

HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL



FIELD MONUMENTS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

1 SITE CODE									
H	N	D	0	5	N	E	0	0	5
2 NGR									
N	D	0	5	8	9	5	7	0	3
3 QUAL									
CE									
6 SITE NAME									
S	I	T	H	E	A	N	M	O	R
10 GENERIC TYPE									
BURIAL CAIRN, CHAMBERED, LONG, HORNED.									
14 PERIOD/DATE					15 DATING METHOD				
NE					TYP				
16 SHAPE									
LONG, HORNED									
19 THREAT AND DATE									

4 DISTRICT		5 PARISH	
CAITHNESS		REAY	
7 AREA STATUS	8 SITE STATUS	9 REGIONAL STATUS	
	SCHEDULED		
11 CONCORDANCE	12 FORM	13 DIMENSIONS	
OS ND 05 NE 5	STANDING STRUCTURE	61.0 x 16.58m	
16 RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTS		17 CONDITION	
		INCOMPLETE	
20 LAND USE		21 GEOLOGY	
ROUGH PASTURE = AFFORESTATION			
22 SOILS		23 VEGETATION	
24 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE		25 RELIEF	26 ASPECT
		GENTLE RIDGE SUMMIT	ENE = N = WNW
			27 ALTITUDE
			130 = 137m OD

28 EXCAVATION (EXCAVATOR: DATE: EXTENT: QUALITY)

29 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR: DATE: TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)

- ORDNANCE SURVEY: 1963: 6" MAP
- RCAHMS: 1911: CAITHNESS INVENTORY: HMSO: : p100, No. 365
- HENSALL, A.S.: 1963: CHAMBERED TOMBS OF SCOTLAND: EUP: VOL. 1: p258, No. 6 plan
- MERCER, R.J.: 1985: ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SURVEY IN N. SCOTLAND: EUP: VOL. 3: p209, No. FOR 397, fig. 5
- HMB (SDD): 1985: LIST OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS.

30 GROUND PLAN NO.

31 GROUND PHOTO NO.

32 SLIDES NO.

33 HR. AP. NO.

34 NMR. AP. NO.

35 OTHER AP. NO. SOURCE

36 ARCHIVE AND LOCATION

37 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

38 SAMPLES

39 PALYNOLOGY

40 NUMERICAL DATES: RANGE: LAB NO.

41 SMALL FINDS

42 MUSEUM/LOCATION

43 OTHER

44 NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER

45 ATTITUDE OF OWNER

46 NAME & ADDRESS OF TENANT

47 ATTITUDE OF TENANT

48 ACCESS & RESTRICTIONS

49 NAME & ADDRESS OF FINDER/RECORDER: DATE

50 RECORDER: DATE

51 CHECK: DATE

AM: 6.8.1985

DY 14.8.1985

52 TEXT

"See continuation cards for text."

3. HENSHALL, A.S.

6 BRAWLBIN, LONG

[SITHEAN MOR*]

(O.-C., long, horned)

In the parish of

REAY

Location at the N foot of

BEN FREICEADAIN

7½ m. SSW of

THURSO

Map reference

ND/058570

Sheet XVII NW; ND 05 NE

Inventory number 365

Reference R. C. A. M. *Inv.* 100¹

Plan by A. S. H. and M. J. S.

(fig. 38) Visited 15.8.56

Description. The long cairn lies NE-SW along a slight ridge in the moorland at over 400ft. OD. The NE end rises into a 10ft. high almost circular mound and is apparently intact. The rest of the cairn has been robbed down the centre and is mainly turf-covered. The length is 204ft., the width at the SW end is 40ft., and the width at the NE end is about 73ft., but due to the sloping ground the precise edges are now indefinite. A horn projects southwards for about 25ft. from the SW end, but the horn at the W corner, noted in 1910,¹ was not visible at the time of visiting, perhaps due to the deep growth of heather; the distance between their outer ends was thought to be about 45ft. No horns are visible at the NE end. Stretches of walling of horizontally laid flat slabs are exposed running along the sides, near the SW end of the NW side and at the centre of the SE side, both about 7ft. inside the present cairn edge. The cairn is constructed of large flat slabs, and in its ruinous condition it is difficult to distinguish constructional stones. However, a number of upright slabs across the body of the cairn seem to be deliberately set, though at present it is impossible to interpret their functions.

10ft = 3.00m

204ft = 62.21m

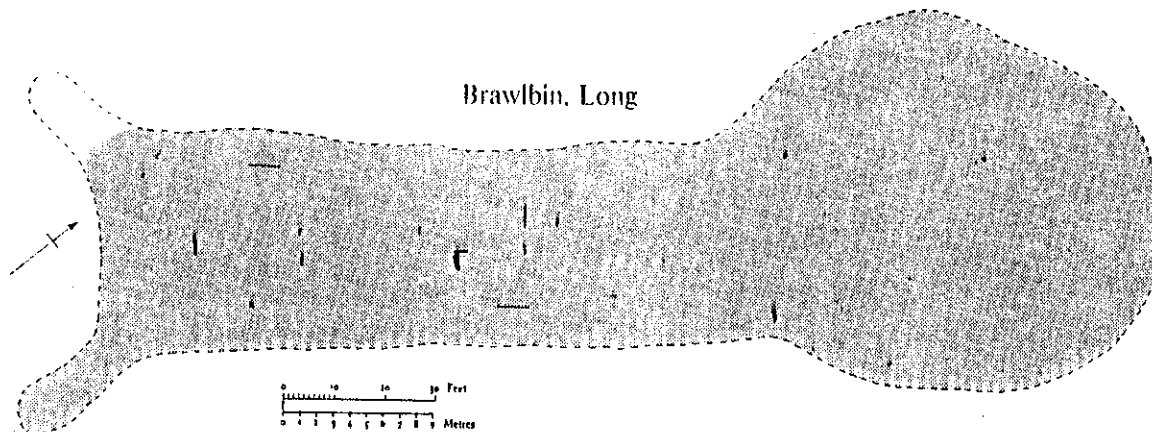
73ft = 22.35m

25ft = 7.74m

45ft = 13.83m

7ft = 2.13m

* The name 'Sithean Mor', given to this site on the 6 in. OS. maps, has been applied in the *Inventory* to the site listed by me as 'Sithean Buidhe'.



4. MERCER, R.J.

397. Long horned chambered cairn. 'Sithean Mor'. 'Brawlbin Long'. Dimensions: 64m x 22m. Height: 2.50m. At the NE end of the cairn is a circular mound 22m in diameter, which is the highest part of the monument. There is a depression 5m x 3m in the NE part of this, and two smaller ones 3m x 1m and 3m x 3m in the SE and SW of the mound. This mound is situated at the end of a long low mound with depressions, the subdivisions for which are 13m, 21m, 25m, and 28m from the NE end of the cairn. There are three upright slabs visible in this part of the cairn. The exact length and outline of this monument is unclear due to the forestry ploughing which has skirted the monument closely on all sides, and destroyed the SW terminal. The SW side is at present directly abutting an area planted with trees. Orientation: NE-SW. Elevation: 425' OD. ND 059570.

O.S. Card ND 05 NE 5.

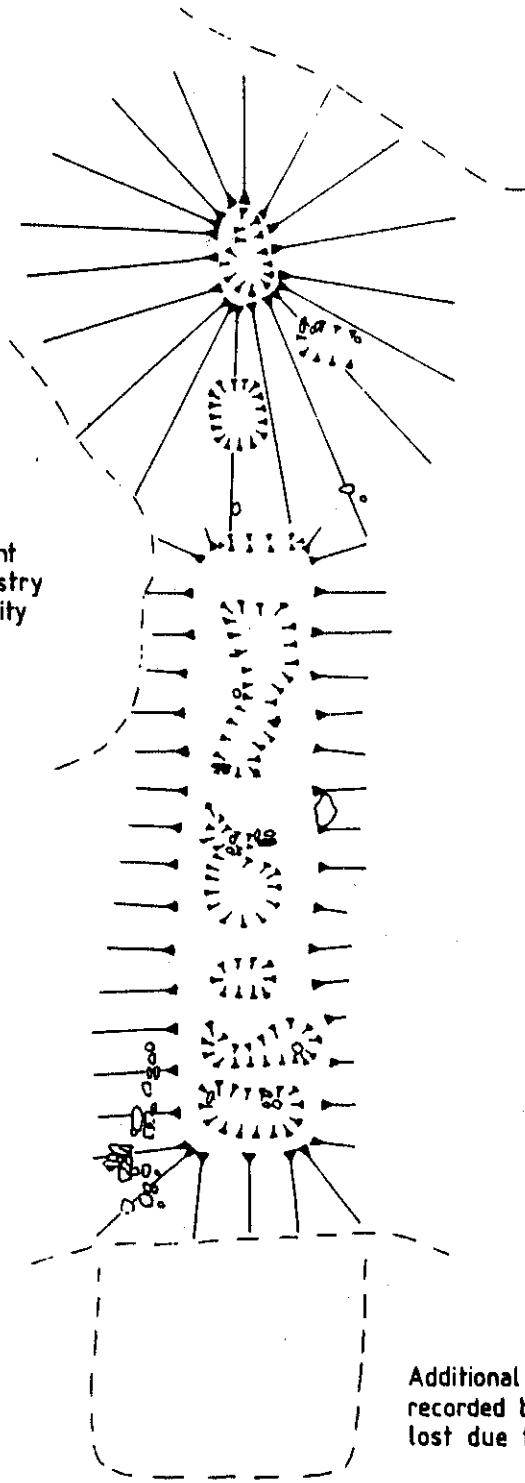
Henshall, A.S. (1963) *The Chambered Tombs of Scotland*, vol. 1, 258, No. 6. RCAHMS (1911) *Caithness*, 100, No. 365.

(Fig. 5)

FOR



Recent
Forestry
activity



Additional length of cairn as
recorded by Henshall—now ?-
lost due to Forestry activity.

Mon 397
Brawlbin Long
Henshall CAT 6

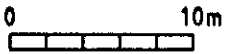


FIG 5

4. MERCER, R.J.

CAT 6 Brawlbin Long (Mon. No. FOR 397, Fig. 5).

This site lies on a crest on open moorland. Very sadly the site is now contained within a forestry plantation which apparently was not the case in 1956 at the time of Miss Henshall's visit. This plantation has unfortunately quite severely damaged this important monument and while it was clearly the intention of forestry managers in the area to respect the cairn, it would appear that, due to a lack of archaeological supervision, the definition by the forester of the edge of the cairn has been somewhat haphazard. As a result some 12m of the 'tail end' of the long cairn including the horn arrangement observed there by Henshall in 1956 have been very severely damaged if not destroyed. Elsewhere, particularly on the NW and E flanks of the cairn, forestry ploughing has approached the cairn far, far too closely, riding right up onto its flanks doing considerable damage. This monument is, or was, one of the most impressive of its class in Northern Scotland and one of the most important prehistoric monuments in the area. It is a scheduled ancient monument. It is nothing short of tragic that in the latter half of the twentieth century a monument of this calibre, protected by the Secretary of State, could have been seriously damaged by an agent of Central Government. The damage, of course, can in no way be made good - and is total and irreversible. The writer would, however, recommend most strongly that upon clear felling of this area of the forest, and prior to replanting, the cairn, or what is left of it, should be returned to a substantial area of open ground - the cairn being set within a *cordon sanitaire* of moorland at least 20m in width and perhaps could even suggest that a path be set out so that members of the public might visit this remarkable site without the physical and navigational hazards of making their way through the plantation.

The cairn is oriented NE-SW with a cairn that would appear to be more oval than round at its NE end. The axis of this oval cairn would appear at the present day to lie somewhat to the east of the main axis of the cumulative cairn. The oval cairn would appear to have been the victim of disturbance both at its summit and on its S & SW flank. A sharp and clearly defined gully separates the long cairn from the oval cairn, a feature recurrent on a number of similar sites - it was encountered by Corcoran at Tulach an t'Sionnaich and is apparent from detailed survey at Cnoc Freiceadain (CAT 18 Mon. No. FOR 90 Fig. 2) - where it was noted by Corcoran - and at Tulach Buaille Assery (CAT 59, Mon. No. FOR 371, Fig. 4). This feature renders difficult the clear perception of any specific priority relationship between both elements of the cairn in terms of field survey and indeed, as Corcoran tells us (Corcoran 1963, 12), during excavation.

Running away to the SW now sadly curtailed lie the remains of the long cairn. The cairn would appear to be a simple one with roughly parallel sides (with revetment walling visible at the SW extremity of the cairn) although there might be some suggestion of quadri-lobate form in cairn outline as recorded in Fig. 5 - suggesting that even this ostensibly simple element could be cumulative in some measure. The precise form of the SW end of the cairn was, of course, not available for record in 1982. Miss Henshall also notes "The (long) cairn has been robbed down the centre" and Curle visiting the site on 11/8/1910 noted also "The body of the cairn ... has been removed for the sake of its stones". The writer is not entirely happy with this explanation and Curle does not make it clear whether his note is based upon his own general supposition or upon any independent evidence. The phenomenon is a recurrent one occurring in very similar form in Cnoc Freiceadain (CAT 18, Mon. No. FOR 90 Fig. 2) and in Tulach Buaille Assery (CAT 59, Mon. No. FOR 371, Fig. 4) in all instances in isolated positions where there is no recent objective for such robbing present and where stone is not anyway in short supply. Two possibilities occur to the writer which can only be tested by excavation:

(1) That this robbing is to be associated with later construction on site, i.e. the round mound is later than the long cairn. Even for this suggestion however the process would appear to be too orderly.

(2) That the activity is of an altogether different and, at present, unknown kind, but one remarkable for its carefully ordered nature.