

**NETHER LARGIE
FALLEN STANDING STONE**

EXCAVATION REPORT



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Summary

An outlying stone of The Nether Largie Standing Stone group collapsed in the autumn of 2012. In order to facilitate its re-erection the excavation of the original stone pit was undertaken. This revealed an oval pit which had been packed around the base of the stone on the E side. The lack of packing on the S side of the pit may have allowed the stone to lean and ultimately fall in this direction. Apart from the packing stones no artefacts or ecofacts were recovered from the original fill of the pit. The stone was re-erected on 17th May 2013. Two groups of previously unnoticed cup marks were noted on the original W side of the stone, a group of three at its base with three eroded cups on its upper face.



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1. Introduction

This Data Structure Report has been prepared by Kilmartin House Museum following the excavation at the standing stone of Nether Largie. The collapse of the stone was reported to Historic Scotland and Kilmartin House Museum in the Autumn of 2013 and following further discussion with Mr Iain Malcolm, the sites owner, all parties agreed that the re-erection of the stone was desirable. In order to facilitate the re-erection of the fallen a small archaeological investigation of the original socket hole was undertaken. A Project Design for the work was prepared by Kilmartin House Museum, this part of the submission for Scheduled Monument Consent (Regan 2013). The work was undertaken on the 6th and 7th of March 2013 and was funded by the Craigend Trust and the site code used was LSS13. The stone was re-erected under archaeological supervision (undertaken by the author) by a team from Historic Scotland on the 17th April 2013.



Figure 1: Site Location in Argyll

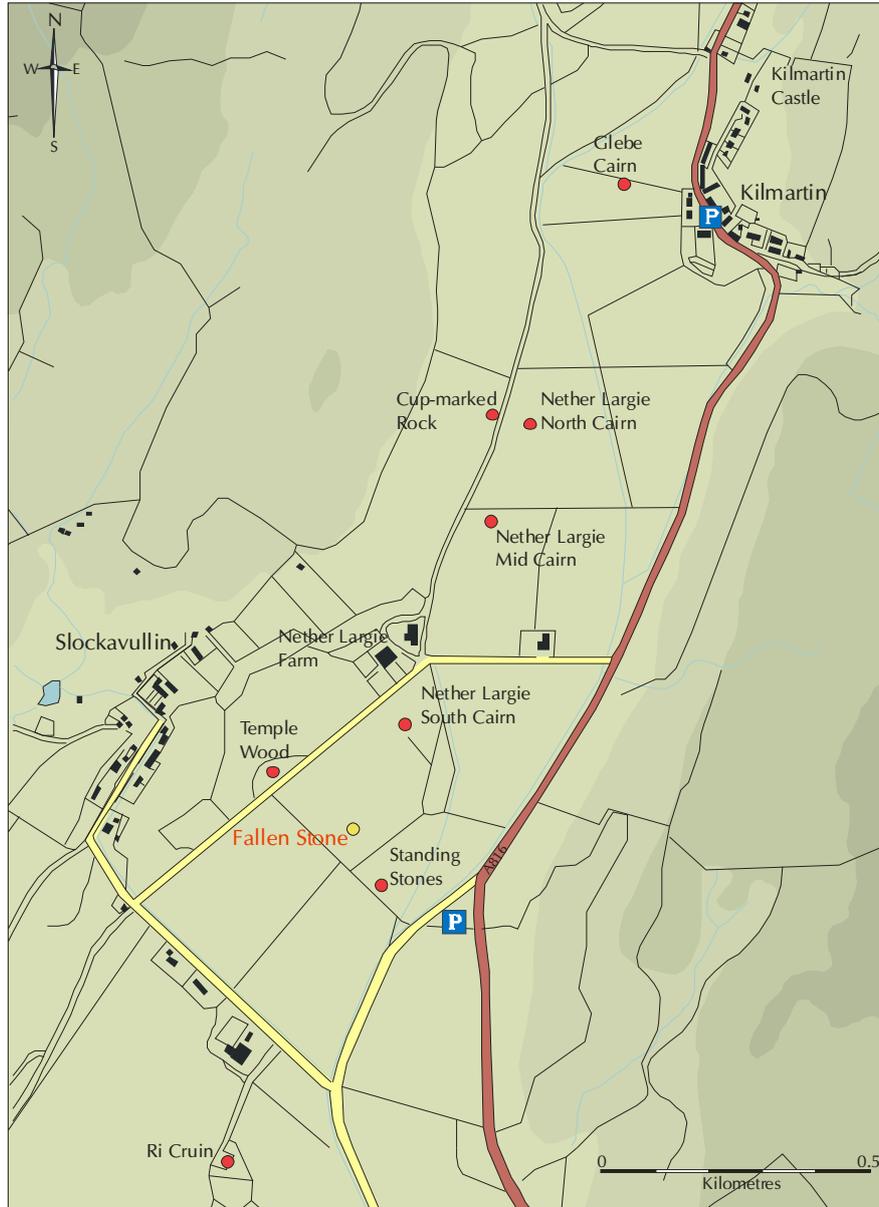


Figure 2: Location of Fallen Stone

2. Site Description

The stone forms part of the Nether Largie (or Lady Glassary) standing stone alignment (NGR NR 8282 9760, NMRS No. NR89NW 3), albeit an outlier of the main grouping which lies some 100 to the SW (centred NR 82798 97734). The grouping has been described previously, most comprehensively by the RCHAMS in their Inventory for Argyll which described the site (stone 'M'), *'Situated 100m to the NW, aligned NE-SE and now leaning to the SE, this stone was formerly about 1.8m high; it has straight sides and a top slanting from SE to NW; it measures 0.55m by up to 0.3m at the base.'* (RCHAMS 1988). The stone lies within a grass pasture field c350 m SW of Nether Largie Farm and is situated on a slight rise within the field (Figure 1). As reported above, the stone was leaning to the SE and

has fallen in this direction. In order to re-erect the stone into its original position and make it stable it is deemed necessary to excavate around the original base of the stone.



Fallen stone with the main Nether Largie grouping in the background

Prior to collapse, a slight hollow had formed around the base of the stone, likely due to livestock using the stone as weather protection and perhaps also rubbing against the stone itself. The existing hole left by the fallen stone is no more than deep 0.34m and 0.51m wide. There was also a disturbed hollow running up the western side of the stone 0.18m wide which may have been caused by recent animal burrowing. Three packing stones are now visible, these all water rounded cobbles the largest measuring 0.30m x 0.24m x 0.20m. Examination of the upper (E) face of the fallen stone revealed as three cup marks at the base of the stone, with perhaps a further three (eroded) cups at the upper end of the stone. The cups at the base would not have been visible when the stone was upright indicating these must have been done prior to the original erection of the stone. The stone unsurprisingly had fallen in the direction it was leaning (S) and had twisted to fall onto its W face.

3. Excavation Results

A trench measuring 2m by 2m was opened up around the base of the stone.

The original pit cut [006] was an irregular oval in shape measuring 1.15m N/S by 0.90m-1.05m E/W at the top. The S edge of the pit fell sharply then shelved away more gradually before again falling away steeply to the flattish concave base. The N, W and E sides fell steeply (the N edge near vertical) at the top forming a steep concave curve nearer the base. The pit was 0.53m deep. The standing stone would appear to have originally occupied the NW of the pit standing nearly flush against the N and W edges of the pit. The E and part of the S side were then packed with stones [004] these sitting in a compact backfill material [005]. The upper stones of this packing had obviously been moved from their original positions by the leaning standing stone and its subsequent collapse. The lower stones on the W however, appeared to be *in situ*. The relative absence of packing stones at the S side of the pit may have allowed the standing stone to collapse in this direction although this may not have been the original cause. Lying over this packing was a fill of grey brown silt [003] which had formed around the base of the standing stone and appeared to be an accumulation that had gradually collected after the stone had begun to lean to the SW.

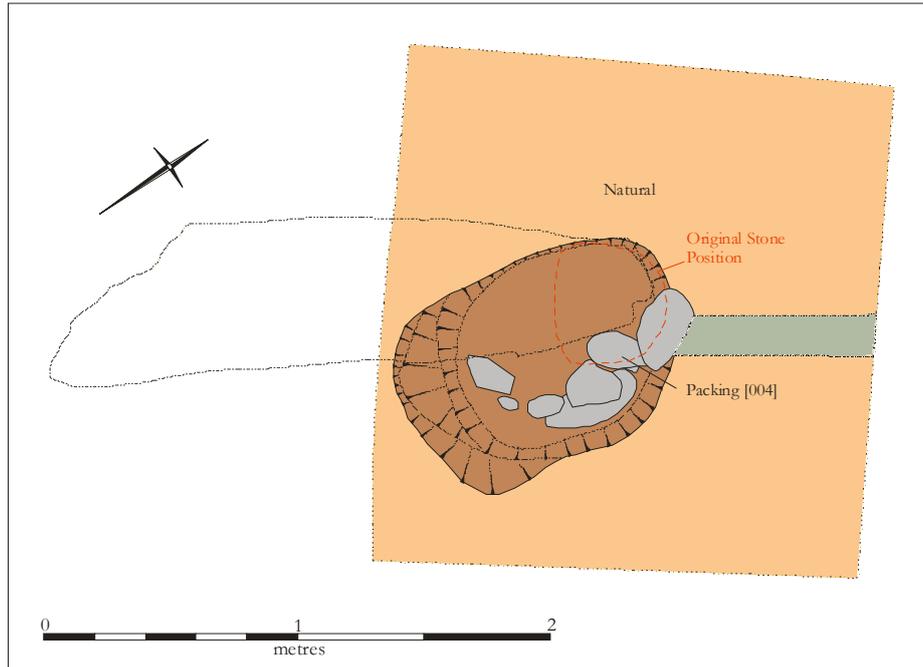


Figure 3: Stone Pit

The collapse of the stone had left a void that the standing stone had previously occupied, this partially filled with loose post collapse material [002]. The depth of the topsoil/plough soil [001] varied across the Trench measuring between 5cm and 10cm at the base of the fallen stone, but was as much as 0.19m at the NE of the trench. The topsoil was very compacted around the base of the stone, this possibly a result of animal trample in the area.

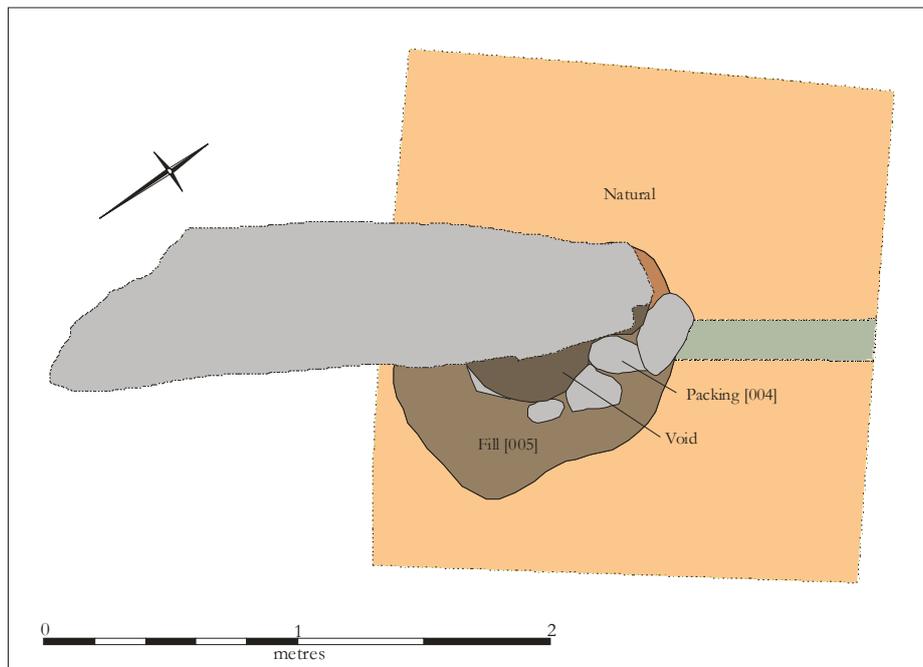


Figure 4: Upper Fills

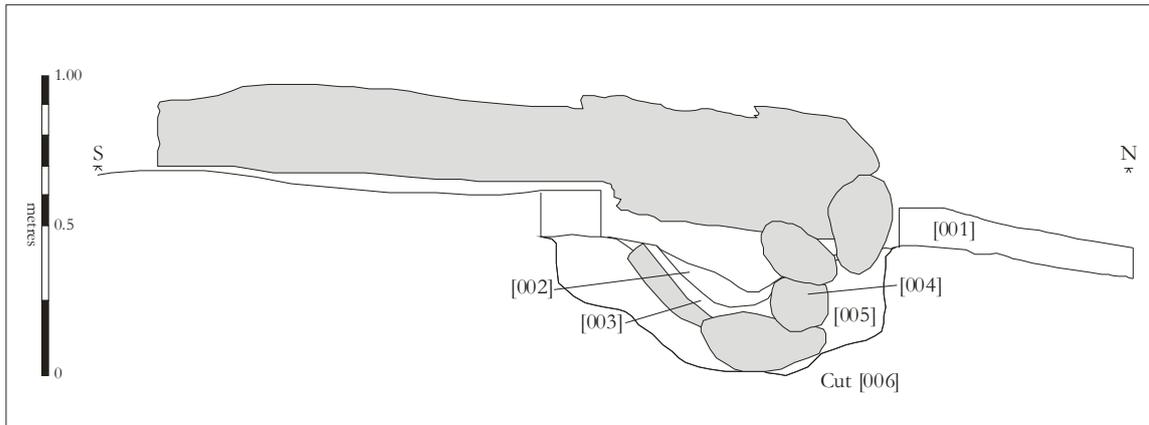


Figure 5: East Facing Section



Stone Pit from N



Stone Pit from E



Stone Pit from W



Stone Packing [004]



Upper Fill of Pit

4. The Re-erection of the Stone

A team from Historic Scotland had arranged for the stone to be re-erected on 17th April 2013. The Historic Scotland team was led by Stephen Gordon and Michael Burgoyne and the work was supervised by the author. In order for the stone to be stabilised in its upright position the base had to be set in concrete. To surround the base with concrete as close to its original position as possible the sides of the original pit had to be extended 10cm on the N and W sides and the base also reduced by 10cm. This involved the removal of compact natural gravels from the sides and base. The stone (weighing 875kg) was then raised to its original position by an A frame and pulley. The packing stones were replaced during the consolidation process and the upper pit and excavation area were then backfilled using the excavated soil.



5. Discussion

The collapsed standing stone would appear to have occupied the NW of the original pit cut its basal N and W faces lying up against the steep edge of the original pit, its base also likely in contact with the bottom of the pit. The more gradual slope of the pit edge on the S side may be deliberate and would have facilitated the sliding of the stone into its original position. Packing stones were then placed around the E side of the standing stone which probably kept the stone in place before the pit was backfilled. Whatever caused the stone to start leaning is unknown, but the relative absence of stones on the S side of the pit may have allowed the standing stone to continue leaning on this side, a process that led to the formation of a loose silt around the base of the stone and to its ultimate collapse. The discovery of the cup marks at the base of the stone is intriguing as these would not have been visible when the stone was in its original position and indicates these must have been pecked prior to the erection of the stone.



Cup marks on the base of the stone

6. References

RCAHMS 1988 The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Argyll: an Inventory of the Monuments: Volume 6: Mid-Argyll and Cowal, Prehistoric and Early Historic Monuments, No. 222, 135-137. Edinburgh.

Regan, R 2013 Nether Largie Standing Stone, Excavation Project Design.

Appendix 1: Context Descriptions

[001] Layer. Topsoil/Plough soil. Mid to dark brown silty loam with frequent gravel inclusions, also contained post medieval pottery and glass, depth between 5cm and 19cm.

[002] Fill. Disturbed soil within void left by fallen stone. Mainly loose dark grey brown silt with occasional gravel cobble/inclusions.

[003] Fill. Dark grey brown silt with occasional stone/gravel inclusions.

[004] Fill. Stone packing around base of standing stone, all the stones apart from one (an angular schist slab) were water rounded cobbles the largest measuring 0.30m x 0.24m x 0.20m. The upper stones at the NE appear to have been displaced by the movement of the standing stone.

[005] Fill. Backfill around standing stone base and stone packing [004]. Consists of a compact dark grey silty gravel with frequent small to medium fragments of sandstone and schist.

[006] Cut. Pit cut for standing stone. Irregular oval in shape measuring 1.15m N/S by 0.90m-1.05m E/W at the top. The S edge of the pit fell sharply then shelved away more gradually before again falling away steeply to the flattish concave base. The N, W and E sides fell steeply (the N edge near vertical) at the top forming a steep concave curve nearer the base. The pit was 0.53m deep.

[007] Natural. The upper natural subsoil was a compact orange brown sandy gravel. This lay over a compact dark grey brown gravel its dark colour possibly indicating it may represent the fill of a relic channel.

Appendix 2: Graphics List

Graphic No	Scale		Description
1	1:20	Plan	Fallen stone and Pit
2	1:10	Section	E facing section of stone pit

Appendix 3: Photo List

Photo No	Context No	Direction From	Description
1		N	Fallen stone pre-excavation
2		NW	Fallen stone pre-excavation
3		N	Fallen stone pre-excavation
4		NE	Fallen stone pre-excavation
5		NE	Fallen stone pre-excavation
6		NE	Fallen stone pre-excavation
7		N	Fallen stone pre-excavation
8		N	Fallen stone pre-excavation
9		NE	Fallen stone pre-excavation
10		S	Fallen stone pre-excavation
11		S	Fallen stone pre-excavation
12		NW	Fallen stone pre-excavation

13		NW	Base of stone
14	[004]	N	Post packing
15	[004]	N	Post packing
16	[004]	E	Post packing
17	[004]	E	Post packing
18	[004]	S	Post packing
19	[004]	S	Post packing
20	[004]	S	Post packing
21	[004]	S	Post packing
22	[004]/[005]	E	Pit fill
23	[004]/[005]	N	Pit fill
24	[004]/[005]	S	Pit fill
25	[004]/[005]	NW	Pit fill
26	[004]/[005]	NW	Pit fill
27	[006]	W	Pit edge
28	[005]	N	Stone packing
29		N	Cup marks
30	[006]	W	Pit cut
31	[004]	E	Stone packing
32	[004]/[005]	N	Pit fill
33	[004]/[005]	N	Pit fill
34	[004]	N	Stone packing
35	[004]	E	Stone packing
36	[004]	S	Stone packing
37	[004]	E	Stone packing
38	[006]	N	Pit cut
39	[006]	E	Pit cut
40	[006]	E	Pit cut
41	[006]	S	Pit cut
42	[006]	E	Pit cut
43	[006]	N	Pit cut
44	[006]	N	Pit cut
45	[006]	N	Pit cut
46	[006]	N	Pit cut
47	[006]	N	Pit cut
48	[006]	NW	Pit cut
49		N	Cup marks
50		N	Cup marks
51-64			Re-erection photos

Appendix 4: Sample List

Sample No	Context		Description
1	[003]		Pit fill
2	[005]		Pit fill

Appendix 5: DES Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Argyll and Bute
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Nether Largie Standing Stone
PROJECT CODE:	LSS 13
PARISH:	Kilmartin
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Roddy Regan
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kilmartin House Museum
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological Excavation and Re-erection of fallen standing stone
NMRS NO(S):	NR89NW 3
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Standing Stone
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	none
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NR 8282 9760
START DATE (this season)	March 2013
END DATE (this season)	April 2013
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	Survey by RCHAMS. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Argyll: an Inventory of the Monuments: Volume 6: Mid-Argyll and Cowal, Prehistoric and Early Historic Monuments. No. 222, 135-137.
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	An outlying stone of The Nether Largie Standing Stone group collapsed in the autumn of 2012. In order to facilitate its re-erection the excavation of the original stone pit was undertaken. This revealed an oval pit which had been packed around the base of the stone on the E side. The lack of packing on the S side of the pit may have allowed the stone to lean and ultimately fall in this direction. Apart from the packing stones no artefacts or ecofacts were recovered from the original fill of the pit. The stone was re-erected on 17 th May 2013. Two groups of previously unnoticed cup marks were noted on the original W side of the stone, a group of three at its base with three eroded cups on its upper face.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Craigend Trust, Historic Scotland
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Kilmartin House Museum, Kilmartin, Argyll, PA31 8RQ
EMAIL ADDRESS:	museum@kilmartin.org
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	The archive will be deposited with Kilmartin House Museum and copies of the report lodged with WoSAS SMR, the NMRS, the Forestry Commission and OASIS database