

SERF 2009: Report on Landscape Survey

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Introduction

The third season of the SERF Walkover Survey took place from 11–16 August 2009. The main activity consisted of walkover survey in the area of Scores Burn, the Black Hill of Kippen, and Casken Hill, on the land of Keltie Estate and Knowes Farm, 3 km south-west of Dunning. SERF is very grateful to Callum Rollo of Keltie Estate and to Anne and David Myles of Knowes Farm for their permission to carry out fieldwork on their land. Thanks also to the teams of students for their hard work and enthusiasm, and to Anne-Marie O'Donnell for her support in directing the fieldwork.

Project aims

1. Investigate the relationship between people, their landscape and their environment in Dunning, Forteviot and Forgandenny parishes, at all periods
2. Investigate communication routes along and across Strathearn and the Ochils, particularly in the Neolithic and Medieval periods
3. Investigate the relationship between the Iron Age forts in the Ochils and in Strathearn
4. Document and study the development of agriculture from pre-improvement to improvement
5. Examine changing settlement patterns, and the relationship between settlements, land use and the environment
6. Investigate the later 'biographies' and changing meanings of prehistoric and medieval monuments
7. Provide data for the National Monuments Record of Scotland
8. Provide training and experience for University of Glasgow students and others

Project methods

1. Investigation, visiting and documentation of the main known sites and features across the study area
2. Systematic and intensive walkover survey of between 5 and 10 survey areas, which provide a representative topographical, historical and environmental sample of the study area
3. Database and GIS analysis of distribution patterns, intervisibility, environmental change, etc.
4. Full integration with all other components of SERF: documentary history, excavations, fieldwalking, geophysics, standing building survey, etc.

The 2009 season: aims and methods

The aims of the 2009 season were as follows:

1. Give the students a one-day taster of systematic walkover survey and site recording
2. Give the students the opportunity to discuss and experience an upland landscape and various approaches to landscape archaeology
3. Look for evidence for Medieval and Late Medieval settlement, particularly small-scale dispersed settlement and structures built of turf
4. Investigate post-medieval enclosure, tathing, and the extension of cultivation into the uplands
5. Investigate the route between Dunning and the Common of Dunning
6. Carry out preliminary recording of any other features of interest

The 2009 upland survey had three main elements: 1) a walkover survey of a part of the Black Hill of Kippen; 2) a trial dGPS survey of enclosures on Casken Hill; and, 3) an exploratory investigation of the route connecting Dunning and the Common of Dunning.

We carried out walkover survey on the Black Hill of Kippen for three days, each day with a fresh group of students. A team of c. 6 students walked systematically across defined areas c. 20 m apart, flagging any features of interest, and returning to record them on a form and discuss their interpretation. The data on the forms was entered into the project database, and the locations of the features were digitised on the GIS. Ends and corners of dykes were located by hand-held GPS points.

The walkover survey covered c. 1.0 x 0.5 km, in the area of Scores Burn, the Black Hill of Kippen, and Casken Hill, on the land of Keltie Estate and Knowes Farm, 3 km south-west of Dunning (centred on NO 00750 11650) (Figure 1). This was immediately adjacent to the area covered in the 2007 season. In this area we recorded 15 sites and investigated changes in land use, land division and human activity more widely.

The three-day walkover survey was followed by a two-day trial using a handheld Trimble differential GPS to record in detail the turf enclosures and banks on Casken Hill, originally investigated in the 2007 season. The aims of this exercise were: 1) to introduce students to the use of dGPS in the production of detailed maps of archaeological features; and, 2) to investigate the potential of this method with a view to its more extensive application in future seasons of the SERF project. As the focus of this exercise was teaching and a trial of the equipment to assess its potential, the complex of turf enclosures was only partially surveyed and was not analysed in detail; the results of the survey are not detailed in this report.

On the sixth and last day of the upland survey, we walked from the Common of Dunning down to Knowes Farm, following part of a possible route connecting Dunning with the Common of Dunning. This walk was not designed as a systematic survey of archaeological remains along the route, but as an initial appraisal whose aim was to establish the potential for further survey work related to the analysis of movement between Dunning and its common grounds. To inform the planning of any future work, relevant archaeological features were recorded by dGPS, photography and a brief written description.

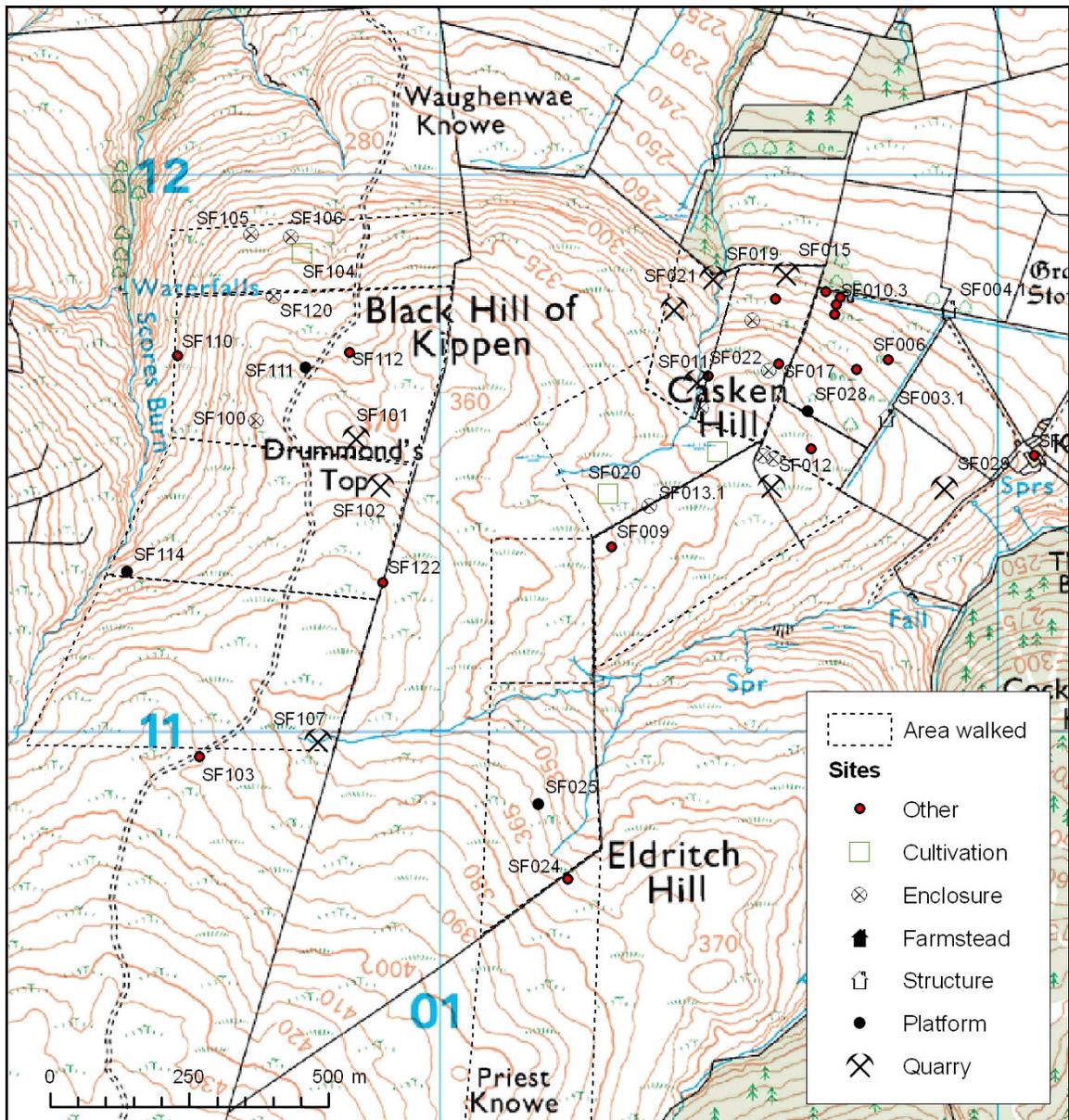


Figure 1. Map of sites discovered on Casken and Eldritch Hills (2007) and Black Hill of Kippen and Drummond's Top (2009)

Turf dykes, enclosures and cultivation

A prominent head dyke runs across the northern end of our area at an elevation of c. 310m asl (SF106; Figure 2). It is constructed of turf, and its remains are c. 1.35m wide and c. 0.35m high. It connects with the head dyke and probable tathing enclosures recorded on Casken Hill 700m to the south-east in 2007. A rectilinear enclosure (SF105) was constructed on its northern side, clearly abutting and therefore post-dating the head dyke. It measures c. 30 x 20.5m, with turf walls c. 1.5m wide, and there is a possible entrance through the head dyke at the western end. Interestingly, this connects it to the area above the head dyke, rather than the area within it.



Figure 2. Turf head dyke (SF106) and the view northwards over Strathearn.

A much less developed turf dyke runs parallel to the head dyke c. 120 m up the hill to the south (SF120). The surviving stretch is some 160m long, tapering off as it runs down the hill to the west, and stopping at a burn on the east. Its lateral spread varies from 1.5 to 2.5m, its height is typically c. 0.2–0.3m high, and a gap 1.6m wide is perhaps an entrance.

In between the head dyke and the upper turf dyke there is a substantial area of rig and furrow (SF104), with an interval of c. 5.3m. In places it can be seen to be cutting the main head dyke. This clearly shows a relatively short-lived extension of cultivation beyond the head dyke. This is very similar to the undeveloped rig discovered in 2007 lying 700m to the south-east, out beyond the head dyke on Casken Hill (SF020; see map below). A similar phenomenon was recorded in Menstrie Glen (Cowley et al. 2001: 52-53).

Quarries and stone dykes

The three quarries that we recorded were all within 100 m of the boundary dyke between Keltie Estate and Knowes farm and are clearly associated with it. One is on a prominent hilltop, Drummond's Top, with a quarry face 26m long and up to 1.6m high. Its prominent location makes it a significant landmark in the area (SF102; Figure 3). We recorded two other quarries: SF102 has a quarry face 5.9m long and 1.6m high, with a clear working platform and spoil heap; SF107 has a quarry face 15m long and 1.5m high.



Figure 3. Quarry on Drummond's Top (SF102)

The conspicuously straight stone dyke (SF122) that runs past all three quarries and was clearly supplied by them is constructed of dry stone with a pyramidal cross section, 1.0m wide at the base and 0.7m high. On top at an interval of 2.45–2.75m are short iron fenceposts. Its importance in marking the boundary between Knowes Farm and the Keltie estate is emphasized by the two generations of fences that have replaced it, the most recent constructed in the last year, with a clearly metric interval of 2.0m.

Route from Common of Dunning

On the last day of the survey season a non-systematic walk was undertaken between the Common of Dunning (NO 01740 08885) and the village of Dunning (NO 01875 14475). The aim of this walk was to look for evidence of the historic transhumance route between Dunning and its common grazings. The walk proceeded north from the Common of Dunning, taking a route over Chapel Hill, Priest's Knowe and Eldritch Hill to Knowes Farm (NO 02060 11500); from Knowes Farm, the walk followed the B934 road to Dunning.

Moving north from the Common of Dunning sites, we climbed to the summit of Chapel Hill. From this vantage point it was clear that the Common of Dunning occupies a large natural bowl defined by Chapel Hill to the north and, moving clockwise, by Green Hill, Craigbaikie Hill, Brunt Hill and Lamb Hill to the south, and John's Hill and Corb Law to the west. On the northern flank, views are restricted to the interior of this bowl until you reach the summit of Chapel Hill, from where it is possible to look south to the Common and north to the land around Dunning in Strathearn. The summit of Chapel Hill thus marks a topographical boundary to the Common and it was on that summit that we encountered our first archaeological feature of potential relevance to the route between Dunning and the Common: a large turf dyke (Figure 4). Although apparently slumped and spread, this dyke appears to have been relatively large. It runs roughly east-west across the summit of the hill and perhaps defines the boundary between the Common and the land to the north. Adjacent to the east there is a sharply-defined cleft between Chapel Hill and North Hill – this may have formed a naturally-defined 'entrance' to the Common from the north, with traffic channelled towards this point by the presence of the dyke running across the hill ground to the west.



Figure 4. Turf bank on summit of Chapel Hill

Moving north from Chapel Hill, passing over Priest's Knowe and Eldritch Hill in the direction of Knowes Farm, several discrete sections of braided trackway were identified. These trackways were only identified on steeply-sloping ground and petered out as the ground levelled off at the top or bottom of a slope – this suggests that the trackways were created by increased erosion of the ground as livestock dug in while climbing upslope (perhaps accentuated by water erosion as the trackways came to form channels in the hillside). The most extensive section of braided trackway comprised up to 12 individual tracks, some of which had been eroded to a depth of c.2 m (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Braided trackways on the northern slope of Eldritch Hill by Knowes Farm

Together, the trackways and turf dyke identified during this exploratory walk and the observations made about the landscape location of these features suggest that there is good potential for future work to record and interpret the routeway between Dunning and its common in greater depth. In considering further survey and landscape interpretation work, consideration should be given to a related programme of oral history and documentary research. The Common may be of relatively early Medieval origin, and there is the potential that the route connecting the Common and Dunning has thus been in use since the Middle Ages. In addition, David Myles of Knowes Farm informed us

that the landscape from Knowes over Eldritch Hill to the Common is known locally as the 'Corb Road' – a route said to have been used to bypass the toll once in place on the B934 at Blaeberry Toll. This appears to be a local memory of the route we have now identified through its archaeological remains.

Appendix: sites and features recorded

Site ID	Location	Site type	N	E	Description
SF100	Scores Burn	Boundary	00670	11560	Probable turf field boundary, 0.5m high.
SF101	Drummond's Top	Quarry	00851	11529	Quarry. Face 26m wide and 1.5m high.
SF102	Drummond's Top	Quarry	00895	11443	Quarry with face 5.9m wide & 1.6m high. Working area and spoil bank.
SF103	Drummond's Top	Track	00567	10956	Possible routeway between the valley floor and Corb Law and Common of Dunning.
SF104	Scores Burn	Cultivation	30075	71186	Rig and furrow. Interval c. 3.6m. Cuts SF106
SF105	East of Scores Burn	Boundary	00662	11892	Turf enclosure, subsequent to SF106, associated with SF104.
SF106	Scores Den	Boundary	00733	11893	Turf head dyke, 1.3m wide, 0.3m high
SF107	Priest Knowe	Quarry	00782	10985	Quarry, with face 15m long and 1.5m high
SF110	Black Hill of Kippen	Clearing	00529	11675	Apparent clearing within vegetation
SF111	Black Hill of Kippen	Platform	00760	11654	Possible platform
SF112	Black Hill of Kippen	Grouse butt	00837	11682	Possible grouse butt
SF113	Black Hill of Kippen	Platform	00611	11380	Possible platform
SF114	Black Hill of Kippen	Platform	00439	11289	Possible platform
SF120	Black Hill of Kippen	Boundary	00703	11783	Undeveloped turf dyke above head dyke
SF122	Black Hill of Kippen	Field wall	00898	11267	Field wall with iron fence; later fence; modern fence

Bibliography

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