
3 THE PHYSICAL REMAINS

A mitigation strategy was agreed with Historic Scotland prior to construction work commencing on site and following the evaluation work (Suddaby 2005). The internal areas of the structures A and B were to be fully investigated and their walls recorded (c 45m²). A small trench (c 4m²) was proposed at the junction of structures A and C to establish their stratigraphic relationships. The excavation of a trench c 100m² in the area between the two buildings permitted investigation of the paved area and other features identified in the evaluation. Features were to be sampled for information gain rather than fully excavated.

Topsoil removal during both the evaluation and the excavation was conducted by hand, as machine access was restricted due to the terrain. The removal of the topsoil revealed a deposit of mottled orange and yellow sandy silt over most of the site.

The building remains were assigned the identifiers Structure A and Structure B. Structure C was a possible wall to the rear of Structure A, at the base of the knoll. The internal areas of the buildings were exposed and excavated, where possible, and sections excavated through walls to investigate construction techniques. Health and safety considerations meant that some areas were unsafe to excavate. An approximately 100m² 'yard' area between the houses was included within Trenches 1, 2 and 3 (illus 2), leaving an unexcavated strip c 3m wide along the bank of the burn to facilitate turf storage, reduce the risk of flooding and allow access to the site. These three trenches were eventually combined to give a full view of the excavated area between the houses (illus 3). A fourth trench, measuring 3m × 1.5m, was excavated at the south-west corner of Structure A to expose part of Structure C and to investigate the relationship between the two structures (Trench 4, illus 2).

In addition, an area of rig-and-furrow and a mound of stones were recorded by Total Station survey, to the west of the main excavation area (illus 2).

The following text describes the findings of the excavation. Full context descriptions are held in the site archive, which will be deposited with Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments in Scotland (RCAHMS).

3.1 Structure A and hard-standing

This structure (illus 3) had an internal floor space 8m by 3.5m and was orientated NE to SW. It was rectangular in plan, with squared internal corners and rounded external corners (illus 4). The walls were approximately 0.65m wide and survived to a

maximum height of 1.5m. They were of drystone construction and consisted of three elements: an outer face of roughly dressed, very large boulder-sized stones (1013); an angular cobble-sized stone core (1015); and an inner face of roughly-dressed, flattened large cobble-sized stones (1014; illus 5), their flat sides facing into the interior of the structure to present a relatively smooth surface. A central entrance and two possible window frames were identified in the eastern wall of the structure. Judging by the size and insubstantial nature of the building remains it is probable that the building was of single-storey construction.

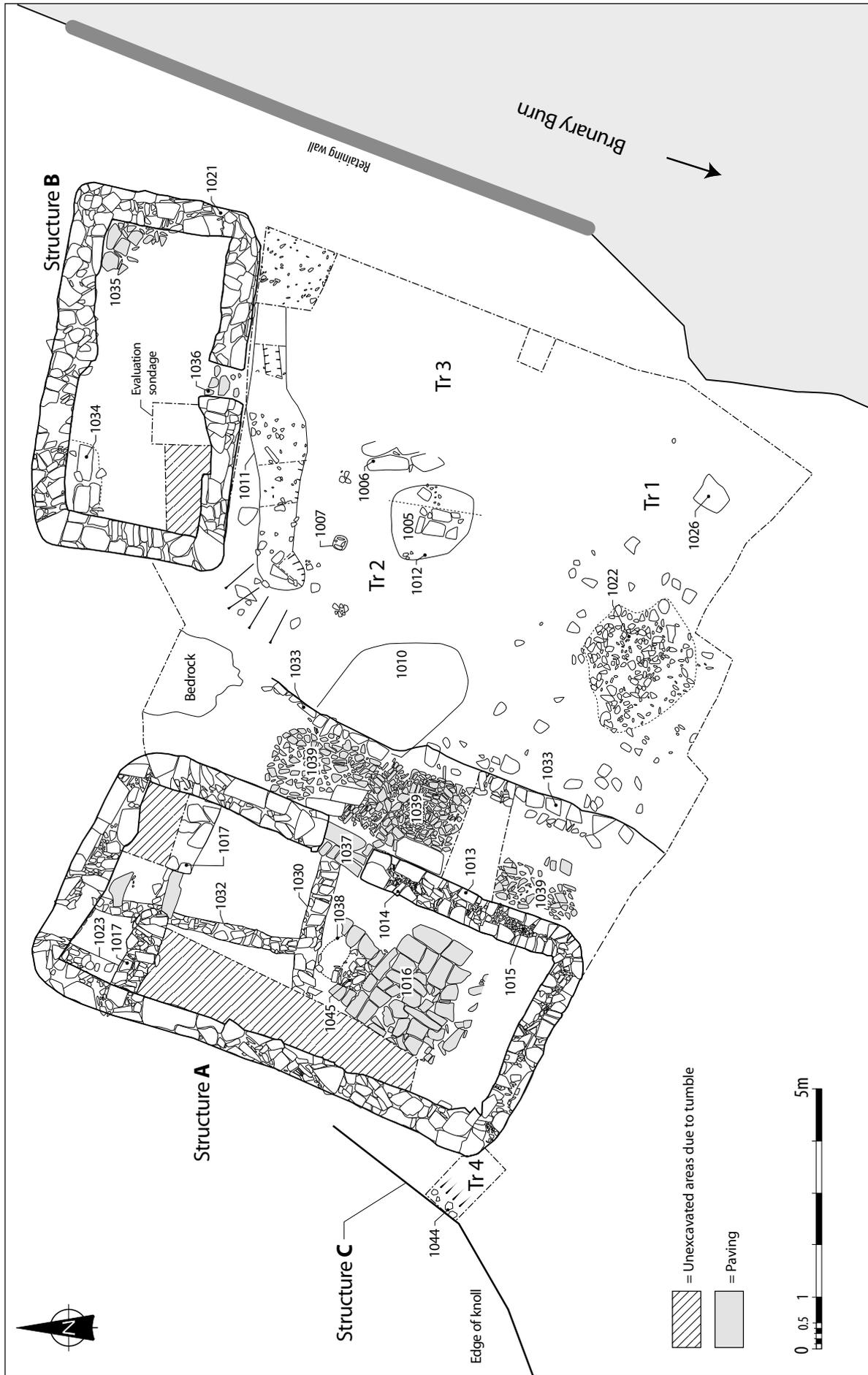
An internal wall (1017) was identified and appeared to represent a partition separating a small compartment, possibly a storeroom, from the rest of the building. A threshold stone showed where the doorway between the main chamber and the compartment had been situated. With the exception of this small chamber, there was no surviving structural evidence to indicate that the main room had been subdivided.

Part of the southern half of the floor area was paved with large, flat flagstones (1016; illus 6). These flagstones did not form a perfectly flat surface but were nevertheless carefully placed to form a neat hard-standing within the building. A small possible hearth was identified just off-centre in the house, within the northern part of the surviving paving. It consisted of a shallow (0.04m deep) patch of burnt soil (1038) which abutted a small sub-circular setting of cobbles (1045), some displaying signs of fire damage.

The surface in the northern half of the interior comprised an earth floor, or represented the level upon which paving had formerly been present. It is possible that the whole of the interior of Structure A was paved, and that post-abandonment robbing is responsible for the small area of paving remaining.

A network of interconnecting under-floor drains (1023, 1030 and 1032) was identified within the interior of the building. The drains were flat-based, vertical-sided and lined with sub-angular and flat cobbles and connected together to run west to east below the entrance flagstones.

Externally, an area of hard-standing was identified on the east side of the building (1039), which ran for approximately 1.5m to the north of the entranceway and 4m to the south of the entranceway. It extended 2.5m out from the east wall into the yard area and was raised above the rest of the yard by approximately 0.2m. A sondage through this feature revealed that it consisted of several layers of imported material to raise up and level the ground outside the main house. It probably formed a con-



Illus 3 Plan of the Brunary Burn structures



Illus 4 Structure A from the north-east

tinuation of the house platform itself. A kerb made of small sub-angular boulders (1033) separated and retained the hard-standing platform from the yard area in front of the house. The main drain (1030) terminated at the edge of the hard-standing. At the mouth of the drain a deposit of dark brown to black, organically rich, friable sandy silt (1010) was identified and contained a relatively dense concentration of pottery fragments, suggesting that it served as a waste collection area lying downslope and away from the house.

Removal of the structures and deposits within Structure A revealed that they were all set upon or cut into the natural mottled orange fine sandy silt subsoil (1003).

3.2 Structure B

This probable single-storey structure (*illus 3*) had an internal floor space of 5.5m × 2.5m and was orientated approximately east to west. It was rectangular in plan, with rounded exterior corners and square internal corners. The walls (1021) were of very roughly dressed drystone construction one or two courses thick. They were approximately 0.6m wide and the only gap noted was at the entranceway on the south side of the building. The walls survived to a maximum height of 1.3m. The building was situated on flat ground, abutting, or possibly slightly cut into, a knoll of bedrock on the western side. A mound of



Illus 5 Detail of wall composition in Structure A

rubble was evident immediately to the north of the building, possibly the tumbled remains of walling, or debris from quarrying and stone trimming.

The interior of the structure was relatively devoid of features in comparison with Structure A. An area of possible rudimentary paving slabs (1035) was identified in the north-east corner, and a small setting of stones (1034) two to three courses high was identified in the north-west corner of the house.

Removal of Structure B confirmed that the building and floor deposits were laid on the natural subsoil (1003).

3.3 Structure C

One trench (Trench 4) was excavated to investigate Structure C; the structure thus revealed comprised the remains of a drystone field bank running along the base of the knoll to the west of the settlement. This field bank is shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1876), and appears to have been used to delineate the forested area from the boggy ground around Lochan Torr na Nighinn. The field bank lay 1m to the west of Structure A and consisted of undressed cobbles (1044) laid against the slope of



Illus 6 Detail of paving within Structure A

the knoll. Only 7m of the bank was visible (*illus 2*). No stratigraphic relationship could be ascertained between the field bank and Structure A, but the nature of the construction and the proximity of the two structures suggests that they are probably contemporary. During the watching brief no continuation of the field bank was identified, presumably having been robbed out.

3.4 The 'yard' area

The southern half of the yard area, or area between the houses (*illus 3*) was littered with tumble from the buildings. The topsoil contained dense bracken and tree roots, rough grass and moss. Topsoil removal revealed spreads of greyish brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal flecks (1001), these spreads being more prevalent in the north of the trench and attributed to silting episodes from flooding. The natural subsoil (1003) was exposed throughout this area, and several features were cut into or laid straight onto this natural subsoil.

An approximately oval spread of stones (1022), or possible platform, measured 2.5m by 2.1m lay on the natural subsoil. The spread appeared to form a rough hard-standing area, perhaps for use as a working area in front of the houses. Alternatively, as it contained the largest group of pottery from the

site, it may have been an area in which refuse was concentrated, perhaps for manuring purposes.

A hearth was identified in the centre of the yard. It was sub-square in plan and consisted of large cobble- and small boulder-sized flagstones (1005). These stones were surrounded by a spread of dark grey-black silt with ashy inclusions (1012). A platform of large boulder-sized flagstones (1006) was identified to the north-east of 1005. The platform was rectangular in shape, 1.1m × 1.5m, and consisted of approximately 12 stones laid directly on layer 1001.

A post-hole (1007; *illus 3*) was identified just to the north-west of the hearth. It was sub-square in plan and measured 0.24m in diameter and 0.2m deep. It was filled with dark grey, loosely compacted sandy silt, with four packing stones. Two small concentrations of cobbles lay equidistantly 1.2m to the east and west of 1007. These may have been the remains of post-holes that had silted up, thus masking any cut feature. If these were indeed post-holes then the three features would have formed a straight line, possibly the remains of fencing or a windbreak or other temporary structure associated with the hearth 1005 and possible working area 1006.

A small sub-square spread of black sandy silt (1026) of indeterminate function lay in the far south-east of the site.

A linear, shallow cut feature (1011; *illus 3*), 3.3m

long × 0.75m wide, ran parallel with Structure B's southern wall; its western extremity curved round slightly to the south. It had shallow sloping sides and a curved base, on average 0.18m deep. It cut through layer 1001, and contained sandy silt fills. This feature probably served as a soakaway or drip channel for rainwater running off the roof of Structure B. Stones present within the uppermost fill were possibly added later to act as a hard-standing area, similar to, but more insubstantial than, that seen to the east of Structure A, as water running from the roof would have made the ground particularly boggy.

A drystone revetting wall (*illus 3*) ran along the western bank of the burn, which survived in places to a height of 0.8m, a maximum of ten courses high. This wall had presumably been built to slow the erosion of the bank of the burn, thus helping prevent flooding of the settlement.

3.5 Other features

An alignment of three rig-and-furrow features was identified to the west of the settlement (*illus 2*). The crests of the rigs were spaced on average 2.75m apart, and aligned approximately north-east to south-west. The maximum length of the rigs was 5.5m before they disappeared into the bog to the south of the settlement. The watching brief failed to find any sub-surface traces of the three features, but the topsoil was deeper, up to 0.6m, at the crest of the rigs, and 0.45m deep at the trough of the furrows. The topsoil was very wet, peaty and boggy and overlay bedrock.

A mound of large cobbles and small boulders lay at the base of the west side of the knoll (*illus 2*). It measured approximately 2.8m × 3m. The watching brief confirmed that this feature was an ephemeral and insubstantial mound of loose stones, not forming any structure and laid on and within the topsoil and bedrock outcrop. It is not possible to associate this mound of stones with the settlement, but the stones were of a similar size to those used in Structure C.

3.6 Finds, by Sue Anderson

3.6.1 Pottery

The site produced 139 sherds (668g) of pottery. With the exception of one small sherd of glazed red earthenware, the assemblage was dominated by refined whitewares of 19th-century date, including industrial slipwares, mocha ware, spongewares, hand-painted and transfer-printed wares. The wide variety of decorative techniques and forms present meant that it was possible to identify a maximum of 26 vessels in this small assemblage. A full list is included in the archive.

The majority of these decorative techniques

were employed by many potteries in Scotland and further afield. It is not possible to attribute any of the sherds from this site to a specific factory, but the most likely sources would be the Glasgow potteries or those close to the west coast ports of England (*Cruickshank 1987*).

Most of the vessels were associated with Structure A, although some were widely dispersed. For example, sherds of a spatterware bowl were found in the general topsoil layer over Structure A, the possible sump 1010, and two evaluation contexts within the structure. Sherds of a spongeware bowl were similarly scattered, in the topsoil, buried garden soil 1001, sump 1010 and stone spread 1022. With the exception of finds from topsoil, the context producing the largest number of sherds was stone spread 1022, possibly indicating that there was some intentional concentration of rubbish in this area. However, the general scatter of vessels tends to suggest that not all broken pottery made it to a midden or rubbish dump and that the occupants may have been relatively careless with the disposal of their refuse. The presence of sherds of individual vessels within both buried features and the topsoil indicate that much of the pottery scattered in the overlying layers was contemporary with the life of the structures and that some was redeposited post-abandonment, perhaps through root or animal action.

The wide variety of broadly contemporary 19th-century vessels in this group may be a result of the pieces' being 'handed down' to their final owners. They may well have been second- or third-hand by the time they reached the site, thus explaining the lack of 'sets'. Some of the vessels may have been treasured possessions, as attempts had been made to mend them. Several sherds from five vessels (a spatterware bowl, a mocha ware teapot, a pearlware plate, a hand-painted bowl and a small rim fragment) had small drilled holes close to the edges, one with iron staining suggesting the use of iron wire staples to hold them together. As one was a teapot, clearly this was not for continued use as wiring would not have made the vessel watertight, so the item must have been intended for display.

3.6.2 Other finds

Other 19th-century finds included a fragment of a glass bottle rim, two clay pipe bowls, iron tools (pick axe and hammer), cast iron cauldron fragments, pieces of slate roofing and a small quantity of heavily calcined animal bone. One of the clay pipes had a short spur and was probably of early to mid 19th-century date; it came from hard-standing cut 1011. Most of the other finds were recovered from topsoil and test pits. The assemblage probably represents domestic debris from the household occupying the structures, which was scattered post-abandonment.