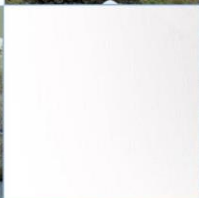
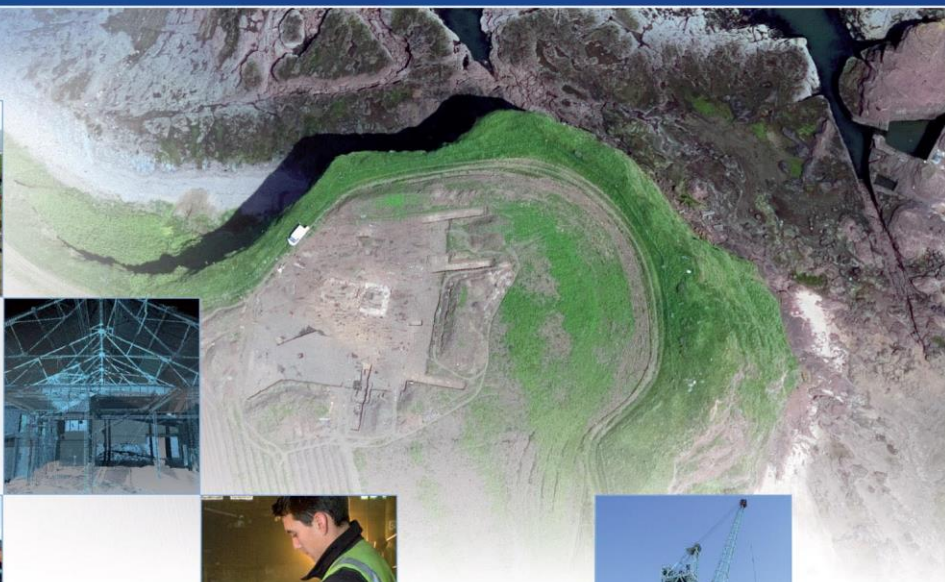


Alness Academy, Alness

Archaeological Watching Brief

Data Structure Report

August 2018
AOC Project Number: 24012-3



Alness Academy, Alness

Archaeological Watching Brief

Data Structure Report

On Behalf of:	Hub North / Kier Construction
National Grid Reference (NGR):	NH 65910 69320 (centred)
AOC Project No:	24012-3
Planning Ref:	17/05797/FUL
Prepared by:	Leanne Demay
Date of Fieldwork:	22nd June 2016 - 31st July 2018
Date of Report:	9th August 2018
OASIS No.:	aocarcha1-325400

This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

Authors: Leanne Demay

Date: 9th August 2018

Approved by: Cathy MacIver

Date: 6th September 2018

Report Stage: Final

Date: 6th September 2018

Enquiries to: AOC Archaeology Group
The Old Estate Office
Rosehaugh Estate
Avoch
IV9 8RF

Tel. 01463 819841

Mob. 07972 259255

E-mail inverness@aocarchaeology.com



Contents

	Page
List of figures	4
List of plates	4
List of appendices	4
Abstract	5
1.0 Introduction	6
2.0 Project Background	6
3.0 Desk-based Assessment	9
3.1 Methodology	9
3.2 Cartographic Sources	9
3.3 Historic Environment Sources	11
4.0 Objectives	12
5.0 Methodology	13
6.0 Results	13
7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations	14
8.0 References	19

List of figures

Figure 1: Site location map

Figure 2: Previous archaeological evaluation and watching brief area

Figure 3: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25-inch-to-the-mile map, 1880

Figure 4: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25-inch-to-the-mile map, 1906

List of plates

Plate 1: General view of development site pre-excavation, facing E

Plate 2: Site stripping working shot, facing SW

Plate 3: General view of central area of development site, facing S

Plate 4: Stripping an area of made ground, facing SE

Plate 5: Stripping access road, facing W

Plate 6: NE-facing section of pit/natural feature [004], facing SW

Plate 7: SW-facing section of pit/natural feature [006], facing NE

Plate 8: NE-facing section of pit/natural feature [008], facing SW

List of appendices

Appendix 1: Photographic register

Appendix 2: Context register

Abstract

This report details the findings of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Alness Academy, Alness, in advance of the construction of a new school building and associated infrastructure. The works form part of a larger overall development. The development site is situated within close proximity to known significant prehistoric archaeology and has potential for the survival of sub-surface archaeological deposits.

The watching brief was carried out intermittently between 22nd June 2018 – 31st July 2018. Approximately 6000m² was stripped of topsoil. Three pits recorded during the watching brief probably relate to modern landscaping or may be natural in origin.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 An archaeological watching brief was required on behalf of Hub North and Kier Construction in advance of the construction of a new school building and associated infrastructure and landscaping (Highland Council planning reference 17/05797/FUL) at land at Alness Academy, Alness.
- 1.2 The site lies within the administrative area of Highland Council, which is advised on archaeological matters by Kirsty Cameron, Archaeologist, Historic Environment Team, Highland Council. A programme of archaeological works has been specified in keeping with the policies outlined in *Scottish Planning Policy* (2014) and *PAN 2/2011 Planning and Archaeology* (2011) to record the extent and significance of any archaeological remains which may be present within the development area.
- 1.3 The watching brief was carried out intermittently between 22nd June 2018 – 31st July 2018. Approximately 6000m² was stripped of topsoil. Three pits recorded during the watching brief probably relate to modern landscaping or may be natural in origin.

2.0 Project Background

- 2.1 The development site is located at the current Alness Academy site situated immediately south of the town of Alness (NH 65910 69320 (centred); **Figure 1**). Alness lies to the north of the Cromarty Firth, with the town of Invergordon three miles to the east, and the village of Evanton four miles to the southwest. Historically, the development area is located on improved ground forming part of Dalmore Farm and has remained relatively undeveloped and currently used as sports pitches; therefore, there is potential for the survival of sub-surface archaeological deposits.
- 2.2 The archaeological watching brief requirement has arisen due to the proximity of the development to significant prehistoric archaeology. A trial trenching evaluation was carried out at the site in September and October 2017 (**Figure 2**). The trenches in the southeast area did not reveal any archaeological features, most likely due to landscaping work carried out in the 1980s and 1990s. However, the northwest area contained several groups of archaeological features (Stirling and Williamson 2017). As a result of the evaluation, an archaeological excavation was carried out in November 2017 (**Figure 2**). Overall, 143 features, mostly pits, were uncovered, representing the truncated remains of prehistoric occupation. Detailed information can be consulted in the Data Structure Report (Stirling 2017).
- 2.3 The development site is also located to the northwest side of Dalmore Farm where evidence for prehistoric settlement, a Bronze Age burial ground and Bronze Age artefacts are recorded. Within the wider environs, significant prehistoric occupation is evidenced by a carved stone ball (MHG6309) found at Teaninich to the west of the development site, a chambered cairn located approximately 4km north of the site at Millcraig (MHG6314) and a cairn at Dalroech Wood (MHG8013). A full desk-based assessment was carried out prior to the evaluation and can be found in the Data Structure Report (Stirling and Williamson 2017).

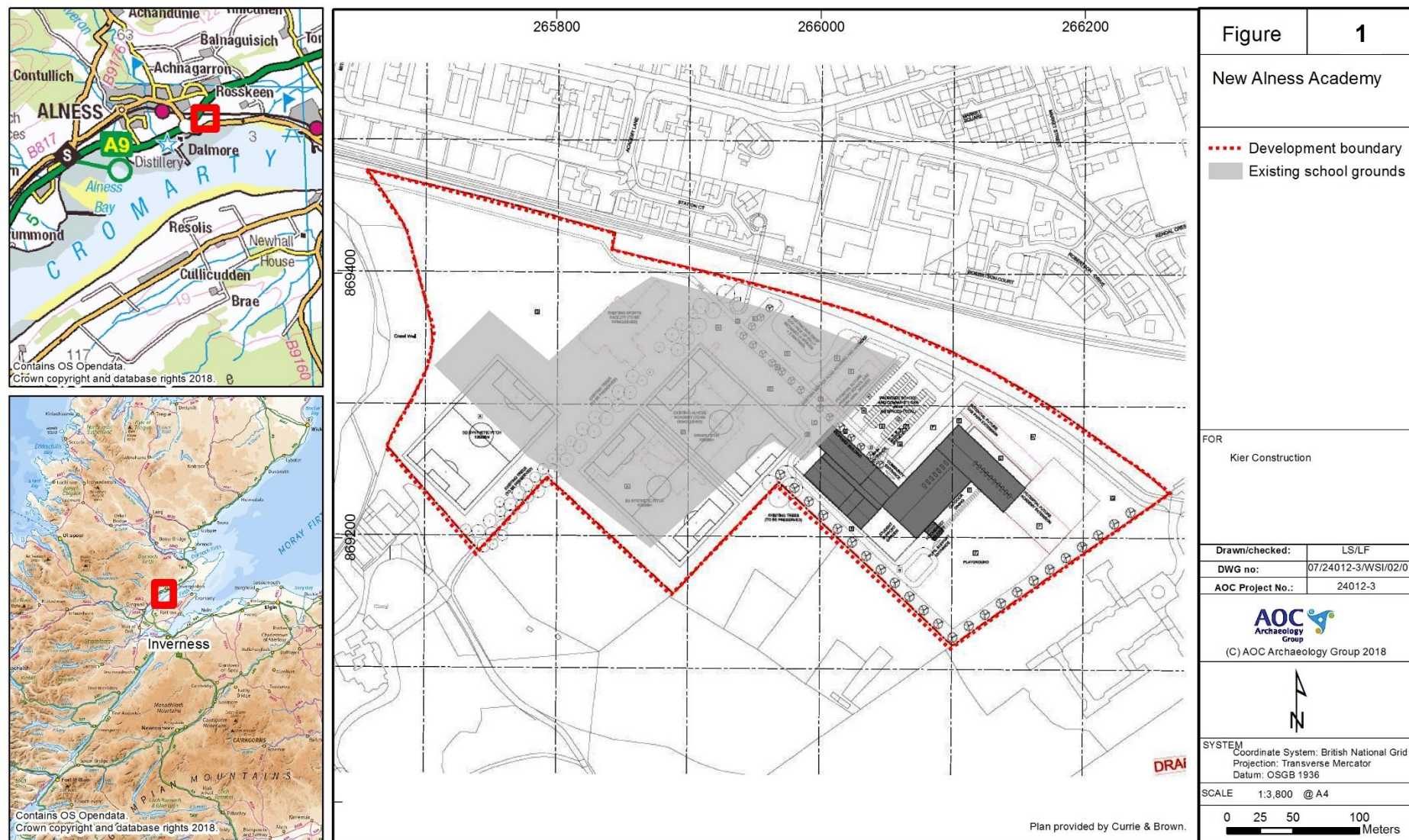


Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Previous archaeological evaluation and watching brief area

3.0 Desk-based Assessment

3.1 Methodology

- 3.1.1 A desk-based assessment was conducted prior to commencement of the watching brief in order to assess the archaeological potential of the area based on previously recorded sites and any historical documentation. A full check of all available historical and archaeological records, aerial photographs and historical maps was conducted using the Highland Historic Environment Record (HHER), Historic Environment Record, the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE), Ordnance Survey Name Books, Historic Environment Scotland's databases, the National Library of Scotland, statistical accounts and other available records, literary sources or online resources about the site.

3.2 Cartographic Sources

- 3.2.1 Historic maps were consulted online at the National Library of Scotland (NLS 2018).

a) Roys' Military Map of Scotland, Highlands, 1747-52

Tenenich, the location of the current Teaninich Distillery to the west of the Averon River, is depicted on Roy's map. The Alness Academy site, opposite this on the east side of the river, is depicted as cultivated land with some trees and a small settlement of houses to the east.

**b) Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25-inch-to-the-mile map
Ross and Cromarty (Ross-shire), Sheet LXV.7
Survey date: 1874 Publication date: 1880**

The 1st edition map (**Figure 3**) shows the development site as an open field with strips of woodland to the west and south. A small lochan, *Lochan Buidhe*, is also depicted.

**c) Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25-inch-to-the-mile map
Ross and Cromarty (Ross-shire), Sheet LXV.8
Survey date: 1874 Publication date: 1880**

The eastern side of the development site is shown as a continuation of the open field depicted on the previous map. A small gravel pit is depicted just beyond the north eastern corner of the site.

**d) Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25-inch-to-the-mile map
Ross-shire 065.07 (includes: Alness)
Date revised: 1904 Publication date: 1906**

The 2nd edition map (**Figure 4**) shows the development site as divided into open fields with a line of trees planted along one of the boundaries. Dalmore House, ancillary buildings and policies have been constructed. *Lochan Buidhe* is gone.

e) **Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25-inch-to-the-mile map**
Ross-shire 065.08 (includes: Alness)
Date revised: 1904 Publication date: 1906

The development site as divided into open fields with a line of trees planted along one of the boundaries. Dalmore House, ancillary buildings and policies have been constructed. *Lochan Buidhe* is gone.

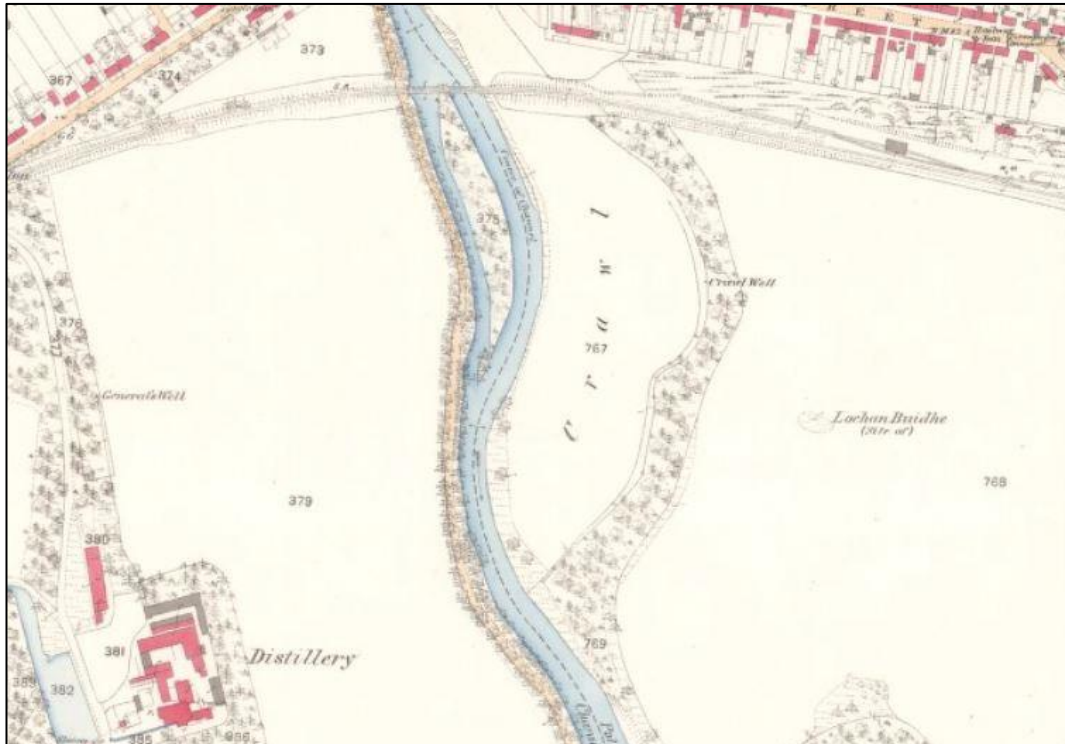


Figure 3: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25-inch-to-the-mile map, 1880

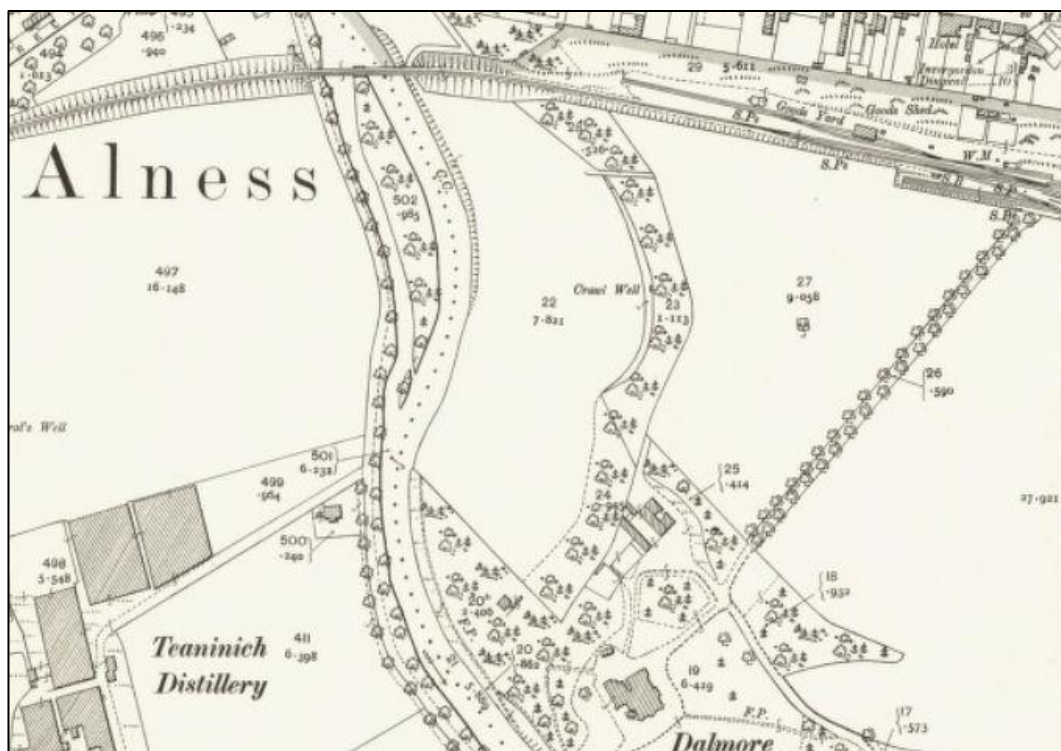


Figure 4: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25-inch-to-the-mile map, 1906

3.3 Historic Environment Sources

3.3.1 A full search of the Highland Historic Environment Record (HHER), Historic Environment Record and the National Record of the Historic Environment (NRHE), via Canmore was carried out. A comprehensive desk based assessment can be found in *Alness Academy, Alness: Archaeological Excavation Data Structure Report* (Stirling and Williamson 2017). The following sites are within close proximity to the development site:

MHG8318 NH 6600 6900 Hospital? Obsdale

A site 'hospitale' which evidently lay between Helmsdale and Wick is mentioned in 1290. This record appears to be in the wrong location and is unlikely to relate to the present landscape.

MHG17924 NH 6660 6900 Prehistoric Occupation, Dalmore Farm

On the east side of the B817 Alness-Invergordon road, the remains of a series of features thought to be prehistoric in date including post holes from a probable roundhouse, a circular building 8m in diameter, two grain storage and another possible building and an area of iron working represented by hammer scale.

MHG55329 NH 6630 6904 Possible Prehistoric Features, Dalmore Farm

To the south of the development site, an apparent circle approximately 7.5 metres in diameter was identified during trial trenching. The circle comprised 11 regularly spaced post or stakeholes, each about 35cm in diameter and 30cm deep. This feature was undated could represent a prehistoric round-house.

MHG55328 NH 6610 6893 Bronze Age Features, Dalmore Farm

To the south of the development site (see MHG 55329), substantial Early Bronze Age pottery were recovered from a single trench during an archaeological evaluation of land at Dalmore Farm. The trench contained a number of pits of uncertain, but possibly of prehistoric origin.

MHG45270 NH 6660 6878 Bronze Age Cemetery, Dalmore Farm

East of the development site, a Bronze Age burial ground was discovered, in two parts, in summer 1878, during construction of the branch railway from Alness station to Dalmore Distillery (NH 666 687). The first part lay immediately above the distillery, and was apparently contained within a stone wall, the base of which could be traced along 3 sides, enclosing an area 108ft by 66ft, with the shorter walls running N-S. A second, presumably related, group was located 200 yards along line of railway.

MHG54018 NH 6604 6864 Suggested Site of Jacobite Fortification, Dalmore

Personal communication from Aonghus Mackechnie, Historic Scotland, received via John Malcolm, suggests that the bluff overlooking the bonded warehouses is reputedly the site of Jacobite Fortifications. No further information is presently available.

MHG32209**NH 6577 6904****Dalmore House Policies****MHG46845****NH 65666 69211****Dalmore House & Buildings**

Dalmore House, kennels, farmstead and gate pier. Grounds generally lie to the E of the house. Trees around the house, open land to E of this but with small plantations, shelter belt planting around edge of grounds.

MHG32211**NH 6567 6935****Crawl Well, N of Dalmore House**

The well is marked on the 1st edition 25" OS mapping, and on all subsequent editions. A small structural element appears to be present at this location on the 2nd edition 25" map, but this is not replicated on later editions.

To the north of the site, on the north side of Caplich Road:

MHG14230**NH 6590 7000****Cropmark, Crosshills**

A possible ring ditch visible on aerial photography.

To the west of the River Averon / Alness River:

MHG8103**NH 6499 6909****Motte, Cnoc A Chaisteil**

An artificial mound, traditionally the site of an ancient castle of which nothing remains. A motte, still known locally as Cnoc a' Chaisteil, situated on brink of a natural escarpment. It comprises a sub-circular area, measuring about 27m diameter, which is defended in south and east by natural slopes and elsewhere by a crescentic ditch with outer bank.

MHG6309**NH 6500 6900****Carved Stone Ball**

A type 4c carved stone ball, with six projecting circular facets, and six intervening triangular facets, from Alness, which was formerly in the collection of Sir John Clerk of Penicuik is now in RMS (AS 120).

MHG36088**NH 6493 6877****Crop mark, Ballachraggan**

A circular enclosure visible on aerial photography. Situated 560m ENE of Balachraggan farmhouse.

4.0 Objectives

- 4.1 The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) defines an archaeological watching brief as 'a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons... where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive' (CIfA 2014(b)).
- 4.2 The aims of the archaeological works were:
 - i. To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area
 - ii. To remove by hand any overburden in order to expose the archaeological deposits

- iii. To excavate, sample and record any features or to propose arrangements for their safeguarding, where possible
- iv. To sample deposits for post-excavation work, including environmental analysis and dating
- v. To make recommendations for further measures necessary to mitigate the impact of the development
- vi. To make recommendations for post-excavation work

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 All groundworks were monitored by an archaeologist by way of a controlled topsoil strip. The archaeologist directed digging by a mechanical excavator fitted with a straight-edged bucket in order to establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains with the development area. All work was carried out in accordance with the *WoSAS Standard Conditions for Archaeological Fieldwork* (2004) and the *ClfA Code of Conduct* (2014(a)).
- 5.2 The watching brief was carried out as per the programme of works set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Fraser and Peteranna 2018).
- 5.3 All features of archaeological significance were cleaned and recorded, with a selection excavated by hand to establish the date, nature, extent and state of preservation of the deposits. Archaeological features and deposits were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and section drawings were drawn at a scale of 1:10. All significant archaeological features were sampled, in the event post-excavation analysis is deemed necessary.
- 5.4 The location of trenches, including findspots and feature locations, were plotted using a Trimble Geo-XR Rover capable of centimetre accuracy. The archaeological monitoring was recorded using high resolution digital photography to record the process as well as any archaeological features or finds of interest.

6.0 Results

- 6.1.1 Fieldwork was carried out intermittently between 22nd June 2018 – 31st July in mostly dry and bright conditions with good visibility. The area excavated included the northwest area of the development site and a small section of access track to the east, giving a total area of approximately 6000m² stripped of topsoil (**Plates 1-5**).
- 6.1.2 An area of approximately 1500m² in the southwestern area of the development site was bulldozed by the contractor (up to a depth of 0.5m) without archaeological supervision due to the ground conditions that indicated previous removal of buried soil layers during construction of the playing fields. Therefore, a watching brief did not take place in this area. Walkover inspection did not identify any archaeological finds or features.
- 6.1.3 Three possible pits were recorded during the watching brief (**Plates 6-8**). Pit [004] consisted of a circular, bowl-shaped cut with ill-defined edges measuring 0.8m diameter with a depth of 0.22m (**Plate 6**). Pit [004] contained fill (005), a compact dark blackish brown silty sand with gravel and stones. Pit [006] consisted of a circular, bowl-shaped cut with ill-defined edges

measuring 1m in length, 0.7m in width with a depth of 0.2m (**Plate 7**). Pit [006] contained fill (007), a dark blackish brown compact silty sand with gravel and stones. Pit [008] also consisted of ill-defined edges, with gently sloping sides leading to flat base measuring 0.5m in length, 0.4m in width with a depth of 0.06m (**Plate 8**). Pit [008] contained (009), a dark blackish brown compact silty sand with gravel and stones. The pits were similar in terms of characteristics and sterile fill, and likely represent natural silted hollows or features, or are possibly related to extensive landscaping works on the site.

- 6.1.4 Topsoil varied in depth between 0.3m – 0.5m across the site. The natural subsoil generally consisted of bright or pale orange gravel, with patches of compact dark gravel and was overlain by a deep (0.8 - 1m) mixed deposit of topsoil and redeposited natural to the south, where the ground had been made up to form a level sports field.

7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 7.1 Approximately 6000m² was stripped of topsoil during the watching brief. Three possible pits recorded probably relate to modern landscaping or may be natural in origin.
- 7.1 Despite the development area being located within close proximity to significant sub-surface prehistoric archaeological deposits, no finds or archaeologically significant features were uncovered. The area has been subject to extensive landscaping works related to the cut and fill creation of level sports pitches. No further work is recommended.



Plate 1: General view of development site pre-excavation, facing E



Plate 2: Site stripping working shot, facing SW



Plate 3: General view of central area of development site, facing S



Plate 4: Stripping an area of made ground, facing SE



Plate 5: Stripping access road, facing W



Plate 6: NE-facing section of pit/natural feature [004], facing SW



Plate 7: SW-facing section of pit/natural feature [006], facing NE



Plate 8: NE-facing section of pit/natural feature [008], facing SW

8.0 References

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014(a). *By-laws of the Institute for Archaeologists: Code of Conduct*.

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. 2014(b). *Standards and guidance: Archaeological Watching Brief*.

Fraser, L; Peteranna, M. 2018. *Alness Academy, Alness: Archaeological Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation*. Unpublished AOC report.

Highland Historic Environment Record. 2018. Accessed online at <https://her.highland.gov.uk/> on 8th August 2018

National Map Library of Scotland. 2018. Accessed online at <http://maps.nls.uk> on 8th August 2018.

Scottish Government 2014. *Scottish Planning Policy*.

Scottish Government 2011. *PAN 2/2011 Planning and Archaeology*.

Stirling, L. 2017. *Alness Academy, Alness Archaeological Excavation Data Structure Report*. Unpublished AOC report.

Stirling, L. and Williamson, S., 2017. *Alness Academy, Alness Archaeological Evaluation Data Structure Report*. Unpublished AOC report.

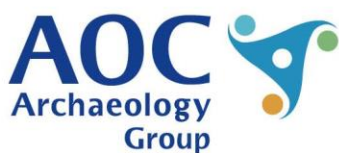
Appendix 1 Photographic Register

Photo No.	Feature	Description	Direction Facing	Date
1		General view of development site pre-excavation	E	02/07/2018
2		General view of development site pre-excavation	E	02/07/2018
3		General view of area stripped	S	03/07/2018
4		General view of development site	E	03/07/2018
5		General view of development site	ESE	03/07/2018
6		General view of development site	SW	03/07/2018
7		Location of temporary hard road	E	03/07/2018
8		Area of topsoil clearance by dozer	WSW	03/07/2018
9		Area of topsoil clearance by dozer	SE	03/07/2018
10		Area of topsoil clearance by dozer	WNW	03/07/2018
11		Stripping for access road	S	03/07/2018
12		Stripping for access road	S	03/07/2018
13		Stripping for access/hard road	WNW	04/07/2018
14		Stripping for access/hard road	W	04/07/2018
15		General view of area stripped without supervision	SW	04/07/2018
16		General view of area stripped without supervision	SSW	04/07/2018
17		General site view	SE	04/07/2018
18		General site view	W	04/07/2018
19		General site view	S	04/07/2018
20		General site view	SE	04/07/2018
21		Stripping in an area of made ground	SE	04/07/2018
22		Site stripping working shot	SW	06/07/2018
23		Site stripping working shot	SW	06/07/2018
24	004	NE-facing section of possible pit [004]	SW	06/07/2018
25	004	Plan of pit [004]	SW	06/07/2018
26	006	SW-facing section of possible pit [006]	NE	06/07/2018
27	006	Plan of pit [006]	NE	06/07/2018
28	006	SW-facing section of possible pit [006]	NE	06/07/2018
29	008	NE-facing section of possible pit [008]	SW	06/07/2018
30	008	Plan view of possible pit [008]	SW	06/07/2018
31		General view of site	S	09/07/2018
32		General view of site	S	09/07/2018
33		General view of site	S	09/07/2018
34		General view of site	S	09/07/2018
35		General view of central area of site	S	09/07/2018

Photo No.	Feature	Description	Direction Facing	Date
36		General view of central area of site	S	09/07/2018
37		General view of central area of site	S	09/07/2018
38		General view of watching brief area	N	09/07/2018
39		General view of watching brief area	E	09/07/2018
40		Stone drain in SW corner of site	NE	09/07/2018
41		S extent of site post-stripping	W	10/07/2018
42		General view of site	N	10/07/2018
43		General view of site	N	10/07/2018
44		General view of site	N	10/07/2018
45		N area of site at compound	E	11/07/2018
46		N area of site at compound	E	11/07/2018
47		N area of site at compound	E	11/07/2018

Appendix 2 Context Register

Context No.	Type	Description	Fill of	Filled by	Interpretation
004	Cut	Circular, bowl-shaped cut with ill-defined edges; possibly stepped at one side; Dia: 0.8m D: 0.22m		005	Truncated possible pit or natural feature
005	Fill	Fill of [004]; dark blackish brown compact silty sand with gravel and stones (70%) throughout	004		Fill of possible pit/natural feature [004]
006	Cut	Circular, bowl-shaped cut with ill-defined edges; L: 1m W: 0.7m D: 0.2m		007	Truncated possible pit or natural feature
007	Fill	Fill of [006]; dark blackish brown compact silty sand with gravel and small stones throughout	006		Fill of possible pit/natural feature [006]
008	Cut	Ill-defined cut with gently sloping sides leading to a flat base; L: 0.5m W: 0.4m D: 0.06m		009	Truncated possible pit or natural feature
009	Fill	Fill of [008]; dark blackish brown compact silty sand with gravel and stones (70%) throughout	008		Fill of possible pit/natural feature [008]



AOC Archaeology Group, The Old Estate Office, Rosehaugh Estate, Avoch, IV9 8RF

| tel: 01463 819841 | mob: 07972 259 255 | e-mail: inverness@aocarchaeology.com

www.aocarchaeology.com