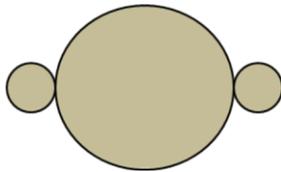


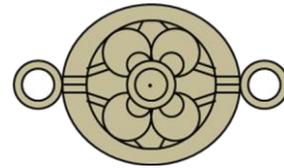
## Mithraic Symbols Decoded - Triple Disc

The Triple Disc is referred to as “cauldron” in some texts due to its shape and prospective use. 2 objects are indistinct and 12 designs emerged from the 13 items that were drawn. The result is 3 Groups of Objects with only the Monymusk Stone design not fitting any Group.

Whilst a general pattern emerged, the 3 Groups have distinct combinations of either smaller circles adjacent to the larger, central one, concentric circles (which look like rings) instead of the smaller circles and a horizontal line across the circles. The Monymusk example has decorations using circles and lines in the central portion. Collectively they do have the appearance of discs.

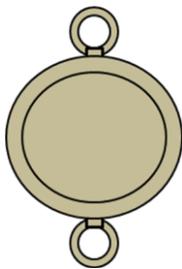


General Pattern

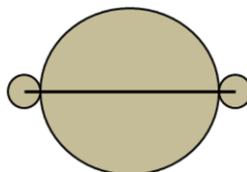


Monymusk

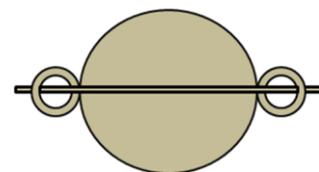
Cairnton, Tobar na Maor and Navidale (Group 1) follow the general pattern with the smaller circles horizontally on either side of the main circle but it has additional concentric circles; in the case of Cairnton there is a central dot in the main circle and dots slightly off-centre in the outer circles. These tend to echo the style of the Discs in the Z-Rod & Double Disc Symbols and one might assume the associated meaning of Earth, Planets and Celestial Sphere. In Group 2 the outer circles are replaced with rings and are on the vertical rather than horizontal axis. Each has a different interface to the main ring – from touching to what look like connecting links. The Dyce example has 3 concentric rings and a dot in the central circle. Group 3 has the horizontal line as its distinguishing feature; 4 of these Symbols are of the central and side circle design with the 5<sup>th</sup> at Kintore (Churchyard) having outer rings and a line which has been drawn to represent what looks like a rod which together suggest a means of carrying.



Glamis Manse



Inveravon (2)

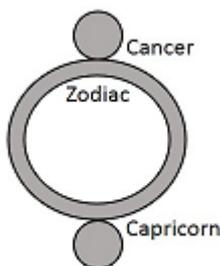


Kintore  
(Churchyard)

With its Triple Disc name a basically flat object is described. However, the alternative of “cauldron” suggests not only a three-dimensional depth but a practical function. It has also been termed krater, crater, vase and water container. Maybe within Mithraism these particular Symbols have several meanings. Each component of the Tauroctony has a Constellation / celestial counterpart: Bull - Taurus; Dog - Canis Minor & Canis Major; Snake – Hydra, Serpens, Draco; Raven – Corvus; Scorpion – Scorpius; Wheat ears on bull’s tail – Spica; Cautes & Cautopates – Gemini; Lion – Leo; Crater (cup) – Crater; Sol – Sun; Luna – Moon; Cave – Universe.

So Crater or cup appears with this Mithraic context. A small beaker is associated with the Corax Mithraic Grade; in the Nymphus Mithraic Grade rite, Venus can be offered a cup of water; a libation bowl is associated with the Pater Mithraic Grade. Apparently part of the Roman Mithraic ritual when progressing through the grades involved water. Water is one of the four elements with air, fire and Earth. Many of the Pictish Symbol Stones are in close proximity to water, generally rivers.

Whilst cauldron, libation bowl, water, plus rings and rods as means of carrying could be contenders in this decode, the greater likelihood is perhaps something more esoteric than obvious. Multiple meanings such as Mithraic grades, water as an element etc. are not discounted. However, with the Symbol Stones revealing the principles of the mysteries of Mithras and some limited recording of the indoor Mithraeum a pointer for decoding the Triple Discs lies in the paintings and statuary that would have been seen in Mithraea. With the addition of decodes for other Symbols plus a deconstruct of the Symbol into its components there are a central circle – the Celestial Sphere / Constellations / Zodiac – and smaller circles that are 180° apart. In Group 3 these components are linked together with a straight line (“rod”). In Group 2 the Glamis Manse(1), Aberlemno (Church) and Kintradwell (1) designs can be seen as having an outer ring – the Zodiac. Cairnton in Group 1 has the concentric ring elements similar to those in the Z-Rod & Double Disc. As Pictish Symbols tend to complement one another and collectively conceal but also reveal a religious belief the Triple Disc decode can be unravelled.



**Complementing other key Mithraic Symbols on the Pictish Stones, the Triple Disc represents the Zodiac with Cancer and Capricorn Constellations (the gates from and to Heaven) 180° apart. They coincide with the summer and winter solstices.**