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| Property in Care no: | PIC051 |
| Designations: | Scheduled Monument (SM90023) |
| Taken into State care: | 1958 (Guardianship) |
| Last reviewed: | 2004 |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

AUCHAGALLON STONE CIRCLE



We continually revise our Statements of Significance, so they may vary in length, format and level of detail. While every effort is made to keep them up to date, they should not be considered a definitive or final assessment of our properties.



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Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at:

Historic Environment Scotland

Longmore House

Salisbury Place

Edinburgh

EH9 1SH

+44 (0) 131 668 8600

www.historicenvironment.scot

You can download this publication from our website at

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AUCHAGALLON STONE CIRCLE

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Although described as a stone-circle in earlier archaeological accounts, Auchengallon (or Auchagallon) is a Bronze Age kerbed cairn incorporating an earlier stone circle. The cairn appears as a low grassy mound of small stones and measures 14.5m in diameter from NW to SE by 13m transversely. Stone robbing has probably reduced its size and there is a vague account of an excavation in the late nineteenth century, although there is no published record of any such work. A ring of 15 irregularly spaced monoliths of reddish sandstone encircles the cairn and defines the outer edge of the monument.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview

C.late 19th century: excavations at Auchengallon described as revealing a cist burial.

1958: Auchengallon becomes a Guardianship monument

1994: Becomes a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Archaeological Overview

Auchengallon is similar in form to the encircled cairn at Machrie Farm Road, where an earlier stone circle was incorporated as an outer kerb into the burial cairn. Although no excavations are documented at Auchengallon, T C Bryce, writing in 1910, quotes a local inhabitant as stating that an excavation at the 'centre of the stone circle' revealed a cist. The acceptance of this site as a stone circle rather than a kerbed cairn appears to be based on Bryce's source who stated that the centre of the circle had once been much flatter, while the Ordnance Survey Object Name Book of 1864 comments that the interior of the stone circle was composed of field clearance material. No further archaeological investigation of the site has been carried out.

Artistic/Architectural Overview

The fifteen red sandstone monoliths surrounding the cairn appear to have been graded in height, the smallest being on the east side, while the largest stones lie on the west of the circle. Conspicuous gaps on the east and south sides of the ring suggest some stones may be buried or are missing.

Social Overview

Although no formal assessment is possible due to a lack of research into local opinion toward archaeological sites and monuments, Auchengallon features in several archaeological gazetteers and internet guides for Arran.

In 1873, J MacArthur noted that the islanders traditionally regarded prehistoric cairns with considerable trepidation.

Spiritual Overview

No evidence is available to assess the current spiritual significance of Auchengallon, although the site features on several 'New Age' websites.

In the Bronze Age, the cairn probably held added significance for having incorporated an earlier stone circle into its structure. The purpose of the original stone circle is unknown, although one possibility is that was aligned to a cosmological feature or prominent landmark.

Aesthetic Overview

The monument occupies a west facing terrace overlooking the north end of Machrie Bay, with excellent views over the Kilbrannan Sound and Kintyre to the west.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

According to Bryce's source in 1910, Auchengallon was excavated, although there is no formal record of any work at the site, which limits our interpretation of the monument.

It is unknown to what extent the cairn is composed of field clearance material. Nineteenth-century sources appear to suggest that the cairn within the circle was much slighter than now.

Research into whether the stone circle is aligned to a cosmological phenomenon or other landscape feature would benefit our understanding of the monument.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key points

- Auchengallon is part of the rich and archaeologically diverse landscape of the Machrie Water area, renowned for the stone circles of Machrie Moor.
- Stone circles are often believed to be aligned to cosmological or landscape features, although this has not yet been examined at Auchengallon. However, the monoliths encircling the cairn are arranged in a distinctive fashion, the smallest stones being placed on the seaward side.
- Auchengallon occupies a prominent position, commanding excellent views over Machrie Bay and toward Kintyre.
- The use of earlier ritual monuments as sites for burial in the Bronze Age may be an indicator of the deceased's social importance and probably indicates that earlier ritual monuments retained a 'special' or sacred character in the Bronze Age.

Associated Properties

PICs: In form, Auchengallon appears to be similar to the **Machrie Farm Road cairn**, partially excavated in the 1970s. The re-use of earlier ritual monuments as Bronze Age burial sites occurs throughout Scotland, the most notable examples being at **Temple Wood** and at **Cairnpapple**. Burials were also placed within the **Machrie Moor stone circles**, while the adjacent (non-PIC) field systems and hut-circles present evidence of Bronze Age settlement in the area.

Keywords kerbed cairn; stone circle; monolith; cosmological feature; cist; field clearance; Neolithic; Bronze Age; Machrie Moor