

Part of Historic Environment Scotland



CANMORE

NATIONAL RECORD OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT



Archaeology InSites



[Return to Archaeology InSites](#)

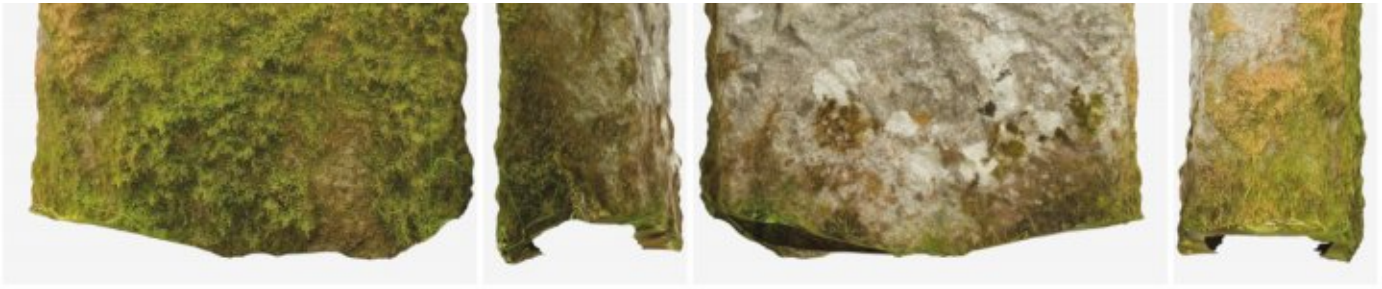
0

50cm



Raasay House Cross Slab and Pictish Symbol stone - Raasay, Skye, Highland





The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland

In 1890 the Council of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland commissioned John Romilly Allen to undertake a survey of the Early Christian Monuments of Scotland by compiling a detailed register complete with photography and illustrations. With the help of Joseph Anderson, Keeper of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, the survey was published in two volumes in 1903. Although this was the first comprehensive study, individual examples had been documented and depicted by antiquarians in the 18th and 19th centuries. Scotland's long tradition of carved stones illustration was explored by Graham Ritchie in 'Recording Early Christian Monuments in Scotland' (1998).

Allen and Anderson described three distinct classes of sculpture, arranged in broadly chronological order: Class I stones bore Pictish symbols incised onto undressed stones; Early Christian Class II stones were those carved in relief onto dressed slabs, depicting crosses, dramatic contemporary and biblical scenes, Pictish symbols and many fantastic beasts; while the repertoire of Class III stones was Christian in its entirety. Although this scheme has largely stood the test of time, it is perhaps more satisfactory to think of our early carved stone heritage in terms of a continuum reflecting developing social influences and symbolic inferences.



Contemporary survey and visualisation

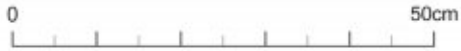
In the spring of 2016, AOC Archaeology recorded a Class II Pictish cross-slab on the Isle of Raasay, on behalf of Forestry Commission Scotland. The slab stands a little over 1.5m in height and features an incised cross-of-arcs within a squared frame above a cusped shaft. Below the cross are two distinctive Pictish symbols, a horizontal 'tuning fork' symbol and a decorated crescent-and-V-rod. The slab was probably carved over 1300 years ago, in the 7th century AD, and it is a good example of the mixture of Early Christian and Pictish symbols. The stone was apparently discovered during road building before 1824, but it escaped the notice of both T S Muir and Romily Allen. A note and drawing by James Richardson in 1907 provided the first detailed record, followed by RCAHMS (1928, 185), Galbraith (1933) and, most recently, its inclusion in a survey of Early Medieval Sculpture (Fisher 2001, 103).

The recent programme of archaeological measured survey included both laser scanning and photogrammetry. Both methods allow the creation of what surveyors call a 'point cloud' – a 3D digital view of the millions of vertices (or points) recorded during the survey. These in turn are processed into a 'polygonal mesh', effectively a surface draped over the point cloud, which can then be coloured or shaded to produce the desired effect. In the case of carved stones, the effects of very subtle lighting can be used to enhance the carvings, making them easier to understand and visualise. The resulting models can then be presented in 3D or as a plan, section or elevation.

Archaeological measured survey has always been a powerful illustrative tool, enhancing knowledge, raising awareness and providing a baseline of information for conservation and management. As we have seen, Scotland has a long and proud tradition of measured survey and recording – the Raasay stone itself has been photographed, rubbed and drawn (and pondered) many times over the last 100 years. Further investment in survey and recording is a crucial element in our management of the historic environment.

Matt Ritchie - Archaeologist, Forestry Commission Scotland





ArchInSites

Please be aware that this site may be on private land. For more information regarding access please consult the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#)



[Accessibility Policy](#)
[Buying Images](#)
[Cookie Policy](#)
[Legals](#)
[Glossary](#)
[Contact](#)
[MyCanmore](#)
[Sitemap](#)
[User Guide](#)



SUPPORTING
year of young people
bliadhna na h-òigridh
2018



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND | ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

© Historic Environment Scotland. Scottish Charity No. SC045925