

**Report of Archaeological Watching Brief
July 4th – 30th 2002
Broadhaven, Wick, Highland
ND 381 / 510 (centred)**

**By
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Introduction

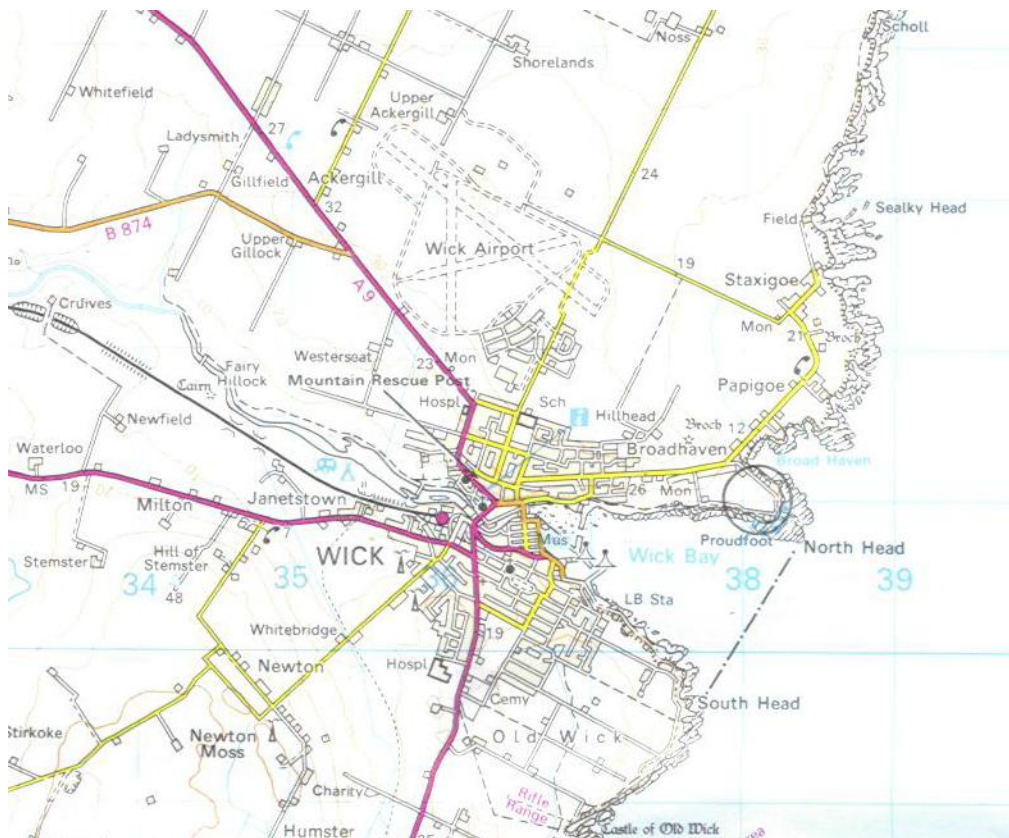
This report is for an archaeological watching brief conducted for Delta North on behalf of Scottish Water by the author for a waste water treatment works scheme at Broadhaven, Wick.

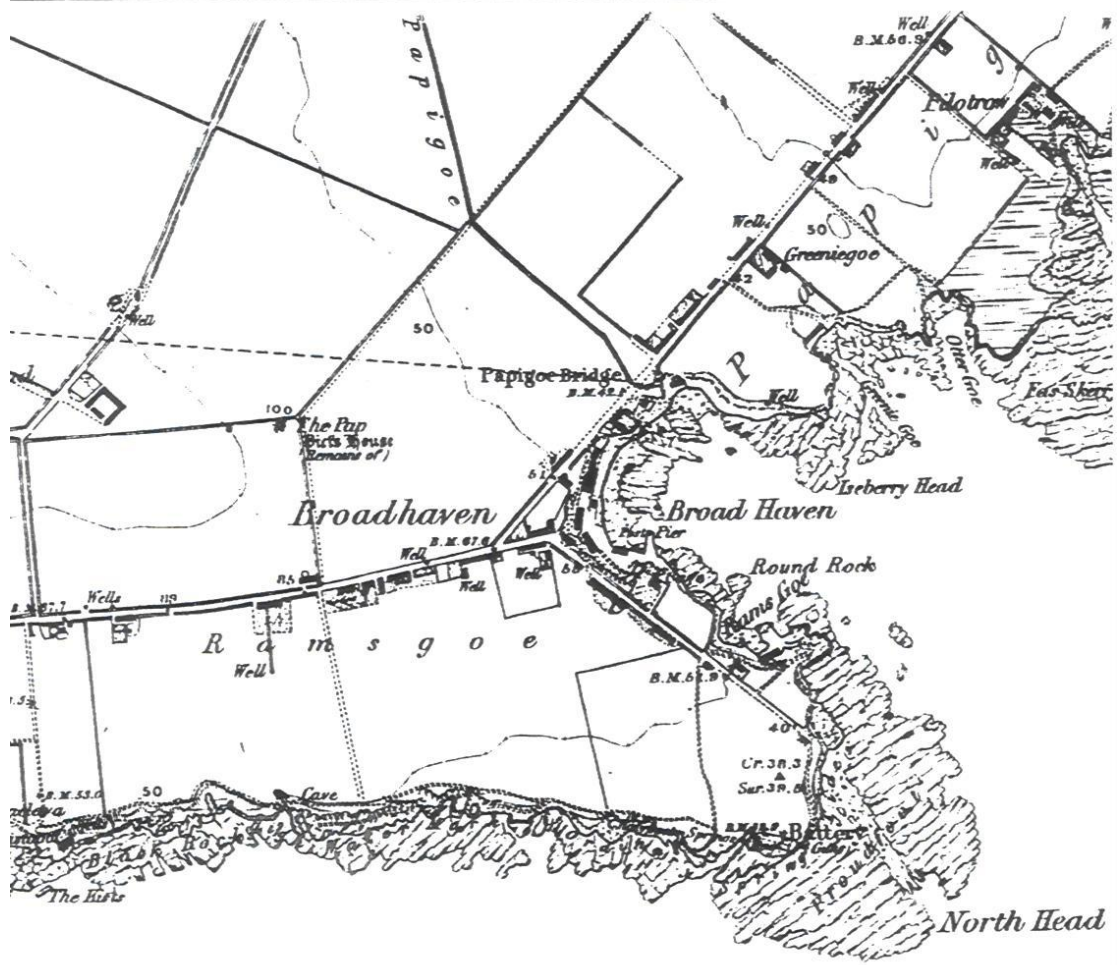
Acknowledgements

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- Mr. R Leith, site agent of Morrison Construction;
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- Mr. D Hall of SUAT Ltd for the report on the pottery;
- Staff of Morrison Construction for onsite works;
- Staff of Highland Council Archaeology Unit.

Location





1877

Historical Background

The area of North Haven is associated with the supposed site of a chapel of St. Ninian of a pre-reformation date (Hooper, 2000) to be situated on the headland, though the current grid reference given for the site places it on rocks on the foreshore. Theories to its actual location are detailed and varied (for detailed discussion see Hooper, 2000). Also recorded to the area of development are a number of other archaeological sites including a croft house to the E whilst the site of a coastal battery and another croft house are located nearby. Also located to the north is an area known as Proudfoot and the former fishing station of Broadhaven.

Archaeological sites located in the vicinity are as follows:

- 1- HSMR ND35SE 21 – Mounds at ND 3820/5102 – no information available.
- 2- HSMR ND35SE 76 – Croft? at ND 3822/5102 – two grass covered mounds 10.4m x 6.5m and 6.1m x 4.4m lying 3.55m apart, probably representing remains of a croft.

[Likely that both these sites are the same site]

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1872 shows a small roofed building to the E (see over), which is not marked on the 2nd edition of 1905. The mounds above may be the remains of this croft, though these mounds were not located as part of a walkover survey (Hooper 2000) or as part of a programme of trial trenching (Rees 2001).

Trial trenching carried out in August 2001 (Rees 2001) made a sample of 6.5% of the development area or 659m² that only revealed a couple of agricultural drainage ditches. No evidence was found for any features or deposits relating to the chapel.

Objectives

To conduct a watching brief on the excavation of the development to record those features revealed by excavation work. (Areas marked in yellow on 2nd map)
A copy of the specification provided by Highland Council Archaeology Unit is enclosed.

Watching Brief Investigation

The watching brief was carried out in accordance with accepted professional archaeological standards as published by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999). Over the construction period a suitably qualified archaeologist was on site to carry out observations and assessment of the area affected by the excavation works.

Methodology

A monitoring was made of the removal of topsoil and subsoil's by back-acting machine with a straight edged bucket with spoil being put into two 9-tonne dump trucks to a maximum depth of 300mm to the overall development area including the area of the landscaping bunds that were also stripped of topsoil. The watching brief was also conducted to areas of the work's compound, car parking areas and service trenches.

Weather on the days of work (July 4th to 30th 2002) was generally partly overcast with sunny periods, only on the last day (30th) was the weather wet and dull.

Results

A monitoring of the stripping of topsoil revealed no evidence for a chapel or anything that may be related to it being located here. No trace was made of the croft house depicted on the 1st edition OS map. Overall the site had in various locations seen heavy ploughing with plough scaring into the natural and occasional finds of modern plastic embedded into the natural as well. A number of sherds of white glazed pottery of an 18th/19th century date were found in the topsoil but not retained.

The watching brief did reveal a number of features including field drains, a small pit and part of a building. A description of these features is as follows (in relation to those numbered and marked on the site plan in red):

- 2 – Small curved feature, possibly terminus of ditch, though upon inspection revealed to be irregular in shape. Possible stone furrow. Section through reveals width of 0.25m with depth of 0.10m. 2m in length.
- 3 – Circular feature, natural. Possible pit but upon inspection revealed to be a shallow natural depression with fine silts to base.
- 5 – Field drain 1.5m apart from parallel field drain [7]. Section through reveals it to be 0.45m wide and 0.12m deep with occasional stone to base. Possibly late 18th or early 19th century in date.
- 7 – Field drain as 5. Not excavated.
- 9 – Field drain, again with 2nd [10] parallel 1.6m apart. Section through reveals straight edged side to W of 0.42m wide 0.12m deep but not straight in alignment and find of a sherd of earthenware pottery of a 18th/19th century date. (see pottery report to rear)
- 10 – Field drain parallel with [9]. Not excavated.
- 11 – Field drain in alignment with existing field boundary. Not excavated.
- 13 – Cut of small pit in area of car parking – excavated due to cable trench for electricity to be situated close by. Excavation reveals a small circular pit 0.55 EW by 0.65m NS by 0.23m in depth. Finds [context 12] include a fragment of possible slate and a sherd of red ware pottery of a 13th – 15th date. (See photograph over)

All the above features, except 13, were not fully excavated as they were covered by terram and stone for area of hard standing for work's compound.

Top : View of pit 13 facing south showing fill 12 – scale 0.5m
Bottom : View of building facing south – scale 2m



- 14 – Modern cut ditch – in low-lying area of field, evidence of being spade cut, not excavated.
- 15 – Pair of field drains, being a continuation of 11 along edge of existing field boundary. In parts difficult to see even upon hand cleaning for 34m. Continued again further west until edge of excavation for 12m where would have continued to cliff edge. Section reveals size to be the same as noted previously with small stones to base. Date probably late 18th or early 19th century. In alignment with this feature were revealed a number of modern fence posts, probably extension of existing field boundary.
- 16 - Pair of field drains, being a continuation of 9 and 10 for a length of 36m. Section reveals size to be the same as noted previously.
- 17 - Pair of field drains, being a continuation of 5 and 7 for a length of 51m. Section reveals size to be the same as noted previously.
- 18 – Access to field? Area of dumping of stone including modern brick, possible area of access to existing field.
- Building – located as part of excavation for area of public parking. Edge only of building aligned N-S of 14m in length of a maximum width of 1.4m and constructed of flat stones. Situated 0.45m below current road surface. Inspection of section of hole excavated to join into existing sewer (for compound) reveals wall to continue to N along roadside for a further 6m. Full excavation not required as to be covered over with terram and stone for car parking, no features or deposits were revealed to its west side. Possible building is part of a long range likely to be associated with Broadhaven Fishing Station and likely to be similar to those depicted on the 1st edition OS map to the northwest along roadside. (See photograph previous)

Overall the features located do not indicate any evidence for the location of a chapel in this area and is likely as has been suggested (Hooper, 2000) to be situated elsewhere. Though the find of the small pit with a sherd of medieval pottery of a 13th to 15th century date attests to settlement in the general location and any further work in the local area should merit further archaeological investigation.

Recommendations

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

Archive

Notebook of results to be deposited in the National Monuments Record in Edinburgh. A set of colour slides showing the progress of the work has been deposited with Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record.

References

Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record for ND35SE.

Hooper, J (2000) North Head, Wick. Expansion of Wastewater Treatment Plant : An Archaeological Assessment. Unpublished report copy held by Highland Sites and Monuments Record.

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

Rees, A (2001) Archaeological Evaluation at North Head, Broadhaven, Wick, Caithness. CFA Archaeology Ltd Report 668. Unpublished report.

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Appendix 1 – List of Features/Contexts

- 1 – Topsoil
- 2 – Possible ditch
- 3 – Natural depression
- 4 – Fill of field drain – cut 5.
- 5 – Cut of field drain.
- 6 – Fill of field drain – cut 7.
- 7 – Field drain.
- 8 – Fill of field drain – cut 9.
- 9 – Cut of field drain.
- 10 – Field drain.
- 11 – Field drain.
- 12 – Fill of small pit – cut 13.
- 13 – Cut of small pit.
- 14 – Modern cut drainage ditch.
- 15 – Field drains.
- 16 – Field drains
- 17 – Field drains.
- 18 – Access point to field.

Appendix 2 – Details of Slides

Film 1

- 1 – View of site facing W prior to excavation.
- 2 – View of access road existing facing SW.
- 3 – View of Broadhaven Fishing Station facing E.
- 4 – View of site facing SW.
- 5 – View of features 2 & 3 facing W.
- 6 – Detail of excavation section of feature 2 facing W – scale 0.5m
- 7 – View of field drains 5 and 7 facing N.
- 8 – View of ibid
- 9 – View of ibid but facing NNE.
- 10 – Detail of section through field drain 9 facing NE – scale 0.5m
- 11 – ibid.
- 12 – View of field drains 9 & 10 facing NE
- 13 – ibid but facing W.
- 14 – ibid but facing SW.
- 15 – ibid but facing N.
- 16 – ibid facing W and overall view of compound area.
- 17 – View of stripping of access road facing SW.
- 18 – Detail of small pit – cut 13 facing S – scale 0.5m.
- 19 – ibid.
- 20 – ibid but facing E.
- 21 – View of access road facing NW prior to excavation.
- 22 – ibid but facing N.
- 23 – View of stripping of access road facing NE.
- 24 – View of machining of access road facing SW.
- 25 – Machining of site in SE corner.
- 26 – ibid.
- 27 – View of modern cut drainage ditch – 14 – facing NNE – scales 1m.
- 28 – ibid.
- 29 – ibid but facing SSW.
- 30 – View of topsoil stripping facing N.
- 31 – ibid.
- 32 – ibid.
- 33 – View of machining in progress.
- 34 – View of area of tanks upon stripping facing NE.
- 35 – ibid facing N.
- 36 – View of NW of site before machining.

Film 2

- 1 – View of coastguard lookout station facing NW.
- 2 – View of tanks area upon stripping facing E.
- 3 – ibid but facing NE.
- 4 – View of edge of building facing S – scale 2m.
- 5 – ibid but facing N.
- 6 – detail of ibid – scale 0.5m
- 7 – ibid.
- 8 – View of W side of site before excavation.
- 9 – ibid but facing SW.
- 10 – View of field drain 15 and access 18 facing SW.
- 11 – ibid but facing NE.
- 12 – Detail of modern fence post in feature 15 – scale 1m.
- 13 – View of stripping of bund along N edge of site facing W.
- 14 – Pair of field drains features 16 facing SW
- 15 – ibid but facing NE.
- 16 – Pair of field drains features 17 facing SW.
- 17 – ibid.
- 18 – View of access track 18 facing W.
- 19 – View of field drains feature 17 facing SW.

- 20 – ibid but facing NE.
- 21 – ibid.
- 22 – ibid but facing SW.
- 23 – ibid.
- 24 – View of site after heavy rain facing W.
- 25 – ibid but facing SW.
- 26 – View of site stripped facing W.
- 27 – View of ex of electricity trench facing NNW.
- 28 – View of stripping in progress.
- 29 – View of site – stripping in progress facing W
- 30 – View of NW corner of site upon stripping facing S.
- 31 – View of continuation of 15 to W edge of site facing W.
- 32 – View of 15 to edge of site facing W.
- 33 – View of stripping in NW corner facing NW.
- 34 – View of W side of site upon stripping facing N.

Pottery from Wick 1

Derek Hall

Context 8

Rimsherd in glazed earthenware of post-medieval date (18th/19th century).

Context 12

Bodysherd in Scottish redware from glazed wheelthrown jug. This sherd appears to belong to the identified Scottish redware tradition and dates to between the 13th and 15th centuries (Hall 1998a, 170-178). Recent archaeological work at Dornoch, Cromarty, Tarbet and Hilton of Cadboll has produced evidence for local redware production, whereas what little work that has taken place in Caithness suggests that organically tempered pottery was more likely to be the local product (Hall forthcoming; Hall 2002a; Hall 1998b; Hall 2002b; Hall 2001).

Conclusions

The presence of the single sherd of redware is of interest as it dates to between the 13th and 15th centuries and may imply some kind of medieval activity on the site. The nature of the fabric, it is very soft and friable, is unlike the Highland redwares discussed above and more reminiscent of fabrics recovered from excavations in Inverness and Elgin (MacAskill 1982, 355-368; Hall 1998c, 786-790). This may suggest that it has been imported to this site from one of the medieval redware production centres further south.

References

Hall, D W 1998a 'The Scottish Medieval Pottery Industry-A pilot study' *Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal Vol 4*, 170-178

Hall D W 1998b 'Medieval pottery from the church excavations at Portmahomack' *Tarbet Discovery Programme Bulletin no 4* (www.York.ac.uk).

Hall, D W 1998c 'The pottery' in Hall, D W et al 'The archaeology of Elgin: excavations on Ladyhill and in the High Street, with an overview of the archaeology of the burgh'

Hall, D W 2001 'Pottery from excavations at Robert's Haven, Caithness' report prepared for James Barrett, York University.

Hall, D W 2002a 'The pottery' in James, H 'Excavations at Hilton of Cadboll'. Report prepared for Historic Scotland.

Hall, D W 2002b 'Pottery from Cromarty museum and a watching brief on NOSWA works along the foreshore'. Report prepared for Stuart Farrell.

Hall D W forthcoming 'The Pottery' in Coleman, R '*A Watching Brief at Meadows Business Park, Dornoch, Sutherland*'

MacAskill, N L 1982 'The pottery' in Wordsworth, J 'Excavations of the settlement at 13-21 Castle Street, Inverness' *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 112, 355-68.