STONES WITH OGHAM TEXTS

Fifteen Pictish Symbol Stones with linear Ogham inscriptions and one circular (Logie Elphinstone) have been identified from The Pictish Symbol Stones of Scotland edited by Iain Fraser (RCAHMS 2008). The alphabet is seemingly (and appropriately) named for Ogmos, the Celtic god of knowledge and communication. Thirteen of these inscriptions are on the so-called Class 1 (incised symbols) and Class 2 (Christian cross and relief symbols) Pictish Stones. Aquhollie has an indecipherable symbol on a stone allegedly the survivor of a stone circle. A shape on the Cunningsburgh stone has been described as a rectilinear motif which is not identifiable as any specific symbol. These two stones are not included in the Shared Space investigations.

Inchyra - Ogham on one narrow side and the top, transliterated as “ETTLIETRENOIDDORS”

Overall observations (no conclusions!):-

All the Ogham inscriptions on Pictish Symbol Stones are incised appearing as additions and seemingly not an integral part of the original overall designs.

For the Stones with Pictish Symbols and Ogham writing 5 are Class 1 and 10 are Class 2. Geographically of these 15 Stones, 6 are in Aberdeenshire / Aberdeen, 2 in Angus, 2 in Caithness and 1 in each of Moray, Shetland, Sutherland, Perth & Kinross and Fife.

In each case there appears to be no specific positioning relative to a Pictish Symbol – except where the Ogham is on the narrow side of a Stone suggesting a decision to not place on the already decorated surfaces (sometimes perhaps due to space restrictions). Ogham was seemingly used between the 4th and 9th centuries CE in Ireland; being on Class 1 and 2 Pictish Stones would suggest these carvings were added in the 4th to 8th centuries.

For the linear variety a stem-line is often used and the Ogham characters are generally open-ended lines. Most of these Ogham inscriptions follow the “upwards” format except the Newton House example. There is more than one style of Ogham on these Stones including open and bound ended lines. Their purpose is unclear with one speculatively used to record a land transaction and others with seemingly personal names. Whether the inscriptions have a "belief" context is inconclusive from material so-far researched.
These pages record for each Stone – name; Class; location of the Ogham inscription and transliteration; and, where appropriate, some comments.

**Ackergill**, Caithness ND35SW 12 (stone 1); Class 1 (broken slab); Ogham from the centre to the upper left at an oblique angle, transliterated as “NEHTETRI”.

![Upper part of Ackergill Stone.](image)

**Aquhollie**, Aberdeenshire NO89SW 10; indecipherable carving; allegedly formed part of a stone circle; Ogham along SE angle, transliterated as “VUO NO N (I) TEDOV”.

**Brandsbutt**, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire NJ72SE 23; Class (1 broken up and reassembled from fragments); Ogham on front face in a clear space on the left hand side, transliterated as “IRATADDOARENS”.

![Brandsbutt before it was re-assembled and relocated.](image)

**Brodie**, Moray NH95NE 3 - “Rodney’s Stone”; Class 2; Ogham is on each side of the front and on the back of the slab and considered to be the longest Ogham inscription in Pictland. The characters are well weathered and include “EDDARRNONN”. Comments: - the Ogham characters seemingly spell out a personal name. The same characters are on the Scoonie Stone and are considered to be a Brythonic personal name.

**Cunningsburgh**, Shetland Islands HU42NW 5; rectangular motif on one side of the fragment; Ogham on the other side, transliterated as “I-R”. Comments: - “I-R” is more like “E-R”. The Ogham lines are not open ended but bound at the tips and there is a two chevron (corporal stripe) alongside which may be an “angled” “O”.

**Dyce**, Aberdeen NJ81 NE 8; Stone 2; Class 2 floriated cross with “Stafford” knots – 7th century Anglo-Saxon; Ogham on right hand narrow side, transliterated as “EOTTASSARRHETODDEDDOTS MAQQ ROGODDADD”. Comment: - Ogham inscription not well planned as last few characters point down. The Ogham lines are not open ended but bound at the tips.
**Fordoun**, Aberdeenshire NO77NW 3.2; Class 2; Ogham on both left and right narrow sides, transliterated as “VUN-MSETTBREBB---N”.

Comments: - St Palladius catholic community was founded here about 431. “PIDARNOIN” inscribed on the stone face upper left in Hiberno-Saxon Miniscule (or Early Roman). If the former this script dates to about 9th century.

**Formaston**, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire NJ05SW 1; Class 2 (fragment); Ogham on front face about half way up the right hand side, transliterated as “MAQQOoiTALLUORRH | NxHHTVROBBACCxNNEVV”.

Comment: - Ogham characters are on two parallel artificial stem-lines.

**Golspie**, Sutherland NC80SW 13; Class 2; Ogham along the back of the slab’s upper and right hand edges, transliterated as “ALL HALLORREDD M [E]QQ N(I[A] V[ARRCERR]”.

**Inchyra**, Perth & Kinross NO12SE 9; Class 1; Ogham on one narrow side and the top, transliterated as “ETTLIETRENOIDDORS”.

Comments: - two sets of Ogham characters seem to be laid out as separate words.

**Kirriemuir**, Angus NO35SE 20 (stone 2); Class 2; below the “key” pattern on the left hand edge there is a possible Ogham inscription. It is indecipherable.

**Latheron**, Caithness ND13SE 27; Class 2 (fragment); Ogham on left hand side front, transliterated as “DUNNODNNAT MAQQ NETO”.

Comments: - the lower arm and shaft of the cross are not in a usual Class 2 style. The bird could be an eagle and the fish a salmon. Although recognised as a Pictish Symbol Stone this example lacks the usual geometric and other shapes such as Pictish Beast.

**Logie Elphinstone**, Aberdeenshire NJ72NW 7 (stone 2); Class 1; Ogham at top, transliterated as “QFTQU” reading clockwise.

Comments: - the only “circular” Ogham recorded on a Pictish Stone. On first sight looks like a sunburst. Also known as “wheel” Ogham.
**Newton House,** Aberdeenshire NJ62NE 12 (stone 2); Class 1; Ogham on curved surface starting near top of stone, transliterated as “IDDARRNNN VORENNI KOI-OSR-”.

Comments: - the Ogham inscription is from the top down (not usual convention) with the last five characters in the upward loop (they could be ILSRZ not -OSR- as stated in source text book. The additional carving near the top is considered to be “cursive or miniscule” script potentially from the 3rd to 7th century, transliterated as “ETTE EVAGAINNIAS CIGONOVOCANI URAELISI MAQQI NOVIOGRUTA”. Several theories have been put forward about this carving ranging from a choice of ancient scripts, to “forgery” and added in the 19th century. The characters appear to be a combination of the two forms of Roman (Latin) cursive i.e. Antigua and nueva.

**Scoorie,** Fife NO30SE 15; Class 2 (the cross has almost disappeared); Ogham on the hunting scene side, transliterated as “-EDDARRNONN” which is considered to be a Brythonic personal name which is also on the Brodie Stone.

**St Vigeans,** Angus NO64SW 3 (stone 6); Class 2 (very small fragment); a short section of Ogham inscription is along the edge.

OGHAM ALPHABET

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R | N | Q | I
Z | S | C | E
NG | V | T | U
G | L | D | O
M | E | H | A
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