

SERF 2011: Report on Walkover Survey

Michael Given, 19 December 2011



SERF

Introduction

The sixth season of the SERF Walkover Survey took place from 9–11 August 2011. The main activity consisted of walkover survey in the area of Boghall Hill and the Hills of Clevage, 3.5 km south-west of Dunning. SERF is very grateful to George Ritchie of Montalt Farm and to Lady Weymss and Brian Henderson of Invermay Estate for their permission to carry out fieldwork on their land, and to the teams of students for their hard work and enthusiasm, in spite of the heavy rain that washed out one and a half out of the three days' fieldwork. Thanks also to Gordon McKellar for his assistance in the field and with the satellite imagery and mapping.

Aims of the SERF Landscape Project

1. Investigate the relationship between people, their landscape and their environment in Dunning, Forteviot and Forgandenny parishes, at all periods
2. Investigate communication routes along and across Strathearn and the Ochils, particularly in the Neolithic and Medieval periods
3. Investigate the relationship between the Iron Age forts in the Ochils and in Strathearn
4. Document and study the development of agriculture from pre-improvement to improvement
5. Examine changing settlement patterns, and the relationship between settlements, land use and the environment
6. Investigate the later 'biographies' and changing meanings of prehistoric and medieval monuments
7. Provide data for the National Monuments Record of Scotland
8. Provide training and experience for students from the University of Glasgow and elsewhere



Fig. 1. View from cairn on Clevage hills looking north to Craigengro Hill, Strathearn and Forteviot

Project methods

1. Investigation, visiting and documentation of the main known sites and features across the study area
2. Systematic and intensive walkover survey of between 5 and 10 survey areas, which provide a representative topographical, historical and environmental sample of the study area
3. Database and GIS analysis of distribution patterns, intervisibility, environmental change, etc.
4. Full integration with all other components of SERF: documentary history, excavations, fieldwalking, geophysics, standing building survey, etc.

The 2011 season: aims and methods

The aims of the 2011 season were as follows:

1. Give the students a one-day taster of systematic walkover survey and site recording
2. Give the students the opportunity to discuss and experience an upland landscape and various approaches to landscape archaeology
3. Look for evidence for Medieval and Late Medieval settlement, particularly small-scale dispersed settlement and structures built of turf
4. Carry out preliminary recording of any other features of interest

Three days of walkover survey and site recording were carried out by students from the University of Glasgow and elsewhere as part of SERF's field school component. This work represents the sixth season of an ongoing survey programme investigating the uplands above Dunning and Forteviot. The 2012 survey sampled an area of c. 1.3 x 0.9 km following the ridgeline of Boghall Hill, Clevage Hills and Craigenroe Hill, plus a leg heading southeast from Knock of Boghall (Fig. 2). The visual centre point was the cairn on Clevage Hill (SF142; NO 05375 13520).

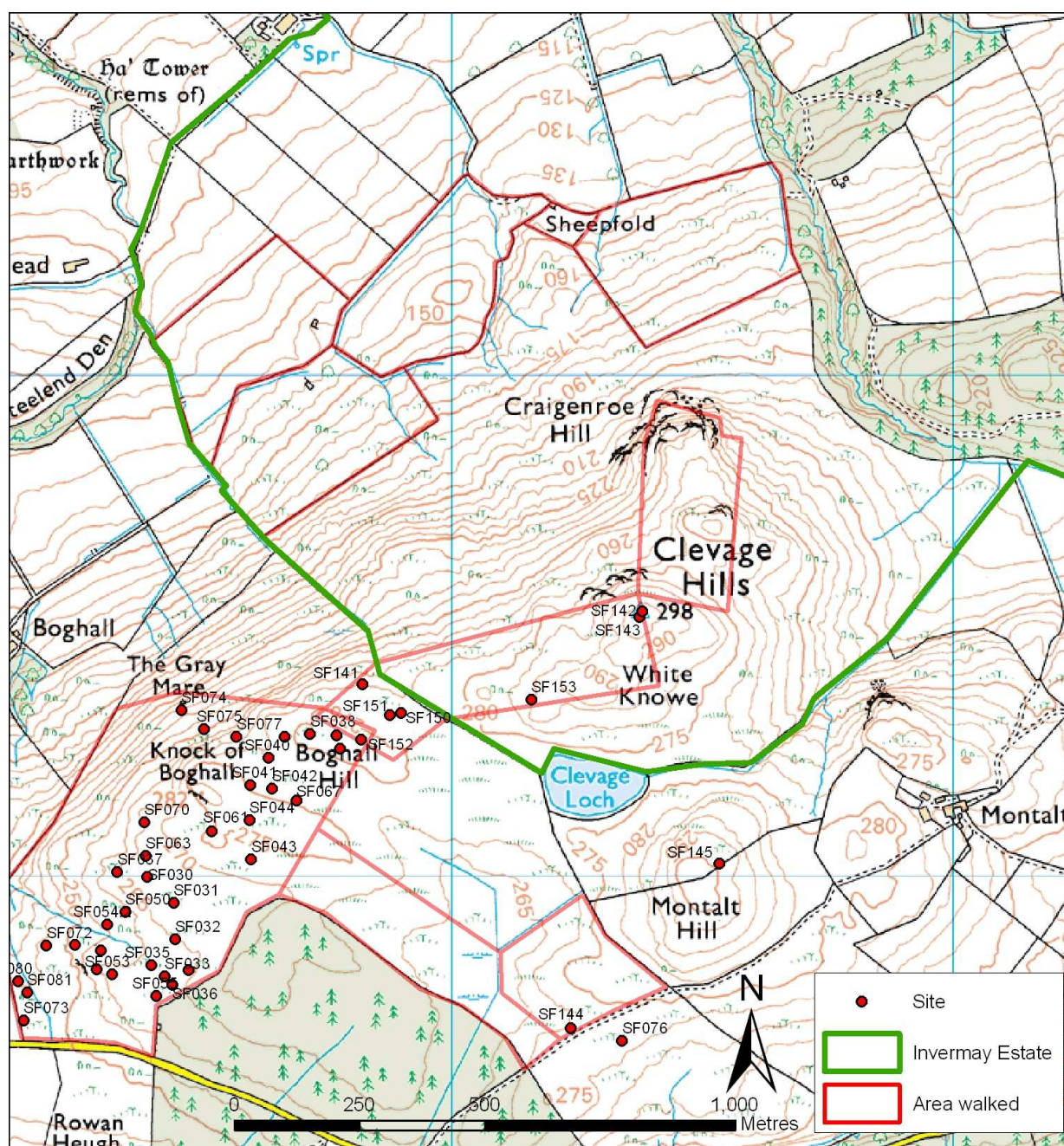


Fig. 2. Map of survey carried out in 2008 (left, round Knock of Boghall), Easter 2009 (upper centre) and 2011 (lower centre). See Table 1 for site summaries.

Results

The western end of our first transect stretching eastwards along the ridgeline from Boghall was the most productive area of the whole season, particularly because of a large complex of turf dykes and enclosures, that was clearly a continuation of the similar complexes recorded in the 2008 season. One stretch (SF151) may have been part of a head dyke, with a current width of c. 1m. At the western end of this there was a more complex layout (SF141; Fig. 3), which included one junction and a gap of c. 4.2 m which might have been the entrance on the western corner of a polygonal enclosure c. 100 m across.

The enclosure was presumably for tathing, the penning of animals on poor land to enrich the soil for future cultivation, particularly during periods of agricultural expansion into the uplands. In previous seasons we have recorded similar enclosures to the west, on Casken Hill (Given 2008) and round Thorter Burn (Dalglish and Given 2010).



Fig. 3. Section of head dyke or enclosure wall, looking north across Strathearn

One interesting feature of these enclosures is that although they continue westwards over and beyond Boghall Hill, they stop dead at the modern fence shown on Fig. 2 running north-west from Clevage Loch. This fence is the modern boundary between Montalt Farm and Invermay Estate, but may well represent an 18th and 19th century boundary between Invermay Estate (or its predecessor Clevage) to the north-east and probably Pitcairns Estate to the west. This needs more work: Stobie's map of 1783, for example, shows the boundary between Forteviot and Dunning parishes running c. 800 m north-east of the current boundary (Fig. 4). Assuming this was an estate boundary in the Early Modern period, the two estates clearly had very different policies: the western estate allowed tenant farmers to extend cultivation into its upland areas, whereas Invermay Estate did not, perhaps because of a focus on hunting or grazing.



Fig. 4. Stobie's map of 1783, showing the boundary between Forteviot and Dunning parishes (light grey band), with Invermay Estate and the 2008 and 2011 walkover survey results overlaid (map: Gordon McKellar)

At the other end of the same transect we recorded a symmetrical, conical hilltop cairn built of dry stones immediately adjacent to the Cleavage Hills trig point (SF142; Fig. 5). This was a substantial piece of work, with diameter ranging from 3.5 to 4.5m and a height of 1.75m, and engendered an excellent discussion on intentionality and the inscription of meaning onto the landscape.

Round the cairn, mainly extending across the flat hilltop on its southern side, was a possible oval platform apparently marked by small boulders (SF143). Its widest diameter was 23 m. Possible interpretations that were discussed include a prehistoric henge, Pictish hillfort, and camp for the Ordnance Surveyors using the trig point.



Fig. 5. Conical cairn on Casken Hill (SF142)

We also recorded a small quarry adjacent to the road to Montalt Farm (SF144; Fig. 6). Its main face was divided into two sections, of which the western was less lichenated and eroded and cut more deeply into the outcrop, so presumably was exploited in a later phase. A 19th-century stone dyke runs just over 100 m to the south-west. Like the many other very similar quarries recorded in previous seasons (Dalglish and Given 2009; Given 2008), this was clearly exploited for the construction of the dyke. The later phase was presumably to repair the dyke, or perhaps for building activity at Montalt Farm.



Fig. 6. Quarry with earlier (left) and later (right) phases (SF144)

Conclusions

Table 1 summarises the sites recorded during the season, while Fig. 2 shows their location. Clearly, not enough fieldwork could be done to produce any strikingly new insights into the area. The enclosures, dykes and quarry confirm the pattern that we have recorded in more detail to the west. Probably the most interesting find was the sudden absence of enclosures, dykes and rig and furrow immediately across the boundary into the Invermay Estate. This would be worth following up by examining aerial photographs, carrying out more fieldwork and doing some documentary work.

Site Code	Site Name	Site Type	Grid ref.	Description
SF141	Boghall Hill	Enclosure/boundary	NO 04820 13385	Large complex enclosure defined by turf banks
SF142	Cleavage Hill	Cairn	NO 05375 13520	Symmetrical, cone-shaped stone cairn. 4.5 x 3.5m. Height 1.75m.
SF143	Cleavage Hill	Platform	NO 05375 13520	Circular/oval dispersal of stones, possibly in concentric rings. 23m wide at widest point.
SF144	Montalt	Quarry	NO 05235 12695	19th century quarry. Height 1.9m. Width 6.5m. 2 sections: NNE one is more eroded & lichenated, so earlier phase. Presumably supplied stone dyke 110m to SW
SF145	Montalt	Enclosure/boundary	NO 05535 13025	A large stone (dimensions: approximately 1m x 1m x 0.5m). It has two square holes.
SF150	Boghall	Enclosure/boundary	NO 04900 13325	Turf head dyke connecting with SF141. Width c. 1m.
SF151	Boghall	Platform	NO 04875 13320	Slightly raised platform with underlying stones; hut circle??
SF152	Boghall	Enclosure/boundary	NO 04820 13275	Possible dry stone wall
SF153	Boghall	Platform	NO 05160 13355	Circular patch of grass discoloration; hut circle??

Table 1. Summary of sites recorded in the 2011 season.

References

Dalglish, C., and M. Given

2009 *SERF 2009: report on walkover survey*. Glasgow: University of Glasgow, Department of Archaeology.

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2008 *SERF 2007: report on landscape survey*. Glasgow: University of Glasgow, Department of Archaeology

For PDFs of these reports, see:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/archaeology/research/projects/serf/inthewiderlandscape/archaeologyoftheuplands/>