

## The Bressay Stone

The Bressay Stone was found in the first half of the nineteenth century, outside the graveyard near St Mary's Chapel at Culliesbrough. The stone has a design with circular cross-heads, clerics and animals. There is carving on both sides of the slab and an inscription in ogham letters which reads 'the cross of Necrudad, daughter of An (in memory of her husband) Benises son of Droan'.

The stone was probably carved in the tenth century and is interesting as there are hints at both native Pictish and incoming Scandinavian Viking influence in the design.

The prominent horseman on the slab may represent Benises, for whom the stone was erected. There are four clerics on the Stone who are wearing hooded robes with book satchels possibly carrying bibles.

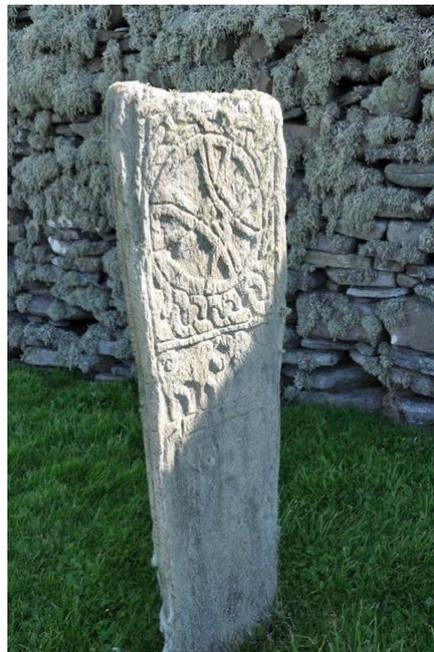
From the sixth to the ninth centuries, most of mainland Scotland was the kingdom of the Picts. Shetland was culturally Pictish in the sense that it shared the same traditions and artefacts.

Irish missionaries or perhaps Pictish monks were responsible for the conversion of Shetland to Christianity, a gradual process which may not have begun until the eighth century. Once the church was established, it had two flourishing centres at Papil in West Burra and St. Ninian's Isle.

Several generations after their initial arrival in the eighth century, Viking settlers began to adopt Christianity in around the tenth century. A reconstruction of the Bressay Stone is in the Culliesbrough churchyard.



Headstone with Inscription in Ogham Characters, Bressay Island, Shetland, 1852.



**Questions.**

- 1.** Where was the Bressay Stone found
- 2.** What does the carving say?
- 3.** When was the Bressay Stone carved? Approximately how many years ago?
- 4.** What are the hooded figures carrying?
- 5.** When did Vikings begin to adopt Christianity?
- 6.** Where is there a reconstruction of the Bressay Stone?



Colour me in - The Bressay Stone.

