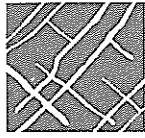


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**Forestry Survey: Langwell - Rinsary Braes, Berriedale,  
Caithness**

WGS ref no 030/002127

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## INTRODUCTION

The Langwell - Rinsary Braes WGS application area covers 76 ha of land extending for 2 km along the Berriedale Water close to the coast at Berriedale, Caithness (OS 1:10,560 sheet ND12SW). This area comprises a narrow valley floor with fluvial terraces and steep slopes on either side rising up to an open plateau at 350 ft. The limit of the application area is at the top of the steep banks so very little of the plateau is within area (see Figure 1). The slopes are currently extensively wooded with a mixture of broadleaved native species and there is open ground on the valley floor and some upper slopes.

A total of eight archaeological sites have previously been recorded in the survey area (see list below) including a broch (NMRS site ND12 SW 4) two groups of prehistoric houses (ND12SW 6 and 8) and two post-medieval townships (ND12SW 33 and 54). The two prehistoric settlement sites (ND12SW 6 and 8) extended beyond the limits of the WGS application area and the survey was extended to take in the whole of both of these sites. Parts of sites ND12SW 4, 6 and 8 are scheduled ancient monuments; in all three cases the scheduling is limited to the actual visible structures: a broch, hut circles and enclosures.

## METHODS

### DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

The following sources contain information relevant to this survey:

#### *NMRS Sites*

NMRS	Highland SMR	Description
ND12SW 4	ND12SW 4 & 80	Broch, farmstead, kiln (SAM 577)
ND12SW 6	ND12SW 6	Settlement, field system (SAM 3474 & 3475)
ND12SW 8	ND12SW 8	Hut circles, field system (SAM 3537 & 3559)
ND12SW 24	ND12SW 24	Hut circle
ND12SW 33	ND12SW 31	Township, corn drying kiln, rig
ND12SW 52	ND12SW 73	Building
ND12SW 53	ND12SW 70	Building
ND12SW 54	ND12SW 79	Township

#### *Maps (National Map Library)*

Roy, W 1747-55 *Military Survey of Scotland* (Sheet 37/1)

Arrowsmith, A 1807 *A map of Scotland*

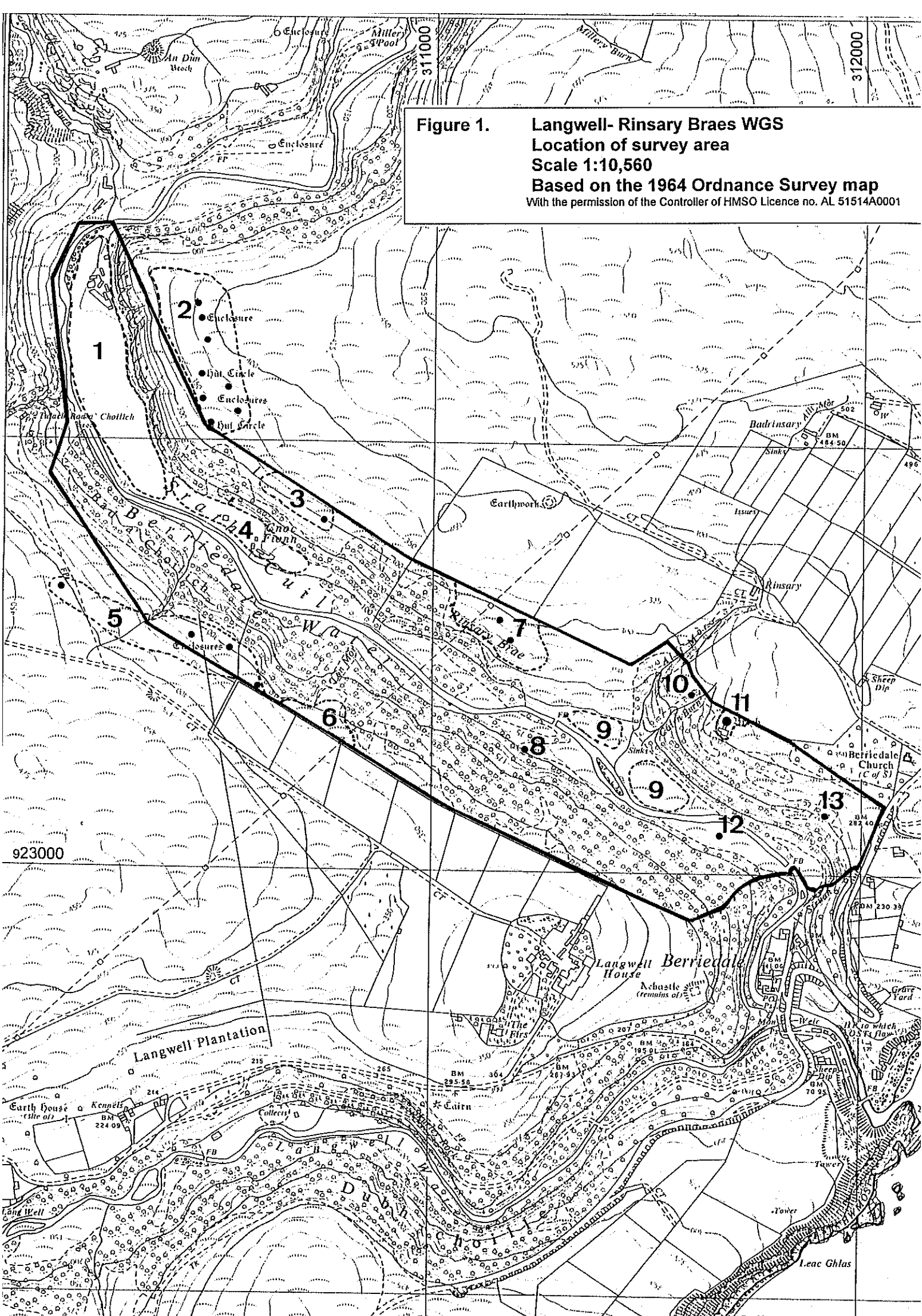
Thomson, J 1822 *Caithness-shire*

Ordnance Survey 1877 *Caithness 1:10,560 sheet XLII* (surveyed 1871)

#### *Aerial photographs (Air Photo Unit RCAHMS)*

23/8/46	106G/SCOT/UK 164 (4005-4001, 3005-3001)
8/10/46	CPE/SCOT/UK 179 (1307-1312)
17/9/58	543/RAF/390 (F22 0116-0113; F21 0116-0113)
5/7/67	OS/67/264 (124-127)
26/5/75	Clyde Coastal Colour (36: 347-345)
21/5/89	618 89 (121-119)

**Figure 1. Langwell- Rinsary Braes WGS**  
**Location of survey area**  
**Scale 1:10,560**  
**Based on the 1964 Ordnance Survey map**  
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## FIELD SURVEY

Field survey was restricted to areas not obscured by dense tree cover and therefore did not cover much of the steeper valley sides (see Figure 2 for approximate extent of tree cover). The accessible areas were systematically walked by a team of two archaeologists and all features of archaeological interest were identified and described. The features were located, where necessary, using a Total Station EDM working on an arbitrary grid tied to local mapped reference points. At the request of Highland Council, all features within the WGS application area, other than areas of recent cultivation remains, were marked out using bamboo canes with red and white tell-tales. These were positioned roughly 20m from the limit of any visible structures.

## RESULTS

Thirteen features, or groups of features, of archaeological interest were located corresponding to the eight known sites plus five newly identified sites. The locations of these sites are given in Figure 1 at a scale of 1:10,560 and a more detailed plan is provided in Figure 2 at a scale of 1:2500. In Figure 2, the representation of all sites is based on the present survey data except for Sites 1, 4, 8, 10 and 13 where Ordnance Survey mapping has been used (both the current 1964 and 1st Edition 1879 1:10,560 scale maps). Details of all features are given in the gazetteer at the end of this report.

## DISCUSSION

### PREHISTORIC SITES

Features of definite prehistoric date are generally restricted to the areas of unimproved heather moorland on the plateaux at the western end of the survey area (Plates 3 and 4). There are areas of prehistoric landscape on both sides of the Berriedale Water: Sites 2 and 3 on the north side and Site 5 to the south. These fragments of landscape extend outside the WGS area which is restricted to the valley of the Berriedale Water. A broch (Site 11) has survived as a visible monument closer to the coast in an area dominated by medieval or later structures; this is typical of brochs which are too substantial to be readily destroyed by later activity. The present survey has added little to our understanding of these prehistoric sites which were well-recorded by the Ordnance Survey. The plotting of the clearance cairns for the first time in Sites 2, 3 and 5 has improved our knowledge of the distribution of visible structures and a fourth building has been identified in Site 5 (a much less obvious structure than the three previously recorded).

### MEDIEVAL OR LATER SITES

Nine recorded sites can all be confidently ascribed a medieval or later date and of these most are probably relatively recent. A variety of site types are present occupying most of the available dry, flatter land within the survey area. There are two townships in the valley on well-drained terraces with extensive arable fields (Sites 1 and 4, Plates 1 and 2) and two

smaller settlements (Sites 8 and 12, Plate 5) further down the valley with further areas of cultivation (Site 9). Areas of cultivation are also present on the upper slopes (Sites 6 and 7) and these appear to be marginal fragments of larger fields on the plateaux that have been destroyed by agricultural improvements in the 19th century. A series of small irregular rectangular enclosures are present along the upper slope on the north side of the Berriedale Water (Sites 7a and 7b, 10, 11e and 13). Their function is not certain but they may have been enclosures for livestock grazing the steep valley side. All of the features mentioned above appear to pre-date substantial agricultural improvements of the mid-19th century and probably represent the 18th and early-19th century landscape. One group of structures, the turf covered farmstead adjacent to the broch (Site 11a and 11b) may be earlier, given the apparent absence of stone in its construction, but it cannot be dated with any degree of confidence (Plate 6).

## GAZETTEER

**Site No. 1** (NMRS Site ND12SW 33) - ND 12 SW 0031

**Grid ref:** ND 102 243

**Location:** Dailyoich

**Class:** Township, rig and furrow cultivation

**Land use:** Rough grazing

**Description:** A compact settlement with adjacent ridged fields (Plate 1). The settlement comprises five principal long houses (1a to 1e on Figure 2), two smaller rectangular buildings (1f and 1g), a kiln barn (1h) and attached enclosures. The adjacent river terraces are extensively ridged; ridge width varies between 4 and 9 m and more than one system appears to be superimposed. Roy (1747-55) records a settlement at this location named *Allandonagg* which corresponds with *Allandoninn* on Arrowsmith's map (1807). The settlement is mapped in its present deserted condition on the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1:10,560 map of 1871 but it is now named *Dailyoich*. The representation of the structures in Figure 2 is based on Ordnance Survey mapping supplemented by field notes.

**Condition:** The rubble walls of the settlement survive up to 1.5 m in height, they are apparently stable with no evidence for recent collapse and there is a complete cover of grassy vegetation surrounding the walls. Recent disturbance is limited to the cutting of a vehicle track from the bridge over the Berriedale Water to the north of the settlement through the north end of the field wall.

**Marking out:** Only the settlement core was marked out with bamboos roughly 20 from the limit of the structures. No bamboos were placed along the east side where the slope rises sharply beside the settlement.

**Site No. 2** (NMRS Site ND12SW 6; SAM 3474, 3475) - ND 12 SW 0006

**Grid ref:** ND 104 241

**Location:** Tulach Bad a Choilich

**Class:** Settlement, field system

**Land use:** Rough grazing

**Description:** A group of structures, principally prehistoric, with clearance cairns spread out over an area of gently sloping heather moorland, 400 x 150 m in extent. Nine of the structures have been described in the past (see NMRS records) and Sites 2a to 2g correspond with the NMRS labelling of the seven recorded prehistoric structures:

- 2a 12 x 14 m oval building with entrance to south
- 2b 12 m circular building with entrance to south (Plate 3)
- 2c 11 x 13 m oval building with entrance to south
- 2d/e 11 x 13 m oval building (d) partially overlain by a possible smaller structure (e)
- 2f 8 m circular structure with set stones visible in inner wall face, entrance to south-east
- 2g 9 m circular structure with no visible entrance

Sites 2h and 2i are previously recorded rectangular buildings; the larger 2h is 9 x 4 m, the smaller is 5 x 3 m. These are assumed to be of medieval or later date and may have been

shieling huts. A total of 20 cairns and one length of bank have been mapped for the first time. The cairns are generally small and low (c.3 m diameter, up to 0.4 m high) and are interpreted as clearance cairns. One cairn is larger (2j on Figure 2), 7.5 m in diameter; three larger stones are visible on the edge and this structure is interpreted as a possible kerb cairn.

**Condition:** All structures have a continuous cover of low heather with only a few stones projecting (particularly in 2f). There is no evidence for recent disturbance (Plate 3).

**Marking out:** This site lies entirely outside the WGS area and has not been marked out.

**Site No. 3** (NMRS Site ND12SW 24) ND 12 SW 0024

**Grid ref:** ND 107 238

**Location:** Cnoc Fionn

**Class:** Hut circle, cairns

**Land use:** Rough grazing

**Description:** As described in existing records, the structure is represented by a platform levelled into the slope, roughly 16 x 10 m, with a definite apron downslope but poorly defined at the back. To the north-west of the platform there are three small cairns within 50 m and a fourth at a distance of 130 m.

**Condition:** The platform and cairns are fully vegetated with a grassy turf and there is no evidence for recent disturbance.

**Marking out:** An area around the platform and three adjacent cairns was marked out with bamboos roughly 20 from the limit of the structures. This coincides with the limits of an area of grassy vegetation surrounded by heather. The isolated cairn was not marked.

**Site No. 4** (NMRS Site ND12SW 54) ND 12 SW 0079

**Grid ref:** ND 106 237

**Location:** Cnoc Fionn

**Class:** Township

**Land use:** Rough grazing

**Description:** A settlement on a prominent rocky knoll with adjacent ridged fields (Plate 2). The settlement comprises three principal buildings, a kiln barn (4b) and attached enclosures. There is an isolated square enclosure to the north-west of the settlement (4a). The adjacent river terraces contain areas of ridged field. Roy (1747-55) records an unnamed settlement at this location but it is named by Thomson (1822) as *Knockfin*. The settlement is mapped in its present deserted condition on the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1:10,560 map of 1871 and named *Cnoc Fionn*. The representation of the structures in Figure 2 is based on Ordnance Survey mapping supplemented by field notes.

**Condition:** The rubble walls of the settlement survive up to 1.0 m in height, they are apparently stable with no evidence for recent collapse and there is a complete cover of grassy vegetation surrounding the walls.

**Marking out:** Only the settlement core was marked out with bamboos roughly 20 from the limit of the structures. This places them at the foot of the knoll on which the settlement is situated.

**Site No. 5** (NMRS Site ND12SW 8; SAM 3537 & 3559) ND 12 SW 0008

**Grid ref:** ND 104 235

**Location:** Cnoc Fionn

**Class:** Hut circles, field system

**Land use:** Rough grazing

**Description:** This site was found to be as described in earlier reports although additional features were noted. There are three prominent oval prehistoric buildings (5a to c) at the locations noted in NMRS (Plate 4). A fourth building (5d) was identified during the present survey as a well-defined semi-circular platform, 12 m in diameter, bisected by a drystone dyke of the improved fields of Langwell House. There was no visible trace of the other half of the platform within the field. A total of eleven cairns were plotted for the first time, most lying between buildings 5a and 5b with only two to the north of 5b. Building 5c appears to be isolated, without any cairns nearby. Note that only two buildings have been scheduled: 5a (SAM 3559) and 5b (SAM 3537).

**Condition:** With the exception of 5d, all structures were stable with a complete cover of rather rank heather (Plate 4). 5d is traversed by a deer fence and animal tracks, following the fence, have created eroding paths across the platform.

**Marking out:** Bamboos were used to mark out the north-east side of this site, running along the top of the steep slope from 5d along to the gully north-west of 5b. The western limit of this site, which lies out of area, was not marked.

**Site No. 6**

**Grid ref:** ND 107 233 ND 12 SW 0093

**Location:** Lon Mor

**Class:** Rig and furrow

**Land use:** Rough grazing

**Description:** The gently sloping top of a spur of land (Lon Mor) is covered in cultivation ridges, 5 m wide. They run beneath a drystone dyke at their south end but do not survive within the improved land beyond it.

**Condition:** The rigs have a complete cover of rank grasses with no evidence for recent disturbance

**Marking out:** This site was not marked out.



**Site No. 7**

**Grid ref:** ND 111 235

ND 12 SW 0094

**Location:** Rinsary Brae

**Class:** Cultivation remains, enclosures

**Land use:** Rough grazing

**Description:** A moderately steep, well drained, slope at the top of Rinsary Brae has been cultivated in the past but is not apparently ridged. There is a well-defined positive lynchet at the lower margin of the area and a few clearance cairns within it. Two of these cairns have accumulated over the remains of one of two small irregular enclosures (7b). These are defined by low turf and stone banks; 7a is 6 x 7 m, 7b is 14 m long and 12 to 8 m wide. 7b is cut by a rubble filled drain which runs down from the improved fields on the plateau above Rinsary Brae.

**Condition:** All of the features have a stable vegetation cover with no evidence for recent disturbance. Dense bracken covers the whole of the area of former cultivation.

**Marking out:** The two enclosures, which are only 30 m apart, were marked out as a single area with bamboos placed roughly 20 m from the enclosures.

**Site No. 8 (NMRS Site ND12SW 53)**

ND 12 SW 0070

**Grid ref:** ND 112 233

**Location:** Langwell House

**Class:** Farmstead

**Land use:** Rough grazing/woodland

**Description:** A small farmstead comprising two attached rectangular buildings and an enclosure on a moderately sloping site above the river flood plain (Plate 5). The buildings survive as low rubble footings, the larger is 18 x 4 m and is upslope from the smaller which measures 12 x 3 m. The buildings are shown as roofless ruins on the OS 1st edition map surveyed in 1871 and the plotting of this structure in Figure 2 is based on OS mapping supplemented by field measurements.

**Condition:** The wall footings are in a stable condition with no evidence for recent disturbance. The area surrounding the farmstead is heavily infested with bracken.

**Marking out:** The farmstead was marked out with bamboos and tell-tales on trees roughly 20 m from the visible structure.

**Site No. 9**

**Grid ref:** ND 114 233

ND 12 SW 0095

**Location:** Alt Mor

**Class:** Cultivation remains

**Land use:** Rough grazing

**Description:** Two areas of well-drained fluvial terrace beside the Berriedale Water, separated

by the Alt Mor, appear to have been cultivated in the past. There are a few well-defined and unvegetated clearance cairns on the margins of these areas but no evidence of ridging.

**Condition:** These two areas are entirely covered in dense bracken.

**Marking out:** This site was not marked out

**Site No.** 10 (NMRS Site ND12SW 52) ND 12 SW 0073

**Grid ref:** ND 116 234

**Location:** Rinsary

**Class:** Enclosure

**Land use:** Rough grazing

**Description:** A small rectangular enclosure, 14 x 7 m, with low rubble and turf walls. Originally identified by RCAHMS as a building from map evidence only, this is clearly an unroofed enclosure.

**Condition:** The walls are in a stable condition with no evidence for recent disturbance.

**Marking out:** This site was marked out with bamboos roughly 20 m from the visible enclosure.

**Site No.** 11 (NMRS Site ND12SW 4| SAM 577) ND 12 SW 0080

**Grid ref:** ND 116 233

**Location:** Rinsary

**Class:** Broch, farmstead, kiln

**Land use:** Rough grazing

**Description:** A complex cluster of structures built around the remains of a broch (11a) which is the only scheduled element of the group. No structural details of the broch are visible except for the outer face which can be traced for over half of the circumference with an approximate diameter of 15 m. To the east of the broch, on the level ground between it and the modern wall, are the remains of a farmstead comprising two rectangular structures linked by a bank (Plate 6). The larger structure (11b) is 26 m long and 5 m wide and its west gable is formed by the outer face of the broch, the smaller structure (11c) is apparently 12 x 4 m although its original length may have been greater. The walls are entirely turf covered with no stone visible and no more than 0.4 m high. On the south-west side of the broch there is a kiln barn (11d) dug into the side of the broch mound; to the south of this there is a rectangular drystone enclosure (11e), 25 x 13 m maximum dimensions. This enclosure is mapped on the OS 1st edition survey of 1871 and along with the kiln appears to be of 19th century date; the turf covered remains of the farmstead are not mapped and appear to be significantly older.

**Condition:** There is a rectangular depression, roughly 5 x 3 m, in the south-east sector of the broch wall which appears to be the result of stone robbing but not in the immediate past; there is also a recent cairn built over the south side of the broch wall adjacent to the kiln. All walls of the farmstead (11b and 11c) are stable and completely covered with a grass turf. A modern fence and dyke crosses over the east end of the buildings. The kiln and adjacent enclosure

(11d and 11e) appear to be stable with no evidence for recent disturbance.

**Marking out:** This group of features was marked out as a single area with bamboo canes positioned roughly 20 m from the visible structures except to the north-east where the modern fence marked the limit of the area..

**Site No. 12**

**Grid ref:** ND 116 230      ND 12 5N 0096

**Location:** Langwell house

**Class:** Building

**Land use:** Rough grazing

**Description:** An isolated rectangular building comprising a low rubble wall footing, 13 x 3 m, located on the front of a river terrace overlooking the Berriedale Water.

**Condition:** The walls are obscured by dense bracken, even in February, but they appear to be stable and there is no evidence for recent disturbance.

**Marking out:** This site was marked out with bamboos positions roughly 20 m from the building.

**Site No. 13**

**Grid ref:** ND 119 231

ND 12 5W 0097

**Location:** Berriedale Church

**Class:** Enclosure

**Land use:** Woodland

**Description:** A small trapezoidal enclosure with low rubble walls, maximum dimensions 15 x 9 m. This structure is recorded on the recent 1:10,560 map (1964) but not on earlier surveys. However, it appears to be 19th century or earlier in date. The plotted position in Figure 2 is derived from the Ordnance Survey map.

**Condition:** The structure lies in a gap between birch trees and it heavily obscured by bracken, but the walls appear to be stable with no evidence for recent disturbance.

**Marking out:** This site was marked out with tell-tales tied to surrounding trees.



Plate 1: Langwell - Rinsary Brae WGS Site 1, Township of Dailyoich. General view from the south with the township in the background.



Plate 2: Langwell - Rinsary Brae WGS Site 4, Township of Cnoc Fionn. General view from north-east.



Plate 3: Langwell - Rinsary Brae WGS Site 2, prehistoric settlement and field system. Building 2b from west



Plate 4: Langwell - Rinsary Brae WGS Site 5, prehistoric settlement and field system. Building 5a from south-east with figure in interior.



Plate 5: Langwell - Rinsary Brae WGS Site 8, farmstead. Buildings viewed from the east with figure in front of east wall.



Plate 6: Langwell - Rinsary Brae WGS Site 11, broch and farmstead. View from top of the broch looking east along the larger rectangular building 11b (figure at east gable).