

Pictish Symbol Stones – Case Study Tillytarmont

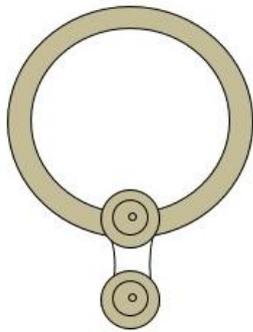
Features – from open farmland at the confluence of two rivers 5 Stones have been discovered, mainly through ploughing activity, over a one hundred year period. Collectively they have a selection of the more numerous Mithraic Symbols.

All of the “top five” Class 1 Symbol Stone figures across what is now Scotland are represented here – the V-rod & Crescent (twice), Mirror (twice), the Z-Rod & Double Disc (twice), Pictish Beast and Comb. Additionally there is an example of a Mirror Case, a Horseshoe / Arch, an Eagle and a Goose – giving the name “Goose Stone” to one of the first Stones discovered here – and an unusual Z-Rod with Serpent. With finds appearing from the 1860s to 1970s maybe there are more Stones in this location which could further lead to the speculation about the importance of this site. Elsewhere in this publication the idea of the equivalent of a “cathedral” has been mentioned with other prospective locations being Rhynie, Aberlemno and St Vigean.

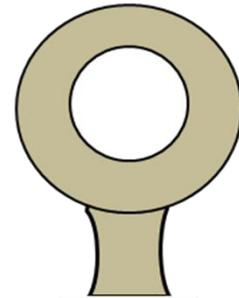
With the piece of land where all the Stones were discovered being a relatively narrow strip at the confluence of the Rivers Isla and Deveron the “cathedral” prospect is maybe further enhanced as water appears to be of significance in Pictish-Mithraism.

An Eagle is not uncommon (of the twenty two bird objects on Stones, sixteen are Eagles) but there are only three other examples of a Goose. Maybe the Goose links into some Celtic form of belief and worship – it can be associated with aggression in Celtic mythology and as symbolising the Holy Spirit in the Celtic Church. The Eagle has been seen variously as a symbol of power, the noon day Sun, a messenger, eternal life etc. – no specific options for association with Pictish-Mithraism but perhaps an acceptance of positioning Pictish-Mithraism Symbols alongside those of a pre-existing religious belief; potentially transition.

Maybe the apparent difference between the two Mirrors (drawn on pages 22 and 23 of Appendix A of www.pictish-mithraism.com) is due to incising tools and techniques rather than portraying a different meaning.

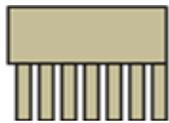


Often in Standing Stone books the Mirror and Mirror Case are described as complementary – hence their names. However, for Pictish-Mithraism interpretation this is inapplicable – they are neither mirror, nor mirror case but it is convenient to use these terms.



The Group 1 examples of the Mirror in Pictish-Mithraism decoding comprise the Double Disc part of the Z-Rod & Double Disc design with the larger circle being the Zodiac. The Tillytarmont example also has the three concentric circles in the Double Disc part – these are the Earth, Planets and Celestial Sphere. The Mirror Case represents 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 shape).

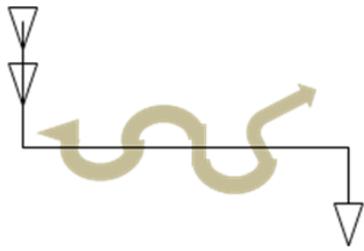
The Tillytarmont design of the Comb has seven “teeth”. Only one other example of this Symbol type has seven “teeth” on one side of a central bar i.e. Collace near Coupar Angus. A Comb at Inveravon, Speyside has seven “teeth” on each side of a central bar. The number seven has important significance in Roman Mithraism. The Planets known at the time were Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Mercury and Saturn. Combined with the Sun and Moon the seven “Planets” are associated with the seven steps in the ladder of initiation grades in the Roman Mithraic cult.



The Pictish Beast – the sea-goat as Capricorn – is also present on a Tillytarmont Stone. Its interpretation complements the V-Rod & Crescent and Mirror at this site in enabling the gateway through the Celestial Sphere to Heaven beyond to be explained.

Of the Z-Rod and Double Disc Symbols the one discovered in 1944 (known as Stone 2) has the usual three concentric circles (drawn at Appendix A page 34 of www.pictish-mithraism.com) compared with the indistinct Stone 3 discovered in 1867 and refound in 1954 with only two concentric circles. Both provide the same message of Cautes and Cautopates linked together by Mithras with the associated Symbolism of morning and evening, spring and autumn plus the Double Discs having several meanings such as the Earth in the centre with the Planets then the Celestial Sphere, the Sun and Moon paired in harmony and/or the Sun and Mithras in balance.

Z-Rods with Serpents are unusual - there are only six of the type of design as at Tillytarmont. Taking the Z-Rod to represent Cautes and Cautopates connected



together by Mithras the Double Discs are replaced by the Serpent which can be interpreted as a single constellation, a set of constellations which stretch across about half of the Zodiac, time itself, eternal life etc. In Pictish-Mithraism terms this arguably reinforces the connectivity and all-embracing position of Mithras.

With this selection of Symbols concentrated in a small space and located between two rivers the case for Tillytarmont having a purpose well beyond that of a stand-alone Symbol Stone is strong; in other words the equivalent of “cathedral”. If all the Stones stood together at the same time there would have been an opportunity to introduce the basics of the Mysteries of Mithras through to more esoteric aspects by progression through the grades.