

Report of Archaeological Evaluation
March 24th 2003
Boath Road, Inverness
NH 91920 / 55509 (centred)

Client: Ewen Gillies Builders Ltd

Planning Application No: 02/00159/FULNA

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Non-Technical Summary

Stuart Farrell was commissioned by Ewen Gillies Builders Ltd in March 2003 to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Boath Road, Auldearn (NH 91920/55509 - centred) as part of a proposed development. Highland Council Archaeology Unit produced a specification for this work.

Work revealed the partial remains of a 19th century row of buildings and pits of a late 19th / early 20th century date.

Further work has been recommended during the clearing of the site due to the sites proximity to the nearby church and churchyard.

1. Introduction

This report is for an archaeological evaluation conducted on behalf of Ewen Gillies Builders Ltd by the author for a housing development at Boath Road, Auldearn per planning application 02/00159/FULNA.

The fieldwork was conducted on March 24th 2003.

2. Acknowledgements

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

- Mr. J MacAngus, of Ewen Gillies Builders Ltd;
- Staff of Adrem Cartographic Services Ltd for site survey work;
- Mr H Kinnaird of A Kinnaird Ltd for onsite works;
- Staff of Highland Council Archaeology Unit;
- Staff of the RCAHMS;
- Staff of the NMRS;
- Staff of Highland Council Archives.

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Figure 1 – General Location (site circled)



Figure 2 – Development Plan

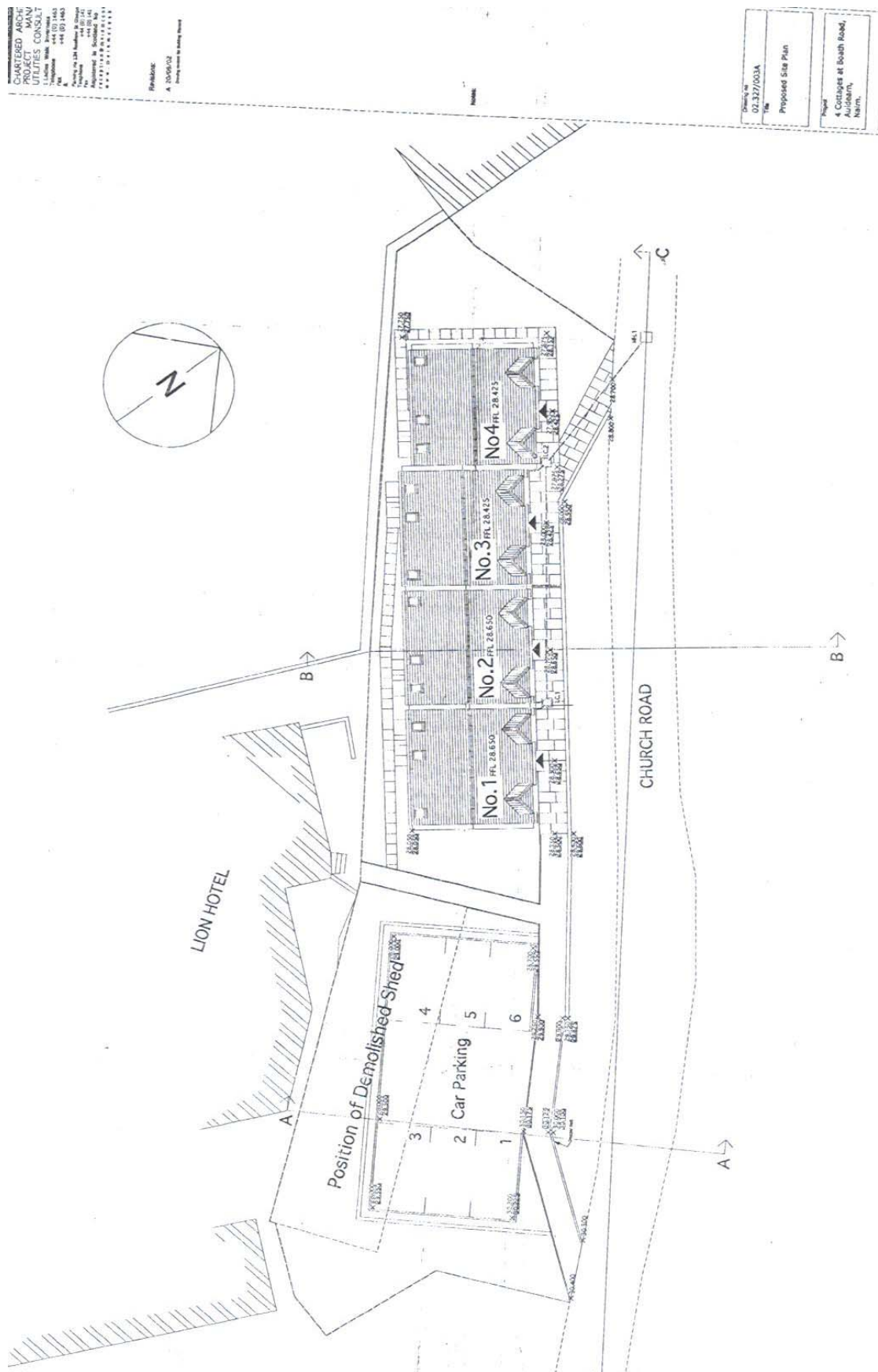


Figure 3 – Location of Trenches

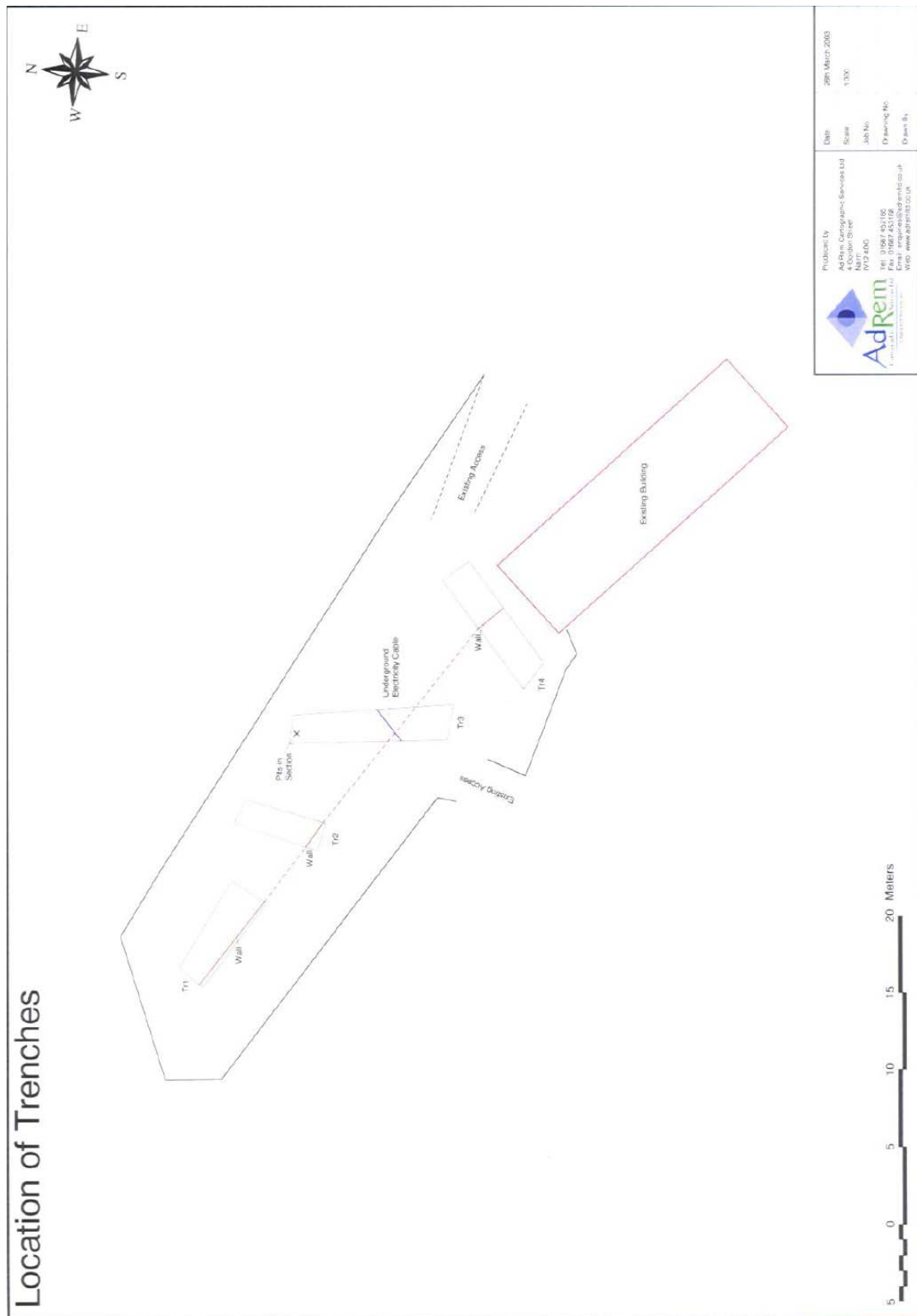


Figure 4 – Ordnance Survey map of 1868 (enlargement)

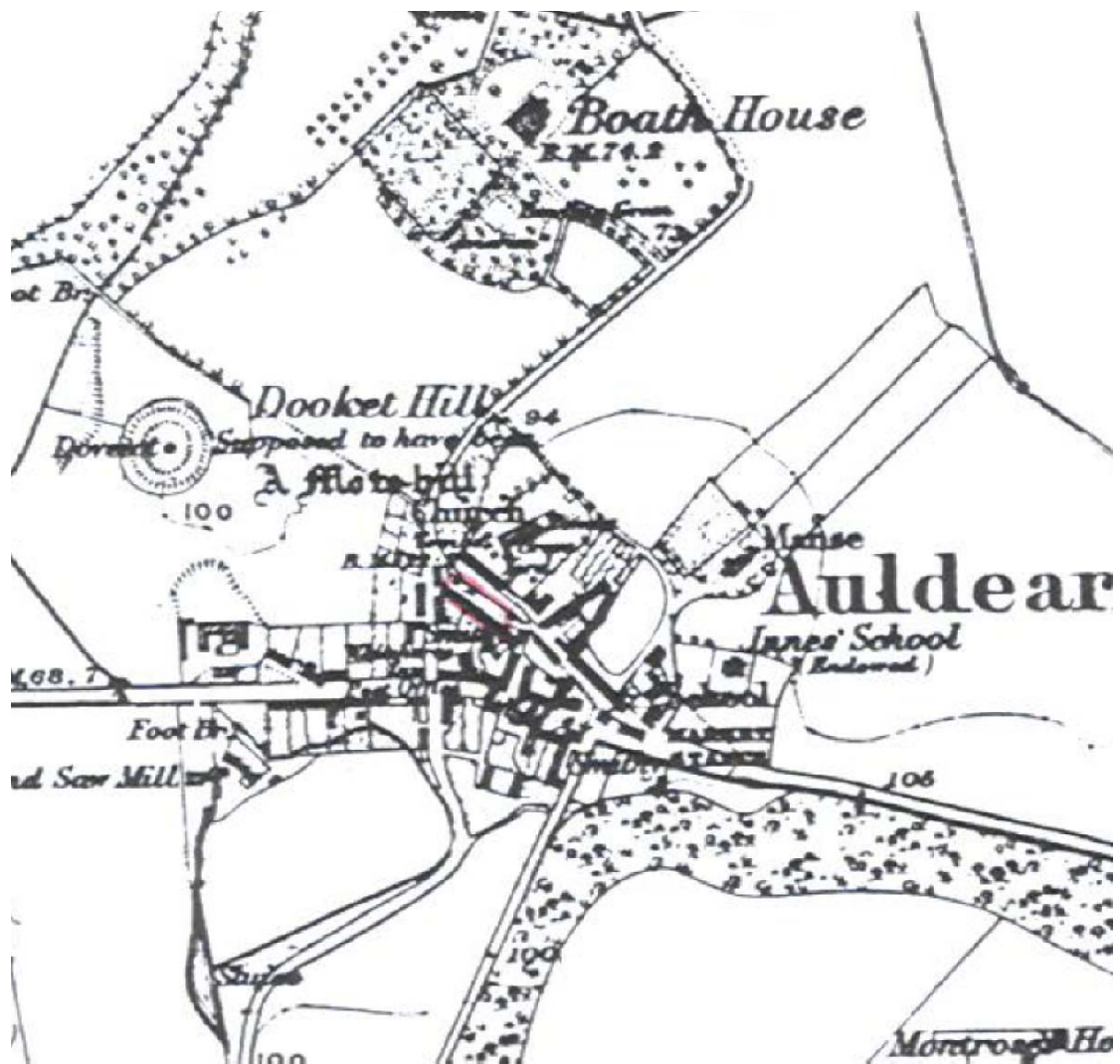


Figure 5 – Ordnance Survey map of 1905

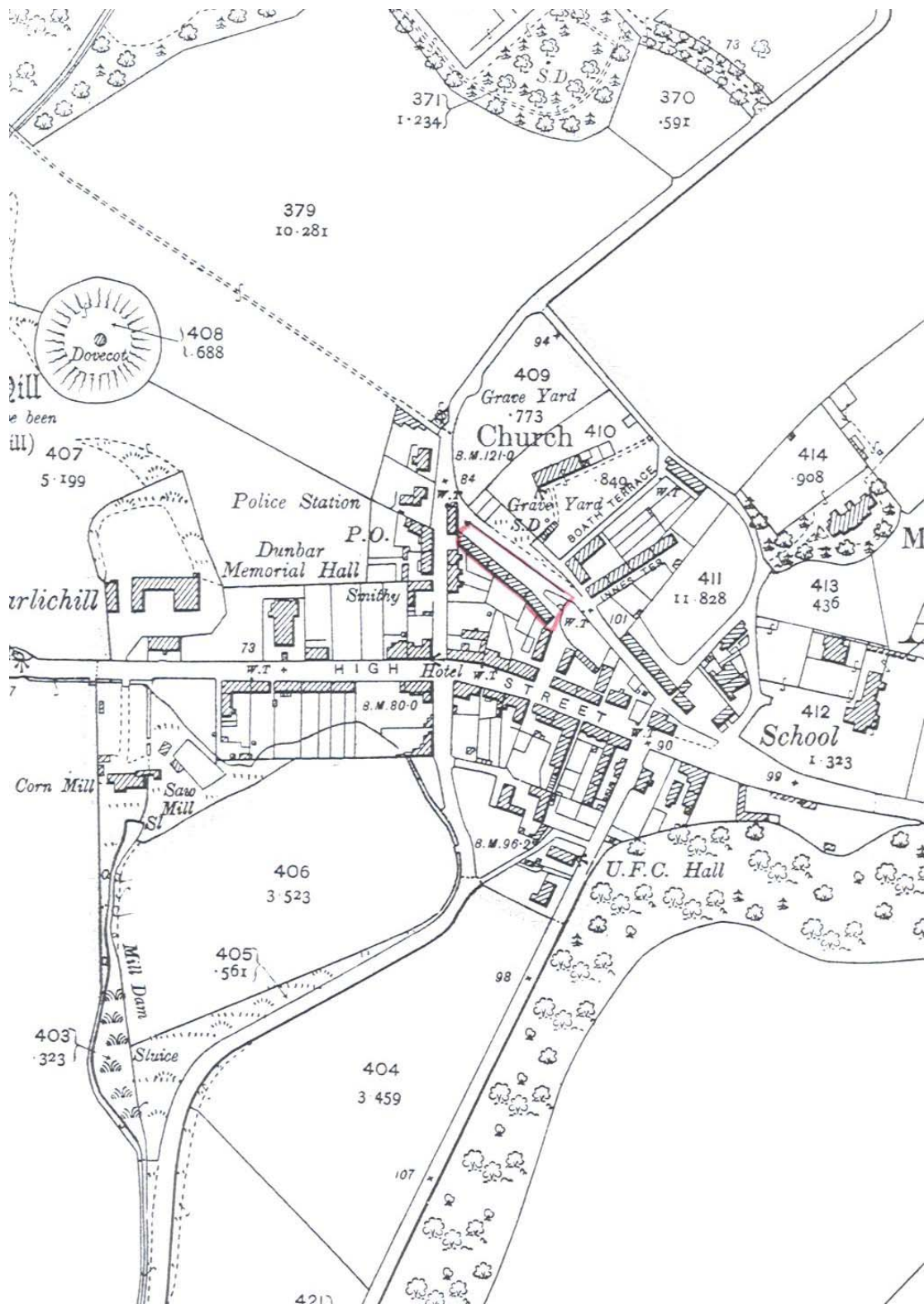


Figure 6 – Ordnance Survey map of 1974



3. Historical Background

It is unknown when the village of Auldearn was established, though the village is known to have existed from the late 12th century when the village is recorded in a charter of King William the Lion (1165-1214) in relation to the site of the castle. The nearby church is known to have been dedicated to St Columba and that the prebend was held by the Dean of Moray in Elgin Cathedral. Present church was built in 1754-7, replacing earlier church, of which the nave of c.1600 survives. The village was made a burgh of barony in 1511 (Gifford, 1992).

Currently no archaeological sites are recorded to the development area either in the Highland Sites and Monuments Record or in the National Monuments Record of Scotland CANMORE database though a number of archaeological investigations have been undertaken in the vicinity. Summaries of these are as follows:

- Work by the author (Farrell, 2001) in the form of a watching brief for an extension to the rear of 1 Newbiggings Buildings, High Street at NH 9184/5545 revealed only pipes and trenches relating to water & sewage services.
- Work by CFA in 1999 (Glendinning, 1999) at NH 917/556 in the form of trial trenching to the Southwest of the nearby dovecot was in the form of 7 trial trenches made upon the results of partial geophysics with excavation forming a total of 370m². Several features were revealed, including pits and gullies and signs of redeposited gravel over natural showing signs of quarrying. No dating material was found in any of these features.
- Work by the author (Farrell, 2000) in the form of a watching brief for a retaining wall at NH 9171 / 5553 revealed no archaeological features.

Overall the current archaeological work carried out in the vicinity of the development has shown that limited archaeology exists in the area.

A study of cartographic sources (see figures 4-6) showed a number of features to be evident on maps for the development location between 1869 and 1973. A study of both the 6"-Mile and 1:2500 for 1869 and 1905 (figures 4 & 5) showed a row of 5 roofed structures to be indicated still to be existing by 1905. By the edition of 1973 (figure 6) this row of structures had been removed and a single building is the only structure on the site. It may be possible that these buildings were removed prior to the extension of the hotel that lies directly to the south of the development area.

A study of aerial photographs held in the RCAMHMS noted only limited coverage for the area of development, with the latest of 1988 being taken too high to show any detail. The row of houses marked on the OS map of 1905 (figure 5) was visible on the aerial photographs of 1947 and 1953 as still being roofed, as was a couple of outhouses on ap of 1947. By 1967 the buildings have been removed and the wooden shed is not visible. 2 small sheds are visible to development area in 1967 that is an area of rough ground.

4. Objectives

To conduct an archaeological evaluation on the development to record those features revealed by excavation work and to make recommendations further to that work. A copy of the specification provided by Highland Council Archaeology Unit is enclosed.

5. Methodology

A back-acting machine with a straight edged bucket made a total of 4 trenches with possible archaeological features being cleaned by hand. Machining of trenches was supervised; trenches were placed across the site in relation to the proposed development (see figure 2) and to try and locate any evidence for the buildings depicted on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1869 and 1905 as were noted in the desktop survey to the development area.

Weather on the day of work was mostly clear and bright with a low sun.

6. Evaluation Results

The evaluation 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.

Site Location

The site lies almost to the centre of the village and is comprised of rough waste ground. The site lies on a slight south-facing slope.

The underlying geology is sand.

Results

A total of 4 trenches measuring 53.95m² of the development area were excavated. Results are as follows:

Trench 1

Length – 7m x 2m aligned NW-SE – Trace of building of rubble pink sandstone found along SW edge for length of 5m and 34mm wide for a height of 0.6m (see photograph below), removed at SE corner of trench by engineers test pit. Behind wall is infill of rubble of small rounded stones in possible foundation trench, though cut of foundation trench could not be located due to collapsing section. Material above existing ground surface located at 0.7m below existing ground surface of rubble infill from demolished buildings also mixed infills of dumped material including mixed deposits and tarmac.

Photograph 1 – View of walling facing W – scales 1m x 1m



Trench 2

Length – 5.2m x 1.7m aligned NE-SW – natural located at 1.3m below existing ground surface. Small stretch of rubble walling of pink sandstone revealed in alignment with that located in trench 1. 1 former cesspit (?) located in section at E end 0.9m below existing ground surface (ground above infilled modern debris of mixed deposits including concrete) with finds of pottery and glass of a late 19th century date. As before large amount of rubble infill from demolished buildings with some slate. No other features located.

Trench 3

Length – 10m x 1.7m aligned E-W – electricity supply cable revealed running through middle of site. Also 2 former engineers test pits. No trace was made of the building though due to its alignment it may have been located under or removed during the excavation for the electricity supply cable. 2 former cesspits (?) located in section at E end (see photograph below) 1.1m below existing ground surface (ground above infilled modern debris including concrete and modern brick) with one pit containing modern material, the 2nd pottery and glass of a late 19th century date. As before large amount of rubble infill from demolished buildings. No other features located.

Photograph 2 – View of pits in section facing E – scale 2m



Trench 4

Length – 8m x 1.7m aligned E-W – revealed small stretch of rubble walling of pink sandstone in alignment with that revealed in previous trenches but now only 1 coarse high. Also revealed were traces of 2 former engineers test pits. Natural of orange sand to 1m with former land surface at 0.7m on E side of building. Machining removed rubble demolition material from former building. No other features were located.

7. Conclusions

It is likely that due to the alignment of the walling revealed is that it matches those buildings depicted on the OS maps for 1868 and 1905 and are probably of a mid 19th century date. With the small structures marked on the OS map of 1868 and visible on aerial photographs of 1947 located to the E end of the site (see figure 4) being outhouses for toilets that were located as infilled cesspits. Overall the site has seen heavy dumping of waste material including mixed soils and deposits, concrete and rubble. Some of the rubble comes from the demolition of the buildings that stood here (information from local residents was that buildings were pulled down prior to 1960). The site has also seen other investigations in the form of engineers test pits, which has limited the area of investigation, though it is not unlikely that other archaeological features may yet survive.

8. Recommendations

Further work has been recommended for a watching brief to be conducted during the clearing of the site due to the sites proximity to the nearby church and churchyard.

9. Archive

The following is to be deposited in the National Monuments Record in Edinburgh:

- Notebook of results
- Copy of this report

A set colour slides showing the progress of the work has been deposited with Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record. Digital images used in this report have been deposited with HSMR on disc as well as a copy of this report as a PDF file.

10. Discovery & Excavation in Scotland

A short summary of the results of this project will be submitted to the Council for Scottish Archaeology's publication *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*.

11. References

Farrell, S (2000) Report of Archaeological Watching Brief November 14th-17th 2000 Auldearn, Highland. Unpublished report copy held in HSMR.

Farrell, S (2001) Report of Archaeological Watching Brief March 28th 2001 Auldearn, Highland. Unpublished report copy held in HSMR.

Gifford, J (1992) *The Buildings of Scotland: Highlands and Islands*. Penguin. Edinburgh.

Glendinning, B (1999) Dooket Hill, Auldearn, Highland: Archaeological Evaluation. CFA. Edinburgh. Report no.450. Unpublished report, copy held in HSMR.

Highland Council Sites and Monuments Record for NH95NW.

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

National Monuments Record of Scotland CANMORE database entries for NH95NW.

Maps Consulted

Ordnance Survey 1st edition 6inch-mile sheet 2 Nairn-shire of 1869 surveyed 1868.

Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 1:2500 sheet 11.13 Nairn-shire of 1905 revised 1904.

Ordnance Survey 1:2500 NH9055-9155 of 1974 revised 1973.

Aerial Photographs Consulted

RAF CPE/Scot/UK 223	3083-3082	27-6-1947	1:10,000
RAF 58/RAF/1116	278-279 F21	8-5-1953	1:10,000
OS OS/67/095	255-256	14-5-1967	1:7,500
OS 62688	116-117	13-6-1988	1:24,000

Appendix 1 – Details of Slides

- 1 – View of site prior to excavation facing W
- 2 – View of existing shed facing SE
- 3 – View of walling in trench 1 facing S – scales 1m x 1m
- 4 – View of W facing section trench 2 facing E – scale 2m
- 5 – ibid
- 6 – View of trench 1 upon excavation facing NE – scales 1m x 1m
- 7 – ibid but facing W
- 8 – ibid but facing SE
- 9 – Detail of walling in trench 1 – scales 1m x 1m
- 10 – ibid.
- 11 – View of trench 2 upon excavation facing E – scale 2m
- 12 – Detail of walling in trench 2
- 13 – View of trench 3 upon excavation facing E – scales 1m x 1m
- 14 – ibid but facing W
- 15 – ibid but facing NE
- 16 – View of trench 4 upon excavation facing NE – scales 1m x 1m
- 17 – Ibid but facing SW
- 18 – General view of trenches upon excavation facing W

Appendix 2 – Context Register

- 1- Trench 1 – topsoil – turf and modern debris including tarmac
- 2- Trench 1 – subsoil –mixed deposits of sand and soil
- 3- Trench 1 – rubble – demolition of large irregular shaped stones
- 4- Trench 1 – wall – stretch of walling of pink rubble sandstone
- 5- Trench 1 – rubble – small rounded irregular stones as infill of foundation cut
- 6- Trench 1 – cut of foundation trench
- 7- Trench 2 – topsoil – turf and modern debris
- 8- Trench 2 – subsoil –mixed deposits of sand and soil
- 9- Trench 2 – rubble – demolition of large irregular shaped stones
- 10- Trench 2 – wall – stretch of walling of pink rubble sandstone
- 11- Trench 2 –infill of cesspit or dark soil with 19th century pottery and glass
- 12- Trench 2 – irregular shaped cut of cesspit
- 13- Trench 3 – topsoil – turf and modern debris
- 14- Trench 3 – subsoil –mixed deposits of sand and soil
- 15- Trench 3 – rubble – demolition of large irregular shaped stones
- 16- Trench 3 – electricity cable
- 17- Trench 3 –infill of cesspit or dark soil with modern material infill with small stones
- 18- Trench 3 – irregular shaped cut of cesspit
- 19- Trench 3 –infill of cesspit or dark soil with 19th century pottery and glass
- 20- Trench 3 – irregular shaped cut of cesspit
- 21- Trench 4 – topsoil – turf and modern debris
- 22- Trench 4 – subsoil –mixed deposits of sand and soil
- 23- Trench 4 – rubble – demolition of large irregular shaped stones
- 24- Trench 4 – wall – stretch of walling of pink rubble sandstone