

Recording carved stones

Wherever stones are conserved, protected or moved, it is essential that a careful record is made of the process. As well as a written description, this will often include 'before', 'during' and 'after' photographs, and drawings.

There is an urgent need to record Scotland's carved stones. Local and national historical and archaeological groups have taken part in recording programmes, and the National Monuments Record and your local authority archaeology service can also give advice on recording techniques.

You should avoid any recording which involves physical contact with the surface of a carved stone. Taking rubbings, impressions or casts can cause irreversible damage to fragile surfaces. Chalking outlines to show up details for photographs can also cause damage, and, like rubbing, will leave traces on the stone.



Graveyard maintenance

If you look after a graveyard, there are a few extra guidelines.

- Ensure that mowers and trimmers do not come into contact with carved stones
- Do not remove stones from their original settings unless absolutely necessary.
- Headstones that were meant to stand upright should not be laid flat on the ground
- Avoid removing the legs from table tombs, or the sides of altar tombs; if they must be moved, get expert advice
- Do not destabilise headstones by removing earth from around the base

Before moving or altering stones, seek advice from your local museum or local authority archaeologist, if necessary get permission from Historic Scotland, and make a record of the setting and inform the National Monuments Record of Scotland at the address overleaf.



We all value carved stones as an important part of our heritage. Help us to preserve these fascinating objects for future generations to enjoy and understand. If you need information on sources of help or advice, please contact:

The National Committee on Carved Stones in Scotland
c/o Society of Antiquaries of Scotland
Royal Museum of Scotland
Chambers Street
Edinburgh EH1 1JF

Protecting and Caring for Historic Carved and Inscribed Stones



Advice and Guidelines

The National Committee on Carved Stones in Scotland

Do you look after historic carved stones in graveyards, in buildings or on your land? . . .
Are you concerned about damage to tombstones, Pictish symbol stones, or cup-marked stones? . . .
Are you interested in recording carved stones? . . .

THIS LEAFLET TELLS YOU HOW YOU CAN HELP PROTECT OUR CARVED STONE HERITAGE

The National Committee on Carved Stones in Scotland

We are a small group of representatives from the main national bodies interested in looking after Scotland's carved stones. Such stones face many threats, most of which need not be serious if straightforward guidance is followed. Some of the commonest causes of damage include: the weather, acid rain, traffic, cattle, building works, vandalism, theft, chalking or rubbing, and even well-intentioned but damaging cleaning, repair and restoration. We hope you will find this leaflet useful in identifying and reducing these and other threats to carved stones.

What are 'carved stones'?

Carved stones are an important part of our cultural heritage, ranging from prehistoric carvings to modern sculpture. The Committee promotes the protection of all carved stones, including Roman sculptures and inscriptions, Pictish symbol stones, and medieval and later tombstones and architectural decoration.

Protecting carved stones: some basic advice

Nothing should be done to a stone which cannot be undone, or which modifies it.

Cleaning: This is generally unnecessary. It is easy to damage the fragile surface of a carved stone, so removal of lichen or other cleaning should only be attempted by a qualified conservator.

Shelter: Important carved stones kept in the open air can often benefit from a carefully designed protective shelter. Again, expert advice is needed: a poor shelter can harm a stone rather than protect it, and can also damage surrounding archaeological deposits.

Alteration: The evidence on a carved stone is unique, and should never be changed or 'restored'.

Surface Treatment: Although it may seem like a good idea to treat stone surfaces with protective coatings, this can often be disastrous. Nothing should be applied to a stone unless it is known to be reversible or neutral.

Monitoring: Keep an eye on your carved stones, and let someone know if they seem to be deteriorating.

Uncovering: Do not remove turf or soil, as this will expose hidden stones or surfaces to weathering.

About carved stones

Carved stones were often made for, or are now associated with a particular place, so we should try to keep them on or as near as possible to those sites. We must also take care that any **protective measures** for a stone do not interfere with its setting or disturb a surrounding archaeological site.

If you are advised that a stone should be **moved**, its new location must give protection against the elements, but must also be secure from theft or vandalism yet reasonably accessible to visitors. There needs to be space for presentation, and visitors should be able to see all the important detail, especially when the carving is on more than one side. Local museums, churches, or other public buildings near the original site can be good places to relocate a carved stone or even a group of stones. If you are thinking of moving stones, you should seek advice from Historic Scotland, the National Museums of Scotland, or your local authority archaeology service.



Scheduled Monument Consent or Listed Building

Consent may be needed before a stone can be moved, conserved or protected. The advice of Historic Scotland or the local authority planning department should always be sought. If the stone is on private land, the landowner's consent will also be needed before any action is taken.

Advice from Historic Scotland can be obtained from: Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh EH9 1SH (0131-668-8600).

If you think that a carved stone may have gone **missing**, please advise your local authority archaeology service or The National Monuments Record of Scotland, John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX (0131-662-1456).

Movable historic carved or inscribed stones may be subject to the law of **Treasure Trove**. New discoveries should be reported to the Treasure Trove Advisory Panel Secretariat, c/o Archaeology Department, National Museums of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF.

