

Where will the runestone go?

In early 2017, during the *Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology*, we worked with partner organisations to conserve and move the runestone to a safer location, outside the University of Edinburgh's Scandinavian Studies Department at 50 George Square. This will make it accessible and visible to everyone all year round.

Funding was secured and permissions granted by Historic Environment Scotland to enable the runestone to be moved. National Museums Scotland will add the stone into its national collection for long-term safe-keeping and will loan it to the University of Edinburgh.

In December 2017, experts from AOC Archaeology carefully excavated and lifted the runestone out of the ground. This spring it will be assessed, conserved and unveiled in its new location, along with high-quality illustration and interpretation panels. The Society will also create dedicated webpages for the runestone and its history to provide further interpretation and context.

Events

Free public events will take place during spring and summer 2018 to celebrate the unveiling of the stone in its new location. An opening event outside 50 George Square is planned, alongside a guest lecture and guided storytelling walking tours. Visit our website (www.socantscot.org) to find out more and book your place.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Below: Artist's impression of how the runestone will look, once it has been moved to its new home.



Find the runestone outside the University of Edinburgh's Scandinavian Studies Department: 50 George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9JU (SE corner)

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Society of Antiquaries
of Scotland



For further information about the runestone and related public events please contact:

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Founded in 1780 the purpose of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland is "the study of the antiquities and history of Scotland." Today, the Society is an independent charity, focused on education and research, with a worldwide membership of about 2,500 Fellows. Increasingly we are involved in helping to translate Scotland's history and archaeology for contemporary audiences.

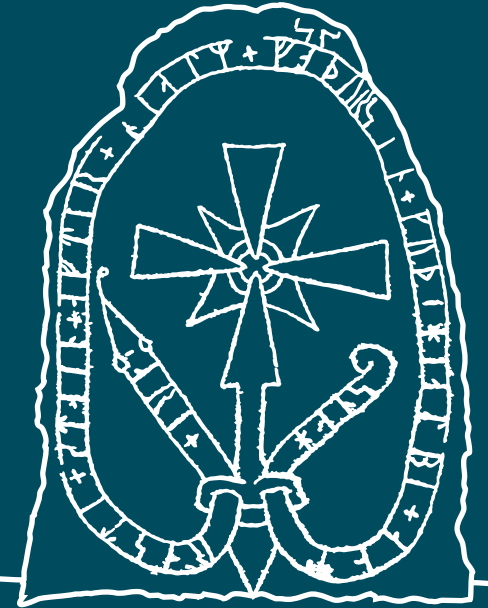
Thanks

Thank you to the following organisations for their support, without which the excavation, conservation, re-siting and telling of the runestone's story would not have been possible:

Society of Antiquaries
of Scotland



A SHORT GUIDE TO EDINBURGH'S RUNESTONE



A Viking age Swedish runestone in Edinburgh with an interesting story to tell is on the move!

For years, the runestone was largely unknown and inaccessible to residents and visitors alike, despite being located in the heart of the city. It had been left high on a steep hillside just below the north wall of Edinburgh Castle's esplanade.

More recently, it was completely off limits during the summer months due to the installation of high metal railings and locked gates to protect the large supporting columns of the stadium for the annual Military Tattoo.

In 2018, this unique piece of shared Scottish-Swedish heritage will be unveiled in a new, safer location in the city: accessible and easy to find for all.



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



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The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland is a Scottish registered charity, Charity No. SC010440.

RUNESTONE UNCOVERED

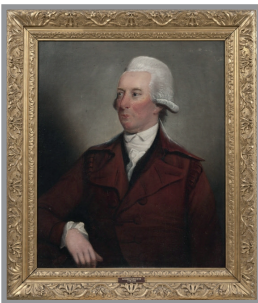
The story so far

Most Viking Age runestones are located in Scandinavia: Denmark has around 250, Norway has 50 or more, and Sweden has between 1,700 and 2,500. Edinburgh's 11th-century AD Swedish runestone is an important monument but it also tells a fascinating story of the links between Scotland and Sweden during the second half of the 18th century.

Originally from Lilla Ramsjö in Uppland, Sweden, the runestone was donated to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1787 by Sir Alexander Seton of Preston and Ekolsund (pictured above). It was moved to various locations, including Edinburgh's Canongate, before being gifted to the proprietors of Princes Street Gardens and placed near the Castle Esplanade in 1822. It stood there for nearly 200 years, where it became hidden behind gates and railings.

Edinburgh's runestone

The runestone (U 1173) is a 1.3 ton, grey granite stone, approximately 1,000 years old, 1.8m high by 0.9m wide. One side has been carved and around the edge is a runic message, framed in a stylised serpent-form, surrounding a central cross whose stem is linked to the serpent's head and tail by a collar. The carved stone has distinctive features which have close similarities to 18 other stones in Sweden which are attributed to or signed by a runemaster called Erik.



© Bodil Karlsson
National Museum of Sweden

What do the runes say?

The inscription starts at the head of the snake and runs clockwise. It follows a standard formula and contains sentiment common on late Viking Age Swedish memorials: a son commemorating his father together with a prayer.

Transliteration into Roman alphabet:

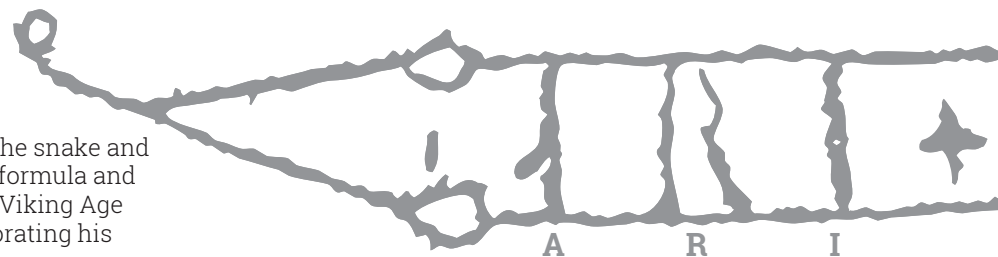
ari + rasti + stain + aftir + (h)ialm + faþur sin + kuþ + hialbi + ant hans

Transcription into Old Norse:

Ari ræisti stæin æftir Hialm, faður sinn.
Guð hialpi and hans.

Translation into English:

Ari raised [this] stone in memory of Hjalmr, his father.
[May] God help his spirit.



What are runes?

Runes are the letters in a set of related alphabets known as runic alphabets. These were used to write various Germanic languages before the adoption of the Roman alphabet and for certain special purposes afterwards. They are also known as the *fupark* or *futhark*, after their first six letters: F, U, Þ, A, R, and K.

The earliest runic inscriptions date from around 150 AD and are found on portable objects such as weapons and jewellery. The tradition of inscriptions on large stones developed later. Runes were generally replaced by the Roman alphabet as more people became Christians. This happened by around 700 AD in central Europe and 1100 AD in northern Europe, although runes continued to be used until the Reformation in parts of Scandinavia.

The three best-known runic alphabets are: *Older Futhark* (150–800 AD), used across the Germanic world; *Anglo-Saxon Futhorc* (400–1100 AD) used in Britain; and *Younger Futhark* (800–1100 AD) used in Viking Age Scandinavia. Younger Futhark, which is used on Edinburgh's runestone, has a variety of forms and was further developed in the medieval period (1000–1500 AD) in Scandinavia.

What are runestones?

The Scandinavian tradition of using runes in monumental inscriptions on stone appears to have begun in the 4th century AD and continued into the 12th century. Most date from the late Viking Age and many of these include Christian iconography. Runestones were placed in specially selected spots in the landscape, such as assembly locations, roads, bridges, and fords. There are still debates about what the main purpose of runestones was: was it to mark territory, explain inheritance, or bring glory to dead kinsmen and to tell of important events? The majority of runestones are memorials to the dead and analysis of the carving shows many were painted in bright colours.

