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## Glenmore Forest

### *An Archaeological Survey on the slopes of Cairn Gorm*



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## 1 Introduction

Wordsworth Archaeological Services successfully tendered for the commission by Forest Enterprise to carry out an archaeological survey of a block of land lying to the south of the existing Glenmore Forest. The location of this survey is shown on Figures 2 and 3. This report outlines the findings of this survey.

## 2 Method

- 2.1 The brief outlining the survey proposal is attached to this report as Appendix 3. The work consisted of an initial desk-bound examination of existing documentary and cartographic sources held in Inverness Library, Highland Council Sites & Monuments Record and Archive Service. The author was also fortunate to gain copies of 18<sup>th</sup> century Estate plans held in the Scottish Record Office in Edinburgh.
- 2.2 This was followed by a field survey carried out over two days in May. On both days the weather was variable switching from sunny periods to blustery showers of sleet, rain or hail. The ground was walked in a series of transects with particular emphasis being placed on grassy flushes and more verdant and sheltered areas associated with the burns and rivers flowing down the hill, as it was anticipated that these areas were more likely to reveal archaeological sites. Greater emphasis was also placed on the more sheltered area to the north and west of the survey area where the ground was more sheltered and more obscured by the existing woodland.

## 3 The Recorded History and Impact of man in Glenmore

- 3.1 Glenmore Forest has long been identified as a significant stand of Caledonian Pinewood. No prehistoric settlement has been recorded from the area and it is unlikely that significant prehistoric settlements lie hidden within its bounds.
- 3.2 The surviving remains, as shown on earlier 18<sup>th</sup> century estate maps, consist of shieling and more permanent settlements abandoned in the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The original foundation of these settlements, all lying to the north of the survey area, is not known. No specific mention of Glenmore is made in medieval charters, though it formed part of the Lordship of Badenoch passing via the Comyns to the Earls of Buchan, before being sold to the Gordon family. The latter retained control until the forest was sold to the Forestry Commission last century. It was probably viewed as a hunting preserve for the Gordons, though its distance from Huntly Castle and the lack of a suitable hunting lodge nearby may have meant it was little used. There are references in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to a Forester (in the sense of game keeper rather than woodsman) in Glenmore. An unnamed source in Macfarlane's Geographical Collections (*Mitchell ed. 1905 Scot Hist Soc 3*) writing in the 18<sup>th</sup> century source described the wood as '*a great Firr Wood with much Birch*'. Though some wood was being felled in the earlier/middle 18<sup>th</sup> century, according to another informant writing at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the local minister John

Grant, no significant exploitation took place until the wood was purchased in 1780 by Osborne & Dodsworth on a 26 year lease. Extraction was aided by the deliberate canalising of the River Luineag to float the wood to the Spey. This exploitation was aided by increased demand for shipping during the Napoleonic War and a total of 47 ships was constructed from these timbers at Garmouth at the mouth of the Spey. A list of ships built by 1795? is appended.

- 3.3 The extent of the wood at this time can be seen on a series of estate maps drawn up for the Duke of Gordon, partly in connection with his dispute over boundaries with the Grants of Seafield but it is also likely in connection with the sale of this wood in 1780. The earliest map drawn up by William Anderson in 1762 (*RHP 2504 Glenmore and Wood*) is not at a sufficient scale (c1:21,000) or in sufficient detail to define features within the survey area. However a map of 1766 (*RHP 2501 Plan of Kincardine with Glen More and Wood exhibiting all the different tacks, crofts etc.with their extents*), also drawn up by W. Anderson, is sufficiently detailed (at a scale of 1:7,100) to identify buildings and to be compared to the modern 1:10,000 plan. A transcript of part is shown as Figure 1.
- 3.4 The extent of the woodland, though perhaps shown schematically, appears to be less than the present extent, particularly on the west on the northern slopes of Airgiod Meal. Despite the potential grazings on the northern corries of Cairngorm, no shieling huts were recorded within the survey area, except perhaps for an abandoned site lying to the north east of Airgiod Meall described as 'stance'.
- 3.5 Following the felling there is no record of deliberate replanting, though vigorous regeneration was recorded by Marshall by 1836. The area was converted into a sheep farm in 1841 and then converted into a Deer Forest in 1859. Depending on the density of stocking this is likely to have inhibited regeneration, as is suggested by coring of trees by the Forestry Commission dating most of the trees to 140 years old (in the 1950s?).

#### 4 Field Survey Results

- 4.1 The presence of wood charcoal was noted at least four locations, as shown on Figures 2& 3. This was not a universal horizon and is perhaps related to lightning strikes, particularly as two of these were below the peat. However it is also possible these charcoal horizons reflect either accidental or deliberate woodland clearance by man at an early date.
- 4.2 Despite systematic walking of the survey area only two, possibly three archaeological sites were noted, all located in the Lag a'Chait. Details of these are recorded in Appendix 1. While these features do not make sense as animal or shieling stores, they may have been part of an illicit still. Normally such sites are located close to water, but perhaps the secluded location outweighed the restricted access to water.

- 4.3 The probable site of the '*stance*' recorded on the estate map of 17 (*RHP 2501*) was found to lie just to the north of the survey area. Details on this site are also recorded in Appendix 1.

## 5 Archaeological conclusions

- 5.1 The impact of man in prehistoric and medieval times is likely to have been restricted to hunting, though it is possible that the charcoal fragments represent some form of woodland management.
- 5.2 Given that shieling sites have been identified at Mar Lodge Estate at 690m above OD and at NN 888 893 at 550m above OD in Glenfeshie, it is initially surprising that no shielings were found within the survey area. However the lack of significant grassy flushes suggests the grazing was nutritionally poor here and aided to the northerly aspect of these areas would have made them less attractive to graziers. The presence of hail and sleet at the end of May showed how inclement these areas could be. Alternatively there were shieling sites that have been destroyed to the south outside the survey area, in Coire Cas and Coire na Ciste, by ski-related developments or elsewhere by active erosion along river banks such as beside the Allt Mor. However no such sites are shown on 18<sup>th</sup> century survey maps and such a negative argument is not robust. The presumption must remain there was never any significant shieling settlement in this area.
- 5.3 The remaining probable illicit still in Lag a'Chait is less surprising given that a number of examples have been recorded in the Glenmore area (*Duncan Anderson pers. comm.*). The remote location would be ideal for hiding the evidence of distillation from the Excise man.

## 6 *Recommendations*

- 6.1 *The feature identified as an illicit still site in Lag a'Chait at NH 9657 0653 could be included on tourist literature as an existing footpath runs past this site. However there are undoubtedly more accessible sites and it may not be desirable to attract visitors into a wild mountain area. Natural regeneration is unlikely to cause major problems with either of the two sites, though it may be appropriate to build in a programme of monitoring of these sites into any proposed management regime for the area. This monitoring should identify and remove seedlings either growing inside the features or within 5 metres of their outer boundary.*
- 6.2 *The possible shieling site at NH 9750 0758 should also be protected from regeneration. However its archaeological value has been severely compromised by the now felled sitka (?) and though it has value as a landscape feature, it could be argued that it is not worth preserving. However given the small number of archaeological sites now surviving in Glenmore, it is desirable that it should be retained. This should a buffer zone of 20m around the identified site and will require periodic monitoring. It would be desirable to remove the brash from the vicinity of this site to establish whether there are other buildings associated with the one already identified.*

Jonathan Wordsworth MA, MIFA, FSA Scot

### Acknowledgements

*I would like to thank Highland Council Archive Service, Ann Wakeling of Aviemore and Duncan Anderson of Glenmore for supplying information to help compile this report.*

*APPENDIX I**Site Descriptions**Site Number*     **1***NGR*             NH 9657 0653

*Description*     Below a large rock in Lag a'Chait is a small roughly circular drystone feature c2m in diameter. The walling stands 0.5m high and there is no entrance. It lies c5m N of the footpath. c110m to the E of this feature, also just N of the footpath, a drystone enclosure has been built utilising two large rocks. The chamber formed below the overhanging rock is tightly constrained with an uneven rock floor measuring 1.5-2m diameter. The entrance to the S has partially collapsed and survives up to 0.5m high.

A third chamber in the rocks to the NW some 30m? above the second feature may be a natural feature as there is evidence of a strong flow of water below this 'cave'

Initially these two features were considered to be small stores but their isolated location and lack of entrance suggests an alternative explanation. It is more probable that they were used for a still site, being well hidden in Lag a'Chait. The feature to the W would have supported the copper worm used in the distillation with the store used for holding materials such as malt for working the still. This probably dates to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. A more accurate date might be obtained by getting a lichenologist to examine the stones here, as there is clearly less growth of lichen than on surrounding rocks.

*Site Number*     **2***NGR*             NH 9750 0758

*Description*     Lying outside the main survey area, but forming part of the existing Glenmore Forest, are the remains of a possible rectangular building 7m by 3.5m aligned NE/SW. It lies on raised ground overlooking a burn not marked on the supplied 1:10,000 plan. It is located c85m NW (330°) of the junction of 2 fences, plus a further 35m NW of the burn (measurements by pacing). The site has previously been planted with non-native conifers (sitka?) but these have recently been removed and the site covered with brashings. To aid future identification the brashings were removed off the site. Other buildings may also lie in the vicinity under the brashings though none were noted.

This may be the 'stance' identified on William Anderson's plan of 1766 (*RHP 2501*) though it would appear to lie slightly to the E of the location suggested on his plan. No other site could be identified for this stance, though it could be obscured by heavy growth of heather and either mature or vigorous pine regeneration which is evident to the W.

Though severely damaged by the previous tree planting, this site is significant in that the map evidence suggests it was abandoned by 1766.

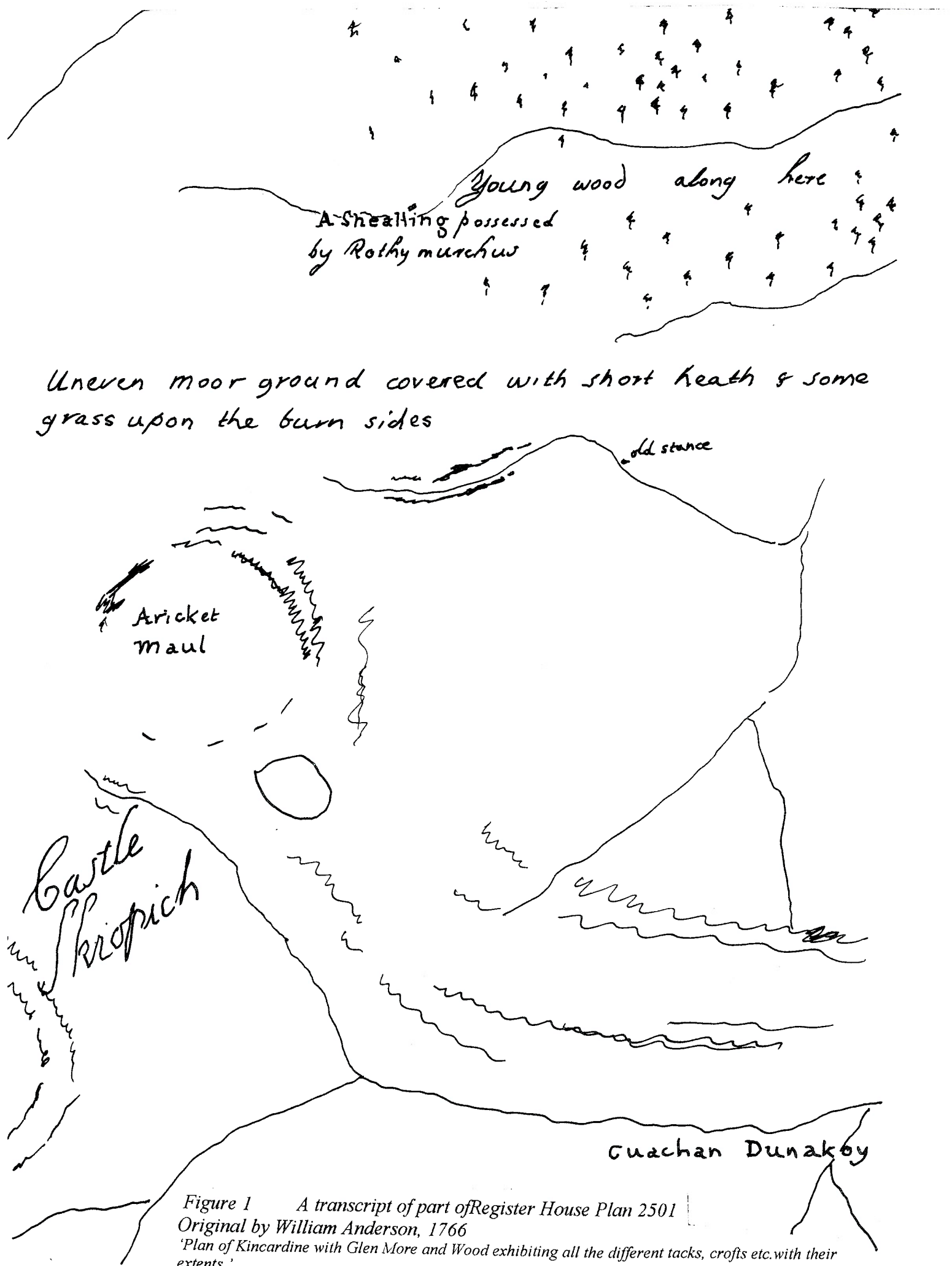


Figure 1 A transcript of part of Register House Plan 2501  
Original by William Anderson, 1766

'Plan of Kincardine with Glen More and Wood exhibiting all the different tacks, crofts etc. with their extents.'

marks location of charcoal  
under peat

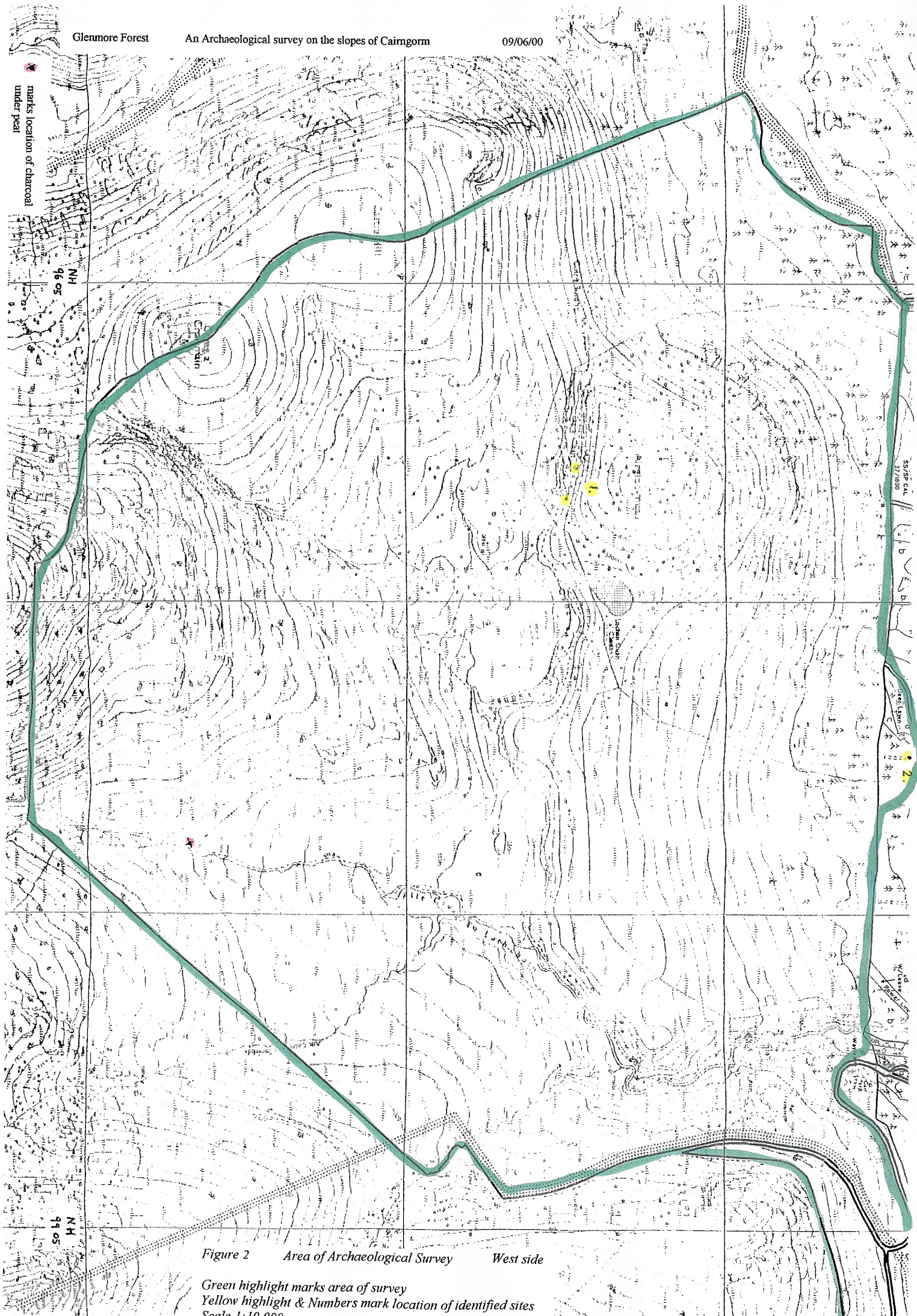
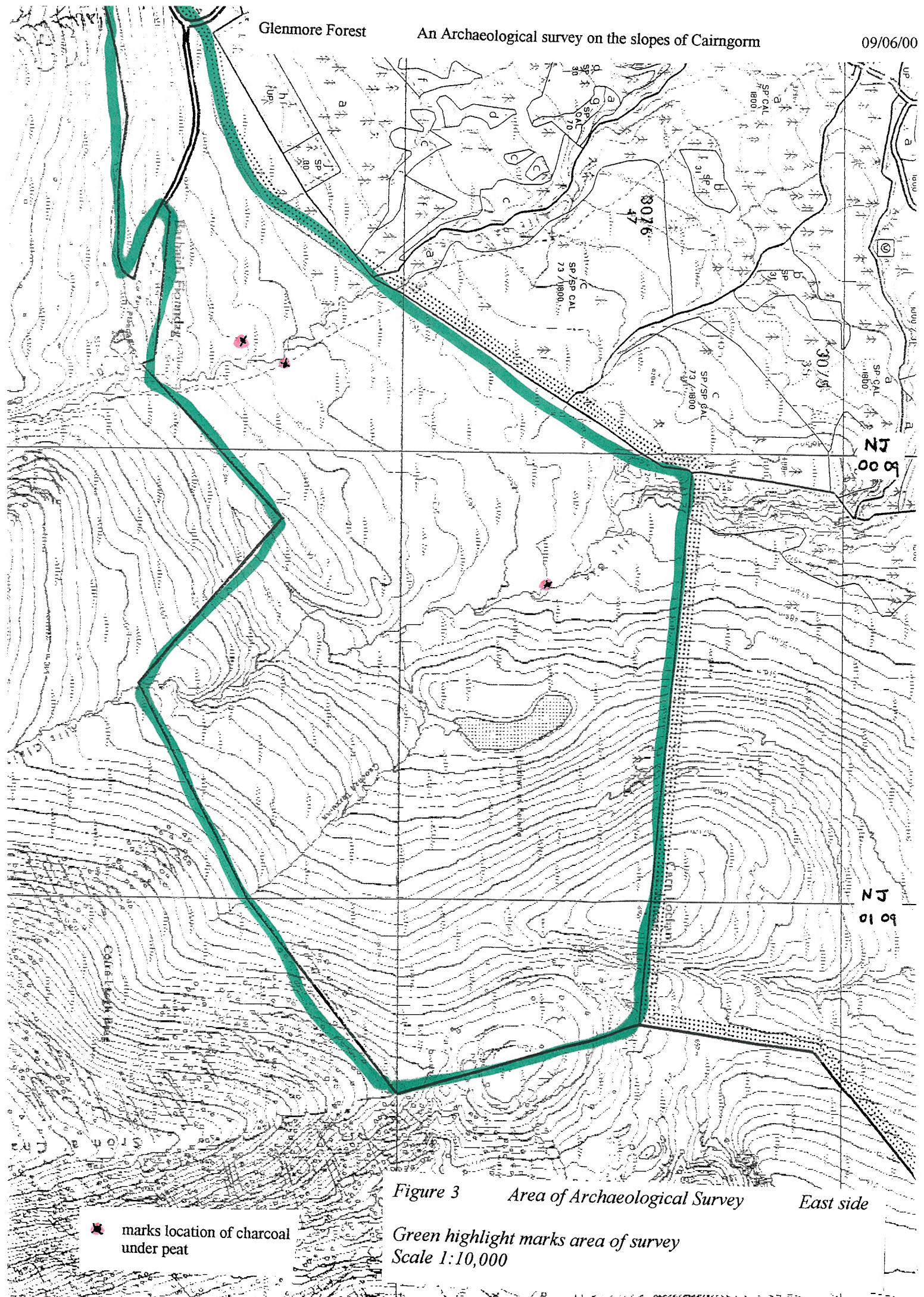


Figure 2 Area of Archaeological Survey West side

Green highlight marks area of survey  
Yellow highlight & Numbers mark location of identified sites  
Scale 1:10,000





Looking N to Site 1., ?an illicit still site in Lag a'Chait



Looking NE at drystone walled 'store' at Site 1. in Lag a'Chait



Looking E at possible cave feature in Lag a'Chait



Looking N at location of possible cave site in Lag a'Chait in a hail storm



Looking SW down length of probable shieling stance Site 2.



Looking S at Site 2., possible shieling stance, after removal of brushings.

## APPENDIX 2

Rev John Grant

Statistical Account of Parish of Abernethy & Kincardine  
c1795

## ical Account

a day's labour in the year from every te-  
tions, as they generally seized on all the  
ffered capitally. 3. All fines for killing  
ten wood, were laid on by themselves,  
These fines amounted to what they plea-  
lucrative perquisite they had, was, what  
which was, the best horse, cow, ox, or  
on the estate possessed at the time of his  
widow and children for the Bailie, at the  
stance. This amounted to a great deal  
e was abolished by the late Sir Ludovick  
ear 1738.

## APPENDIX

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Containing some additional information, received after the  
account of Abernethy and Kincardine was gone to  
Press.

LIST of VESSELS built at Kingfion Port, or Speymouth,  
of Glenmore Timber, by Messrs Dodsworth and Of-  
bourne, since the year 1785.

			Tons.
The brig <i>Glenmore</i> , burden	-	-	110
The ship <i>Duchess of Gordon</i> ,	-	-	330
The brig <i>Kingfion</i> ,	-	-	140
The ship <i>Effay</i> ,	-	-	350
The sloop <i>Success</i> ,	-	-	54
The ship <i>Sally and Ann</i> ,	-	-	200
The brig <i>Speedwell</i> ,	-	-	120
The ship <i>Yucatan</i> ,	-	-	260
The schooner <i>Dispatch</i> ,	-	-	34
The schooner <i>Neptune</i> ,	-	-	70
The schooner <i>Good Intent</i> ,	-	-	55
The sloop <i>Harriot</i> ,	-	-	25
The sloop <i>Friendship</i> ,	-	-	54
The ship <i>Lord Alexander Gordon</i> ,	-	-	350
The <i>Lady Charlotte Gordon</i> ,	-	-	180
The <i>Marquis of Huntly</i> ,	-	-	380
The <i>Duke of Gordon</i> ,	-	-	500
The <i>Gollingwood</i> ,	-	-	300
The sloop <i>Fane</i> ,	-	-	70
			<hr/>
			Tons, 3582

Attested by Thomas Seal, clerk to the Company.

**SPECIFICATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK  
PREPARED FOR FOREST ENTERPRISE**

**GLENMORE/CAIRNGORM**

**APPENDIX 3**

**Archaeological Survey**

**Background**

This specification has been produced in response to proposals for a Forest Enterprise Design Plan. There is a high potential for unrecorded archaeological remains to be present within the Design Plan area, therefore a rapid archaeological survey must be carried out, and any archaeological remains must be recorded and suitably marked on the ground to ensure their preservation with the Design Plan.

**Terms of Reference**

The specification has been produced for Forest Enterprise who will be responsible for the work, including all tendering and contractual arrangements. Estimates should be obtained from archaeological contractors on the basis of this specification. It is for a *minimum* standard of work; a higher standard may be offered and accepted.

Any reference to 'archaeologist' in this specification is to be taken to mean a suitably qualified and experienced practitioner acceptable to the Senior Archaeologist. This is to ensure that work is carried out to professional standards.

The area to be covered is as shown on the attached plan.

**Objectives**

1. To identify the nature and extent of any archaeological remains which may exist within the Plan area.
2. To propose arrangements for the safeguarding where possible and recording where necessary of any archaeological features or finds identified.
3. To ensure that the needs for archaeological conservation and recording are met without causing any unnecessary delay/disturbance to the Plan.

**Method**

1. A rapid, desk-based assessment of all records, documents and maps available in Inverness relating to the application area will be carried out.
2. A survey will be made of the Plan area, using

**\* walk over the Plan area and indicate visible archaeological features of possible importance on 1:10,000 Ordnance Survey base.**

3. No excavation is to take place as part of this specification.
4. The archaeological areas should be marked out on the ground with appropriate buffer zones to ensure that they are clearly visible and safeguarded.

**Monitoring**

1. The Senior Archaeologist will normally monitor projects to ensure<sup>†</sup> that specifications are met, normally by unannounced site visit. Alternative or additional monitoring arrangements may be made in individual cases.
2. Prior notice of fieldwork starting dates, with contact names and local addresses, telephone numbers and directions and other arrangements for access must be given to the Senior Archaeologist.
3. Any unexpectedly significant or complex discoveries, or any other unexpected occurrences or conditions which might affect the agreed project work or its timetable or cost must be notified immediately to the client and the Senior Archaeologist so that revised arrangements can be made. Reasons given later for non-completion to timetable or specification will not normally be accepted if immediate notification has not taken place.

**Reporting****1. Survey Report**

At least three copies of the project report must be produced.

- \* Two copies for Forest Enterprise, Tower Road, Smithton, Inverness, IV2 7NL
- \* One copy for the Highland Sites and Monuments Record, Planning Service, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV1 5NX, where it will be available for immediate consultation by the public. One copy should be on disk in a format compatible with MS Office 95/ Windows 95.

The report must be submitted to the Forest District Manager within 2 weeks of the completion of the fieldwork.

The report must include, as a minimum,

1. Location plan showing the Plan area and archaeological sites and features affected, including the extent of any areas to be managed for conservation.
2. Circumstances and objectives of this work, including a copy of this specification.
3. Weather and other conditions affecting fieldwork.
4. Photographs of archaeological features noted.
5. A full index to any finds, records or other archive material generated by the project including their location.
6. Details of any measures proposed to mitigate the impact of the application on the archaeological resource.
7. General comments and recommendations arising from the carrying out of this project.

The completed report will be available for immediate public consultation for research purposes at the Highland Sites and Monuments Record, in Inverness. Copyright in the report remains with the author unless transferred in writing. However, the Forest District Manager and the Archaeology Unit may make the report available to researchers either on paper or electronically.