

**Report of Archaeological Watching Brief  
December 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> 2003  
Contin Bridge, Contin, Highland  
NH 4540/5667**

Client: Halcrow Group Ltd on behalf of Scottish Water

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## **Non-Technical Summary**

*Stuart Farrell was commissioned by Halcrow Group Ltd on behalf of Scottish Water in June 2003 to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Contin Bridge (NH 45403/56672) as part of a project of a water mains renewal, this work followed on the recommendations of a previously conducted desktop and walkover survey.*

*Work revealed part of a possible former road surface to the east side of the bridge though within the area of the bridge only natural sands and gravels underlying modern gravel and tar were located.*

*No recommendations for further work have been proposed.*

## **1. Introduction**

This report is for an archaeological watching brief conducted for Halcrow Group Ltd on behalf of Scottish Water by the author for a water mains renewal project at Contin Bridge.

The work was conducted between December 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 2003.

## **2. Acknowledgements**

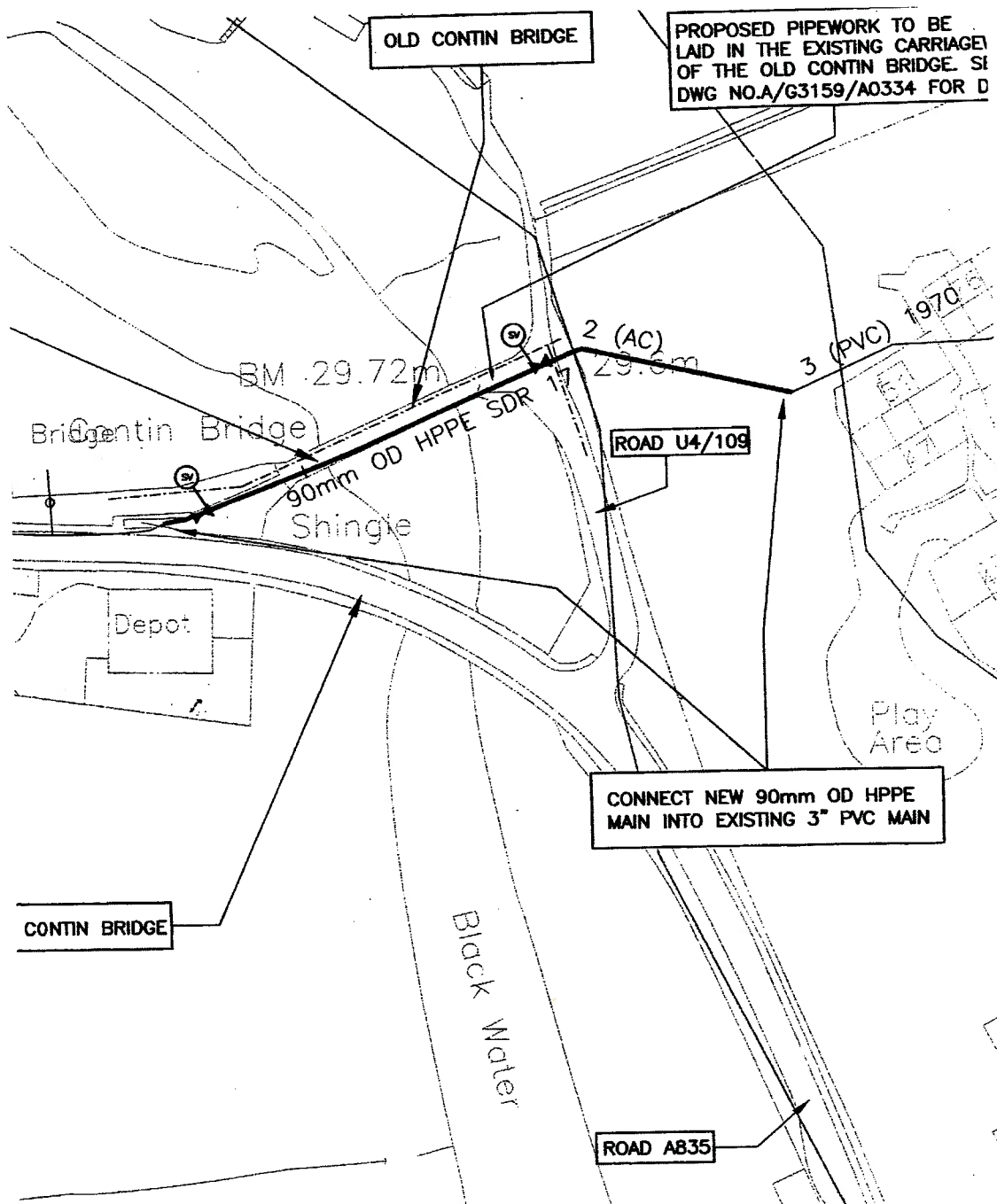
I would like to thank the following for their help during the work:

- Mr. A Barnett, of Halcrow Group Ltd;
- Staff of A MacPhee Ltd Contractors for onsite works;
- Staff of Highland Council Archaeology Unit.

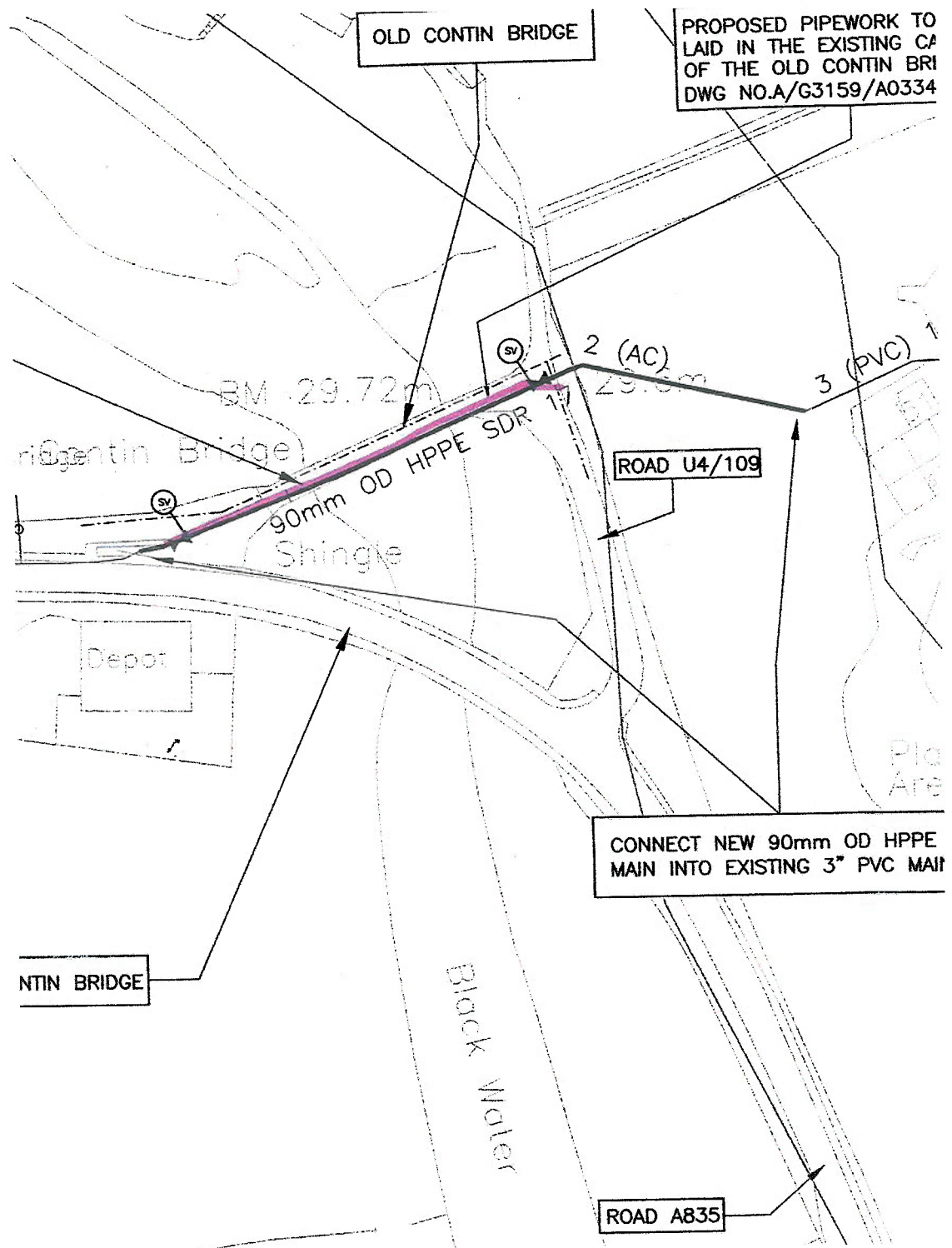
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This is a detailed topographic map of the Strathpeffer area in Scotland. The map shows the River Conon flowing through the center, with several lakes including Loch Achity, Loch Achonachie, and Loch Uisge. The terrain is hilly, with numerous contour lines indicating elevation. Key locations marked on the map include Strathpeffer, Ulladale, Kinellan, and Strathgairn. The A832 road is clearly visible, running through the area. The map also shows the Strathgairn railway line and various smaller settlements and landmarks. The map is oriented with North at the top.

**Figure 2 – Plan of Proposed Pipeline 1:1250**



**Figure 3 – Plan of Watching brief 1:1250 – Route highlighted**



### **3. Historical Background**

The site is recorded in the Highland Sites and Monuments Record and the National Monuments Record of Scotland CANMORE database as follows:

Contin Bridge

HSMR – NH45NE 18

NMRS – NH45NE 59

Type – Bridge

Grid Ref – NH 45403/56672

Parish – Contin

Listed A. Noted in HSMR and NMRS as 'rubble-built, three-arched bridge constructed by Thomas Telford 1812-13, now superseded by modern bridge to south'.

Noted by John Hume in his study of industrial archaeology as 'early 19<sup>th</sup> century, 3 spar rubble bridge, with segmental arches and rounded cutwaters'. (Hume, 1977, 284)

Unfortunately details about the bridge are currently lacking and the papers of Thomas Telford are vast and kept in a variety of institutions all over the country (see excerpt from National Register of Archives to rear). Built under direction of the Commissioners for Highland Roads and Bridges.

There are no records for the bridge in either the Commissioners of Supply records for Ross for the period of the bridge being constructed or in the Commissioners of Supply and Heritors of the Counties of Ross and Cromarty General meetings minute book for the same period or in the Statute Labour Trust General Book Minute for the same period. (All held in Highland Council Archives)

The bridge went out of use in the 1980's with the building of a new road bridge to south.

This watching brief followed on a desktop and walkover survey conducted by Cathy Dagg (Dagg, 2003) and the recommendation made therein.

### **4. Objectives**

To conduct a watching brief on the excavation of the pipeline to record those features revealed by excavation work.

### **5. Methodology**

A monitoring was made of the removal of tar and gravels to a maximum depth of 0.7m for the pipe trench to a trench of 78m in length and 0.5m wide and to an average depth of 0.5m (at east end before bridge at depth of 0.75m). A back-acting machine with a toothed bucket excavated the trench after tar was broken with a breaker with possible archaeological features being cleaned by hand.

Weather on the day of work (December 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 2003) was slightly overcast but bright.

## **6. 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.

### Site Location

The bridge lies to the NW of the village of Contin and lies to the north of the existing road bridge.

### Results

A monitoring of the excavation revealed no archaeological features or deposits. Work to the east end of the trench (NH 45430/56668) revealed rounded cobbles of a possible road surface below 400mm of tar and modern gravel (type 1) over a thin layer of greyish black soil over natural sands and gravels for a length of 5m, though there was no indication of these forming part of the bridge road or the road that runs past it to the north.

Within the area of the bridge tar and modern gravel (type 1) was revealed to an average depth of 270mm that overlay a thin lens of white/grey sand of a varying depth of 15 to 25mm though this was not constant throughout the length of the trench. This in turn overlay redeposited natural orange-brown sandy gravel to the end of the trench at NH 45376/56642.

The existing water main ran along the southern edge of the parapet under tar and gravels to a depth of 480mm.

## **7. Conclusions**

If the deposit of white/grey sand revealed is part of the original road surface (possibly as the base for cobbles) most of it has been removed on the replacement of tar on the road surface. No sign was made of any surface that could be suggested as the original road surface.

## **8. Recommendations**

No recommendations with regard any further fieldwork for this project is to be proposed due to no further work being conducted.

## **9. Archive**

The following is to be deposited in the National Monuments Record in Edinburgh:

- Notebook of results
- Copy of this report

A set of colour slides showing the progress of the work has been deposited with Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record.

## 10. Discovery & Excavation in Scotland

A short summary of the results of this project will be submitted to the Council for Scottish Archaeology's publication *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*.

## 11. References

Dagg, C (2003) Archaeological Evaluation of areas to be affected by Water Mains Replacements at Contin and Strathpeffer, Parishes of Contin and Fodderty, Ross-shire. Unpublished report.

Hume, J (1977) The Industrial Archaeology of Scotland 2: The Highlands and Islands. Batsford. London.

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

### Unpublished Sources

(All Highland Council Archives)

Commissioners of Supply Records for Ross Minute Book CRC/1/1/2B

Commissioners of Supply and Heritors of Counties of Ross and Cromarty  
General Meetings Minute Book CRC/2/2/1

Statute Labour Trust General Road Trust Minute Book CRC/2/3/1

## Appendix 1 – Details of Slides

- 1 – View of bridge surface prior to work facing W.
- 2 – View of bridge surface prior to work facing E.
- 3 – View of bridge facing NE.
- 4 – View of bridge during breaking of road surface facing W.
- 5 – View of east end of trench facing E – scale 1m.
- 6 – Detail f section of trench facing N – scale 1m.
- 7 – View of trench facing E.
- 8 – View of trench facing W.
- 9 – View of trench facing E.
- 10 – View of trench upon completion facing W.



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**Civil Engineer**

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Bewdley bridge**

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**1809: plans of roads**

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**1810-30: corresp, reports and papers rel to Morpeth  
bridge**

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**1815-31: plans of Dundee harbour**

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Reference : GD/DH

NRA 13496 Dundee Harbour

see NRA(S)1653