
SCOTTISH URBAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST LTD

*Archaeological Watching
Brief
on
Torr Mor
near Kildonan
Sutherland*

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abstract

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on Torr Mor (NC 9237 1920), near Kildonan by the Scottish Urban Archaeological Trust on Wednesday 11th and Thursday 12th March 1998. The work was occasioned by the construction of a telecommunications mast and associated access route at this location. The watching brief was commissioned by Medlock Communications on behalf of their clients Cellnet Ltd. Specifications for the archaeological recording work were prepared by the Highland Council Archaeology Service. In view of the presence of significant archaeological remains in the immediate vicinity of the mast site and access route, all stages of their construction was monitored. No archaeological finds or features were discovered during the monitoring of the site groundworks.

1. Site Location and Description

Torr Mor lies approximately 15 kilometres NW of Helmsdale, near Kildonan Lodge, on the south side of the Kildonan Strath (Fig 1). The mast construction site occupies the eastern end of a slight spur (approximately 350 m OD), overlooking the river valley. An access track of 130 m was constructed across open moorland to link the mast site with the existing unclassified track and road (Fig 2).

2. Circumstances and Objectives of the Work

The presence of significant remains on Torr Mor necessitated archaeological consultation in the planning stages of this construction project. The present location for the mast and access track was selected only after discussion with Highland Council Archaeology Service, a previous location having been rejected on account of its proximity to known archaeological features.

In view of the likelihood of new discoveries, monitoring of any construction was desirable to minimise the impact on the archaeological resource. To this end a condition was attached to the planning application which would only be discharged when a watching brief had taken place. The specification for this watching brief was produced by Highland Council Archaeology Service. A copy of the specification is contained within this report (Appendix 1).

3. Archaeological Background

The recorded features on Torr Mor form part of a wider multi-period upland archaeological landscape whose temporal span stretches from prehistory to modern times (Fig 2). Key features of this landscape are the Broch and Long Cairn; both features are Scheduled Ancient Monuments and as such are accorded protection under law. These monuments are to be found a little distance to the south of Torr Mor. To the west of the unclassified road, traces of probable later prehistoric settlement, cultivation and grazing are to be found. These activities are preserved in the archaeological record in the form of hut circles, enclosures and field systems. The remains on Torr Mor itself also belong to this category (Fig 2 and photographs in Appendix). Here a settlement of three hut circles has been recorded (Highland Council Archaeology Service SMR No NC91NW0015); surrounding this is a field system measuring six hectares, comprising clearance heaps, lynchets and traces of field walls.

4. Methodology

All areas affected by groundworks were to be examined for upstanding features prior to the commencement of the construction. In the event of any significant discoveries at this stage, a revised site for the mast or route for the track was to be agreed by the archaeologist and the contractors. If this was not practical, whether through the presence of extensive remains or contractors' constructional requirements, our aim was to minimise the disturbance to the archaeological resource. Any significant features which, through necessity, had to be damaged or destroyed would be recorded to professional standards.

To minimise the chance of damage to any unknown features the construction of the track was to be carried out in two stages. Firstly the heather and topsoil would be machined off. After this the entire length of the route would be walked for any trace of archaeological features. If nothing was visible after this initial inspection then machining to the contractors' required depth could commence.

5. Conditions affecting Fieldwork

Over the two day period of the watching brief the weather was inclement, although not serious enough to affect archaeological visibility during the important initial machining of the access track.

6. Results

No features or finds were identified during the construction of the mast or machining of the access track. An extensive photographic record of all groundworks was kept throughout the period of the watching brief (examples in Appendix).

7. General Comments and Recommendations

In order to minimise the impact of any similar projects on the archaeological resource, it seems advisable to follow the methodology adopted here in respect of walking the proposed route prior to the commencement of groundworks. In the event of any unexpected discoveries it is likely that a revised route, avoiding any significant features, can be agreed upon. To facilitate this avoidance strategy on future projects it would be helpful if the building contractors could supply more accurate drawings of proposed mast site and accompanying access track. The existence of accurate plans helps locate proposed groundworks in relation to existing archaeological features. Accurate location is also an essential part of the recording process of any remains to be damaged or destroyed during construction.

8. Acknowledgements

This watching brief was commissioned by Medlock Communications on behalf of their clients Cellnet Ltd. The Trust would like to thank Douglas Keith and David Shand of Medlock Communications for their assistance. We would also acknowledge the Highland Council Archaeology Service for their curatorial role, in particular we would like to thank Allison Fox, Assistant Archaeologist.

FIG 1

SITE LOCATION

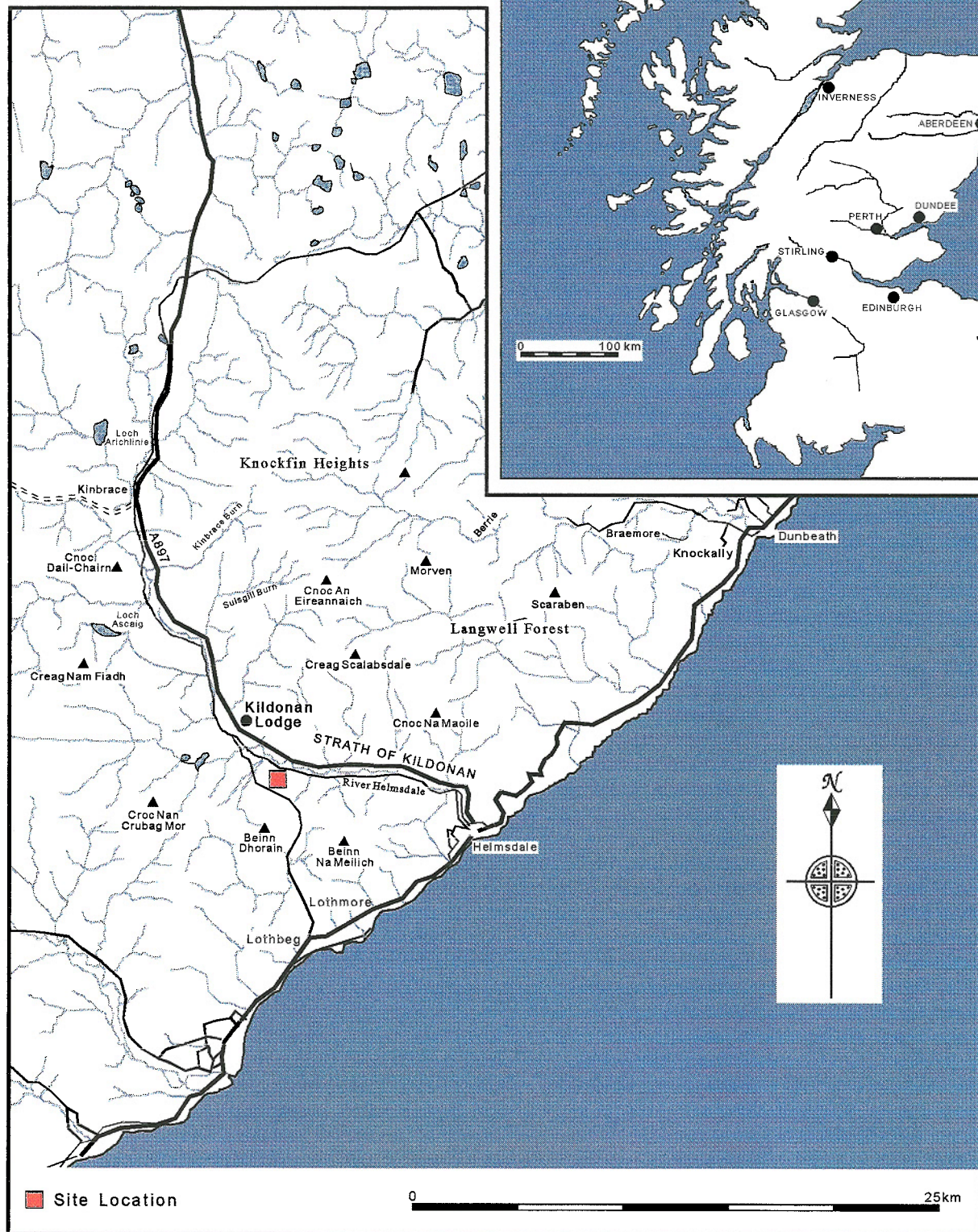
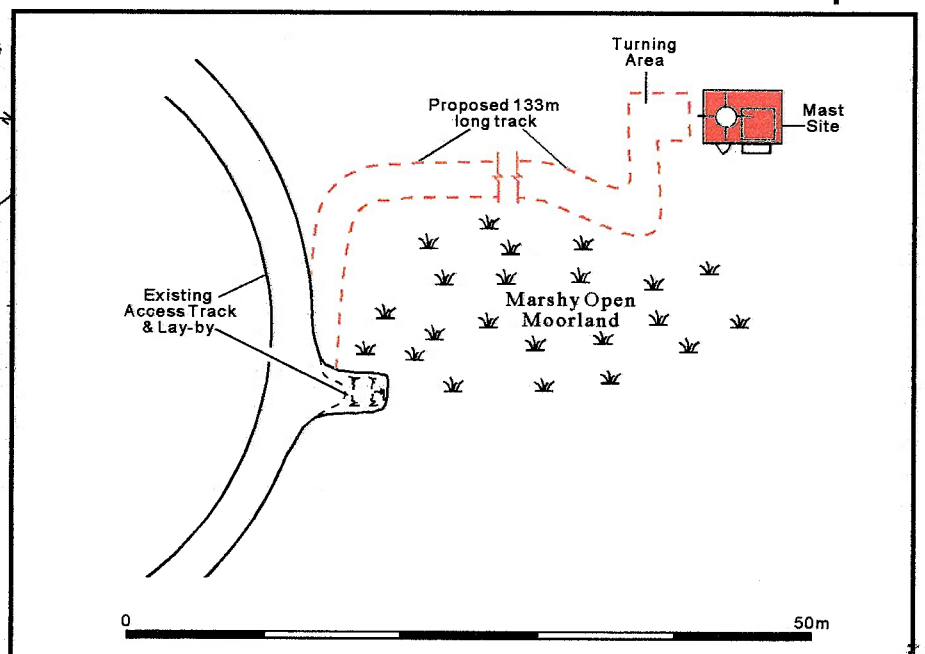
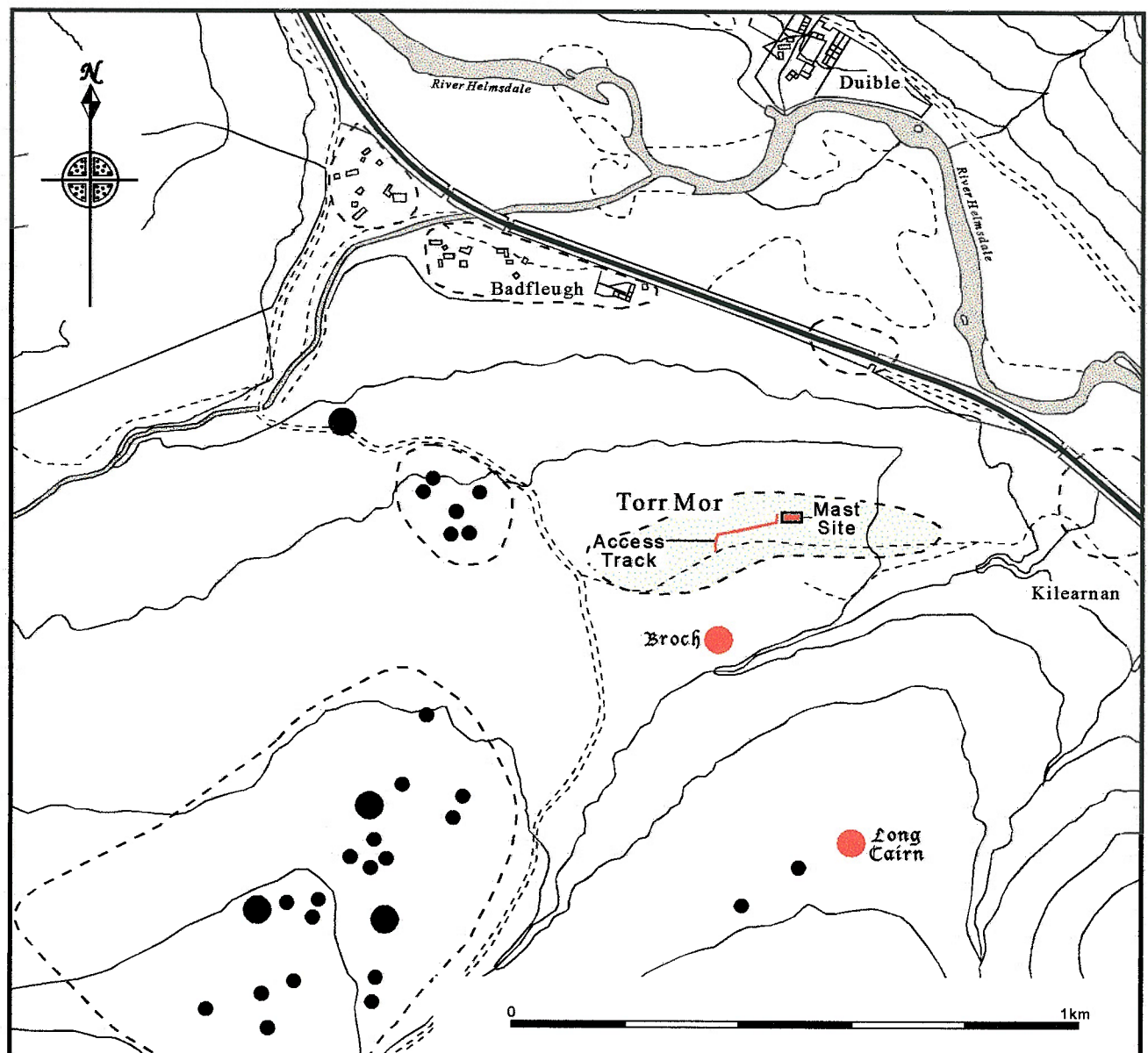


FIG 2

Location of Mast Site & Access Track in relation to nearby Archaeological Sites



- ● Hut Circles & Enclosures
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments

HIGHLAND COUNCIL
Cultural and Leisure Services
ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE

**Specification for archaeological work
prepared for Cellnet Ltd.**

Torr Mor, Kildonan Lodge, Sutherland

Archaeological Watching Brief

Background

This specification has been produced due to the construction of telecommunications apparatus and associated access route at the above location.

Terms of Reference

This specification is for archaeological recording work at Torr Mor, NC 9237 1920 occasioned by Telecommunications Cell no. 6419. It is based on documents enclosed. If these details are changed a new specification will be needed. It is valid until 31.3.98 after which if no work has been carried out a revised specification will be needed.

The specification has been produced for Cellnet Ltd. who will be responsible for the work, including all tendering and contractual arrangements. Estimates should be obtained from archaeological contractors on the basis of this specification. It is for a *minimum* standard of work; a higher standard may be offered and accepted.

Any reference to 'archaeologist' in this specification is to be taken to mean a qualified and experienced practitioner acceptable to the Highland Archaeologist. This is to ensure that work is carried out to professional standards. The project should be carried out by, or under the immediate direction of, a Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists or an archaeologist of equivalent standing.

Objectives

1. To record, to professional standards, any features and objects of archaeological importance that will be damaged or destroyed by this development.

Method

A watching brief will be conducted by an archaeologist on site groundworks so that any finds or features of importance can be recorded to professional standards.

Those carrying out site works will need to work closely with the archaeologist and provide all necessary access and other arrangements.

Monitoring

1. The Highland Archaeologist will normally monitor projects to ensure that specifications are met.
2. Monitoring will normally be by unannounced site visit. Alternative or additional monitoring arrangements may be made in individual cases.
3. Prior notice of fieldwork starting dates, with contact names and local addresses, telephone numbers and directions and other arrangements for access must be given to the Highland Archaeologist.
4. Any unexpectedly significant or complex discoveries, or any other unexpected occurrences or conditions which might affect the agreed project work or its timetable or cost must be notified immediately to the client and the Highland Archaeologist so that revised arrangements can be made.

Reporting

1. Project report

At least FOUR copies of the project report must be produced.

- * One copy for the client Cellnet Ltd.
- * Two copies for the Highland Sites and Monuments Record, Old School, High Street, Clachnaharry, Inverness IV3 6RB where it will be available for immediate consultation by the public.
- * One copy to be deposited in the National Monuments Record for Scotland, John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX.

The report must be submitted to the Highland Archaeologist within 2 weeks of the completion of the work.

The report must include, as a minimum,

1. Location plan showing the project area and archaeological sites and features affected
2. Circumstances and objectives of this work, including a copy of this specification
3. Weather and other conditions affecting fieldwork
4. Plans, drawings and photographs of archaeological features noted
5. A full index to any records or other material generated by the project including its location
6. Details of any measures proposed to mitigate the impact of the application on the archaeological resource
7. A brief analysis of the project results drawing in comparative data as appropriate.
8. General comments and proposals for future archaeological projects arising from the carrying out of this project

The completed report will be available for immediate public consultation for research purposes at the Highland Sites and Monuments Record.

2. Treasure Trove

The Project Director must liaise with the Assistant Curator (Archaeology) at Inverness Museum and Art Gallery prior to the start of fieldwork, regarding possible emergency conservation needs and future storage arrangements. Provision must also be made for a cataloguing system for artefactual material which will be compatible with the needs of the institution receiving these finds. Any report to the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer must be copied to the Highland Archaeologist.

3. Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

A brief summary of the results must be sent to the Council For Scottish Archaeology for inclusion in Discovery and Excavation in Scotland.

General

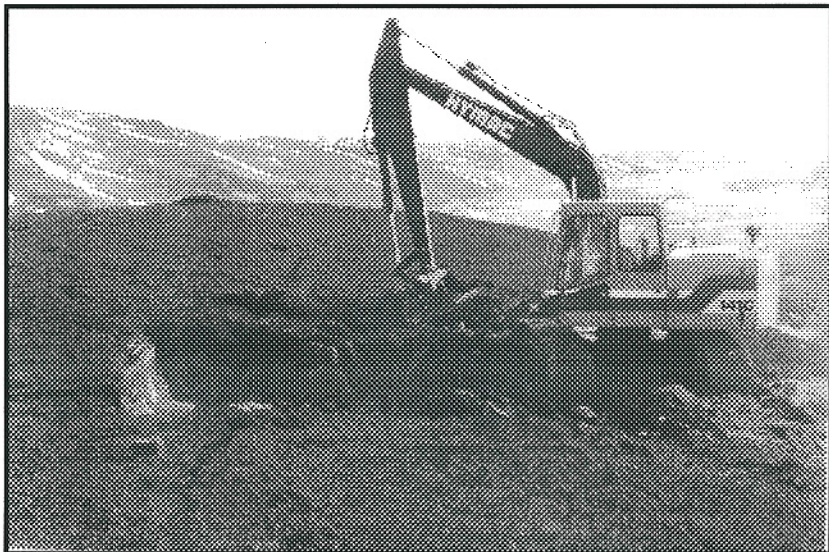
1. The archaeologist appointed must be of a professional standing acceptable to the Highland Archaeologist and must carry out the work according to the Code of Conduct, standards and guidelines of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
2. The archaeologist is responsible for taking all necessary measures to conform with the Health and Safety at Work Acts and be covered by all necessary insurances.
3. The archaeologist must agree a timetable for the work with the client and the Highland Archaeologist
4. The archaeologist appointed will not comment to the press or other media without prior approval from the Highland Archaeologist
5. Proper provision must be made for prevailing weather conditions in northern Scotland

Allison Fox
Assistant Archaeologist.
March 1998.

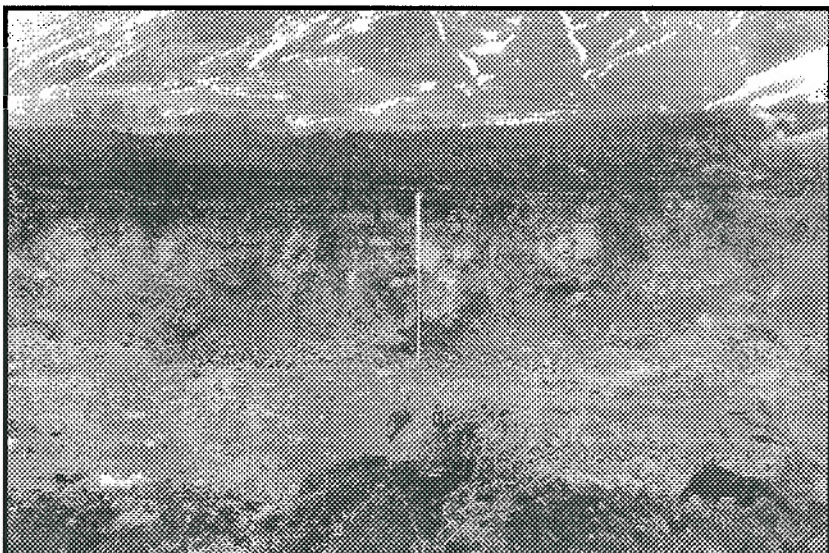
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Excavating the mast trench on Torr Mor summit, looking West



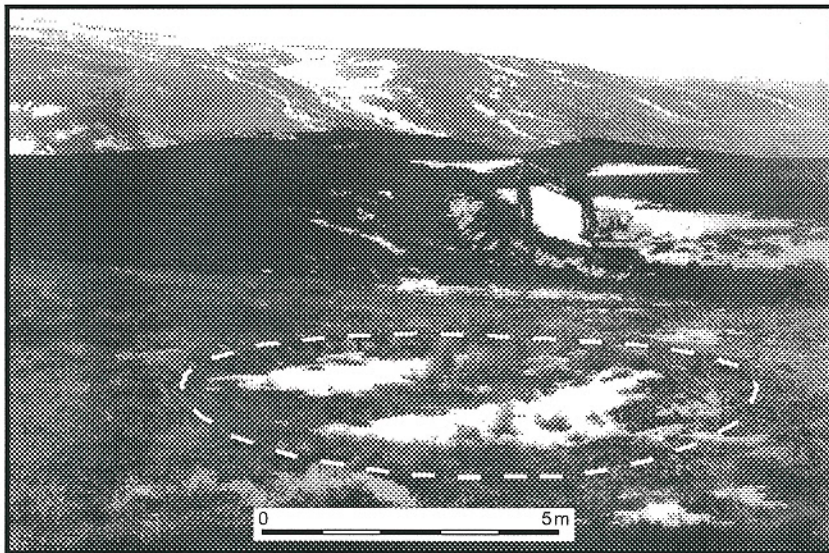
Excavating the mast trench on Torr Mor summit, looking East



Soil profile in South facing section of mast trench



Approaching the site from existing track, looking North East



Machining of access track in progress,
hut circle highlighted in foreground



Construction of access track in progress, looking South

COLOUR SLIDE INDEX

KD01 Film 1 of 1

Shot No.	Description
3.	General view of approach to site from existing dirt track. Looking north east.
4.	General view of approach to site from existing dirt track. Looking north east.
5.	On top of Torr Mor looking east. Showing mast trench being dug.
6.	On top of Torr Mor looking east. Showing mast trench being dug.
7.	On top of Torr Mor looking west. Showing mast trench being dug.
8.	On top of Torr Mor looking west. Showing trench for mast being dug.
9.	West facing section of mast trench.
10.	West facing section of mast trench.
13.	East facing section of mast trench.
14.	East facing section of mast trench.
15.	General view of mast trench. Looking east.
16.	General view of mast trench. Looking east.
17.	Access track in process of construction. Hut circle in foreground. Looking east.
18.	Access track in process of construction. Hut circle in foreground. Looking east.
19.	View from the mast site towards the first 30 m of access track. Looking west.
20.	View from the mast site towards the first 30 m of access track. Looking west.
21.	Looking east towards the mast site showing access track.
22.	Looking east towards the mast site showing access track.
23.	The final 30 m of access track linking with existing unclassified road. Looking south.
24.	The final 30 m of access track linking with existing unclassified road. Looking south.
25.	Access track and area cleared for further investigation. Looking north.
26.	Access track and area cleared for further investigation. Looking north.
27.	View of cleared area. Looking north.
28.	View of cleared area. Looking north.
29.	Quarrying for road material. Looking east.
30.	Quarrying for road material. Looking east.

B/W PHOTO INDEX

KD01 Film 1 of 1

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1.	General view of approach to site from existing dirt track. Looking north east.
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3.	On top of Torr Mor looking west. Showing mast trench being dug.
4.	West facing section of mast trench.
5.	South facing section of mast trench.
6.	East facing section of mast trench.
7.	General view of mast trench. Looking east.
8.	Access track in process of construction. Hut circle in foreground. Looking east.
9.	View from the mast site towards the first 30 m of access track. Looking west.
10.	Looking east towards the mast site showing access track.
11.	The final 30 m of access track linking with existing unclassified road. Looking south.
12.	Access track and area cleared for further investigation. Looking north.
13.	View of cleared area. Looking north.
14.	Quarrying for road material. Looking east.