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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DRUMTRODDAN CUP AND RING MARKED ROCKS



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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DRUMTRODDAN CUP-MARKED ROCKS

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The Cup-marked Rocks are located to the south of Drumtroddan Farm, off the B7085, south-west of Wigtown.

The monument comprises a set of three groups of cup-and-ring-marked rocks likely to be of late Neolithic/early Bronze Age date.

The monument lies within three small fenced enclosures, two close to the farm in pasture, and a third within a small copse a little to the south-west of the farm. It comprises a number of flat stone outcrops bearing carved cup-and-ring marks. The carvings consist of simple cups, or cups surrounded by up to six concentric rings. Some of the rings are complete, while others are incomplete or gapped. The rings measure up to about 40cm in diameter, and several of the cup marks are joined by connecting grooves.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview

This monument features characteristic rock art of the Neolithic or Bronze Age. The span of such monuments runs from the 4th to 1st millennia BC. They have been dated elsewhere by their association with contemporary structures, notably standing stones and tombs.

There are important groups of cup-and-ring markings in Galloway, Argyll, eastern Scotland and north-east England.

Similar rock art occurs in north-west Spain and in Brittany, as well as in Ireland, where especially complex rock art has been recorded in the Boyne Valley.

The best argued explanation of such monuments is as territorial markers. They are usually sited in conspicuous locations with good views.

This site came into care from Sir Herbert Maxwell in 1931 as part of a group which included the Drumtroddan standing stones and Big Balcraig cup-and-ring marked stones.

Archaeological Overview

This monument represents a clear indication of the existence of Neolithic or Bronze Age communities within this area.

The surrounding prehistoric landscape is little understood, and much could be learnt regarding contemporary land use and environment.

Artistic/Architectural Overview

The designs were carefully executed using hard stone tools to create cups, rings and spirals of varying geometric qualities.

The meaning of this form of artistic expression is entirely lost, and is unlikely ever to be retrieved.

Social Overview

Some individuals are devoted to deciphering the meaning of these symbols.

More than 100 theories exist to explain their meaning and use. These include connections with mapping, metal prospecting, and prehistoric belief systems.

Spiritual Overview

In 1990 an incident took place in which the carvings were coloured in and photographed. Although potentially damaging to the stones, this indicates that a transcendent artistic value has been read into the carvings in modern times.

Aesthetic Overview

This form of rock art can be recognised and appreciated today.

An appreciation of this art might be aided by analogy with rock art from other parts of the world. The strongly geometric use of pattern within Australian aboriginal art, for example, is reminiscent of these carvings.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

The contemporary meaning and significance of this monument, and this form of rock art, is not understood, and may never be understood.

We understand little of contemporary life within the surrounding landscape.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key Points

This monument is a good example of this distinctive regional group of rock art of the late Neolithic and Bronze Age.

This is one of the most visible legacies of these people to survive within the landscape.

The markings are likely to have had a more immediate and practical use to the people who cut them, compared to the practical value applied to most 'art' in a modern context. 'Art' may be an unhelpful term in this context.

This form of rock art was a common form of artistic expression of communities distributed over a wide area of Atlantic Europe. Analogies with other forms of traditional art suggest that common meanings were being expressed. This rock art has the potential to inform us of the part that rock art played within this prehistoric society.

Associated Properties

Drumtroddan standing stones; Big Balcraig; Cairnholy; Kilmartin Glen

Keywords

cup-and-ring markings; prehistoric rock art; carved stones