



Highland Archaeology Services Ltd

Site Evaluation



2 House sites at Stittenham, Ardross

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Site Evaluation: 2 House sites at Stittenham, Ardross

Report No.	HAS060201
Client	Mr and Mrs Smith
Planning Ref	04/01071/OUTRC
Date	14 February 2006
Author	John Wood

Summary

Two house sites were evaluated by trial trenching for possible archaeological evidence. A cairn recorded by the RCAHMS within the area was found to have been incorrectly located; another, not previously recorded but noted on site, was excavated and interpreted as a modern heap of stones. There are no recommendations for further work.

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Introduction

A programme of archaeological work was carried out in 2005 by Highland Archaeology Services Ltd on behalf of Mr and Mrs R. Smith, the primary dependants of Mrs A. Allison, owner of two house sites at Stittenham, Ardross, Ross-shire, to fulfil a planning condition (Highland Council Reference 04/01071/OUTRC)

The programme consisted of archaeological mitigation and recording in line with the Highland Council's Structure Plan policies, and the Scottish Executive's National Planning Policy Guidance Note 5 (NPPG5) and Planning Advice Note 42 (PAN42) (SOEND 1994).

The purpose of the work was to identify and record the nature and extent of any archaeological features revealed or affected by the intended development.

Location



Figure 1 Site Location

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The two house sites are centred approximately at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NH 6507 7444, approximately 150m NNE north of Stittenham House, on the road leading north from Ardross to Edderton and Ardgay. They are 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).

Site details and archaeological background

The two house sites have been created from part of Stittenham Wood and were previously occupied by dense tree and scrub cover. Following agreement with the Council's Forestry Officer, some areas have now been cleared to ground level, while others have been safeguarded.

The proposed development will require the excavation of sites for the houses themselves, as well as service roads, drains and services. Following a desk assessment and extensive discussion with the client and the Highland Council's archaeology and planning officers an initial mapping DGPS survey was carried out, followed by a programme of trial trenching to establish the nature and extent of any buried archaeology.

There are several recorded archaeological sites in the immediate area. A Neolithic burial cairn of Orkney-Cromarty type (Highland SMR and NMRS NH67SW 1) lying about 150m to the south at NH 6491 7430 is a Scheduled Monument. This appears to have been dug into in the 19th century and much of the overlying stone removed. Two smaller cairns lie approximately 25m ENE and 85m NE of this (NMRS NH67SE 30A and B). These sites are well outside the current development boundary but give a general indication of prehistoric activity in the area.

Another site is recorded by the RCAHMS on the southern boundary of the western house site at NH 6503 7444 (NMRS NH67SE 33). According to the National Monuments Record for Scotland (NMRS), it was published as a 'cist' on the 1:10,000 Ordnance Survey map in 1979, although it has not been possible to check this. The RCAHMS field surveyors may be referring to this site when they note, at NH 650 743, a cairn approximately 5m in diameter and 0.5m high, situated 180m ENE of the chambered cairn described on NH67SW 1. The grid reference given refers in fact to Stittenham House itself, and includes a 100m square with this point as its SW corner. A walk-over inspection by the writer found a cairn at NH 6506 7438, to the south of the eastern house site and outwith the present scheme. This is situated at approximately 170m NNE of the scheduled cairn NH67SW 1. As no evidence was found of a cairn or cist at grid reference NH 6503 7444, this is believed to be the site referred to by the RCAHMS.

The walk-over survey revealed a previously unrecorded cairn within the eastern house site at NH 6509 7442. This cairn was also independently noted by Highland Council's archaeologist Hilary White. It had been damaged by the creation of a rough clearing in the woodland. It was subsequently excavated and found to be an undifferentiated heap, containing fragments of 19th or more likely 20th century whetstone.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the programme was 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.

The objective was 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.

Programme

Desk Based Assessment

The Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record and the National Monuments Record for Scotland as well as the Historic Scotland Scheduled Monument details were checked. Historic Ordnance Survey and other maps were checked online. The immediate post-war RAF aerial photographs were not examined since the site appears to have been under dense woodland at that time and any archaeology would be invisible. There are not known to be any private archives relating to this site.



Figure 2 Pont's map, c.1600
(NLS Gordon 20)

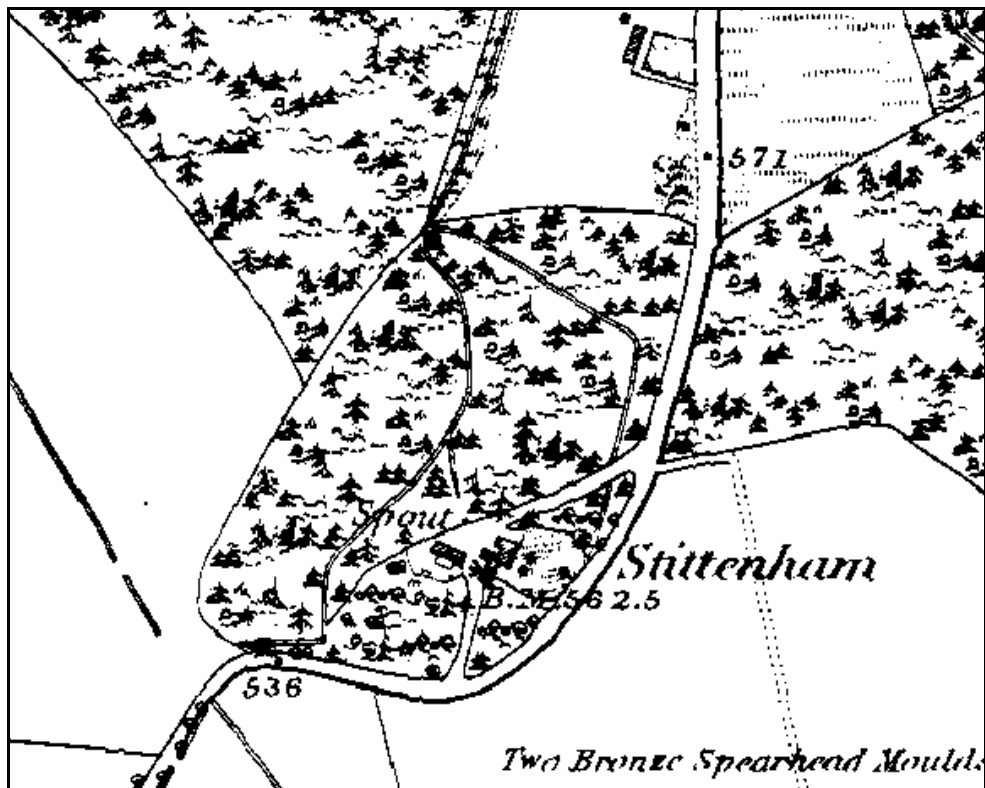


Figure 3 First Edition OS 6 inch map: Ross and Cromarty 1880

(Not to scale)

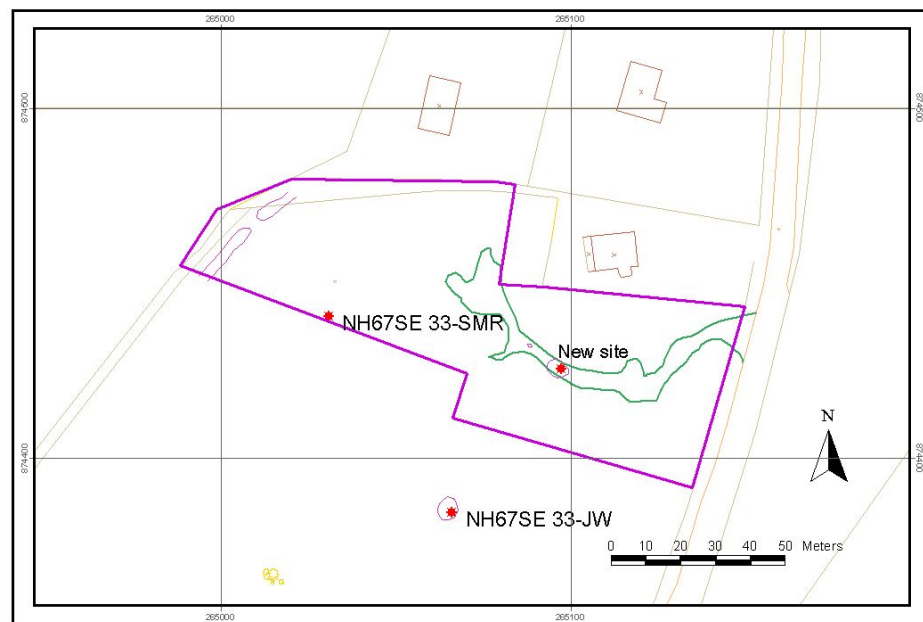


Figure 4 Results of initial walk-over survey in March 2005

Purple line shows the site boundary with Outline Planning Permission. Green outline shows area where trees had been removed at that time. 'New site' indicates the location of the excavated cairn.

Background mapping reproduced by permission of the Ordnance Survey: Licence 100043217

Tree safeguarding

Tree safeguarding areas were identified and marked out on site by the client to meet the Planning Officer's requirement in this case for tree retention to allow for screening between the houses. As these areas will not be disturbed as part of this development they were then excluded from the archaeological programme.

A Written Scheme of Investigation was then submitted to the Planning Authority for approval in September 2005. Figure 6 below shows the tree felling area – within the green dashed line on the plan, the trees had by now been felled to ground level. Archaeology evaluation trenches as proposed are shown in blue.



Figure 5 View E across western site following tree felling

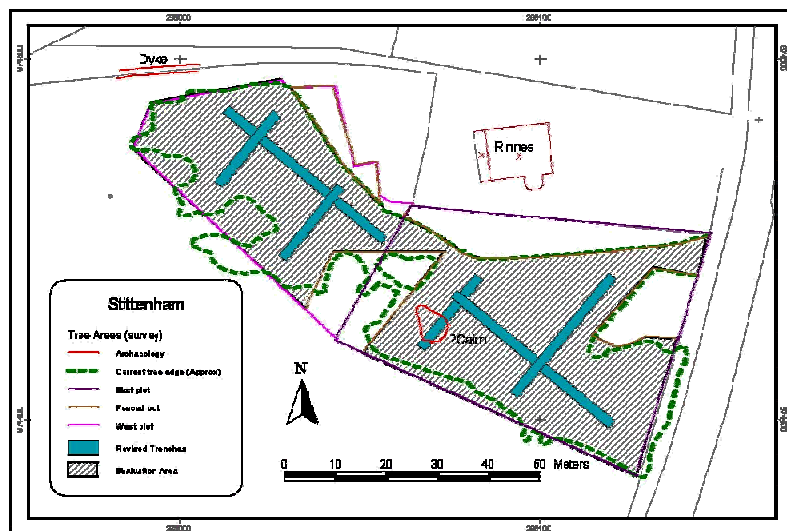


Figure 6 Trial trenches as proposed in September 2005

Background mapping reproduced by permission of the Ordnance Survey: Licence 100043217

Trenches as finally cut are shown in Figure 15 below.

Trial trenching evaluation

Trial trenches were excavated in October 2005 to provide a sample of over 10% of the development area using a small back-acting mechanical excavator fitted with a straight-edged ditching bucket. The machine and driver was provided by Highland Archaeology Services, and excavation was monitored closely. The site consisted of a dense mat of tree-roots, which was removed carefully to keep any archaeological disturbance to a minimum. Trenches were then selectively hand-cleaned using hoes and / or trowels as appropriate to clarify any archaeological features.

Trench 1

A trench 44m long, running ESE to WSW in the western house site. The depth of this trench varied between approximately 300 – 400 mm. No archaeological features were identified.



Figure 7 Trench 1 from the eastern end looking west

Trench 2

A trench 22m long, running SW to NE across Trench 1 in the western house site, roughly parallel to Trench 3. This trench was 250 – 350mm deep. No archaeological features were identified.



Figure 8 Trench 2 looking north from south end.

Note the natural variations of the soils and the extensive root action

Trench 3

A trench 18m long, running SW to NE, east of and roughly parallel to Trench 2 in the western house site. This trench was 250 – 350mm deep. No archaeological features were identified.



Figure 9 Trench 3 looking north from southern end

Trench 4

A trench 45m long, running ESE to WSW across the eastern house site, on a similar alignment to Trench 1. This trench was 400 – 600 mm deep. No archaeological features were identified.



Figure 10 Trench 4 from western end

Trench 5

A trench 28m long, running SW to NE in the eastern house site roughly parallel to Trench 6. This trench was 300 – 850 mm deep. No archaeological features were identified, but the northern part of this trench contained an extensive stone-filled soakaway, presumably relating to the modern house Rinnes to the north. Modern (i.e. 20th century) pottery was noted in the upper layers of this feature. It was not excavated.



Figure 11 soakaway in Trench 5



Trench 6

A trench 24m long, running SW to NE in the eastern house site roughly parallel to Trench 5. No potential archaeological features were identified, apart from the cairn noted previously, which this trench was designed to intercept. The trench was carefully taken over the cairn which contained several large tree-stumps. The southern end of this trench ended in a drainage ditch cut or re-cut in the 20th century, which had truncated the cairn on its south side.



Figure 12 Trench 6: view S from northern end

Trench 7

A westward extension to Trench 6 cut to excavate the putative cairn approximately 5m by 6m. It was difficult to create a well defined edge to this trench owing to the extensive tree roots. The southern limit of excavation was formed by the east-west ditch mentioned above. A silted up feeder drain was found to run north-south into this ditch: this, or a re-cutting of it, had cut the cairn on its western side. The cairn was excavated and a section was cut across it. (see orange line in Fig 16 below). This section was photographed, but not drawn. Its maximum depth at the centre was approximately 250mm to the natural forest subsoil. There was no structure and the only artefacts recovered were three pieces of whetstone, within the cairn and apparently 20th century in date.



Figure 13 Cairn - view from N following cleaning
See Figure 16 below.



Figure 14 Cairn sectioned

Additional photographs of the cairn and this section are on the enclosed CDROM. Please note the tree-stumps.

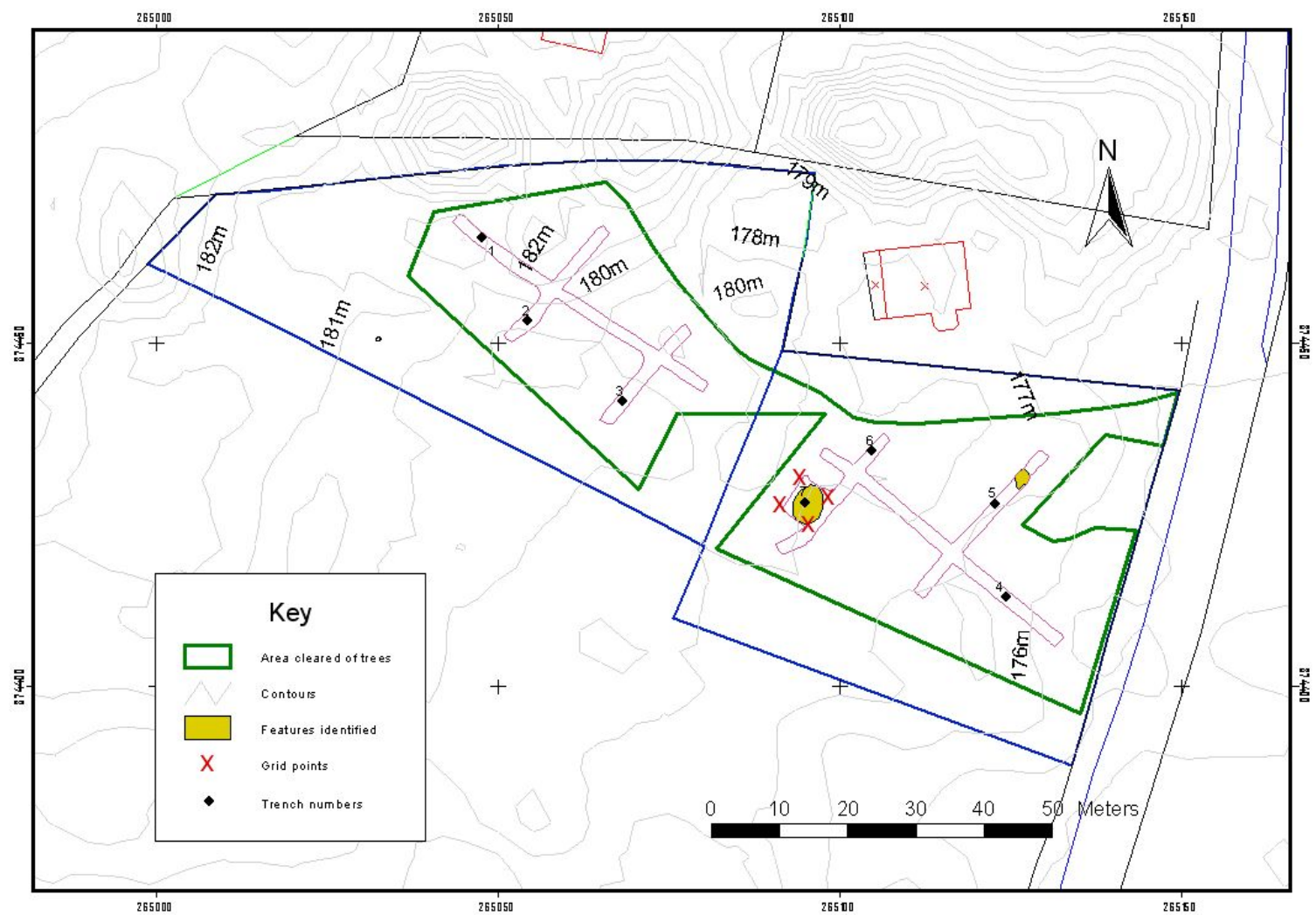


Figure 15 Trenches as cut

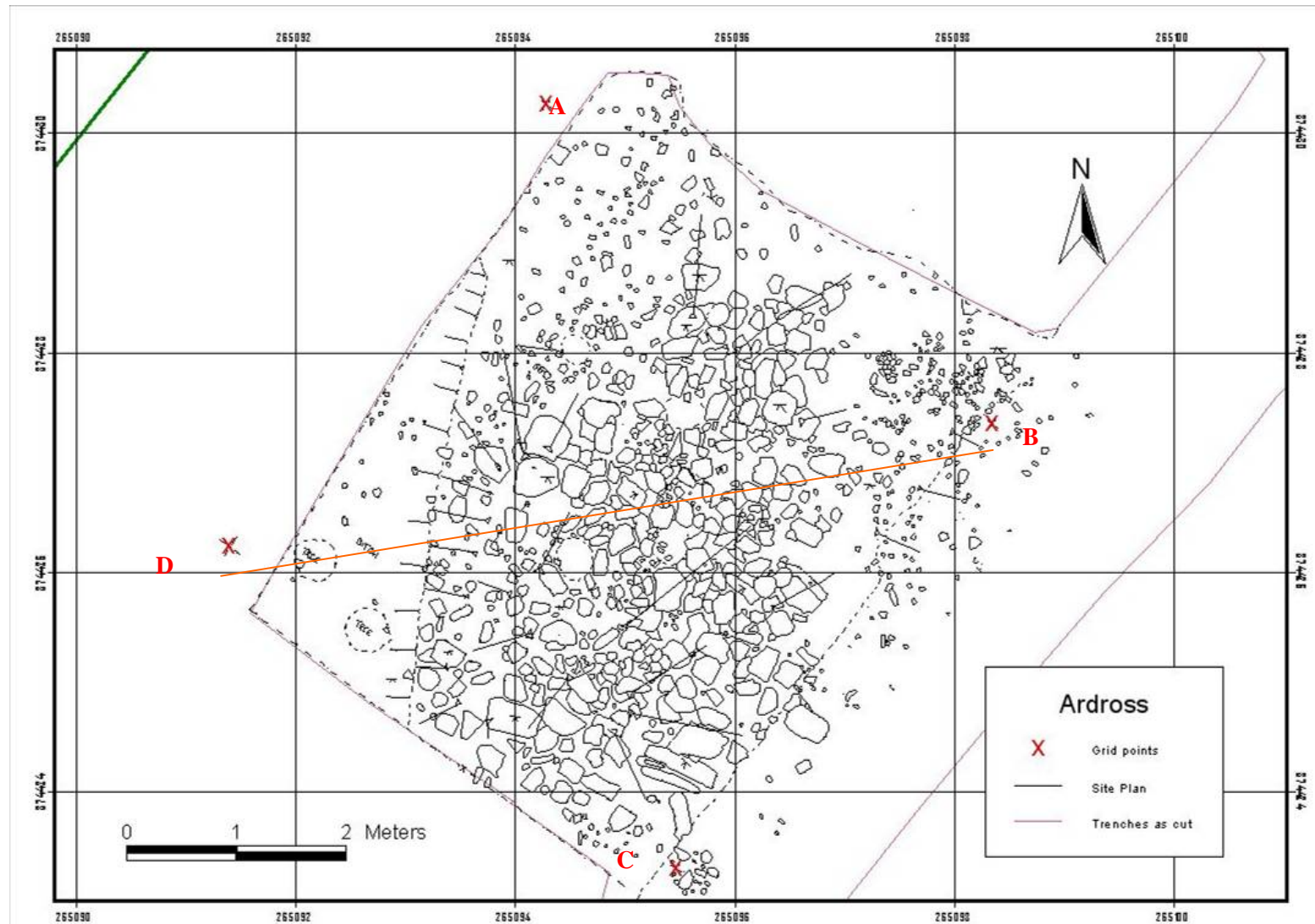


Figure 16 Plan of cairn

Figure 16 was drawn by hand using the grid points marked. The Ordnance Survey co-ordinates of these are:

A	Easting: 265094.29	Northing: 874430.26	Level (OSGB): 175.357
B	Easting: 265098.35	Northing: 874427.35	Level (OSGB): 175.257
C	Easting: 265095.47	Northing: 874423.29	Level (OSGB): 175.857
D	Easting: 265091.40	Northing: 874426.23	Level (OSGB): 175.857

A digital version of this plan, with additional levels and other information, is on the enclosed CDROM.

Results

No archaeological features were found in any of the trial trenches. The putative cairn contained no built structure but represented a simple heap of stones. Three fragments of a whetstone of 20th century date were found within this. This area has been under woodland for a long time – it is apparently shown as such on all early maps, and no traces of ploughing were found, so field clearance seems unlikely. The provisional interpretation is as a modern heap of stones, perhaps a cartload placed there for possible use in dyking or reclaimed from the initial ditch digging for re-use.

An index of photographs is appended.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for further work at this site. No areas are worthy of preservation in situ with no further ground disturbance, and there would be no archaeological benefit from monitoring site clearance and excavation works to record any features of archaeological importance that may come to light.

Operational Matters

Photography was digital at a minimum resolution of 6 mpx and digital copies (JPEGs) of all photographs are included on the CDROM accompanying this report. The camera location and direction of each photograph taken has been plotted on the site plan. No human remains were encountered. Palaeo-environmental sampling was not undertaken. All work was carried out to the standards usually required by Historic Scotland, the Highland Council., and the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The Company's Risk Assessment and Health and Safety procedures were followed throughout.

John Wood
Highland Archaeology Services Ltd
11 February 2006

Appendix 1: Photograph index

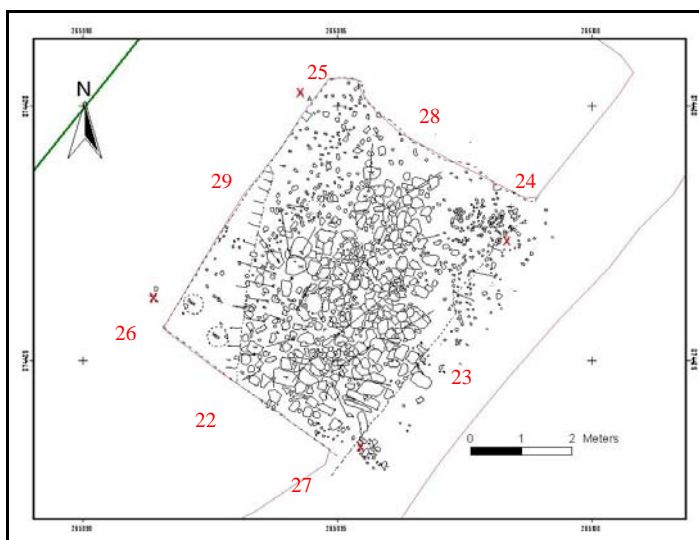
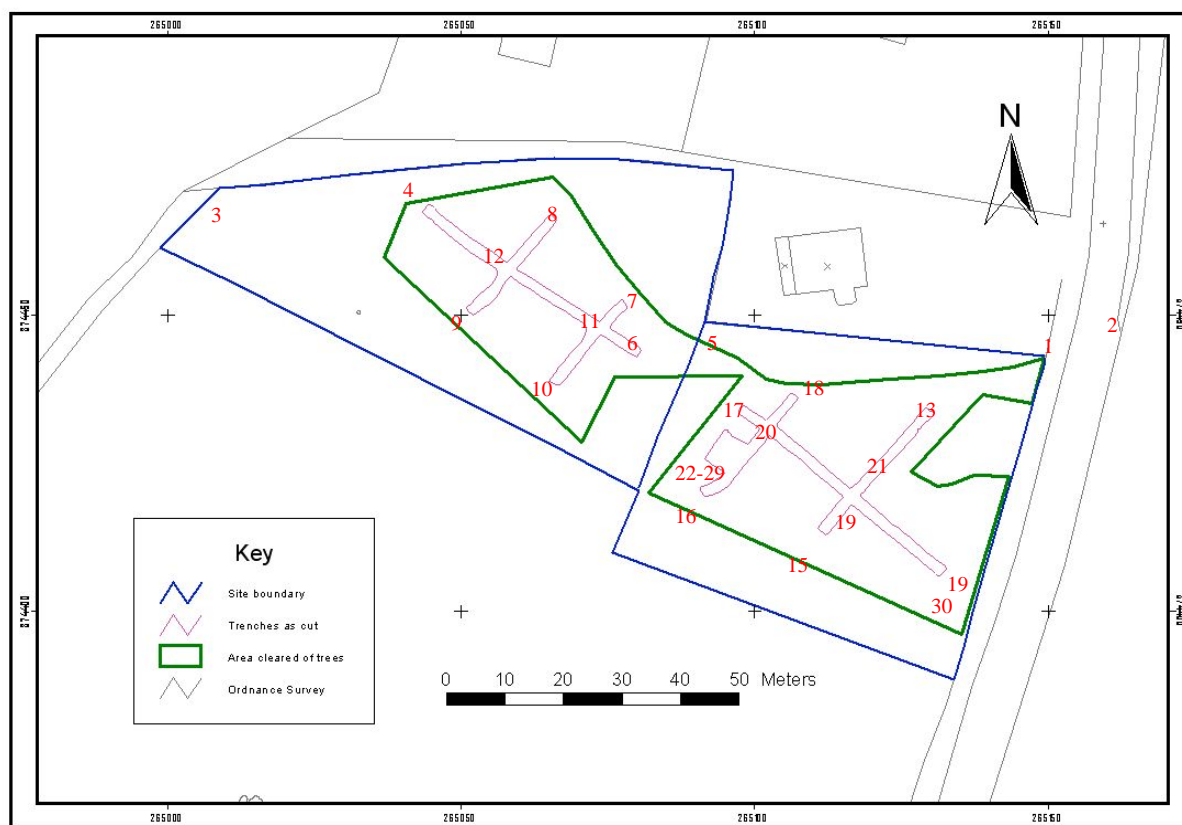


Figure 17 Camera locations (approximate)

A spreadsheet containing the information in this table is included on the CDROM accompanying this report.

Photo no.	Camera Location	Notes	Taken by	Date
IMGP0899	1	View WSW: site entrance	JW	26/03/2005
IMGP0900	2	View WSW: site entrance	JW	26/03/2005
IMGP0901		Site conditions before tree removal	JW	26/03/2005
IMGP0902		Site conditions before tree removal	JW	26/03/2005
IMGP0903		Site conditions before tree removal	JW	26/03/2005
IMGP0904		Site conditions before tree removal	JW	26/03/2005
IMGP0905		Site conditions before tree removal	JW	26/03/2005
IMGP0906	3	Feature 1- dyke at west end of site	JW	26/03/2005
IMGP0907	3	Feature 1- dyke at west end of site	JW	26/03/2005
IMGP0908	3	Feature 1- dyke at west end of site	JW	26/03/2005
IMGP0909	3	Feature 1- dyke at west end of site	JW	26/03/2005
IMGP3914	5	View W across western site following tree removal	JW	05/09/2005
IMGP3915	5	View E across eastern site following tree removal	JW	05/09/2005
IMGP3916	5	View SE across eastern site following tree removal	JW	05/09/2005
IMGP3917	5	View S across eastern site following tree removal	JW	05/09/2005
IMGP4221	4	Initial removal of roots - Trench 1, looking E from 4	JW	12/10/2005
IMGP4222	6	Trench 1 looking W	JW	12/10/2005
IMGP4223	7	Trench 3 looking S	JW	12/10/2005
IMGP4224	8	Trench 2 looking S	JW	12/10/2005
IMGP4225	4	Trench 1 looking E. Hoed areas	JW	12/10/2005
IMGP4226	9	Trench 2 looking N	JW	12/10/2005
IMGP4227	10	Trench 3 looking N	JW	12/10/2005
IMGP4228	12	Trench 1 looking W	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4229	11	Trench 1 looking W	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4230	6	Trench 1 looking W	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4231	11	Trench 3 looking W	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4232	11	Trench 1 looking W	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4233	11	Trench 3 looking SW	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4234	7	Trench 3 looking SW	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4235	10	Trench 3 looking N	JW	13/10/2005

Photo no.	Camera Location	Notes	Taken by	Date
IMGP4236	10	Trench 3 looking N	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4237	11	Trench 1 looking E	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4238	11	Trench 1 looking E	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4239	12	Trench 2 looking SW	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4240	12	Trench 2 looking SW	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4241	12	Trench 2 looking NE	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4242	12	Trench 1 looking SE	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4243	12	Trench 1 looking SE	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4244	12	Trench 1 looking SE	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4245	12	Trench 1 looking SE	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4246	12	Trench 1 looking SE	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4247	12	Trench 1 looking W	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4248	9	Trench 2 looking NE	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4249	9	Trench 2 looking NE	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4250	8	Trench 2 looking SW	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4251	11	Trench 1 looking SE	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4253	10	Trench 3 looking NE	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4254	6	Trench 1 looking NW	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4255	12	Trench 1 looking NW	JW	13/10/2005
IMGP4256	19	Trench 5 looking NE	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4257	19	Trench 5 looking NE showing soakaway	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4258	19	Trench 5 looking NE showing soakaway	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4259	13	Trench 5 looking SW	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4260	13	Trench 5 looking SW	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4261	21	Trench 5 looking SW: soakaway	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4262	21	Trench 5 looking NW: soakaway	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4263	21	Trench 5 looking SW: soakaway	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4264	21	Trench 5 looking NE: soakaway	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4267	14	Trench 4 looking WNW	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4268	14	Trench 4 looking WNW	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4269	15	Trench 5 looking NE	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4270	15	Trench 5 looking NE	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4271	17	Trench 4 looking SE	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4272	20	Trench 4 looking SE	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4273	18	Trench 6 looking SW	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4274	18	Trench 6 looking SW	JW	14/10/2005

Photo no.	Camera Location	Notes	Taken by	Date
IMGP4275	20	Trench 4 looking SE	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4276	16	Trench 7 looking NE	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4277	22	Trench 7 looking NE	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4278	22	Trench 7 looking NE	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4279	22	Trench 7 looking NW	JW	14/10/2005
IMGP4291	28	Trench 7 looking WSW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4292	28	Trench 7 looking SSW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4293	28	Trench 7 looking SSW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4294	27	Trench 7 looking NW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4295	22	Trench 7 looking NE	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4296	22	Trench 7 looking NE	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4297	26	Trench 7 looking ENE	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4298	25	Trench 7 looking S	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4299	24	Trench 7 looking SSW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4300	17	Trench 7 looking S	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4301	17	Trench 7 looking ESE	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4302	18	Trench 7 looking SW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4303	18	Trench 7 looking SW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4304	24	Trench 6 looking NE	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4305	19	Trench 4 looking WNW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4306	19	Trench 4 looking WNW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4307	19	Trench 5 looking NNE	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4308	19	Trench 5 looking NNE	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4309	13	Trench 5 looking SSW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4310	13	Trench 5 looking SSW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4311	21	Trench 5 looking NE	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4312	21	Trench 5 looking NE	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4313	30	Trench 4 looking NW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4314	14	Trench 4 looking WNW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4315	14	Trench 4 looking WNW	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4316	16	Trench 6/7 looking NNE	JW	18/10/2005
IMGP4340	27	Trench 7 looking N	JW	19/10/2005
IMGP4341	27	Trench 7 looking W	JW	19/10/2005
IMGP4342	27	Trench 7 looking W	JW	19/10/2005
IMGP4343	22	Trench 7 looking NE	JW	19/10/2005
IMGP4344	28	Trench 7 looking SSW	JW	20/10/2005

Photo no.	Camera Location	Notes	Taken by	Date
IMGP4345	28	Trench 7 looking SSW	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4346	29	Trench 7 looking ESE	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4347	28	Trench 7 section through cairn	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4348	28	Trench 7 section through cairn	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4349	24	Trench 7 section through cairn	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4350	23	Trench 7 view S	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4351	22	Trench 7 view NE	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4352	26	Trench 7 view E	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4353	26	Trench 7 view E	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4354	26	Trench 7 view E	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4355	24	Trench 7 view W	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4356	24	Trench 7 view W	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4362	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4363	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4364	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4365	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4366	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4367	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4368	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4369	29	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	20/10/2005
IMGP4370	29	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4371	29	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4372	29	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4373	28	Trench 7 view SW: section through cairn	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4374	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4375	22	Trench 7 view NE	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4376	22	Trench 7 view NE	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4377	22	Trench 7 view NE	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4378	23	Trench 7 view NW	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4379	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4380	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4381	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4382	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4383	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4384	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4385	25	Trench 7 view S: section through cairn	JW	21/10/2005

Photo no.	Camera Location	Notes	Taken by	Date
IMGP4386	27	View N: Southernmost area of cairn - detail	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4387	27	View N: Southernmost area of cairn - detail	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4388	27	View W: Southernmost area of cairn - detail	JW	21/10/2005
IMGP4389	27	View W: Southernmost area of cairn - detail	JW	21/10/2005

Appendix 2: Site levels (cairn excavation)

Location	BS / IS	HI	Reduced level
TBM	2.09	177.00	174.91
1	1.50	177.00	175.50
2	1.39	177.00	175.61
3	1.19	177.00	175.81
4	1.19	177.00	175.81
5	1.49	177.00	175.51
6	1.53	177.00	175.47
7	1.22	177.00	175.78
8	1.29	177.00	175.71
9	1.43	177.00	175.57
10	1.53	177.00	175.47
11	1.64	177.00	175.36
12	1.39	177.00	175.61
13	1.69	177.00	175.31
14	1.06	177.00	175.94
15	1.13	177.00	175.87
16	1.09	177.00	175.91
17	1.55	177.00	175.45
18	1.40	177.00	175.60
19	1.49	177.00	175.51
20	1.51	177.00	175.49
21	1.73	177.00	175.27
22	1.75	177.00	175.25
23	1.79	177.00	175.21
24	1.60	177.00	175.40
25	1.52	177.00	175.48