

## Preparing the Panel for Recording

In order to make a complete and clear record of the carvings you will need to prepare the panel carefully. The notes below offer guidance on how to do this. Please follow this guidance as far as possible, and encourage others to do so. If in doubt, the golden rule is to keep your interaction with the rock surface to a minimum, and **not to use any abrasive or sharp materials**. Research has also demonstrated that making rubbings and tracings can damage the rock art, particularly when repeated many times. While one person touching or walking on the carvings may have very little impact, if dozens of people physically interact with them, the microscopic structure of the rock surface will be affected and, over time, the engravings will wear away. If you do need to walk on the rock surface, please try and tread only on the parts covered with vegetation and avoid the carved areas. In warmer weather, take your boots or shoes off to walk on the panel.

Some of the carved rocks in Scotland are **Scheduled Monuments (SMs)**. This means they are protected by law and it is an offence to damage them or do most forms of work at them (even if your intentions are good) without prior Scheduled Monument Consent from Historic Environment Scotland (HES). **If you plan to record a SM, please contact us before you start**. You will need to be extremely careful, and keep cleaning and interaction to an absolute minimum. If there is turf or moss over the engravings, only remove this if it is already loose and does not require cutting or pulling. Stop immediately if the rock underneath is flaking or fragile. Remember to put the turf back carefully when you have finished. We have a special agreement from HES to record rock art using these guidelines, but this does not extend to unconnected activities, intensive cleaning, or extensive removal of turf, lichen and moss.

### Removing Turf

In many instances, the carvings have become partially or completely covered with turf. Turf covering actually protects the rock surface from the effects of weathering, but every time the turf is removed, this balance is upset, and the rock surface can deteriorate. Persistent removal destabilises the rock surface and will be detrimental to the rock art.

In order to minimise the impact on the rock surface, turf should only be removed once, when you are recording the panel. **Please do not remove turf from crevices in the rock**, as these may be sealing important archaeological deposits. Please take a photograph of the panel before removing the turf, so that we have a record of it and can monitor its spread and effect. The turf is often only a thin layer sitting on top of the rock surface, and can be peeled back quite easily. Wetting the grass, or clearing it after a wet spell, may make it easier to remove. If the turf is thick, or needs cutting to facilitate removal, the safest way to do this is by sliding a thin piece of plastic or Perspex (such as a kitchen chopping board) under the turf and then cutting down onto this board with a knife or sharp implement. This avoids accidentally cutting into and damaging the rock surface (make sure that you are cutting onto the board). Keep any removed turf as intact as possible so that you can carefully replace it when you have finished.

### Cleaning

You may wish to clean the panel a little so that you can see the surface and the motifs better. Cleaning is especially important for photogrammetry as growths, such as moss and grass, on the rock surface interfere with the quality of the 3D model. **Never use any chemicals or abrasive materials** or tools to clean the rock surface, although you can use clean water. Use only plastic

or wooden implements. Even hard bristled brushes can cause microscopic damage to the panel, so please use soft brushes.

Loose material such as leaf litter, pine needles and animal droppings should be gently removed from the rock surface, either by picking up larger pieces or clumps of vegetation, or brushing away dry vegetation and droppings using a soft brush (a hand-held household brush is ideal). A sponge is also useful for getting water out of cup-marks and hollows. Mosses and small areas of turf growth on the rock surface can be removed by gently scraping with a wooden or plastic implement – kitchen spatulas are ideal for this! Smaller grooves and cupmarks can be cleaned out using wooden lollipop sticks. It helps to then brush the surface of the rock with a soft brush to remove the debris.

Lichens and algae should **never** be removed. Removal of lichens is not a viable option, partly because some are protected species, and partly because the process of removal will damage the rock surface. New lichen growth is more aggressive than that of established lichens, so if lichens are removed, they need to be kept off. Lichens actually protect the rock, and the newly exposed surface will be more vulnerable to the physical and chemical effects of weathering. Instead, moss and algae should be discouraged through site management (e.g. removal of tree cover) rather than through our interference. Until we understand better how lichens, mosses and algae act on rock art, we should not remove them or interfere with them in any way.

### Enhancing the Carvings

Carvings may be very eroded and faint, and you will need to look very to make out some of the motifs. Do not try to re-carve, paint or chalk the engravings. Low-angled sunlight (morning or evening, and winter), particularly after rainfall, provides the best natural conditions for viewing. You could also use artificial means to show up the carvings better. If there is any sunshine, you can put water from a local source on the panel and position yourself so the light enhances the relief of the carvings. You could also try shading the rock surface then using a reflective surface to focus sunlight onto the surface (silver survival blankets or mirrors are very effective for this). If it is an overcast day or the panel is in dark woodland, you could use a powerful torch to shine light obliquely onto the panel.

### Recommended Kit

- Plastic or wooden spatula, wooden lollipop sticks
- Soft brush
- Sponge
- Plastic or Perspex board (such as a kitchen chopping board)
- Knife, trowel, or spade
- *Optional:* Torch, silver survival blanket

