



Case information

Case ID	300017744
File Reference	AMH/5315/2/1
Name of Site	Cairn of Shiels, cairn

Local Authority	Aberdeenshire
National Grid Reference	NO 74700 71700
Designation No. (if any)	SM5315
Case Type	Amendment

Received/Start Date	29/01/2016
Decision Date	03/02/2017

1. Decision

The monument was first scheduled in 1992 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 **Cairn of Shiels, cairn**.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument was first scheduled in 1992; no subsequent amendments.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The site was considered for amendment and visited on 31/08/2016.

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 Shiels, cairn

1 Description

The monument is the remains of a burial cairn dating from the Bronze Age (between 2500BC and 800BC). It is visible as a circular mound of turf and stone measuring around 20.5m in diameter and 1.5m in height. The monument lies on a prominent ridge on the summit of Hill of Garvock, at about 260m above sea level.

The scheduled area is circular on plan, measuring 33m in diameter, centred on the cairn, to include 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.

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

2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics

The monument survives as a substantial mound of turf and stone. Although some disturbance of the cairn is visible in the form of a dished hollow in the centre of the mound, the monument survives largely intact and there is high potential for the survival of important archaeological information within, beneath and around the cairn, including one or more graves or cist settings and human skeletal remains in the form of cremations or inhumations. There is also potential for the survival of associated artefacts such as pottery and flint. Such deposits can add to our understanding of the practice and significance of burial and commemoration of the dead at specific points in prehistory, along with the nature of belief systems. They may also help us to understand the changing structure of society in the area. In addition, the cairn is likely to overlie and seal a buried land surface that could provide evidence of the immediate environment before the monument was constructed. Botanical remains, including pollen or charred plant material, may also survive within archaeological deposits deriving from the cairn's construction and use. This evidence can provide information about the climate, vegetation and agriculture in the area before and during the construction and use of the cairn.

Cairns such as this are typically Bronze Age in origin, dating most commonly to between about 2000 BC and 800 BC, though it is possible that the site has earlier origins as a place of ritual or burial. Excavations of Bronze Age cairns elsewhere often show evidence for an initial phase of burial and then reuse for later, secondary, burial. Therefore the monument at Cairn of Shiels may have an extended development sequence and it is likely to have been an important place of commemoration for many generations. Scientific study of the monument's form and

construction compared with other cairns would enhance our understanding of the development sequence of this site and of Bronze Age ritual and funerary monuments in northeast Scotland in general.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

Burial cairns are found throughout Scotland and cairns are often placed in conspicuous locations within the landscape, at the edge of arable land and overlook or are intervisible with other ritual monuments. The example at Cairn of Shiels is of particular significance because of its good survival, position within a larger cluster of burial cairns and prominent location. It is situated on a ridge with extensive views to the west overlooking the Howe of Mearns and east where it has views to the sea. The location also serves to emphasise and increase the prominence of the cairn.

It forms part of a group of cairns arranged along the northeast-southwest oriented Hill of Garvock, including The Shiels (Canmore ID 36505), Garvock Hill (Canmore ID 36332) and Tower of Johnston (scheduled monument reference 6435; Canmore ID 36330). It is likely these cairns were originally intervisible. There is also a wider cluster of known funerary monuments in this area, including a burial cairn excavated around 3km southwest (Canmore ID 36532) and a barrow recorded about 2km northwest (scheduled monument reference number 5168; Canmore ID 36526). The proximity of these monuments can give important insights into the Bronze Age landscape and the placing of such sites in the landscape. They can add to our understanding of social organisation, land-use and belief during the Bronze Age.

2.3 Associative Characteristics

There are no known significant associative characteristics which contribute to the site's cultural significance.

3 Purpose and implications of scheduling

Our field visit showed the site is in a stable condition and well preserved. Designation as a scheduled monument is an appropriate mechanism to secure its continued preservation and ensure 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 the design and construction of burial monuments and the nature of belief systems, ritual and burial practices in Bronze Age society. Ritual and funerary monuments are a major source of evidence for human activity during the Bronze Age in Scotland. They are particularly important for enhancing our understanding of Bronze Age society, its organisation, economy, religion and demography. The cairn is a good example of a burial cairn which largely retains its overall form and structural footprint, allowing us to interpret its original form

and function. It retains high potential for buried archaeological remains including burials, artefacts and palaeo-environmental evidence. The monument can significantly expand our understanding of the nature of Bronze Age belief systems, ceremonial and burial practices, as well as society and economy. The monument's importance is enhanced by its position within a group of intervisible cairns constructed along the Hill of Garvock, association with a wider cluster of later prehistoric remains, prominent location and open aspect. The loss of the monument would diminish our ability to appreciate and understand the meaning and importance of ceremony and ritual, death and burial in the Bronze Age. Our understanding of the nature and placement of Bronze Age funerary and ceremonial monuments within the landscape of northeast Scotland would also be diminished.

5 References

Historic Environment Scotland <http://www.canmore.org.uk> reference number CANMORE ID 36564 (accessed on 17/10/2016).

Aberdeenshire SMR Reference NO77SW0006 (accessed on 17/10/2016).

Ordnance Survey (Name Book. *Object Name Books of the Ordnance Survey (6 inch and 1/2500 scale)*). Page(s): Book No. 11, 24

RCAHMS. (1982) *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. The archaeological sites and monuments of South Kincardine, Kincardine and Deeside District, Grampian Region, The archaeological sites and monuments of Scotland series no 15*. Edinburgh. Page(s): 9, No. 20
