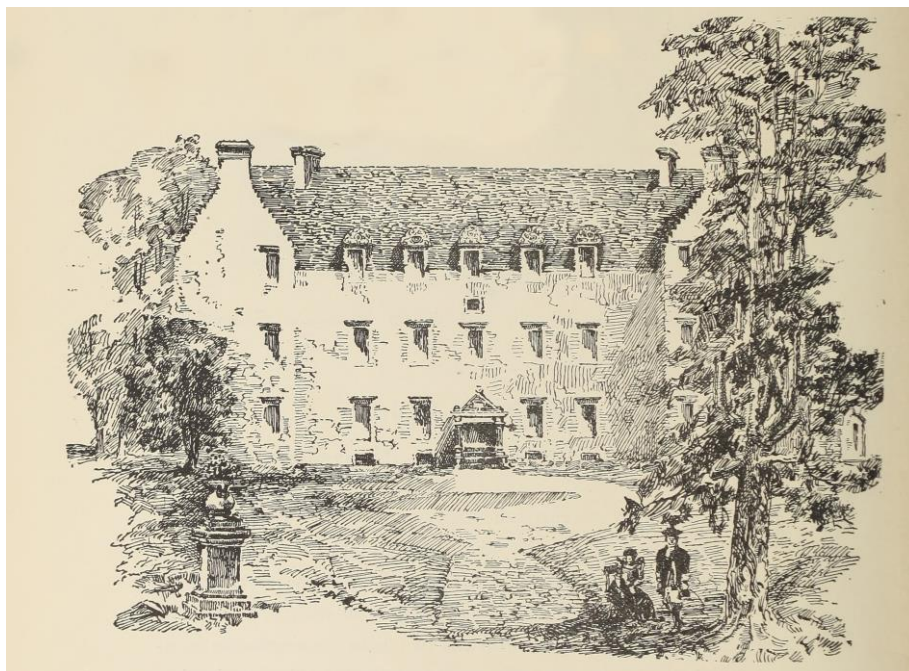




THE GROUNDS OF BANNOCKBURN HOUSE

Archaeological Survey by ACFA

June 2023



Field Archaeology for All
Arc-eòlas do na h-uile

www.acfabaseline.info

Introduction

ACFA was approached by Colin Davenport of Bannockburn House Trust to carry out a walk-over survey of the grounds of the house. A team from ACFA undertook the survey in March 2023, guided by Colin Davenport. The aim was to confirm the known archaeology and identify any other features.

There is evidence of coal extraction with known mine sites and a wagonway. Two features were noted and recorded: a linear feature presenting as a ditch, and a dyke.

Site Location

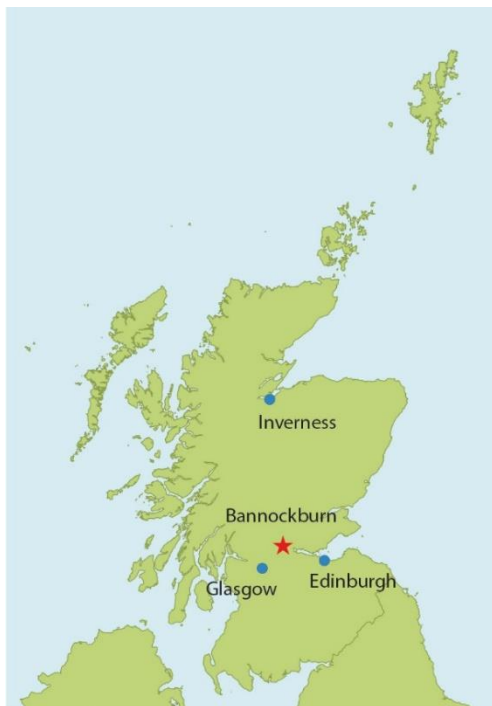


Figure 2: Location within Scotland

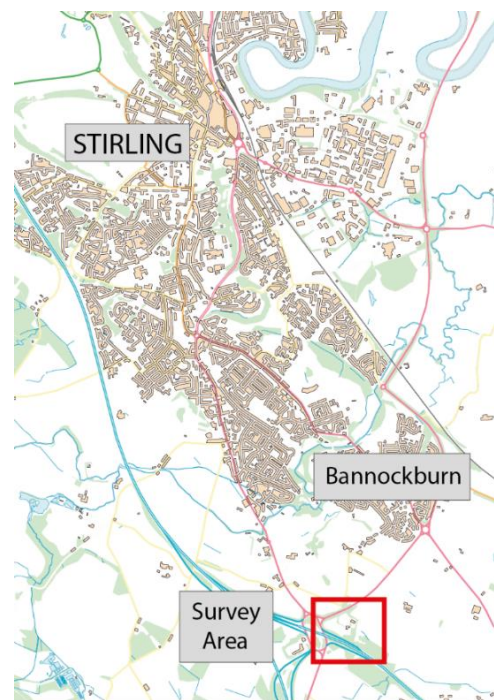


Figure 2: Location of survey area south of Bannockburn

Feature One: Linear feature beside Bannockburn House

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Maps

The feature described in this site record is the line marked in green between the House of Bannockburn and a road from Coalheugh (coalmine) which can be seen on Roy's map (1752 – 1755) in Figure 3.

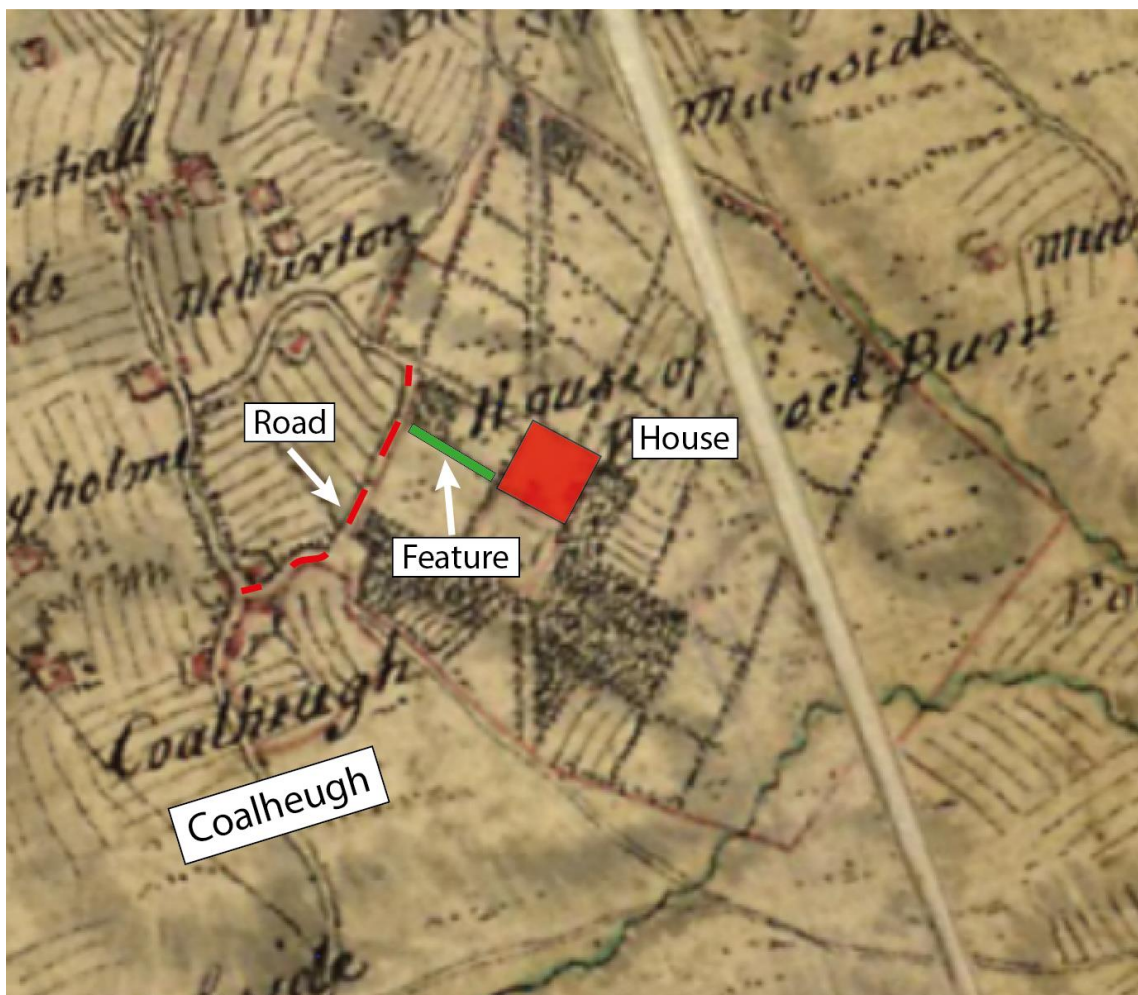


Figure 3: The site of Bannockburn House on [Roy's map](#) of the Scottish Lowlands. Map courtesy of The British Library

It's possible that Coalheugh provided coal for the fires at the house in the 18th century in the same way that other landowners used small coal pits on their estates. This route to the back of the house by way of the green feature would be less obtrusive than delivery to the front door.

The same feature can be seen on the OS map of 1859 (Figure 4) where it still divides the field but now ends at a small track rather than the road shown on Roy's map. The track, barely visible on the map, leads to a quarry which may be part of the remains of Coalheugh.



Figure 4: [OS First Edition Map \(1859\)](#)

In Figure 4, the green line separates area number 2104 (north of the feature) from area 2108 (south). The land-use information, from the [OS Book of Reference](#) for the parish of St. Ninians (1862), tells us that area 2104 is a wood while 2108 is an area of arable farming and trees.

Although the feature looks like a field boundary which separates the two areas of land, this map together with Roy's map suggest that the feature may have formed part of a track which, by the 19th century (the date of the map in Figure 4), could be used as a short-cut from the back of the house to the major north-south road which passed near it.

The feature can still be seen today in Figure 5, which is a [LiDAR image](#) showing that a modern road (A91) now cuts through the area and covers part of the feature. The remains of Coalheugh and the quarry were buried under this road.

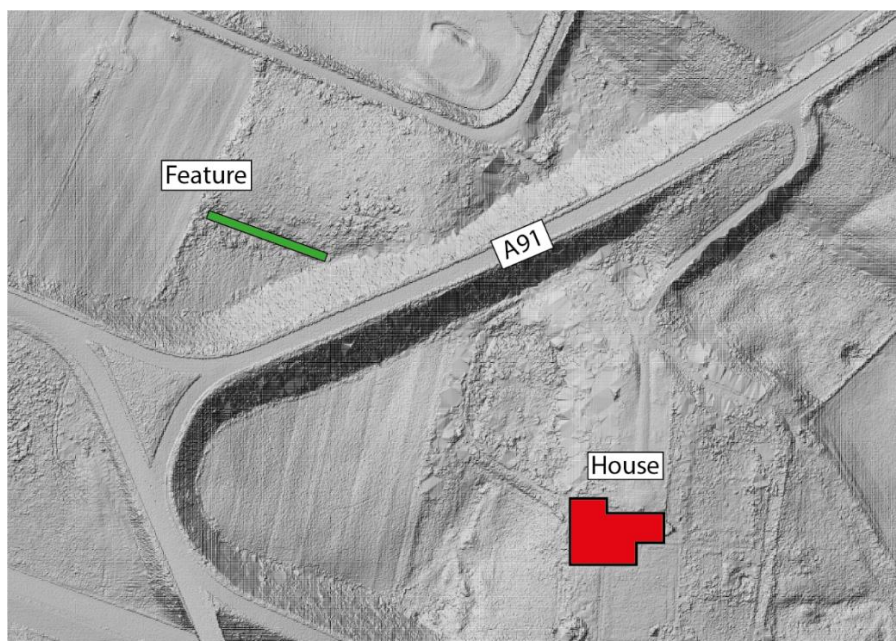


Figure 5: [LiDAR image](#) captured between 2017 and 2019. It shows that some of the feature has been covered by the modern A91 road.

Site

Although the feature looks like a field boundary on the early maps (Figure 3 and Figure 4), it does not look like a field boundary on the ground (Figure 6).



*Figure 6: Photograph of a cross-section of the feature.
The camera is looking to the North-West, along the feature.*

In this photograph, the feature looks more like a track than a field boundary.

A cross-section of the feature was sketched at the location shown in the photograph, at the site marked by a yellow line between A and B in Figure 7.

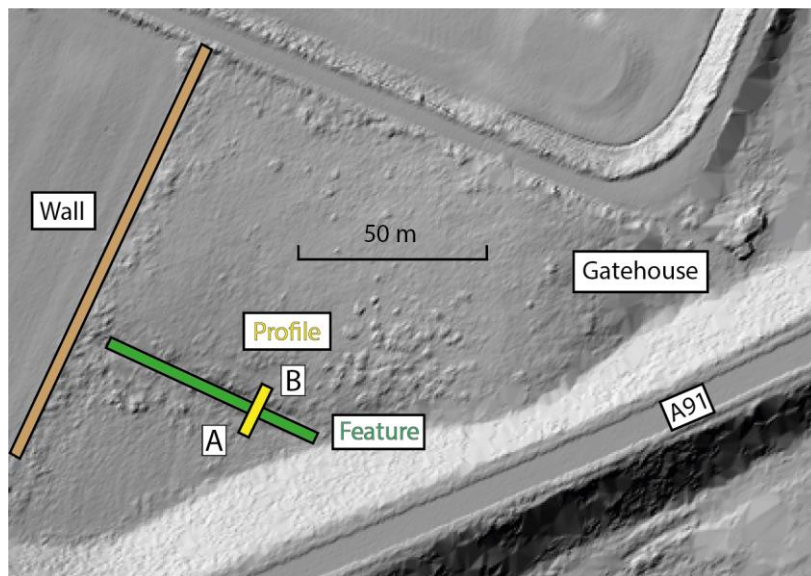


Figure 7: The yellow line between A and B shows the location of the profile shown in .

The profile of the cross-section shows a main channel with a smaller channel to the side.

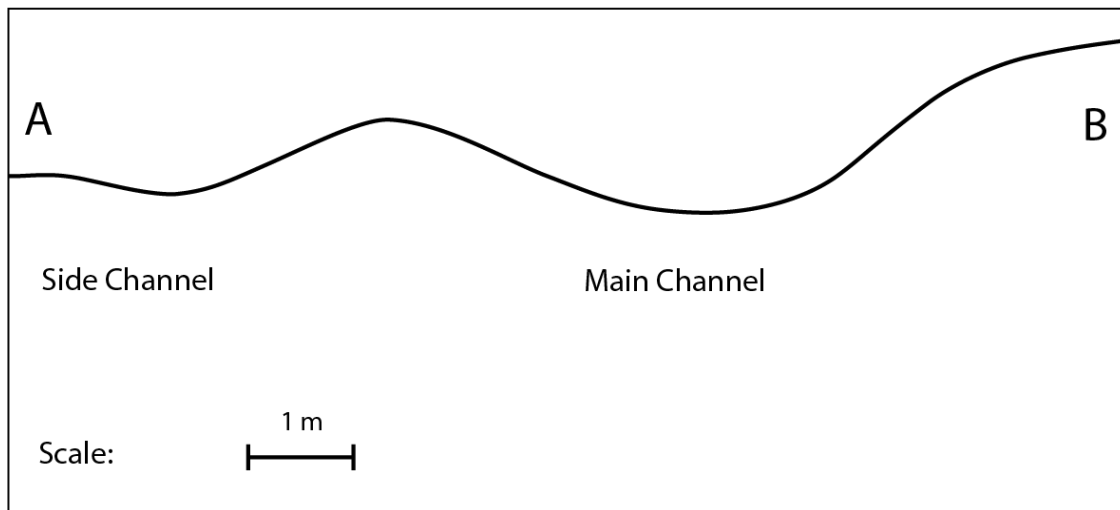


Figure 8: Profile of feature

The main channel is about 1m deep with side B higher than the rest of the feature. Side B drops quite steeply down into the channel so that the feature feels a little like a Ha-ha, or ditch, designed to prevent the movement of animals from one side to the other. Normally in a Ha-ha, the steep drop would be faced with a stone wall and, although there were some blocks of stone lying loose in the main channel, they did not form a structure. There was no sign of a wall. The feature is approx 65m long.

Photographs of the profile of the feature are shown in Figures 9 and 10. The camera was facing NW along the line of the feature, shown as a green line in Figure 7.



Figure 9: Side Channel



Figure 10: Main Channel

The wall at the end of the feature is shown in Figures 11 and 12. At this end of the feature, the main channel has almost disappeared while the side channel has completely vanished under the vegetation.



Figure 11: Wall at end of feature



Figure 12: Wall at end of feature

There was no sign that the feature continued beyond the wall. The survey team did not explore the area for traces of the track that can be seen on the 19th century map. It might be interesting to look for the remains of this track and to see whether it ever joined the feature.

Discussion

The maps in Figure 3, Figure 4 and Figure 5 show a line separating two areas of land which has been in this location since at least the 18th century. The feature, on the ground, does not look like a traditional field boundary. It may have been a Ha-ha except that there is no sign of the vertical stone wall which is a normal part of these structures.

Another possibility is that there was a stone dyke at this location and that the stones forming the dyke were removed for use elsewhere.

In some ways, the feature looks like a track, which has been hollowed out by long use, except that it comes to a halt at the wall and does not seem to go anywhere beyond that. However, the early maps show that, in the past, there was a track where there is now a wall and it may be that the feature joined this track.

Feature Two: Turf Dyke

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Maps

It is likely that some of the fields marked on Roy's map are retained in the modern fence lines, but it hasn't been possible so far to pinpoint where the dyke remains are on the map.

On the OS 2nd edition map (Figure 13) and the LiDAR image (Figure 14), a dot (labelled 'Dyke remains') marks the site of the survey team's drawing (Figure 17). An arrow indicates the location of the turf dyke, which is shown as a dotted line on the OS map. There is a faint line on the LiDAR, with rig and furrow to the west. Although the rig is clear on the LiDAR, it was not obvious to the team on the ground.



Figure 13: OS 2nd edition 6" map, [National Library of Scotland](#)



Figure 14: [LiDAR image](#) captured between 2017 and 2019.

Site

The whole turf dyke as shown on the LiDAR was walked and traced on the ground (Figure 15). Interestingly, it is in a direct line to a modern fence. A 17.2m length of the dyke was exposed to its stone footings (Figure 16). No sign of the dyke continuing was found downhill from the exposed section, but it was noted that the trees respected the projected line of the wall with dense woodland to the east.



Figure 15: Turf dyke



Figure 16: Exposing the stone dyke

Feature as sketched and recorded

The exposed feature is the dog-leg of an early stone-built boundary dyke, sections of which are visible in maps and LiDAR images (Figures 13 and 14).

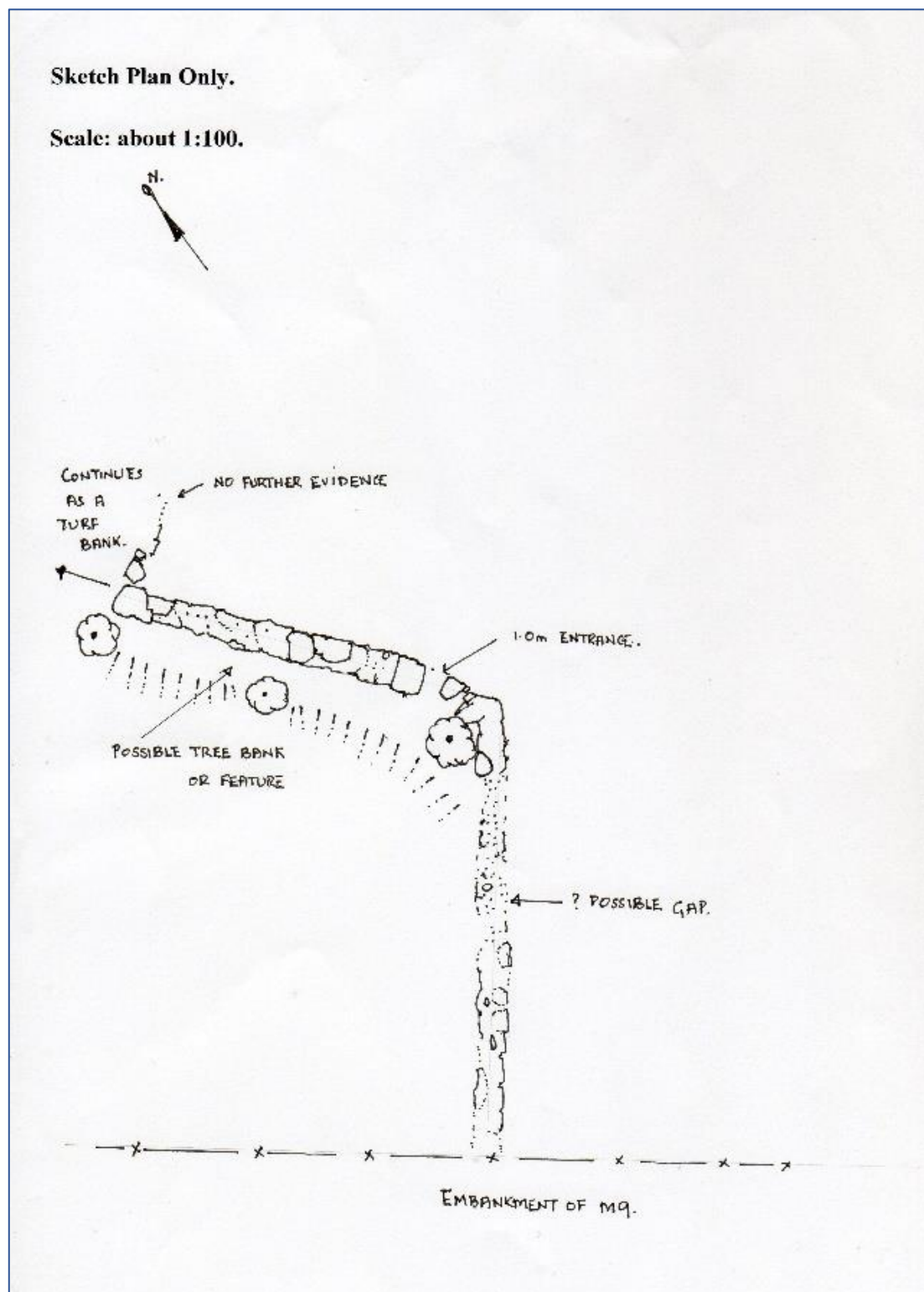


Figure 17: Sketch of stone dyke

It extends from the post and wire fence which delimits the foot of the bank of the current M9 and extends for 9.8m in a NNE direction before turning to the NNW for a further 7.4m.

The feature consists of reduced turf-covered foundation stones of rough-cut local freestone. The width is variable, with an average of 0.6m, and a maximum height of 0.6m.

There is evidence in the NNE length of a possible entrance gap 1.05m wide and a more probable one in the NNW length just beyond the corner turn, 0.38m wide.

The dyke has been robbed to its foundations with no evidence of rubble associated with a natural abandonment.

At the visible termination of the NNW length, there is an apparent further short length of stonework turning to the east for c.1.0m but there is no evidence of any further exposure, so its function is unknown. There is a faint suggestion of a further mounded feature along the west side of the NNW length as indicated on the plan, which only a section might elucidate.

The NNW length does extend on mapping and LiDAR. It is visible as a low turf bank for a considerable distance and it can currently be seen as separating the ancient woodland on the west side from recent planting to the east.

Discussion

The construction of the M9 has interfered with the potential for interpreting this feature. It seems likely, as indicated by the areas of extensive rig and furrow to the west, clearly shown on the LiDAR, that the dyke is a remnant of a sequence of old farmed arable ground to the east which was abandoned and replaced by later landscaping plantations.

Acknowledgements

ACFA would like to thank Bannockburn House Trust for the opportunity to conduct this survey, in particular Colin Davenport for his invaluable help and biscuits.

The survey team for Feature One consisted of Edward Smith, Janie Munro and Elizabeth Swain and the site report was produced by Edward Smith. The survey team for Feature Two consisted of Ailsa Smith, Wendy Raine, Eric Gardner, Ross Wood, and Ian Marshall who produced the site report and sketch. Ailsa researched and produced the mapping information. The report was compiled by Janie Munro.

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Roy Map Reference: British Library Maps CC.5.a.441 6/7a | 6/7b | 16/1a | 16/1b

LiDAR images are reproduced under Open Government Licence.

Cover illustration of Bannockburn House taken from [Ancient Castles and Mansions of Stirling Nobility, described and illustrated by J.S. Fleming, 1902](#)

ACFA, formerly the Association of Certificated Field Archaeologists, was founded in 1987. Since then our members have acquired a wide range of knowledge, skills and experience in archaeological field survey and archival research. We often work in collaboration with other heritage and community organisations. As a charity we are mainly self-funding but also seek grants and welcome donations. Applications for membership are encouraged from anyone, with or without experience, interested in the practice of field archaeology, survey or research. At ACFA we learn by doing.

More information at our website: acfabaseline.info



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