



Property in Care (PIC) ID: PIC021

Designations: Scheduled Monument (SM90097)

Taken into State care: 1920 (Guardianship)

Last reviewed: 2011

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DOGTON STONE



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Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at:

Historic Environment Scotland

Longmore House

Salisbury Place

Edinburgh

EH9 1SH

+44 (0) 131 668 8600

www.historicenvironment.scot

You can download this publication from our website at

www.historicenvironment.scot

DOGTON STONE

SYNOPSIS

The Dogton (or Dogtown) Stone stands within a modern circular enclosure on a slight brow in a gently-sloping field near Dogton farmhouse, 1.5 km east of Cardenden in Fife. It was probably carved and erected in the 9th century AD. The monument comprises the base and lower shaft of a decorated free-standing cross. The decorations are on all sides, but weathering and algae obscure the details. The location of the rest of the stone is not known.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview:

- c. 900 AD - the cross is erected. Victorian antiquarians maintained that it marked the spot where Constantine II (900-42) defeated the Danes.
- post-medieval - the stone is incorporated into a field dyke.
- 1920 - the monument is taken into state care.
- 1990s - the last vestiges of the stone wall are removed to facilitate farming.

Archaeological Overview:

- There is no reason to believe that the Dogton Stone is not in its original location. The number of Pictish carved stones still in their original locations is small, and decreasing. The rare ability to be able to visit and attempt to understand and appreciate why a carving was placed where it was in the landscape is important.
- Nothing is known of the sub-surface archaeology in the immediate vicinity of the carving, which is at risk from the effects of regular cultivation. The relationship to contemporary nearby settlement and communication routes is unknown.

Architectural/Artistic Overview:

- The surviving stone stands to a height of 1.47m on a base measuring 1.06m by 0.38m.
- The stone has broken off at around the level of the head, as indicated by the remains of the waist of the shaft and the survival of what must have been a central boss.
- On the east (rear) face, there was a panel containing an armed horseman above two figures of beasts. This is Pictish, and reminiscent of the **Dupplin Cross** (also in Historic Scotland's care and now on display in **St Serf's, Dunning**).
- The narrow side panels also held decoration, and on the north side is a pair of interlaced serpentine animals.
- The remainder of the decoration is composed of abstract ornament. On the basis of such designs, the Dogton Stone seems likely to be 9th or 10th century in date.

Social Overview:

- The Dogton Stone seems to have little social meaning today, being remote from local communities and little advertised or assessed.

Spiritual Overview:

- The monument would have been erected in an overtly Christian manner, at a time when Pictish Fife was thoroughly Christian.
- It was intended to be seen from afar, but what it was erected for is not known. Did it mark the boundary of a religious site perhaps, overlook an important secular or ecclesiastical site, or mark a victory in battle?
- It could be that the horseman depicted is the patron of the stone or location, indicating local ecclesiastical patronage.
- This kind of monument is known as a cross, so its Christian meaning and association with the Passion story are still perceivable. It is not known if there are any other associations or meanings, though the remoteness of the stone adds to the spiritual experience of it.

Aesthetic Overview

- Though much decayed, the stone feels ancient, and its intricate, yet weathered decoration only adds to its sense of antiquity and reverence.
- There is no formal path to the site, and the modern enclosure is very tight around the sculpture. However, being able to visit the stone where it was originally erected and used is important.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- Who was the patron(s) of the stone, and what was their reason for erecting it?
- What did the rest of the stone look like, and what happened to it?
- Was there a Pictish settlement close by?

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key Points:

- The monument comprises the fragmentary and worn remains of what was once an impressive free-standing cross, a relatively uncommon form of monument in Pictland.
- The cross-shaft and base appear to be in their original location. Few Pictish sculptures, let alone crosses, survive in their original location. This relationship is crucial to understanding the significance of the cross.

Associated Properties:

other free-standing Pictish crosses in Historic Scotland's care) - **Dupplin Cross** (in **St Serf's, Dunning**); **St Andrews Cathedral museum**

other free-standing early Christian crosses in Historic Scotland's care) –

Barochan Cross (in **Paisley Abbey**); **Iona Abbey**; **Keills Cross**; **Kildalton Cross**; **Monreith Cross** (in **Whithorn Priory museum**); **Ruthwell Cross**.

Keywords:

free-standing cross, Pictish, Insular art

Selected Bibliography:

Allen, J. R. & Anderson, J., *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, vol.3 (Edinburgh, 1903)

Cottam, M. B. & Small, A., 'The distribution of settlement in southern Pictland', *Medieval Archaeology*, vol.18 (1974)

RCAHMS., *Inventory of Monuments and Constructions in the Counties of Fife, Kinross and Clackmannan* (Edinburgh, 1933)