



Highland Archaeology Services Ltd

Bringing the past and future together

Woodlands **Boblainy, Beaully**



Watching Brief

July 2006

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Woodlands

Boblainy, Beaulieu

Watching Brief

July 2006

Report No.	HAS061101
Site Code	HAS/ BBW06
Client	Mr & Mrs P. McLellan
Planning Ref	IN-05-1251
Date	16 November 2006
Authors	Gemma Shannahan and John Wood

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out to record the nature and extent of any archaeology revealed during a proposed development at Woodlands, Boblainy, by Beaulieu. No features or artefacts of archaeological significance were found.

Contents

Introduction	3
Aims and objectives.....	3
Location	4
Archaeology and policy background	6
Femnock Wood	6
Boblainy	6
Index of Photographs.....	11
Index of Contexts.....	12

Figures

Figure 1 Site Location	4
Figure 2 The site in its immediate context.....	5
Figure 3 Site plan and camera locations	5
Figure 4 First Edition OS 6" Map 1875-6.....	7
Figure 5 Excavation stages	8
Figure 6 View from entrance – Stage 1 excavated.	9
Figure 7 Extending trench to septic tank	9

Introduction

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on 1st and 2nd of July 2006 by Gemma Shannahan for Highland Archaeology Services Ltd on behalf of Mr & Mrs P. McLellan, who propose to construct a house, cattery and driveway at Woodlands, Boblainy, by Beauly.

Aims and objectives

1. To minimise any possible delay or cost to the development by anticipating archaeological requirements as far as possible, timetabling and integrating archaeological recording work with the project, and dealing with any issues arising quickly and efficiently.
2. To determine as far as possible the character, extent, condition, date and significance of any archaeologically significant remains; and to preserve these where possible and record where necessary in line with the Highland Council's Structure Plan, NPPG 5 and PAN 42.

Location

The site is centred approximately at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NH 492 396. It is within the local authority area of the Highland Council, which is advised on archaeological matters by its Archaeology Unit staff based within the Council's Planning and Development Service (HCAU).

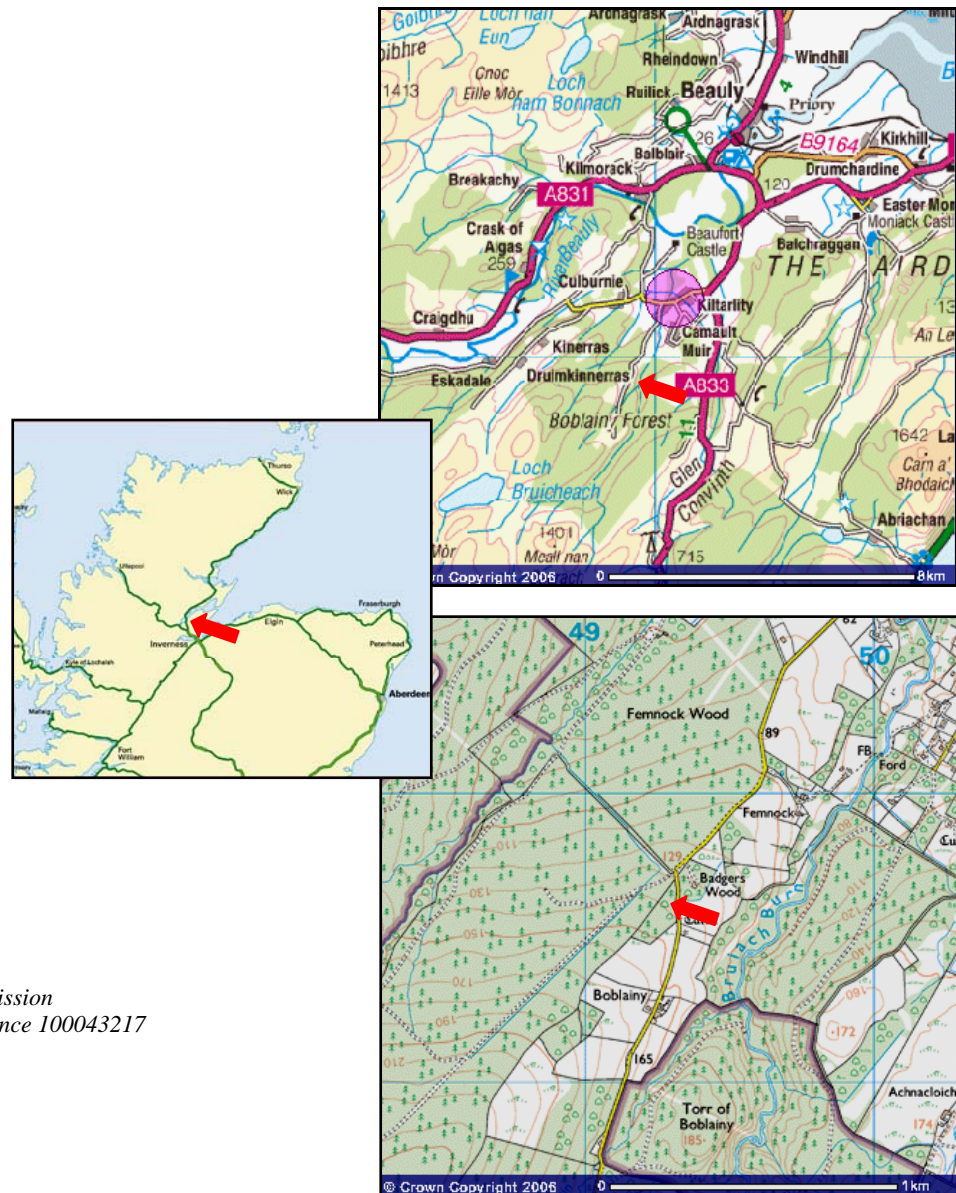


Figure 1 Site Location

Mapping reproduced by permission
of the Ordnance Survey: Licence 100043217

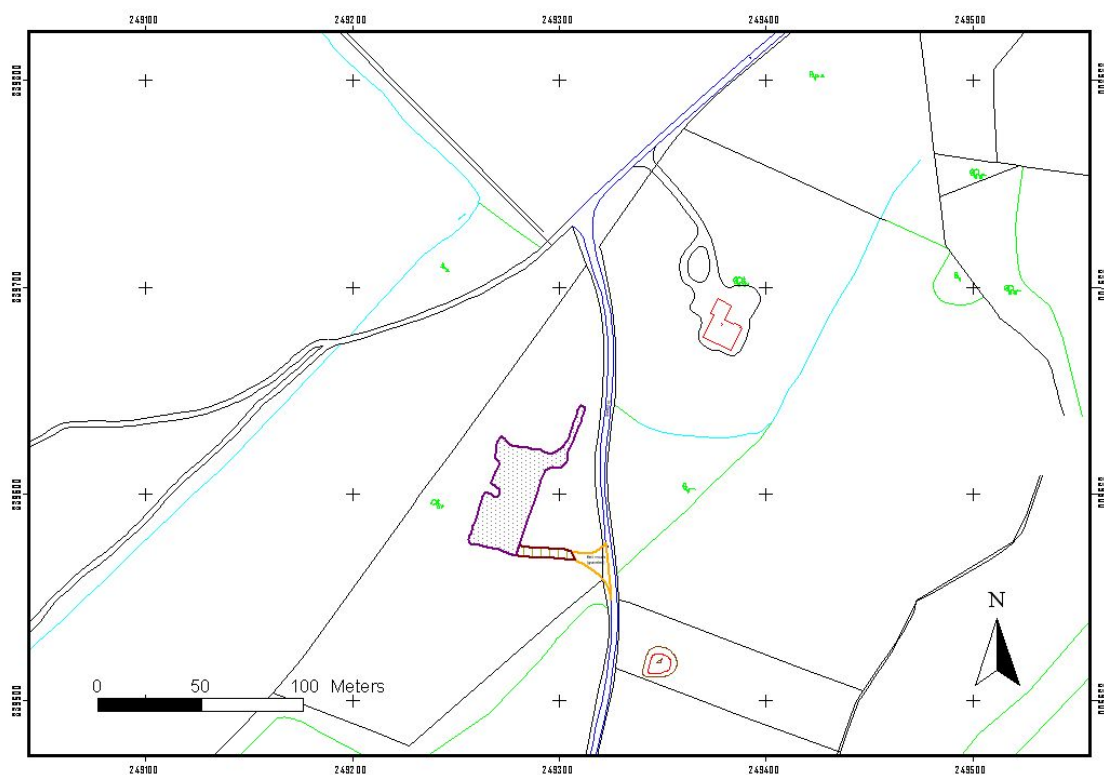


Figure 2 The site in its immediate context

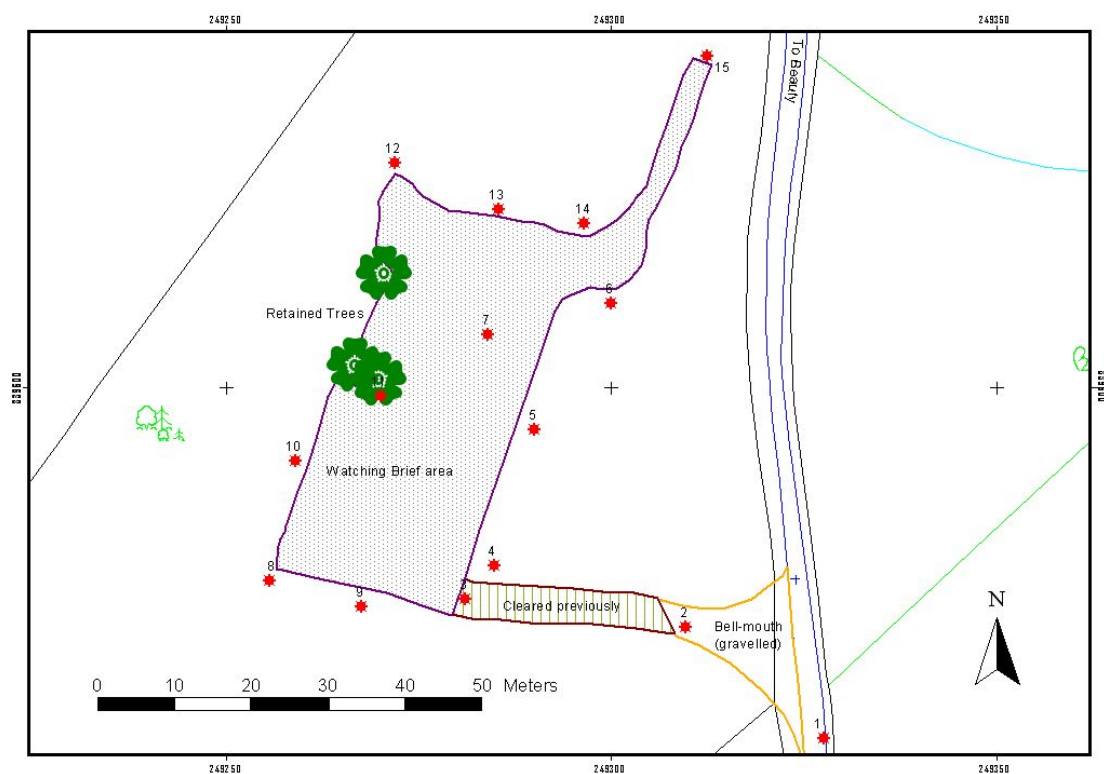


Figure 3 Site plan and camera locations

Archaeology and policy background

There were no recorded sites or features of archaeological interest within the development site itself, although two recorded prehistoric sites lie close by. It was the proximity of these sites that occasioned the watching brief in this case.

Femnock Wood

Map references: NH 494 398; NH 493 401
Highland SMR Number: NH43NE0034
NMRS Number: NH43NE 10

Two possible hut circles, together with possible cairns and indeterminate remains, were noted by S E Jacks between 1987 and 1989. They lie across the road, NE of the development site

Boblainy

Map reference: NH 4934 3951
Highland SMR Number: NH43NE0002
NMRS Number: NH43NE 2

In 1886, T D Wallace described 'the remains of a cairn surrounded by a circle of stones. The cairn measures 11 yards in diameter, and at a distance of 2 yards, there are the remains of a circle of stones about 2 1/2 or 3 feet high. At a distance of 20 yards north-west from the circle there is a boulder 4 feet by 3 feet, but whether it had ever formed a part of the structure it would be hard to say.'

Audrey Henshall recorded it as 'destroyed' in 1963, but in 1964 the Ordnance Survey noted the 'greatly mutilated, grass covered, remains of a cairn measuring about 15.0 metres in diameter by 1.9 metres high'.

Wallace's description seems to indicate a Clava type cairn, of later Neolithic or early Bronze Age date. It seems to lie fairly close to the present development site, across the road on the SW side.

RAF 1945-1955 aerial photographs were checked at the Highland Council's offices in Inverness, but the area has been under woodland for many years. Neither the Statistical Accounts for Scotland¹ nor the First Edition Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map of 1875-6 (see Fig 2 below) suggest any archaeological features in the site area.

The site itself is sheltered by established, dense woodlands to the North and East. A few mature trees remain to the South, with a field beyond which slopes upwards, providing further shelter from the winds. To the East, a few mature trees have been retained, although there are open views across the minor road and fields beyond. A large area of tall, mature trees has been felled and the roots and stumps ripped up with a mechanical digger to create a site for the proposed house and cattery. The site is quite flat, large and very disturbed by the recent activity.

On initial inspection of the site, virtually no surface turf or vegetation survived in the area of the proposed development. In addition to the removal of trees and roots, deep tyre tracks covered the entire site.

¹ <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/stat-acc-scot/stat-acc-scot.asp>

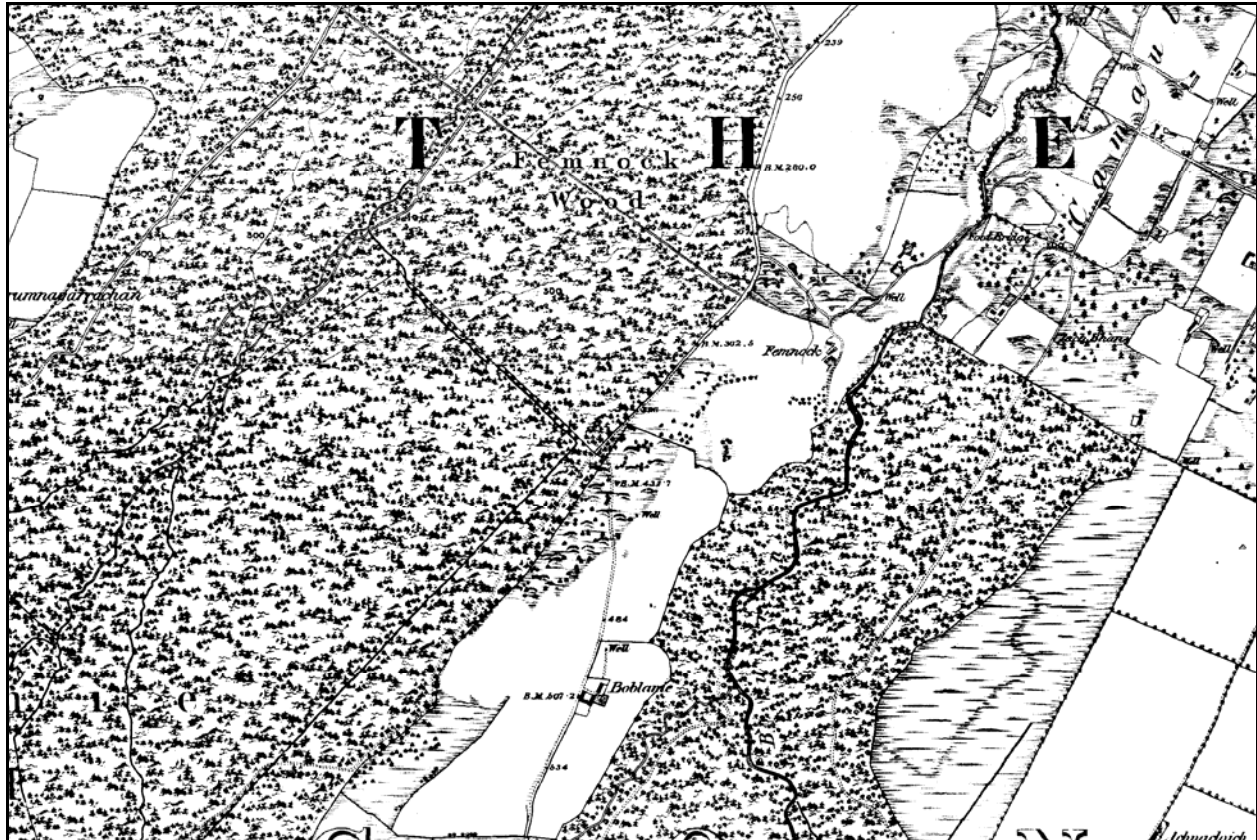


Figure 4 First Edition OS 6" Map 1875-6

The planning and policy framework in this case included the Highland Council's *Structure Plan*², and the Scottish Executive's *National Planning Policy Guidance Notes* 5 (NPPG5)³ and 18 (NPPG18)⁴, and *Planning Advice Note* 42 (PAN42)⁵ (SOEND 1994). The fundamental principles underpinning the above policies are set out in *Passed to the Future: Historic Scotland's Policy for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (2002)⁶ and the *Burra Charter* (Australia ICOMOS 1999).⁷

² <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/developmentplans/structureplan/thehighlandstructureplan.htm>

³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/1998/10/nppg5>

⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/1999/04/nppg18>

⁵ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/1994/01/17081/21711>

⁶ www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pasttofuture.pdf

⁷ <http://www.icomos.org/australia/burra.html>

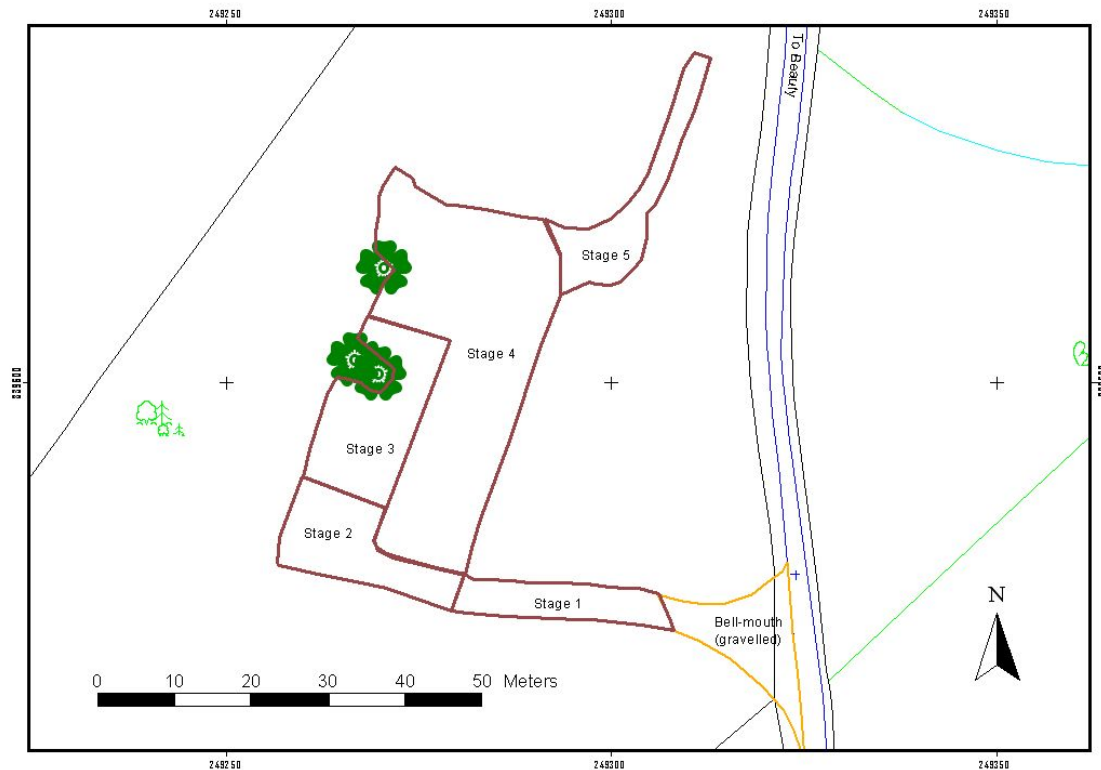


Figure 5 Excavation stages

Programme

The programme consisted of archaeological mitigation and recording in line with the policies outlined above. Working in co-ordination with the contractor, a watching brief was carried out on all areas of ground-works.

When the archaeologist arrived on site on Saturday 1st July 2006, she found that a large trench had been dug with a toothed bucket, up to a depth of approximately 40cm deep, running West in a straight line from the road entrance (Stage 1 on Figure 4). This was inspected, but no archaeological features or finds were noted.

Work then began, using a six-foot straight edged bucket fitted to a back-acting mechanical digger, at the west end of the existing trench, working towards the North. The work divided roughly into the stages shown in Fig. 4 above. On Sunday 2nd July 2006, the trench was fully recorded using tapes, DGPS and photographs.



Figure 6 View from entrance – Stage 1 excavated.



Figure 7 Extending trench to septic tank

Results

The total area excavated measured approximately 1560m².

The topsoil [1] was brown and moist, though crumbly in texture, with some medium stones (100mm-200mm) included. Some tree branches, roots and stumps were still present across the site, both on top of and within [1]. Below the layer of disturbed topsoil, lies a yellow/grey/brown clay-rich material [2] and medium-large stones (150mm-350mm). This sits on top of the orange/brown natural, (500-600mm at deepest), consisting of a hard surface of sandy/gravel and small-medium stones (50mm-100mm). The colours and textures of the contexts are so different that any changes/fluctuations would be very clear.

The drainage route and position of the septic tank were plotted out by the client, and subsequently excavated. This area revealed the only finds, which were two small fragments of mid-20th century pottery in the topsoil [1]. The clients had also found similar pot sherds in the woods to the north, some time previously, which they believed to be associated with a former croft house said to have been occupied by refugees during the Second World War.

No archaeological finds or features were identified. Any stains or changes to context were investigated but found to be the result of root action.

Recommendations

No artefacts or features of archaeological significance were found, and no further archaeological work is recommended within the current area of the proposed development. There are no areas that warrant preservation *in situ*.

Operational Matters

Weather was clear to the East, sunny and dry with very little wind, and a thin cloud cover over the site.

Index of Photographs

Photo number	Camera Position	Direction Facing	Description	Taken by	Date
4483	1	NWW	Site on arrival - showing area already excavated.	GS	01/07/2006
4484	1	NW	Site on arrival	GS	01/07/2006
4485	2	N	Site along road	GS	01/07/2006
4486	2	W	Site on arrival - showing area already excavated.	GS	01/07/2006
4487	2	W	Site on arrival - showing area already excavated.	GS	01/07/2006
4488	2	W	Site on arrival - showing area already excavated.	GS	01/07/2006
4489	3	E	Site on arrival - showing area already excavated.	GS	01/07/2006
4490	4	E	Site on arrival - showing area already excavated.	GS	01/07/2006
4491	4	E	Site on arrival - showing spoil.	GS	01/07/2006
4492	4	NE	Site on arrival	GS	01/07/2006
4493	4	W	Site on arrival - showing area already excavated.	GS	01/07/2006
4494	4	SE	Site on arrival	GS	01/07/2006
4495	4	S	Site on arrival	GS	01/07/2006
4496	4	SSW	Site on arrival	GS	01/07/2006
4497	4	SW	Site on arrival	GS	01/07/2006
4498	4	SWW	Site on arrival	GS	01/07/2006
4501	5	NWW	Site on arrival	GS	01/07/2006
4502	5	N	Site on arrival	GS	01/07/2006
4503	5	NE	Site on arrival	GS	01/07/2006
4504	6	SW	Site on arrival	GS	01/07/2006
4508	5	W	Excavations around the retained silver birch tree.	GS	01/07/2006
4509	5	NW	Mechanical digger removing disturbed topsoil	GS	01/07/2006
4513	7	W	Showing contexts [1] and [2]	GS	01/07/2006
4514	7	NE	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4515	6	N	Extending trench to septic tank.	GS	01/07/2006
4516	6	N	Extending trench to septic tank.	GS	01/07/2006
4518	6	SW	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4520	8	NE	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4521	8	E	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4523	8	N	Area to the West of trench	GS	01/07/2006
4525	8	N	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4526	8	NE	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4527	8	E	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006

Photo number	Camera Position	Direction Facing	Description	Taken by	Date
4531	9	N	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4533	10	E	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4534	10	NE	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4536	11	SE	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4537	11	E	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4538	11	NE	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4539	7	NNE	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4541	12	E	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4542	12	SE	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4543	13	W	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4545	13	S	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4551	14	S	Trench during excavation	GS	01/07/2006
4554	6	N	Area of trench leading to septic tank.	GS	01/07/2006
4556	15	S	Looking towards main area of trench	GS	01/07/2006
4564	2	W	Looking towards main area of trench	GS	01/07/2006
4565	4	SE	Looking towards road.	GS	01/07/2006
4567	4	SW	Extent of Trench	GS	01/07/2006
4568	5	W	Extent of Trench	GS	01/07/2006
4569	5	NW	Working in trench	GS	01/07/2006

Index of Contexts

1	Topsoil – disturbed, brown and moist, though crumbly in texture, with some medium stones (100mm-200mm)
2	Yellow/grey/brown clay-rich material. Below [1]
3	Orange/brown hard surface of sandy/gravel and small-medium stones (50mm-100mm)

Highland Archaeology Services Ltd
16 November 2006