

Temple Wood stone
circle in Kilmartin Glen
is just one of many early
monuments in this area.

INVESTIGATING TEMPLE WOOD STONE CIRCLE

Information for Teachers





Temple Wood Stone Circle

Without carved stones, we would have little evidence for the existence of the people who lived in Scotland around 4,000 BC. The stones they shaped, carved and positioned in the landscape survive today as part of a very incomplete set of evidence of past lives and past societies. Single stones, often 1-3 metres high can often be spotted standing on their own in fields across Scotland. Other groups of standing stones can be found across Scotland, sometimes arranged in a roughly circular pattern. One of these is the stone circle in Temple Wood in Kilmartin Glen.

This stone circle was built around 5,000 years ago and probably replaced an earlier circle made of timber. We are still not sure what the circles were used for but they are likely to have played an important part in spiritual rituals and ceremonies of Scotland's early people.

Practical information

- Location: 1 mile south-west of Kilmartin, off the A816.
- Parking: Lady Glassary Wood car park, 1 mile south of Kilmartin on the B8025.
- Access: 400m walk across fields.
- Nearest toilets: Kilmartin.
- Note: Activities focus on the southern circle at Temple Wood.

How to use this resource

This resource is designed to enable teachers or parent helpers carry out a simple investigation of the stone circle in Temple Wood. Simple discussion points focus pupils' attention on what they can see and encourage pupils to interpret this evidence.

This activity guide should be used in collaboration with the much larger full-colour booklet *Investigating Carved Stones*, Historic Scotland 2009. This is available free of charge to teachers from Historic Scotland and can also be downloaded from the Historic Scotland website. This booklet sets the stone circle in Temple Wood in the context of other early carved stones and provides a wealth of additional suggestions for pre-visit, on-site and post-visit activities.

Call **0131 668 8793/8736** or visit www.historic-scotland.gov.uk for more details.

Suggested activities

- On site, spend some time recording what can be seen. Pupils can count the stones and sketch their rough location. They can take or estimate measurements using tape measures or pieces of string to record the dimensions. They can draw or photograph particular stones, perhaps with groups taking responsibility for particular stones. Can the stones be grouped or sorted in any way? Are there any outlying stones or features?
- How do the stones relate to each other? Measure the distance between the stones, the diameter of the circle. Is it in fact circular? Pace the circumference or perimeter of the

arrangement. Can pupils work out what the arrangement would look like from above? These measurements can be used to inform scale drawings or models back at school.

- Look around for any evidence of how the site may have changed. Look for ditches which may have been filled in, stones which may have fallen over or been split. Could there have been other elements which have long since rotted (e.g. wooden poles or barricades)?
- Why was this spot chosen? Pupils could look around them to see what, if anything makes this spot special. Is there a good view? Can any other historic sites be made out from here? Does it feel 'special'?
- What's it like here now? Record the surroundings through photography, sketching, recorded oral responses. What can you see now that people 5,000 years ago would not have seen?
- What theories do pupils have about the standing stones and how they might have been used?
- Back at school, pupils could create their own miniature models of the stone circle, based on sketches made on site. They could create scenes or imaginative writing showing the circle in use.

Further reading

Historic Scotland Education, *Investigating Carved Stones*, Historic Scotland 2009.

Rachel Butter, *Kilmartin: an introduction and guide to Scotland's richest prehistoric landscape*, Kilmartin House Trust 1999.



Did you know...

Archaeologists have found a number of early stone circles and monuments in Kilmartin Glen – and they are all arranged in a straight line along the glen.

Background information

This may be read aloud to pupils either before the visit or on site.

- People have been coming here for more than 5,000 years. They settled in this part of Scotland because it was good for farming and fishing. They built their houses here – and also their religious monuments.
- Archaeologists have found several different monuments here in the woods.
- The oldest one was probably a wooden structure. Archaeologists found the holes for wooden posts when they were excavating here in the 1970s. Later on the wooden poles were replaced with a circle of stones.
- About 5,000 years ago this second stone circle was built. It was used for hundreds of years, though we don't quite know how. Different generations added different sections to the circle, including cairns outside it, and a burial chamber for cremations in the middle.
- We are not sure what the circles were used for. They might have been a kind of observatory, for watching the movement of the sun, moon and stars across the sky through the year. Different generations probably used the circles for different reasons, until eventually they stopped being used altogether.
- Both of these monuments were close to a long line of religious monuments which ran along Kilmartin Glen. Look out for other monuments as you leave the site.



Site of an earlier stone circle in Temple Wood



Discussion points

<i>Teacher prompt</i>	<i>Pupil responses</i>
How many stones are there in the circle today?	About 13.
Do you think there were ever more stones here?	Yes – there seem to be gaps for another 7 stones in the circle.
At least one of the stones is decorated. See if you can find it. We are not sure if the people who built the circle were recycling an old decorated stone, or if they decorated it specially for the circle. What do you think?	Pattern of circles and curves carved over one stone (in the stone at the northernmost end of the circle). Pupils' own ideas.
Look at the rectangular section in the centre of the circle. What do you think this was used for? How long is it? Could someone be buried in it? Archaeologist found pottery 'beakers' or pots, which they think contained the cremated remains of bodies. You can see copies of these in Kilmartin House Museum.	Burials. Quite short for a burial cairn.
Have a look at the other circle site in this area. How is it different from the first circle? How is it the same? Archaeologists think that this circle was never completed.	Smaller, no big stones standing. Also roughly circular.



Circle in Temple Wood