J ZIIII) Sur/Acc/RICC

Archaeological Survey of Proposed Plantation at Creag na Ceapaich, Dundonnell

Introduction

The author was commissioned to carry out a survey of this proposed woodland, in advance of an application for Woodland Grant. The survey involved a desk bound study of the Sites & Monuments held by the Regional Archaeology Section and documentary sources held at Inverness library, as well as a brief examination on the ground of the proposed woodland area. This report details the findings of this study and makes several recommendations.

Historical Background

No prehistoric remains have been recorded from the area studied, though roundhouse sites with associated clearance cairns have been recorded on **Dundonnell**, further to the south east at cNH 12 85. It is probable that the sheltered bay and fertile slopes of **Kildonan** would have been occupied long before there is a historical record. The density of later settlement means that such any earlier site will be hidden under the more recent buildings and field system. The settlement is named after the celtic **St Donnan** who was martyred in 617 AD and it is assumed he had a monastic cell in the vicinity. It is reputed to have been sited at NH 0789 9094. The graveyard at **Clach Cill Donan** and the standing stone at NH 0803 9152 are also traditionally associated with this foundation. The origins of the other settlements of **Keppoch** and **Badralach** are not known (the latter only extends slightly into the survey area.)

The settlements of **Keppach** and **Killdonnan** were both shown on **Roy's** map of c1750 with extensive runrig or lazy bed cultivation in association. **Badrallach** (its name being misapplied to **Dundonnell**) was restricted to a smaller settlement restricted to the west side of the modern site and with no arable land delineated. The townships were cleared for sheep in the mid nineteenth century, apart from **Badrallach** which absorbed some of the people evicted from **Kildonan**. The precise dating of this is uncertain as **Keppoch** was already cleared of crofters/ farmers by 1841 (see census returns in Appendix 2) whereas **Kildonan** was not cleared until 1850. The land has remained as a sheep farm until the present day and though some sheep fanks and other enclosures have been added there seems to have been little disturbance of the earlier settlement. There is, however, a large area of reclaimed land on the hill above, presently stocked with both sheep and cattle.

Field Survey

The area was visited on the 14th December, the author arriving at 8am to maximise the amount of daylight. The survey was concentrated on the areas outside those previously recorded by the Ordnance Survey, particularly around the settlement at **Kildonan**. The density of settlement meant that the full area was not examined before the light failed. The main area not examined lay in the moorland of **An Crasg** and north towards the headwaters of the **Alltan an Tairbh** and the **Allt nan Caorach**. Though nothing obvious was visible from the road, it is possible that there are shieling sites similar to those at NH 104 895.

Details were taken of the new sites and are summarised with the recorded information from the known sites in Appendix 1.

Discussion

The survey established that the settlement at **Kildonan** was much more extensive than previously recorded and that there were several sites close to the road at the north of the area, probably connected with the settlement at **Badralloch**. Individually these are not major archaeological monuments, but cumulatively they give a greater structural and chronological; depth to settlement in this area.

The settlement at **Kildonan** is one of the most important post medieval settlements in Wester Ross because it has been largely undisturbed by later developments. There has been some ploughing by the shore both north and south of the **Kildonan** burn, but the field system is largely intact and deserves preservation. The other features of houses, enclosures, field walls also require preservation and this includes the sites newly discovered as they complement the existing remains. Even the more recent sheep folds and enclosures enrich this site by demonstrating the economic and social changes in the area. It is to be hoped that public access will be encouraged to this site once the plantation is established.

The shielings at NH 104 895 and the settlement remains at **Keppoch** also need to be preserved, as do the small areas of rig cultivation that survive to the east of the latter township. Specific recommendations for each site are given together with the site descriptions in Appendix 1, but the following general recommendations are given.

Recommendations

- 1. All the identified archaeological sites should be protected from disturbance by planting, by contractors machinery or the dumping of materials. Access routes and strainer posts for fencing must be sited to avoid damage to the archaeological features.
- 2. There should be a tree-free zone of c20 metres from all recorded sites, though a smaller distance might be acceptable next to linear features such as dykes and enclosure walls. The minimum should allow the distance in height of the mature tree to prevent damage during felling or windfall. There may be scope for some limited planting of broad leaves within the enclosures but this should be restricted to shallow rooted species such as birch and should be kept off areas of rig cultivation.
- 3. Management plans should include provision for the maintenance of these archaeological sites in their present form. This may require a regular programme of weeding to inhibit natural regeneration on these areas.

Jonathan Wordsworth 20th December 1995

APPENDIX 1

Site descriptions & recommendations

1. NH 0685 9147 Badrallach Schoolhouse

This single roomed schoolhouse 7m by 4m is now derelict. Its asbestos roof is presumably a replacement for an earlier corrugated roof. It is surrounded by a zone of grassland between 5 and 10m in diameter. There may have been a wall defining this enriched zone though it is no longer evident. The roofless building shown on the current OS map is now only partly visible and its dimensions cannot be seen

Lying to the S & E of the schoolhouse there is an an enclosure centred at NH 0688 9142 which is 130m long by 30m wide. It is defined by an earth and stone dyke now 0.5m high and spread c1m wide. The cutting strip 3-4m wide to obtain the material for the dyke can be seen to the N and E of the wall. There are no signs of rigs or clearance cairns within the enclosure, though there is a central division. The interior contrasts strongly with the denuded land of **Druim Dhonn** to the N.

Discussion & Recommendations

These features are all worthy of protection by excluding trees from the area, including leaving a zone of 20m clear of the schoolhouse. While a few trees planted in the centre of the enclosure would not affect the archaeological value of these sites, the restricted width available makes this impracticable after allowance is made for possible damage by windfalls or later felling. It is therefore suggested this area is excluded from planting.

2. NH 070 917 Allt na Criche, Badrallach

Lying S & E of the **Allt na Criche** is a prominent turf and stone bank up to 1.5m high by 3m wide at the base and c0.4m wide at the top. It enters the survey area at NH 0705 9176 and runs to NH 0692 9168 where it meets the well maintained stone dyke that forms the western boundary of the survey area. This stone dyke enters at NH 0696 9177 and runs down to the sea at NH 6977 9138. The current OS map shows it running to a line of cliffs above the road, though the earlier OS editions show it continuing up the hillside on the E bank of the **Allt na Criche**

Discussion & Recommendation

The stone dyke is presumed to be the march dyke between Kildonan Sheep Farm and the crofting settlement at Badrallach and it was presumably erected c1850. The turf and stone bank must be an earlier boundary before the clearances. The stone dyke in particular will be vulnerable to damage from falling trees whether by felling or wind blow so it is recommended that there be sufficient margin to prevent such damage.

3. NH 0735 9175 (centred) Allt na Luib

A turf and stone banked enclosure 100m by 80m lies to the E of an unnamed burn and is cut by the modern road with about half the enclosure lying within the survey area. The bank is now up to 1.5m high by 2m wide at the baseand a strip 3m wide has been excavated on either side to supply material for the dyke. There are possible traces of rig/lazy bed cultivation.

At cNH 0738 9168 are the faint remains of three buildings, roughly rectangular in shape and aligned approximately N/S. The most northerly is bracken clad and measures 4m by 3m, the other two are slightly raised areas of heather and measure 8m by 3m.

To the SW at NH 0726 9165 there are two drystone features 0.5m high by lying in a little hollow on the N bank of the Allt na

Luib.

On the S bank of the burn running from cNH 0729 9162 to link at NH 0696 9170 with the earth and stone dyke at **Site 2** are the very faint remains of another turf and stone dyke. It is is very irregular and has possibly been extensively quarried, as the area to the S has been extensively stripped for turf and peat.

Discussion & Recommendations

The buildings and enclosure appear to mark a small croft, probably already abandoned by the time Kildonan became a sheep farm. The buildings were probably turf walled on stone footings. The small structures by the burn may have been either stores connected with cheese production or the remains of a small still.

These features should be preserved and protected from planting, though the dyke on the S bank of the is so slight as to hardly merit preservation. As there is such a marked contrast between the impoverished land to the S of the burn and the relatively more fertile land to the N, it is suggested that this difference in land use is marked by selective planting of broadleaves in the better land to contrast with the pine wood.

4. NH 0790 9155 Druim Dhonn

A 16m stretch of walling survives here, 6m of which is of purely drystone construction. Within this drystone stretch there is an entrance c1m wide. The remaining stretches are constructed of earth and stone. The wall is surrounded by a heavily eroded landscape.

Discussion & Recommendation

It is likely that the small stretch of walling was constructed purely for the entranceway and the rest of the wall was of turf and stone construction. The course of the wall is now impossible to reconstruct though it may have linked with the walls observed running from Sites 3 & 5. The rest of the wall has been presumably removed for fuel or walling elsewhere, probably by crofters settled at Badrallach after 1850.

As an archaeological feature this wall has been so badly mutilated that it no longer has much value. If trees can be sited away from it that is to the good, but no recommendations are being made.

5. NH 0790 9165 Allt a'Phuind

On the E side of the burn and parallel to the road is a rectangular building 8m by 4m and to the W is another building aligned N/S 4m by 3m. On the opposite side of the burn are two more structures, one 4m by 2m and the other 5m by 2m. This settlement is bounded by a badly eroded earth and stone dyke. It probably formed and enclosure of similar dimensions to that at Site 3.

The N end of the dyke ends opposite a more prominent dyke of mostly drystone construction that runs down the W side of the **Allt a'Phuind** from NH 0785 9168 to NH 0770 9160. After this dyke has descended a small cliff below the road two more structures are built into the wall. Where the dyke enters the moss it becomes predominantly of turf construction, and fades out.

Discussion & Recommendations

This appears to be a settlement similar to that shown at Site3, though unlike Site 3 the buildings are sited within the enclosure and therefore it is more likely this was an animal fold than an arable area.

The dyke that runs SW may have linked with either the wall at Site 3 or 4 and indeed they may have all linked together.

The area of the enclosure around the buildings should be kept free from planting and if it is decided to plant the more fertile'

areas N of the Allt na Luib, then this should be extended to include the area up to the Allt a'Phuind.

6. NH 0803 9152 Kildonan Farm

'At NH 08039152, 30m W of the track leading to Kildonan Farm stands a monolith, 1.4m high, 1m wide by 0.2m thick with its main axis N and S, and inclined in an easterly direction. According to Miss McNorton, District Nurse, (Ret.), Ardessie, Dundonnell, Little Loch Broom opinion is divided as to the purpose of this stone, some regard it as a sanctuary stone of the early monastic establishment, others as a prehistoric standing stone.' (OS Field Investigator R Bruce 5.10.1964)

[SMR Ref HNH 09 SE 002]

Discussion & Recommendation

The date this stone was erected will remain uncertain (the writer preferring to see it as a boundary marker/sanctuary stone for the monastery) and the area around it has been badly disturbed by erosion and/or peat cutting (see Fig.). It is clear it is a significant feature worthy of preservation and this will require an unplanted zone of c20m around it. Ideally it should be left open so that it can be viewed as a feature in relation to the ?monastic site at Clach Chill Donnain.

7. NH 0773 9109 Kildonan Farm

The former farmhouse is still inhabited and lies within a deer proof enclosure on the boundaries of the large enclosure illustrated on the current OS map. Two roofless buildings lie to the SW of the farmhouse at NH 0765 9110 and are associated with the remains of enclosure walls as shown on Fig. The larger building was shown as roofed in 1905-6 and was probably a barn or byre connected with the farmhouse. Running into the modern enclosure is a stone and turf dyke, predominantly of drystone construction forming an enclosure c600m by 130m. The wall runs from NH 0737 9123 to NH 0791 9197 and is shown on the current OS map. It is not clear whether this was erected before the introduction of sheep farming

Another unroofed building estimated at 7m by 3m lies on the shore below the raised beach at NH 0740 9117. Run rig/lazy bed cultivation lies up to 90m W of the building and up to 250m E of it.

There is a curious feature to the E of the farmhouse at NH 0776 9106 consisting of large boulders with a dump of very small stones. This may be a modern feature but may also be the site of an earlier building.

The drystone sheepfank at NH 0775 9115 is shown on the current OS map.

Discussion & Recommendations

The features within the modern deer proof enclosure lie outside the area of the proposed plantings and need not be discussed further here. The earlier enclosure wall, the building on the shore, the rig system and the sheep fank should all be protected from planting and planting operations.

As the rea to the W and above the rigs is suggested for natural regeneration, it is recommendeded that this whole area be excluded from the planting and that the sheepfank be linked to this in conjunction with the footpath.

8. NH 0789 9094 Clach Chill Donnain

Kildonan is numbered among the religious sites planted by St Donnan who was martyred in AD. There was a burial place here called "clach Chill Donnain." (Mitford ACM 1936 Guide to Wester Ross, pp47-48)

"According to Mr A Roger, Dundonnell House, Little Loch Broom, this 7th century religious foundation was probably situated on a flat plateau at NH 0789 9094. The tradition that St Donnan had a cell here prior to his martyrdom in 617 AD is well known locally. There is now no trace of a church or cell.'

'At NH 0801 9099, there are the grass covered footings of 3 buildings, a field bank and a corn drying kiln which obviously predate the nearby township, and are possibly contemporary with the burial place at 'Clach Chill Donnain' [at NH 0782 9097] where the last interrment took place some 200 years ago.' (OS Field Investigator R Bruce 5.10.1964)

[SMR Ref HNH 09 SE 001, 004 & part of 003]

Discussion & Recommendations

As the exact location of the earlier church or monastic cell is not recorded this makes this general area archaeologically sensitive. The area is heavily overgrown with bracken which makes viewing difficult even at this season. It is not clear why the OS field Investigator considered the three buildings and corn drying kiln at NH 0801 9099 as earlier than the main settlement at Kildonan. There are other abandoned structures N of the Killdonan burn such as the three shown at NH 080 910 and there is no reason why these should not be contemporary with the settlement south of the burn. It is possible that there was a hierarchy to settlement and that the N side was restricted to the tacksman and his kin, but this is conjecture.

While it might be attractive to plant trees or encourage regeneration along the burn side, this is not desirable archaeologically. The area of the church and graveyard should not be planted.

9. NH 0782 9097 Kildonan

The depopulated township of 'Kildonan' extends from NH 075 910 to NH 082 908. It comprises 26 buildings, 3 yards, and several enclosures, all standing to an average height of 1m. The largest building measures 21.2m by 4.8m, while the smallest is only 4m square. According to local information this township was depopulated around 1850, "as the last survivor, a Mr McIver, who died some 10, years ago, aged 100 years, was only 2 weeks old when his family was evicted, together with all the other families in the township." There are between 20 and 30 large stone clearance heaps interspersed between the ruined buildings showing that the entire area has been extensively cultivated at one time.' (OS Field Investigator R Bruce 5.10.1964)

The previous description ignores the broad rig cultivation which is one of the most prominent features of this site. The rigs are sited most visibly to the N of the **Alltan a'Churaich** and S of the **Alt Mor Chill-donain** on a sloping terrace above the raised beach (see Fig.). There are slight traces of rig cultivation in the ground below the raised beach though this area appears to have been partly ploughed since the township was deserted. There are remains of a fine sheepfold at NH 0777 9090 and other later enclosures further to the S.

The following features form part of the **Kildonan** settlement but are not marked on the OS map.

The earth and stone E boundary to the settlement shown as ending at NH 0813 9053 actually extends a further 80m to the S to end at NH 0811 9044.

At NH 0825 9075, on the same contour as the buildings incorporated into the E boundary wall and lying outside the enclosed are 4 buildings. These small drystone buildings are 4-5m long by 1.5m wide and were probably turf walled on a stone

Further E below the 200m contour at NH 0827 9087 and are the footings of 2 more buildings. The smaller is 6m long by 2.5m wide while the larger is 10m by 3.5m wide, well built with squared corners. The lack of tumble suggests that these were also

turf walled on a stone footing.

Centred at NH 0827 9094 and below a massive boulder, is an enclosure c14m diameter bisected by the **Allt an Tairbh**. The drystone walls survive up to 1m high. 10m upstream is a rounded oval drystone structure 3m by 2m.

At NH 0833 9090 is a ?oval building 4m by 3m heavily overgrown with bracken.

At NH 0837 9089 below the waterfall on the **Alltan an Tairbh** is a building 6m by 1.5m. An additional chamber 1.5m square lies at the NW end.

An earth and stone dyke runs NW from NH 0840 9092 for 70m where it peters out. It probably continued for another 80m to link with the corner of the mapped enclosure at NH 0827 9101. To the W of this dyke the ground appears to have been worked, though there are no signs of rigs or clearance cairns.

At NH 0812 9098 near the junction of the **Alltan an Tairbh** and the **Allt Mor Chill-donain** is a small enclosure c4m wide by c30m long.

On the Allt Mor Chill-donain are a series of enclosures marked predominantly by drystone wall remains, though some portions may also have been turf walled. The largest is centred at NH 082 911 and measures 140m by 50m. To the S of this is a narrower enclosure 120m by 30m lying on either side of the burn. A third enclosure lies in the hollow of the Allt a'Phuind and is centred at NH 0814 9111.

At the NE corner of the largest enclosure at NH 0830 9115 is a drystone building 4m by 2m and there is a possible circular enclosure c10m diameter immediately E of this structure.

At NH 0831 9110, on a cliff above the S bank of the **Allt Mor Chill-donain** is a rectangular drystone building 2m wide with two chambers one 6m long and the other 2m long.

[SMR Ref HNH 09 SE 003]

Discussion & Recommendations

As has already been discussed in the main report Kildonan is a particularly well-preserved example of a west coast township. The alterations that have been made since it was depopulated c1850 have been concentrated to the N of the burn and below the raised beach so that the majority of the settlement has remained untouched. It would be desirable to keep it intact rather than preserve separate elements. This means that the unplanted area should include the sites listed above making the E boundary approximately the 250m contour up to the the boundary recorded at NH 0840 9092.

The protected area should include the enclosures as elements of this settlement. Individual trees could be planted within the larger enclosures but they should be distinguished from the pinewood and should be at a low density to protect the individual sites. Individual trees could be planted at the E away from the buildings where there are no rigs. Gean and rowan would be the preferred species as they might traditionally have been encouraged near the buildings. The planting within this protected area will partly depend on the management regime to be followed in the future. Regeneration could be prevented by continued grazing of the site or by a more active regime of regular weeding.

10. NH 0865 9125 Allt Mor Chill-donain

A large enclosure some 80m in diameter has been formed at the junction of the Allt Mor Chill-donain and the Allt nan

Caorach. A wall mostly of drystone construction is evident on the NE and has been inferred for the rest. Within this enclosure are signs of clearance presumably for arable cultivation. There are at least 2 oval shielings 3m by 2m and 2 circular structures 1.5m and 2m respectively in diameter. There are also two smaller structures, probably stores, built against a large rock near the waterfall at NH 0870 9121.

At NH 0871 9127 on a slight knoll on the N bank of the burn is an oval shieling 5m by 2m and a circular structure 2m in diameter

Further up the burn at cNH 0845 9122 is a possible 2m diameter circular structure and a ?rectangular structure 3.5m by 2m at NH 0875 9132

Discussion & Recommendations

All these sites would appear to be seasonal shieling sites dependent on Killdonan. The cleared stones in the enclosure at NH 0865 9125 suggest a more permanent settlement which would be quite feasible as the site is only at 200m OD.

These sites should be protected from planting and disturbance.

11. NH 0924 9167 Allt Mor Chill-donain

A small stretch of drystone walling was observed from the car at cNH 0924 9167. It was about 5m long and cut off a narrow gulley, presumably to form an enclosure in the level terrace behind which is c200m by 50m.

Discussion & Recommendation

This is an isolated feature that could perhaps be preserved by varied planting. As it is set at nearly 600m it may not be possible to select a suitable broadleaf. Without further examination it must remain a low priority to preserve this.

12. Allt nan Caorach/An Crasg

Running from approximately NH near **Allt an Caorach** to cNH 0835 9025 at **An Crasg** are the sunken remains of an earth and stone or turf dyke. It is not shown on the current OS map though it was recorded on the 1905 and 1st edition OS maps.

Discussion & Recommendation

This is presumably the march dyke marking the township boundary.

It should be preserved as a linear feature in the landscape by leaving an unplanted zone alongside it. This zone should prevent future disturbance from trees falling or root heave.

13. NH 104 895

In this area are the grass covered remains of nine oval shielings 0.3m high varying in size from 4m by 3m to approximately 2m in diameter.' (reference not recorded)

These features are badly obscured but consist of two types of structure, one being an oval shieling and the other a circular structure similar to those recorded at **Site 10**.

(SMR Ref HNH 18 NW 002)

Discussion & Recommendation

This is a shieling site probably abandoned before sheep were introduced to this area. It is likely to have been dependent on **Keppoch** rather than **Kildonan**. As the features are heavily overgrown by heather and moss there may well be other features not recognised in this area. These should be preserved and rather than leaving separate 20m exclusion zones the individual sites should be linked into one united area.

14. NH 095 886 Keppoch

'On the north bank of the Dundonnell River, in the area centred at NH 095 886, there are the remains of 26 buildings and 3 enclosures, comprising a depopulated township, which is still known locally as "Keppoch". (OS Field Investigator NKB 3.10.1964)

The settlement is now heavily overgrown with trees especially large alders along the riverside. The extent westwards was not examined and is assumed to be as previously recorded. The former fields of the settlement have largely been improved by later farmers but traces of rigs can be seen at NH 097 884, at NH 099 884 and at NH 100 884. The latter are within a large earth and stone enclosure as illustrated. The land above the settlement was not examined, though as there is a large area of reclaimed it is possible that little now survives.

[SMR Ref HNH 08 NE 001]

Discussion & Recommendations

From the census returns Keppoch wascleared by 1851 and largely by 1841. This may be connected with the substantial (agricultural improvements carried out on the estate at the beginning of the 19th century. The details of this are uncertain but may survive in the Estate Records.

The settlement is badly obscured by the growth of alder beside and within the deserted buildings and it would be desirable if these could be carefully removed to prevent further damage. The management agreement should include provision to prevent regeneration on the open areas within the settlement. The earth dykes and areas of rig cultivation should be preserved by leaving these areas unplanted. They are the last survival of an extensive system of rig cultivation that extended along the **Dundonnell River**.

APPENDIX 2

1841 Census returns - summary

Keppach 4 households totalling 18 people

Headed by Iweaver
1 carpenter
1 fisher

1 jisher 1 cottar

Kildonan 16 households totalling 46 people

Headed by 2 farmers 3 crofters 2 cottars

1 agricultural labourer

1 carpenter

Badralach 14 households totalling 66 people

Headed by 11 crofters 3 cottars

1851 Census returns - summary

Keppach no return

Kildonan 6 households totalling 25 people

Headed by 1 farmer of 20 acres arable & 800 acres pasture

1 farmer of 6 acres

1 shepherd

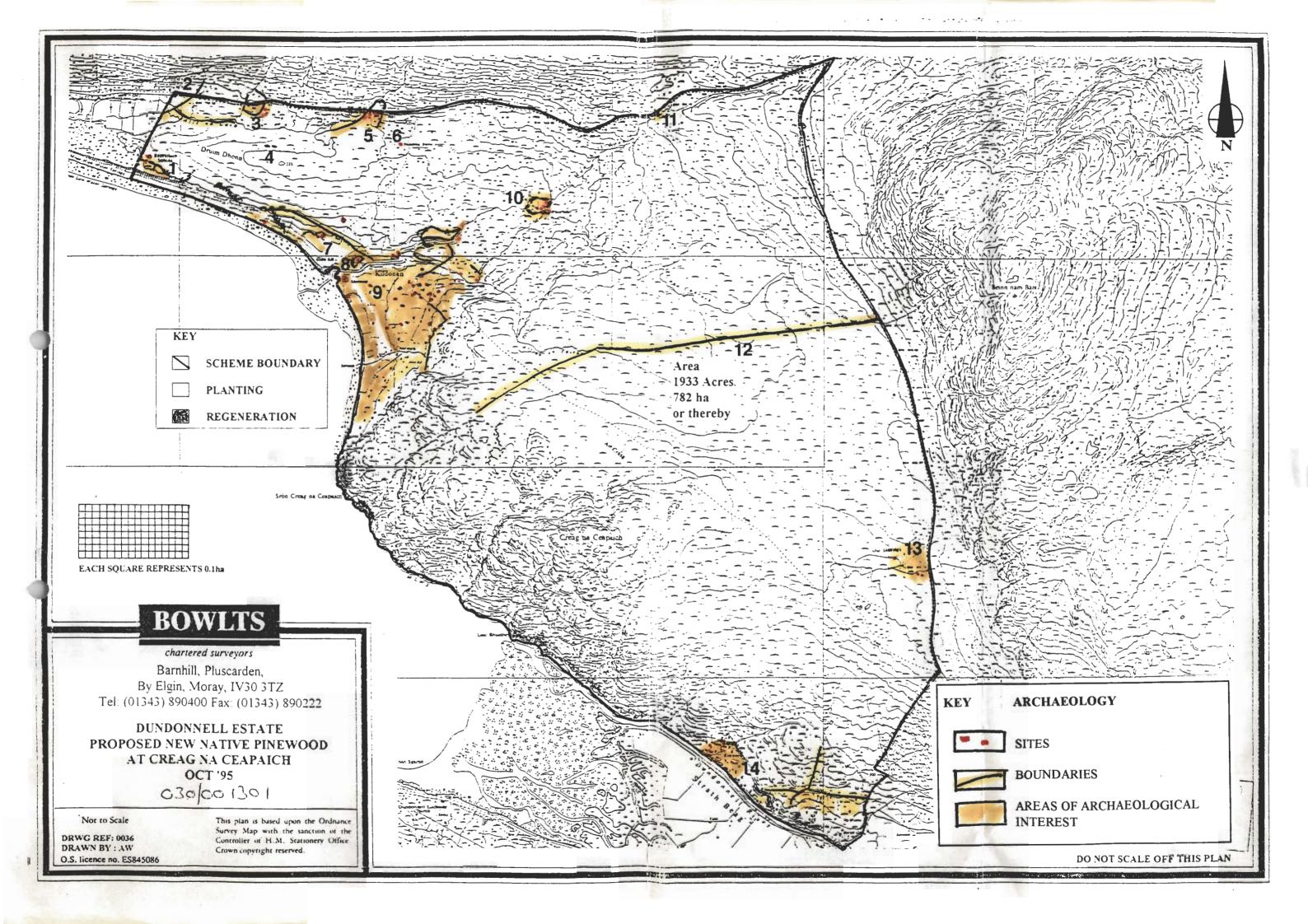
3 paupers aged 74, 77 & 80 respectively

Badraloch 18 households totalling 94 people

Headed by 11 farmers of 5-7 acres

3 crofters of 1-4 acres & 1crofter's widow

1 cottar 1 pauper





Site 3 Enclosure with 3 structures in foreground & centre, showing as raised areas in heather & bracken-clad area. Looking NW



Site 7 Building at NH 0740 9117 and associated rigs. Looking S



Site 9 General view of settlement at Kildonan with farm and old sheepfank in the foreground.

Looking SE



Site 6 Standing Stone at Kildonan Looking E



Site 6 Standing Stone at Kildonan Looking W



Site 10 General view of shielings and enclosure Looking W



Site 9 Enclosure at NH 0827 9094 Looking N



Site 9 ?Building at NH 0837 9089 Looking NE



Site 13 Grass-covered knolls & stones mark site of shielings. As can be seen these features are largely covered by vegetation. Looking W



Site 13 As above Looking NE



Site 14 General view of deserted settlement at Keppoch Looking NW



Site 14 Rig system lying E of settlement at Keppoch

Looking E