

Recording Images Old and New on the Calderstones in Liverpool

George Nash¹ and Adam Stanford²

Abstract

Between late 2007 and early 2008 the authors were commissioned by Merseyside Archaeology Society to [digitally] record photographically the rock-art on the Calderstones, a destroyed passage grave dating to the Neolithic period. The site, originally located immediately outside the Calderstones Park in Liverpool, had recently witnessed a rather turbulent history. Following destruction of the site in the early 19th century, six stones (along with probably other stones) were erected within a traffic island immediately outside the park boundary in the early 20th century. By 1964 the stones, made from local soft sandstone were erected in a glass pagoda in Calderstones Park. However, inspection by one of the authors in 2005 revealed that the stones had deteriorated significantly, due mainly to poor climate control and moisture levels within the pagoda. It was therefore considered that a programme of recording and conservation would be required in the near future. Using several tried and tested photographic methodologies each of the thirteen faces that belonged to the six highly decorated stones was photographed. The carved imagery included megalithic art, cupmarks, medieval and post-medieval textual and representative graffiti. This paper describes the recent history of the site and the discoveries made from the two photography sessions that took place in the winter of 2007.

Key words: *Calderstones, graffiti, megalithic, Neolithic, rock-art, sandstone*

Introduction

The passage grave tradition, including the Calderstones monument, has its origins in the Iberian Peninsula and commences during the late 5th millennium BC. Associated within this phenomenon is megalithic art. This unique and predominantly abstract rock-art tradition appears to have migrated northwards along the Atlantic seaboard into Brittany and later into central and northern Ireland (Shee-Twohig 1981; O'Sullivan 1986, 1993). Within the core passage grave areas of Europe, megalithic art is usually present, although not in central southern Sweden. Megalithic art, consisting of geometric and curvilinear designs, is arranged in numerous panel sequences. Motifs include chevrons, concentric circles, diamonds, multiple lines, spirals, triangles and zigzags. In addition to these motifs cupmarks are also present. These particular designs are also found on other monument types and landscapes and have a much wider chronological

distribution and provenance (for example Waddington *et al.* 2004, Nash 2007). Interestingly, the Calderstones has megalithic art and cupmarks, each probably representing two distinct phases. Also incorporated onto these stones is an array of other motifs that are dated much later.

The Calderstones, now comprising six highly decorative stones (Stones A to F) is one of three major sites in England and Wales that form the eastern extent of the Late Neolithic passage grave tradition (*c.* 3,000 – 2,000 *cal.* BC).³ The other two monuments, Barclodiad y Gawres and Bryn Celli Ddu, are located in Anglesey, North Wales. These three monuments along with probably eleven others in Scotland (and Orkney) probably mark the (eastern and northern) demise of the megalithic art tradition in Western Europe. North Wales and western Scotland can also be considered as mutual trading areas of what is sometimes termed as the *Irish Sea Province* (Herity 1970; Lynch 1967, 1969). Each of the three monuments boasts a unique rock-art assemblage. Barclodiad y Gawres and Bryn Celli Ddu were excavated in the early- to mid-20th century. However, at the time of writing this paper there are no radiocarbon dates so far to determine the pre-construction, use and abandonment phases of these monuments (Daniel 1950; Powell and Daniel 1956; Hemp 1926; Hemp 1930). It is more than probable that the Anglesey monuments were constructed sometime after the monuments in the Boyne Valley in Ireland were built. Many of the architectural traits and rock-art designs from the Irish monuments appear to have been incorporated into the two Anglesey monuments (Lynch 1970) suggesting some form of contact and exchange was ongoing whilst both sets of monuments were in use. The rock-art, although restricted to just two stones at Bryn Celli Ddu, is in abundance at Barclodiad y Gawres and the Calderstones.

The later history of the Calderstones site, the destruction of the monument and re-erection of the surviving stones has been discussed in detail by Cowell and Warhurst (1984) and Cowell (2008) with a more cohesive narrative by Royden (web page). Antiquarian accounts, important in understanding the stones origins, include Ecroyd Smith (1868) Simpson (1866), Romilly Allen (1888) and Hand (1915). Prior to its present location, within a pagoda in Calderstones Park (Fig. 1), the stones were once erected within a traffic island immediately east of the park's main gates (Plate 1)⁴, and before this the site was probably sited within a few metres of the traffic island (which incidentally still stands). The surviving stones that form the Calderstones monument arguably have the most elaborately carved decoration of the three southern British passage grave monuments and the rock-art appears to constitute at least five chronological phases, the earliest dating to probably

¹ Department of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Bristol, England and The Museum of Prehistoric Art, Mação, Portugal.

² Archaeology Safaris and Aerial-Cam, Tewksbury, Gloucestershire.

³ The date range employed in this paper extends from the Late Neolithic into the Early Bronze Age. We assume that the transition is variable both spatially and temporally.

⁴ See Roberts, this volume.

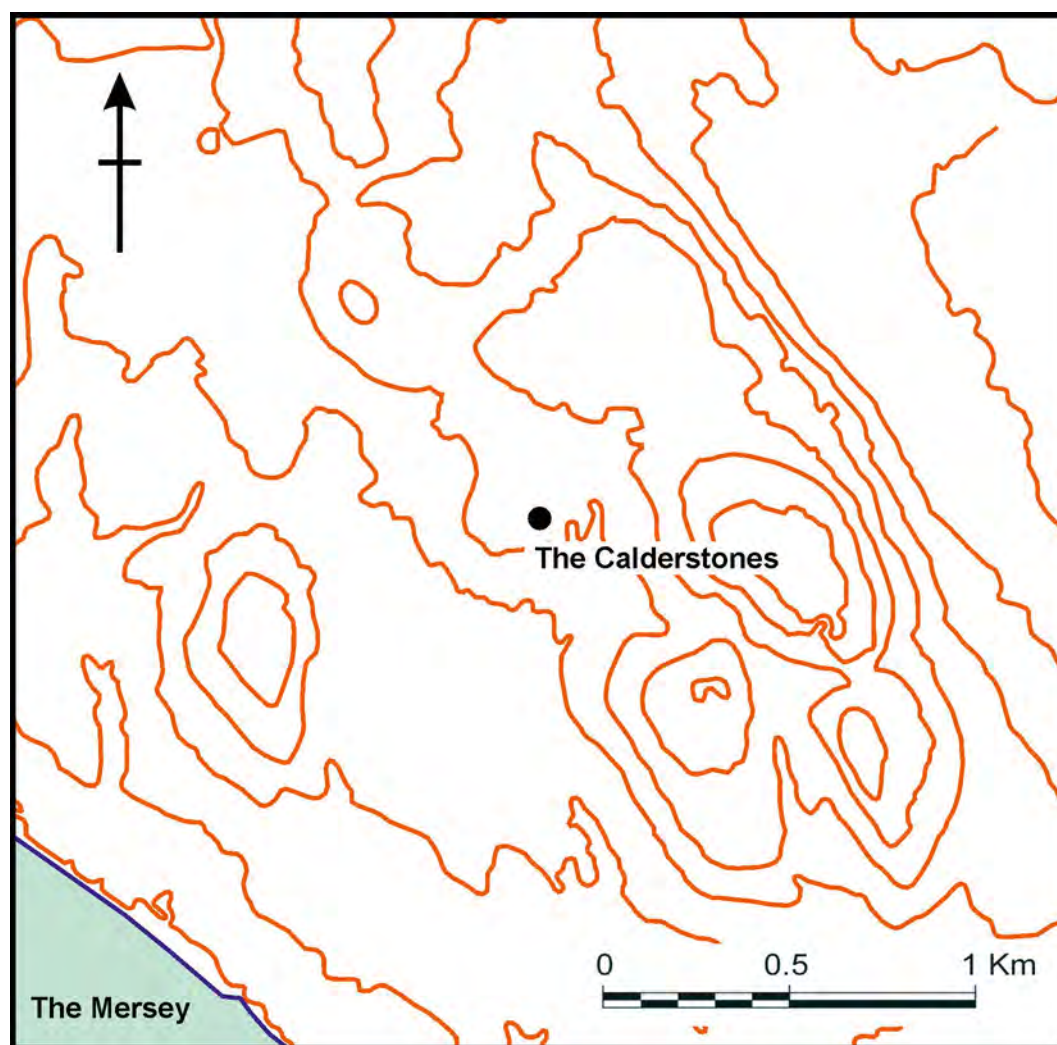


Figure 1. Location of the Calderstones monument (drawn by Abby George).

the Late Neolithic and the latest to the 20th century.

The prehistoric rock-art is mainly abstract in form comprising concentric circles, cup-and-rings, cupmarks, grooved lines and spirals. These images date to the Neolithic period and are generically referred to as *megalithic art*. Also present on three stones, are eight footprints that date from the same era (on Stones A, B and E). Due to the poor conservation conditions the rock surfaces are severely weathered and a number of images are now difficult to determine. Associated with the megalithic designs are a series of cupmarks that possibly date to the Bronze Age. Further rock-art including a medieval church, 19th-century shoeprints and modern textural graffiti represents the three other carving phases.

Contextualising the Calderstones

The first in-depth recording of the Calderstones was undertaken by J. Y. Simpson (1866) who produced a series

of lithographic prints for each of the six stones. In the mid 1950s Forde-Johnston produced the first set of detailed drawn plans of the stones (1957). However, omitted from these plans were cupmarks and the historic graffiti.⁵ Prior to this some referencing to the stones was made by Forde-Johnston when describing the artistic styles between these stones with those at Barclodiad y Gawres (1956). Since this initial pictorial record, Shee-Twohig (1981), Cowell (1991), Cowell and Warhurst (1984), Cowell (2008) and Nash (2006, 2007) have undertaken superficial discussions using the Forde-Johnston set of images.

Although only six stones from the Calderstones monument survive, it is more than likely that other decorated stones existed, either inside or outside the park. It is not clear where the surviving stones were positioned within the monument's architecture. There are however several clues that are to be found within the composition of two early 19th-century engravings, one dating to October 11th 1825, the other *circa*. 1840 (Figs 2 and 3). Both engravings focus on the Calderstones monument

⁵ The cupmarks record was also omitted by Shee-Twohig (1981).



Plate 1. View of the Calderstones, dated 1905; the multiple cupmarks on Stone C are clearly visible.

that at that time was in a denuded state; both also assist in geographically locating the monument in relation to other landscape features such as nearby Childwall Hall and several of the five converging roads/lanes where it once stood (see Roberts, this volume). Incorporated into both compositions are the stone settings and on several stones the engraver has inscribed recognisable megalithic art (such as a large spiral on the 1840 engraving). In addition, several stones with distinguishable shapes can also be identified including probably Stones A and B. From the limited rock-art present on the engravings plus the shape and location of the stones, one can tentatively construct sections of the original passage and chamber of the Calderstones monument. Stones A and B probably represent the uprights belonging to the chamber. One of the authors has stated previously that the strategic location of particular decorated stones would have been important to the users of the monument especially in terms of *reading* a semiotic narrative – that is, moving through the monument and reading each stone and assuming that each motif has a particular meaning (Nash 2006, 2007).

Recording and interpretation

Due to the fragile nature of the stones, the recording was restricted to non-contact methods. One of the authors had reported in 2005 that the six stones had suffered

long-term ground moisture percolation and penetration.⁶ This process, ongoing for the past 40 years or more has created cavities or pockets underneath the surface of certain stones. Several of the panels or what we term as *faces* had suffered from this process. The fluctuating temperatures within the pagoda had also assisted in their deterioration. Furthermore, in the recent past the pagoda had been a target of systematic vandalism and nearly all the stones had been inscribed with textual graffiti.

The methods employed for our photographic survey included daylight and night-time photography.⁷ The results of the daylight phase, although detailed enough to expose for analysis the major designs on each stone, did not fully expose all the imagery. However, the night-time sessions did reveal greater detail for all previously known imagery as well as identifying new motifs. The night-time photographic method, referred to as *painting the rocks*, employed a high resolution digital camera set on a tripod. The camera was set on a fixed exposure and aperture whilst a halogen light was obliquely aimed at the rock face (Plates 2).

The oblique angle optimised the shadows cast from the rock-art motifs, even those motifs that were heavily

⁶ Conservation Technologies Team from the Museum of Liverpool prepared an action plan for the conservation of the stones in 2005. English Heritage was also informed of their current state of preservation. A proposal to laser-scan each stones was considered.

⁷ Also used infra-red photography, alas with little success.



Figure 2. Early 19th-century engravings of the destroyed Calderstones monument, dated 11th October 1825 (engraving by William Latham).



Figure 3. 19th-century engravings of the destroyed Calderstones monument circa 1840 (engraving by T. Lindsay Aspland).



Plate 2. *Painting the stones; photographing the imagery during darkness hours.*

eroded. In order to focus on the rock-art panel and to eliminate any background and foreground material, several boards were strategically placed which rebounded the light source directly to shine obliquely across onto the panel. Previous experimentation at sites in North Wales included a similar camera to panel set-up. Here, two or more halogen lights were used on panels that had uneven surfaces. The lights were used to fill-in areas where a static light could not penetrate. The same process was used on several faces at the Calderstones.

As part of the photographic survey undertaken during daylight hours, a series of stereo and multiple images were also taken of each face using the basic principles of photogrammetry (i.e. angled photographs of the same image). Using software that will merge images taken of the same face it is hoped that more information can be gained. However, the results from this part of the project remain un-calibrated (Nash, George and Stanford, forthcoming).

Using Forde-Johnston's classification system for the stones (Stones A to F) and the numbering of each motif set, the authors have sequentially continued the reference system for all newly identified rock-art. In addition we have also included non-megalithic art referred to as Phases II – V (see Table 1).

Despite the presence of later (historical) inscriptions on each of the stones, Phases I and II hold the greatest interest. The repertoire of symbols is indicative of the

megalithic art tradition and includes concentric circles, cup-and-rings and spirals (Table 2). Also present but not recorded by Forde Johnston or researchers since are numerous cupmarks. It is probable that these enigmatic symbols are roughly contemporary with the megalithic symbols.

Stone A (*general comments*)

This stone, the tallest within the Calderstones group comprises megalithic and Bronze Age rock-art; with megalithic art present on both faces. The stone has in the recent past been subjected to differential exposure to the elements; hence the colour patina changes to the stone. Part of the largest design, a series of parallel lines (A1i) enclosing a triple concentric circle (A1ii), is partially buried in gravel as well as an eroded clockwise spiral (A3). On the upper section of the stone are two footprints that are arranged similarly to footprints on Stone E (E5, E6). Shearing damage has occurred to the edging within the upper section of the stone, left of the two footprints.

Front face (Plate 3)

This face, with its complex multi-phased line and concentric circle designs would have probably faced into the chamber. Image A1, similar to that on Stone C2 at Barclodiad y Gawres in Anglesey has within its design coding both circular and rectilinear forms (A1i, A1ii).

This group comprises a triple-lined concentric circle

	Period	Stone A	Stone B	Stone C	Stone D	Stone E	Stone F
Phase I	Neolithic	X	X	X	X	X	
Phase II	EBA/MBA	X	X	X	X	X	?
Phase III	Medieval		X			X	
Phase IV	19 th century		X	X	X	X	X
Phase V	20 th century	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 1. Chronological frequency.

	Stone A	Stone B	Stone C	Stone D	Stone E	Stone F
Spirals	X		X		X	
Double spirals			X		X	
Concentric circles	X	X	X		X	
Double concentric circles		X				
Cup-and-rings				X		
Diamonds	X					
Arcs		X				
Lines	X					
Lines and cups		X				
Cupmarks	X	X	X	X		X
Dagger				X		
Footprints	X	X			X	
Lines in cups						X
Miscellaneous		X			X	X

Table 2. Frequency of prehistoric symbols.

that is flanked by a series of parallel lines. The complexity of this group is not recorded in Forde-Johnston's tracing (1957, fig. 2). Based on the photographic survey there are up to three and four lines flanking the concentric circle.⁸ Also present are a large cupmark (A6) and several diamonds (A7, A8). The diamonds are carved differently to the surrounding imagery and, therefore, may not be contemporary. Incorporated within the right-hand section of this group is textual graffiti in the form of double-line initials 'R H' (A10). Above this group are two [Bronze Age] footprints (A4, A5). Unlike their counterparts on Stone E, these footprints are more developed; the A4 design possessing an instep. The sole of the footprint appears to have once formed a circular motif, possibly a [megalithic] clockwise spiral.

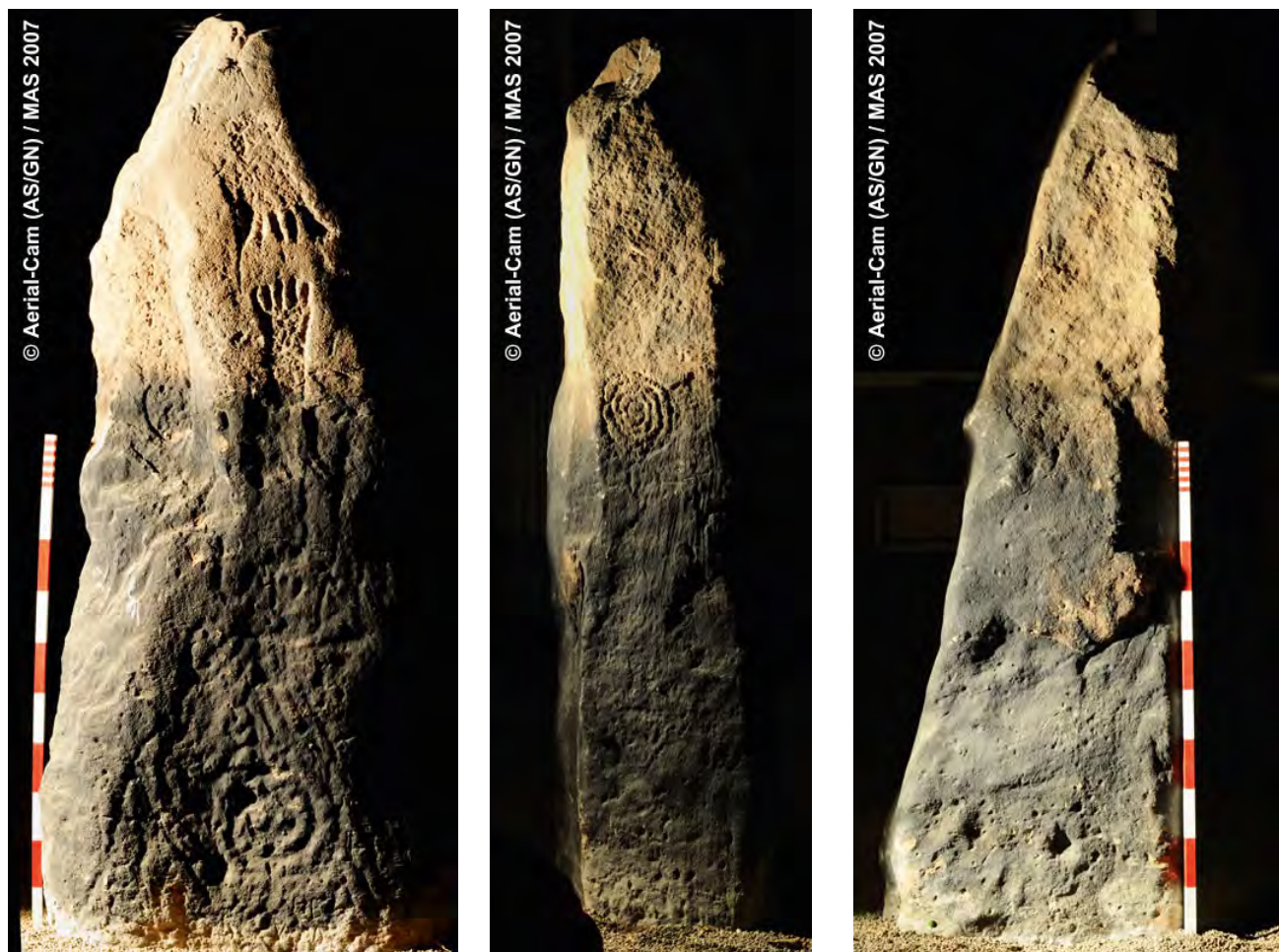
⁸ The complexity of this group is also highlighted by Shee-Twohig (1981, Fig 261).

Rear face a (Plate 4)

On this face are three circular motifs, one of these is located below the gravel line (A3). This motif is much weathered and comprises a clockwise spiral. The upper two motifs (A2i and A2ii) comprise a clockwise spiral and a smaller double concentric circle. Above these motifs are several late 20th-century textual graffiti markings, one dating to 1994 (collectively referred to as A9).

Rear face b (Plate 5)

Based on the photographic survey no distinct rock-art from any period is present on this face. However, above the current ground level is one, possibly two weathered cupmarks (A11).



Plates 3, 4 & 5. The three faces of Stones A showing a variety of megalithic imagery.

Stone B (general comments)

This stone possesses complex multi-phasing comprising megalithic, Bronze Age and medieval imagery. Based on the orientation of the medieval image, a church (B11), this stone was probably set 20 degrees to the right (this is assuming that the medieval carving was made whilst this stone was *in situ*). It is probable that stone is included within the William Latham engraving of 1825.

Front face (Plate 6)

Severe-shearing damage has occurred to this face within the upper section and it is more than probable that prehistoric art may have existed in this area.⁹ Despite the damage though, a single large cupmark is present on the diagonal left-hand edge (D19). The lower section contains a variety of images that encompass at least four chronological phases. The surviving narrative, forming the central and lower right section of the face comprises two incomplete carved curvilinear arcs; these motifs run parallel with each other (B3). Outside a further irregular carved arc and located in the lower section of the face are two pecked footprints; the left footprint facing

upwards (B7), whilst the right footprint with six toes facing downwards (B6). These two images probably represent two different individuals. Bisected by a larger irregular arc (B16) are two concentric circles, probably forming a conjoined motif (B5i, B5ii). Both concentric circles are worn; the outer circle (B5i) possessing three outer rings (but with missing core) and inner concentric circle with six probable rings (B5ii). A possible footprint and single line is located above the conjoined circles (B9). It is not clear if this image is megalithic or a later addition. Forde-Johnston (1957, 26) suggests that this image may represent an Early Bronze Age halberd. Inside the two parallel arcs are an anticlockwise spiral (B2) and several possible worn footprints (B8, B11). Superimposed over these images is a carved building, probably a church with cross (B17) that is believed to be medieval in date. If this is the case there may have been access to the chamber area during this time, possibly when the site formed part of a boundary around before *circa*. 1568.¹⁰ Dispersed across the prehistoric images and motifs as well as the later sheared surfaces are 19th and 20th-century textual graffiti (collectively B18).

⁹ See also Shee-Twohig (1981, 228).

¹⁰ The stones are incorporated into a map of the locality that dates to 1568 (Cowell 2008) and Roberts (this volume).

Rear face (not illustrated)

The rear face has been subjected to severe shearing damage and the only rock-art present dates from the 19th century. A curious symbol comprising a finely carved circle with a line running diagonally through it is located within the central part of the face (B14). Either side of this motif are numerous worn textual graffiti markings (collectively B15).

Side face a (Plate 7)

Located on this face are three megalithic motif types: a quadruple ringed concentric circle (B1) and two worn double [oval] concentric circles (and not spirals as promoted by Forde-Johnston; 1957, Fig. 3) (B4, B12). Dispersed amongst this group are several cupmarks (collectively B13). Three cupmarks are present within the large quadruple concentric circle (B1i, B1ii, B1iii). A further cupmark is present within the upper line of the small double ringed concentric circle (B4i). It is not clear if the cupmarks are contemporary with the megalithic motifs.

Side face b (Plate 8)

This side face comprises three megalithic motifs: cup and ring marks, cupmarks and interconnecting lines. It is not clear at this point if these motifs are from a single carving event. All interconnecting imagery extends across the upper section of this face. It is probable that this imagery was originally hidden and stood as a vertical panel (based on the assumption that the imagery of the front face is presently askew – see above).

Stone C (*general comments*)

This stone, the largest within the Calderstones group has megalithic art and later prehistoric art on both faces. On the face containing multiple cupmarks there is evidence of shear damage with most of the upper section missing. However, up to three cupmarks extend to the new surface, maybe each representing the central section of the cup. Below the damaged area, the rear face is covered by cupmarks. Examination of this face has revealed that only one megalithic symbol is present; a concentric circle, located at the current base of the stone. Above the damaged area are the remnants of up to six vertical grooves, possibly the result of natural weathering (also present on other monuments made of soft sandstone [for example Robin Hood's Stone, Liverpool and The Queen's Stone in Herefordshire]). An alternative view could be that the upper section of the stone has been used for polishing stone implements. Incorporated onto the front face are up to nine megalithic symbols including spirals, conjoined spirals, concentric circles and the remnants of several grooves or lines. Dispersed on both faces are 19th and 20th-century textual graffiti. Interestingly, both Forde-Johnston (1957) and Shee-Twohig (1981) make little

mention of the multiple cupmarks located on the rear face.

Front face (Plate 9)

Located around the edges of this face is a series of megalithic circular motifs (C2 – C6). Within the upper section of the face are up to four naturally weathered grooved lines. Two of the spirals (C3, C5) are carved counter-clockwise, whilst C2 is carved clockwise. Located on the right-hand side of the face and incorporated into a more complex design group is a conjoined double spiral (C6). Carved over the left-hand spiral are several images including a concentric circle (C6i) and multiple lines (C6ii). Based on the recent photographic survey several curvilinear motifs are carved below (C6). The concentrated group of three motifs including a double concentric circle (C4), spiral (C5) and a single carved circle (C5i) located along the right-hand edge has shearing damage either side. Within the upper right-hand section of this face is extensive 19th and 20th-century textual graffiti (collectively C8).

Rear face (Plate 10)

Forde-Johnston (1957, 26) states that a 'score' of cupmarks are present on this face. Actually there are more than 60; ranging in size between 2cm and 6cm in diameter (collectively grouped as C7). Several cupmarks extend to the damaged area within the upper part of the face. Several groups of cupmarks are linear in form suggesting some form of phased intentional design grouping. At ground level is a quadruple-ringed concentric circle (C1). It is probable that this is the earliest symbol on this face and contemporary with other megalithic symbols on the front face.

Stone D (*general comments*)

This roughly-coursed sandstone block is decorated on both faces but unlike the majority of other stones within the Calderstones group, Stone D only has prehistoric rock-art on one face. Probably following the destruction of the monument during the early 19th century a series of seven shoe or boot prints were carved on the front face along with a series of textual graffiti markings (Cowell, 2008). Several of these markings probably date to the 20th century suggesting that this face was exposed and available to people who had the desire to carve. Recent inspection of this face shows that much of the upper section of the original face has either weathered away or has been sheared. Carved across this section are further textual graffiti markings. On the rear face are a series of megalithic and Bronze Age carvings; interestingly the earlier megalithic carvings, the cup-and-ring marks and possibly the cupmark, are located on the left-hand section of the stone, whilst a probable carved dagger, indicative of the Early to Middle Bronze is centrally placed.



Plates 6, 7 & 8. Three of the four faces of Stone B.



Plates 9 & 10. Phases 1 and 2 rock-art of Stone C.



Plate 11. The complex panel design on the rear face of Stone D. Located within the central lower section of the face is a south east European-style dagger.

Front face (not illustrated)

Of the seven shoe or boot prints, three are buried beneath the present gravel (D4 - D10). The style of each carving is roughly similar, although four (D4, D6, D7, D10) have heels. Apart from D8 and D9, all other shoe prints are un-paired and all vary in size. It is conceivable the D8 and D9 represent the same individual. Six of the footprints are oriented similarly, facing towards the right-hand side and upper edge of the stone. Inscribed into each print, usually in the sole area of the shoe are a series of letters. It is probable that these textual marks each represent the carver's initials (e.g. 'GLH') (Cowell, 2008).

Rear face (Plate 11)

The upper central and right-hand section of this face has been sheared away and it is possible that rock-art may have been present over the earlier section. The damage to this section of the face may have been recent as no graffiti appears on the new surface. Damage also appears to have been inflicted onto some of the face edges; the left-hand section of one of the cup-and-rings is missing. Recorded by Forde-Johnston and located within the upper left-hand section of the stone are three cup-and-ring motifs (D1 - D3). This motif has been recently stratigraphically

dated to the Neolithic and can be considered part of the megalithic art repertoire (see Waddington *et al.* 2005). According to Forde-Johnston these are the only prehistoric motifs on this face (1957, Fig. 5). Located within the central section of the face is one definite cupmark, measuring 3-4cm in diameter (D11) and possibly two smaller cupmarks. Within the central part of the lower section of this face and partially buried by gravel is what appears to be a stylised dagger, similar in form to those found at the Fentans rock-art panel in the Campo Lamerio Valley, Galicia, north-western Spain (see Nash 2003).¹¹ The double-lined dagger, measuring c. 23cm in length is carved 10 degrees off vertical (D12). A further cup-and-ring motif is located left of the dagger (D13).

Stone E (general comments)

This roughly-coursed rounded and much-eroded sandstone block has several rock-art images that are buried. These include a Maltese cross (E3), the lower section of a double spiral (E9), a small concentric circle (E10) and a foot print (E4). This stone has rock-art on

¹¹ Similar in form to a dagger found during the excavation of a Middle Bronze Age barrow at Reaverhill Farm, Northumberland in 1964. The dagger, belonging to a group of riveted knives and daggers is triangular in shape with bevelled straight edges and made from predominantly copper (67%) [Accession No. 1964.2]. See also EBA metallurgical classification by Burgess - Phases II to V (1980).

three faces and it is probable that some of it was hidden, and facing into the mound. The repertoire comprises three footprints (E2, E4, E5), two single spirals (E7, E8), a double spiral, sometimes referred to in the earlier literature as a *face* (E9), three double concentric circles (E1, E10, E11), a Maltese cross (E3) and a trapezoidal wedge shape or a possible incomplete footprint (E6). Dispersed across all three faces are a series of textual graffiti marks that we have collectively referenced as E13. Based on the worn edges of some of the text it is probable that some markings date to the 19th century.

Front face (not illustrated)

Based on the concentration of megalithic designs, we suggest that the front face (that is the face that would have been visible during Neolithic times) is represented by the two single spirals (E7, E8), the double spiral (E9) and the concentric circle (E10). It is probable that this stone was on display and faced into the chamber of the Calderstones passage grave. The double spiral, found elsewhere within the megalithic world, has been almost completely eroded away. However, based on Forde-Johnston's tracing the two spiral elements can be considered as a single carving episode. The spiral present on the upper section of the stone (E7) appears to be multi-phased, associated with two possible cupmarks (E12, E13) which were either carved before or after the spiral. Further multi-phased activity occurs over (or underneath) the concentric circle (E10) in the form of several lines. However, these lines could be accidental scratches (and are therefore not referenced).

Side face (not illustrated)

Located on the upper section of the side face is a damaged double concentric circle (regarded by Forde-Johnston as an anticlockwise spiral; *ibid* 29, Fig 6). This motif may also have later carving activity although Forde-Johnston quite rightly suggests that it has been subjected to much weathering and therefore it is difficult to understand its morphology (1957, 31).

Rear face (Plate 12)

This face comprises the six images/motifs recognised by Forde-Johnston including the three footprints, the trapezoidal shape, a concentric circle and Maltese cross. The footprints appear to be arranged in two groups. The upper section of this stone has been damaged and a small section is now missing and it is probable that rock-art once graced this section of the stone. The first group, comprising two footprints (E2 and E4), pecked and measuring *circa* 20cm in length, are each formed from a generic trapezoidal shape. The deeply pecked footprint E2 has five toes, the largest appears to have been added later, whilst footprint E4 only has four toes and unlike the rest of the pecked footprint, the toes are curvilinear. The

footprint motif *stands* either side of the Maltese cross and above footprint E2 is a double concentric circle (E1). The outer ring of this motif appears to have been altered to give the appearance of a more rectilinear form. A further footprint with the toe section facing downwards is located left of the other group and is roughly similar in size and form. Above this and oriented similarly is an incomplete footprint (E6). Based on prehistoric carved footprints found elsewhere in Britain, we consider the Calderstones' footprints to be later than previously considered (for example Shee-Twohig 1981), dating to the Early or Middle Bronze Age and is roughly contemporary with the footprints found on the inside face of the Pool Farm Cist in Somerset (Coles, Gestsdottir and Minnitt, 2000). Associated with the footprints is what we would term as a pentiform, comprising five cupmarks that are arranged in what can be described as a *domino face* (E12). The Maltese cross which is currently buried is considered by Forde-Johnston as dating to the medieval period, probably between the 12th and 15th centuries. A type sometimes referred to as *Alisee Pattée* (Frederickson 1997).

Stone F (*general comments*)

This fine-grained sandstone boulder with polished surface contains no clear distinguishable prehistoric carvings. One enigmatic symbol is located on the upper section, although a drawing made by Forde-Johnston shows this carving to be on the lower section (1957, Fig. 7). The present setting and orientation is in our view correct and it is clear that a large section of what was a pointed stone is missing. It is conceivable that some form of decoration was present on the missing section.

Front face (Plate 13)

On this face are three groups of carving. The most enigmatic and difficult to date is a possible roughly-gouged cupmark (or natural depression) that has been modified by a series of short radiating carved lines. The cupmark or depression measures *circa* 5cm in diameter (F1).¹² Up to five lines radiate beyond the depression on the left side. Below this are the initials J.S (F2) which is probably 19th-century in date. On the right hand side of the face are a series of irregular scratches that are probably the result of previous handling damage of the stone.

Rear face (not illustrated)

The surface of this face is relatively even and the broken section running from the right hand side of the stone (once forming a point), can be clearly seen. Sporadically carved across this face are a series of pits and scratches that are probably the result of accidental damage. Carved in the upper section though are two vertical parallel lines that are linked by a curvilinear

¹² This arrangement is also present at several megalithic sites in Wales.



Plate 12. The rear face of Stone E showing footprints, Maltese Cross and a curious pentiform cupmarked arrangement.

line that may represent a motif (F3). Two possible megalithic motifs are recognised by Shee-Twohig (1981, Fig. 264, Fi) and include a rectilinear motif (F4) and an anticlockwise spiral. The rectilinear motif found elsewhere on other exposed panels dates to the Bronze Age and the motif on this face comprises three rectangular boxes that are arranged in a vertical row. The spiral was not recorded during the recent photographic survey.

Side face (not illustrated)

Located on the lower section of this face is a single cupmark (F5).

Towards a grammar of art

The destroyed Calderstones passage grave monument now survives as six decorated stones and is arguably one of the most decorative megalithic monuments (or remains of) in mainland Britain. The megalithic rock-art, including the cupmarks, represents the first two phases of possibly five carving phases that span 5,000 years. Previously, it is only the megalithic art that has been pictorially recorded (for example Forde-Johnston

(1956), Shee-Twohig (1981) and Cowell and Warhurst (1984)). The megalithic elements have also been incorporated into wider discussions that also include other passage grave monuments that have megalithic art (Nash 2007). Unlike its counterparts in the Boyne Valley in central Ireland, the Calderstones appears to represent a megalithic art tradition that is dominated by curvilinear motifs and covering much of each of the thirteen faces.¹³

Also depicted and probably from a slightly later phase, are eight carved feet. Carved feet and footprints are found within western European Bronze Age art traditions. In Britain only a handful of sites possess these representative images, the most notable of these is a cist originating from the Pool Farm barrow, West Harptree (for example Beckensall 1999; Coles *et al.* 2000). The archaeological context in which the rock-art was found firmly places them and the burial monument into the Early Bronze Age (that is the first quarter of the 2nd millennium BC).¹⁴ Shee-Twohig however, suggests that

¹³ What Shee-Twohig refers generically as the *Fourknocks Style* (1981, 106).

¹⁴ This date was based on radiocarbon dated human bone found within the cist; dated between 1,920 and 1,735 cal. BC (Coles *et al.* 2000). Despite the probable Neolithic origin we advocate that cup-and-ring marks in this instance are Early Bronze Age in date.



Plate 13. The front face of Stone F showing striated cupmark.

these figures (along with the church with cross on Stone B and the Maltese Cross on Stone E) may date from the medieval period (1981,121). Unlike their counterparts from the Pool Farm cist, the pairs of feet do not stand together suggesting that each footprint represents a different individual. The carving style for each footprint appears to be similar and may have been carved roughly at the same time by the same individual. Although the footprints are carved slightly differently to those on the Pool Farm cist, we consider them to be prehistoric in origin. As far as we are aware there are no footprints carved in Britain during the medieval period.

Other motifs and symbols that are not considered as megalithic but probably Early Bronze Age in date include cupmarks, cup-and-ring marks, single and multiple lines (linking cupmarks) and a unique dagger.¹⁵ Apart from the dagger this array of symbols is found elsewhere on Bronze Age funerary sites. Daggers also occur on funerary and open air rock-art sites in certain areas of Bronze Age Atlantic Europe (for example Santos Estévez 2009). The style of dagger on Stone D is also found on the Fentans panel in the Campo Lamerio Valley, Galicia in North-west Spain (Plate 14).

Based on the array of imagery on these stones, in particular those motifs and symbols that date between the Neolithic and Late to Middle Bronze Age, it is clear that the Calderstones monument was in use, albeit periodically, for a considerable period of time, maybe up

¹⁵ Waddington *et al.* though has convincingly suggested that cup-and-rings extend into the Neolithic period (2005).

to 800 years. The repertoire of symbols carved on the Calderstones suggests that this monument was probably one of the last passage graves to be constructed and used during the Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. It is also possible that the site became denuded and was covered over following abandonment during the latter part of this period. It is not until the medieval period that the stones become the focus for carving (for example, the church and cross on Stone B and the Maltese Cross on Stone E). Despite these unique medieval symbols, other motifs from Phases III to V comprising mainly of textural graffiti and a unique set of 19th-century shoe prints on Stone B complete the panel narratives for each stone (see Table 1).

Although the majority of stone surfaces have now been recorded, little can be said concerning the arrangement of the stones within a passage grave arrangement (see Faulkner, this volume). Several clues though are present on the two early- to mid-19th century engravings of the site (see figs. 2 and 3 in Nash and Henderson forthcoming). Possibly up to four of the stones can be identified in the engraving of 1840 (Figure 3). The engraving clearly shows Stone B and probably Stone C. These appear to form part of the chamber or gallery area. Two further stones to the left of the picture form the remnants of the passage. However, caution is required when analysing this engraving. Stone C present on the 1825 engraving has fallen and is partly buried (Figure 2). One can therefore assume that between 1825



Plate 14. Early Bronze Age triangular bladed dagger from Castriño de Conxo, Santiago de Compostela (courtesy of Manuel Santos Estévez).

and 1840 several stones were re-erected. Also present on this engraving is possibly Stone A, forming the left upright probably representing an upright belonging to the inner passage. It is probable that the former splendour of this monument was similar in architectural style to that of Barclodiad y Gawres in Anglesey (Plate 15). With both examples, the internal architectural arrangement would have been hidden from public view, with access for a privileged few and, of course the dead (Nash 2006). At Barclodiad y Gawres, much of the megalithic art is positioned in such a way that it can only be viewed whilst in the chamber area. The same can be said for many other passage graves in Ireland (O'Sullivan 1986). The Calderstones repertoire is similar in style and form to those symbols that are found in the Boyne Valley, County Meath on the passage graves of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth (Eogan 1986; O'Kelly 1982). Similar spiral designs are also found at the passage grave site of Fourknocks, also in County Meath. It is probable that the rock-art was special and was part of a restricted visual language that was only privy to an elite and to the dead; a similar practice may have been installed at the Calderstones. Illumination would have been a critical

component when *reading* the art. Dorrell has suggested that directional light from torches and fires would have provided the necessary lighting (Dorrell, 1994). This directional lighting was in some way repeated with previous experiments and the lighting used to illuminate the Calderstones during the recent photographic survey.

It is a remarkable testament to Forde-Johnston that his drawings and descriptions have been used by so many scholars since publication in 1957. Indeed, the authors used his drawings as an essential reference tool. The rationale for Ford-Johnston's survey was to record the megalithic art. However, in this paper we have identified a further four phases.

The fieldwork, that is the photographic survey forms part of a much larger survey project that will include digital rectification followed by a set of phased drawings using a graphics pen and board (Nash, George and Stanford forthcoming). Although the phasing is relatively clear, some ambiguity does exist between Phases I and II; between the megalithic (Neolithic) and cupmarks of the Early Bronze Age. Further doubt



Plate 15. An aerial view of the Barclodiad y Gawres passage grave – how the Calderstones monument may have looked.

is expressed by Shee-Twohig who questions the date of the footprints on Stones A, B and E, suggesting that they may date to the medieval period (Phase III). Despite these slight distractions, the photographic project has highlighted a number of new and exciting carvings, once hitherto missing from the British repertoire. The newly identified motifs will assist in making more sense of six enigmatic stones in Liverpool.

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