

BERMS, BANKS, DITCHES AND PLATFORMS ASSOCIATED WITH BARROWS IN SCOTLAND

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The barrow - to use this word in the strict sense of a grave-mound, a tumulus - has been widely recorded in Scotland in the form of a simple ditchless bowl. It has long been recognized that there also exists an important minority of barrows which have berms, banks, ditches or platforms associated with them. Many examples of these have been recorded piecemeal in Inventories and elsewhere, and in recent years more have either been discovered or reassessed during the routine field reconnaissance carried out by the Archaeology Division of the Ordnance Survey. The notes which follow point to some of the material which is now available for use in any comprehensive study of the nature and distribution of these antiquities throughout Scotland and in any attempt to discover just how they fit in to the archaeology of the 2nd millennium BC in Britain. Some of them, for example, show a remarkable superficial resemblance to certain Wessex barrows, but the validity of this apparent link remains unexplained.

In this as in so many aspects of archaeological field work the matter of nomenclature requires attention. The distinction, for example, between the conventional descriptions bell, bell/disc or disc barrow is often ill-defined, while since ploughing or robbing may have caused a feature such as a berm, a ditch or an outer bank to have disappeared, a description in these terms may mislead. Thus, in the notes which follow, the characteristic features are recorded simply as they now appear on the surface, without conventional labels.

A Barrow with berm, ditch and bank. In some examples a kerb can be seen at the base of the barrow.

1 The Ord, Lairg, Sutherland; NC 57760521. Robbed barrow 14.5 m in diam., numerous kerb stones survive in situ; berm 5.0 m wide; ditch 6.0 m wide, 1.3 m deep; bank 4.0 m wide, 1.6 m high.
RCAMS Sutherland, 138, no. 396, enclosure.

2 Market Knowe, Longforgan, Perthshire; NO 31223058. Overgrown with scrub at date of visit, so measurements provisional. Robbed barrow 20.0 m in diam., low; berm 4.0 to 5.0 m wide; ditch 3.0 m wide, shallow; bank 4.0 m wide, low.

OSNB, 51 (1861), 45 (Stat Acct, Fullarton's Gazetteer).

3 Three Laws, Logie Pert, Angus; NO 67786227. Mutilated by former ploughing and plantation, recently by bulldozers. One of three (?similar), the others now destroyed. Barrow 20.0 m in diam., low; berm 3.5 m wide; ditch 2.0 m wide, 0.5 m deep; bank 3.5 m wide, 0.4 m high.
Stat Acct, IX (1793), 51.

4 Hill of Canterland or Hill of Pitbeadly, St Cyrus, Kincardineshire; NO 70606534. Barrow 9.0 m in diam., 0.7 m high; berm 4.0 m wide; ditch 5.0 m wide, 0.9 m deep; bank 5.0 m wide, 0.6 m high - the bank has a broad medial groove the bottom of which is above the level of the ground outside. Beaker and CU sherds from this site.
PSAS, XXII (1887-8), 403; XXXIV (1899-1900), 54; NSA, XI (1845), 282; OSNB, 18 (1864), 33; Clarke, D.L., Beaker Pottery of Great Britain and Ireland (1970), 518.

5 Auchtertyre, Lochalsh, Ross & Cromarty; NG 85092942. Set into the slope of the nose of a ridge; barrow mutilated by small, late enclosure. Barrow 6.5 m in diam., 0.2 m high; berm 3.5 m wide; ditch 7.0 m wide, 0.5 m deep; bank 4.0 m wide, 0.9 m high.

B Barrow with ditch and bank. Some examples of this class may originally have had a berm.

1 Balcharn, Lairg, Sutherland; NC 59690622. Barrow 31.0 m in diam., 1.7 m high; ditch 8.0 m wide, 0.2 m deep; bank 9.0 m wide, 0.2 m high. RCAMS Sutherland, 160, no. 464, mound.

2 Collessie, Fife; NO 29931115. Barrow 11.8 m by 10.8 m, 0.6 m high; ditch 7.0 m wide, 0.6 m deep; bank 8.8 m to 6.4 m wide, 0.3 high. RCAMS Fife, 56, no. 114, Bell-barrow.

3 Table Rings, Whittingehame, East Lothian; NT 63706354. Barrow 10.4 m by 9.4 m, 0.7 m high; ditch 6.4 m to 8.2 m wide, 0.5 m to 0.2 m deep; bank 1.8 m to 2.4 m wide, 0.3 m high. RCAMS East Lothian, 139, no. 232, Bell Cairn.

4 Dalmigavie Lodge, Moy & Dalarossie, Inverness; NH 76712407. Barrow 8.0 m by 7.0 m, 0.6 m high; ditch 2.5 m wide, 0.2 m deep; bank 2.5 m wide, 0.2 m high - gap in E arc of bank with large stone apparently in situ on N side.

C Barrow with bank. In some cases there may originally have been a ditch between the barrow and the bank.

1 Hangman's Hill, Croy & Dalnacross, Nairn; NH 85535290. Barrow

25.0 m in diam., 3.3 m high; bank 3.5 m wide, 0.6 m high; space between, 1.5 m wide.

2 Arniefoul, Glamis, Angus; NO 40764491. Barrow 21.0 m in diam., 1.6 m high; eccentrically placed within a bank 3.0 m wide, low; space between averages 6.5 m wide. Gap in E arc of bank 3.0 m wide.

3 Dalreoch Wood, Aness, Ross & Cromarty; NH 63137176. Barrow 10.0 m in diam., 1.0 m high; bank 2.0 m wide, 0.5 m high; space between, 1.5 m wide.

OS 6" 1907, cairns, remains of.

4 Upperton, Kiltarlity & Convinth, Inverness; NH 39323135. Barrow 8.0 m by 7.0 m, 0.6 m high; bank 2.5 m wide, low; space between, 2.0 m wide.

D Barrow on platform. In some cases, the outer rim of the platform is embanked; it is not always easy to decide whether or not the bank is an original feature.

1 Minnigaff, Kirkcudbright; NX 41686560. Barrow 19.8 m in diam., 2.5 m high; centrally placed on platform 30.0 m in diam., 1.0 m high.
RCAMS Kirkcudbright, 192-3, no. 365

2 Collessie, Fife; NO 28261356. Barrow 16.0 m in diam., 1.3 m high; centrally placed on platform 29.5 m by 28.0 m, 1.4 m high.

3 Vola, Stenness, Orkney; HY 31471395. Barrow 17.5 m in diam., 1.0 m high; centrally placed on platform 31.0 m by 26.0 m, 1.0 m high, with peripheral bank.

RCAMS Orkney and Shetland, 314, no. 889, Disc Barrow.

4 Barcaldine, Ardchattan & Muckairn, Argyll; NM 91004029. Barrow 9.8 m in diam., 0.6 m high, with kerb; centrally placed on platform 22.5 m in diam., 0.3 m high, with kerb, with peripheral bank. Gap in S arc of bank flanked each side by an upright stone.

5 Cutter's Toor, Stronsay, Orkney; HY 67252847. Barrow 13.0 m in diam., 0.9 m high; centrally placed on platform 21.0 m in diam., 0.3 m high.
RCAMS Orkney and Shetland, 330, no. 952, Cairn.

6 Philla Cairn, Benholm, Kincardineshire; NO 78937102. Barrow 12.0 m in diam., 1.2 m high; centrally placed on platform 21.0 m in diam. which has been built up on the slopes on either side of a ridge to provide a level base for the barrow.

OSNB, 4 (1863), 8.

7 Auldearn, Nairn; NH 93125486. Barrow 13.0 m in diam., 2.0 m high; eccentrically placed on platform 21.0 m by 18.0 m, 0.3 m high. A row of six upright stones formerly extended from it to SE - one remains in situ. Northern Notes and Queries, XVI (1902), 211; Reliquary, X (1904), 130.

8 Hill of Drimmie, Bendochy, Perthshire; NO 18715061. Barrow 8.5 m in diam., 0.3 m high; centrally placed on platform 18.5 m in diam., 0.4 m high.
PSAS, XLIII (1908-9), 99.

9 and 10 Balnabodach, Blair Atholl, Perthshire; NO 82346069. Barrow 9, 10.0 m in diam., 0.4 m high, centrally placed on platform 15.5 m in diam., 0.3 m high. Barrow 10, 7.5 m in diam., 0.5 m high, centrally placed on platform 15.5 m in diam., 0.3 m high.

11 Dunsyre, Lanarkshire; NT 092 502. Barrow 6.5 m in diam., 0.5 m high, centrally placed on platform 12.0 m in diam., 0.2 m high.

Several other categories of elaborate barrows, such as the saucer barrows recorded in the Inventories of Roxburgh and Peebles, and some of the supposed enclosed cremation cemeteries, such as RCAMS Peeblesshire, 66, no. 112, as well as some other classes, should also be included in any comprehensive study of these antiquities. Full particulars of those listed above, as well as information about numerous other examples, can be had in the Archaeology Division office at 43 Rose Street, Edinburgh.