

# Wild Camping and Scheduled Monuments

Colleagues at Historic Environment Scotland have produced this article to highlight the link between our waterways and scheduled monuments...

Scotland's waterways have provided routes through our landscape for thousands of years, initially giving our ancestors access to the heart of the country through primordial forests, and allowing rapid travel along the coasts, up through straths and glens, and amongst the islands.

While we tend to experience our modern landscape largely through the road system, until less than 200 years ago, water was the focus of Scottish settlement. As a result most of our important archaeological monuments and historic buildings are located close to water. This means that many such archaeological sites are more accessible to paddlers and people travelling on the water than they are from the land, and this gives us a particular responsibility of care towards them.

The most important historic sites are protected by law under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. These are called 'scheduled monuments'. Most activity at a scheduled monument legally requires special permission, called Scheduled Monument Consent, which is obtained through Historic Environment Scotland beforehand. Damage and works carried out without consent can be a punishable offence. Many of these monuments remain in private ownership and there is no right of public access provided through the designation. However, under the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, most of these sites can be accessed responsibly.

So what is responsible access in this particular case? Can you camp on, picnic on, and visit scheduled monuments? What is counted as damage or change? The value and importance of a monument isn't just in the bits that are upstanding and obvious to the eye, like walls. Much archaeological evidence is invisible, beneath the surface of the ground, including things like ancient rubbish dumps, which can tell us what people ate, how they lived, and when the site was occupied. Scheduling a site protects not just the visible remains, but also all the land within the scheduled area, above and below ground.

So, thinking practically, anything which disturbs the ground surface or the visible remains of the monument could cause damage, as it could disturb the evidence preserved there. Dumping rubbish, or adding to a site by building a cairn, can also damage a monument and prevent subsequent visitors from understanding and enjoying a monument. All these activities therefore require consent.

The old cliché 'take only photographs, leave only footprints' is very apt for the monuments to our past and will allow them to survive for future generations. You can visit and enjoy them, but don't take anything away, whether it is lying loose on the ground, buried on the soil, or part of the upstanding remains. Don't risk any activity that might damage the remains, climbing on unstable masonry can lead to injure the sites as well as yourselves.

Have a picnic, and pick up all your rubbish, put it in a bag and remove it – don't bury it. If you camp on an archaeological site, tie your guy ropes to trees and don't bury your waste or dig fire pits. Camping with pegs may require consent, and could damage underground deposits in sensitive areas, so you should contact Historic Environment Scotland beforehand to discuss this.

This is all very well, but how do you find out if a monument is scheduled? Historic Environment Scotland is the organisation that takes care of these sites, and you can look up sites on a map here: [historicscotland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=18d2608ac1284066ba3927312710d16d](https://historicscotland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=18d2608ac1284066ba3927312710d16d). There is also lots of additional information on the National Record of the Historic Environment <https://canmore.org.uk>, so it's a good idea to plan your trip before you go – it will add a lot to your understanding of the sites, and suggest additional places to see.

Most monuments are not sign-posted but occasionally they will be, sometimes with interpretation boards. Occasionally there may be a sign stating that it is a scheduled monument. If in doubt, you can do no harm by treating any archaeological monument as if it is legally protected.

When you are in a canoe, you're moving through the landscape as people have



Archonell Castle, Loch Awe, from the water

done over thousands of years in Scotland, and you're in a position to see the history of the country in a way that most people can't. Our right to freely access our countryside is a fantastic privilege, and carries with it a responsibility to care for its wealth of natural and cultural history, for generations to come.

Heritage Directorate: [hmenquiries@hes.scot](mailto:hmenquiries@hes.scot)  
0131 668 8716

#### Further information

- Canmore, the National Record of the Historic Environment's online portal [canmore.org.uk](https://canmore.org.uk)
- Information about legal designations, [historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/](https://historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/listing-scheduling-and-designations/)
- Law and Policy [historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/](https://historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/)

