

**Client:** Mr D. Green

**Date:** October 2021

## **Archaeological Evaluation at New Fleenas Farm, Nairn, Highland IV12 5QN.**

**Director:** Stuart Farrell

**Written by:** Stuart Farrell

**Planning Ref.** 21/00790/FUL (14/02375/FUL)

**Grid Ref:** NH 90705/51840 (centred)

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### ***Non-Technical Summary***

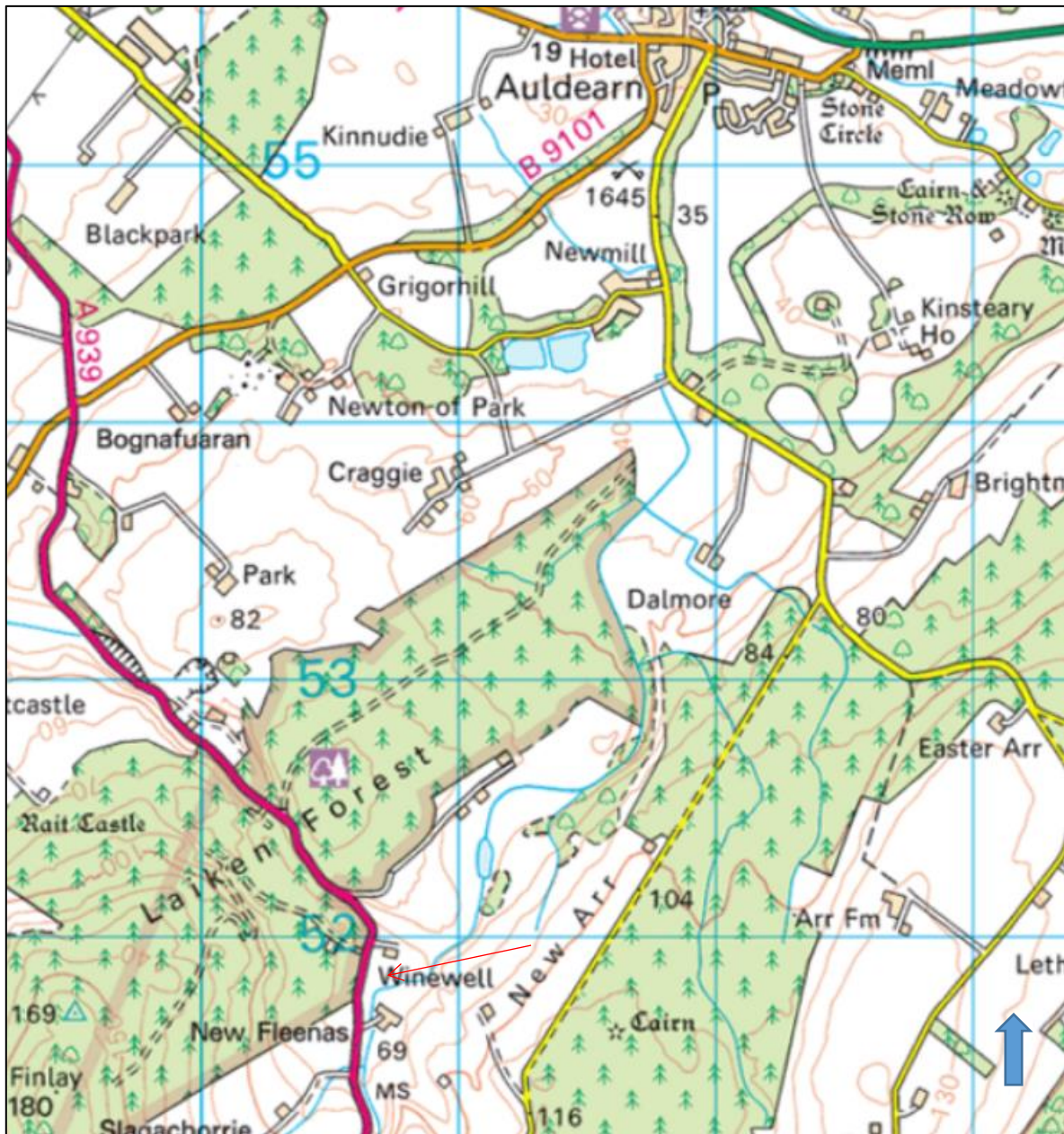
*Stuart Farrell was commissioned by Mr D. Green in June 2021 to undertake an archaeological evaluation of land at New Fleenas, Nairn (NH 90705/51840 centred) as part of a project for a new house and garage.*

*Work in October 2021 revealed no archaeological features or deposits, site lying in an area of an improved field.*

*No recommendations for further archaeological work are proposed.*

**Figure 1 – Site Location.**

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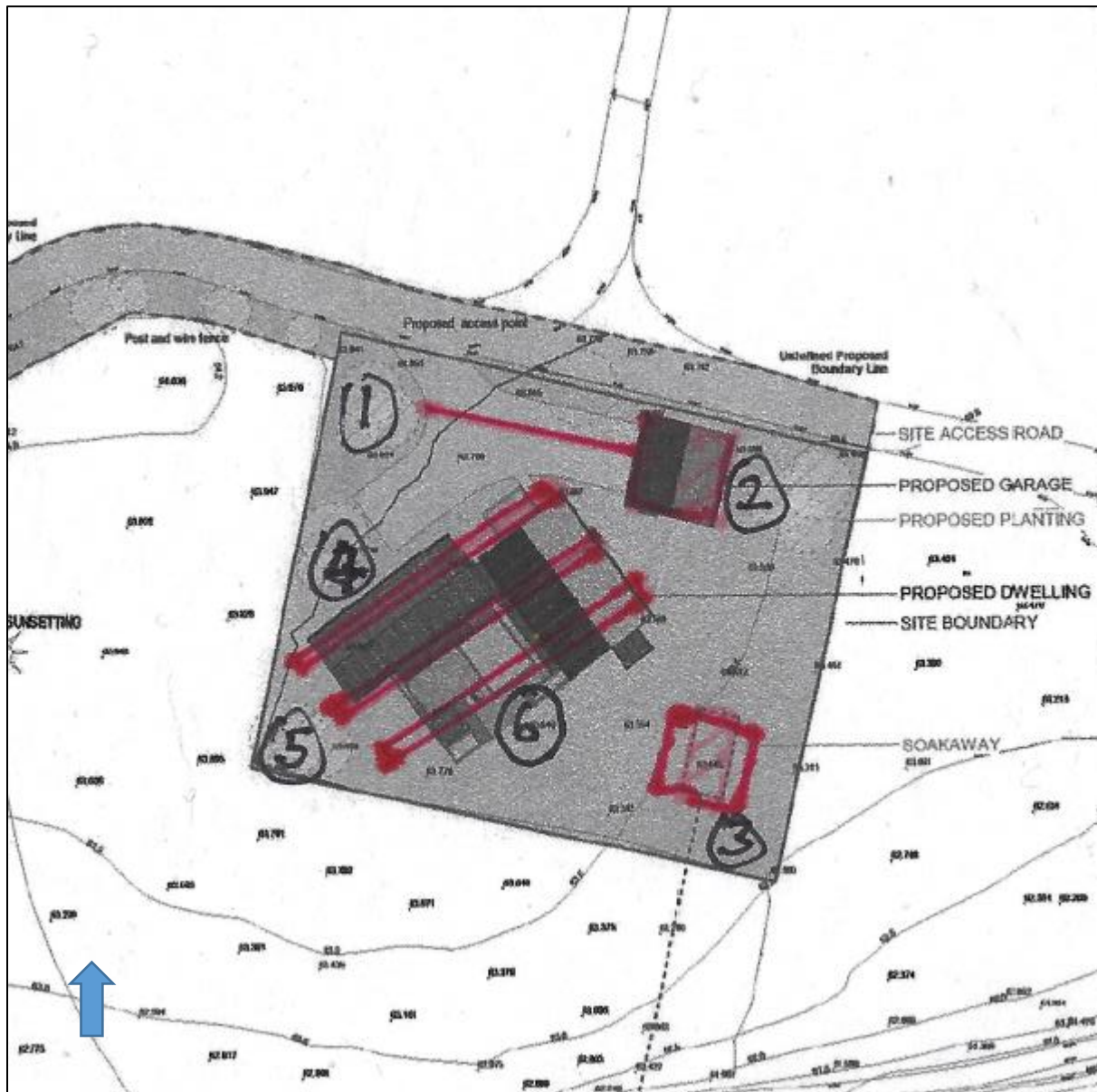
**Figure 2 – Site Plan 1:1000.**

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**Figure 3 – Location of Trenches**

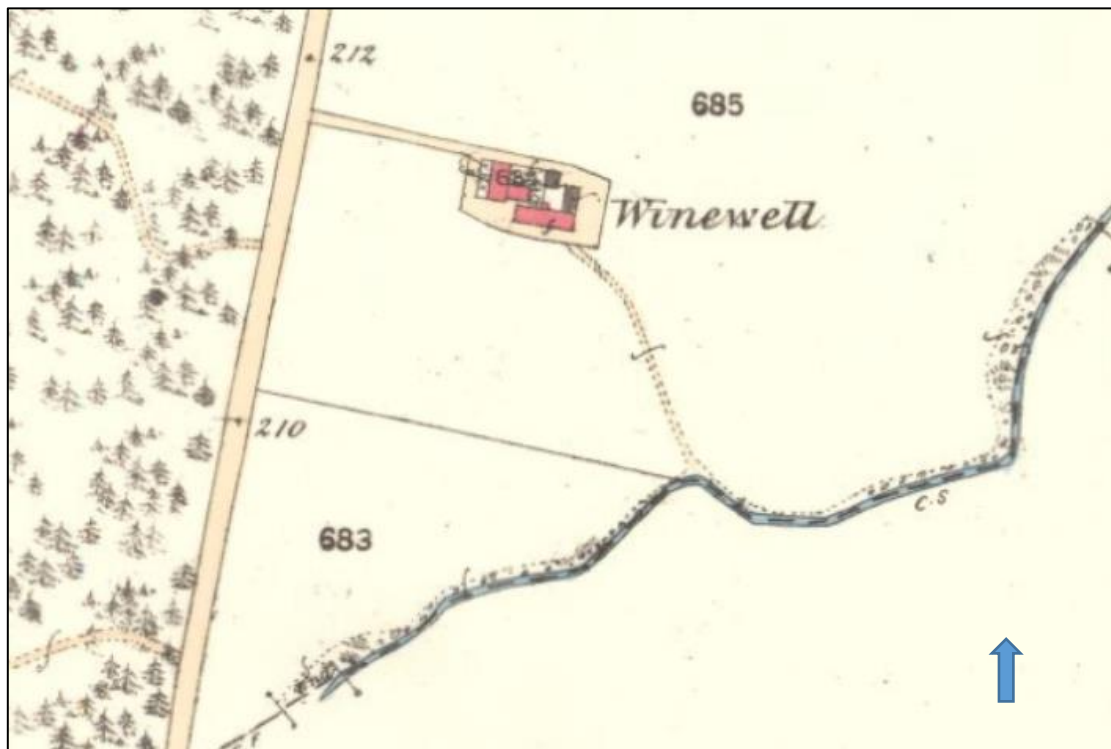
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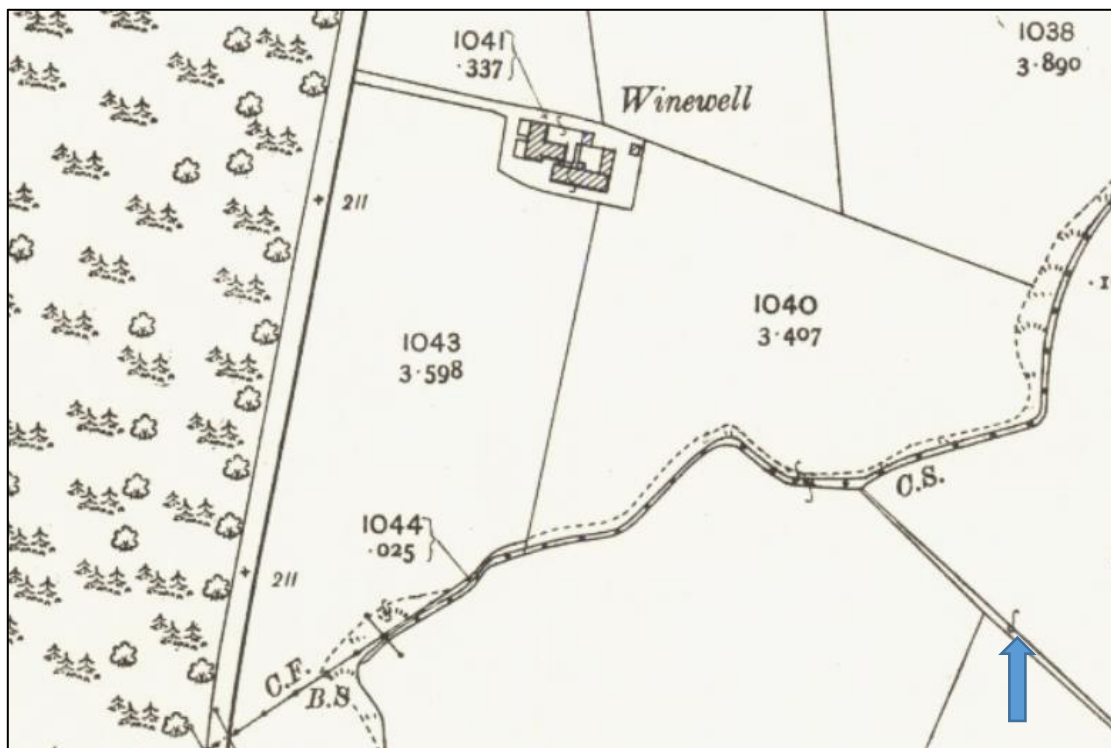
**Figure 4 – 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey of 1870.**

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**Figure 5 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey of 1905.**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

An archaeological evaluation was carried out by the author on behalf of Mr D. Green as required as part of a planning application. The development site is a 'greenfield' site located at New Fleenas, Nairn, Highland IV12 5QN.

The work was required as part of planning condition no.1 by the Highland Council (Planning Ref. 21/00790/FUL previously 14/02375/FUL), which stated the following:

*No development or work shall commence until a programme of work for the evaluation, preservation and recording of any archaeological and historic features affected by the proposed development, including a timetable for investigation, all in accordance with the specification attached to the consultation response dated 01 August 2014 from the Council's Historic Environment Team, shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the Planning Authority. The agreed proposals shall be implemented in accordance with the agreed timetable for investigation.*

*Reason: In order to protect the historic interest of the site.*

## 2. BACKGROUND

The proposed development site forms an area of ground to the East of the existing road (A939) in an area of ground bounded to North by Winewells Farm, open ground to East and New Fleenas (Green's Nursery) to the South.

The proposed development of a single house and garage is shown on the latest OS map as open ground with new access road already in place. Site is centred at NH 90705/51840. The development site is a 'green field' site.

### Archaeological Background

Currently no sites recorded to development area in Highland Council HER or NRHE. Site lies to the south of Lakenbuie Cairfield, recorded as follows:

HER – MHG 14363

NRHE – Canmore ID 283686

Grid Ref: NH 9086/5220

Type – Cairnfield

Status – Scheduled Ancient Monument SM11609

Noted in NRHE of 'NH 9086 5220 Laikenbuie Ring Cairn was excavated between 2003 and 2006. It lies to the NE of Laikenbuie Cairn Field (DES 2007). During excavation samples were taken from the fill of a small hole near the centre of the ring cairn and from the early land surface under boulders forming the ring of the cairn. The samples were analysed by Reading University and radiocarbon dated by SUERC. The date from the hole was obtained from a mixture of quercus and corylus charcoal (SUERC-16910) and gave a date of 2465±35 BP. The date from the early land surface beneath the ring was obtained from corylus charcoal (SUERC-16909) and gave a date of 2440±35 BP. At a 68.2% probability the dates are 550–480 BC and 525–455 BC. The dates are Early Iron Age.

These dates correspond with the latest of four dates obtained from Balnuaran of Clava S ring cairn 2420±45 BP (AA25259) (Bradley 2000) and with two dates obtained at the excavations of Kerb Cairn IIA Sands of Forvie 2565±140 BP (GU-1824) and 2510±125 BP (GU-1826).

Laikenbuie Ring Cairn is in the Clava tradition of monuments. It is similar in form and size to Balnuaran of Clava S (DES 2007). It is interesting that both these monuments had been

considered previously to be Iron Age hut circles. Richard Bradley's investigation published in 2000 proved that Balnuaran of Clava S was not a hut circle but a ring cairn, a similar result to our excavation at Laikenbuie. Three of the dates obtained at Balnuaran of Clava S Ring Cairn indicate activity there in the Late Bronze Age, though these earlier dates may indicate residual material. The fourth, later, date corresponds with the Early Iron Age dates obtained at Laikenbuie Ring Cairn and may indicate that the two cairns are contemporary (R Bradley pers com). Bradley suggests that Balnuaran of Clava S was part of a secondary phase of monument building at Balnuaran of Clava more than a thousand years later than the earlier monuments.

At Laikenbuie Ring Cairn we felt that elements in its design suggested that reflections of the earlier Clava monuments were being incorporated into the design of the later monument. From its typology we had thought the cairn to be Late Bronze Age but it has turned out to be Early Iron Age. It is interesting to note that Kerb Cairn IIA at the sands of Forvie also seems to reflect the earlier tradition of Recumbent Stone Circles in the surrounding area. It has a large flat stone making up the major part of its southern kerb, as do the RCS's. The excavation raises the question of whether these earlier traditions were being incorporated by the later monument builders with similar ideologies, or whether the builders were copying the form of degraded earlier monuments, seen in the landscape, without an understanding of the concepts of the earlier builders.

Geophysical survey NH 9086 5220 Magnetometer and resistance survey in October 2005 located several of the upstanding cairns; the results were limited, however, by ground disturbance caused by cattle. Several of the cairns seem to have compacted surfaces surrounding and potentially linking them. One feature to the NW of the survey area appears to be bounded by a slight ditch, possibly indicating the presence of a barrow, although later dumping could be an alternative interpretation.

NH 9086 5220 Laikenbuie cairn field lies on a gently sloping S facing promontory. To the S, W and E are glacial meltwater channels. It lies approximately 60m above sea level. The geology on which it lies is glacial till overlying an outcrop of pink coarsegrained granite. The surrounding area is predominately old middle red sandstone. Only the eastern part of the promontory has been cleared in recent times of heavy gorse and 47 cairns have been identified. Aerial photography suggests there may be more to the W in the uncleared part of the site. The cairns range in size from 5 to 7m across. Many are low mounds and some have dished centres. A 10m circular cairn lies to the NE of the cairn field and appears to define its Northern limit. Excavation revealed that this cairn was a small kerbed ring cairn with three additional small round cairns superimposed on the ring. It appears to be of a type identified as possibly of the late Bronze Age, similar in size and construction to Balnuaran of Clava S 17km to the W.

A bank to the W of the site and two of the cairns in the field, one dished and one round, were also investigated. The dished cairn appears to have been built deliberately in this form. The other cairn consisted of stones laid on a mound of yellow earth. There was an undefined deposit of heavily impregnated charcoal in this mound just above the early land surface. The bank consisted of stones laid on a low bank of soil with shallow ditches to either side. Radiocarbon dates are being obtained for the ring cairn.

Noted in HC HER as follows:

Extensive cairnfield with many upstanding remains. Up to 56 cairns can be counted from Aerial Photograph. Site was discovered by farmer c.2000 and is currently being investigated by Ronnie Scott who is conducting both survey and excavation over the site. The two of the cairns being investigated specifically demonstrate different characteristics.

In the northern tip of the field, excavation over two seasons has shown the cairn to have the partial remains of a stone and earth platform. This surrounds an external kerb of large boulders set on end against a well packed mound of smaller stones. Internally the cairn is scooped in towards the centre, described as 'Dish Shaped.'

To the south in the lower portion of the field a further cairn being investigated also showed evidence of an external platform with a less well defined kerb on the NW. This cairn is



smaller and slightly oval in form aligned N-S. The interior of the cairn is more complex with the western side showing evidence of a possible internal kerb or what might be described as terracing with an obvious scoop similar to that seen in the northern cairn. The eastern side differs from this pattern in that there is no evidence of the internal kerb and rather than it being 'Dished', there is what seems to be a platform of well compacted small stones just to the east of the centre.

Further information will follow with the results of the initial excavation and survey.

An interim report on the fieldwork was received in October 2005. The working hypothesis is that the cairns form a Late Bronze Age land clearance and ritualised cairnfield with at least two associated ceremonial dished kerb cairns.

Noted in Sam Document (SM11609) as follows:

The monument comprises a group of cairns of prehistoric date, situated at around 65m above sea level in improved grassland used for grazing and camping. The cairns occupy a gently sloping plateau above Auldearn Burn on the NW side of Laiken Glen, approximately 5km SSE of the town of Nairn.

There are approximately 50 cairns in the group, ranging in size from about 5m to 11m in diameter and up to about 1m in height. Some of these have the appearance of piles of stone cleared from the land to enable cultivation of the surrounding land during the Bronze Age (around 4000 - 2500 years ago). However, a number of the cairns have kerbs of boulders and hollows in their centres, suggesting that they were constructed or modified in order to fulfil a ritual, ceremonial or funerary function. One of these, towards the NE corner of the group, includes an unusual symmetrical arrangement of five kerbstones on its S side; a small white granite boulder flanked by two gneiss stones, which are in turn flanked by two larger pink granite stones. This arrangement of stones bears resonance with the rear chamber wall in the SW cairn at Balnuaran of Clava, suggesting that the builders of the group at Laikenbuie were aware of the wider Bronze Age Clava tradition of cairn construction in the area. Limited archaeological excavation of this cairn and another nearby has shown them to have a shallow dished profile. This profile bears similarities with another of the cairns at Clava.

The area to be scheduled is irregular on plan, to include the remains described and an area around in which evidence for their construction and use may survive, bounded on the E and SE by a drystone dyke and on the NW by a modern post-and-wire fence, as shown in red on the accompanying map. The modern post-and-wire fence and drystone dyke are specifically excluded from the scheduling, to allow for their maintenance. Also excluded from the scheduling is a large pile of modern stone clearance at the centre of the field and a small modern circle of stones and trees periodically used for camping activities.

The development site is indicated on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1870 (see figure 4) as open ground with fence line running E-W forming 2 separate fields, almost the same is shown on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Ordnance Survey map of 1905 but fence line is now shown as running N-S. Current OS shows open ground with access track in place.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The archaeological evaluation took place on the site on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2021. Weather during the work was dry and sunny. The trenches were excavated using a 8 ton back-acting machine with a 1.8m wide straight-edged bucket under direct archaeological supervision.

Trenching was proposed to be conducted to 7% of the area of the proposed development. Topsoil was removed to an average depth of 0.3m, the greatest depth being 0.4m with shallowest being 0.25m.

#### **4. RESULTS**

Site for evaluation is an improved field, at time laid to grass, but formerly under crop. The topsoil, laid to grass, was a mid light to dark brown silty loam with small to medium angular and sub-angular stones and a moderately high sandy content. Natural of dense heavy orange-brown gravel with occasional large stones.

Results of trenches (1, 4-6), all 1.8m wide (see figure 3) were as follows:

- 1 – Aligned W-E 15.5m in length – no archaeological features or deposits revealed.
- 2 – Area of garage 6m x 7.3m – no archaeological features or deposits revealed.
- 3 – Area of septic tank 6m by 6m – no archaeological features or deposits revealed.
- 4 – Aligned NE-SW 22.2m in length – no archaeological features or deposits revealed.
- 5 – Aligned NE-SE 22.2m in length – no archaeological features or deposits revealed.
- 6 – Aligned NE-SW 20m in length – no archaeological features or deposits revealed.

Overall a total area just under 224m<sup>2</sup> was excavated with no indication of any archaeological features or deposits.

#### **5. DISCUSSION**

The archaeological evaluation revealed no archaeological features or deposits. Underlying natural to most of site of dense compact gravel. Overall no evidence of site being area of archaeological activity in relation to Lakebuie Cairnfield which lies to the North.

#### **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

No further archaeological work is recommended for this site. This is subject to approval by the Highland Council Archaeologist.

#### **7. REFERENCES**

1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map 1:2500 Nairn-shire sheet V.5 (Auldearn) surveyed 1866-8 published 1870.

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map 1:2500 Nairn-shire sheet V.5 (Auldearn) revised 1904 published 1905.

#### **8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author would like to thank the following for their help during the work:

- Mr K Duncan for onsite works;
- Staff of Aardvark Groundworks for machine works.

## **9. ARCHIVE**

The following is to be deposited in the National Record of the Historic Environment in Edinburgh:

- Notebook of results
- Copy of this report

A set of digital images showing the progress of the work has been deposited with Highland Council Historic Environment Record. Digital images used in this report have been deposited with HCHER as well as a copy of this report as a PDF file.

## **10. DISCOVERY & EXCAVATION IN SCOTLAND**

A short summary of the results of this project will be submitted to Archaeology Scotland's publication *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*. OASIS Report no.431873.

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Plate 1 – View of site facing E [Photo 1].



Plate 2 – View of site facing SW [Photo 3].





Plate 3 – View of trench 2 upon excavation facing N – scales 1m [Photo 8].



Plate 4 – View of trench 3 upon excavation facing NW – scales 1m [Photo 11].





Plate 5 – View of trenches upon excavation facing NE [Photo 23].



Plate 6 – View of trenches upon excavation facing SW [Photo 27].





## **Appendix 1 – Photograph Register**

Scales 1m.

- 1 – View of site facing E.
  - 2 – View of site facing E.
  - 3 – View of site facing S.
  - 4 – View of site facing SW.
  - 5 – View of trench 1 upon excavation facing W – scales 1m.
  - 6 – View of trench 1 upon excavation facing E – scales 1m.
  - 7 – View of trench 1 upon excavation facing E – scales 1m.
  - 8 – View of trench 2 upon excavation facing N – scales 1m.
  - 9 – View of trench 2 upon excavation facing W – scales 1m.
  - 10 – View of trench 3 upon excavation facing N – scales 1m.
  - 11 – View of trench 3 upon excavation facing NW – scales 1m.
  - 12 – View of trench 4 upon excavation facing NE – scales 1m.
  - 13 – View of trench 4 upon excavation facing SW – scales 1m.
  - 14 – View of trench 4 upon excavation facing SW – scales 1m.
  - 15 – View of trench 4 upon excavation facing SW – scales 1m.
  - 16 – View of trench 4 upon excavation facing SW – scales 1m.
  - 17 – View of trench 4 upon excavation facing SW – scales 1m.
  - 18 – View of trench 4 upon excavation facing SW – scales 1m.
  - 19 – View of trench 5 upon excavation facing SW – scales 1m.
  - 20 – View of trench 5 upon excavation facing NE – scales 1m.
  - 21 – View of trench 6 upon excavation facing NE – scales 1m.
  - 22 – View of trench 6 upon excavation facing SW – scales 1m.
  - 23 – View of trenches facing N.
  - 24 – View of trenches facing NE.
  - 25 – View of trenches facing E.
  - 26 – View of trenches facing SW.
  - 27 – View of trenches facing SW.
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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT TEAM, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICE  
SPECIFICATION FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

Erection of house and garage at New Fleenas Farm, Nairn  
14/02375/FUL

**1) Summary**

This brief details the work required to fulfil the archaeological condition of this planning consent. It represents the minimum standard of work necessary to meet the needs of this condition and should be supplied to tendering archaeological contractors

This project may impact on valuable features of historic and archaeological importance. In view of the archaeological sensitivity and potential of the site, HET advised that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken in advance of development. The implementation of this brief will meet the concerns raised.

This specification is for evaluation by geophysics and trial trenching to determine the archaeological baseline of the application site. If significant deposits are encountered, recommendations for further measures necessary to mitigate the impact of the development should be made.

This brief has been produced for the applicant who will be responsible for the work and all costs incurred, including any tendering and contractual arrangements. This brief must be read with reference to the Highland Council *Standards for Archaeological Work* document that sets out in detail who is responsible for what, as well as the terms of reference, objectives, method, monitoring and reporting arrangements.

The *Standards for Archaeological Work* is available on our webpage at [http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/1022/standards\\_for\\_archaeological\\_work](http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/1022/standards_for_archaeological_work)

**2) Archaeological Background**

The application site lies in an area that is considered to have the potential for buried archaeological and historic remains to survive. A number of historic and prehistoric sites lie in the wider area – including an extensive and nationally-important Bronze Age burial ground. As such, there is a requirement to evaluate the entire application area in advance of development.

**3) Objectives**

- To identify the location, nature and extent of any features or objects of archaeological importance that would be damaged or destroyed by this development.
- 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.

**4) Methodology**

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

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 desk-based 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.

**5) Schedule & Monitoring**

The Historic Environment Practitioner is responsible for agreeing arrangements for monitoring with HET staff. We will monitor projects as necessary to ensure that minimum standards are met. Prior notice of fieldwork starting dates, with contact names, telephone numbers and arrangements for access must be given to HET in advance of the start of works.

The Historic Environment Practitioner must make a short progress report (by telephone) to HET for every week of fieldwork undertaken. Any unexpectedly significant or complex discoveries, or other unexpected occurrences which might significantly affect the archaeological work and/or the development must be notified by the Historic Environment Practitioner immediately to the applicant and HET. The finds or features must be left in situ until arrangements have been agreed for safeguarding or recording them. In the meantime work may continue on other areas of the site.

**6) Products**

Following completion of the fieldwork, an archive and report will be produced and disseminated according to the standards set out in the HC *Standards for Archaeological Work*. The report should describe the nature of the field work undertaken; the conditions and limitations within which the work was carried-out; the results that were obtained and recommendations for mitigation and/or further work, as appropriate. Further work may include additional fieldwork, post-excavation analysis, specialist studies and publication.

All work will be undertaken according to the Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists.

The brief has been produced specifically for this scheme based on documents supplied at the time it was issued. It is valid for one year from the date of issue. Where work is not carried out in full within that time, a revised specification may be issued.

This brief has been produced by the Historic Environment Team, to whom any enquiries should be addressed. No one else has authority to vary its terms.

Archaeological Evaluation at New Fleenas, Nairn.

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Highland
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	New Fleenas
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	-
<b>PARISH:</b>	Auldearn
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Stuart Farrell
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	-
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Evaluation
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	n/a
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	None
<b>SIGNIFICANT FINDS:</b>	None
<b>NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)</b>	NH 90705/51840 (centred)
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	2 October 2021
<b>END DATE (this season)</b>	2 October 2021
<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	n/a
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in October 2021 for a new house and garage, site lying to South of Lakenbuie Cairnfield (Canmore ID 283686). Work revealed no archaeological features or deposits. Full report submitted to HCHER & NRHE.
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	None
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	n/a
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Private Individual
<b>ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	39a Park Street, Nairn, Highland, IV12 4PP
<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	stuart714@btinternet.com
<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION</b> (intended/deposited)	To be deposited with NMRS