



Highland Archaeology Services Ltd

Bringing the Past and Future Together

Dingwall North: Pitcairn Lands



Desk-Based Assessment



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Dingwall North: Pitcairn Lands

Desk-Based Assessment

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Summary

A desk based assessment was undertaken for a proposed housing site at Pitcairn Lands, Tulloch, Dingwall. The site was found to represent the last remaining recognisable area of late 18th and early 19th c. parkland associated with Tulloch Castle. Careful design of the scheme overall is recommended to mitigate the unavoidable impact on the visual setting of the castle.

The north-eastern part of the site was also a racecourse in the 18th c. There is also limited potential for buried archaeological evidence of earlier pits and similar features. However this is likely to be fragmentary and difficult to evaluate in the field. Attendance by an archaeologist during topsoil stripping is recommended to ensure that any such evidence found can be dealt with promptly and effectively without delay to the construction work.

Attention is drawn to the Davidson family burial ground within this site close to Chestnut Road, which should be marked off and safeguarded.

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Aims and objectives

- To minimise any possible delay or cost to the development by anticipating requirements as far as possible
- To determine as far as possible the character, extent, condition, date and significance of any recorded archaeology that could be affected by this development and recommend mitigation as necessary

Location

The site is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NH 544 601, and rises from about 31m above sea level by Dingwall Primary School northwards to about 65m above sea level at the highest point in the NE corner.

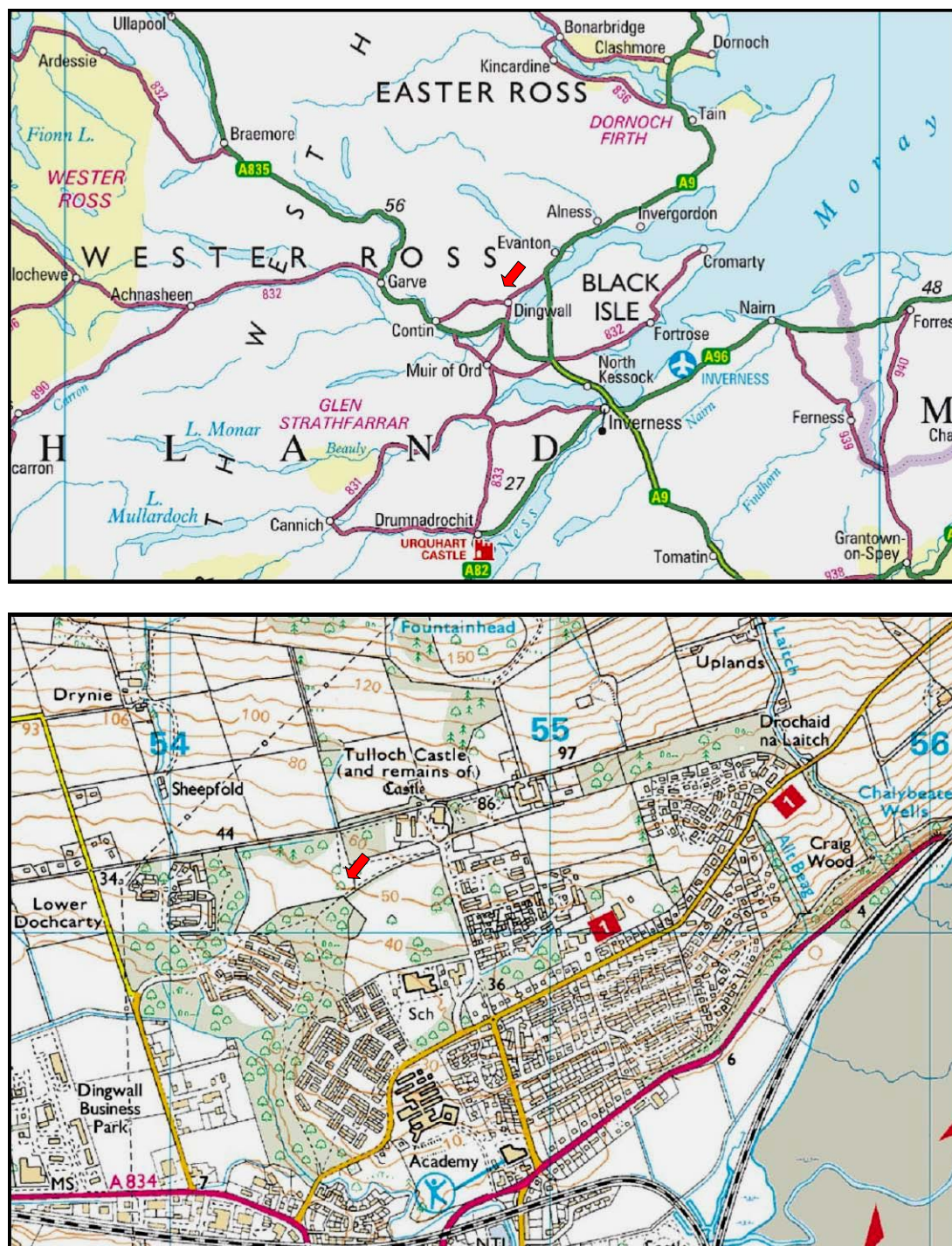


Figure 1 Site location

Introduction

A desk-based assessment was carried out of a site at Pitcairn Lands, Tulloch, Dingwall, in advance of a housing development. A brief site visit was also undertaken. The purpose was to determine as far as possible from archaeological and historical records, the known and potential cultural heritage baseline within the proposal area.

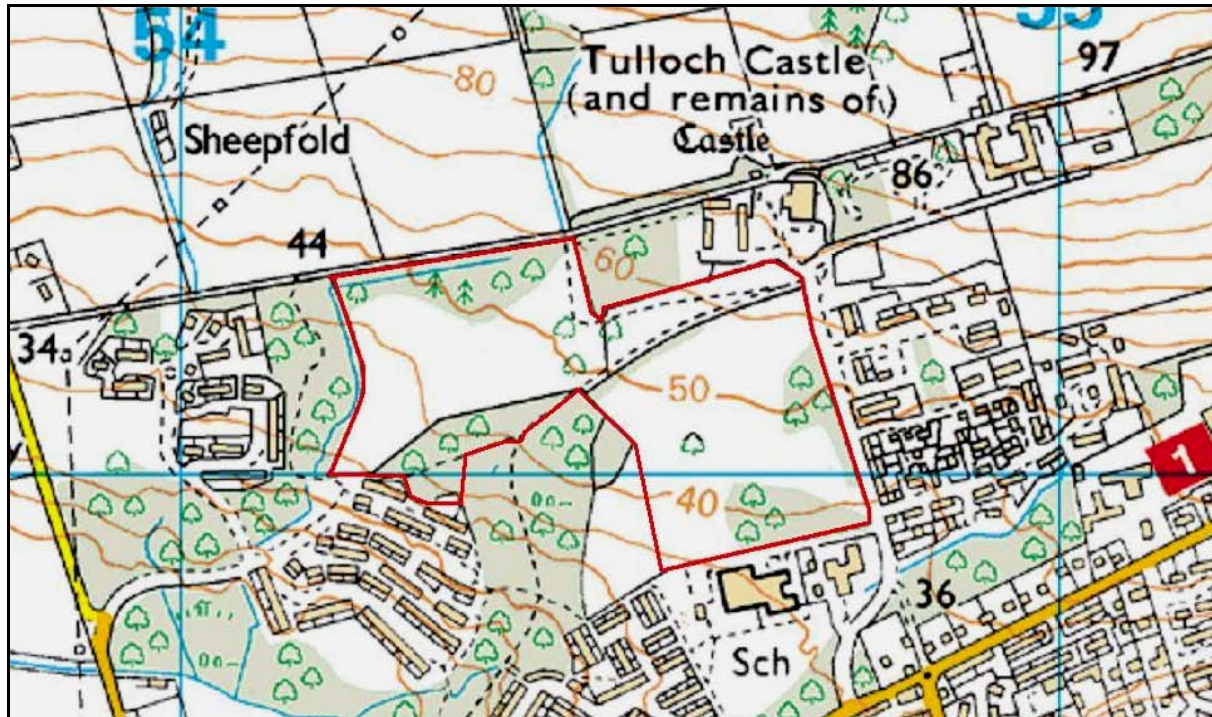


Figure 2 Site extent.

Policy and archaeological background

The planning and policy framework includes the Highland Council's *Structure Plan*¹, and the Scottish Government's *Scottish Planning Policy SPP 23: Planning and the Historic Environment* (2008)². The fundamental principles underpinning the above policies are set out in *Passed to the Future: Historic Scotland's Policy for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (2002)³ and the *Burra Charter* (Australia ICOMOS 1999).⁴

¹

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/developmentplans/structureplan/thehighlandstructureplan.htm>

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/10/28135841/0>

³ www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pasttofuture.pdf

⁴ <http://www.icomos.org/australia/burra.html>

The proposed housing site was formerly part of the parkland of Tulloch Castle⁵, which is about 70m NE of the NE corner of the site. The castle itself, with its tunnel entrance, extensive farm steading, houses and garden walls are Listed Category B⁶. There has been no recorded archaeological excavation or survey in the Pitcairn Lands area.

Method

All relevant locally or digitally accessible archaeological and historic records, maps and aerial photographs were checked. These included the digitised RAF post-war aerial photograph collection and historic OS map sequence held at the Highland Council headquarters in Inverness, the Highland Council archives service, Dingwall Museum, and Dingwall Library (including the NOSAS collection). Unfortunately it was not possible to locate the relevant aerial photographs for the Tulloch and Dingwall area.⁷

Results

Norman Macrae, in his *Romance of a Royal Burgh: Dingwall's Story of a Thousand Years* (1923) states,

The Tulloch Hill was once the habitation of a pre-historic race. Ages before the first Viking sailed his coracle up the Cromarty Firth, the Tulloch Hill afforded a dwelling-place for a considerable population...

He goes on to describe a Neolithic flint adze found 'at the root of an old Scotch fir tree', a Celtic bead found near the stone circle at Brae, and 'a thriving weaving industry established on the western shoulder of Tulloch Hill'. It seems likely he was referring to the Heights of Brae, where Bronze Age hut circles and field systems are still visible, rather than this area⁸, but this gentle south facing slope at about 50m above sea level might have been a favoured site for early agriculture, and there is some potential for fragmentary, truncated buried evidence to survive.

According to Highland Library Service⁹, there may have been a Norse stronghold near Tulloch Castle, although the evidence for this is not clear. An undated steatite lamp now in the National Museum of Scotland is recorded as having been found to the north-east of Tulloch in the 19th c. However this is a stray find of uncertain provenance, and apparently some distance from the proposed housing site.¹⁰

The *First Statistical Account* (1791-99) states that the proprietor of the estate of Tulloch was appointed hereditary constable of Dingwall Castle on the forfeiture of the Earl of Ross in 1476. As Dingwall Castle decayed, Tulloch was no doubt becoming the seat of the town's principle landowner. A tower or "keep" was built by Duncan Bain in 1542, with further ranges added in the seventeenth century. John Bane, 4th

⁵ Highland HER MHG 8897; NMRS NH56SW 8.0

⁶ Listed Building nos 24518-9

⁷ The reference numbers are: 106G/UK/01114/3084-5; 3367-8 (1946); 58/2337/10-11 (1957); and a single photograph with no sortie number, shown on the index as BOS_68_104.

⁸ Thanks to Dingwall Museum for drawing this to my attention

⁹ http://www.ambaile.org.uk/en/item/item_photograph.jsp?item_id=35310

¹⁰ Highland HER MHG 8952; NMRS NH56SE 16

Laird of Tulloch from 1626, was Provost of Dingwall on three occasions. Kinnairdie was bought from the Munros of Foulis in 1633, and in 1665 the tower house was enlarged to form a 'castle'. However by 1762 the estate was bankrupt and it was sold to Henry Davidson, a wealthy London sugar merchant, originally from Cromarty.¹¹

Davidson appears to have invested heavily in his new property: the farm steading carries a date of 1774. A hundred years later, the Ordnance Survey Name Book (1872) refers to a 'considerable farm steading, with coach houses and cottages in the possession of and the property of Duncan Davidson esq.'¹² The farm steading was repaired and altered in 1900.

Six successive Davidsons from this family were lairds of Tulloch Castle until 1917, playing a prominent role in the Burgh of Dingwall and County of Ross-shire. Different generations served as Provosts of Dingwall and as MPs for the local constituency, and one was appointed a Lord Lieutenant of Ross & Cromarty in 1879¹³.

Duncan Davidson, the fourth laird, was nicknamed "The Stag". Born in 1800, elected Member of Parliament for Cromarty in 1826 and a favourite of Queen Victoria, he had five wives, eighteen children and at least thirty illegitimate children. One of his daughters is said to have run off after seeing her father with another woman. She fell down the stairs and was killed. It is possible that she is the "Green Lady" who is supposed to haunt the castle¹⁴.

Major fires in 1838 and 1845 destroyed most of Tulloch Castle along with many of the estate records, but the castle was rebuilt and extended in 1891. The last of the direct line of Davidsons died in 1917.

The present building mostly dates from 1918-23 but incorporates 16th c. and possibly earlier work. It was used as a hospital in World War II. In 1947 it was taken over by Ross and Cromarty County Council and used as a hostel for Dingwall Academy. It has been a hotel since 1988¹⁵.

A copy of an undated estate map in Dingwall Museum shows a race course occupying the eastern part of the present site. The land had already been enclosed into rectangular fields surrounded by hedges and trees, some of which had been removed to form the course. The racecourse is referred to by David Alston in his guide to Ross and Cromarty as being in existence by 1827.¹⁶

The castle was later surrounded by a designed landscape of policies and gardens, which have been much encroached on by housing development in recent years. The Second Statistical Account for Dingwall (1834-45) waxes lyrical about the area:

To the north of the town stands the hill of Tulloch – a continuation of the northern ridge of Strathpeffer, which rises to the height of about 800 feet. Its acclivity presents an aspect of uncommon luxuriance. It is occupied by several farms, which are ornamented by rows of fine old trees; and by the beautiful grounds attached to Tulloch castle, which stands midway, about a mile from the town, 'embosomed deep in tufted trees',¹⁷

¹¹ David Alston, *Ross and Cromarty: A Historical Guide* (1999)

¹² ONB R & C Book 9, 9, quoted in NMRS NH56SW 37.0

¹³ http://www.clandavidson.org.uk/Part_5.pdf

¹⁴ Ibidem

¹⁵ *A Brief History of Tulloch Castle* – notes for an exhibition in Dingwall Museum

¹⁶ David Alston, *Ross and Cromarty: A Historical Guide* (1999), 162

¹⁷ <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/sas/>

There has been much encroachment by housing development over the last 30 years , and today this site represents the only area where this parkland can still be recognised (see cover)¹⁸. However, little survives of the avenue that formerly led through the site.

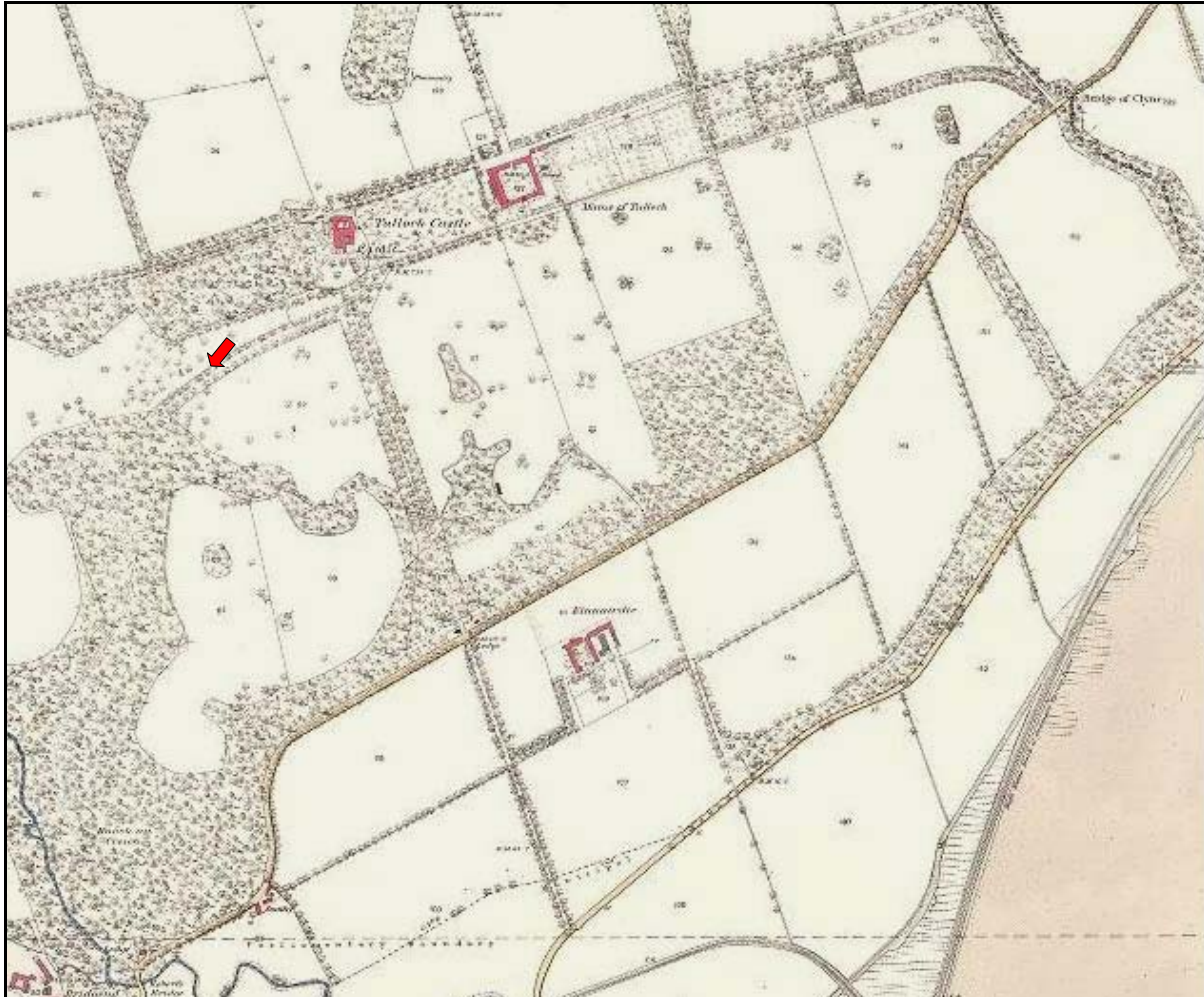


Figure 3 Extract from 1st Edition OS 1:2500 Map, surveyed 1875.

Courtesy of National Library of Scotland. Not reproduced to scale. Derived from digital data

Within the site, on its south-western boundary, is the Davidson private burial ground in which the Davidson family remains exhumed from St James Episcopal Church, Castle St., Dingwall were re-interred on 6th September 1999¹⁹.

¹⁸ Highland HER no. MHG33131

¹⁹ Highland HER no. MHG24946. It is at grid reference NH 5430 5997

Conclusions and Recommendations

The proposed housing site lies on a hillside to the south and west of Tulloch castle. It retains much of its parkland character with mature trees. As noted above, based on similar topography elsewhere there is some potential for buried evidence of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement and agriculture. However no evidence has yet been found for these here, and later agriculture, followed by the creation of the racecourse and the subsequent park are likely to have truncated or removed much of whatever may have existed.

The case for possible Norse settlement here seems weak. Dingwall itself was a centre of Norse administration and justice, no doubt accompanied by trading and other activity, but this is likely to have taken place on or near the site of the present town.

The presence of a medieval service settlement or *castletoun* also seems unlikely here, as the occupiers of the castle from the outset were closely associated with Dingwall. On the other hand a mains farm is likely to have existed, although where this was located is unclear. This area is likely to have formed part of the common fields in the later medieval and early post-medieval periods, continuing in use as agricultural land before being enclosed and then extensively landscaped as a park in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Archaeological evidence of the former racecourse is unlikely to survive as this may have consisted of a simple grass track – no structures are shown on the estate map.

Direct impacts from the development on buried archaeology are possible, but given the probably fragmentary nature of any surviving evidence it would be difficult to evaluate effectively. Regular site visits by an archaeologist might be a sensible precaution during topsoil stripping to ensure that any such evidence is dealt with promptly and effectively without delay to the construction work.

The designed landscape of the castle has already been encroached upon by previous developments over the years as they have come closer, but this has increased the potential value of this last remaining section. Careful design of the scheme overall is recommended to mitigate the unavoidable impact on the visual setting of the castle as far as possible.

Care should also be taken to identify and avoid the Davidson family burial ground close to Chestnut Road. Marking and safeguarding a protective buffer zone around this is recommended.



Plate 1 Tulloch Castle from the south

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