

AN INTRODUCTION TO SCOTLAND'S ROCK ART PROJECT (ScRAP)



Figure 1 Cupmarks and cup-and-ring motifs are typical of prehistoric rock art in Scotland.

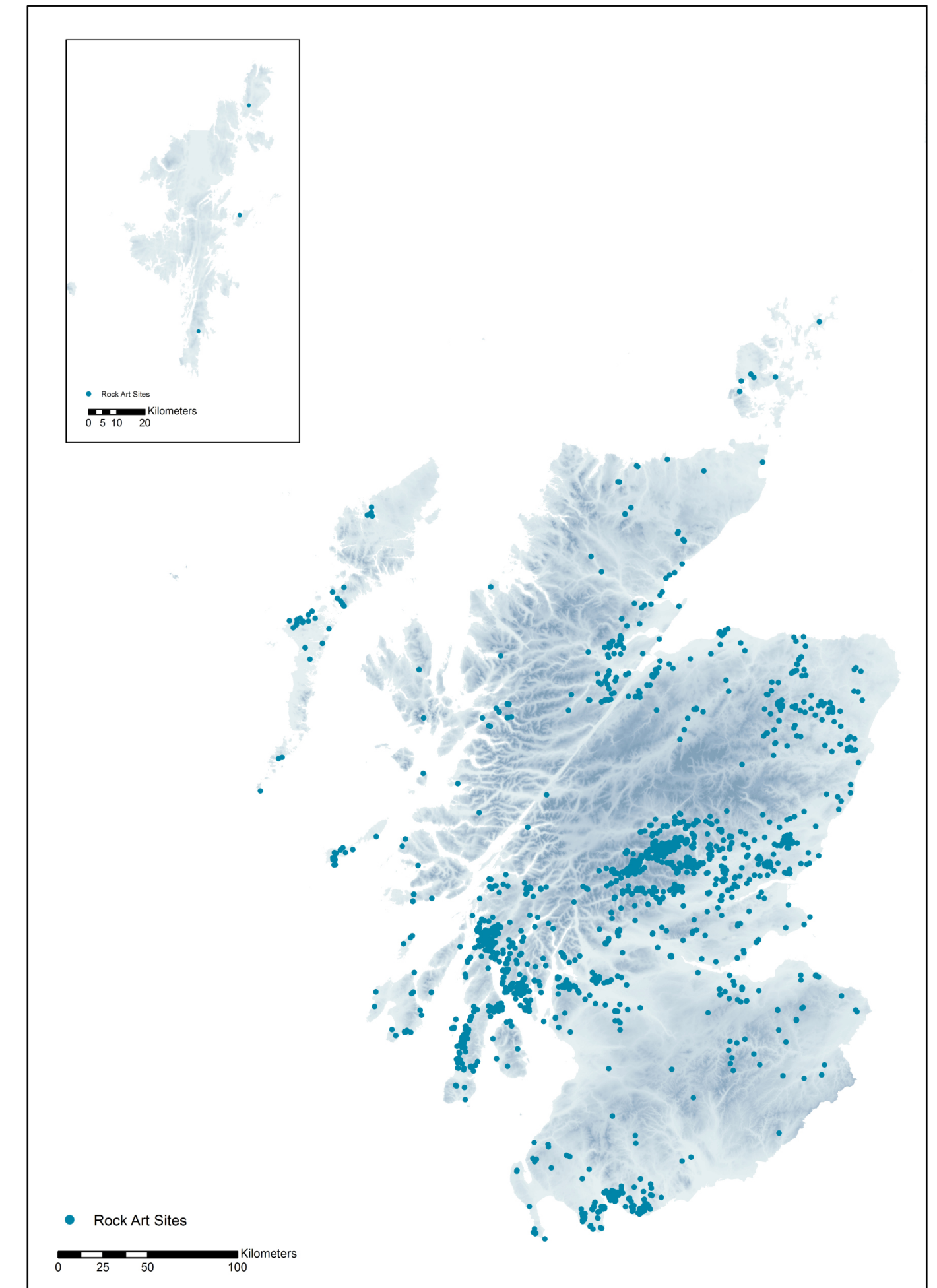


Figure 2 Rock Art distribution in Scotland

Scotland's Rock Art

Scotland's prehistoric rock art is part of a broader tradition, generally termed "Atlantic Rock Art", which shares a number of features with other European countries on the western seaboard. The iconography is mainly geometric and abstract, based on cupmarks, often surrounded by concentric circles (cup and ring marks), and linear grooves. There are numerous variations on these themes, such as pennanulars (a central cupmark surrounded by gapped rings), rosettes (a circular arrangement of cupmarks often surrounded by a ring), and spirals.

These symbols often occur isolated on a rock surface but can also be combined in complex designs. In many instances they interact with natural features - hollows, crevices and cracks, or raised areas of the rocks. Since there are regional preferences regarding the types and combinations of motifs used across Scotland, one of our aims is to explore how rock art varies in different regions and places in the landscape.

It is currently accepted that Atlantic Rock Art was originally created by early farming communities in the Neolithic (c.4000-2200 BC in Britain). It appears to have continued in use into the Early Bronze Age (c.2200-1800 BC), when fragments of decorated rocks were often incorporated into the structure of funerary monuments such as cairns and cists.



Figure 3 Training community teams in Dumfries and Galloway.



Figure 4 Volunteers recording rock art in Dumfries and Galloway.

The Project

Prehistoric rock art was first identified in Scotland in the 19th century, and over 2800 carved rocks have since been recorded. However, they have never been systematically studied, and there are still significant gaps in our understanding. Issues such as difficult access, the abstract nature of the motifs, and the lack of a consistent record, also hinder thorough and large-scale investigations. Scotland's Rock Art Project (ScRAP) is a research and community-led project, working closely with local Community Teams to carry out detailed research on Scotland's prehistoric carvings. Our main aim is to build a comprehensive, publicly accessible dataset that will enable us to pursue our research questions and raise awareness of the rock art.

Research Themes

The main themes for our investigation are:

1. to analyse the relationship between rock art and landscape (natural and built features, land use, geology, landmarks, etc.);
2. to assess the re-use of prehistoric carvings over time, as many are found in later sites (e.g. Iron Age souterrains, Pictish carved stones, etc.);
3. to understand the social value of rock art today (i.e. contemporary perceptions of rock art; how is it valued; how people engage with it and what it means to them).

Methodology

In order to conduct such a large-scale project and carry out regional comparisons it is essential that we apply a systematic methodology across the whole study area. Our fieldwork methods include text-based recording forms, field sketches, photography and photogrammetry (3D modelling).

In collaboration with our Community Teams, we are currently re-visiting known rocks, and surveying areas where rock art has not yet been identified. We are rectifying incorrect data and making detailed records of all rock carvings we identify. This includes systematic 3D modelling of all the rock surfaces (Figure 5) in order to capture an accurate record of the carvings, and to investigate the rock art features and their relationship with the rock surfaces.

Check our website for more details on the project:

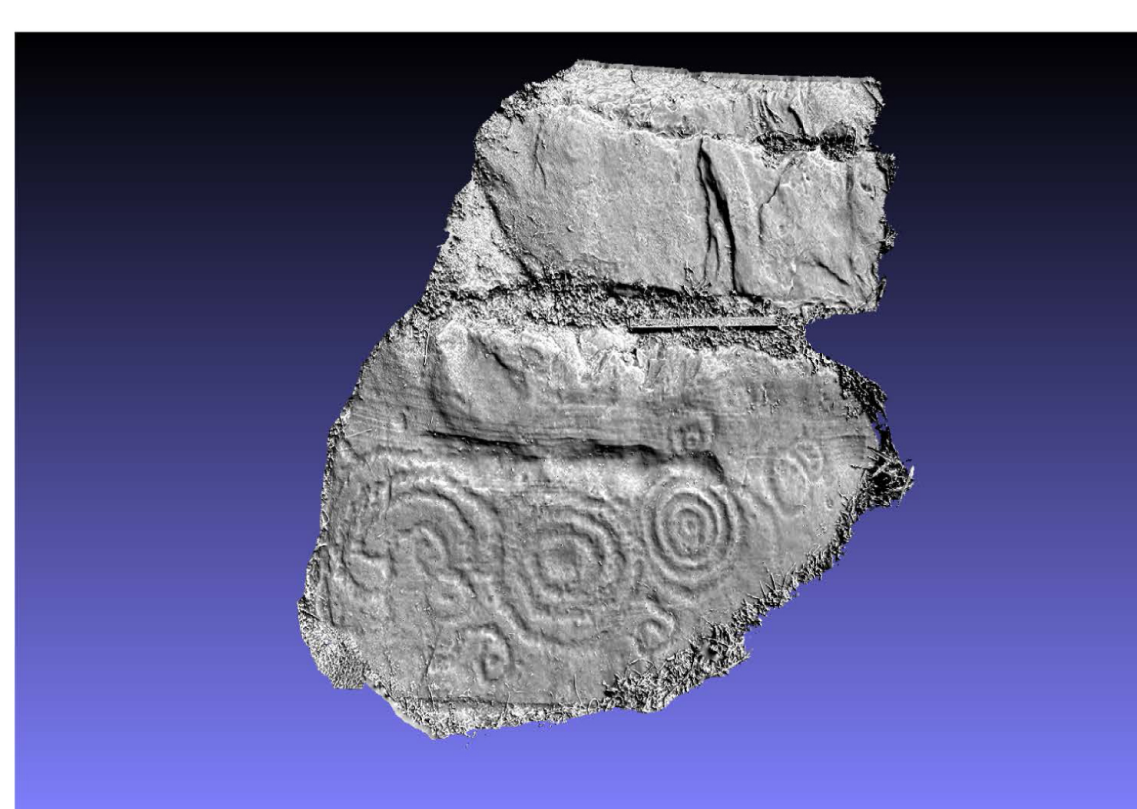
www.rockart.scot

About Us

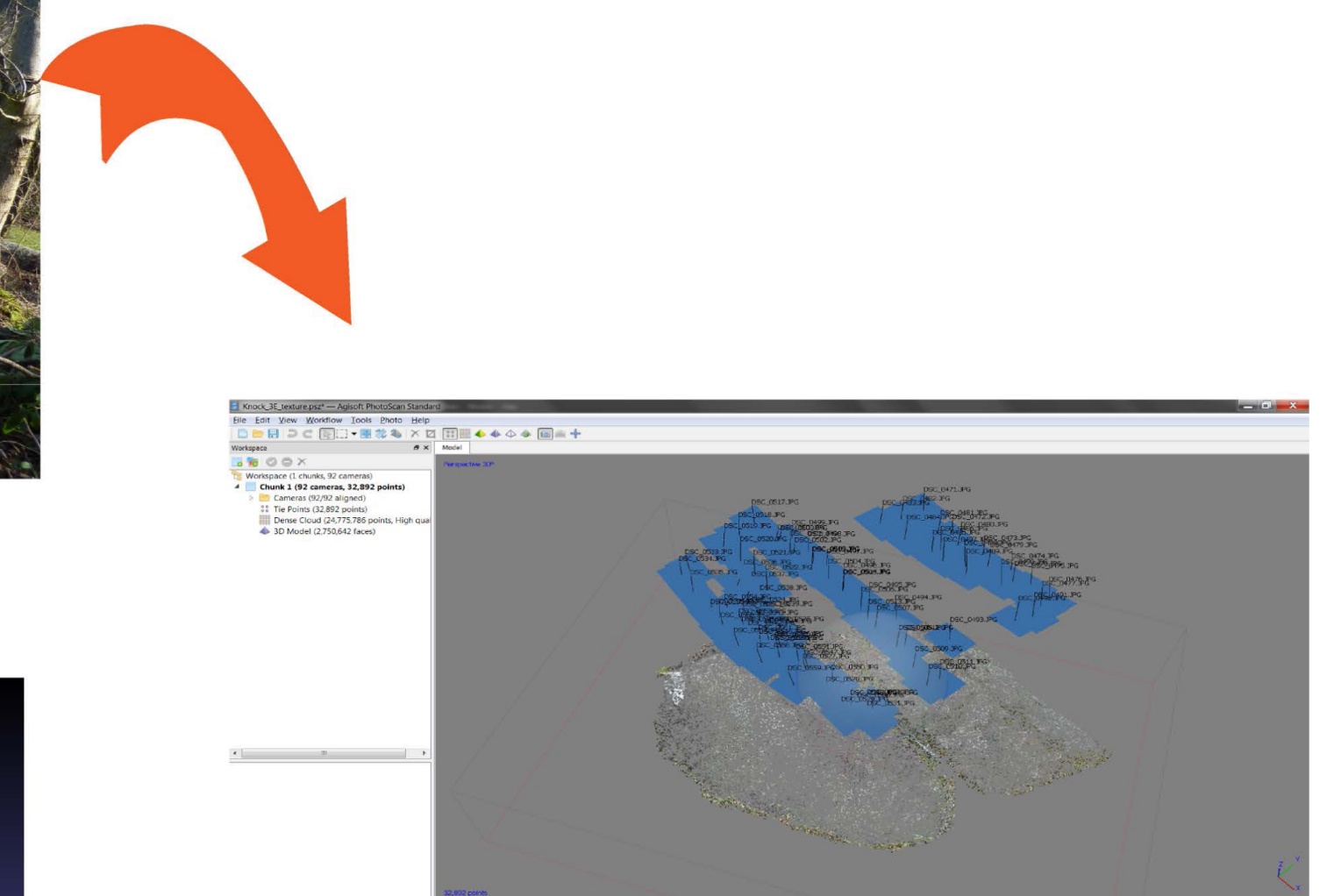
Scotland's Rock Art Project (ScRAP) is the first large scale research project focusing on the prehistoric rock art of Scotland. It will run for 5 years (2017-2021) funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and hosted by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh and Glasgow School of Art School of Simulation and Visualisation (SimVis).



Photographic Survey



Final 3D Model visualised with Meshlab



Processing in dedicated software

Figure 5 3D Modelling process