

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT  
LYBSTER AND BRUAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,  
BRUAN, CAITHNESS**

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## REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT LYBSTER AND BRUAN CHURCH, BRUAN, CAITHNESS

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on a site at ND 3129 3951, on waste ground immediately north-east of Lybster and Bruan Church of Scotland at Bruan, Caithness. The site lies on the west side of the A99, approximately 300 metres east of a broch, and about 300 metres south of a dismantled railway line (Figs. 1 and 2). The work which was to be observed was the excavation of a trench and pits for the installation of a septic tank. The trench was to run north-eastwards from the wall surrounding the church to a large pit which would contain the septic tank, and a further trench would lead south-east from this to a soakaway area ( Fig. 3). In the event, while work was in progress the contractors decided to change this plan and make the trench to the soakaway run north-east from the septic tank pit, continuing the line of the trench into it (Fig. 4).

The work was carried out on 25<sup>th</sup>. September 2001; the weather was initially cloudy, with heavy rain clearing, and becoming sunny in the afternoon. At some time a few days or weeks previously the site had been visited by engineers from SEPA, who had dug several holes to test for soil filtration, including one on the site of the actual septic tank pit. While no archaeological features of any great significance were found during the watching brief, it is nevertheless impossible to be certain that nothing of interest was destroyed by the digging of these holes, or that no finds which might have been in the soil were overlooked, and it is strongly recommended that archaeological watching briefs should be conducted whenever digging first begins on a site, including cases like the present where test pits are dug before the actual excavation for construction takes place.

The site consisted of an area of rough ground lying between the Church of Scotland and the former Free Church, now used by a farmer as an implement store (Plates 1 and 2). In the northwest corner of the site were the very ruinous remains of a cottage (Plate 3), and the whole area appeared to be much disturbed with many bumps and mounds in the ground, which was overgrown with grass, weeds and nettles. A local neighbour, Mr. John MacLean of Tulloch Lea, Bruan, confirmed that the area had been extensively used as a rubbish dump.

Work began with the excavation of the pipe trench north-eastwards from the wall surrounding the Church of Scotland. Vegetation and dark brown topsoil were removed to a depth of about 45 cm, at which the topsoil gave way to what is known locally as raffie stone (information from the digger driver, Mr. Willie Sutherland), a natural rotten shale consisting of disintegrating flat stones, intermixed with orange sand. Work continued into the actual septic tank pit; a hole had already been dug here by the SEPA engineers, and it was now expanded by the digger and the sides straightened.

During the removal of the topsoil much domestic refuse was noted, namely bottles, pottery (of 19<sup>th</sup>. and 20<sup>th</sup>. century date) and an enamelled iron cooking-pot, also some flat stone fragments which may have been broken paving stones. An iron sleeper bolt was also found, which must have come from the old Lybster railway (see Figs. 1 and 2).

The only possible archaeological feature was seen in the north-east side of the pit for the septic tank, revealed in section as the digger straightened the sides of the irregular pit which

had been already dug by the SEPA engineers. This feature consisted of layers of very dark soil, the upper one containing a large number of stones, sloping downwards into the southwest side of the pit, and looking like a ditch or shallow pit cut into the natural (Fig. 5 and Plate 4). It is just possible that it may indeed have been a ditch or pit, with the rest of it lying under the ground to the east of the trench and septic tank pit, or having lain within the hole which the SEPA engineers dug. On the other hand, the ground did slope down in this direction anyway (which was one of the reasons why the contractors decided not to route the soakaway in this direction as originally planned), and the digger driver, an elderly man with much local knowledge, was of the opinion that the slope was entirely natural.

The most likely interpretation seems to me to be that the layers of black soil (Fig. 5, layers 2 and 3) represent an old ground surface, on which domestic rubbish has been dumped. This would accord well with the generally irregular surface of the site and the information that it had been used for dumping rubbish.



# PROPOSED WATER INSTALLATION AT BRUAN CHURCH

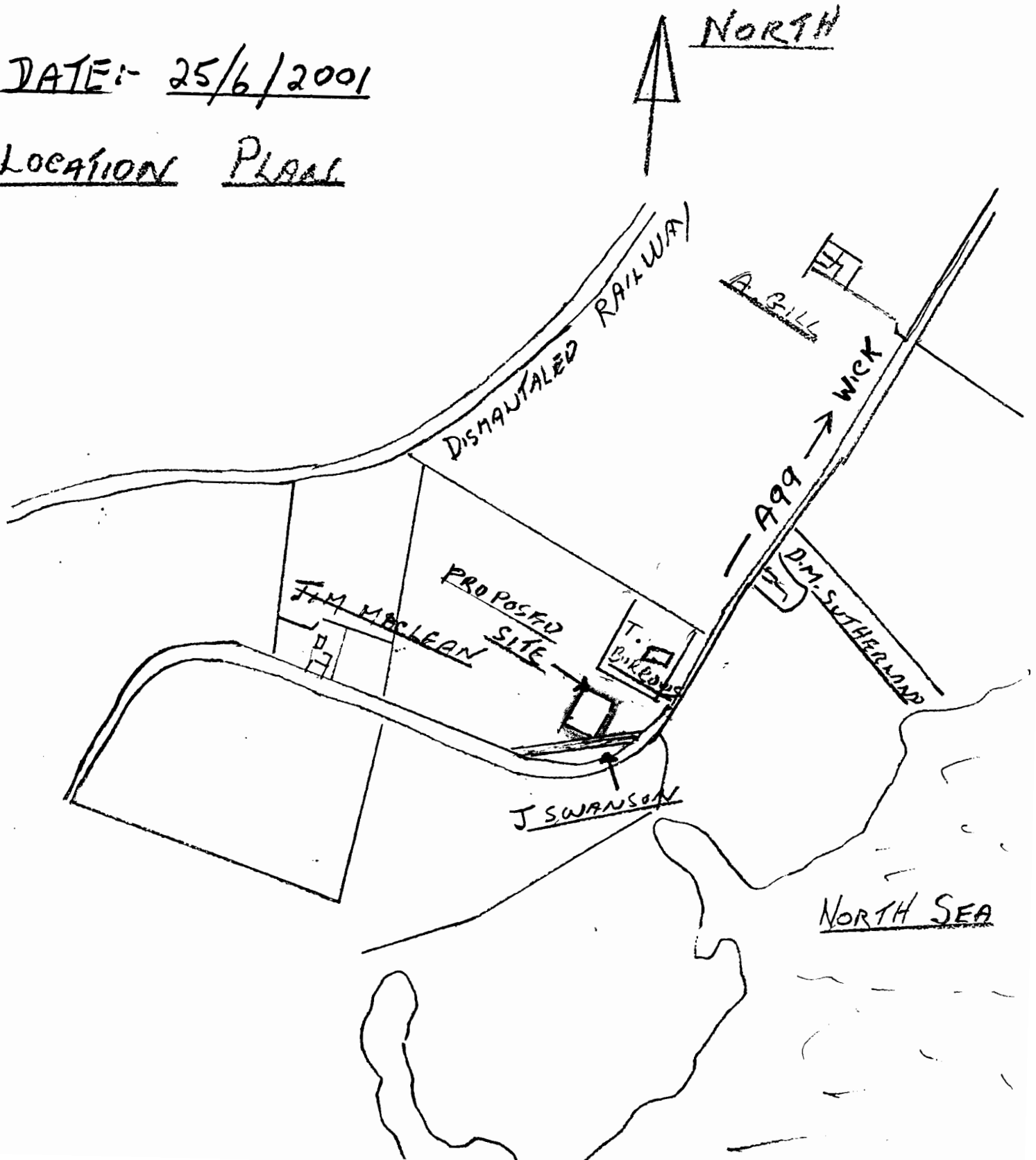
Fig. 2

CLIENT:- LYBSTER/BRUAN  
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

SCALE:- 6 INCHES = 1 MILE

DATE:- 25/6/2001

LOCATION PLAN





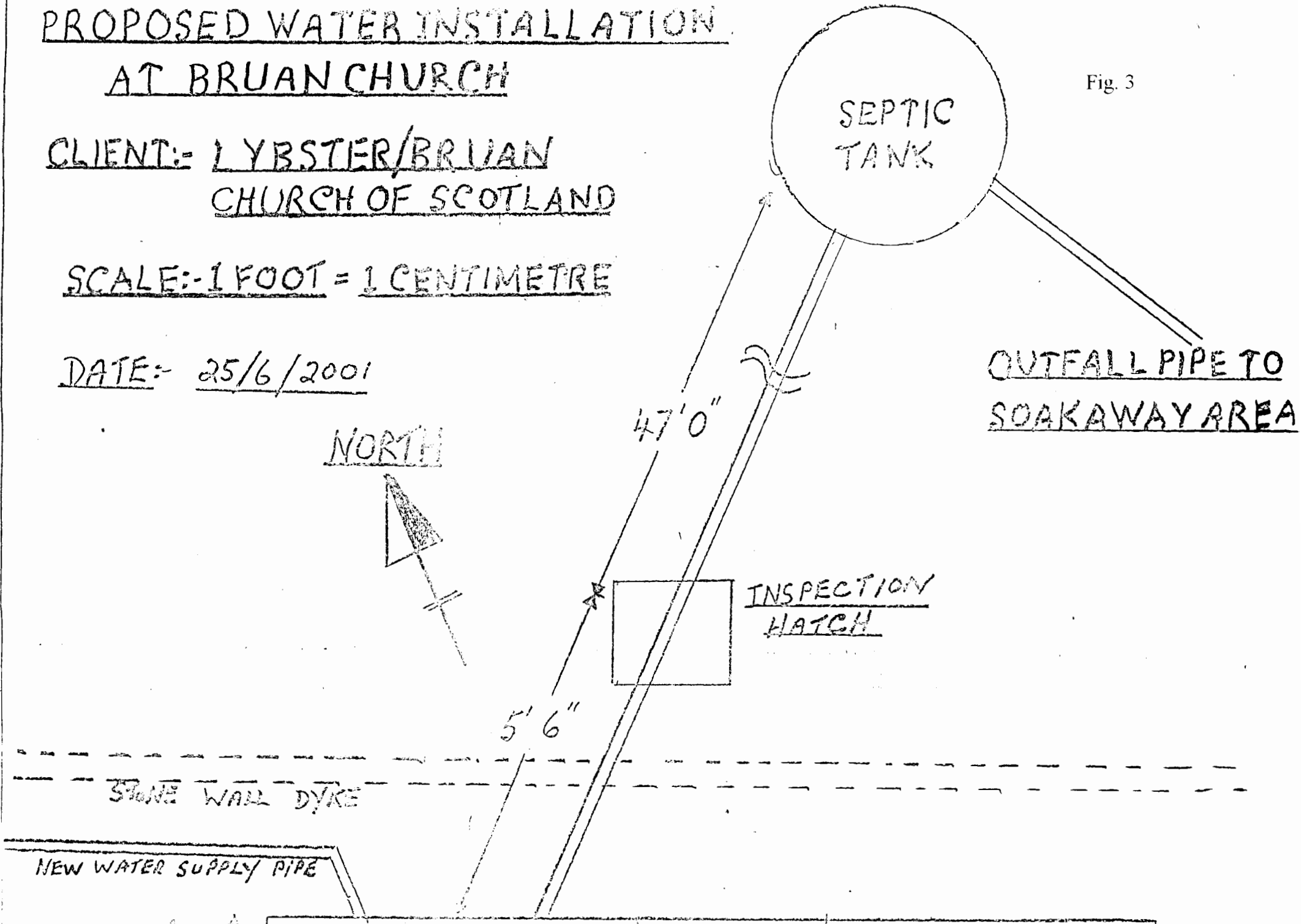
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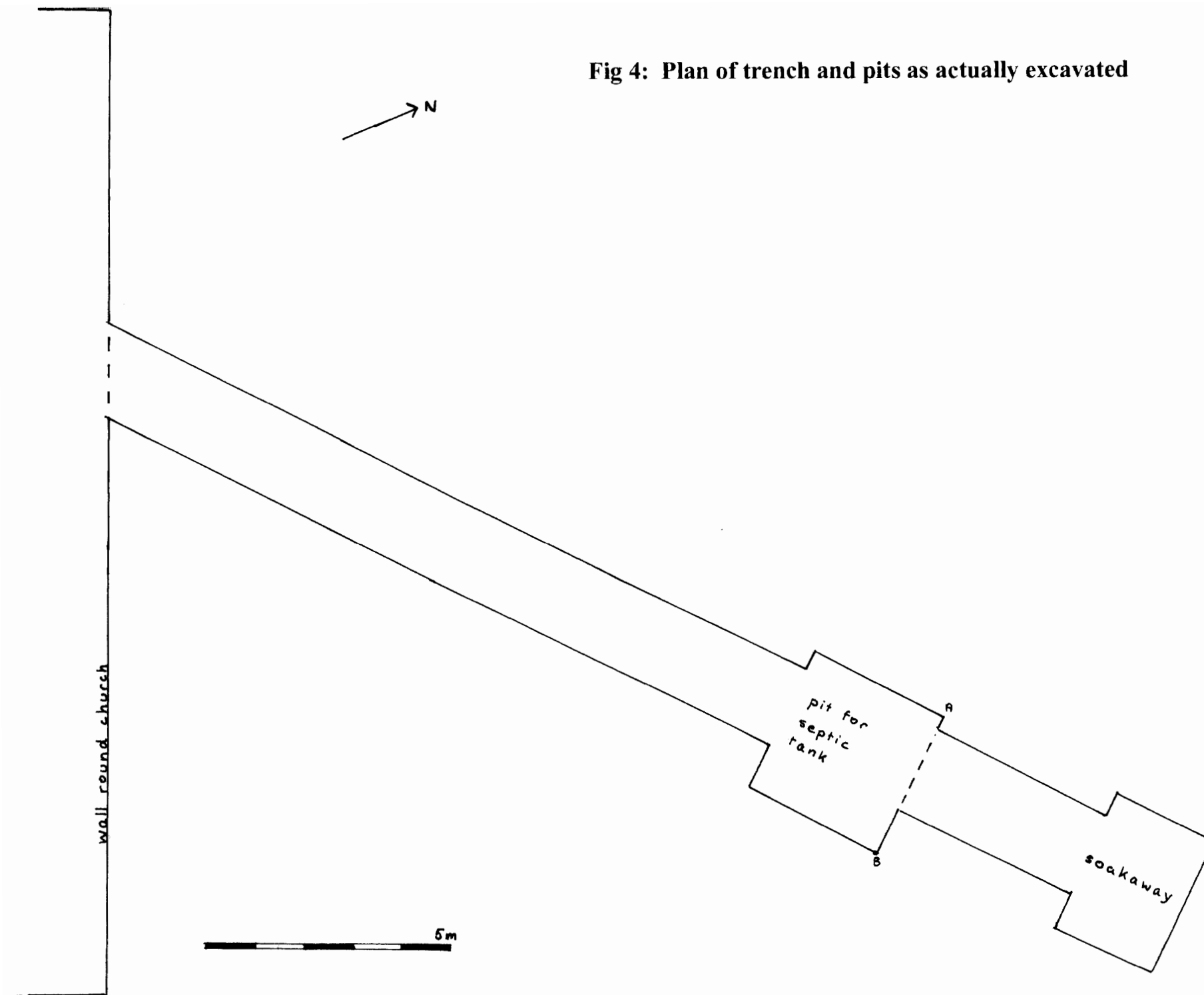
SCALE:- 1 FOOT = 1 CENTIMETRE

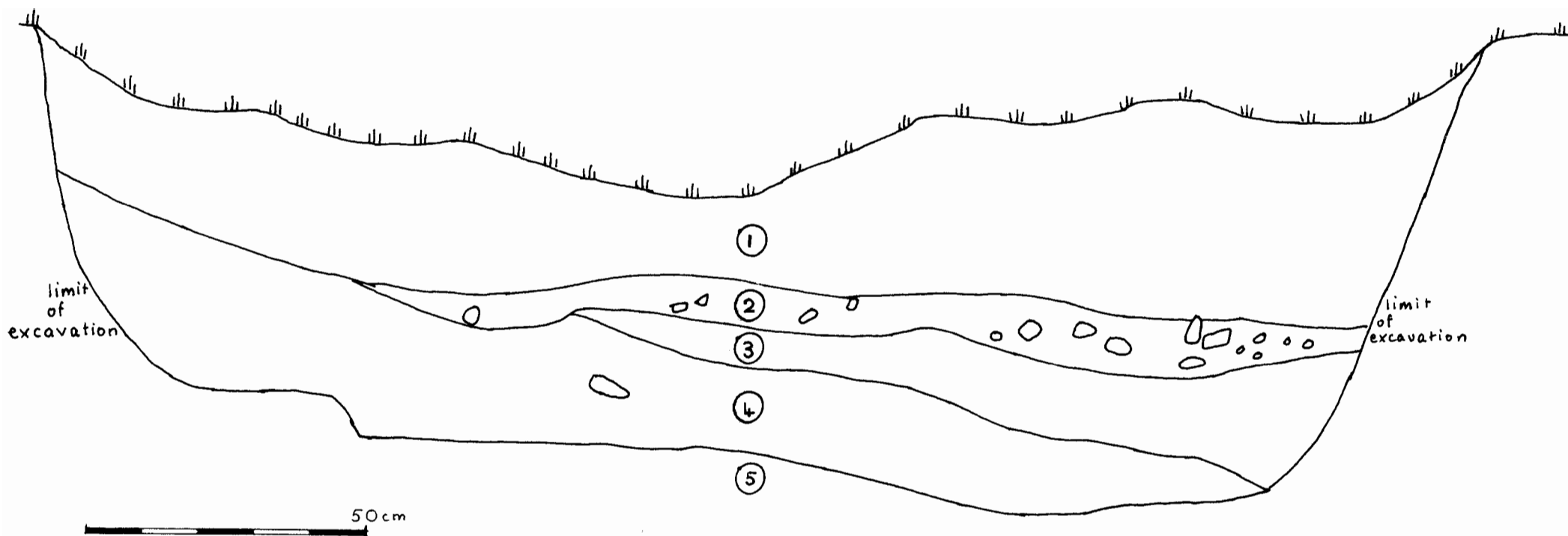
DATE:- 25/6/2001

Fig. 3



**Fig 4: Plan of trench and pits as actually excavated**





**Fig 5: Possible ditch feature**

- 1: very dark brown topsoil
- 2: stones in black clayey soil
- 3: black clayey soil
- 4: brown clay
- 5: orange - brown clayey sand





Plate 1: View of site looking west, with wall of Church of Scotland



Plate 2: View of site looking north-east, with former Free Church





Plate 3: Ruins of cottage in north-west corner of site

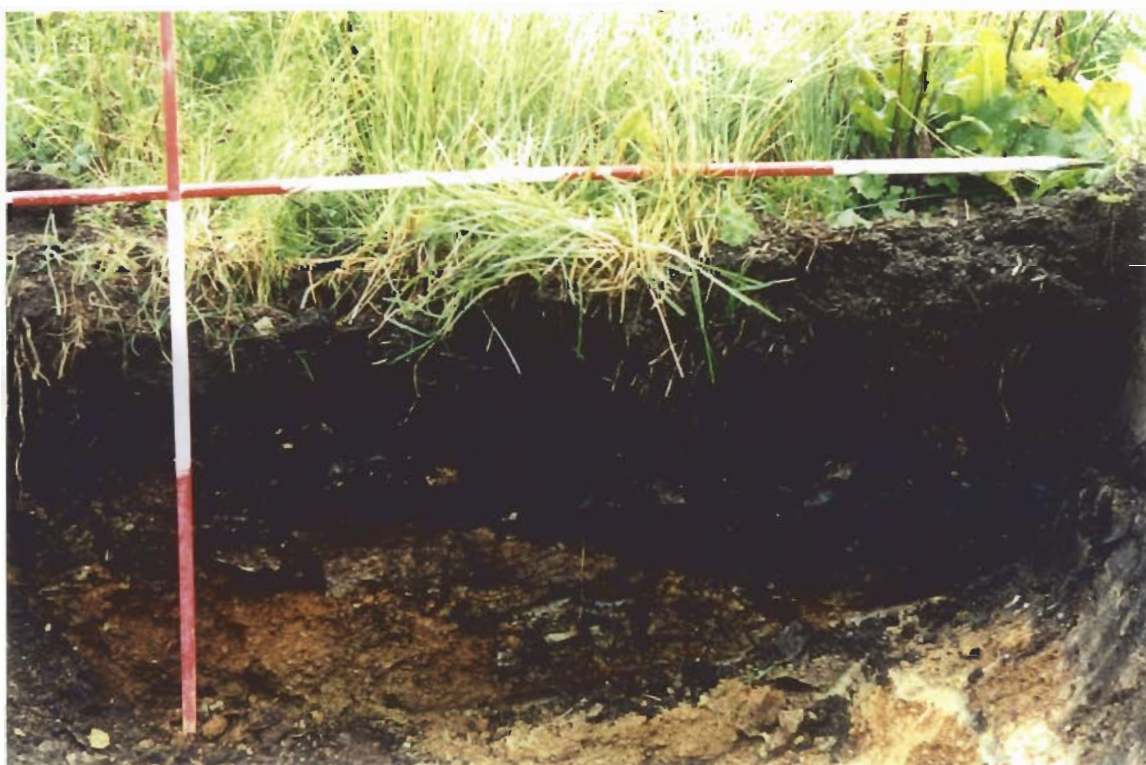


Plate 4: Section of possible ditch feature

**Brief for archaeological work at:**

**Lybster and Bruan Church**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**HIGHLAND COUNCIL  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE**

**Archaeology Unit**

## 1) Background

- a) This specification has been produced in response to the need for an archaeological watching brief to be carried on site ground works. It is for a minimum standard of work; a higher standard may be offered and accepted

## 2) Terms of Reference

- a) This specification is for archaeological recording work occasioned by planning application no.[ - ]. It is based on these documents. If these details are changed a new specification will be needed. It is valid until April 1<sup>st</sup> 2002 after which if no work has been carried out a revised specification will be needed.
- b) The specification has been produced for the applicant, who will be responsible for the work, including all tendering and contractual arrangements. Estimates should be obtained from archaeological contractors on the basis of this specification
- c) Any reference to 'archaeologist' in this specification is to be taken to mean a qualified and experienced practitioner acceptable to the Senior Archaeologist. This is to ensure that work is carried out to professional standards. The project should be carried out by, or under the immediate direction of, a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists or an archaeologist of equivalent standing.
- d) **Before site works commence, the proposed arrangements, including a timetable for the work must be agreed with the Area Planning Manager, and the Senior Archaeologist in writing.**

## 3) Tendering

- a) Tenders must be accompanied by a project design, statement and evidence of competence, including the CV of the Project Director, and other staff where possible.

## 4) Objectives

- a) To record, to professional standards, any features and objects of archaeological importance that will be damaged or destroyed by this development. This is often achieved by clearing the topsoil to a clean surface in which archaeological features can be identified by the archaeologist. 11

## 5) Method

- a) A watching brief will be conducted by an archaeologist on site ground-works, including service trenches so that any finds or features of importance can be recorded to professional standards.
- b) Those carrying out site works will need to work closely with the archaeologist and provide all necessary access and other arrangements. Where excavating machinery is to be used, a straight-edged bucket must be used on a back acting machine. Care will need to be taken to avoid over excavation, and the advice of the archaeologist on-site should be adhered to regarding this.
- c) The archaeologist must be given every aid by contractors to enable the archaeological work to be carried out. Contractors may need to use differing work practices on site than usual to enable the archaeologist to complete the work. This must be catered for and adhered to.
- d) **Should archaeological remains be encountered during the work, the archaeologist must be allowed up to one hour to record each feature. If longer than this is required, refer to paragraph 6(d)**

## 6) Monitoring

- a) The Senior Archaeologist will normally monitor projects to ensure that specifications are met.
- b) Monitoring will normally be by unannounced site visit. Alternative or additional monitoring arrangements may be made in individual cases.
- c) Prior notice of fieldwork starting dates, with contact names and local addresses, telephone numbers and directions and other arrangements for access must be given to the Senior Archaeologist by the archaeologist contracted to carry out the work.
- d) Any unexpectedly significant or complex discoveries, or any other unexpected occurrences or conditions which might affect the agreed project work or its timetable or cost must be notified immediately to the client and the Senior Archaeologist. Revised arrangements will be required and the archaeologist must organize a site meeting with the applicant/agent and senior archaeologist to agree a course of action. No further archaeological work should take place upon the features requiring extra time until the meeting has been held and appropriate arrangements agreed. In the meantime work may continue on other areas of the site.
- e) Where archaeological work fails to meet this specification the applicant will be in breach of the planning condition until matters are rectified.

## 7) Reporting

### a) Project report

- i) At least five copies of the project report must be produced. These must be submitted to the all of the following within 3 weeks of the completion of the field work.
  - One paper copy for the applicant.
  - One paper copy for the Caithness Area Planning and Building Control Manager
  - One paper copy for the Archaeology Unit, Planning and Development Service, Council Offices, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX where it will be available for immediate consultation by the public
  - A copy of the complete report in Adobe Acrobat format (ie a pdf file). This can be supplied by email or on a computer disc. Please ensure that all drawings and photographs are included.
  - One paper copy to be deposited with Norman Newton, Libraries Support Unit, 31a Harbour Road, Inverness.
- ii) The report must include, as a minimum,
  - Location plan showing the project area and archaeological sites and features affected. Grid references must be included.
  - Circumstances and objectives of this work, including a copy of this specification
  - Weather and other conditions affecting fieldwork
  - Scale plans, and photographs of all archaeological features noted
  - A full index to any records or other material generated by the project including its location
  - A brief analysis of the project results drawing in comparative data as appropriate, and a statement of the significance of the results for future research. Note that a negative result may itself be significant.
  - General comments and proposals for future archaeological projects arising from the carrying out of this project
  - A set of colour slides illustrating the project progress from start to completion.

- iii) The completed report will be available for immediate public consultation for research purposes at the Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record. In addition, the Archaeology Unit reserves the right to make the report available for reference and research purposes, either on paper, or electronically. Subject to this, copyright will remain with the author unless specifically transferred in writing, and the Archaeology Unit will assume author's copyright unless advised otherwise. Copyright will be acknowledged in all cases by the Archaeology Unit.
- b) This specification includes arranging a presentation of the project results to the local community within a year of the completion of the fieldwork. Arrangements must be agreed with the Senior Archaeologist.
- c) A brief summary of the results must be sent to the Council for Scottish Archaeology for inclusion in Discovery and Excavation in Scotland. The cost of this must be included in any tender document.

## 8) Treasure Trove

- a) The Archaeological Contractor must liaise with the Assistant Curator (Archaeology) at Inverness Museum and Art Gallery prior to the start of fieldwork, regarding possible emergency conservation needs and future storage arrangements. The Assistant Curator will in turn notify the local museum of the fact that there is archaeological work ongoing in the area. Should museum staff wish to visit the site whilst the archaeological work is in progress, they must first gain permission from the site owner/agent. **The site owner/agent must be aware that no one, other than the Council's Planning Officer, in consultation with the Archaeology Unit, has the authority to vary the terms of this specification.**
- b) Provision must also be made for a cataloguing system for artefactual material, which will be compatible with the needs of the institution receiving these finds. Any report to the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer must be copied to the Senior Archaeologist, and the Assistant Curator (Archaeology) at Inverness Museum and Art Gallery. Any finds, where appropriate, should also be reported to the Receiver of Wreck.

## 9) General

- a) The archaeologist appointed must be of a professional standing acceptable to the Senior Archaeologist and must carry out the work according to the Code of Conduct, standards and guidelines of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- b) The main contractor has responsibility for the Health and Safety of any archaeological staff on site.
- c) The archaeologist is responsible for taking all necessary measures to conform with the Health and Safety at Work Acts and be covered by all necessary insurance.
- d) Any Health and Safety incidents on site involving the archaeologist must be immediately notified to the Health and Safety Executive.
- e) The archaeologist must agree a timetable for the work with the client and the Senior Archaeologist
- f) The archaeologist appointed will not comment to the press or other media without prior approval from the Senior Archaeologist
- g) Proper provision must be made for prevailing weather conditions in northern Scotland.
- h) The archaeologist agrees by undertaking this work to the terms of this specification.