

WINDHILL, BEAULY

Archaeological Watching Brief



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Introduction

The writer was asked to carry out an archaeological watching brief at Windhill, Beaully, this being a condition of planning permission for the construction of a house on this site. The details of this brief are appended at the back.

Archaeological Background

Approximately 40 metres to the SW of the site, as shown on Figure 1, is a 3 m tall standing stone. Another stone stands 200m to the W of this on the other side of the Beaully – Muir of Ord road. It is not known when or why these stones were erected, but, from analogy with the excavation of similar stones, it is thought they are likely to have been erected as memorials or burial markers dating from 1500 to 5,000 years ago. The stones sit on a natural glacial terrace where a number of prehistoric finds have been made. The watching brief was therefore called for in case significant archaeological remains survived in the vicinity buried beneath the ploughsoil.

Watching brief

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on Thurs 6th May 1999 during which the foundations for the house were cleared by mechanical excavator. The weather was cool, overcast and windy, turning to heavy rain in the afternoon. Over an area measuring 9m x 14m, a maximum depth of .65m of topsoil was cleared. Within this subsoil a number of charcoal-rich features were noted but after further examination these were all found to have an amorphous shape, generally dipping under the natural subsoil. There was no evidence that these were constructed features and they were interpreted as the remains of tree stumps and roots whose timber had either rotted or been burnt. The size of these features was generally small and is more likely to be derived from scrub than mature trees.

Conclusions

This area of land has been heavily cultivated for many years, and a great depth of top soil has accumulated.

While the location of the building plot is close to the standing stones and other potentially significant prehistoric deposits, no archaeological features were recorded. The charcoal-rich deposits, noted above, were all interpreted as the result of tree or scrub clearance. They may well be relatively recent in date. If there had been buried archaeological features in this area, they have been destroyed either by ploughing or the clearance of this scrub.

Jill Kendrick May 1999

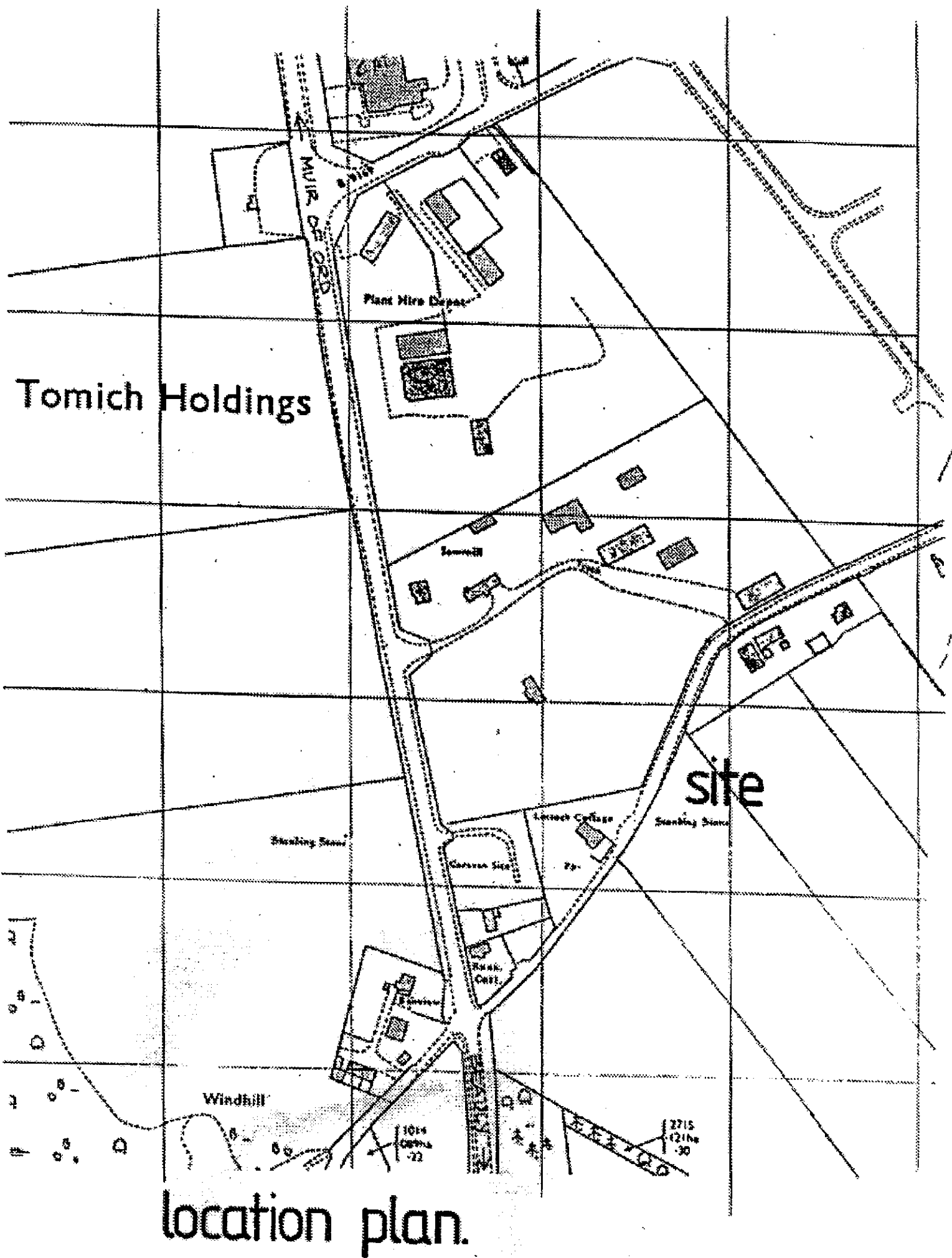
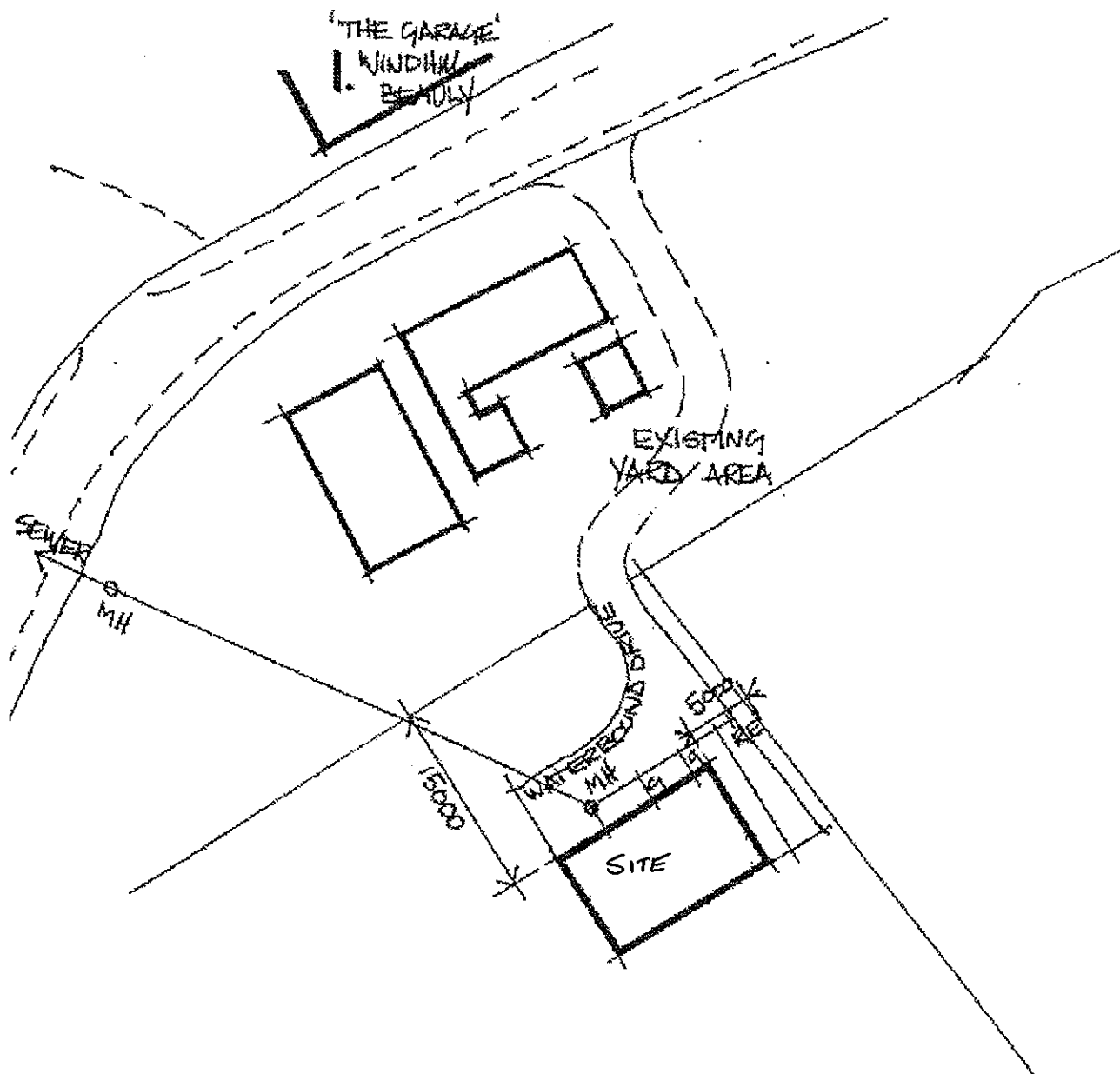
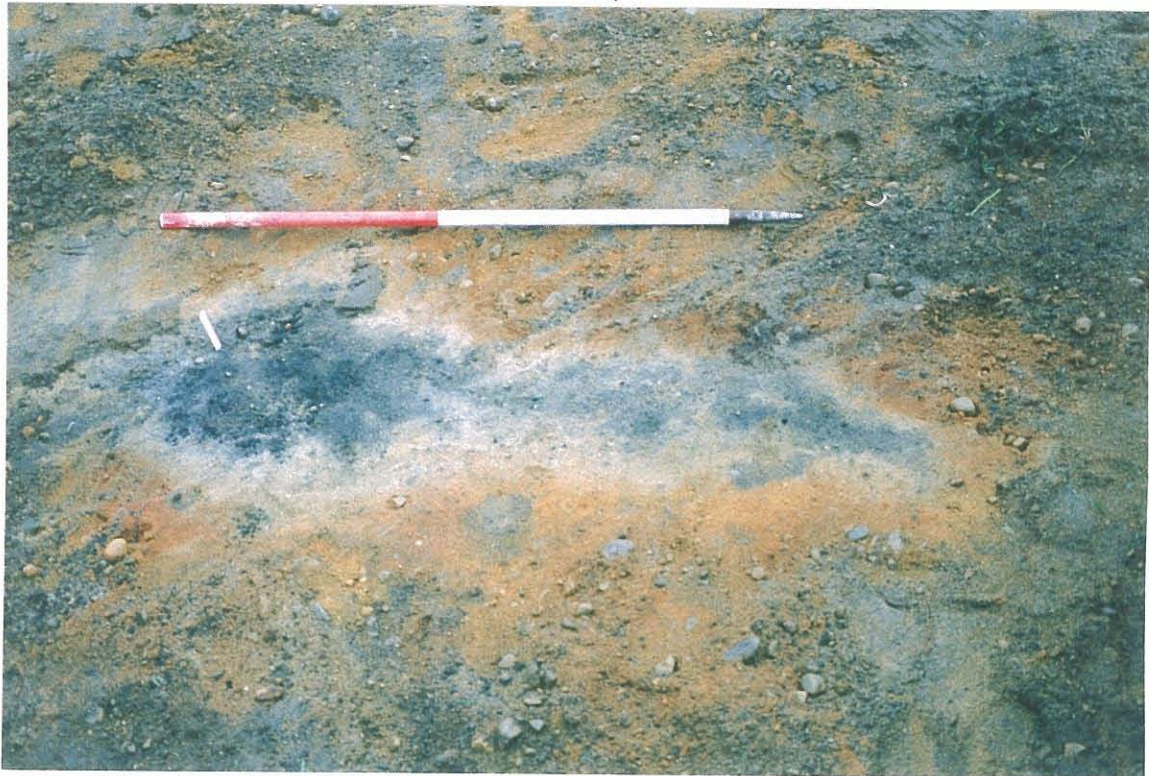


Fig 1. Scale 1:2500



Location of site at scale 1:500



Charcoal-rich feature as revealed. Considered to be remains of burnt root



Charcoal-rich feature as excavated. Note lensing of charcoal below subsoil.

**HIGHLAND COUNCIL
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE
Archaeology Service**

**Specification for archaeological work
prepared for Mr P Simpson**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

Background

This specification has been produced in response to the need for an archaeological watching brief to be carried on site ground works. It is for a minimum standard of work; a higher standard may be offered and accepted.

Terms of Reference

This specification is for archaeological recording work at No 4 Tomich Holdings, by Beaully occasioned by planning application no RC/1998/768. It is based on these documents. If these details are changed a new specification will be needed. It is valid until March 1999 after which if no work has been carried out a revised specification will be needed.

The specification has been produced for Mr Paul Simpson who will be responsible for the work, including all tendering and contractual arrangements. Estimates should be obtained from archaeological contractors on the basis of this specification

Any reference to 'archaeologist' in this specification is to be taken to mean a qualified and experienced practitioner acceptable to the Senior Archaeologist. This is to ensure that work is carried out to professional standards. The project should be carried out by, or under the immediate direction of, a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists or an archaeologist of equivalent standing.

Before site works commence, the Senior Archaeologist must agree, in writing, the proposed arrangements, including a timetable for the work.

If this is for a road or water or sewerage proposal the area to be covered is the entire wayleave except where otherwise indicated.

Tendering

Tenders must be accompanied by a statement and evidence of competence, including the CV of the Project Director, and other staff where possible.

Objectives

1. To record, to professional standards, any features and objects of archaeological importance that will be damaged or destroyed by this development. This is often achieved by clearing the topsoil to a clean surface in which archaeological features can be identified by the archaeologist.

Method

A watching brief will be conducted by an archaeologist on site groundworks so that any finds or features of importance can be recorded to professional standards.

Those carrying out site works will need to work closely with the archaeologist and provide all necessary access and other arrangements. Where machinery is to be used for top soil stripping, a straight-edged bucket must be used on a back acting machine. Care will need to be taken to avoid over excavation, and the advice of the archaeologist on-site should be adhered to regarding this.

The archaeologist must be given every aid by contractors to enable the archaeological work to be carried out. Contractors may need to use differing work practices on site than usual to enable the archaeologist to complete the work. This must be catered for and adhered to.

Where this is a watching brief for road, water, or sewerage proposals the specification includes drainage and other ancillary works as well as the carriageway itself.

Monitoring

1. The Senior Archaeologist will normally monitor projects to ensure The Senior Archaeologist will normally monitor that specifications are met.
2. Monitoring will normally be by unannounced site visit. Alternative or additional monitoring arrangements may be made in individual cases.
3. Prior notice of fieldwork starting dates, with contact names and local addresses, telephone numbers and directions and other arrangements for access must be given to the Senior Archaeologist.
4. Any unexpectedly significant or complex discoveries, or any other unexpected occurrences or conditions which might affect the agreed project work or its timetable or cost must be notified immediately to the client and the Senior Archaeologist so that revised arrangements can be made.
5. Where archaeological work fails to meet this specification the applicant will be in breach of the planning condition until matters are rectified.

Reporting

1. Project report

At least FOUR copies of the project report must be produced.

- One paper copy for Mr Paul Simpson.
- One paper copy for the Highland Sites and Monuments Record, Planning and Development Service, Council Offices, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX where it will be available for immediate consultation by the public.
- One paper copy to be deposited in the local public library
- One copy for the Highland SMR as above, on a computer disk in a format compatible with Microsoft Office 95 for Windows.

The report must be submitted to all of the above, including the Senior Archaeologist within 3 weeks of the completion of the field work.

The report must include, as a minimum,

- Location plan showing the project area and archaeological sites and features affected
- Circumstances and objectives of this work, including a copy of this specification
- Weather and other conditions affecting fieldwork
- Plans, drawings and photographs of archaeological features noted
- A full index to any records or other material generated by the project including its location
- Details of any measures proposed to mitigate the impact of the application on the archaeological resource
- A brief analysis of the project results drawing in comparative data as appropriate, and a statement of the significance of the results for future research. Note that a negative result may itself be significant.
- General comments and proposals for future archaeological projects arising from the carrying out of this project
- A set of colour slides illustrating the project progress from start to completion.

The completed report will be available for immediate public consultation for research purposes at the Highland Sites and Monuments Record. In addition, the Archaeology Service reserves the right to make the report available for research purposes, either on paper, or electronically. Subject to this, copyright will remain with the author unless specifically transferred in writing, and the Archaeology Service will assume author's copyright unless advised otherwise. Copyright will be acknowledged in all cases by the Archaeology Service.

This specification includes arranging a presentation of the project results to the local community within a year of the completion of the fieldwork. Arrangements must be agreed with the Senior Archaeologist.

2. Treasure Trove

The Project Director must liaise with the Assistant Curator (Archaeology) at Inverness Museum and Art Gallery prior to the start of fieldwork, regarding possible emergency conservation needs and future storage arrangements. Provision must also be made for a cataloguing system for artefactual material which will be compatible with the needs of the institution receiving these finds. Any report to the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer must be copied to the Highland Archaeologist.

Any finds, where appropriate, should also be reported to the Receiver of Wreck.

3. Discovery and Excavation in Scotland

A brief summary of the results must be sent to the Council For Scottish Archaeology for inclusion in Discovery and Excavation in Scotland. The cost of this must be included in any tender document.

General

- The archaeologist appointed must be of a professional standing acceptable to the Senior Archaeologist and must carry out the work according to the Code of Conduct, standards and guidelines of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- The main contractor has responsibility for the Health and Safety of any archaeological staff on site.
- The archaeologist is responsible for taking all necessary measures to conform with the Health and Safety at Work Acts and be covered by all necessary insurances.
- Any Health and Safety incidents on site involving the archaeologist must be immediately notified to the Health and Safety Executive.
- The archaeologist must agree a timetable for the work with the client and the Senior Archaeologist
- The archaeologist appointed will not comment to the press or other media without prior approval from the Senior Archaeologist
- Proper provision must be made for prevailing weather conditions in northern Scotland
- The archaeologist agrees by undertaking this work to the terms of this specification.
- The Archaeology Service will not recommend archaeologists or archaeological units for contract work if they fail to meet specifications.

Dorothy Low