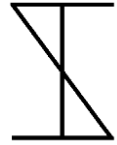


# Guide to recording stonemasons' marks



## 1. Background to masons' marks

A stonemason's mark (mason's mark) is a symbol cut into the dressed surface of a piece of masonry. Usually evenly incised into the face of the stone, masons' marks stand out from other "graffiti" found on stone buildings as they consist mainly of straight lines forming triangles, squares, rectangles, and other geometric shapes. These marks served a number of purposes, including as a makers' mark, a statement of artisanship which ensured payment for work, and as a form of quality control. The marks may also have been instructions to the setter who positioned the stone, indicating the correct orientation of the dressed stone. The symbol above is an example of a 4-line mark.

## 2. The Project

### a. Origins

A lightbulb moment at Crookston Castle in Glasgow led to a major piece of research being undertaken between 2015 and 2019. This took the form of a Research Masters degree at the University of Glasgow, the results of which can be found here: <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/81713/> This project is an extension of the initial research.

### b. Objectives

This Scottish Stonemasons Marks Research Project offers opportunities for individuals and community organisations to engage with and learn about their local historic buildings.

It is designed to allow participation in the identification and recording of masons' marks that can be found on stone buildings across Scotland, using a standardised recording format.

## 3. Participation

No previous experience in, or knowledge of, recording standing buildings is required. Recording by young people, under the guidance of adults, is not only possible but encouraged. Attention to detail and neat handwriting are the only essentials! Only a low level of fitness is required to participate.

NOTE: If you are participating in an organised event, the organiser is responsible for ensuring that the survey is carried out with appropriate health and safety measures in place. If you are undertaking a survey as an individual, you are responsible for all aspects of your own safety. An example risk assessment form is attached. This **must be completed** and submitted to the Project Lead before the survey takes place. Some locations may wish you to complete their risk assessment form. In this case, you should retain a copy and keep it with the survey records. Regardless, the health and safety of participants is essential and takes priority.

# Scottish Stonemasons' Marks Research Project

Whether as a group or as an individual, **approval must be obtained in advance** from the building's owners/managers, e.g., National Trust for Scotland (NTS), Historic Environment Scotland (HES) or private owner(s) and from the Project Lead. If in doubt, contact the Project Lead.

## 4. Recording Process

### a. Site Selection

Any building constructed mainly or partly from stone is potentially suitable for inclusion.

The application of masons' marks to dressed stone has not been consistent in history. As an example, marks were applied during the original building phases at Glasgow Cathedral but are not applied to replacement stonework during repairs being undertaken in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Many later buildings, from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, may have no masons' marks at all, whilst some older and newer buildings will.

### b. Site plan and preparation

Most buildings to be surveyed will be listed on Canmore, the HES online record ([canmore.org.uk](http://canmore.org.uk)). Information on construction dates, together with photographs and plans can be found here. The building plan will help to organise surveying, ensuring all of the building is recorded. It can simplify things if you allocate a simple alphabetical code to each section of the building, e.g., E = Nave wall north. Mark these on the plan you use and then copy plans to make available to team members.

### c. Finding and recording the marks

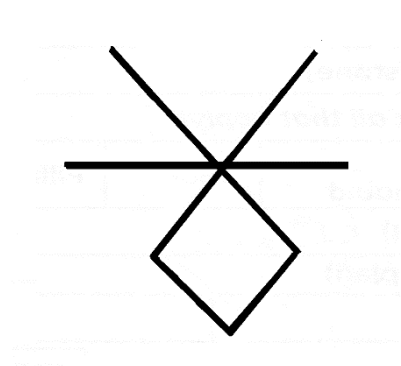
These instructions should be read in conjunction with the SSMRP survey recording form, which is printed 2 forms on an A4 sheet and can be found at the back of this guide.

You can copy the form locally. Then split into individual forms before carrying out the survey.

Not all marks are immediately obvious. Try holding a torch (LED works best) and shine it across the marks, from top, bottom, left, right and diagonally. This will help to identify the form of the mark.



*Photograph of M064 at Glasgow Cathedral*



*Drawing of M064 at Glasgow Cathedral*

## Scottish Stonemasons' Marks Research Project

**Please draw the mark in pencil.** The rest of the form should be completed in blue or black ink. The drawing of the mark should always represent how it appears, i.e., the same way up, etc. If the mark appears to be incomplete or the stone is broken, and a part of the mark is missing, draw the broken edge with a dotted line.

d. Filling in the data

The following is an example of the sort of information to be added to the form.

Box	Content	Example		
<b>Site name</b>	Name of building, etc	Glasgow Cathedral		
<b>Mark no.</b>	<i>Office use only</i>	-		
<b>Area of building</b>	Specific area of survey	Nave, North wall		
<b>Photo ref</b>	If you take a photo, add the number	115-034		
<b>Location description</b>	Where on Nave N wall	Under Millennium window		
<b>Course</b>	Layer of stone, counting up from floor	6 up from floor level		
<b>Stone style</b>	1 tick for each mark included on this form	Door II, Window III For "other", state stone style in space below		
<b>Max dimensions</b>	(H) and (W) in mm	37 H x 72 W		
<b>Scale</b>	Full size, preferably. For large marks, 1:2 or 1:4 is acceptable	1:1		
<b>Drawing</b>	As you see the mark when you look at it.			
<b>Material</b>	What is the stone made of?	S=sandstone, G= granite		
<b>Location code</b>	If the site plan has codes, put the code in the first box and the number of occurrences of the same mark at that location in the second	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"><tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td style="text-align: center;">III</td></tr></table>	E	III
E	III			
<b>Comments</b>	Additional information about location, appearance, etc.	To right of XYZ memorial, partly eroded		
<b>Recorded by (initials)</b>	Recorder's initials	ABC		
<b>Date</b>	Date or recording	23/07/21		
<b>Chkd/scan/database/drawing file</b>	<i>Office use only</i>	-		

# Scottish Stonemasons' Marks Research Project

## 5. Post recording actions

Once the survey is complete, check over the forms, ensuring that all information requested has been correctly entered.

Completed forms should be scanned in **PDF format only**. Scan each form individually. Email the scanned forms, plus a copy of the building plan showing the codes allocated to each area, to the email address below. If you have taken photographs, please email them too, making sure the image numbers are recorded on the relevant survey form.

## 6. Contact Information

The Project Lead is Iain Ross Wallace, who can be contacted as follows:

Email: [info@masonsmarks.scot](mailto:info@masonsmarks.scot)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1683868745175644>

Post: Please email the Project Lead if you wish to send the results by post

(Please only post forms if you cannot scan and email them).

## 7. Attachments

1. The SSMRP recording form (blank)
2. Risk assessment template (to be completed locally in conjunction with the manager/owner of building).