Facsimile Cover Sheet

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Comments:

Dear Graham,

The Lynchat souterrain proposal follows. I must apologise for spelling your name wrong throughout! The copies which went to Hs had an erratum slip pasted in the front to the effect that 'for Moray, Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise' read additional funding partners Highland Council, Historic Scotland etc. (The omission was pointed out after the proposal had been bound.) Lots of luck in Finland, stay warm, & I'll see you sometime....

Olivia x

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LYNCHAT SOUTERRAIN

797

A Project Design for Historic Scotland

by

Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division

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LYNCHAT SOUTERRAIN

by

Olivia Lelong

1999

Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division

Glasgow

Summary Sheet

Proposer: Olivia Lelong, Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division (GUARD)

Nature of Proposal: Request for partnership funding with ~~Moray, Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise~~ additional funding partners, H.C., H.S etc.

Nature of Project: Survey and trial excavation of a souterrain and its environs prior to presentation to the public

Project Name: Lynchat Souterrain

Council Area: Highland

NGR: NH 7767 0193

Legal status: Scheduled Ancient Monument, on privately owned land.

Brief description of project: A programme of topographic, geophysical and standing building survey of the souterrain at Lynchat, near Kingussie is proposed as part of the monument's preparation for presentation to the public, in accordance with the development strategy for archaeological sites in Badenoch & Strathspey partly funded by Historic Scotland. The work will investigate the presence/absence and nature of any structural remains and hearth deposits in the immediate vicinity of the souterrain, which might be associated with its use and provide dating material. It will also involve clearing contaminated material, under archaeological supervision, from the souterrain's interior and investigation of any surviving occupation deposits, as well as examination of the entrance structure. The results of the work will inform the position of a stock fence, any necessary consolidation of the structure for visitor safety and information panels for its presentation to the public.

Total costs 1999-2000: £12,921

Sum sought from Historic Scotland 1999-2000: £11,921

Import of resources by others: Moray, Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise will cover the salary of Graham Robbins, Badenoch & Strathspey Community Archaeologist, during his contribution to the excavation phase. MB&SE will also fund any necessary consolidation work and other preparations, such as stock fencing and information panels, necessary for the site's public presentation.

A more detailed project design is attached.

Products of the proposed fieldwork will include:

Drawings in plan and section at appropriate scales for all deposits, structural evidence and earthworks.

A data structure report on the excavation and survey results with recommendations for any future work necessary for its management (such as consolidation or bracken control) and for post-excavation analysis; copies will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland and the Highland Sites and Monuments Record.

Publication of the fieldwork results on the Highland Archaeology Unit website.

Video footage of the souterrain's interior and showing the progress of survey and excavation, to be made available to the Highland Folk Museum for presentation purposes.

An assessment of the research potential of the monument within the wider context of Badenoch and Strathspey as well as within the research framework for the Scottish Iron Age to medieval periods.

A note in *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland* about the fieldwork.

Publication in an appropriate academic journal, such as *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, of the fieldwork results and research implications.

Deposition of the site archive in the National Monuments Record of Scotland.

A public lecture on the results of the fieldwork, to be given jointly by the fieldwork director and the Badenoch & Strathspey Community Archaeologist at a local venue.

1.0 *Introduction*

The souterrain at Lynchat (NGR: NH 7767 0193; NMRS No NH70SE 3) is a large, well preserved structure built into a slope above the Spey floodplain, immediately above the line of Wade's military road. The souterrain has excellent potential for presentation to the public, in accordance with the development strategy for archaeological sites in Badenoch & Strathspey being proposed through the Community Archaeologist project, which is partly funded by Historic Scotland.

However, before public access can safely be encouraged, the monument requires cleaning out and an assessment of its structural stability. The need for these measures presents an opportunity to examine the souterrain and its immediate environs for evidence of its date of origin and history of construction and use, of which nothing is known. To inform preparations for its presentation to the public as well as its future management, a programme of survey and limited excavation is proposed.

Today the souterrain, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, appears as a large, horseshoe-shaped structure built into an upper break of slope in a natural terrace above the floodplain. Its eastern half is very well preserved, with curving drystone walls surviving to c 2 m in height and a roof formed of large slabs. An entranceway from the south, at the deepest point in the horseshoe's curve, leads into it; the sides of this entrance are covered in turf, with stone facing visible beneath it. At the shorter, western end of the horsehoe a narrow, low passage covered with a stone lintel leads to another aperture in the ground above.

The souterrain is situated on the Balavil Estate, owned by Mr. Alan MacPherson Fletcher. It lies just above and to the north of the Wade road, visible as a linear terrace running along the slope directly beneath the monument and possibly built on a medieval precedent, from cartographic evidence of settlements along this side of the strath. Other linear terraces further to the south may be lynchets.

The higher ground immediately north of the souterrain is under bracken and nettle cover. What may be slight banks are discernible beneath the vegetation, but measured survey and some invasive investigation would be required to determine whether these represent structural remains associated with the monument.

The field in which the souterrain lies is currently used for grazing by sheep and cattle. The sheep have access to the monument's interior; its floor is covered in a layer of sheep dung, and a sheep carcass was noted there as recently as August 1999.

The fieldwork proposed below would constitute the first modern, systematic investigation of the monument. The results of the work would help inform its future management and preservation and enhance visitors' experience of the site, encouragement of which is planned as part of the Community Archaeologist project for Badenoch & Strathspey. The archaeological phase of the fieldwork would be contingent upon a clear commitment in principle on the part of Moray, Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise to carry out subsequent work to consolidate and present the monument to visitors.

2.0 *Archaeological and Historical Background* –

The souterrain was pointed out to Sir David Brewster, Principal of the University of Edinburgh, in 1835; it must have been known to local people before that time, and although he records that no local traditions about it existed, this is contradicted by folklore about the monument recorded in the nineteenth century (see below). Brewster found the souterrain full of 'stones and rubbish from the neighbouring grounds' (1863, 119).

He removed the rubbish and exposed the internal walls and entranceway; his sketches of the structure accompany his note on the find in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (1863). They show the entranceway with two stone steps leading down to the interior, and with what appears to be a slab-framed doorway beyond. Another slab-framed doorway is sketched leading to the western part of the souterrain. Among the rubbish he removed, Brewster found a very corroded, oblong iron padlock, up to three inches long, with a hasp.

While Brewster records clearing stones and rubbish from the monument's interior, he does not note the extent or depth of his clearance, or whether he found occupation deposits or deliberate flooring beneath.

From its size and manner of construction the souterrain has affinities with those of Angus and Perthshire, which generally date to the first two centuries AD and typically had associated huts above ground, rather than with the usually smaller and earlier northern examples (Foster 1996).

According to local folklore it also saw use in the medieval period. A story credited to a fifteenth century source ('Old Biallid') relates that a family of MacNivens lived in a cottage above the monument (or Raitts Cave, as it is known locally). Some members of the family raided cattle from the neighbouring Macphersons, and the perpetrators removed one of the souterrain's roof slabs and hid inside it, foiling attempts by their enemies to wreak vengeance. Eventually one of the Macphersons visited the cottage disguised as a beggar and was given hospitality by the fireside. While pretending to be asleep, he observed a woman of the house putting freshly baked oatcakes in a cupboard at the back of the room; when she opened the cupboard to put a second batch in, he saw that the first batch had disappeared. He drew his conclusions and left, to return the next day with supporters who flushed out the MacNivens and killed them (MacDonald 1835, 88; MacPherson 1893, 408; Scarlett 1988, 33-34).

Although the story may be a fabrication, the fact that nineteenth century authors attribute it to an earlier source does suggest that the souterrain was known locally and perhaps used in some way, quite possibly by bandits along the road, before its examination by Brewster in 1835. It may have had a long and complex history of use, perhaps involving its re-use in the medieval period. In any case, it is likely that an associated structure did exist above ground, during either its Iron Age or its later use.

The investigations proposed here would shed more light on the Iron Age and perhaps medieval occupation of this part of Badenoch, and would also complement ongoing investigations at the deserted post-medieval (to medieval) settlement of Easter Raitts which lies *c* 400 m to the north.

3.0 *Proposed Fieldwork*

The proposed fieldwork comprises a programme of survey, clearing out and limited investigation to establish the character of the souterrain's interior and of any related structures outside it and to aid in the interpretation of the monument and its presentation to the public. The components of the proposed fieldwork are outlined below. Scheduled Monument Consent would be required before fieldwork could commence.

3.1 *Topographic Survey*

Topographic survey of the souterrain and its environs will be carried out in order to record the monument in its landscape context and to identify and record any visible archaeological features in the near vicinity, such as the lynchets and/or trackway visible running along the slope to the south and any traces of associated buildings to the north or south, particularly around the entrance.

The survey will be carried out using an EDM, and will cover an area *c* 1000 metres square, centred on the souterrain. As well as recording visible earthworks and breaks of slope, the survey will involve topographic prospection -- recording of spot heights on a high-density grid -- in the immediate vicinity of the monument in order to locate archaeological remains not readily visible on the ground but detectable as slight changes in level.

The survey data will be recorded electronically and processed using CAD software to produce a contour model of the site. The data will also be used to draw a hachure plan of the site in the field.

3.2 *Geophysical Survey*

Geophysical survey of the area surrounding the souterrain will be carried out to establish the presence or absence of archaeological features in the vicinity, in particular any earlier associated structures. The survey will involve the use of both electrical resistivity meter and fluxgate gradiometer, and will encompass the ground surrounding the souterrain, focusing particularly on the higher ground to the north but extending over a 40-metre square area centred on the monument.

The geophysical survey will follow the topographic survey, and will focus on any possible structural remains identified as changes in level. Remote sensing should complement the results of the topographic survey and reveal features not visible on the surface; in particular, the use of the fluxgate gradiometer may reveal the locations of any hearths in associated buildings. The data will be processed in Geoplot to produce plots of anomalies.

3.3 *Structural Survey*

A survey of the souterrain itself will be carried out in order to elucidate the manner and sequence of its construction and to identify any possible diagnostic structural elements not noted by previous observers (such as fragments of re-used stone). The work will comprise an electronic survey of the souterrain's interior in plan, linked to the topographic survey of its exterior, as well as stone-by-stone measured drawings of its interior elevations and roof structure. A comprehensive photographic survey will complement the drawn record, and written descriptions will be compiled of the various structural elements.

Preceding this survey, the stability of the souterrain's structure will be assessed by a suitably qualified surveyor, and recommendations made for any consolidation work necessary to ensure safe public access. Although the structure appears to be stable, temporary shoring of the its roof may be necessary during the archaeological survey to ensure the safety of those working inside. An Historic Scotland architect could conduct the survey and assess the structure's safety both for archaeologists and visitors. Any work necessary to make the structure safe for visitor access following fieldwork will be the responsibility of Moray, Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise.

A Planning Supervisor may be required to manage the project under Construction, Design & Management (CDM) regulations, and could be provided by Moray, Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise as an in-kind contribution; this contingency is addressed separately in section 7.0 (Costing).

3.4 *Trial Excavation*

Based on the results of the topographic and geophysical surveys, trial excavation will be carried out to investigate the character and date of any anomalies identified, in particular any possible structural remains or hearths.

One trench will be opened to the north of the souterrain across the slight banks visible beneath the bracken, should the topographic and geophysical surveys confirm these as probable features.

Brewster's sketch shows the entrance as especially well-built, and it seems likely that this was the main entrance, perhaps connected to an above-ground structure. A larger trench will be opened over the entrance and the area to the south to investigate and record the entranceway's construction and any relationship to exterior structural remains.

Trenches opened over anomalies outside the souterrain will be fully excavated to determine the depth and character of any occupation deposits or structural sequences. In the trench opened over the entrance to the souterrain, occupation deposits will be fully excavated and recorded in section, but the stonework of the entrance will only be exposed and recorded, not dismantled, and notes will be made on the need for any consolidation work.

Deposits in each trench will be recorded in plan and section by written description, photograph and measured drawing. The location of trial trenches will be recorded by EDM survey.

3.5 *Investigation and Recording of Interior Deposits*

The souterrain's floor is presently covered in a layer of sheep dung and a sheep carcass has been decaying inside it over the summer of 1999. This contaminated material will have to be removed before the survey of the interior can safely be carried out and visitor access encouraged.

In accordance with the Environmental Protection Act and in the absence of a local incinerator, the material will be removed using methods and personnel normally employed locally for such tasks, and the carcass will be buried. The work will be monitored throughout by a professional archaeological, in the event that potential archaeological deposits are encountered during the clearance. Protective clothing will be worn by all personnel.

When the contaminated material has been removed, any archaeological deposits surviving on the floor of the souterrain will be recorded in plan by measured drawing, photograph and written description. A slot trench will be excavated through deposits in order to characterise their depth and date and better understand the souterrain's history of use, and the sequence of deposits (if any survives) will be recorded in section by the methods outlined above.

After completion of this limited excavation, the trenches will be backfilled. Any surviving archaeological deposits on the floor of the souterrain will be covered with Terram, which in turn will be covered with material suitable both for enduring visitor traffic and for protecting archaeological deposits beneath, its nature to be determined by Historic Scotland and funded by Moray, Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise.

3.6 *Preparation of the Site for Visitor Access*

Following completion of the fieldwork, the monument will be prepared for public access. The detailed specifications for all of the elements described below will be determined through consultation between Historic Scotland and Graham Robbins, Badenoch & Strathspey Community Archaeologist. This phase of the work will be specifically funded by Moray, Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise.

Based on the recommendations of the surveyor who assesses the souterrain's structure, any consolidation of the structure necessary to ensure safe public access will be carried out. A stock fence will be erected around the monument in order to prevent further disturbance and contamination of the archaeological resource by animals; its exact position will be determined by the results of the geophysical and topographic surveys and trial excavation.

An interpretation panel presenting the history of the souterrain, based on the results of the fieldwork, will be erected. As the Kingussie Primary School is interested in adopting the monument, a second panel could be erected presenting the school project information and focusing more on the folklore surrounding the site. A designated vehicle parking area, sign-posting and way-marking will be established for the visiting public, and the track leading to the site will be improved.

These visitor facilities would also serve the neighbouring township of Easter Raitts, which has been the subject of excavation (funded partly by Historic Scotland) over the last four years (Lelong 1997; Lelong 1998; Lelong in prep), and which is also planned for presentation to the public (Graham Robbins, pers comm).

3.7 *Personnel and Local Participation*

The fieldwork will be directed by Olivia Lelong, director of excavations at Easter Raitts 1997-99 and an experienced archaeological surveyor. The assessment of the souterrain's structure may be conducted by an Historic Scotland architect, who could assess its safety for visitors; a costing for a structural surveyor is not included in the detailed costing below (section 7.0). Lorna Sharpe will carry out the geophysical survey. Suitably qualified professional archaeologists will assist with all phases of the work; Graham Robbins, Badenoch & Strathspey Community Archaeologist, will participate in the excavation.

Local amateur archaeologists and other interested people will be invited to participate in the fieldwork, particularly past and present students on the University of Aberdeen's Certificate in Field Archaeology course, several of whom live locally and have been trained in excavation techniques at Easter Raitts from 1997 to 1999.

In addition, two open days will be held during the fieldwork so that local residents can visit the site and see the work in progress; access during the open days will, however, be limited to the souterrain's exterior.

3.8 *Products of the Proposed Fieldwork*

Products will include:

Drawings in plan and section at appropriate scales for all deposits, structural evidence and earthworks.

A data structure report on the excavation and survey results with recommendations for any future work necessary for its management (such as consolidation or bracken control); copies will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland and the Highland Sites and Monuments Record.

Publication of the fieldwork results on the Highland Archaeology Unit website.

Video footage of the souterrain's interior and showing the progress of survey and excavation, to be made available to the Highland Folk Museum for presentation purposes.

An assessment of the research potential of the monument within the wider context of Badenoch and Strathspey as well as within the research framework for the Scottish Iron Age to medieval periods.

A note in *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland* about the fieldwork.

Publication in an appropriate academic journal, such as *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, of the fieldwork results and research implications.

Deposition of the site archive in the National Monuments Record of Scotland.

A public lecture on the results of the fieldwork, to be given jointly by the fieldwork director and the Badenoch & Strathspey Community Archaeologist at a local venue.

4.0 *Potential for Management and Interpretation of the Site*

The proposed fieldwork will, through survey and limited invasive investigation, produce a more informed understanding of the souterrain's origins and history of use. This understanding will help inform the future management of the monument and will enrich visitors' experience of the site. The fieldwork results will also form the basis for measures necessary to improve the monument's safety for visitors.

As the higher ground to the north of the monument, the possible site of any associated structures, is currently under bracken, the recording of potential archaeological features there through survey and the investigation of the archaeological resource through trial excavation will establish the degree of survival of any features. The results will also help determine the least damaging route for positions of posts for a stock fence to protect the souterrain and its environs from further damage and contamination by stock.

The structural survey of the souterrain will aid in interpreting its history of construction and use and in making comparisons to other souterrains of similar size and construction; this in turn will bolster the interpretation of the site to be presented to the visiting public. The survey of the souterrain in terms of its structural stability will inform any consolidation work necessary to make it safe for visitors, as well as the future management and preservation of the monument.

The clearing out, under archaeological supervision, and limited excavation of the souterrain's floor will rid it of contaminated material and allow the small-scale but valuable investigation of any surviving archaeological deposits. This phase of the fieldwork will make the interior of the monument safer for public access and at the same time may lead to the recovery of information about the souterrain's history, possibly including material culture or environmental deposits (although any of the latter which survive may well have been contaminated). Excavation of trenches in the entranceway and to the north may recover dating evidence, particularly hearth material, from associated structures, and will reveal more about the souterrain's history and the nature of its use.

In summary, the proposed fieldwork will help inform the monument's future management, including its presentation to the public; it will enhance visitors' experience of the site, and it will add to what is understood of the Iron Age to medieval occupation of this part of Badenoch.

5.0 *Timescale*

The fieldwork will take place in late April to May 2000, before the bracken surrounding the monument has recovered. The data structure report will be produced by June 2000, and the other fieldwork products will be produced by April 2001. Preparation of the monument for visitor access will be completed on a schedule to be agreed between Moray, Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise and Historic Scotland.

6.0 *Bibliography*

Brewster, Sir D 1863 'Notice of an artificial cave in the parish of Alvey, Inverness-shire', in *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 5 (1862-3), 119.

Foster, S M 1996 *Picts, Gaels and Scots*, Edinburgh.

Lelong, O 1997 *Excavations at the Deserted Settlement of Easter Raitts, Badenoch: 1997 Interim Report*, Inverness: Highland Council.

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MacDonald, J 1835 'Parish of Alvie', in *The New Statistical Account of Scotland, Vol XIV: Inverness - Ross and Cromarty*, 681-96.

MacPherson, A 1893 *Glimpses of Church and Social Life in the Highlands in Olden Times*, Edinburgh.

Scarlett, M H 1988 *In the Glens Where I Was Young*, Inverness.

7.0 *Costing*

The following sets out the costing for the archaeological phase of the fieldwork; the consolidation and presentation phases will be funded by Moray, Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise, and detailed costings for these phases are not included here. Graham Robbins, Badenoch & Strathspey Community Archaeologist, will assist during the excavation; his time will be an in-kind contribution by Moray, Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise.

Fieldwork Fees and Expenses	
Set up (including risk assessment)	
2 days @ £135/day	£270
0.5 day @ £85/day	£43
Topographic Survey	
Surveyor, 3 days @ £135/day	£405
Survey assistant, 3 days @ £95/day	£285
Geophysical Survey	
Geophysicist, 3 days @ £135/day	£405
Geophysical survey assistant, 3 days @ £95/day	£285
Structural Survey	
Field director, 5 days @ £135/day	£675
Archaeological surveyor, 5 days @ £95/day	£475
Watching Brief	
Archaeologist, 2 days @ £135/day	£270
Team of two to clear contaminated material	£300
Trial Trenching	
Field director, 10 days @ £135/day	£1,350
Archaeologist (Graham Robbins), 10 days @ £100/day	£1,000
Archaeologist, 10 days @ £95/day	£950
Archaeologist, 10 days @ £85/day	£850
Sub Total	£7,563
Expenses	
Accommodation	£1,000
Subsistence	£500
Vehicle hire and petrol	£400
Equipment hire	£100
Consumables	£150
Shoring	£200
Lighting	£100
Mobile phone	£100
Sub Total	£2,550

Reporting Fees and Expenses

Director, 7 days @ £135/day	£945
Geophysicist, 2 days @ £135/day	£270
Survey plot production, 3 days @ £135/day	£405
Illustrator, 5 days @ £95/day	£475
Editing, 0.5 day @ £135/day	£68
Report production	£150
Sub Total	£2,313

Project Management

Project manager, 3 days @ £165/day	£495
TOTAL	£12,921
Sum sought from Historic Scotland	£11,921

Note: The project may fall under Construction, Design & Management (CDM) regulations, in which case a Planning Supervisor would be required to manage the project. This could be provided by Moray, Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise as an in-kind contribution; however, this has not yet been negotiated. In the event that GUARD are responsible for sub-contracting a Planning Supervisor, a contingency sum of up to £1,300 will be required in addition to the above sum of £11,921. The above costing also assumes that an Historic Scotland architect would be available to assess the structure's stability.