

**SUAT** Ltd

archaeological  
contractors



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
AND LIMITED EXCAVATION  
LEYS OF MARLEE STONE CIRCLE  
BLAIRGOWRIE**

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**LY01**

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**Illustration 1:** *Site location plan*

**Illustration 2:** *Location, plan and section of stone F socket*

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***ABSTRACT***

*W B Grieve Groundworks Ltd commissioned SUAT Ltd to carry out an archaeological watching brief and limited excavation at Leys of Marlee stone circle after a lorry accidentally collided with and pushed over one of the stones.*

*The work, carried out 28th October 2008, consisted of monitoring the removal of the stone, the excavation of its socket, and supervising the replacement of the stone so that it was set back in its original orientation and position. The excavation revealed that the stone had originally been held tightly into position by packing stones which were found on three sides of the stone socket. No other evidence of note was discovered. After excavation, the stone was placed back in its original position and wedged tightly into the socket using new packing stones.*

*The SUAT site code was LY01.*

# **1 Background**

## **1.1 Introduction**

W B Grieve Groundworks Ltd commissioned SUAT Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief and limited excavation on the site of Leys of Marlee stone circle at Blairgowrie. The stone circle is located just over 2km WSW of Blairgowrie town centre on the B947, centred on NGR NO 1601 4386. The work (SUAT site code LY01) was undertaken on 28th October 2008 in cold weather conditions. The requirement was to monitor the removal of Stone F so that any archaeological deposits would not be damaged and also to excavate the stone socket in hope of obtaining any datable material or artefacts. The work was requested by Historic Scotland in response to the archaeological implications of re-erecting stone F after it was pushed over by a lorry in early 2008. Scheduled Monument Consent was obtained prior to the work being carried out.

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives**

The main aim of this investigation was to establish the presence/absence, date, character and quality of any archaeological remains surviving within the socket of Stone F. It was also important to supervise the removal of the stone in order to avoid further damage to the underlying archaeology and the stone itself. The final repositioning (re-erection) of the stone was also supervised to make sure that the stone was placed back in its original orientation and position and to make sure that modern materials such as cement were not used when setting the stone back in its socket.

## **1.3 Reporting**

The present document has been prepared as the final report on this watching brief and excavation. Copies will be sent to the client, Historic Scotland, The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland and Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust.

## **1.4 Acknowledgements**

SUAT wish to thank Stewart McNeish, Iona Murray, Oliver Lewis and Sarah Winlow for their assistance and guidance throughout this project. NFU Mutual funded this watching brief and excavation.

# **2 Details of Work**

## **2.1 The Site (Illus 1 and 2)**

The stone circle at Leys of Marlee lies to the west of Blairgowrie and has a major road (B947) running through it. Heavy traffic including large lorries can only pass through the circle one at a time. Stone F lies to the west of the circle and lies very close (less than 40cm) to the tarmac of the B947.

## **2.2 Archaeological Potential**

The circle is probably Neolithic in date and is part of a much wider ritual landscape that includes the Cleaven Dyke and other monuments at Carsie and Gothens. Stone F

is probably the only one that has not previously been moved or relocated; excavations were undertaken on parts of the stone circle in 1988 (Gibson 1988).

### **2.3 Results of Investigations**

The removal of the stone revealed that the impact caused by the lorry had pushed over the stone to the south-west causing the base of the stone to rise up slightly to the north-west. The ground to the west also appeared to have been compressed by the collision and pushed upwards slightly.

Excavation revealed that the socket [01] had been excavated to a depth of around 90cm into a natural orange silty grit (05) and natural dark grey gravel (06). No artefacts or organic layers were found when the socket cut was cleaned out. A series of stones (03) was revealed in the south-east, south-west and western sides of the socket. Most of these stones seemed to be incorporated in the natural, though several were loose and slipped down the face of socket on excavation.

## **3 Interpretation**

The uniform nature of the socket and lack of modern finds its base suggests that Stone F had not been moved or disturbed by previous excavations. This finding is in agreement with the known historical background of this stone circle.

The small stones found within the socket are interpreted as packing stones. These stones would have originally been jammed down in between the socket cut and the stone, once the stone had been set into desired position. The apparent incorporation of many of the packing stones into the natural can be explained if we assume that the socket was backfilled with the natural excavated from the socket. However, the weight of the stone may have also led to the pressing of packing stones into the surrounding natural, particularly during the recent collision. The absence of packing stones on the north-east side of the socket is difficult to explain, but it is probably the case that when the stone was initially erected, it had a tendency to be less stable on its western, south-western and south-eastern sides.

The small size of Stone F's socket suggests that it may only have been dug by one person. This possibility was brought home during the re-excavation of the socket when it was found that there was limited room for manoeuvring digging equipment and throwing up spoil.

## **4 Conclusion**

Excavation of the socket revealed that the stone had not been erected over any archaeological deposits but instead had been cut into natural grits and gravels. The careful excavation and recording of the socket shape enabled the stone to be placed back into its original position and jammed upright using the original method of placing packing stones between the socket and the stone.

## **5 Bibliography**

- Gibson, A (1988) The Essendy Road stones: an illustrated report
- Hall, D (2008) Written Scheme of Investigation for Leys of Marlee stone circle Archaeological watching brief and limited excavation. SUAT Ltd

## Appendix 1 Context Register

<i>No:</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Phase</i>
01	Cut for the socket of Stone F (02). A 1.3m by 1m oval cut, 0.9m deep orientated NE-SW. Sides near vertical with a steep break of slope to base. Base slightly concave. Many stones (03) appear to stick into or rest on top of the surface of the cut. The cut has been excavated into the two naturals (05) and (06).	Neolithic?
02	Stone F. A large stone 1.9m long 1.5m wide, 0.8m thick (widest points). One of the six stones making up the stone circle. Grey metamorphic rock. The stone has been slightly scarred by the impact with the lorry.	Neolithic?
03	Stones found in between the stone (02) and the cut [01] for the stone socket. Various sizes (20cm x 10cm x 5cm to 30cm x 20cm x 5cm). All slightly flattish and most angular though some sub-rounded. Some appear to be pressed firmly into the natural; others were looser and moved during excavation.	Neolithic?
04	Topsoil, a dark silty sandy loam with turf containing modern debris from the road (glass, wing mirrors, plastic) and Victorian blue glazed pottery.	Modern
05	A natural deposit. An orange silty gritty layer with small stones and gravel 1-3cm dia (40%).	Natural
06	A natural deposit. A greyish brown gritty gravel layer south-east of (06). Possibly derived from an early hillwash event.	Natural

## Appendix 2 Photographic Register

<i>Frames</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>View</i>
LY01_001	View of the stone prior to excavation	W
LY01_002	Ibid	W
LY01_003	Ibid	W
LY01_004	View of the stone prior to excavation, notice how the stone has been pushed westwards by the impact of the lorry.	S
LY01_005	Ibid	S
LY01_006	As above but looking from the west	E
LY01_007	Ibid	E
LY01_008	As above but looking from the south	N
LY01_009	Ibid	N
LY01_010	Ibid	N

LY01_011	View of hand excavated slot	WSW
LY01_012	View looking at the displaced base of the stone (east side)	WSW
LY01_013	Ibid	WSW
LY01_014	Ibid	WSW
LY01_015	Ibid, zoomed out	WSW
LY01_016	Photo of the lifting process	ENE
LY01_017	Ibid	SE
LY01_018	Ibid	SE
LY01_019	The stone being hoisted out of the socket	S
LY01_020	Ibid	S
LY01_021	Ibid	S
LY01_022	Ibid	S
LY01_023	Ibid	S
LY01_024	Ibid	S
LY01_025	The stone socket before cleaning	NW
LY01_026	Ibid	W
LY01_027	The stone socket after cleaning, packing stones visible	WSW
LY01_028	Ibid	WSW
LY01_029	Ibid	WSW
LY01_030	Ibid	WSW
LY01_031	Hoisting the stone back into the socket	S
LY01_032	Ibid	SW
LY01_033	Ibid	SW
LY01_034	Ibid	SW
LY01_035	Ibid	SW
LY01_036	Ibid	SW
LY01_037	Tilting the stone back into its original position	NE
LY01_038	Ibid	NE

LY01_039	Ibid	NE
LY01_040	The stone after having been placed into final position	ENE
LY01_041	The stone being wedged into position using new packing stones	E
LY01_042	Ibid	NE
LY01_043	Ibid	E
LY01_044	The stone after having been wedged into position using new packing stones	E
LY01_045	Backfilling around the packing stones	NNE
LY01_046	Ibid	NW
LY01_047	The stone after the socket was backfilled	ENE
LY01_048	Ibid	E
LY01_049	The stone after resetting	ENE
LY01_050	Ibid	ENE
LY01_051	Ibid	S
LY01_052	Ibid	S
LY01_053	Ibid	SW
LY01_054	Ibid	SW
LY01_055	Ibid	SSW
LY01_056	Ibid	SSW
LY01_057	Ibid	SSW

### **Appendix 3 Drawing Register**

<i>Sheet No.</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Scale</i>
1	A sheet of A3 Permatrace containing context descriptions, section and plan.	1:10

## Appendix 4 Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Perth and Kinross Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Leys of Marlee Stone Circle, Blairgowrie
PROJECT CODE:	LY01
PARISH:	Kinloch
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S):	Tamlin Barton
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	SUAT Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching Brief and Limited Excavation
NMRS NO(S):	-
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Stone Circle
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	-
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	Site centred on NO 1601 4386
START DATE	28 October 2008
END DATE	28 October 2008
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	-
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	W B Grieve Groundworks Ltd commissioned SUAT Ltd to carry out an archaeological watching brief and limited excavation at Leys of Marlee stone circle after a lorry accidentally collided with and pushed over one of the stones. The work, carried out 28th October 2008, consisted of monitoring the removal of the stone, excavation of its socket, and supervising the replacement of the stone so that it was set back in its original orientation and position. The excavation revealed that the stone had originally been held tightly into position by packing stones which were found on three sides of the stone socket. No other evidence of note was discovered. After excavation, the stone was placed back in its original position and wedged tightly into the socket using new packing stones.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	NFU Mutual
CAPTIONS FOR ILLUSTRS	-
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	SUAT Ltd, 55 South Methven Street, Perth PH1 5NX

ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended)	NMRS
EMAIL ADDRESS:	<a href="mailto:Director@suat.co.uk">Director@suat.co.uk</a>

## Appendix 5 Standard Terms of Reference for all Fieldwork

### 5.1 Recording Methodology

SUAT employs a Single Context Recording System that allows full cross-referencing of stratigraphy, finds and environmental samples, as well as site-wide phasing. All features will be planned at scale 1:20, and sections drawn at scale 1:10. Sections and profiles will be drawn and all features will be photographed with metric scale included. Environmental samples will be taken from archaeologically significant contexts, if the analysis of these samples would aid significantly in the interpretation of any features identified.

### 5.2 Human Remains

If human remains are encountered they will be left in situ and the local police will be informed. If removal is required this will take place in compliance with Historic Scotland's Policy Paper *The Treatment of Human Remains in Archaeology*.

### 5.3 Products and Reporting

A Data Structure Report will normally be prepared within a period agreed within the Written Scheme of Investigation/ Project Design, after the completion of the fieldwork. This forms the basic level of reporting. Further reporting may be required on the basis of discoveries made during excavations.

A copy of the report and the project archive will be deposited in the NMRS. Further copies will be sent to the client, LAAO and others, as appropriate.

### 5.4 Artefacts

Finds of objects will be subject to the Scots Laws of Treasure Trove and *Bona Vacantia*. SUAT will report such finds, if recovered, with supporting documentation to the Secretariat of the Treasure Trove Panel for disposal to the appropriate museum.

### 5.5 Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

A brief summary of the results will be submitted to *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*.

### 5.6 General Conditions and Health and Safety

SUAT adheres to the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

SUAT has public liability insurance of £5,000,000. Details of this can be provided on request.

SUAT operates a strict health and safety policy and conforms to the Health and Safety at Work Act. SUAT undertakes Risk Assessments on all fieldwork carried out.

All SUAT representatives will at all times wear protective footwear, high visibility clothing and other appropriate clothing. Hard hats will be worn if there is active plant on site or at all times if the site is deemed a hard hat area.

If lightly contaminated deposits are uncovered disposable boiler suits and gloves will be worn. A source of clean water will be made available for staff to clean hands with. If the health risk posed by site contamination is felt to be too high all further archaeological work will stop in that area.