

Date: August 2004
Client: Tulloch Homes Ltd
Project Code: MRS04

Archaeological Assessment at Murray Road, Smithton, Inverness

Richard Conolly

PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET (MRS04)

Client	Tulloch Homes Ltd
National Grid Reference	NH 7100 4550
Project Manager	Mark Roberts
Project Supervisor	Richard Conolly
Text	Richard Conolly
Illustrations	Mike Middleton
Schedule	
Fieldwork	2nd – 3rd August 2004
Report	August 2004

Summary

Headland Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation of land off Murray Road, Smithton, Inverness, in advance of a proposed housing development. The work was intended to determine the likely archaeological impact of the development and, where necessary, propose an appropriate mitigation strategy. A single undated pit was identified in the course of the evaluation. Although comminuted charcoal was recovered from this feature's basal fill, no artefacts were recovered, either from this feature or elsewhere on the site.

The archaeological potential of the site is considered to be low and the potential impact of the proposed development is therefore likely to be negligible.

1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned to carry out an archaeological assessment of land at Murray Road, Smithton, Inverness, by Tulloch Homes Ltd. The work was undertaken in advance of a proposed housing development; a condition of the outline planning consent for which (02/00588/OUTIN) required a programme of archaeological works, approved by the planning authorities' archaeological advisors, to be undertaken before the commencement of the proposed development. The first stage of this programme took the form of an assessment of the site's archaeological potential and comprised a desk-based assessment, walk-over survey and trial trenching.

The work was carried out on the 2nd-3rd August 2004 in bright sunshine.

2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION (FIGURE 1)

The site of the proposed development is located to the east of Inverness (NGR NH 7100 4550) and takes in approximately 2.3 ha on a gentle north-west facing slope at 90 mOD. A small knoll occupies the south-western corner of the site. At the time of the assessment, much of the site was covered by thick gorse and clumps of small trees. It is bounded to the south by the Inverness – Aberdeen railway and to the north and east by a private drive.

4. AIMS AND METHODS

The assessment was intended to:

- provide an indication of the archaeological potential of the site
- establish the character and extent of archaeological deposits and features within the site
- determine the likely archaeological impact of the development and, where appropriate, propose an appropriate mitigation strategy

Before fieldwork commenced, a desk-based assessment of existing records was made in order to inform the placing of the evaluation trenches. Maps held by the National Map Library of Scotland and records held by the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) and the Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) were consulted.

A walk-over survey was carried out to locate topographic features that might have high archaeological potential, so that these might be targeted by trenching. Trenches equivalent to 5% of the development were then excavated using a JCB 3CX, operating under direct archaeological control and fitted with a 1.5 m toothless ditching bucket. Potential features were hand cleaned, excavated, and recorded as appropriate. Trenches were located using a total station.

5. RESULTS (FIGURES 1 & 2)

Desk-based assessment (Appendix A)

The NMRS and the Highland SMR hold records of 13 sites within 1 km of the proposed development, none of which are within the boundaries of the proposed development. Of these sites only three have any bearing on the archaeological potential of the site: a cluster of pits and other features approximately 0.75 km to the west at Galloway (NMRS NH74NW 114); a possible barrow and enclosure at Ashton Farm (NMRS NH74NW 112), approximately 1 km to the north-west and a ring ditch (NMRS NH64NE 39) and pit circles (NMRS NH64NE 99), 1 km to the west at Drumrosach. These sites were all identified through aerial reconnaissance demonstrate that the area does have archaeological potential. The remainder of the recorded sites are chance finds and discrete sites, such as the barracks that formerly stood in Cradlehall (NH74SW 49).

That the archaeological potential of the area goes beyond the known sites is demonstrated by the discovery of sites in the general area through trial trenching in advance of development. At Castlehill (NMRS NH64SE 246) Neolithic and Iron Age features were initially identified by trial trenching, while a Neolithic site was similarly located at Milton of Leys (NMRS NH64SE 248). Both these sites lie over a kilometre to the west of the proposed development.

The first detailed map of the site was the Ordnance Survey First Edition (1874). This depicts the area of the site as unimproved scrubland. To the north-west of the site lay an unusual arrangement of five roofed buildings with associated yards and tracks and three wells. An earlier map dating to c. 1725 shows cultivation and settlements in the area of Inverness in some detail but the area around the site is blank, implying that there was little or no settlement or cultivation in the area.

Walk-over Survey

Much of the site was covered by impenetrable gorse and so could not be surveyed. Only one significant topographic feature was noted, a small knoll in the site's south-western corner. This was covered by thick gorse and could not be surveyed. Trees prevented machine access to this part of the site.

Trial Trenches (Appendix B)

A total of 13 trenches were excavated (Figure 1). These were placed to give as broad a sample as possible, though their exact location was largely dictated by the presence of gorse and trees, which restricted access to much of the site.

The site was covered by a fairly uniform layer of topsoil, no more than 0.25 m in depth. There was no indication that the site had ever been improved or cultivated.

One feature was identified, a pit (003) was located in Trench 2. Charcoal recovered from a sample taken from its basal fill was found to be fragmentary oak charcoal. No dating evidence was recovered, either during the excavation of the feature or during processing of the samples taken.

In order to establish whether Pit 003 was an isolated feature or not the surrounding area was stripped as far as reasonably practicable. No further features were identified.

6. DISCUSSION

One archaeological feature was identified in the course of the evaluation. As far as could be established this pit was an isolated feature. No artefacts were recovered from its fills and the feature cannot therefore be dated without recourse to radiocarbon dating.

There is no evidence that the site has ever seen any intensive use or improvement. The archaeological potential of the site is, therefore, low.

APPENDIX A: DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

Monuments Records

The National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) holds records of eleven sites within a 1 km radius of the site. These are listed in the table below.

NMRS No.	Name	Site Type	NGR
NH74NW 51	Smithton	Chance find of possibly medieval belt buckle	NH 71 45
NH74NW 53	Cradlehall House	Residential	NH 7029 4473
NH74NW 96	Smithton	Village	NH 7145 4554
NH74NW 112	Ashton	Possible barrow and enclosure	NH 7011 4554
NH74NW 114	Galloway	Cropmarks	NH 7029 4501
NH64NE 39	Drumrosach	Ring-ditch	NH 698 450
NH64NE 99	Drumrosach	Pit-circles	NH 6975 4510
NH74SW 3	Raigmore Tower	Dykes	NH 713 443
NH74SW 33	Myrtlefield	Farmstead	NH 7197 4438
NH74SW 49	Cradlehall	Barracks	NH 702 446
NH74SW 52	The Tower	Residential	NH 7139 4428

The Highland Council SMR holds records for the following additional sites

SMR No.	Name	Site Type	NGR
NH74NW 148	Cuckoo Stone, Smithton	Stone	NH 71312 45278
NH74 SW 65	Westhill	Chance find of (?)cutlass	NH 715 445

Cartographic Sources

Although the area is covered by other maps held by the National Map Library, only the following cover it at a useful scale:

Board of Ordnance c. 1725 *A general survey of Inverness...*
 Ordnance Survey 1874 *Inverness-shire* XII 1:10,560 (surveyed 1868-70)

Documentary Sources

Conolly, RJ, & MacSween, A forthcoming *A possible Neolithic settlement at Milton of Leys, Inverness*.
 Roy, M 2000 'Castlehill, Cauldfield Road, Inshes, Inverness' in *Discovery Excavation Scot* 2000, 52.

APPENDIX B: FIELD REGISTERS

Trench Register

Trench 1			
Length: 50 m		Orientation: SE - NW	Situation: Flat ground
Context No.	Description		Depth
1	Topsoil		0.25 m
2	Subsoil		-
Other Information: -			

Trench 2			
Length: 50 m		Orientation: SE - NW	Situation: Near flat ground
Context No.	Description		Depth
1	Topsoil		0.25 m
2	Subsoil		-
3	Cut of pit		
4	Fill of Pit 3		
5	Basal fill of Pit 3		
Other Information: Trench expanded around Pit 3			

Trench 3			
Length: 60 m		Orientation: NE - SW	Situation: Slight NW-facing slope
Context No.	Description		Depth
1	Topsoil		0.25 m
2	Subsoil		-
Other Information: -			

Trench 4			
Length: 50 m		Orientation: NW - SE	Situation: Slight NW facing slope
Context No.	Description		Depth
1	Topsoil		0.25 m
2	Subsoil		-
Other Information: -			

Trench 5			
Length: 50 m		Orientation: NW - SE	Situation: Slight NW facing slope
Context No.	Description	Depth	
1	Topsoil	0.25 m	
2	Subsoil	-	

Other Information: -

Trench 6			
Length: 30 m		Orientation: E - W	Situation: Slight NW facing slope
Context No.	Description		Depth
1	Topsoil		0.25 m
2	Subsoil		-
Other Information: -			

Trench 7			
Length: 140 m		Orientation: N - S	Situation: Flat ground
Context No.	Description		Depth
1	Topsoil		0.25 - 03 m
2	Subsoil		-
Other Information: -			

Trench 8			
Length: 40 m		Orientation: NE - SW	Situation: Slight NW facing slope
Context No.	Description		Depth
1	Topsoil		0.25 m
2	Subsoil		-
Other Information: -			

Trench 9			
Length: 50 m		Orientation: NE - SW	Situation: Slight NW facing slope
Context No.	Description		Depth
1	Topsoil		0.25 m
2	Subsoil		-
Other Information: -			

Trench 10			
Length: 50 m		Orientation: N - S	Situation: Slight NW facing slope
Context No.	Description		Depth
1	Topsoil		0.25 m
2	Subsoil		-
Other Information: -			

Trench 11			
Length: 30 m	Orientation: E - W	Situation: Slight NW facing slope	
Context No.	Description	Depth	
1	Topsoil	0.25 m	

2	Subsoil	-
Other Information: -		

Trench 12		
Length: 50 m	Orientation: E - W	Situation: Slight NW facing slope
Context No.	Description	Depth
1	Topsoil	0.25 m
2	Subsoil	-
Other Information: -		

Trench 13		
Length: 60 m	Orientation: N - S	Situation: Slight NW facing slope
Context No.	Description	Depth
1	Topsoil	0.25 m
2	Subsoil	-
Other Information: -		

Context Register

Context Number	Description	Dimensions
1	Topsoil. Dark greyish brown silty sand.	Max depth 0.3 m
2	Subsoil. Light yellowish brown sandy gravel with rare boulders.	-
3	Cut of pit. Sub-ovoid with moderately steep slightly concave sides breaking gently to concave, slightly irregular base base.	Length: 2 m Width: 1 m Depth: 0.2 m
4	Upper fill of Pit 3. Dark greyish brown, loose silt loam with rare stones <5 cm.	Depth: 0.17 m
5	Basal fill of Pit 3. Very dark greyish brown/black silt loam with abundant charcoal	Depth 0.03 m

Photo Register**Film no. 1**

Film Type: Colour Slide and Black and White

Shot no.	Trench	Direction Facing	Description
1	2	E	W facing section of Pit 3
2	7	S	General view
3	1	S	General view
4	11	E	General view
5	10	N	General view
6	2	NW	General view

Shot no.	Trench	Direction Facing	Description
7	4	SE	General view
8	9	NE	General view
9	5	SW	General view
10	6	W	General view
11	8	S	General view
12	12	W	General view

Drawing Register

Drawing Number	Description
1	W facing section of Pit 3
2	Post-excavation plan of Pit 3

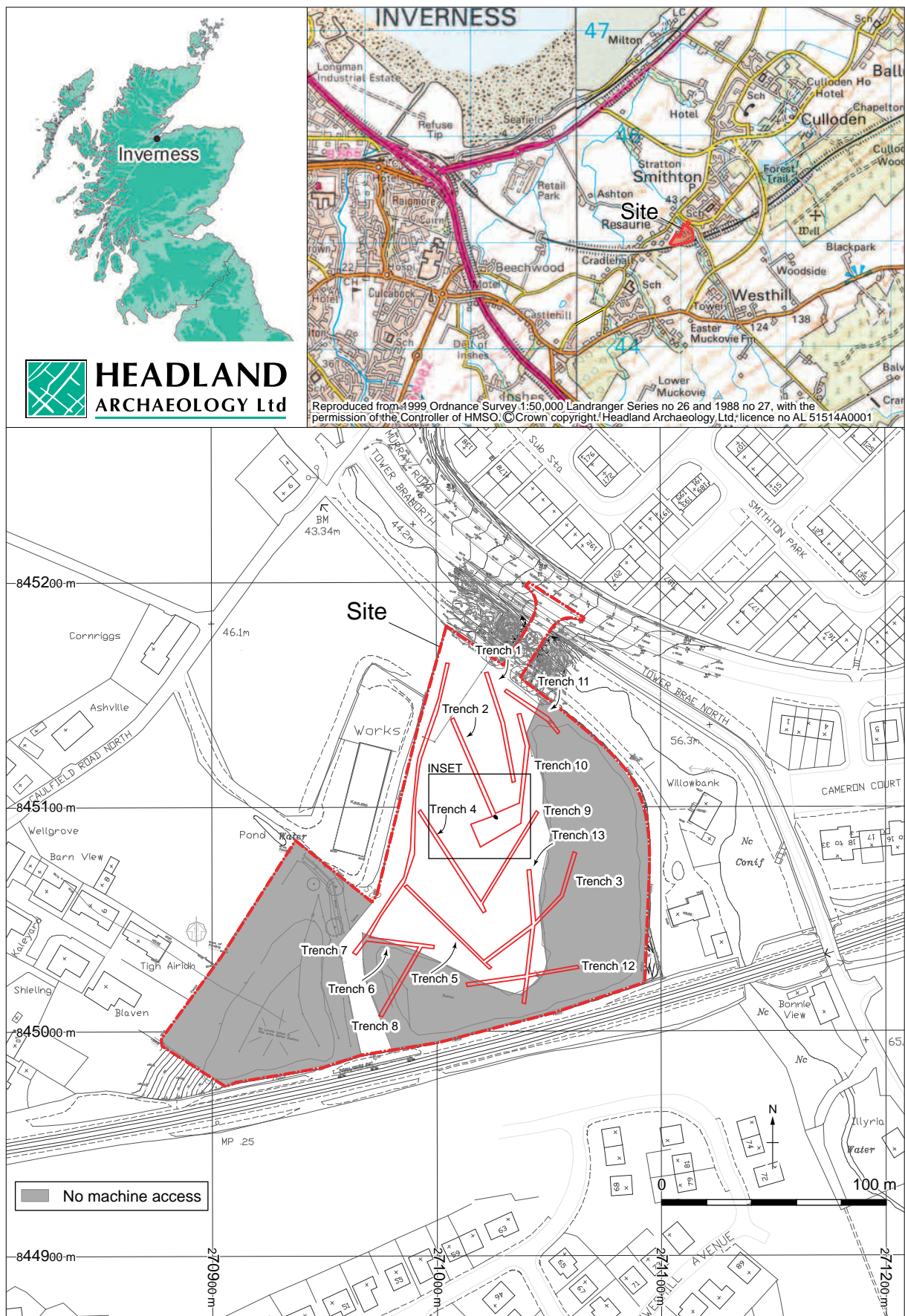


Figure 1 - Land at Murray Road, Smithton, Resaurie: Location of site and trenches

INSET

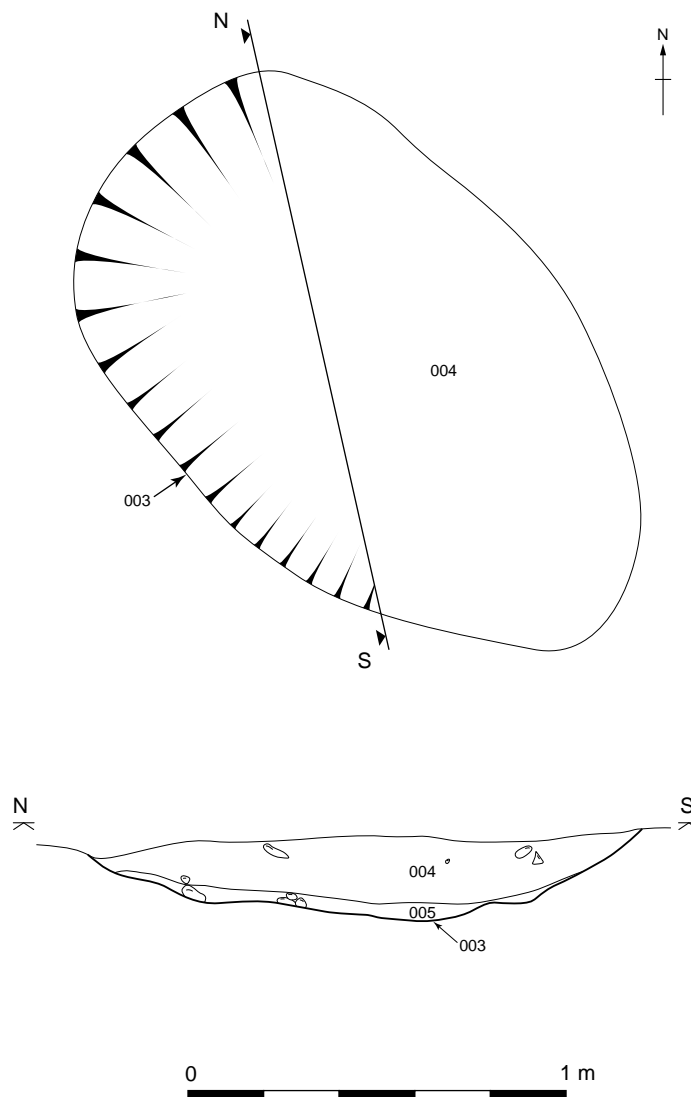
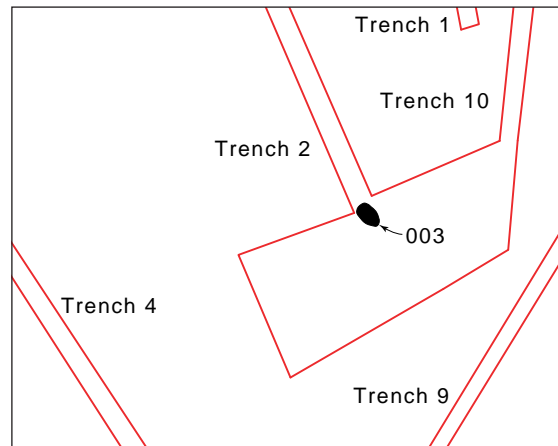


Figure 2 - Land at Murray Road, Smithton, Pit 003.