



Case information

Case ID	300016750
File Reference	AMH/90320/2/1
Name of Site	Hilton of Cadboll, chapel 500m NNW of

Local Authority	Highland Council
National Grid Reference	NH 8731 7687
Designation No. (if any)	SM90320
Case Type	Amendment

Received/Start Date	04/05/2015
Decision Date	10/11/2016

1. Decision

The monument was first scheduled in 1962 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 amend the entry in the Schedule as **Hilton of Cadboll, chapel and site of cross slab 90m NNW of Parkside**.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument was first scheduled in 1962; there have been no later amendments.

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 04/05/2015.

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 Hilton of Cadboll, chapel and site of cross slab 90m NNW of Parkside.

1 Description

The monument is the remains of a chapel and burial ground visible as low, turf-covered banks. The chapel was probably built in the 13th century; however, excavation has revealed evidence of Pictish activity sometime between AD 650 and AD900 which may have been associated with an earlier chapel and burial ground. The monument also includes the site of the Hilton of Cadboll Pictish cross slab which was carved about AD 800 and was moved from the site around the 1860s. The monument lies on a raised beach overlooking the Moray Firth, about 5m above sea level and bounded on the north and west by rising ground.

The chapel is rectangular on plan, measures about 12m by 6.5m and is oriented east - west. Low turf-covered banks around the chapel indicate multi-phase, subrectangular enclosures on a slightly different alignment to the building. The inner enclosure measures about 32m east-northeast – west-southwest by 23m transversely within banks 3m wide. It probably has early origins and may define the burial ground. A larger, later enclosure includes the same area as well as additional ground to the east and south. It measures 45m by 34m and probably dates from the 16th to 19th centuries. Limited excavation within the enclosure to the west of the chapel has revealed fragments of human bone from about AD 650-900, suggesting early use of the site for burial, as well as medieval burials. Excavation also revealed what may be the original setting for the Hilton of Cadboll cross slab, comprising one half of a probable ‘collar-stone’ sited about 6m west of the medieval chapel; this setting was recorded but not removed. About 0.3m to the west is the site of another setting that probably held the slab from about 1150 until 1674. The broken, lower portion of the cross slab was found in position here in 2001 and was removed for conservation.

The scheduled area is rectangular on plan and 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 post and wire fence, gate and electricity box are excluded from the scheduling. The monument was first scheduled in 1962, but the documentation did not meet 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 chapel survives as a stone wall foundation and wall base, now covered with turf and visible as a low bank. When a small trench was excavated across the west wall, it revealed a massive sandstone block at the base of the wall, then five courses of dressed blocks. The surrounding enclosures are also visible as a low banks. The limited excavations demonstrate that remains of the chapel, burials and other buried archaeological deposits survive in a well-preserved condition.

Excavations have examined only a very small portion of the chapel and burial ground and there is significant potential for buried archaeological remains that can support a better understanding of the chapel's form, construction and development. Although an architectural fragment suggests the building represented by the stone wall bases may date from the 13th century, there is potential for earlier footings and scientific study could provide more information on the chronology of the site, including its date of origin and development sequence. Further architectural fragments may exist that can provide information about the architectural embellishment of the chapel and help to refine its date. There is also potential to learn more about the enclosure banks that surround the chapel, to understand their relationship with the burial ground, and to date and understand their development sequence. The excavations at the west end of the chapel revealed a wall that could be dated to the earliest phase of activity, a period from the 7th to 9th centuries until the mid-12th century. This appears to relate to the inner, subrectangular enclosure bank visible as an earthwork. The excavations also located deposits of wind-blown sand that contain organic remains and medieval pottery and suggest a medieval settlement existed in the immediate vicinity. Further deposits are still in situ and the artefacts and ecofacts have potential to inform a better understanding of how the chapel related to a nearby settlement.

There is clear potential for a large number of human burials to exist within the monument and scientific study could reveal evidence for health, diet, illness, cause of death, and perhaps the types of activities people undertook during life over a long time period. The limited excavations revealed four child/youth burials in a small area west of the chapel, two probably contemporary with the chapel's construction, two from later in the medieval or early post-medieval periods. This suggests there was spatial zoning within the burial ground which may have endured from the about the time the chapel was built into the late medieval period. The recovery of disarticulated human bone from about AD 650-900 suggests evidence for early use of the site for burial may survive.

The original function of the monument was as a place of worship and burial. The former presence of a highly impressive cross slab to the west of the church suggests that this site of worship was of particular significance.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

Medieval chapels such as this with clear evidence for well-preserved masonry and burials with good bone preservation are relatively rare across Scotland. However, the significance of this site is increased because of its association with the Hilton of Cadboll Pictish cross slab, carved around AD 800 and one of the most magnificent of all Pictish cross slabs, now housed in the National Museum of Scotland. One face of the slab is carved with a hunting scene and Pictish Symbols; the other face was chipped off between the sixteenth and late seventeenth centuries, with a new inscription being substituted in 1676. However, excavation of the lower portion of the cross slab shows that this face originally carried a large stepped cross surround by animal ornamentation. The excavation identified two settings 6m west of the chapel where the stone formerly stood, though an earlier location on the cliff top overlooking the sea cannot be ruled out. Such a possible location would be comparable to that of the Shandwick cross slab (scheduled monument reference SM1674, Canmore ID 15278).

Henderson suggests that the discovery of the original lower portion of the Hilton slab and fragments from its front face has revealed in effect a new monument, which we now know carried a 'cross of salvation' (in James, Henderson, Foster and Jones 2008, 127, 200). It can be seen as a massive, profoundly Christian monument, comparable with the other tall slabs of the Tarbat peninsula, particularly the Nigg cross slab (scheduled monument reference SM1680, Canmore ID 15280) and the Shandwick cross slab. These tall slabs, alongside many carved stones from the monastery at Portmahomack (scheduled monument reference SM12793, Canmore ID 15662), represent a short, intensive period of artistic and intellectual creativity in Easter Ross from the late 8th century. There is potential to study this monument alongside the others on the peninsula to understand more about how carved stones were used, both in the Pictish period and in subsequent centuries. Stone cross slabs may have marked entrances to burial grounds or monastic enclosures, served as the focus for worship in the absence of a church, or had a role in liturgical rites or processions. Or the Tarbat stones may have had a more inter-related function, for example as sentinels marking the lands of the Pictish monastery of Portmahomack, 8km to the northeast, or as parts of a coherent liturgical landscape (Henderson writing in James, Henderson, Foster and Jones 2008, 201).

The location of the chapel on a raised beach overlooking the Moray Firth means it would have been quite a prominent feature and focal point in the landscape, visible from the water and land. The higher ground just to the north and west provides a slightly elevated position from which to look over the monument.

2.3 Associative Characteristics

The monument was the setting where a finely carved and unique Pictish cross slab stood from around AD 800 to around 1674. An early Pictish chapel on the site of the medieval chapel may have formed part of the same ceremonial landscape as the slab. The stone was reworked as a grave marker around 1676 but then never used for that purpose. It was removed to Invergordon Castle in the 19th century and then donated to the British Museum around 1921. This caused a storm of protest with

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extensive newspaper coverage, and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland led a campaign for the return of the stone, which saw the stone transported up to the National Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh by November 1921. Today it remains a prominent exhibit in the National Museum of Scotland. In 2001, the lower portion of the cross slab, left in-situ in 1674, was discovered during an excavation and recorded before being removed for curation and subsequent display off-site. A modern replica of the cross slab now stands close to the chapel but is not within the scheduled area.

Accounts suggest the medieval chapel was dedicated to the Virgin and it is named 'Our Lady's Chapel' on a document dated to 1610. Records from the 18th century indicate the chapel was in a ruinous state by that time.

3 Purpose and implications of scheduling

The site visit showed the site is in a stable condition and well preserved. 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 it has an inherent potential to make a significant addition to the understanding of the past, in particular the form and development of early ecclesiastical sites and the role and function of monumental cross slabs. Small scale excavation shows that the lower walls of the medieval chapel retain their structural characteristics and lie within a burial ground that contains well-preserved archaeological remains, including graves and an early setting for the Hilton of Cadboll cross slab. There is potential to understand how the site was used before the medieval church was built, when the first church building was constructed, how it related to the burial ground and cross slab setting, and how the church developed over time. The monument stands above the shore of the Moray Firth and would have been a prominent part of the early medieval and medieval landscapes. The association of the chapel site with the Hilton of Cadboll cross slab enhances its importance and can add to our understanding of both the function of the chapel and of the slab. The monument can be compared with contemporary monuments at Nigg, Shandwick and Portmahomack to improve understanding of the network of Pictish ecclesiastical sites in Easter Ross. The loss of the monument would impede our understanding of the layout and development of early medieval and medieval religious centres and the use of carved stones.

5 References

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