

# **Mullans Wood, Tore, Killearnan: Proposed Development**

## **Archaeological Evaluation**

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**For**

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**Mullans Wood, Tore, Killearnan: Proposed Development, Archaeological  
Evaluation**

### **Contents**

<b>1.0 Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.0 Executive Summary</b>	
<b>3.0 Background</b>	
<b>4.0 Archaeological Background.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5.0 Historical Background.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6.0 Site Description</b>	
<b>7.0 Archaeological Evaluation.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7.1 Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites</b>	
<b>7.2 Potential Impacts and Mitigations</b>	
<b>8.0 Visual Impact Assessment.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>8.1 The Scheduled Ancient Monuments</b>	

**8.2 Potential Impacts and Mitigation.....9**  
**9.0 Conclusions of Evaluation.....10**  
**Appendix 1. Data Sources and Bibliography.....10**  
**Appendix 2: Photographic Record.....11**

- Plan 1. Location Plan**
- Plan 2. Location of Scheduled Monuments**
- Plan 3. Location of archaeological sites within Mullans Wood**

**1.0 Summary**

<i>Site summary</i>	Rural site
<i>Site location (NGR)</i>	NH 575 526
<i>Total area of construction</i>	12.62 hectares of , at present, plantation woodland
<i>Work required</i>	Desk-based assessment and walk-over survey
<i>Area of evaluation required</i>	Direct impacts on area of construction and indirect visual impact on Scheduled Monuments in surrounding area

**2.0 Executive Summary**

An archaeological survey of an area of proposed development located one Bronze/Iron Age hut Circle and a number of cairns or stone piles which may be contemporary with the hut circle and may be either a Bronze Age cairnfield or prehistoric field clearance associated with cultivation. A visual impact assessment of the development on adjacent Scheduled Monuments concluded that the impact will be minimal and may not be entirely negative.

**3.0 Background.**

The author was asked by Gunn MacPhee & Associates to carry out an archaeological evaluation, consisting of a desk-based assessment and walk-over survey, of an area of proposed development at Mullans Wood west of Tore. The evaluation in compliance with a brief for archaeological work prepared by the Highland Council Archaeology Unit. The development may have a negative impact on the archaeological record for the following reasons:

- The area of development is adjacent to a number of nationally important Scheduled Ancient Monuments, in particular a group of Neolithic chambered cairns which originally formed a ritual landscape on the brow of the ridge running along the Black Isle.
- There may be further archaeological remains and areas of archaeological or cultural sensitivity within the development area which have not been previously recorded and evaluated.
- Previous monitoring of ground-breaking development work in the vicinity discovered sub-surface archaeological features, including at least one pit containing cultural material and possibly cremated bone (J. Wordsworth 1992). There is therefore the potential for further features, not visible on the surface, to survive within the development area.
- Any development will have a visual impact on the adjacent Scheduled Ancient Monuments, although this may not be negative. A visual impact assessment is required to evaluate this impact.
- No previous archaeological evaluation has been carried out of this area.

The evaluation consists of the following elements:

1. Placing of the area of evaluation within an archaeological, historical and cultural context. This will be done through investigation of all readily available archive and data sources on the history of settlement, land use and land ownership in this and the surrounding area. (sections 4 and 5)
2. Identification of all visible archaeological features and areas of potential sub-surface archaeological features or deposits within or immediately adjacent to the area of evaluation. This information is presented as a gazetteer of sites (section 7) and each site is given a significance according to the Burra Charter
3. Visual Impact Assessment: to evaluate the potential impact of the development on Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the vicinity. Scheduled Ancient Monuments are nationally important monuments protected by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. The National Planning Policy Guideline 5. Paragraph 17 states that *scheduled ancient monuments are of national importance and it is particularly important that they are preserved in situ and within an appropriate setting. Developments which would have an adverse on scheduled monuments or the integrity of their settings should not be permitted unless there were exceptional circumstances.*

#### **4.0 Archaeological Background**

Before the enclosure and improvement of the commony along the Millbuie ridge, early writers noted 18 cairns along the ridge. These are likely to have been Neolithic chambered cairns. Six of these are located to the west and south of Mullans Wood, while others are located further east along the ridge, either within or beyond plantations of mature coniferous forestry. These monuments are likely to have been important elements in a prehistoric ritual landscape, and clear lines of sight from one cairn to the next and from cairns to other landscape features, possibly some distance away, is likely to have been a major consideration in their construction..

Cairn Irenan, 75m west of Mullans Wood, is one of the most important of these cairns. Although undoubtedly Neolithic, the cairn is associated in local folklore with later burials, one version being that Irenan was a Norse warrior, slain in a nearby battle. There is no documentary evidence for such a battle, but it is common in the Highlands to explain concentrations of small cairns as graves associated with a battle or skirmish. Archaeological investigation is more likely to define these cairns as Bronze Age burials or even piles of field clearance stones associated with Bronze or Iron Age field systems. 19<sup>th</sup> century writers describe the Mulbuie ridge as having been covered with such cairns, which probably gave rise to the tales of battles. The majority of the smaller cairns will have been removed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century during field enclosure and improvements, only the larger cairns surviving.

The visible archaeological remains of domestic settlement associated with the cairns have for the most part also been removed, either during field improvement or during ploughing and planting for forestry. However, more early domestic sites are now being identified through archaeological monitoring of development areas.

## **5.0 Historical Background**

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this area was still a part of the commonty of the Millbuie ridge, which ran the length of the Black Isle. This was common land used for rough grazing, peat cutting and collection of firewood. By 1816 the heritors, or landowners, had agreed to divide this land between the various estates which bordered on it. Their initial use of these enclosures appears to be for woodland plantations: a map drawn up by P Brown in 1816 shows 'a large plantation of firs planted for the proprietor of Redcastle' (Drynie Park), 'Muir ground, has never been planted though interspersed with young firs' (Muir of Allangrange) and 'Plantation of Young firs' (Kilcoy). The area of Mullens Wood came within the parish of Killearnan and the estate of MacKenzie of Kilcoy.

It was not long before these young plantations gave way to farmland and croft holdings. Kilcoy, like many of the Black Isle heritors, provided crofts for the victims of the clearances elsewhere in the Highlands, particularly Strathconon. The placenames; Newton of Kinkell, Newton of Ferintosh, Heights of Kilcoy and the dense layout of small croft fields still surviving in the landscape date from this time, and the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map, surveyed in the 1870s records scores of small farmsteads or croft houses, now abandoned. Despite their earlier generosity, the heritors eventually decided to subsume most of the newly created agricultural land into their improved farms.

Mullens Wood is shown as enclosed rough ground on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map, but on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition map appears to be planted with young trees. This may be part of the 'land under plantation' which appears in the valuation rolls in 1878, then worth £4 and by 1900 worth £29.

The Forestry Commission bought Mullens Wood for planting in about 1943, at which date it was being rented as grazing. It was not planted until 1952. 1.5 acres were not planted, but used 'for poultry'. This is presumably the strip adjacent to the A835 now

occupied by the HC depot. Immediately to the west of this a strip of trees was felled in 1992 to allow the Inverness-Invergordon gas main.

## 6.0 Site description

Mullans Wood is an area of coniferous plantation SW of the A835 Tore-Maryburgh road. The trees are thinned and brashed, consistent with a plantation approximately 50 years old, although a small stand of larger trees in the middle of the wood may be survivors from earlier planting. The ground was ploughed before planting, the rows running parallel to the road, and a ride or firebreak was left unplanted after approximately every eighth row of planting. The forest floor is mossy. The wood is bounded to the south, west and north by a stone and earth dyke of early 19<sup>th</sup> century type, stone-faced on the outer side and banked on the inner, a style which prevents livestock from entering the enclosed area. Mature beech trees, probably contemporary with the construction of this dyke, grow on it. The trees and the style of dyke would appear to be older than the earliest known planting of the wood in 1878 and may indicate that the wood was first planted during the initial enclosure of the commonty in 1819.

The north boundary of the wood is a double dyke formerly defining a roadway or track which ran along the north edge of the wood, providing access to the former croft buildings to the north and west of the wood.

The site is bounded to the east by a Highland Council works depot. As the rest of the wood is under plantation, this must be the area set aside for poultry in 1952. West of this, within the wood, a strip of felled trees indicate the line of the Inverness-Invergordon gas main, inserted in 1992.

## 7.0 Archaeological Evaluation

### 7.1 Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites

The following sites were noted during the walk-over survey, which was carried out on 12.12.07 in bright and mostly dry weather conditions.

1. **Hut circle** at NH 57529 52548  
Significance: Regional  
On a level, slightly raised platform, moss-covered banks define a hut circle, measuring internally 7m in diameter, with a possible entrance to the SSE. Mature trees are growing on the banks and in the interior, but the site has not been ploughed, so was presumably a visible feature in 1952. The site has been previously noted by members of NOSAS
2. **Cairns:** 14 scattered moss-covered rubble stone piles with diameters of up to 5m, in a band from NW of to S of the hut circle, measuring 200m NW-SE by 100m NE-SW

**Significance:** possibly Regional

**Individual locations, by GPS, are as follows:**

NH 57580 52471 This is one of the most prominent, with visible stony material. The top of the mound is hollowed, and dug fairly recently by foxes or badgers, revealing a high earth content to the mound.

NH 57565 52484

NH 57522 52544 Very spread

NH 57512 52562

NH 57499 52573

NH 57464 52606

NH 57440 52586

NH 57438 52584

NH 57475 52507

NH 57504 52494 Ploughed through

NH 57499 52490 Ploughed through

NH 57525 52494 Very spread

NH 57543 52500

3. **Small cairns or field clearance piles:** 9 moss-covered piles, spread to 4m in diameter and less prominent than no. 2. These are concentrated in the west corner of the wood

**Significance: Local**

Individual locations , by GPS, are as follows:

NH 57721 52637

NH 57633 52630

NH 57732 52604

NH 57709 52599

NH 57692 52546

NH 57471 52656

NH 57542 52553

NH 57607 52505

NH 57616 52495 Group of 4 mounds close to the forest boundary

4. **Dykes, roadway** from NH 5741 5273 to NH 5761 5286.

**Significance: Local**

Two parallel turf and stone dykes, the outer forming the boundary of the wood and the more southern now within the wood and overgrown with regenerated birch. Both dykes have one rubble face, facing in to the roadway, and one side turf-banked. There is also a suggestion of ditching along the roadside. There is no visible road surface.

These features correspond to a road or track recorded on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS and subsequent maps, which appears to have formed the access to croft holdings north and west of the wood. The northern dyke also appears to have formed the boundary between Kilcoy and Newton of Ferintosh. A probable boundary stone is recorded on the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition OS map, but was not located during this survey

5. **Boundary Dyke**

**Significance: local**

The wood is bounded to the west and south by a stone and earth dyke of early 19<sup>th</sup> century type, stone-faced on the outer side and banked on the inner. Mature beech trees are growing on the dyke. This is the strongest evidence for the area having been enclosed for planting at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

## **7.2 Potential Impacts and Mitigations**

The majority of the sites identified during the walk-over survey, with the exception of the small cairns which form site no. 3, lie outwith the area of the proposed recycling centre. These small cairns or field clearance piles would be destroyed by the development. If they are, in fact, field clearance piles representing the surviving remnants of a prehistoric field system, they would be classed as of local significance only and it is unlikely that a watching brief or further evaluation would offer more information about the site. However, there remains the slight possibility that these are burial cairns. A small controlled archaeological investigation of one of the mounds before any ground breaking work or tree felling commences would be advisable.

The prehistoric sites 1 and 2 lie within the area designated as for future development. This development is likely to take the form of commercial forestry. If this is the case, the sites can be protected and preserved by following the Forests and Archaeology Guidelines issued by the Forestry Commission. As a general rule, archaeological features within an area of new planting would be protected within an unplanted area extending at least 20m from the outermost feature of the site or group of sites. In the case of the Mullans Wood prehistoric features, sites 1 and 2 would be incorporated into one large area of open space so that the relationship of the sites to each other is maintained. Other proposals for the protection and management of the archaeology would include:

- Hand-felling of trees at present growing on or adjacent to archaeological features
- Avoidance of defined archaeological areas by timber extraction machinery
- Management of open space within new planting by control of regrowth
- Development of access and interpretation

Any decisions on further investigation or management of the archaeological features should be made in consultation with the Archaeology Unit within the Department of Planning and Development at Highland Council.

## **8.0 Visual Impact Assessment**

### **8.1 The Scheduled Ancient Monuments**

The visual impact assessment was limited to the group of six Scheduled monuments located to the south and west of Mullans Wood. While there are other similar monuments elsewhere on the Black Isle and in Easter Ross which may, in the

prehistoric period, have had a visual relationship with the monuments listed below, they are now screened from Mullans Wood by large areas of coniferous plantation and other modern developments.

**1. Cairn Irenan, chambered cairn and stone circle at NH 566 522**

**SAM Index no. 3122**

This would have originally been the most prominent of the cairns, placed at the high point of the west end of the Millbuie ridge. It is now enclosed within private grounds and overgrown with trees and vegetation. The surrounding landscape is open grazing. Mullans Wood is visible on the west horizon, although partially screened by a closer woodland plantation. No inhabited houses are visible in this direction; a ruinous croft house is the only visible building.

**2. Kilcoy North chambered cairn at NH 570 517**

**SAM index no. 4606**

This cairn stands in open farmland on a slight SE facing slope, with clear views over Kilcoy Castle to the Moray Firth. Part of Mullans Wood is visible to the NE, behind the small complex of croft cottage and outbuildings at Heights of Kilcoy behind which is a narrow band of mature mixed woodland.

**3. Kilcoy South chambered cairn at NH 570 516**

**SAM index no. 1795**

This cairn is dramatically bisected by a drystone wall but is otherwise similar in situation and vista to Kilcoy North. The view from Kilcoy South to the nearby Kilcoy North is backed by the band of mature woodland at Heights of Kilcoy, while the visible part of Mullans Wood is slightly to the east.

**4. Carn Glas chambered cairn, Mains of Kilcoy at NH 578 520**

**SAM index no. 3213**

This broad low cairn is covered with whins and therefore somewhat inaccessible. It commands a broad view SE down to the Moray Firth. To the north, Mullans Wood forms part of a horizon dominated by mature coniferous forestry. Between this and the cairn are some small landscape features including low housing, ruinous croft houses and some low deciduous trees

**5. Carn Glas cairns, Mains of Kilcoy at NH 577 518 and 577 519**

**SAM index no. 3123**

These two adjacent cairns are located in open farmland at the upper edge of the slope down to the Moray Firth, and command open views to the south over the Firth. Mullans Wood is screened from direct view by a small stand of deciduous woodland.

## **8.2 Potential Impacts and Mitigation**

None of the Scheduled sites will be directly affected by the development. The visual impact of increased traffic running to the development will be minimal, as it is assumed that the main approach will be from the A835 to the east.



The planned development, as it stands at present, includes the retention of a 25m thick border of existing trees around the whole development area, including the proposed recycling centre. If this band of trees is retained, there will be no change in the visual impact on the Scheduled Monuments.

The present proposal for the western part of the wood is for possible re-planting and this, too, will not change the present visual impact on the Scheduled sites. However, future plans may change, and there is the possibility that the area will be developed for housing. If this is the case, it will introduce a modern element to a traditional farming landscape, and will probably also necessitate the removal of at least sections of the retained band of trees. This would give rise to a different, but not necessarily negative horizon, particularly for Carn Glas.

Overall, any minor changes to Mullans Wood as a distant visual feature, generally on the horizon, and the introduction of modern features on a small scale will have a minor and not entirely negative visual impact on the Scheduled sites

## **9.0 Conclusions of Evaluation**

Of the archaeological sites identified within the bounds of Mullans Wood, the majority will be unaffected by the initial development of the recycling centre. Site 3, a group of small cairns tentatively identified as prehistoric field clearance cairns, will be destroyed by the development of the recycling centre, and it is recommended that a small archaeological investigation be undertaken to confirm their identification.

The remaining sites, particularly 1 and 2, are likely to be within land designated for coniferous planting and it has been recommended that these be protected according to the Forests and Archaeology guidelines.

The development will have a minimal and not entirely negative visual impact on nearby Scheduled Ancient Monuments and no further action is recommended at this stage.

## **Appendix 1. Data Sources and Bibliography**

The following data sources were consulted during this evaluation:

- Highland Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) held by the Archaeology Unit within Highland Council in Inverness
- National Monuments Record for Scotland (NMRS) held by RCAHMS in Edinburgh
- Aerial photographs, series CPE/UK/0/84, held by Highland Council in Inverness

- Old maps held by the Map Library within the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh
- Valuation Rolls and other archival documentation held by the Highland Archive in Inverness

The following books provided background information for the evaluation:

- Alston, D.1999: Ross and Cromarty A Historical Guide
- Forestry Authority 1995: Forests and Archaeology Guidelines
- Marshall, E. 1973: The Black Isle: A Portrait of the Past
- Watson, WJ, 1904: Place Names of Ross and Cromarty

## Appendix 2. Photographic Record (on Disc)

Photo no.	Site no.	Description	Angle of view
1.		Mature scots pines from earlier plantings surviving in middle of wood	From SE
2.	1.	Hut circle	From SE
3.	1.	Hut circle: bucket lies on outside of NW arc of bank	From SW
4.	1.	Hut circle	From NW
5.	2.	Large cairn, with small deciduous tree and exposed stones	From W
6.	2.	Same large cairn, centre of picture within break in trees with deciduous tree	From SE
7	2	Large cairn cut through by FC ploughing	From NW
8	3	Group of small cairns, indistinct, at SE edge of forestry	From S.
9	4	Dykes, roadway. Inner dyke	From E
10	4	Dykes, roadway, outer dyke	From E
11	5	Boundary Dyke with beech trees on SE boundary of wood	From SE
12	5	Boundary Dyke with beech trees on SW boundary of wood	From NW
13.	SAM 1	Cairn Irenan: view to Mullans Wood, coniferous trees in centre of horizon	To E
14	SAM 2	Kilcoy North: view to Mullans Wood visible as coniferous trees behind cottage	To NE
15	SAM 3	Kilcoy South: view to Mullans Wood visible as coniferous trees behind cottage	To NE
16	SAM 4	Carn Glas chambered cairn: view to Mullans Wood filling horizon	To NW
17	SAM 5	Carn Glas cairns: view towards Mullans Wood, obstructed by intervening deciduous woodland	To N

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