

# An Archaeological Survey of the proposed route of a water pipeline between Poolewe and Inverasdale, Wester Ross



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## **An Archaeological Survey of the proposed route of a water pipeline between Poolewe and Inverasdale, Wester Ross**

### **Introduction.**

The author was asked by the North of Scotland Water Authority to carry out a desk-based assessment and walk-over survey of the route of the proposed pipeline prior to work commencing. The aim of the assessment was to locate known archaeological features and identify unrecorded features, to assess the potential impact of the project on the archaeological record and to make recommendations to mitigate this impact. This would involve forming a judgement on the relative local or national importance or interest of each individual feature, particularly those which lie within the wayleave of the pipeline. Recommendations will be made as to whether it is acceptable to damage or destroy an archaeological feature, whether further archaeological recording should be undertaken on these features, or whether steps should be taken to avoid causing damage. This last option might involve minor alterations to the pipeline route being recommended. All decisions on the implementation of such mitigating measures will be made by the Senior Archaeologist in charge of the project within the Department of Planning at Highland Council.

### **Method**

An initial desk-based assessment was carried out to establish the historical background of the area and the likelihood of archaeological features being present. The following resources were consulted:

Highland Council's Sites and Monuments Register, held by the Archaeology Unit within the Planning Department of Highland Council.

The National Library of Scotland's Map Library in Edinburgh.

Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland: Air photographs and other archive material.

Highland Archive in Inverness Library: Valuation Rolls and 1841 Census returns

The following books provided important background material:

Gairloch and guide to Loch Maree: J.H. Dixon 1886

People and Settlement in North West Ross: ed. John r. Baldwin 1994

This was followed by a walk over survey of the route of the pipeline. Due to the constraints of time on this project, effort was concentrated along the 20m. width of the wayleave. Outwith this narrow strip, archaeological features were only noted briefly to ensure that they would not be affected by the pipeline project. This survey was carried out on July 20<sup>th</sup> 2000 in good weather conditions.

## **Archaeological Background**

There is as yet very little archaeological evidence for early settlement along this section of coast. However, hut circles dating to the Bronze or Iron Age are common in the wider area, particularly at Tournaig, Big Sand and above Strath of Gairloch, and it is likely that any suitable areas of cultivable land would have been in use at this early period. Although there is now no trace of the Dun at Dun Naast, it is likely to have been a defensive structure similar to those at Tournaig, Gairloch and Badachro, all roughly 2000 years old. The name Naast, however, is considered to be Norse in origin, as is the 'dale' of Inverasdale, and there was no doubt a Norse presence in Loch Ewe despite the lack of archaeological evidence.

## **Historical Background**

The lands between Loch Ewe and Loch Torridon were granted to Hector Roy MacKenzie in 1494 and have been in the possession of the Gairloch MacKenzies ever since. Documents in 1566 specify the lands of Gairloch as including among others, Innerasfidill (Inverasdale) and Cryf (Cliff), and in 1638 Inverasdale, Clive and the two Nasts. (Cliff, or Clive is the original name for the settlement at the mouth of the River Ewe, possibly from the Gaelic word for good pasture) Blaeu's 1654 map of North Scotland, based on the surveys of Timothy Pont between 1583 and 1596, records Inverasdale and Dunast as well as Ruymakilvandrich (considered to be just north of Boor) but fails to record Cliff, recording however the settlement of Inverewe to the north of the river.

Roy's military map of the 1750s fails to name any of the settlements along the west shore of Loch Ewe, but marks extensive cultivated areas along the coast with townships marked at the approximate locations of Cliff and Inverasdale. A further township which would be presumed to be Naast is marked further north than the present crofting township. The other maps of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Dorret in 1750, Ainslie in 1789 and Huddart in 1794 are not accurate in locating the townships geographically, but consistently record Boor, Naast and Inverasdale as well as Cliff / Poolewe. Therefore, prior to the reorganisation of the estate in 1843 it can be assumed that this stretch of shoreline was occupied by four small clachans, or townships at Cliff, Boor, Naast and Inverasdale, with unenclosed areas of land being held in common spread along the coast.

The 1841 census lists 14 families living at Naast and 4 at Boor. Of these 4 householders at Boor, 3 are listed as tenants and one as a labourer. Of the three tenants, one is also the miller and one a boatbuilder. On the day of the census one family was also listed as living at the shielings at Bad a' Chreamh to the west of Boor and Naast, but whether that was their permanent home or they were up there for the seasonal pasture is not recorded. 7 households are listed for West Clive, ie. the present village of Poolewe. This was at a time when the greater part of the Highland Clearances had already taken place, but unlike



the greater number of Highland estates, improvements on the Gairloch estate were carried out with the well being of the small tenant in mind. The 5<sup>th</sup> Baronet, Sir Francis MacKenzie, set out plans to improve the agricultural practices and living conditions of his tenants. On his death his brother, Dr. John MacKenzie set about converting the townships into crofting holdings of 4-5 acres. This was carried out in 1843, and the present layout of the crofts at Naast is an example of this. Nearly all the existing tenants received a lot, others were moved onto new crofts at Mellon Charles. 12 tenants are recorded at Naast on the valuation roll of 1868, the present number (1981) is 11.

At this time the small township of Boor appears to have been converted into a farm. Only one tenant is recorded in 1868, with the mill being worked as a separate unit. It is possible that all the families from the original township continued to live there as labourers on the farm, as there is no record of any being removed to one of the new crofting areas

Loch Ewe achieved a brief military strategic importance during the second World war, when it was used as a fleet base and convoy assembly point. The North Atlantic convoys gathered in the loch before setting off under escort on the dangerous journey to Russia. The whole area was heavily defended, with anti-aircraft guns, barrage balloons, mines and an anti-submarine boom at the mouth of the loch. There is still a military presence in the loch, with regular military exercises and the NATO refuelling base providing local employment alongside the recent growth of fish farms.

### **The Archaeological Survey**

The following archaeological features were recorded within or on the edge of the proposed wayleave of the water pipeline:

1. **NG 8567 8097 Bank Barn.** A mid-19<sup>th</sup> century 2-storey structure built into the bank to allow access to the upper storey from ground level. To the left of the upper, west, doorway is a horse-walk, a raised round platform originally housing gearing to move threshing machinery within the barn. This barn is the only known example of its kind north of Lochaber.

*Recommendations: This building is on the other side of the road from the proposed route of the pipeline, but is included to draw attention to the horse walk and prevent its accidental damage from turning vehicles.*

2. **NG 8545 8100 Cliff House.** This is the location of the manse and glebe of Gairloch Parish between 1759 and 1803, although the parish church is six miles to the south. Thomas Pennant dined here in 1772. The present house is dated to approximately 1800, so is likely to have been built when the manse was moved to its present location in Gairloch. Cliff House is recorded as being the inn for Poolewe in 1825. The farm



buildings and walled field behind the house may relate to the glebe lands. Footings of a small extension or byre can be seen attached to the north gable of the house.

*Recommendations: This house and associated buildings should not be affected, so no action is required.*

3. **NG 8546 8103 Building.** This building is marked on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map and can be seen on a 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph as a thatch-roofed cottage. There is now no trace of this, and it is presumed to have been destroyed by the construction of the present road. Grass-covered mounds between the old and the new roads at this spot may relate to this structure, but no discernible shape to the mounds could be seen and they are probably only random rubble.

*Recommendations: The unlikelihood of any of this building remaining intact suggests that no particular care need be taken while crossing this area, but any large accumulations of rubble revealed by excavation can be presumed to be related to the site of the building.*

4. **NG 8543 8103 Clapper bridge** SMR no. NG88SE0017 This bridge, probably 19<sup>th</sup> century, is on the route of the old road and has been bypassed by the new road.

*Recommendations: the pipeline route is planned to pass between the old and the new bridges. Care should be taken to avoid accidental damage, and no vehicles of any weight should be allowed to cross the bridge. If there are any major excavations of earth from the vicinity of the bridge, it is recommended that a structural engineer consider what action should be taken to shore up the bridge to prevent collapse from undermining of its foundations.*

5. **NG 8516 8029 Area of rig cultivation.** This was noted on aerial photographs and is still visible on the ground. This is in a field of rough grazing and peat, outside the present crofting lands. The rigs run roughly E-W.

*Recommendations: This feature does not run right up to the road and therefore should be far enough away not to be affected by this project. It is included in the report to provide a complete archaeological record of the area.*

6. **NG 850 808 Canal trial pits.** Local tradition, as reported in Dixon's 'Gairloch' was that Sir George Hay, who established the iron works in Poolewe around 1608, projected a canal to link the navigable part of the River Ewe with the sea at Cuil an Scardain. In 1886 two large holes, waterlogged but by then nearly completely filled with field-clearance stones were clearly visible and were considered to be test borings for this project.

*Recommendations: there is now no trace of these two holes. Should excavation work for the pipeline reveal any areas of rubble fill which might represent these two holes, whatever their original function, it is recommended that a note of their exact location be*

*taken for the benefit of local historians and archaeologists, but is not considered for any further action need be taken.*

7. **NG 8494 8085 Cul an Scardain.** Dixon's 'Gairloch' records that "there were formerly houses here". There are no visible signs of footings of old buildings, and it is possible that these houses were further down towards the shore. There are however arrangements of stones between the corner of the fence and the road, and a short row of stone footings just east of the old drystone dyke above the road. Neither of these features can be clearly identified.

*Recommendations: as these features lie within the wayleave of the pipeline, it may be considered useful to record or investigate them further before excavation work commences.*

8. **NG 8462 8114 Boor Mill** SMR no. NG88SW0013A This mill is recorded on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map and is mentioned in Dixon's 'Gairloch' but it has now been completely obliterated by the construction of the new road bridge.

*Recommendations: This feature can be considered to have been completely destroyed and no action is considered necessary.*

9. **Boor Farm** The farmhouse was on the hillside above the road, a new house and access track have been built there since 1946. The following features within the farmland are within or close to the wayleave:
- a. **NG 8446 8131 footings of a rectangular building** just below the road. Around this are the stone footings of a dyke enclosing an area which has been built up to a level platform This must have been fenced until recently as garden trees are growing within this area.
  - b. **NG 8434 8145 Rubble dyke** running down the south bank of the burn. To the north of the burn is a small enclosure.
  - c. **NG 8408 8169 Dyke**, possibly the boundary dyke of Boor farm This is constructed of large boulders, of two courses only, and very neat.

*Recommendations: it is recommended that if possible the pipeline trench run to the east of the rectangular building, and that it be flagged beforehand to avoid accidental damage. The dykes, as linear features being crossed by the pipeline, will only be damaged at these crossing points, and this is considered to be acceptable. It is recommended that damage be kept to a minimum by avoiding the dumping of excavated material on the dykes.*

10. **NG 8420 8135 Boor Township** SMR no. NG88SW0013. The original township is on the hill behind the modern house, and the traceable associated field systems are above the road.

*Recommendations: This feature should not be affected by the project and no action is required.*

11. **NG 8398 8202 Creag Fhearchair Area of field walls and cultivation.** This is also the approximate location of Ruymakilvandrich, 'the point of the son of the servant of Andrew' marked on the Blaeu map of 1654. Traces of sections of dykes dating to pre-improvement cultivation meander below the road and cross a turf and stone dyke coming up from the point. North of this dyke the original dyke becomes more substantial although concealed by bracken, and eventually runs up to join the road. There are two prominent boulders close to the intersection of these two dykes. About 5m. below these boulders are two low grass-covered mounds, and attached to the turf dyke near these is a small circular enclosure, possibly a lambing pen. Below all these features, running along above the shore, is a large area of rig cultivation.

*Recommendations: It appears that the route of the wayleave runs along some of these features and is likely to damage large sections. While it is preferred that this could be avoided, it is recognised that pre-improvement dykes are common features along this stretch of coast, and that if their precise location has been recorded, it would not be a great loss to the archaeological record if whole sections of some had to be destroyed. It is recommended that the two low mounds and lambing pen be preserved and damage to the dyke crossing the wayleave be kept to a minimum. These features should be flagged before work commences to prevent accidental damage.*

12. **NG 8381 8228 Gun placement and accommodation huts.** Known locally as the Three Penny Bit. This is a Bofors anti-aircraft gun site, built onto a natural rocky outcrop. Between this and the road are the concrete and brick bases of three accommodation huts and one smaller square building, presumably demolished at the end of the Second World War. The southernmost hut contains the base of its central stove, and a raised pathway runs from the doorway of this hut towards the gun platform. Beneath these huts are the remains of cultivation rigs.

*Recommendations: given the intensity of military activity around Loch Ewe during the Second World war, accommodation huts are not rare in the area, many are still standing and in use, whether military or civilian. The demolished bases are still scattered across the landscape, notably at Loch Tollaidh, Cove and Tournaig. It is therefore not considered necessary to preserve every example. The author is of the opinion that these hut bases could be passed through by the pipeline without great loss to the archaeological or historical record, particularly as the more impressive gun placement will be unaffected by this project.*

13. **NG 833 826 Allt Loch Christina: Hill field and associated structure.** SMR no. NG88SW0011 A low turf and stone wall encloses a roughly oval hill field. Tucked into the ridge in the NW of this field is a small rectangular drystone building, possibly a shepherd's bothy. These features are marked on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map. On the other side of the ridge, at NG 8330 8268, is an artificial hollow of unknown function, possibly a quarry for road building material. and north of this are two piles of boulders, possibly field clearance cairns. On the other side of the road a



dyke can be traced running from the roadside at NG 8343 8255 up the hillslope to behind Torran nan Cliabh.

*Recommendations: the wayleave passes between the hill field and the road, and there should be enough room to avoid damage to the dykes of the enclosure. It is recommended that the dyke be flagged before work commences to avoid accidental damage, and material excavated should not be dumped on the feature. No particular action need be taken to avoid damage to the hollow and the boulder heaps. The long dyke is on the other side of the road from the wayleave and will not be affected.*

**14. NG 8295 8298 Area of dykes and rig cultivation.** A low stone dyke follows the NE bank of the Allt a' Phollain Bhuidhe and curves NE to join another dyke circling the high ground. Most of this area shows evidence of rig cultivation.

*Recommendations: These features should not be affected by the pipeline and no action is necessary.*

**15. NG 827 831 Naast old township.** What appear to be the remains of a pre-improvement township are at the side of the Allt Glas above the road. There is mention of two Naasts in a document of 1638, and it is possible that there was a second small township on the Allt Don at NG 8245 8345. These sites were not investigated on this survey.

*Recommendations: This township is far enough above the road to be unaffected by the present project.*

**16. NG 826 833 Naast Crofting township SMR no. NG88SW0010** Only the individual features listed below are liable to be affected by the present project:

**17. NG 8272 8316 Building and section of turf dyke.** Rough rubble footings of a building, aligned NE-SW and measuring 7m. by 2.5m. in total, but probably a main building with a byre attached to its NE gable. The walls stand no more than 0.5m. high. South of this, a rubble dyke follows the north bank of the stream, and a turf dyke runs WNW from this, just SW of the building.

*Recommendations: The proposed route of the pipeline appears to run behind this feature, so it should be possible for it not to be affected. If this is the case, it is recommended that it be flagged to avoid accidental damage, and that no excavated material be dumped on it.*

**18. NG 8259 8324 Barn.** The substantial ruin of a 19<sup>th</sup> century barn, aligned NE-SW, measuring approximately 5.5m by 2.5m. The bank behind has been dug out to provide a flat and drained site for the building.

*Recommendations: The wayleave passes between the barn and the road and it should be possible not to damage the building, so no action need be taken.*

19. **NG 8271 8340 Dam** A concrete structure with cast iron sluice mechanism and pipe. This probably dates to the Second World War, part of a complex of tanks and weirs providing water for the bunkering of vessels.

*Recommendations: this feature should not be affected by the present project, so no action is necessary*

20. **NG 8275 8340 Two Second World War military buildings.** One possibly a shelter, one a storage shed. There is also the base of a small square structure slightly to the south of the other two.

*Recommendation: These features are on the other side of the road from the proposed pipeline and will not be affected.*

21. **NG 8266 8371 Sheep dip** A very small pen and dip with no apparent attached enclosures, just below the road on steep ground. It is constructed of very rough concrete, mostly pebbles, aligned NW-SE . The pen is roughly 3m. square and 0,4m. high.

*Recommendations: this feature was not affected by the laying of the existing AC main, and it is hoped that the new pipeline will pass below it. Although of no great age, it is worth preserving if possible as part of the record of land use in this area.*

22. **NG 8266 8375 Area of cultivation, cairns, possible oval structure.** Three low ridges, possible former field boundaries, run down the slope from the road. At the base of these are probable clearance cairns and, at the base of the middle ridge, one possible oval structure measuring 3m. in length. Further clearance cairns are scattered in a line northward as far as a small burn, Along the coast on both sides of this burn are areas of rig cultivation

*Recommendations: The wayleave passes through the three ridges at a higher level than the cairns, and it is hoped that these features will be preserved from damage. Care should be taken to avoid the dumping of excavated material on these features.*

23. **NG 8248 8414 Lorg Ruadh: Stone dyke.** This dyke runs down the south bank of the burn. Above the shore here there is an area of rig cultivation.

*Recommendations: this is a linear feature of which only a short section will be damaged during excavation of the pipeline trench. It is recommended that this damage be kept to a minimum by avoiding the dumping of excavated material on the dyke.*

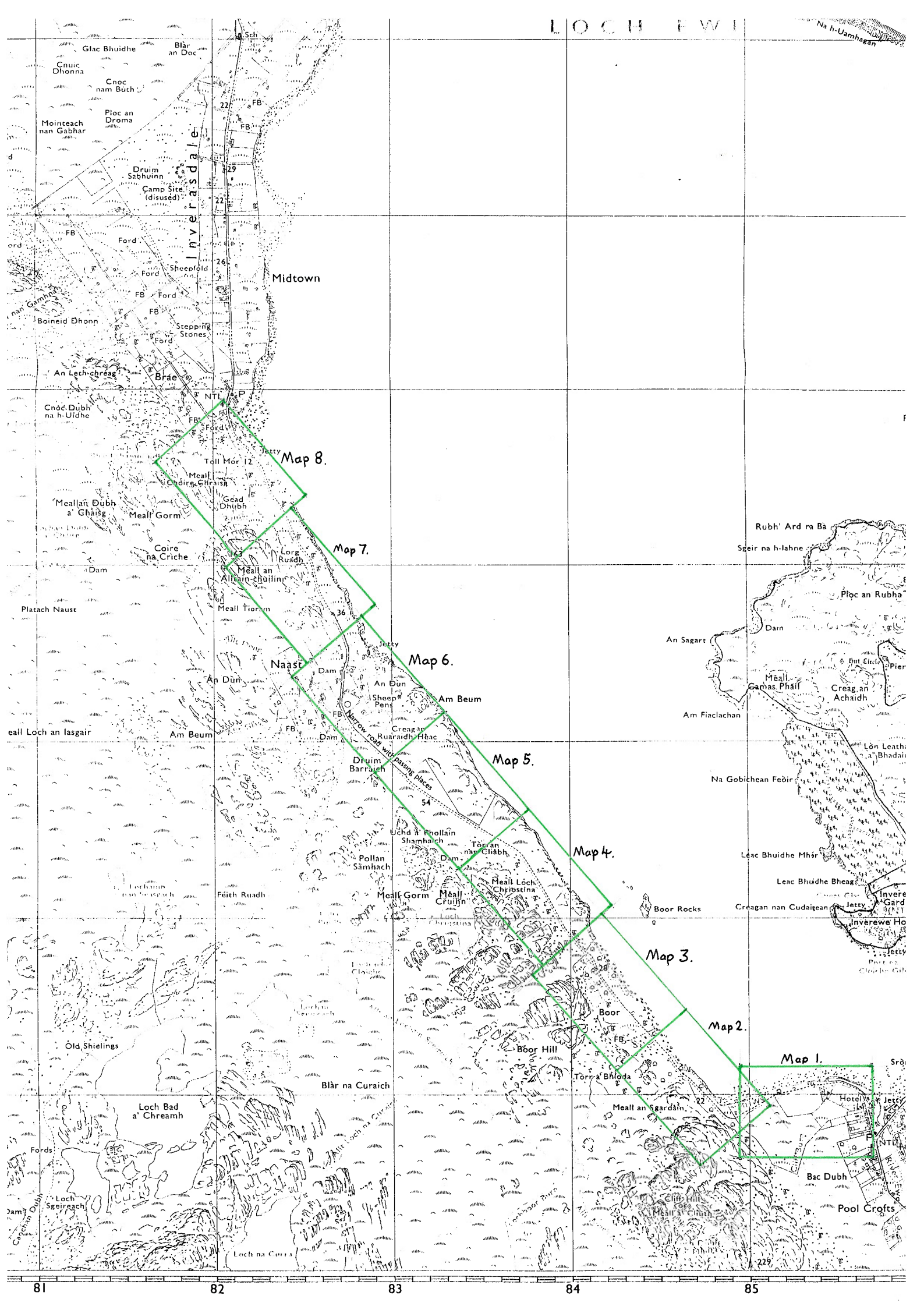
## **Archaeological Conclusions**

The large number of archaeological features dating to the pre-improvement period gives evidence for the intensity of land use along the coastal strip prior to the establishment of crofting lands, and the exclusion of small tenants from the hill grazing land. It is clear that a far greater area of land was in use, much of it in rig cultivation, than the parcels of land allocated for crofting tenure. Many of these new holdings had to be reclaimed from previously unused land, and it is not surprising that not all the tenants were happy with the improvements made on their behalf.

Within the narrow area surveyed, no archaeological features of obvious prehistoric or pre-modern date were identified, despite the place name evidence for settlement here for at least 2000 years. This is not surprising as the location of settlements appears to have hardly changed, and the arable land would have stayed in constant use through the centuries. It is quite possible that many of the archaeological features associated with cultivation, such as dykes and clearance cairns do in fact date back far older than the immediate pre-improvement period, but it would be impossible to say without more adequate dating techniques.

**Catherine Dagg**  
**23.7.00**





Map 8.

Map 7.

Map 6.

Map 5.

Map 4.

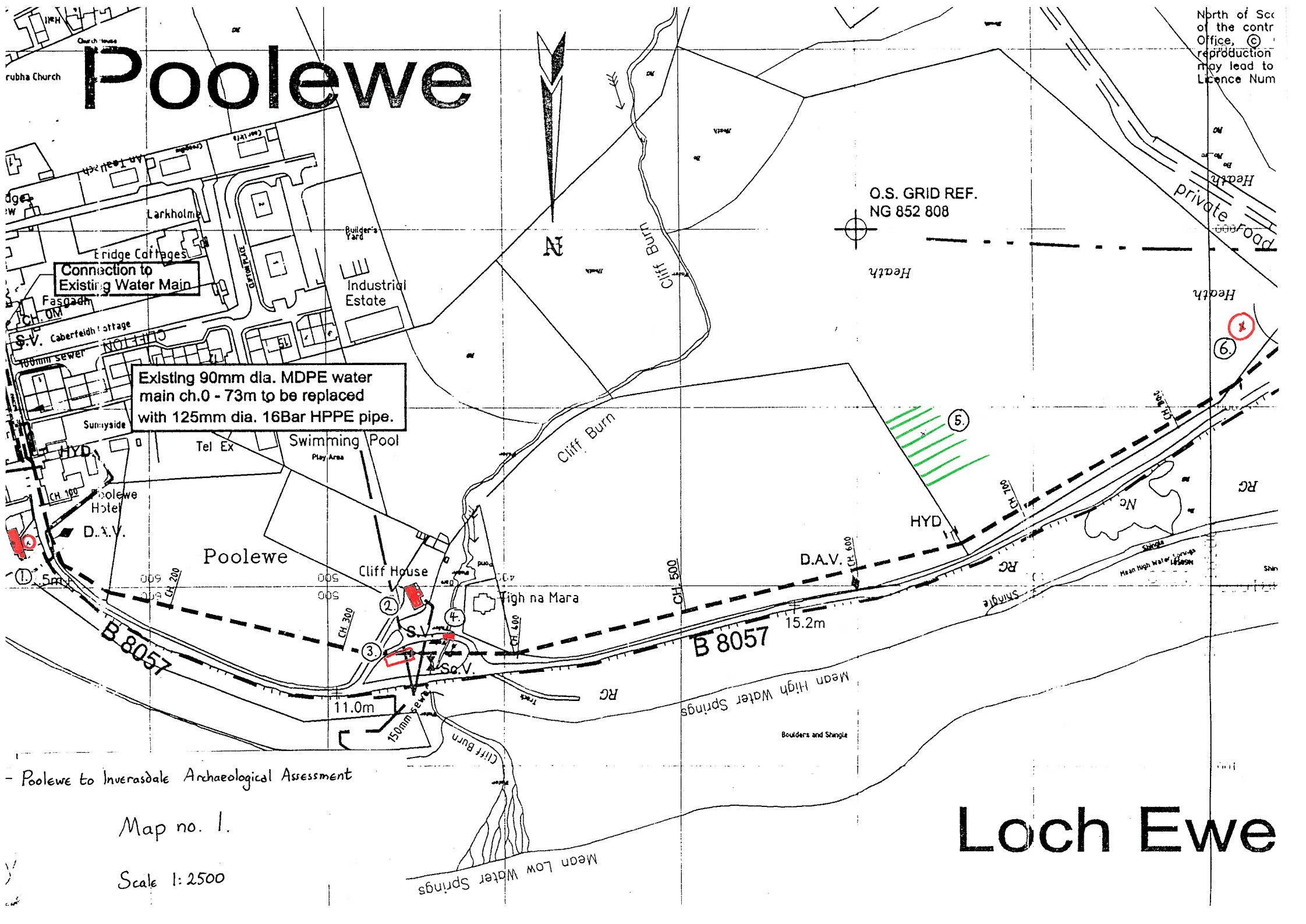
Map 3.

Map 2.

Map 1.

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# Poolewe



Connection to Existing Water Main

Existing 90mm dia. MDPE water main ch.0 - 73m to be replaced with 125mm dia. 16Bar HPPE pipe.

O.S. GRID REF.  
NG 852 808

- Poolewe to Inverasdale Archaeological Assessment

Map no. 1.

Scale 1: 2500

# Loch Ewe

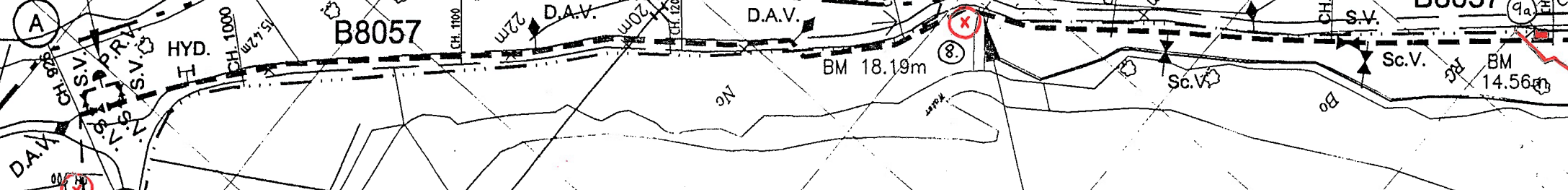
80/50mm dia. P.R.V. & 4 No. S.V.'s  
(2 x 100mm dia. & 2 x 80mm dia.)  
See Drg. No. O0663/012 for details.

Meal  
an Sgardain

Alit a Phuillinn

Boor Bridge

B8057



For Continuation  
See Sheet 1

Boor Bridge crossing -  
See Drg. No. O0663/011 for details.  
Note: road realignment not shown in O.S. plan

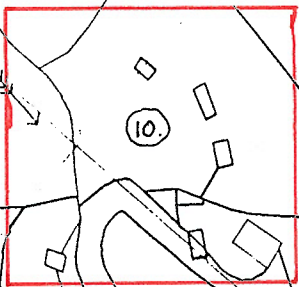
Poolewe  
Poolewe to Inverasdale Archaeological Assessment

Map no. 2  
Scale 1:2500

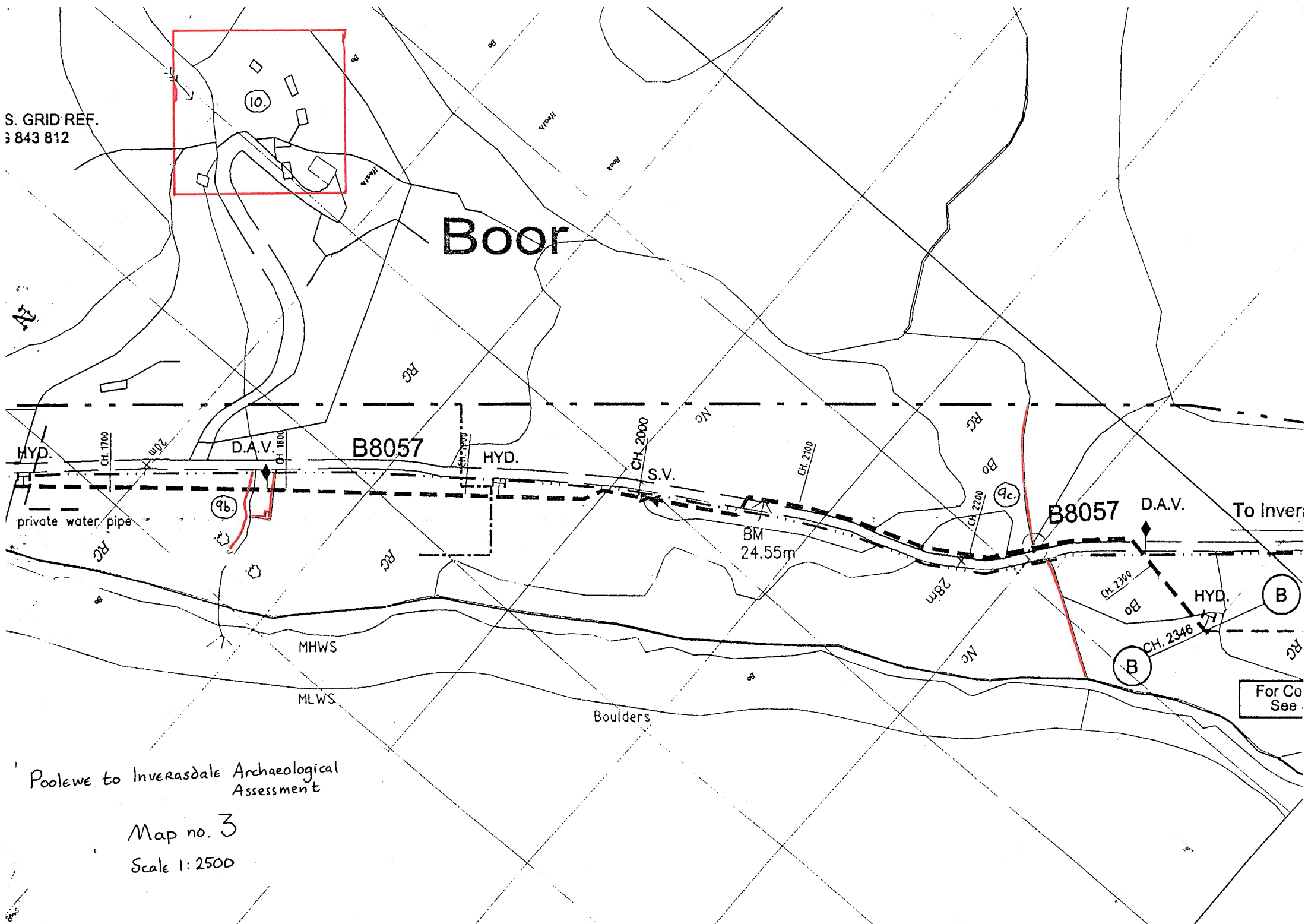
Loch



S. GRID REF.  
843 812



# Boor



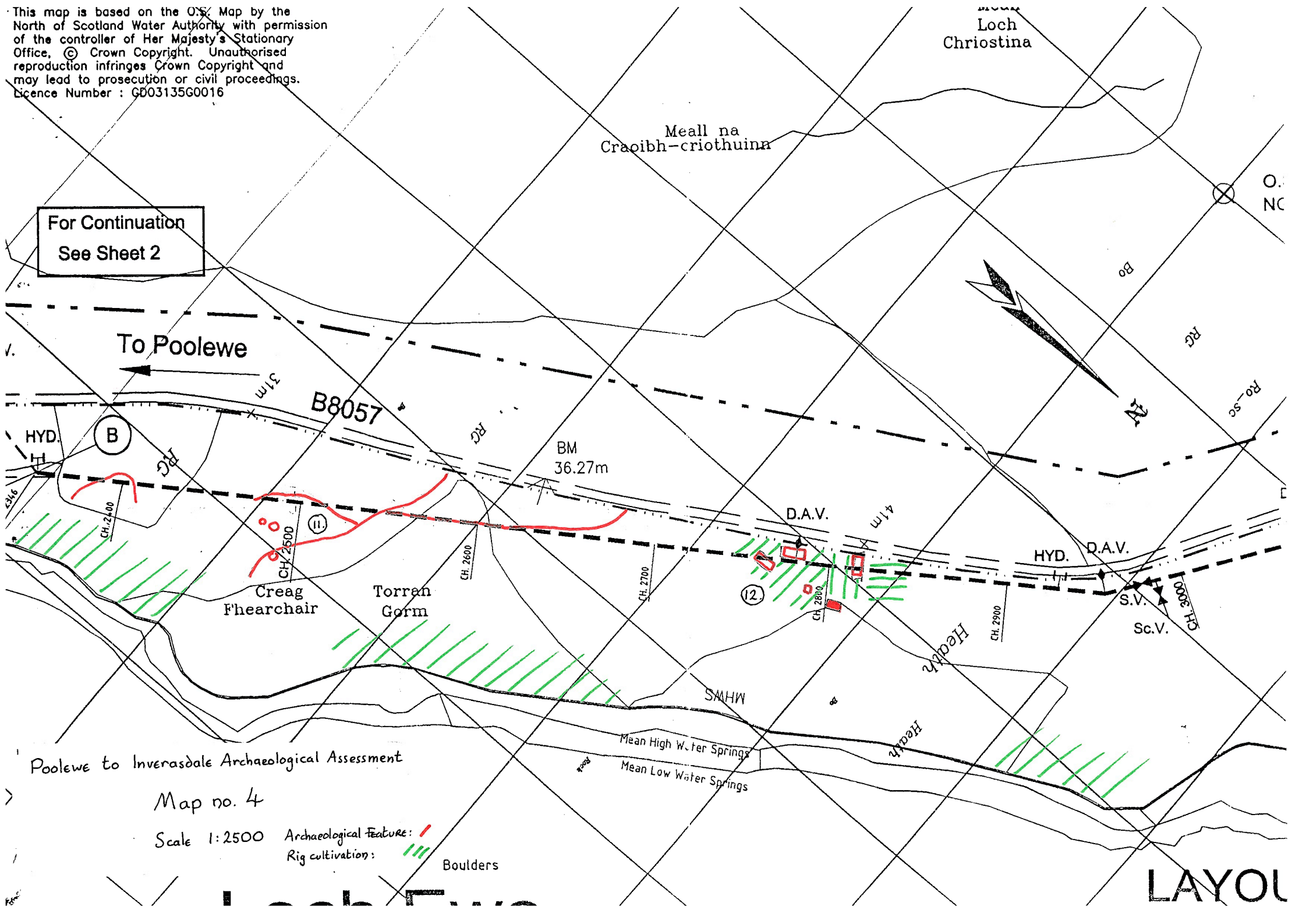
Poolwe to Inverasdale Archaeological Assessment

Map no. 3  
Scale 1:2500

For Co See

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For Continuation  
See Sheet 2



To Poolewe

B8057

BM  
36.27m

Creag  
Fhearchair

Torran  
Gorm

D.A.V.

HYD.

D.A.V.



S.V.

Sc.V.

Poolewe to Inverasdale Archaeological Assessment

Map no. 4

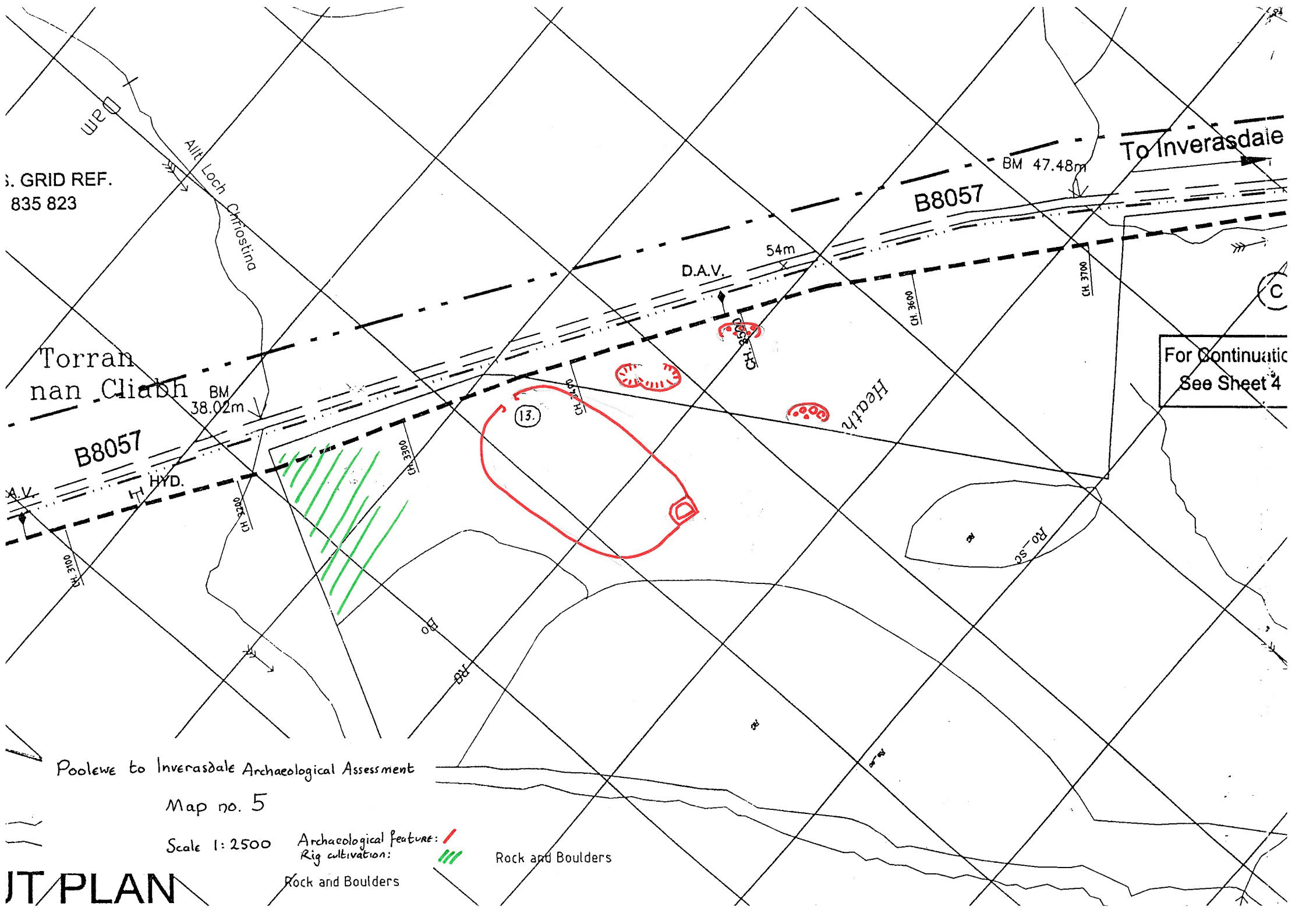
Scale 1:2500

Archaeological Feature:   
Rig cultivation: 

Boulders

LAYOU

GRID REF.  
835 823



Torran  
nan Clìabh

BM  
38.02m

B8057

HYD.

D.A.V.

54m

B8057

BM 47.48m

To Inverasdale

For Continuation  
See Sheet 4

Heath

13.

Poolewe to Inverasdale Archaeological Assessment

Map no. 5

Scale 1:2500

Archaeological feature: /  
Rig cultivation: /

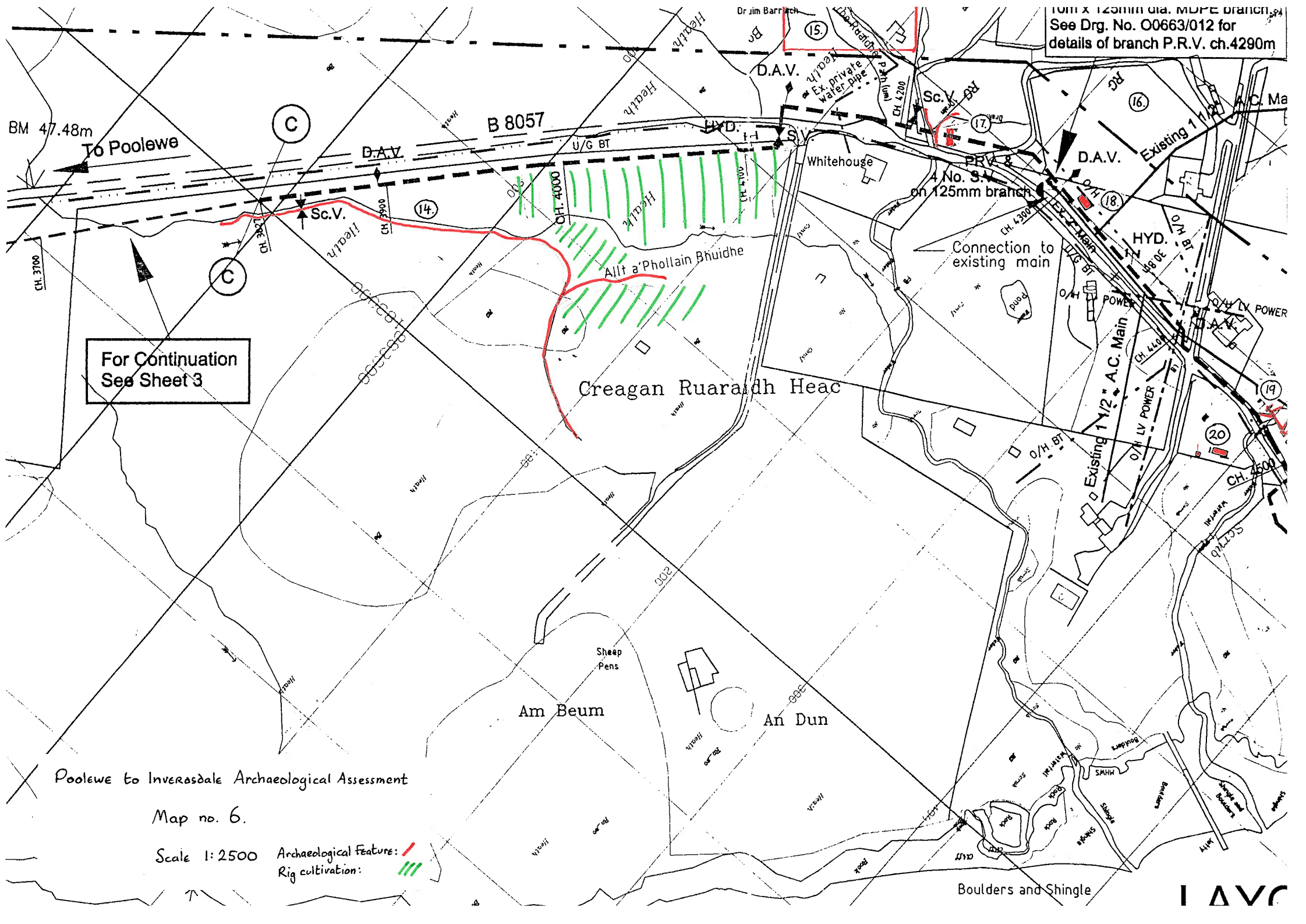
Rock and Boulders

Rock and Boulders

IT PLAN



100mm x 125mm dia. MDPE branch  
See Drg. No. O0663/012 for  
details of branch P.R.V. ch.4290m





For Continuation  
See Sheet 3

Poolwe to Inverasdale Archaeological Assessment

Map no. 6.

Scale 1:2500

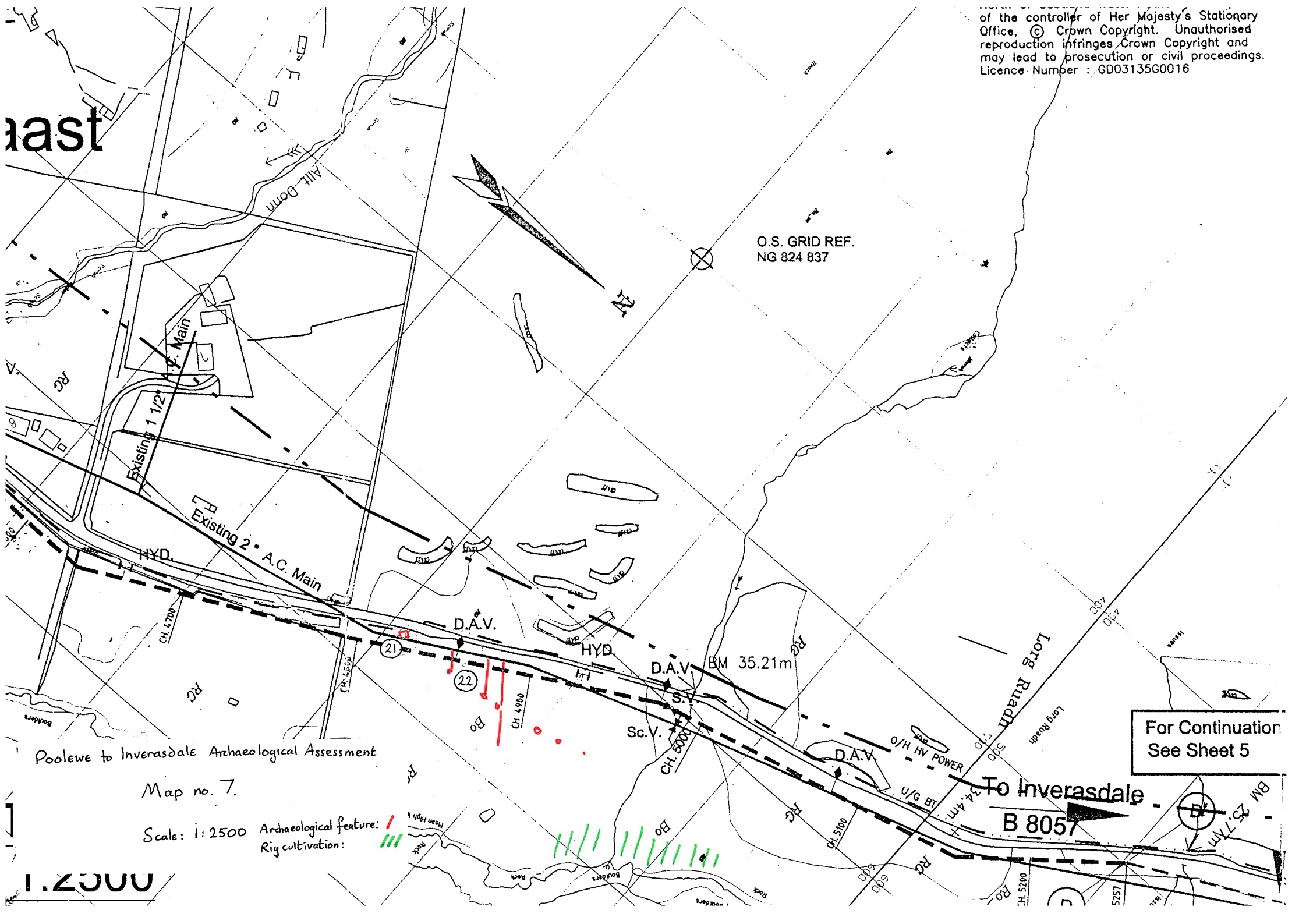
Archaeological Feature:   
Rig cultivation: 

Boulders and Shingle

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East





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NG 824 837

For Continuation  
See Sheet 5

Poolwe to Inverasdale Archaeological Assessment

Map no. 7.

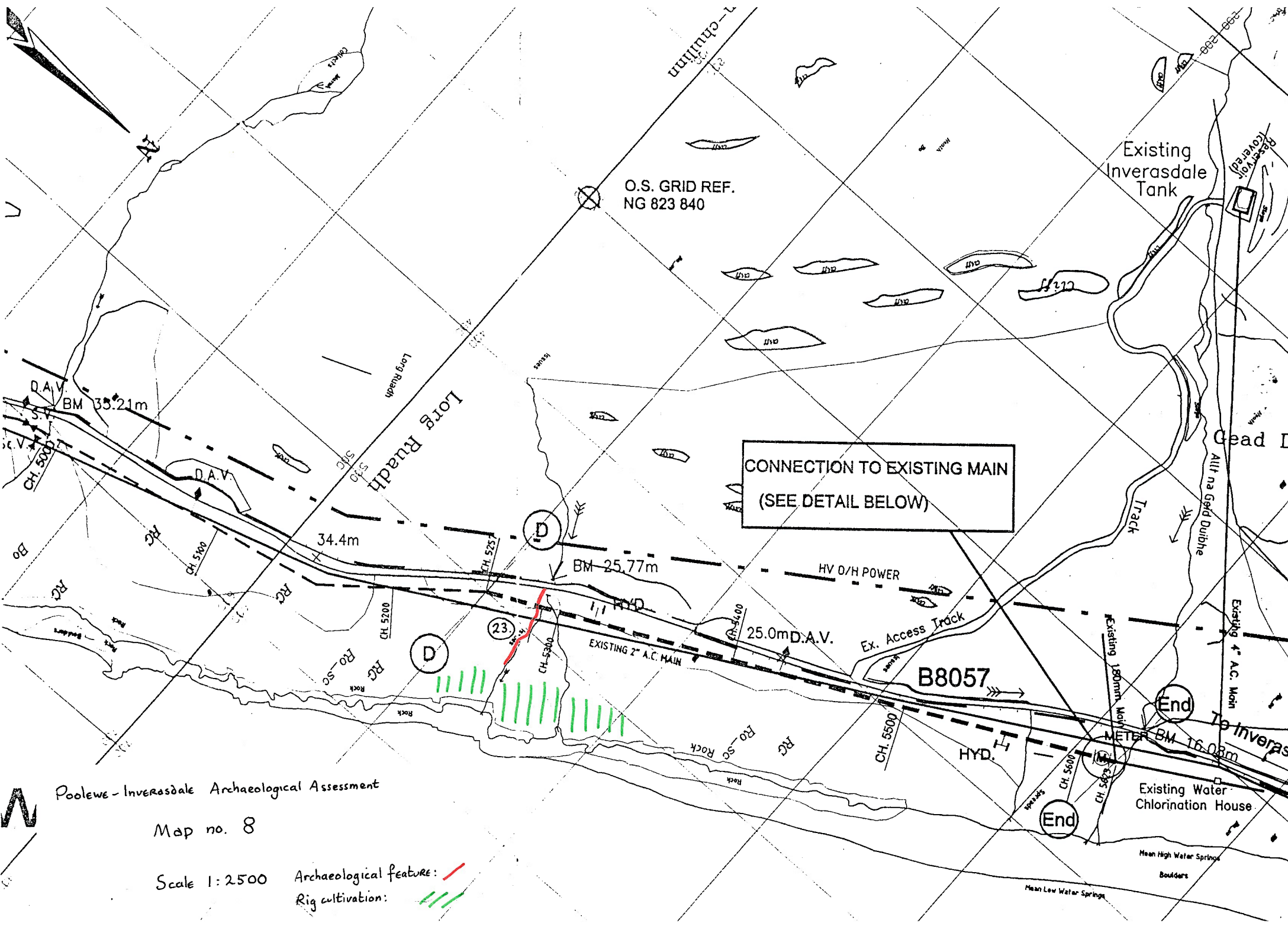
Scale: 1: 2500

Archaeological feature:   
Rig cultivation: 

1:2500

To Inverasdale  
B 805

BM 25.77m



O.S. GRID REF.  
NG 823 840

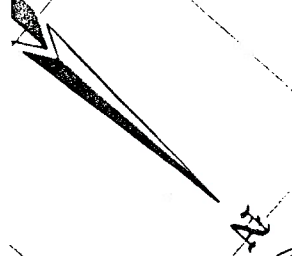
CONNECTION TO EXISTING MAIN  
(SEE DETAIL BELOW)

Poolewe - Inverasdale Archaeological Assessment

Map no. 8

Scale 1:2500

Archaeological feature: —  
Rig cultivation: ▨▨▨





Site no. ①



Site no. ④



Site no. ⑦





Site no. (9a)



Site no. (9b)



Site no. (9c)





Site no. ⑪



Site no. ⑪

'lambing pen'



Site no. ⑫





Site no. (12)



Site no. (13)



Site no. (15)





Site no. (17)



Site no. (18)



Site no. (19)





Site no. (20)



Site no. (21)

