The Kirkmichael (Black Isle) Heritage Centre Project

Conservation Statement

Case for Relocation
of the Kirkmichael "Tree Cross" and Cullicudden slabs A, C, D, E and G
and
Methodology of Relocation

19 July 2016

Introduction

An application on behalf of the Kirkmichael Trust to repair the derelict buildings at Kirkmichael in the Black Isle, and to establish a display of ornate gravestones within the repaired "nave" or Gun Munro mausoleum, was approved on 28 June 2016. Reference: "*Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 Scheduled Monument Consent Decision Notice Case ID 201600640 Index No M5419 Scheduled Monument St Michael's Church, Kirkton Location/Address Ross and Cromarty, Highland Proposed Works Conversion of a derelict church building to create a small heritage centre*". The consent included relocation of two slabs from the kirkyard in Kirkmichael, the medieval "Kirkmichael Cross" and the "McCulloch Slab" from the 1700s, to within the Gun Munro mausoleum.

The Kirkmichael Trust has been working for 16 years to raise awareness of the value, and the increasingly deteriorating condition, of the medieval gravestones in the other old kirkyard in the parish, that of nearby Cullicudden. The Trust's team and supporters consist of local Resolis and Black Isle residents, many of whose families have lived in the area for generations, and many of whom have antecedents interred at either Kirkmichael or Old Cullicudden. Following one of many guided tours of Cullicudden conducted by the Trust, at which Historic Scotland was in attendance, the site was recently (2013) scheduled. Although welcome, this, however, has not resulted in any physical protection for the gravestones, which have continued to deteriorate, and, if anything, damage appears to have accelerated.

A section is included below showing the widespread and gross damage sustained by stones generally, as captured on a photographic survey on 3 July 2016. Another section is included showing the deterioration and damage to the six stones (one at Kirkmichael and five at Cullicudden) the Trust is prepared to rescue for the appreciation and enjoyment of future generations.

There are no buildings on the Cullicudden site. The ruined chapel consists of one gable and is beyond repair. There are no suitable heritage buildings close by, <u>except</u> the soon-to-be repaired Gun Munro mausoleum at Kirkmichael, which will host complementary gravestones. It is proposed to relocate the five high risk stones identified at Cullicudden to the Gun Munro mausoleum.

Upon clearance of debris from inside the Gun Munro mausoleum, it has become increasingly clear that there is ample space within the mausoleum for further stones to be protected and put on display. It is therefore intended to relocate those five stones currently at greatest risk at Cullicudden to the Gun Munro mausoleum at Kirkmichael, but to leave those at less risk for the present.

It had originally been intended to relocate the Kirkmichael "Tree Cross" within the Gun Munro mausoleum as well as the "Kirkmichael Cross" but it was considered when the previous application for Scheduled Monument Consent was submitted that it had deteriorated too far since the start of the project to justify protection any longer. We have reconsidered this, and now consider that with correctly angled lighting the pattern could be distinguished and rather than lose the value of the stone altogether, that after all it too should be relocated inside the Gun Munro mausoleum.

This document therefore has two objects:

1. to provide the case for relocation of six "at-risk" gravestones in the two old kirkyards in the Parish of Resolis, Black Isle, namely Kirkmichael and Cullicudden. These gravestones comprise one from Kirkmichael kirkyard entitled the "Kirkmichael Tree Cross" and five from nearby Cullicudden kirkyard (stones previously named by the former Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) as stones "A", "C", "D", "E" and "G"). These are to be relocated to the repaired and re-roofed Gun Munro mausoleum at Kirkmichael, using the same methodology as for the already approved relocation of two gravestones at Kirkmichael – the "Kirkmichael Cross" and the "MacCulloch Slab". We demonstrate in this case a) that these stones are at unacceptable risk where they are located, and have already suffered avoidable damage and b) that moving these two stones within the mausoleum accords with Scottish Executive guidance on carved stones, prepared by Historic Environment Scotland.

2. to provide the methodology by which the stones will be relocated, handled and displayed with safety to the stones themselves, to workers and to the public, and by which a substitute plain slab with plaque or engraving will replace each original stone on site.

Summary of physical reasons for relocation of specific gravestones

More detailed descriptions of the stones, along with photography, are given below, but for convenience, the following gravestones are those considered most at risk, for the reasons given.

i) "the Kirkmichael Tree Cross"
Highly weathered but very unusual stone which has deteriorated very badly since the 1990s – suspected to be of less resistant sandstone. With good lighting, features can still be distinguished.

ii) Cullicudden Stone "A"
Highly worn stone due to being used as step in main path of site. Sharp pebbles used on the path grind into the stone. And yet with sympathetic lighting the heritage interest in the stone may yet be saved.

iii) Cullicudden Stone "C"
A stone deteriorating rapidly due to erosion from weather and grass-cutting equipment. Considerably deteriorated since 1992.
Stone bears very recent chipping of rock from mowing equipment – all stones bear similar chipping, but this one is particularly recent and additionally has abrasion marks.

iv) Cullicudden Stone "D"
Another stone deteriorating due to weathering. One end is rising up while the other is sinking so the cross head will increasingly be exposed to damage. The cross itself is damaged due presumably to mowing work.

v) Cullicudden Stone "E"
The stone that is suffering the most distressing wear and weathering. The entire lower complex cross, stem of the cross, star or mullion and hilt of the sword have been seriously worn down, and definition of the complex cross lost.

vi) Cullicudden Stone "G"
A slab already snapped by the weight of a more modern stone pressing down on one end. The half caught by the overlaid stone continues to separate and rise and will break again.
To add to the concern, it lies beside and underneath a one tonne table slab which is tilting over alarmingly, ready to fall on the ornate stone below – many similar slabs have tipped over within the churchyard.

Several other stones, such as the Cullicudden "pierced hand of Christ and chalice" stone (identified in the scheduling document as being a particularly rare survival), Cullicudden Stone "B" and Cullicudden Stone "F" are also weathering but their location seems to be providing a little more protection than the identified stones. It is <u>not</u> intended to relocate these at this time.

Conservation status

The designations relating to the two Resolis old churchyards of Kirkmichael and Cullicudden are as set out below.

The Gun Munro mausoleum forms part of the Kirkmichael scheduled site (named in the scheduling as St Michael's Church, Kirkton).

> **St Michael's Church, Kirkton SM5419**
> **Description**
> The monument consists of the remains of the former parish church of Kirkmichael. It was superseded in 1662 when the parish of Resolis was created.
> The rectangular, rubble-coursed structure is situated in a walled burial ground close to the Cromarty Firth. The central portion of the building was rebuilt and re-roofed in the 19th century and used as a mausoleum for the Munros of Poyntzfield. The church measures 16.9m E-W by 7.2m N-S overall with walls approximately 0.7m thick. The roofed portion measures 7.1m square and contains a round-headed entrance in the W gable; the chancel measures 5.8m by 5.4m and incorporates a double-light late gothic window in the gable, twin lancets in the S wall and a square-headed entrance; extending 4m W from the NW angle of the mausoleum is a portion of poorly bonded, rubble masonry, 1m high and 1m wide. The interior side contains the remains of a moulded arch, this fragment is probably part of the original N wall of the church and may have been part of an arch-tomb of 16th-century date.
> The area to be scheduled is rectangular, extending 2m from the overall dimensions of the church and measuring a maximum of 20.9m E-W by 11.2m N-S, as shown in red on the accompanying map.
> Statement of National Importance
> The monument is of national importance because, although it has been much altered by later work, it retains features consistent with a church of late Medieval origin and as such is of architectural value as an ecclesiastical building. In addition it provides evidence and has the potential to provide further evidence, through excavation, for parish organisation, settlement evolution, burial practices and material culture during the period of its construction and use.

This site has a recent associated decision (2016): “St Michaels Church, Kirkton - Conversion of a derelict church building to create a small heritage centre 201600640”. This is the approval of the repair of the buildings at Kirkmichael, their re-use to display of ornate medieval and other gravestones and relocation of gravestones within it.

Cullicudden was scheduled relatively recently (2013) following a Kirkmichael Trust guided tour to promote the heritage value of the site and its vulnerability, and the following information is given on the Historic Environment Scotland website in relation to it:

> **Cullicudden, church and burial ground SM13346**
> **Description**
> The monument is the remains of a late medieval church and its graveyard, which contains a fine collection of carved grave-slabs, some dating from the 14th and 15th centuries. The church is visible as the gable end of an upstanding masonry structure, located within a roughly square graveyard. The monument is located on the Black Isle to the S of the Cromarty Firth at 26m OD.

The upstanding ruin comprises the SE gable end of a structure formed mainly of pink-hued coursed sandstone and boulders, with a central doorway and window. The gable end stands up to 3.5m high and is about 5m wide. This fragment may have formed part of a burial aisle or part of the church. The date '1609' is inscribed on the lintel stone of the doorway, but the site overall is likely to be earlier as the burial ground contains carvings from the 14th century. External niches for plaques or other sculptures are set above and on either side of the central window. Parts of the SW and NE walls adjoining the gable stand to a maximum height of 1.3m. The NE wall has been re-faced and three modern gravestones are embedded into its external elevation. The SW wall has two gravestones set into its internal face and is built mainly of irregularly coursed boulders.

The burial ground is roughly square in plan, measuring 52m NW-SE by 49m transversely, and contains numerous grave-slabs and funerary monuments dating from the 14th to the 19th centuries. The earlier grave-slabs are largely buried below the turf, but their outlines can be traced. They appear mainly to cluster around the church on a slightly raised sub-oval area measuring 28m NE-SW by 14m NW-SE, which may be the core of the earliest burial ground. Along the NW side of the raised area is a stone and earth embankment.

The scheduled area is irregular in shape and includes the remains described above and an area around them in which evidence for the monument's construction, use and abandonment is expected to survive, as shown in red on the accompanying map. The scheduling specifically excludes: the above-ground elements of all modern boundary walls; the top 300mm of all modern paths to allow for their maintenance; all burial lairs where rights of burial still exist; and any 20th-century burial monuments.

Statement of National Importance

The monument is of national importance as the remains of a late medieval church and burial ground, containing a fine collection of carved grave-slabs and funerary monuments dating from at least the 14th to the 19th century. It can significantly enhance our understanding and appreciation of Scotland's medieval and later church sites. It is of particular importance because of its long chronological range, with the carved stones demonstrating that the site was in use from at least the 14th century. The monument can add to our understanding of developments in memorial practice through periods of significant devotional change, including the Reformation, and concomitant developments in burial and memorial practices, stone carving styles and symbolism. The grave-slab bearing the pierced hand of Christ is a particularly rare survival. The monument would have formed a prominent part of the late medieval landscape and is now a picturesque ruin in the contemporary landscape. The loss of the monument would significantly diminish our ability to understand the origin and development of medieval and later church sites, and the changing nature of burial ritual, memorial practice and sculptural funerary traditions over 500 years, in Ross and Cromarty and further afield.

Note that although the scheduling states that the scheduled area is irregular in shape, in fact the plan attached to the legal scheduling simply follows the boundary walls of the site.

Policy background and case for relocation within policy background

It is considered our proposals are a perfect fit with the Scottish Ministers' wishes as expressed in Historic Environment Scotland's Policy Statement (June 2016).

We set out below the key principles set out within the Policy Statement with our commentary in coloured text to indicate how the Kirkmichael proposals comply.

KEY PRINCIPLES

1.9 The principles that underpin what Historic Environment Scotland does are that:

a. actions taken in respect of Scotland's historic environment should secure its conservation and management for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations;

The relocation of the six identified stones to within a protective environment is entirely designed to ensure that their historic and artistic interest will be preserved for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. No other measure can secure their conservation and management. The interpretation proposed of these and complementary stones already approved to be relocated at Kirkmichael will result in the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

b. there should be a presumption in favour of preservation of individual historic assets and also the pattern of the wider historic environment; no historic asset should be lost or radically changed without adequate consideration of its significance and of all the means available to manage and conserve it;

These six stones represent an historic asset that will be lost unless rapid action is taken to relocate before further deterioration and damage is caused. The presumption must be to preserve this asset. The stones have deteriorated in situ and are at risk from further weather deterioration and damage as demonstrated in the attached photography, and the proposals will manage them in a sustainable way to secure their long-term survival.

c. be carried out in accordance with a conservation plan, which brings together all of the information and research necessary to guide the proposed action;

This Conservation Plan has been written to bring together all the information and research known about Kirkmichael and Cullicudden and these six stones. We have benefited from on-site information and encouraging advice at Cullicudden and Kirkmichael from John Borland, HES's Measured Survey Manager and carved stone specialist, in April 2016 and in email communications thereafter. In turn, John Borland has had input from Iain Fraser of HES on dating of the Cullicudden stones. Previously we had much useful input from Ian Fisher of RCAHMS, prior to his retirement, with the Trust inviting him to Cullicudden where he set the site into historic context.

d. all of the people of Scotland should be able to enjoy, appreciate, learn from and understand Scotland's historic environment, and be assisted in that through access, research, knowledge, information and education and proactive conservation investment, without compromise to cultural significance.

The relocation of the stones, the lighting to show off their features to the best effect, their interpretation on site and on-line, and their use to draw people to the repaired buildings at Kirkmichael as a heritage resource will enhance their potential as a social, cultural, economic and environmental resource. The Cullicudden site is rarely visited with poor access, whilst the Kirkmichael site has excellent access by road, is already well visited and visitor numbers will greatly increase when the current repair work has been completed.

The Kirkmichael Trust has worked for 16 years to increase the appreciation of the historic environment through research, web resources on line, guided tours, books and booklets, about Kirkmichael, Cullicudden and the area generally. The establishment of the display of medieval stones at Kirkmichael will create a nationally important historic and cultural resource. This collection of Resolis Stones could trigger interest in the late Medieval period in the Scottish Highlands, which has equal potential for the local economy to the Pictish period which has already brought great benefit to the area. In order for wider enjoyment and appreciation of these stones, a section on the Trust's website will be developed to provide images and interpretation of them and further promotion of the cultural significance of this resource will be developed through liaison with complementary websites such as Dundee University/McManus Art Gallery and Museum sculptured stone pages http://dundee-medieval-stones.aocarchaeology.com/?p=812

1.10 The conservation of any part of Scotland's historic environment should:

a. be based upon sound knowledge and understanding of the particular site, building, monument or landscape, and of its wider context;
b. be founded on full awareness and consideration of its cultural significance and all phases of its development;

These six stones and the sites of Cullicudden and Kirkmichael, and their cultural significance, have been investigated in great detail, as set out in this Conservation Statement. The proposed relocation is considered to be based upon a very sound knowledge and understanding. Following careful consultation with the local community over the course of many tours, illustrated lectures and open days, we believe that the cultural significance of these stones will be greatly increased by their assemblage in one place as a single collection of Resolis Stones.

c. be carried out in accordance with a conservation plan, which brings together all of the information and research necessary to guide the proposed action;

We believe this Conservation Statement achieves this aim, bringing together for the first time information on these regional sculptured stones.

d. ensure that what is to be conserved is properly recorded before and, if necessary, during and after work;

The stones have previously been recorded by RCAHMS, but the method statement requires archaeologist presence during work to record everything available during the relocation process.

e. make provision for recording where continued preservation is no longer possible or where loss is taking place through change or ongoing decay, and ensure that all records are retained in readily accessible archives;

Our aim is for continued preservation but we *also* intend to record all features of the stones and their current site, this record made by professional archaeologists and deposited in local archives and published on our website.

f. incur only the minimum degree of intervention considered appropriate by the relevant authority for the type of site, building, monument or landscape;

We consider the *only* feasible measure to preserve these deteriorating ornate gravestones is to take them into a local, accessible site safe from further weathering and physical damage. We have targeted only those stones at greatest risk of further deterioration (although relocation of some of the other stones at lesser risk would we feel be justified).

It is important to note the effect of Climate Change and increased precipitation, which is a growing concern in conservation circles and will have an impact on the erosion of sandstone. The anticipated increased wind, rain and moisture we are likely to experience in the future will have an impact on historic buildings and monuments. A recent UNESCO/World Heritage Committee report noted direct physical impacts of climate change on cultural world heritage:

> **"Historic buildings have a greater intimacy with the ground than modern ones. They are more porous and draw water from the ground into their structure and lose it to the environment by surface evaporation. Their wall surfaces and floors are the point of exchange for these reactions. Increases in soil moisture might result in greater salt mobilisation and consequent damaging crystallisation on decorated surfaces through drying. … Archaeological sites and monuments may be at risk from flooding, particularly the eroding effect of rapid flowing water."**
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> **("Predicting and Managing the Effects of Climate Change on World Heritage" A joint report from the World Heritage Centre, its Advisory Bodies, and a broad group of experts to the 30th session of the World Heritage Committee (Vilnius, 2006) - Prepared by Cassar (Centre for Sustainable Heritage, University College London), Young (English Heritage) and Weighell (Joint Nature Conservation Committee), Sheppard (IUCN), Bomhard (IUCN), and Rosabal (IUCN), in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and its Advisory Bodies. Updated to account for the suggestions of the Group of Experts during the Meeting on Climate Change and World Heritage, held at UNESCO Headquarters on 16th and 17th of March, 2006.)**

g. use appropriate technical knowledge, materials, skills and methods of working;

We shall use a previously approved method statement for location and treatment of the gravestones.

h. have regard to retaining, or where appropriate enhancing, the setting of the site, monument, building or landscape;

We shall replace the relocated slabs with similarly sized slabs so that there will be no change to the existing site at Cullicudden, and we shall continue to encourage the Highland Council to repair some of the damaged more modern gravestones which currently detract greatly from the setting.

i. ensure that, where change is proposed, it is appropriate, carefully considered, authoritatively based, properly planned and executed, and (if appropriate) reversible;

These proposals have been carefully considered, are based on the best available knowledge, will be executed properly, and, of course, are completely reversible should at some date there be a wish to return the stones to their previous location. However, the proposed approach is to replace the relocated slabs with similarly sized slabs so that there will be no change to the existing site at Cullicudden, and, as noted above, we shall continue to encourage the Highland Council to repair some of the damaged, more modern gravestones which currently detract greatly from the setting

We know from our research and from the addition of later initials that these stones have been reused and relocated (both purposefully for re-use and in some cases unceremoniously dumped elsewhere to clear space for further burials) several times already.

Whoever originally commissioned these fine stones wished them to trigger a response - in terms of identification of or respect for the individual originally buried beneath it, or more generally awe at the craftsmanship. We may never be able to identify the original locations or graves of these stones or who commissioned them, but we can still encourage wonder at their craftsmanship.

The Trust does not believe it is appropriate to leave this rare collection of medieval carved stones, which may have been commissioned by some of our own ancestors, to deteriorate. It is more respectful to move them to a place within the same parish which they are likely to have known and visited where they can be cherished and celebrated.

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j. include effective arrangements for monitoring the condition and safety of the historic asset and for delivery of routine maintenance and good housekeeping;

This project is funded by Heritage Lottery Funding which is conditional on long-term, detailed management and maintenance arrangements. A management and maintenance plan is therefore in place and will be a live management tool.

k. take account of the rich biodiversity of many historic sites, buildings and landscapes.

Whilst not directly relevant to this relocation element of the project, the overall Kirkmichael project has taken biodiversity fully into account, with one of our Open Days focused purely on graveyard natural heritage to raise awareness of biodiversity interests associated with graveyards. This is being undertaken in conjunction with RSPB and Highland Butterfly Conservation.

In conclusion, we consider that this proposal meets each and every key principle set out within Historic Environment Scotland's Policy Statement (June 2016).

Accordance with “Carved Stones: Scottish Executive Policy and Guidance”

The following case for moving the six identified stones to safety within the repaired Gun Munro mausoleum is based upon the guidance document “Carved Stones: Scottish Executive Policy and Guidance”, prepared by Historic Scotland and published May 2005.

The guidance states (section 4.3.5) that “*Where it is in the best conservation interest of known carved stones that they are removed, it is normally preferable that they are located as close as possible to where they are being removed from, providing that curatorial needs can be satisfied (e.g. in an appropriate existing local structure or registered museum). Individual circumstances will dictate how ‘local’ local can be, but the expectation is that this would normally be associated with the same site or geographical area*”.

In the case of Kirkmichael “Tree Cross”, it would be moved less than 25 metres from its current exposed location to safety within the Gun Munro mausoleum.

In the case of the Cullicudden stones, they would be moved less than three miles within their own Parish of Resolis to the nearest possible heritage building, i.e. the Gun Munro mausoleum. This is certainly the same geographical area, and is very much an appropriate existing local structure. Moreover, consent has just been granted to relocate the “Kirkmichael Cross” to the Gun Munro mausoleum, so that the addition of several more ornate stones would be highly complementary.

The guidance further states (section 4.3.6) that “*If considering moving a carved stone, particularly if moving to a new structure, consideration needs to be given to: ● future public access to the structure and its*
contents, and how these can be displayed ● long-term responsibility for conservation of the carved stone, including regular monitoring and access to specialist conservation skills ● long-term stability and maintenance responsibilities of the structure housing the carved stone ● how the carved stone can be safely relocated, both with reference to the carved stone itself and the health and safety of those persons involved in the project. ”.

In the Kirkmichael project,

- regarding the first bulletpoint, public access and interpretation of the six stones would be provided and greatly enhanced within the Gun Munro mausoleum (in contrast Cullicudden is rarely visited and has a long and poorly maintained access track)

- regarding the second bulletpoint, the Kirkmichael Trust has responsibility for maintenance of the mausoleum and has access to specialist conservation skills

- regarding the third bulletpoint, one of the main objects of the Kirkmichael (Black Isle) Heritage Centre project is to provide long-term stability and responsibility of the Gun Munro mausoleum which will house the carved stones

- and regarding the final bulletpoint, the detailed methodology set out within Section 2 has been designed to ensure the safety of the carved stones and of people involved in the project during relocation.

It is stated in the guidance (section 4.3.9) that: “*Stones should be fully recorded in advance of their removal or enclosure in order to recover information relating to construction, erection, functions (including secondary uses) and broader landscape and historical context. Full archaeological*

provision should be made for any disturbance of the ground associated with the relocation of a carved stone".

The detailed methodology set out within Section 2 requires an archaeologist to be in attendance during relocation activities, and includes full recording of information on, around and under the slabs before and after relocation. A slab of the same dimensions bearing a plaque or engraving stating where the original may be seen will replace each original slab.

We thus consider that the proposals meet every requirement of "Carved Stones: Scottish Executive Policy and Guidance", prepared by Historic Scotland and published May 2005.

Cullicudden – historical background

Cullicudden churchyard lies at NH64976507 at the end of a long track, which reaches, having passed through the farmyard of Easter Cullicudden farm, the B9163.

Cullicudden and Kirkmichael were united by Act of Parliament in 1662 to form the united parish of Kirkmichael and Cullicudden, commonly known as Resolis. Following the unification, the parish ministers preached alternately at Cullicudden and Kirkmichael until a new central church was completed in 1769. The kirk buildings at Kirkmichael continued to be maintained, but as mausolea for the estate-owners of Braelangwell, Newhall and Poyntzfield. Cullicudden, however, was not so fortunate, and the buildings were allowed to collapse.

Cullicudden and Kirkmichael lay within the Presbytery of Chanonry, and from the Presbytery records it is noted that by the 1740s the kirk at Cullicudden was becoming increasingly dilapidated and dangerous to the congregation, and repeatedly the Presbytery had to organise repair work to the kirk. It is therefore not surprising that it collapsed. It was not converted to mausolea in the same way as at Kirkmichael presumably because the need for mausolea was not as great – the Newhall Estate, which owned most of the land around the Kirk, already had a mausoleum at Kirkmichael, and the other estate in the neighbourhood, Kinbeachie, already had a substantial mausoleum at Cullicudden.

There are mounds of partly grass-covered stones where the former kirk lay. One small part of an aisle of the kirk, which from a reference in the Church records is known to have been called the “Aisle of Ardullie”, the doorway to which bears a date of 1609.

There are no burials in Cullicudden nowadays, the last occurring several decades ago, but the grounds are closely and very well maintained by the Highland Council, in whose ownership the site lies. The thorough maintenance, in fact, is unfortunately one of the major ongoing causes of deterioration of the stones.

Cullicudden – the medieval stones

The Kirkmichael Trust has been closely involved with the Cullicudden site even prior to the Trust's inception. The current Chairman of the Trust, whose grandparents are buried in the graveyard, recorded all the gravestones at Cullicudden in the 1990s, and the current Project Development Manager, who was brought up within walking distance of Old Cullicudden, assisted her mother Penny Poole in researching these stones in the late 1970s and 1980s. Mrs Poole arranged RCAHMS photography of the medieval stones there in 1992. It should be noted that all surveyed medieval stones were in fact excavated to their full depth in 1992 by RCAHMS for their photographic record, now held by HES following amalgamation of RCAHMS and Historic Scotland.

The notes by RCAHMS in 1992 are transcribed on the next page exactly as provided by Ian Fisher of RCAHMS to Mrs Poole by letter of 25 August 1992.

Since that time, knowledge of these stones has been complemented by investigation by the Trust of similar stones at Contin Churchyard, Mortlach Church and Cromarty East Church, and the Trust has visited complementary sites in Argyll.

There have been remarkably few publications to deal with the medieval ornate stones of the area – the only publication to describe the stones at Contin Churchyard in fact was in the Publications of the Scottish Antiquarian Society as long ago as 1914/15 (A.C. Maclean, 1914/1915). Since this time the stones at Contin have been relocated, erect, inside the Church to preserve them.

Similarly, the Mortlach stone has been described in detail only in *The Scottish Antiquary* in 1895 (W. Cramond, 1895). This stone, found below the floor of the church, contains the sword and ornate cross arising from a three-stepped Calvary base, but has the unusual distinction of an inscription around the four edges of its perimeter. Since that time the Mortlach Stone has been repaired and relocated, erect, in a safe location.

Photography of the Cullicudden stones can be found in *Ross and Cromarty. A Historical Guide.* (David Alston, 1999) and *Resolis "*Slope of Light*" Guide to a Black Isle Parish* (Jim Mackay, 2009).

An illustration and interpretation of the medieval slab found below the floor of the Cromarty East Church can be found in *East Church Cromarty. A Guide.* (Caroline Vawdrey and David Alston, 2012). This slab has two swords and an ornate cross standing on a stepped Calvary base, and also bears a rectangular feature thought to be an open book. The interpretation suggests: "*A medieval person looking at the grave-slab would have understood several things. The two longswords signify that it is for a man of some importance and the open book suggest that he was also a man of learning. The three Calvary steps at the bottom were a common shorthand for the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. They instruct the viewer that the way to heaven – shown as a lively sunburst – was by following his example. Interestingly the stone has been reworked at a later date…*" This stone is now relocated, erect, in a safe location..

It is interesting to note that both the Mortlach stone and the East Church stone were found below the floor of the church. It may well be that some or all of the Resolis stones at Kirkmichael or Cullicudden were at one time also inside the church buildings.

The advice from John Borland and Iain Fraser of HES is that with the more developed/ornate cross heads, these stones may be late C13th or early C14th date. These experts suggest that there is not an exact science to dating but acknowledge that a certain style of cross dates from a certain point in time - early/mid/late in a given century – and then one then works on the basis of changes to that style being subsequent developments. However, one also has to factor in the possible

"local" element: for example a cross shaft with somewhat stilted or derivative foliage might be considered as later but it could just be an attempt at naturalistic foliage by a local mason not conversant in the visual language. It is clear that the Cullicudden/Kirkmichael stones, which are complementary, cover a range of periods. There is thus a span of time, perhaps covering more than one generation of patron, but it is considered that there are several examples that seem roughly contemporary, suggesting multiple patrons.

Several descriptions and pictures of these stones have been published by Dr David Alston (who is in frequent correspondence with the Trust) in his *Ross and Cromarty. A Historical Guide.* (Birlinn Books, 1999). He also includes an image of a remarkable stone with pierced hand and chalice from Cullicudden.

The complementarity of the stones at Kirkmichael and Cullicudden (the Resolis stones) suggests that a skilled set of gravestone sculptors were active in the area, and clearly they were being employed by rich and influential proprietors locally. It is thus surprising that so few have survived – the examples at Contin and Cromarty are in very poor condition but do show similarities with the Resolis stones. The same motifs of ornate crosses and swords arising from a stepped Calvary base can be found in locations as far apart as on the Ardrossan Sarcophagus (Ayrshire) and on relocated gravestones at Kilmartin, Keills and Kilmory (Argyll) but the rock and the style of sculpting are very different. There is a clear regional style. Relocation of stones for preservation has been carried out at all these locations, and there are many other examples such as the Govan Stones (Glasgow) and slabs at Ui Church, Lewis (Eaglais na h-Aoidhe) and Rodel, Harris (St Clements Church).

Dating of similarly-designed (but differently-executed) stones in Argyll revealed surprisingly that the stones were in fact located above much more recent graves. They had been re-used. This is exactly the case with the Resolis stones, with at least the Kirkmichael Cross and the Kirkmichael “Tree Cross” and Cullicudden stones “B”, “E”, “F” and “H” all bearing much later initials unsympathetically carved into the original patterns. The serious physical damage suffered by Cullicudden “H” and its tilted angle suggests that it was unceremoniously moved aside to make room for the immediately adjacent 18th century Kinbeachie mausoleum. The Kirkmichael “Tree Cross” also bears a later inscribed date of 1730. These stones have thus been re-used (several times in the case of the Kirkmichael Cross and Cullicudden “F”) and already moved.

Whilst the crude damage inflicted on these medieval stones by later re-use is lamented, nevertheless the fact that they were re-used by later families undoubtedly has led to their being retained for posterity. Earlier generations cared little for heritage value, and an interesting old stone as in fact been used as a step across the wall at Cullicudden (a curious carved symbol can be seen when one lies under the steps), and another stone was used as a doorstep in the chancel mausoleum at Kirkmichael.

Review of the Cullicudden ornate medieval graveslabs (Ian Fisher, RCAHMS, 1992)

CULLICUDDEN CHURCHYARD, BLACK ISLE, ROSS AND CROMARTY
NH 66 NW 4 / Preliminary list of medieval graveslabs

A. (re-used as step across path; lower end set into turf).
Tapered slab, lacking the foot, 1.4m by 0.47m; worn.
Long-shafted cross with cruciform centre, large fleur-de-lys terminals, recessed in 0.38m circle; sword with lobated pommel, curved quillons (one overlain by cross-shaft), at left.

B. (S end of buried row of three, 3m E of path).
TS, 1.74m by 0.58m; worn and surface flaked at lower right.
At top, incised inscription in capitals: THIS STONE \ PERTINS TO \ VILIAM MACCA[?E] \ 1605; at centre, large two-handed sword with round pommel, inclined quillons and pierced quatrefoil terminals of true 'claymore'.

C. (centre of row between 'B' and 'D').
TS, 2.03m by 0.47m, with margin of dogtooth between two roll-mouldings on bevelled edges.
In low relief, long-shafted cross with 8-spoked 0.18m central circle extending to fleur-de-lys terminals divided by moulded 'horseshoes'; at foot, shaft rises from a curving multi-cusped base (? elaborate form of Calvary mount) which rests on the 0.3m recessed circular surround of another cross with central lozenge between four circles, all sunk, and pointed terminals; at left, sword resembling that on 'A'.

D. (N end of row, and 1m S of pink granite McPherson headstone).
TS, 1.62m by 0.53m, with margin of large 'half-dogtooth' on bevel.
In low relief, at top, large cross with fleur-de-lys terminals, which extend on to bevel, between semicircular 'brackets' with similar terminals; it rises from a thick stem with four pairs of leaves on down-curving stems, supported by a cross with curved-triangle base; this base touches one of the fleur-de-lys terminals of an 8-spoked cross at the foot of the slab, which has an open central ring and openwork stems; at right there is a sword with lobated pommel and short curved quillons.
This fine slab is evidently by the same carver as one at Contin, Ross-shire (PSAS, **49** (1914-15), fig. on p. 73).

E. (Immediately E of 'B', and 2m W of grey granite Ross headstone).
TS, 1.94m by 0.51m, with bevelled edges; the upper half is carved in low relief and the lower half incised.
At top there is an 8-spoked cross similar to but larger than that on 'C', with a central shaft rising from a simple three-stepped Calvary base; at right there is a sword with lobated pommel and slightly curved quillons, and at left a 5-pointed star, mullet or spur-rowel and an inverted carpenter's axe. The later initials AMG have been incised across the centre.

F. (Immediately W of elaborate sandstone Simpson headstone).
TS, 1.78m by 0.55m; carved in low relief; worn.
At the top there is an openwork plaited 8-pointed cross incorporating a small central boss and an 0.37m circle, rising from a thick stem with three-stepped Calvary base; attached to the left of the shaft there are eight horizontal stalks with expanded ends, possibly intended as leaves but forming a crude arcade; at right there is a sword with lobated pommel and slightly-curved quillons. The top 0.13m of the cross-head has been cut away to receive the incised initials AS KS, and flanking the shaft are the initials IS and MF.

G. (Immediately W of Muir table-tomb at SW angle of S aisle of church).
TS, at least 2.07m by 0.87m; broken across, and the foot concealed by the plinth of an adjacent table-tomb. At the top there is an elaborate version of the type of openwork cross seen on 'F', with double-beaded plaited strands forming 16 peripheral loops, and a triple-beaded 0.75m circle; additional asymmetrical strands with foliated terminals extend down from the lower curve of the cross-head, which is supported on a plaited shaft with expansions at the head and foot, and produces two down-curved stalks bearing large fleurs-de-lys; to the left of the shaft there is a ?lion passant, and to the right a pair of shears, both damaged by the break in the slab; at the foot there is a plaited 8-spoked cross with large fleur-de-lys terminals, incorporating a central boss and a double-beaded 0.45m circle. This motif closely resembles one on a slab at Contin (PSAS, **49** (1914-15), fig. on p.75).

H. (Outside N wall of Urquhart burial-enclosure).
TS with central foliated stem, flaked at the top.
Not yet fully recorded.

I Fisher / 17.viii.1992

The current condition of Cullicudden kirkyard

Cullicudden is well-maintained in terms of grass and path management, but the stones themselves are in a remarkably poor condition. A photographic review on 3 July 2016 of stones at Cullicudden reveals a shocking state.

Cullicudden broken gravestone (July 2016)

Cullicudden broken gravestone (July 2016)

Cullicudden smashed tablestone (July 2016)

Cullicudden broken gravestone (July 2016)

Cullicudden collapsed tablestones (July 2016)

Cullicudden broken gravestones (July 2016)

Extreme abrasion on old slab caused by grass-cutting equipment (July 2016)

Tablestone knocked or sliding off its supports (July 2016)

Tablestone propped up on another gravestone and on one of the tablestone legs (July 2016)

Tablestone tipping over (July 2016)

Serious chipping and scraping on yet another old stone in the past few weeks (July 2016)

For a small graveyard (there are only 253 memorials in the entire site), the amount of damage is extraordinary. The conclusion is that Cullicudden churchyard, despite scheduling, generally is a high-risk location for gravestones.

The Six Stones to be Relocated

The six stones which the Kirkmichael Trust proposes to take into its care are set out on the following pages.

i) “the Kirkmichael Tree Cross” – an ornate but very badly worn cross rising from a Calvary base, with, unusually, no sword on either side. The detail is now difficult to distinguish compared to a generation ago, but with the right lighting could be displayed to the best advantage. No date has been attributed to the carving of the stone, but it is considered to be late medieval or earlier, and certainly pre-reformation. Most unusually, three pairs of branch-like devices arise from the stem at regular intervals between Calvary base and cross. Each bar of cross terminates in a fleur-de-lys. A ?star appears at top left and top right. A raised boss appears in the two lower angles of the intersection of the cross, a complementary upper two were perhaps excised to take the later initials. As normally the case, the stone shows evidence of later usage: it bears incised initials: T ?E A D and date 1730.

Slab in 1994.

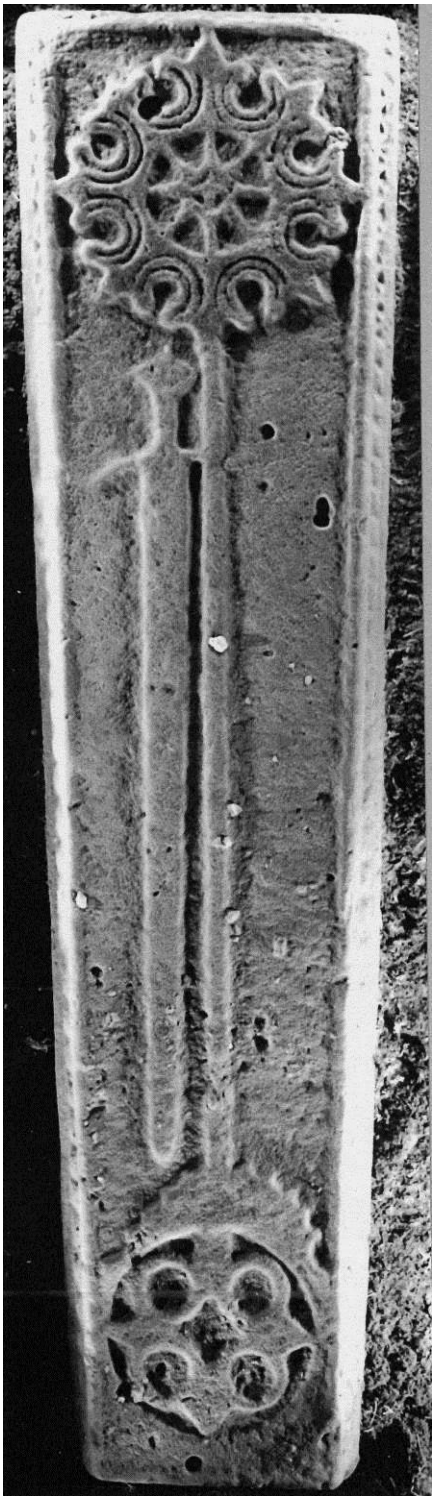
Slab in 2016 – heavily eroded but still of value

ii) Cullicudden Stone “A”

Cullicudden Stone “A” subject to wear as it is used as a step on the main path in the churchyard, and the sharp pebbles used on the path grind into the stone. And yet with sympathetic lighting (see below) the heritage interest in the stone may yet be saved.

“Tapered slab, lacking the foot, 1.4m by 0.47m; worn. Long-shafted cross with cruciform centre, large fleur-de-lys terminals, recessed in 0.38m circle; sword with lobated pommel, curved quillons (one overlain by cross-shaft), at left."

iii) Cullicudden Stone “C”

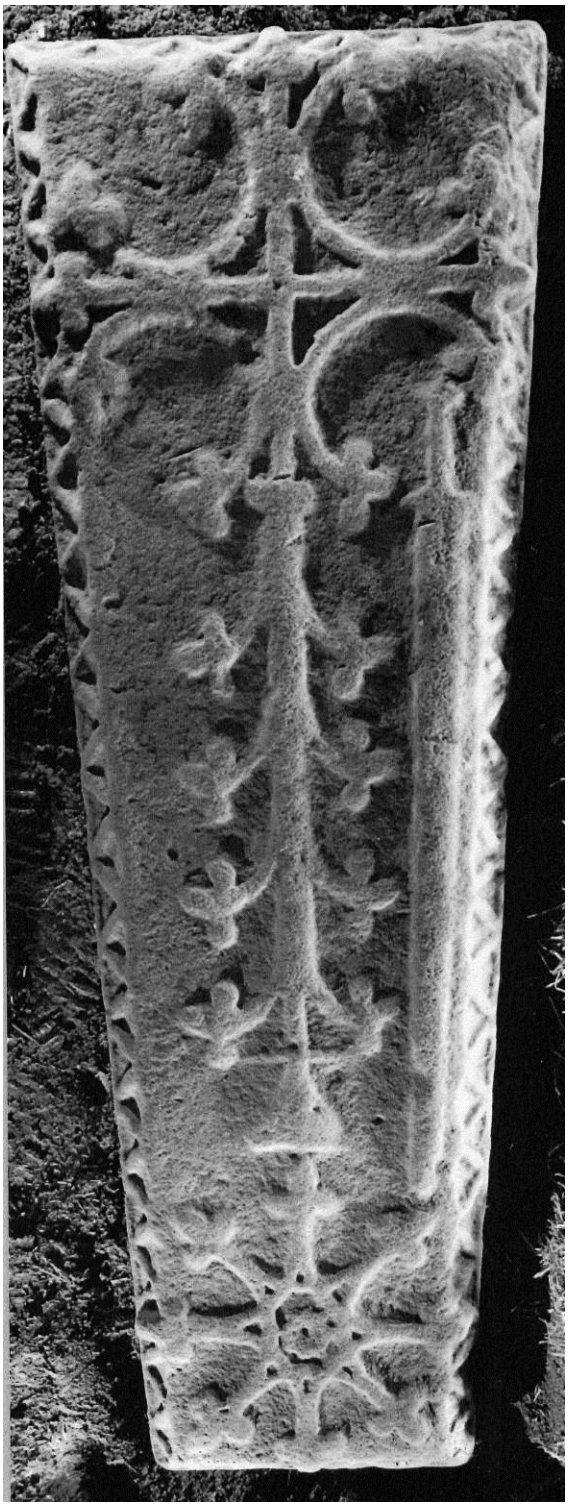


Cullicudden Stone “C” subject to erosion from weather and grass-cutting equipment. Considerably deteriorated since 1992. Note typical abrasion and chipping from equipment on left; this routinely occurs to these stones.

“TS, 2.03m by 0.47m, with margin of dogtooth between two roll-mouldings on bevelled edges. In low relief, long-shafted cross with 8-spoked 0.18m central circle extending to fleur-de-lys terminals divided by moulded ‘horseshoes’; at foot, shaft rises from a curving multi-cusped base (? elaborate form of Calvary mount) which rests on the 0.3m recessed circular surround of another cross with central lozenge between four circles, all sunk, and pointed terminals; at left, sword resembling that on ‘A’."

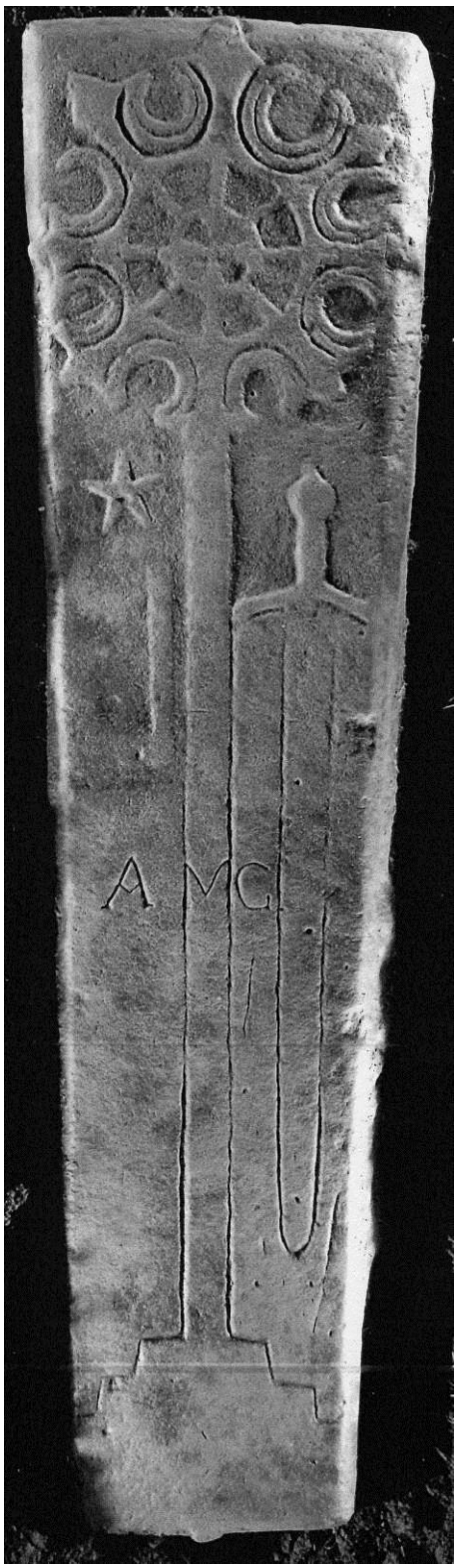
iv) Cullicudden Stone “D”

Above: general deterioration due to weathering
Below: chipped slab due to mowing works



TS, 1.62m by 0.53m, with margin of large ‘half-dogtooth’ on bevel. In low relief, at top, large cross with fleur-de-lys terminals, which extend on to bevel, between semicircular ‘brackets’ with similar terminals; it rises from a thick stem with four pairs of leaves on down-curving stems, supported by a cross with curved-triangle base; this base touches one of the fleur-de-lys terminals of an 8-spoked cross at the foot of the slab, which has an open central ring and openwork stems; at right there is a sword with lobated pommel and short curved quillons. This fine slab is evidently by the same carver as one at Contin, Ross-shire (PSAS, **49** (1914-15), fig. on p. 73).

v) Cullicudden Stone “E”



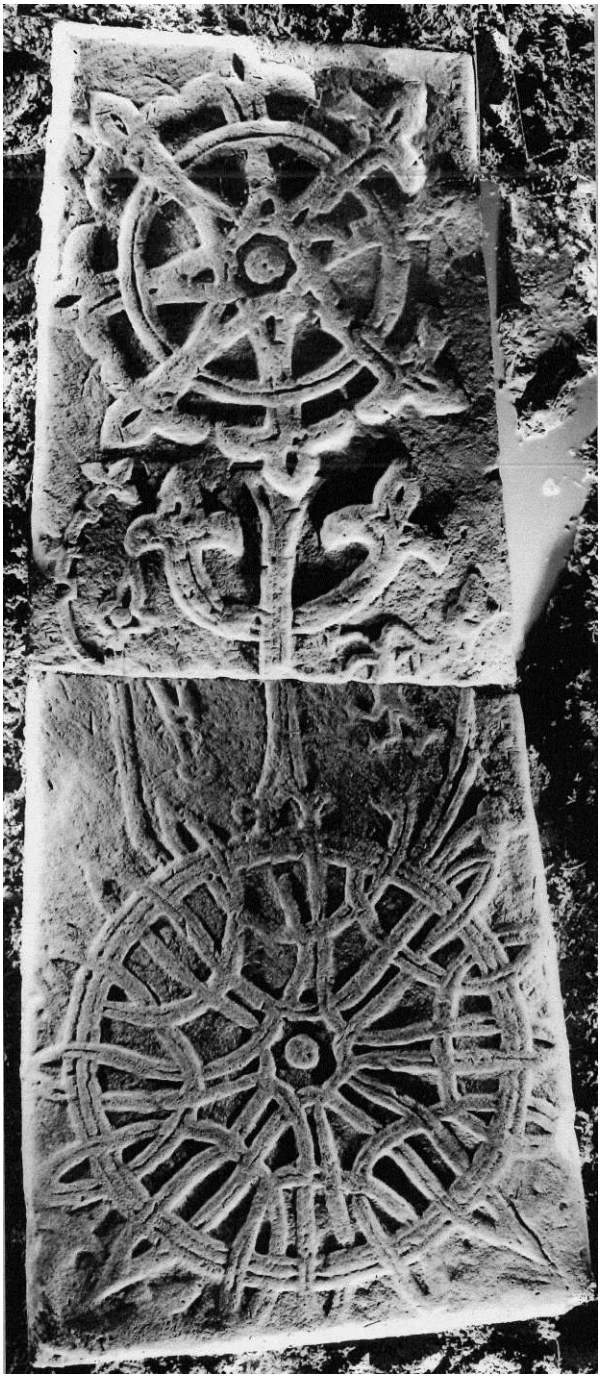
This stone is one of the most distressing to watch being steadily eroded by weather and traffic – the entire lower complex cross, stem of the cross, star or mullion and hilt of the sword have been seriously worn down, and definition of the complex cross lost.

“TS, 1.94m by 0.51m, with bevelled edges; the upper half is carved in low relief and the lower half incised. At top there is an 8-spoked cross similar to but larger than that on ‘C’, with a central shaft rising from a simple three-stepped Calvary base; at right there is a sword with lobated pommel and slightly curved quillons, and at left a 5-pointed star, mullet or spur-rowel and an inverted carpenter’s axe. The later initials AMG have been incised across the centre.”

vi) Cullicudden Stone “G” (page 1)

Above: a one tonne table slab tipping over, ready to fall on the ornate slab immediately beside it.

“TS, at least 2.07m by 0.87m; broken across, and the foot concealed by the plinth of an adjacent table-tomb. At the top there is an elaborate version of the type of openwork cross seen on ‘F’, with double-beaded plaited strands forming 16 peripheral loops and a triple-beaded 0.75m circle; additional asymmetrical strands with foliated terminals extend down from the lower curve of the cross-head, which is supported on a plaited shaft with expansions at the head and foot, and produces two down-curved stalks bearing large fleurs-de-lys; to the left of the shaft there is a ?lion passant, and to the right a pair of shears, both damaged by the break in the slab; at the foot there is a plaited 8-spoked cross with large fleur-de-lys terminals, incorporating a central boss and a double-beaded 0.45m circle. This motif closely resembles one on a slab at Contin (PSAS, **49** (1914-15), fig. on p.75).”



Left: The widening gap being pointed out as the right hand half of the slab rotates due to the tablestone pressing down on the right end of the slab. It is anticipated that the right half of the slab will break across again whenever pressure on the elevated section is experienced.

Additionally, as seen above, top left, the tipping slab beside stone “G” will certainly slide onto the broken slab when knocked or with further settlement.

vi) Cullicudden Stone “G” (page 2)

Stone G – right end of broken section being pressed deeper and left end rising further out of the ground.

Other stones considered for relocation

Several other stones of considerable interest are also weathering but their location seems to be providing a little more protection than the identified stones and it is <u>not</u> intended to relocate these at this time.

These include stones identified and described by RCAHMS as Cullicudden Stone “B” and Cullicudden Stone “F”.

They also include the Cullicudden “pierced hand and chalice” stone, the only stone specifically identified in the site scheduling: “The grave-slab bearing the pierced hand of Christ is a particularly rare survival.” This stone appears to be composed of more dense sandstone.

Alternatives to relocation

The Trust has carried out an appraisal of all options available for protecting and preserving these stones, including:

- Burial under mounds of soil. Most of the stones are currently sitting well above ground and exposed to weather and mechanical grass-cutting. The option of burial by use of mounded soil was considered, and has been attempted in the past. However, a) a considerable mound would be required as they sit proud of the surface, b) they would lose all their interpretational value, and c) the mound would seem incongruous and act as an obstacle to maintenance of the site. When tried before, the mounded soil over the stones eroded and the stones became re-exposed.

- Erection of wooden or plastic covers over vulnerable stones. However, this would not protect them from frost damage, and the solution would seriously compromise the visual amenity and context of the site.

- Treatment of the surface of the gravestones with a hardening solution. This would assist in protecting against weathering, but not against physical damage from grounds maintenance or toppling gravestones. And there is considerable reluctance from the Trust to alter physically the nature of the sandstone material of the gravestones. Moreover, these are relatively new conservation practices and the long term consequences of this approach are unknown.

- Creation of resin casts of the originals. This option is extremely costly, with a risk of damage to the original surface when the mould from which the resin cast would be made was removed.

- Carving of full size replica of each stone. This option is also extremely costly and would always be a modern version of the original.

The last two options would also result in our exhibiting something which was not authentic within Kirkmichael alongside authentic monuments already *in situ* and that too would be dissonant.

The Kirkmichael Trust has also been liaising with Dr Sally Foster at the University of Stirling and the Carved Stones Committee who have expressed interest in our project. We hope to address the Committee on our project's progress in the autumn. We would be keen for our Resolis Stones Collection project to be among the first to benefit from this new thinking about carved stones as a resource for the Highlands and for Scotland in general, due to be published in August 2016.

The considered view is therefore that the only long-term and sympathetic measure to give lasting protection to these stones is relocation to a safe site where their heritage value can be brought to life for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.

Methodology of relocation

This method statement has been developed utilising experience from successful gravestone relocations elsewhere, but may be varied with permission of Historic Environment Scotland if alternative methodologies are developed which are equally safe and sensitive.

The gravestones need to be relocated for their own protection, and their relocation gives a great opportunity to ensure that they can be sensitively displayed and fully appreciated. However, the operation needs to be carried out with the greatest of care, each step recorded and an archaeologist present at all times to record stone and soil as each stone is removed. It should be noted as earlier that each stone has been excavated all around in 1992 by the RCAHMS prior to photography (photography now held by HES).

Each slab will be moved as a separate operation. It is estimated from the known dimensions of the six pieces of sandstone, which has a typical mass of 2.32 tonnes per cubic metre, that the maximum weight of the heaviest piece will be 509 kg. The actual weight will be less, as the maximum dimensions of each slab have been used, but it is considered reasonable to over-estimate as a precautionary measure.

Kirkmichael “Tree Cross”: 1.83 m x 0.65 m x 0.170 m x 2320 kg/m^3 = **469 kg**
Cullicudden Stone “A”: 1.40 m x 0.47 m x 0.220 m x 2320 kg/m^3 = **336 kg**
Cullicudden Stone “C”: 2.03 m x 0.47 m x 0.230 m x 2320 kg/m^3 = **509 kg**
Cullicudden Stone “D”: 1.62 m x 0.53 m x 0.240 m x 2320 kg/m^3 = **478 kg**
Cullicudden Stone “E”: 1.94 m x 0.51 m x 0.185 m x 2320 kg/m^3 = **425 kg**
Cullicudden Stone “G” east portion: 1.19 m x 0.87 m x 0.180 m x 2320 kg/m^3 = **432 kg**
Cullicudden Stone “G” west portion: 1.00 m x 0.87 m x 0.180 m x 2320 kg/m^3 = **363 kg**

Each stone will be fully recorded in advance of its removal including archaeological assessment of the ground within which it is located. An archaeologist will be in attendance during relocation operations.

• Each section of the Cullicudden Stone “G” will be lifted and moved separately.

• A rigid carrying frame comprising a sheet of 4 cm thick plywood on a frame of 10x10 cm timbers at 30 cm spacing and covered in 60 mm (two layers of 30 mm) Plastazote will be placed adjacent to the stone being lifted. Multiple points of lifting at every operation will be utilised to spread the load so that there is no risk of damage. One long side of the slab will be raised by hand by eight volunteers 20 cm and propped at multiple points by timber topped with 30 mm Plastazote. The underside will be photographed and inspected to confirm soundness. If a problem is evident, the stone will be lowered back into place and an alternative methodology developed. If sound, the opposing side will be lifted at multiple points and timbers overlaid with 30 mm Plastazote placed horizontally under the slab at 30 cm intervals. The slab will then be slid sideways onto the carrying frame. A frame will be built around the slab, with a layer of 30 mm Plastazote firmly between edge of frame and edge of slab to prevent movement or abrasion on three sides, and on the fourth, basal, edge, 60 mm Plastazote.

• A slab of similar length and width with an inconspicuous plaque or engraving recording the date of removal of the original stone and its new location will replace the existing slabs.

• Specialist gravestone moving equipment will be used to shift the enclosed slab to the car park of the graveyard where it will be lifted for vehicular transport to Kirkmichael, where the reverse process will be utilised to carry it into the Gun Munro Mausoleum. The Highland Council’s

graveyard maintenance service has specialist heavy duty gravestone moving equipment and has offered to provide assistance in this exercise.

• a supporting timber will be passed above the new rafters of the mausoleum, and the frame will be lifted by hoist to stand erect on one end beside its mounting location. The rear of the frame will be deconstructed, leaving the slab held by the front and base of the frame. The slab will then be slid backwards into its resting place.

• stainless steel mounts padded with Plastazote will hold the slabs in place, two to the base of each slab, and two to each side of all the stones except for the re-joined Cullicudden Stone “G” which will be held by four to each side.

• each slab will be provided with accompanying interpretation, indicating how it would have looked on site, along with notes on the slab’s history and significance.

• strong lighting directed at a shallow angle will increase the contrast and visibility of the carving. Specialist input will be brought in to maximise effect. Lighting will be on a time switch and activated by movement.

• the surface of the slab will be left for a month to allow moss to die off and will then be carefully brushed with a soft brush to remove dead moss. No fragments will be detached, but any which are loose will be retained in a labelled container lest they be needed in future conservation work on the slab. No chemicals will be used and no scrubbing or scraping will be permitted.

The Gun Munro mausoleum site, on which building works are at present (July 2016) just starting, will be free from rain and frost (low level heating is to be provided), and public access will be encouraged, thereby ensuring that these stones, instead of being permanently lost through deterioration and damage, will form a permanent heritage resource to be appreciated and enjoyed by present and future generations.

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