

DANDALEITH STONE



The Pictish Symbols Decoded



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The Dandaleith Stone was uncovered during ploughing of a field near Craigellachie, Moray in May 2013. Following conservation, it will be on display at Elgin Museum from 2016.

It is unique in having incised Pictish Symbol carvings on adjacent sides – the so-called V-Rod & Crescent, Mirror Case and Z-Rod with Notched Rectangle; plus an eagle.

These Symbols can be interpreted in the context of a form of Roman Mithraism. At the time of the Roman Empire this mystery cult, derived from an older Persian religious belief, was practised across the Empire. There are remains of temples to this God – Mithras - by Hadrian's Wall, not far from Pictland, with statues and inscribed stones in museums e.g. in Newcastle.



Remains of the Mithras temple (Mithraeum) at Carrawburgh, Hadrian's Wall.

The author has discovered the connection between Mithraism and the Pictish Symbol Stones – who erected the first ones, when and for what purpose. The Symbols have been decoded. The entire discovery, Pictish-Mithraism®, and explanation is at www.pictish-mithraism.com

Those carvings on the Pictish Symbol Stones showing aspects of Mithraism are in three categories – symbolising Mithraic beliefs, indicating the structure of the temple (Mithraeum) that was used in Roman Empire times and a composite of both (rare and on the Dandaleith Stone).

Aberdeen Council Archaeology Service pictures show the Dandaleith Stone lying on its side. These pictures are rotated in this pamphlet as the Stone originally would have been upright in the ground.

This side of the Dandaleith Stone has two carvings – an Eagle which in Celtic mythology was seen as one of the oldest creatures whose wisdom and age were only surpassed by the salmon (also on the nearby Inveravon and Birnie Stones) – and the V-Rod & Crescent Pictish Symbol (seen on Stones across Pictland).



Fundamental to the Mithraism cult is the belief that the soul travels from beyond the Celestial Sphere at birth so into mortality then back at death into immortality. This belief would have been spiritually comforting – which partly explains its popularity amongst soldiers – and an enticement to join the cult.

Looking at Pictish Stones there is a Symbol which shows the travel of the soul - if the “V” of the so-called “V-Rod and Crescent” is seen not as a V but two arrows with the Crescent representing the skywards view.



The downward arrow represents the arrival of the soul at birth, the upward arrow its return on death and the Crescent the view from Earth, across the horizon to the Celestial Sphere.

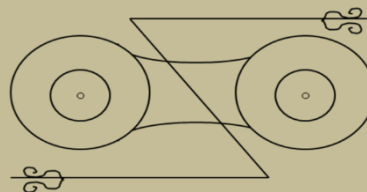
Turning, literally, to the other side of the Dandaleith Stone there are examples of a belief – the upper carving is a Mirror Case – and a very unusual composite of Z-Rod with Notched Rectangle.



Two elements of Mithraic belief are in the Dandaleith Mirror Case - Mithras Born from The Rock and holding the Celestial Sphere (alongside is a statue from Hadrian’s Wall in the Great North Museum, Newcastle – with constellations suggesting Mithras rotating the universe) and concentric circles representing the earth, planets and Celestial Sphere.

The key physical difference when practising the Roman and Pictish forms of Mithraism was the gathering place, with the fundamental shift from indoors (the temple or Mithraeum) to outdoors - the Symbol Stone and skywards view. The people who created the first Stones would have known what the earlier, indoor version looked like. It would have been recollected, then described to future initiates through a Symbol – popularly known as the Notched Rectangle.

Dandaleith’s version also has a Z-Rod – more usually seen with the Double Disc (general example below).



Tyrie and Birnie Stones have a similar design to Dandaleith (shown below).

The areas alongside the “notch” are reminiscent of the long side wall benches where participants would have sat in the indoor Mithraeum. The circles represent statue niches for Mithras’ companions - Cautes and Cautopates - who are represented by the Z-Rod arrows in the general sketch of the Z-Rod & Double Disc overleaf. In addition, a Z-Rod itself overlays the Notched Rectangle making this a composite carving of a Mithraic belief (Cautes representing sunrise & the spring equinox and Cautopates sunset & the autumn equinox) and the temple or Mithraeum.



With several Pictish Symbol Stone sites along the Spey Valley (not distant from more concentrated locations that are near former Roman establishments) plus the Roman hoard find at Birnie, maybe this most recent find will prompt further research into a past Roman presence in this geographic area.