

QRB06

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Client: Aviemore & Highland Development Ltd.

Quarry Road, Balintore, Highland: An Archaeological Assessment & Evaluation

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PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET (QRB06)

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Schedule	
Fieldwork	November 2006
Report	November 2006

Summary

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Aviemore & Highland Development Ltd. to conduct an archaeological desk based assessment and evaluation at a proposed housing development at Quarry Road, Balintore, Highland. The initial desk-based assessment identified the presence of a modern quarry and former gravel pit within part of the proposed development. In addition the assessment identified a number of prehistoric sites and features on the periphery of the site and within an approximate 500m radius. The potential for further unrecorded discoveries within the proposed development was therefore seen as high. A Geo-Environmental Site Investigation by Fairhurst had established that much of the site had been disturbed by quarrying and lay beneath several metres of modern deposits. In agreement with the Highland Council Archaeological Unit it was determined that intrusive trial trenching was only required over the site outside the established area of quarrying. Consequently a total of eleven trenches were excavated in the south and west of the proposed development, representing a 7% sample equating to 220 linear metres. The excavations revealed re-deposited sand and wind-blown sand deposits above natural coarse sand and gravel. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered during the works.

(QRB06) RESULTS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

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1. INTRODUCTION (Figure 1)

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Aviemore Highland Developments to undertake an Archaeological Assessment and Evaluation in advance of a proposed housing development at Quarry Road, Balintore. The work was designed to fulfil a planning condition (Planning condition No. 12) placed by Highland Council. The work followed a Brief prepared for the applicant by Highland Council Archaeology Service (RC-05-844) and a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Headland Archaeology. The work was subject to an agreed variation to these documents excluding those parts of the site subject to previous quarrying. This report presents the results of the initial desk-based assessment and intrusive site evaluation, which represented a 7% sample of the undisturbed part of the development area or 220m of linear trench. The fieldwork was undertaken in November 2006.

The site of the proposed development occupies an area that was previously utilised for quarrying, the extraction of gravel, and until recently a refuse tip. The site comprises raised beach above the present shoreline with extensive areas of wind-blown sand and dunes. To the north of the site is open, pasture; to the south is the shoreline; to the east is a housing development; and to the south west is a modern cemetery. The western and southwest part of the proposed development represents an area of ground un-affected by the quarrying and gravel extraction activities, and was an open area of wind-blown sand and small dunes bounded to the south and west by low-lying gorse bushes at the time of the evaluation.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives were:

- To identify the location, nature and extent of any features or objects of archaeological importance that would be damaged or destroyed by the proposed development
- To propose arrangements for the safeguarding where possible, and recording where necessary of any archaeological features or finds identified, to be agreed with Highland Council Archaeology Unit
- To make sure that the needs for archaeological conservation and recording are met without causing any unnecessary delay or disturbance to the proposed development project

3. METHOD

Desk based assessment

A systematic search of all readily available and relevant documentary sources was undertaken using the following sources:

- Information in the Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record (SMR)
- Archaeological records held in the National Monuments Record of Scotland
- Aerial photographs held by RCAHMS
- Published Maps held in the National Library of Scotland
- Information on Listed Buildings/Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Relevant published sources

In addition to the identification of sites within the proposed development, an area approximately 500m in radius outwith the development was assessed for sites of cultural heritage interest that may

help inform on the potential for unrecorded archaeological discoveries within the proposed development area.

Walkover Survey

A walkover survey of the site of the proposed development was undertaken to confirm the nature and condition of recorded sites and to identify any further features of archaeological potential.

Evaluation

Trial trenches were excavated by machine under direct archaeological supervision. The total development area comprising house plots and access roads measures approximately 63705 m². A large area of the proposed development were previously occupied by a quarry and gravel pit, since filled in with modern material. The Geo-Environmental Investigation of the site indicated that the only area that comprised undisturbed ground was Zone 2, adjacent to the cemetery in the southwest portion of the proposed development (Client Report by Fairhurst & Partners 2006). It was agreed that only this part of site (Zone 2) would be subject to a 7% sample, equivalent to approximately 220 m of linear trench using a 1.60m wide bucket. Any archaeological features in the trenches were recorded using the Headland Archaeology Ltd standard recording method. Colour transparencies and colour print photographs were taken. An overall site plan was recorded and tied into the National Grid using an EDM and penmap software. All recording was undertaken on *pro forma* record sheets.

4. RESULTS (Figure 1 & Plates 1-4)

The following presents the results of the desk based assessment and evaluation.

DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT

The village of Balintore is first noted on Gordon's 1640s revision of Pont's 16th century maps, although the settlement was called Abbotshaven, the Gaelic for which is '*Balintore*', the 'village with the tower'. In 1750, Roy's map shows the settlement as Fishertown, possibly as a consequence of the development of Balintore and the neighbouring villages of Hilton of Cadboll to the north and Shandwick to the south as fishing hamlets (Smith 2001: 69). The 1872 1st edition Ordnance Survey shows the settlement named as Balintore. The area of the proposed development during this period seems to have comprised open land above a row of houses along the shore on the northeast side of the settlement. The 2nd edition OS revision of 1907 shows the presence of a quarry (Site 1) and a stretch of boundary along its northern edge. Subsequent OS revisions suggest that the site of the proposed development has stayed as such throughout the 20th century, with the development of a modern cemetery along the southwestern boundary of the site during the same period (OS 1960, 1981).

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings or Designed Landscapes within the proposed development or within the immediate vicinity of the site. One site of cultural heritage interest was identified within the proposed development. This comprised the remains of a former quarry and gravel pit (Site 1) dating from the late 19th and early 20th century (Ordnance Survey (OS) 1907, 1960). Seven sites (Site 2-8) of cultural heritage interest were identified within an approximate 500m radius of the proposed development (Table 1 below). All the sites, with the exception of Site 8, represent the recorded remains of burials dating to the prehistoric period discovered in the vicinity of the proposed development. This suggests that the potential for the discovery of unrecorded remains of this nature remains high. Site 9 represents the location of a watching brief carried out due to the proximity of the works to previously uncovered prehistoric burials. No archaeological remains were uncovered. The potential for the discovery of unrecorded remains dating to the medieval period within the proposed development is probably limited, as is the potential for early modern features. The land under investigation seems to have been little affected until the developments of the 19th and 20th century as intimated by the map evidence.

Site No.	National Grid Ref.	Site Type	Description	Source
1	NH 8660 7590	Quarry & gravel pit	Former quarry located within the development, dating to the late 19 th and early 20 th century	OS 1907, 1960, 1981; walkover
2	NH 8660 7580	Burials	Two extended inhumations covered by flat slabs discovered during the excavation for a sewer pipe. Date unknown	NMRS: NH87NE14; SSMR: NH87NE0014
3	NH 8630 7568	Cist	Human remains were unearthed during building works in 1919, covered by a slab	NMRS: NH87NE11; SSMR: NH87NE0047
4	NH 8617 7578	Cist	Cist found in 1976 and contained two inhumations: an adult and a child. Contents removed to Inverness Museum	NMRS: NH87NE13; SSMR: NH87NE0046
5	NH 8639 7570	Cist	Cist discovered whilst digging a well in 1932 at the back of Johnstone's Butchers, contained human remains	NMRS: NH87NE8; SSMR: NH87NE0045
6	NH 8626 7563	Cist	A short cist was discovered containing human remains while a sewer pipe was being dug in c.1950	NMRS: NH87NE10; SSMR: NH87NE0025;
7	NH 8610 7540	Burial-ground	Possible Bronze Age burial ground. Cists discovered with inhumations during works in 1937 and 1955.	NMRS: NH87NE5; SSMR: NH87NE0005
8	NH 8653 7574	Graveyard	20 th century burial ground	SSMR: NH87NE0052
9	NH 8700 7600	Watching Brief	Conducted during the excavation for 4 outfall chambers in the vicinity of recorded burials. No features were found.	NMRS: NH87NE40

Table 1: Sites of cultural heritage interest.

EVALUATION

Full trench descriptions are provided in Appendix 1, a summary is provided here.

A total of eleven trenches were excavated within the area marked as Zone 2 in the Geo-Environmental Report (Figure 1). The trenching revealed an extensive coverage of wind-blown sand of varying depth across the site. Trench 4 was excavated to a maximum depth of 2 metres in order to establish the full extent and nature of the wind-blown deposits. Some areas were covered with a layer of re-deposited sand above the wind-blown sand, probably the result of recent activity in the area when the site was used as a quarry, gravel pit and refuse tip. This interpretation was supported by the presence of modern litter within this mixed sand deposit. The wind-blown sand was removed by machine in spits in order to ensure the identification of any archaeological features or finds that may be uncovered. Natural coarse orange sand, pea-grit and gravel were noted beneath the wind-blown sand. No archaeologically significant features or finds were identified.

5. DISCUSSION

The evaluation failed to identify any remains of archaeological significance. Much of the site of the proposed development has been extensively disturbed by quarrying and gravel extraction in the recent past. The area identified as Zone 2 comprised the only area of undisturbed ground suitable for archaeological investigation. The trenching revealed re-deposited sand above wind-blown sand that had accumulated to form small dunes. Despite the careful removal of the sand deposit in spits, no archaeological finds or features were identified. The natural subsoil comprised sand and gravel.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Kirsty Cameron of Highland Council Archaeology Service who curated the project for Highland Council as planning authority. Thanks also to Tom McGougan for his support and to Bannerman's Plant Hire for the provision of a machine and operator.

8. REFERENCES

Maps (National Library of Scotland and SCAN website)

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1636-52 | Gordon <i>Part of Ross</i> |
| 1747-1755 | Roy, W <i>Military Map of Scotland: 27/5e Area around Balintore, in Ross-shire.</i>
(SCAN website) |
| 1832 | Thomson, J <i>Atlas of Scotland; Southern part of Inverness-shire 1826</i> |
| 1872 | Ordnance Survey, 1:10560, 1 st Edition, <i>Cromartyshire</i> , Sheet LV (surveyed 1871-2) |
| 1907 | Ordnance Survey, 1:10560, 2 nd Edition, <i>Ross & Cromarty</i> Sheet LV (re-surveyed 1904) |
| 1960 | Ordnance Survey, 1:10000, Sheet NH87NE |
| 1981 | Ordnance Survey, 1:10000, Sheet NH87NE |

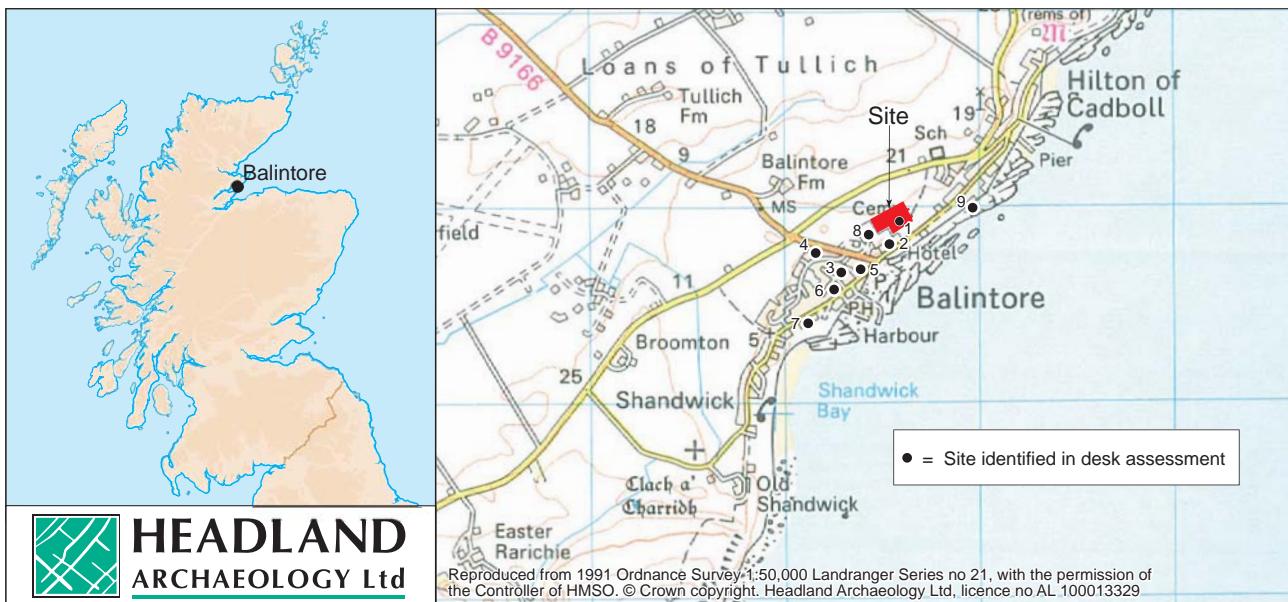
APPENDIX 1: Registers**Trench Register** (All trenches are 1.60m wide)

Trench No.	Zone	Description	Length (m)	Av.Topsoil/subsoil Depth (cm)
1	2	Oriented E-W. Wind-blown sand above natural sand and gravel. Sondage excavated to 1.45m to confirm the nature of the natural subsoil. A modern cable trench was noted. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered.	27	90
2	2	Orientated N-S. Wind-blown sand above natural sand and gravel. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered.	27	70
3	2	Orientated NW-SE. Wind-blown sand above natural sand and gravel. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered.	22	80
4	2	Orientated NW-SE. Wind-blown sand above natural sand and gravel. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered.	5	150
5	2	Oriented E-W. Wind-blown sand above natural sand and gravel. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered.	24	80
6	2	Oriented E-W. Wind-blown sand above natural sand and gravel. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered.	24	45
7	2	Oriented E-W. Wind-blown sand above natural sand and gravel. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered.	21	60
8	2	Orientated N-S. Wind-blown sand above natural sand and gravel. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered.	15	60
9	2	Orientated NE-SW. Wind-blown sand above natural sand and gravel. The north end of the trench revealed modern deposits denoting the edge of the cut for the gravel pit. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered.	29	65
10	2	Orientated NE-SW. Wind-blown sand above natural sand and gravel. The north end of the trench revealed modern deposits denoting the edge of	21	65

		the cut for the gravel pit. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered.		
11	2	Orientated N-S. Wind-blown sand above natural sand and gravel. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered.	5	50

Photograph Register

Shot	Print	Slide	Direction facing	Description
1	-	-	N/A	ID Shot.
2	-	-	E	Trench 1; General shot.
3	-	-	N	Trench 1; South facing section of sondage.
4	-	-	S	Trench 1; North facing section of sondage.
5	-	-	N	Working shot; Excavation of Trench 3.
6	-	-	N	Trench 2; General shot.
7	-	-	NW	Trench 2; South end of east facing section.
8	-	-	NW	Trench 3; General shot.
9	-	-	N	Trench 3; SW facing section.
10	-	-	SE	Trench 4; General shot.
11	-	-	E	Trench 5; General shot.
12	-	-	SE	Trench 5; North facing section.
13	-	-	E	Trench 6; General shot.
14	-	-	S	Trench 6; North facing section.
15	-	-	E	Trench 7; General shot.
16	-	-	N	Trench 8; General shot.
17	-	-	N/A	Working shot; Excavation of Trench 9.
18	-	-	N/A	Working shot; Excavation of Trench 9.
19	-	-	NE	Trench 9; General shot.
20	-	-	S	Trench 9; NW facing section.
21	-	-	NE	Trench 10; Partially excavated.
22	-	-	NE	Trench 10; General shot.
23	-	-	N/A	Working shot.
24	-	-	N/A	Working shot.
25	-	-	N	Trench 11; General shot.



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Figure 1 - QRB06: Sites of cultural heritage interest & Trench locations



1: General shot looking NE



2: General shot looking NE



3: General shot looking NW



4: General shot looking N

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