

Case information

Case ID	300017846
File Reference	AMH/90048/2/1
Name of Site	Cairn of Get

Local Authority	Highland Council
National Grid Reference	ND 31327 41124
Designation No. (if any)	SM90048
Case Type	Amendment

Received/Start Date	30/04/2015
Decision Date	16/08/2016

1. Decision

The monument was first scheduled as two separate, adjacent monuments in 1934 (Cairn of Get, SM90048 and Broughwhin, SM4255) and the documentation does not conform to current standards. The assessment against the scheduling criteria demonstrates that the monuments continue to be of national importance. The decision is to update the entry in the Schedule as **Cairn of Get, chambered cairn, cairns and cists**.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monuments were first scheduled in 1934 and there have been no amendments. The amended designation now proposed will contain both the original scheduled monuments, plus an area to the north that was not previously scheduled. Scheduled monument SM4255 will be technically removed (descheduled) and its archaeological remains included in the amended designation SM90048.

2.2 Development Proposals

N/A.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was considered for amendment as part of the North 2015 Scheduling Enhancement Project.

The site was visited on 30/04/2015.

3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

An assessment against the Scheduling criteria has been carried out (see Annex A).

The monument was found to meet the criteria for scheduling.

The designation criteria are published in the Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 1, pp. 48-50.

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/historic-environment-scotland-policy-statement/>

3.3 Other considerations

N/A

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ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria

Cairn of Get, chambered cairn, cairns and cists.

1 Description

The monument is a group of prehistoric funerary structures including three cairns and several cists (stone-lined graves). The largest structure is a chambered cairn dating from the Neolithic (about 4000BC to 2500BC). Two smaller, circular cairns probably date to the Bronze Age (2500BC to 800BC) or the Iron Age to Early Historic period (about 800BC to AD900). The circular cairns each contain evidence for a cist and four other isolated cists may be contemporary with the cairns. The site is located within open moorland and lies around 110m above sea level.

The chambered cairn is of the Orkney-Cromarty type found mostly in northeast Scotland and the Orkney Islands. It measures approximately 18m in diameter and 2.25m in height and is 'short horned' on plan; the north and south faces of the cairn have pairs of horns projecting, forming concave ends and forecourts. The entrance, on the south, is flanked by two large portal stones, up to 0.6m high. A passage around 3.25m long, lined with stone walling, leads to a small square shaped ante-chamber, the entrance again flanked by portal stones, up to 1.3m high. At the north of the ante-chamber is the main burial chamber, the entrance to which is flanked by portal stones up to 1.7m high. The main chamber retains some evidence of its corbelled stone roof. Two circular cairns are located to the northeast and southeast of the chambered cairn. The northeast cairn is visible as a low mound around 9m in diameter and 1m in high with a shallow depression in the top. The southern cairn is visible as a broad, circular band of stones about 10m in diameter and 0.6m high. This structure resembles a platform cairn of Iron Age to Early Historic date (800BC to AD 900), and both circular cairns may form part of a cemetery dating to this period. The circular cairns each include evidence for a stone-lined cist and there are at least four other cists nearby, each represented by at least one stone slab and measuring up to 1.3m in length, 0.7m in width and 0.4m deep. The monument is located on the crest of an undulating terrace, on gently sloping moorland which runs east southeast to the coast some 1.5km distant.

The scheduled area is irregular on plan. The scheduled area includes the remains described above and an area around them within which evidence relating to the monument's construction, use and abandonment is expected to survive, as shown in red on the accompanying map. The monument was first scheduled in 1934, but the documentation did not meet current standards: the present amendment rectifies this. The above-ground elements of the boardwalk path and information board are specifically excluded from the schedule.

2 **Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria** (Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 1, pp. 48-50.)

2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics

The various elements of the monument are well preserved and it is possible to appreciate the stratigraphy of the chambered cairn and its architectural components. It has an unusual layout with an entrance passage, leading to an ante-chamber then finally the main sub-circular corbelled chamber. These elements can help us understand more about the architecture and use of Neolithic monuments. Together, the cairns and cists provide good evidence for a variety of prehistoric ritual and funerary practices, giving potential to study the construction, use and abandonment of these monuments. There is also strong potential for the survival of other buried archaeological deposits, including burial remains, artefacts such as pottery, and environmental remains such as charcoal or pollen, within, beneath and around the intact elements of the monument. These deposits can help us understand more about ritual and funerary practice, and the significance of materials, technology and craft in a burial context.

It is unusual for burial remains at a single site to cover such a long time period. It is probable that almost 4000 years separates the first use of the chambered cairn from use of at least one of the circular cairns. Scientific study would allow us to develop a better understanding of the chronology of the site, including its date of origin, state of completeness and detailed development sequence. The chambered cairn itself probably developed from a simpler round chambered cairn into the short horned, passage chambered cairn seen today. The circular cairns can be compared with platform cairns elsewhere that were often re-used with later burials added or additional cists built on or within the cairn. Cists are sometimes found in relatively large numbers, and there is potential that further examples lie preserved as buried features. While the original function of the monument was as a burial or funerary site, it may also have had other ceremonial or ritual uses for the local community.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

Short horned chambered cairns are very rare and mainly found in Caithness, where around five other examples are known, including Ormiegill (Canmore ID 9018) and Tulloch of Assery (SM498 and Canmore ID 7934). Platform cairns are also relatively rare; the potential examples here can be compared with the example at Groat's Loch (SM4338 and Canmore ID 9065), only around 400m southwest, and with groups at Reiss and Ackergill in Sinclair's Bay, some 14km north northeast. This monument forms part of a wider group of cairns in the Wattenan area, giving high potential to study burial and ritual practices in the context of other cairns in the locality and more widely in Caithness. There may have been links between the burial cairns in the locality or they may indicate community catchments. This monument's location gives it added potential to enhance and broaden our understanding of prehistoric and protohistoric burial practices.

There are other broadly contemporary monument types in the landscape including Garrywhin fort (SM548 and Canmore ID 9034) located 300m north. Some nearby sites are visible from the Cairn of Get including Garrywhin fort; such intervisibility allows research into the possibility that the sites were linked or related. There is potential to study this dense collection of sites together to understand their functions within the local communities and possible chronological development in the area.

2.3 Associative Characteristics

N/A.

3 Purpose and implications of scheduling

There are no immediate threats to the preservation of the monument. Designation as a scheduled monument remains the most appropriate mechanism to secure the preservation of the monument, and ensure the recognition of its national importance.

4 Assessment of national importance

The monument is of national importance because of its potential to make a significant addition to our knowledge and understanding of the past, particularly the design and construction of prehistoric burial monuments, and the nature of belief systems and burial practices. The chambered cairn is of a rare type and has excellent field characteristics, allowing us to interpret its form, function and position in the landscape. Its entrance passage, three sets of portal stones and corbelled burial chamber are notable, well-preserved features. The two circular cairns potentially represent relatively rare platform cairns and are supplemented by at least four additional, individual cists. The monument has potential for the presence of further buried archaeological remains, including human burials, artefacts and palaeoenvironmental evidence. The time depth displayed by this monument is unusual and important, offering a rare opportunity to study the development of burial practices, at a single site, over three to four millennia. There are numerous other cairns in the vicinity of the monument, which together can contribute to our understanding of prehistoric and early historic society, its organisation, economy, religion and demography. The loss of the monument would significantly diminish our future ability to appreciate and understand prehistoric funerary practice in Caithness, and the placing of cairns and cists within the landscape.

5 References

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