

The crofting township of Big Sand



Centred on NG 75284 79229

The township of Big Sand was established in 1845 as one of the Gairloch crofting townships created by John Mackenzie. The Gairloch Estate map shows that there was a sizeable settlement here before this, and rental records go back to 1792. There were also estate maps for Little Sand farm where the campsite is today,



and Little Sand crofts which were on the N side of the road but never established.



Like most townships Big Sand crofters relied on fishing to supplement any income from crofting, and slipways can still be seen along the shoreline as well as a fishing station.

Today no crops are grown and only a few livestock are grazed, but a ruined corn drying kiln is a reminder of when crops were grown.

For more detail on the people of Big Sand read 'The road to the Lighthouse' available in Gairloch Heritage Museum and local outlets.

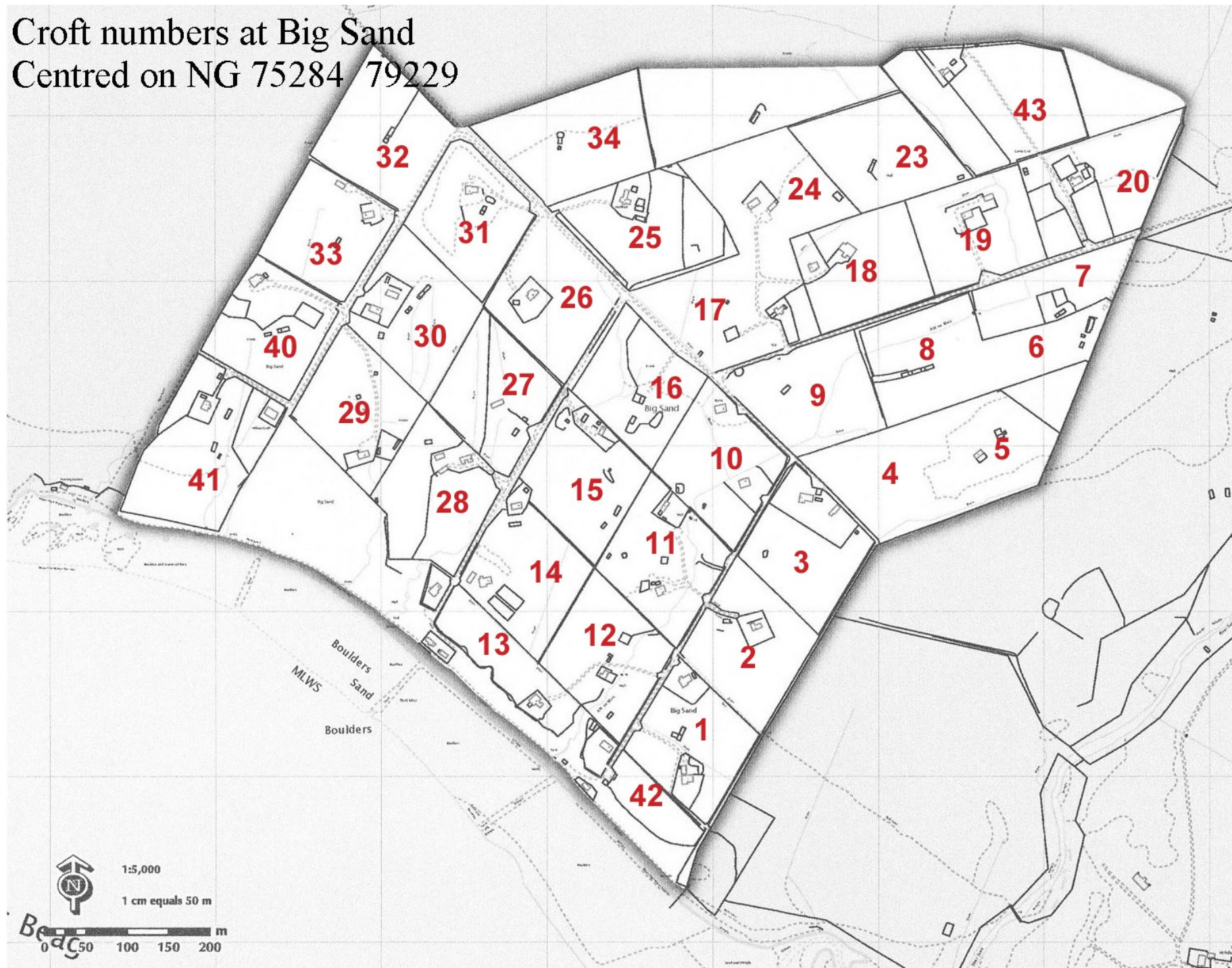
The Gairloch Estate Map of 1845 shows a sizeable cluster of buildings already in the area.



Some of these can still be seen

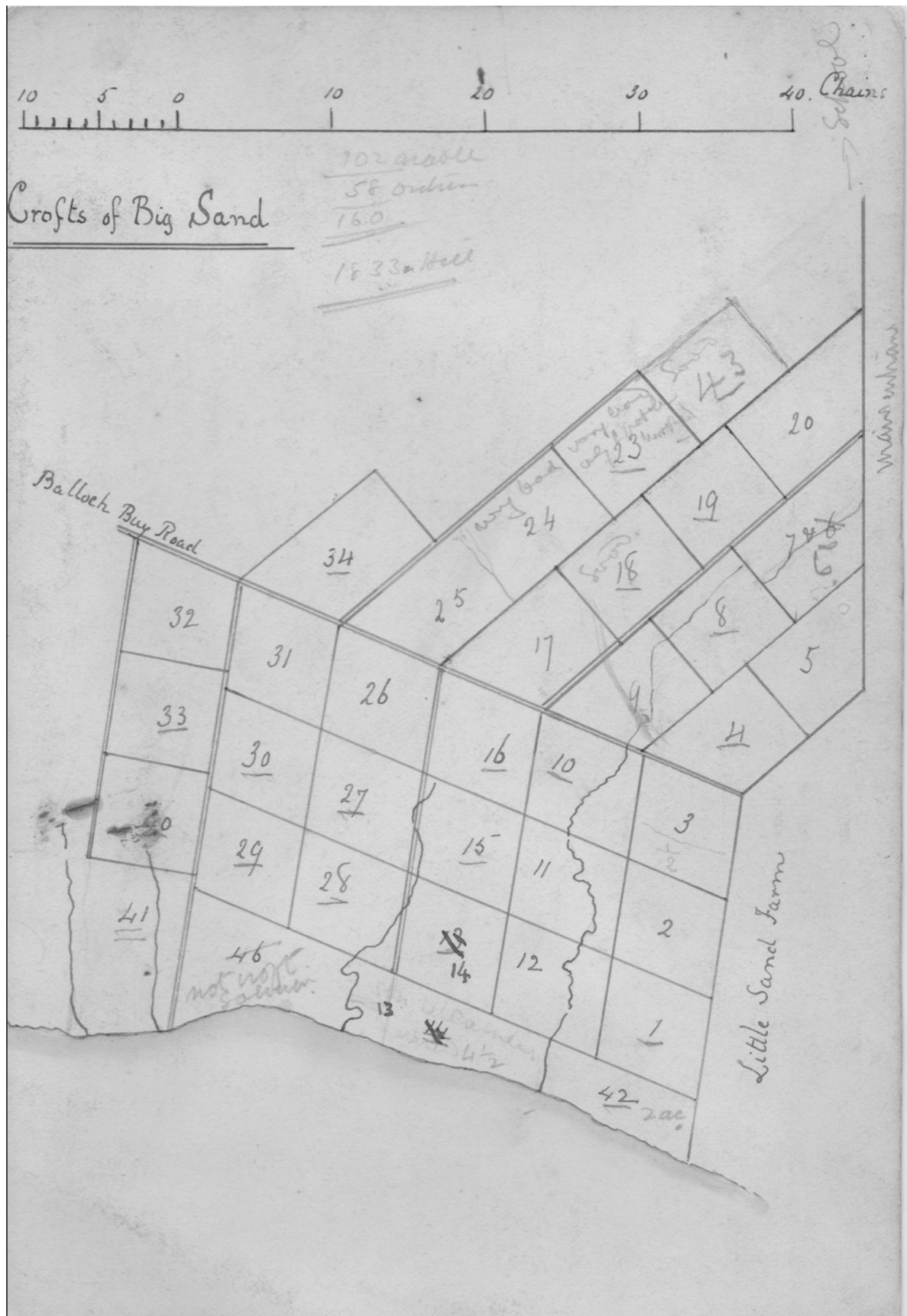


Croft numbers at Big Sand Centred on NG 75284 79229



Big Sand Township

The township was made up of crofts 1 to 34 and 40 to 43.



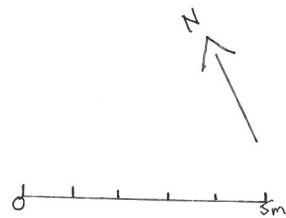
The dwellings of the pre 1844 township were concentrated on the south eastern area which was the most sheltered part of the township.

When the crofts were laid out in 1844 it was proposed to plant shelter belts of trees along the west and north boundaries but it is not clear if this was ever done. Three North Erradale crofts, numbers 1,3 and 4 had a share of the Big Sand common grazings.

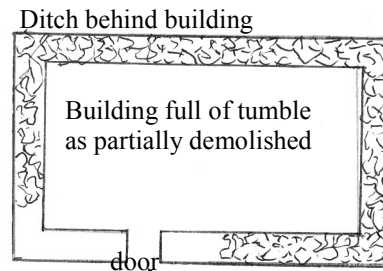
In 1958 the Crofters Commission planned a reorganisation of the Big Sand crofts. It was proposed that some crofts would be joined to form larger holdings. At the time there were 33 holdings in the township. 14 crofts had resident tenants, 9 had non-resident tenants, 6 were vacant and 4 crofts had heirs who had to be confirmed as tenants. When a vote was held to propose the reorganisation the majority of the crofters were against the proposal so it did not proceed and the crofts remained as they were.

During Mitchell's time as owner a number of the Big Sand crofts were sold and many crofts were not worked resulting on an influx of new owner crofters.

Ruin situated on Croft 2, Big Sand, Gairloch. NG 75419 78975 elevation 18m.
 Surveyed 04/02/2012



Retaining wall situated behind building



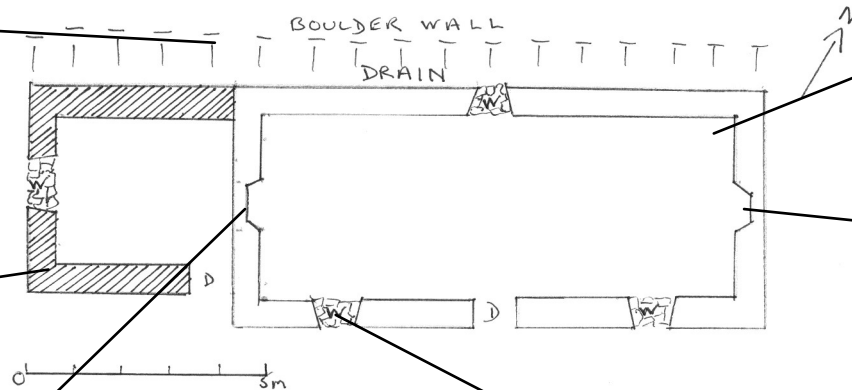
Looking from stackyard towards ruin



Looking W. over the ruined building

This ruin has been partially demolished and will soon be totally removed. It is constructed of local sandstone boulders with some chosen and dressed stone around the doorway. There is some evidence of layering and snecking between the larger stones. Lime mortar can still be seen amongst the stones. Latterly it was used as a barn, but due to its watertight construction it may have previously been a house, although there is a croft house on this croft. It is not possible to see any windows due to the demolition. The building is shown as roofed on both the 1st and 2nd O.S. The walls are 0.6m thick. Behind the ruin there is a ditch and beyond that a retaining wall built into the bank. In the SW corner of the building a large stone has been placed in the wall (see photo). To the SW of the ruin lies a platform measuring 9x8m which is remembered as a stackyard/garden. At its S. boundary lies a boulder wall measuring 8.10m with a thickness of 0.5m. Amongst the boulders there is some concrete showing some later addition to the building.

Croft house with attached byre at 3 Big Sand, Gairloch. NG 75550 79113 GPS ,elevation 29m ,surveyed 18-05-12



**Croft House with attached barn on Croft 3 Big Sand, Gairloch.
NG 75550 79113 GPS elevation 29m surveyed 18-05-12**

This croft house is first shown on the 2nd OS map. It faces S and is situated on croft 3 on a gently sloping area of ground. The site is fairly well drained but has a drain with retaining wall to the rear to take water away from the building.

It is traditionally constructed with chosen and dressed local sandstone that has been layered with snecking between the larger stones.

It has the traditional design of two windows and a door to the front, and a single window to the rear, the direction of the prevailing wind.

The barn/byre to the W has been attached at a later date.

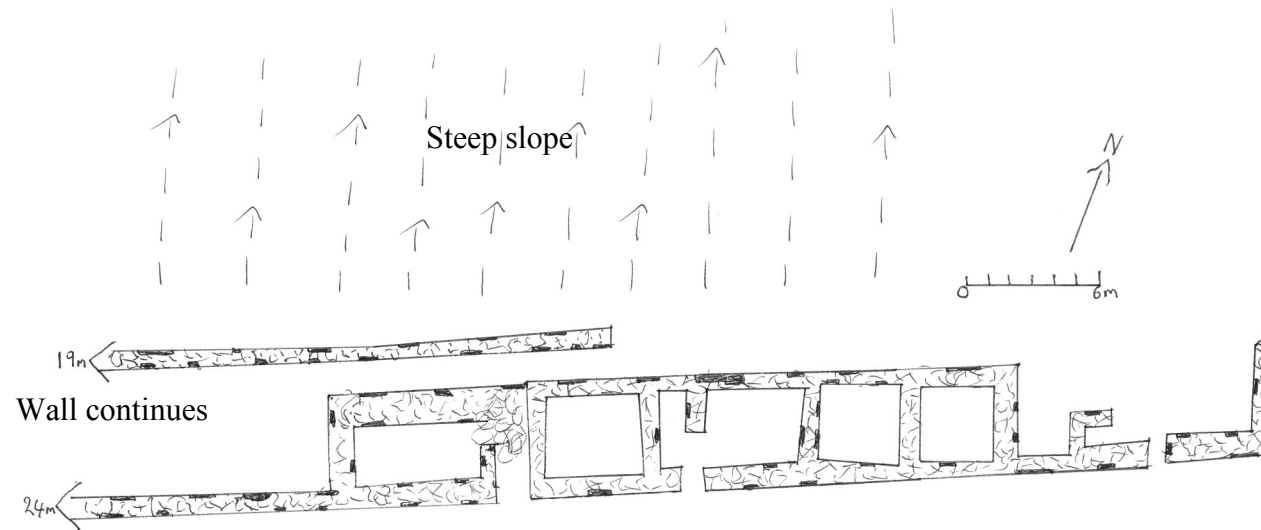
The walls and gable ends of the building have been raised when the building was reroofed. This can be seen quite clearly in both the stonework and mortar.

There are two fireplaces with substantial lintel stones.

The exterior of the building has been covered with a rough thin harling.

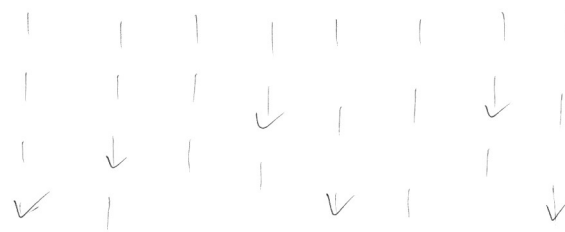
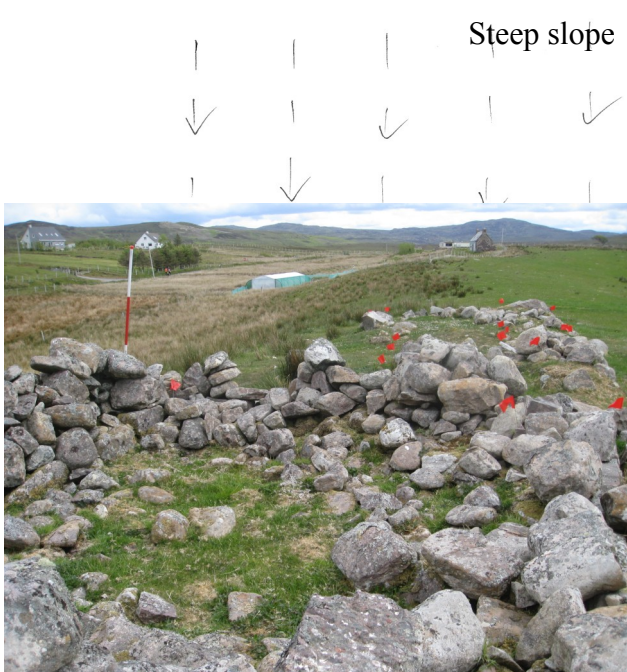
The building is about to undergo extensive renovation.

Ruin situated on croft 8 Big Sand. NG 75655 79275 elev 44m Plane table survey 06-06-2012



This ruin is situated along the ridge between two steep slopes. It is shown as roofed on the 1st OS but remains now as low footings up to a height of 0.5m.

The footings are constructed with boulders and a few chosen stones. The purpose of the building is unknown, although it is known locally as 'Larach Taigh Seumas' or the ruins of James house. It is not the typical construction style of the area.



Footings of Ruin, croft 9, Big Sand. NG 75494 79262 elev 43m



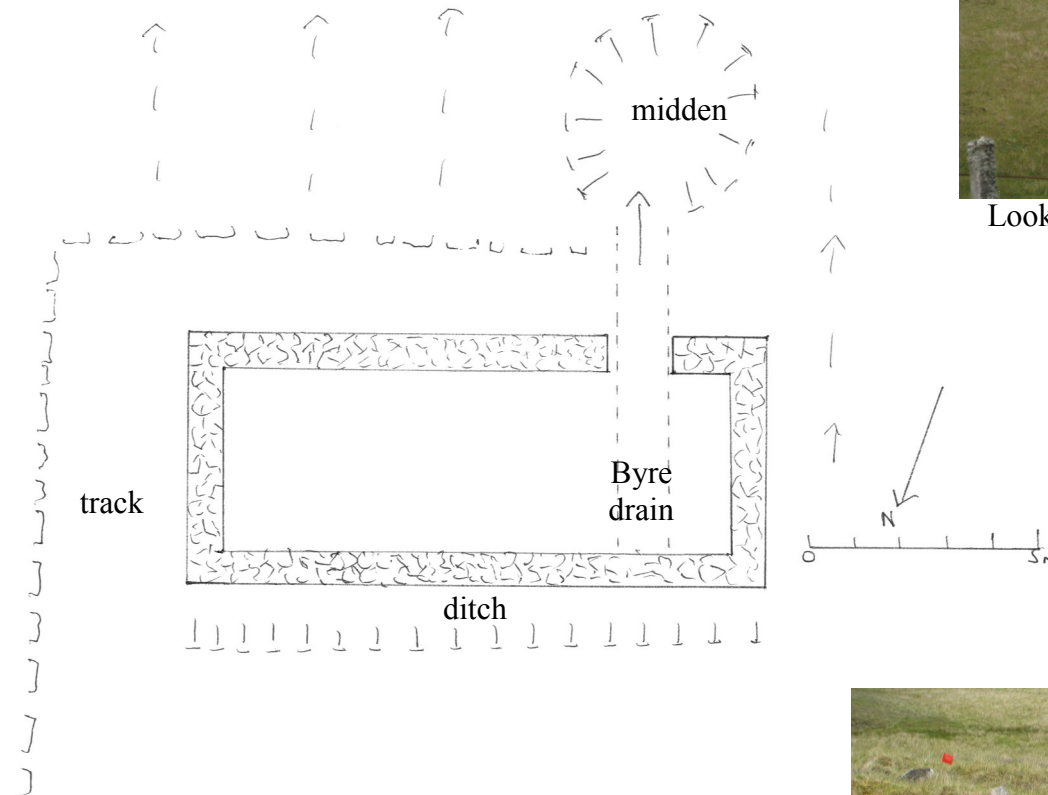
Looking down slope to ruin



Footings of ruin



Track leading down to ruin



This ruin is shown as roofed on the 1stOS map. There are only footings comprising boulders remaining. A track leading from the main passage lead to the ruin. There is no evidence of an entrance except for the byre drain leading to a midden. On the 1st OS a well is shown as situated to the W of the building, today there is only a wet hollow.



Looking across to position of ruin

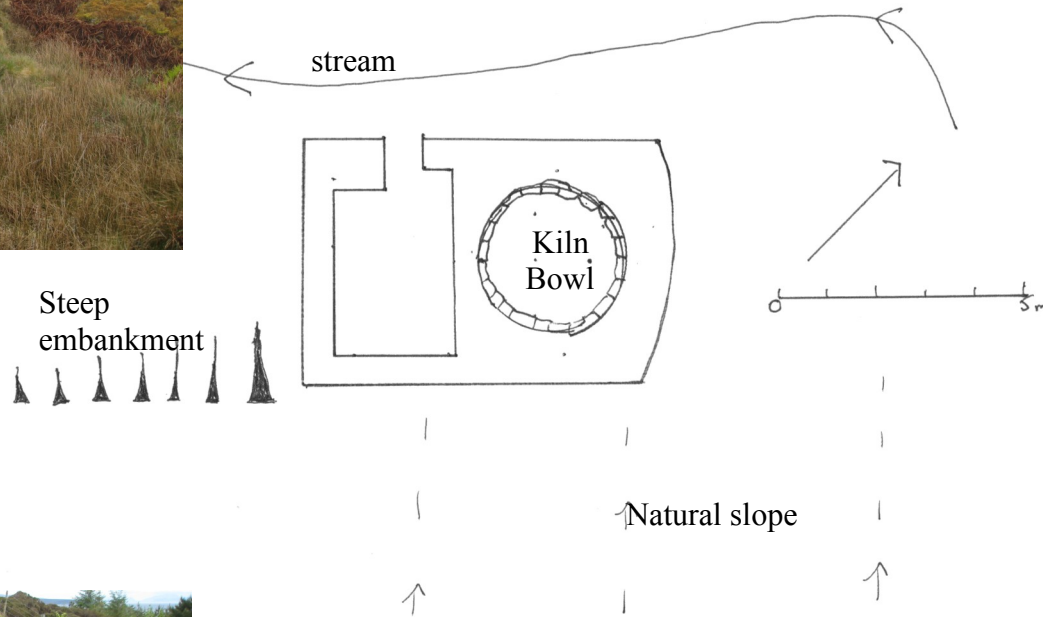


Byre drain leading to midden

Corn drying kiln, croft 10, Big Sand, Gairloch. NG 75394 79116 elev 34m



Looking S across stream to Kiln



The kiln bowl



Looking across the kiln barn to steep embankment

This kiln is set into a bank of the stream that runs NE to SW through the township. The slope to the W of the kiln has been artificially graded.

The kiln is of solid construction, made with boulders and chosen stone that is layered, to a remaining height of 1.76m.

The bowl is 2m in diameter, and walls range in width from 0.6 to 1.0m. There is an attached kiln barn and visible

lintel over entrance to flue.

It is shown as roofed on the 1st OS, but in living memory was only used as a rubbish dump.



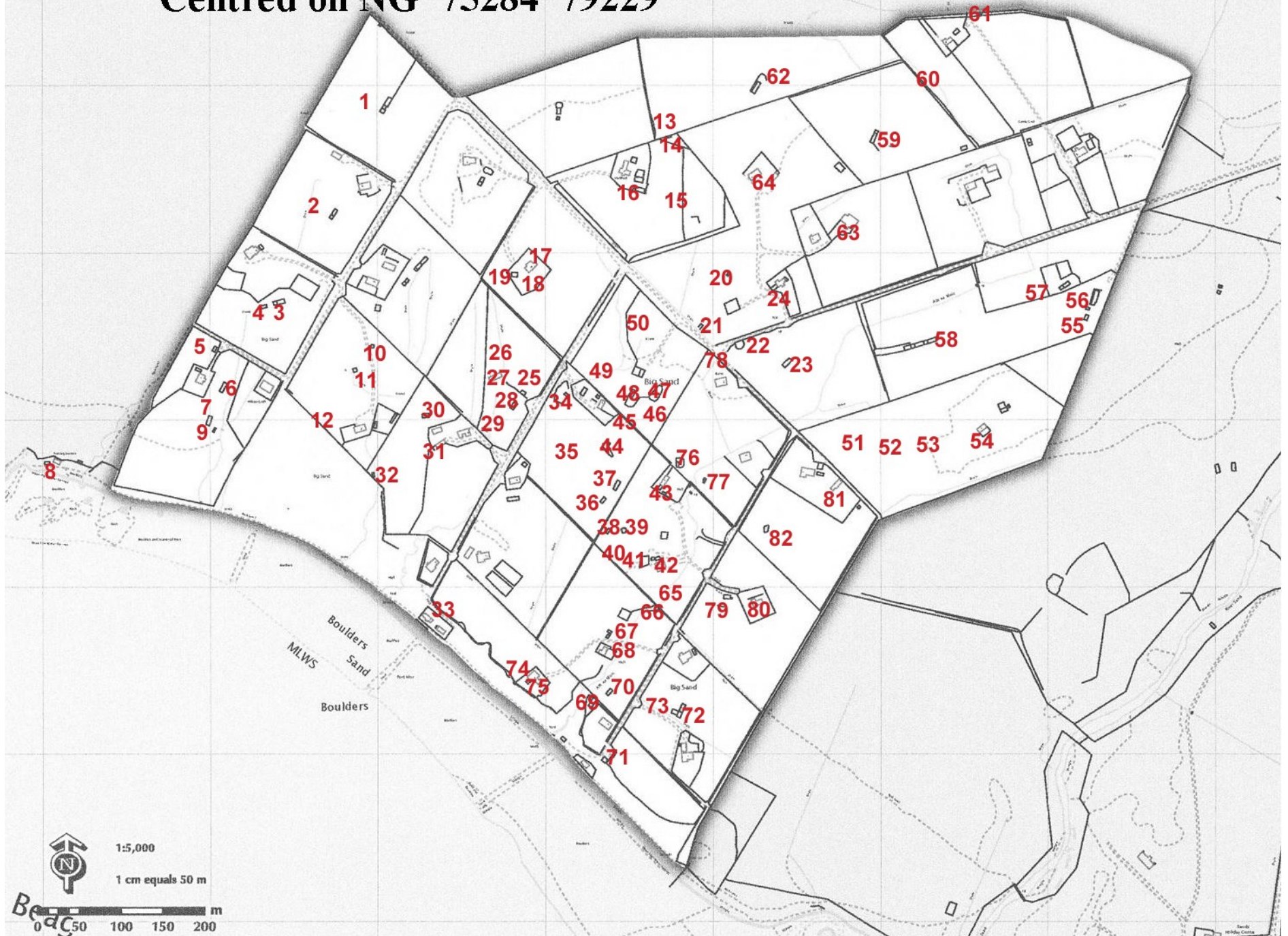
Looking from slope down on to kiln barn and bowl

Ruins and features Of Big Sand



Centred on NG 75284 79229

Ruins and features of Big Sand Centred on NG 75284 79229



- 1 NG 75019 79563 74m A ruined house and byre



- 2 NG 74968 79435 59m A ruined house and byre with garden wall



- 3 NG 74885 79325 47m A ruined house and byre with byre drain



4 NG 74868 79320 46m Ruined byre



5 NG 74812 79272 41m Ruined byre



6 NG 74843 79248 41m Boundary wall leading down to the sea



7 NG 74821 79225 39m Barn



8 down on shore Old salmon bothy



9 NG 74799 79186 36m Ruined house



10 NG 74999 79273 47m Barn



11 NG 74981 79244 44m Ruined house with barn and garden



12 NG 74951 79176 33m Gateway to shore and port and common grazing



13 NG 75321 79523 68m Head Dyke N. Edge of Big Sand



14 NG 75344 79518 64m Structure by head dyke. There was a cottars croft just outside head dyke.



15 NG 75366 79443 56m Well



16 NG 75311 79464 53m Byre



17 NG 75191 79368 52m House



18 NG 75198 79362 52m Well



19 NG 75168 79360 51m Barn



20 NG 75425 79361 53m Small structure possible hen house



21 NG 75390 79298 51m Small structure by road



22 NG 75438 79277 47m Enclosure



23 NG 75490 79256 43m Ruined house and byre with a byre drain and midden



24 NG 75621 79350 51m

House



25 NG 75181 79212 43m Footings of small structure



26 NG 75144 79228 40m House and barn with dipper



27 NG 75162 79217 46m Barn



28 NG 75172 79204 42m Barn



29 NG 75158 79191 40m Footings of structure



30 NG 75059 79191 39m Barn on platform



31 NG 75071 79150 39m Gable end of house



32 NG 74997 79118 37m Small barn



33 NG 75063 78970 10m Two bothies on shore and port



34 NG 75218 79207 44m Well



35 NG 75242 79141 36m Small Structure



36 NG 75275 79089 35m Footings of barn



37 NG 75292 79112 32m Ruined house and byre with midden



38 NG 75292 79090 35m Croft wall



39 NG 75283 79056 32m Footings of structure



40 NG 75300 79057 33m Round enclosure, possible previous building



41 NG 75320 79055 28m Small enclosure with stone clearance piled on top



42 NG 75341 79048 32m Enclosure



43 NG 75342 79096 33m House



44 NG 75276 79154 29m Small structure possible barn



45 NG 75290 79167 35m Structure with embankment and stone clearance



46 NG 75325 79193 38m Ruined structure



47 NG 75336 79214 38m Ruined house and barn



48 NG 75316 79211 41m Footings of structure



49 NG 75284 79229 43m Footings of building



50 NG 75363 79278 43m Remains of footings of building



51 NG 75596 79158 42m Ruined building with midden



Looking across to the old settlement area on Croft 10 and 11 Big Sand Crofting Township. This shows features 45—48



- 52 NG 75627 79162 43m Field clearance pile possibly on top of footings of building



- 53 NG 75639 79171 39m Footings of building



- 54 NG 75752 79195 41m Barn



55 NG 75852 79320 51m Ruined Barn/Henhouse



56 NG 75863 79332 47m Ruined house and byre



57 NG 75822 79343 49m House and byre



58 NG 75649 79274 46m Ruins of row of buildings (see separate site report)



59 NG 75612 79556 59m Footings of possible barn



60 NG 75646 79597 56m Field wall



61 NG 75716 79672 61m Ruin of building



62 NG 75452 79580 71m Ruin of house and barn with attached turf walled enclosure. Known cottars house outside township head dyke.



63 NG 75509 79386 48m Barn



64 NG 75470 79471 62m Bain's house



65 NG 75297 78952 17m Ruined house



66 NG 75327 78964 16m Barn gable end wall and enclosure



67 NG 75294 78916 12m Stone wall beside stream with stone slab bridge



68 NG 75294 78901 11m Well



69 NG 75264 78846 13m Ruined house



70 NG 7527978861 16m Ruined barn



71 NG 75273 78784 10m Bothy on shore with outhouse at top of slope



72 NG 75369 78837 16m Ruined house and barn with attached enclosure



73 NG 75349 78840 11m Well



74 NG 75165 78882 13m Footings of building at edge of cliff



75 NG 75175 78881 16m Truncated ruin



- 76 NG 75362 79137 35m Footings of house and barn with enclosure. Very overgrown and sunk into boggy area.



- 77 NG 75393 79115 29m Corn drying kiln



- 78 NG 75408 79264 45m Bridge below main road



79 NG 75419 78975 18m Ruin of barn now demolished



80 NG 75457 78968 14m House



81 NG 75550 79113 29m House and Barn



82 NG 75469 79055 24m Ruined building with stone clearance piled on top.
Possible modified roundhouse shown first on estate map 1845.

