



Highland Archaeology Services Ltd

Bringing the past and future together

Watching Brief



Londubh Burial Ground Poolewe

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Watching Brief:

Londubh Burial Ground Poolewe

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OS Grid Reference	NG 8603 8096
Planning Ref	N/A
Client	Highland Council
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Authors	M Peteranna and J Wood

**Highland Archaeology Services Ltd
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Summary

A watching brief was carried out 5-7 June 2006 by Highland Archaeological Services, Ltd on behalf of the Highland Council TEC Services, Gairloch. The purpose of the work was to identify and record the nature and extent of any archaeological features revealed or affected by trench digging for the installation of the new drainage system for Londubh Burial Ground, Poolewe. No archaeologically significant discoveries were made, but future work in this and other ancient graveyards should be monitored as the potential for archaeology is high.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out by Mary Peteranna. Special thanks are due to Douglas Miles and his staff for their invaluable assistance throughout.

Location

The site is located at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NG 8603 8096 in Poolewe.

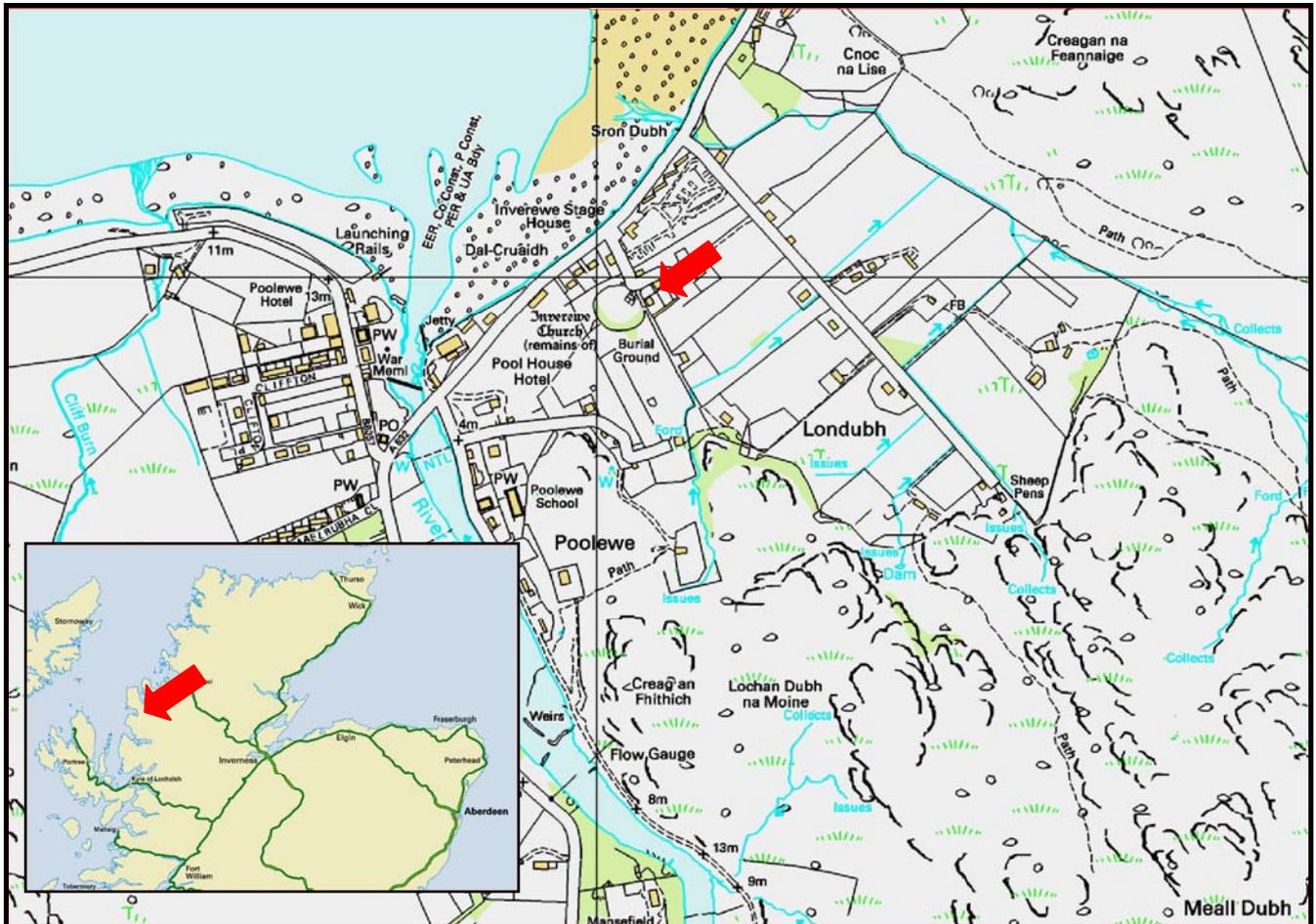


Figure 1 Site Location

Mapping reproduced by permission of the Ordnance Survey: Licence 100043217

Introduction

A watching brief was carried out 5-7 June 2006 by Highland Archaeological Services, Ltd on behalf of the Douglas Miles for the Highland Council, Gairloch. It was undertaken because the graveyard is Scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (Scheduled Monument 7036). No listed buildings, or gardens or designed landscapes on the national register were affected; but the graveyard is included in both the National Monuments Record (NG88SE 10) and the Highland Council's Sites and Monuments Record (NG88SE0055).

The purpose of the work was to identify and record the nature and extent of any archaeological features revealed or affected by trench digging for the installation of the new drainage system for Londubh Burial Ground, Poolewe. This report summarises the results. The principle of preservation in situ was adhered to.

The programme consisted of a desk-based assessment followed by a watching brief on the cutting of the trenches, and was carried out in conformity with the Scottish Executive's National Planning Policy Guidance Note 5 (NPPG5) and Planning Advice Note 42 (PAN42) (SOEND 1994). The project was directed by John Wood and fieldwork was undertaken by Mary Peteranna.

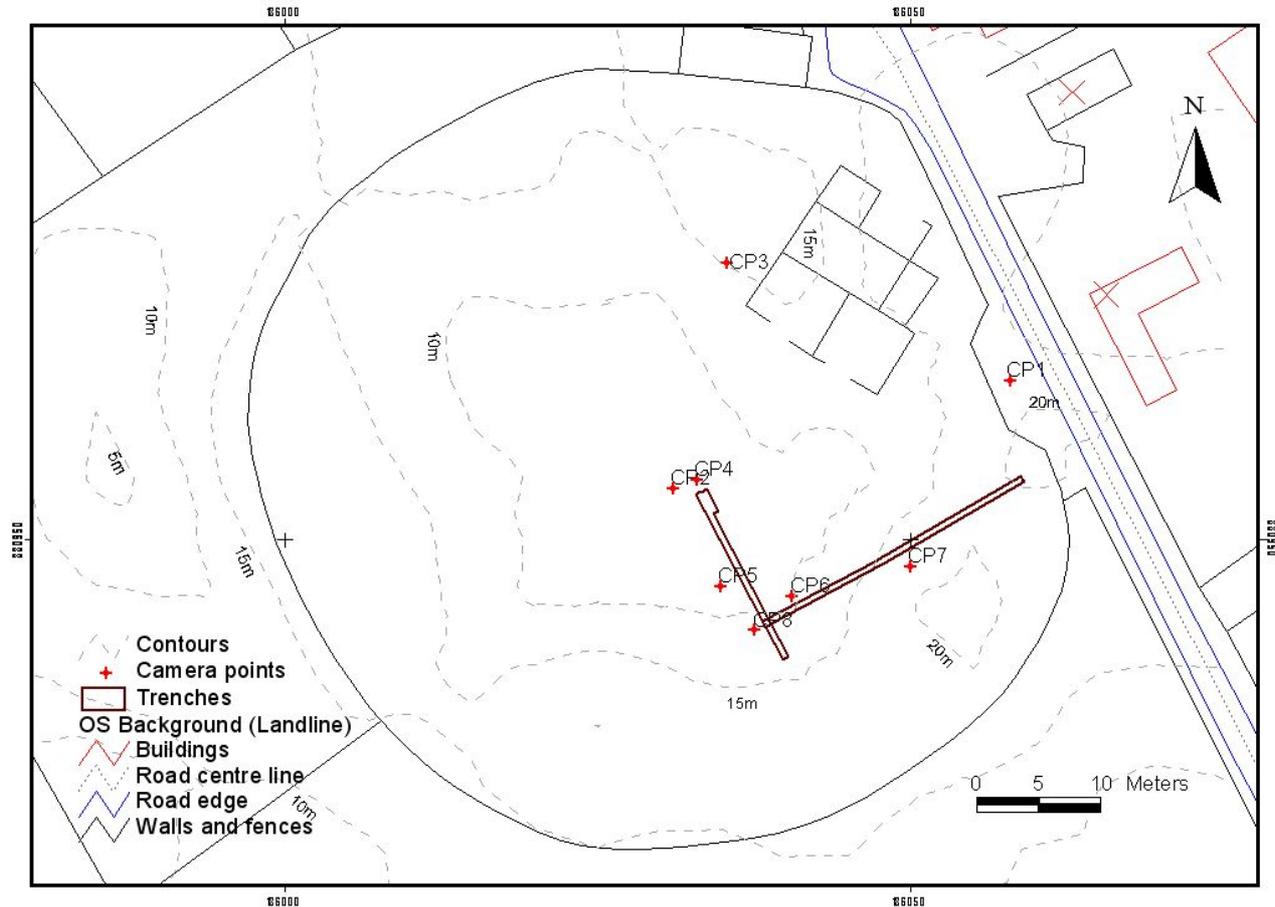


Figure 2 Site plan showing trench and camera locations

Contours plotted from 5m DSM data. Background mapping reproduced by permission of the Ordnance Survey: Licence 100043217

Aims and Objectives

The archaeological watching brief was requested in this case because this is an ancient graveyard of circular form, containing a Pictish symbol stone. There was therefore a possibility that further, buried archaeology could lie in the area. The new drainage system would require the excavation of trenches through the graveyard.

The objectives of the archaeology programme were to:

1. Minimise any possible delay or cost to the works by anticipating archaeological requirements as far as possible, timetabling and integrating archaeological recording work with the project, and dealing with any issues arising quickly and efficiently.
2. Determine as far as possible the character, extent, condition, date and significance of any archaeologically significant remains; and to preserve these where possible and record where necessary in line with NPPG 5 (SOEND 1994) and PAN 42 (SOEND 1994).

3. Meet the archaeological requirements of the Highland Council and Historic Scotland for this project

Archaeological background and cultural significance

Londubh Burial Ground, also known as Inverewe Burial Ground, is situated on high ground, eighty metres from the south end of Loch Ewe. It is enclosed by a roughly circular stone wall built of large cobbles, naturally smoothed by coastal wave erosion—similar to the smooth cobbles along the shore at Poolewe. The entrance is on the east. The site would once have had excellent views over Loch Ewe out to the Minch, though it is now partly obscured by a few buildings and a line of trees planted around the ground's perimeter within the boundary wall. The burial ground is aptly named *Londubh*, Scottish Gaelic for 'black pool', as the site is boggy and often floods. The empty, southeast part, on the left just after entry, is used for modern burials. It is reported to be particularly wet, and was the area to be dug for the new drainage pipes.

The ruins of the former Inverewe Church lie immediately to the right after passing through the entrance. It is oriented NW–SE, and appears to be 17th c. in date, with a number of burial enclosures added to its NE side. The remains of the church itself measure 12.4 m long, 5.1 m wide and stand 1.7 m high, with stone walls 0.9 m thick. According to J H Dixon, writing in 1886, the church was purchased by Rev. Kenneth Mackenzie in the 17th century'. Mackenzie may have built this church or perhaps restored an earlier one. The graveyard may well contain the remains of a medieval church. Mackenzie's church was partly pulled down in about 1689 and the burial enclosures added. Dixon states, 'The stone basin of the font lies loose in the burial-ground near; a stone now placed over a grave is moulded along one edge, and may possibly have formed part of the altar.'

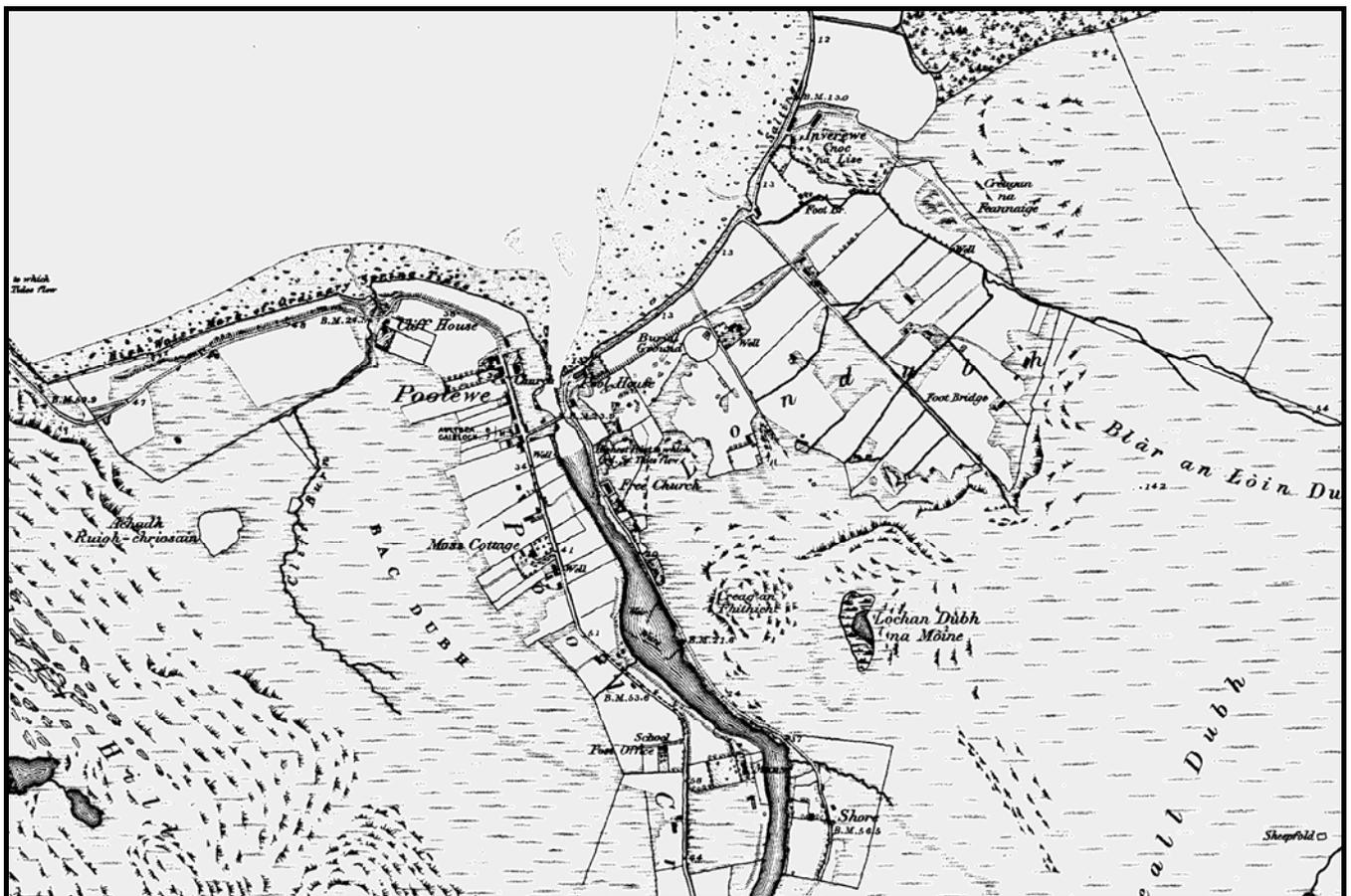


Figure 3 First Edition Ordnance Survey 6 inch map, 1881
(Not to scale)

The Ordnance Survey re-visited in 1965, and found 'no trace of the font or portion of altar remains, and a stone marked "K M K 1678" now stands upright in burial ground about 8m SW of the church'.

N and W of the ruined church are the oldest surviving marked burials. Most of the inscriptions date to the 19th-20th century, but many of the burials are covered by crudely cut plain stone slabs, lying flat, many of which are now becoming turf covered. Some earlier slabs are now resting against the walls of the graveyard or the church.

The Pictish crescent and V rod symbol was discovered incised into one of these flat stones in 1992. This stone has since been fenced to prevent damage, but the design is only barely visible (see Photos 23-24). Another stone, to the west of the incised Pictish one, is known as the 'wart stone'. This has a carved hollow like a bowl that resembles a rotary quernstone (see Photo 25). It may well be the 'font' described by Dixon. Local lore attests to a belief that dipping a hand or foot into the bowl with water would cure warts.

The fields to the S and W of the graveyard contain grass-covered stony mounds and field banks, probably of various dates (SMR NG88SE0057-8), which pre-date the field patterns shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map. These have not been investigated archaeologically but some could be early medieval or even Bronze Age in date (approx. 4,400 to 2,700 years ago).

The graveyard and the surrounding area clearly have archaeological potential. The graveyard is important to local people today and is a scheduled monument.

Method

A desk-based assessment of the site was undertaken, and all accessible records and aerial photographs held locally, or available online, were checked for archaeological information. There are not known to be any private archives relating to this site.

Two trenches were excavated by mechanical digger with a 0.5 m straight-edge bucket under close archaeological supervision. The work was conducted over three half days at the client's request and the weather remained dry. The topsoil was very rich earth with about 30% small rounded cobbles. The subsoil was sandy gravel.

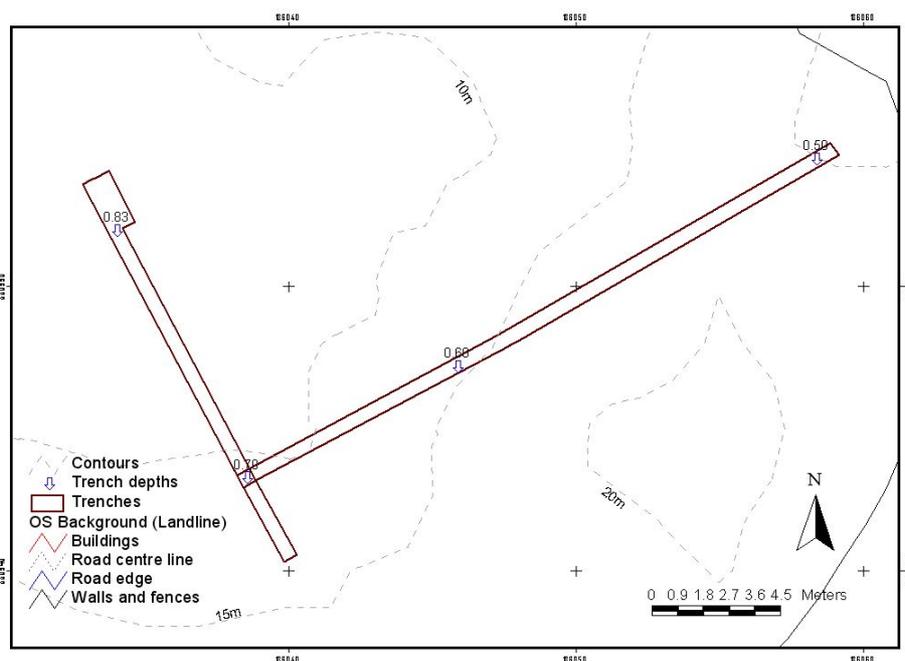


Figure 4 Trench depths - measured from ground surface.

During the first day, the north end of Trench 1 (1.1m by 1.9m) was dug and the former drainage connection identified by its gravel covering. The area around the connection was wider to facilitate connection to the new pipes. During day two, the remainder of Trench 1 (13.1m by 0.5m) was dug from north to south.

On the third day, Trench 2 was dug from west to east from the point of intersection with Trench 1. It measured 22.75m by 0.5m. Turf was also cleared from an area measuring 3.27m by 6.45m directly inside the site entrance.

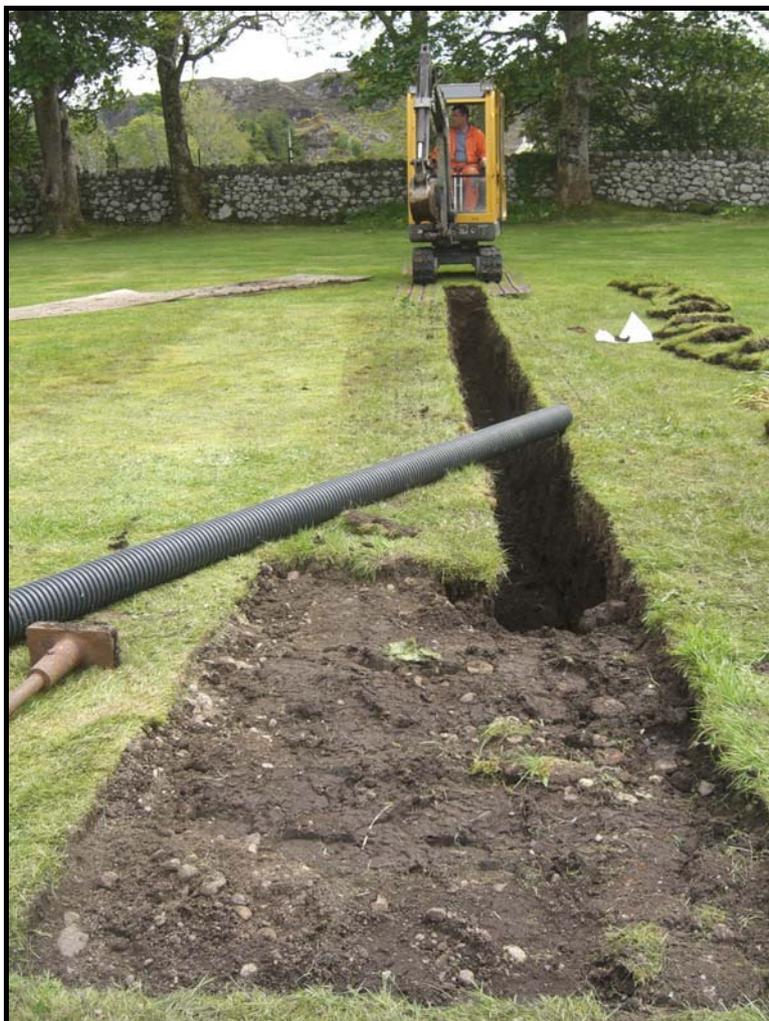


Figure 5 Trench 1 View south

Results

Trench 1

No archaeological features or finds were recorded. Within the last third of Trench 1, numerous fragments of the original drainpipe were found scattered throughout the topsoil.

Trench 2

No archaeological features or finds were recorded. There were additional fragments of the original drainpipe scattered throughout the topsoil at the start of Trench 2. The last third of Trench 2 ran along the same line as previous recent drainage trenches on site—evidenced by the cloth underlain by gravel fill (see fig 6).



Figure 6 Trench 2 View east

Discussion and Conclusions

Both new trenches ran mostly along the same lines as the recent drainage trenches cut in the 1970s, as was demonstrated by well-scattered drainpipe fragments and gravel fill associated with drainage ditches. No features or finds of interest were identified during excavation.

Recommendations

The trenches did not contain archaeologically significant features, and no further archaeological work is recommended in connection with the drainage pipe installation.

Operational Matters

No human remains were encountered. All work was carried out to the standards usually required by Historic Scotland, the Highland Council and the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The company's Risk Assessment and Health and Safety Procedures were followed throughout.

Appendix 1: List of drawings

Plan 1 Trenches observed, Scale: 1:100 M Peteranna 07/06/2006
Measured depths and camera points

Details were also plotted using a Promark 3 DGPS system.

All plans were drawn on the Company's standardised pre-printed planning sheets which are modelled on those developed by the Museum of London. These drawings have been digitised and vector versions (dxf) are available of the CDROM.

Appendix 2: Photography

All photography was digital and copies (JPEGs) of all photographs are included on the CDROM accompanying this report.

Londubh Burial Ground: Photograph Index				
Photo No.	Camera Location	Notes	Taken by	Date
1	CP1	View west on to site from entrance	MKP	05/06/2006
2	CP1	View southwest on to site	MKP	05/06/2006
3	CP1	View northwest on to site	MKP	05/06/2006
4	CP2	View east towards entrance	MKP	05/06/2006
5	CP2	View east towards entrance / wall	MKP	05/06/2006
6	CP3	View south-southwest over church ruins	MKP	05/06/2006
7	CP3	Zoom view over north wall on to Loch Ewe	MKP	05/06/2006
8		North end of Trench 1	MKP	05/06/2006
9	CP4	View south, Trench 1	MKP	06/06/2006
10	CP5	View north-northeast over Trench 1	MKP	06/06/2006
11	CP5	View north-northeast over Trench 1	MKP	06/06/2006
12	CP6	View east, Trench 2	MKP	07/06/2006
13	CP7	Trench 2, gravel fill	MKP	07/06/2006
14	CP7	Trench 2, gravel fill	MKP	07/06/2006
15	CP8	View east, Trench 2	MKP	07/06/2006
16	CP8	View east, Trench 2	MKP	07/06/2006
17	CP2	View southeast over trenches	MKP	07/06/2006
18	CP2	View southeast over trenches	MKP	07/06/2006
19	CP2	View east, over end of Trench 1 to entrance	MKP	07/06/2006
20	CP8	View east, Trench 2	MKP	07/06/2006
21		Burial Ground stone wall	MKP	05/06/2006
22		Burial Ground stone wall	MKP	05/06/2006
23		Pictish stone	MKP	05/06/2006
24		Pictish stone	MKP	05/06/2006
25		Wart stone	MKP	05/06/2006