



FEBRUARY 2023

HEATHERY HEIGHTS MONTHLY

Articles, walks and news



NEXT ISSUE
St Columba's Footprints
& Dunaverty

KILMARTIN GLEN

Walking through time...

The mystery and aura of Kilmartin Glen has drawn humankind for centuries. In fact several millennia have passed since humankind first settled here. Following the retreat of ice at the end of the last ice age plants and wildlife would have recolonised the landscape, some species being much the same as they are today with Hazel, Oak and Rowan. With increased food supply so too would come larger animals closely followed by early humans, the hunter gatherers of the Mesolithic.

But it is the settlers of the Neolithic and ages of Bronze and Iron which have left Kilmartin Glen with such a fascinating array of cists (stone burial coffins), burial cairns, standing stones and mysterious cup and ring marks.



Temple Woods Stone Circle



Nether Largie Standing Stones

Some of the remains are believed to be over 5500 years old, others around 3000. Most of these appear to be of a peaceful nature, perhaps alluding to a desire to understand this world, the sun, moon and stars, the seasons, and the surrounding landscape. It is also possible that such effort was put into these incredible structures to celebrate death and a possible afterlife in a time when food was plentiful. Later a wetter climate may have driven people away or encouraged battle over land and food sources as the Bronze age faded into that of the Iron. To find out more it is highly recommended that a visit is made to [Kilmartin Museum](#) when it reopens but for now this walk offers a glimpse into a past that is little understood and often remains a mystery.



Nether Largie South Cairn

Safety in the Outdoors

Please exercise responsibly and use appropriate clothing and equipment for your chosen outdoor activity. Inform a contact about your route/whereabouts and don't forget your phone, snacks, drink, medication and first aid supplies. Check the forecast and mountain weather conditions. Please keep your dog under close control, especially around livestock and wildlife, and be aware some open areas of moorland may have snares in use. Please follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, bylaws and laws that protect areas including National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

www.heatheryheights.co.uk

The walk

1. At the carpark it is initially worth walking to the viewpoint at the south end of the green next to the Church and churchyard – this gives a fantastic view down the glaciated glen with signs of its raised beaches and a glimpse towards the burial cairns that form what is known as the linear cemetery. The latter refers to the number of burial cairns constructed over time in a linear fashion down the glen, stretching for some 2 ½ miles.
2. From the carpark turn left to pass the church and museum. Just after the museum bear left on a footway down to Kilmartin Garage. Immediately turn left by the water treatment works and through a gate into a field. Ahead you will see Glebe Cairn. Built in the Bronze Age some 4000 years ago with two burial cists a jet necklace was found suggesting one may have been for a woman. This is the northernmost cairn of the linear

cemetery (although there was a circle to the north where gravel is now quarried).

3. From the cairn head down the field to the burn and cross the bridge. Turn left and follow the track for 400m. Nether Largie North Cairn is to your left. This vast cairn has a modern concrete chamber protecting the cist inside. Of main interest are the axe heads that were carved on the coffin lid which may signify a person of importance, perhaps a metal worker, was buried here. You can go inside, just take care as the steps are steep.

4. Continue south and a little ahead, on the left, is Nether Largie Mid Cairn. Here a cist can be clearly seen (two cists were found). Bodies would have been placed in a foetal position and surrounded by precious or useful goods for the afterlife. The pile of stones that forms the cairn will be substantially smaller than it once was – many stones will have been repurposed.

5. Walk south to the road, passing the school. Turn right. Continue for 300m and you will reach Temple Wood. Here there are two circles, one, the older, now just outlined, the other with 13 of its stones remaining. These are older than the cairns you have seen by some 1000 years. One can only imagine the ceremonies and their purpose – the sun and moon? Burials were made here too.
6. Cross the road* and go through the gate. Ahead you will see the fabulous Nether Largie Standing Stones. Proudly standing they may have been aligned for the sun and moon. They are younger than the cairns and are likely to have been placed here just over 3000 years ago. Look for the cup and ring marks, these are much older suggesting the rock was moved here some 1500 years after it was carved.
7. Turn north across the field, a path leads you past a wood on your right and then to the wonderful burial cairn of Nether Largie South. The chambers of this huge cairn can be entered on the north side. Built some 5500 years ago it is older than the others. Stones were likely added as the other cairns were being built to create the effect of a linear cemetery.
8. Return back to the road and the track to Kilmartin.

*To visit the southernmost cairn of Ri Cruin you will need to do three sides of a square before returning to the main walk. This little visited cairn has its own charm amongst the trees. Follow the road to the T-junction and turn left. Go 350m and cross a stone stile on your right, signposted to the cairn. On returning to the road, turn right and continue for 150m. Turn left. After 400m cross the small bridge on the left (opposite a carpark). Ahead are the standing stones and continuation of the walk.

Before leaving Kilmartin it is worth visiting the churchyard where you will find some fine examples of medieval carved stones and grave slabs. These can be found in the 17th Century Poltalloch Enclosure and the Campbell burial aisle.

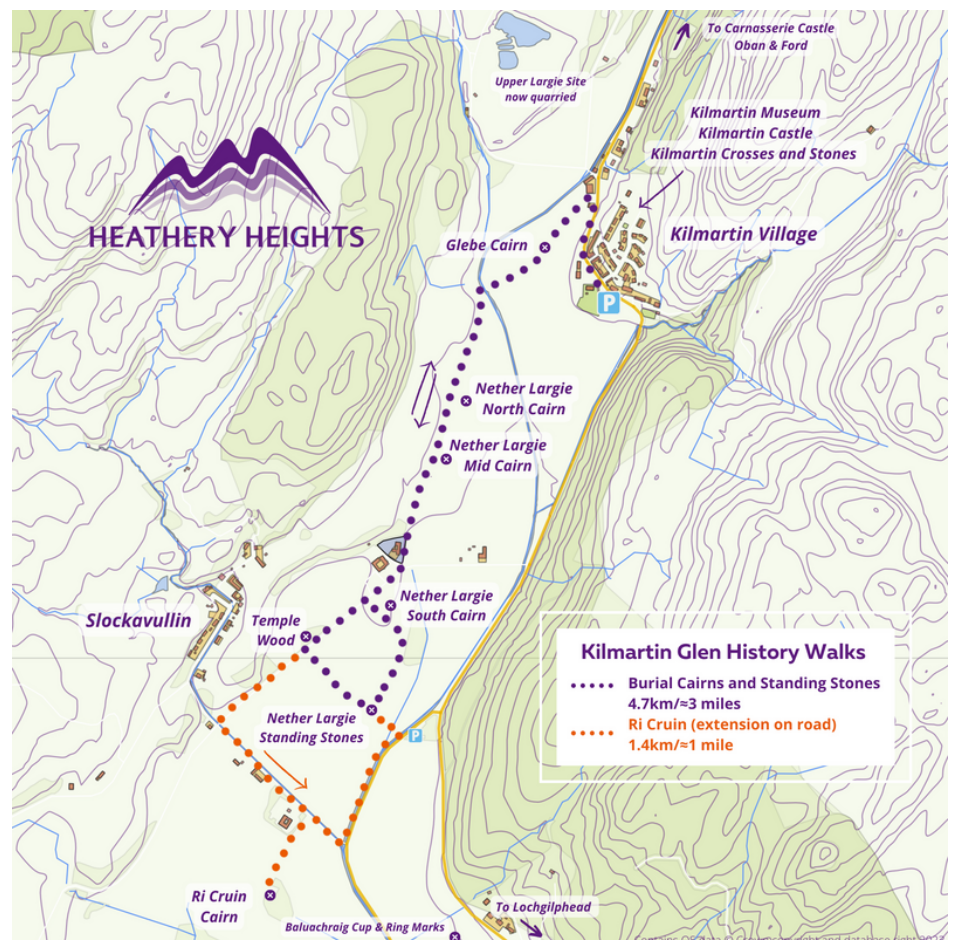
The glen also has a reem of other historical sites of interest. Ancient carved rocks, Iron Age forts built on hilltops, the rock of Dunadd - once the centre of the Kingdom of Dalriata and a place that held such importance that it is believed that Kings were ordained there - and castles added in medieval times as clan battles were lost or won.

Refreshments can be found at the Kilmartin Hotel and the Museum - when it reopens - has a café.

Walk Information

Route: Kilmartin Glen, linear cemetery and standing stones
Distance: 4.7 to 6.1km (3 to 4 miles)
Ascent: 30m
Time: 2 to 3 hours (you may want longer!)
Terrain: Mixture of road, track, and grassy paths.
Map/s: OS Landranger 55 (1:50 000)
 OS Explorer 358 (1:25 000)
Start/Finish/Parking: Small carpark opposite Kilmartin Hotel (further parking by new church - lane entrance opposite old church)
Grid reference: NR 835 988
Public Transport: 23/423, 421, 429 (limited service at weekends)
Toilets: Yes

OS Map Link



The described route and accompanying information are there to be used as a guide and do not replace the use of map and compass and the skills required to use them.

Whilst every effort is made to ensure the route is accurate at the time of going to print please be aware that track and path closures can happen at any time. All walks are undertaken at your own risk. Further information on routes and updates from Forestry & Land Scotland can be found [here](#)