

HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

FIELD MONUMENTS



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

1 SITE CODE									
2 NGR									
N	D	1	7	4	2	6	2	6	0
3 QUAL									
CE									
6 SITE NAME									
S H E A N									
10 GENERIC TYPE									

4 DISTRICT		5 PARISH	
CAITHNESS		BOWER	
7 AREA STATUS		9 REGIONAL STATUS	
8 SITE STATUS			
11 CONCORDANCE		13 DIMENSIONS	
OS ND16 SE 1		c 46.0m LONG	
12 FORM		17 CONDITION	
STANDING STRUCTURE		INCOMPLETE (MUTILATED)	
16 RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTS			

10 GENERIC TYPE	
BURIAL CAIRN, LONG, CHAMBERED	
14 PERIOD/DATE	15 DATING METHOD
NE	TYP
18 SHAPE	
19 THREAT AND DATE	

20 LAND USE		21 GEOLOGY	
ENCLOSED LAND			
22 SOILS		23 VEGETATION	
24 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE		25 RELIEF	
		LEVEL GROUND	
		26 ASPECT	
		360°	
		27 ALTITUDE	
		90=100m OD	

28 EXCAVATION (EXCAVATOR: DATE: EXTENT: QUALITY)

1. TRESS BARRY: 1904: PARTIAL: UNSCIENTIFIC

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

1. ORDNANCE SURVEY: 1907: 6" MAP
2. HENSHALL, AS: 1963: CHAMBERED TOMBS OF SCOTLAND: EDINBURGH U.P.: VOL. 1: p286
3. RCAHMS: 1911: CAITHNESS INVENTORY: HMSO: p4: No 9
4. ORDNANCE SURVEY: 1970: 6" MAP
5. ORDNANCE SURVEY: 1970: 1/10,000 MAP

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	
POTTERY SHERDS			
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	
		M.W.C.: 19.3.1986	
		51 CHECK: DATE	
		27.3.1986	

52 TEXT

"RCAHM identified this site with that excavated by Tress Bary in 1904, although this is not certain. In the RCAHM report of the excavation, mention is made of an inhumation in the chamber, and in the debris near the top of the cairn, another, apparently secondary urburnt interment, accompanied by pieces of an urn, now lost

"A long cairn, as described by Miss Henshall. No trace of a chamber can now be seen. A stone projects through the turf at the SE end, and another larger stone lies at the NW side of the cairn." (OSFI:RD:10.11.1965) "ND 1742 6260. Long Cairn" (4)

"No change to previous field report." (OSFI:JM:28.10.1981)

"See continuation card for text of (2) and (3)."

46 SHEAN, STEMSTER

*(long)**In the parish of*

BOWER

Location 5 m. SE of

WICK

Map reference

ND174626

*Sheet XII; ND 16 SE**Inventory number 9**Reference R. C. A. M. Inv. 4¹**Excavation TRESS BARRY*1904¹*Visited 10.5.57*

Description. On top of the gentle hill at Stemster at 417ft. OD, in moorland but beside cultivated land, there stand the turf-covered and mutilated remains of a long cairn. The main axis is SSE-NNW, the former end rising into a circular mound with a height of about 8ft., but the rest of the cairn has been greatly disturbed and robbed and tails away to a height of only about 1ft. The length is now 149ft., but the SSE end has been cut off square and somewhat curtailed by the construction of a large cistern immediately in front of it. The NNW end may also have been reduced by the track which passes behind the site. The width at the SSE end is 73ft. and at the NNW end 33ft.

The site has been identified by Curle with the cairn dug only six years before his visit by Tress Barry, which was reported; however, to be a round cairn. Curiously, Curle does not comment on the discrepancy though the site is marked on the 6in. OS sheets as a long mound. Either Curle mis-identified the site or, more likely, Tress Barry did not recognise it as a long cairn due to the robbing of the NNW portion. Unfortunately the manuscript report of the excavation is not to be found and the chamber cannot now be seen, so Curle's precis is quoted in full. 'The diameter of the cairn was 40ft. and its elevation 12ft. In the centre was found a square chamber built of rubble-work, with two upright flagstones set in each corner. The floor consisted of five flagstones stretching right across from side to side. The width of the chamber was 4ft. 8in. Its height from the floor to the top of the walls 8ft., and to the top of the debris 13ft. Flagstones were found on the top laid in a slanting position to form a roof. On the floor in the SW corner were found the unburnt remains of a human skeleton, the area on which it lay being marked off on the floor by an arc of grey boulders. . . . The entrance to the chamber was from the S through a doorway 4ft. 6in. high and 1ft. 10in. wide, which was walled up with walling 2ft. 9in. thick. The passage was opened for a distance of 4ft. outwards. It was found to be well built and roofed, and its floor, paved with flagstones, was 8in. lower in level than the floor of the chamber. The whole length of the passage was estimated at 15ft. Beneath the flooring of the chamber was found a layer of broken stones about 4in. deep resting on a bed of clay. In the debris near the top of the cairn were found the remains of another unburnt interment and pieces of a "clay jar or urn". The roof of the chamber was removed when the excavation took place.'¹

Finds

Artifacts. Lost. Pieces of a pot, apparently secondary.

Skeletal. Lost. An inhumation in the chamber; a second inhumation near the top of the cairn, presumably secondary.

9. *Chambered Cairn, "Shean," Stenster.*—At Stenster, about 1½ m. to the NNW. of Stenster House, is the "Shean" or "Sithean," a chambered cairn excavated in 1904 by the late Sir Francis Tress Barry. The following details are derived from MS. Reports which, along with plans, are in the possession of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. The diameter of the cairn was 40' and its elevation 12'. In the centre was found a square chamber built of rubble-work, with two upright flagstones set in each corner. The floor consisted of five flagstones stretching right across from side to side. The width of the chamber was 4' 8". Its height from the floor to the top of the walls 8', and to the top of the debris 13'. Flagstones were found on the top laid in a slanting position to form a roof. On the floor in the SW. corner were found the unburnt remains of a human skeleton, the area on which it lay being marked off on the floor by an arc of grey boulders. The skull, as indicated by the fragment recovered, had been "ovoid" in form, with a cephalic index low in the mesocephalic group if not actually falling into the dolichocephalic category. The entrance to the chamber was from the S. through a doorway 4' 6" high and 1' 10" wide, which was walled up with walling 2' 9" thick. The passage was opened for a distance of 4' outwards. It was found to be well built and roofed, and its floor, paved with flagstones, was 8" lower in level than the floor of the chamber. The whole length of the passage was estimated at 15'. Beneath the flooring of the chamber was found a layer of broken stones about 4" deep resting on a bed of clay. In the debris near the top of the cairn were found the remains of another unburnt interment and pieces of a "clay jar or urn." The roof of the chamber was removed when the excavation took place, and for it a covering of railway sleepers has been substituted.

O.S.M., CAITH., xii. ("Mound"). Visited, 9th September 1910.

MEMORANDUM

To Mr I Giles, Senior Engineer
New Works, Water & Sewerage,
Wick

From Archaeologist, Dept Libraries & Leisure
Services

Your ref.

Our ref.

Date 3.5.90

Please ask for R Gourlay

PROPOSED RESERVOIR, STEMSTER HILL, WICK

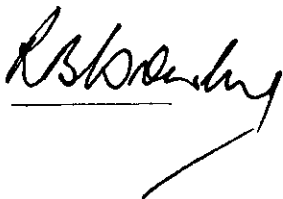
I am sorry that we did not get to see you on the 31st, but in the event myself and the HBM Inspector only got to the site in the early evening.

While I am uncertain of your specific needs, there seems to be space to locate the reservoir to the north without encroaching on the monument - or at least as little as possible. Can you suggest alternative locations which would be viable (I think obviously they would mean a longer linking line) and sketch them on the map for me?

In view of the cairn, I think it is quite possible that there may be other, associated archaeological remains now invisible almost anywhere on this hilltop, and I think that we should undertake at least a watching brief when topsoil comes off, and possibly trial trenching of the area which would be affected. Have you any funds which might cover such work, as a professional archaeologist would probably have to be brought in due to my workload?

Finally, can you enlighten me on the degree of earth-moving necessary or otherwise: depth a width of linking pipe trench, and the depth, etc of the reservoir base itself, plus any immediately adjacent ground which would be unavoidably disturbed? I would be most grateful, and am sure we can come to a satisfactory solution at the end of the day.

With thanks



MEMORANDUM

To MR I GILES, SENIOR ENGINEER? NEW WORKS WATER & SEWERAGE, WICK
From ARCHAEOLOGIST, DEPT LIBRARIES & LEISURE SERVICES

Your ref.

Our ref. ND16SE001

Date 3.5.90

Please ask for R GOURLAY

PROPOSED RESERVOIR, STEMSTER HILL, CAITHNESS

Thank you for your Fax and information. This site is not a Scheduled Monument, and therefore will not require an application to the Secretary of State for Scheduled Monument Consent. However, it is an archaeological site of some importance, and should be treated accordingly.

It is possible, though uncertain, that the site was excavated at the turn of the century, and for present purposes it is assumed that this has not taken place, and the site is undisturbed, although much damaged. The area around the sites is also important, and although the pipeline shown on the map lies perhaps 20-25m from the drawn cairn, there may be archaeological features in the vicinity. Any test cores or pits should therefore be under archaeological supervision, and I would hope that I would be able to do this with adequate forewarning. Ideally, the topsoil should be taken off the ~~line~~ ^{reservoir area} along the line of the pipework, and the trench investigated for archaeological features before the trench itself is excavated - with someone on hand to record if necessary.

I will pass a copy of this memorandum to Historic Buildings and Monuments for their comments, and ask them to respond directly to you if they have further concerns. It may be that they would wish to fund excavation of the reservoir area itself, as this may also be the site of early activity associated with the cairn. Is it possible to move the reservoir a little way to the north to avoid the cairn by a wider margin? If so, this would be more acceptable.

These are initial thoughts, and I will reply further when I have spoken with my colleagues in HBM.

*Jackie,
please retype.*

Roinn na Gaidhealtachd  Highland

J. F. S. Wilson
 C.Eng., M.I.C.E., M.I.Mun.E., M.I.W.E.S., M.I.P.H.E.
 Divisional Engineer

Highland Regional Council
 Department of Water and Sewerage
 Northern Divisional Offices

Please reply to WICK Office
 Miller Street The Square
 Wick KW1 5EQ Dornoch IV25 3SD
 Tel. (0955) 2472 Tel. (0862) 810363
 Fax No 0955 3899

Date: 3rd MAY '90
 To: MR R. B. GORLAY
 Regional Archeologist
 Dept of Libraries & Leisure Services
 INVERNESS

From: IAN R. GILES

No. of pages: 2 (including this sheet)

In the event of an error in transmission please telephone: WICK 2472

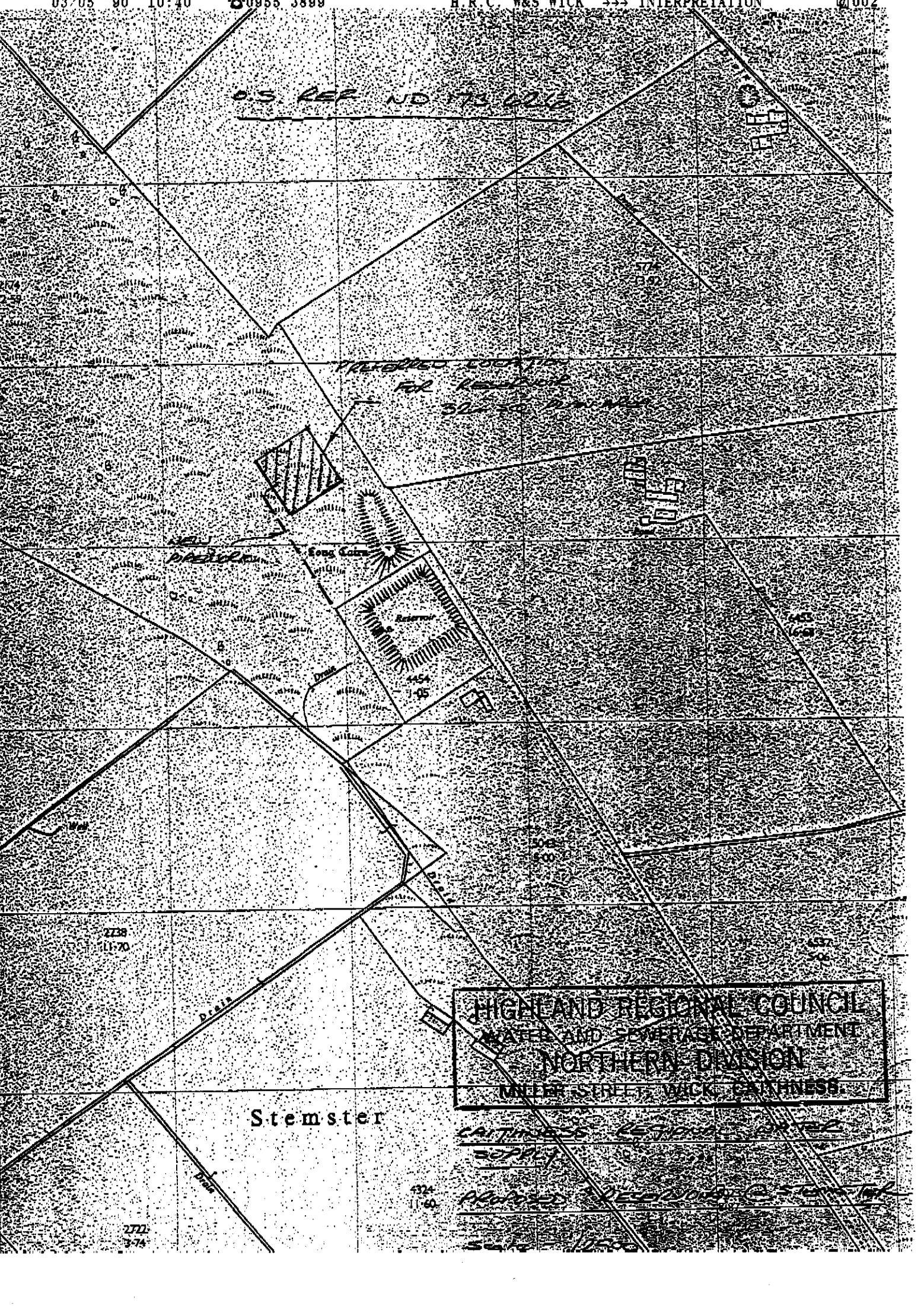
REMARKS Ref: Proposed Reservoir @ Stenster

As discussed I attach a site plan showing reservoir location.
 I hope to arrange a meeting to discuss site investigation in two weeks.
 Your early comments on the site and any procedures which should be adhered to would be gratefully received.

Ian R Giles
 Senior Engineer
 Newburgh

O.S. REF NO 43 016

PROPOSED LOCATION FOR RESERVOIR



HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL
WATER AND SEWERAGE DEPARTMENT
NORTHERN DIVISION
 UNDER STREET, WICK, CAITHNESS.

Stemster

CAITHNESS REGIONAL WATER
REPORT
PROPOSED RESERVOIR AT STEMSTER
SCALE 1:500