



*Highland Archaeology Services Ltd*

Bringing the Past and Future Together

## Land 90m SE of Marish, East Tulloch Bonar Bridge



## Archaeological Evaluation Interim Report

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## Archaeological Evaluation Interim report

<b>Report No.</b>	HAS160909
<b>Site Code</b>	LMG16
<b>Client</b>	W & H Grant
<b>Planning Ref</b>	16/00491/FUL
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## Summary

*Stage 1 of an archaeological evaluation was carried out in the area forming the septic tank and soakaway for a house development near the western end of Loch Migdale. A total of 76.6sqm was opened. One feature was identified and recorded – the foundations of a dry-stone wall which appears to form part of an enclosure. Many fragments of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century glazed pottery were recovered from across the site, and one copper alloy button. This first phase was in advance of installation of a static caravan on site; the second phase will concentrate on the footprint of the house.*

## Contents

Summary.....	2
Contents.....	3
Acknowledgements .....	3
Aims and objectives .....	3
Location.....	4
Legislation and Policy .....	6
Desk based assessment .....	6
Historic Environment Record.....	7
Historic Maps .....	10
Statistical Accounts .....	11
Evaluation methodology.....	12
Results and Discussion.....	13
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	16
Appendix 1: Additional records .....	17

## *Illustrations*

Figure 1: Project location (general).....	4
Figure 2 Project layout (courtesy of client) .....	5
Figure 3 Desk-Based Assessment Asset locations .....	6
Figure 4: 1st edition OS map surveyed 1874.....	10
Figure 5: Site plan .....	13
Figure 6: Feature 1 section drawing.....	16
Figure 7: Plan of Feature 1 .....	18

## *Plates*

Plate 1: Feature 1 before excavation [LMG16_01].....	12
Plate 2: Feature 1 after tumble and surrounding soil removed [LMG16_18].....	15
Plate 3: eastern end of trench after excavation [LMG16_08] .....	19
Plate 4: F1 with tumble [LMG16_16] .....	19
Plate 5: Pottery fragments.....	20
Plate 6: Copper Alloy button .....	20

## Acknowledgements

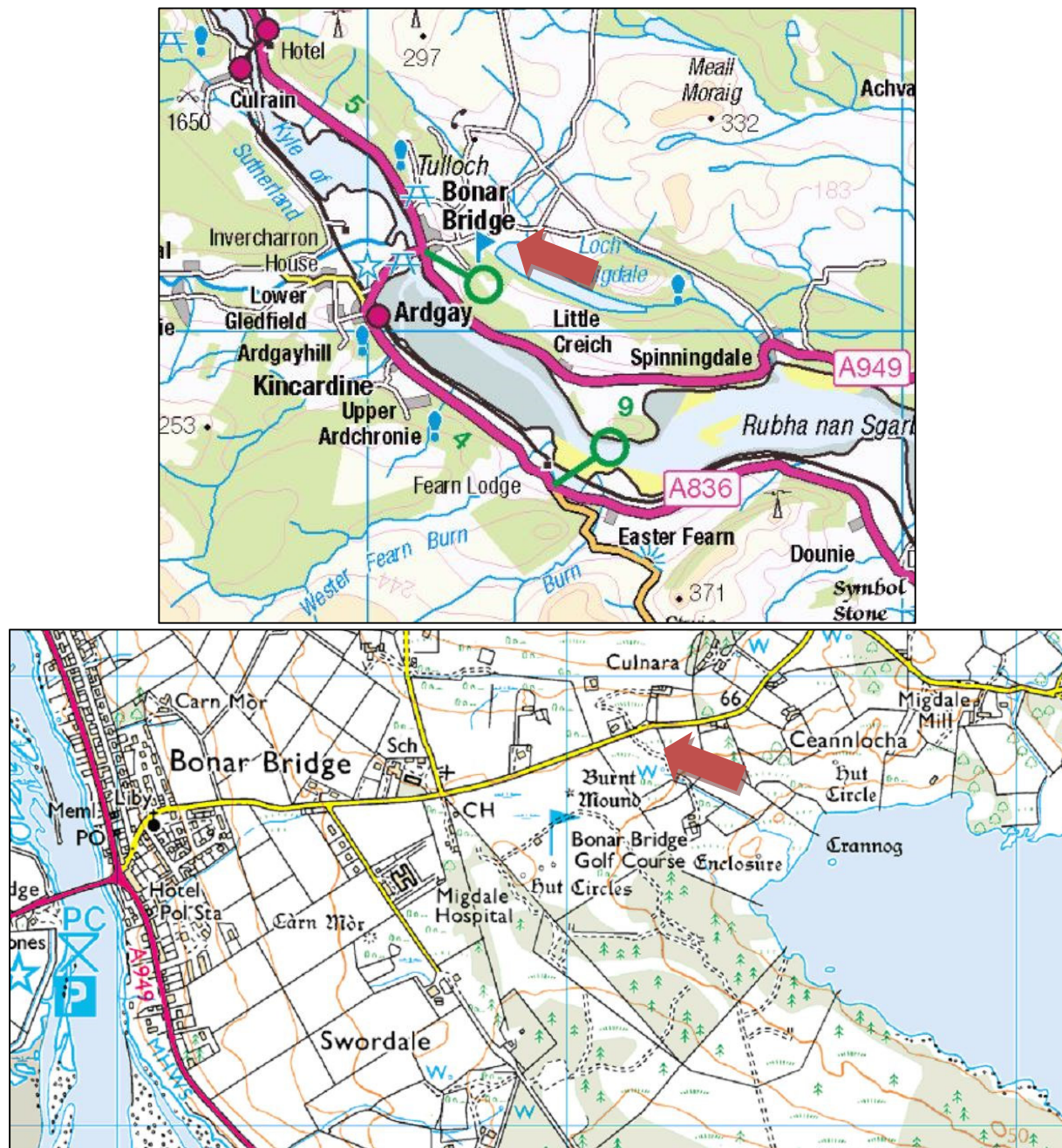
Background mapping has been reproduced by permission of the Ordnance Survey under Licence 100043217. Historic mapping is courtesy of the National Library of Scotland. Fieldwork was carried out by Lynne McKeggie.

## Aims and objectives

- To minimise any possible delay or cost to the development 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.
- To determine as far as possible, the character, extent, condition, date and significance of any archaeologically significant remains; and to record these where necessary in line with national and local policies and standards.

## Location

The site lies at the west end of Loch Migdale near Bonar Bridge.



**Figure 1: Project location (general)**

From OS mapping, reproduced under Licence. Not to original scales



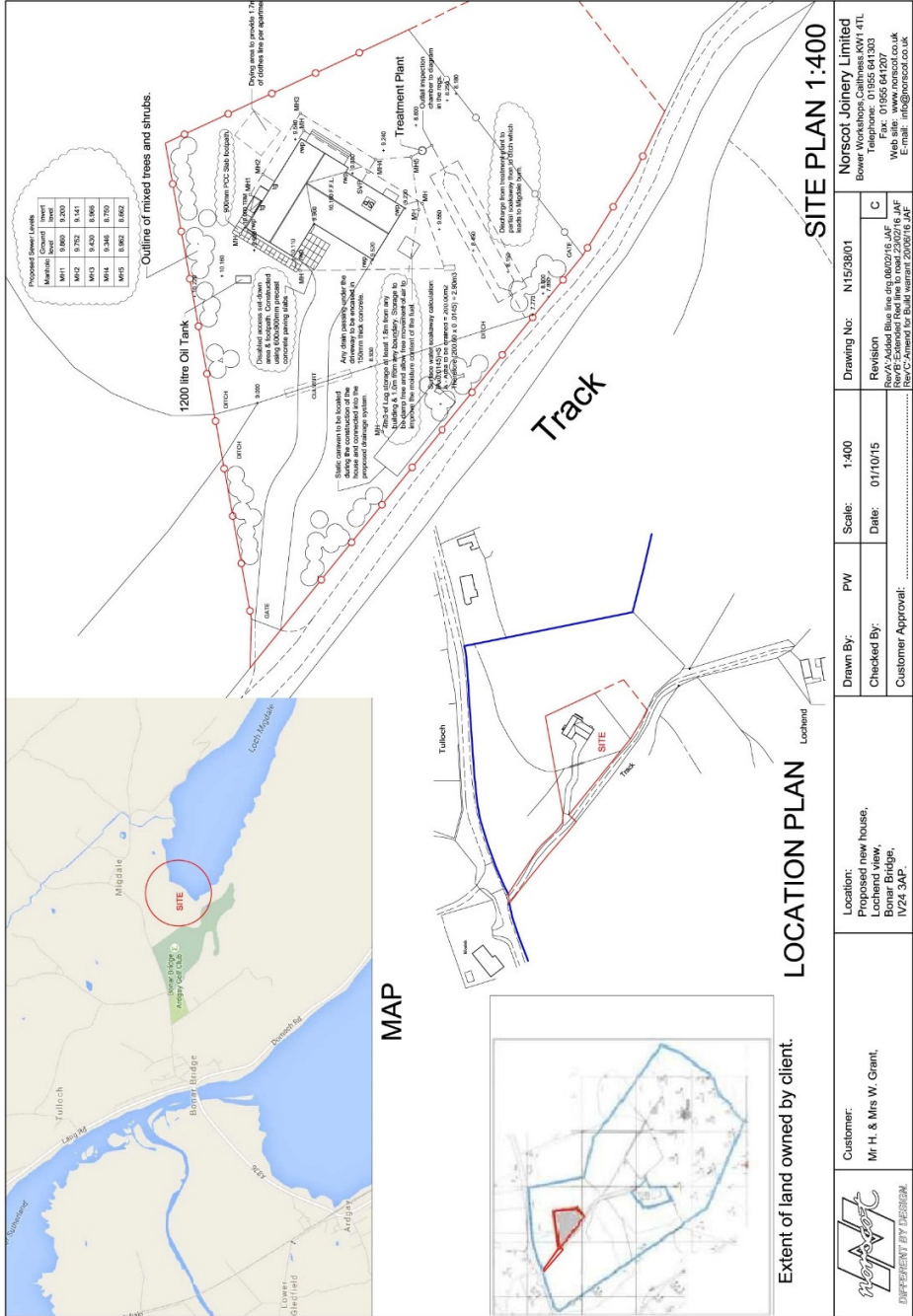


Figure 2 Project layout (courtesy of client)

## Legislation and Policy

The common principles underlying international conventions, national legislation and local authority planning policies are that cultural heritage assets should be identified in advance of development and safeguarded where practicable; if disturbance is unavoidable appropriate recording of features and recovery of portable artefacts should take place. These have been set out in international and European Union agreements, and UK and Scottish legislation, as well as national and local planning policies<sup>1</sup>.

Professional standards during the present project were secured by adherence to the *Codes of Conduct and Approved Practice and Standards* of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and the Highland Council's published *Standards for Archaeological Work*.

## Desk based assessment

A desk based assessment has been carried out in order to identify any features which may be visible during the survey and to inform potential mitigation. The results of this assessment are set out below.

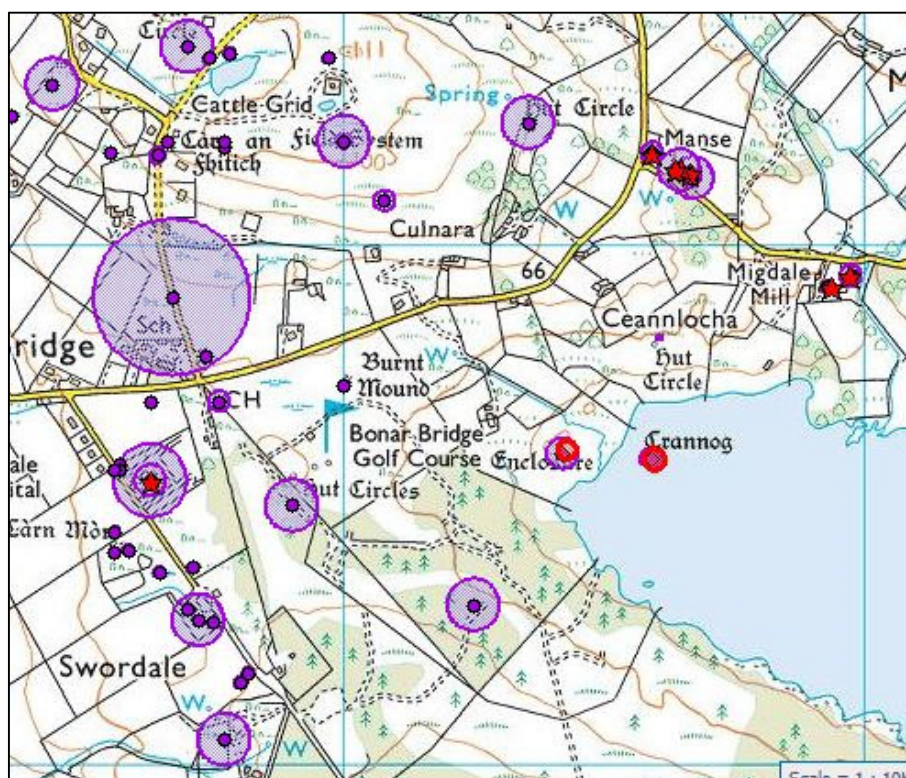


Figure 3 Desk-Based Assessment Asset locations

<sup>1</sup> A full statement of current legislation and public policy is available from the Highland Archaeology Services office on request

## Historic Environment Record

### DBA1 Migdale Henge

NGR NH 6242 9160

HHER ref MHG10021

NMRS Numlink 14025

Scheduled Monument 10916

**Description** 'A well-preserved 'henge/barrow/cairn' situated on a low, dry rise close to the shore at the head of Loch Migdale. It measures 12.0m overall and comprises a level, circular platform 7.4m in diameter, surrounded by a ditch 1.1m wide and 0.2m deep, outside which there is a bank 1.2m wide and 0.2m high, revetted externally by a discontinuous line of small horizontal blocks. The bank is broken on the SE, where there is a gap leading to a causeway across the ditch. Both gap and causeway, about 0.6m wide, are slightly mutilated. There are a few clearance heaps in the vicinity.

Visited by OS (W D J) 11 June 1963 and (N K B) 14 November 1969.

Excavation of a segment of the work was undertaken by Dr Woodham in 1971. A layer of dark "burnt" earth forming a rim "about 3ft wide" around the central area, and a scatter of quartz chips were revealed, but no other finds were made. The interior appeared undisturbed and there was no evidence of barrow or cairn material. Dr Woodham (Clava, Inverurie) considers that this work is of the same category as the hengiform earthworks of Easter Ross (NH45NW 1, NH55NW 1, and NH55NE 5). The excavation has been backfilled. Visited by OS (N K B) 6 October 1980.

Scheduled 04/03/2004.

Excavated by Time Team 4/2003, re-excavated original quarter section plus a little more to confirm structure. Bank, ditch, but also internal post holes and an upright stone outside the entrance - pers comm C Dagg.

Report on Time Team evaluation, carried out in 2003. A geophysical survey was followed by the excavation of a trench measuring 34.61 sq m, around Woodham's central test pit.

The re-examination of the putative henge in Area 1 broadly supports Woodham's original interpretation of the monument as a henge. It has an external bank and internal ditch and single, east-facing, entrance. The single entrance would allow it to be classified as a Class 1 henge but the small size, a mere 12 m diameter, is consistent with its classification as a mini-henge.

The presence of what may be a ring of stake holes, and perhaps a radial division, a central feature that may have held a post or a standing stone, and the standing stone at the entrance all refer to well-known features in henges, albeit much better known on a larger scale.

The site of this henge is visible in an oblique aerial photograph by Jim Bone.' - HHER

### DBA2 Migdale Crannog

NGR NH 6259 9159

HHER ref MHG10059

NMRS Numlink 14028

Scheduled Monument 10917

**Description** 'At W end of Loch Migdale, some 60 yards from the shore, is an islet which appears to be artificial. It is formed of boulders laid on clay and is some 63' in diameter. The loch is shallow towards the landward side, but deep on the outer sides. The island is said to have been occupied in 1630.

RCAHMS 1911, visited 1909.

A crannog at NH 6259 9159. It is a mound of stones c. 22.0m in diameter and c. 2.0m deep (plumbed with oar). At the time of investigation the loch was high and it was awash, and nothing could be seen of its construction. There is no causeway. Visited by OS (A A) 21 October 1969.

The crannog is as described. It is composed solely of large stones and stood 0.4m above the loch when visited. It is positioned partly on a natural shallowing in the loch. Visited by OS (J B) 9 September 1980.

Scheduled 04/03/2004.

Excavated by Time Team 04/2003. Timbers reported from Crannog. Locals spoke of seeing causeway to crannog in past - pers comm C Dagg.

Report on excavations by Time Team, 2003.

Two trial trenches were dug across the Crannog; one in shallow water and one under water. The crannog was examined by a team of four underwater archaeologists led by Dr Nicholas Dixon, Scottish Trust for Underwater Archaeology. Dr Dixon concluded that there was no doubt that the remains discovered underwater at Loch Migdale are those of an artificial island or crannog connected to the mainland by a narrow causeway. It was suggested initially that, on the basis of the tool marks on the timbers, that the crannog may be of Late Bronze Age date, though two radiocarbon determinations support an Iron Age date which is consistent with the evidence from many other crannogs.

This crannog can be seen clearly in an oblique aerial photograph by Jim Bone.' - HHER

**DBA3 Burnt Mound**

**NGR** NH 6200 9173

**HHER ref** MHG10076

**NMRS Numlink** 14045

**Description** 'On Bonar Bridge Golf Course is a burnt mound, overgrown with heather and whin. It is horseshoe shaped and measures 11.5m NE-SW by 9.5m and up to 1.3m high. The open side is in the SE; it faces no obvious water source, but the ground is damp and has been ditched in modern times. Where the mound has been eroded, its contents are seen as packed stones, smaller than field clearance, some of which are reddened and friable. Surveyed at 1:2500. Visited by OS (J B) 1 October 1980.' - HHER

**DBA4 Hut Circle**

**NGR** NH 6260 9182

**HHERref** MHG10023

**NMRS Numlink** 14027

**Description** 'A much worn hut circle of the ordinary type. To the W of the miller's house on the N bank of Loch Migdale are a number of small mounds. RCAHMS 1911, visited 1909.

The remains of a circular stone-walled hut on a S-facing slope in an area of modern cultivation. It is defined by a wall spread to about 2.5m and measures about 11.5m in diameter between wall centres. The lower (S) arc is destroyed. No entrance is evident.

There is no trace of associated fields. In the area centred NH 628 919, to the W of Migdale Mill are a few small mounds, possibly reduced clearance heaps, but the terrain suggests that they are not associated with this hut. Visited by OS (A A) 22 October 1969.

Evaluation at the hut circle was carried out by Time Team in 2004, as part of a project at the W end of Loch Migdale. A single trench was excavated, 1m x 8.5m, from the centre of the hut, through the outer bank and across a linear feature identified during geophysical survey. The line of the wall was approximately 0.90 m wide and defined by a single course of large rounded stones, up to 0.30 m across, which lay immediately over the natural bedrock. The material beyond the wall line was composed principally of wall tumble in a sandy peat matrix. No datable material was recorded from the hut circle, although a Bronze Age date is suggested.' - HHER

**DBA5 Hut Circles**

**NGR** NH 6190 9150

**HHER ref** MHG10018

**NMRS Numlink** 14022

**Description** '(A: NH 6189 9155, B: NH 6195 9156, C: NH 6197 9157) Hut Circles (NR) OS 1:10,000 map, (1971)



In Market Park, now a golf course, are three hut circles (A - C) and occasional stone clearance heaps, noted by the RCAHMS (1911) as mounds, near the huts and in Swordale Wood. Huts 'A' and 'B' lie on a fairway and their profiles have become flattened, leaving an appearance of 'rimmed saucers'. They measure internally 11m NNW-SSE by 9m and 11m NNW-SSE by 10m respectively. The walls are spread to 3m wide and 0.3m high internally. The entrance of 'B' is in SSE and that of 'A', though indistinct, was probably in the same arc. 'C' is severely obscured by whins; its dimensions appear similar to the other two huts. While a few scattered clearance heaps remain, modern land use has destroyed any existing field pattern. Revised at 1:2500. RCAMS 1911, visited 1909; Visited by OS (W D J) 10 November 1963 and (J B) 3 October 1980.' - HHER

**DBA6 Field System & Hut circle****NGR** NH 6200 9220**HHER ref** MHG40405, MHG 9999**NMRS Numlink** 14001

**Description** '(NH 6235 9223) Hut Circle (NR) (Name: NH 6212 9219) Field System (NR) OS 25" map, (1967)

About 1/4 mile NNW of the church (at Migdale) is a hut ruin, measuring 16' overall diameter with an interior depression c. 7' in diameter. The entrance appears to be in the SE. Some 80 yards to the NNW are two mounds, 18' in diameter and 2' - 3' in height.

A little to the E of Carn an Fhitich (NH69SW 31) are a number of "supposed hut ruins". One heap of stones measures 30' E-W by 17' N-S, and adjacent to it is a crescentic mound, facing S, about 60' long by 20' wide at the centre. Near the top of the hill are a few mounds 12' - 16' in diameter, and an oval one, 20' x 14'. The remains of old walls can be seen, at one point overlaid by two heaps, 15' apart and 15' - 16' in diameter.

About 1/2 mile NW of the W end of Loch Migdale are the remains of a hut circle measuring 24' x 20' internally with wall foundations running from it. Some 40' to the N is a heap of stones, 40' N-S by 18' E-W, with a depression within it. Nearby are several mounds about 12' in diameter and 1 1/2' high. RCAHMS 1911, visited 1909.

At NH 6235 9223 is the hut described by the RCAHMS (1911) as being "about 1/2 mile NW of the W end of Loch Migdale". It is set into an E-facing slope adjacent to recent cultivation, and measures 12.5m in diameter between wall centres, with the wall, c.3.0m thick at the WNW side, splaying to c.4.0m at the "clubbed" entrance in the ESE. The "wall foundations running from it" is a modern ruined wall which passes by it.

Some 20.0m to the NW is a circular platform about 15.0m in diameter, set into a NE-facing slope. It is defined by a back scarp in the SW where living rock protrudes, a clearance heap in the W, and a build-up of stony material around the rim on the lower NE side. A modern wall overlies the SE arc. It may be the remains of a hut, but is more likely a cultivation plot.

Extending about 700.0m W of the hut and centred at NH 620 922 is an associated field system composed mainly of clearance heaps, with occasional lynchets forming plots, average size 25.0m x 20.0m. The "hut ruins", mounds, etc, described by the RCAHMS are all clearance heaps or lynchets of the field system. Visited by OS (N K B) 10 October 1969.' - HHER

**DBA7 Hut circle & cairns****NGR** NH 6235 9223**HHER ref** MHG32937, MHG41839

**Description** 'Hut circle marked on modern OS. 1st ed OS shows large area of "cairns" a little to the S of this - HAW 3/2004' - HHER

## Historic Maps

Historic maps were consulted using the National Library of Scotland's online mapping service.<sup>2</sup>

The first edition OS 25" map (Sutherland Sheet CXI.3) shows a roofed structure and an unroofed structure on the site; this is recalled by Mr Grant as ruined by time of his childhood some sixty years ago. However in the 1904 edition the roofed structure no longer appears, although the unroofed enclosure is still shown.

### DBA 8 Roofed Structure

Building visible on first edition OS map. Oriented approximately east-west.

### DBA 9 Enclosure

Unroofed structure likely to be an enclosure visible on first and later editions of OS mapping. Oriented approximately north-south.

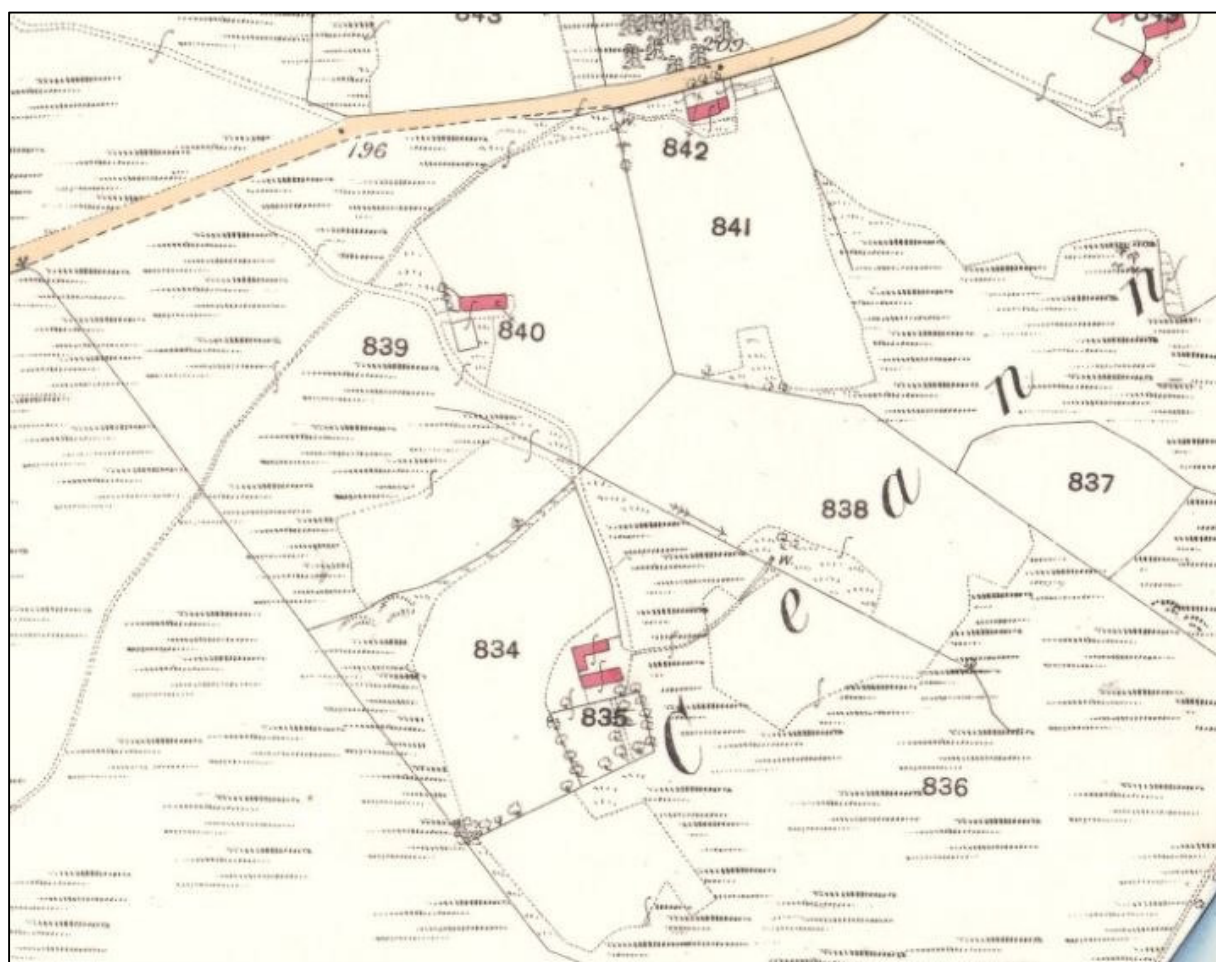


Figure 4: 1st edition OS map surveyed 1874

*Not reproduced to original scale  
Courtesy National Library of Scotland*

<sup>2</sup> <http://maps.nls.uk/geo/find/>

## **Statistical Accounts**

The Old and New Statistical Accounts for the parish of Criech were consulted for references to the development area. The Reverend Mr Rainy's entry in the 1790s Old Statistical Account does not mention any antiquities nearby the development site. He states that cattle are the principle means for people to pay their rents. This account is followed by a statement arguing that secure tenantry and increasing the linen production industry would be a preferable investment to the introduction of sheep, which implies that this was beginning to threaten the county. The New Statistical Account was written between 1834-45 by the Reverend Murdo Cameron. He mentions the large number of tumuli, or cairns, in the area around Bonar Bridge, attributed to a battle with the Danes.<sup>3</sup> In this account it is stated that there is but one sheep farm, and so the fears of the previous account seem not to have borne out at this stage. The development of Bonar Bridge following the erection of an iron bridge in 1813 is also mentioned.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1834-45/Sutherland/Criech/15/18/>

## Evaluation methodology

After consultation with the Historic Environment Team of Highland Council it was agreed that the evaluation would be conducted in two stages. This first stage comprised stripping of topsoil from the location of the septic tank and soakaway. The second phase will explore the footprint of the house.

A flat-bladed ditching bucket was used to strip topsoil and other overburden down to the first soil change, which was inspected by the archaeologist on site for signs of possible features or artefacts. The trench comprised an area of 76.6sqm. The area of the site (excluding the access track) according to the plan supplied by the client is 1,997sqm. The area stripped therefore represents 3.8% of the development site.

The area of the septic tank, soak-away and pipe to the septic tank was stripped. An area of disturbance immediately beside the water-course was not excavated as the ground was rocky from excavation of the ditch.

Upon arrival at the site a linear feature was noted as a long narrow mound covered in turf. This was photographed before work started (see Plate 1). This feature was de-turfed using the machine before being cleaned and revealed by hand by removing the surrounding soil stratigraphically. It was then recorded before being removed by the machine only where required by the development, and the section was recorded.



**Plate 1: Feature 1 before excavation [LMG16\_01]**



## Results and Discussion

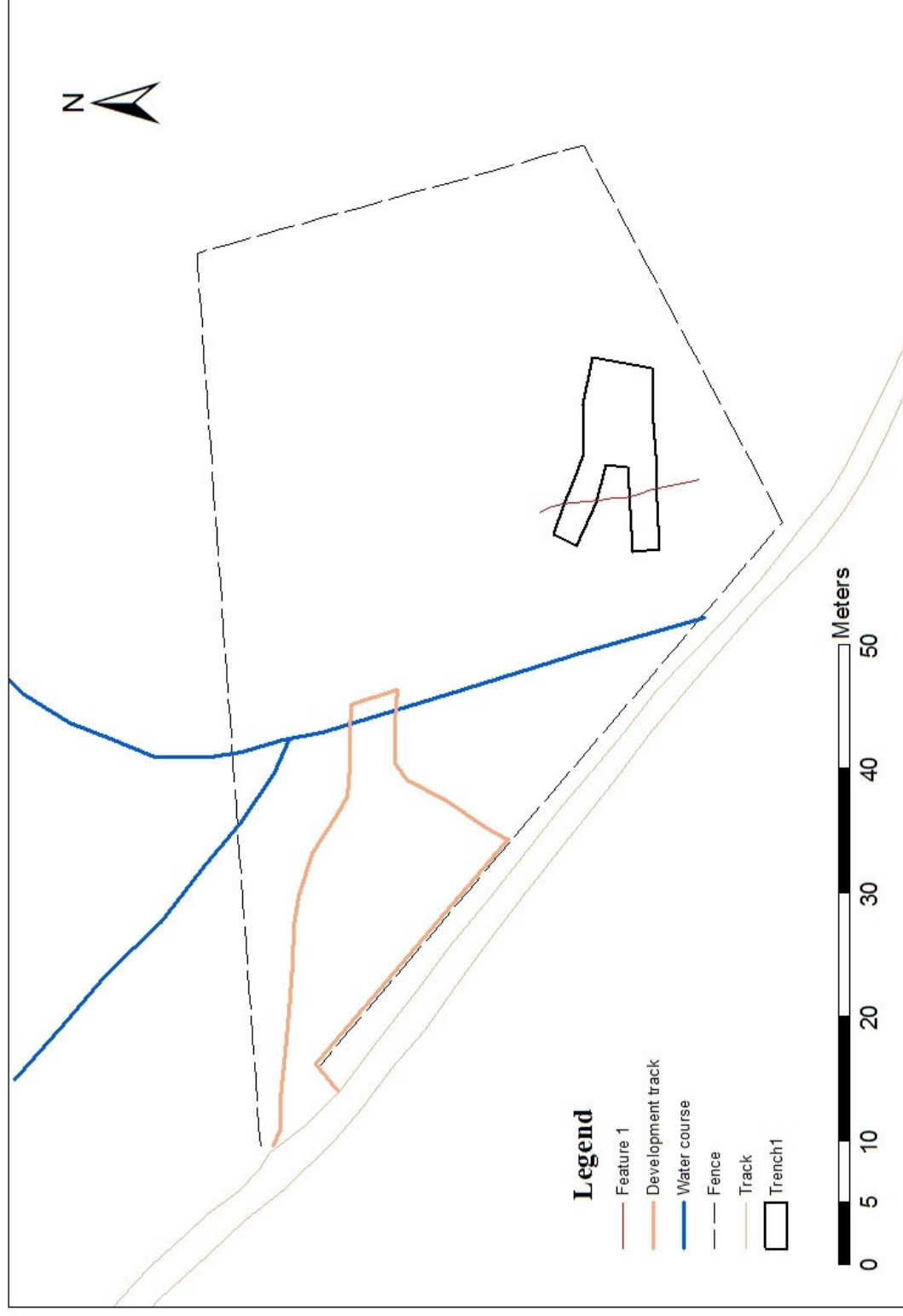


Figure 5: Site plan

The topsoil was relatively shallow (15-20cm deep) homogenous brown loam with some stones. Various fragments of modern white glazed pottery were recovered from across the site. The subsoil was orangey-brown rotten rock.

**Feature 1**

The footings of a dry-stone wall. Larger, more angular stones form the outer skins of the wall whilst smaller more rounded stones and soil form the infill. Survives essentially one course deep, up to 40cm. Likely to be eastern wall of enclosure from 1<sup>st</sup> edition map (DBA9). The subsoil is somewhat deeper on west side implying that this had eroded through use. Surrounded by sherds of glazed pottery and glass. Compacted soil had built up on both sides of the wall with tumbled stones overlying this (see Plate 4, appendices). It appears that the wall was constructed directly on top of compacted topsoil, although the cut is only visible as a subtle difference in the homogeneity of the soil and a lack of artefacts.



**Plate 2: Feature 1 after tumble and surrounding soil removed [LMG16\_18]**

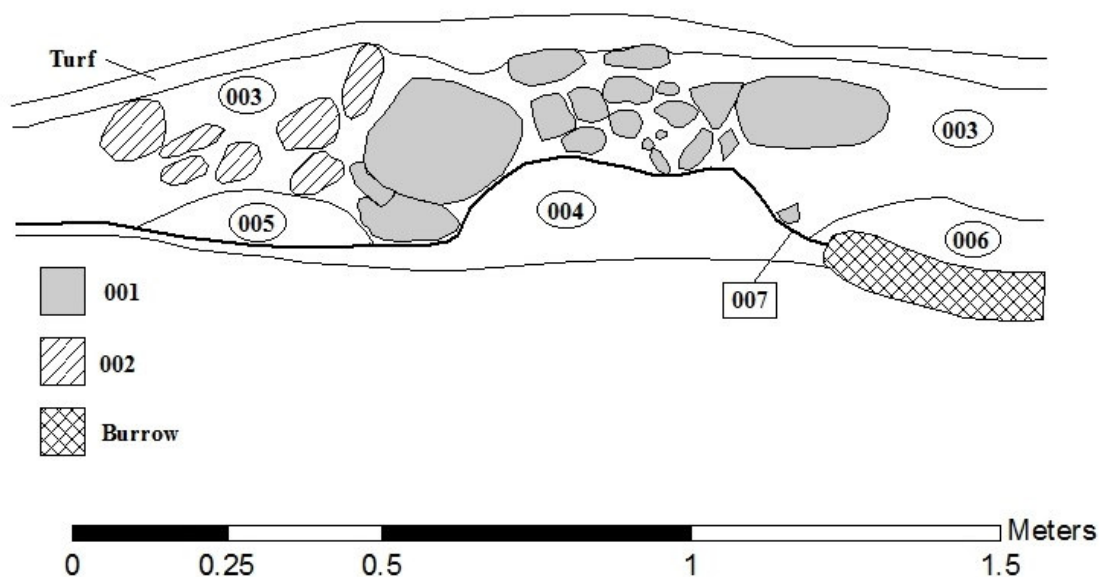


Figure 6: North facing section, Feature 1

### Artefacts

Many fragments of glazed pottery and glass were recovered from the site, both from the immediate vicinity of Feature 1 and in the topsoil across the site. A copper-alloy button was also found in the compacted soil abutting Feature 1.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The Desk-based Assessment has shown that this is an area rich in prehistoric activity including monumental construction and settlement. The map evidence suggested that the site has also been used for agriculture and settlement in the more recent past.

During the phase 1 watching brief of the septic tank and soak-away there was no indication of any prehistoric activity. The eastern wall of an enclosure identified during the desk-based assessment (DBA9) was identified and recorded (Feature 1). The artefacts recovered from the proximity of the Feature and across the site confirms that the site was reasonably active during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, with significant amounts of household waste being deposited in the vicinity.

No further work to characterise and record Feature 1 is recommended. The shallow nature of the topsoil suggests that survival of further features is unlikely. However, it is possible that some remains of DBA8 may survive. As this directly underlies the footprint of the proposed house plot it is recommended that a watching brief of ground-breaking works is applied to the area of the house footprint.



## Appendix 1: Additional records

**Table 1 Photographic register**

Camera No.	New No. [LMG16_]	Facing	Showing
0289-0291	01-03	<NE>	Area before work with linear feature
0292-0294	04-06	<W>	Area before work with linear feature
0295-0296	07-08	E	Eastern area of trench after stripping
0297	09	W	Western area of trench after stripping
0298	10	N	North segment of wall (F1)
0299	11	W	North segment of wall (F1)
0300-0301	12-13	S	South segment of wall (F1)
0302	14	W	South segment of wall (F1)
0303	15	E	South segment of wall (F1)
0304-0305	16-17	S	South segment of wall with double facing visible
0306	18	S	South segment after removal of tumble
0307	19	E	South segment after removal of tumble
0308	20	W	South segment after removal of tumble
0309-0312	21-24	S	South segment of F1 section

**Table 2 Contexts**

Context No.	Trench	Part of Feature	Description	Context type	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Interpretation
001	1	1	Unworked stone, outer stones large (<40cm) inner stones small (<10cm)	structure	13m	0.75m	0.4m	Footings of wall
002	1	1	Unworked stone, various sizes, floating within (003)	structure	13m	1.5m	0.4m	Tumble from wall
003	1	1	Homogenous brown loamy soil containing glazed pottery, glass etc.	deposit	-	-	-	Topsoil
004	1	1	Medium brown soil with small stones, very compact	deposit	-	-	-	Paleo-topsoil
005	1	1	Compact mixed soil on east side and abutting (001), brown with lenses of orange and yellow, contains pottery, glass, coal, small stones.	deposit	-	0.3m	0.2m	Soil build-up against wall before destruction

Context No.	Trench	Part of Feature	Description	Context type	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Interpretation
006	1	1	As (005) but on west side of (001)	deposit	-	0.3m	0.2m	Soil build-up against wall before destruction
007	1	1	Unclear cut, mostly defined by lack of artefacts beneath	cut				Cut of wall

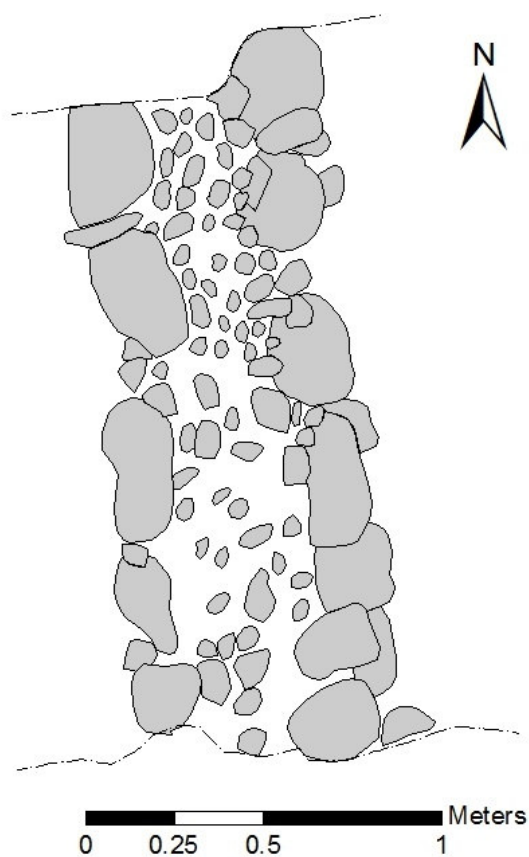


Figure 7: Plan of Feature 1





Plate 3: eastern end of trench after excavation [LMG16\_08]



Plate 4: F1 with tumble [LMG16\_16]





**Plate 5: Pottery fragments**



**Plate 6: Copper Alloy button**