

Land 55m NE of Arcadie, Migdale, Bonar Bridge, Highland

Archaeological Watching Brief Project
Planning Ref: 23/03780/FUL

Data Structure Report

For
Michael Redmond

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May 2024
(Project ARCM24)



Avon Archaeology (Highland) Limited
Professional Archaeological Services





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Land 55m NE Of Arcadie, Migdale, Bonar Bridge, Highland: Erection of a dwelling with access and associated works

Archaeological Watching Brief (Strip & Record) Project Data Structure Report

Report No.	ARCM24 - 003
Site Code	ARCM24
Client	Michael Redmond
Planning Refs	23/03780/FUL
OS Grid Ref	NH 6259 9245
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Executive Summary

An archaeological watching brief and recording project has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of planning consent during preliminary groundworks for a new dwelling, garage/workshop and access at a site located to the north of Arcadie, Migdale, Bonar Bridge. The Strip and Record project was designed to identify, record and characterise all significant archaeological deposits, features and finds revealed during the course of preliminary ground works for the development build, in particular any buried features, deposits or finds associated with a possible prehistoric cairn (MHG39108), which is located adjacent and west of the development area.

The watching brief fieldwork recorded a uniform and simple sequence of deposits across all parts of the development area, comprising up to 400mm of topsoil overlying an undisturbed stony to gravelly sand silt substrate. The site was archaeologically sterile - no significant archaeological deposits, features or finds were revealed and no further archaeological mitigation is recommended.

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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 policies¹.

Professional standards maintained throughout the present project adhered to the Codes of Conduct and Approved Practice and Standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists².

¹ A summary of relevant international, EU, UK and Scottish legislation and policies is available from the AAH office on request.

² Chartered Institute for Archaeology (CIfA) Standards and Guidelines. <https://www.archaeologists.net/codes/cifa>



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Introduction & Background

Michael Redmond has received planning permission from Highland Council (22/03780/FUL) for the construction of a new dwelling, garage/workshop and access on land 55 m northeast of Arcadie, Migdale, near Bonar Bridge (Figures 1 to 4 below). The planning consent issued by Highland Council for the development included a Condition that required all preliminary ground works to be monitored by means of an archaeological watching brief in order to identify, characterise and record all buried heritage assets revealed during the course of that work. The preferred method to achieve this was by means of a 'Strip & Record' exercise in advance of development works.

The development site for the construction of the new dwelling is located approximately 55m to the northeast of the dwelling named Arcadie in the rural settlement of Migdale, Bonar Bridge, Sutherland. Migdale is situated in the civil parish of Creich on the north side of the Dornoch Firth, approximately 3km to the NE of the settlement at Ardgay and c 20km west of Dornoch. The development area is centred at NGR NH 6259 9245.

The area with planning consent (Figure 3) has an overall footprint of approximately 0.7 Hectares and at the time of the project consisted of gently sloping and uneven grassland flanked by immature woodland at an elevation of c 58 m above Ordnance datum. The British Geological Survey indicates that the site is underlain by a bedrock basement of Alltnaharra Psammite Formation comprising highly deformed sedimentary deposits formed during the Precambrian era. The basement is overlain locally by undifferentiated fluvioglacial till and morainic deposits of Pleistocene date³.

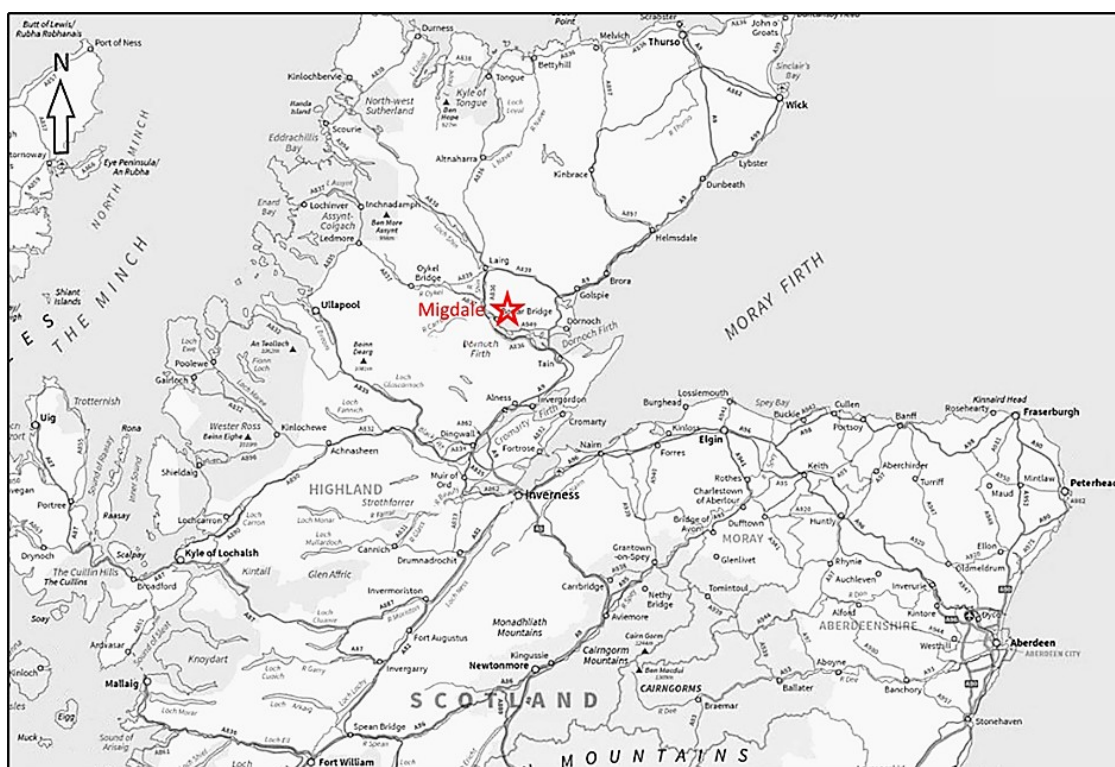


Figure 1 - General Site Location

³ BGS online viewer accessed 08/2/23





Figure 2 - Site Location. Grid squares in kms



Figure 3 - Plan showing layout of proposed development. Scale shown. Courtesy of Michael Redmond



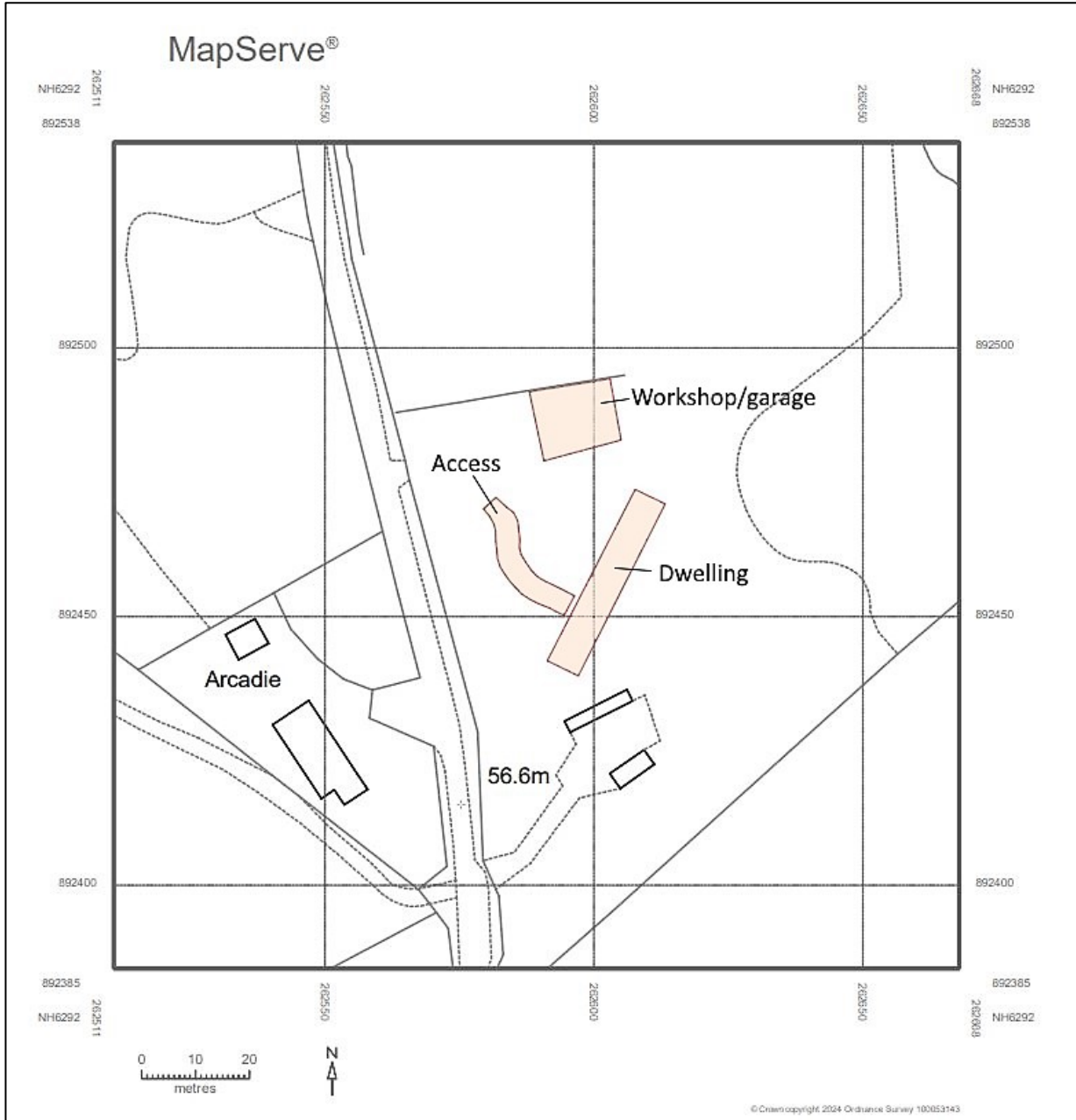


Figure 4 - Areas of strip and record watching brief. Grid scale 50 metres





Figure 5 - The development site prior to topsoil stripping. Looking SE from Migdale Road.

Methodology

In order to satisfy the Condition for archaeology attached to planning consent the objectives of the Watching Brief Strip & Record exercise were to:

- Identify, characterise and record all significant heritage assets preserved in the areas of the proposed new dwellings and associated access road.
- Examine and establish the nature, extent and character of all features of potential archaeological significance affected by the proposed work, and to record these to professional standards, in line with current legislation and policy.
- 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.

Archaeological & Historical Background

Recorded heritage assets located in the vicinity of the study site were reviewed for the project WSI and the results of the research are detailed in the WSI document (Avon Archaeology (Highland) 2023) submitted to and approved by Highland Council in advance of the watching brief fieldwork. The sources consulted for the review included historic mapping held by the National Library of Scotland, the Highland Council HER and Canmore



databases, the Old and New Statistical Accounts, Ordnance Survey Name Books, aerial photographs held by NCAP and LiDAR survey data.

The documentary research indicated that the development area had potential for the preservation of buried archaeological deposits and finds, in particular features and/or activity associated with the construction and use of a putative cairn (MHG39108.), possibly a monument of prehistoric date which is recorded on the Highland Council historic Environment Record immediately to the west of the development site. In addition, the site is located in an area where there is extensive evidence for prehistoric settlement related and funerary activity (HER *passim*).

Watching Brief Strip & Record Fieldwork

The footprint of the house plot, the garage/workshop and the new access (Figure 4 above) was stripped of topsoil using a 12-ton slew tracked machine equipped with a toothless grading bucket. Topsoil stripping was directed by the writer to the level of the natural substrate in order to identify potential archaeological deposits.

Detailed survey was undertaken using a Topcon Hiper GPS unit capable of cm accuracy.

The strip and record fieldwork were undertaken by the writer on the 24th April 2024.

House Plot & Access area

The footprint of topsoil stripping for the house plot (Figure 4 above and Figures 6 and 7 below) measured 35m by 6.5m wide. The area was excavated to a depth of between c 150 mm and c 400 mm (to a level of between 53.8m and 52.4m above Ordnance Datum). The topsoil strip for the new house access (Figure 4 above and Figure 8 below)) measured 25m by 4.5m.

Both areas revealed a simple and undisturbed sequence of stony dark brown sandy silt loam topsoil with occasional vegetation roots (101), which was between 280 and 400mm deep and directly overlay a mixed natural substrate consisting of undisturbed gravelly to stony sandy silt (102).

The strip and record cuttings for the new dwelling and access did not reveal any features or deposits of potential archaeological significance and no finds of any kind were recovered.





Figure 6 - Topsoil stripping of the dwelling footprint nearing completion. Facing NE. Scale 2m.



Figure 7 - Topsoil stripping at the NE end of the dwelling footprint. Facing SW. Scale 2m.





Figure 8 – Strip and Record clearance work in progress. Facing NW. Scales 1m

Garage/Workshop area

The footprint of topsoil stripping for the garage/workshop (Figure 4 above and Figure 9 below) measured 15m by 12.5m. The area was excavated to a depth of between c 250 mm and c 400 mm (to a level of between 52.53 and 52.24m above Ordnance Datum).

The area also revealed a simple and undisturbed sequence of stony dark brown sandy silt loam topsoil (201) that varied between 280 and 400mm deep and directly overlay a mixed natural substrate consisting of undisturbed gravelly to stony sandy silt (202).

The strip and record cutting for the new garage/workshop did not reveal any features or deposits of potential archaeological significance and no finds of any kind were recovered.





Figure 9 - Topsoil stripping of the garage/workshop area nearing completion. Facing NE. Scale 2m.

Finds

No significant finds of any kind, either stratified or unstratified, were revealed site-wide during the controlled topsoil stripping exercise.

Conclusions & Recommendations

A programme of archaeological monitoring and recording (Watching Brief Strip and Record) has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of a Condition attached to planning consent 23/03780/FUL. The project was designed to identify and record all significant buried archaeological features, deposits and finds present within the footprint of a new dwelling, a garage/workshop and associated access.

The strip and record fieldwork in the development area recorded a uniform sequence of topsoil overlying an undisturbed natural substrate of variable gravelly to stony sandy silt.

In conclusion, the development areas were archaeologically sterile - no significant archaeological deposits, features or finds were revealed on the site and no further archaeological mitigation is recommended.



References

Avon Archaeology (Highland) Ltd 2024. *Land 55m NE of Arcadie, Migdale, Bonar Bridge, Highland - Archaeological Watching Brief (Strip & Record) & Reporting Project: Desk-based Assessment, Project Design, Methods Statement & Risks Assessment*. Unpublished client report.

Highland Council Historic Environment Record – *passim*

Managing Change in the Historic Environment (MCHE): Documents including guidance on the treatment and management of heritage assets including Scheduled Monuments

Scotland's Archaeology Strategy 2016

Document laying out the importance of archaeology in Scotland

The Historic Environment Policy for Scotland 2019 (HES 2019): Historic Environment Scotland's published revised principles and policies for the management of heritage in Scotland including managing change and sources of further information.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Photographic Register

<i>Photograph</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>Facing</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Scales</i>
5224-5229	site	SE - S	The site on arrival	-
5230-5239	House area	SE	Topsoil stripping of the proposed house footprint	2m and 1m
5240-5244	House area	SW	Topsoil stripping of the proposed house footprint	2m
5245-5257	Garage/workshop	NE	Topsoil stripping of the garage/workshop area	2m and 1m
5258-5260	Access	N	Topsoil stripping of the house access in progress	2 x 1m
5261-5263	Site	SE-S	The site on completion of the topsoil strip	-



Appendix 2 – Context Register

Context No.	Areas	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Type (Cut, Fill, Deposit, surface)	Description	Interpretation	Find No.	Plans (Drwg #)	Sections (Drwg #)	Photos (Y/N)	Samples
101	Dwelling and access	>35	>6.5	Up to 0.4	Deposit	Layer of dark greyish brown friable sandy silt loam containing variable but generally sparse small stones and gravels	Topsoil		Y	N	Y	N
102	Dwelling and access	>35	>6.5	>0.15	Deposit	mixed very gravelly to sandy silt clay with sparse larger cobbles and stones	Natural glacial till substrate		Y	N	Y	N
201	Garage/workshop	>15	>12.5	Up to 0.3	Deposit	Layer of dark grey brown to yellowish-brown friable sandy silt loam containing variable but generally sparse small stones and gravels	Topsoil		Y	N	Y	N
202	Garage/workshop	>15	>12.5	>0.15	Deposit	mixed gravelly to sandy silt clay with common gravels and sparse larger cobbles and stones	Natural substrate		Y	N	Y	N

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