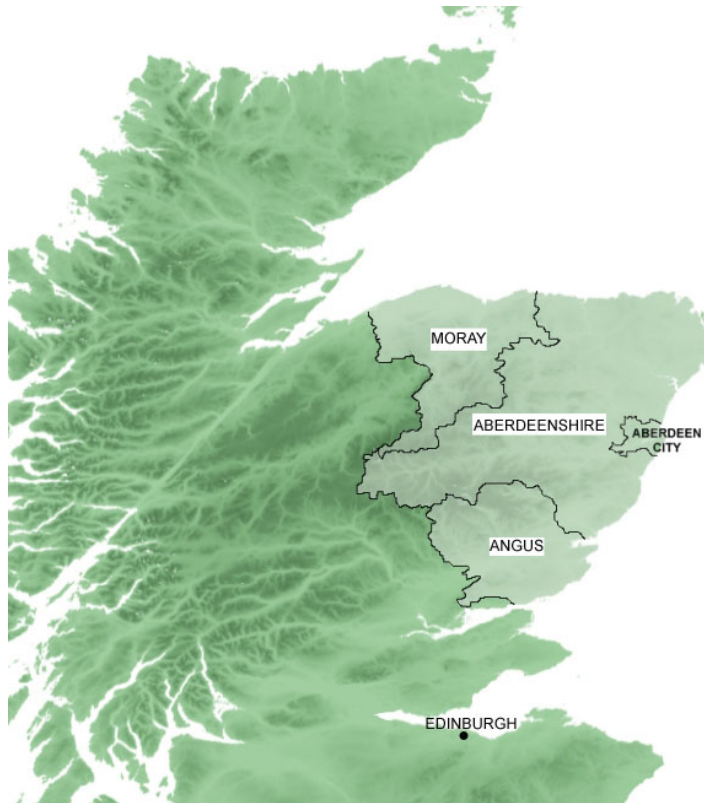


FROM MOUNTAINS TO SEA...AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN: ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE

July 11, 2014 Claire Herbert Curation, Day of Archaeology 2014, Public Archaeology a day in the life, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service, Aberlemno, Angus, Angus Council, Archaeology, Duffus Castle, favourite site, Forestry, Historic Environment Record, Local Authority Archaeology Service, medieval, Moray, Moray Council, Pictish, Pictish stones, Picts, Prehistoric, Prehistoric Europe, Prehistory, recumbent stone circle, regional archaeology service, Scotland, Stone circle, Tomnaverie, United Kingdom

It is our great pleasure to welcome you on the Day of Archaeology 2014 to the Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service.

Situated in the North East of Scotland, we are a small team (just the three of us!) with responsibility for a large geographic area – not only do we act as the regional archaeology service for Aberdeenshire Council, but also for Angus and Moray Councils, which is equivalent to 10,733km²!



Map showing location of Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Council areas in North East Scotland ©ACAS

PROTECTION, MANAGEMENT AND PROMOTION

For any given area roughly 95% of the historic environment is not protected by national designations, and it is down to Services like ourselves at local government level in the UK to protect it.

The team's remit is to protect, manage and promote the historic environment of Aberdeenshire, Angus & Moray. A big part of this is maintaining a **Historic Environment Record** (HER) for each of these areas, an ever-growing database of sites and monuments of archaeological and historical interest hosted on our website.

There are currently almost 32,000 sites recorded in the HER, ranging from Lower Paleolithic auroch horns through Early Medieval Pictish stones to World War II defences. That's almost 12,000 years of history!

The HER acts as the hub for our primary work within the Councils. We use it as the basis for assessing the potential impact of planning applications, forestry, utility and other consultations on the historic environment. The resulting archaeological mitigation work from these consultations then feeds back into the HER, broadening our (and therefore everyone's) knowledge and understanding of the historic environment here in the North East, and helping to inform future decisions.



WE WILL PROVIDE THE BEST PROTECTION, MANAGEMENT AND PROMOTION
OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT OF ABERDEENSHIRE FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL.

Aberdeenshire Council Archaeology Service Team Motto ©ACAS

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE...

We also do many other things such as helping to develop national policies and strategies, working with partners across the sector; giving advice to landowners and members of the public; helping metal-detectorists to report finds; helping the police when human remains are unearthed; advising and supporting community projects; developing tourist trails; working with academics and commercial units to develop a regional research framework; and working with developers to preserve sites, to name but a few. It's an almost never ending list, and we can never be certain from one week to the next what we may be approached about (last week we were asked to advise on potential filming locations!).

A DAY IN THE LIFE...

As a flavour of what's happening today, each of the team will go into a little more detail:

ARCHAEOLOGY AND PLANNING

CLAIRE HERBERT (ARCHAEOLOGIST)

One of my main tasks is dealing with planning consultations. In an average week, I'll view between 50 and 70 applications across the three Council areas, and assess whether archaeological mitigation is required.

Applications range from conversions of historic buildings, to wind turbines, to large-scale residential and leisure developments. The complexity of each application varies, and while some are relatively straight forward to comment on others require a more considered approach.

Every application is assessed on an individual basis, taking into consideration location, known archaeology within the area, the potential for unknown archaeology, the scale and type of development. I will then use of all this information to decide what, if any, would be the most suitable way to record the archaeology. This might be a standing building survey of a farmstead being converted into a house, a watching brief over the excavation of a wind turbine foundation, or a more complex programme of archaeological works perhaps starting with an evaluation.

Connections with the Past...

A recent example of successful mitigation works is a large housing development, located in a prominent situation in central Aberdeenshire with far reaching views across the rural landscape. Initially a trial trenching evaluation was carried out, with a handful of archaeological features uncovered. These were investigated further, and a larger area excavated revealing a suite of Iron Age roundhouses, souterrains and pits.



Example of archaeological mitigation in practice: a roundhouse revealed on a modern housing development ©ACAS

Not only has this mitigation added to our knowledge of what was happening in the area 2000 years ago, but it also serves to illustrate that we are perhaps not so far removed from our ancestors when it comes to deciding on what makes a good location for a settlement.

It is finds and connections like this which make it a privilege to work in this area with its rich and diverse cultural heritage.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND FORESTRY

CAROLINE PALMER (SMR ASSISTANT)

Large tracts of Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray are afforested – as much as a third of the land area of Moray is given over to forestry. These forests and woodlands contain significant numbers of archaeological sites, which need to be protected and managed in accordance with the [UK Forest Standard](#) which sets out the national approach to sustainable forest management.

Consideration of the historic environment is an important part in the process of planning new woodlands, developing forest plans, and for felling and restocking operations. The Archaeology Service has a role in advising on the nature of historic environment features within woodland and responding to forest and woodland related proposals to ensure that these features are appropriately managed and protected, encouraging conservation and interpretation where appropriate.



View across the afforested landscape of Aberdeenshire ©ACAS

Many features are already maintained as open ground within wooded areas. However, many existing forests and woodlands are relatively recent and may cover earlier features which could easily be damaged by modern forestry practices. Many sites in our record were first recorded in the 19th century, and we may not know their current condition. In such instances, or where new areas of planting are proposed in areas known to contain archaeological features, archaeological assessment, including walkover surveys, can identify these features on the ground to better inform planting proposals, allowing the conservation of significant remains, often as open ground.

The Theory in Practice...

A recent scheme I've looked at proposed woodland creation on an area that was included on the HER as an archaeological site comprising over 50 stone clearance cairns and rig & furrow remains recorded during a pre-afforestation survey some 20 years previously.

Whilst the field survey reported the cairns to be well preserved these did not cover the whole of the proposed planting area and it was not known to what extent these features might have survived. A possible hut circle identified on an aerial photograph had not been investigated on the ground. In the absence of a detailed plan of the individual features and knowledge of their current survival it was advised that an archaeological walkover survey be carried out to better record the features and their present condition and so inform planting proposals. The resulting plan and assessment provided more close delineation of the areas of remaining upstanding features to be left unplanted, enabling the woodland creation to proceed on the remaining areas.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN STRATEGY & POLICY

BRUCE MANN (ARCHAEOLOGIST)

Everyone outside of archaeology has an idea of what an archaeologist does, whether it is the slightly inaccurate Indiana Jones portrayal to the 3-days and we've solved everything Time Team production. What no-one realises, until you're well into your professional career, is that in reality an archaeologist has more paperwork to complete than you can possibly imagine.

At the heart of this mountain of words lie Strategies and Policies. Without them we can't effectively plan how we are going to protect and manage the historic environment. Back in April this year, I was very pleased to see the launch by Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture & External Affairs, of Scotland's Historic Environment Data (SHED) Strategy which we had been a key author of. This new strategy is one of many changes happening within the sector in Scotland at the moment, all of which has a bearing on how we do our everyday work.

Taking the Team Forward...

So this week I've been busy with the team translating all these new national policies and strategies into a new 3-year strategy for the Service. There are no easy answers unfortunately. We all know that archaeology is important, that it gives us a sense of place for where we live and who we are. It is also very fragile, and once gone it is lost forever. Therefore we have to balance the importance of protection and careful management with the realities of funding cuts, pressures of development and changing requirements on the land around us.

This week's example of that balancing act: overseeing the last pieces of investigative and repair works at a castle site which will ensure its long term preservation as a tourist attraction (success story!) versus assessing cracks appearing in the walls of a ruined Medieval church (new funding problem).

It may not be the most exciting part of archaeology, but without that paperwork we wouldn't even know where to begin in managing 32,000 sites.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

As mentioned, there are nearly 32,000 archaeological sites recorded in the Historic Environment Record. Below are three of our favourites, not only great sites to visit but also reflecting key periods which tell the story of the development of the North East of Scotland. For more information on the archaeology of Aberdeenshire, Moray and Angus, please visit the [Archaeology Service](#) on-line.

Caroline's Choice:

Tomnaverie Recumbent Stone Circle, Aberdeenshire [NJ40SE0001](#)

Tomnaverie recumbent stone circle is a site to which I frequently return. Narrowly avoiding destruction by quarrying in the 1920s, some of the stones, including the recumbent, were moved before it was saved by being taken into Guardianship. The stones were then restored to their original sockets following excavation in 1999.

The circle stands on a prominent hilltop allowing appreciation of its position within the surrounding landscape, with commanding views northwards over much of the surrounding Howe of Cromar, and over to the mountain of Lochnagar in the distance.



Tomnaverie recumbent stone circle, Aberdeenshire, looking out towards the mountain of Lochnagar
©ACAS

The stone circle itself encircles the remains of an earlier cairn defined by a kerb, and it is possible both were part of a single scheme. Tomanverie stands on the southern edge of an archaeologically rich landscape with evidence of occupation from at least the early Neolithic, with later Bronze Age and Iron Age remains including cairns, field systems and hut circles, to later Medieval and Post-medieval abandoned crofting settlements. There is even recent history present, as a short distance to the southwest of the stone circle are traces of a Cold War Royal Observer Corps post.

The recumbent stone circle is unique to the North East of Scotland, found almost exclusively in Aberdeenshire. More than 70 examples have been recorded in the region, and it is worth noting that around 10% of all stone circles recorded in Britain are found in Aberdeenshire.


The Archaeology Service has recently compiled a short guide to 10 of the best of them in Aberdeenshire, and we would encourage everyone to visit at least one stone circle this summer!

STRICHEN

SMR Ref No: NJ55W0001 // NJ 9367 5448 // AB43 6TN

Reconstructed Recumbent Stone Circle, c.15m in diameter, comprising the recumbent, 2 flankers and 7 other standing stones of local grey granite. The circle was pulled down by a tenant farmer in 1830, who was then made to re-erect it by the 'Tutor's' landowner. It was later discovered that it had been re-erected to the South of the original site, so that the recumbent appeared on the North arc of the new circle. This reconstruction was first removed in the 1960s. After excavation in 1979, the stones were replaced in their original positions and the circle reconstructed.

Directions: 7 miles (11km) Northwest of Midvale. Take the A930 West out of Midvale in direction New Phipps for 6.2 miles (10km). Turn right onto the A811 and continue on this road for 3.2 miles (5km) turn left onto minor road (B9099) for 0.4 miles (0.6km). Car park. Walk under old railway bridge and follow signed path on hill. Beware of livestock.

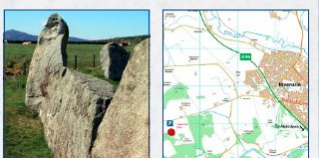


EASTER AQUHORTHIES

SMR Ref No: NJ72SW009 // NJ 7223 2079 // AB51 5JL

Its almost perfectly circular plan places this circle early in the series of Recumbent Stone Circles. It is 19.5m in diameter and consists of 9 erect stones, the red granite recumbent, 2 grey granite flankers plus 2 massive blocks which form a reserved area in front of the recumbent. The West Flanker has 4 cup marks on it. The differences between this recumbent with its flankers and the other circle stones can be seen clearly in terms of their geological origin.

Directions: 3 miles (4.8km) West of Inverurie. Turn left off A94 at Inverurie off Blackhall Road roundabout or the North end of Inverurie, on to minor road. Continue for c.2 miles (3.2km) the car park is on the left. From the car park follow the signposted track.




MIDMAR

SMR Ref No: NJ60NE003 // NJ 6994 0649 // AB51 7NA

Recumbent Stone Circle, 17.2m in diameter, consisting of the recumbent, 2 flankers and 5 other erect stones. This re-arranged circle is now surrounded by a churchyard. The 2 flankers, each c.2.5m high, have been matched and shaped to resemble two enormous canine teeth, and flank a massive recumbent which weighs 20 tons. It is likely that at least one stone has been re-erected and a ring cairn removed, probably when the graveyard was laid out around the circle in 1914.

Directions: 16 miles (25.8km) West of Aberdeen. 2 miles (4.8km) West of Echt turn right off B9119 (signposted for Midmar Kirk). Parking is possible by the churchyard wall.




TOMNAVERIE

SMR Ref No: NJ40SE001 // NJ 4865 9349 // AB34 4YQ

Reconstructed Recumbent Stone Circle, c. 17m in diameter, comprising the massive whinstone recumbent, its 3 flankers and 8 erect stones of pale red granite. The recumbent has 2 cupmarks. The circle enclosed a ring cairn, c.1.4m across, whose substantial kerbs still survive.

Directions: 4.5 miles (7.2km) Northwest of Abertree. Turn right off A93 onto B9094 at the West end of Abertree. Continue on this road for 4 miles (6.4km). The stone circle is on the left. From the car park follow the signposted path.

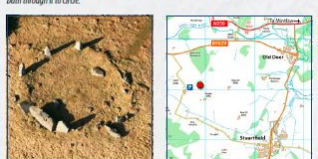


LIKEY BAAE

SMR Ref No: NJ4NE003 // NJ 9587 4709 // AB42 5PP

The most intact Recumbent Stone Circle in Northern Aberdeenshire. It has 5 erect stones, including the recumbent and East Flanker, and 5 fallen stones, including the West Flanker. They are set upon a circular bank of small stones and earth c.14.4m in diameter, with kerbs formed by slab-like stones on the inner and outer faces. Most of the stones of the circle are of granite although the fallen West Flanker and recumbent are of whinstone. The recumbent is estimated to weigh 21.5 tons.

Directions: 3.6 miles (5.8km) Southwest of Midvale. From the A930, turn left onto the B9020. Continue for 1 mile (1.6km), passing through Old Deer; turn left onto minor road. In c.800m, park south of the end of the track on the left. Walk up the signposted track to the first wall and follow the path through it to the circle.




Scheduled Monuments

Most of the sites listed here have been designated as Scheduled Monuments, which are monuments of national importance to which Scottish Ministers have given legal protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Treasure Trove Law

Under the laws of Treasure Trove in Scotland, all finds of archaeological or historical interest or importance are the property of the Crown. If you find an artefact please report it to either a local museum or contact the Archaeology Service (archaeology@aberdeenshire.gov.uk).

Timeline



Glossary

CIST BURIAL A small, stone lined grave into which a body is placed along with grave goods.

CLAVA CAIRNS Passage graves and circular or ring cairns surrounded by stone circles. Typically found around Inverness, in the inner Moray Firth and Speydale.

CUPMARKS Cup-shaped hollows, measuring between 10 and 50 mm in diameter, which have been carved or ground into a stone.

FLANKERS A pair of upright stones which stand at either end of the recumbent, the tallest stones of the arrangement. Often decorated with cupmarks.

KERB CAIRN Circle of upright kerbstones, often quite large, containing a mounded cairn of small stones. Sometimes contain boulders.

RECUMBENT Massive stone slabs laid horizontally in the Southwestern or Southern arc of a Recumbent Stone Circle often decorated with cupmarks, flanked by 2 tall upright stones.

RING CAIRN Circular or oval banks of stones with an open area left clear in the centre, forming a ring shape. Sometimes contain boulders.

SMR The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) is a database containing information on nearly 20,000 sites of archaeological and historical interest in Aberdeenshire. Visit the SMR online and input the SMR Reference Number for each of the stone circles described to see more information on each site.


www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/archaeology/smr

CLUNE HILL

SMR Ref No: NO79SE002 // NO 7947 4831 // AB31 6GX

Recumbent Stone Circle, measuring 17.5m x 16.7m, consisting of the recumbent, its 2 flankers and 3 erect stones. All are of red granite. The recumbent is on the South side, measuring c.2m long, and weighing over 9 tons. The centre of the circle is occupied by a cairn measuring c.15.3m by 13.5m. Immediately to the East of the stone circle is a ring cairn.

Directions: c. 5 miles (7.8km) East of Banffshire. From the A93, turn onto the A957 at Clunzie. After crossing the Burny Burn, turn left onto B9077, continue on this road for c. 2 miles (3.2km), passing through Kirk of Dalry. Then turn right onto minor road towards Rhododendron of Dalry, for c. 0.5 miles (0.8km), then turn left. Clun Hill is signposted on the right. Car park. From the car park take the left hand path past the top of the hill take the right hand path until you reach a bench; take the track on the left to the stone circle.

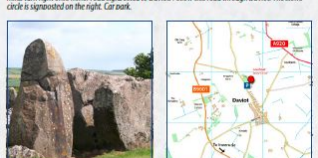


LOADHEAD OF DAVID

SMR Ref No: NJ2NW0001 // NJ 7476 2885 // AB51 0JH

Reconstructed Recumbent Stone Circle, with low central kerb cairn. The outer circle, 20.5m in diameter, is formed of 8 standing stones, 7 flankers and the massive, frost-split, recumbent. The stone immediately East of the East flanker has a vertical line of cup marks on its inner face. Each stone stood in a small cairn beneath which was a pit containing charcoal and pottery sherds. Adjacent to the stone circle are the remains of a Bronze Age cremation cemetery which, when excavated, contained the remains of 31 individuals.

Directions: 5.5 miles (8.8km) Northwest of Inverurie. Take the B9001 out of Inverurie, and after 4.3 miles turn right onto minor road signposted to Daviot. Follow this road through Daviot. The stone circle is signposted on the right. Car park.

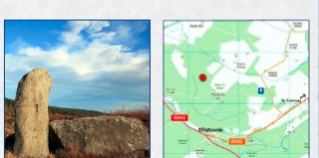


WRITERHILL

SMR Ref No: NJ61SW002 // NJ 6432 1350 // AB51 755

Recumbent Stone Circle, c.20m in diameter, within which is a well-defined ring cairn of c.17m in diameter. Only the grey granite recumbent, its West Flanker and 2 other stones are in their original positions, although a number of fallen stones remain.

Directions: 11.5 miles (18.5km) Southwest of Inverurie. Turn left off A94 onto B993 at the South side of Inverurie, towards Kemnay, and continue on this road for c. 10 miles (16km) then turn right towards Parkside Forest car park. From the car park follow the marked trails for 0.9 miles (1.4km).




CULLILLIE

SMR Ref No: NJ70SE001 // NJ 7851 0427 // AB32 6UX

Restored Stone circle, comprising 8 stones placed around the circumference of a circle c.10m in diameter. Within the stone circle, 8 small kerb cairns were added which when excavated contained burnt bone, charcoal, flint tools and pottery. The central cairn is the largest, at 2.4m in diameter, and is the only one to have a double kerb. This stone circle is seen as a later development of the Recumbent Stone Circle tradition.

Directions: 11 miles (17.7km) West of Aberdeen. Turn left off the A94 at Westhill onto the B9119 B9125. Pass through the village of Garioch, turn left to stop on the B9125, and in 200m look left onto a minor road. Continue on this road for c.0.3 miles (0.4km). Car park.




NINE STONES

SMR Ref No: NO79SW008 // NO 7233 9121 // AB31 6JU

Remains of a Recumbent Stone Circle, surrounding a ring cairn, comprising 6 erect stones, the recumbent and 2 flankers. This stone circle differs from classic examples in having the recumbent and flankers set on the edge of the inner cairn, while the remaining standing stones sit in an oval outer arc, c.18 by 14.6m. It is thought that this circle was built late in the sequence of Recumbent Stone Circles.

Directions: 8 miles (12.8km) Southeast of Banffshire. From the A93, turn onto the A957 at Coathills. Continue for 2.8 miles (4.5km), then turn right before the bridge onto a minor road. Continue for 2 miles (3.2km) park at the end of the forestry track on the right. The stone circle is a short walk along the left to the stone circle.



The new Aberdeenshire Stone Circle Trail leaflet ©ACAS

Claire's Choice:

Duffus Castle, Moray NJ16NE0004

As a Moray lass, it's only fitting that the site I've chosen to share is a Moray one, and one which has long been favourite of mine. Located 5 miles North of Elgin, Duffus Castle rises up majestically from the Laich of Moray. Visible for miles around, it's easy to see why this location was chosen by its first builder, Freskin (a Flemish soldier), with its commanding views across the Moray coastal plain.



Panoramic view of the flat coastal plain of the Laich of Moray from Duffus Castle ©ACAS

Duffus is a motte & bailey castle; its first castle, a timber construction, was built around 1150 AD. In c.1297 AD, while under the ownership of the Cheyne family, supporters of the English King, the timber keep was burnt to the ground by the Scots. It was replaced in c.1305 AD by the stone structure we see today.

I like to think of the builder reassuring the owner about the new, sturdier, stone castle being built... “Stone is a *muchs*safer bet than timber, nothing could *possibly* go wrong” Cut to the view we have today, and the lesson learned is that stone heavier than timber. It appears that the man-made motte hadn’t been strengthened to accommodate the much weightier new castle, with historic repairs suggesting an extended period of subsidence before the tower house was finally abandoned, possibly in the late 14th century.



Duffus Castle, a motte and bailey castle in Moray. The timber castle on the motte was replaced with a stone keep in the 14th Century ©ACAS

Duffus tells a story and allows you to get a real sense of people and place, but most importantly it’s a place where archaeology is fun – you can climb up the motte to the castle and roll down the other side to the bailey; you can lead a charge attack on the Castle up the cobbled entrance track; you can stand in the kitchens and imagine the sights & smells of the great feasts; or you can simply stand back in the bailey and soak up the historic atmosphere of this Castle itself.



Duffus Castle, Moray ©ACAS

Bruce's Choice:

Aberlemno Pictish Stones, Angus [NO55NW0008](#) [NO55NW0026](#)

Choosing my favourite site out of all the ones in our area is a very very difficult task (I can't believe I've not gone for a hillfort!), but for today I'm choosing a group of Pictish symbol stones. The stones at Aberlemno represent the changing styles and motifs used by the enigmatic kingdoms of the people known as the Picts who lived in the region. The stones date from roughly between the 6th to 8th centuries AD.

Sitting next to the road you first see an early Class I stone (A4), originally found in the field just behind, with the faint traces of a curving symbol carved into it. Next is another Class I stone (A1) with several classic Pictish symbols: a serpent, a double-disc and Z-rod, and a mirror and comb whose meaning has long been lost.



Aberlemno Pictish Stone no.4 ©ACAS

Next is a large Class II cross-slab (A3), standing some 2.7m high, which shows a later type of decoration on both sides that includes an elaborate cross flanked by angels, a hunting scene, and symbols of a crescent and V-rod, a double disc and Z-rod and a depiction of King David fighting the lion.



Aberlemno Pictish Stone no.1 ©ACAS



Aberlemno Pictish Stone no.3 – front ©ACAS



Aberlemno Pictish Stone no.3 – reverse ©ACAS

Finally, standing in the churchyard, is another Class II cross-slab (A2). This depicts a fine cross with elaborate interlaced decoration flanked by patterns of entwined beasts, and a battle scene between an army of men with long hair and an army of men wearing helmets. It is thought this stone may commemorate the Battle of Nechtansmere fought in 685 AD, in which King Ecgfrith of Northumbria was killed, ending the Anglian occupation of the south of Pictland. The long-haired Picts are clearly victorious in the scene which shows a helmeted, Anglian rider fleeing with the corpse of one of his comrades.

While we may not understand the meaning of the symbols now, we are finally starting to understand the Picts themselves as archaeology uncovers more and more in the area, whether through academic research projects or commercial units during development works.

These stones therefore represent for me one of the great parts of the job, protecting our history for the benefit of everyone while learning more about it every day through new discoveries. And who knows what may be found next week!