

## PICTISH STONES, BOARS AND A ROMAN LEGION – A BONA CONNECTION?

Amongst the range of what we know as Pictish Stones, only two have incised carvings of boars – originally located at Clune Farm, Dores and at Knocknagael, Essich.

The surviving fragment of the Clune Farm Stone, originally at NH 6057 3542, was near a chambered cairn, hut circles and field systems. It is in the National Museum of Scotland (NMS), Edinburgh with a reconstructed full boar copy. Photos courtesy of NMS.



Dores (Clune Farm) Stone - fragment ↑

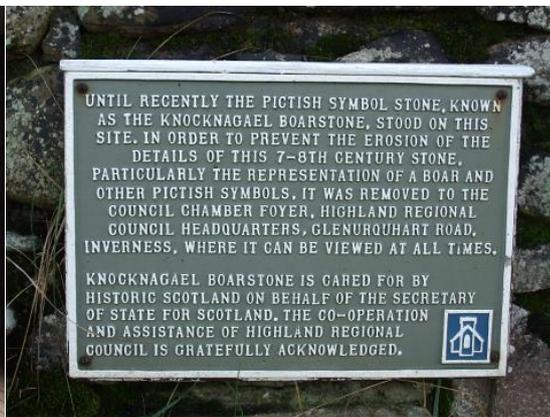


and reconstructed full boar copy ↑

Originally located at NH 6567 4134 near a stone circle, the Knocknagael Boar Stone is now housed in the foyer of the Highland Council, Inverness.



Knocknagael Stone - indoors ↑



where it stood near Essich, Inverness ↑

In the time of the Roman Empire the Boar was the symbol of the Twentieth Legion. It has several connections with Caledonia.



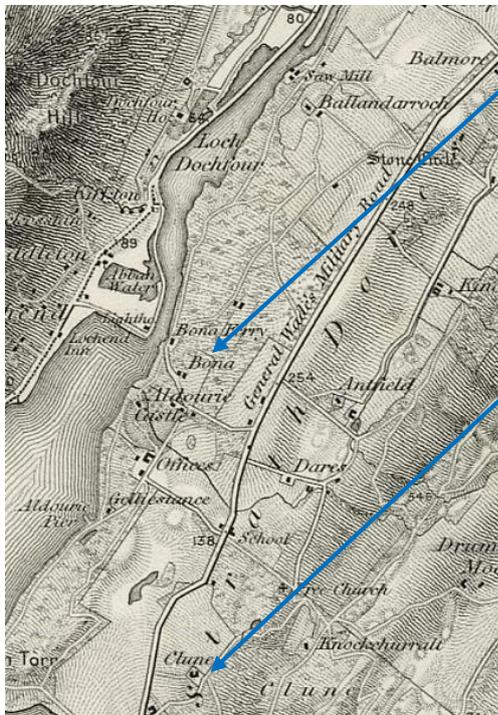
X.FR567 - Cappuck

The Twentieth Legion built the base at Inchtuthil (82/83 CE) as part of Agricola's campaign, it was involved with the construction of Hadrian's Wall which began in 122 and the Antonine Wall (initially built between 142 and about 154). In 208 the Twentieth reappears when Septimius Severus initiated repairs to the Antonine Wall for his Caledonia campaign.

Archaeological evidence of the Twentieth Legion, complete with Boar symbol, can be seen in the lower left on this dedication slab – the Cappuck Stone found in 1886 near Jedburgh – with the text “*Twentieth Legion, Valeria Victrix, built (this)*”.

Roman establishments of various sizes were built during Agricolan and Severan campaigns in what is now North East Scotland. Larger camps were at Kintore, Muiryfold, Ythan Wells and Durno; others are of less determinate periods.

Previously unknown to me is *Bonatrie* a location referred to as Roman in Bradshaw's Handbook of 1863.



This site is by “Bona” on the south bank of Loch Dochfour at the eastern entrance of Loch Ness.

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Just over a mile away from Bona is the original location of the Clune Farm, Dore's stone with the incised boar symbol and nearer to Inverness the Knocknagael Boar Stone stood.

The Clune Farm stone has no other carvings on it – just the boar.



The Knocknagael Boar Stone once stood at a road junction beyond Lochardil, Inverness that is marked by the sign shown above. It has one other symbol – a “mirror case”.

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In a paper – “North Scotland’s Roman Heritage” - TC Bell has identified a number of fortlets alongside the south bank of the eastern entrance to Loch Ness with specific locations at NH6047-3786 by a track north of Aldourie castle and NH 6058-3847 on a ridge above a track (the route of a possible Roman road with visible stonework). These identifications tie in with the *Bonatrie* i.e. Bona mentioned above.

Considering on the boar carvings, could these stones have been erected and incised specifically by people associated with the Roman Twentieth Legion?

In <http://www.pictish-mithraism.com/page44.php> I have made the connection between those people who have stayed on after the Roman army withdrawal around 212 and their recording religious beliefs on stones. Perhaps the carvings on these Boar stones pre-date that withdrawal – in other words incised when Twentieth Legion personnel were actively based at *Bonatrie* (and / or other nearby Roman sites).

The connection between Pictish Stones, Boars and a Roman Legion has significant historical impact:-

- reinforcing that there was a Roman army presence further north than generally regarded,
- adding another location for the presence of the Twentieth Legion,
- prompting the removal of these Boar inscribed stones from the lists of Pictish Symbol Stones (as they fall out of that category – arguably they are not religious symbols) and
- challenging the dating of the Knocknagael Boar Stone (shown as 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century on the Historic Scotland sign shown above).

I wonder if any members of the South Loch Ness Heritage Group can shed more light on these prospective connections?

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