

**Report of Rapid Pre-afforestation Survey  
November 2003  
Navidale Farm, Helmsdale, Highland  
ND 053/173 (centred)**

**By  
Stuart Farrell  
B.A A.I.F.A F.S.A.Scot.  
November 2003**

## Introduction

This report is for an archaeological desktop and rapid walkover survey for a Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) conducted by the author for Bowlts Chartered Surveyors for Navidale Farm by Helmsdale, Highland.

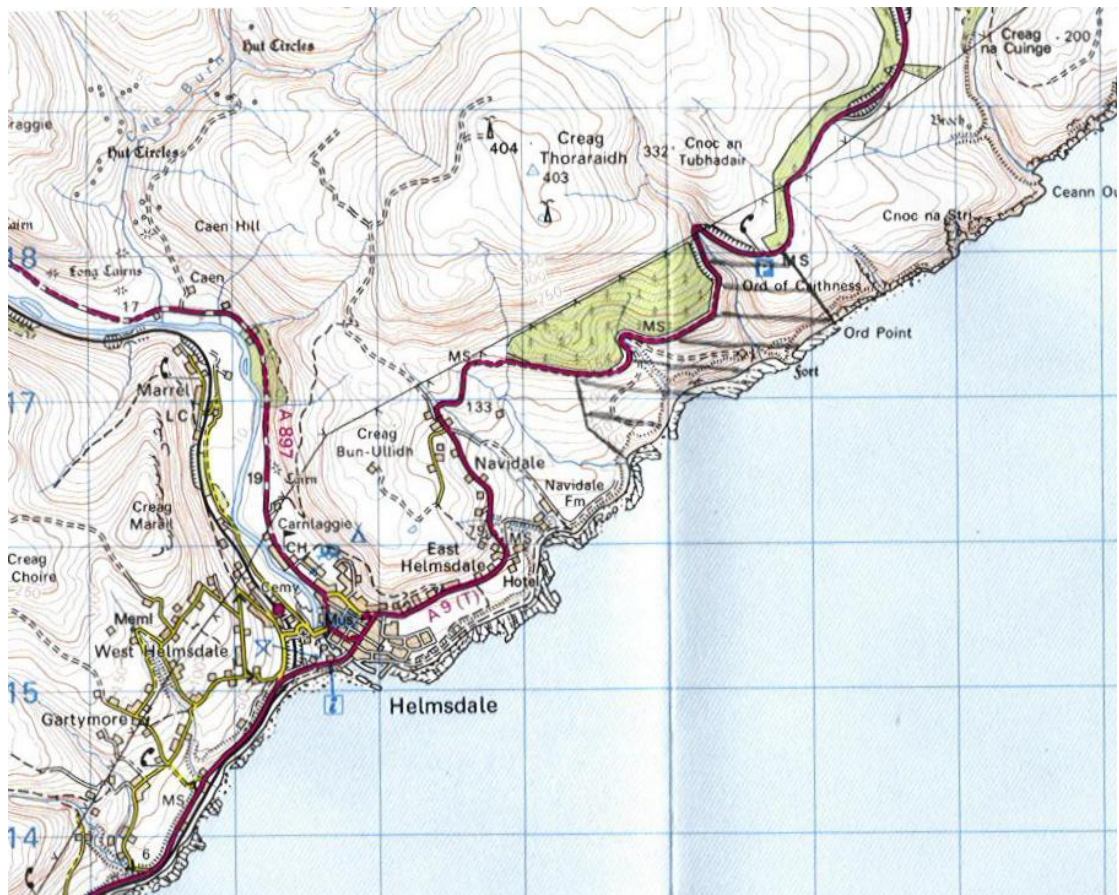
This work follows on a survey conducted by the author in 2002 where it was recommended that further work be conducted due to bracken cover.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following for their help during the work:

- Mr. L Macaskill, of Bowlts Chartered Surveyors;
- Mr. J Wood, of Highland Council Archaeology Unit;
- Mr. S Buchanan, for onsite help.

## Site Location 1:50,000



## Objectives

A rapid walkover survey was conducted to identify those archaeological sites that lie in the area of the proposed Woodland Grant Scheme. (See enclosed map – scale 1:5000)

This followed on a desktop survey of records of the following:

- Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record
- National Monuments Record of Scotland
- Highland Council Archives
- Work by AOC Archaeology Group.

## Results

Currently a number of archaeological sites are recorded in the Highland Sites and Monuments Record or the National Monuments Record of Scotland CANMORE database to the area of the WGS. The Ordnance Survey has conducted previous survey work in the area in the past in 1976 and by the AOC Archaeology Group in 1994 (AOC, 1994). It must be noted that the survey by AOC in 1994 was not fully completed.

Recommendations are given after each site.

Weather on the day of fieldwork (November 4<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> 2003) was partly cloudy with sunny periods. A walkover was made of all areas of the proposed 83 hectares accessible (some parts not accessible due to gorse and dense bracken).

(Both grid references and height above sea level were obtained using a Garmin II Plus GPS using European Data) Results are as follows:

HSMR – Highland Sites and Monuments Record  
NMRS – National Monuments Record of Scotland  
N/a – not available

### 1 – Allt Briste

HSMR – ND01NW 40

NMRS – ND01NW 40

Grid Ref: - ND 0483/1734

Type – Hut circle

Noted in HSMR and NMRS of 'hut circle is 10.5m in diameter within a bank of 2.2m average spread. The entrance is in the SSE. The bank has been destroyed in the N probably during the construction of the later track. There are no traces of cultivation in the immediate vicinity but a few clearance heaps are visible a few hundred metres to the E. OS 1976'.

Walkover in 2002 revealed that site lies in area of proposed alterations to nearby A9 road, with archaeological evaluation being carried out by AOC Archaeology Ltd. Possible 2nd structure (?) of 4m diameter at ND 04826/1733 within bank (revealed by trial trenching to be 0.5m high).

Walkover in 2003 showed site to have back filled. The site was wholly excavated by AOC in 2002 (Dunbar, 2003) that revealed a hut circle of an Iron Age date, though the site had been damaged by animal disturbance and flooding. No trace was made of any clearance heaps to the E, there are a few mounds but probing did not reveal any stones. A possible bank lies to the E (see site 20).

Over – View of site facing W (Nov 2003)



*No recommendations to be made.*

**2 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – ND01NW 46

NMRS – ND01NW 46

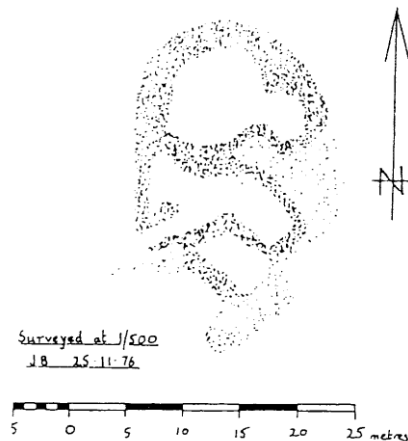
Grid Ref: - ND 0484/1717

Type – Homestead (?)

Noted in HSMR and NMRS of 'an enigmatic complex of stone-built structures, overgrown with bracken. It is built up on the SE slope and measures 27.5m NS x 17.5m. It appears to comprise at its N end of a sub-circular enclosure within a wall 1m high and spread to 3m. On the S side is an L-shaped structure entered from the SW, its inner face defined by occasional upright slabs. This mode of construction is unquestionably early and is found in hut circles and 'wags'. Positive identification not possible due to its mutilated condition and addition of stone clearance - OS 1976'.

Walkover in 2002 revealed that site is very heavily overgrown with bracken, though the sub-circular enclosure and L-shaped structure are traceable. A few large stones are visible in the L-shaped structure.

Walkover in 2003 revealed site as planned by OS (see below) with site centred at ND 04840/17176. Bank of stones revealed at ND 04822/17157 S to ND 04843/17132 of big stones up to 1m high for 34m, 2<sup>nd</sup> at ND 04863/17162 to ND 04879/17153 as before and possible 3<sup>rd</sup> remnant of bank 25m E at fence line forming former field system. All obscured by bracken.



*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS. Bracken to be cleared from site.*

**3 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – ND01NW 45

NMRS – ND01NW 45

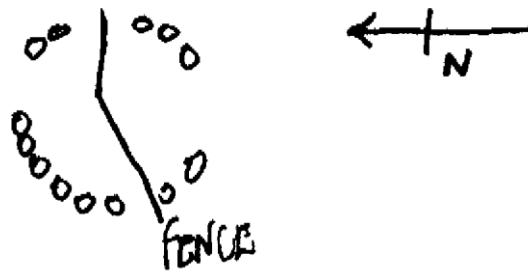
Grid Ref: - ND 048/171

Type – Hut circles

Noted in HSMR and NMRS of 'on a SE facing slope is 3 stonewalled hut circles (A-C). A and B are severely reduced. The former set into the slope has been about 8.5m in diameter within a wall 2.2m wide in the SE arc where both faces are visible, elsewhere the wall is obscured by whin and spoil from the adjacent track. A gap in the S arc indicated the entrance. Only the W half of hut B remains, it measures about 10m in diameter within a wall spread to about 2.5m. No trace of the entrance is visible. Hut C is well preserved, it is 9.5m in diameter with walls up to 1m high and spread to 2.5m. Occasional inner and outer faces are exposed but later field clearance has been piled up onto the walls. There is no evidence of contemporary cultivation; the area around has been cultivated recently (OS 1976)'.

Walkover in 2002 reveals little or no trace of these hut circles due to the site being very heavily overgrown with bracken.

Walkover in 2003 reveals hut circle at ND 04801/17120 at 360 ft overlain by fence and covered with bracken. Only single circular arc of stones visible of c8m in diameter. (Possibly site A as noted by OS) Again no sign of site B and C due to heavy bracken coverage.



*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS. Bracken to be cleared from site.*

**4 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04919/16974

Type – Enclosure

Site is marked as a hut circle on latest OS map that is not recorded in HSMR or NMRS.

Walkover in 2002 reveals site is not a hut circle but an enclosure heavily overgrown with bracken. 12m in diameter with walls 1m wide and up to 1m high. Steepness of slope within the enclosure makes it impossible to be a hut circle.

Walkover in 2003 reveals site unchanged.

*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**5 – Cnoc an Tubhadair or Ord Burn**

HSMR – ND01NE 4

NMRS – ND01NE 4

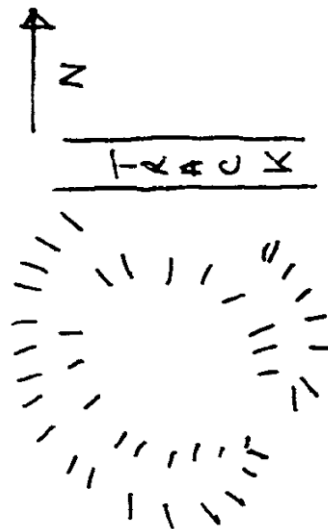
Grid Ref: - ND 0515/1725

Type – Hut circles, clearance cairns

Noted in HSMR and NMRS of "there are 2 hut circles set slightly into the S facing slope each with an entrance to the ESE. A at ND 0517/1724 is of unusual "pear shape" it measures 11.5m ESW-WNW by 9m with a slight turf covered wall which has an average spread of 3.2m widening at entrance to 4.5m. B at ND 0513/1725 is of similar construction and measures 10.5m in diameter with a largely turf covered wall spread to 3m. A few scattered clearance heaps lie in the vicinity of the huts OS 1976'.

Walkover reveals in 2002 both huts to be heavily covered in bracken, only traceable due to the rise and fall of the bracken. No sign of the clearance heaps in the vicinity noted by the OS due to bracken.

Walkover in 2003 reveals site still covered in bracken. Hut circle at ND 05168/17244 10.5m in diameter with no sign of visible entrance. Second hut circle at ND 05128/17240 at 388ft using bank to NW 11.5m in diameter with entrance to SE. (See sketch below – not to scale) A possible 3<sup>rd</sup> site at ND 05208/17224 noted by the AOC in 1994 to the E with a passage to E and W was revealed not to be very convincing as an archaeological site. No trace was made of any clearance heaps in the vicinity, there are a few mounds but probing did not reveal any stones.



*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS. Bracken to be cleared from site.*

**6 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04754/16926

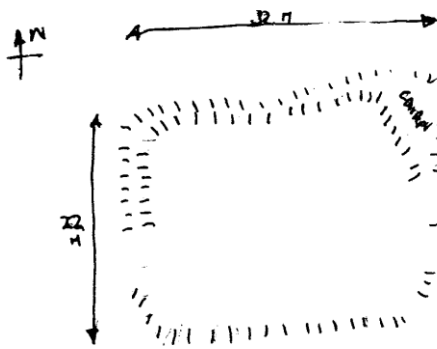
Type – Enclosure, possible

Possible enclosure is depicted on latest OS plan that is not recorded in HSMR or NMRS.

Walkover in 2002 reveals no trace of any enclosure or other structure at this location.

Walkover in 2003 reveals site to lie on south facing slope c.32m x 22m with cairn at ND 04768/16932 to NE corner. Discernible in parts by large stones though in parts only flat ground. (See sketch plan over – not to scale) (Over – View of cairn – scales 1m)





*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**7 – Green Table or Dun Glas**

HSMR – ND01NE 3

NMRS – ND01NE 3

Grid Ref: - ND 0583/1728

Type – Promontory Fort

Noted in HSMR and NMRS of 'pear-shaped promontory fort linked to the high coastal slope by a narrow neck of land 15m long and eroded to 2m wide. Interior slopes from N-S and measures c60m NW-SE by c35m E-W. The remains of an earth and stone rampart curve around the N end of the promontory and run for 17.5 along the N edge and 7m along the W edge to a maximum height of 2m and 2m wide. Erosion has destroyed rampart around remainder of promontory. The approach to the promontory is cut off by a ditch and rampart. Ditch is c6m wide and 2m deep on the scarp and 5m deep below the promontory, with outer bank up to 2m high. OS 1960 and OS 1976'.

Walkover not made of site as not very accessible due to being close to cliff edge. Site not revisited in 2003.

*No recommendations to be made as site will not be in area of WGS.*

**8 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 05521/17289

Type – Coastguard Lookout Post

Building marked on Landranger map of 1993, not marked on latest or 1st or 2nd edition OS maps.

Walkover in 2002 reveals site to be coastguard lookout post with building of brick with concrete floor and roof. Roller shutters on windows, small toilet room to E end and roof ladder and base for scope on roof. 5m x 3m.

Site not revisited in 2003.

*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**9** – Allt Briste

HSMR – n/a

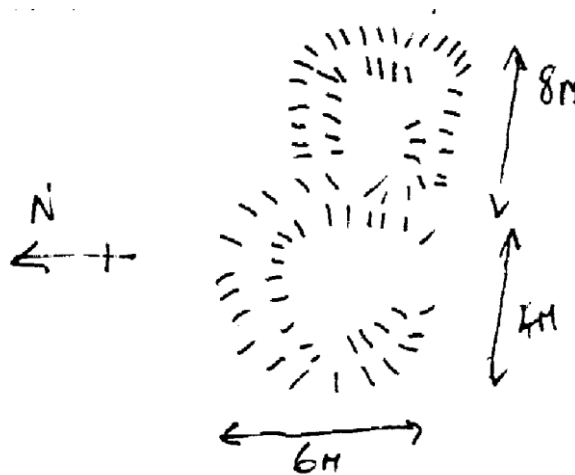
NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04746/17002

Type – Circular enclosure (possible), building

Site revealed during walkover survey in 2002 of a possible circular enclosure at 253ft. 8m in diameter with walls spread to 1m and up to 0.8m high, walls denuded to the N and NE arc.

Walkover in 2003 reveals possible additional building at E end at ND 04749/17007 with overall size of 12m x 6m. (See sketch below – not to scale) (Below – View of site facing SE – scales 1m)



*Site to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*



10 – Allt Briste

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04718/17006

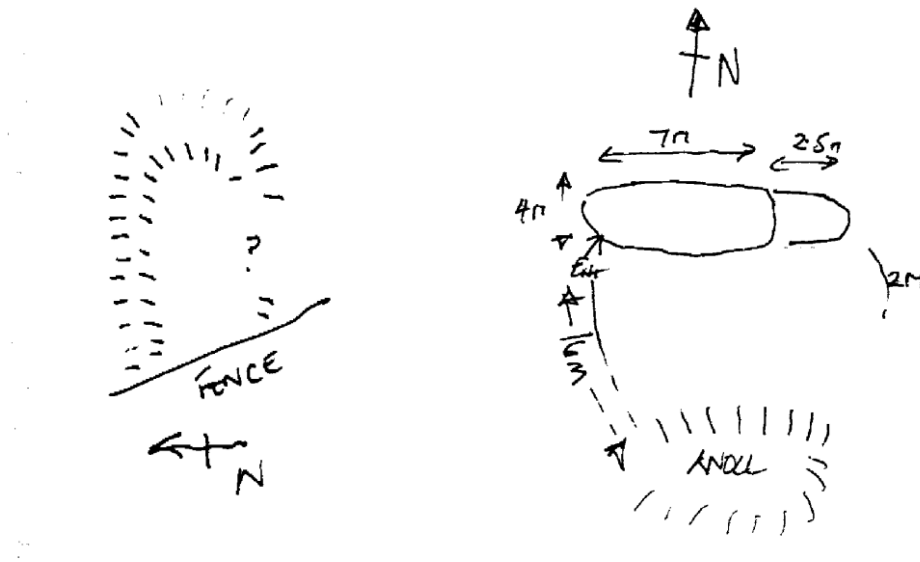
Type – Building

Site revealed during walkover survey in 2002 of rectangular building aligned E-W 10.5m EW x 3.5m NS with entrance to S. Walls 0.4m wide and built partly into south facing slope and up to 0.2m high. Overlain by fence to W end.

Walkover in 2003 reveals no change.

(See sketch below left – not to scale).

Site to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.



11 – Allt Briste

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04784/17036

Type – Building

Site revealed during walkover survey in 2002 of rectangular building aligned E-W 7m x 3.5m walls 0.5m thick and up to 1m high (only at NE corner) rest up to 0.5m high.

Addition on E side of 2.5m x 3m with entrance to S and walls 0.4m wide and high. Heavily covered in bracken.

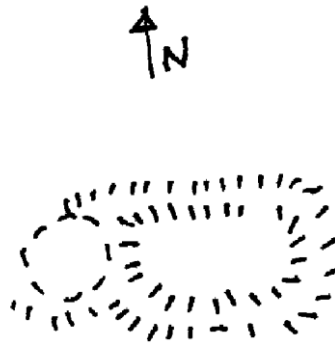
Walkover in 2003 reveals 2<sup>nd</sup> building 2.5m x 4m to E end with retaining walls forming enclosure to south (see sketch above right – not to scale). Possible entrance visible to SW.

Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.

12 – Allt Briste  
HSMR – n/a  
NMRS – n/a  
Grid Ref: - ND 04737/16929  
Type – Building, kiln

Site revealed during walkover survey in 2002 of rectangular building with kiln. Building is aligned SE-NW with bowl kiln to NW of 9m x 5m with walls 0.5m wide and up to 0.4m high. Kiln is very well defined of 3.5m in diameter overall with bowl 1.5m in diameter and 0.5m deep, built into natural bank to a height of 1.4m. Enclosure to S – see site 6.

Walkover in 2003 reveals site to be unchanged. Below – site plan not to scale.

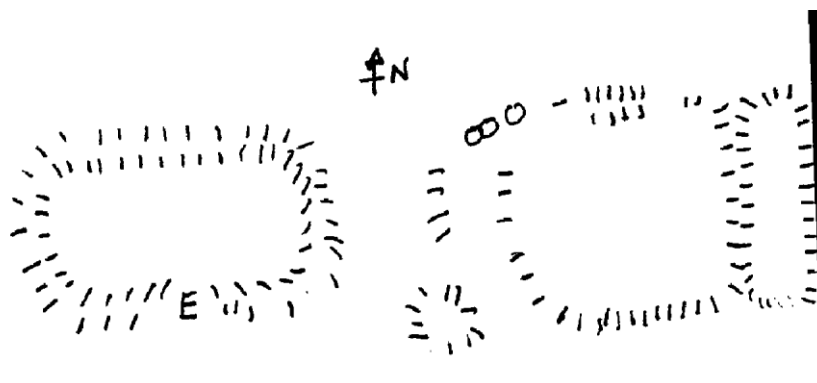


*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

13 – Allt Briste  
HSMR – n/a  
NMRS – n/a  
Grid Ref: - ND 04671/16927  
Type – Long House

Site revealed during walkover survey in 2002 of long rectangular building aligned EW of 13m EW by 4m NS with entrance visible to S with walls 0.6m wide and up to 0.4m high. Addition to E end of 5m x 4m with walls 0.6m wide and up to 0.3m high. Circular pit to SE, possible cesspit (?), of 2m diameter and 0.5m deep.

Walkover in 2003 reveals site to be unchanged, new site of building (site 30) located between this site and site 12. (See sketch below – not to scale – site 13 is on left).



*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**14 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04689/16840

Type – Cairn

Site revealed during walkover survey in 2002 of cairn heavily overgrown with bracken of 3m in diameter and 0.7m in height.

Site unchanged 2003.

*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**15 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04762/16852

Type – Clearance cairn (?)

Site revealed during walkover survey of possible clearance cairn against bank spread to 6m and up to 2m in height.

Site unchanged 2003.

*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**16 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04895/16805

Type – Coastguard Lookout Post

Site revealed during walkover survey of coastguard lookout post of brick with concrete floor and roof. Roller shutters on windows, small toilet room to E end and roof ladder and base for scope on roof. 5m x 3m. Exactly same size and style as site 8.

Site unchanged 2003.

*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**17 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04685/16704

Type – Clearance cairn

Site revealed during walkover survey in 2002 of small clearance cairn 2m in diameter and 0.7m in height. Other small mounds in vicinity but none have sign of any stone being visible or found by probing of ground.

Walkover in 2003 reveals site to be unchanged.

*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**18 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

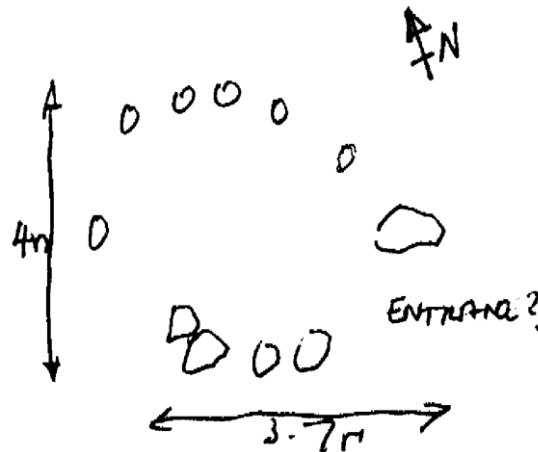
Grid Ref: - ND 04569/16776

Type – Oval structure

Site revealed during walkover survey in 2002 of oval structure aligned N-S 4m x 3m with walls 0.4m wide and up to 0.2m wide, function unknown. Lies directly to edge of site 19.

No change in 2003 covered partly in bracken, possible entrance to SE.

Below – plan – not to scale.



*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**19 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04550/16787

Type – Enclosure

Site revealed during walkover survey in 2002 of rectangular enclosure aligned N-S of 24m NS by 9m EW with turf walls 0.6m wide and up to 0.3m high. Not very discernible being denuded in parts and open to the N by edge of track. Few large boulders visible to NW and NE corners. Sits above site 18, relationship unclear.

No change in 2003.

*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

The following additional sites were located during the walkover survey in 2003:

**20 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04936/17317 to 04937/17279

Type – Dyke

Turf and stone bank 1.5m wide and 0.7m high, cut through by machine 3.6m wide at ND 04934/17315. Cut by track, 22m in length on N side and 15m on south side. Partly not very discernible due to bracken.

*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**21 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04823/17236

Type – Hut circle (possible)

Site is heavily covered in bracken and gorse, only discernible due to slight dip in gorse and that bracken was still green in colour at time of visit. Situated by edge of track at 429ft.

Below – view of site facing E – scale 2m.



*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**22 – Allt Briste**

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 046/170 (centred)

Type – Clearance cairns, Banks

Group of clearance cairns and banks forming former field system, though no trace of any structures or buildings in vicinity, though part of surrounding area heavy with bracken and gorse.

Clearance cairn (1) at ND 04618/17054 at 351ft 2m x 4m spread down slope to height of 0.5m covered in bracken. Possible 2<sup>nd</sup> CC or bank at ND 04612/17057 2.5m x 4m spread against N bank, possibly a collapsed bank/wall 7m in length though not very discernible. Turf and stone bank from ND 04581/17054 to ND 04587/17060 with CC and bank mentioned before forming possible terrace 1m wide and 0.5m high. Possible return at ND 04590/17075 to ND 04574/17076. Ending at ND 04559/17081 at clearance cairn (2) of 4m diameter and 1m high at 389ft. Return possibly at ND 04562/17050 N to ND 04553/17056 with possible 2<sup>nd</sup> bank to W. This last bank is 1.2m wide and 0.4m high. A possible path runs between clearance cairn no.1 and the first bank to the N.

*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*





**23** – Allt Briste

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04543/17063

Type – Clearance cairns

Group of 2 clearance cairns each 2m wide and spread down slope to 4m each 0.5 high.

Possible 2<sup>nd</sup> bank at ND 04538/17049 to ND 04552/17030 of 20m in length 1.5m wide and 0.3m high though very denuded and not very discernible.

Below – View of CC – scales 1m.



*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**24** – Allt Briste

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04475/17081

Type – Cairn (Possible), pen possible.

Possible cairn at 405ft 3.8m in diameter with possible kerb visible all around. Cairn material has been robbed out, if not cairn possible pen.

Below – View of possible cairn facing W – scales 1m.



*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*



**25** – Allt Briste

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

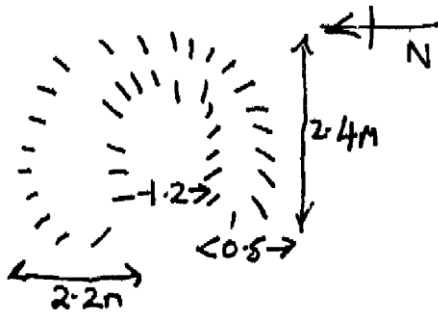
Grid Ref: - ND 04467/17089

Type – Structure

U shaped structure at 405ft c2.5m in diameter and open to the NW, walls 0.5m wide and up to 0.3m high.

Left – Plan – not to scale.

Right – View facing SE – scales 1m.



*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**26** – Allt Briste

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04527/17022

Type – Structure

Structure at 350ft partly covered in gorse 4m x 3m opened to SW 0.4m wide. Site is not very discernible due to gorse.

Below – View facing NW – scales 1m.



*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**27** – Allt Briste

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

Grid Ref: - ND 04472/17033

Type – Clearance cairn

Cairn at 380ft 4m in diameter partly spread down slope to SE 0.5m high.

Below – View facing SW – scales 1m.



*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**28** – Allt Briste

HSMR – n/a

NMRS – n/a

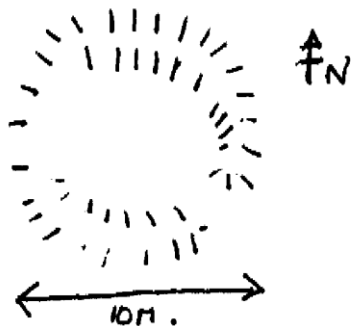
Grid Ref: - ND 04816/16756

Type – Enclosure (possible)

Possible enclosure at 146ft though on plan resembles hut circle at 146 ft 10m in diameter with walls 1m wide and 0.5m high. Partly open to w, with possible entrance to SE. No sign of any associated field system as area around has been ploughed and grazed until recent times.

Left – Plan – not to scale.

Right – View facing E – scale 2m.

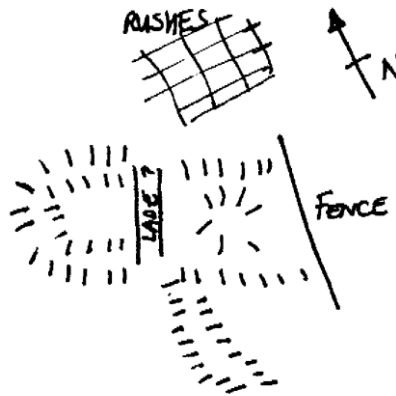


*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**29** – Allt Briste  
HSMR – n/a  
NMRS – n/a  
Grid Ref: - ND 04903/16833  
Type – Mill

Site covered in bracken. Small building to W 3.4m x 3m with walls 0.5m thick, lade in 3m in length and 0.4m wide. Small mound of stones to E. lade runs along wall to edge of cliff at south.

Below – plan – not to scale.



*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**30** – Allt Briste  
HSMR – n/a  
NMRS – n/a  
Grid Ref: - ND

Type – Building (possible)

Possible rectangular building with possible enclosure on west side, situated between sites 13 and 12. For site plan see site 13. Building aligned NE-SW 11m x 4.5m with walls 0.5m wide and 0.2m high.

*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

**31** – Allt Briste  
HSMR – n/a  
NMRS – n/a  
Grid Ref: - ND

Type – Bank, Clearance cairn

Bank and clearance cairn forming part of field system to rear of sites 2 and 3 on SE facing slope. Bank runs from ND 04760/17570 to circa ND 04747/17185 for about 30m though very difficult to trace as in parts only a few stones are visible through the bracken. Clearance cairn at northern edge at ND 04763/17207 of 4m in diameter, 0.5m high with possible edge on N side.

Over – View of CC facing E – scales 1m.





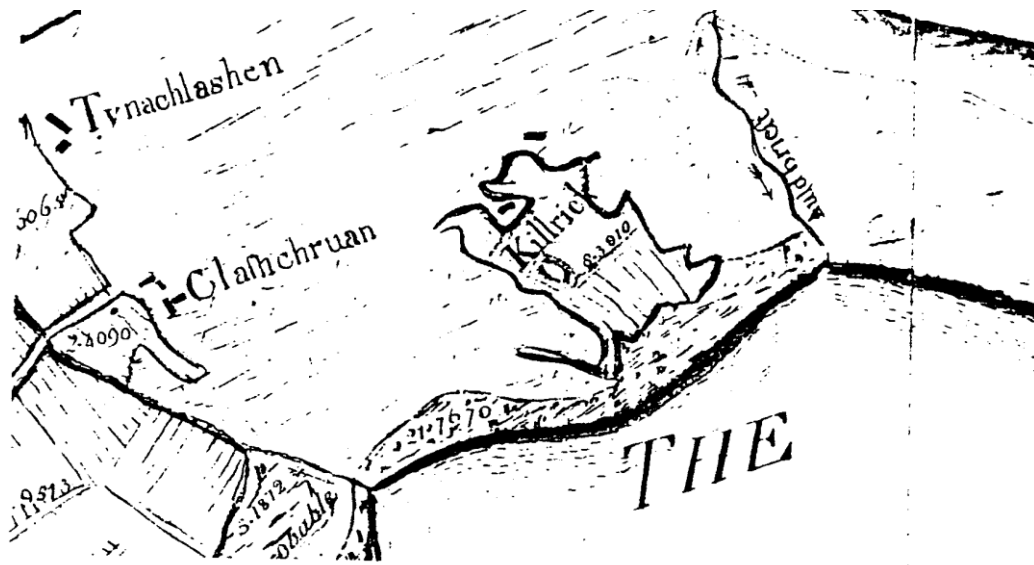
*Area to have 20m exclusion in place for WGS.*

### **Conclusions**

It is possible that the 2 groups of buildings and the mill found are related to the site of Killrick (NMRS site ND01NW 33). An estate map of 1771 shows 3 buildings to the N with a building by the cliff edge, though there was no find of the formal boundaries of the farmstead or the possible enclosure depicted on the estate plan. There was no indication of a chapel site to this location.

Parts of the overall site have evidence of being ploughed until recently, some clearance cairns being against natural banks. Other areas are open and which may have caused the removal of some archaeological remains, especially where clearance cairns survive on their own.

Below – Plan of 1771 (after AOC, 1994)



## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that a number of exclusion zones from planting be made to a number of sites (see plan) especially to those sites that need to be treated as a possible related group. These should follow Forestry Commission guidelines of 20m from the site boundaries and also include open areas between these sites.

Bracken to be sprayed from sites in areas of exclusion. It would be advisable to consider active management of these sites in the future, possibly under the Rural Stewardship Scheme.

It is recommended that exclusion areas to be marked out before any planting occurs by an archaeologist.

## **References**

AOC (1994) A9 Helmsdale to the Ord of Caithness archaeological evaluation (avoidance phase). AOC Report. Unpublished report – copy held in HSMR.

Dunbar, L (2003) Navidale, Helmsdale, Sutherland: Archaeological Evaluation. Data Structure Report. AOC Report 3946. Unpublished report – copy held in HSMR.

Farrell, S (2002) Report of Rapid Pre-afforestation Survey October 2002 Navidale Farm, Helmsdale, Highland. Unpublished report – copy held in HSMR.

Forestry Commission (1995) Forests and Archaeology Guidelines. HMSO.

Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record entries for ND01NW & ND01NE.

National Monuments Record of Scotland CANMORE database entries for ND01NW & ND01NE.

Ordnance Survey Map Sutherland sheet 46 for 1880 (surveyed 1875) 6"-mile.

Ordnance Survey Map Sutherland sheet 46 for 1908 (revised 1904) 6"-mile.

Ordnance Survey Landranger sheet 17 for Helmsdale of 1996.