

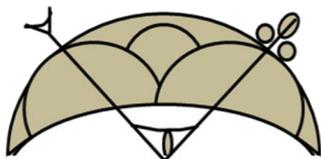
Pictish Symbol Stones – Case Study Inveravon

Features – four Class 1 Stones, generally with more commonplace Symbols, displayed on the wall of a church by the River Spey – recently relocated to the porch. The Stone found under the foundation of an old church has a “one- off” design.

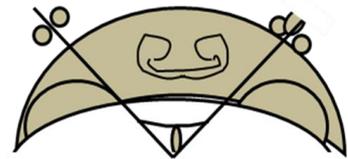


V-Rod & Crescent objects appear at the top of twenty Class 1 Stones – arguably placed there deliberately so the viewer looks up from the Stone to the sky (for smaller Stones) or across the top to the sky (for taller Stones). The object has been decoded as the crescent representing the Celestial Sphere and the V-Rod being two directional arrows.

Inveravon (2)

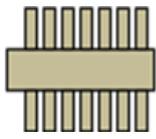


Inveravon (4)

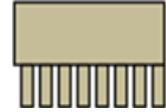


In Pictish-Mithraism the soul comes into mortality from Heaven at birth and returns to immortality at death. These two examples very clearly show the direction of travel (in from the left hand side and out from the right) to a central point (the viewer). Although the two examples at Inveravon have different infill to the crescents, the design at the focal point is the same on both.

Two Stones here have Combs of different designs. On the webpage “Mithraic Symbols – Identified and Decoded” at www.pictish-mithraism.com, twenty one distinct “comb” designs emerged and have been



analysed into four groups. The Inveravon Combs are in separate groups – one has seven teeth on each side of a central bar the other has eight teeth below a single bar.

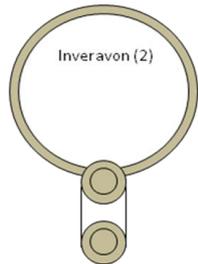


The latter is very difficult to see on the Stone and, therefore, to decipher – it may have seven teeth depending on how lines are counted.

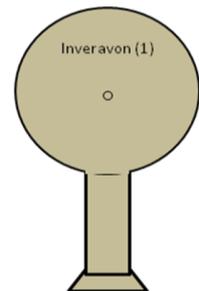
The number seven is of particular importance in Roman Mithraism being the number of Planets known in the period – as “gates” it is via these Planets that the soul travels from and to the Celestial Sphere. Also there are seven Mithraic grades. The presence of features associated with the number seven on Pictish Symbol Stones further tends to support a follow through from Roman to Pictish-Mithraism.

Combs are never seen without associated Mirrors which fall into two patterns – described elsewhere in this publication as “ring” and “solid”.

At Inveravon there is one of each, the solid example being on the Stone with the Eagle and the Comb with the double row of teeth.



This association of Mirrors and Combs could simplify their interpretation. If the Combs have a numeric association with elements of the Mysteries of Mithras (as noted above) and combs are all seen with mirrors then, arguably, the mirror object is also related to the Mysteries. For Inveravon Stone

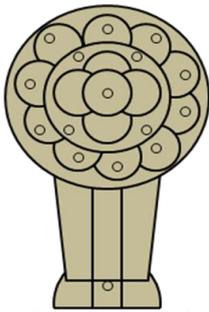


No. 2 the Symbol can be decoded as a Double Disc (usually representing the Earth, Planets and Celestial Sphere – but, here, lacking the central dot to depict the Earth) connecting to the Zodiac specifically at the constellation Capricorn. Inveravon Stone No. 1 has a one- off for a Mirror design (which does look like a hand-held mirror) but is more like a Mirror Case suggesting some artistic licence or a dual representation including the relationship between Mithras and the Zodiac (as with a Mirror Case).

Generally the Triple Disc looks like a receptacle with carrying rings and has been referred to as a cauldron. Having what looks like a bar or rod across the Triple Disc object at Inveravon brings together two ways of alluding to water as a circle with a horizontal line which is a pagan symbol for water plus the cauldron. Conversely, or additionally, the decode for this Symbol has the main circle as the Zodiac with the smaller circles as the Cancer and Capricorn constellations- the gates from and to Heaven.

There is a complete Pictish Beast on Stone number 4 and a fragment, mainly of the head, on Stone number 3. In addition to the decode being the sea goat as the sign of Capricorn a prospective further meaning is the Leontocephalous (a complex imagery of never ending time). Placed adjacent to the V-Rod and Crescent there is an opportunity for someone to talk through immortality (Capricorn being the gate to Heaven on death) and infinite time together.

On the middle Stone on the church wall is an Eagle which in Celtic mythology was seen as one of the oldest creatures whose wisdom and age were only surpassed by the Salmon. Many Pictish Symbol Stones have objects that have Celtic connections.



Certainly the most striking of the objects on the set of Inveravon Stones is the Mirror Case. Like Mirrors the Mirror Cases have “solid” and “hollow” or ring patterns making classification difficult as a few “solid” examples have a clear outer ring. Whilst the example on Inveravon Stone number 1 is in the “solid” majority it is a “one-off” due to its arrangement of partial circle plus dots.

Whereas “hollow” Mirror Cases can fairly readily be explained as representing the birth of Mithras (the lower part of the design being the birth from the rock) and also his holding the Zodiac (i.e. the circle or ring shape) the “solid” objects gave the carver the opportunity to make use of the full space enclosed by the outer circle. In this instance there are three distinct rings (the Earth, the Planets and the Celestial Sphere perhaps); between the outer and first ring in are ten partial circles of slightly differing size with a dot in each; between the first ring in and second are four partial circles with dots in the spaces in between; there is a single dot in the middle. Neither the shapes nor dots nor the numbers of them suggests anything to do with Pictish-Mithraism – maybe like the lines and dots on the Eagle they are merely decorative.