

Edinburgh College of Art graduates team up for Antonine Wall project

The 'Antonine Wall Distance Stones' project forms part of a wider 'Rediscovering the Antonine Wall' project working across central Scotland to build better connections for communities and visitors along the length of the Antonine Wall.

The project is being managed by a Steering Group of five local authorities (West Dunbartonshire, Glasgow City, East Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire and Falkirk Councils) and Historic Environment Scotland, and is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Kelvin Valley & Falkirk LEADER, WREN, Falkirk Community Trust and each of the partner organisations.

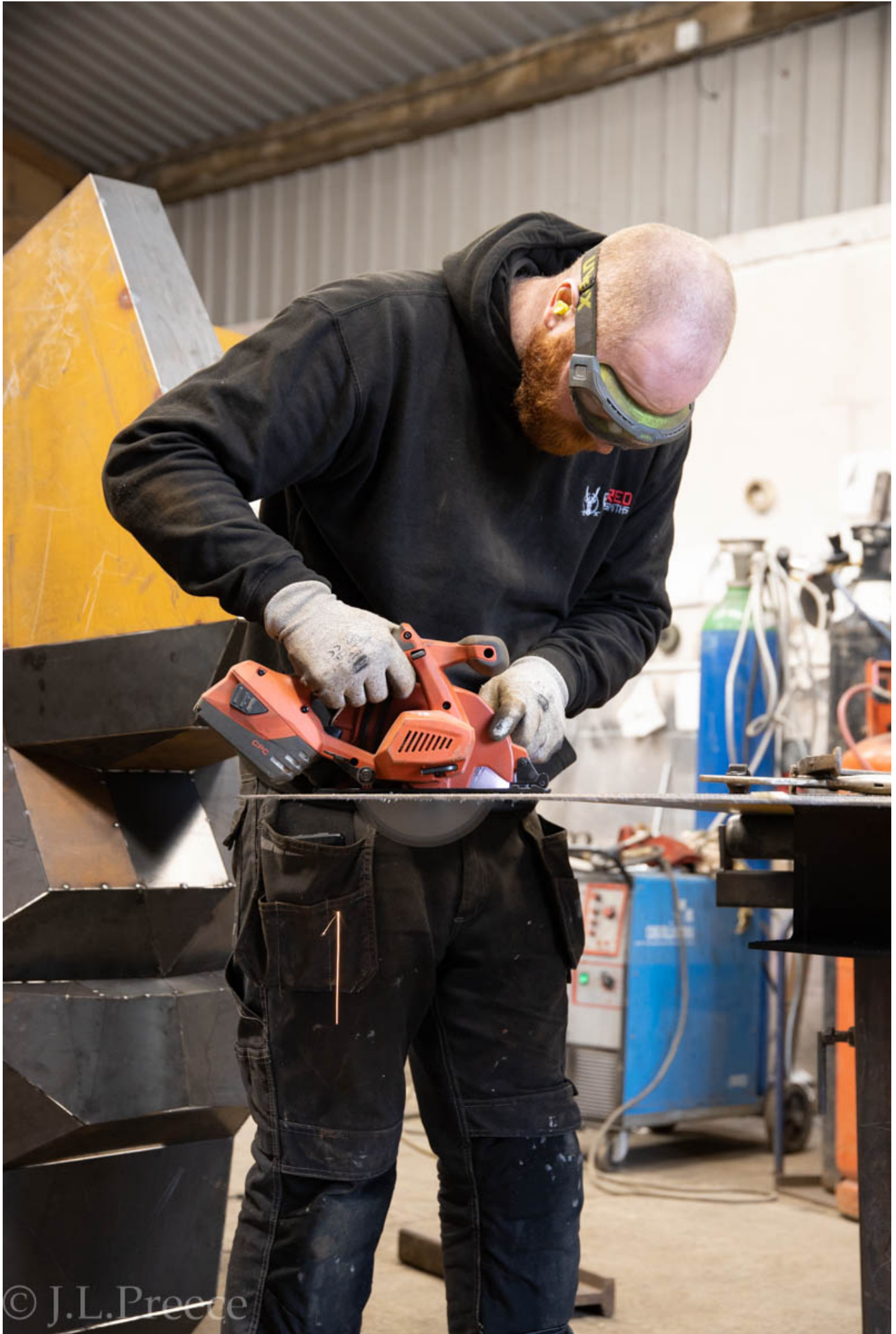


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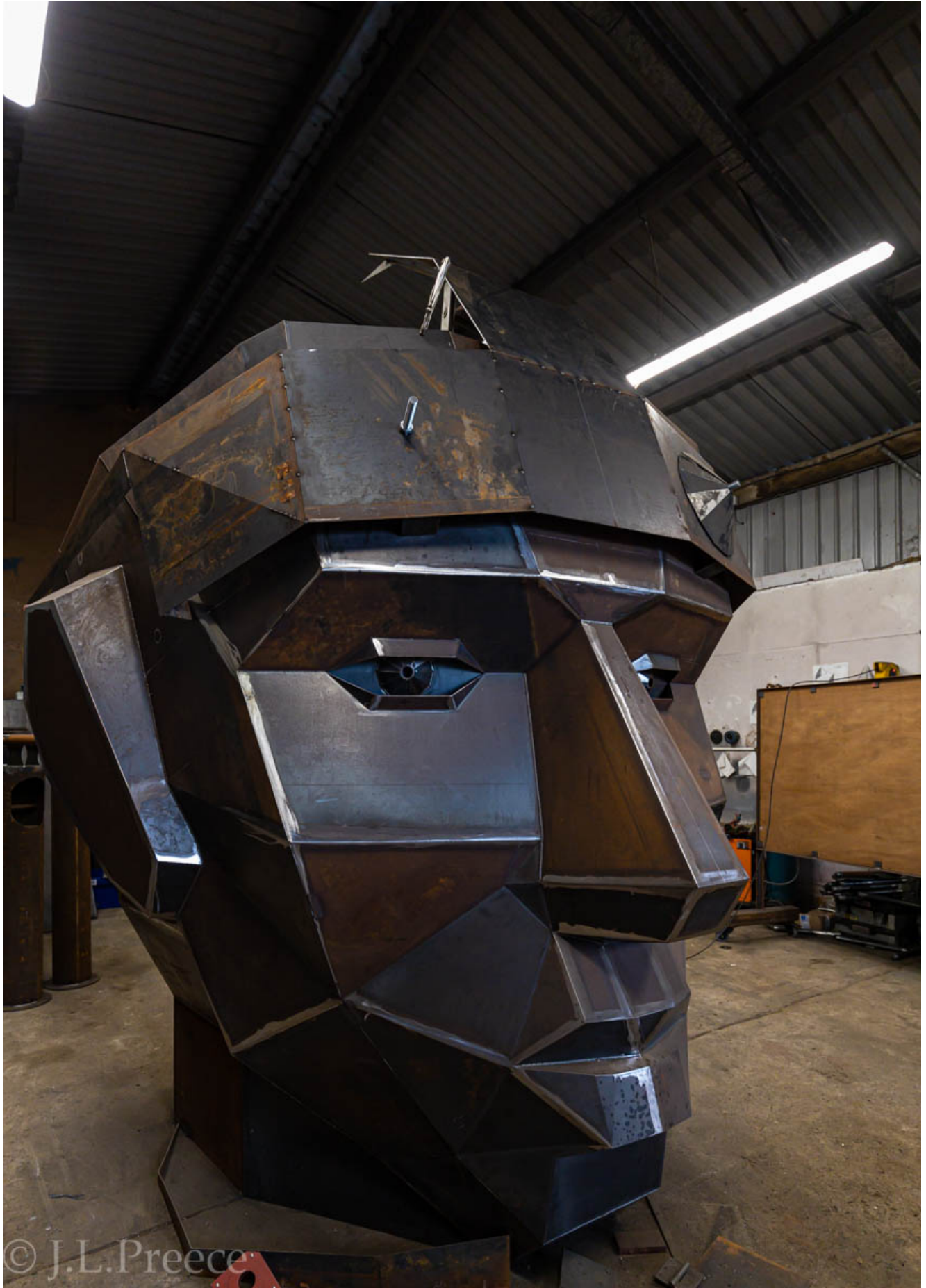
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Archaeological discoveries along the line of the Antonine Wall have determined that the construction of the Wall involved the erection of carved stone 'Distance Slabs' which celebrated the achievements of the Roman Legions responsible for each section of the wall. The majority of these Distance Slabs were recovered and are now displayed in the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow.

In 2017 proposals were developed for the siting and interpretation of 5 replica Roman Distance Stones across the length of the Antonine Wall and included small landscape and environmental improvements to these locations.



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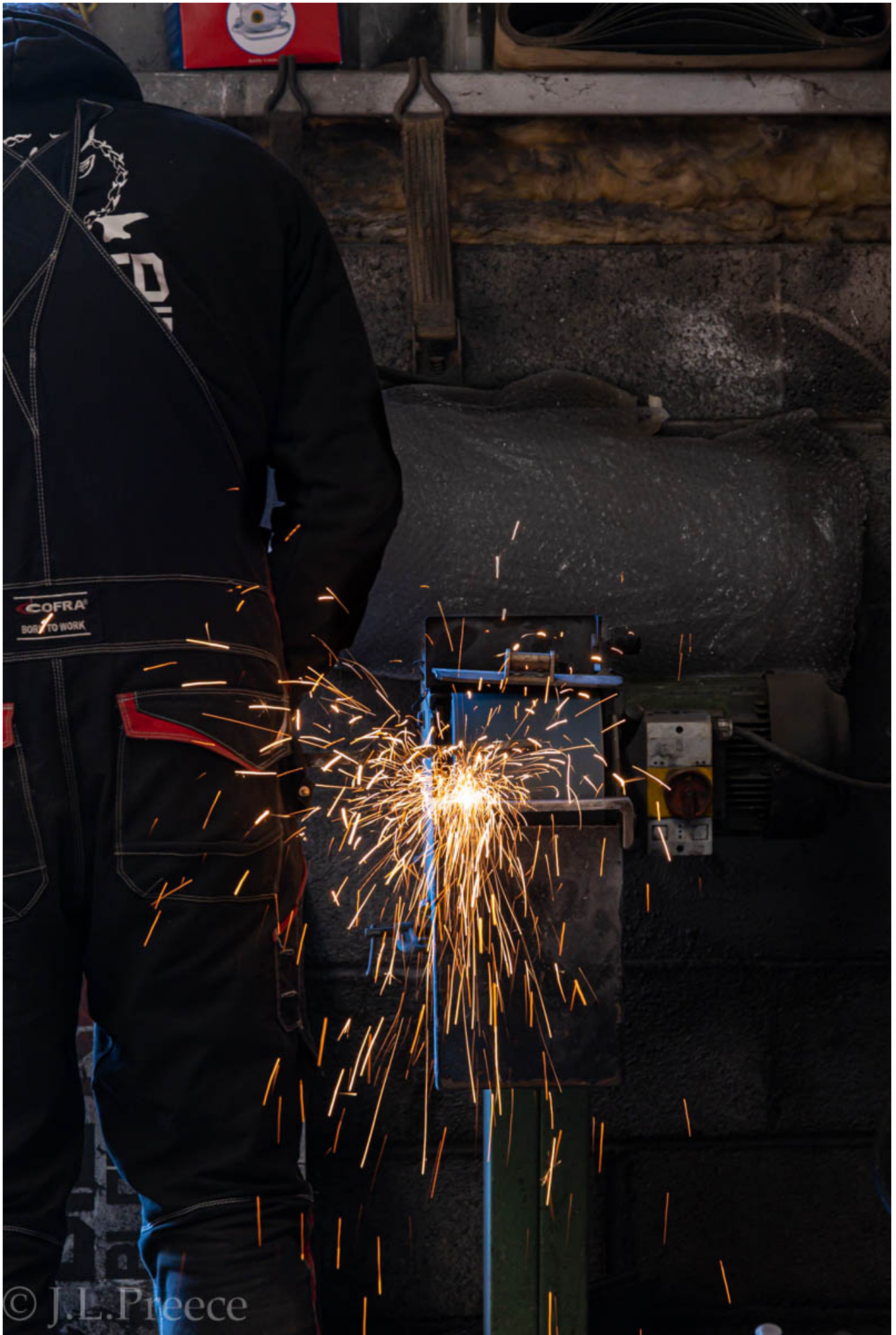
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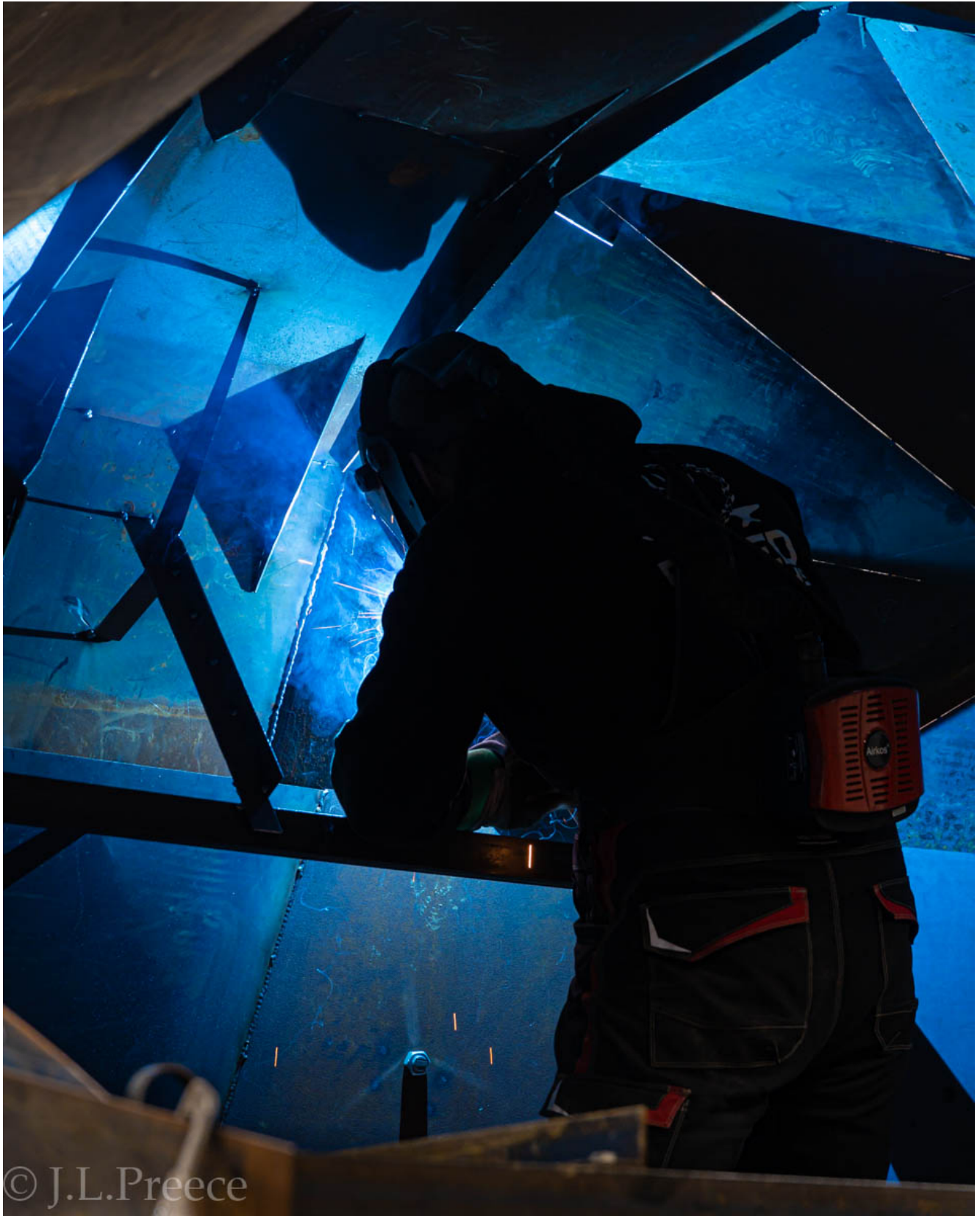
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The five sites are situated in each of the five local authorities that the Antonine Wall passes through; West Dunbartonshire, East Dunbartonshire, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and Falkirk, with funding being secured to carry these projects through to completion.

Proposals for the Distance Stone Sites were developed by landscape architects LUC on behalf of the project partners and at two of the five sites, large sculptural installations were proposed to support and promote the 'Rediscovery of the Antonine Wall'.



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For these two sites outline concepts were developed for sculptural Roman 'heads' to be located in prominent sites capable of creating landmarks and raising awareness of the local Roman influence. The outline proposals include for the creation of heads of a legionaire and an officer, interpreted in different materials suited to the forms of the helmets.

The Roman Heads would signify the presence of the Distance Stones and help to attract passers by to the interpretation.







In collaboration with [Gordon Simpson \(Big Red Blacksmiths\)](#), the commissioned artist, [Svetlana Kondakova](#), worked on the design of a giant weathering steel sculpture of a Roman officer's head to be placed at Nethercroy, near Kilsyth. This particular piece was commissioned by West Dunbartonshire Council as part of a wider 'Rediscovering the Antonine Wall' project.

The build started back in late-February/early-March, but the Covid-19 pandemic put a stop to much meaningful work, so construction has only recently got back up underway with installation of the sculpture being delayed until mid-December.



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The 6 metre tall head in question is now called 'Silvanus', suggested and voted on by locals through an online naming campaign. 'Silvanus' is the god protector of forests and cattle and 3 altars mentioning him have been found along the

Antonine Wall, one of them at nearby Bar Hill.

He looks to the North as if contemplating what might have been...

Note – With a few small adjustments and additions still to make, as well as stonework to install, the site has been closed for the holiday period and the sculpture will not be completed until early in the New Year. The official ‘unveiling’ will take place later in 2021, probably near the summer once the Covid-19 situation is clearer.

Svetlana Kondakova – Graduating from ECA in 2011, Kondakova worked on a variety of projects and collaborations in several countries, and in 2016, held a solo exhibition in Edinburgh’s Union Gallery

Between 2013-2014, together with project partner Maja Quille, she delivered two major public artworks in Edinburgh’s Fountainbridge commissioned by Edinburgh Napier University. The artworks entitled ‘Tree of Knowledge’ and ‘Imprint’ focused on the local heritage as well as commemorating WW1 efforts in the area.

Her solo projects included major public works in the Borders and East Lothian.

In 2019, the pair installed ‘Musselburgh Archer’, a prominent public art project for Musselburgh town centre, commissioned by the East Lothian Council.

Her most recent project was in collaboration with Gordon Simpson (Big Red Blacksmiths) on the Antonine Wall installation above.

Gordon Simpson (Big Red Blacksmiths Ltd.) – A product of Broxburn Academy, Simpson spent his immediate post-school years serving an apprenticeship at Loaninghill Fabrication before entering Edinburgh College of Art in 2006.

While at ECA he won the George Jackson Huchison Memorial Award 2010, Guthrie Award for painting 2010 and Stevenson Award for painting 2011 and graduated with a BA(Hons).

He also exhibited in the Royal Scottish Academy Annual exhibition at the start of 2020.
<https://www.rsaannualexhibition.org/artists/254-gordon-simpson/works/>

After spending time on exchange at Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts, Krakow in Poland, he lived in Latvia for a few years, returning to open his blacksmithing business on the outskirts of Broxburn in 2015.

The mainstay of the business was mainly domestic, with gates, railings handrails, etc, forming the bulk of his work, but one of the first non-domestic projects was for forged metalwork (around 40 hinges, prison bars, well handles and a few plates) for the set of the Netflix production 'The Outlaw King' being filmed in Edinburgh in 2018.

Other than the Roman head, the company's current portfolio includes both interior and exterior stairways and he regularly works in collaboration with several local building companies.

A more comprehensive and on-going selection of images from the build and installation [can be found here](#)