

## Stirling Castle Royal Initials Proposals

### Background

Three sets of royal initials are carved into copes on the wallwalk in the Douglas Gardens. These correspond with royal visits to the castle. HES Cultural Resources Team provided the following information:

**V. R. 1842** – commemorating a visit by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in September 1842. This was when Victoria gave orders for the King's Knot to be restored. She wrote in her diary, *"We were shown the room in which James IInd killed Douglas & the window out of which he was thrown; the ceiling of the room is very curious."*

**A. P. of W. 1859.** – referring to His Highness Prince Albert (later Edward VII) who was responsible for transferring maintenance of Stirling Castle to the Office of Works in 1906.

**GR v MR 1914** – commemorating a visit by King George V and Queen Mary on 11 July 1914.

**H.P.A.** – recalls the visit of the Duke & Duchess of York to Stirling Castle on 10 August 1928. The Duke of York was the future George VI, known then as Albert or 'Bertie'.

As the Castle was a military barracks throughout these visits, it seems likely that the carvings were done by the military, though there is no known documentation of this.

### Recent history

HES Applied Conservation have regularly reported to HES Conservation on the condition of the carved royal initials since about 2013. Perspex covers, causing harmful build-up of moisture, were removed in 2014. Moulds were taken and urethane resin casts produced, pigmented to match the original surfaces. It was suggested that these could be fitted into the lettering, for protection or interpretation (see Conservator's Report page 7). Unfortunately, due to pressure of work elsewhere at the Castle and limitations of resources, no action was taken and the stones have since deteriorated significantly, due to water accumulation, delamination and wear-and-tear from visitors touching them. The casts contain detail that is now weathered off and these could be laser-scanned to enable more accurate carving of new stones.

### Proposals for SMC

It is proposed that the existing stones be permanently removed from the wallwalk, as they have degraded beyond reasonable legibility or the possibility of conservation for an external context.

Firstly, the stones will be taken to the Applied Conservation workshop for conservation with acrylic repair mortar. Following this, they will be taken into care by HES Collections, who have agreed in principle, as per the HES Acquisitions Policy 2.2.1a and the HES Fabric Retention Guidelines. The stones will be displayed if their physical condition allows, potentially in the Transe under the Great Hall (where display mounts for three stones are already in situ but empty). If the stones are not fit to display they will be kept in storage, with other fragments in Collections.

Replica cope stones will be carved, using an appropriate matching stone type and the laser scan of the moulds. Due to sequencing and resources, it may be necessary to remove the existing copes (to prevent further degradation), install plain stone copes temporarily, then install the newly carved replicas once these are ready.

HES Interpretation are aware of the above proposals and are willing to provide interpretation. It has not been decided whether interpretation panels should be erected near the replicas, or near the displayed originals in the Transe, or in both locations. Any new panels and associated fixings will be the subject of a later SMC.