

SMR/ACC/SK

3267

**COILLE AN TORRAN**

( TORRAN )

**ISLE OF RAASAY**

**PLANTING AND WOODLAND REGENERATION PROPOSAL**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY**

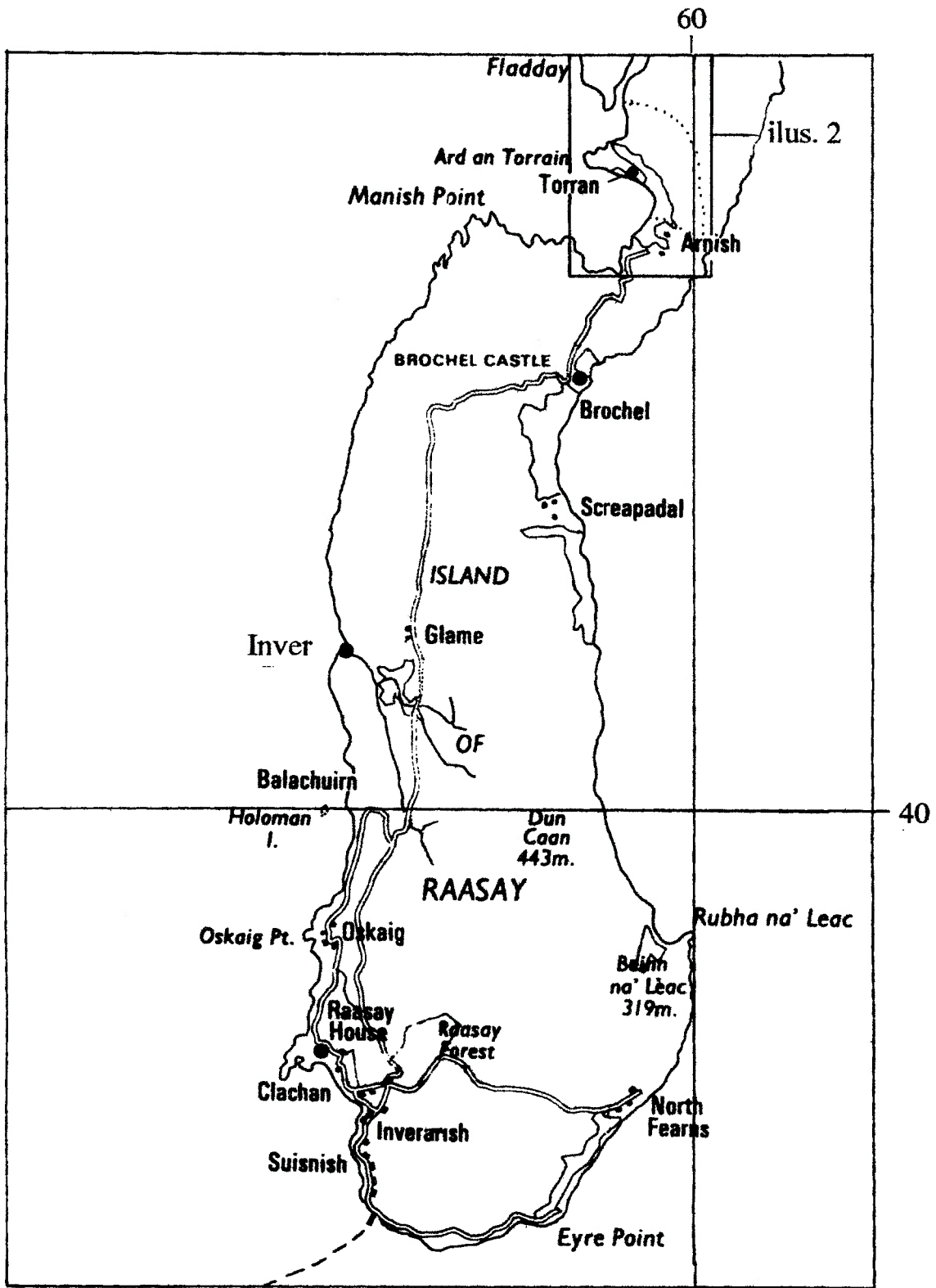
**OCTOBER 1999**

by

**Martin Wildgoose**

for

**Tilhill Economic  
Forestry Ltd**



illus. 1 : Raasay - Location of survey area.

## **1. Summary**

*An archaeological survey, (rapid walk over) of a single, distinct, area of proposed planting and natural woodland regeneration, carried out in advance of site works. The survey was commissioned by Kevin Sutton, Forester to Tihill Economic Forestry, as part of the initial environment assessment of the landscape, in order that the surviving archaeology might be highlighted and preserved.*

## **2. Introduction**

The proposed area lies at the northern end of the Island of Raasay around the northern and western sides of Loch Arnish. The area of survey, some 2.0 km long by a maximum of 1.5 km wide, lies on the wooded, rising ground on the western flanks of Meall Dearg and Meall Dearg Arnish and includes the part wooded peninsula Ard an Torrain. Native tree cover, about 40% of the proposal, consists mainly of birch and hazel with small numbers of oak, holly, rowan and aspen also present. The upper, eastern, half of the proposal consists of a wet; peat covered plateau supporting only heather and moorland grasses. The townships of Torran and Brae Arnish lie within the confines of the proposal. (See illus. 1)

## **3. The Survey**

This part of Raasay has not previously been surveyed for archaeology. There is only one entry in the Sites and Monuments Record – NG 54 NE 4 Cladh an Torrain. 1904. (See below)

*“At the east end of Torran, a small cluster of cottages on the north side of Loch Arnish, is a small disused burial ground. It lies above and behind a high rock outcrop, beneath some trees, and close to a footpath from the cottages to the school. Only a few feet across it is hemmed in against the rock by some boulders, and the burial places are marked by small stones. Local inhabitants say it was last used about 80 years ago (1820) for plague burials, mostly of small children.*

The author Richard Sharp in his book "Raasay, A Study in Island History"\* states –

*"A burial ground, Cladh an Torrain at Torran in the north of the island. No trace of it now remains."*

The current survey was carried out on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October and the 11<sup>th</sup> of November during spells of indifferent weather. A written record of each site was kept on prepared recording sheets and where it was thought appropriate sketch surveys were made.

During the 1999 survey 33 new sites were located and the exact position of the lost graveyard was recorded for the first time. (See Site 33)

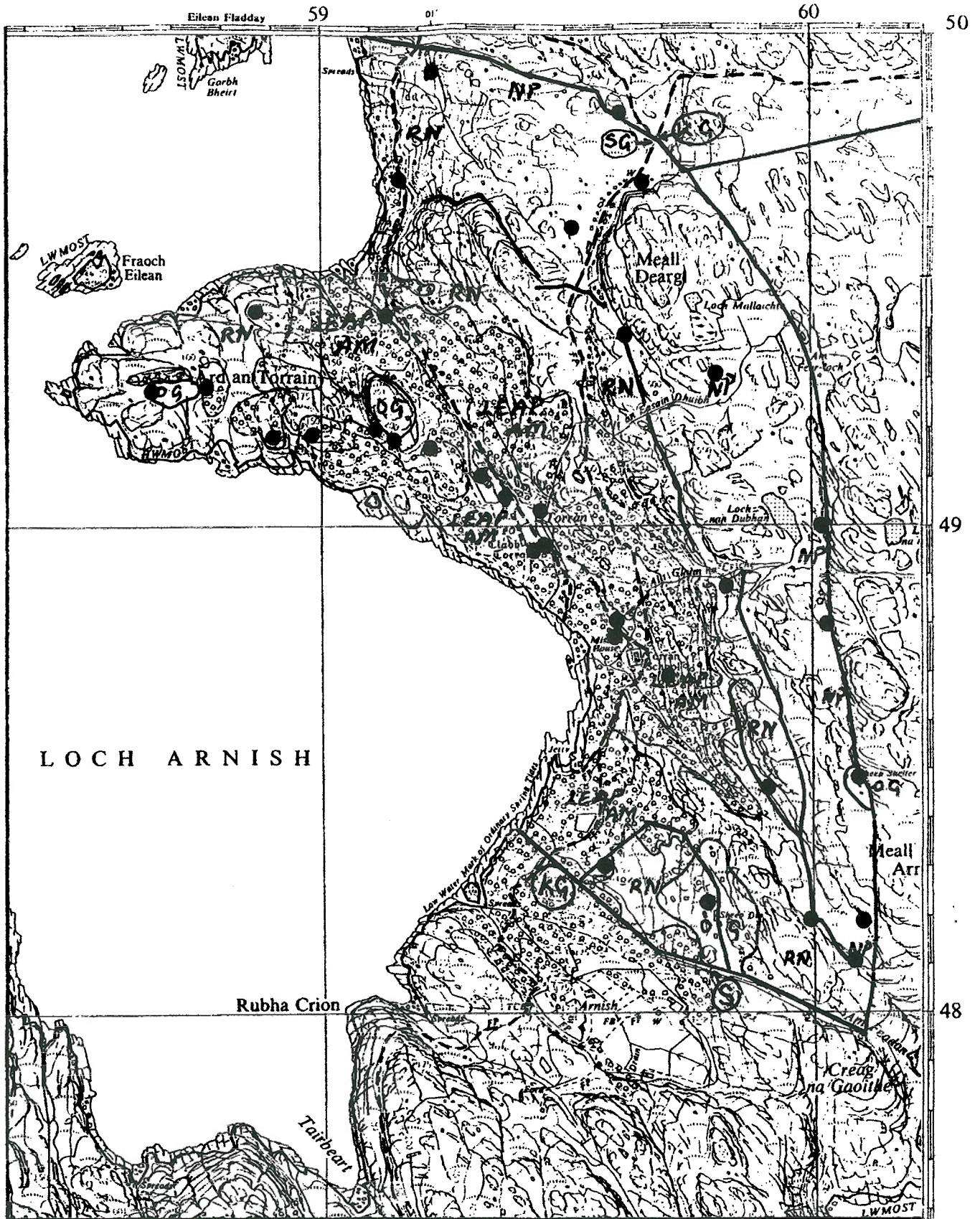
As a visual aid to intended planting and regeneration the archaeological sites have been plotted against the proposed planting and regeneration plan supplied by the contractor.

(See illus. 2)

Numerous landscape boundaries and small cultivation plots were also noted but these were not recorded as this would have required considerable time and expense above and beyond the brief for the current survey.

All site records are kept in the archive of the author.

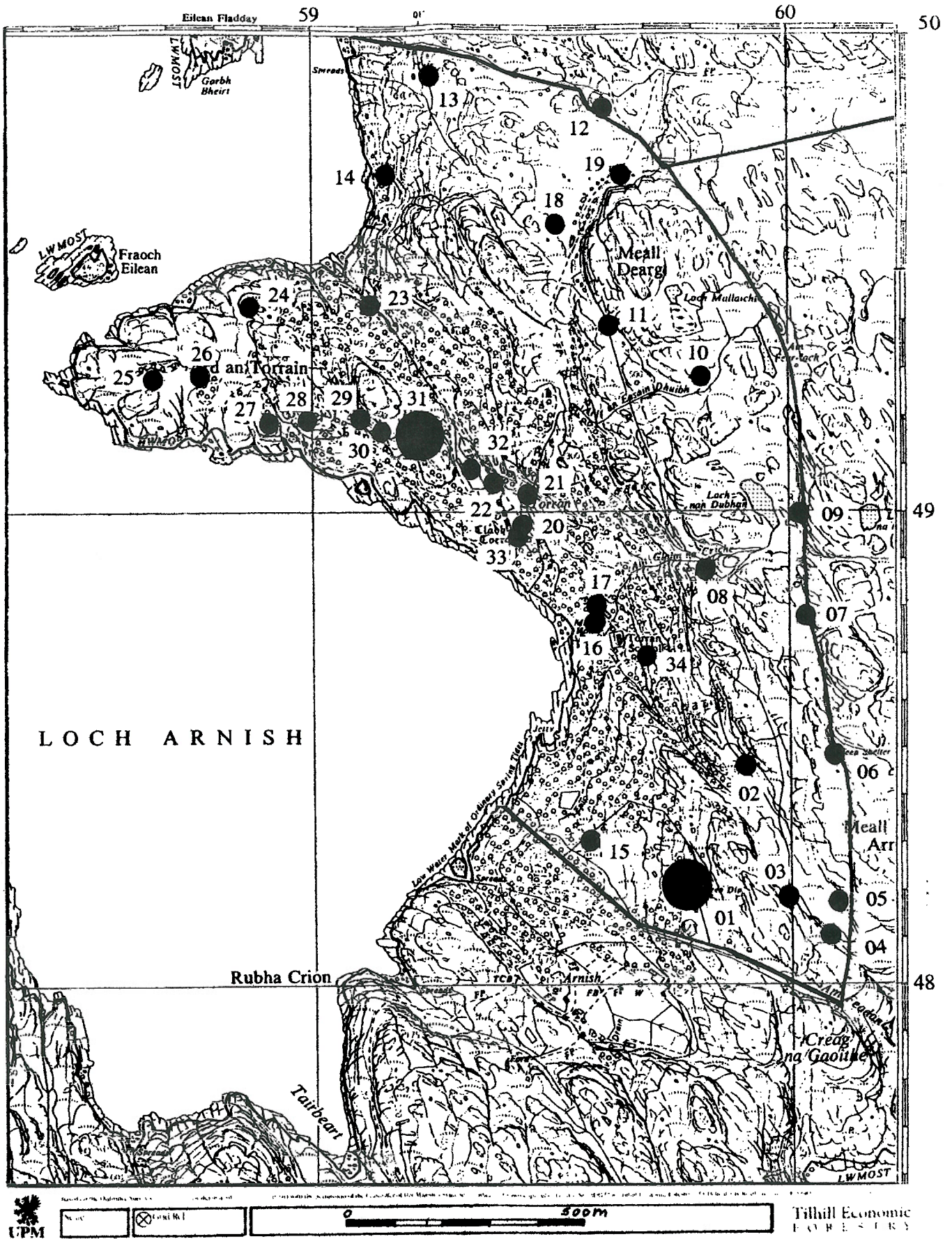
\*Sharp, R 1982 Raasay, A Study in Island History, Grant & Cutler Ltd. p 29.



UPM Tillhill Economic FORESTRY

<b>KEY.</b>	<b>LEAP/AM</b>	<b>Livestock Exclusion Annual Premium</b>
	<b>RN</b>	<b>Natural Regeneration</b>
	<b>NP</b>	<b>New Planting</b>
	<b>OG</b>	<b>Open Ground</b>
	-----	<b>Footpath</b>
	●	<b>Archaeological Site</b>

illus. 2 : Planting and Regeneration



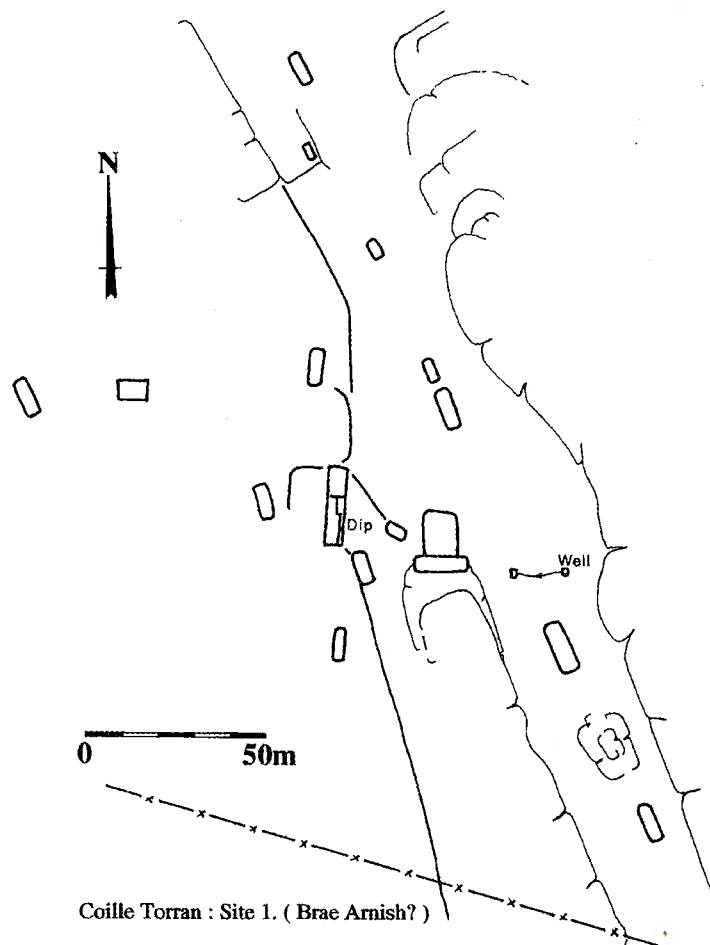
illus. 3 : Distribution of Archaeological Sites

#### 4. Results of the Survey.

##### Sites List. (For location see illus. 3)

Site No.	Type of site	Condition	OS grid ref.	Height OD
01	Township	Well preserved	NG 5980 4820	100.0m

Lying on a level, grassy plateau at the foot of the western flank of Meall Dearg Arnish is a well preserved, deserted, township (see plan below) consisting of the roofless remains of 16 well built, stone structures. The ruins represent the remains of 10 houses and 6 byres, for the main part lying on a north-west to south-east alignment. A small enclosed well is centrally placed on the east side of the Township. A large roofless structure at the centre of the group has been converted to a sheep dip. This is now out of use.



<b>Site No.</b>	<b>Site type</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>OS grid ref.</b>	<b>Height OD</b>
<b>02</b>	Pen	Well preserved	NG 5991 4843	100.0m

Lying on a south-west facing slope at the foot of a massive rocky outcrop is a beautifully built, circular stone pen. A single birch tree stands just to the south of the site. This well preserved monument still stands to its original height of 1.5m around its entire circuit. It is 9.0m in diameter over walls that are 1.0m thick at the base and 0.7m thick at the wall head. A well built entrance faces to the south-west down the slope.

<b>03</b>	Pen	Well preserved	NG 5997 4827	120.0m
-----------	-----	----------------	--------------	--------

Amongst bracken at the foot of a north-east-facing outcrop is a small stone pen that measures 2.0m in diameter over walls 0.5m thick. The walls still stand to 1.0m high. There is no visible entrance.

<b>04</b>	Pen	Well preserved	NG 6005 4810	120.0m
-----------	-----	----------------	--------------	--------

Tucked into the south-east side of a small outcrop, at the head of Am Feadam, is an egg shaped stone pen that measures 2.5m by 2.0m over walls 0.8m thick. The walls still stand to a maximum of 1.1m high. A narrow entrance faces to the east, across the slope.

<b>05</b>	Pen	Well preserved	NG 6010 4820	130.0m
-----------	-----	----------------	--------------	--------

Lying on a south-west facing slope at the head of Am Feadam and just 80.0m to the north of Site 04 is a square, stone built pen. The pen measures 2.0m by 2.0m over walls 0.6m thick and standing to 1.2m high. A well-preserved entrance faces along the slope to the south-east.

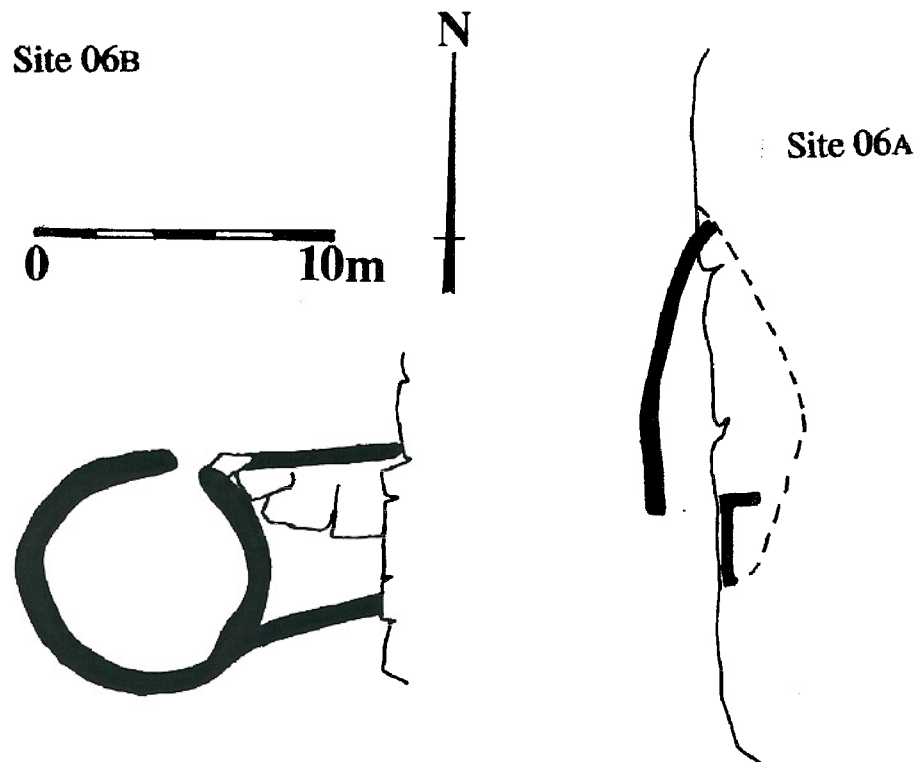


Site No.	Type of Site	Condition	OS grid ref.	Height OD
06A	Sheep shelter/Pen	Well preserved	NG 60084848	160.0m

In the base of the west-facing cliff, which lies on the western flank of Meall Dear Arnish, and marked on the OS map as a sheep shelter, is a natural rock overhang which has been converted to a small covered pen. The rock overhang measures some 12.0m long by 3.0m deep and is almost 2.0m high. A small drystone pen has been constructed beneath this natural overhang. It measure's 3.0m long by almost 3.0m deep over a wall which still stands to 1.5m high. A second length of wall, now collapsed, once enclosed the remainder of the shelter. (See plan 06A below).

### 06B

About 50.0m to the north of the shelter is a well preserved, circular stone pen which measures 8.0m in diameter over walls 1.0m thick and still over 1.0m high. Several small pens are visible amongst the rocks around the pen. A well-preserved entrance faces north.



<b>Site No.</b>	<b>Type of Site</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>OS grid ref.</b>	<b>Height OD</b>
<b>07</b>	Rock shelter/Pen	Well preserved	NG 6017 4882	160.0m

At the foot of the west-facing cliffs, about 300.0m to the north of Site 06, is a second natural overhang, this has also been walled in to form a small pen. This overhang measures only 4.0m long by 2.0m deep and is almost 2.0m high. A well made, stone wall has been constructed across the mouth of the shelter forming an enclosed pen. A narrow entrance lies in the centre of the wall.

<b>08</b>	Pen	Well preserved	NG 5982 4987	140.0m
-----------	-----	----------------	--------------	--------

On a south-west-facing terrace, against a low cliff and just 12.0m to the south of the Allt Glaim na Criche, is a small pen. This boulder built pen measures 4.0m by 3.0m over walls that still stand to 1.2m high. A narrow entrance, 0.5m wide, faces to the south-west. This site is partially hidden amongst many large boulders.

<b>09</b>	Pen	Ruinous	NG 6003 4900	185.0m
-----------	-----	---------	--------------	--------

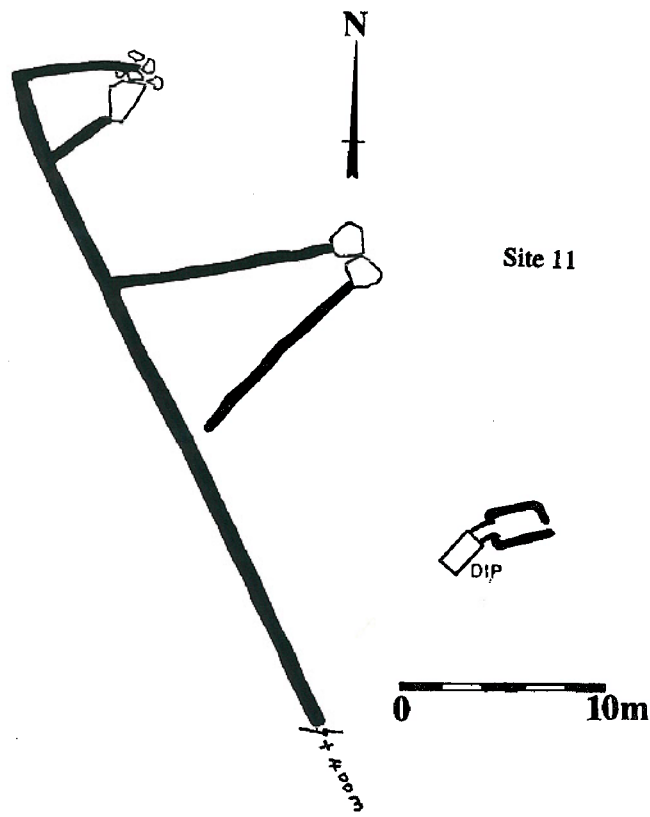
Set against the foot of the west facing cliffs, overlooking the east shore of Loch nan Dubhan, is a ruinous stone built pen. Built in the shape of half a circle this structure measures 3.0m long by 2.0m deep over walls that have now collapsed.

<b>10</b>	Pen	Ruinous	NG 5981 4934	170.0m
-----------	-----	---------	--------------	--------

Built against the foot of a small rocky outcrop, on the north side of the Allt an Easain Dhuibh, is a ruinous, half-circular pen. It measures 2.0m long by 1.5m deep. There is no obvious entrance.

Site No.	Type of Site	Condition	OS grid ref.	Height OD
11	Pens/Dip	Well preserved	NG 5963 4939	140.0m

Lying at the foot of the west facing cliffs, below the summit of Meall Dearg, is a group of related, stone built features consisting of two pens, a driving wall and a sheep dip. The dip lies at the south end of the group and consists of a well-built sunken tank with a draining pen at its upper, eastern end. Approximately 13.0m to the north of the dip is a triangular pen which measures 11.0m long by 2.5m wide at its east end and 9.0m wide at its west end. A 1.0m wide entrance lies at the south end of the west wall. A second triangular pen lies 6.0m to the north of the first, it measures 5.0m long by 3.0m at its east end and 5.0m at its west end. There is no entrance into this second pen. Leading up to the first pen, and butting up to the west side of its entrance is a long “driving” wall which runs in a southerly direction, away from the pen, for about 400.0m. (See plan below)



Site No.	Type of Site	Condition	OS grid ref.	Height OD
12	Hut circle/bothy	Ruinous	NG 5961 4984	130.0m

Lying just to the north of a small burn, and only 2.0m outwith the boundary of the proposed Woodland Grant Scheme is a complex site consisting of several structures one on top of another. The latest structure on the site appears to be a small dry-stone bothy. This lies on the ruins of a multi-cell shieling, which in turn lies on and within the remains of a 12.0m diameter hut circle.

**Although this site lies outwith the proposal its closeness to the boundary leaves it vulnerable to fencing activities.**

13	Shielings (2)	Degraded	NG 5923 4989	80.0m
----	---------------	----------	--------------	-------

On a natural terrace, immediately to the east and above the Fladday path, are the remains of two single cell shielings. The western cell, which lies close to the edge of the terrace, measures 4.0m by 3.0m over walls which have spread to 1.0m in width. The second cell lies 15.0m to the east against a small rocky outcrop and measures 1.5m in diameter. Scattered around the shielings are a number of small heaps of stone - possibly clearance for cultivation.

14	Shelter	Well preserved	NG 5914 4971	30.0m
----	---------	----------------	--------------	-------

Constructed under an overhanging cliff face immediately to the east of the shore path to Fladday is a beautifully constructed dry-stone shelter. The shelter measures 2.0m long by 1.5m wide and is almost 2.0m high. The interior consists of a single, dry, rock ledge that runs the full length of the shelter. A wild rose guards the entrance.

<b>Site No.</b>	<b>Type of Site</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>OS grid ref.</b>	<b>Height OD</b>
<b>15</b>	Byre and yard	Ruinous	NG 5960 4830	50.0m

Lying just within birch woodland and 50.0m to the south-east of the Arnish to Torran path is a collapsed stone walled enclosure containing a ruinous stone byre. The enclosure, which has been robbed of much of its wall stone, measures 13.0m long by 9.0m wide over a wall which is 0.8m thick. A ruinous entrance, 1.1m wide, lies close to the centre of the north-east facing wall. Built within the enclosure and overlying part of its south-west wall is a ruinous byre which measures 5.0m long by 3.5m wide over walls 0.8m thick and 1.1m high. A narrow entrance lies at the south-east end of the north-east facing wall, directly opposite the entrance into the enclosure.

<b>16</b>	Ring cairn	Well preserved	NG 5958 4877	20.0m
-----------	------------	----------------	--------------	-------

On a level terrace, directly below the Mission House at Torran, is a well preserved but somewhat denuded ring cairn 5.0m in diameter and about 1.0m in height. Set around the base of the cairn is a ring of largish stones; some set on edge, which acts as a kerb to the mound of smaller stones within. The mound has collapsed over the kerb in places.

Four metres to the east of the cairn, and close to a short flight of steps leading up to the Mission House, is the stony outline of a small, cleared, garden plot.

<b>17</b>	House	Ruinous	NG 5960 4880	25.0m
-----------	-------	---------	--------------	-------

Lying in dense undergrowth at the north-west end of the Torran Mission House, on a north-west to south-east alignment, is a ruinous dry-stone walled house. This house measures 9.0m long by 4.0m wide over walls that are 0.8m thick and still stand to 1.0m high. A pair of doors face on to the path running along the south-west face of the building.

<b>Site No.</b>	<b>Type of Site</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>OS grid ref.</b>	<b>Height OD</b>
<b>18</b>	Pen	Ruinous	NG 5945 4961	130.0m

Tucked under the north-east side of a low rock outcrop, about 70.0m to the north-west of the Torran to Umachan path and overlooked by the imposing bulk of Meall Dearg, is a ruinous pen. This sub-circular pen measures 1.1m in overall diameter over walls that have tumbled into ruin. There is no entrance.

<b>19</b>	Well	Well preserved	NG 5965 4970	130.0m
-----------	------	----------------	--------------	--------

Lying on open, level ground about 6.0m to the west side of the Torran to Umachan path and directly under the high cliffs on the north-west side of Meall Dearg is a small enclosed well. This well consists of a shallow tank, still containing clear water, which has been surrounded by a low stone wall on all sides but that facing the path. It is likely that a flat slab once capped the wall to prevent debris entering the water. The overflow from the well runs under the path in a narrow channel, eventually finding its way down the hill in a westerly direction.

<b>20</b>	Byre ?	Degraded	NG 5947 4891	40.0m
-----------	--------	----------	--------------	-------

Abutting the south-west side of the Torran path, approximately 80.0m to the south-east of the old post office, are the grassed over foundations of a small stone building. This building measures 6.0m by 4.0m over walls 1.0m thick. The north-east end of the building appears to have been truncated by the path, perhaps indicating that the path post-dates the ruin. There is now no obvious door opening and it is possible that evidence for a door was removed when the path cut through the end of the building.

<b>Site No.</b>	<b>Type of Site</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>OS grid ref.</b>	<b>Height OD</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>Ruin</b>	<b>Degraded</b>	<b>NG 5945 4902</b>	<b>40.0m</b>

Lying 20.0m to the north-east of the Torran path and about 60.0m to the north-east of the old post office is a complex series of overlapping ruins. Immediately visible is a square cornered ruin measuring 11.0m by 6.0m over walls 1.0m thick.

This structure has a ruinous door opening in the centre of its south-west wall. A small pen, which measures 2.0m square internally, has been constructed within the north corner of this building.

Underlying the above ruin, and sharing its north-east wall, are the foundations of a larger stone structure. This earlier building lies on the same alignment and measures 12.0m long by 7.0m wide over walls which are 1.0m thick. There is no visible door opening into this structure.

<b>22</b>	<b>Well</b>	<b>Well preserved</b>	<b>NG 5938 4906</b>	<b>40.0m</b>
-----------	-------------	-----------------------	---------------------	--------------

Lying by the west side of the Torran to Fladday path, about 60.0m to the north of the old post office, is a beautifully preserved well. This well consists of a shallow tank, 0.75m square, surrounded on three sides by a low stone wall, the south side being left open for access. Crystal clear water still runs through the well.

<b>23</b>	<b>Bothy</b>	<b>Well preserved</b>	<b>NG 5918 4935</b>	<b>40.0m</b>
-----------	--------------	-----------------------	---------------------	--------------

About 10.0m to the west of the Torran to Fladday path, at the foot of a small cliff and just over a modern wire fence, is a well preserved, stone built, bothy. Lacking only its roof this structure stands to 1.2m high, is 2.0m in diameter and has a narrow entrance, 0.75m wide, facing the path.

Site No.	Type of Site	Condition	OS grid ref.	Height OD
24	Standing stone	Well preserved	NG 5888 4941	35.0m

On the summit of a low bluff, overlooking a small rocky cove, on the north side of Ard an Torrain, is a single, standing stone. This stone stands 0.8m high, is 0.3m wide and 0.15m thick. Large stones have been packed around the base of the stone to prevent it falling over.

25	Cultivation	Well preserved	NG 5870 4928	25.0m
----	-------------	----------------	--------------	-------

Lying to the south side of a low rocky outcrop, close to the western end of Ard an Torrain, is a compact area of lazy bed cultivation. The lazy beds lie on a north to south alignment and vary in width from 2m – 4m. A narrow drain which once kept the area dry is now choked with weed and the lazy beds are now for the most part flooded and rush covered.

26	Pen	Degraded	NG 5875 4933	25.0m
----	-----	----------	--------------	-------

At the foot of a small, south facing outcrop and just under the birch woodland that lies at the east end of the cultivation mentioned in Site 25, is a small pen. The pen is stone built, uses the outcrop as its north side and measures 3.5m long by 2.0m wide over walls 0.6m thick. A narrow entrance lies at the east end of the pen.

27	'U' Enclosure	Degraded	NG 5886 4914	25.0m
----	---------------	----------	--------------	-------

On a natural ledge, under birch woodland, overlooking the north shore of Loch Arnish is a ruined, stone built 'U' shaped enclosure. The enclosure measures 3.0m in diameter over walls 1.0m thick. The interior face of the wall consists of large, thin slabs set on their edges, while the outer face and core of the wall is built in the conventional manner. The entrance or open end of the enclosure is 1.1m wide and faces south, to the shore.



<b>Site No.</b>	<b>Type of Site</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>OS grid ref.</b>	<b>Height OD</b>
<b>28</b>	Pen	Ruinous	NG 5893 4923	25.0m

At the foot of a small, west facing cliff lying under birch woodland is a small sub-rectangular pen. The pen is stone built, uses the rock face as its east side and measures 4.0m by 3.0m over walls 0.6m thick. The west wall of the pen still stands to over 0.7m high. A collapsed entrance lies in the south-west corner of the pen.

<b>29</b>	Pen	Well preserved	NG 5907 4921	20.0m
-----------	-----	----------------	--------------	-------

Lying beneath a large holly tree, which is growing out of the west facing side of a massive rocky outcrop, is a well preserved pen. The pen is stone built, uses the outcrop as its east side, and measures 3.5m long by 2.0m wide over walls which are 0.6m thick and still stand to over 1.1m high. An entrance 0.8m wide lies at the south end of the pen.

<b>30</b>	Pen	Very degraded	NG 5914 4918	20.0m
-----------	-----	---------------	--------------	-------

Lying on the west side of the same massive outcrop as Site 29, and only 30.0m to the south, is a very degraded stone pen. The pen is wedge shaped and built into a small angle in the cliff face. It measures only 1.5m in diameter over a wall now much collapsed. There is no visible entrance. A well-built boulder wall abuts the cliff just to the north of the pen.

<b>31</b>	Settlement	Well preserved	NG 5923 4915	40.0m
-----------	------------	----------------	--------------	-------

Lying on a level grassy plateau amongst rocky outcrops and woodland, and clearly visible on the OS 6" map, is a small settlement consisting of seven related structures. (See plan below). At the centre of the group is a well built stone house with rounded corners which measures 12.0m north-south by 5.0m east-west over walls which are 1.0m thick and still stand to over 1.5m high. The interior of this structure is divided into two compartments, The northern room

having a fireplace at its north end. A central door-opening, flanked by equally placed windows, lies in the east-facing wall.

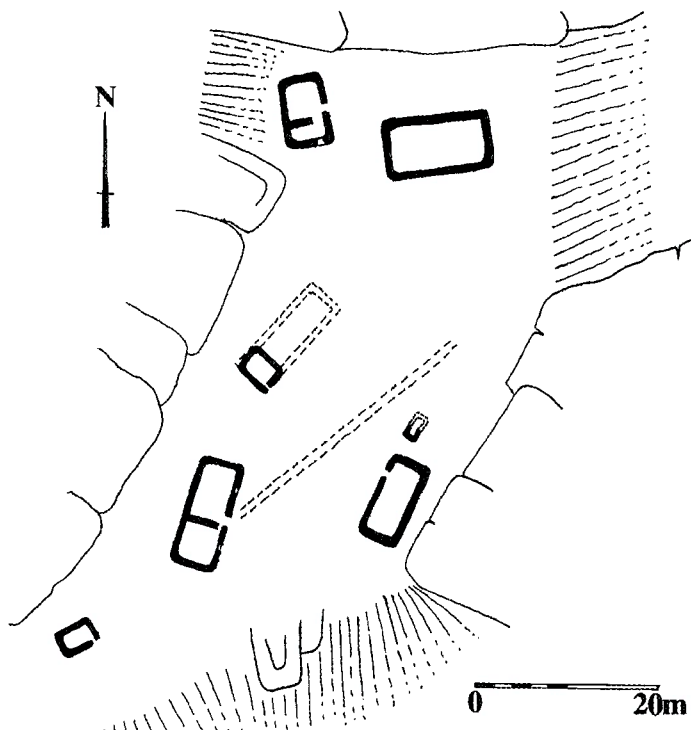
To the south-west is a small stone byre which measures 4.0m by 3.0m over walls 0.8m thick.

To the north is a second byre which also measures 4.0m by 3.0m over walls of a similar width. This second byre however overlies the remains of an older house, whose foundations, barely visible under the grass, measure 12.0m by 4.5m overall.

A further 14.0m to the north is a well preserved stone structure which measures 7.0m by 5.0m over walls 1.1m thick. The interior of this building is again divided into two compartments. A well-defined entrance lies in the centre of the east-facing wall.

A ruinous kale yard lies 5.0m to the east of the above building. This yard lies on an east-west alignment and measures 12.0m by 7.0m over walls which are 0.7m thick.

On the east side of the clearing, and some 17.0m to the east of the first building described is a ruinous structure which measures 9.0m by 5.0m over walls 0.7m thick. The partial foundations of a small byre? lie under the bracken 2.0m to the north-east of this structure.



Site 31

<b>Site No.</b>	<b>Type of Site</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>OS grid ref.</b>	<b>Height OD</b>
<b>32</b>	Settlement	Ruinous	NG 5933 4910	35.0m

On a small, grassy knoll just 25.0m to the west of the Torran to Fladday path is a much disturbed mass of stone which vaguely resembles a two-compartment pen. Lying 25.0m to the north-west, and connected to it by an intermittent stone dyke, are the foundations of a large, stone built house. This structure lies on a north-south alignment and measures 15.0m by 6.0m over walls 1.1m thick. The interior is divided into two equal compartments. Numerous small cultivation plots and short lengths of boundary dyke lie around these two structures.

<b>33</b>	Graveyard	Well preserved	NG 5945 4893	30.0m
-----------	-----------	----------------	--------------	-------

A small enclosed graveyard, now hidden by dense bracken, lies just 50.0m to the west of the path and 60.0m to the south-east of the old post office on the top of a low cliff. The graveyard is enclosed by a low outcrop on its west side, a rocky knoll on its east side and by short lengths of drystone dyke at the north and south ends. The enclosed area measures 6.0m by 2.0m. A small cairn now marks the position of the graveyard.

<b>34</b>	Pen	Ruinous	NG 5968 4870	50.0m
-----------	-----	---------	--------------	-------

Situated under birch woodland on the hillside to the south-east of the old school is a ruined pen. The pen is set against the west face of a low outcrop, is sub-circular in plan and measures 3.0m by 2.5m overall. There is no obvious entrance.

## **5. Conclusions**

The planting and regeneration map supplied with the request for survey was not detailed enough for a correlation to be made between archaeological sites and the proposed planting plan. It is, however, clear that a number of archaeological sites lie close to or within areas of proposed new planting or natural regeneration. It can be stated with some certainty that:-

- A. Site 12 lies outwith the boundaries of the survey .
- B. Sites 01, 06, and 25 currently lie within proposed open areas.
- C. Sites 14, 15, 16, 17, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33 and 34 currently lie under existing woodland.

The proposed designation of the areas around the remainder of the archaeological sites is unclear with sites 20, 21, 22, 31 and 32 probably falling within livestock exclusion zones and sites 02, 03, 04, 05, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 13, 18, 19 and 24 falling within areas of either natural regeneration or new planting.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 That those sites which currently lie under existing woodland be monitored to prevent the setting of young trees upon the remains.
- 6.2 That, in the case of natural regeneration, young trees be actively removed from within the 5.0m exclusion zone around each archaeological site.
- 6.3 That a 5.0m exclusion zone (no trees) be left around all sites within areas of proposed new planting.
- 6.4 That site 33, the graveyard, be cleared of trees and overgrowth, fenced off and marked as a graveyard.

- 6.5 That care be taken when fencing close to site 12. The site should not be over-run by tracked vehicles. Stones from the site should not be used for the packing of turners or strainers or for the filling of gaps beneath the wire.
- 6.6 Although, in this instance, boundary dykes have not been recorded, care should be taken that trees are not planted upon the existing dyke system.

End

Martin Wildgoose 12/11/99