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A Fragmented Masterpiece

Recovering the Biography of the Hilton of Cadboll Pictish Cross-Slab

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Chapter 2

‘the work of a genuine artist’: a review of the art-historical literature on the slab from Hilton of Cadboll up to 1998

ISABEL HENDERSON

This review traces the development of art-historical perceptions of the defaced Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab from the second quarter of the 19th century onwards, first at its location on the Hilton chapel site, then at Invergordon Castle, and finally in the Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. As it became more accessible, as a consequence of its relocations, so also critical appreciation of its significance in the history of Pictish art has increased steadily.

2.1 ‘The obelisk at Hilton’

Apart, perhaps, from investigating the local Gaelic names ascribed to what we now call Pictish sculpture, it is difficult to give a balanced view of how a local population in past times responded to its presence. If, as now seems possible, the slab from Hilton had a familiar Gaelic name, ‘Bardvour’, with the meaning, ‘Mary’s Meadow’, then when it was recorded it was not thought necessary to include the usual adjunct ‘clach’, ‘stone’. The use of the truncated name ‘Bardvour’ to identify the slab presupposes the awareness of a notably large slab in this location, and may imply an awareness of another locational name for a large slab at nearby Shandwick, although here ‘clach’ regularly precedes the location (see Chapter 6.5). Watson discusses the components of the name Bàrd Mhoire in his collection of the place-names of Ross and Cromarty.¹ The slab, of course, did not have the advantage of being a prominent landmark, like the Shandwick slab, or being in the eye every Sunday morning at the Parish Church, like Nigg (at least after the 1830s), but the area seems to have been one that the local Hilton community, in the recent past, appreciated as a recreational area. For a record of local response to the art carved on the sculpture one has to turn to the works of Hugh Miller, the self-taught Cromarty geologist and writer.

Miller was curious about everything, observing in minute detail, responding in a first-hand way and always attempting a generalisation about man and his condition. For periods of his early adult life he was a stonemason and a sculptor by trade, and thus he was bound to take note of such early sculptured stones as came his way.

Miller had family connections in Nigg and he was often in Easter Ross on the north side of the Cromarty Firth. When reading his literary works it has always to be remembered that he had the cast of mind of a journalist who knew how to tell a good story and turn a good phrase, and that some of his material is shaped in a literary way to this end.

In *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland*, published in 1835, Miller tells at length the story, current in Easter Ross, of the erection of the monuments at Hilton, Shandwick and Nigg by a Danish King, whose sons, on a mission of revenge, had been drowned off the coast (see Chapter 6.5). He considered this Easter Ross tradition likely to be more authentic than the alternative view, held south of the Moray Firth, that monuments of this type were erected by the native inhabitants to celebrate victories over the Danes.² In fact, the Easter Ross ‘tradition’ is almost certainly based on the pervasive, learned, antiquarian practice of ascribing early-seeming artefacts and structures of any quality to either the Romans or the Vikings. For example, there had been a running controversy from the early 18th century as to whether brochs were the work of Scandinavians (Danes or Norwegians) or of the native inhabitants. It was the ascription of the Easter Ross monuments, by a learned person, to the Danes, that inspired the story. It was not, as Miller argued, worthy of respect because it was founded on a belief belonging ‘to a district still peopled by the old inhabitants of the country’.

In the description of the Hilton slab which follows the telling of the princes’ story, Miller remarks that it is less well known than the other two monuments although it is perhaps ‘the most elegant of its class in Scotland’. This easy generalisation (there is no evidence

Illustration 2.1

The Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab in the National Museum of Scotland. The lower portion is reconstructed in metal (© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)

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that he was aware of Pictish sculpture south of the Grampians) appears to be based on his appreciation of the borders of vine-scroll running the length of the left and right sides of the broad face of the slab, which he thinks of in terms of classical art. In his view it is 'in a style of ornament that would hardly disgrace the frieze of an Athenian portico'. His perception of the Hilton vine-scroll as exotic and appropriate for frieze decoration cannot be faulted. He makes the most of the defacement, denigrating the work of 'some barbarous mason of Ross', and ruminating on various aspects of the 'laughable inscription', which he transcribes in full. His indignation may stem from the fact that as a stonemason he could himself feel how outrageous was the very act of defacing ornamental sculpture, but the creation of the Duff memorial is a good story and there is an element of relish in his telling of it.

The details of the more straightforward description and interpretation of the Nigg cross-slab that follows need not concern us here. In general he notes, pertinently, the use of borders by both the sculptors of Hilton and Nigg to contain their figural scenes. He could not identify the hermit saints, Paul and Antony, in the Nigg pediment, or more surprisingly David with his lamb and harp on the reverse. His careful description of the pediment with two 'priest-like' figures in an attitude of a prayer, with a 'wafer' between them above what may be 'the sacramental cup' shows just how close he was to discerning the Eucharistic significance now assigned to the scene. In the end, however, this man of the Free Church, backs away from the notion of the portrayal of the Mass, preferring 'a treaty of peace between rival chiefs' whose locks curl 'upon their shoulders in unclerical confusion'. Oddly, he supports this secular interpretation with the observation that this would account for the preservation of a monument of 'a people so little beloved [the Danes]', for the visual record of the treaty would be important to the natives.³ Miller's interpretations show that he had an observant eye but little knowledge of Christian art. His natural tendency of mind made him want the monuments to have local significance at the time of their erection. The advocacy for contemporary local significance being a function of Pictish sculpture was not to appear again in the literature on the art of the Picts, in any fully developed form, until the 1980s. Although we do not hear any more of the two local chiefs on the Nigg slab, the subject-matter of the Hilton of Cadboll slab features strongly in 20th-century discussions that favour sociological rather than theological interpretations of Pictish sculpture.

In a later work first published in 1854, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, Miller gives a tantalising account of 'a very elaborate set of drawings' of the art of the Easter Ross monuments made by a friend of his young manhood, William Ross, who was about five years his senior (1797–c1830).⁴ Ross lived in very straitened circumstances in Nigg. He had been apprenticed as a housepainter, but his health prevented him from making a living from this trade. He had a talent for drawing and Miller took a great interest in his work. His drawings of sculpture, seen by Miller in the early 1820s, were not, Miller writes, mere 'picturesque approximations'. Ross made separate drawings of each panel, working out the mathematical framework that formed the groundwork of the designs before embarking on the drawing of the whole face. Miller felt that with such a set of drawings he himself could have learned how to carve in this 'complex ancient style'.

Again the story of the sick and impoverished Ross, 'a poor friendless lad of genius ... anticipating the labours of antiquarian societies' is given full dramatic effect by Miller, but he and Ross were kindred spirits in respect for exactitude and there is no reason to doubt that Ross's drawings did indeed anticipate the mathematical methods of J Romilly Allen which, more than half a century later, were set out in Part II of *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, and were to remain such an important aid to study of Insular sculpture in general.

Miller's accounts are evidence that he and Ross, both of whom lived locally and saw the monuments regularly, were alarmed by the weathering of the Easter Ross sculpture and were intellectually curious about its art and craft. But they were probably exceptional, and the general local understanding of the Hilton of Cadboll slab in the first half of the 19th century was probably in the main limited to its role in the 'three princes' folk-tale, which present-day writers of popular guides keep alive for its own sake. Although, as we have seen, the 'tradition' of Hilton being one of the three monuments erected by a Danish king is fundamentally the creation of early scholarship, and not of folk memory, the story is still told, and it undoubtedly has had the effect at all periods of bonding the three monuments, Hilton, Shandwick and Nigg together, in local, otherwise uninformed, perceptions. Both *Scenes and Legends* and *My Schools and Schoolmasters* were immensely popular with all classes of society in Scotland, and there can be no doubt that they brought what Miller termed 'the

obelisks of Easter Ross’ to the attention of many who otherwise would have been unaware of them. Those whose curiosity was aroused were soon to get a much more interesting evaluation of Easter Ross sculpture from the ‘labours’ of an antiquarian society.

In 1856, just two years after the publication of *My Schools and School Masters*, the first volume of John Stuart’s *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* was published by the Spalding Club of Aberdeen, one of the antiquarian societies that Miller had in mind. The second, more discursive, volume appeared 11 years later.⁵ Stuart’s work covered all of Scotland and in particular was recognised as the first publication to do justice to the northern sculpture. The second volume was almost too ambitious, covering all aspects of the context of the sculpture including associated archaeology and historical sources. Most significantly Stuart demonstrated the degree to which the sculpture shared the decorative repertoire of early illuminated manuscripts such as the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Book of Kells. The connection put paid to the theory of Danish origin. In the introduction to the facsimile of the Book of Deer, published by the Spalding Club two years later, Stuart takes the question of origins a step further: ‘Are we to ascribe the Book of Deer to an Irish or a Pictish origin?’⁶ Using his deep knowledge of the sculpture, and aware of the recently published ‘great work’ of J O Westwood, *Facsimiles of the Miniatures and Ornaments of Anglo-Saxon and Irish Manuscripts*, Stuart makes a very reasonable case for the manuscript being the work of a Pictish scribe. This is still an open question, but Stuart’s argument is strengthened by the significant number of references to both volumes of his own ‘great work’, and a natural context for the art of the Picts in the early manuscript art of Great Britain and Ireland could no longer be ignored. In many respects the publication of facsimiles of the manuscripts by Westwood in 1868 was the greatest single factor in bringing Pictish sculpture into the domain of contemporary art in Great Britain and Ireland.⁷ To realise that manuscript art provided a key to the understanding of the art of the cross-slabs, and even to some of the animal art on the symbol stones, to a large extent unlocked the mystery. Without the need for argument, the connections were revealed, whether it was specifically the lion of St John in the Book of Durrow, the animal ornament in the Lindisfarne Gospels, or the ornamental repertoire generally. The repertoire included all the decorative patterns used on the reverse of the Hilton slab, including inhabited vine-scroll.

Stuart’s fieldwork in Easter Ross led to the taking down and repositioning correctly of the two surviving fragments of the Nigg cross-slab. Regrettably there was no such re-presentation of the Hilton slab, which he records as being in a lean-to shed at the Chapel. On the other hand, he makes no reference to the slab being exposed to any particular danger, and the shed will have played its part in protecting the carving from the elements. Thanks to recent research we now know a good deal about how Stuart worked with his illustrator, A Gibb, in order to achieve ‘scrupulous accuracy in detail’.⁸ Gibb’s lithograph of the Hilton of Cadboll slab was ‘Drawn from nature’ in 1853 (illus 6.5). It is an extremely good record. The weakest part of the drawing, understandably, is the left-hand border of vine-scroll. He is aware that the design differs from that of the right-hand but he expects it to have a similarly undulating stem and so misses the characteristic angularity of its structure. Gibb’s drawings did not make good the worn parts of the carving and thus it is an accurate record of the state of the slab some time before it was moved from the site. The damage to the top edge is clearly recorded. Gibb’s drawing must have been made in favourable conditions, with good light and an unobscured view. Perhaps the nature of ‘the lean-to shed’ needs to be reassessed.

The Spalding Club imprint ensured that Stuart’s volumes reached both the libraries of its members, and many research libraries and institutions in and outwith Scotland. The Hilton of Cadboll slab was now available for wider art-historical study. Stuart also published an account and illustration of the fragment from Portmahomack, Tarbat, which is carved with a vine-scroll border very similar indeed to that on Hilton of Cadboll. It was drawn by P A Jastrzȳbski and, even allowing for the obscurity of the figural sculpture, it is a poor effort. Nevertheless the drawing existed, showing a carving essential to the understanding of the options open to the Hilton of Cadboll sculptor.

2.2 ‘now at Invergordon’

The Welshman, J Romilly Allen, used Stuart’s volumes to guide him in his first expeditions to see for himself the sculptured stones of Scotland. Allen respected Stuart’s work but he came to the conclusion that something rather different was needed if the subject was to be advanced. In this he was supported by Joseph Anderson, the Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. The first paragraph of

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Anderson's introduction to their joint publication in 1903, *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, sets out their objectives: an attempt was to be made to deal scientifically with the monuments in order that systematic knowledge of them could be made available. Allen would make an archaeological survey and Anderson would call attention to its systematised results by means of the Rhind Lectureship.⁹ It did not quite work out so neatly, but basically both authors were of the same mind: the survey should be disciplined, and the facts obtained from the survey should be kept separate from their interpretation. Both men had wide knowledge of other contemporary art and experience of photography; the age of the local anecdote, and of lithography was over.

How did their approach affect study of the Hilton of Cadboll slab? In the 1890s Allen came to Easter Ross to check Stuart's texts and illustrations and to make his own descriptions. He made rubbings, which, if photography were to prove impractical, could form the basis for line drawings. By this period there were a great many interested local people in Easter Ross, mostly lawyers, medical doctors, and parish ministers, eager to assist. Notable among these was the Reverend Dr J M Joass, of Golspie, an active amateur archaeologist, who was the honorary curator of the antiquities in Dunrobin Castle museum. Allen will not have been pleased when he learned that the slab had been moved from Hilton to the drive of Invergordon Castle. He disapproved strongly of monuments being moved from their find-spots unless they were in danger, or difficult of access for study.¹⁰ Allen was dismayed at the fragile state of the carving, which after a second visit he believed was deteriorating fast. The position at Invergordon Castle was exposed, and clearly Allen thought that the slab should have been indoors. He records that, at Invergordon, the Tarbat fragment with the vine-scroll was placed alongside the slab, a display desideratum yet to be achieved. Allen made full-scale rubbings of the slab, including the vine-scrolls, which he later inked over (see illus 4.19). One would have expected these to appear as drawings in part III of Allen and Anderson, for there were, after all, drawings supplementing the photographs of Shandwick and Nigg. Unlike Gibb, Allen, in his unpublished rubbing, reproduces accurately the angularity of the design in the left-hand border. He understood exactly how it worked. However, he was content to illustrate Hilton and the Tarbat fragment with vine-scroll with photographs supplied by Mr David Whyte of Inverness.

The description of the carving on the slab is typically thorough except in respect of the vine-scroll which he restricts to a generalised comment, describing them as 'beautiful scrolls of foliage springing from a single undulating stem and involving winged beasts and dragons in every scroll'.¹¹ Perhaps he felt that his drawing was insufficiently informative, or more probably, he was aware of the wearisome nature of descriptions of forms which have no geometrical structure. His description of the hunting scene highlights its characteristic features, features that were to be debated repeatedly in future studies: the female rider seated frontally; her long hair; the fact that she seems to be holding something in her hands as well as the reins; the double outline of her horse conveying the presence of another rider abreast; the trumpeters, to be compared to those on the back of the slab at Aberlemno, known as Roadside or no 3. Allen reserves 'art-historical' comment on vine-scroll to the description of the motif on the Tarbat fragment.¹² In a rare comment on chronology he notes that the similarities of the vine-scrolls on the Hilton of Cadboll slab and the Tarbat fragment were so great that they must be contemporary, 'the work of the same school of design'.

Allen reserved his more general views on Pictish vine-scrolls to his extended discussion of St Vigean's no 1, the 'Drosten stone'.¹³ Here, a vine-scroll is carved on a narrow face of the slab. Its upper reaches have a small 'inhabitant', which Allen appears to have missed. However, he notes that this kind of ornament is specially characteristic of the Anglian sculptures of the 'ancient kingdom of Northumbria' but that it is also found on Mercian sculpture. He rightly compares the art of St Vigean's no 1 to the decoration of the Insular gospel-book known as the *Codex Aureus* of Stockholm, 'especially the foliage and reptilian creatures on the 'Xpi autem' initial page of St Matthew's Gospel', footnoting the analogy to a plate in Westwood's *Miniatures*. He points out that the St Vigean's slab 'affords evidence that scroll foliage, the symbols, and spiral ornament of the best quality were, at all events, in this instance, contemporaneous, as also on the upright cross-slab at Hilton of Cadboll, Ross-shire'. This careful wording has in mind Anderson's view that, while scroll-foliage was an indicator of 'lateness', spiral ornament was 'early'.

The presence of scroll foliage was important to Anderson as a means of placing the manuscripts in chronological order. In a fully referenced discussion in the introduction to chapter IV of part I of *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* Anderson, to his credit,

opted for the Book of Durrow preceding in date the Lindisfarne Gospels, with the Book of Kells latest of all, the order accepted today.¹⁴ The presence in the Book of Kells of foliate ornament he felt supported this chronology, and in this respect the Hilton of Cadboll vine-scroll is recognised by both Allen and Anderson as having a crucial role in understanding the relationship of Pictish sculpture to the art of the manuscripts, carrying with it significant implications for its own chronology. The difficulty, which still remains an impediment in art-historical study, is the absolute dating of the manuscripts. They are the problem, not Pictish sculpture. For the *Codex Aureus*, for example, Allen had to rely on a dating as vague as ‘earlier than AD 871’ for a manuscript now dated to the mid-eighth century.¹⁵ Anderson gave due weight to the arguments of the palaeographers, carefully considering their views and citing dated Anglo-Saxon charter evidence of the eighth century as having a bearing on the dating of the Book of Kells. As always, the thoroughness and logic of the discussions of both Allen and Anderson astonishes. Anderson was determined to make a review of all the evidence, including what he considered to be relevant datable historical events, and thus to be able to offer a fixed conclusion about the dating, and technical and artistic linear development of the sculpture. Admirable though it was, this objective was premature, and Allen distanced himself from it.

Reviewers of Allen and Anderson were for the most part not users of it. Had they been users, they would have understood the usefulness of Allen’s detailed analyses of the ornamental patterns that they considered otiose. The analyses were not self-standing to be read in isolation. It is true that Allen’s clear accounts of the prehistoric origins of the patterns and his breadth of analogy had sometimes no direct bearing on the study of the sculpture, but the analyses of the ornamental designs carved on the monuments were an essential part of the descriptive list of the monuments, making for briefer entries in the main text, and at a glance, revealing regional connections and wider art historical context. Allen knew at first hand much of the sculpture of Great Britain and Ireland, and for manuscripts he had Westwood. Anderson remained the authority for metalwork and this was fully covered in part I.

We can see how this systematic study advanced perceptions of the art of the reverse of the Hilton of Cadboll cross-slab. Spiral pattern no 1078 is a schematic drawing of how its spiral panel was constructed, and shows what it would have looked like when complete. Pattern no 1079, of Shandwick’s spiral panel, is drawn

beside it, in order that the similarities and differences of these panels on two proximate monuments are made apparent. Drawings of other rectangular panels with spiral ornament arranged round a centre, pattern nos 1069 to 1085, include the two superlative spiral panels on Nigg. They also include related panels of spirals in the Book of Kells, the Lindisfarne Gospels and the Book of Armagh. The pattern analyses also heighten awareness of other spiral designs of this nature on sculpture outwith Ross-shire, for example at Glenferness in Moray, at St Vigean in Angus, at Meigle in Perthshire, at Golspie and Clyne in Sutherland, and Skinnet in Caithness. All this readily accessible information broadens perspectives of the sculpture of Easter Ross. Similarly the interlace pattern used to fill the two disc symbols on the Hilton of Cadboll slab, pattern no 792, and related patterns nos 791–93, is shown to be found carved at Nigg, at Tullylease, Co Cork, at Lastingham, North Yorkshire, and used on the Monymusk Reliquary and the Rogart brooch. The common spiral pattern no 1096 found on the Hilton of Cadboll double disc symbol is found on other Pictish sculpture, grave slabs in Clonmacnois, hanging-bowl escutcheons, and in the carpet pages of the Book of Durrow and the Lindisfarne Gospels. Today such a sharing of basic repertoire is taken for granted and we know that Allen did not intend to imply any direct connection between these art productions, but in Allen’s time the listing of analogous patterns securely bedded down Pictish sculpture in art of all media in the British Isles from 600 to 900. His observation of more specific connections is still at the heart of understanding the art of the Hilton of Cadboll slab. For example, Allen writes, ‘It is evident from the foregoing analysis of the key-patterns how very close a resemblance there is between the Ross-shire group of erect cross slabs and the Book of Kells.’¹⁶ It took many years for this observation to be taken up by an art-historian. Part of the key pattern analysis is Allen’s account of the central section of the interior decoration of the crescent symbol on the Hilton of Cadboll slab. Allen observed, what is obvious after it has been pointed out, that the curve of the crescent symbol was part of a circle, an annular ring. The geometry of the crescent is drawn out in pattern no 1022. Much Pictish sculpture has still to be studied at this level of detail. Allen’s observation allows us to see the Pictish sculptor at work adapting (a word which appears throughout the pattern analysis) the repertoire to fit the requirements of his own creativity.

The publication of *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, preceded by the work of Anderson in his Rhind Lectures, was thus not only an

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'Archaeological Survey' followed by a 'Descriptive List, with Illustrations', the results of which would be commented on in an Introduction, but was also the beginning of the detailed study of the 'Art Relations of the Monuments', what is now called art-history, set in the context of early medieval art of all media in the British Isles and of other relevant scholarly disciplines.¹⁷ In one important particular, it established that Pictish sculpture had connections with a number of aspects of the art of the Book of Kells, an important instance of which was the presence of scroll foliage, itself of Northumbrian origin, but found on the Hilton of Cadboll slab, and in the manuscript, providing a clear example of what, is now called 'Insular art' in action.

2.3 'now safely preserved in the National Museum at Edinburgh'

In 1924, *Early English Ornament*, a major study on vine-scroll, was published by the Danish scholar, J Brøndsted. He regarded the vine-scroll motif as an important guide to the chronology of Anglo-Saxon sculpture and proposed a linear development for the inhabited vine-scroll motif. He reproduced the right-hand border of vine-scroll on Hilton of Cadboll from Gibb's drawing in Stuart, describing it as an 'interesting imitation which has somewhat of an Irish stamp, of the vine pattern still in its coherent shape'.¹⁸ He notes also the vine-scrolls at Tarbat and Crieff, both with references to Stuart. Brøndsted only refers to his admiration for the scope of *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* in his discussion of English vine-scrolls. Presumably the photographs published there were not sufficiently clear to use in his analysis. Although it was important that there was an illustration of Hilton in such a magisterial work, his perceptions belong to the period before Allen and Anderson and the relocation of the slab to Edinburgh.

In 1936, around 15 years after the arrival of the Hilton of Cadboll slab in Edinburgh, the first of a group of articles of the late 1930s and early 1940s appeared. Only one directly concerned the slab but they were all important and lastingly influential, in a number of respects. All but one were published outside Scotland, four in the journal *Antiquity* and one in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*. Three of the authors were scholars who were emerging as major art-historians of international significance.

The first paper, in *Antiquity*, was by Cecil Mowbray, who under her married name, Mrs C L Curle, was to become an important figure in the study of Pictish

sculpture. In this, her first paper, 'Eastern influence in the St Andrews Sarcophagus and the Nigg cross-slab', she acknowledges the help of her friend, Françoise Henry, an art-historian trained at the Sorbonne under Henri Focillon, who had just published her definitive survey, *La sculpture irlandaise*.¹⁹ Henry was to become the universally acknowledged expert on all aspects of early Irish art until her death in 1982.

The eastern influences proposed were new and surprising, and on the whole convincing, but Cecil Mowbray was at a loss to reconcile her primitivising view of the Picts with their presence on the monuments. This was the first study that firmly attributed developments in Pictish sculpture almost exclusively to Irish influence. She considered St Andrews and Nigg to be too far apart geographically to be in direct contact, and suggested that possibly the intermediary which made such exotic models available 'by accident' was Iona.²⁰ The Hilton of Cadboll slab is mentioned only in connection with the trumpeters on the Aberlemno Roadside slab (no 3), which she believed were derived from the Hilton panel. Allen had of course noticed the similarity but with typical reserve described them as merely 'like'.

In the same year in the same journal Ernst Kitzinger, a German refugee scholar, working under T D Kendrick in The British Museum, and later to become a world authority on Early Christian and early Byzantine art, published an article on vine-scroll ornament on Anglo-Saxon sculpture. Kitzinger was in touch with Cecil Mowbray, and had usefully drawn her attention to animal ornament on the Northumbrian Rothbury Cross, which he thought relevant for the animal ornament of the St Andrews Sarcophagus. In his article in *Antiquity* he writes in the context of the widely perceived urgent need for a survey of all types of decoration on Anglo-Saxon monuments so that they could be collated with each other to form the basis of a chronological system. He points with approval to the methodology of Henry's *La sculpture irlandaise*. Kitzinger's paper demonstrated convincingly the ultimately oriental origins of the vine-scroll motif and it is still a necessary first point of reference for later studies.²¹

The following year, again in the same journal, a well-illustrated note by O G S Crawford, Ordnance Survey Archaeology Officer, by way of a supplement to Kitzinger's paper, drew attention to examples of vine-scroll on Scottish monuments. Of the examples north of the Forth he inevitably singles out examples of the motif on the Hilton slab and the Tarbat fragment as 'the most

remarkable’. Of the Hilton slab he writes eloquently, ‘The whole carving is admirably executed; it is a work of real beauty, with its well-balanced designs, and is the work of a genuine artist.’²² His analysis of the vine-stems at Hilton, illustrated by an excellent photographic detail of the right-hand border, are generalised, but he attempts to define the difference of the Tarbat vine, which he regards as more attenuated and stylised. Even so, he felt that they might be by the same sculptor. Like Allen before him, he believes that the closest analogy for the Ross-shire inhabited vine-scroll design is to be found on the fragment of a shaft from St Peter’s, York now known as St Leonard’s Place 2 (see illut 5.58). Depending on Collingwood’s dates for Anglo-Saxon sculpture, he concludes that the Yorkshire fragment falls within the period AD 800–50. He regards the resemblance to be so close that the Hilton slab cannot be dated earlier than the ninth century. Crawford notes the coastal distribution of his examples of vine-scroll on monuments north of the Forth, something that he feels can be explained by easy communication by sea along the east coast from Northumbria. Crawford’s tone is authoritative: the vine-scroll motif in Scotland is isolated and to be attributed solely to Northumbrian influence. He achieves this certainty in his short note by restricting his comparisons to vine-scroll in Northumbrian sculpture. Unlike Allen and Anderson he ignores the implications of vine-scroll on Mercian and Irish sculpture and in manuscript illumination. The publication in 1938 of the Ordnance Survey map of Britain in the Dark Ages (North Sheet) contained a distribution map of the occurrence of the vine-scroll motif on relief-carved slabs in eastern Scotland. The edges of the front cover of the map had a Bewcastle vine-scroll on the left, and the right-hand vine-scroll from Hilton on the right. In the introduction Miss C L Mowbray was thanked for her work. She had provided a list of incised symbol stones for including on the map. Symbol-bearing cross-slabs were not mapped.

Mrs Curle’s long paper, ‘The Chronology of the Early Christian Monuments of Scotland’, was published in Scotland, appropriately, in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* in the volume for 1939–40. Her aim was to establish a detailed chronology, something Allen had shied away from, and Anderson, essentially, had related to broad historical periods. She acknowledges the fundamental importance of *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland* but accepts that no ‘very precise dating was at that time possible’.²³ She lists the studies of Irish and English art currently available which make the opportunities for

comparative study much greater. The details of her overall chronology need not concern us here. Hilton of Cadboll appears in a class called Elaborate Eastern Monuments along with the St Andrews Sarcophagus, Nigg, Rosemarkie, Shandwick, Aberlemno Roadside and the Tarbat fragments. As a class she dates these monuments to the late eighth or early ninth century. She strengthens the links between the St Andrews Sarcophagus and the Nigg slab published in her earlier paper by more detailed observations on the animal ornament on the Nigg cross-head. Without attempting any characterisation of the vine and its inhabitants she simply accepts Crawford’s view that the Hilton of Cadboll and Tarbat vine-scrolls are versions of the Northumbrian vine-scroll of the type found at St Peter’s York, their style, however, being ‘Celticised’.

More interesting is her response to the hunting-scene panel. She considers it to be a ‘new version’ of the Pictish hunting scene because of the novelty of the framing of the scene, its compactness within a panel, the presence of a woman rider, and the trumpeters. In her account of Aberlemno Roadside (no 3), part of her grouping, she sees the hunt there as a slightly altered version of the scene on Hilton of Cadboll. To Mrs Curle must go the credit for first recording the presence of the bearded profile of the face of the rider behind the women sitting frontally on her mount. She considers that the riders on the top of the reverse of Meigle no 2 are similar to the Hilton of Cadboll composition, presumably because here too riders are shown riding abreast by the simple device of contouring. She suggests that the similarity can be accounted for by access to an ‘eastern source’. An eastern source is also proposed for the trumpeters.

Her account of the Pictish symbols on the slab goes no further than Anderson’s view that on ‘later’ slabs they became larger, were treated as decorative fields, and were limited to the principal symbols. She has nothing to say about the spiral panel. Rightly, she focuses on the lettering style of the inscription from Tarbat as important for understanding the context of the art of the tall slabs of Easter Ross, but her arguments, endorsed by Françoise Henry, accounting for the inscription and other Tarbat sculpture as the production of an off-shoot of a monastery in southern Ireland are flawed and seriously misleading.²⁴ It was Mrs Curle too who formulated the oft-repeated view that the Picts were uninterested in Christian themes, and that what Christian themes they represented were turned into motives that are decorative rather than iconographical, far from their early Christian meaning

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as symbols of deliverance and redemption. Whether she meant to include the omnipresent decorated cross in this assessment is not clear. The system of symbolism, she writes in her concluding sentence, is 'one of the strangest features in the strange episode in Christian art which the Pictish monuments present'. In spite of its heavily Irish bias and a view of Pictish culture as essentially primitive, Mrs Curle's paper was an ambitious and necessary attempt to bring discussion of Pictish sculpture up to contemporary art-historical standards.

Mrs Curle's chronology was disparaged by C A R Radford, at the time an influential Member of the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments in Wales, in *Antiquity* for 1942.²⁵ His preferred chronological scheme was very different. He dated Hilton of Cadboll to c800 along with slabs which included Meigle no 2 and Dunfallandy, but Nigg and the St Andrews Sarcophagus were dated to the first half of the 10th century, a late date he largely supported by historical circumstances. For many years Radford's late dating was displayed prominently in front of the St Andrews Sarcophagus in the Cathedral Museum.

The final paper in this lively burst of activity was a joint paper by Mrs Curle and Françoise Henry entitled 'Early Christian Art in Scotland' and published in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* a year later. It has the great benefit of Françoise Henry's unsurpassed powers of description. The Hilton of Cadboll slab does not feature, but Pictish sculpture is given a significantly more positive role. The raised snake-bosses on the St Andrews Sarcophagus, on Nigg, and on the crosses of Iona are seen as inspirational for some pages of the Book of Kells. It is suggested that this 'richer style' passed from St Andrews and Nigg to Iona. Through Iona it was introduced into Irish art helping 'the Irish sculptors' to achieve 'more sensitive modelling'.²⁶ It is the Pictish sculptors who have developed skills in relief, and St Andrews that has the exotic models in its treasury, not Iona. In her many later publications Françoise Henry, while not altogether ignoring Pictish sculpture, did not refer again to this view of its possibly influential role in Irish art.

More than 10 years passed before another major study of Pictish art appeared. The publication in 1955 of a set of essays by scholars of different disciplines, *The Problem of the Picts*, edited by F T Wainwright, was an enormous advance for many aspects of Pictish studies. Wainwright's own contribution, a first general chapter on the nature of all the available sources, was a masterly piece of interdisciplinary work. He included

the evidence to be obtained from Pictish sculpture but was frankly sceptical of the usefulness of analyses of the art-relationships of the monuments. They might 'throw a little light on the Picts, their origins and their neighbours', but he felt that the study of the distribution of 'Class I' and 'Class II' and the assembly of all the evidence for contemporary material culture represented on 'Class II' offered 'more direct and more promising approaches'.²⁷ This marked the beginning of an unhappy drifting apart of the archaeologists' Picts and the Picts of the art-historians.

In spite of Wainwright's views on art-history the collection of essays contained a seminal study of the art-relations of the monuments. Robert Stevenson's chapter, 'Pictish Art', was enormously influential, and in terms of use by 20th-century students of the subject eclipsed the work of Mrs Curle.²⁸ Methodologically it was important for Stevenson's detailed analysis of the interior decoration of the incised versions of the crescent symbol. His conclusion that the designs could be arranged chronologically was regarded as convincing, but the real significance of the endeavour was that at last a particular symbol design was being looked at in detail individually, and then compared with others, instead of being lumped together as more or less part of the same phenomenon. Because of its decorative complexity the Hilton of Cadboll crescent was the sole example of his type D, included on the strength of its being partly incised.

In spite of the pressure of space in a general review Stevenson devoted a whole section to the Hilton of Cadboll slab. His observations have to be given full weight and are worth quoting at length, for as Keeper of the National of Museum Antiquities, where it was housed, he must have known it as few others can ever have done. He observed, as none had before, that the relief carving of the Hilton slab is no longer flat but roundly modelled, and that it is the only slab 'on which rounded relief and motifs of varied origin are combined with the serene uncramped feeling of the cross-slabs at Glamis (No 2) and Aberlemno (No 2)'. For Stevenson, the Hilton slab represented 'a brief stage of perfection between those earlier classics and the full flower of the art, as represented by the higher relief and more restless complexity of three monuments, that at Nigg, ... at St Andrews, and the great roadside stone at Aberlemno (No 3)'.²⁹ This is a sensitive response to the monument as a work of art founded on knowledge of its technique and composition. That he was dealing with only half a monument does not seem to have troubled him. For Stevenson the trumpeters were a fresh borrowing

direct from classical Mediterranean art. He describes the frame as of 'striking eclecticism' presumably because of its Pictish symbol in the horizontal border, and what he terms the 'Anglian inhabited vine-scroll of a rather wiry form' on the vertical strips.

He has interesting observations on the hunting scene. He regards the mirror and comb symbol as 'determinative' of the lady riding frontally who must 'surely be the person honoured by the monument'. He notes that along, with David on the St Andrews Sarcophagus, she is a rare example of a full-face figure, until the Daniel on Meigle no 2, a cross-slab which, because of its lack of symbols, he dates to the latter half of the ninth century. He describes carefully the nature of the recession used to carve the heads of both riders abreast. The riders and dogs in the rest of the hunting scene 'follow the fashion at home in Angus' and the interlace decoration of the pair of roundels under the crescent are compared to the tight 'knitted' knots seen on the Angus crosses. The comparison with the cross-slab on the roadside at Aberlemno (no 3) covers not only the trumpeters in the hunting scene but the use of this close interlace and the choice of decoration for the crescent and double-disc symbols. In a footnote he raises the possibility that the Aberlemno slab was carved before the one at Hilton in spite of its being in some respects typologically later.³⁰ Such a relationship would have suited better his belief that Angus was the beginning of the line of development for the tall slabs, and that Hilton was the earliest example of later developments in Easter Ross. He notes similarities in the treatment of the spiral panel at Hilton, the Shandwick spiral panel, spirals in the Book of Kells and on shrine fragments at South Kyme, Lincolnshire (see illus 5.33).

This authoritative review of Pictish art, which for the earlier monuments was a substantial revision of Mrs Curle's paper, was followed by an equally important paper by Stevenson, 'The Chronology and Relationships of some Irish and Scottish Crosses' published in an Irish journal in 1956-7.³¹ This paper is remembered best for its reassessment of the sculpture at Iona and his proposed redating of the Donegal sculpture, both of which had implications for Pictish sculpture. In this paper Stevenson also argued cogently against Radford's late dating for the St Andrews Sarcophagus, stressing in particular Mrs Curle's analogy, pointed out to her by Kitzinger, between its animal ornament and that of animals on the Rothbury Cross dated to about 800 by Kendrick. He pointed to both Northumbrian and Pictish traits on the Iona crosses concluding that

the sculptors on the island were the receivers of formal technical and iconographical elements from both these regions. His view of the transmission was similar to that of Mrs Curle: an origin in Fife and Angus passing to Iona and from thence to Nigg and Ireland. To the snake bosses and David iconography which linked St Andrews, Iona, Ireland and Nigg he added a further link in the 'thin-lined' inhabited vine-scroll on the slab from Hilton, 'one of the most notable Pictish monuments'. There was no surviving vine-scroll on the Iona crosses, but he was prepared, without entering into specific comparison, to attribute the introduction of the inhabited vine-scroll in Ireland to Pictish sculptors. If this was acceptable then Hilton of Cadboll became part of the long-lasting but unresolved debate about the priority of the techniques and repertoire used on these monuments. He concludes 'Whichever has priority it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Bealin and Iona groups, the Hilton and St Andrews masterpieces, the Nigg cross-slab and the Ahenny crosses, are manifestations of little more than a single generation of rapid sculptural development in Celtic lands'.³² This was the first time that Hilton had entered this magic circle of Insular excellence.

A third paper by Stevenson in the 1950s was a collection of notes of unpublished or 'insufficiently' published early Christian monuments.³³ Among these was Hilton of Cadboll. A new photographic detail of the riders abreast showed the profile of the male rider more clearly than previous illustrations had done, though he was careful to point out that it did not show the hair that falls in 'corrugations $\frac{3}{8}$ inch long' on the lady's right shoulder, which had helped to obscure the head of the male rider. The usual comparison with the tall slab at Aberlemno (no 3) is made and described as 'a fuller version'.

More surprising was Stevenson's further consideration of Allen's observation that the female rider held something in her hands. Following his study of the forms and surfaces he concludes that they could be interpreted as an outsize penannular brooch fastening the lady's mantle. This view was widely accepted and enriched the already strong perception of the hunting-scene panel as being heavily loaded with contemporary hierarchical social indicators.

Evidently still thinking about chronology, the paper ends with an Appendix in which Stevenson sets out his own chronological scheme as argued in *The Problem of the Picts*, but with 'with additions and adjustments'. One of these was to put Hilton and Tarbat into a class of their own called the 'Cadboll

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Style'. Did he feel that the slab and all the Tarbat fragments in the National Museum had distinctive properties which required definition? Or was it simply that since the potentially boss-bearing face of Hilton had been obliterated it could not be part of his Pictish and Ionan Boss Style? The chronologies of Mrs Curle and C A R Radford were also set out. In his general introduction he warned: 'agreement is still far off on relative chronology, and all absolute dates are intended only as approximations'.

The chapter on Pictish art in Isabel Henderson's *The Picts*, published in 1967, acknowledged the help of Robert Stevenson who had supervised her postgraduate work on Pictish art.³⁴ Her analysis of some aspects of the iconography of the St Andrews Sarcophagus and the hunting scene on Hilton of Cadboll aimed at reducing somewhat the exotic element in these monuments, the brilliant, accidental product of the hypothetical rich treasury at St Andrews. She pointed to a number of more tangible analogies particularly in Mercian art. For Mrs Curle's lion wrestler Gilgamesh, the influences that lay behind the Breedon angel in the tower of Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire, and of David iconography in English manuscripts were proposed. Central to this new emphasis on art south of the Humber was the analogy between the trumpeters who appeared in the miniature of David and his musicians in the Vespasian Psalter, a Canterbury manuscript, dated to the earlier part of the eighth century, which she felt had 'the merit of being found in Insular art at about the right time, giving them an advantage over Mrs Curle's analogies from Persian rock carvings'. The version of the trumpeters motif on the Aberlemno Roadside slab was regarded as a debasement of the model used by Hilton, but the display on that slab of David iconography reinforced the likelihood of its derivation from a David miniature, and created thereby a stronger connection between the monuments at Aberlemno, Hilton, Nigg, St Andrews and Iona.³⁵ Stevenson had boldly maintained that the main sculptural influence had travelled [from Northumbria and Pictland] 'towards, rather than from, Iona and Ireland'. Henderson wanted to change the perception of the nature of these relationships, maintaining that 'Pictish sculpture in no way represents a late or provincial reflection of the main developments in Hiberno-Saxon art; it was, rather, the creation of artists freely participating in the evolution of that style and contributing to it some of its most daring and magnificent monuments'.³⁶ The change was from 'influenced by' to 'participating in'. Such a change does not help chronological schemes

based on the comparative method, itself so dependent on changing views on the dating of all the media, but it was hoped that it gave Pictish art a new status as a primary source, on an equal footing with the art of the other regions of the British Isles, an art which could contribute to an understanding of the wider issues. Looked at this way the evidence of the half-monument from Hilton of Cadboll could have a new value.

In 1973 David Wilson published his definitive analysis of the rich store of objects in the hoard from St Ninian's Isle, Shetland. Wilson was rigorous in discounting artistic parallels as evidence for chronology, or even for stylistic connections, but he believed that some of the resemblances between the repertoire of Pictish sculpture and the art of the Treasure were strong enough to support the suggestion that most of the objects in it were probably manufactured in Pictland. For example, the foliate terminals of the tails on the animals which decorated two of the silver bowls he saw as derived from vine-scroll, and he pointed to the quality of the vine-scroll motif on the Hilton of Cadboll slab, considering it to be 'one of its finest expressions'. His suggestion that a mount from Lilleby, Eiker, Buskerud, Norway, was plundered from Pictland was based on its 'eclectic' repertoire of coiled animals and snake bosses, as found on Nigg and Shandwick, and foliate ornament, derived from vine-scroll, as found at Hilton of Cadboll.³⁷ Egil Bakka in his classic study, 'Some English Decorated Metal Objects found in Norwegian Graves', published in 1963, had attributed the mount to Northumbria.³⁸ Bakka devoted a long footnote to Insular vine-scrolls. For the Pictish examples he depended to a large extent on Crawford's *Antiquity* paper, although he also refers to Allen and Anderson, Brøndsted and Mrs Curle's 1940 paper. He is of the view that the style of the Hilton of Cadboll and Tarbat vine-scrolls are, *pace* Mrs Curle, untouched by Hiberno-Saxon stylisation. Rather they represent a competent imitation of a Northumbrian model 'not earlier than the opening and hardening linear stylization of the Northumbrian vine in the middle and second half of the eighth century'. He considers that their 'isolated location in Ross-shire, further north than the majority of vine representations in southern Pictland, adds to the episodic character of the appearance of the motif in Pictish art of the eighth century or rather c800'.³⁹ This long and well-referenced footnote, echoing the vocabulary of previous writers, has something defensive about it. Bakka obviously recognised the existence of a significant number of Pictish vine-scrolls, and that

plundered objects, bearing vine-scrolls, such as the Lilleby mount, could have had an origin in Pictland, whatever the origin of the motif, must have crossed his mind. However, in this matter, the Picts, for Bakka, were part of ‘greater Northumbria’ and he would have regarded the introduction of the possibility of Pictish manufacture as unnecessarily speculative.

The Easter Ross sculpture in many respects formed an appropriately sophisticated and ambitious background for the *de luxe* objects in the Shetland treasure. And then, of course, there was the penannular brooch on the breast of the female rider on Hilton of Cadboll. The treasure contained a suite of brooches of distinctive form and decoration. These and other brooches, Wilson argued, could reasonably be thought of as distinctively Pictish.⁴⁰ The brooch on the mantle of the female rider could therefore now be seen to be part of contemporary specifically Pictish personal adornment. The Hilton of Cadboll slab played an important part, therefore, in the interpretation of this extensive new corpus of Pictish decorated silver metalwork.

By the 1970s the Hilton of Cadboll slab had, as we have seen, become part of the debate on the relationship between Pictish, Ionan, Irish and Northumbrian sculpture. The 1980s saw the first close examination of its vine-scroll ornament, in Isabel Henderson’s contribution to the Stevenson *Festschrift*.⁴¹ Here for the first time the nature of the differences between the designs used for the two vertical borders was highlighted: the one on the right with its simple undulating stem, and that on the left with a more complex angular stem that zig-zags up the border. The degree of difference justified her speculation that the two borders had their own growing points on the missing lower portion of the slab, and thus were not part of a frame with a lower horizontal edge of the type carved on Tarbat no I. No exact parallel was found for the zig-zagging stem among Northumbrian vine-scrolls, although it was proposed that it could have been an adaptation of an inhabited bush scroll of the type found on a shrine fragment at Jedburgh. Henderson felt that the closest Northumbrian parallel in terms of the animals was an inhabited bushscroll on the reverse of a fragment of a shaft from Croft on Tees, Yorkshire (see *illus* 5.60), dating to the late eighth century, considering it to be very much closer than the parallel at York, cited by both Allen and Crawford, which was dated to the ninth century. However, the closest parallel for the construction of the left-hand stem was shown to be on folio 8 recto of the Book of Kells.⁴² Allen had emphasised how close were the

connections between Kells and the sculpture of Easter Ross in respect of key patterns, and the analogy with the Hilton of Cadboll vine-scroll told the same story. Henderson also drew attention to similarities between the Hilton scroll and the inhabited scrolls on the Ormside Bowl and the Brunswick (Gandersheim) Casket. Clearly the Hilton scroll could not be dismissed as merely ‘Northumbrian’, even though the possibility of the influence of sculpture at Jedburgh meant a shared cultural connection with Northumbria, which for the Picts, in the early eighth century, had rare historical backing.⁴³

Henderson was able to list 20 examples of Pictish vine-scroll, more than double the number cited by Crawford, two of which had to be discounted. Six of the additions were in the collection of sculpture at St Andrews. The variety of types of vine-scroll raised unresolved questions of models, internal and external. A subsequent listing of all vine-scrolls on Irish sculpture by Nancy Edwards, focused on an analysis of the motif at Clonmacnois, led to the conclusion that only one model lay behind them all.⁴⁴ Edwards did not comment on Stevenson’s tentative suggestion that the model could have been Pictish.⁴⁵ By this time the volumes of the *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture* were appearing steadily. In the 1970s Rosemary Cramp had been producing papers which were defining what she believed to be the sequence of progression for uninhabited and inhabited vine-scrolls. Her wide-ranging discussion of the classic Northumbrian vine-scroll on the Bewcastle Cross allowed for the possibility that ‘the fashion for inhabited vine-scrolls could have been differently explored at the same time in different centres’.⁴⁶ Cramp referred to Henderson’s 1983 paper on Pictish vine-scrolls and cited the Pictish use of detached berries in her discussion of an inscribed cross-arm at Carlisle, dated to the eighth century. On this Carlisle monument she pointed to the combination of vine-scroll and inscription, already noted by Bailey as occurring, perhaps significantly, elsewhere. Cramp felt that the best analogy for the Carlisle vine-scroll was to be found in the Leningrad (St Petersburg) Bede, a manuscript dated to the mid-eighth century.⁴⁷ Neither the *Corpus* coverage for the venerable analogy for the Hilton vine-scroll at York, described there as St Leonard’s Place 2, or indeed for the sculpture at Croft on Tees, referred to the Hilton of Cadboll scroll, although the 1983 Pictish vine-scroll paper does appear in the list of references for Croft.⁴⁸

Many of the papers in the 1990s that referred to the Hilton of Cadboll slab were focused on the hunting

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scene panel. Notable was an increasing interest in identifying the representation of women on the sculpture.⁴⁹ The discovery when ploughing in 1994, at Wester Denoon, Angus, of a slab, now in The Meffan Museum, Forfar, carved with a mirror and comb symbol adjacent to a standing frontal figure, wearing a garment on which was pinned a large penannular brooch, was particularly striking.⁵⁰ In 1992 hunting scenes on Pictish sculpture generally, and in particular on the Hilton of Cadboll slab, were interpreted by Henderson in terms of royal rituals such as are known to have been part of Carolingian court life.⁵¹ In 1996 in the first general study of all aspects of the Picts written to modern standards, the Hilton of Cadboll hunting scene was singled out for its rare depiction of women in society, with the Hilton woman treated as an active patron rather than being passively memorialised. Such slabs with secular scenes and crosses were interpreted as propaganda which ‘encapsulates the changing political scene’ where seculars and the Church were competing for land and judicial authority.⁵²

The monograph on the St Andrew Sarcophagus appeared in 1998, the year of the first finds on the Hilton of Cadboll Chapel site of fragments from the front face of the slab.⁵³ It is tempting to speculate how what was written there would have been affected if the later find in 2001 of the lower portion carved on both sides had been known. Certainly the animal ornament preserved on either side of the cross-base would have enriched discussion of the animal ornament on the corner slabs flanking the surviving long panel of the Sarcophagus. The suggestion in the St Andrews volume that the structures that lie behind the animal ornament on the corner slabs might be, ultimately, a derivative of vine-scroll could now be developed in terms of the indications we now have of the relationship between the animals in the scrolls on the reverse, and the animal ornament on the cross-face. The evident grandeur of the Hilton cross-face design also pulls the monument closer to the Sarcophagus. The relationship between the Sarcophagus and Nigg is clearly there, both in the animal ornament on the cross-head, and in the shared snake-bosses, but we now see Hilton of Cadboll as less of ‘a brief stage of perfection’ as Stevenson put it and more of a technically and intellectually virtuoso monument, in that respect, closer to Nigg and Shandwick. The known delicate miniature style of the vine-scroll on the reverse, appears as something much heavier and dramatic, even violent, on the front face. The whole monument, even though still only partially perceived, bridges, therefore, a stylistic, and to some

degree, formal gap between the Sarcophagus and the sculpture of Easter Ross. In its figural iconography the completed monument extends the range of Easter Ross sculpture, a range also recently enlarged by a new find, located in 1995 at Portmahomack, the Apostles’ Stone.⁵⁴ Writers prior to 1998 rarely referred to the ‘probable’ loss of the sculpture on the front face of Hilton of Cadboll, and its nature seemed to have been considered beyond speculation. The same detachment, to the point of suppression, is true for discussion of the Crieff cross-slab, which had its reverse removed.⁵⁵ On the other hand, if writers had been asked directly what the front face of Hilton might have looked like they would probably have opted for arrangements of high-relief snake bosses in the background of the cross. So far no clear evidence has been found among the fragments for the use of that much discussed motif. On the other hand the fragments do seem to support a further possible use of inhabited vine-scroll on the front face and a case can be made for the symbolic identity of serpent and vine-scroll ornament. The Hilton of Cadboll sculptor had his own vision, and his own visual ‘language’ with which to express it, and in that respect he is certainly in the same class as the sculptors of the other tall cross-slabs of Pictland. Prior to the excavations, Hilton of Cadboll, for art-historians at least, had by the 1990s moved out of a cul de sac signed ‘female rider and Northumbrian vine-scroll’. The recovery of the lower portion of the cross-slab must now make it obvious that we have here a mainstream Christian monument that must be taken into account in all future assessments of the achievement and relationships of Pictish sculptors.

Notes

- 1 Watson 1904, 10, 44, 80.
- 2 Miller 1835, 39–40.
- 3 Miller 1835, 41–3.
- 4 Miller 1854, 209–12.
- 5 Stuart 1856; 1867.
- 6 Stuart 1869, xxi.
- 7 Westwood 1868.
- 8 Ritchie 1998, 11–13.
- 9 ECMS, pt I, iii.
- 10 ECMS, pt II, 21.
- 11 ECMS, pt III, 61–3.
- 12 ECMS, pt III, 74–5.
- 13 ECMS, pt III, 234–9.
- 14 ECMS, pt I, lxxvii–lxxx.
- 15 Alexander 1978, no 30, 56–7.
- 16 ECMS, pt II, 363.
- 17 ECMS, pt II, 1; pt III, 1; pt I, v, lxxviii–ci.

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- 18 Brøndsted 1924, 84, fig 69.
19 Henry 1933.
20 Mowbray 1936, 440.
21 Kitzinger 1936.
22 Crawford 1937, 470.
23 Curle 1940, 103–4.
24 Henderson 1982, 86, n 22.
25 Radford 1942.
26 Curle & Henry 1943, 268–70.
27 Wainwright 1955, 32–3.
28 Stevenson 1955, 97–128.
29 Stevenson 1955, 116–17.
30 Stevenson 1955, 117 n 3.
31 Stevenson 1955, 116 n 2, 120.
32 Stevenson 1956, 91, 92.
33 Stevenson 1959.
34 Henderson 1967, 104–60.
35 Henderson 1967, 154–6.
36 Henderson 1967, 157.
37 Wilson 1973, 81–105.
38 Bakka 1963, 36, 40–1, figs 40, 41–3.
39 Bakka 1963, 32–3, n 71.
40 Wilson 1973, 81–105.
41 Henderson 1983.
42 Henderson 1983, 254, fig 106b.
43 Colgrave & Mynors 1969, 532–52.
44 Edwards 1986.
45 Stevenson 1956, 91.
46 Bailey & Cramp 1988, 67.
47 Bailey & Cramp 1988, 85–6, ills 202–5.
48 Lang 1991, 109–10; 2001, 89–92.
49 Robertson 1991.
50 RCAHMS 1999, 23.
51 Henderson 1994, 53.
52 Foster 1996, 93–5.
53 Foster 1998.
54 Carver 2004, fig 10a & b.
55 Hall *et al* 2000.