



The Committee met in Edinburgh on 6 May, 15 August and 12 December 2014. We are grateful to the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust and RCAHMS for kindly hosting these meetings, and to Historic Scotland (HS) for a grant to cover our miscellaneous costs and ongoing website redesign.

Developing strategy

- This was at the forefront of our work in 2014. In order to clarify its role and develop a more strategic function, the Committee completed an analysis of the problems faced by carved stones, their causes and effects, the impacts the Committee aims to have on them, and how best to achieve this. This was followed by a SWOT analysis for the NCCSS in relation to the identified purpose, overall objectives and results sought, and, since communication was identified as a key issue, an analysis of our key audiences and what and how to communicate to them (see website).
- To improve our communication, and reflect better on our work, the Committee decided to initiate a short Annual Report. The Chair also produced a retrospective report for 2013.
- Redesign of the website is in progress (to be completed by end March 2015). Committee members have contributed to its content, while Northlight Heritage has been commissioned to undertake its construction and design. The planned URL is www.carvedstones.scot.
- To progress our strategic approach, the present and most recent chairs of the NCCSS (Sally Foster, University of Stirling and Dr Katherine Forsyth, University of Glasgow) applied in September 2014 to the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) for a £10k Workshop Grant, to be delivered in collaboration with the NCCSS: *Future Thinking on Carved Stones in Scotland* (see details below). In December RSE confirmed that this bid was successful. In September, the Committee also applied successfully to HS for funds to enable wide participation in the largest of the planned workshop events.
- The Committee recognises that loose and vulnerable stones are a particular priority for strategic and joined-up action by heritage bodies and others, and that there may be scope for

improved legislation to add protection and clarify responsibilities. In late December 2014, Scottish Government announced its consultation on the Historic Environment Scotland Act - Secondary Legislation.

- Our December meeting ended with a seminar delivered by Dr Victoria Whitworth (Centre for Nordic Studies of the Orkney College of the University of the Islands and Highlands) entitled 'Early, innovative and influential: a reconsideration of hogbacked stones from Meigle, Govan and Inchcolm in their wider context'. This was a joint venture with the RCAHMS.

Research developments and outcomes

- ***Future Thinking on Carved Stones in Scotland (RSE-funded workshops led by SMF and KF in collaboration with the NCCSS)***
This project, taking place in 2015/16, aims to generate a research agenda for carved stones in Scotland, filling what the heritage sector recognises to be an important gap in the existing Scottish Archaeology Research Framework (ScARF) (<http://www.scottishheritagehub.com>). Given the nature of the resource, research interests cut across periods, disciplines (humanities and sciences), and across the fragmented heritage and stewardship sectors. Four linked workshops will define priorities for future research from both a historical and curatorial perspective. This research agenda will be published on-line as a contribution to ScARF. Each workshop will bring together a range of participants for the first time. We aim to constitute one or more research networks directed at specific questions, and to lay initial groundwork for other potential future research collaborations. This is a strategic effort to link, inspire, mobilise and help direct diffuse communities with an interest in and responsibility for carved stones.
- A particularly notable project was the Tomb of Robert the Bruce project, which, among other things, deployed 3D-laser scanning for research purposes to reconstruct a very fragmentary and dismembered monument, not simply for the purpose of visual effects.



- **Bibliography of carved stones**

The Committee compiled a bibliography of publications dated 2014 (and retrospectively for 2012 and 2013), to be published on our new website. The Chair will be pleased to receive the full details of relevant publications as published, and to update the back lists. Our focus for the bibliography is work related to material in Scotland, although we are always pleased to learn of key publications about non-Scottish material that might inform our research and curatorial work.

- **Conferences**

Events which featured papers on Scottish carved stones included the Pictish Arts Society annual conference (Caithness Horizons, October 2014), the 7th International Insular Art Conference (NUI Galway, July 2014) and the University of Edinburgh's *Celtic Revival in Scotland* conference and exhibition (May 2014).

Casework (including new discoveries)

- We discussed 56 cases and projects, including a number of new discoveries of prehistoric to Modern-period date, as well as new observations made on existing stones in the course of recording. Examples included: new prehistoric rock art from Over Glenny near the Lake of Menteith (Stirling); part of a Pictish goose at Cotterton (Highland), a fragment of Pictish key and spiral carvings recognised at the collections in Aberdour Castle (Fife) and now more securely curated; unusual worked stones encountered during the Pictish Arts Society fieldtrip to St Thomas' Chapel, Skinnet (Highland); and graffiti on a stone from a garden in Duns (Scottish Borders) that appears to depict a medieval church.
- A query about a concrete look-a-like of part of the Aberlemno Kirkyard stone recognised in Gloucestershire prompted Committee members and others to draw on their collective memories about the production of garden furnishings based on carved stones.

Examples of good practice

- Further to the Hilton of Cadboll online jigsaw that was part of the Glenmorangie *Creative Spirit* exhibition in 2013, crowd sourcing is also a feature of the Wemyss Cave website, where visitors can search online scans to identify and analyse detail: <http://www.4dwemysscaves.org>
- *Adding a new dimension to Dundee's medieval carved stones* (<http://www.aocarchaeology.com/dundee-medieval-stones/>), a HLF-funded project, was a good example of how to involve the public in recording and understanding carved stones, in this case a neglected body of important medieval graveslabs that offer insights into Dundee's elite.
- Redisplay of early medieval monuments has been a key theme: HS's redisplay of the Kirkmadrine Stones (Dumfries and Galloway) opens in January 2015; the National Trust for Scotland has redisplayed the Pictish symbol stones at Leith Hall (Aberdeenshire); Caithness Horizon's redisplay of its carved stone collection; and plans are in hand for Forteviot as part of the Tayside Landscape Partnership. We also noted with interest the relocation of the Downpatrick High Cross in Northern Ireland.
- We noted that HS has improved its storage of *ex situ* architectural fragments at several of its medieval properties, and continues its recording programme for them.
- The excellence of the innovative lighting of the new displays of sculpture at Iona by KSLD was recognised by a series of lighting industry awards. See: http://www.kevan-shaw.com/projects/project_page/iona_abbey
- We noted that Manx National Heritage has published Statements of Significance for its Manx Crosses and Carved Stones.
- Govan Old Churchyard Conservation Plan.

Curatorial concerns

- We noted how difficult it is to use indexes in *Discovery and Excavation Scotland (DES)* and the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of*



Scotland to identify work on carved stones. We have brought this to their Editors' attention.

- Loose and therefore vulnerable stones that may fall between legislative provisions or curatorial roles is a perennial issue.
- The late medieval Roseneath cross (Argyll and Bute) was not located by one member on a recent visit to the churchyard. The early medieval, portable cross-slab from Innerleithen (Scottish Borders) has now been descheduled.
- We continue to be concerned about stones with conservation and other issues that are in the care of trusts that are not necessarily sustainable. The Shandwick Stone (Highland) is the prime example.

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Other

The Committee was absolutely delighted when its long-standing member, Ian G Scott, received a well-deserved MBE in July 2014 'For services to Archaeology in Scotland'.



Ian G Scott recording the Forteviot Stones. Image © Mark A Hall.