

Interests - start points, then many years later

From early childhood, people we meet and places we visit undoubtedly make an impression - often without our even realising it. Reflecting on who and what might have influenced my current and recent interests I can see (and appreciate) connections to family and buildings that I would like to think had an impact.

My interest in engineering started with visits to what was known as the "Chambers Street push button museum" in Edinburgh (now the National Museum of Scotland) and the Science Museum in London. That led to a work career in telecomms and professional pursuits with engineering institutions - tinkering with motorbikes and cars ran in parallel. From primary school age I was intrigued by a Pictish Stone just outside Inverness - the Boar Stone (now in the Highland Council office) - the start point of much research and discovery which still continues. Another passion is family history. Threading through and also prompting these interests are my immediate family. The following sets of photos take different subjects in chronological order - from age 2 - although the "interests", as such, came years later!

Different Beliefs

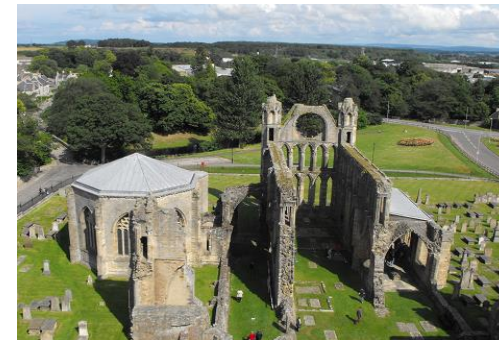
I have written books and created websites about Pictish Symbol Stones, what the symbols mean and the use of the Stones as a "shared space" for different beliefs.



Elgin Cathedral
01-Nov-50

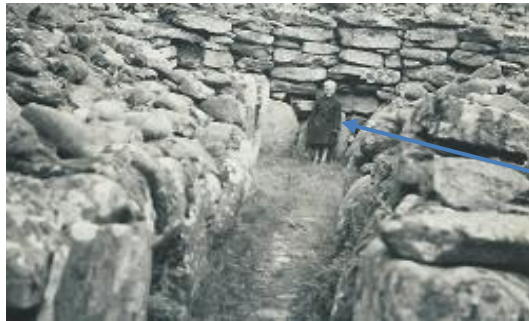


Norman age 2, Melody 12 and Grandma Penny



When in Elgin I climb the tower to look at the cathedral and countryside. This is a Class 2 Pictish "Transition" Stone.

History



Clava Stones
06-Jul-53



Impressive at age 5 - these are big structures when you are 1 metre tall - more impressive when you know their history. Had a family picnic here in 1953 in company of seagulls.

Much time spent in museums and art galleries resulting in seeing a sculpture of Mithras in the Museum of London which led to proposing that many of the symbols on Pictish Stones can be seen to relate to Mithraic belief and that the initial carvers were early 3rd century CE "stayers" from the Roman military in Scotland. This was after learning about Cuneiform writing and language development in the British Museum and not making a language interpretation for the Pictish Symbols. Have written about the Roman legacy in Scotland and presence further north than usually accepted e.g. a fort at Bona near Inverness etc.

My main website about Pictish Stones their symbols and beliefs is at:-

www.pictishsymbolstones.com

Transport



Trike
27-Apr-52

First powered two wheeler was a Honda 50 in 1965 followed by Norton Dominator 88, Triumph 21 various BSAs and Matchless. Then, much later, Honda VFC 750, City Fly 125, BSA Bantam, Honda Super Dream 250 etc. - finally a Peugeot Scooter.

Bike
Oct-57



Cars have been a passion - 50 to date. From Chrysler New Yorker and Pontiac Catalina in the late 60s in the US to a 1956 Ford Anglia 100E, Triumph Spitfire, Vauxhall Cresta, Triumph Dolomites, Hillman Imp, Jaguars, Rovers, Fiats, Vauxhalls, Chevrolets, Yugo 45, Morris Minors, Mini Clubman estate, Reliant Scimitars, Peugeots, Kias etc. Favourites - MGF, Nissan 100NX and Rover Sterling.

Science and Engineering

First exposure to "techy" things was at the National Museum of Scotland in Chambers Street, Edinburgh - the "push button" museum. No early photos of me there but the main part of the building is still the same and below is a modern version of a "push button" these activated from an Austin A40 car chassis to models of mine pumps etc. I am still a regular visitor!



Mum took me to the Science Museum in April 1961. Melody (daughter) and I first visited when she was about 16.

In 2007, whilst Chairman of Council of the IET, I researched material in the Science Museum for an IET talk I gave on Thomas Telford and Stephen Demainbray in Glasgow.



"Puffing Billy" locomotive c 1814 - photographed on 19 May 2021. The only item I could find from my 1961 visit.

Favourite City - big first impact; still impacting at each very regular visit



Edinburgh
12-Sep-57

Holyrood Palace - 1957



Scott Monument -1957



Scott Monument - 2018

Mum took the 1957 photo with the North British Hotel lined up through the arch - same shot 61 years later. No direct influence - I only discovered the 1957 photo in 2021.



View across Princess
Street gardens to
castle - 1957

← taken 57 years apart →

For many years I found I could not climb to the top of the Scott monument then in 2007 found it was not the height but the turning round and round to go up. Written on the back of this 12 Sept 1957 view of the Art Galleries and Castle is "taken by Norman from Scott Monument" - what a surprise!



View of castle (taken by me) from roof
garden of National Museum - 25 Sept 2014

Family History - roots and branches



Mum and Norman
Hector & Angus
Muirden

19-Jun-57

Just one example of my meeting a more distant relative. Their father - William - founded Muirden College in Adelaide which still exists. Years later I started to compile a "roots and branches" web site with family lines (Muirden, Penny, Buckley and Laing) back to 1658.



16 months old

Towards education, work,
adventure or escape!

My website about "Family History - roots and branches" is at:-

www.norman-j-penny.family