

Strangford Stone

The tallest megalith in Ireland

Located on a hilltop in
Delamont Country Park
Killyleagh, Co Down BT30 9TZ
www.delamontcountrypark.com



Megalith – from the Greek –
mega (*big*) **lithos** (*stone*)

Why a stone?

The stone was erected to create a landmark as a testament to young people's energy, industry and co-operation to mark the Millennium.

The idea came to Martyn Todd in January 1995 who was inspired by a nineteenth century king from Madagascar who said 'quarrying and erecting a megalith brought people together and was proof of mutual friendship'.

Martyn's concept was that by using muscle power of the young people of Northern Ireland to raise a standing stone in the manner of our forefathers, we could create a lasting achievement of the youth of this country.

The Stone:

- Quarried from Mourne Granite
- 12 metres in length
- Weight – 47 tonnes

The height above ground is 10 metres – 1000 centimetres, one for each year of the Millennium.

Erected on 26 June 1999 using the muscle power of 1000 young people, this project was awarded a Millennium Commission grant of £225,850.

Quarrying of the stone



The stone was quarried in Donard Quarry, Mourne Mountains. The quarry can be seen to the right of the present location of the stone, when looking seawards.

It was quarried in one piece from a 300 tonne block. When it was being trimmed back, using the old plug and feather technique, a natural flaw in the granite was revealed. It was decided to allow the block to break at this point and rejoin it securely using steel dowels.

The bottom section measures 1.5m x 1.0m x 4.6m long. The top section tapers down to 1m square measuring 7.8m in length. The top piece alone is longer than any other standing stone in Ireland.

The marks of the plug and feather technique are clearly visible on one side of the stone.

The Lough shore face of the stone is engraved with the alignment of the inner four planets as they were on the 26 June 1999. This will allow future astronomers to accurately pinpoint the date it was erected.

The quarrying, finishing and joining of the stone took nearly three years.

Transportation:

A special steel cradle was manufactured to support the megalith during transport and erection. The cradle had to be strong enough to take all the forces exerted by the 47 tonne weight of the stone, the pull of the 1,000 people and the restraining safety systems.

The rams of the safety system had two safety functions. Firstly they damped the movement of the stone so that it could only move slowly and smoothly whatever the load applied. Secondly they acted as a one way mechanism to hold the cradle and stone in whatever position it was pulled to, not allowing them to fall back.

The stone and cradle were transported from Kilkeel by low loader, accompanied by a hundred tonne crane and a police escort on 10 June 1999.

To ensure that the stone was facing the correct way on its foundations, the low loader had to reverse the half-mile from the main road to the site on the hill.



In parallel with the engineering work, was the task of recruiting and training teams of young people. Teams had to be taught: how to pull as one person, how to pull safely, learn the commands, develop control, and sustain steady force for minutes at a time aiming for 30 kg pull per person.



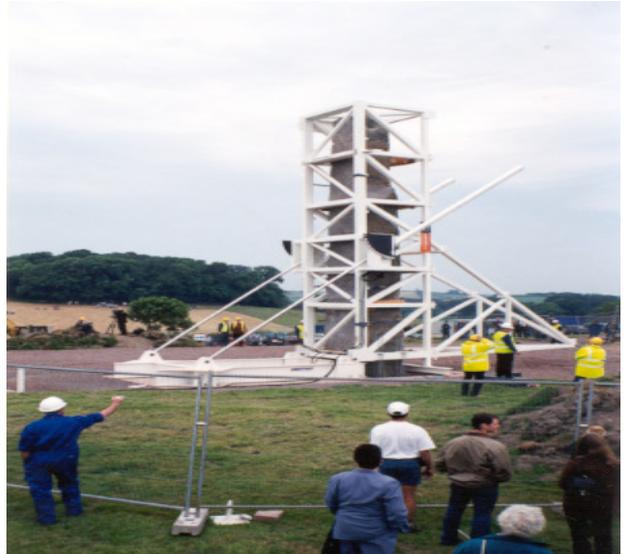
Rising Of the Stone

A three-day camp for 700 people was set up for the weekend of the 25 – 27 June 1999. All the young people assembled and lined out on 20 ropes across the top meadow at 2.30pm. To the sound of '2001 A Space Odyssey', the mighty pull began.

Over the next two hours the stone was gradually pulled up into position until a few minutes after 4.00pm the indicator on the inclinometer read 90 degrees.

The finale from Mahler's 3rd Symphony and the release of 1,000 coloured balloons marked the achievement.

The foundation around the stone was filled with concrete and the next day the steel cradle was removed to reveal the stone in its new surroundings.



After four and a half years of planning and work from 2000 people, a new megalith was in place.

The Strangford Stone was formally handed over to the safe keeping of the Down District Council on the 4th September 1999.



Thanks to the work of the Strangford Stone Consortium, the expertise of Northern Ireland's industries, and the friendship of the youth of this country for this unique project.