

Archaeological watching-brief on track excavation at Corrary, Gleann Beag, Glenelg, Inverness-shire, 15 - 16 March 1996

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Summary:

Two days' observation of earth-moving operations on the hillside to the E of Dun Troddan broch in Glenelg failed to produce any archaeological evidence.

Introduction:

This watching-brief was carried out for Mr Neil Sutherland of Corrary in fulfilment of the conditions of planning consent for the construction of a new track (Annex 1).

The observation of soil removal was considered to be necessary as the proposed line of the track ran close to the relatively well-preserved broch of Dun Troddan, which overlooks Corrary (Figure 1). Excavation in the earlier part of this century (Curle 1921) failed to reveal traces of settlement around the broch, but it might be expected that modern observation would reveal traces not recognised earlier. It must be remembered that the broch would have been merely a highly visible part of a more extensive pattern of land use and settlement in the later Iron Age.

Field-walking prior to soil removal yielded no positive evidence of archaeological features, but it was noted that the vegetation cover of grass and bracken indicated a reasonably rich soil.

The track:

Figure 1 shows the approximate line of the new track. As no archaeological features or finds were uncovered, and given the permanent nature of the new track, it was not deemed necessary (or cost-effective) to prepare a detailed plan of it. From a point 15m SE of the modern curtilage of Dun Troddan (c. NG 8341 1720) and at a height of c 40m OD, the track runs uphill at right angles to the road, towards the NE. The cut is around 2.5m wide. Some 30m up the slope the track turns to the ESE and runs across the slope until it nearly meets the Allt na Culeig stream. This part of the track is on a level with the broch, but even so,

no remains were found. From the Allt na Culeig the track turns sharply NW, runs for about 70m, then again turns sharply to run just N of E, back to the W arm of the now-divided Allt na Culeig, where it ends, at a height of c 75m OD (c NG 8358 1725). This last leg of the track crosses a level area in the hillside, which might have been expected to produce settlement evidence; none was forthcoming. The top end of the track lies just S of the old head dyke shown on the map. This dyke was not disturbed.

Cutting the track:

Earthmoving was by a Caterpillar excavator with a large bucket. Weather and soil conditions were both very favourable, and observation was detailed. The digger removed the A horizon of the soil and then a variable portion of the B horizon. The soil was a brown earth, relatively stone-free, with no evidence for the leaching of iron or other soil components; it varied according to the slope between c 0.2m and 0.6m in depth. It contained occasional sub-rounded stones, on the higher part of the track up to 0.6m maximum dimension, but somewhat smaller on the lower part. The soil lower down the slope was somewhat sandier than that above, which was more silty. Patches of rotten bedrock were encountered and partly removed: they were more frequent on the upper part of the track. Where stones were met, the digger ceased work and hand investigation by trowel was used to ascertain whether they showed evidence of human activity (including the presence of cup-marks). The same procedure was followed with occasional sandy patches, which proved merely to be very rotten rock. No traces of human activity were recorded.

Conclusion:

While this exercise was archaeologically unproductive, it was not a wasted effort. We can now confirm that the soil to the E of Dun Troddan is a fertile brown earth, which was most probably exploited in the Iron Age (and indeed at other periods). That discoveries remain to be made in the general area (and hence that archaeological observation may be necessary in future) is underlined by the discovery, since this work was carried out, of the top stone of a rotary quern in a drainage trench in the large new garden W of Corrary farmhouse. It is intended to report on the quern and its location in more detail at a future time.

Reference:

Curle, Alexander O 1921 'The broch of Dun Troddan, Gleann Beag, Glenelg, Inverness-shire', Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland 55(1920-21), 83-94.

NG 81 NW

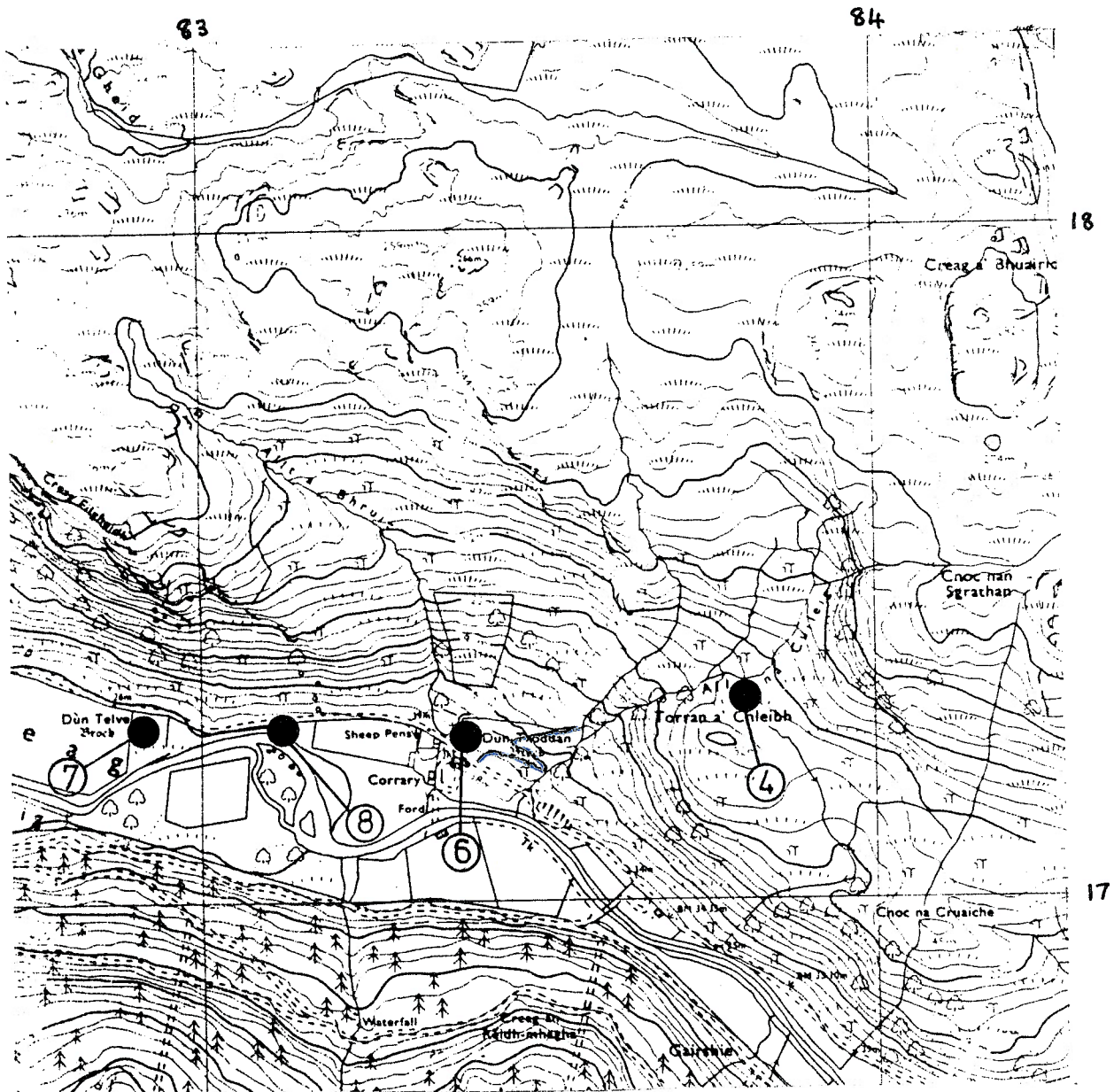


Figure 1: location and sketch plan of the new track at Corrarry (Scale 1:10000).
N is to the top of the page.

HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL
ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE
Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief
CORRARY, GLENELG

Terms of Reference

This specification is valid until 30 June 1996 after which time if no work has been carried out a revised specification will be needed. It refers to Planning Application SL/1995/298. Any substantial change to the details proposed in this information may require a revised specification.

Objectives

1. To ensure that a satisfactory watching brief is maintained over all earth moving operations sufficient to establish any level of archaeological interest in the site.
2. To ensure that in the event of archaeological sites or features of importance being discovered this is promptly drawn to the notice of the construction contractors, project architect, and client; and suitable arrangements are made to allow the preservation, protection or excavation of any remains identified.
3. To ensure that the requirements for archaeological observation and recording are met without causing any unnecessary delay or disturbance to the construction project.

Scope

The contractor should as far as possible assist the archaeologist by using earthmoving equipment, preferably a back-acting machine without teeth which will provide a clean scrape.

The archaeologist appointed must observe the earthmoving operations undertaken by the contractor and make a field record in the form of measured plans at a reasonable scale (not less than 1:250), and photographs of any archaeological features noted, together with a field notebook. The notebook must include details (including dates and times) of all field observations, who was responsible and weather and other conditions that may affect the quality of the results. Any sites and features noted must be located on an overall site-plan at 1:1000 scale. Photographs of individual features must be taken from at least three angles and include a metric scale.

This specification is for a watching brief only. In the event that archaeological sites or features are discovered, the archaeologist appointed will make arrangements with the contractor and Regional Archaeologist to preserve in-situ, or by record, these within the overall timetable set for the construction project. If this is not possible the project architect and the Regional Archaeologist must be informed immediately so that appropriate action can be taken.

Reporting

Any unexpectedly significant or complex discoveries must be reported immediately by the archaeologist appointed to Neil Sutherland and the Regional Archaeologist.

The archaeologist appointed must produce a report within 2 weeks of the completion of fieldwork setting out:

1. Location plan showing the project area and archaeological sites and features affected.
2. Circumstances and objectives of the work.
3. Weather and other conditions affecting fieldwork.
4. Plans, drawings, and photographs of archaeological features noted during the survey.
5. Details of measures to be taken to mitigate the impact of the works on the archaeological resource.
6. A brief analysis of the results, drawing in comparative data as appropriate.
7. A copy of this specification.

At least 3 copies of this report must be produced:

1. One copy to be supplied to Neil Sutherland, Corrary, Glenelg.
2. Two copies to be deposited in the Highland Sites and Monuments Record, maintained by the Highland Regional Council's Archaeology Section, the Old School, Clachnaharry, Inverness, where it will be available for public consultation.
3. One copy to be sent to the National Monuments Record for Scotland, (RCAHMS), John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh.

A brief summary of the results must also be sent to the Council for Scottish Archaeology for publication in Discovery and Excavation in Scotland 1995 a small charge may be made, for which the archaeologist appointed will be responsible.

General

The archaeologist appointed must be a Member or Associate Member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (or of equivalent standing) and must carry out the work according to the Institute's Code of Conduct and relevant guidelines and standards.

The archaeologist appointed must take all necessary measures to conform with the Health and Safety at Work Acts and be covered by any necessary insurances.

The archaeologist appointed must agree a timetable for the work with the Regional Archaeologist and Mr. Sutherland. Any proposed changes to the timetable must be notified to and agreed by the Regional Archaeologist before implementation.

Mr. Sutherland will afford all assistance and access to the archaeologist appointed in carrying out this work.

The Regional Archaeologist will monitor the work in progress to ensure that timetables and professional standards are being adhered to.

The copyright of the report produced lies with the originator, unless formally transferred in writing. However, the completed report will be available for immediate public consultation at the Highland Regional Council's Archaeology Section.

The archaeologist appointed will agree not to comment to the press and media without prior approval from the Regional Archaeologist.

Proper provision must be made for prevailing weather conditions in Northern Scotland.

Failure to meet any part of this specification may result in non payment for the work undertaken.

Dorothy M. Low
31.1.96