

(BSB99, Scourie)

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**Forestry Survey: Scourie and Badcall Common
Grazings, Highland**

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INTRODUCTION

This survey covers an area of 118 ha to the south-east of Scourie, Sutherland (OS 1:10,000 sheet NC 14 SE). The area consists of rocky heather moorland used as rough grazing. The area is dominated by three rocky knolls from 117 to 139 mOD; Cnoc a' Bhutain to the west, Cnoc an Daimh to the south, and Creag Gharbh to the east. Two lochs lie within the area; Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd and Lochan Sgeireach (Figure 1).

There are six previously recorded archaeological sites within the area, largely located on the slopes around Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd in the middle of the area (NMRS NC14SE 6-10, 15). The sites comprise five hut-circles, one homestead, with associated field-systems, two burnt mounds and numerous small stone built shelters.

METHODS

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

The following sources contain information relevant to this survey:

Archaeological Sites

NMRS	Highland SMR	
NC14SE 6	NC14SE0006	Hut-circle; Field-system
NC14SE 7	NC14SE0007	Hut-circle; Field-system
NC14SE 8	NC14SE0008	Hut-circle; Field-system
NC14SE 9	NC14SE0009	Burnt mound
NC14SE 10	NC14SE0010	Settlement; Field system
NC14SE 15	NC14SE0015	Burnt mound

Maps (National Library of Scotland, Map Library)

1654	Blaeu, J	<i>Extima Scotiae</i>
1747-55	Roy, W	<i>Military Survey of Scotland</i> (Sheet 34/4)
1815	Anon	<i>Sketch of the county of Sutherland showing the boundaries and divisions of the Earldom of Sutherland</i>
1820	Forbes, W	<i>Sutherlandshire</i>
1823	Thomson, J	<i>Sutherlandshire</i>
1853	Burnett, G and Scott, W	<i>Map of the county of Sutherland</i>
1878	Ordnance Survey	<i>Sutherland 1:10560 sheet XXXIX</i> (Surveyed 1875)
1908	Ordnance Survey	<i>Sutherland 1:10560 sheet XXXIX</i> (Revised 1903)
1992	Ordnance Survey	<i>1:10000 sheet NC14SE</i> (Surveyed between 1964 and 1985, revised 1991)

Aerial photographs (Air Photo Unit RCAHMS)

09/05/46	106G/SCOT/UK74	(4167-4170)
08/10/46	CPE /SCOT/UK/ 181	(2147-2150, 4147-4150)
19/06/89	624 88	(002-003)

FIELD SURVEY

The survey area was systematically walked by a team of two archaeologists and all features of archaeological interest were described and located using a Total Station.

RESULTS

Sixteen features or groups features of archaeological interest were recorded; their locations are given in Figure 1 at a scale of 1:10,000 and in Figure 2 at a scale of 1:2500.

A total of 221 archaeological features were recorded, including six hut-circles, two homesteads, two burnt mounds, seventeen small stone shelters and 178 cairns. The majority of the sites had been previously recorded and were located to the north of Lochan Sgeireach and to the west, north and east of Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd. Outside this core area, the remains of a large bank (Sites 3 and 16), not previously recorded, were located to the south and south-west of the prehistoric settlement.

DISCUSSION

The fieldwork was carried out in an area which contained several known prehistoric monuments. The survey did not change the general pattern of sites and merely filled in details of the previous 1: 10,000 mapping. The majority of the sites are prehistoric; hut-circles and homesteads with associated cultivation remains. A broad bank was recorded to the south and south-west of the settlements. It consists of two separate segments (Sites 3 and 16). However, their size and construction is similar and it is most likely that they belong to the same contemporary boundary. It is difficult to date this feature but it may be associated with the prehistoric settlements to the north.

A number of small stone structures were recorded in the area. These are likely to have been used as lambing pens or shelters by shepherds, guarding livestock, and are probably of medieval or later date.



Plate 1 Site 2. Stone structure. From E



Plate 2 Site 3. North-west end of bank. From N



Plate 3 General view of area to the north and east of Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd. Site 6 cairns in the foreground, Site 7 is located on promontory on the far side of the loch. From W.



Plate 4 Site 8. Burnt mound. From SE.



Plate 5 Site 11. General view of cairns on south-facing slope. From E



Plate 6 Site 11b. Stone structure. From S



Plate 7 Site 11d. Hut-circle. Cairns in the background. From W.



Plate 8 Site 12a. Hut-circle. From E

GAZETTEER

Site No. 1

Grid ref: NC 1559 4393 (site centre)

Location: Cnoc a' Bhutain

Class: Cairn, cultivation plot

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: A turf-covered elongated cairn is situated on the south side of Cnoc a' Bhutain. It is 2.5 m wide, 7.5 m long and 0.4 m high. To the east of the cairn is a sub-rectangular stone-free area, believed to be a small cultivation plot measuring 7 m by 14 m.

Condition: The cairn shows no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 2

Grid ref: NC 1564 4396

Location: Cnoc a' Bhutain

Class: Stone structure

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: A small sub-rectangular stone structure is set up against a vertical south-facing crag at the foot of Cnoc a' Bhutain (Plate 1). It measures 1.5 by 1.7 m internally, and is defined by collapsed stone walls up to 0.5 m high abutting the crag. The structure is thought to have been built as a shelter.

Condition: The structure is collapsed but show no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 3

Grid ref: NC 1559 4391 – 1579 4359

Location: Cnoc na Caorach Glaise

Class: Bank, stone structure

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: An earth and stone bank runs north-west to south-east over Cnoc na Caorach Glaise (Plate 2). It can be traced intermittently over a distance of 385 m and fades out at both ends. It is best preserved on the north-west facing slope of Cnoc na Caorach, where it is spread to 4 m width and up to 1.2 m high. The bank runs up to the edge of a tall crag on the south side of Cnoc na Caorach and picks up again at the foot of the crag. A small sub-rectangular stone structure (3a) is built amongst the scree at the foot of the crag next to the bank. It measures 1 by 1.8 m internally with an entrance at the south-east corner. The structure is likely to be a shelter similar to that recorded 180 m to the north (Site 2).

Condition: The bank is cut by a farm track and a road leading up to the sand depot towards its north end, but is otherwise covered by a stable turf surface.

Site No. 4 (NMRS NC14SE 10)

Grid ref: NC 1575 4376 (site centre)

Location: Cnoc na Caorach Glaise

Class: Hut-circle, cairns

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: A hut-circle (4a) and a group of five cairns are situated on the lower south-east facing slopes of Cnoc na Caorach Glaise. The hut-circle is oval, aligned east to west and measures 7.5 by 9 m. It is cut into the slope to the north, and with a 1.2 m high embankment downslope. The walls appear as low turf-clad stony banks up 2.5 m wide and 0.3 m high. The entrance is to the east. Five cairns are located downslope from the hut-circle. The cairns are turf-clad and up to 5 m in diameter and 0.5 m high.

Condition: The cairns and hut-circle show no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 5 (NMRS NC14SE 10)

Grid ref: NC 1582 4393 (site centre)

Location: Leathad nan Cruineachd

Class: Hut-circles, cairns, peat-stack bases, stone structures

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: A group comprising three hut-circles, thirty-five cairns, two peat-stack bases, and two stone structures is situated on Leathad nan Cruineachd on the west side of Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd. The cairns are turf-clad, up to 5 m in diameter and 0.6 m high.

- 5a) Hut-circle situated on a low rocky promontory at the foot of Cnoc a' Bhuthain. It is defined by an intermittent low stony bank, 1.2 m wide and 0.1 m high. The hut-circle is 7 m in diameter and occupies most of the promontory. There is no clear entrance which would have been to the north-east or to the south-west.
- 5b) A two-celled stone structure is situated at the foot of the promontory near the hut-circle (5a). Its collapsed stone walls are 0.4 to 1 m wide and up to 0.5 m high. The cell to the west is set up against the rock-face to the north-west. It is sub-rectangular and measures 1.6 by 2 m internally. The cell to the east is set out from the rock-face and measures 1 by 1.7 m internally.
- 5c) A circular stone platform, 2.2 m in diameter. Believed to be a base for a peat-stack.
- 5d) An oval stone platform, 2 m by 3 m and 0.2 m high. Probable peat-stack base.
- 5e) Remains of a small rectangular building? Defined by an L-shaped line of stones visible through the turf. Possibly the remains of a small shelter measuring 2 by 2.5 m.
- 5f) Hut-circle situated on a gentle north-east facing slope. It is cut into the slope to the south-west and has a low embankment towards the north-east. The hut-circle is 8.5 m in diameter with a possible entrance to the north-west. Remains of the walls can be seen as an intermittent low bank around the perimeter.

- 5g) Hut-platform situated on an east facing slope. It is cut into the slope to the west and has a marked embankment towards the east. The platform is oval, aligned north to south and measures 7 by 10 m. A low bank to the north represents the only visible remains of the walls.

Condition: The recorded structures show no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 6 (NMRS NC14SE 10)

Grid ref: NC 1612 4415 (site centre)

Location: Leathad nan Cruineachd

Class: Homestead, field-system, stone structures

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: A settlement and field-system is situated on Leathad nan Cruineachd to the north of Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd (Plate 3). The site comprises a homestead, sixty-three cairns, three lynchets, two cultivation plots, one bank and five stone structures. The cairns are turf-clad, up to 6 m in diameter and 0.7 m high. A stony bank runs westwards up the hill from Allt Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd and can be traced over a distance of 160 m. It is up to 3.5 m wide and 1 m high in places. On either side of this bank are two sub-rectangular stone-free areas, possibly cultivation plots. The smaller plot to the north is 16 m long and 4 to 10 m wide. The plot to the south measures 13 m by 30 m. Other cultivation remains include three stony lynchets, 16 to 26 m long.

- 6a) Small sub-rectangular dry-stone structure set in open hillside. It measures 0.8 by 1.5 m internally. The walls are 0.7 m wide and up to 0.5 m high. It is likely to have been built as a shelter.
- 6b) Possible remains of an irregular stone structure 3.5 m long and 1.2 to 2 m wide. Marked by ill-defined rows of stones.
- 6c) A homestead is situated on a low ridge to the north of Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd. It appears as a rectangular hollow cut into the top of the ridge. It is 7 m wide and 13 m long, defined by a cut to the south and low stony banks up to 2.5 m wide and up to 0.3 m high elsewhere. The entrance is in the short wall to the north.
- 6d) Circular dry-stone structure, 0.9 m in diameter internally. The walls are 0.4 m wide and 1 m high. The structure has no entrance. Possibly a shepherds shelter?
- 6e) A two-celled rectangular stone structure. The room to the north-east measures 1.5 by 2 m internally with the entrance to the south. The room to the south-west is rectangular and completely infilled. It measures 1.8 m by 2 m externally.

- 6f) A two-roomed rectangular stone structure aligned east to west. The room to the west measures 1.5 by 2 m internally with the entrance to the south. The room to the east measures 1.8 by 2.5 m internally with the entrance at the north-east corner. The walls are 0.8 to 1 m wide and up to 1 m high. The size of the structure suggests that it was built as a shelter.

Condition: The recorded structures show no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 7 (NMRS NC14SE 8)

Grid ref: NC 1622 4396 (site centre)

Location: Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd

Class: Homestead, cairns, bank, peat-stack base

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: The site is situated on a low knoll on the east side of Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd. It comprises a homestead, a short bank, a peat-stack base and nine cairns. The cairns are turf-clad, up to 5 m in diameter and 0.6 m high and spread over an area 50 by 100 m.

- 7a) Homestead 5 by 10 m and aligned north to south. It has a 1 m high embankment at its south end. Its east side is defined by a stony bank up to 2 m wide and 0.4 m high. The east wall line is less well defined and is partly marked by a line of stones visible through the heather. This structure is described as a hut-circle in the present records, but its shape is clearly sub-rectangular and similar to the homestead (Site 6c) on the opposite side of the loch.
- 7b) A short stretch of collapsed stone wall 12 m long, spread to 1.5 m wide and 0.3 m high. The wall is covered in heather with a few stones visible through the peat. A circular stone platform, 2.5 m in diameter lies 3 m to the east of the wall. The platform is most likely to be a peat-stack base, probably associated with the old peat-cuttings seen in a boggy area to the east.

Condition: The recorded structures show no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 8 (NMRS NC14SE 9)

Grid ref: NC 1620 4415

Location: Allt Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd

Class: Burnt mound

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: A burnt mound is located on the west side of Allt Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd, 100 m north-east of Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd (Plate 4). The mound is U-shaped, 7.5 m by 9.5 m and 1.3 m high, with the open end facing the stream. It is covered in peat and heather.

Condition: The mound is stable and shows no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 9

Grid ref: NC 1631 4416 – 1648 4425

Location: Allt Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd

Class: Bank

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: An earth and stone bank runs towards the north-east over a small ridge on the south side of Allt Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd. The bank is spread to 2.5 m wide and up to 0.4 m high. It starts at the east side of the stream and can be traced over a distance of 200 m, before fading out in marshy ground to the north-east, having crossed the stream.

Condition: The bank shows no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 10 (NMRS NC14SE 8)

Grid ref: NC 1637 4410 (site centre)

Location: Allt Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd

Class: Cairns

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: A group of eight cairns are located to the east of Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd. Four cairns are situated on a low ridge to the north-east of the loch, with a further four cairns on a natural shelf in the hill side 50 m to the south. The cairns are up to 0.6 m high, some are elongated up to 3 m by 8 m, others are sub-circular and up to 5 m in diameter.

Condition: The cairns are fairly low but show no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 11 (NMRS NC14SE 7)

Grid ref: NC 1645 4396 (site centre)

Location: Allt an Lochain Sgeireich

Class: Hut-circle, field-system, stone structures, enclosure

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: A settlement and field-system is situated on the north-east and south-east facing slopes of a rocky knoll to the west of Allt an Lochain Sgeireich. The site comprises one hut-circle, fifty-two cairns, three lynchets, one enclosure and seven stone structures. The cairns are turf-clad, up to 6 m in diameter and 0.6 m high (Plate 5). The three lynchets are 15 - 45 m long.

- 11a) Small sub-rectangular dry-stone structure located on a south-facing hillside. It is aligned north to south and measures 1.4 by 1.7 m internally. The entrance is at the south-east corner. The walls are 0.4 m wide and up to 0.6 m high. The structure is likely to have been used as a shelter.

- 11b) Small sub-rectangular stone structure located on a south-facing hillside (Plate 6). It is aligned north to south and measures 0.8 by 1.8 m internally. The entrance is at the south-east corner. The walls are 0.5 m wide and up to 0.4 m high. The structure is likely to have been used as a shelter.
- 11c) Small U-shaped enclosure defined by low stone walls 0.5 m wide and up to 0.3 m high. The enclosure is 3.5 m wide and 4.5 m long.
- 11d) Hut-circle situated on a ridge 70 m north-west of Allt an Lochain Sgeireich (Plate 7). It measures 9 m in diameter internally with an entrance to the south. The walls are defined by broad stony banks up to 2.5 m wide and 0.6 m high.
- 11e) A group of three small sub-rectangular stone structures are located to the west of the hut-circle (11d). The structures are defined by low stony banks and lines of stones. Two of the structures are built next to the hut-circle; the one to the south is sub-rectangular 1.2 by 2 m; the other is sub-oval 1.5 by 3 m. The third structure lies 4 m to the north-west. It is sub-rectangular, 1.4 by 2 m and defined by a line of stones.
- 11f) Small sub-rectangular stone structure located 20 m north-east of the hut-circle (11d). It is defined by lines of stones and measures 1 by 1.8 m.
- 11g) An L-shaped line of stones, 2 by 2 m. Possible remains of small sub-rectangular structure.

Condition: The recorded structures show no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 12 (NMRS NC14SE 6)

Grid ref: NC 1656 4417 (site centre)

Location: Allt an Lochain Sgeireich

Class: Hut-circle, cairns

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: A hut-circle (12a) and a group of five cairns are situated on the west facing slopes of Chreag Gharbh. The hut-circle is 12 m in diameter internally, and defined by stony banks up to 1.4 m wide and 0.5 m high (Plate 8). An L-shaped stone wall has been built up against the inside of the hut wall to the south forming a small shelter 1 by 1.6 m. Five cairns are located on the hill side to the north-east of the hut-circle. The cairns are turf-clad, up to 5 m in diameter and 0.4 m high.

Condition: The recorded structures show no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 13 (NMRS NC14SE 15)

Grid ref: NC 1658 4403

Location: Allt an Lochain Sgeireich

Class: Burnt mound

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: A burnt mound is located on the west side of Allt an Lochain Sgeireich. The mound is U-shaped, 9 by 10 m and 1.2 m high, with the open end facing the stream. It is covered in peat and heather.

Condition: The mound is stable and shows no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 14

Grid ref: NC 1705 4412 – 1708 4410

Location: Gleann Scourie

Class: Bank

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: A turf and stone dyke is situated on the south side of Loch a' Bhadaidh Daraich. It crosses the east corner of the survey area and is spread to 1.5 m wide and up to 1 m high. It is cut to the north by the A894 but remains of the dyke were seen on the narrow strip of land between the road and the loch. It can be traced over a total distance of 40 m, the part within the survey area is some 10 m.

Condition: The dyke is cut by the modern road but otherwise shows no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 15

Grid ref: NC 1611 4345

Location: Cnoc an Daimh

Class: Stone structure

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: Small U-shaped stone structure located in a small steep south-west facing valley on the south side of Cnoc an Daimh. The structure measures 1 by 1.5 m internally and is defined by low stone walls up to 0.5 m high. The structure is likely to have been used as a shelter.

Condition: The structure shows no evidence of recent disturbance.

Site No. 16

Grid ref: NC 1613 4347 – 1648 4356

Location: Cnoc an Daimh

Class: Bank

Land use: Rough grazing

Description: A stone and turf bank runs west-wards from the west shore of Lochan Sgeireach up towards Cnoc an Daimh. It is up to 4 m wide and 0.5 m high and can be traced over a distance of 400 m. It fades out on the upper slopes of Cnoc an Daimh. The bank is similar to the bank seen further to the north-west (Site 3) and may be part of the same boundary.

Condition: The bank shows no evidence of recent disturbance.

Photographic catalogue

Print no.	Slide no.	Description	From
1	1	Site 4a. Hut-circle.	NW
2	2	Site 4. Cairns.	N
3	3	Site 5g. Hut-platform.	W
4	4	Site 5f. Hut-circle.	SW
5	5	Site 5e. Stone structure.	NW
6	6	Site 5e. Peat-stack base.	SW
7	7	Site 5a. Hut-circle.	NW
8	8	Site 5b. Rectangular stone structure.	NW
9	9	General view of area to the north and east of Loch Leathad nan Cruineachd. Site 6 cairns in the foreground, Site 7 is located on promontory on the far side of the loch (Plate 3).	W
10	10	Site 6c. Homestead.	NE
11	11	Site 6e. Stone structure.	NW
12	12	Site 6d. Circular stone structure.	W
13	13	View over NE part of survey area from Cnoc a' Bhutain.	W
14	14	Site 3. NW end of bank (Plate 2).	N
15	15	Site 2. Stone structure (Plate 1).	E
16	16	Site 7a. Homestead.	NE
17	17	Site 7b. Bank.	S
18	18	Site 7b. Peat-stack base.	SW
19	19	Site 8. Burnt mound (Plate 4).	SE
20	20	Site 6f. Rectangular stone structure.	S
21	21	Site 12a. Hut-circle (Plate 8).	E
22	22	Site 13. Burnt mound (to the right of figure).	E
23	23	Site 11d. Hut-circle with cairns in the background (Plate 7).	W
24	24	Site 11e. Stone structures on west side of hut-circle.	NW
25	25	Site 15. Stone structure.	SW
26	26	Site 11a. Stone structure.	N
27	27	Site 11b. Stone structure (Plate 6).	S
28	28	Site 11c. Enclosure.	S
29	29	Site 11. General view of cairns on south-facing slope (Plate 5).	E
30	30	Site 6b. Stone structure.	N
31	31	Site 6a. Stone structure.	SW
32	32	Site 6. Cairn.	SW
33	33	Site 3a. Stone structure.	SE

All prints have been deposited with the NMRS.

