

## Guidance Sheet No. 4: PREPARING THE PANEL for RECORDING

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In order to make a complete and clear record of the panel you will need to prepare it very carefully. Please remember – and make others aware – that the majority of carved rocks in England are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. This means they are protected by law and it is an offence to damage them, even if your intentions are good! Recent research has demonstrated that even rubbings and tracings can be damaging to the rock art, particularly over time with repetitive rubbings. You have special consent from English Heritage to record rock art sites using these guidelines, but this consent does not extend to unconnected activities.

The notes below offer guidance on how to prepare the rock art for recording. Please follow this guidance as far as possible and encourage others to do so too. If in doubt, the golden rule is to keep your interaction with the rock surface to a minimum. While one person touching the carvings or the rock surface may have very little impact, if dozens of people walk on the rock the microscopic structure of the rock surface will be affected and, over time, the engravings will wear away.

### Removing Turf

Current knowledge suggests that the protection offered by turf cover more than outweighs any deterioration it may cause. Anything that upsets the established equilibrium of a rock surface will be detrimental, so **turf should not be removed** unless absolutely necessary. The only time that turf should be removed for recording purposes is to locate and record **known** panels that are obscured by recent cover. Turf should then be carefully replaced. A record should be made of the current extent of turf cover so that we can monitor its spread and effect. Persistent removal and recovering destabilises the rock surface and will be detrimental to the rock art. You may, however wish to trim back long grass around the panel to ensure a clean edge for photogrammetry images.

### Cleaning

You may wish to clean the panel so you can better see the surface and the motifs. **Never use any chemicals or abrasive materials or tools** to clean the rock surface. Loose material such as leaf litter, pine needles and animal droppings should be gently removed from the rock surface. This can be done by picking up larger pieces or clumps of vegetation. Dry vegetation and droppings can be cleared away using a soft brush. **Lichens, mosses and algae should not be removed.** Removal of lichens is not a viable option, partly because some are protected species, and partly because the process of removal of biological growths will damage the rock surface. New lichen growth is more aggressive than that of established lichens, so if lichens are removed, they need to be kept off. The newly expose surface will also be more vulnerable to the effects of physical and chemical weathering. Moss and algae should be discouraged through site management (e.g. removal of tree cover) rather than through our interference. Until we understand better the ways in which lichens, mosses and algae act on rock art, we should not remove them or interfere with them in any way.

### Enhancing the Carvings

Carvings may be very eroded and faint, and you will need to look very carefully at the rock surface to make out some of the motifs. **Do not try to re-carve, paint or chalk the engravings.** Low-angled sunlight (morning or evening) after rainfall provides the best natural conditions for viewing, but you may also want to use artificial means to enhance the carvings so you can see them better. If there is sunshine, you can put water from a local source on the panel and position yourself so the light enhances the relief of the carvings. You could also try shading the rock surface then using a reflective surface to focus sunlight onto the surface (silver survival blankets or mirrors are very effective for this). If it is an overcast day or the panel is in dark woodland, you could use a powerful torch to shine light obliquely onto the panel.

