

Scale
0 10m



Mulchaich West settlement
Ferintosh, Ross-shire
GR centred on NH 5763 5688

Mulchaich Farm, Chambered Cairn,

A plane table survey and profiles of this scheduled chambered cairn were completed by NOSAS members in April 2011. The cairn is situated on a knoll which has a steeper drop to the SW and is unusual in that it has two kerbs. The height difference between the two kerbs is 1.5m-2m although on the SW side it is 4m. The inner kerb surrounds the top of the knoll and is roughly circular, c.17m diameter edge to edge; some of the stones of the kerb have been displaced and there are gaps but the kerb is clearly traceable as a change in slope and is generally 0.5m high. The cup marked stone is at the south edge of this kerb. The outer kerb is elliptical and 50m diameter NW-SE, 40m NE-SW. The stones here are generally smaller than those in the upper kerb and many have been displaced. The height of this kerb varies from 0.3-0.5m to 1m although it is barely discernable in places.

Mulchaich Farm, West Settlement

The site is located to the N of the farm of Mulchaich on the slopes of the Black Isle opposite the town of Dingwall just 1km from the shore of the Cromarty Firth. These slopes are NW facing and intensively farmed. The settlement covers an area of 100m x 70m and is situated on two steep spurs of ground which enclose a marsh. The majority of the buildings are on the north most of these spurs. The site comprises the remains of 7 buildings, a large enclosure and several working areas - see plan for layout.

The remains of six substantial buildings are very obvious. A seventh building on the south spur is barely discernable; this building continues into a neighbouring garden where it has been enhanced to form a platform for a garden seat. Apart from these 7 buildings the site also comprises an enclosure and several working areas. A quarry and some of the worked areas in the NE part of the site may be relatively recent. See plan for layout.

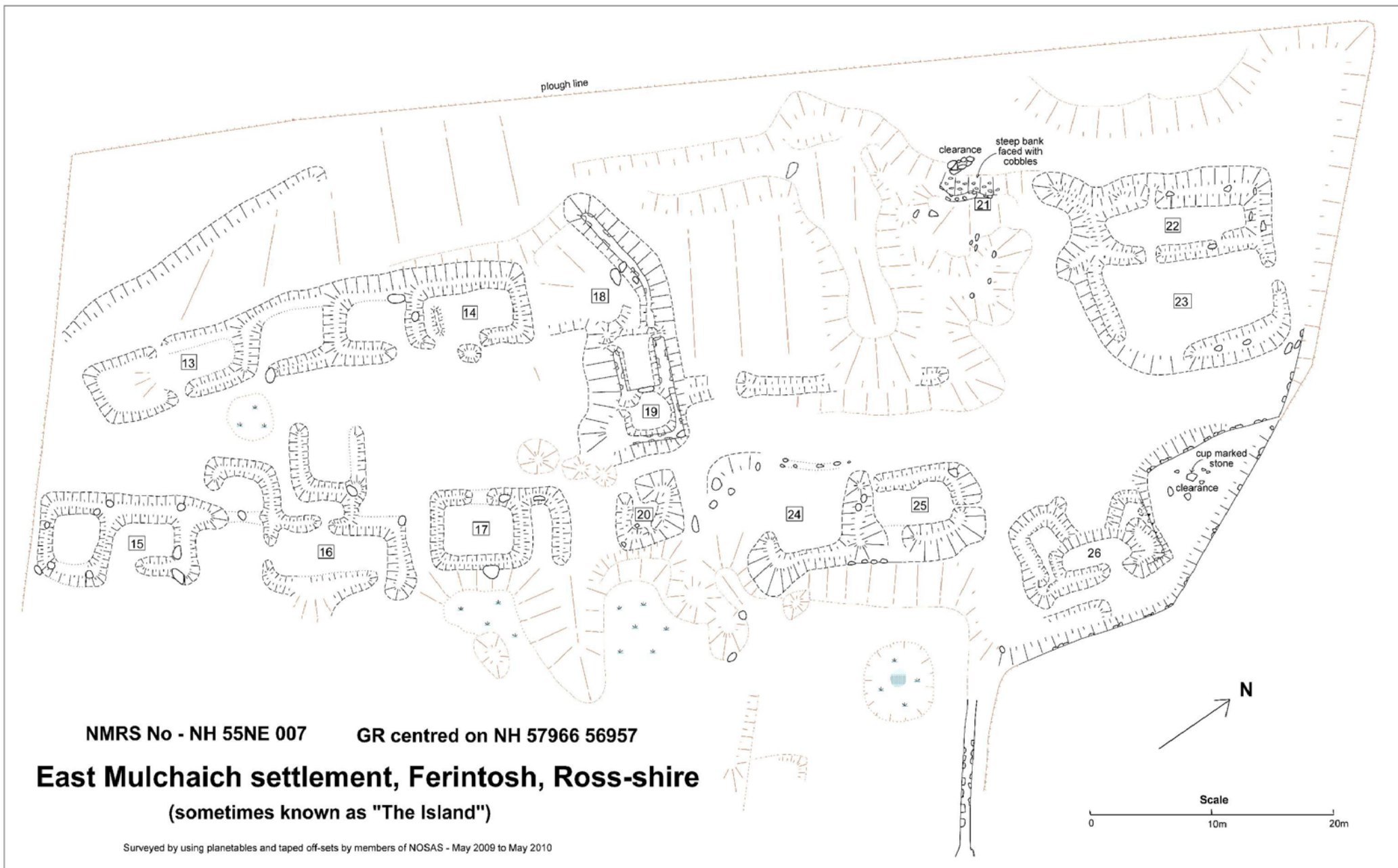
Five of the six buildings are of similar construction. They have the remains of solid stone footings, the walls probably robbed of much of their stone, on substantial turf and stone platforms. The platforms have underbuild of as much as 1m height at their lower ends, buildings 04, 05 and 06 for example. The wall footings are generally of stone and turf, although in some places they have double faced stonework with a rubble core. The walls vary from 0.5m to 0.7m height externally and 0.2m to 0.5m internally.

Two of the six buildings are kilns with barns. The upper one, site 07, is constructed into a steep bank and is much more wasted than the lower one, site 02. This is more substantially constructed and has 3 compartments; the upper compartment being a kiln bowl which has been filled in.

Two of the buildings, sites 03 and 05, have opposing entrances, although in both cases one of the entrances is not very convincing. Site 01, straddles the lowest part of the marsh and has 4 compartments, the south one of which extends into the neighbouring garden where its limits are indiscernible. Site 06 also has 4 compartments each having a wide entrance in the east wall.

The enclosure, site 09, too has the remains of quite substantial surrounding walls and slopes gently towards the NW. The quarry, site 12, has a south and west face of 1.5m deep, the NE bank is 0.7m deep and appears to respect the adjacent enclosure, but it is difficult to say whether or not it is contemporary with the settlement, it may well have been in use at a later date. The working areas, sites 10 and 11, slope gently to the west and are bounded on their west sides by an embankment of 0.5m to 0.8m height. A possible trackway descends the slope towards the marsh

This site is believed to have been the site of a former Ferintosh distillery by the landowner, by local folk and even people in the wider area of Ross. The farmer says that in the upper part of the marsh there is a well; but no evidence of this was found. The Roy map of c1750 depicts a densely populated area at Ferintosh, with at least 7 large townships, but the site is not depicted on the 1st Edition OS survey of 1870.



NMRS No - NH 55NE 007

GR centred on NH 57966 56957

East Mulchaich settlement, Ferintosh, Ross-shire
 (sometimes known as "The Island")

Surveyed by using planetables and taped off-sets by members of NOSAS - May 2009 to May 2010

Mulchaich Farm, East Settlement – GR centred on NH 57966 56957

This township is located 400m to the NE of Mulchaich Farm in intensively farmed land. It is on a NW facing slope above the Cromarty Firth and has extensive views towards the town of Dingwall and Ben Wyvis. The site is in the middle of a field on an elongated flat knoll and does not appear to have been ploughed. It is grazed by cattle or sheep but in the summer is overgrown with dockens and thistles. The site covers an area of 100m x 50m. The remains of nine buildings, two enclosures and several other features are apparent as earth or earth and stone banks, which are 0.3m to 0.5m in height with a spread of between 1 and 1.5m. Some of the buildings have distinct stone edges to their footings, others have substantial earth underbuild on their lower sides. Many of the buildings have multiple compartments. See plan for layout

Buildings 13 and 14 and buildings 15, 16 and 17 in the SW part of the site form two parallel ranges, which stretch for a length of approximately 50m and enclose an elongated quadrangle, with building 19, set at right angles in the central part of the site, forming the north limit. Building 19 has more stone composition in its wall footings and has two compartments, with a stone slab set on edge between them.

The north part of the site has two single compartment buildings, both with enclosures, 22-23 and 24-25. A complex building, 26, occupies the NE corner of the site. The main part of this building is just 6m x 2.5m internally and there are two outshots, with communicating openings into the main compartment, abutting each of the west most corners; both are at a higher level by some 0.3m; the south most also has an entrance to the outside in the south.

A cup marked stone was found amongst clearance material to the north of building 26. The stone measures 84cms x 69cms x c30cms and has 16, possibly 17 cups. On the NW side of the site there is a complex series of terraces with, in one part, a steep bank, 21, which is faced with cobbles; this is 5m in length x 1m in height.

Two areas of quarrying are seen as deep indentations into the side of the knoll, one into the NW side and the other, a smaller one, into the SE side. An earth and stone bank which has been truncated by the NW quarry may have defined an enclosure

This site is not depicted on the 1st Edition OS survey of 1870 but the Roy map of c1750 depicts a densely populated area at Ferintosh, with at least 7 large townships. In 1689 Duncan Forbes of Culloden (1644 – 1704) secured the privilege of distilling whisky free of duty on his Ferintosh Estate for services rendered to the Crown, his estate had been sacked by the Jacobites in 1689. There was an immediate boom in the production of the spirit and Ferintosh whisky became increasingly popular and important, both because of its quality and its price. In 1781 there was an outcry from Lowland distillers against the flood of whisky produced in Ferintosh.

In c1782 a large distillery was constructed at Ferintosh, but "the privilege" was withdrawn in 1786 to meet other distillers complaints about the injustice of the competition from Ferintosh whisky.

Robert Burns in his poem "Scotch Drink", 1786, devoted a verse to Ferintosh whisky, lamenting:

"Thee Ferintosh! O sadly lost!

Scotland lament frae coast to coast!

Now colic grips, an' barkin' hoast

May kill us a';

For loyal Forbes' charter'd hoast

Is taen awa'!"