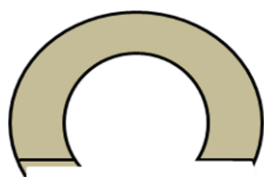
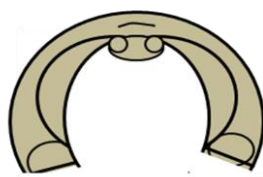


Mithraic Symbols Decoded - Horseshoe / Arch

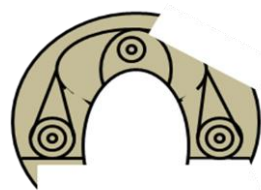
A general “arch” pattern can be seen in the Symbols that have been given the Horseshoe and Arch names except for Rothiebrisdane which has a somewhat distorted shape. 6 of the 18 Objects are indistinct so 12 designs emerged. There is a wide range of detail within the general pattern from the simplicity of Sandness to the highly decorated style of Crosskirk and the inclusion of concentric circles (as in the Z-Rod & Double Disc) at Strathpeffer.



Sandness



Crosskirk



Strathpeffer

The horseshoe and arch can be decoded (by taking the shape as an arc) as the arc of a Planet’s orbit, the entrance to a cave, the general shape of the inside of a Roman Mithraeum or the Celestial Sphere or, as with most of the Symbols, all of these, perhaps others. Unlikely prospects include the “good luck” Symbol seemingly a superstition started when St Dunstan was a blacksmith in Canterbury (around 959) and the pre-Chaldean shape representing various Moon goddesses – these cases are both outside the Pictish-Mithraism period.

The horseshoe and arch shapes can be recognised as representations of and from the indoor Mithraeum. “Of” the Mithraeum in the sense of its arched shape; “from” in the sense that within the Mithraeum there are representations of the Celestial Sphere etc.

Perhaps these decoded shapes were used instructionally to tell initiates about indoor Mithraea in which cult members would have met elsewhere and in the past but are not doing so in North East Scotland for reasons given above.