

The enigmatic stone at **Dunfallandy** is rich in Pictish symbols and imagery.

INVESTIGATING THE DUNFALLANDY STONE

Information for Teachers



EDUCATION



INVESTIGATING HISTORIC SITES



Dunfallandy Stone

Pictish symbol stones are among Scotland's most distinctive monuments. Their elegant and vivid symbols and images can be found carved into boulders and slabs of rock, and on specially cut and shaped freestanding stones. Most of the stones which survive today were carved between around AD 500 and 800. Many stones have now been taken into museums to preserve them, but there are a number which still stand outside.

One of these is the well-preserved stone at Dunfallandy, near Pitlochry. Now enclosed within a protective casing for conservation reasons, on one side we can see a boldly-carved cross surrounded by mythical and real-life figures and beasts. The other side shows several Pictish symbols including tools, seated figures and a rider.

Practical information

- Location: 1 mile south of Pitlochry off the A924.
- Parking: No onsite parking
- Access: Short walk up steep steps to reach the stone.
- Nearest toilets: Pitlochry Service Station, Perth Road.
- Note: the stone is enclosed within a glass box for conservation reasons.

How to use this resource

This resource is designed to enable teachers or parent helpers carry out a simple investigation of the Dunfallandy stone. Simple discussion points focus pupils' attention on what they can see and encourage pupils to interpret this evidence.

This activity guide should be used in collaboration with the much larger full-colour booklet *Investigating Carved Stones*, Historic Scotland 2009. This is available free of charge to teachers from Historic Scotland and can also be downloaded from the Historic Scotland website. This booklet sets the Dunfallandy stone in the context of other Pictish stones and provides a wealth of additional suggestions for pre-visit, on-site and post-visit activities.

Call 0131 668 8793/8736 or visit www.historic-scotland.gov.uk for more details.

Suggested activities

- Measure the stone, so that back at school you can recreate a life sized or scale model of it.
- Draw one element from the stone. Back at school pupils can use these drawings as a basis for scale drawings of the stone or modelling work. Or they could be used to inspire imaginative writing or expressive art work. The symbols are a good motif for press printing work.

Further reading

- Historic Scotland Education, *Investigating Carved Stones*, Historic Scotland 2009.
- Anna Ritchie, *Picts*, Historic Scotland/HMSO 1995.
- Iain Fraser and John Borland, *The Pictish Symbol Stones of Scotland*, RCAHMS 2008.



Did you know...

The Picts may have coloured their stones with red clay or charcoal.

Background information

This may be read aloud to pupils either before the visit or on site.

- This stone was carved more than 1200 years ago by a group of people called the Picts. They were the people living in the north and east of Scotland between AD 300 and 900.
- We're not sure exactly what stones like this were for. It was probably a grave marker for someone important, but it could have been a territory marker, or a place for religious ceremonies.
- There are lots of Pictish stones like this one in Scotland. We know they are Pictish because they are carved in a similar style and show many of the same symbols or patterns.
- Nobody today knows what the symbols mean. They could be a kind of language, or they could represent names of people. A symbol like the double-disc might show when two families became connected through marriage. Some people think that certain symbols are connected with women.
- The stone might have been decorated or painted when it was first new.



The Picts carved real and mythical animals



Discussion points

Teacher prompt

Pupils responses

Have a quick look at the cross. Look for a symbol or pattern that you like. Show it to a friend.

Pupils' own responses.

Look at the side with the cross on it. What is the cross usually a symbol of?

A Christian symbol.

What does this tell us about the Picts?

They were Christians.

Look at all the carvings round about the cross. Are the animals real animals or made-up, mythical animals?

A mixture of mythical animals and real animals (e.g. stag)

What can you see in the mouth of the animal in the bottom left?

Two human legs!

Are there any people on this side?

No complete people – but two four-winged angels.

How many different kinds of pattern are there on the cross?

At least five patterns: three on cross shaft, patterns on arm of cross, and round the edge of the cross.

Today, there is no pattern in the very centre of the cross. Do you think it was always like this?

Unlikely – seems to have been chiselled off for some reason.

Look at the other side. What makes this side different from the first side?

No cross.
Shows people rather than angels.

What makes the frame on this side?

No patterns.
Two serpents.

How many animals can you see on this side of the stone?

Horse, two serpents, two strange beasts (see below).

Look for an animal which has roundish flippers, a long snout and a kind of long crest over its head.

There are two of these, one just by the horse's head, the other above the seated figure on the left.

What kind of animal do you think this is?

Made up creature.

This animal was obviously important to the Picts, as it appears on lots of stones. It's called a Pictish beast – or sometimes a 'swimming elephant'! Why do you think they carved it on their stones?

Maybe it had something to do with traditional beliefs.



Who are the people on the Dunfallandy stone?

Can you see any people?
 Why do you think these people are carved here? Is there a story with the people on the chairs and the rider?
 What are your ideas?
 Two people on seats, one riding a horse. Also someone's head between the jaws of the two serpents – at the top.
 Pupils' own ideas – perhaps the stone was carved to commemorate a meeting between two important leaders.

Look for these symbols:

- Crescent and V-rod (two of them) Top middle and middle right.
- Double disc Top right.

What do you think these symbols could mean? Pupils' own ideas.

Look for these tools:

- Hammer Bottom of this side of the stone, below the horse.
- Tongs
- Anvil (for beating metal)

Why do you think they are carved here? Possibly this stone is connected in some way with a blacksmith or someone who worked with iron.

Which side of the stone do you like best? Pupils' own responses.

Which side of the stone do you think is the front or main side? Probably the cross – important religious symbol.



Are these blacksmith's tools?