

**Site to the North of Arnabost Cottage (1), Isle of Coll:
Archaeological Watching Brief**



Data Structure Report

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1 Introduction

This Data Structure Report presents the findings of archaeological works undertaken for Wayne Thornton of Island Developments UK, in respect to the construction of a new dwelling with associated septic tank, drainage / soakaway and access road. The development is located at a site to the north of Arnabost Cottage, Isle of Coll (centred on NGR: NM 2092 6032).

Argyll & Bute Council asked for an archaeological watching brief to be undertaken as a requirement of the issued planning consent (planning ref 06/01748/DET). The archaeological works were designed to address the general ground reduction and excavation of foundations relating to the new structure. The main objective of the works was to record and recover items of interest that were impacted on by the development works.

Although there are no observable or known archaeological remains within the development area, there are a number of known archaeological sites and finds within relative close proximity.

Rebecca Shaw Archaeological Services was appointed to act with regard to the archaeological condition by Wayne Thornton of Island Developments UK. The terms of the watching brief were agreed through a Method Statement (Shaw, 2005) with the West of Scotland Archaeology Service, who advise Argyll & Bute Council on such matters.

2 Background

The first sound mapping that we have for the Isle of Coll indicates that the development site has always been open ground with rocky outcrops (Figures 1a & 1b). However, there are a number of known archaeological sites in the immediate area (Figure 2) which are noted below:

Site 1 – Burial ground: an old burying ground is situated among the sand dunes to the W of Coll, and little more than a mile from another burial ground, still in use, with ruins of an old church in it (NM26SW 3). It is on a low sandhill or mound in a small secluded valley surrounded by higher ones. Various cists containing human bones have been exposed here and through the valley by the wind. W M'Gillivray 1878. (NGR - NM 206 603; NMRS - NM26SW 8; WoSAS site id - 322)

Site 2 – Souterrain Arnabost: there is now no trace of the souterrain that was discovered at Arnabost about 1855 during the construction of the road from Sorisd ale to Ballyhaugh; it lay under the carrigeway, immediately S of the junction with the road to Arinagour. From the entrance, which was situated on the NW side of the road and is now covered by a modern house, the passage extended SE in a gentle arc for a bout 11.6m before it broadened into a roughly circular chamber about 2.1m in diameter. The passage was about 0.7m in width and the walls were corbelled, rising to a maximum height of about 1.3m. The roof consisted partly of stone lintels and, according to the original account (E Beveridge 1903), partly of wood. The use of wood is most unusual, but it has also been inferred in the case of the souterrain at Bankfoot, Perthshire (NO03SE 13). In 1896 the chamber was excavated and a bronze pin, several fragments of coarse pottery, at least two flint flakes, and some bones and shells were found; two blue glass beads and 'a piece of twisted gold' are also said to have been found on other occasions. Only the two beads and the pin are known to have survived; one bead is in the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum, and the other bead and the pin are in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (NMAS Accession nos FJ 94 and HD 345 respectively). RCAHMS 1980; E Beveridge 1903; D MacRitchie 1907; Proc Soc Antiq Scot 1903. (NGR - NM 2096 6003; NMRS - NM26SW 10; WoSAS site id – 295)

Site 3 – Mound: a quarter of a mile NW of Arnabost are portions of an irregularly-shaped mound standing N-S in which were found, it was stated, a bronze weapon and what was called a helmet, together with small square scales, supposed to be of armour.

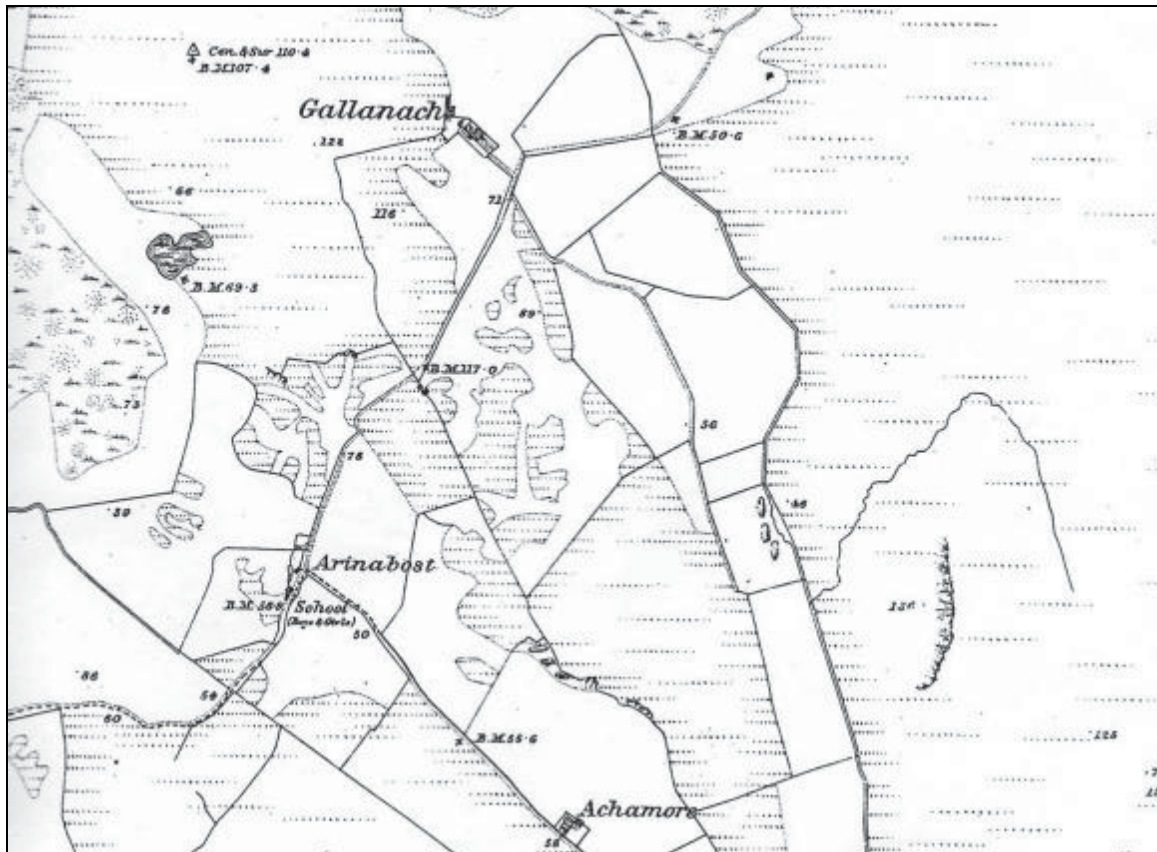


Figure 1a – 1st Edition Ordnance Survey (1881)

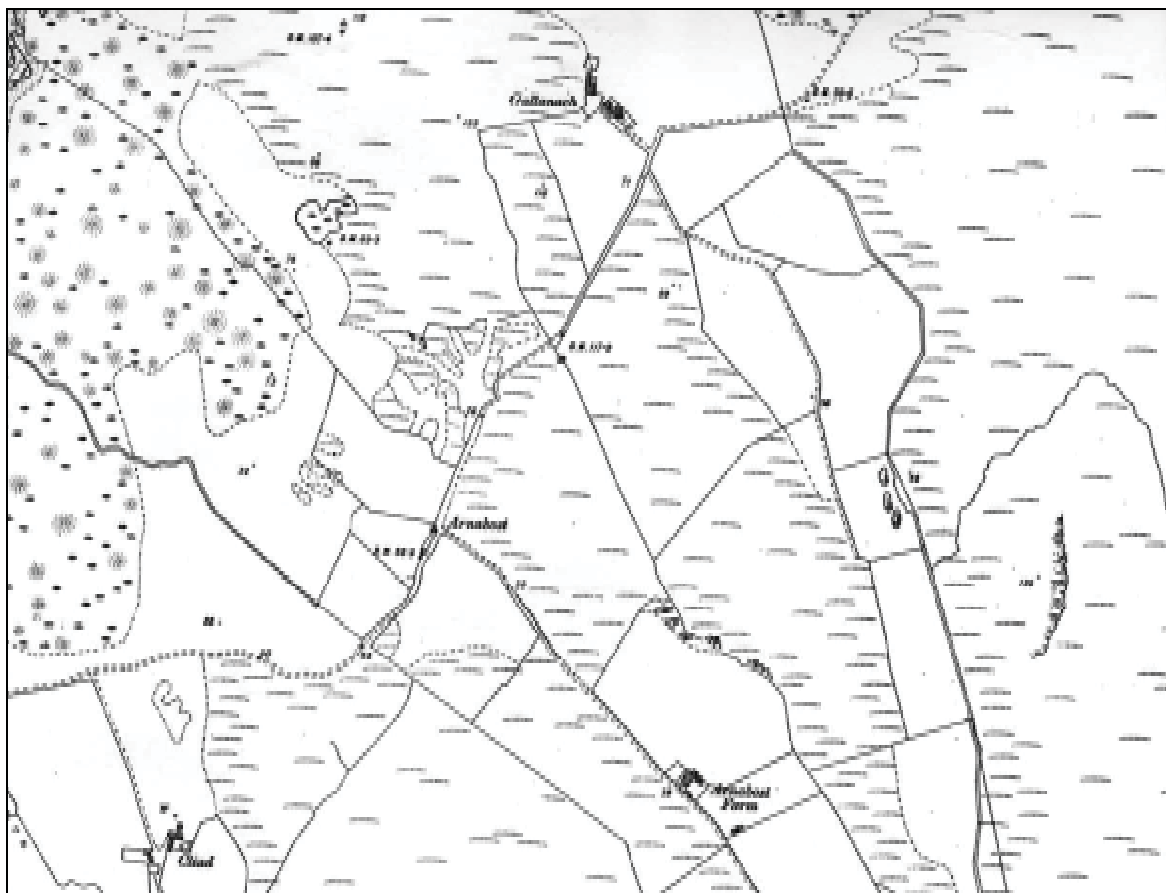


Figure 1b – 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey (1900)

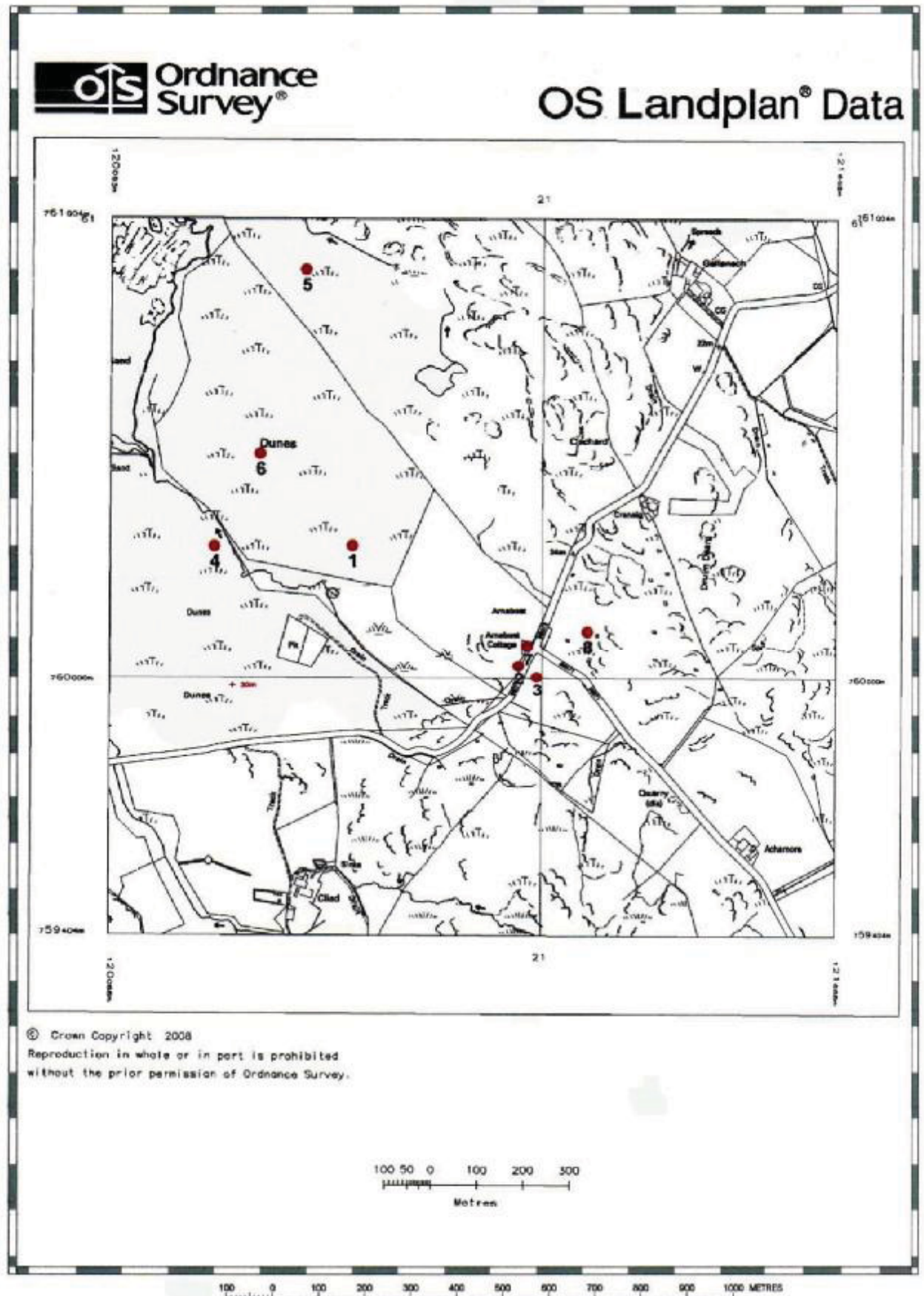


Figure 2 – Map showing archaeology sites in surrounding area

E Beveridge 1903. (NGR - NM 210 600; NMRS – NM26SW 22; WoSAS site id - 309

Site 4 – Midden; S of Gallanach and Arinabost, among the Claid sandhills (Claid Bay: NM 1960), between the road and the sea, is extensive tract of broken sand, containing many comparatively level spaces. Here, hammer-stones were specially common and occasionally very large; a bone borer, thick at one end and well pointed at the other, a little pottery, including simple patterns of plain or dotted lines, and a few flints, including scrapers, were also found. Only in one spot, close to a small kitchen -midden, was flint at all plentiful. E Beveridge 1903. (NGR – NM 203 603; NMRS - NM26SW 23; WoSAS site id – 310

Site 5 – Cairn (possible), Arnabost: a low grass-covered mound situated within the sand-hills 800 m NW of Arnabost may be the remains of a prehistoric burial-cairn. Composed of small stones and sand, it measures 8m from E to W by 7m transversely and stands to a height of 0.5m. Two stones on the E side may indicate the line of the kerb. RCAHMS 1980, visited 1974. (NGR – NM 204 605; NMRS – NM6SW 27; WoSAS site id – 314

Site 6 – Mound: near the northern limit of Claid sandhill is a building within a mound, probably a chambered cairn similar to that at Torastan (NM26SW 1). It appears to have contained two closely adjacent cells, which seem to have been opened recently, and two of three pieces of flint were found near by. E Beveridge 1903. (NGR – NM 205 609; NMRS - NM26SW 24; WoSAS site id - 311

Site 7 – Farmstead; a farmstead comprising two unroofed buildings, one roofed building and two enclosures is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Argyllshire, Island of Coll 1881, sheet xxxvi). One unroofed building and four enclosures are shown on the current edition of the OS 1:10000 map (1975). Information from RCAHMS (SAH) 17 August 1998. (NGR – NM 2098 6008, NMRS NM26SW 34, WoSAS site id - 43964

Site 8 – Farmsteads; Rig; (no information) (NGR - NM 2111 6011, NMRS - NM 2111 6011, WoSAS site id - 46547

3 Project Works

The watching brief took place on the 28th February & 7th - 8th April 2008. All groundbreaking works were observed which included the removal of topsoil for the access road, car park area and house plot. Excavation for the septic tank & associated drainage / soakaway and foundation trenches for the dwelling structure were also monitored.

As agreed though the method statement any potential features revealed were to be investigated. However, no archaeological features were observed during the on-site works and no material was recovered.

The works were undertaken as agreed with Argyll & Bute Council and the West of Scotland Archaeology Service. All works complied with the Institute of Field Archaeology's Standards and Policy Statements and Code of Conduct, and Historic Scotland Policy Statements.

4 Findings:

The development area (centred on NGR: NM 2092 6032) (Figure 5) lay to the west of a main road (B8072) on an open area of rough grazing with numerous rocky outcrops.

Access Road and Car Park Area

The access measured roughly 220m in length and was excavated from the existing main road to the dwelling site. Below the turf the topsoil was a mid to light brown very fine silt with a small to moderate percentage of sand [001]. Bracken roots were observable in some areas and bedrock was occasionally visible at the surface, large sub-angular rocks were also prevalent. Although in most sections only the turf and topsoil were removed, the depth was on occasional up to 500mm which revealed a pale brown fairly fine sandy subsoil [002]. The car park area measured 11m by 10m and also comprised topsoil [001] (Figure 3c) – though occasional shells were visible as well as an occasional to moderate amount of sub-rounded



Figure 3a – dwelling site after topsoil removal



Figure 3b – septic tank



Figure 3c – car park area



Figure 4a – new drainage for septic tank



Figure 4b – old drain re-excavated



Figure 4c – general post-ex showing foundation trenches

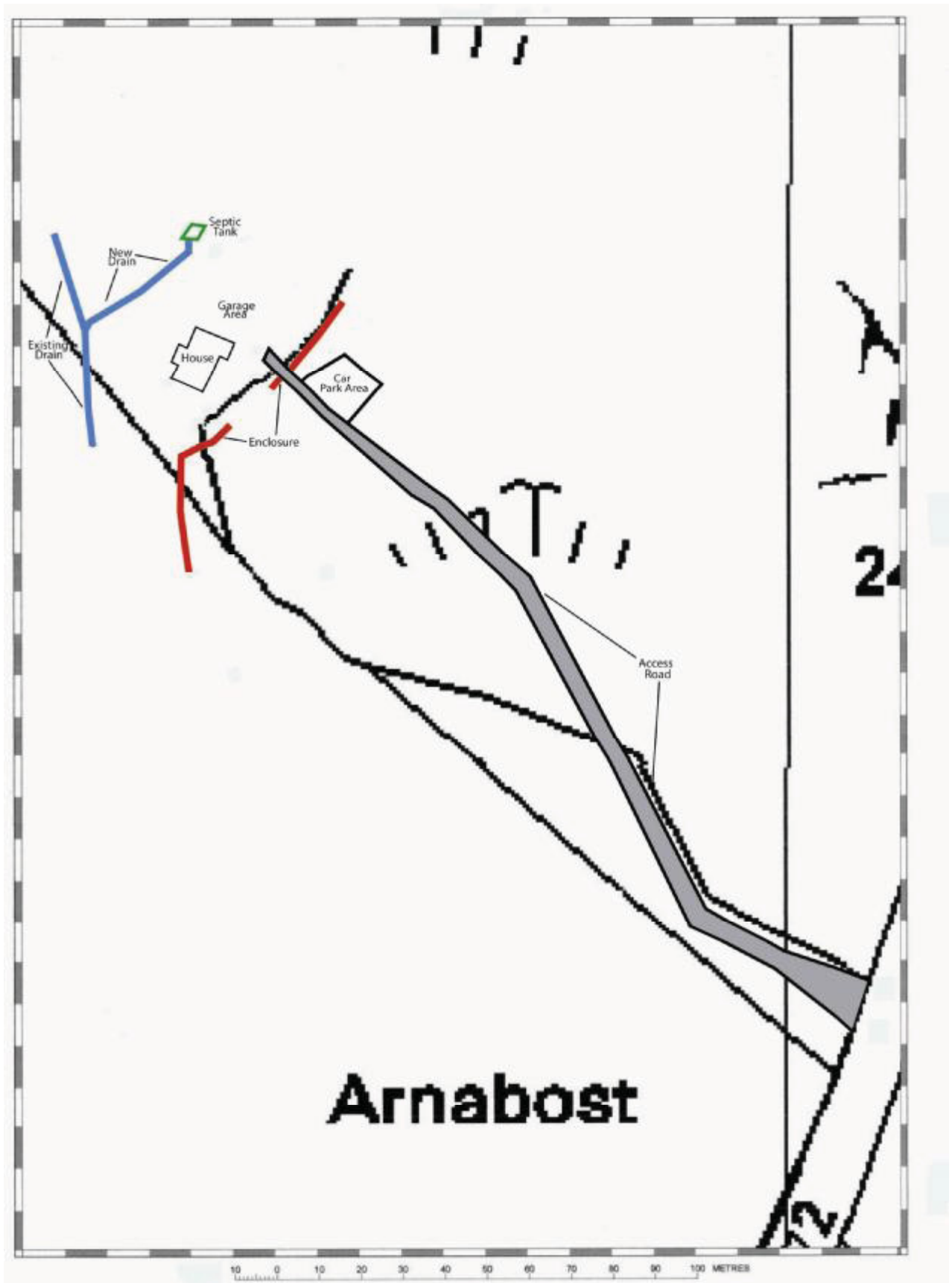


Figure 5 – Site plan

and sub-angular rocks. The average depth was roughly 200mm and subsoil was not revealed.

Septic Tank and Drainage

The area of the septic tank measured roughly 2.2m by 2m and was excavated (under monitoring) to a depth of just below 1m. Immediately below the turf was a warm dark brown peat-like topsoil [003] with an average depth of 250mm, this came down onto a fine grey sand [004]. The sand which contained lenses of whiter sand throughout appeared to be an undisturbed windblown sand (Figure 3b). Below [004] was an orangey grey much coarser sand [005]. At roughly 1m in depth the ground became very wet. The drain that was excavated from the existing field drain (re-excavated) (Figure 4b) to the septic tank was roughly 35m in length with a width of 600mm and an average depth of 750mm. The stratigraphy was more or less the same as the septic tank, though in some sections of the base a reddish / orange clay was apparent [006] (Figure 4a).

Dwelling Site

The dwelling site measured roughly 13.5m by 12m (at most – including protrusions for utility room and porch areas) Removal of the turf and topsoil (Figure 3a) revealed a mid brown fairly fine sand with occasional (some very large) rocks [007]. The foundation trenches (Figure 4c) measured 600mm in width and averaged 400mm in depth. In general all the trenches exhibited context [007] below which was either a mix of red & grey clay [008]; a mix of dark grey & brown coarse sand [009] or a mix of boulder clay & sand [010]. Bedrock was visible in some sections as well as patches of a dark brownish / black 'gravel' [011] which was possibly degraded bedrock.

5 Discussion

The archaeological watching brief failed to identify any significant archaeology within the development area. The open rough grazing ground revealed either a fine silt (containing a small percentage of sand) or peat below the turf. This in turn mainly came down onto a clayey or fine sandy subsoil or a mix of both. Large rocks and bedrock was visible in a moderate amount throughout the site.

However, it is worthy of note that the large amount of rocky outcrops as well as general availability of large rocks on the Isle of Coll has led to the utilising of both for enclosures. Examples of this type of enclosure were noted on the periphery of the development site (front cover) with some of the stones being displaced where the access road terminated at the dwelling site.

6 Conclusion

An archaeological watching brief was carried on the 28th February and 7th – 8th April 2007 for Wayne Thornton of Island Developments Ltd. The works were undertaken in respect to the construction of a new dwelling with associated septic tank, drainage / soakaway and access road, on a site located to the north of Arnabost Cottage, Isle of Coll (centred on NGR: NM 2092 6032). The watching brief identified no archaeological material during the topsoil stripping or groundbreaking works.

References

Documentary		
SODev	1994	<i>National Planning Policy Guideline 5, Archaeology and planning</i> , Scottish Office Development Department.
SOEn	1994	<i>Planning Advice Note 42, Archaeology</i> , Scottish Office Environmental Department.

<i>Cartographic</i>		
Ordnance Survey	1881	1 st Edition Ordnance Survey, Argyllshire
Ordnance Survey	1900	2 nd Edition Ordnance Survey, Argyllshire

Appendix 1: Record Summaries

Context Summaries

No.	Interpretation	Description
001	Topsoil	Mid to light brown very fine silt containing a small to moderate percentage of sand
002	Subsoil	Pale brown fairly fine sand
003	Topsoil	Warm dark brown peat-like soil
004	Windblown sand	Fine grey sand with lenses of whiter sand throughout appeared to be an undisturbed windblown sand.
005	Natural	Orangey grey coarse sand
006	Subsoil	Reddish / orange clay
007	Topsoil	Mid brown fairly fine sand with occasional (some very large) rocks
008	Subsoil	Mix of red & grey clay
009	Subsoil	mix of dark grey & brown coarse dark brownish / black 'gravel' [011] which was possibly degraded bedrock.
010	Subsoil	Mix of boulder clay & sand
011	Degraded bedrock	Dark brownish / black 'gravel'

Photographic Record

No.	Film No.	B&W Negative No.	Disc No.	Digital No.	Description	From	Date
1	1	21	1	1	After removal of topsoil at dwelling site		28/2/08
2	2	17	1	2	Post-ex of car park area	NNW	08/4/08
3	2	16	1	3	Septic tank	E	08/4/08
4	2	15	1	4	Septic tank	NE	08/4/08
5	2	14	1	5	Drainage associated with septic tank	NE	08/4/08
6	2	13	1	6	Drainage associated with septic tank	SW	08/4/08
7	2	12	1	7	Existing drain re-excavated	N	08/4/08
8	2	11	1	8	Enclosure	NNE	08/4/08
9	2	10	1	9	Enclosure	E	08/4/08
10	2	9	1	10	Enclosure showing entrance	E	08/4/08
11	2	8	1	11	General post-ex of dwelling site	W	08/4/08

12	2	7	1	12	General post-ex of dwelling site	N	08/4/08
13	2	6	1	13	General post-ex of dwelling site	E	08/4/08
14	2	5	1	14	General post-ex of dwelling site	S	08/4/08

Drawing Record

Sheet No.	Drawing No.	Description	Scale	Date
1	001	Post ex ground plan of dwelling site	1:50	08/4/08

Appendix 2: Discovery & Excavation in Scotland

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Argyll & Bute Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Site to the North of Arnabost (1) , Isle of Coll
PARISH:	Coll
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Rebecca Shaw
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Rebecca Shaw Archaeological Services
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching Brief
NMRS NO(S):	None
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	None
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NM 209 6032
START DATE (this season)	28 th February 2008
END DATE (this season)	8 th April 2008
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
DESCRIPTION:	An archaeological watching brief was carried on the 28 th February and 7 th – 8 th April 2007 for Wayne Thornton of Island Developments Ltd. The works were undertaken in respect to the construction of a new dwelling with associated septic tank, drainage / soakaway and access road, on a site located to the north of Arnabost Cottage, Isle of Coll (centred on NGR: NM 2092 6032). The watching brief identified no archaeological material during the topsoil stripping or groundbreaking works.
PROJECT CODE:	08004
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Island Developments Ltd
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	1780 Great Western Road Anniesland Glasgow G13 2TL
E MAIL:	rebeccashaw@archaeologist.com
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	Report to West of Scotland Sites and Monuments Record and archive to National Monuments Record of Scotland.

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