

**Archaeological Watching Brief at Car Park Construction,
Grummore and Passing Place Relocation, Grumbeg for the
Strathnaver Trail Project, Strathnaver, Sutherland**



Catherine Dagg

for

**Highland Council
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX**

Received JW. 23/1/02

Archaeological Watching Brief at Car Park Construction, Grummore and Passing Place Relocation, Grumbeg for the Strathnaver Trail Project, Strathnaver, Sutherland

1:0 Background: The Strathnaver Trail

The Strathnaver Trail, covering the area from Farr and Bettyhill on the north coast to Loch Naver approximately 26km south, is being developed to provide access to the archaeological, historical and natural heritage of Strathnaver for both the local community and tourists. This includes the creation of car parking areas and a network of waymarked paths, with disabled access where possible, and a limited number of information on stone plinths.

42 archaeological sites were selected for inclusion in the trail, the criteria for selection including the state of preservation of each site and its ability to withstand visitor pressure. The site themes include prehistoric life, death and fortifications, churches and religious sites, the Clearances, memorials and monuments and 19th century buildings. Within the 42 sites are 16 Scheduled Monuments and one Listed building.

1:2 Background: Grummore and Grumbeg

Grummore and Grumbeg are both located on the north shore of Loch Naver, and both are pre-Clearance townships with associated prehistoric monuments: at Grummore a broch on the loch shore and hut circles and a burnt mound to the north of the township, and at Grumbeg a chambered cairn, a cup-marked stone and a hut circle. The placenames suggest a possible Norse influence (ON: Grimr) and both settlements are recorded in Timothy Pont's survey carried out between 1583 and 1596 (Growb Moir and Growb Beg). Both were depopulated during a notorious episode during the Strathnaver Clearances in 1819, since when the land has been used only for sheep grazing. A forestry plantation covers part of the west of Grummore, and there is an international caravan site on the loch shore. Both sites are Scheduled Monuments.

1:3 Background: The Watching Brief

In order to protect the archaeology at the two sites during the construction of the car parks and laybys, a brief for archaeological work was prepared by the archaeology Unit of Highland Council Department of Planning and Development. This brief specified the monitoring of all site ground works, so that any finds or features of importance could be recorded to professional standards.

This specification included any ancillary work such as drainage channels, landscaping or embankment works, works compounds or stone pits as well as the car parking areas.

Scheduled Monument Consent was granted for the proposed works, a description of which included the specification that a watching brief would be carried out. The Scottish Ministers were satisfied that the work could be carried out without detriment to the historic, archaeological or architectural integrity of the monuments.

The author was invited by Highland Council in September 2001 to carry out the watching brief at Grummore and Grumbeg. Due to delays with the contractor, Highland Council Roads Dept, the work was not carried out until December 4th and 5th. Work on both days took place in clear, cold and dry weather conditions

2:1 The Watching Brief: Grummore

2:1:1 Proposal: Provision of an informal ‘off-road’ car park for five cars using the existing field access track on the north side of the road to the west of Grummore Burn bridge. This proposal utilizes an existing plateau area approximately 14m by 25m. The access track runs in from an existing passing place, which will be widened to the east for improved visibility.

2:1:2 Site Description: The ‘plateau’ area of the car park is a roughly rectangular area aligned approximately NE-SW, draining gently NE to the Grummore Burn and with a probable spring in the west corner, marked by a damp reed-covered patch. It has the appearance of an area of former cultivation, being level and relatively stone free, with field clearance cairns on two sides (**Photo no. 1**)

To the north of the area are two substantial cairns at the base of a stony slope. As there is no evidence for cleared fields higher up this slope, it is assumed that the material was cleared from the car park area. The more easterly of these two cairns, (cairn 1) located north of the NE corner of the car park area by approximately 3m is circular, with a diameter of 3.5m, and consists of both large and small stones. (**Photo no. 2**) The second large cairn (cairn 2) is SW of the first, approximately 2m from the edge of the car park area, is oval in shape and appears to be made up of larger stones, now grass and bracken covered. (**Photo no. 3**)

The SE edge of the area, running parallel to the road and ditch, and set back from the ditch by approximately 2m, has the appearance of a bank built up with clearance stones, now grass-covered. To the SW end of this bank is a low grass-covered clearance cairn, (cairn 3) triangular in shape and measuring 1m by 2m. (**Photo no. 4**) At the SE corner of the car park area is a fourth clearance cairn, (cairn 4) sickle-shaped and built around an *in situ* boulder, consisting of small stones (**Photos 5 and 6**)

2:1:3 The Watching Brief: Topsoil stripping of the area of the car park revealed a homogeneous brown sandy soil, relatively stone free and with no other visible

features.(**Photo no. 7**) In order to make up the required width of the car park, either cairns 1 and 2 or cairns 3 and 4 would lie close enough to its edge to be in danger of damage. It was agreed that cairns 1 and 2 should be protected by shifting the car park area slightly to the SE, this had the result of removing part of cairn 4 (**Photos 8 and 9**) The material removed proved to be typical small field clearance cairns.

2:1:4 Grummore Watching Brief, Conclusions: The conclusion of the author is that while the car park was placed on an area of land which had had a function as an area of cultivation probably contemporary with the pre-Clearance township, the damage to the archaeological record is minimal, as the associated field clearance cairns remain, with one exception, undamaged. These cairns could be used in the interpretation of the car park for the visiting public as a starting point for their visit to the township.

2:2 The Watching Brief, Grumbeg

2:2:1 Proposal: The provision of a 3-car layby on the outside bend of the road, at present a passing place. This passing place to be relocated to the excavated area on the inside of the bend. The proposed layby flanks an existing field access, allowing for two cars to the east and one car to the west of this access track. Minor visibility splays will extend at either end of the passing place.

2:2:2: Site Description: The north side of the road, the area of the proposed relocated passing place, has already been cut into the bank, presumably to allow improved visibility for vehicles rounding the bend (**Photo no. 10**) The present face of the bank is stabilized at approximately 45° and is presumed to be grassed-over subsoil. Below this bank, the area level with the road is covered with patches of imported material such as subsoil and gravel, also mortar which is presumed to date from repairs to the drystone wall on the other side of the road. Above the bank the ground slopes up gently to the church site and old burial ground approximately 40m away. This ground is stony and has some field clearance piles, none close to the top of the bank.

On the other side of the road, the ground falls away sharply from the road edge to the base of the drystone wall. This indicates that the ground level has been substantially built up with imported material during the building of the passing place, leaving only 1m between the edge of the passing place and the dyke.

2:2:3 The Watching Brief: The surface of the area at the base of the bank to the north of the road was removed. This material was a mixture of subsoil and the aforementioned imported soils, gravel and mortar. An exploratory scoop was made into the bank to see if its material was suitably to be used as hardcore, but it proved to have too high an organic

content, so the bank was left intact and the scoop later reinstated. (Photos 11 and 12). The passing place area was extended east and west. No archaeological features were revealed. No excavation was involved with the construction of the layby on the south side of the road, as the extensions to this area required building up to the level of the road. Material for this was to be brought on site from the existing quarry to the south of Grumbeg, outwith the Scheduled area.

2:2:4 Grumbeg Watching Brief, Conclusions: The conclusion of the author is that there was no damage to any archaeological feature during the construction of the layby and passing place.

3. General Conclusions and Comments

As no features of the two townships have been recorded at either of the locations of the watching briefs, it was not anticipated that any archaeology would be affected, although the areas of work both lie within the Scheduled areas of the sites. The identification of the car park site at Grummore as an area of former cultivation does indicate that areas without any recorded features also had a function. The overall pattern of land use at Grummore and Grumbeg has yet to be plotted by detailed archaeological survey, but will offer as interesting an insight into life at these settlements as the standing ruins.

Enclosures

1. Location Plan
2. Grummore Site Plan
3. Grummore Detail of area of Watching Brief
4. Grumbeg Site Plan
5. Grumbeg Detail of Area of Watching Brief
6. Copy of Highland Council Archaeological Watching Brief

**Catherine Dagg
2, Ruigh' Riabhach
Scoraig Peninsula
Dundonnell
Wester Ross
IV23 2RE
Tel: 01854 633 337**

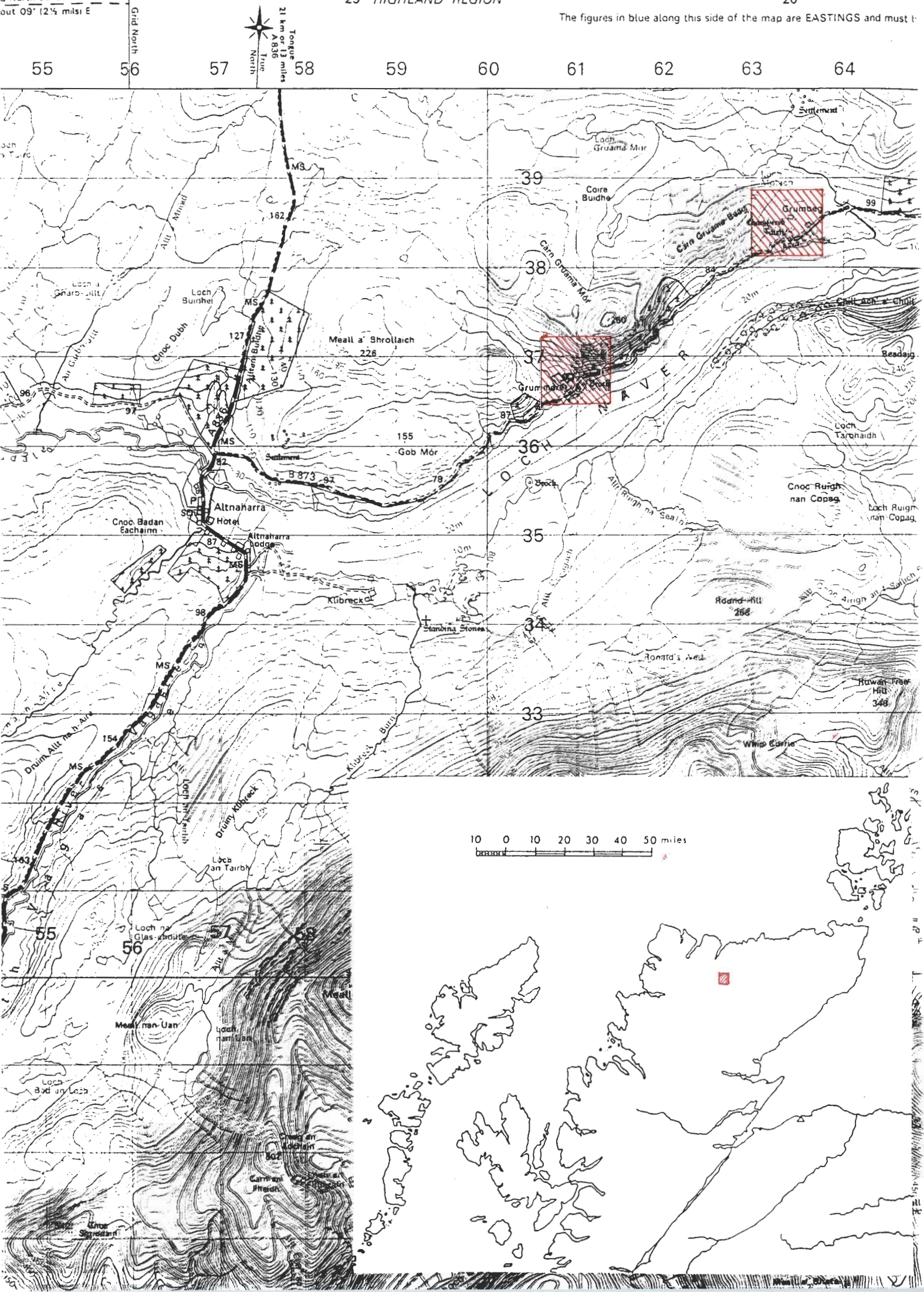
21.1.02

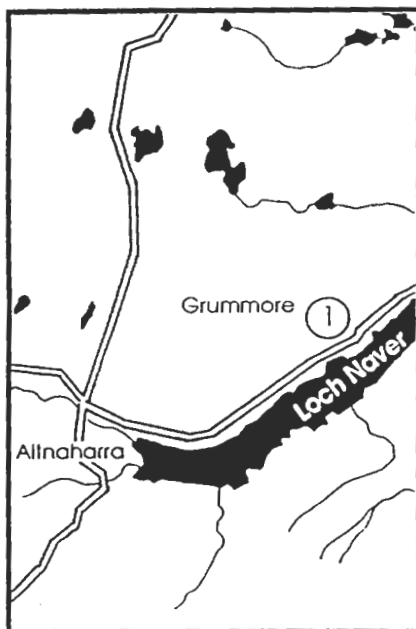
and North June 1990
out 09° (2.4 miles) E

25' HIGHLAND REGION

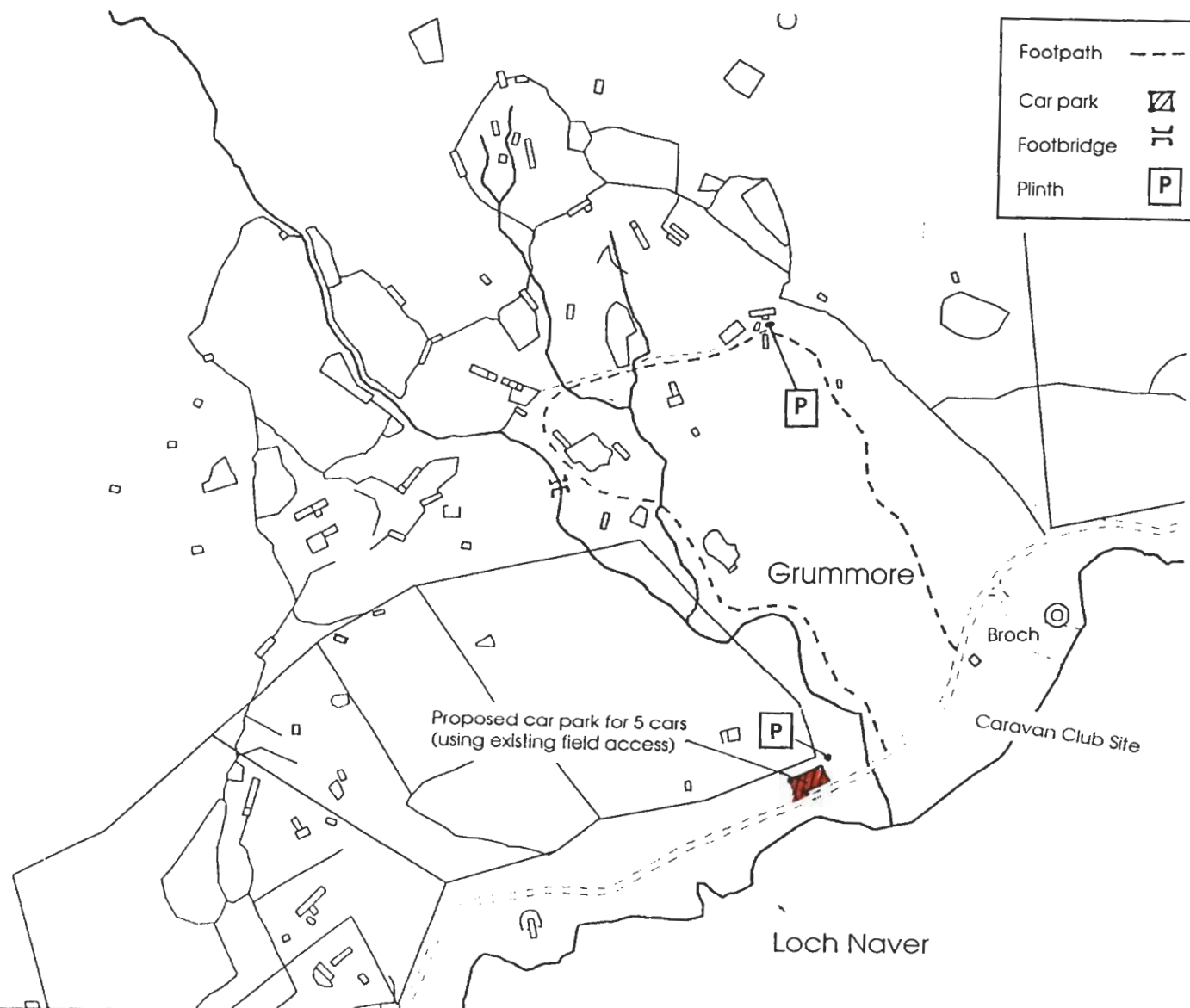
20'

The figures in blue along this side of the map are EASTINGS and must t





Scale 1:135 000 (approx 2 miles to 1 in.)



0.2 0 0.2 0.4 0.6 Kilometers



Sites and Monuments Record


Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of HM Stationary Office. Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. The Highland Council LA09036L

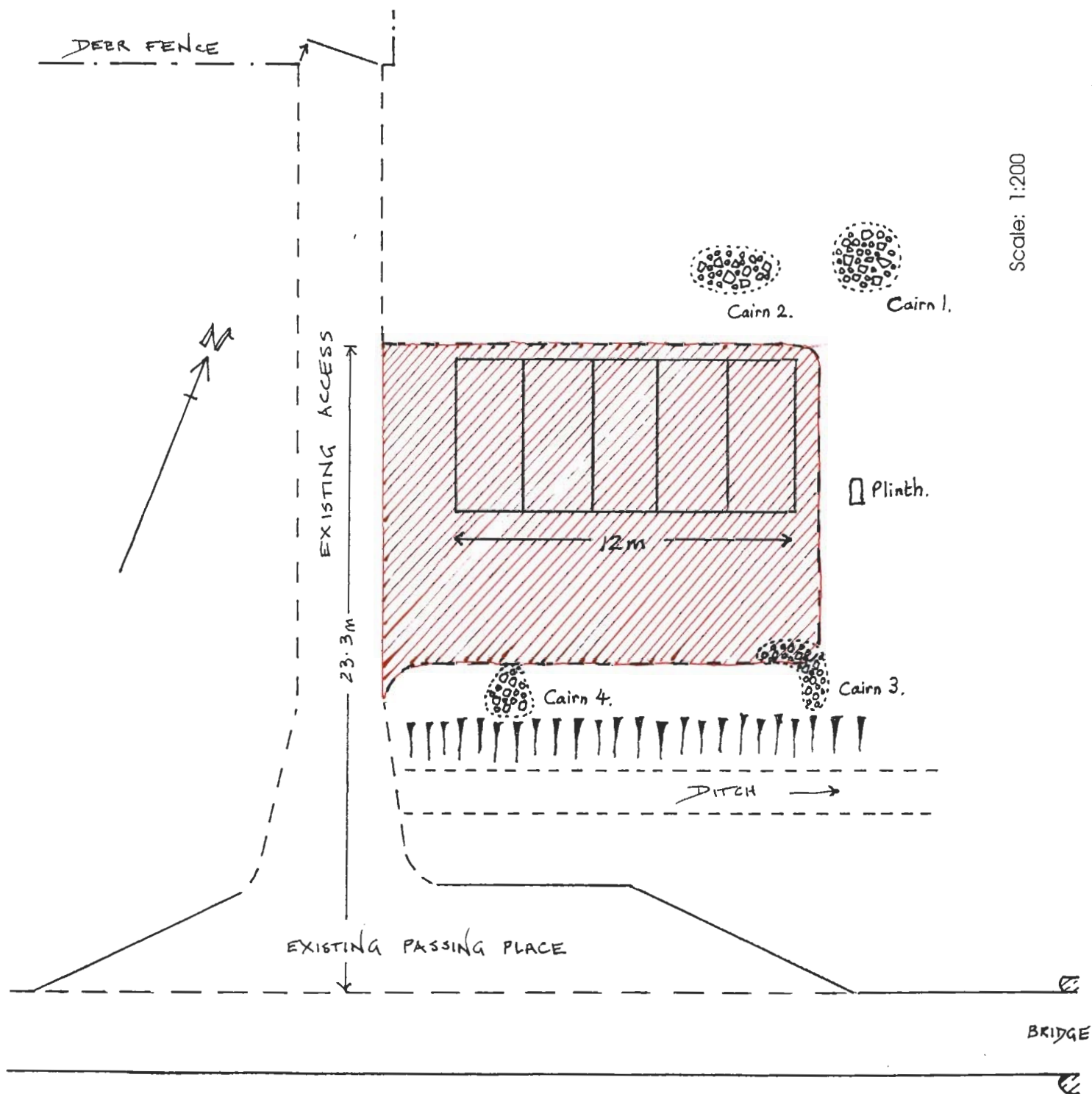





The Strathnaver Trail

Car Parking at Grummore

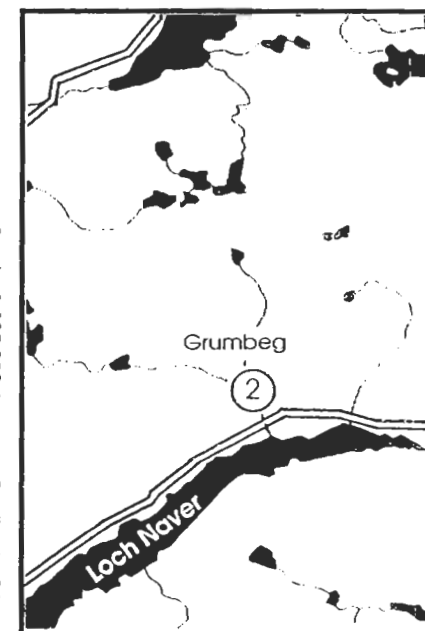
Archaeological Watching Brief

Area of topsoil stripping: 



- Footpath ---
- Car park 
- Passing place 
- Plinth 

Hut Circle



Scale 1:135 000 (approx 2 miles to 1 in.)

Chambered Cairn

Grumbeg

Kiln

93m

P

Relocate passing place

94m

Old Burial Ground

P

Proposed layby for 3 cars

Loch Naver

0.1 0 0.1 0.2 0.3 Kilometers



Sites and Monuments Record


Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of HM Stationary Office Crown Copyright
 Unauthorised reproduction infringes crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings
 The Highland Council LA09036L

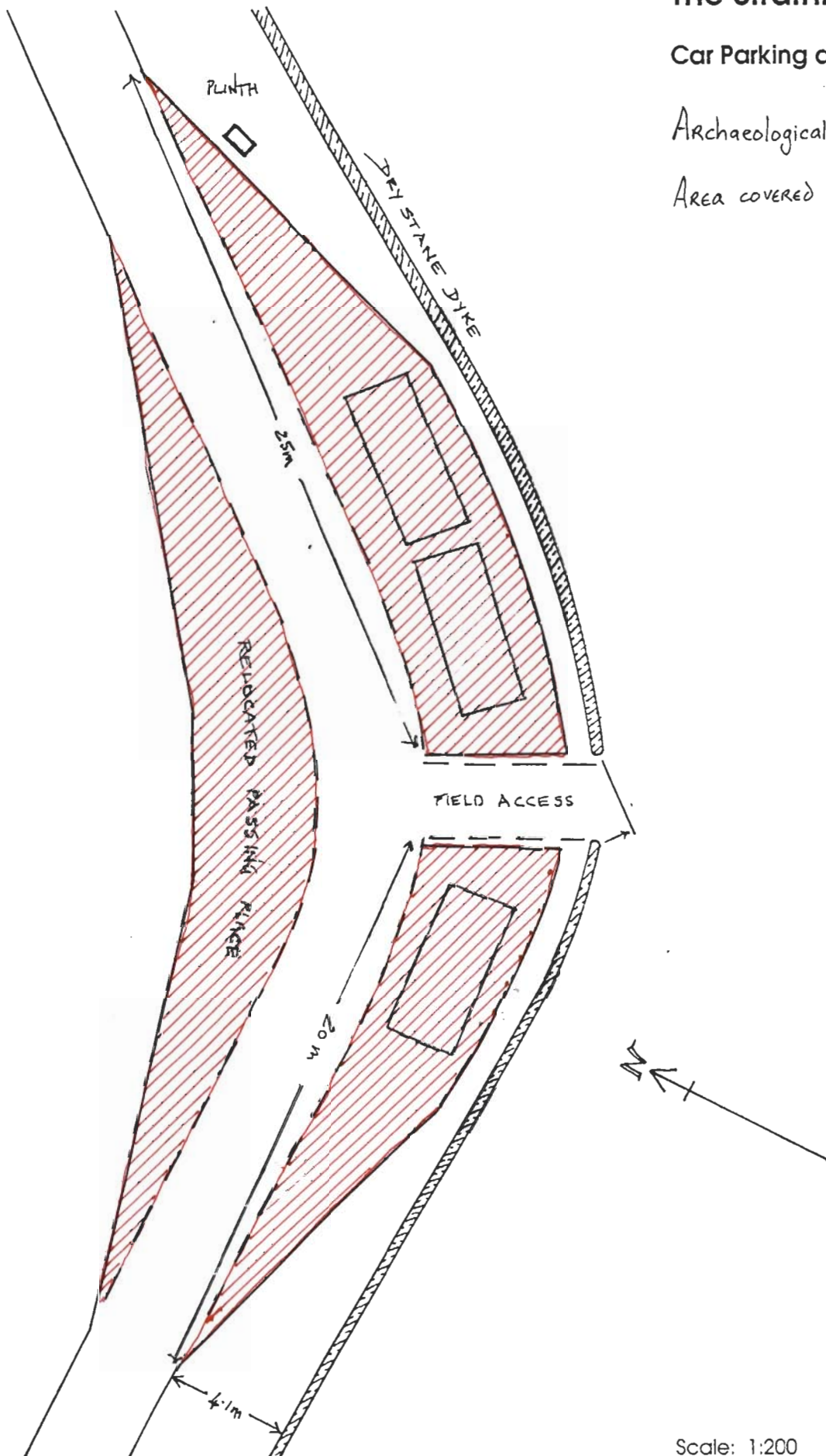


The Strathnaver Trail

Car Parking at Grumbeg

Archaeological Watching Brief

Area covered by watching brief: 



Scale: 1:200

Brief for archaeological work at:

Strathnaver Trail Car Parks / Laybys

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

**HIGHLAND COUNCIL
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE**

Archaeology Unit

1. Background

- 1.1. 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

- 2.1. This specification is for archaeological recording work occasioned by the construction of the car parking areas for the Strathnaver Trail. It is valid until December 31st 2002 after which if no work has been carried out a revised specification will be needed.
- 2.2. The specification includes any ancillary works such as drainage channels, landscaping or embankment works, works compounds or stone pits dug for this work, as well as the car parking areas themselves.
- 2.3. This is a capital project funded by a partnership led by the Highland Council, 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.
- 2.4. 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, who subscribes to the Institute's professional Code of Conduct.
- 2.5. **Before site works commence, the proposed arrangements, including a timetable for the work should be agreed with the Council's Senior Archaeologist in writing.**

3. Tendering

- 3.1. Any 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

- 4.1. 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.

5. Method

- 5.1. A watching brief will be conducted by an archaeologist on site ground-works, so that any finds or features of importance can be recorded to professional standards.
- 5.2. Those carrying out site works will need to work closely with the archaeologist and provide all necessary access and other arrangements. Where machinery is to be used for topsoil stripping, 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.
- 5.3. 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.
- 5.4. **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 6.4**

6. Monitoring

- 6.1. The Senior Archaeologist will normally monitor projects to ensure that specifications are met.
- 6.2. Monitoring will normally be by unannounced site visit. Alternative or additional monitoring arrangements may be made in individual cases.
- 6.3. 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.
- 6.4. **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.**
- 6.5. Where archaeological work fails to meet this specification the applicant will be in breach of the planning condition until matters are rectified.

7. Reporting

7.1. Project report

At least five copies of the project report must be produced and supplied to all of the following within **3 weeks** of the completion of fieldwork:

- 7.1.1. One paper copy for Marlyn Price, the Project Manager, Torrobol, Lairg, Sutherland.
- 7.1.2. One paper copy for the Area Planning and Building Control Manager, Sutherland
- 7.1.3. 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.
- 7.1.4. A copy of the complete report in Adobe Acrobat format (ie a pdf file) for the Archaeology Unit, Planning and Development Service, Council Offices, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX. This can be supplied by email or on a computer disc. Please ensure that all drawings and photographs are included.
- 7.1.5. One paper copy to be deposited with Norman Newton, Highland Council Libraries Support Unit, 31a Harbour Road, Inverness.

7.2. The report must include, as a minimum,

- 7.2.1. Location plan showing the project area and archaeological sites and features affected. Grid references must be included.
 - 7.2.2. Circumstances and objectives of this work, including a copy of this specification
 - 7.2.3. Weather and other conditions affecting fieldwork
 - 7.2.4. Scale plans, and photographs of all archaeological features noted
 - 7.2.5. A full index to any records or other material generated by the project including its location
 - 7.2.6. 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.
 - 7.2.7. General comments and proposals for future archaeological projects arising from the carrying out of this project
 - 7.2.8. A set of colour slides illustrating the project progress from start to completion.
- 7.3. 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 by the Archaeology Unit.

- 7.4. 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.
- 7.5. A brief summary of the results must be sent to the Council for Scottish Archaeology for inclusion in Discovery and Excavation in Scotland. Any associated costs for this should be included in contractors' estimates.

8. Treasure Trove

- 8.1. 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. **The site owner/agent must be aware that no one, other than the Council's Senior Archaeologist, has the authority to vary the terms of this specification.**
- 8.2. 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

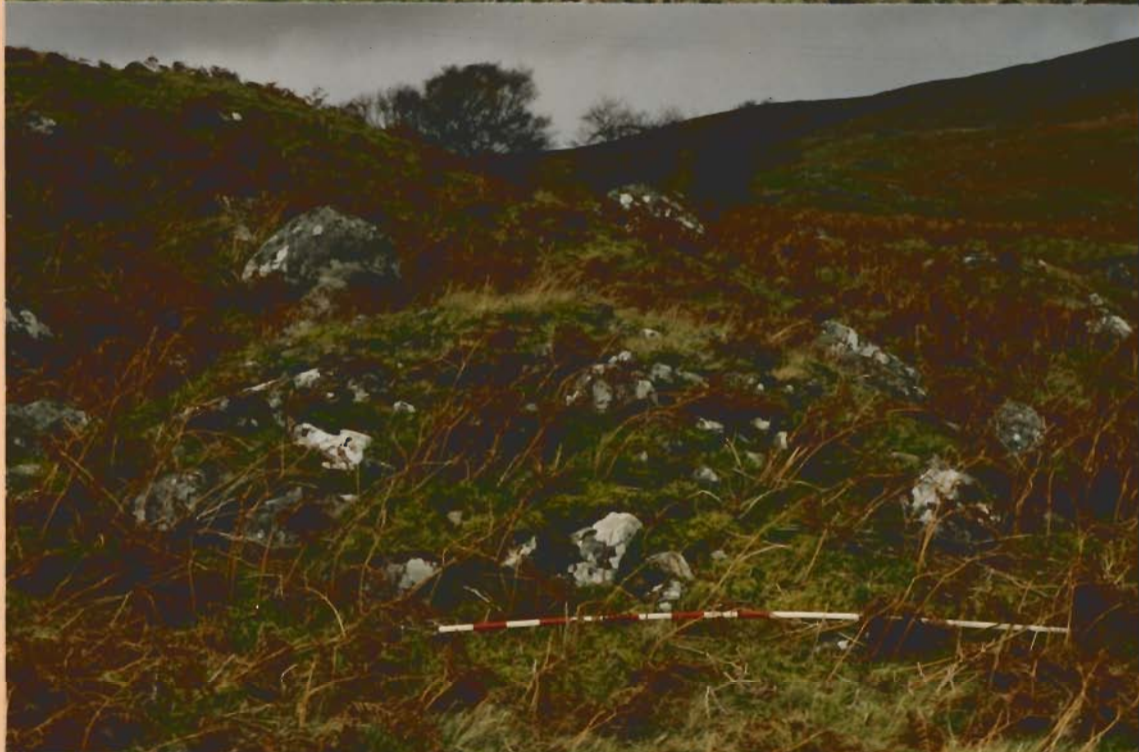
- 9.1. The archaeologist appointed must be of a professional standing acceptable to the Senior Archaeologist and must carry out the work according to the Code of Conduct, standards and guidelines of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.
- 9.2. The main contractor has responsibility for the Health and Safety of any archaeological staff on site.
- 9.3. 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.
- 9.4. Any Health and Safety incidents on site involving the archaeologist must be immediately notified to the Health and Safety Executive.
- 9.5. The archaeologist must agree a timetable for the work with the client and the Senior Archaeologist
- 9.6. The archaeologist appointed will not comment to the press or other media without prior approval from the Senior Archaeologist
- 9.7. Proper provision must be made for prevailing weather conditions in northern Scotland.
- 9.8. The archaeologist agrees by undertaking this work to the terms of this specification.

John Wood
Senior Archaeologist
Tuesday, 21 August 2001

①



②



③



4.



5.



6.



7



8



9



10.



11.



12.

