



S E R F

Scores Burn Farmstead 21th-22th August 2012 Survey Report

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Cover images:

Top: Measuring during survey.

Bottom: Drawing in foreground and surveying in the background.

Summary

Members of the Strathern Environs and Royal Forteviot (SERF) project team undertook a plane table survey of Scores Burn farmstead – a post-medieval farmstead complex situated on the Kelpie Estate approximately 3km to the south-west of the village of Dunning, Perthshire. The survey investigated archaeological remains previously recorded during walkover survey as part of SERF in 2010. The survey revealed a farmstead comprising the remains of five rectangular buildings, a corn drying kiln, and an enclosure lying within a large agricultural landscape. A later sheepfold, incorporating elements of the earlier building, overlies much of the site.

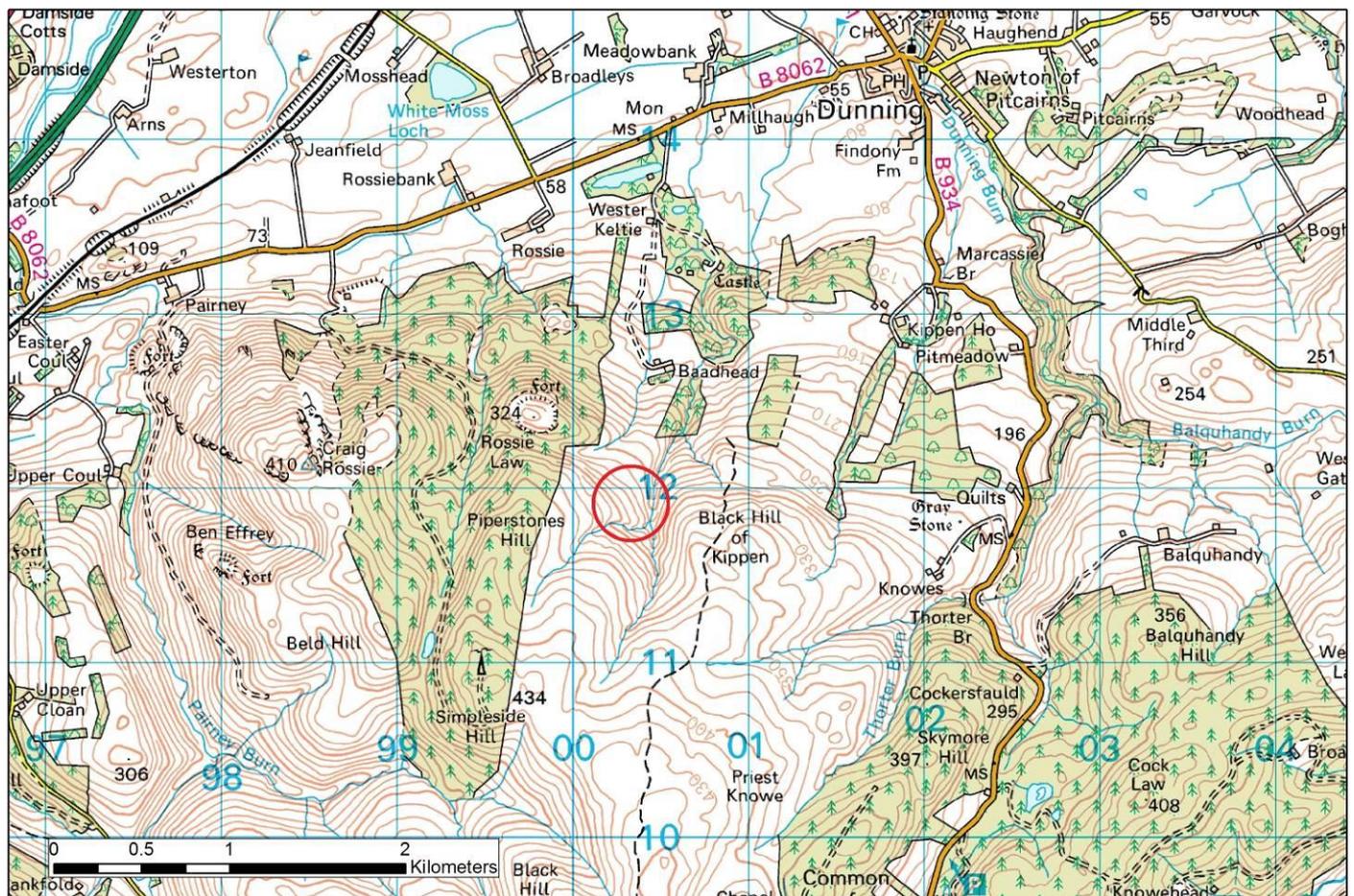
The site appears likely to have complex phasing. An extremely substantial heavily robbed rectangular building and the nearby ephemeral remains of a possible kiln barn within the main enclosure may represent the earliest phase of the site. Two rectangular buildings which probably represent a byre-dwelling and a barn with an associated corn-drying kiln appear later in character, whilst an extremely long rectangular structure with 3 subdivisions represents either a later development of the farmstead or a possible sheep house related to post-improvement sheep management. The final phase of use at the site appears to be a stone-built sheep fold.

The site offers an opportunity to understand the development of the Perthshire upland landscape from potentially the late medieval period to the present day. The site also has the potential to inform our understanding of how the process of Improvement was carried out the ground in an upland area of Perthshire which may have seen early, active improvement by local landowners.

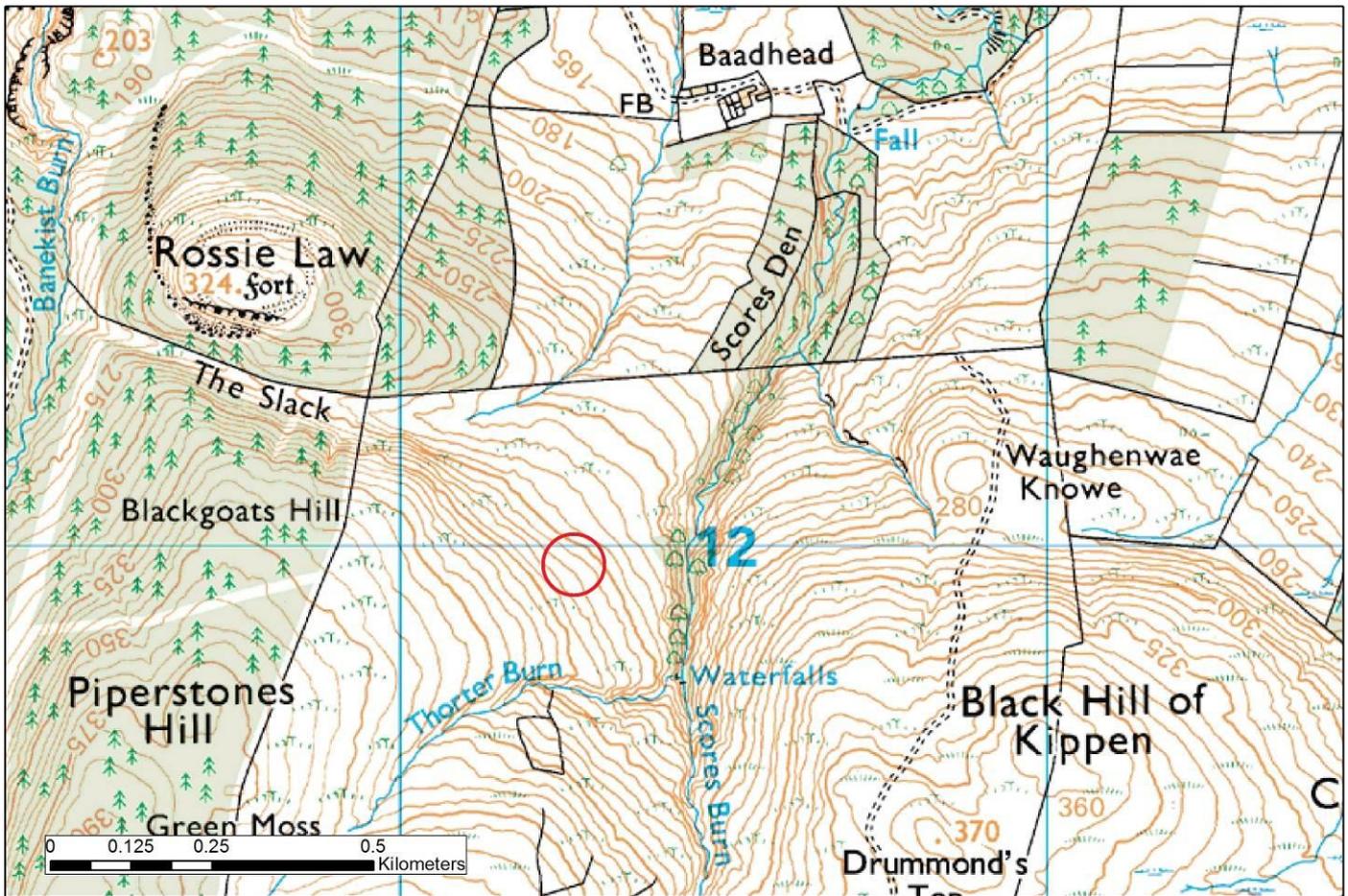
Further site visits, survey, excavation and documentary research all have the potential to greatly enhance our understanding of the site and its surrounding landscape.

Site Location & Topography

The Keltie Estate is located approximately 3km south-west of the village of Dunning in Perthshire, which itself is situated between the city of Perth and the town of Auchterader. **Figure 1** (below) Highlights the approximate area of Scores Burn farmstead in relation to the village of Dunning . © Crown Copyright and Databaseright 2011 All Rights Reserved. Ordnance Survey License No 100020548



The farmstead itself stands on the north-east flank of Piperstones Hill about 180m north of Thorter Burn and 160m west of Scores Burn. Access is from a rough trackway which runs south of the recently abandoned farmstead of Baadhead roughly parallel with Scores Burn. A rough quadbike track branches off this trackway and runs upslope to Scores Burn farmstead. **Figure 2** (below) gives the approximate location of the farmstead. © Crown Copyright and Databaseright 2011 All Rights Reserved. Ordnance Survey License No 100020548



The farmstead lies on rough grazing land within a landscape of extensive enclosures, head-dykes, and abandoned field systems, many of which are clearly visible on aerial photography. The farmstead adjoins the east side of large head dyke which runs roughly north-west to south-east for several hundred metres along the hillside.

A settlement annotated 'Scores Farm' is depicted here on Stobie's map of 1783, but only the sheepfold is shown on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Perthshire 1866, Sheet CXVIII).

Aims

The survey was intended to build on wider walkover survey in the area by assessing the site of Scores Burn farmstead in detail and had several specific aims:

1. Establish the exact number of structures within the farmstead and its immediate surroundings.
2. Extract as much information as possible about the relationships between the various structures within the farmstead.
3. Inform understanding of the site and propose possible phasings.
4. Give students the opportunity to learn measured survey techniques and to learn how to examine upstanding remains in greater detail than possible during walkover survey.

Methodology

The survey was conducted by plane table at a scale of 1:250. Two plane tables were used. Angles were taken by sighting to ranging poles using an alidade whilst measurements were taken using 30m tapes. The survey was

undertaken over two days by ten students. Four survey stations produced a drawing each, a composite drawing was then created using tracing paper and then digitised using adobe illustrator. The survey was supervised, composed, and digitised by Kevin Grant.

The surveying was somewhat limited by thick vegetation cover in some areas – further site visits or surveying between October and April would be likely to reveal further features or clarify those observed during the survey.

Results

The survey revealed the remains of five buildings, a corn drying kiln, an enclosure, and a later sheepfold. An annotated version of digitised survey can be seen overleaf (**Figure 3**).

Structure A

The most substantial building within the farmstead, aligned south-west to north-east, has been heavily robbed and may measure a maximum of 9m by 11m over stone walls up to 1.5m thick which survive to a maximum of 1.5m in height. The remains of what appears to be one side of an entrance are present in the south wall. This building is the most enigmatic of the structures – its substantial walls and large dimensions are unusual for structure within a post-medieval farmstead. The exact dimensions of the building could not be ascertained due to robbing, probably for the other structures in the farmstead and the later sheepfold.

Structure B

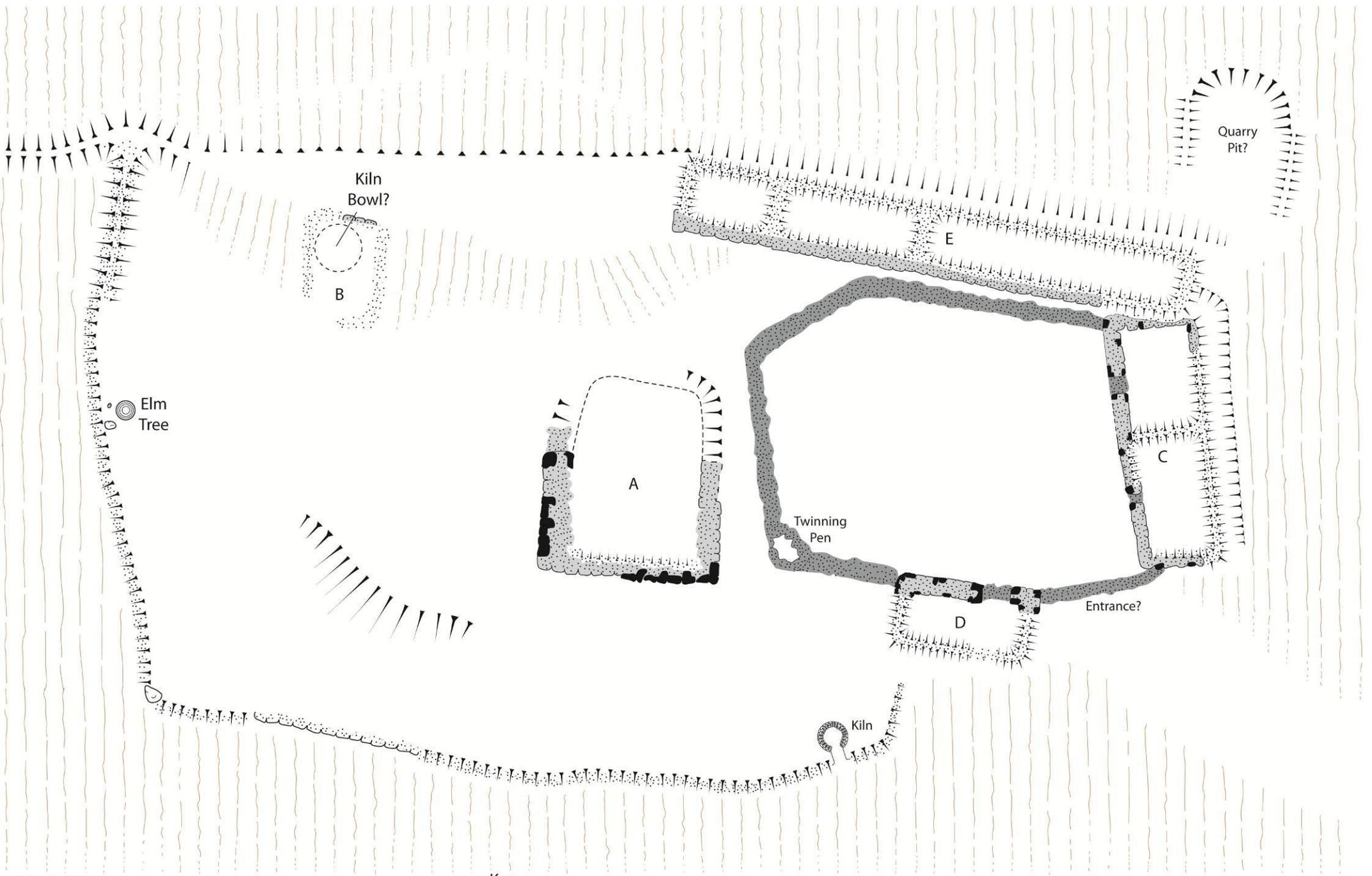
Building B comprises a rectangular structure which has been constructed within a small natural hillock. This building measures 6m by 5m over grass-grown stone footings and may have an entrance in the south-east corner. Surface remains suggest this building may contain a kiln bowl in the western end built into the natural slope. The possible kiln bowl appears to be offset slightly and aligned to the entrance, possibly suggesting that the flue may have been on the south-east and space for loading the corn-drying kiln was north-west of the kiln bowl.



Figure 4 (left) Photograph looking south-west into structure B, a possible kiln barn. This photograph illustrates the extremely ephemeral nature of the remains. Structural stone is visible in a slight dip in the centre of the top of the green bank. Slight banks running down the slope and a small bank below the ranging pole in the foreground define the structure. A slight hollow in the upper left of the structure may suggest the presence of the kiln bowl.

Structure C

Building C measures 13m by 5m over grass-grown stone footings approximately 1m in thickness. In the best preserved areas, stone walling survives to a height of c 1.2m. The structure has two compartments of roughly equal size, both of which have an entrance in the south-east Wall. An associated drainage ditch runs parallel to the north-west walls. Building C is similar in character of construction to building D and appears to be centred round a level area which may have been a yard or work space.



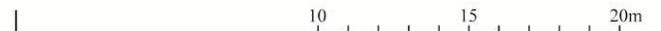
SERF 2012
 Scores Burn Farmstead, Perthshire
 Survey 1:250

NGR: NO 0279 1954

Surveyed By: KG, NR, SC, HW-M, DC, DB, JW, JG, MM, TJ, SM
 Drawing Composed and Digitised by Kevin Grant

Key

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Sheep Fold Walling | Natural Slope |
| Stone Revetment | Man-Made Slope |
| Upstanding Building Remains | Natural Slope with Man-Made Alteration |
| Turf-Covered Wall Footings | |



Structure D

Building D is a rectangular building measuring 8m by 4m over stone walls and grass-grown wall footings. There is a clear entrance in the south-west wall and a possible parallel entrance in the north-east wall. The parallel doors and dimensions of the building suggest that it is likely to have been a barn. Building D is similar in character of construction to building C and appears to be centred round a level area which may have been a yard or work space.

Structure E

Structure E is a rectangular building oriented north-west to south-east measuring 27m by 3.8m over grass grown footings c 1m in thickness. The north-east wall of this building survives as intact faced stone walling with a rubble core. The building is divided into three compartments and there is no evidence of entrances within the structure. The south compartment measures 2.2m by 3.8m internally, the middle compartment measures 2.2m by 6.6m internally, and the north compartment measures 2.2m by 12.8m internally. The north-west end of the building overlies the south-west wall of building C and its associated ditch. The building is built into a natural hillock at its south-east end and over or incorporating the head dyke along its south-west wall. The character of the walls is extremely consistent throughout and there is no evidence of phasing. Vegetation growth in the south-east end of the building slightly obscured the dimensions of the building.

Corn Kiln

Approximately 9m to the south-east of building D are the remains of a corn drying kiln is built into the east wall of the revetted platform enclosing the south part of the farmstead. The kiln is constructed of angular stone and survives to a height of around 5 courses. The top of the kiln bowl is 1.5 m in diameter and c 0.7m at the narrowest visible point. The flue is not visible but appears to have been north-east facing. **Figure 5** (below) shows the remains of this structure. The stone structure of the kiln bowl is clearly visible and the collapsed stonework in the foreground is likely to have been part of the flue. © The Author.



Sheep Fold

A later polygonal sheepfold measuring 17m by 19m at its widest point over tumbled stone walling c 1m thick incorporates lengths of walling from buildings C and D. The entrances of buildings C and D have been blocked as part of this sheep fold and the length of sheep fold walling between the SE corner of building C and the north-west corner of building D appears to overly what is likely to have been the original entrance to the farmstead, which is present as a slight level platform which may join the nearby track. A small twinning pen is within the east corner of the sheep fold.

Enclosure

The farmstead is defined on the east and south-west sides by a stone-built revetment, which survives to a height of 1.5m at the highest part. The west traverse of the enclosure is approximately 39m in length whilst the south is approximately 28m in length. At the western end of the southern traverse of the enclosure where it meets the head dyke, the enclosure rises to form a turf and stone bank merging with the head dyke. The nature of this junction and the way in which the enclosure appears to respect the head dyke suggests it may be later.

A small ephemeral platform within the enclosure to the south east of building A may be the remains of a flat area used as a stack yard.

Discussion

The project was successful in extracting a significant amount of information from the site. The survey revealed a complex farmstead with evidence for several phases of occupation and use. There is also the possibility that occupation of the site continued over an extended period, perhaps stretching back to the 17th century. The evidence gleaned from the survey allows a tentative phasing of the site to be put forward with references to similar nearby archaeological examples.

17th century defended farmstead/Lairds house?

Building A is the most enigmatic of the structures on the site due to the substantial construction of its walls, its large size and its probable sub-square shape in plan, which is in contrast with the other rectangular buildings on the site. The severe robbing of structure A, whilst obscuring its overall shape, may suggest that it is one of the oldest structures on site. It is possible that this structure belongs to a relatively little-understood class of buildings, classified variously as pele houses, bastles, halls, or laird's houses, and generally seen as being c.17th century in date (Zeune 1992:157). These structures, although separated into distinct classifications, represent a spectrum of which ranges from defensive to non-defensive; 'castle-like' architecture to vernacular architecture; and high to middle in status. It is therefore necessary to briefly discuss the nature of this class of buildings before considering building A in more detail.

Pele houses are small two-storied fortified houses which are generally found in the Borders and Lanarkshire (notable examples being Mervinlaw and Slacks in Roxburghshire (Zeune 1992:152)). The term *bastle* refers to the generally more substantially built, vaulted defensible houses which can be as early as 16th century in date (Zeune 1993:172). Although bastles are associated with the Borders, they are also found in Lanarkshire and Dumfries and Galloway. The bastle house at Glenochar in Clydesdale and its associated fermtoun, consists of a two storied bastle with a vaulted lower floor, a substantial number of rectangular stone-and-turf built buildings, and a number of agricultural features such as sheep buchts, stock enclosures, and lazy beds. The fermtoun was interpreted as being occupied from the 16th to the 18th centuries (Ward 1998:9). Halls or laird's houses, again generally dating to the 17th century, are "non-defensive/non-tower-like" structures associated with "middle-ranking lairds" (Smith 1985:73), which are generally rectangular one or one-and-a-half storied structures often with a large formal fireplace. Some of these structures are substantial vaulted buildings such as at Balsarroch House, Wigtonshire (Smith 1985) and Cowden Hall, Refrewshire (Hughson and McRae 1992) while others have very few defensive features, no vault in the ground floor and the living quarters at ground level. The less defensible forms are extremely widespread and are found from Argyll in the west, Lothian in the East, and Sutherland in the North (Zeune 1992:152-156). Examples in Perthshire include Pitcastle near Pitlochry, dated to the 17th century (Dunbar 1960: 113); Easter Carawhin, Lochtayside, excavated by Guard in 2002 (Atkinson et al. 2003) also with a proposed 17th century date (Atkinson et al. 2003:27); and Craigsheal, North-East Perthshire (RCAHMS 1990).

Structure A's walls, c 1.2 m thick, made of substantial facing stones and a rubble and earth core, are typical of the examples given above with the exception of Easter Carawhin which had significantly thinner walls and where it was not clear if an upper floor was present (Atkinson et al. 2003:27). This may suggest that building A may have had an upper floor or garret. The sub-square dimensions of the structure (possibly 9m by 11m max), although extremely unusual, are more in keeping with fortified houses which tend to have a smaller ratio of breadth to length than byre dwellings, the most common domestic dwellings in post-medieval rural contexts. The pele house at Mervinlaw, measuring 7.8 by 6.4 m [converted from imperial measurements] (RCAHMS 1956), shows that a sub-square shape in

plan is consistent with an interpretation of structure A as part of a defended farmstead/pele house type building. In contrast, laird's houses tend to be more longitudinal in plan. Without knowing the exact dimensions of the structure it is difficult to speculate on its possible character.

Structure A appears to be on the same alignment as Structure B and it is likely that structure B, the extremely denuded remains of a possible kiln-barn, may belong to this early phase. Kiln-barns are difficult to date due to the longevity of their use and complexity of regional and local variations, but similar structures in the Highlands may date to the 17th-18th centuries (Dixon 2001:165). The presence of a smaller kiln bowl built within the enclosure would suggest that structure B was superseded at a later date. The small platform within the enclosure may also be associated with structure A, and indeed the enclosure itself. Given that structures A and B both lie within the primary enclosure, it is possible that the earliest phase of the farmstead consisted of a substantial farm building of defensive or high-status nature possible of 17th century date, with nearby kiln-barn, possible stack-stance and enclosure.

18th/19th century farmstead

Buildings C and D are typical of rural buildings of the 18th and 19th centuries found in farmsteads in the upland areas of Scotland. Numerous examples are to be found in Perthshire such as those surveyed by RCAHMS a part of the Perthshire inventories (RCAHMS 1990: 95-171; 1994:112-124), and those excavated at Lix in West Perthshire (Fairhurst 1971) and on Lochtayside (Atkinson et al. 2004). The survey of Mentríe Glen on the opposite side of the Ochils (RCAHMS 2008: 37), found sixteen farmsteads which have comparable structures. The function and structure of such buildings (though complex) in the post-medieval period is fairly well understood.

Building C is constructed of faced stone with a rubble core and appears to be of one phase. The structure is likely to have been of cruck-frame construction, possibly with a layer of turf above the surviving stone footings, or with cruck platforms in the walls or on the internal floor surface (see Dixon 2001). An associated drain running parallel with the north wall is likely to have aided drainage within this structure. It is likely that at least one of the two compartments in building C served as a domestic dwelling, the other may have been a byre – creating the traditional byre-dwelling common through the Highlands in the post-medieval period. However, given the lack of evidence for an internal drain, this is conjecture. The internal division, relatively square corners, and construction method, suggest that this building may be Improvement Period in date, perhaps of the 18th or 19th centuries.

Building D is of a similar character to building C and is likely to be of similar date and construction. The small size of the structure and the possible opposing doorways (often used to create a through-draught for winnowing grain), suggest this building is likely to have been a barn. The presence of the nearby kiln, which appears to postdate the enclosure, also supports the interpretation of building D as a barn.

It is possible that building A remained in occupation when buildings C and D were constructed and occupied, though perhaps with an altered function. In its 18th or early 19th century form the farmstead may have consisted of buildings A, D, and C arranged round a central yard or workspace – a common layout in the improvement period (RCAHMS 2001: 37).

18th/19th century and later sheep management

Structure E, with its unusually narrow, regular character and no clear evidence of entrances in its longitudinal sides, may potentially be the remains of a sheep house. Sheep houses, used for housing sheep at night, are seen in Scotland from the 17th century but most were constructed in the early 19th century when several particularly harsh winters revived interest in the structures (Callander 1988:3-4). At least five sheep houses were present in Mentríe Glen to the south-east, where they are referred to in 18th century documents. Two examples of sheep houses were identified on the ground during survey work by RCAHMS at Ashentrool and Loss (RCAHMS 2001:60). The sheep house at Ashentrool, with three compartments and lack of any obvious entrances, is similar in character to structure E; its dimensions of 12.2m by 3.1m internally almost exactly matching those of the largest compartment of structure E at 12.8 by 3m. The location of structure E, near the upper edge of what was presumably in the infield area, is also typical of those found at Mentríe Glen. Structure E appears to overlie structure C and its associated drain and so may represent a later use of the site in the late 18th or early 19th centuries. Sheep houses generally fell out of favour by the mid to late 19th century as sheep breeds became hardier (Callander 1988:4), and were often replaced with open sheepfolds to provide shelter from harsh weather.

The final phase of use on the site is the sheep fold. This is attested to in the first edition ordinance survey map (Perthshire, Sheet CXVIII, Surveyed 1866) where only the sheepfold is depicted. The fact that the other structures in the farmstead were not depicted, even as unroofed, seems to suggest that they were in a ruinous condition and may have been already unoccupied for some time at the time of survey. The sheepfold itself is built of robbed stone, presumably from the nearby buildings, and is of somewhat poor dry stone construction. Much of the fold itself is now reduced to heaped stone. This sheep fold is typical of those found across Scotland and is a vernacular form of the more formal stells and folds advocated by mid 19th century agriculturalists (i.e Stephens 1844:53-65). A small twinning pen in the eastern corner, used to bond orphaned lambs to a surrogate mother, is also typical. The sheep fold represents the final and current phase of use of the landscape as upland grazing for sheep, and is likely to have been used into the 20th century.

Recommendations

Further investigation is required to firmly identify the use and age of several of the structures on site. Structure A, as the most unusual structure, could greatly benefit from excavation which would seek to identify the true dimensions of the structure and look for evidence of internal features and recover finds which would aid in dating the building and ascertaining its function.

Structure E would also benefit from further investigation. The exact dimensions of the south-east end of the structure and its relationship with structure D were somewhat obscured by vegetation at time of survey – further site visits during the winter months when vegetation is lower may help to clarify the relationship of building C to the other structures on site. Ultimately, excavation within structure E would aid in understanding its purpose and age. Given that sheep houses are a relatively uncommon monument type, excavation would prove a unique opportunity to examine the nature of the archaeological remains within a sheep house. Excavation may also provide evidence that the structure is in fact a domestic or agricultural building of unusual dimensions which would serve to greatly inform our understanding of the site and how its use changed over time.

Excavation would confirm or disprove the interpretation of structure B as a possible kiln barn would also assist in understanding the site. If the structure did prove to be a kiln barn excavation would add to the small but important dataset which already exists on this important class of monuments (Dixon 2011).

Detailed recording of the enclosures, tathing pens, tracks and head dykes in the area would allow the landscape context of the site to be understood and provide an example of the use of the upland landscape in the post-medieval period.

Conclusion

The farmstead at Scores burn is an example of the changing character of rural settlement and land use in the post-medieval period. This relatively well preserved site lies within its relic landscape which provides an excellent context for its understanding. Further detailed investigation of the site would complement the walkover survey conducted in the area in 2009, 2010, and 2012 as part of the SERF project as resulting information could assist in the understanding of other settlement remains in the area and highlight possible research questions. Excavations in the northern edge of the Ochils as part of the SERF project have provided evidence of the human occupation and use of this upland area in prehistoric and early medieval times – investigation of Scores Burn farmstead could provide more information on activity here in the post-medieval period, allowing us to understand this dynamic landscape in upland Perthshire over an extended of time.

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