

HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL



FIELD MONUMENTS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

1 SITE CODE										
H	N	N	1	7	N	W	0	0	9	A
2 NGR		3 QUAL								
N	N	1	2	9	3	7	6	4	2	CE
6 SITE NAME										
D H I L E N A C A R A I D H										

4 DISTR:CT LOCHABER				5 PARISH KILMONIVAIG						
7 AREA STATUS		8 SITE STATUS			9 REGIONAL STATUS			10 GENERIC TYPE		
		-SITE OF						RITUAL SITE (VOTIVE HOARD?)		
11 CONCORDANCE NN 17 NW 10		12 FORM			13 DIMENSIONS			14 PERIOD/DATE BA		15 DATING METHOD TYP
16 RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTS				17 CONDITION DESTROYED				18 SHAPE		
								19 THREAT AND DATE		
20 LAND USE OPEN WOODLAND					21 GEOLOGY					
22 SOILS					23 VEGETATION					
24 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE				25 RELIEF HILLOCK OVERLOOKING A RIVER			26 ASPECT NW		27 ALTITUDE 20=30m O.D	

28 EXCAVATION (EXCAVATOR: DATE: EXTENT: QUALITY)										
BARRET, J. & GOURLAY, R B:1981-84:FULL:SCIENTIFIC										
29 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR: DATE: TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)										
1 NEWSPAPER REPORT:1983:DISCOVERY & EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND 1983:(CBA.SCOTLAND):p81										
2 GOURLAY & BARRET J:1984:'DAIL NA CARAIDH':										
3 GOURLAY & BARRET J:1984:CURRENT ARCHAEOLOGY:No 94:VOL VIII:no 11 pp347-9										
4 MOORE,S M:1984:A POLLEN ANALYSIS FROM DAIL NA CARAIDH (INVERLOCHY):UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW										
5. GRACE, A. & PATERSON, L.: 1985:'DAIL NA CARAIDH' landscapes and ritual': G.P. VIDEO PRODUCTIONS OVER/..										
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 Full Archive Sites + Monuments Records SMR Office HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL										
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 SM:5.9.1986		51 CHECK: DATE A.R.7.9.1986	

52 TEXT

"See continuation card for text (3)"

"Additional information available from SMR office Highland Regional Council"

"The deoposits of flat axes and dagger fragments found by individuals and during excavations between 1981 and 1984 have been awarded to Inverness Museum following a treasure trove decision. INV MG 986.18 " (6)

21 5. 10

BOX 29.

6. HARDEN, G:1986:DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND:CBA (SCOT):P 14



DAIL NA CARAIDH

by Robert Gourlay
and John Barrett

CURRENT excavations at Dail na Caraidh in the western Highlands, just north of Fort William, are throwing new light on the nature of Early Bronze Age hoards.

Hoards are one of our major sources of information for the Bronze Age. The origins of metallurgy itself are discussed largely with reference to hoard and grave finds, whilst the chronology of the British Bronze Age is written in terms of metal typologies, and the patterns of association between various bronze types found in hoards.

Yet, by their very nature, the recovery of hoards is a haphazard affair. Most have been uncovered by accident, for example during agricultural or building work or during quarrying, rather than under the controlled conditions of an archaeological excavation. Our knowledge of a hoard may therefore rest heavily upon the memory of the finder, or upon second or third hand accounts of the discovery, as well as upon the discoverer's competence in recovering small, and often fragmentary, pieces of metal.

Given this, it is surprising that so little archaeological work has taken place on the known findspots of hoards. Even the discovery of the enormous Late Bronze Age hoard from Isleham, Cambridgeshire led to only some 30 sq.m. of excavation around the vicinity of the hoard.

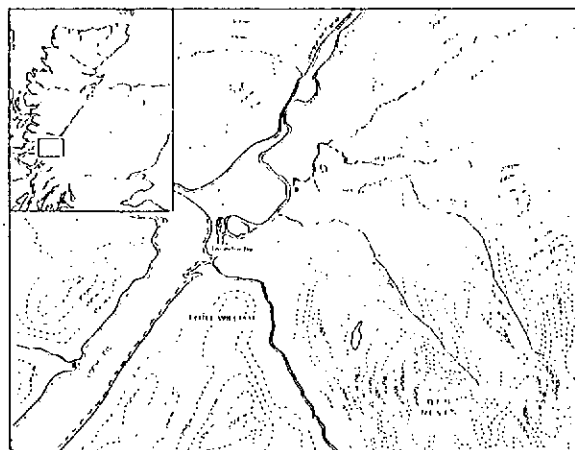
This lack of further investigation can no longer be justified. Various reasons can be given for putting

hoards in the ground: some hoards are personal possessions, hidden away at times of danger and never recovered. Others may be the stock of a bronzesmith, secreted away but never retrieved. And some were of a ritual nature, and thus never intended for recovery. Is there any way we can distinguish between these motivations?

Obviously, the context of a hoard is significant: material thrown away into a lake or bog is unlikely to be intended for future recovery. The

composition of a hoard is also important. Stuart Needham has recently pointed out that whereas axes are more common in hoards than daggers, in graves the reverse is true: for example, no beaker has yet been found in a grave with a metal axe anywhere in Britain. He suggests that both hoards and graves are united by a single logic: the artifacts used have an important symbolic value, rather than being a casual collection of material. He argues that the axe seems to have acquired a symbolic value during the neolithic; if it continued to carry this symbolic value in the bronze age, then the fact that axes predominate in hoards would seem to imply that many more of our early metal hoards may have been "ritual" than we normally allow.

(3)



Dail na Caraidh lies at the foot of Ben Nevis, by the Rivers Lochy and Lundy.

Fig 1.

excavation (marked by stars on the plan, opposite, below). Despite our own survey Mr Mather returned to the site with a metal detector and found another axe 4m. away from the area of the first finds (near pit marked 003 on the plan), and on excavating further found two more axes and 6 dagger blade fragments. Another small fragment of metal was subsequently recovered from Mr Mather's spoil. The repositing of the second group of finds led to further excavations in 1983 and 1984, funded by the Scottish Development Department.

All of the Bronze Age activity which we have investigated so far took place in front of a long, prominent but natural mound. The mound's location is important. To the NW it overlooks the confluence of the two rivers, whilst to the SE the stark mass of Ben Nevis dominates the landscape. The land drops away steeply to the N and W, whilst to the E peat was probably accumulating at the time the metal was deposited around 2,000 bc (preliminary palaeobotanical work by Dr. David Robinson and Susan Moore). The siting is impressive.

The bronzes represent several individual deposits. The largest group of material is the total of 16 axes from the original find, scattered in an erosion channel from the prow of the mound, just below a small pit marked 029 on the plan; some of these axes are shown on the cover photo. This pit may well have held all or some of these axes, or it may have been dug in connection with their deposition, but not necessarily

to contain any of them. We must stress that we have no stratigraphic evidence that all these axes were deposited at the same time.

The second group of material looks more securely like a single deposit, a conventional hoard. A pit (003) had been dug, and into this was placed 2 axes and 6 daggers. Another small piece of metal also came from this pit. The site of this deposit was marked by a large boulder set up immediately to the N (i.e. left) of the pit. A series of other boulders appear to have been set up on the contemporary ground surface in the area so far excavated. One of these had been carefully propped up to face the prow of the mound, and on its face there is a natural, but sharply defined hollow. When viewed from the mound in the afternoon sun this produces the remarkable image of an axe. Running diagonally across the area to the front of the mound there is a cobbled path.

Two other deposits of metal can be identified. One is the single axe already mentioned as coming from the quarry edge. The second is of two small fragments of dagger blade found 8m. to the north of the main deposit and marked by triangles on the plan.

Only one other feature needs to be described. On the axis of the mound, and 20m to the north (area D on site plan, opposite, top), a large granite boulder was found, showing drilled holes, and it was split along the lines of these holes. At one time we thought that this was Bronze Age, but it now looks very like recent drilling.

Implications

There are two major implications resulting from this work. Firstly the bronzes from Dail na Caraidh were deposited on a number of separate occasions. How many other hoards, casually recovered, represent multiple rather than single deposits? Amongst other things this question has important implications for the way we treat hoards as chronological indicators.

Secondly this repeated activity, the use of a dramatic landscape setting, and the employment of other markers and natural symbols, are exactly what an anthropologist would tell us we should expect from a ritual site. Further, in the case of Dail na Caraidh, what can we identify as the 'site', when it is the total landscape setting of this activity which is significant? Further fieldwork is required to understand the landscape context within which this particular activity took place. We urgently need to rethink our approach to the archaeology of Bronze Age hoards.

John Barrett,
Department of Archaeology,
The University,
Glasgow G12 8QQ.

Robert Gourlay,
Highland Regional Archaeologist,
Regional Council Buildings,
Inverness IV3 5NX.

All these problems concerning the ritual nature of hoards came to the fore in the Dail na Caraidh (pronounced Dail na Carral) hoard.

In 1981 a local resident, Mr Cummings of Caol, discovered a group of early Bronze Age axes eroding from the front of a long mound which overlooks the confluence of the rivers Lochy and Lundy at Dail na Caraidh (Fig. 1). In all 8 axes and axe fragments were recovered, and these were reported to Robert Gourlay, Highland Regional Archaeologist. A few months earlier a separate, single axe had been recovered by a Mr Mathers, also of Caol, some 30m to the west, from the edge of a small gravel quarry.

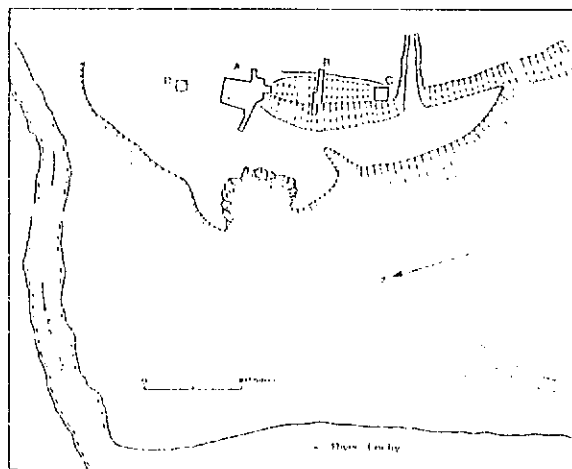
These new finds resulted in an excavation instigated by Highland Regional Council, and this has now developed into a joint project with Glasgow University. The first excavations opened an area of some 20 sq.m. around the area from which the first axes had been recovered and sectioned the mound, whilst a metal detector survey was undertaken of the surrounding area. A further 8 axes and fragments were recovered in



View of the site from across the River Lochy, with the mountains in the background. The arrow points to the spot where most of the axes were found.

Photo: John Barrett.

(3)



The site lies on a small hillock, and the excavated areas, A-D run along the crest of the hill. But note the small quarry, cutting into the hillock by area A (after RCAMES).



Plan of area A. The first hoard is represented by the stars on the right, which mark the position of the 7 excavated axes (from 16 in all) from the erosion hollow below pit 029.

The second group of axes and daggers comes from pit 003 with a 'marker' boulder just to the north. Two more dagger fragments were found at the points marked by the triangles. Note the cobbled path running from the bottom left diagonally across the excavated area.

HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL



ARTEFACTS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

1 SITE CODE H N N 1 7 N W 0 0 9 B									
2 NGR N N 1 2 9 3 7 6 4 2									
3 QUAL CE									
6 SITE NAME D I A L N A C A R A I D H									
7 GENERIC TYPE AXEHEADS, BRONZE, FLAT, HOARD									
11 PERIOD/DATE RA (EBA)					12 DATING METHOD TYP				
15 EXCAVATOR AND DATE R GOURLAY & J BARRET:1983									
16 EXCAVATION RECORD NO.									

4 DISTRICT LOCHABER		5 PARISH KILMONIVAIG	
8 CONCORDANCE OSNN 17 NW 10 NMR	9 MUSEUM/LOCATION OF FIND(S) INVERNESS MUSEUM	10 ACCESSION NO. INVMG 986.18. 1-30	
13 FIND CIRCUMSTANCES EXCAVATION		14 CONDITION	

17 LAND USE OPEN WOODLAND		18 GEOLOGY	
19 SOILS		20 VEGETATION	
21 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE		22 RELIEF HILLOCK OVERLOOKING RIVER	23 ASPECT NW
			24 ALTITUDE 20=30m. O.D

25 DETAILED DESCRIPTION/DIMENSIONS

26 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR:DATE:TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)
1 NEWSPAPER REPORT:1983:DISCOVERY & EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND 1983:(CBA.SCOTLAND):p81
2 GOURLAY R & BARRETT J:1984:'DIAL NA CARAIDH':
3 GOURLAY R & BARETT J:1984:CURRENT ARCHAEOLOGY:no94,VOL VIII No 11:pp347-9

27 GROUND PLAN NO.	28 GROUND PHOTO NO. 82/3/1/12-32
29 SLIDES NO.	30 HR. AP. NO.
31 NMR. AP. NO.	32 OTHER AP. NO.: SOURCE
33 ARCHIVE AND LOCATION Full Archive Sites & Monuments Records SMR Office, Highland Regional Council	
34 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY	35 SAMPLES
36 PALYNOLOGY see Box 29 no 4	37 NUMERICAL DATES: RANGE: LAB NO.
38 OTHER	

39 NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER		40 ATTITUDE OF OWNER	
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47 TEXT
"See continuation cards for text & illustration (3)"

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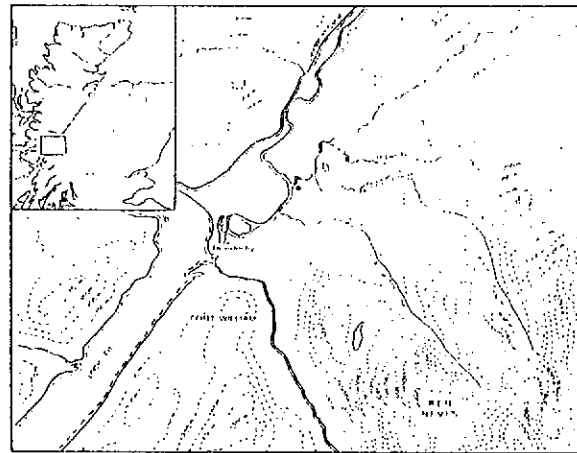
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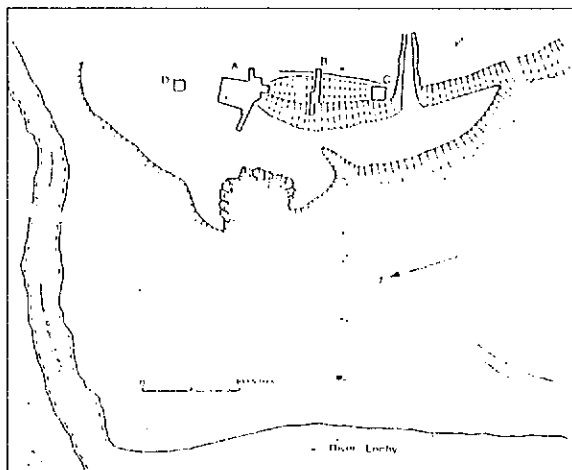
John Barrett,
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Robert Gourlay,
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View of the site from across the River Lochy, with the mountains in the background. The arrow points to the spot where most of the axes were found.

Photo: John Barrett.



The site lies on a small hillock, and the excavated areas, A-D run along the crest of the hill. But note the small quarry, cutting into the hillock by area A (after BCAMIS).



Plan of area A. The first hoard is represented by the stars on the right, which mark the position of the 7 excavated axes (from 16 in all) from the erosion hollow below pit 029.

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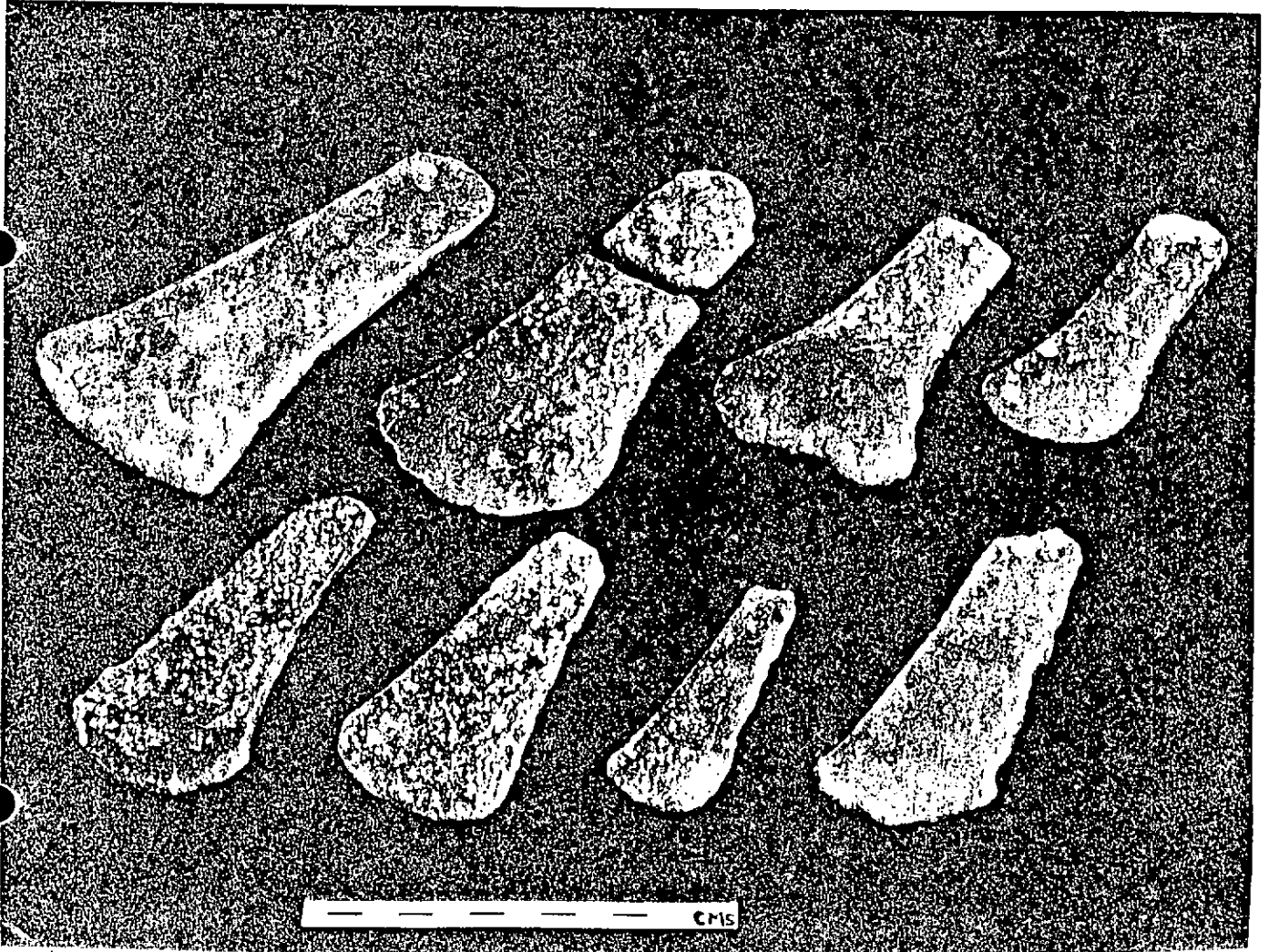


PHOTO - R.M.S. (QUEEN STREET)