

## HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

## FIELD MONUMENTS



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

4 DISTRICT SUTHERLAND		5 PARISH KILDONAN		1 SITE CODE H N C 8 2 N E 0 0 1	
7 AREA STATUS		8 SITE STATUS SCHEDULED *		2 NGR N C 8 6 6 2 9 5	
11 CONCORDANCE OS NC 82 NE 1		12 FORM STANDING STRUCTURES		3 QUAL C E	
16 RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTS 7 HUT CIRCLES		17 CONDITION INCOMPLETE		6 SITE NAME K I N B R A C E H I L L	
				10 GENERIC TYPE SETTLEMENT + FIELD SYSTEM, CLEARANCE HEAPS, LYNCHETS + FIELD WALLS.	
				14 PERIOD/DATE BA=IA	
				15 DATING METHOD TYP	
				18 SHAPE	
				19 THREAT AND DATE	
20 LAND USE AFFORESTATION = ROUGH PASTURE				21 GEOLOGY	
22 SOILS				23 VEGETATION	
24 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE		25 RELIEF GENTLE HILLSLOPE		26 ASPECT SW	
				27 ALTITUDE 114=168m OD	
28 EXCAVATION (EXCAVATOR: DATE: EXTENT: QUALITY)					
29 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR: DATE: TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)					
1. ORDNANCE SURVEY:1962:6" MAP.					
2. RCAHMS:1911:SUTHERLAND INVENTORY:HMSO:pp124-5,No352,PLAN.					
3. CURLE A.O.: :PROC SOC ANT SCOT.: :VOL 45:pp10,18-23,PLAN.					
4. FAIRHURST H.& TAYLOR D.B.:1970-71:PROC SOC ANT SCOT.: :VOL.103:pp65-99.					
5. HBM (SDD):1985:LIST OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS					
30 GROUND PLAN NO.			31 GROUND PHOTO NO.		
32 SLIDES NO.			33 HR. AP. NO.		
34 NMR. AP. NO.			35 OTHER AP. NO.: SOURCE		
36 ARCHIVE AND LOCATION					
37 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY			38 SAMPLES		
39 PALYNOLOGY			40 NUMERICAL DATES: RANGE: LAB NO.		
41 SMALL FINDS			42 MUSEUM/LOCATION		
43 OTHER					
44 NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER				45 ATTITUDE OF OWNER	
46 NAME & ADDRESS OF TENANT				47 ATTITUDE OF TENANT	
48 ACCESS & RESTRICTIONS					
49 NAME & ADDRESS OF FINDER/RECORDER: DATE				50 RECORDER: DATE GS:14.5.1985	
				51 CHECK: DATE A.R. 27.6.1986	
52 TEXT "See attached photocopies for text."					

NC 805 296 (A) KINBRACE FARM, HUT CIRCLE 1030m NW CP (16)  
NC 805 296 (B) KINBRACE FARM, HUT CIRCLE 1100m NW CP

8. \* 'Huts A and B are scheduled.' (5).

## (Centred NC 866295) Hut Circles &amp; Enclosures (NR)

A settlement of hut-circles, field clearance heaps and field banks, stretching for about 400m along the lower west slopes of Kinbrace Hill in which it is possible to identify, by analogy with Fairhurst's excavations at Kilphedir (NC 91 NE 25) two periods of occupation. The first consists of simple huts associated with field clearance heaps, and dates from about 500 BC. The second consists of at least one strongly built hut, possibly a rebuild of one of the earlier type, associated with field walls and dating from about 130 BC.

The simple huts, most of which were found by F1 whose visit occurred after heather-burning, number about twelve, and some are not true circles. They consist of earth and stone banks 0.5m in maximum height and 8m to 15m in diameter. At least six have entrances in the west, the others being in the SE.

The later type of hut occurs at NC 86812963 (Hut 'A') and was excavated by Curle in 1910. It is almost identical with Kilphedir Hut V being oval 9.1m by 10.6m internally with a paved entrance passage 4.5m long in the SE. The stone-faced walls vary from 2.4m to 7.3m in thickness and Curle identified a souterrain or mural gallery in the west wall. His excavation produced finds of coarse pottery and part of a lignite armlet which he donated to the NMAS (Acc No HD 440-2). Adjoining the hut on the NE, and connected by a possibly secondary entrance, are the remains of a small oblong enclosure. As at Kilphedir, a bank approaches the hut entrance from the west at a distance of only a few feet from the hut. Another possible hut of this type occurs at NC 86882968 (hut 'B') where a large green mound, outside the entrance on the SW, may indicate the presence of a souterrain. The irregularly shaped fields are enclosed by courses of stones, earth and stone banks, or low, spread turf banks whose average height is 0.3m but on the west side of the road, towards the north, they reach a maximum height of 1m.

At NC 86812962 is a turf mound with a 4m by 3m by 0.3m deep depression which RCAHM thought might be a kiln. At NC 86842928 is a slight depression 2m in diameter and 0.2m deep, banked on the SW side, which also resembles a kiln.

This settlement comprises fourteen stone-walled huts, but since the previous field investigator's visit, the area to the E of the road has been ploughed and afforested, mutilating and obscuring all features except huts 'A' and 'B'. 'A', as described above, is now covered by heather and turf.

'B' measures internally 14.0m SSW-NNE by 11.0m; it is set into the slope in the NE, where the floor is 1.5m below the top of the wall scarp. The wall is approximately 3.0m thick in the NW, widening to 8.5m at the entrance in the SSW arc, at the west side of which the possible souterrain is located. The entrance unusually wide at 1.5m, is blocked by a small heather-covered mound of uncertain purpose, possibly a clearance heap.

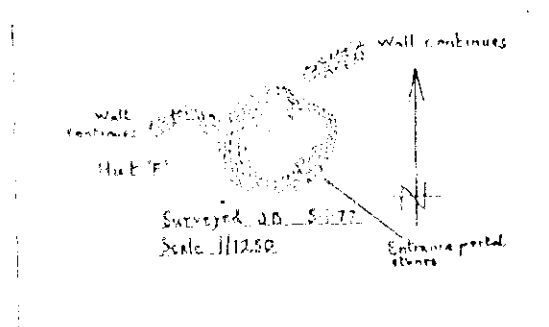
below  
 The huts described are on the W side of the road, unaffected by afforestation. 'C' is 9.0m in diameter within a wall, whose SW half has an inner face of almost contiguous slabs on edge. The wall appears to have been 2.1m broad. The probable entrance, now stone-choked, is in the W. 'D' and 'E' have internal diameters of 6.0m and 10.0m respectively, with walls approximately 1.8m wide. Both are entered from the W. 'F' is severely mutilated but appears to have measured about 10.0m in diameter within a turf overgrown wall about 1.8m wide. Several inner and outer upright facing stones are exposed including four portal slabs at the choked entrance in the SE indicating a wall thickness of 2.2m here. A compartment in the north of the hut may be an original feature or it could indicate later use or mutilation. A later wall overlies and obscures the NW arc (See illustration). 'G' is a very ill-defined hut visible as a platform about 12.5m in diameter within a low, broken, turf covered wall. No obvious entrance is visible.

The two possible kilns mentioned appear to be the remains of clearance heaps. The first has been totally destroyed by forestry ploughing. The revealed contents are typical of a clearance heap. The second has another clearance heap close by it.

Only vestigial remains of the field system survive in the forest E of the road and the association between it and the huts is obscured. On the W side of the road there are one or two clearance heaps and some lynchets. There is an unusually well-preserved system of field walls surviving generally as single lines of boulders on edge. These appear contemporary with the huts but there is incursion of later walls associated with run-rig. There are cultivation plots visible, average size 25.0m by 15.0m.

Published survey (6") revised.

Hut 'F'



Authority 6

## I.

ON THE EXAMINATION OF TWO HUT CIRCLES IN THE STRATH OF KILDONAN, SUTHERLANDSHIRE, ONE OF WHICH HAS AN EARTH HOUSE ANNEXED. BY ALEXANDER O. CURLE, *Secretary.*

During my survey of the ancient monuments of the county of Sutherland in the summer of 1909, I was much impressed by the extraordinary number of hut circles to be seen there. The existence of such objects has been noted from time to time, especially in relation to hill forts and other constructions of a defensive character, but there is little information in regard to them in the volumes of our *Proceedings*. In Scotland no antiquary so far has made these interesting remains a special subject of study. In 1866 Mr. John Stuart, then Secretary of this Society, conducted excavations in a number of hut circles and adjacent mounds on Balaubroch, Parish of Kirkmichael, Perthshire, but with almost negative results. Much charcoal was found on the floors of the former, and in one instance a fragment of bronze like the pin of a brooch.<sup>1</sup> On the Gallow Hill, at Auchterless, Aberdeenshire, others destroyed by cultivation, along with mounds in their near vicinity, were described in 1871 by Mr. James Forrest, Auchterless. Quantities of ashes and charred wood were found in one hut circle, and a hole in the centre about 1 foot in diameter and 2½ feet in depth, in which was some decayed wood.<sup>2</sup> In several mounds, composed of stone and earth, and situated near the circles, were found urns of the cinerary type, some of which are now in the possession of Mrs. Duff Dunbar, Ackerhill, Wick.

Hut circles in the South of England have attracted much attention, and the labours of the Exploration Committee of the Devonshire Archaeological Society, extending over a number of years, among those of Dartmoor, have demonstrated that there, at least, they are dwellings of the Early Bronze, if not of the Late Neolithic period. Excavations in the island of Anglesea, conducted by the Hon. Owen Stanley as long ago as 1865, led to a similar conclusion.

In Sutherland they exist for the most part by the sides of the straths forming the natural highways into the interior, by the shores of the lochs, and on the slopes of the hills, often at an elevation of some 500 to 600 feet.

The variety of plan met with is considerable, and peculiar features are not infrequently restricted in their occurrence to limited areas. In no case is this more evident than in the Strath of Kildonan, where, in several instances, an earth house, or underground gallery, forms a part of the plan. While in two or three cases the earth house is accessible, in others its existence is clearly indicated by a peculiar increase, on one side only of the hut circle, in the dimensions of the bank which formed it. As a rule, the bank in its present dilapidated state, and overgrown with vegetation, measures some 6 feet to 8 feet in breadth, but in the instances referred to it has a breadth of 20 feet or more, and a height of 1 foot to 6 feet for about one third of the circumference.

Situated near the upper end of the strath of Kildonan at the foot of Kinbrace Hill, and some fifty yards S. of the cultivated land at Burnfoot, is a hut circle (fig. 1) (No. 352 of the Inventory of the Ancient Monuments of Sutherland). In form the interior is oval, measuring some 30 feet in breadth by 35 feet in length towards the entrance, which is from the S.E. The passage leading to the interior is 45 feet in length, some 4 feet wide at the exterior, and 2 feet at the inner end. The thickness of the bank or wall is some 5 feet, where it projects outwards on either side of the passage, and about 11 feet on the east side of the circle. On the west it is some 9 feet in thickness for the first 19 feet from the entrance, whence it rapidly expands to a width of 21 feet, decreasing thereafter to 8 feet at the back of the circle. On the N.E., abutting on the outer face, is a small oblong enclosure, the banks of which are much worn down. At no distant date the bank or wall has been much dilapidated by the removal of

stones, probably for road metal, but no earth house has been exposed. opportunity by Mr. Sykes, the shooting tenant of Borrobol, and now a Fellow of the Society, to explore this circle. The permission of His Grace the Duke of Sutherland having been obtained, we started operations on a cold stormy day in the beginning of September. The time at my disposal did not permit of a thorough examination, so the tasks I set myself were to ascertain if an earth house really existed beneath the broad portion of the bank, and to examine a part of the interior in the hope of finding some fragments of pottery that might furnish an indication of the period to which the structure belonged. Clearing an area about 10 feet square near the centre, we found at a depth of some 16 inches below the present ground-level a stone-paved floor. From this came a small quantity of charcoal and minute fragments of burnt bone, but no relics of importance. An excavation made along the inner face of the bank on the W. side showed that it had been faced with large stones, and produced a small fragment of coarse hand-made pottery, red in colour on the outside, and much blackened in the interior. The fragment, which is unornamented, measures half an inch in thickness, and has evidently been a portion of the wall of a large vessel broken off at the base. As this cutting failed to locate the entrance to an earth house, as I had hoped, I was compelled to dig into the mound. It had previously been much disturbed, and many large stones lay exposed in pockets dug into it on the top and about the inner face. At its thickest point, where I thought the back of the earth house might occur, a hole was dug in from the outside, but, though a built wall was met, no trace of the gallery was found. Judging, then, that the entrance would probably be in a position similar to that in other hut circles, an excavation was made into the bank on the left of the interior some 20 feet, or thereby from the inner end of the main entrance, and here, as the search was being relinquished at the close of the afternoon, the gallery was found. The workman had dug a pit some 3 to 4 feet deep and the same in diameter, from the bottom of which his spade had passed horizontally inwards. Lighting a candle and entering, the walls, built of boulders, were found to be intact, and the great slabs which formed the roof *in situ*. A talus of loose soil stretched nearly to the back, which was reached at 20 feet from where the gallery was entered. At the inner extremity the width was 4 feet and the height 5 feet 6 inches. As the opening was discovered some 4 or 5 feet from the inner face of the bank, the original length of the earth house must have been longer by that extent, and the depth at which it was found indicates that it was dug out of the solid ground, otherwise the wall of boulders could with difficulty have withstood the thrust of the heavy flag-stone roof. It is remarkable that, instead of passing to the right under the great bank which suggested its existence, it turned towards the left. Unfortunately, time did not permit of us either clearing out the gallery or making a cut through the mound to see if a second earth house had existed there, both of which operations would have involved much labour. The opening was therefore filled up again, as it was dangerous to leave it open, and we had reluctantly to bequeath the completion of the exploration to other hands at some future date.

On removing the turf from the main entrance, and from the interior just within it, further rude paving was laid bare and another fragment of pottery recovered. This was a small portion of the lip of a vessel of thick black ware with a smooth surface, also apparently hand-made. In the composition of both these fragments of pot are many minute flakes of mica, suggesting that the vessels were of local manufacture, the rock of the district being micaceous schist. The only other relics recovered were a round sandstone pebble, measuring superficially 6 by 5 inches, slightly concave, and polished with rubbing on one face, also a segment of an annular amulet of unpolished lignite amounting to about one-third of the original. In section it is flat on one side and slightly rounded on the other, and is much

stones, probably for road metal, but no earth house has been exposed.

During my residence in the North last summer I was given an

marked with cuts made with a blunt tool. The diameter of the armband when complete has been about 3½ inches. It was picked up on the top of the thickened portion of the bank, and had probably been scraped up by a rabbit.

These relics are few and of little value, but they are probably sufficient to prove that this class of hut circle belongs to the period of the Early Iron age. Shale or lignite is a product of the district, and is to be found on the shore near Broom, and rings or armbands of it were found in the brochs of Carrol and Carn Liath, as well as in the cruciform earth house at Culmally, near The Mound.

The pottery and the fragment of an armband have been deposited in the Museum.

352. *Kinbrace Hill*.—Situated about 40' E. of the road, and some 50 yards S. of the cultivated land at Burnfoot, is a hut circle. The main enclosure is oval, measuring interiorly about 30' × 35', with its entrance from the SE. through a passage 15' long and about 2' 6" wide at the interior end and 4' at the exterior. The thickness of the bank on either side of the entrance passage towards the outer end is 5'. The breadth of the bank on the E. side of the circle is about 11'. It has had much stone in its composition. To the W. it is about 9' in thickness for the first 19' from the interior end of the entrance, whence it expands rapidly to a width of 24', decreasing again to 8' at the NW., opposite the entrance. This thick bank has been much broken into and pillaged for stone. Though no earth-house is exposed, from the plan and the number of flat stones laid bare in the broad part of the bank, it possibly contains one. Abutting on the circle on the NE. is a small oblong enclosure, measuring about 37' × 9', widening towards the N. The banks are much broken down. There has been an entrance to this from the main enclosure, which may be secondary. The bank is much broken down and has been about 7' thick. The whole circle has been much

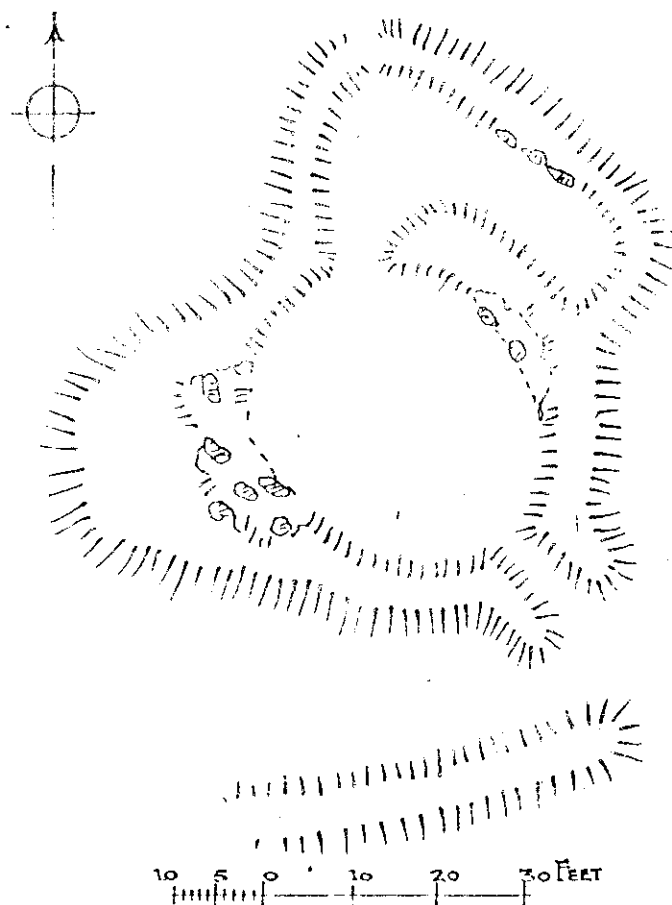


FIG. 48.—Hut Circle, Kinbrace Hill (No. 352).

dilapidated at a recent date—for the sake of stones. Some 9' in front of the entrance, on its S. side, a bank some 8' across runs round towards the W. at a distance of about 13' from the main bank, and disappears, passing northwards as beyond the circle (fig. 48).

Some 50 yards ENE. of the first is another enclosure. It is circular, with an interior diameter of 31'. The entrance, which is from the S. or SE., appears to have been an alternate, and has been wide.

Some 30' E. of the first enclosure is a mounded construction, with a depression on the top, probably a well.