

SCOTLAND'S ROCK ART PROJECT

NEWSLETTER 8: SPRING 2021



Despite being locked down for the six months since our last newsletter, we have been busy, busy, busy! Read on to find out what we've been doing, and what is coming up as we enter the final stage of the project.

We are now into the last eight months of the project, and we are focusing on three key areas: **Completing Recording, Data Analysis, and Project Legacy**. You can find out more about these in the next two pages.

COMPLETING RECORDING

Together with our Community Teams we have now recorded over 1550 panels from the current total of 3100 in our database. This increase of 200 since our autumn newsletter is mainly from Teams completing 'Work in Progress' records, and a huge thank you to everyone for finishing these. Special thanks to Jenny (Kirkcudbright Team) who has worked so hard over the last six months untangling many complicated records.

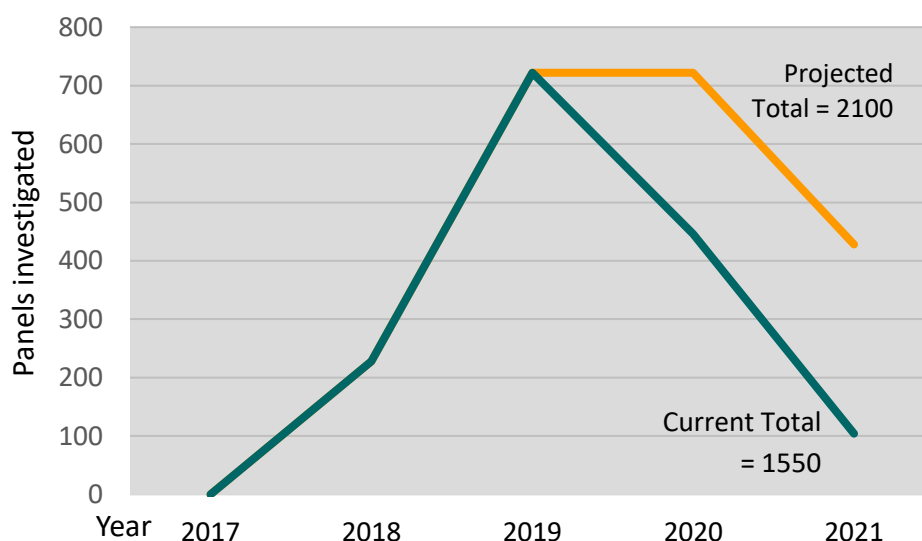
Some Teams have been able to continue fieldwork, and the tenacious Rock Art Bute Team have discovered and recorded several new panels. Thanks also to Doug (ELF Team) and Andrew (Killin Team) for responding to our recent requests for fieldwork in Angus and Glen Lochay. However, covid restrictions over the last year have had a significant impact on what we have been able to do - by this stage in the project we expected to have recorded around 2100 panels (exceeding our original estimate of 1900). But there is still time for more fieldwork, now that we're unlocked...

Sadly, the project will come to an end on 31 December. At the end of last year we set out a timetable for completing fieldwork, to allow time to analyse and archive the data before the project finishes:

1 May for records to be included in our analysis;
1 September for records to be transferred to Canmore, regional Historic Environment Records (HERs) and Edinburgh University DataShare.

Records submitted between 1 September and 31 December will still go into the ScRAP database and be publicly accessible on our website, but will not be archived in the long-term. We very much hope that our Community Teams will continue using their skills to record rock art and submit their data directly to Canmore after the project finishes. There is more about this under **Project Legacy** below.

Impact of covid restrictions on rock art recording, showing the current total of panels investigated and recorded (1530), and the projected total (2100), based on the pre-covid rate of recording



DATA ANALYSIS

There are many uncertainties and questions surrounding Scotland's rock art, ranging from 'how old is it?' to 'what does it mean?' These are challenging issues, and not easy to address. Meaning is particularly problematic, and best approached by trying first to better understand the social, cultural and physical contexts in which the rock art was created and used. Our aim has never been to find out what the carvings 'mean' – they probably had multiple and mutable meanings – but rather to explore their past significance and how they 'worked'. We are doing this by exploring several research questions:

- When was Scotland's rock art created and how did it change through time?
- How did rock art reach Scotland and why is its distribution so uneven?
- What is the character and regional variability of Scotland's rock art?
- Who created the rock art and how was it used?

Much of our time over the last six months has been devoted to analysing the data we have collected with our Community Teams. Because we use a standardised recording methodology we can compare and analyse the data at different scales, from the motifs and rock surface, to the natural and archaeological contexts of the panels.

Joana is exploring the small to medium scale of the motifs and the rocks on which they are carved, using detail extracted from 3D models and field records (see below). Linda is using a range of spatial and statistical approaches to analyse the medium to larger scale environmental and archaeological contexts of the rock art, and their relationship to patterns of visibility and mobility.


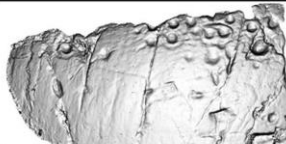
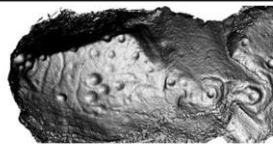


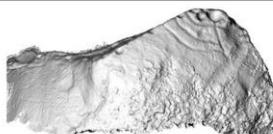
SCRAP TEAM NEWS

A crucial aim of the project is making sure that all the data we and our Community Teams have collected over the last four years is preserved and publicly accessible for the long-term. This is a very challenging task, and so we are delighted to welcome Frederick Alexander to the ScRAP Team as our Digital Archivist to oversee the work. Freddie joined us on 1 April and will be with us until the project ends in December – you can read more about him on our [Meet the Team](#) website page. Find out more about what Freddie is doing in our **Project Legacy** section on page 3.



Our other piece of good news is that our Data Analyst, Linda Marie Bjerkedvedt, will now be with us until the project finishes. Linda has been doing fantastic work since she joined us last November and we are so pleased that it has been possible to extend her contract to the end of this year.

SMALL SCALE: TYPE OF DEPICTION

Planar Style	Plastic Style	3D Style
		
		

These are just some of the detailed classifications of the motifs and their relationship to the rock surface that Joana is using to characterise and compare rock art across Scotland.

This research will help us better understand the significance of different attributes, their distribution in Scotland, and what this can tell us about connectivity and knowledge exchange in the Neolithic.



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SCRAP NEWS FLASH

We have some very exciting news coming out soon about a recent rock art discovery in Kilmartin! We'll share this with you on our Facebook page, and put details about it on our website 'About Rock Art' section

PROJECT LEGACY

ScRAP Website and Database:

The ScRAP website is an incredibly useful resource for everyone interested in recording or finding out more about Scotland's rock art, and we are keen to keep it accessible for as long as possible. Our website, along with the database search tools, will be available for at least five years after the project ends. Its future is uncertain beyond that and we are working with our HES colleagues to establish a longer-term solution which we can update you on in our next newsletter. Our website will continue to function, but the data upload form used by our Community Teams to submit their records to our database will be turned off when the project finishes because there are no resources to support it after the ScRAP Team leaves HES.

Data Archiving:

It is vital that all the ScRAP data, images and 3D models remain publicly accessible, even after our website is eventually taken offline. To ensure this happens, we are in the process of transferring copies of the data to Canmore, the regional Historic Environment Records, and Edinburgh University DataShare. This is a complex and lengthy process that we have been working on with our HES colleagues for the last two years. Many of the ScRAP records are now on Canmore, but the digital images and remaining records will take a while longer yet to archive. Our Digital Archivist, Freddie, will be focusing on this full-time for the remainder of the project.

After ScRAP:

We very much hope that our Community Teams and others will continue recording rock art after ScRAP. Before the project ends we will produce and share updated guidance on what to record, and how to ensure the data become part of Scotland's historic environment record. We are also working with HES to establish longer-term support for our Community Teams and others, and will update you on this in our final newsletter.

Sharing our Results:

A key aim of ScRAP is to share the outcomes of our research as widely as possible. We are doing this through a series of presentations and publications for academic and wider audiences. We will present our results at the following events this year, and hope you will be able to join us for at least one of these:

29 May: [Archaeological Research in Progress](#)
Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Online Conference

5 June: [British Rock Art Group](#) Online Conference

8-11 September: [European Association of Archaeologists](#) Online Conference

13 December: [ScRAP Webinar](#) Online Talk

17-19 December: [Theoretical Archaeology Group](#)
Online Conference

Alongside the three academic journal publications we have planned (these will be freely accessible also to non-academics), we are developing two 'Legacy Publications': a free booklet about Scotland's rock art, to be published later this year, and a more substantial *Atlas of Scotland's Rock Art*. We will continue working on the *Atlas* after the project ends, and expect it to be published in 2023-24.

SCRAP EVENTS

As this is our final year, we are celebrating Scotland's wonderful rock art through a series of public events: Our **Conference** on 24 April was a huge success! Many of our Community Teams showcased the work they have been doing during the project, alongside talks by academic specialists and heritage professionals, and we also shared the preliminary results of our data analysis. We have had fantastic feedback, and are incredibly grateful to everyone that contributed to making it such an enjoyable and stimulating day. If you missed any of the talks, or want to see them again, they are now all on our [website Conference page](#).



Our monthly **Webinars** have been incredibly popular, with topics ranging from rock art in Kilmartin, Wales, and Ireland to the enigmatic carved stone balls of Scotland. We still have eight more webinars to go, and are looking forward to hearing experts from Britain and Europe talk on themes relevant to Scotland's rock art. You can find out more about each webinar, register to attend, and watch past webinars on our [website Webinars page](#).

Because of the lockdown restrictions, we have extended the deadline for our **Photography Challenge** to 30 September. So keep your fabulous photos coming in and you could win one of our amazing prizes! Below, you can see Linda showing off the ScRAP 'mystery' prize. For full details, see our [website Photography Challenge page](#).



AND FINALLY...

You can find out more about what we and our Community Teams are doing on our [Facebook page](#). If you have a favourite rock art site, or a question or interesting fact about rock art, please send us details as we would love to feature it in our Facebook posts.

And remember that there is lots of information about Scotland's rock art on our website: www.rockart.scot!



Near the end of the project, we will also be giving all our Community Teams members their own T shirt as part of a 'thank you' package for their hard work. We'll be in touch!

CONTACT US AT: ScRAP@hes.scot



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