

Braes Common Grazings

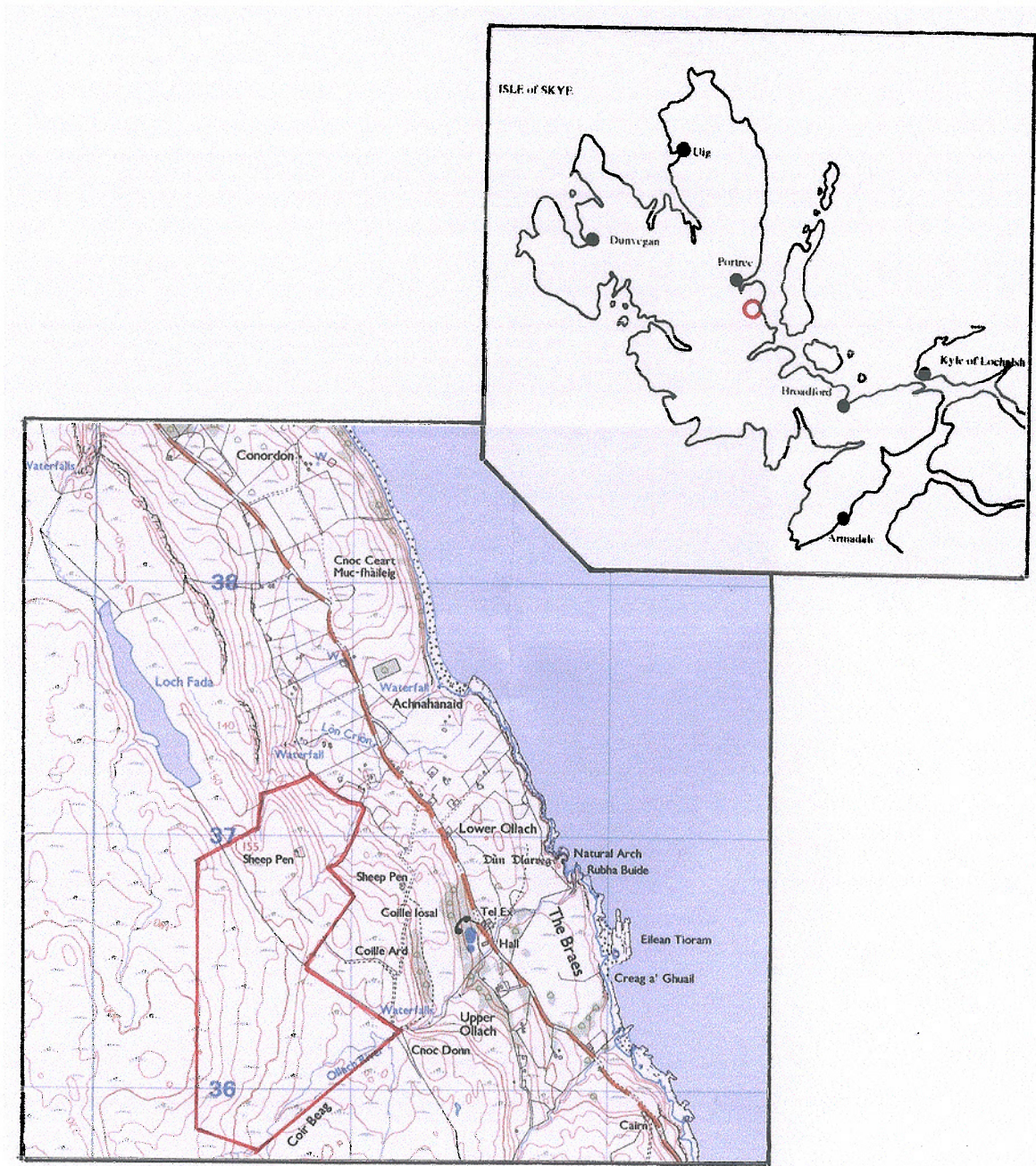
Woodland Grant Scheme Proposal

Archaeological Survey, (Rapid Walkover).

September 2003



Photo. 1 : Site 7 (Part) - A ruined, 4 metre diameter, single cell shieling.



Map 1 : Isle of Skye and location of Survey area, (outlined in red).

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Rapid Walkover Survey (Archaeology)**September 2003****Braes Common Grazings, Isle of Skye.**

NG 4080 5500 (See Maps 1 & 2)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Archaeological and Ancient Landscape Survey was commissioned on the 21st of September 2003, by Mr Dietrich Pannwitz of I M Forestry, to carry out a rapid walkover survey of the outlined area of a proposed Woodland Grant Scheme, (WGS), application at Achnahannait in Braes on the Isle of Skye. (See Map 1). The walkover survey was designed to locate, and flag, all visible archaeological sites lying within the boundaries of the WGS proposal. A limited desk-based search was also carried out. The walkover survey recovered 6 archaeological sites which were new to the archaeological record, but failed to relocate a site recorded by Mr Roger Miket in November 1990. The positions of the new sites were recorded on to a base map of the proposal. The position of all visible turf and stone dyke boundaries was also recorded on to the base map of the proposal, (See Map 2).

2. METHODOLOGY**2.1 The desk-based Search**

A limited desk-based search was carried out consulting the RCAHMS 'CANMORE' web site and the Highland Sites and Monuments Record, also via the Internet. The Dualchas Archive in Portree and the archive of Archaeological and Ancient Landscape Survey were also consulted.

2.2 The Walkover Survey

2.2.1 The area of the proposal was walked, by a team of two surveyors, on the 26th of September – a warm sunny day with occasional showers. The lower slopes of the proposal were covered, in places, by waist high bracken, making survey very difficult. The location of archaeological sites recovered during the survey was established using a hand held GPS, (Global Positioning System), giving an eight figure OS grid reference. In addition a written record of each site was kept on prepared recording sheets. The more visible sites were also photographed. All sites were flagged with canes and red and white barrier tape.

2.2.2 Extant land divisions, (Dykes), were plotted on to a base map of the proposal.

2.2.3 As each site was recorded its condition was also assessed. A sliding scale was used to indicate site condition. – The categories are listed below:-

See over

- Well preserved - All elements visible and in close to original condition.
- Ruinous - All elements visible but some disturbance and collapse.
- Degraded - Type of site still discernable but remains very disturbed.
- Very degraded - Not possible to say with any certainty what the site is.

3. **RESULTS**

3.1 **The Desk-based Search**

Only 1 archaeological site had previously been recorded within or close to the WGS proposal.

NMRS No.	Grid ref.	Description
NG53NW 23	NG 510 362	Possible house platform showing as a linear mound.

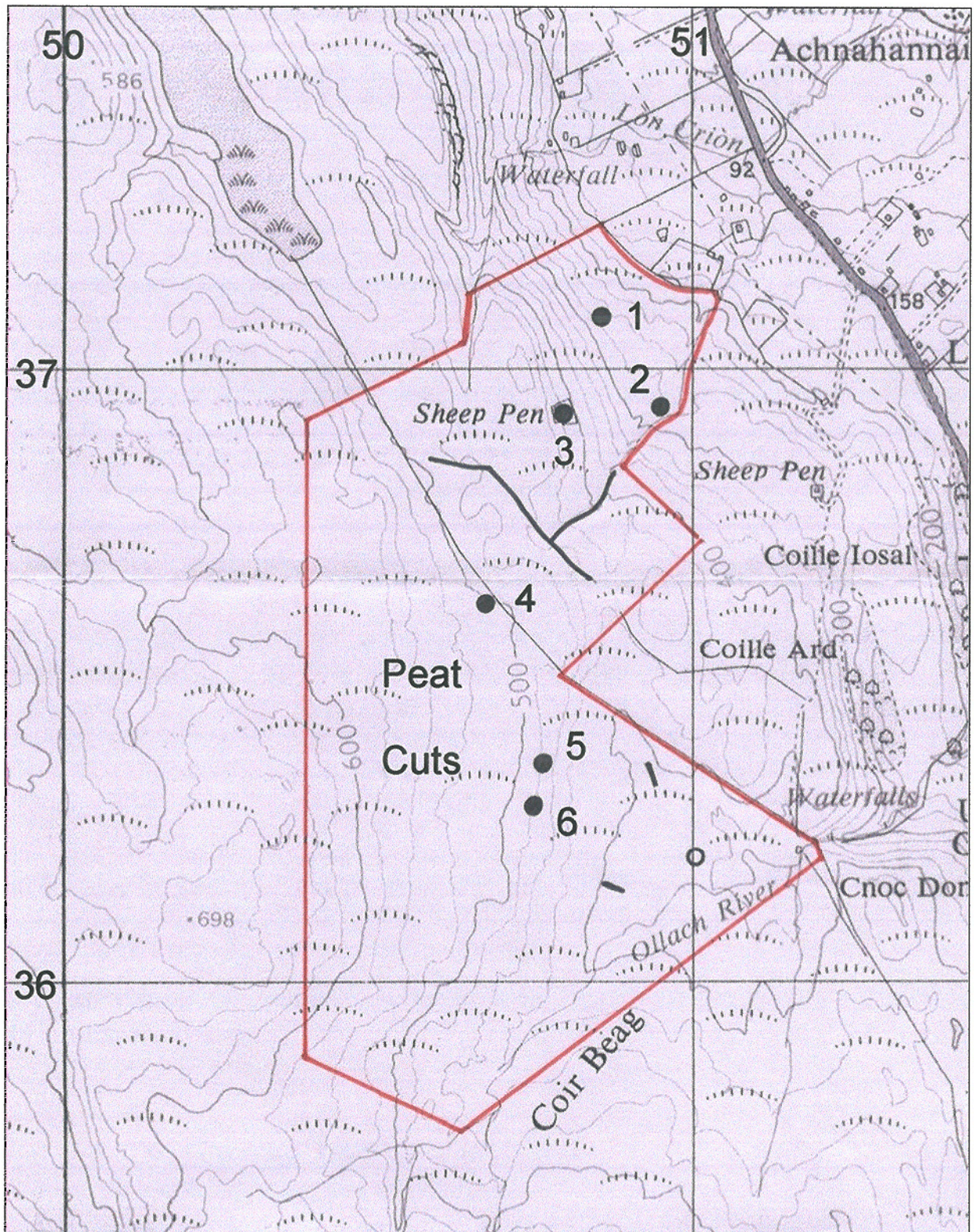
The walkover survey failed to relocate this site.

3.2 **The Walkover Survey**

3.2.1 During the walkover survey 6 archaeological sites were recorded for the first time, (1 – 6 on Map 2), and an attempt was made to relocate the previously recorded site, (Without success).

These sites are listed below and described in detail in the Gazetteer, (Section 4).

Site No.	Type	Condition	OS Grid Ref.
1.	Shieling	Ruinous	NG 5086 3709
2.	?Shielings (2)	Very Degraded	NG 5095 3693
3.	Stone Fank and Dip	Well Preserved	NG 5079 3692
4.	Shieling	Degraded	NG 5069 3662
5.	Shieling	Degraded	NG 5077 3635
6.	Shieling Group (4)	Ruinous to Degraded	NG 5075 3628



Map 2 : Showing location of Archaeological sites and Boundary Dykes (Thick black lines)

* The open circle marks the position of the site recorded in November 1990.

(Not relocated in the 2003 survey).

4. GAZETTEER OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Site No.	Type	Photo. No.	Condition	OS Grid Ref
1.	Shieling	-	Ruinous	NG 5086 3709

A stone built, round cornered, structure of rectangular shape set on a small platform on the NE facing hillside above Achnahannait. This structure is aligned NW to SE and measures 6 metres by 5 metres over walls 0.65 of a metre thick. The walls survive to a maximum of 0.60 of a metre high. A ruinous door opening survives in the centre of the NE wall.

2.	?Shielings (2)	-	Very degraded	NG 5095 3693
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Lying amongst dense bracken between a modern wire fence and a small burn are the remains of 2 very disturbed ?structures. Both structures are aligned N to S and appear to be grassed-over twin-celled shielings. The lower of the two structures measures roughly 7 metres long by 4 metres wide over walls which have spread to over 1 metre in width. No entrances are visible. The second structure lies some 15 metres to the NW, up the slope.

3.	Fank and dip	-	Well preserved	NG 5079 3692
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A stone built, 3 compartment fank with a dipping tank of concrete construction at its N end. This structure lies on a natural grassy platform which lies below low cliffs at the top of the rising hillside above Achnahannait. The fank is aligned N to S and measures 28 metres by 10 metres overall with walls 1.5 metres high and 0.80 of a metre thick. The remains of a post and wire pen lie to the down-slope side of the fank.

4.	Shieling	-	Degraded	NG 5069 3662
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A degraded, single cell, shieling lying at the foot of a NE facing rocky outcrop. A modern wire fence lies 7 metres to the NE. This structure is stone built and measures 3 metres long by 1.8 metres wide over a wall which survives in places to 3 courses high.

5.	Shieling	-	Degraded	NG 5077 3635
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A boulder-built single cell shieling lying at the foot of a small rocky outcrop with an E aspect. A small waterfall lies just 10 metres to the N. The remains of this structure, which in places still stands to 0.6 metre high, measure 4 metres long by 3 metres wide over walls 0.80 of a metre thick. A tumbled door opening 1 metre wide, faces to the E.

6.	Shielings (4)	1 (see cover)	Ruinous to Degraded	NG 5075 3628
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Lying on a natural terrace at the top of an E facing slope are the remains of a loose grouping of 4 stone and turf built shielings. All the shielings are single cell examples with some stonework still visible. One, (see cover photo), has its interior filled with loose stones. Two of the shielings measure 6 metres by 4 metres overall, with the remaining two measuring 2.50 metres and 4 metres in overall diameter.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This WGS Proposal lies, for the most part, on gently rising ground with a heavy peat overburden. All the visible archaeological sites lie on the steeper, better drained, slopes overlooking either Achnahannait or the Ollach River, with the upper ground showing much evidence of peat extraction – in some places to a depth of over 2 metres. The level ground lying to the NW side of the Ollach River shows some evidence for a buried landscape, with fragments of boulder walling rising out of the peat at NG 5094 3632 and NG 5085 3615.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 A 20m buffer zone, measured from the outer limits of each site, should be left around all recorded archaeological sites, (Sites 1 – 6 in this report).
- 6.2 A 5m buffer zone should be left to each side of all recorded boundary dykes, (thick black lines on Map 2).
- 6.3 Access roads running parallel to a boundary dyke should respect the 5m buffer zone protecting the dyke.
- 6.4 If an access road has to cross a boundary dyke it should do so at a right angle, or as close to a right angle as is practicable, to minimize damage to the dyke.

7. LOCATION OF RECORDS

All records relating to this survey are held in the archive of:-

Archaeological and Ancient Landscape Survey
C/o Martin Wildgoose
Tigh an Dun
Dunan
Broadford

Isle of Skye. IV49 9AJ. Tel. 01471 822 562

E-mail : jwildgoose@aol.com

END

Martin Wildgoose AIFA

27th September 2003.