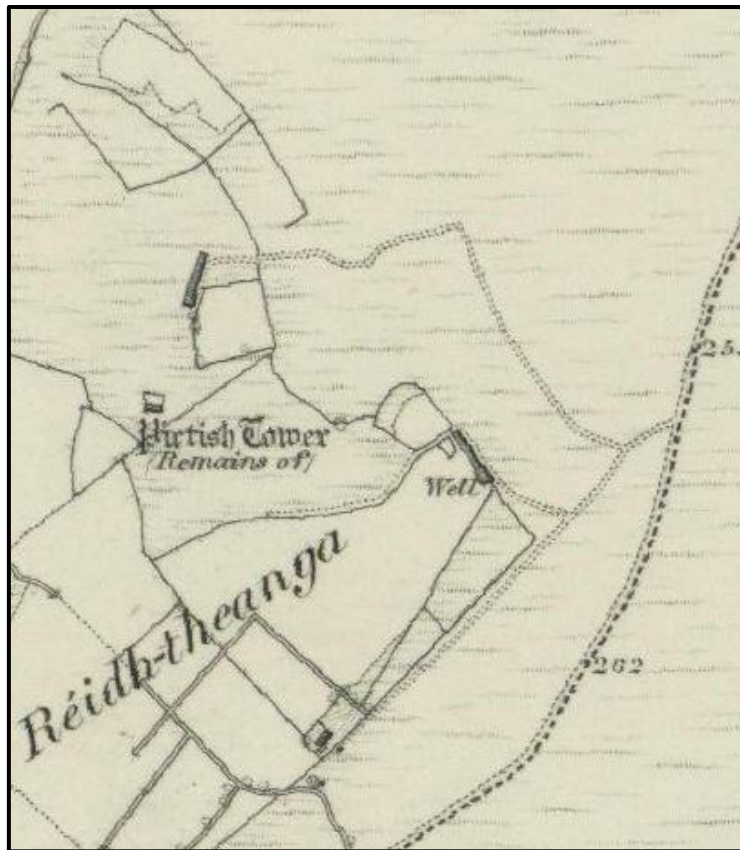


RoCAS



ROSS & CROMARTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

New house site 115 Rhitongue, Sutherland



Watching brief Written Scheme of Investigation

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| National Grid Reference | NC 60504 59866 |
| Planning Reference | 10/04188/FUL |
| Site Code | RTE11 |
| RoCAS Report | 2011-07/RTE11 |
| Client | Peter MacDonald |
| Date | 19-05-2011 |

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Cover page: Rhitongue shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map¹

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This report is a proposal for a watching brief on behalf of Peter MacDonald on the site of a proposed single house site development at 115 Rhitongue, Sutherland. The watching brief is a requirement of the Highland Council Planning Department prior to development of the site.

¹ National Library of Scotland

1.0 Project Background

An archaeological watching brief is proposed to take place on a site located at 115 Rhitongue, Sutherland. The watching brief requirement has arisen due to the situation of the proposed house site within an area of archaeological potential.

The purpose of the archaeological watching brief is to efficiently record the character, extent, condition, date and significance of any archaeologically significant remains on the site whilst minimising delays and disruption to the development².

2.0 Site Location

The proposed house site is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NC 60504 59866 on the west side of the A836 between Tongue and Coldbackie at approximately 60m above sea level (Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1 Site location³

² HCAU 2010a

³ Landmark Information Group Licence LIG1044

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

Rhitongue is situated on the north coast of Scotland on the eastern bank of the Kyle of Tongue and Tongue Bay in the former county of Sutherland, now Highland Region.

The remains of Rhitongue Broch lie to the south-west of the development site; this is one of many that line the coastline in both Sutherland and neighbouring Caithness. There are no other prehistoric remains in the vicinity⁴.

Roy's Military Survey of 1747-1755 records a township at Rhitongue; he shows cultivation to the north-east of a stream and a track running to the south of the township dropping down to, what is presumably, a ferry crossing across the Kyle of Tongue⁵.

The 1878 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map shows houses to the north-west, west and south-east of the broch⁶.

An archaeological watching brief on another house site at 115 Rhitongue in 2007 uncovered the remains of a cobbled surface, which was interpreted as possibly being associated with a structure or building of which there is now no trace⁷.

4.0 References and General Information

This Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) is written in accordance with the *Development Guidance* from the Highland Council Archaeology Unit (HCAU)⁸.

All fieldwork will be conducted as per the *IfA Code of Conduct*⁹, guidance from Historic Scotland and the *Burra Charter*, which outlines the importance of working in places of cultural significance¹⁰.

5.0 Aims and Objectives

The purpose of the archaeological watching brief is to efficiently identify and record any features or finds of archaeological interest prior to development, in order to minimise any delays or disruptions to the project or to propose appropriate mitigation in the event that significant features of interest are uncovered. The *Scottish Planning Policy 2010* describes how archaeology should be managed when considering planning decisions and determining conditions for developments that have an impact on the historic environment¹¹.

The specific objectives are:

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area
- To remove by hand any overburden in order to expose the archaeological deposits

⁴ HER MHG12605

⁵ National Library of Scotland

⁶ National Library of Scotland

⁷ HER EHG1631

⁸ HCAU 2010b

⁹ IfA 2008a

¹⁰ ICOMOS 1996

¹¹ Scottish Government 2010

- To excavate, sample and record any features or to propose arrangements for their safeguarding, where possible.

6.0 Methodology

6.1 Desk-based assessment

The purpose of the desk-based assessment (DBA) is to gain information about the known archaeology or potential for archaeology within a given area or site (including the presence or absence, character and extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and relative quality of the potential archaeological resource), in order to make an assessment of its merit in context and assist in the formulation of a strategy for further work¹².

The DBA shall be undertaken prior to the fieldwork commencing, and will involve a full check will be undertaken of all available historical and archaeological records, aerial photographs and historical maps using the Highland Historic Environment Record (HER), the Highland Council archives, the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS), Historic Scotland's databases, the National Library of Scotland and any other available records or online resources about the site.

In order to inform the preparation of this report an assessment of the historic maps was conducted online at National Library of Scotland and the Highland Historic Environment Record was checked on 19 May 2011.

6.2 On-site recording

Trench positions and any archaeological features or finds of interest will be plotted using ArcPad software with GPS technology with sub-metre accuracy on a handheld Windows Mobile-based computer.

6.3 Photography

The development site will be recorded using high resolution digital photography prior to the start of works and throughout the trial trenching evaluation in order to record the trial trenching process as well as any features or finds of interest.

6.4 Watching brief

The site clearance will be monitored under constant archaeological supervision. This includes topsoil stripping of the house footprint, access road and all services (Figure 2).

The site will be excavated using a straight-edged bucket on a back-acting machine. Following machine excavation, the clearance area will be cleaned back using a draw-hoe to allow for the identification of archaeological features. Any features identified will be excavated by hand in order to establish, as far as possible, the date, nature, extent and state of preservation of the deposits. The clearance area may be extended, if necessary, to aid the investigation of all significant relationships between features. A second phase of archaeological work may be required in the event that

¹² IfA 2008b.

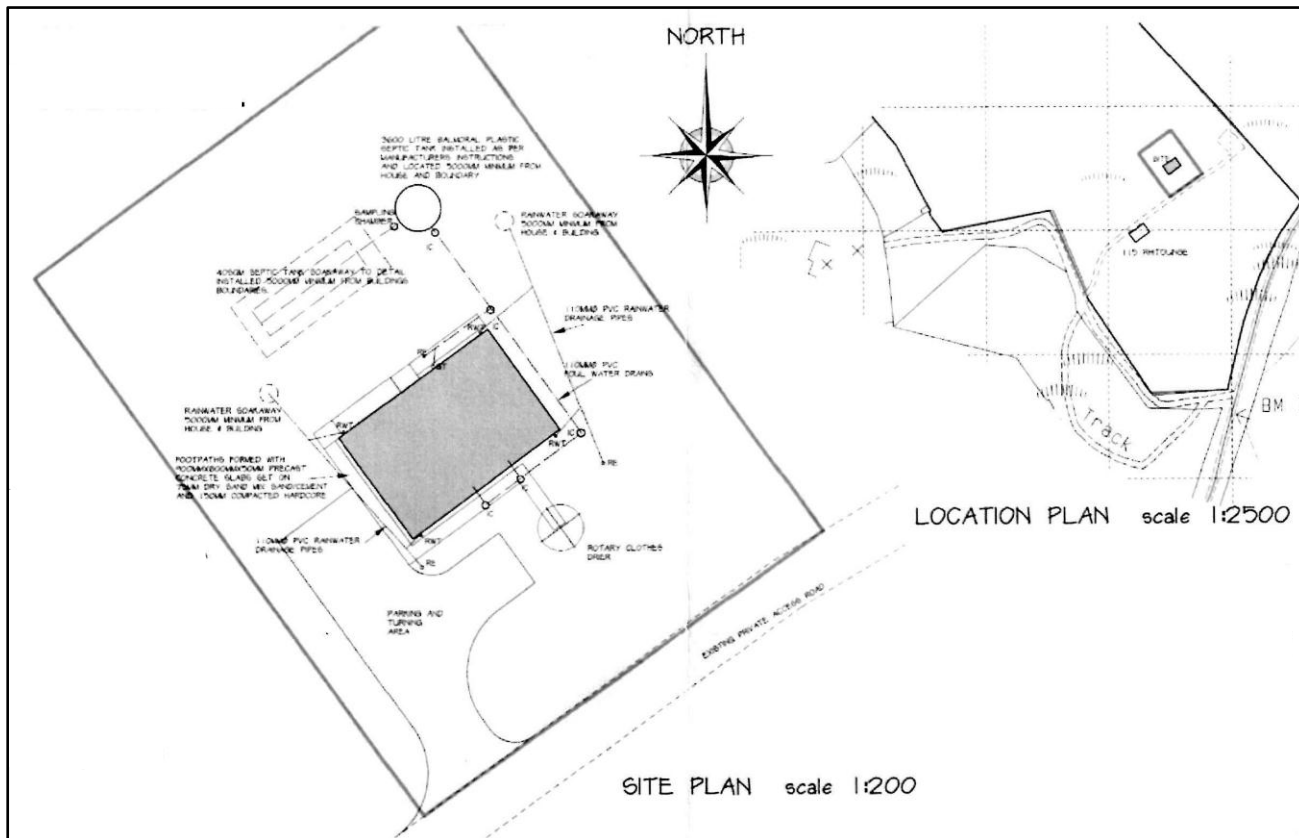


Figure 2 House location and footprint¹³

significant archaeological features are uncovered, in order for the work to be done to professional standards. Any such works will be agreed, in advance, with HCAU and the client.

In the event of any important or complex discoveries, all finds and features will be left *in situ* and the archaeologist will notify the contractor/developer and HCAU immediately to make arrangements for their safeguarding and recording. This may result in site clearance works taking longer than normal, and the archaeological contractor will work with both parties to come to an agreement on any further phases of work¹⁴.

The discovery of any human remains is a sensitive matter. Any such finds will be left *in situ* until the local police and the HCAU have been contacted. Any excavation required will be conducted as per Historic Scotland’s Operational Policy Paper 5¹⁵.

7.0 Strategy for recording/conservation

All artefacts recovered will be sorted and recorded. Finds will then be turned over to *Treasure Trove*. If help is required with emergency conservation, we will contact *Inverness Museum* or *National Museums Scotland*.

¹³ Plan provided by client

¹⁴ HCAU 2010b

¹⁵ Historic Scotland 2006

8.0 Post-excavation and reporting

Upon completion of work, Ross and Cromarty Archaeological Services will compile and analyse all data from the evaluation. A digital report will be produced containing the conclusions of the work and any mitigation proposals agreed with HCAU and recording arrangements. This report will be disseminated to the contractor/developer, the Highland Council Planning and Buildings Standard Department, HCAU and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.

The report will be submitted with digital copies of the site photographs and georeferenced site plans in ESRI shapefile format. Ross and Cromarty Archaeological Services will retain copyright of this report.

A summary of the watching brief will be submitted for publication in Archaeology Scotland's annual journal, *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*. An OASIS entry will also be completed.

9.0 On-site contact

The archaeologist on site will be Lynn Fraser, who can be contacted on 07891 578998 or on rossandcromarch@gmail.com. RoCAS will keep HCAU informed of the schedule of works.

10.0 References

Highland Council Archaeology Unit, 2010a. *Specification for an archaeological watching brief: Erection of house and installation of septic tank at 115 Rhitongue, Lairg*. Planning reference 10/04188/FUL

Highland Council Archaeology Unit, 2010b. HCAU Development Guidance, v 1.2.
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