

The history and survey of Cùlanach settlement in Argyll.

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Abstract

A typical West Highland abandoned settlement was surveyed as part of North Clyde Archaeological Society [NCAS] fieldwork projects and its history as far as is known is given.

Introduction

Cùlanach settlement is located at NS 2622 9715, the site is given on OS maps and is on Explorer 364, Loch Lomond North, 1: 25,000 series. It is located at 140m OD and lies on the east side of a prominent ridge Sròn Mallanach, aligned NE/SW, it lies to the west of and adjacent to the West Highland Railway, straddling an unnamed spring feeding into Glenmallan Burn, and is surrounded in woodlands. The site is within MOD land.

It is one of a series of such settlements in the area of interest of NCAS which the Society hope to investigate further by excavation and establish the true nature and date of such sites in this part of Argyll. Several other comparable sites along the eastern shore of Loch Long were also surveyed courtesy of MOD (PI 1).

Survey. Figs 1 & 2.

The site is seen as three main long buildings and an enclosure to the north. While the outlines of all the structures may be traced, few details are visible among the moss-covered ruins and, as is usual, the interiors are strewn with rocks from the walls.

Described here from the railway;

B1, NS 26297 97099, measures 15m long by 5.5m wide in total, a centrally placed entrance is seen on the long south wall, there are no further visible details, although the building is elevated and sloping above the rest of the site. At the west end, a lower, level area of c6m long may be a yard.

B2 lies in line with B1 and is 25m downslope from it. It measures in total 15m long by 5.7m wide. The only detail on the building is the centrally placed entrance in the long north wall, nevertheless a wall feature is built against the north wall and adjacent the entrance.

B3, NS 26246 97110, also measures 15m long by 5.7m wide in total but it is out of line with the other two buildings. It has a division wall creating two chambers, the western one, which

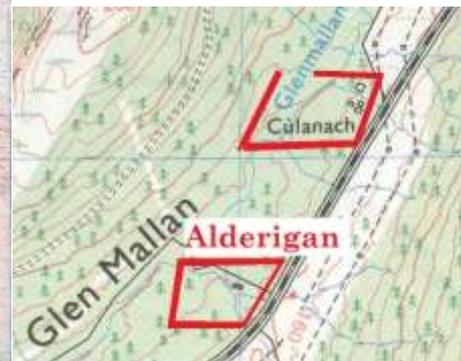
has an entrance showing in the north wall, is twice the size of the other, of which nothing more may be seen.

At the west end of B3 (Pl 2) is a sunken area bounded by a wall running in line with the building and another possible angled wall, the space is 6m long by c0.6m deep. On the south side of B3 an area of 15m by 6m is semi enclosed by a low wall, this is assumed to be a garden or stock enclosure.

Some 25m to the north of B3 and lying on the north side of the burn, there is an enclosure formed by stone walling, it measures c15m square but is open on the side facing the buildings and the burn. On the north and east sides there are gaps in the wall indicating entrances.



Pl 1. Location.



Pl 2. Location.

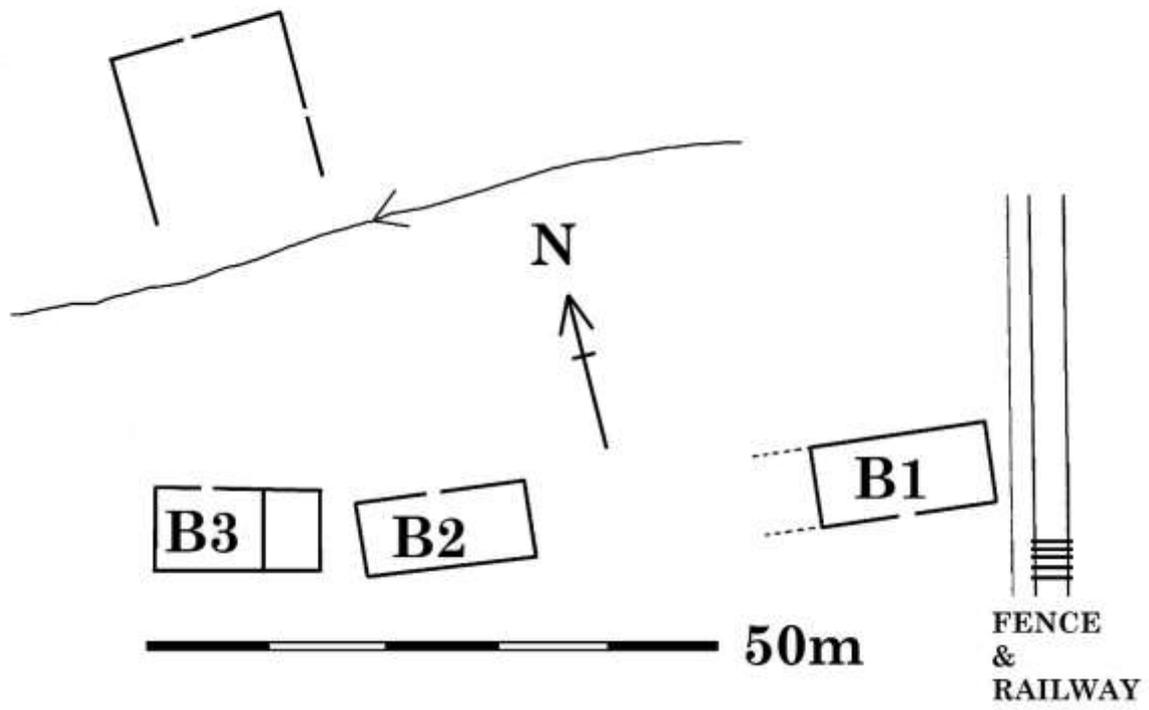


Fig 1. Entire site.

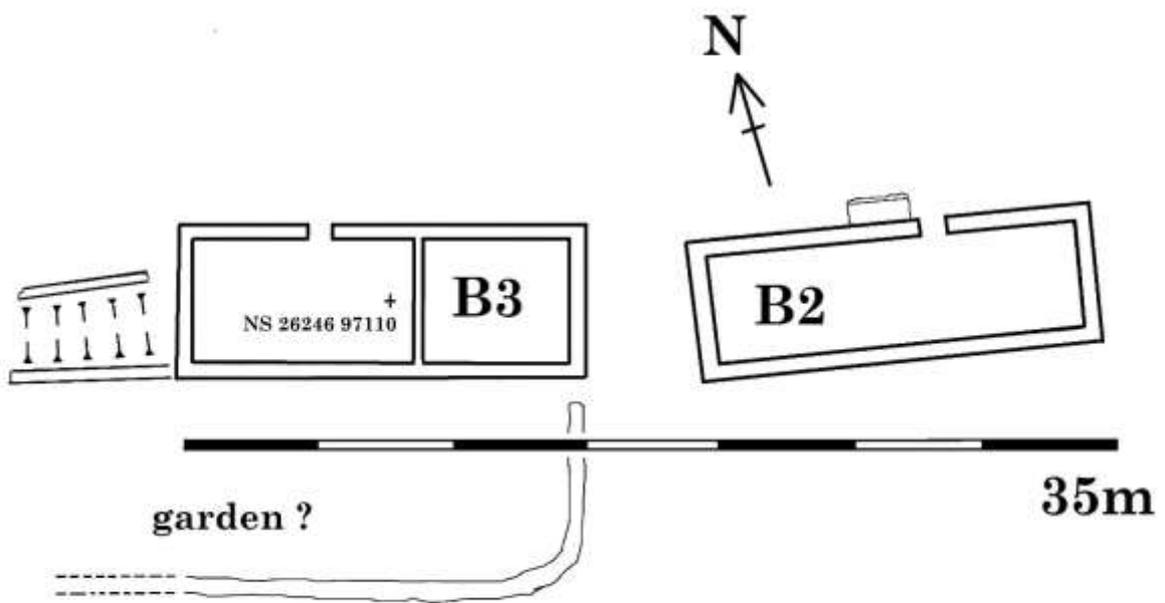


Fig 2. Buildings No's 2 & 3.



Pl 1. Looking west down the site. Position of a small building given on 1st Ed OS map.



Pl 2. Showing B2 and B3.

History. **Alastair McIntyre.**

Cùlanach Timeline

As with many old settlements, there are a wide variety of spellings of the name, the meaning of which may translate as “place of hazels”. The form of spelling of the heading is as used on modern OS maps.

1395 John McAuslane of CALDENOCHT is witness to a charter between Humphrey Colquhoun of Luss and his brother Robert, in which Humphrey grants Robert the lands of Camstradden.

(Colquhoun of Luss charters)

1429 Land resignation document of 7 Feb. 1429 contained in the Colquhoun of Luss charters, in which reference is made to a Johanne MacAustillane, domino de CALLENACH.

(Fraser: Chiefs of Colquhoun)

1535 Charter dated 10 Dec. 1535 in which mention is made of Patric McCauslane of COLDENOCHT.

(Fraser: Chiefs of Colquhoun)

1536 Patrick McCaslane of CALDANACHT and his brother Donald are named as followers of the Earl of Argyll.

(Black: Surnames of Scotland)

1599 Deed of renunciation by Patrick McAwslane of CALDENACHE in favour of Sir Alexander Colquhoun of Luss of his claim to 2/3 of Stronmaleroch, Parish of Rosneath, Barony of Luss, in return for payment by Sir Alexander of 200 merks.

(Colquhoun of Luss Estate papers, deed (box 7))

1602 CALDENOTH, the property of John McCaslane of CALDENOTH, is among the list of places despoiled in the so-called Glen Finlas Raid of December 1602. As well as various

properties despoiled on Loch Lomondside, others so treated included places in Glen Luss, Glen na Caoruinn and Glen Mallan, most likely giving an indication of the route taken by the raiders as they made their escape northwards. (Fraser; Chiefs of Colquhoun)

1657 A County Valuation Roll puts the value of Baron McCauslan's holdings in the Parish of Luss at £80, out of a parish total of £2234. (Dunbartonshire Valuation Roll)

1664 Sasine of £8 land of CALDENNOCH, Prestellach, Innerquhonlanes and Craighfad, in Dunbartonshire, to Alexander McCauslane as eldest lawful son and heir of the late John McCauslane of CALDENNOCH, on a precept of clare constat by Sir John Colquhoun of Luss, 20 May 1664. (Campbell: Abstract of Argyll Sasines)

1666 Sasine of 40/- land of Gortan...given by Alexander McCauslane in COLDENNOCH, as bailie...to Duncan McFarlane, lawful son of the late Andrew Oig Mcfarlane in Conaglen, on a charter by Sir John Colquhoun of Luss, 1 March 1666. (Campbell: Abstract of Argyll Sasines)

1673 Alexander McCausland of CALDENNOCH is witness to a sasine confirming various land grants in Arrochar Parish. (Campbell: Abstract of Argyll Sasines)

1694 Hearth Tax returns for the Parish of Luss shows that Alexander McCauslane of CALDONAH has 2 hearths, while a John McCauslane in CALDONAH also has 2 hearths. (Hearth Tax returns, 1694)

1701 Walter McFarlane and Christian McFarlane, spouses in CULLONNOCH had a son (s.) John. (Luss Old Parish Registers, 1698-1854)
(N.B. All following births/marriages are similarly extracted from Luss Old Parish Registers).

1707 Register of tailzie, referring to Ann Colquhoun, or Grant, and listing a large number of properties, including COULDENNOCH. (Fraser: Chiefs of Colquhoun)

1708 Archibald McKellar and Marjory McFarlane, spouses in CULLONNOCH, had a daughter, (d.) Margaret.

1709 Patrick McFarlane and Janet Campbell, spouses in CALLONNOCH, had a (d.) Marie.

1713 Andrew McFarlane and Ann McFarlane, spouses in CULLENNOCH, had a d. Kathrin.

1725 Robert McFarlane and Margaret McFarlane, spouses in CULANNOCH, had a d. Mary.

1729 Sir Ludovic Colquhoun of Luss is referred to in an extract retour, according to the obligation of tailzie granted by the deceased Sir Humphrey Colquhoun in 1707....long list of properties, including CAULDENNOCH. (Fraser: Cartulary of Colquhoun)

1729 Humphrey Walker and Ann McFarlane, spouses in CULLANOCH, had a d. Janet.

1729 Robert McFarlane and Margaret McFarlane, spouses in CALANOCH, had a d. Christian.

1730 John McFarlane and Catherine Munro had a d. Marjory, through fornication.

1731 John McAuslan and Janet McMains, spouses in CALLANOCH, had a d. Mary.

1732 John McFarlane and Isobel McAllum, spouses in CALLANOCH, had a d. Margaret.

1733 John McAuslan and Janet McMains, spouses in CALLANOCH, had a s. Dougall.

1738 John McAuslan and Margaret Chambers, spouses in CULLANOCH, had a..... (indecipherable).

1753 Malcolm McFarlane and Jean McInturner, spouses in CALLENOCH, had a d. Cathrine.

1755 Duncan White and Mary White, spouses in CALLENOCH, had a d. Agnes.

1757 Culanach is one of 10 places in Glen Luss, Glen Douglas and Glen Mallan leased to John Campbell of Lanemark (later, and most often referred to, as “of Lagwine”). Both places are in Cumnock Parish, Ayrshire). Campbell is well-known as an entrepreneurial pioneer in the introduction of large-scale commercial sheep farming to the South West Highlands. Around the same time, perhaps a little later, he also leased extensive tracts of land in Cowal for the same purpose. He is often credited as being the first to introduce the Blackface, or Linton, breed of sheep to the South West Highlands, this being at Glen Luss. The date is sometimes quoted as 1747, but thanks to the researches of Stewart Noble of Helensburgh Heritage Trust, 1757 can be confirmed as the earliest date when he obtained a lease there.

(Colquhoun of Luss papers, bundle

90)

1758 Malcolm McCallum and Catherine McCallum, spouses in CALLANOCH, had a d. Catherine.

1761 Malcolm McCallum and Catherine McCallum, spouses in CALLANOCH had a d. Janet.

1761 Duncan White and Mary White, spouses in CALLANOCH had a d. Mary.

1764 Donald McFarlane and Mary McPhun, spouses in CALENOCH, had a d. Margaret.

1766 Duncan White and Mary White, spouses in CALLANOCH had a s. Donald.

1766 Donald McFarlane and Mary McPhun, spouses in CALLANOCH, had a d. Elizabeth.

1767 Patrick McKellar and Agnes McPhun, spouses in CALLENOCH had a d. Elizabeth.

1767 Niel Campbell in CALLENOCH and Catherine Leitch of Rosneath Parish, gave their

names with the intention of marriage.

1768 Niel Campbell and Catherine Leitch, spouses in CALLENOCH had a d. Mary.

1768 Donald McFarlane and Mary McPhun, spouses in CALLENOCH had a d. Elizabeth.

1768 Duncan White and Mary White, spouses in CALLENOCH, had a d. Catherine.

1769 Peter McKellar and Ann McPhun, spouses in CALLENOCH, had a s. Archibald.

1770 Niel Campbell and Catherine Leitch, spouses in CALLENOCH, had a s. George.

1772 Niel Campbell and Catherine Leitch, spouses in CALLENOCH had a s. Dougald.

1774 Niel Campbell and Catherine Leitch, spouses in CALLENOCH, had a d. Catherine.

1774 Feu charter by Sir James Colquhoun of Luss to James Colquhoun advocate, his eldest son....long list of properties, including CHALDONACH . (Fraser: Colquhoun Cartulary)

1776 A listing of farms owned by Luss Estates has the following entry for Culanach:
croft- 9 acres; outfield- 12 acres; good pasture- 25 acres; sheep pasture-395 acres.
(Farms on Luss Estate,
1776)

1776 Niel Campbell and Catherine Leitch, spouses in CALLENOCH, had a s. Donald.

1781 Alexander McDougall and Catherine McGregor, spouses in CALLENOCH, had a s. Donald.

1785 Alexander McDougall and Catherine McGregor, spouses in CALLENOCH, had a s. John.

1787 Alexander McDougall and Catherine McGregor, spouses in CALLENOCH, had a s. Alexander.

1801 John McDougall and Nancy Campbell, spouses in CALLENOCH, had a d. Janet.

1818 Culanach not shown on Wood's Map of Dumbartonshire.

1841 Culanach not mentioned in Census returns of that year.

1860 Ordnance Survey Name Book refers to the ruins of Culanach, and quotes local authorities as stating it had not been occupied for 40 years.

DISCUSSION

As will be seen from the early charters referring to Calanach, members of the McAuslan family are referred to as “of” as distinct from “in” Calanach. This is a key matter, since being “of” a property implies having possession of a charter to that property, as opposed to simply

just living there. The McAuslans were in fact lairds of a number of properties over and above Culanach.

A Colquhoun Estate rental of 1844 refers to certain lands once having belonged to a Baron McAuslan, noting that these included Prestelloch, Stronmallanach and Alderigan. It will be noted that in the above Timeline, Patrick McAuslane in 1599 renounced his claim to 2/3 of the lands of Stronmaleroch in favour of Sir Alexander Colquhoun, for a monetary payment. Likewise, note also the 1664 sasine of the lands of Caldonach, Prestellach, Innerquhonlanes and Craigfad to Alexander McCauslane, heir to the late John McCauslane of Caldenoch. These various lands were all located on or near the flanks of the distinctive hill known as Cruach an-t Sithean (Fairy Hill), which faces onto both Glen Douglas and Glen Mallan.

Interestingly, the author of the section dealing with Luss in the Old Statistical Account of Scotland (1793), informs us that in the mid-17th Century, in order to compensate for Luss Parish lands lost in consequence of the formation of certain new parishes, the lands of Caldanach, Prestellach and Conglens, once belonging to the Parish of Inchcailloch, were now annexed to the Parish of Luss. Note that the Parish of Inchcailloch later came to be known as the Parish of Buchanan. This later name is appropriate in that it represents the heartland of the Clan Buchanan. The McAuslans are usually described as a sept of the Clan Buchanan, and it seems at least possible that the McAuslan barons stemmed from elite members of that clan.

There exist many references to the McAuslan barons. However, it should be stressed that in Gaeldom, the title “Baron” is not as prestigious as its equivalent in English, often being applied to smaller lairds or landowners. Even so, the McAuslans appear to have been associated with a warrior elite. Local historian Donald McLeod, in his book “Historic Families and Notable People of the Lennox” (1891) relates a story about one of the barons and his lady. He informs us that a certain Baron McAuslan distinguished himself at the “Siege of Tournay”. (In fact, this strategically-placed town in Flanders endured a whole series of sieges from the 12th Century right through to the 18th Century.) McLeod goes on to relate the story that the Baron's lady had been with her husband on the Continent, but sadly died there. However, legend has it that her body was taken back to Luss and buried in the churchyard. Her grave was strewn with plants, including the fleur de lys, some of which survived to grow over the burial place. From this is said to come the name “Luss” itself, the name deriving from the Gaelic “lus”, meaning herb. Whatever the truth or otherwise of the account, no-one can doubt the charm of the story!

As will be seen from the above listed sasine of 1664, the McAuslan barons had at that time the Colquhoun lairds of Luss as their immediate feudal superiors. Nevertheless, their status seems to have been such that at least one marriage took place between a daughter of one of the barons and a younger son of the laird of Luss. Seattle-based author and historian Polly Aird, whose McAuslan forebears came from the area, has carried out a good deal of research into the barons. She relates that Baron John McAuslan of Callanach seems to have died within a few days of the so-called Battle of Glen Fruin (7 February 1603). Whether or not this was a result of taking part in the Battle is unclear, but whatever the case, the estate now passed to Patrick, the eldest son. The third son, John, married the second daughter of Alexander Colquhoun of Luss, this being around 1616.

It was at this period that King James 6th of Scotland and 1st of Great Britain and Ireland set in motion what came to be known as the “Plantations of Ulster”, a policy of settling English and

Scottish protestants in Ireland, and the laird of Luss was one of those granted land there by King James. According to Aird, Colquhoun now sent his daughter and her McAuslan husband to Ulster to manage the new estate on his behalf. A measure of support for this narrative comes in the form of a letter published in the "Lennox Herald" newspaper of 1st February 1900 and written by Lt. Col. R.C.S. MacAusland. The author refers to research carried out by James Dennistoun of Camis Eskan, which showed that the Irish branch of the McAuslans could be traced back to John McAuslan of Caldervoth.

Polly Aird also looked into the history of the later McAuslan barons, and found that their fortunes went downhill, for reasons unknown. She established that in 1678 and 1692, Alexander McAuslan was obliged to mortgage his lands. His daughter, who was married to Duncan Campbell, eventually sold the lands to Sir Humphrey Colquhoun (Laird of Luss 1688-1718). Again, this account ties in with the fact that thereafter, there is no longer any reference in the records to McAuslans of Culanach, their ancestral lands now being occupied by tenants of the Colquhoun lairds.

Incidentally, it is clear that local collective memory long retained an awareness of the McAuslan barons. In another book by Donald McLeod, "Past Worthies of the Lennox" (1894), the author devotes a page to one Sandy McAuslane, otherwise known as the "Baron". Sandy was a skilled weaver in Luss, and his heyday was the first half of the 19th century. Also employed as a porter at Luss pier, Sandy was evidently a real "character". McLeod writes: - "While Sandy was beyond doubt a good weaver, he had the reputation of being also a capital spinner- of a "yarn". The neighbours put in many pleasant nights round his cheery ingle listening to his narratives regarding the sprees and splores of his younger days and other wonderful tales".

The year 1757 may be regarded as a watershed date, with the granting of tacks of Culanach and nine other properties to John Campbell, a large-scale sheep farmer. This inevitably would have meant a move away from the old system of subsistence farming to an intensive commercial sheep rearing enterprise. In many other places, this would have been catastrophic for the indigenous tenants, priced out of the market, and with little alternative but to seek a living elsewhere. Indeed, as is well-known, the switch from old to new was sometimes attended by forcible removal of the previous occupants, known to history as the "Highland Clearances". No evidence has ever come to light of such evictions on lands owned by Luss Estates.

Indeed, as can clearly be seen from the succession of births recorded at Culanach after 1757, whole families clearly continued to live at the site for many years after that date. Commercial sheep farming did of course require the services of farmers and their shepherds, but evidently, going by the Old Parish Registers, there would have more than what was needed at Culanach. Sometimes, (but by no means always), clues can be gained from the names of the farmers and shepherds in this early phase of sheep-farming- people from the South of Scotland often filled these roles. At the same time, families not employed by the sheep farmers would have needed somehow to make a living, this at a time when employment in the area out with agriculture would necessarily have been hard to find. How then did life continue?

A clue to this puzzle may come from the 1776 entry in the Timeline given above. As can be seen, a distinction is made between croft, outfield, good pasture and the extensive area given over to sheep farming. The most obvious interpretation is that a form of crofting might have taken place alongside the sheep farming operation. It is often pointed out that commercial and

subsistence farming systems could not co-exist in the Highlands, the latter being dependent on a system of transhumance, where in summer, low ground would be rested, and crops grown, with the attendant transfer of livestock to high-level grazing. Conversely, in hard winter conditions, the generally hardy blackface breed of sheep that would have been stocked by people like John Campbell would have needed access to good low-level grazing, exactly the sort of ground that crofters would want to reserve for their own use. Nevertheless, the evidence from the Old Parish Registers would seem to imply that some sort of accommodation might have been reached, at least in the short to medium term.

What does the Old Statistical Account have to say about the situation? Turning again to the entry for Luss, written by the Parish minister, the Rev. Dr. John Stuart, he accepts that the population has diminished slightly over the past century, but acknowledges that amalgamation of farms has had its effects. However, he explains that any resulting loss of employment in farming has been “more than compensated by the additional hands employed by the slate quarries and other works” While not wishing to undermine the integrity of people like the Rev. Stuart, ministers might not have been necessarily described as impartial observers- this was still an era of patronage.

Turning again to the intent to a population census: there could well be people living a place with no births or marriages taking place, in which case persons there would in a sense be invisible. Nonetheless, over time, lack of events does tend to suggest a change of circumstance. The most likely interpretation over what happened at Culanach, and indeed other places, is that over time people merely drifted away. Once this process began, the dynamics of the situation may have been rendered unstable, serving as a catalyst for others to follow suit. In Glen Fruin, where similar circumstances obtained, there are several accounts- including the testimony of Polly Aird- that people increasingly came to see their future either in the growing industrial centres, or in emigration to countries like The United States and Canada.

General Discussion.

This survey does not accord with that of OS (Pl's 1 & 2) regarding the disposition of the three main buildings. It is interesting to note that the three buildings, all of which may be houses, are of the same size but it may be that some sort of hierarchy prevailed with the upper one being the principal household, although that is entirely speculative. The railway construction has obliterated features on the site; a small square building is given on the 1st Ed OS map, surveyed in 1860 and published 1865 this could be a corn drying kiln? Surprisingly, there is no evidence of lazy beds on the site, given that at least two of the buildings probably represent houses, one may have expected such a feature nearby, the enclosure; rather than a stock pen, could have been a garden plot, given its size, likewise the area beside B3.

Acknowledgement.

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