Able Minds and Practised Hands:
Scotland’s Early Medieval Sculpture
in the 21st Century
Edited by Sally M Foster and Morag Cross
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One hundred years on from J Romilly Allen and Joseph Anderson’s 1903 landmark publication, The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland, twenty six essays explore the current state of knowledge of early medieval sculpture in Scotland. They demonstrate the unique value of this material in contributing to our understanding of the society and people that created it between 1000 to 1500 years ago. Today’s approaches and techniques offer new insights, as well as great hope, for what might be learnt from future study of ‘familiar’ and new material alike.

The essays exemplify the ever-diversifying, interdisciplinary approaches that are being taken to the study of early medieval sculpture. Key themes that emerge include: the interdependence of conservation, research and access; the need for a 21st-century inventory of the sculpture; the breadth and value of the wide range of the research tools that now exist; conservation issues, including the politics of how and where sculpture should be protected, and the pressing need to identify priorities for action; and, what is probably the most important development over the last 100 years, the increase in awareness of the range of values and significances that attaches to early medieval sculpture, including appreciation of context.

CONTRIBUTIONS INCLUDE:
Sculpture in action: contexts for stone carving on the Tarbat peninsula, Easter Ross, Martin Carver
‘The stone was born here and that’s where it belongs’: Hilton of Cadboll and the negotiation of identity, ownership and belonging, Siân Jones
‘Just an ald steen’: reverence, reuse, revulsion and rediscovery, Iain Fraser
Fragments of significance: the whole picture, Isabel Henderson
HIC MEMORIA PERPETUA: the early inscribed stones of southern Scotland in context, Katherine Forsyth
The Govan School revisited: searching for meaning in the early medieval sculpture of Strathclyde, Stephen T Driscoll, Oliver O’Grady and Katherine Forsyth
The runic inscriptions of Scotland: preservation, documentation and interpretation, Michael P Barnes and R I Page
Figuring Salvation: an excursus into the iconography of the Iona crosses, Jane Hawkes
The role of geological analysis of monuments: a case study from St Vigeans and related sites, Suzanne Miller and Nigel A Ruckley
The early medieval sculptures from Murthly, Perth and Kinross: an interdisciplinary look at people, politics and monumental art, Mark A Hall, Isabel Henderson and Ian G Scott
The missing dimension: future directions in digital recording of early medieval sculptured stone, Stuart Jeffrey

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