excavation of 1975–1977.¹ As will become clear, some of this material is very clearly devotional, whilst some of it may have had a less transparent devotional function. I will contend that all the objects under consideration had use-lives as opposed to a single, fixed, ordinary identity. The time-span covered, approximately 250 years (c.1100 to c.1350), speaks of several generations living in the same spot and so of handed-on, adapting traditions of ritual behaviour, some of them embedded in material culture, some of which may have had the quality of heirlooms, either within families or tight, craft-based groupings. The rationale for the article is that religious/spiritual ideas could infuse many, if not all, aspects of life and could give material culture religious meaning (including the performative role in channelling the ‘excess’ of ‘mysterious energy’ that defines sainthood – see Meltzer and Elsnar, 2009: 375) when such meanings were required. This may seem counter-intuitive, in denial of Occam’s razor and unconcerned with original purpose, but human behaviour can and frequently does display these qualities.

Religion and ritual: the theoretical background

Before exploring the specifics of the Perth objects, a few words are necessary in order to set this discussion in the theoretical perspective that prompted it. This is mainly concerned with understanding ritual not as a catch-all for irrationality and superstition but as a purposeful action or set of actions, always rational within an individual’s or a group’s worldview. It also accepts a set of rituals as always being historically situated – as this case study aims to show – but that there are also some consistent traits of human behaviour that underline them. Ritual remains a problematic categorization of human behaviour. It has frequently been used as an explanation for what otherwise seems inexplicable behaviour (particularly in the archaeological record) and has tended to over-fix historical and anthropological views of belief systems in a given society, suggesting rituals were about passing on an unchanged set of orthodox values. But, as has been observed by Schmitt (1998: 7) in his study of medieval belief in ghosts: ‘belief is a never completed activity, one that is precarious, always questioned and inseparable from recurrences of doubt. There is nothing less fixed and less assured than [the] activity of believing.’ Rituals help to govern, express and sustain belief. The consequence of engagement with rituals is what Pierre Bourdieu (quoted in Muir, 2005: 6) has characterized as *habitus*:

those deeply held beliefs and assumptions expressed through gestures and repeated actions, those inner dispositions that integrate past experiences and function at every moment, in every perception, appreciation and action. Thus ritual helps to form and reform all social life.

Equally, as observed by Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994: 80–81) within social systems, variant individual understandings can give their own inner meaning to a shared outward set of actions or ritual.

I am not advocating the use of the term ‘ritual’ as a vague cover-all of the unexplained, but to indicate that there was a set (or sets) of practices, physical and mental, sacred and profane and ongoing but not with people necessarily believing all the time (Insoll, 2004: 13). The material culture to be discussed here demonstrates self and group agency in

belief and highlights the fact that religion was not compartmentalized but a part of the rest of life, which is infused by it. Because ritual functions at a communal and a personal level, it has to be approached in a holistic, contextual manner (Insoll, 2004: 154). In the words of Bell (1997: 171):

For each and every ritual there is a thick context of social customs, historical practices and day-to-day routines that in addition to the unique factors at work in any given moment in time and space influence whether and how a ritual action is performed. The warp-and-weft of handed down customs and real-life situations form the fabric from which specific rites are constructed and found meaningful.

In their ground-breaking analysis of ritual based on the analysis of the Jain rite of worship, Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994) noted anthropology's general neglect of liturgical ritual, as it has favoured studying other forms of ritual so as to reveal ideal, perfect partners. Through their field-work they were able to observe some significant features of ritual: that ritual practice governs ritual more tightly than religious exegesis (noting also that historians concentrate on exegesis and its texts, the orthodoxy if you like, and so miss the greater, 'self-proclaimed orthodoxy' of everyday practice); that the acceptance by practitioners of an authoritative text can go hand-in-hand with an almost total ignorance of the content of that text; that the same person can give several meanings to a single act with no sense of contradiction (and in having a meaning for a ritual act at a given moment the practitioner is representing that idea to themselves); and that practitioners could variously perform the same acts with or without devotion (the deep emotional sense that one 'means it'). The idea that a practitioner should always 'mean to mean it' is accepted but can still be absent; indeed, some ritual acts appear not to need this intent and stem from non-intent and spontaneity on which 'meaning to mean' is superimposed afterwards (Humphrey and Laidlaw, 1994: 198–212).

Following Insoll (2004), this discussion confronts and accepts ambiguity and possibility, both inevitable with the acceptance that religious belief and its ritual enactment is capable of structuring all aspects of life. Insoll (2004: 150–151) asks whether archaeologists will continue to regard religious material culture only as a 'pre-determined checklist of materials' that are 'definitely religious in intent', or will we rise to the challenge of recognizing 'material which might have been used while people entertained religious thoughts, the underlying intention of which we can never reconstruct'? This article is an attempt to rise to the challenge within the context of medieval archaeology.

Religion and ritual: the archaeological context

A key import of Humphrey and Laidlaw's analysis cited earlier is that, although rituals can have a special place for their enacting, they clearly inform and support practitioners' everyday experience. In the last decade in particular, archaeology has increasingly recognized that the interpretation of ritual as a separated-out area of lived experience, opposite to secular life, in the prehistoric past is no longer tenable. The long-held assumption of their mutual exclusion has now crumbled. The closer analysis of material culture has been pivotal in suggesting that the categories of 'sacred' and 'profane' were not overtly distinguishable (Bradley, 2005; Brück, 1999; Hill, 1995). The categories will be

familiar to many medievalists, and study of medieval material culture has demonstrated a similar blurring of these categories; for example, the rich haul of metal badges from the Low Countries (Van Beuningen and Koldeweij, 1993; Van Beuningen et al., 2001). The clear conclusion of both prehistoric and medieval studies is that ritual is part of the everyday, used to define and/or support other activities. In the medieval period, this could often be intermingled with Christian orthodoxy, although such everyday rituals are rarely recorded unfiltered in texts (exceptions include written-in prayers in books of hours, which I will return to later). Rather, they generally survive through the correcting or judgemental prism of orthodoxy, as with the Dominican Stephen of Bourbon's description of the cult of the holy greyhound, St Guinefort, analysed so richly by Schmitt (1983; see also Rider, 2006). Like Stephen (or like the trial judges of Joan of Arc and their alarm at what they saw as pagan practices connected to the Fairy Tree in Joan's village of Domrémy, see Meltzer, 2009: 496–505), our tendency is to treat such practices as superstitious, popular belief (rather than the culturally specific rational ones they appeared to their practitioners), but recent studies (in particular Beebe, Duffy, Gilley, Rider, Swanson and Yarrow; all in Cooper and Gregory, 2006) of so-called popular and elite religious belief has clearly shown this to be another false dichotomy. Such beliefs and their attendant rituals were shared across all social classes.

The St Guinefort case study demonstrates another tenet of religious ritual practice, and one pivotal to the broader sense of dedication – linking sacrality to place. Hrobat's (2007) archaeological analysis of oral tradition with respect to religious practice draws on the work of Halbwachs (1971) and his insight that religion has to be symbolically transferred into the spatial dimension to ensure survival: 'Religion has to be immobilised into the "stability of material things"' (Hrobat, 2007: 38, quoting Halbwachs). This sense of place may accrue a potent religious force, which Hrobat suggests is inherent in the root word from which religion may derive, '*religare* – to bind or fasten fast', in a sense of placing an obligation on someone.² This understanding of the root of the word certainly fits with the medieval practice of the cult of saints and its various rituals which reciprocally bound believers to the saints and to God, the reciprocity expected to manifest itself with God's 'magical' power³ acting in people's lives. Within British medieval archaeology, a more considered understanding of how material culture clarifies the everyday use of ostensibly sacred spaces has begun. For example, Pestell (2008: 161–186) has analysed metalwork finds from Bromholm Abbey to elucidate the complexity of human interaction and ritual behaviour within a formal, institutional, sacred space, reminding us that the profane was an essential admixture to that space. Conceptually (if not temporally) closer to the home of this present study is the clear evidence for the Early Christian/Byzantine deployment of magic and ritual through a range of material culture. Maguire (1995: 51–71) has written on the magical role of the frequent repetition of Christian imagery, particularly on textiles and clothing, where such images functioned as charms to win God's favour. Russell (1995: 35–50) has analysed a range of talismans and amulets recovered from the Roman and Byzantine town of Anemurium on the coast of Turkey. His discussion notably begins with a modern-day analogy to the practice in Turkey of tying rags to trees at sacred sites. Whilst I do not accept Russell's conjecture that this makes the practitioners 'simple people' (p. 36), I do accept the difficulty of understanding such practice here and now, never mind in the medieval and remoter pasts. This article could equally have started with the contemporary British practice of tying

rag to trees, usually next to holy wells (and so in Scotland known as ‘cloutie wells’, a cloutie being a cloth or rag).⁴ To continue the parallel, Russell discusses a series of 3rd- to 4th-century amulets excavated in Anemurium from well-defined domestic contexts. The objects include pilgrimage souvenirs ‘employed by their owners as instruments of magic with the power to effect cures’ (p. 41), and through their association with more mundane material culture such apotropaic items are suggested to be ‘nothing out of the ordinary and as much a part of everyday life as the cooking pots, ... spoons, ... tweezers ... and key’ (p. 45). In summation, Russell observes that:

Magic for [the] humble residents [of Anemurium] was no abstract belief or perversion of true religion practiced in secret but as common a function of daily existence as any other activity represented amongst the small finds ... The measures taken to cope with the unseen menace of demons constituted a domestic necessity as familiar as cooking, working, playing games or bringing up children. (p. 50)

Here I am seeking to take this one step further and suggest that the admixture of apotropaic material with mundane material was part of the everyday ritualizing of work, play, childcare, etc. Such syncretic associations have rarely been pursued in medieval archaeology. A notable recent exception is Gilchrist’s (2008: 119–159) study of the everyday experience of death as we can perceive it through a range of apotropaic objects placed in 11th- to 15th-century burials in Britain. It is a persuasive and clear statement that communities and individuals defined their Christianity more broadly than (and with some toleration by) Church authorities and had no qualms about hybridizing formal orthodoxy with ‘traditional’ folk beliefs in their praxis. It seems clear now from a range of evidence that such attitudes, such applications of magic, were not confined to anxieties about death but applied across all aspects of everyday life. Although the evidence is there, few have given serious consideration to ritual in everyday medieval life (but see, for example, Pokrovskaya’s, 2007: 399–417 study of ritual wooden objects from Novgorod). Prehistoric archaeology has led the way here and alerted archaeologists to thinking about how everyday life was subject to ritualizing processes (e.g. Bradley, 2005) and encouraged a change in archaeological thinking away from such binary approaches to spheres of life as ritual versus domestic. Having demonstrated the wider archaeological context, this analysis is not overtly concerned with generalizing out from Perth to the whole of Western Christendom (although I readily accept that the households I discuss here were engaged in a web of social practices common across Western Christendom). Rather, the focus of the article is on the possibilities of rituals enacted by a relatively small number of people on a small plot of land containing dwellings and workshops in medieval Perth. The analysis offered here is in accord with newer social approaches to understanding the medieval past (Gilchrist, 2009) and has the potential to extend our understanding of the mentalities at work in, for example, housing culture (Rosedahl, 2009) and the urban environment (Astill, 2009).

Religion and ritual: practice in medieval Perth

The Perth High Street Excavation 1975–1977 (see Figure 1) uncovered extensive archaeological evidence for the successive occupation of over 50 buildings (dwellings and

Table 1. The materiality of devotion and belief on the Perth High Street

Object & PHS number	Site context ^a	Date
1. Pendant-crucifix of Whitby jet, with tin-inlaid ring-and-dot decoration. A10331	From a midden, possibly a pit dug into that midden, that replaced the out-of-use Building 4 (a simple dwelling) in Rig VI.	Late 12th century
2. Goat-horn horn (or decorated terminal), with a band of chevron decoration. A8684	From a midden in Rig VI.	Late 12th century
3. Coin, silver penny of William I ('the Lion') (1165–1214), second issue 'crescent and pellet' type. A4886	From a wattle fence-line in midden 1.3, Rig VI.	Late 12th – early 13th century
4. Glass shard, a base fragment probably from a Roman vessel. Light blue/green in colour. A9936	From amongst the packing stones around the burnt post PP2470, in midden 1.3, Rig VI.	Late 12th – early 13th century
5. Tin alloy circular mount or spangle bearing an Agnus Dei within a beaded border. A12576	From a midden below Building 20 and above Building 27 (both of uncertain function). Rig VII.	Early 13th century
6. Tin alloy ampulla from the shrine of St Thomas Becket, Canterbury (showing Becket's martyrdom and beatification). Found crumpled. A9264	From a midden in Rig VI, into which an oven or kiln was also cut.	c. 1200–1250
7. Tin alloy token/mount bearing two peacocks (?), turning to look back at each other, separated by a tree. Possible cross incised on reverse. A9279	From the surface of a pathway (P2.2) between Buildings 2 and 3, Rig V.	Mid-13th century
8. Tin alloy ampulla from the shrine of St Thomas Becket, Canterbury (showing the martyrdom and Thomas's soul ascending). Found crumpled. A04-0682	From a midden in a leather-workers yard, possibly associated with Building 18 – a hall with subsidiary chambers – in Rig VII.	Mid-13th century
9. Bronze Age flint barbed and tanged arrowhead. A06-0041	Foundation deposit (in a post hole) of Building 18 in Rig VII.	1250–1300
10. The pink coloured upper valve of a scallop shell (<i>pecten maximus</i>), its beak and flanges lost, from the shrine of St James, Compostela, Spain. A5190	From a midden crossing Rigs V and VI.	1200–1300
11. The pink coloured upper valve of a scallop shell (<i>pecten maximus</i>) from the shrine of St James, Compostela. The beak is pierced with two suspension or stitching holes. A07-0576	From a path between two middens in Rig VII.	1250–1300

(Continued)

Table I. (Continued)

Object & PHS number	Site context ^a	Date
12. Tin alloy badge from the shrine of St Andrew, St Andrews; one stitching ring intact, depicts martyrdom of St Andrew. A04-0505	From a midden replacing Building 18 and perhaps comprising its debris, Rig VII.	1250–1300
13. Copper alloy badge/pendant in the form of an eagle (symbolizing St John the Evangelist?). A04-0124	From a midden, possibly associated with Building 50, a stone structure, in Rig VIII.	1250–1300
14. Copper alloy/gun-metal mirror locket decorated with punched arcs to form a cross on both lids. A3926	From a midden possibly associated with Building 1, of specialised function (a bakery?), in Rig V/VI.	Early 14th century
15. Pewter mirror locket with elaborate geometric decoration. ^b A04-0111	From a midden overlying a path and Building 34 (clay-walled with central hearth), in Rig VI.	Early 14th century
16. Tin alloy ampulla, probably from the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham (depicting the Virgin's coronation and the Virgin and Child enthroned). Empty and damaged. A04-0214	From the floor level of phase 2 of building 53, a workshop, in Rig VII.	Early 14th century
17. A copper alloy annular brooch with a garbled apotropaic inscription echoing AVE MARIA ... Pin missing. A04-0114	From the floor level of phase 2 of building 53, a workshop, in Rig VII.	Early 14th century
18. Walrus ivory knife handle decorated with the head of a May celebrant.	From Midden 8a, with evidence of industrial/craft activity (including bone, textile and leather) within and around the midden, in Rig VIII.	Early 14th century
19. Rosary/prayer bead made of Whitby jet, octagonally faceted and with tin-inlaid ring-and-dot decoration. A7188	Unstratified, in Rig V – from behind the west wall of John Duncan's cellar, where he found a medieval coin hoard c. 1812. ^c	c. 1150–1200 (?)
20. Lead alloy seal matrix of William de Brun, the name inscribed around an 8-point star. A10001	Unstratified, Rigs V/VI.	1200–1300

^a For full descriptions of the identified buildings, see Murray (forthcoming).

^b A possible third mirror case (PHS A05-0067) has been excluded from this discussion because it is so fragmentary – it is round and made of wood or horn but its fragility meant it did not emerge intact from conservation; it was recovered from a 14th-century metalworkers workshop and has also been suggested to have been part of a box.

^c For the coin hoard see Bowler (2004: 113, entry CF03); Metcalf (1987: 41, 54); Thomson (1844: 73).

workshops), middens, pathways and garden ground, within and across four property zones (labelled Rigs V, VI, VII and VIII) and dating substantially to the 12th to 14th centuries⁵ (Figure 2 shows the plan of the excavation site). The rigs were identified in the south sector (trenches 1–4 and 7–10). Many hundreds of artefacts were recovered from the site, but my concern here is with a heterogeneous group of 20 of them. All can be said to have had varied use-lives and the time-span covered by their distribution (c.1100 to c.1350) implies several generations and so handed-on traditions of ritual behaviour and possibly including heirlooms.

Table 1 gives outline details of the 20 objects, arranged in chronological order according to the phasing of the site. They comprise a group in that they are all the objects recovered from the site, which variously reflect on devotional life and wider supernatural concerns. I have further divided the group into two parts, one directly reflecting the cult of saints and in particular specific cults, the other a more general group with no specific cult associations. They are listed in the table in chronological order. The main group (Table 1, numbers 1, 5, 6, 8, 10–13, 19 and 20) comprises predominantly pilgrimage-related items: three ampullae (including Table 1, number 6, see Figure 4), one sew-on badge (Table 1, number 12, Figure 3), a pendant, a mount and two scallop shells (Table 1, numbers 10 and 11, see Figure 5). Prior discussion (Hall, 2005: 214–215, 2007a: 72–81) has assessed these items in the context of Perth folk going out into the wider world, on pilgrimage. Here, that exterior connectedness will be put aside to explore the meanings

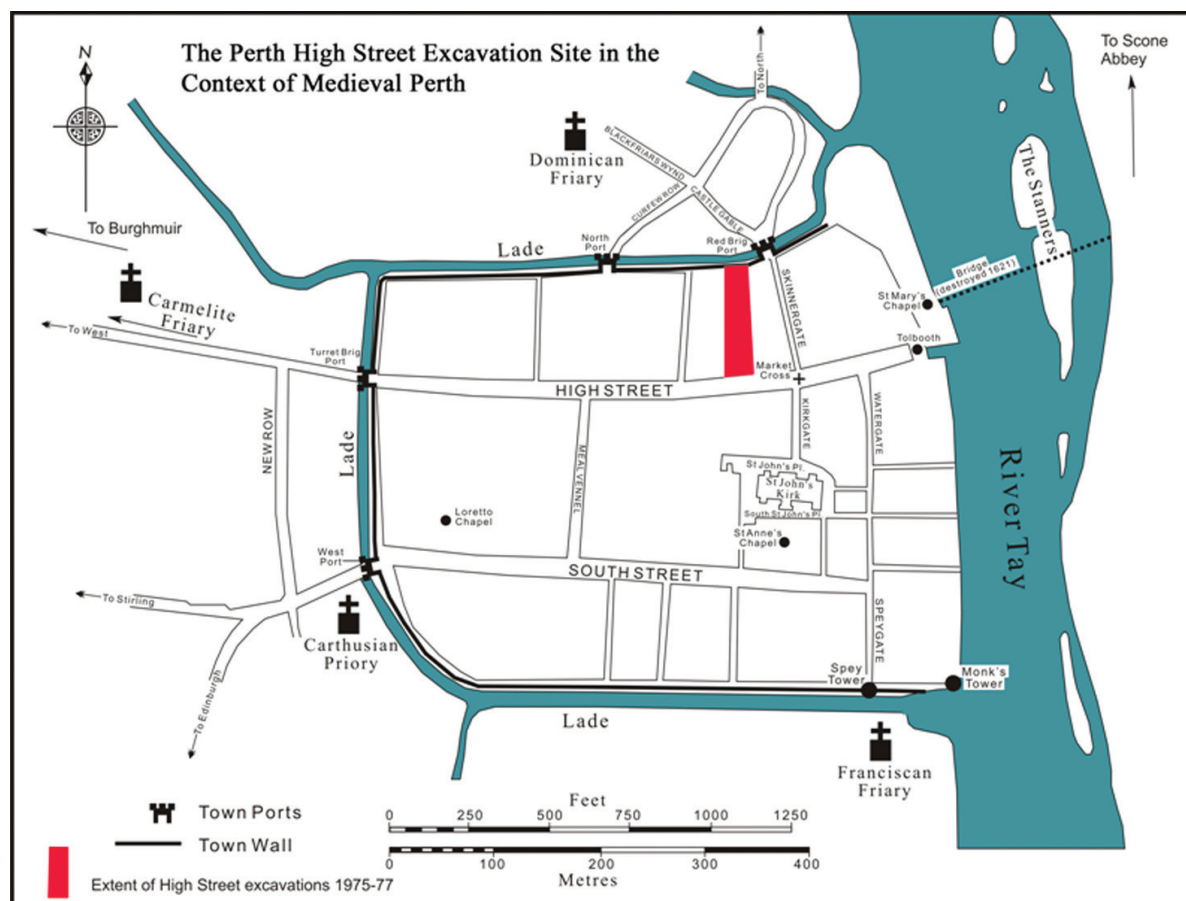


Figure 1. The Perth High Street excavation site in the context of medieval Perth. Courtesy of SUAT Ltd.

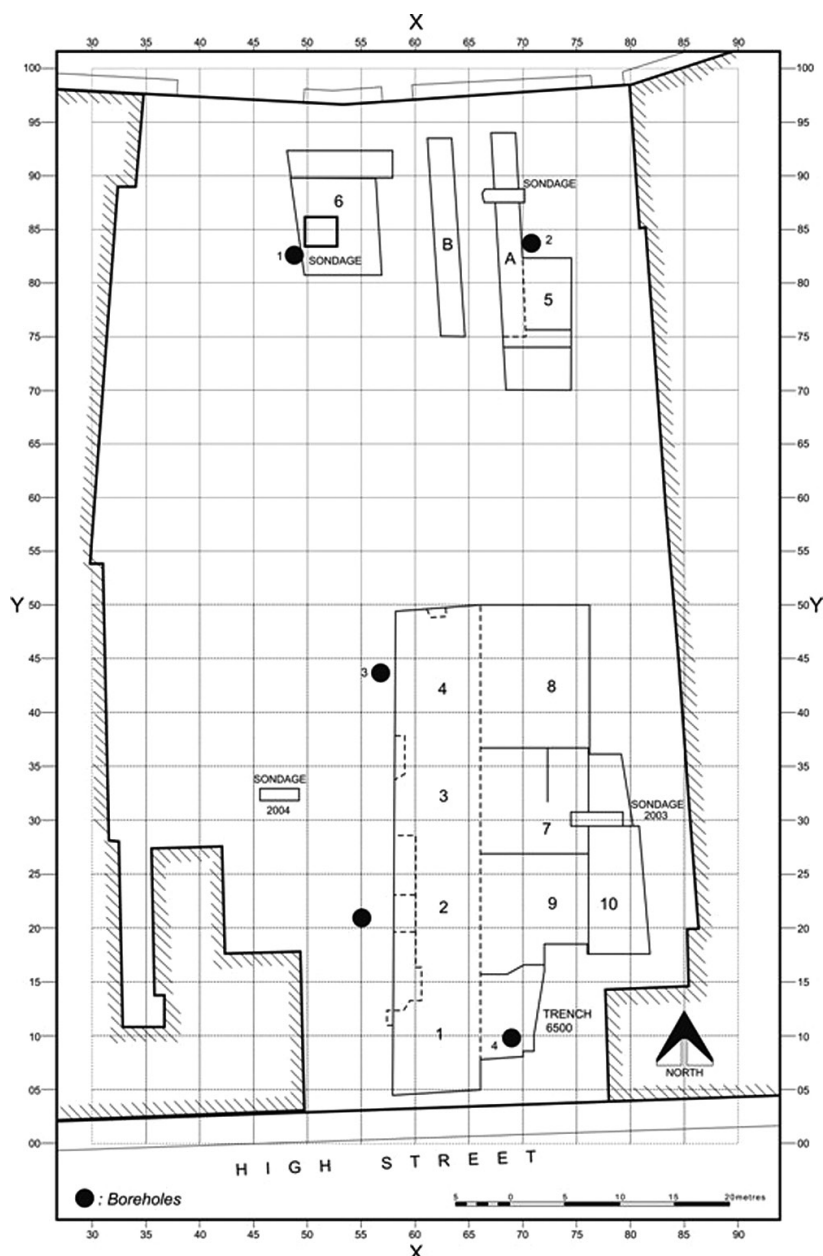


Figure 2. Plan of the Perth High Street excavation site. Courtesy of SUAT Ltd.

that material culture could have had in the home environment, back in Perth (whilst not forgetting that any pilgrimage undertaken would remain a memorable [able to be remembered] aspect of a souvenir's – a memento's – meaning in the home environment). The ampulla in particular may have required acquisition away from Perth (but see later discussion), but once in Perth became part of at least one individual's strand in a network of Marian devotion, including buildings, altars, seal matrices and a miracle story, a devotional nexus more fully explored in Hall (2010). Suffice it to say that it is one of a group of objects from the High Street site that indicate a closely held Marian devotion that suffused everyday life: the AVE MARIA brooch (Table 1, number 17), the jet crucifix and bead (Table 1, numbers 1 and 19) – possible components of a rosary/rosaries (which could of course be worn against the skin) – and the William de Brun seal matrix (Table 1, number 20) with its eight-rayed 'Marian' star, used as a personal marker of identity.⁶



Figure 3. St Andrew pilgrim badge from Perth High Street. © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.



Figure 4. St Thomas Becket pilgrim ampulla from Perth High Street. This face shows St Thomas beatified. © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.



Figure 5. Scallop shells of St James from Perth High Street. © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.

The altar dedications to St Thomas Becket, St Andrew and Our Lady, in the parish kirk of St John Baptist, share their dedications with the Becket, St Andrew and Virgin ampullae. Although the details of the altar dedications in St John's are opaque before the



Figure 6. Marian brooch (left) and seal matrix of William de Brun with Marian (?) star design, from Perth High Street. © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.

15th century (from which time rental and other records survive), such mainstream saints as Mary, Thomas Becket and Andrew are likely to have been constants.

The dating of the pilgrimage souvenirs to the 13th century certainly extends the range of verifiable devotion to these saints in Perth. They also indicate a penetration of devotion and rituals in connection with these saints into people's everyday lives and outside the more formal arena of the church space (although no doubt the items sometimes entered this space worn on the body of their owner). One of the items, the Agnus Dei mount (Table 1, number 5) suggests the same for the cult of St John the Baptist, hardly surprising given his status as patron saint of Perth.⁷ Of course, such common items were not unique to Perth and such spangles/mounts are an increasingly recognized element of 12th- to 14th-century urban assemblages,⁸ but this example does further demonstrate Perth's participation in a common cult, which it sought to make its own. Such spangles were probably stitched on to clothing and may have borne religious iconography because of a link to pilgrimage. Worn in profusion they are likely to have had a sparkling, jangling effect which would have worked as a fashion statement, as a devotional advert, as an apotropaic cluster and, through the personal adornment of costume, as a reminder of the wearer's own outlook on things. There is one further example of a spangle from Perth, excavated on the opposite side of the High Street (at 80–86). Its design is of a small, plain Latin cross against a 4-point star, linking it to the Rood cult, as discussed later (Moloney and Coleman, 1997: 746–748, figure 18.48). Cult practice connected to St John the Evangelist is hinted at with the eagle pendant (Table 1, number 13). There was a hospital dedicated to St John, in Scone, no more than two miles up-river from Perth and there is a record of a 1448 endowment to found an altar dedicated to St John the Evangelist in St John's Kirk (Fittis, 1885: 311). This is a very tentative interpretation. Beyond Perth, the cult of St John the Evangelist has little in the way of material culture to its testament. Two tin alloy pendants from Middleburg (Van Beuningen et al., 2001: 418, number 1809) and Dordrecht (Van Beuningen and Koldeweij, 1993: 279, number 271) are similar to the Perth example, if more detailed in their design, but they are interpreted as heraldic or otherwise secular in purpose and, on balance, this probably holds for the Perth example too.

One other aspect of the ampullae is highly pertinent here. Certainly, the two Becket ampullae were found crumpled or folded and so were straightened out during conservation. As so often happened on excavations, crushed objects were thought to be in that condition because of burial in the ground (and to this category we might also add the goats-horn horn to be discussed later, which is still in its flattened condition), something that could be rectified by straightening to get back to an 'original' condition. Equally likely is that folded or crumpled objects were deliberately re-shaped in this way as part of rituals around object use. The breaking of objects within the context of funerary rituals is well known and Cherry (2002: 82–83), for example, discusses it in the context of the breaking of medieval seals. The crumpling of pilgrimage ampullae may have had a funerary association in some instances. Given their use to contain holy water or oil they would have frequently been opened in the hope of effecting a miraculous cure. The next stage of the ritual may well have been the cancellation and disposal of the opened ampulla. This could equally have been part of the cure administration and done before the outcome was clear or, if a cure failed to materialize (as must often have been the

case), the ampulla could have been crushed or slighted as part of an anger-based ritual. Given the magical quality such objects were perceived to have, some might have been deliberately buried to anchor protection around a particular place; in such circumstances it would doubtless have made sense to empty an ampulla into the chosen spot and then fold the ampulla prior to burial. The Walsingham ampulla has minor holes and some edge damage which appears to be wear and tear rather than deliberate folding but it has been emptied of its contents so was clearly used at some point.

The second group comprises items with no specific dedication (although their owners could well have applied such dedications informally in everyday language and thought to at least some of them): a possible pilgrims' horn, two mirror lockets, a token (?), a Bronze Age arrowhead, a knife handle, a glass shard and a coin (Table 1, numbers 2–4, 7, 9, 14, 15 and 18). It became clear that in preparing the catalogue for the forthcoming publication of the High Street excavation one item in particular (Table 1, number 2) had been overlooked. It is in a fragile and semi-flattened condition and has hitherto been assessed as a possible decorative terminal. It has a series of pinholes around the rim that could have fixed it to something but equally could have held a mount to the exterior of the horn. Made of goat-horn, it retains its horn shape and has been decorated with a band of chevrons mid-way around its girth. Small horns were a common attribute of medieval pilgrims and could be plain or decorated, as here, with geometric patterns. Recent excavations on Mont St Michel, Normandy, below the courtyard of Mont St Michel Primary School, unearthed a workshop for the making of pilgrim badges, the finds including finished objects and moulds, dating to the 14th and 15th centuries. The moulds include one for a metal horn not dissimilar to the Perth goat-horn example (and including a suspension fitting, something not evident on the Perth example). No finished examples have been found on the Mont, but large numbers of ceramic examples have been found from the same site.⁹ Perth also boasts a pilgrims-style ceramic horn, found in 1902 during construction work on the site of the City Hall (Le Patourel, 1992).¹⁰ Such horns were sold at many pilgrimage shrines, primarily to be blown at reliquary processions (Koldeweij, 1999: 184).

Another piece of generic pilgrimage equipment evidenced from Perth is the mirror-case or locket. The two complete examples from the High Street (Table 1, numbers 14 and 15) bear geometric decoration, which does not evidence a specific saint's cult, although number 14, with its cross patterns could have been linked to the widespread Rood cult.¹¹ Mirror-magic became a common aspect of pilgrimage behaviour, particularly at very popular shrines, such as Aachen, where a high volume of pilgrims prevented direct physical contact with the relics. Instead, many pilgrims deployed the (pre-Christian) belief in mirror-magic: using a mirror to capture the reflection of a relic, thereby capturing some of its radiating power. It was believed that this could be stored in the mirror for future use, thus making the mirror a form of touch relic (see Figures 7 and 8). Subsequently aiming such a mirror at, for example, a piece of bread, would add curative properties to the bread, to be given to a sick relative or friend.¹² We should not forget that such mirrors had more secular, vanity uses, of which we are reminded by a third mirror case from Perth (found during construction work in St John's Place in 1920) and which depicts the Romance tale of Tristram and Iseult. Like the Becket ampullae it was found crumpled and so straightened out. This may represent the deliberate, ritual act of

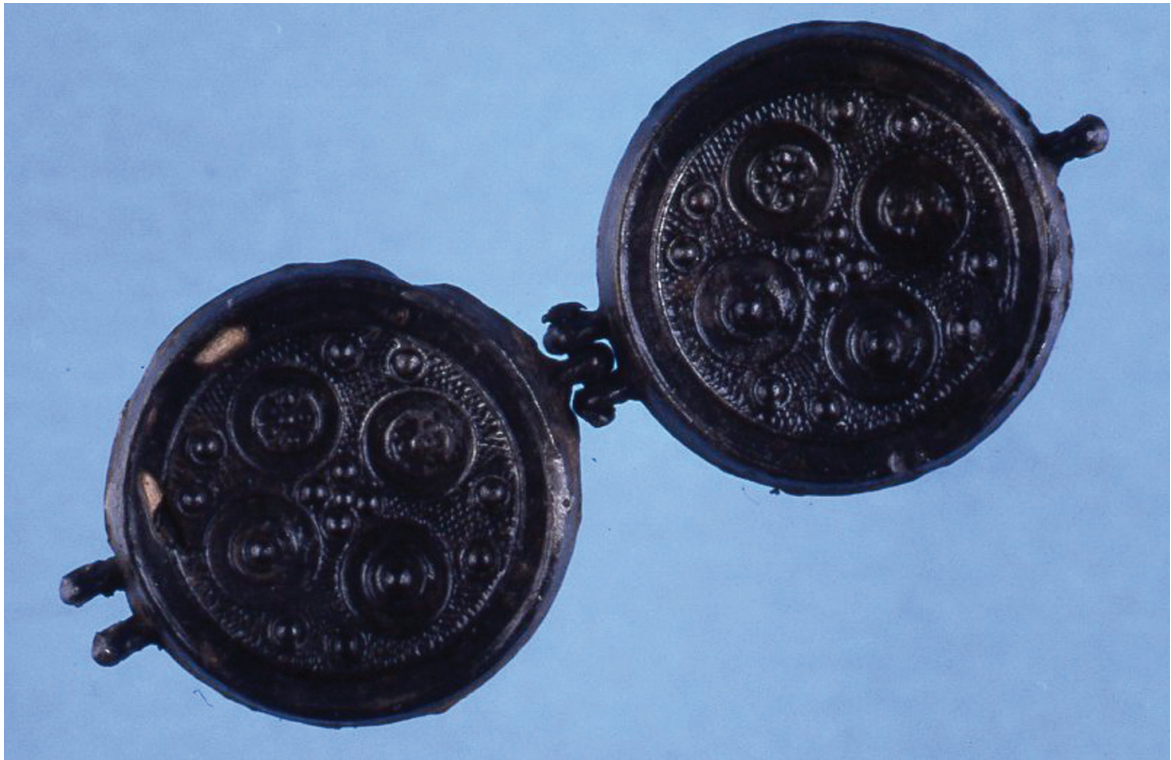


Figure 7. Pewter mirror case with geometric decoration from Perth High Street. © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.



Figure 8. Copper alloy mirror case with punched crosses from Perth High Street. © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.

cancelling, perhaps privately after a loved one's death or abandonment, or it may have been done to influence future events in the owner's life or to 'spite' a piece of ill-fortune. The previous publication (Hall and Owen, 1998) of this find has considered its implications for Romance culture and notions of love and vanity, but the various uses should not be seen as exclusive. The existing apotropaic function of the Tristram and Iseult case would have been reinforced by any mirror-magic deployment of that mirror during a relic showing. I have discussed in detail elsewhere (2001) the anthropomorphic ivory knife handle, bearing the figure of a 'Maying' celebrant. Suffice it to say here that whilst we might prefer to call this secular rather than religious, in reality it represents an ambiguous blend. The cultural celebration of May-time was subsumed within Christianity and it was ritually, seasonally enacted. The symbolism of the knife handle would perhaps have both commemorated such ritual and looked forward to the next enactment. As a prized possession kept about someone's person it would have invoked a mixture of memories, feelings, and anticipations and linked that individual with his (her?) co-celebrants. The specialness it is likely to have possessed would have been reinforced (and vice versa) by its apotropaic qualities (the exposed ivory dentine, its phallic suggestiveness and the fertility links with May-time).

The token or mount is a flat, circular tin alloy object decorated on one side only with a design of two birds (peacocks?) separated by a tree, their heads turned to look back at each other. This may be an example of a group of objects interpreted as tavern tokens or pilgrim tokens (a use suggested by their generally religious imagery and as implied here if the birds are indeed peacocks). An alternate interpretation is that it is a larger version of the spangle-type mounts discussed earlier, its stitching flange broken away.¹³ Either function is supported by the lightly incised cross added on the reverse (also note the later discussion on the cross symbolism on coins). One of the key objects for consideration is a Bronze Age flint arrowhead, its ritual significance clearly indicated by its having been placed as a foundation deposit in a post-hole of Building 18, a major hall structure. As observed by Hall (2005: 213–214) it is highly suggestive of a desire to protect the building (and its occupants) from the damaging effects of fire, weather and disease. In the medieval period, such prehistoric arrowheads were interpreted as elf-shot – the harmful arrows of elves that transmitted disease and were often associated with thunder and lightning, opening them up to use as amulets of sympathetic magic. It is also noteworthy that by the mid-15th century St John's Kirk had one of its altars dedicated to St Sebastian, martyred by being shot with arrows and so widely held to have a curative role in combating elf-shot and human archery (more generally, an elf-shot would have its apotropaic efficacy enhanced by touching a relic of St Sebastian, for example). However, I am not trying to force any direct link between the Perth arrowhead and the St Sebastian altar in Perth, merely to point out that they were part of the same package of cultural beliefs. For those deploying the arrowhead it was enmeshed in their Christianity and not a separate area of belief, as has already been demonstrated by the range of amuletic and magical functions to which pilgrimage paraphernalia was put. The common, widespread nature of these beliefs across all social classes is further demonstrated by the hand-written prayers added to books of hours by their owners, summed up by Eamon Duffy (2006: 161; but see also Duffy, 2007) in these terms:

They range from devotion to named saints to prayers to be said at the Elevation of the Host at Mass, they include penitential prayers to be used as a temporary substitute for the sacrament of penance, and also several prayers which are in fact charms, designed to fend off evil or procure material good. The prayers as a whole are churchly, sacramental, attentive to the saints, concerned with meritorious acts of charity: they are highly supernatural but in no way otherworldly. There are prayers ... to stop your house burning down or to help a woman to conceive a baby and ... some ... were thought of as instrumental [not] merely supplicatory: done properly they are guaranteed to work. Yet these are not the prayers of ignorance ... Far from being a symptom of and instrument for upper-class devotional exclusivity and isolation, in the late medieval Book of Hours, elite and popular religion converge.

In the context of this discussion, it is the arrowhead amulet and its clear, rational ritual deployment (inviting the speculation that the ritual may possibly have included an invocation of St Sebastian) that reminds us of the fluidity of meaning that people applied to their material culture and paves the way for us to consider how the fixity of the objects under consideration can be loosened. So, whilst these objects remain crucially relevant to a consideration of how some of its inhabitants moved out of Perth on pilgrimage, they also deserve consideration for the possible ways in which they functioned in the domestic and work environments to which they were introduced. The apotropaic value of such material culture is well attested. Spencer (1999: 18) notes how objects such as these were nailed up in the home of an owner as a lucky charm, buried in the foundations of buildings and used to ward off evil and harm from livestock and crops, including being 'buried in garden plots and arable land to deter weeds, insect pests and vermin'. As has already been observed, Perth has produced more pilgrimage souvenirs than anywhere else in Scotland and, with the exception of the ceramic horn from the City Hall site and an unprovenanced St John the Baptist badge (Hall, 2007a: 78–79; Hall, 2007b: 80) all of them come from the concentrated space of the High Street site.¹⁴ In some respects, this is a false concentration in that it is spatial rather than temporal but it is nevertheless not echoed anywhere else in Scotland. The arrowhead was associated with Building 18, perhaps the most substantial building identified on the site (even allowing for the two stone or stone and timber buildings, 50 and 51), interpreted as a hall with subsidiary chambers. One of the Becket ampullae, the St Andrew's badge and one of the Compostela scallop shells (Table 1, numbers 8 and 12) are also associated with this hall, two from a general midden area and one from a leatherworkers yard. They may, of course, have ended up there by accident or as thrown-out rubbish, but equally they may have ended up where they did as a consequence of apotropaic placement in spaces of dwelling and work, so placed by one or more persons. The second scallop shell and Becket ampulla (Table 1, numbers 10 and 6) come from middens contemporary with the adjacent Building 19, which preceded Building 18 in the early 13th century. The Becket ampulla may have been associated with an oven or kiln cut into the midden – giving protection to the baking of bread, for example, seems entirely plausible. The importance of bread as a food staple and the dangers of a fire from an oven support this plausibility. It is noteworthy that Perth's putative saint, William, is said to have been a baker when he left Perth in the early 13th century, heading for Canterbury. He was murdered near Rochester and, as far as the cathedral there (his probable inventors, fabricating him with due ritual) was concerned, clearly a saint. His shrine in the cathedral paid for much new building work.¹⁵



Figure 9. Portrait of Peter Velner, shoemaker, 1474, from the Mendel Housebook.
© Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg, Amb. 317.2°, f. 93v.

The decorated horn comes from a midden with no recognized stratigraphic link to a dwelling or workshop. Like the ceramic horn, we can imagine its use – usually blown to ward off evil (see Spencer, 1999: 18)¹⁶ – on communal, ritual occasions in Perth (such as Corpus Christi processions, see Hall, 2005: 220–224, or the viewing of holy relics in St John’s Kirk, such as those of St Eloi at the Hammermen’s altar, see Hall 2007a: 72–73), but also possibly within the combined domestic and work environments of their owners on particular saints’ days. The Marian ampulla and brooch (Table 1, numbers 16 and 17) were recovered from Building 53, a workshop. Did they belong to the same person with a particular devotion to the Virgin or two people who worked in the building and used them either about their persons or in association with their workspaces, dedicated to her and invoking her protection? A parallel for this underlying, everyday invocation can be found in a German manuscript illumination of 1474 (see Figure 9). It is a portrait of Peter Velner, shoemaker, seated at work in his shop. The detail includes, just to his left, his rosary beads, hanging from a wall hook. The beads shown are very like the rosary held by St Bartholomew (also holding his own skinning knife) on the so-called Apostle Antependium (c.1480) in the treasury of Aachen Cathedral (Minkenber, 1995: 24).

Perhaps the most contentious object in the group of items discussed here is the coin, a silver penny of William I, ‘the Lion’, put into circulation c.1180 to c.1195 (Bateson,

forthcoming a). Coins are generally treated, understandably, in a very hard economic, money-only way, but this is not always how they have been used.¹⁷ There is a widening recognition of the non-commercial use of coins as amulets and curative or apotropaic touch pieces. This was in part derived from the consistent deployment of cross symbolism on coins, an element of the Rood cult (Hall, 2007b: 80–81; Maguire, 1997; Russell, 1995: 48) and partly a consequence of invariably bearing a portrait of a king. They represent the king and his sacrality invested in the coinage (the standardization of which can be seen as having an iconic value). With the king on one side and the cross on the other, coins can be seen as offering a double protection. In medieval Flanders, it has recently been demonstrated that a range of coin-like objects were in fact base metal copies of coins that served as apotropaic badges and so were deemed to have the same evil-averting power as the coins they copied. In some instances, actual silver coins were pierced and used as such badges/amulets (Koldeweij, 2006: 60–63, Fig. 3.35, 153–157). The wider symbolic values of coins have been rather neglected but they, like much medieval art, have a contextual, polysemic value, a part of the rich visual and tactile environment of later medieval Europe (Jones, 2002; Koldeweij, 2006). Space precludes a full analysis of the symbolic and apotropaic uses of coins (see Hall, forthcoming b, for an analysis of the medieval coins found in Perth) but we might also note here their amuletic use in burials (Hadley, 2009: 479–482).

The Perth silver penny of William the Lion was found in the line of a fence, part of a structure of two parallel fences and posts, which may have been a latrine shelter. It seems perhaps more likely that a coin would get deliberately placed within a fence rather than get lost there. The penny is considerably damaged (with a frayed edge and a fragment missing, probably indicative of clipping to use the precious metal in small scale transactions) and it may well be nothing more than wealth concealed but its bearing of both the king's portrait bust and the cross would have carried a powerful charm effect – an effect that would have been perceived in whatever way a coin was used (including decision-making on the toss of a coin) or hoarded. This other, parallel life of coinage entitles us to ask if this particular example could thus have been placed to protect the shelter, in a way comparable to the use of pilgrim tokens described earlier (without necessarily preventing recovery of the coin if needed)? The shelter does seem to have attracted placed objects. A piece of probably Roman vessel glass was recovered from the packing stones of one of the oak posts (with a burnt base), deemed by the excavators to be residual. However, the flint foundation deposit discussed earlier shows that such practices of deliberate placement were far from strange to the High Street site. There is, then, justification in seeing the shard of glass as a curated object ritually placed in the post-hole for protective reasons. Roman vessel glass was often regarded as being 'elfin pipe' – as recently as the 1920s, a piece of Roman glass found on the North Inch, Perth, was accessioned into the Perth Museum collections as 'a piece of elfin pipe'.

One thing it is impossible to do through this exploration is to put names to the Perth inhabitants using these objects. We can perhaps describe those people as landlords, as tenants, as craftsmen and labourers and as men and women. We can describe them as pilgrims but we cannot categorically state that they went, physically, on pilgrimage. Vows of pilgrimage were not always fulfilled (the story of St William of Perth shows that this could be because of murder during the execution of one's vow) and sometimes were fulfilled by proxy by 'professional' pilgrims and sometimes the aspiration to pilgrimage

led to the acquisition of pilgrimage regalia (by both individuals and fraternities) for its symbolic value (rather than say a direct experiential value).¹⁸

By the same token, it seems not unreasonable to suggest that some of the Perth material could have been acquired through exchange or barter, possibly in part or full payment for goods and/or services, possibly in exchange for other devotional items (perhaps linked to a desire to have the aid of a particular saint through his or her material culture). Some of the objects then could have been brought to Perth by visiting travellers and could already have been second-hand when they got there. None of this would have diminished the saintly, magical efficacy of the objects when used in Perth. Just as we have already seen that devotional practice around the cult of saints could be contested, we also have to recognize that in Perth some of these artefacts and their attendant rituals and dedications could have been exploited for illegitimate purposes. Late medieval written sources (including the testimony of a German criminal) tell us that badges and signs were exploited by criminal and subversive elements in society, including revolutionaries disguised as beggars (their badges used as secret identifiers). A text describing the different types of spurious vagabond pilgrims is also known from Germany (Koldeweij, 1999: 181–185), and similar testimony of falsification is known from England (Spencer, 1999: 16). What should also be recognized is that some of these objects may also reflect abandonment of beliefs.

My primary concern has been to suggest how we might think more subtly about how objects were used to enact everyday beliefs. It included an element of ritual deposition (and we should remember that objects put out of sight/concealed would still have been regarded as having a daily influence on the depositor's life), but the majority of the objects were not obviously concealed where they lay before being revealed by the archaeologist's trowel. This does not mean they can be dismissed as a set of random deposits. They come from the vestiges of recognizable built spaces and were part of the daily lives of their occupants. They were at some point abandoned, physically and perhaps in some cases mentally, that is to say: the underlying beliefs that informed their use may have changed. We might also make allowance for a succeeding generation deliberately abandoning or cancelling some items as a testament to their predecessor(s), be they family or craft-brother.

Within the confines of a short article, I have sought to bring together an updated anthropological and archaeological framework for understanding ritual, then applying it to a group of medieval pilgrimage, devotional and related material objects, excavated in Perth from the same High Street site. It is a close contextual examination that seeks to deal with the whole use-lives of the objects concerned, away from the formalized sphere of dedications to churches and their altars (with their own rituals). The material culture in question sometimes carries its own dedication, thus linking it to more formally dedicated church and altar spaces in Perth and elsewhere. Sometimes they have no (or no surviving) dedication themselves but they were still linked to wider patterns of belief, to which saintly dedications were fundamental. The commonality of many of the saints involved – Mary, St John the Baptist, St Thomas Becket, St John the Evangelist, St Sebastian included – is not in question here. They were in no way unique to Perth; indeed, their very popularity is an important foundation for exploring the now opaque practices that invested the everyday with ritual meaning. It forms the basis of a model

that acknowledges individual variation feeding into a social network that crosses social boundaries (refuting such dichotomies as elite and popular, orthodox and heretical, secular and profane) and also social dissension from and fraudulent exploitation of these beliefs and rituals.

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Notes

1. This article is not the place for the full catalogue of the items under consideration and only their relevant details will be given here (see Table 1). Full publication is pending as Hall and Spencer in Bogdan et al. (forthcoming).
2. The root of religion is discussed by Hrobat (2007: 39). I have slightly extended the definition of *religare* here, from Barnhart (1988: 907–908), which also notes the alternative root, *relegere*, ‘to go through or read again’ (which can be understood as having a connotation of binding through repetition).
3. For cogent and illuminating case studies on the role of magic within Christian practice see Maguire (1994, 1995, 1997); for a broader analysis of magic in society, see Flint (1991) and Merrifield (1987).
4. One could cite many more examples of embedded unorthodoxy beyond the medieval period, including the transition to Protestant culture in Scotland (and its embedding of held-on-to sensual, ceremonial experiences so valued in medieval practice, see Todd, 2002); the Cluny Abbey tie-beam repair ritual of the early 20th century, detailed by Selvèque (2001: 62–63); and the informal miracle shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe set up at a Chicago bus stop in 2001, surviving until burnt down in 2004 and, as Muir (2005: 299–301) notes, endorsed by Catholics of varying ethnicities and not requiring orthodox approval. The balance of orthodoxy and unorthodoxy varies from case to case but all serve to remind us of the levels of complexity we need to be looking for in the medieval period.
5. Full publication of the excavation is forthcoming as Bogdan et al., but see also Bogdan and Wordsworth (1976), Bogdan (1980) and Hall et al. (2005).
6. For a set of yellow glass rosary (?) beads recovered from the site of St Anne’s Chapel, Perth, see Hall (2007c: 393–394). The seal matrix will be fully published in Hall (forthcoming a) – a detailed case is made therein for its possible Marian association and it is important to stress here that, in doing so, I am not seeking to circumscribe the meaning of the object but to allow breath to its possibilities; however else it functioned and was interpreted, it was possible for its owner to reflect on the celestial heavens and the link to Mary through possession and use of the matrix.
7. For a full discussion of the cult of St John in Perth, see Hall (2007a, 74–79).
8. The Perth High Street site has also produced a second example, bearing a heraldic lion, see Bogdan et al. (forthcoming). For a range of continental coin brooches, spangles and medalions all incorporating the Agnus Dei, see Van Beuningen and Koldeweij (1993: P1, 133–134, numbers 77 and 78, 141) and Van Beuningen et al. (2001: P2, 360–361, 479, number 27, 490, number 784, 492, number 789).
9. The site has yet to be fully published but an excellent online summary is available on the INRAP (Institut National de Recherches Archéologiques Préventives) website at: http://www.inrap.fr/preventive-archaeology/Virtual_exhibitions/Virtual_exhibitions/Making_Pilgrim_Badges_at_Mont_Saint_Michel/The_site/p-1475-The_site_and_the_discoveries.htm

- There may have been a particular association with horns and the St Michael pilgrimage – a Romanesque capital in the abbey shows a pilgrim blowing his horn, see Koldeweij (1999: 184).
10. This emphasizes the military use of such horns; a toy remains another possibility, as does a mix of all three uses.
 11. Compare the near identical example from Winchester, in Biddle and Hinton (1990: 655–656).
 12. For the detail on the use of mirrors, see Spencer (1999: 17–18 and [for Aachen], p. 259). For a comparable mirror to the Perth examples, see Spencer (1990). Spencer's report on 'The hinged mirrors from Perth' will form part of Hall and Spencer, forthcoming. A modern equivalent to mirror-magic is the use of mobile phone cameras, as recorded for the annual Assumption Day celebrations and Virgin's statue procession at Elche, south-east Spain.
 13. Donal Bateson's (forthcoming b) report on the token 'The medieval pewter token' will be published in the final report; the alternative suggestion of a mount has been made by Peter Stott, in correspondence filed in Perth Museum.
 14. For the wide range of sites excavated in Perth, see Bowler (2004).
 15. For fuller discussion of and references to St William, see Hall (2007a: 80–81) and Crook (2006).
 16. Spencer also refers to bells incorporating pilgrim badges in their making to add their apotropaic power to the sound of the bell, a phenomenon previously noted for Perth and its hinterland (Hall, 2005: 215, 2007a: 76–77). Of course, not all horns functioned instrumentally and several symbolic badges and pendants are known; see, for example, Van Beuningen and Koldeweij (1993: P1, 306, which shows badges alongside an actual horn) and Van Beuningen et al. (2001: 437).
 17. The deficiency of a solely economic explanation has wider archaeological recognition. In their exploration of the monastic appropriation of the Witham Valley, Lincolnshire, Stocker and Everson (2003: 282) noted the construction of causeways across the river: 'economic explanations provide the commonplace explanation', as a precursor to arguing that the conjunction of monasteries and causeways 'was due to something more than a simple desire to capitalise on fisheries and ferries', adding the example of the monks at Bardney, whose right to fish the river for one day of the year – on the vigil of St Oswald – would not have made a significant contribution to the monastic diet or economy: 'the specific connection between the ceremonial fishing expedition and the vigil of the saint for whom Bardney was the pre-Viking cult centre makes it highly likely that this was an ancient monastic observance' (p. 279).
 18. Many of these issues are succinctly discussed in the context of the pilgrim or pseudo-pilgrim burial from Worcester Cathedral (Lubin, 1990).

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Biographical note

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CHAPTER 2.6

‘Of Holy Men and Heroes: The Cult of Saints in Medieval Perthshire’, in
Innes Review 56.1 (Spring 2005), 60-87

M.A. Hall

Of holy men and heroes: the cult of saints in medieval Perthshire

This paper seeks to explore the cult of saints (and the allied cult of heroes) and their relics as practiced by the various communities of medieval Perthshire, visitors to those communities and visitors from Perthshire to other parts of the European Christian world. It is a look at the long rhythm of a cultural practice that crosses the boundaries of early and late medieval Christianity (and was also a common mode of Islamic and Buddhist religious practice). This is not to say that it – the cult of saints and its integral component, pilgrimage – was an unchanging phenomenon: it was subject to fashionable vicissitudes but generally it followed a curve of increasing popularity on the back of an increasing population (allowing for the Black Death of course). Its popularity and what reformers perceived as its theological misguidedness (i.e., they thought it wrong) made it a key target of the Reformation, but just as it was a deep-seated human response pre-dating Christianity so it was able to cling on and re-emerge after the Reformation. Today it remains a strong element of Catholic and Orthodox Christianity and of Islam.¹

The following discussion takes a broadly chronological line, moving from the early medieval through to the later medieval and into the Reformation, but ignoring this when necessary in the pursuit of a theme.

Early Medieval

One of the key boundaries between the classical pagan world-view and the late antique/early medieval Christian one is that pivotal aspect of Christianity, the cult of saints and by extension pilgrimage. It is a boundary but not a hard and fast one. The pagan world was familiar with a notion of pilgrimage to sacred sites where the intercession of the gods or supernatural forces could be sought through invocation and votive offerings. They had no martyrs but there were cults of heroes and the perceived relics of heroes, comprising

- Those put in a certain place and worshipped there (e.g. the tombs of fallen warriors)
- Those bought from one place to another for worship (e.g. the bones of Theseus from Scyros to Athens) and

¹ For the cult of saints in medieval Islam see for example J. W. Meri, 'The etiquette of devotion in the Islamic cult of saints', in J. Howard-Johnston and P. A. Hayward, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford 1999) 263-83; C. Robinson, 'Prophecy and the Holy Man in Islam', in Howard-Johnston and Hayward, 241-62 and T. Mackintosh-Smith (ed.), *The Travels of Ibn Battutah* (London 2002).

- Those found by chance and given an identity and venerated (e.g. the sceptre of Agamemnon found at Chaéronea).²

It is worth noting here that in our more secular modern world relic cults continue: in 2004 a film fan paid a very high price for the riding dress worn by Liv Tyler as Arwen in *The Lord of the Rings* only to learn afterwards that it was a fake and part of a movie memorabilia scam.³ In the wake of the release of Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* the newspapers were full of stories of the mass production of holy relics, including nails and crowns of thorns. Historically contextualised phenomena these may be, but such relics of Tolkien or of the filmed Christ stand in the same psychological relationship to parts of our cultural landscape as the relics of saints did for some of our medieval forebears.

Christianity could also look to analogues closer to home, in the pages of the Bible dealing with the Jewish tradition whether it be the raising of memorial stones or the enshrining of the Ten Commandments stone tablets or the reliquary known as the Ark of the Covenant.⁴ The early medieval Insular and Continental worlds maintained a predilection for muscular heroes, partly as a way of making sense of monuments in the landscape,⁵ and I will return to this below when I look at the Christianisation of medieval heroes. However we should be cautious of making too easy a link between the Christian cult of saints and the Classical cult of heroes, for there was a key difference: the intimacy and intercessory role a human martyr was entitled to with God. As Peter Brown has observed:

² See for example the entry on relics in S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (ed.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford, 3rd ed. 1996) and, more fully, J. Bentley, *Restless Bones. The Story of Relics* (London 1985).

³ The scam is reported in J. Cameron-Wilson and A. Keen, *Film Review 2004-5* (London 2004) 159. For a broad selection of Tolkien-inspired relics see A. Errigo, *The Rough Guide to the Lord of the Rings* (London 2003) 243-59. For an examination of the same issues around the cult of Elvis see R. Harrison, 'Senatehouse Rock', in *Assemblage – the Sheffield Graduate Journal of Archaeology*, 1 (Oct. 3 1996), 1-4, at www.shef.ac.uk/asse/1/.

⁴ Biblical examples include memorial stones, see *Joshua* 4 and the ark of the covenant, *Deuteronomy* 10:2, later – *Hebrews* 9:4-5 – the apparently simple wooden ark came to be coated in gold, the lid bearing two cherubs with outstretched hands and additionally contained a pot of manna and Aaron's rod.

⁵ The link between heroic individuals and the landscape is typified for example by the Old Welsh 'Stanzas of the Graves', see T. Jones, 'The Black Book of Carmarthen "Stanzas of the Graves"', in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 53 (1967) 97-136 and D. Petts, forthcoming 'De Situ Brecheiniauc and Englynion y Beddau: writing about burial in early medieval Wales'.

Thus, in Christian belief, the grave, the memory of the dead and the religious ceremonial that might surround this memory were placed within a totally different structure of relations between God, the dead and the living.⁶

Somewhat paradoxically this meant that Christianity, having disavowed the notion of holy places as observed by pagan classical tradition, had by the end of the fourth century firmly re-invented it and mentally and physically metamorphosed the land of Palestine and Judea into the Holy Land.⁷

The cross appears to have been a symbol of Christianity from its earliest decades but a pivotal moment in the development of relic cults was the mid-fourth-century discovery of the Holy Rood by the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine. Relics of the Holy Rood quickly began to proliferate after this⁸ and the scale of pilgrimage also increased. There seems to have been from the start the combination of local and long-distance travel. The early Christian cemetery of Alexandria, excavated in 1997, included amongst its finds fourth- and fifth-century pottery ampullae for holy water, from the near-by Monastery of Saint Menus (50km SW of the City).⁹ Early long distance pilgrims included the nun Egeria, who travelled from Spain to the holy Land c. 381-84 AD and wrote of her experience.¹⁰

⁶ P. Brown, *The Cult of Saints, Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago 1996) 5-6. Brown's argument is a persuasive one but we should note that Christian theologians against the cult of relics and holy places did see them as pagan modes of expression, including Jerome, see R. A. Markus, 'How on earth could places become Holy? Origins of the idea of Holy Places', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994) 257-71, at 260. In the transition from pagan to Christian significant pagan objects could become Christianised: the chief relic of St Cynog of Brecon, Wales, was a gold torc/armilla that was a pre-Christian family badge of authority of which Cynog was the last recipient but first Christian owner. For a full discussion of its significance see C. Thomas, 'The artist and the people: a foray into uncertain semiotics', in *From the Isles of the North Early Medieval art in Britain and Ireland*, ed. C. Bourke (Belfast 1995) 1-7, esp. 1-5.

⁷ Markus 'How on earth' discusses this volte-face in detail; the notion of a holy place spread rapidly to neighbouring regions of the Middle East, the Mediterranean and Europe.

⁸ For a summary see M. A. Hall, forthcoming 'Crossing the pilgrimage landscape: a Holy Rood reliquary from Carpow, Perthshire, Scotland'; for a useful introduction to the broader context see L. Nees, *Early Medieval Art* (Oxford 2002) esp. 117-52.

⁹ C. Cannuyer, *Coptic Egypt. The Christians of the Nile* (London 2001) 19.

¹⁰ J. A. Smith, 'Sacred journeying: women's correspondence and pilgrimage in the fourth and eighth centuries', in *Pilgrimage Explored*, ed. J. Stopford (York 1999) 41-56, esp. 47ff. For Egeria's travels see, A. Francheschini and R. Weber, *Itineraria et Alia* (Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 175, Turnhout 1965) 35-105 ('Itinerarium Egeriae') and J. Williamson (trans.), *Egeria's Travels* (London 1971). For the possibilities of pilgrimage before Constantine see E. D. Hunt, 'Were there Christian pilgrims before Constantine?', in Stopford, *Pilgrimage Explored*, 25-40.

In Scotland the cult of saints and their relics can be said to be underway by the seventh century. The focus of our evidence is the monastery of Iona and its abbot from 679–704, Adomnan. On assuming the abbacy he wrote his account *De Locis Sanctis*, ‘Of Holy Places’ [*DLS*], which he tells us is based upon the verbal account of a Frankish bishop, Arculf, who had spent 9 months in Jerusalem in the 670s. Later in his abbacy (688–92) he wrote his account of his august predecessor and first abbot of Iona, St Columba (574–97).¹¹ Both texts were pivotal to fostering the spread of the cult of saints. *DLS* may have been a crucial influence on the holding of the relics of saints by hereditary keepers or dewars, the origins of which are obscure. Chapter 9 of *DLS* concerns Christ’s burial shroud and how it came to be the property of hereditary keepers.¹² By the time Adomnan wrote his *Vita Sancti Columbae* [*VC*] it is clear that Columba’s cult was well underway and by the eighth century it was joined on Iona by the cult of the Virgin Mary, testified to by the eighth-century Marian hymn *Cantemus in Omni Dei* and the Virgin and Child panel carved on the St Martin’s cross within a generation or so.¹³

Dunkeld and St Columba

The cult of St Columba is a fitting one with which to make the spatial transition to Perthshire and in particular Dunkeld. Not Perthshire then of course, but Pictland. There were other saints’ cults, of course, including St Fillan, St Ronan and St Serf,¹⁴ to name but three but space and time precludes their discussion here. Dunkeld is chosen because of

¹¹ For *De Locis Sanctis* see Adomnán, *De Locis Sanctis*, ed. D. Meehan (Scriptores Latini Hibernae vol 3, Dublin 1983) and for *VC* see Adomnán (ed. R. Sharpe), *Life of St Columba* (London 1995).

¹² For a recent review of the role of dewars see M. A. Hall *et al.*, ‘Of Makings and Meanings: Towards a Cultural Biography of the Crieff Burgh Cross’, *Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal* 6 (2000) 155–88, esp. 177–9; for chapter 9 of *DLS* see Meehan, *DLS*, 53–5. For the *Noli Pater* see T. O. Clancy and G. Márkus, *Iona: The Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery* (Edinburgh 1995) 81–95.

¹³ For the hymn see Clancy and Markus, *Iona: The Earliest Poetry*, 177–85; for the Virgin’s cult see RCAHMS, *Argyll IV: Iona* (Edinburgh 1982) 47 and 267; I. Henderson, *Pictish Monsters: Symbol, Text and Image* (H. M. Chadwick Memorial Lecture 7, Cambridge 1997) 7–8 discusses the conjunction of hymn and sculpture. During the 7th century the cult of St John the Baptist is suggested by the amuletic poem, *Noli Pater*, invoking St John’s aid and protection against lightning and said (but unlikely) to have been used by Columba, see Clancy and Márkus, *Iona: The Earliest Poetry*, 81–95.

¹⁴ For St Fillan see S. Taylor, ‘The Cult of St Fillan in Scotland’, in *The North Sea World in the Middle Ages – Studies in the Cultural History of North West Europe*, ed. T. R. Luiszka and E. M. Walker (Dublin 2001) 175–210; for St Ronan see Hall *et al.*, ‘Crieff Burgh Cross’, 155–88. Aspects of the cult of St Serf and pilgrimage in the Kinross – Dunfermline area are discussed in M. A. Hall, forthcoming, ‘Liminality and Loss: the Material Culture of St Serf’s Priory, Loch Leven, Kinross-shire, Scotland’.

its Columba link and because it is a site of great unrealised archaeological potential. The name Dunkeld, 'Fortress of the Caledones' suggests a late Iron age power centre, possibly the small hill-fort of King's Seat, beside the river Tay and within a suggestive amphitheatre of higher hills at the geologically-determined Dunkeld gap (which marks the transition to the Highland Zone).¹⁵ There was an important monastic church at Dunkeld by the mid ninth century. The Annals of Ulster record for AD 865 the death of Tuathal son of Artgus, chief bishop of Fortriu and abbot of Dunkeld. More critical for my theme is that in the late 840s Cinaed mac Ailpín or Kenneth MacAlpin brought the relics of St Columba to a church that he had built and which is assumed to be Dunkeld (and possibly replacing a church that had been attacked by the Vikings?). The first church at Dunkeld is attributed to Constantine son of Uurgust, King of Picts (789–820) and the transportation of the relics of St Columba to mainland Scotland in 818 has been linked to this first foundation at Dunkeld.¹⁶ It is possible that this was the plan of Constantine but that it was not fully achieved until the reign of Kenneth. The Dupplin Cross, with its inscription that hints at its erection by Constantine, includes a panel decorated with doves, interpreted as a Columban reference or motif and as a confirmation of resurgence in the cult of St Columba in the early to mid ninth century.¹⁷ Confirmation that the relics of St Columba were in Dunkeld by the mid ninth century is corroborated by the Anglo-Saxon 'Secgan' or List of resting places of saints, of early eleventh-century date (and possibly with a mid ninth-century core¹⁸) which includes Dunkeld, the only site listed for Scotland. This transfer of Columba's relics is most often portrayed, understandably, in terms of troubled political times (particularly the coming together of Pictland and Dal Riata and Viking raids on Iona), with the deliberate establishment of Dunkeld as the chief church and royal centre a deliberate policy of church and state working together. Dunkeld was not to prove particularly safe from Viking attack and endured at least three raids

¹⁵ On the hill-fort see Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *South-East Perth: An Archaeological Landscape* (Edinburgh 1994) 57, 74 and 89; L. Alcock, 'Pictish Studies: present and future', in *The Picts A New Look at Old Problems*, ed. A. Small (Dundee 1987) 80-6.

¹⁶ See, for example, T. O. Clancy, 'Iona, Scotland and the Céili Dé', in *Scotland in Dark Age Britain*, ed. B. E. Crawford (St Andrews 1996) 111-30, esp. 112-15.

¹⁷ I. Henderson, 'The Dupplin Cross: a preliminary consideration of its historical context', in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud 1998) 161-77, esp. 174.

¹⁸ D. W. Rollason, 'List of saints' resting places in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Anglo-Saxon England* 7 (1978) 61-93.

between the mid ninth and the early tenth century.¹⁹ Through out this time of political turbulence the church presumably would have sought to maintain its spiritual and pastoral functions (indeed the troubled times may have given it a greater impetus to do so), possibly including the needs of pilgrims. The timing of the transfer of Columba's relics – the relics of an important and widely venerated saint – does overlap with the spread of new church building in ninth century Europe, largely stimulated by the need to visit the remains of the saints. Dunkeld then may have been chosen for the additional benefit of being somewhere that could potentially cope with greater numbers of pilgrims (by which I do not mean to suggest that Iona was a particularly inaccessible place but that it would struggle to cope with large numbers of pilgrims).

After a period of trying to dampen enthusiasm for the appropriation of the incumbents of Rome's cemeteries and catacombs the Papacy changed tack in the late eighth /early ninth century, particularly under popes Hadrian I (772–95), Leo III (795–816) and Paschal I (816–24) all of whom encouraged their reception as holy relics to be venerated. This led to the widespread adoption of churches with pilgrimage crypts and later ambulatories, i.e. pilgrimage churches, initially in Italy and generally as far as northern France by the mid-to-late ninth century.²⁰

Dunkeld is not known to have been an ambulatory church at this date, but then we do not know what form it took (trying to find out is one of the great attractions of much needed excavation at Dunkeld). It may not have been built on the scale of some continental churches, but as the chief church of the kingdom, designed specifically to accommodate Columba's relics, it would surely have been a significant structure. Recognition of pilgrimage needs is hinted at in contemporary Scottish churches. Peter Yeoman has suggested that the enlarged rebuilding of the Church of St Ethernan, Isle of May, in the ninth

¹⁹ For a summary of the earliest historical records relating to Dunkeld see Simon Taylor's Appendix II in M. A. Hall, I. Henderson and S. Taylor, 'A fragment of early medieval sculpture from Pittensorn Farm, Murthly, Perthshire', *Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal* 4 (1998) 129-44, at 141-2. The papers referred to there by Broun and Bannerman have since been updated as J. Bannerman, 'The Scottish takeover of Pictland and the relics of St Columba', in *Spes Scotorum: Hope of Scots Saint Columba, Iona and Scotland*, ed. D. Broun and T. O. Clancy (Edinburgh 1999) 35-70 and D. Broun, 'Dunkeld and the origins of Scottish identity', in *Ibid.*, 95-114. I. Smith, 'The Origin and Development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Pictland', in *Church Archaeology Research and Development for the Future*, ed. J. Blair and C. Pyrah (York 1996) 19-37, at 33 is also a useful summary.

²⁰ D. J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge 1998) 100-1. See also K. J. Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture 800–1200* (3rd edn, London 1973) 13 and fn. 7, p.296, which deals with the form of the monastery at St Riquier near Abbeville, in the 790s and the uses made there of saints relics in various processions.

century could have been due to the needs of a reliquary church. The excavations there also revealed a group of 12 burials of ninth-/tenth-century date (both adults and children) with evidence of very serious pathologies, including unhealed wounds and sores with infections through to the bone: these were probably brought to the May by others, in the hope of a cure, only to die there, after a period of pilgrim-hospice care.²¹

The scale of buildings at Dunkeld may have been more like that at St Andrews, which came to boast several churches in addition to the basilica of St Andrew, each probably with its own collection of saints' relics available for veneration.²² One of these would have housed the magnificent St Andrews sarcophagus, undoubtedly designed for the relics of a royal saint in the late eighth century.²³ Thus, whilst the relics of Columba could have been housed in the body of the kirk (in line with Continental and Anglian practice) we need also to note that until Columba's translation in the mid eighth century his body lay in a small oratory beside the Abbey church at Iona. This is also comparable to Irish practice, where, down to the eleventh century corporeal saints relics were kept in oratory chapels close to the main churches, even when translated into portable reliquaries (which of course would permit movement between the main church and the oratory).²⁴

²¹ P. Yeoman, forthcoming *Excavations on the Isle of May*; this interpretation broadly fits the scenario suggested by *VC* (I: 32) where Columba welcomes two pilgrims to Iona and immediately makes them monks and predicts their death within the month, which comes to pass.

²² Smith, 'Origin and development'.

²³ See esp. I. Henderson, 'Primes inter pares: the St Andrews Sarcophagus and Pictish sculpture', in *The St Andrews Sarcophagus: A Pictish Masterpiece and Its International Connections*, ed. S. Foster (Dublin 1998) 97-167. Following A. W. Wade-Evans (ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae* (Cardiff 1944) 80-1, N. Cameron, 'The church in Scotland in the later 11th and 12th centuries', in Blair and Pyrah *Church Archaeology*, 42-6, at 42, noted the probable grandeur of St Andrews as a pilgrimage destination: 'The Welsh author of the 11th century *Life of St Cadog* compares the *basilica sancti Andree Apostoli* in Scotland with Jerusalem and Rome as a place of pilgrimage'.

²⁴ I am grateful to Richard Gem for sharing with me some of his insights on this aspect; see his forthcoming 'St. Flannán's oratory at Killaloe: a Romanesque building of c. 1100 and the patronage of King Muirchertach Ua Briain', in *Reform and Renewal: Ireland in the Twelfth Century*, ed. D. Bracken and D. Ó Riain-Raedel (Cork, forthcoming). It seems more than plausible that the clustering of several chapels is less an Irish tradition than one that lasts longer there and is less visible in England for example because so many of the key church sites developed into much larger structures (cathedrals and abbeys). It is worth noting that in the 7th and 8th centuries Canterbury had a significant clustering of at least six churches, in an east-west alignment. Westernmost lay the Cathedral of Jesus Christ Saviour, moving eastwards lay the chapel of St John the Baptist, then a chapel of unknown dedication, the principal abbey church of St Peter and St Paul (with its porticos of St Gregory and St Martin for archiepiscopal and royal burials respectively), the church of St Mary, the church of St



Dunkeld Cathedral cross-slab on display in the Cathedral Chapter House Museum. Photograph courtesy Perth Museum & Art Gallery.

In this context the most significant piece of sculpture to survive at Dunkeld is the probably ninth- or tenth-century cross-slab, badly damaged and worn but with scenes including Daniel in the Lions den, the 12 apostles and a possible depiction of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. One of the side panels includes a figure which appears to be nimbed and Macquarrie has tentatively suggested that this may be a representation of Columba, though more recently Henderson and Henderson suggest it is likely to be Christ.²⁵ One might certainly expect a Columban link in the sculpture of a church so intimately associated with the relics of that saint, especially as the cross-slab form may have had in some instances a functional correlation with relics and reliquaries as suggested by Henderson in her analysis of the cross-slabs at Meigle, Dunfallandy, Aberlemno, Cossins and Rosemarkie, with

Pancras and the church of St Martin (in existence before AD 597). For a summary of their development see J. Roebuck, *St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury* (London 1997) 24-5 and M. Lyle, *Canterbury 2000 Years of History* (Stroud 2002) 56-61.

²⁵ A. Macquarrie, 'Early Christian Religious Houses in Scotland: foundation and function', in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, ed. J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester 1992) 121-3; G. Henderson and I. Henderson, *The Art of the Picts: Sculpture and Metalwork in Early Medieval Scotland* (London 2004) 147.

cross-slabs serving as a mediating mechanism between the local community and the preserved relics of a saint.²⁶

We may have a glimpse of the tenth-century veneration and use of Columba's relics in Dunkeld preserved in the *Life of St Catroe of Metz*, written c. 971, shortly after his death. He appears to have been born in Scotland circa 900 and the episode of his conception is recounted as happening after his parents prayed at a candle-lit vigil beside the shrine of St Columba.²⁷ Macquarrie²⁸ makes a plausible argument based on the probable geographic setting of the *Life* and other named individuals in it that this conception episode and some of Catroe's early tutelage (under St Bean) took place at Dunkeld. Catroe's whole life is couched very much in terms of an act of pilgrimage and his physical journey has been underway for sometime before he makes his final decision to leave for the Continent. At St Brigit's church (probably in Abernethy) many try (and fail) to dissuade him from going by using holy relics, which they place before him, 'adjuring him by them',²⁹ that is swearing oaths by the relics to try and make him stay. No doubt a familiar use of such relics in Dunkeld also, as elsewhere.

The long-standing presence of Columba's relics in Dunkeld is confirmed by two of its later seal matrices. The earlier matrix is inferred to date to the late twelfth century and is currently only known as a detached seal-impression from a document of c.1221 (possibly a Coupar Angus abbey charter) and as an impression witnessing a charter of Inchaffray Abbey dated 1238/9.³⁰ The seal is of the chapter of Dunkeld and it shows a house-shaped reliquary with large upward-curling end-finials and an openwork cresting along the ridge. The uniform cross-hatching or trellis-like decoration shown on the roof and side panel may be the matrix-cutter's decoration rather than an accurate depiction of the shrine's finish. The reliquary has the same basic form as early-medieval house-shaped shrines apart from the volute terminals but seems unlikely to be as early as the eighth or ninth century, with a tenth- or eleventh-century date perhaps more likely. Behind the

²⁶ I. Henderson, 'The shape and decoration of the Cross on Pictish cross-slabs carved in relief', in *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, ed. J. Higgitt and R. M. Spearman (Stroud 1993) 209-18, at 216.

²⁷ A. O. Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History A.D. 500-1286*, two volumes (1922, reissued Stamford 1990) [henceforth, *ESSH*], 431-43 ('Life of St Catroe'), at 432.

²⁸ A. Macquarrie, 'St Catroe of Metz', in *The Saints of Scotland. Essays in Scottish Church History AD 450-1093* (Edinburgh 1997) 199-210, at 201-3.

²⁹ Anderson, *ESSH*, 440.

³⁰ The detached seal impression is in the collections of Perth Museum & Art Gallery, the Inchaffray Charter is in W. A. Lindsay, J. Dowden and J. M. Thomson (eds), *Charters, Bulls and Other Documents Relating to the Abbey of Inchaffray* (Edinburgh 1908) 312 (item 14).

reliquary is shown a bishop's crozier, its foot visible behind the arches of the shrine base, the top, with its plain volute crook with an oval terminal and a large spherical knob at the top of the shaft. This is a form of crozier common by the twelfth century and may represent either a notional depiction of Columba's crozier or, more likely, a depiction of a contemporary bishop of Dunkeld's crozier linked to Columba's authority via the reliquary. A shrine and crozier are also depicted on the late thirteenth-century seal matrix of the Dunkeld chapter.



Seal impression from 12th-century Dunkeld Chapter matrix, showing Columban reliquary. Courtesy Perth Museum & Art Gallery.

This is a new more fashionable matrix that also shows a new reliquary in the style of the chasses of later thirteenth-century northern France. It stands on four clawed feet and is clearly within the Cathedral. Behind it can be seen the top of a crozier. The shaft and crook are decorated and the crook is a simple drop from the knob, from which a crucifix is suspended by a chain. Henderson suggested that the crucifix was attached to the reliquary and formed the link by which the crozier and its chain were attached to the reliquary. Bourke suggested that the crucifix was actually part of the crozier or rather a twelfth-century remodelling of it, its chain and cross so close to that on the Kilmichael-Glassary bell-shrine that the two may be twelfth-century contemporaries from Dunkeld, and so the Kilmichael bell possibly a lost Columban relic from Dunkeld. Given that the Cathedral also possessed a relic of the True Cross (see below) it is conceivable that the cross on the chain indicated the placing of this relic in the drop of the crozier. The thirteenth-century matrix depiction of the crozier is clearly meant to be, in showing an authentic early Irish/Hiberno-

Scottish form of crozier, the crozier of St Columba. A third Dunkeld chapter seal of 1320 shows Columba enthroned holding a crozier like that on the late twelfth-century seal.³¹

The later medieval historical accounts of Dunkeld make little reference to the relics of St Columba though they must have remained there until the Reformation for in the early sixteenth century water poured over the bones of the Saint was administered through out the diocese of Dunkeld, to be drunk as a plague-averting potion.³² Prior to this there are also numerous references to Columban devotion – the feast day as a point of note is recalled, the goods of the Cathedral are termed St Columba’s goods, one of the church bells is named ‘Columba’ and one of the canons donated a paten bearing a representation of St Columba (part of a set of plate for the High altar).³³ It is also worth noting that Columba’s cult never seems to have reached the wide currency of St Andrew’s cult in the later Middle Ages; in Scotland for example St Andrew was the only Saint to be depicted on the currency of the realm, including, for example, the gold lion and demi-lion of Robert III.³⁴

Dunkeld did possess other relics –as might be expected for an important church – including one of the True Cross or Holy Rood, which must have also made it a popular pilgrimage destination in the later Middle Ages. Accommodation for pilgrims was provided by this

³¹ For a discussion of the Dunkeld seals and the continental connections of the thirteenth-century chapter seal see V. Glenn, ‘The late 13th century chapter seals of Dunkeld and Oslo Cathedrals’, *PSAS* 132 (2002) 439-58. Glenn is unpersuaded that the crozier depicted is the *cathbuaid* or ‘battle victory’ and suggests that the relic of some other saints is equally likely. However it seems unlikely that on a seal so strongly proclaiming the link with St Columba that another saint’s relics would be depicted. For a broader review of Columban relics see C. Bourke, ‘Insigniae Columbae II’, in *Studies in the Cult of St Columba*, ed. C. Bourke (Dublin 1997) 162-83 and R. Ó Floinn, ‘Insigniae Columbae I’, in *ibid.*, 136-61. For the wider cult of Columba see T. O. Clancy, ‘Columba, Adomnan and the cult of saints in Scotland’, in Broun and Clancy, *Spes Scotorum*, 3-34. For Henderson’s comments see G. Henderson *From Durrow to Kells, the Insular Gospel-books 650-800*, (London 1987), 190-91. For Bourke’s discussion of relics at Dunkeld see *idem*, *Studies in the Cult*, 171-77.

³² A. Myln, *Vita Dunkeldensis* (Bannatyne Club, 1823) 43.

³³ R. K. Hannay (ed.), *Rentale Dunkeldense* (Edinburgh 1915), including St Columba’s goods (307, 316), the bells (314), recognition of Columba’s feast and influence (277, 319 and 334) and the decorated paten (325). At p. xlv F. C. Eeles comments on the remarkability of this paten at a time when such items were generally decorated with an image or symbol of Christ. For the Perth Hammermen collections in Dunkeld see C. Hunt (ed.), *The Perth Hammermen Book 1518–1568* (Perth 1889) 7.

³⁴ The international cult of St Andrew also included the association with Scotland: in St Bavo’s cathedral, Ghent are 14 choir-stall panels painted in 1572 and telling of the martyrdom and cult of St Andrew, with the 14th panel recording Scottish victory in battle through their possession of St Andrew’s cross-relic, see R. van de Wielle, *Saint Bavo’s Cathedral at Ghent* (Ghent 1997) 55.

time by the Hospital of St George. The relics were lost or dispersed by the Reformation and later covenanting destruction in Dunkeld in 1689 and the clearest way in which the influence of the saints – especially Columba – persisted was in the fairs held annually in the town, originally fostered by the Cathedral. The Fair of St Columba continued to be held on his day, 9th June (a day on which the Perth Hammermen visited Dunkeld to collect dues and offerings), down to at least the eighteenth century (and five other fairs were spread throughout the year). In addition the holy wells beneath King's Seat, dedicated to St Columba retained their appellation and usage down to the twentieth century.

Later Medieval

By following something of the trajectory of St Columba's cult in Dunkeld we have moved into the later medieval period where the volume of evidence for saints' cults and pilgrimage increases significantly and helps to emphasise the links between Perth, Perthshire and western Christendom.

Perth and its hinterland: devotion in a medieval burgh

Let us begin in the parish church, dedicated to St John the Baptist. By the late fifteenth-century there were some 40 altars in the Kirk, many bearing double and some triple saints' dedications. The majority were maintained by the various guilds in the town, a patronage that also informed, for example, drama in the town, most notably the annual Corpus Christi play which included several characters reflecting the town's devotion to the saints, including St Erasmus and St Eloi. The latter was the patron saint of the town's Hammermen Incorporation (as he was of metal-workers across Europe), and their altar included a relic of the saint. Numerous records of expenditure are noted in the incorporation's *Hammermen Book* (which as it survives was written in 1583, copying its early entries, from 1518 on, from a previous book). In 1519, for example, the Hammermen made three payments for pieces of silver weighing 6.5 ounces, used to modify/repair their St Eloi reliquary; for which they seem to have paid one Findlay Goldsmith to carry out the work. The Hammermen had a particular collecting box or *stok* of St Eloi (and one each also for St Erasmus and St Triduana: this in itself suggests a strong degree of patronage confirmed by an entry for 1518 which designates 5 patrons for the guild: St Eloi, St Erasmus, St Serf, St Triduana and St Kessog. It is conceivable that these were all dedicatees of the Hammermen's altar prior to the Reformation and they form a notable spread of a long-established and craft-associated European saint, a popular European saint of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and three Celtic saints, a Pictish/British male, a Pictish female

Perth's main cult appears to have been that of its patron saint John the Baptist. The dedication of the Kirk has already been mentioned and for much of the later medieval period Perth was widely known as St Johnstoun. By the thirteenth century this popular name was known beyond Scotland's frontiers. It occurs for example on the Hereford Mappa Mundi.³⁶ Probably made in Lincoln in the 1280s, it depicts Scotia as an island on the very edge of the NW corner of the map and for Perth it uses the form *civitas st, ioh(anis)* – St Johnstoun.



13th-century seal of the burgh of Perth.

Photograph courtesy of Perth Museum & Art Gallery (image redrawn from S. Cowan, *The Ancient Capital of Scotland* (1904), vol. II, pl.1).

The burgh seal of Perth, used in 1296 to swear fealty to Edward I, shows St John's decollation on the counter-seal and is paired with the image of St John holding his plaque bearing an image of the Agnus Dei or Lamb of God, a reference to John the Baptist's description of Christ as he baptised him: 'Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). Amongst the finds from the Perth High Street Excavations of 1975–77 were two items of costume jewellery – mounts

99 and A. Reid and D. M. Lye, *Pitmiddle Village and Elcho Nunnery: Research and Excavation in Tayside* (Perthshire Society of Natural Science, Perth 1988) 71 and pl. 3. They are fairly simple examples of a more elaborate series of star lamps, usually with four but with up to eight points and with elaborate superstructures discussed in I. A. Richmond, 'Stukeley's Lamp, the Badge of the Society of Antiquaries', *The Antiquaries Journal* 30 (1950) 22-7. Further evidence of the use in Perth of both lamps and images is attested by mentions in rentals and endowments, including that of 1448 to found the altar of St John the Evangelist in St John's Kirk, which included the setting up of a star of brass before the image of St John. The same founder, Friar John of Bute, similarly directed that a lamp should be hung before the image of St Lawrence at the said saint's altar in St John's; see R. S. Fittis, *Ecclesiastical Annals of Perth to the Period of the Reformation* (Perth & Edinburgh 1885) 311.

³⁶ P. D. A. Harvey, *Medieval Maps* (London 1991) 31, fig. 24.

or spangles of lead alloy, including one, probably of thirteenth-century date, that shows the Agnus Dei.³⁷ Such spangles are an increasingly



Agnus Dei lead alloy dress-spangle from the Perth High Street Excavations.
Courtesy Perth Museum & Art Gallery.

recognised element of twelfth- to fourteenth-century urban assemblages.³⁸ They are cheaply made items of lead alloy jewellery and the repertoire of designs is extensive. We should not see these examples, with St John's insignia as unique to Perth but they do help to demonstrate how Perth participated in a very common cult and sought to make it its own. The precise way in which such spangles were used remains opaque and Stott³⁹ notes that Forgeais's analysis of the examples from the river Seine, Paris suggested their designs may have

³⁷ J. Cherry forthcoming, 'Report on two lead mounts and four dress rings...', in N. Q. Bogdan (ed.) forthcoming, *The Perth High Street Excavations 1975-78*.

³⁸ P. Stott, 'Spangles', in *Dress Accessories c. 1150-c.1450 Medieval Finds From Excavations in London: 3*, ed. G. Egan and F. Pritchard (London 1991) 235-8. The commonness of the Agnus Dei design is also reflected in a range of other materials, for example a lead/tin alloy mount from Salisbury, see *Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum Medieval Catalogue Part 3*, ed. P. Saunders (Salisbury 2003) 93 (no. 14 and fig. 31).

³⁹ Stott, 'Spangles'. They are of course part of a wider European phenomenon – several types of badge, brooch and token are known from the Low Countries and from England bearing depictions of the Lamb of God, see H. J. E. van Beuningen and A. M. Koldeweij (eds), *Heilig en Profaan 1000 Laatmiddeleeuwse insignes uit de collectie H J E van Beuningen* (Rotterdam Papers 8: Cothen 1993) 283, 322; H. J. E. van Beuningen, A. M. Koldeweij and D. Kicken (eds), *Heilig en Profaan 2: 1200 Laatmiddeleeuwse insignes uit openbare en particuliere collecties* (Rotterdam Papers 12: Cothen 2001) 479-81, 490, 492; and B. Spencer, *Pilgrimage Souvenirs and Secular Badges, Medieval Finds from Excavations in London* (London 1990) 171-2.

aped the purses of the rich and also derived significance from echoing the bags of pilgrims.

More emphatically a reflection of St John's cult is the large St John's bell that has in its casting an *Angus Dei* emblem which may also have had an apotropaic function similar to that to be highlighted below in relation to pilgrim badges and bells. The bells of St John's Kirk were in fact a key way in which the cult of St John was enacted in the community through physical material culture producing a sound that helped to both structure the day and emit a protective aura for the church and the town. There are eight bells of pre-Reformation date in St John's, more than survives for any other British church and which demonstrate the importance that the bells had in the life of the town. Most, no doubt, were provided through the patronage of the various guilds or Incorporations (as with several of the later, post Reformation bells) and their ringing could have been a very audible reminder of this patronage. Three of the eight medieval bells are associated with the town's cult of St John. The largest is the finest of its type surviving from pre-Reformation Europe and was cast by Peter Waghaevens at Mechlin (Malines) in 1506 (and remains in use as one of a 35 bell carillon, the other 34 being modern bells).

The design includes the figure of St John and its inscription commences 'I am the voice of John the Baptist.' During the Reformation it seems to have been renamed the Preaching Bell and is so recorded in the seventeenth century. The second bell, no longer in use, is of early sixteenth-century date and bears the inscription: 'exce' (for ecce) 'Agnus Dei' *Behold the Lamb of God*, preceded by a small badge of the Lamb with its flag. It may have been this bell that was later recorded as the small Skelloch bell and may originally have hung at Greyfriars monastery prior to the Reformation. The third bell is also lost. In 1652/3 it was known as the Commone Bell and was cast by Peter Waghaevens in 1520, with two medallions of St John cast in and an inscription that again began 'I am the voice of John the Baptist'. Damaged, it was recast in 1804 and again in 1848 but thankfully the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society (the predecessor of Perth Museum) recorded part of the inscription with a rubbing.⁴⁰

Of the wide range of fairs and markets held in Perth perhaps the most important was that held at midsummer to mark the feast of St John's birth on 24 June (again a feast celebrated throughout Europe). This date is recorded in the Perth Psalter – a rare survival of a medieval manuscript from Perth, possibly of late fifteenth-century date and made in the Low Countries. Seemingly it is for the use of someone connected

⁴⁰ R. W. M. Clouston, 'The bells of Perthshire: St John's Kirk, Perth', *PSAS* 124 (1994) 525-41, at 527-38.

with the parish church (probably a guild member) rather than being church property. The other crucial St John feast listed is that of the decollation on 29 August (and referred to as a day of celebration in the *Hammermen Book*). On 3 September the Psalter's calendar also lists the feast of the dedication of the Kirk in Perth, given that the dedicatee was St John this would have given yet a further opportunity to celebrate his cult.⁴¹

The cult of St John was terminated in its outward display by the Reformation. However such attachments as were formed to such cults and strongly held did remain, clung to by some as acts of resistance and defiance and by others as comfortable tradition. The burgh seal described above was used as late as a 1563 writ and the burgh seal and coat of arms is not replaced by a design which can be deemed less superstitiously 'Popish' until the early seventeenth century, namely, a double-headed eagle, across its body a shield bearing the Agnus Dei. The same device is employed in the town's beggars-badges. A Kirk Session minute for 1589 requires that from that time beggars cannot receive alms without 'the holy lamb, the town's mark and token, on their breasts'.⁴² It was an emblem that continued to be used by individual craftsmen in the town including Thomas Ramsay, Deacon of the Hammermen Incorporation in the early seventeenth century and Robert Gardiner (deacon in the late seventeenth century) both of whom employed the Agnus Dei as a hallmark.⁴³ This adherence to cult forms that were enmeshed in the civic identity of the town is further demonstrated by objects such as a mid to late seventeenth-century pewter collecting plate of St John's Kirk, with a central boss of the

⁴¹ For the Psalter see F. C. Eeles, 'The Perth Psalter', in *PSAS* 66 (1932) 426-41. Eeles notes (p.426) that the additional entries in a distinct cursive hand were made probably in the sixteenth century; they include the dedication feast and the other St John feasts, suggesting that the Psalter may not have started its functional life in Perth, or put another way that its commissioner was not from Perth. The later additions also include the resurrection of Our Lord (i.e. Easter Day) on 27 March, which would suggest the additions were made in 1502, 1513 or 1524 – see Easter Day Table 6 in C. R. Cheney (ed.), *Handbook of Dates for Students of English History* (London [corrected edition] 1981) 94. For the Hammermen reference see Hunt, *Perth Hammermen Book*, 4. The wider picture of fairs and markets in medieval Perthshire has recently been reviewed in M. A. Hall, 'Some Perthshire Fairs and Markets AD 700–1900', *Review of Scottish Culture* 16 (2003) 44-57.

⁴² The 1563 writ is in the archive collection of Perth & Kinross Council; it and the Kirk Session minute of 1589 were brought to my attention by Margo Todd who is researching Reformation resistance in Perth for a forthcoming book. By the eighteenth century (possibly earlier) the Perth design was being used on other parish beggars' badges, including Fossway and Tulliebole, Little Dunkeld and Comrie, see R. Kerr and R. Lockie, 'Scottish Beggars Badges', *PSAS* 45 (1961–2) 291-9, at 292, 294-5.

⁴³ For Gardiner and Ramsay's marks see R. Rodger and F. Slattery, *Perth Silver: A Guide to Perth Silver and Silversmiths* (Perth 2002) 21 and 33.

Agnus Dei and, again, by the town bells or rather in terms of continuity through the Reformation, one bell, made for the Kirk in 1690, by Cornelius Jansen Ouderogge of Rotterdam and including the Agnus Dei emblem. The bell is now lost (possibly it was recast in the nineteenth century) but a rubbing of the inscription survives in the collections of Perth Museum.⁴⁴



St John the Baptist pilgrim badge from Amiens Cathedral.
Courtesy of Perth Museum & Art Gallery.

Returning to the medieval cult of St John, the collections of Perth Museum also include a pewter pilgrim badge bearing the head of John the Baptist. It comes from the shrine of St John the Baptist at Amiens Cathedral, northern France. An identical example, i.e. one cast from the same mould has also been found in London.⁴⁵ Although the Perth example has no secure findspot, the shrine at Amiens must have been one of the key destinations for pilgrims from Perth. It was a shrine founded in the early thirteenth century following the sack of Constantinople – one of the many relics looted was the skull of St John, subsequently donated to Amiens. An additional factor in persuading us that the badge was a likely medieval acquisition is the fact that Perth has produced a higher concentration of pilgrimage souvenirs than anywhere else in Scotland. The Church primarily encouraged pilgrimage as a way for the faithful to think about the final judgement and to gain spiritual indulgences (though it was clearly aware of the economic returns it could bring). The majority of pilgrims equally

⁴⁴ Clouston, 'Bells of Perthshire', 537-8.

⁴⁵ P. Yeoman, *Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland* (London 1999), illus. 90c and Spencer, *Pilgrimage Souvenirs*, 219. Note Spencer's description of the saint as depicted with large protruding eyes, believed to give the wearer better protection by repelling evil spirits.

undertook their journeys so that they could benefit from the power of the saints and to appropriate it into their lives, either first-hand – through miracles at a saint's shrine – or second-hand – through acquiring souvenirs from the place of pilgrimage. Souvenirs demonstrated that the pilgrimage had been undertaken and were thought to bring good luck and avert evil from the wearer or owner and so they would have taken their place alongside other forms of amulet.

The range of souvenirs excavated in Perth is diverse and extensive. From St Andrews comes a badge of St Andrew deposited in the later thirteenth century, on the Perth High Street, (notably it uses stitching rings, which was a Continental rather than an British tradition). From Canterbury come two ampullae of St Thomas Becket; one is a rather crumpled ampulla with a rectangular frame from an early thirteenth-century pit on the Perth High Street, the front shows Thomas beatified as a demi-figure and on the back his martyrdom. The second ampulla is also elaborate but rather more damaged. It has a simple flask concealed behind an elaborate façade of three figures in relief, Thomas in the centre and his murderers to either side. It was deposited in the mid-thirteenth century. From Santiago de Compostella come two scallop shells of St James. Pilgrimage to Santiago reached such a height of popularity that the scallop shell became the general sign of a pilgrim.

Perth also boasts a fourteenth-century ampulla probably from the shrine of Our Lady in Walsingham, Norfolk. It takes the form of a church, the gable ends of the transepts shown on each side and beneath each gable is shown, on one side the Virgin and child enthroned and on the other the Coronation of Mary with flanking inscriptions commenting on the scenes.⁴⁶ This is one of several strands of evidence for devotion to the Virgin in Perth: there are numerous dedications and part-dedications of monasteries and of altars within them and the parish church, a Loreto chapel, a recorded miracle and several seal matrices depicting the Virgin, as used by Perth monastic houses, including Whitefriars (Carmelite), Blackfriars (Dominican) and the Carthusians. All are suggestive of altars/shrine arrangements within churches where the faithful could be encouraged to pray to the Virgin. The strength of institutional dedications is reinforced when we look at the altars within those institutions, particularly St John's Kirk. Testament to their rich furnishing is a fifteenth-century Flemish brass chandelier of Marian iconography which survives in the Kirk.⁴⁷ We also have from Perth a

⁴⁶ The Perth material is to be published in Bogdan, forthcoming *Perth High Street Excavations 1975–78*. The items have been recently illustrated in Yeoman, *Pilgrimage*, illus. 39a, 89, 90, & 91e. For comparable material and illustrations of the Perth examples see Spencer, op. cit. in n. 36, 270-2 (St Andrew) and 42-6 (St Thomas).

⁴⁷ Hall, 'Burgh mentalities'. For a fuller study of Marian devotion in Perth see M. A. Hall forthcoming 'Wo/Men Only? Marian Devotion in Medieval Perth'.

jet crucifix with a tin inlay which could have been part of a rosary, along with a jet (probably rosary) bead found at Elcho Nunnery some 8 km south-east of Perth, which scientific analysis has shown to come from Compostella, no doubt acquired as a pilgrimage souvenir.⁴⁸

Also from outwith Perth comes a copper alloy crucifix reliquary found in the river Tay downstream from Elcho. I deal with this in detail in the forthcoming volume of essays in Brian Spencer's memory,⁴⁹ and suffice to say here that it was made for a relic of the True Cross and was recovered from the river Tay at Carpow, where it may have been lost or offered as a votive at a ferry crossing. Reliquary crosses in general come in two basic forms: the Cross and the Crucifix. There are within these two forms a wide variety of reliquaries, both in terms of their materials and their detailing. The reliquaries are also but one element of the cult of the Holy Rood. The much broader context of the material culture of the Cross, which bore witness to God's power and was used to ease pain and suffering, bring psychological comfort and reinforce political power and social hierarchies on earth encompassed huge amounts of manuscript art, paintings and sculpture.

Perth's pilgrims then were a well-travelled community, and there is one other way that at least one inhabitant of Perth left his mark on the pilgrimage landscape: the achieving of sainthood. In 1201 William, a baker, set out for the Holy Land (that the trajectory of his pilgrimage – departing Scotland – echoes that of St Catroe discussed above, is a trope based on experienced reality). Heading for Canterbury (and the shrine of St Thomas) he reached Rochester, and was murdered near the town. He soon became, by popular acclaim, a saint and was buried in Rochester Cathedral where his cult flourished. Pilgrims to his shrine provided sufficient income from offerings for the rebuilding of part of the Cathedral, and his cult appears to have been extensive in the Rochester area. William's saintliness did not appear to impress Perth or Scotland (where there are no dedications to him) but he does stand as testimony to the power of pilgrimage, to its widespread practice, to its dangers and to its economic potential. It also helps us to see, like the range of badges from Perth, individuals drawn out of the town and into the wider world. Whether real or an invention, he enabled Rochester Cathedral to exploit the steady stream of Scottish pilgrims making their way to St Thomas à Becket's shrine in Canterbury (the successful flourishing of which the clergy of Rochester would have been well

⁴⁸ Reid & Lye, *Pitmiddle Village and Elcho Nunnery*, 80. Analysis of the beads and the jet crucifix was by X-ray diffraction and courtesy of the National Museums of Scotland.

⁴⁹ The crucifix reliquary is illus. 90f in Yeoman, *Pilgrimage*. It will be fully published in M. A. Hall, forthcoming 'Crossing the Pilgrimage Landscape: A Holy Rood Reliquary from Carpow, Perthshire, Scotland'.

aware). St Thomas was extremely popular in Scotland, where King William I, the Lion, founded Arbroath Abbey in his honour and contested with King Henry II for his saintly support. Rochester Cathedral was dedicated to St Andrew, Scotland's patron saint and the shrine of St William was visited by powerful benefactors, including, in 1299, King Edward I.⁵⁰

The journey of pilgrimage leaves traces across the whole country and not only in towns. The apotropaic function of pilgrim badges was perceived to operate at both an individual and a community level. Research in the Netherlands has shown that pilgrim badges were often incorporated into the castings of church bells to take advantage of their apotropaic power whenever the bells rang out. Common in the Low Countries, this practice also extended to those places in other countries for which bell-founders from the Low Countries carried out commissions. Some six miles to the south-west of Perth, in Strathearn, lies the village of Dunning. Here the parish church of Dunning (St Serf's) had a bell cast in 1526 by Willem van den Ghein of the Mechline Foundry. It includes a badge of St James of Compostella, showing the saint standing within a cockleshell and also a badge of the Madonna and child with a small crucifix to her left within a pointed oval or *vessica* and presumably from a Continental shrine.⁵¹

Meikle, King Arthur and the cult of heroes

Let us remain in Perth's hinterland but move northward by some 30km to Meikle in Strathmore. It was the site of an important Pictish ecclesiastical centre, certainly from the ninth century, as evidenced by its surviving Pictish sculpture. One of these sculptures was interpreted in the medieval and later periods as depicting the fate of Queen Vanora (Guinevere). The sculpture – now interpreted as Daniel in the Lions

⁵⁰ J. S. Richardson, 'Saint William of Perth and his memorials in England', *Scottish Ecclesiological Society Transactions* (1907) 122-6; N. Yates (ed.), *Faith and Fabric: The History of Rochester Cathedral* (Woodbridge 1996) 38-40 and E. W. H. St John Hope, 'The architectural history of the cathedral church and monastery of St Andrew at Rochester', *Archaeologia Cantiana* 23 (1898) 194-328, at 232-3. The association has remained strong in Rochester, which has a St William of Perth R. C. Primary School. It is worth noting that England has a track record of supporting unofficial saints, including Henry VI, Richard Caister, John Schorn and Thomas of Lancaster, and William fits readily into this pattern, though he pre-dates the others by a considerable margin.

⁵¹ For pilgrim badges and bells see E. van Loon-van de Moosdijk, 'Pilgrim Badges and Bells', in *Art and Symbolism in Medieval Europe Papers of the 'Medieval Europe Brugge 1997' Conference vol. 5*, ed. G. De Boe & F. Verhaeghe (Zellik 1997) 149-54, and E. van Loon-van de Moosdijk, 'Pelgrim Insignes op Nederlandse klokken', in H. J. E. van Beuningen *et al*, *Heilig in Profaan*, 112-27. For Dunning see R. W. M. Clouston, 'Bells of Perthshire', 453-508, at 479-80 and van Loon-van de Moosdijk 'Pelgrim Insignes', *illus.* 10.

Den – shows a robed figure surrounded by lions. Formerly this was thought to represent Queen Vanora, being torn apart by beasts (after a period of imprisonment at nearby Barry hillfort), the sentence passed on her by King Arthur for her infidelity with the Pictish king Modred. The sculpture was recorded as being part of an elaborate burial monument that stood on Vanora’s grave, in the churchyard at Meigle. The various



Illus. 6. Vanora’s Mound, Meigle churchyard.
Photograph courtesy Perth Museum & Art Gallery.

written accounts of it may represent interpretations of a jumble of stones. Perhaps more likely is that they represent descriptions of a monument that was assembled in the later medieval period on top of what was known as Vanora’s mound, in the churchyard, as a way of making sense of sculpture whose purpose had been forgotten. In doing so it clearly made sense to link it to the tales of Arthur, and make them very much a part of the landscape – including the nearby Iron Age Barry hillfort which was clearly understood as a stronghold – and local identity.⁵²

This phenomenon is also linked to the cult of saints. In my introduction I referred briefly to the cult of heroes and I wish to return

⁵² For Meigle in general see A. Ritchie, ‘Meigle and lay patronage in Tayside in the 9th and 10th centuries AD’, *The Tayside & Fife Archaeological Journal* 1 (1995) 1-10, esp. 1-2 for the Vanora connection. The earliest historical account appears to be that of Hector Boecce in the early sixteenth century, see J. Stuart *Sculptured Stones of Scotland II* (Edinburgh 1867) 22. The account is interesting in other respects too, including its assigning of guilt to women for sexual ‘misconduct’ and the clear stress laid on the notion of the Picts as a troublesome people through the person of the evil Modred. For one version of the Vanora legend see S. McHardy, *Scotland: Myth, Legend and Folklore* (Edinburgh 1999) 88-90. For a description of Barry hillfort see RCAHMS, *North-East Perth: An Archaeological Landscape* (Edinburgh 1991) 27-9.

to it now for it makes a resurgence in the later medieval period not just in parallel with the cult of saints but entwined with it, one of the key linkages being King Arthur.

The Meigle tale of Vanora reaches the attention of historians in the sixteenth century (see previous footnote) but seems to be well established by then. The very physical construction of Vanora's tomb, on top of her mound, as well as making sense of the sculpture in Meigle may well have drawn visitors from further afield to see it, as no doubt happened with the site of Arthur's O'on at Carron (a Roman monument that formerly stood near the Antonine Wall and which Edward I had renamed after King Arthur as The Oven of Arthur).⁵³ Such physical, material-culture manifestations of Arthur are a very direct parallel for the profusion of material culture essential to the cult of saints.

The Welsh 'Stanzas of the Graves' (thought to be of ninth-/tenth-century origin), alluded to above as a manifestation of the early medieval consciousness about the past (and its relevance to the then present political situation) explained in terms of heroes. A number of these heroes (but not the majority) are specifically associated with churches, including Owein at Llanheledd, Ceri Longsword at Corbres and Dylan at Llanfeuno.⁵⁴ The link between heroes and churches is also reflected in more northern Welsh (British) poetry, particularly the *Gododdin*, where '...there are specific references to a hero who lays gold on an altar, another who takes communion and the army itself is said to have gone to church to do penance.'⁵⁵ Adomnan tells us in the *VC* of a sword Columba gave to a fellow monk to buy his freedom and Ó Floinn discusses this in the context of the relics of St Columba and suggests that its sheath may have resembled the early eighth-century sheath of the so-called dagger of St Peter in the cathedral treasury of Bamberg, northern Germany. He notes further the magical sword preserved at Durrow – the sword ensured its owner would not die, a power it derived from the intercession of Columba.⁵⁶ There is, I suggest, at work here a double-reflection, showing how the profane and the sacred were intertwined – secular heroes and heroism were imbued with Christianity and vice versa. The figure of King Arthur in fact

⁵³ K. Steer 'Arthur's O'on: A Lost Shrine of Roman Britain', in *Archaeological Journal* 115 (1960) 99-110, at 91. It seems likely that Edward was doing another of his acts of appropriation and that the link with Arthur already existed: R. S. Loomis 'Scotland and the Arthurian legend', *PSAS* 39 (1956-7) 1-21, at 4 notes a reference in the *Liber Floridus* of 1120 which describes a palace of Arthur in Pictland, lavishly provided with sculpture.

⁵⁴ Jones, 'Stanzas of the Graves'; the stanzas or *englynion* also mention the grave of Arthur but as 'the wonder of the world' or 'the most difficult thing in the world to find', i.e. no one knew where it was because of the belief that Arthur was not dead.

⁵⁵ Smith, 'Origin and development' (see n. 16), 23, with references to the text.

⁵⁶ Ó Floinn, 'Insigniae Columbae I', 158-9.

stands at a nexus of beliefs about the saints and heroes and the relics of both.

In Scotland this is manifest at the church of Wedale in the Borders, where it was held that Arthur brought with him from Jerusalem an image of the Virgin. So we are told by a twelfth-century marginal note in 'Nennius' and also that the fragments of the image are 'still preserved at Wedale in great veneration.'⁵⁷ The Church is dedicated to St Mary and has a nearby holy well sharing that dedication. Nennius tells us that the Virgin image was used as a battle standard (on Arthur's shield) enabling him to put to flight his enemies at Guinnion fort. At the battle of Badon in 516 Arthur carried with him the image of the Holy Rood on his shield and similarly it brought victory over the Saxons.⁵⁸

By the thirteenth century the cult of Arthur was widespread well beyond Scotland, serving the diverse needs of legitimating authority and ownership and of emulation and behaviour justification, as well as fulfilling a cultural need for narratives of the past and its heroes. In 1195 the monks of Glastonbury claimed to have discovered the bodies of Arthur and Guinevere and with them a lead cross inscribed in Latin: 'Here lies the famous King Arthur in the Isle of Avalon'. In 1278 Edward I and his Queen, Eleanor, were in Glastonbury for the translation of these supposed remains into a new grave, a marble tomb before the high altar of the Abbey church.⁵⁹ The process of the miraculous discovery and translation of bodies is an integral one to the cult of saints. In a more chivalric vein Edward also held round-table gatherings of his knights, something in which he was emulated by his grandson Edward III. His round table still survives in Winchester and tables are also known from Rome (the church of St John Lateran) and Jerusalem. Other places had other relics: Gawain's skull, Craddock's mantle, Lancelot's sword. Such legendary, heroic relics were often held in churches and given the widespread pilgrimage traffic visiting such places to see holy shrines it would be a natural step to include the shrines and relics of Christian heroes on one's itinerary. The treasury of St Denis, Paris included the sword of Charlemagne and the church of San Pedro de Cardena, Castile, was the centre of a flourishing cult of

⁵⁷ D. N. Dumville, "'Nennius' and the *Historia Brittonum*", *Studia Celtica* 10/11 (1975-76) 78-95; for a recent assessment of the text and further references see T. O. Clancy, 'Scotland, the "Nennian" recension of the *Historia Brittonum*, and the *Lebor Bretnach*', in *Kings, Clerics and Chronicles in Scotland 500-1297*, ed. S. Taylor (Dublin 2000) 87-107. The short quotes given above come from Stuart, *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, II, lxvii.

⁵⁸ J. Morris (ed & transl.) *Nennius' British History and the Welsh Annals* (Chichester and London 1980) 35 and 45.

⁵⁹ J. P. Carley (ed.) *The Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey* (Woodbridge 1985) 242-7; J. P. Carley *Glastonbury Abbey: The Holy House at the Head of the Moors Adventurous*, (Woodbridge 1988) 367, 124-5.

the Spanish hero El Cid.⁶⁰ Further afield, in Russia, Alexander Nevski, thirteenth-century prince of Novgorod and military hero was declared a saint in 1381, with the main centre of his cult at the monastery of Vladimir-Kljazma, where he was buried.⁶¹

Scone, Rome and St Fillan's resistance

As our journey draws to a close there remain two final relic centres to consider: Scone and Struan. This was one of the most significant royal and ecclesiastical centres in Scotland but in terms of pilgrimage and the cult of saints we have little evidence to go on. However the Aberdeen Breviary does record that Scone was a centre for the cult of St Fergus. His cult is particularly associated with Glamis, Angus (Strathmore) and Muthill, Strathearn. He is thought to have been active in the eighth

⁶⁰ For aspects of Arthur's cult, Edward I and Edward III, see M. Prestwich *The Three Edwards: War and State in England 1272–1377* (London 1980) 37, 204-5; R. S. Loomis 'Edward I: Arthurian enthusiast', *Speculum* 28 (1958) 114-27; J. Fleming, 'The Round Table in Literature and Legend', in *King Arthur's Round Table An Archaeological Investigation*, ed. M. Biddle (Woodbridge 2000) 5-30. For the cult of El Cid see C. Smith 'The diffusion of the Cid Cult', *Journal of Medieval History* 6 (1980) 37-60 and P. E. Russell 'San Pedro de Cardena and the Heroic History of the Cid', *Medium Aevum* 27 (1958) 57-79.

For further insights (in the context of a discussion of narrative in early medieval art) on the interlacing of heroic individuals and saintliness see George Henderson, *Early Medieval* (London 1973, rev. edn 1977) 155-73. Thus we have the common European phenomenon of warrior bishops (their equivalents in Scotland including Abbot Crinan of Dunkeld) given heroic status through the figure of Archbishop Turpin in the legend of Roland or the enshrinement of secular heroes in ecclesiastical settings such as the tapestry of the life of Earl Byrhtnoth presented to Ely Minster in the late tenth century and the Winchester Cathedral eleventh-century frieze of the *Völsunga Saga*, of which Henderson (173) remarks: 'The Winchester relief is ... interesting as the representation of an intensely secular heroic tale located in a major ecclesiastical establishment, paralleling the representation of a manifestly non-biblical battle-scene on the reverse of the *cross-slab at Aberlemno* [my emphasis] and paralleling the probable use of the Bayeux Tapestry as a noted showpiece of Bayeux Cathedral....' The eleventh-century upsurge in the cult of St James at Compostella, in the context of Christian crusade against Moslem Spain (and so comparable to El Cid) include many stories of St James as a miraculously appearing warrior on a white horse to lead the Christian attack, which Henderson (166) conceptually links to the various soldier saints depicted on the ninth-century triumphal-arch reliquary designed by Einhard, the saintly warriors depicted alongside Christ and the Apostles, the four evangelists et al (see Henderson 141-3 for a full description).

⁶¹ D. H. Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (3rd edn, Oxford 1992) 14-15. Tradition also asserts that Nevski took holy orders towards the end of his life, which invites comparison with several early medieval kings in Britain and Ireland, notably Constantine II, king of Scots AD 900–43, who abdicated and took monastic vows at St Andrews, where he died in 952. For a summary of his life see Ann Williams, A. P. Smyth and D. P. Kirby, *A Biographical Dictionary of Dark Age Britain, England, Scotland and Wales c.500–c.1050* (London 1991) 88-9 and see also the entry for Constantine saint and king of Strathclyde c. 600, *ibid.*, 89.

century and may have been a bishop. Glamis parish church bears his dedication and there is also a holy well and a cave. His body was supposedly venerated there. Scone Priory may have felt the need to draw in the relics of local saints where it was able, possibly to off-set a paucity of relics relating to its titular saints, St Michael and the Holy Trinity – and at any rate an unnamed abbot of Scone had the relics of Fergus enshrined in marble, except for the head which he took back to Scone for separate enshrinement and veneration. That Scone had the head is confirmed by the Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer which list for 11 October 1505 a payment of 18 shillings as an offering to the head of Fergus, in Scone, with a further offering made in 1506.⁶² The relics were clearly available for veneration and this in turn suggests that the church was laid out to accommodate pilgrims (and in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century there are certainly a number of payments to masons for building work at Scone⁶³).

There is one other possible clue to pilgrimage and saints' cults at Scone at an early date. The place name Rome occurs in the Abbey lands of Scone, in more recent centuries referring to the dilapidated farm that stood west of the Palace and abbey site, opposite the river Almond confluence with the Tay. In his exploration of the name Watson noted the practice, attested in Ireland by 800, of the borrowing into Old Irish of the word Rome (or rather the Latin Roma) as *ruam* or 'cemetery'. This seems to have derived from the practice of pilgrims to Rome returning to Ireland with soil from the holy cemeteries which they scattered over their monastic cemeteries. Consequently burial there was regarded as burial in the soil of Rome, with a consequent rise in fame and burial dues for the monastery. Examples include Glendalough and, in Wales, Bardsey Island, which in the *Book of Llandaff* is known as the 'Rome of Britain'. It is possible that a further reflex of this practice derived from the debate on the Irish adoption of so-called Roman practice. This seems particularly apposite at Scone in the ninth/tenth century. In AD 906 King Constantine II and Bishop Cellach (of St Andrews) met at Scone, '...and vowed together with the Gaels (*Scotti*) to maintain the laws and disciplines of the faith and the rights of the churches and of gospel-books on the hill of faith and close to the royal civitas of Scone.' It remains unproven but possible that this was a suitable opportunity for the creation of a cemetery enriched with the soil of Rome.⁶⁴

⁶² For the cult of St Fergus see J. Mackinlay 'Traces of the Cult of St Fergus in Scotland', *PSAS* 37 (1903–04) 445–53; see also R. Fawcett 'The Buildings of Scone Abbey', in Welander *et al.*, *Stone of Destiny*, 169–80, at 172.

⁶³ Fawcett, *ibid.*

⁶⁴ On Romes and the Scone example see W. J. Watson *The History of the Celtic Placenames of Scotland* (Edinburgh 1926) 257–8; also D. H. Verkerk 'Pilgrimage ad

The cult of saints continues, of course, today but for our purposes the medieval chapter of its life story has a drawn-out ending of protracted discourse during the Reformation, in Scotland a process of transition extending at least into the eighteenth century. The church of St Fillan at Struan illustrates how communities were reluctant to abandon their long-established cultural practices. The church site is ancient and indicated by early stone sculptures, a possibly associated mound of assembly, a ninth-century hand-bell (the so-called St Fillan's bell) and a long-established fair or Feill Faolan, held in the New Year. The bell and the fair are key clues to the long-lived practice of St Fillan's cult in Struan – the bell seems to have remained in use in later times, possibly as a deid bell (so chimed at the head of parish funeral processions) until the nineteenth century when a local landowner acquired it in exchange for a new bell; the bell was then acquired by Perth Museum in 1939. A third element of the cult's survival no longer survives. It was a presumably wooden statue (probably painted) of St Fillan, kept in the church (possibly in association with the bell) but used in rituals and processions including that of dipping its feet in the water of St Fillan's well (a fourth cultic element), at the base of the mound referred to above, beside the river Garry. However in the early eighteenth century the then incumbent minister, John Hamilton, found this practice to be an unpalatable vestige of Catholic belief and so had the statue broken and thrown into the Garry.⁶⁵

Conclusion

My title is meant to suggest that medieval pilgrimage and the wider cult of saints were expressive of a desire for salvation but also of a concern with the here and now (or if you like the there and then) in the world: it

Limina Apostolorum in Rome: Irish Crosses and Early Christian Sarcophagi', in *From Ireland Coming Irish Art from the Early Christian to the Late Gothic period and its European Context*, ed. C. Hourihane (Princeton 2001) 9-26, and esp. 21, which links the creation of *ruams* or Romes into a broader phenomenon encompassing churches and crosses dedicated to St Peter and St Paul, representing a desire to recreate Rome's wonders in Ireland. For the 906 conference between Constantine II and Cellach see Anderson *ESSH*, I, 445 and T. M. Charles-Edwards *The Early Medieval Gaelic Lawyer* (Cambridge 1999) 60-1, quoted in S. Driscoll 'The archaeological context of assembly in early medieval Scotland – Scone and its comparanda', in *Assembly Places and Practices in Medieval Europe*, ed. A. Pantos and S. Semple (Dublin 2004) 73-94, at 74. The longevity of the Rome place-name at Scone remains to be proven and we should be mindful of the presence of two Roman camps at Scone, see RCAHMS *South-East Perth*, 86-7.

⁶⁵ The early medieval landscape at Struan has recently been reviewed by M. A. Hall 'The Early Medieval Landscape of Struan', in *Clan Donnachaidh Annual 2004*, 11-14; the dipping of the statue's feet is recorded in detail in J. M. Gow, 'Holiday Notes in Athole Perthshire', *PSAS* 24 (1890) 382-7, at 383-4. For the fullest account of the wider cult of St Fillan see Taylor, 'Cult of St Fillan'.

demanded of God that his power be diffused through the remains of his family and saints to the benefit of people's material lives, bringing them good fortune and good health. It enabled a freer movement of folk which social and community hierarchies would otherwise have limited and this relaxation of boundedness coupled with a believed-in direct contact with the Almighty could be seen to be essential to a sense of well-being. Given the reactionary nature of much Reformation theology/teaching it may well be that the cumulative social liberty of personal action engendered by centuries of pilgrimage may have been a key target (alongside economic plunder) of a Reformation seeking to tighten social controls. It is possible that our more humanist age with its roots in the Reformation-Renaissance overlap has blurred, if not blinded, our vision and understanding of this aspect of the Reformation. Finally, the linkage of secular and sacred, holy and profane, within the cult of saints and (Christian or Christianised) heroes reminds us that there were no sharp boundaries between the two in the medieval mind. Once again we see that the peoples of Perthshire were medieval Europeans, sharing the diversity of thought, word and deed that characterises medieval Europe and which we find crystallised in its surviving material culture.⁶⁶

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⁶⁶ Thanks to Archie Duncan, Thomas Clancy and Simon Taylor for various comments and insights shared and the anonymous *IR* reader who saved me from several errors; those that remain are my responsibility. I am also grateful for the opportunity to present variant versions of this paper to the School of Scottish Studies, University of Glasgow (March 2005) and to the International Medieval Congress, Leeds (in a session in honour of Brian Spencer, July 2005).

CHAPTER 2.7

‘Burgh Mentalities, A Town-in-the Country Case Study of Perth, Scotland’,
in K. Giles and C. Dyer (eds) 2005 *Town and Country in the Middle Ages –
Contrasts and Interconnections 1100-1500*, Leeds (=Society for Medieval
Archaeology Monograph 22), 211-28

TOWN AND COUNTRY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Contrasts, Contacts and Interconnections, 1100–1500

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M A N E Y

2005

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BURGH MENTALITIES:
A TOWN-IN-THE-COUNTRY CASE STUDY OF
PERTH, SCOTLAND

By MARK A. HALL

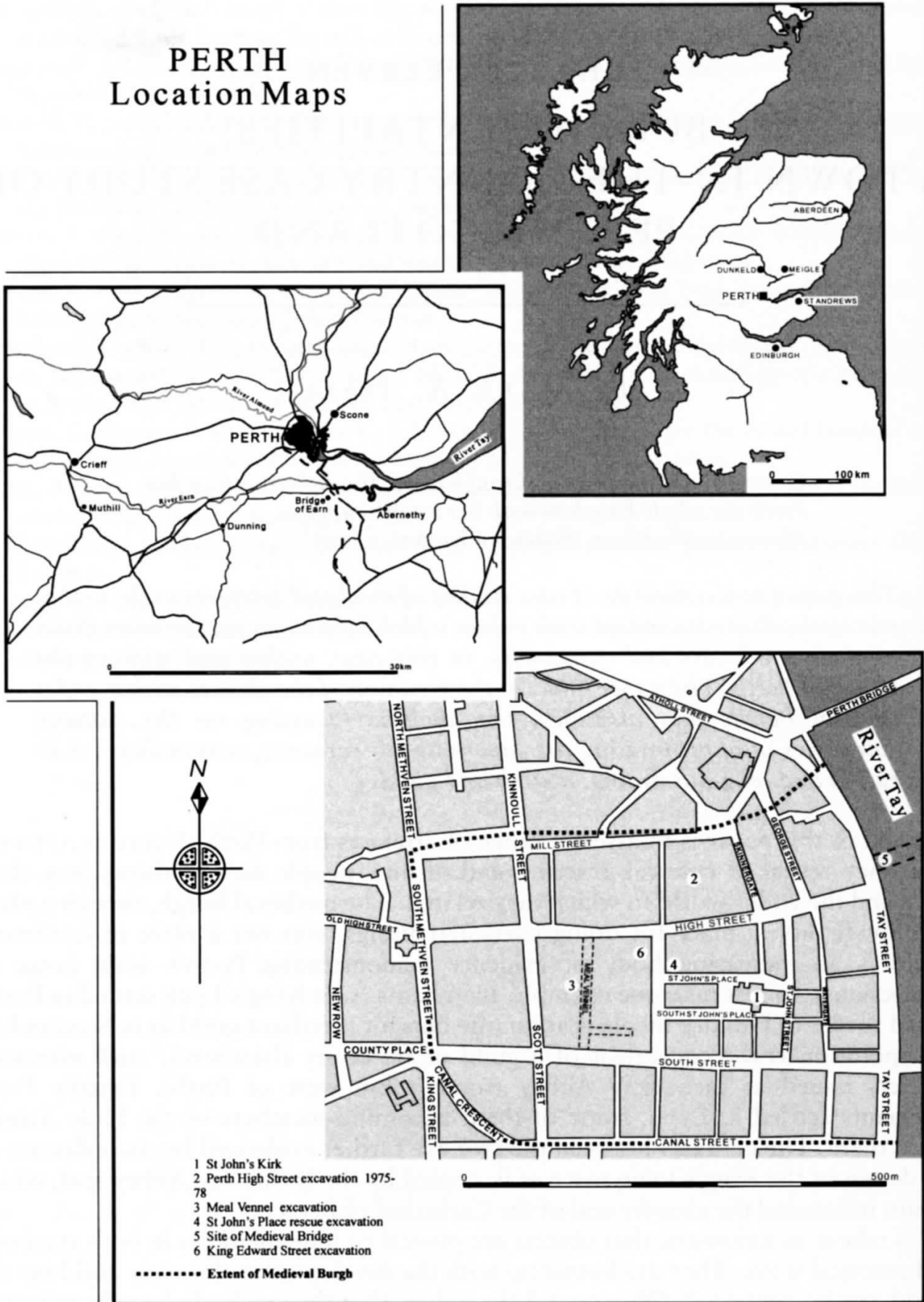
*Great Tay through Perth, through town, through countries flies,
Perth the whole kingdom with her wealth supplies.*
Alexander Neckham (Bishop of Exeter), c.1215¹

This paper uses a number of case studies of medieval artefacts to show that material culture is imbued with values which help to reveal the mentalities of their producers and consumers, in this case, within and without the burgh of Perth. The paper looks at the meaning of the objects within wider societal beliefs and attitudes, the analysis focussing on the cultural categories of appropriating the supernatural; romance, seasonality, celebration and religious drama; church and guildry.

The aim of this paper is to assess a range of artefacts from Perth (Figure 11.1) to see what they reveal of cultural practice, and of how people defined themselves, their town and the wider world to which they related. The medieval burgh, though a place of individuality, a place for doing particular things, was not a place of insularity. There is an increasing body of evidence demonstrating Perth's wide range of connections. To just take one example, merchants from King's Lynn settled in Perth, joined the Perth Guildry Incorporation (the burgh's merchant guild as in Scotland an Incorporation is the equivalent of a guild or fraternity elsewhere),² and witnessed charters issued at Inchaffray Abbey (some 16km west of Perth). Equally Perth merchants settled in Lynn, some of them becoming members of the Holy Trinity Guild there. The contacts between the two are further evidenced by the influence of the design of the King's Lynn town seal, copied by the Inchaffray Abbey seal, which in turn influenced the chapter seal of the Cathedral of Bergen.³

I take it as axiomatic that objects are pivotal to human affairs in both symbolic and practical ways. They are bound up with the development of society and how the world can be perceived. Objects and the values that they embody heavily influence social life, through their exchange as commodities and through their appropriation and re-appropriation in differing contexts. People used material culture to help order

PERTH Location Maps



Perth Location Map (Dave Munro, SUAT)

FIGURE II.1 Perth. Location maps (courtesy of SUAT Ltd).

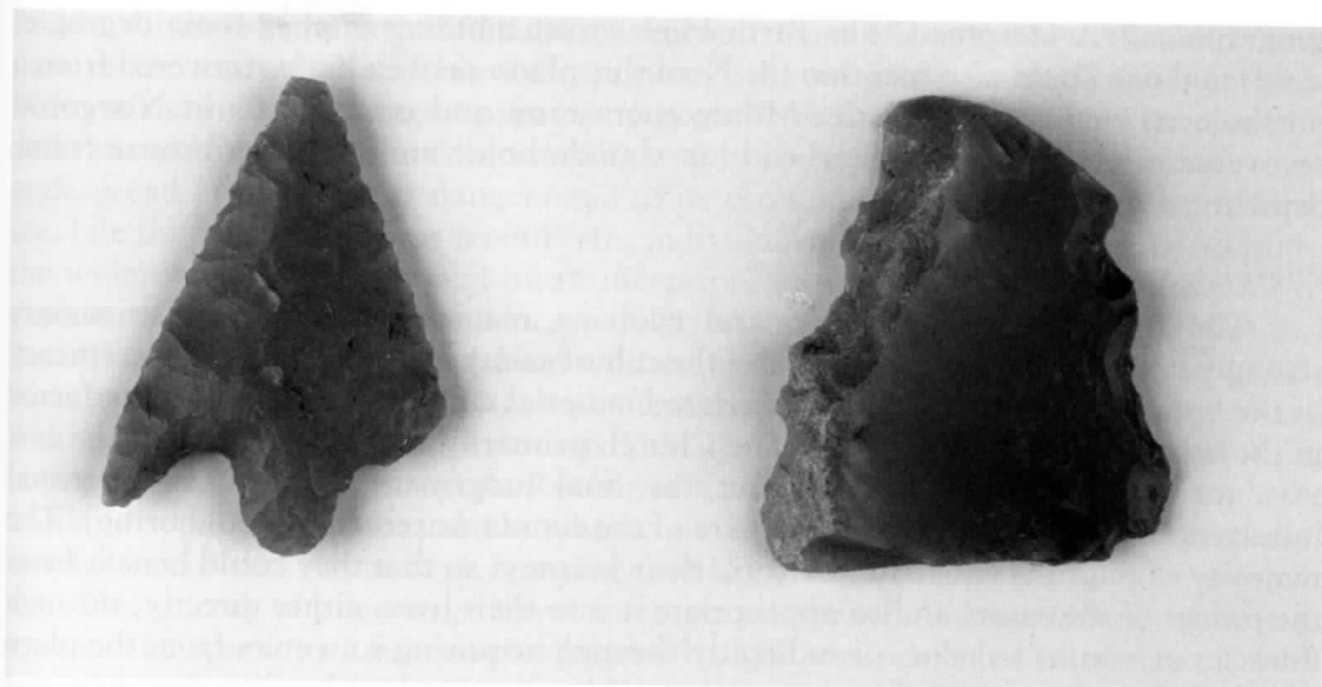


FIGURE 11.2 Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead (left) and a struck flake (right), Perth High Street excavations 1975–78 (Perth Museum and Art Gallery).

their world and their place in it, including their network of social, natural and supernatural relationships.⁴

APPROPRIATING THE SUPERNATURAL: THE POWER OF BELIEF

Re-use of prehistoric lithics

Prehistoric lithics can provide important clues to the way that the world was perceived in the Middle Ages. The 1975–78 Perth High Street excavations produced a large assemblage of flint and related material including two pieces of particular note (Figure 11.2). One is an early Bronze Age struck flake found in a 13th-century midden, where it was lost or discarded after medieval use as a strike-a-light. The second, from a building post-hole dating to the early 12th century, is a Bronze Age arrowhead re-used as a foundation deposit. Excavations at Meal Vennel in Perth also recovered a barbed and tanged Bronze Age arrowhead, from 15th-century backlands slump fill.⁵ Both arrowheads (and possibly the strike-a-light, given its usage) are likely to represent medieval amuletic or apotropaic use of what was seen as elf-shot, the harmful arrows of elves that transmitted disease and were often associated with thunder and lightning. The placing of the Perth High Street piece in particular, in the posthole of a building that was probably a substantial hall, is suggestive of a desire to protect the building (and its occupiers) from the damaging effects of weather and disease. Such beliefs do not mark Perth out as a backwater of superstition but reflect widespread European beliefs of pre-Christian origin, infused with Christianity. St. Sebastian (to whom an altar was dedicated in mid 15th-century Perth) for example, was martyred by being shot with arrows and so he was widely held to have a curative role in combating both elf-shot and human archery.⁶ These beliefs were socially and

geographically widespread. The Perth High Street building implies some degree of status and one could also mention the Neolithic plano-convex knife recovered from a posthole at Hen Domen castle (Montgomeryshire) and excavations in Novgorod recovered a Neolithic flint spearhead (or 'thunderbolt') mounted in a bronze frame depicting a cross.⁷

Pilgrimage

The fusion of pre-Christian and evolving magical beliefs and Christianity strongly influenced the development of the cult of saints, which centred on the efficacy of the body parts of saints and their related material culture, a key motivating factor in the undertaking of pilgrimage. The Church primarily encouraged pilgrimage as a way for the faithful to think about the final judgement and to gain spiritual indulgences (though it was clearly aware of the economic returns it could bring). The majority of pilgrims equally undertook their journeys so that they could benefit from the power of the saints and to appropriate it into their lives, either directly, through miracles at a saint's shrine, or indirectly through acquiring souvenirs from the place of pilgrimage. Souvenirs demonstrated that the journey had been undertaken and were thought to bring good luck and avert evil from the wearer or owner and so they would have taken their place alongside other forms of amulet. We should also remember that pilgrimage could be enforced by judicial sentence and that criminals could appropriate the paraphernalia of pilgrimage (witness the Coquillards or Companions of the Cockleshell, in France).⁸

Excavations in Perth have unearthed a range of pilgrimage souvenirs including a badge of St Andrew (from St Andrews); two ampullae of St Thomas Becket (from Canterbury); and two scallop shells of St James (from Santiago de Compostela). Perth, it should be noted, has the highest concentration of pilgrimage souvenirs from any Scottish burgh. It can be amplified by a jet crucifix (also from Perth) and a possible jet rosary bead (from Compostela) found at Elcho Nunnery some 8km south-east of Perth; a copper alloy crucifix reliquary found in the river Tay downstream from Elcho;⁹ and a badge of St John the Baptist, possibly found in Perth. St John the Baptist was (and remains) the patron saint of Perth: the parish kirk is dedicated to him. During the later medieval period Perth was widely known as St Johnstoun and the burgh seal of 1296 shows his beheading. From the early 13th century the shrine of St John the Baptist was at Amiens Cathedral. The badge from Perth is cast from the same mould as one from London.¹⁰ Perth's pilgrims then were a well-travelled community but we should not forget that Perth itself was a centre for local pilgrimage, because St John's Kirk held a relic of St Eloi.¹¹ This was a key component of the kirk's shrine or altar to St Eloi, supported by the Hammermen Incorporation. St Eloi was the Hammermen's patron saint through virtue of his skill as a metal worker (a situation common to many European metal-working guilds).

There is one other way that at least one inhabitant of Perth left his mark on the pilgrimage landscape: the achieving of sainthood. In 1201 William, a baker, set out for the Holy Land. Heading for Canterbury (and the shrine of St Thomas) he reached Rochester (Kent), and was murdered near the town. He soon became, by popular acclaim, a saint and was buried in Rochester Cathedral where his cult flourished.

Pilgrims to his shrine provided sufficient income from offerings for the rebuilding of part of the cathedral and his cult appears to have spread in the Rochester area. William's saintliness did not appear to impress Perth or Scotland (where there are no dedications to him) but he does stand as testimony to the power of pilgrimage, to its widespread practice, to its dangers and to its economic potential. It also helps us to see, like the range of badges from Perth, individuals drawn out of the town and into the wider world. Whether real or an invention, he enabled Rochester Cathedral to exploit the steady stream of Scottish pilgrims making their way to St Thomas à Becket's shrine in Canterbury (about whose flourishing the clergy of Rochester would have been well aware). St Thomas was extremely popular in Scotland, where King William I, the Lion, founded Arbroath Abbey in his honour and contested with King Henry II for his saintly support. Rochester Cathedral was dedicated to St Andrew, Scotland's patron saint, and the shrine of St William was visited by powerful benefactors, including, in 1299, King Edward I.¹²

The journey of pilgrimage leaves traces across the whole country and not only in towns. The apotropaic function of pilgrim badges was perceived to operate at both an individual and a community level. Research in the Netherlands has shown that pilgrim badges were often incorporated into the castings of church bells to take advantage of their apotropaic power whenever the bells rang out. Common in the Low Countries, this practice also extended to those places in other countries for which bell-founders from the Low Countries carried out commissions. Some 10km to the south-west of Perth, in Strathearn, lies the village of Dunning. Here the parish church of Dunning (St Serf's) had a bell cast in 1526 by Willem van den Ghein of the Mechline Foundry. It includes a badge of St James of Compostella, showing the saint standing within a scallop shell.¹³

ROMANCE, SEASONALITY AND CELEBRATION

A Tristram and Iseult mirror-case

In 1921 work in North St John's Place, Perth uncovered half of a 13th-century pewter mirror-case (Figure 11.3). It was found crumpled up, suggesting deliberate disposal.¹⁴ Like the pewter pilgrim badges already referred to, it is a cheap, mass-produced item requiring the use of simple stone mould technology. It could have been made in Perth or elsewhere, though its Anglo-Norman inscription implies an insular origin. The inscription is a garbled, illiterate prophylactic phrase wishing the bearer joy; a common type of medieval charm intended to avert evil and to bring good luck. The inscription is allied to images taken from the legend of Tristram and Iseult, highly popular in the middle ages. Tristram and Iseult were portrayed as ideal lovers and their tale was linked to the Arthurian Cycle. The popularity of their story ensured their depiction on a wide variety of artefacts, and two other mirror-cases are known depicting Tristram and Iseult, one found in London, the other in Regensburg, Germany.¹⁵ Different from each other and from the Perth example, they all demonstrate the widespread nature of these popular renditions as they were produced in different centres, and not to a standard design. They are material examples of vernacular culture, a culture influenced by the written word but which remained

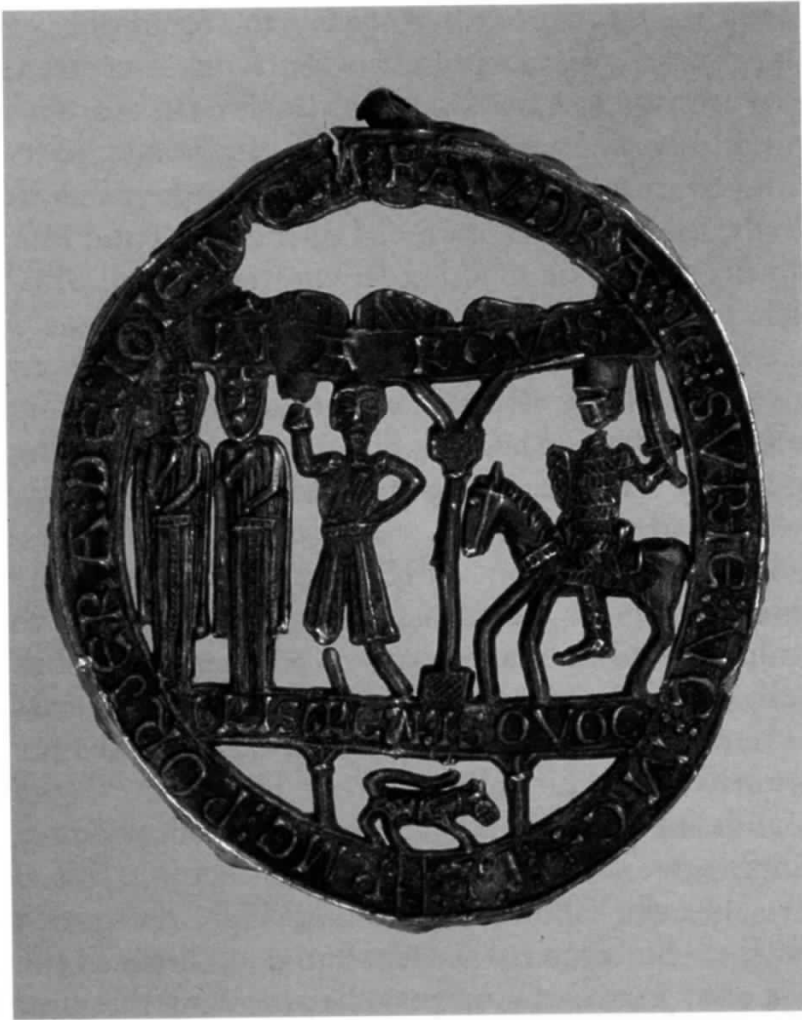


FIGURE 11.3 Tristram and Iseult mirror-case, Perth (Perth Museum and Art Gallery).

largely oral and celebrated and transcribed through drama, song, story-telling and puppetry. Often more courtly, literate and élite versions of legends and stories developed from these (but the process could work the other way as has been demonstrated for the noblemen turned outlaws Robin Hood and El Cid).¹⁶ The Europe-wide phenomenon of Reynard the Fox¹⁷ was so popular that people were inclined to link their personal identity to it. In Scotland, for example, the personal seals of Huw de Balmenaghe, in Perthshire, and of Rauf Faireye, in Ayrshire, both depict Reynard in his guise as a preaching bishop. Both seals were used to swear fealty to Edward I in 1296.¹⁸

Through its material, iconography and illiterate inscriptions the Perth mirror-case demonstrates a link to the huge amount of mass-produced cheap jewellery of the 12th to 15th centuries. They show that the mass of 'ordinary' folk using this jewellery were familiar with the themes depicted and demonstrate a key way in which knowledge was popularized.

The Tristram and Iseult romance is part of a wider, evolving cycle of Arthurian tales. Scotland produced its own contribution to the high culture of Arthurian romance with the witty parody on the Grail legend, *Fergus of Galloway, Knight of King Arthur*.¹⁹ Written in Old French in c.1200 by one Guillaume Le Clerc, it shows the marked influence of the Arthurian romances of Chrétien de Troyes. Arthurian tales can also be seen at work in medieval Perthshire. The village of Meigle lies some

30km to the north-east of Perth, in Strathmore. It was the site of an important Pictish ecclesiastical centre, certainly from the 9th century, as evidenced by its surviving Pictish sculpture. One of these sculptures (number 2; Figure 11.4) was interpreted in the medieval and later periods as depicting the fate of Queen Vanora (Guinevre). The sculpture — now interpreted as Daniel in the Lions' Den — shows a robed figure surrounded by lions. Formerly this was thought to represent Queen Vanora being torn apart by beasts (after a period of imprisonment at nearby Barry hillfort), the sentence passed on her by King Arthur for her infidelity with the Pictish king Modred. The sculpture was recorded as being part of an elaborate burial monument that stood on Vanora's grave in the churchyard at Meigle. The various written accounts of it may represent interpretations of a jumble of stones. Perhaps more likely is that they represent descriptions of a monument that was assembled in the later medieval period on top of what was known as Vanora's mound in the churchyard as a way of making sense of sculpture whose purpose had been forgotten. In doing so it clearly made sense to link the stone to the tales of Arthur, and make them very much part of the landscape, including Barry hillfort which was clearly understood as a stronghold. Thus these legends contributed to a sense of local identity.²⁰

The 'May' celebrated on a knife handle

From the 14th century we can glimpse another aspect of Perth's cultural life, in the shape of a walrus-ivory knife handle carved with a Maying figure (Figure 11.5).²¹ Found during the Perth High Street excavations of 1975–78, in a 14th-century context interpreted as a metalworker's workshop, it is a lively and fulsomely carved piece, showing a hooded face with intricate leaves on both sides of the head. Its iconography is consistent with a variety of descriptions and depictions of medieval Maying, the seasonal celebration of the imminent arrival of summer, a key aspect of which was the gathering of seasonal greenery. The celebration of May was widespread throughout medieval Europe and, for example, is beautifully illustrated in the 14th-century French Book of Hours, the *Très Riches Heures* of the Duc de Berry.²² Its illumination for May shows the nobility dressed in green and garlanded with flowers. In Perth, the knife handle is not an isolated example of May celebrations. Due east of Perth (across the river Tay), approximately 1.6km from St John's Kirk, in the south-facing cliffs of Kinnoull Hill is a small cave known as the Dragon Hole. Its name derives from its folklore provenance as the place where St Serf slew a dragon in the 6th century. In the later medieval period it became a place of May-time pilgrimage (by which townsfolk, and thus the town itself was taken out into the countryside), though the evidence for this only becomes visible in the 16th century. Following the Reformation the annual procession out to the Dragon Hole was an activity condemned as licentious and banned by the Reformed Kirk Session of Perth. It is through historical records that we also have a glimpse of Maying activity outside the burgh. The parish register for Errol, a village some 16km to the east of Perth, records for 1592 the prohibiting of the bringing in of the May.²³

A feature of many May celebrations was the institution of a mock-king or queen to preside over the May Games. Reference was made above to how Robin Hood's tales grew in the telling. So it was that he acquired a wider social celebration,

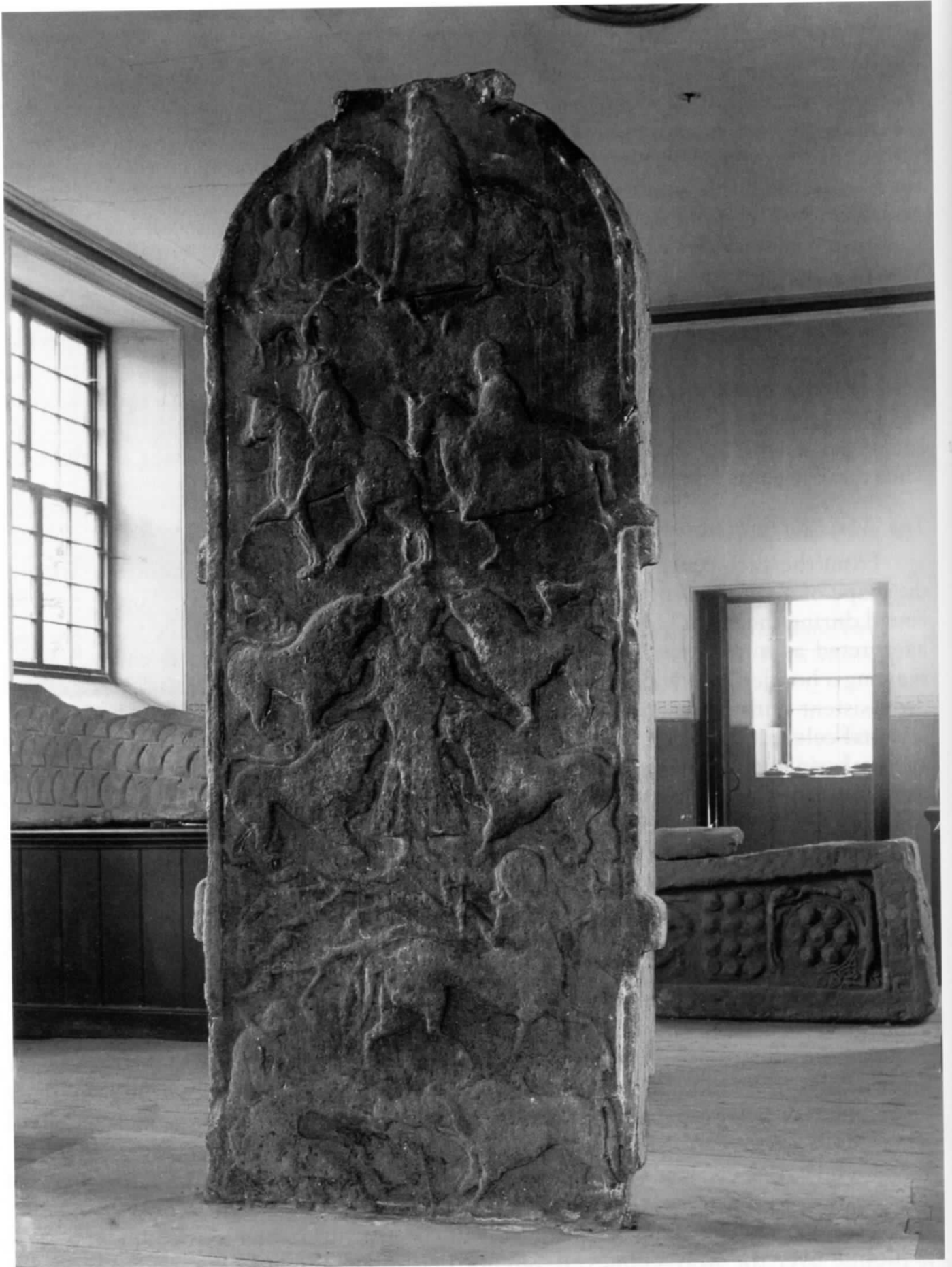


FIGURE 11.4 Meigle Pictish sculpture no. 2, the 'Vanora Stone' (Perth Museum and Art Gallery).

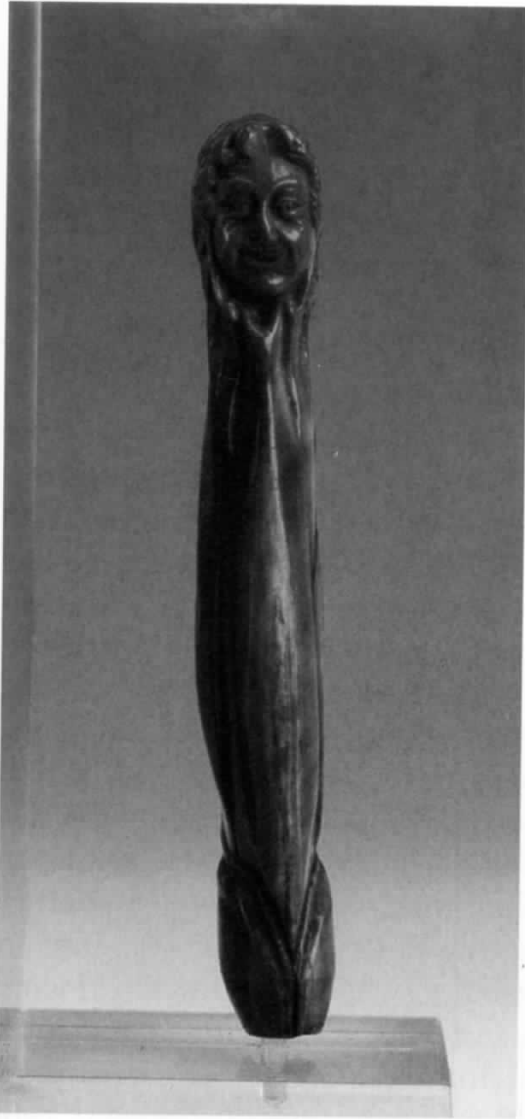


FIGURE 11.5 Ivory knife handle, carved with probable Maying figure, Perth (Perth Museum and Art Gallery).

including becoming a feature of some May games. As an outlaw chief, Robin Hood made something of an ideal Lord of Misrule and he also had the appropriate green clothing and woodland association for a May figure. Thus he became a stock figure in the dramatic performances associated with May Games. In the Perth Guildry Book there are references to the Guild paying (throughout 1545) its member James Mackbrek his fee for playing 'Robyn Hwyd/Robeyn Hwyd/Roberne Hwde'.²⁴

A 14th-century sherd of pottery from King Edward Street adds to the picture: just enough of its decoration survives to identify it as a nobleman with a hawk. The pottery comes from the north Netherlands and similar ceramic depictions are known from Aberdeen and continental sites, notably Tønsberg in Norway.²⁵ In medieval Books of Hours and in Labours of the Month sculptures found in churches throughout Europe, May-time is often depicted as a combination of May-time festivities and the lordly pursuit of hawking.²⁶ Should it be a surprise that such symbolism extended to the feasting table and to the minds of craftsmen alive to the possibilities of linking their products to widely-shared rituals?

RELIGIOUS DRAMA: CHURCH AND GUILDRY

The Glovers and St Bartholomew

In the collections of Perth Museum and Art Gallery are eight carved oak panels of openwork tracery (Figure 11.6).²⁷ Six have been sampled for dendrochronology, giving them a tree-ring sequence of 1225–1490 and showing that they came from the same tree in the eastern Baltic, felled between c.1508 and 1550. If they did not reach Scotland as completed panels they probably did so as part of a batch of prepared planks or boards, ready to be worked. They represent liturgical furnishings of framed construction, with parallels in Scotland, England and Wales. By the end of the 15th century Perth had a number of monastic houses, hospitals and chapels, all suitable homes for such furnishings. Perhaps more crucially it also boasted the major parish kirk of St John's, which underwent a significant re-building campaign in the 15th century. By the eve of the Reformation it had some 40 altars which would have had associated screens, pictures and lights (the up-keep of which is often mentioned in Perth's guild and rental records). Much of this was swept away by the Reformation.

The panels appear to have been amongst the items saved from this destruction, either for secular, decorative use or for more private continued Catholic use. They came to light again in 1849, during the demolition of a plaster wall forming part of a building that must originally have faced on to Skinnergate. As the name suggests, this was the focus of the leather-working trades in Perth, including the Glovers. The Perth Museum collections also include a wooden panel-painting of the Glover's patron saint, Bartholomew (Figure 11.7). His martyrdom with a fleshing knife made him an ideal patron for leather-workers. Though re-painted, it retains a medieval core verifying the date it bears of 1557. It presumably graced the Glovers' altar to St Bartholomew in St John's Kirk. Saved from destruction during the Reformation, it continued in use for Glover ceremonies, being fully replaced only in the mid 19th century when an entirely new portrait was commissioned in a more fashionable style. The earliest records that survive of the Glover Incorporation include deeds (the earliest of 1429) relating to a tenement known as St Bartholomew's Land, which is at the bottom of Skinnergate. We know then, that the Glovers were able to salvage their patron saint's portrait and in the light of this it seems likely that they could have saved other items including liturgical furnishings, such as the wooden panels described above. They clearly had guild property in which to relocate such items.²⁸

Guildry and Corpus Christi

The Perth guild organizations were the leading patrons of the parish church and so the chief supporters of the Corpus Christi Play. Within decades of its establishment in 1317 Corpus Christi had become a pivotal feast in the Christian calendar, with a moveable date fixed to those of Pentecost and Easter. The Feast inspired a dramatic celebration of varying size and frequency in a variety of communities. The name 'The Play of Corpus Christi' has been loosely used to describe a variety of dramatic performances in the vernacular. It was a diverse ritual event, built around a shared symbol but incorporating different local interests, lore, traditions and capabilities between the 14th and the 16th centuries. It was changeable over time and varied in its

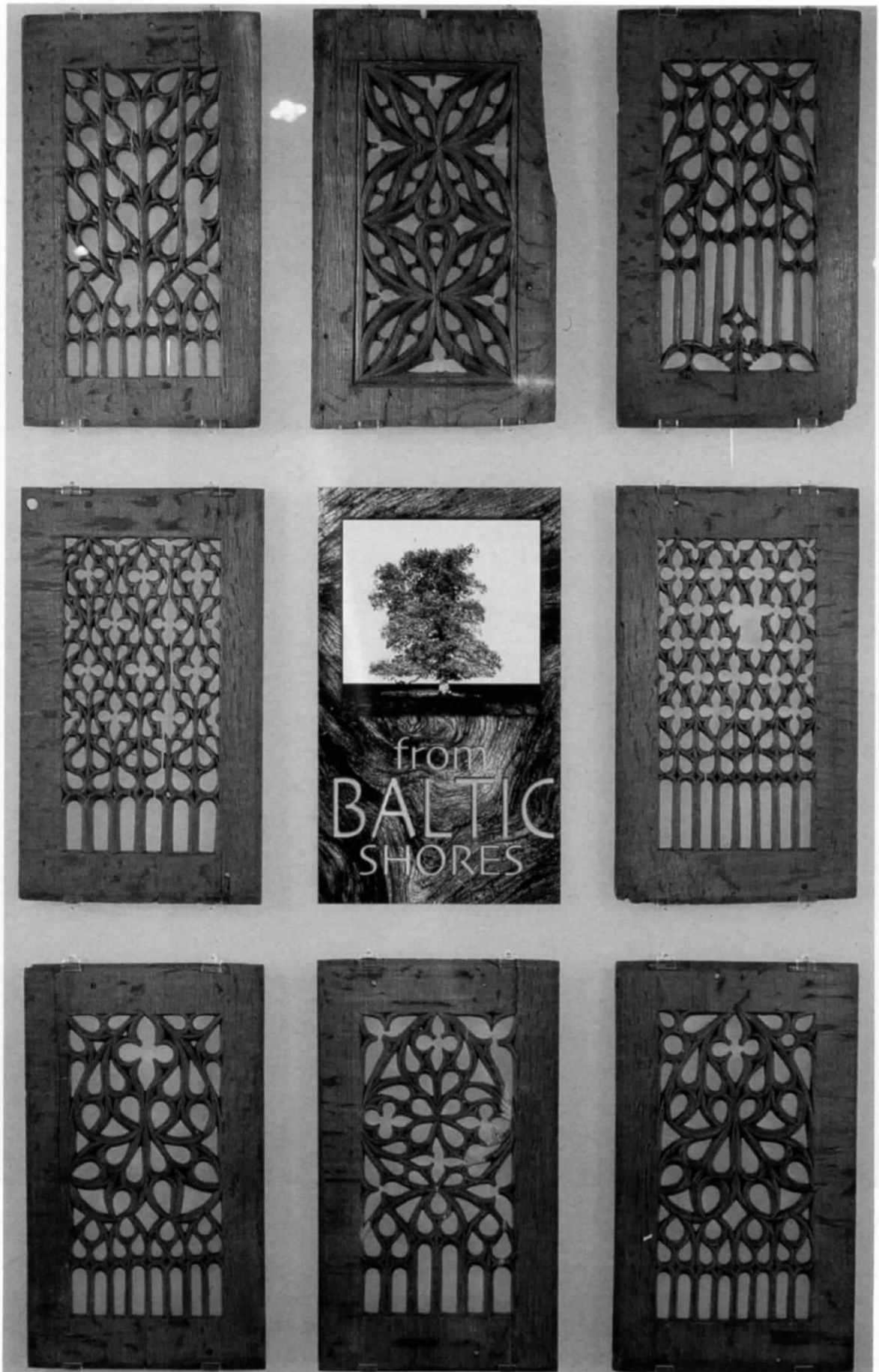


FIGURE 11.6 Eight liturgical oak panels from the Baltic (Perth Museum and Art Gallery).

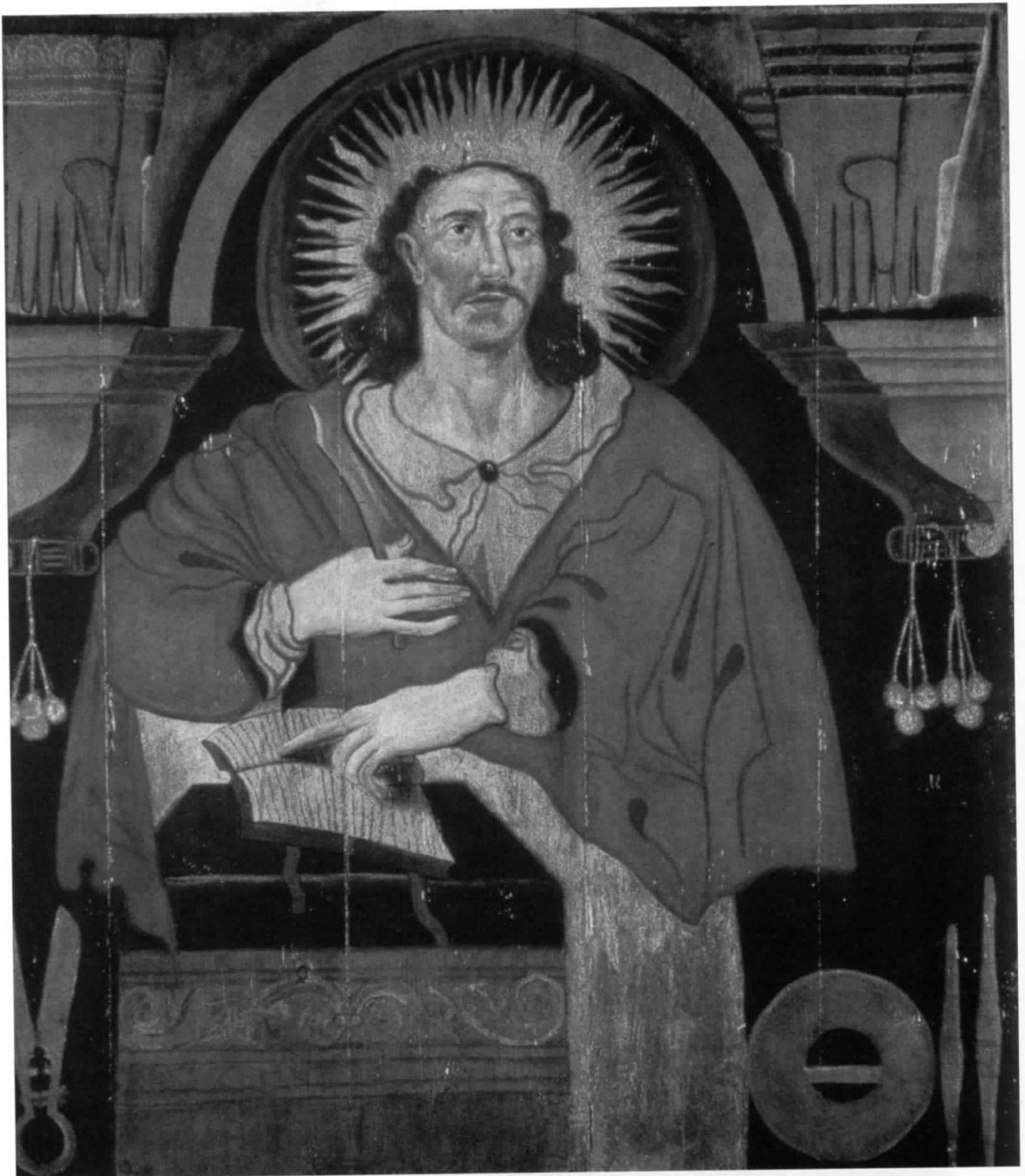


FIGURE 11.7 Portrait of St Bartholomew, painted for the Perth Glover Incorporation (Perth Museum and Art Gallery).

many manifestations.²⁹ The surviving evidence for the Corpus Christi play and procession in Perth is slender but sufficiently detailed to indicate its continuity, its guild sponsorship, its diversity and local distinctiveness and its contested demise. The evidence principally comes from references to the performance and resourcing of the

play that are scattered through various Incorporation records, principally the Guildry Book, the Hammermen Book and the records of the Wrights Incorporation; spanning the late 15th and 16th centuries.³⁰

The earliest references (for the years 1485–87) relate to expenses being paid to named individuals. The more explicit Hammermen records include casts of characters: principally Adam and Eve, the Devil and his Chapman (or pedlar), Saint Eloi, the Marmadin (a mermaid, or possibly a monster or prostitute), and a mixture of supporting devils and angels along with a range of banner bearers, various prop holders and minstrels. The key character in 1518, missing by 1553, was St Erasmus, along with the Corddrawer, the three Tormentors and the King. By 1553, the main addition is a character called Trinity and a degree of enforcement is also necessary, with those who do not play their roles being fined half a stone of wax for the candle on St Eloi's altar in St John's. A number of slighter entries deal with various expenses in connection with the Play, including the payments for banner bearers, for costumes and props, for minstrels, and for refreshments for the players (chiefly bread and ale).

The most obvious local element to the Play is the presence of the saints, Eloi and Erasmus. As the patron saint of the Hammermen, Eloi's place was presumably assured in their contribution to the Play. But why include St Erasmus? He was greatly revered across Europe and it is noteworthy that his feast day, 2 June, is well within the Corpus Christi season. He was also the patron saint of sailors, of which Perth must have had a reasonable throughput. Amongst the various props listed there are 'cabers', 'gudstrings', 'bluid' and 'St Erasmus cord'. Add these to the characters of St Erasmus, the Tormentors and the Corddrawer and it is clear that one of the scenes presented was the martyrdom of St Erasmus, who was tied to a windlass and disembowelled via a cord hooked into his stomach. He is shown being so martyred in a Salzburg woodcut of 1410–20, probably one of the earliest depictions of the windlass as torture instrument, and adopted for St Erasmus only in the 14th century.³¹ There is a certain amount of (theatrical) blood and gore implied in this reconstruction and if there is doubt that such was the practice one need only study *The Martyrdom of Apollonia* by Jean Fouquet (c.1460). This shows (against a backdrop of some six scaffold stages showing their own plays) a main scene of Apollonia under torture including the pulling of her teeth by large tongs.³²

The surviving evidence suggests that the Perth Corpus Christi Play was the major dramatic event of the calendar and in which all the Incorporations had their parts to play, their scenes to present and their banners to process. The records of the Hammermen and the Wrights alike show that money was being collected — both about the town and through offerings left in a collecting box (*stok*) at their respective altars in the parish church. They took the credit for the plays and were clearly careful to defray what must have been a substantial financial outlay as widely as possible. The performing of the Corpus Christi Play continued beyond the Reformation and the drive to eradicate it is preserved in the Kirk Session Register: if fathers took part in the play, their children were refused baptism. Sermons and prohibitions were repeatedly invoked against it.³³

There is then sufficient evidence to indicate that the Perth Corpus Christi Play involved both procession and performance. A commencement at the parish church is

logical because of the nature of the feast, the conjunction of guilds and church and the topography of the town (with the kirk at its centre). The rest of the route will not here be the subject of speculation but the procession was clearly a lengthy affair as refreshments were served. Perhaps it culminated in an open space where the various scenes of the Play were then performed. A Perth documentary record for 23 June 1603, refers to a playfield, apparently at the end of the High Street.³⁴ We do not of course know whether the playfield existed before the 17th century or if it came into existence then as part of an upsurge in secular drama. It is perhaps worth giving consideration to some of these elements as future archaeological investigations in the town allow and as part of any research agenda drawn up to pursue the social topography of the town.

CONCLUSION

The analysis presented above has sought to develop an understanding of the changing cultural life of medieval Perth, defining it as a place not divorced from its surroundings and where economic sustenance was not the only agenda. By examining a range of culturally informative artefacts and institutions I have tried to demonstrate the diversity of cultural practice, crucial in trying to understand thought processes. I have tried to show both individuals and groups within society, both in town and country, pursuing these cultural practices, often in contradiction of, or in contestation with authority. In large part we are dealing with a medieval culture of appropriation. Identity in Perth, in Meigle, in Errol, in Dunning and so on did not rise organically from Scottish soil, it was worked out, fluid and changing, by people in these particular places using cultural influences from near and far and re-defining them, appropriating them, to suit their own interests and cultural concerns.

Historical and archaeological work is increasingly demonstrating that there was no single sense of Scottish national identity in the medieval period. There were both clear regional and social-hierarchical identities. These were fluid and dependent on an individual's place in society and in trying to pick them out today we have to be careful to distinguish between genuine uniqueness in the past and uniqueness as a product of evidence survival. A key element in this cultural identity was the common web of European culture. This is not an argument that everything was the same but that there was a sort of competing sameness, a common pool of tastes, interests, beliefs and practices that could be appropriated and re-defined in a series of overlapping local, regional and international contexts.

NOTES

¹ Quoted in Penny 1836, 306.

² The Guildry was given royal sanction in 1209, by William I, the Lion, see Stavert 1993, iv.

³ The connections are discussed in some detail in Glenn 1999, 151–160.

⁴ A summary of the ideas more fully expressed in: Alkemade 1997, 180–184; Appadurai 1986; Dyer

1997, 509–517; Renfrew 1994, 3–12; 1997, 1–61 and Spensler 2002, 17–40.

⁵ For the High Street flint see Kenworthy forthcoming (the first to draw attention to the medieval re-use of the prehistoric lithics). The posthole wherein the arrowhead was found was related to building 18, described by Murray

- (forthcoming) as 'best interpreted as a hall with subsidiary chambers'. For the Meal Vennel flint see Harden 1996, 790.
- ⁶ For arrowhead amulets in general, see Evans 1872, 323–327; Penney 1976, 70–75, and Bassett 1982. For St Sebastian see Flint 1993, especially 165.
- ⁷ Higham and Barker 2000, 109–110; Yanin 1992, 67–106; and see also Cormack 1995, 36 for a prehistoric scraper from a child's grave in Barhobble, Galloway and Kenworthy 1982, 203 no. 179, for an example from the burgh of Aberdeen.
- ⁸ For the crime dimension see Dean 2002, 62–64 and 134–135. For amulets see Lowenthal 1978; Black 1894.
- ⁹ The Perth material is to be published in Bogdan (forthcoming). The items have been recently illustrated in Yeoman 1999, Illustrations 39a, 89, 90, and 91e; the crucifix reliquary is illustration 90f. For the Elcho bead see Reid and Lye 1988, 80. Analysis of the beads and the jet crucifix was by X-ray diffraction and courtesy of the National Museums of Scotland.
- ¹⁰ Yeoman 1999, illustration 90c and Spencer 1999, 219. Note Spencer's description of the saint depicted with large protruding eyes, believed to give the wearer better protection by repelling evil spirits.
- ¹¹ McNeill and MacQueen 1996, 377–378.
- ¹² Richardson 1907, 122–126; Yates 1996, 38–40 and St John Hope 1898, 232–233.
- ¹³ For pilgrim badges and bells see van Loon-van de Moosdijk 1997, 149–154; 2001, 112–127. For Dunning see Clouston 1992, 453–508, especially 49 and illustration 25; and van Loon-van de Moosdijk 2001, illustration 10.
- ¹⁴ Hall and Owen 1998, 150–165.
- ¹⁵ Spencer 1999, 327, illustration 325f; Kreuger 1995, 209–248, especially 231.
- ¹⁶ Holt 1989, 109–186; Fletcher 1991, 196–200.
- ¹⁷ Varty 1999.
- ¹⁸ McAndrew 1999, nos. 1253 and 3327 respectively.
- ¹⁹ See Owen 1991.
- ²⁰ For Meigle in general see Ritchie 1995, 1–10, especially 1–2 for the Vanora connection. The earliest historical account appears to be that of Hector Boecce in the early 16th century, see Stuart 1856, 22. For one version of the Vanora legend see McHardy 1999, 88–90. For a description of Barry hillfort see RCAHMS 1991, 27–29.
- ²¹ Hall 2001, 169–188.
- ²² Longnan and Cazelle 1969, plate 6 and 176.
- ²³ Mill 1927, 243.
- ²⁴ Holt 1989, 159–162; Hutton 1996, 262–276; Stavert 1993, nos. 358–360.
- ²⁵ For the Perth sherd see Bowler *et al.* 1995, 957 no. 161. For the Aberdeen sherd see Murray 1982, 125, illustration 93 no. 706. For the Tønsberg examples see Molaug 1979. Frans Verhaeghe (pers. comm.) now suggests that these pieces should be associated not with Aardenburg but a site probably near Haarlem.
- ²⁶ See for example Jones 2000 and Fowler 1873.
- ²⁷ Crone *et al.* 2000, 189–201.
- ²⁸ MacRoberts 1959, 281–286 and plate opposite 279.
- ²⁹ For the painting see MacRoberts 1959, 281–286 and plate opposite 279. The title deeds are held by Perth and Kinross Council Archives, A.K. Bell Library, Perth; Rubin 1991, 164–212.
- ³⁰ For the Guildry see Stavert 1993 especially nos. 1114, 1115 and 1119; for the Hammermen see Hunt 1889, especially 2, 18–19 and 78. All the guild and Kirk session references to Corpus Christi are drawn together in Mill 1927, 271–275.
- ³¹ The woodcut is in the British Museum (accession 1904-5-19-1). For details see Körner 1987, 107–108 and plate 28.
- ³² Bartlett 2001, 229, illustration 2.
- ³³ For the Kirk Session accounts see Lawson 1847, 124 and notes.
- ³⁴ Mill 1927, 266, 352.

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CHAPTER 2.8

‘Three stones, one landscape and many stories: cultural biography of the early medieval sculptures of Inchyra and St Madoes, Carse of Gowrie, Perthshire, Scotland’, in S. Dudley, A. J. Barnes, J. Binnie, J. Petrov and J. Walklate (eds) 2012 *Narrating Objects, Collecting Stories* Routledge, (volume 2 Material Worlds Conference Proceedings and Festschrift in Honour of Prof Susan Pearce), 85-102



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Narrating Objects, Collecting Stories

Essays in Honour of
Professor Susan M. Pearce

**Edited by Sandra H. Dudley,
Amy Jane Barnes, Jennifer Binnie,
Julia Petrov and Jennifer Walklate**

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7 **Three stones, one landscape, many stories**

Cultural biography and the early
medieval sculptures of Inchyra and St
Madoes, Carse of Gowrie, Perthshire,
Scotland

Mark A. Hall

In my beginning is my end. In succession
Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended
Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.

(Eliot 1940)

Introduction

Perth Museum & Art Gallery has on display two pieces of early medieval Pictish sculpture: the Inchyra symbol stone (acquired in 1945) and the St Madoes cross-slab (acquired in 1992). Both are significant pieces which have previously been published. However, they have only ever been considered as single pieces, never as related items – the fact that they, along with a lost third piece, share the same temporal and landscape provenance has never been considered. This chapter seeks to redress this within the framework of cultural biography, which charts the changes in meaning in material culture by which a history or biography is accumulated (Appadurai 1986a; Gosden and Marshall 1999), so as to address their multiple lives and their landscape context. Their pivotal importance to the understanding of early medieval Scotland is recognized but this is not a static meaning. The analysis offered will reflect the significance of cultural biography in both academic and popular culture debates, thus encompassing the mid-twentieth-century graffiti recently identified on the Inchyra stone as sharing the inscriptional value of the ogham inscription cut during the stone's early medieval use phases. Museums are never a graveyard for material culture but institutions that support the continuing life stories of the objects they curate.¹

Cultural biography

Cultural biography is an acute method of getting to grips with the complex relationships between people and things. Though never called cultural biography it is an approach that has a long currency in popular, artistic endeavour – especially films,

novels and poetry – but can be said to have been kick-started in academic debates by anthropological interest in defining commodities and their uses (Appadurai (ed.) 1986a, especially there Appadurai 1986b; Kopytoff 1986; and Geary 1986). Cultural or material biography (Schiffer 1999; Meskell 2004), then, in an archaeological, anthropological and museological context, charts the changes in meaning in material culture by which an object accumulates a history or biography.

Cultural biography and early medieval sculpture

The medieval archaeological and material culture record of Europe is replete with examples of cultural biography, notably evidenced by the writings of Abbot Suger of St-Denis about the various objects he commissioned: a conscious reworking of the past in his drive to transform the abbey church for the greater glory of God, himself and the French monarchy (Panofsky 1979: 53–79, 170–223 and pl. 224–31). In the field of early medieval sculpture, cultural biography has a growing acceptance, encompassing individual monuments (Cassidy 1993; Moreland 1999; Hall *et al.* 2000) and groups of sculptures (Fraser 2005; Clarke 2007). All these examples demonstrate how cultural biography helps to reveal and contextualize questions of appropriation and adaptation of what has gone before and of the redefining of identity. Making links between physical objects in the local environment with wider, often oral stories in circulation as a means of identity reworking is a key reflex of this. Pictish sculpture was sometimes deployed in this way. The large collection of sculpture in Meigle, Perthshire was, in late medieval times, used to construct a ‘tomb’ for Arthur’s queen, Guinevere (known locally as Vanora) and, thus, link the locality into the wider, hugely popular matter of King Arthur (Hall 2005a: 216–17). In terms of the link between such sculpture and the sense of identity among present generations, this has been thoroughly explored through the Hilton of Cadboll project (James *et al.* 2008). The project brought the issue of continuing uses for early medieval sculpture into sharp focus. It looked at changes to the cross in both the medieval and post-medieval periods, with a sympathetic exploration of how one local community has deployed the cross-slab in formulating its identity and survival instinct. The combination of conventional art historical and archaeological analysis with a more overtly political, socially inclusive analysis of the community’s responses to what it considers to be its sculpture is not to everyone’s taste. But it does lay bare the important, complex issue of how communities use their medieval past to help define themselves in the present. This can lead to paradoxical combinations such as that of the transparently solid – the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab, for example – with the opaquely chimerical: the implausible and unhistorical stories applied to the sculpture, which disturb our sense of objectivity and prod our desire to dispel ignorance, whilst often missing the underlying purpose of those stories. However, the Hilton and neighbouring communities neither can nor should be denied their stories – such phenomena are a given of human nature and can form the basis of a dialogue for everyone’s benefit. Such monuments as the Hilton cross-slab, of course, stand ready to absorb whatever veneer of story and understanding people choose to apply to them; all grist to the mill of their cultural biography.

St Madoes and Inchyra: stories in stone

St Madoes and Inchyra: the place

The current chapter in the lives of the sculptures finds them as significant objects in the collection of Perth Museum & Art Gallery. The St Madoes cross-slab is displayed as a key example of Pictish art. The Inchyra stone is displayed as an example in the long theme of communication in a gallery structured around concepts, rather than chronology (Hall 2005b: 343–4). A visitor to the museum would be hard-pressed to appreciate their connectedness and their pivotal role in so many human stories. This chapter represents a first step in recovering that connectedness.²

Both, along with a now lost third piece, come from the same part of Perthshire, Scotland: the village and parish of St Madoes, which is close to the River Tay and its junction with the River Earn, and sits opposite the important early church and royal site of Abernethy. St Madoes takes its name from Mo Aedóc, a hypocoristic form of Aedán. Several saints of this name are known but the principal one is St Maedoc of Ferna, Leinster, Ireland, active in the later sixth century (Taylor 2009; Mackinlay 1914: 147).³ In Leinster, he was only outshone by St Brigit, who is the principal dedicatee just across the Tay at Abernethy. The dedication dates to Abernethy's early, royal foundation *c.* 600 CE (Macquarrie 1997: 177–81; 1992: 114–18) and the close proximity of early dedications to Leinster's two greatest saints suggests that what became St Madoes parish was originally part of the land-holding of Abernethy (Taylor 2005: 215): as a pocket of very fertile land it would have had a great appeal, although the small extent of the territory may also suggest a focus in controlling the river crossing to Abernethy. Both Abernethy and St Madoes were part of the diocese of Dunblane, with St Madoes the only parish in the Carse of Gowrie, on the north bank of the Tay to be so (Rogers 1992: 184–5; Taylor 2005: 215). Macquarrie (1997: 180–1) has suggested that Abernethy may, in fact, have been an early bishopric, succeeded by Muthill, Strathearn, which was, in turn, succeeded by Dunblane. Nothing remains of the early pre-parochial church, except the dedication and the sculptures. The current building owes its appearance to rebuilding in 1610 and 1798. All of the earlier churches probably stood, like the present building, on a large, natural mound. Recent archaeological investigation around an adjacent mound on which the manse stands found nothing to corroborate this (Duffy 2007).

One further aspect of the place-name is worth noting: its characteristic of being a personal, saint's name. These are not common as place-names⁴ but where they occur appear to be suggestive of strong cult practice. The earliest references to St Andrews (Fife) and St Vigean (Angus), for example, are to Kilrimont and Aberbothrie respectively, becoming St Andrews of Kilrimont and St Vigean of Aberbothrie before finally being shortened to the saints' names only. There are no extant equivalents for St Madoes, but the name itself, its early dedication and the link with Abernethy suggest that this process may well have happened. The clear indication of a strong St Madoes cult may imply a strong need to Christianize a locality – the extensive prehistoric landscape in which it sits, of

standing stones and burial monuments (see below), may suggest a pagan shrine focus needing to be replaced by a Christian one. The later medieval example of Perth, also known as St Johnstoun and named after its patron saint, John the Baptist, reminds us that a cult can flourish out of devotion and adherence (and lead to a name change) beyond a phase of conversion politics (Hall 2005a).

St Madoes: the sculptures

The so-called St Madoes cross-slab stood in the churchyard until 1991, when it was donated to Perth Museum to facilitate its conservation and long-term care (Hall 2005b). It is a prestige piece of sculpture indicative of an early church and a possible St Madoes cult. The presence of other, associated sculptures is demonstrated by a fragment of sculpture found in the late nineteenth century but presently lost.



Figure 7.1 St Madoes cross-slab (image credit: P. Adair, © Perth Museum & Art Gallery).

The surviving cross-slab is probably eighth century CE, composed of Old Red Sandstone and measuring 1.79 metres high (see Figure 7.1). It is sculpted in relief on both broad faces and across the top. The 'front' face is dominated by a bossed, ringed cross divided into panels of geometric decoration (spirals, key-pattern and interlace). Either side of the cross shaft a pair of beasts, the second biting the back of the first in each case, are aligned vertically against the shaft, like prowling protectors. Two further self-biting beasts crouch either side of the upper cross-arm, lying against the ring quadrants and, in almost full three-dimensional relief, two further but damaged, beasts crouch in opposition across the top of the slab. The 'rear' face bears three panels arranged vertically, each containing a cowled rider (on the lowest rider, Allen (in ECMS: 295) could discern a book satchel slung across the shoulder but this has eroded from view). Below the riders are three sets of panelled, worn Pictish symbols: a crescent and V-rod pair is next to a double-disc and Z-rod pair and below them is a single, so-called Pictish beast (for full description, see ECMS: 294–8). The most recent art historical analysis of the sculpture (Henderson and Henderson 2004: 66, 189, 218, 224) emphasizes the important innovation of the framing approach taken with the symbols (and the riders), signalling a new attempt at clarity of definition as against earlier forms of the symbols. The crouching beasts astride the slab are identified as lions, with both Romano-British and Irish affinities, and parallels are drawn with the guarding role of crouched beasts on some reliquaries. The slab integrates a robust conversion Christianity with overtly Pictish symbols, carved several generations after their probable inception. Though perhaps changed in meaning, these symbols may still express a link to the Inchyra stone (see below), which could still have been standing in the eighth to ninth century CE.

There are two early, conflicting accounts of the St Madoes slab. Noble's 1839 account describes it as upstanding and 'a very beautiful specimen' (626–7) of what was regarded as a Scandinavian (not Pictish or Christian) class of monument at that time. However, Skene (1832) describes it as fallen over and lying flat and partially sunken into the earth. This disagreement is hard to reconcile. Skene's account has some chronologically imprecise corroboration in Allen's account of 1883, in which he describes it as having lain 'for many years neglected and unknown in the churchyard, until in December 1853, at the instance of Mr Muir of Leith it was erected on a substantial sandstone base, outside the west door of the church' (214). The epistolary account of this re-erection is given in full in ECMS (293–4), quoting directly from the late Mr Muir, who writes of having seen the sculpture, on several visits, 'lying in the burying ground of St Madoes ... being more and more injured and that unless removed from its degraded position it would in a short time be defaced and broken'. Clearly there were strong antiquarian politics at play. The re-erection did not halt further erosion, particularly on the 'back' face; neither did its subsequent move in the early 1920s under a small shelter attached to the south-west end of the church. Prior to its donation to Perth Museum, it spent several winters in an *in situ* box, courtesy of Historic Scotland, to protect it from the elements.

The missing fragment of sculpture is part of a second cross-slab (see Figure 7.2). It was discovered in 1881, as two fragments of rubble built into the wall of

SCULPTURED SLAB - ST MADOES.

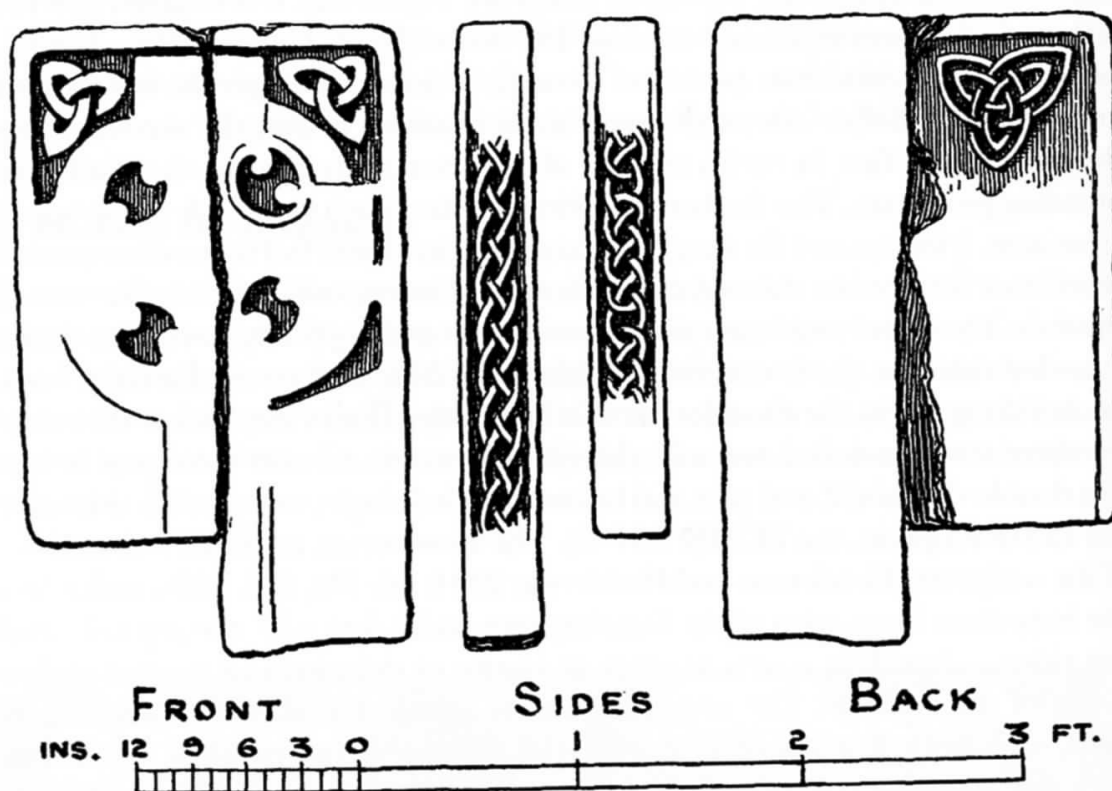


Figure 7.2 The lost cross-slab from St Madoes (image credit: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland).

the Session House adjoining the church (Allen 1883: 211). Extracted from the wall, it was refitted and put in the kirkyard. It was still extant in 1903 (ECMS: 328–9) but before 1939 it disappeared, one explanation suggesting it had been ‘carted away as rubbish’ (Melville 1939: 86). In 1964, the then minister of St Madoes, the Revd H. K. MacDonald, suggested it had been lost between 1923 and 1929, when the old graveyard was extended (NMRS entry number NO12 SE21). When refitted, it formed the upper portion of a cross-slab, carved on both sides (see Figure 7.2). One of its broad faces bears a ringed cross with pellets in the armpits and a triquetra either side of the upper arm of the cross. A third triquetra survives on the other broad face, and the narrow sides bear damaged interlace ornament. The incorporation of the fragments into the Session House wall – generally characterized as expedient use of available material – dates that phase of its biography to no later than the late eighteenth century. It cannot be ruled out that the fragments (and others undetected) had been used in a similar way in the previous church buildings and that they were done so deliberately for apotropaic and/or commemorative reasons, reconciling and reinforcing the old and new Christian elements with each other.

The three hooded riders, on the extant cross-slab, springboard us into wider landscape considerations. They are probably ecclesiastics (something the book satchel observed by Allen would support) and it has been suggested

that this confirms the importance and existence of a route-way between Scone, Abernethy and St Andrews, and including a ferry crossing at, or close to, the present-day small landing known as Inchyra (Taylor 2005). The continuity of the Tay crossing within the St Madoes landscape is further demonstrated by the discovery of Roman–Iron Age and later medieval finds close to the probable landing point. These were recovered from the bank or foreshore of the river at Inchyra and Cairnie Pier but were almost certainly lost or deposited in the river itself, as Cairnie Pier, in particular, was reclaimed from the river in the early 1830s (Noble 1839: 633). In the early 1990s, two separate episodes of metal-detecting recovered a Romano-British enamelled trumpet brooch (Hunter 1996: 117) and a hoard of eight Roman *denarii* (Bateson and Hall 2002), dating from 69–177 CE. These were possibly deposited in the 180s CE: either as a deliberate votive deposit or an accidental loss whilst crossing the river at Inchyra. Metal-detecting in 2004 recovered a fourteenth-century enamelled heraldic horse harness pendant (Hall 2005c: 119), a little further downstream at Cairnie Pier. All of these finds support the longevity of the ferry crossing point across the Tay and the mouth of the Earn, which joins it upstream.



Figure 7.3
Inchyra symbol stone (image credit: P. Adair © Perth Museum & Art Gallery).

Inchyra: the sculpture

The Inchyra symbol stone (see Figure 7.3) is a sandstone slab decorated with Pictish symbols, in a manner suggesting at least three reorientations, and a series of ogham inscriptions. The symbols provide a link to the cross-slab already discussed. The Inchyra slab is named not from the landing place but the nineteenth-century Inchyra House, a mile or so from the river. The name Inchyra has a straightforward first element, 'inch', (from the Gaelic *innis*) which means haugh or low-lying piece of ground beside a river-bank, liable to flooding (Forsyth 1996: 340). The second element of the name is uncertain, and Simon Taylor offers the following personal comment: 'an unrecognised personal (including saint's) name cannot be ruled out but more likely may be a derivation from the Gaelic *sior*, "lasting" and found in such names as Siorghlais ("lasting stream") near Blair Atholl, Perthshire (Watson 1926: 477), which in the case of Inchyra, might be a reference to the inch's good productivity. It may be a compound name, *sir-ith*, "lasting corn", again referring to good productivity.'

The symbol stone was found in 1945 during ploughing beside Inchyra House, no more than half a mile from St Madoes church, near the mound known as Witch Knowe. The slab covered the remains of a body that was reinterred without detailed record, though it was noted that the slab rested on forty-nine water-rolled stones 'above and around ... the upper part of a skull (at the west end) an arm bone and shoulder socket' (Stevenson 1959: 34, n.1). Some of the marks on the rougher face of the stone may be plough marks, suggesting this was the uppermost face when found (Stevenson 1959: 34). At the time of discovery, the stone was thought to have little but accidental, secondary associations with the burial (Wainwright 1961: 8), which was thought by Thomas McLaren (Perth Burgh Surveyor), to be Bronze Age (information filed in Perth Museum). This cannot be determined without excavation and analysis of the burial. The stone being added to an existing burial cannot be ruled out, but Forsyth (1996: 340) thinks it more likely that burial and stone were a Pictish insertion to an existing cemetery. Wainwright (1960: 3) thought any association between grave and stone was late, that is, from recent centuries, following a chance disturbance. Forsyth points up the inherent implausibility of this:

More likely is that the slab stood upright beside the grave, fell over in antiquity and subsequently became buried under accumulated deposits; or, alternatively that having served as an upright monument for a number of years the slab was reused later in the Pictish period as a cover for the grave.

(Forsyth 1996: 340)

The stone is a fine-grained sandstone and measures 1.6 metres high. It is a long, thin, tapering slab incised on both faces with Pictish symbols and on three narrow faces with three ogham⁵ inscriptions in five lines (see Figure 7.4).

The narrow end is complete, but the broad end is broken and there has been some surface flaking. Unlike other Pictish symbol stones, it is carefully dressed and shaped rather than being a rough-hewn slab or natural boulder, and is also

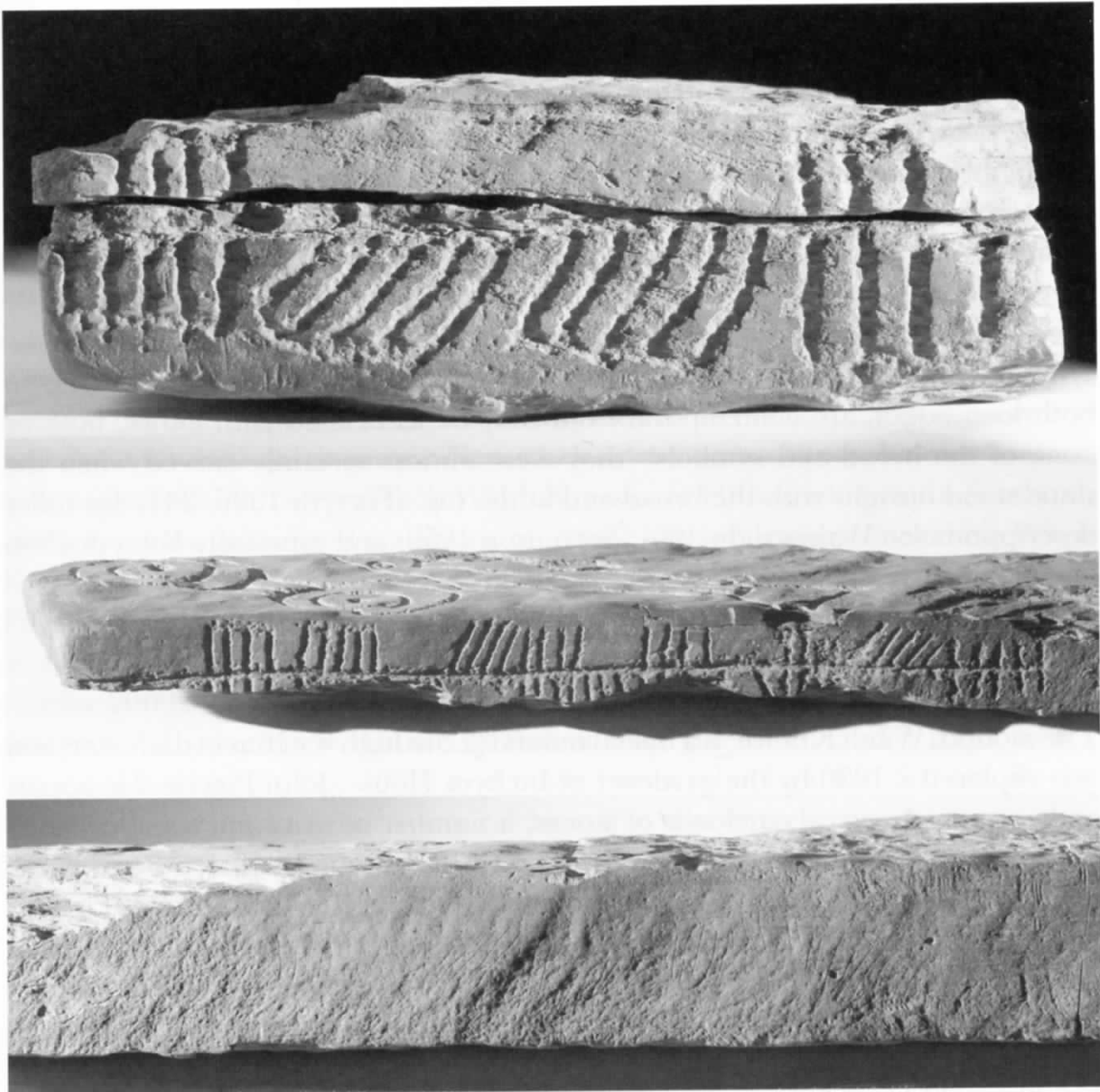


Figure 7.4 Inchyra symbol stone, detail of ogham inscriptions (image credit: P. Adair, © Perth Museum & Art Gallery).

exceptional in having at least three phases of reuse. The smoother of the two broad faces has at the narrower end a pair of symbols: a notched disc and a salmon cut using a pocking technique, which leaves obvious U-shaped channels. At the opposite, broader end and orientated away from the first pair, are two further symbols, a tuning-fork and a mirror, incomplete and partially defaced, probably to make them less visible in preparation for reuse. The flaky surface of the stone may have influenced the abandonment. The rougher broad face was carved using a chisel or knife, producing a V-section channel in the incision. The symbols on this face are carved at the broad, broken end, orientated to suggest that this was the top (opposite to the smoother face). The symbol pair comprises a serpent below a damaged salmon (for a full detailed description see Stevenson 1959, and Forsyth 1996: 342–6). The symbols are the work of at least two hands in possibly three phases. The precise order of the carving and the phases cannot be proven, and depending on the orientation of the slab, not all the symbols would

be visible; this would not have mattered at all if the slab was always intended to be buried (although repeated burial in three phases seems unlikely).

The ogham inscriptions run around the unbroken narrow faces and across the rough, broad face, although they appear to contain names they are not currently intelligible. They are apparently in three different hands, matching the symbols with certainty in two cases and with probability in the third. The shortest ogham is on the rougher, broad face, adjacent to the salmon, and like the symbols is cut with a chisel or knife. The notched double-disc and salmon are framed by two oghams on one of the long sides and running onto the short side – like the symbols, they were cut using a pocking technique. The final two oghams, on both long edges, are contemporary but may be associated with either, both or none of the broad end symbols: ‘they were almost certainly carved when the stone stood upright with the broad end at the top’ (Forsyth 1996: 347) (for fuller descriptions see Wainwright 1961; Stevenson 1959; and especially Forsyth 1996 and CISP entry for Inchyra: Celtic Inscribed Stones Project 1999).

Singing the land: socializing sculpture

The mound, Witch Knowe, is a burial mound (2.5m high × c.18m in diameter) and was explored c. 1830 by the gardener of Inchyra House, John Powrie. He apparently removed several cartloads of stones, a number of urns and some calcined bone (Name Book 1860, no. 45: 5; RCAHMS 1994: 150). In 1911, a fragment of cranium was found on the Knowe and donated to Perth Museum in 1917. This is the only piece of evidence from the mound known to survive, and although not scientifically dated, it seems likely that the Knowe is the most clearly visible surviving element of a Bronze Age cemetery (and McLaren may be right about the Inchyra stone burial being Bronze Age). The undeveloped field in which the Knowe stands may yet prove to contain other burials and material culture. In the present St Madoes churchyard, there are slight remains of what may be a further Bronze Age cairn, still perceptible in 2007. Hutcheson (1903) notes that in 1891 he excavated the ‘remains of a burial cairn of the Bronze Age, with underlying urns and cremated bones, in the south west angle of the parish churchyard of St Madoes ... not hitherto recorded’ (238–9). In 1990, a flint scraper was found in the kirkyard (King and Robertson 1990: 42). A later prehistoric settlement landscape in the vicinity is indicated by crop-marks including a probable souterrain close to Inchyra House (RCAHMS 1994: 150) and a probable roundhouse and souterrain near Inchyra farm-steading (NMRS site number NO12 SE85). We do not know the extent of the Bronze Age cemetery, but the proximity of the Inchyra-slab grave to the mound implies an early medieval appropriation of the cemetery. Though intelligible sense of the Inchyra oghams remains elusive, the consensus is that they do not follow a recognizable formula of the type ‘x son of y’ (or ‘x made this cross/stone’), although they do appear to contain recognizable names (Forsyth 1998: 55). Could these names possibly represent those of old mythical and legendary heroes, presumed to be buried in what the Picts recognized as an ancient burial ground? Before the stone was laid flat over one particular grave, its upright position may have allowed the names on it to refer to several

graves in the cemetery, possibly by being within a defined enclosure within the cemetery, or by being placed on top of Witch Knowe. The functioning of Pictish symbols as a script (Forsyth 1997: 85–98) may not be universally accepted, but as Forsyth (1998: 55–6) and Thomas (1994: 120) have observed, the symbol stones are cognate in their functioning with the post-Roman inscribed stones of the Celtic-speaking British Isles. Might then the Inchyra symbols refer to heroes and their adventures; a continuity of purpose across the different ‘scripts’ of ogham and symbols? The other two St Madoes sculptures can more tentatively be associated with what may have been an extensive Bronze Age cemetery (see above). The church perhaps seems further away from Witch Knowe than it really is because the landscape has been so radically altered by the East Coast railway line and the A90 dual carriageway. Nevertheless, the name Witch Knowe hints at later appropriation. Several such Witch Knowes or Hills are known in Scotland, and some have associated traditions of actual witch burnings, including Witch Knowe, Gask, Perthshire (Young 1837: 282) and Witch Hill, near St Andrews, Fife. The latter is recorded from the late seventeenth century as having been used as a stance to burn witches if they survived drowning in the adjacent Witch Lake (Taylor 2009). No more than a quarter of a mile from St Madoes church are the remains of a stone circle, known as Pitfour after the estate land it is on, which was excavated in the late 1960s and made into a school garden feature. By the nineteenth century the stones were celebrated in a local verse, possibly sung since the medieval period:

The stannin’ stones o’Semmiadoes

Be-sou the river Tay.

(attrib. Thomas the Rhymer, see Philip 1901: 286)

Semmiadoes remains the preferred local pronunciation of St Madoes (Philip 1901: 286; Melville 1939: 41, both of whom essentially follow Black 1792: 624–5). The couplet may reflect a time when the Tay’s course (or its then more frequent flood waters) flowed even nearer to St Madoes, and they certainly indicate that the standing stones were regarded as a significant feature and held some degree of identity for the community. We cannot say either way whether the St Madoes cross-slab or the Hawkstone (see below) were included under the verse’s ‘stannin’ stones’ appellation or not.

The medieval reuse of the prehistoric landscape is also evidenced by a prehistoric standing stone – the Hawkstone – immediately east of the church and the Pitfour circle. It materializes the legend of the hawk that landed there in the tenth century, as a means of determining the extent of a royal land grant. This legend was current in the later medieval period, as several charters mention the Hawkstone as a boundary marker (Marshall 1880: 11–2; Melville 1939: 44; and for the legend’s celebration in song see Philip 1901: 67–83). Its perceived national significance led to it being inscribed with the word ‘CALEDONIA’, observed at least as early as 1792 (Black: 552), and although the circumstances of the inscription remain veiled, it does imply a political desire to express some inner truth about the stone and its perceived connection to state-foundation.

This rather neatly brings us back to the Inchyra slab, which has a similar, if more personal reflex of revelation from the mid-twentieth century. In the early medieval period it was incised, as discussed above, with two salmon, testament to the cultural importance of that magnificent fish. It is that cultural importance that led to some recent discoveries about the stone. During 2008, STV filmed the stone as part of a Gaelic documentary on salmon, *Turas a' Bhradain*, broadcast on BBC Alba in 2009. The lighting and close examination of the stone this afforded also revealed a whole series of marks and graffiti demonstrating more recent reuses and attempted reuses. The presence of plough marks and of horizontal grooves or cut marks was noted by Stevenson. He suggested that one of the latter was probably made when the stone was transported to Perth Museum and one added at the museum, 'unfortunately made to mark the depth the stone was to be set in a wooden base' (1959: 34). There are also additional, graffiti inscriptions: 'LENN' and the pair of letters 'JA', along with a further inscription on the other, smoother face, 'KATH 4 BILL', set within a heart (see Figure 7.5).

All these modern inscriptions appear to be name-based and must have been applied when the slab was on open display in the museum in the 1950s or 1960s. Like the ogham, we can say that they are names, but whose? It would be very easy to dismiss them as the work of vandals, but we cannot be certain that there were not other, unofficial dialogues going on between stone and public visitors, ones that parallel the addition of 'CALEDONIA' to the Hawkstone, or indeed much older examples of graffiti, which are now prized documents of social behaviour.



Figure 7.5 Inchyra symbol stone, detail of 'Kath 4 Bill' graffito (image credit: P. Adair, © Perth Museum & Art Gallery).

The classic example is the mid-twelfth-century Viking graffiti added to the walls of the Neolithic tomb at Maeshowe, Orkney (Barnes 1994). Some of it was possibly incised by Jerusalem-bound or homecoming crusaders, including no. 21, which translates as 'Ingrigerdr is the most beautiful woman' (Barnes 1994: 159–65). Along with several more sexually explicit lines (possibly about love, certainly about sexual congress), this resonates with the Inchyra 'Kath 4 Bill' graffito.

I put forward this reading of the Inchyra graffito fully aware that it is not the only one; indeed many 'readers' would probably accept no other interpretation than one of cultural vandalism. Taking a different tack is not to advocate such vandalism but simply to recognize the diversity of purpose and response inherent in the meaning of appropriated material culture. There is certainly a tension between seeing graffiti as culturally informative and as vandalism in conflict with conservation. Plesch (2002, esp. n. 37) cites several examples of late medieval wall paintings in Italian churches that have been conserved so as to remove late medieval and modern graffiti. She notes the traditional perception of such graffiti as 'visual noise' (169) and counters it with a case study of the paintings in the chapel of San Sebastiano, Arborio, Italy, to demonstrate that there is an increasing acceptance of the significance of graffiti in relation to medieval material culture, as a method of appropriation and meaning-making (Blindheim 1985; Pritchard 1967; Fleming 2001). Graffiti express the idea that something is important, sufficiently so to be written down. It acts as a testimony of bodily presence in a place; as a memorialization of an event, a feeling or an idea and, in devotional circumstances, as a ritualized incision of devotion. Holy or sacred objects and spaces can be incised with graffiti about everyday life, thus appropriating that sacredness in support of one's secular life (Plesch 2002: 181). The addition of modern graffiti to Pictish sculpture adds to its palimpsest qualities (compare Plesch 2002: 169).

Anthropological analysis by Taussig (1999) has persuasively shown that 'defacement' can be a route to understanding: 'the despoiling of something beautiful and/or sacred can itself become mysterious and thus reaffirm the sacred' (Plate 2008: 74). Taussig (1999: 4) compares defacement to enlightenment and to magic, theorizing that it unmasks mystery and reveals knowledge whilst paradoxically intensifying the mystery. It echoes sympathetic magic, 'privileged among the arts of magic because it offers the fast track to the mimetic component of sympathetic magic in which the representation becomes the represented, only to have the latter die in the slipstream of its presencing'. Following Meskell (2004: 148) we might also read the later inscriptions as signals of resistance and playfulness, analogous to rumours, gossip, folk tales, gestures and jokes in 'insinuating a critique of power while hiding behind a certain anonymity.'

Is it possible then, to view the modern (indeed, all the) inscriptions on the Inchyra stone as pieces of sympathetic magic? Was 'Kath 4 Bill' a joke by either of them, or by others, or was it done to lend rebellious significance to the love being declared through the appropriation of the stone? The inscriptions are not highly visible, but, at the time, those who may have seen them would be complicit in the secret through friendship, or simply through knowledge about which they could do little.

The road goes ever on

This is far from the final word on the cultural biography of the early medieval sculptures from St Madoes and Inchyra, and their stories have not ended with their inclusion in a museum collection: a particular form of appropriation which seeks to enable a social memory of and engagement with a shared past. What we know of where they have been is far from complete, and the narrative tendency of cultural biography cannot override the lacunae. The sculptures do tell us about the communities which created and used them, reused, appropriated and mythologized them. Taking them as the focus for this chapter has involved looking backwards and forwards through time and drawing on archaeological, museological, art historical, linguistic and documentary approaches to material culture, whilst also drawing on place-names, songs and folklore.

There is a story here of successive communities and individuals changing, yet retaining threads of continuity including burial, ritual and river crossing. The circumstantial evidence strongly suggests a vital Bronze Age community in the area which appears to have left a substantial cemetery (or two adjacent cemeteries?), and whose members may also have partaken of ritual use of the Tay through the votive deposition of metalwork, especially swords (see Cowie and Hall 2010). The full extent and continued ritual significance of the burial ground remain to be tested archaeologically, but in the early medieval period it was appropriated and Christianized, certainly by the eighth century, with the erection of at least two, overtly Christian cross-slabs. These were preceded by the erection of at least one Pictish symbol stone, marking either the intrusion of a Pictish burial (possibly Christian, possibly pagan, possibly a hybrid of beliefs) into a visibly ancient burial ground, or the appropriation of an existing grave (or graves) as that of an heroic ancestor. The symbol stone was reorientated at least three times and no doubt came to share in the Christian identity proclaimed by the cross-slabs close-by. We do not know when the symbol stone was buried, either during the Pictish cultural hegemony or before the end of the fifteenth century, but it appears to have been done as a deliberate act of closure. It can be speculated that the St Madoes cult flourished through the medieval period, with the cross-slabs becoming part of its paraphernalia. The currently lost cross-slab fragment derives from a broken-up slab, presumably a consequence of the Reformation. By the end of the eighteenth century, it was used in the construction of the Kirk Session House, expressing, perhaps, an underlying attachment to the old ways, as much as being economically expedient. The reference in popular song to the standing stones of St Madoes may have included the major monument we call the St Madoes cross-slab, but if so, this did not accord it any greater protection than any other part of the cultural landscape. At some point in the second quarter of the nineteenth century it collapsed, suggesting community neglect and indifference – its re-erection required the enthusiasm of an outsider from Leith. Much of the surviving material culture of archaeological significance from St Madoes and Inchyra has made its way into Perth Museum. Of all, it is perhaps the Inchyra stone that most vitally reminds us that the museum is not a mausoleum of things (although

not even mausoleums are always the dead places they become in their metaphorical capacity), but a place of inspiration and contestation. The new set of graffiti inscriptions acquired by the Inchyra stone when on display in the 1950s and 1960s demonstrate this.⁶ They may not accord with a late twentieth-century conservation ethic, but neither does the prior history of the sculpture: the twentieth-century graffiti are but the latest declaration of human interest in using the sculpture to impart and absorb meaning. To paraphrase Taussig, the secret is out, long may it remain hidden.

Notes

- 1 I was a student of Susan Pearce's during 1987–8 and continue to benefit from her scholarship and wisdom. She is one of those giants on whose shoulders I am wont to perch – it is, of course, not the fault of Sue, or any of those other giants, that I am prone to fall off or suffer from altitude sickness. The shoulders of giants aphorism is itself amenable to a cultural biography approach, see Merton 1993, Eco 2008 and Marchiori 2007: 77–152. This chapter is offered in joyous indebtedness to Sue and conjoins two of her interests – early medieval material culture and theoretical approaches to archaeology and museums.
- 2 In terms of the museum's display of the sculptures, the connectedness will remain opaque until resources permit a gallery redevelopment but the research for and publication of this chapter will allow that connectedness to be explored, for example, online, through community talks and through art projects.
- 3 There is a Scottish Maedoc on record in the Irish Martyrology of Oengus, but save his description as 'Alba's (i.e. Scotland's) diadem', nothing is known of him; see Taylor (forthcoming).
- 4 I am drawing a distinction here between places in the landscape such as holy wells, standing stones and churches, which carry the personal, saints' names in abundance (see e.g. Márkus 2009, including some Abernethy examples connected with St Bridget) and the much rarer incidence of towns and villages named solely after a saint. I am grateful to Simon Taylor for his discussion of this issue.
- 5 A form of script which comprises patterns of horizontal strokes either side of a vertical line (see Forsyth 1996).
- 6 As this chapter was being finalized, new photography for the plates revealed additional modern inscriptions, very faint and difficult to read. One is in black chirograph and of two lines (the first letters, the second numbers) and the second (at least two letters) in purple paint (?). Both are on the same face as the other modern inscriptions.

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CHAPTER 2.9

‘The Meigle Stones: a biographical overview’, in the *Journal of the Scottish Society for Northern Studies* 46 (2014), 15-46

The Meigle Stones: A Biographical Overview¹

Mark A. Hall*

THE wider Tayside geographical region is immensely fortunate in having three of the key assemblages of early medieval Pictish sculpture – St Andrews, St Vigean and Meigle – which by a stroke of fortune works out at one each for Fife, Angus and Perthshire. There may be finer single monuments elsewhere, for example Nigg,² Shandwick,³ Hilton of Cadboll⁴ and Sueno's Stone, Forres,⁵ and larger corpora at Iona and Govan,⁶ but nowhere has the quality and range in depth of the aforementioned three centres. The term 'collection' as applied to Meigle includes both present and absent sculptures.⁷ The total of 33 stones includes seven that were lost in the nineteenth century but are always considered part of the collection, in addition to the 26 on display in the Museum. This paper is not seeking to catalogue each of these stones – a project requiring much more space – but rather to give a general overview of the collection and its biographical trajectory, whilst following just some of the key pieces, to bring out some salient, defining points and to demonstrate how the meanings and forms of sculptures changed over time. We are fortunate

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1 I am grateful to the Society for inviting me to present a version of this paper at their *Early Medieval Meigle* conference, held at the Kinloch Memorial Hall, Meigle on 13 April 2013 and for all the helpful questions and comments garnered from the audience that day and later from Lesley Abrams, John Borland, Martin Cook, Jane Geddes, Isabel and George Henderson, David Henry, Simon Taylor, Nick Evans, Adrian Maldonado and an anonymous referee. I owe an immense debt to Doreen Hall, in this case including her reconstruction view of Vanora's Tomb.

2 Henderson 2001; *ECMS* 75.

3 *ECMS* 68.

4 James *et al*, 2008.

5 *ECMS* 149; McCullagh 1995; Sellar 1993; Jackson 1993.

6 For Iona, see RCAHMS 1982; for Govan, see Ritchie 1994.

7 Throughout the paper the numbering of the Meigle stones follows that established by *ECMS*. For the full corpus of drawings of the extant sculptures at Meigle, see RCAHMS 1994: 98-102. For all the drawings and photographs of all the sculptures, see the RCAHMS's CANMORE website entries for the individual stones (listed under NO24SE25).

with Meigle in having snap-shots of the social role of Pictish sculpture in the early medieval period, in the later medieval period and in post-medieval and modern times. It is a biography that also encompasses the reuse of prehistoric standing stones. I use the term snap-shots deliberately: the variability of evidence survival means that the biographical approach cannot recover all that happened to, around or with a carved stone monument. Thus the cultural biography of the Meigle stones has periods of evidenced activity separated by longer lacunae of evidence. This does not mean the gaps can be ignored or elided but that a more nuanced understanding of the social re-valuing of early medieval sculpture by subsequent generations needs to be explored.

The Early Medieval Period

Here I consider the birth and early uses of the sculptures as early medieval, Christian sculptures. In terms of chronology we are dealing principally with the eighth to tenth centuries, whilst acknowledging the sculptures are part of a longer trajectory of human behaviour. The long acknowledged defining characteristic of the Meigle assemblage is its robust imagery of animals and hybrid monsters, often with a violent tone and a sense of imminent threat of damnation, which seems to go hand-in-hand with a largely (but not exclusively) burial monument function. However, that does not mean that the carving lacks the vigour and humour of human creativity, both of which are triumphantly demonstrated by one of the collections masterpieces, Meigle 2 (see Figure 1a). The clear parallels this cross-slab has with metalwork models has been long recognised – reduce it in size, cast it in gold and bedeck it with jewels and precious stones and it would grace any altar. However the cross-slab also has clear affinities with manuscript models. The way one of its human figures adapts itself to the available space, wrapping itself around the cross shaft as if it were an opening initial letter in a manuscript, is a breathtaking execution (see Figure 1b). It reinforces the cross as salvation because the figure reaches down to offer a helping hand to a second person, to pull him up beyond the reach of the jaws of a denizen of Hell. It has the space-pushing and subversiveness we tend to associate with later manuscript marginalia, particularly in the continuation of the story on the other side of the cross, where the ever ready-to-pounce creatures of sin are making their way up and over the shaft (see Figure 1c). Certainly these are amongst the most compelling scenes the Meigle sculptures have to offer.

To return to the burial monuments; the art-historical dating of the sculptures spans the 8th to 10th centuries and give us a broad indication of



Figures 1 a-c. Meigle 2 cross-slab: a: general; b: a helping hand; c: the creeping danger of sin (Mark Hall)

when some people were buried there. The early medieval burial ground is presumably, at least in part, beneath the present, long-standing graveyard. This is certainly given credence by the concentrated presence of the sculpture here, by the presence of Vanora's Mound in the graveyard and by the discovery of cist burials close to this mound in the early 19th century (and possibly in association with cross-slabs 1 and 2).⁸ A suggestion that the earliest phase burials were close to the settlement site is raised by the report of a souterrain, observed in 1878 partially beneath the manse garden and under the road in front of it.

I will return to Vanora and her mound below. Suffice to say here that the mound is clearly a burial mound. It could be prehistoric in date but almost certainly represents the earliest phase of Pictish burial on the site, either as a new cairn or as a re-used prehistoric one. Recent study of the landscape context of the Inchyra symbol stone and the St Madoes cross-slab demonstrated that early medieval church foundations and sculptures were no strangers to prehistoric cemeteries. The Inchyra stone was found capping a burial next to a Bronze Age cairn and less than half-a-mile away a further such cairn was visible until the late 19th century, when it was excavated by Hutcheson.⁹ We know that the Picts living in Meigle were attuned to an ancestral presence as they re-used a prehistoric standing stone with cup-marks for the magnificent cross-slab no. 1.

We know that for people of high status burial under round and square barrows was not uncommon in the mid-first millennium AD. From aerial photography of cropmark sites, over 70 barrow cemeteries have been identified across Scotland, with a noticeable concentration across Tayside.¹⁰ Significant examples have been excavated at Redcastle, Lunan Bay, Angus; Forteviot, Perthshire and, most recently in local terms, at Bankhead of Kinloch, just 3km, less than 2 miles, west of Meigle, and excavated in 2012.¹¹ The site included both round and square barrows, which appear to be Pictish but closer dating is pending post-excavation analysis and carbon dating.

We can readily envisage such a cemetery in Meigle being utilised by several generations of privileged, elite individuals (cf. Redcastle). Within the mounds, bodies may have been interred in textile coverings, in stone-lined cists or in wooden coffins. The organic materiality of these traditions rarely

8 Jervise 1859, 245.

9 Hall 2012, 94; Hutcheson 1903, 238-9.

10 Alexander 2005, 105-7 (and without equating female with low status); see also Winlow 2011 and Grieg *et al.* 2000.

11 For Redcastle see Alexander 2005. I am grateful to Martin Cook for discussing the Bank Head barrows, the final report of which is forthcoming in the *Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal*. For the Forteviot excavations, see Campbell and Driscoll forthcoming.

survives. We know though from a tenth-century Irish elegy that in the late 7th century, the Pictish king Bridei was buried in a 'block of hollow withered oak'.¹² Folk of much lower status were less elaborately dealt with; close to Redcastle, at Hawkhill, three female burials of the 6th-9th centuries were found in a simple pit dug into the site occupied by an Iron Age round-house and souterrain.¹³

The sculpture at Meigle is certainly a product of Christianisation, representing a later phase of burial tradition in Meigle serving the needs of the social elite in an evolving political context. The new traditions had a measure of respect for previous ones, as a sense of ancestry lent legitimacy to a new political structure. The deliberate retention of what later became known as Vanora's Mound (see Figure 4) is an indication of this, as is the creation of Meigle 1 if we can assume its incarnation as a standing stone marked some aspect of an older cemetery. Whilst the Pictish stone burial monuments in Meigle may well have furnished entirely new graves, we cannot rule out that some were additions to reused graves, with or without the insertion of new burials. The later Vanora tradition is an important reflex of this, indicative of an existing cemetery landscape of mounds and sculptures, adapted to Arthurian tale-telling as a method of defining a community identity (as will be discussed further below). We might, in fact, think of the sculptures as community heirlooms, an important way in which new meanings could be articulated for old things.¹⁴

The characteristic, defining monument type at Meigle is the so-called recumbent monument. The importance of this group has been long recognised and no one has done more to explore their meanings than Isabel Henderson. Across Scotland there are some 12 or so such presumed gravestones, though none has yet been found in association with a contemporary grave. Meigle has four examples, numbers 9, 11, 12 and 26. Generally they are wedge-shaped, tapering towards the foot end. Meigle also has a variant (in no. 25) of the so-called 'hogback' gravestone, in origin from an Anglo-Scandinavian recumbent tradition. This is in some respects perhaps the most unique monument to survive in Meigle (see Figure 2a-b). It is certainly very different from the other early members of the Scottish hogback corpus,¹⁵ so given how poorly understood the whole group is and the fact that it encompasses a variety of monuments that is rather obfuscated by the title, it is perhaps time we did not think of the Meigle example as a hogback but simply a recumbent monument.

12 *Betha Adamnáin* (regarded by some as taking poetic license given its late date).

13 Alexander 2005, 107

14 cf. Gilchrist 2013 on medieval heirlooms.

15 Ritchie 1994, Ritchie 2004, Crawford 2006, Lang 1975, Lang 1984, Lang 1994.



Figure 2. Meigle 10 (Mark Hall)

This problem has been recognised for some time¹⁶ and re-conceptualisation of the term and the sculptures is underway.¹⁷ The tegulated or tile pattern on Meigle 25 is the key link to hogbacks, but in this case does not define this monument as a hogback. Its overall shape echoes the Pictish recumbents and the defining serpent or dragon that runs the medial length of the upper surface also carries Pictish echoes. It was noted above how little we still know about burial monuments and furniture just before and during the conversion period.¹⁸ It was also noted that documentary sources indicate that King Bridei was buried in a wooden coffin. It may have been such established traditions that informed this idiosyncratic monument at Meigle. Other parts of Europe are more fortunate in having survivals of these traditions. Instructive here is a series of Alemannic wooden coffins from SW Germany. One of them, a child's, is on display in the Landesmuseum Württemberg, Stuttgart. It dates to the sixth century and was excavated (as grave 259) in Kreiss Tuttlingen, Oberflacht (Figure 3). The coffin lid has sloped slides and the flat upper

16 Ritchie 2004.

17 I am grateful to Lesley Abrams for discussing with me the problem of hogbacks and for sharing with me a draft of her paper, in preparation, *The Problem of the Hogbacks*.

18 Notwithstanding recent upsurges in our knowledge and understanding, particularly evidenced by Maldonado 2011.



Figure 3. Oberflacht wooden coffin. (Landesmuseum Stuttgart)

surface is filled with a two-headed serpent or dragon (with a head at either end), clearly protective in the manner of Meigle. A total of 58 wooden coffins were excavated, several bearing this two-headed serpent design.¹⁹ Although the Meigle serpent does not have two heads Pictish art was no stranger to dual headedness; Henderson has observed that 'all Pictish representations of griffins have heads on the end of their tails'.²⁰ The sixth century was a period of conversion in Alemannia and such coffins as well as preserving an older tradition may have been understood differently in a conversion episode. The shaping of the wooden coffin, through a skeuomorphic process, may have led to stone monuments comparable to that at Meigle. Continental traditions

19 I am grateful to Dr Klaus Georg Kokkotidis of the Landesmuseum Württemberg, Stuttgart, for information on the coffins and permission to reproduce the image. See also Paulsen 1992 (on the wooden coffins) and Schiek 1992 (on the excavations). The excavations took place in the late 19th century and only a handful of the coffins survive, scattered across several museums (with four in the Landesmuseum Württemberg). For a useful English summary of the Oberflacht evidence, see Carver and Fern 2005, 290-8, where it is used to elucidate the wooden coffin remains of Sutton Hoo Mound 17 (*ibid.*, 132-53).

20 Henderson 1996, 27.

also include tegulated, recumbent monuments. In the church of Saint-Loyers des Champs, near Argentan, Normandy is the raised tomb of St Lotharius (Loyer). Long-house shaped with a tegulated roof and plain, hipped, short sides, it also has an access hole cut through at one end where the roof meets the straight side beneath. Crook suggests that this gave the faithful access to the holy relics beneath,²¹ possibly including strips of cloth, so-called *brandea*. Crawford discusses the spread of similar shrine tombs in Scandinavia, citing several 11th century examples including Botkyrkja, Sweden, and Norderhov, Norway, noting the ultimate inspiration as Late Antique 'houses of the dead'.²² The house-shape and the use of tiling need not exclusively signal Scandinavian taste; it may be drawing inspiration from existing house-shaped recumbent monuments (paralleled by elaborate house-shaped metalwork shrines) and older traditions in wood. However as part of the process of Scandinavian acculturation and assimilation we are seeing, these elements clearly had an appeal in northern Britain. Hogbacks may in part be a response to or be inspired by already established monumental stone shrines in and around churches. In some cases bears were added as end supporters and that this served to express a new cultural context, a bringing in of something to the Christian fold, is perhaps worth further exploration outwith this paper. However, where we encounter such monuments, as at Meigle, we are not necessarily seeing Scandinavian burials or patronage but an expression of older indigenous tastes, possibly hybridised with developing Scandinavian fashions in northern Britain.

The Pictish recumbents exhibit a narrow slot cut into the head end of the upper face, a feature that also defines recumbents as composite monuments. In other words the slot was primarily intended to hold an upright cross, possibly of wood or perhaps a small, elaborate housing for a relic. Being removable, these may have facilitated the addition, on special occasions, of objects associated with the deceased. The large, square, off-set recess on the end face of Meigle 11 is often regarded as a much later modification of the stone, possibly related to reuse as masonry, but, as the Hendersons have observed, 'it could have held a metal attachment to secure a venerable object to the surface of the slab. There were two such attachments on the west face of St John's cross on Iona.'²³ Thus we can also say that it is possible that recumbents also served a secondary, reliquary, role through these recesses.

Meigle 26, like the other recumbents, has a rich repertoire of images including a hunt scene, fabulous monsters and devouring beasts. This is often

21 Crook 2011, 54 and pl. 3.3.

22 Crawford 2005, 7.

23 Henderson and Henderson 2004, 200.

interpreted as violent and secular and thus in keeping with the presumed secular nature of the site.²⁴ That said, we should be a little wary of not seeing Christian storytelling and symbolism in secular and violent scenes. The hunt, for example, was a widely recognised metaphor of Christian conversion from Late Antique times.²⁵ The bears devouring a human on side panel A are fully amenable to a Christian, Biblical interpretation.²⁶ In *Kings* 2 (23-25) the Elisha Cycle tells of the incident at Bethel: 'while he was on the road-up, some small boys came out of the town, and jeered at him. 'Go up bald head!' they shouted, 'Go up bald head!' He turned round and looked at them, and he cursed them, in the name of Yahweh. And two she-bears came out of the wood and savaged 42 of the boys.' In addition, *Wisdom* 11:18 talks of God exacting vengeance on idolaters by unleashing savage lions or hordes of bears upon them.

Leaving the recumbents, the other site-defining and more plentiful monument type at Meigle is the cross-slab, of which there is a huge diversity in size and subject matter, though some are only fragments. Of course, the use of some of them as grave markers, either in a primary or secondary role, cannot be ruled out, and we can perhaps incline to accept some of the smaller examples as being eminently suitable as upright grave markers. This is not to exclude other possibilities. Christine Maddern's study of early medieval name stones from a series of Northumbrian cemeteries (including Lindisfarne and Hartlepool) posits the idea that some of the stones may have actually been placed in the grave. This is quite a long-lived phenomenon in the biography of sculptures: in 1908 Macalister observed that at Clonmacnoise, Ireland, 'the local peasantry' adapted the remains of early medieval sculpture, with which they were enamoured, as new tombstones, including 'burying them with the coffin in newly-made graves.'²⁷

For size, range of imagery and sheer ebullience the two key cross-slabs are numbers 1 and 2. Both the main faces are defined by their slab-filling crosses in high-relief carving, especially no. 2, which is redolent, as suggested above, of metalwork crosses covered in precious stones, known in Latin as a *Crux Gemmata* or 'jewelled cross.'²⁸ Both cross-slabs are populated by familiar elements of Pictish art: hybrid monsters; scenes of the hunt; and, on no. 1, mirror and comb, snake and horizontal z-rod, salmon, Pictish beast (which occurs several times at Meigle, including on at least one lost stone) and horse's head Pictish symbols.

24 Henderson 1982.

25 For example, Loverance 2007, 142-4.

26 RCAHMS 1994, 101, illus. D.

27 Maddern 2013; Macalister 1908, quoted in Swift 1994, 24.

28 Henderson 1982.

Significantly there are two pieces of sculpture (10 and 22), one (10) now lost, that confirm the presence of an impressive building. Meigle 22 appears to have been part of an architectural frieze, its excellent state of preservation suggesting it may have been an interior rather than an exterior frieze. Its central figure has been interpreted as a depiction of the horned Celtic god Cernunnos,²⁹ but as Henderson has pointed out, 'a figure clasping long coils of hair and having interlaced fish-tail legs can be interpreted more mundanely as a three-dimensional rendering of a *Book of Kells* fantasy.'³⁰ Sadly lost is Meigle 10. Its original function may have been as a panel for a shrine or, more likely, a screen, either across the chancel or defining an area in the nave. It is worth noting that cross-slab no. 2 has tenon-like projections down the sides (and across the top) which may have allowed it to be fitted into a screen,³¹ but equally may have facilitated the holding of the sculpture in a wooden frame whilst the sculptor worked on it. Prior to its loss, Meigle 10 attracted a good deal of attention from antiquarians, probably because of its unique depiction of a two-wheeled, covered cart, which may represent Elisha ascending to heaven,³² albeit the presence of a third person in the cart problematises that interpretation,³³ and the accompanying, devouring bear may be another Elisha reference. Long regarded as a unique depiction of a wheeled vehicle, it has been joined by the identification of a similar vehicle on the recently conserved Skinnet stone, now on display in the new Caithness Horizons Museum in Thurso.³⁴ Though perhaps originally intended as a panel, Meigle 10 had several re-uses recorded in post-medieval documentation. It formed part of Vanora's monument in the graveyard and later was used in the Stables Court building in the village. It was removed from there in the 1830s and placed in the church for protection; ironically it was destroyed there in the fire that consumed the church in 1869 (a church which had only been rebuilt a century earlier). Both pieces of sculpture suggest an impressive stone church, though not necessarily a monastery. We know that from at least the twelfth century the church was dedicated to St Peter. This does not prove its earlier dedication,

29 Mackenzie 1929. The interpretation was repeated by Ross 1974, 185-6. Hicks 1993, 149, interprets the figure as a siren.

30 Henderson 1982, 96.

31 As observed by Ritchie 1995, 5-6.

32 An observation first made by Anderson 1891, 158-9. For early antiquarian drawings, see, for example, those of Charlotte Hibbert, reproduced in Henry and Trench-Jellicoe 2005, figure 15.7.

33 Aglen 1926, 5.

34 I am grateful to John Borland for drawing my attention to the identification of the wheeled vehicle on the Skinnet stone. For comparison, see the pair of chariots depicted on the lower panel of the east face of the base of the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnoise, Ireland (Harbison 1992, 48-53, figs 132-5; Stalley 1996, pl. 5a).

but Peter is a recognised early dedication and may lend some weight to an important early church. Although a monastic establishment is doubtful we do know there were scribes working in Meigle in the 9th century. One of the scribes was named Chana (son of Bargoth) and he is referred to in one of the versions of the St Andrews foundation legend as writing in Meigle for King Pherath (or Uurad or Ferat), who reigned 839-42. The same king is mentioned on one of the St Vigeans sculptures, no. 1, the so-called Drostén stone.³⁵ The presence of Chana (or Thana)³⁶ the scribe could indicate a monastic scriptorium, but given that the reference also describes Meigle or *Migdele* as a *villa* it seems much more likely that Meigle was the centre of a (royal?) estate, presumably boasting a royal hall or palace, an essential part of which would have been a royal chapel or church. The scribe's name is certainly Gaelic and suggests that perhaps the new language was taking hold there, to replace Pictish. At any rate it is certainly in marked contrast with the concentrated survival of Pictish place names around Meigle. Analysis by Simon Taylor has revealed that Meigle and its hinterland boasts a clutch of Pictish and Pictish derived names, essentially describing or rooted in the names of landscape elements,³⁷ a concentrated survival indicating that Gaelic was slower to replace Pictish than in some other places. Meigle itself was *Migdele*, from **mig*, 'bog' and *dol*, 'water meadow', giving 'the water meadow by the bog', and suggestive of productive land for pasture. The Pictish names in the area include Coupar (from *Cooper*, 'confluence'); Cardean (from **cair*, 'fort' or **carden*, 'wood' or 'enclosure/encampment'); Airlie (from **are*, 'east of') and Newtyle and Nevay (from Old Celtic *nemeton*, 'sacred place', Gaelicised as *neimhidh* or *neimheadh*). Taylor has suggested (at the Meigle Day Conference) that what may have permitted this concentrated survival of Pictish names around Meigle was the relative political and ecclesiastical neglect from the eleventh century onwards. Although on the border between the dioceses of Dunkeld and St Andrews, Meigle was equally remote from the centres of both dioceses and so, though clearly significant, possibly of lesser importance in the early years of the Gaelic-speaking kingdom of Alba. Perhaps this relative neglect meant that the in-roads of Gaelic suggested by the presence of Thana/Chana were not accompanied by the social or tenurial changes which produced place-name replacement elsewhere.

35 Clancy 1993; see also Geddes, forthcoming.

36 Taylor and Márkus 2009, 575, give Chana and Thana as orthographic variants in different manuscript versions of the St Andrews Foundation Legend B. In their introduction to Legend B they give 'Thana or Chana, son of Dudabrach' (p. 565), and in their translation of the text give 'Cano son of Dudabrach' (p. 579).

37 For the full analysis of Pictish naming elements, see Taylor 2011, 67-120.

The Later Medieval Period

Given what I have already said about Meigle 10, this is a fitting point to turn to the later medieval use of the sculptures. My focus in doing so will be Vanora's Mound (see Figure 4) and Meigle's role as an Arthurian cult centre.



Figure 4. Vanora's Mound, Meigle churchyard. (Mark Hall)

Documentary references going back to the early sixteenth century and the pen of historian Hector Boece described the Mound, furnished with elements of Pictish sculpture.³⁸ These were probably at least numbers 2, 10, 11 and 12 and possibly some of the smaller fragments, some of them probably added over time rather than in a single construction phase. This sepulchral monument was regarded as being the tomb of King Arthur's Queen, Guinevere, known locally as Vanora or Wanda.³⁹ The story narrates that she had been abducted

38 Boece's account is discussed in Stuart 1867, 22. Boece's *Historia Gentis Scotorum* was published in 1527. A hypertext critical edition by D F Sutton of the 1575 edition is available, in Latin and English, at <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/boece/>

39 *Ibid* (for Wanda) Taylor and Márkus 2009, 600, have shown that Macquarie's assertion (1992, 123) that *monumentum* in the St Andrew's Foundation Legend B meant a royal burial in Meigle (with an inference of the placing of sculpture) is a misinterpretation of the text, which instead refers to a possibly genuine document recording a mid-9th century grant of land to St Andrews. They note that the same word, *monumentum*, is used in version A of the Foundation Legend to describe 'Alexander I's act of having an Arab steed led to the altar of St Andrew to symbolise and fix the memory of his grants of land and other rights to the church there. This mirrors, in grander fashion, King Hungus's act of carrying a divot to the same altar to symbolise basically the same grant.'



Figure 5. Meigle 2 cross-slab, face D, once interpreted as showing Vanora's fate. (Mark Hall)

by the evil Pictish king Modred and held prisoner at Barry hillfort, 3 miles to the north. Rescued by Arthur she was deemed to have been somewhat too willing a captive of Modred's and so she was sentenced to be torn apart by wild beasts, the folk interpretation put upon the Daniel in the Lion's Den scene on the back of Meigle 2 (see Figure 5). This legend is variously reported by later antiquarians, as we will see when we turn to our third biographical snapshot. For now I want to stick with the medieval phase of the re-purposing of at least some of the sculpture (see Figure 6). Rather than dismiss this imaginative reinvention of the mound and its attendant sculpture as a misguided local episode, I offer a different view of it as one rooted in international cultural ideas and demonstrative of the fluidity of meanings that attach to material culture. Such meanings frequently change with alterations in social context and circumstance.

One element of the story recorded by Boece notes that if any woman walked across the mound she would become barren. Later accounts (discussed below) suggest an inscription to that effect. This rather smacks of a late addition to the story, one aimed at trying to control folk practice around the site, a practice more likely to invoke the mound as bringing fertility rather than barrenness, one which perhaps proto-Reformation and Reformation Church authorities



Figure 6. Artist's impression of the later use of sculpture around Vanora's Mound (Mark Hall)

sought to control. A fertility ritual is much more in keeping with medieval folk practices, which as popular expressions around Arthurian legends across Europe were current from at least the 12th century. Such interest is certainly testified to by the monk historian Lambert of St Omer, Normandy. He wrote his encyclopaedia, *Liber Floridus*, or 'Book of Flowers', between 1090x1120.⁴⁰ The universal history section of the *Liber Floridus* notes that there was a 'palace of the soldier Arthur in Britain, in the country of the Picts, constructed with marvellous art and variety, in which may be seen sculptured all his deeds and wars.' This has been widely accepted as a description of Arthur's O'on,⁴¹ a Roman temple at Carron, near the Antonine Wall. It was visited by king Edward I c1296, one legend suggesting he renamed it after King Arthur, in reality probably an acknowledgment of an existing attribution. There is also a reference to the site as '*furnum* Arthur' in a 1293 charter of Newbattle Abbey, Midlothian.⁴² The surviving drawings do not show the traces of sculpture – eagles, victories and inscriptions – that had been recorded. Although I take on board the observation by the Hendersons⁴³ that what survives at Meigle does not fully tally with the *Liber's* description, it seems worth pointing out that neither do the descriptions of Arthur's O'on and given that we are left with only a small part of what was probably at Meigle (even in the twelfth century) it is tempting to wonder if Meigle as an Arthurian cult centre was being described by the *Liber Floridus*.

Meigle certainly had other elements of such a cult. Three miles south-east of Meigle lies the mansion of Arthurstone, originally Scots, *Arthur Stane*, its name derived from the huge standing stone (presumably a glacial erratic) which was removed in 1791 for the construction of Arthurbank Farm, and its location recorded (as 'Stone of Arthur') on Stobie's map of 1783.⁴⁴ *Arthurstane* occurs in the documentary record as early as 1460, when it is cited in the rental book of Coupar Angus Abbey⁴⁵ and, therefore, is solid evidence that the Meigle Arthur stories were not literary inventions by Boece (though he may have introduced elaborations of course).

40 For the *Liber Floridus*, see Delisle 1903 and the Ghent University website: <http://www.liberfloridus.be/> See also Dumville 1976.

41 Steer 1960, 91; Loomis 1957, 4; Padel 1994, 6.

42 Hall 2006, 61.

43 Henderson and Henderson 2004, 220-1.

44 Stobie, *Counties of Perth and Clackmannanshire*.

45 I am grateful to Simon Taylor for sharing his work with me on the *Arthurstane* name and its reference in *C.A. Rent. i* no. 124. The rental also refers (*C.A. Rent. i* no. 13) to a *Croftarthur*, presumably near to the stone. These are significant additions of evidence to my previous discussion of the Arthur cult manifest at Meigle: Hall 2005, 81-4, and additional references there.

The naming of elements in the landscape after Arthur and the very physical construction of Vanora's tomb on top of or around her Mound, as well as making sense of the sculpture in Meigle, suggests visitors may have been both expected and encouraged to see and interact with that landscape and its monuments, as clearly happened with Arthur's O'on, already mentioned. They are not the only examples of Arthuriana in Scotland, and we might also mention the 12th-century tale, *Fergus of Galloway*⁴⁶ and the Church of St Mary, Stow, in Wedale in the Borders. According to a marginal note added in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century to the *Historia Brittonum* of Nennius,⁴⁷ Arthur brought to the church, from Jerusalem, an image of the Virgin (apparently used on his shield to bring victory in a battle at Stow), fragments of which were preserved there. Such physical material culture manifestations of Arthur are a very direct parallel for the profusion of material culture essential to the cult of saints. It also encompassed the discovery of Arthur's remains at Glastonbury Abbey, round tables at Winchester, Rome and Jerusalem, the skull of Gawain, the mantle of Craddock, and the swords of Lancelot and Arthur.⁴⁸ Such legendary, heroic, relics were often held in churches and gave widespread pilgrimage traffic using such places the opportunity to see holy shrines and relics of Christian heroes and their lives. The adaptation of an already semi-legendary and mythical figure into the historicisation of the British against Anglo-Saxon struggle helps to explain the persistence and development of the idea of Arthur beyond that early medieval period focus.⁴⁹ Geoffrey of Monmouth's imaginative additions certainly helped to popularise internationally the matter of Arthur, although such popularisation was not confined to book transmission but is also exemplified by the embodying of tales within local communities. Meigle remains a particularly vivid example. As has been recently observed medieval people appear to have accepted figures such as Arthur as being as historical as Charlemagne or Alexander, but also used them 'as a way to enter an ideal and imaginary world which they could try to reproduce or at least copy and paste to their own present society.'⁵⁰

The Post-Medieval and Modern Period

The Vanora episode continues beyond the later medieval period and excites antiquarian interest in Meigle from the late seventeenth century. At

46 Guillaume Le Clerc, *Fergus of Galloway*; Hall and Owen 1998.

47 For the Arthurian Wedale reference in the *Historia Brittonum*, see Stuart 1867, lxvii; for fuller discussion, see Dumville 1976 and Clancy 2000.

48 Fleming 2000, 30.

49 Green 2007.

50 Cangemi and Corbellari 2012, 52.

that time the Rev. Kirkwood recorded the Vanora legend, briefly describing cross-slab number 2 and Vanora's death-scene. He also described a second gravestone, presumably cross-slab no. 1, as marking the place where her servants were buried. Around the same time an anonymous account collected for *MacFarlane's Geographical Collections* reported the Vanora connection and noted her dwelling place as Barrey (*sic*) Hill, 3 miles to the north. In 1726 and 1727 antiquary Alexander Gordon published his account of Scotland's Roman remains, the *Itinerarium Septentrionale or A journey through most of the counties of Scotland and those in the north of England* and in it noted the Vanora tradition connected to several stones in the churchyard at Miggle (*sic*).⁵¹ In 1772 Thomas Pennant wrote, in his *Tour of Scotland*, of the belief that the grave had once been surrounded by three stones forming a triangle although by the time of his visit they had been 'removed to different places'. In connection with this, Pennant's illustrator, Moses Griffiths, produced an engraving of the Meigle 10 slab.⁵² In 1765 the poet Thomas Gray, in his words '...passed through Megill, where the tomb of Queen Wanders, that was riven to dethe by staned-horses for nae gude that she did, so the women there told me, I'm sure.'⁵³ In 1795 the *Statistical Account* described Vanora's tomb as a grand sepulchre, but interprets it rather than describes it, as having been composed of lots of stones skilfully bound together. It goes on to note that 'many other stones, which originally belonged to the monument, have been carried off or broken in pieces, by the inhabitants of this place.'⁵⁴ Before the end of the 18th century then we seem to have the end of folk practices (or at least their giving ground to Enlightenment antiquarianism) around the so-called Vanora's Mound. With the loss of this significance a more utilitarian re-use of the sculptured fragments took over and various fragments were built into the church, the manse, a malting kiln and a stables building. Skene's drawings of 1832 record some of these remains in situ. Skene notes that Meigle 10 was built into the wall at Stable Court or mews, cross-slabs 1 and 2 were in the churchyard, recumbent 12 was built into the manse, recumbent 11 was upright in the churchyard, where recumbent 9 was prone, with both being built into Stable Court shortly afterwards.⁵⁵

Stable Court was part of Meigle House, then the residence of Patrick Murray, who was a great advocate of the stones. It seems as if he had Meigle

51 Gordon 1726; Kirkwood and MacFarlane's accounts are recorded in Campbell 1975, 46 and 47-8 (edited from MS Carte 269 in the Bodleian Library), and also Mitchell and Clark (eds) 1907, 220.

52 Pennant 1772, 177-78 and plate XVIII (*sic*.)

53 Gray's visit is noted in Henderson and Henderson 2004, 220 and fn 66, with reference to Toynbee and Whibley (eds) 1935, II, 891.

54 See OSA 1799, 426-7, for the decayed state of Vanora's tomb.

55 Skene 1832.

10 and the other stones built into the walls of Stable Court removed; it was there that Charlotte Hibbert must have done her drawing. This is a point of information established by David Henry, which corrects the assumption that it was at Arthurstone House.⁵⁶ In fact Murray did not acquire Arthurstone until c1835, after he was visited by both Hibbert and Skene. Before leaving Meigle House Murray had the stones placed in the church for safe keeping only for them to be lost in the fire of 1869, along with several pieces that had been long before built into the church walls. The silver lining of this particular cloud was that the fire revealed several additional pieces of sculpture not previously recorded, namely Meigle 6, 7, 26, and 27, along with several pieces already recorded as part of the fabric of the church, namely Meigle 20-22 and also 3. Both Jastresbski and Gibbs, the illustrators respectively of Chalmers's *The ancient sculptured monuments of the county of Angus including those at Meigle in Perthshire...* (published in 1848) and of Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* volume 1 (published in 1856) showed Meigle 3 with a tenon, which it had lost between the fire and its recording for Allen and Anderson's *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* (published in 1903). The tenon is thought to have been cut during the early medieval period because its measurements would fit a socketed recumbent slab, but it may have been modified during the later medieval period as part of Vanora's monument.

There is at least one other Vanora episode in Meigle. In the 1920s the Meigle branch of the Scottish Women's Rural Institute made themselves a new banner, of blue felt with sewn-on silk panels. The border panels of animals and abstract motifs are stylistically influenced by a variety of 'iconic' examples of early medieval art, including the Book of Kells and the Bayeux Tapestry. The central panel depicts Queen Vanora in a contemporary Art Deco style (the Meigle branch was founded in 1928) with a lion to right and left and in poses of worship rather than immanent violence (see Figure 7). At the same time the branch worked on a book, *Our Meigle Book*, published in 1932, encompassing local history and folklore, including Vanora. The local interest in Vanora was clearly strong and, as depicted here, she is a symbol of pride in an ancient past, one that could be seen to exemplify a strong woman with whom it was suitable for a women's society to be identified.

The mid-19th century saw a flurry of antiquarian recording activity, including by Chalmers, Stuart, Hibbert and Skene, with the period ending fittingly with the detailed recording of Allen and Anderson's *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* published in 1903.⁵⁷ However, that is not where the

56 As noted in Henry and Trench-Jellicoe 2005, 232.

57 Chalmers 1848; Stuart 1854; Skene 1832; *ECMS* 1903. The most detailed account of Hibbert's interactions with the Meigle stones is Henry and Trench-Jellicoe 2005.



Figure 7. Meigle Women's Rural Institute branch banner, 1920s (Mark Hall)

story ends, as further fragments (Meigle 8, 14, 30, 31 32, 33) were discovered at the end of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century. Meigle 8, found outside the schoolhouse in 1888, is a fragment of a cross-slab. Meigle 30 was first recorded in *ECMS* and remains undetermined; it may be part of a scroll, part of a serpent or part of ram's horn, possibly from a cross-slab, possibly from a panel. Meigle 14, part of a cross-slab (a second piece of which was lost in the fire), and Meigle 32 were both first recorded by S Cruden in 1964.⁵⁸ Meigle 33, part of a distinctive cross-of-arcs cross-slab, was found in 1989 in the graveyard by the redoubtable Niall Robertson.⁵⁹ Scholarship on the sculptures reached a new plateau in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, with defining and lasting contributions from: Anna Ritchie, with her 1995 paper on Meigle in volume 1 of the *Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal*; Isabel Henderson, in various papers, including her exploration of *Pictish Art and the Book of Kells*, and books, notably their 2004 magnum opus, *The Art of the Picts*, written with George Henderson; and the RCAHMS, with illustrations by John Borland, in their 1991 survey of SE Perthshire.⁶⁰

The other key development at the end of the 19th century was the acquisition of the schoolhouse to serve as a museum, which took place shortly after the fire (and was certainly up and running before 1888 when John Reid visited).⁶¹ The schoolhouse was converted for the display of the sculptures by the local laird, Sir John Kinloch, a modern equivalent to those 9th-century lay patrons. Just as the Arthurian cult site brought visitors in the medieval period, so this fresh heap of the sculptures – and I mean that in a good way – sought to bring visitors into Meigle to celebrate the sculptures from a different perspective, in the cultural context of post-Enlightenment education and a refashioning of local identity as an aspect of national identity. This appearance, though certainly recognisable today, is not as unchanging as it seems and in reality has been revised or revamped several times in an attempt to widen the social access to and appreciation of the Meigle sculptures and their significance. In 1947 a major re-ordering required an entirely new floor to be built in the museum, recorded in several photographs (available online at the RCAHMS Canmore website). Less drastic revamps have taken place in the last few decades, with minor adjustments to plinths, layout and lighting levels. In 1997 a long overdue new guide book appeared, penned by

58 Cruden 1964.

59 Robertson 1989.

60 Ritchie 1995; Henderson 1982; Henderson and Henderson 2004, especially 93-6; RCAHMS 1994.

61 Reid 1889, 232.

Anna Ritchie and usefully summarising in an accessible way much of the new thinking (including her own of course) on the sculptures.⁶²

Quo Vadis?⁶³

But what about the future for the Meikle stones and for Pictish and early medieval studies more generally? Well if the audience for the April 2013 Scottish Society for Northern Studies Early Medieval Meikle Conference and the similarly over-subscribed audience for the Scotland in Early Medieval Europe Conference held by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in February 2013 are anything to go by the future is bright. There is clearly a huge appetite for finding out about this part of our shared past. This will no doubt be fuelled by the on-going Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF) project⁶⁴ inviting the widest possible collaboration and by the strength of integrated scholarship in Scotland's archaeological institutions. Vocal public support is vital for the momentum to be maintained, especially in these challenging economic circumstances. However, narrowing the focus a little to Meikle and Pictish sculpture, what might be explored in the years ahead. Drawing the various strands together we might point to three, interlinked aspects: biography, landscape and performance.

Highly desirable is the wider application of a cultural biography approach and linked to that a fuller exploration of the landscape context in which the monuments reside. This twin approach has the scope to both deepen our fine grained understanding of how the function and purpose of sculpture changed within early medieval times as well as capturing the on-going, reinvented importance of these stones down to our own times, often punctuated by long periods of neglect and forgetfulness. Several studies of Perthshire monuments, including those at Crieff, Forteviot and St Madoes,⁶⁵ have shown a rich vein of analysis here, but further afield we have the recent study of the Strathdon landscape by Ian Fraser and Strat Halliday⁶⁶ and the soon to be published study of the sculpture from neighbouring St Vigean,⁶⁷

62 Ritchie 1997. The most recent guide to the Meikle stones is the much condensed one, 'Guide to Meikle', based around colour photographs, included in Harden 2010, 70-6.

63 In the apocryphal *Acts of Peter* (Vercelli Acts XXXV, trans. James 1924), Peter asks this question of Christ, whom he meets in vision as he attempts to flee Rome in the face of the threat of crucifixion. Peter returns to Rome to be crucified upside-down. I use the St. Peter association and the intent of the question to extend its meaning to cover the possible future of the Meikle sculptures.

64 For the medieval section of ScARF, see <http://www.scottishheritagehub.com/content/medieval> (the medieval church is discussed particularly at section 4.4).

65 Hall *et al.* 2000; Hall 2012; Hall 2011; Hall and Scott forthcoming.

66 Fraser and Halliday 2007; Fraser and Halliday 2011.

67 Geddes forthcoming.

a site and sculpture collection that the understanding of which has been so reinvigorated by the lively, imaginative and engaging re-display of the stones in 2010. Before this renewal at St Vigean, the sculptures at Whithorn were re-displayed, a big improvement on the previous displays.⁶⁸ Hilton of Cadboll was explored in great, rewarding detail,⁶⁹ and since then Nigg has been re-conserved and re-displayed in 2013, followed shortly afterwards by the re-display of the early and later medieval sculptures of Iona in the Abbey Stones Museum⁷⁰ and the on-going redisplay of the sculptures at Govan. Meikle is on the agenda for a re-display, and hopefully it will be one that preserves the airiness and intimacy of the space, which in turn facilitates such close contact with the material.

Although the critical issue of the nature of the early medieval settlement (including its Church and burial practices) at Meikle remains open and has certainly not been solved by the sculpture beyond there clearly being a church there, it will remain pivotal for a further exploration of the nature of the settlement at Meikle. The documentary references to Meikle are now accepted as pointing to a royal centre or estate, complete with royal scribe (see discussion above) and certainly with a church (which by the twelfth century was in non-royal hands, being donated to St Andrews by Simon de Meikle c1178x1187).⁷¹ That same donation charter also tells us that the church had a chapel adjacent, a chapel which speculation suggests may have been the reliquary shrine of a particular saint. The dedication of the church to St Peter is perfectly acceptable as an early dedication, but doubt has been expressed on this point.⁷² In any event any reliquary chapel is most likely to have carried a dedication to an Insular saint. There are other possibilities; although described as a chapel in the twelfth century it may have had a different, original function. Henderson postulates the possibility of a baptistery from the iconographical links of Meikle 22.⁷³ The nature of early medieval church and monastic sites in Britain and Ireland has received much investigation in recent years, with vital contributions from the excavation campaigns at Whithorn, Portmahomack, Inchmarnock and the Isle of May, with additional studies exploring other evidence sources – texts, sculptures and placenames – notably at Deer, Aberdeenshire. The breadth of the evidence is such that the hitherto uniform

68 Hall 2007.

69 James *et al.* 2008.

70 Hall 2013 and Yeoman 2013.

71 *RRS ii*, 254-55; Macquarrie 1992, 123-24; Geddes forthcoming.

72 Mackinlay 1910, 221; Ritchie 1995, 4-5, for the caution on assuming an early dedication.

73 Cowan 1967, 145; Ritchie 1995, 4-5; Geddes forthcoming discusses the wider pattern of early churches and reliquary chapels. Henderson 1996, 9-10, discusses baptism iconography around M 22.



Figures 8 a&b. a Detail of masked figure on Meigle 11, b Detail of dog-mask on Meigle 1. (Mark Hall)

notion of a monastic establishment has begun to be questioned and refined.⁷⁴ There are ample resources (sculpture, placenames, text references and undoubtedly archaeology) which justify a major archaeological investigation to extend significantly our understanding of the spatial and operational dynamics of the church at Meigle, embedded in the landscape and in networks of power and especially royal patronage.

The third aspect I hope to see take flight is a fuller exploration of the way sculptures can articulate performance. Whether it is connected to the original phase of use of a monument or to later reuses, many sculptures record several aspects of performance (as the Vanora 'episode' at Meigle shows), and something I have recently explored through the question of mask depiction in Pictish sculpture,⁷⁵ reminding us that we need to see sculpture as embedded within its society of production; it was not just erected to be passively looked at but to be thought about, imagined about, and when appropriate used within a community's rituals and ceremonials.⁷⁶ On one of the long-sides of the recumbent Meigle 11 three high-stepping horses and their riders form a line and close behind them, partly tucked up into the top-right corner is a human-hybrid figure holding two serpents and possibly wearing an animal mask (see Figure 8a). Meigle 1, face C, includes a dog's head (shown upper left, just below the salmon's tail), perhaps a symbol but its stylised terminals are suggestive of a hooded dog-mask (see Figure 8b). There is no contradiction between the Pictish taste for hybridity in their art and the use and depiction of masks. Masks themselves are another facet of hybridity. As has been observed by Hedeager, 'masks that combine features of both sexes, or masks that have both animal and human attributes, are known from a wide group of pre-industrial societies where they communicate esoteric knowledge and *sacra*, the symbolic template of the whole system of values in a given culture. In these cultures masking is associated with 'rites of passage' or other rituals marking change and transformation and the masks themselves are regarded as objective embodiments of power or the capacity to will their use.'⁷⁷

74 Hill 1997; Carver 2004; Carver 2008; Carver forthcoming; Yeoman 1998; Yeoman and James 2008; Clancy 2008; Forsyth 2008; Lowe 2008; Ó Carragain 2009; Etchingham 2010; Woolf 2013.

75 Hall 2013. The two Meigle examples discussed in this paper were not captured by me for my 2013 paper, partly because of their eroded condition (especially Meigle 11). I am grateful to David Henry for discussions of both in front of the sculptures.

76 In a liturgical and religious community context, see Hall 2005, 64 and references there (for both hymn singing on Iona as cult performance and the role of dewars in keeping and showing relics, another facet of cult performance) and Ó Carragain 2005. For an example of adapted use of sculpture rooted in performance – sword strikes on early medieval Irish sculpture –, see Newman 2009.

77 Hedeager 2011, 128-9.

A further aspect of ritual performance around some of the slabs is suggested by the presence of oblique, triangular facets on one bottom corner of at least four cross-slabs and shafts, Constantine's (formerly the Dupplin) Cross, the Maiden Stone, the Golspie cross-slab and the Meigle 1 cross-slab. The facets that feature at the base of the shaft or slab form are all respected by the lay-outs of their respective carvings (except for the Maiden Stone, where the interlace carries over but does not fill the surface of the facet) suggesting a pre-existence on a standing stone or that they were part of the design of the Pictish sculpture or possibly that they were a coping mechanism for a flaw in the stone. All these stones also have large bases and the combination of base and facet may have facilitated the leaving of offerings, such as at Rogationtide, for the blessing of the fields, which would be a reinforcing of one of the functions of monumental cross sculptures, to endow the land with divine protection.⁷⁸

A key aspect of performance is also the question of sensory perception. We know that hymn singing to and around free-standing crosses took place at Iona, for example,⁷⁹ but other forms of ritual would have required the human voice and musical instruments (no strangers to depiction on Pictish sculpture). In terms of vision the colouring of stones is of huge importance. It is not credible to doubt that colour and texture were part of the Pictish aesthetic; see, for example, Ian Scott's suggested, indicative colouring scheme for the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab.⁸⁰ Colour, of course, could have been achieved in other ways, along with variation in texture, by using a combination of materials. The top of Meigle 12 is decorated with a row of point-to-point recessed lozenges (and the lozenge was symbolic of the resurrected Christ), which the Hendersons have suggested could have been completed by the insertion of metal plaques or polished stone panels to resemble the lozenge shaped inserts of green and purple porphyry on Roman and Early Christian patterned stone floors.⁸¹ Such themes of colour are well worth exploring in any re-display of the Meigle sculptures, either via a digital format allowing visitors to experiment with different colour schemes or with a fully coloured replica. In trying to recover something of the sensuality of performance around sculpture then we need also to consider touch, either formal touching as part of ritual processes or informal in the case of personal devotion and visitation.⁸² In the final analysis

78 Neuman de Vegvar 2007. Goldberg 2012, 172-4, also comments on these facets as an element of the function of their respective monuments.

79 See n. 73 above and also, as a caution for not eliding performance with being outside, Ó Carragain and Ó Carragain 2011.

80 Harden 2010, p.11.

81 Henderson and Henderson 2004, 221 (and see p. 200 for the Christological significance of the lozenge).

82 Cf. Blackwell 2012, 29 on the ritual touching of brooches and reliquaries.

it is the use and re-use of sculpture, for whatever purpose, which keeps it alive from one generation to the next.

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CHAPTER 2.10

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Article

Money isn't everything: The cultural life of coins in the medieval burgh of Perth, Scotland

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Abstract

Drawing on a summary catalogue of all the excavated coin finds and hoards from medieval Perth, the article explores the range of non-monetary, primarily amuletic, uses for coins, in a European context. This is not to question the monetary purpose of coins but to demonstrate their wider social functions, arising out of their malleable use as material culture by people. Coins then have a cultural or material biography.

Keywords

amulet, burial, coin, cross, money, Perth, Rood cult

Real is not how you are made . . . It is what happens to you . . . (Williams, 1922)

Introduction: COINS R US

During a weekend in Canterbury, Kent, in 2005, a cash-point machine issued me with a £10 note. I needed to spend that note on Sunday afternoon, but not before noticing that it had been used by a previous 'owner' to scribble directions and address details on, presumably by or for someone with no other form of paper.

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Although this observation increased the value of the £10 note enormously for me, I could not afford to keep it. It was a splendid piece of evidence for secondary (though at the time of the notation, paramount for its user), ephemeral, unorthodox use of money. The long-lived practice of throwing coins into wells and watery places to bring good fortune (Jones, 1992; Morris and Morris, 1982; Rattue, 1995) continues today and demonstrates that coins were and are amongst a range of everyday items which take on a different value when used as charms and amulets; depositing coins in watery places or fixed into holy trees is not a financial transaction but a spiritual and memorializing one. Sometimes we keep a coin made special by its giving, or by its newness or by its association with the date of a loved one's birthday, again a familiar gesture from the medieval period: the great Moroccan Muslim scholar and traveller Ibn Battutah records how he kept with special care six dinars received from a holy man in India (Mackintosh-Smith, 2002: 218). Coins can also be used as aids to decision-making, a practice we are all familiar with today in tossing a coin and calling 'heads or tails'. In the medieval period the presence of sacred imagery on coins meant such divinatory practice was effectively endorsed by Christianity. Tossing coins, referred to as 'cross and pile' rather than 'heads and tails', was also played as a guessing or gambling game. A favourite of boys and apprentices, it was in reality played quite widely. King Edward I's exchequer accounts record his losses at the game, played with his domestic servants (McClellan, c.1984: 104–105). All of these examples are illustrative of the issues at the heart of this article: the non-financial transactions; the subversions of the utilitarian, economic nature of coins as money; and those subversions or changes brought about by the requirements of social encounters and by human ingenuity.

There is no doubt that coinage is a vitally important aspect of economic history but the general lack of a wider social analysis of coins is because, in general, numismatic scholarship has concentrated on the production and circulation of money (Kelleher, forthcoming). This fixing of money in place and time has been eagerly consumed by archaeologists, not least because that data (especially type series and issuing and circulation dates) is so attractive in terms of the dating of sites. Taphonomic precision aside, this linear construction of time (one which can only see objects out of their time as anomalies) is outmoded when life is perceived as multi-temporal (Sternholm, 2006: 34). Just as lived, or performed, lives have different and coterminous temporalities, they have adaptable material culture. Drawing on actor-network and the social construction of technology theories and applying them in a medieval context, O'Keefe (2007: 93) writes that:

... artefact types will work (or not...) according to who uses them and how they are used. They can develop multi-dimensionally, which means that each can assume more than one basic form or manifestation. Relevant social groups can interpret and redefine artefacts as they adapt them to their purposes, especially in response to artefact types that they already know and use.

This element of social theory fits with the concept of the cultural and material biography of objects (Gosden and Marshall, 1999; Hall, forthcoming), which, in applying the notion of a life cycle to material culture, is particularly adroit at handling the changes of function and social context which many objects undergo. Everyday necessities frequently change and a staple of cultural behaviour is that things are adaptable for new purposes, sometimes in contravention of their original function, sometimes in sympathy or dependence – a trait that is also observable in language use, with words often made to carry more than one meaning. With words and things, meaning is conditioned by context. Crucially then, cultural biography frees us from understanding objects only in terms of their original purpose and allows us to explore their contingent, performative roles that enabled everyday survival.¹ In doing so the approach dovetails neatly with well-established theoretical approaches to performance and the everyday (cf. De Certeau, 1984; Latour, 2005; Law and Hassard, 1999; Schechner, 2002).

Coins and para-numismatica from Perth

An essential preliminary to this discussion was the compiling of a catalogue of all the known medieval coin finds (and related copies, tokens and jetons) excavated and found in Perth (and, with the exception of some of the hoard material, all within the collections of Perth Museum and Art Gallery) and the nearby Elcho Nunnery, closely dependent on Perth (Reid and Lye, 1988). This data is available as a summary catalogue published as a web-appendix with the online version of this article² and is indicated spatially on the map (Figures 1 and 2). Virtually all of this material has been recovered in the last 35 years or so and the majority of it has been reported on by Nicholas Holmes in the various site excavation reports and, critically in some cases, unpublished archive reports (for references see the summary catalogue). However, the limited archaeological value most excavation reports place on coinage beyond that of a dating aid means that coins are invariably not published in full, even for major sites such as Meal Vennel (Cox, 1996). Their generally limited treatment by report editors confirms the perception of a limiting focus on coin-classification and description and on the purveyance of technical data but no recognition of developing ideas about materiality and its social role. It also has to be acknowledged that the reinterpretation of the medieval coins from Perth is not straightforward: the find contexts for many of them are frequently unilluminating, with coins often poorly stratified (sometimes unstratified) and rarely in good condition. The phase dating on all the sites is almost invariably based on the pottery sequence and its dating on each site. This is recorded in the online summary catalogue along with the date of the coin type and, where available, an estimate of its circulation dates. It should be emphasized that a case is not being made for a unique approach to coin use in medieval Perth, rather that the material supports the interpretation of Perth as engaging in common practices, if not necessarily in a uniform way. Thus the interpretation offered here is in tune with a wider European reassessment of coin use. The seventeenth Annual Meeting of the



Figure 1. General location map.

European Association of Archaeologists, held in Oslo, Norway, in September 2011, included a session on this theme, with a particular emphasis on the ritual use of coins as an aspect of the Christianizing of and Christianized Europe. Crucially, the session identified archaeological evidence as the key means by which new knowledge about this widespread phenomenon can be won (Gullbekk et al., 2011: 162–164).

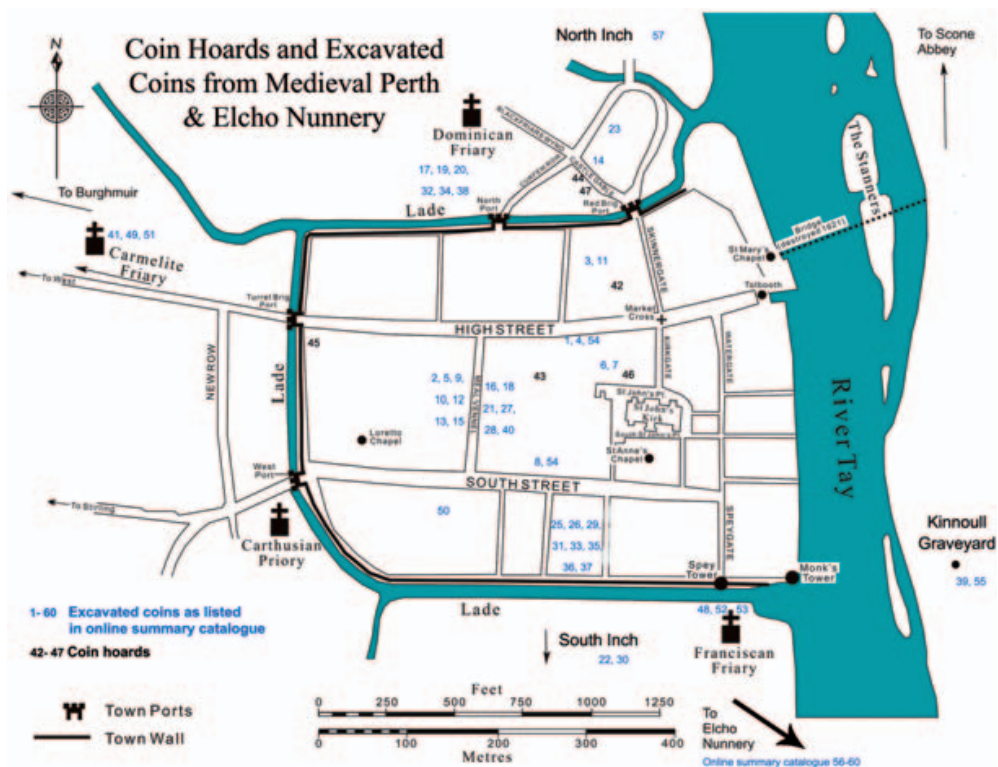


Figure 2. Map of the location of coin hoards and excavated coins from medieval Perth. Map courtesy of SUAT Ltd with additions by M Hall.

Summing up the Perth and Elcho assemblages statistically, in terms of their uses, we can note that 100 per cent (54 coins) were issued as currency or money (including accounting aids). That same 100 per cent was theoretically available for use as amulets and magical aids, with 5.4 per cent (10 coins) of such use visible in the archaeological record with any certainty. Nine coins (4.86%) are associated with human burials and a further 1.8 per cent (two coins) may be so associated. Five coins (2.7%) were otherwise concealed than as grave goods. Because we do not have precise figures for the totals of coins from the Perth hoards (but at a minimum around 1300), they have not been included in this breakdown. The proportions are relatively small but they echo patterns seen elsewhere across Europe and should be seen as the tip of the iceberg rather than its entirety. They bring sufficient clarity to allow us to explore more fully the non-monetary uses they corroborate.

Coin use in Perth: Investing wisely in magic and memory

Amulets and the Rood cult

In the late antique and medieval Christian world the cross and the coin were closely intertwined, particularly following the conversion of the Roman state to Christianity under Constantine in AD 313. The image of the cross became a staple element of medieval coinage, generally as the reverse to the portraits of

Roman and Byzantine rulers and later medieval kings, both images endorsing that authority in an almost iconic way. A consciousness of the religious significance of the cross on coins at the end of the medieval period is evidenced by Luther, who justifies it with some effort as non-iconic and non-amuletic, thus confirming that many thought of coins as both iconic and amuletic (Belting, 1994: 549). It was because of the recognition of the sacral and secular power invested in coins that Roman, Byzantine and successor state coinages to varying degrees deployed coins in formal settings of jewellery (Leahy, 2006). A Frankish disc brooch (appropriating a gold coin of Justinian) was reappropriated in the tenth century, when Archbishop Egbert of Trier (AD 978–93) commissioned a reliquary for St Andrew's sandal using this coin brooch as the central element of the back of the reliquary (Nees, 2002: 229–231). In later medieval Flanders it has been recently shown that a range of coin-like objects were in fact base metal copies of coins that served as apotropaic badges and so were deemed to have the same evil-averting power as the coins they copied. In some instances actual (silver) coins were pierced and used as badges or amulets (Koldeweij, 2006: 60–63 and fig. 3.35, 153–157). The depiction of the Holy Rood or Cross on British coins varied across two basic types, short and long cross. This readily recognizable imagery made coins an element of the widespread Rood cult (Gannon, 2008; Hall, 2007), and this in large part gave coins their apotropaic value. In the later medieval period the imagery was joined in some instances by inscriptions. In England the so-called gold 'angels' (showing St Michael slaying the dragon on the obverse) had as their reverse the image of a ship, with the central mast generally depicted as the Rood, a powerful invocation to protect shipping, especially the royal fleet. The standard reverse inscription reinforced and extended that protection: PER CRUCEM TVAM SALVA NOS CHRISTIE REDEMPTOR ('By thy Cross Save Us O Christ our Redeemer'). Some 30 gold and silver coins (including angels) were found in association with skeletons on board Henry VIII's ship *The Mary Rose*, interpreted by Besley (2005) as being carried on the person for good luck as much as for their intrinsic value. The ever-present danger of life at sea made the ship a particular theatre where such superstitions were played out. The excavation of the ship in Newport harbour, Wales, in 2003 revealed that a fifteenth-century French silver coin had been embedded in the keel of the ship – specially inserted into the first timbers put in position by the ship's builders, with its reverse facing outwards, to show its short cross and Latin legend 'Blessed be the name of the Lord' (*Peregrinations*, 2006: 4–5; Merrifield, 1987: 54, for the wider practice).

In Scotland, the combination of cross and cross-referencing legends occurs on a range of coins, invoking salvation by the cross (Figure 3). PER LIGNVM CRVCIS SALVI SVMVS ('By the Wood of the Cross Are We Saved') and CRVCIS ARMA SEQVAMVR ('Let Us Follow the Arms of the Cross') are both used (separately) with the short cross fleury on the reverses of gold crowns of James V (AD 1513–42) (with the second one also used on crowns of Queen Mary). SALVATOR IN HOC SIGNO VICISIT ('O Saviour in this Sign Hast Thou Conquered', a reference to Constantine's vision of the cross before the battle of the Milvian Bridge)



Figure 3. Cross reverses of a Robert III lion and demy-lion and (from the Perth Hoard) a rider and unicorn of James III. © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.

accompanies the ship-mast Rood on the pattern angels of James IV (AD 1488–1513), and CRVX PELLIT OMNE CRIMEN (‘The Cross Drives Away all Sin’, originally from a fourth-century hymn by Prudentius) appears in abbreviated form on the copper ‘Crux Pellit’ coinage of the late fifteenth century (*c.*AD 1452–80), accompanying a short cross (Holmes, 2008). The combination of inscription and image on all these coins is clear proof of the role of coinage in the Rood cult and its apotropaic value, tantamount to a secondary touch relic. They testify also to the endorsement of coins by the Church, which is not to deny that the Church did not have issues with the abuse of money, especially through usury and the burgeoning capitalist system from the thirteenth century on (Le Goff, 1990) and with money tainted by evil deeds, such as the betrayal of Judas. Even this was seen as ordained by God and so the ‘thirty pieces of silver’ could be treated as relics: in the treasury of the parish church of Nin, Croatia, is a silver forearm and hand reliquary holding a silver obol. This genuine ancient Greek coin was treated as a relic of Judas’ betrayal in the fifteenth century (when the reliquary was made; Domijan, 1983: 34, no. 14). Travaini (2004: 172) interprets the prevalence of low-value coins in medieval Italian burials as demonstration of such coins being deemed ‘good’ (because ubiquitous and available to all) and so acceptable in death when material wealth had to be otherwise eschewed.

Some later medieval Scottish coins illustrate further linkages to the cult of saints, particularly through the deployment of the image of St Andrew (see Figure 3) and the issuing of special coins for religious occasions. Examples include the issuing of Maundy Money³ and touch pieces in connection with the King’s power to cure

scrofula or ‘the King’s evil’ (Stewart, 1966: 266–268). During the reigns of Robert III (AD 1390–46), James I (AD 1406–37), James II (AD 1437–60) and James IV (AD 1488–1513), crowns and half-crowns were issued with a reverse image of St Andrew on or holding his saltire cross.⁴ In 1787, demolition of the Crieff parish church uncovered 40 such half-crowns of Robert III concealed in the wall and so reported in the *New Statistical Account* (NSA, 1844: 502), along with a larger hoard of both half-crowns (58) and crowns (62) found beneath the floor of the crossing of Glasgow Cathedral. This concealment in holy places of ‘holy’ objects implies an agenda wider than any economic necessity of hoarding. In the 1470s, King James III had struck the so-called Amiens medallion, specifically for presentation to the shrine of St John the Baptist at Amiens Cathedral and with the reverse showing St Andrew holding his saltire. The saltire on its own continued to be used on billon bawbees (or halfpennies) into the reign of Mary (AD 1542–67). This symbolic, amuletic value of coins has hardly been recognized as an element of everyday social dynamics. Regardless of their monetary use, all the coins had this amuletic quality deriving from their presencing of the cross (and sometimes reinforced by the presence of the king’s portrait, the king also having sacral power), the importance of which would have been perceived differently from person to person.

Foundation deposits and concealments

The uncertainties and vagaries of context mean it is difficult to sometimes see foundation deposits or deliberate concealments, but there are four possibilities: summary catalogue (hereafter s.c.) nos 3, 19, 20 and 32, respectively from a wattle fence line, a construction trench for a cellar (x2) and a pit dug into a boundary ditch. There are clearer examples from outside of Perth that help to clarify the possibilities. From Finlaggan, Islay (the centre of the Lordship of the Isles), excavation recovered a folded half-groat of David II/Robert III (Figure 4) incorporated into the mortar of the SE corner of the chapel (dedicated to St Findlugan, a contemporary of Columba; Caldwell, forthcoming). Similarly, a folded penny of Alexander III was excavated in the deserted medieval village of Chalgrove, Oxfordshire, within the construction of a mid–late thirteenth-century stone feature in the main house (Wheeler, 2011: 263), and a fragment of a silver coin of Edward I was found folded and embedded in the mortar of a wall of a tenement in St Aldates, Oxford (Wheeler, 2011: 143). Such bent coins are clear signals of ritual practice, though perhaps rather than a vow they were a physical form of prayer calling on protection for their respective buildings. I have argued elsewhere (Hall, 2011: 97–97) that the William I penny (s.c. no. 3) recovered from the fence line of a timber shelter on the Perth High Street (with part of a Roman glass vessel deposited in one of the post holes) need not automatically represent a casual loss but could indicate apotropaic deposition if we view it in the wider ritual context under discussion. The possible placing of the jetons and coin in the cellar construction trench and the boundary ditch (all Blackfriars monastery) are all suggestive of apotropaic foundation deposits, in line with Merrifield’s (1987: 49) comments on



Figure 4. Folded half-groat of David II/Robert III incorporated into the mortar of the chapel of St Findlugan, Finlaggan Islay. © and courtesy Trustees of National Museums Scotland.

such deposits. Allied to this may have been a memory-token function for some of these pieces. Travaini (2004: 170–171) cites Italian and French examples of coins inserted into the foundations of tombs and a bell-tower as commemorating acts, linking construction to personal and communal memory.

The medieval coin finds from Perth include six hoards (s.c. nos 42–47). With the exception of s.c. 43 these were poorly recorded and the whereabouts of those that escaped melting down is unknown. Though details are scant we know enough to warrant the inclusion of the hoards in this discussion, not least if we think about those coins beyond the moment of deposition. The final impetus for concealment for many hoards is frequently troubled political and economic conditions, and a key impetus to the longevity of saving implied by the date range of the hoard contents in Perth is certainly in part a desire to secure prosperity. But the coins travelled to their resting places in their respective hoards by differing routes, used by several people for commercial and non-commercial reasons. Also it seems a logical deduction that accepting the apotropaic power many coins were perceived to have means that accumulating several of them might be perceived as a way of amplifying this power. The 1812/1818 hoard(s) (s.c. no. 42) appears to have included large numbers of Continental sterlings produced in the Low Countries and imitating thirteenth-century English types and which circulated widely in Britain and on the Continent. The Perth examples form part of a wider group of Scottish hoards containing only or almost only Continental sterlings, possibly all deposited around AD 1300. Smart (forthcoming) links this to the de-monetization of such sterlings in England, as a result making them available at a discount and so increasingly carried to Scotland for use there. Officially they may not have been welcome as money, given their inferior quality, but their deployment of cross

imagery on their reverses meant their amuletic quality was still valid regardless of whether the coins were ‘fakes’. The two single finds of Low Countries’ sterlings (both from Meal Vennel) have varying degrees of wear. One (s.c. no. 15) indicates short-lived monetary circulation and the second (s.c. no. 16) circulating into the mid-fourteenth century. Their available potentiality as amulets is not precluded by either scenario. As with the other single coin finds (and many of the hoard pieces before being hoarded), we should bear in mind that one of the reasons a coin may have stopped circulating is because of a restriction of its use to an amulet by one person. We should also bear in mind that even when a coin was being exchanged a potential factor in the deal could always have been whether the owner of the coin was prepared to part with the coin and the protection its cross brought. Given the long circulation life of many of the coins, we should bear in mind that as well as the financial transactions that made up those lives there were the many individual, not to say idiosyncratic, uses to which they were put as amulets, ‘icons’ and memory-aids.

Changing shape, changing purpose

No purposefully bent coins have as yet been found in Perth (though other objects cancelled by folding have, notably a pewter mirror case; Hall and Owen, 1998), but the folding of coins (examples of which have been cited above) is part of a wider phenomenon of shape modifications which relate to devotional and magical rituals. Perhaps the most prolific offering at medieval pilgrimage shrines was bent coins and tokens (Merrifield, 1987: 92). Numismatists have long resisted these being anything but coins tested for genuineness, but documentary evidence in particular shows that such coins were a form of dedication to and aid-invocation from a saint.

In Edward I’s reign...coins were bent once a year to ensure the health of the king’s hawks and chargers; and in 1499 a child drowned in the Thames at London was brought back to life when a penny was bent over her head to devote it to one of the last of England’s uncanonised saints, Henry VI. (Merrifield, 1987: 90–91)

The bending of coins (perhaps representing a ‘killing’ of its monetary function) in the name of a saint constituted a vow to take the coin on a pilgrimage and present it to the saint’s shrine. While saying a prayer calling on a saint’s help, a coin would be bent above a sick person or animal or at a time of danger to avert some anticipated catastrophe. The very coin that had been bent was the one that had to be presented at the shrine (Merrifield, 1987: 92), though they could also be thrown into rivers as votives. The placing of coins in watery contexts has remained consistently the commonest votive offering since the Roman period and Merrifield recognized (1987: 115) the ongoing practice of coin offerings in our own time, not to win the favour of water spirits but simply to bring luck: the ritual – the proper thing to do in a given circumstance – did not change but the cultural context

did. Bent and perforated coins were also amongst the commonest objects worn as amulets throughout Europe.

A schoolboy in Altdorf wrote to his mother in 1579: 'I am sending you a groschen I received because I have been promoted. I want you to have it made into a charm and returned to me', that is to have a hole drilled in it so he could wear it round his neck. (Wilson, 2000: 427)

There are several cut pennies and halfpennies in the Perth assemblage and one might think that these could serve as nothing but money, given, on the face of it, the disregard for the cross iconography implied by the cutting up of the coins. Certainly the need for low-value coinage for small-scale transactions was a key driver in such activities, but the careful cutting would not have ruled out continuing symbolic or apotropaic value. The idea of the fragment representing the whole was a crucial element of ritual practice in the medieval cult of saints and their relics; indeed, the principal way in which Rood relics circulated was as tiny slivers of wood. It is also consistent with medieval mentality that a coin could be cut down for magical reasons, including 'medicinal' treatments. In late sixteenth-century France the philosopher-essayist De Montaigne (1987: I: 21) noted how he used a trick relying on 'coin magic' to help a friend afflicted with impotence.

In thinking about the possibility of coins as amulets, the Perth examples should be viewed alongside the range of other amulets and devotional items, encompassing costume spangles, Bronze Age arrowheads, pilgrim badges and other souvenirs and mirror-cases (Hall, 2005, 2010, 2011; Hall and Owen, 1998). The pierced jeton from Perth (Figure 5) is a late fourteenth-century type, unstratified on the Meal Vennel site (s.c. no. 28). Its reverse bears a cross design. The jeton is pierced through the middle. Such piercings are a recognized aspect of English jetons and it has been suggested (Barnard, 1916: 95) that this may have been due to manufacture or the means of preventing fraudulent use of jetons as coin of the realm (in English law pierced coins were treated as counterfeit and so serve as proof of fraudulence, Wheeler, 2011: 246). However, a third possibility is not ruled out by any of this being true, for such piercing lends considerable support to its apotropaic function deriving from its cross-symbolism. The placing of the hole implies it was not worn about the neck but would make it suitable for tying around a particular body part or for fixing to a leather belt or a hat or an outer garment or even to a wall or bench if the protection was desired in a domestic or workspace environment. An illegible, pierced jeton from Westbury, Bucks, England, was suspended on a pin and so clearly worn for decorative and/or charm purposes. There is a whole range of genuine and fake coins from Flanders that were worn as amulets (Koldeweij, 2006; discussed in Hall, 2011: 18). It has been suggested that the late thirteenth-century jeton made into a brooch from Norwich was done so because it was worthless as money (Hinton, 2005: 229), but, as Wheeler (2011: 221) has observed, its value as a brooch could have resided in its design, and any perceived apotropaic value, not in its lack of monetary value.



Figure 5. English jetons excavated in Perth; the third has been pierced for suspension. The other two have been semi-perforated. © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.

Death and burial

The purpose of coins buried with the dead is well attested in classical literature as fees for Charon, the ferryman, facilitating the soul's journey into the next world (Merrifield, 1987: 67–8), and has been interpreted as present in some medieval contexts, including some Slavic burials of the ninth–twelfth centuries (Poulík, 1975: 21). Rather than a uniform, universally held belief, this was part of a set of variable, linked traditions, espousing a fundamental connection between the underworld and money, even when it sought only to express the social status of the deceased (Stevens, 1991: 221). Whether coins were intended as offerings of the dead to the gods or offerings of the living to the dead, such practices were based on convictions about the intrinsic value of money and the importance of the tomb as the threshold to the other world. Coins offered at the time of death or burial were a way for the living to communicate with the dead, to promote life among the dead while the door to the other world was still open. In her study of later Christian

Anglo-Saxon burials, Hadley (2009: 481–482) sees the inclusion of coins in burials as indicative of ritual and magical practice. This seems particularly so with bent examples (see earlier) but is not confined to them. Such practice in a Christian context is an updating of pagan practice, not a clinging-on to it. Travaini's (2004) account of the Italian evidence also shows that there was an element of such coins serving as memory tokens when placed in burials. For later medieval Britain, the practice of coin burial continued and though identified in relatively few instances in the archaeological record, as recently re-assessed by Gilchrist (2008: 133–135 and Table 3) it appears to have been widespread across Britain and it is likely to have been under-recorded by archaeologists. The examples from Perth help to extend the recognition of the phenomenon north of Edinburgh and there are further Scottish examples that are not widely known. Some can be gleaned from asides in antiquarian literature, as with the note of a silver groat of Robert II being found in the coffin of his son, Alister More Mac an Rìgh (the 'Wolf of Badenoch') when his tomb in Dunkeld Cathedral was opened in the nineteenth century (Stewart, 1926: 57).⁵ Others are given scant treatment in excavation reports (in part due to poor initial recording). The recent, long overdue and commendable publication (Lowe, 2009) of the archaeological excavations at Whithorn Priory between 1957 and 1967 record five medieval coins, four of them found closely associated with burials, including one that may have been wrapped in a shroud. The coin report (Holmes and Franklin, 2009: 82) notes the associations but offers little interpretation, preferring to lament the difficulty of using the coins as dating evidence for the graves. They certainly fit within the discussion here and demonstrate that the Perth evidence is part of a wider pattern. The description of coins in Christian graves in Norway as being 'not widespread but not uncommon' (Risvaag, 2011: 163) is an apt one for Perth.

The seven coins associated or possibly associated with burials in Perth comprise five from formal burials and two from a single, illicit burial. The formal burials were in the cemeteries of the Blackfriars or Dominican monastery, the Whitefriars or Carmelite monastery (Figure 6) and the Old Kinnoull Church and graveyard. The Blackfriars excavation report records the link between one of the coins (s.c. no. 38) and the grave in which it was found (Bowler et al., 1995: 943) but does not say whether the burial was male or female (the cemetery was not confined to the monastic community but available to the lay community for the appropriate burial fee – Bowler et al., 1995: 943–944). The coin in question is a fifteenth-century French copper-alloy piece, with a long cross reverse. A second coin from Blackfriars (s.c. no. 17) is a silver long cross penny of Edward I, but recovered in less clear circumstances in the post-medieval phase of the cemetery, possibly disturbed from an earlier medieval burial, possibly buried after long-term use as a charm or family heirloom. The coin from Whitefriars (s.c. no. 40; Figure 6) was excavated from an incomplete skeleton in poor condition, partially destroyed by a Victorian wall. The coin was found lying beneath the pelvis, among the bones of the fingers of the left hand. It could only have been placed there at the time of burial. This was after the Reformation as the grave was cut through the demolition



Figure 6. Coins found with burials in Perth and Elcho, upper l to r: fused pennies from Horse Cross; penny from Whitefriars burial; maille tournois from Blackfriars burial; lower l to r: James IV pennies and a plack associated with burial B11. © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.

rubble of the friary. The coin though is medieval, pre-dating the burial by at least 50 or 60 years and suggests the coin circulated for some time as either money or an amulet (or both interchangeably); the poor and clipped condition of the coin seems to support this. Taken with the burial it suggests an unofficial use of the whole former-friary site as a burial ground because it was deemed to have a continuing holiness.

The illicit burial of a young man (Figure 7) severely struck about the head until dead and buried in a hastily dug pit on the Horse Cross site was found with two coins (s.c. nos. 14 and 23), both silver long cross pennies. In the excavation report the presence of the coins is taken as evidence that the man was not murdered for robbery because ‘he still had coins in his pocket’ (Roberts, 2007: 179–186), but ‘pocket’ is an anachronistic reference here as a purse is where money would have been kept. Given that nothing survives of the victim’s clothing it is quite likely that any purse of leather or textile also decayed away to nothing. It is, however, possible that any purse was stolen and that the two coins escaped theft because they were sown into a seam of clothing (for security and/or apotropaic reasons). We should also consider, if less strongly, that the coins were left with the burial by the murderer(s) out of some sense of guilt at his/their deed. The two coins were found fused together, a consequence of decay in the ground. They differ in date by at



Figure 7. Coin burials from medieval Perth: left: Horse Cross murder victim; right: Whitefriars. © Perth Museum & Art Gallery, Perth & Kinross Council, Scotland.

least 65 years and speak of a long-lived willingness to use whatever coin was available but also of the possibility of handed-on amulets or family heirlooms of more than monetary value. The site of the Old Kinnoull Church and graveyard is on the east bank of the Tay (near the Queen's Bridge). Two coins were found here, one with a burial and one probably so (but disturbed by later construction). The definite burial (s.c. no. 55) of a child with a halfpenny of Queen Victoria placed on his/her chest is striking evidence for the evolving-continuance of burial customs into the modern period (Cox, 1998: 297, who draws attention to the large number of coins placed in the coffins of post-medieval burials in the Cathedral of Our Lady, Antwerp, Belgium – Veeckman, 1997: 71–75). Any amuletic value must have derived from the coin itself and its association with Queen Victoria, a hugely popular monarch. In 1635 the so-called Kinnoull Aisle was added to the church, to accommodate the burial monument of Sir George Hay, first Earl of Kinnoull. A recent trench excavated against the west wall of the Aisle unearthed a disarticulated skull (buried upright and facing north-west), close beside it a medieval penny (s.c. no. 39), here identified as a long cross penny of James II/III. The association is suggestive of another burial with a coin but cannot be taken as certain (it may be fortuitous following reburial of the skull after disturbance caused by the construction of the Aisle, for example).

The Elcho burial coins (all bearing long crosses) comprise four pieces (s.c. nos 56–59): two (58 and 59), a copper-alloy penny and a plack, seem to have been associated with the burial of a woman in her twenties; one (57), a penny, was recovered from above the level of this burial, possibly as a consequence of disturbance; and the fourth (also a penny) came from the area of disturbed and

undisturbed burials but with no precise context recorded. If we can read anything about the selection of coins suitable for burial based on the Perth sample it is that Scottish, English and Continental types were all suitable and that 100 per cent of them bore a long cross. Of course, the presence of a cross of some form on medieval coins was near universal, but that consistency meant there was a reasonably ready stock of Rood imagery available: in some instances choice would be down to whatever coin was available; in others some element of individual selection of a particular coin and its cross can be supposed.

Conclusion

In the medieval burgh of Perth, as in other towns, the principal use of coins was as money, to facilitate – alongside barter – a range of economic transactions and exchanges. This is not disputed by this article. But their use as money or currency is one rather than the only use to which they were put, for coins – as a consequence of their human creation as material culture – have a cultural or material biography and are amenable to new uses, appropriations and repurposings as they move by human agency through a variety of social and cultural contexts. These new uses, just like their use as money, enabled coins to perform and be a part of the performance of life in the everyday, embedded in a network of personal and social relationships.⁶ Economics is but one element, propaganda and symbolism another and rituals connected with magical and religious beliefs and practices yet another; frequently these uses were perceived as overlapping and reinforcing one another. The evidence considered in this article, from Perth and from Elcho Nunnery, is locally distinctive in its chronological and contextual dynamics but fits Europe-wide patterns of coin use-practices. The Perth/Elcho evidence can be interpreted as exemplary of the supporting role of coins in the more popular aspects of the Rood cult, an element of the cult of saints which relied on a profusion of amulets channelling supernatural power. To possess a cross-marked coin would have been for many to possess an amulet. The centrally pierced jeton lends weight to this in that its fixing to or suspending from something confirms the daily need for amulets by the living. At least 10 of the coins offer examples of that need extended to the dead. Of nine coins from medieval or immediately post-medieval burials, seven come from formal Christian burial grounds of monastic houses. If we add to this total the nineteenth-century example from Kinnoull, then it extends the burial practice of coin deposition to parish church burials and demonstrates the practice was applicable to children as well as adults.

This case study argues for a balance of economic and non-economic possibilities to be kept in mind when considering coin finds and so to treat them more holistically as part of the material culture record. In circulating through society, coins were moving in and out of various cultural categories, fulfilling different roles depending on the varying mix of individual and social circumstances. There is much scope for a fuller re-evaluation of coins and their uses across the whole of Scotland for the entire medieval period, including the re-analysis of excavated finds

and a search of medieval texts for references to coin behaviours, as well as a deeper comparison with the wider European evidence: the dividend is likely to be high.

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Notes

1. See, for example, the collection of essays charting some of the changing everyday roles of material culture in late medieval England (Hamling and Richardson, 2010).
2. Available at: <http://jsa.sagepub.com/content/12/1.toc>. We plan to publish the catalogue as an appendix in Hall et al. forthcoming.
3. King James' order for this coinage in 1512 is the earliest known evidence for specifically minted Maundy Money and part of a Scottish royal tradition of alms-giving since at least the eleventh century; such coins were frequently turned into amulets by their recipients, often by piercing for suspension about the person.
4. The St Andrew patronage was not confined to Scotland – in late fifteenth-century Europe one of the best known gold coins was the Burgundian 'andriesgulden' or florin of St Andrew, showing St Andrew holding his saltire.
5. The practice of coins inserted in the tombs of nobles and saints, either at the time of burial or later by pilgrims, as memory tokens, is well attested in Italy (see Travaini, 2004: 168–171).
6. The approach is explored in detail in, for example, Meskell (2004: 39–58), drawing on Ancient Egyptian material culture.

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