

New House and Vehicle Access Kingsburgh Isle of Skye

NG 39571 55237

Archaeological Watching Brief

17th January 2006



illus. 1 Kingsburgh : The plot before excavation.

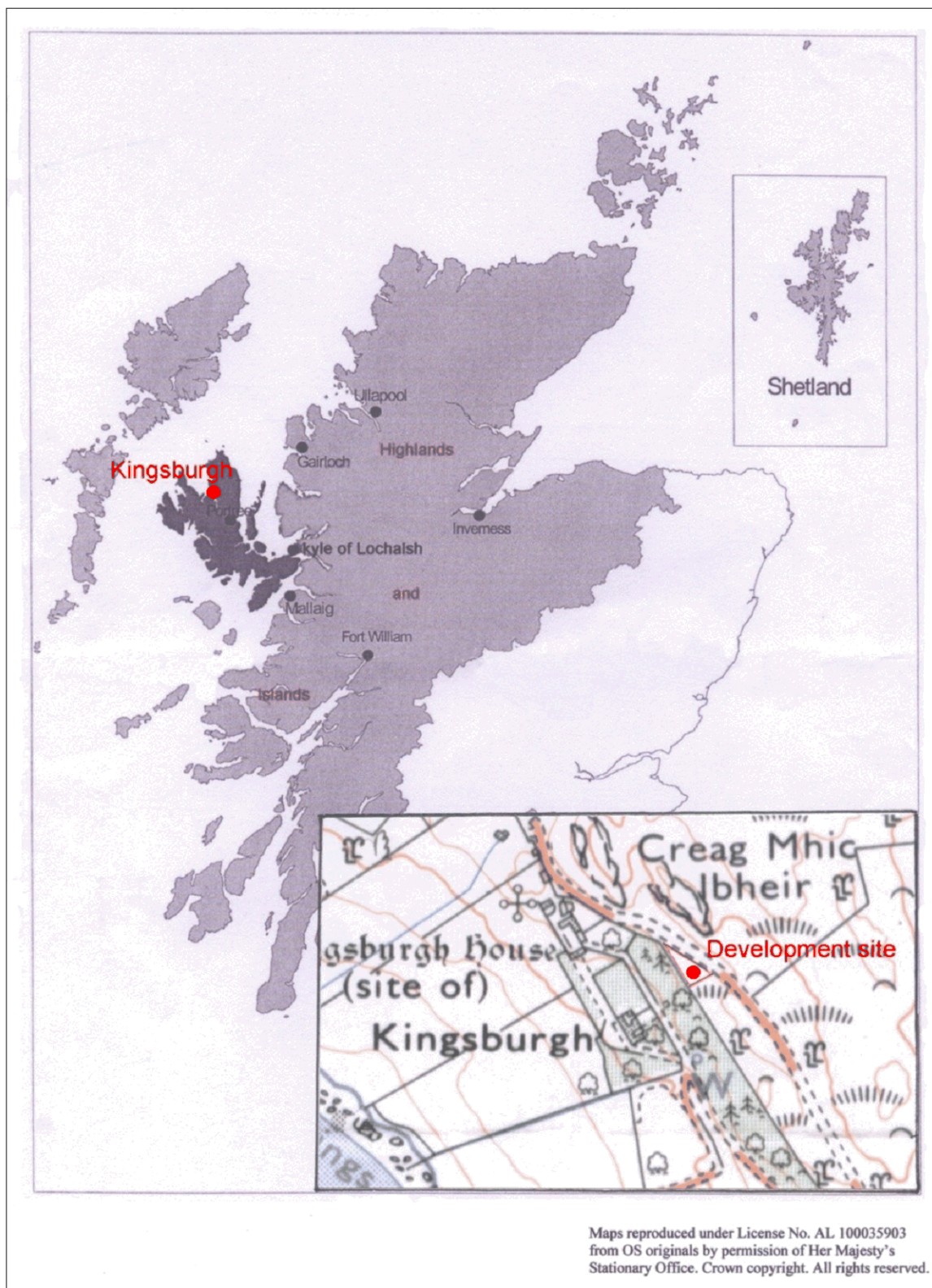
For

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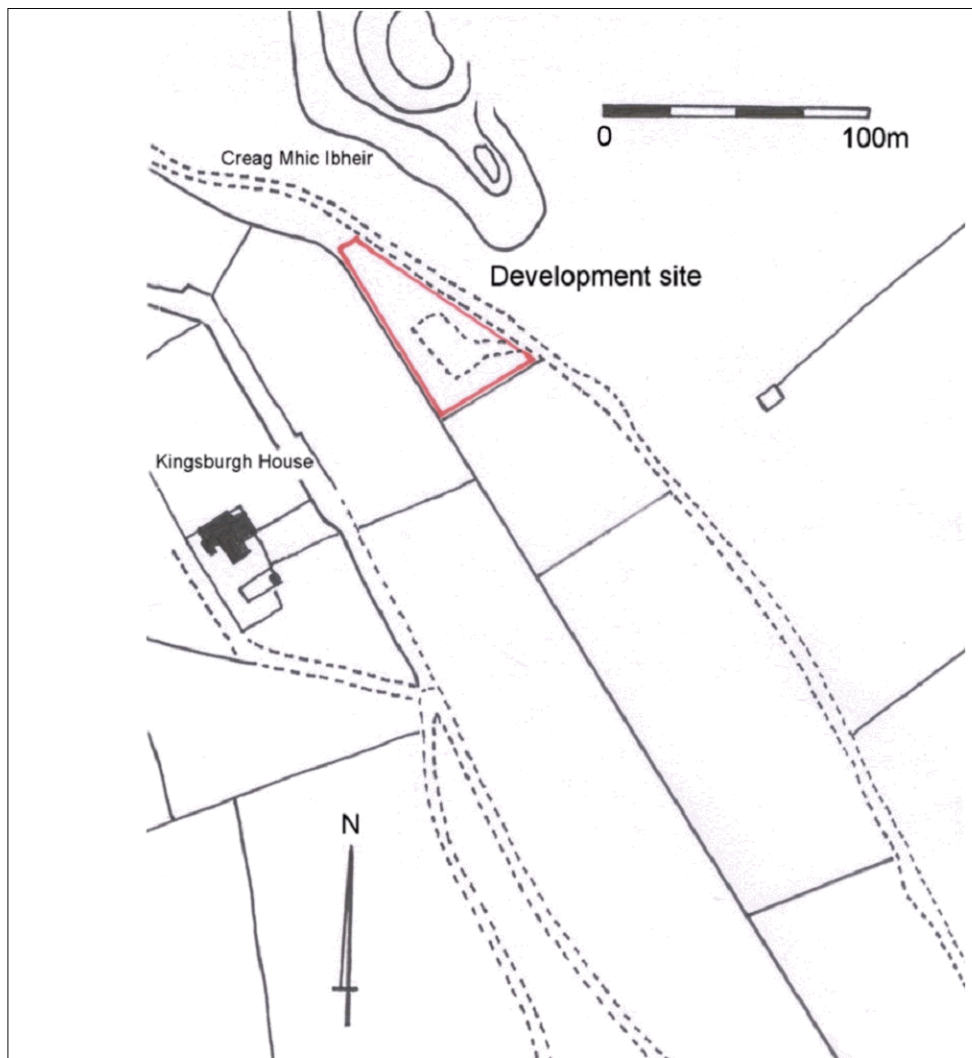
Report No. 165



illus. 2 : Location, Kingsburgh and site of the development.

WATCHING BRIEF**NEW HOUSE SITE, KINGSBURGH****NG 39571 55237****1. INTRODUCTION**

The development covered by this report lies immediately to the south of Creag Mhic Ibheir between the township road and a stone built wall surrounding the policies of Kingsburgh House. The site overlooks Loch Snizort to the west but has restricted views in all other directions. There appears to be no obvious archaeology in the vicinity. The watching brief was concerned with the excavation of a platform for the new house and an access road leading to the township road to the east.



illus. 3: Kingsburgh House and location of development site.

2. THE WATCHING BRIEF

The watching brief consisted of 3 elements:-

- a) A desk-based assessment. (carried out prior to site works)
- b) A walkover survey (carried out on the day of the site works)
- c) A watching brief during site works.

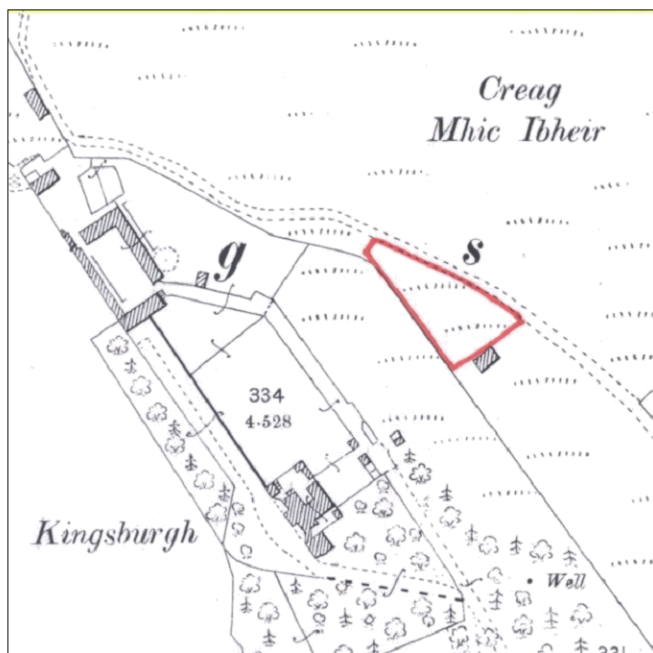
2.1 Desk-based assessment

The desk-based assessment consulted the following sources:

- The National Monuments Record for Scotland (NMRS) via the Internet.
- The Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record (HSMR) also via the Internet.
- The Dualchas Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) in Portree
- The Dualchas Aerial Photo Archive
- The Dualchas Map Archive
- The Archaeological and Ancient Landscape Archive.

A search of the above sources revealed that there are no recorded archaeological sites, other than the site of Old Kingsburgh House, within 200 meters of the development site.

A search of the Dualchas Map Archive produced a copy of the 1903 6" OS sheet for Kingsburgh, which showed a roofed building lying immediately to the south of the development site, (See illus 4).



illus. 4 : Part of the 1903 6" OS map showing the development site and adjacent building.

2.2 The Walkover Survey

The walkover survey was carried out on the 17th of January prior to the start of site works. The day was cold with occasional hail showers.

No archaeological features were visible within the house plot. There was no trace of the roofed building shown on the 1903 OS map.

2.3 The Watching Brief

The watching brief was carried out on the 17th of January. Site works were carried out by a tracked excavator using a straight edged bucket. Site works consisted of the excavation of a level platform for a house and turning area and the creation of a track for access.

During the stripping of the house platform a small area of black soil and stones was revealed – this area is referred to as Feature 1 below.

2.4 Feature 1 (see illus. 5 – 9 below)

Lying below 300mm of plough soil was an oval area of black soil, charcoal and stones which measured 1.80 meters N – S by 1.20 meters E – W. This feature had been cut into the natural orange clay and had been truncated by the plough. There was no sign of black soil or stonework in the overlying plough-soil. The feature was recorded, and sectioned on a NW – SE line before being completely excavated. A large sample (10 litre bucket) of the fill was retained for later wet sieving. No finds or other dating evidence were recovered during the excavation.



illus. 5 : Feature 1 as first exposed. (North to right. Scale = 30cm)

slightly out of focus

2.4.2 Observations during excavation

The fill consisted of a black charcoal rich soil containing thin lenses of pure charcoal, orange peat ash and stones.

It was observed that the natural, within and close to Feature 1, showed no sign of heating other than a general blackening of the surface associated with the charcoal rich fill. There was no reddening or hardening of the clay sub-soil at all.

The stones within Feature 1, both set in the sub-soil and loose, also showed little sign of heating, showing only discolouration from lying within the charcoal rich fill.

A char-filled lobe at the north end of the feature represented the filled remains of two small channels which ran into/out-of the main feature.

A char-filled stake hole 170mm deep and 80mm in diameter survived at the NW end of the depression. (see illus 8)

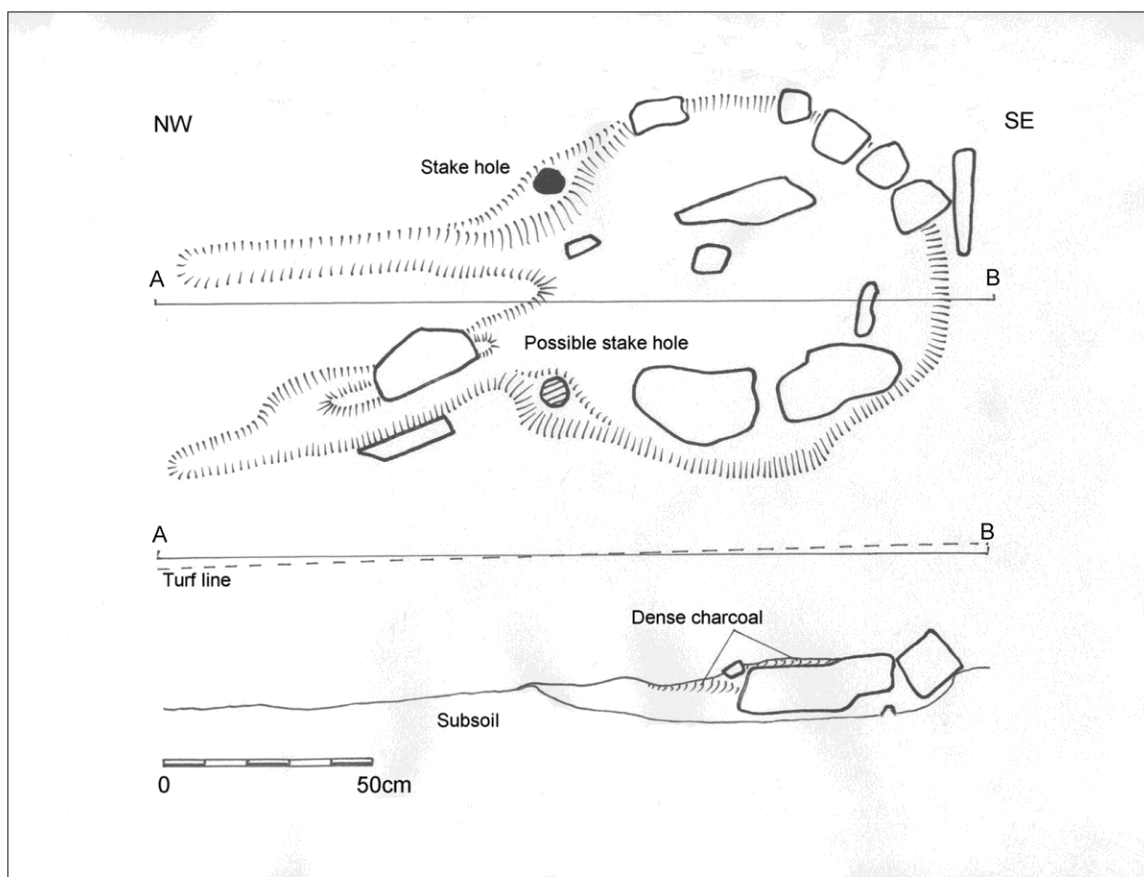
A shallow depression 50mm deep and 85mm in diameter was recorded on the opposite side of the depression. This was also filled with char and may represent a second stake hole. (see illus. 8)



illus. 6 : Feature 1 sectioned (North-west to left. Scale = 30cm)



illus. 7 : Feature 1 fully excavated (North-west to left. Scale = 30cm



illus. 8 : Feature 1. Plan and Section.

3. POST EXCAVATION ANALYSIS

Wet Sieving

A 10 litre sample of the charcoal rich fill of Feature 1 was wet sieved (1mm sieve) to extract evidence for use or dating of the feature.

Results of the wet sieving.

The fill of Feature 1 consisted of a fine black and orange ash with some small stones. The only finds recovered were a small fragment of white pottery (?Pearlware) with a clear blue-ish glaze and a single small piece of carbonized heather stem. The glaze on the pottery fragment was heat shattered and somewhat blackened by ?smoke.

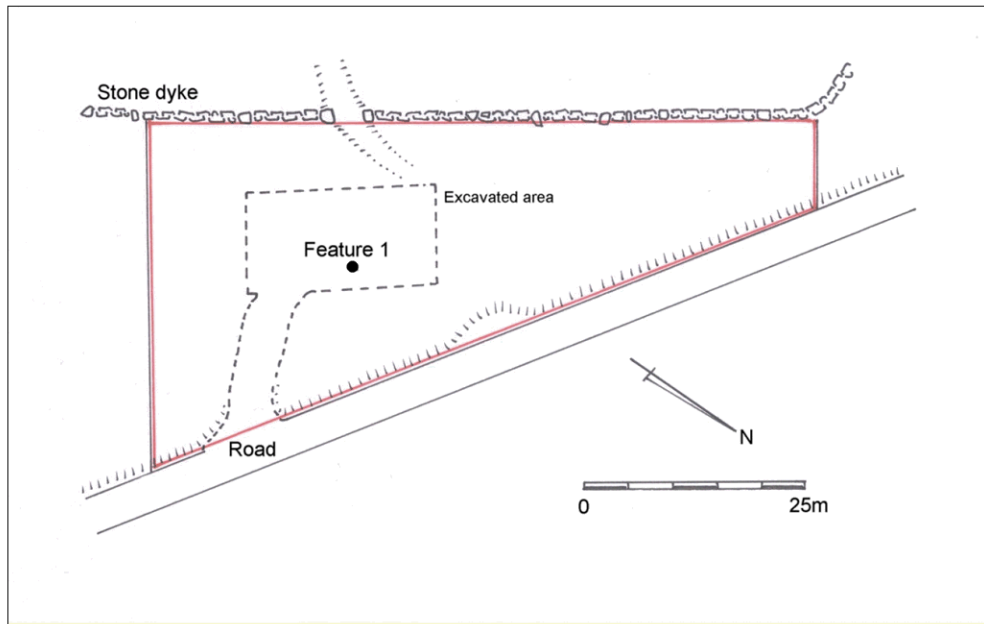


illus. 9 : The house plot after clearance.

4. CONCLUSIONS

At first sight Feature 1 appears to be the truncated remains of an oven or kiln with associated flues at the north end. It is however difficult to assign a use to Feature 1 which would produce the evidence as recovered. There appears to have been no direct heating to the remaining stonework, or within the feature. It is perhaps safer therefore to assume that the remains, as presented, are either the footprint of a stone structure which performed a burning or heating function or that they are part of a process or undertaking which did not involve heat on site but which may have used heat offsite. The remains of this structure/offsite process being dumped in a redundant Feature 1 after completion of the task

It is possible that an offsite process was carried out at, or close to, the now lost structure shown on the 1903 OS 6" map (See illus 4).



illus. 10 : Relationship of Feature 1, the excavated area and the house site (outlined red).

4.1 Dating evidence

The single small fragment of clear glazed Earthenware pottery (?Pearlware) almost certainly dates to the mid 19th Century or later and therefore provides a *terminus post quem** for the burning episode with which it is associated. Feature 1 must therefore post-date the mid 19th Century.

* A date after which something occurred. ie The pottery could not have arrived in the ash before it was manufactured, only after.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The archaeological requirements for this house site have been completed. There are no further recommendations regarding this site.

6. LOCATION OF RECORDS

All records relating to this report and watching brief are held in the archive of:

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END

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