CARVED STONES
houses, in both cases dating to four to five thousand years ago. Copper and bronze axes were highly valued items from around 2200 BC, and depictions of axes have been found carved in stone in burial monuments.

With the Roman occupation of Scotland in the 1st to the 3rd centuries AD came the practice of dressing or shaping stone for building and the idea of carved and even inscribed gravestones, and these may indicate the former existence of a Roman fort in the vicinity. During the building of the Antonine Wall, the turf wall that the Roman army constructed as a barrier across central Scotland, distance-slabs were incorporated to record the length built by individual units of the army. Both types of inscription were in Latin, and the decoration was sometimes sculpted in relief, making the figures stand out higher than their background.

Prehistoric religious beliefs were sometimes expressed through carving on natural rock faces, on standing stones and on burial monuments. Cupmarks are circular hollows, and cup-and-ring marks have one or more rings carved round the hollow. In Argyll and southwest Scotland, large expanses of rock face have been carved in this way to create sacred places in the landscape.

Occasionally spirals and chevrons were carved on stones in burial tombs, and signs can be found on the walls of...
Christianity was introduced to southern Scotland in late Roman times, blossoming from the 6th century AD onwards. By about AD 700 it was the dominant religion throughout Scotland. There is a vast range of carved stones connected with Christianity, from gravestones and crosses to building stones and internal fittings from churches. The earliest chapels were built of timber, but from the 8th century AD they were often built in stone. Gravestones were carved with the symbol of the cross and sometimes with Latin inscriptions.

Unique to Scotland are the symbol stones set up by the Picts from the 6th to the 9th centuries AD. A uniform set of symbols was used throughout Pictland from the Firth of Forth to Shetland to convey messages that cannot now be understood. They were carved in pairs or in multiples of pairs on natural slabs and boulders. Once Christianity had been adopted, symbols were also carved on cross-slabs, either beside the cross or on the back of the slab. Fragments of such stones may indicate the presence nearby of graves, churches or settlements. Pictish symbols, the Christian cross and inscriptions can also be found on the walls of caves.

Roman script was not the only alphabet in use in early medieval times. From Ireland came another script, ogham, in which letters were represented by groups of strokes on either side of a central line.

There are two different types of carvings on this stone: the rectangle and part of a fish above it are Pictish symbols, while the short strokes on the sloping line are ogham letters. © Crown Copyright: Historic Scotland.

A simple cross-slab was a common memorial to mark a grave from early Christian times onwards. This fragment of an early Christian cross-slab is now in St Vigeans Museum, Angus. © Crown Copyright: Historic Scotland.
Ogham was also used on memorial stones, as well as on stones in buildings, from the 6th to the 10th centuries AD. The runic alphabet was introduced by Norse or Viking settlers in the 10th to the 12th centuries AD. The letters were formed by vertical and sloping strokes, and were used on gravestones and crosses to record the dead, and on buildings and caves to record less formal messages.

Gravestones can be simple slabs incised with the cross or dressed in the shape of a cross, and they can be elaborately decorated, according to the preference or wealth of those erecting them. Some were set upright and others lay recumbent over the grave. In later medieval times, effigies of warriors in full armour became popular among leading families, while in post-medieval times burial aisles and raised table-tombs were favoured by those who could afford them.

Fragments of architectural carving may come from secular buildings such as castles and tower-houses as well as from churches and abbeys. There were often armorial panels carved with the family coat of arms and motto set above the main doorways of tower-houses, and fireplaces in the most important rooms had decorative stone surrounds. Stone garden furniture included sundials, benches and statues. Roadside stonework ranges widely from milestones to boundary markers, market crosses and war memorials.

Carved stones of all types help to illuminate past society and need to be recorded and preserved. Please report new discoveries to your local authority archaeologist or local museum, or to the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Please avoid the temptation to clean them or to remove any growths unless expert advice has been sought.
## TIME-LINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>End of the last Ice Age</td>
<td>12,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife colonises land</td>
<td>8500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesolithic hunting settlers</td>
<td>4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neolithic farming settlers</td>
<td>3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal technology (gold, copper)</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate deteriorating</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortifications begin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron-working technology</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 BC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD 79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman army in Scotland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waning of Roman influence</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of Christianity</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picts, Gaels, Britons and Anglians</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start of the Viking Age</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergence of Scottish nation</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First burghs</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reformation of the Church</td>
<td>1600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agricultural improvements &amp; Industrial Revolution</td>
<td>1800</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two World Wars</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Archeological Features

- Flint scatters
- Shell mounds, rock shelters
- Chambered tombs and houses
- Cupmarked rocks
- Stone circles, henges, and standing stones
- Burial mounds and short cists
- Hut-circles
- Burnt mounds
- Hillforts
- Crannogs
- Duns, brochs, wheelhouses, and earth-houses
- Roman camps, forts and roads, Antonine Wall
- Long cist graves
- Early Christian and Pictish carved stones, chapels
- Pagan Viking graves and settlements
- Stone-built churches
- Mottes, abbeys, stone-built castles
- Tower-houses
- Deserted villages and farms
- Coal mines and heavy industries
- Gun batteries and airfields

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**FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH:**

Cupmarks and cup-and-ring marks are found on rock outcrops as here, and on standing stones and boulders.

Historic Scotland is an agency within the Scottish Government and is responsible for administering the legislation that protects ancient monuments (buildings, ruins, archaeological sites and landscapes). It provides general advice on the conservation and protection of Scotland’s heritage.

Historic Scotland’s Education Service encourages the use of the built heritage as a learning and teaching resource.

Over 300 historic properties are looked after by Historic Scotland and are open to the public for enjoyment and education. For further information, including free leaflets, telephone 0131 668 8600.

Our data service website contains details of scheduled monuments and has GIS datasets available to download:
http://data.historic-scotland.gov.uk

The following leaflets are available from Historic Scotland:

Scheduled ancient monuments: a guide for owners, occupiers and land managers
Managing Scotland’s archaeological heritage
Grants for Ancient Monuments: a guide to grants available for the preservation, maintenance and management of ancient monuments
Archaeology on farm and croft (produced jointly with Archaeology Scotland)
Scotland’s listed buildings: a guide for owners and occupiers
The carved stones of Scotland: a guide to helping in their protection
Metal detecting - yes or no? Metal detecting, scheduled ancient monuments and the law

A number of Historic Scotland Technical Advice Notes on topics such as the use of lime mortars, the conservation of thatching and stonelarning are available, together with a Conservation of Historic Graveyards Guide for Practitioners; catalogue from and orders to:
Historic Scotland Conservation Group
Tel: 0131 668 8638
e-mail: hs.cgpublications@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

This information leaflet is one of a series produced by Historic Scotland.

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Illustrations drawn by Alan Braby