Carved stones are often the only evidence surviving from Scotland’s earliest societies. This resource focuses on:

- Early peoples (3500–1500 BC)
- Pictish stones (AD 500–900)
- Early Christian stones (AD 450–1100)
Using this resource

Introduction
Stone is the original raw material. Strong, waterproof, colourful and durable, it has been used and shaped by people in Scotland since earliest times. Across Scotland we can find objects carved from stone, many still standing in the landscape where they were created. They are often the only evidence surviving from Scotland’s earliest societies and are a good starting point for an investigation of the cultures which produced them.

This resource focuses on three key phases in Scotland’s past which are particularly rich in carved stones surviving to this day:

- Early peoples (3500–1500 BC)
- Pictish stones (AD 500–900)
- Early Christian stones (AD 450–1100)

We have chosen to focus on sites where you can see items which have been shaped from a single stone and which feature carving – items such as carved standing stones, rocks with carved ‘cup’ marks, early Christian crosses and grave slabs decorated with Pictish symbols. The resource aims to encourage teachers and their pupils to explore their local landscape and investigate what remains there today.

This resource is designed to help teachers make the most of carved stones from these times as a way into learning about the societies who created them. It aims to link classroom work to historic sites where carved stones can be found. It is most suitable for teachers of middle–upper primary and lower secondary classes.

Please note that this booklet is intended for teacher use, and while elements may be useful to more able pupils, it is not designed to be copied and distributed to pupils.

This pack contains:
- background information about the three key phases in Scotland’s past for the non-specialist teacher
- suggestions of sites to visit linked to these phases and how the sites might be used to enhance learning
- suggestions for activities to prepare for and follow up a site visit
- links showing how visits can contribute to the aspirations of the Curriculum for Excellence

Site visits
The Curriculum for Excellence aspires to motivate and challenge pupils through a wide range of varied learning experiences. Site visits have a particular role to play in ‘joining up’ learning outcomes, making learning relevant and in their capacity to offer learners a degree of personalisation and choice.

See pages 36 and 37 for a map and list of names and locations of key sites.
Booking a visit

To book a visit to any of the Historic Scotland sites featured in this pack, please call the Education Unit on the number below. Please note that many of the stones featured are on unstaffed sites with no facilities and access may not always be straightforward. Our staff can advise!

Historic Scotland Education Unit
Tel: 0131 668 8793
www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

Two types of visit are currently available for schools:

**Teacher-led visits**

Teachers are encouraged to lead their own class visits to our sites. All visits must be booked. Historic Scotland operates a year-round **FREE** admission scheme for teacher-led educational visits. The exceptions to this are visits to Stirling Castle and Edinburgh Castle during the months of May–August inclusive, when there is a charge.

Teacher-led tours for many of the sites featured in this pack are available to download from our website. These contain background information and notes for activities and discussion.

**Special events and activities for schools**

Many sites run special activity sessions for school groups. To book or to find out more about these activities, call the Education Unit on the number above, or look at our Schools Activity Programme on our website. There is usually a small charge for these activities.

Historic Scotland’s Ranger Service on Orkney provides tours of the Ring of Brodgar and Stones of Stenness. The Rangers also offer an on-site education programme at Skara Brae. Telephone 01856 841732 for details.

**Travel subsidy scheme**

Schools can apply for a travel subsidy to visit any Historic Scotland site. This provides financial assistance with transportation costs between the school and the chosen site. To find out more about the scheme please contact the Education Unit, or download an application form from our website.

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**Risk assessment**

Risk assessment of the site is the responsibility of the teacher in charge of the group. To assist with this, hazard information sheets for staffed sites are available on our website or contact the Education Unit for more information.

We strongly encourage teachers to make a free pre-visit themselves before bringing a class. This gives teachers the chance to carry out their risk assessment, try out material and become familiar with the site. Please discuss this when booking your class visit.

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*Ranger Service at Ring of Brodgar, Orkney*
Supporting learning and teaching

The Curriculum for Excellence

The Curriculum for Excellence presents teachers with an unrivalled opportunity to make the most of site visits, both in specific curriculum areas and through cross-curricular studies.

The guiding principles behind the Curriculum for Excellence are at the heart of learning activities suggested here and in our downloadable Site Investigation packs. While providing guidance and suggested activities for teachers or parent helpers who are unfamiliar with the topic and the site, they aim to build in opportunities for personalisation and choice and for pupils to set their own research goals and targets. Suggested activities should be regarded as a starting point; ideally, pupils, if properly prepared, will be setting their own agenda on-site and understanding the purpose and relevance of all activities and of their visit.

Most of the sites referred to in this booklet are at least partly outdoors. The power of outdoor learning is well-documented, as pupils benefit from learning in context and through experience and place. The less formal environment can have positive effects on social development as a different kind of relationship develops among pupils and between pupils and staff.

Most teachers will be visiting a historic site to support ongoing work in achieving outcomes in Social Studies: people, past events and societies. More broadly speaking, a visit can help support the development of the four capacities of the Curriculum for Excellence, as outlined below.

A visit and use of any supporting material will help to:

**Develop successful learners by:**
- exploring places, investigating artefacts and discussing the past
- encouraging pupils to think critically about the nature of historical evidence and arrive at their own conclusions
- making links between current and previous knowledge
- providing a real context for learning which helps to bring the past to life

**Develop confident individuals by:**
- providing opportunities for pupils to share and present their learning to others using a range of media
- giving pupils opportunities to communicate their own views on historical events and issues raised during the visit

**Develop responsible citizens by:**
- encouraging greater understanding of and respect for their own historic and built environment
- experiencing examples of the work of historians, archaeologists and conservationists and understanding why this is important

**Develop effective contributors by:**
- encouraging pupils to record and express their observations following on-site investigations
- providing pupils with the opportunity to develop life skills such as photography during their visit

Pupils investigating a standing stone on Orkney
Learning in Social Studies

Most teachers will be visiting a historic site to support ongoing work in achieving outcomes in Social Studies: people, past events and societies. Many teachers will use carved stones in their area as an entry point into a study of the relevant society – for example, Scotland’s early people in Kilmartin Glen or Skara Brae, the Picts in Angus, or the early Christians in Whithorn or Iona. A site visit will help pupils work towards the following broad outcomes:

- develop an understanding of how Scotland has developed as a nation, resulting in an appreciation of their local and national heritage within the global community by understanding the impact and influence of the society
- broaden their understanding of the world by learning about human activities and achievements in the past and present by finding out about societies in the past who inhabited their local area through investigating places and objects
- develop their understanding of their own values, beliefs and cultures and those of others by searching for parallels between early societies and our own
- learn how to locate, explore and link periods, people and events in time and place by focusing on a specific period in the past
- learn how to locate, explore and link features and places locally and further afield by using maps to plot events
- establish firm foundations for lifelong learning and for further specialised study and careers by developing life skills such as photography and understanding more about jobs in conservation and heritage

Religious and Moral Education (RME)

Other teachers may begin a study of carved stones as part of a programme of work in RME. Through examination of ritual stones and sites, pupils will very naturally have the chance to reflect on and develop their own beliefs and values. A site visit will help pupils work towards the following broad outcomes:

- learn about and from the beliefs, values, practices and traditions of Christianity and other world religions by investigating historic Christian sites at Iona Abbey and Whithorn, for example
- develop their own values and beliefs and put these into practical action in order to promote a more just, equal and compassionate society
- develop empathy, tolerance and respect for others and so learn to value diversity and combat prejudice and discrimination by realising that Scotland’s diversity is part of its heritage
- develop an understanding of, sensitivity to and acknowledgment of religious and non-religious beliefs by visiting historic sites with religious significance
- develop an awareness of the role of religion, beliefs and values in society, and the ways in which these are central to the fabric of Scottish society
- explore the development of beliefs and values, including non-religious perspectives and
- have the opportunity to search for meaning, value and purpose in life through relating all areas of learning to their own developing beliefs, values and practices by comparing the beliefs and values of past societies with their own developing values (e.g. Do I believe in life after death? Why?).

Conservator at work on the early Christian stones at Whithorn Priory Museum
Cross-curricular work

The Curriculum for Excellence actively promotes learning beyond subject boundaries. A site visit offers obvious learning opportunities across many curricular areas in addition to Social Subjects. Key areas are as follows:

**Literacy**

Pupils will read and write, talk and listen as they find out about past societies in their area and express what they have learned. Activities on-site will promote listening and talking in groups. There are opportunities for reading as they research the society and relevant sites and for producing functional, personal and imaginative writing for a range of audiences.

**Numeracy**

Pupils will have authentic, contextualised opportunities to develop their skills and confidence in numeracy. A site visit provides opportunities to count, estimate, measure and plot; to collect, handle and present data.

**Expressive Arts**

Many pupils have strong reactions to ancient sites, which may be expressed and explored through art and design, music, dance or drama. Some schools may use their visit as a springboard for exploring the traditional music of Gaelic and Scots.

Using ICT to promote learning

There are several activities suggested within this resource for utilising the power of technology to motivate and challenge pupils. Key examples are:

- Pupils can become familiar with how to use database websites such as [www.scran.ac.uk](http://www.scran.ac.uk) to stimulate questioning and provide background information before and after a visit.
- Pupils can take photographs of the site using digital cameras or mobile phones. At a lower level, these could be designed as postcards which could be sold as part of an enterprise project. At a higher level, these can be developed into a PowerPoint-type presentation about their visit or as evidence to support their research findings. Pupils can learn how to embed photographs within text documents as part of a class or school newsletter, or on a school website.
- Pupils can storyboard, script and film or audio-record their own responses to or recreations of events which took place at the visited site.
Integrating a visit with classroom studies

Educational visits have the greatest value if they are planned into a scheme of work in advance. The activities which follow are suggestions designed to supplement ongoing classroom work.

**Before your visit**

- All of the carved stones under discussion here were made a very long time ago. Help pupils try to grasp this distance back in time and develop a sense of chronology by constructing a class timeline.

- Discuss with pupils the conservation issues relating to carved stone. Many of the stones would have looked very different when they were first carved. Some would have been painted or decorated. The carvings on many have now been worn away by weather and wind. Some stones have been brought inside museums for protection. Others remain in their original location but surrounded by glass protection. What do pupils think is the best way to look after our stone heritage?

- In the past it was common for visitors to make a record of the stone carvings by rubbing over the patterns with a crayon on paper. Visitors are no longer allowed to do this in order to preserve the carvings. Discuss this issue with pupils. What other ways can they think of to record the patterns they see?

- Prepare pupils for their visit through classroom work on the context of the stones. Pupils can find out about the lives of the religious communities at Whithorn and Iona, how Kilmartin’s early settlers lived, about the daily lives of the Picts. Some suggestions for resources to help with this can be found on pages 38–39.

- Many of the Pictish and early Christian stones show scenes from the Bible. Prepare children for this by telling them the relevant Bible story so that the carvings are more meaningful to them. Then discuss with pupils why this story might have been selected for the stone – does the story have a message? Key stories or figures often shown on stones are:

  - Daniel in the lion’s den
  - Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac
  - David’s victory over the giant Goliath
  - David playing the harp
  - Jesus with his mother Mary

*Illustration of St Martin’s Cross, Iona, showing scenes from the Bible*
Almost all of the stones under discussion carry carved symbols. Discuss with pupils the difference between a symbol and a picture. Some of them we can still understand today, such as the symbols associated with Christianity. Help pupils to understand some of the key symbols on Christian stones, for example:

- the cross – symbol of sacrifice and rebirth to Christians
- symbols containing three elements (for example a three-pointed shape or sets of three carved circles) – symbol representing the Christian Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- a vine or plant – symbol of the wine used in the communion ceremony
- circles – represent God, without beginning and without end

The meaning of other symbols, for example the cup-and-ring marks, or those used by the Picts, has been completely lost and are a mystery to us today. Let pupils see examples of these before your site visit. Share with them some of the ideas that people have had for interpreting their meaning. What do pupils think?

If possible, involve pupils in planning their visit. Help them collect information about the site they are about to visit, using the Historic Scotland guidebooks and website (www.historic-scotland.gov.uk), or the useful Undiscovered Scotland website (www.undiscoveredscotland.com).

Pupils gain most from their visit if they have a clear idea of why they are going. Help define this with them in advance and help them to see the site as a resource, as a source of evidence. For example, you might set them the challenge of ‘How could we find out about how people in the Bronze Age worshipped?’ As well as books or the internet, guide pupils towards the idea that a physical site could also be helpful. Before they visit a site, remind them of the initial challenge so that they arrive on-site with a sense of mission. As they go around, they can then collect evidence based on what they see or experience which can be collated as a group afterwards.

Discuss with pupils in advance how they might collect evidence or information about their ‘mission challenge’. They could write, draw, photograph or video-record what they see or experience. Could they design a pro-forma for collecting this evidence? Particularly with the Pictish stones, they could design a checklist of different symbols or patterns they may see.

Pupils could script and rehearse a short play to perform on-site, based on research into the society who constructed the stone. This could also lead to further research into suitable costumes, etc. This could be photographed or videoed as a resource for further class work.
Visiting the site: some general activities

Suggestions for on-site activities are given with the background for each of the three periods (see pages 15, 19, 28, 35).

• Some of the sites mentioned in this booklet also have accompanying downloadable tours. These provide background information, points for discussion and suggested activities for that particular site. These can be found on www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/learning/education_unit.htm

• On this web page you can also find a downloadable general Evidence Record, on which pupils can record evidence about what they see around them. Otherwise pupils can look for, interpret and record evidence in a range of ways – through drawing, writing, photography, etc.

• If pupils have defined their ‘mission’ for visiting the site in advance – for example, to find out about Bronze Age religious practices – then this will provide the main focus for the visit. Pupils can collect and record evidence about this in a range of ways as they go around.

• If pupils have prepared short scenes to perform on-site, make sure they have time for a short rehearsal and then performance. Take photographs – or appoint official photographers – so that the pictures can be used back in class.

Follow-up work

Following the visit pupils can pool their findings to form a broad view of the site. This material can then be used as the basis for a number of presentation activities, for example:

• using the evidence they have found to complete a research project

• preparing their own guide book to the site

• preparing a slide show with commentary about the site and their visit to show another class

• designing a poster or leaflet to promote the site, incorporating photographs or artwork

• drawing and producing postcards of the site as part of an enterprise project

There is also scope for pupils to respond imaginatively and expressively to the site, for example by:

• writing diary entries for an imagined site inhabitant

• using drama or role play to investigate the feelings of those involved in an event at the site

• describing their own reactions to the site through simple poems

• using a combination of photography and artwork to ‘rebuild’ the site

• responding to the site through visual art inspired by what they have seen

Class visit to Ring of Brodgar, Orkney
Timeline

7000 BC
People live as hunters and gatherers in Scotland

4000 BC
First farming begins in Scotland

3500 BC
Stone circles in Temple Wood, Kilmartin, in use

2500 BC
First cup-and-ring marked rocks in Kilmartin

AD 80
Romans invade Scotland

AD 85
The Romans defeat local tribes at battle of ‘Mons Graupius’ in north-east Scotland

AD 139
The Romans advance into Scotland again and build the Antonine Wall

AD 105
The Romans withdraw from Scotland

AD 297
The word ‘Picti’ first used in a Latin poem to describe the people living in Scotland

AD 367
The Picts push the Romans back from Hadrian’s Wall

AD 450
‘Latinus’ stone created at Whithorn – the oldest surviving Christian stone in Scotland

Skara Brae, Orkney, built

Ring of Brodgar, Orkney, built

First standing stones erected, Kilmartin

INVESTIGATING HISTORIC SITES: PLACES
500s
Earliest Pictish symbols stones carved

563
St Columba establishes Christian community in Iona; visits court of Pictish king Bridei

597
Death of Columba at Iona

600s
‘Peter’ Stone erected outside Whithorn

685
Picts defeat Northumbrians at battle of Nechtansmere at Dunnichen

600s
Columban monasteries spread throughout Pictland

700s
Earliest Pictish cross slabs erected

700s
Tall free-standing crosses carved at Ruthwell, Kildalton, and Iona

730
Monks from Northumbria found new monastery at Whithorn; free-standing crosses carved showing this influence

795
First Viking raid on Iona

843
Scots and Picts united under Kenneth MacAlpin

950
Stone carvers at Whithorn begin to carve the ‘typical’ round-headed free-standing crosses

563
St Columba establishes Christian community in Iona; visits court of Pictish king Bridei
**Early peoples (3500–1500 BC)**

**Introduction**

Without carved stones, we would have little evidence for the existence of the people who lived in Scotland around 4000 BC. The stones they shaped, carved and positioned in the landscape survive today as part of a very incomplete set of evidence of past lives and past societies. Scotland’s earliest settlers shaped stone to meet both their physical and spiritual needs.

Stone was not the most commonly used material; this was undoubtedly wood. Wood was easy to source and manage, it was easy and quick to shape and work, it was light and flexible. But for significant items, stone was the material of choice. It was sharp and heavy – ideal for a range of cutting and hunting tools; its durability made it suitable for constructing spiritual places of long-lasting significance.

The carved stones can be divided into two broad categories:

- standing stones, both single and in groups
- ‘rock art’ – rocks with carved patterns, often known as cup-and-ring marks

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

Today only 36 of the original 60 stones of the Ring of Brodgar, Orkney are still standing. In 1985 this number almost went down to 35, when one of the stones was split in two by a bolt of lightning. Half of it is still standing while the other half lies at its foot.

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**Ring of Brodgar, Orkney**

**Rock art at Cairnbaan, Kilmartin, Argyll**
Standing stones

Although many have been worn to nothing or have been reused in building projects by later generations, there are still a large number of early carved stones standing where they were first created by Scotland’s early people.

Single stones, often 1–3m high, can often be spotted standing on their own in fields across Scotland. Other groups of standing stones can be found across Scotland, sometimes arranged in a roughly circular pattern.

Where can we see standing stones today?

- Auchagallon stone circle, Arran
- Calanais standing stones, Calanais, Isle of Lewis
- Cullerlie stone circle, Cullerlie, Aberdeenshire
- Drumtroddan standing stones, Port William, Dumfries and Galloway
- Kilmartin Glen, Argyll:
  - Ballymeanach
  - Temple Wood stone circles
  - Nether Largie standing stones
- Loanhead stone circle, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire
- Machrie Moor stone circles, Arran
- Ring of Brodgar stone circle, Orkney
- Stones of Stenness, Orkney
- Torhouse stone circle, Wigtown, Dumfries and Galloway

Who shaped the stones?

The people who carved and shaped the stones found across Scotland were early farmers who began to form settled communities in the period known as the Neolithic and Bronze Age from around 4000 BC. They lived by farming, hunting and fishing. They left many monuments, burial mounds and alignments of cairns – evidence for a complex, well-organised and resourceful society with a rich spiritual life.
How were the standing stones and the circles made?

The stones we see today are still impressive and colossal. It is no trivial task even today to lever slabs from their bedrock, transport them to the site and then secure them in an upright position so that they don’t fall over. We don’t really know how early people achieved these tasks, although there have been a number of experiments.

Most of the stones are plain and unadorned today but a few bear traces of decorations. One of the standing stones at Nether Largie, Kilmartin, bears cup marks, possibly an example of recycling an earlier decorated slab. It is possible that the stones may have been painted when they were in use.

In some cases archaeologists believe that the stones replaced earlier circles or monuments made of timber. Traces of a timber structure which includes four large posts have been found on the site of the northern stone circle at Temple Wood, Kilmartin, Argyll.

The societies who made stone circles must have been settled in the area to consider it worth the huge investment of labour necessary to build such structures. Constructing ambitious arrangements of stones, such as the Ring of Brodgar in Orkney, was a major undertaking, and would only have been possible in a well-organised, sophisticated society. This large stone circle is 104m in diameter and originally consisted of 60 stones. It is surrounded by a huge ditch, 6m wide and 3m deep, which would have taken an estimated 10,000 man-days to dig. It sent out a clear message that the person or society responsible for it was powerful and had major resources at their disposal. The Ring of Brodgar was begun around 2500 BC, but would have taken many generations to complete and develop.
What were the stones for?

We do not know for certain what circles of standing stones were for. What seems clear is that they served some kind of spiritual or ceremonial function, rather than having a practical role. Some were used for human burial and may have had sacred associations. They may have been used as sites for religious ceremonies including sacrifice, or for functional ceremonies such as the appointment of leaders.

Many arrangements of stones appear to be aligned with the movement of the sun, moon and stars, with elements lit up by the sunrise at certain times, for example. The sites may have been used as lunar observatories or may have been orientated so as to link the ceremony with significant events in the wider, natural world. They may have been used to calculate important dates within the ritual or farming calendar.

On-site activities

If you visit a standing stone or stone circle with your class, there are a number of activities you could carry out on-site. Here are some suggestions for discussion points and recording activities:

- Help pupils identify the location of the stones on an Ordnance Survey Pathfinder map. If possible, let a group of pupils lead the way to the stone using the map and ticking off landmarks as they pass (e.g. over a river, heading uphill, walking alongside a wall, under a power line).
- Spend some time recording what can be seen. Pupils can count the stones and sketch their rough location. They can take or estimate measurements using tape measures or pieces of string to record the dimensions. They can draw or photograph particular stones. Can the stones be grouped or sorted in any way? Are there any outlying stones?
- How do the stones relate to each other? Measure the distance between the stones, the diameter of the circle. Pace the circumference or perimeter of the arrangement. Can pupils work out what the arrangement would look like from above? These measurements can be used to inform scale drawings or models back at school.
- Look around for any evidence of how the site may have changed. Look for ditches which may have been filled in, stones which may have fallen over or been split. Could there have been other elements which have long since rotted (e.g. wooden poles or barricades)? Could there be any stones missing? Estimate their possible location.
- Why was this spot chosen? Is there a good view? Can any other historic sites be made out from here? Does it feel ‘special’?
- What’s it like here now? Record the surroundings through photography, sketching, recorded oral responses. What can you see now that people 5000 years ago would not have seen?
- What theories do pupils have about the standing stones and how they might have been used?
- Back at school, pupils could create their own miniature models of the stone circle, based on sketches made on-site.

Reconstruction drawing of an eclipse at Nether Largie, Kilmartin, Argyll

© Kilmartin House Trust
Rock art

If you look down at your feet when walking in Argyll, you may come across rock slabs and boulders which have been carved with hollows (‘cups’) and circular patterns (‘rings’). There are over 100 of these examples of ‘rock art’ within a radius of 6 miles of Kilmartin. The same patterns also appear on some standing stones in the area (for example, at Nether Largie). You can also find these patterns in other places in Scotland, for example at Drumtroddan, Dumfries and Galloway, and in the woods and on slopes in Tayside.

Where can we see rock art today?

Particularly good examples of rock art can be seen at the following sites:

- Drumtroddan cup-and-ring marked stones, Port William, Dumfries and Galloway
- Kilmartin Glen, Argyll:
  - Achnabreck cup-and-ring marks
  - Ballygowan cup-and-ring marks
  - Baluachraig cup-and-ring marks
  - Cairnbaan cup-and-ring marks
  - Kilmichael Glassary cup-and-ring marks

DID YOU KNOW?

Rock art is found all over the world. Similar patterns showing cups, rings, circles and spirals have been found carved into stones in Scotland, England, Ireland, Brittany, Spain, Scandinavia and Italy!
**Who carved the stones?**

We cannot tell exactly who carved the stones, nor exactly when they were made, because the same patterns were used over a wide time-span. The oldest carvings may date from around 4000 BC, and the same designs were used until around 1500 BC. Patterns on the same rock slab may have been carved by different people, hundreds of years apart. In some cases you can see where a pattern has been partly covered by a more recent carving.

**What do the patterns look like?**

The patterns vary slightly from rock to rock, perhaps because they were carved by different people. The core patterns and symbols appear over and over again, and include:

- cups – hollows in the rock – singly, in groups, or in lines
- cups surrounded by one or more carved rings
- single and multiple arcs and rings
- grooves, either separate or running from the centre of a ring to its circumference
- spirals

It is interesting to note that there are no examples from this time of rock art in Scotland which show people, animals, or recognisable objects.

Many of the rock slabs are close to water sources and some appear to be designed so that water runs or seeps over the carvings. One suggestion is that this was deliberate, so that the glinting water would emphasise and draw attention to the carving.
How were the patterns carved?

The patterns were probably roughly ‘pecked’ into the rock using a hammer and a pointed tool made of a stone harder than the stone being carved. These peck marks were then gradually joined up and the edges of the line rubbed smooth.

One experiment at Kilmartin in 2003 showed that it was possible to cover an area of just under a square metre with a range of patterns in around 12 hours. The carver used stone tools and protected the palm of his hand with a leather pad.

Rock puzzle: what was the rock art for?

We can only guess what these carvings were for. We don’t know if the places chosen were special, or whether they were chosen because they were good places for carvings. They are often found in unobtrusive places, rather than on prominent ridges, though many of them are found in locations which have a wide view. Most theories today suggest that the carvings should not be looked at in isolation, and should be considered with reference to other monuments in the area and the landscape around.

Some of the many suggestions for their use include:

- meeting place markers
- sites marking good pastures or watering holes for cattle
- territory markers
- maps
- sites for religious ceremonies
- markers indicating the site of an important event – perhaps a death or a hunt scene
- evidence of a written language
- simply decoration
- the patterns are irrelevant – the carvers were extracting crushed stone for another purpose

Discuss these suggestions with pupils. What do they think?

Andy McFetters carving a replica stone, Kilmartin House Museum

Cairnbaan, Kilmartin
On-site activities

If you visit a rock art site with your class, there are a number of activities you could carry out on-site. Below are some suggestions for discussion points and recording activities.

Before visiting the site with pupils, discuss with them the following conservation guidelines. Can pupils think of the reason behind each instruction?

### Always

- Treat the carvings with respect
- Leave the carved rocks as you find them

### Never

- Make rubbings or chalk over the patterns
- Add your own carving to the stone
- Walk over rock art
- Remove turf from around rock art
- Attempt to remove graffiti, chalk, lichen or anything else on the rock

### Please do not

- Allow pupils to take rubbings of the patterns; if the issue comes up, discuss with them why they should not do this. Get pupils to suggest other ways of recording the patterns (e.g. drawing, photographing).

- Help pupils identify the location of the stones on an Ordnance Survey Pathfinder map. If possible, let a group of pupils lead the way to the stone using the map and ticking off landmarks as they pass (e.g. over a river, heading uphill, walking alongside a wall, under a power line). Could they use a GPS locator to help them?

- Look at the rock itself. Is it distinct or special in any way? One theory is that the patterns were designed to make certain rocks or boulders stand out more in the landscape. Could this be the case where you are? If so, why might this be done? Are there any natural features in the rock which the patterns make use of – any colours, cracks, or shapes?

- On-site, spend some time recording what can be seen. Pupils can sketch the rocks and the location of the patterns on them. They can take measurements using tape measures or pieces of string to record the dimensions. They can draw or photograph patterns, perhaps with each child or group taking responsibility for certain clusters of pattern.

- Can the patterns be grouped or sorted in any way? Perhaps by developing their own system of organising patterns, pupils could log which patterns are shown, and how many there are of each.

- Look at the patterns from every angle. Do you think that the patterns were designed to be looked at from one particular direction? Which direction? Why?

- Do the patterns look like anything? Do they remind you of anything? Gather pupils’ ideas. Discuss with them how the patterns seem to be abstract, and don’t show people, animals or objects we recognise. Discuss with pupils what this might indicate – perhaps religious beliefs against representation; perhaps that the symbols had a clear meaning to people then (like road signs today, for example).

- Why was this spot chosen? Pupils could look around them to see what, if anything, makes this spot special. Is there a good view? Can any other historic sites be made out from here? Does it feel ‘special’?

- What’s it like here now? Record the surroundings through photography, sketching, recorded oral responses. What can you see now that people 5000 years ago would not have seen? Remind pupils that the landscape is likely to have changed since early times, not just because of human activity but also because of variations in the climate.

- What theories do pupils have about these carved stones and how they might have been used?

- Back at school, pupils could ‘carve’ their own versions of the patterns in clay slabs which could be fired to make a permanent display in the playground. The patterns could also be used as a stimulus for printmaking or other work in the expressive arts.
DID YOU KNOW?
At Burghead in Morayshire archaeologists found a flock of bulls! In the 19th century it was recorded that were more than 30 bulls carved on individual boulders at the site of this Pictish fort. Today there are six remaining. What did they mean to the Picts? Their strength and power is emphasised in the carvings, so perhaps these carvings were part of a warrior cult celebrating strength and aggression.

Pictish stones (AD 500–900)

Pictish symbol stones are among Scotland’s most distinctive monuments. Their elegant and vivid symbols and images can be found carved into boulders and slabs of rock, and on specially cut and shaped free-standing stones. Most of the stones which survive today were carved between around AD 500 and 800. Many stones have now been taken into museums to preserve them, but there are still a number standing in the landscape to surprise and delight us where they were positioned nearly 1500 years ago.

Pictish symbol stone, Aberlemno, Angus
Where can we see Pictish stones?

Some Pictish stones still stand in the landscapes where they were originally carved. Some are now enclosed within a glass box for their protection. You can see good examples of Pictish stones still in position at the following locations:

- Aberlemno sculptured stones, Aberlemno, Angus
- Brandsbutt symbol stone, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire
- Dunfallandy Stone, Pitlochry, Perth and Kinross
- Dupplin Cross, Dunning, Perth and Kinross
- Dyce symbol stones, Dyce, Aberdeenshire
- Eassie sculptured stone, Glamis, Angus
- Fowlis Wester sculptured stone, Crieff, Perth and Kinross
- Hilton of Cadboll (replica stone), Hilton, Invergordon, Highlands
- Knocknagael Boar Stone, Inverness, Highlands
- Maiden Stone, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire
- Picardy symbol stone, Huntly, Aberdeenshire
- Sueno’s Stone, Forres, Morayshire

Many others have been taken inside into museums or visitor centres to preserve them and can be seen at:

- Meigle Sculptured Stone Museum, Meigle, Angus
- National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh
- St Vigeans Museum of Carved Stones, Arbroath, Angus
- St Andrews Cathedral Museum, St Andrews, Fife
Who carved the Pictish stones?

The stones were carved by a distinctive group of people known as the Picts. They lived in Scotland for about 600 years, between AD 300 and AD 900. They were the native people of Scotland, rather than an invading tribe. They thrived north of the Forth and Clyde, from Fife north to Orkney and Shetland and farmed the flatter, fertile arable land by the coast in these areas. Between AD 500 and AD 700 the Picts became Christians under the influence of St Columba and other evangelists. Later stones show Christian images, especially the cross, as well as distinctively Pictish symbols.

The Picts were ruled by leaders with resources to spare for carving stones. Their independent kingdom only came to an end in the 9th century as the power of the Norse spread into the northern areas, and the Scots gained influence in the south.

What are the stones like?

The earliest carvings are those carved on rocks and boulders from around AD 600. In bold, confident carving they show animals native to Scotland and wild, mythical beasts; enigmatic symbol stones and what may be scenes of Pictish life or myth – battles, hunts or significant events. In some cases, for example at Aberlemno, the Picts reused existing standing stones, carving their images on to stones which had been erected by previous societies many hundreds of years before.

From around AD 700 the Picts carved crosses or grave slabs which bear Christian imagery alongside traditional Pictish symbols or images. Some show crosses carved in relief on rectangular slabs of stone, while others are free-standing crosses. With the adoption of Christianity a wider world of carving traditions was opened up to the Picts and designs influenced by Irish or Northumbrian traditions start to appear on stones.
Native animals

Look out for realistic carvings of animals native to Scotland: muscular deer, bristling boar and sinuous salmon. Many of the stones on display at St Vigeans Museum show these animals, for example, the Drosten Stone. After the adoption of Christianity, some of the animals have widely recognised Christian associations – for example, the lion on the Papil Stone from Shetland represents St Mark. Elsewhere the eagle represents St John and the fish represents Christ. You can also see domestic animals – horses, dogs and cows and the famous set of bulls from Burghead. Some of these animals may have communicated a symbolic message to the Picts.

Mythical beasts

The mythical beasts include serpents, eagle-headed monsters, griffins, and a creature known variously as the ‘Pictish Beast’ or, more creatively, the ‘swimming elephant’: an animal with legs, a dolphin-like face and long trailing crest (for example, stone no 4 at Meigle Museum, and the Maiden Stone, Aberdeenshire).
Symbols
Pupils will enjoy spotting and discussing the striking, semi-abstract symbols which appear on both types of stones (see the Picardy Stone, Huntly). These were in use on both unshaped and then shaped stones, but after about AD 850 they seem to have died out and their meaning has been totally lost. Some of the symbols seem abstract to us, though they may represent objects which were familiar to the Picts. They often appear in pairs or combinations. These are the most common, together with their commonly used names for identification:

- crescent and V-rod
- Z-form and double disc
- mirror and comb

People and events
Some stones appear to record realistic images of people or events. Some of these are significant but non-specific events, such as the hunting scene shown on the Hilton of Cadboll Stone (now in the National Museum of Scotland – though a replica stands at Hilton). Others seem to show specific events. An amazing stone in Aberlemno churchyard (see Aberlemno 1) shows a vivid and detailed scene from a battle which could be a battle which took place at Dunnichen, just south of Aberlemno in AD 685. You can clearly see horsemen, weapons, helmets, the two sides – and the carrion crow, hungry for the rich pickings of the battle dead. The awe-inspiring, 6.5m tall Sueno’s Stone, by Forres also shows a battle scene. These may have been designed to remind passers-by of the strength and might of a local tribe. The grimacing, axe-bearing individual carved on a stone found at Rhynie (now in Woodhill House, Aberdeen) and the horse-riding drunk on the Bullion Stone from Invergowrie, Dundee (now in the National Museum of Scotland) seem so realistic as to be drawn from life – particularly the drunk’s long-suffering horse – but who these individuals may have been and why their portraits or caricatures were carved in stone can only be guessed at.
Scenes from the Bible

Stones from the Christian era of the Picts show Biblical scenes and Christian figures. On the surviving panels of the 8th-century St Andrews Sarcophagus we can see three images of David, the Old Testament shepherd-boy who defeated the giant Goliath. Here he is shown grappling with a lion. Other stones show monks, bishops, angels and saints – see St Vigeans 7 and the Eassie Stone.

Carved inscriptions

A few Pictish stones show written inscriptions. Most use the form of script known as Ogham which was developed in Ireland. This written language uses straight stroke lines arranged either side of a line and was specifically developed to be easily carved on to stone. The Brandsbutt Stone at Inverurie has a clear line of Ogham. A small number of stones have Roman letters; some of these use Latin words and others use Irish. The Drosten Stone at St Vigeans Museum is an example of this. In most cases it’s hard to work out what the letters are, before even trying to interpret their meaning. The main point to note is that the inscriptions show that at least some of the Picts were literate.
How did the Picts carve the stones?

The symbols and how they were carved on Pictish stones are strikingly similar wherever they are found, so much so that it has been suggested that they were carved by a small group of specialists who travelled around Scotland for work.

Not many tools were needed to carve the earliest stones: a large hammer; an iron punch; a hardened iron chisel and a range of stones used to smooth off and shape rough edges. The carver would have worked alongside a blacksmith, who was continually sharpening the chisels. Designs were marked out on the stones by chisel or else with paint on a grid. Initial markings were then joined together into a continuous groove by further pecking at the stone with the chisel. This was gradually refined and then finally rough edges were smoothed off, perhaps the most time-consuming element of the process. With these basic tools the Picts created the fluid, elegant and confident lines which are immediately recognisable today.

The later cross slabs were more complex. A stone slab roughly the right size would be cut from a quarry of suitable stone, and then transported to the sculptor’s workshop. The surface would be dressed and smoothed off and then the outline of the cross would be marked out. If the cross was to be presented ‘in relief’ then the entire surface area of the stone apart from the cross itself would have to be stripped away, a laborious and demanding job. Then the design on and around the cross, often a pattern of woven ‘interlacing’, would be marked out and the carving would begin.

The style of some of the imagery is similar to illustrations in illuminated Gospels of the late 7th and early 8th centuries. A master sculptor may have had pattern books with images copied from manuscripts painted on to ‘vellum’ – raw animal hide. He would then have scaled up the design to suit the size of the cross, and perhaps transferred it to the stone using specialised tools such as dividers and compasses.

What were the stones for?

We cannot be certain what the earliest stones were for. They may have been grave markers or memorials to important people. They may have marked territorial boundaries, or they may have had a spiritual significance whose meaning is completely lost to us.

Some of the later free-standing stones or slabs were used as grave markers for significant and wealthy people. Others may have formed part of a shrine for the relic of a saint. Larger Pictish crosses may have provided symbolic protection on a pilgrims’ route, or provided a focus for prayer. Stones showing biblical scenes may have provided ‘visual aids’ for outdoor preaching and teaching, or inspiration for prayer.
Pictish puzzle: What do the symbols mean?

Historians can’t be sure what the abstract Pictish symbols mean. They appear on both the Christian and the pre-Christian stones, so their meaning is not likely to conflict with Christian messages. Here are some of the theories:

- Images of objects were carved on stone memorials instead of putting the actual object in the grave of a dead person.
- The symbols represent men and women; a mirror may represent a woman and a sword a man.
- The symbols represent particular families or ranks in society; perhaps a crescent was more significant than a mirror.
- The symbols indicate who the stone commemorates and who erected it. So, for example, the fish, sword (?), mirror and comb on the Dunrobin Stone could mean: ‘Erected to a warrior of the salmon-people by his wife’.
- The symbols are records of marriage contracts or other contracts between tribes.
- The symbols are a kind of alphabet, with each symbol standing for a sound in the Pictish alphabet. On stones these symbols make up names – so, for example, the Dunrobin Stone could this time be interpreted as ‘Here lies Mrs Sword-fish’.
- The symbols mark territorial boundaries of different families.

Discuss these theories with your pupils.
What do they think?

We see what survives on these stones. There is much that is still unknown about the Picts, their society and crafts. We cannot tell if the stones were decorated or the carvings enhanced in other ways, perhaps they were painted. We cannot tell if there was also a tradition of carving on other surfaces – wood, for example – or if the Pictish patterns were reproduced as body tattoos. The symbols certainly appear on a wide range of metalwork, jewellery and other objects. We don’t know who actually did the carving, whether it was an exclusively male occupation or whether women were involved too. Perhaps in the future new discoveries and research may answer some of these questions.
On-site activities

Pupils generally respond well to the imagery and symbols on Pictish stones. Here are a few general suggestions for activities which can be carried out on both stones which are still in their original locations, and those which are in museums. Visiting stones outside has the advantage of seeing them in their original open-air location. The advantage of seeing stones inside is that the weather need not have an impact on your visit and there may be other stones or objects from the time of the Picts which can enhance pupils’ understanding of the stones.

Some of the stones have activity sheets with discussion points, which can be downloaded from the Historic Scotland website. These include:

- Dunfallandy Stone, Pitlochry
- Sueno’s Stone, Forres
- Aberlemno 1, Aberlemno
- Drosten Stone, St Vigeans Museum of Carved Stones, Arbroath

Start by looking at what is on the stone – as this is likely to be what first draws the attention of pupils. Talk about what they can see: symbols, wild animals, domestic animals, mythical animals, people, plants. Is there a cross? How do the patterns relate to the cross? Is there any writing or any kind of inscription? Pupils can tick off what can be seen on a checklist, ideally one that they have devised themselves in preparation for their visit. Spend some time recording what can be seen by drawing or taking photographs.

- Are there any decorations on any of the other faces of the stone? Repeat the activity above for any other faces. Can pupils find a way of recording the different designs on all visible faces of the stone? Does there seem to be a main face?

- Are there any clues as to why the stone was created? Is it telling a story of any sort? Does it show an important event like a battle? Does it show a story which might be from the Bible?

- How big is the stone? Pupils can take or estimate measurements using tape measures or pieces of string to record the dimensions.

- If you are outside, look around you. Is there anything else locally which seems to be made from the same kind of stone? Is there a quarry locally?

- Do pupils think the stone has always looked like this? Are there any parts which have broken off or been worn away? Get pupils to try to imagine how it might have looked when new – perhaps painted in bright colours.

Mythical animals on the Drosten Stone, St Vigeans Museum of Carved Stones
If you are outside:

- Look around for any evidence of how the site may have changed over the years. Are there any other stones nearby? Why do pupils think this spot was chosen as a site for the stone? Pupils could look around them to see what, if anything, makes this spot special. Is there a good view? Can any other historic sites be made out from here? Does it feel ‘special’?

- What’s it like here now? Record the surroundings through photography, sketching, recorded oral responses. What can you see now that the Picts would not have seen? Is there anything around which they would still recognise?

If you are looking at a number of stones in a museum:

- Give pupils the chance to have a look round at all the stones and then ‘adopt’ a stone in order to become the ‘expert’ on it – how big it is, what’s on it, what the label says if there is one, what their interpretation of it is, etc.

- In pairs get pupils to play ‘spot the similarities’ with two stones, making a note of everything that is similar between the two stones (e.g. both have a cross, both have plants creeping up the side, etc).

- DIY treasure hunt: get pupils to write a detailed description of one detail of a stone. It might help if you give pupils ‘viewfinders’ to look through – square holes cut out of a plain piece of card would do. Redistribute the descriptions and see if pupils can find the stone with the description they have been given. This is a useful activity for encouraging close observation.

- Another writing activity to encourage observation of stones with people or animals is to get pupils to fill in ‘thought bubbles’ for a chosen person or animal. Back at school these thought bubbles could be added to digital photos of the detail.

Back at school, pupils could create their own versions of a stone, using a block of clay and ‘carving’ into it. Pictish symbols and images are also a rich source for a range of printmaking and other design activities. Could pupils design a set of souvenirs from the stone they have visited?

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A DIY treasure hunt encourages close observation of a detail such as this mythical creature at Meigle Museum
Early Christian stones (AD 450–1100)

The Christian history of Scotland dates back over 1500 years to the end of the 4th century AD. The earliest monuments surviving from Scotland’s Christian past are made of stone. Some are little more than boulders carved with a simple cross; others are elaborate and sophisticated stone masterpieces.

The two significant people in the history of the early Christian Church in Scotland are the saints Ninian and Columba. Although there had been Christians in the lands south of the Forth and the Clyde since Roman times, the earliest evidence for Christianity in Scotland is the **Latinus Stone** at Whithorn, which dates from the mid-5th century AD. Whithorn is the site of an early Christian monastery, traditionally associated with St Ninian in the 4th century AD. In AD 563 Columba established a Christian community on the island of Iona. Each of these communities developed its own style of creative expression of Christian devotion. Workshops at each of the centres developed skills in a range of crafts and produced illuminated manuscripts, metalwork, woodcarving and stone sculpture. These skills then spread with Christianity across Scotland.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

At 3m tall, the Monreith Cross is the tallest cross in Galloway. It’s unusual in that it used to stand on a hill used for trials, rather than in a religious setting. On the cross you can see the remains of two iron rings, which may have been where ‘jougs’ were attached – an iron chain and collar used to punish criminals. If you look closely, you may be able to spot where a tired carver made a mistake with the intricate interlace carving! All good reasons to go and see this stone at the Whithorn Priory Museum!
Where can we see early Christian stones today?

Some of these carved stones still stand – battered, worn but still impressive – in the landscapes where they were originally placed. Good examples are:

- Iona Abbey, Iona
- Kildalton Cross, Kildalton, Islay
- Laggangairn standing stones, Dumfries and Galloway
- St Ninian’s Cave, Physgill, Dumfries and Galloway

Many others have been taken inside into museums, churches, or visitor centres to preserve them. Examples are:

- Barochan Cross, Paisley Abbey, Paisley
- Iona Abbey Museum, Iona
- Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow
- Kirkmadrine early Christian stones, Sandhead, Dumfries and Galloway
- Museum of Islay Life, Port Charlotte, Islay
- The National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh
- Ruthwell Cross, Ruthwell, Dumfries and Galloway
- Whithorn Priory Museum, Whithorn, Dumfries and Galloway
Who carved the early Christian stones?
The simplest stones were crudely carved by early Christians improvising with the simplest tools. At Whithorn and then Iona workshops were established where craftsmen developed sophisticated carving skills and specialist styles, under religious and lay patronage.

What are the stones like?
Simple crosses
Some stones show simple crosses crudely carved on to rocks and boulders. A number were found close to St Ninian’s cave at Physgill, a retreat and chapel associated with St Ninian. Some of these were probably carved, between AD 800 and AD 1000, by pilgrims in memory of their visit to the cave rather than by professional or expert sculptors. You can see some these on display at Whithorn Priory Museum and in the National Museum of Scotland. Other similar stones can be seen at the Iona Abbey Museum. At Laggangairn you can see crosses carved on to the Bronze Age standing stones. These crosses may have been carved by pilgrims on their way to St Ninian’s shrine at Whithorn. Other early stones show more elaborate carved crosses, for example, the ‘Peter’ Stone now on display at Whithorn Priory Museum. It used to stand by the side of the road south of Whithorn. Later on, craftsmen developed the skill of carving large blocks of stone, some jointed together, to form a free-standing cross.

Christian symbols
Some stones show other symbols which mark them out as Christian. Look out for the Christian symbol known as Chi-rho. You can see it on the stone from Kirkmadrine shown below. Chi and Rho are the names for the first two letters of the name of Christ, written in Greek. Some stones are carved with the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet – alpha and omega. This is a reference to the Christian idea of God as the ‘beginning’ and ‘end’. Some stones are carved with images which have a symbolic meaning to Christians: a three-pointed shape symbolises the Christian trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit; a vine represents the wine of the communion ceremony.
Scenes from the Bible

Stones carved later are more obviously Christian. As well as being carved in the shape of a free-standing cross, some stones show images of biblical scenes or figures. The spectacular 8th-century cross at Kildalton, Islay, shows scenes from the Old Testament: Cain murdering Abel, David killing the lion, and the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. St Martin’s Cross at Iona, though worn, shows similar scenes – the Virgin and child, David and Goliath, and Abraham on the point of sacrificing Isaac. The enormous cross at Ruthwell, Dumfries and Galloway, shows images of the four evangelists – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It is thought that scenes like these may have been carved as ‘visual aids’ for open-air preachers and a reminder of their lessons for people unable to read.

The inscription on the Latinus Stone is carved in Latin, the language of the Church

Carved inscriptions

Some stones are carved with inscriptions which help us to identify them as Christian. The oldest Christian stone in Scotland is known as the Latinus Stone and is on display at Whithorn Priory Museum. It is carved with a written inscription in Latin which tells us that it is a memorial stone for a man named Latinus and his four-year-old daughter. It was erected around AD 450 by Latinus’ grandson Barrovadus. Latin was the language of church services and the Bible, and the first part of the inscription is taken from a biblical verse.
The Whithorn and Iona ‘schools’

Between AD 900 and AD 1100 the craftsmen at Whithorn developed their own distinctive style of carving, known as a school. A typical Whithorn cross is carved from a single slab of stone and features a decorated shaft with a circular head, with distinct circular ‘armpits’ between the cross-arms (see Whithorn no 7). Many of the shafts are carved with beautiful, intricate ‘woven’ patterns known as interlacing. The Monreith Cross on display in the Whithorn Priory Museum is over 2m high, its shaft covered in densely carved interlaced patterns. It is thought that following the calm, regular patterns of the interlacing might have inspired a meditative sense of contemplation suitable for communicating with God. They may also have been intended as a trap for the Devil! You can also see good examples of interlacing on the stones at St Vigeans Museum. This style was common throughout Scotland, Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England.

The craftsmen at Iona experimented with making particularly tall crosses with very large cross-heads. St Martin’s cross, carved from a single slab, still survives intact, but St John’s Cross survives only in pieces in the Iona Abbey Museum. The monks at Iona carved the cross with a span of almost 2.2m, one of the widest crosses ever carved in the British Isles. Sadly, the cross was too wide to support itself. The monks tried to support the cross-arms by adding a stone ring around the cross-head, but this was not enough and it is thought that the cross collapsed soon after it was built. You can see a replica of the cross outside Iona Abbey today.
How did the early Christians carve the stones?

Unskilled pilgrims would have carved their stones using the simplest of tools: a pointed metal tool with which to ‘peck’ a series of marks into the stone, which would later be joined together. The craftsmen at Whithorn and Iona would have used more sophisticated tools as their craft developed and would have sought inspiration from other workshops in the Christian world – for example in Ireland and Northumbria. Like the Pictish Christians, the designs in contemporary illuminated manuscripts and metalwork would have influenced, and been influenced by, the development of carved stones.

Once carved, the more elaborate stones were slotted into a specially shaped stone ‘collar’ which supported the shaft. The stone collar would have been placed into a foundation pit. Wooden levers were used to raise the cross and slot it into place in the collar. More stones were packed in, and the foundation was covered with earth. You can see cross-bases on display at Whithorn Priory Museum. Other stones were simply held in place with stone chocks in a foundation hole.

What were the stones for?

Many of the stones are thought to be grave markers over the burying places of significant people in the early Christian Church. Others are thought to mark a pilgrims’ route, and would have become a focus for prayer by pilgrims on their way to or from a shrine. The larger, more elaborate crosses may have marked out cemeteries or sites set apart for outdoor services, and would have been the focus for outdoor preaching and individual prayer. Others marked the boundaries of a monastery.

St Martin’s Cross, Iona Abbey – some crosses marked the boundary of a monastery

This early Christian cross on Eileach an Naoimh might have been a way marker

On-site activities

Many of the activities suggested for investigating Pictish stones can be adapted for early Christian stones outside and in museums – see pages 28–29.

In addition to the activities mentioned there, pupils can experiment with designing interlacing patterns, perhaps using plasticene or string or a computer graphics programme.

Some of the stones have activity sheets with discussion points, which can be downloaded from the Historic Scotland website. These include:

- St Martin’s Stone, Iona
- St John’s Stone, Iona
Inverness
Edinburgh
Glasgow
Dundee
Aberdeen
Sites to visit in the care of Historic Scotland

Visit the Historic Scotland website to download free resources which will help you and your pupils investigate your local site. The map opposite shows sites of carved stones in the care of Historic Scotland.

To book a visit to any of the Historic Scotland sites featured in this pack, please call the Education Unit on the number below. Please note that many of the stones featured are on unstaffed sites with no facilities and access may not always be straightforward. Our staff can advise!

Historic Scotland Education Unit
Tel: 0131 668 8793
www.historic-scotland.gov.uk

Early peoples
1. Auchagallon stone circle, Arran
2. Calanais standing stones, Calanais, Isle of Lewis
3. Cullerlie stone circle, Cullerlie, Aberdeenshire
4. Drumtroddan cup-and-ring marked and standing stones, Port William, Dumfries and Galloway
5. Kilmartin Glen, Argyll:
   • Achnabreck cup-and-ring marks
   • Ballygowan cup-and-ring marks
   • Baluachraig cup-and-ring marks
   • Cairnbaan cup-and-ring marks
   • Kilmichael Glassary cup-and-ring marks
   • Temple Wood stone circles
6. Loanhead stone circle, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire
7. Machrie Moor stone circles, Arran
8. Orkney sites:
   • Ring of Brodgar stone circle, Orkney
   • Skara Brae Prehistoric Village and Visitor Centre, Orkney
   • Stones of Stenness, Orkney
9. Torhouse stone circle, Wigtown, Dumfries and Galloway

Pictish stones
10. Aberlemno sculptured stones, Aberlemno, Angus
11. Brandsbutt symbol stone, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire
12. Dunfallandy Stone, Pitlochry, Perth and Kinross
13. Duplin Cross, Dunning, Perth and Kinross
14. Dyce symbol stones, Dyce, Aberdeen
15. Eassie sculptured stone, Glamis, Angus
16. Fowlis Wester sculptured stone, Crieff, Perth and Kinross
17. Knocknagael Boar Stone, Inverness
18. Maiden Stone, Inverurie, Aberdeenshire
19. Meigle Sculptured Stone Museum, Meigle, Angus
20. Picardy symbol stone, Huntly, Aberdeenshire
21. St Andrews Sarcophagus, St Andrews Cathedral Museum, St Andrews
22. St Vigeans Museum of Carved Stones, Arbroath, Angus
23. Sueno’s Stone, Forres, Morayshire

Early Christian stones
24. Barochan Cross, Paisley Abbey, Paisley
25. Iona Abbey and Museum, Iona
26. Kildalton Cross, Kildalton, Islay
27. Kirkmadrine early Christian stones, Sandhead, Dumfries and Galloway
28. Laggangairn standing stones, Dumfries and Galloway
29. Ruthwell Cross, Ruthwell, Dumfries and Galloway
30. St Ninian’s Cave, Physgill, Dumfries and Galloway
31. Whithorn Priory Museum, Whithorn, Dumfries and Galloway
Other resources

For teachers

SITE-SPECIFIC RESOURCES:

Teacher-led tours for some of the sites featured in this pack are available to download from www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/index/learning/education_unit.htm

These contain background information and notes for activities and discussion. Featured sites include:

- Achnabreck cup-and-ring marked stones, Kilmartin Glen
- Dunfallandy Stone, Pitlochry
- Sueno’s Stone, Forres
- Aberlemno 1, Aberlemno
- Drosten Stone, St Vigeans Museum, Arbroath
- Whithorn Priory and Museum
- St Martin’s Stone, Iona
- St John’s Stone, Iona
- St Vigeans Museum

SOUVENIR GUIDES AND BOOKS

Sally Foster Maes Howe and Neolithic Orkney
Historic Scotland 2006

Gordon Barclay Farmers, Temples and Tombs: Scotland in the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Historic Scotland/Birlinn 2005
A good guide to the period of Scotland’s first farmers.

Stan Beckensall The Prehistoric Rock Art of Kilmartin Kilmartin House Trust 2005
A site-by-site guide to rock art in Kilmartin Glen.

Breadalbane Heritage Society Cupmarked Stones in Strathtay In Scotland Magazine 2005
A site-by-site guide to rock art in the Strathtay area.

Chris Tabraham St Serfs and the Dupplin Cross Leaflet
Historic Scotland 2005

Sally M Foster Picts, Gaels and Scots Historic Scotland/Batsford 2004
A thorough and authoritative approach to the Picts and their contemporaries, including the early Christians.

Anna Ritchie and Ian Fisher Iona Abbey and Nunnery
Historic Scotland 2004

David Clarke and Patrick Maguire Skara Brae
Historic Scotland 2000

Rachel Butter Kilmartin: an introduction and guide Kilmartin House Trust 1999
An excellent and beautifully illustrated guide to Kilmartin glen, its monuments and people.

Martin Carver Surviving in Symbols: a Visit to the Pictish Nation Historic Scotland/Birlinn 1999
Lively, well-illustrated and lucid, this is perhaps the best introductory book on the Picts for the non-specialist.

Anna Ritchie Scotland BC Historic Scotland 1999
The story of Scotland from around 3800 BC to AD 200.

Peter Yeoman Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland Historic Scotland/Batsford 1999
Includes an interesting chapter about pilgrimages to Whithorn.

Anna Ritchie Meigle Museum: Pictish Carved Stones Historic Scotland 1997

Anna Ritchie Picts Historic Scotland/Stationery Office 1997
A useful guide to the Picts, with detailed information on certain stones and good illustrations.

C A Ralegh Radford and Gordon Donaldson Whithorn and the Ecclesiastical Monuments of Wigtownshire
Historic Scotland 1984

WEB SITES

www.historicscotlandimages.gov.uk
A searchable database of images of Historic Scotland sites, objects and places, useful for preparatory work with pupils.

www.whithornpriorymuseum.gov.uk
This website provides an excellent overview of the Whithorn site and includes photographs and background information about a number of the Whithorn crosses and the craftsmen who carved them.

www.undiscoveredscotland.com
A useful website with good pictures and historical overview of many of the sites featured in this pack.
EARLY CARVED STONES

www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pictishsculpturedstones
An overview of Pictish stones in Scotland.

www.scran.ac.uk
A searchable database of sites and objects from all over Scotland.

http://rockart.ncl.ac.uk
A useful and comprehensive website with beautiful images exploring the rock art of Northumberland. Includes video clips, interactives and a downloadable site visit sheet which could be adapted for pupil use.

The Highland Pictish Trail
www.highland.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/what-to-see/heritage
A useful downloadable guide to Pictish sculpture from Inverness to Dunrobin, produced by the Highland Council Archaeology Unit.

OTHER PLACES TO VISIT

Calanais Visitor Centre
Calanais, Isle of Lewis HS2 9DY
Tel: 01851 621422.
Email: enquiries@calanaisvisitorcentre.co.uk

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum
Argyll Street, Glasgow, G3 8AG
Tel: 0141 276 9515
www.glasgowlmuseums.com

Kilmartin House Museum
Kilmartin, Argyll, PA31 8RQ
Tel: 01546 510 278
www.kilmartin.org

Meffan Museum and Art Gallery
20 West High Street, Forfar, DD8 1BB
Tel: 01307 464123
www.angus.gov.uk/history/museums/meffan

Museum of Islay Life
Port Charlotte, Isle of Islay, PA48 7UA
Tel: 01496 850358
www.islaymuseum.org

National Museum of Scotland
Chambers Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1JF
Tel: 0131 225 7534
www.nms.ac.uk

Pictavia Visitor Centre
Haughmuir, by Brechin, DD9 6RL
Tel: 01356 626241
www.pictavia.org.uk

Tankerness House Museum
Broad Street, Kirkwall, Orkney, KW15 1DH
Tel: 01856 873191
Email: museum@orkney.gov.uk

For pupils

Allan Burnett Columba and All That Birlinn 2007
An informative and readable take on the life of Columba.

www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/education/sysm/scots/index_choice.shtml
This website accompanies the popular schools TV programme See you see me and looks at the life of monks and Picts.

www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/learning/primary/skarabrae
This BBC website about the Neolithic village at Skara Brae also features stone circles.

National Museum of Scotland
The Museum of Scotland Museum on the Move outreach project has a number of accompanying online resources. Some relate to the Picts and can be found here: http://www.nms.ac.uk/education__activities/outreach_programmes/museum_on_the_move/picts.aspx

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