

# The Lost Art of the Picts

## A Survey of Pictish Symbol Stones in Eastern Scotland

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### Project Aims

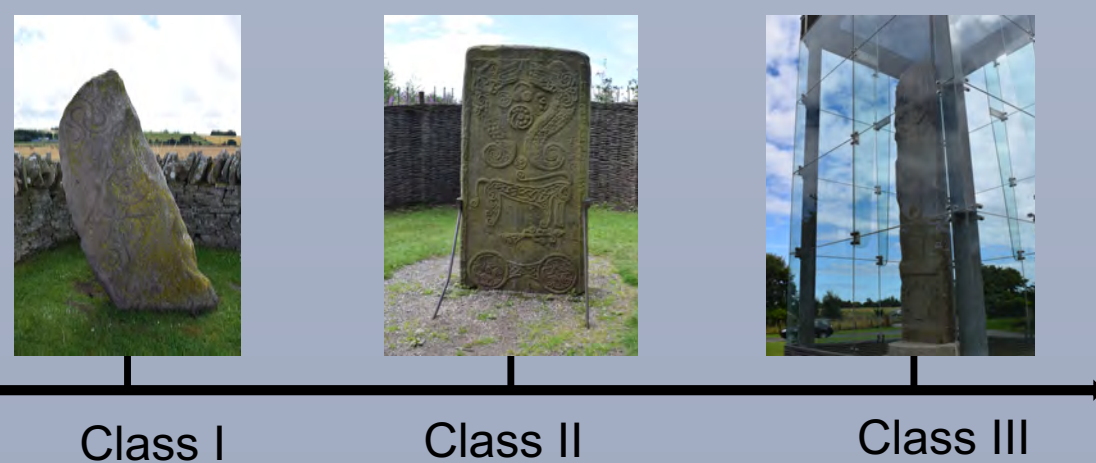
- To conduct a photogrammetry survey of a sample of Pictish symbol stones from the Moray and Aberdeenshire regions of Scotland
- To develop an online database to allow anyone to view the stones in detail

### Who were the Picts?

- The Picts were a group of people living in Scotland in the Late Iron Age and Early Medieval Period.
- They left no written records so much of what we know about them comes from archaeology.

### The Pictish Symbol Stones

- One legacy left by the Picts is the variety of carved stones spread across the Scottish landscape from the 5<sup>th</sup> century.



- The Class I and II stones feature a series of symbols, carved in a consistent way all across Pictland. The Class I stones are the earliest with the Class II slabs beginning to take on crosses and Christian images in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. These were the stones I focused on in my survey.
- These symbols include the mysterious Pictish beast, mirrors, serpents and in some areas images of birds and fish. More recent stones also depict battle scenes alongside ornate crosses.
- Some of the most common symbols are the z- and v-rods which can be seen on the Class II stone from Aberlemno (right). While their meaning is unknown they have been interpreted as broken spears or arrows representing the death while the crescents and discs associated with them may represent the sky or marriage.
- The Class III stones are cross slabs and grave markers and feature predominantly Christian carvings rather than the Pictish symbols.

### Why is it important to record them?

- These stones are spread out across the landscape and are left exposed to damage.
- Some stones are protected by glass cases or have been moved to museums or churches for protection.
- By moving the stones, however, their context is lost- their significance comes from their place in the landscape as well as their decoration.
- Some solutions to this include careful recording or, when stones must be moved, the placement of replicas in their previous position.



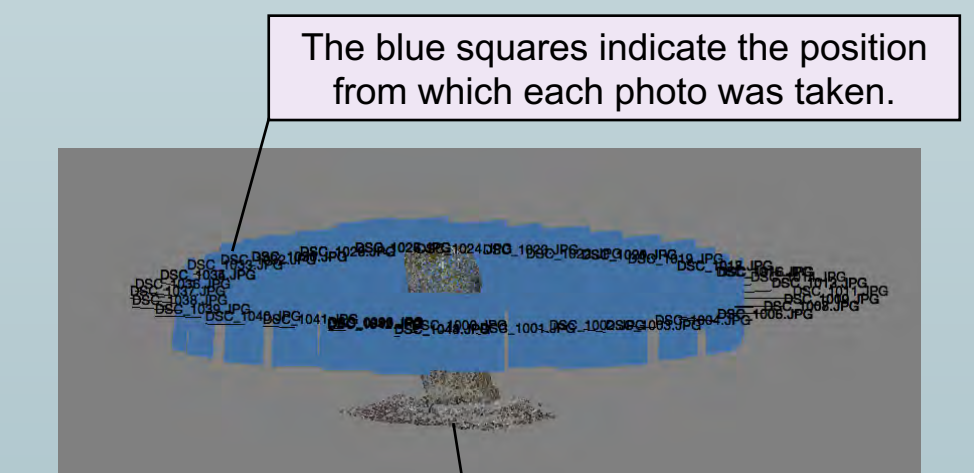
### What is Photogrammetry?

- Photogrammetry is a way of creating 3D images from photographs.
- It is much cheaper than using a 3D scanner but needs high quality photographs and specialist software.
- It allows a high level of detail to be captured and therefore a greater amount of information about the stone to be seen and preserved.



1

Overlapping pictures have to be taken at all angles of the stone.



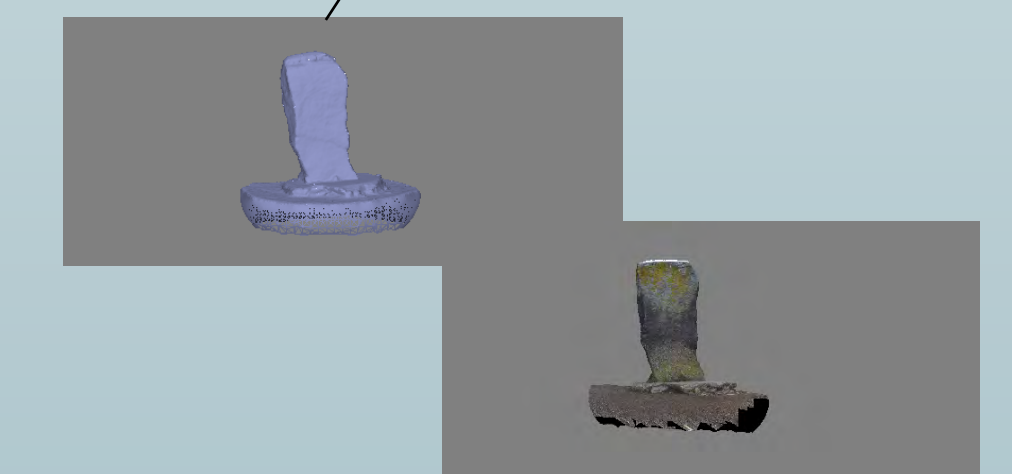
2

The software identifies how the photos match and creates a series of points.



3

These points can then be used to create a more detailed point cloud.

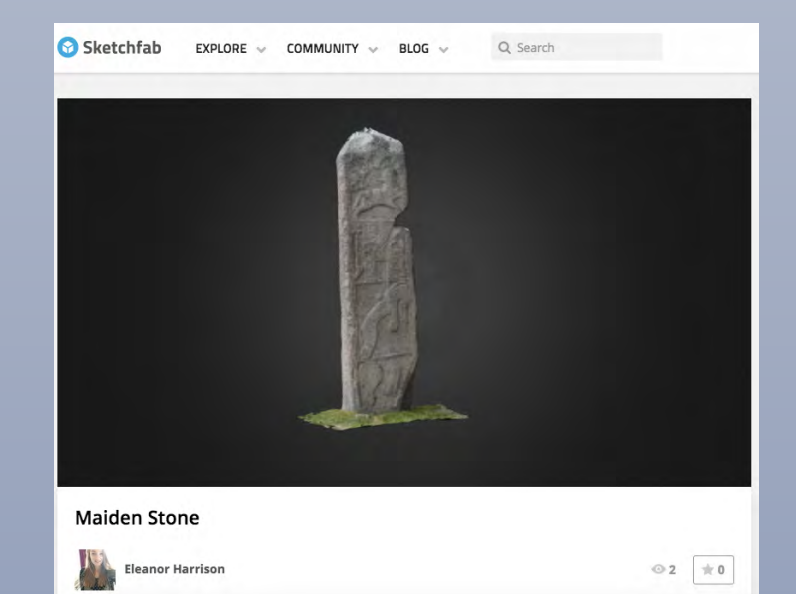


4

Textures taken from the photos are added back onto the model.

- The final step of the project was to upload the finished models onto Sketchfab.
- The website is free to use, although a professional membership is required to upload models in their full resolution.
- The models are accompanied by a small piece of information about each one and identification of the key symbols visible on the stone.

5



To view the models visit:  
[www.sketchfab.com/egharrison/models](http://www.sketchfab.com/egharrison/models)