

**Erection of House and Associated Groundworks**  
**Land 80M NE Of Applecross Village Hall, Camusterrach**  
**Applecross Parish**  
**17/02567/FUL**

**Archaeological Evaluation**



**Catherine Dagg**  
**For**  
**Marion Gilroy and Robert Macrae**

**17/02567/FUL - Erection of house at Land 80M NE Of Applecross Village Hall,  
Camusterrach, Applecross Parish**

**Archaeological Evaluation**

<b>Contents:</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Location Plans .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.0 Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.0 Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3.0 Background .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.1 Archaeological Background .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.1.1 Previous Archaeological Work .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.1.2 Sites with Statutory Protection .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.1.3 Recorded Archaeological Sites .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.2 Cartographic Evidence .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.3 Summary of Background .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4.0 Objectives .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5.0 Archaeological Evaluation .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5.1 Rapid Walk-over Survey .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>5.2 Location of Trial Trenches.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>5.3 Trial Trenching .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>5.4 results of Trial Trenching .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>6.0 Recommendations for further work .....</b>	<b>16</b>





## 1.0 Executive Summary

Trial trenching on the site of a proposed house, ancillary works and access road south of Milton in the parish of Applecross produced some evidence for minor improvements associated with grazing and cultivation

## 2.0 Introduction

This report covers a programme of archaeological evaluation in the form of 7% trial trenching in advance of ground breaking works associated with the construction of new croft house and access road at Milton, Applecross.

The planning application for the development engendered the following statement from the Historic Environment Team at Highland Council on 17.7.17:

### *Archaeological Background*

*The development lies in an area with potential for the survival of buried archaeological deposits. The wider area contains a number of important and extensive prehistoric sites. Consequently, the area must be subject to an archaeological evaluation to assess the content, nature and extent of buried archaeological features and deposits. Further work may be required in advance or during development dependent on results.*

### *Objectives*

- x To identify the location, nature and extent of any features or objects of archaeological importance that would be damaged or destroyed by this development.*
- x To propose arrangements for the safeguarding where possible, and recording where necessary of any archaeological features or finds identified. These will need to be agreed with the Historic Environment Team.*

### *Methodology*

*All fieldwork must be informed by a desk-based assessment undertaken in advance of the start of works.*

### *Fieldwork*

*An evaluation by open area trenching will be conducted across the application site. The location of these trenches will be informed by the results of a deskbased assessment and a study of the local topography. The trenches will be of varying lengths and sizes and set on varying orientations, putative features will be targeted, as will apparently blank areas. An indicative trench plan will be included as part of the project design for approval by HET.*

*The application site will be subject to a 7% sample evaluation. The evaluation report will make recommendations regarding the need for further excavation work to record any identified features. All recovered artefacts and ecofacts must be subject to a programme of post-excavation analysis and the results incorporated into a final report. The Historic Environment Practitioner must refer to the minimum standard requirements as laid out in the HC Standards for Archaeological Work. This brief itself is not comprehensive or definitive - tendering Historic Environment Practitioners will need to determine for themselves the methodology that will deliver the required product. This should be laid down in a Project Design and agreed with HET in advance of the start of site works. The start of archaeological work will be subject to the submission and approval of this document.*

This report is a response to this planning condition.

## **3.0 Background**

### **3.1 Archaeological Background**

#### **3.1.1 Previous Archaeological Work**

No previous systematic archaeological surveys have been carried out which include the precise location of the development site. It lies within the general area of investigation, EHG1057 Applecross Estate Forestry Survey but was not included in the targeted areas.

One survey, EHG275 Applecross Water Pipeline, included the area to the east of the development area. This survey identified or confirmed a number of prehistoric sites on the west flank of Torr Mor.

#### **3.1.2 Sites with Statutory Protection**

There are no Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Designed landscapes, gardens or battlefields in the vicinity of the proposed development.

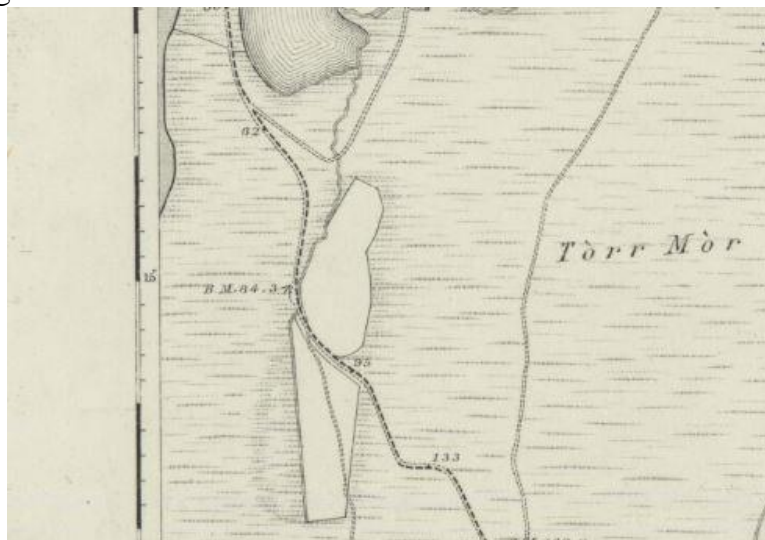
#### **3.1.3 Recorded Archaeological sites**

The following archaeological sites are recorded on the Highland Historic Environment Record as lying within or immediately adjacent to the development area:

- **MHG22592 Torr Mor enclosure and field system** c/o NG 7075 4312. Information taken from 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS (see below, section 2.2) and identified by local informant as 'outfield for the crofts at Milton.  
The proposed house site lies to the east of this feature, which is crossed by the proposed access and sewage treatment plant, partial soakaway and discharge west to the watercourse.
- **MHG7645 Torr Mor hut circles**  
The proposed house site lies to the west of all features identified as part of this prehistoric settlement area.

### 3.2 Cartographic Evidence

The 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map, Ross and Cromartyshire (Mainland) CIX published 1880 shows an irregular, approximately oval area of improved ground east of the public road. This improved ground continues south, west of the road, where its boundaries are shown as more angular. A small watercourse drains from the west boundary of the enclosure north to Loch a Mhuilinn., crossed by a track leading round the south of the loch towards the township of Torgarve.



1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey Ross and Cromartyshire (Mainland) CIX 1880: enclosures

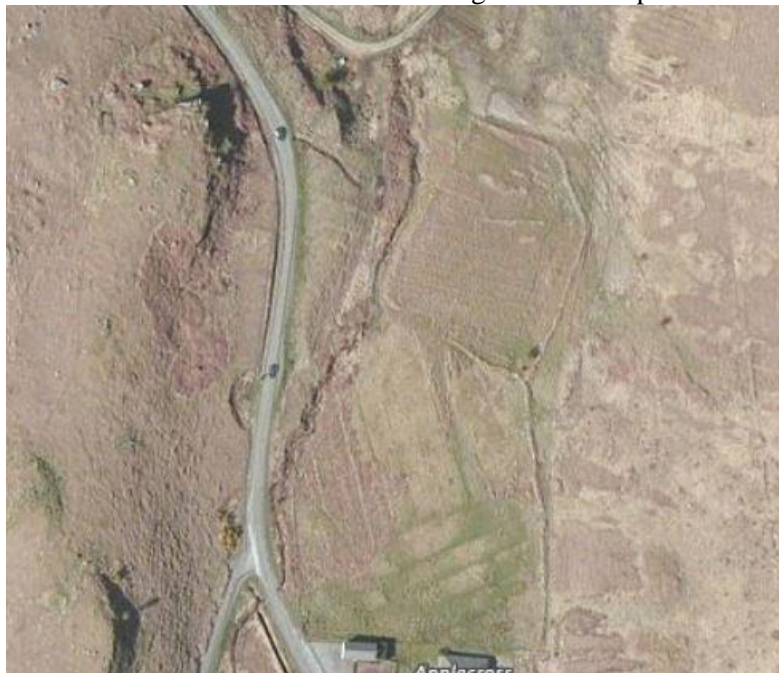
This area corresponds to land under cultivation as shown on Roy's Military Survey of the 1750s south of Loch a' Mhuilinn (Milton on Roy's map is given its original Gaelic name of Balavulen (Bail a Mhuilinn))





**Roy's Military Survey 1750s**

Modern satellite imaging gives more detailed information. What appear to be turf dykes divide the enclosure into two compartments of unequal size and shape. A pattern of lines fill both compartments but respect the north east corner of the northern compartment, where there is the suggestion of a farmstead with rectangular footings of a building. Outwith the enclosures to the east and north, what appears to be an earlier boundary line runs north east and defines an extensive area of rig cultivation which continues round the north flank of Torr Mor to Torgarve township.



**Bing Satellite Image showing two conjoined enclosures and field division marks, with rig cultivation to north east**



**Detail of Bing satellite image of north enclosure with possible farmstead in north east corner**

Local information is that the linear features represent individual croft holdings, partly a survival of the pre-crofting system of rig cultivation and a local response to the lack of good arable land and the need to share scarce resources. In this particular enclosure, the croft tenancies have now lapsed and the land has reverted to common grazings, but a similar pattern of narrow strips can be seen in the modern tenancies at Ard-Dubh.

The proposed house site is located to the east of the turf dykes, with the access road, treatment plant, soakaway and discharge south of the east-west division. The access road will cross the turf dyke in two places as well as the drains, aligned NW-SE, in the south compartment. The possible earlier boundary line crosses the area of the proposed house site.

### **3.3 Summary of Archaeological and Cartographic Background**

The presence of an extensive settlement site in close proximity to the development area indicates a high potential for prehistoric remains to be located sub-surface. Although there appears to be no overlap between the prehistoric site and the early modern rigs, enclosures and possible farmstead, this is probably due to ground improvement by clearance, drainage and ploughing. Pre-existing features such as pits, postholes and ditches may survive below the depth of ploughing.

## **4.0 Objectives**

The objectives of the archaeological investigation are:

- To identify any visible archaeological features in advance of any ground breaking and agree a methodology for their protection with the contractor.



- To protect from accidental damage the archaeological features adjacent to the development by ensuring these are within clearly marked archaeological exclusion zones where no access routes, parking or laydown of materials is allowed
- To identify and record sub-surface archaeological features revealed by excavation.
- To identify any significant features or finds and prevent further damage until a full programme of investigation can be set in place

## **5.0 Archaeological Evaluation**

The requirements as specified by the Highland Council Historic Environment Team are:

*An evaluation by open area trenching will be conducted across the application site. The location of these trenches will be informed by the results of a deskbased assessment and a study of the local topography. The trenches will be of varying lengths and sizes and set on varying orientations, putative features will be targeted, as will apparently blank areas. An indicative trench plan will be included as part of the project design for approval by HET. The application site will be subject to a 7% sample evaluation.*

The total area of the proposed development is approximately 2454 square metres, of which 1750 sq m is the main site area and a further 600 sq m is the access road treatment plant and discharge. This requires the archaeological evaluation to cover 172 sq m.

### **5.1 Rapid Walk-Over Survey**

A rapid walk over survey was carried out in advance of ground breaking work in order to identify any visible archaeological features. This noted the steepness of the slope down to the stream in the vicinity of the proposed trench 1 and concluded that there was an extremely low potential for archaeological features to be located here. Equally, Trench 7 and Trench 8 were removed from the design due to the steepness of the slope and large boulders.

### **5.2 Location of Trial Trenches**

The initial proposal for trial trench locations is shown below. This design was based on information from the desk-based evaluation



**Plan of area of development and indicative trench locations**

Justification for the trench locations and dimensions are as follows:

1. 10m x 1m aligned N-S along the section of access road west of the small watercourse.
2. 5mx5m aligned E-W. This box trench will expose the west boundary dyke of the enclosure and an area of the interior of the enclosure
3. 4mx4m. This box trench will expose an area of the interior of the south compartment of the enclosure, including one of the drains visible on satellite images, aligned NW-SE.
4. 25m x 2m. This long trench will cross and expose sections of the east boundary dyke of the enclosure and the possible earlier boundary to the east, with the area of possible early rig cultivation between the two dykes.
5. 15m x 1m aligned NE-SW. This trench is located on ground presumed to be outwith the area of former cultivation
6. 5m x 5m. This box trench is located on ground presumed to be outwith the area of former cultivation but is closest to the defined area of prehistoric settlement
7. 10m x 2m aligned NE-SW. This trench is located on ground presumed to be outwith the area of former cultivation but is close to the defined area of prehistoric settlement
8. 15m x 1m aligned NW-SE. This long trench covers the south part of the proposed house development site.

## 5.3 Trial Trenching

**Trench 1:** not excavated as located on a steep slope

**Trench 2:** at west side of the enclosure just to the east of the steep drop down to the stream, measuring 2m NE-SW by 3m NE-SW

**Location:** NG 70774 43156- NG 70776 43157

**Results:** Vegetation of mossy grass on a shallow rooty soil 001, 100mm in depth over a sandy, stone-free subsoil. A few charcoal flecks on the subsoil surface indicate a possible grass fire or vegetation clearance but is too ephemeral to be of significance.

**Interpretation:** evidence for stone clearance but not for ploughing



**Trench 2, view from SE**

**Trench 3:** within enclosure south of the dividing dyke, laid on a linear depression interpreted locally as a former croft land tenure boundary

**Location:** NG 70757 43175

**Results:** vegetation cover of mossy grass on a very shallow bracken root – filled soil 001 over an intermediate soil. 002 notably stone free and reddish sandy, similar to the underlying subsoil 003, and gradually merging from 002 to 003.

**Interpretation:** There was no evidence for any ditch or other visible boundary other than the slight drop in levels between the two strips, leaving the linear mark visible on satellite images.



**Trench 3, profile of section crossing linear feature, showing drop in level but no cut or ditch**

**Trench 4:** Crossing the rubble dyke marking the original east boundary of the enclosure and taking in rough ground to the east and improved ground to the west, measuring 2m N-S by 10m E-W

**Location:** NG 70796 43147 to NG 70786 43146

**Results:** vegetation east of the fence very rough tussock grass, bracken and bog myrtle, west of the fence grazed grass. Soil 001 was grey and sandy containing some bracken roots, with little change in soil from one end of the trench to the other. There was a noticeable drop in levels from the east to the west side of the rubble dyke, possibly indicating a build-up of slumped soils uphill and a reduction by cultivation to the west.

The trench was placed to avoid damage to the rubble boundary dyke but to expose a section in the south-facing section of the trench. This demonstrated that there was no sophisticated construction to the dyke, which consisted of medium-sized stones forming a rough low base to an earth bank





**Trench 4, Boundary Dyke before excavation**



**Trench 4, section across boundary dyke, view from south.**

**Interpretation:** Field boundary of probable Early Modern date, possibly cutting a formerly larger area of minor ground improvement in the form of stone clearance, improved vegetation maintained by modern grazing.

**Trench 5:** Crossing relatively level ground east of the fenceline. Measuring 1.5m by 20m

**Location:** between NG 70810 43157 and 70828 43116

**Site Description:** relatively level ground running up to the break of slope at the NE end of this trench. Vegetation cover of bracken and tussock grass possibly indicating an improved or better-drained soil.



**Results:** At the NE end of this trench the soil 001 was black, filled with bracken roots and stony, the central section crossed a waterlogged sump, to the SW of which the soil 002 was grey, gritty and stony. Both soil types merged gradually into the subsoil, indicating an absence of improvement by ploughing. At the NE end of the trench was a stone pile interpreted as field clearance. This consisted of large stones in a matrix of the black soil. One small fragment of green glass was recovered from the matrix of this feature.

**Interpretation:** The presence of the field clearance pile indicates some improvement of the ground, but the residual stoniness and the waterlogged sump suggest that cultivation is unlikely and that the stone clearing was to improve grazing.



**Trench 5, stone field clearance pile**



**Trench 5, waterlogged SW section**

**Trench 6:** measuring 5m by 5m and covering the area designated as the footprint of the house.

**Location:** Corners at Ng 70821 43138, NG 70819 43130, NG 70815 43131, NG 70814 43137

**Site description:** Steep stony slope with a dense vegetation of bog myrtle and tussock grass.

**Contexts:** Peaty, rooty pale brown earth 001 containing embedded large stones, varying in size from 500x300mm to 100x100mm. This peaty soil, to a depth of 300mm overlies a subsoil 002 of streaky grey-orange clay also with embedded boulders.

**Interpretation:** there is no evidence in this trench for any clearance of the natural distribution of stones, and it is unlikely that any cultivation or habitation has taken place on this steep slope.



**Trench 6, under excavation at top of slope, view from North**

**Trench 7:** Not excavated due to steep and stony nature of terrain

**Trench 8:** not excavated due to steep and stony nature of terrain

## **5.4 Results of Trial Trenching**

The steep and stony nature of the terrain made it immediately obvious that there had been no settlement or cultivation over the greater part of the development area east of the modern fence line or west of the stream. This conclusion was supported by the results of Trench 6, which was archaeologically negative. A small area of more level ground to the north of the proposed house site had some evidence for improvement in the form of one field clearance pile investigated in Trench 5, but this was the only archaeological feature noted east of the former enclosure.

Within the enclosure, evidence for improvement was limited to the vegetation species and lack of stones in the topsoil as evidence for clearance. No land drains were located. The rubble bank forming the boundary of the enclosure was roughly constructed, probably of field clearance stones.

## **6.0 Recommendations for Further Work**

There are no recommendations for further archaeological investigation or monitoring on this site unless design features such as the route of the access road change substantially.

Catherine Dagg, BA, ACIfA  
2, Ruigh' Riabhach  
Scoraig Peninsula  
Dundonnell  
Wester Ross  
IV23 2RE  
Tel: 01854 633 337  
e-mail: [cathydagg@gmail.com](mailto:cathydagg@gmail.com)

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