

Class 2 Stones have “Christian” crosses. Apart from introducing a different religious belief, the new symbols of Cross, Biblical stories etc. probably would have been used to convert Mithraists. The fact that these Stones have symbols from more than one religious belief suggests they were quite acceptable to the remaining Mithraists. Maybe there were distinct transition features in the new iconography such as the arms of the cross being considered to represent the four “elements” of earth, wind, air and fire.

Looking to the earlier transition and introduction to Pictish-Mithraism from Roman Mithraism there are no Tauroctonies on Standing Stones but some components such as the serpent. Several stones engraved with bulls came from Burghead – perhaps a hang back to the Roman Mithraic Tauroctony or maybe that form of Mithraism was practiced there. The well which would have been within the fort boundary could be a Mithraeum. The situation at Burghead may well be one of timing with Roman Mithraism being practiced there in the same period as at Hadrian’s Wall.

The following pictures show examples of Stone Circles. The one at Lagmore is near Inveravon church where there are four Symbol Stones previously attached to an outer wall now in a porch. The church also overlooks the River Spey. Ardlair Stone Circle, like Upper Lagmore has a panoramic view and is near Rhynie and nearby Standing Stone sites. Inveravon church has Class 1 Stones seemingly from around the 6th to 8th Century the church itself being erected in 1806 on the site of the previous church built in 1568. And finally two views involving Migvie; the first is of the Cairngorms from the graveyard taken from beside the Migvie Pictish Symbol Stone; the second an inside view of the current church – restored in 2001 with extensive Christian and Pictish iconography.

The beliefs and changes in beliefs in the foregoing and as alluded to in the pictures below cover a period from prospectively 2000 BCE to now - a time span of 4000 years.



Upper (or West) Lagmore Stone Circle above Ballindalloch Golf Course (near Inveravon Church & Stones). Early Bronze Age.



Lower (or East) Lagmore Stone Circle next to Ballindalloch Golf Course. Photo taken from the Upper Stone Circle.

Class 1 Pictish Standing Stones at Inveravon Church. 6th to 8th Century CE. (Stones now in a porch).





Inveravon Church – erected 1806 on site of previous church (built 1568).



Ardlair Stone Circle (near Kennethmont).



Ardlair Stone Circle (near Kennethmont) – distant view.



Chairs and table inside Migvie church. Restored by Philip Astor of Tillypronie in 2001 in memory of his parents. The carvings include Pictish Symbols (in this picture the V-Rod & Crescent), text in English and at right angles to it in Ogham.

The church has a mixture of Christian and Pictish iconography.

Cairngorms from Migvie grave yard.
Pictish Cross slab is just beyond the right side of this view.



In summary:

- a) Stone Circle stones from an earlier religious belief have been re-used for creating Pictish Symbol Stones,
- b) iconography from Class 1 Stones (arguably seen as pagan) is seen on Class 2 (Christian “transition”) Stones and
- c) various pre-Christian (Class 1) Stones and “transition” Stones have been re-located in (and under) some Christian churches and in church yards.

Across these changes there seems to have been some form of continued reverence, acceptance or superstition (but no apparent threat).

Christian Crosses

Class 2 Stones have Christian crosses on them with earlier Symbols as well, the Class 3 Stones have no earlier Symbols. The Cross designs should not be regarded only as being what they are and nothing else. There is the possibility of Symbol concealment in the cross itself. For example where the vertical and horizontal parts of the cross intersect some Stones show a circle at each junction – 4 in all. These could be an allusion to the 4 elements (earth, water, air, fire) or four “winds” of the Moon. These Class 2 Stones tend to have well executed and sometimes more stylised versions of the Symbols seen on Class 1 Stones. Clearly the carving of Symbols on Class 2 Stones (with Christian Crosses) facilitated a transition between Pictish-Mithraism and Christianity. This is similar to the way in which Christianity was transitioned into as the state religion in the Roman Empire period. Class 2 Stones, therefore, have Mithraic relevance in the transition between beliefs.

Saints and Stones

Some churches in Pictland were founded by people who either were already or became Saints. However, our modern view of a Saint and what prevailed in Pictish times is different. The local clergyman was sometimes referred to as Saint. Many more churches were dedicated to existing, well known, Saints.

The following are locations where there are Pictish Stones (mainly Class 2) and Saint associations. This list links with the content in Appendix E.

St Boniface – church at Tealing NO43NW 9. Boniface - 672 to 754 seemingly founded 150 churches in NE Scotland; the one at Tealing was dedicated to St Peter.

St Braoch – church at Inchbrayock NO75NW 2.

St Bride – dedication of Advie NJ13SW 2 old church.

St Drostan – appointed abbot of Deer Abbey by St Columba. A Stone was reported as standing at the Abbey at NJ94NE 5 in the mid-1800s.

St Fergus 8th century - Dyce NJ81NE 8.

St Fillan – Struan NN86NW 3.

St Finnan died 661 – Migvie NJ40NW 2 dedicated to St F.

St Martin 4th century – Balluderon (St Martin's Stone) NO33NE 2 – St Martin was a Roman soldier who became a bishop. 11 Nov is Martinmas. St Columba erected a church in Ireland to St Martin. Ulbster ND34SW 28.01 Stone may have been at St Martin's chapel.

St Medan (male and female versions but of different time periods) – Kingoldrum NO54NW 3.

St Moluag / Lugg / Moloc died 592 – Rhynie NJ 42NE 30, perhaps Alyth NO224NW 14 and several others.

St Nathalan (Nachalan or Nachlan or Neachtan) bishop of Tullich died 678. Tullich NO39NE 2. Celtic chapel established by Nathalan, church held by Knights Templar then Hospitallers – built a fort round the church in 13C.

St Ninian – chapel of that name at Navidale ND01NW 23 but Ninian is usually associated with Southern Scots.

St Orland – Cossans NO45SW 4.

St Palladius - Fordoun, Auchenblae NO77NW 3.2 - first Christian missionary to Scotland (?) - preceded St Patrick around mid-400s.

St Regulus (St Rule) – association with former parish church at Monifieth NO43SE 25.

St Tredwell - Kintradwell NC90NW 15 – near Cinn Trolla broch with chapel and saint associations. Story of eyes and Nechtan (references to Papa Westray, Orkneys).

St Vigean – church at St Vigeans NO64SW 3 (Latin Vigeanus was St Feichin of Irish origin died 664).