

Preserving old gateways and other formal boundaries in modern farming systems

Why are old gateways considered important?

Gateways, mortared stone walls and parkland fencing can form one of the most distinctive features on a farm. Too often they have been removed or altered because they do not fit in with modern farming methods.

While some drystone dykes were mostly built primarily as field boundaries, mortared stone walls have been more generally built to define properties and for prestige. Though sometimes seen as exclusive to restrict access, they can also be strong architectural features making a distinctive contribution to the Scottish landscape.

How do I know if I have got significant gateways or boundary walls?

Any well-built wall or gateway that has character and is distinctive should be worth preserving. The condition of a feature is important in deciding its value and one that is intact and well maintained is of greater significance than a feature that has been altered or badly restored.



Well-restored gateposts can enhance the visual impact of farms. The mortar pointing could have been more carefully finished on this example.

What should I do to protect them?

Identify surviving examples on your farm and the condition they are now in. Maintain these features in good repair. This may require no more than an occasional replacing of stones or re-pointing of weak joints - though clearly there are serious issues where large lengths of walling have collapsed.

Modern machinery may be broader than existing farm entrances. Where there is no option other than to widen access then this should be done in sympathy with existing walls and gateways, using original stone to build the new entrances.

It is important to use appropriate materials to repair and restore walls and gateways. Adding modern materials, like brick to a stone dyke or cement mortar where a lime mortar has previously been used, can significantly alter the appearance of a mortared dyke or gateway. A sensitive restoration can significantly enhance the setting of a farm.



For grander residences gate piers can be quite impressive requiring more effort to maintain. Note how the wall to the left previously had a mortar render.

GOOD PRACTICE

- Identify significant stone walls, gateways and other built boundaries and record them on your farm plan. Note where they are in a poor state of repair or have been damaged.
- Make sure to check that your walling or gateway does not form part of a listed building or designed landscape before planning any alterations. Remember that listed building protection may extend to the area or setting around a Listed Building, known as the curtilage. If in doubt consult the conservation or equivalent officer in your local planning department.
- Maintain walls in good repair to prevent expensive restoration work.
- Where a gateway requires widening use existing masonry to restore the original form of the entrance.
- Where new materials are required to make repairs use stones and mortar that are similar to the wall or gateway you are trying to repair. Cement mortar may well damage soft sandstones and the use of brick or breeze block to replace collapsed stones may look unsightly.
- You can get advice as to what materials are appropriate from the Technical, Conservation, Research and Education section (TCRE) of Historic Scotland.
- Make a photographic record of your gateway and/or wall both before and after carrying out repairs. Copies should be supplied to your local Historic Environment Record.

*Further information - see **Historic Scotland** [Conservation guidance](#), in particular the [INFORM Guides](#), as **these** give excellent advice on specialist treatment such as replacing sandstone blocks or selecting appropriate mortars. Some useful links are available on the leaflet [Managing change in the historic environment Boundaries](#).*



Significant old masonry features abandoned on farmland may require specialist materials and techniques to aid their repair.



Though well constructed, the wall end repaired here would have looked more appropriate using stone rather than breeze blocks.

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