

RDS06

**Report on an
Archaeological Watching Brief at
Royal Dornoch Golf Club,
Dornoch**

Client: Royal Dornoch Golf Club

September 2006

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PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET

Client	Highland Council
National Grid Reference	NH 8002 8944
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Summary

A desk-based assessment established that although there were no recorded sites within the development area, there are possible remains of a monastic and later military site close by.

The stripping of the area revealed no archaeologically significant features or finds. The following report presents the results of the fieldwork and desk based assessment.

1 INTRODUCTION

Royal Dornoch Golf Club commissioned Headland Archaeology Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological evaluation as part of a planning application to construct a new car park at Dornoch, (Planning Applications 01/00119/FULSU). This involved the stripping of an area of land, 25m x 40m, (see Figure 1). This area of land functioned as rough ground for the present-day golf course, and may well have had a similar function for the golf-course that pre-dated it.

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2 METHOD

Documentary research

A systematic search was undertaken of readily available and relevant documentary sources for all land potentially affected by the development and a 250 m study area around the site. This was examined for archaeological potential, listed buildings and standing buildings were excluded from our search, as they would not have any reference to this site. The following sources were used (Appendix 1):

- Archaeological records held by the NMRS
- Published maps held in the National Library
- Information in the Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record, consulted at their offices in Inverness.

This information was collated in a gazetteer (Appendix 2).

Watching brief

It was determined by the Highland Council that stripping of the area associated with the development would be monitored and any features of archaeological significance recorded appropriately. Any exposed features would be cleaned by hand and fully recorded. All deposits would be sample excavated to obtain dating evidence. All recording would use pro-forma record sheets, drawings would be at standard scales (1:20 and 1:10), and photography would use colour print and slide film.

The brief from Highland Council indicated that monitoring should be undertaken over the entire site down to the natural subsoil, in this case beach gravel.

3 RESULTS

Documentary research

There are no known sites within or immediately adjacent to the application area. Within a 250 m radius of the site there are a number of poorly located sites that are of archaeological potential.

There is a cropmark site approximately 80m to the north-west of the site, being the remains of what is potentially a small military camp. The NMRS records of this site state that nothing survives of this camp due to development on the site. Approximately 100m to the north-west is the site of a possible priory, though the NMRS records that this is doubtful owing to a lack of substantial evidence.

Further a field, out with our 250 m study area to the south east of Dornoch archaeological investigations and metal detecting have revealed potential remains of early medieval industrial activity. The location of such remains in an undeveloped area to the south of Dornoch suggests there may be potential for similar activity on this site.

Watching brief

The stripping of the topsoil, (approximately 20cm in depth), revealed no archaeological features, and the finds amounted to five sherds of modern glazed pottery. Directly beneath the topsoil was a layer of sand that varied in depth over the site. At its deepest, it was approximately 1.8 m at the southern end of the site, (the highest point of the site). This sand rested upon the natural gravel beach which rose gently towards the south.

Beyond the fact that the area had most probably been landscaped as part of an earlier incarnation of the golf course, no archaeological features were encountered during the excavation of the site.

4 DISCUSSION

At this location the natural subsoil was represented by the gravel of the Holocene raised beach. No evidence of a topsoil was encountered directly above this so it is assumed that the sand at this point started to build up soon after the sea retreated although it may have accumulated over many years of sand blow.

The ground upon which the new car park was being built functioned as 'rough' ground for the present golf course. It may well have had a similar function for the earlier golf course, and as such the upper layers may have been landscaped. Upon consultation with groundstaff it was established that the method of landscaping was simply one of building up sand over the existing topsoil and then applying a 'skin' of new topsoil upon it. In fact, sand was being re-used from the current excavation to landscape other areas, demonstrating the on-going transformation of the golf-course. Figure 2 demonstrates the location of the site in relation to the old golf course. Plate

4, (from McLeod), shows a view of the 18th green and the old location of the club-house looking towards town.

The evaluation clearly shows that no buried archaeological deposits lie within the footprint of the new car park.

5 REFERENCES

John McLeod – *A History of the Royal Dornoch Golf Club 1877-1999* Moravian Press Ltd. 2000.

APPENDIX 1.

LIST OF CULTURAL HERITAGE DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

NMRS (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland)

NH78NE 15 Priory (Possible)

NH78NE 16 Friary

NH78NE 84 Defence/ Military/ Military Camp (Possible)

Maps (National Library of Scotland)

1874 Ordnance Survey 1:10560 scale

1906 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 scale

APPENDIX 2: Royal Dornach Golf Club Car Park. Gazetteer of sites of cultural heritage interest

Site No.	National Grid Ref.	Site Type	Description	Source	Designation
1	NH 799 895	Priory (Possible)	Doubtful location of priory no substantial evidence	NMRS site NH78NE 15	None
2	NH 798 895	Friary	A Franciscan friary is said to have stood at the SE corner of Dornach on the road leading to the links	NMRS sites NH78NE 16	None
3	NH 7997 8951	Defence/ Military/ Military Camp (Possible)	A small possible military camp identified 1946 from a vertical air photograph. Nothing likely to survive as area has been built on by several houses	NMRS site NH78NE 84	None

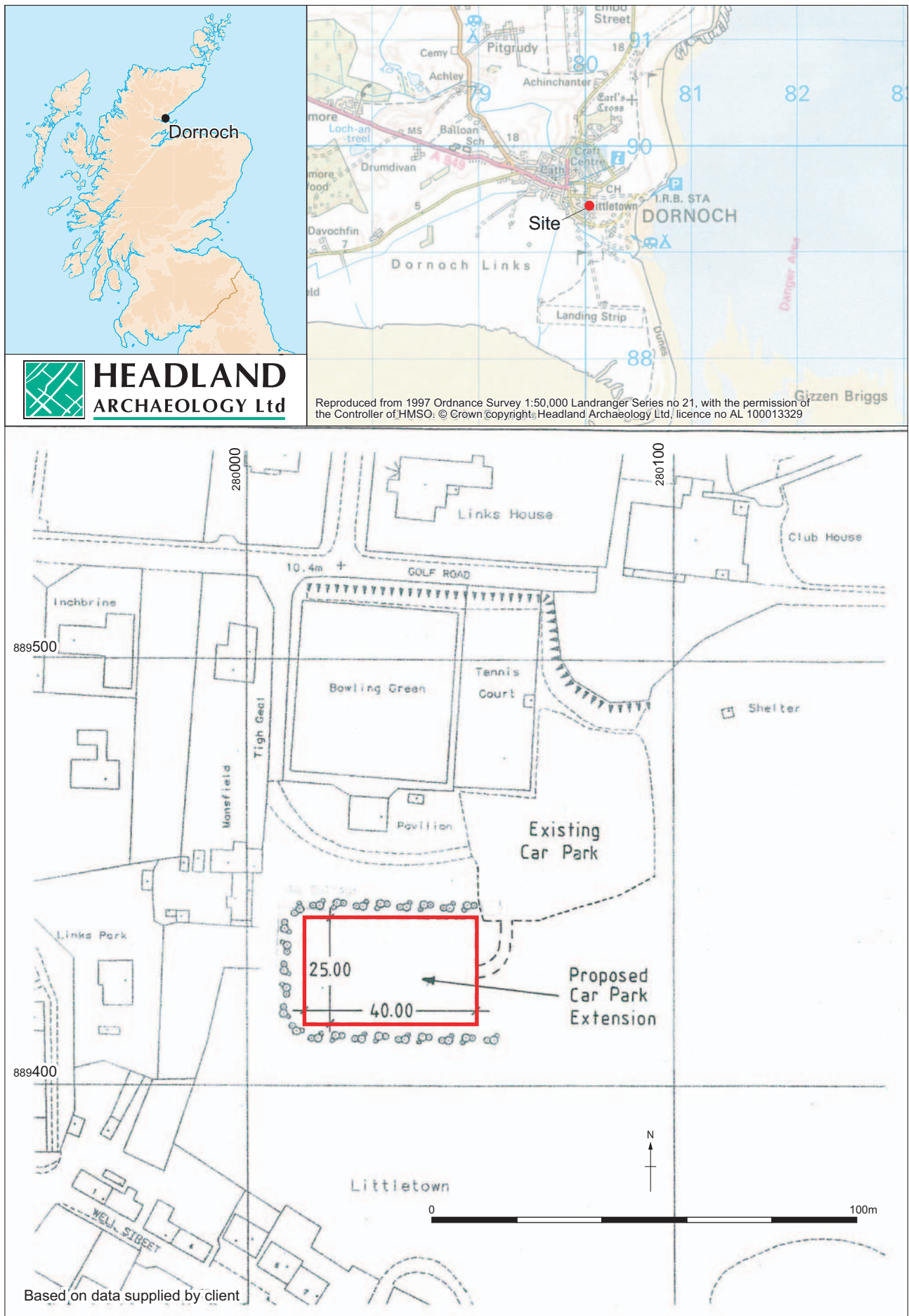


Figure 1: Location map of showing area of car park extension

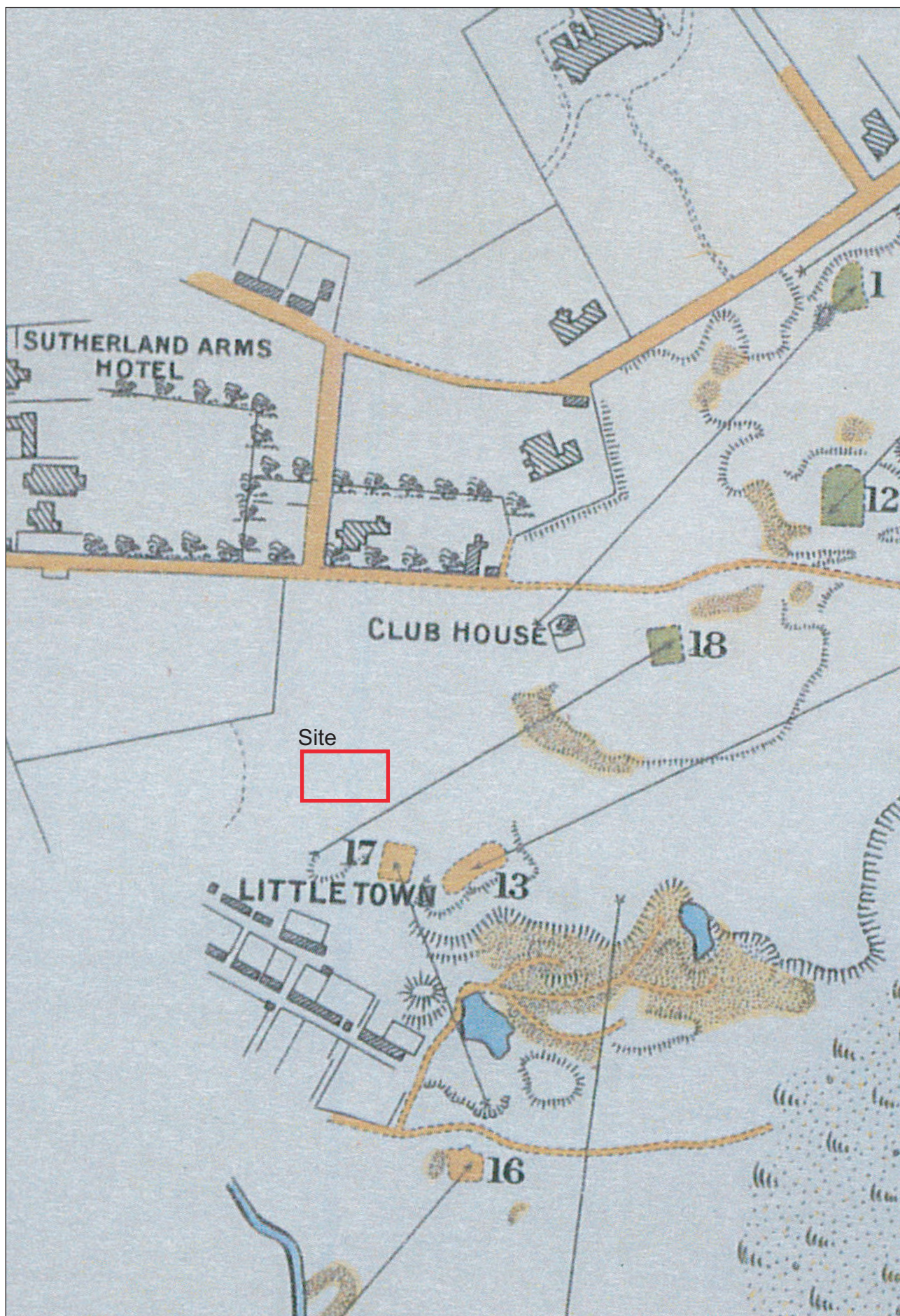


Figure 2: Location of site in relation to a plan of the old golf course made in 1906



Plate 1: View of the site looking S towards the Dornoch Firth as soil stripping commences



Plate 2: View looking W showing stripped topsoil



Plate 3: View of the site looking N showing the gravel 'beach' beneath the sand



Plate 4: Archive photograph showing putting on the 18th green looking towards town, early 1900's, after McLeod. The area of the site would have been to the far left of the scene.