

**Project Code: BMO07**

**Date: May 2007**

**Client: Aviemore & Highland Developments Ltd.**

# **Broomhill, Muir of Ord, Highland: An Archaeological Evaluation**

Dan Atkinson

**PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET (BMO07)**

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<b>Schedule</b>	
Fieldwork	April 2007
Report	May 2007

**Summary**

*Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Aviemore & Highland Developments Ltd. to conduct an archaeological evaluation at a proposed housing development at Broomhill, Muir of Ord, Highland. Given the topography of the site and the development proposals it was agreed with the Highland Council Archaeological Unit that the road corridor for site access and the summits of knolls (with a sample of the gullies in-between) were to be investigated through intrusive trial trenching. Consequently, a total of twenty-two trenches were excavated within the area of the proposed development, totalling approximately 650 linear metres. The evaluation identified evidence of a natural palaeochannel and features associated with the improvement of the land in the recent past. This included ceramic field drains, a rubble drainage sump located in one of the gullies, and tree throws. No significant archaeological features or finds were uncovered during the works.*

## **(BMO07) RESULTS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Aviemore & Highland Developments Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of a proposed housing development at Broomhill, Muir of Ord, Highland. The work was designed to fulfil a planning condition (Planning condition No. 12) placed by Highland Council. The work followed an initial assessment (Stronach 2007) and met the terms of a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Headland Archaeology and agreed with Highland Council Archaeology Service (March 2007). This report presents the results of the intrusive site evaluation, comprising approximately 650m of linear trenching in areas of elevated archaeological potential. The fieldwork was undertaken in April 2007.

## **2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION (Figure 1)**

The site of the proposed development lies on agricultural land to the west of the settlement of Muir of Ord. The north of the site is low-lying and marshy. To the south the ground rises steeply to a terrace with pronounced Kame-&-Kettle topography formed by melting at the end of the last glaciation. This results in a landscape of pronounced hillocks separated by fairly steep slopes and gullies. The base of these gullies can be marshy in places and the tops of the hillocks have often been eroded by cultivation.

## **3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

The initial site assessment (Stronach 2007) identified that from the time of the first detailed plans of the area the site has been open farmland. In addition, a number of prehistoric cropmark sites have been identified in the immediate surroundings of the site.

The potential for previously unrecorded prehistoric settlement in the area was regarded as low as a result of the topography. Natural hillocks and ridges are sometimes used as the location for prehistoric burial or ritual activity and in this regard the south of the site had an untested potential. The low-lying area to the north had the potential to be the location for burnt mounds, which are found at the edge of wetlands.

## **4. OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- To identify the location, nature and extent of any features or objects of archaeological importance that would be damaged or destroyed by the proposed development
- To propose arrangements for the safeguarding where possible, and recording where necessary of any archaeological features or finds identified, to be agreed with Highland Council Archaeology Unit
- To make sure that the needs for archaeological conservation and recording are met without causing any unnecessary delay or disturbance to the proposed development project

## 5. METHOD

Trial trenches were excavated using a JCB backactor with a flat bladed bucket under direct archaeological supervision. The total development area comprising house plots and access roads measures approximately 63705 m<sup>2</sup>. It was agreed with Highland Council Archaeology Service that the evaluation would concentrate on the tops of hillocks/ridges and along the potential line of the access road as these were the areas of elevated archaeological potential. In addition the bases of gullies were sampled to provide information on soil accumulation/erosion.

Any archaeological features in the trenches were recorded using the Headland Archaeology Ltd standard recording method. Colour transparencies and colour print photographs were taken. An overall site plan was recorded and tied into the National Grid using an EDM and penmap software. All recording was undertaken on *pro forma* record sheets.

## 6. RESULTS (Figure 1)

The following presents the results of the evaluation. Full trench descriptions are provided in Appendix 1; a summary is provided here. A total of twenty-two trenches were excavated within the area of the proposed development. No archaeologically significant features or finds were identified.

### *Trench 1 & 2*

Trench 1 and 2 were located in the eastern part of the low-lying area of the site within the proposed access road corridor. The trenches were relatively dry and the natural subsoil comprised well-drained sands and gravels - in contrast to the western part of this area, excluded from building in the proposed development, which is waterlogged and marshy. No finds or features of archaeological significance were identified.

### *Trench 3 & 4*

Trenches 3 and 4 were located on a lower slope adjacent to the low-lying area mentioned above. A linear feature [01], approximately 3m in width, was identified in both trenches, running with the slope on a north to south alignment. The cut had an irregular flat base and sterile silty sand fill; it was interpreted as an infilled drainage feature or palaeo-channel. This suggestion was supported by the surrounding topography. Evidence of modern ploughing was also noted in the form of plough scars. No finds or features of archaeological significance were identified.

### *Trench 5 – 9*

Trenches 5 – 7 and 9 were located along the areas of summits and ridges of the higher ground in the northern half of the proposed development. The topsoil was fairly shallow and the natural comprised sandy silt and gravel. Trench 5 appeared to contain a linear feature similar to that noted in Trench 3 and 4. The orientation of the feature suggested that it was the continuation of [01]. Trench 8 was located in a gully below the ridge upon which Trenches 6, 7 and 8 were located. The topsoil was slightly deeper and evidence of a field drainage system indicated that water was drained into these lower areas. Evidence of modern ploughing was also noted in the form of plough scars. No finds or features of archaeological significance were identified.

### *Trench 10 – 22*

The majority of the trenches highlighted similar characteristics both in the nature of the topsoil and the natural subsoil. All trenches except Trench 13 and 14 revealed evidence of plough scarring, indicating that the area was cultivated in the recent past. A number of trenches also revealed evidence of extensive bio-turbation in the form of burrowing. Trench 13 was located in a low-lying area between two summits and revealed evidence of land drainage in the form of a ceramic horseshoe

drain issuing into a rubble sump or soak-away. This feature is likely to be early 19<sup>th</sup> century in date, indicated by the ceramic horseshoe drain, a common type used at the time. Trench 17 contained two roughly sub-circular features and a rubble field drain. The investigation of one of the sub-circular features suggested that both represented tree or bush-throws, indicative of clearing and improvement of the land probably sometime in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. No finds or features of archaeological significance were identified.

## **7. DISCUSSION**

Although the site of the proposed development had some potential for the presence of unrecorded archaeological remains, the evaluation failed to identify any finds or features of archaeological significance; in particular, evidence of early human activity. The presence of 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery in the topsoil suggested agricultural manuring, and the identification of plough scars indicated that the land was also cultivated in the recent past in addition to the current grazing. The type of field drainage identified during the evaluation and the presence of tree-throws supported the suggestion that the land was cleared and improved from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## **8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thanks to Kirsty Cameron of Highland Council Archaeology Service who curated the project for Highland Council as planning authority. Thanks also to Tom McGougan for his support and to Bain Plant Hire for the provision of a machine and operator.

## **9. REFERENCES**

Stronach S, 2007 *Broomhill, Muir of Ord, Highland: An Archaeological Assessment* Unpublished Headland Archaeology client report

**APPENDIX 1: Registers****Trench Register**

All trenches were 1.60m wide

<b>Trench No.</b>	<b>Area No.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Length (m)</b>	<b>Av.Topsoil Depth (cm)</b>
1		Dark grey silty sand topsoil. Natural grey orange sand with abundant small-medium sub-rounded stones. NW-SE orientation. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	20	30
2		Mid grey silty sand topsoil. Natural mid-dark orange in NE, pale white-yellow in SW, sand with abundant small-medium sub-rounded stones. NE-SW orientation. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	50	30
3		Dark grey sand topsoil. Natural pale yellow sand natural. NE-SW orientation. Trench contains large linear feature [001] and (002). TR4 added on to SW end. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	25	40
4		Dark grey sand topsoil. Natural pale yellow silty sand natural. NW-SE orientation. Contains part of linear feature [001] and (002) of unknown date or function; possibly a natural drainage channel. 19 <sup>th</sup> cent pot in topsoil evidence of manuring for cultivation. There is also evidence of modern plough scarring. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	8.5	30
5		Dark brownish grey clayey sand. Natural pale orangey yellow sand with small-medium sub-angular stones. NE-SW orientation. Possible palaeo-channel in SW, made of dark reddish brown silty sand. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	27	25
6		Dark brownish grey silty sand topsoil. Natural orangey yellow sand with small-medium sub-angular stones. NE-SW orientation. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	32.5	20
7		Dark grey silty sand topsoil. Natural pale orangey yellow sand with abundant small-medium sub-angular stones. Evidence of animal burrowing and bioturbation. NE-SW orientation. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	34	25

8		Dark grey clayey sand topsoil. Natural orange/white sand with abundant sub-angular and occasional large angular stones. NW-SE orientation. SE end contains 2 ceramic field drains. No significant features or finds were identified.	20	30
9		Dark brownish grey sand topsoil. Natural orange/white sand with medium sub-rounded and sub-angular stones. Evidence of burrowing throughout. NE-SW orientation. No significant features or finds were identified.	19.5	25
10		Dark brownish grey sand topsoil. Natural white/orange sand with sub-angular and sub-rounded stones. Plenty of plough scarring. E-W orientation. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	50	25
11		Brownish grey clayey sand topsoil. Natural dark orange/white sand with sub-rounded stones. N-S orientation. Modern plough scarring. No archaeological features or finds were identified.	38	25
12		Dark brownish grey clayey sand topsoil. Natural orange/white sand with frequent medium sub-rounded stones. Some plough scarring and animal burrowing. E-W orientation. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	22.5	30
13		Dark blackish brown silty sand topsoil. Natural pale grey sand with medium sub-angular stones. E-W orientation. Contains rubble drainage sump joined by an early 19 <sup>th</sup> century ceramic horseshoe drain. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	18	40
14		Dark grey sandy silt topsoil. Blackish grey silty sand with angular-rounded stones, up to 0.25m. E-W orientation. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	17	25
15		Pale-mid greyish brown silty sand topsoil. Natural pale whitish orange sand. E-W orientation. Some evidence of animal burrowing. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	20	30
16		Dark greyish brown silty sand topsoil. Natural light brownish orange sand with small-medium sub-angular stones. E-W orientation. Lots of plough scars, mainly in E-W orientation. No significant archaeological features or finds were	24	30



		identified.		
17		Dark brownish grey silty sand topsoil. Natural light orangey brown sand with small sub-rounded stones. N-S orientation. Contains 2 tree throws and a rubble field drain (probably 18 <sup>th</sup> cent), both evidence of human field clearance and improvements. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	28	35
18		Dark brownish grey silty sand topsoil. Natural light orangey brown sand with small-medium sub-angular stones. NE-SW orientation. Plough scars on E-W orientation, mainly in SW end. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	19	30
19		Dark brownish grey silty sand topsoil. Natural pale yellow orange sand with small-medium sub-rounded stones. N-S orientation. Plough scars on N-S orientation in S end. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	24	30
20		Dark brown silty sand topsoil. Natural pale orange sand. NE-SW orientation. Plough furrows on E-W alignment, mainly in SW. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	24	30
21		Dark brownish grey silty sand topsoil. Natural pale whitish orange sand with small-medium sub-angular stones. NW-SE orientation. Some plough scarring in E-W direction. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	10	30
22		Dark brownish grey silty sand topsoil. Natural pale orange sand. NW-SE orientation. No significant archaeological features or finds were identified.	20	25

### Context Register

Context no.	Site	Trench	Description
1		3 + 4	Linear feature, possibly a palaeo-channel. Cut was steep sided with a flat, uneven and irregular base. W= c.3m
2		3 + 4	Fill of [1]. Consisted of sterile dark grey silty sand with small and medium sub-rounded stones. No finds. Th= 0.20m

**Photograph Register**

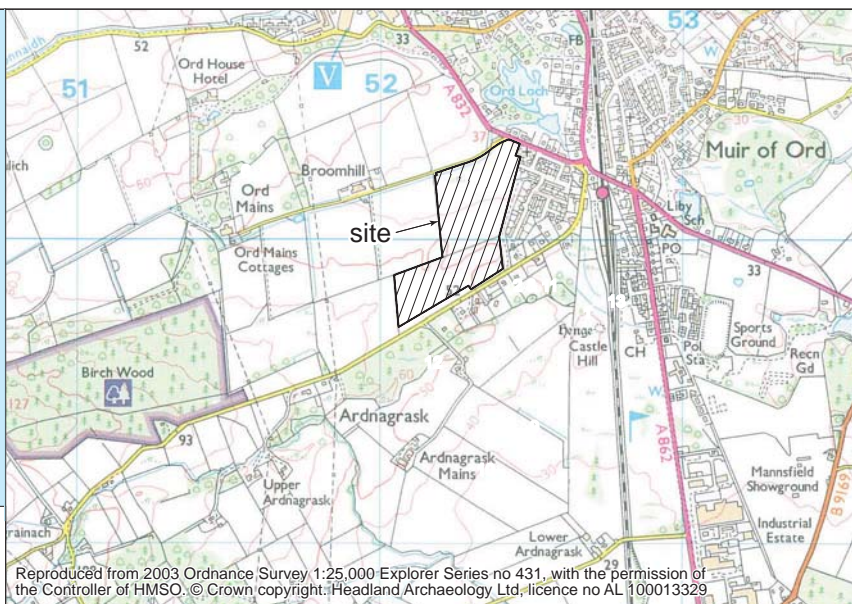
<b>Shot no.</b>	<b>Slide</b>	<b>Direction facing</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	-		ID shot
2	-	NW	Post-ex shot of TR # 1
3	-	NE	Post-ex shot of TR # 2
4	-	SW	Post-ex shot of TR # 3
5	-	NW	Post-ex shot of TR # 4
6	-	SW	Post-ex shot of TR # 5
7	-	NE	Post-ex shot of TR # 6
8	-	SW	Post-ex shot of TR # 7
9	-	SE	Post-ex shot of TR # 8
10	-	NE	Post-ex shot of TR # 9
11	-	SW	NE-facing section of linear feature [1] and (2)
12	-	W	Post-ex shot of TR # 10
13	-	N	Post-ex shot of TR # 11
14	-	E	Post-ex shot of TR # 12
15	-	E	Post-ex shot of TR # 13
16	-	W	Post-ex shot of TR # 14
17	-	W	Post-ex shot of TR # 15
18	-	W	Post-ex shot of TR # 16
19	-	S	Post-ex shot of TR # 17
20	-	SW	Post-ex shot of TR # 18
21	-	S	Post-ex shot of TR # 19
22	-	E	Post-ex shot of TR # 20
23	-	SE	Post-ex shot of TR # 21
24	-	NW	Post-ex shot of TR # 22

*Sample Register*

<b>Sample no.</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	2	Fill of linear feature [1].



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