

# Kilmartin Museum and Archaeology Scotland unearth enigmatic prehistoric rock art in Kilmartin Glen



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Argyll & Bute, September 2023 – A collaborative project between Kilmartin Museum and Archaeology Scotland will shed new light on Scotland's prehistoric rock art in the Kilmartin Glen area.

This joint initiative, supported by **The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic Environment Scotland, and landowner Rosemary Neagle**, kicks off at **Carnasserie Farm** in Argyll & Bute from **18 September to 29 September 2023** (excluding Monday, 23 September).

The project will see archaeologists, students, and volunteers coming together to investigate rock art panels at Carnasserie Farm. It will contribute to Kilmartin Museum's Community Archaeology Programme, a major activity which is part of the Museum's ongoing Redevelopment Project. The initiative aligns with the objectives approved by The National Lottery Heritage Fund highlighting the importance of community engagement and participatory archaeology.

**Carnasserie Farm** lies in the renowned prehistoric landscape of Kilmartin Glen, known for its **Neolithic and Bronze Age archaeology**. The area features an unusually high concentration of carvings, characterised by cup and ring motifs, which have long fascinated researchers and the public alike. They are thought to have been created between four and five thousand years ago, although the meaning of these abstract patterns has long been a subject of intrigue and speculation.

The project will focus on three rock art sites within the farm, which is strategically located at the crossroads of ancient routes. This unique positioning allows the relationship between rock art, routeways, nearby monuments, and the broader landscape to be studied.

Activities will include recording and conservation work, and the ground surrounding the carvings will be carefully excavated by hand. Kilmartin Museum's collections feature remarkable artefacts found during previous research at sites in the area, including rare examples of quartz hammerstones used to make similar markings. If the Carnasserie excavations reveal comparable evidence, there is potential for this to date the creation of the carvings, or it may be associated with environmental evidence which can help determine the landscape's appearance. The team will also collaborate with experts from the **University of Glasgow** to employ techniques such as **p-XRF and Raman Spectroscopy** to try and determine whether pigments were applied to the rocks.

**This project is committed to fostering community engagement and inclusivity.** It provides valuable training opportunities in archaeological excavation for participants, including New Scots and underrepresented groups in archaeology, local school groups, and volunteers.

In alignment with **Scottish Archaeology Month**, the national archaeology festival taking place each year all over Scotland during September, the project's **Open Day scheduled for Saturday, 23 September 2023**, will offer guided tours at 10:30 am and 1:30 pm, inviting the public to witness the excavation process first-hand and learn about the cultural significance of these ancient rock art panels. School visits during both weeks and a visit from a local Girl Guides group on 24 September will further enhance community involvement.

The Carnasserie Farm project aims to answer important questions about Scotland's prehistoric past. By examining rock art within its broader landscape context and by engaging the local community, this initiative will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Neolithic and Bronze Age societies, their beliefs, and their interactions with the world around them.