

Carved Symbol Soaps

Good clean fun!

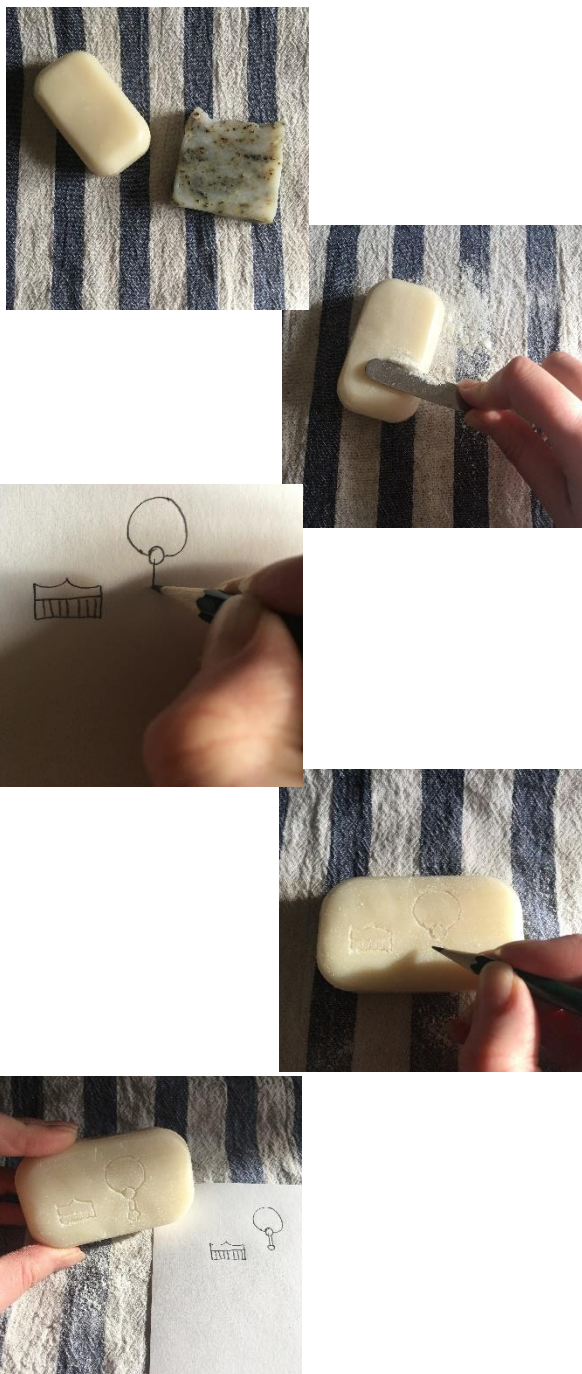
Suitable for ages 5 plus with some adult help.



The Picts were a people who lived in north east Scotland, they are first mentioned in Roman records around 300AD up until around 900AD. Not much is known about the Picts as they did not leave any written history of their own, although they did leave many large stones carved with symbols. These mysterious symbols are fascinating to many people. What do the symbols mean?

Do they tell a story? Is there more evidence of the Picts where these stones are found?

In this activity, we're using a bar of soap and a sharp pencil to create our own carved Pictish symbol stone.



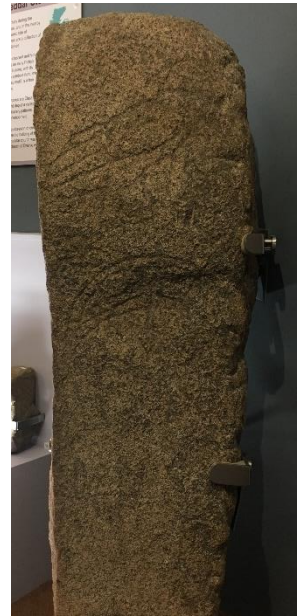
1. Find a good sized bar of soap, the bigger the better. Plain is good for working on but maybe a coloured one would look more like a stone?
2. Ask an adult to use a butter knife to scrape and smooth off the sides of your soap (sometimes it has writing printed into it, not very Pictish!). Always use the knife with the blade pointing away from you.
I usually do this bit over a tea towel as I don't like to waste anything, you can collect up the bits of 'shaved' soap and mix them with cooled boiled water to make a liquid handsoap!
3. Look at Pictish stones for inspiration to create your own symbol or copy one! Practice drawing your design out on paper first.
There are some pictures and details on the other side of this sheet but maybe you can see more online (have a look at Historic Environment Scotland) or visit Sueno's Stone in Forres, Rodney's Stone at Brodie.
4. Once you are happy with your design you can 'carve' it into your 'stone' with a sharp pencil, going to a 2-3mm depth is usually enough to effectively show your design. Like a real sculptor, you will need to manage the 'dust' that you create, it's a good idea to still be working on a tea towel. I have found that if you leave the soap to dry for a couple of days after you smooth it that it makes it a bit nicer to carve too.
5. Share pictures of your Symbol Soaps with us on social media using #elginmuseumfromhome so we can see them!
6. You can use your soap and re-carve it when your symbol washes off or scrape and redesign as much as you want! Look online for inspiration from runes, Ogham alphabet, and to find out more about other carved stones.



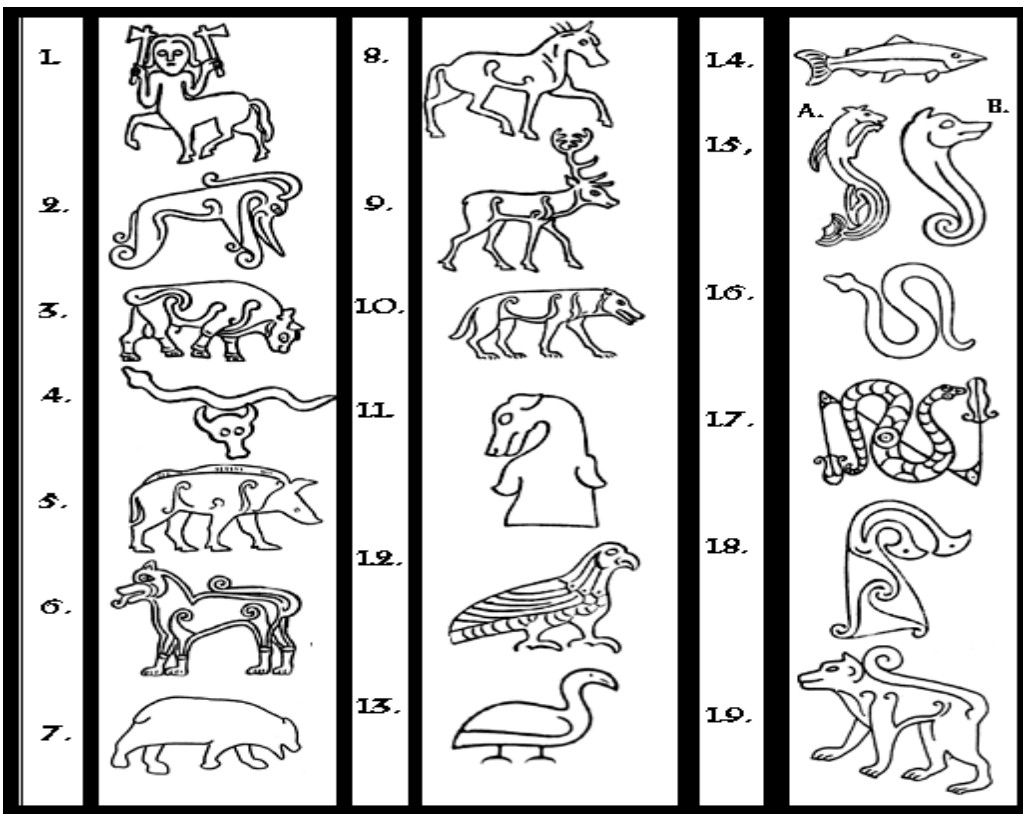
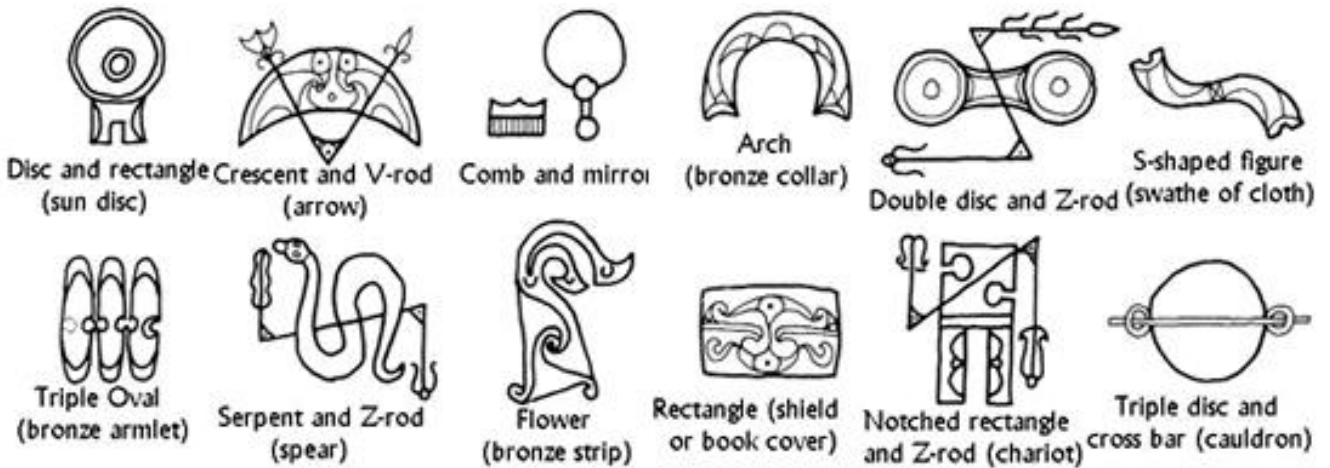
< Can you work out what the symbols >
are on the Dandaleith Stone
at Elgin Museum?

'Despite centuries of study, the meaning behind these Pictish symbols carved across Scotland continues to elude us. Despite many interesting theories, we have no idea what they truly mean, so we have to find our own personal connection with them.'

Hamish Findlay Lamley (@pictavia.leather)



sun disc, chariot, eagle, arrow



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William Craighn.
As a Scot of Alba