

Walkover survey at Strath Sgitheach

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2020

Prehistoric Settlement site - Strath Sgitheach (East)

GR centred on NH 524633 HC HER: MHG8925 Canmore ID: 12924

Visited June 2020 MMM

This group of 12 round houses is NE of the main track which heads north from the bridge/stepping stones in the upper part of Strath Sgitheach. The round houses are at an altitude of c250m in heathery ground on both sides of a small burn which runs from W to E down a SE facing slope. Six are on the south side of the burn and six on the north. Just four hut circles have been previously recorded at this location although more are seen on snowy aerial photographs taken by Jim Bone in February 2010 (see JSB collection).

Hut circle (SS1) – GR centred on NH 52545 63270 is on a slight knoll a few metres to the west of a track and south of the burn. This hut circle has an internal diameter of c9m, the surrounding banks are incomplete, up to 0.3m height and covered in heather with grass in places. There is no evidence of an entrance.

Hut Circle (SS2) – GR centred on NH 52569 63323 An oval hut circle on a NW-SE alignment is a few metres to the north of the burn and measures 12m x 10m internally. It is completely covered with heather but has a small marsh at its centre; an obvious boulder may have been disturbed in an attempt to drain this. The surrounding banks are up to 0.4m height and there is no evidence of an entrance

Hut Circle (SS3) - NH 52533 63331 A heather covered hut circle of 9m internal diameter on the north side of the burn has a mound at its centre; this possibly held a "salt lick" (there is a similar one to the NW). The surrounding banks are up to 0.3m

Hut Circle (SS4) - NH 52473 63284 On a small heather covered knoll this hut circle is barely discernible. The internal diameter is 7m and the surrounding banks are up to 0.2m with a spread of c1m.

Hut Circle (SS5) (previously recorded as "B") – NH 52418 63278 The remains of this larger hut circle are more substantial than the others and in low lying ground. It is c9m diameter internally and has heather covered banks up to c0.5m (int) to 0.8m(ext) height x 2m spread. Internally the ground cover is coarse grass and moss. There is evidence of an entrance in the S arc.

Hut Circle (SS6) ("D") – NH 52396 63297 This hut circle is the NE of two abutting each other (the other is SS7). It appears oval in shape and is on an E-W axis with an internal dimension of c7m x 6m. The heather covered banks have evidence of some stone composition but have been badly damaged in the SW; where they are extant they are up to 0.5m height x 2m spread. Internally there is heather and grass.

Hut Circle (SS7) ("C") – NH 52385 63289 This hut circle is the SW of two abutting huts (the other is SS6) on the south side of the burn. It measures c6m diameter internally and is surrounded by substantial heather covered banks up to 0.5-0.6m height x 2m spread which are incomplete on the S side. There is no evidence of an entrance and the central area has fine grass and moss.

Hut Circle (SS8) – NH 52416 63233 This hut circle appears as a sunken depression covered in heather and coarse grass. It has an internal diameter of c6m and the surrounding banks on the S and W sides are up to 0.3m height x 1.5m spread. There is evidence of a possible entrance in the S arc.

Hut circle (SS12) ("A") – GR centred on NH 52303 63332 On the north side of the burn this hut circle has an internal diameter of 7m and is covered in heather. The surrounding banks are substantial and up to 0.5m high with a spread of 1.5m; they are more wasted on the east side where there is a possible entrance.

Hut circle (SS14) – GR centred on NH 52107 63397 This grassy hut circle on the summit of a knoll has an internal diameter of just 6m. The grass and heather covered surrounding banks are up to 0.3m high but less distinct on the south side

Hut circle (SS15) – GR centred on NH 52297 63481. This hut circle is heather covered and barely discernible but shows up nicely on the snowy aerial photographs taken in February 2010. The internal diameter is c11m and the indistinct banks are up to 0.2m high.

Hut circle (SS17) – NH 52458 63350 This small hut circle, on a raised bank on the north side of the burn, has an internal diameter of 5m. The surrounding banks are heather covered, up to 0.2m height and have a spread of 1m. Heather and coarse grass internally.

Strath Sgitheach Post Medieval sites

Upper Farmstead -

Building/?Farmstead/?Inn (SS9) – NH 52377 63185 This rectangular building is barely discernible and defined as much by the changes in vegetation as its slopes. It is on an E-W alignment, measures 9mx3m internally and has distinct rounded ends. The surrounding banks are covered in heathery turf and are up to 0.3m height x 1m spread those on the S side more evident. Internal ground cover is coarse grass and moss. There is a possible entrance at the E end

Shieling (SS10) – GR centred on NH 52341 63121 This oval structure on the summit of a grassy knoll is on a NW-SE alignment and measures 5m x 3m overall. The footings are of stone and turf and quite low but distinct.

Shieling (SS11) – GR centred on NH 52415 63173 This circular mound covered in heather and moss has a diameter of 6m and is 1m in height. There are two slightly dished areas on the summit.

Enclosure (SS13) – GR centred on NH 52218 63363 A substantial rectangular enclosure on heathery slightly sloping ground. The structure is on an E-W alignment and measures 13m x 11m internally. The surrounding earthbanks are substantial and upstanding to 0.8m height and generally 2m width at their base. Internally the enclosure has grass and heather in its upper part but moss and reeds in its lower part. A gap in the banks at the NE corner is possibly an entrance for a supply of water, another gap in the centre of the E wall may have been the exit, leading to the conclusion that this may have been a man made pond.

Farmstead (SS16) – GR centred on NH 52443 63473 A hummocky area of grass and heather measuring roughly 20m in diameter has the footings of a farmstead of two indistinct buildings and a corn-drying kiln. The area is in poor peaty/heathery land on the west side of a small burn. The remains of the two buildings are incomplete but generally up to 0.5m high and 0.7m thick, there is some stone composition and the corners of the buildings are square. The larger building is L-shaped and 10m x 3m internally, the smaller 6m x 2.5m. To the NE of the buildings a small corn-drying kiln is built into a bank, it measures 4m x 2.5m internally

Buildings/Farmstead (SS18) – GR centred on NH 51997 63420. A small grassy well drained area on the lower side of an extensive area of enclosed improved land has the incomplete stone footings of two rectangular buildings. The larger building on a SW-NE alignment measures 10m x 2.5m internally, it has squared corners and end walls to 0.5m height. To the south the smaller one measures 4m x 3m internally, and has footings in the main to 0.3m height but there is no evidence of a west wall

Enclosure (SS19) – GR centred on NH 52178 63030. This irregular grassy enclosure on a south facing slope is covered in bracken in the summer months. It is almost oval in shape and on a NW-SE alignment measuring roughly 150m x 60m. The surrounding turf and stone banks are incomplete, up to 0.3m on the east side but more substantial and up to 0.5m on the NW side where there is an eroded track and a possible entrance

Dam - GR centred on NH 52744 63029 400m to the SE of the group of hut circles there is a substantial apparently well maintained dam in a small valley. It is on lower ground with remnant pine trees nearer the Allt na Strath Sgitheach. The dam is 70m long x 2m height and 4m spread. No evidence of a sluice was seen but there was a small "overflow" channel at the S end. It is not on the 1st Edition OS map and is possibly of quite recent origin

Strath Sgitheach – Prehistoric Records

On HC HER

Hut circles MHG8925

NH56SW 14 524 632.

Centred at NH 524632 on an almost level part of hillside is a settlement of 3 hut circles, plus a probable hut ('A' - 'D').

'A' is a small heather-covered hut measuring 8.5 m SE - NW x 7m within a slight wall of 1.8 m average spread. Entrance is in SE.

'B' is noticeably larger and stronger built than 'A' being 13m SE - NW x 11m within a wall of 2.5 m av spread, somewhat mutilated in NW. An outer facing stone lies at E side of entrance in SE.

'C' is 8.5 m E-W x 7.5 m within a wall of 2m average spread. The entrance is in the E.

Immediately to ENE of 'C' is an enclosure 'D' probably a hut circle though in a much poorer and rougher condition than 'C'. It measures approximately 9.9 m SE - NW x approximately 7m within a wall of indeterminate width.

Some probable facing stones lie to the S of the entrance, in the SE.

130m E of 'B' is a sub-rectangular feature ('X' on the field sheet) about 8m in diameter within a turf-covered bank. Its condition is too amorphous for definite classification.

A few scattered clearance heaps are the only evidence of contemporary cultivation in the area.

Surveyed at 1:10 000. Visited by OS (J B) 16 November 1976.

This group of at least three hut circles and scattered cairns stands in improved pasture.

RCAHMS 1979, visited September 1978 <1>

A number of other settlement features are visible across this area on an aerial photograph taken by Jim Bone in 2010. <2>

Sources/Archives (2)

- <1> Text/Report: RCAHMS. 1979. The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. The archaeological sites and monuments of Easter Ross, Ross and Cromarty District, Highland Region. . 21, No. 173.
- <2> Image/Photograph(s)/Aerial Photograph/Oblique: Bone, J. 01/2010. Strath Sgitheach NH 526 634. Colour. . Digital.

Hut circle MHG8903 - Strath Sgitheach

Hut circle NH56SW 34 5223 6838 - This hut circle is located on a bluff above a burn, NW of NH 56 SW 20. Poorly preserved, it measures c. 9.5m in diameter between walls of indeterminate width. It has no obvious entrance.

Visited June 1989. Information from S T Driscoll and S M Foster (Mss, 6, No. 7.1.) 1989

Kerb Cairn MHG8902 - Strath Sgitheach KERB CAIRN (Neolithic - 4000 BC to 2401 BC)

NH56SW 35 5236 6397 A substantial kerbed cairn is located on slightly sloping ground. This large mound of stones is approximately circular c15.5m in diameter. Along most of the perimeter large boulders retain the smaller stones of the body of the cairn. The cairn has been heavily robbed and now stands no more than 1.5m high. Projecting from the E side is a line of several boulders 2.0m long, which may simply be the result of modern disturbances. It is apparently unexcavated and has no immediate neighbours.

Visited June 1989. Info from S T Driscoll and S M Foster (Mss, 6-7, No. 7.1.) 1989.

On Canmore

Strath Sgitheach - Cairnfield (Period Unassigned), Hut Circle(S) (Prehistoric)

Canmore ID 12924 NGR NH 524 632

Centred at NH 524 632 on an almost level part of the hillside is a settlement of three hut circles, plus a probable hut ('A' - 'D').

'A' is a small heather-covered hut measuring 8.5 m SE - NW x 7.0 m within a slight wall of 1.8 m average spread. The entrance is in the SE.

'B' is noticeably larger and stronger built than 'A' being 13.0m SE - NW x 11.0 m within a wall of 2.5 m average spread, somewhat mutilated in the NW. An outer facing stone lies at the E side of the entrance in the SE.

'C' is 8.5 m E - W x 7.5 m within a wall of 2.0 m average spread. The entrance is in the E. Immediately to the ENE of 'C' is an enclosure 'D' probably a hut circle though in a much poorer and rougher condition than 'C'. It measures approximately 9.9 m SE - NW x approximately 7.0 m within a wall of indeterminate width. Some probable facing stones lie to the S of the entrance, in the SE. 130 metres E of 'B' is a sub-rectangular feature ('X' on the field sheet) about 8.0 m in diameter within a turf-covered bank. Its condition is too amorphous for definite classification. A few scattered clearance heaps are the only evidence of contemporary cultivation in the area. Surveyed at 1:10 000. Visited by OS (J B) 16 November 1976. This group of at least three hut circles and scattered cairns stands in improved pasture. RCAHMS 1979, visited September 1978

Strath Sgitheach - Cup Marked Stone (Prehistoric)

Canmore ID 12923 NGR NH 522 630

Centred around NH 522630 are eight cup marked rocks ('A' - 'H').

'A' is a boulder measuring 3.1m x 1.9m x 0.6 m high with at least fifteen shallow cup marks on its upper surface.

'B' a large block 3.6m x 1.8m x 1.0m maximum height. It is largely earth-covered. It has twenty-three cup marks on its two outer edges.

'C' a boulder 1.8m x 1.2m x 0.6m high with six cup marks.

'D' a boulder 2.4m x 1.0m x 0.6m high with seven small shallow cup marks.

'E' a small boulder 1.1m x 0.7m x 0.3m high with two probable cup marks. 'F' a boulder lying close by has seven shallow cup marks upon it.

'G', a boulder, 2.8m x 1.5m x 0.6m, lying on the bank of a stream, has probably slipped from its original position due to erosion. It has six extremely shallow cup marks on its upper surface.

'H' is a slab 2.2m x 1.3m lying flush with the ground; it has three probable cup marks on its surface.

Surveyed at 1:10 000.

Visited by OS (J B) 16 November 1976

Eight outcrops of rock with shallow cup-marks.

RCAHMS 1979, visited September 1978

Strath Sgitheach - Hut Circle (Prehistoric)

Canmore ID 12946 NGR NH 5223 6383

This hut circle is located on a bluff above a burn, NW of NH56SW 20. Poorly preserved, it measures c. 9.5m in diameter between walls of indeterminate width. It has no obvious entrance.

Visited June 1989.

Information from S T Driscoll and S M Foster (Mss, 6, No. 7.1.) 1989

Strath Sgitheach - Cairn (Prehistoric)

Canmore ID 12947 NGR NH 5236 6397

A substantial kerbed cairn is located on slightly sloping ground. This large mound of stones is approximately circular c. 15.5m in diameter. Along most of the perimeter large boulders retain the smaller stones of the body of the cairn. The cairn has been heavily robbed and now stands no more than 1.5m high. Projecting from the E side is a line of several boulders 2.0m long, which may simply be the result of modern disturbances. It is apparently unexcavated and has no immediate neighbours.

Visited June 1989.

Information from S T Driscoll and S M Foster (Mss, 6-7, No. 7.1.) 1989.

Strath Sgitheach Canmore ID 12948 Site Type CUP MARKED Rock NGR NH 5320 6381

The rock outcrop at this spot has 7 good cup-marks and presumably others are obscured by the large modern clearance heap which covers much of the outcrop. Visited June 1989.

Information from S T Driscoll and S M Foster (Mss, 7, No. 8.1.) 1989

Strath Sgitheach Canmore ID 12946 Site Type HUT CIRCLE

NGR NH 5223 6383

This hut circle is located on a bluff above a burn, NW of NH56SW 20. Poorly preserved, it measures c. 9.5m in diameter between walls of indeterminate width. It has no obvious entrance.

Visited June 1989.

Information from S T Driscoll and S M Foster (Mss, 6, No. 7.1.) 1989

**Strath Sgitheach Site Type KERB CAIRN Canmore ID 12947
NGR NH 5236 6397**

A substantial kerbed cairn is located on slightly sloping ground. This large mound of stones is approximately circular c. 15.5m in diameter. Along most of the perimeter large boulders retain the smaller stones of the body of the cairn. The cairn has been heavily robbed and now stands no more than 1.5m high. Projecting from the E side is a line of several boulders 2.0m long, which may simply be the result of modern disturbances. It is apparently unexcavated and has no immediate neighbours.

Visited June 1989.

Information from S T Driscoll and S M Foster (Mss, 6-7, No. 7.1.) 1989

**Strath Sgitheach Canmore ID 12945 Site Type HUT CIRCLE
NGR NH 5288 6402**

This hut circle is located on a slight hillock adjacent to a steep gully made by a burn. It is c. 12.0m in diameter between walls of uncertain thickness. The E wall is poorly preserved, but a few facing stones survive. The ill-defined entrance is to the W. No associated features were observed.

Visited June 1989. Information from S T Driscoll and S M Foster (Mss, 6, No. 6.1.) 1989

**Strath Sgitheach Canmore ID 12922 Site Type HUT CIRCLE
NGR NH 540 637**

Centred at NH 540 637 and set on a N-facing slope approximately 25m above the River Sgitheach is a settlement of three hut circles ('A' - 'C'), all obscured by peat and heather.

Hut 'A' is 10.5m E-W by 9.0 m within a slight wall of indeterminate width. The entrance is in the E. 'B' and 'C' are circular and measure 8.0 m and 8.5 m in diameter respectively within walls of 2.5 m average spread. The entrances, although not evident, were probably in the E sides.

With the exception of one or two possible clearance heaps there is no trace of contemporary agriculture in the area, although the ground is of a fairly stone-free nature.

Surveyed at 1:10 000. Visited by OS (J B) 16 November 1976

A group of three hut circles. RCAHMS 1979, visited September 1978

POST MED SITES for separate doc

**Strath Sgitheach Canmore ID 12943 Site Type CORN DRYING KILN, SETTLEMENT
NGR NH 535 641**

This pre-improvement settlement survives as low stone wall spreads (1.0 - 2.0m wide), which are completely grassed over. The settlement is focused on a long house (33.0m by 5.0m) oriented NE-SW with two internal partitions. At its SW end is a second smaller house or byre (14.0 by 5.0m), which was oriented NW-SE. Nearby, to the SW, is a probable grain drying kiln and to the NE a substantial stone enclosure which measures 24.0 by 14.0m and is oriented NW-SE. A number of less prominent field walls extend from the settlement away from the river.

Visited June 1989. Information from S T Driscoll and S M Foster (Mss, 5, No. 4.1.) 1989.

**Strath Sgitheach Canmore ID 12939 Site Type ENCLOSURE
NGR NH 5237 6359**

A large rectangular enclosure has been added to a major N-S field boundary. It is of a similar build (2.0m wide and 0.75m high) as the field wall but appears to be a later addition. Visited June 1989.

Information from S T Driscoll and S M Foster (Mss, 4, No. 2.0.) 1989

