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|-----------------------|----------------|
| Arbroath TIC          | - 01241 872609 |
| Brechin Castle Centre | - 01356 623050 |
| Brechin Museum        | - 01356 625536 |
| Carnoustie Library    | - 01241 859620 |
| Forfar Meffan         | - 01307 464123 |
| Kirriemuir Museum     | - 01575 575479 |
| Monifieth Library     | - 01382 533819 |
| Montrose Museum       | - 01674 673232 |

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# Angus Pictish Trail



## Introduction

Angus encapsulates everything that is best about Scotland. In an area of just 2,200 square kilometres; mountains, glens, rivers, rugged cliffs, seaside towns, market burghs, turreted castles and ancient monuments stand side by side.

Back in the mists of time, the early settlers in Angus paid their homage to this unique part of the world, leaving for the wonder of future generations the mysterious Pictish stones which now cover the landscape.

This guide is intended to give visitors a taste of the rich Pictish Heritage which survives in Angus.

The 12 point trail is designed to be followed by car, but enthusiastic cyclists and walkers are not excluded!

All users are advised to follow the Countryside Code and although all points on the trail have access agreements, it is only courtesy to respect the many landowners who have made this possible.

To follow the trail thoroughly will take more than a day so why not have a short break in Angus and enjoy our hospitality while you are here? Further information on what to see, what to do and where to stay can be obtained from local Tourist Information Centres (see back).



## The Picts

The Picts, first mentioned during the Roman campaign of Emperor Severus in 210 AD, were a Celtic people inhabiting most of what we now know as Scotland, north of the Firths of Forth and Clyde. This area was divided into two Kingdoms, the southern one being Atholl. Angus first appears in the tenth century and may be named after the Scottish house of that name following the takeover of the Picts by Kenneth MacAlpin.

Apart from their King lists and some superb metalwork, we have few tangible remains of the Picts. Without any doubt they are best known by their carved symbol stones, of which some of the finest are in Angus. While we cannot be certain of their function, it seems likely that they are memorial stones, and that the symbols may indicate rank or lineage.

The earliest sculpture includes incised animals and shapes and can be found on rock faces and in caves. Although no such sites are known in Angus, an early incised stone has been recognised at Westerton, Balgavies, near Forfar.

The Pictish symbol stones themselves are rough, undressed boulders upon which animals and geometric shapes are incised, and were probably being produced between 500-750 AD. These are thought to have originated in the north of Scotland where they predominate, but fine examples have been found in Angus at Aberlemno, Dunnichen and

Kinblethmont. With the coming of Christianity many simple incised crosses appear, usually associated with early churches and monastic sites. While many ecclesiastics were involved with the conversion of Pictland, the Irish St Columba of the late 6th century was the most influential.

About 715 AD the Pictish Church was subjected to the reforms of the Roman Church when King Nechtan MacDerile sought advice from Northumbria. This also influenced the sculpture of the period and relief carving on squared, faced slabs became the norm and we see the emergence of the Pictish cross slabs.

Using a page of stone gave Pictish sculptors more opportunity to exercise their talents and the Angus area is justifiably famous for its superb cross slabs. Alongside interlace, scrollwork, key pattern and ornate crosses are the familiar Pictish symbols, usually on the reverse, with many beautiful hunting and biblical scenes. Aberlemno, Cossans, Eassie, Glamis and St Vigean's all possess excellent examples.

With the coming of Kenneth MacAlpin and the death of the Pictish King, Drostan Mac Uroid in 848 AD, the sculpture changes with the disappearance of the symbols and the introduction of Irish and Norse influences.

Angus has a selection of the different types of sculpture and this short guide is designed to lead the visitor to a range of stones and significant sites, which are

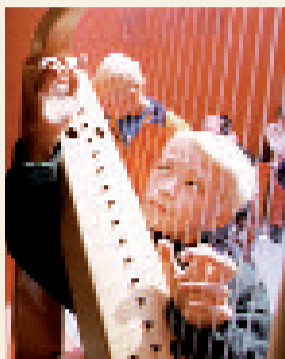
easily accessible. Many other stones are situated in private property but more information about them and any of the sites mentioned in this guide may be had from Angus Council, Cultural Services at The Meffan, 20 West High Street, Forfar, Angus DD8 1BB, Tel: 01307 464123.





## 1 Pictavia

Map Ref: NO582601  
 Directions: Off the A90 at Brechin  
 Open: Please call for information on opening times.  
 Facilities: Full disabled access and facilities, wc, café, gift shop, free car & coach parking and tourist information.  
 Admission: Adult £3.25, child £2.25 concession £2.25 & family £10. (Please note that there are separate charges for the Countryside Park).  
 Tel: 01356 626241 or visit [www.pictavia.org.uk](http://www.pictavia.org.uk)



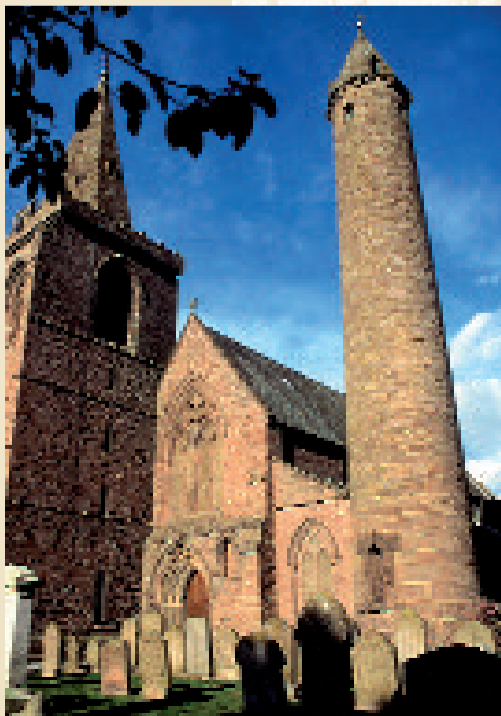
Discover Scotland's ancient past, through the legacy of the enigmatic Picts at Pictavia Visitor Centre. Explore the mystery and the unique culture of the Picts through a

range of interactive exhibits, replicas and original artefacts, including the stones from Edzell, Farnell and Menmuir are on display. Pictavia is a fun and educational experience for those who are new to the life of the Picts, as well as those who already have a keen interest in these fascinating people. Open all year (weekends only, in winter), this all weather attraction is ideal for the whole family.

## 2 Brechin Cathedral and Round Tower

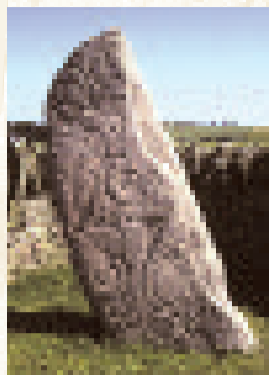
Map Ref: NO596601  
 Directions: Signposted from Brechin town centre, Bishops Close  
 Open: All year access to Cathedral precinct - daily 9am - 5pm  
 Admission: Free  
 Tel: 01356 629360

Noted for its Irish-style Round Tower, dating from the late 11th or early 12th century, Brechin Cathedral has a collection of 4 sculptured stones of the period, the earliest being a mere fragment of a cross slab. Fixed to the north wall of the chancel arch is what remains of a very intricately carved cross slab of 9th century date. It bears an inscription "S MARIA MR CHR" which can be translated as St Mary, Mother of Christ, and is therefore known as St Mary's Cross. There is also an early 11th century hogback, and a fine early Scottish cross slab from nearby Aldbar, NO573582. The front has a decorated Celtic cross while the back includes seated clerics, and David rending the jaws of a young lion, surrounded by his emblems of harp, staff and sheep.



## 3 Aberlemno Sculptured Stones

Map Ref: NO 522558  
 Directions: On the B9134 Forfar - Brechin road  
 Open: Apr - Sept, boxed during the winter  
 Admission: Free  
 Tel: 0131 6688600 Historic Scotland



There are three roadside stones, two of which bear symbols only, the better one with fine snake, double-disc and z-rod, mirror and comb symbols. The third stone is a Pictish cross slab with a ring cross on the front and a

particularly good hunting scene on the back. Above are the Crescent and V-rod and double-disc symbols and below a Centaur and David and his emblems. The cross-slab in the Kirkyard, one of the finest Dark Age sculptures in Europe, stands on the west side of the church. The front has an impressive cross and the beautiful decoration is heavily inspired by Northumbrian art of the late 7th/early 8th centuries. The reverse has a magnificent battle scene which is thought to portray the battle of Dun Nechtan or Nectansmere of 685 AD when Brude MacBeli defeated the Northumbrian King Ecgrith and his army. The slab ably depicts Pictish and Northumbrian cavalry, Pictish infantry and a dying Northumbrian being pecked by a Raven.



## 4 Montrose Museum

Map Ref: NO77577  
 Directions: East of town centre in easy walking distance at Panmure Place  
 Open: Mon - Sat, 10am - 5pm  
 Closed 25 - 26 Dec, 1-2 Jan  
 Admission: Free  
 Tel: 01674 673232

Two stones are on display, which are originally from the old Kirkyard of Inchbrayock. The first has a fine Celtic cross on the front and a Samson and Delilah scene, with a hunting scene and Samson slaying a Philistine on the reverse. Often known as the "Samson Stone", this and the other fragment with its two Eaglemen date to the late 9th or 10th centuries.



## 5 St Vigeans Museum

Map Ref: NO638429  
 Directions: A933 Arbroath to Friockheim, St Vigeans signposted on right 2km from Arbroath town centre  
 Tel 01241 433 739 for opening hours. For more information check [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)  
 Admission: Adult - £3.70, child - £2.20 reduced - £3.00.  
 Tel: 0131 6688600 Historic Scotland

St Vigeans is the Latin form of St Fechin, an Irish churchman who died in 664 AD. No fewer than 34 carved stones from the Early Christian period have been found in St Vigeans churchyard, ranging in date from the 7th to the 11th centuries. Perhaps the earliest is a simple cross, and some 31 are displayed in the converted cottage. Six of the stones bear Pictish symbols, the most complete of which also has the famous inscription in Hiberno-Saxon text "Drosten ipe voret ett forcus" and is widely known as the "Drosten" stone. The stone dates to the mid 9th century and may be the memorial stone of the Pictish King Drostan son of Uuroid. Most of the other stones are of the early Scottish type with one Norse hogback.



## 6 Dundee Museum

Map Ref: NO403306  
 Directions: Albert Square, Dundee DD1 1DA  
 Open: Mon - Sat 10am - 5pm,  
 Sun 12.30pm - 4.30pm  
 Last entry is 15mins before closing time.  
 Admission: Free  
 Tel: 01382 307200

Displayed in the museum are a number of stones from Angus, including the fine symbol stones from Aberlemno and Strathmartine. Part of a cross slab from Tealing, a recumbent from Strathmartine and a late cross slab from Benvie are also on view. You can see the recreated face of 'Pictoria', a Pictish woman from Lundin Links who lived and died around 1400 to 1600 years ago

## 7 Meikle Museum

Map Ref: NO287445  
 Directions: In Meikle Village, adjacent to the Parish Church  
 Open: Tel 01828 640 612 for opening hours. For more information check [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)  
 Admission: Adult £3.20, child £1.90, reduced £2.70.  
 Tel: 01828 640612 Historic Scotland

Over 30 sculptured stones have been discovered at Meikle, all in or by the Parish Church of St Peter. Like St Vigeans, this collection is simply unmissable and has a range of sculpture from the 8th to the 11th centuries. The standard of carving on no. 2 is simply superb and contains the wonderful Daniel in the Lions' Den scene. The lions are perhaps the best portrayals of their kind in early mediaeval art in Europe. Like St Vigeans there are also fine examples of the Norse-inspired hogbacks.

## 8 Eassie Church

Map Ref: NO353474  
 Directions: Access to the church is by means of the sign posted farm road leading off the A94 Forfar - Coupar Angus road  
 Open: All year  
 Admission: Free  
 Tel: 0131 6688600 Historic Scotland

This fine Pictish cross slab is now behind a glass screen within the ruins of the old church. The richly decorated cross is flanked by a hunter with his two hunting dogs and their prey, a magnificent red deer stag. The reverse has Pictish 'beast' and 'double disc and Z-rod' symbols and three scenes. At the top is a scene with a tree, in the middle are three robed men in procession and at the bottom are three cattle.



## 9 Kirriemuir Museum

Map Ref: NO386539  
 Directions: High Street, Kirriemuir  
 Open: All year, Mon - Wed,  
 Fri - Sat, 10am - 5pm  
 Thur, 1pm - 5pm, closed Sun  
 Admission: Free  
 Tel: 01575 575479

Although most of the Pictish and early Scottish sculptured stones discovered at Kirriemuir are now on display in the Meffan, Forfar, one, no 18, the most recent discovery is on display here. The parish church, dedicated to St Mary, probably dates to the early 9th century, and the oval shape of the kirkyard is still well preserved, virtually adjacent to the museum.

## 10 St Orland's, Glamis

Map Ref: NO401500  
 Directions: Reached by taking the Cossans farm road, east off the A928 Glamis - Kirriemuir road  
 Open: All year  
 Admission: Free  
 Tel: 0131 6688600 Historic Scotland

Known as St Orland's Stone, this beautiful Pictish cross slab probably marks the site of an ancient chapel, burials having been found here during the 19th century. Faced by an intricately decorated ring-cross, the back of the slab bears the familiar Crescent and V-rod and double-disc and Z-rod symbols above a hunting scene and a unique Pictish depiction of a boat.

## 11 Glamis Manse

Map Ref: NO385468  
 Directions: Stands in the Manse garden adjacent to the village church  
 Open: All year  
 Admission: Free

A magnificent Pictish cross slab with a highly decorated cross. Flanking the shaft are representations of cauldrons, one with human legs projecting from it and two fighting warriors. The reverse has incised symbols of the adder, salmon and mirror. Four other fragments may be seen in Glamis Church, the largest being the remains of a cross slab with part of the shaft flanked with human and animal figures. A smaller cross slab fragment bears part of an interlaced cross shaft, and another fragment has the "concertina" symbol inscribed. There is also a small column with scrolled decoration which may be a piece of church furniture.



## 12 The Meffan

Map Ref: NO445506  
 Directions: West High Street, Forfar. Parking nearby  
 Open: Mon - Sat, 10am - 5pm  
 Closed 25 - 26 Dec, 1 - 2 Jan  
 Admission: Free  
 Tel: 01307 464123

The Meffan houses a fine collection of stones, mainly from Kirriemuir. Five cross-slabs, originally discovered in 1797 are on display as well as a further 12 fragments excavated in 1995. Cross-slabs from Kirkbuddo and Wester Denoon are also on display, the latter of which portrays a woman complete with mirror and comb symbols and a fine penannular brooch. Pride of place, however, is reserved for the Dunnichen symbol stone, discovered in 1805 nearby the village of Dunnichen.

