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Forestry Survey: Langwell, Berriedale, Caithness

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Berriedale WGS survey area covers approximately 2 square kilometres spread over three discrete areas within the Langwell estate, Berriedale.

The Langwell estate lies to the west of Berriedale in Caithness (Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 sheets ND02SE & ND12SW). Three areas were surveyed (Fig. 1); Area 1 to the south-east of Langwell House, Area 2 to the north-west and Area 3 to the south-west. Land already densely wooded but within the areas was excluded from the survey. The land surveyed ranged from approximately 15 metres to 150 metres OD and comprised unimproved rough grazing, heather moorland and sporadic to dense woodland. The survey was carried out in good weather conditions.

Area 1 was situated at the entrance to the Langwell estate. The land was predominantly very steeply sloping and was covered by a mixture of natural deciduous woodland and planted coniferous woodland.

Area 2 was used as rough grazing for sheep and comprised heather moorland, rough grass and areas of gorse.

Approximately half of Area 3 was densely forested with coniferous trees, the other half was rough grass and heather moorland grazed by deer. The forested areas were impenetrable and therefore not surveyed.

There are ten entries in the NMRS for the survey areas, four of which are scheduled ancient monuments. These are described as a chambered cairn, two brochs and a homestead. The remaining entries are largely attributed to the post-medieval period with the exception of a hut circle.

2. METHODS

Documentary Research

The following documentary sources were consulted and contain information relevant to this survey:

Archaeological sites (NMRS)

ND 02 SE 5 Chambered Cairn
ND 02 SE 6 Hut Circle
ND 02 SE 10 Broch
ND 12 SW 1 Broch
ND 12 SW 2 Homestead
ND 12 SW 18 Cairn
ND 12 SW 20 Standing Stone
ND 12 SW 37 Deserted Settlement
ND 12 SW 48 Farmstead
ND 12 SW 62 Structures

Maps (National Library of Scotland, Map Library)

Roy, W 1747-55 *Military Survey of Scotland*, sheet 37/1

Ordnance Survey 1877 *Caithness 1:10,560 map*, sheet XLII (surveyed 1871)

Ordnance Survey 1906 *Caithness 1:2,500 map*, sheet XLII.11 (surveyed 1905)

Ordnance Survey 1906 *Caithness 1:2,500 map*, sheet XLII.15 (resurveyed 1905)

Ordnance Survey 1908 *Caithness 1:10,560 map*, sheet XLII (partly resurveyed and partly revised 1905)

Ordnance Survey 1964 *Caithness 1:10,560 map*, sheet ND 02 SE (surveyed in 1961)

Ordnance Survey 1964 *Caithness 1:10,560 map*, sheet ND 12 SW (surveyed in 1962)

Aerial Photographs (Air Photograph collection, RCAHMS)

CPE/SCOT/UK 179 8 Oct 1946 1305-1313, 3308-3315

1066/SCOT/UK 164 23 Aug 1946 44007-4001, 3007-3001

543/390 17 Sep 1958 F21 0115-0109, F22 0115-0109

OS/67/264 (1:13,000) 5 Jul 1967 124-128, 120, 119

Clyde Colour 7343 26 May 1975 36: 347-343

Published Reports

Curle, A O 1912 'Excavation of a galleried structure at Langwell, Caithness', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, **46**, 1912, 77-89.

Field Survey

The survey area was systematically walked by a team of two archaeologists and all features of archaeological interest were identified, described and then located on the 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey (1964) map. Where necessary the archaeological features were located using a Total Station EDM working on an arbitrary grid tied into local mapped reference points which were subsequently converted to National Grid co-ordinates. Large sections of the survey area were densely wooded and could not be walked systematically.

3. RESULTS

A total of 18 sites or features were identified. The locations of all of these sites are given at a scale of 1:10,000 in Figure 1 and, where appropriate, in greater detail at 1:2500 in Figures 2 & 3. Detailed descriptions of individual sites are given in a gazetteer at the end of this report. Some of these sites lie near the boundaries of or outwith the areas designated for planting but have been included in the report. Areas of quarrying and rig cultivation remains were also identified but not included in the gazetteer. The rig is plotted on the accompanying Figures (1-3). NMRS descriptions are provided for all previously recorded sites. Where this is considered to still be accurate no further description is added.

4. DISCUSSION

Only one entry is made on the NMRS for Area 1. This refers to a group of four buildings identified from Roy's map by the OS. The map was inspected but was not accurate enough to determine whether the buildings in question were within the survey area. Area 1 was quite densely wooded and could not be easily surveyed although an attempt was made to investigate the relevant area. No evidence for any structures or archaeological features was identified. The grid reference given by the OS for the site places it beneath the A9.

Area 2 had no entries on the NMRS. This area was clear of trees and most of it was easily surveyed. The north-east of the area had been used as a dumping ground for the estate in recent times and the ground was very disturbed. A large number of small to medium sized stone quarry pits were identified over the remainder of the area.

Area 3 was by far the richest area for archaeology (Figs 1: 2 & 3). The earliest dating monument identified was the chambered cairn at the extreme west end of the survey area (Fig. 3: 16). Although badly disturbed in antiquity, this was found to be in a stable condition.

A late prehistoric landscape was well attested with the identification of two hut circles (Fig. 3: 13 & 14), two brochs (Fig. 2: 7 & Fig. 3: 17) and a wag or galleried structure (Fig. 2: 9). Inspection of the 'wag' suggested that this may in fact represent the remains of a round house and associated souterrain.

Details previously unrecorded were identified at the Langwell Tulloch Broch which lies to the north of the Langwell Water (Fig. 3: 17). The enclosing bank for the monument could be seen to the north-east of the track which truncates the monument, and an associated enclosure was identified to the north-east of the broch, outwith the survey area. The enclosure was formed by lines of large orthostats. The present scheduled area does not cover the entire monument but stops at the track.

Another broch lay to the south of the river; Borgue Langwell Broch (Fig. 2: 7). A large quarry ditch was identified to the north of this which may have been the source of stone for the construction. The broch itself was in a stable condition but had been robbed of stone in antiquity, probably during the construction of the adjacent settlement.

A group of previously unidentified rectangular structures were located to the immediate north and north-east of the broch but these are difficult to assign to period (Fig. 2: 7a). They may be associated with the broch or alternatively they may represent a later, possibly medieval, settlement. In general these were shorter than the post-medieval structures, with turf and stone walls and rounded corners.

A substantial early modern settlement was also recorded surrounding the Borgue Langwell Broch (Fig. 2: 6, 7b & 8) with other isolated structures identified to the west. These included a very long building sub-divided into three rooms and three shorter buildings clustered around an enclosure (Fig. 2: 7b). A similar long structure was also identified in the western part of Area 3 (Fig. 3: 15). The surrounding agricultural landscape was evident in the form of a number of enclosures (Fig. 2: 6b & 8), rig cultivation (Fig. 1, 2 & 3), and clearance cairns (Fig. 2: 6a). Extensive cultivation remains are depicted on Roy's map for the area.

GAZETTEER

Site No. 1

NGR ND 1170 2244

Location Area 1

Site Type Structures, (possible)

NMRS Description A settlement of four buildings identified by the OS from Roy's Map. NMRS No. ND 12 SW 62.

Addendum Inspection of the general area was carried out although dense woodland restricted access. No structures or archaeological features were identified in the area. The coordinates for the building provided by the Ordnance Survey place the buildings under the A9 and therefore the structures are not located on the attached illustrations.

Site No. 2

NGR ND 1076 2293

Location Area 2

Site Type Cairn

Description Cairn measuring 3.5 m in diameter by 1.0 m high, composed of angular stones which were c. 0.3 m in diameter.

Condition Covered by vegetation and stable.

Site No. 3

NGR ND 1078 2300

Location Area 2

Site Type Wall

Description Northeast-southwest aligned dry-stone wall. Could be seen for 15 m and survived to a height of 0.3 m.

Condition Covered in vegetation and stable.

Site No. 4

NGR ND 103 221

Location Area 2

Site Type Bank

Description Bank beside tree plantation, measuring 5 m in width by 1 m high with a ditch around the side. Possibly served as a boundary to the tree plantation.

Condition Overgrown with nettles and bracken and some trees.

Site No. 5
NGR ND 1030 2197
Location Area 3
Site Type Bank

Description North-east/south-west aligned bank on verge of wooded area. May be part of the plantation boundary.

Condition Covered by vegetation and trees and stable.

Site No. 6
Area of agricultural remains including clearance cairns, an enclosure and a dry stone boundary.

6a **NGR** ND 1029 2190; 1030 2189; 1033 2190.
Location Area 3
Site Type Cairns

Description Group of three cairns, possibly the result of clearance, to the north of Borgue Langwell Broch. In general measured about 1 m in diameter by 0.30 to 0.40 m high.

Condition Slightly overgrown and stable.

6b **NGR** ND 1030 2188
Location Area 3
Site Type Enclosure

Description Circular enclosure of turf and orthostats to the north of Borgue Langwell broch.

Condition Much of eastern side overgrown with heather and bracken.

6c **NGR** ND 1028 2189
Location Area 3
Site Type Wall

Description North-south aligned dry-stone wall, boulder constructed.

Condition Collapsed although it appears that no collapse has occurred recently.

Site No. 7

Site 8 represent a multi-period settlement including and surrounding Borgue Langwell Broch.

7a NGR ND 1026 2182; 1027 2182; 1029 2183; 1029 2181

Location Area 3

Site Type Structures

Description Group of sub-rectangular buildings, large boulder and turf wall construction, grouped around north side of broch. Possibly medieval or post-medieval.

Condition Covered by vegetation and stable.

7b NGR ND 1028 2174

Location Area 3

Site Type Enclosure

Description Rectilinear stone and turf enclosure, northeast-southwest aligned, to south Borgue Langwell Broch. Marked on Ordnance Survey map.

Condition Covered by vegetation and stable.

7c NGR ND 1026 2181

Location Area 3

Site Type Broch

NMRS Description Badly disturbed broch with an over all diameter of c. 17 m. The south west portion is best preserved where the outer wall face can be traced at a height of 0.1 to 1.2 m. Within the breadth of this section of the wall, which reaches c.5 m in width, are exposed the remains of a gallery, extant for 3.2 m long by 0.9 m wide, 1.2 m deep on the north side. The greater part of the broch has been demolished, leaving a mass of stones covering the perimeter. Adjacent to the broch on the southern side are the footings of two buildings. NMRS No. ND 12 SW 1, Scheduled Ancient Monument 524.

Condition No change in the state of the broch from 1960, but it is clear the structure has suffered from stone robbing probably for the construction of the surrounding structures.

Site No. 8

NGR ND 1020 2174

Location Area 3

Site Type Enclosure

Description Large enclosure to the south west of Borgue Langwell Broch. The enclosing bank measured 1 m wide by 0.3 m high.

Condition Grass covered and stable

Site No. 9

NGR ND 1016 2192

Location Area 3

Site Type Homestead

NMRS Description A homestead, comprising an oblong aisled house and subsidiary enclosure. On the north side is a circular area measuring 27 ft, enclosed by a wall c. 6 ft in length and 2 ft in breadth. Bounding the entrance on the left is a cairn-like mound, 20 ft in diameter and 3 ft 6 in height, formed of large stones intermixed with soil and probably the result of excavation of the second enclosure. Adjoining the above enclosure on the east is an oblong structure, whose outer wall curves round at the north to meet the cairn on its side opposite the entrance to the circle. The interior of the structure measures 48 ft in length and 13-14 ft in width and has been divided into two at 28 ft from the south west end by a wall, communicating via a doorway 3 ft wide. Four uprights survive in situ within the inner division, including one still bearing a lintel slab. The stones as described by A. O. Curle (1912 a) comprised three upright stone pillars along each side (of the interior), one of which had fallen, 5-6 ft in height, 6 ft apart and varying from 2 ft 3 ins to 4 ft 7 ins in distance from the side walls. Curle partially excavated the structure in 1912 noting that the floor at the back or inner end lay 4-5 ft below the surrounding level, whilst the opposite end was sunk to c. 2 ft.

Finds from the excavation included the upper portion of a rotary quern, a saddle quern in situ on the floor with the rubbing stone which had been used on it. One small fragment of heavily corroded also came from the floor level; no pottery was recovered. NMRS No. ND 12 SW 2, Scheduled Ancient Monument 525.

Addendum At NGR ND 1016 2192 the survey recorded a turf and earth constructed bank to the immediate north-east of the homestead, approximately 1 m high and 2 m wide. On the ground the monument has the appearance of a souterrain and associated round-house.

Condition The site is grass covered and stable.

Site No. 10

NGR ND 1015 2201

Location Langwell Water Area 3

Site Type Cairn, (possible)

NMRS Description A slight mound, approximately 6 m in diameter and 0.4 m high, composed of earth and stone, with its centre hollowed. It is possibly a cairn but too mutilated for any degree of certainty. NMRS No. ND 12 SW 18.

Addendum Not relocated during survey.

Site No. 11

NGR ND 1030 2129

Location Area 3

Site Type Early triangulation point / bench mark

Description Early trigonometric point or bench mark. A boulder measuring 1 m by 0.7 m and 0.8 m high with a small bronze pin hammered into the top. Pinhead was 8 mm in diameter.

Condition Stable

Site No. 12

NGR ND 1004 2164

Location Borgue Langwell, Area 3

Site Type Standing stone

NMRS Description Site inaccessible; area thickly planted with conifers. NMRS No. ND 12 SW 20.

Addendum The site is still inaccessible due to dense woodland.

Site No. 13

NGR ND 0955 2187

Location Area 3

Site Type Hut circle

Description Hut circle measuring externally 9 m east-west by 11 m north-south, and internally 6 m east-west by 6 m north-south. The rubble bank is c. 0.6 m in height; an entrance 1.5 m wide is evident on the eastern side.

Condition. Covered with bracken and heather growth. Stable.

Site No. 14

NGR ND 0945 2216

Location Langwell, Area 3

Site Type Hut circle

NMRS Description Massive hut circle of the Kilphedir II type, 14.1 m north-south by 13.5 m transversely, with an earth and stone bank 1.1 m high internally, but only 0.6 m high externally. An entrance to the east may be postulated; there is no visible break in the wall, but this sector is overlaid by an early-modern enclosure. Walls spoiled to build adjacent cottage and fold, now in ruins. Similar dwellings also occur in the area, (see ND 02 SE 11 and 13). NMRS No. ND 02 SE 6.

Addendum The survey concurs with the eastern entrance. An adjacent rectilinear enclosure is likely to be early modern in date and may relate to Site No. 15.

Condition Both the hut circle and the rectilinear enclosure are in a stable condition.

Site No. 15

NGR ND 0931 2217

Location Area 3

Site Type Building

Description Dry-stone rubble walled building aligned east-west. The walls are 0.8 m thick and up to 1.5 m high, existing to a maximum of seven courses. Externally the structure measures 6 m by 34 m, and is divided by a north-south aligned wall situated 14 m from the west end wall of the structure. This dividing wall curves slightly towards the west and is 15 m long. A further north-south aligned dividing wall is located 3 m from the west end wall and contains a doorway. Doorways are also found along the southern wall into the two rooms at the western end of the building. A 5 m break in the southern wall occurs to the east of the major north-south dividing wall.

Condition Covered by vegetation and stable.

Site No. 16

NGR ND 0915 2223

Location Langwell, Area 3

Site Type Chambered cairn

NMRS Description Much of the cairn has been robbed out and the chambers largely demolished. It appears to have measured some 78 ft east-west by 63 ft transversely and may have had two separate chambers along the line of the main axis. Some 1 ft 6 ins in from the east edge are two upright stones 2 ft 8 ins apart, that on the north broken off at ground level, while that alongside stands to a height of 2 ft 8 ins; 4 ft 8 ins behind them are another similar pair, 2 ft 4 ins apart, apparently marking the entrance to an inner chamber, the sides and back of which has been removed. At 10 ft inwards from the outer edge of the cairn on the west stands a large slab, 3 ft 2 ins in breadth and 2 ft in height, set at right angles to the direction of the passage. To the east or rear of the chamber, 11 ft 6 ins away, a pair of slabs protrude from the ruins, 2 ft 8 ins apart. Directly behind them, a large slab 5 ft breadth is visible for a height of some 1 ft 2 ins, marking the back of this chamber. The side walls are not now visible. NMRS No. ND 02 SE 5. Scheduled Ancient Monument 423.

Addendum

Survey agrees with NMRS description and the monument is outwith the proposed planting boundary.

Condition

The monument is in a stable condition.

Site No. 17

NGR ND 0974 2231

Location Langwell Tulloch, Area 3

Site Type Broch

NMRS Description Robbed out broch over all measuring c 28.0 m by 32.0 m. An overgrown circular bank c. 1.5 m high and 10 m in diameter (on a north-east south-west axis), survives in the centre of the broch, which lends the broch the distinctive 'mound on mound' profile. To the riverside some masonry wall is evident which forms revetement just to the inside of the ditch. Rubble is apparent up the slope towards the central structure, possibly in terraces. NMRS No. ND 02 SE 10. Scheduled Ancient Monument 3441.

Addendum The scheduled area around the broch extended to the edge of the track at the north, but the outer enclosure of the broch continued beyond this point. A large stone and turf enclosure was also noted, extending north from the outer broch enclosure. This enclosure centres around NGR 0980 2235.

Condition Badly robbed out in antiquity but stable.

Site No. 18

NGR ND 0963 2244

Location Area 3

Site Type Bank

Description Linear, gently curved bank running down east facing slope for about 100 m: north-west/south-east aligned and measuring 1 m wide by 0.4 m high.

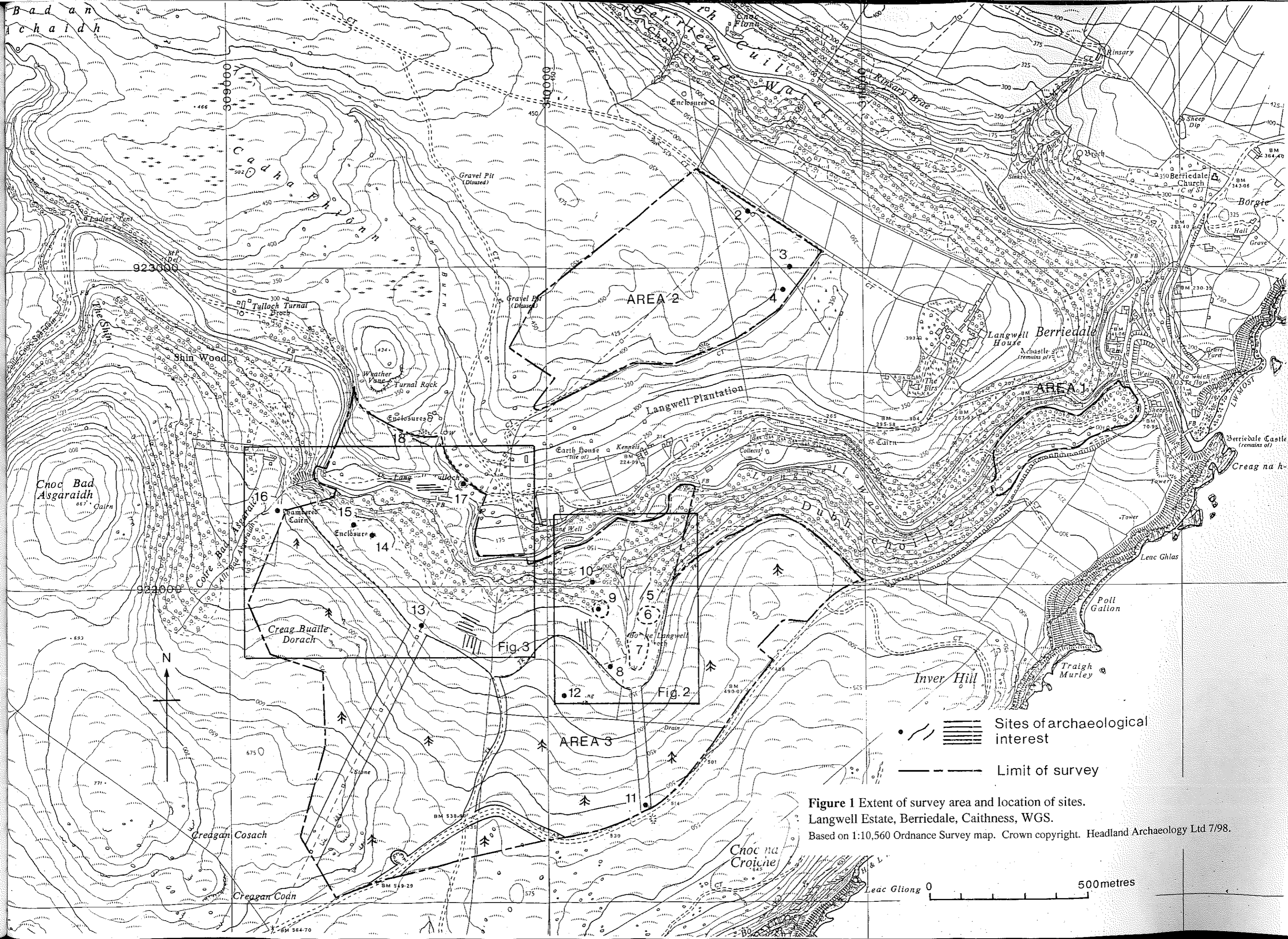
Condition Heather covered and stable



Plate 1 Borgue Langwell Broch and surrounding structures from the north-east



Plate 2 Langwell Tulloch Broch from the north-east showing unrecorded bank in the foreground



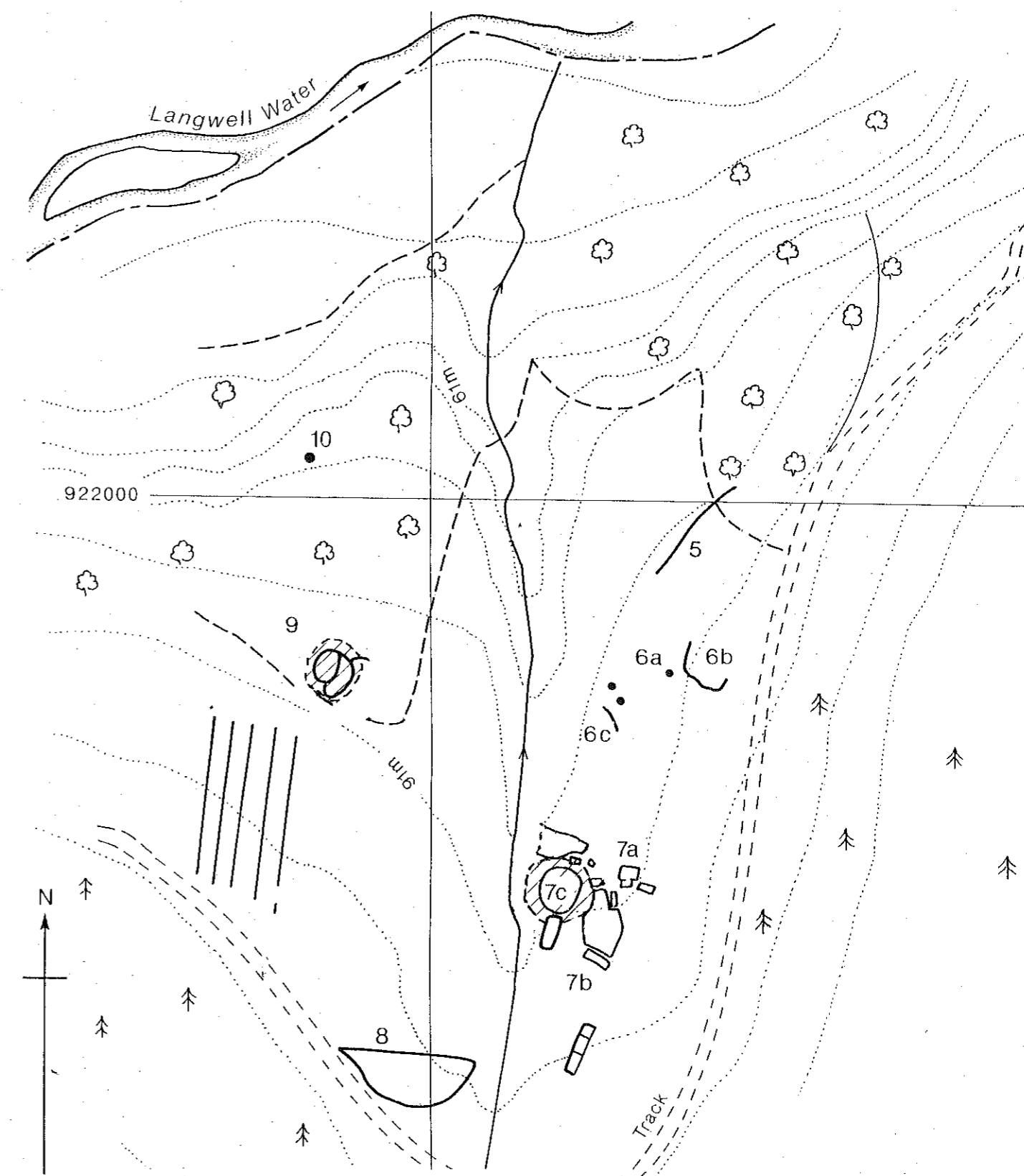
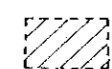
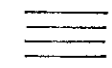




Figure 2 1:2,500 plan of sites in east of Area 3.
 Based on 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map. Crown copyright.
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-  Scheduled area
-  Cultivation remains (schematic)
-  Limit of survey area
-  Limit of trees

0 100 metres 310200

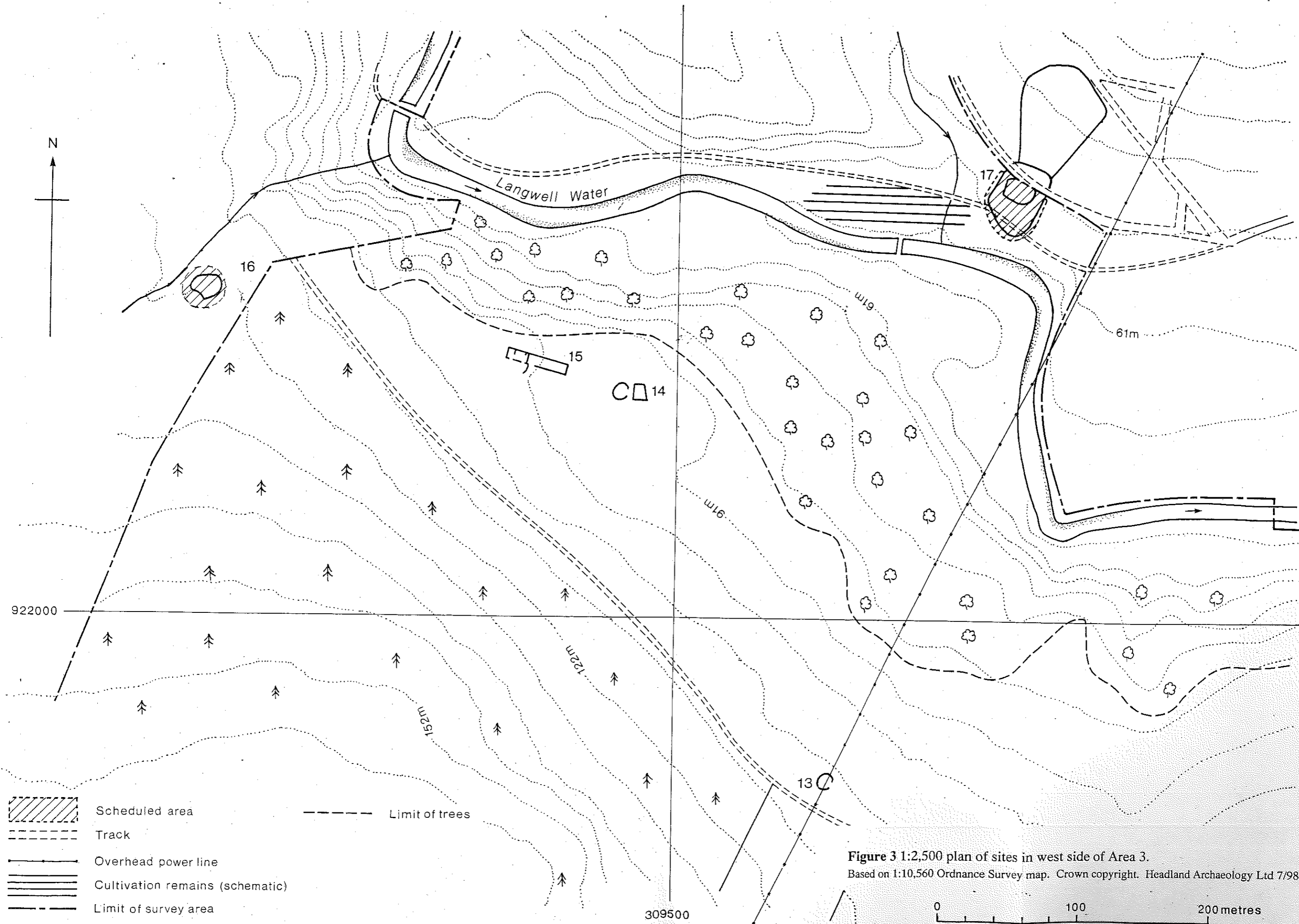


Figure 3 1:2,500 plan of sites in west side of Area 3.
 Based on 1:10,560 Ordnance Survey map. Crown copyright. Headland Archaeology Ltd 7/98.