

Case information

Case ID	300017437
File Reference	AMH/5802/2/1
Name of Site	Buail Ormaclett, souterrain and settlement, Usinish

Local Authority	Na h-Eileanan Siar
National Grid Reference	NF 84996 34508
Designation No. (if any)	SM5802
Case Type	Amendment

Received/Start Date	10/09/2015
Decision Date	03/02/2017

1. Decision

The monument was first scheduled in 1993 and the scheduled area was incorrectly located. 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 **Buaile Ormacleit, settlement**.

2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

2.1 Designation Background

The monument was first scheduled in 1993 but the scheduled area was wrongly located; no subsequent amendments.

2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals.

3. Assessment

3.1 Assessment information

The present assessment is desk-based, using available information and has included reference to recent photographs and accurate RCAHMS survey data.

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

Buaile Ormacleit, settlement

1 Description

The monument is the remains of a settlement mound, probably dating to the Iron Age (between 600BC and AD 400) and five shieling huts, all constructed on or very close to the mound and of likely 17th or 18th century date. The monument lies on the edge of a valley-side terrace, about 60m above sea level.

The settlement mound, which is grass-grown and stony, measures about 13m in diameter and 3m high. The largest shieling hut lies on the summit of the mound. It measures 3.2m northeast to southwest by 2.8m transversely within walls 0.6m thick and 0.6m in high, with an entrance on the east. A second smaller hut is attached to the north end. A subcircular hut just south of the mound and measures 1.9m in diameter, and an oval hut southeast of the mound measures 3m north-east to southwest by 2.3m transversely. A subrectangular hut north-east of the mound measures 4m by 2m, its interior having two compartments.

The area to be scheduled is circular on plan, measuring 40m in diameter, centred on the top of the mound 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.

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

2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics

The most prominent feature is a substantial stony mound probably representing the collapsed remains of a prehistoric circular building and associated archaeological deposits. A probable saddle quern is embedded in its southwest flank. The scale of the mound indicates that buried walls and other structural remains are likely to survive, while the shieling huts constructed on and around the mound survive as upstanding and clearly visible structures. There is high potential for the survival of structural remains and archaeological deposits, including occupation and abandonment debris, artefacts and environmental remains such as charcoal and pollen within, beneath and around the remains of the settlement mound and shieling huts. This monument has the potential to add to our understanding of settlement, land-use and environment during both later prehistory and the post-medieval period, and provide information about the economy, diet and social status of the occupants and the structure of contemporary society and economy.

The presence of a saddle quern and the plan of the remains indicate the settlement mound is likely Iron Age in date, though excavations of similar mounds elsewhere have provided evidence for occupation extending from the Bronze Age into the early medieval period. Shieling huts are associated with seasonal use of upland pastures and typically indicate post-medieval occupation, though some shielings have provided evidence of earlier occupation. The field remains suggest the monument had a complex development sequence with occupation spanning as much as two millennia. Scientific study of this site would allow us to develop a better understanding of the nature and chronology of this site, including its date of origin, the character of the remains and the development sequence.

2.2 Contextual Characteristics

Later prehistoric settlement is found throughout the Western Isles, with a concentration upon the western machair coastlands. The monument at Buaille Ormaclait is significant as a substantial and well-preserved settlement mound, situated on the eastern side of South Uist with evidence for long-term occupation or re-occupation. It forms one part of a wider cluster of later prehistoric remains, including a wheelhouse (Canmore ID 331140) about 265m southwest, and a souterrain and settlement (scheduled monument reference SM5801; Canmore ID 33126 and 10152) about 492m south-south west. A scatter post-medieval remains, including shieling huts, farmsteads and townships, has been recorded in the immediate area. The proximity of these remains has the potential to enhance and broaden our understanding of prehistoric and post-medieval settlement, society and economy. There is potential to study these sites together to understand their functions within the local communities, social status and place in the settlement hierarchy, as well as changing settlement patterns and systems of inheritance.

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

Designation as a scheduled monument is an 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 Iron Age and post-medieval society and the construction, use and development of settlement in the west of Scotland. It is a good example of later prehistoric settlement that retains its field characteristics and has significant potential for the survival of buried archaeological deposits. As a well-

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preserved example of a settlement, the monument can significantly expand our understanding of domestic buildings, agriculture and economy. The monument's importance is enhanced by surviving post-medieval occupation in the same location and its association with a wider cluster of later prehistoric and post-medieval remains. The loss or damage of the monument would diminish our ability to appreciate and understand the character and development of Iron Age settlements and the seasonal use of upland pasture in the 17th and 18th centuries in the Western Isles, as well as society and economy during these periods.

5 References

Historic Environment Scotland <http://www.canmore.org.uk> reference number CANMORE ID 331141 (accessed on 07/07/2016).

Barber, J. 2003 Bronze Age farms and Iron Age farm mounds of the Outer Hebrides. *Scottish Archaeological Internet Report* 3.

Cheape, H. 1996 Shielings in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland: prehistory to the present, *Folk Life* 35, 7-24.

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Sharples, N (ed) (2012) *A late Iron Age farmstead in the Outer Hebrides: Excavations at mound 1, Bornais, South Uist*. Oxford.
