

Prehistoric Cochno Stone unearthed near housing estate



The work to unearth the stone is expected to last three weeks. Image copyright Glasgow University

A prehistoric stone panel said to be the "most important in Europe" is being unearthed for the first time in more than 50 years in Clydebank.

The Cochno Stone dates to 3000BC and is described as one of the best examples of Neolithic or Bronze Age cup and ring markings in Europe. Located next to a housing estate, the stone was buried in 1965 to protect it from damage.

Excavation work started on Monday 5th of September and is expected to last three weeks.



Archaeologists will use 3D-imaging technology to make a detailed digital record of the site.

They hope this will provide more information on the stone's history, purpose and the people who created it about 5,000 years ago.

Modern Graffiti

Dr Kenny Brophy, from Glasgow University, who is leading the dig next to Cochno farm, said: "This is the biggest and, I would argue, one of the most important Neolithic art panels in Europe.

"The cup and ring marks are extensive but the site just happens to be in the middle of an urban housing scheme in Clydebank.



"It was last fully open to the elements and the public up until 1965. Sadly, as it was neglected it was also being damaged through vandalism and people just traipsing all over it.

"Renowned archaeologist Ludovic Maclellan Mann, with a team of experts, decided the best way to preserve it was to cover it over to protect it from further damage."

A trial excavation last year indicated modern graffiti is "probably extensive" over the stone's surface.



The stone has Neolithic or Bronze Age cup and ring markings, and more modern graffiti

The joint project between the university's archaeology department and the Factum Foundation for Digital Technology in Conservation aims to gather high-resolution data of the stone's surface before reburying it.



The foundation then hopes to produce a lifesize copy of the 8m by 13m stone using the recorded digital data and historical sources, including the graffiti as well as the prehistoric surface.

The foundation's Ferdinand Saumarez Smith said: "Factum Foundation captured the world's attention through its 3D scanning work that led to the discovery of evidence of a new chamber in the tomb of Tutankhamun. "With the Cochno Stone, we are going to use similar recording methods to bring the world's attention to Scotland's equally important, mysterious and beautiful heritage. "We believe that if we trust people, they will look after it."