

HILTON of CADBOLL
ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
AND PROJECT DESIGN



REPORT
June 1998

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THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

HILTON of CADBOLL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT *and* PROJECT DESIGN

Introduction

This paper concerns the proposed archaeological investigation of the site of a ruined chapel at Hilton of Cadboll (Plate I, Fig 1) where it is proposed to erect a replica of the famous Hilton of Cadboll stone (Plate II).

The evaluation to date suggests that a full investigation of the site and the surrounding area would be desirable, to understand the nature of occupation in the 9th century, the period in which the stone was probably made and first erected.

Presented here is a preliminary assessment of the site and a suggested programme of action. It is offered as a basis for discussion between interested parties.

Objectives

- * To erect a replica of the Hilton of Cadboll stone at Hilton
- * To develop the site so that it can be visited by the public
- * To evaluate the site prior to any development
- * To investigate the site in the context of a major programme of research into early historic Easter Ross, currently under way.

Participants

- * Highland Council are sponsors and will need to be approached for planning permission to erect the stone (Jim Patterson)
- * Historic Scotland have given Scheduled Monument Consent for a geophysical survey, and will need to be approached in the event of any more work on the chapel site. (Nick Bridgland)
- * The Royal Commission of Ancient and Historical Monuments have contributed a topographical survey (Grahame Ritchie).

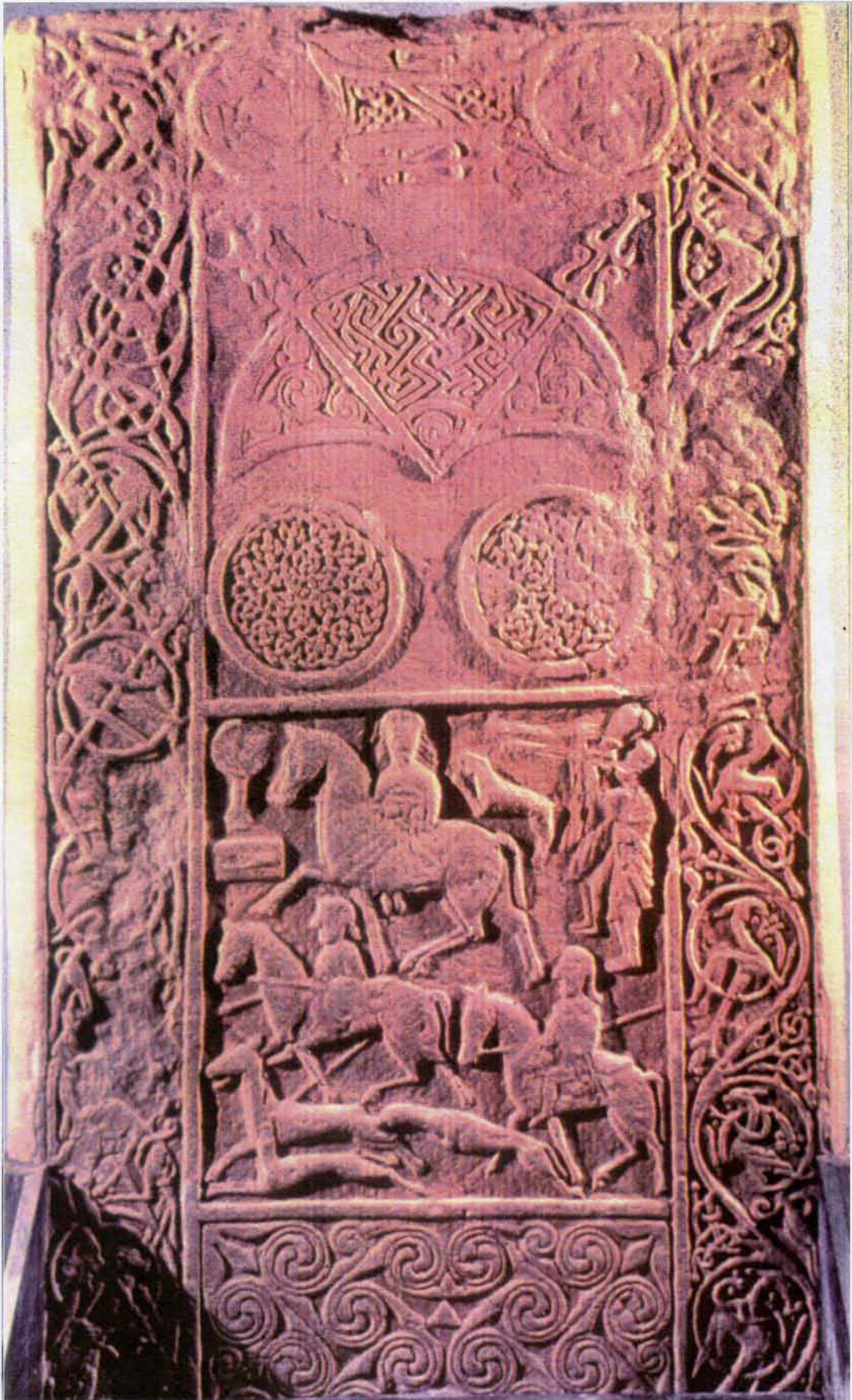


Plate II The Pictish stone from Hilton of Cadboll



Plate 1 The sea-shore chapel site: from the air

- * The Cadboll Estate have given permission for work to be undertaken and are sponsors (Andrew Taylor).
- * The Tain and Easter Ross Civic Trust is currently acting as grant-holder and co-ordinator (Richard Easson)
- * The University of York has carried out the evaluation and is carrying out the programme of archaeological research in the area (Martin Carver).
- * Documentary research on the seaboard villages, including Hilton of Cadboll, sponsored by Historic Scotland and carried out by North Highland Archaeology in 1996, has been contributed to the evaluation (Graham Robbins).

1.0 Programmes to date

1.2 *The making of the replica.*

An estimate for the making of a replica stone was received from Barry Grove in July 1997 and sent to Tain and Easter Ross Civic Trust, by whom a commission would be issued. The original stone, in the National Museum of Scotland, is currently off display and will probably remain accessible for a few weeks. There is thus temporarily an opportunity for the carver to gain access to the stone and take measurements etc from it. It would seem desirable to issue Barry Grove with a commission as soon as possible (Annex A).

2.2 *Surveys of the Site*

- 1.2.1 A topographical survey of the site by RCAHMS was undertaken in 1997 (Annex B).
- 1.2.2 A package of topographical and geophysical surveys of the site were undertaken by the University of York in 1997 (Annex C)
- 1.2.3 A Catalogue of References to Human Burials at Shandwick, Balintore and Hilton was compiled by Graham Robbins. The relevant findings are given in Annex D.
- 1.2.4 A review of the documentary and toponymic evidence for the origins of Shandwick, Balintore and Hilton was undertaken by Graham Robbins. The relevant findings are summarised in Annex E.

1.2.5 A dowsing operation was undertaken in 1996 by D L Bates (Annex F)

1.3 *Evaluation*

1.3.1 Evidence for the antiquity of the Chapel site.

The site in question is located at NH 883 791 (RCAHMS 1979, no 210) and is referred to in what follows as "The Seashore chapel site", to avoid confusion with the sites of documented chapels and placenames, which may or may not refer to the site under investigation.

The provenance of the stone

The earliest evidence attributed to the seashore chapel site is the Pictish "Hilton of Cadboll" stone, now in NMS, which is dated on stylistic grounds to about 800 AD. The stone has had a turbulent history since it was erected, at an unknown location, as a high status monument of unknown purpose, in the 9th century. It had been taken down before 1676, since its front side which may have once carried a cross, now carries an inscription of that date commemorating Alexander Duff and his three wives. Before 1780, the stone was said to have stood near the ruins of a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, "under the brow of the hill on which the farmhouse of Cadboll is situated" (Cordiner 1780, 65). By 1811, it was lying near the seashore face down when Cordiner is said to have discovered that there was carving on the underside and had the stone turned over (Allen and Anderson 1903, 61). By 1856 it was lying "in a shed, the wall of which was believed to have formed part of an ancient chapel" (Stuart 1856 I, 10). By 1903, the stone had been removed to Invergordon Castle, where it stood on a modern base in the grounds at the side of the carriage drive half a mile south of the castle (Allen and Anderson 1903, 61). When Invergordon Castle was demolished in 1928 it was sent to the British Museum, but following protests was transferred to the National Museums of Scotland where it remains (Gordon and Macdonald c1988, 15).

There are inconsistencies here which make it difficult to relate with confidence the association of the Hilton of Cadboll stone and the seashore chapel site. Alexander Duff was buried at Fearn, and in explanation of the separation of the man and his memorial, Allen and Anderson suggest (1903, 62n) that, while the stone was made at Hilton, it proved "too heavy" to carry to Fearn. The stone was however moved without machinery at least twice (in 1676 and after 1811) so it could theoretically have been taken to Fearn; or indeed it could have originated and been reworked at Fearn, used as Duff's grave cover as intended and subsequently been taken to Cadboll. Since the

official burial ground of Hilton of Cadboll before 1628 was at St Colman's Tarbat, 6.5 miles away (Robbins, Annex E), it is also not impossible that the stone originated, and was reworked, at Portmahomack. There are other reasons for supposing that it might have begun its history in the vicinity of Cadboll Castle (see below).

Cordiner seems to have lived from about 1746 to 1794 (Henderson in the Introduction to Allen and Anderson 1993 edn, 13), so he could not have turned over the stone in 1811. He could have seen the stone in its "original" position near a chapel dedicated to Mary, before 1794. But this position was not original in any other sense, since the stone had already been reworked in 1676 to carry the inscription to Alexander Duff. Assuming that Cadboll Farm is co-located with Cadboll Castle, the stone was then located "under the brow of the hill" on which it stands. This is an odd way to describe the site of the seashore chapel, but the dedication suggests that the location is correct. It is this site that Watson (1904, 43-4) accepts as that of "Our Ladyis Chapell" in 1610; and he records local names associated with this dedication that still survived: Creag na bantighearna (Lady's Rock) Tobar na baintighearna (Lady's Well), Port na baintighearna (Lady's haven), and Bard Mhoire, Mary's meadow or enclosure. Lady Street, leading to the chapel site, also survives today. This seems to constitute the best evidence that the Cadboll stone, wherever it originated, was actually found at the seashore chapel site and had been there since at least 1780.

Survey in 1978 noticed a semi-circular annexe at the west end of the seashore chapel site, which it was assumed was the "original" site of the stone (RCAHMS 1979, no 224). But this is "at" rather than "near" the chapel. Unless the Duff inscription was carved in situ, it can only have been erected there in any case after 1676 and had been dismantled by 1811.

The Early settlements at Cadboll

The seashore site cannot have been the original site of Hilton (Hilltown) of Cadboll (Robbins, Annex E, 3). By 1478, the names Catboll-fisher, Cadboll-abbot and Wester Cadboll apparently refer to present Hilton, Balintore and a settlement to the west (ibid. citing OPS, 442-3). In 1561-1566 the seashore site was known as the Fishertown of Hilton, and furnished fish to Fearn Abbey, suggesting that the foreshore was specially developed as a fishing village. By 1610 it was known as Bail' a' chnuic, "cliff town" (Gordon and Macdonald c1988, 18). The Cadboll Estate Maps of 1813 show a "Hilltown" located "behind the eroded cliffline at the back of the raised beach" with "Fishertown of Hilltown" on the present site of Shore Street (Robbins, Annex E, 3).

It thus seems likely that there was once a settlement above the cliffs called Cadboll,

which subsequently spawned two others, Hilltown and Fishertown. This first site may have been the Wester Cadboll of 1478, although Robbins points out that in common usage, Shandwick is said to lie to the "west" (actually south west) of Balintore. The Wester Cadboll of 1478 could therefore be intended for Shandwick.

The name Cadboll is from the Norse and refers to a farmstead (Watson 1903, 40). Its most likely location is the site of the castle, currently the headquarters of the Cadboll estate. The extant remains of a two or three storied tower-house stand at the spot and date to the 16th century. A 17th century laird's house stands adjacent (RCAHMS 1979, no 252; NH 878 776). Some 650m WNW of Cadboll Castle a cropmark has been recorded representing three sides of a rectangular enclosure measuring at least 40m x 30m (RCAHMS 1979, no 194; NH 871 778).

There are therefore five candidates for the place of origin of the Hilton of Cadboll stone: Fearn, Portmahomack, Cadboll, "Hilltown" of Cadboll and the present Hilton, the chapel site, otherwise Fishertown of Cadboll or Clifftown. The Abbey of Fearn was founded at its present site in c1238, and not known to have been the site of an earlier settlement. Portmahomack, the nearest known Pictish site, was the site of the mother church and official burial ground in the middle ages, and there are clear and intimate artistic connections between the Tarbat and Hilton stones (eg with TR 1, Allen and Anderson 1903, 74). A great many stones were broken up here at the reformation, and it is not inconceivable that one of them should have gone into circulation as a grave cover. However, no antiquarian association of the Hilton stone and Tarbat Old Church has been recorded.

In the Cadboll area, a presumed mother-settlement at Cadboll itself seems the most eligible for a 9th century date. The name is Norse, and should date from the Norse interest in Easter Ross between the 9-11th century. A Norse placename does not disqualify it as the place of manufacture of the Hilton stone. The Fishertown of Cadboll was in existence by 1478 (as Catboll-Fisher), and a Hilltown of Cadboll by 1813. This latter had presumably merged with the seashore settlement, taking the name with it, by 1840, when the population was enlarged by people cleared from Sutherland and new houses were built (Gordon and Macdonald 1988, 88). If the stone originated at Cadboll, it could have stood in profile above the cliffs looking out to sea as at Shandwick (equally a Norse placename). At a given moment, in about 1676, it would have been taken down and reworked as a grave cover and transported to Fearn. Subsequently (before 1780), it would have been reclaimed and transported back to Cadboll, where a new site was eventually found for it in "Fishertown".

It is therefore possible to construct a hypothesis in which the Hilton of Cadboll stone

originally stood at Cadboll on the high ground above the cliffs within a settlement founded in the 9th century or earlier. But this is by no means proven and would not in any case disqualify the chapel site from hosting a replica, since it was once certainly there, however briefly. A chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary was very probably a feature of this site from at least the later Middle Ages, when it could have served the population of Catboll-Fisher, who no doubt operated their boats off the small beach immediately adjacent, on behalf of the Abbey of Fearn.

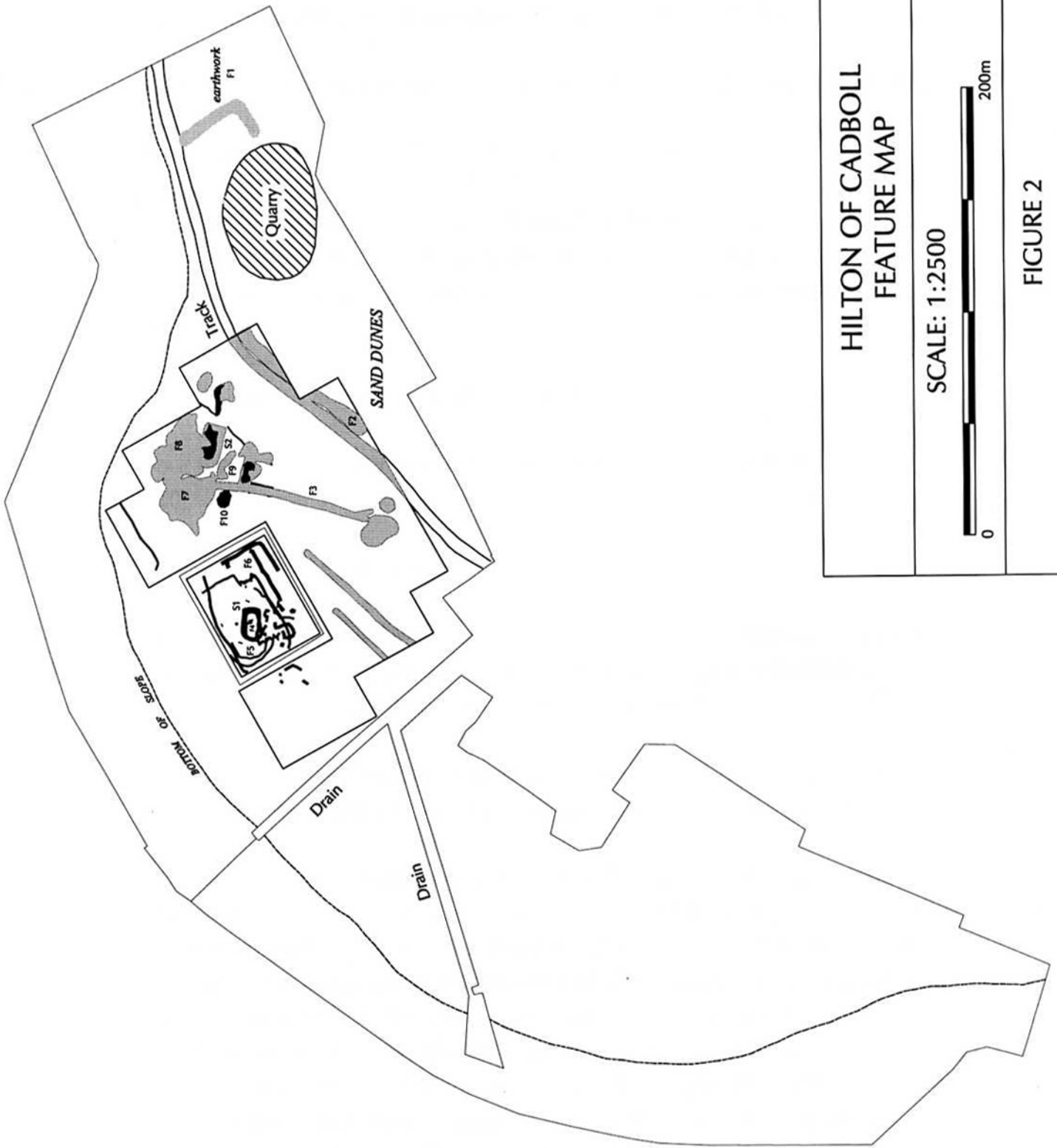
Whether this sea-shore site had a greater antiquity than Fearn Abbey itself, and what kind of settlement it may have been, is completely unknown. On the analogy of the site being unearthed at Portmahomack, the D-shaped protected beach at Hilton would suit both Pictish and Viking exploitation. It would be most interesting to know, with greater confidence than we do now, in what context the Hilton of Cadboll stone, one of the most majestic of the entire Pictish corpus, may have had its origin and function. This may be elucidated by means of an archaeological investigation, now in its preliminary phase.

1.3.2 *Results of Surveys*: seashore chapel site (Annex A and B).

The area of the seashore chapel site is less than 13 acres (5 hectares) defined to the north-west by an arc of cliffs, to the south-east by the sea and to north-east and south-west by a narrowing of the littoral strip between the cliffs and the sea. A short stretch of beach interrupts the rocky foreshore opposite the chapel site. The site has a sandy subsoil, but there are patches of clay deposit (now boggy) towards the sea.

The features mapped by the surveys are shown in Fig 2.

1. A recent quarry for sand. Stratification was exposed in the face of the quarry, without any indications of earlier settlement.
2. An L-shaped bank of stones covered with turf seems to close the north end of the site (F1). It had been cut through by an existing track.
3. Track still in periodic use.
4. Possible earlier track (F2).
5. Possible earlier track (F3).
6. The chapel - a rectangular building aligned E-W (S1). It appears to have had a



HILTON OF CADBOLL
FEATURE MAP

SCALE: 1:2500



FIGURE 2

pit dug in its centre (F4).

7. One or more arcs of walling around the chapel on its west side. This may be the "semi-circular annexe" observed in 1978 (RCAHMS 1979) (F5).
8. One or more enclosures around the chapel. These are aligned SW-NE (F6)
9. Occupation debris west (F1 - Fig.11, Annex C) and
10. Occupation debris east (F2 - Fig.11, Annex C) of the chapel. These are positioned like spoil heaps, as though some clearance of the chapel site had taken place; an impression reinforced by the detection of a back-filled hole at the centre of the chapel (F4).
11. A building (S2) aligned W-E like the chapel.
12. Four patches of possible occupation debris associated with the building S2 (F7-F10).

1.3.3 *Chance Finds and Observations*

1. Watson (1903, 44) recorded that there was a burial ground for unbaptized children near the Lady's Well. Local tradition also suggests that this area (near the chapel) was used for cholera burials in 1832 (Robbins, Annex D, 11)
2. Human bones have been recovered (1995) from rabbit holes at the eastern end of the outer enclosure, and are now in Inverness Museum (Robbins Annex D, 10)
3. A dowsing project was carried out by D L Bates in December 1996 at the invitation of Jane Durham (Bates Annex F). Direct dowsing on the stone itself gave a date of 736 AD. The position of the stone before its removal to Invergordon is suggested as at the west end of the chapel. A rectangular plinth was said to have been detected at this location, in which the stone would have stood facing west. The missing portion of the stone was said to remain in position in this plinth. The mound west of the chapel was interpreted as the grave of a prominent person dated by dowsing to 724 AD. Dowsing dated the walls of the enclosure to 736 and the chapel itself to 844 AD.

1.3.4 *Interpretation*

It seems likely that the earthworks and anomalies so far located on the site belong to the deserted medieval village of Catboll-Fisher. S1 is probably the chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and S2 one of a number of other houses on the same E-W alignment, which no doubt clustered around the chapel.

The medieval settlement is unlikely to have had a burial ground of its own, except, perhaps, an area for the burial of unbaptized infants. The burial ground at Catboll-Fisher is signified by the enclosures around the chapel, and was probably added after the reformation in the 16th century, or after its removal from the parish of Tarbat to that of Fearn in 1628. The enclosures were erected on a NE-SW alignment (ie parallel with the foreshore). The appellation "Clifftown" suggests that the settlement was still operating in 1610.

The chapel was in ruins by 1780, so the adjacent settlement had by that time probably been abandoned for one lying farther south, designated as Fishertown by 1813. The abandoned site may have been used to bury cholera victims in 1832.

The Hilton of Cadboll stone had reached the chapel site by 1780, and perhaps stood within the arc of walling on the west side of the chapel. These in turn may have formed the foundations of a lean-to shed - that seen by Stuart in or before 1856. Before that it had served as a grave cover dated 1676, intended for a burial at Fearn. It may have originated at Fearn or at the Pictish centre at Portmahomack, but the fact that it ended up at one of the Cadboll sites is *prima facie* evidence that it began there. Its original site would have been a 9th century settlement or cemetery. This may have been located either on the high ground at Cadboll or beneath the chapel site at Hilton, where the medieval fishing village was to develop.

1.4 *Estimated Costs to date*

Barry Grove's estimate for making the replica was £6660 in 1997

University of York costs for the surveys was £5476.

Total Liabilities to date: £12136

2.0 **Future Programme of Action**

2.1 *Erection of the Replica and development of the site.*

If, as is hoped, the decision is made to commission a replica of the Hilton of Cadboll stone, erect it on the chapel site and provide access to visitors, a programme of archaeological site management will be required, whether or not it is combined with a programme of archaeological research (see below).

The three obvious components of a basic display policy are (1) the erected replica, (2) a car-park and (3) an access path to connect the two.

We have no certain information as to where the stone originally stood, and can only guess where it stood after 1676. Dowsing apart, there is no direct evidence that it ever stood on a plinth at the west end of the chapel at Hilton, or that there is any more of it to be found there. But the west end of the chapel would be an obvious place to have re-erected the stone in the post-medieval period, and the semi-circular enclosure there is an obvious target for investigation.

From the point of view of any "original" site, the stone could be erected anywhere that was convenient, provided that the impact is first assessed. The layout of a display could therefore be led by planning considerations. From the archaeological viewpoint, the appropriate positioning of the stone and car-park would depend principally on whether there is to be a research programme, and whether archaeological work on the site would precede or follow the erection of the stone. If it is to be erected prior to archaeological investigation, then it would be advisable to erect it near the point of entry and away from the earthworks. If it is to be erected after archaeological investigation, then the location of the stone and car-park can be guided by the results of that investigation. In particular, excavation of the chapel site would reveal a position for the replica that was appropriate and had no deleterious impact.

2.2 *Archaeological Research Programme*

Hilton of Cadboll is an attractive subject for archaeological research, with a high potential to contribute to current work.

Context

Over the past two decades a small group of archaeologists and historians has been engaged in trying to discover the origins of the countries of Europe, particularly those

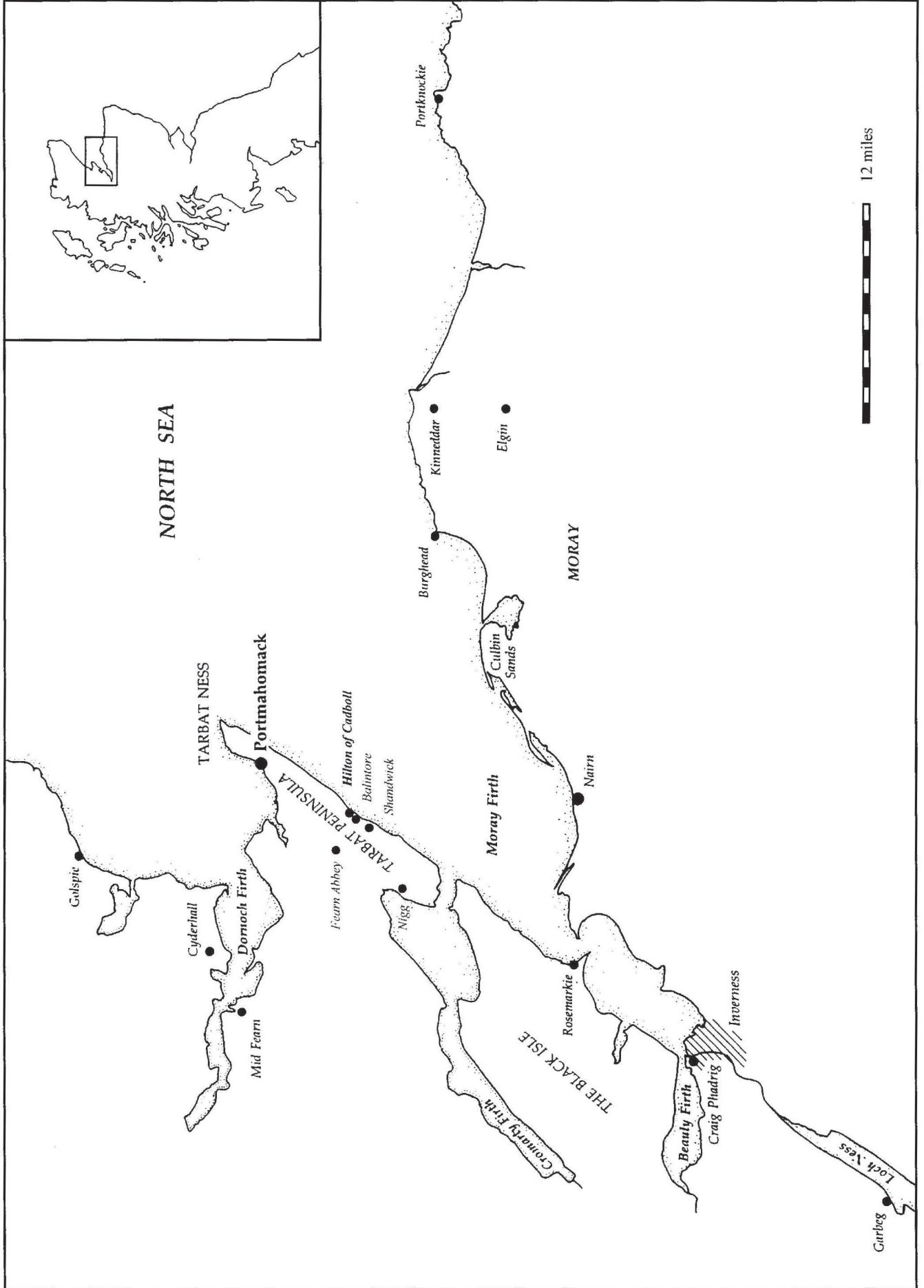


Figure 1: Hilton of Cadboll location map

which border the North Sea. A number of different social formations has been defined before and after the 7th century, the period in which most of the changes took place. Tribal kin-based groups give way to land partition in small lordships, which in turn coalesce into kingdoms in which a territory supports a single overall leader through taxation. A people also professes an ideology, which may be pagan or Christian and can exhibit variety within those broad headings. A Christian community can, for example, profess a monastic or an episcopal organisation. It appears that these options are preferred to a different degree in different territories. Territories adopting a similar position are aligned, while differences in alignment, particularly in neighbours, provide a persistent cause of conflict.

These social formations and ideological alignments can be detected by archaeology, because the material culture they generate is different. For example, a folk inhabits a network of small family sized villages, while a system of small lordships has estate centres, like manors. Christian and pagan can be distinguished, but within Christianity, the monastic can be distinguished from the episcopal. Using this kind of detection, a history of this undocumented period is beginning to be written.

The Sutton Hoo project showed that a tribal people went over to a system of lordships in the later 6th century, and in the early 7th formed a kingdom (of East Anglia) but did so in the Pagan idiom aligned with Scandinavia, to counter the threat from Christian Kent and France (Carver 1998). Within 50 years the conflict had been resolved in favour of a Christian East Anglia, but the Scandinavian alliance was reheated momentarily in the Viking era.

In Yorkshire it can be shown that the Christian kingdom of Northumbria, formed in a monastic and then an episcopal organization, was changed by the Vikings to a "secular" Christian kingdom, in which lordships appointed their own priests. This important result was deduced entirely from the type and distribution of sculpture, which is found clustered in monastic sites in the 7-8th century and is distributed in numerous estates in the 9th (Carver, forthcoming).

The *Tarbat Discovery Programme* set out to examine the early history of the peoples of the Dornoch firth area in the same way. The types and distribution of settlements, burials and sculpture would be studied to reveal the social and religious transformations of this part of the North Sea region. The site at Portmahomack seemingly occupied from the 2nd century to the 11th, should provide a control on the process to be observed more generally. The expectation is that it will reveal a sequence of Pagan Pictish lordship, a monastic centre, and a Viking beachmarket, over 800 years, with influence at different times from Irish, English and Scandinavian neighbours (Carver 1995).

The model at present does not favour the formation of any Pictish kingdom. The sculpture, like that of Yorkshire, shows that while there may have been some (rare) monastic centres, such as Rosemarkie and Portmahomack, the principal investments are distributed in many estates, such as Nigg, Shandwick, Edderton - and Cadboll. The lordship model is one that suits the area, at least in the 9th century, and may explain why the Pictish language and art was so easily extinguished in favour of the new (Irish) kingdom of Scotland or in favour of alliance with the Scandinavian cause. The Dornoch Firth, on the border between these two power blocs may be a good place to study their interactions (Carver 1996).

Portmahomack, Cadboll, Nigg, Shandwick, and Rosemarkie are thus players in the same drama. It should be possible one day to write the history of the formative but largely undocumented period 4-10th century, but badly needed first is some tangible evidence for settlement. The sculpture is expressive, of belief and alignment, but it is all much the same date (late 8th/early 9th century); we have no context for it and little idea of what came before and after its so-called "Golden Age". The settlement at Portmahomack will go some way to solving the problem, but the project has a major weakness in that the churchyard cannot be excavated, and this is likely to deny a sight of some of the key structures, particularly the ecclesiastical ones. It is also quite probable that Portmahomack had a special ecclesiastical role on Tarbat Ness. We therefore need a "lordship" to compare it with.

All these reasons mean that the investigation of Cadboll would be highly relevant to the current research programme. As can be seen from the discussion above, the original site of the Cadboll stone is by no means certain, but its context, if it can be discovered is extremely significant. Was such a stone produced for a local potentate, as opposed to a Royal patron or a monastic atelier? Was this potentate a Pictish lord - or lady - or a Picto-Norse estate owner based on a new foundation? With Portmahomack and Shandwick contemporary and adjacent the local estate at Cadboll can scarcely have been extensive. This opens a vision of the peoples of 9th century north-east Scotland that resembles Gotland more than its immediate neighbours in Dal Riada, southern Pictland or Northumbria.

Targets (Fig 3)

An archaeological investigation of the Cadboll area would give primacy to the seashore chapel site, but it would need to include intensive survey in a number of other zones, suggested by the documentary research (above) and by topography: the area of Cadboll Castle, possible site of a 9th century settlement; the area around Drumossie; the area around Hilton of Cadboll house, possible site of the original Hilltown; the area between

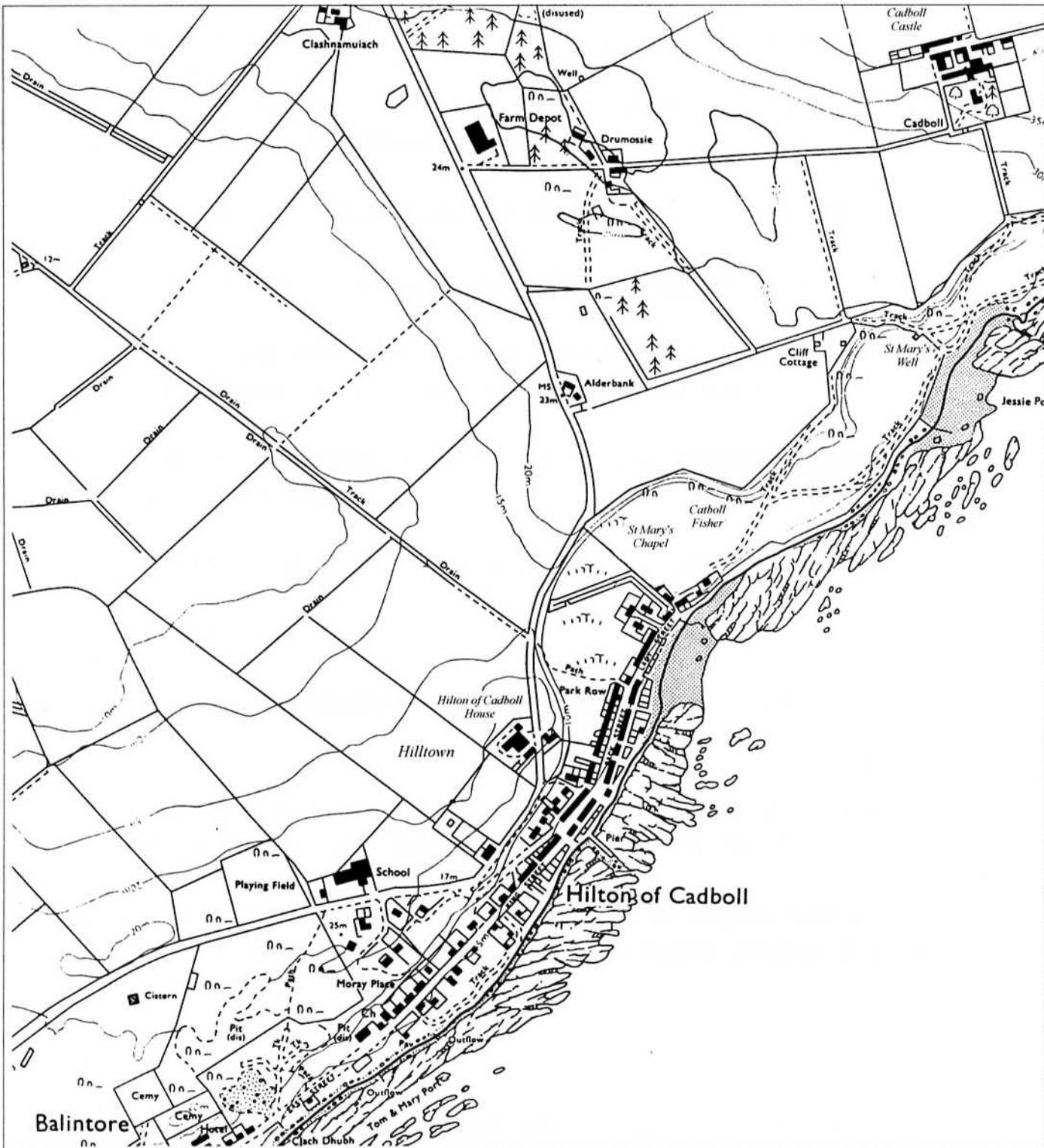


Figure 3: The Cadboll area, showing zones for investigation:
 Cadboll Castle, Drumossie, Hilton of Cadboll House,
 "Hilltown", "Catboll-Fisher", St. Mary's Chapel, St. Mary's Well

the Chapel site ("Catboll-Fisher") and the well, probably Mary's Meadow (Fig 3).

Programme for the Chapel Site

Strip and map the area of the chapel (S1), the enclosure on the west side and the anomalies to the east (S2). This should show:

- * Whether medieval buildings other than the church had survived
- * The potential for making a monument of the medieval village.
- * The nature of the enclosure at the west end and whether any of the stone remains from the post-medieval arrangements of display.
- * (By limited intervention) Whether the medieval village overlies another more ancient settlement.
- * (If required) A suitable place to erect the replica of the Cadboll stone

Programme for Survey

Non-invasive surveys (mainly geophysical) would be applied to the areas shown in Fig.3.

Following this, test transects would be excavated across any promising anomalies, to confirm that a settlement has been found, and if possible to date it.

This evaluation work might well lead to the identity of an important early settlement, which would merit detailed investigation. (This would be undertaken in close collaboration with landowners and farmers).

Mode of Operation

All the proposed fieldwork is staged, that is, each stage of the investigation is completed before the next one starts, and it would only start with the full backing of the participants and when adequate funding was in place.

The participants may well wish to manage the project as a company or committee, on which the interests of residents, landowners and scholars were represented. The University of York team is quite happy to operate in this way. Or, if preferred the

4.0 Agenda

- (1) This paper is being circulated at the end of May 1998. Comments on its content, including the accuracy and reading of the documentation, and on the proposals being made would be welcome by, say, end of June. I would also be glad to be made aware of any other addressees to whom the document should sent.
- (2) I would like to propose a meeting of addressees at Cadboll during August 1998, from which a plan of campaign might emerge.
- (3) I would be glad of confirmation that, whatever the archaeological programme may be, the replica is to be commissioned.

Martin Carver
23 May 1998

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- Stuart J 1856-67 *The Sculptured Stones of Scotland* (2 vols)
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Distribution

Nick Bridgland, Historic Scotland
Steve Callagan, Balintore
Richard Easson, Tain and Easter Ross Civic Trust
Justin Garner-Lahire, Field Archaeology Specialists
Jim Patterson, Highland Council
Graham Robbins, North Highland Archaeology
Andrew Taylor, Moraingie Estate
John Wood, Highland Council

Annexe A: Estimate for the making of a replica of the Hilton of Cadboll stone



Millhill Farm Cottage
Auchterarder
Perthshire
PH3 1PQ

10th July 1997

Dear Professor Carver,

Please find enclosed the estimates required for both the *Hilton of Cadboll* and *Tarbat (No1)* commissions as requested. As you can imagine it is a difficult process to come to a totally accurate figure for either project, as a lot depends on the quality and shape of the source stone used.

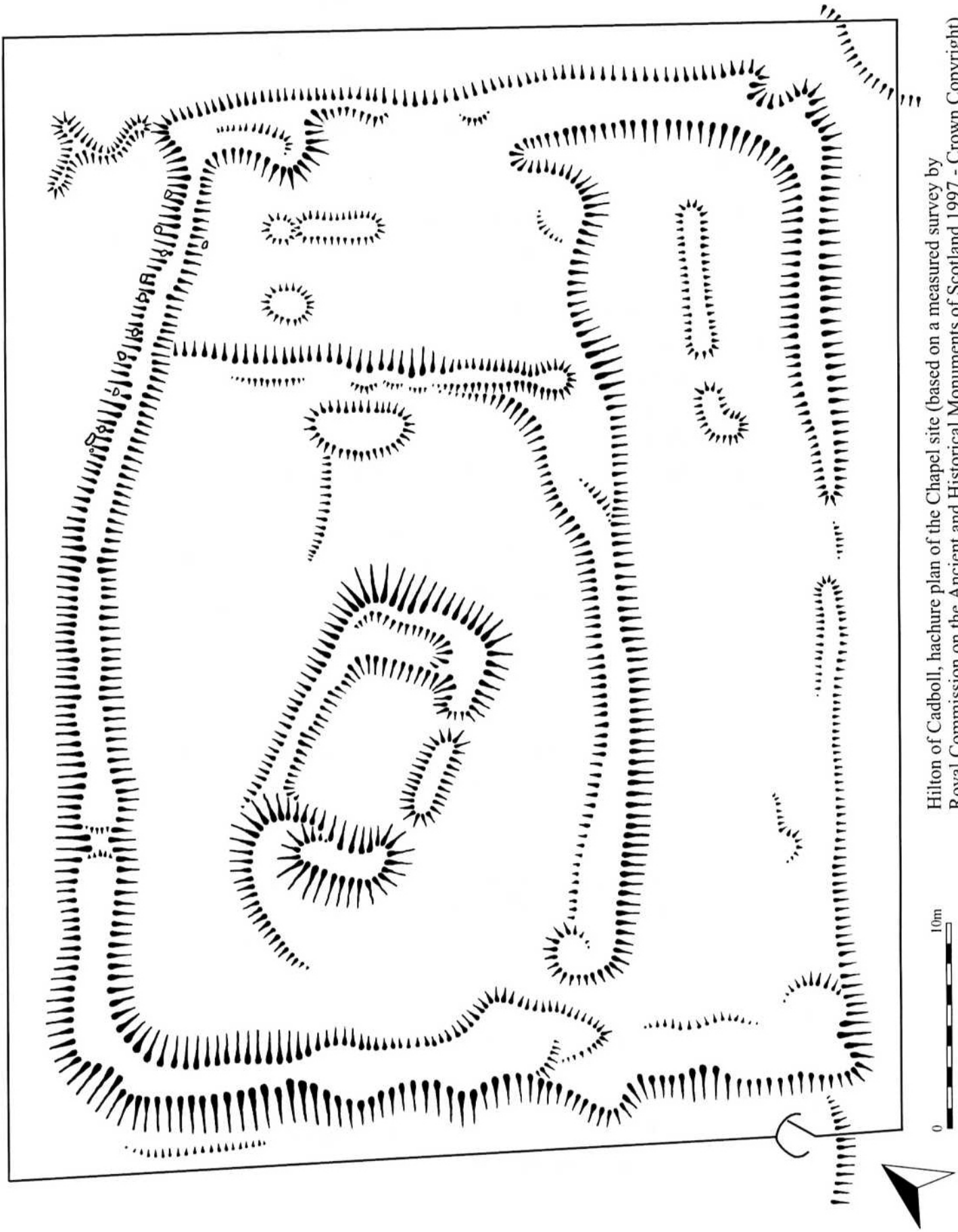
I must admit to being excited by both these projects and indeed applied to Tain and Easter Ross Civic Trust a little over a year ago when I heard there was a possibility of the *Hilton of Cadboll* commission becoming available - it would be a real pleasure to carve!

Hope this letter finds you well and everything is progressing smoothly, I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best Wishes

Barry Grove.

Barry Grove



Hilton of Cadboll, hachure plan of the Chapel site (based on a measured survey by Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland 1997 - Crown Copyright)

University team can operate quite independently, and carry the sole responsibility for seeking funds and permission.

Rewards

- * The rewards for knowledge are potentially very great. They will throw new light on the history of Scotland that is multi-cultural and European in its scope.
- * The Chapel site, it could be argued, deserves to be evaluated, studied, conserved and presented in its own right
- * The residents of Cadboll may wish to attract summer pilgrims to their village. The effect of having a replica would be greatly enhanced by archaeological research, development (eg a car-park) and by the presentation of the chapel site.
- * An attraction at Cadboll, combined with an attraction at Portmahomack would increase the tourist circulation around the Tarbat peninsula. Having two attractions would greatly increase the chances of each succeeding.
- * The investigation of the Castle and other adjacent sites would be mainly to understand the context of the Cadboll stone. There would be no obvious pressure to make a conserved or displayed monument on farmland.

3.0 Conclusion

This paper offers a summary of current understanding of the Cadboll site and the degree to which it may have provided a context for the celebrated Hilton of Cadboll stone.

It concludes that the stone could be replicated and erected in any position at Hilton of Cadboll, but the erection of the stone and the provision for visitors may require some archaeological mitigation.

There are other reasons, connected to both research and tourism, which would make the excavation of the Chapel site and its presentation to the public desirable.

Research suggests that an archaeological investigation of neighbouring areas could also prove very rewarding for the understanding of the original context of the Hilton of Cadboll stone, and through that to a new vision of the early history of north-east Scotland.

Annexe C Topographical and geophysical survey by FAS



**GEOPHYSICAL AND
TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY
HILTON OF CADBOLL**

REPORT
May 1998

On behalf of:

Department of Archaeology
University of York
King's Manor
York YO1 2EP

Sponsors:

TAIN & EASTER ROSS CIVIC TRUST
HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL
GLENMORANGIE DISTILLERY



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LIST OF CONTENTS

	Contents	Page
1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Aims and objectives	
1.2	Location and land use	
2.0	METHODOLOGY	3-7
2.1	Grid location	
2.2	Topographical survey (Intervention 1)	
2.3	Magnetometer survey (Intervention 2)	
2.4	Soil resistance survey (Intervention 3)	
3.0	RESULTS	7-17
3.1	Topographical survey (Intervention 1)	
3.2	Magnetometer survey (Intervention 2)	
3.3	Soil resistance survey (Intervention 3)	
4.0	ASSESSMENT	17-18

Figures

1	Location map	2
2	Area of magnetometer survey	4
3	Area of soil resistance survey	5
4	Contour map	9
5	Magnetometer survey	10
6	Soil resistance survey (Areas 1 and 2, 0.5m probe spacing)	11
7	Soil resistance survey (Area 3, 0.5m probe spacing)	12
8	Soil resistance survey (Areas 1 and 2, 1.0m probe spacing)	13
9	Soil resistance survey (Area 3, 1.0m probe spacing)	14
10	Magnetometer survey interpretation plan	15
11	Soil resistance survey interpretation plan	16
12	Feature map	19

Appendices

A	Scheduled Monument Consent	
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document reports on a geophysical survey undertaken by Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd on behalf of Professor MOH Carver of the Department of Archaeology, University of York. This survey forms part of a wider research evaluation programme being carried out at Hilton of Cadboll by Professor Carver.

The survey was carried out between 25th August and 12th September 1997.

1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the survey programme was to map sub-surface archaeological remains both in and around the earthwork site of Hilton of Cadboll. The purpose of the boundary and contour survey was to provide base maps within which archaeological remains can be placed within their present land use and topographical context as well as providing the basis for future evaluation and deposit modelling work. It was hoped that the geophysical surveys would define the focus or foci of the archaeological site allowing any further invasive evaluation work to be well targeted, thereby minimising its destructive impact on the site while maximising its research yield.

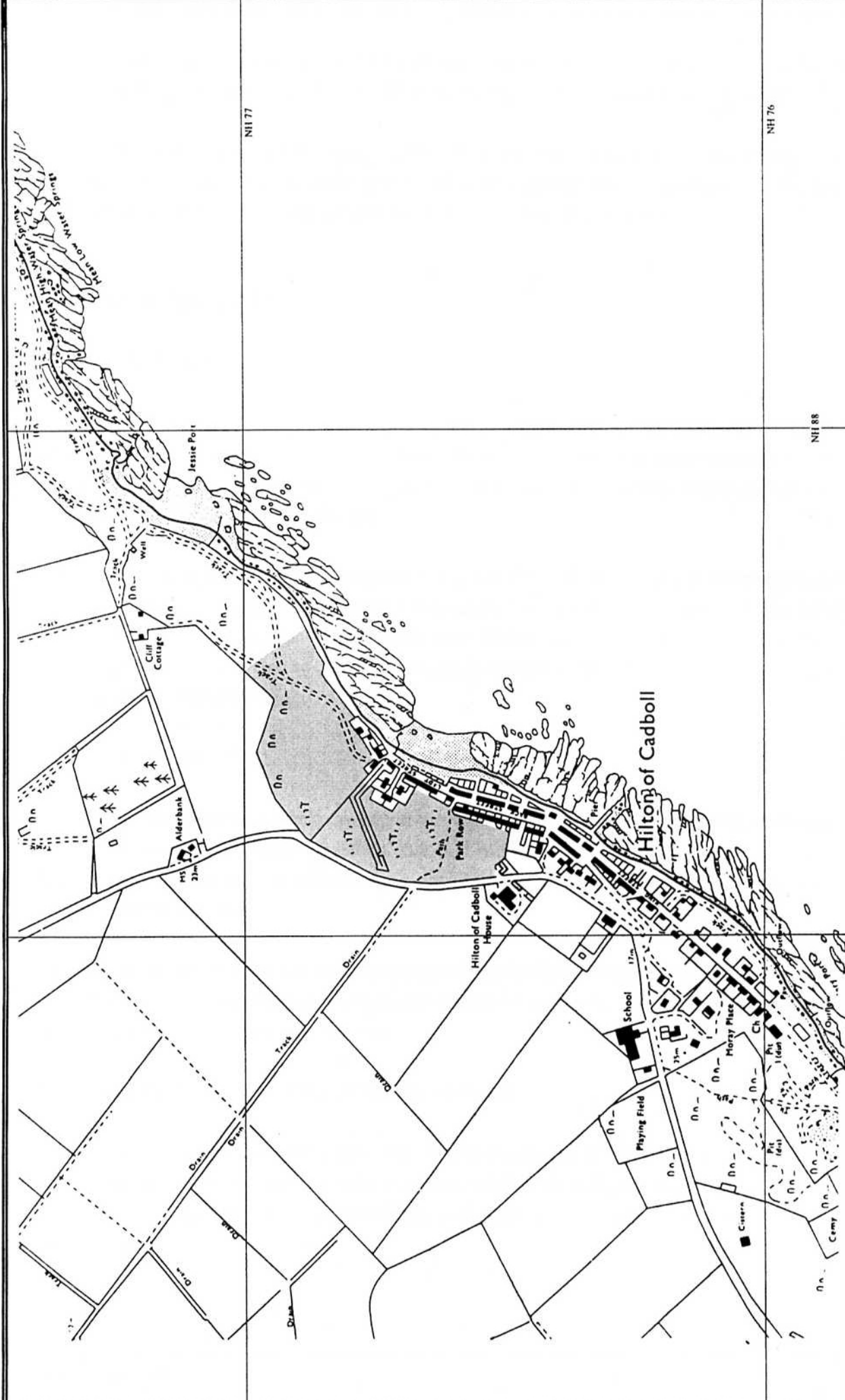
A further objective of the survey was to identify the original position of the Hilton of Cadboll carved stone which is now in the care of the National Museums of Scotland. It has been proposed that a full-size replica of the stone should be erected on the site and a suitable location for the replica is required.

1.2 LOCATION AND LAND USE

The site (NGR NH 8730 7689) is situated to the north of the village of Hilton of Cadboll which lies on the northern shore of the Moray Firth, approximately eleven miles south-east of Tain in Ross-shire, Highland Region, Scotland.

The site consists of a 'D' shaped area of approximately 5 hectares overlooking the shore of the Moray Firth to the south-west (Fig.1). This area appears to be a raised beach enclosed to the north and west by a steep slope which is approximately sixteen metres high. The site is bounded to the south by post-war housing development, however, the northern part of this boundary remains undeveloped and slopes gently down to the firth. On the whole, the ground surface is gently undulating ranging from 5m to 6m above Ordnance Datum (AOD), however, these undulations become more pronounced towards the firth giving the impression that this area of the site consisted of sand dunes subsequently stabilised by grass coverage.

A group of impressive earthworks lie at the centre of the north-eastern part of the site. These features are concentrated within an area of 60m x 40m which is fenced to protect the area from animal activity. The earthworks also lie at the centre of an area designated by Historic Scotland



HILTON OF CADBOLL - LOCATION OF SURVEY AREA

A

SCALE: 1:10 000

FIGURE 1

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey 1:10 000 map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright

as a Scheduled Monument (No. 90320) and are thought to represent the remains of a medieval chapel and its associated boundaries (Scheduled Monument Consent - Appendix A)

Most of the site is covered by long, thick well established grass with concentrations of large tussocks in many places which have produced a very uneven ground surface. To the north-west and south-east of the earthworks two low lying areas also contain reeds.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 GRID LOCATION

Two permanent survey stations forming a magnetic north-south alignment were installed to form the basis of the site grid. The AOD height of the origin station was then calculated by reference to a nearby Ordnance benchmark. Temporary survey stations were set out across the site to allow accurate surveying throughout the area.

The geophysical survey area was then set out on a NNW-SSE grid alignment in order to maximise coverage within and around the fenced area (Fig.2-3). Grid points were set out at 40 metre intervals using the total station theodolite, to form the basis of the survey area. Intermediate points were positioned using tapes, to complete the grids of 20m x 20m squares. This procedure ensures an internal grid point accuracy of $\pm 0.05\text{m}$.

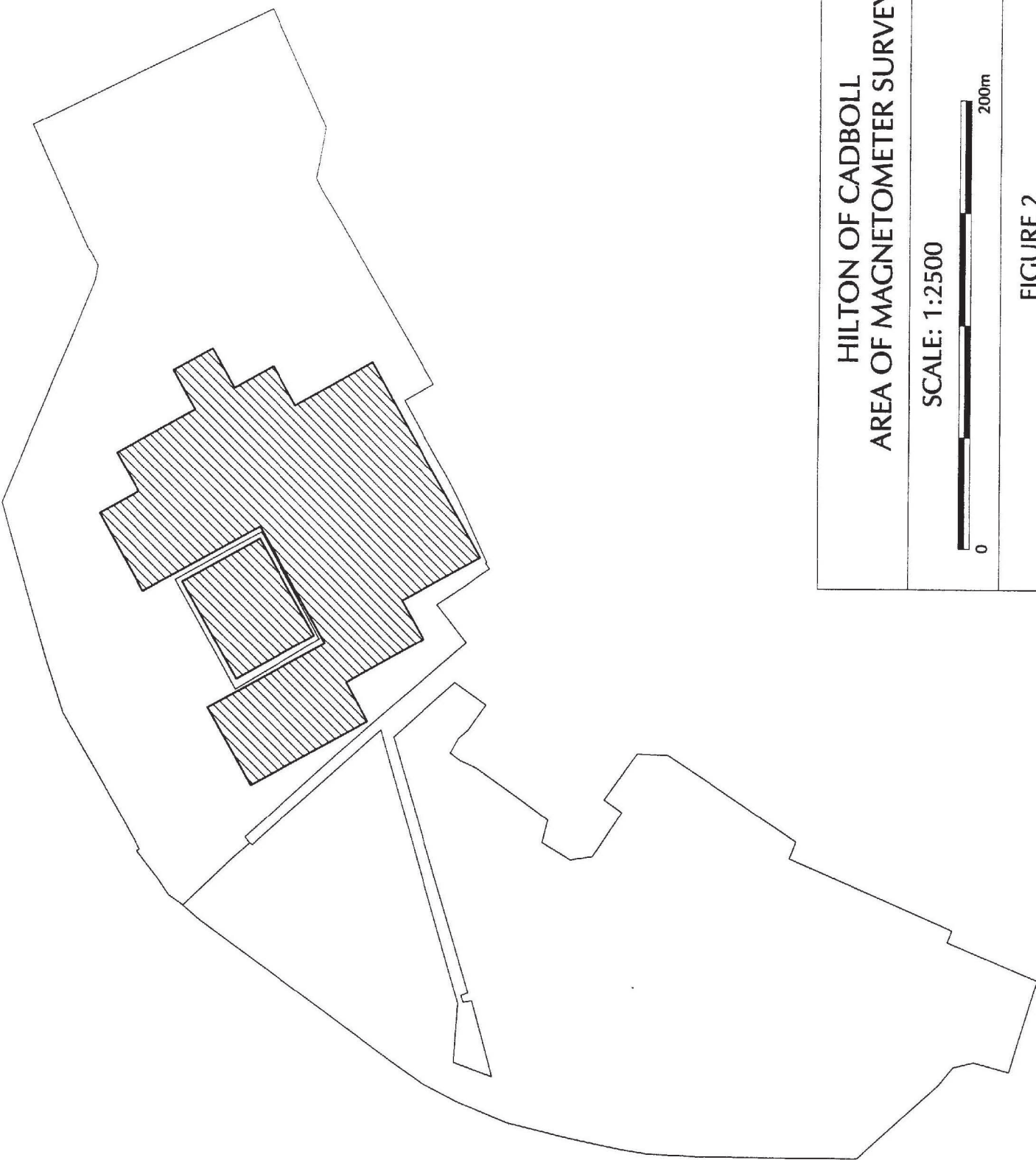
2.2 TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY (INTERVENTION 1)

The internal and external boundaries of the site were surveyed using a total station theodolite (Wild TC1010). Further data points were then collected by the survey of points at the top and bottom of major breaks of slope as well as lines of points at 5-20m intervals depending upon the topographic variation within an area.

This data was then transferred to a computer where the data was processed to produce a contour map of the site at 0.5m intervals using Surfer version 6 software. The resulting contour map was output on a high definition laser printer.

2.3 MAGNETOMETER SURVEY (INTERVENTION 2)

Magnetometry measures subtle magnetic variation against a consistent magnetic background. Metalwork creates significant magnetic variation, while archaeological features and deposits which contain debris from burning or organic decay will create more subtle variations, both of which can be mapped.



HILTON OF CADBOLL
AREA OF MAGNETOMETER SURVEY

SCALE: 1:2500



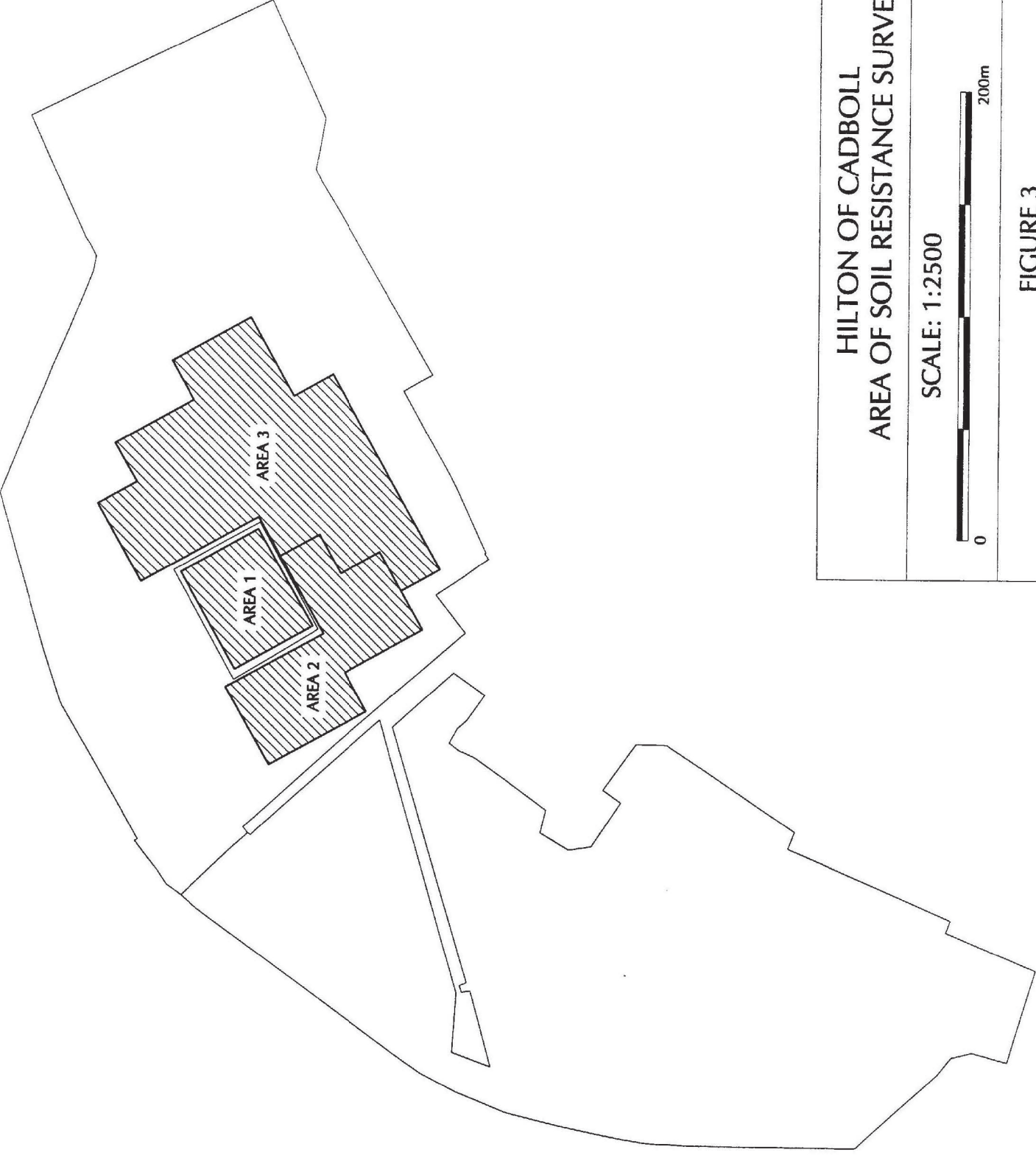
FIGURE 2

HILTON OF CADBOLL
AREA OF SOIL RESISTANCE SURVEY

SCALE: 1:2500



FIGURE 3



This survey was carried out using a fluxgate gradiometer with digital storage and data transfer facilities (FM18 with ST1 sample trigger - manufactured by Geoscan Research). Each 20m x 20m survey grid was undertaken using the parallel traverse method (unidirectionally) to ensure the capture of good quality raw data. Instrument readings were logged at 0.5m x 0.25m intervals in order to produce a high resolution image of magnetic anomalies which improves the definition of feature form and increases the possibility of defining smaller feature types. On the completion of each survey grid the data was transferred from the FM18 to a portable computer where it was checked for survey defects.

The raw data was processed using Geoplot version 2.02. This involved the adjustment of any differences in the average background reading between individual survey grids as well as inconsistencies caused by instrument drift, which were removed to facilitate clear presentation of the data sets.

The processed data was transferred to Surfer version 6 in which it was prepared for presentation. The resulting grey-scale images were then output on a high definition laser printer.

2.4 SOIL RESISTANCE SURVEY (INTERVENTION 3)

This technique involves passing an electrical current through an area of ground and measuring the ground's resistance to the electric current. Soil particles and stone are insulators and do not conduct electricity, however, if water is absorbed by these materials soil can conduct electricity as water is a good conductor. In effect, a soil resistance survey maps moisture content. Archaeological remains will normally retain more or less moisture than undisturbed ground and therefore will offer a lower or higher resistance to an electric current allowing these features to be mapped by a soil resistance meter.

This survey was carried out using a Soil Resistance Meter with digital storage and data transfer facilities (RM15 (Advanced) - manufactured by Geoscan Research). The RM15 was used with a MPX15 multiplexer connected to a PA5 probe array fitted with three probes. The use of a multiplexer and multiple probe array allows a series of different readings to be taken at the same point. In this case, two readings at 0.5m probe separation and one at 1.0m probe separation were logged at each point. This method produces two data sets; firstly, a higher resolution data set with readings at 0.5m x 1.0m intervals (0.5m probe spacing) and a second lower resolution data set with readings at 1.0m x 1.0m intervals (1.0m probe spacing). The first data set produces a higher definition image of soil resistance anomalies, while the second with wider probe spacing provides a coarser image of soil resistance at greater depth.

The fact that the site was composed of light, well drained sand soils and the weather remained relatively dry presented serious difficulties in carrying out an effective soil resistance survey. In many areas high contact resistance problems were encountered whereby the soil resistance was so high that it was not possible to measure it. In order to overcome these problems it was necessary

to divide the survey into three areas (Fig.3). In Areas 1 and 2 the instrument range was set to gain x10 which provided adequate variation in the data and measured subtle variation in soil resistance. In Area 3, however, the instrument range was reset to gain x1 so that readings could be recorded in this area of higher contact resistance, this resulted in the loss of subtle variations in soil resistance within the data set. Unfortunately, due to high contact resistance, it was not possible to take soil resistance measurements in the southern strip of the geophysical survey area.

The raw data was processed using Geoplot version 2.02. This involved the adjustment of any differences in the average background reading between individual survey grids as well as inconsistencies caused by changing climatic conditions, which were removed to facilitate clear presentation of the data sets.

The processed data was transferred to Surfer version 6 in which it was prepared for presentation. The resulting grey-scale images were then output on a high definition laser printer.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY (INTERVENTION 1)

The resulting contour map (at 0.5m intervals) from the topographical survey (Fig.4) provides a generalised model of the topographical context of the site. The contour map clearly illustrates how well enclosed the site is by a steep slope to the north and west (rising from 6m to 22m AOD), and by the firth to the south. The only easy access to the site by land is along the shoreline from the south-west or north-east. A broad L-shaped bank was identified during the survey running from the bottom of the steep slope at the eastern end of the site, down towards the firth before turning south-west to run parallel to the shore (Fig.12). This feature appears to be an attempt to define or control access to the site, however, there is no indication of its date.

3.2 MAGNETOMETER SURVEY

Figure 5 shows a grey scale plot of the processed magnetometer data while Figure 10 provides an interpretation plan of the plot.

Within the earthwork area the survey located a concentration of positive magnetic anomalies. A large east-west orientated rectangular feature (S1) can be seen containing a central pit-like feature. This rectangular feature corresponds with the earthwork thought to represent the remains of a chapel. Several linear anomalies surround S1 which again correspond to visible earthworks, although a concentration of linear and curvilinear anomalies to the south of S1 are not present as earthworks.

A small group of positive anomalies to the west of the chapel enclosure may represent further structural remains (F1). The group of large irregular positive anomalies to the east of the chapel enclosure (F2-4) are not readily identifiable by their form, but they do suggest the presence of archaeological features. A larger more regular positive anomaly with negative anomalies on its southern and northern sides (S2) may indicate the presence of a building as it shares a similar shape, proportions and orientation to S1. The presence of several linear positive anomalies (F5-7) within this concentration of features further supports the interpretation of this group of anomalies as archaeological remains.

The south-east and south-west parts of the survey area contain many anomalies characteristic of ferrous debris. These anomalies most likely represent the presence of superficial metal debris derived from modern rubbish disposal.

3.3 SOIL RESISTANCE SURVEY (INTERVENTION 3)

The methodology employed to carry out the soil resistance survey produced two sets of results: Firstly, soil resistance measurements taken at 0.5m probe spacing which produces a high resolution image of the ground's resistance at a relatively shallow depth (Figs.6-7). Secondly, soil resistance measurements taken at 1.0m probe spacing which produces a coarser image of the ground's resistance at greater depth (Figs.8-9). Normally, the comparison of these results would provide information on the relative depth of soil resistance anomalies and therefore aid in their interpretation. Unfortunately, due to soil conditions and high contact resistance the results are rather 'flat' providing little information on the relative depth of anomalies.

Figure 11 shows an interpretation plan of the results of the soil resistance survey. The results of the survey in Area 1 reflect the pattern of earthworks visible on the site with the east-west orientated structure (S1) and enclosure features represented by either high or low resistance anomalies. The curvilinear anomaly to the west of S1 is an exception as it does not correspond to an earthwork feature. Apparently associated with the chapel enclosure are two large high soil resistance areas (F1-2), such anomalies would normally be interpreted as spreads of rubble, although, given the dry ground conditions it is equally possible that they represent areas of disturbed subsoil.

The two parallel linear anomalies situated to the south of the chapel enclosure (F3) run south-west from a low lying area of the site towards existing drains. Given their size, location and orientation, these features are considered to be fairly recent land drains. The present track which runs NE-SW across the site is clearly visible in the south-east corner of the survey area. Under normal circumstances a track would produce a high resistance anomaly as the more compacted soil would contain less water than the surrounding ground, in this case the opposite is true as the surrounding ground is so well drained that the compacted ground of the track retains moisture more readily and has therefore a lower soil resistance compared to the surrounding area. This would seem to indicate that both negative soil features and compacted surfaces produce a similar soil resistance

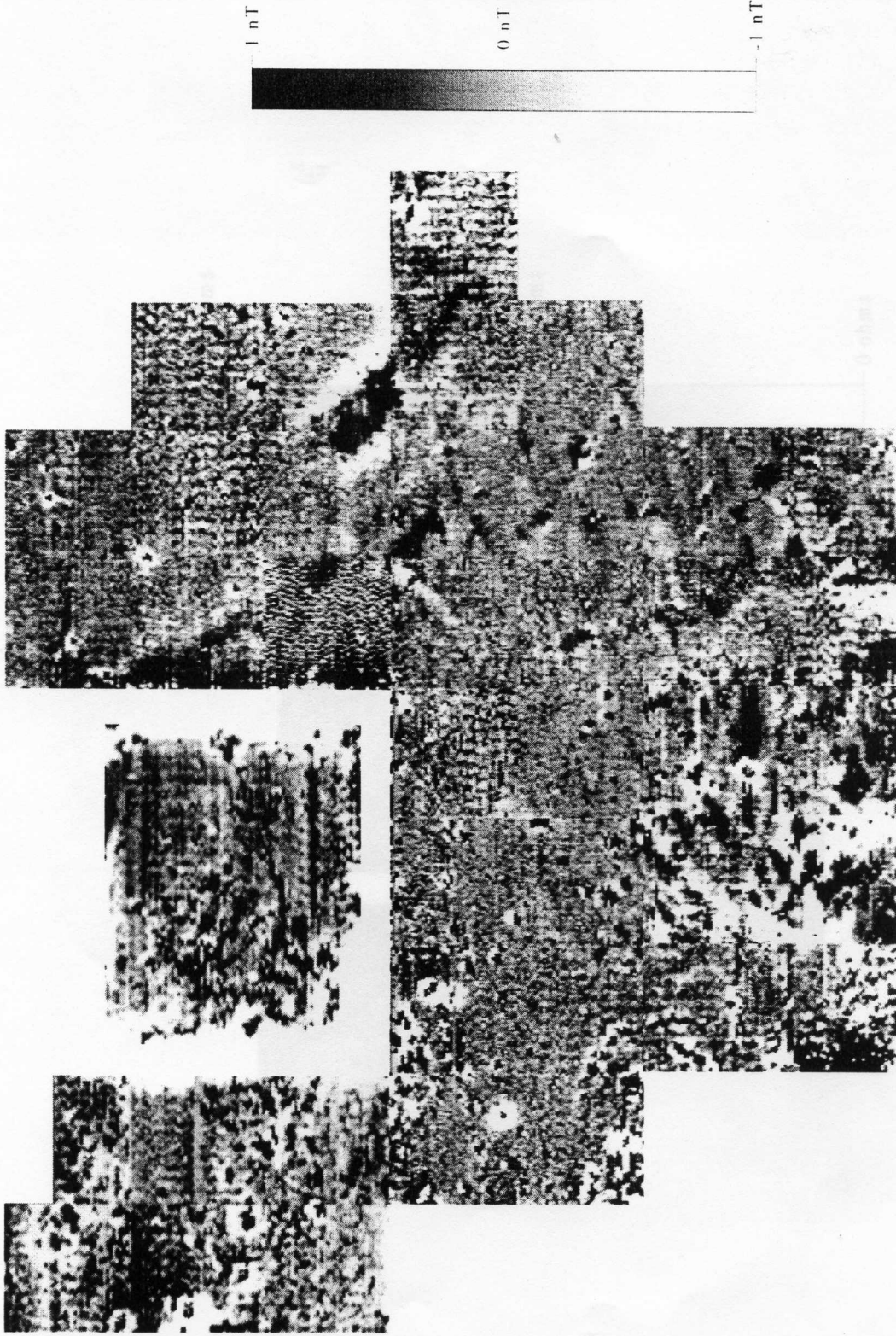


HILTON OF CADBOLL CONTOUR MAP
(0.5m intervals)

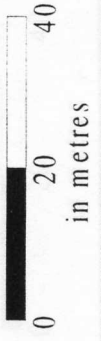
SCALE: 1:2500



FIGURE 4

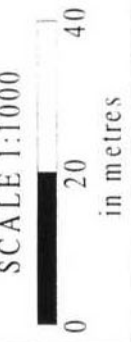
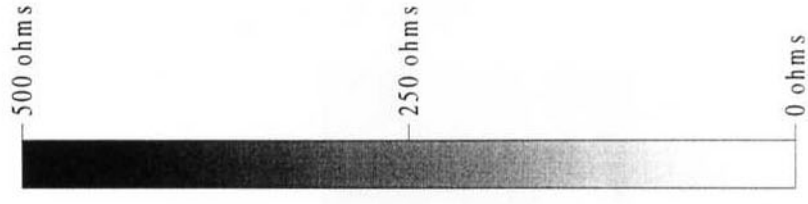
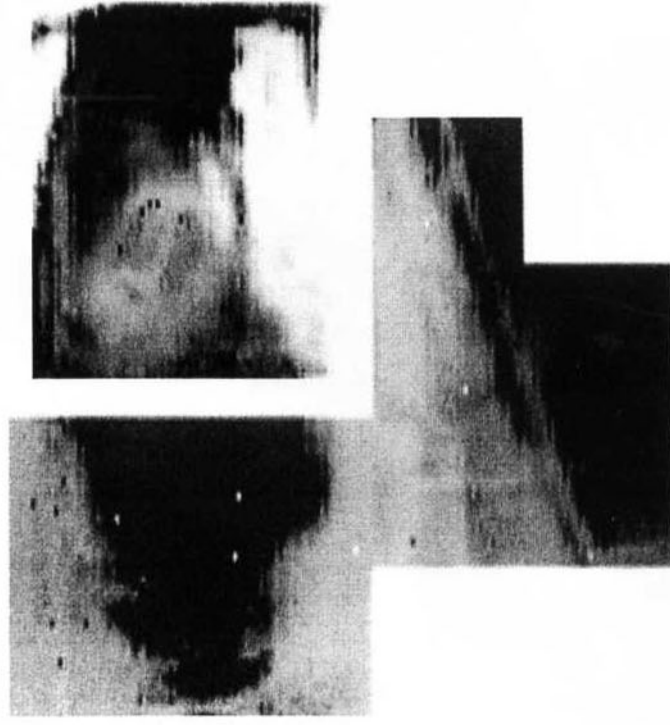


SCALE 1:1000



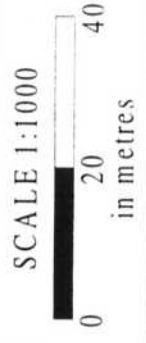
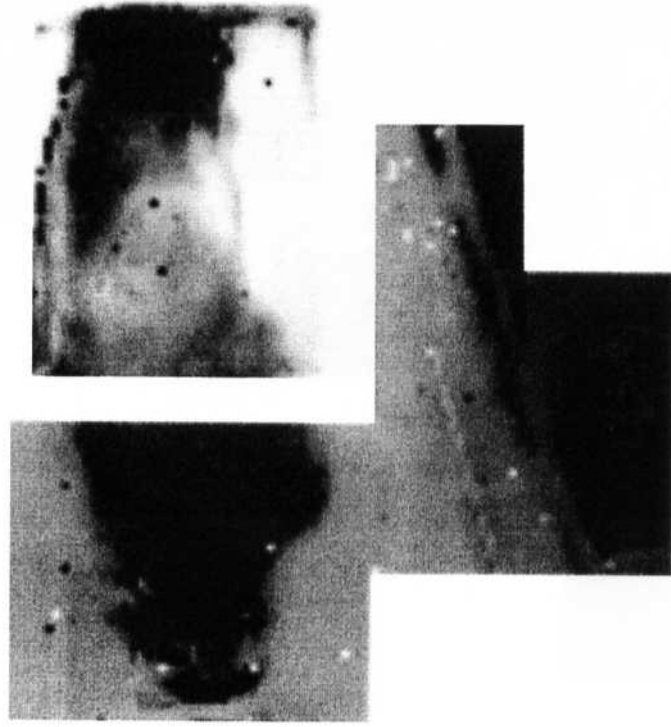
HILTON OF CADBOLL
 MAGNETOMETER SURVEY

FIGURE 5



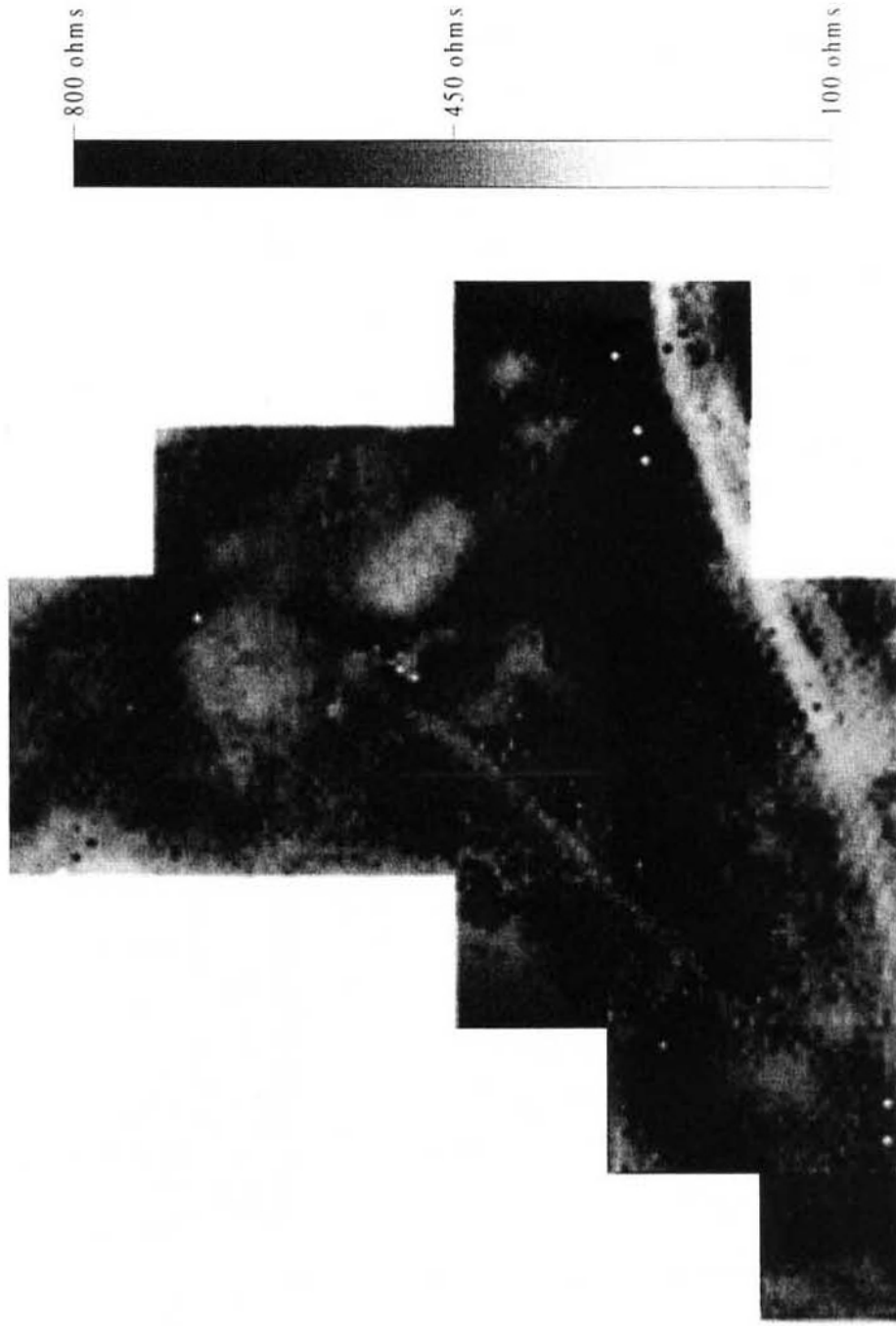
HILTON OF CADBOLL
SOIL RESISTANCE SURVEY (AREAS 1 AND 2) AT 0.5m PROBE SPACING (GAIN x 10)

FIGURE 6



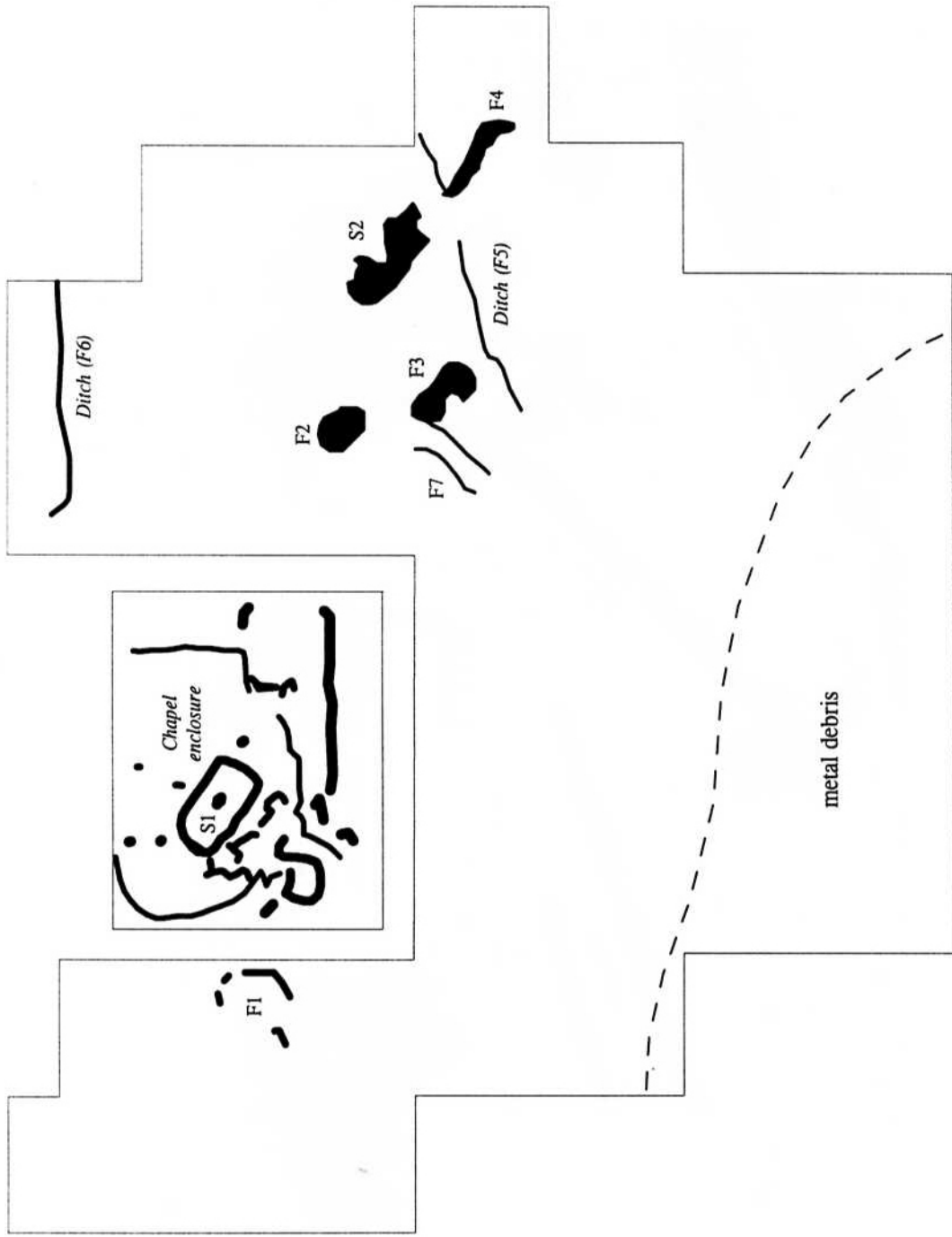
HILTON OF CADBOLL
 SOIL RESISTANCE SURVEY (AREAS 1 AND 2) AT 1m PROBE SPACING (GAIN x 10)

FIGURE 8



HILTON OF CADBOLL
SOIL RESISTANCE SURVEY (AREA 3) AT 1m PROBE SPACING (GAIN x 1)

FIGURE 9

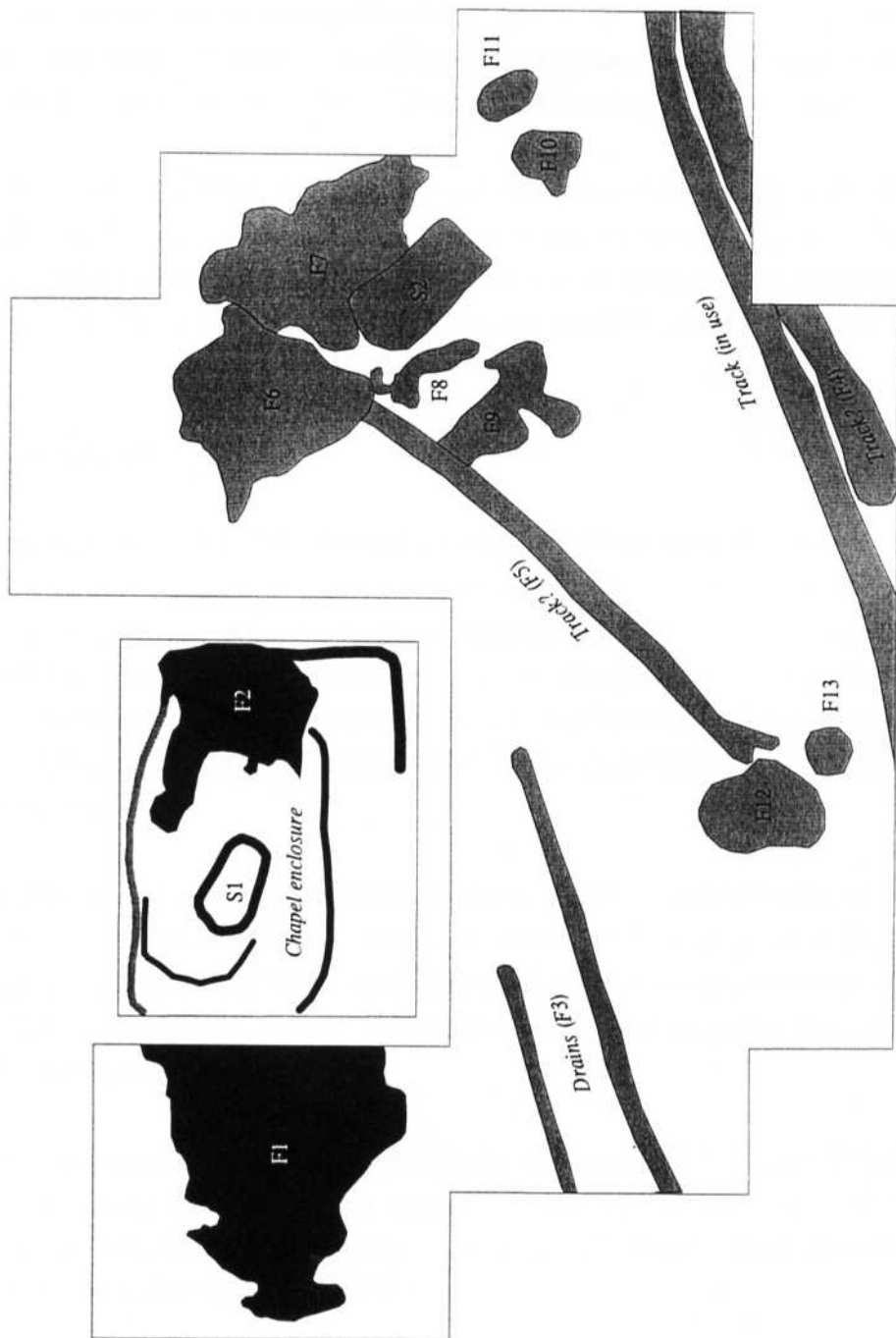


HILTON OF CADBOLL
MAGNETOMETER SURVEY INTERPRETATION PLAN



SCALE 1:1000

FIGURE 10



HILTON OF CADBOLL
 SOIL RESISTANCE SURVEY INTERPRETATION PLAN



SCALE 1:1000

FIGURE 11

signature making the interpretation of linear anomalies more problematic than would normally be the case.

To the east of, and running parallel to, the present track lies a similar anomaly (F4). This feature would appear to be an earlier alignment of the current track, although the possibility that it may reflect the presence of a broad ditch or truncated bank cannot be ignored. The north-south orientated linear feature to the east of the chapel enclosure may also be interpreted as a track (F5). The northern end of this feature runs between two small, similarly orientated linear anomalies defined by the gradiometer survey (F7). F5 may well be a track with a narrow gully on either side.

A group of large low resistance anomalies situated at the northern end of F5 (F6-11) coincide with a concentration of features defined by the magnetometry survey (Fig.12). At the centre of this group a large sub-rectangular anomaly (S2) appears to confirm the interpretation of S2 from Int.2 as a building. Two large irregular anomalies are situated at the southern end of F5 (F12-13).

4.0 ASSESSMENT

Although the nature of the site presented serious difficulties with the effective application of geophysical techniques, the survey programme was successful as it identified previously unknown areas of potentially significant archaeological activity. The results of the geophysical surveys also indicate that the site of chapel enclosure is more complex than suggested by the surviving earthwork features and seem to suggest that the site was in use for a long period, being altered and adapted through time rather than being a single phase development which fell into disuse within a relatively short period.

Both the magnetometer and soil resistance surveys identified a concentration of anomalies to the east of the chapel enclosure situated on an area of relatively high ground (Fig.12). At the centre of this group lies S2 a possible building of similar size and orientation as the so-called chapel (S1). Around S2 both geophysical surveys identified several large irregular anomalies many of which appear to be archaeological in character.

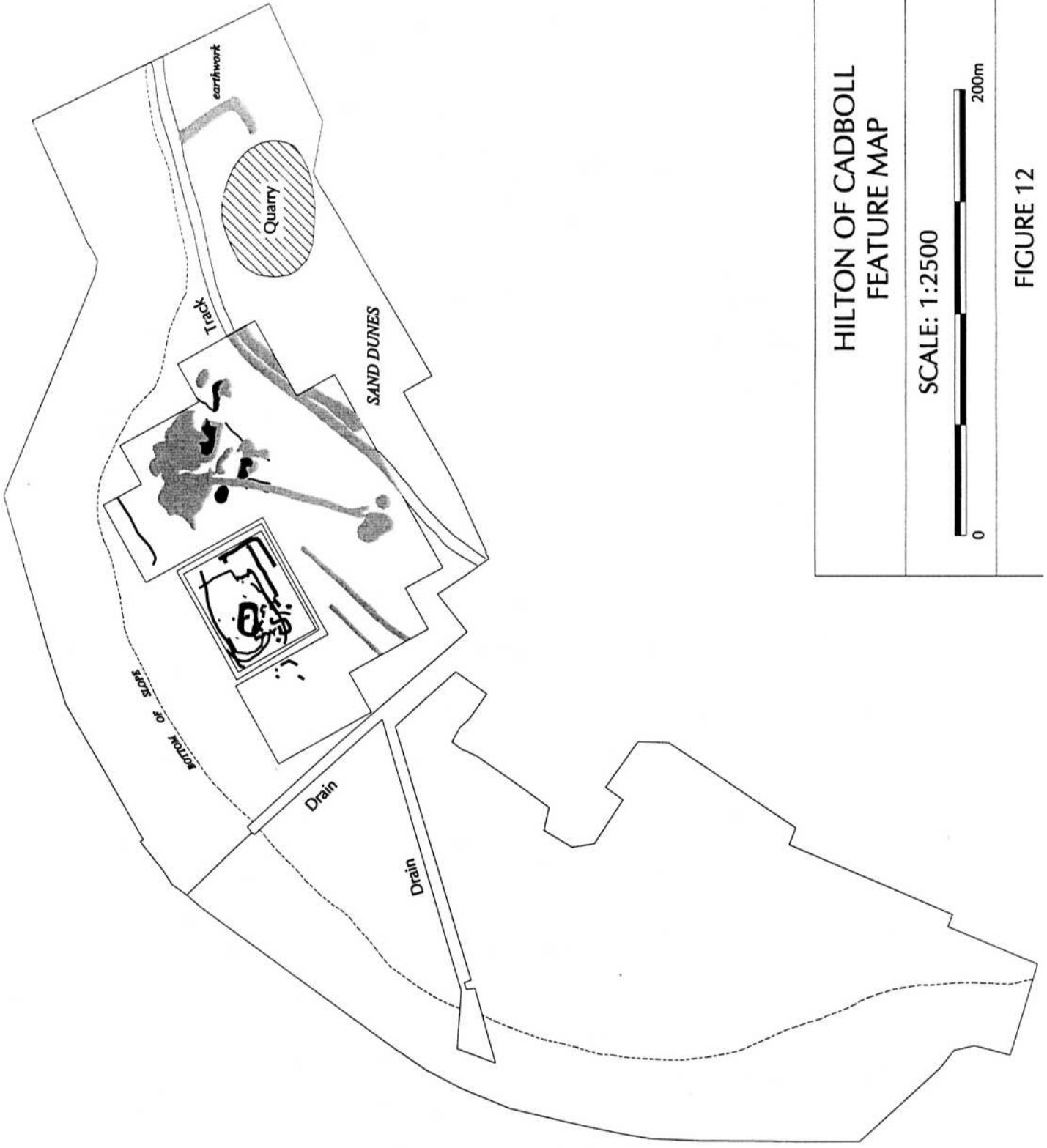
A linear anomaly identified by the soil resistance survey (F5, Int.3) runs SSW from this group of anomalies terminating before the area of sand dunes next to the firth. At this point the soil resistance survey located two further large anomalies. F5 would seem to be a track, possibly with a gully running on either side of it (F7, Int.2).

Although it cannot be assumed that these possible archaeological features are contemporary, the group of anomalies centred on S2 may well represent the remains of a building(s) sited on high ground at the base of the steep slope connected by a track to some kind of activity nearer the shore of the firth. Given that S2 shares the same proportions and orientation as S1, S2 may be the predecessor of the chapel or an associated building in phase with S1. It would also appear to be

likely that the complex of archaeological remains around S1 continue to the west of the fenced area and probably to the north, although this could not be tested due to extremely poor ground conditions.

The 'L' shaped earthwork at the eastern end of the site may well be associated with the above activity as an attempt to define or control access to the site.

The results of the geophysical surveys do not suggest any likely original locations for the Hilton of Cadboll carved stone.



HILTON OF CADBOLL
FEATURE MAP

SCALE: 1:2500



FIGURE 12

APPENDIX A

SCHEDULED MONUMENT CONSENT

HISTORIC SCOTLAND

Tel: 0131 668 8770

Fax: 0131 668 8765



Professor Martin Carver
Department of Archaeology
University of York
King's Manor
YORK
YO1 2EP

Our Ref:- AMH/90320/1/1

20 August 1997

Dear Sir

ANCIENT MONUMENTS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREAS ACT 1979
APPLICATION FOR SCHEDULED MONUMENT CONSENT: HILTON OF
CADBOLL, CHAPEL 500m NNW OF

I refer to your application for scheduled monument consent to undertake a geophysical survey at the above scheduled ancient monument.

You indicated that a hearing is not requested before the Secretary of State determines whether or not to grant scheduled monument consent.

The Secretary of State is satisfied that the works summarised above can be carried out without detriment to the historic, archaeological or architectural integrity of the monument. **Accordingly, he hereby grants scheduled monument consent** for the works outlined in the application dated 11 August subject to the following conditions:

1. Historic Scotland should be informed of exact dates on which the work is to take place.
2. The insertion of probes as part of the remote mapping survey is the only ground disturbance which is permitted.



3. Within 3 months of end of fieldwork a preliminary report should be submitted to Historic Scotland and the Highland Council Archaeology Service and a report suitable for inclusion in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* should be sent to the Council for Scottish Archaeology.

Yours faithfully

Pamela Wood

MRS P WOOD

cc: Mr Andrew Taylor, Glenmorangie Distillery
Lucy Vaughan, Fort George
Justin Garner-Lahire, University of York
Monument Warden
Mr J Wood, LA Archaeologist
Mr N Bridgland, Historic Scotland
Dr R Hingley, Historic Scotland

Annexe D Catalogue of human burials discovered in the vicinity of the seaboard villages (Shandwick, Balintore, Hilton of Cadboll) by Graham Robins

SEABOARD VILLAGES

1996

HUMAN REMAINS ASSESSMENT

PART I

CATALOGUE OF BURIALS

INCLUDING DISTRIBUTION MAPS

Part I:

Catalogue of burials

1) Shandwick	2-3
2) Balintore	4-8
3) Hilton of Cadboll	9
4) Local Tradition	10
5) Discussion	11-22

Distribution Maps

Map 1: Shandwick

Map 2: Balintore

Map 3: Hilton of Cadboll

Part II:

Figure 1: The study area and its physical environs

The physical environment	1-2
The History of the Seaboard	2-8
The Burials in the context of the Villages	8-12
Conclusion	13-15

Bibliography

Appendix I: Questionnaire

Appendix II: Specification

Appendix III: A statement on the Treatment of Human Physical Remains

**The Seaboard Villages, Easter-Ross
HUMAN REMAINS ASSESSMENT
1996**

Part I

CATALOGUE of BURIALS

- 1) Shandwick
- 2) Balintore
- 3) Hilton of Cadboll
- 4) Local traditions
- 5) Discussion

Example:

BL2 - Code for this report **NH87NE 5** - NMRS number

National Grid Reference **NH 8619 7552**

Discovered when? **Local informant** - ie: uncorroborated (When Recorded?)

Other - specified, eg: watching brief (**Report** date)

Description

Contextual information

1) Shandwick

SH1 - NH87SE 5

NGR NH 8558 7465

Discovered about 1945 - Local informant (Recorded 1972)

Short Cist containing a single crouched inhumation, left *in situ*.

Found during service trench excavation. The informant believes there to be at least 4 or 5 more cists in the immediate vicinity, evidenced by large horizontal slabs, which were avoided.

SH2 - NH87SE 5

NGR NH 8555 7465

Discovered about 1954 - Local informant (Recorded 1961)

"Stone coffin" containing "a skull and other human bones", left *in situ*.

Location is in close proximity to SH1.

SH3 - see "Local traditions" below

SH4 - NH87SE 1

NGR NH 8582 7453

Discovered 1939 - 1945 & early 1970s - Local informant (Recorded 1961 & 1972)

Human bones in graves; several skeletons; a single skull; believed to be a burial ground associated with Old Shandwick Chapel (15th century).

(SH4 continued)

The area of burials is located on the edge of a quarry. Bones exposed during 1939-45 were thrown away. Excavation of silage pit exposed several skeletons that were reburied, as was a single skull. Site visited by the author in November 1996. Single bone exposed in the rapidly eroding, vertical section above the quarry face. Two upright stones, unmarked, may be grave-markers.

2) Balintore

BL1 - NH87NE 5

NGR NH 8617 7549

Discovered 1937 - Local informant (Recorded 1972)

Inhumation, possibly in cist - destroyed.

Discovered on the SW side of the *Bruchal Mhor*, while excavating foundations for No.8, Ross Crescent.

BL2 - NH87NE 5

NGR NH 8619 7552

Discovered 1935 - Local informant (Recorded 1972)

Two cists containing crouched inhumations - destroyed.

Discovered on NE side of *Bruchal Mhor*.

BL3 - NH87NE 5

NGR NH ???? ???? ?

Discovered 1937 - Local informant (Recorded 1945; Davidson 26)

Inhumation "surrounded by stone slabs"; "flints or sharp stones were found in association with it". 2 skulls were also found at this location - destroyed.

Finds associated with the levelling of the *Bruchal Mhor* for house foundations at the north-east end of Ross Crescent. Site visited and findings corroborated by Dr J. J. Galbraith, then Medical Officer of Health for Ross & Cromarty District.

BL7 - NH87NE 8

NGR NH 8639 7570

Discovered 1932 - Local informant (Recorded 1972)

Short cist containing crouched inhumation - damaged, left *in situ*.

Found during well-digging at the back of Johnstone's the Butchers, toward the north-east end of Balintore village.

BL8 - NH87NE 10

NGR NH 8626 7563

Discovered c.1950 - Local informant (Recorded 1972)

Short cist containing bones - not known whether remains left *in situ*.

Found during mechanical excavation of a sewer at the south-east end of Rover's Crescent, where it joins Bank Street.

BL9 - NH87NE 11

NGR NH 8630 7568

Discovered 1919 - Local informant (Recorded 1972)

Human bones - destroyed.

Found during extension works at the rear of No. 4 Bank Street. A large slab is reported to have been found in the vicinity.

BL10 - NH87NE 13

NGR NH 8617 7578

Discovered 1976 - Rescue excavation and recording, 1976

Short cist containing single adult and single child inhumations.

Located at the rear (north) of No. 30, Abbotshaven. Bones and unpublished report (including bone report) in Inverness Museum.

BL11 - NH87NE 14

NGR NH 8658 7575 (Note: Excavation report gives NH 8670 7587)

Discovered 1982 - Rescue excavation and recording, 1982

Two extended inhumations, laid out SW(head) / NE and covered by a number of stone slabs. Single skull found in same area during earlier watching brief.

Finds made during mechanical excavation of a sewer, under the road on the opposite side from No. 3/3a East Street. Bones and unpublished report (including bone report) in Inverness Museum.

BL12 - Not in NMRS or Highland SMR

NGR NH 7567 8629

Discovered 1995 - Monitored, Highland Council Archaeologist, 1995

Single extended inhumation, oriented W(head) / E.

Found during service trenching at rear of No.5, Bank Street. Unpublished report and bones at Highland Council Archaeology Service.

BL13 - Not in NMRS or Highland SMR

NGR NH 7566 8628

Discovered 1995 - Monitored, Highland Council Archaeologist, 1995

Feet of an inhumation discovered, assumed orientation W(head) / E.

Found during service trenching at rear of No.5, Bank Street, approximately 10 metres SW of BL12. Unpublished report and bones at Highland Council Archaeology Service.

BL14 - Not in NMRS or Highland SMR

NGR NH 8630 7568 (By association with BL9)

Discovered c.1972 - Local informant (Recorded 1996)

Bones discovered.

Bones found during mechanical excavation for extension works at the rear of No. 4 Bank Street. Human bones, including two skull fragments, deposited with Inverness Museum, December 1996.

BL15 - Not in NMRS or Highland SMR

Discovered early 1970s - Local informant (Recorded 1976)

Single skull

Unprovenanced - A report of a skull being brought into the local primary school in the period 1973 - 1975 by a young girl from the Abbotshaven estate, Balintore. The informant has no recollection of the girl's name or the precise find spot.

3) Hilton of Cadboll

HL1 - Not in NMRS or Highland SMR**NGR NH 8729 7687**

Discovered 1995 - Local informant (Recorded 1995)

Human bones

Human bones, including a jaw bone, have been found in rabbit scrapes at the eastern end of the outer enclosure of the chapel at Hilton of Cadboll (Dr. R. Hanley, Inverness Museum, Pers. Comm.), supporting the local tradition of burials at this site. (OS Name Book). The bones are at Inverness Museum. It is possible that the distribution of burials around the Hilton of Cadboll chapel is more extensive than the original enclosure, or the area contained within modern fencing. Any development in the locality of this site should be archaeologically supervised.

HL2 - see below

4) **Local tradition** has it that two more localities are associated with burials.

SH3 - NH87SE 3

NGR NH 8556 7473

Burial Ground at Shandwick Stone.

Class II Pictish Cross-slab known in gaelic as *Clach a' Charridh* - "Stone of the Burials", where, "all unbaptized infants of the parish were buried up till fairly recent times." (Watson 56-57)

The first statistical account records that, in the vicinity of the stone "in digging the ground human bones and skeletons have often been found." (Sinclair 594) An article in the Tain museum archive refers to the last unbaptized infant burial at the end of the 19th century. Local tradition has it that the site was also used for the burial of suicides and was used during the cholera epidemic of 1832, rather than carry infected corpses through the parish to the graveyard at Nigg, some 4 miles away. Archaeological excavations conducted in 1988, when the stone was temporarily removed, opened an area 8 metres by 8 metres centred on the stone. No evidence of burials was found. (Gourlay, R Highland SMR)

HL2 - Not in NMRS or Highland SMR

NGR NH 877 772

Burial ground for unbaptized children near the Lady's Well, located 500 metres NE of Hilton. (Watson 44). There is also a local tradition that this is the site of the 1832 cholera burials for Hilton.

5) Discussion:

Relating to the incidence of human skeletal material within the study area, the nature of the finds, their recording, and the interpretations that can be drawn from the varying qualities of information that have been recorded.

From the study area there are accounts of 31 discrete finds of human skeletal material (2 from Shandwick, 29 from Balintore and 0 from Hilton) - this figure includes finds of single skulls, which imply an individual, either destroyed by earlier disturbance, or still existing mostly intact. Of these 31 discrete finds only 6 have been recorded in the field by archaeological investigation (varying from rescue excavation to observation of bone removal), all within the last 20 years and all in Balintore. 2 are associated with a single short cist, 2 are extended inhumations covered with slabs, and 2 are extended skeletons with no observed constructional associations. None of these excavations have recovered dateable artefacts associated with the burials, and no attempts have been made to secure dates by C14 analysis.

To discount the remaining 25 finds would be a misjudgement of the available information. However, the degree of archaeological significance that can be attached to any of these finds is limited; none were recorded at the time of discovery, noting details such as constructional associations (eg: short cist, covering of stone slabs), orientation of the burial, or presence of grave goods. It is also possible that some of these accounts have been replicated. Inaccuracies in the recording of some of the archaeologically excavated examples are significant, and little confidence can be given to those finds only recorded twenty to sixty years after initial discovery, having never been investigated or recorded with the intention of defining diagnostic features. With the present level of knowledge relating to these finds any attempt to fit them into specific typologies, with the purpose of extrapolating approximate dates and making sense of possible distribution patterns, is invalid. Comparison with archaeologically recorded finds of human skeletal material from the Seaboard Villages is limited from

both sides. Firstly, there is a lack of diagnostic evidence from those discoveries that were not recorded archaeologically, preventing confident descriptions. Secondly, there is a lack of information relating to typology and dating from the proportionately small number of finds that, supposedly, have been archaeologically recorded.

Within this report, the assumption has been made that bones and associated constructs from recorded finds, unless otherwise stated, have been destroyed. One possibility is that discovered bones (that have decades later been recorded into the NMRS) were reburied and that these bones could be rediscovered and reported as another discrete burial. This is possible for finds BL9 and BL14, both found at the rear of No. 4 Bank Street, Balintore, but there is no chance to verify this.

The reburial of bones without them being first reported is another possibility. It would appear that, rather than the intention of the finder being to pervert the course of justice (or archaeological research), the reasoning is that the finder considers that he has no business disturbing these bones, but having done so will rebury them with a minimum of fuss. This was the case when the bones of BL14 were disturbed in the early 1970s. The machine driver reburied them, but they were dug up again by the lady who, until recently, had them stored in her garden shed. The thought of contacting the police, or any other authority, was not entertained. The tradition is that any bones disturbed during grave-digging are simply reburied, so why not bones disturbed during building works?

It would be a natural reaction for contractors to be suspicious of anyone asking questions that, should the questioned party have any relevant information, would imply a degree of dishonesty on their part. Such suspicions are heightened by questions being asked by people from outside the villages, and by any link that these questions might have with Council or Planning or Building Regulations. It is rumoured in the villages that certain contractors have a policy of destroying any bones found, so clearly there are

concerns as to the repercussions of finding human remains. Whether these concerns reflect the true situation or not hardly matters. The important issue is the attitude of the finder toward burial evidence and what action is taken upon discovery of such evidence. In 1982 the machine driver reported the bones of BL11, and in 1995 it was the contractor who alerted the police to the bones of BL12 & BL13. How many discoveries have gone unreported is not known, if in fact any have gone unreported.

The people most likely to know the relevant information are those least likely to reveal it, for the same reason that they did not reveal it in the first place: a fear that such finds will prove detrimental to their livelihood. This is a classic Catch 22 situation that will require a clear statement of intent from the relevant authorities, meeting the needs of the contractor and the needs of archaeology, before it can be satisfactorily resolved.

All of the information relating to the 25 burials that have not been archaeologically recorded derives from local inhabitants and must be considered in the light of certain considerations.

Firstly the informants are not trained to identify human bones or burial types, and the majority of reports have not been corroborated by a second party. Broken slabs of red sandstone occur naturally all along the raised beach. If encountered in a narrow trench, as is most often the case with service or foundation works, such naturally occurring slabs might lead to false identification of burial slabs or cists. Pigs were kept in the villages, and though most were sold in the market of Fearn, some were slaughtered in the villages. It is possible that their bones are sometimes mistakenly identified as human.

Secondly, the history of the villages has been recorded (Gordon(c), 1995) and the majority of Seaboard inhabitants, young and old, are familiar with this book. It is now difficult to separate personal memories from those derived from this source. This

consideration must be further applied to all documentary sources. Information regarding traditions of burials recorded in the Statistical Accounts will be replicated by following accounts, such as *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*, Watson, and other historians referring to any of these sources. The origin of the statement is often unrecorded and unless corroborated by securely recorded evidence then it cannot be treated with any degree of confidence. Perpetuation of local traditions by repetition gives them wide acceptance but does not increase their validity.

Thirdly, there may be a tendency to exaggerate the number of burials remembered, based on perhaps one actual find with the tradition of other burials tacked on. The nature of the answer depends on the character of the individual being questioned leading on the one hand to exaggerated claims of "local" knowledge, and on the other hand to a modesty that denies all possibility of knowing anything significant.

With the above points in mind three approaches were adopted to facilitate the most open replies:

- 1) A questionnaire was handed out at the local primary school, with the request that the children help by asking parents and grandparents about archaeological finds within the Seaboard villages. Bones and burials were mentioned along with other items of interest. 120 forms were given out. (See Appendix I) Four visits were made to the school to remind the children of the project and to collect any completed forms. A small number of completed forms were returned, though no mention was made of bones or burials. Later visits around the villages proved that the majority of people were aware of the questionnaire.
- 2) Villagers were approached directly. In all but two cases these visits produced vague information that related to the 1976, 1982 and 1995 excavations, and occasionally the earlier discoveries, BL7 & BL8. One visit to a lady, believed to be in her

nineties, produced information relating to a burial discovered at 4 Bank Street. She claims that two burials were found, not just the one that is in the NMRS (BL9). She produced a small quantity of recognisably human bone, which is now in Inverness Museum (BL14). A man remembers, when at the local primary school in the mid-1970s, a girl bringing in a skull (BL15) found during the building of the Abbotshaven council estate. He could not remember the girl's name or the precise find spot.

3) Local building contractors and plumbers were approached, including those now retired. The general reaction was to deny all knowledge of bones or burials. When asked about the 1995 burials they all admitted knowledge of it, but somehow hadn't associated it with the question. The majority also remembered the 1982 excavation and the 1976 excavation. It is impossible to gauge whether information on unreported burials is being with-held, or that there aren't any unreported burials to report. Only one local builder offered to provide information on many such unreported burials. However, he was not able to demonstrate knowledge of any that have not already been reported and recorded in the NMRS. It was this builder who informed the police, at the occasion of the 1995 discoveries, BL12 & BL13, that many burials turned up in the villages but that they are never reported. The policeman who made the report was of the opinion that little credence should be given such information, and the builder in question was described as "the Arthur Daly of the Seaboard". It is likely that burials being found every ten years or so, over the past fifty years, coupled with a general folklore of many burials being found in the distant past, has fueled the notion that burials are discovered wherever one looks.

Where reports of burials have been confirmed by a second party, such as those visited by Dr. J. J. Galbraith, the Medical Officer of Health for Ross & Cromarty District in the 1930s, then it is more reasonable to assume that human bones were discovered.

However, in interpreting these finds within a context of burial typologies one is still faced with the problem as to whether a "stone coffin with human bones" is a short cist containing a crouched inhumation, a long cist containing an extended inhumation, or an extended inhumation beneath stone slabs; a specific period and cultural tradition cannot be fixed. Any reference within the NMRS to "short cist" is unlikely to be the original description used by the finder to describe the find, but is more likely to be the interpretation of the Ordnance Survey officer or other recorder. There is a difference in terminology between the archaeological record and the descriptions of local people, and a possibility that the interface between these two terminologies can produce inaccuracies. In the villages it is common to refer to Hilton as being east of Balintore, which is in turn east of Shandwick. Looking at a map it is clear that the villages are oriented on a north-easterly line. Similarly, the crouched inhumation discovered in 1976 is described by local people as "sitting up".

Shandwick

The two reported cist burials at Shandwick, **SH1** & **SH2**, probably refer to the same find. **SH2** was found in association with a service trench to the nearby house "The Bungalow", which wouldn't exist for another 9 years, at which time **SH1** was discovered in a service trench. Nearby at Easter Rarichie farm (outside the study area), a short cist beneath a large sandstone slab (approximately 1.5 metres by 1 metre by 0.3 metres) was revealed by ploughing in the early 1990s. Excavation revealed no bone evidence or associated artefacts. A field located 300 metres away is recorded by Watson as *raon a' chlaindh* = "the graveyard field". He states:

"The plough...formerly used to strike the gravestones, but these are now removed."

(Watson 57)

Even if credibility is given to this account it cannot be clearly stated whether these "gravestones" represent the cover slabs of cists or another form of burial tradition. And though called "gravestones" it is not clear whether any firm relationship with human bones was established. Elsewhere, Watson is careful to record the occurrence of

human bones, whether associated with chapel sites, standing stones or cists. It must be remembered that slabs of Old Red Sandstone occur naturally within the soils of this area.

Burials associated with the Shandwick Stone, **SH3**, are in keeping with the local tradition that "consecrates" the ground around any standing monument, even around the mouths of caves where hermits are believed to have lived. The minister of Nigg Parish records the finding of bones around the Shandwick Stone (Sinclair 594), and Hugh Miller records that the site was used during the cholera outbreak of 1832, but that the ground was ploughed over in 1885. A miscellaneous account from Tain Museum archive, and the reference in Watson to infant burials (Watson 56-57) provide further evidence for such a use of this area toward the end of the nineteenth century. However, archaeological excavation in the 1980s around the stone revealed no evidence of burials. This appears to be an example of a single reference or tradition being quoted by a number of different sources, disseminating and thus appearing to gain credibility. The assumption can be made that, if the area around the stone was used as a burial ground for infants, albeit unbaptized, the ground would not be ploughed up by the farmer while the parents of such cases still lived in the village, as implied by Watson.

The burials at the site of Old Shandwick Chapel, **SH4**, must be supposed to be Christian burials associated with the chapel (Dated c.1460 in the NMRS). Recorded disturbance of burials implies that a significant area has already been destroyed. Human bone was visible in the cliff-line in November 1996, but the site is rapidly eroding into the disused quarry.

Balintore

Finds **BL1**, **BL2**, **BL3**, **BL4** & **BL5** are associated with two landscape features of the village, prominent in local folklore as sites of burials and hauntings, still remembered

today. Both features were destroyed around 1937 - 1939. The *Bruchal Mhor* was a sand hill and, according to those alive today who remember it, was also known as the "Ghost's Hillock", though it appears that the NMRS treats this information as referring to two discrete mounds. The *Slochd Geal*, the "White Pit" is located by the NMRS report toward the southern end of Ross Crescent, information which is itself questionable (see BL4 in the Catalogue of Burials). However, locals today remember the spot as being further north-east under what is now the sheltered housing of Harbour View, close to the location given by Gordon for the mass grave of the Balintore cholera victims of 1832 (Gordon 1988). It could be that the "White Pit" and the cholera pit, the corpses being covered with white quicklime, are one and the same thing, though this assumption still would not clarify whether the cholera pit is marked at the wrong spot by Gordon, or the NMRS report has the *Slochd Geal* in the wrong position. Only one of the burials (BL4) is associated with the *Slochd Geal*, the burial being found on its southern edge. The bottom of the *Slochd Geal* was never dug out, and by all accounts, wherever it was located, the pit was filled in. The problem is one of vague recollections, being recorded decades after the event, from people whose local landmarks have been significantly altered in the last 60 years. It is also one of inaccurate recording by O.S. and Royal Commission inspectors.

Mr. A. MacAngus of 2 Ross Crescent was employed by Morrisons Construction on the construction of the sheltered housing at Harbour View, the approximate location given by Gordon of the Cholera Pit. He said that they levelled a number of sand dunes but found no bones, though he also stated that the majority of new houses are built with "floating" or "raft" foundations that do not require a great depth of excavation. He said that slabs are often found when building in the villages, but that these are naturally occurring, broken slabs from the cliffs, and that he has never found them associated with bones or in a cist-like construction. He mentioned that bones are often found about the village but that these are pig and horse bones, as the proprietor of the Post Office used to bury his horses in the sand dunes in the early part of this century,

and the majority of households kept pigs. It is therefore possible, where a report mentions "bones" being found, such as beneath the church hall (BL6), that these bones are not human.

The report of the finding of 13 extended skeletons (BL5) during the levelling of the *Bruchal Mhor* in 1937, and their excavation by Aberdeen University, cannot be traced in the archives of the Department of Anatomy at Aberdeen University (which has recently been catalogued), or at the Marischal Museum, Aberdeen, the curator of which was traditionally the Head of Anatomy. The present curator of the museum, Neil Curtis, is of the opinion that few records were made of such early excavations, and if bones were recovered then they may well have ended up as part of Anatomy's teaching collection (Neil Curtis, Pers. Comm. 1996). The site was visited by the Medical Officer of Health for Ross & Cromarty District, a Dr. J.J. Galbraith. This visit is not mentioned in his annual report to the Council, nor is it mentioned in the minutes of the Housing Committee. (Reports for the years 1936, 1937 & 1938 were checked.) Dr. Galbraith's visit is recorded by Davidson in his paper in PSAS 80 (1945-47).

Under the heading "Cemetery at Balintore" Davidson writes:

"Two skulls and a complete skeleton were the first relics to be found in the sand. The skeleton was surrounded by stone slabs...More recently burials have been found in some of the back gardens nearby. These were in short cists."

He then states:

"Dr. Galbraith...who examined some of the human remains, was of the opinion that the cemetery was a very large one. He did not see any of the later cists, but he thought they were similar to those previously found."

Davidson also states that the name of the locality "Ghost's Hillock":

"stimulated the concealment of the discoveries due to fears that the linking of the association of ghosts and burials would affect detrimentally the letting of the houses. Publicity was accordingly discouraged: the foundation work was carried on

without the interruption of investigators, and no attempt was apparently made to place on record the nature or the circumstances of the finds."

(Davidson 26)

This account is remarkable for two reasons. Firstly that the authorities could condone the destruction of such a site without any attempt to record it, and secondly that it completely disagrees with the account given by a local inhabitant to the O.S. in 1972, that thirteen burials were found and excavated by Aberdeen University representatives. The most optimistic interpretation is that Galbraith saw the original inhumations associated with the cist, and was not informed that more burials were found, they were excavated by Aberdeen University, but that Galbraith, and subsequently Davidson, were unaware of this having taken place. It is worth mentioning that none of the local people who were alive in their teens or early twenties in 1937 remember anything like this happening. It can be assumed that such activity would be common knowledge throughout the village. Whatever the history, no record exists of this discovery; if it was there then all evidence is destroyed. This information is therefore unsuited to archaeological interpretation, and it has little bearing on decisions concerning future development.

The reported crouched inhumation, BL7, is remembered by some locals today, who state that the skeleton was "sitting up". This is a clear example of the description of a find being couched in a terminology that then requires a further stage of interpretation by archaeological investigators, and is a possible source of confusion.

Another example of confused reports concerns the short cist burial found in 1976, BL10, at the rear of the new housing estate, Abbotshaven. Some local people remember "bones" being found at Abbotshaven, others remember "burials" being found at Abbotshaven. When questioned more closely those who remember burials being found can only specifically refer to the one. However, two reports do suggest that more than one burial was found at the time of the construction, One is the report

of the skull being brought into the school, BL15, the other is a report from a lady living in Rover's Crescent, overlooking the Abbotshaven development, who claims to remember more than one occasion when bones were discovered during building works. The main contractor for that work, Hall and Tawse, claim that they are no longer in contact with any of the people directly employed at Balintore, as the company has undergone significant changes since that period.

The grouping of reported discoveries of bones at the rear of No.s 4 & 5 Bank Street (BL9, BL12, BL13 & BL14) is the most significant in the study area. Two of the burials have been corroborated archaeologically, though not excavated under controlled conditions. These were extended inhumations that lacked any apparent constructional associations, such as the covering of slabs seen in BL11. Dependant on the nature of their excavation and subsequent storage it may be feasible to conduct C14 analysis on this material, and on the bone material from BL11. This would allow a qualifying statement to be made as to the period of these burials, and further significant statements of relationship dependent on clear dating being established. It is the wish of the finder of the bones (BL14) that they are reinterred as close as possible to the original find spot.

The information is scant and can be shown, in cases, to be inaccurately recorded. For example, the 1982 excavation (BL11) at Balintore was grid-referenced in the unpublished report to a spot 180 metres to the north-east of the actual find spot. The earlier report of a crouched inhumation (BL4) being found during foundation digging for No.21 Ross Crescent is grid referenced to No.13 Ross Crescent, some 50 metres away. Though some inaccuracies can be corrected, where informants are dead and no physical evidence of the burial exists there is little that can be done to check for accuracy. Concerning BL4, is the grid reference correct or the house number?

A distribution pattern for which less than 20% of the data (6 of 31 discrete finds) can be treated with any degree of confidence cannot produce a result that can then be applied to all of the finds, or all of the study area.

DISTRIBUTION MAPS

Map 1: Shandwick

Map 2: Balintore

Map 3: Hilton of Cadboll

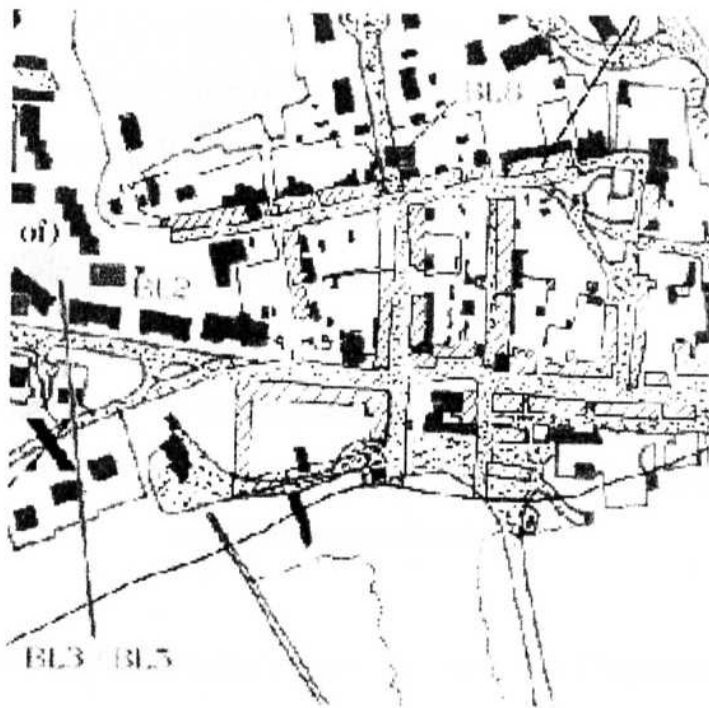
Legend:

Development post-1872 in Red (including metallised surfaces and plot boundaries)

Catalogue
Reference No.

Sandy Beach

Rock



Development to 1872 in Grey (including metallised surfaces and plot boundaries)

- | | | |
|--|---|------------------|
| Short cist containing crouched inhumation(s) - | ■ | (Uncorroborated) |
| - | ■ | (Corroborated) |
| Extended inhumation(s) - | ● | (Uncorroborated) |
| - | ● | (Corroborated) |

All maps at scale 1:3000.

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Summary

The aim of this work is to collate information pertaining to the incidence of human burials within the area of the Easter-Ross Seaboard villages, Hilton, Balintore and Shandwick (NGR NH 858 744). Its primary purpose is to define, map and explain the distribution of recorded burials within the study area, an essential prerequisite to the preservation of the archaeological resource with regard to the planning process and future development. The quality of the existing corpus, in terms of full, accurate descriptions and precise locations, is poor, and provides little opportunity for comparison with material from elsewhere. The questionable validity of some of the early reports and the inability to corroborate them further hampers any efforts to formulate a meaningful interpretation of the burial record. This situation can only be improved by accurate dating of material recovered by archaeological means. The sheer number of finds of human skeletal material is significant and indicates the potential for future discoveries in the Seaboard villages and the opportunity to increase our knowledge of burial practices from the represented periods.

As a resource the local inhabitants, and particularly the local building contractors are an invaluable link in the investigation of future discoveries. A clear statement of intent must be made by the relevant authorities to satisfy those concerned that discovery of burials will not prove detrimental to their livelihoods, for example, by unreasonably delaying or preventing development. Rumours that this is the case do exist, but it cannot be known to what extent intentional destruction of archaeological evidence, particularly burial evidence, is practised, if at all. If there is no evidence to be destroyed then there is nothing to be lost by making such a statement, and if evidence is being destroyed then there is everything to be gained.

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Table of Contents

Part I:

Catalogue of burials

1) Shandwick	2-3
2) Balintore	4-8
3) Hilton of Cadboll	9
4) Local Tradition	10
5) Discussion	11-22

Distribution Maps

Map 1: Shandwick

Map 2: Balintore

Map 3: Hilton of Cadboll

Part II:

Figure 1: The study area and its physical environs

The physical environment	1-2
The History of the Seaboard	2-8
The Burials in the context of the Villages	8-12
Conclusion	13-15

Bibliography

Appendix I: Questionnaire

Appendix II: Specification

Appendix III: A statement on the Treatment of Human Physical Remains

SEABOARD VILLAGES

1996

HUMAN REMAINS ASSESSMENT

PART II

Report

Graham Robins
North Highland Archaeology

The Seaboard Villages, Easter-Ross
HUMAN REMAINS ASSESSMENT
1996

Part II

The physical environment

The eastern coastline of Easter-Ross, from the North Sutor to Tarbat Ness, is dominated by high cliffs of Middle Old Red Sandstone, the erosion of which has formed a rocky, wave-cut platform along much of the tidal zone. Easy access to the shore, both from seaward and landward, is restricted to one 2 kilometre stretch. Here the eroded remnant of the cliffline is less formidable, only 5 - 10 metres in height, and the wave-cut platform is broken by five sandy beaches, providing the only point of easy access to 'soft' landing points on the entire coastline. Prior to the program of harbour construction in this area during the last decades of the nineteenth century these natural beaching points were the only harbours, fulfilling the needs of fishing, trade and wider communications. One would expect the wide expanse of beach in front of Shandwick to be the best beaching point, and subsequently Shandwick to be the focal point of settlement in the area. (See Fig.1) This is apparently not the case. During periods of storms, linked with Spring tides, the beach at Shandwick can become covered with boulders. A local account is of the entire beach being covered with rocks up to 2 metres in depth for a three month period, after which another storm cleared the beach. This would threaten the existence of fishermen who depended on the sea for their survival. The same process does not affect the narrow inlets that exist in front of Hilton, and in the case of Balintore, existed prior to the construction of the harbour in 1890-1896. These inlets offer a soft beaching point and protection from storm damage,

and it is these inlets that have the Gaelic "Port" names associated with them, whereas the beach at Shandwick does not.

The Seaboard villages are located on post-glacial raised beach deposits, which lie between 4 metres and 10 metres above Ordnance Datum and occupy the bays cut into the cliffline, with a maximum width of 350 metres (from the MHWS to the 10 metre contour, which marks the lower break of slope), but an average width of only 75 metres. The soil is light and sandy and freely draining, giving favourable conditions for bone preservation. The study area takes in the full extent of the villages, being bounded to the west by the modern "cliff-top" road, and to the north and south at the points where the raised beach narrows significantly. (See Fig.1)

West of the landward ridge that bounds the study area, toward the foothills of Easter-Ross, the land is low lying and was poorly drained, dotted with lochans and marsh, until the agricultural improvements of the 19th century, when the major farms were established. The coastal cliffs are the eroding front of a ridge, trending north-east / south-west, reaching a maximum height of 200 metres at Nigg Hill, south-west of the villages. North-east of the villages the ridge is significantly lower. The strip of raised beach on which the Seaboard villages are located, and the ridge to north and south, are the only areas of freely draining, cultivable soils, available to prehistoric farmers. As a source of sustenance for human populations the significance of the marine resource should not be underestimated, with salmon, other deep-sea fish and crustacea in abundance close to this coastline. It is the combination of these geographical elements, access to an agricultural resource, and in particular the marine resource that has, in recorded history, been the focal point of settlement at the Seaboard.

The History of the Seaboard

This study is concerned primarily with archaeological evidence, and will not attempt an in-depth analysis of the documentary, cartographic and onomastic evidence pertaining to the Seaboard villages, nor is it the intention of the present work to discuss the validity and applicability of such evidence. Rather, it will be used to provide a background and framework within which the archaeological evidence might be better understood.

Local tradition has it that Shandwick is the oldest of the Seaboard villages, possibly because of the Norse origin of the name. The study area is bounded by two place-names with their origins in the Norse language: Shandwick to the south (*Sand-vik* = sandy bay) (MacKenzie 152) and Cadboll to the north (*Kati-boll* = Kati's farm) (MacKenzie 205). The Norse place-names emphasise the importance of the wide bay at Shandwick to any maritime travel or trade, and the establishment of a farm on the better drained soils behind the cliffline. The 'Shandwick' referred to in early maps and documents is the 'Old Shandwick' of the castle and chapel. The development of the village in its present form is not recorded cartographically before the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The development of Hilton is relatively late, as the misfit name suggests. The Cadboll Estate maps of 1813 (Tain Museum Archive) show "Hilltown" located behind the eroded cliffline at the back of the raised beach. "Fishertown of Hilltown" is shown as a row of houses, the 'Shore Street' of present-day Hilton. Hilton saw its main period of growth during the 1840s, housing people cleared from Sutherland (Gordon(c) 88).

From documentary and cartographic evidence the settlement at Balintore (Gaelic *bail' an todhair* = "farm by the bleaching green") is the oldest of the Seaboard villages. The locality is named "Abotshavn" on the Pont manuscript of Easter-Ross (Stone), with

"Balintoire" located significantly inland, half-way to Loch Eye. The name 'Balintore' exists today only at the coastal village and a farm on the low ridge 300 metres inland of the village. It is possible that the name 'Balintore' has been superimposed on the earlier name. "Abbotshaven" appears on the title deeds of a house in John Street, Balintore (Gordon(c) 6). An even earlier name for the village was Cadboll-Abbot, which appears on the title deeds of a house in Park Street, Balintore, (Ibid 6). This ties in with a 15th century reference:

"In subsequent records (to 1478) occur the names Catboll or Cadboll, Wester Cadboll, Catboll-abbot and Catboll-fisher, Cadboll being the lands granted to the bishop of Moray, and the other three being but different designations of a Cadboll belonging to the abbot of Fearn." (Origines Parochiales Scotiae 442-43)

The presence of the bishop of Moray in this area refers to a 13th century misdeed by William Earl of Ross against two chapels in the abbacy of Moray, for which William had to pay compensation:

"In the year 1281 William Earl of Ross...granted to the bishop (of Moray) the two davachs of land in Ros which were called Kattepoll..." (Ibid 441)

From the Kalendar of Fearn comes this record:

"In 1529 Pope Clement VII confirmed to the Canons of New Ferne all their possessions, including...the free passage which they held at the small ports of Ardnacolternach..." (Ibid 437)

This place name was recognised by an elderly inhabitant of Hilton as the name used by her grandmother for the high shoreline behind Shandwick beach, spelt phonetically from the Easter-Ross Gaelic, but not recorded cartographically. Finally, the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey records the name of the inlet in front of Balintore, where the 1896 harbour is now located, as "Port Abb". The local name for the village is *Port an Abb* - "The Abbot's Port".

The evidence points to a port, linked to the abbey at Fearn (established c.1238), at or about the present location of Balintore. In geographical relation to the hinterland of

Easter-Ross, the Seaboard is ideally placed for maritime communications with the rest of the Moray Firth, and beyond. Links with the south Moray coast are evident in the written records:

"fishing they (the Canons of New Ferne) had in the place called Banaff (Banff)".

(Origines Parochiales Scotiae 437)

Nodal points in the physical and human landscape, such as bridging-points, intersections of communication routes and ports, often develop as centres for settled population. If this association between Balintore/Abbotshaven and Fearn is given credence then it points to a settlement existing at this locality in the 15th century, and by association with Fearn abbey back into the 13th century. At Old Shandwick there is a well, *Tobar Cormag*, that could be a dedication to a 'Saint Cormac' or a 'Saint Colman'. If this is the same Colman as is referred to in the dedication of St. Colman's church at Tarbat, then it is possible that ongoing archaeological excavations at the latter site will throw light on the significance of such dedications to Early Christian saints in this area.

A more concrete ecclesiastical connection is the presence of two chapels in the area of the Seaboard villages, one at Old Shandwick and one at Hilton of Cadboll. Burials have been associated with both sites and have been confirmed by field observations (Hanley, R. Pers. Comm., 1996). The date of the chapel at Old Shandwick is supposed to follow the date of the castle (c.1460 in the NMRS). A date for the Hilton of Cadboll chapel is not known, though the present chapel structure is clearly not the earliest on the site. The orientation of the outer enclosure is distinctly north-east/south-west (the perception of the villages being oriented east/west is still firmly entrenched in the local mind, though they are in fact oriented north-east/south-west). With a progression of chapel structures the orientation has shifted to a truer east/west line. This false perception of east/west could also have significance for the orientation of Christian burials within the villages. The bones excavated in 1982 (BL11) were oriented south-west/north-east.

However, there are records of six chapels on this eastern coastline, the majority of large houses having one (the chapel at Shandwick is associated with Old Shandwick Castle). Without understanding the function of these individual chapel sites little significance can be put on their being representative of a situation unique to the Seaboard villages, for example as a focus for population or burials.

The siting of two Pictish Class II sculptured standing stones, the Hilton of Cadboll Stone at the northern extreme of the villages and the Shandwick Stone at the southern extreme of the villages, infers a certain significance for this locality back into the 1st millennium A.D. (assuming that the two stones are at, or nearby, their original positions). The location of these monuments throughout the North of Scotland coincides with areas of settlement to the present day, and particularly those localities that have an attested ecclesiastical significance either as the focal point of a parish (eg: Rosemarkie, Nigg, Tarbat, Edderton, Kincardine, Reay), or as important nodal points within the ecclesiastical (incorporating political and economic) landscape, reflecting the importance of trade and communications, as at the Seaboard. At Rosemarkie, on the Black Isle, a centre of early ecclesiastical activity is linked with the discovery of Class II Pictish sculptured stones, and the same is true for St Colman's church at Portmahomack.

With the absence of archaeological evidence of early settlement at the Seaboard the discussion must rely on the tenuous evidence of onomastic and documentary sources. The above discussion, combined with the favourable geographical factors for settlement, suggests a longevity of settlement at the Seaboard, providing the two factors required for the discovery of burials. Firstly, a population to die and be buried; secondly, the development and expansion of the original settlement that facilitates the re-discovery of these burials.

The villages were distinct entities until the mid-20th century. Shandwick is situated in the parish of Nigg, with its burial ground at Nigg church, 4 miles away. Balintore and Hilton are in the parish of Fearn, though prior to 1628 they were within Tarbat parish, with its burial ground at Tarbat Old Church, 6.5 miles away. The distances required to travel to the respective parish burial grounds were significant. In 19th century Caithness people in isolated communities used ancient monuments as burial places, the assumption being that they were old, somehow sacred, and therefore consecrated. This belief is prevalent in the place-names and folk traditions of Easter-Ross. The site of the Shandwick Stone is associated with burials, as is the Lady's Well near Hilton. At Nigg there is a recorded graveyard under the cliffs at Castlecraig, "The Temple", (Watson 56), considered holy ground because hermits had lived in the caves nearby. Another, more recent reference states:

"After the restoration of Episcopacy in 1606 the Covenanters are said to have met at the rocks below Castlecraig...and the tall standing rocks sometimes called 'The Temple'. They are reputed to have a graveyard there..." (Gordon (b) 33)

This is also the case at Ballone, north of the Seaboard villages. *Teampall Earach* = "Easter Temple" (Watson 48) and the caves here are believed to have been used for worship. However, there is no extant monument or folk tradition that explains the disproportionate number of burials at Balintore.

The first calamitous event in the recorded history of the Seaboard villages is the "seven years famine betwixt 1694 and 1701" (Sinclair 27), when many people are said to have perished. The recorded deaths from cholera in 1832 are 27 in Hilton, 27 in Balintore and 4 in Shandwick (Gordon(c) 58-59). The effect on the people was a dramatic shift in the customs that we would expect to be the norm:

"When churchyard burial was forbidden...many were buried near to where they died or in fields." (Gordon(a) 120)

People were afraid to bury the dead and left the villages to camp in the fields. At the nearby fishing village of Inver the death toll was reputed to be very high, the dead

being buried in the sand dunes. This has spawned local legends of the entire population dying and being covered by drifting sands. In the 1970s concern about these bodies being eroded out of the sand dunes was raised at a local council meeting for fear of cholera once again becoming epidemic. The 1832 outbreak had a clear and lasting affect on the psyche of these villages, and evidence suggests that burial customs were significantly altered for its duration.

The burial customs of the present should not be regarded as the norm. Even as recently as the 19th century, the community's burial ground reflected the often conservative views of the local people, who would consider burial within consecrated ground as being something to be earned. People generally disliked by the community, or seen as having committed an ungodly act, such as suicide or dying before baptism, were generally not buried within consecrated ground.

Perhaps as significant as the calamities of recent times was the threat posed by disease to communities in earlier periods. Diseases such as smallpox and scarlet fever, recorded as wreaking havoc in the nineteenth century, must always have been a threat, and their affect on the psychology of earlier communities would have been similar, if not more extreme, than the affect of the 1832 cholera outbreak. It is possible that the extended inhumations recorder in Balintore could represent Christian period burials of a local or rural type, though from which period precisely can only be determined by C14 dating in the absence of diagnostic finds.

The burials in the context of the villages

If the information relating to recorded burials is treated at face value then two concentrations are evident; one in the back gardens of Bank Street (consisting of extended inhumations), and one stretching along the length of Ross Crescent

(consisting of crouched inhumations in short cists), both in Balintore, though it must be stressed that any interpretation is extremely circumspect.

Since 1872 when the 1st edition Ordnance Survey of the Seaboard was published, the three villages have seen marked expansion. (See Maps 1,2 & 3; Part I) The three Seaboard villages have seen equal development along the linear strip of road that now has effectively joined the villages into a single entity. Only at Balintore, around Ross Crescent, were any discoveries of bones reported during this development. The nuclei of the three villages, as recorded in 1872 by the Ordnance Survey could represent a long-standing continuity in the pattern of settlement in this area. Major development has not revealed any settlement evidence here, though it is likely that the bone evidence will be disproportionately greater than any other element of the archaeological record, where the record is dependent upon local informants for the majority of its information. Bone is more easily recognisable and sensational than evidence of structures.

The main development of Balintore has been the council housing built by Hall & Tawse to the west of the old village nucleus. (See Map 2). This large area of development only turned up a single recorded burial context (BL 10). If development is seen as a window into hidden archaeological landscapes, then within this window Balintore is significant in having the majority of recorded burials (a possible 29 out of a possible 31). However, all of these burials were recorded after 1919, when the villages of Hilton and Shandwick had already witnessed much of their present linear development.

This raises the question, were burials only reported after a certain date when awareness of their significance became known to the local people or the necessary means were in place to facilitate recording of observations, or does the record truly reflect the discovery of burials within the villages? It is impossible to answer this question for the

Seaboard Villages with the level of knowledge available. However, elsewhere the finding of burials was recorded by various parish ministers in the Statistical Accounts, for example in Tarbat Parish.

There is little archaeological evidence for settlement in the study area to imply that this location was a focal point for human population in earlier periods. Two unexcavated enclosures in defensible positions are located at the foot of Nigg Hill, just south of Shandwick. Other than this there is only the onomastic evidence and implied significance of the Seaboard's geographical location, accessible both from landward and seaward, to back a suggestion that this locality has been a focus for activity and settlement from prehistory until the present.

The apparent concentration of crouched inhumations in short cists at Balintore could imply that the raised beach was exploited in early prehistory. Similar concentrations of short cist burials are known from Easter-Ross. At nearby Portmahomack:

"Several chests of freestone flags were dug up a few years ago...Each chest contained an entire skeleton...and from the position of the bones it appeared that the bodies had been doubled." (Sinclair 461)

At Dalmore, near Alness on the Cromarty Firth, eighteen short cists were excavated in the 1870s, two concentrations, one of ten and one of eight. Similar to the Seaboard, they were located on raised beach deposits close to the coast. (Jolly 252-264). Not enough is known of the settlement evidence in these localities to make a significant statement regarding the distribution of population relative to the location of burial sites. It would be reasonable to suggest that exploitation of the coastal zone in Easter-Ross would support a greater concentration of population than any other local geographical environment. The logical step is to imply a greater concentration of burial evidence, the surface occupation being eradicated by subsequent, intensive exploitation of this zone. Single short cist burials are common from the hinterland of Easter-Ross, but concentrations have only been recorded on the raised-beach deposits. Though this

might be used to demonstrate the concentration of activity in earlier periods, it could equally reflect the varying intensity of subsequent land-use, such as ploughing, or urban development.

It is possible that the seven extended inhumations at Balintore represent an early Christian presence at this locality. Not enough is known about the burial practices of the 1st millennium A.D. to make a significant statement regarding this likelihood, though a Pictish presence and a Norse presence can be implied from other sources. That these extended inhumations are later (2nd millennium) Christian burials does not comply with evidence from elsewhere, but as Reed points out there is not enough known about rural burial practices in Scotland to be able to define a clear typology (Reed 790). It is possible that these burials, which do not appear to be concentrated within an enclosure of consecrated ground, could represent a disaster in the history of the villages, as evidenced in the recorded history of the cholera epidemic of 1832, when burial practices were significantly altered.

The comparative evidence for Norse period burials comes mainly from Caithness, the Western Isles and the Northern Isles. At Cnip, Lewis, a pagan Norse cemetery was discovered, revealing extended inhumations beneath stone kerbs, and it is stated that:

"The cemetery at Cnip need not have had a single focus, and the possibility of spatially discrete groupings reflecting familial or kinship groupings must be countenanced." (Dunwell 744)

The same is possibly true at Balintore, with specific reference to the extended inhumations.

The evidence for cist burials at the Seaboard villages is in many cases not specific enough to clearly identify them as being crouched inhumations within short cists, therefore early prehistoric. It is possible that other periods and burial traditions are represented here. Long cist burials containing extended inhumations have a great

duration within the archaeological record. A Late Norse cemetery was excavated at Murkle Bay, Caithness, dated to A.D. 1260-1420, and it is supposed that this represents a Christianised tradition (Batey 160). However, as Batey states:

"It is notoriously difficult to confirm that inhumations lacking distinctive artefacts belong to a specific cultural milieu." (Batey 157)

At St. Peter's Church, Thurso, flexed inhumations were recorded, one of which was covered with a runic inscribed cross dated to the 12th century A.D.. (Batey 157)

Extended inhumations within cists are recorded from Ackergill, Caithness, occurring in evenly spaced clusters (Ashmore 348). At the same site a crouched inhumation was discovered in association with extended inhumations, and all were associated with a fragment of Class I symbol stone (Ashmore 348). The discovery of groups of cists beneath "a long low sandy mound" at Keiss, Caithness, (Ashmore 349) could have a strong bearing on the discoveries at Balintore beneath the *Bruchal Mhor*. And the finding of an extended inhumation beneath a row of horizontal slabs at Sandwick, Shetland (Ashmore 350), is in accord with the discoveries at Balintore in 1982 (BL11). However, insufficient evidence exists from the Seaboard villages and from other examples to allow a significant comparison of burial traditions and periods to be made.

Of Pictish period burials very little is known from Northern Scotland. The Dairy Park excavation at Dunrobin, East Sutherland, revealed an extended inhumation within a cist, capped by a low cairn. Dating of the bones and association with a Class I symbol stone points to a Pictish burial of the 7th century A.D. (Close-Brooks 330). No contextual evidence for any of the Seaboard burials has been recovered, whether they were capped by artificial cairns or mounds. It is possible that, if such structures existed they were destroyed long before the burials were discovered.

Extended inhumations with a common orientation, approximately east/west are recorded in Balintore, a possible group of four at the rear of Bank Street (BL9, BL12,

BL13 & BL14) and a possible group of three at East Street (BL11). (See Map 2) The two apparent groupings are over 300 metres apart. During the disturbance of these two localities the density of burials that one would expect to find within an enclosed area of consecrated ground, as was recorded at the 11th - 12th century burial ground at Newhall Point on the Black Isle (Reed 781), was not noted. This implies that the Balintore burials are not within a defined area of consecrated ground. There is also no onomastic evidence suggesting the presence in Balintore of a chapel or other sacred site, now destroyed, with which they could be associated.

At Balnabruach, near Portmahomack, archaeological investigations in 1992 discovered 1 cist burial, and 2, possibly 3, extended inhumations with associated stone slabs covering the bones (Low 1992). This description is similar to Balintore, BL11. There is a local tradition of a chapel being sited at Balnabruach for which there is no longer any physical evidence. This is the only comparative data available from a similar situation. However, the bone material was not dated and there were no diagnostic artefacts recovered.

Conclusion

Within the study area there are 31 individuals from recorded burials, two chapel sites associated with burials, and two 'monument' sites associated with burials. Of the 31 individuals 11 are from cist burials (though only 2 of these have been recorded archaeologically), 3 are finds of detached skulls only, and 17 are extended inhumations, (though only 4 have been recorded archaeologically and a group of 13 have not been corroborated in any way). As there has been no fieldwork, other than development led, carried out within the study area the distribution of recorded burials is in part a construct of twentieth century development. If there are factors producing blind spots within the study area then these are unlikely to change. The area of pre-20th century development of the villages, (the earliest reported burial being in 1919), is blank. It must be assumed that the area of the modern cemeteries at Balintore will also draw a blank as bones, unless clearly placed within a cist, are unlikely to excite interest. And if it is the case that the attitude of the builders is opposed to the recording of burials, then only a favourable statement of intent from the relevant authorities regarding burials and the action taken to record them, (regarding NPPG5), will change this attitude. The prevailing attitude among the contractors questioned was one of co-operation and even interest in the burials, and certainly among the older contractors questioned (some of whom have worked within the Seaboard villages for the last fifty years) there was only one recollection of bones being found (BL15) that was not recorded within the NMRS.

The distribution of reported, short cist burials is focused on Balintore with 9 individuals, and 1, possibly 2, in Shandwick. Within Balintore it cannot be said that the short cists are clustered in any one locality, though the area at the northern end of Ross Crescent has the greatest recorded density. The area surrounding these early discoveries has been subsequently developed and no addition to the number of burials, or extension of a significant cluster of burials, was reported.

2 extended inhumations were found close together, and associated was the find of a single skull (BL11). A possible total of 4 extended inhumations form a cluster behind No.s 4 and 5 Bank Street (BL9, BL12, BL13 & BL14). Two of these burials (BL9 & BL14) were discovered in poorly recorded circumstances, which limits their value to the archaeological record. The other two (BL12 & BL13) were excavated in a restricted area and not in a controlled manner, and therefore lack any contextual information relating one to the other, or either to associated structures. To date, there has been no attempt to date any of the material recovered.

Though the present state of research can contribute little to the archaeological interpretation and evaluation of the Seaboard villages, the possibility of future discoveries of human remains represents a resource for increasing our understanding of the periods represented, not only at the Seaboard villages but further afield, as any contribution will be a significant addition to the existing corpus. Dating of the bone evidence from the 1982 excavation (BL11) and the 1995 excavation (BL12) is an essential prerequisite to evaluating new discoveries and implementing measures aimed at preserving the archaeological resource at the Seaboard Villages. The bone material from BL11 and BL12 is in the keeping of the Inverness Museum and the Highland Council's Archaeology Service, respectively. Provisional agreement has been given by Robin Hanley, Assistant Curator of Archaeology at the museum, to release a sample of bone material for C14 determination, should this be required.

Controlled excavation of new discoveries of bone material is essential, and resources should be made available to archaeologically investigate the immediate locality of any significant finds. Interpretation of the excavations to date is limited by the lack of resources that would have allowed the wider investigation of the burial contexts, other than that exposed in construction trenches.

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DOWSING INVESTIGATION OF THE HILTON OF CADBOLL SITE
CARRIED OUT ON 11TH DECEMBER 1996; by D. L. BATES of FVIE;
and Mrs JANE DURHAM of SCOTSBURN.

AIM:- To discover, without disturbing the site; the exact location of the Plinth and missing base-portion of the Hilton of Cadboll Stone; and any additional information about the site and its environs.

Method:- Dowsing techniques are ideally suited to this type of sensitive investigation where excavation is not possible until a later stage.

- 1) I, (D. L. BATES) was familiarised with all available information on the history of the Hilton of Cadboll site, and the stone in particular.
- 2) With reference to the 1:2500 O/S Map and a 1:1773 scale aerial photograph - a 1:500 scale map was prepared, for the purpose of remote dowsing; and recording findings on-site. Walls and mounds are represented by hatching to give an approximation of their relative relief.

Results:- * Map-dowsing for the original location of the stone indicated that it stood in the immediate vicinity of the West gable of the Chapel -

- * Dowsing on photographs of the Stone; indicated a carrying date of 736 AD
- * Dowsing on-site - for the location of the fallen stone before it was removed to Invergordon, indicated a position marked X -
- * Dowsing for the location of the Plinth, indicated repeatedly and unequivocally, the position delineated by a rectangle on the map (Two small wooden laths were pushed horizontally into the turf, to mark the ends of this rectangle).
- * The missing portion of the stone is thought to be still mounted in the plinth at this location.
- * Other dowsing on-site suggests the existence of human remains in two mounds; one to the North of the enclosure, marked "North mound", and the other in the extreme Western corner of the site (not represented on the map but referred to as West mound). The West mound may also contain artefacts, and my impression is that it may be the grave of a prominent person; as it occupies a commanding geographically central location in relation to the whole bay area.
- * Some features were dated by dowsing - giving 724 AD for the West mound; 736 AD for the walls and enclosure; 746 AD for the North mound, and 844 AD for the Chapel.
- * Other interesting shapes are revealed on the aerial photograph, particularly - a distinct circular form beside the cattle grid at the entrance to the site.

Castle

HILTON of CARROLL - 1:500 (approx)
DL. BATES - 11-12-96.

6/3

North mound

Extend. Sand - mound

(rabbit burrows)

Slightly elevated security area. (mounds)

West mound
←

Reference line

approx fence line

CHAPEL

