

**Site**        **St. Blane's Chapel**

**N.G.R**      NS 095 534

### **Project Description**

Investigation of exposed stones prior to reinstatement of fallen tree.

### **Report**

The area of investigation comprised a roughly rounded depression (c.3.4m E-W x 5.5m N-S) left after the collapse of a single mature tree when the root was not dislodged. The average depth of the hole was 40cm, beneath which was a general level of loose fist-sized stones and clay rich earth (F005). This material represents a natural soil profile development over an extended period in an abandoned or non-intensively used area of the site.

Directly below the displaced tree trunk, and approximately central to the hole was a crude alignment of boulders (Fs 001-003), aligned approx. N-S. The stones were sealed by F005 and the tree roots themselves, in part creating the point of weakness which caused the tree's collapse.

The tree was a mature beech variety, in excess of 20m in height, and therefore at least 100 years old. It in turn appears to have been a part of the nth-century monastic complex during the 19th-century manse occupation of the site, apparently part of a decorative (mystery word here!) associated with the deliberate enhancement of the craggy edges of the site to the N.

The feature as exposed comprised 3 large stones, associated with 2 further stones lying to the N, which must have protruded from the present turf-line. In all, the feature was 3.2m in length, and lay very approximately parallel to the outer enclosure wall of the 5th-century monastic complex, some 6.1m to the NW. This alignment sits on a small baulk, formed by clay-rich subsoil (F004), possibly a slumped earthwork which has compacted around the stones. Two of the stones as exposed lie almost side by side (F001 & F002), with F003, the S extremity, abutting the S end of F002. All the stones showed signs of weathering, and although they are all natural boulders, their upper surfaces do seem to have been exposed at some point, for a considerable time.

### **Interpretation**

The stone alignment probably represents a structural fragment of a building - a wall-line which combined a low earthwork around a core of large stones. The general character of the feature suggests associations with the pre-12th-century activity on the site, although whether this is 5th- or 7th-century is not clear. Superficially, the monumental drystone construction of the outer enclosure wall and the 'Cauldron' are not immediately similar, but since little is known about the character of the assumed numerous courtyard structures from any period of the pre-12th-century occupation of the site, the wall fragment may be associated with this construction. The feature respects the line of the outer enclosure wall, and so is likely to be

part of the monastic occupation, and in view of its construction and general eroded nature (as distinct from it having been robbed-out), and early historic date is postulated.

**Finds**      No finds were made

**Contexts**

F001	Set stone at N end of alignment
F002	Set stone parallel to F001
F003	Set stone at S end of alignment
F004	Subsoil / clay-rich buried feature
F005	Turf and stony topsoil horizon

**Illustrations**