

The Fishing Village of Port Henderson, Gairloch. Centred on NGR NG 7542 7379

From the Minutes of Settlement of the Gairloch Estates, a hand written document from 1815 sets out the conditions of tenancy for a new fishing village.

Port Henderson

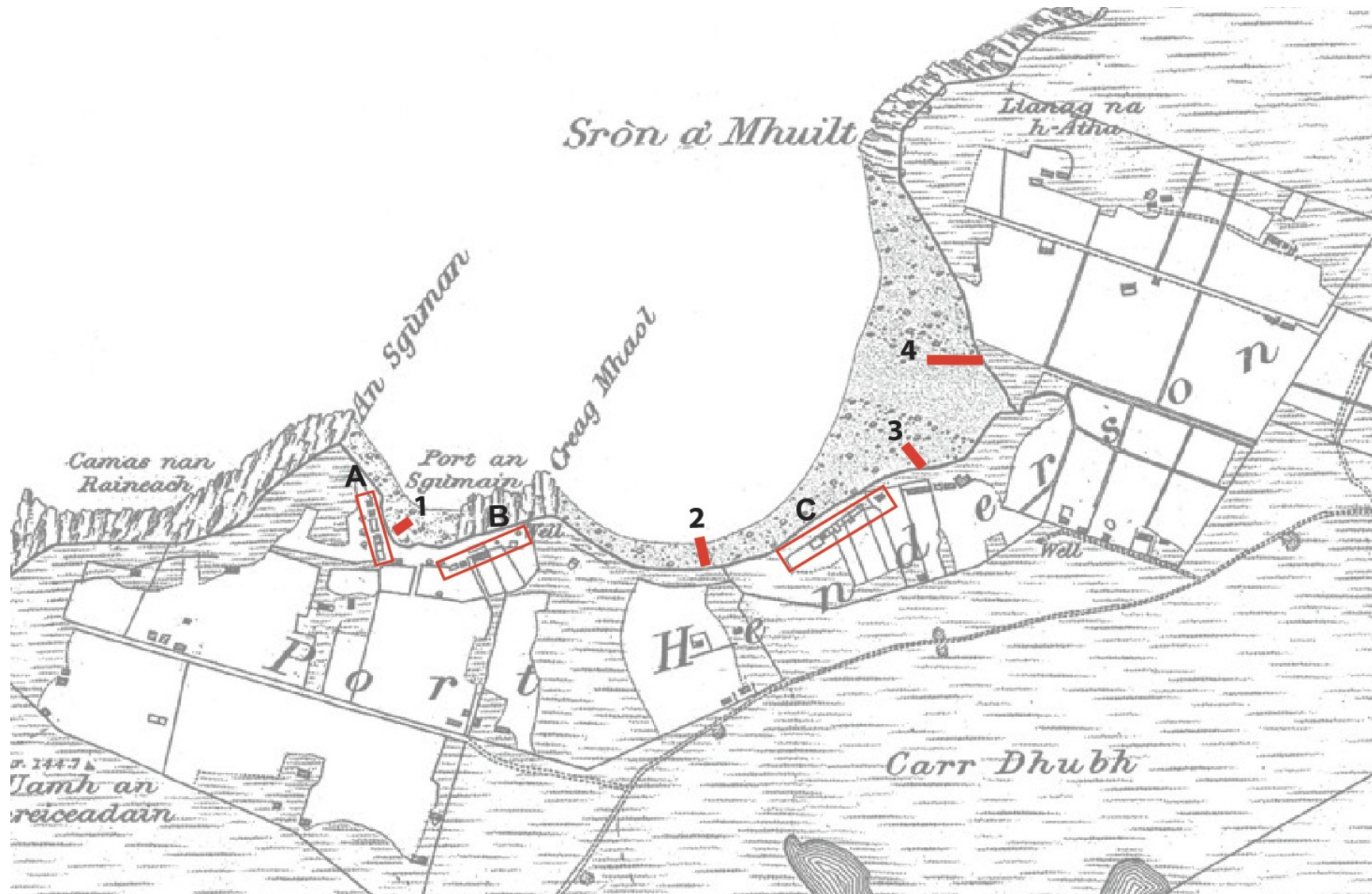
I for Hector Mackenzie Bart. in terms of the foregoing Minutes do hereby give a lease of Twenty years from Whitsunday Eighteen hundred and fifteen of those of South Cradale and Ardriachadh from Loch in thail by Glas-bhie and by the end of Loch Badna hachlish to Loch nan iannan and from thence to a cut near a point of Carr by the bottom of the hill called Naigh-Threastadan to William Mac Mackenzie, William Fraser, Murdo Mac Donald, Donald Mackenzie, Alexander Macpherson, Angus Mac Donald, Frederick Mackenzie, Alex Campbell, Don Mackenzie, Murdo Mackenzie, Alex Macpherson, Duncan Macpherson, Alex Macpherson, Hector Arguehart, James Mac Donald, John Maclean, Murdo Fraser, Niel Macpherson, John Macpherson, Murdo Mac Donald, John Fra. Kenneth Macmillan, John Campbell Will. Mackay
on condition of occupying the same by building their houses two and two joined and lotted out, for the first five years to pay no Rent but to build their march dykes make a port and road from the houses to the same and for the next fifteen years to pay one Guinea each of yearly rent beginning the first years payment at all Martinmas ey hundred and twenty and so on yearly. To be removeable by the decision of a majority of neighbours their fellow labourers in the place before the Proprietor or Factor for the time The ground must be laboured and laid regularly by draining and each man is to enclose hundred feet back the breadth of his front ground or each two for a yard or garden between them
W. H. M. Mackenzie

The boundaries of the village are laid out, and the tenants are named. It states,

"on condition of occupying the same by building their houses two and two joined and as lotted out, for the first five years to pay no rent but to build their march dykes, make a port and road from the houses to the same and for the next fifteen years to pay one guinea each of yearly rent. To be removeable by the decision of a majority of the neighbours their fellow labourers in the place before the Proprietor or Factor for the time. The ground must be laboured and laid regularly by draining and each man is to enclose one hundred feet back the breadth of his front ground or each two for a yard or garden between them."

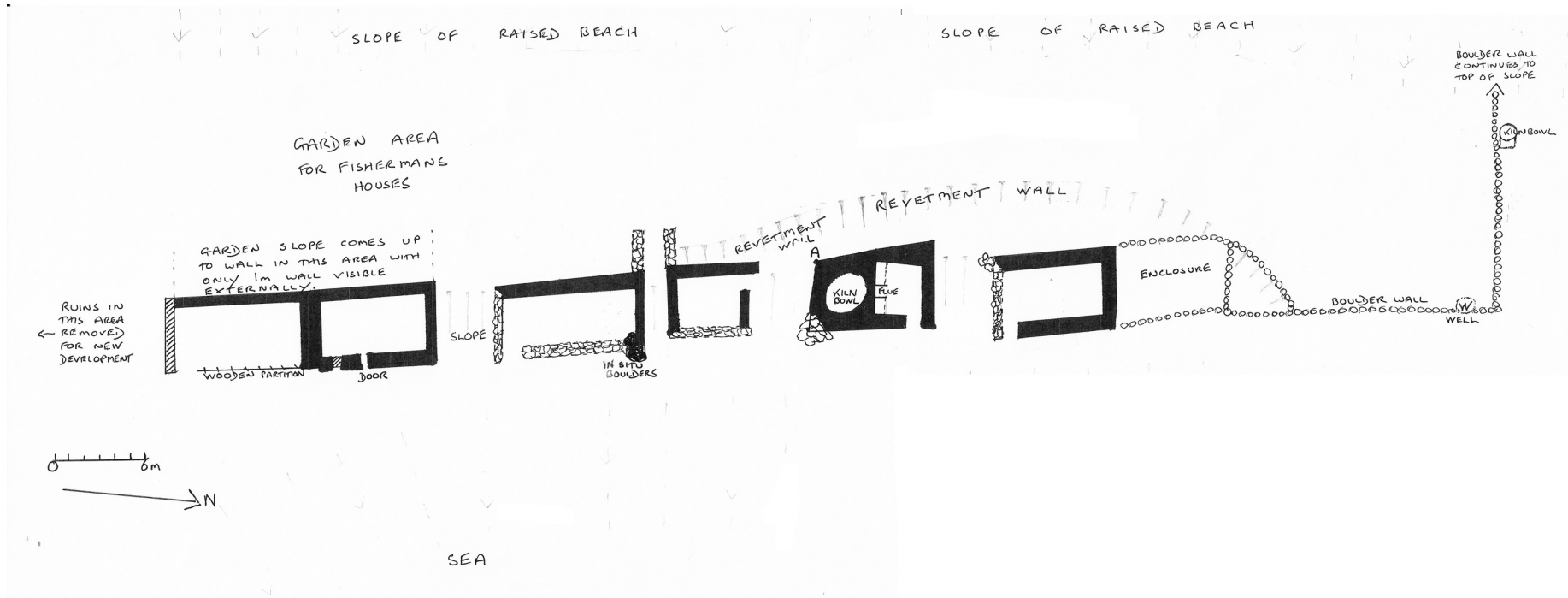
It is not known why the estate decided to establish this fishing village, but as the estate was involved with the fishing industry already through the Northern Fisheries Board, and there was work being done on the estate with the Highland Destitution Board, there may be a connection.

Fishing Village of Port Henderson



This OS map shows the location of the fishing village ruins which are located as shown on the peninsula of An Sguman(A), crofts 21(B), and croft 22(C). There were four slipways/ports.

Fishing Village of Port Henderson. Section A An Sguman, centred on NG 74879 73799 GPS



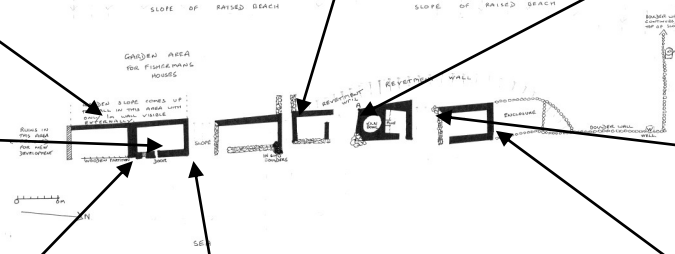
This section of the ruined fishing village was surveyed using the tape and offset method, except for the two kiln structures which were plane tabled(see separate descriptions).

The ruins stand at 12 to 14m to the E of the base of the steep slope of a raised beach, with the ground then sloping to the shore of Loch Gairloch. The land between the ruins and the slope was the 'garden' area of the buildings and is improved ground. At the N end the ground is retained by a wall but at the S end the ground has built up against the walls of the buildings.

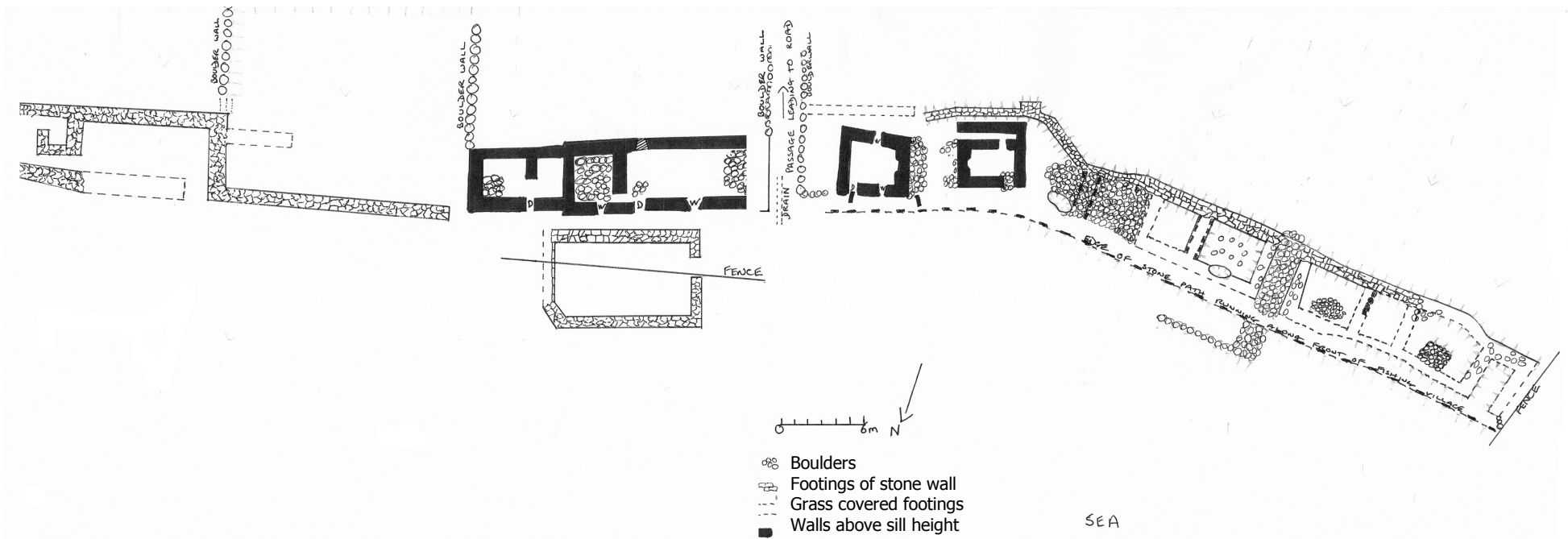
The remaining walls vary in height from footings to 2.2m, and average width is 0.5 to 0.6m. The structures at the S end have been renovated/roofed and are used as sheds. Boulders have been used in enclosure walls with chosen and dressed stone layered in the buildings. Openings can be seen in the structures but only one definite blocked window in a building at the S end.

Two wells were found at the N end, one being the known main well and the other further to the N.

Fishing Village section A at An Sguman.



Fishing Village of Port Henderson. Section B Croft 21, centred on NG 74983 73742 GPS



This section of the fishing village was surveyed using the tape and offset method.

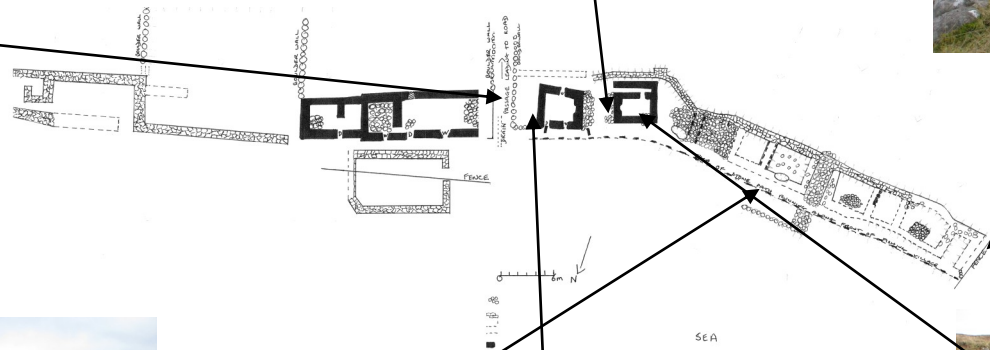
The ruins are situated at the N end of croft 21 just above the rocky shoreline, and to the E of section A at An Sguman, and are a continuation of the village spread along the coast around the bay. The land slopes gently from S to N to the sea.

Between the ruins and the shore at the W end of this section runs a stone path. There is also access from the passage at the centre of this section that runs up to the road to the S.

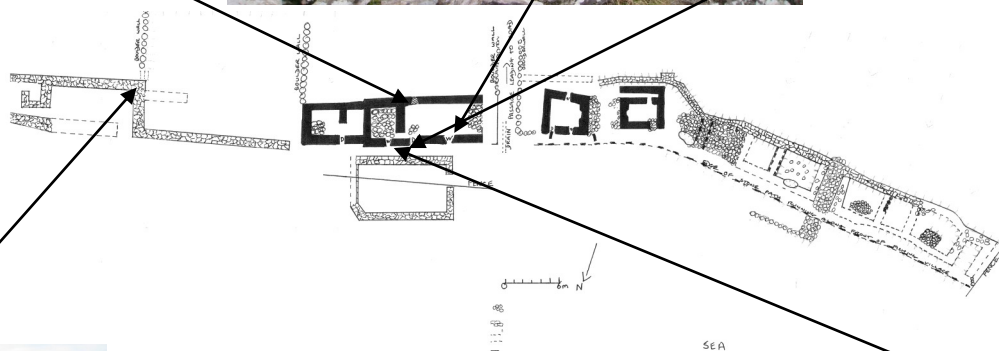
The 'garden' area lies to the S of the ruins, is improved ground, and still divided by boulder walls. At the W end subsequent ploughing from the crofts has resulted in the walls being destroyed and piled on top of some of the fishing ruins leaving substantial piles of boulders. An enclosure lies to the N of the ruins.

The walls range from footings to 2.0m in height, and average thickness is 0.6m. Dressed and layered stonework is evident in the ruins on either side of the passage and some harling is still visible. The last resident moved from here to the salmon bothy at An Sguman in 1951. The buildings have been altered for use with livestock, and children have made dens. The well marked on the early OS maps was not found but a second well was found to the SE of the ruins (see croft plan).

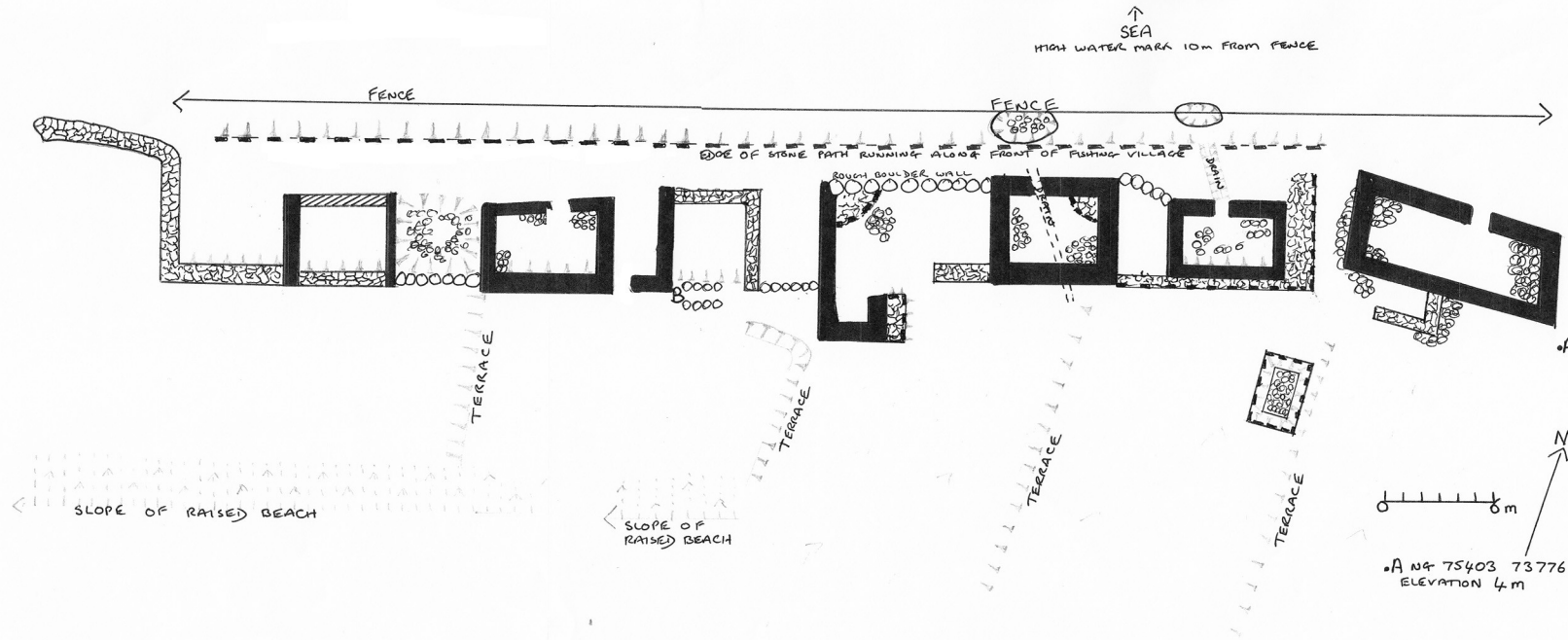
Fishing Village section B on Croft 21.



Fishing Village section B on Croft 21.



Fishing Village of Port Henderson. Section C Croft 22, centred on NG 75365 73749 GPS



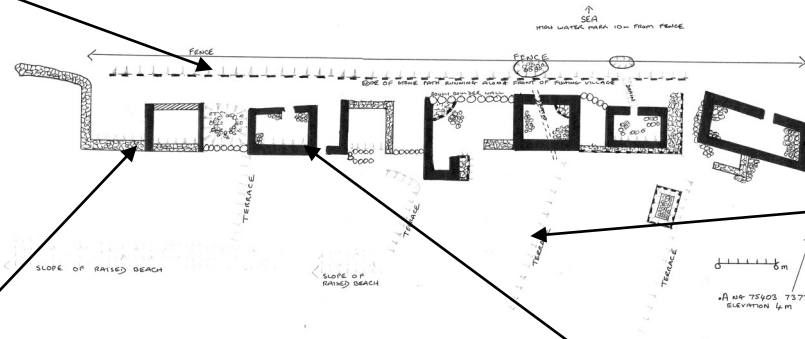
This section of the fishing village was surveyed using the tape and offset method.

The ruins are situated at 12m above the shoreline at the N of croft 22. They lie to the E of sections A and B of the village. Further to the E there was a continuation of the village but this has been redeveloped with later housing, although two buildings have been renovated and are in use, and one wall of the boat builders shed is visible(see plan of croft 22).The village is shown on the early OS maps.

Just S of the ruins lie the improved ground of the 'gardens' with their divisions/terraces still visible. N of the buildings the remains of a stone path can be seen running the length of the section.

The walls vary in height from footings up to 2m at the E end wall. Their thickness averages 0.6m, and their construction is of boulders with some chosen and dressed stone. Subsequent use of the ruins for livestock has altered the structures. Many of the N walls of the buildings are built into the slope especially at the W end. Although some doorways were recorded, there was no evidence of any windows.

Fishing Village section C on Croft 22



Looking E down onto Section C



Ports/Slipways of The Fishing Village of Port Henderson

There were four known ports in Port Henderson.

- 1 Situated at An Sguman and known as 'Port an Sguman' this was the main port associated with the salmon station.
- 2 Situated on the shore below croft 10 was a port called 'Port Alasdair Dhuinn' (brown haired Alasdairs port). This is no longer visible.
- 3 'Port an T- Seada' (the port of the shed) is situated on the shore below the boat builders shed on croft 22.
- 4 'Am Port Beag' (the little port) is on the shoreline below croft 13.



Port 1



Port 3



Port 4