

Report of Archaeological Watching Brief
May 16th 2002
Clava Cairns, Highland
NH 7586/ 4447.

By
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Introduction

This report is for an archaeological watching brief conducted on behalf of the Capital Projects Team of Highland Council by the author for an environmental improvement scheme at Clava Cairns.

Acknowledgements

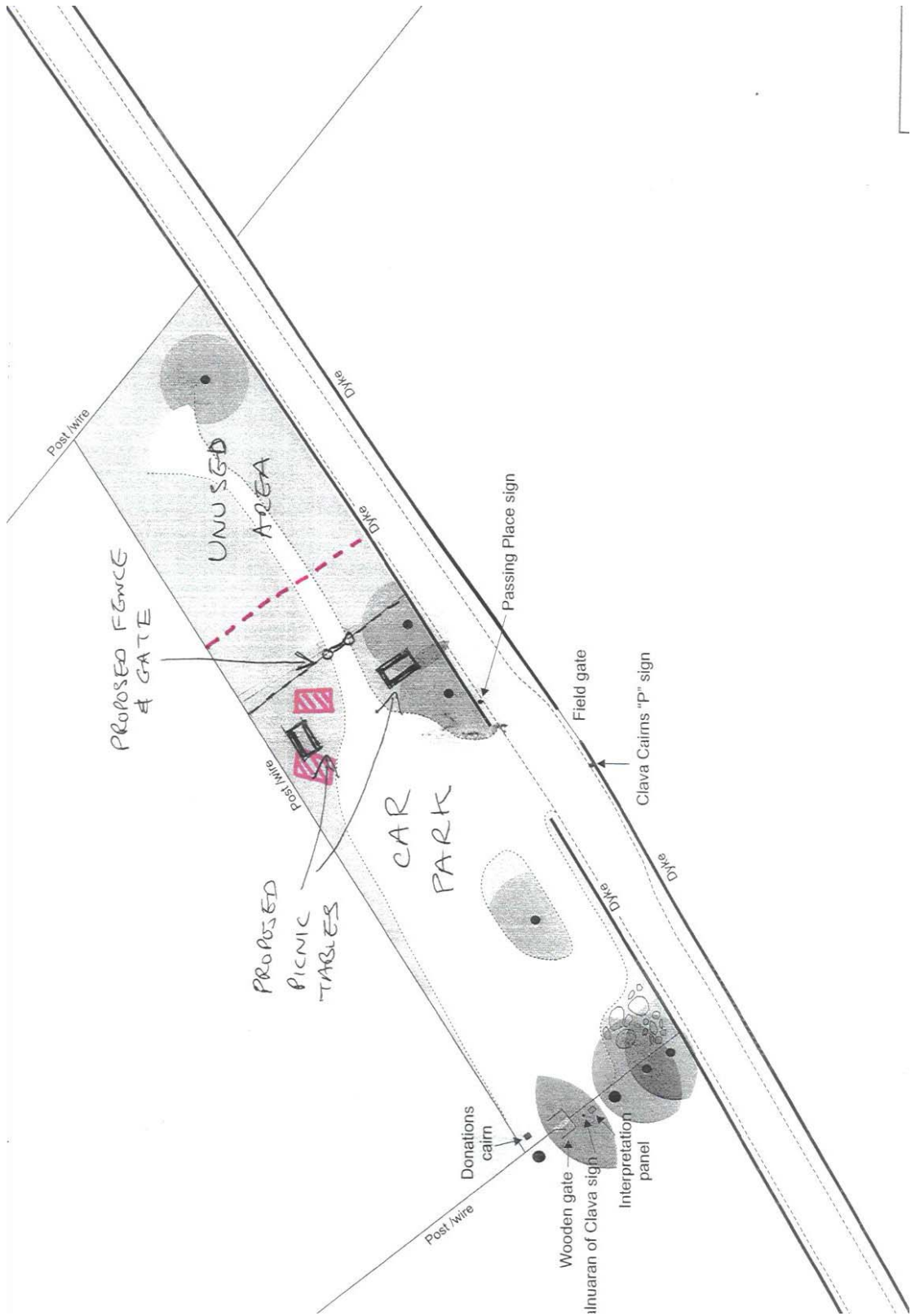
I would like to thank the following for their help during the work :

- Mrs D Maxwell, of Highland Council;
- Mr. R Murchison, of Highland Council
- Staff of D MacLean for onsite works;
- Staff of Highland Council Archaeology Unit.

Location

Location of benches and fence-line marked in red on site plan over.





Historical Background

The site lies close to the site of Clava Cairns which is under the guardianship of the Secretary of State for Scotland and managed by Historic Scotland forming three chambered cairns, also within the vicinity are a number of other prehistoric monuments including other cairns and a standing stone which form part of a larger complex of monuments in the Strathnairn region. (Bradley, 2000)

Objectives

To conduct a watching brief on the excavation of the base of 2 picnic benches and fence-line to record those features revealed by excavation work. A copy of the specification provided by Highland Council Archaeology Unit is enclosed.

Methodology

A monitoring was made of the removal of topsoil and subsoil's to a maximum depth of 350mm for the picnic benches to an area of 2m². Weather on the day of work (May 16th 2002) was generally clear with sunny periods.

Watching Brief Investigation

The watching brief was carried out in accordance with accepted professional archaeological standards as published by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999). Over the construction period a suitably qualified archaeologist was on site to carry out observations and assessment of the area affected by the excavation works.

Results

For the fence-line both the strainer posts were inserted without archaeological supervision, though an inspection of the spoil revealed no indication of archaeological deposits being disturbed or any artefacts.

The excavation of the picnic benches were as follows, though both lay in area of semi rough ground, with evidence of root disturbance due to gorse.

1 – NH 75868/44478 area excavated to 2m² with removal of turf and topsoil to 150mm, area heavy with root action. Sand silt deposit revealed similar to the current car park material. Excavation for concrete bases of picnic base to 350mm of 1.6m x 200mm revealed only natural ground of red-brown gravel silts.

2 – NH 75859/44476 area excavated to 2m² with removal of turf and topsoil to 150mm, sand silt deposit again revealed to part of excavation. Excavation for concrete bases of picnic base to 350mm of 1.6m x 200mm revealed only natural ground of red-brown gravel silts.

Overall no archaeological deposits or features were revealed. The two picnic benches lie in an area of former car park that has over grown.

Recommendations

No recommendations with regards to this project are to be proposed.

Archive

Notebook of results to be deposited in the National Monuments Record in Edinburgh. A set of colour slides showing the progress of the work has been deposited with Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record.

References

Bradley, R (2000) The Good Stones : a new investigation of the Clava Cairns, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph 17. Edinburgh.

IFA (1999) By-laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. Reading.

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Appendix 1 – Details of Slides

- 1 – View of fence-line facing south.
- 2 – View of area of benches pre-ex facing north-east.
- 3 – View of spoil from fence strainer facing south.
- 4 – View of site of bench no.1 pre-ex facing south-east.
- 5 – View of excavation in progress facing south.
- 6 – View of bench no.1 upon removal of turf and topsoil facing south.
- 7 – View of site of bench no.2 pre-ex facing south.
- 8 – View of bench no.2 upon removal of turf and topsoil facing south.
- 9 – View of excavation for concrete base bench no.1 facing east.
- 10 – View of excavation for concrete base bench no.2 facing north.