

CDTS12



# CASTLE DOW FORT, STRATHHTAY, PERTH AND KINROSS

*Archaeological Measured Survey*

*for Forestry Commission Scotland*

*March 2013*



**HEADLAND**  
ARCHAEOLOGY Ltd





# CASTLE DOW FORT, STRATHTAY, PERTH AND KINROSS

*Archaeological Measured Survey*

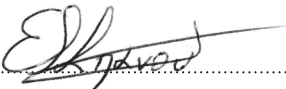
*for Forestry Commission Scotland*

*March 2013*

HA Job no.: CDT512  
NGR: NN 9295 5130  
Parish: Logierait  
Local authority: Perth & Kinross  
OASIS ref.: headland1-142384  
SMR no.: SM 4432  
Archive will be deposited with RCAHMS

Project Manager  
Author  
Fieldwork  
Graphics  
Approved by

Sorina Spanou  
Magnar Dalland  
Magnar Dalland & Jürgen van Wessel  
Julia Bastek  
Sorina Spanou – Project Manager

  
.....

© 2013 by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd



**Headland Archaeology  
North East**

13 Jane Street  
Edinburgh EH6 5HE

0131 467 7705

[northeast@headlandarchaeology.com](mailto:northeast@headlandarchaeology.com)

[www.headlandarchaeology.com](http://www.headlandarchaeology.com)



## CONTENTS

---

1.	INTRODUCTION	2
2.	ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	2
3.	METHODOLOGY	2
4.	RESULTS	5
5.	DISCUSSION	9
6.	CONSERVATION ISSUES	9
7.	REFERENCES	9
8.	APPENDICES	13
	Appendix 1 Site register	13
	<i>Appendix 1.1 Photographic register</i>	13

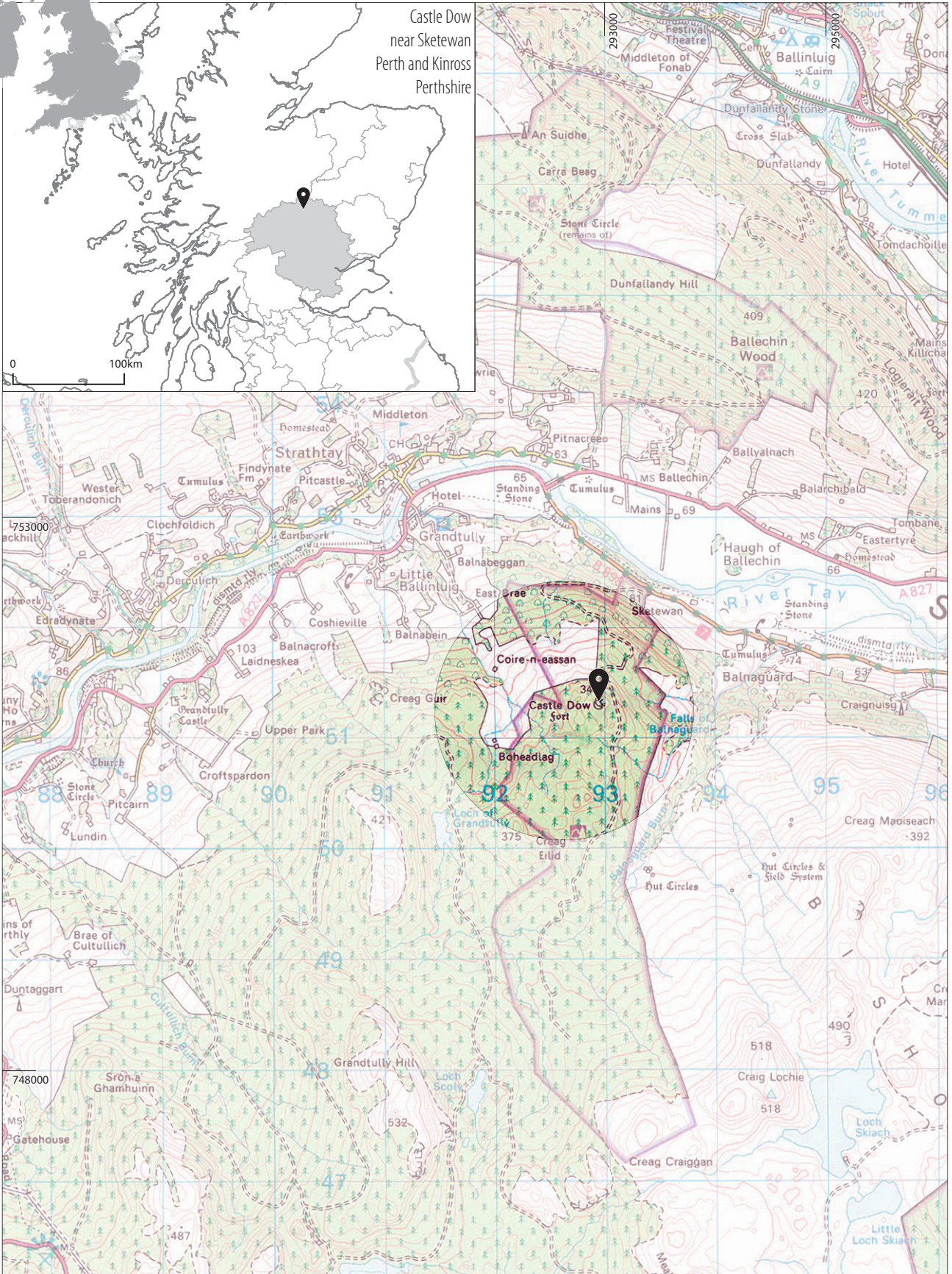


## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<i>Illus 1</i>		viii
	<i>Site location</i>	
<i>Illus 2</i>		1
	<i>View across Strathtay and the river from the east rampart, facing east</i>	
<i>Illus 3</i>		2
	<i>19th century plan of Castle Dow (from Hutcheson 1889)</i>	
<i>Illus 4</i>		3
	<i>Plan of Castle Dow at 1:625</i>	
<i>Illus 5</i>		5
	<i>Digital terrain model of Castle Dow seen from the south-east</i>	
<i>Illus 6</i>		6
	<i>Remains of outer face of the main rampart to the east of the junction with the annexe, facing north-west</i>	
<i>Illus 7</i>		6
	<i>Entrance into the annexe, facing south</i>	
<i>Illus 8</i>		6
	<i>Entrance into the main fort at the N end of the annexe, facing south-west</i>	
<i>Illus 9</i>		7
	<i>View along the west annexe rampart, facing north</i>	
<i>Illus 10</i>		7
	<i>Sheepfold facing south-west</i>	
<i>Illus 11</i>		7
	<i>Small square feature built into the annexe rampart, facing south-west</i>	
<i>Illus 12</i>		8
	<i>D-shaped feature built up against the external face of the annexe rampart, facing north</i>	
<i>Illus 13</i>		8
	<i>Animal bones visible under stone in D-shaped feature, facing east</i>	
<i>Illus 14</i>		8
	<i>View towards marker cairns along the east rampart, facing south-east</i>	
<i>Illus 15</i>		10
	<i>Erosion in the path where it crosses the main rampart on the south side of the fort, facing north-west</i>	
<i>Illus 16</i>		10
	<i>Erosion in path leading up to Cairn 12, facing east</i>	
<i>Illus 17</i>		10
	<i>Slightly eroded path along the main rampart on the north side of the fort, facing west</i>	
<i>Illus 18</i>		11
	<i>Plan of Castle Dow at 1:625 - archaeology only</i>	



Castle Dow  
near Sketewan  
Perth and Kinross  
Perthshire



viii

Reproduced using 2002 OS 1:50,000 Landranger Series no. 152 and digital data. Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 2012. All rights reserved. Licence no. AL 100013329

scale 1:50,000 @ A4



0



2.5km

**Illus 1**

Site location



# CASTLE DOW FORT, STRATHTAY, PERTH AND KINROSS

## Archaeological Measured Survey

*An archaeological measured survey was carried out of the Castle Dow fort, Strathtay. The fort is defended by largely collapsed stone ramparts. An annexe is located on the south-west side of the fort. A modern stone dyke cuts across the fort. The fort has been damaged in the past through the construction of a sheepfold across the west part of the annexe. The eastern rampart has been damaged through the construction of some fifteen marker cairns. The fort is largely covered in deep heather that may obscure smaller features within the fort.*

*Recent felling of trees on the south and west side have created a much better view of the fort from a distance. The monument appears to be very stable with few sign of any significant damage, the only issues being minor erosion scars in the footpath leading into and across the fort.*



1

**Illus 2**

*View across Strathtay and the river from the east rampart, facing east*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) commissioned Headland Archaeology to carry out a detailed topographic archaeological survey of the Castle Dow fort, Strathtay, Perth and Kinross (NN 9295 5130, NMRS NN95SW 14, Scheduled Monument no 4432) (*Illus 1*). The fort is situated on a prominent hill on the south side of Strathtay with extensive views over the strath and River Tay (*Illus 2*).

The archaeological survey was commissioned in order to provide a baseline record of the surviving structural features of the fort that would inform conservation management and provide an enhanced record of this important site.

The survey was carried out in accordance with a Brief provided by FCS. The fieldwork took place during the 9th and 10th of January 2013.

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A description of the fort was published in 1889 by A Hutcheson (Hutcheson 1889). A drawing published there (reproduced here as *Illus 3*) shows a simplified plan; an oval fort aligned north to south with a crescent shaped annexe to the south-west. An entrance into the main fort is depicted on the west side, just north of the annexe.

The fort is described as 'quite bare and smooth, and almost devoid of vegetation' (*Ibid* p.367). Hutcheson observed a well preserved segment of the rampart on the south-west side. The wall was here 14 to 16 feet thick (4.3m to 4.9m) and faced on both sides. There was also evidence of 'banking up of earth at the back of the wall' (*Ibid* p.367). He also recorded a circular structure some 4.5m in diameter

at the south-east 'angle' of the annexe and a stone slab 1.2m by 0.3m set on edge in the south-east part of the fort.

Although not shown on the plan he also reported that the fort had been robbed to erect sheepfolds 'and other similar erections in the near neighbourhood'.

Some 80 year later The Ordnance Survey recorded the site (NMRS NN95SW 14):

*'A fort, situated on the summit of Caisteal Dubh measures 97m NW-SE x 64m. The defences consist of a boulder-faced rubble wall, about 3m thick, which has completely disappeared along the top of a cliff on the east. An annexe measuring 85m NW-SE x 26m abuts onto the SW corner of the fort. The wall, of similar construction to that of the fort though slightly narrower is also visible as tumble. Outside this wall further defence is provided by a turf-covered earth-and-stone rampart with traces of a ditch at its eastern end. The entrance through this rampart and annexe wall is in the south and measures c 2m wide while the entrance to the fort is from the annexe in the NE corner and measures about 3m wide. There are no internal structures apart from a modern sheep fold which has almost certainly been built from the stones of the fort.'*

## 3. METHODOLOGY

A detailed topographic survey was undertaken of residual archaeological features such as earthworks and stone-built structures within the fort. The survey was undertaken consistent with a Level 4 survey.

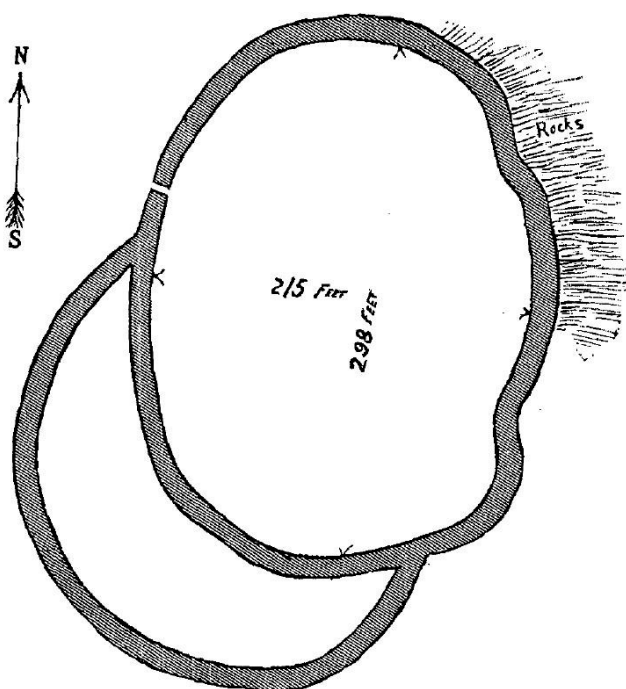
A contour survey was carried out. The results have been presented as a traditional hachure-drawn plan of man-made features with contours illustrating the terrain (*Illus 4*).

The survey was carried out using a Trimble R6 Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) with VRS-Now technology. This system produces measurements to within centimetre accuracy which will allow recording down to a scale of 1:20 (if necessary) depending upon the density of points taken. Due to lack of mobile phone signal in the southern part of the site, the VRS correction was relayed to the instrument using a VRS repeater. Part of the site was surveyed using a Leica TCR405 total station. This survey was tied into National Grid using GPS referenced points.

The density of survey points was adapted to a reproduction of the survey to a scale of 1:250. The results have been reproduced on A3 at a scale of 1:625 (*Illus 4*).

Main features were photographed and described. The photographic record is listed in Appendix 1. A series of working shots were taken during the survey showing surveyors in action. These pictures have been copied onto the CD supplied with this report.

2



**Illus 3**

19th century plan of Castle Dow (from Hutcheson 1889)





## 4. RESULTS

The fort is located on a rocky hill (*Illus 5*) on the south side of Strathtay with extensive views to the north, east and south over the valley and River Tay some 270m below. The fort is largely covered in mature heather but with some segments of the rampart still free of vegetation.

The fort is oval, aligned north-north-west to south-south-east and measures some 97m by 64m internally, covering an area of 5,000m<sup>2</sup> (*Illus 4*). The stone rampart is collapsed and spread up to 7m wide. However, segments of the outer face survive along the south side of the fort (*Illus 6*). The best preserved segments of the rampart indicate that it was originally some 3m wide. The north side of the fort runs along the top of a steep craggy slope. The rampart is ill-preserved along this side with large segments missing.

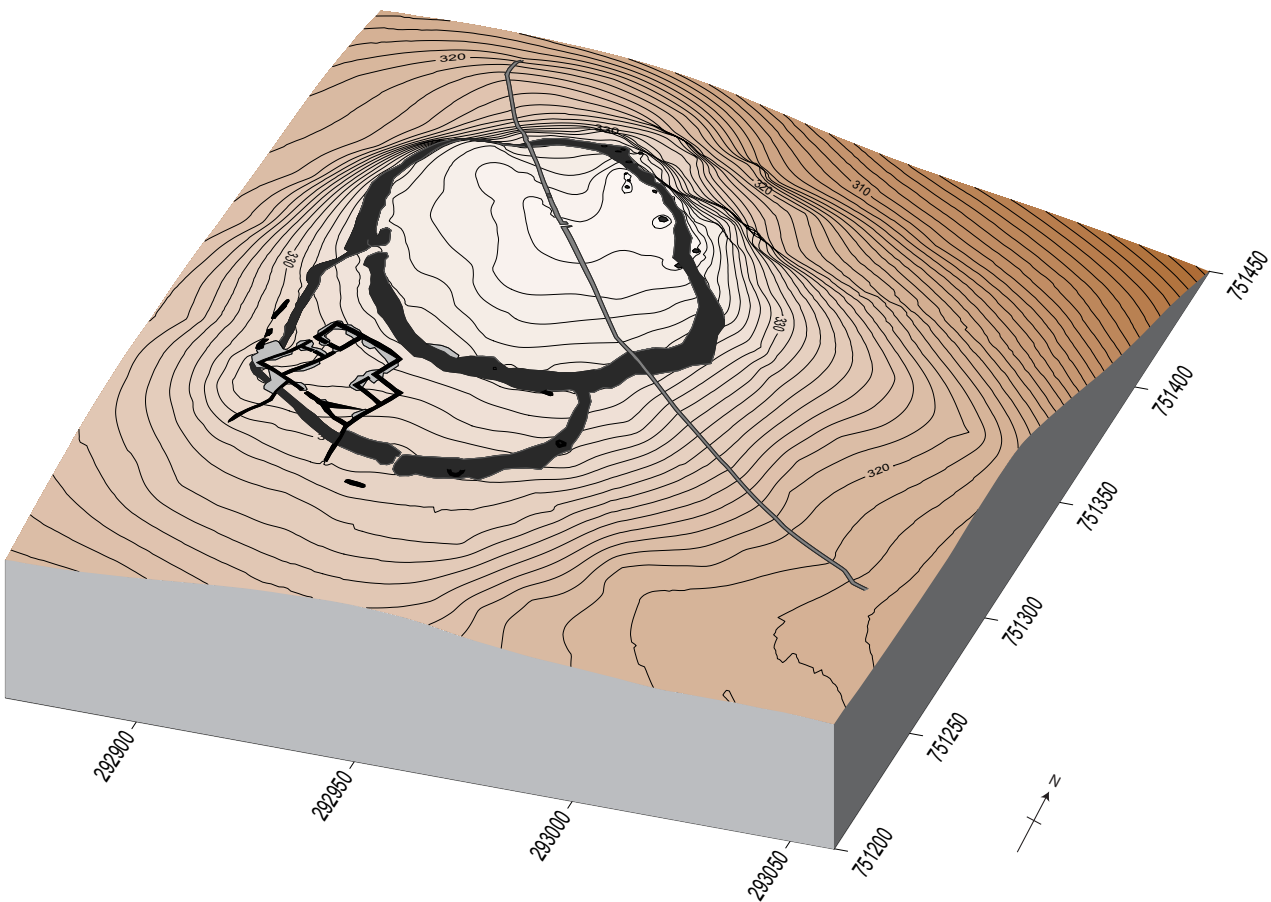
An annexe is situated on the lower ground to the south-west measuring some 85m north-west to south-east by 26m wide covering an area of some 2,160m<sup>2</sup>. The annexe is defended by a stone rampart spread up to 6m wide with segments of the rampart face surviving on the south side. There is an entrance into the annexe from the south that is indicated by a narrow gap in the annexe wall, 0.6m to 0.9m wide (*Illus 7*). On the west side of the entrance evidence of both the outer and inner faces of the rampart survives indicating that the rampart was some 2m wide at this point.

The entrance from the annexe into the fort is 2.9m wide and is situated at the north end (*Illus 8*).

Remains of further outer defenses are located outside the western half of the annexe. It extends from the entrance and around towards the north end. These remains consist of a fragmented turf-covered stony bank (*Illus 9*) along the west side that runs into a marked shoulder in the terrain curving around the south-west side. A short bank segment some 7m to the south-west of the entrance is in line with the edge of the shoulder to the west and may represent the east end of this outer defense. Previous surveys (NMRS NN95SW 14) have referred to traces of a ditch associated with this outer defense. Two very shallow elongated depressions that were recorded within the east end of the shoulder may be what were interpreted as a ditch.

Two oval hollows were recorded at the north-east corner of the annexe (F1, *Illus 4*). The hollows were located against the ramparts and measured c 3.5m by 2.5m by 0.4m deep. A short turf-covered bank segment appeared to be associated with the north hollow.

A series of recent features have been built in and around the fort using material from the rampart. The main feature is a sheepfold situated within the western half of the annexe (*Illus 4,10*). The building of the sheepfold has left a 40m wide gap in the annexe rampart. The structure is sub-rectangular, measures 31m by 23m



**Illus 5**

Digital terrain model of Castle Dow seen from the south-east



◀ **Illus 6**

*Remains of outer face of the main rampart to the east of the junction with the annexe, facing north-west*



◀ **Illus 7**

*Entrance into the annexe, facing south*



◀ **Illus 8**

*Entrance into the main fort at the N end of the annexe, facing south-west*

**Illus 9** ▶

*View along the west annexe rampart, facing north*



**Illus 10** ▶

*Sheepfold facing south-west*



**Illus 11** ▶

*Small square feature built into the annexe rampart, facing south-west*





◀ **Illus 12**

*D-shaped feature built up against the external face of the annexe rampart, facing north*



◀ **Illus 13**

*Animal bones visible under stone in D-shaped feature, facing east*

8



◀ **Illus 14**

*View towards marker cairns along the east rampart, facing south-east*



## Headland Archaeology

and is divided into five compartments, with entrances to the west and south. Two stone dykes run up to the south side of the rampart, presumably built to facilitate herding the sheep into the sheepfold through the south entrance.

Two other features recorded along the south-eastern annexe rampart may be associated with the use of the sheepfold. A small sub-rectangular structure was built into the collapsed rampart rubble to the south-east (F2 *Illus 4*, *Illus 11*). The structure measured some 0.8m by 0.9m internally and was defined as a sub-rectangular, flat-based area framed by stones. There was no clear evidence of it being surrounded by stone walls.

A second feature was located some 12m to the east of the annexe entrance. It was a semi-circular stone bank, up to 1m wide, built up against the rampart face forming a D-shaped feature (F3 *Illus 4*, *Illus 12*). The feature measured 2.2m east-west by 1m wide internally. The interior of the structure was filled by stones. A large stone slab at the west end was set at an angle, resting on the rampart and leaving a gap beneath the stone that contained disarticulated animal bones (*Illus 13*).

A recent stone dyke running north to south cuts through the middle of the fort. It is largely intact with only one small area of collapse. There is a gap in the dyke allowing access to the east side of the fort with its extensive views to the east.

A series of marker cairns of various size from 0.3m to over 2m high have been built along the rampart where it runs along the top of the steep east-facing slope (*Illus 4*, *Illus 14*). There are 15 cairns along this side of the fort presumably all built from rampart material. In addition to the 15 cairns on prominent ground to the east, there is a small cairn built into the south-west side of the main rampart.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Until recently the forest extended almost to the edge of the ramparts on three sides of the fort. The trees have now been cut back leaving a wide gap around the fort giving a much better view of the fort from a distance. The ground within the fort to the west of the dyke was largely covered in deep heather. This meant that it was difficult to define the extent of the rampart in areas where it was reduced to a spread of rubble which is in the section to the north of the annexe and to the east of the stone dyke.

Hutcheson (1889) noted that the fort was *'almost devoid of vegetation'*. As the sheepfold indicates the area would have been used for pasture which would have kept the heather down. This would allow Hutcheson to see details now obscured by the heather. This may be the reason we were not able to locate the vertical-set slab and the earthen bank against the rampart features which he described in his paper. The deep heather is likely to obscure details that would be visible if the fort had a grassy surface.

Hutcheson seems to have missed the entrance into the annexe from the south and also the wide entrance from the annexe into the fort. His plan however, indicates an entrance to the north of the annexe which there is no trace of today.

The two hollows at the eastern corner of the annexe (F1, *Illus 4*) may be what Hutcheson refers to as a circular structure. The hollows appear to be man-made and most likely later than the construction of the annexe. A short stony bank abutting the main rampart seems to close off the corner of the annexe occupied by the two hollows. Without further investigation the date and nature of these features remain unknown.

The small sub-rectangular feature (F2, *Illus 4*) is built into the rubble of the collapsed annexe rampart. It is not well preserved and may represent a small unfinished sheep pen.

The in-filled D-shaped feature (F3, *Illus 4*) contains animal bones. This could indicate that it represents the burial of animal cadavers. Putting the dead animals in a hollow in the rampart rubble might have been easier than digging a hole in the ground.

The 15 marker cairns along the eastern rampart have all been built on prominent ground. The rampart is much denuded in this area. Although some of this can be due to material robbed to build the cairns it is also likely that some of the rampart has collapsed down the steep slope to the east. Material from the east rampart may also have been used to build the stone dyke some 20m to the west.

## 6. CONSERVATION ISSUES

The monument appears to be very stable with few sign of any recent damage. There is a footpath that leads into and across the fort from the south along the west side of the dyke. Near the middle of the fort it branches off to the east through a gap in the dyke leading up to the east rampart. Further north there is a short spur leading off to the west along the north rampart. There are three minor patches of erosion within the paths; one where the main path crosses the south rampart (*Illus 15*), one in the path leading off to the east (*Illus 16*), and also within the path along the north rampart (*Illus 17*).

As a result of the recent felling there are no mature trees growing in the immediate vicinity of the ramparts. There is one tree within the western part of the fort, but it is situated away from the rampart and it not likely to do any significant damage even if up-rooted by wind. However, there are a small number of smaller saplings growing on the ramparts. These have to be monitored and cut back before they cause damage to the structure.

As a result of the recent felling there are strips of brash within the felled area. Two of these strips extend towards the outer defences obscuring parts of the fragmented outer defences on the south-west side of the annexe (*Illus 4*).

## 7. REFERENCES

Hutcheson. A 1889 'Notes on the stone circle near Kenmore and of some hill forts in the neighbourhood of Aberfeldy, Perthshire', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, vol. 23 (pp.366–7)



◀ **Illus 15**

*Erosion in the path where it crosses the main rampart on the south side of the fort, facing north-west*



◀ **Illus 16**

*Erosion in path leading up to Cairn 12, facing east*

10



◀ **Illus 17**

*Slightly eroded path along the main rampart on the north side of the fort, facing west*





## 8. APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Site register

#### Appendix 1.1 Photographic register

Photo no	Direction	Description	Photo no	Direction	Description
01	SW	General view of sheep fold	32	E	Caim 11
02	SW	General view of interior of sheep fold	33	NNW	Caim 12
03	NW	Sheepfold. NE half of SE external elevation	34	NE	Caim 13
04	NW	Sheepfold. SE half of NE external elevation	35	SE	Caim 14
05	NW	Sheepfold. SE external elevation	36	N	Caim 15
06	S	View along dyke at S corner of sheepfold	37	NW	Slightly eroded path where it crosses the main rampart on the S side of the fort
07	N	Sheepfold. General view of S corner	38	NW	Remains of outer face of main rampart to the E of the junction with the annexe
08	SE	Sheepfold. View along SW wall	39	NW	Remains of outer face of main rampart to the E of the junction with the annexe
09	NE	Sheepfold. Entrance in SW wall	40	NW	Junction of the main rampart and E end of annexe
10	SE	Sheepfold. Internal view towards S corner	41	N	Hollow inside the E annexe rampart
11	E	Sheepfold. Internal view towards cell on E side of the fold	42	E	Hollow at the E corner of the rampart
12	SE	Sheepfold. View of cell on E side of the fold	43	E	View along outer face of main rampart to the W of the junction with the annexe
13	NW	Sheepfold. Entrances leading in from the NW side	44	SW	Small square feature built into the annexe rampart
14	W	Sheepfold. General view of S interior	45	NE	Small square feature built into the annexe rampart
15	SW	Sheepfold. View of cell at E corner	46	NW	Small square feature built into the annexe rampart
16	NE	Sheepfold. View of cell at N corner	47	SE	Small square feature built into the annexe rampart
17	SE	Sheepfold. Entrance in NW wall	48	W	D-shaped feature built up against the external face of the annexe rampart
18	NE	Sheepfold. View of cells along NW side	49	E	D-shaped feature built up against the external face of the annexe rampart
19	N	Sheepfold. View of dyke extending from SW wall	50	S	D-shaped feature built up against the external face of the annexe rampart
20	N	Sheepfold. View of cells along NW side	51	N	D-shaped feature built up against the external face of the annexe rampart
21	S	Sheepfold. General view	52	E	Animal bones visible under stone in D-shaped feature
22	E	Caim 1	53	N	Remains of outer face of annexe rampart to the W of D-shaped feature
23	S	Caim 2	54	N	Remains of outer face of annexe rampart to the E of the entrance
24	SE	Caim 3	55	N	Entrance into the annexe to the S
25	SSE	Caim 4	56	S	Entrance into the annexe to the S
26	N	Caim 5	57	N	Remains of outer face of annexe rampart to the W of the entrance
27	SE	Caim 6			
28	SE	Caim 7			
29	NE	Caim 8			
30	WSW	Caim 9			
31	N	Caim 10			



Photo no	Direction	Description
58	E	View along the annexe rampart
59	N	View along dyke running up to the S corner of the sheep fold
60	ESE	View along low ridge and shallow hollows along the outside of the projected line of the annexe rampart
61	SE	View along low ridge along the outside of the projected line of the annexe rampart
62	SSE	View towards the NW end of the low ridge along the outside of the projected line of the annexe rampart
63	N	View along an intermitten bank parallell with and outside W annexe rampart
64	N	View along the W annexe rampart
65	SW	View along the N end of the W annexe rampart
66	SW	Entrance into the main fort from the N end of the annexe
67	S	View towards the entrance into the main fort from the N end of the annexe
68	S	View along the main rampart to the N of the annexe
69	W	Slightly eroded path along the main rampart on the N side of the fort
70	E	Slight bank indicating the line of the rampart on the N side of the fort
71	S	View along rampart rubble at the SE corner of the fort
72	SSE	View along the main rampart to the S of the entrance into the annexe
73	N	View along main rampart towards the NW corner of the fort
74	W	View along main rampart towards the SW corner of the fort
75	N	Small cairn (Cairn 16) built on top of the main rampart near the SW corner of the fort.
76	W	View along outer face of main rampart to the W of the junction with the annexe
77	SE	View along main rampart on the S side of the fort
78	NW	View towards the N end of the fort
79	ENE	Erosion in path leading up to Cairn 12
80	W	Sheepfold. General view
81	SW	Sheepfold. General view
82	N	View towards cairns along the rampart at the NE corner of the fort
83	N	View towards Cairns 12-14 along the rampart along the E side of the fort
84	N	View towards Cairns 6, 8 and 11 along the rampart along the E side of the fort
85	NNW	View towards Cairns 4, 6 and 8 along the rampart at the NE corner of the fort
86	NE	Low Cairns 9 and 10 with Cairns 8 and 11 in the bacground
87	SE	View towards Cairns 12-15 along the rampart along the E side of the fort





© 2013 by Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd

**Headland Archaeology  
North East**

13 Jane Street  
Edinburgh EH6 5HE

0131 467 7705  
[northeast@headlandarchaeology.com](mailto:northeast@headlandarchaeology.com)

**Headland Archaeology  
North West**

10 Payne Street  
Glasgow G4 0LF

0141 354 8100  
[northwest@headlandarchaeology.com](mailto:northwest@headlandarchaeology.com)

**Headland Archaeology  
Midlands & West**

Unit 1, Premier Business Park, Faraday Road  
Hereford HR4 9NZ

01432 364 901  
[midlandsandwest@headlandarchaeology.com](mailto:midlandsandwest@headlandarchaeology.com)

**Headland Archaeology  
South & East**

Building 68A, Wrest Park, Silsoe  
Bedfordshire MK45 4HS

01525 861 578  
[southandeast@headlandarchaeology.com](mailto:southandeast@headlandarchaeology.com)

[www.headlandarchaeology.com](http://www.headlandarchaeology.com)