

Article for Aulds Wives Lifts

About a century ago, Robert McNeil produced an image of 17 men around a geological curiosity on Craigmaddie Muir, north of Glasgow, known locally as "The Auld Wives' Lifts". He sold a hand-tinted version of the image as a postcard in Strathblane, where he ran the local post office. Roll on 100 years and Strathblane Heritage, challenged the women of the Ladies Scottish Climbing Club to recreate the image. (The LSCC, founded in 1908, is the oldest all-women climbing club in existence.) Photographer Stevi Jackson did a recce of the site to identify the exact spot from which the original had been taken and secured access via a privately-owned farm track. The group assembled on 21 June 2023, midsummer's day, and the deed was done. Their luck was in because the notoriously boggy area around the stones had dried out in the recent heatwave and a stiff breeze kept the midges at bay.

Legend has it that the grey sandstone boulders were carried to the site in the aprons of three women who were competing in a trial of strength. The largest stone rests on top of the other two. Several human faces have been carved in the surfaces, as well as much Victorian graffiti, and it has been suggested that it was once a Druid altar. A more likely explanation is that they are part of the random detritus left by a retreating glacier at the end of the Ice Age.

(Photo courtesy of Stevi Jackson)

