

SETTING POSITIONS FOR THE SUN AND MOON FROM EDDERTON STONE CIRCLE.



If you visit the village of Edderton in Easter Ross, you can see the ruins of a Bronze Age stone circle from which the setting sun and moon were observed throughout the year about 3500 years ago.

The remains of the circle consist of an arc of five stones and is surrounded by a large ditch. Near the centre of the circle can be seen an open burial cist which, when excavated in 1866, revealed a food vessel with some burnt bone and charcoal.

About 80m to the south west of the circle is a large standing stone called Clach Biorach, (The Pointed Stone).

This stone is carved with two Pictish class 1 symbols of a salmon and a double disc and Z-rod dated to about 500 years AD.

Two stones from the circle line up with Clach Biorach to indicate a hill on the distant horizon. This hill is where the sun sets on what were known in the later Celtic period as the festivals of Bride, 4th Feb. and Samhain, (Sav'-im) 5th Nov.

To the north west of the site near the farm of Dounie, was the position of another large

standing stone, now removed. When viewed from Clach Biorach this stone indicated a notch on the horizon where the sun set at the summer solstice. This event can still be seen from the circle on the 21st June.

Using the flat side of Clach Biorach it is possible to sight an area of the Struie ridge where the moon sets during its most northerly position every 19 years at what is called the minor standstill. This is due to happen again in 1996.

If you stand in the circle, two other horizon features show the setting positions for the sun at specific dates. On the 21st March and 21st Sept., the spring and autumn equinoxes, the sun sets in the Struie gap. On the 4th May and 7th August the sun sets behind the top of Struie hill. Both these days were also known in Celtic times, they were the festivals of Beltain and Lughnasadh.

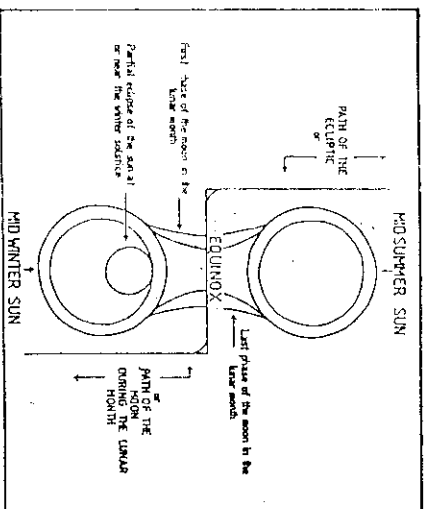
Although these horizon positions have no stones to indicate them, the fact that they lie within the horizon arc between the two main solar indicators at significant calendar dates would, it is suggested, seem to be more than just coincidence.

The only solar setting point that is neither marked by any stones or horizon feature, is the winter solstice, on the 21st Dec. This position is, however, the closest horizon to the circle and could have been easily marked by a stone long since removed.

It is suggested that the importance of the site lies in the maximum use of the horizon as a solar calendar, a use that could be verified by the excavation of the circle to discover if the missing stones act as indicators to these solar positions.

The solar and lunar use of the Edderton circle could have held its importance for a much longer period than the late Bronze Age. Recent work by the author suggests a solar and lunar link between the Bronze Age cup and ring marks and the Pictish class one symbol of the double disc and Z-rod, one of which can be seen on Clach Biorach.

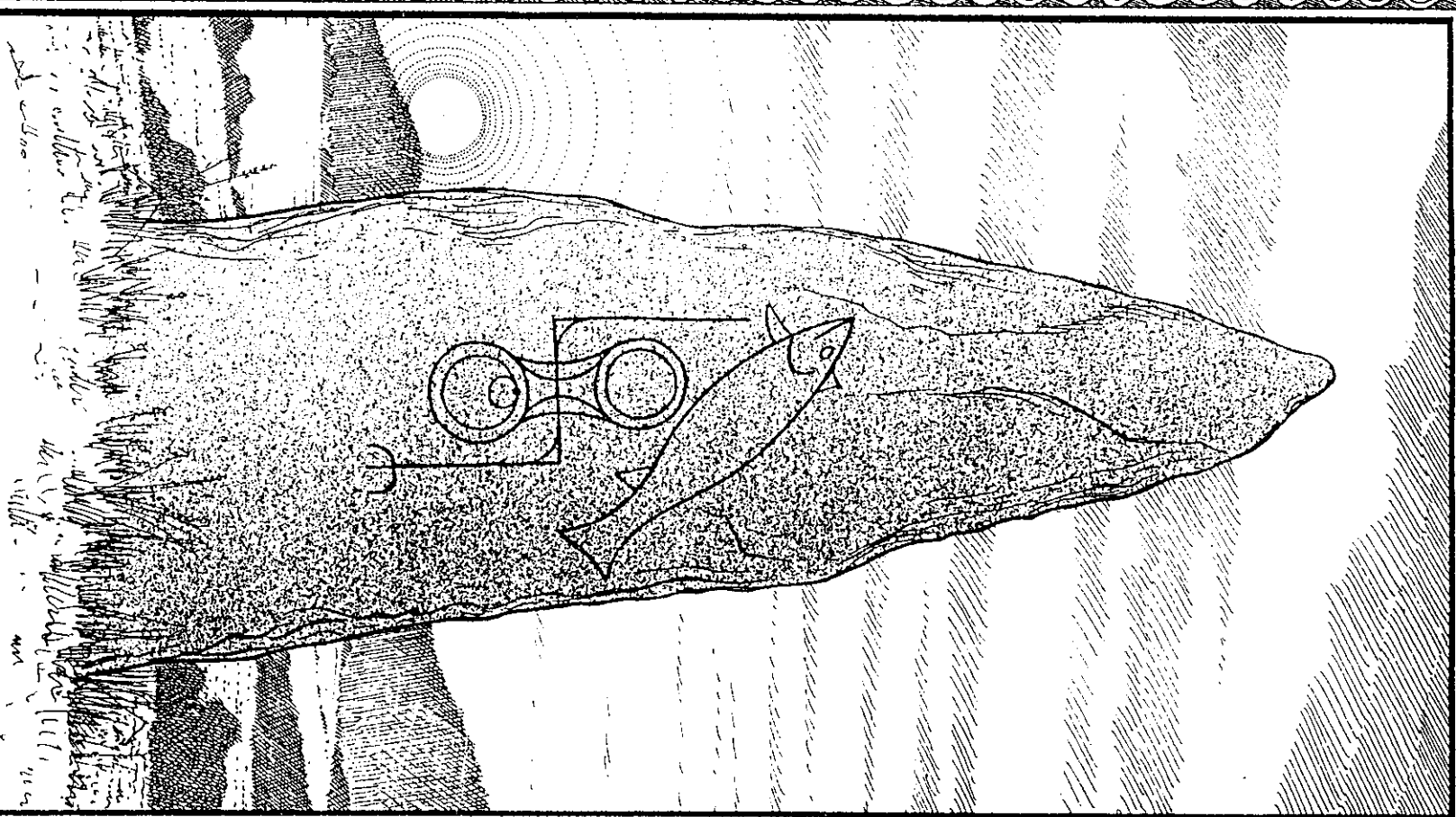
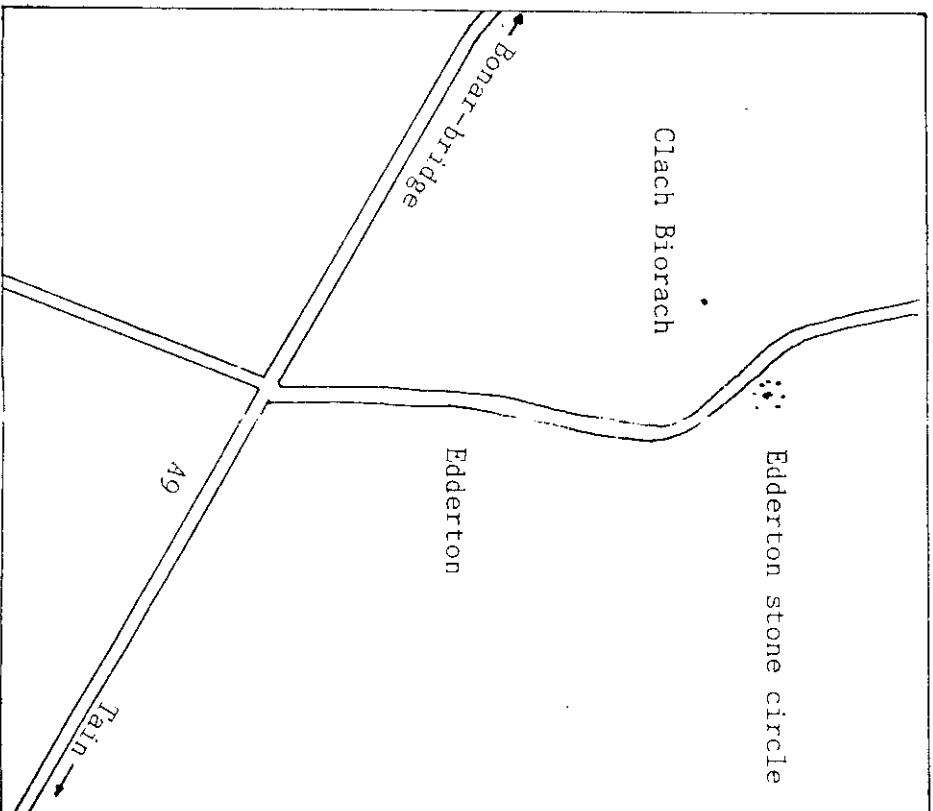
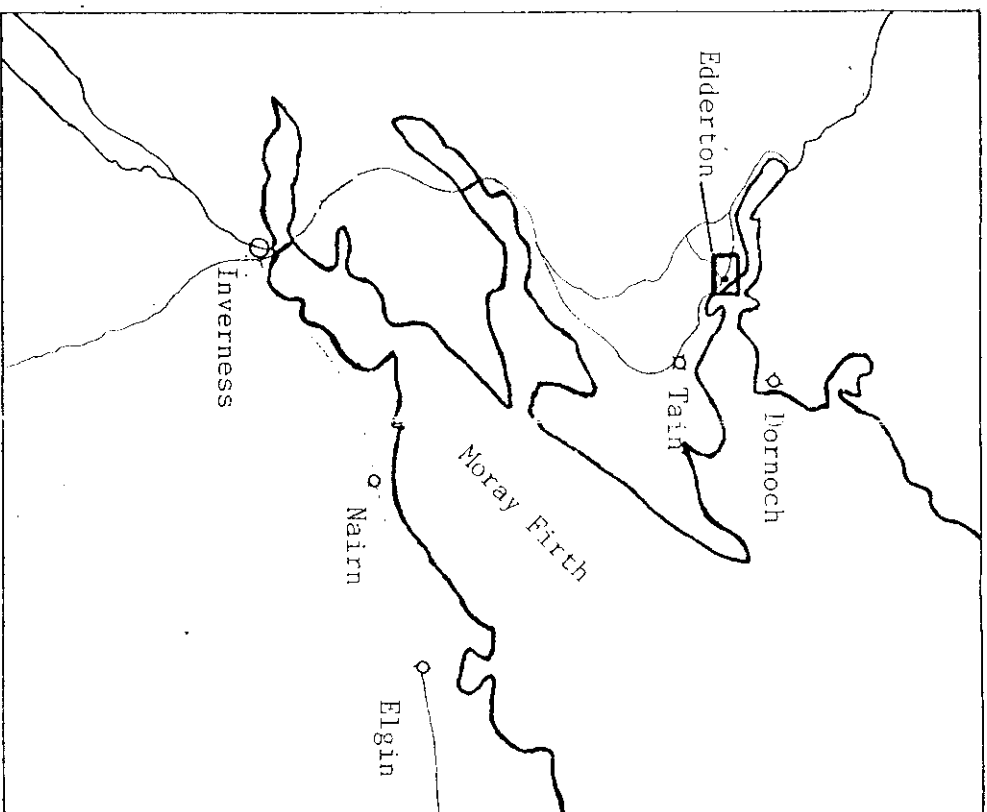
It is suggested that the solar positions at Edderton show early examples of the later Celtic festivals, the importance of the sun could have been passed on through the Iron Age to be reflected in the symbols carved on the standing stone during the Pictish period.



It is suggested that at the Edderton stone circle there are two cultural expressions of the sun, separated by some 2000 years. If the double disc symbol was a social statement involving solar events, it is likely that the Picts knew the original function of the site. This original function as a solar calendar could also have been associated with economic, social or religious events some 3500 years ago.

It has been suggested by some, that the origin of the Pictish symbol stones should be found around the Dornoch and Moray Firths. If this is the case, then perhaps the Edderton stone circle reflects a continuity of use through 2000 years and carries one of the earliest examples of Pictish symbolism.

Douglas Scott.



THE SOLAR STONES of EDDERTON

NH78NJK002 SNE/ASSOC/POCS