



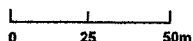
## Field Survey of part of Balblair Wood, Beauly February 2002

### North Balblair Wood - Beauly

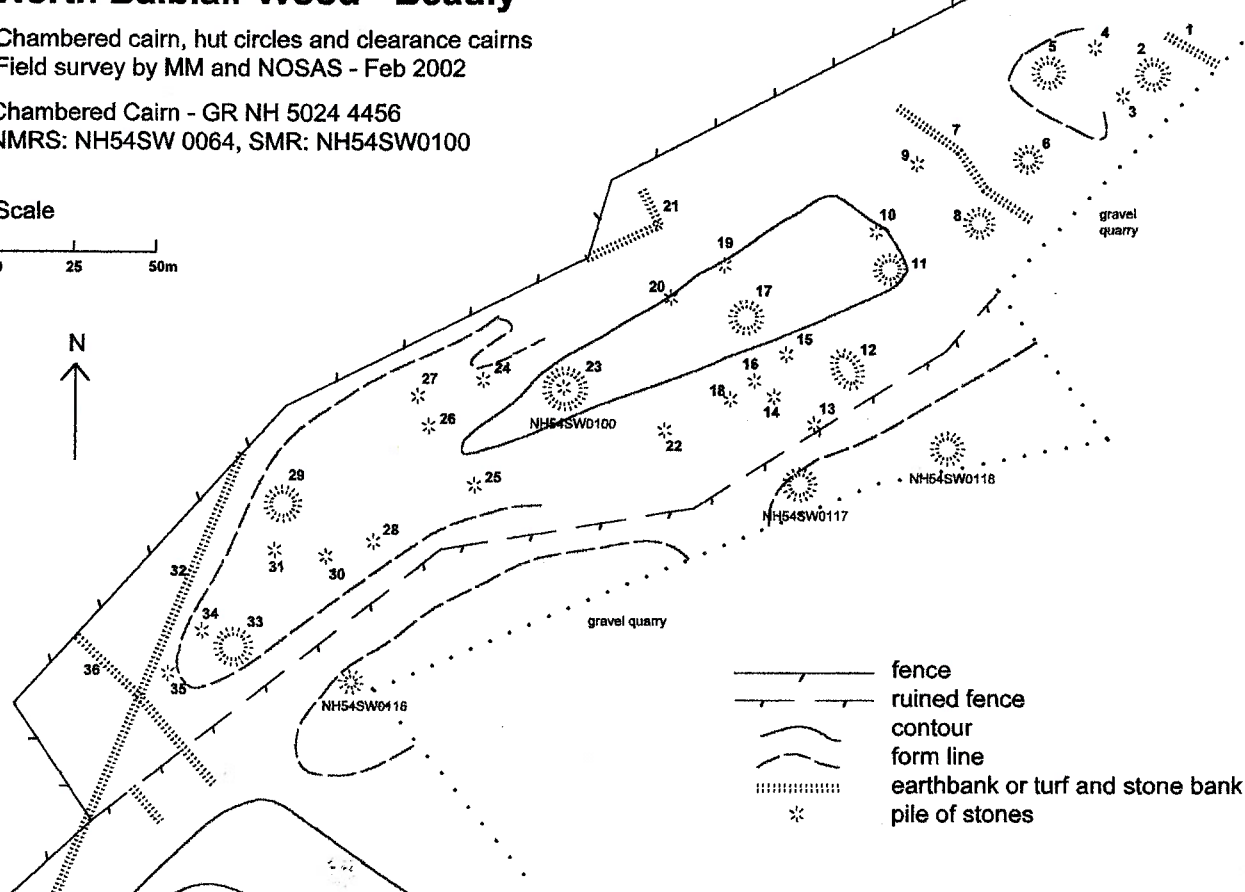
Chambered cairn, hut circles and clearance cairns  
Field survey by MM and NOSAS - Feb 2002

Chambered Cairn - GR NH 5024 4456  
NMRS: NH54SW 0064, SMR: NH54SW0100

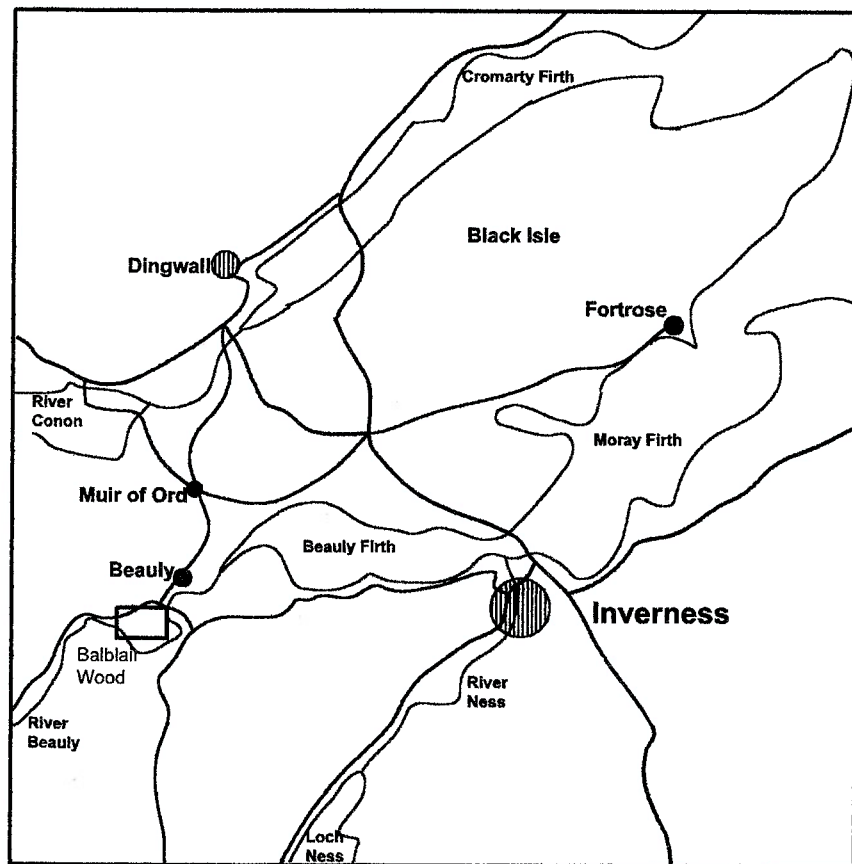
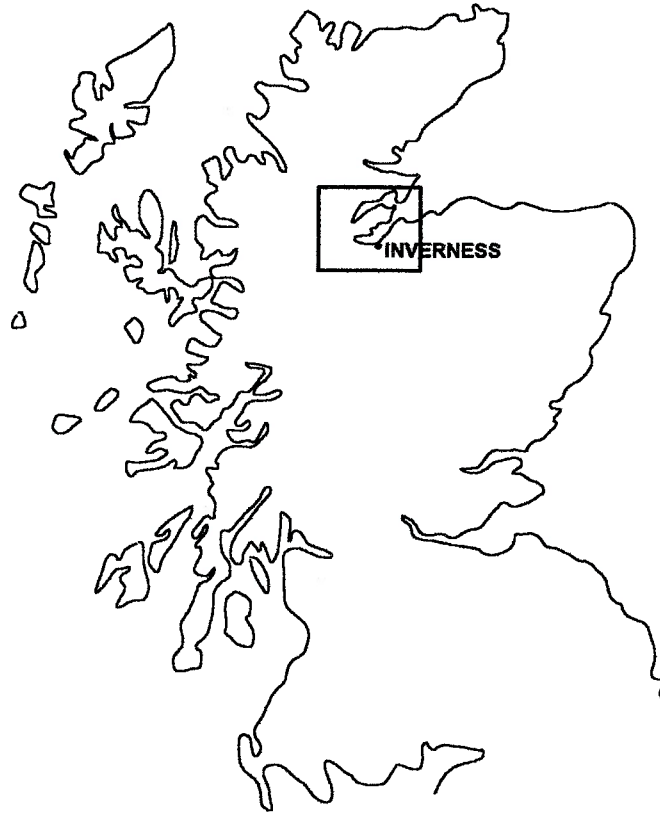
Scale



N



## Location of Balblair



## **Field Survey of Archaeological Features in the north part of Balblair Wood, near Beaully – 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2002**

### **Introduction**

The aim of the project was to identify, survey and record the archaeological features in an area of north Balblair Wood. A chambered cairn had previously been recorded in the area and mention had been made of hut circles, but no recording of these had been done.

The area is situated on a gravel river terrace to the north of the River Beaully and has a south-easterly aspect. The site is at a height of roughly 20m OD and is 6km from the point at which the River Beaully enters the Beaully Firth to the northwest. It is speculated that the site was adjacent to the first available crossing point of the river. There is evidence for believing that the river may have changed its course over the years and become more distant from the site.

A cist burial containing 2 beakers was discovered 400m to the east, it was excavated in 1990. A Pictish Grade 1 stone was found at Wester Balblair 600m to the NE in 1969. At least five hill-forts or duns are located in the hills 3km to the north of the site and a further settlement and field system is to be found at Farley, 5km to the west.

The area is roughly 500m long by 100 - 150m wide and lies on NE/SW axis, it is bounded on the NW by a fence and on the SE by a ruined fence. It is overplanted with widely spaced pine trees and has a forest floor of short heather and grass with moss and bracken patches. Visibility is generally good, but not good enough for photographs. The wood is used occasionally by dog-walkers.

The chambered cairn has been recorded on the SMR(NH54SW0100) and the NMrs(NH54SW064) and mention has been made of the hut circles but no detailed recording has been carried out. A field survey was made in Nov 1999, by the CFA (Centre for Field Archaeology) of an adjacent area to the south and west ahead of a proposed gravel quarry. This identified 2 possible chambered cairns, four hut circles, many clearance cairns and an earthbank (which continues into the project area). Three of the hut circles, (SMR nos. - NH54SW0116, NH54SW0117 and NH54SW0118) lie immediately to the south-east of the project area. The gravel quarry now exists to the south-east of these hut circles and it is understood that it is to be extended to the southwest.

### **Method**

The task was undertaken on a cold, overcast February day by a group of volunteers from the North of Scotland Archaeological Society, most of whom had completed the Certificate of Field Archaeology, Aberdeen University

1. The areas' longitudinal axis was traversed by the group, walking in parallel at 10 - 15m intervals, as per field walking. Each feature was marked with a cane and allocated a unique number. Thirty six features were identified and marked in this way.
2. Six pairs of individuals were allocated between 5 and 7 features each to record. They were supplied with 30m tapes, steel tapes and marker flags. The details of each feature were recorded on a recording pro forma, making rough sketches where appropriate. GPS readings were taken, but it was felt unsuitable for photography.

3. A survey of the whole area at a scale of 1:2,500 using compass and pacing technique was carried out by MM, marking in the archaeological features in relation to one another. This was 'drawn up' using Ocad, an orienteering cartographic drawing programme, the symbols having been modified to represent archaeological features.
4. A document containing a synopsis of the features, the original recording forms and the plan of the area, together with a copy of the previous entry on the SMR/Nmrs, and the CFA report of the adjacent area is to be deposited in the NOSAS archive. Copies of the synopsis and the plan are to be sent to the SMR, the Nmrs, the Beaulieu Heritage Society and the Kilmorack Heritage Trust. A shortened version will be sent to the CSA for inclusion in 'Discovery and Excavation', and also to the editor of the NOSAS Yearbook.

## Balblair Wood – NOSAS – Feb 17<sup>th</sup> 2002

### Synopsis of Features

1. Linear Earthbank  
NGR: NH 5018 4468  
This linear turf and stone bank lies 14m ENE of hut circle 2, it is 21m long and runs in a NW-SE direction. It has a spread of 2m, a height of between 0.3 and 0.5m and is moss-covered.  
GG & KS
2. Hut circle  
NGR: NH 5044 4466  
An oval enclosure, this feature measures internally 9.7m on its long NW-SE axis and 6.8m in width. The enclosing turf and stone banks have a spread of 1.7m, a height generally of 0.4m and are grass and moss covered. There appears to be an entrance in the SE.  
GG & KS
3. Clearance cairn  
NGR: NH 5043 4466  
To the SW of hut circle 2, this low oval cairn has a large spread of 9m by 5m and height of 0.4m  
Tree and moss covered.  
GG & KS
4. Clearance cairn  
NGR: NH 5041 4466  
Circular stone mound, 4.7m in diameter and 0.5 to 0.7m in height. Tree and moss-covered.  
GG & KS
5. Hut Circle  
NGR: NH 5040 4466  
Roughly circular enclosure with internal diameter of 6m and external of between 11 and 14m, the spread of the turf and stone footings varying from 2 to 4m. The height of the bank varies between 0.4 and 0.6m and there is an entrance 1.2m wide at the ESE. The structure is covered with grass, moss and bracken and planted with pine trees, there are also birch trees.  
AC&GT
6. Enclosure/?Cairn  
NGR: NH 5039 4465  
Situated at lower edge of slope on low ground, this oval structure lies on an E-W axis and has an overall dimension of 9m by 7m and height of 0.8m. The central area is dished and measures 3m by 1.5m and 0.5m deep. The surrounding stone banks have a consistent spread of about 2.5m and there is no evidence of an entrance. This feature resembles NH54SW0116, 250m to the SW in the adjacent CFA survey and also enclosure/?burnt mound 8 of this survey, 25m to the SW.  
AC&GT
7. Linear bank  
NGR: NH 5039 4463  
This linear feature is 50m long, runs in a NW-SE direction in a 'cranked' shape. It is roughly 0.5m in height, has a spread of 2.5m and is comprised of turf and stone with heather cover.  
AC&GT
8. Circular enclosure/?Burnt mound  
NGR: NH 5038 4462  
A circular mound with a depression at its centre, this feature has a diameter of roughly 10m. The hollow is roughly 3m in diameter and the surrounding stone and turf banks have a spread of 2.5m and rise to 0.5m in height with no evidence of an entrance. The feature slopes from SW to NE and is covered with light bracken, moss and trees. The feature is very similar to cairn 6 to the E.  
AC&GT
9. Clearance cairn  
NGR: NH 5036 4465  
This linear clearance cairn has a long axis N-S, it measures 10.6m by 4.3m and has a height of 0.5m. Grass covered  
AC&GT
10. Clearance cairn  
NGR: NH 5034 4461  
This grass and bracken covered stone cairn, which is close to hut circle 11, has a diameter of 5m. It is 1m high at the north where the ground falls away but 0.4m to the south.  
MR&MG

11. Hut circle  
NGR: NH 5037 4461  
External diameter of this hut circle varies from 11.8m to 13m, the stone and turf banks rise to a height of circa 0.5m, have a wide spread of 2-2.m spread and enclose an area of diameter 5.5m. There is a possible entrance in the east. The feature is covered with bracken. MR&MG
12. Oval enclosure  
NGR: NH 5033 4454  
An oval enclosure, lying on a NW-SE axis, with walls varying in height from 0.3m to 0.6m and spread from 2.4m to 3.4m. Internal measurement is 8m by 5m and external 15m by 10m. An entrance, 3.6m wide, appears to exist at the south end. Vegetation cover is moss, grass and trees. MR&MG
13. Clearance cairn  
NGR: NH 5034 4553  
Linear heather covered cairn lying on a NE-SW axis. Measures 8m by 4m and is 0.5m high
14. Clearance cairn  
NGR: NH 5034 4456  
Moss-covered roughly circular stone cairn, 0.5m high and with a diameter of 3.5m. NG&TW
15. Clearance cairn  
NGR: NH 5033 4457  
Moss-covered circular stone cairn measuring roughly 5.5m in diameter and rising to 0.5m, flattened or dished on top. NG&TW
16. Clearance cairn  
NGR: NH 5031 4457  
A circular cairn of diameter 7.5m and height 0.5m with a dished centre, Moss covered. NG&TW
17. Hut circle  
NGR: NH 5031 4459  
An ovoid enclosure with a possible entrance in the SE. Surrounding earth and stone banks rise generally to 0.5m and are moss-covered. Long axis E-W measures 11.8m externally and 7.4m internally, N-S measures 10.4m externally and 5.8m internally. NG&TW
18. Clearance cairn  
NGR: NH 5030 4456  
A moss-covered oval cairn, long axis E-W measures 6.1m, short axis 4.7m and height of 0.8m. Some evidence of large boulders. NG&TW
19. Clearance cairn  
NGR: NH 5029 4461  
Linear cairn lying to the north of hut circle 17 on an E-W axis. Measures 8m by 3m and 0.4m high. Moss and grass covered with trees
20. Clearance cairn  
NGR: NH 5028 4460  
Large oval stone cairn with moss and bracken cover. Long axis E-W measures 7.8m and short axis 6.3m with a maximum height of 0.8m. NG&TW
21. Linear earthen bank/boundary  
NGR: NH 5027 4462  
Two earthen banks at right-angles to one another, one running NNW, the other WSW. Both have a spread of 1.2m and rise to 0.5m in height. Both appear to continue into the adjacent field to the NW outwith the survey area. PD&JW



22. Clearance cairn  
 NGR: NH 5039 4455  
 Stone and earth mound measuring 10m long (NE/SW axis) and 5.3m wide, with a height of 0.5m. Covered in bracken, heather moss and trees. PD&JW
  
23. Chambered cairn – NMRS- NH54SW 064, SMR- NH54SW 0100  
 NGR: NH 5024 4457  
 An oval feature of external diameter 18m(NNW-SSE) by 22m(WSW-ENE) with a rectangular chamber at its centre. The surrounding outside bank of stone and earth rises to 0.6m and has a spread of 2-3m. There is a raised area at the centre and the chamber can be seen as a shallow hollow, measuring roughly 1m by 1.3m. It has an upended slab (2.25m wide x 1.25m high x 0.5m deep) at its WSW edge, and there may be a passage leading away to the ENE where there is what appears to be two lintels measuring 1.8x0.6m and 1.6x0.45m respectively. The whole site is covered with planted pines, birch, moss and light bracken PD&JW
  
24. Clearance cairn  
 NGR: NH 5022 4458  
 A moss covered mound of stones roughly circular with a diameter of 5m and max. height on north side of 0.5m. TW&NG
  
25. Clearance cairn  
 NGR: NH 5022 4453  
 An oval stone and earth mound, long axis E-W, measuring 9.2m by 5.9m and 0.75m high, planted with pines and with birch moss and fine grass cover. PD&JW
  
26. Clearance cairn  
 NGR: NH 5020 4454  
 An oval mound of stones on an ENE-WSW axis, 10.6m long by 6.8m wide and 0.5m in height, it has a shallow depression at the centre and is covered with pines, bracken and moss PD&JW
  
27. Clearance cairn  
 NGR: NH 5020 4458  
 Small oval cairn measuring 3m by 4m and 0.3m high. Moss and tree covered
  
28. Clearance cairn  
 NGR: NH 5019 4452  
 An oval stone and earth mound covered in pine, birch, moss and fine grass and with measurements of 6.8m (NNE-SSW axis) by 4.7m and height of 0.5m. PD&JW
  
29. Hut circle  
 NGR: NH 5015 4451  
 A oval enclosure of external diameter 11.8m,/internal 6.6m NW-SE axis, 10.2m external/5.5m internal(E-W). with a possible entrance in the SE. The surrounding banking of stones varies from 0.3 to 0.4m in height and spread generally of 2-2.5m. Covering of trees, moss and grass.LD&SL
  
30. Clearance cairn  
 NGR: NH 5017 4450  
 An oval mound of earth and stones on a N-S axis, dished at the centre and measuring 8.2m by 6.5m and with a maximum height of 0.75m. Tree covered and with grass and moss. LD&SL
  
31. Clearance cairn  
 NGR: NH 5016 4453  
 A pile of stones, 3.5m in diameter and 0.4m in height, covered in moss and bracken LD&SL
  
32. Linear earthbank  
 NGR: NH 5015 4457(N end) to NH 5010 4443(S end)  
 NE-SW alignment and 130m long, this earthbank is the continuation of the one in the CFA project to the SW. It is generally 0.4m in height but 1m in places and has a spread of 2m wide. A ditch 1m wide and 0.3m deep runs parallel on the NW side. At the north end it merges with a bank in the field which runs parallel to the edge of the wood

33. Hut circle

NH 5014 4447

A circular enclosure with an external diameter of 11.5m and internal diameter of 6.7m. The earthbanks have a spread of 2-2.5m and are generally 0.6m in height. There appears to be an entrance in the SE. The site is overplanted with trees, and covered with moss and grass.LD&SL

34. Clearance cairn

NGR: NH 5019 4448

Close to hut circle 33 and on its NW, this low cairn measures 6m by 4m and is 0.5m high. Grass covered with trees.

35. Clearance cairn

NGR: NH 5013 4446

6m in diameter and 0.6m high, this cairn is tree-covered.

36. Linear bank

NGR: NH 5009 4449(N end) to NH 5013 4446(S end)

NW-SE alignment, has a spread of 2-3m and height of 0.5-0.6m. Is cut by bank and ditch 32 and joins earthbank in field at north end in a T-junction



# North Balblair Wood - Beauly

Chambered cairn, hut circles and clearance cairns  
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Chambered Cairn - GR NH 5024 4456

NMRS: NH54SW 0064, SMR: NH54SW0100

Scale

