

An Archaeological Survey in Tasiusaa Area Performed in the Autumn of 2010

- Report prepared for True North Gems
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by

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Report on Archaeological Survey conducted for True North Gems in the Tasiusaa area September 2010

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Introduction

During the period of 13 – 17. September 2010 Greenland National Museum and Archives (NKA) did an archaeological survey by the Appaluttoq ruby occurrence area of interest on request from True North Gems (TNG). According to the Greenland Conservation Act of May 19th 2010 NKA must be involved in the planning phase for exploitation of resources in Greenland (§11 subsection two). As the area of interest was unknown regarding to cultural heritage sites NKA recommended an archaeological survey. The 17 listed cultural heritage sites mapped on the survey, all relating to the Inuit and their descendants were not known to the heritage authorities earlier and it is the assessment that conflicts with planned mining in the area can be avoided.

Historic background

This area of the country were for the first time inhabited by the Saqqaq Culture in the period of 4400 – 800 BC, the second habitation phase from 500 BC – 200 AD was by the Greenlandic Dorset. Remains from those two Stone Age cultures are not as visible in the landscape as the later inhabitants of the area, as their structures are not as substantial. The Norse People (Vikings) lived in the area from 1000 to 1450 AD and the Inuit (The Thule Culture) 1400 – 1800 AD. The population, living in the area today, is the descendants of the Inuit mixed with Europeans.

No heritage sites from the Stone Age Cultures are mapped in the area. The closest Norse site is situated at the bottom of the next fjord North to Tasiussaa.

The nearest settlement to Tasiussaa area is Qeqertarsuatsiaat only 15 km away. People using the area in the more recent times (e.g. the last 100 years) for hunting and fishing probably did not need to camp in the area as they could relatively easily reach back home in the evening. The mapped sites are mainly regarded to originate from the time before the colonial settlement at Qeqertarsuatsiaat and the Moravian mission at Akunnaat established in 1754 and 1758 respectively. This does not mean that the structures were not used later on. Especially the fox traps might have been in use way up in the last century. Most of the cultural heritage structures were probably mainly used on caribou hunting and fishing activities.

The survey

The survey team from NKA was: Pauline K. Knudsen, archaeologist; Bo Albrechtsen, anthropologist and the graduate student Hans Kristian Lennert. The team left Nuuk in a chartered boat on a sunny Monday September 13th and established a camp at the Southern shore of the narrow entrance to Tasiussaa. Tuesday through Thursday was used for pedestrian surveys on the land areas and a survey from a zodiac along the SSW coast of Tasiussaa. The steep areas and the mountain between Tasiussaa and Lake Katarina were not surveyed. Except from rain on Thursday all days were nice and sunny. According to the plans the time estimated for the survey was sufficient and the chartered boat picked up the team on Friday afternoon and reached Nuuk in the evening.

Summary of finds

Following structures were found on 19 different sites:

Tent rings	10
shelters	1
hunter's beds	1
graves	1
cairn systems	5
shootings blinds	1

single cairns	2
fox traps	4
Total of structures	26

Mapped sites

FM 63V2-III-27: Three tent rings (A-C) and a cairn (D). The site is situated by the coast just north to the river. The area has low vegetation of heather and grass. All the stones in the tent rings lay deep in the vegetation.

- A, tent ring: Round structure with a diameter of approximately 3- 4 metres. The stones are placed with some space in between and are head sized and smaller.
- B, tent ring: The rectangular structure situated 20 metres W of A has the dimensions: Approx 2.5 by 3 metres.
- C, tent ring: The structure situated 32 metres N of A has the dimensions: Approx. 3.5 by 5 metres.
- D, cairn: The pile situated approximately 25 metres SSW of B consists of one more than head sized stone one put upon a boulder and a smaller one at the top. The cairn is placed where the landscape starts to rise.

All the structures can be related to Inuit's use and are probably from the same time period from before introduction of the rifle, eg. between 1400 – 1800 AD as it seems likely that they are connected to the drive hunting systems to the W of the site. Drive hunting of caribous went out of use during the second half of the 18th century. Position: N 63°02'09.1" / W 050°19'37.7"

FM 63V2-III-28: Part of drivehuntingsystem NNW to the river running parallel to it. The row of 16 stone cairns placed along a the SSE edge of a ridge runnging SSW to NNE (parallel to the river). The cairns consisting of one stone placed with some distance in between are head sized or not much larger except from cairns nos: I, L and N which are smaller. Three other cairn systems are recorded by the river (decriptions follow bellow). The systems are probably part of one hunting drive for caribous taking advantage of the river and the boulder fields in the riverbed. The system is probably connected to tent site no. FM 63V2-III-27

Position of cairns in the drive hunting system:

A	N 63°02'05.7" / W 050°20'07.9"	I	N 63°02'05.4" / W 050°20'03.4"
B	N 63°02'05.6" / W 050°20'08.6"	J	N 63°02'05.4" / W 050°20'10.9"
C	N 63°02'05.7" / W 050°20'08.8"	K	N 63°02'05.3" / W 050°20'11.4"
D	N 63°02'05.6" / W 050°20'09.2"	L	N 63°02'05.2" / W 050°20'14. 2"
E	N 63°02'05.4" / W 050°20'10.7"	M	N 63°02'05.3" / W 050°20'14.4"
F	N 63°02'05.3" / W 050°20'12.0"	N	N 63°02'04.7" / W 050°20'15.2"
G	N 63°02'05.3" / W 050°20'12.1"	O	N 63°02'04.8" / W 050°20'16.4"
H	N 63°02'05.4" / W 050°20'13.0"	P	N 63°02'01.2" / W 050°20'34.8 "



FM 63V2-III-28: Part of drive hunting system for caribous running parallel to the river just north to the camp area.

FM 63V2-III-29: Recent tent ring. Position: N 63°01'56.7" / W050°20'15.9". Not listed as cultural heritage.

FM 63V2-III-30: Recent tent ring. Position: 63°01'55.3" / W050°20'16.8". Not listed as cultural heritage.

FM 63V2-III-31: Two cultural remains probably tent rings (A and B). Both the oval rings are of head sized to smaller stones placed along the edge of protruding bedrocks in a vegetated area. It is hard to tell the date of the structures, but judged from the lichens on the stones they can be more than 100 years old and if they are related to the shooting blind (FM 63V2-III-22) at some distance to SW of the site they might be from the 18th century. Position: N 63°01'18.3" / W 050°20'04.3"

FM 63V2-III-32: Shooting blind SE of the tent rings FM 63V2-III-31 on a rised rock outcrop. The blind is made of a three more than head sized stones arranged in a semicircle of. Lenght: Approx: 1.5 m.
Two stones next to the blind can be intepreted as another blind, in that case they are put togeher with a little space inbetween. Position: N 63°01'14,3" / W 050°19,49.4"

FM 63V2-III-33: Small cairn of several stones built on top of a big boulder. The cairn is situated on the descent to the valley on the E side to the river. Position: N 63°01'28.8" / W 050°19'40.1

FM 63V2-III-34: Three tent rings (A-C) positioned close to the beach on the SE shore of the small peninsula making the NE part of the narrow passage into Tasiusaa. All three rings are imbedded in the low vegetation of heather, grass and lichens

A, tent ring: Clear round ring of stones placed with some space inbetween. Diameter: Approx. 2.5 metres.

B, tent ring: The ring of stones placed with some space in between and which is rectangular is situated just to the E of A and is rather big. Dimentions: Approx 6 by 2.5 metres.

C, tent ring: The structure is somewhat unclear but seems to be an oval ring of stones with somespace in between the stones. Dimensions: Approx. 3 by 2 metres. As a grave (FM 63V2-III-35) were found NE of the site the structures on the site are probably from the precolonial time e.g. from the Thule Culture period. Position: N 63°01'51.1" / W 050°16'04.2"

FM 63V2-III-35: Grave situated NE of the tent site (FM 63V2-III-34). The grave is situated just below a slope where heaps of stone slabs are to be found. One of the heaps is for sure a grave as a human hipbone was discernable inside it. Some of the the heaps of stones in the imediate surroundings may be graves as well but it was not possible to see into them. Dimensions: Approx. 2 by 1.5 metres. Position: N 63°01'53.8" / W 050°16'03.7"

FM 63V2-III-36: Foxtrap. The structure is situated near the tip of the headland and consists of two foxtraps buildt of stones into one structure. The entrances face N. Dimensions: Approx. 1.5 by 1.6 metres. Position: N 63°01'46.9" / W 050°16'14.2"

FM 63V2-III-37: Foxtrap situated near the tip of the headland a while NE to FM 63V2-III-36. Trap entrance is facing to S. Dimensions: Approx. 1.2 by 1.5 metres. Position: N 63°01'48.0" / W 050°16'12.5"

FM 63V2-III-38: Shelter on a shelf in clif on the western slope of the peninsula. An almost right angled wall is buildt of stones in three to five courses to make the NV and SV sides of the shelter, the clif makes the opposite walls. On a small shelf in the clif making the back wall a hearth is made of two stone placed with approx. 40 cm space in between and covered with a big slab. The floor of the structure is covered with rather high grass and a fern agains the back wall. On the outside the stone wall is partly covered with heather, grass and lichens. The structure probably is more than 50 years old and even much older. Dimensions: Approx. 2 by 2 metres. High of the wall: Approx. 70 – 40 cm. Position: N 63°01'56.4"/ W 050°16'16.0"

FM 63V2-III-39: Hunter's bed built as circle from head sized and bigger stones by the fiord coast. Some of the stones are imbeded in the low vegetation of heather and grass. Diameter: Approx. 2 m. Position: N 63°01'57.4"/ W 050°16'27.2"



FM 63V2-III-38: Shelter built under a cliff overhang

FM 63V2-III-40: Part of a hunting drive for caribous. The system is situated along the river on the SE bank. The drive consist of 8 head sized or smaller stones placed on the cliff and some boulders. Position: N 63°01'59.8" / W 050°20'06.2" Position of the cairns making part of a drive:

- A N 63°01'59.8" / W050°20'06.2"
- B N 63°01'59.5" / W050°20'06.3"
- C N 63°01'59.6" / W050°20'06.8"
- D N 63°01'59.1" / W050°20'07.8"
- E N 63°01'59.0" / W050°20'08.2"
- F N 63°01'59.0" / W050°20'08.4"
- G N 63°01'58.6" / W050°20'08.8"
- H N 63°01'58.6" / W050°20'09.3"

FM 63V2-III-41: Two single stone cairns put on the ridge of a rock outcrop and probably part of the hunting drive along the river. The stones are head sized and have a distance of 6- 7 metres between them. Position: N 63°02'06.7" / W 050°19'48.6"

FM 63V2-III-42: Part of a hunting drive of cairn systems. 4 to 5 cairns positioned on the top of a rock outcrop and probably part of the hunting drive along the river. Position: N 63°02'03.6" / W 050°19'45.6"

FM 63V2-III-43: Part of hunting drive consisting of two single stone cairns situated on each of their own rock outcrop. Probably part of the hunting drive along the river Position: N 63°02'02.5" / W 050°19'45.4"

FM 63V2-III-44: Foxtrap situated on the head of a promontory on the S bank of the narrow passage into Tasiusaa. Position: N 63°01'44.9" / W 050°16'17.7"

FM 63V2-III-45: Foxtrap positioned by the cost to the SE to a small creek. Position: N 63°01'40.0" / W 050°16'01.6"

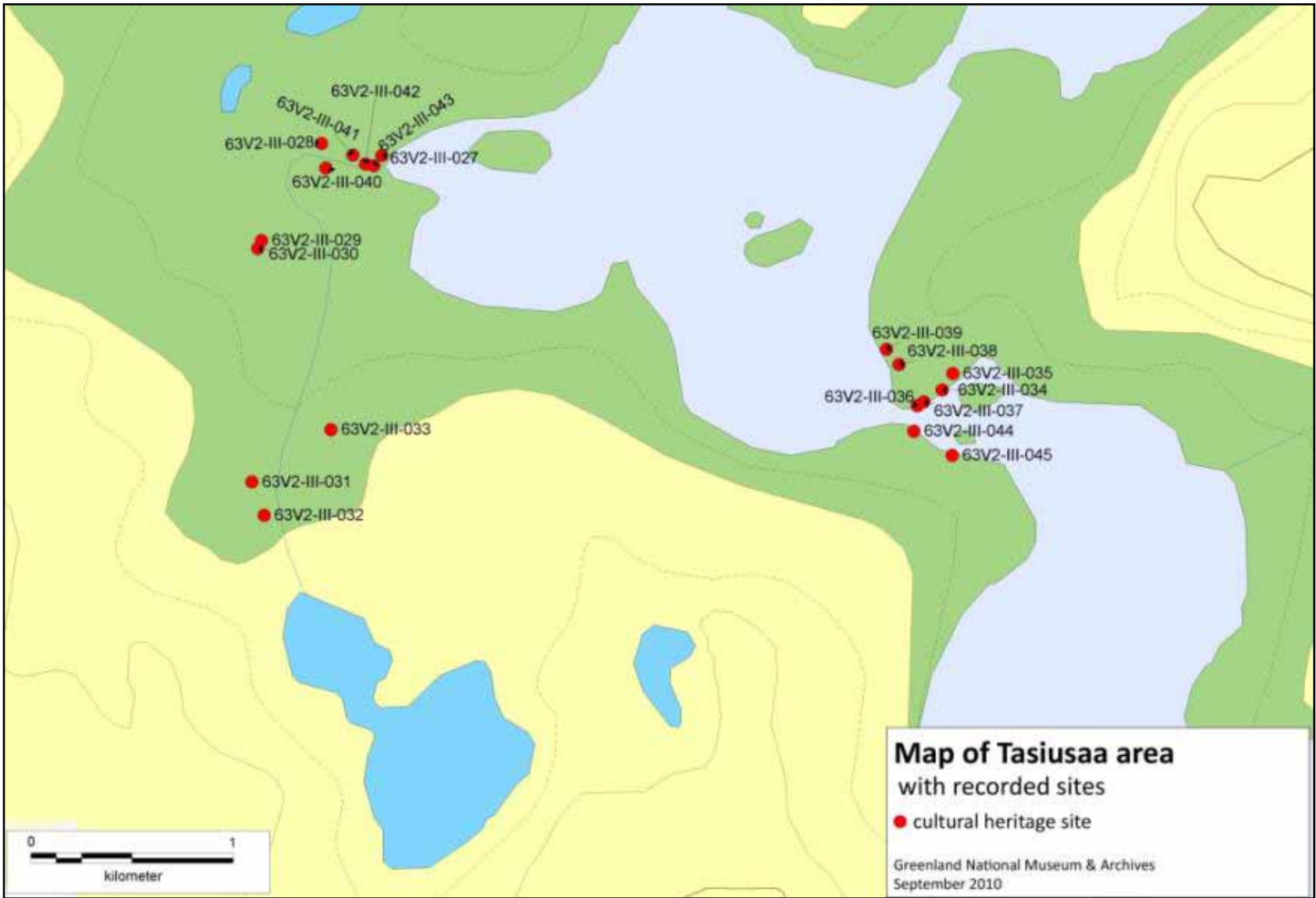
Conclusion and recommendations

The observations made by the archaeological team on the short stay tell of an area with resources for hunting caribou, fishing arctic char and collecting berries. On that background the finds of cultural heritage sites were not surprising, but expected. Because of the nature of the heritage remains which are all made from natural occurring materials in the immediate surroundings some heritage structures are difficult to discern in the landscape. The lush vegetation in the area probably also hide some structures especially remains from the Stone Age Cultures that are almost impossible to find in the area. In the region only a single site from the Norse settlement have been mapped and it is not likely that any Norse sites have been missed in the area if interest as they are usually quit visible in the landscape. The two recent tent rings FM 63V2-III-29 and FM 63V2-III-30 are not regarded as heritage sites.

The best solution for True North Gems, if plans on mining in the area are to be realized, will be to avoid sites with cultural remains. The Greenland conservation act put a limit on 20 metres around the archaeological structures for preservation (§6). But if a conflict with heritage sites cannot be avoided negotiations between TNG and NKA probably can provide a solution that is acceptable for both parts, as none of the heritage sites found are unique.

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November 1st 2010



Map of area of archaeological investigations with recorded cultural heritage sites

List of photos

NO.	Date	Hour	Cultural heritage no.	Motive	From direction	Camera
1	13-09-2010	17:31		Entrance to Tasiusaarsua		Canon
2	14-09-2010	10:01		Entrance to Tasiusaa		Canon
3	14-09-2010	10:07		Tasiusaa		Canon
4	14-09-2010	10:52	63V2-III-27 A	Tent ring	SE	Canon
5	14-09-2010	11:02	63V2-III-27 B	Tent ring	SE	Canon
6	14-09-2010	11:09	63V2-III-27 D	Cairn	SE	Canon
7	14-09-2010	11:12	63V2-III-27 C	Tent ring	E	Canon
9	14-09-2010	11:26	63V2-III-27	Area with tent rings	W	Canon
10	14-09-2010	11:29		Camp	N	Canon
11	14-09-2010	12:10	63V2-III-28 A	Cairn	S	Canon
12	14-09-2010	12:15	63V2-III-28 B	Cairn	S	Canon
13	14-09-2010	12:17	63V2-III-28 C	Cairn	S	Canon
14	14-09-2010	12:19	63V2-III-28 D	Cairn	SE	Canon
15	14-09-2010	12:21	63V2-III-28 E	Cairn	S	Canon
16	14-09-2010	12:23	63V2-III-28 F	Cairn	SE	Canon
17	14-09-2010	12:24	63V2-III-28 G	Cairn	S	Canon
18	14-09-2010	12:26	63V2-III-28 H	Cairn	S	Canon
19	14-09-2010	12:32	63V2-III-28	Cairn system	SE	Canon
21	14-09-2010	12:43	63V2-III-28 I	Cairn	S	Canon
22	14-09-2010	12:53	63V2-III-28 J	Cairn	S	Canon
23	14-09-2010	12:55	63V2-III-28 K	Cairn	SE	Canon
24	14-09-2010	12:58	63V2-III-28 L	Cairn	NE	Canon
25	14-09-2010	13:10		lunch by the river		Canon
26	14-09-2010	14:05	63V2-III-28	Ridge with cairns	W	Canon
27	14-09-2010	14:10	63V2-III-28 M	Cairn	N	Canon
28	14-09-2010	14:12	63V2-III-28 N	Cairn	NW	Canon
29	14-09-2010	14:14	63V2-III-28 O	Cairn	N	Canon
30	14-09-2010	14:25	63V2-III-28 P	Cairn	S	Canon
31	14-09-2010	15:51	63V2-III-31	Tent rings?	W	Canon
32	14-09-2010	15:52	63V2-III-31	Tent rings?	NE	Canon
33	14-09-2010	16:06	63V2-III-32	Shooting blind	NE	Canon
34	14-09-2010	16:07	63V2-III-32	Possible shooting blind	SW	Canon
35	14-09-2010	16:08	63V2-III-32	Shooting blind	SW	Canon
36	14-09-2010	17:22		Aappaluttoq		Canon
37	14-09-2010	17:22		Aappaluttoq		Canon
38	14-09-2010	17:22		Aappaluttoq		Canon
39	14-09-2010	17:43		Aappaluttoq		Canon
40	14-09-2010	17:44		Aappaluttoq		Canon
41	14-09-2010	17:44		Aappaluttoq		Canon
42	14-09-2010	17:50		Aappaluttoq		Canon
43	14-09-2010	18:50		Scree on mountain side		Canon
44	14-09-2010	20:10	63V2-III-33	Cairn of several stones	SW	Canon
45	15-09-2010	11:16	63V2-III-34 C	Tent ring	S	Canon
46	15-09-2010	11:18	63V2-III-34 B	Tent ring	W	Canon
47	15-09-2010	11:19	63V2-III-34 A	Tent ring	W	Canon
48	15-09-2010	11:33	63V2-III-35	Grave	NNW	Canon
49	15-09-2010	12:17	63V2-III-36	Double fox trap	N	Canon

No.	Date	Hour	Cultural heritage no.	Motive	From direction	Camera
50	15-09-2010	12:20	63V2-III-37	Fox trap	S	Canon
51	15-09-2010	12:22		Berries		Canon
52	15-09-2010	12:25	63V2-III-36	Double fox trap	NV	Canon
53	15-09-2010	12:54	63V2-III-38	Shelter	NW	Canon
54	15-09-2010	12:55	63V2-III-38	Shelter	NE	Canon
55	15-09-2010	12:56	63V2-III-38	Shelter	E	Canon
56	15-09-2010	13:06	63V2-III-39	Hunter's bed	W	Canon
57	15-09-2010	13:07	63V2-III-39	Hunter's bed	SW	Canon
58	15-09-2010	16:10	63V2-III-40 A	Part of hunting drive	NNW	Canon
59	15-09-2010	16:12	63V2-III-40 B	Part of hunting drive	NNW	Canon
60	15-09-2010	16:14	63V2-III-40 C	Part of hunting drive	N	Canon
61	15-09-2010	16:16	63V2-III-40 D	Part of hunting drive	N	Canon
62	15-09-2010	16:17	63V2-III-40 E	Part of hunting drive	N	Canon
63	15-09-2010	16:19	63V2-III-40 F	Part of hunting drive	E	Canon
64	15-09-2010	16:21	63V2-III-40 G	Part of hunting drive	N	Canon
65	15-09-2010	16:22	63V2-III-40 H	Part of hunting drive	NE	Canon
66	15-09-2010	16:30	63V2-III-28	Hunting drive	S	Canon
67	15-09-2010	16:40	63V2-III-41	Part of hunting drive	SSE	Canon
68	15-09-2010	16:16	63V2-III-42	Hunting drive	N	Canon
69	15-09-2010	16:56	63V2-III-43 A	Part of hunting drive		Canon
70	15-09-2010	16:57	63V2-III-43 B	Part of hunting drive		Canon
72	17-09-2010	11:06	63V2-III-44	Fox trap		Canon
73	17-09-2010	11:19	63V2-III-45	Fox trap		Canon
75	14-09-2010	08:29	63V2-III-29	Recent tent ring		
76	14-09-2010	08:38	63V2-III-30	Recent tent ring		