Archaeological Survey and Watching Brief of a Development at Croftcroy, Farr, Inverness-shire, Highland.

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Planning Ref: 09/00840/PIPIN
Grid Ref: NH 6823/3325
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A programme of archaeological survey and a watching brief was carried out by the author on behalf of Mr Farquhar Forbes of Forbes Enterprises Ltd in regard to a condition required as part of a planning application. The development site is a ‘greenfield’ site located at Croftcroy, Farr, Inverness-shire, Highland. The proposed development is adjacent to a recorded monument NH63SE8, of a hut circle.

Survey work revealed a number of clearance cairns and a possible cultivation plot, lying around the hut circle. A number of cairns upon excavation were comprised of some clearance material dumped atop large boulders of an unknown date. Subsequent work on a watching brief for the clearance of the site for the house plot and two adjacent plots revealed no archaeological features or deposits.

No recommendations for further archaeological work have been proposed.
Figure 1 – General Location.
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Figure 2 – Site Plan 1:1250.
© David Blanchard Architectural Services.
Figure 3 – Site Survey Plan 1:100 (A3).
© J Hepburn-Wright Surveyor.
Figure 4 – Composite Plan of Principal Features on Site (reduced from 1:50)
Figure 5 – Area of Watching Brief 1:100 (A3)
© J Hepburn-Wright Surveyor.
Figure 6 – Line of Electricity Cable.
© Scottish Hydro Electric.
1. INTRODUCTION

An archaeological survey and watching brief was carried out by the author on behalf of Mr Farquhar Forbes of Forbes Enterprises Ltd in regard to a condition of planning. The development site is a ‘greenfield’ site located at Croftcroy, Farr, Inverness-shire, Highland. The proposed development is situated adjacent to a recorded national monument NMRS – NH63SE8, a hut circle.

The work was required as part of planning condition no.12 of Highland Council Planning Department ref. 09/00840/PIPIN:

Prior to the commencement of development, proposals for an archaeological watching brief, in accordance with the attached specification, to be carried out on site clearance and excavation works shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Planning Authority. No site clearance or excavation works shall take place until such proposals are agreed. The agreed proposals shall be implemented.

Reason: In order to protect the archaeological interest of the site.

A specification for this work was supplied to the client by the Highland Council Archaeology Unit and is attached as Appendix 1.

2. BACKGROUND

The site is located to the west of the existing public road and access is gained from a newly built road to the East. The development site is a ‘greenfield’ site under heather and grass; the hut circle sits atop a small natural flat plateau on a rise, with the house site lying below to the East.

The proposed development site is located close to a recorded archaeological monument, which is listed in the NMRS/HHER as follows:

Name: Tordarroch Cottage
NMRS: NH63SE 28
HHER: MHG 3575
Grid Ref: NH 6819/3326
Type: Hut Circle
Recorded in the HHER and NMRS of ‘At NH 6817 3325 is an oval stone-walled hut measuring c. 13.5m NW-SE by c. 10.0m transversely between the centres of a mutilated wall spread to c. 3.0m all round. The NW arc is partially destroyed by a modern wall and the entrance in the SE is mutilated.'
There are several stone clearance heaps in the vicinity but modern cultivation has destroyed all details of any associated cultivation plots. Visited by OS 20 April 1970 & 7 January 1972. This hut-circle is crossed by a fence running to the NNE from Tordarroch Cottage. It measures 10.3m from NW to SE by 9.8m transversely within a stony bank 2m in thickness and 0.3m in height. The entrance, which is on the SE, is approached by a slight gully. The interior is levelled into the slope on the NW arc. There is a scatter of small cairns measuring up to 4m in diameter and 0.4m in height to the E. What may be the robbed footings of a rectangular building are situated some 100m to the E of the hut-circle. Visited by RCAHMS 19 March 1993.

Also situated close by is the following site:

Name: Croftcroy
NMRS: NH63SE 2
HHER: MHG 3943
Grid Ref: NH 6835/3318
Type: Chambered Cairn
Status: Scheduled Ancient Monument (Index no. 11548)
Recorded in the HHER and NMRS of ‘A Clava passage-grave - the cairn is overgrown with shrubs and has been so much robbed that all the cairn material has been removed. The kerb has a diameter of 35 ft. and the passage runs from the SSW. Fraser (J Fraser 1884) noted three large slabs, 8 ft. to 12 ft. 6ʺ long lying outside the kerb, presumably fallen monoliths of a circle surrounding the cairn. The two to the south are no longer to be seen and that to the NE has been shifted nearer the kerb.

The remains of the cairn are as described above. It is mutilated and overgrown with bushes and trees. Visited by OS 10 September 1963.

This Clava chambered cairn is situated in the rear garden of Stonehenge House, a modern building lying to the NE of Farr Post Office. The cairn measures about 11.5m in diameter over a kerb of boulders up to 1m in height, and the passage runs towards a central chamber from the SSW. Originally the cairn appears to have been surrounded by a stone circle, but only one fallen slab remains. Visited by RCAHMS 17 March 1993.

Previous archaeological work has been conducted close to this development; the author undertook an archaeological evaluation and watching brief in January 1999 (Farrell 1999) to the East of the development site which produced no archaeological features or deposits. A watching brief for a house plot to the East in 2001 (Farrell 2001) again produced no archaeological features or deposits. Work in 2009 for a house plot to the South by the author (Farrell 2009) revealed a clearance cairn of stones dumped atop a natural stone outcrop, no other features or deposits were revealed.
3. METHODOLOGY

Archaeological survey work of the hut circle and surrounding area took place on the site between the 29th of June and 24th of August 2010. The watching brief was undertaken on the 29th of October and the 1st of November 2010.

The survey of the site was first undertaken using a plane-table, after a walkover of the site; this was followed up by a survey by EDM and points to produce a contour map, and finally a ground plan of the main part of the site was made at 1:50. The watching brief was made on the main house plot (Area 1) and two proposed house plots (Areas 2 and 3).

4. RESULTS

The hut circle sits at the North end of a natural plateau with a moderate slope to its E side. Its W edge has been overlain by a later fence line which sits atop a stone and turf dyke, with the ground on its west side dropping off steeply. There is no evidence of this being quarried in any way but is the actual edge of the hut circle. At the north corner of the site the dyke has been trampled by an existing footpath. Its entrance lies to the SE and outside to the E is a turf bank, which may be some kind of porch. The walls of the hut circle, though upstanding to c0.4m are quite flattened, especially on W side.

Possibly associated with the hut circle are the remains of a field wall to the S, though only a few large boulders remain, which has been robbed out. A number of cairns of clearance material were also noted; they vary in size from 1-2m in diameter and are up to 0.4m high.

The surveys noted no discernible layout of the clearance cairns, as to form plots but all seem randomly situated.

The resulting archaeological watching brief took place on the site on the 29th of October and 1st November 2010. Weather during the work was slightly bright and sunny, with a frost on the start of the second day. Work on the house plots was excavated using a JCB back-acting machine with a 1.8m wide straight-edged bucket. Supervision was conducted on areas where any new sub-surface ground works were to be carried out ie house plots and access roads (services already in place). Topsoil was removed to a maximum depth of 20cm across the site. Work was conducted on the existing house plot Area (1) and two areas for proposed house plots (2 & 3).

Area 1 (centred NH 6823/3325) within this excavated area 17m EW by 20m NS were 2 mounds. Mound 1 was revealed by hand-excavation to be a large boulder covered in turf, whilst Mound 2 was comprised of small stones dumped atop 2 large stones. Topsoil of a dark-peat like soil in the area was to a maximum depth of 10cm onto a natural of orange-brown sand with rough erratic stones of granite on a NE- slope with patches of brown-grey silts. No archaeological features or deposits were revealed.
Area 2 (centred NH 6826/3326) within this excavated area 20.2m EW by 19m NS, with access road 4m by 5m was a single mound. Mound 3 was revealed by machine excavation to be comprised of small stones dumped atop a single large boulder. Topsoil of a dark-peat like soil in the area was to a maximum depth of 10cm onto a natural of orange-brown sand with rough erratic stones of granite with patches of yellow sand. No archaeological features or deposits were revealed.

Area 3 (centred NH 6820/3323) within this excavated area 21m NS by 19m EW, with access road 4m by 7m were 2 mounds. Mound 4 was revealed by machine excavation to be comprised of small stones dumped atop 2 large stones, whilst Mound 5 proved to be a single large boulder covered in turf. Topsoil of a dark-peat like soil in the area was to a maximum depth of 20cm onto a natural of orange-brown sand with rough erratic stones of granite on a NE- slope with patches of brown-grey silts. No other archaeological features or deposits were revealed, though a small pile of stones was revealed to the NW corner though this was in area disturbed by an electricity service trench.

5. DISCUSSION

Archaeological survey and evaluation on this site revealed five mounds in the area of the existing house plot and two proposed house plots, three of which proved to be archaeological of an unknown date, with no dating material being found with two others being large stones. These and the other mounds found on the site are likely to be probably of the relative same date in an attempted clearance of the site for the use of a field system. The possible wall is in fact the upcast from an electricity trench (see figure 6) but 1 or 2 stones due to them being covered in moss and/or lichen may be in their original position along the edge of the possible cultivation plot as this area is devoid of any stones.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no further archaeological work recommended on this site as comprehensive survey and a watching brief work has taken place and no dateable artefacts, deposits or features were identified; it is likely that any further work would not provide any further information than that already gained by this work.
7. REFERENCES


Highland Council Historic Environment Record entries MHG 3375 & 3943.

NMRS CANMORE entries for NH63SE 2 & 8.

8. ARCHIVE

A copy of this report and a set of digital photographs have been deposited with the Highland Council Archaeology Unit; Archive of plans, notebook, photographs and report are to deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland, Edinburgh.

9. DES

A summary of the results of this project have been submitted to the Council for Scottish Archaeology’s publication Discovery & Excavation in Scotland. Oasis Report no. 85722.
Appendix 1 – Archaeological Specification

1) Summary
This project may impact on valuable features of historic and archaeological importance. In view of the archaeological potential/sensitivity of the site, HCAU advised that archaeological mitigation is required. The implementation of this brief will meet the concerns raised.

This brief is for a Watching Brief which will enable any discoveries to be recorded quickly and efficiently as they appear with minimum delay or disruption to the development. If significant deposits are encountered, recommendations for further measures necessary to mitigate the impact of the development must be made. Recording of the current condition of a prehistoric site within the application plot is also required.

This brief has been produced for the applicant who will be responsible for the work and costs, including any tendering and contractual arrangements. This brief must be read with reference to the HCAU Development Guidance that sets out in detail who is responsible for what, as well as the terms of reference, objectives, method, monitoring and reporting arrangements.

The work must be carried out by an IfA Registered Archaeological Organisation with wide experience in the excavation of prehistoric domestic deposits. The applicant should ensure that their selected archaeological contractor can provide documentation of their relevant qualification and experience.


2) Archaeological Background
The application area contains a prehistoric house measuring roughly 18m in diameter and situated in the SW corner of the plot. The western side of the house has been disturbed by the construction of the boundary wall of the field and the southern extent has been disturbed recently by the erection of the application boundary fence, exposing what appears to be a well-built stone foundation. The survival is such that an entrance is visible in the south-eastern segment of the house. This feature is a well-preserved example of a later prehistoric roundhouse with upstanding remains dating to the first or second millennium BC. It is likely that archaeologically significant deposits relating to the construction, use and abandonment of the structure remain in situ in the area of, and surrounding, the monument. The feature will be protected within the plot; however, the potential remains that associated buried features survive and will be impacted by the proposed development.
3) Objectives
   - To identify and record any features or objects of archaeological importance that could be damaged or destroyed by this development, while minimising any delays or disruption to the development project.
   - To record to professional standards the current condition of the upstanding prehistoric features within the application area.

4) Methodology
   All fieldwork must be informed by a desk-based assessment undertaken in advance of the start of works.

   Survey
   A detailed survey of the upstanding features on site will be required. All individual features will be recorded, photographed and sketched. All features will be marked on a plan, at a relevant scale and tied into the Ordnance Survey grid.

   The site should be recorded using measured analytical survey and photography. This work will produce:
   – a location plan and overall site plan including a scale and north point. These should be to a scale sufficient to show the details required.
   – Larger scale ground plans showing relative phasing, development and analysis – as necessary.
   – Details of construction methods and materials should be described and any later additions, demolitions or modifications noted.
   – A set of colour photographs (slides, prints, or good quality digital images) must be produced to illustrate all elements of the site. These should include general views of the site as well as any construction details of the individual elements.

   Watching Brief
   Archaeological monitoring is required during all site groundworks for this application. Topsoil stripping of the building footprint and all associated services must be monitored by an archaeologist so that any buried archaeological features can be identified, recorded and/or appropriate mitigation put in place to ensure their preservation.

   All recovered artefacts and ecofacts must be subject to a programme of post-excavation analysis and the results incorporated into a final report.

   The Archaeological Contractor must refer to the minimum standard requirements as laid out in HCAU Development Guidance. This brief itself is not comprehensive or definitive - tendering Archaeological Contractors will need to determine for themselves the methodology that will deliver the required product. This should be laid down in a Project Design (or Written Scheme of Investigation) and agreed with HCAU in advance of the start of site works. The start of archaeological work will be subject to the submission and approval of this document.

5) Schedule & Monitoring
   The Archaeological Contractor is responsible for agreeing arrangements for monitoring with HCAU staff. We will monitor projects as necessary to ensure that minimum standards are met. Prior notice of fieldwork starting dates, with contact
names, telephone numbers and arrangements for access must be given to HCAU by the Archaeological Contractor.

The Archaeological Contractor must make a short progress report (by telephone) to HCAU for every week of fieldwork undertaken. Any unexpectedly significant or complex discoveries, or other unexpected occurrences which might significantly affect the archaeological work and/or the development must be notified by the Archaeological Contractor immediately to the applicant and HCAU. The finds or features must be left in situ until arrangements have been agreed for safeguarding or recording them. In the meantime work may continue on other areas of the site.

6) Products
Following completion of the fieldwork, an archive and report will be produced and disseminated according to the standards set out in the HCAU Development Guidance. The report should describe the nature of the field work undertaken; the conditions and limitations within which the work was carried-out; the results that were obtained and recommendations for mitigation and/or further work, as appropriate.

All work will be undertaken according to the Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance of the Institute for Archaeologists.

The brief has been produced specifically for this scheme based on documents supplied at the time it was issued. It is valid for one year from the date of issue. Where work is not carried out in full within that time, a revised specification may be issued.

This brief has been produced by the Highland Council Archaeology Unit, to whom any enquiries should be addressed. No one else has authority to vary its terms.

Highland Council Archaeology Unit             Monday, 15 March 2010
www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/conservation/archaeology
Appendix 2 – Photographic Register

1 – View of clearance cairn area 2 facing W – scales 2m.
2 – View of mound 4 area 2 facing W – scales 2m.
3 – View of hut circle facing NW.
4 – View of hut circle facing NW.
5 – View of hut circle facing NW – scales 2m.
6 – View of hut circle facing W – scales 2m.
7 – View of hut circle facing W – scales 2m.
8 – View of hut circle facing W – scales 2m.
9 – View of hut circle facing W – scales 2m.
10 – View of hut circle facing W – scales 2m.
11 – View of modern clearance material area 1 facing N – scale 2m.
12 – View of mound 2 area 1 facing W – scales 1m.
13 – View of mound 1 area 1 facing S – scales 1m.
14 – View of stones area 1 – scales 1m.
15 – View of possible wall line facing SW – scales 1m.
16 – View of hut circle facing W.
17 – View of clearance cairn area 2 facing W – scales 1m.
18 – View of clearance cairn area 2 facing W – scales 1m.
19 – View of mound 3 area 2 facing N – scales 1m.
20 – View of mound 3 area 2 facing N – scales 1m.
21 – View of stones area 2 facing W – scales 1m.
22 – View of stones area 2 facing NW – scales 1m.
23 – View of modern clearance material area 1 facing W.
24 – View of site facing SW.
25 – View of area 3 facing W.
26 – View of hut circle facing W.
27 – View of mound 1 and 2 area 1 facing N – scales 1m.
28 – View of area 3 facing NW.
29 – View of area 3 facing NW to hut circle.
30 – View of area 3 facing W.
31 – View of excavation in progress facing S.
32 – View of excavation of mound 2.
33 – View of excavation of mound 2 facing S – scales 1m.
34 – View of excavation of mound 2 facing S – scales 1m.
35 – View of excavation of mound 2 facing S – scales 1m.
36 – View of excavation in progress facing S.
37 – View of excavation in progress facing S.
38 – View of excavation in progress facing N.
39 – View of excavation in progress facing NE.
40 – View of excavation in progress facing NE.
41 – View of mound 3 area 2 facing N – scales 1m.
42 – View of area 1 upon excavation facing SW.
43 – View of area 1 upon excavation facing SW.
44 – View of area 1 upon excavation facing W.
45 – View of area 1 upon excavation facing W.
46 – View of area 1 upon excavation facing W.
47 – View of excavation in progress facing NE.
48 – View of area 1 upon excavation facing SE.
49 – View of area 1 upon excavation facing SE.
50 – View of area 1 upon excavation facing E.
51 – View of area 1 upon excavation facing E.
52 – View of excavation in progress facing NE.
53 – View of area 1 upon excavation facing N.
54 – View of excavation in progress facing NE.
55 – View of area 1 upon excavation facing NE.
56 – View of area 1 upon excavation facing N.
57 – View of area 1 upon excavation facing N.
58 – View of area 2 prior to excavation facing N.
59 – View of area 2 prior to excavation facing N.
60 – View of excavation in progress facing S.
61 – View of excavation of mound 3 facing W – scale 1m.
62 – View of excavation of mound 3 facing W.
63 – View of excavation in progress facing N.
64 – View of excavation in progress facing N.
65 – View of excavation in progress facing W.
66 – View of area 2 upon excavation facing N.
67 – View of area 2 upon excavation facing S.
68 – View of area 2 upon excavation facing SW.
69 – View of area 2 upon excavation facing SW.
70 – View of area 2 upon excavation facing S.
71 – View of area 2 upon excavation facing SW.
72 – View of area 2 upon excavation facing N.
73 – View of area 2 upon excavation facing N.
74 – View of area 2 upon excavation facing N.
75 – View of area 2 upon excavation facing N.
76 – View of area 2 upon excavation facing NE.
77 – View of area 3 prior to excavation facing N.
78 – View of excavation of mound 4 facing E – scale 1m.
79 – View of excavation of mound 4 facing E – scale 1m.
80 – View of excavation of mound 4 facing E – scale 1m.
81 – View of excavation of mound 4 facing E – scale 1m.
82 – View of excavation of mound 4 facing E – scale 1m.
83 – View of excavation of mound 4 facing N – scale 1m.
84 – View of excavation of mound 4 facing N – scale 1m.
85 – View of excavation in progress facing NE.
86 – View of excavation of mound 4 facing NE – scale 1m.
87 – View of excavation of mound 4 facing NE – scale 1m.
88 – View of clearance material facing NE – scale 1m.
89 – View of clearance material facing NE – scale 1m.
90 – View of excavation in progress facing E.
91 – View of area 3 upon excavation facing W.
92 – View of area 3 upon excavation facing NW.
93 – View of area 3 upon excavation facing SW.
94 – View of area 3 upon excavation facing W.
95 – View of area 3 upon excavation facing S.
96 – View of area 3 upon excavation facing S.
97 – View of area 3 upon excavation facing E.
98 – View of area 3 upon excavation facing NE.
99 – View of area 3 upon excavation facing E.
100 – View of area 3 upon excavation facing SW.

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An archaeological survey was conducted in June 2010 for the hut circle of Tordarroch (NMRS NH63SE 28) due to it lying in the area of a new house plot. Survey work revealed a possible cultivation plot and a number of possible clearance cairns.

A watching brief on the house plot site in late October revealed one clearance cairn and no other features or deposits. Work was also conducted on 2 adjacent proposed house plots which noted cleared stones dumped atop large boulders and again no other features or deposits.

Full Report submitted to HSMR and NMRS.
Plate 1 - Top - View of hut circle facing NW – scales 2m.
Plate 2 - Bottom - View of hut circle from area of house plot facing W – scales 2m.
Plate 3 - Top - View of Area 1 prior to excavation facing N.
Plate 4 - Bottom - View of Area 1 upon excavation facing W.
Plate 5 - Top - View of Mound 2 prior to excavation facing SW – scales 1m.
Plate 6 - Bottom - View of Mound 2 during excavation facing
Plate 7 - Top - View of mound 3 area 2 facing N – scales 1m.
Plate 8 - Bottom - View of area 2 prior to excavation facing N.
Plate 9 - Top - View of excavation of mound 3 facing W – scale 1m.
Plate 10 - Bottom - View of area 2 upon excavation facing N.
Plate 11 - Top - View of area 3 prior to excavation facing N.
Plate 12 - Bottom - View of area 3 upon excavation facing SW.
Plate 13 - Top - View of excavation of mound 4 facing E – scale 1m.
Plate 14 - Bottom - View of excavation of mound 4 facing N – scales 1m.