The Drosten Stone: a new reading

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ABSTRACT

The Drosten Stone (St Vigeans 1) is a Pictish carved stone of the ninth century. This paper seeks to interpret the inscription on that stone as containing a Gaelic time expression coupled with a personal name: i ré Uoret. This would allow for close dating of the stone, to 839 x 842, the dates of the Pictish king Uurad, son of Bargoit. Evidence is introduced from inscriptions elsewhere in the insular world, both to reinforce the suggested time expression, and to suggest the purpose of the stone and the possible nature of the persons commemorated on it.

INTRODUCTION

The cross-slab at St Vigeans near Arbroath, Angus, known as the Drosten Stone (St Vigeans no1), has been much discussed, both for the art historical significance of the interlaced cross on its front and the animal scenes and symbols on front and back, and more particularly for the importance of the inscription found on one of its sides (for a full bibliography, see Okasha 1985, 59–60). This inscription is one of only a handful within the territory of the historical Picts written in Latin script rather than ogam (for these see Okasha 1985, 43–69). It has gained greater significance because of its suggested use of a Pictish word, *ipe* or *ire*, considered by Kenneth Jackson as possibly of non-Celtic or non-Indo-European origin (Jackson 1955,140). The purpose of this paper is to suggest a new interpretation, based on an understanding of the letters *ire* as a Gaelic time expression, and to attempt thereby to date and contextualize the inscription and the stone.

The most recent reading of the inscription on the Drosten Stone is by Elisabeth Okasha. She transcribes:

> DROSTEN:
> IREUORET
> [*E*]*TTF*OR
> *CUS*

This she reads as DROSTEN : IRE UORET [E]TT FORCUS, 'Drosten, [...] Uoret and Forcus,' taking [E]TT as Latin *et* (Okasha 1985, 60). Jackson read the second word as *ipe*, with important consequences for his interpretation of the text. Okasha sees the second letter of this word as R, with some hesitation (Okasha 1985, Table 2; 60n). There is a serif

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finishing the loop of the second letter of the second line, and the loop is more rounded, making it distinct from the other three examples of R in the inscription. It should thus be cautioned that on balance it does appear more likely to be a P. This paper, however, will be based on Okasha's reading, and hopefully the case made for a clear interpretation deriving from that reading will affect our judgement of the epigraphy.

The names in the inscription, Drosten (Pictish *Drostan*; Welsh *Drystan*, *Trystan*), Uoret (Pictish *Wrad , Uurad*; Gaelicized *Ferat*; Old Breton *Uuoret*) and Forcus (Gaelic *Forcus*; Pictish **Uorguist*; Welsh *Gorwst*) have all been thoroughly discussed by Jackson and by Oliver Padel (Jackson 1955, 140, 142, 161–6; Padel 1972, 157–9). They consist of three Celtic names, two of clearly Brittonic derivation attested elsewhere in Pictish sources (Drosten, Uoret), and one a Gaelic name, Forcus, by its orthography probably belonging to a Gaelic speaker.

The fourth word in the inscription is almost certainly Latin *et*, 'and'. It is possible that the doubling of the T is an attempt to clarify its voiceless quality, as opposed to the probably voiced T in UORET (compare Uurad, Ferat). The use of Latin, along with the script employed and the cross depicted on the stone, would tend to suggest a monastic context for both stone and inscription. Okasha (1985, 60) comments with regard to the relation of inscription to stone that 'despite its diminutive size, the text is probably primary and is likely to be commemorative'. Dates ranging from the late eighth to the second half of the ninth century have been suggested for the stone. Isabel Henderson (*in* Okasha 1985, 60–1), basing her judgement on artistic style, the presence of Pictish symbols, and the orthography of the names in the inscription, suggests a date in the first half of the ninth century. Of the context, Anna Ritchie states, 'The 9th century was a time of change in Pictland, and the inscription on this stone is an appropriate reflection of the increasing ethnic and cultural mixture in the population' (Ritchie 1989, 37) .

The main problem in any discussion of the inscription on the Drosten Stone has been the meaning of the first part of the second line. Jackson (1955, 140), who read IPE, suggested that 'from the context it might be "and", or it might be "son of", "nephew of", or the like, but these are guesses; it would seem to be neither Celtic nor Indo-European'. F C Diack had earlier proposed that IPE was a contraction of *in pace*, and Watson followed him in this view (Watson 1926, 317). Although there are some epigraphic parallels for the use of *in pace* in Britain on some Welsh examples (Nash-Williams 1950, nos 83, 294, & 62), the clear absence of suspension marks at St Vigeans, and the different phrasing of the text from the Welsh examples, makes this suggestion unlikely. If the second line be read as IPE, however, other possibilities might be pursued, such as the Old Irish/Gaelic verbal noun *eipe*, 'cutting, incision', or parts of the verb from which it derives, *as-ben*, 'cuts, incises' (RIA, *loc. cit.*).

There is good evidence for Gaelic influence in the milieu of the inscription, seen in the style of lettering and the name Forcus. The position of the inscription, low down in a panel, may also be an indication of Gaelic (Irish) influence (Higgitt 1986, 127, 142–3). In light of the prevalence of the vernacular in inscriptions in Ireland (Higgitt 1986, 128), it is worth considering a Gaelic interpretation for this second word. Gaelic influence can also be seen elsewhere in the territory of the Picts at this period. There are a smattering of Gaelic words or borrowings in Pictish ogam inscriptions (*crosc, maqq/meqq*, for Gaelic *cros, mac*, cf Jackson 1955, 140) and there are various hybrid names, most famously the name *Peanfahel* cited by Bede in the early eighth century, which is probably derived from a Brittonic *pen(n)*, 'head' and Gaelic *fál'* 'wall'(Jackson 1955, 143). Also significant is the degree of language mixture to be adduced from the *pit-* placenames, although these cannot be dated precisely (Nicolaisen 1976, 154–6).

A Gaelic reading of the stone, taking the second line as IREUORET and understanding IRE as two words instead of one, would give:

DROSTEN: I RE UORET [E]TT FORCUS

Drosten, i ré Uoret, ett Forcus

which may be translated as 'Drosten, in the time of (or, in the reign of) Uoret, and Forcus.'

Ré is a word attested in Old Irish/Gaelic, meaning primarily an expanse of time, but also a lifespan or reign (RIA, 501: 1.ré). The particular expression used on the Drosten Stone can be seen in a Middle Irish text in the Book of Uí Maine on the origins of the Gregorian chant: *Grigair...ab Roma i rē Irua[i]th ...,* 'Gregory...abbot of Rome during the reign of Herod'(Meyer 1912, 144). There is no example of this word in an epigraphic context in Ireland. Nor is there an example of the use of the term in a similarly 'historical' context, such as annal-entries or genealogies. However, with few exceptions, no time expressions appear to be used in these sources. The proposed reading, then, while plausible, is based on an example of the use of *i ré* which is unique epigraphically and historically.

A reading of the Gaelic phrase *i ré* also raises the question of a mixed Gaelic / Latin inscription. Gaelic and Latin are found in some inscriptions in Ireland, notably at Termon Fechin, Co. Louth, which reads OROIT DO ULTAN ET DO DUBTHACH... (Macalister, no 582, also 564, 965). Such mixed Latin and Gaelic statements are also common in the annals (Dumville 1982, esp. 335).

In Gaelic syntax one would expect genitives to follow the expression *i ré*. It is possible that Uoret does represent a genitive form, as other instances of the name, in Pictish and in Irish versions, are Uurad, Ferat. Jackson suggested a genitive in Uuroid for Uurad (Jackson 1955, 165-6), but it is uncertain that the instance he adduced in fact shows a genitive, or indeed the same name as Uurad. The death of a king of Strathclyde is listed in the Annals of Ulster, s.a. 657 (=658): *Mors Gureit regis Alocluaithe.* The actual name here may be either Gwryat or Gwret, British (Cumbric/ Welsh) equivalents of Uurad/ Uoret, and the form in the text an (invented?) Irish form of a genitive for the name.

We may in this case compare Drosten, which by its position may also be a genitive form (the implied '[stone of] Drostan', as found on many Latin Early Christian inscriptions, but see Macalister (1949 introduction), for the prevalence of forms in the nominative). Here, the nominative is usually Drostan (Welsh Drystan), and Padel cites both Drostain and Druisten as genitive forms in Irish texts (Padel 1972, 158). We may compare the probable genitive of Curnán on a stone in Gallen Priory LEC CU[R]NEN (Macalister, no 858). In the Book of Deer, however, Drostan shows no inflexion in the genitive (Jackson 1972, 42). It may be, we should note, that the scribe was uncertain of how to form a genitive for Pictish names, or that Pictish, like Welsh, had lost its case endings, and hence Uoret (and possibly Drosten) may not show genitive forms because the scribe felt none was necessary. In this case they would merely be alternative forms of the nominatives more commonly found, as Jackson took them to be, despite the function in the phrase of at least Uoret as a genitive.

The same cannot be true for Forcus. Here, if the inscription is using Gaelic we would expect a genitive Forcusso or Forcusa (see, for instance LEC COEMGUSA at Gallen Priory, Macalister, no 857). Thus, unless the inscriber has been confused by the previous Pictish name (not in the genitive?) and forgotten to inflect Forcus, we should take *ett Forcus* as additional to the entire phrase: 'Drosten, in the time of Uoret, and Forcus (as well)'. In this case, rather than taking Uoret and Forcus as 'like quantities', we will need to explain the two names Drosten and Forcus as somehow linked.

It should be emphasized, as noted above, that there is no exact epigraphic parallel for

the use of *i ré* in insular inscriptions. Nonetheless, there are parallels for the use of similar time expressions in Latin, and also inscriptions which show the same apparent intent to date an inscription or monument by the name of the contemporary ruler.

The two most similar examples are both from Wales, one much earlier and one much later than the St Vigeans stone. An inscription from Penmachno, Gwynedd, dated by the inscription to AD 540 has been read as [ ] FILI AVITORI // IN TE(*m*)PO[RE] / IVSTI[NI] / CON[SVLI (*s*)] (Nash-Williams 1950, no 104). This stone shows a closely similar phrasing to the St Vigeans stone, the dating on it constituting the date either of the death of the person commemorated or the erection of the stone (but see Dark 1992, 56 for an alternative view). Somewhat different in form is the inscribed basin at Partrishow, near Crickhowell. This gives the name of either craftsman or patron, and ascribes the making to the time of a local ruler: MENHIR ME FECIT I(N) TE(M)PORE GENILLIN (Nash-Williams 1950, no 67). Macalister notes, 'Genillin is identified with Cynhyllyn, son and successor of Rhys Goch, lord of Ystrad Yw, who flourished in the middle of the eleventh century' (Macalister, no 988).

The use of a time expression based on the reign of contemporary rulers and ecclesiastics to date a stone or inscription is known from examples in England, Wales and Ireland at various periods. Particularly relevant to the Drosten Stone inscription is the dedication found at St Paul's, Jarrow, which precisely dates that dedication to 23 April 685. John Higgitt reads this as:

☧ DEDICATIO BASILICAE SANCTI PAVLI VIIII KALENDAS MAIAS ANNO XV ECFRIDI REGIS / CEOLFRIDI ABBATIS EIVSDEMQVE ECCLESIAE DEO AVCTORE CONDITORIS ANNO IIII . This he translates as: '☧ The dedication of the basilica of St Paul on the 9th day before the Kalends of May [23 April] in the 15th year of the king Ecgfrith. / In the fourth year of Ceolfrith, abbot, and by the direction of God, founder of the same church' (Higgitt 1979, 343–4).

Here the reigns of both king and abbot are used to date a monastic dedication. A comparable example, much later in date (1055–65), is at Kirkdale in Yorkshire, where the church dedication, again to a saint, written in Old English on a sundial, synchronizes the foundation with the reigns of both king and the local earl (Okasha 1971, no 64; Higgitt 1979, 369; Lang, 1991, 163–6). Another English example is again from the 11th century, at Deerhurst (I) in Gloucestershire, where earl and bishop are mentioned as patrons, the church is built and dedicated for the sons of the earl's brother, and the date is determined by the reign of the English king Edward the Confessor (Okasha 1971, no 28).

In Ireland, precise temporal expressions are rare, though the patrons and makers of crosses and other objects are commemorated. We may note the inscription on the cross at Tuam, Co. Galway, from the mid 12th century: ŌR DON RIG DO THORDELBUCH U CHONCHOBAIR; ŌR DON THAER DO GILLU C̄R̄ U THUATHAIL // OR DO CHOMARBA IARLAITHE DO AED U OSSIN ... NDERNAD IN CHROSSA. 'A prayer for the king, for Toirdelbach úa Conchobair. A prayer for the craftsman, Gilla-Crist úa Tuathail. A prayer for the successor of Iarlaithe, i.e. Aed úa Oissín, under whose auspices the cross was made' (Harbison 1991, no 218).

The king in this last example reigned 1106–56, and the abbot from c 1126–61 (Macalister, no 522). Here contemporary secular and ecclesiastical rulers are mentioned without the use of a time expression. It is at least possible, in many of the examples given above, that the kings and ecclesiastics mentioned would have been patrons of the sculptures or articles inscribed, or the churches dedicated, as well as contemporaries.

Irish inscriptions abound in examples of abbots as patrons of stones. The nearest in date

to the St Vigeans stone is the Bealin cross, Co. Westmeath. The inscription on the cross, written in a panel and in a script similar to the St Vigeans stone, reads OROIT AR TUATHGALL LAS DERNATH IN CHROSSA 'A prayer for Tuathgall under whose auspices the cross was made'(Henry 1965, 143; Harbison 1991, no 22; Macalister, no 871). Tuathgall has been identified as the abbot of Clonmacnoise who died in 810 or 811, and since a grave-slab for him may exist elsewhere we can take him to be patron rather than purpose of the cross, giving a date for the cross of 798x811. The Kinnitty Cross, at Castlebernard, Co. Offaly, can be dated to 846x862 by the king and abbot commemorated in its inscription: ŌR DO RIG MAELSECHNAILL M̄ MAELRUANAID / OROIT AR RIG HERENN// ŌR DO COLMAN DORRO.. IN CROSSA AR RIG HERENN/ ŌR DO RIG HERENN 'A prayer for the king, Mael-Sechnaill mac Mael-Ruanaid, a prayer for the king of Ireland; a prayer for Colman who made the cross for the king of Ireland, a prayer for the king of Ireland'(Harbison 1991, vol. 1, 355–6; De Paor, 1987). Muiredach's Cross at Monasterboice, dating from the early 10th century, cites the abbot Muiredach (†923), presumably as patron of the stone: ŌR DO MUIREDACH LAS NDERN(A)D (Ī C)RO(S-SA). 'A prayer for Muiredach under whose auspices the cross was made' (Harbison 1991, no 174; Macalister, no 580).

A close parallel to the Kinnitty Cross in the citation of the person who had the stone made and the person commemorated is the eighth- or ninth-century stone at Yarm, N. Yorkshire (Okasha 1971, no 145). This Anglo-Saxon inscription is inset in a box-panel, amid interlace very close in type to the St Vigeans stone, and is written in a closely comparable script. It reads: --[M]BEREHCT + SĀC+ ALLA+SIGNUM AEFTER HIS BREODER A[S]SETAE+ , '-[m]berehct the priest Alla set up this monument in memory of his brother.' (On this formula, see Higgitt 1986, 133.)

Craftsmen are much in evidence on the stones as well. The stone at Partrishow has already been mentioned, which may refer to either patron or craftsman. The craftsmen on the Kirkdale inscription may provide a useful parallel to the St Vigeans stone, in that two names are given. 7 HA�ARÐ [:] ME �ROHTE : 7 BRAND PRS , 'And Havard made me and Brand the priest' (Okasha 1971, no 64). Here it is possible to think of the two names as literate cleric and illiterate craftsman working together on the monument, and this may be relevant to the interpretation of the Drosten Stone (Higgitt 1986, 134; 1988, 151, 159). In Ireland, too, craftsmen are frequently recorded. One example shows two craftsmen in collaboration on a building: OROIT DO ULTAN ET DO DUBTHACH DO RIGNI IN CAISSEL, 'A prayer for Ultan and for Dubthach who made the fortification' (Macalister, no 582). An interesting inscription from Alnmouth, Northumberland, shows a Gaelic craftsman in an Anglo-Saxon context. Like the Yarm cross, this is close in style to the St Vigeans stone: MYREDAH : MEH:ꝼO—, 'Muiredach made me' (Okasha 1971, no 2; Higgitt 1986, 126; 1988, 152).

These examples from the wider insular world, although not corresponding precisely with the Drosten Stone in either date or formula, do give us patterns to use in interpreting the three names in the St Vigeans inscription. It is likely, then, that i ré Uoret refers to the reign of the contemporary king. A Uurad (Wrad, Ferat) son of Bargoit did indeed rule the Picts in the first half of the ninth century, from 839 to 842. His name has already been connected by Jackson with the Uoret on the Drosten Stone (Jackson 1955, 140). Three sons of this Uurad also held the kingship of the Picts, Bruide, Cinaed, and Drust, this last dying as, presumably, the last king of the Picts in 848 at Forteviot (Smyth 1984, 184; Anderson 1973, 198).

Intriguingly, another document contains an ascription to his reign. This is the 'St Andrews Abstract', which in its present form is probably 12th-century (Anderson 1974, 4, 6–13). The first section of this document, which describes the foundation of the church at

St Andrews, concludes with a passage: *Thana filius Dudabrach hoc monumentum scripsit Regi Pherath filio Bergeth in villa Migdele* (Skene 1867, 188). Although the *monumentum* is unlikely to refer in truth to the abstract which precedes it, it seems likely that the author of the 12th-century document has copied this colophon from an earlier manuscript. Certainly, the names, date and location are unlikely choices for a propagandist of St Andrews, and ones also unlikely to have been chosen by a forger. Here we find the same Pictish / Gaelic mix of nomenclature, both in the scribe's name and in the Gaelicised version of the name of the king. The scribe we may take as either Tano (from Tangno?, see Bartrum 1966, 117–18) or Cano (see alternative reading, Anderson 1974, 13) son of Dub-dá-bárcc, writing in the reign of Uurad (Ferat) son of Bargoit, at the other prime Pictish stone-working and ecclesiastical centre, Meigle. Comparing this with the Drosten Stone, we can perhaps surmise that the area of Uurad/Uoret/Ferat's control centred on Angus, and that both the centres of Meigle and St Vigeans were under his patronage.

Returning to the inscription, it remains to consider the other names. We must assume, based on syntax, that Drosten and Forcus, though separated, are meant to be taken together. If Forcus were, ignoring lack of inflexion, to be taken with Uoret, then we would have to assume, based on the Irish and Anglo-Saxon examples given above, that Forcus was either a sub-king or a contemporary abbot. On balance, however, it is best to take Forcus with Drosten, and hence we must ask what functions these names were meant to fill.

Three possibilities suggest themselves. One is that the stone commemorates one Drosten, or Drostan, a nobleman or ecclesiastic who died during the reign(s) of Uoret (and Forcus?). This would indicate that the function of the stone is as a memorial, as are the Penmachno, Clonmacnoise and Deerhurst inscriptions, or many other examples, especially crosses or slabs with single names in either the nominative or the genitive (see, for instance, England:the Hartlepool and Lindisfarne series, Okasha 1971, 75–9, 93–7; Wales: Llanfynydd, Carew, Nevern, Nash-Williams 1950, nos 159, 303, 354; Ireland: Gallarus, Macalister, no 910).

If this is the case, Forcus would then be another person commemorated by the stone, one who perhaps died slightly later. A plausible context for such a situation would be abbots of the foundation with which the stone was associated, one of whom, Drosten, died in the reign of Uoret, and the other of whom caused the stone to be made for his predecessor, and ultimately for himself. Such an explanation may also explain the blank space after Forcus, space left, perhaps, for further abbots or for Forcus's own date of death, but never used. Blank space can be seen in other examples, however, where the inscription appears to be complete. (Okasha 1971, no 41) The cause of this at St Vigeans is likely to be that the making of the cross, complete with blank panel, and the carving of the inscription were separate events, performed possibly by two separate people. Moreover, the syntax does not necessarily demand a time separation between the deaths of Drosten and Forcus, and so they may have died at the same time.

A germane comparison may be found in a cross at Llanilltud (Nash-Williams 1950, no 223; Macalister no 1012) which commemorates the craftsman/patron and a dead king, and to which later names may have been tagged: IN NOMINE DI SUMMI. INCIPIT: CRUX. SALUATORIS. QUAE PREPARAUIT SAMSONIS APATI PRO ANIMA SUA: E͡T [P]RO ANIMA IUTHAHELO RE͡X : E͡T ARTMALI: [E͡T] TEC[A]IN+ (RCAHMW 1976, no 933). The king in the inscription has been identified with Iudhail son of Athrwys, king of Gwent (†848) (RCAHMW 1976, 8, 31). The manner in which the names of those commemorated are listed on this stone provides a strong parallel for the St Vigeans inscription.

A second possibility is that Drosten indicates a saint, the cross representing his shrine or church (see Higgitt 1986, 129, 135). A clear parallel in this case would be the South Cross at Kells, which reads PATRICII ET COLUMBAE CRUX , 'The Cross of Patrick and Columba', (Harbison 1991, no 127; Macalister no 587) or the simple SC̄I BRECANN in Kilbreccan, Co. Galway (Macalister, no 531). Drostan was the founder of the monastery of Deer, and his cult certainly would seem to include Angus in its distribution; there are dedications as far south as Markinch in Fife, and St Drostan is reputed to have founded a church at Glen Esk in Forfarshire (Watson 1926, 316–18; Jackson 1972, 4–5). Whatever the foundation at St Vigeans was like, it seems to have been dedicated to a St Fechin, of which Vigean is an anglicization of a Pictish or Latin version (Watson 1926, 321–2). This would not, however, preclude the presence there or nearby of a shrine or church dedicated to St Drostan. If we are reading *Drosten...et Forcus*, we would have to assume that this shrine or church also commemorated a St Forcus. If we assume an original Pictish name either Uurguist or Uorguist, with variant Gaelicisations in Fergus and Forcus, such a dedication becomes plausible. A St Fergus was commemorated on the east coast, possibly the Fergustus Pictus described as bishop of Scotia at a council in Rome in 721. Watson notes evidence of his cult, including a cave and well bearing his name at Glamis (Watson 1926, 322–3, also 317). The event being synchronized with the reign of Uoret, in such a case, would perhaps be the translation of relics of the saints, and the fashioning of the commemorative cross. This explanation is less likely, as there is no clear explanation for the Gaelic orthography of Forcus, if the saint commemorated was known by a Pictish name as well.

The third possibility, comparable with the examples at Termon Fechin, Kirkdale and Partrishow, as well as numerous other examples in Ireland and elsewhere where the artist has included his own name in an inscription, is that Drosten is the name of the artist and engraver of the stone, and in this inscription we have his signature. Two stones with Anglo-Saxon inscriptions, close in date and type to the St Vigeans stone, display the name both of artist and the person commemorated. These are the cross shafts at Alnmouth, probably 10th century, and at Yarm, probably ninth century. Reading the St Vigeans stone as *Drosten ... et Forcus*, Forcus, too, would have contributed to the fashioning of the stone. Perhaps the situation at Kirkdale is analagous, where we may guess at Brand the priest writing the words to be inscribed by Haward the craftsman (Higgitt 1988, 159). The dual nature of the names on the St Vigeans stone may then be informative: has a Gaelic cleric or abbot, Forcus, commissioned a cross, and written out the inscription for Drosten the Pictish craftsman to inscribe?

The Drosten Stone lacks any frame of commemorative formula, such as 'pray for x', dedication formula, such as 'cross of x,' or craftsman/patron formula such as 'x made me' or 'x the craftsman'. As a result it is unlikely that the identity or purpose of the name Drosten, and thus, perhaps, Forcus will ever be determined satisfactorily.

If the reading of the Drosten Stone inscription I have suggested here be accepted, it leads to a number of significant conclusions.

First, in the Drosten Stone we have a Pictish Class II monument with a fixed date 839x842, the dates of the reign of Uurad son of Bargoit. From such a fixed date, and its implications for the connection of the stone with the Pictish monarchy, we may extend connections in both insular art history and the history of the Picts. In addition, the notice of his reign here may indicate his patronage for the stone. The two further names may belong to either deceased and commemorated persons (abbots?), saints, or craftsmen.

Second, we have further evidence of the influence of Gaelic and Gaelic-speakers in

Pictish territory prior to the accession of Cinaed son of Alpin, c 843. The stone may indicate that while the monarchy remained basically Pictish, as did the skilled classes, the church, in this case, was Gaelicized, and Gaelic had become a language of learning and writing in Pictland.

Third, the stone gives graphic testimony to the continuing power and wealth of ruler and church in Pictish territory on the eve of the accession of Cinaed son of Alpin. It particularly shows that there was still vitality in Pictish cultural mechanisms, and that some Picts were still employing Pictish orthography for their names, despite Gaelic influence. Taken with the probable evidence from the St Andrews Abstract, the Pictish monarchy at this date can be seen patronising a Pictish-Gaelic church, with active scriptoria and sculpture workshops at both Meigle and St Vigeans.

Finally, it is possible that we have in the St Vigeans inscription the name(s) of the Pictish artist(s) whose skill is vividly evident on both faces of the cross-slab he created. If not, we may have the names of those the stone was erected to commemorate or venerate. In any case, it would seem that the name, the Drosten Stone, remains a particularly apt one.

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