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NESS GAP, FORTROSE

Archaeological Evaluation
& Watching Brief (Phase 1a & 1b)

Nuala C. Marshall
MA(Hons) MA



HEADLAND
ARCHAEOLOGY (UK) Ltd

PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET

<i>Client</i>	TULLOCH HOMES LTD
<i>National Grid Reference</i>	NH 7329 5651
<i>Address</i>	NESS ROAD, FORTROSE
<i>Parish</i>	ROSEMARKIE
<i>Council</i>	HIGHLAND COUNCIL
<i>Planning Ref No.</i>	09/00472/FUL
<i>Oasis No.</i>	HEADLAND1-85328
<i>Project Manager</i>	ED BAILEY ANDREA SMITH
<i>Text</i>	NUALA C. MARSHALL
<i>Graphics</i>	ANNA SZTROMWASSER
<i>Fieldwork</i>	NUALA C. MARSHALL PAUL MASSER DAVE SWAN
<i>Schedule</i>	
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<i>Report</i>	FEBRUARY 2011

Signed off by:

Ed Bailey BA(Hons) BCom AIfA, Project Manager

& Andrea Smith BA FSA FSA Scot MIfA, Project Manager

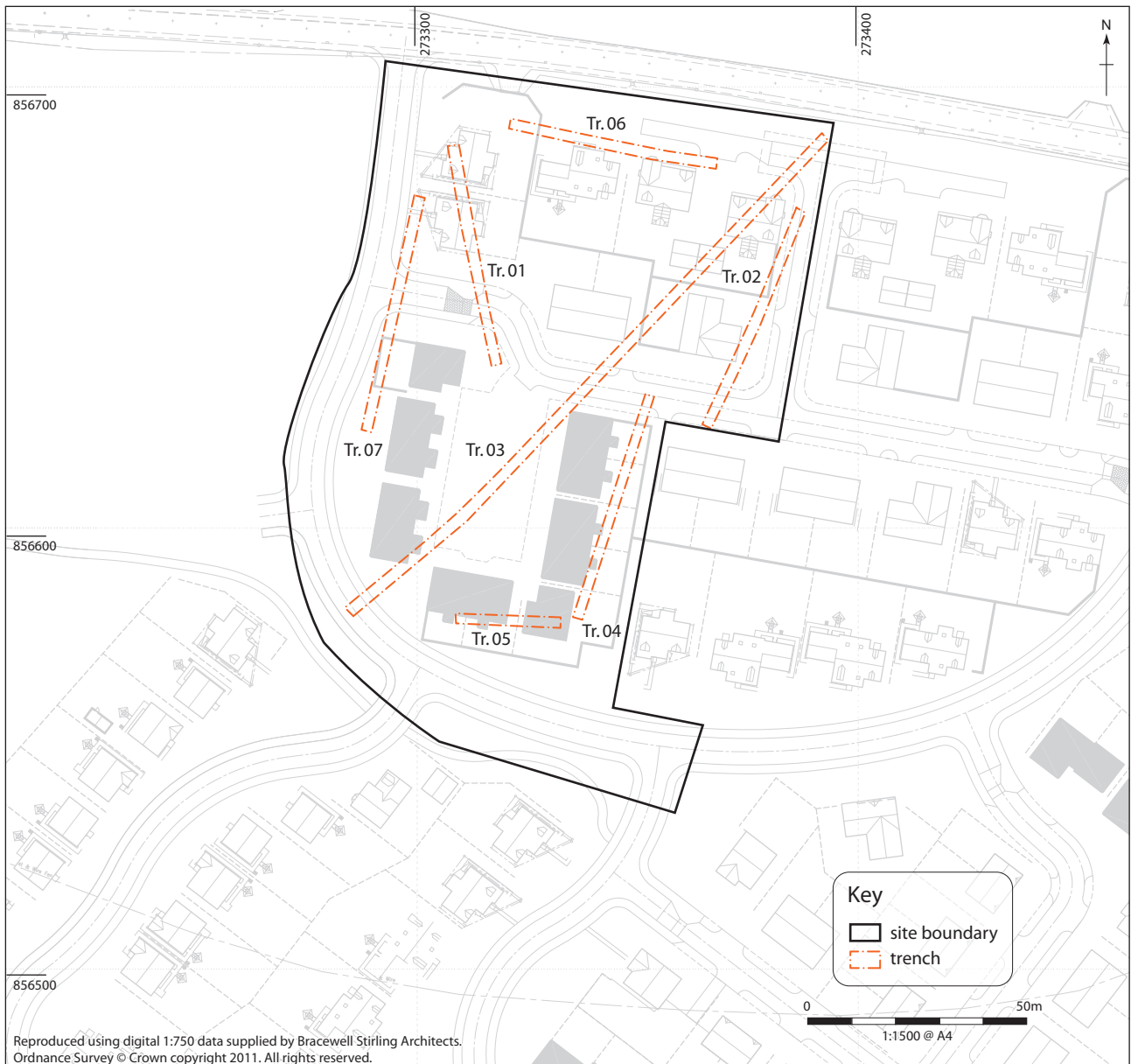
Date:.....

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Illus 1
 Site location showing area of evaluation

NESS GAP, FORTROSE

Archaeological Evaluation & Watching Brief (Phase 1a & 1b)

by Nuala C. Marshall

Headland Archaeology Ltd conducted an evaluation at a proposed housing development site off Ness Road, Fortrose in order to satisfy a planning condition placed by Highland Council. The work was commissioned by Tulloch Homes Ltd. Seven trenches were excavated within Phase 1a and Phase 1b and found post-medieval pit features containing 18th and 19th century ceramics and china. A subsequent watching brief took place during intrusive groundworks which produced similar evidence of post-medieval pits but no further archaeological features, deposits or artefacts.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by Tulloch Homes Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation on a site planned for a housing development off Ness Road, Fortrose. The evaluation was undertaken as part of a programme of archaeological work required to fulfil a planning condition attached by Highland Council (Planning Ref. No. 09/00472/FUL).

A desk-based assessment of the area was undertaken prior to the evaluation (Haston 2006). The assessment concluded that the site had some potential for containing archaeological remains associated with the medieval town of Fortrose which was the seat of the Bishopric of Ross during the medieval period.

The fieldwork took place on the 20th and 21st of September 2010 and between 9th and 18th February 2011 and this report outlines the results.

1.2 Site location

The evaluation area is located in the western part of Fortrose on the Chanonry Ness. The site lies in open fields on the south side of Ness Road and northern side of Wester Greengate with Deans Road to the east. The natural topography of the site slopes gently both east and south towards the Moray Firth shore. The site was being used as rough pasture at the time of fieldwork.

1.3 Archaeological background

Whilst there is some evidence of the area of Fortrose being settled in prehistory (a flint scatter and midden have been

discovered around 400m west of the development area), the earliest evidence of substantial settlement comes for the early medieval period with the, now ruined, cathedral in Fortrose dating to the 13th century. All the early, pre-Ordnance Survey maps refer to the town of Fortrose as Chanirie or Chanonry and show it to be larger than that of neighbouring Rosemarkie with its cathedral and precinct. Roy's map of 1747–55 shows the seaward part of the Ness as being rough grazing, with rig and furrow cultivation taking place on the higher, landward part including the site of the current evaluation. A farmstead or small settlement is shown approximately in the area of Ness House, probably not within the area evaluated. There is no evidence of the land use at the site location changing through time as there are no appreciable differences depicted between the First Edition Ordnance Survey Map (1881) and more recent maps.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- to evaluate the archaeological potential of the development site and determine the location, character, extent and quality of any archaeological remains identified within it,
- to propose arrangements for the safeguarding, where possible, and recording where necessary of any archaeological feature or finds identified,
- to meet the needs for archaeological conservation and recording without unnecessary delay or disturbance to the development project.



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Illus 2
Evaluation trench plan



Illus 3
Field conditions

2.2 Methodology

Machine evaluation

The proposed development area comprised *c.* 12000m². A 7% sample of the area was scheduled to be evaluated amounting to 840m² or 420m of linear trench 2m wide. A total of 7 trenches were excavated amounting to 425 linear metres, 2m wide. Evaluation trenches were laid out to provide coverage across the application area and any topographic features or areas that were thought to have more archaeological potential.

A mechanical excavator equipped with a flat-bladed bucket was used to remove topsoil under direct archaeological control. Excavation continued until clean geological sediments, significant archaeological deposits or structures were encountered or until the limit of safe excavation (1m) was reached. Only trenches less than 1m and considered safe were entered by site staff.

Further excavation required to satisfy the objectives of the evaluation was continued by hand. A representative sample, sufficient to meet the objectives of the evaluation, of identified features was investigated by hand and all identified features were recorded. The stratigraphy of each trench was recorded in full.

Watching brief

Following the initial investigations, a watching brief was undertaken during the topsoil strip of the development area. This mitigation was discussed and agreed with Highland Council. Ground breaking works were archaeologically monitored. Isolated features or artefacts were recorded according to normal watching brief methodology.

2.3 Recording

All recording was in accordance with the code of practice of the Institute for Archaeologists. All trenches and contexts were given unique numbers and all recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards that conform to accepted archaeological norms. All stratigraphic relationships were recorded.

An overall site plan at an appropriate scale and relative to the National Grid was recorded by digital survey using a total station linked to an onsite PC equipped with CAD software.

A full photographic record including colour slide and colour print photographs was taken, supplemented with digital photography. A metric scale was clearly visible in record photographs of contexts.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Evaluation

Seven trenches were excavated, designed to provide coverage across the site of Phase 1a and Phase 1b of the development (Illus 2). Three trenches were located N-S, two trenches E-W, one trench NW-SE and one located NE-SW. All trenches were 50m in length with the exception of Trench 3 and 5 which were 150 and 23m respectively.

The soil profile comprised, on average, 0.6m of dark brown/black loose clay sand over geological deposits of mixed light brown and orange sand with various sized



Illus 4
Example of investigated modern pit [005]



Illus 5
Post-excavation shot of Trench 4 showing modern pits



Illus 6
Area monitored during watching brief

stone inclusions. Geological deposits of dark brown clay sand and mid grey clay sand were also noted in Trenches 1, 3 & 7. These were mainly noted in areas at breaks of gentle slopes within the landscape and were most likely due to colluvial activity.

The features identified were pits visible in Trenches 3 to 7 of which a sample was recorded ([001], [003] & [005]). These were of various sizes and depths and were filled by deposits very similar to the clay sand topsoil. The inclusion of finds of 18th & 19th century ceramics and china within the fill identified the pits as dating to the post-medieval period. No other archaeological features or finds were present within these trenches.

3.2 Watching brief

Although the investigations within this area produced negative results for archaeological activity, the evaluation in neighbouring Areas B–G produced evidence of Bronze Age funerary activity. Due to these findings, it was decided that a further watching brief be maintained during the intrusive groundworks of the area of Phase 1a & 1b.

The majority of the footprint of the development was stripped by a bulldozer and a wheeled loading shovel. A mechanical excavator equipped with a flat-bladed bucket was also used to aid in the removal of spoil heaps and the topsoil which remained beneath.

The topsoil removed from the development area ranged between 0.3 and 1.1m in depth and the stratigraphic sequence was consistent with that seen in the trenching phase.

All the features bar one (see below) encountered during the watching brief were pits similar to those found in the evaluation trenches. The pits varied in size, ranging between roughly 0.6 and 1m in diameter and 0.3 and 0.6m in depth. They were backfilled with a similar deposit to the topsoil, sometimes with rubble stone inclusions, and had finds of ceramic and china shards within it.

One other feature was present which consisted of a pit measuring 2.2 by 1.5m. It contained a sheep/goat-sized animal skeleton. A china shard was present in the backfill around the skeleton so it was presumed that the burial was a result of recent farming activity, and the burial was not further disturbed.

No other features were encountered during these groundworks.

4. DISCUSSION

Despite the archaeological potential of the site, the seven trenches excavated within Phase 1a and 1b, along with the watching brief of the development, produced evidence only of 18th/19th century pits which contained pottery and china shards that dated the pits to this time. The use of these pits discovered was unclear but could relate to agricultural use of the area with activities such as sand and gravel extraction possibly taking place.

No furrows or plough marks were noted, suggesting a genuine paucity of archaeological activity, rather than its destruction or truncation by ploughing, or other agricultural activity.

In conclusion, with the exception of the post medieval pits, this phase of evaluation and watching brief produced no other evidence of archaeological features or deposits.

5. REFERENCES

5.1 Bibliography

- Brown Johnston, J, 1903, *Place names of Scotland*, Kessinger Publishing.
- Fraser, I, 1984, 'Place names of Ross and Cromarty', in *The Ross and Cromarty Book*, The Northern Times Ltd.
- Haston, S-J, 2006, *An archaeological desk-based assessment of land at Ness Gap, Fortrose, Highland*, unpublished client report.
- Slezer, J, 1693, 'Plate 43 Chanonria Civitalis Rossiae, The Channery Town of Ross', *Theatrum Scotiae*.

5.2 Maps

The following maps, held by the National Library of Scotland, were consulted:

- 1615–1686, Gordon, J, *A draught of the firths of Tayne, Cromartie, & Inverness, wt ye true distances as yey do ly.*
- 1636–1652, Gordon, R, *Part of Ros. Part of Ross.*
- 1636–1653, Gordon, R, *Map of the coast of the Moray Firth, showing Dornoch, Cromarty, and the Beauly Firths.*
- 1654, Bleau, J, *Extima Scotiae septentrionalis ora, ubi Provinciae sunt Rossia, Sutherlandia, Cathenesia, Strath-Naveiae, cum vicinis regiunculis quae eis subsunt, etiamque Moravia/R. Gordonius a Strath-loch collegit et descripsit.*
- 1745, Moll, H, *The Shires of Ross and Cromartie.*
- 1747–1755, Roy, W, *Military Survey 26/2.*
- 1826, Thomson, J, *Northern Part of Ross and Cromarty Shires. Southern Part.*
- 1881, Ordnance Survey, *Ross and Cromarty*, sheet XC.
- 1906, Ordnance Survey, *Ross and Cromarty*, sheet XC, 7 & 8.
- 2006, Ordnance Survey, *Ross and Cromarty.*

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Site Registers

1.1 Trench Register

Trench no.	Orientation	Description	Length (m)	Max. depth (m)
001	E-W	Topsoil of dark brown/black loose clay-sand overlaying natural subsoils of brown and orange sand with a variety of stone inclusions.	50	1.2
002	N-S	Topsoil of dark brown/black loose clay-sand overlaying a natural subsoil of orange sand with pebble type stone inclusions.	52	0.7
003	NE-SW	Topsoil of dark brown/black loose clay-sand overlaying a natural subsoil of orange sand with stone inclusions. In some areas a subsoil of mid grey sand appears below the topsoil.	150	0.7
004	N-S	Topsoil of dark brown/black loose clay-sand overlaying a natural subsoil of orange sand with small stone inclusions.	50	0.6
005	E-W	Topsoil of dark brown/black loose clay-sand overlaying a natural subsoil of orange sand with pebble type stone inclusions.	23	0.75
006	NW-SE	Topsoil of dark brown/black loose clay-sand overlaying a natural subsoil of orange sand with pebble and angular type stone inclusions.	50	0.6
007	N-S	Topsoil of dark brown/black loose clay-sand overlaying a natural subsoil of orange sand with stone inclusions. In some areas a subsoil of mid grey brown sand appears below the topsoil (at base of slope in landscape).	50	0.7

1.2 Context Register

Context no.	Area	Description
001	Tr. 3	Modern pit
002	Tr. 3	Fill of [001]
003	Tr. 3	Modern pit
004	Tr. 3	Fill of [003]
005	Tr. 3	Modern pit
006	Tr. 3	Fill of [005]

1.3 Photographic Register

Photo no.	Direction facing	Description	Photo no.	Direction facing	Description
001	–	Pre-condition survey	014	SW	Post-ex shot Trench 2
002	–	Pre-condition survey	015	N	Post-ex shot Trench 2
003	–	Pre-condition survey	016	SW	Post-ex shot Trench 4
004	–	Pre-condition survey	017	N	Post-ex shot Trench 4
005	–	Pre-condition survey	018	W	Post-ex shot Trench 5
006	–	Pre-condition survey	019	E	Post-ex shot Trench 5
007	–	Pre-condition survey – site entrance	020	NE	Post-ex shot Trench 3
008	–	Modern pit [001]	021	N	Post-ex shot Trench 7
009	–	Modern pit [003]	022	NW	Post-ex shot Trench 6
010	–	Modern pit [005]	023	SE	Post-ex shot Trench 6
011	E	Post-ex shot Trench 1	024	S	Post-ex shot Trench 7
012	W	Post-ex shot Trench 1	035	S	Trench 1 – north facing section showing deposits
013	SW	Post-ex shot Trench 3			

1.4 Photographic Register (Watching Brief)

Photo no.	Direction facing	Description	Photo no.	Direction facing	Description
301	SW	Watching brief – working shot	319	E	Post-ex stripped areas
302	S	Watching brief – working shot	320	SE	Post-ex stripped areas
303	W	Stripped area (N of strip)	321	SE	Post-ex stripped areas
304	W	Stripped area (N of strip)	322	E	Post-ex stripped areas
305	NE	Stripped area (E of strip)	323	N	Post-ex stripped areas
306	N	Stripped area (N of strip)	324	NW	Post-ex stripped areas
307	E	Stripped area (E of strip)	325	NW	Post-ex stripped areas
308	NE	Stripped area (E of strip)	326	NNW	Post-ex stripped areas
309	NW	Pit [001]	327	N	Post-ex stripped areas
310	E	Investigated pit [001]	328	S	Post-ex stripped areas
311	N	Pit [002]	329	SW	Spoil heap
312	E	Investigated pit [002]	330	SW	Spoil heap
313	S	Sheep burial	331	E	Working shot
314	W	Sheep burial	332	ESE	Spoil heap remaining (not monitored)
315	S	Sheep burial	333	WSW	Spoil heap remaining (not monitored)
316	SW	More pits (pit [015] & pit [016])	334	S	Post-ex stripped site
317	NE	Working shot (spoil heap)			
318	S	Working shot (spoil heap)			

Appendix 2 – Finds Catalogue

Context	Material	Qty	Object	Description	Spot date	Period
U/S	Pottery (Mod)	1	SLBA	Banded blue, brown, beige	1790–present	Mod
U/S	Glass	1	Bottle	Green bottle sherd	18th/20th	Mod
U/S	Iron	1	Chisel	–	–	Mod
002	Pottery (Mod)	3	SLIPT	Slip trailed redware fragments form same vessel	–	PM/Mod
004	Pottery (Mod)	1	SLIPR	Rim with white slipped rim border, dairy bowl?	–	Mod
004	Plastic	1	Golf Ball	Dimpled rubber cored ball, marked ‘Dunlop’ ‘Warwick’ ‘4’	20th	Mod
004	Industrial waste	1	Fragment	Iron slag?	–	–
006	Pottery (Mod)	1	CREAM	Small sherds	1760–1830	Mod



Illus 7
Photo of pottery