

Remains of a 12th-century structure and other medieval features on the Knoll of Castle Point, Troup (Cullykhan), Banff and Buchan

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SUMMARY

Seasonal excavations on Cullykhan took place between 1963 and 1972 and, as part of the last season's excavation, work continued on the area known as the Knoll where further investigation of the east end revealed the remains of a curved single course wall foundation and associated earth floor. Numismatic, bronze, stone and ceramic evidence suggest a late 12th-century date for this domestic structure while additional structural features show a development of the site in the 13th and possibly into the 14th century.

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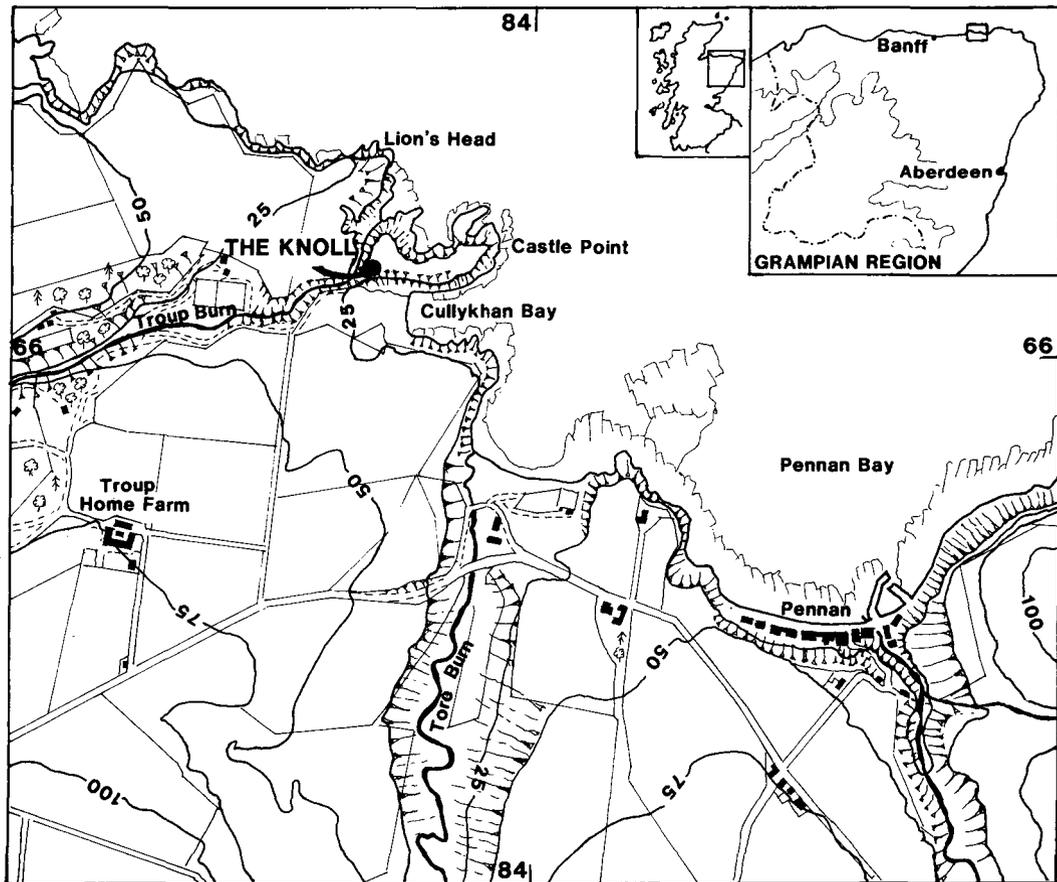
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INTRODUCTION

Approximately 1 km to the west of the village of Pennan on the north Banffshire coast, in the parish of Gamrie, lies the coastal promontory called Castle Point, Troup (NGR NJ 837 662), known locally as Cullykhan (illus 1). The name is taken from the sheltered bay which lies to the south of the peninsula. Main access to this conglomerate headland is by means of a narrow, natural causeway approximately 3 ft 4 in (1 m) wide. Meltwater channels run on either side of the causeway, and the 100 ft (20–25 m) cliffs all around form a natural barrier. The defensive potential of this site has been exploited by man since prehistoric times (illus 2).

Excavations over nine seasons on the Cullykhan peninsula revealed it to be a complex, multi-phased site with evidence of occupation from about 500 bc to the 20th century. The almost continuous use and development of this 1.5 acre (0.6 ha) promontory meant that with each new phase the occupants had either reconstructed and/or part destroyed structures and associated horizons of the previous phase. In addition aerial photography clearly shows the loss of archaeological evidence due to sea and land erosion (illus 2) as well as damage done by the construction of the track. The extreme north-west end of the site has suffered badly from cliff erosion. In spite of this, structural evidence and associated finds were to prove the existence of a domestic structure on Cullykhan in the 12th century AD, with later development of the site in the 13th and 14th centuries.



ILLUS 1 General location map of site

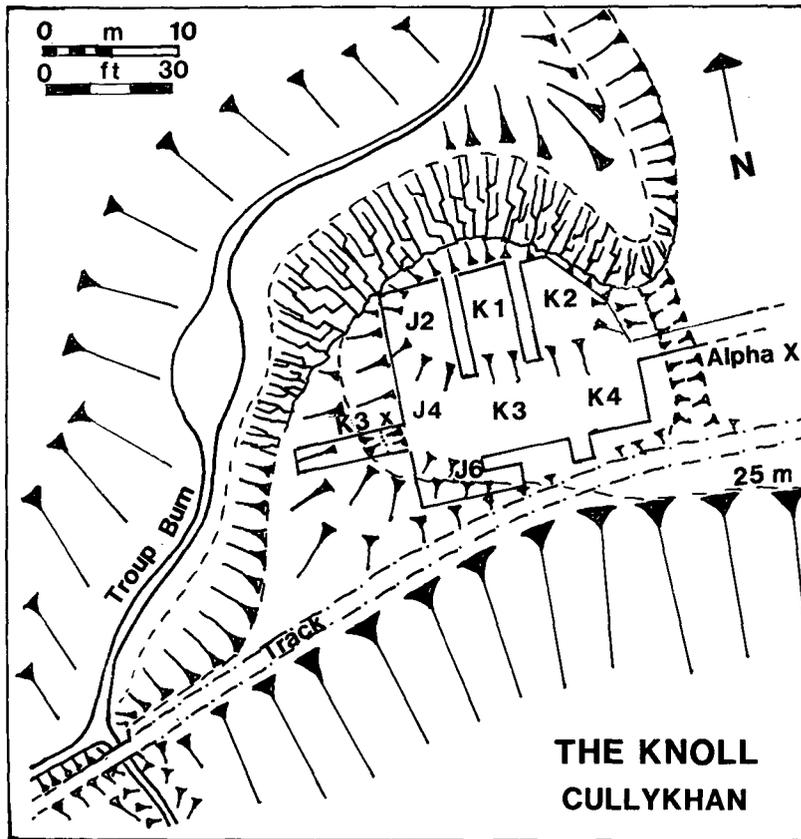
THE SITE

At the extreme west end of the peninsula lies a small raised area 60 ft by 50 ft (18 m by 15 m), named 'the Knoll', with near vertical cliffs on the north and north-west and a wide shallow ditch to the east isolating it from the main area of the site. A trackway on to the site forms its southern extremity (illus 2 & 3).

Over several seasons of excavation on the Knoll, small quantities of wheel-turned pottery were uncovered and these were at first thought to be Roman, perhaps Derbyshire and Swanpool products. At the time of excavation there had been minimal research on early Scottish medieval pottery and few datable sherds from medieval excavations. This pottery, including bases and rims, appeared to be associated on the whole with redeposited material including areas of clay dumping (N4) from which came many of the sherds and two decorated stone spindle whorls (illus 5, *SF120* and *I24*). However, they and other artefacts were often found in scattered clusters suggesting their position was the result of site re-organization, ditch-digging and track alignment in the later medieval period. In spite of the stone-robbing, which had been extensive on the Knoll, it was possible to define areas of collapsed



ILLUS 2 Aerial photo of Cullykhan, showing causeway and Knoll to the fore

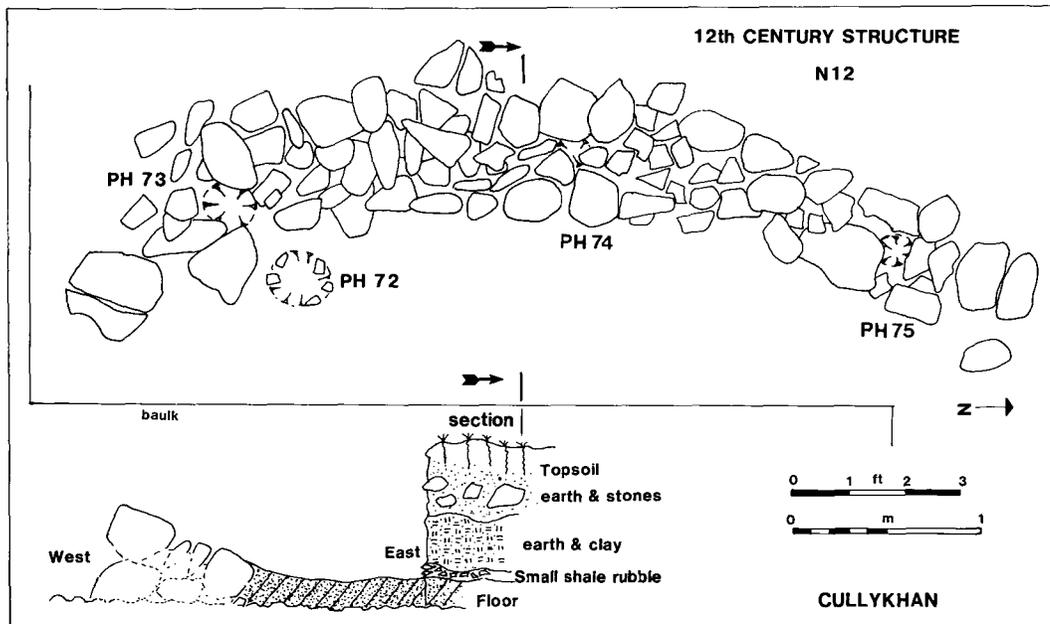


ILLUS 3 Site plan of Knoll

rubble or walling but at that point no structural features, either defensive or domestic, were established as the source of the rubble spread. Other features such as postholes and isolated pebbled areas which, though stratigraphically disjointed because of stone-robbing and site re-organization, nevertheless indicated the possibility of exposing more definitive structural debris.

THE STRUCTURE, N12 (fiche 4: A5)

The de-turfing and removal of loose rubble from an extension to trench K4 on the south-east of the Knoll revealed the footings of a curved wall (illus 4). These wall footings (N12) contained no really substantial stones, the largest being 1 ft 6 in by 10 in by 4 in (40 cm by 26 cm by 10 cm). The footings consisted of graphite, sandstone and a few pieces of green shale bedded in clay forming the foundation layer. The width varied from 1 ft 11 in to 2 ft 6 in (65 cm to 75 cm). Included within it were the remains of three postholes (PH 73, 74, 75 (fiche 4: A9)). Also associated with this curved stone walling were many large square-headed nails with clay or daub adhering to them. It has been suggested (Peter Yeoman, Geoffrey Stell, pers comms) that N12 is likely to have been a single course foundation for the west end of a rectangular or circular building using a sill-beam method of construction (ie, with a wooden beam resting on a single course stone foundation between earth-fast corner and intermediate posts). In this case the walling would have been secured into the beam. Alternatively no beam was necessary and the walls were formed from planks or wattles secured by



ILLUS 4 Plan and section of Feature N12

large upright posts. The clay covering of the nails may be daub from the demolished building. The slight construction of the wall suggests that it was not load-bearing; if this were the case, the roofing would have been supported by internal roofing posts.

Work to the east of N12, in trench K4, was greatly restricted due to the position of a baulk and site spoil heap. The internal excavation was therefore confined to an area 16 ft 8 in long by 3 ft 4 in wide (5 m by 1 m). Further careful investigation east of N12 uncovered an 8 in (20 cm) thick layer of earthy clay which overlay a thin rubble horizon, 1 in to 3 in (3 cm to 6 cm) in thickness. This in turn sealed an earth floor whose depth varied from 6 in to 8 in (15 cm to 20 cm). The floor swept up to the curved wall N12 and set into the floor, near the wall, was one posthole 72. From the occupation debris on the earthen floor came quantities of charcoal, burnt bones and pottery sherds, some of which resembled the unstratified sherds from the aforementioned clay dumping N4.

Other finds from this horizon were three unidentified iron objects, a badly corroded bronze artefact, a perforated belt hone, a bronze stick pin (illus 5, *SF464*, *SF370*) and a gilt belt decoration (illus 6, *SF223*). From the surface of the floor came quantities of pottery sherds, a fragment of glass, charcoal and bone, a jet die (illus 7, *SF370*) and a well preserved silver coin (illus 8, *SF381*).

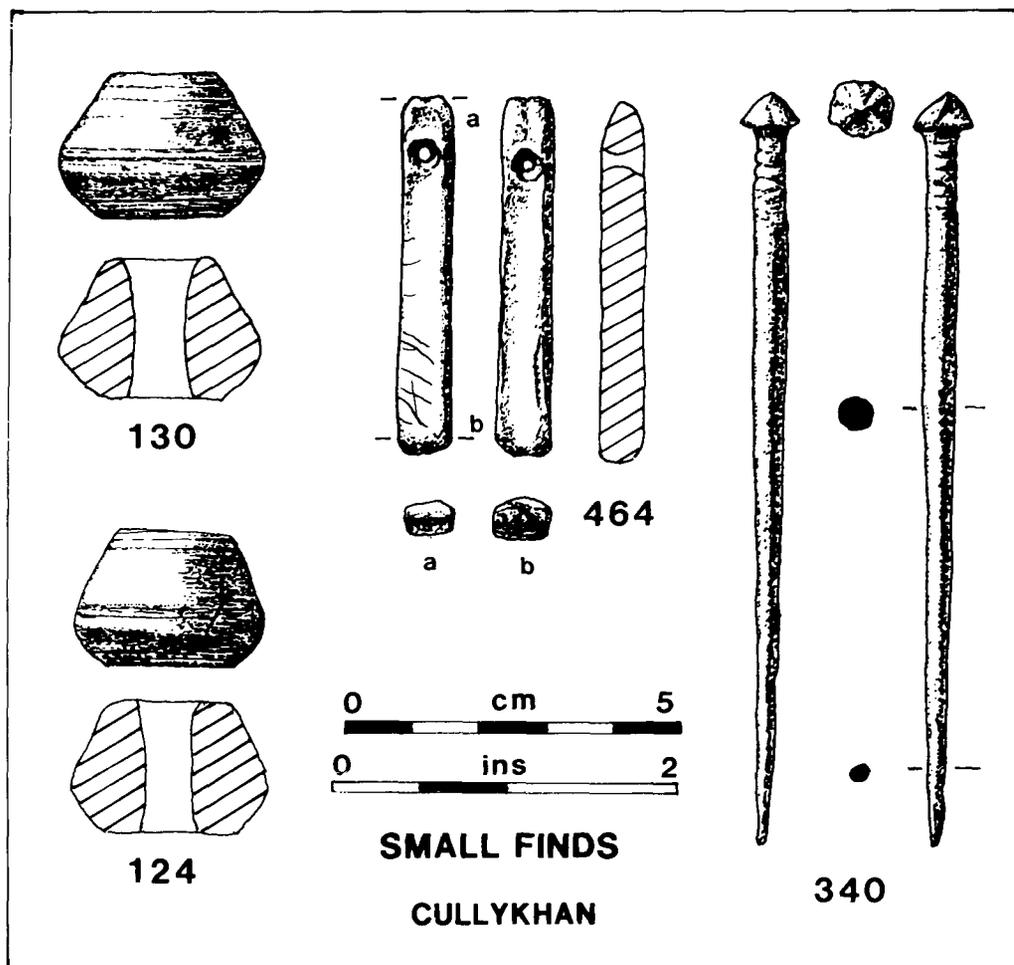
Further excavation gave no evidence of either a secondary topsoil below the earth floor or of any earlier archaeological horizons. It would appear that a wide ditch of pre 12th-century date had destroyed all earlier phases and the medieval builders had therefore filled what remained of this ditch (Alpha X (Feature R IV)) in order to level the site.

THE FINDS

SMALL FINDS

D H Caldwell

The small finds came from two different areas of the Knoll but as the pottery sherds found beside them are of the same fabrics it may be assumed that they are of the same date. The two spindle



ILLUS 5 Small finds

whorls were redeposited and found together within the clay dump N4 in K3 along with wheel-turned pottery similar to that found in N12. The remaining finds were from the floor within feature N12. A brief mineralogical report on *SF130*, *SF124* and *SF464* by Dr Ian Basham is on fiche 4: B3.

CK SF130

Pear-shaped spindle whorl of serpentinite (illus 5). It is well polished, with horizontal striations. Diameter 30 mm, height 20 mm. Spindle whorls of this form are known from medieval contexts elsewhere, for example, King's Lynn, where two were excavated in a context c 1250–1350 (Clarke & Carter 1977, fig 144, nos 11, 14).

CK SF124

Pear-shaped spindle whorl of serpentinite. Diameter 28 mm height 18 mm. This is similar to *SF130* (illus 5).

CK SF464

Small rectangular hone of fine-grained quartzose mica schist, perforated at one end for suspension (illus 5). Length 52 mm, width 7 mm, thickness 6 mm. *From within the floor of the 12th-century house.*

CK SF340

Copper alloy stick pin with conical head, apparently roughly engraved with radial lines. The upper part of the shank is grooved transversely and the lower part is noticeably thinner. Length 111 mm. *From within the floor of the 12th-century house* (illus 5).

This pin is not dissimilar to many others from Scotland described by Laing (1973, 69; 1975, 327, 331) as mushroom-headed and domical-headed. Some of these have radial grooves on their heads and have the lower part of their shanks squared off. In 1975 Laing dated them mostly to the sixth–seventh centuries and possibly as late as the tenth. One of the closest matches to the Cullykhan pin is, in fact, one from the Norse farmstead at Jarlshof in Shetland, dated to the ninth century (Hamilton 1956, fig 60, 5). Its head is decorated with radial lines and is lower and not so pointed.

Stick pins of the same form have been found in Dublin appearing in 11th-century levels and early medieval contexts when the ringed pin types were going out of fashion (pers comm, Dr Fanning, Dept of Archaeology, University College Galway).

Considerable caution should be exercised, however, in assuming that the Cullykhan pin is earlier than the 12th century as it is by no means clear that stick pins can be so closely dated as has been supposed in the past. A mushroom-headed pin has been recovered from a 14th/15th-century grave at



ILLUS 6 Gilt belt decoration

Keills in Knapdale (information from the excavator, Ms C Brooks), and another stick pin has been found in a 14th-century context in Aberdeen (Murray 1982, illus 107, no 56). It has a dome-shaped head engraved with a cross and the upper part of its shank is rope-moulded, a feature reminiscent of the grooving on the Cullykhan pin. A similar pin is reported from Cramond (Murray 1982, 186) and there is also the upper portion of a silver stick pin with hexagonal stem and dome-like head deposited with a coin hoard at Langhope in Roxburghshire, between the years 1310 and 1360 (Thompson 1956, pl XVIIb; Metcalf 1977, no 127).

Such pins would have been used to fasten clothing. The squaring-off, swelling or contracting of the shank on many of them was presumably intended to stop them easing themselves out of the material. Highland men used pins to fasten their plaids as late as the 18th century while women at that time wore large ring brooches (Martin 1716, 208).

CK SF223

Copper alloy buckle plate. The front is gilt and decorated with a dragon, set against a stippled background; 22 mm by 18 mm. *From within the floor of the 12th-century house* (illus 6).

On stylistic grounds this can be dated to the late 12th century. Compare, for instance, the designs on London bookbindings of c 1185 (especially Arts Council 1984, 346, no 4). This could also be of French origin or from elsewhere in Northern Europe.



ILLUS 7 Die (scale c 6:5)

CK SF370

Jet die 7 mm by 7 mm by 7 mm (illus 7). Possible tin inlay. *From the floor surface of the 12th-century house.*

CK SF381

Silver penny of Richard I of England, c 1196–9; short cross series (in name of Henry II), class 3, by Stivene, London. Weight 1.57 g. *From the floor surface of the 12th-century house* (illus 8).

It shows some sign of wear and may have been in circulation for 30 or more years before it was lost.



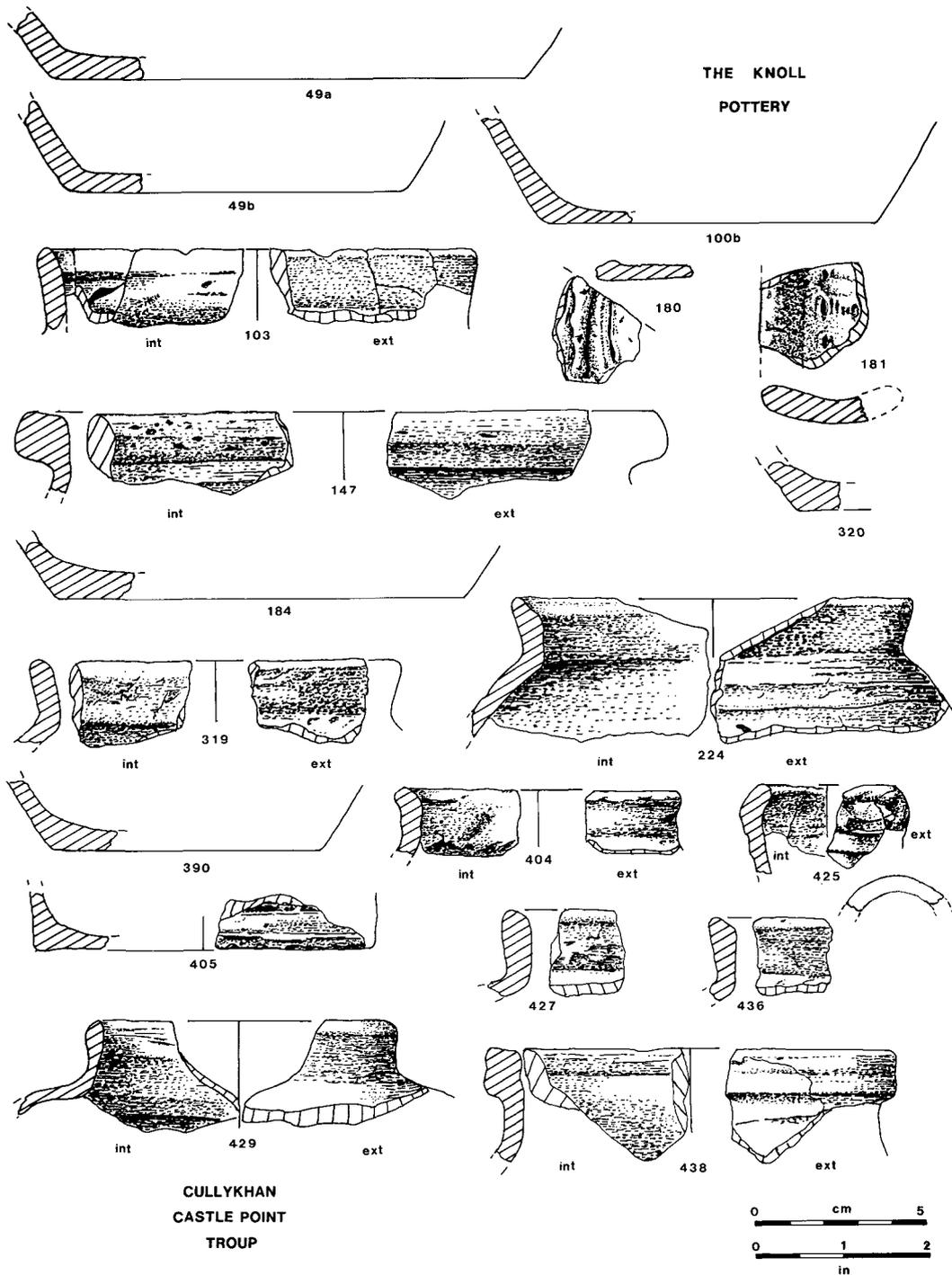
ILLUS 8 Coin (a, obv; b, rev, scale 6:5)

POTTERY

Charles Murray

The full catalogue is on fiche 4: B4.

The amount of medieval pottery recovered from the excavations at Cullykhan is small and



ILLUS 9 Pottery (scale 1:2)

represents a minimum of 17 vessels. A small sample is missing, however, having been sent for examination some years ago and been lost in transit.

A total of eight fabrics is identified; they range from coarse hand-made cooking pots to fine green-glazed imports such as Scarborough ware. The date range would appear to be from the 12th to the 14th century.

Discussion

Of some 75 extant sherds of medieval pottery recovered from Cullykhan only 32 came from secure contexts within the small portion of building N12 that was excavated. The remaining sherds are from disturbed or redeposited contexts west of N12.

In terms of dating, the two most important wares from within N12 are the Rhenish blue-grey ware (Fabric 1, illus 9, 429) and the coarse hand-made cooking pot with simple everted rim (Fabric 2, illus 9, 103, 224, 319, 404).

The blue-grey ware, the best known source of which is Paffrath near Cologne, is a very distinctive type of pottery made throughout the 12th and 13th centuries. Although it occurs widely in Scotland in 13th-century urban contexts, it is possible, given the finds associated with it in building N12, that its use at Cullykhan is early in the 12th century. Associated with it in the floor fill and surface of the floor is the coarse cooking ware with everted rim. The precise origin of this ware is unknown at the present time but it bears marked similarities to early medieval cooking pots produced in East Anglia between the 11th and 13th centuries (Jennings 1981, fig 14). This type of ware also occurs in early contexts at Aberdeen (Murray 1982, illus 85, no 379) but because of problems of residuality and contamination it was never possible to ascribe a 12th-century date to it with absolute certainty. Its occurrence, therefore, in these sealed contexts at Cullykhan is a very useful indication that this type of cooking pot was almost certainly one of the earliest types of pottery in use along the eastern seaboard of medieval Scotland.

It is also a curious feature that none of the south Scottish white gritty wares (Fabric 4, illus 9, 147) found at Cullykhan came from Building N12. It would be wrong to place too much emphasis on this given the small portion of the building excavated but it may indicate that this ware is chronologically later than the coarse cooking ware (Fabric 2). This in turn (and in time) may help with the problems of residuality in urban contexts where these wares occur simultaneously.

METALWORK

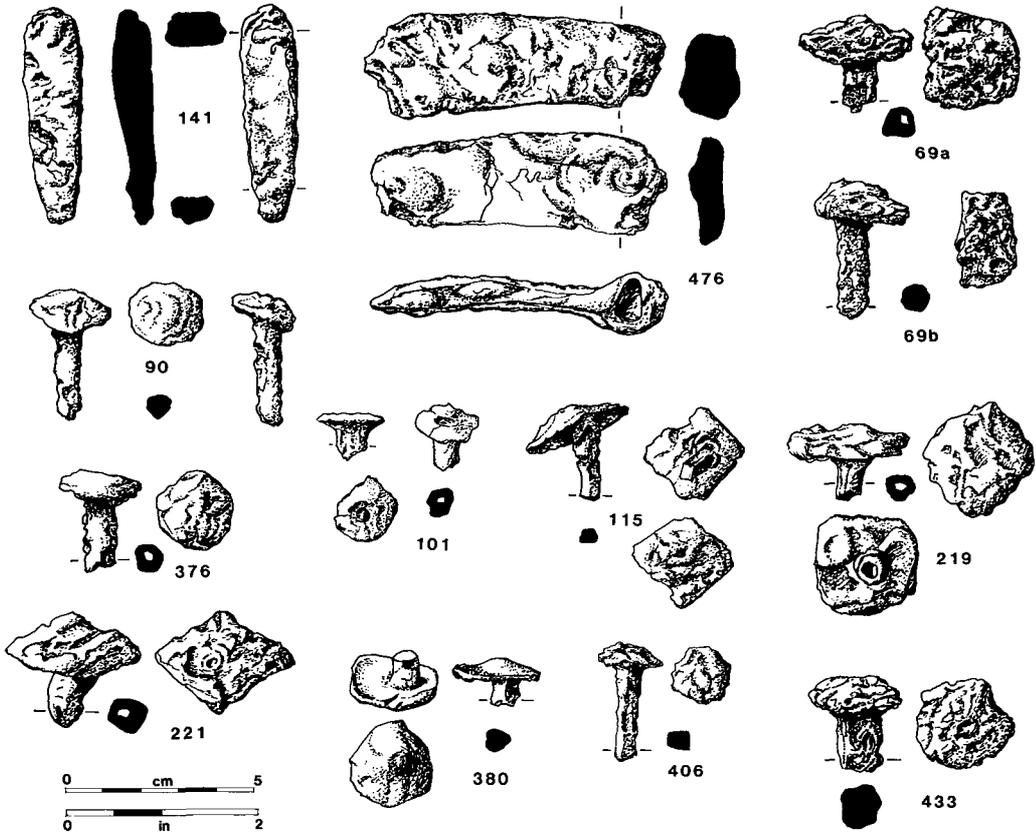
R M Spearman

The full report is on fiche 4: C14.

The standard of conservation cleaning is generally poor and it has not always been possible to take meaningful measurements of the objects. The standard of conservation may reflect the lack of remaining metal in many of the pieces. No X-rays were available for the material.

The ironwork from the area of the Knoll mainly consists of quite large wrought-iron flat-headed nails of the type used in structural carpentry (illus 10). They all appear to have been used and their shanks are broken. From what can be seen of the shanks all were parallel-sided. Such nails have a broad medieval date, and while they may exceptionally occur in earlier contexts, large iron nails were not in common use until the 13th century in Scotland. The fiddle-key nail-head *SF384* is of a type normally associated with horseshoes and is therefore also likely to be of medieval or later date (not illustrated).

The small chisel *SF141* and axe *SF476* appear to be carpentry tools. These tools are difficult to date but slightly larger parallels do occur among tools from the Iron-Age hoards such as those from



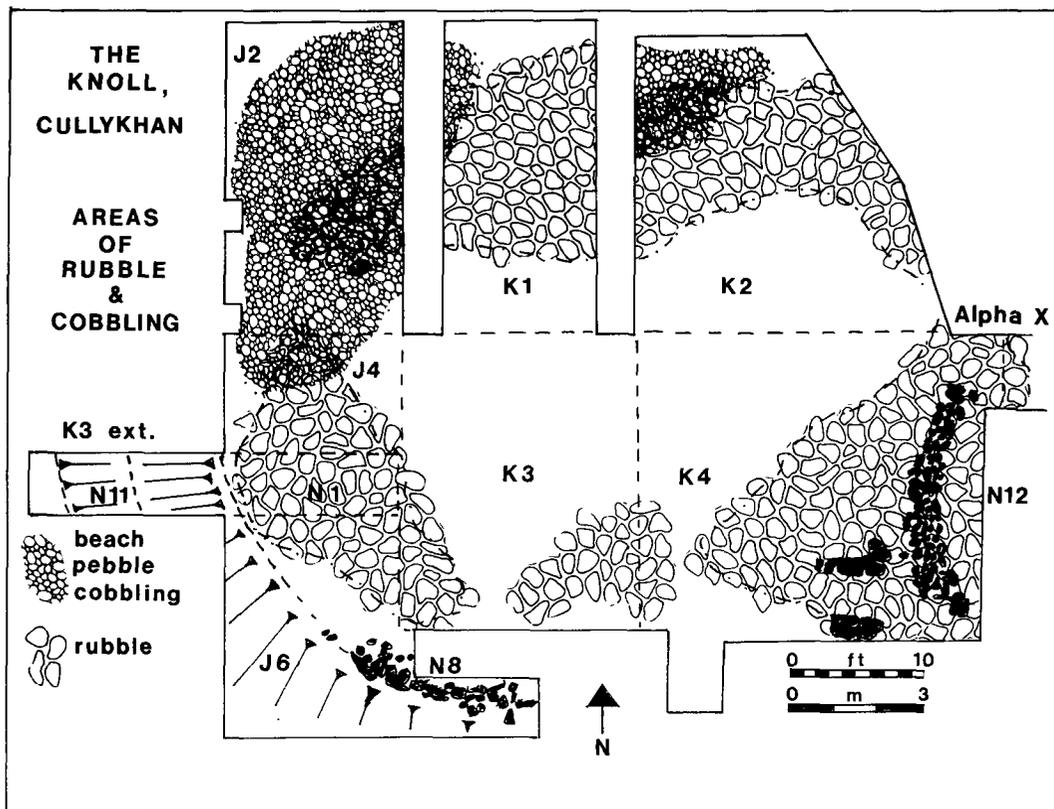
ILLUS 10 Metalwork (scale 1:2)

Carlingwark Loch, Kirkcudbrightshire and Cockburnspath, Berwickshire. A number of axes of similar manufacture have also been found from broch and dun sites although once again these are slightly larger than the Cullykhan example.

The copper alloy patch, *SF215* (not illustrated), again has a broad date range, being used on bronze vessels of Iron-Age date, including the cauldron from Carlingwark Loch (NMS DW 1), through to late medieval times. Individual rivets have been found in great numbers from Culbin Sands (NMS BI 25654–26408; illus: NMS 1892, 93) and stratified medieval examples have been found at Canal Street, Perth (Ford, forthcoming).

EVIDENCE OF OTHER STRUCTURES

The exposure of 12th-century remains (N12) had implications on the previous stratigraphic interpretation of the Knoll. Its complicated horizons had always suggested re-organization of the site in a post-prehistoric period, perhaps even dark age, and as already stated earlier excavations on the Knoll had uncovered wheel-made pottery with examples of both rims and bases which were thought at that time to be Roman and some in fact dated to the fourth to fifth century AD. Unfortunately the best examples of this pottery were lost in transit. However, the later excavation work on N12 produced similar wheel-turned pottery and associated finds now clearly of a 12th-century date from



ILLUS 11 Areas of rubble spread

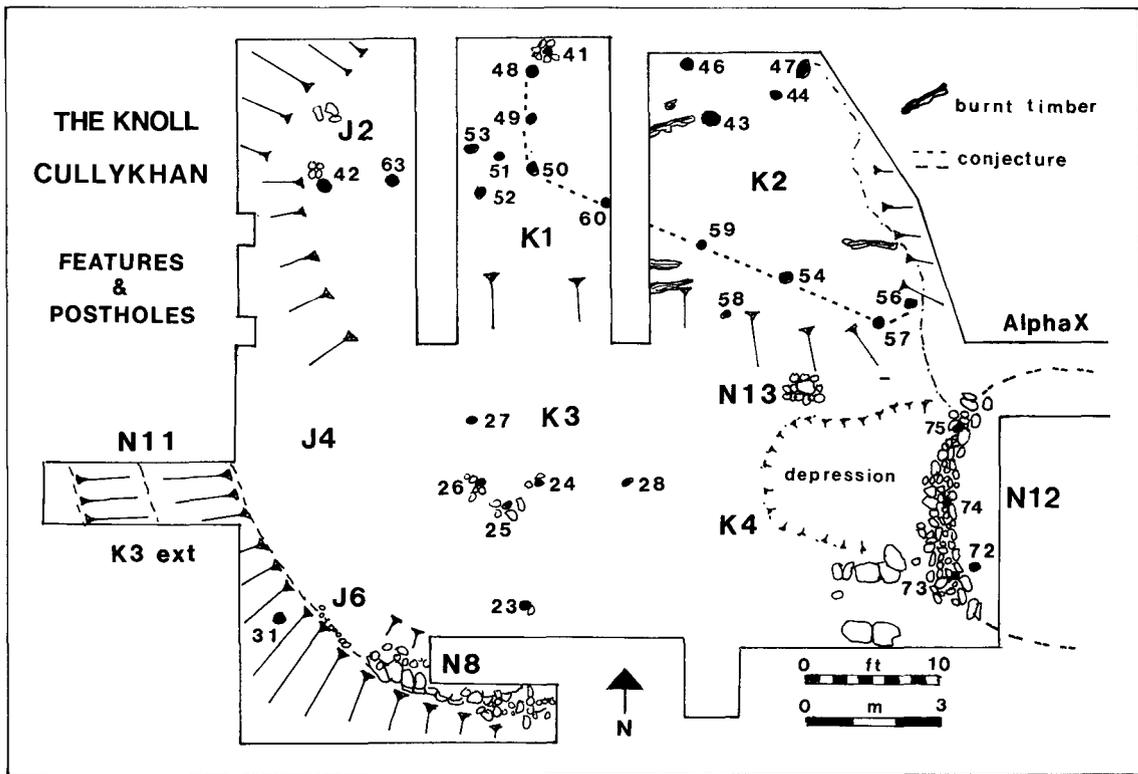
the floor. However, earlier work had also revealed areas of collapsed walling (N1) west of N12 in trench K3 extension and J4 with iron nails amongst it (illus 11). Near N1, and possibly associated with it, was found a group of sherds of white gritty ware. It should be noted that no examples of this fabric were found in association with N12.

To the north of N1, in trench J2, lay an area of cobbling consisting of large beach pebbles with two contemporary postholes, 63 and 42, and traces of a thin, patchy, earthy occupation horizon lying on the cobbles with collapsed rubble on top. This cobbling and thin occupation ran up to the remains of walling in the east section of J2 (illus 16, fiche 4: A7-8). There was some evidence to suggest that this walling may have run along the northern side of the Knoll as rubble lay across trenches K1 and K2 with traces visible in section. An area of burnt timber was also uncovered in K2. In this same area later excavation exposed a number of postholes which could be associated with the fallen stonework, cobbled areas and burnt timber.

There was strong evidence that the structures were destroyed by fire as much of the shale rubble was smoke blackened on the underside and there were areas of charcoal beneath the shale. No definitive datable artefacts were uncovered and unfortunately the charcoal and timber samples sent to the museum laboratories in the early 1970s were lost or became contaminated.

THE POSTHOLES

The interpretation of the postholes was complicated by the multi-phase nature of the site plus the ravages of erosion and stone robbers. However, there were two clusters of postholes in areas



ILLUS 12 Site plan showing positions of features and postholes

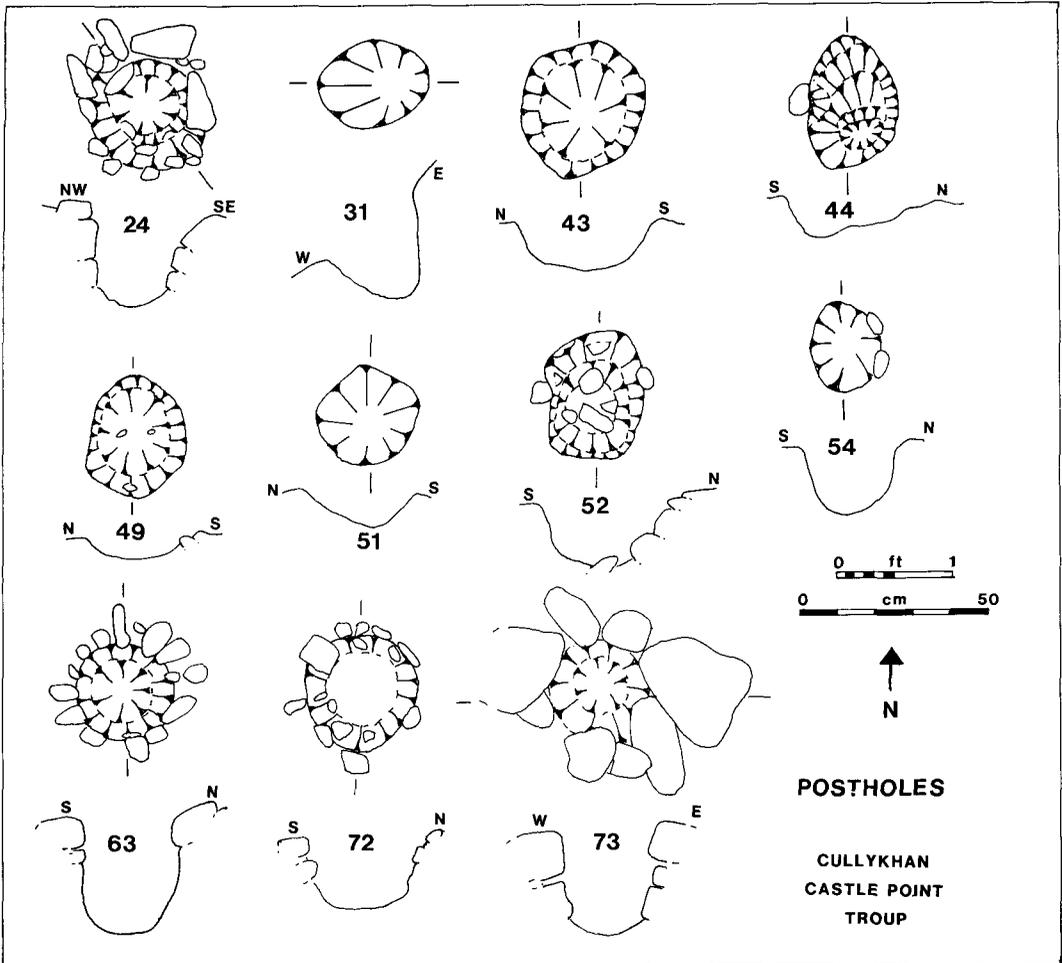
J2/K1 and K1/K2 which did suggest some type of structural remains (illus 12 & 13). The former group, 42, 63, 51, 52 and 53, may have been the remains of internal supports for some structure but no evidence remained of the outer walling. The latter group of postholes, 56, 57, 54, 59, 60, 50, 49, 48, 41 and 47, indicated the remains of a round-ended building orientated north-west/south-east and constructed on an artificially levelled area of the Knoll. These postholes varied in diameter from 6 in to 8 in (15 cm to 20 cm) with depths of 6 in to 10 in (15 cm to 25 cm). They delineated a structure approximately 30 ft by 16 ft (10 m by 5 m) with a distance of 5 ft to 6 ft (1.5 m to 1.75 m) between the side posts and 3 ft (1 m) between the curved north-west end posts. Only three internal postholes remained, 43, 44 and 46. No evidence remained of the north side of the building which was probably destroyed through cliff erosion.

One other group of postholes lay in K3 which again may have been internal supports though all are relatively small, being 6 in to 8 in (15 cm to 20 cm) in diameter with a depth of 8 in to 10 in (20 cm to 25 cm).

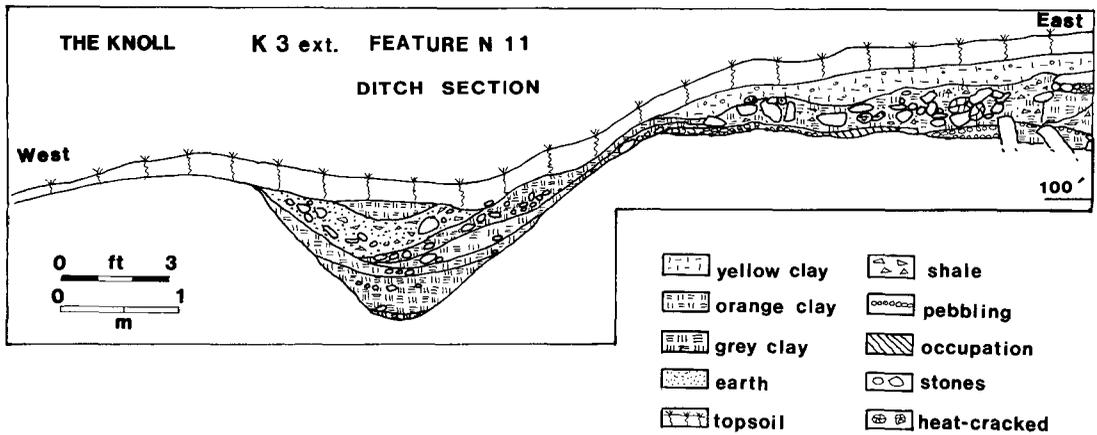
Only one other posthole, 31, should be noted for its position. It lay on the east side of a ditch, feature N11 and may be all that remains of a type of bridge over the ditch.

OTHER FEATURES

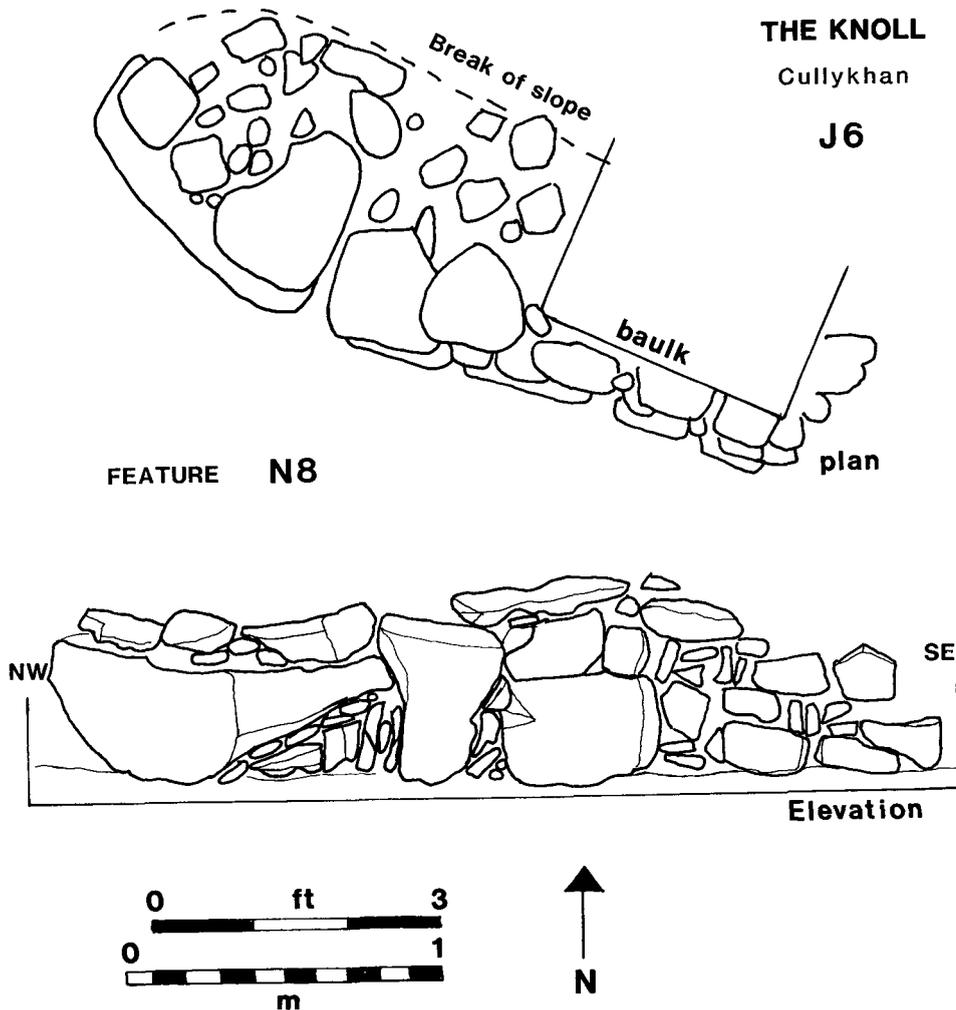
Two other Knoll features remain to be considered. They are the ditch N11 and a retaining wall N8. A section across this V-shaped ditch N11 (illus 14) revealed that it had been cut into the base clay on the extreme west end of the site on the slope below the Knoll. Running north/south and curving



ILLUS 13 Plans and profiles of postholes



ILLUS 14 Ditch section, N11



ILLUS 15 Plan and elevation of N8

round towards the east on the southern side it provided an excellent defence from a landward threat. The construction of this ditch had cut through a number of earlier prehistoric features and horizons. Its depth was approximately 3 ft 6 in (1 m) with a top width of 9 ft (2.5 m). The ditch fill produced stone tumble from the feature N1 plus a few sherds of late ?12th-/early13th-century pottery.

In the last week of excavation at Cullykhan, while extending trench J6 south to ascertain if the ditch continued to curve eastwards, the remains of a retaining wall, N8, were found built into the north-east side of the ditch (illus 15). This survived to a height of 2 ft (60 cm) and incorporated two to three courses of a well constructed wall of large undressed stones with carefully set small stone infills. Some of the stones were set in clay and earth and it had obviously been originally several courses higher. A length of 10 ft (3 m) of the face was exposed but due to lack of time it was not possible to completely excavate the whole of N8 or its associated ditch N11.

PHASING

The archaeological evidence for the existence of medieval structures on the Knoll at Cullykhan, though limited for the reasons given in the text, nevertheless suggests a three-phased building development of the site.

PHASE 1

The curved wall N12 with its associated earth floor. Dating evidence includes a late 12th-century coin, a copper alloy stick pin possibly of the 12th century: perforated hone and jet die, possibly 12th century; a 12th-century gilt buckle plate probably of French origin, and 12th-century imported and Scottish pottery. This concentration of 12th-century finds in such a restricted area of excavation is evidence of a well established medieval household on Cullykhan in the late 12th century. It is possible that the V-shaped ditch N11 and the curved retaining wall N8 are also associated with Phase 1.

PHASE 2

This consists of the round-ended structure with associated postholes orientated north-west/south-east in areas K1/K2. This area also contained burnt timber and some of the stonework was smoked on the underside. A small iron chisel, *SF141*, was the only significant find from this phase.

PHASE 3

The rubble of feature N1 in K3 extension and the rubble spread and areas of cobbling in J2, K1 and K2 would appear to be contemporary. From beside N1 came the distinctive white gritty ware not found elsewhere on the site. Stratigraphically this pottery should be of a later date than the pottery found in N12. It is important to note that the cobbling in K1 and K2 overlay several of the Phase 2 postholes.

COMMENT ON MEDIEVAL PERIOD RECONSTRUCTION

Peter A Yeoman

The natural formation of the Knoll would have made it an attractive platform to site buildings on. Indeed it would have been a suitable eminence to transform easily into a motte. A parallel for this could be the site at Cruggleton, Wigtonshire where an Iron-Age and Dark-Age promontory was converted into a motte (Ewart 1985). The Knoll has an obvious important strategic location overlooking the entrance, and in whatever form this would have been a defensible enclosure in the medieval period.

A major problem in attempting such a reconstruction is that it is impossible to assess the relative contemporaneity of individual features. The structures are likely to be multi-phase, and further complicated by the insertion of repair posts. Also, various postholes and other structural elements are bound to be missing from the archaeological record through erosion, robbing, etc.

FEATURE N12

This is likely to have been the west end of a sub-rectangular or circular structure of sill-beam construction, apparently with the wooden beam resting on a single course stone foundation between earth-fast corner posts. Many instances of these techniques have been recorded on sites of this period in Britain, Ireland and on the continent: one need look no further than sites in Aberdeen published in the Aberdeen *Monograph* (Murray 1982).

The small stone size in this wall makes it unlikely to have been a defensive wall.

The curve of the wall is significant; a 12th-century circular building was found on Castlehill, Peebles (Murray & Ewart 1980), and this writer excavated another at Castlehill of Strachan, Kincardine & Deeside, of 13th-century date (Yeoman 1984). Each had a diameter of 12 m. The weight of the roof of such a structure is likely to have been borne by internal roof posts, and the nature of the non load-bearing wall (N12) is consistent with this interpretation. This structure is, however, in a curious location, apparently blocking a neck of land.

THE POSTHOLES

K3

This group of postholes is likely to represent one or more structures but is impossible to interpret.

J2/K1/K2

The plan indicates a great concentration of postholes on what appears to be an artificially scarped platform. Two main groups can be seen – J2/K1 and K1/K2. The former (42, 63, 51, 52, 53) is certainly incomplete, and may be lacking all original wall lines which could have been non earth-fast eg sill beam or turf. These posts are therefore likely to be roof supports for tie-beams.

The second group occupies the eastern part of the platform, and possibly outlines a building aligned at right angles to the first. Again it is impossible to comment on superimposition and periodicity. Unlike the first group this does appear to define a building plan which was either oval or sub-rectangular, with rounded corners to lessen wind resistance.

In general, the postholes were small and could not have held elements of very large structures with great longevity.

DOCUMENTATION

Colvin Greig

The parish of Gamrie which includes the Troup Estate is rich in prehistoric and medieval sites and it was while researching the Troup Estate that the first evidence of a medieval Baron using the name de Trop came to light. It concerned a petition made by a certain Simon de Trop in 1241 (*Cal Docs Scot*, vol 1, 283).

Later, in the early 14th century (1304–5), we find a Hamelyn, son of Hamelyn de Troup, in the parish of Gamrie, petitioning Edward I with regard to a complaint against Sir Reginald Le Chen and Sir Duncan de Ferendraught who had come with their people at midnight and laid waste his cornfields and ravaged his lands. He represented that it would be impossible for him to retain possession of his lands on account of these knights, unless the king put a stop to their proceedings; and he therefore begged that the King would inquire into the truth of his statements. In reply to this, Edward ordered that the petitioner should have a writ to his *Locum Tenens*, to call parties before him, and after having inquired into the truth of the statements in the petition, to do justice in the case (*Cal Docs Scot*, vol 2, 469).

Hamelyn de Troup, the father, and Hamelyn, the son, petitioned the King and Council for redress for injuries done to them by Sir Duncan de Ferendraught, Sheriff of Banff, who had sent his people at the dead of night on the lands of Findon, belonging to Hamelyn, the son, and burned his houses and took and imprisoned his people against the peace. They complained that he had disobeyed the orders which the Guardian gave on their last petition, inasmuch as he only delivered up

a half of the property belonging to Hamelyn, the father, and had not observed that officer's injunction not to molest or injure the Hamelyns, but had assembled the force of his bailiwick, and after pillaging the land, had taken and imprisoned their people, and held them contrary to his pledge. Edward in answer to this, directed that his *Locum Tenens* should, after calling the parties before him and hearing the cause, do justice thereon.

In 1337–8 the widow of a Hamelyn de Troupe whose husband had died 'in the King's service' is granted by the King a pension of 6s 5d per week for herself and her family (*Cal Docs Scot*, vol 3, 230).

It may be interesting to speculate on the connection between the Estate of Troup, Simon de Troupe and his descendants and the spread of dates represented by the small finds and pottery from the Knoll at Cullykhan.

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