

**Report of Archaeological Evaluation
Preacher's Wall, Sheildaig, Highland
NG 8158 / 5443**

**By
Stuart Farrell
B.A A.I.F.A F.S.A.Scot.
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Introduction

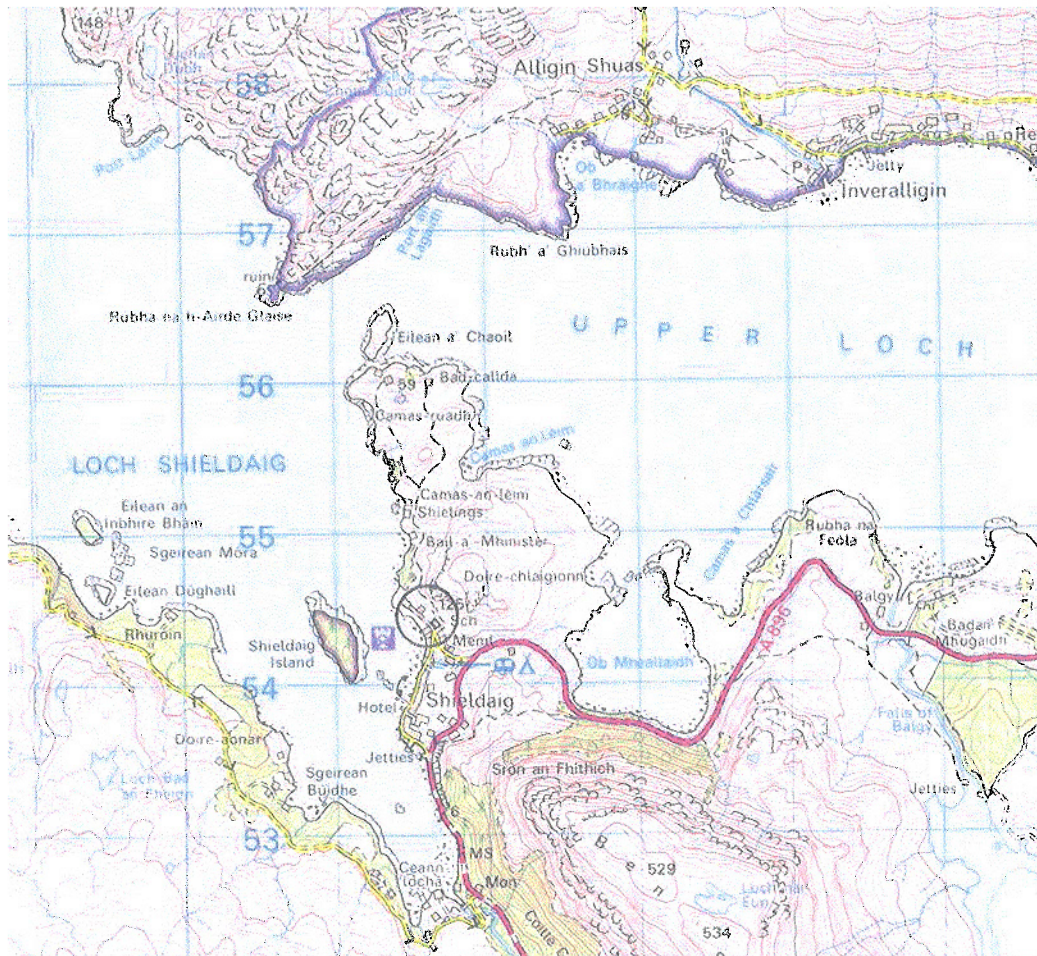
This report is for an archaeological evaluation conducted on behalf of Mr. R Smith by the author for a house plot at the open-air preaching site at Sheildaig.

Acknowledgements

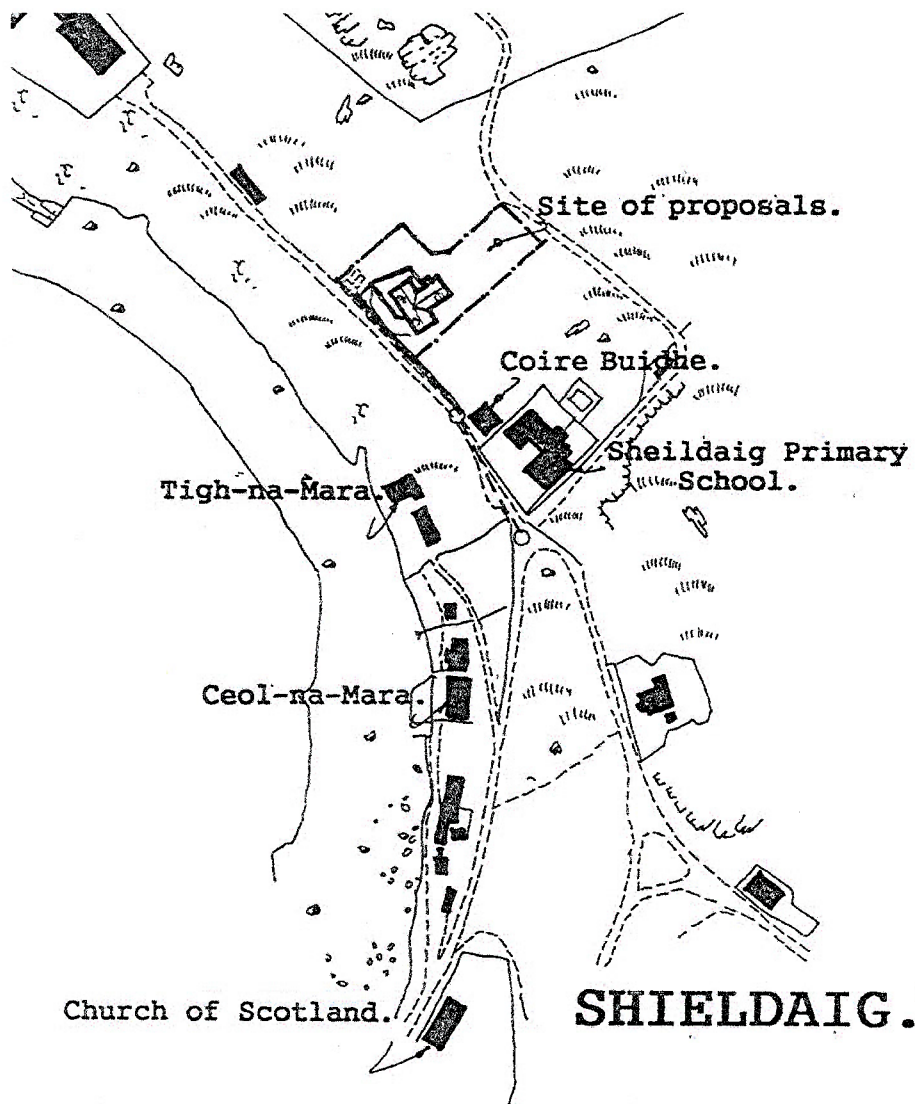
I would like to thank the following for their help during the work :

- Mr. R Smith;
- Mr. R Morrison, architect;
- Mr. J Stevenson, of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland for a copy of their plan of the site;
- Mr. N Fojut, of Historic Scotland;
- Mr. J Wood, Highland Council Archaeology Unit;
- Miss J Hooper, for references to the site;
- Staff of K W Builders for onsite works;
- Staff of Highland Council Archives;
- Staff of Inverness Library.

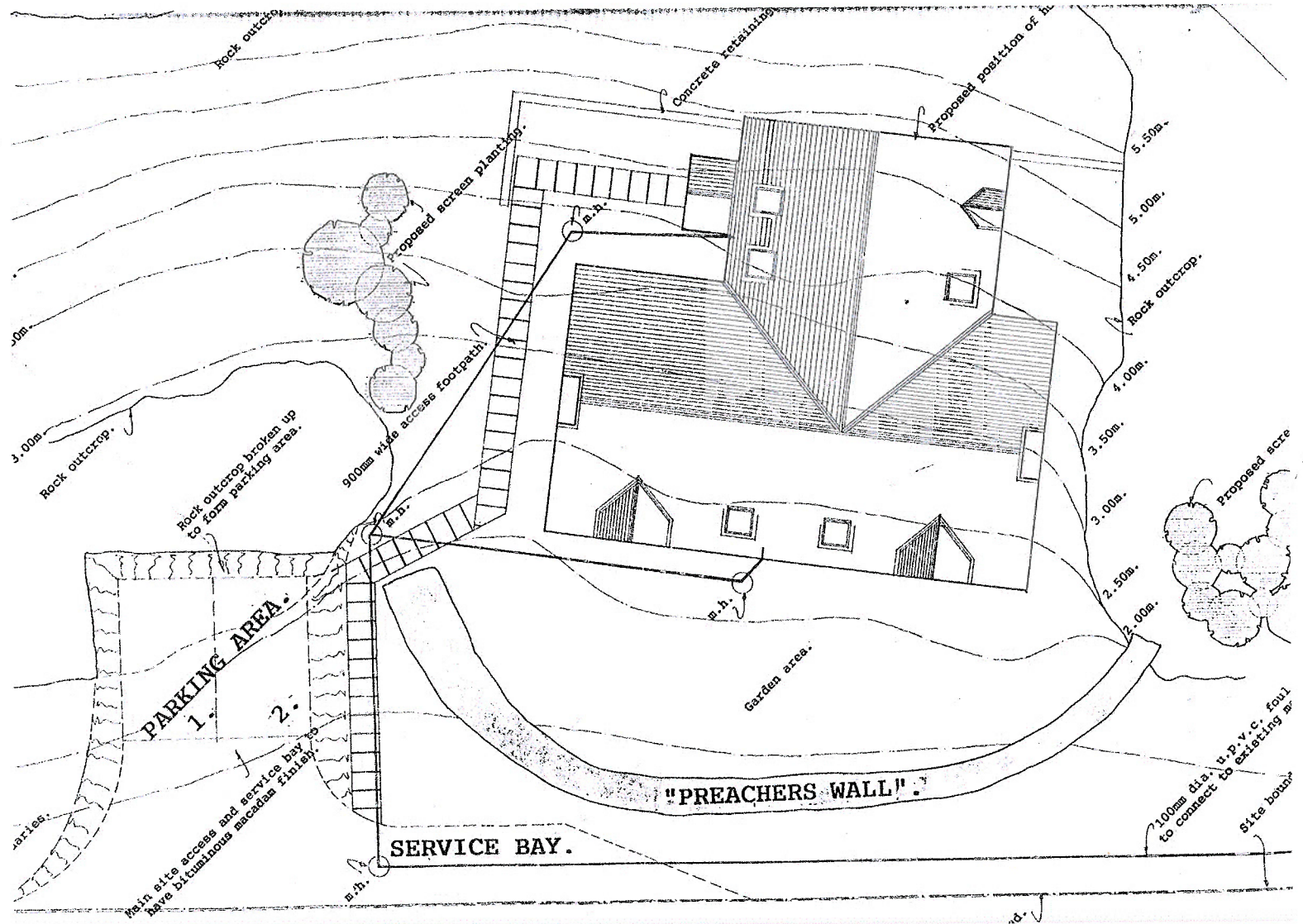
Location

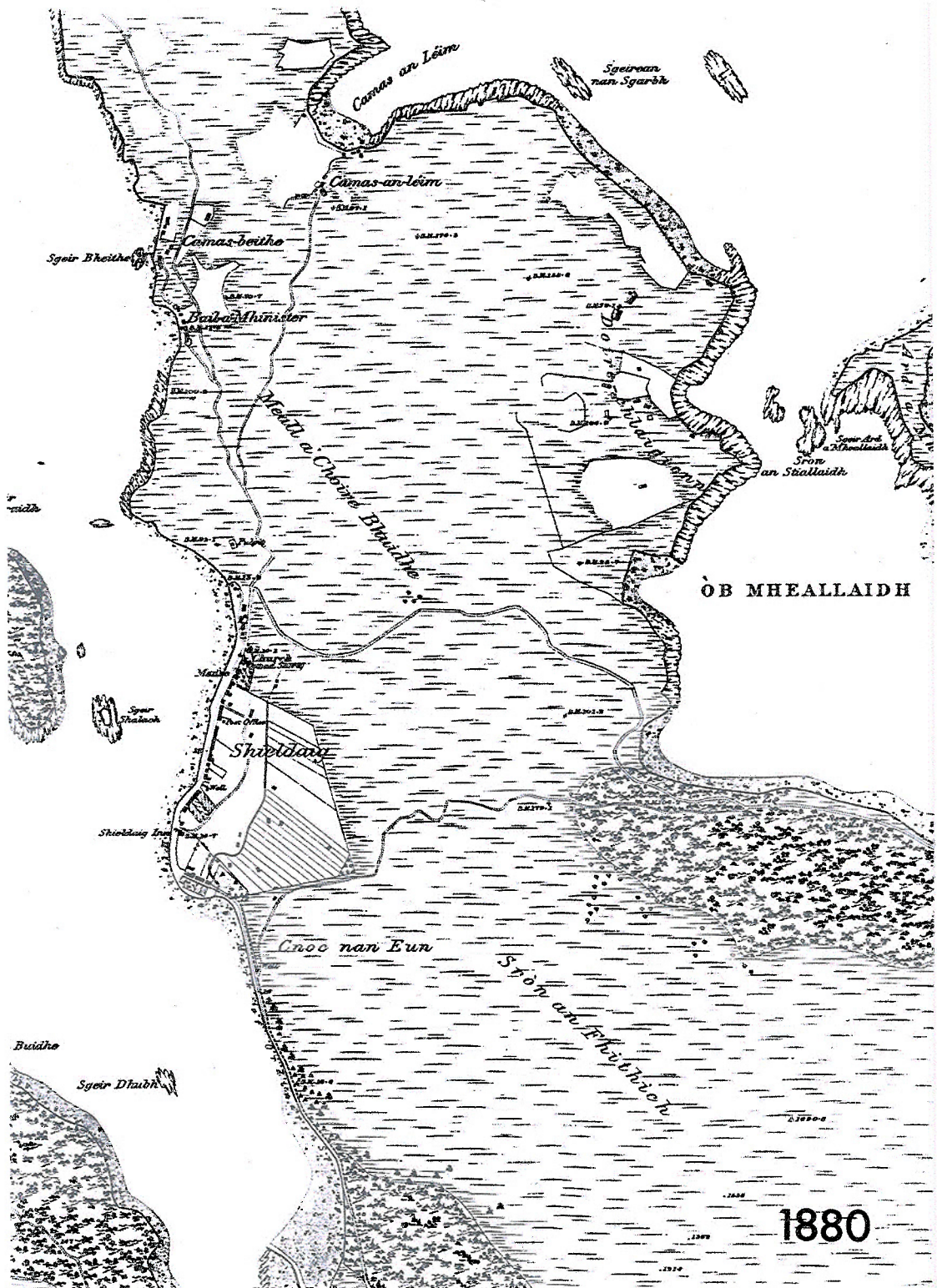


Location



LOCATION PLAN. scale : 1 to 2 500.









Plan by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of
Scotland

Background

The site is historically associated as being an open-air preaching site relating to the disruption of the church in 1843 and the formation of the Free Church of Scotland. Sheildaig derives its name from the Norse 'sild-vik' or herring bay. Open-air preaching sites such as Sheildaig are slightly common in the Highland's though each site is different in its own way.

Desktop Survey

A desktop survey was conducted for the site using the following sources:

- Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record;
- National Monuments Record of Scotland, Edinburgh;
- Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland Aerial Photograph Collection;
- National Map Library, Edinburgh;
- National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh;
- Highland Council Archives;
- Inverness Library.

The site is currently not recorded in the Highland Sites and Monuments Record or the National Monuments Record of Scotland, Edinburgh. No records for the Free Church at Sheildaig exist in the National Archives of Scotland, or the National Register of Archives for Scotland or Free Church House, Edinburgh.

The site is marked on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1880 (sheet 92 surveyed 1875) (See over) and is marked as a rectangular enclosure and named pulpit. By the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1906 (Sheet 92 revised 1902) (See over) the site is not named but now has a stretch of curved wall. Unfortunately no larger scale maps of the area were produced.

There is very limited aerial photograph coverage of the site. The stretch of walling is visible on aerial photographs of 1946 and subsequent dates but there is no evidence of any features within due to large scale.

The Ordnance Survey Name Book of 1875 records the site as:

"Applies to a wooden erection covered in. Situated a short distance north of the N end of the village of Sheildaig. In front of the pulpit is an enclosure seated with rough wooden forms or seats not covered in. In this enclosure assemble during fine weather the Free Churchmen & C of the neighbourhood where divine service is held. During inclement weather the congregation adjourns to the F C Meeting House (described below here) having no church in this district. Pulpit and enclosure on the property of the Right Hon Sir John Stuart".

The Free Church Meeting House is recorded as:

"Applies to a plain stone building situated E of and adjacent to Camlueth used by the members of the F C body as a meeting house during wet weather. The services of the church having at other times held in the open air as this body have no church in this locality. The above building was erected by subscription about 1848 is one storey high slates and in fair repair. The property of the F C of Scotland on the ground of the Right Hon Sir John Stuart".

Unfortunately little study has been undertaken on open-air preaching sites in the Highlands. One reference to the site is mentioned in a history of the Free Church of Scotland (Brown, 1893, 661) of:

"Here was another scene like that at Applecross. The tent (pulpit) was placed amid naked rocks on the sea-shore, the sound of the Psalms literally mingled with the roar of the

waves of the Atlantic. The tent was fastened down with strong ropes to prevent it being upset, and there were grey-headed men sitting uncovered in the cold, - several of them with tears streaming down their cheeks, whilst Mr. Glass preached to them the blessed gospel on their native tongue".

It is likely that Mr. Glass mentioned above was the local catechist and not a minister within the Free Church. Like many parishes in 1843 the Local minister the Rev Colin Mackenzie joined the Free Church in 1843 along with most of the congregation. The open-air site was started as the local proprietor, Sir John Stuart, refused for many years to give the Free Church a site to build a church.

When Mr. Mackenzie was translated to Arrochar in 1844 a catechist was placed here and in 1864 the Free Church Assembly recognised Sheildaig as a disruption charge. The Rev Donald MacDonald was appointed here in 1872, after Sheildaig was without a minister for 29 years, and a site for the Free Church obtained in 1874 with church and Manse being built in 1876-77. It was noted in 1866 that the membership of the church was 600 including adherents. (Ewing, 1904)

In 1893 most of the congregation along with the Rev Donald MacDonald left the Free Church to join the Free Presbyterian Church, and in 1900 membership of the church was noted to be only 34 in number. (Ewing, 1904) The Free Church is now currently disused. (Gifford, 1992)

There is no reference to the site being used for service in recent times, though local tradition records that up to 1000 people used the site for 30 years with some arriving by sea and that the wall was built to provide shelter. Though not recorded as being in use after the Free Church was built, the site may have been used for communion services, as the church may not have been big enough.

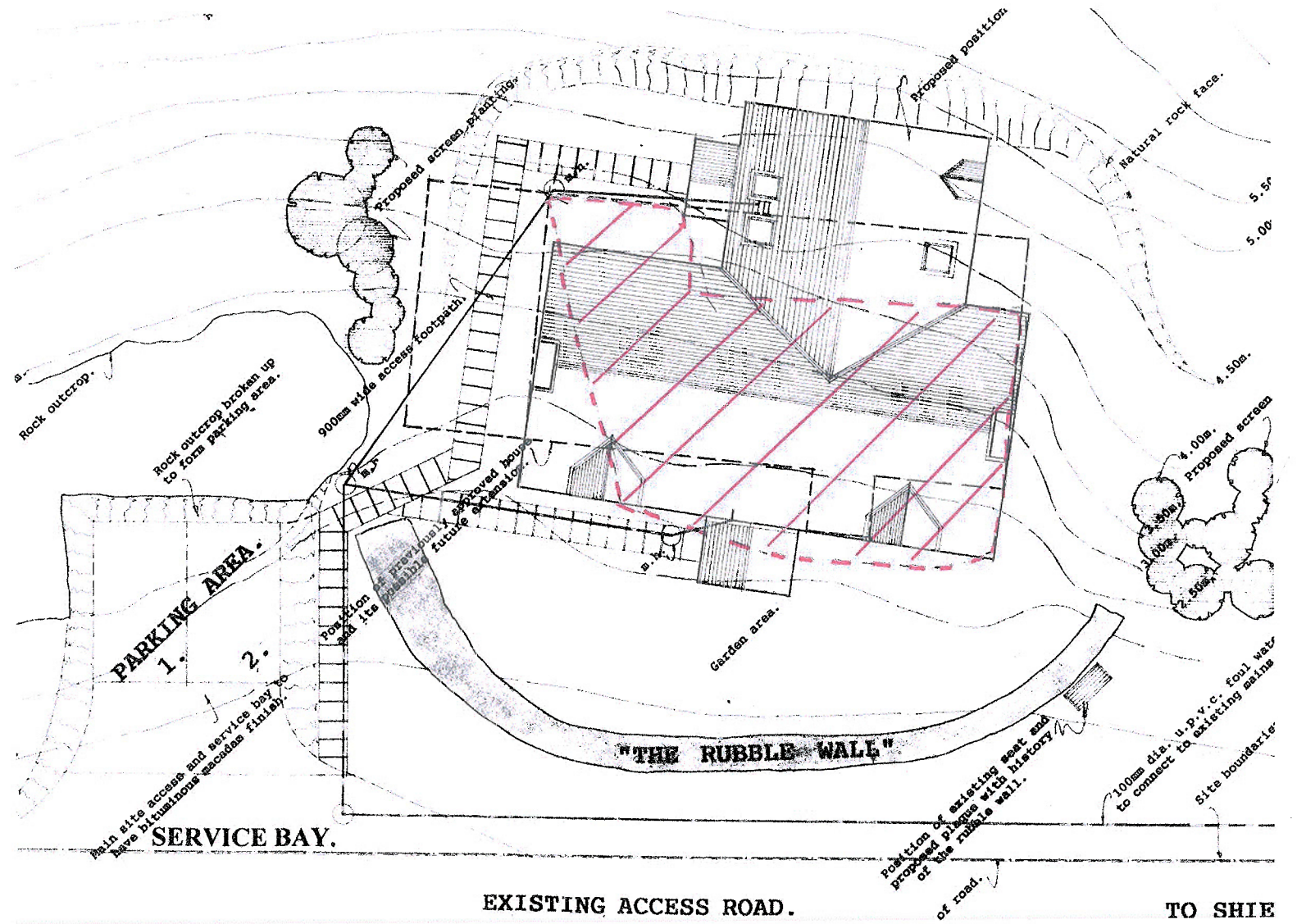
The wooden ark used here and later in the Free Presbyterian Church between 1892 and 1920 is now housed in the Gairloch Heritage Museum.

The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland surveyed the site in May 2000 (see over – this is a working drawing and the drawing and its description has yet to be put into the public record). The drawing indicates possible channels running to the SW and the SE.

Photographs taken of the site in 1998, by the Mr. R Smith, show the site before any development work was undertaken. (See over) No other archaeological work has been undertaken on the site previously.

Top : View of site facing East © R. Smith 1998.
Bottom : View of site facing South-east © R. Smith 1998.





View of site and previous excavation facing W



Objectives

To conduct an evaluation and recording project prior to the development being undertaken to record those features that would be affected by the development project. A copy of the specification provided by Highland Council Archaeology Unit is enclosed.

It should be noted that most of the site had already seen some development work undertaken under a previous planning application RC/1978/437 and a building warrant 01/00408/ERCRC. (See area marked in red in enclosed drawing – an inspection of this area revealed no archaeological features or deposits though the area was heavily disturbed)

Methodology

Work carried out included:

- A detailed photographic study both in black & white and colour slide of the walling and the site. (Carried out 1st June 2002 – see photographs in archive)
- Supervised excavation of the house plot, with a clean of the existing excavation. (Carried out September 28th - 30th 2002)

Site Conditions

The site is on a south-facing slope, with natural bedrock outcrops to the north and east. The ground cover is a mixture of rough grass and heather. The site has in the past recently had trees planted on it (see photographs of Mr. R Smith).

Results

The surrounding wall is rubble built of medium to large stones utilising large boulders and up to 1.8m in height topped with large stones and tapered with base 1.9m wide and top up to 1.3m wide. In the centre the wall has partly collapsed and only stands to about 1.3m high. Entrance to southwest about 1.4m wide (as depicted on plan) and uses part of the natural bedrock as steps on its entrance path. There is no evidence of the wall being rebuilt at any time and looks to be of one phase of construction. The wall though crude in construction, is well defined utilising the natural bedrock at its east end terminus.

Due to previous excavations carried out (see photograph and plan of area highlighted over – area of roughly 12.5m x 7.5m) it was deemed impossible to conduct the 5% trial trenching as requested by the Highland Council Archaeology Unit Specification. Discussions with the Highland Council Archaeologist, Mr. John Wood in June 2002, led to the overall house site being cleared under the direct supervision of the author.

A back-acting machine with a straight edged bucket made machining of the site revealed natural ground of sand underlying turf and topsoil to an average depth of 200mm to an overall area of 15m x 12m or 180m². Overall the ground was very stony with large numbers of medium to large stones being revealed.

No evidence was found of the wooden enclosure of the earlier pulpit (as noted on the 1st edition map and OS Name Book) it might be possible that due to previous construction work disturbance or that the structure had no foundations that no evidence of it was found. As the site has a south-facing slope with no indication of seating, the enclosure may have been no more than wooden boards placed directly on the ground.

Two small features in the form of 2 rubble drains were revealed under the topsoil that was removed, both aligned to the inverted v depression as depicted on the RCAHMS plan. The 1st running to the entrance was 0.4m wide and 10m in length whilst the 2nd of the same width was 7m in length but could be traced partly for a further 5m until the south corner. Both were of small to medium irregular shaped stones. (see photograph below) No datable material was found associated with the drains, and only some white glazed pottery was recovered from the topsoil (not retained). It is likely that the drains date between 1843 and 1876 when the open-air preaching site was in use.



Recommendations

No recommendations with regards to this project are to be proposed.

A plaque commemorating the site's use is to be placed outside the wall as part of the new house development.

Archive

Notebook of results and a set of black & white photographs and negatives to be deposited in the National Monuments Record in Edinburgh. A set of black & white photographs and colour slides has been deposited with Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record.

References

Brown, T (1893) Annals of the Disruption with Extracts from the Narratives of Ministers who left the Scottish Establishment in 1843. MacNiven and Wallace. Edinburgh.

Ewing, W ed (1914) Annals of the Free Church of Scotland. 2 Volumes. T & T Clark. Edinburgh.

Gifford, J (1992) The Buildings of Scotland : Highlands & Islands. Penguin. London.

IFA (1999) By-laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. Reading.

MacFarlane, D (1957) memoir and Remains of the Rev Donald MacDonald, Sheildaig, Ross-shire. N Adstead & Son Ltd. Glasgow.

Ordnance Survey Name Book 1879 volume 46, page 43.

Watson, W J (1904) Place Names of Ross & Cromarty. Northern Counties Printing and Publishing Ltd. Inverness.

OS Maps Consulted

Edition of 1880 sheet 92 Ross-shire 6" to the mile.

Edition of 1906 sheet 92 Ross-shire 6" to the mile.

Edition of 1968 1:10,560.

Aerial Photographs Consulted

RAF 1946 – CPE/Scot/UK 192	1:10,000	1025-1027	11-10-1946
RAF 1954 – 542/RAF/5	1:10,000	136-134	17-8-1954
OS 1964 – OS/65/092	1:10,000	187, 190, 193	29-5-1965
OS 1988 – 64088	1:24,000	86-85	14-10-1988

Stuart Farrell
39a Park Street
Fishertown
Nairn
IV12 4PP

Appendix 1 : Film Register				
Film 1 - Black & white and Colour slide				
Shot	Facing	Scale	Date	Description
1	E		01/06/2002	General view of site
2	E		01/06/2002	„
3	S		01/06/2002	„
4	S		01/06/2002	„
5	W		01/06/2002	„
6	W		01/06/2002	„
7	W	1m x 1m	01/06/2002	View of excavation
8	W	"	01/06/2002	„
9	W	1m x 1m	01/06/2002	Detail of excavation
10	E	1m x 1m	01/06/2002	„
11	N	1m x 1m	01/06/2002	„
12	N	1m x 1m	01/06/2002	„
13		2m	01/06/2002	Internal view of wall shot 1
14		2m	01/06/2002	Internal view of wall shot 2
15		2m	01/06/2002	Internal view of wall shot 3
16		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 4
17		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 5
18		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 6
19		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 7
20		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 8
21		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 9
22		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 10
23		2m	01/06/2002	Section of wall at entrance shot 11
24		2m	01/06/2002	External view of wall shot 12
25		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 13
26		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 14
27		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 15
28		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 16
29		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 17
30		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 18
31		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 19
32		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 20
33		2m	01/06/2002	„ shot 21
34	N		01/06/2002	Entrance to Preaching site
35	N	1m x 1m	01/06/2002	„
36	E		01/06/2002	General view of site
Film 2 - Colour slide				
1				No photo
2	NE		28/09/2002	View of electricity trench
3	E		28/09/2002	„
4	SW		28/09/2002	„
5	E		28/09/2002	View of site prior to excavation
6	E	1m x 1m	30/09/2002	View of field drains
7	W	1m x 1m	30/09/2002	„
8	SW	1m x 1m	30/09/2002	„
9	S	1m x 1m	30/09/2002	„
10	S	1m x 1m	30/09/2002	„
11	W	1m x 1m	30/09/2002	„
12	W	1m x 1m	30/09/2002	„
13	SW	1m x 1m	30/09/2002	Detail of field drain
14	NE	2m	30/09/2002	..

15	NE	2m	30/09/2002	
16	SE	1m x 1m	30/09/2002	Gully and drain to SE
17	N	1m x 1m	30/09/2002	Detail of drain

Brief for archaeological work at:

Preachers Wall, Shieldaig

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
and RECORDING**

**HIGHLAND COUNCIL
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICE**

Archaeology Unit

1) Background

At this site there is a need to record features of historic or archaeological importance. Some of them, like the Preacher's Wall in its unaltered setting, are clearly visible; but there is also a potential for finds or features of interest to be discovered and damaged during site works. This brief is for an initial drawn and photographic record of the visible features, and an evaluation to establish the nature and extent of any buried finds or features. This evaluation aims to identify any such features at the earliest possible stage so that they can be preserved, or if necessary recorded before destruction. Finally, *only if the results of the evaluation show this is necessary*, a watching brief will be carried out on site works to identify and record any further features of historical interest that are discovered at this stage. This approach is intended to ensure that any archaeology on site is identified and recorded with minimum delay or disruption to the development.

This brief specifies what we consider to be the minimum acceptable standard of work; proposals that present a higher standard may be offered and accepted. It may be used to obtain estimates from archaeologists. We will assume that this will form the basis of an agreed approach unless changes are agreed with us in writing before the start of any site works.

Where archaeological work fails to meet the standards set out in this brief, the applicant will be in breach of the planning condition until matters are rectified. The Council's Archaeology Unit may also refuse to accept work from, or otherwise take action against, archaeologists who fail to carry out work to these standards.

The brief sets out who is responsible for what, as well as the terms of reference, objectives, method, monitoring and reporting arrangements.

2) Terms of Reference

This brief has been produced for the applicant, who will be responsible for the work, including all tendering and contractual arrangements. It has been produced in response to Planning Application no 99/00094/FULRC, and Appeal Decision P/PPA/270/196, and it is valid until 5 March 2007. If any of these details do not apply when site works start, a new brief will be needed.

The work should be carried out by, or under the immediate direction of, a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists to ensure that work is carried out to professional standards.

Before site works commence, the proposed arrangements, including a timetable for the work must be agreed with the Area Planning Manager, and the Senior Archaeologist in writing.

3) Objectives

To identify the location, nature and extent of any features or objects of archaeological importance that would be damaged or destroyed by this development.

To safeguard where possible and record where necessary any archaeological features or finds identified. Detailed arrangements will need to be agreed by the Senior Archaeologist.

To ensure that the needs for archaeological conservation and recording are met without causing any unnecessary delay or disturbance to the development project.

4) Method

Proposed arrangements must be agreed by the Council's Senior Archaeologist before the start of site clearance works.

A desk based background check must be made of all relevant archaeological records and aerial photographs held in Inverness and Edinburgh.

A plan, at a minimum scale of 1:2500, should be made of the site to include any visible upstanding remains, from any period (including modern). The location of photographs, detailed plans, elevation drawings, and trial trenches should be accurately indicated on this.

Photographs should be taken of the site as a whole to show the situation before development starts, and also the progress of the archaeological and the development work. All photographs should be good quality 35mm prints or slides, or (minimum 3 megapixel) digital images. Where necessary to understanding, a scale should be provided within the photograph. The photographs must be clearly labelled and numbered, and these numbers marked on the site plan to show which location each photograph represents.

The Preacher's Wall itself should be fully recorded by means of photographs and drawn plans and elevations at a scale of at least 1:20. Where it is to be taken down and rebuilt at least one section should be drawn to show the construction details. The information gained by this work should be used to inform the subsequent reconstruction.

Trial trenches will be excavated by (or under the direction of) the archaeologist appointed, at locations to be agreed, to provide a sample of at least 5% of the total site area. This will provide an indication of the likely nature and extent of any buried archaeology. If required, trenches may be cut using a back-acting excavating machine using a straight edged (not toothed) bucket. The location of these trenches must be accurately located on the aforementioned 1:2500 plan. The results of the trial trenching exercise must be communicated to the Council's Senior Archaeologist as soon as possible after completion of the work. Where objects or features of archaeological or historical interest have been identified, it will be necessary to agree appropriate arrangements for their safeguarding where possible, or recording where necessary. The best arrangement is usually to ensure that any archaeology is recorded at this stage so that the need for a watching brief on site works can be avoided. Where the evaluation returns negative results, or where any archaeology discovered has been recorded at this stage, there should be no need for further archaeological work in these areas.

If the archaeology identified by the evaluation has not been fully recorded before the start of site works, a watching brief will need to be conducted by an archaeologist on all site ground-works, so that any finds or features of importance discovered during them can be recorded to professional standards. Note that any service trenches outwith areas of topsoil stripping will need to be included in the watching brief.

The archaeologist will endeavour wherever possible to work with the contractor to ensure that any recording required is done with minimum delay to the site works.

Note re Site Contractors where watching briefs are taking place

Building contractors and others carrying out site works will need to work closely with the archaeologist and provide all necessary access and other arrangements. They may need to use differing work practices on site than usual to enable the archaeologist to complete the work. For example,

- Where excavating machinery is used, a straight-edged bucket must be used on a back acting machine. Care will need to be taken to avoid over excavation, and the advice of the archaeologist on-site should be adhered to on this.
- Archaeologists may need to get quickly into recently cleared areas and this may mean that drivers of excavators may sometimes need to wait briefly, or switch to working other areas.

- Each excavating machine needs to be watched by at least one archaeologist at all times (1:1 ratio). Work should not begin on site until this cover has been set up.
- Because the archaeologist must be able to record any archaeological remains encountered during the work to professional standards, site clearance works may take slightly longer than normal. This should be allowed for in the development project timetable. Occasionally, more extensive excavation may be needed since there will be limited opportunities to preserve features in situ. The previous evaluation should greatly reduce the likelihood of major discoveries at this stage that would cause significant delays, but if these occur, **please see (5) below**.

5) Monitoring

The archaeologist appointed is responsible for agreeing arrangements for monitoring with Archaeology Unit staff. We will monitor projects as necessary to ensure that minimum standards are met. This is usually by unannounced site visit - alternative or additional monitoring arrangements may be made in individual cases.

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 by the archaeologist contracted to carry out the work.

Any unexpectedly significant or complex discoveries, or other unexpected occurrences which might significantly affect the archaeological work and /or the development must be notified by the archaeologist immediately to the applicant and the Senior Archaeologist. The finds or features must be left until arrangements have been agreed for safeguarding or recording them. In the meantime work may continue on other areas of the site.

6) Reporting

a) Project report

The archaeologist appointed is responsible for producing a report on the work, and for making sure copies have been received by the recipients listed below. We require archaeologists to submit satisfactory reports within the agreed deadline.

At least **six** copies of the project report must be produced. These must be submitted to all of the following **within 4 weeks** of the completion of the fieldwork.

- One paper copy for the applicant
- One paper copy for the Council's Area Planning and Building Control Manager, 2 Achany Road, Dingwall IV15 9JB
- One paper copy to be deposited with the Council's Senior Librarian Information Co-ordinator, Libraries Support Unit, 31a Harbour Road, Inverness IV1 1UA. This will be available for public consultation through the public library service.
- One paper copy to be deposited with the Council's Assistant Curator (Archaeology), Museum & Art Gallery, Castle Wynd, Inverness IV2 3EB
- Two copies for the Archaeology Unit, Planning and Development Service, Council Offices, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX :
 - One paper copy
 - One digital copy of the complete report in Adobe Acrobat format (ie a pdf file). This can be supplied by email or on a computer disc. Please ensure that all drawings and photographs are included.

The report must include, as a minimum,

- Location plan showing the project area and archaeological sites and features affected. Grid references must be included.
- Circumstances and objectives of this work, including a copy of this brief
- Weather and other conditions affecting fieldwork
- Scale plans, and photographs of all archaeological features noted
- A full index to any records or other material generated by the project including its location
- A brief analysis of the project results drawing in comparative data as appropriate, and a statement of the significance of the results for future research. Note that a negative result may itself be significant.
- General comments and proposals for future archaeological projects arising from the carrying out of this project
- A set of colour slides illustrating the project progress from start to completion.
- A list of finds, set out in the required format for Treasure Trove reporting. Copies of the necessary forms are obtainable if required from the Council's Assistant Curator (Archaeology), Museum & Art Gallery, Castle Wynd, Inverness IV2 3EB

b) Presentation

Where significant archaeology has been found, this specification includes arranging a presentation of the project results, to the local community within a year of the completion of the fieldwork. This is the responsibility of the archaeologist appointed who should allow for any costs when estimating for the work. Arrangements must be agreed with the Senior Archaeologist.

c) DES

A brief summary of the results must be sent to the Council for Scottish Archaeology for inclusion in Discovery and Excavation in Scotland. This is also the responsibility of the archaeologist appointed who should allow for any costs when estimating for the work.

d) Copyright

The Council will assume author's copyright unless advised otherwise. However, the Archaeology Unit reserves the right to make the report available for reference and research purposes, either on paper, or electronically. The completed report will be made available for immediate public consultation for research purposes at the Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record, and through the public library service. The Archaeology Unit will acknowledge copyright in all cases.

7) Finds

Contractors should be aware that advice and facilities for emergency conservation and temporary storage can be offered by Inverness Museum on consultation with the Conservation Officer and Assistant Curator (Archaeology). A list of services and table of costs are available from the museum.

Contractors should notify the Council's Assistant Curator (Archaeology) at Inverness Museum, before the start of site works. The Assistant Curator will in turn notify local museums of the fact that there is archaeological work ongoing in the area.

A finds list, in the required format for Treasure Trove reporting, must be attached to and submitted with the report.

The contractor should notify all finds for Treasure Trove before the report is submitted.

8) General

The archaeologist agrees by undertaking this work to the terms of this brief, including the following:

The archaeologist appointed must:

- carry out the work according to the Code of Conduct, standards and guidelines of the Institute of Field Archaeologists
- agree a timetable for the work with the client and the Senior Archaeologist
- take all necessary measures to conform with the Health and Safety at Work Acts and be covered by all necessary insurance
- not comment to the press or other media without prior approval from the Senior Archaeologist
- fully allow for prevailing weather conditions in northern Scotland.

The main contractor on site has overall responsibility for the Health and Safety of any archaeological staff. Any Health and Safety incidents on site involving the archaeologist must be immediately notified to the Health and Safety Executive.

This brief has been produced by the Council's Senior Archaeologist, to whom any enquiries should be addressed. No one else has authority to vary its terms.

John Wood

Senior Archaeologist

Thursday, 18 April 2002