

**Final Report of Archaeological Watching Brief
September 23rd 2002
Torbreck by Essich, Highland
NH 6523 / 4109**

**By
Stuart Farrell
B.A A.I.F.A F.S.A.Scot.
November 2002**

Introduction

This is the final report is for an archaeological watching brief conducted on behalf of Roy Homes Ltd by the author for a house plot and associated access at Torbreck by Essich.

Acknowledgements

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

- Mr. P Roy, of Roy Homes Ltd;
- Mr. A Roy, of Roy Homes Ltd;
- Staff of Roy Homes Ltd for onsite works;
- Staff of Highland Council Archaeology Unit;
- Miss M Hastie, of Headland Archaeology Ltd for samples analysis;
- Mr. D Henderson, of Headland Archaeology Ltd for bone studies;
- Miss F Worley, of Bradford University, for info on cremations;
- Miss A Teather, for info on excavations at Dunragit, Stranraer.

Location

See over.

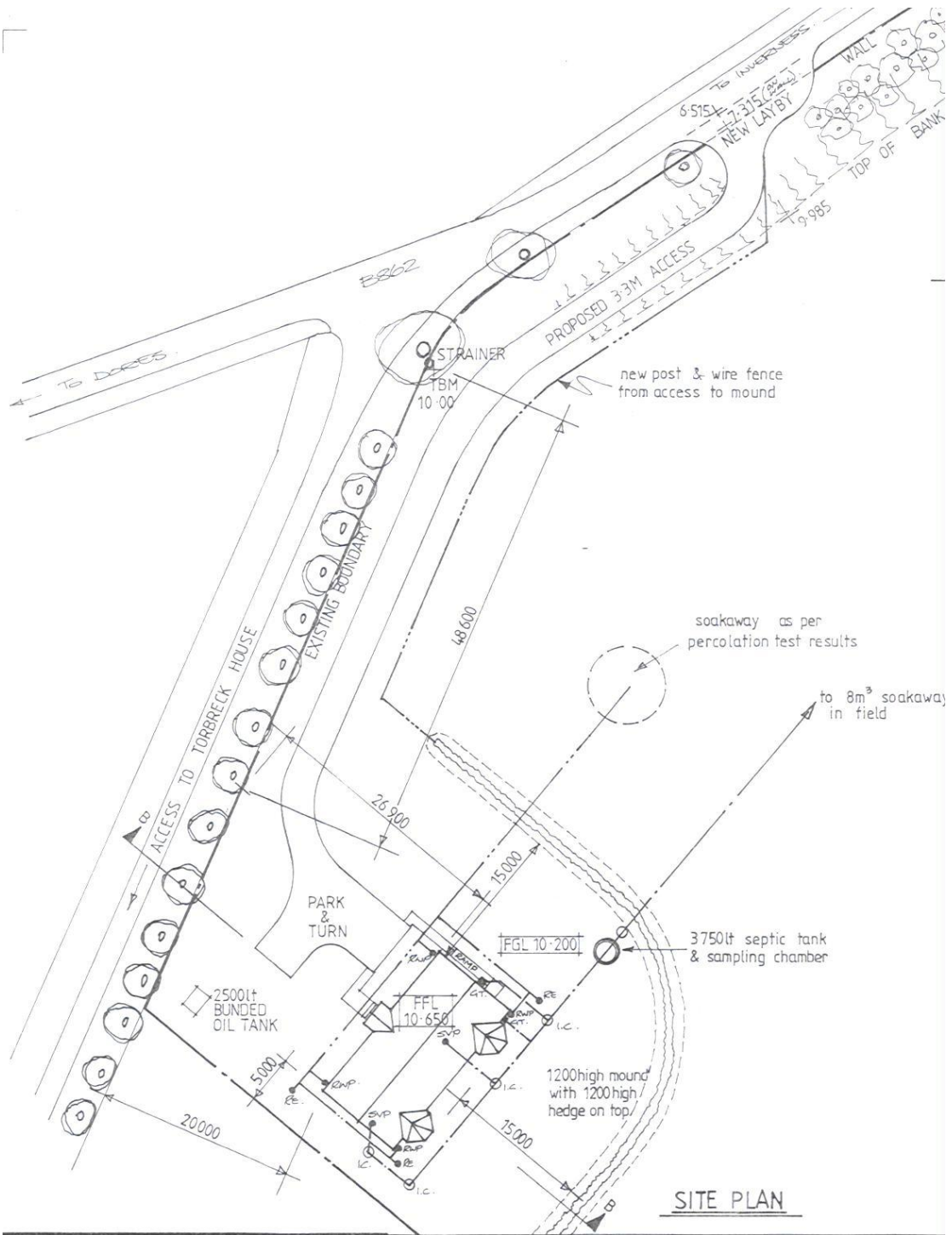


LOCATION PLAN (1/1500)

ADJOINING OWNERS

- (A) THE APPLICANT.
- (B) MR & MRS DYCE, 'BROOMBANK' ESSICH, BY INVERNESS, INV 2AH.
- (C) MR J. WOTHERSPON, 'TOREBROOK HOUSE' ESSICH, BY INVERNESS, INV 2DJ.

revision	date drawn	chkd.	Job No.	Drg.No.
A. MOUND & HEDGE AND NEW FENCE ADDED, SEPTIC TANK MOVED & SIZE OF SOAKAWAY NOTED.	01-08-02	CM.	WNAB / 22705	04B
B. SECTION LINE C-C ADDED, HOUSE FOR (B) & HEDGE POSITION ADDED.	27-09-02	CM.	scale 1:500	drawn
			date 27/05/02	chkd. <i>dm.</i>



Roy Homes Ltd.

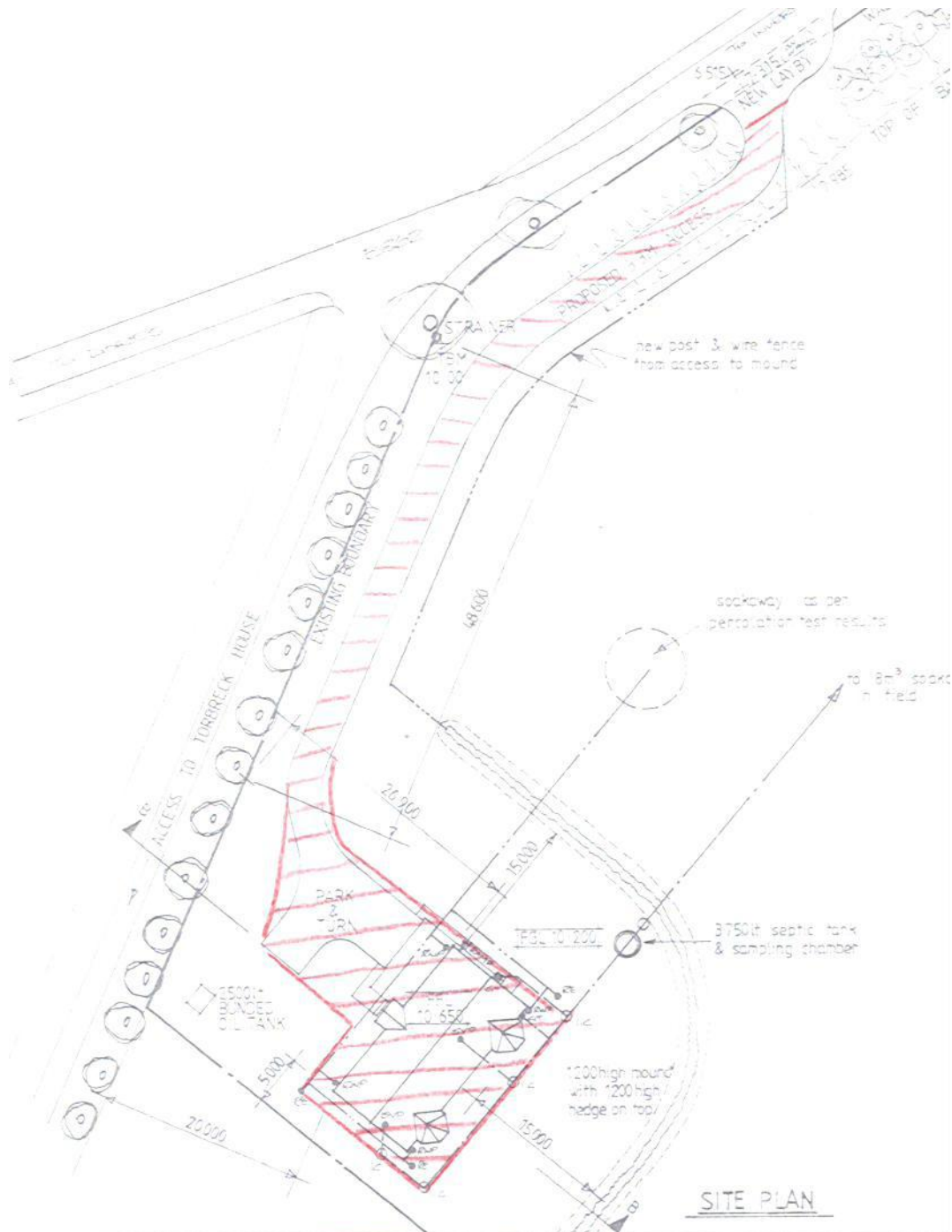
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Client
MR W. WILSON

Project
TORBRECK
INVERNESS



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Historical Background

Currently no archaeological sites are recorded to the development location in the Highland Sites and Monuments Record or the National Monuments Record of Scotland, though the following site is recorded to lie in the vicinity:

Knockangel

HSMR – NH64SE 295

NMRS – NH64SE 70

Type - Cropmarks

Watching brief conducted by James Kenworthy (Kenworthy, 1999) that revealed possible cropmarks in the vicinity of a house plot (Grid Ref - NH 6540 4120).

Excavation revealed a large pit likely to be late Neolithic or early Bronze Age in date. Fieldwalking carried out in the vicinity also produced a worked flint object, possibly Mesolithic in date. A more detailed summary of the archaeology in the surrounding area is to be found in Kenworthy 1999.

Objectives

To conduct a watching brief on the excavation of the development to record those features revealed by excavation work. A copy of the specification provided by Highland Council Archaeology Unit is enclosed.

Methodology

A monitoring was made of the removal of topsoil and subsoil's to an average depth of 400mm for the house plot and associated access (services to lie in access track) to an area of 980m² (see area marked in red). A back-acting machine with a straight edged bucket removed topsoil and subsoil's. Underlying natural was a mixture of an orange-brown stony-silt or towards the west end of the excavation was an area of yellow-brown sand. This difference in naturals relating to the natural geology may explain the varied patches in the aerial photograph of this area. (See Kenworthy, 1999)

Weather on the day of work (September 23rd 2002) was bright and sunny which did not affect the work undertaken.

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.

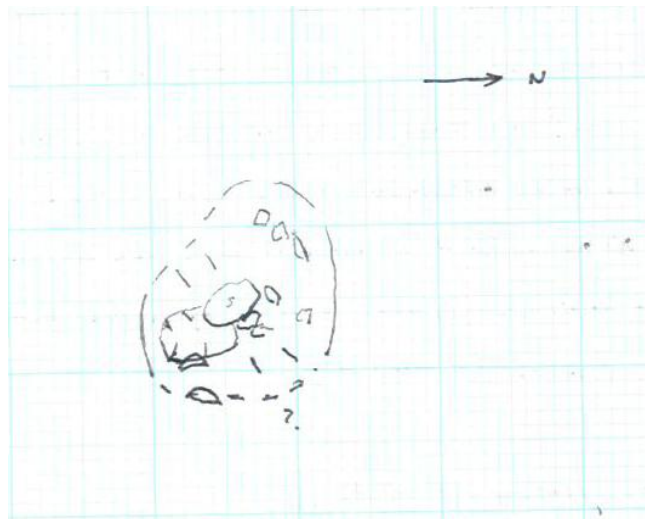
Results

A monitoring of the removal of topsoil revealed 5 archaeological features in the area of the house plot (see plan over – scale 1:200) to be revealed and therefore requiring excavation to comprise of the following:

1 – Cremation burial of possibly 2 individual cuts (contexts 2 & 3) lying in part natural depression and part cut. Topsoil to this area of the house excavation was up to 800mm in depth. Natural depression to the west edge of 27cm EW by 30cm NS by 6cm in depth with cut 16cm EW by 26cm NS and 12cm deep. Large amount of bone to each, some of the bone in context 2 was unburnt. No artefacts were found in the fills.



Detail of cremation - feature 1 - scale 0.5m



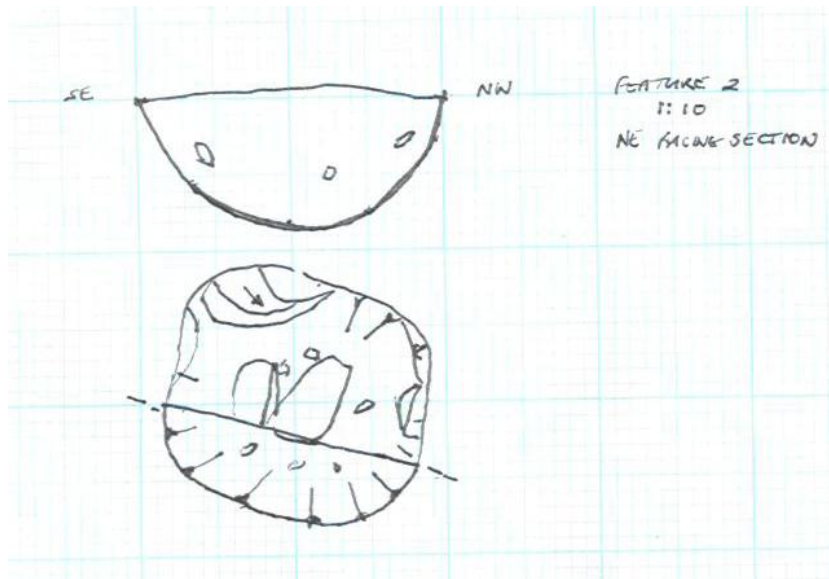
An analysis of the bone recovered from the fills (see full report to rear) revealed that the bone was not human but animal. The bone was comprised of skull fragments from either or both cattle and sheep, with a small amount of material from horn cores. It is possible that some of the bone was de-fleshed before it was cremated. Also found was a small amount of marine whelk shell. Discussion of these remains is made below.

2 – Small pit of 40cm diameter by 19cm deep with dark black silty fill, with occasional stones and occasional specks of charcoal. No artefacts were found in the fill.

An analysis of the fill (see report to rear) gave evidence for a small amount of burnt bone, carbonised hazelnut shell and some charcoal.



Half section feature 2 facing W scale 0.5m

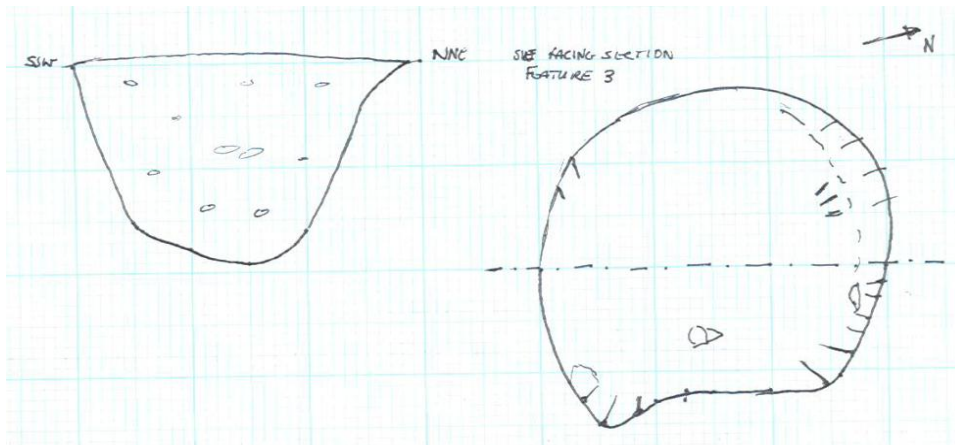


3 – Medium to large pit of 60cm by 70 cm by 40cm deep with dark black silty fill, with occasional stones and occasional specks of charcoal. No artefacts were found in the fill. Contained some fire-cracked stone but no evidence that feature had been a hearth.

An analysis of the fill (see report to rear) gave evidence for carbonised hazelnut shell and some charcoal.



View of pit upon excavation facing W - scale 0.5m

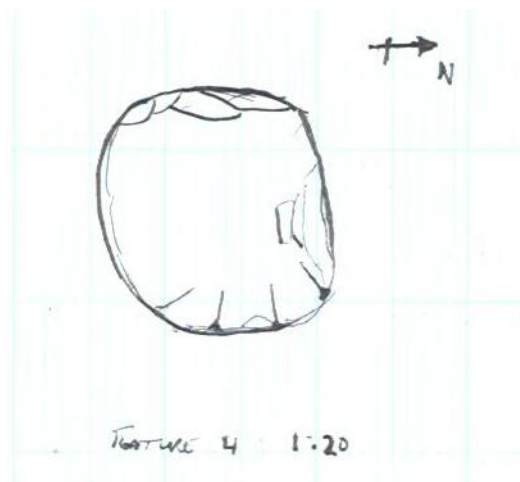


4 – Small pit to edge of excavation (partly damaged by stone drag during machining so section could not be recorded) of 40cm diameter by 30cm deep with dark black silty fill, with occasional stones. No artefacts were found in the fill.

An analysis of the fill (see report to rear) gave evidence for carbonised hazelnut shell and some charcoal. Also found were some small quartz flakes, possibly the result of working of stone.



View of pit upon excavation scale 0.5m

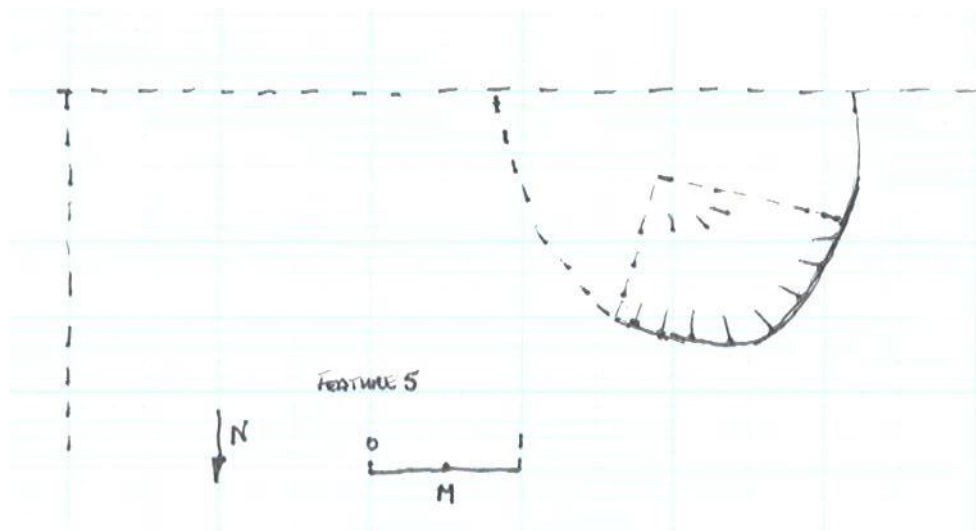


5 – Irregular shaped feature to south edge of excavation 3mEW by 1.7m NS by 25cm deep with dark black silty fill, with occasional stones. Sample of context removed and retained for post-excavation analysis. No artefacts were found in the fill. Excavation of large quadrangle revealed edges of cut were sloping but base naturally rose to 10cm towards centre. Function unknown, possibly partly a natural feature.

An analysis of the fill (see report to rear) gave evidence for burnt bone, carbonised hazelnut shell and some charcoal. Also found were some small quartz flakes, possibly the result of working of stone.



View of feature 5 facing S - scales 1m



Discussion

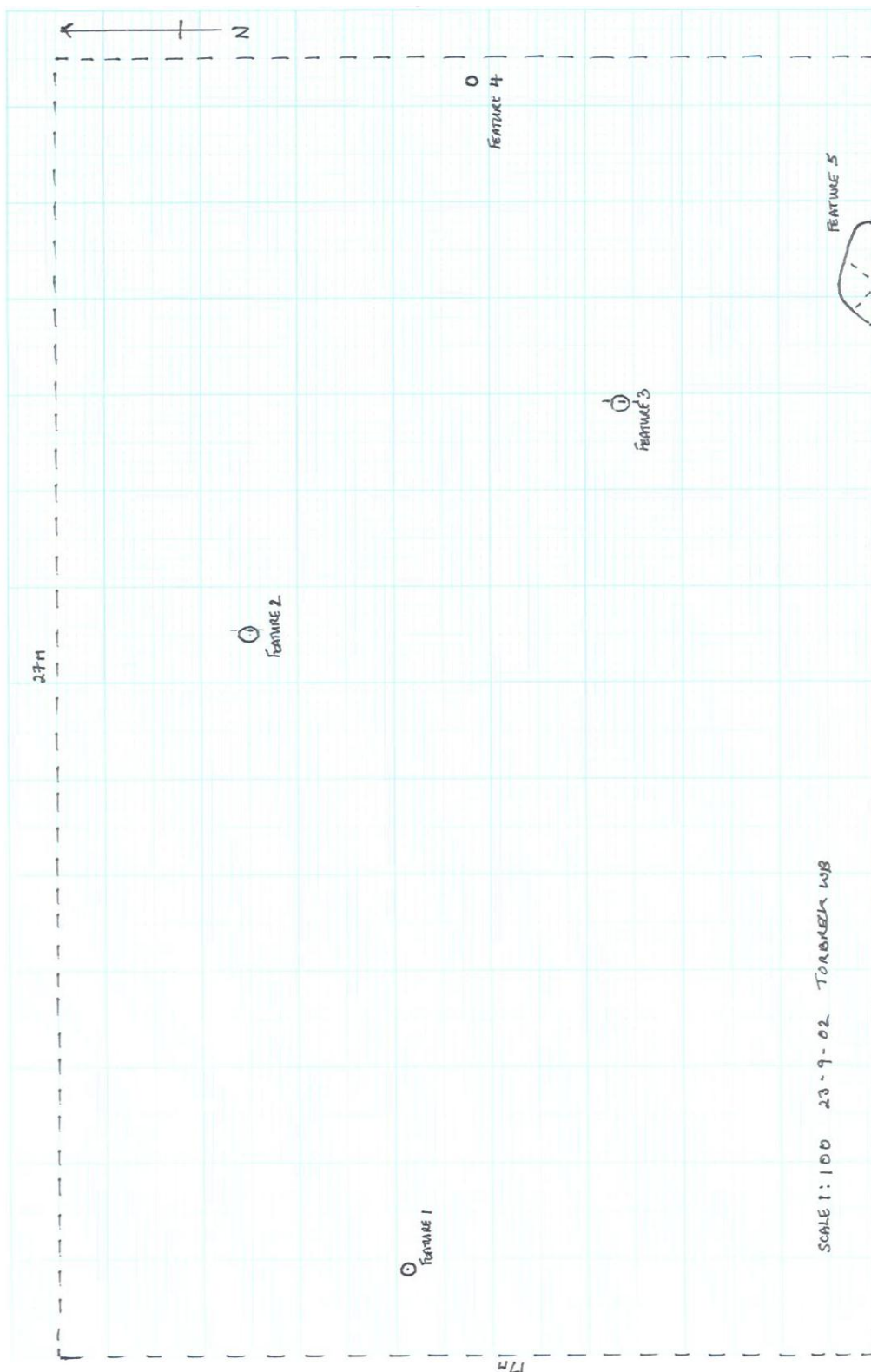
Overall the features revealed point to prehistoric settlement in the close vicinity, though further work in the immediate area may help to explain their function. The small pits (features 2-5) may be domestic rather than funerary or ritual.

The cremated animal bone found in feature 1 is a very rare find. If the nearby cropmark is a henge monument the site has possible close parallels to the find at Dunragit, near Stranraer where excavations by Dr Julian Thomas of the Dept of Archaeology, Manchester University revealed a cremation of woman and a sheep in a posthole, though currently no details are available to the precise details of the animal bone.

Overall cremations just involving animal remains are not well noted in the archaeological record, this may be a bias of the study of human bone remains and not any detailed studies of cremated animal bone (per comm. Fay Worley of Bradford University) or that animal cremations are not studied or recorded in detail.

Recommendations

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



Archive

Notebook of results is 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 database entries for NH64SE.

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

Kenworthy, J (1999) Report on an archaeological watching-brief during soil removal at a new house site at Torbreck Farm, Inverness December 1998 – February 1999. Unpublished report – copy held in Highland SMR.

National Monuments Record of Scotland CANMORE database entries for NH64SE.

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Appendix 1 – Details of Slides

- Denotes black & white photograph taken.

- 1 – View of site prior to excavation facing west.
- 2 – View of site prior to excavation facing north.
- 3 – View of machining in progress.
- 4 – View of cremation burial facing west – feature 1 – scale 0.5m #
- 5 – ibid #
- 6 – ibid #
- 7 – ibid #
- 8 – ibid but facing south #
- 9 – ibid but facing east #
- 10 – ½ section of feature 2 facing west – scale 0.5m #
- 11 – ibid #
- 12 – ibid #
- 13 – ibid #
- 14 – View of feature 2 upon excavation – scale 0.5m #
- 15 – ibid #
- 16 – View of site during machining facing west.
- 17 – View of site during machining facing south.
- 18 – View of ½ section of feature 3 – facing NW – scale 0.5m #
- 19 – ibid #
- 20 – General view of feature 3 facing northwest.
- 21 – View of house site upon excavation facing west.
- 22 – View of area of road splay upon machining facing north.
- 23 – View of house site upon excavation facing west.
- 24 – View of feature 3 upon full excavation – scale 0.5m #
- 25 – ibid #
- 26 – ibid #
- 27 – ½ section of feature 4 facing west – scale 0.5m #
- 28 – ibid #
- 29 – View of feature 4 upon full excavation facing west – scale 0.5m #
- 30 – ibid #
- 31 – View of access road upon machining facing east.
- 32 – View of feature 5 facing W – scales 1m x 1m #
- 33 – ibid but facing south #
- 34 – ibid but facing east #
- 35 – Detail of feature 5 facing east – scales 1m x 1m #
- 36 – ibid but facing south #

Appendix 2 Register of Contexts

- 1 – Topsoil – dark brown silty soil
- 2 – fill of cremation 1 – light grey fill with some unburnt bone
- 3 – fill of cremation 2 – light grey fill with large amount of white bone
- 4 – cut for cremation (feature 1)
- 5 – fill of pit (cut 6) – dark black silty fill
- 6 – cut of small pit (feature 2)
- 7 – fill of pit (cut 8) – dark black silty fill
- 8 – cut of large pit (feature 3)
- 9 – fill of pit (cut 10) – dark black silty fill
- 10 – cut of small pit (feature 4)
- 11 – fill of irregular shaped cut – dark silty fill
- 12 – cut of irregular shaped feature (feature 5)