

Pictish symbol stones and early cross-slabs from Orkney

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ABSTRACT

Orkney shared in the flowering of interest in stone carving that took place throughout Scotland from the 7th century AD onwards. The corpus illustrated here includes seven accomplished Pictish symbol-bearing stones, four small stones incised with rough versions of symbols, at least one relief-ornamented Pictish cross-slab, thirteen cross-slabs (including recumbent slabs), two portable cross-slabs and two pieces of church furniture in the form of an altar frontal and a portable altar slab. The art-historical context for this stone carving shows close links both with Shetland to the north and Caithness to the south, as well as more distant links with Iona and with the Pictish mainland south of the Moray Firth. The context and function of the stones are discussed and a case is made for the existence of an early monastery on the island of Flotta.

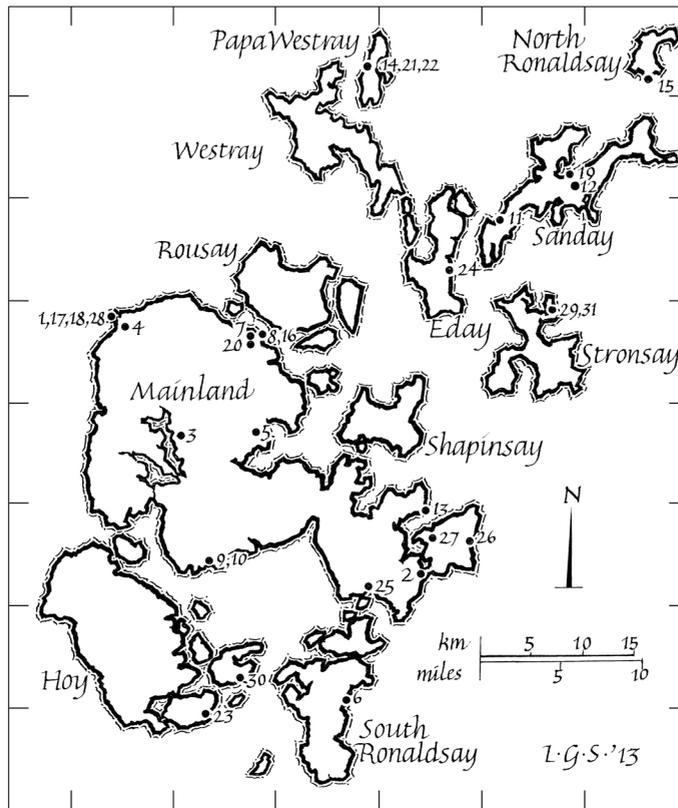
While much has been written about the Picts and early Christianity in Orkney, illustration of the carved stones has mostly taken the form of photographs and there is a clear need for a corpus of drawings of the stones in related scales in order that they may be compared one to another and to carved stones elsewhere. This paper aims to fill that need and in particular to compare the early medieval carved stones of Orkney with those of Shetland to the north (Scott & Ritchie 2009) and Caithness to the south (Blackie & Macaulay 1998). Ian Scott's drawings, the majority of them published here for the first time, are available for consultation in the archive of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) in Edinburgh. The stones themselves are mostly housed in the Orkney Museum in Kirkwall (OM) and the National Museums of Scotland (NMS) in Edinburgh, and details may be found here in the accompanying summary catalogue (see pp 197–200), including references for the circumstances of their discovery. The geology of the Orkney islands is dominated by Old Red Sandstone (Mykura 1976), which provides not

only superb building stone but also ideal stone for carving, and is easily accessible on the foreshore and by quarrying. It fractures naturally into flat rectilinear slabs, which are relatively soft and can easily be incised, pecked or carved in relief. It has been used for decorative carving since Neolithic times in the 4th millennium BC, but this paper is concerned with the symbol stones and cross-slabs of the 6th to 12th centuries AD, six centuries that spanned the historical Pictish and Viking periods in Orkney. The islands were part of the Pictish kingdom from the 6th to the 9th centuries and were subject to Christian influence from the 6th century onwards, and thus the range of stone carving includes both Pictish symbols and early Christian cross-slabs and church furniture. There are also inscriptions carved in ogham and Norse runes, as well as Scandinavian hogback gravestones, but these have been well covered by other writers and are not included here.¹

The total of recorded carved stones is 31 and their original locations are widely distributed throughout mainland Orkney and the islands, mostly close to the coast: 18 in mainland, 10 in the northern isles and 3 in the southern isles (illus 1).

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ILLUS 1 Distribution map of Pictish symbol stones and early cross-slabs in Orkney, numbered according to the catalogue (© RCAHMS SC 1349937. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk)

Most are carved on fine-grained sandstone, except three which are carved on slate: a symbol stone from Redland, Firth (no 5) and two cross-slabs, one from the broch of Burrian, North Ronaldsay (no 15) and the other from Denshowe in Evie (no 20). In every case, the stone was locally and easily available and required a minimum of transport.

PICTISH SYMBOL STONES

Pictish symbols were used in a number of ways in Orkney, of which the formerly upright stone monument is the most common. There are seven intact or fragmentary symbol stones distributed across mainland Orkney and the island of South

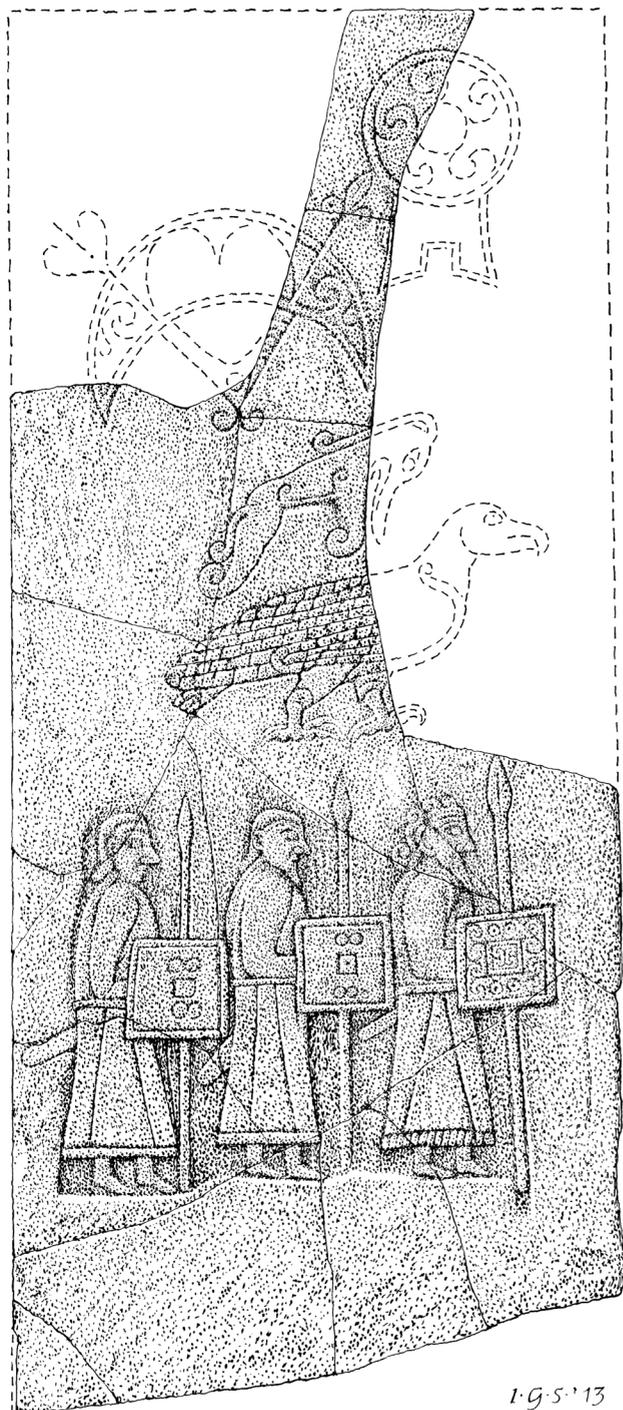
Ronaldsay, although none is now in its original location. The designs were carefully incised, pecked or carved in relief on the broad faces of suitable large slabs of stone, which were set upright in the landscape as memorials and markers. Throughout Pictland, the crescent and V-rod is the most common symbol, and this is true for Orkney too, where it occurs on every complete symbol stone. In three cases (nos 1, 3 and 6), the decoration within the crescent includes the pelta, which Mack has identified as a 'northern and localised design' with seven of the ten examples located in Orkney, Caithness and Sutherland (2007: 192, 282). The terminals of the V-rods on both Greens (no 2) and Knowe of Burrian (no 3) are not only identical but also sit firmly

TABLE 1
Illustrated stones

<i>Stone catalogue number</i>	<i>Illustration</i>	<i>Page</i>
1	2	172
2	3	174
3	3	174
5	3	174
6	4	176
7	5	178
8	5	178
10	5	178
11	5	178
12	6	180
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23	8	185
24	9	186
25	9	186
26	9	186
28	10	189
29	10	189
30	11	190
31	12	192

on the back of the crescent, rather than rising above it. Also included in the symbol repertoire is the rectangle (two examples), the Pictish beast (one example), the eagle (three examples), the disc with indented rectangle (sometimes known as the ‘mirror case’) (three examples, assuming that the incomplete Brough of Birsay symbol was indented) and the mirror (three examples). The disc with indented rectangle is another symbol with a northern distribution in Orkney, Caithness and Sutherland, and the example on Greens (no 2) has an unusually elaborate indented rectangle. The handles of the mirrors on nos 2 and 3 are similar in their dumb-bell shape, while that on Sands of Evie (no 7) has a triangular top and a double outline, in shape similar to that on Clynemilton 1 from Sutherland (Fraser 2008: no 136.1). In common with all mirror symbols, the mirror itself is undecorated, which implies that we are seeing the reflective face, as the prototype Iron Age mirrors were mostly decorated on the other face. The mirrors on Orcadian stones are not accompanied by combs as they so often are in mainland Pictland (although, in the case of the incomplete no 7, the former presence or absence of a comb cannot be proved). Another noticeable gap in the range of symbols used in Orkney and Shetland is the absence of the salmon, perhaps because there are no rivers in which salmon could breed,² and the serpent, again perhaps because snakes are not found in the islands and therefore as symbols they were irrelevant. In mainland Pictland, the double-disc and Z-rod symbol is the second most commonly used symbol, but it is distinctly scarce in the Northern Isles, where in Orkney it is found only on a bone pin (Hunter 2007: 509–11) and in Shetland it occurs on a single monument and on two stone discs (Scott & Ritchie 2009: nos 5, 17 and 21).

Although these seven symbol stones perhaps present too small a sample from which to draw conclusions, the repertoire of symbols used is of some interest. The absence of the comb symbol is particularly noticeable, given that so many of the bone combs which match the various forms of the symbol have been found on Orcadian settlement sites. Cecil Curle discussed the relationship between bone combs and those depicted on



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ILLUS 2 No 1 Brough of Birsay (scale 1:10; © RCAHMS SC 537331.
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symbol stones in the context of the combs found at the Brough of Birsay, though without mentioning the absence of the comb symbol from Orkney (Curle 1982: 95–7). She also drew attention to the similarity between the curl behind the rear thigh of the clumsily executed Birsay eagle and that on the elegant Knowe of Burrian eagle, which is a useful link between these two images of disparate quality (Curle 1982: 87).

Names for the various Pictish symbols were standardised by Allen and Anderson in their 1903 corpus and have been generally adhered to by later scholars, in order to avoid confusion. They distinguished between the ‘circular disc with rectangle’ (or so-called ‘mirror case’), found in Inverness-shire, Banff and Aberdeenshire, and the ‘circular disc and rectangle with square indentation’, found in Orkney, Caithness and Sutherland (1903: pt II, 61). Both were included under symbols with ‘conventional geometrical forms’ rather than ‘objects of known use’, and yet, throughout Part III of their work, where J Romilly Allen listed the monuments, the term ‘mirror case’ is used for both symbols. This is a most unusual discrepancy for which there seems to be no explanation. Yet the original terms have the great advantage of being purely descriptive, rather than implying a function for the objects depicted, and this is why we have preferred here to use the term ‘circular disc with indented rectangle’. There is no archaeological evidence for mirror-cases in Britain in the Iron Age, although they could have been made of perishable materials such as wood, leather or textile. Use of the term ‘mirror-case’ goes back

at least as early as 1866, when eight examples were known (Stuart 1867: 39), though its use was not universal. Much has been written about the meaning and purpose of Pictish symbols, and the current consensus of opinion sees them as a form of language representing words and probably names (see, for example, Forsyth 1997 and Lee 2010).

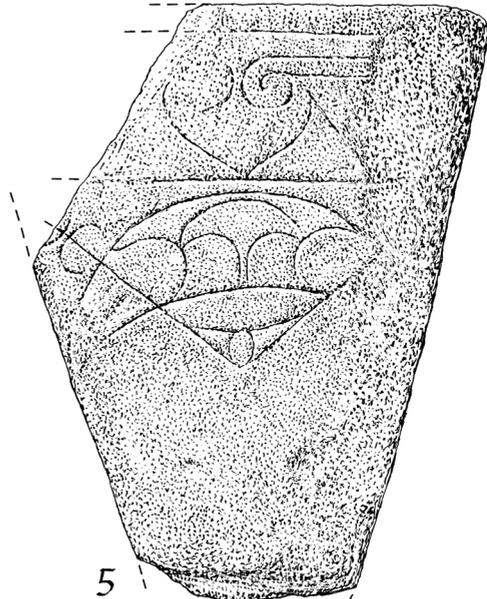
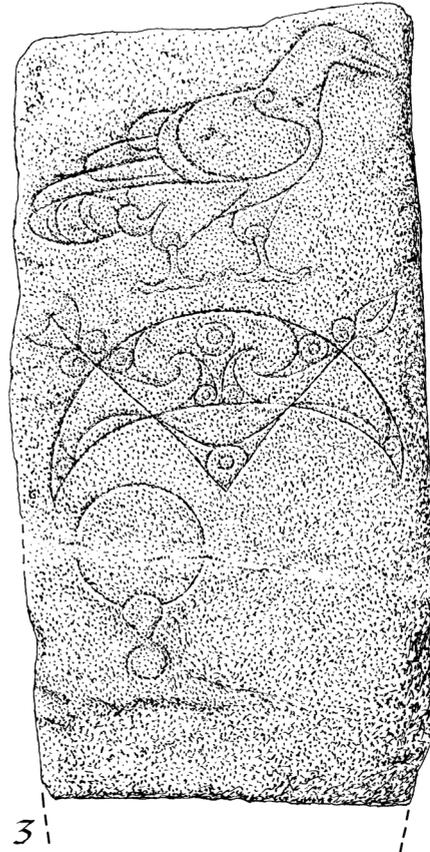
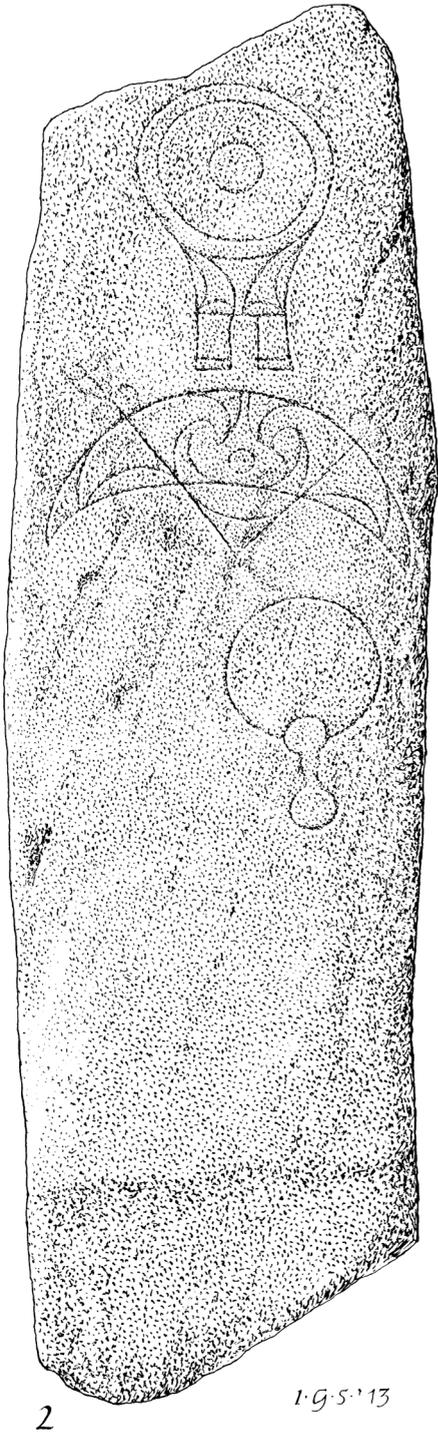
THE CONTEXT OF PICTISH SYMBOL STONES

In Orkney, Shetland and Caithness, not a single stone with symbols has survived upright in the landscape, as some have in mainland Pictland farther south, perhaps because they were victims of the Norse settlement (although Ackergill 1 in Caithness was said still to be standing in the 19th century (Ritchie 2011a: 133–4)). Two, at least, of the Orkney stones were found in what is likely to have been their original approximate location, Brough of Birsay and Greens (nos 1 and 2), and others may be close to their original seat. The Brough of Birsay stone was close to a Pictish settlement of the 7th and 8th centuries AD,³ while the Greens slab was found face down, at a depth of some 0.3m below ground surface, at a point overlooking the neck of land that formerly joined the Deerness promontory to mainland Orkney. Marwick remarked upon the lack of weathering of the carving on the Greens stone at the time of its discovery (1924: 298), which may suggest that it fell, or was felled, a relatively short time after its erection.

The stone from St Peter's Church, South Ronaldsay (no 6), has symbols carved on both sides, and it is one of 13 symbol stones from Pictland as a whole which have been identified by Clarke as 'stones with multiple lives' (2007: 21–3, 38), in this case, a stone which appears to have been used twice over. Comparing the two sets of symbols, one is markedly more elaborate in internal decoration than the other, which suggests a difference in date between the two carving events, and the plainer side could represent Orkney's earliest formal symbol stone. As Mack observed, the various patterns within crescents 'are only additions to what was originally a plain

outline' (1997: 3), although a chronological progression cannot be assumed. In execution and choice of symbols, the South Ronaldsay stone is very similar to one from Clynekirkton in Sutherland (Fraser 2008: 135.2).

The fragment found on the Sands of Evie (no 7) is carved with a mirror symbol and was undoubtedly part of a larger slab with other symbols before it was broken up and the surviving fragment became worn by sea erosion. There is a photograph by the renowned Orcadian photographer, Thomas Kent (1863–1936), of the discovery of an inhumation grave on the Sands of Evie, probably in the 1930s, which shows an unusual number of stones around the burial, and it is possible that this was once a Pictish platform cairn (Orkney Archive TK4109). If so, the broken symbol stone may have been associated with the cairn. A carving more certainly associated with a burial is the slab from Oxtro, which covered one of 'a great number' of short cists containing cremation deposits, although it is not recorded whether the eagle was facing into the cist or was on the top of the slab (no 4; Petrie 1890: 76). It bore a 'boldly cut' eagle, but whether it was a single carving or a re-used fragment of a larger monument is unknown, for it was used as building material soon after its discovery. Stones with single animals are known from mainland Scotland, but not single birds, which suggests that this was part originally of a larger symbol stone, like the eagles on the Brough of Birsay and Knowe of Burrian stones (nos 1 and 3). Nonetheless, its presumed secondary use in a cemetery has interesting implications. At the time, the cemetery was assumed to be of Bronze-Age date because short cists and cremations were unknown then in post-Bronze-Age contexts (Petrie 1890: 78). But beneath the cemetery were the remains of a broch, and Petrie was forced to argue that the broch must be of 'considerable antiquity', a notion taken up with enthusiasm and some exaggeration by Samuel Laing (1868: 64). Whereas Petrie mentions a single urn and half of a bronze ring as finds from the cists, Laing has multiple urns and 'bronze ornaments'. Laing recognised, however, that the broch must have been deliberately demolished and that the 'mass of ruin must have remained mouldering



ILLUS 3 No 2 Greens, St Andrews (SC 1349812); no 3 Knowe of Burrian, Harray (SC 1350651); no 5 Redland, Firth (SC 1349763) (scale 1:10; © RCAHMS. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk)

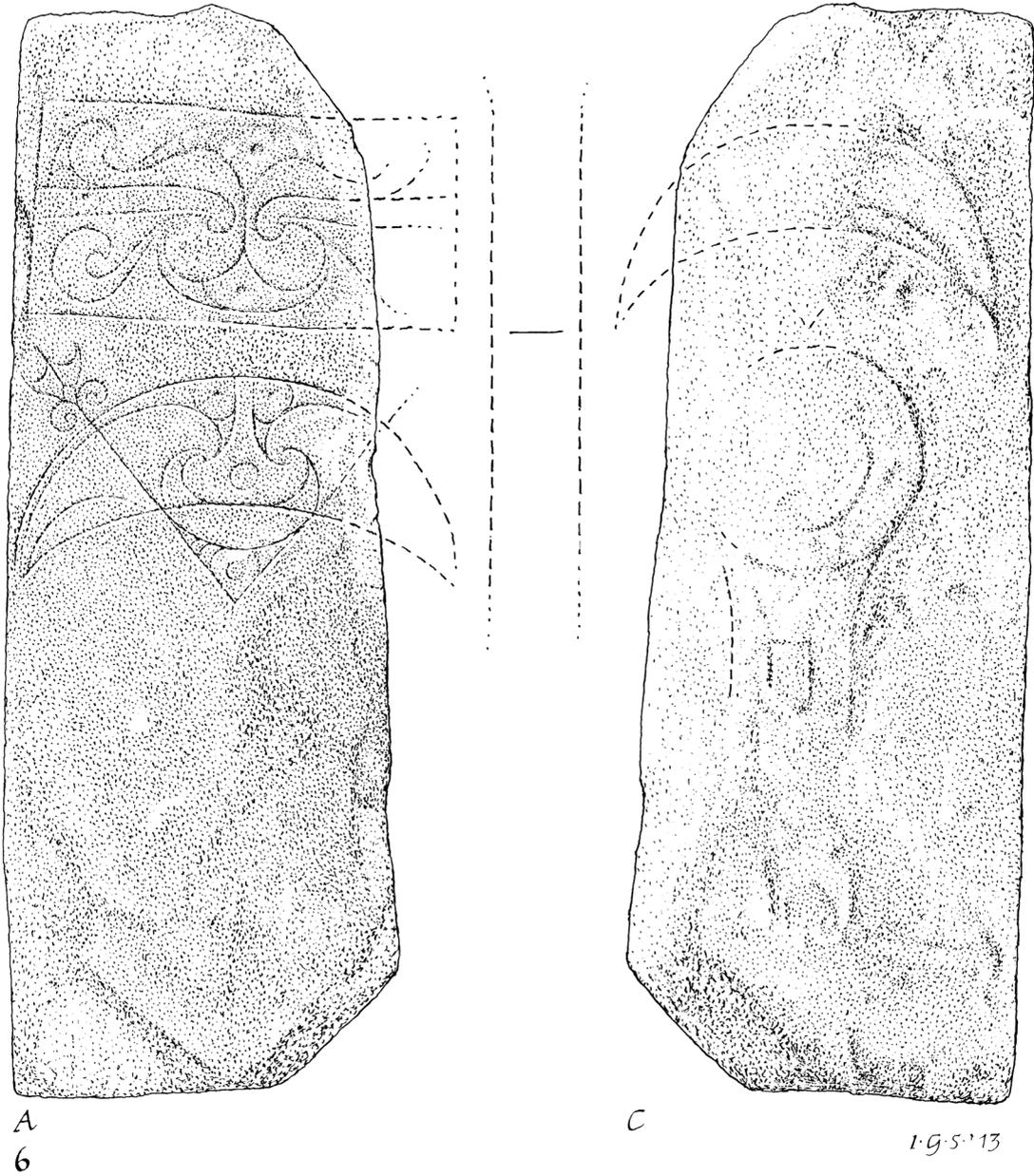
in the air long enough to become covered with at least three feet of vegetable soil, and to be converted into such a green mound'. He goes on to argue, like Petrie, that 'in this green mound pagans of the bronze period must have buried sepulchral urns containing the ashes of their dead'. This relationship between short cists with cremations and an undoubtedly normal Iron Age broch was soon set aside as inexplicable, and it is only in recent decades that radiocarbon dating has shown that there was indeed some use of cremation in the post-Roman period (Ashmore 2003: 37–40). The large cemetery of short cists at Oxtro remains unparalleled, although three short cists were found alongside 11 long cists at Saevar Howe, not far from Oxtro, for which Hedges suggested a date in the 10th century (1983: 120). The evidence from both sites warns against assuming all short cists to be early prehistoric in date. Several aspects of the site at Oxtro suggest that this was no run-of-the-mill broch: its unusually thin wall, its well and its prestigious artefacts (including a bronze tankard handle and a silver 'cylinder'), not forgetting the likelihood that it was deliberately demolished.⁴ In this context, the choice of this particular mound for an unusually large cemetery of short cists hints of a long folk memory.

The Knowe of Burrian stone (no 3), sometimes known as Garth, was reused at the entrance to a well in a settlement mound, which is likely to represent the remains of a broch. It was discovered in May 1936, when three youngsters, Robert Flett, Anna Johnston and Tim Johnston, dug a trench into the mound, but there is some confusion about its exact location. A first-hand account from Anna Hourie (née Johnston) relates that they found 'a doorway blocked by a large upright slab with smaller stones filling the gap round about it. With a pick, they levered out the stone and discovered carvings on the other side. The point of the pick made a hollow in the body of the eagle, and the leverage broke the slab into two about two-thirds down its length and across the mirror symbol' (Ritchie 1997: 44). Correspondence about the discovery is preserved in NMS Research Library (Special Collections, SAS Internal Manuscripts, UC73/37), and a letter written on 20 May, from John Mooney to James

S Richardson of HM Office of Works, describes how he, Provost Slater, Robert Rendall and Jas Spence saw the upper part of the stone at the farmhouse of Garth on 19 May, relating that it had been found 'as a projecting ledge'. Richardson annotated the letter on 31 May to the effect that the lower part of the stone had been subsequently found. The lower part of the stone is markedly different in colour to the upper part (seen well in the photograph in Henderson & Henderson 2004: illus 30), which suggests that the lower part had been buried, whereas the upper part was facing the void of the well entrance, indicating that the first-hand account is correct.⁵

OTHER SYMBOL STONES

Four stones bear symbols of such an informal character that they must be treated separately from the more formal monuments. A version of the double-disc symbol appears in roughly pecked form on a stone from Pool (no 11), although acceptance of this carving as a symbol is controversial (Mack 2012: 13). The curving arc with rounded terminal above the double-disc might be seen as the beginnings of a Z-rod, although John Hunter saw it as a possible serpent with a tiny crescent beside it (Hunter 2007: 115). Hunter also argued that the Pool stone had been placed deliberately in paving facing downwards towards the ancestors, as part of an enigmatic structure dated to the 6th century. Lightly incised on an irregularly shaped block from Gurness are two non-identical elongated rectangle symbols and a disc with indented and elongated rectangle (no 8). The stone was found on top of a wall in a building flanking the pathway leading to the broch (Ritchie, J N G 1969: 130; Hedges 1987: 85). At Orphir, two slabs incised with symbols were noticed by James S Richardson during excavations of the Earl's Bu in 1939 (they are apparently still there, but below present ground surface) (nos 9 and 10). No 10 was photographed in situ, built into the footings at the north-west corner of what Richardson described as the pend tower (published in Ritchie, J N G 2003: illus 6; the drawing here is based on that photograph). The wall is clearly mortared and is probably the



ILLUS 4 No 6 St Peter's Church, South Ronaldsay (scale 1:10; © RCAHMS SC 1349888. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk)

thick-walled building first uncovered in the 19th century, at the south-east end of the complex that makes up the Earl's Bu (Johnston 1903: fig 1). The symbol stone was thus re-used in a late phase of the Bu, probably in the early 12th century,

contemporary with the building of the round church. The slab is clearly narrower by far than a normal symbol stone, and the plain crescent and V-rod with simple leaf terminals occupies almost the entire width of the stone (c 0.16m) towards

one end of the slab (no 10; illus 10). Above it is an unusually small rectangle, similar to that on no 14 from Papa Westray (the transverse line on the Orphir rectangle may not belong to the symbol). A similarly small and simply ornamented rectangle may be seen on the slab from Newbigging Leslie in Aberdeenshire (Fraser 2008: no 37), and these small and simple rectangles should probably be seen as a separate category, distinct from the more common larger rectangle, which is normally equal in size to any other symbols present, as on the stones from St Peter's Church, South Ronaldsay (no 6) and Redland, Firth (no 5). Charles Thomas drew attention to the resemblance between the rectangle symbol and the book satchels carried by monks, depicted on the shrine panel from Papil in Shetland (Thomas 1963: 56; Scott & Ritchie 2009: no 30), and it may be suggested that this interpretation is particularly apposite for the small rectangle symbol. Representations of book satchels carried by monks are known from Papil and Bressay in Shetland and in mainland Pictland (St Vigeans, St Madoes and Elgin) (Kilpatrick 2011: 195), while two of the three known small rectangle symbols are in Orkney, with another possible example on a disc from Ness of Burgi in Shetland (Scott & Ritchie 2009: no 32). On the other hand, if the book satchel interpretation is assigned to the large rectangle symbol, the small rectangle might be seen as a writing tablet or even as a seal box. The ornamentation on the Papa Westray and Newbigging Leslie small rectangles is strikingly close to that on the seal box lid from Philiphaugh, Selkirk (Hunter 2012). The latter is a Romano-British example dating to the 1st or 2nd century AD, but the potential longevity of the image is no greater than that of the mirror symbol with its Iron Age antecedents.

The other slab from Orphir was a fragment and bore only a crescent and V-rod, and it is unfortunately not known whether the slab had broken in such a way that another symbol might originally have been present (no 9). A single symbol would not, however, be too surprising, given the informal character of the two stones and the presence of single symbols on portable artefacts. Two glass beads of 6th-century date were found at nearby Lavacroon (Batey 1986:

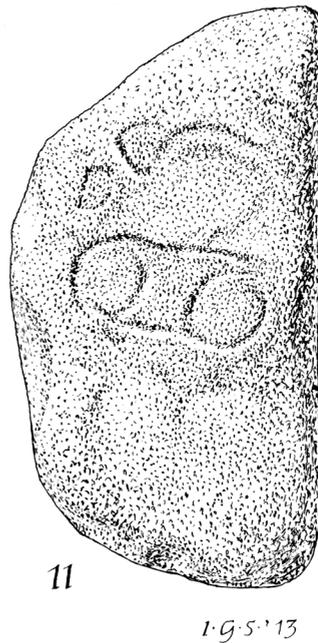
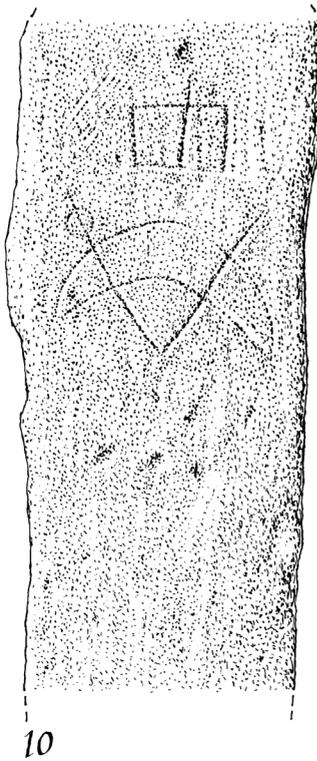
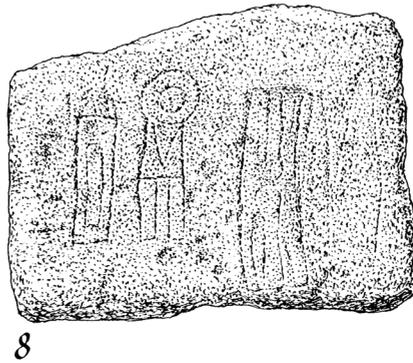
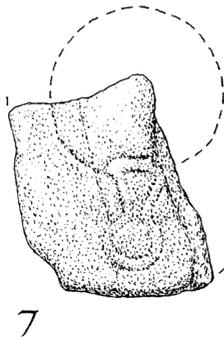
297–8), which suggests that there may have been a settlement in the vicinity in the 6th or 7th centuries with which the two symbol-bearing slabs at Orphir may have been associated.

Most of the surviving seven ogham inscriptions from Orkney are the equivalent of these informal symbol stones, for they are brief graffiti incised on building stones (three from the Brough of Birsay and one from Pool in Sanday (Forsyth forthcoming b; Hunter 2007: 100, illus 4.15)) and on a knife handle of bone from the broch of Gurness (Forsyth 1996). A relatively long inscription on the cross-slab from the broch of Burrian (no 15) and the inscription on a spindle whorl from Buckquoy in Birsay are more formal and purposeful in character (Forsyth forthcoming a; Forsyth 1995).

THE ART AND TECHNIQUE OF PICTISH SYMBOL STONES

There are clearly differences in technique and function between the large and formally designed symbol stones and the remainder of the stones bearing carved symbols – and yet the latter are not quite *graffiti* either. The exquisite incision of the symbols on the stone from St Peter's Church (no 6) is the work of a good craftsman, whereas anyone familiar with the symbol repertoire could have cut the symbols on the block of stone from Gurness (no 8) or pecked the crude double-disc on the slab from Pool (no 11).

As artistic achievements, some of the seven large symbol stones are of exceptional quality, particularly the three warriors on the Brough of Birsay stone (no 1) and the superbly realistic eagle on the Knowe of Burrian stone (no 3). Alcock suggested that the best of the Pictish animal and bird carvings were the work of a single master craftsman with a workshop at Burghead and that the Burrian eagle 'might be a by-product of Pictish overlordship of the Orkney Isles', perhaps in the 7th century (1998: 518). He avoided discussion of the mechanics of this 'by-product' but, as it is unlikely that the stone itself was imported from Burghead, any such master craftsman must have travelled to Orkney by sea to undertake the commission.



ILLUS 5 No 7 Sands of Evie, Evie & Rendall (scale 1:10; SC 1350648); no 8 Broch of Gurness, Evie & Rendall (scale 1:5; SC 1349788); no 10 Earl's Bu, Orphir (scale 1:10; SC 1349761); no 11 Pool, Sanday (scale 1:10; SC 1351222 © RCAHMS. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk)

The remarkable resemblance between the Burrian eagle and the eagle of the Evangelist St John on folio 1 recto of the fragmentary Gospel-book in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (MS

197B), has been discussed many times since it was first recognised by Isabel Henderson (1967: 124–5), but most recently by Henderson and Henderson, concluding that the Gospel version is

the less competent of the two (2004: 33–5). The Corpus Gospel-book has been dated tentatively to the late 7th to early 8th century (Alexander 1978: 44, no 12). The eagle on the Brough of Birsay stone lacks the finesse of the Burrian eagle but is nonetheless a realistic representation of a bird with its body held horizontal which, as Alcock observed, implies that it was either stooping on the nest or hunting ground prey on foot (1998: 518). Sadly, the head and neck are missing, but the plumage is rendered by a checked pattern, which Carola Hicks relates to the eagle on folio 84 verso in the *Book of Durrow* rather than to other Pictish eagles (Hicks 1993: 97; Henderson 1987: illus 61).⁶ Another link between the Pictish settlement on the Brough of Birsay and the *Book of Durrow* can be seen in the pattern of four spirals on a circular lead disc (Curle 1974; 1982: 49), and the cross-slab from Sanday has a similar roundel with a triple spiral design (no 12). The *Book of Durrow* is a late 7th-century illuminated manuscript, probably made in an Irish monastery (Trinity College Library, MS 57, Dublin; discussion of its origin and date is usefully summarised in Meehan 1996: 17–22), and it is tempting to see direct Irish influence in Orkney, particularly in view of the use of the Old Irish language in the ogham inscription of the spindle whorl from Buckquoy, on the mainland, opposite the Brough of Birsay, which points to the presence of Irish speakers in the vicinity (Forsyth 1995: 693).

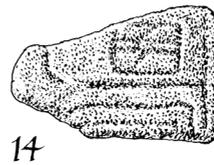
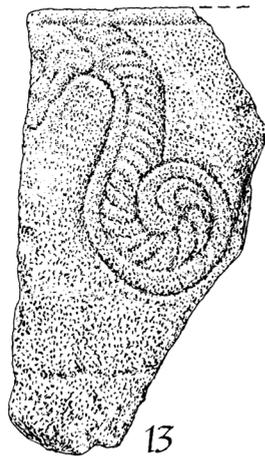
A combination of techniques was used for the Brough of Birsay stone, namely incision and very low relief, whereas other symbol stones were simply incised. But this assumes that on the Birsay stone the four symbols and the warrior scene beneath them were contemporary and by the same hand, which is not necessarily the case. As a stone with four symbols which do not include a mirror and comb, Birsay is very unusual, leading Thomas to read the symbols as signifiers for the three warriors beneath (1964: 86), a notion echoed in spirit by Henderson and Henderson's evocation of 'the symbols flying above their heads like standards' (2004: 179). If, however, one views the stone as a symbol stone to which a figural scene was added, it is simply another example of a stone with

four symbols, and the contrast in quality and technique between symbols and figures becomes less remarkable.⁷ Apart from the less-assured rendering of the eagle already mentioned, there are other aspects of the symbols which suggest that they are relatively late, namely the parallel hatching and probable dome design within the crescent (Stevenson 1955: 106) and the double outline of both the crescent and the disc with rectangle. A relatively late date would fit the transitional nature of the low relief figural scene, whether contemporary or secondary. It is often suggested that the surviving fragments flaked off a thicker slab, the other side of which may have been carved with a cross (eg Close-Brooks & Stevenson 1982: 30), but this is by no means certain. The fragments are only about 25mm thick, while the complete slab was some 1.85m long, but thin slabs of this size are quite possible to achieve in Old Red Sandstone and thus no firm conclusion can be reached.

The differences in hairstyle, clothing and weapons between the three Birsay warriors have been discussed frequently (most recently by Ritchie et al 2006: 55–7 and Clarke 2012: 73–4) and will not be repeated here, but clearly this is an image of a warlord and his retinue, whether it relates to local Orcadian history or is a generalised motif, as in the words of Henderson and Henderson 'an expression of successful military might as a social virtue' (2004: 179). The image is as symbolic in its own way as the Pictish symbols above it and, even if it was a later addition, it may still, in some respect, have served as a gloss on those symbols.

Portable artefacts with symbols and figures

In Orkney, as in Shetland, Pictish symbols were considered appropriate for small artefacts as well as for slabs of stone, although there are in Orkney no decorated stone discs such as those found in Shetland (Scott & Ritchie 2009: nos 16–28). The latter may have been a form of amulet local to Shetland, while in Orkney, symbol-incised cattle phalanges and pebbles may have performed the same function. Two such phalanges from the brooch of Burrian in North Ronaldsay (Clarke & Heald 2008) and another from Pool in Sanday (Hunter 2007: 509–11), together with a pebble



ILLUS 6 No 12 Appiehouse, Sanday (scale 1:10; SC 1306663); no 13 Ness, Tankerness (scale 1:10; SC1350659); no 14 St Boniface Church, Papa Westray (scale 1:15; SC 1351233) © RCAHMS. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk

from Windwick Bay in South Ronaldsay (Martin Carruthers pers comm). All came from settlements, and the designs incised upon them are dominated again by the crescent and V-rod. The bone point from Pool, incised with a double-disc and Z-rod, has been mentioned already. Although painted pebbles are found in Pictish contexts in the Northern Isles and elsewhere, none is decorated with a symbol, perhaps because the origin of this type of artefact dates to long before the Pictish historical period.⁸ There is also a bone phalange from Bu Sands on the east coast of Burray, lightly incised with a human figure and a human head, which should be seen in the same category as the phalanges from Burrian and Pool (Laurence 2005; 2009). The head is depicted wearing a helmet, and Laurence suggested that it might have been copied from Roman coins (Laurence 2009: 12). The phalange is likely to be comparable in date to those from Burrian, which have been dated by radiocarbon analysis to the late 6th to 8th centuries AD (Clarke & Heald 2008).

Another human figure should be mentioned, although it is incised on what was probably a building slab rather than a portable artefact. This is the stone found in 1922, in the ruins of a broch at Chapel Knowe, Burness, Firth (Marwick 1924), and given to NMS (X.IB 201). It measures about 1.0m × 0.2m and 0.03–0.06m in thickness. One face bears a number of knife-cut graffiti, including a carefully depicted figure some 63mm high, seen in profile, facing left. Its main interest lies in the two curls and tightly bound hair shown on the head, which resemble those of the leading warrior on the Brough of Birsay symbol stone (no 1) and the slate portrait of a young man from Jarlshof (Ritchie et al 2006: 58), and they all share a distinctively oval eye. The Burness figure has a long flowing cloak, with some sort of edging down the front and a decorative band round the hem (*pate* O'Meadhra, whose drawing makes the band on the front of the garment continue over the head as a hood, 1993: fig 27.1). He lacks the beard of the Birsay and Jarlshof men and could represent either a young man or a cleric, of which, given the hairstyle, a young warrior is the most likely, like the third warrior in the Birsay scene.

PICTISH CROSS-SLABS

The most exciting discovery of a carved stone in Orkney in recent years is undoubtedly the cross-slab found in the fertile island of Sanday, on 20 July 2011, which is carved in relief on both sides (no 12) (see Gibson et al forthcoming, where the stone will be described and discussed more fully). It was discovered below the floor of a cottage, Appiehouse, at Lady, and was broken along both the left-hand edge of the cross-face and along the foot of the slab. Both faces are badly worn, particularly the reverse face, which has suffered considerable water-erosion. Nonetheless, the character of the slab is clear: this is an elaborately ornamented cross-slab, carved in relief and bearing zoomorphic motifs alongside the cross-shaft on face A and on face C at least one roundel containing a triple spiral motif. It was designed to be an upright monument, although secondary truncation at the base may suggest that it was re-used at some stage as a recumbent monument. The slab may have come originally from the chapel on Colli Ness to the north-east, where a cemetery of long cists, one containing a gold ring, and a cross-slab, now lost (no 19), have been found. Sometime between its original location and its incorporation into the cottage floor, the relief-carved slab lay in moving water, probably the sea, which almost surrounds the ness at high tide.

Face A is dominated by a cross with equal arms set on a short shaft, itself set on a rectangular base. The upper arm and transverse arms extend to the top and side edges of the slab, but the lower edge of the cross-base is missing. The entire cross is outlined by a moulding, which extends round the armpits and across the junction between the shaft and the base. The rounded armpits are small with narrow entrances. Though sadly worn, it is clear that the whole of the cross has been filled with interlace carving, with a separate panel in the base. The interlace pattern appears to have flowed unbroken from the shaft into the lower arm of the cross-head. A roundel of some sort might be expected in the centre of the cross but none can now be discerned. The interlace design appears to have been single-strand and angular at the edges where it meets the frame.

There is also interlace in the background to the cross in the panels to either side of the upper arm, and this appears to have been a different design of plaited strands with rounded angles at the edges. In the panels to either side of the lower arm and shaft of the cross there is zoomorphic imagery. On the right is a strongly delineated S-dragon, facing the cross with pricked up ear, well defined forehead, rounded eye and gaping jaws with fangs. The body is divided by a median line along its length, but there is little more than a hint of any internal decoration. The body ends in a tight spiral. There are traces of other motifs to the left of and below the S-dragon, but their form is uncertain, though the eye of faith might make out a standing human figure alongside the cross-base. On the left of the shaft there is a quadruped, again facing the cross. The two front legs, neck and head are clear, and the hindquarters appear to be curled in some way, perhaps relating to the slope on which the animal appears to be standing. Above the animal there may be a 'cloud' of interlace, perhaps representing antlers intertwined with a snake or the creature's own elongated tail, or even an unrelated space-filler of entwined snakes. There was also a motif above the animal but its form is now obscured by erosion.

Face C is even more eroded than the front. There are faint traces of a moulding along the top and left-hand edges. Clearly visible on the top third of the slab is a roundel, which contains a triple spiral formed by two thick strands. The rest of the decoration is very uncertain. There may have been a second roundel immediately below the first, but there are also traces of an outer band enclosing the top roundel which extends below, perhaps to form a very large disc and rectangle symbol, but the way in which the stone has fractured makes it difficult to make out the carved outlines. Whatever the character of the lower motif, it appears to have been filled with pattern of some sort. The lower part of the slab appears not to have been carved.

The S-dragon is similar both to the S-dragon on the Ness fragment (no 13) and to those on the cross-slabs from Ulbster and Skinnet in Caithness and Brodie in Moray (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt III: 30–5; Fraser 2008: no 151). The head of the Sanday S-dragon is particularly close to that on

the Ulbster stone, whereas the Skinnet pair has, as Charles Thomas remarked, 'fallen prey to the interlace-disease', their jaws clasping the cross and elongating into interlace to fill the lower arm of the cross-head (Thomas 1963: 55). This is a uniquely intimate association of S-dragons and cross, but, in general, pairs of S-dragons flanking the cross are symbolic of recognising and protecting Christ on the cross (Henderson & Henderson 2004: 199). There are also links northwards to Shetland, where there are S-dragons on corner-posts from St Ninian's Isle and large roundels on the Bressay cross-slab which act as cross-heads (Scott & Ritchie 2009: nos 31, 34 and 54). Allen distinguished between the realistic sea horse and the hippocamp with spiral tail (the S-dragon) and saw both as Pictish symbols (Allen & Anderson 1903: pt II: 77), whereas to the Hendersons 'the benign sea horses, which, reduced to S-dragons, become a standard symbol of guardianship and protection on a number of cross-slabs where they are frequently placed adjacent to the cross' (2004: 199). For Mack, the sea horses are purely decorative and the hippocamp/S-dragon, which he renames as the fish-monster, only sometimes has the status of a symbol, when it is not one of a decorative pair (2007: 145, 181–2). Whether or not they are symbols matters only to the question of symbols as language, and what is important here is that the S-dragon/hippocamp/fish-monster is a definitively Pictish motif. In discussing the Kilduncan cross-slab, Trench-Jellicoe (2005) used the term 'S-beast' rather than S-dragon, which has the advantage of being less specific, but since the creature has ears and scales it may be permissible to identify it as a form of dragon, as first used by Thomas (1963: 53–6).

It is more difficult to find parallels for the quadruped on face A of the Appiehouse stone owing to its incomplete state. Two forelegs are clear, the chest extends forwards and a long neck supports a small head with a long snout. The jutting chest is reminiscent of the animal below the left arm of the cross on Meigle no 4 (Fraser 2008: 189.3). The small round object hanging from its snout is probably the coiled end of its tail (Isabel Henderson pers comm). The rest of the animal is unclear, though the area is busy with traces of carving. Some sort of monster is

perhaps more likely than a realistic animal, and it is possible that the hind quarters are curled round themselves, like the animal bottom right on the reverse of Meigle 1 in Perthshire (Fraser 2008: no 189.1) and the animals on silver bowl no 3 from the St Ninian's Isle treasure, for which a link with the art of the Book of Kells has been argued (Henderson & Henderson 2004: 111, illus 159). The position of the quadruped flanking the cross-shaft with the S-dragon on the other side may be compared with face C of the Ulbster cross-slab, although there they are not facing one another across the shaft but across an equal-armed cross (Fraser 2008: no 104).

On face C, the roundel filled with triple spirals is very reminiscent of the decoration within the discs of the double-disc and Z-rod in the upper part of the frame on the back of the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab in Ross and Cromarty, dated to around AD 800 (Henderson 2008: 121; illus 4.18). The Appiehouse triple spiral is a simpler design, however, and appears not to have a central round. The triple spiral appears, with a central hollow, in miniature form on the decorated stone disc from Eswick in Shetland, with a double disc and Z-rod on the other side (Scott & Ritchie 2009: no 21). The large size of the Appiehouse roundel is in keeping with that of symbols generally on Orcadian symbol stones. If the roundel is in fact the disc of a disc and rectangle symbol, its size would still not be much larger than the disc and indented rectangle on the slab from St Peter's, South Ronaldsay (no 6). Its size is also on a par with the double disc and Z-rod on the relief-carved fragment from Mail in Shetland, which occupies almost the whole width of the stone (Scott & Ritchie 2009: no 5). Symbols on the later Pictish cross-slabs often appear over-large in relation to the overall design, but Appiehouse demonstrates that, in a local context, they can also be seen as normal in size.

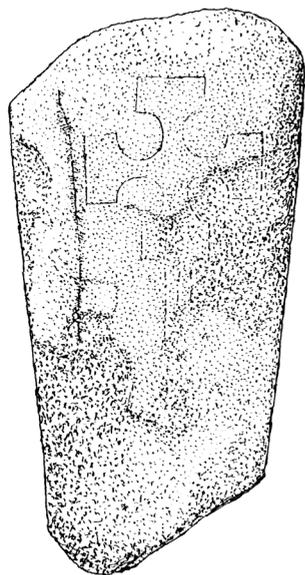
Appiehouse is the first reasonably intact cross-slab carved in relief on both sides to have been found in Orkney, though the fragments from Ness and St Boniface suggest that it was not the only one to have existed (nos 13 and 14). In its design, it is quite different from the relief-carved cross-slab from Bressay in Shetland to the north (Scott & Ritchie 2009: no 54), and its main comparanda

hail from Orkney itself and from Caithness and Sutherland to the south. The form of the cross-head is very similar to that on face A of cross-slab no 21 from St Boniface, Papa Westray, with its double frame and narrow armpits, although the latter is not quite an equal-armed cross. There is also a roundel on the Papa Westray slab, although it contains a cross-of-arcs rather than the triple spiral of Appiehouse. Equal-armed crosses appear to have been popular in Orkney, as they were throughout Pictland, for they were also used on the Flotta altar frontal (no 30) and, combined with a shaft, on no 15 from Burrian in North Ronaldsay, no 23 from St Colm's in Hoy, on no 25 from Holm and no 29 from Papa Stronsay. On the Holm slab, the top and side arms extend out to the frame of the slab as they do on the Appiehouse stone, and the entire cross with its rectangular base is filled with interlace patterns. In Caithness, the cross-slab from Ulbster has an equal-armed cross, infilled with interlace but lacking armpits (Fraser 2008: no 104). The cross on face A of the cross-slab from Golspie in Sutherland shares the moulded frame and narrow armpits of Appiehouse, as well as thick-stranded interlace filling both the cross and the background panels (Fraser 2008: no 140).

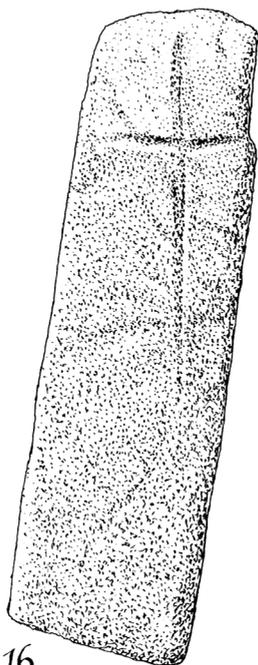
The Appiehouse combination of equal-armed cross, shaft and base suggests a relatively late date for the cross-slab, probably in the 9th century. The primary Norse settlement at Pool is dated to around AD 800 and was followed by more than two centuries of settlement with mixed Pictish and Scandinavian cultural influences (Hunter 2007: 137–62), which provides an acceptable social context for the Pictish cross-slab.

CROSS-SLABS

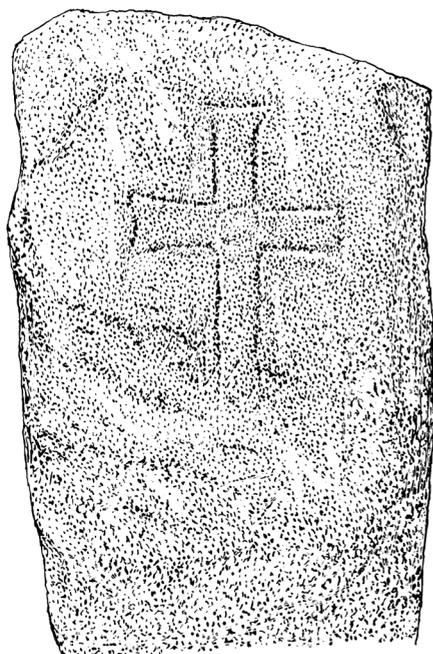
Thirteen cross-slabs of early medieval date are known from Orkney, of which eight survive today.⁹ They display an unusually wide range of forms, from simple shafted and outline crosses to crosses with expanded terminals, equal-armed crosses and the cross-of-arcs within a circle. The armpits of the more elaborate crosses vary from circles left open to circles almost closed and fully closed circles. There are clear links with the early



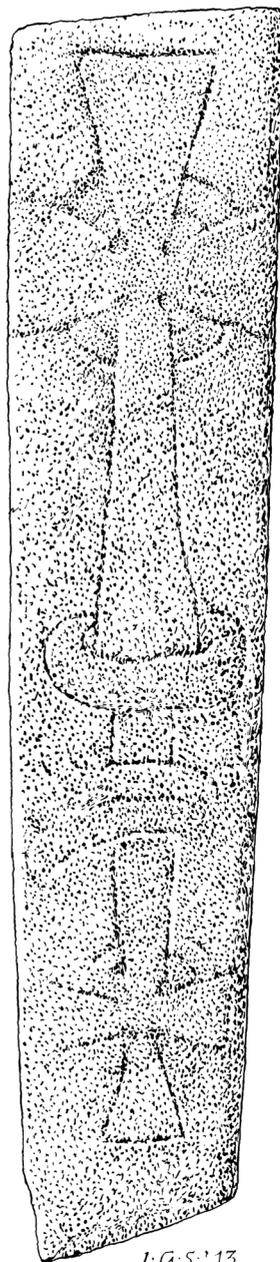
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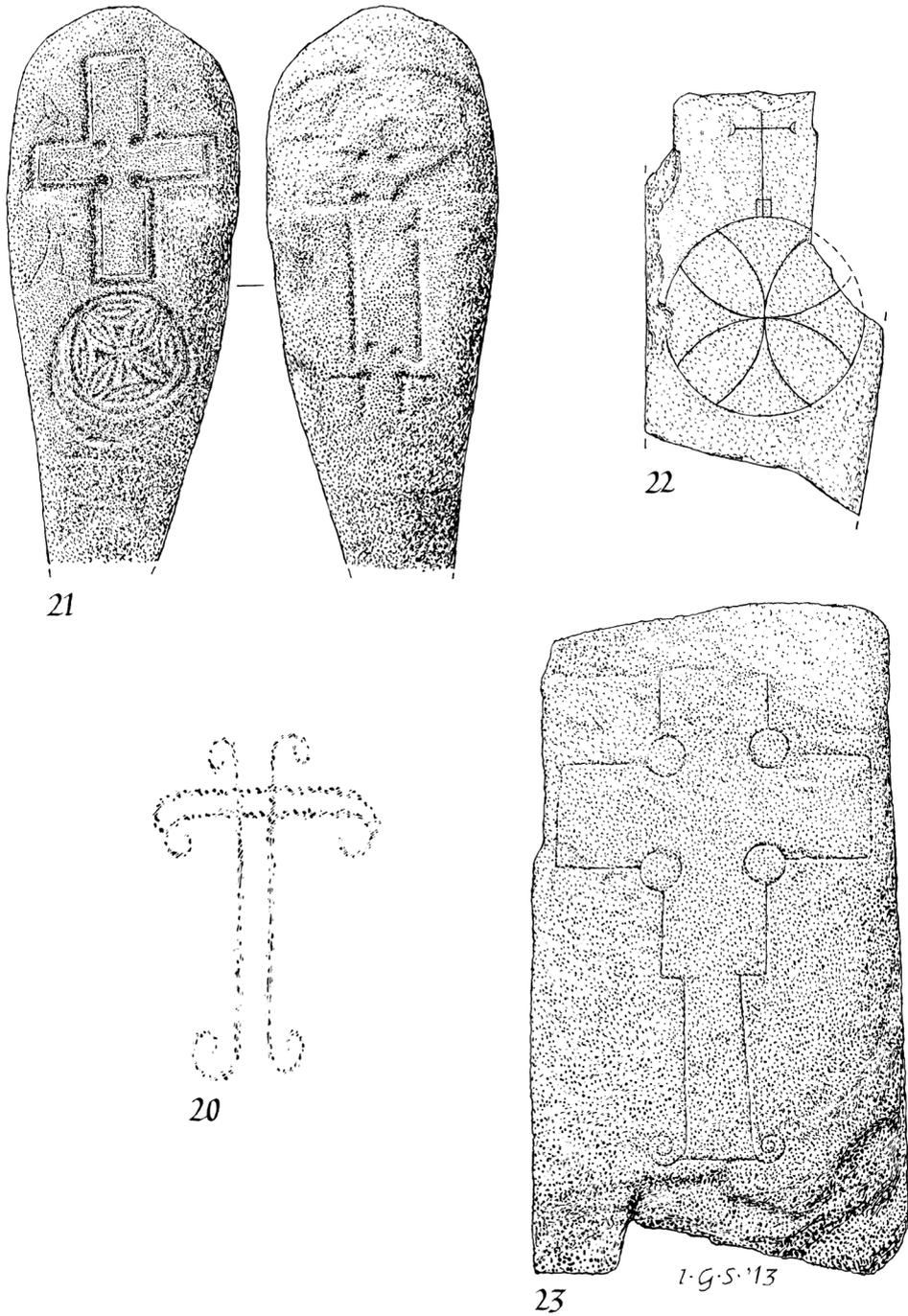
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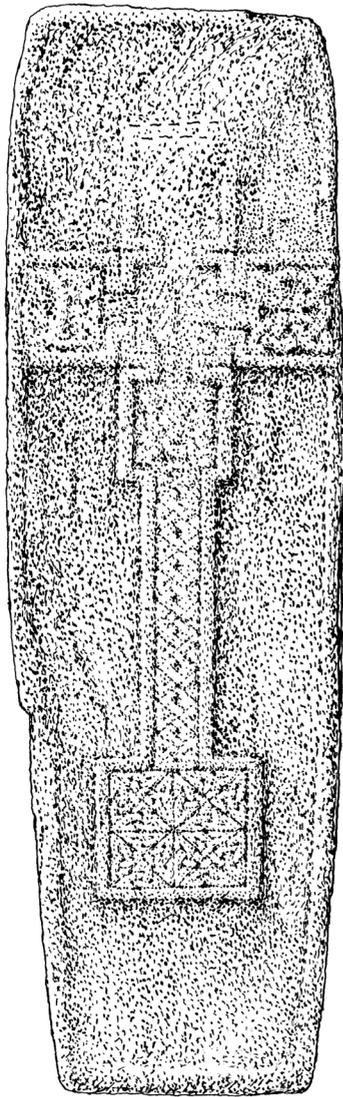
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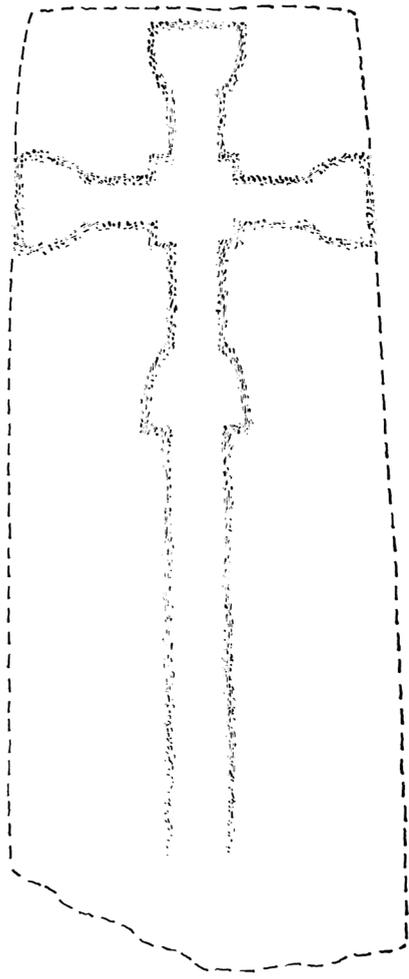
ILLUS 7 No 15 Broch of Burrian, North Ronaldsay (SC 1349742); no 16 Broch of Gurness, Evie & Rendall (SC 1349743); no 17 Brough of Birsay (SC 1349774); no 18 Brough of Birsay (SC 1349809) (scale 1:10; © RCAHMS. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk)



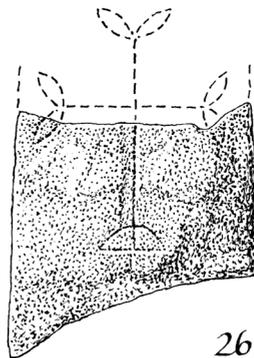
ILLUS 8 No 21 St Boniface Church, Papa Westray (scale 1:10; SC 1320377); no 22 St Boniface Church, Papa Westray (scale 1:10; SC 1241522); no 20 Denshowe, Evie & Rendall (scale c 1:10; SC 1349797); no 23 St Colm's Church, Hoy (scale 1:10; SC 1349746) (© RCAHMS. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk)



25 1.G.S.'13



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26

ILLUS 9 No 25 St Nicholas Church, Holm (SC 1349810); no 24 St Mary's Church, Eday (SC 1349764); no 26 Skail, Deerness (SC 1350668) (scale 1:10; © RCAHMS. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk)

Christian gravemarkers of Iona and other sites in western Scotland – and beyond to Ireland – and the early examples in Orkney are important indicators of the spread of Christianity to the Northern Isles (Henderson 1987). Ian Fisher has discussed the links between the sculpture of western Scotland and that of western Ireland, particularly among the simple linear and outline crosses (2002: 21–2), and those links extend northwards into Caithness and the Northern Isles. In addition, Kelly Kilpatrick has mapped and discussed the occurrence of the cross-of-arcs from Shetland to the west of Ireland (2011: 192–6, *illus* 19). The damaged slab from St Boniface Church, Papa Westray (no 22), bears a cross-of-arcs very similar in design to one from Raasay (Fisher 2001: 104, no 3), and it is surmounted by a small linear cross with square base and crescent-terminals to the side-arms. Expanded terminals of various forms are relatively common in Orkney, where the double loops of the Skaill cross (no 26) might be seen as a simplified version of the interlaced terminals of the crosses on two Iona graveslabs (Fisher 2001: 45, Iona nos 68 and 69), and the scrolled terminals of the crosses on the slabs from St Colm’s Church (no 23) and Denshowe (no 20) can also be matched at Iona (Fisher 2001: 31, Iona no 19). Closer to home, the closed and rounded armpits of the St Colm’s Church cross-slab can be seen on a fragmentary cross-slab from Latheron in Caithness (Blackie & Macaulay 1998: no 18).

St Boniface Church (no 21) is a particularly interesting gravemarker, not only because it has crosses on both faces and clear traces of reworking but also because there are small motifs flanking the outline cross on face A. To the left of the shaft are traces of a human figure, while to the left of the upper arm there is a triquetra knot, and both recall carved stones in Angus, as well as the Papil cross-slab from Shetland (Scott & Ritchie 2009: no 29). The St Boniface figure is striding to the right and wears a stiff pointed cloak like that on the figure in the same position on the Eassie cross-slab (Henderson & Henderson 2004: fig 179). The triquetra knot appears both above and below the transverse arms of the armpit cross on Kirriemuir no 9 and above the left arm on a fragment from St Vigean’s (RCAHMS 2003; Fraser 2008: 67.4). There are no fewer than

five triquetra knots guarded by the S-dragons on the Kilduncan cross-slab, underlining the significance of the triquetra as a symbol of the Trinity (Trench-Jellicoe 2005: 531). The triquetra also appears among the symbols on the back of a cross-slab at Meikle, leading Allen and Anderson to include it as a Pictish symbol (Fraser 2008: no 189.1; Allen & Anderson 1903, pt II: 65). Returning to St Boniface (no 21), the linear cross itself has a lightly incised inner line within a deeper outline, with small armpits, which Fisher dates to no earlier than the 9th century (2002: 49), while below there is a cross-of-arcs carved in false relief. On the other side is a worn outline cross where the four hollow armpits are repeated at the foot of the shaft, as if the intention had been to create a double cross with a common shaft in the manner of one of the St Ninian’s cross-slabs (Scott & Ritchie 2009: no 71). Crosses-of-arcs are often associated with pilgrimage sites and mostly date to the 7th to 8th centuries (Kilpatrick 2011: 195–6), and this chronological and functional context would be entirely acceptable for the Papa Westray site. In Ireland, the cross-slab from the pilgrimage site at Ballyvourney, Co Cork, combines the cross-of-arcs with a human figure bearing a crosier (Harbison 1991: fig 51). Despite the ambitious programme of carving, however, St Boniface (no 21) lacks the assurance of the perfectly incised and compass-drawn no 22 from the same site.

The recumbent slab from St Nicholas’ Church in Holm (no 25) is an accomplished piece of sculpture. The base of the cross contains four panels, each formed of four triquetra knots, a device which is echoed on the Ulbster cross-slab in Caithness, with the difference that the knots flow one from another (Ulbster is best seen in Tom Gray’s photograph in Blackie & Macaulay 1998: fig 12 and in John Borland’s drawing (RCAHMS SC 1358937). The shaft is filled with two-string triangular interlace similar to that on monuments from Lothbeg in Sutherland (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt III: 54), Kilduncan in Fife (Trench-Jellicoe 2005) and Winwick in Lancashire (Bailey 2010: 254–9, *illus* 711). It may be noted of the Holm stone that the moulding at the foot of the cross-shaft, as shown by Allen, is an illusion created by the layout of the very finely

executed panels of interlace (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt III: fig 18). Trench-Jellicoe related much of the ornament on the Kilduncan cross-slab to the sculpture of an area between the Moray Firth and Shetland, which he termed the North Sea province, transmitted to Fife via the Kineddar area of Moray around the turn of the millennium (2005: 540, 542). The upper part of the Holm slab is very worn and we were unable to trace the ‘S-beasts’ on either side of the upper arm of the cross proposed by Trench-Jellicoe (2005: 528).

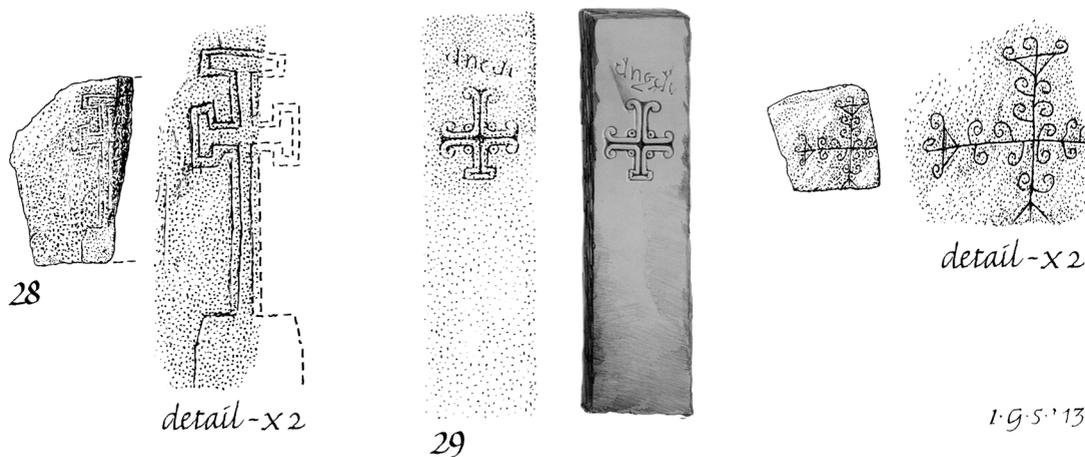
The drawing here of the lost Denshowe slab (no 20) is based on measurements of the slab and a sketch of the cross itself in one of George Petrie’s notebooks (NMS Research Library, SAS 547, no 10, 7 June 1970, ‘a stone about 4ft by 2½ft and 2 inches thick’). Petrie states that the incised cross occupied ‘the whole face of the stone’, which suggests either that this was a recumbent monument or that the lower part of the stone was broken. The particular interest of the lost cross-slab lies in its scroll terminals, which assign it to a group of scrolled crosses in Orkney discussed below.

Eight of the 13 cross-slabs came from graveyards or were built into later churches and thus imply early ecclesiastical foundations at Brough of Birsay, St Boniface Church in Papa Westray, St Colm’s Church in Hoy, St Mary’s Church in Eday and Colli Ness in Sanday. Four cross-slabs were found in or near secular settlements and imply the former presence nearby of graves at Skail in Deerness, Gurness, South Keigar and Burrian in North Ronaldsay, while the slab found in a knoll at Denshowe in Evie (no 20) was perhaps marking an isolated grave. Unlike St Ninian’s Isle in Shetland with its many cross-slabs (Barrowman 2011), no site in Orkney has yielded more than two cross-slabs, but this is a familiar situation across Scotland, for it was clearly not considered essential to mark Christian graves in this way at this early period. At Newark in Deerness, a cemetery of some 250 burials, most of them contemporary with a chapel dating to the late 10th or 11th century (Ashmore 2003: 38), yielded not a single cross-slab. Indeed, the ogham inscription on the Burrian cross-slab implies that the carving of a cross was unusual, for it recorded the name of the person who

carved or erected the cross, although, as Fisher observed, both cross and ogham are ‘so lightly incised that neither can be visualised as making a public statement’ (Forsyth forthcoming a; Fisher 2002: 52). A few lines beneath the Burrian cross have sometimes been interpreted as traces of a carved fish, but they are too vague to support this idea. This is a relatively small and thin slab, and the base of the stone is broken. The excavations at Burrian also yielded a small iron hand-bell of Irish type, probably used there in the 7th or 8th century (MacGregor 1974: 100). Owing to contemporary interest in ogham inscriptions, soon after its discovery the stone was sent to Edinburgh, where Sir Henry Dryden was the first to draw it, in October 1871, although William Traill illustrated it by a photograph rather than by Dryden’s drawing in his brief report on the excavation (Traill 1890: pl 46).

It can be difficult to be sure whether a slab was intended to stand upright at one end of the grave or whether it lay recumbent along the grave. Holm (no 25), with its continuous frame, was certainly a recumbent, as was the long narrow Brough of Birsay slab (no 18), with its pair of unusual, almost Maltese, crosses with encircled shafts, and the tapering slab from St Mary’s in Eday (no 24), with its deeply incised cross with chalice-shaped terminals, was most probably a recumbent gravestone, despite its unusual length. Fisher suggested a date in the 10th century for the Holm recumbent and a pre-Norse date for the Eday slab (2002: 47, 49), while the Brough of Birsay recumbent is probably later in date, contemporary with Orkney’s two hogback monuments and three tegulated coped monuments of the 11th and 12th centuries (Ritchie 2004: 17–19). The encircling ‘doughnuts’ on the Birsay shafts lend an unexpected sense of perspective to the design.

Among cross-slabs in Orkney, the techniques employed range from knife-incision to pecking-and-smoothing and both low and high relief. As with the symbol stones, some of the incised work is of a very high quality, particularly the cross-of-arcs on St Boniface (no 21), where, as Kirkness observed, the ‘incisions are all made with masterly precision: some tool, used as we do compasses, has been utilised to form the arcs and



ILLUS 10 No 28 Brough of Birsay (scale 1:5, detail x2; SC 1349791); no 29 St Nicholas Chapel, Papa Stronsay (scale 1:5 from Allen & Anderson 1903: fig 22; SC 1349789), with, on the right, the drawing in Stuart 1856: pl XLII; SC 1350695). Right, Jarlshof, Shetland, graffito cross (scale 1:5, detail x2; SC 1349794). (© RCAHMS. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk)

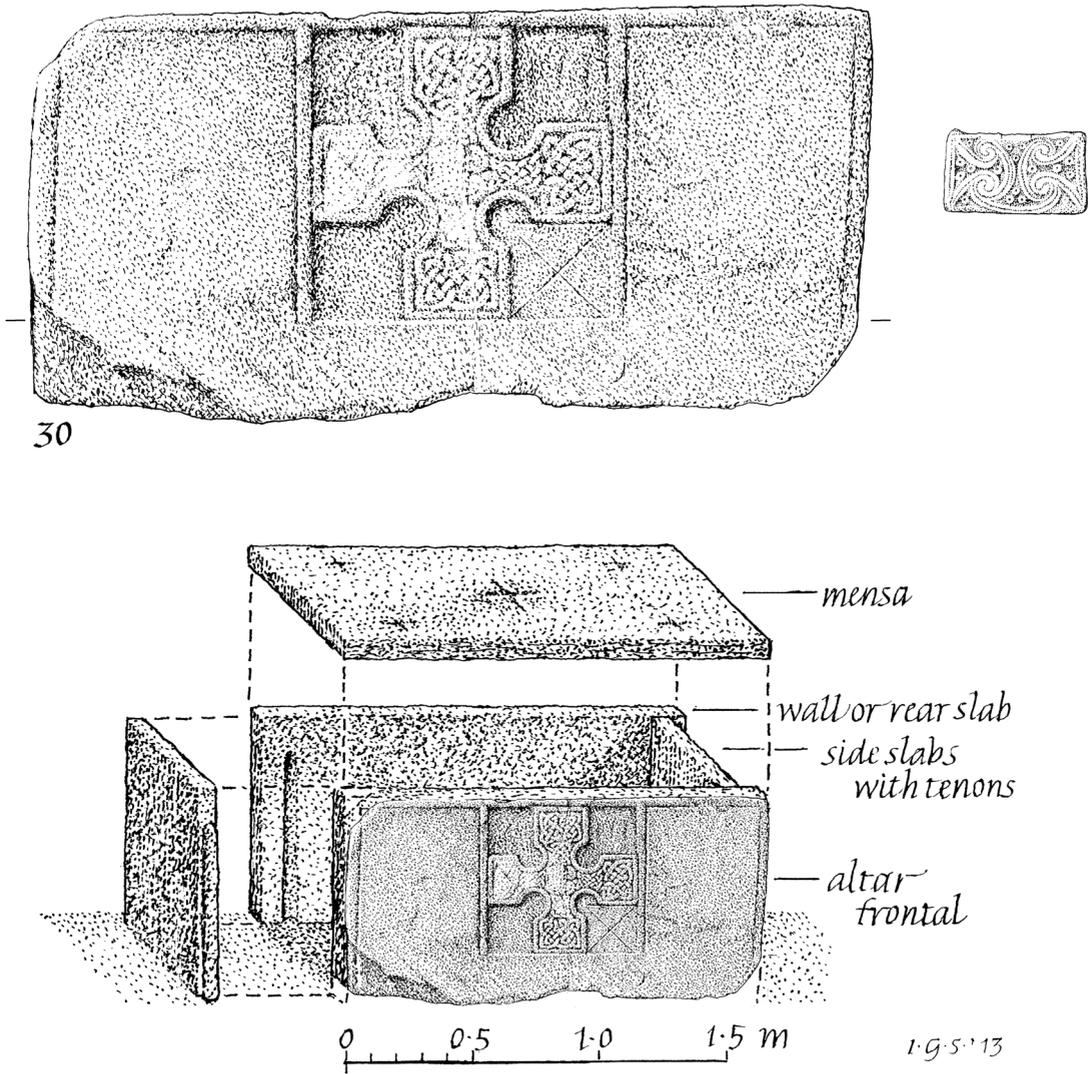
circles' (1921: 134). The interlace ornament on the Holm slab (no 25) is another fine example of the sculptor's craft.

In addition to the cross-slabs, there are also lightly incised graffiti of crosses on two prehistoric monuments: inside the chamber of Maes Howe cairn (Petrie Sketchbook 4: 4v, NMS Research Library, SAS 487) and on standing stone no 3 at the Ring of Brodgar (Cursiter 1908: 77–8).

PORTABLE CROSS-SLABS

An unusual cross-slab (no 29) was found around 1850 near St Nicholas' Chapel in Papa Stronsay, but sadly it was lost within decades of its discovery. It is known to have been in the possession of the Heddle family of Melsetter in the island of Hoy: a letter from J G M Heddle to J W Cursiter, dated 4 April 1888, records 'The Papa Stronsay cross I recollect in our house in Kirkwall – in my father's time, say 30 years ago – but where it was deposited I know not, only fancied in Edinburgh Museum' (OA D29/8/8). In fact, it appears that the stone was not sent to Edinburgh and the letter implies that its last known provenance was the Heddle town house in Kirkwall; unfortunately the site of the

house has been redeveloped over the intervening years (Sarah Jane Gibbon pers comm). Its special interest relates to the inscription *dnedi* incised above an ornate cross with scroll terminals, which is an abbreviated version of *Domine Dei*, 'O Lord God' (Okasha 1985: 56–7). This was a small stone, but not as small and irregular in shape as it appears in Allen's drawing (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt III: fig 21) which was based on a paper squeeze taken for or by Sir Henry Dryden in the mid-19th century and which shows the outline of the squeeze rather than the stone itself. A better impression of the stone is given by the drawing in Stuart 1856 (pl XLII), where the cross and the inscription are shown towards the top of a narrow slab, and it is this on which the drawing here is based (illus 10). Nonetheless, Allen's drawing is useful in providing the scale of the carving, which was reproduced at half size. Thus the cross with its inner and outer frame measures some 80mm × 44mm overall and the slab was probably about 60–70mm in width and 280mm or more in length. Lowe suggested that it may have come from a grave belonging to the early burial ground (2002: 86). The inscription recalls that on one of the silver sword chapes in the treasure from St Ninian's Isle in Shetland, which reads *innomineds* (Okasha 1985), and scrolls are



ILLUS 11 No 30 Flotta, altar frontal (scale 1:15; SC 1351245); top right, Birsay wooden box, end-panel (scale 1:7.5; SC 1349798); possible reconstruction of the Flotta altar (scale 1:30; SC 1349801) (© RCAHMS. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk)

common among the carved shrine-posts from the same site. The Papa Stronsay stone implies the presence of literacy, probably in the 8th century, and the *papar* element in the name of the island implies the presence of a monastic community, although Lowe has suggested that the place-name may have been a creation of the 12th century rather than of the early Norse period (Macdonald 2002; Lowe 2002: 94–5). The shaft of the cross

appears short in relation to the arms, and the same is true of a graffito cross embellished with scrolls incised on a slate fragment from Jarlshof in Shetland (NMS HSA 4109), where the shaft has a single pair of scrolls above a pedestal foot instead of the two pairs of scrolls on the arms of the cross (illus 10). Both are probably depicting portable crosses designed to stand on the altar, and Fisher has commented upon the affinity of the

pellets in the angles of the Papa Stronsay cross with St Cuthbert's pectoral cross (Fisher 2002: 47). O'Meadhra assigned a date in the 7th century to the Jarlshof piece (1993: 430–1).

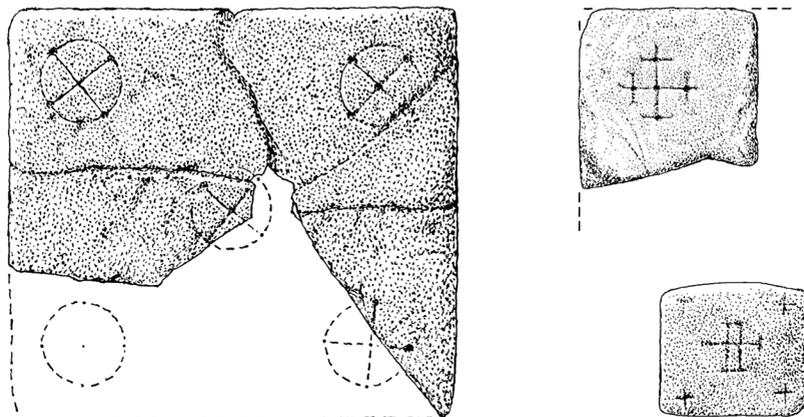
Crosses with scrolled terminals appear to have been popular in Orkney and Caithness. Aside from the Papa Stronsay example, there were scrolls on the terminals and base of the lost cross-slab from Denshowe in Evie (illus 8, no 20, illustrated in NMS Special Collections, SAS 547, pp 81–2). There are also scrolls at the foot of the cross shaft on the slab from St Colm's Church (no 23), on the upper arm of the cross on a slab 2 from Mid Clyth¹⁰ and on the upper and side-arms of the cross on slab 1 from Ballachy, both in Caithness (Blackie & Macaulay 1998: nos 17 and 8). Farther afield in Aberdeenshire, the cross-slab Dyce 2 (Fraser 2008: no 1.2) is an interesting parallel in that it has not only scroll terminals to the arms but also a central roundel filled with a triple spiral like that on the Appiehouse, Sanday, cross-slab in Orkney (no 12).

Another portable slab is no 28 from the Brough of Birsay, which is incised with the double outline of a cross potent, with expanded rectangular terminals, on a rectangular cross base, and which probably dates from the 9th century. Portable cross-slabs like these may have been placed either within the grave or flat on top of it.

CHURCH FURNITURE

From the tiny island of Flotta comes a rare example of church furniture, in the form of a large slab carved with a central cross, which was once the frontal of a box-like altar (no 30). It was found in two pieces in 1871, re-used in the wall of a ruined church at Kirk Bay on the south coast of the island, and it was acquired by the Kirkwall antiquary, George Petrie. When Petrie's collection of artefacts was purchased by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1877, the arrival of the stone in Edinburgh was awaited with some excitement: 'The Stone has come', wrote William Galloway on 22 May to his friend Sir Henry Dryden. The following month he wrote again, discussing the grooves on the back of the slab by which it would have been fitted to the side-

slabs of a box-like altar.¹¹ Later that year, Dryden was the first to draw the slab in Edinburgh and, although the drawing has not survived, it formed the basis for the drawing published by Romilly Allen (Allen & Anderson 1903, pt III: 23, fig 19). Allen wrote to Dryden on 5 November 1890: 'I have copied your drawing of the Flotta stone and now return it with many thanks. It is a very curious stone altogether, apparently, as you suggest, part of an altar tomb.'¹² Thus the interpretation used by Allen in 1903, 'one side of an altar tomb', may be attributed to Sir Henry Dryden, building on Galloway's identification of its function as a frontal panel. RCAHMS published the drawing upside-down and made it the 'side of a sarcophagus' (1946: 342–3), but Thomas placed it in its European tradition as an altar frontal and dated it to the later 8th century (1971: 186–8), and Henderson and Henderson discuss the frontal both in its European context and in relation to the panels from Rosemarkie in Ross and Cromarty (2004: 206–7, 209–10). There are vertical grooves at either end of the reverse face, which are clear evidence that this was part of a composite piece of stone furniture that had side-panels with tongues to fit the grooves and was probably rectangular in shape with a flat top. The fact that the cross and triple frame stop well short of the base of the slab indicates either that it was earth-fast or that there was a horizontal step in front of the altar, both for kneeling on and, critically, helping to hold the frontal in position. The equal-armed cross with hollow armpits in the central panel is carved in relief, whereas the slightly narrower plain panels on either side are delineated with an incised line. There is also a clearly incised X filling the bottom right background to the cross, which may suggest that the sculptor intended, at one stage, to carve interlace pattern as a background to the cross, and which may be a rare insight into design techniques. The damaged centre of the decorated cross appears to have been decorated with a back-to-back pair of double spirals, and there is tight interlaced decoration in the arms which expands to fill the larger terminals. The double spiral design is very reminiscent of those on the lid and end-panel of the carved wooden box known as the Birsay box after the parish in which it was found (illus 11; Cursiter 1886; Stevenson



31

ILLUS 12 No 31 St Nicholas Chapel, Papa Stronsay (SC 1349792); top right, Eshaness, Shetland (SC 1349749); lower right, Wick, Caithness (SC 1349793) (scale 1:5; © RCAHMS. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk)

1952; Cursiter's engravings of the box were reproduced in Allen & Anderson 1903, pt I: fig 29, while Stevenson included a reconstruction of the decoration on the lid as fig 1). This beautiful example of the woodworker's craft was preserved in peat, and it is a reminder of all the decorated objects made in organic materials which have been lost to decay.

If the Flotta altar was a hollow box-like structure, it may indeed have been akin to an altar tomb as Dryden and Allen suggested, containing more, if not all, of a skeleton rather than one small relic. It is also possible, however, that the frontal slab and side-slabs acted as facings for a solid interior. The width of the frontal, 1.65m, may be compared with that of the solid altar surviving in the chapel on the Brough of Deerness, which is about 1.1m wide (Morris & Emery 1986: 322–3), and that in the chapel on St Ninian's Point in Bute, which is 1.52m wide (Thomas 1971: fig 86).

The grooves on the back of the slab terminate short of the top, but it is unlikely that the missing altar-top or *mensa* lay at a lower level than the top of the frontal slab, and the reconstruction offered here gives an impression of how the altar may have fitted together. The *mensa* may have had five consecration crosses incised at the corners and

at the centre, as suggested in the reconstruction drawing (illus 11), or it may have had a small central hollow into which a consecrated portable altar could be placed. Like the *mensa* itself, the altar slab would bear the five crosses commemorating the five wounds of Christ on the cross. Such an altar was dredged up off the coast at Wick in Caithness (illus 12) (Thomas 1971, 194–5) and may have been lost at sea by a priest on his way to or from the islands of Orkney in the 7th or 8th century, while fragments of another and larger slab were found re-used in the floor of the nave of St Nicholas' Chapel on Papa Stronsay (no 31). When complete, the Papa Stronsay slab must have weighed about 6kg and, while portable, it would have been too heavy to carry far, and it probably acted as the permanent cover or seal for a recess in the *mensa*, which may have contained relics (Lowe 2002: 88–90). The incised circles enclosing the crosses were compass-drawn and the hollows in the terminals were drilled up to 7mm deep with a conical bit. At first glance, the slab appears to have been deliberately smashed by a blow slightly off-centre, but close examination shows that there was a large blob-like anomaly in the rock at that point, which, if the slab had been dropped, would have caused it to fracture in this way.

Another slab which is probably a portable altar was found in Crosskirk graveyard at Eshaness in Shetland in 2012 (Jenny Murray pers comm).¹³ It is similar in size to the Wick slab, though it could also be the top left corner of a larger slab, like the Papa Stronsay example (illus 12). The fact that there are only two intact edges and that it is the same thickness as the Papa Stronsay slab supports the latter interpretation (the Wick slab is half the thickness of the other two). The cross crosslets suggest that the Eshaness slab may have been rather later in date and may have belonged to the original Crosskirk, or church of the Holy Rude, in the 12th century (Cant 1975: 55; RCAHMS 1946: no 1351). The graveyard here has also yielded a recumbent graveslab with a runic inscription of around 1300 and a Scandinavian scale-weight of the early 14th century (Barnes & Page 2006: 134–7).

In contrast to this evidence for altars, there are no components of corner-post shrines surviving from Orkney. This may indicate a different practical approach to the cult of relics in Orkney compared with Shetland, where parts of at least five shrines have been found, but no recognisable altar parts (Scott & Ritchie 2009: 4–6): whereas in Orkney, relics seem to have been kept in the altar, in Shetland they were stored in stone shrines. In these very small churches, however, shrines may have acted as altars as well as containers for relics. We have no information about the nature of the relics themselves, whether saint's bones or small items associated with the saint, but there is one type of artefact which has been found both in Orkney and in Shetland and which was probably imported by pilgrims returning from holy places in the eastern Mediterranean. This is a tile made of green porphyry, which is a marble quarried in Laconia in northern Greece and used as floor and wall coverings in early churches, of which fragments have been found, usually in ecclesiastical contexts, in Ireland and Scotland (Lynn 1984). Three such fragments come from Orcadian sites (Brough of Birsay, Hunda and Papa Stronsay) and two from Shetland (St Ninian's Isle and Kebister) (Lowe 2002: 92–4). Thomas suggested that the St Ninian's Isle piece may have been a decorative inset from a reliquary (Small et al 1973: 31–2), and a similar argument

could be made for the Brough of Birsay example, for it was found close to the well, which seems to have been a focus for metalworking, but it is equally possible that both fragments were relics kept in their respective church altars. The Hunda piece lacks an immediate context, but Hunda is an islet attached to the west coast of the larger island of Burray, which is likely to have been a power centre in the 1st millennium AD, and there may have been a hermitage on the islet.

Aside from its intrinsic interest, the Flotta altar-panel gives us a glimpse of a church embellished with carving, which may have belonged to a monastery, for it is otherwise difficult to envisage why a church furnished in this way should have been built in this small island. As a church site, it is unusual in Orkney in apparently lacking a dedication to a saint (Gibbon 2006: 517). Flotta is a remarkably barren island in terms of its archaeology: the RCAHMS survey in 1929 found just one small cairn and the church site, and subsequent fieldwork has identified a possible barrow and a burnt mound, all prehistoric sites. Tellingly, despite the construction of the oil terminal and earlier wartime installations in the 20th century, there are no recorded artefacts apart from the altar frontal (Sheila Garson pers comm). Such an absence of finds suggests that the island may have been virtually unpopulated and thus an ideal location for a monastery. Indeed, the island may have been granted to a delegation of monks in the same way that land in Iona was given by royal consent to Columba (Sharpe 1995: 16–19). It may be objected that, if this were the case, Flotta ought to have been given a *papa* name by Scandinavian speakers, like Papa Stronsay and Papa Westray, but any such name may have been replaced when the monastery was abandoned. Flotta's namesake, Flatey (ON 'flat island'), was the name of an important ecclesiastical centre in the Westmann Islands of Iceland.

CONCLUSION

As a province of the Pictish kingdom, it is not surprising that Orkney has yielded some very fine examples of Pictish symbol stones, although, as Anne Brundle noted, 'the wonder is not how

many examples of Pictish art we have but rather, how very few' (2004), given how many Pictish settlements have been excavated in the islands. Anne Brundle was also the first to appreciate that some of the painted quartzite pebbles of the period had been carefully painted with a brush, which opens up the possibility that painting on parchment may have been practiced in the Church in Orkney (Brundle et al 2003: 98). Knowledge of the influential Knowe of Burrian eagle may have been transmitted southwards on parchment rather than on a stone or wooden object, perhaps contributing to the lost illuminated Pictish Gospels proposed by George and Isabel Henderson (2004: 215–17).

Comparing the carved stones of Orkney with those of Shetland to the north and those of Caithness and Sutherland on the adjacent mainland of Scotland, a number of aspects stand out. Among the designs on Pictish symbol stones, cross-slabs and portable artefacts, the crescent and V-rod, the rectangle and the S-dragon were widely popular, but the comb and fish were not used in Orkney or Shetland. The disc and indented rectangle was used in Orkney, Caithness and Sutherland but not in Shetland. Peltas were employed in the ornament of crescents in Orkney and Caithness, and triquetras and especially spirals were popular in many forms in all three areas, as they were throughout Pictland. The shape of the mirror handle on the Evie fragment (no 7) provides a particularly close link with Clynemilton 1 in Sutherland. When it came to a choice of cross-form, the cross-of-arcs and the outline cross with wide armpits were used throughout the islands and the northern mainland of Scotland, but a more extensive range of types of cross appears in Shetland, including sunken and relief crosses, than in Orkney. It is also noteworthy that Orkney lacks the distinctive cruciform gravemarker which was frequently used in the northern islands of Shetland (Scott & Ritchie 2009: no 81–123).¹⁴ Church furniture occurs in Orkney and Caithness in the form of altar frontals and altar slabs, whereas in Shetland the preference was for composite slab-built shrines with corner-posts. This is a purely technical distinction, however, for shrines can act as altars and altars can contain relics.

The fine precision of some of the incised work in Orkney is mirrored in Caithness on symbol stones from Sandside and Ackergill, the latter with a rectangle chock full of spiral work, and on the cross-slab from St John's Chapel (Blackie & Macaulay 1998: nos 2, 4 and 15). This last is one of a group of outline crosses with hollowed armpits, including Burrian, St Colm's and Flotta (nos 15, 23 and 30), the origin of which lies in 7th-century tradition in Iona (Henderson & Henderson 2004: 160). The concept of the cross as the pre-eminent symbol of Christianity was carried northwards by Irish monks from the 6th century onwards, and the resultant sculpture of the next three centuries is often associated with placenames incorporating *papar*, the name bestowed upon the monks by incoming Scandinavian speakers, to whom the robed figures must have seemed very alien. In Orkney, Papa Stronsay and Papa Westray are obvious *papar* places with carved stones, while other cross-slabs can be associated with less obvious names such as Paplay or Papley (Fisher 2002; The Papar Project 2005).

The trail of the S-dragon motif on sculpture winds through northern and eastern Pictland, from Shetland to Fife, and even more widely on portable metalwork (Blackwell 2011). In his analysis of the Kilduncan cross-slab from Fife, Trench-Jellicoe identified a strong link in decorative tradition with the area between the south coast of the Moray Firth and Shetland, which he termed the North Sea province (2005: 540), which coincides with an equally strong link in platform cairn architecture between Caithness and Fife, for which the explanation of maritime activities along the east coast of Pictland has been suggested (Ritchie 2011a: 140). Another aspect of this sea-borne contact must surely be the distribution of composite shrines with corner elements, with a group around the River Tay in southern Pictland, one around the Moray Firth and the extraordinary group in Shetland (Thomas 1998: 92–4, fig 18).

Clearly there were, in Pictish society in the Northern Isles, people wealthy enough to commission carved stones, whether they were secular or ecclesiastical leaders. An impressive hoard of Pictish silver was discovered on St Ninian's Isle in Shetland and there is evidence

for another such hoard, now lost, from the broch of Burgar in Orkney (Graham-Campbell 1985), both of which provide ample testimony in themselves of local wealth, while the fragment of exquisite gilded bronze mounting from Monker Green, Stromness (Foster 1989), is a glimpse of the quality of imported luxury goods, in this case from 8th-century Northumbria. In the upper levels of Pictish society there were regional kings or supreme warlords, and Orkney and Shetland appear to have had their own separate leaders (Sharpe 1995: chap II, 42, p 196 and footnote 324). Both have royal inauguration stones with pairs of footprints: the Ladykirk Stone at Burwick in South Ronaldsay (Thomson 2002; Windwick 1928) and the stone at Clickhimin in Shetland (Scott & Ritchie 2009: no 10), which presumably reflect the influence of monks from Western Scotland on the indigenous kingship tradition.¹⁵ The archaeological and art historical evidence for links between Orkney and Caithness in Pictish times suggests that the Orkney king may have held sway over Caithness as well, just as in Norse times the Orkney earldom embraced Caithness, and that the Pentland Firth was not regarded as a barrier.

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of Burrian ogham inscriptions. David Mackie of the Orkney Archive was most helpful with Thomas Kent photographs. We are grateful to Les Smith for information about the Eshaness altar slab, which he found in 2012, and to Jenny Murray and Ian Tait of the Shetland Museum for alerting us to its discovery and allowing us to include it here. Isabel Henderson was kind enough to share her thoughts about the Appiehouse cross-slab, and we are grateful to the Society's referees for their helpful comments. Iain Fraser and John Borland of RCAHMS have kindly expedited the scanning of Ian Scott's drawings, which are housed in the Ian G Scott Collection in the Commission Archive. The Hunter Trust is thanked for their contribution to the costs of travel. As ever, Mrs Pauline Scott is thanked for her faithful support.

NOTES

- 1 For ogham, see Forsyth 1995, Forsyth 1996, Forsyth forthcoming a and b; for Scandinavian runes, see Barnes 1994, Barnes & Page 2006; for hogbacks, see Lang 1974, Ritchie 2004, Crawford 2005.
- 2 Gordon made the point that all but one Pictish depiction of a salmon were found 'within a few hundred yards of quiet and easily fished rivers' (1966: 220).
- 3 The fragments were sold by the landowner to the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (now National Museums Scotland) in October 1935 for £5 (NMS Research Library, Special Collections, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Internal Manuscripts, UC73/29).
- 4 There is a possibility that there was a symbol-bearing portable artefact from the Oxtro excavations, but the record may be confused. In small notebook no 10 (NMS, SAS 547), George Petrie has an entry on page 17: 'leg bone of deer found in Okstro Brough 10¼ inches long', and beneath it (and the only other items on the page) are sketches of the disc with indented rectangle symbol, the crescent and V-rod symbol and a hexagram. The implication is that the three figures relate to the sentence about the deer bone, and yet no such object is mentioned in Petrie's brief account of the finds from the excavation (1890: 86-7). Petrie was far more interested in prehistory than in early medieval Orkney, but the discovery of the eagle ought to have prompted

a reference to a symbol-incised deer bone. An alternative explanation is that the sketches are unrelated to the record of the bone, and that they relate instead to the designs incised on portable artefacts found in the excavations at the broch of Burrian in North Ronaldsay in 1870 and 1871. The hexagram was incised on a pebble, and the two symbols on bone phalanges (Traill 1890: figs 1, 16 and 18). The Burrian crescent and V-rod is, however, very different in its decoration to the Petrie sketch, and therefore the possibility must remain that there was indeed a deer bone with incised symbols from Oxtro.

James Graham-Campbell suggested that the silver object from Oxtro was the upper part of a pin-shaft from a Viking-age 'ball-type' brooch (1984: 299–300), but it was found either in the well or amongst the debris inside the broch, which means that it must have been deposited before the broch was demolished and the cist cemetery created. Its date is thus more likely to lie in Pictish or even Roman times.

- 5 Richardson bought the Knowe of Burrian stone from Robert Flett for £5 but then found that it belonged to the landowner, J W Isbister, who lived in New Zealand. Isbister refused J G Callander's request that he should give the stone to the National Museum of Antiquities and held out for payment, and the last letter to survive is an offer from Callander of £10. This was presumably refused, otherwise the stone would have gone to Edinburgh, and it remained in Kirkwall in the care of HM Office of Works until after the opening of Tankerness House Museum in 1968, when it was transferred to the new museum (now the Orkney Museum). It is set in a plinth and the total length of the slab is 1.14m.
- 6 The discovery in 2013 of a symbol stone at Dandaleith in Moray adds another Pictish eagle in the style of that on the Brough of Birsay stone.
- 7 It is worth noting here that Cecil Curle considered that the slight recession of the surface of the stone, which creates the impression of relief, extends above the warriors to the underside of the eagle's talons (1982: 97). Close inspection of the stone suggests, however, that the area of pecking associated with the warriors is separate from small areas of pecking immediately beneath the eagle's feet.
- 8 A total of 55 painted pebbles has been recovered to date, from contexts ranging from pre-Pictish at Old Scatness in Shetland (Dockrill et al 2010: 320–2) to the 7th or 8th centuries (an updated catalogue is appended to Arthur, R & Murray, J 2014: 3–16).
- 9 This figure does not include St Tredwell's Chapel, Papa Westray (HY45SE 4; HY 496508), where a cross-slab is said to have been seen in the mid-20th century, underwater in the loch, close to the chapel site (Lamb 1983: no 30). Despite careful searches over the years, it has not been located and must be considered doubtful (Jocelyn Rendall pers comm).
- 10 Two drawings of Mid Clyth 2, by John Nicolson in the late 19th century, mistakenly show spirals at the foot of the cross as well as at the top (RCAHMS E49359 and E49375).
- 11 Orkney Archives, D21/S/3, 22 May 1877 and 4 June 1877 (Ritchie 2013: 447–8).
- 12 Northamptonshire Central Library, Northampton, Sir Henry Dryden Collection, uncatalogued correspondence.
- 13 The discovery of the Eshaness altar came after the publication of Scott & Ritchie 2009, as did the publication of the first volume on the excavations at Old Scatness, which includes several carved items apart from the bear, fish and boar carvings included in our 2009 work. These include a stone weight incised with a linear cross, a steatite weight incised with a double spiral, a fragment of a possible cross-slab and a series of graffiti (Dockrill et al 2010: 284–5, 288–9, 311–12, 315–20).

The suggestion has been made that the unprovenanced stone from the old Lerwick Museum in Shetland came from Papil in North Yell (Scott & Ritchie 2009: no 3, 1, 47; Ritchie 2011 (b): 27–7). This idea was based on an annotated drawing of the stone from Uyea pasted into Irvine's *Shetland Historical Collections* (Scott & Ritchie 2009: 4), on which Irvine noted that 'a piece of stone ornamented in a very similar way was found at Papal in North Yell about 1835'. On the reverse, Irvine wrote

The piece of stone found at or near the 'Shed' of Papal [a storehouse on the shore] when it belonged to Mr J W Hoseason went into his possession and was at Greenbank for some time but seems to have been again lost there. It was so far as memory serves somewhat about the size of one's fingers stretched out together. It was only a fragment but there was a good deal of hatching more on one side than the other & I think no circular work.

The size of the fragment matches that of the Lerwick Museum stone and the decoration on Lerwick and Uyea is very similar, but Irvine's recollection of the absence of 'circular' work perhaps lessens the likelihood of the Lerwick and Papal stones being one and the same. Cataloguing Society of Antiquaries of Scotland manuscripts in NMS has, however, brought to light more Irvine papers, including a note on the Papil stone with a tiny sketch of a fragment about 150mm long, of which he wrote 'The two sides were covered with sunk carving of zigzag and other lines' (NMS Research Library, Special Collections, SAS Internal MSS, UC69/2). It appears to have been a fragment of a cross-slab carved in relief on both sides with the remains of lozenge or key pattern, which had been washed up by the sea from the site of the old graveyard (Ritchie 2011 (b): 27, fig 6). The fragment from the Lerwick Museum collection thus remains unprovenanced. These lost stones indicate that there were at least 10 elaborately decorated cross-slabs amongst the corpus of carved stones from Shetland.

- 14 There is, however, a rough sketch of a gravemarker among the George Petrie papers in RCAHMS Archive, which appears to be related to cruciform stones (DC 66388; Petrie folio SAS 487, 7: 38). Petrie saw it near the Bu of Orphir sometime in the mid-19th century and it appears now to be lost. It was a small stone of anthropomorphic shape with an angular head and shaft with sloping shoulders, 1' 8½" high (0.52m), the shaft 6" wide (0.15m). Its dimensions were thus comparable to the smallest of the Shetland cruciform gravemarkers (eg Scott & Ritchie 2009: no 98), although there is no precise parallel for its shape either in Shetland or in the Western Isles.
- 15 On Dunadd as an inauguration site see Lane & Campbell 2000: 26–7, 258–61.

SUMMARY CATALOGUE

NMS National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh

OM The Orkney Museum, Kirkwall, Orkney

RCAHMS Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland Archive (+ archive number of drawing), Edinburgh

SM Shetland Museum and Archives, Lerwick, Shetland

PICTISH SYMBOL STONES

1 Brough of Birsay

HY 2397 2851; HY22NW 1; NMS X.IB.243

Found below ground level, close to churchyard wall, during excavations in 1935.

Incised, circular disc with rectangle, crescent and V-rod, Pictish beast, eagle, three warriors in low relief.

Curle 1982: 91–2, 97–100; Fraser 2008: no 166; RCAHMS DC54655

2 Greens, St Andrews

HY 5419 0317; HY50SW 9; NMS X.IB.203

Found face down, c 0.3m below ground level, in 1923.

Incised, circular disc with indented rectangle, crescent and V-rod, mirror.

Marwick 1924: 297–9; Fraser 2008: no 167; RCAHMS DC60678

3 Knowe of Burrian, Harray

HY 3082 1680; HY31NW 2; OM 1655

Found in 1936 at entrance to well in probable broch.

Incised, eagle, crescent and V-rod, mirror.

Ritchie 1997: 44; Fraser 2008: no 168; RCAHMS DC58305

4 Oxtro, Birsay

HY 2537 2678; HY22NE 4; lost

Found in 1847 acting as cover slab of short cist; subsequently built into Boardhouse Farm outbuilding.

Incised, eagle.

Ritchie, J N G 2003: 121; Watters et al 1995: 2; Fraser 2008, no 170

5 Redland, Firth

HY 378171; HY31NE 15; NMS X.IB.24

Found, c 1817, re-used in cottage.

Incised, rectangle, crescent and V-rod.

Allen & Anderson 1903, pt III: 20; Fraser 2008: no 172; RCAHMS DC60669

6 St Peter's Church, South Ronaldsay

ND 4701 9084; ND49SE 27; NMS IB.2

Found in 1852 re-used in church.
Incised. Face A rectangle, crescent and V-rod; face C crescent and V-rod, circular disc with rectangle.
Allen & Anderson 1903, pt III: 20–1;
Ritchie, J N G 2003: 118–19; Fraser 2008: no 173; RCAHMS DC60679

7 Sands of Evie, Evie and Rendall

c HY 377265; HY32NE 31; OM 1976.233
Found on beach in 1967.
Incised, mirror.
Ritchie, J N G 1969; Fraser 2008: no 174; RCAHMS DC58306

8 Broch of Gurness, Evie and Rendall

HY 3817 2685; HY3NE 5; in site museum
Found in post-broch outbuildings in 1935.
Incised, rectangle, disc with indented rectangle, indented rectangle.
Clouston 1937; Ritchie, J N G 1969; Hedges 1987: ii, 85, 125, 218; Fraser 2008: no 165; RCAHMS DC60673

9 Earl's Bu, Orphir

HY 3349 0445; HY30SW 1; on site but not visible
Found during excavations of the Earl's Bu in 1939.
Incised, crescent and V-rod.
Fraser 2008: no 169.1

10 Earl's Bu, Orphir

HY 3349 0445; HY30SW 1; on site but not visible
Found built into Earl's Bu during excavations in 1939.
Incised, rectangle, crescent and V-rod.
Ritchie, J N G 2003: 122; Fraser 2008: no 169.2; RCAHMS DC60671 and G 83810 (photograph)

11 Pool, Sanday

HY 6194 3785; HY63NW 17; OM 1997.33
Found re-used face down as paving stone in Pictish settlement in 1985.

Pecked, double-disc and other carvings.
Hunter 2007: 114–15; Fraser 2008: no 171; RCAHMS DC58306

PICTISH CROSS-SLABS

12 Appiehouse, Lady, Sanday

HY 6921 4105; HY64NE; OM 2015
Found below floor of cottage in 2011.
Relief carved. Face A, equal-armed cross on shaft and rectangular base, S-dragon, quadruped; face C, disc with triple spiral.
Gibson, Dockrill & Bond forthcoming; RCAHMS DC56107 and DC56108

13 Ness, Tankerness

HY 544093; OM 1986
Found just below ground level in 1986.
False relief, S-dragon.
Burt 1991: 5; Mack 2012: 12; RCAHMS DC58304

14 St Boniface Church, Papa Westray

HY 4877 5271; HY45SE 17; OM 1993.48
Found on the shore near St Boniface Church in 1992.
Incised, rectangle, possible cross.
Rendall 2002: 31, fig 2.4; RCAHMS DC58304

CROSS-SLABS

15 Broch of Burrian, North Ronaldsay

HY 7627 5138; HY75SE 3; NMS GB.1
Found in secondary level within broch during excavations in 1870.
Incised, outline cross with armpits, ogham inscription.
Traill 1890; RCAHMS 1946: no 193; MacGregor 1974: no 279, 96; Fisher 2002: 49, 52; Forsyth forthcoming a; RCAHMS DC60667; Sir Henry Dryden's drawing is RCAHMS DP 150410.

16 Broch of Gurness, Evie and Rendall

HY 3817 2685; HY3NE 5; NMS
 Found on top of broch wall during excavations in 1935.
 Sunken, linear cross.
 Hedges 1987: ii, no 306, fig 2.52; RCAHMS DC60667

17 Brough of Birsay

HY 23972851; HY22NW 1; in site museum
 Found in churchyard close to apse of church during excavations c 1936.
 Incised, outline cross with central circle.
 RCAHMS 1946: fig 53; RCAHMS DC60672

18 Brough of Birsay

HY 23972851; HY22NW 1; in site museum
 Found close to west wall of churchyard during excavations c 1936.
 Incised, two incised ring-headed crosses with expanded arms and ringed shafts; recumbent monument.
 RCAHMS 1946: fig 53; Curle 1982: 91; RCAHMS DC60677

19 Colli Ness, Sanday

HY 6850 4212; HY64SE 21; lost
 Found re-used in grave near chapel-site in 1828.
 Incised, 'cross Calvary' (cross with stepped base).
 NMS SAS MS 551: 98, Petrie notebook; New Stat Acct: vol 15, 142; RCAHMS 1946: no 458

20 Denshowe, Evie

HY 3767 2604; HY32NE 9; lost
 Found below ground surface in knoll in 1852.
 Incised, double linear cross with scroll terminals to the arms and at the base of the shaft.
 Allen & Anderson 1903, pt III: 25; RCAHMS 1946: no 301; NMS SAS MS 547, Petrie notebook no 10, 81–2; RCAHMS DC60675

21 St Boniface Church, Papa Westray

HY 4877 5271; HY45SE 17; OM 1997.3
 Found in graveyard, near north-east corner of church, in 1966.
 Incised. Face A outline cross, human figure, triquetra, false relief-carved cross of arcs; face C double outline cross with sunken armpits.
 Lamb 1983: no 29; Fisher 2002: 49; RCAHMS DC58303

22 St Boniface Church, Papa Westray

HY 4877 5271; HY45SE 17; NMS X.IB.200
 Found in graveyard north of St Boniface Church in 1920 (part left in ground).
 Incised, compass-drawn cross of arcs surmounted by linear cross with crescent terminals and rectangular base.
 Kirkness 1921: 134; Lamb 1983: no 29; Fisher 2002: 49; RCAHMS DC54521

23 St Colm's Church, Osmondwall, Hoy

ND 3341 8953; ND38NW 26; NMS X.IB.169
 Found in foundations of St Colm's Church in 1887.
 Incised, equal-armed cross on shaft with closed armpits.
 Cursiter 1898; RCAHMS 1946: no 1004; RCAHMS DC60668

24 St Mary's Church, Skail, Eday

HY 568328; HY53SE 1; lost
 Found buried in churchyard in 1934.
 Incised, linear cross with D-shaped terminals and shaft.
 Stat Acct: vol 15, 418; RCAHMS MS 36/119, 35; RCAHMS 1946: no 209; Fisher 2002: 47–8, fig 3.4; RCAHMS DC60670

25 St Nicholas' Church, Holm

HY 4909 0181; HY40SE 8; St Margaret's Chapel, Graemeshall, Holm
 Found re-used in the floor of St Nicholas' Church in 1893.

Low relief, equal-armed cross on shaft, rectangular base, filled with interlace; recumbent monument.

Allen & Anderson 1903, pt III: 21–3; RCAHMS 1946: no 359, fig 152; Fisher 2002: 45–7; RCAHMS DC60677

26 Skail, Deerness

HY 5881 0651; HY50NE 19; OM 79.2

Found re-used in paving of path to primary Norse house during excavations in 1979.

Incised, linear cross with looped terminals and pedestal base.

Buteux 1997: 108, 131, no 3001; RCAHMS DC58303

27 South Keigar, Deerness

c HY 552063; lost

Found on surface near souterrain in 1930.

Incised, 'rude cross'.

Rendall 1934

PORTABLE CROSS-SLABS

28 Brough of Birsay

HY 2397 2851; HY22NW 1; NMS H.B 607

Found on surface during excavations in 1937.

Incised, double outline cross, bar terminals and rectangular base.

Curle 1982: 92, ill 45, no 607; RCAHMS DC60674

29 St Nicholas' Chapel, Papa Stronsay

HY 6695 2918; HY62NE 14; lost (taken to the Heddle family town house in Kirkwall, last recorded 1888)

Found buried near St Nicholas' Chapel c 1850.

Incised, equal-armed cross, scroll terminals and rectangular base. Latin inscription.

Stuart 1856: 14, pl 42; Orkney Archives D29/8/8, 4 April 1888; ECMS 2: 24–5; Fisher 2002: 47, fig 3.5; Lowe 2002: 86; RCAHMS DC60674

CHURCH FURNITURE

30 Flotta

ND 3665 9308; ND39SE 4; NMS X.IB.48

Found re-used in wall of medieval church in 1871.

Low relief, equal-armed cross filled with interlace; altar frontal.

Allen & Anderson 1903, pt III: 23; NMS SAS UC17/39; Orkney Archives D34/S/2-3; RCAHMS 1946: no 1027; Thomas 1971: 186–8; Henderson & Henderson 2004: 209–10; RCAHMS DC51071 and DC60676

31 St Nicholas' Chapel, Papa Stronsay

HY 6695 2918; HY62NE 14; Headland Archaeology

Found re-used in floor of nave in 1998.

Incised, five small crosses; portable altar.

Lowe 2002: 88–90; RCAHMS DC60674

Wick, Caithness

c ND 368505; NMS KG 91

Retrieved from sea outside Wick harbour in the mid-19th century.

Incised, five small crosses, central cross partly double outline; portable altar.

PSAS 53 (1918–19), 10–11; Thomas 1971: 194–5; Blackie & Macaulay 1998: no 24; RCAHMS DC60674

Crosskirk, Eshaness, Shetland

HU 2123 7803; HU27NW 6; SM ARC 2013.79

Found in graveyard in 2012.

Incised cross with barred arms and base; portable altar.

Jenny Murray, Shetland Museum, pers comm; RCAHMS DC60666

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