

Bunroy Mill, Roy Bridge, Lochaber

Desk-based assessment, photographic survey and field recording



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Bunroy Mill

Desk-based assessment, photographic survey and field recording

Summary

An archaeological desk-based assessment, photographic survey and field recording were carried out by Maya Hoole in order to record the remains of the ruined mill at Bunroy. This project was undertaken due to a personal interest in the site and the desire to protect, preserve and promote the history of the mill. This project was also used as a training opportunity to practice techniques of archaeological investigation.

The overall assessment has resulted in plans of the ruins along with a description of its history as well as the creation of an archaeological illustration of one of the millstones that had been abandoned on the site.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This project was undertaken due to a personal interest in the ruins of the Bunroy mill, as it was in a ruined state and there was no collaborated record available of its history. This project aimed to protect, preserve and promote the known history of the site so that information would be freely available to anyone interested in the mill.
- 1.2. This project was used as a training opportunity to practice techniques of archaeological assessment including research techniques of data gathering and analysis, photographic survey, field recording, archaeological illustration and report writing.

2. Site Location and Condition

- 2.1. The mill was located on the southern side of the A86 and the village of Roy Bridge in a natural deciduous woodland. To the south ran the river Spean from east to west approximately 75m distance from the site. To the north west was an old road used as a footpath at the time of investigation. This footpath provided access to the site where approximately 10m after an old gate, it reached the mill. The mill is in close proximity to the Bunroy Holiday Park to the west, to the immediate north is an open meadow, to the east and south is natural woodland (figure 1).
- 2.2. A channel to run water from the river to power the millstones was constructed on the southern side of the site. This channel was traceable to the east where it led back to the original source of the river Spean. The condition of this channel was variable, but was mostly distinct and always visible. However, to the west the channel was no longer visible

and disappeared approximately 10-15 metres from the site.

- 2.3. The condition of the mill was clearly ruinous. The site has been robbed of stone work and had collapsed in many places. A large old oak tree had grown through the centre of the structure and subsequently had collapsed. Many other trees, particularly silver birch trees, had taken root and were growing throughout the interior of the site. In places there was clear evidence of entrance ways and windows. Two large millstones had survived in tact and complete in the south west corner of the building.



1 - Location of Bunroy Mill

3. Methodology

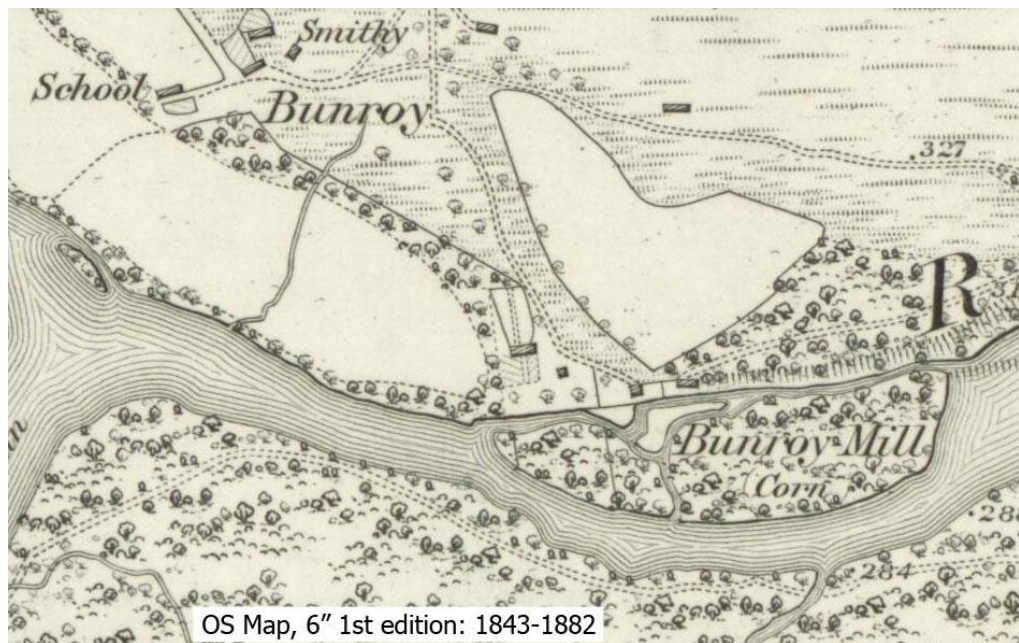
- 3.1. The project was undertaken over several days, spaced out over the period of a year . The photographic survey was carried out on the 21st of March 2013; the measured survey was carried out on the 19th and 20th of April 2014, and the DBA was carried out between the 18th and the 27th of April 2014.
- 3.2. The project was carried out by one individual who conducted all of the fieldwork and report writing independently.

- 3.3. Sources of information were gathered from: the National Library of Scotland; the Highland Council Historic Environment Record; Inverness Reference Library, the Scottish Post Office Directories and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland's (RCAHMS).
- 3.4. The site was measured using a 7.5m measuring tape, a notebook, and a SONY camera. The plans and illustrations were created using Adobe Photoshop CS5 through a WACOM graphics tablet.

4. Desk based assessment

4.1. Cartographic sources

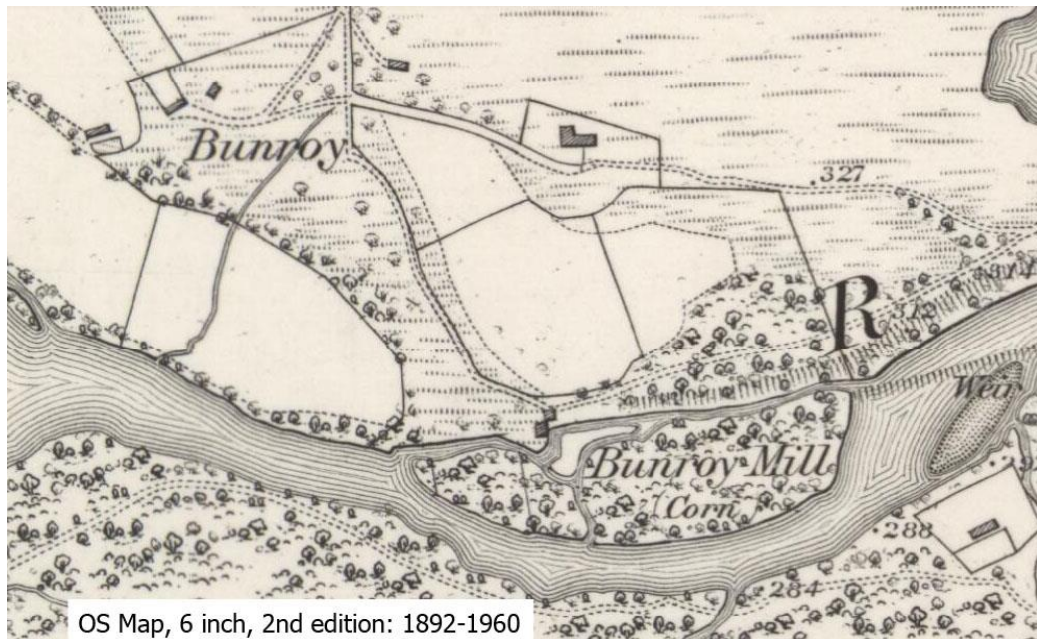
- 4.1.1. The DBA consisted of the analysis of cartographic sources using online resources provided by the National Library of Scotland (NLS). Maps were surveyed from c.1843-1960.
- 4.1.2. On the 1st edition 6 inch OS Map, the mill appears as 'Bunroy Mill – Corn' suggesting that corn was being produced here at that time. The map clearly shows the channel and weir to the east where the straight course broke into two just before the mill and then subsequently returned to the river. A small island had been created opposite the mill site as two channels ran either side. These channels returned to the river at two separate points. A second building appears on this map to the east, however there was no apparent evidence in the field of this structure (figure 2).



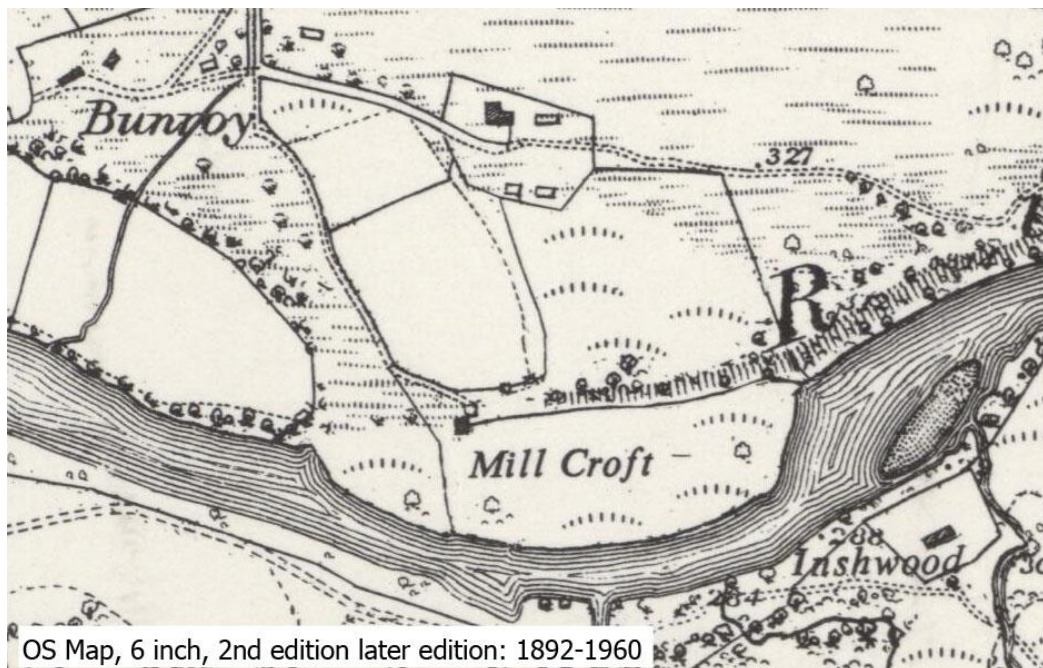
2 - OS Map, 6 inch, 1st edition: 1843-1882

- 4.1.3. The first of two versions of the 2nd edition 6 inch OS Map, again showed the mill as 'Bunroy Mill – Corn', however the building had been extended to the south, whilst the building on the previous edition mentioned above to the east had disappeared. Here

the weir was labelled and was more apparent than on the previous map, whilst the channels ran the same courses (figure 3).



3 - OS Map, 6 inch, 2nd edition (earlier version): 1892-1960



4 - OS Map, 6 inch, 2nd edition (later version): 1892-1960

4.1.4.

On the later version of the 2nd edition 6 inch OS Map, the mill appeared as 'Mill Croft'. The weir to the east and the channel to the west had disappeared whereas the channel running from the east to the mill remained visible (figure 4).

4.2. Documentary sources

4.2.1. A newspaper advert, supplied by the Inverness Reference Library, was dated to Friday, May 15th, 1835 and was entitled 'Contractors wanted for builingd a meal mill and kiln at Bunroy'. This source suggested that the mill was originally intended to be used for making meal and included a kiln and that the site was built during the year of 1835. This source also suggested that the mill was used as a meal mill rather than a corn mill as appeared on the OS Maps mentioned previously. It could be possible that the site had multiple uses over time or that it was not used for its original intention. A man called 'Peter Chilshom' was also mentioned in the newspaper advert, although his relationship with the mill is unknown it is likely that he was in charge of the work force, and it was possible that he lived in Bunroy (figure 5).

4.2.2. The RCAHMS canmore record provided a quote about the mill. It read:

Above, Miller's House, probably by John Rhind, 1870/2, incorporates an earlier cottage in its rear wing. It is unusual in having been built by the laird (Mackintosh) as a retirement home for local priest Father Donald Forbes, becoming the miller's house after his death (Miers: 2008).

Although this would suggest that the mill was built later, it seems that this may be a reference to another building to the north, known as 'Mill House' which more accurately fits the description. This was confirmed on visiting the Canmore record for the alternative site as it has also been given the same quote. However, this would suggest that the mill was still in use in c.1872 due to the reference to the miller subsequently owning the house .

4.2.3. The Scottish Post Office Directory from the county of Inverness (c.1887-1902) had a record for the rental payment of Bunroy Mill. At this time, the mill was run by a man called Donald Macpherson who was to pay £10-00 as yearly rent for the property (figure 6).

CONTRACTORS WANTED,

FOR building a MEAL MILL and KILN, at Bunroy, Lochaber, agreeable to a Plan and Specification, to be seen at Balvonie, near Inverness; at the Office of Thos. Falconer, Solicitor; or with Peter Chisholm, Bunroy.

Estimates may be lodged at either of the above places until the 22d May.

Balvonie, 12th May, 1835.

5 - Newspaper clipping from Inverness reference Library

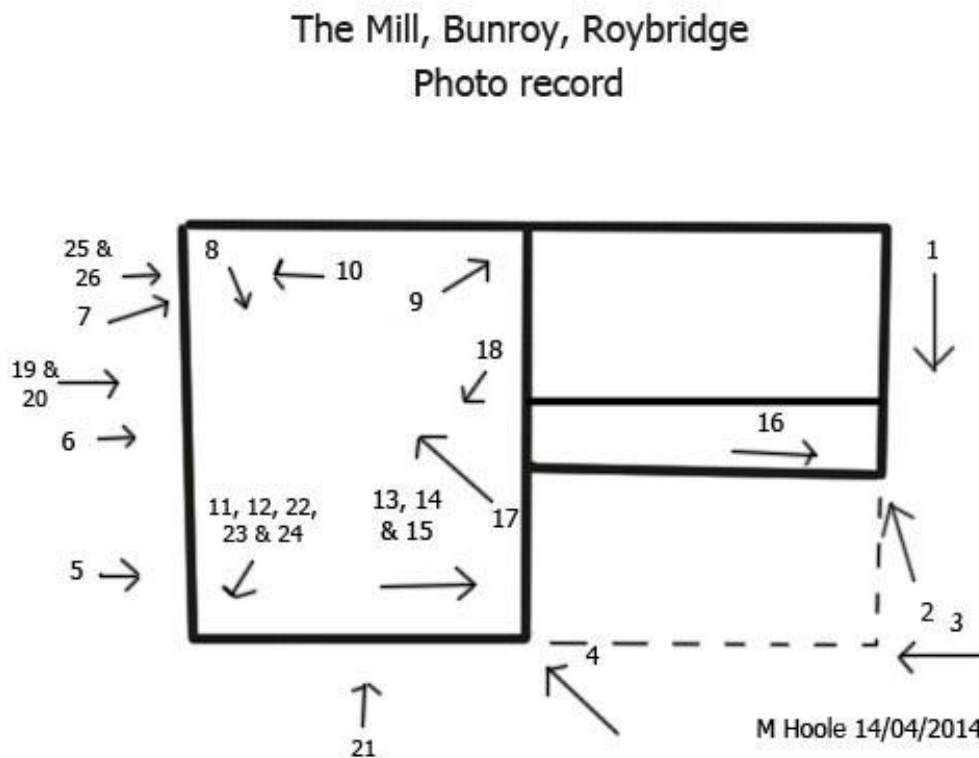
INVERNESS COUNTY DIRECTORY. 79

Name, Address, Post Town.	Yearly Rent or Value.
Macpherson, A. & D., Catlodge, Kingussie ...	£25 0 0
Macpherson, A. & L., Balgown, Laggan, Kingussie	68 0 0
Macpherson, And., Craggan of Clune, Kingussie ...	13 10 0
Macpherson, Andrew, Glenbanchor, Kingussie ...	11 0 0
Macpherson, Angus, Strone of Glenbanchor, Kingussie ...	21 0 0
*Macpherson, C. J. B., Belleville House, Kingussie	135 0 0
Do. for Banchor Mains ...	200 0 0
Do. Chapel Park ...	300 0 0
Do. Lands, Chapel Park ...	26 0 0
Do. Woodlands, do. ...	35 0 0
Do. Grazings, Newtonmore ...	45 0 0
Do. Woodlands, Knock ...	10 0 0
Macpherson, Miss Catherine, Bohinie, Kingussie ...	10 18 9
Macpherson, Christina, The Restaurant, Quay, Portree ...	40 0 0
Macpherson, Representatives of late Cluny, Cluny Castle, Kingussie ...	100 0 0
Macpherson, Donald, Bunroy Mill, by Kingussie...	10 0 0

6 - From Inverness County Post Office Directory (p.79)

5. Photographic survey

- 5.1. A photographic survey was carried out over two days, the first in March 2013, the second in April 2014.



7 - Photo record plan

- 5.2. A total of 25 photographs were taken, recording a large number of features across the site. These can be viewed in figures 10-32.
- 5.3. A photo record plan showing the direction and location of each numbered photograph has been provided (figure 7).
- 5.4. An index of these photographs can be found at the end of the document.

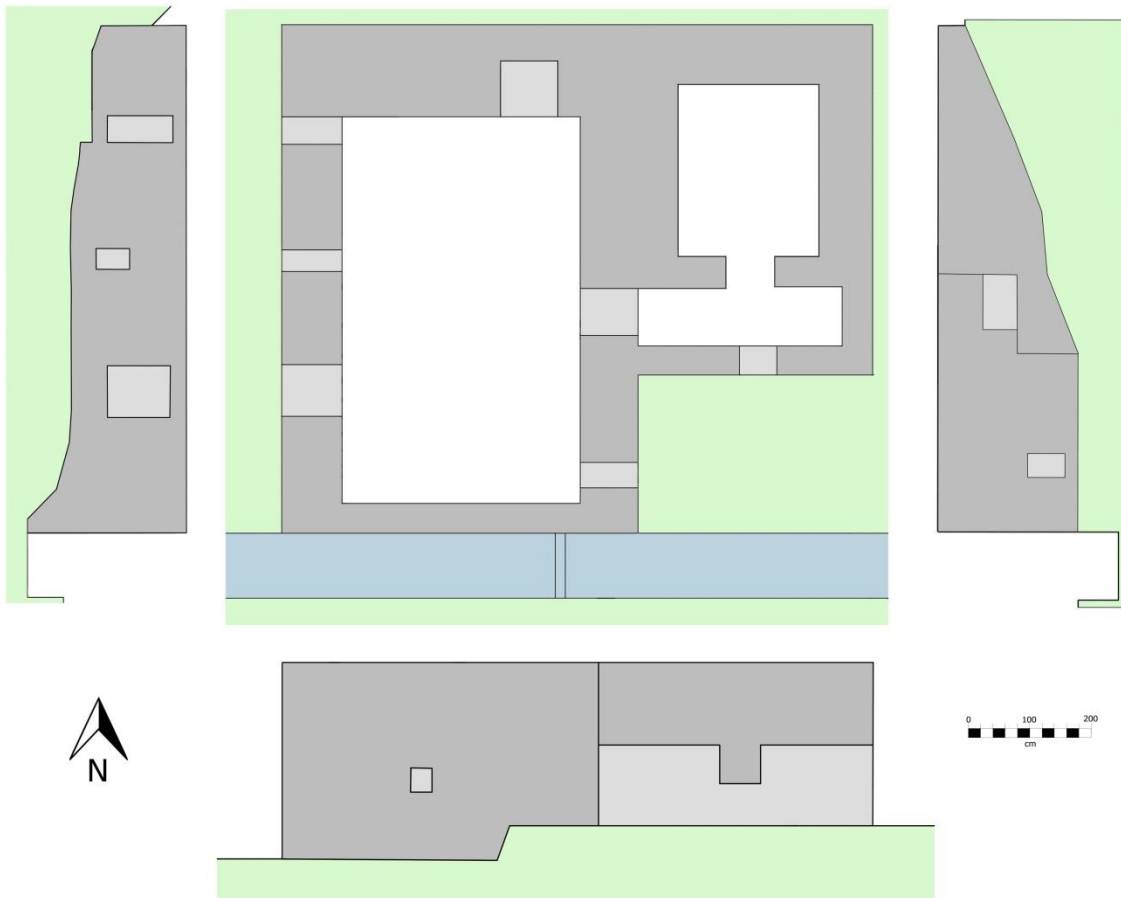
6. Field Survey

- 6.1. The site was surveyed and measured, planned and drawn. A plan and scale drawings of three sides of the building were created as a result of the field survey. The fourth, northern side of the building was embedded into the hillside and so was not planned.
- 6.2. The site was measured using a 7.5m tape measurer and all measurement were noted and recorded in a logbook. These distances were recorded on to a sketch and then were made into a final plan using Adobe Photoshop and a graphics tablet.
- 6.3. The western side of the building consists of a large rectangular room (which may possibly have had an interior separating wall) which has five, possibly six entrances. Four of these were still in use until the abandonment of the site, whilst one had been bricked over. The

last possible entrance may have been the location of the kiln in the north eastern corner of this room.

- 6.4. On the eastern side of the building, a smaller area consisting of one interior room with one access door was accompanied by a potential outdoor space with an enclosing half height wall and short passageway leading into the main structure to the west. This 'porch' area had a small opening which provided access to the external area facing directly south where the channel providing water would have originally run its course.
- 6.5. The eastern external wall, unlike the western, slopes with the ground on a roughly 30 degree angle. The western wall is generally flat although there is a gradual angle followed by a short drop to the southern side of the site.
- 6.6. The southern wall was the tallest remaining wall which reached to the base of the channel, and appeared to survive to the full height of the building. This wall may have been younger in date than the eastern part of the building. One of the main bricks had been removed from this southern wall; otherwise the only feature was a medium sized hole, where the watermill would have been attached.
- 6.7. The channel had a smooth drop to the east of where the watermill would have been situated. This drop would have been design to make the water, flowing from the east, turn the wheel in an anti-clockwise rotation.
- 6.8. A plan and section drawings of the mill have been provided below (figure 8). These have been partially reconstructed to suggest the shape of the mill prior to falling into ruin based on measurements and observations made during field recording. The dark grey colour in the plan represents the walls, the lighter grey represents gaps in the walls or features, the green identifies the external areas and the blue indicates where the water channel would have been located.

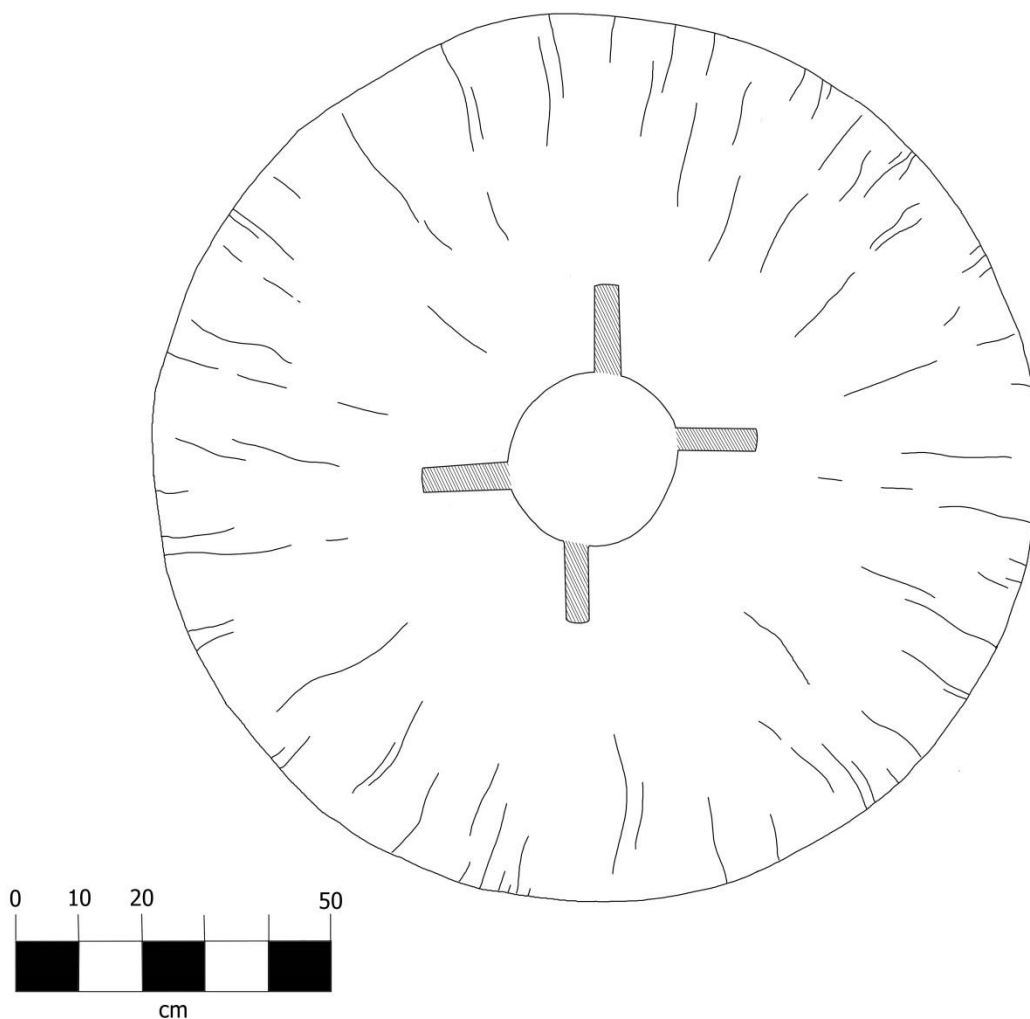
Bunroy Mill – Roy Bridge, Lochaber



8 – Scale and measured plan of Bunroy Mill, Roy Bridge

7. Archaeological Illustration

- 7.1. One of the mill stones located in the south-western corner of the largest internal space were subject to an archaeological illustration. The stone was approximately 7.5cm in depth, 140cm in diameter and the central hole was approximately 15 cm in width.
- 7.2. The central hole was cut through the whole stone; however it was accompanied by four rectangular sections, 5 cm deep at right angles to each other, although they were off set rather than perpendicular. Presumably, a metal instrument was placed between the two millstones to keep them together during the grinding process and it rested in these rectangular sections. The central hole could have been designed to allow the grain to be poured between the two mill stones, although this is just speculation.
- 7.3. The surface of the mill stone was naturally rough, with undulating lines extending from the centre to the edges.
- 7.4. The illustration of the mill stone was created using Adobe Photoshop and hand drawn using a graphics tablet. It was drawn with a scale to indicate size.



9 - Archaeological illustration of one of the mill stones

8. Recommendations and conclusions

- 8.1. The ruin of the old mill was well known within the local community and has a historical identity amongst them. I would suggest that if possible, the mill stones should be protected as they are at risk of being removed from the site, this is based on the evidence that a lot of the stones have already been taken. It might be best if the mill stones were relocated to a more secure location within the community to ensure their protection and preservation for future generations.
- 8.2. This training project has revealed a lot about the history of the ruined mill at Bunroy, including the date it was built (1835), the product produced here (meal and corn), the name of a man who worked here (Donald Macpherson) and its role in shaping the river Spean and the land around it.
- 8.3. I would recommend that further work be undertaken to protect, promote and preserve the site before it falls into total disrepair or before any more of the key characteristics are removed from the site



10 - South eastern corner of the eastern section, view from the south east



11 - The channel running towards the main southern wall, view from the east, facing west



12 - The main wall and channel of the water wheel, viewed from the east



13 - Southern section of the western wall, viewed from the west facing east



14 - Central section of the western wall, viewed from the west facing east



15 - Detail of the northern side of the most northerly gap in the western wall, view from the south west facing north east



16 - The interior of the main room of the mill, viewed from the north facing south



17 - Possible kiln, viewed from the south facing north-east



18 - The most northerly entrance on the western wall, view from the interior to exterior, facing north west



19 - The abandoned mill stones in the main interior space, in the south west corner



20 - Close view of the abandoned mill stones in the main interior space, in the south west corner



21 - Interior, southern wall on the right, showing the eastern wall and window, facing east



22 - Close up of the window in the eastern wall, view from the interior, facing east



23 - View of the exterior area on the eastern side of the mill, facing east



24 - Interior of the main room, facing north west taken from the south east corner



25 - Interior of the main room showing the mill stones, and facing west



26 - Filled in window in the western wall of main building, facing east



27 - View of the western wall, facing east



28 - View of the exterior, main, southern wall where the water wheel would have been located, facing north



29 - Close up the centre of the mill stone showing offset rectangular sections



30 - Close up of the mill stone showing rough rivets for grinding



31 - Detail of the texture of the mill stone, showing rough surface



32 - Centre of the western wall, showing southern gap, facing east

Photo number	Caption	Direction facing	Photographer
10	South eastern corner of the eastern section, view from the south east	NW	M Hoole
11	The channel running towards the main southern wall, view from the east, facing west	W	M Hoole
12	The main wall and channel of the water wheel, viewed from the east	W	M Hoole
13	Southern section of the western wall, viewed from the west facing east	E	M Hoole
14	Central section of the western wall, viewed from the west facing east	E	M Hoole
15	Detail of the northern side of the most northerly gap in the western wall, view from the south west facing north east	NE	M Hoole
16	The interior of the main room of the mill, viewed from the north facing south	S	M Hoole
17	Possible kiln, viewed from the south facing north-east	NE	M Hoole
18	The most northerly entrance on the western wall, view from the interior to exterior, facing north west	NW	M Hoole
19	The abandoned mill stones in the main interior space, in the south west corner	SW	M Hoole
20	Close view of the abandoned mill stones in the main interior space, in the south west corner	SW	M Hoole
21	Interior, southern wall on the right, showing the eastern wall and window, facing east	E	M Hoole
22	Close up of the window in the eastern wall, view from the interior, facing east	E	M Hoole
23	View of the exterior porch area on the eastern side of the mill, facing east	E	M Hoole
24	Interior of the main room, facing north west taken from the south east corner	NW	M Hoole
25	Interior of the main room showing the mill stones, and facing west	W	M Hoole
26	Filled in window in the western wall of main building, facing east	E	M Hoole
27	View of the western wall, facing east	E	M Hoole
28	View of the exterior, main, southern wall where the water wheel would have been located, facing north	N	M Hoole
29	Close up the centre of the mill stone showing offset rectangular sections	SW	M Hoole
30	Close up of the mill stone showing rough rivets for grinding	SW	M Hoole
31	Detail of the texture of the mill stone, showing rough surface	N	M Hoole
32	Centre of the western wall, showing southern gap, facing east	E	M Hoole

Bunroy Mill – Roy Bridge, Lochaber

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Miers, M (2008) *The Western Seaboard: an illustrated architectural guide*, Rutland Press, London.

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Royal Commission of Ancient and Historic Monuments Canmore 2014 Accessed online at
<http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/280706/details/roybridge+mill+house/>

<http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/en/site/280706/details/roybridge+mill+house/>

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<http://digital.nls.uk/directories/browse/pageturner.cfm?id=86042836&mode=transcription>

Inverness reference library 2014 email correspondence request for information