

# Hunting Hogbacks: Excavations and Surveys at Dalserf, South Lanarkshire, and Luss, Argyll & Bute

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HOGBACK AND COPED STONES in Scotland have been studied for decades, but there is still debate about their exact age, who commissioned them and what they represent. Up to this point, many studies have been concerned with recording individual stones and examining their iconography in relation to similar monuments.<sup>2</sup> However, there has been little excavation done to examine the archaeological contexts of these stones; to question whether they remain in their original locations, whether they were intended to be grave markers or represented something else and why they are absent from the Scottish Highlands and Western Isles. This paper suggests that their

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1 We are grateful to our Hunting Hogbacks volunteers in Luss and Dalserf who turned up each day with baked goods and unflinching enthusiasm for digging, regardless of the weather. Reverend Dane Sherrard at Luss and the Reverend Cameron McPherson at Dalserf gave their invaluable assistance in getting the project up and running. We also owe a thank-you to Dane and his wife Rachel for allowing us dig up their garden in Luss. We would like to thank the landowner at Dalserf, Mr Christopher Henderson-Hamilton and the tenant farmer, Mr Willie Young, for providing access to their land and Mr Niall Milner of Davidson & Robertson Rural for facilitating this. This project would not have been possible without funding from the Discovery Programme at York Archaeological Trust. Core samples were taken and evaluated by Sharon Carson. Thanks also to Christina Donald of the McManus Art Gallery and Museum in Dundee for giving me access to the stones there and sharing information on them. Finally, I am grateful to Victoria Thompson for kindly sharing a draft chapter of her forthcoming publication on Northumbrian sculpture, and to Dr. Adrián Maldonado at the University of Glasgow for his generosity and numerous comments and suggestions for improving this article. Any remaining mistakes are those of the authors.

2 For example, Lang 1972-4.

identification as ‘Viking colonial monuments’<sup>3</sup> needs to be reconsidered, particularly for the later stones in Scotland.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the possibilities for learning more about hogbacks in Scotland through their archaeological context rather than relying upon traditional art historical approaches. As part of this, the paper includes results of excavations and surveys around Dalserf, South Lanarkshire, and Luss, Argyll and Bute, as part of the community archaeology project ‘Hunting Hogbacks’. The churches in both of these villages are host to hogback stones, yet both are located outwith the areas traditionally considered to be zones of dense Scandinavian settlement in Scotland. Relatively little is known about the medieval history of these localities, particularly Dalserf, making them prime candidates for archaeological investigation.

### Defining a ‘hogback’

The recumbent monuments were first called ‘hogbacks’ in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in reference to their rounded shape;<sup>4</sup> it is unknown what this type of monument would have been called by its makers. Hogbacks are often characterised by stylised roof tiles, or *tegulation*, incised or carved in relief on the top half of the stone, perhaps as a representation of the roofs of contemporary houses. In Scotland, the most obvious forms of true hogbacks are the rounded stones from Govan, which are similar in shape to the hogbacks at Penrith, Cumbria. However, aside from the Govan stones, many recumbent stones belonging to this family of monuments in Scotland have relatively little to no curvature along their top spine.

This leads to questions about which stones should be considered ‘hogbacks’, as the criteria for designating monuments as ‘hogback’, ‘coped’ and ‘kindred / related’ are difficult to define.<sup>5</sup> In his catalogue of Scottish hogbacks, Lang created a typology for the development of these stones.<sup>6</sup> He divided them into categories based on decoration and form. Type A were stones with end beasts, such as Inchcolm and Govan 2-5, which are dated to the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> Types B1 through B3 begin as hogback monuments whose sides and roofs flatten over time into the coped and kindred monuments. Lang dates these to the 11<sup>th</sup> and early 12<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>8</sup> later than English examples.

However, these classifications are subjective. For the sake of simplicity, ‘hogback’ will be used in this paper to refer to all hogbacks, coped and

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3 Lang 1984, 87.

4 Ritchie 2004, 6.

5 see Ritchie 2004, 6-9, for a discussion updating Lang’s categories.

6 Lang 1972-4.

7 Lang 1972-4, 220; Ritchie 1999, 16.

8 Lang 1972-4, 220.

kindred monuments that appear to be part of this broadly related group of stone sculptures, regardless of whether they display tegulation, a rounded longitudinal profile or a flat longitudinal spine. Although this generalised term will likely be controversial, it reduces the amount of qualifying terminology needed to talk about these stones as a group. Regardless of their exact shape and decoration, they likely conveyed similar meanings to their audiences.

One characteristic shared by many hogbacks is their tegulation, but it is not a defining characteristic. Some stones which have a straight top line (therefore not true 'hogbacks') still feature tegulation, such as the recumbent stones from Dunkeld and Dundee. Other stones, such as the plain steatite stone from St. Ninian's Isle in Shetland, have a slightly rounded profile but no tegulation; in this case, a lack of decoration is probably due to the physical properties of the steatite.<sup>9</sup> While similar forms and decorations show that these stones are part of the same tradition of monument, a lack of closely datable evidence beyond identifiable artistic styles, such as the Romanesque arches on the Luss stone, makes the dating of these stones and creation of a useful typology nearly impossible. Rather than trying to assign all hogbacks and related monuments to strict categories, Howard Williams suggests approaching them by 'considering each monument as idiosyncratic personal commemorative monuments'.<sup>10</sup>

All but two of the forty-nine identified hogback monuments in Scotland are associated with a church, although in some cases such as Tynninghame in East Lothian, the stones were found elsewhere and were simply assumed to be associated with the local church or monastery.<sup>11</sup> Some churchyards, such as Dalserf, only contain one hogback, while other churches have groups of hogbacks, such as the five found at Govan or the three each at Dornock, Dumfries and Galloway, and Abercorn, West Lothian.

No Scottish hogbacks have ever been unquestionably linked to a grave, although it should be noted that nearly three-quarters of Scottish stones have been recorded as definitely being moved at least once within the same churchyard or beyond in the past 150 years, and very well could have been moved many more times in the past. None of the stones feature writing, and very few have iconography by which to identify or memorialise a deceased individual. The possibility that they could represent patronage by wealthy individuals or have a mercantile connection is discussed below.

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9 The stone from Brechin [Canmore ID 35068] has not been included in this study as the author agrees with Ritchie (2004, 9) that it bears too little resemblance to the rest of the Scottish corpus of hogbacks to be closely related, and may be more closely associated with Pictish sculpture.

10 Williams 2016, 499.

11 Ritchie 2004, 5.

## Background and distribution

Hogback stones are generally thought to have had their genesis in the Anglo-Scandinavian traditions of north-eastern England, based upon Scandinavian elements in decoration on stones such as those at Brompton and Gosforth,<sup>12</sup> although these assumptions are being challenged by Victoria Thompson.<sup>13</sup> More hogbacks are found in England (more than 120<sup>14</sup>) than in Scotland, where there are approximately fifty, including lost stones reported from Rendall, Orkney, and Edrom, Scottish Borders.<sup>15</sup> Lang suggests that proper hogbacks in England were a short-lived phenomenon, produced for only a few decades in the 10<sup>th</sup> to possibly the early 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> The Scottish hogbacks that most closely echo English examples, such as Govan and Inchcolm, Fife tend to be dated from the mid-10<sup>th</sup> through to the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, while other Scottish stones are dated as late as the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup>

Hogback stones have been written about in various Scottish sources for nearly two centuries,<sup>18</sup> although mention of the hogback at Inchcolm Abbey in the Firth of Forth goes as far back as ca. 1535.<sup>19</sup> This type of monument, especially the Inchcolm hogback, was in antiquarian times associated with ‘Danes’, a generic term for Scandinavians.<sup>20</sup> The first survey of known Scottish hogbacks was published by J Russell Walker, but the definitive study was published nearly a century later by J T Lang.<sup>21</sup> Since then, more stones have been identified, including examples at Dundee and Tullibole, Perth and Kinross.<sup>22</sup> More recently, research by Barbara Crawford and Anna Ritchie<sup>23</sup> has helped to place hogbacks, particularly the Govan examples, within their historical context, including their links to economic activity.<sup>24</sup>

It must be acknowledged that the modern England–Scotland border has been used as a dividing line by some scholars, most notably by Lang with his separate catalogues for Scottish and English hogbacks.<sup>25</sup> This paper is also guilty of using that dividing line for the sake of a smaller data set focusing on

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12 Lang 1972-4, 206; Bailey 1980, 91–92; Lang 1984, 95; Crawford 2005, 11.

13 Thompson, pers. comm. 20 Nov 2017.

14 Lang 1984, 112-72; Bailey et al. 2006; Copsey 2012.

15 On the lost stones, see Lang 1972-4, 224, 230.

16 Lang 1984, 97.

17 Land 1972-4, 220, 230; Ritchie 1999, 16.

18 For example, Roger 1855-6; Simpson 1855-6, 495-6.

19 Stewart 1858, 635.

20 For example: Simpson 1855-6; Stewart 1858, 635; 495; Russell Walker 1884-5, 406.

21 Russell Walker 1884-5; Lang 1972-4.

22 Robertson 1991, 71.

23 Ritchie 1999; Ritchie 2004; Crawford 2005.

24 Ritchie 1999, 18; Ritchie 2004, 9; Crawford 2005, 15.

25 Lang 1972-4; 1984.

the lesser-studied Scottish stones. However, recent studies have straddled the border in order to study hogbacks from a perspective closer to the political situation present when they were constructed. These include studies of Govan by Crawford and Ritchie<sup>26</sup>, as well as Ph.D. dissertations on stray finds in southern Scotland with Viking connections by Courtney Buchanan and a current Ph.D. study by Jamie Barnes on the connections between Strathclyde and Northumbria seen through the hogback and hammerhead crosses.<sup>27</sup> Thompson includes detailed considerations of hogbacks from both sides of the border in her forthcoming publication on Northumbrian sculpture, while Williams' recent work on the materiality of hogbacks views these monuments as agents of commemoration and communication by not just referring to local architectural and material culture through their form in a mortuary space, but also by referencing long-distance secular and ecclesiastical links through their wide distribution.<sup>28</sup>

The distribution of hogbacks in Scotland is intriguing (Figure 1). In England, these stones tend to be found in the Danelaw and on the west coast in the Irish Sea region. While Scottish stones in the west likely also linked to the Viking-influenced Irish Sea, the distribution in eastern Scotland is more difficult to explain. Scandinavians settled heavily in the Northern Isles, the Western Isles and the northern areas of mainland Scotland in Caithness and Sutherland. Although sporadic evidence for Scandinavians has been found elsewhere in Scotland, namely through stray finds and occasional Viking Age burials, the traditional southern border for settlement on the northern Scottish mainland is in the north near Beaulay. However, a distribution map of hogbacks in post-Viking Age Scotland illustrates that hogbacks tend to be found in the southern and central parts of mainland Scotland and up the east coast to just north of the Firth of Tay, then skipping to the Northern Isles. Aside from Orkney and Shetland, they are not found in areas traditionally associated with Scandinavian settlement.

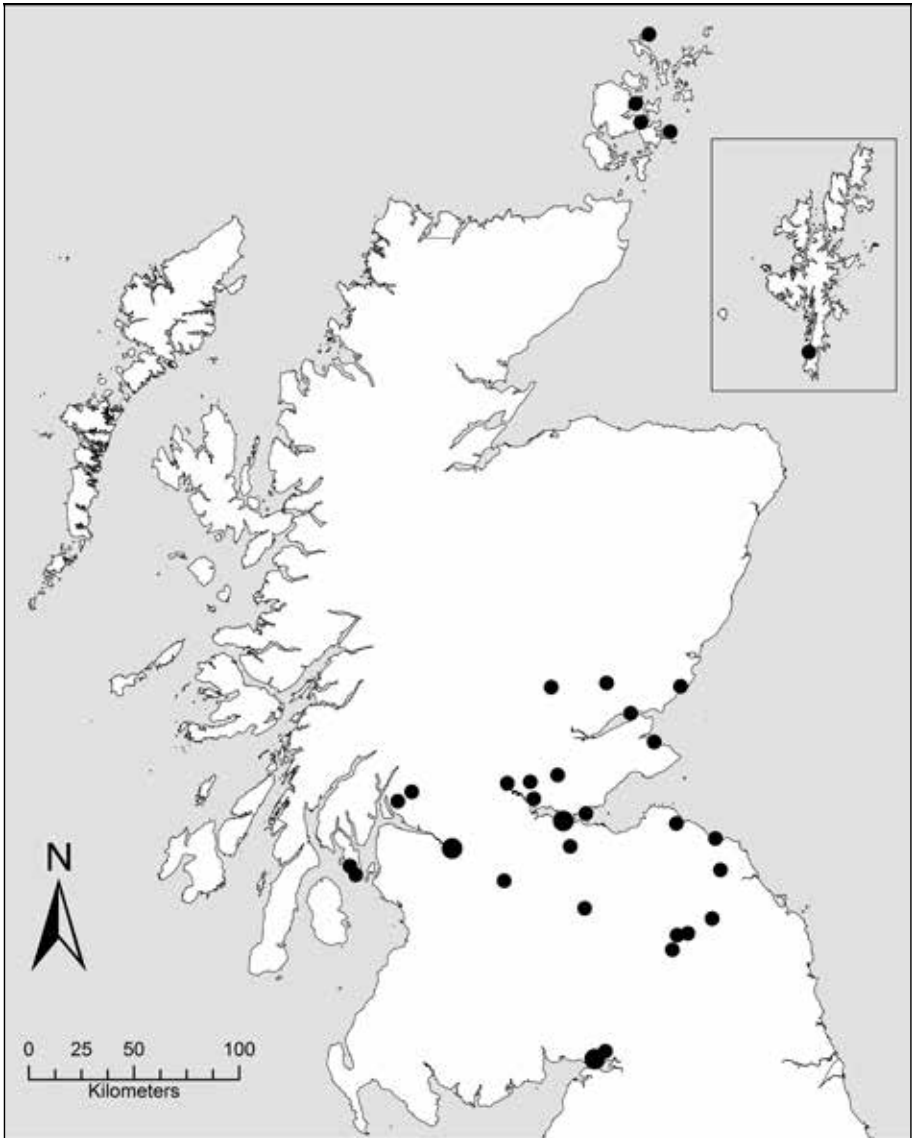
The association of hogbacks with Scandinavian settlers may be a red herring in Scotland since many Scottish monuments are of a slightly later date than their English counterparts. Instead of being restricted to representing links to a Scandinavian, Anglo-Scandinavian or Hiberno-Norse cultural milieu, these hogbacks rather may have come to be used as memorials or show patronage without intentional cultural associations by people who

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26 Ritchie 2004; Crawford 2005.

27 Buchanan 2012; Barnes pers. comm., forthcoming as part of a PhD dissertation at the University of Glasgow entitled 'Of Warriors and Beasts: searching for meaning in the hogbacks and hammerhead crosses of the Viking Age landscapes of Strathclyde and Northumbria'.

28 Williams 2016; Thompson pers. comm. 20 Nov 2017.



**Figure 1: Distribution map of Scotland's hogbacks and coped stones.** *Map by Kirsty Millican*

had gained wealth through trade and had seen these monuments elsewhere. In England, Stocker has convincingly argued that Viking-Age sculpture from Lincolnshire and Yorkshire can be linked to churches associated with

a growing class of merchants living near, and trading at, English ports.<sup>29</sup> Likewise, there is a concentration of hogbacks and other Viking Age sculpture around the beach market at Meols on the Wirral peninsula.<sup>30</sup> Relatively little is known about the early centuries of commercial centres in Scotland, but it is likely that hogbacks appear around the same time as towns start forming. Perth, where widespread archaeological excavations were carried out in the 1970s, was originally thought to have formed ca. AD 1128 under David I, but radiocarbon dates from material in ditches and carbonised residue on pottery dated its foundation to the late 10<sup>th</sup> or early 11<sup>th</sup> century before it and other towns became royal burghs in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the concentration of stones in central and eastern Scotland might better be explained by proximity to commercial trade, but not necessarily as evidence for the presence of Scandinavian settlers.

There has been no widespread geological study of Scottish hogbacks, but anecdotal evidence suggests that many of these monuments were made from stone sourced locally. This use of local material is most readily evident in the steatite hogback from St. Ninian's Isle in Shetland, which is only a few miles from a steatite quarry at Catpund. The use of local stone has also been verified for the Dundee examples, and suggested for the Govan stones after visual inspection.<sup>32</sup> Local volunteers at Luss observed that their hogback's material matched locally-available stone. Given the local stone and the stylistic variation in just the tegulation and decoration of the Scottish monuments, it seems that it was the idea of hogbacks that travelled with merchants journeying the waterways of Britain rather than the monuments themselves moving. There was no ready-made template for the design of hogbacks; some elements of their design were clearly influenced by local sculpture, such as the highly-stylised recumbent stone from Meikle.<sup>33</sup>

The location of the hogbacks at Dalserf and Luss (see below) is not surprising when looking at movement through the landscape, particularly after the destruction of the kingdom of Strathclyde's stronghold at Dumbarton on the River Clyde in AD 870, which may have opened up access to the waterways of central Scotland. Areas such as Loch Lomond and inland communities of Lennox, as well as overland routes accessed along the Clyde, would now have access to the trade networks of the Irish Sea area. Luss would have been accessible to maritime traffic from the Clyde, either by travelling up Loch Long and then over a short portage along the Tarbet isthmus into

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29 Stocker 2000.

30 Bailey et al. 2006, 350-351.

31 D. Hall 2002, 10; M. Hall et al. 2005, 277, 280.

32 C. Donald, pers comm.; Chadburn 1994, 145.

33 Ritchie 1995, 7; M. Hall 2015, 19-20.

Loch Lomond, or by journeying up the River Leven from the Clyde and into Loch Lomond. Likewise, Dalsenf is located on one of the fording points on the upper Clyde, and may have provided a gateway to portage and trade routes further south and east which have been suggested by Crawford and Buchanan (discussed below).<sup>34</sup>

## **Hunting Hogbacks – Excavation results**

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Given the number of unknowns regarding hogbacks – their exact date, purpose and cultural affiliation, for instance. – the Hunting Hogbacks project was an attempt to give some archaeological, rather than art historical, context to these monuments. This project was carried out by Northlight Heritage in 2012 in cooperation with the local communities at Luss and Dalsenf. The project sought to explore three themes:

1. Why were these locations chosen for the stones?
2. Do the sites provide evidence for Scandinavian settlement or political influence in these areas?
3. What do we understand about the broader locations of these sites, particularly with regard to the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries?

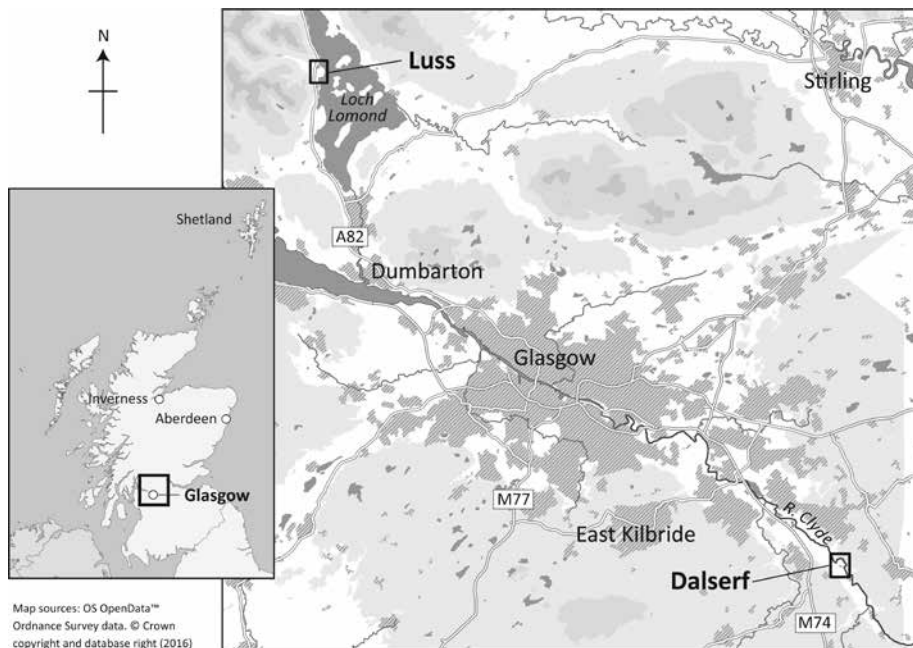
The villages of Luss and Dalsenf were chosen for excavation because there are several similarities in their circumstances despite being located 61 km apart (Figure 2). Relatively little information is known about either area in the 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The two villages are estate-owned and have prominent church buildings, where their respective hogbacks are located. Both would appear to have relationships with early saints of Scotland (the place-name Dalsenf based on St. Serf; the church at Luss dedicated to the local Saint Kessog), and may have been the sites of early chapels, although archaeological evidence of these chapels has thus far not been found.<sup>35</sup> Although both sites are outwith the traditional area of Scandinavian settlement in Scotland, the presence of hogbacks in both areas may indicate the importance of their location to commerce in medieval Scotland, Scandinavian or otherwise.

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34 Crawford 2005, 17; Buchanan 2012, 212-217.

35 Becket 2013, 5.





Map sources: OS OpenData™  
Ordnance Survey data. © Crown  
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Figure 2: Location of Dalserf and Luss.

*Illustration by Ingrid Shearer, Northlight Heritage*

Both the Luss and Dalserf hogbacks are smaller than the Govan examples. The Dalserf stone has the following dimensions: a length of 1.89 m; width of 0.42 m; and a height of 0.27 m at the centre.<sup>36</sup> The top of the stone has only a slight curve and is almost rectangular in profile from above. The sides of the stone are decorated with clear scalloped tegulation but the top is smooth, either by design or perhaps due to weathering. At some point in time, the stone was broken straight across about a quarter of the way down the length of the stone. The ends are fairly vertical. It appears that the tegulation continues across the ends, although any other decoration is difficult to discern due to weathering and the growth of lichen and moss on the stone.

The Luss stone (Figure 3) is slightly taller and more ornate than the Dalserf example, measuring 1.78 m in length, W: 0.33 m to 0.40 m in width, 0.43 m in height at the centre, and with a more rounded profile.<sup>37</sup> Because of this, Lang dates the Luss stone to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, a slightly earlier period than the Dalserf stone.<sup>38</sup> Like Dalserf, the 'roof' of the Luss stone is made of

36 Lang 1972-4, 224.

37 Lang 1972-4, 229.

38 Lang 1972-4, 220.



**Figure 3: Luss hogback in churchyard before 2015 conservation.**

*Author's photo*

semi-circular tegulation. Along one side, carved in relief below the tegulation, there are a number of Romanesque arches resting atop columns. The other side features three arches similar to those on the first side, plus three compass-drawn shapes within circles toward the right end. Any decoration on the left side of this panel has become obscured. It has been suggested that the architectural decoration on the sides of the Luss hogback are a later addition,<sup>39</sup> but it is difficult to say for certain since the arches respect the tegulation above. According to written sources and the minister at Luss during the Hunting Hogbacks project, the stone was moved into place near one of the gates from elsewhere in the churchyard in 1874 when the modern church was being built and the churchyard tidied, but its history before that is not clear.<sup>40</sup> In 2015, the Luss hogback was cleaned and redisplayed in the churchyard through a grant from Historic Scotland.<sup>41</sup>

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39 Lang 1972-4, 218, 220; Ritchie 2004, 4.

40 Lacaille 1927-8, 89; Becket 2013, 13.

41 Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park 2015, 'Historic hogback stone unveiled in Luss graveyard', 27 November 2015, <http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/looking-after/historic-hogback-stone-unveiled-in-luss-graveyard/menu-id-483.html>, accessed 29 April 2016.

While aerial photography did suggest some possible cropmarks, these features turned out to be modern or natural. Both villages have seen substantial construction disturbance over the centuries, including roads, houses and the rebuilding of churches. Unfortunately, the allotted time, resources and scope of the project did not allow for extensive geophysical survey or further excavation in these areas. There were a small number of finds at both sites. At Luss, green-glazed pottery of possible medieval or post-medieval date was recovered from both the manse garden and the glebe, and a trench excavated in the back garden of the manse contained the remains of a shallow ditch, probably relating to post-medieval cultivation of the garden. At Dalserf there was evidence of the post-medieval use of fields located on a bend in the River Clyde, but there was a complete lack of finds relating to the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries or earlier. Volunteers at Dalserf reported that in previous decades, metal-detectorists had repeatedly searched the fields between the village and the Clyde, but any finds were either unknown or unreported, and the detectorists had stopped frequenting the area years ago.

## Dalserf

The village of Dalserf is located on a meander of the River Clyde in South Lanarkshire, at NGR: NS 7998 5071. The parish was reportedly called Machanshire until sometime in the Middle Ages, with the first mention of Dalserf as the parish name in 1568.<sup>42</sup> Very little evidence of Dalserf's early history survives. The village name Dalserff first appears in AD 1406 in the *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, and as Dalserf in 1426 in the same manuscript.<sup>43</sup> There was known to be a ferry crossing here until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>44</sup>

The village is surrounded by relatively flat low-lying fields which are variously farmed for crop and, in the case of the fields investigated during the project, used for grazing cattle. An exception to this are fields on the western side of the village which have been used in recent years as a rare-breed farm and tourist attraction, part of which involved the landscaping an area to make a miniature golf course which was never completed. The village and surrounding fields are owned by Dalserf Estates, although Dalserf House, located to the east of the village, was demolished in 1963.<sup>45</sup>

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42 Craig and Russell 1845, 719; *Saints in Scottish Place-names*, 'Dalserf, Modern Parish,' <http://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=697>, accessed 30 October 2017.

43 *Saints in Scottish Place-names*, 'Dalserf, Settlement, Dalserf,' <http://saintsplaces.gla.ac.uk/place.php?id=1335269462>, accessed 30 October 2017.

44 Craig and Russell 1845, 748.

45 Canmore site no. NS85SW61, <https://canmore.org.uk/site/201954/dalserf-lanark-road-dalserf-house>, accessed 29 April 2016.



**Figure 4: Dalsersf hogback.**

*Author's photo*

The church, reputedly built in 1655, lies at the heart of the village,<sup>46</sup> and the hogback stone (Figure 4) is located in the churchyard on the south-east side of the building. The Dalsersf hogback was found south of the church by grave digger John Ritchie around 1897.<sup>47</sup> It is the only pre-Reformation sculpture in the churchyard. Old chapels were said to exist at one time near Dalsersf at Chapelburn and Dalpatrick, but by the 19<sup>th</sup> century they had disappeared and their locations had been forgotten.<sup>48</sup> If the church at Dalsersf really was only built in the post-Reformation period, the hogback originally could have been at one of these other sites. If the hogback was moved to its current site in conjunction with the relocation of the church, it would indicate that the stone was an important symbol linking the local community to activity in the region's past.

There is little documentation of the ford and the surrounding land at Dalsersf before the late 1500s. It is possible that merchants, including those

46 Canmore site no. NS75SE13, <https://canmore.org.uk/site/45700/dalsersf-village-kirk-road-dalsersf-parish-church-and-churchyard>, accessed 29 April 2016

47 Waddell 1921-2, 19-20.

48 Craig and Russell 1845, 733.

with some links to Scandinavia or Anglo-Scandinavian England, were using the ford as part of an overland route or that they travelled upriver in boats as a shortcut between the Viking trading centres of York and Dublin. Overland routes were often used during the Viking Age, including a route between Lancashire and York via the Ribble-Aire gap through the Pennines, as illustrated by the deposition of the Cuerdale hoard.<sup>49</sup> Merchants may have travelled, using portages, along the Clyde-Forth or Clyde-Tweed in order to avoid sailing around the whole of Scotland in order to reach the east coasts of Scotland and England.<sup>50</sup> Supporting the idea of the association of hogbacks with commerce along this route, there is a spread of hogbacks in the vicinity of the Rivers Tweed and Teviot at Stobo, Ancrum, Nisbet, Bedrule, and Lempitlaw. The only find of Scandinavian character from the area around Dalserf is a five-lobed pommel from Abingdon, Biggar (South Lanarkshire), even today a crossing point between the Clyde and Tweed valleys.<sup>51</sup> This indicates little to no Scandinavian settlement in the area.

Two trenches were opened at Dalserf (Figure 5). Trench 1 [T1] was located on the high point of a low rise in a field to the southwest of the church. Trench 2 [T2] was located to the north of the church, at the southern end of a large field.

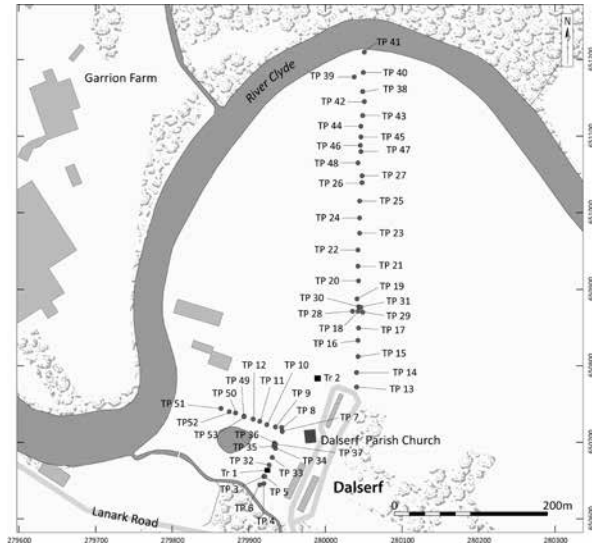


Figure 5: Map of Dalserf and plan of project trenches and test pits.

*Illustration by Ingrid Shearer, Northlight Heritage*

49 Griffiths 2010, 41, 44.

50 Crawford 2005, 17; Buchanan 2012, 212-217.

51 Buchanan 2012, 217, 326.

More than fifty small test-pits were also excavated in transects across both these areas. T1 contained no significant archaeological features or deposits. The topsoil was consistent across the trench and covered natural deposits of clay sand and gravel. The subsoil appeared to be glacially deposited. Various artefacts, all of which were of modern date, were recovered from the topsoil including fragments of modern ceramics, glass, and small fragments of slate.

T2 contained no archaeologically significant features or deposits. A piece of a clay pipe was recovered from the topsoil along with a fragment of modern bottle glass. Below the topsoil an interface deposit [005] between the topsoil and subsoil contained four sherds of green glazed pottery, of probable post-medieval date, amongst further modern artefacts.

A total of 54 test-pits also were dug across both areas in three main transects with a few outlying pits, including pits along the bank of the River Clyde. Soil deposits generally appeared to have been glacially deposited, although the depth of sand identified within the northern field [Transect 1] may relate to periodic flooding over an extended time period.

## **Luss**

Luss is located on the banks of Loch Lomond in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park at NGR: NS 3600 9280. In later times, both water and overland routes for travel and cattle droving ran from the west coast and central Highlands past Luss to Lowland population centres.<sup>52</sup> Today, the A82, one of the major roadways from the Lowlands to the Scottish Highlands, passes along the west bank of Loch Lomond, just bypassing Luss. While the age of many of these routes is unknown, excavations at Tigh Caol, Argyll, in 2014 revealed burnt timbers used to repair the drove road which were dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>53</sup> The historical and archaeological evidence makes it likely that these routes were used in the Viking Age and earlier, making the area around Luss a well-travelled zone.

More is known about St. Kessog's church at Luss than the church at Dalsarf. A church was mentioned here in a 1315 charter by Robert I granting 'God and St. Kessog for ever' sanctuary for three miles around the church.<sup>54</sup> A 2002 watching brief during the construction of new drains and paths confirmed the foundations of a ca. 13<sup>th</sup> century chapel east of the current church.<sup>55</sup> There is no record of the discovery of the Luss hogback, but it was known

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52 Adamson 2014, 251.

53 Adamson and Bailie 2015, 7, 9.

54 Fraser 1874, 18, 363.

55 Baker 2002, 22.

to scholars by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>56</sup> In addition to the hogback, several other medieval carved stones have been found there. A coped stone with tegulation and decorated with chevrons was described in the 1920s but was destroyed in the 1970s and not included in Lang's catalogue.<sup>57</sup> A coped stone with flat ridge line, a free-standing cross and two stone slabs with simple crosses, of which the latter two may be early medieval, have also been uncovered there.<sup>58</sup> A baptismal font and effigy found approximately 3 km south of the church during road improvements in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century were uncovered in a cairn called Carn ma-Cheasoig (NGR: NS 358 900), a site associated with St. Kessog's martyrdom.<sup>59</sup> Both pieces are now housed inside Luss church.

If the hogbacks do indeed have Anglo-Scandinavian links, there is certainly evidence for Scandinavian activity in the area around Luss. After the Viking kings of Dublin were successful in their four-month siege of the Britons' fortress at Dumbarton Rock, the *Annals of Ulster* record that these kings left Scotland with 200 ships filled with 'a great prey' of Britons, Angles and Picts,<sup>60</sup> possibly including people from the Loch Lomond area. In 1263, a group of King Haakon's ships reportedly crossed the Tarbet-Arrochar isthmus, putting them in the vicinity of Luss, not long before they engaged with the Scottish army at Largs.<sup>61</sup> In 1851, a burial was unearthed in a mound located just south of Luss called Boiden (NGR: NS 3554 8600).<sup>62</sup> The burial contained a bent sword, a damaged shield boss and a spear head that were attributed to the Viking Age based upon the styles of the weapons.<sup>63</sup> In 2005, excavations ahead of the construction of a golf course near the Boiden burial uncovered a craft-working enclosure containing more than eighty burials dating in clusters to the 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century, well within the Viking Age in Scotland, and the 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>64</sup> Eight of the early graves contained grave goods, including a blue glass bead, a whetstone from Norway, knife blades, a copper-alloy bracelet, a shale ring and lignite and shale bracelets, including one bangle sized for a child.<sup>65</sup> Since Hunting Hogbacks was completed, the Heritage Lottery Funded project Hidden Heritage of a Landscape surveyed and investigated possible archaeological sites along the portage route between Arrochar and Tarbet. Although evidence was found of prehistoric stone working and post-

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56 Russell Walker 1884-5, 418-419.

57 Lacaille 1927-8, 93-95; Lang 1972-4; Baker 2002, 22.

58 Lacaille 1924-5, 144-146; Lacaille 1927-8, 89-90.

59 Lacaille 1933-4, 100.

60 *AU* 871.2: Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill 1983, 326.

61 Dasent 1894, 354.

62 Stewart 1851-4.

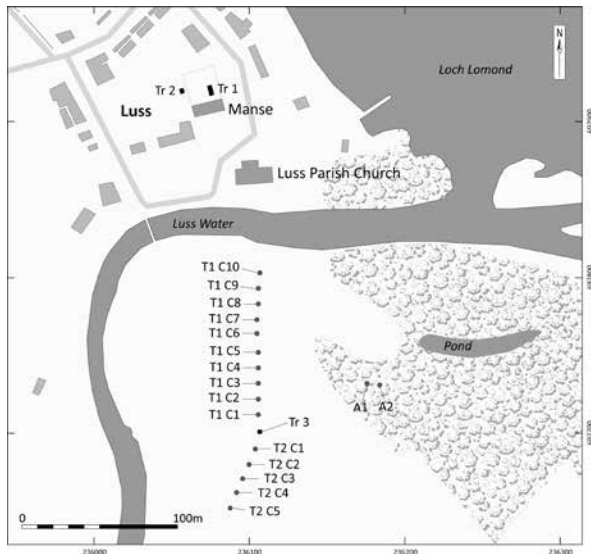
63 Anderson 1872-4, 569; Graham-Campbell and Batey 1998, 144.

64 MacGregor 2009, 11.

65 MacGregor 2009, 11-12.

medieval occupation of the area, nothing was found by that project which could be dated to the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>66</sup>

Much of the present village and surrounding land is owned by Luss Estates, although the church, manse and glebe, where the excavation work occurred, are all owned by the Church of Scotland. The glebe is a low-lying area of rough pasture located to the south of the higher ground of the church and manse, bounded to the west and north by the River Luss and by wooded areas to the east and south. The glebe is accessed from the north via a footbridge, beneath which the remains of paving for a fording point are still visible. Local residents confirmed that parts of the glebe are regularly flooded.



**Figure 6: Map of Luss and plan of project trenches and auger transect.**

*Illustration by Ingrid Shearer, Northlight Heritage*

Three trenches were excavated at Luss (Figure 6), two within the grounds of the manse and one within the glebe. The first trench [T1], measuring 4 x 2.5 m, was located to the rear on the north side of the manse to investigate some unusual ridges and depressions in the lawn. The topsoil in T1 contained a range of artefacts, including ceramic, glass and metal, all of relatively modern date. Beneath the topsoil, a deposit of mixed rubble was encountered at the southern end of the trench. This rubble deposit contained pieces of broken brick and large slabs of slate, possibly representing a demolition deposit.

66 James et al. 2014.



Within this material were a large number of finds, including one piece of green-glazed pottery, a bone spoon and fragments of porcelain and glass. Beneath the rubble layer was a heavily-disturbed layer of mixed soil, probably the result of bioturbation and the cultivation of a garden, containing a sherd of green-glazed pottery with possible incised patterning, sherds of green glass, and fragments of white porcelain.

Sealed beneath the deposit of mixed soil was a shallow ditch which ran east-west, broadly parallel to the north face of the manse. This ditch was 1.2 m wide and up to 0.25 m deep – the full length of the ditch is not known – and had been filled with a deposit of sandy silt, perhaps representing a gradual ‘silting-up’ of the feature over time. The ditch fill was sterile, containing no artefacts or other anthropogenic material, but had been disturbed by animal burrows. The ditch had been cut into natural clay subsoil, so its age and purpose remain unknown.

To the west of T1, a second trench [T2] measuring 2 x 2 m was excavated on the other side of a fence, but still within the grounds of the manse. Deposits were deep but of modern date, containing ceramics, glass and metal artefacts. Due to the depth of deposit at more than 0.5 m, it proved impractical to continue with this trench.

A third trench [T3] measuring 3 x 2 m was located within the glebe land to the south of the church. The trench was positioned on a visibly dryer and higher part in the centre of what is a fairly flat piece of ground. Beneath the topsoil, the first find was a modern sheep burial cut into sandy silt, which may be an alluvial deposit. Four sherds of green-glazed pottery, including a rim-sherd, were recovered from this deposit, along with fragments of more modern white porcelain, bottle glass and pieces of metal. The sandy silt lay on top of the natural subsoil, which was comprised of sand and gravel.

Core samples radiating out from T3 were taken with a hand augur by Sharon Carson. Due to their proximity to the Luss Water, some samples showed deposits probably associated with the waterway. A lower deposit in core 8 from transect 1 did reveal a band of mottled orange which was not found in any other sample. This may be indicative of a feature, but it was not investigated further due to time constraints. Possible charcoal fragments were found in some of the deposits in the cores close to trench 3. It should be noted that some black inclusions were interpreted in the field as charcoal, but could possibly have been degraded coal, as coal was also found in some of the cores. No evidence of human activity was found within the deposits in the cores, with the exception of the possible truncation of the uppermost deposits in transect 2, core 3, where no topsoil was observed.

## Discussion

Research on hogbacks from historical and stylistic perspectives has been well-covered by many scholars in the past few decades. In contrast, the intention of the Hunting Hogbacks project was to look for archaeological evidence which might provide clues as to the meaning and context of hogbacks in their local areas in the period of their manufacture, as well as provide evidence as to land use and other activities taking place in the vicinity of Dalsersf and Luss in the 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The results of the excavation and evaluation work at Dalsersf showed a lack of evidence for pre-modern activity. This may be due to the placement of the trenches and trial-pits as landscaping or modern farming destroyed evidence of earlier activity. The depth of sandy deposits noted across the northern field might suggest that archaeological deposits have been buried beneath alluvium as this area is known to flood. However, it is also possible that there was limited activity in this area in the medieval period or earlier. Due to the logistical and financial scope of the project, geophysical survey was not carried out; however, it may prove to be a useful, non-invasive tool to use in the churchyard in the future.

The lack of evidence for early historic or medieval activity does raise questions about the context of the hogback in the Dalsersf churchyard. At Luss there is evidence for medieval and earlier activity, particularly through the carved stones in and around the church. However, at Dalsersf little is known about the church in the medieval period and earlier. The Dalsersf hogback is the only pre-Reformation piece of sculpture from the church or churchyard. Whilst this is not unusual for Scottish hogbacks, about three-quarters of the hogback sites in Scotland yield sculpture that predates or is contemporary with the hogbacks. Therefore, the possibility that the Dalsersf hogback has been moved to the grounds of the current church from another church or an important point in the surrounding landscape must be considered. Moving the hogback from an older ecclesiastical site could have been a way to lend continuity and legitimacy to a new site, while also adding another layer to the hogback's biography.

In a wider context, hogbacks seem to be longer-lived monuments in Scotland than in England. Although arguments can be made for a Scandinavian connection to the stones at Luss, Govan, St. Ninian's Isle and in Orkney, most hogback stones are outwith the areas of dense Scandinavian settlement in Scotland. Instead, their absence from western Scotland and the Highlands and Western Isles rather suggests a link between their distribution along the coasts, waterways, and routeways in central and southern Scotland, and the movement of people in these areas. Rather than being produced as

symbols of Scandinavian cultural affiliation in Kirkwall, Orkney, for example, hogbacks may have been a result of the people visiting Kirkwall as part of the commercial activity taking place in one of Scotland's early towns and ecclesiastical centres.<sup>67</sup> Merchants who successfully engaged in trade along the east coast would have had the knowledge and means to commission hogbacks, and perhaps saw such action as a way to use their newfound wealth to memorialise themselves or elevate their status within the community.

Interestingly, it is only in the 12<sup>th</sup> century that similar monuments start appearing in a handful of instances in Scandinavia, such as the Botkyrka church stone from Södermanland, Sweden and Romanesque grave covers from Stenløse church and Kerte church, Denmark. Even after the end of the Viking Age, Norway continued a brisk trade with the British Isles: at one point in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Norwegian ships accounted for half of the total imports listed in the customs rolls at the English port of King's Lynn. We lack the same amount of documentation for Scotland at this time because there is a lack of surviving port books and there is not a Scottish version of the Domesday Book to record early churches.<sup>68</sup>

## Conclusion

The explorations at Luss and Dalsenf were admittedly on a small scale and carried out over a short period of time. Neither location produced direct evidence for the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD; the evidence suggesting that domestic and agricultural activity in the Viking Age was not focused on the current locations of the villages' hogbacks, if indeed the hogbacks were originally located in these churchyards. This project has shown the difficulty in gathering Viking Age evidence, and shows that any future work should focus on areas close to church buildings and walls for a better chance of dateable finds.

The suggestion that these stones may have been moved to the churchyards from other locations still has potential. Future fieldwork should focus on churchyards which do not have pre-Reformation sculpture or architecture except for their hogbacks, and which are not mentioned in written sources until at least the later medieval period. Establishing the antiquity of these churches could help to support or discard the argument that some hogbacks were transported in from other locations. Geophysical survey can provide a noninvasive method of finding earlier foundations. There is a great possibility for carrying out excavations in abandoned churchyards with hogbacks, such as Old Cambus, St. Helen's Church, Scottish Borders.

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67 Owen 2005, 302-303.

68 Ditchburn 1988, 171; Stevenson 1988, 183; D. Hall 2002, 10, 21.

At Dalsersf, there is a case to be made for further study into the history of the land use of the low-lying areas around the church and village. Additionally, it would be useful to explore whether there are earlier phases of the church beneath the modern building since evidence for a possible earlier foundation was identified on an eastern corner of the church. The possibility of a different location for earlier incarnations of the church, as was suggested by Craig and Russell in the *New Statistical Account*, should be considered.<sup>69</sup>

It is worth noting that many more examples of hogbacks probably remain buried in Scottish churchyards and in other places. Although hogbacks remain an enigmatic form of sculpture, more information about their original context and meaning in Scotland potentially can be found using archaeological methods in addition to historical and stylistic approaches. Whether or not the Scottish hogbacks, including coped and kindred monuments, represented the same Anglo-Scandinavian affiliation and were commissioned with the same intentions as their English counterparts remains to be determined. Would a newly-carved hogback in the churchyard at Govan in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century be interpreted by its audience in the same way as the stones created a century or two later? In Scotland, a connection can be suggested between commissioned hogbacks and merchants taking advantage of increasing commercial opportunities throughout mainland Scotland and the Northern Isles from the late 10<sup>th</sup> century through to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, which helps to explain their distribution outside areas of dense Scandinavian settlement in Scotland. rather than as simply ‘Scandinavian colonial monuments’.

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69 Craig and Russell 1845, 730.

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