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# Tullich, Aberdeenshire: a reappraisal of an early ecclesiastical site and its carved stones in the light of recent excavations

Jane Geddes,\* Hilary K Murray<sup>†</sup> and J Charles Murray<sup>†</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*Long known as an early church site, the importance of Tullich in Aberdeenshire may often have been underestimated. An evaluation and excavation were undertaken prior to the extension of the modern graveyard and have produced evidence of both inner and outer enclosures around the church that yielded good radiocarbon dates for development of the site in the 7th to 9th centuries and for continued activity in the medieval period. Two early grave markers were found during the excavation, bringing the present total of carved stones from the site to 16 cross-marked slabs and a Pictish symbol stone, a quantity which makes Tullich unique in Aberdeenshire and strongly indicates a religious community established by the late 7th century. The newly discovered crosses have prompted a reappraisal of the full corpus of early medieval carved stones from the site.*

## INTRODUCTION

The ruined medieval church of Tullich, Aberdeenshire (NMRS No: NO39NE 2; Historic Scotland SM Index No 86), stands within its sub-circular graveyard some 2km to the east of Ballater, between the A93 and the River Dee (NGR: NO 3905 9754). Traditionally regarded as the site of an Early Christian community founded by St Nathalan, it has produced a significant collection of early medieval carved stones. When an extension was proposed to the modern graveyard, which lies beside the church, Aberdeenshire Council's Archaeology Service imposed a planning condition requiring an archaeological evaluation of the field to the east of the graveyard (illus 1 and 6). Undertaken in November 2012 (Murray & Murray 2012a), this investigation revealed part of an outer ditch and, as a result, it was decided to commission a geophysical survey of the ditch line and the enclosed area, including the west part of the graveyard. A ground penetrating radar survey

(GPR) was undertaken by Rose Geophysical Consultants (Ovenden 2013) which clearly indicated the line of a ditch, possible revetting or stonework within the ditch and an arc of possible stone outside the line of the existing graveyard wall (illus 5). It was used as a basis for deciding a scheme of full excavation of targeted areas, which took place in 2013 (Murray & Murray 2012a; 2014). Two previously unknown cross-slabs were found during the excavation, which stimulated the present authors to adopt a multi-disciplinary reassessment of Tullich.

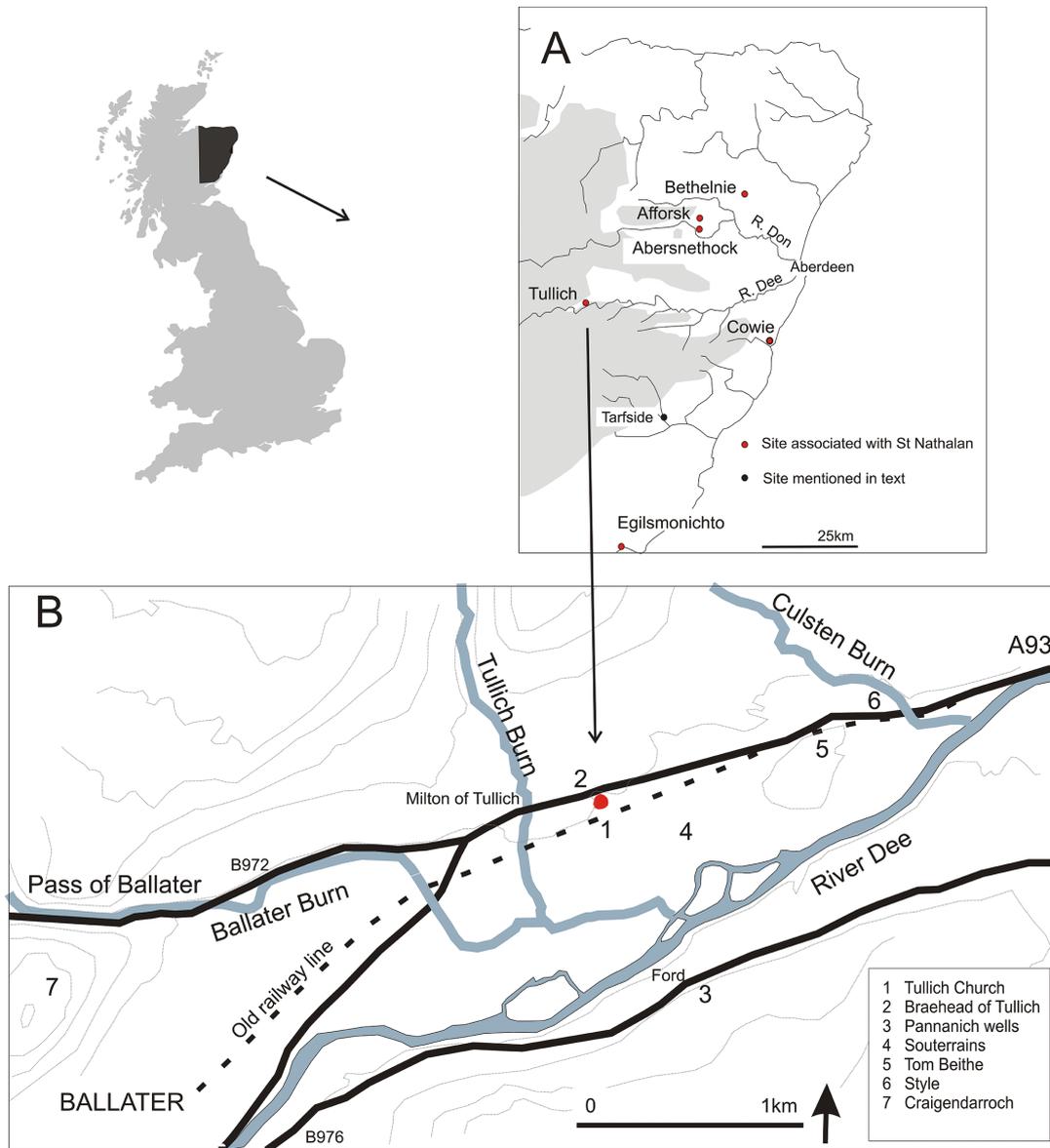
## PART 1: THE SITE

### LOCATION

The striking landscape around Tullich is of focal and strategic importance. It lies on a flat plain at the east end of the Pass of Ballater, controlling the route between the Highlands and the lower reaches of the River Dee. A church in this position would demonstrate a very visible

\* History of Art, University of Aberdeen AB24 3DS

<sup>†</sup> Murray Archaeological Services Ltd, Hill of Belnagoak, Methlick, Aberdeenshire AB41 7JN



ILLUS 1 Location of Tullich. A: sites associated with St Nathalan. B: Tullich and its surrounding topography

political endorsement by the early medieval secular power in the area.

It is also beside the confluence of the Tullich Burn and the River Dee, with fords over both nearby. An estate map of 1790 (*Scroll Plan*) shows early roads running from the

church west to the pass across the ford of the Tullich Burn and south to the ford over the River Dee (illus 2). This fairly narrow stretch of good land between the river and the high ground to the north would have controlled movement through the pass and across the river. This would



ILLUS 2 Detail of Tullich Churchyard from the *Scroll Plan of the lands of Tullich within dykes, the property of Wm Farquharson Esqr of Monaltrie. 1790*. Photographed and reproduced courtesy of Invercauld Estate

have been even more apparent if, as Watson and Allan suggest (1987: fig 5), the former tract of the Dee looped north to the west of the Tullich Burn.

The church site appears to have been bordered on three sides by a palaeochannel which had been deepened to form an enclosing ditch. The palaeochannel, possibly seasonally waterlogged, would have been visible in the Early Historic landscape and may have created the sense of a place apart. The wider vista of the church plain is closed at the west end by the prominent knoll,

Craigendarroch, and at its east by Tom Beithe, a lower hillock.

There is no clear archaeological evidence of any prehistoric ritual site on this ground – although other natural features might be regarded as indicators of the possible existence of such an earlier, pre-Christian sacral site. The church is situated in direct alignment between the spring point of Pannanich Wells to the south and the exposed geological fault which forms a notch in Crannach Hill to the north (illus 3). It is tempting to think that the waters of the nearby Pannanich

Wells (NO39NE 98.1 and 98.2) may have been locally known for their curative powers long before the publicised healing of an old lady in 1760 (Groome 1884: 158). Sedgwick (1995: 26) notes that the Monaltrie Estate papers refer to the ‘discovery’ of the waters before 1745.

#### PREHISTORIC ACTIVITY

The importance of the location of Tullich controlling the route-ways is demonstrated by the deposition of a hoard of two Early Bronze Age flat axes at the Pass of Ballater (NO39NE16) (Ralston 1984: 77–8), which stresses the symbolic and practical significance of the pass.

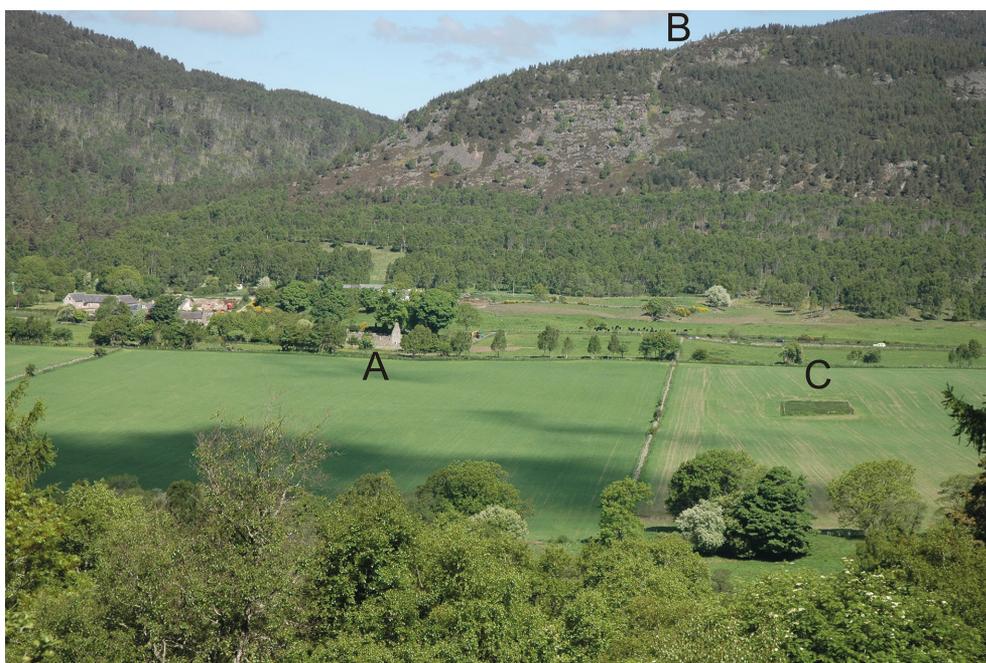
Evidence of late prehistoric settlement in the fertile plain directly around Tullich is provided by two souterrains, c 80m apart, at Braehead of Tullich between 200 and 250m south-east of the church. One of the souterrains is only known from a cropmark (NO39NE103, NO39NE114). The other, opened in the 1920s and since blocked, comprises a stone passage c 15m long

with a possible secondary chamber (NO39NE3) (illus 3: C). There is no visible evidence of the roundhouses that would have stood beside them; however, the effort of building two souterrains would have involved community labour and, as Armit (1999: 583) stresses, is a marker of a settlement of considerable social significance.

The Class 1 Pictish symbol stone (Tullich 1) from the graveyard is witness to the continuation of this secular power in the immediate area into the early medieval period.

#### HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

The earliest written records, from 1275 and 1366, refer to the location as *Tulynathtlayk* and *Tulynathelath* meaning ‘hillock or knoll of Nathalan’ (*Abdn. Reg.*: 1275, 1366). Both elements of the name are significant. His saint’s day, 8 January, commemorated in the *Aberdeen Breviary* and by the date of the later village fair, confirm his identity with *Nectain of Nér*, an abbot whose death is recorded in the *Annals of*



ILLUS 3 View from south side of River Dee near Pannanich Wells across the Dee to Tullich. Church (A), notch in the hill above the church (B) and the souterrain site (C) are marked

*Ulster* in 679, with the death day mentioned in the *Martyrology of Tallaght* (Mackinlay 1914: 222; Clancy 2008: 366–7; Macquarrie 2012: 21). Clancy (2008: 367–75) identifies Nathalan with variations (Nachlan, Nechtan, Mo Nithoc, Mo Neittoc) and suggests the name is probably Pictish. He also suggests that Afforsk and Abersnethock, both near Monymusk, and possibly Egilsmonichto, near Dundee, were dedicated to Nathalan. He identifies Nathalan with *Nectain of Nér* in Alba – a lost monastery which he would place around Fetternear, Aberdeenshire. Clancy (2008: 366) argues further that the apparently local nature of the cult of Nathalan, as illustrated by dedications and place-name evidence, may indicate these are contemporary foundations by the eponymous saint or his immediate followers/successors, rather than later, medieval dedications. This could place their foundation prior to, or within a few years of Nathalan's death in 679. The local Gaelic name of the site *Cill Nachlan*, Nathalan's church (Watson & Allan 1984: 42) reiterates this association. While the evidence does not allow of any certainty that Tullich was founded by Nathalan, radiocarbon dates from one of the ditches at Tullich prove activity there within the 7th to 9th centuries, a date range supported by the stylistic range of the crosses. Even if Clancy (2008: 369) is correct in placing the main Nathalan foundation near Fetternear, it is at least credible that Tullich, only some 45km away, was founded by Nathalan, as stated in the *Aberdeen Breviary*, or shortly afterwards by one of his followers.

The *Aberdeen Breviary*, printed in 1510, promotes the cult of St Nathalan in terms of its own era rather than the historical past (Macquarrie 2012: 20–3). It highlights Tullich as the home of Nathalan, the location of his miracles, and the site of his burial, with no mention of Nér. It credits him as founder of Tullich, Bethelnie and Cowie, all churches which were historically dedicated to him, while miracles of healing were still drawing pilgrims to Tullich in the 16th century. This at least indicates that his cult was apparently alive and flourishing at the end of the Middle Ages.

In an area already dominated by hills, the choice of Tullich as a name suggests a notable

landmark. O'Grady (2014: 114, 117–19) has identified a correlation, particularly in north-east Scotland, between names containing the element 'tulach', churches and assembly sites. Some of these mounds are historically attested, like Tillydrone adjacent to St Machar's Cathedral in Aberdeen. O'Grady includes Abersnethock (also containing St Nathalan's name), adjacent to the mound at Tillywater, and Tullich, with its symbol stone and prominent knoll to the east, in this group as a potential site of early secular administration beside a church. Although RCAHMS records another smaller mound at Braehead of Tullich (NO39NE60), the defining landmark is undoubtedly Tom Beithe (see below, pp 261, 264).

Medieval documentary references show that probably from the mid-13th century, the church and its lands were granted to the Knights Templars, and after the suppression of that order they were transferred with their other assets to the Knights Hospitallers, in 1312 (Cowan et al 1983). Properties gifted to the Military Orders were primarily of importance in terms of the income they generated; such properties were often leased and Tullich was certainly leased by the Rental of 1539–40 (Cowan et al 1983: lviii–lxi, 13). If the cult had been flourishing at Tullich during this period, it would have significantly increased income from the property. The extent of the Templar/Hospitaller property (NO39NE18) is not clear, but Bogdan and Bryce (1991) classified it as a manor. The settlement, the pre-Improvement field system, the church and the mill – as shown on the 1790 *Scroll Plan* – may all reflect the medieval manorial structure.

The existing ruined church is medieval, with a blocked doorway of early 15th-century date in the west end of the north wall (Simpson 1922). The 15th-century remodelling of the church would have been done during the Hospitallers' ownership. Tullich, like all the Hospitallers' properties, was confiscated after the Reformation. Cowan (1967: 201) suggests that by the 13th–14th centuries, Tullich had become a chapel of Aboyne because of the close association of both foundations in grants.

According to the Monaltrie Estate records (Sedgwick 1995: 24), Monaltrie including parts

of Tullich, was granted to the Farquharsons by the Earl of Mar in exchange for land at Braemar. Tullich was made a Burgh of Barony by Charles II in an *Act for William Farquharson anent the town of Tullich*, registered in Edinburgh in April 1661 (RPS 1661/1/229). This established a weekly market and two fairs each year and it would have been after this date that the market cross was erected. Ownership of the Monaltrie Estate remained in the Farquharson family – with the exception of the period after 1745 when it was forfeit to the Crown. After regaining his lands, Francis Farquharson began agricultural improvements that were continued after his death in 1791 by his nephew William. The implementation of these improvements is reflected in the 1790 *Scroll Plan* and the first OS map of 1866.

The church was altered in the post-Reformation period. In 1798, the three parishes of Glenmuick, Tullich and Glengairn were united and a new parish church built in Ballater, subsequently the Tullich church was abandoned and divided into burial enclosures.

After the foundation of Ballater, Tullich, which is shown on the 1790 *Scroll Plan* as a scatter of at least 40 buildings, declined to a cluster of houses, although foundations of some of the earlier settlement remain visible to the north-east of Braehead of Tullich.

#### MAP EVIDENCE

The earliest maps depicting and naming Tullich church are Robert Gordon's *Map of Scotland, north of Loch Linnhe and the River Dee and west of the River Deveron*, surveyed c 1636–52, Blaeu's *Duo Vicecomitatus Aberdonia & Banfia*, published in 1654, and an anonymous *Map of the five parishes above Colblean*, dated 1725. In all cases, the church is shown by a symbol and no enclosure is depicted.

Roy's *Military Survey* of 1747–55 is more detailed and shows the church in a rectangular enclosure clearly marked K. of Tulloch [*sic*] (illus 21). The rectangular shape should not be over-interpreted since the depiction of non-military features on Roy's map is of variable accuracy (<http://maps.nls.uk/roy/style.html>), and he also

depicts the circular Govan church enclosure as square (NMRS No NS56NE17) (Kelly 1994: fig 4).

An outstanding, large scale map of the site, *The Scroll Plan of the lands of Tullich within dykes, the property of Wm Farquharson Esqr of Monaltrie. 1790* gives a far more detailed picture (illus 2). It has been extensively analysed by Watson and Allan (1987). The general accuracy of this plan has been demonstrated by overlaying it with the lines of the ditch attested during excavation.

This plan shows the church and graveyard in detail. The graveyard is drawn as an almost perfect circle enclosed by a wall. On the north side of the graveyard, two features are drawn in the line of the wall; one is a sub-rectangular grey-shaded feature, the shading possibly suggesting a structure, the other is an almost triangular feature.

To the west of the church, the words 'Font' and 'Stone' flank a small round symbol, presumably the font stone itself. The only cross depicted and named is the 'Market Cross', shown clearly standing on the north side of the road, within the settlement of Tullich (illus 2).

Of very considerable interest is the line of the boundary separating the open ground around the graveyard from the rigs and yards surrounding it. On the east, this boundary is on the line of the ditch shown by aerial photographs and the geophysical survey and sectioned by the excavation. The north end of the boundary is shown curving east to the road and continuing north of the road, apparently curling around the east limit of the village of Tullich. It is noteworthy that most of this east boundary was drawn as three parallel lines, unlike, for example, the churchyard wall, which was drawn as two parallel lines; this may represent the stone drain found during the excavation (see below: Area A).

To the south, the boundary comes to an angle south-east of the churchyard before turning north-west along the line of a cropmark shown on aerial photographs; a small rectilinear enclosure is marked near the angle (see below: Area F). To the south-west of the churchyard, there is a short wall(?) between the churchyard wall and the outer boundary.

The Ordnance Survey Map of 1866 (*OS 1869*) shows the graveyard on its existing sub-circular plan, slightly elongated towards the north to the road. The church is marked as ruined. The fields have been amalgamated and incorporated into the rectilinear fields of the improved landscape.

#### AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

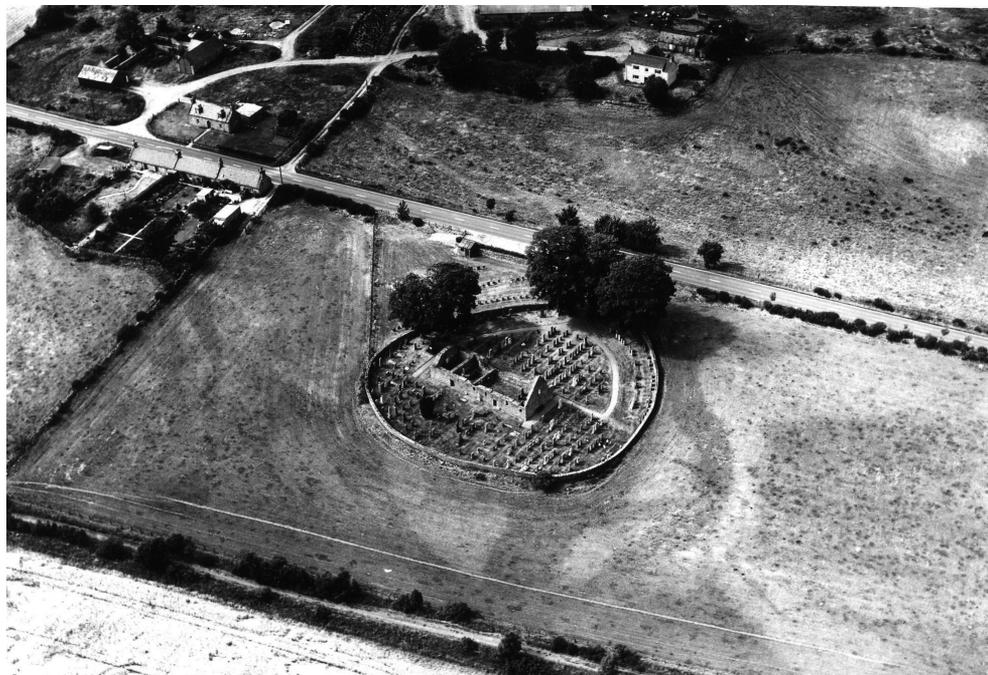
All the aerial photographs in the Aberdeenshire SMR have been reviewed courtesy of Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service. One of the photographs, taken from the south in 1989 (AAS-89-05-516-7 001), shows the modern burial ground (illus 4). A dark cropmark is visible lying alongside the east side of the graveyard and then curving west and south before joining a wide, dark, north/south cropmark running north to the churchyard wall. At this point, a similar cropmark also extends north-west towards the west side of

the graveyard. The cropmarks, which can now be identified with the excavated ditch, accord with the evidence of the geophysical survey and with the line of boundaries on the 1790 *Scroll Plan*.

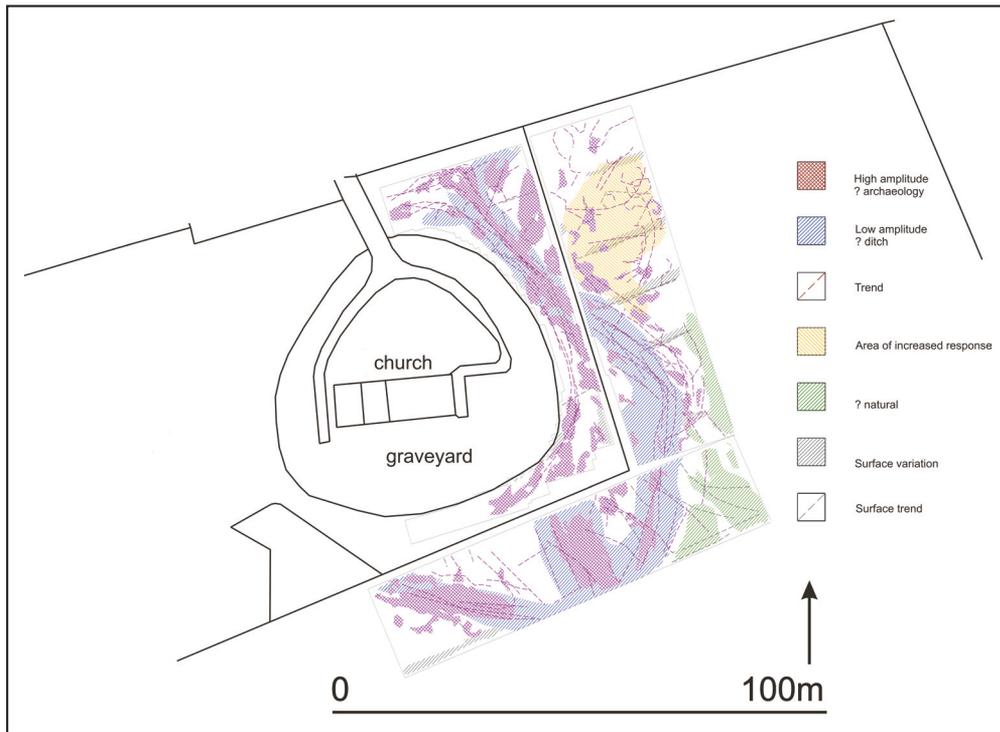
#### THE EXCAVATION

The excavation targeted the outer ditch and a series of anomalies indicated by the geophysical survey (illus 5) and the aerial photographs. The evaluation had identified the ditch (illus 6: evaluation trenches 1, 2 and 5) but only partial sections had been possible and interpretation was limited by a late 18th-/early 19th-century hearth and lime kiln on the inner edge of the filled ditch (Murray & Murray 2012a).

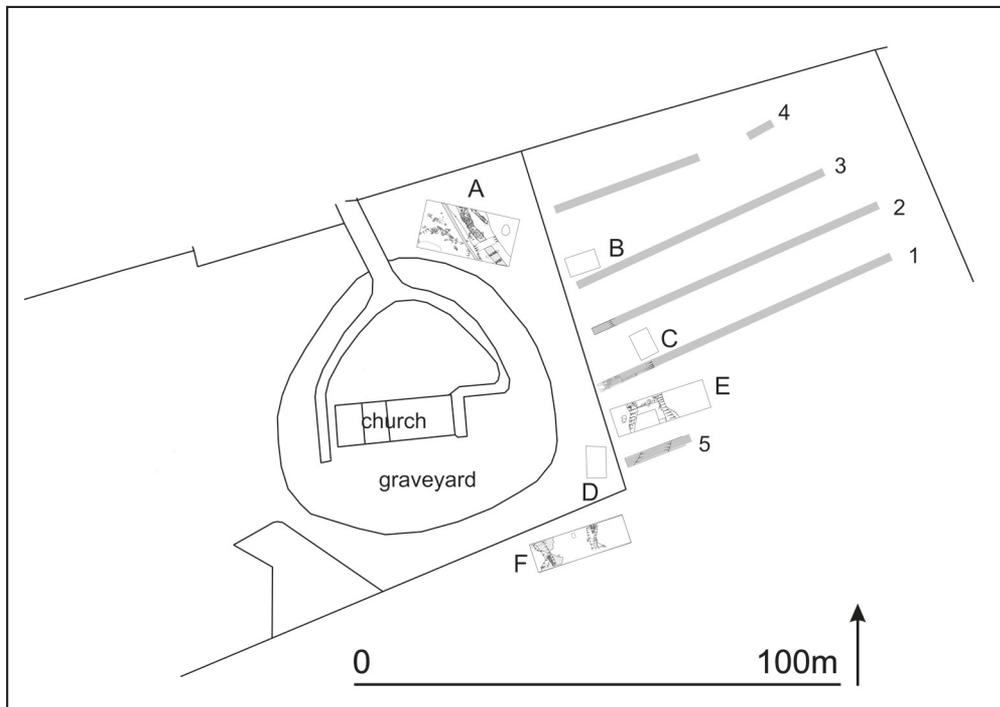
Six areas were excavated (illus 6: A–F). Areas B, C and D, which were excavated to examine small anomalies shown on the geophysical survey, proved negative and will not be discussed further here. Areas A, E and F all sectioned



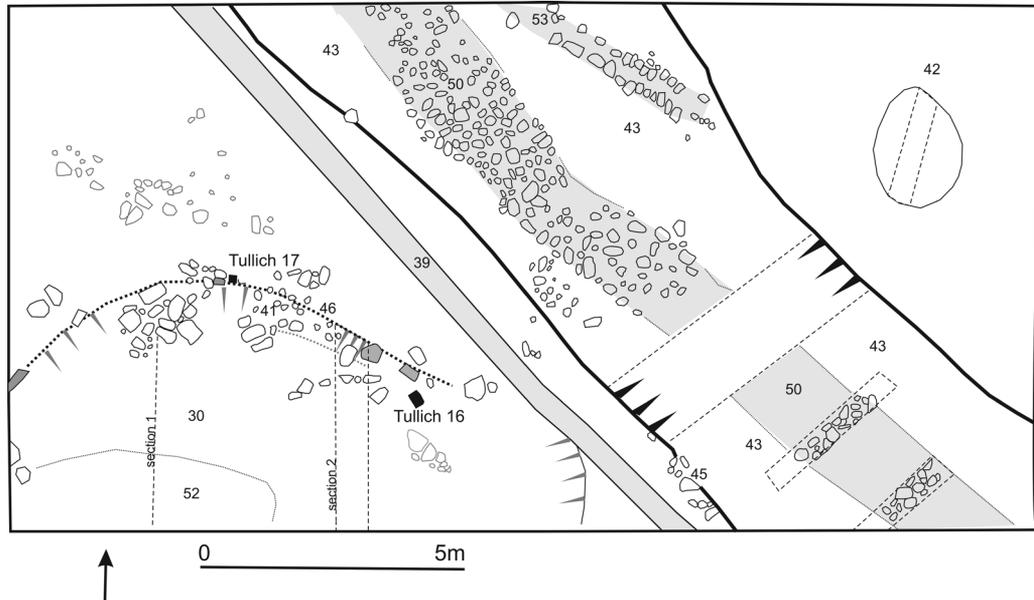
ILLUS 4 Air photograph of Tullich churchyard in 1989 showing the palaeochannels and ditches as darker bands in the foreground. The modern burial ground has expanded considerably since this photograph was taken. AAS-89-05-516-7 001. Reproduced courtesy of Aberdeenshire Council



ILLUS 5 Combined interpretation of the Ground Penetrating Radar Survey (Ovenden, 2013, figure 22).  
Reproduced courtesy of Rose Geophysical Consultants



ILLUS 6 Tullich Graveyard showing evaluation trenches (Tr 1–5) and excavated areas (A–F). Reproduced from Ordnance Survey digital map data, © Crown Copyright, All rights reserved. 2014. License No 100041040



ILLUS 7 Plan of Area A. Cross-slabs Tullich 16 and Tullich 17 are coloured black

different parts of the outer enclosure ditch and are discussed below.

#### Area A

Area A, which was 20m × 10m, was excavated to cross-section the ditch at the north side of the graveyard where it appeared to run north towards the road and to attempt to identify a strong anomaly in the geophysical survey which curved west parallel with the graveyard wall and inside the area enclosed by the ditch (illus 5 and 7). Part of this area extended into the exclusion zone around the Scheduled Monument and was excavated with Scheduled Monument Consent.

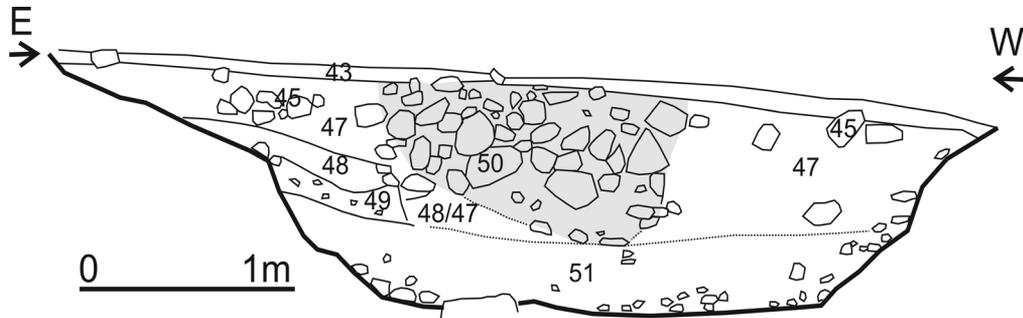
Both the ditch and the curved anomaly were identified and will be discussed below. The natural ground here comprised a gravel ridge across the east part of the excavated area and, to the west, very hard compact clay with boulders. Aerial photographs suggest that the ditch was cut within part of a natural palaeochannel which may have formed along the interface between the clay and gravels. A shallow pit (C42) cut into the natural gravel outside the ditch appeared to be a modern agricultural feature.

#### The Ditch

The ditch was identified running NNW/SSE across the trench. A section was dug across it (illus 8 and 9). The maximum width was 4.85m, but part of this was a shallower cut on the east side; the width of the lower, nearly vertically sided section was c 3.3m. The maximum depth was 1.2m. The lowest fill (C51) was grey silt with some small stones and some charcoal fragments (identified as oak so no radiocarbon sample was submitted).

On the east side, a thin layer of redeposited natural gravel (C49) and a later deposit of charcoal (C48) may be related to the apparent disturbance of the shallower east edge. Over most of the ditch, the upper surfaces of silt (C51) merged into lighter grey sandy silt (C47). Neither of these layers yielded any finds.

It was clear that a recut (C50) filled with stones had been dug along the length of the ditch, cut into the earlier fills. This was exposed across the full width of the site, and two additional partial sections cut across it. Recut C50 was 1.5m wide and 700mm deep; it appears to have been a very large stone drain and is likely to



ILLUS 8 North-facing section through outer enclosure ditch in Area A. Shading denotes later stone drain (50)

date to the late 18th/early 19th century as part of agricultural improvements. The only find was a fragment of modern glass from the top surface, which is liable to have been ploughed in from the topsoil. The line of the ditch is shown on the estate map of 1790 (illus 2). This section of the drain follows the softer ground of the ditch and the GPR survey results (illus 5) suggest it may have followed the ditch further south, appearing in evaluation trench 1 and in Area E.

A scatter of stones (C45) appeared to have been plough-dragged from the top of the stone drain (C50). The slight hollow of the ditch and the drain were both sealed by cultivation soil (C43) which merged into the topsoil.

A second, far smaller, stone drain (C53), dug into the ditch fills, and a 20th-century clay pipe drain (C39), dug alongside the ditch, both attest to modern drainage disturbing the earlier features.



ILLUS 9 Area A looking south-east with churchyard wall in background. Outer enclosure ditch with stone drain (C50) along centre crosses the left side of excavation. Arc of stones to right at back of excavation

#### *Arc in south-west corner of Area A*

The GPR survey had shown a curvilinear anomaly, roughly parallel to and some 4–5m outside the north side of the existing churchyard wall, forming an arc *c* 18m across (illus 5). The central part of this arc (*c* 11m east/west × 4.5m north/south) was exposed by the excavation (illus 7 and 9). It formed a hollow up to 500mm deep, apparently cut into natural, and filled by grey pebbly silt (C30 over C52) with rare lenses of cleaner sand or of charcoal flecks. This may have been, at least in part, relatively late infilling of an inconvenient hollow as it included several large, fairly modern, iron bolts as well as fragments of glass and china. However, an abraded handle sherd from a 13th/14th-century redware jug is indicative of medieval activity. The hollow could not be fully excavated without endangering mature trees within the churchyard; as a result only two sections were excavated to natural.

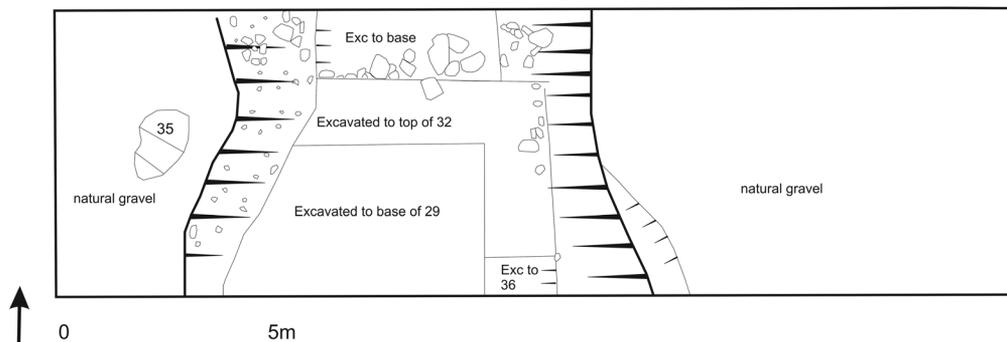
The edge of the hollow was formed by a fairly gentle slope with a concentration of stones along its line, a number of these were set vertically, against the edge of the slope. Two cross-slabs were found in this arc. One (Tulich 16), found during topsoil removal, lay on its carved face with the top towards the church, having apparently fallen from a vertical position facing the church. The other (Tulich 17) was excavated in its vertical position, also facing the church (illus 7 and 16). All the other stones on the arc were excavated and examined but none displayed any indication of having been carved.

Interpretation of this arc is difficult. It may relate to the rather odd, sub-triangular feature shown on the 1790 *Scroll Plan*, although this appears somewhat further east (illus 2). The hollow may be assumed to have been filled before the rebuilding of the churchyard wall in the early 19th century and the 18th/19th-century leveling prior to cultivation within this area. While it is possible it relates to the removal or building of an earlier wall, this does not really explain the wide hollowed area. Of possible significance is the apparent care, whether of reverence or superstition, taken in the placing of the two cross-slabs facing the church, in marked contrast to the reuse of some of the larger slabs in the fabric of the post-Reformation alterations to the church.

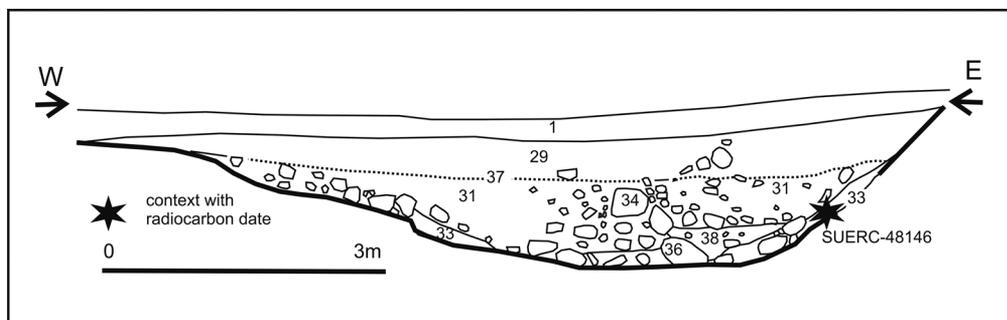
#### *Area E*

An area 20m × 6m was targeted to give a full cross-section of the ditch. As the evaluation had shown that part of the ditch fill comprised very loose stones, the ditch was excavated in three 'steps', the full depth only being excavated at the north section (illus 10).

Some 9m of Area E lay outside the ditch to the east; this all proved to have shallow topsoil onto gravel natural, with no surviving archaeology or finds. This is consistent with the results of the evaluation in which there were no archaeological features or finds observed outside the ditch. This is perhaps not surprising in the light of the intensive agricultural use depicted here on the 1790 *Scroll Plan*.



ILLUS 10 Plan of Area E showing outer enclosure ditch



ILLUS 11 South-facing section of outer enclosure ditch in Area E

A maximum of 3m within the enclosed area west of the ditch could be excavated. This also proved to have shallow topsoil over gravel natural. A single, shallow irregular feature appeared to be no more than a stone hole or similar.

The ditch (C28) at this point was 7.8m wide and maximum 1.6m deep (illus 11 and 12). The upper fill, below topsoil, comprised some 400mm of silty soil (C29), which can be interpreted as a mixture of silting and deliberate levelling



ILLUS 12 Section of outer enclosure ditch in Area E

for easier cultivation. Three abraded sherds of medieval pottery in this suggest soil was pulled in from the edges of the ditch. The levelling would have occurred at some point between the drawing of the 1790 *Scroll Plan*, when the ditch was still visible as the boundary between churchyard and cultivated land, and 1866, by

which time the Ordnance Survey map shows that the new field system had incorporated this area into cultivation. Directly below the levelling fill there was a turf line (C37), which had developed when the ditch would have been visible as a dip at least 500mm below the ground surface. A band of stones (C32) above this level, running south-west/north-east then turning north, and a more general spread of cobble-like stones, may be part of the 18th/19th-century features associated with a lime kiln and earlier hearth in evaluation trench 1.

The main ditch fill below the turf line comprised fine yellow/grey silt (31) with a number of pebbles, especially at the edges where they had eroded off the sides of the ditch. This gave the impression of natural silting over a number of years.

Below this there was a slippage of redeposited gravel and stones (C38) that extended from the outer, east edge of the ditch. This sealed the primary fill (C33), which comprised fine gritty silt with charcoal, burnt mammal bone and burnt cereals; a sherd of medieval pottery and a radiocarbon date of cal AD 1228–cal AD 1384 (Table 1: SUERC-48146) from burnt grain suggest that this primary fill was washed in during the 13th/14th century. It suggests that the ditch was open and either dug or re-dug in the 13th/14th century.

TABLE 1  
Radiocarbon dates

Site	Sample	Material	Context	Description	Depositional context	Uncal	Calibrated 1-sigma	Calibrated 2-sigma	Delta- <sup>13</sup> C ‰
Tullich, Aberdeenshire	SUERC-44681	Charred grain: Hulled barley	Evaluation Tr 1, 16	Hearth below lime kiln on inner edge of filled outer enclosure ditch.	Secondary. Post-dates filling of ditch.	169 ± 29	cal AD 1668–1949	cal AD 1661–1954	–23.5
Tullich, Aberdeenshire	SUERC-48146	Charred grain: Hulled barley	Area E, 33	Fill of outer enclosure ditch in-washed from sides	Primary fill of cut/recut of ditch	717 ± 30	cal AD 1266–1291	cal AD 1228–1384	–25.0 assumed
Tullich, Aberdeenshire	SUERC-48148	Charred grain: Hulled barley	Area F, 61	Upper fill entry ditch 68	Latest in sequence of fills in ditch	1250 ± 30	cal AD 688–800	cal AD 676–870	–23.8
Tullich, Aberdeenshire	SUERC-48149	Charred grain: Hulled barley	Area F, 70	Fill in entry ditch 68. Above context 67	Middle in sequence of fills in ditch	1215 ± 30	cal AD 774–870	cal AD 693–890	–24.4
Tullich, Aberdeenshire	SUERC-48147	Charcoal: Scot's pine	Area F, 67	Lower fill entry ditch 68	Earliest in sequence of fills in ditch	1318 ± 30	cal AD 658–765	cal AD 653–771	–24.5

The compact area of stones and larger boulders (illus 10 and 11: C34, C36), some 1.5m wide in the centre of the ditch, can be interpreted as an extension of the stone drain excavated in Area A, cut through the earlier fills (C33, C38 and C31) at a time when the ditch was still a very visible dip in the landscape.

#### Area F

An area 20m×6m was excavated to the south of the graveyard where the ditch curved west, and where both the aerial photographs and the geophysical survey suggested that there was a possible entrance leading north into the enclosed area.

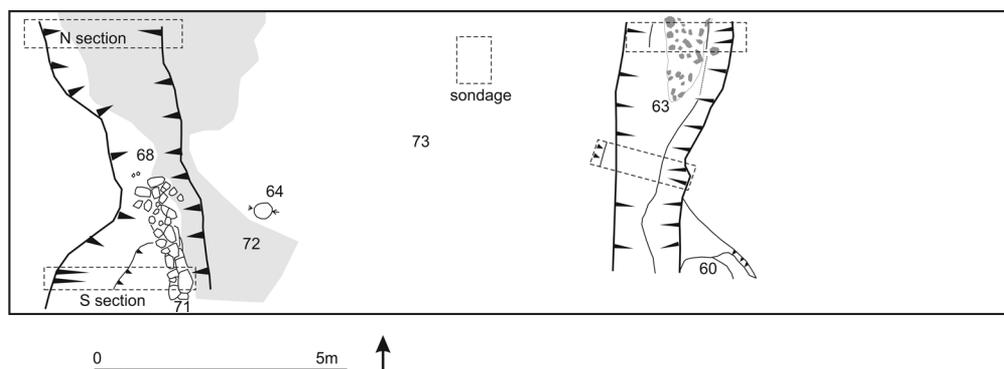
When the topsoil was removed by machine, it appeared that there was a central north/south dip flanked by slightly higher areas of natural gravel to the east and west (illus 13). The fill of this dip, which merged into the topsoil, was a fine sandy soil (C56 and C57) with small pebbles derived from the gravel natural and frequent tiny flecks of charcoal or burnt bone. Excavation of this layer showed that there was a central area of slightly dirty natural gravel (C73), 8.4–9.5m wide, flanked by north/south ditches (C63 and C68). The same layer (C56 and C57) that had covered the central area also sealed the fills in the ditches C63 and C68.

The natural gravel in the central area was up to 500mm below the natural on the outer edges of the ditches; it could not be proved that this had been deliberately lowered, but a thick layer

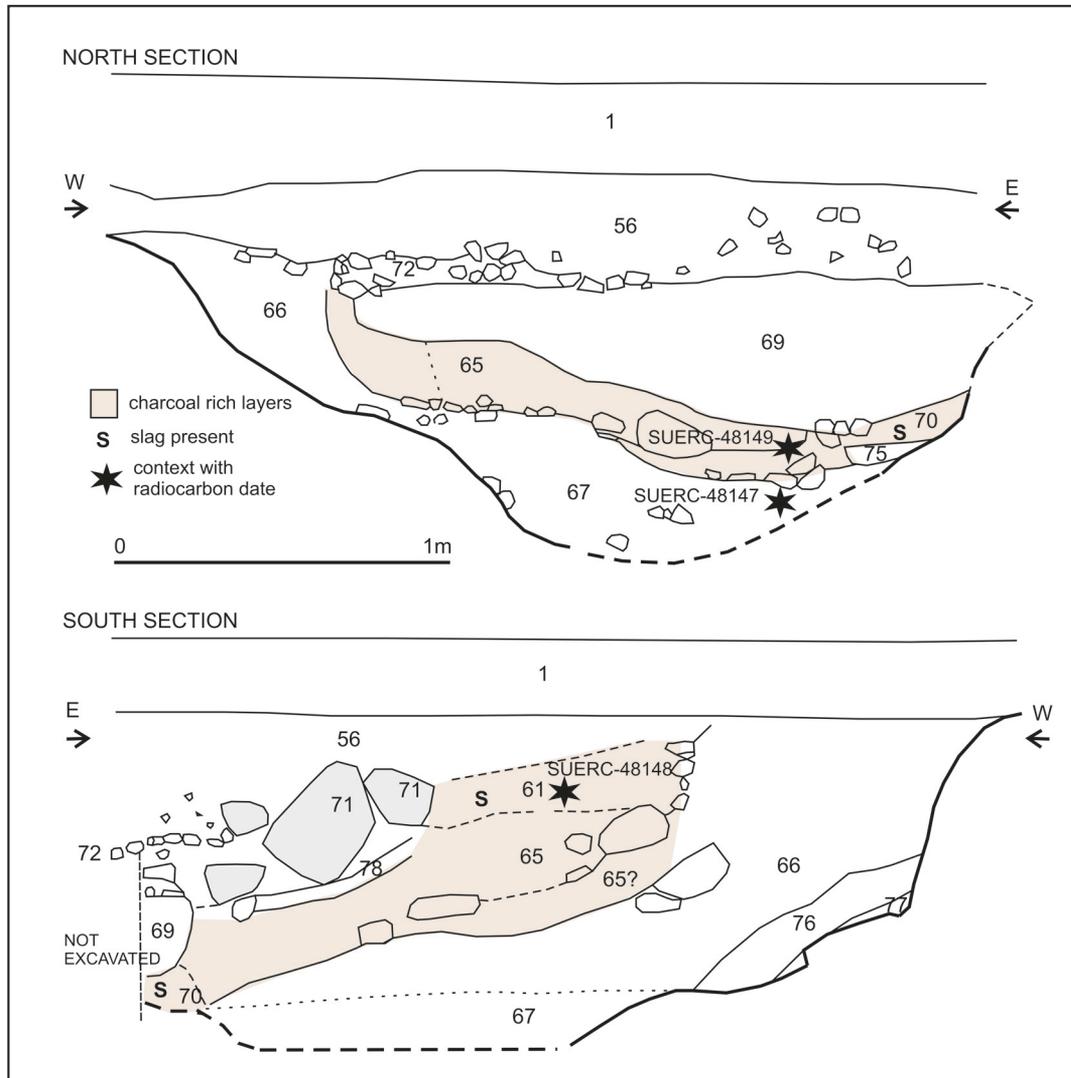
of redeposited clean natural gravel above the primary fills of the west ditch (C69: illus 14), and thickest on its east side, may well have been scraped off this central area to fill in the dip of the partially filled ditch. A sondage was cut into the central area to a depth of 0.75m into the gravel to prove that it was otherwise undisturbed natural.

The west ditch (C68) was between 1.5m and 2.7m in width and up to 1m deep (illus 14). The primary fill, visible in both north and south sections, was fine sandy silt (C67). A radiocarbon sample from this context was dated to cal AD 653–cal AD 771 (Table 1: SUERC-48147). In contrast to overlying layers, there was little charcoal in C67 and no metal-working debris. A very tiny modern glass bead, 2mm in diameter, found in the sample from C67, is considered to have percolated through the soil through bioturbation. At the outer, west edge of the ditch in both sections, this silt appeared to merge into similar, although yellower, silt (66), the difference possibly being no more than leaching of the lower fill.

In both sections, on the inner, east side of the ditch, a black silty charcoal-rich deposit (C70) partially overlay C67. Several fragments of iron slag were present. A radiocarbon sample from this context was dated to cal AD 693–cal AD 890 (Table 1: SUERC-48149). This deposit was overlain by another charcoal rich sandy silt (C65) coming into the ditch from the outer, west side and mixed with a quantity of stones. In the south section this was overlain by dark grey very fine sandy humic



ILLUS 13 Plan of Area F showing possible entrance between ditches C63 and C68



ILLUS 14 North and south sections of ditch 68 with C14 sample spots marked (see Table 1)

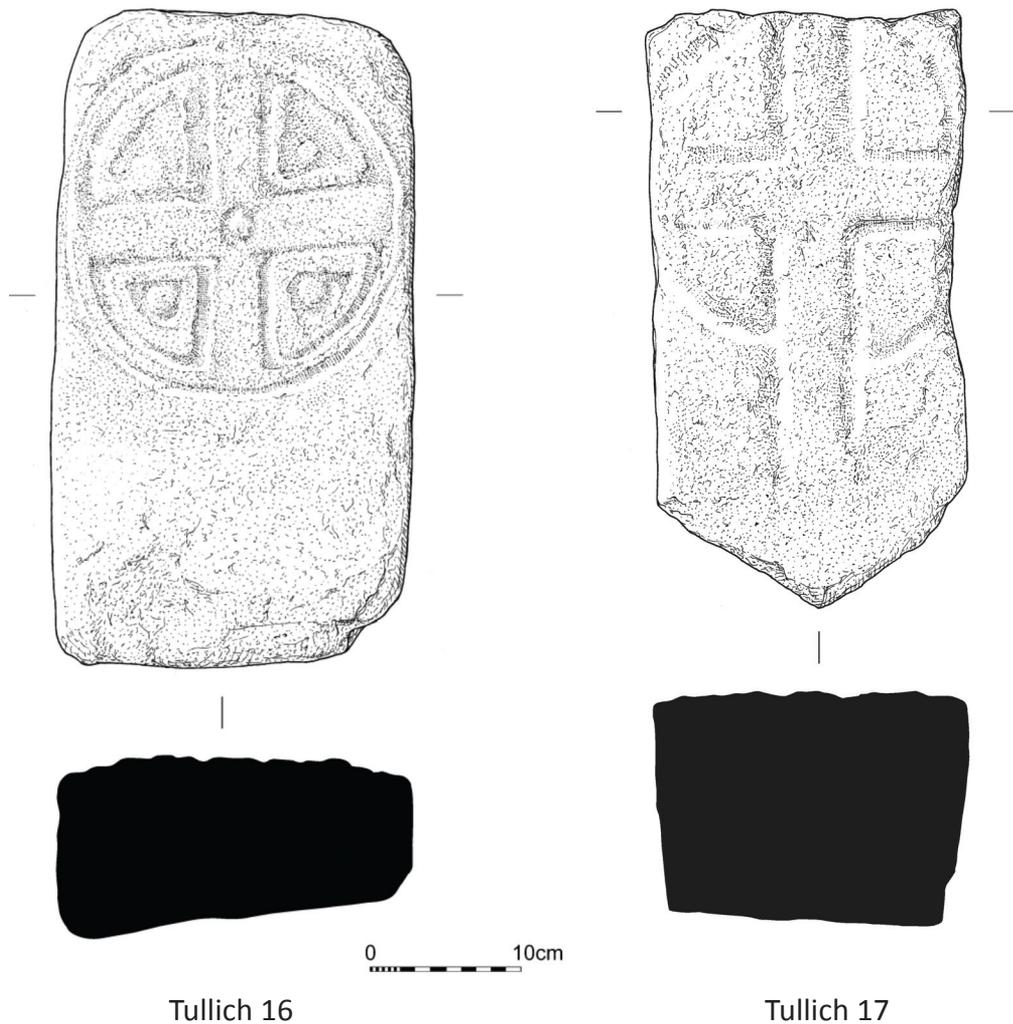
silt with abundant charcoal (C61). This also contained some metal-working debris including hammer scale, prill and iron slag (Timpany 2013). A radiocarbon sample from this context was dated to cal AD 676–cal AD 870 (Table 1: SUERC-48148). A NNW/SSE wall (C71) was built on, or possibly cut into, this layer. The wall (illus 13), which was 460mm wide, was only two courses wide and survived to two courses high, it extended for 2.32m, but appeared to have been ploughed out at the slightly higher northern end.

Rubble (C62) from the wall extended over the west rim of the ditch. The wall appeared to limit an area of cobbling (C72 – shaded on plan) which extended across part of the west ditch (C68) and east into the central area, and lay directly over the redeposited natural. It would appear probable that the cobbles and wall were constructed directly after the leveling of the central area as there was no intervening silting. Many of the cobbles (C72) and of the stones in C62 were blackened and even heat-fractured. Several lumps of slag from the

layer overlying the cobbles (C56) and from the top of the underlying ditch fill (C61) suggest that iron working may have taken place in relation to the wall and cobbles; the lack of evidence of a corresponding east wall and the slight nature of wall C71 suggest that this might have been an enclosed yard, or even a sheltering wall for a forge, rather than a building. This activity seems to have taken place when the ditches (C63 and C68) were almost fully filled but still visible as linear sunken channels. The 1790 *Scroll Plan* shows a small paddock in the south angle of the

ditch, just south of Area F, but this is on a different orientation and does not appear to relate to C71.

Palaeoenvironmental analysis of samples from ditch C68 (2013: 2014) yielded burnt grain, predominantly oats and hulled barley, as well as fragments suggestive of grain processing. Small fragments of burnt bone and burnt hazelnut shells are also likely to derive from food waste. Flax, grown for linen or oil, was also present in small quantities, especially from the lower ditch fill (C70). Analysis of the charcoal showed a dominance of hazel, particularly as small



ILLUS 15 Cross slabs Tullich 16 and 17 (Drawing Jan Dunbar)

roundwood, suggestive of coppicing or pollarding for use as wattle. Other timber in use included willow, alder and birch, which may have grown on the wetter ground near the river and oak, elm, holly and fruitwood trees, which, with the hazel, may have grown on the drier valley slopes.

The east ditch (C63) was between 1.5m and 2m wide and 700–900mm deep. The primary fill comprised dark silty gravel (C74) with an admixture of pebbles washed in from the gravel through which it had been cut. There were no finds and there was no charcoal, so it appears to have been further from any metal-working areas. A large pit (C60) on the east edge of the ditch could not be dated, but the fill was indistinguishable from the general layer C56 and C57.

#### DISCUSSION OF THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

Like many Early Christian religious sites, Tullich had an inner and an outer enclosure, representing different levels of sanctity around the church (illus 22). The inner enclosure in its present sub-circular form is *c* 58m × 55m. To date, there has been no excavation on the wall line; it may originally have been of timber, later replaced by stone, the present wall being one of many repairs and rebuildings over time. The outer enclosure was of an irregular ovoid shape, with its narrower end and a possible entrance to the south, towards the river. It was at least 95m × 64m but may have extended further to the north. The perimeter of the outer enclosure appears to have utilised a series of visible palaeochannels which were, at different periods, widened or deepened by ditches.

As the modern graveyard has extended over most of the area south of the road enclosed by the outer enclosure, there was very limited possibility to excavate between the two inner enclosure boundaries. An additional ground penetrating radar survey (GPR) was undertaken in 2015 in the inner enclosure and the western side of the outer enclosure (Ovenden 2015). While the results were dominated by modern burials, some anomalies in the north-east part of the inner graveyard may relate to the excavated features.

If the reinterpretation of the lost East Cross as a boundary marker is accepted (below p 262), it would have marked the eastern limit of the grounds pertaining to the monastery, the wider lands within the plain, measuring about 1km from east to west and up to 65ha in area (illus 22).

#### *The inner enclosure: the graveyard wall*

There is no excavated evidence of the line of the assumed medieval wall. The earliest large scale and locally derived documentary evidence is the 1790 *Scroll Plan*, which shows the graveyard wall as more circular than the present slightly ovoid plan, which appears elongated on the north side. By the time of the Ordnance Survey map of 1866, the outline of the graveyard had changed to its existing plan. This extant wall would appear to have been built between 1790 and 1866, during which period responsibility for the graveyard would have fallen on the feudal superior, Monaltrie, after 1857 part of Invercauld Estate. An entry in the *Invercauld Estate Accounts* for November 1818 reads, ‘Received last month from Mrs Edgar as her subscription towards the building of the Church Yard Wall of Tullich 1.1.0.’. No other references to subscriptions were found in the (incomplete) *Accounts* or in a search of contemporary newspapers. However, it does suggest that the existing wall was built by Invercauld Estate around 1818, with at least some public subscriptions.

This 19th-century wall was not without its problems as in September 1839 the *Aberdeen Journal* (25 September 1839) records a flash flood sweeping through Tullich village and across the road ‘the greatest current entering the churchyard, which it filled to the top of the wall, when several yards of the wall gave way ...’.

Responsibility for the maintenance of the wall passed subsequently to the parish council and in 1973 to Grampian, now Aberdeenshire, Council. In 1993 it was scheduled by Historic Scotland (Historic Scotland SM Index No 86). It was also listed as a Category B structure in 1971 (HB No 9320). Much detail of the 19th-century wall is now obscured by cement render.

On the south side outside the wall, stones lying some 2–3m out from the face of the wall



ILLUS 16 Cross-slab Tullich 17 in situ in Area A

are likely to be part of the earlier wall, as shown on the 1790 plan. The results of the geophysical survey (Ovenden 2013 and illus 5 above) would suggest that a curved linear anomaly around the outside of the south-east quadrant of the existing wall may also be the foundation of the earlier wall, or stones derived from it.

It is possible that the arc of stones in Area A, and the cut-away area enclosed by it, also may have been the remnant of some re-building or clearance of an earlier wall. There is no direct dating evidence for this event but it is almost certainly prior to the levelling of the outer ditch in the late 18th or early 19th century, when this ground was put into cultivation. It could be related to the odd triangular feature shown near here on the 1790 *Scroll Plan*. The backfilling of the area enclosed by the arc included a handle sherd of 13th-/14th-century pottery, but this was very abraded and almost certainly residual.

#### *The outer enclosure: The ditch*

The main ditch curving around the east side of the graveyard was between 4.85m and 7.8m

wide and between 1.2m and 1.6m deep. The line of the ditch shown by excavation corresponds closely with the east arm of the possible ditch indicated by the GPR survey (illus 5) (Ovenden 2013). Aerial photographs show this ditch curving sinuously in an irregular arc to the east and south of the graveyard wall, with another line coming in from the west, both arms meeting just to the south of the excavated Area F (illus 4). Much of the possible west ditch line is now beneath the modern burial ground but the south end of it was included as part of the GPR survey and appeared as a very similar anomaly to the excavated part of the east ditch. No excavation or survey was possible north of the road but the evidence in Area A appears to indicate the outer enclosure ditch continuing north below the line of the modern road, towards the settlement of Tullich. The 1790 *Scroll Plan* also shows what appears to be the same ditch extending north of the road, enclosing the open market area – it is tempting to suggest that this was originally also part of the outer enclosure (illus 22).

The irregular line of these ditches and the appearance in Area A that they may have lain along a change between gravel and boulder clay suggests that they were originally palaeochannels. They would have been visible in the landscape as somewhat sunken and probably seasonally wet channels, enclosing an irregular, roughly ovoid area within which the church was established and the churchyard wall built. There was no evidence in the main ditch sections that the palaeochannel had been artificially widened, cleaned out or deepened prior to the medieval period, but the early dates from the smaller ditches in Area F suggest it is very possible and that earlier evidence in the main ditch has been destroyed by later activities. Apart from their function as a boundary, the ditches were almost certainly vital in terms of drainage.

Outer enclosure ditches are common around Early Christian churches and monastic sites and support the contention that the main ditch at Tullich may also have been initially dug at this period, apparently utilising the palaeochannels. Ditches of similar size have been excavated, for example, at Tarbat, Highland (NH98SW4) (Carver 2008: 13, 51–2) and Inchmarnock, Argyll and Bute (NS05NW2) (Lowe 2008: 83–5), both with primary fills dating to the 7th to 9th centuries. Portmahomack is an interesting comparator as the ditch was used to manage water, albeit an attempt to retain it, whereas at Tullich there was a need to drain and disperse it. Both of these are among the examples listed by Ewan Campbell (2012) as sub-rectangular or D-shaped monastic enclosures similar to Iona. Tullich does not fully fit Campbell's definition of enclosures with one side open to the sea or a river, although the outer ditch did have an entrance facing towards the ford over the River Dee. However, the suggested wider unenclosed, although naturally defined, precinct at Tullich (illus 22) fits well with the landscape settings indicated by Campbell.

The evidence from Tullich Area E shows that the palaeochannel was either dug out as a ditch, or more likely re-dug, in the 13th/14th century. McConnachie (1898: 107) suggested that, in the 19th century, traces remained of a fort at Tullich, built in the 13th century by the Knights Templars.

The RCAHMS in 1968 identified this reference with the remains of the earlier wall and a slight dip outside it and described it as 'probably only a minor protective dyke and drainage ditch' (NO39NE2). The results of the present excavation may challenge this rather dismissive description, as it is clear that in the 13th/14th century the ditch was impressive, enclosing a wide precinct outside the churchyard. While the dating does indicate the ditch was dug/re-dug during the period when the Templars and – after 1312 – the Hospitallers, possessed the church of Tullich, it cannot be regarded as a fort. Its function would have been both practical in terms of drainage and symbolic as a boundary, although of very limited defensive use. Ditches of comparable size are known around other medieval ecclesiastical sites in Aberdeenshire – such as the Bishop's manor at Old Rayne (NJ62NE2) (Murray & Murray 2012b) or at Fetternear (NJ71NW7.11) (Dransart & Trigg 2008).

From the medieval period, apart from small amounts of occupation material in primary silting in Area E, the ditch appears to have silted naturally with silt and pebbles washed down from the sides and possibly from any bank formed from the upcast material. In Area E, a turf line suggests that there was a period of stability when the fills grassed over at a point when the ditch was still some 500mm deep and very visible in the landscape. After this, and probably as part of late 18th-century Improvement drainage, a large stone-filled drain was cut along the line of the partially filled ditch. The line of the ditch and possibly the drain itself are shown on the 1790 *Scroll Plan* and it is clear that the area enclosed by the ditches was regarded as church/community ground until the re-drawing of field boundaries in the late 18th/early 19th century, possibly after the amalgamation of the parishes in 1798, when the ditch was filled up and levelled.

#### *The south ditches and possible entrance track*

To the south of the churchyard there was a possible track 8m to 9.5m wide, extending between the inner and outer enclosures and flanked by ditches 1.5–2.7m wide and between 0.70m and 1.0m deep. There appears to have been an initial silting of the ditches, dated to between



ILLUS 17 Tullich stones 2–6

the mid-7th to later-8th century AD, during which there was some evidence of cultivation nearby. Later there was a series of charcoal-rich deposits with evidence of iron-working waste in the partially filled western ditch dating within the period between the late 7th and late 9th century AD. The earliest iron working may have been to the west of the possible entrance as the ditch deposits sloped in from the west. The latest iron working, associated with cobbling and a stone-walled shelter or structure, took place after the ditches had almost filled and the central area had apparently been scarped. The ditch fills

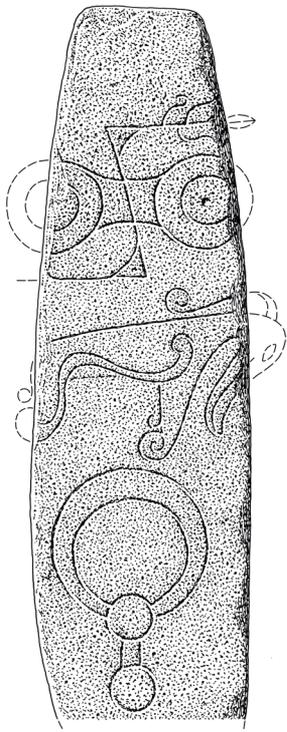
incorporated some evidence of grain processing, as well as burnt grains and burnt bone suggestive of domestic waste (Timpany 2013; 2014). The ditches do not appear on the 1790 *Scroll Plan* so appear to have been unknown by the 18th century.

#### *The enclosed area – the outer precinct*

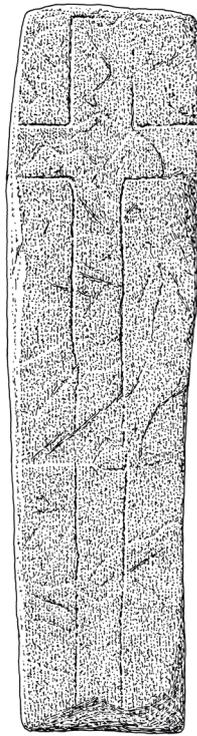
The very small amounts of 13th/14th-century pottery in any context, and the limited quantities of slag, burnt bone and grain in the 13th/14th-century ditch fill in Area E, are evidence to a range of activities during the medieval period



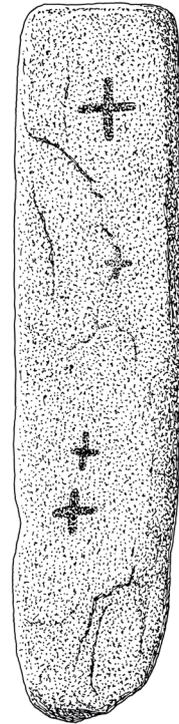
ILLUS 18 Tullich stones 8–14, 16–17



Tullich 1



Tullich 7



Tullich 15



Tullich 1



Tullich 7



Tullich 15

ILLUS 19 Tullich stones 1, 7 and 15

but suggest that it was at some distance from the enclosed precinct.

Due to the restricted areas excavated between the enclosures, there was little excavated evidence of what activities were taking place there in the Early Historic period. The very limited evidence of iron working, grain processing and the disposal of burnt grains and bone from domestic waste suggests that this outer precinct was used for the everyday activities necessary for a small community. This is similar to the evidence on a far larger scale from sites such as Portmahomack (Carver 2008), and although to date Tullich lacks evidence for fine metalwork, the evidence of the carved stones demonstrates that significant craft skills were present.

## PART 2: THE CARVED STONES

The collection at Tullich church consists of 17 stones, of which one is carved with Pictish symbols and the remainder have incised crosses and no other ornament. There is also a monumental boulder font (illus 17–20, Tables 2, 3). In addition to the 17 survivors, two major monuments, the market cross and lost East Cross have been destroyed. An initial glance at the

collection gives the impression of a homogeneous group of carvings, made predominantly from local granite. A closer examination brings out both many similar features but also exceptional qualities. These variations allow some speculation about the ultimate purpose of the site while providing considerable evidence about the skills of the sculptors and the requirements of the patrons.

### DISCOVERY OF THE TULLICH CARVED STONES

The Market Cross (since destroyed) and the font are both located on the 1790 *Scroll Plan* (illus 2). Otherwise, the earliest published references to the Tullich crosses are in volume 2 of Jervise's *Epitaphs and inscriptions from burial grounds and old buildings in the north-east of Scotland* (1879). This was published posthumously as Jervise died in 1878, while most of the research would appear to have been done around 1876, when the text was drafted (Jervise 1875–9, vol 2: lvi–lvii). Gibb (1877), who also described the stones, quotes Jervise on one occasion. Michie's account of the stones was not in his 1877 first edition of the *History of Loch Kinnord*, but was one of a series of undated papers which were added to the second edition published in 1910,



ILLUS 20 Tullich font

six years after Michie's death. All three authors refer to the symbol stone (Tullich 1) and to the destroyed Market and East Crosses (see catalogue entries below). Michie also describes finding Tullich 1, 2 and 7 built into the fabric of the church. Gibb only mentions Tullich 2 and another stone – which may be Tullich 8 – but does not refer to Tullich 7, which Michie discovered in 1878.

As a result of the 1878 discovery, Michie persuaded Colonel Farquharson of Invercauld to construct a fenced enclosure for the stones, outside the blocked north door of the church. The earliest dated photograph of the stones in the enclosure is a negative held by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, dated July 1902 (SAS A8670–71, A8687–8). The undated photograph published in Michie (1910: pl VIII) shows the enclosure with ivy and fewer stones than in 1902 and may be slightly earlier.

In 1903, in addition to the symbol stone and font, Allen and Anderson (II, Pt 3: 196–8) describe but do not illustrate 'five granite slabs with incised crosses'. Their measurements fit with the crosses Tullich 2, 7, 8, 10 and 12.

This total of the stones was the same in 1922 when WD Simpson wrote, 'The sculptured stones collected at the door of the church comprise one stone with incised symbolic ornament, and five stones with incised Celtic crosses'. The symbol stone and two other crosses were recovered from the fabric of the church, but the provenance of the others in this initial collection is not known. Between 1922 and 1968 there are no detailed descriptions of the finding of new stones at Tullich. But, in November 1968, the OS notes record 'As well as the Pictish symbol stone as described by Allen (1903), and the font, there are now 16 Celtic type cross-slabs within the railed enclosure on the north side of the church. They vary from 0.2m square to 1.5m in height' (NO39NE 2.02).

The RCAHMS survey of 2004/5 recorded the symbol stone (Tullich 1), the font and 15 cross-slabs; this survey included the first full set of accurate drawings (<http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/search/?keyword=tullich&submit=search>). Borland (2007) noted: 'During survey over 2004/05, in addition to the Pictish Symbol

Stone and large stone font, RCAHMS recorded 15 cross-slabs, not 16 as stated by OS in 1968'.

It is likely that the discrepancy in numbering was due to the interpretation of small fragments. In particular, Tullich 6, which is now conserved and viewed as a single cross-slab, has at times been in two pieces and counted as two unrelated stones (illus 17).

There is no known record of the exact find-spots of the stones found between 1922 and 1968. It is likely they were found during grave digging. If that was the case, the graves dug between 1922 and 1968 all lie within the graveyard wall, mostly being situated to the north or east of the church. The area of the graveyard outwith the wall and in use since 1968 does not appear to have yielded any new stones. This has been confirmed by an ex-council employee who had been involved with the graveyard from 1975 till his retirement around 2005.

In that time, no more carved stones were found, but he remembers former council workers talking about 'strange steens' being unearthed in the area where the excavation found the two crosses in 2013. Apparently they were uncovered whilst the workers were draining that area. He thought that the draining was done in the late 1950s/early 1960s (Ian Cameron pers comm). A tile drain (illus 7: C39) cut through Area A, including the arc where the two crosses were found; it appears very possible that several of the undocumented stones may have come from this area. The drain appeared to continue down the east side of the graveyard wall – so it is also possible that the reference could have included that side of the graveyard. Currently (2016) the stones are in Aberdeenshire Council storage, pending a new display in a secure environment.

#### CATALOGUE

Note: The examination and photography of these stones took place while they were in storage (illus 17–19). As a result, some were only visible on one side, too large to remove from their crates or to photograph adequately, but all had been drawn in 2004/05 by John Borland for RCAHMS. RCAHMS numbering is used throughout.

**Name**

Tullich 1, NO39NE2.2 Also known as Michie Stone A (illus 19, Table 2).

*Evidence for discovery*

Discovered in 1866 by Michie when he 'took a rough sketch of it'. 'The slab then served as the inside lintel of a blind door-way that had been built up when the church was last repaired, and was partly concealed by the walls' (Michie 1910: 118, 150, pl VIII). Both Jervise (1875–9, vol 2: 157) and Gibb (1877: 196) wrongly dated the discovery to 1875.

*Dimensions*

L: 1.76m; W: 490mm; Th: 150mm.

*Stone type*

Andalusite staurolite schist.

*Present condition*

Surface weathered and pitted. Both long sides and, presumably, the foot are trimmed, making the stone narrower and shorter for secondary use.

*Description*

A tall stone, with curved tapering sides. Face A is incised with three Pictish symbols. At the top is a double-disc, each filled with single concentric circle; Z-rod with incised triangle at each bend, and three tendrils on the tail. The 'compass point' in the centre of the disc is a shallow scooped dimple. The abraded surface of coarse stone makes it hard to see if there are dots in the triangles. In the middle is a Pictish beast with scrolled muscle joint proceeding from a double line under the belly. It has a powerful foreleg and single-line head-lappet. At the foot is a large mirror (620mm diam) ornamented by an additional non-concentric circle. The handle has a disc at each end of the stem. The carving is incised with broad shallow semi-circular grooves.

Previous examinations indicate that the other faces are not carved, but as the stone was in a box on this occasion, its appearance could not be fully verified.

*Discussion*

The proximity of the mirror symbol to the base of the stone suggests that a longer tenon,

which would enable it to stand upright, has been cut off. See Table 2, and discussion on p 265.

**Name**

Tullich 2, NO39NE2.3, Allen and Anderson (1903, II: 196) stone (2), (illus 17, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

Jervise (1875–9, vol 2: 157) illustrates this stone, describing it as 'the most primitive and peculiar of these (represented in the annexed woodcut) has long formed the lintel of the south-west door of the kirk. The slab is about 5½ feet long'. Gibb records (1877: 196) it 'has been long seen forming the outside lintel of the south door of the church'. Michie adds (1910: 119, pl. VIII) 'The sculpturing here is in the form of an Iona Cross. The slab so far as can be ascertained, had formed the outside lintel of a door-way on the south side of the church, and must have been placed there before the Reformation, as the masonry surrounding it belongs to a date anterior to the changes that were made at that period.'

*Dimensions*

L: 1.55m; W: 440mm; Th: 250mm.

*Stone type*

Coarse grained, grey granite. The face is probably a natural fracture surface; likewise the broken edge on the right seems to be a more recent surface than that on the left. Similar to Tullich 8.

*Present condition*

Right edge of A is broken. Left edge of face A is chamfered for reuse.

*Description*

Long, slender rectangular stone. Face A has an incised outline Latin cross with hollow angles, Allen and Anderson (1903, I, 51) type 101A. At its base the outline continues, to depict a skeuomorph horizontal base stone and triangular tenon. There is a natural step in the slab surface at the junction between cross-shaft and base. Faces C, E, F not seen.

**Name**

Tullich 3, NO39NE2.4 (illus 17, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

Discovered between 1922 and 1968. No reference to exact findspot.

*Dimensions*

L: 375mm; W: 220mm; Th: 70–95mm (thicker at base).

*Stone type*

Coarse pinkish granite. Carving worked on naturally flat face.

*Present condition*

Complete.

*Description*

Kite-shaped stone with faintly incised cross, only visible in raking light. Outline Latin cross with hollow armpits, Type 101A, with upper and lateral arms touching the edge. Four shallow circular dimples in the armpits. No cross arms have completed terminals. The carving is shallow, with narrow grooves.

*Discussion*

The incomplete terminals may be intentional, rather than signs of damage, because there is space to complete the base terminal but the lines just tail off.

**Name**

Tullich 4, NO39NE2.5 (illus 17, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

Discovered between 1922 and 1968. No reference to exact findspot.

*Dimensions*

L: 540mm; W: 320mm; Th: 90–180mm.

*Stone type*

Pale pink granite with a few large feldspar crystals.

*Present condition*

Considerably weathered since the carving was executed.

*Description*

Sub-rectangular stone with one smooth face on A. Other faces B, C, E, F are uneven and irregular; D slightly dressed. It has a wedge-shaped profile with top end thicker, so it lies with top end raised. It is incised with

an outline Latin cross with hollow armpits, type 101A. All cross arms lack the terminal line. Decisively cut with a broad, shallow outline, channeled with straight sides and flat bottom.

**Name**

Tullich 5, NO39NE2.6 (illus 17, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

Discovered between 1922 and 1968. No reference to exact findspot.

*Dimensions*

L: 330mm; W: 280mm; Th: 190–200mm.

*Stone type*

Granite, strikingly pink with grey flecks.

*Present condition*

Faces D and F broken. Smooth face A was probably water worn before carving. Some filler in crack on face A.

*Description*

A rectangular fragment of a cross head. Face A is naturally flat and smooth. Incised with equal-armed outline cross, with circular armpits, within a plain double ringed circle. Cross arms open into the inner ring. Although the lower arm is illustrated as if it crosses over the ring, implying the extension of a shaft, the stone is very coarse in this area. The suggestion of a line over the circle may be due to the coarse granules of the granite. The pecked strokes of the punch are particularly visible in lower right quadrant. Incisions are wide, shallow with a roughly semi-circular profile. B has a straight edge and is naturally convex and smooth. E has a straight edge but surface rougher than A. C natural surface. D and F broken.

**Name**

Tullich 6, NO39NE2.7 (illus 17, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

Discovered between 1922 and 1968. No reference to exact findspot.

*Dimensions*

L: 550mm; W: 210mm; Th: 65–75mm.

*Stone type*

Finely laminated sandstone/siltstone – metamorphosed with cleavage.

*Present condition*

In 1968, when the Ordnance Survey recorded 16 crosses (in addition to the symbol stone), they noted sizes ranged upwards from 0.2m square. The formerly detached top left corner of Tullich 6 is approximately 0.2m square and was thus counted as a separate item from the rest of the stone. Recorded by Historic Scotland in 1993 as having been previously mended. Recorded as in two pieces by Nick Boyes Stone Conservation in 2006 and conserved prior to storage. The join is now barely perceptible.

*Description*

Naturally smooth stone with almost triangular section. Grey-brown wood-grained appearance, worn to slightly furrowed surface. A is a natural cleavage plane. The stone is oblong with, at one end, an equal-armed outline cross within two circles. Cross arms open into the inner circle. Circle accurately designed. Incised with firm V-shaped grooves. E and F are perpendicular dressed faces; B broken; C rough, canted, sheared. D sheared along bedding plane.

**Name**

Tullich 7, NO39NE2.8, Michie Stone C; Allen and Anderson (1903, II: 196) stone (1), (illus 19, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

In SAS photograph of 1902. Michie (1910: 120–1, pl VIII) describes finding this stone in 1878 on the inside of the south wall, not near any doorway or blocked opening ‘Its position was 9 feet above the ground, and 2 feet from the top of the wall’. It was after the removal of this stone from the wall that Farquharson of Invercauld built the outdoor enclosure for the collection.

*Dimensions*

L: 1.72m; W: 430mm; Th: 210–240mm.

*Stone type*

Grey granite similar to 4. Bounded by natural joint surfaces.

*Present condition*

Complete.

*Description*

Long, rectangular stone. Natural undulations on the surface of face A give the appearance of false relief. Incised with an outline Latin cross, with lower and lateral arms unfinished. The illustration indicates lines on bottom of cross are firmer than in reality. A natural step on lower part of stone suggests this uncarved section was inserted in the ground. The incisions are very lightly made, barely creating a groove. The other faces of the stone were not visible at the time of examination, due to its storage in a crate.

**Name**

Tullich 8, NO39NE2.9, Allen and Anderson (1903, II: 106) stone (3), (illus 18, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

This may be the cross described by Gibb (1877: 196) ‘There is another stone, with a cross less entire, forming a back lintel to the same [south] door’. This was found prior to 1902 (SAS photograph) and before the photograph published in Michie (1910).

*Dimensions*

L: 600mm; W: 330mm; Th: 80–100mm.

*Stone type*

Pink granite as 4.

*Present condition*

A natural flaw line crack, extending through most of the stone, has been partially filled. It curves below the right vertical of the cross-shaft. Some filler on cracks in the centre of the cross.

*Description*

A naturally smooth rectangular stone with slightly tapered tenon at the base. Face A is incised with an equal-armed outline cross, with no terminal line on any cross arm. The sculptor used the natural fault line to shape the lower right shaft: its apparent curved

extension is a natural feature, visible on the back. Grooves are wide, shallow and U-shaped. The other faces are undecorated and undressed.

**Name**

Tullich 9, NO39NE2.10 (illus 18, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

Discovered between 1922 and 1968. No reference to exact findspot.

*Dimensions*

L: 360mm; W: 245mm; Th: 90–100mm.

*Stone type*

Grey granite.

*Present condition*

Complete.

*Description*

A small irregular boulder with a naturally flat front and back surface. Face A is incised with an outline Latin cross which tapers towards the base and has rounded arm terminals. The incision lines are U-shaped, wide and shallow.

**Name**

Tullich 10, NO39NE2.11, Allen and Anderson (1903, II: 196) stone (5), (illus 18, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

This was found prior to 1902 (SAS photograph).

*Dimensions*

L: 310mm; W: 245mm; Th: 55–60mm.

*Stone type*

Grey granite.

*Present condition*

Surfaces natural and weathered.

*Description*

A kite-shaped stone whose trapezoid outline may be later than the original design as face B appears to be more freshly broken than the rest. It is incised with an outline Latin cross. The upper three arms end against the edge of the stone. The lower arm may have been

carved complete with rounded end, although this area is coarse and the stone surface is uneven. The incisions have a shallow, wide U-shaped profile.

**Name**

Tullich 11, NO39NE2.12 (illus 18, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

Discovered between 1922 and 1968. No reference to exact findspot.

*Dimensions*

L: 320mm; W: 215mm; Th: 60–70mm.

*Stone type*

Grey granite.

*Present condition*

Natural surfaces, all weathered. Slight infill of cracks on face A. Face E broken.

*Description*

A narrow oblong slab. Face A is incised with the shaft of an outline Latin cross. The incisions have a shallow, wide U-shaped profile.

**Name**

Tullich 12, NO39NE2.13, Allen and Anderson (1903, II: 196) stone (4), (illus 18, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

This was found prior to 1902, visible to left of symbol stone in SAS photograph.

*Dimensions*

L: 360mm; W: 260mm; Th: 45–60mm.

*Stone type*

Pink granite.

*Present condition*

Weathered natural surfaces.

*Description*

Sub-circular stone whose natural outline tapers to a tenon-like base. The main part of face A is smooth, but the tenon-like section is rougher. It is incised with an outline cross whose upper three arms are terminated by the edge of the stone. The incisions have a broad, shallow, semi-circular profile. F has

a straight edge and smooth surface, but this seems to be natural. All other faces and edges are rough.

**Name**

Tullich 13, NO39NE2.14 (illus 18, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

Discovered between 1922 and 1968. No reference to exact findspot.

*Dimensions*

L: 430mm; W: 410mm; Th: 60–90mm.

*Stone type*

Coarse pink and grey granite.

*Present condition*

Natural boulder with face A naturally flat and face C deeply weathered. Filler in crack across C and E.

*Description*

A roughly circular stone, incised with an equal-armed outline cross of Thomas's skeuomorphic design, resembling two planks of wood (Thomas 1971: 119). Terminal to lower end of shaft is incomplete. The incisions are shallow and broad, with individual punch marks visible on lower shaft.

**Name**

Tullich 14, NO39NE2.15 (illus 18, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

Discovered between 1922 and 1968. No reference to exact findspot.

*Dimensions*

L: 325mm; W: 300mm; Th: 55–70mm.

*Stone type*

Pink granite.

*Present condition*

Face A naturally flat and smooth, face C weathered.

*Description*

An almost square stone carved on face A with an incised, irregular Latin cross, with a tapering shaft and narrow head. Surrounding the head is an extended frame or head-board, possibly for a painted inscription. The inner

cross is carved more lightly than the outer broader frame. Both incisions have a narrow V-profile.

**Name**

Tullich 15, NO39NE2.16 (illus 19, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

This was found prior to 1902 (SAS photograph).

*Dimensions*

L: 1.52m W: 360mm Th: 60–80mm.

*Stone type*

Garnet-mica schist, with crenulated micaceous surface dotted with small garnets.

*Present condition*

Complete. This laminar rock has a shiny brown varnished appearance, densely flecked with black garnets. Its surface was laminated at top and bottom, before carving took place.

*Description*

Oblong stone with neat parallel sides and straight top which may be its natural shape. On face A, almost centrally spaced, on a perpendicular axis, an equal-armed linear cross is firmly incised near the top of the stone. Its grooves are sharp and deep. At a line of lamination is a second carving of cross-like form. Its arms are wide, shallow scoops, but its fourth arm is incomplete. The 'arms' do not join at the centre. Lower down the cross, apparently casually placed, are two more equal-armed crosses. These are sunken crosses, cut with broad, square incisions, and their depth is limited by the lamination of the stone. The different quality of carving, and the random location of the lower three crosses, suggests the upper central cross is primary and the others added later. Sides and back not seen, due to its storage in a crate at the time of examination.

*Discussion*

Another garnet-mica schist stone currently forms the lintel on the third window from the east on the south side of the church. Although there is no carving on its visible face, it is approximately the same shape and texture as

no 15 and could be carved on its upper side. Nos 1, 2 and 8 were previously used as lintels.

**Name**

Tullich 16, NO39NE2.17, (illus 15, 18, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

Excavated 2013 in Area A (see pp 237–9), in a secondary location, but apparently placed there with some care, the carving originally facing the church.

*Dimensions*

L: 430mm; W: 240mm; Th: 100mm.

*Stone type*

Pale pink granite.

*Present condition*

Water-rounded with smooth surfaces showing natural wear pre-dating the carving.

*Description*

A naturally rectangular and smooth block of stone. Face A is incised with a Greek cross, its arms opening into a ring 230mm in external diameter. There is an incised circle at the centre of the cross and a circle within the sunken triangle within each quadrant. Arms extend into the outer circle. Evenly carved with relatively deep and moderately narrow U-shaped grooves.

*Discussion*

Particularly close in design to Kilmory Knap 3, Knapdale (illus 26) (Fisher 2001: 150).

**Name**

Tullich 17, NO39NE2.18 (illus 15, 16, 18, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

Excavated 2013. Area A (see pp 237–9). In a secondary position, but placed there with some care, vertical, with the carved side facing the church.

*Dimensions*

L: 400 mm; W: 200mm; Th: 140mm.

*Stone type*

Coarse grey granite.

*Present condition*

The angular edges suggest some dressing and trimming, especially on right of face A.

*Description*

Oblong rectangular block, with a pointed base. Faces B and D appear to be natural whilst faces E and F appear to be roughly dressed. On face A is an incised outline Latin cross with the upper and horizontal arms opening into an irregular ring c200mm in diameter. The lower arm, extending below the ring, has no terminal. Incisions are broad, shallow grooves.

**Name**

Lost East Cross.

*Evidence for discovery*

Jervise (1875–9, vol 2: 159) records a cross ‘which lay by the side of the turnpike road, near the site of Mr Farquharson’s monument ... which very much resembled the Skeith Stane of Kilrenny in Fife was unfortunately destroyed when the Deeside line of railway was being constructed’. Gibb (1877: 196) quotes Jervise as his source for this stone and places it ‘about half a mile east of the old church, on a mound, until it had to be displaced during the formation of the railway, when it was destroyed’. If Jervise’s near contemporary account is correct, this stone would have been broken up c 1865–6 when this section of the Deeside Railway was built. Michie (1910: 116) adds more information, over 50 years after its loss, perhaps confusing some details with the market cross. It was ‘a sculptured cross on a rude block of granite some distance to the east of the churchyard ... broken up by the vandal hands of the road contractor in 1857, and its material converted into road metal.’ He also says it was known, like the market cross, as St Nachalan’s cross.

*Description*

Jervise (1875–9, vol 2: 159) describes the carving as resembling the Skeith stone at Kilrenny, Fife.

*Discussion*

See pp 261–4 and 272–5. The railway track slightly clips the lower north edge of the hillock Tom Beithe where there are still other large boulders, at NO39932 97847. The stone must have been quite large if it had to be destroyed. Gibb (1877) described the site ‘on a mound’ which O’Grady (2014: 117) then interprets as ‘an upright cross slab ... on the summit of a mound’. The substantial mound is clearly Tom Beithe itself, but the railway track, in its shallow cutting, may have flattened a small hummock at its base.

**Name**

Font (illus 20, Table 3).

*Evidence for discovery*

Indicated on the *Scroll Plan* of 1790, outside the west wall of the church. Mentioned by Michie (1910: 122), a font ‘like that found at Loch Kinnord’.

*Dimensions*

Diameter: 1170mm.

*Stone type*

Coarse pink granite.

*Present condition*

Good.

*Description*

Massive broad-shouldered rough rounded boulder with bulging sides. Circular bowl neatly cut with vertical sides and drain hole exiting through the side of the stone. The possible function of this stone is discussed below, pp 264–5.

**Name**

Lost Market Cross.

*Evidence for discovery*

The 1790 *Scroll Plan* depicts this cross to the north of the road opposite the graveyard in open ground at the entry to the village of Tullich (illus 2). It is named ‘Market Cross’. Gibb (1877: 196) says it ‘stood on the market stance of the old village of Tullich, and was known as St Nachlan’s Cross’.

*Description*

According to Gibb (1877: 196) ‘It is said to be about 12’ in height, and was removed to make way for a turnpike road and broken up for building stone’. Jervise (1875–9, vol 2: 159) mentions that ‘Another interesting cross – St Nach’lan’s – consisted of a square unadorned shaft of granite, about 12 feet in height, surrounded with steps. It stood upon the site of St Nachlan’s Fair, which was removed from Tullich to Ballater about 1817, when the cross was destroyed, and the materials used for building purposes (Inf. from late Mr. Smith).’

*Discussion*

RCAHMS suggests 1817 was a mis-print but this appears to be a misunderstanding of Jervise who states this was the date that the site of the Fair was moved – the cross being destroyed at or after this date.

The description of the market cross is very reminiscent of the 17th-century market cross at Old Rayne (Shepherd 2006: 105–6), suggesting that the Tullich market cross might also be of 17th-century date, possibly erected around 1661 when Charles II granted to William Farquharson the rights of a market at Tullich (*RPS*, 22 April 1661). The only other market cross surviving on Deeside is at Banchory, where its shaft is displayed in Burnett Park.

## GEOLOGY

Identification of the geology was carried out by Nigel Trewin. The majority of stones are coarse granite, mainly pink seamed with white, although on a few stones the pink has leached out leaving grey areas. The granules of the rock are large and of irregular shape. Many stones have at least one face which is naturally smooth and this has been selected for the sculpture. Others have been exposed to frost and rain after the carving took place, their matrix has worn away and the surface is exceptionally rough (Tullich 13). Fault lines in the granite often cause it to shear in straight lines, a feature which may have led to the initial choice of stone with a crisp outline. The curved

tail of Tullich 8 is a natural fault in the rock, also visible on the back, which has been incorporated into the cross-shaft.

Three stones stand out because of their different geology. The symbol stone (Tullich 1) is a large and distinguished block of grey schist. The long, neatly shaped oblong stone, carved with linear and sunken crosses (Tullich 15) has a luxurious and exotic appearance: it is a mica schist densely studded with glistening black garnet inclusions. It is brown coloured and has a naturally shiny surface which gives the impression of polished wood. Tullich 6 is sandstone, grey-brown in colour and weathered in furrows, like a sea-washed old timber spar.

A survey of the vicinity shows that stones with suitable characteristics for carving were easily available. Within the churchyard, laid in an east/west alignment, adjacent to the south-east corner of the church are two large natural granite slabs (1.95m×0.58m and 1.47m×0.5m) similar in shape and size to Tullich 1 and 15, but uncarved, with a flat face and straight sides. Another flat natural slab was found in excavated area D. Around the fields are bolster-sized rectangular blocks with perhaps two straight sides and a smooth flat face. Grey schist and banded sandstone can be found north of the road beyond Braehead of Tullich farm. Above the farm is the geological fault in which great granite slabs can be seen to be in the process of shearing off in flat planes with sharp corners. The garnet schist is a rarity in this area, but another slab (with no carving on its visible face) is used as a lintel above the third window from the east, on the south side of the church. Although the selection of these stones indicates great discernment by the patrons and sculptors, it is possible that a finish of paint or gesso would have obscured some of their natural characteristics.

#### CARVING TECHNIQUE

The majority of stones are carved with incised outline designs, including both the symbols and crosses. The exception is Tullich 15 with one linear cross and two sunken crosses. There is no relief carving. Outlines of the designs appear

basically to be pecked with a punch and then the pock holes joined together to form a more regular groove. The sculptors show great understanding of their medium, achieving the maximum effect with minimum effort. Because the granules of the granite are so coarse, the incised lines – or rather channels – are generally shallow and wide, with a U-shaped profile (Tullich 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 17). This allows granules to pop out under the chisel blows, without detracting from the final form. The carving on Tullich 1, the schist symbol stone, is similar to this group.

On other stones the tooling is slightly different. This may indicate different responses to the rock type, and also different hands or levels of skill. The sandstone Tullich 6 has crisp V-grooves, while the sunken crosses on the garnet-mica schist Tullich 15 have square-sided, flat-bottomed grooves responding to the bedding planes. Tullich 16 has deep, narrow grooves; Tullich 3 is so finely scored that the lines are almost invisible; Tullich 8 has firm semi-circular troughs; Tullich 14 has narrow U grooves; Tullich 13 has shallow and very wide grooves, while on Tullich 7 the lines are only lightly worked. These variations in technique are sufficient to suggest a range of sculptors working on the site, perhaps over an extended period, but with one technically homogeneous group, including the symbol stone, created in the same way with the wide U-shaped groove.

#### MONUMENT FORM AND FUNCTION

There are four large oblong stele (Tullich 1, 2, 7 and 15) each carved on their flattest face, and one smaller stele (Tullich 6). The rest of the stones are smaller blocks or boulders. Most of these are roughly rectangular in shape (4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 16 and 17). Tullich 9 is more irregular although it has one straight edge. Two are shaped like small kites (3 and 10) while 12 is circular with a natural tapered tenon projecting at the base. The lost granite pillar on the market stance sounds like a market cross, probably erected when rights to the market were granted in 1661 (illus 2) (Gibb 1877: 196; *RPS* 1661/1/229). Information that the lost East Cross was destroyed by the railway construction suggests it was significantly large

and obstructive. A smaller stone would have been tossed aside or used directly in the embankment. The font is a monumental raw, pink granite boulder, approximately 117cm in diameter, into which a bowl and large drainage hole are roughly carved (illus 20, Table 3).

The stones can be grouped into basically four types as mentioned above: tall, narrow slabs or pillars; roughly rectangular or circular boulders, and boulders with a tapering outline. It might seem obvious for the tall narrow stones, including the symbol stone, to stand upright, but they could equally be recumbent, placed over a long cist. In order to stand up with carving fully visible, the symbol stone would need to be considerably longer than it is at present. The tenon incised on Tullich 2 implies that a cross of this type was expected to be thrust into a stone collar or mortice. Placing the cross at one end of Tullich 6 leaves plenty of space for the stone to be partially buried in a vertical alignment. The votive crosses carved at different levels on Tullich 15, including low down, suggest it was placed upright and the lower crosses were perhaps designed for a kneeling worshipper. The carving of the cross-shaft right down to the bottom end of 7 would be partly concealed if the stone stood upright, so this may have been a recumbent cist cover. Tapered stones like Tullich 3, 8, 10, 12 and 17, whose carving stops short of the bottom, would more naturally be inserted in the ground or a base; whereas boulders like 9, 13 and 14, whose crosses extend over the whole face, would be more appropriate lying flat, face up. Tullich 16, with its regular rectangular shape but cross at the top end, could stand or lie equally well. It is notable that Tullich 16 and 17, though not in their original positions, had been carefully placed upright and facing the church.

In terms of function, the symbol stone might reflect prior use of the site before it became a church. Equally it could have come from anywhere in the vicinity, perhaps originally serving as a boundary marker, before being reused as a convenient lintel. Although there is no other evidence of previous ritual activity on the site, the massive uncarved stele mentioned above (p 260), now lying by the east end of the church, could even be an appropriate size for the

member of a stone circle, or equally just another lintel.

Cross-marked stones in Early Christian Insular churchyards could serve many functions apart from grave markers. These are amply summarised by Fisher (2001: 8–9). They could demarcate entrances or areas of special sanctity within the monastic enclosures. They could be placed as boundary markers around a wider area of sanctuary. Before a church was built, or if the church was too small for a large gathering, a standing cross could indicate an assembly site for the congregation: essentially a preaching cross. They could indicate areas of specific liturgical activity, commemorate ownership or patronage. They might commemorate a particular event or holy presence, like the cross marking a spot where Columba rested, the places where he and his uncle died or the unmarked boulder which served as his pillow (Sharpe 1995, I: 45; III: 23). A small votive cross could indicate the site of a prayer, a wish or an oath. Some slabs, generally carved with at least four or five crosses, could be outdoor altars, as at Inishmurray (Ó Carragáin 2010: 173) or potentially at Killeen (Fisher 2001: 118). As none of the stones were in situ, their original function remains uncertain – although there is a strong likelihood that many were grave-markers.

The lost East Cross, about half a mile east from Tullich, was in a significant location. Jervise describes it as beside the road, near Farquharson's monument [which is on top of Tom Beithe] and destroyed when the railway was built (Jervise 1875–9, vol 2: 159). For a short distance at this point, the railway forms a shallow cutting to enable the train to pass between the road and the hill. This is near the boundary of the Monaltrie Estate, and there are large rounded boulders still to be seen nearby. This hill marks the natural closure to the plain at Tullich (illus 1 and 22).

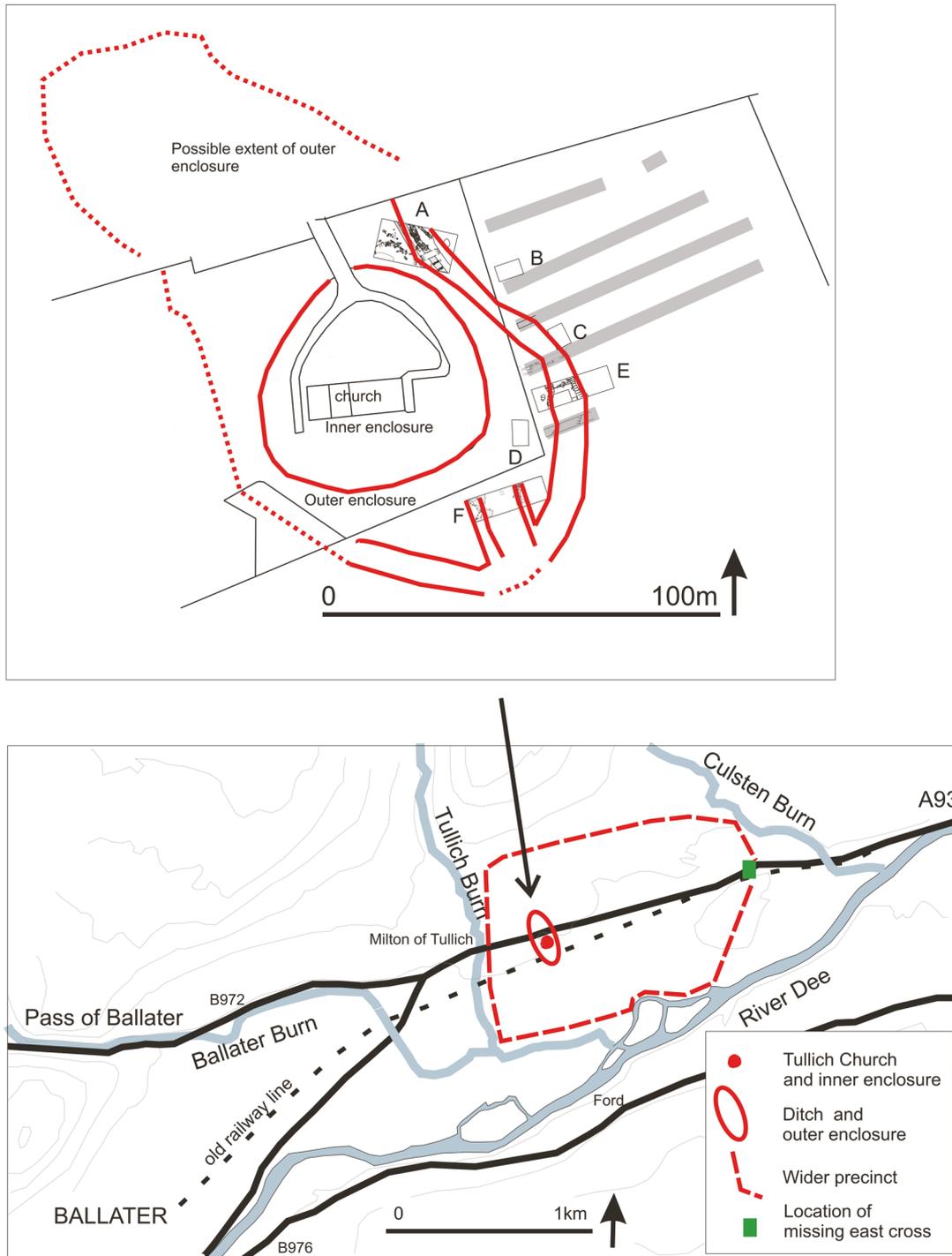
The only description of the East Cross compares it to the Skeith stone at Kilrenny, whose function (as well as its form, discussed below pp 272–5, illus 27) may be relevant here. The church of Kilrenny is dedicated to St Ethernan (d. 669) whose cult was celebrated throughout the Middle Ages at the nearby Isle of May

(Trench-Jellicoe 1998: 508). The Skeith stone faces towards the church and is placed beside an ancient track leading through the outer boundary and inner boundary of the church land. Earlier excavations found no trace of a burial on the site, so the way-marker function is more likely. One meaning of the word Skeith is ‘boundary’ (Trench-Jellicoe 1998: 507; Taylor 2009: 351). At Whithorn, the Peter stone (illus 28: A), whose design resembles the Skeith stone, may have served as a boundary, way-marker or perhaps the site of a cemetery on the road between Whithorn and the Isle of Whithorn (Trench-Jellicoe 1998: 511 n 17; Craig 1997: 616). At Tullich, the 1790 *Scroll Plan* not only indicates the boundary of the Monaltrie estate in this area, but it also marks the farmland of Style, repeating

the word alongside the road (Watson & Allan 1987: 29). Roy’s map of 1747–55 marks Style of Tulloch as a hamlet by the Coldstone Burn, which creates a boundary at the east side of the hill (at NO422944) (illus 21). Style is the Scots word for a gate or entrance, indicating an ancient property division in this area adjacent to the hill. If the East Cross represented a boundary marker, it would establish the three zones of sanctuary: *sanctus*, *sanctior*, *sanctissimus* (Ó Carragáin 2010: 57–9). The outer area would encompass the Tullich plain bounded by the hillock Tom Beithe (Tombae) and the Culsten (Coldstone) Burn in the east, closing in the west with the Tullich Burn and the boglands beyond. Within that space is the outer enclosure created by the ditch to the east of the church and north of the road, and the



ILLUS 21 Detail of Tullich from Roy’s Military Survey © The British Library Board, Maps CC.5.a.441



ILLUS 22 Interpretation of the inner and outer enclosures and the wider precinct. The possible N and W extent of the outer enclosure is based on the 1790 *Scroll Plan* and the Geophysical Survey

inner enclosure of the churchyard (illus 22). For obvious geographical reasons, the ancient track to Tullich would have proceeded from an entry to the plain by the cross, roughly along the line of the present road or former railway. At Kilrenny, Trench-Jellicoe was also able to define these three levels of boundary (1998: 507).

Another possibility is that the East Cross commemorated a place of retreat for St Nathalan. Michie (1910: 116) recalls it was ‘popularly designated St Nachalan’s cross’. Medieval spellings of the place-name are Tulynathlayk (1275) and Tulynathelath (1366) meaning hillock of Nathalan (*Abdn. Reg. 1275; 1366*). This hillock NO419 939, called Tombae in the *Scroll Plan* (Tom Beithe, hill of the birch trees) (Watson & Allan 1987: 28), is a place of contemplation overlooking the church plain, now occupied by a memorial obelisk to William Farquharson of Monaltrie, erected in 1836. Both Cuthbert and Columba had hallowed places of retreat away from their community’s centre. If this stone was in some way ‘the stone of the founder saint’, distinguished from the grave-markers in the cemetery, its exceptional design could take on an additional importance in the locality, leading to the proliferation of simpler versions in Aberdeenshire.

#### *The Font*

Although indicated as ‘Font Stone’ on the 1790 plan, and for convenience called a font in this article, the exact function and date of the large boulder bowl are debatable (illus 2 and 20). By the late 11th–12th century, monolithic carved fonts become commonplace in churches throughout England, Wales and Ireland, although relatively few complete carved medieval examples survive in Scotland (Walker 1887: 346–498). There are many more undecorated stone bowls found by Scottish churches, some of which might be fonts but the smaller ones resemble Irish bullauns, vessels used for prayer rituals, or perhaps used as a stoup. In Deeside there are several stone bowls associated with churches, but none match Tullich in size (diameters: Tullich, 117cm; Lumphanan, 92cm; Glengairn, 59cm; Loch Kinnord c 60cm (Michie 1910: 89); Braemar St Andrews, 53cm; Inchmarnoch, 47cm). Lumphanan, Inchmarnoch

and Glengairn are quite neatly dressed in some areas, while the bare rocks at Tullich and Braemar have a wild and natural look (Geddes 2001: 114, 156; Fraser 1925: 29; OS Name Book no 39: 19). By the central Middle Ages, church monuments tend to be distinguished with dressed or carved stone, whereas the protean Tullich bowl is more readily associated with an earlier era, perhaps the 7th–8th centuries, when raw boulders like the cross-marked stones were being adapted for church use.

The earliest records of baptism in Scotland concern the missionary activities of St Columba (d. 597), while travelling through the pagan countryside. Two were speedy services for old men on the brink of death, by the sea shore on Skye and in the fields of Glen Urquhart (Sharpe 1995: 1:33 p 136, III:14 p 216). Another was an entire household ‘in the province of the Picts’, while an infant baptism took place on a journey, beside a rock from which water bubbled out (Sharpe 1995: II:32 p 179, II:10 p 161). For these early rituals of the conversion period neither the formalities of a church nor stone font were required. From a period when the church was fully established, there is more evidence from Irish sources which is likely to be relevant at Tullich. Narrative accounts cited by Whitfield (2007: 519–37) show that early baptisms frequently took place by rivers or holy wells, and the water was held in a decorated bucket, to be ladled over the neophyte’s head. In England, the relative absence of early stone fonts suggests priests may have carried a portable bowl or bucket from place to place (Foot 1992: 182–3). At the birth of St Rumwald, attendants were ordered to ‘fetch a hollow stone lying a little distance away’ for the holy water (cited in Foot 1992: 171). However, the 9th-century Stowe Missal from Ireland provides some details about Celtic baptismal rituals. The font itself was consecrated before being filled with holy water, perhaps implying it was an ad hoc vessel previously unblessed. The neophyte was lowered into the font (*descendit in fontem*) and was sprinkled with holy water three times. To complete the ceremony, washing of the feet (*pedilavium*) took place. Although not performed in the Roman baptismal Office, *pedilavium* was common in the early Gallican church (Warren

1987: 217 n 4, 66). Adamnán mentions that at Iona in the late 7th century it was customary to wash the feet of pilgrims and for the monks to wash their feet before entering the church (Sharpe 1995: II: 45 p 202, I:4 p 117). By the west door at Iona there is a shallow rectangular cross-marked granite trough which may be such a foot bath (RCAHMS 1982: 106, no 6). Other possible footbaths are noted in Ireland at Inishmurray and Glendalough Cathedral (Ó Carragáin 2010: 198–9).

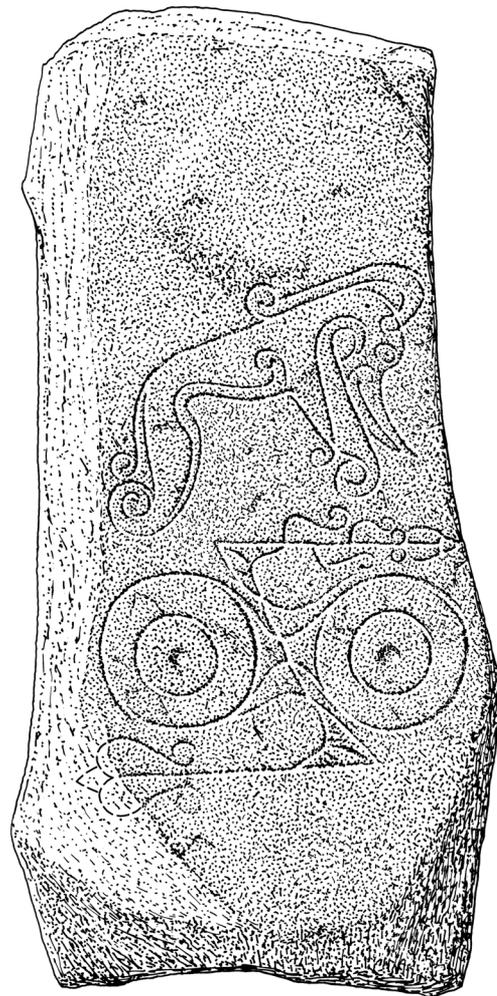
Tullich shares its great size and rough form with the slightly smaller boulder bowls at Fortingall and Dull in Perthshire (Robertson 1997: 146), although only Tullich has a drain hole. It may be significant that these giant boulder bowls are found in conjunction with some of the largest collections of early Class IV stones, also at Fortingall and Dull. The two may be a related phenomenon. However, a full survey to correlate boulder bowls in association with other early sculpture has yet to be undertaken.

Access to holy waters, often a pre-Christian cult focus, may have been an initial reason for selecting the site. Tullich church is positioned directly above the geological fault which traverses the Dee Valley. At a higher level, to the south, the ‘curative’ water at Pannanich springs from the same fault (illus 3). No well has so far been identified in the churchyard, but there is one just to the east at NO395973. This is likely to be an ancient source: it is on a natural spring line; it is the nearest water supply for the souterrain settlement; its triangular area of boggy ground is marked on the 1790 *Scroll Plan* (illus 2); and it is recorded as a well on the 1866 Ordnance Survey Map. It is currently a boggy pool. This recalls the situation at Old Deer, where St Drostan’s Well lies some distance from the circular graveyard (Forsyth 2008: 401).

#### COMPARISONS: SYMBOLS

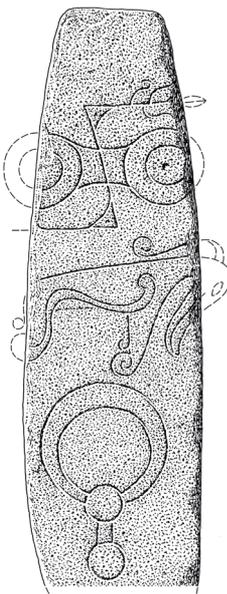
Although the symbols on Tullich 1 are among the most common types (double-disc and Z rod, Pictish beast and mirror (illus 19)), they are carved with specific details which restrict their comparative material (listed in Table 2). The double-discs are made with two concentric circles

and a dot in the centre. The bends of the Z-rod are filled with plain triangles, and the rod itself is fletched with three tendrils. These combinations are found at six sites in Aberdeenshire. The Pictish beast at Tullich has some specific details: a double line under the belly, leading up to the shoulder scroll; a single tendril forming the head lappet; two scrolls on the front leg, as if one were a dew-claw; and it faces to the right. Four of the closest parallels are in Aberdeenshire. These elements are ‘abstractions’ from the most developed ‘elephant’ model which Henderson (1957–8: 51–2) identifies at Golspie, Sutherland.



ILLUS 23 Dyce 1 © Crown Copyright: RCAHMS.  
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TABLE 2  
Comparison of Symbols

<i>Tullich 1</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Comparisons</i>	<i>Illustrated in Fraser 2008, page</i>
	<p>Double-disc and Z-rod. Discs 2 concentric circles, plain bar. Triangles in Z-rod bends, three tendrils.</p>	<p>Dyce 1, Clatt 1, Dunnicaer 5, Keith Hall, Picardy Stone Inch, ABD.</p>	<p>13, 17, 21, 27, 37, 46</p>
	<p>Pictish Beast. Double line under belly, single line head lappet, double scroll on front leg.</p>	<p>Dyce 1, Broomhead of Crichtie, Kintore Churchyard, Tillytarmont 4 ABD. Aberlemno Flemington Farm, Kinblethmont, Strathmartine Castle, Linlathen, ANG.</p>	<p>13, 16, 28, 43, 49, 56, 68, 64</p>
	<p>Mirror. Two concentric circles on face, two circles forming handle.</p>	<p>Bourtie, Daviot, Keith Hall, Nether Corskie, Newbigging Leslie, Park House, Picardy Stone, Rhynie 6, Tillytarmont 5, ABD. Glamis Manse ANG. Abdie FIF. Sandside CAI. Inveravon 2, Knockando 2, MOR</p>	<p>15, 19, 27, 35, 34, 37, 41, 43, 55, 66, 79, 111, 112</p>

The mirror has two concentric circles on its face, and two circles forming the handle. This has a much wider distribution but also shows an overwhelming concentration in Aberdeenshire. Dyce 1 (illus 23), Keith Hall and Tillytarmont occur twice in these comparisons, which may suggest a particularly close connection either in date or meaning with the Tullich symbols.

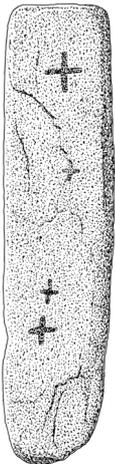
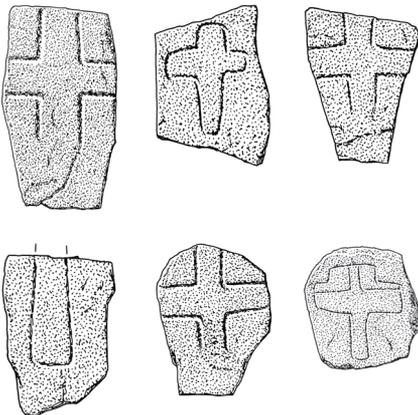
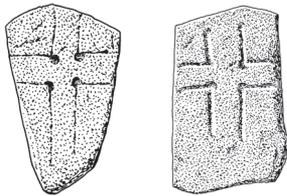
#### COMPARISONS: CROSS TYPES

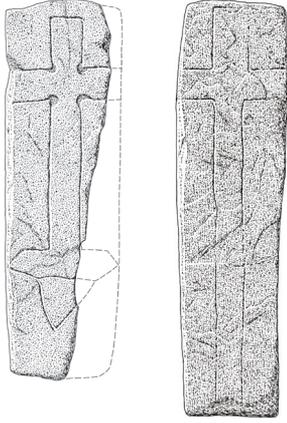
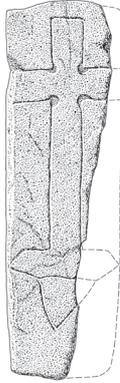
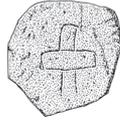
Table 3 illustrates the range of cross designs used at Tullich. They are compared firstly with similar motifs found in Aberdeenshire, where a proliferation of simple cross-marked stones is found along the valleys of the Dee and Don

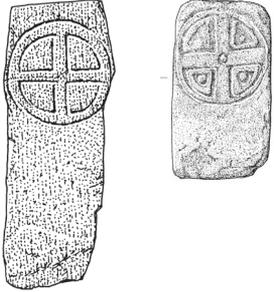
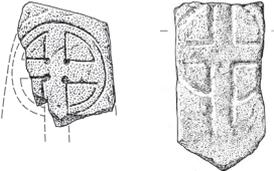
(mapped in Henderson & Henderson 2004: 158). Secondly they are compared with their generic hinterland, throughout Western Scotland and the Isles. These western comparisons are conveniently illustrated according to type by Fisher (2001: 27–53). This distribution shows that every surviving type at Tullich has comparisons in the locality, some very close: Tullich 2 and Banchory Ternan mort house share the unusual quirk of dimpled circles set within the rectangular outline of the cross armpit. Banchory Ternan manse is close in shape and proportion to Tullich 5 but it is carved in false relief.

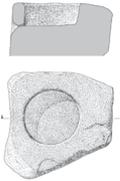
Plain linear crosses of two simple lines, the primary cross form, whether on boulders or pillars, have few distinguishing characteristics,

TABLE 3  
Comparison of Cross Forms

<i>Tulich (not to scale)</i>	<i>Tulich</i>	<i>Comparisons in Aberdeenshire and Western Scotland</i>
<p>Small linear crosses, plain short arms, votive type</p> 	15	<p>Mains of Afforsk, Bennachie ABD, single incised cross, and inscription 'Necton' (Clancy 2008: 374)</p> <p>Fortingall PER, 5–11. Fortingall 10 and 11 have three sunken equal-armed small crosses (Robertson 1997: 13–48; Hall 2004: 104–5). Dull PER, 5 slabs with linear crosses (Will 2003: 62–4)</p> <p>Smugglers' cave, Holy Island, Arran, BTE; Scoor cave, Mull, ARG; Vallay, N. Uist INV, Iona 1 (Fisher 2001: 29, 31)</p>
<p>Incised outline Latin cross</p> 	8, 9, 10,      11, 12, 14	<p>Dyce 3, Milton of Crathes, ABD; Tarfside, Northwaterbridge ANG</p> <p>Iona 23, Torran ARG; Kilchoan, Knoydart INV; Trudernish, Kildalton, Islay ARG (Fisher 2001: 33–4)</p>
<p>Small Latin cross with circular armpits</p> 	3, 4	<p>Aberdeen, from Seaton (with skeuomorph tenon)</p> <p>Iona 25 and 53; Kilkerran, Kintyre ARG (Fisher 2001: 35); Dull.</p>

<i>Tullich (not to scale)</i>	<i>Tullich</i>	<i>Comparisons in Aberdeenshire and Western Scotland</i>
<p>Elongated, incised Latin cross, no ring</p> 	2, 7	<p>Banchory Ternan mort house × 2; Deer? (Forsyth 2008: 405) ABD</p> <p>Muthill PER</p>
<p>Latin cross, circles set inside angled armpits</p> 	2	Banchory Ternan mort house ABD
<p>Skeuomorph incised base and tenon</p>	2	Isle Maree × 2 ROS (Fisher 2001: 35)
<p>Skeuomorph crossed 'planks'</p> 	13	<p>Aboyne, St Machar's stone ABD</p> <p>Cladh a'Bhile 15 (Fisher 2001: 33); Dull × 2 PER</p>
<p>Cross arms which do not complete their terminals</p>	3, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13	Numerous in western Scotland (Fisher 2001: 33)

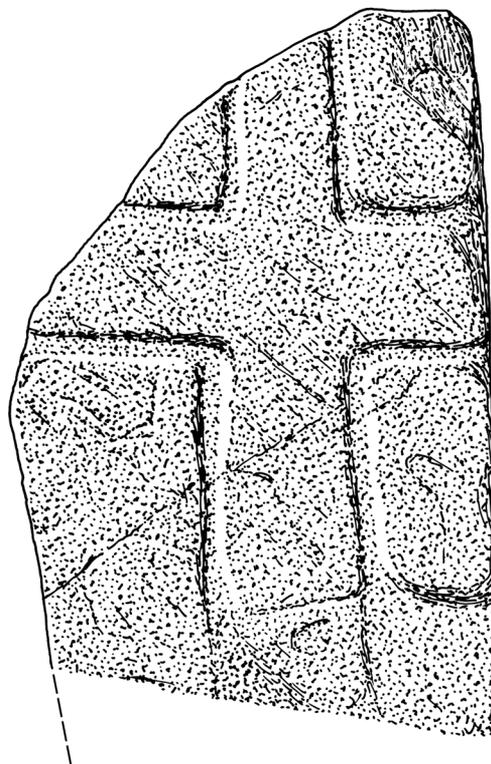
<i>Tullich (not to scale)</i>	<i>Tullich</i>	<i>Comparisons in Aberdeenshire and Western Scotland</i>
<p>Equal armed cross in circle</p> 	6, 16	<p>Dyce (illus 25), Inchmarnock, Migvie, Milton of Crathes, Monymusk, Barmekin of Echt (illus 27A), all ABD</p> <p>Lochgoilhead, Iona 5 and 6; Soroby, Tiree; Cladh a’ Bhile, Kilmory Knap 3 (Illus 26), ARG. (Fisher 2001: 28, 33, 36). Rosemarkie (in relief) INV. (Henderson &amp; Henderson 2004: 211)</p>
<p>Three equal arms in circle, with extended shaft</p> 	5, 17	<p>Banchory Ternan manse, Botriphnie, Clatt, Dyce (square not circle), all ABD</p> <p>Achadh na Cille, Oib ARG; Iona 39 (Fisher 2001: 36, 38)</p>
<p>Eight-petal marigold inside double circle</p>	East Cross, ‘like Skeith’	Skeith FIF; Maughold, Isle of Man; Whithorn, Kirkmadrine 1, 2 and 3, WIG; Cladh a’ Bhile ARG; Inishkea, Killeen, Reask, W. Ireland. (Trench-Jellicoe 1998: 501)
<p>Cross-of-arcs in a circle</p>	?East Cross, ‘like Bressay’	Ladywell, Kilspindie PER; Peter Stone, Whithorn; Whithorn 36 WIG; Eilean Mór; Cladh a’ Bhile; Kilberry; St Blane’s, Kingarth; Great Cumbrae; St Ciaran’s Cave; A’Chill, Canna; Kilbride, Lamlash; Kilmory, Rum; A’Chill, Muck; Raasay; Inchmarnock; Kilmaha; Dunans; Daltote Cottage. (Fisher 2001: 27)
<p>False relief Latin cross within circle</p>		<p>Logie Coldstone, ABD</p> <p>Crois Bheinn, Morvern; Kilbride, Islay; Cnoc na Cille, Brahunisary (Fisher 2001: 39)</p>
<p>False relief cross with squared arms and hollow armpits, within a circle</p>		<p>Inchmarnock ABD</p> <p>Kildonan, Eigg INV (Fisher 2001: 40)</p>

<i>Tullich (not to scale)</i>	<i>Tullich</i>	<i>Comparisons in Aberdeenshire and Western Scotland</i>
'Font' or boulder bowl 		Tullich 117cm diam; Lumphanan 92cm; Glengairn 59cm; Loch Kinnord [c 60cm, Michie 1910: 89], Braemar St Andrews 53cm; Inchmarnoch 47cm. ABD, Deeside.  Dull, Fortingall PER

and there are numerous examples – particularly on pillars – from the west coast (Fisher 2001: 28). A few include a number of small crosses like Tullich 15. Placed in caves and on living rock, they have the appearance of votive crosses (Holy Island Arran, Smugglers' Cave, Scoor Cave, Mull) but they also appear in similar fashion to Tullich, on a pillar at Vallay (Fisher 2001: 29, 31). On Tullich 15, the single central cross at one end looks primary, with the others added later. The boulder inscribed with the name Necton, from the Mains of Afforsk, near Bennachie, has a single incised cross, formed like Tullich 15 (Clancy 2008: 374). The association of both Tullich and Afforsk with Necton/Nathalan may provide a link between these two sites. Although the sunken crosses on Tullich 15 appear simple, their garnet schist stone gives them greater significance. At Fortingall, Perthshire, stones 5–11 are all local schist and decorated with basic incised or sunken crosses. The Fortingall slabs 10 and 11 are particularly comparable to Tullich 15 (Robertson 1997: 133–48; Hall 2004: 104–5), each with an array of three sunken equal armed small crosses. At Dull, Perthshire, there are five recumbent cross-slabs incised with simple linear crosses. However, Dull 7, an outline cross with the inscription 'Becli', is made of the sparkling garnet schist (Will et al 2003: 62–4). In contrast to the wide distribution of linear crosses along the west coast and in Perthshire, there are only three recorded by Fisher at Iona (2001: 28, 29).

The commonest form at Tullich is the simple incised outline Latin cross: Tullich 8, 9, 10, 11,

12 and 14 (illus 18). While there are at least eight of these within Dee and Donside, they are very rare in Angus (Table 3). Tarfside is in a remote area dedicated to St Drostan, at the head of the North Esk valley, en route towards a significant pass into Upper Deeside over the Mounth Road;



ILLUS 24 Tarfside © Crown Copyright: RCAHMS.  
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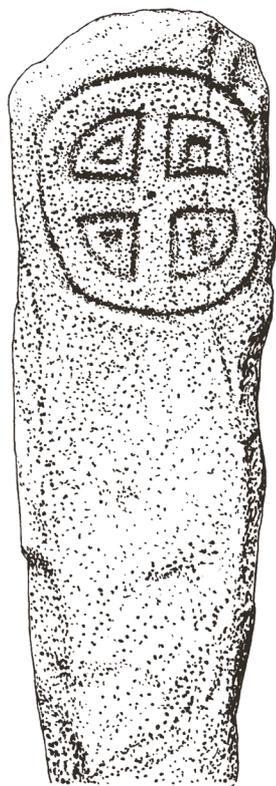
while Northwaterbridge is further down the same North Esk river. Rather than being rare, northern outliers in Angus, these two stones can be seen as a cultural extension from Deeside, over the Mounth pass (illus 24). It is notable that the long-shafted, incised Latin cross without a ring (2 and 7) is relatively rare both in Aberdeenshire and in the West. That outline becomes the predominant form for free-standing crosses in western Scotland, and for ringed crosses whether incised or carved in relief, frequently with interlace (Fisher 2001: 37–53).

The Hendersons remark on a ‘distinct regional preference for encircled equal-armed crosses’ in Aberdeenshire (2004: 163). This observation about the encircled cross can be further unpacked. At Tullich, the five encircled crosses are of two types: an equal armed cross inside the circle (Tullich 6, 16, East Cross); and a cross with three equal arms within the circle, but with a shaft extending beyond (5 and 17).

The same observation applies for the rest of the region: crosses contained within the circle are at Dyce (illus 25), Inchmarnock (inside a rounded square rather than a circle), Migvie, Milton of Crathes, Monymusk and Barmekin of Echt (illus 27A). The most fully developed example of this type in eastern Scotland is at Rosemarkie, Inverness-shire, carved in relief. Crosses with a circle around the head and an extending shaft are at Banchory Ternan manse, Botriphnie, Clatt and Dyce (square not circle, illus 25). This distribution indeed demonstrates a regional concentration for this type of cross; it also shows that Tullich has the most surviving examples on a single site. Table 3 lists the close comparisons for these encircled crosses to be found in the West. It also includes the stones from Logie Coldstone and Inchmarnock, both near Tullich, carved in false relief, with close relatives in the West. Illus 26 shows Kilmory Knap, Knapdale, a particularly close comparison for Tullich 16.



ILLUS 25 Dyce © RCAHMS (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Collection). Licensor [www.rcahms.gov.uk](http://www.rcahms.gov.uk)

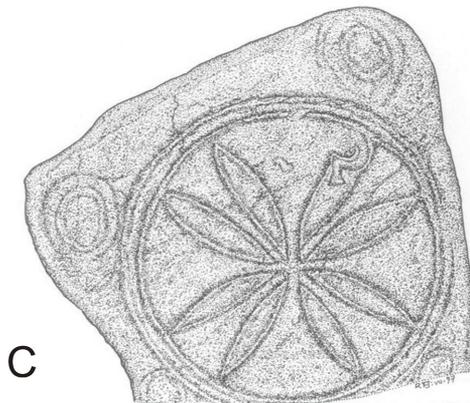
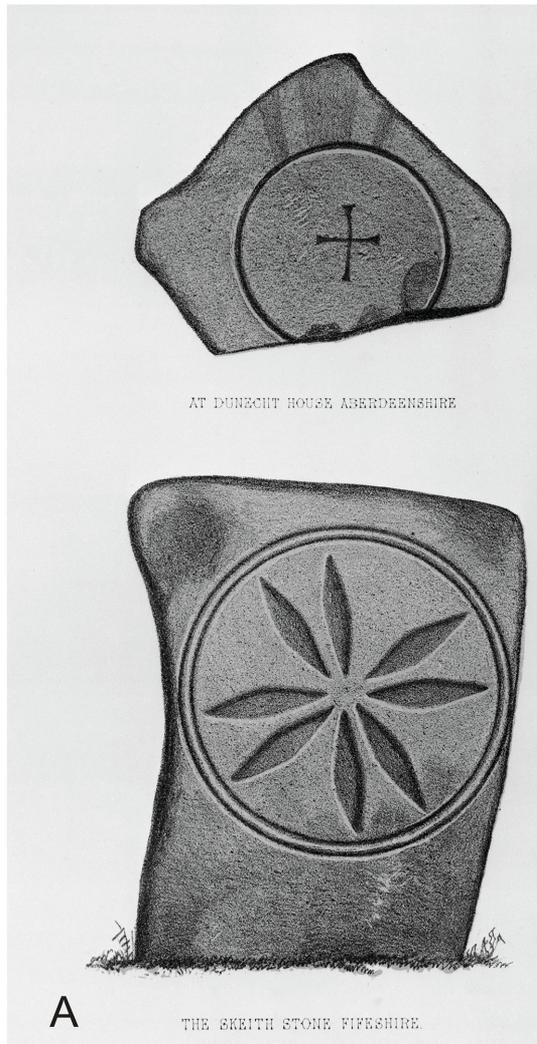


ILLUS 26 Kilmory Knap © Crown Copyright: RCAHMS.  
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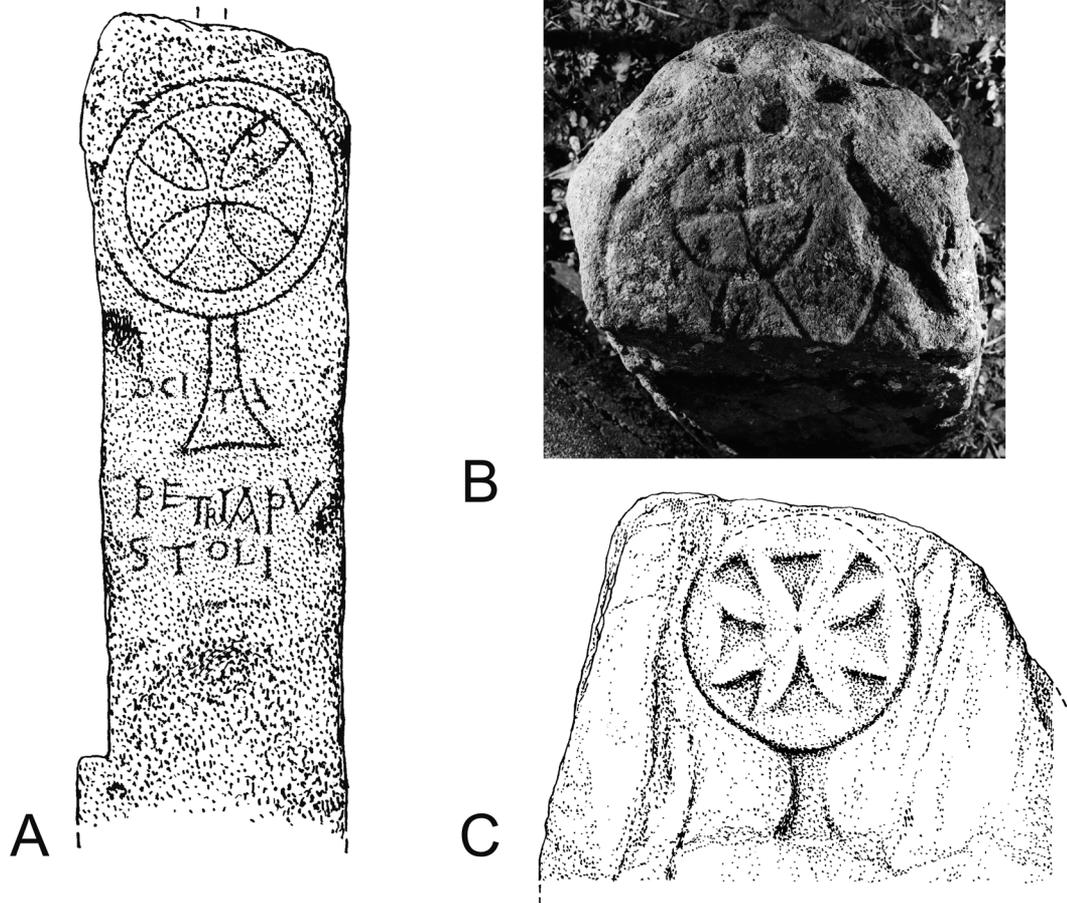
The lost East Cross is problematic, not least because its design was poorly recorded and it could potentially be one of the most important sculptures from the church. The only description is from Jervise (1875–9, vol 2: 159) who wrote it ‘very much resembled the Skeith Stane of Kilrenny’. In his day, the available illustration for reference (illus 27: A) was that in John Stuart’s *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* (1856–67, vol 2: 69, pl. cxxiv). Stuart shows a very simplified and schematic image of an eight-petalled marigold inside a double incised circle. Stuart’s own description of the Skeith stone says it resembles the crosses at Bressay (illus 27: B) (1856–67, vol 1: pl. xciv, xcv). The Bressay crosses have four equal, curving interlace arms in a circle, to the modern eye barely resembling Skeith. Careful modern drawing of the Skeith stone shows a far

more complex design which incorporates the letter *rho* among the eight petals, and has four smaller circles outside the main circle (illus 27: C) (Trench-Jellicoe 1998: 498). It is thus impossible to guess precisely what Jervise meant by ‘very much resembled’ in reference to the East and Skeith stones. It is likely he was referring to a cross of petal form or with curved arms within a circle, but he may not have noticed Skeith’s *rho* or additional circles.

Amongst the Early Christian sculpture in north-east Scotland, the incised marigold/hexafoil/cross-of-arcs designs are rare; most are found in the West (Table 3). Associated with the holy spring at Ladywell, Kilspindie, Perthshire, is a stone carved with three circles, the central one with a cross-of-arcs (*DES* 1992: 78–9). The parallels which Trench-Jellicoe (1998: 501) maps for Skeith (Kilrenny, Fife) are around the Irish Sea and west coast of Ireland (Maughold, Isle of Man; Whithorn, Kirkmadrine, Galloway; Cladh a’ Bhile, Argyll; and in western Ireland, Inishkea, Killean, Reask). The earliest of these, Kirkmadrine 1, 2 and 3 are equal-armed crosses with rho letter inside a circle, perhaps from c 550–600 (Forsyth 2005: 126). These are a close adaptation of the Chi-Rho labarum of Emperor Constantine (Thomas 1971: 86, fig 3; 161, fig 21). Nearby, the Peter Stone (illus 28: A) and Whithorn Museum No 36 have a crosses-of-arcs in a circle (*CIIC*, 1: no 519). Assuming Tullich East was a hexafoil or cross-of-arcs within a circle, more comparisons present themselves. Fisher illustrates a wide range of these designs in Western Scotland, though not at Iona (Fisher 2001: 27). An apparent connection between eastern Scotland and the south-west is further strengthened by the incised cross at Toft hills, Clatt, Aberdeenshire (illus 28: B), which is similar to the Peter Stone at Whithorn, both sharing a cross in the circle and a distinct splayed triangular stand holding up the circle. However, this design also appears in the West at Daltote Cottage, Knapdale (illus 28: C), with minor examples at Eilean Mór, A’Chill on Canna, Kilmory on Rum, Iona (Fisher 2001: 27, 28) and Shurrery, Caithness (Borland 2013a). So parallels for a stone ‘like Skeith’ at Tullich can be seen in the South-West, the Western Isles, Fife and Perthshire.



ILLUS 27 Parallels for the lost East Cross A: Skeith Stone, Kilrenny, from Stuart 1856. (Dunecht House stone came from Barmkin of Echt.) © Crown Copyright: RCAHMS. Licensor [www.rcahms.gov.uk](http://www.rcahms.gov.uk) B: Bressay, from Stuart 1856 © Crown Copyright: RCAHMS. Licensor [www.rcahms.gov.uk](http://www.rcahms.gov.uk) C: Skeith, © Trench-Jellicoe 1998



ILLUS 28 A: Peter Stone. B: Tofthills. C: Daltote © Crown Copyright: RCAHMS. Licensor [www.rcahms.gov.uk](http://www.rcahms.gov.uk)

Earlier research by Douglas Simpson laboured over the potential role of Ninian from Candida Casa converting the northern Picts in the 5th century, long before Columba. To bolster his case, he seized on the East Cross description calling it ‘probably an equal armed cross of Candida Casa or Ninianic type’ (Simpson 1925: 28). Since then, Ninian’s role in the early conversion of the northern Picts has been overturned by Clancy (2001). If the early mission of St Ninian can now be rejected, so too can the primacy of the Peter Stone as a source for Aberdeenshire crosses. Although Kirkmadrine 1 and the Latinus stone are evidence for Christianity flourishing around Whithorn

in the 5th century, Macalister dates the Peter Stone to the late 7th century, after the Synod of Whitby in 664, because of its petrine emphasis (*CHC*, 1: nos 516, 520, 519). More cautiously, Forsyth considers the dating of the Peter Stone and the many Irish crosses-of-arcs as ‘slippery’, suggesting a range from the 6th to 8th centuries (2005: 128). However, the Irish church also celebrated a devotion to St Peter, with his relics apparently brought to Armagh by St Patrick, and recorded by Tirechán (c 684) (Charles-Edwards 2000: 58). Craig thus sees the Peter Stone and other compass drawn designs at Whithorn showing predominant connections to Ireland (Craig 1997: 441). Both the Aberdeenshire

crosses in circles and the Peter Stone are thus likely to be reflexes of early Irish Christian forms. John Borland has mapped the diffusion of these cross designs, emanating from not just Iona but all across the Western Isles, penetrating through the glens of Perthshire, and perhaps crossing over Glenshee to reach Tullich and then spreading down the Dee and Don valleys (Borland 2013a & b). It may be significant that St Nathalan was sufficiently well known in Ireland for his death to be recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* (see above, pp 232–3).

The Hendersons reflect (2004: 163) ‘The simple undateable Aberdeenshire crosses cannot make a useful contribution to defining the role of Ninian in the conversion of the Picts but this undeniable regional preference [for the encircled equal armed cross] calls for some explanation. The simple answer would be that the cross-type reflects some local ecclesiastical allegiance, not necessarily Ninianic, not necessarily Columban, for this is not a common type on Iona or its vicinity.’ At Iona, with the exception of no 39, the arms of the cross project beyond the ring, whereas the common Aberdeenshire type, including Tullich 5, 6, 16 and 17, keeps the arms within the ring, a design closely derived not from the Latin cross but from the cross-of-arcs within the circle. Thus the East Cross at Tullich, like Skeith, exceptional both in design and location, could have provided a local source of emulation for the encircled crosses of Aberdeenshire.

#### CROSS TYPES: HISTORICAL IMPLICATIONS

These simple incised cross-marked stones have been classified as Class IV by Henderson (1987: 46), developing the typology of Class I–III which Allen and Anderson established for Pictish sculpture (Allen & Anderson 1903, I. pt 1: xi–xii; pt II: 46–56). The incised technique is also used on the Pictish symbol stones, Class I, and both are technically simpler than Class II and III which are carved in relief. For this reason, the distribution of Class IV stones may be used to trace the earliest physical evidence of the spread of Christianity through Scotland. Frustratingly, because of their very simplicity,

they continued to be made throughout the Middle Ages so they are less useful for defining an upper date horizon.

The *Annals of Ulster* refer to the deaths of Abbot Uineus (d. 623) and Nectain (d. 679) from a religious establishment called Nér. Clancy cautiously associates this with a potential site in the vicinity of Fetternear, Abersnithock (*Eccles Mo Nethoc*, church of Nechtan), and Monymusk. He conjectures that this is the ‘earliest historically documented ecclesiastical settlement in the North-East of Scotland’ (2008: 367, 371). Although the name Nathalan (Nechtán) is only documented at Tullich in the 13th century, the recent radiocarbon dates (p 241) indicate Tullich church was probably occupied by the late 7th century, within the lifetime of Nathalan. This gives some substance to the statement in the *Aberdeen Breviary* that Nathalan personally founded Tullich church (Macquarrie 2012: 23). It is therefore likely that at least some of the carved stones date from this period. This is reinforced by the many local sites with similar carved stones, listed in Table 3, which are associated with saints from the same era as Nathalan. Their role in the early church in north-east Scotland, often hazy and elusive, has been analysed by Clancy (2008: 363–97). A few of them have recorded dates: St Uineus (Finnan)/Migvie, d. 623; St Machar/Seaton-Aberdeen, ?fl. 669; St Drosten/Tarfside, d. 719; St Fergus/Dyce, fl. 721. St Ternan of Banchory may have lived in the 5th or 6th centuries, while Marnoch of Inchmarnock could be one of many early individuals of that name (Clancy 1999: 83–8; 2008: 387; Macquarrie 2012: 389–91). Association with a saint’s name can signify a mother–daughter relationship between churches, or simply the possession of relics acquired at a later date, but it may also indicate his personal role as founder, particularly when the churches form a local cluster and the saint is otherwise relatively obscure. Table 3 demonstrates that, cumulatively, cross-marked stones of the Tullich type were being made in some quantities all around the centre of Aberdeenshire. It also highlights the exceptional quantity of stones to emerge from a single site, which suggests a special role for Tullich.

## THE COMMUNITY AND PATRONS

In eastern Scotland it is rare to find so many simple cross-marked stones together. Where collections of these stones exist, it is rare for them all to be incised, with no examples of relief carving. Thus, around the popular pilgrimage church on the Isle of May, with hundreds of burials, there is no surviving sculpture at all (Yeoman 2009: 240). At Portmahomack there is a combination of smaller incised cross-marked stones (5) identified as likely grave markers, and larger monumental slabs carved with complex designs in relief (Carver 2008: 84, 97–102. Incised grave marker stones: TR 21, 24, 25, 30 and 31). At Fortingall and Dull, both with large collections, there is a mixture of simple incised stones and complex relief sculpture (Robertson 1997: 136–43; Will et al 2003). These latter sites demonstrate a continuity of sculptural patronage developing from early incised monuments to include monuments carved in relief. The prestigious mausolea at St Vigeans and Meigle in Angus have no incised cross-marked stones; all their monuments are carved in relief, mainly with complex iconography. In this context therefore, the Tullich collection is unusual.

In the early days of Christianity in Pictland, many Christians still chose to be buried at their traditional ancestral sites rather than in the church precinct, and most had graves unmarked by memorials. Pre-Christian burial grounds were frequently located by local boundaries, protecting their territory (Winlow 2011: 346–56). There may be evidence of this practice at Tullich, where the place-name Tomnakeist means ‘knoll of the coffin’ – recalling the discovery of stone cists there. The location is precisely at the pinch-point at the east end of the plain, in the area called Style, gateway to the district on the north side of the modern road, and facing Tom Beithe (NO399980) (Macdonald 1899; Watson & Allan 1984: 151).

Pictish patrons chose to represent their Pictish identity, whether for burial, commemoration or ownership, in the language of the symbol stones. The relatively humble but Christian anonymity of the stones at Tullich therefore indicates a community with closely shared views about

their own importance in relation to death and their Saviour. This suggests a monastery or community of clerics. Archaeological evidence of metalworking on the site indicates it was an area of social habitation as well as religious devotion. The single symbol stone could signify earlier occupation of the site or perhaps the contribution of a secular donor, like Bede the Pict, mormaer of Buchan, who donated the lands of Deer to St Drostan (Forsyth et al 2008: 137).

Although there is some variation in the style of cross design, the technique remains the same: most of the stones are incised in approximately the same way. This could indicate two possibilities. For practical reasons to do with the granite and theological concerns about humility, the sculptors continued with their simple incised technique for a long time at Tullich, even after relief carving developed elsewhere. The admirable quality of nearby Migvie, Kinnord, and Formaston stones demonstrates how well the local carvers could handle granite relief for other purposes. Or else, all the stones were carved within a relatively short period of time, before the technique of relief carving was introduced in the 8th century.

This conclusion begs several questions. When were the stones produced? And why did investment in the sculpture at Tullich stop? Radiocarbon samples have produced dates from the mid-7th to late 9th centuries for deposits in one of the ditches (Table 1). These dates correspond to the *floruit* of St Nathalan (d. 679), a saint who was known in Ulster and historically associated with the site. The graveyard and enclosure are of the early circular form. The strong influence on design from Western Scotland reflects the Columban church whose artistic influence began to wane from the 8th century. Local parallels for the sculpture are frequently found in churches with similar early associations.

Explaining the decline of investment at the site, with no relief carving or more advanced cross forms in the collection, requires a proviso. We do not know the technique employed on the East Cross and more finds might emerge from a more comprehensive excavation of the site. It may be that in contrasting the plain incised crosses at Tullich with the complex Class II stones in the vicinity, we are not comparing like with like. At

Migvie and Kinnord, with only one stone each, the churches are adjacent to small medieval castles (Michie 1910: 82–93; Simpson 1949: 81). The relief sculpture on these sites may be the result of secular rather than monastic patronage, with the humble monks at Tullich preferring to continue with their anonymous incised crosses long after the relief technique became widespread in the 8th century. The closely similar group (Tullich 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 17) looks like a core collection of grave stones, indistinguishable in technique from the symbol stone, connected with the original community in the late 7th–early 8th century. The remaining stones, though showing signs of slightly different workmanship, particularly 16 with its suggestion of false relief, might be a few generations later, but have no evidence of developments like complex cross forms from a significantly later date.

The main evidence for continued use of the site is the subsequent construction of the church itself with its Gothic doorway, reusing stones 1, 2 and 7 in the fabric. Apart from that, there is little visible sign of any later investment in adorning the site during the remainder of the Middle Ages. This may be a reflection of the era when the land was owned by the Knights Templars and Hospitallers, during which the property was seen as a source of revenue rather than investment. By the 13th and 14th centuries it probably became a chapel of Aboyne (Cowan 1967: 201). Nonetheless, we are left with the apparent paradox that, according to the *Aberdeen Breviary*, pilgrims continued to visit the church for healing right up to the 16th century, but have apparently left very little trace of their presence and devotions.

## CONCLUSION

These excavations have added some substance to the legendary early origins for Tullich church. The work was driven not by research objectives but by the need to extend the modern graveyard. Nevertheless, they have revealed the development of both the inner and outer enclosures around the church while the suite of three good radiocarbon dates prove that some of

this took place between the late 7th century and the 9th century. As very little of the internal area could be excavated, few signs of wide-ranging social and economic activity have come to light but there are indications of both agriculture and metalworking. This, combined with the exceptional number of cross-marked stones, indicates a religious community flourishing within the era of St Nathalan, the supposed founder of the church. Its apparent remoteness, like that of Portmahomack, belies the fact that Tullich lies on a major route of communication from the west to east of Scotland. This is amply demonstrated by the types of cross design, all with parallels in the West. Understanding the development of the secular settlement at Tullich beside the church might in future shed light on the transition from religious community to parish church. With its peace and beauty and burgeoning new housing developments, Ballater is wryly described by its present inhabitants as ‘the place old Aberdonians come to die’. It is fitting that the desire of more Ballater folk to be buried at Tullich today is leading to the recovery of its past.

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