

BEDD MORRIS STANDING STONE EXCAVATION 2012



Prepared by Dyfed Archaeological Trust
For Cadw



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**BEDD MORRIS STANDING
STONE
EXCAVATION 2012**

Gan / By

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EXCAVATION 2012**

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SUMMARY

In October 2011, the scheduled Bedd Morris standing stone broke and toppled over, probably having been hit by a vehicle. The upper part of the stone was subsequently removed from the site for safe keeping. A small-scale excavation in February 2012 recovered the snapped-off base of the stone, and established that the stone had probably been originally erected in the prehistoric period. Several hammer stones and stone flakes from dressing the stone were discovered. It is planned to repair the standing stone and re-erect it in its original location in the near future.

INTRODUCTION

Bedd Morris standing stone is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (PE361), recorded on the Dyfed Historic Environment Record as site 1435. It stands immediately alongside a minor road running over Carningle Common in Pembrokeshire, and is on the boundary of Newport and Llanychlwydog parishes, at the highest point of the road crossing at 290m (Fig. 1; NGR SN 03824 36509). Several rights of way converge on the stone, and it still acts as a marker for parcels of grazing land. It is a Dolerite, standing 2.2m high above the ground surface, 0.9m wide and 0.45m thick (Photo. 1). A modern (probably 19th century) inscription towards the base of the stone facing the road records its location as a parish boundary marker. An Ordnance Survey benchmark has also been carved on this face. The stone is assumed to be Bronze Age in date, although the scheduling description notes that it may have been moved or maybe laid flat and re-erected when the inscription was added.

In 2007, graziers reported that the stone had become unstable and raised concerns that it could topple. It was unclear what had caused this to happen, but it was most likely a combination of factors; vibration from vehicles, animals rubbing against it, erosion around the base of the stone, impact from a vehicle. It was decided that stabilisation was required; this was undertaken in June 2007 by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority staff under the supervision of their Archaeologist, Polly Groom (2007). This stabilisation consisted of removing turf and loose material from an eroded hollow between the stone and the road to create a solid surface to build from. This work revealed a crack in the stone. It would seem that the bottom of the stone had been 'squared off'. It was noted that hardcore from the road spread almost to the base of the stone. Beams of recycled plastic were placed against the squared sides of the stone and concrete poured in behind them with the intention of providing a solid buffer and preventing movement of the stone. Earth was then mounded up over the concrete and the turf reinstated.

During the weekend of 8th/9th October 2011 the standing stone toppled over, fracturing across the crack noted in 2007. The reason for this is unknown, but it is considered likely that a vehicle clipped it. The stone was removed to a nearby farm for safekeeping. The preferred option of Cadw and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and others was to return the stone to, or very close to, its original upright position. However, before this could be achieved the base of the stone had to be recovered. As there was the possibility that it had remained *in situ* since the Bronze Age, this had to be achieved as part of an archaeological excavation. Dyfed Archaeological Trust therefore submitted a request for grant-aid to excavate the site. This was approved and the excavation was undertaken in the week of the 6th-10th February 2012.

METHODOLOGY

An area approximately 2m by 2m was hand-excavated around the site of the standing stone down to undisturbed natural deposits. The 2007 concrete fillet was left in place as were the deposits filling the stone socket below the fillet. All deposits and features were recorded according to Dyfed Archaeological Trust's recording manual. The base of the stone was removed and stored with the upper part in the nearby farm. Prior to back-filling perforated plastic was placed in the stone socket and surrounding area. Safety of the site workers was a consideration; Pembrokeshire National Park Authority therefore provided temporary barriers between the excavation and road-edge.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

Removal of turf and topsoil (101), which included rounded boulders, pieces of plastic and metal, and debris from the 2007 stabilisation work, revealed the surface of a low bank (102) through which the base of the standing stone protruded.

Bank 102 consisted of mixed layers of soil and occasional large rounded stones and boulders (Fig. 2; Photos. 2 and 3). It ran parallel to the road, occupied the whole width of the trench, apart from where removed in 2007, and stood up to 0.5m high. This seems to be the remains of a turf/soil and stone built boundary bank into which the standing stone had been incorporated. The bank is not recorded on any map, and as no archaeological dating evidence was found, the date of its construction and use is unknown. Hammer stones assigned to the bank may have come from the underlying layer (103).

Removal of bank 102 revealed what was probably a buried soil (103), consisting of silty-clay with occasional small/medium-sized stones. It overlay a stony surface (104), the fill of the stone socket (106, 107) and the fill of a posthole (108, 109).

It was not possible to completely excavate the whole of the socket (106, 107) due to the presence of the concrete fillet and to the sharply tapering nature of its base. It was approximately 1m across and 0.7m deep, with its pointed bottom formed by the base of the stone (Figs. 3, 4 and 5; Photos. 3, 4 and 5). Several large rounded stones, including what appeared to be hammer stones, had been jammed into the pit acting as packing stones. Several stone flakes, possibly a result of dressing the standing stone, were included in the stony silty-clay fill (106) of the socket. Bulk soil samples and a charcoal sample were taken from the fill of the socket. The snapped-off base of the standing stone mirrored the shape of the base of the socket (Photos. 6 and 7). Originally the stone would have been embedded at least 0.7m in the ground. A posthole (109, filled by 108) cut through part of the fill (106) of the stone socket.

The stone socket cut through silty-clay geological deposits. Resting on these in the south-west corner of the excavation trench was a stony surface (104) made up of rounded and angular pebbles, and some larger rounded stones (Fig. 3: Photo. 4). There was no discernible relationship between this layer and the stone socket or the posthole.

CONCLUSIONS

The erection of the standing stone pre-dates the construction of the boundary bank and therefore is of some antiquity; certainly earlier than 19th century. There is the possibility that the stone could have been placed in position in the early modern period or the medieval period, but the presence of hammer stones and dressing flakes in the stone socket are a strong indication of a prehistoric date, most likely Bronze Age, in common with other excavated and dated examples in south-west Wales and beyond (Williams 1988).

The presence of hammer stones and dressing flakes is of considerable interest as this is the first time such evidence has been found in south-west Wales in association with a standing stone and indicates greater manipulation of natural resources than previously recognised. The depth (0.7m) to which the stone had been dug into the ground was also unusual, as all other investigated south-west Wales examples have been shallowly set, seemingly relying on an act of faith to keep them upright.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the stone is repaired and re-erected in its original socket. It would be useful to obtain a radiocarbon date from the charcoal from the stone socket. Depending on the date obtained it might be useful to analyse the samples obtained from the stone socket.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excavation was grant-aided by Cadw with support in-kind from the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. The excavations were supervised by Pete Crane and assisted by Hubert Wilson of Dyfed Archaeological Trust. Geoff Wainwright enthusiastically volunteered on the excavation. The Trust is indebted to the Barony of Cemais for permission to undertake the excavation, and also to several staff members of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority for health and safety guidance, provision of signs and fencing and for lifting the stone and removing it to a place of safety.

SOURCES

Groom P, 2007. 'Repairs to Bedd Morris standing stone, SAM Pe361', unpublished Cambria Archaeology (Dyfed Archaeological Trust) report 2007/48.

Williams G, 1988. *The standing stones of Wales and south-west England*, BAR British Series 197.

ARTEFACTS

Context 101

Post-medieval ceramics – 2 small sherds

Quartz fragments – 4 small fragments (largest 0.03x0.02m)

Corroded iron – 1 amorphous lump (0.04x0.03m)

Context 102

Hammer stones – 3 – rounded, one with very distinct flattened surface -
0.15x0.10m / 0.14x0.10m / 0.12x0.09m

Quartz pebbles – 3 – each 0.05-0.06x0.04m

Context 103

Hammer stones – 2 – of size and shape to fit comfortably in the hand –
0.16x0.10m / 0.12x0.12m

Context 106

Hammer stones – 3 – large stones – 0.14x0.14m (rounded on one side, flattened
on other) / 0.23x0.14m (rounded ends and 4 flattened, elongated sides) /
0.20x0.16 (flattened surfaces created a ridge around one half of the stone)

Flat stones – 3 – possibly worked – 0.19x0.10m (well-defined hand-axe shape,
blue-grey stone – Dolerite?) / 0.17x0.11m (possible working on one edge but less
well-defined) / 0.13x0.05m (amorphous with evident break)

Small mixed-stone fragments and flakes – 88 – range from 0.11x0.05m to
0.01x0.01m – generally flat, elongated stone flakes.

Quartz fragments – 7 – amorphous lumps – range from 0.03x0.03m –
0.08x0.09m

SAMPLES

301. Bulk sample from boundary bank 102.

302. Bulk sample from boundary bank 102.

303. Bulk sample from midway down fill 106 of stone socket 107.

304. Charcoal sample from midway down fill 106 of stone socket 107.

305. Bulk sample from near bottom of fill 106 of stone socket 107.

FIGURES

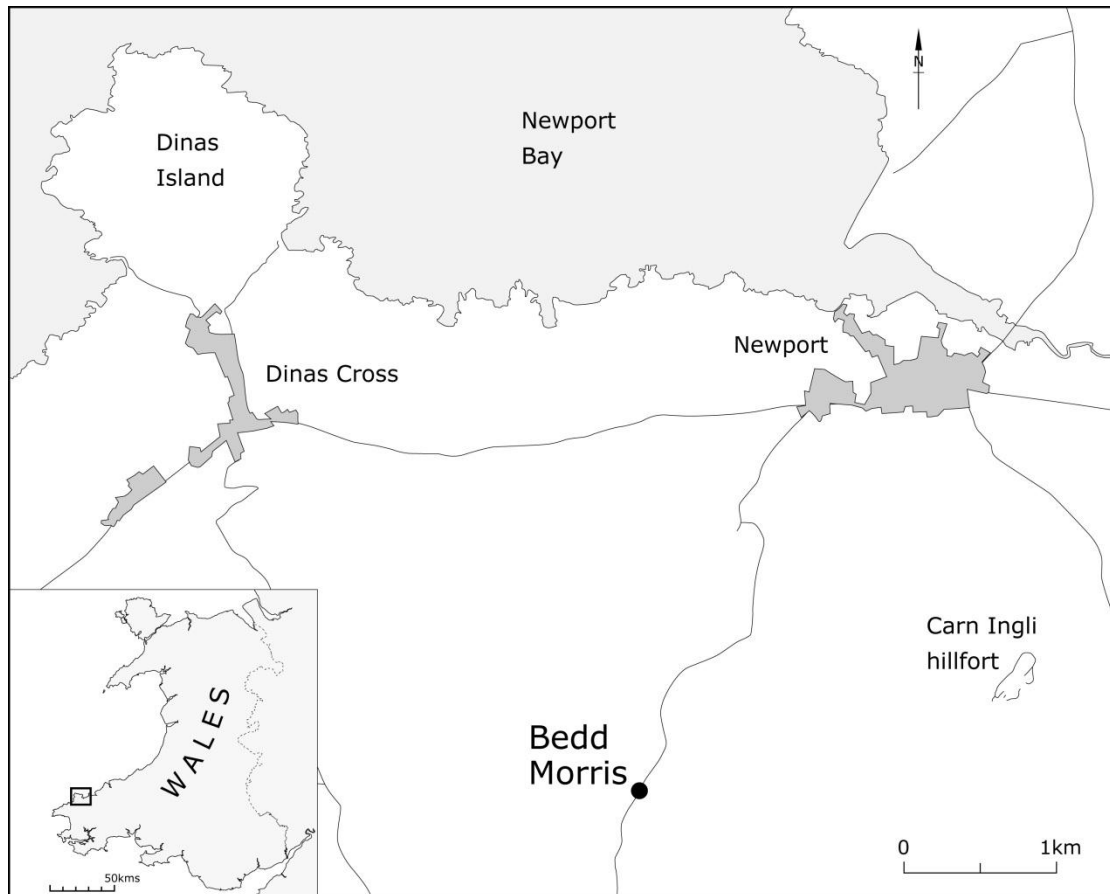


Figure 1. Location map

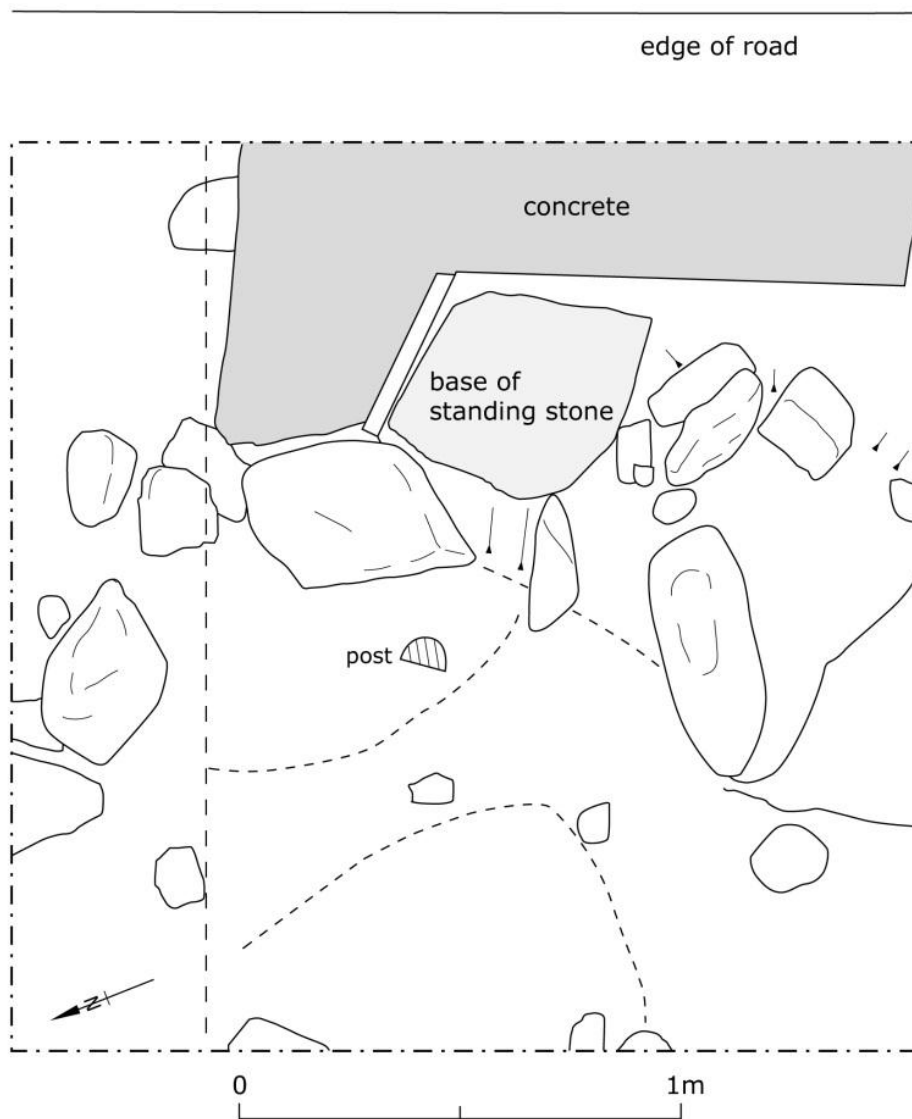


Figure 2. Plan of the surface of bank 102, the base of the standing stone and the concrete fillet.

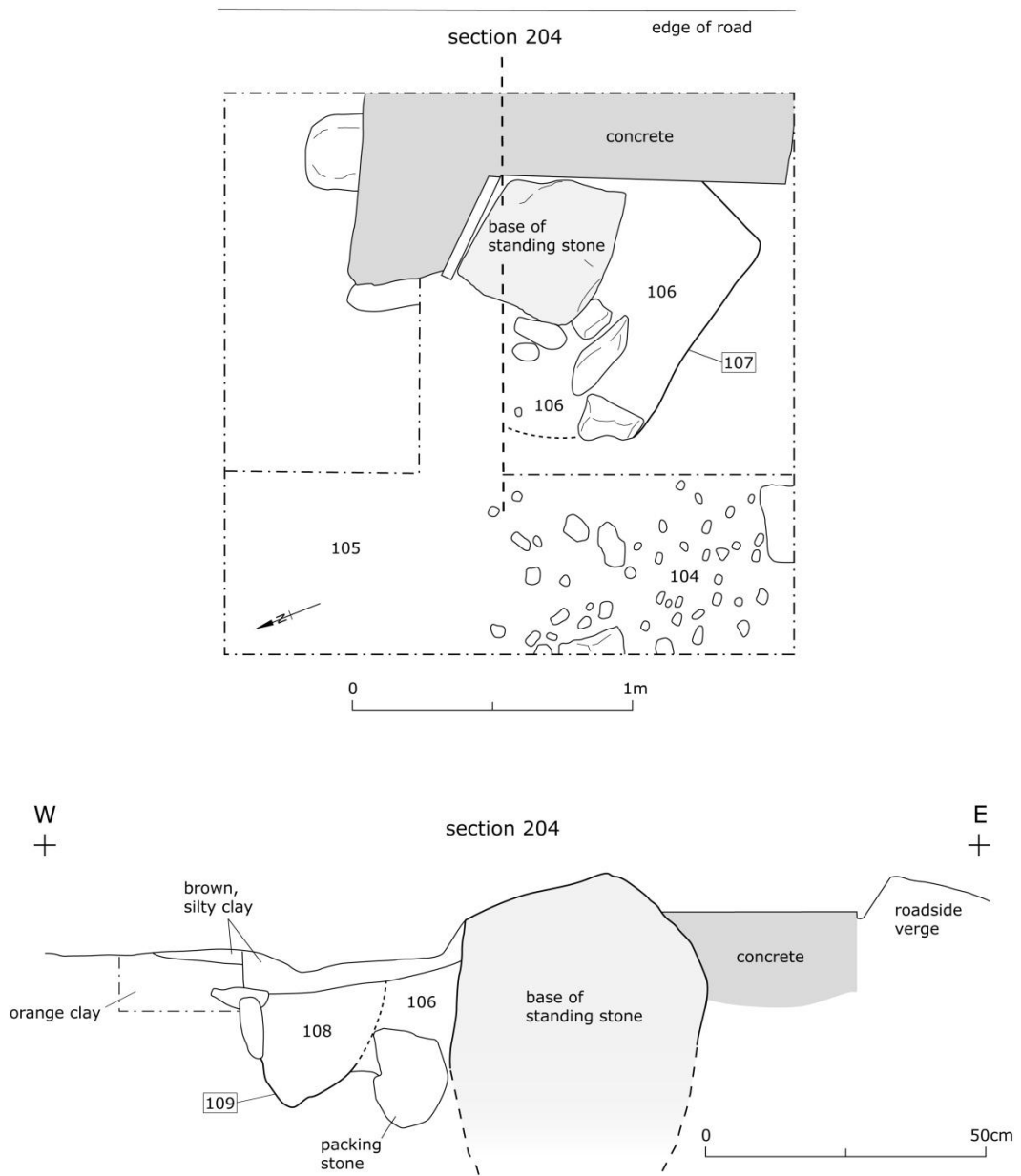


Figure 3. Plan and section of the stone socket showing the packing stones and also layer 104.

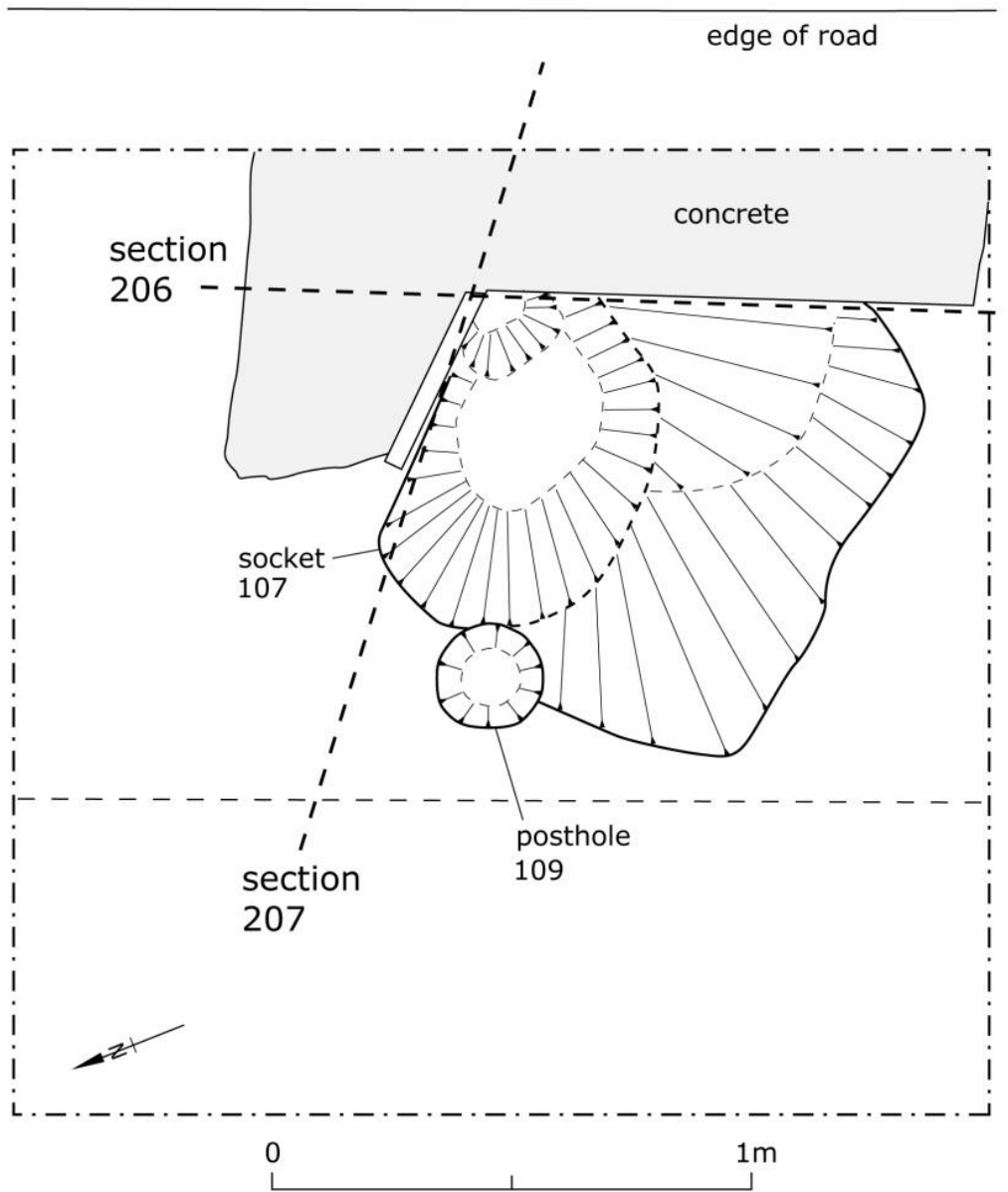


Figure 4. Plan of the stone socket 107.

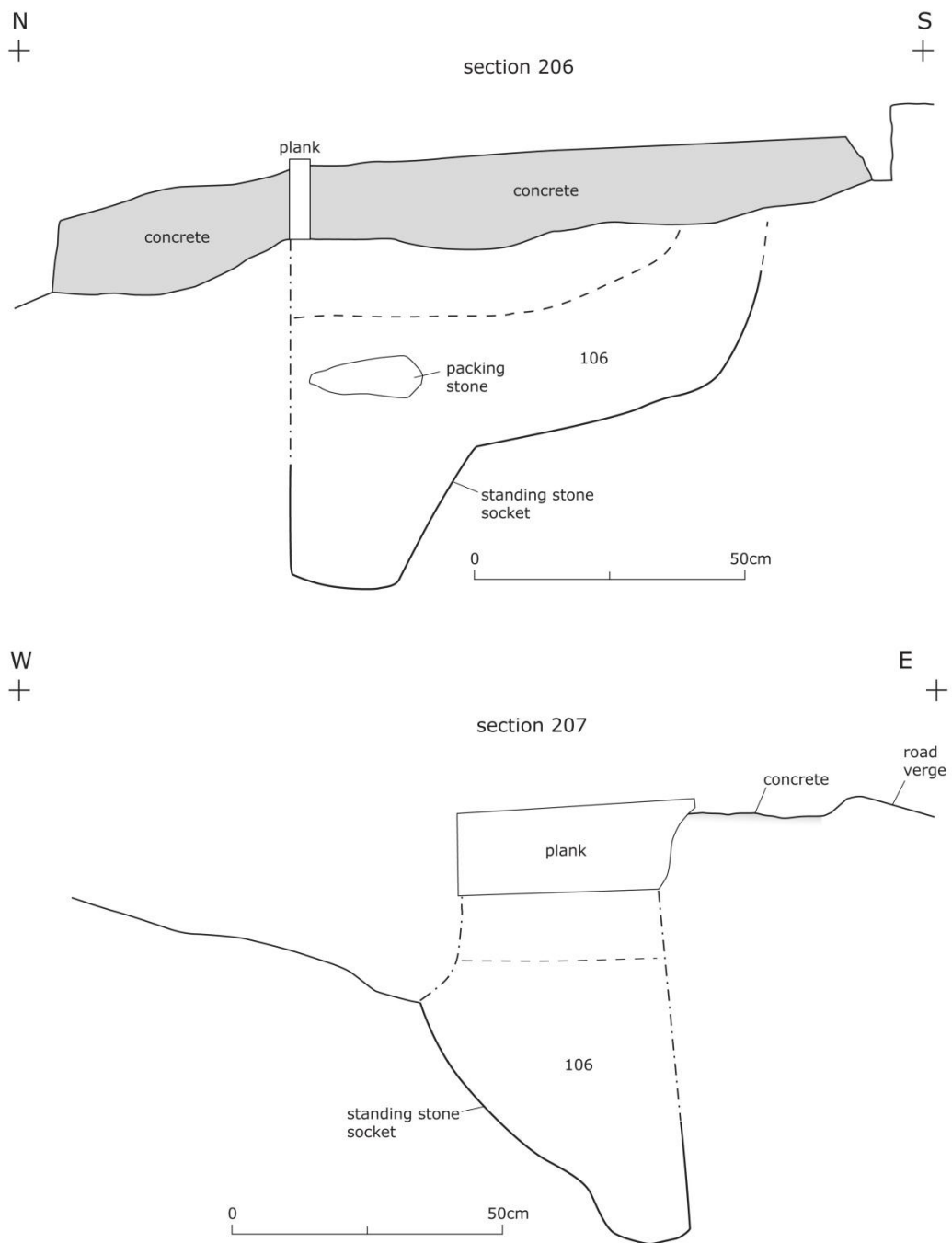


Figure 5. Sections 206, 207 across stone socket 107.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photograph 1. Bedd Morris standing stone in 2007 following stabilisation.



Photograph 2. The site after the removal of topsoil showing the surface of the bank (102) and the in situ base of the standing stone. Scales 1m and 0.5m.



Photograph 3. The *in situ* base of the stone with packing stones and stony surface 104. Note the section through bank 102 at the end of the trench. Scales 1m and 0.5m.



Photograph 4. The *in situ* base of the stone with packing stones and stony surface 104. Scales 1m and 0.5m.



Photograph 5. The *in situ* base of the stone after removal of most of the packing material. Scale 1m and 0.5m.



Photograph 6. The base of the standing stone reunited with its upper section.
Photo: Geoff Wainwright.



Photograph 7. The base of the standing stone following removal from the socket.
Scale 0.5m. 7871



Photograph 8. Two hammer stones from Layer 102.



Photograph 9. Three hammer stones and quartz pebbles from Layer 102.



Photograph 10. Three hammer stones from fill of stone socket (106, 107).



Photograph 11. Stone fragments and flakes from fill of stone socket (106, 107).



Photograph 12. Three hammer stones and other stones from fill of stone socket (106, 107).

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**Mawrth 2012
March 2012**

Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan / This report has been prepared by K Murphy

Swydd / Position: Trust Director

Llofnod / Signature



Dyddiad / Date 21.03.2012

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith
This report has been checked and approved by J Meek

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Swydd / Position: Head of Field Services

Llofnod / Signature



Dyddiad / Date 21.03.2012

Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadau
sydd gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn

As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any
comments you may have on the content or presentation of this report



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