

**Report of Archaeological Watching Brief  
August to December 2003  
Mulbuie Water Supply Project  
Phases 2 & 3, Highland**

Client: Halcrow Group Ltd on behalf of Scottish Water

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## **Non-Technical Summary**

*Stuart Farrell was commissioned by Halcrow Group Ltd on behalf of Scottish Water in June 2003 to undertake an archaeological watching brief on sections of pipeline as part of a water mains renewal project.*

*Monitoring of excavation work in 2 separate areas of the project revealed no archaeological features or deposits. A previously unrecorded farmstead was noted as part of a route change. Work was conducted between August and December 2003.*

*No further recommendations for further work have been proposed.*

## **1. Introduction**

This report is for a number of sections of archaeological watching briefs conducted for Halcrow Group Ltd on behalf of Scottish Water by the author for the Mulbuie Water Mains Renewal Project phases 2 and 3.

The work was conducted between August 27<sup>th</sup> and December 19<sup>th</sup> 2003.

## **2. Acknowledgements**

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

- Mr. A Barnett, of Halcrow Group Ltd;
- Mr. A MacLaren, of Halcrow Group Ltd;
- Ms. V Callier, of Halcrow Group Ltd;
- Mr. M Quigley, of Northern Construction Services;
- Mr. J Lynch, of Northern Construction Services;
- Staff of Northern Construction Services for onsite works;
- Staff of Highland Council Archaeology Unit.

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**Figure 1 – General Location 1: 50,000**  
**Figure 2 – Over – Location of Sections of Watching Briefs**

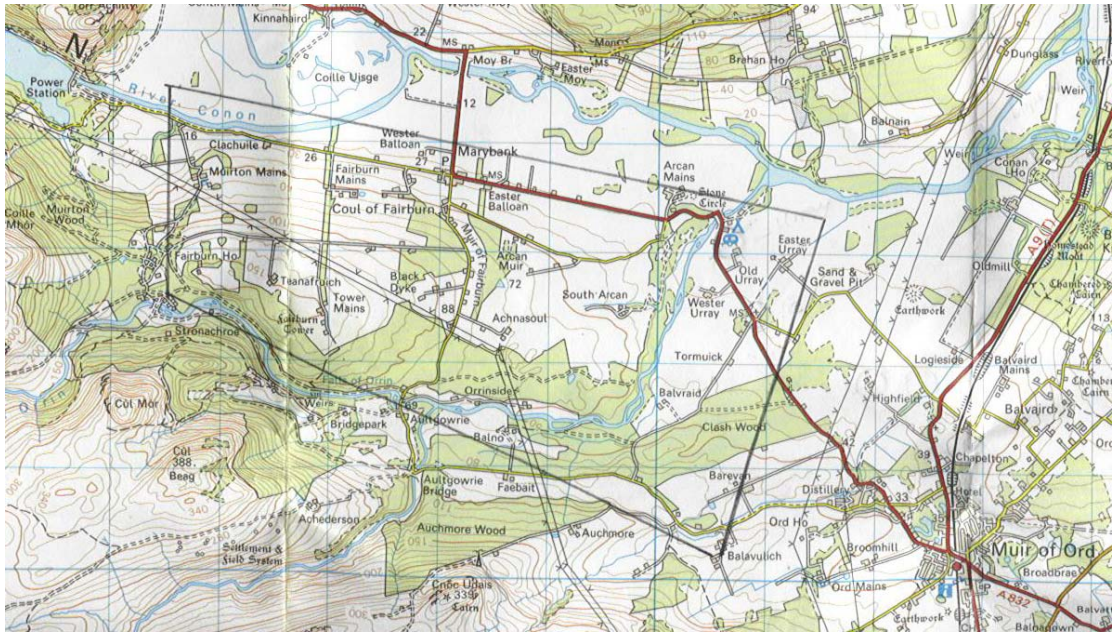
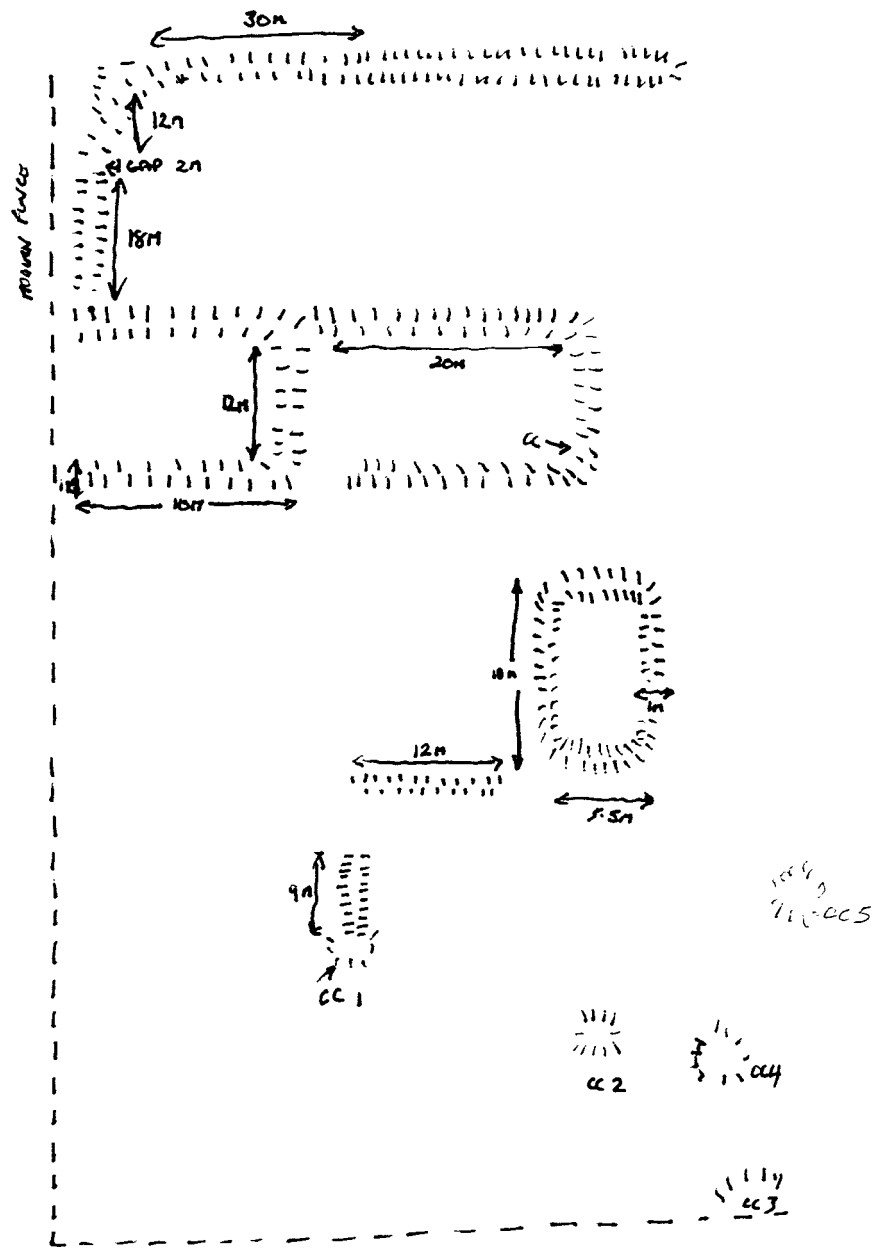


Figure 9 – Plan of Farmstead at West Urray Church – not to scale



### **3. Archaeological Background**

The archaeological watching brief was to follow up on recommendations that had been made following a desk-based and walkover survey conducted by the CFA Archaeology Ltd (Johnstone, 2003) where it was possible that archaeological deposits could be revealed, especially in relation to existing recorded archaeological sites or standing sites revealed during the walkover survey.

### **4. Objectives**

To conduct a watching brief on the excavation of the pipe trenches to record those features revealed by excavation work. To conduct desktop and walkover survey of any additional pipeline routes.

### **5. Watching Brief Methodology**

A monitoring was made of the removal of topsoil and subsoil's to an average depth of 150mm. A back-acting machine with a toothed bucket cleared the topsoil and subsoil with possible archaeological features being cleaned by hand.

### **6. 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

Results for areas of interest were as follows:

**1 – Bridge Cottage** - NH 52868/51561 to NH 52807/51507 (Work conducted prior to August 27<sup>th</sup> 2003) (See figure 3) Work to be conducted due to lying close to 2 clearance cairn's located during walkover survey (Johnstone, 2003, site 76).

Construction work was conducted on this section without archaeological supervision. A walkover of site after work on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August revealed 2 clearance cairns at edge of field in low lying wet area. One of a large pile of stones of modern date including concrete, 2<sup>nd</sup> close at NH 52807/51507 may also be modern as it is close to the former water pipe and was comprised of large boulders rather than small to medium stones typically associated with a clearance cairn. The second site to the north looked convincing as a clearance cairn though given the evidence of the other stones may again be modern. Site overall to be recorded as a possible clearance cairn.

**2 – Muirton Mains** - NH 45609/54077 to NH 45672/54103 (Work conducted September 1<sup>st</sup> 2003) (See figure 4) Work to be conducted due to lying close to site of 2 burial cist's uncovered 1972/73 (NMRS and HSMR – NH45SE0004) (Johnstone, 2003, site 41).

Site of cists is on a natural knoll overlooking river, currently unploughed, with some modern clearance dumped to its SE edge. Work was conducted along edge of field on a northeast-facing slope. Work started at NH 45609/54077

heading NE to road then to NH 45616/54089 then to NH 45629/54099 then finally east to NH 45672/54103.

Work revealed no archaeological deposits or features, little or no topsoil only to a depth of 200mm in certain places, a large amount of stones were revealed to the middle section of the trench and are probably part of former course of river. Site of cists therefore is on knoll overlooking bend in the river.

**3 – Tormuick** - NH 5064/5207 (Work conducted prior to December 4<sup>th</sup> 2003) (See figure 5) Work to be conducted due to lying close to clearance cairn located during walkover survey (Johnstone, 2003, site 80).

Construction work was conducted on this section without archaeological supervision. A walkover of site after work on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December revealed two large clearance heaps on the north side of the road. Cairns are possibly modern field clearance as adjacent field is very flat.

**4 – North Lodge** - NH 5136/5258 (Work conducted prior to December 4<sup>th</sup> 2003) (See figure 6) Work to be conducted due to lying close to clearance cairn located during walkover survey (Johnstone, 2003, site 78).

Construction work was conducted on this section without archaeological supervision. A walkover of site after work on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December revealed work had no effect on the clearance cairn though route of pipeline had moved to south edge of road. Cairn should be located at NH 51317/52421 (as noted by handheld GPS – Garmin II using OS data). Cairn is possibly modern as adjacent field is very flat.

**5 – Fairburn Tower** - NH 46983/52291 to NH 46973/52422 (Work conducted December 12<sup>th</sup>- 15<sup>th</sup> 2003) (See figure 7) Work to be conducted due to lying close to 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century tower house. (NMRS and HSMR – NH45SE0001) (Johnstone, 2003, site 38).

Excavation of a trench 0.5m wide for a length of c130m in a grass field to the east of the tower revealed no archaeological deposits or features only natural yellow-brown sandy-clay below an average topsoil depth of 120mm.

Photo1: View of trench facing S.



**6 – Urray West Church** - NH 5053/5317 to NH 5119/5227 (Survey work conducted December 19<sup>th</sup> 2003 – weather slightly overcast. Grid references were obtained using a Garmin II GPS using OS data) (See figure 8). This additional route had not been surveyed by the CFA in 2002 (Johnstone 2003). Survey work revealed the following additional sites:

1 – 2 clearance cairns. First clearance cairn at NH 50796/52603 of 5m x 2.5m x 1m high. 2<sup>nd</sup> at NH 50791/52502 spread to 8m in diameter and 1.5m high. Both are situated to the edge of a flat field and are possibly both modern field clearance.

2 – Farmstead centred at NH 509/524 in small woodland. Remains of farmstead and enclosures and clearance cairns. Edge of enclosure (see figure 9) is cut by modern fence to N by adjacent Urray West Church car-park. Sites are as follows:

Enclosure – centred at NH 5096/5245 of 10m x 12m by fence and 12m x 20m with walls spread to 1.3m wide and 0.7m high with enclosing wall to north of 30m x 30m and open to the S. Possible cc to SW corner.

House – NH 50954/52420 – aligned E- W with entrance to S. 5.5m x 10m with walls 1m wide and up to 0.4m high. Returning wall on north side for 12m and 1m wide and 0.4m high.

cc 1 – NH 50937/52428 – against 9m length of wall 1m wide and 0.4m high, possibly of 2 large clearance cairns. Most evident is 3m x 4m x 0.7m high.

cc 2 – NH 50942/52408 – 3m in diameter x 0.4m high.

cc 3 – NH 50947/52400 – 4m x 1.5m x 0.2m high (against natural bank).

cc 4 – NH 50947/52405 – 2.5m in diameter x 0.2m high.

cc 5 – NH 50951/52415 – 2m in diameter x 0.2m high.

Both these sites are previously unrecorded in either the NMRS or the HSMR. Farmstead is not depicted on 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS for 1870's. Relation to nearby Urray Church of 1780 (with later additions) is unknown.

*Recommend that both sites be avoided by new proposed pipeline. If sites cannot be avoided a watching brief to be conducted in both these locations.*

Photo 2: View of site 1 facing NE.





Top - Photo 3: View of enclosure facing E.

Middle - Photo 4: View of house facing W – scale 1m.

Bottom - Photo 5: View of clearance cairn no.1 facing E – scale 1m.



## **7. Overall Conclusions**

Overall limited archaeological supervision was conducted during construction work, though it is hoped that the two small pieces of excavation work monitored may help towards a better understanding of the archaeological sites involved.

The farmstead recorded is undated and is possibly late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century in date.

## **8. Recommendations**

No recommendations with regard any further fieldwork for this water mains project is to be proposed.

## **9. Archive**

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

- Notebook of results
- Copy of this report

A set of 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**

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

Johnstone, M (2003) Mulbuie Archaeological Desktop Survey & Walkover Survey Report. CFA Archaeology Ltd report no.778. Unpublished Report – copy held by HSMR.

## Appendix 1 – Photographic Register

- 1 – Bridge Cottage Section – View of small clearance cairn to W edge of wet area.
- 2 – Bridge Cottage Section – View of modern clearance cairn by N edge of wet area.
- 3 – Bridge Cottage Section – View of excavated section facing S.
- 4 – Bridge Cottage Section – View of modern clearance cairn by edge of existing water main.
  
- 5 – Muirton Mains Section – View of knoll – site of cists facing SE.
- 6 – Muirton Mains Section – View S to Muirton Mains prior to excavation.
- 7 – Muirton Mains Section – View N to Muirton Cottage by W edge of knoll.
- 8 – Muirton Mains Section – View E on N side of knoll prior to excavation.
- 9 – Muirton Mains Section – View of excavation in progress facing NE.
- 10 – Muirton Mains Section – Ibid.
- 11 – Muirton Mains Section – View from middle section of trench – with heavy number of stones – facing NE.
  
- 12 – Tormuick Section – View of clearance cairn facing NW.
  
- 13 – North Lodge Section – View of North Lodge facing SW.
- 14 – North Lodge Section – View of clearance cairn facing NE.
  
- 15 – Fairburn Tower Section – View of tower facing S.
- 16 – Fairburn Tower Section - View of tower facing W.
- 17 – Fairburn Tower Section - View of tower facing NW.
- 18 – Fairburn Tower Section - View of tower facing N.
- 19 – Fairburn Tower Section - View of tower facing NW.
- 20 – Fairburn Tower Section – View of field facing N.
- 21 – Fairburn Tower Section - View of tower facing N.
- 22 – Fairburn Tower Section – View of field facing S.
- 23 – Fairburn Tower Section – View of trench facing N.
- 24 – Fairburn Tower Section – View of trench facing S.
- 25 – Fairburn Tower Section – View of trench facing N.
- 26 – Fairburn Tower Section – View of trench and tower facing N.
- 27 – Fairburn Tower Section – View of trench facing S.

### Digital Images

- 1 – Fairburn Tower Section - View of trench facing S.
- 2 – West Urray Church Section - View of site 1 facing NE.
- 3 – West Urray Church Section - View of enclosure facing E.
- 4 – West Urray Church Section - View of house facing W – scale 1m.
- 5 – West Urray Church Section - View of clearance cairn no.1 facing E – scale 1m.