

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Kettins cross-slab is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Any works on the monument (including ivy-clearance) require the prior written consent of the Scottish Ministers, administered through Historic Scotland. If you have any concerns about the stone please contact any of the following:

Historic Scotland: 0131 6688600

Perth Museum & Art Gallery: 01738 632488


Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust: 01738 477081


FINDING OUT MORE


We hope you have enjoyed your visit to Kettins. If you would like to find out more about the Picts there are several other places to visit and a number of useful books to read.

PLACES TO VISIT


There are three local museums with collections of Pictish sculpture:


 Meikle Museum (Historic Scotland). An outstanding collection of sculptures from Meikle. Beside the Parish Church in Meikle village. Open: seasonal. Admission Charge. Tel: 0131 668860

 Perth Museum & Art Gallery (Perth & Kinross Council): Stones from Gellyburn, Inchyra, St Madoes, Scone and Pittensorn on display. 78 George Street, Perth, PH1 5LB. Open: Monday-Saturday 10am-5pm. Admission: free. Tel: 01738 632488.

 The Meffan Institute, Forfar (Angus Council): Displays a fine collection of sculptures, notably from Kirriemuir. West High Street, Forfar. Open: Monday-Saturday, 10am-5pm. Admission: Free. Tel: 01307 464123/467017.

The nearest sculptures to Kettins, not in museums and available to view all year are:

 Keilor: On a minor road between Kettins and Newtyle, map ref: NO 273 397. A symbol stone on top of a burial mound with fine views. The symbols are worn but still clear: a wolf above a double-disc and z-rod and below that a mirror and comb.

 Eassie (Historic Scotland): Access is via a sign-posted farm track leading off the A94 Coupar Angus -Forfar road. Set behind glass within the ruins of Eassie Church this is a fine cross-slab. On one face is a cross flanked by a hunting scene. On the other face is a combination of symbols with figurative scenes.

Titles for further reading include:

Surviving in Symbols A Visit to the Pictish Nation, Martin Carver, Edinburgh (Historic Scotland), 1999.

Picts, Gaels and Scots, Sally Foster, London & Edinburgh (Batsford/Historic Scotland), 2004 (2nd edition).

Field Guide to the Pictish Symbol Stones, Alistair Mack, Balgavies (Pinkfoot Press), 1997.

The Art of the Picts Sculpture and Metalwork in Early Medieval Scotland, George and Isabel Henderson, London (Thames and Hudson), 2004.

Able Minds and Practised Hands Scotland Early Medieval Sculpture in the 21st Century Sally Foster and Morag Cross, Leeds (Society for Medieval Archaeology), 2005



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KETTINS CROSS SLAB



Kettins Church
near Coupar Angus
Perth & Kinross

The Pictish stone at Kettins

One of the largest examples of a group of stone monuments called cross-slabs, a Pictish form of Insular (British and Irish) sculpture. Cross-slabs are rectangular slabs of stone carved on one or both faces with a Christian cross.

The cross can take various forms and is usually accompanied by a variety of abstract and figurative designs – sometimes including Pictish symbols. They tell us about people in the past engaged with Christianity. Cross-slabs date broadly to the 7th-10th centuries AD. The example from Kettins probably dates to the 8th or 9th century.

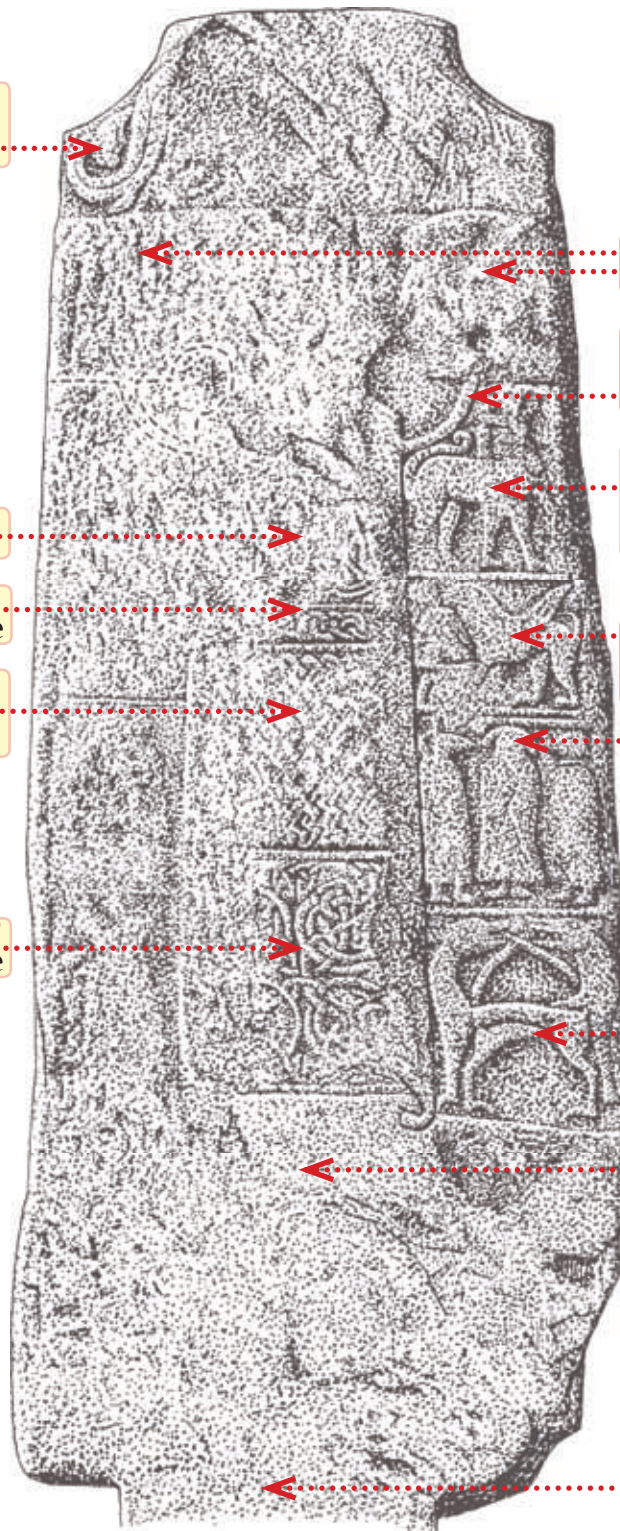
Description

The cross-slab stands beside the northern boundary wall of Kettins church-yard, facing the north side of the parish church. The slab is Old Red Sandstone, possibly quarried in Kettins parish, certainly in Strathmore. The 2.8m high stone is a tapering rectangular slab fixed into a 19th century base and supported by 19th/20th century iron fittings. Decoration survives only on the front face. The accompanying drawing describes what survives of that decoration.

History

The presence of the cross-slab in Kettins is evidence for the earliest Christian community in the area. The size of the slab and its decoration suggest a possible link with the important monastic community at near-by Meigle. The cross-slab could have been a focus for Christian teaching and worship and / or it may have marked Kettins out in the landscape as a territorial possession. Other possibilities are that it may have marked the grave of an important cleric or landowner.

The cross-slab has stood in its present location for around 150 years. It was found around 1865, in use as a footbridge over the Kettins Burn, which runs beside the Church. Because of this the back of the slab is now very worn, giving it a furrowed appearance, with no designs visible. The front of the cross-slab is also very worn, with much of its detail no longer visible. The loss will have been hastened by the damp environment of the Kettins Burn. Whilst the poor condition of the slab is regrettable, its use as a footbridge is also a part of its history. It tells us interesting things about the later life of the cross-slab



A
monsters
tail

Cross-
shaft

Panel of
interlace

Panel
of key
pattern

Panel of
interlace

Cross
arms

Part of
the cross
ring

Animal
with
curled
tail

Winged beast
(griffin?) holding a
bird in its mouth

2 animal-
headed figures
facing a central
winged figure
(possibly an
angel)

2 animals
looking back at
each other and
biting the others
tail

Undecorated
surface probably
covered by the
original base

Tenon for base

and its economic re-use of a no longer valued piece of sculpture, ideally suited for use as a footbridge. It is also possible that, being carved with a cross, it would have been seen as warding-off evil from the crossing and protecting those who used the bridge.

Kettins Church

The cross-slab suggests that there may have been a Christian church in Kettins for well over 1,000 years. The earliest documentary reference to a church building shows that Bishop David of St Andrews dedicated a church in Kettins to St Bride (or Bridget) in 1249. There are later references to the 'abthen' of Kettins, a term usually suggesting a monastery. There was no monastery in Kettins in the later Middle Ages but it may be an echo of a pre 12th century church in Kettins. That a parish church stood here in the 13th century is indicated by the fragments of architectural stonework described below. The present church was built in 1768 and enlarged in 1878.

Architectural Fragments

On the gravel area around the cross-slab are several pieces of medieval church fabric. These moulded stones probably come from the medieval parish church and comprise (from left to right):

A bell-shaped capital of semi-circular form (perhaps originally forming one half of a circular capital), probably of early 13th-century date.

A semi-circular arcade base of 'water-holding' form, with a deep hollow between two rolls, (perhaps originally forming one half of a circular base) probably of early 13th-century date; this base is likely to have been from a similar arcade pier as the cap listed above.

The springing stone from the junction of two arcade arches, possibly forming the lowest element of the chamfered outer order of those arches; along with the cap and base listed above. These stones suggest that the church from which they came had at least one aisle, separated from the main body of the church by an arcade carried on one or more cylindrical piers.

A possibly 14th or 15th century stone from a window framework (or 'reveal') with broad chamfers on each side of the half-mullion into which the glass was set.