

Kinakyle Township, Aviemore, Inverness-shire

Archaeological Evaluation



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for

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1.0 Background

In October 2007, the author carried out an archaeological evaluation for Scottish Water Solutions, consisting of a desk-based assessment and rapid walk-over survey, of areas potentially to be affected by the proposed water supply upgrade for Badenoch and Strathspey. This evaluation identified the site of the proposed water treatment plant as the location of a former township, Kinakyle. In order to be able to fully evaluate the site and make proposals for further archaeological work or other mitigations, an archaeological survey was commissioned. This consists of a measured ground plan and photographic record of all archaeological features, together with comments on construction, materials, dating and phasing and recommendations for further work.

2.0 Site Description

The area of the former township covers 100m NE-SW by 40m NW-SE. It is at present an area of open grassland, bounded to the SE by the embankment of the Perth-Inverness railway line and to the NW by the undulating edge of a bank of a former river terrace of the Spey, now covered with mature birch trees. The lack of regeneration within the trees indicates that the area has been heavily grazed, although no livestock is present. The open ground slopes gently to the SE and is extremely altered by the action of rabbits, whose burrowing has created a landscape of mounds and hollows which conceals the archaeological features and confuses their identification. Comparison with earlier photographs (A. Wakeling 1997) shows that the burrowing on this scale has been taking place for at least 10 years, with quantities of subsoil cast up into a low mound which eventually grasses over. Hollows have been created by the collapse of burrows, particularly in the area between structures a, b and c. Moles have also been active, although they have thrown up only topsoil.

The break of slope to the west is irregular and may have been modified during construction of the railway embankment. Particularly, the level area (feature h) which cuts into the slope west of structures b and d, appears artificial and may be the remains of quarrying. There is also a small borrow pit (feature g) west of structure a. Further evidence for quarrying is located higher up the slope, west of the railway underpass access track, which itself forms a major cut through the slope.

The present underpass access route is relatively modern, converging with the original trackway at the west end of the cut. This modern track overlies stone footings at its west end. These are assumed to be the late 19th century buildings recorded on the 2nd edition OS map (see below, section 3.0) and were not included in this survey.

The railway embankment now cuts the township off from the broad area of former cultivated ground in the loop of the Spey. The embankment is also burrowed by rabbits; the material cast out is almost entirely slag and ash, which must have been deliberately used as a facing. The core of the embankment is likely to contain robbed stones from the township as well as quarried earth and rock and material excavated from the cut containing the access track.

About a decade ago, the site was modified for use as a bike racing circuit. This modification is still visible in the form of earth-covered birch branches creating banks and bunds, but is mostly within the trees and does not affect the structures.

3.0 Cartographic Evidence

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map dates to 1874, 12 years after the construction of the railway. No structures are recorded in the area of the township, which is shown as rough unimproved ground. To the SW the ground is shown as improved and the trees as a plantation, while the tree cover to the west of the township is sparse. The track to the underpass is marked, with the deep cut, also a small pathway appears to be marked running SE from the west end of the cut.

The 2nd edition OS map of 1901 shows all the low ground west of the railway as improved, and the banks as planted with trees. There is now a building and attached enclosure, probably a farm cottage, immediately south of the west end of the underpass access track at the top of the slope. The small track or path west of the cut is still recorded.

4.0 Pictorial Evidence

It has been suggested that the drawing entitled 'The town of Leneiweig Aviemore', and dated to 1791, may actually represent Kinakyle, which appears in some rentals of the 17th century to be referred to as Easter Lynwilg.



If the picture does represent Kinakyle, then, given a degree of artistic license, it will not only give an approximately accurate image of individual buildings but also give useful information about construction and use of the buildings. If it does not represent Kinakyle, then it is still a portrayal of a contemporary neighbouring township.

The buildings in the drawing appear to be roofless and derelict, but it is possible that this is a representation of the seasonal removal of roofing material to use as fertiliser. The internal roof structure is exposed, showing what would appear to be three cruck frames. The walling seems to be turf on stone footings and the roofing material thatch or turf. In the foreground are midden piles and a withy fence runs to a building in the left foreground, against which a fork is propped.

If this is Kinakyle, then the viewpoint would have to be just north of structure c, looking SW to structure a., the threshing barn and corn kiln, with the building on the far right the missing part of structure b. However, the two roofed buildings in the left background, one of which has a smoking chimney, do not appear to exist on the ground.

5.0 Survey Results

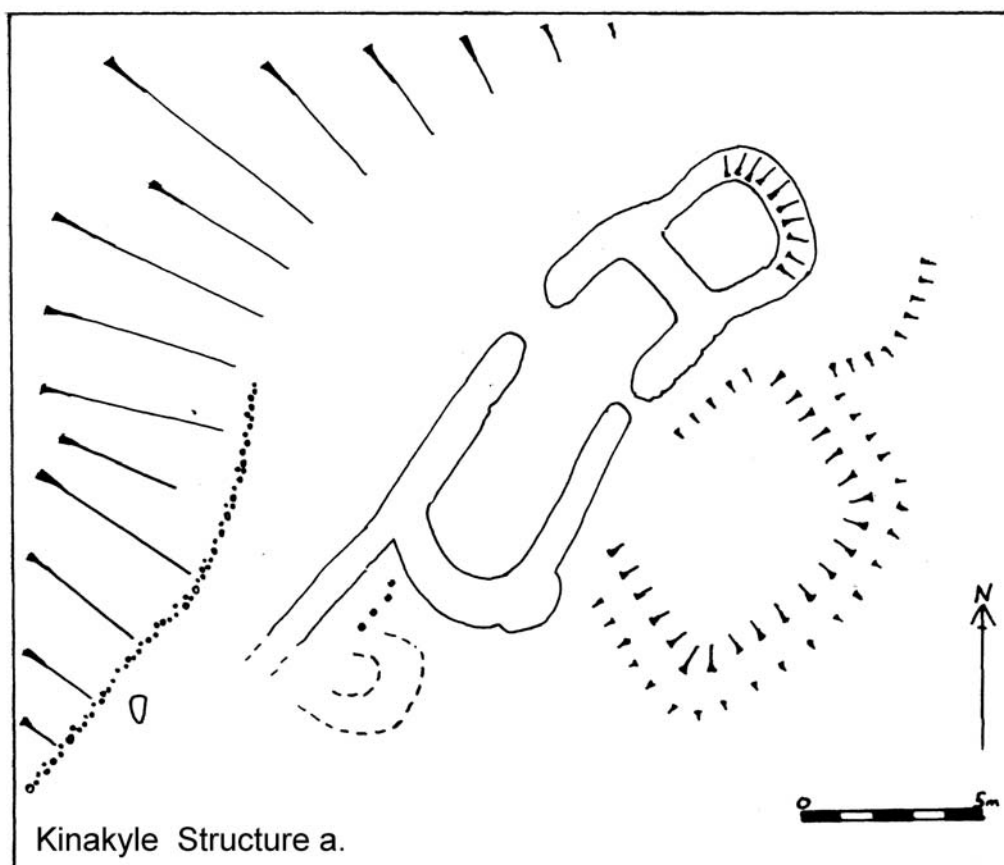
The initial walk-over survey in October 2007 identified four visible structures, probable buildings. No further buildings were identified during the measured survey, but nine other features, not all contemporary with the township, were recorded.

A plane table survey was carried out on 7.2.08, recording the archaeological features at a scale of 1:200. Modern features, notably the fence line, electricity pole and, most importantly, a survey point, were recorded to allow the plan to be keyed into other mapping.

a. **Structure, building, possible threshing barn and corn kiln.**

Total length: 15.75m, total width 4.5m, aligned NE-SW

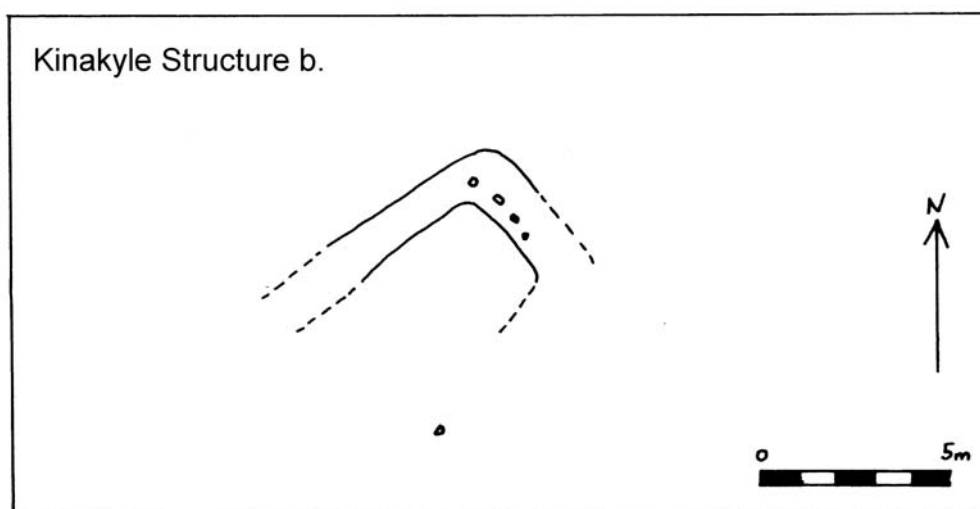
This is the best preserved and most prominent feature, occupying a slight rise at the SW end of the township area. The main structure is a rectangular building divided into two compartments measuring internally 9.5m by 3m and 2.75m by 2.5. The smaller, NE compartment is rounded and stands to a height of 0.75m and has the appearance of a corn kiln. The larger, SW compartment may have opposing doorways and may be a threshing barn. The walling is grassy and spread but a number of stones are visible, particularly immediately to the east of the SE doorway, where a row of outer facing stones is visible. A mound of rubble in the south corner may be buttressing. Extending to the SW is a low bank and a row of stones which may represent the remains of an extension, although other possible banks may be the work of rabbits. To the SE a square, slightly sunken area bounded by low spread banks may be a stackyard. At two points internally, rabbits have burrowed under stones which may be the lowest course of stone facing to the base of the walls. **(Photos 7-21)**



b. Structure, possible building

Total length: 5m, total width 3.5, internal measurement at gable: 2.6m, aligned NE-SW

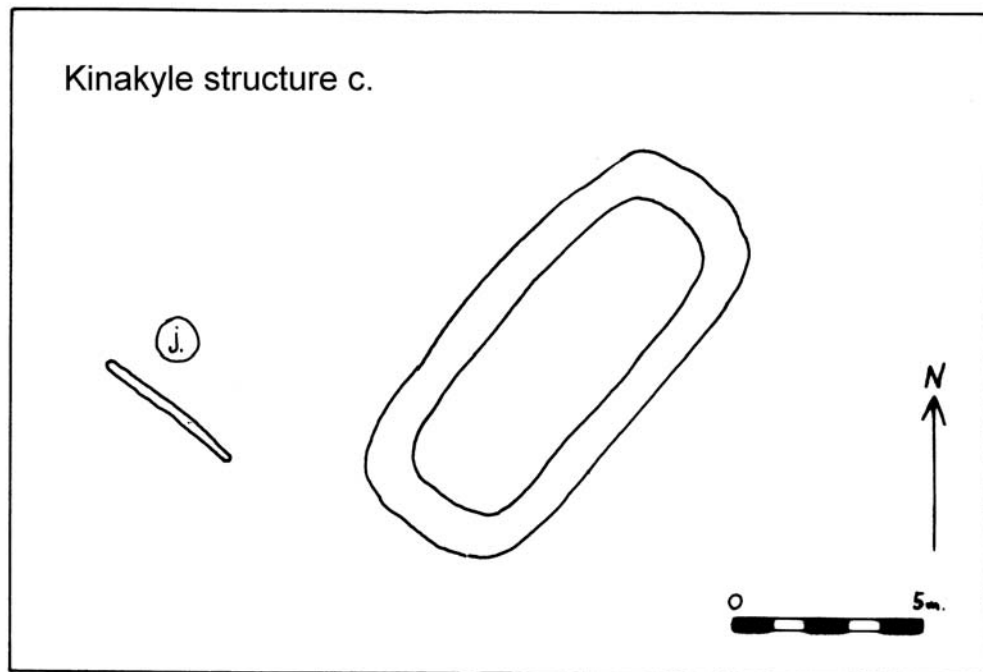
This is the least preserved structure, with only what may be the NE gable end and a short section of the NW long wall surviving. Five stones are visible in the gable wall and others can be felt below the turf. (Photos 22, 23)



c. Structure, building

Total length: 12m, total width 5.3m, aligned NE-SW

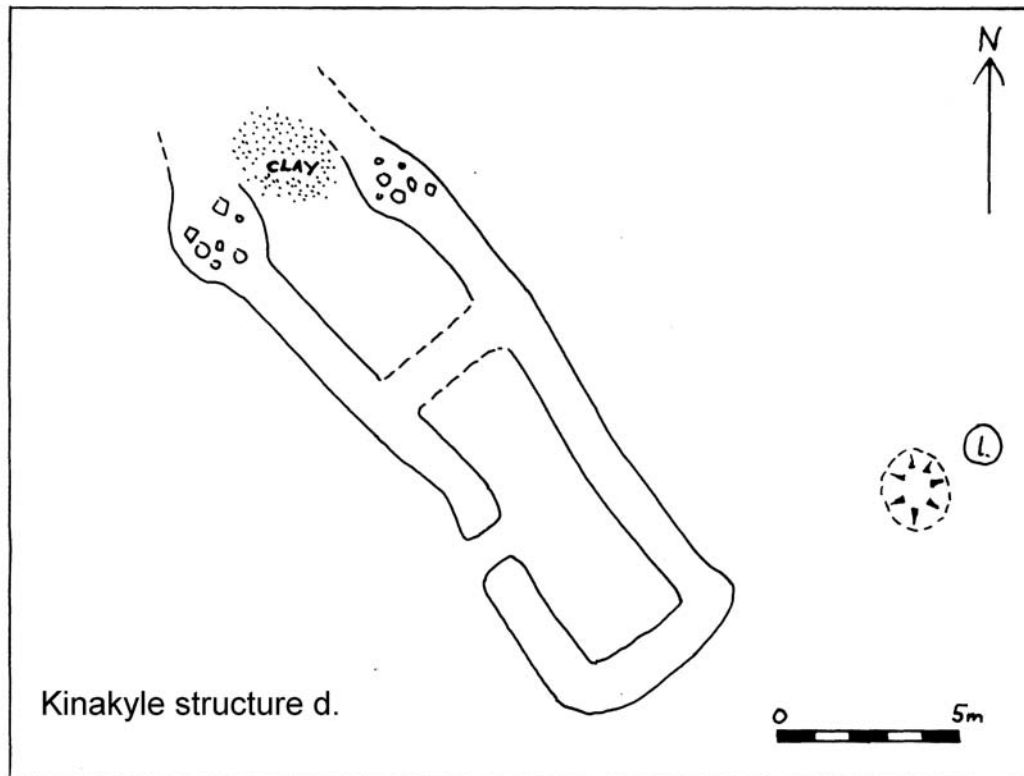
Low, spread grassy banks form a definite rectangular structure with rounded corners. No doorway is visible and there are no attached extensions or dykes. The highest point of the walling is in the north corner, where a row of external facing stones is visible. (Photos 24-31)



d. Structure, building

Total length 20.5m, total width 5.5m, aligned NW-SE

This is the largest of the identified buildings and the only one aligned NW-SE across the site and down the slope. The walls are spread and eroded, particularly at the NW end, where the building becomes indistinct within the trees. There may be an internal partition; the smaller section measures internally 8.7m by 3m and may have a doorway centrally in the SW facing wall. The larger section measures internally 9m in length. Just SE of the trees, both walls contain what appears to be mounds of rubble which does not appear to be structural. An eroded section of the NE wall shows a number of sharp-edged stones which have the appearance of rubble fill to a double-skin stone wall. At the NW end, at the edge of the tree line, rabbit burrowing has thrown up a quantity of clay. This is clean, without any noticeable inclusions and is assumed to be a natural glacial deposit rather than the remains of a clay floor (Photos 32-47)



e. Bank, walling

Total length: 13m

Low and indistinct bank of earth and rubble which may be a former boundary which originally continued further west. **(Photo no. 48)**

f. Bank, field clearance

Total length: 14m.

At the base of slope, erosion has revealed what appears to be artificially piled small stones which may be the result of field clearance. **(Photo no. 49)**

g. Borrow pit

Dimensions: 5m by 4m

Cut into the slope is a scoop which has the appearance of a typical small borrow pit. Scattered randomly in the centre of the area are a number of large stones. **(Photos 50, 51)**

h. Quarried area (possible)

Dimensions: 50m by 20m

This cut back from what would be the natural line of the base of slope may be the result of quarrying, possibly during construction of the railway embankment. The ground surface is lacking in vegetation, sandy and damaged by rabbit action. The area is crossed by the trackway, feature i. **(Photo no. 52)**

i. Trackway

Dimensions: 18m by 6m

This broad trackway cuts across the possible quarried area and descends evenly to the township area. There is some suggestion of stone edging. It is now overlaid at its NW end by the modern access track to the underpass, but may have continued further NW. It is notably broad at 6m and has no rutting associated with cart tracks, and

generally appears unlike a cart track contemporary with the township, which would more normally drop obliquely down the bank. It may be associated with quarrying or construction activities associated with the railway. (Photos 53-57)

j. Bank, walling

Total length: 4m

A short detached section of earth and rubble bank to the west of structure c. It may be the remnant of a building similar to structures b. and c. or of the boundary of a stackyard. (Photos 58, 59)

k. Pathway

Dimensions: 37m by 3m

This pathway drops from the W edge of the railway underpass access track cut, skirting the edge of the possible quarried area (feature g) It appears to correspond to a feature marked on the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps

l. Mound

Dimensions: 2m by 1.6m by 0.4m

A low, spread, grassy mound which has the appearance of a field clearance pile, (Photos 61, 62)

m. Pit

Dimensions: 5.8m by 4.8m

An oval pit dug into the subsoil to an unknown depth and partially backfilled with rubble of differing sizes. The purpose of digging the pit is unknown, although the backfilling may be of field clearance stones. (Photos 63-65)

6.0 Discussion

The whole site is heavily disturbed by the action of rabbits and moles and is also assumed to have been robbed of all useful stone at the time of construction of the railway embankment in 1862, to the extent that the structures were too indistinct to be recorded by the Ordnance Survey in 1874. It is almost impossible to determine without geophysical survey whether further structures were originally present, which have now been concealed by subsequent ground disturbance. However, the survival of the remaining stone footings appears to a certain extent to have deterred the rabbits burrowing, as most of the present disturbance is outside the visible structures. Where the rabbits have succeeded in burrowing under the *in situ* stone footings, this gives an indication of the depth below the present ground surface of the original base of wall and suggests that the lowest course was placed on cleared subsoil with no excavated foundation trench.

Surviving sections of stone facing in structures a. and c. suggest the original wall footings were narrower than the spread banks, and that the overburden is likely to be collapsed turf walling. The exposed section in structure d. containing filling stones suggestive of a double skin construction of stone wall may indicate a different construction technique in at least one building. The size and individual features of the four surviving buildings suggests only one dwelling: structure d., with a substantial threshing barn and corn kiln, structure a. and two barns or byres, structures b. and c. This is more like the layout of a farmstead than a township, but other buildings may have been located directly under the railway embankment.

7.0 Recommendations

The two main considerations in recommending any future plan of excavation or other means of recording and investigation are:

- a. Ensure that all structures that will be destroyed by the development are recorded as fully as possible
- b. Target areas for excavation which will give the maximum information on the site in terms of architectural detail, development, artefacts and datable material

It is assumed that all the township features will be destroyed during construction of the proposed WTW. However, it may be possible to adjust the design to allow the survival of part of the site, particularly structure a. which is the furthest south and slightly outside the broad level area where the WTW is to be located. Structure a. is the best-preserved building and also the one most likely to provide the information detailed above (b) Despite this, its preservation as a landscape feature and for study by future archaeologists and historians is the preferable option.

If the WTW design does not allow for the preservation of structure a., then this building should be targeted as a main excavation area. This, it is hoped, will confirm the identification of the structure as a threshing barn and corn kiln and should reveal details of the kiln such as the fire and flue arrangement.

Of the remaining three buildings, structure b. is so badly eroded and robbed that excavation may provide a limited result. Structure c. is more complete and relatively free of rabbit damage. Excavation here may be able to confirm its function as a barn or byre, if only by the absence of a central hearth Structure d. has been identified as probably the main dwelling, with an attached byre and although it is damaged by rabbit burrowing may provide details such as a central hearth, drain, particularly at the byre end, remains of flooring and domestic detritus.

Of the other structures, e, f, g, j and l are minor features probably contemporary with the township and unlikely to provide much information through excavation, with the possible exception of feature j. which may be the surviving wall of an otherwise removed building. A small investigation at one end of the bank would reveal the existence or otherwise of a return.

Features h, I and k may date to the building of the railway in 1862. A sondage across feature i, the broad trackway, would reveal whether it is built up with rubble, which would indicate that the ground level to either side is natural, or laid directly onto undisturbed subsoil which has been cut away on either side by quarrying.

As well as targeting the visible structures, test pitting both of areas apparently undamaged by burrowing and areas severely damaged may reveal structures or features no longer visible on the surface

To summarise:

- It is recommended that structure a. be preserved is possible
- Failing this, structure a. should be a main target for excavation
- Structure d. should also be a main target for excavation
- Smaller investigations should be carried out at structures b, c, i and j.
- Test pitting at a variety of locations outwith the structures.

8.0 Index of Photographs (on disc)

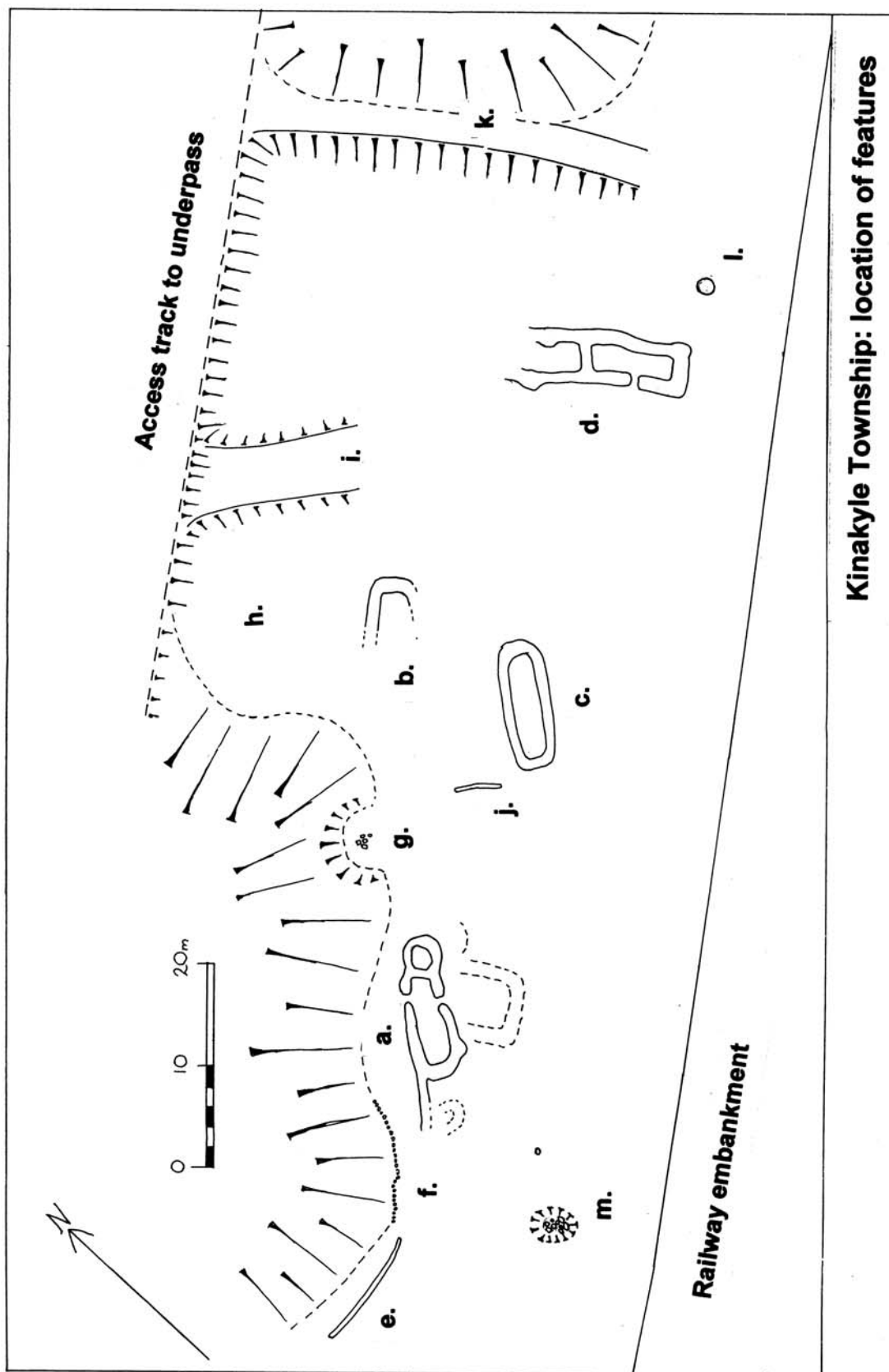
Photo no.	Feature no.	Description	Angle of view
1		General view of site . Structures are to right of tree line	From SW
2		General view of site from railway embankment. Trackway crossing site is modern	From S
3		General view of site from railway embankment. Structures are all right of trackway	From NNE
4		General view of typical birch cover on bank to NW of township	From NE
5		General view of site	From NE
6		General view of site and railway embankment from Underpass access track	From NW
7	a	View from railway embankment	From SE
8	a	Exterior of corn kiln bowl	From NE
9	a	Interior of corn kiln bowl	From SW
10	a	Corn kiln bowl and stone facing	From S
11	a	SW compartment, possible threshing barn	From NE
12	a	External facing stones	From SE
13	a	Rabbit burrowing under possible bottom course of internal walling of main compartment	From SW
14	a	Possible facing stone of SE entrance	From SW
15	a	Ranging pole indicates internal partition	From W
16	a	NW long wall. Pole indicates rabbit burrowing under bottom course of stone walling	From NE
17	a	External facing stones by SE doorway	From S
18	a	External facing stones by SE doorway	From NE
19	a	Possible extension SW indicated by row of stones and low bank to right	From NE
20	a	SW end of main building	From SW
21	a	Low bank indicating possible extension SW	From SW
22	b	NE gable end	From NE
23	b	NW wall. Stones indicate NE gable end	From NW
24	c	View from railway embankment	From SE
25	c	NE end and visible facing stones	From N
26	c	N corner, detail of facing stones	From N
27	c	N corner, detail of facing stones	From NE
28	c	NE end	From NE
29	c	N corner, interior view	From SW
30	c	SW gable end, foreground	From SW
31	c	NE end	From W
32	d	General view of structure from railway embankment	From SE
33	d	Exposed section with sharp-edged packing stones	From SE
34	d	Exposed section, detail of packing stones	From above
35	d	Rabbit burrow under bottom course of stones	From S
36	d	Rabbit burrow under bottom course of stones, detail	From SW
37	d	NW end of building, cast up clay after rabbit burrowing	From SE
38	d	W. end of SW walling, rubble pile	From NE
39	d	NW end of building, indistinct within trees	From NW
40	d	Ranging pole marks possible internal partition	From NW
41	d	SW walling, possible entrance with set stone	From SE
42	d	SE end of structure	From NW
43	d	SE end of structure	From N
44	d	SE end of structure	From NE

45	d	SE end of structure	From SE
46	d	SE end of structure, centre, and typical rabbit and mole damage, foreground	From SW
47	d	NW end of building, centre, and rabbit burrowing, foreground	From S
48	e	South face of low rubble and earth bank	From SE
49	f	Possible field clearance rubble at break of slope	From SE
50	g	Possible borrow pit with abandoned stones	From SE
51	g	Possible borrow pit	From S
52	h	Possible quarried area within trees, bounded by modern access track in background and feature k, pathway, on right	From SE
53	i	Trackway, centre, within area of possible quarrying, feature h	From SE
54	i	Trackway running back to terminate under bank of modern access track	From SE
55	i	trackway	From E
56	i	Trackway, SW corner, terminating under bank of modern access track	From E
57	i	Trackway, descending to township area	From NW
58	j	Low stone and earth bank w. of structure c.	From SE
59	j	Low stone and earth bank w. of structure c.	From SW
60	k	Pathway rising to edge of 1862 cut	From SE
61	l	Mound, possible field clearance pile	From SW
62	l	Mound, possible field clearance pile	From SE
63	m	Rubble filled pit	From NW
64	m	Rubble filled pit	From S
65	m	Rubble filled pit	From SW
66		Surface finds from township area	
67		Surface finds from railway embankment	

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13.2.08



Kinakyle Township: location of features

Kinakyle Township, Aviemore
Location Plan

