

NH 80 SW 0032

113/BAS

'BADAN DUBH'
NEAR KINCRAIG
BADENOCH & STRATHSPEY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

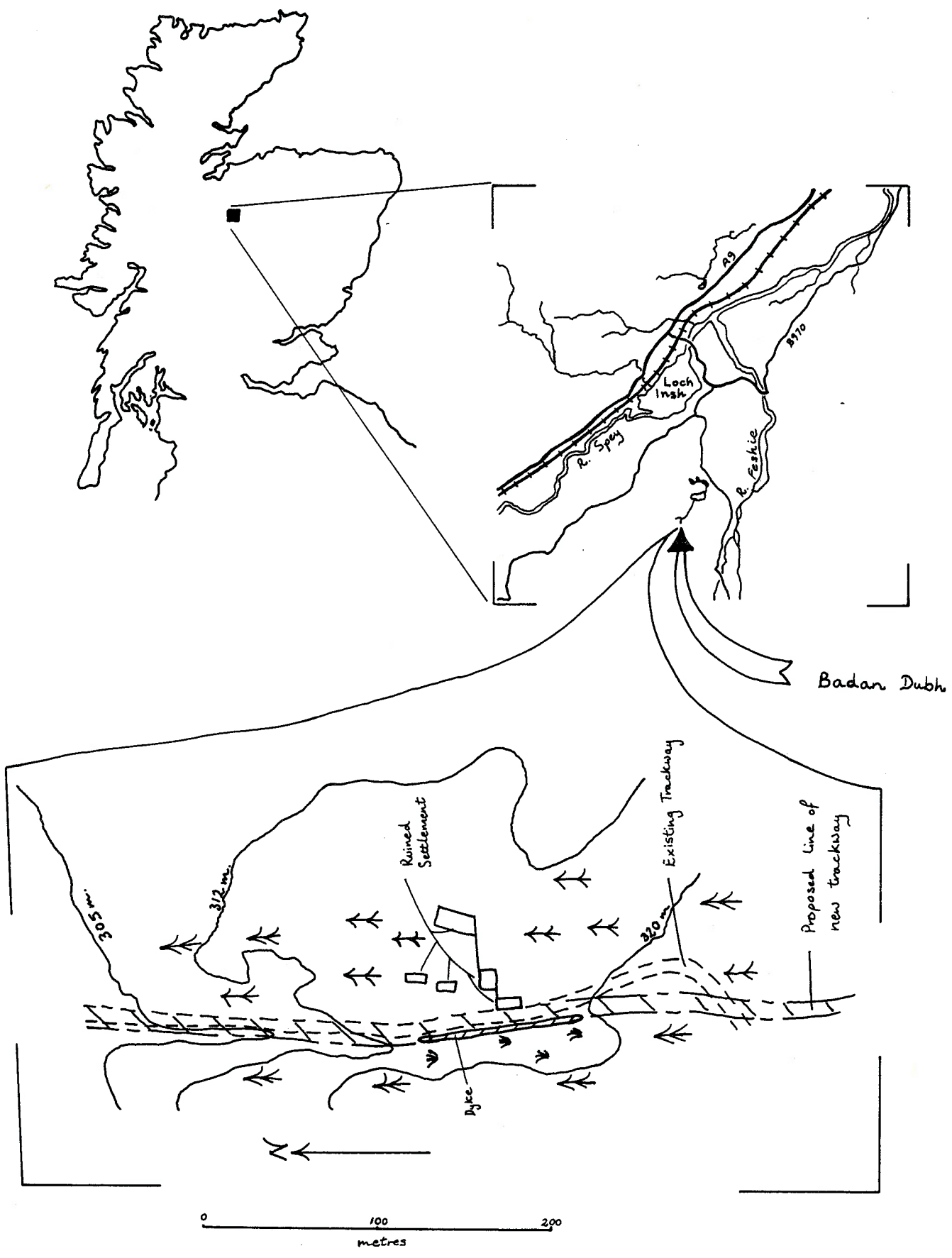
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Site and Situation

The ruins of the depopulation site at Badan Dubh are situated within commercial forestry land approximately 900 metres SSW of the Uath Lochan. Access to the site is gained by forest tracks and with the permission of the Forest Enterprise manager at Loch Insh. The site consists of a cluster of four rectangular buildings and a large rectangular enclosure situated immediately above and to the East of a former stream bed, which descends to the North. A collapsed dyke, tending North/South, separates the settlement from this boggy ground. The existing track lies between this dyke and the settlement and has truncated the western edge of one building.

Archaeological Project

A Watching Brief was requested by Highland Regional Council's Archaeology Service, on work carried out to straighten and widen the existing track. This would entail the complete removal of the dyke, thus enabling its structure to be examined. The work was undertaken on 4th July 1995 by Graham Robins. Material was removed by a mechanical digger working perpendicular to the line of the dyke. This produced clear sections through the dyke, three of which were closely investigated, sketched and photographed. The weather conditions were warm and sunny.

The ruined dyke stood to approximately one metre in height and survived to approximately one hundred metres in length. The first section, cut near to the northern end of the dyke, revealed little structural information. (See Photograph 1) The majority of stones used in the dyke's construction were between twenty and thirty centimetres in diameter, some washed but some angular. The dyke was built directly onto fluvio-glacial material of sand, gravel and larger boulders. Some boulders, up to one metre in diameter, sat on the existing surface of the dyke, but were most likely dragged into place there by deep ploughing in the past. Further evidence for ploughing

is the large proportion of peaty soil that overlies the rubble of the dyke. This would account for the ruinous nature of the dyke.

The second section in the southern portion of the dyke opposite to the truncated building, revealed more structural details. (See Photograph 2) Similar collapse has taken place, again with boulders sitting on the modern surface but with collapsed material to the West and East. Immediately to the left of the ranging pole are the remains of the footing of the dyke. Again, a large proportion of the material that formed the existing shape of the dyke is peaty earth. This section also revealed paving stones to the West of the dyke. (See Photographs 3 & 4) These stones were laid into the natural sub-soil forming a pathway up to one metre in width. The natural sub-soil dropped sharply to the West of the paving stones, suggesting either a drainage ditch, or more likely the natural slope to the boggy ground. Beneath the eastern area of collapsed material were found two small pieces of ceramic, both glazed. One piece is decorated with hand-painted, blue curvilinear design on a white background. The other piece is cream in colour and decorated with an embossed flower bud. The dating of such pieces can only be approximated, but neither are likely to be earlier than the mid-seventeenth century. When they were deposited in their most recent context is even more open to question.

At the extreme southern end of the dyke a section revealed a large quantity of stones of approximately twenty centimetres in diameter. These topped a layer of loamy soil thick with roots and vegetable matter. (See Photograph 5) It is possible to conclude that sections of the dyke were constructed using peat, or that an existing bank was incorporated into the dyke. This section of the dyke has not suffered the destruction of the sections to the North.



Photograph 1: North-facing section through dyke



Photograph 2: North-facing section through dyke, revealing wall-footings
and paved area to the West



Photograph 3: Paved area in plan: photograph taken from the North



Photograph 4: North-facing section through paved area



Photograph 5: West-facing section through southern end of dyke