

Historic Churchyards Project



The Historic Churchyard Project is grateful to Betty Willsher who kindly gave her permission for the use her photographs and manuscripts. The project has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Gannochy Trust and Perth and Kinross Council.

Acknowledgements:

Historic Scotland Pictish Sculptured Stones Museum and various publications
www.historic-scotland.gov.uk
 Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust website
www.pkht.org.uk
 - The Historic Churchyards Leaflet
 Mitchells, Monumental Inscriptions (pre-1855) in North Perthshire
 Willsher, B. Stones and Understanding Scottish Graveyards
 Woolf, A. From Pictland To Alba

Further information is available from:

the church (B Listed)

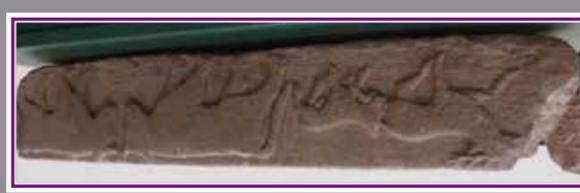
Meigle was a Pictish Christian site from around the 6th or 7th century. The St. Andrew's foundation mentions King Wrad who had a church-settlement at Meigle which would be consistent with the 9th century. The first surviving record, however is for a church and adjacent chapel in the 12th century dedicated to St. Andrew and Augustinian. The present church was built in 1869 following a fire, but it appears to fit the foot-print of the medieval church. Some of the Pictish stones were built into the fabric of the previous church. It was designed by local architect, John Carver and built in Perthshire brown sandstone.



Timothy Pont Map c. 1580 (under license to the National Library of Scotland).



The medieval octagonal font (inside the church)



A Hunting Scene

Vanora's mound (which is a Scheduled Monument) to the north of the church, is said to be the grave of a Pictish Queen who was King Arthur's wife. Legend tells of her abduction by a neighbouring leader, Mordred, who held her at Barry Hill. On her return, the unfortunate woman was put to death by her husband by being torn apart by wild beasts as punishment for her infidelity. One of the two largest stones in the museum (Meigle 2) is said to be a depiction of Queen Vanora's grisly death, although it seems more likely to be Daniel and the Lions. Meigle stones 1 and 2 stood either side the path opposite Vanora's mound.

The Pictish Beast



Meigle 1 (detail)

The Meigle stones are richly carved with mysterious symbols and fantastic mythological animals. These include snakes, fish and deer and a good carving of a Pictish beast, which some people believe represents an elephant, others a dolphin. Weapons and horses feature, suggesting that warriors were held in high regard. The stones of the Christian period are carved with beautiful Celtic interlace designs, sometimes alongside other pagan symbols.



Rev Symmer's memorial panel

The interior is T-plan and there is an outstanding medieval octagonal stone font carved in relief with the instruments of the Passion set within ogee arches, alternating with scenes of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. There is a memorial panel dated 1661 (to the Rev. George Symmer and wife Margaret Fullarton) on the north of the building which would originally have been inside, which suggests much re-use of building fabric.



The path to the Museum

Meigle 2 (Daniel and the Lions)



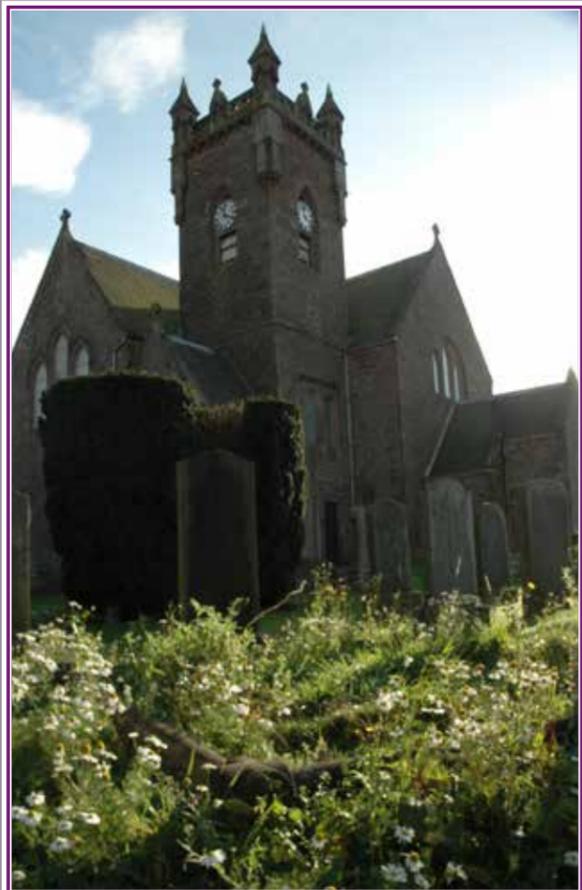
Meigle has one of the most important Pictish religious and secular sites and has an impressive collection of Pictish sculptured stones. The Picts were named by the Romans Picti (or painted people) and occupied East and North Scotland during the period between the 3rd century and the 9th century.

the Picts

Meigle has a rich history going back to Neolithic times, first appearing in records as a Pictish centre known as "Migdele". The town is situated in the centre of the plain of Strathmore, an area which has long been associated with rich arable farmland. Meigle had strategic importance as a route centre between marshy ground which lay to the South and the River Isla and where the roads from Perth to Brechin and Dundee to Alyth intersect. The street layout of the town centre very much reflects the irregular footprint of the graveyard and the centrality of the church, both literally and figuratively.

meigle

meigle HISTORIC CHURCHYARD



Meigle Church





key to gravestones



meigle CHURCHYARD (C-Listed)

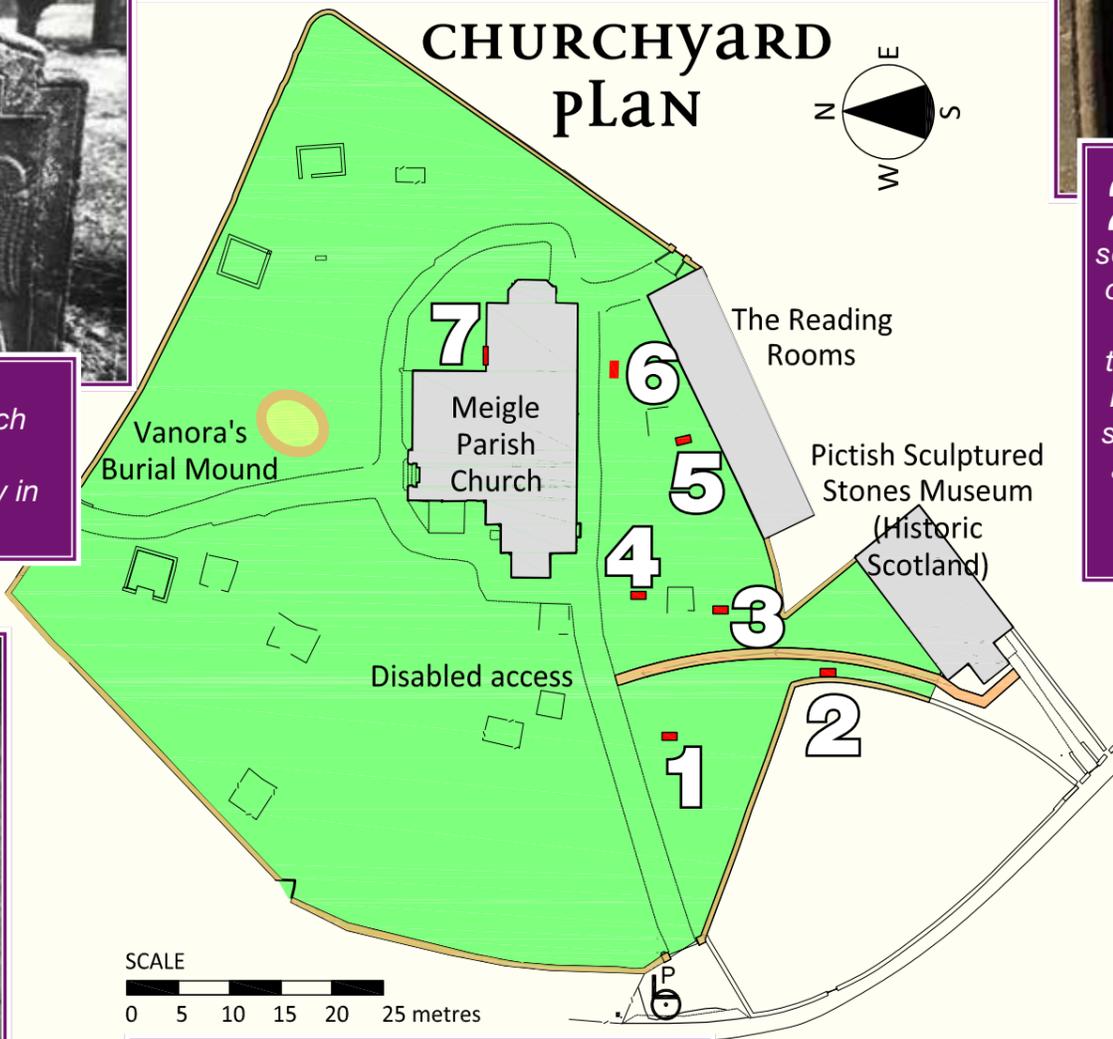
Although many of the gravestones have eroded and become difficult or impossible to read through the ravages of time, careful observation and recording of historic gravestones can reveal much about past people and events. The churchyard contains a significant collection of carved 18th century gravestones, including a rare collection of chest tombs. The 18th century gravestones are typically arranged in three parts. A 'winged soul' or angel's head is at the top symbolising the soul's passage to heaven. In the middle heraldic shields and coats of arms are sometimes portrayed together with the tools of trade of the deceased. In Meigle, there are a number of weavers and tailors, but also blacksmiths and farmers. Meigle has a significant collection of Resurrection stones, featuring trumpeting angels awakening the dead on the Day of Judgement. The most prestigious person buried in the graveyard, apart from Vanora, is Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, the Prime Minister of Great Britain who lived at nearby Belmont Castle.



2 Un-named (1749). A large slab, one of several rescued from a pile of discarded stones when the disabled access to the museum was created. It has high relief carvings showing a tailor's scissors and a 'goose' (iron), with the emblems of death at the base.



1 James Lesley (1737). A Resurrection stone, much worn and eroded by the repeated use of herbicide spray in the past.



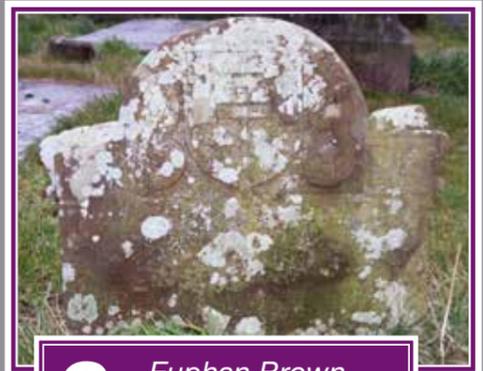
4 Patrick Archer (1767). The crown could be the emblem for a blacksmith, but there is a cordiner's knife to the left so he could equally have been a shoe-maker.



5 William Anderson (1743). The West face features a helm with a weaver's shuttle, a loom and flax coils either side. The East face features an unusual heart in the winged soul's collar.



3 William Watson (1762). The East face shows a Resurrection scene-note palm fronds; On the West face, a possible Jacobite rose is in the cloud above? This is now much less visible and legible due to lichen growth and erosion.



6 Euphan Brown (1715). A miller's tools (rhynd, pick and chisel) are shown.



7 Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman (1903). Leader and father of the House of Commons.



8 Rev. George Symmer (1661). a memorial panel previously inside the old church and re-built on the outside of the current Church.

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