Case information

Case ID	300016778
File Reference	AMH/1841/2/1
Name of Site	Caen, hut circles and souterrain 1060m NW of, on bank of Caen Burn

Local Authority	Highland Council
National Grid Reference	ND 0110 1860
Designation No. (if any)	SM1841
Case Type	Amendment

Received/Start Date	29/04/2015
Decision Date	16/08/2016

1. Decision

The monument was first scheduled in 1934 and the documentation does not conform to current standards. The assessment against criteria demonstrates that the monument continues to be of national importance. The decision is to update the entry in the Schedule as **Caen, hut circles and souterrain 982m, 1035m and 1083m NNW of.**

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument was first scheduled in 1934; no subsequent amendment.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was considered for amendment as part of the 2015 Highland project and visited on 29/04/2015.

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
Caen, hut circles and souterrain 982m, 1035m and 1083m NNW of

1 Description

The monument is the remains of three roundhouses and a souterrain, probably dating to the late Bronze Age or Iron Age (between 1500 BC and AD 400). They are visible as the turf-covered upstanding remains of three roundhouses, defined by substantial turf and stone walls. The entrance to a souterrain is visible within the southernmost roundhouse, and the footings of three post-medieval buildings lie adjacent to the northernmost roundhouse. The monument lies at around 90m above sea level, on the hillside above the Caen Burn.

The most northerly of the roundhouses measures about eight metres in diameter within walls up to four metres wide and one metre high, increasing in height to about 1.5m around the southeast facing entrance. This entrance is filled with rubble, and wall facings noted within the tumbled south section of the wall west of this entrance may represent the remains of a souterrain. The footings of three post-medieval buildings, the largest measuring 12.5m in length and three metres across, lie adjacent to this roundhouse and appear to have disturbed its western section. The second roundhouse lies around 59m to the south. It is terraced into the slope and measures about nine metres in diameter within banks around 1.7m in height and 1.5m in width, with an entrance on the southeast. The southernmost roundhouse lies around 102m to the south-southwest and measures around 10m in diameter within a turf and stone bank measuring about 0.75m in height and 1.5m in width, increasing to around three metres wide towards the entrance on the southeast. The entrance to a souterrain is visible within the internal wall face in the eastern arc of this roundhouse. The passage runs under and extends beyond the wall of the roundhouse.

The scheduled area is in three parts, two of which are circular on plan and the third irregular, to include the remains described above and an area around 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 and the documentation does not conform to current standards. The present amendment rectifies this.

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

2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics

The monument consists of three well-preserved examples of later prehistoric roundhouses, surviving as penannular banks of turf and stone measuring up to 1.7m in height and between 8m and 10m in internal diameter. A souterrain is visible within

the southernmost example, and the possible remains of a further souterrain has been noted within the wall of the northern roundhouse. The footings of three post-medieval buildings lie adjacent to this hut circle. By analogy with excavated roundhouses in the region, the roundhouses at Caen are likely late Bronze Age or Iron Age in date and there is good potential for the survival of archaeological deposits, including occupation and abandonment debris, artefacts and environmental remains such as charcoal and pollen within, beneath and around the roundhouses. This can tell us about how people lived, their trade and exchange contacts, and their social status, as well as provide information about roundhouse architecture, construction methods and the contemporary environment. The roundhouses, therefore, have the potential to add to our understanding of settlement, land-use and environment during later prehistory and provide information about the structure of contemporary society and economy.

While there is no clear indication whether the roundhouses derive from an extended development sequence, differences in the form of the roundhouses and analogy with examples excavated nearby may suggest an extended period of occupation and use. Scientific study of the roundhouses' form and construction would enhance our understanding of the development sequence of this site and of later prehistoric settlements in general, while comparative study of the form and structure of the roundhouses has the potential to provide information about the design, construction and development of later prehistoric settlement. The presence of post-medieval buildings adjacent to one of the roundhouses provides evidence of long-term occupation of this location, though there is no clear indication whether this represents continuous occupation or later re-settlement. Scientific study of the relationship between the roundhouses and post-medieval settlement has the potential to enhance our understanding of the long-term use and development of the landscape at Caen, and of similar multi-period landscapes in general.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

Later prehistoric roundhouses are found throughout Scotland. The structures at Caen are of particular interest because of their good condition, the proximity of differing forms of roundhouse and presence of at least one souterrain. This interest is enhanced by the co-location of one roundhouse with the remains of post-medieval buildings, indicating the extended use of this location for settlement. The remains form one part of a larger cluster of prehistoric and later remains, including field systems and hut circles around 330m north (Canmore ID 7487), 580m north-northeast (Canmore ID 7489), 580m north-northwest (Canmore ID 7488), 260m southwest (Canmore ID 7447) and 740m southeast (Canmore ID 7424). Additionally, souterrains have been identified about 1.3km southwest (Canmore ID 6999) and 2km west-northwest (Canmore ID 7001), and a post-medieval township immediately to the east (Canmore ID 97750). The proximity of these remains has the potential to enhance and broaden our understanding of prehistoric society and community, the development of later prehistoric settlement and economy and the long-term use of the landscape. There is potential to study these sites together to understand their functions within the local communities, social status and settlement hierarchy in the area.

2.3 Associative Characteristics

N/A

3 Purpose and implications of scheduling

The field investigation concluded the site is stable and in good condition. There are no immediate threats to the preservation of the monument. Designation as a scheduled monument is therefore most appropriate mechanism to secure the preservation of the monument, and ensure the recognition of its national importance.

4 Assessment of national importance

This monument is of national importance because it can make a significant addition to our understanding of the past, in particular of Bronze Age and Iron Age society and the construction, use and development of settlement in the north of Scotland. It is a good example of later prehistoric settlement that retains its field characteristics and there is good potential for the survival of archaeological deposits within and around the roundhouses. As a well preserved example it can significantly expand understanding of domestic buildings, agriculture and economy. The monument's importance is enhanced by its association with a wider cluster of later prehistoric remains and with later settlement. The loss or damage of the monument would diminish our ability to appreciate and understand the character and development of later prehistoric settlements in Sutherland, society and economy during this period, as well as the long-term use and development of the landscape.

5 References

Historic Environment Scotland http://www.canmore.org.uk reference number CANMORE ID 7444, 7446, 7478 (accessed on 11/05/2016).

The Highland Council HER references are MHG10131, MHG10133, MHG10148.

Fairhurst, H. and Taylor, D. B. (1974) *A hut-circle settlement at Kilphedir, Sutherland, Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, vol. 103, 1970-1.*

MacIntyre, A. (1998) Survey and excavation at Kilearnan Hill, Sutherland, 1982-3. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol. 128, 167-201.

RCAHMS (1911) *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments and Constructions of Scotland. Second report and inventory of monuments and constructions in the county of Sutherland*. Edinburgh.

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