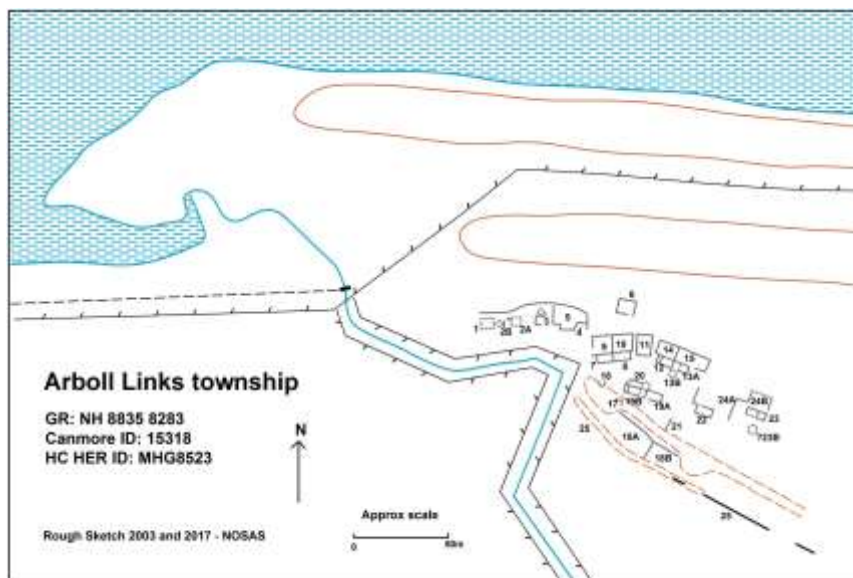


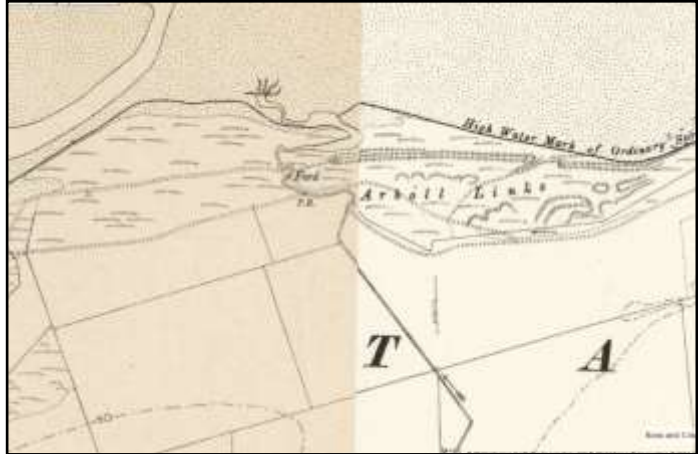
Report of the Survey of the Arbol Links Township, Easter Ross, carried out by members of NOSAS in January 2017



General view of the township from the SE

Introduction

Arboll township, sometimes known as Arboll Links, centred on GR NH 8835 8283, is located on the north shore of the Tarbat peninsular 2kms east of the village of Inver. The township is 150m from the shoreline at the back of several large sand dunes in an area of rough grassland which is occasionally grazed by cattle. This survey was carried out as part of an exploratory walk between Inver and Portmahomack for the Shorewatch programme. Brief details and a rough sketch of the township had been taken previously on a NOSAS walk in 2003.



The township comprises the remains of 9 (possibly 11) buildings, up to 12 enclosures, several midden pits and a possible kiln. A channelled burn runs down the west side of the township and drains into the sea at a small creek. This creek has clearly been important to the residents of the township in enabling access to the sea, but from the map evidence it is apparent that its course today and that of the shoreline has changed over the years. The township is marked as a cluster of ruins on the current OS map and is recorded on both Canmore (ID: 15318) and the HC HER (ID: MHG8523).

M. Marshall, NOSAS - May 2017

Brief history

The township does not appear on the maps of 1876 (*1st edition OS survey*) and 1904 (*2nd edition OS survey, above*) but it is marked on an estate plan of Geanies dated 1833, where it has at least 7 roofed buildings. Interestingly the Roy map of c1750 (*right*) has the township of "mill of Arbo" nearby with a pond to the south; a very different landscape to that of today.



The township appears to have been a result of a population cleared from the hinterland, settled on marginal ground outside the estate boundary and expected to make a living from pastoral and fishing activities; the estate plan produced in 1833 (*almost certainly surveyed a few years before that*) has the township annotated as "Fishertown of Arboll". The enclosures were possibly for kale or other crops and their number suggests that the cattle were free to roam about the township. It is quite likely that the community was heavily affected by the cholera epidemic of 1832 and it may well have been abandoned about this time



Extract from a plan of Geanies Estate dated 1833

Description of Arboll Links Township – GR centred on NH 8835 8283

Canmore ID: 15318

HC HER ID: MHG8523

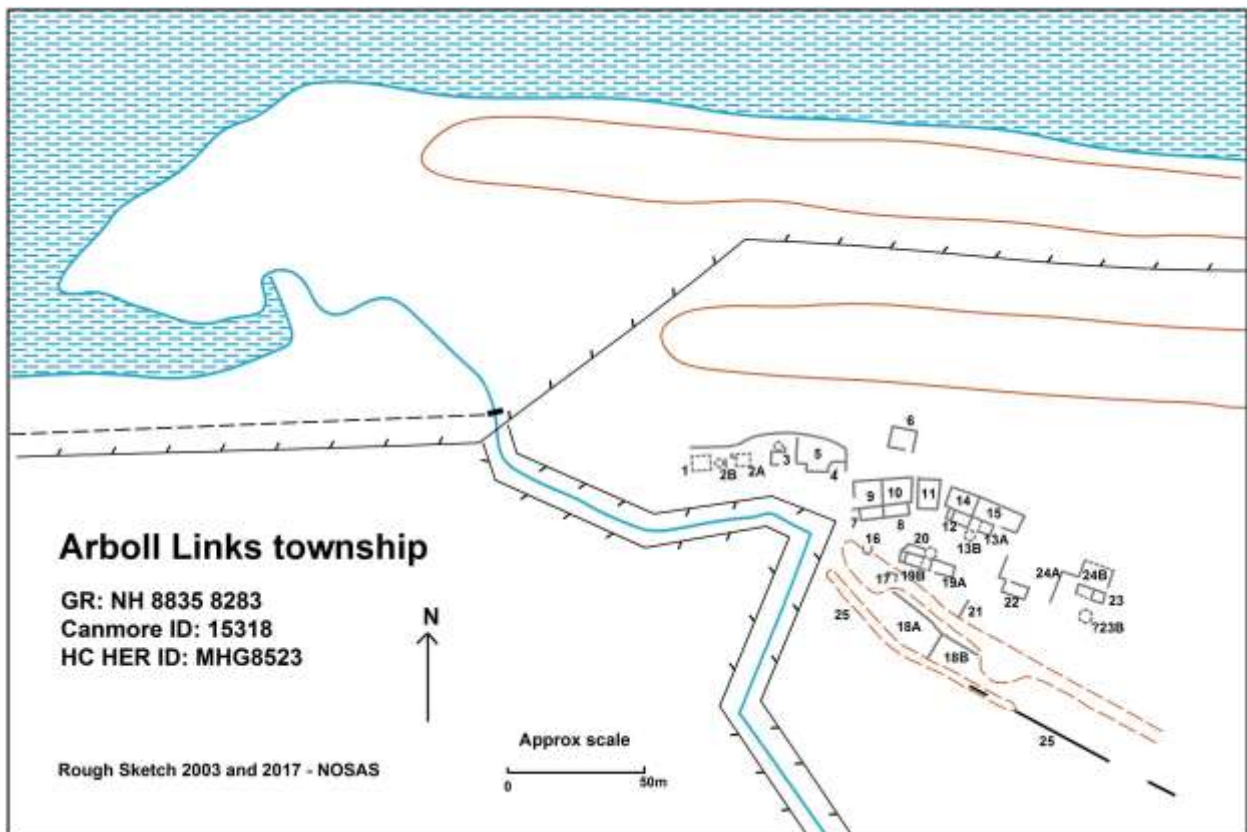
The township comprises the remains of 9 (possibly 11) buildings, up to 12 enclosures, several midden pits and a possible kiln. The features appear to be grouped into 4, possibly 5, distinct units possibly suggesting farmsteads for families. Each unit has a building or two conjoined buildings, an enclosure or two, and most have a midden pit or two

The footings of a discontinuous dry stone wall (feature no 25), probably an estate wall, bounds the south side of the settlement; remnants of this structure can be traced for at least 1km eastwards. A trackway (*not described*) traverses the north part of the township.

1 Platform – centred on NH 88242 82860 A raised grassy platform 8m² x 0.3m in height, possibly a base for a building

2A. Building - centred on NH 88260 82868 a possible building on an E-W alignment measuring 10m x 3m internally. The turf walls have a spread of 1m and are up to 0.25m high. There may be an internal dividing wall. A pit (2B) to the west may be associated; it is 4m in diameter and may be a midden

2B Midden Pit – centred on NH 88250 82866 This pit is located between Platform 1 and Building 2A; it is 4m in diameter



3 Possible building – centred on NH 88277 82868 Three turf walls each with a spread of 1m and up to 0.25m height define the west end of what may be a building measuring 8m x 4m internally. It is on an E-W alignment and abuts enclosure 5 which is on its east side. Adjacent and to the north there is a midden pit 4m in diameter.

4 Possible pen – centred on NH 88298 82870 This sub-rectangular structure is on an E-W alignment, measures 8m x 3m internally and is defined by turf walls on three sides. It is situated within the SE corner of enclosure 5 with which it is probably associated.

5 Enclosure – centred on NH 88289 82876 An irregular enclosure to the north of Building 3 and Pen 4 this enclosure measures 22m x 12-14m internally. To the north it is bounded by a curving turf wall up to 0.25m high and with a

spread generally of 1m; this wall continues westwards for a further 45m. The enclosure is covered in rank grass especially in its western part

6 Enclosure – centred on NH 88324 82880 A rectangular enclosure on an N-S alignment measuring 7m x 8m surrounded by the remains of a turf wall up to 0.2m high with an entrance 4m in width at the E end of the S wall

7 Building – centred on NH 88314 82846 A rectangular platform on an E-W alignment measuring 3 x 8m. The south wall is defined by a sloping bank 1m high, the north wall by a turf covered stone wall 0.2m high and 0.65m thick, with the E and W walls less distinct but up to 0.2m high. What may be an entrance is seen at the east end of the south wall. This building is on the west and abutting building 8 on the same alignment.

8 Building – centred on NH 88323 82850 A rectangular platform on an E-W alignment, measuring 3 x 10m and abutting building 7 to its east. The south wall is defined by a sloping bank 0.7m high, the north wall by the remains of a turf covered stone wall 0.4m high and with a spread of 2.5m, the E wall 0.4m high X 2m spread and the W wall 0.2m high x 2m spread. What may be an entrance is seen in the middle of the south wall

9 Enclosure – centred on NH 88309 82855 A sub-rectangular enclosure abutting building 7 to the north. It is roughly 10m square (the south wall is 12m in length) and surrounded by a turf and stone wall 0.4m high and 0.7m thick. An entrance is seen at the S end of the W wall.

10 Enclosure – centred on NH 88329 82859 A sub-rectangular enclosure on an E-W alignment abutting building 8 to the north. It measures 8m x 12-13m and is surrounded by the remains of a stone wall 0.25m high and with a spread of 1m. There is an entrance 2.5m wide at the W end of the north wall. To the north there is a raised rectangular platform, 10A, measuring 4m x 7m x 0.4m high

11 Enclosure – centred on NH 88341 82858 A sub-rectangular enclosure on a N-S alignment measuring 9-10m(N-S) x 7-9m(E-W). The remains of the surrounding turf and stone walls are 0.5m high x 0.6m thick (1.5m spread) although the E wall is indistinct. No evidence of an entrance.

12 Building – centred on NH 88356 82845 A rectangular building on a WNW-ESE alignment, the westmost of two abutting each other on the same alignment. This building measures 4m x 8m internally. The remains of the turf covered stone walls are 0.5m in height and 0.6m thick (but with a spread of 2m). There is an internal cross wall dividing off a compartment of 1.7m x 4m at the W end, but no entrance was discernible. Enclosure 14 abuts this building to the north

13A Building/Possible Byre – centred on NH 88365 82843 A rectangular building on a WNW-ESE alignment, one of two abutting each other on the same alignment. The building measures 11m x 4m internally. The turf and stone footings of the north wall are 0.5m high and 0.6m thick (spread to 3m). The south wall is indistinct and defined by a change in slope. There may be 2 compartments to this building; the west part of 4m length is at a lower level and a possible entrance here opens onto a midden pit (13B). Enclosure 15 which abuts this structure to the north and the midden pit 13B to the south are associated.

13B Midden Pit – Lies south of building 13A and is associated with building 13A. The pit is oval in shape and measures 4m x 3m x 0.5m deep

14 Enclosure – centred on NH 88357 82853 A rectangular enclosure on a WNW-ESE alignment to the north of building 12 and abutting it. The enclosure is roughly 13m x 7m and is surrounded by the turf and stone footings of a wall which is generally 0.2m in height and 0.6m thick. A trackway runs parallel immediately to the north.

15 Enclosure – centred on NH 88369 82851 A rectangular enclosure on a NW-SE alignment to the north of building 13A and abutting it. The enclosure measures 22m x 6m and is surrounded by the remains of a turf and stone wall 0.6m in height and 0.6m thick. An entrance 1.2m wide is seen in the south wall adjacent to building 13A

16 Pit/Possible kiln – NH 88318 82835 An elongated pit excavated into the bank and open to the north. It is aligned N-S, 4m x 1.5m width and 0.6m deep. Some stone is detected in the sides. This may be a kiln

17 Wall – centred on NH 88333 82823 A short L shaped setting of stones which may be associated with Enclosure 18A. S arm is 4m in length and 0.5m thick, W arm is 3m in length

18A Enclosure – centred on NH 88335 82801 The northern of two abutting sub-rectangular enclosures on a NW-SE alignment bounded on the south by boundary wall 25. This enclosure measures roughly 8m x 25m and is enclosed on the SE and NE sides by traces of a stone wall. Wall 17 may be associated.

18B Enclosure – centred on NH 88355 82787 The southern of two abutting sub-rectangular enclosures on a NW-SE alignment bounded on the south by boundary wall 25. This enclosure measures roughly 8m x 12m and is enclosed on the NW and NE sides by traces of a stone wall; no evidence of an end wall are seen in the SE

19A Building – centred on NH 88352 82827 A rectangular building aligned WNW, the eastmost of two buildings which have the same alignment. The building measures 4m x 9m internally and the footings are of turf and stone upstanding to 0.2m and with a spread of between 1.5m and 3m. There is a possible entrance in the SW corner.

19B Building – centred on NH 88338 82828 A rectangular building aligned WNW, the western of two buildings on the same alignment. The building measures 10 to 11m [one wall 10m the other 11] x 4m internally and has 2 compartments; a low bank separates off a compartment of 1m x 3m at the west end. The footings of the building are of turf and stone upstanding to 0.2m, although the east end wall is not apparent. The two buildings are 4m apart and to the north there is a midden pit possibly associated. A small enclosure (20) to the north of 19B may also probably be associated

20 Enclosure/?Building – centred on NH 88340 82834 To the north of building 19 and abutting it, this small sub-rectangular enclosure measures roughly 8m x 3m internally. It is enclosed by a low turf and stone wall c0.2m in height and with indeterminate spread

21 Wall – centred on NH 88361 82810 The grass covered footings of a stone wall are aligned NNE-SSW. It is 10m in length X 0.6m thick X 0.15m high

22 Building - centred on NH 88383 82814 The building is rectangular in shape, on a NW-SE alignment and measures 9m x 3m internally. The stone footings of the walls are c0.6m wide as determined by probing, covered by sand with fine turf surface vegetation; the bank has a spread of c2m and a max height of c0.3m. The wall corners are square internally and rounded externally. A possible entrance is seen at the NW corner in the N wall from where a truncated dog leg-wall extends c2m NW-SE then turns 90 degrees for c7m NE/SW; this may be the remains of a small enclosure attached to the rear of the building.

23A Building – centred on NH 88411 82811 This building is rectangular in shape, aligned NW-SE and measures approx. 12m x 3m internally. It has two possible compartments, the west part being 6m x 3m internally and the east part 3m x 3m internally. There are possible entrances left and right off a central passage between the two compartments. The stone footings of the walls are c0.6m wide as determined by probing, covered by sand with a fine turf surface vegetation and the wall banks are spread to c2m with a max height of 0.4m. The wall corners are square internally. Enclosures 24A and 24B abut and are associated with this building; midden pit 23B also.

23B Midden Pit – centred on NH 88408 82802 A roughly oval scoop forming a possible midden measures c 5m x 4m x 0.5m deep; fine grass turf covers the whole. Could also be a shell crater from WW2 D day training winter 1943/44.

24A Possible Enclosure – centred on NH 88402 82817 The remains of a dog leg wall that extends and is attached to the SW corner of enclosure 24B. It is 7m in length running NW/SE and then 11m NE/SW. Of similar construction to that of site 23 with which it is associated

24B Enclosure – centred on NH 88403 82818 The remains of a truncated rectangular enclosure on a NE-SW alignment and measuring c10m x c5m internally abuts the rear/north wall of Building 23. It has a narrow side

entrance c0.75m wide at the NE corner and a larger entrance c2.5m wide at the NW corner of 23. The walls are constructed in the same manner as 23 but are intermittent in the N side, possibly due to WW2 training damage.

25 Wall/probable “estate” boundary wall – this feature on a NW-SE alignment bounds the south side of the township and enclosures 18A and 18B. In its west part it appears as a curving sandy bank but its east part, from GR NH 88356 82776 is a straight discontinuous dry stone wall up to 0.5m height. The wall can be traced for at least 1km eastwards.