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*An Offprint from*

# Carving a Future for British Rock Art

New directions for research, management  
and presentation

*Edited by Tertia Barnett and Kate Sharpe*

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ISBN 978-1-84217-364-0

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## 7. Shaping up rock art in Scotland: past progress, future directions

Sally M. Foster

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*When it comes to rock art it is probably fair to say that Scotland recognises the rock art challenge and is beginning the debate. Historic Scotland is the government body in Scotland responsible for safeguarding the nation's built heritage and promoting its understanding and enjoyment. We are of course only one of the many bodies who contribute towards this broad aim: the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) plays a key role in survey and record (Stevenson, this volume); local government archaeologists seek to protect and enhance archaeological sites, predominantly through the planning process; and we also have a national museum, local government and private museum network. Historic Scotland seeks to achieve its responsibilities in many ways. These include: definition and promotion of policy and best conservation practice; provision of technical guidance to encourage and support best conservation practice by ourselves and others; research to inform policy, conservation practice and understanding of the archaeological resource; protection and monitoring of nationally important sites and monuments; provision of conservation advice and permissions for works that might affect such nationally important sites; provision of grants; and the direct conservation, presentation and interpretation to the public of 345 monuments in State care.*

*This paper will provide a rapid summary of past progress in prehistoric rock art in Scotland, particularly its protection, conservation and presentation, and advance some ideas for future work. This will include reference to carved stones of other periods.*

*Note: this paper was drafted in 2005. Subsequent key developments are highlighted in a postscript.*

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### Past progress

The history of rock art studies in Scotland has been summarised by Bradley (1997) and Beckensall (1999). While 18th-century travellers and antiquarians were developing an acute interest in Scottish monuments, rock art was not recognised. In 1757 someone visited and carved a vertical rock face at Ballochmyle, apparently not recognising this extraordinary monument, which was not officially reported until 1986 when discovered by the proverbial man walking his dog (Stevenson 1993). The occasional carving was mentioned in the 1791 First Statistical Accounts (see Simpson 1865, 59) or drawn (e.g. Coilsford in 1785 by Montgomery, cited in Young 1938, 145), but the first significant reported discovery was at Cairnbaan in 1830 (Currie 1830) and the first serious overview was not published until J. Y.

Simpson's classic paper of 1865 (Figure 7.1). Simpson's paper spurred other antiquaries, typically 'resident gentry, ministers, schoolmasters and others', to look out for and report new discoveries, as witnessed by the 36 or so articles in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* between 1874 and 1908. Of these, J Romilly Allen's 1882 paper merits particular mention as the first full listing and analysis of all 204 known sites; the next published list does not appear until 1989 (Morris 1989). Allen categorised the sites depending on the contexts in which they were found – 'works of nature', in other words carved rock surfaces and boulders, sepulchral remains, military, domestic and Christian structures. He is better known for his work on early Christian sculpture, of which more later.

The reasons for the apparent lack of interest in

prehistoric rock art during the 19th century are many. As Simpson (1865, 63) observed, most of the material he was reporting on was only recently discovered. Agricultural improvements and serendipitous discoveries by farmers, shepherds, geologists and energetic antiquaries are the main mechanisms by which so much new material suddenly came to light (by no means all of it was to survive: e.g. Macmillan 1884; Macintosh Gow 1886). Today we better understand the vocabulary of the siting of petroglyphs in the landscape. Our eyes are therefore receptive to looking for and recognising the carvings. In the second half of the 19th century geology was still a very young discipline and consequently there was less sensitivity to and awareness of rock surfaces, let alone recognition of petroglyphs. This may in part explain why in 1882 Allen could only list 18 examples of carved rock surfaces. There was also a recognised problem in distinguishing natural and artificial markings (today we recognise the added significance of the relationship between these).

It has also to be said that Scottish antiquarians and the small number of professional archaeologists newly working in Scotland were generally far more interested in early medieval sculpture. Pitt Rivers's work in implementing the measures of the 1882 Ancient Monuments Protection Act exemplifies this. Fuelled by his personal interest, he devoted a considerable effort in Scotland to securing the preservation of early medieval sculpture in its locality. Founded in 1780, fellows of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland soon made the case for a general collection of early medieval sculpture, as well as expressing a concern for its deteriorating condition. Joseph Anderson, a leading light in the Society, had become the first Keeper of Archaeology in the National Museum in 1869. Equally concerned with the preservation and condition of the resource, he was a zealous champion of the centralised collection of early Christian sculpture, both original and casts. The question of where to preserve early medieval sculpture and why was a hot issue in the 1890s, but that is another story (Foster 2001). Anderson's interests and attitudes are significant when it comes to prehistoric rock art because he dominated Scottish archaeology, including the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, for over 40 years (Piggott 1983). I am not aware of any evidence that he had a particular personal interest in what he referred to as 'one of the enigmas of archaeology' (Anderson 1883, 299). Having said that, he was conscientious in ensuring that new discoveries were properly reported (see for instance Mackenzie 1895) and some original and cast material did clearly make its way to the Museum (Foster 2001, figure 1). In contrast to early medieval sculpture this was not 'art' as the Victorians knew it, indeed they were aware that some of the closest parallels lay with native peoples they had colonised elsewhere in the world.



Figure 7.1. 'Craigie-Hill, Linlithgowshire'. Source: Simpson 1865, Plate XV.

Its very unfamiliarity therefore seems to have made it less attractive to serious scholarship. As Simpson noted, 'they are too decidedly 'things of the past' for even the most traditional of human races to have retained the slightest recollection of them' (Simpson 1865, 107). This may also go some way to explaining why, in contrast to early medieval sculpture (see Jones 2004), prehistoric rock art does not apparently play such a significant part in defining present local identity and sense of place.

Allen, the cataloguer mentioned above, was a Welshman who moved to Scotland to work as an engineer. He expressed a passing concern for the condition of cup-markings in Scotland and northern England, but again his greater and abiding love was early Christian sculpture. Much of the credit must rest with him for the 1890 Society of Antiquaries of Scotland initiative to commission a full descriptive catalogue and assessment of the condition of the early





Figure 7.2. Detail of the carvings in the cave at Hawthornden. Copyright Bern Balfe.

Christian monuments of Scotland. Allen and Anderson undertook this as a joint venture, published just over 100 years (Allen and Anderson 1903). While it has been argued that this magisterial study inhibited innovative research for decades afterwards (Stevenson 1981, 175), it certainly raised the prominence and public awareness of this Scottish resource. We can only wonder what might have happened if Allen had stuck with prehistoric rock art in Scotland.

As it is, interest in Scottish rock art entered the doldrums after the First World War. Significant new discoveries were reported in the 1930s, but in the case of Michael Cave, East Wemyss, Fife and Traprain Law, East Lothian, sadly only briefly and in advance of their destruction (Edwards 1933; 1935). Professor Gordon Childe (Childe and Taylor 1939) took an interest in the newly discovered vertical carved rock face at Hawthornden, just outside Edinburgh (Figure 7.2), but he remains virtually the only Scottish-based university academic to have taken any such interest, with the exception of Derek Simpson's 1969 involvement in single grave art (Simpson and Thawley 1972). From the 1960s to early 1990s interest in this resource has largely been the domain of highly interested and motivated non-professional archaeologists, such as Morris, van Hoek and Beckensall. This was to change in the 1990s with the work of Bradley and his colleagues, further aided by the recently completed recording work of the RCAHMS in Argyll.

### Future progress

In thinking about what prehistoric rock art needs I will cast the net a little wider because of the benefits that accrue from thinking about the needs of rock art in tandem with art on rock of other periods. We use 'carved stone' as a generic catch-all for what in Scotland can be broadly categorised under the headings of prehistoric rock art, Roman, medieval and post-reformation sculpture, *in situ* architectural sculpture, *ex situ* architectural sculpture and gravestones. Historic Scotland's policy and much of our guidance for carved stones is generic because a number of attributes are common to all carved stones. Firstly, and most obviously, these types of monuments are often prone to the same range of threats, whether from nature or human practice. Secondly, such carved stone can have a dual personality or identity – is it a monument or is it an artefact? This is less of a problem for prehistoric rock art because it is less likely to be portable, but this duality creates a set of legal and practical problems which can make dealing with carved stones of any period particularly complex. Scotland's National Committee on the Carved Stones in Scotland does not limit itself to carved stones of any one period either. Formed in 1993, this exists to draw attention to threats to Scottish carved stones of all periods, to promote their understanding and appreciation, and to encourage a common approach to their recording and preservation.

Historic Scotland is unique among British heritage

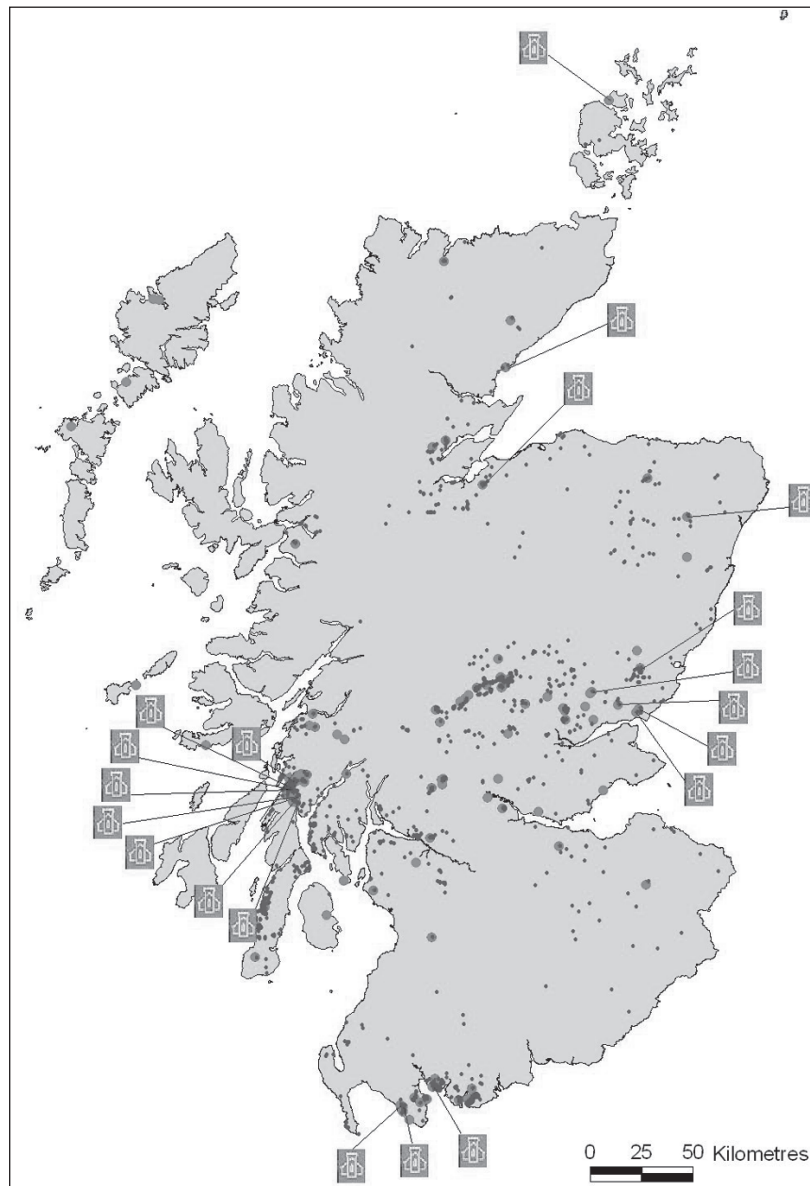


Figure 7.3. Approximate distribution of prehistoric rock-art in Scotland in 2003: Historic Scotland sites, monuments in the care of Scottish Ministers (logos); scheduled monuments including rock-art (large dots); non-scheduled monuments (small dots). Map prepared by Richard Strachan. Crown copyright: Historic Scotland.

bodies in having produced a policy statement for carved stones. This was drafted in 1992 (Historic Scotland 1994) and revised in 2005 following a three-month public consultation period (Historic Scotland 2005). Informed by this, we are also beginning to give thought to what our agenda and strategy for carved stones in general needs to be, and action plans for individual categories of carved stones in particular, drawing a distinction between what we can do at our own hand, and what we should be encouraging others to do. The following fleshes out some of our working ideas regarding prehistoric rock art.

### Policy, guidance and statutory protection

It is stating the obvious but we need to establish what is significant about the rock art resource in Scotland, and individual carvings in particular. This is not just a question of aesthetics but also understanding the role of such monuments in the landscape. In the first instance this means getting a better grasp of the resource's scale, nature and existing legal status (Figure 7.3). It is telling that I cannot give you a precise number for the instances of rock art in Scotland. Morris (1989) lists about 540 examples of motifs that exclude simple cup-marks;



the RCAHMS estimates about 1,640 examples of rock art as a whole (pers. comm. J. Stevenson; this can be contrasted with the estimated 1,600 rock art panels in England: English Heritage 2000). Of these, a minimum of 130 out of 7,750 or so scheduled monuments – that is nationally important, legally protected sites – in Scotland include rock art. (This calculation excludes Neolithic scratch art. It is also difficult to be precise because of the way in which monuments are categorised at the time of scheduling). All surviving caves known to contain rock art are scheduled, as are a range of standing stones and stone circles, the occasional cairn that contains carvings and at least 78 examples of carvings on bedrock, Allen's so-called 'works of nature'. The main examples of so-called passage grave-art are to be found in museums.

The pattern of scheduling can be seen to have been as follows: in the wake of the 1912–1920 RCAHMS surveys of Dumfries and Galloway which made recommendations for sites 'specially in need of protection' or 'deserving protection but not in imminent risk of demolition or decay'; a general interest in the Kilmartin Valley monuments in the late 1920s/early 30s; very little scheduling for 20 or so years after the Second World War; a concerted effort from the 1970s onwards in the wake of the RCAHMS's progress through Argyll; and otherwise scheduling predominantly reflects when and where new exciting discoveries have been made, such as at Eggerness, Dumfries and Galloway in 1989, and the interests/programmes of individual inspectors.

The areas protected by scheduling tend to be small. In general this reflects our lack of knowledge of what is going on in the immediate vicinity of such sites. In contrast to Scandinavia, modern, scientific exploration of living rock sites has been very limited to Auchentorlie and Auchalick (Barrowman and Meller 1994; Curtis and Jaffray 1991); Ballochmyle was cleared by volunteers, albeit under archaeological supervision. Several ongoing projects in Argyll are beginning to redress this imbalance.

A range of monuments in state care contain rock art almost by chance, but the actual rock art sites taken into care on their own terms, between 1928 and 1932, are a series of monuments in Kilmartin Valley and in Dumfries and Galloway. In the case of Kilmartin this reflects a specific initiative to take into care a range of important monuments on one estate.

Planning procedures require Historic Scotland to be consulted about any planning applications that have the potential to impact on the setting of a scheduled monument, and there are opportunities for local authority archaeologists to comment on potential impacts of other developments, such as forestry, for unscheduled sites too. This is one area where I suggest

that casework officers need more guidance if we are to adequately consider and recognise the qualities of the surrounding landscape that it is important to preserve, taking into account that invisible line between natural and cultural aspects of rock art sites.

## **Communication, understanding and awareness**

Historic Scotland and other bodies have already published considerably regarding carved stones in general, notably with regard to gravestones, and much of this is also applicable to rock art. We can certainly re-double our efforts to ensure that this work is better known and accessible, both in Scotland and abroad. But we also need to identify gaps in our coverage. A recent addition, in our consultation document (Historic Scotland 2003), was guidance on rubbing of carved stones for scientific purposes, an issue not just confined to rock art. Rather than just say 'no' or ignore the fact that this is happening, we have made recommendations for a series of steps that are advisable to try to ensure that there is no inadvertent damage to the surface of the stone. A further gap that also needs plugging in the future is guidance on de-turfing and cleaning for scientific recording purposes, as well as the pros and cons of re-turfing.

We also need to target our information and advice more effectively, not least for the owners and occupiers of land containing monuments, particularly farmers, foresters, estate managers and agricultural advisors. Historic Scotland has produced a free information leaflet describing carved stones in general, as well as a leaflet that provides basic management information, but there may well be something more specific we could do for rock art interests.

## **Interpretation, education and outreach**

There is certainly much that we can do at our own hand, making more use of the monuments that Historic Scotland directly cares for. We are very fortunate in being responsible for some of the best examples of rock art in the country at Kilmartin Valley and in Dumfries and Galloway. The future challenge here will be how, given our evidence-based approach to interpretation and education, we choose to use such rock art sites.

When it comes to monuments on private land, or in the care of other State bodies, such as the Forestry Commission, scheduled sites are visited on a three to ten year cycle by Historic Scotland's Monument Wardens. This regular, face-to-face contact is our opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of rock art and encourage owners to address specific management issues.

## Monument management and conservation

We still have work to do agreeing what are the appropriate types of recording required to baseline survey and then monitor carved stones for changes in their condition at the mega, macro and micro levels. We need to formally agree which organisation is responsible for doing which level of recording at which monuments, and what our co-ordinated programmes are. Different skills are required for different types of recording, not least for 3D laser scanning. Monument Wardens, for instance, only undertake visual inspections. In one trial year they did complete a formal carved stone decay assessment when visiting early medieval sculptures, as developed by our Technical Conservation Research and Education Division (Figure 7.4; Yates *et al.* 1999). This is a formal means for a non-expert to identify the type of stone, assess the precise problems that it is facing and recognise some of the potential causes of this. It is not a means of registering or measuring small changes in surface condition. It takes some time to complete and the future role of Monument Wardens in such recording of carved stones of any period has yet to be decided, but there could well be a role for others when it comes to rock art recording of this nature.

We are also giving further thought to how our Stone Conservation Centre, a body of professional stone conservators, regularises our recording and monitoring of the condition of carved stones as part of our cyclical condition survey programme for monuments in State care, and how 3D laser scanning fits into this.

While Monument Wardens are not recording change in the condition of stones at the micro level, their broader-brush assessments of the condition of monuments have now been recorded in a database spanning the last 15 years. This means we recognise the categories of problems affecting rock art, whether nature, farming, forestry and development/human intervention, and where this is happening. In terms of nature, weathering, moss, lichen, overhanging vegetation and bracken are all perceived as problems. When it comes to farming, cattle congregate on some sites, grazing can cause minor erosion around stones and, unfortunately, there is the occasional incidence of loss from destruction through quarrying or ploughing. The main distribution of rock art coincides with parts of Scotland that are heavily afforested. Problems here have included windblown trees falling on sites, tree planting in the immediate vicinity, timber extraction taking place across stones and other works, such as track creation, that have inadvertently damaged or destroyed a site. Low Clachaig was the finest cup-and-ring marked boulder in Kintyre until it was inadvertently damaged in 1989 by the creation of a new forest track. This grim discovery was made by the Monument Warden in 1992.



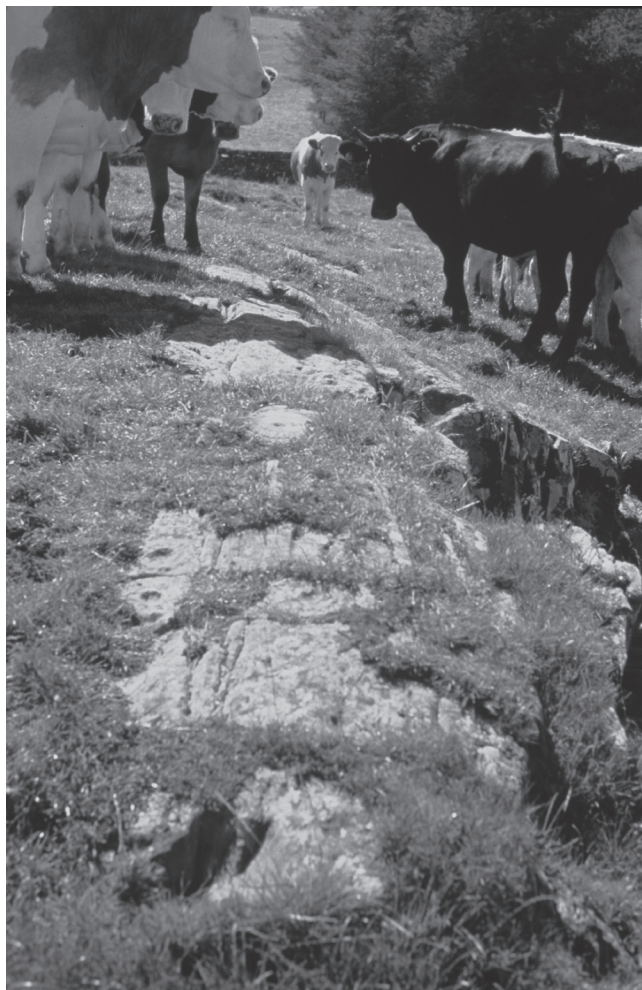
Figure 7.4. Monument wardens being trained in the assessment of carved stone decay. Crown copyright: Historic Scotland.

Scottish Woodlands Ltd subsequently paid for it to be reinstated under archaeological supervision, although it was now in several pieces, the relocation of which required detective work.

Other human activities include taking rubbings, deturfing, brushing, chalking, defacement, notably graffiti, and new age or pagan ritual. Historic Scotland's Stone Conservation Centre has been involved in an advisory capacity in several cases where graffiti was removed (Urquhart 1999). In a local initiative, supported by Historic Scotland, a Victorian gate was replaced in the 1990s at King's Cave on Arran to try to control casual access: it was specially designed so that passing visitors who have been unable to pick up a key beforehand can walk part of the way into the cave. But fencing and gates are not always the solution and run the risk of attracting more unwelcome attention.

Some of these problems are instances where changes





*Figure 7.5. Cattle congregating on the scheduled prehistoric rock-art at High Banks, Dumfries and Galloway. Crown copyright: Historic Scotland.*

in land management or non-technical interventions might immediately improve the condition of a rock art site, e.g. by keeping cattle off or re-turfing (Figure 7.5). Using Monument Warden data we have the opportunity to target and prioritise a programme of outreach supported by necessary advice and grant-aid that might bring quick results and good value for money, although we certainly need to ensure that the longer-term management of such sites is taken care of, and the efficacy of any conservation measures is also monitored. The Forestry Commission has a very significant holding of rock art and it has developed management plans for all its scheduled monuments, with advice from Historic Scotland. However, most rock art sites are in private ownership and few individuals are ever keen to take active measures to protect a monument at their own hand. Tackling management needs through direct action cannot be left to Historic

Scotland alone, so local authorities and other interested third parties need to be persuaded and enabled to work with landowners to improve their care of monuments. More use of agri-environment schemes is particularly to be encouraged, not least since this can address the needs of non-scheduled monuments.

One model to consider is the pilot Council for Scottish Archaeology Carved Stone Advisor Project, funded by Historic Scotland. Dr Susan Buckham's main remit is graveyards and gravestones, promoting their better protection and management, including encouraging a wider role for the voluntary sector, not least in their recording and reporting (and we anticipate benefits for other types of carved stones as well). There may be ways in which a parallel strategy might usefully be developed for aspects of rock art care, piggy-backing on what has been learnt from and developed from this particular project, which places a focus not just on recording of individual stones, but also understanding their archaeological and landscape context.

Dealing with the sites that require specialised and technical stone conservation is another matter altogether when these are not in Historic Scotland's care, or where they might not be a local champion to stick with and realise a conservation plan. Historic Scotland is fortunate in having teams of architects, archaeologists, stone conservators and Monument Conservation Unit staff (chiefly trained stonemasons) who can devise and implement, monitor and maintain the conservation of monuments in State care, but north of the border we are unique in this respect. It is therefore all the more incumbent on us to ensure that what we do at our rock art sites is a model of best practice, although we recognise that there is still much to learn.

Historic Scotland and local partners have been able to make a big difference at Achnabreck in Argyll, rock art in state care. New access has been created to the site, on-site interpretation improved (texts written by John Barrett) and in the last few years the trees that prevented any appreciation of its landscape setting have been clear felled by Forest Enterprise. Particular efforts have been made to discourage visitors from walking over the rocks themselves. We have not gone so far as prohibiting this, but signs make it explicit that it will damage the stones and raised walkways have been created around parts of the enclosures to give a little more height and hence better viewing (Figure 7.6). We have not yet followed the Scandinavians in putting walkways across the outcrops.

Sometimes rather contradictory messages have been given out about whether to cover or re-cover monuments for their protection. There is the inevitable tension between making an exciting site accessible to the public and researchers (at Ballochmyle) and needing to cover it for its own interest (as at Eggerness; Figure 7.7).





Figure 7.6. Raised walkway at Achnabreck, Argyll, prehistoric rock-art in the care of Scottish Ministers. Crown copyright: Historic Scotland.



Figure 7.7. An example of the carvings at Eggerness, Dumfries and Galloway, which have now been covered up for protection. Copyright Sally M. Foster.

At Ormaig in Argyll, a significant part of which was only discovered in 1972–1975, anecdotal evidence suggests that this once fresh carving is weathering fast, but there are local concerns about recovering such a fascinating site. One of the more unusual conservation actions taken by Historic Scotland is at Dunadd hillfort, a monument in State care. Important early medieval bedrock carvings have been covered with a synthetic stone cast for the last 25 years (Figure 7.8).

Otherwise, direct care by Historic Scotland of rock art sites has involved keeping them enclosed (to keep animals off, etc), clear of harmful vegetation, regular monitoring and, when necessary, remedial stone consolidation. We used to spray sites with biocides, but with no certainty as to whether or not this was a potentially harmful practice it was stopped in the 1990s (Masonry Conservation Research Group 1995).

Other than the work undertaken by Historic Scotland

at its monuments, and the occasional re-turfing of some scheduled monuments, it is difficult to think of many instances of proactive rock art site management in Scotland. The works at Auchentorlie in Dunbartonshire can only be described as reactive and not a totally happy solution to the preservation of a monument. Auchentorlie was described by Ronald Morris as the 5th or 6th most important site containing cup-and-ring markings in the British Isles (in litt. to Gordon Barclay). This was not scheduled until 1970, 21 years after planning permission was given for quarrying of the ground containing this series of spectacularly carved outcrops. When the National Museum of Scotland sought permission in 1992 to remove the carved faces for display in their forthcoming Museum of Scotland, Historic Scotland's initial response was to seek to explore final options for preservation *in situ*, this being our normal policy and preferred solution for





Figure 7.8. Important early medieval bedrock carvings at Dunadd being covered with a synthetic stone cast. Crown copyright: Historic Scotland.

sculpture of all periods. However, the owners had had intermittent permission since 1973 to remove the stones, indeed Euan Mackie had already undertaken what was viewed by all at the time as the final rescue record (Mackie and Davies 1989). Historic Scotland could have opted to pay the quarry owner compensation if a successful and practical means of *in situ* preservation was deemed feasible, but we concluded following advice from a range of experts that this was not practicable. Quarry activities in the immediate vicinity were already exacerbating weathering and stability of the sculpture, and there was no ready solution to preservation of a pillar of land within the wider quarry. At the end of the day, consent was granted for removal under strict archaeological conditions and after further archaeological recording, which included exploration of the immediate vicinity. My biggest regret, for I was the Inspector dealing with this case, is that laser technology was not so developed and widely available 10 years ago as it is now. It did not prove possible to have an accurate 3D record created of the outcrops, and there are problems with the earlier moulds taken by Mackie.

## Research

Research has not yet been mentioned. We take it as a given that research, conservation and access, here used in the sense of all aspects of interpretation and presentation, are interdependent. If we do not protect and conserve the rock art it will not survive for us to record, study and enjoy; if we do not record, study and assess it, we cannot identify priorities for management action or present the rock art in an intelligent and informed way; if we do not share and allow access to our knowledge and enthusiasm, who in society will ensure that there is support for its very survival? Further research is clearly needed to address specific technical conservation issues, such as dealing with horizontal and vertical rock face conservation, and to enhance understanding and interpretation of the rock art resource as a whole, specific sites in particular.

## Concluding remarks

So what has changed since the 19th century? The range of contexts in which the sculpture is found has altered



little, although material is now sometimes recovered in scientific and datable contexts (e.g. Dalladies: Piggott 1972; 1973). The phenomena of reuse in Iron Age and other periods is also recognised (Hingley *et al.* 1997). Yet overviews of Scottish prehistory can still be written in which rock art makes a greater impact on the cover of the book than it does inside it (Ashmore 1986), although in this instance this is because the book concentrates on what can be well-dated, and that does not include rock art. The recording techniques used by the RCAHMS have improved dramatically, both in the sense of detail applied to individual carvings, best exemplified in their Mid Argyll inventory (RCAHMS 1988) and, in the last 20 years or so, recording of relict features in the wider landscape. The last RCAHMS inventories saw rock art move from their Bronze Age to Neolithic discussion sections, but little analysis beyond dating evidence, distribution and brief discussion of motifs. In general literature on Scottish rock art has largely been obsessed with motif typology and chronology until the work of Bradley *et al.*, a phenomena not limited to Scotland (Nash and Chippindale 2002, 3). 3D laser scanning is now more readily available but not yet being employed in any systematic fashion to record and monitor Scottish rock art. For the future, we must also seriously consider the extent to which the recording techniques that are being employed, the sectoral nature of Scottish archaeology and its institutional cultures are continuing to foster what Richard Bradley (1993, 45) has described as a 'timid approach to the archaeology of monuments'. If we are agreed that beyond logging, describing and empirical analyses we also need the ability to incorporate the unaltered topography into our sense of the landscape, from the form of the rock itself to its wider setting (cf Bradley 1993; Bradley *et al.* 2002), how do we develop techniques of recording that allow us and others to undertake such analysis, now and for posterity?

This still leaves us with a big challenge and lots yet to debate. We want to build on what has been learnt from approaches to rock art elsewhere, recognising that Scotland's prehistoric art is only a small part of a bigger field, a field in which present day national boundaries of course had no currency in prehistory. The tools we choose to employ in any future Scottish strategy must be fit for Scottish purpose, given our unique laws and institutions; but the most successful way forward is likely to lie in open discussion, sharing of experiences and identification of opportunities for collaboration with others. Unnecessary duplication of effort needs to be avoided, but we do need to identify what is needed to address any peculiar circumstances in Scotland, not least our own geology, geography and past regional archaeological diversity. Historic Scotland welcomes the opportunity the English Heritage Rock art Pilot Project and English Heritage's Rock art Management,

Assessment, Study and Education Strategy (Last, Chapter 10, this volume) has created for us all to begin to identify where there is common ground and scope for working in tandem. However, I must also repeat my plea that we learn by being aware of how sculpture of other periods is approached, and try to ensure that any work undertaken to benefit prehistoric rock art conservation, research and access also benefits carved stones in general. But before we go much further, we have to find a way of addressing some of the basics: what have we got, what is significant about it, where are the gaps in our understanding, what condition is the resource in, where do the most urgent conservation needs lie and what is the most appropriate conservation action? It sounds so simple, but that in fact is the main challenge.

### Postscript

Key relevant developments since this paper was drafted in early 2005 include:

- Historic Scotland has published a series of Scottish Historic Environment Policies in relation to the historic environment, scheduled monuments and properties in care. These are downloadable from [www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk), which also provides information about present approaches to scheduling, for instance.
- Historic Scotland has initiated a project to provide an assessment of Scotland's historic environment. This includes statistics on heritage assets and information on how they are changing over time ([www.heritageaudit.org.uk](http://www.heritageaudit.org.uk))
- The pilot CSA Carved Stones Advisor Project has ended. Dr Susan Buckham, worked with the Moray Burial Research Group to develop and trial a successful methodology for de-turfing, cleaning, recording and reburial of gravestones (see [www.mbgrg.org](http://www.mbgrg.org))
- At Torbhlaren 1 near Kilmartin, Argyll and Bute, Dr Andy Jones and Dr Blaze O'Connor have found the first evidence for the construction of monuments (a stone and clay platform) in close association with rock art sites in Scotland, as well as artefacts, notably flakes of flint and Arran pitchstone (Jones and O'Connor 2007). Torbhlaren 2 demonstrates multi-period use of such sites, with evidence for 10th–12th-century AD activity (Andy Jones pers. comm.). The project ended in 2007 and is now in the final stages of post-excavation analysis.
- Richard Bradley and Aaron Watson have been working at Ben Lawers in Perthshire and Kinross. In 2007 they found quantities of flaked and worked flint, and some Arran pitchstone flakes, in association with bedrock outcrops.

- As part of developing a strategy for the short- and long-term management of the site, Kilmartin House Museum undertook excavations in 2007 around the rock art site at Ormaig in Argyll and Bute; no associated structural evidence was encountered.

## Acknowledgements

Many Historic Scotland colleagues have kindly assisted with the drafting of this paper and the developments of the ideas that underpin it. In particular these include: Genevieve Adkins, Patrick Ashmore, Gordon Barclay, David Breeze, Michael Burgoyne, Audrey Dakin, Richard Fawcett, Ingal Maxwell, Aonghus Mackechnie, Rod McCullagh, Ann Miles, Sue Mitchell, Sarah Morris, Andrea Smith and Richard Welander. In 2008, Richard Bradley, Andy Jones, Blaze O'Connor and Aaron Watson, Sharon Webb provided information about their projects.

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