

777

H.C. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE		
17 JAN 2000		
PASS TO	INITIALS	DATE
GR		
AF	OK	6/3/02
SMR, Highbridge Farm, Spean Bridge		

Leacan Dubha
Munerigie
Invergarry
Inverness-shire
PH35 4HR

Dear Allison,

Please find a site visit record sheet enclosed with maps and photos for Highbridge Farm near to Spean Bridge. By way of explanation, I was allowed out of my cage last autumn to look at a matter involving a planning consent condition to provide off road dog walking facilities!

NOSWA are soon to go ahead with a big new water supply system for Fort William, by abstraction from the gravels in the Great Glen at Camisky. They have planning consent now to use the very narrow Brackletter road which goes through Highbridge, and one particular local resident who operates kennels, made enough fuss for a planning condition to be attached for the provision of dog walking facilities as an alternative to using what is normally a very quiet country road.

I met an engineer from Messrs Mott Macdonald, NOSWA's consulting engineers for the project, and looked at footpath creation options in the area. In so doing I ended up learning that Highland Council owns Highbridge Farm, highlighted pink on Map No 1 enclosed. The former Lochaber District Council some years ago bought Achhabobin and Highbridge Farms in order to acquire a site they wanted to develop for travelling people. The tenant at Achhabobin exercised a right to purchase soon after the old District Council had bought the property, the Council developed their new travellers site and for reasons unknown to me they held on to the land area which I am calling Highbridge Farm.

Things went quiet on the footpath matter, when out of the blue, the private refuse tip at Duiskey which the Council was using was closed and in the emergency, Brackletter tip beside Highbridge was reopened as a waste transfer station. Suddenly this quiet wee road was busy again with lorries and this matter of dog exercising came up again. I was asked by the local Councillor to look at the problem in a hurry, and that is how I came to be walking over Highbridge Farm.

I could not avoid noticing the archaeology on the site, and I made some mental notes. My camera was out of action at the time, but I have just recently been back and taken the photos which I now enclose.

I may be completely out of order with my next saga, and if so please excuse my intervention. Just put it down to naïve enthusiasm!

At the time I was on site with the chap from Mott Macdonald, I learned that it was NOSWA's intention to cut the corner off at Highbridge with a temporary new road, as I have shown on Map No 2, and I believe they now have planning consent for this.

2.

It took me a wee while to get my "eye in" at Highbridge, but I am now reasonably convinced that the Highland Council is the owner of some interesting archaeology there. This is probably all on record leaving me looking a right "Charlie." Never mind, but I am a bit concerned that the proposed new diversion may be cutting through archaeology. Part of the area is masked under whin bushes, trees and rushes. There are definitely old earth dykes and ditches crossing the area in question, possibly a trackway, and possibly some platforms of which I am less than certain. The ground is rolling moraine humps with poorly drained hollows in between. The farm land has been derelict for many years, and I don't think it has ever seen modern machinery. There is some old horse drawn equipment laying out in the middle amongst the whin bushes.

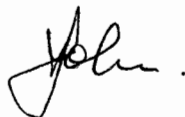
The land is a tapestry of old fields bounded by earth dykes and ditches. The modern post and wire fencing is very dilapidated and sheep and cattle from a nearby farm seem to have a free run of the place.

The big raised platform at 19858170, and the large dry stone ruin at 19558170 which has a military feel to it, are worth a look if no one has already done so. My first reaction to the bend in Wade's road at Highbridge was that he was avoiding some very wet ground, but I now think he may have been going round a well laid out farm.

Please let me know if Highbridge Farm has been previously recorded, and whether you would like me to record anything in greater detail.

The question of the management of this land now and in the future has to be raised sometime with someone in the organisation who wants to listen. The building beside the lay-by for instance, which is supposed to be an old inn, is in a dangerous state and wide open to the public at the moment.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John' followed by a stylized surname.

John Wombell

SITE VISIT RECORD SHEET

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE

SITE NAME: HIGHBRIDGE FARM NEAR SPAN BRIDGE INVERNESS-SHIRE	SMR:
SITE TYPE: FARM DERELICT FARM LANDS WITH VARIOUS STANDING AND COLLAPSED STRUCTURES	NGR: MAP ENCLOSED
LEGAL STATUS: S.S.S.I. GEOGRAPHICAL	ACCESS: PARK IN LAYBY NEAR THE 1745 ASSOCIATION CAWN AT HIGHBRIDGE THE COUNCIL OWNED LANDS LAY EITHER SIDE OF THE ROAD
NAME/ADDRESS* (OWNER/TENANT) HIGHLAND COUNCIL GLENURQUHART ROAD INVERNESS	
REASON FOR VISIT: OTHER DUTIES (AND IN OWN TIME LATER TO TAKE PHOTOS)	OFFICER/DATE: JOHN WOMBELL 20/10/99
DESCRIPTION, NOTES, COMMENTS: 1. HOUSE WITH TIN ROOF 19958185, DERELICT LIME MORTAR RANDOM RUBBLE STONE CONSTRUCTION, CHIMNEYS IN EACH GABLE, BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN AN INN DURING WARRIOR TIME 2. 2 COMPLEX PLATFORMS 18m x 10m and 8m x 10m WITH TRACKWAY. THESE 2 SIDE BY SIDE PLATFORMS NOW TURF COVERED HAD VERY SUBSTANTIAL BUILDINGS ON THEM AT ONE TIME. NGR. 1985 8170. <u>VERY INTERESTING FEATURE</u> . 3. PLATFORM MARKED ONLY BY 3 OLD HAWTHORN TREES. GLAZED POTTERY SHARD FOUND IN MOLEHILL ON THE SITE. NGR 2003 8167 4. THE PLATFORMS AT 1990 8190 MAY BE DRY KNOLLS ON LINE OF AN OLD BOUNDARY OR TRACKWAY TO SITE 2 ABOVE P.T.O.	
FURTHER ACTION: PART OF THE SITE IS AT RISK. PLEASE SEE LETTER ATTACHED.	WEATHER/CONDITONS: CLOUDY / BRIGHT
PHOTOGRAPHS/DRAWINGS: ATTACHED	SKETCH OVERLEAF: *YES/NO

DESCRIPTION / NOTES CONTINUED

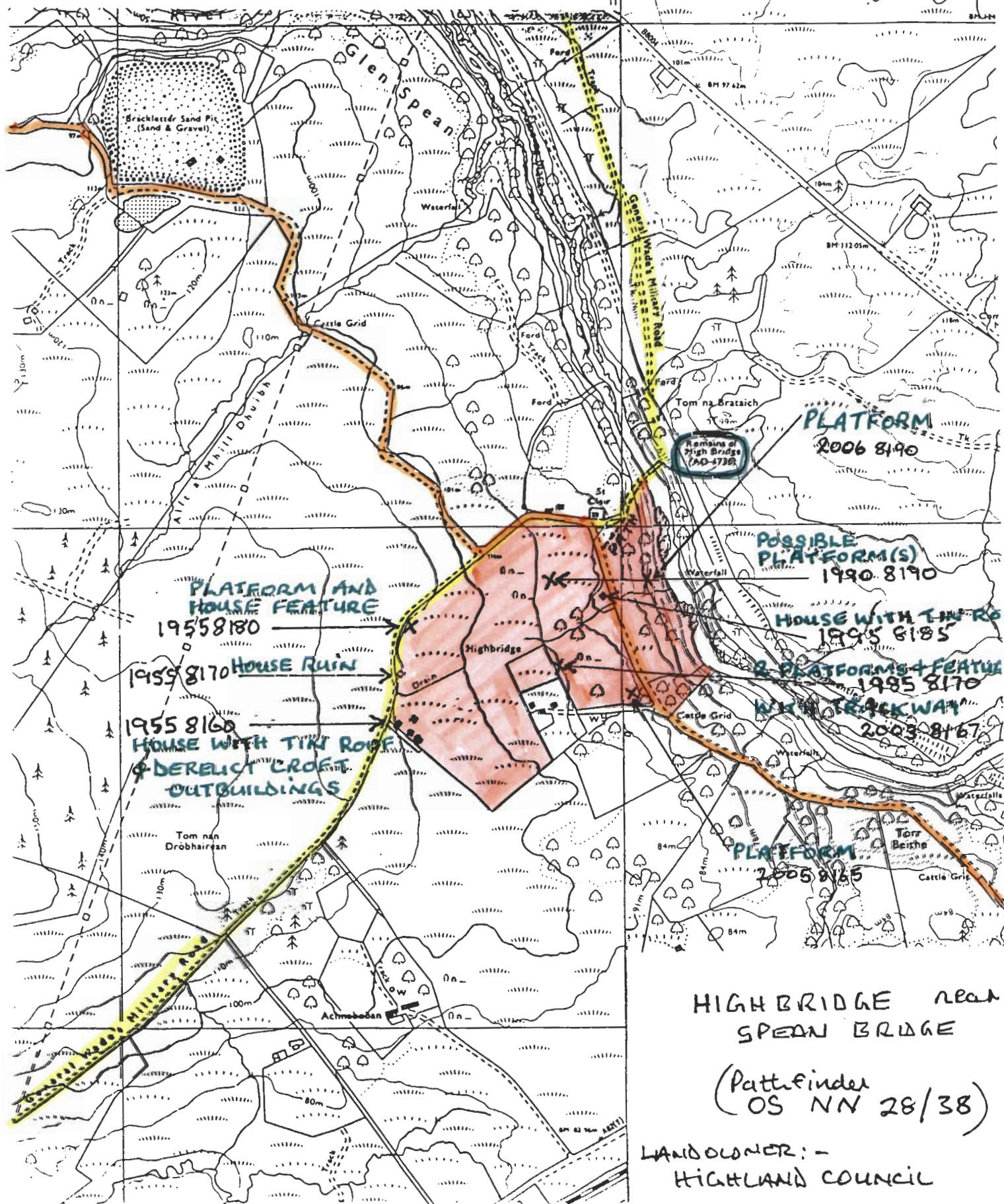
5. FARM/CROFT HOUSE WITH ASSOCIATED OUTBUILDINGS N.G.R. 1955 8160
4 BUILDINGS AND 1 INTERESTING FEATURE
LIME MORTAR STONE HOUSE (DERELICT) WITH TIN ROOF
LIME MORTAR ROOFLESS AGRICULTURAL BUILDING - BYRE OR STABLE
LIME MORTAR ROOFLESS AGRICULTURAL SHED - POSSIBLY CART SHED
CORRUGATED IRON IMPLEMENT SHED OR BARN
LOW FEATURE DUG INTO THE BANK BELOW WADES ROAD WITH STONE RETAINING WALLS
6. THE LOWER WALLS OF A MASSIVELY BUILT DRY STONE HOUSE 12m x 5m, WALLS 900mm THICK, WALLS REMAIN TO 2.1m HIGH, SMALL STONE OUT BUILDING ALMOST CERTAINLY USED LATER AS A PIGSTY. N.G.R. 1955 8170
7. PLATFORM WITH TURF COVERED FOOTINGS 1955 8180
8. REMNANTS OF THE USUAL "WADE" DRY STONE WALL ARE ON THE PROPERTY BESIDE WADES ROAD.
9. THE LAND REMAINING IN COUNCIL OWNERSHIP IS A TAPESTRY OF SMALL FIELD ENCLOSURES DEFINED BY DITCHES AND TURF DYKES, MARKED BY PATCHES OF WHIN, TREES, RUSHES & BRACKEN TODAY.
MY FIRST IMPRESSION WAS THAT WADE HAD DIVERTED HIS ROAD FROM THE STRAIGHT LINE TO AVOID WET GROUND, NOW I AM SURE HE DID SO TO GO AROUND A WELL ESTABLISHED FARM. I THINK WE COULD POSSIBLY BE LOOKING AT A 17th C FARM HERE OR EVEN EARLIER, MORE OR LESS UNSPOILT.
10. POSSIBLE PLATFORM OVERLOOKING THE RIVER ON NORTH SIDE OF ROAD IN WOODLAND. NGR 2006 8190
11. HIGH BRIDGE ITSELF LIES AT THE NORTH WEST CORNER OF THE PROPERTY
IT IS A BIT OF AN EYESORE WITH THE REMAINS OF AN IRON FOOTBRIDGE ACROSS ONE SPAN, BUT THIS MAY BE STOPPING THE CENTRE PIER FROM FINAL COLLAPSE.
** A LARCH TREE IS GROWING IN THE MIDDLE PIER AND IS MOST PROBABLY THE CAUSE OF A LARGE CRACK WHICH WILL EVENTUALLY CAUSE THE CENTRE PIER TO COLLAPSE. THE MOVEMENT OF THIS CONSIDERABLE TREE WILL ALSO BE LITERALLY SHAKING THE PIER TO DESTRUCTION (PLEASE SEE PHOTOS).
12. A WELL PRESERVED HORSE PLOUGH (SINGLE FURROW) AND HORSE GRUBBER ARE LAYING IN WHIN BUSHES OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROUGH GRAZING.

1:10,000 SHEETS... JOINED

PLAN NO 1

(PATIFINDER
O/S NN 08/18)

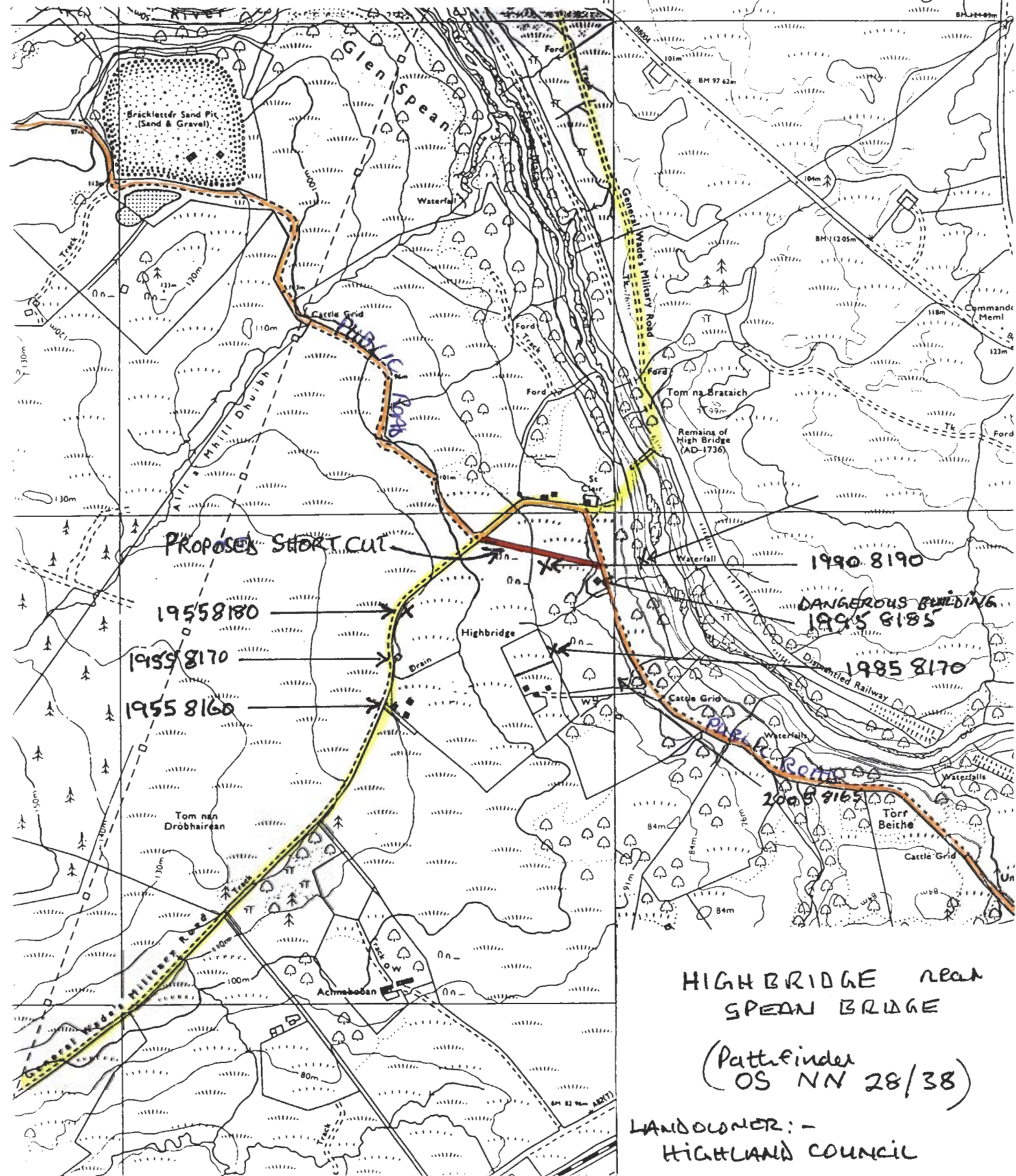
ARCHAEOLOGY



WATER ROADS
PUBLIC ROADS
PROPOSED NEW SHORT CUT

SITE RISK

(PATIFINDER
O/S NN 08/18)



LANDOWNER: -
HIGHLAND COUNCIL

HIGH BRIDGE, SPAN BRIDGE.
WADE 1736 TAKEN 12/01/00



MIDDLE PIER DETAIL
TAKEN FROM SOUTH ABUTMENT
12/01/00



TAKEN FROM BELOW LOOKING WEST
TO SHOW THE LARCH TREE
GROWING OUT OF THE MIDDLE PIER
12/01/00

HIGH BRIDGE, NA SPEAN BRIDGE, WADE 1736



WHOLE STRUCTURE TAKEN
LOOKING EAST 12/01/00



TAKEN FROM BELOW LOOKING WEST
12/01/00



WADES ROAD ABOVE THE BRIDGE
LOOKING SOUTH 12/01/00

HIGHBRIDGE FARM SPEAN BRIDGE



PLATFORMS AND FEATURES

AT 1985 8170
TRACKWAY TO LEFT

PHOTOS TAKEN LOOKING WEST 12/01/00



PLATFORMS 1985 8170 , TRACKWAY TO RIGHT
TAKEN LOOKING N/W 12/01/00

HIGH BRIDGE FARM SPEAN BRIDGE



MAIN PLATFORM 19858170 LOOKING N.W 12/01/00



PLATFORM 19858170 TAKEN FROM BELOW
LOOKING WEST 12/01/00

HIGH BRIDGE FARM, SPEAN BRIDGE



FARM BUILDINGS AT 1955 8160 LOOKING SOUTH WEST 12/01/00



FEATURE TO REAR OF BUILDINGS PHOTOGRAPHED ABOVE
WADES ROAD DIRECTLY BEHIND FENCE ABOVE
12/01/00



WALL DETAIL INSIDE BYRE ABOVE RIGHT
12/01/00

HIGH BRIDGE FARM
SPEAN BRIDGE



DRYSTONE BUILDING 12m x 5m (CENTRE)
DRYSTONE PIGSTY - RENDERED (FOREGROUND)
AT 1955 8170 PHOTO TAKEN LOOKING NORTH
12/01/00



WAES ROAD AND TYPICAL SECTION
OF DYKE . TAKEN LOOKING NORTH 12/01/00
HOUSE AT 1955 8170 CENTRE - TOP

HIGHTBRIDGE FARM, SPEAN BRIDGE

EARTH DYKE
AND HAWTHORN
TREE AT 1990 8190
12/01/00



HORSE DRAWN SINGLE
FURROW PLOUGH
AT 1990 8185
12/01/00



SAME PLOUGH AND
GRUBBER AT 1990 8185

12/01/00



POSSIBLE PLATFORM AT 1990 8190
12/01/00



HIGH BRIDGE FARM - SPAN BRIDGE



INSIDE 1995 8185 - SOUTH GABLE FIREPLACE
12/01/00



INSIDE 1995 8185 FORMER INN
SHOWING NORTH GABLE FIREPLACE
12/01/00



FRONT (EAST) ELEVATION OF
FORMER INN AT HIGHBRIDGE 1995 8185
12/01/00

HIGHBRIDGE FARM SPERN BRIDGE



SHEDBASE TO REAR OF FORMER INN
AT 1995 8185 12/01/00



UP BEHIND 1995 8185 LOOKING NORTHEAST
12/01/00



SOUTH GABLE AND WEST SIDE OF 1995 8185
LOOKING NORTHEAST 12/01/00

HIGHBRIDGE FARM : SPEAN BRIDGE



HIGHBRIDGE FARM
SPEAN BRIDGE JANUARY 2000

TAKEN LOOKING SOUTH OVER THE
SPEAN GORGE FROM THE COMMANDO
MEMORIAL 12/01/00



PLATFORM FEATURE WITH 3 HAWTHORN TREES
AT 2005 8165 LOOKING N/EAST



EARTH DYKE AND POSSIBLE TRACKWAY
1990 8180 12/01/00
LOOKING SOUTH



PLATFORM AT 2006 8190