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Proposed Distributor Road at Parks Farm

Results of a desk-based assessment and archaeological evaluation

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Project summary sheet

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<i>National Grid Reference</i>	NB 689 428
<i>Address</i>	PARKS FARM, INVERNESS
<i>Parish</i>	INVERNESS & BONA
<i>Council</i>	HIGHLAND COUNCIL
<i>Planning Application No</i>	IN-08-239
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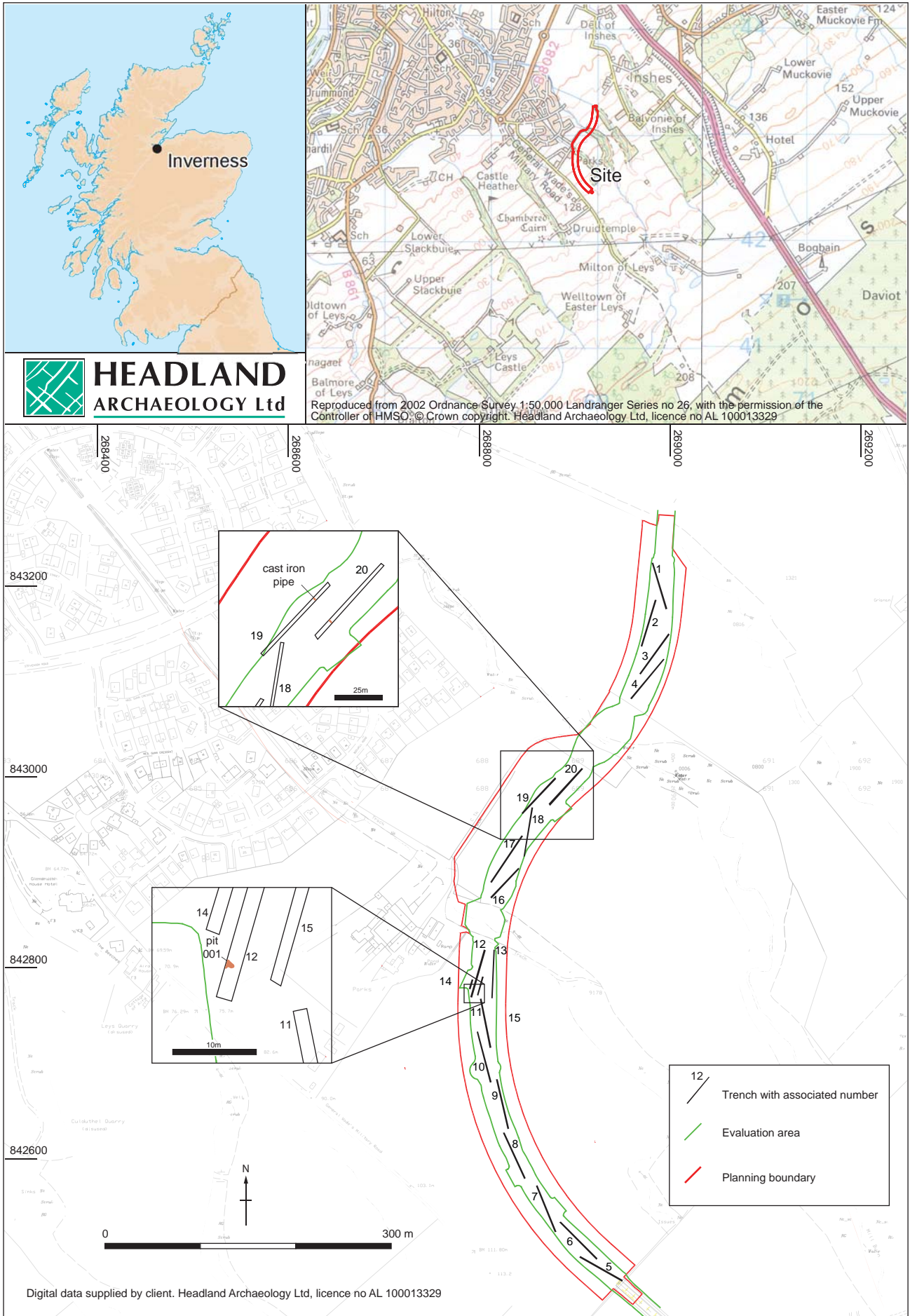
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Site Location with trenches and identified features

Proposed Distributor Road at Parks Farm, Inverness

Results of a desk-based assessment and archaeological evaluation

By Kirsty Dingwall

Headland Archaeology Ltd undertook an evaluation along the route of a proposed road within Parks Farm, Inverness in order to test the archaeological potential of the area that would be impacted on by the development. A desk-based assessment was undertaken prior to fieldwork to understand the archaeological background of the site and to help to locate trenches on any potential areas of interest. The work was commissioned by Tulloch Homes Ltd and a specification for the work was agreed with Highland Council Archaeology Unit.

A total of twenty trenches were excavated across three fields, separated by two small streams. The trenching identified an isolated pit with a charcoal rich fill, a single posthole of modern date, and a cast-iron pipe running through two of the trenches. No other features of archaeological significance were identified.

INTRODUCTION

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in response to a planning condition placed by Highland Council on a proposed road development at Parks Farm, Inverness. The fieldwork took place from the 23rd – 26th June 2008 and the work was commissioned by Tulloch Homes Ltd.

The works were to satisfy a planning condition (Planning Ref. IN-08-239) for the development of the road. The work was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Headland Archaeology Ltd based on a brief prepared by Highland Council. The WSI was agreed with Highland Council Archaeology Unit in advance of work commencing.

BACKGROUND

The proposed development involves the construction of a section of new road just under 1km in length. The proposed road runs across a north-west facing hillside, which extends across much of the southern extents of the city of Inverness. The proposed road crosses three fields, two of which are currently used for rough grazing and one of which had recently been harvested.

METHOD

Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- to evaluate the archaeological potential of the development site and determine the location, character, extent and quality of any archaeo-

logical remains identified within it

- to propose arrangements for the safeguarding, where possible, and recording where necessary of any archaeological features or finds identified; to be agreed with the Highland Council Archaeology Unit.
- To meet the needs for archaeological conservation and recording without unnecessary delay or disturbance to the development project.

Methodology

Desk based assessment

A rapid desk based assessment of the area was undertaken prior to the start of fieldwork. The results were used to inform the location of the test trenches and are summarised below.

The assessment comprised a systematic search of all relevant archaeological/historical records, maps and oblique aerial photographs, including:

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

Laying out

The area subject to evaluation comprised the road solum and a buffer of 2m on either side of this. Prior to test trenching taking place the limits of this area were laid out physically on the ground. This was

done using a total station and on-site PC equipped with CAD software.

Trial Trenching

The total area available for evaluation was 25686 sq m and 7% of this was sampled by trial trenching. This equated to 900m of linear trenching 2m wide. An indicative trench plan was agreed with Highland Council Archaeology Unit prior to work commencing on the site, although there was scope within the WSI to alter this plan as required by conditions on the ground.

All excavation was undertaken by a 16 ton tracked excavator equipped with a 2m wide flat ditching bucket, working under the direct guidance of an archaeologist.

Recording

All recording followed Headland Archaeology Ltd standard procedures and was in accordance with the codes of practice of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. All trenches and contexts were given unique numbers and all recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards that conform to accepted archaeological norms. All stratigraphic relationships were recorded.

Colour transparencies and black and white print photographs were taken to record archaeological contexts and to illustrate the progress of the trial trenching. A graduated metric scale was clearly visible in record photographs of contexts. All photographs were recorded by individual print number and included information on the context and direction taken.

An overall site plan at an appropriate scale and relative to the National Grid was recorded by digital survey using a total station linked to an onsite PC equipped with CAD software. Sections through individual features were drawn by hand at an appropriate scale.

RESULTS

Desk based assessment

A rapid desk-based assessment was undertaken prior to fieldwork commencing to establish the presence of any known sites both within the development and in the surrounding area. The desk-based assessment comprised a systematic search of all relevant archaeological and historical records, maps and oblique aerial photographs, as detailed in the methodology.

No relevant oblique aerial photographs were held by RCAHMS.

The desk-based assessment established that there are no known sites of cultural heritage interest with-

in the proposed development area, however, there are a number of sites in the immediate vicinity and the general area is the location for a range of sites. The closest known recorded site to the development is immediately to the north of the proposed road (NH64SE 330) and comprised an isolated pit and posthole of unknown date and function, found during similar work in advance of construction. The features were considered to be of little significance and did not form part of any recognisable structure or settlement.

Considerably further to the south of the development, over 1km away, a concentration of archaeological features was identified at Milton of Leys (NH64SE 61 and 248). These were badly truncated due to ploughing, but are thought to have related to a settlement of Neolithic date, with a number of hearths present, though no identifiable structures. This is one of a number of relatively recently discovered sites of Neolithic date in the area to the south-east of Inverness, and recent analysis of these indicates there is a strong likelihood of further examples being found within the wider area, as a result of developer funded work in advance of construction on greenfield sites.

To the east and south-east of the development area, there are a number of further sites of prehistoric date. The closest of these is Druidtemple (NH64SE 23), a chambered cairn lying roughly 500m to the south-east of the development area. A cist containing two urns was found within the cairn in the 19th century and work on it in the mid 20th century identified the surface of the cairn as having been disturbed. The cairn is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. In the immediate vicinity another urn in a pit and a metal torc were found during the 19th and 20th centuries, though these now appear to be lost.

Further east a number of sites have been identified and in some case excavated. In broad terms, these can be considered to be domestic sites of one description or another, made up of pits and postholes, and are all prehistoric in date. Some have been dated to the Bronze Age while others are slightly later and extend into the Iron Age.

It is clear that this area has been occupied throughout the prehistoric period, and the underlying sand and gravel subsoils would have made it very attractive for settlement and cultivation

Blaeu's Atlas of the mid 17th century notes both Inches (Inche) and Leys (Leyis) as settlements at that time. Roy's Military survey 100 years later shows a settlement named Inches with additional unnamed settlements to the south and west. By the time of John Thomson's Atlas of Scotland dated to the second quarter of the 19th century, Leys and Inches are both marked and immediately to the west is a road, the route of which survives today as the Old Edinburgh Road. This road was one of those constructed by General Wade in the first part of the 18th century to improve communications in the Highlands and allow the military to easily move about.

The first edition Ordnance Survey mapping of the area in 1874 shows the route of the proposed road much as it is now; three fields with two small streams running between them. To the north of the westernmost field is a small complex of farm buildings, which is called Parks of Inches (what is now Parks Farm). The series of Ordnance Survey maps from 1874 onwards show that there has been little alteration, if any, to the layout of the fields.

Trial Trenching

Twenty trenches were excavated within the area to be tested, comprising the road solum and a 2m buffer. In total 930 linear metres were excavated, equating to 1860m². Full descriptions of each trench can be found in Appendix 1. Results are summarised below.

Field 1 (Trenches 1 – 4)

Four trenches, all 50m in length, were excavated in this area. The topsoil was a maximum of 0.4m in depth and was a mid brown clayey silt. The natural subsoil ranged from a yellow brown sand to a reddish clayey sand containing patches of shattered rock, and was fluvioglacial in origin. No archaeological features or finds were present.

Field 2 (Trenches 16 – 20)

Five trenches, ranging in length from 40m to 60m, were excavated within this area. The topsoil was 0.4m in depth on average, and was a fine light to mid-brown silty sand. Running roughly north-west to south-east across this field was a marked dip between two higher knolls of ground. Here, the topsoil was up to 1.2m in depth. No archaeological finds or features were present; however, a large cast iron pipe was identified running through Trenches 19 and 20. This pipe is likely to be 20th century in date and relate to services within the field. The route of the pipe lines up with the dip in the field associated with the deeper topsoil deposits and the two may be related.

Field 3 (Trenches 5 – 15)

Eleven trenches were excavated within this area. With the exception of Trenches 14 and 15, these were all 50m in length. The topsoil was between 0.3m and 0.4m in depth. Within a number of trenches possible features were identified during machining but investigation revealed them to be either geological in origin or relating to animal activity.

A pit was identified at the southern end of Trench 12. It had an irregular rounded shape in plan, gently sloping sides and was 0.1m in depth. Its base was very uneven and it contained a dark greyish brown clayey silt with frequent charcoal throughout. There was also some evidence of burrowing present. While

the burrowing and presence of roots would suggest the feature is disturbed, the amount of charcoal present suggests that it was an anthropogenic feature.

Additional trenches were excavated on either side of this feature, to establish if it was isolated or belonged to a larger complex of activity. These trenches produced no evidence of further archaeological features and it was concluded that the feature in Trench 12 was both isolated and partly disturbed.

A posthole was seen in Trench 7; a fragment of modern glass was recovered from its rooty fill. The feature is not illustrated and no further recording was undertaken. No other archaeological features or finds were present.

DISCUSSION

The results of the rapid desk-based assessment showed that the area has been undeveloped or used for agricultural purposes since the medieval period. It also indicated that there was potential for there to be prehistoric features present.

Although the location and setting of the field is eminently suitable for the presence of prehistoric settlement, no evidence of this was identified. Aside from a single stray pit, no features of archaeological importance were found to be present, and similarly, no deposits of archaeological importance were identified.

There were no substantial signs of the impact of agricultural activity present within the trenches (eg in the form of furrows and plough marks) so it is likely that either these fields have mainly been used for grazing, or that any ploughing was not deep enough to touch the subsoil. This suggests that the lack of archaeology is not due to later truncation. The parts of the fields subject to evaluation appear not to contain any complex archaeology and are unlikely to have been used for prehistoric settlement.

APPENDIX 1: SITE REGISTERS

Trench Register

All trenches 2 m wide

Trench No	Orientation	Location	Description	Length (m)	Max Depth (m)
1	NW-SE	Field 1	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.4m deep	50	0.4
2	NE-SW	Field 1	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.4m deep	50	0.4
3	NE-SW	Field 1	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.4m deep	50	0.4
4	NE-SW	Field 1	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.3m deep	50	0.3
5	NW-SE	Field 3	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.3m deep	50	0.3
6	NW-SE	Field 3	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.4m deep	50	0.5
7	NW-SE	Field 3	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.3m deep	50	0.5
8	NW-SE	Field 3	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.4m deep	50	0.6
9	NW-SE	Field 3	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.3m deep	50	0.4
10	NW-SE	Field 3	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.3m deep	50	0.4
11	N-S	Field 3	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.3m deep	50	0.3
12	N-S	Field 3	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.3m deep	50	0.3
13	N-S	Field 3	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.3m deep	50	0.5
14	N-S	Field 3	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.3m deep	10	0.3
15	N-S	Field 3	Topsoil: Mid brown clayey silt, 0.3m deep	20	0.3
16	NE-SW	Field 2	Topsoil: Fine light – mid brown silty sand, 0.4m deep	40	0.6
17	NE-SW	Field 2	Topsoil: Fine light – mid brown silty sand, 0.3m deep	60	0.4
18	N-S	Field 2	Topsoil: Fine light – mid brown silty sand, 0.3m deep	50	0.4
19	NE-SW	Field 2	Topsoil: Fine light – mid brown silty sand, 0.5m deep	60	1.0
20	NE-SW	Field 2	Topsoil: Fine light – mid brown silty sand, 0.3m deep	60	1.2

Context Register

Context No	Description	Dimensions (m)
1	Fill of pit. Dark greyish brown fine clayey silt containing frequent charcoal and roots throughout, moderately small flat and sub-angular stones. Some evidence of burrowing present in section through deposit.	Length: 1.2 Width: 1.2 Depth: 0.1
2	Cut of pit. Irregular rounded shape in plan, with sharp breaks of slope on the eastern side and more gentle elsewhere. Gently sloping sides and an uneven stony base. Weathering and disturbance present, particularly on north and west sides.	Length: 1.2 Width: 1.2 Depth: 0.1

Drawing Register

Drawing No.	Section	Plan	Description
1	1:10	-	N-facing section through pit 002, Trench 12
2	-	1:20	Plan of pit 002, Trench 12

Photo Register

Shot No.	B/W Print	Colour Slide	Direction Facing	Description
1	Y	Y	-	ID shot
2	Y	Y	-	Working shot
3	Y	Y	-	Working shot
4	Y	Y	-	Working shot
5	Y	Y	-	Working shot
6	Y	Y	-	Working shot
7	Y	Y	SW	Geological linear feature, Trench 8
8	Y	Y	S	Modern posthole, Trench 7
9	Y	Y	NW	Large burrow, Trench 6
10	Y	Y	NW	General shot, Trenches 5 and 6
11	Y	Y	N	General shot, Trenches 10, 11 and 12
12	Y	Y	NE	General shot, Trench 12
13	Y	Y	S	Charcoal rich pit 002, Trench 12
14	Y	Y	W	View of trench 12 section showing feature 002
15	Y	Y	SW	General shot, Trench 16
16	Y	Y	N	Working shot
17	Y	Y	N	Working shot
18	Y	Y	NE	General shot, Trench 19
19	Y	Y	NW	General shot, Trench 20