Forestry Commission Scotland
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba

ScARF Scottish Archaeological Research Framework

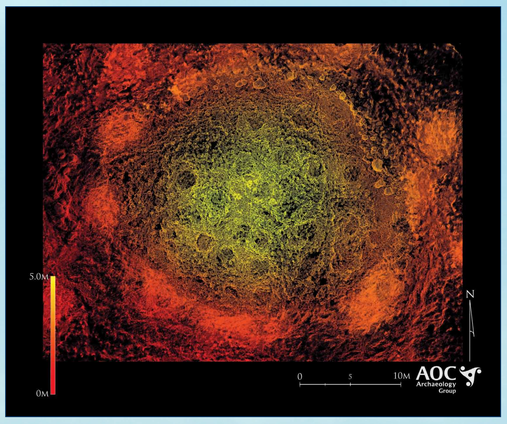
Bucharn Cairn

The Bronze Age burial cairn at Bucharn boasts wide views over the Water of Feugh in Aberdeenshire. The round cairn remains largely undisturbed, measuring up to 23m in diameter and up to 6.2m in height. It remains an impressive and imposing monument, despite the passage of over three thousand years. The mass of stone probably covers a central stone cist and burial.

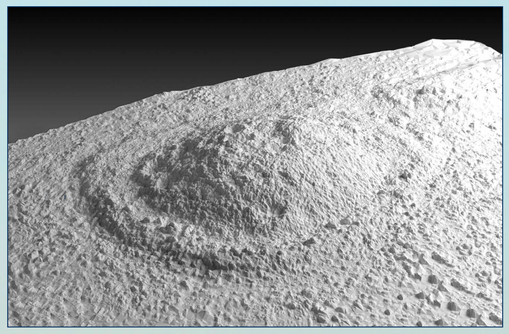
The archaeological evidence for Scotland's Bronze Age funerary and ritual practice is rich and varied, with many examples of exceptional structural preservation and several unique site types. However, simple round cairns have rarely been considered worthy subjects for detailed archaeological measured survey. When drawn, their bulk is often just depicted as grey-shaded infill between kerb and cist.

But every picture tells a story – and the archaeological measured survey of the Bucharn Cairn is no exception. Despite the accumulation of field clearance around its edge, the cairn remains unusually well-preserved, retaining its original domed profile. Archaeological terrestrial laser scan survey has revealed the secret of its longevity - the cairn seems to have been placed on a distinct platform of stone, providing a solid foundation upon which to build.

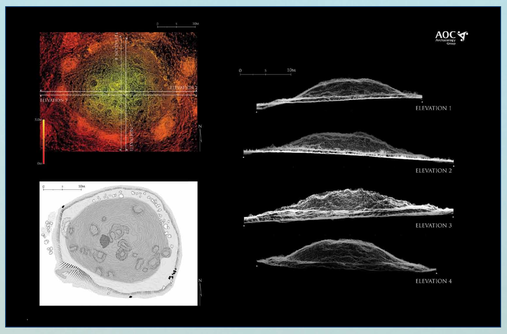
By commissioning laser scan surveys of significant archaeological sites on the national forest estate, Forestry Commission Scotland aims to contribute to our national and regional historic environment records and to support the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework, *'promoting the range of benefits and uses of laser scanning'* and furthering *'Scotland's strong role in employing emerging technologies for digital recording and imaging in the heritage sphere'* (ScARF 2012).



The terrestrial laser scan by AOC Archaeology has provided precise terrain models, plans and elevations. This unusual orthographic plan uses colour to depict changes in height and enables an appreciation of the dome of the cairn.



The associated hill-shaded terrain model helps the reader visually interpret the plans and elevations, aiding understanding by revealing more of the form and shape.



The detailed elevations of the cairn capture the well-preserved domed profile and reveal the level foundation platform. This is likely an original (or earlier) feature and not simply an apron of later field clearance.