



Highland Archaeology Services Ltd

Bringing the past and future together

Watching Brief



New House: Fionnphort Isle of Mull

7 Duke Street Cromarty Ross-shire IV11 8YH Tel: 01381 600491 Fax: 07075 055074
Mobile: 07834 693378 Email: info@hi-arch.co.uk Web: www.hi-arch.co.uk

VAT No. 838 7358 80

Registered in Scotland no. 262144

Registered Office: 10 Knockbreck Street, Tain, Ross-shire IV19 1BJ

Watching Brief

New House: Fionnphort Isle of Mull

Report No.	HAS070201
Client	Martin Caldwell
Planning Ref	02/02194/OUT
Date	13 February 2007
Author	Mary Peteranna

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted to establish the nature and extent of any archaeology likely to be affected by the construction of a new house at Fionnphort, Isle of Mull. This was done in order to fulfil a planning condition prior to development. Desk-based background research was followed by an archaeological watching brief of all areas to be affected.

There are no proposals for any follow-up work in this case.

Contents

Introduction and Planning Background	3
Location	4
Archaeological background and cultural significance	6
Aims and Objectives	6
Method	7
Results	8
Discussion and conclusions	11
Recommendations	11
Appendix 1: Index of Photographs	14

List of Figures

Figure 1 Site Location	4
Figure 2 Architect's site plan	5
Figure 3 First Edition OS 1:10560 Map 1881-2	6
Figure 4 Initial photography – view W to Achaban House	8
Figure 5 Examples of ceramics scattered within topsoil across the site	9
Figure 6 Feature 1 - Field Drain	10
Figure 7 View SE over house site (T1) during excavation	10
Figure 8 View S over drive (T2) after machining	11
Figure 9 Overall site plan	12
Figure 10 Feature 1	13
Figure 11 Camera locations	14

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank the client, Martin Caldwell, the project architect, Shauna Cameron, and Cameron Fletcher of TSL Construction for their help. John Wood managed the project and edited this report, while the fieldwork was undertaken by Mary Peteranna PIFA. Background mapping has been reproduced by permission of the Ordnance Survey under Licence 100043217.

Introduction and Planning Background

An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Highland Archaeology Services at Fionnphort, Isle of Mull from 24-26 January 2007 on behalf of Martin Caldwell to fulfil a planning requirement prior to construction of a new house.

The purpose of the work was to identify and record the nature and extent of any archaeological features affected by the development. This report summarises the results.

The programme consisted of a desk-based assessment, followed by a walkover survey and archaeological watching brief.

This report summarises the results.

Location

The new house site is centred approximately at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NM 314 233, one mile east of the town of Fionnphort on the Ross of Mull peninsula on the Isle of Mull (See Figure 1). It is within the local authority area of the Argyll and Bute Council, which is advised on archaeological matters by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WOSAS) based in Glasgow.

The site is centred approximately at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NH 805 958. It is within the local authority area of the Argyll and Bute Council, which is advised on archaeological matters by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service based in Glasgow (WOSAS).

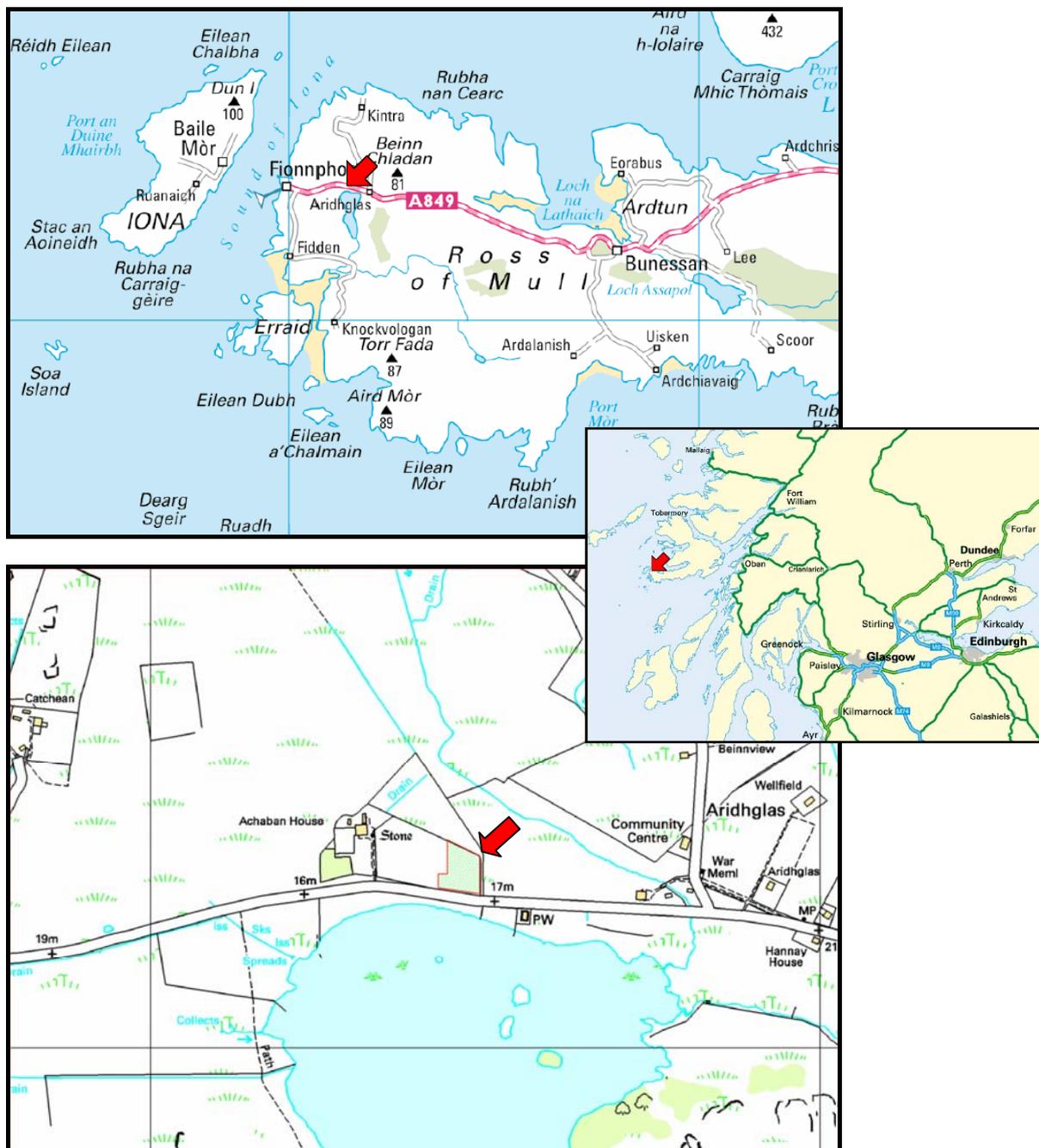


Figure 1 Site Location

Fionnphort is located at the far west end of the Ross of Mull. It is approximately one mile east over the Sound of Iona from the Isle of Iona, an island with a rich pre-Medieval and Medieval history.

The development site is a mostly flat, livestock-grazed field that rises in elevation by about 5m from south to north and sits approximately 20m above sea level. It is grass-covered, well-farmed and bordered by similar fields to the north, east and west. To the south, the site is bordered by a drystone wall and the A849 road with the freshwater Loch Poit na h-Ì adjacent to the road (See Figure 2). The lands at this westernmost end of the Ross of Mull are fairly low-lying and rolling plains, though hills of a coarse-grained red granite outcrop throughout the area and dominate the landscape. This red granite is found in the drystone walls in the area, and was once quarried less than a mile from the site.

A standing stone in the neighbouring field to the west of the site is composed of the granite.

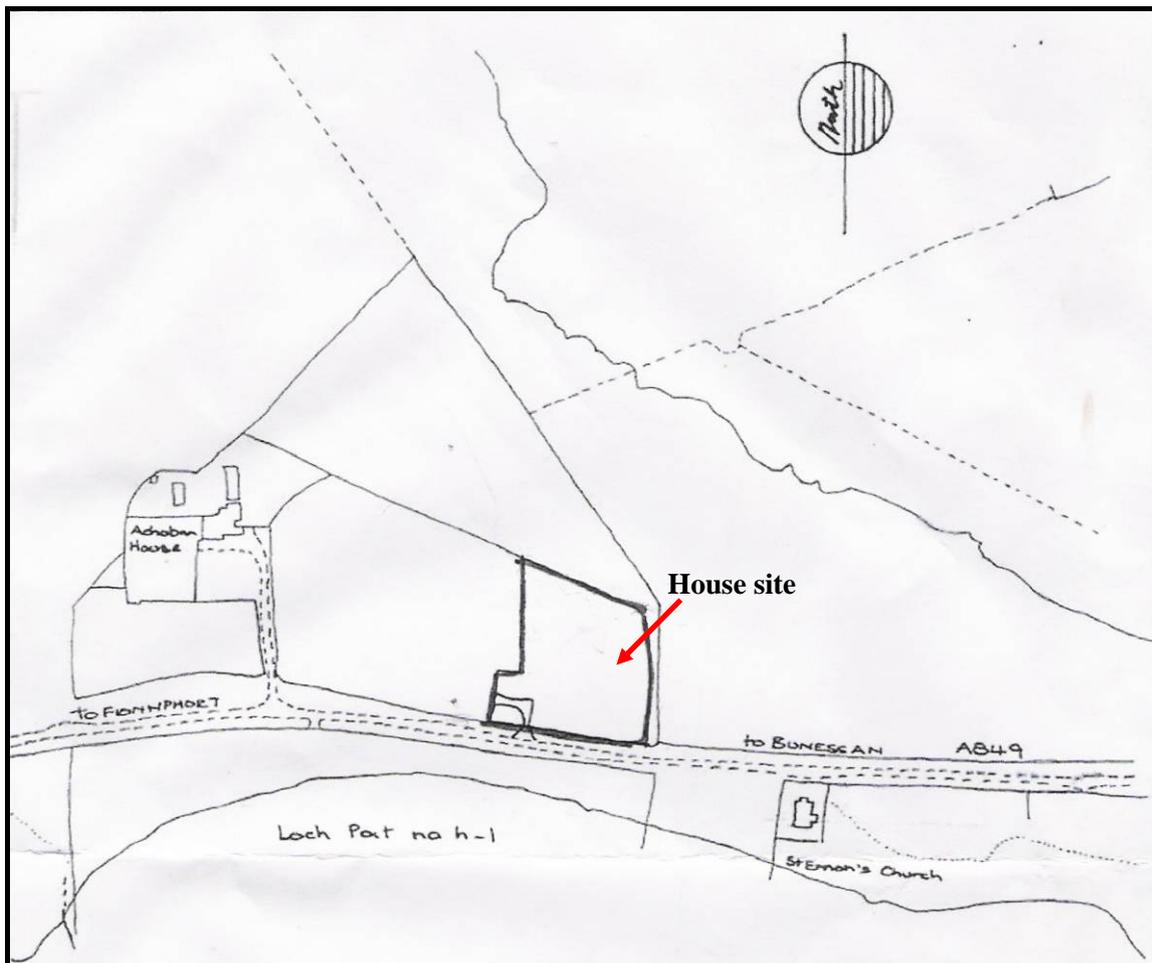


Figure 2 Architect's site plan

Drawn at 1:2500; not reproduced to scale. With thanks to Shauna Cameron

Archaeological background and cultural significance

The new house site lies on a historical pilgrimage route to Iona, marked by standing stones, one of which (NMRS NM32SW1) survives on the grounds of the neighbouring site to the west, Achaban House (See Fig. 3). Another stands 1/3 mile to the east in Aridhglas (NMRS NM32SW11). This route was used for centuries by pilgrims to the shrine of St. Columba, the Christian monk who established the abbey in Iona in 563.

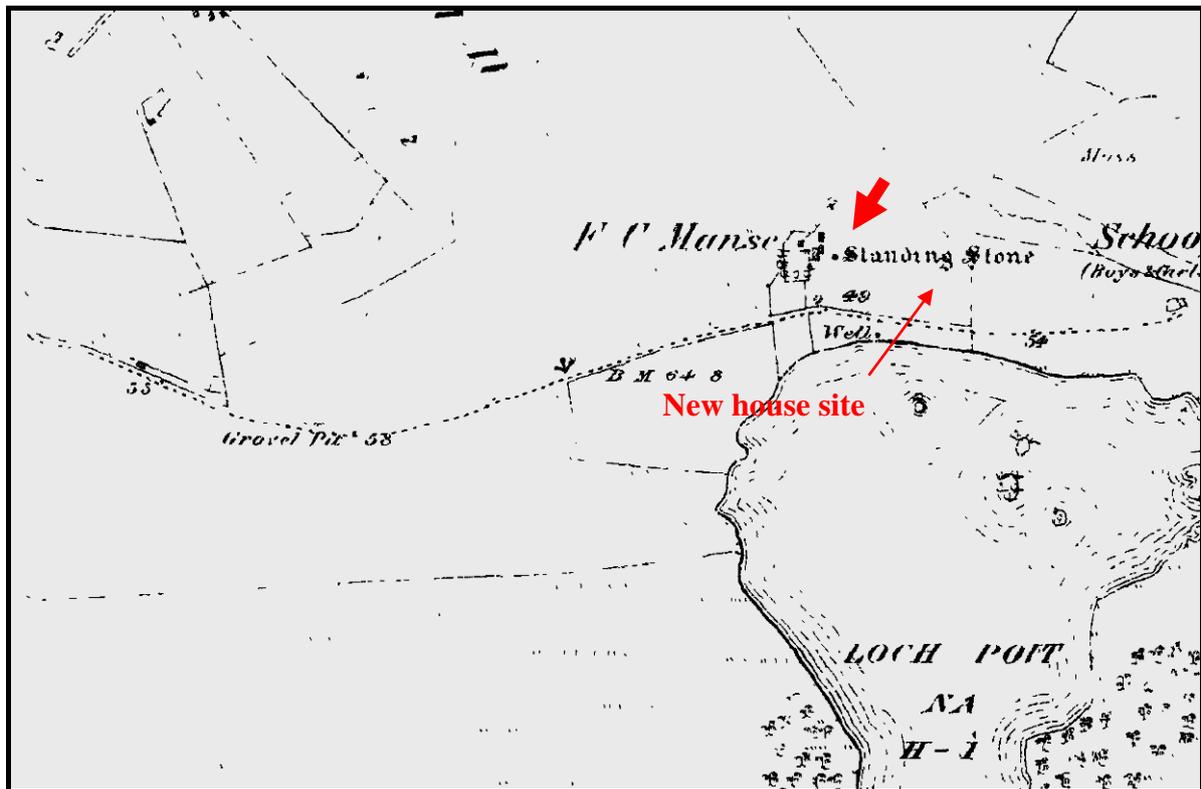


Figure 3 First Edition OS 1:10560 Map 1881-2

Derived from digital mapping. Not to scale

Across the A849 road from the house site is Loch Poit na h-Ì. Located 65m from the north shore of the loch is a possible crannog (NMRS NM32SW13): an artificial island which may be of Iron Age date (c.600BC – 500AD), although there are records of crannogs being occupied much later and indeed earlier than this.

There is an abundance of prehistoric sites throughout the island of Mull, but both the pilgrim route and the crannog suggest a particular potential for further archaeology in this area.

Aims and Objectives

The proposed development required the digging of house foundations, driveway and drainage services.

The overall aims of the archaeology programme were to:

1. Minimize any possible delay or costs to the development by anticipating any archaeological requirements as far as possible, timetabling and integrating archaeological recording work with the project, and dealing with any issues arising quickly and efficiently.
2. Determine as far as possible the character, extent, condition, date and significance of any archaeologically significant remains; and to preserve these where possible and record where necessary in line with NPPG 5 (SOEND 1994) and PAN 42 (SOEND 1994).
3. Meet the requirements of the Argyll and Bute Planning brief for this project.

Method

Desk Based Assessment

A desk-based assessment was conducted prior to fieldwork. A check of all relevant and accessible archaeological / historical records, maps and aerial photographs was undertaken. It was not possible to visit the West of Scotland Historic Environment Record, but enquiries were made. The National Monuments Record for Scotland, the first edition 6 inch Ordnance Survey map, and the map collections of the National Library of Scotland were checked online. No reports on nearby archaeological fieldwork were found.

Walk-over survey and risk assessment

A walk-over survey was undertaken before excavation started and initial record photographs were taken. A risk assessment was also undertaken but no unusual or exceptional risks were noted.

Watching Brief

A watching brief was conducted to monitor digging of all areas of the site to be disturbed during development. Topsoil was cleared from the house site itself as well as an additional buffer around this of at least 2m. width. The drive and the areas for drainage services were also cleared. All excavation was carried out using a back-acting mechanical excavator with 2m-wide straight-edged ditching bucket, monitored by an archaeologist at all times. All surfaces were inspected for possible archaeological features with hand-cleaning by trowel or draw-hoe where necessary.

Digital site plans were produced using the company's Thales Promark 3 DGPS equipment in mapping mode using real-time differential correction. This provides sub-metre accuracy.

A digital photographic record was made, and all photographs and an index are included with this report.

No archaeological excavation was undertaken as part of this work beyond the minimum necessary to achieve the objectives above. Palaeo-environmental sampling was not undertaken.

Results

Desk Based Assessment

There were no recorded sites on the house site, although there were several important sites of archaeological interest nearby, including those mentioned above. The historical maps did not provide any further archaeological information, showing the site to have been in agricultural use as it is today.

No aerial photographs of the site could be located.

Walk-over survey and risk assessment

The initial walk-over was carried out on 24 January 2007. It showed the site to consist of level grazing ground. No unusual or severe risks were identified in this case.

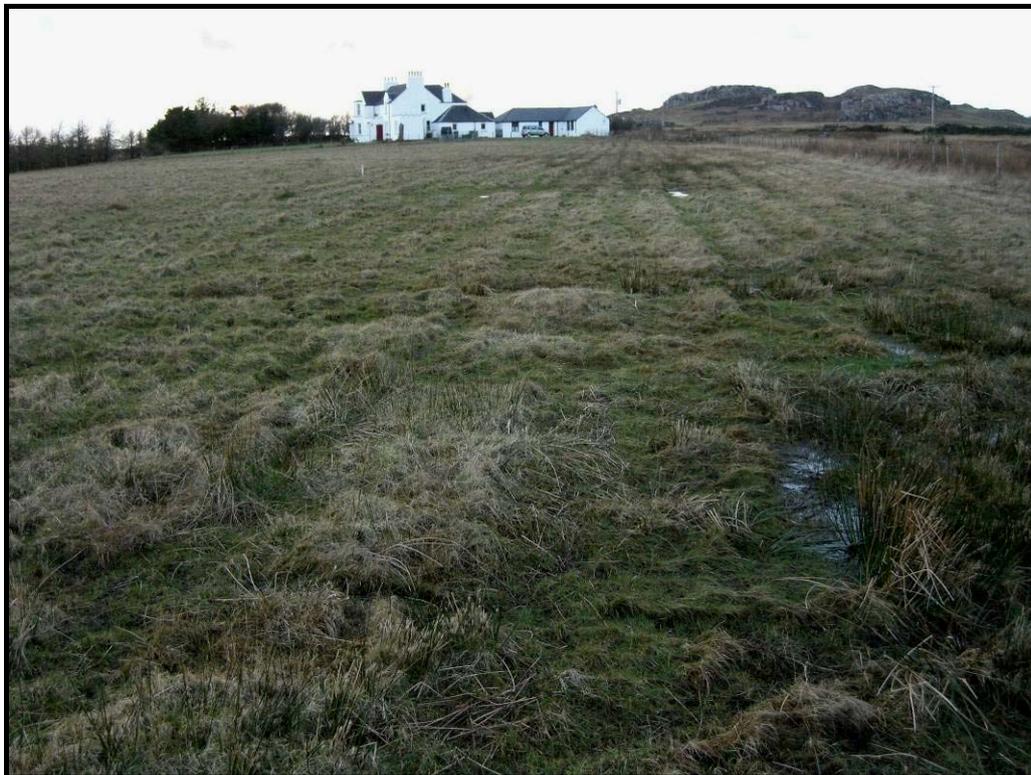


Figure 4 Initial photography – view W to Achaban House

Watching Brief

The topsoil throughout the site was a very dark brown, rich soil with 5% gravel throughout. Scattered boulders of red granite were found over the entire site.

The topsoil extended to a depth of 40cm over the west-southwest and southeast portions of the house site, and a depth of 65-70cm in the northwest and northeast corners of the site. Over the drive, the southern two-thirds of the topsoil extended to a depth of 30-40cm, and the northern third to a depth of 55-65cm. The topsoil over the drainage/septic tank area extended to 30cm below the surface.



Figure 6 Feature 1 - Field Drain



Figure 7 View SE over house site (T1) during excavation



Figure 8 View S over drive (T2) after machining

Discussion and conclusions

The watching brief did not uncover any remains of archaeological interest. The field drain is typical of many such features in the west highlands and elsewhere dating from the 19th or 20th c. However there remains a potential for archaeological discoveries in this area on the basis of the evidence previously recorded.

The area between the drive (T2) and the public road was not observed. This was believed to contain modern service cables and the water main.

Recommendations

We recommend full archaeological clearance be given to the site. There are no recommendations for further work.

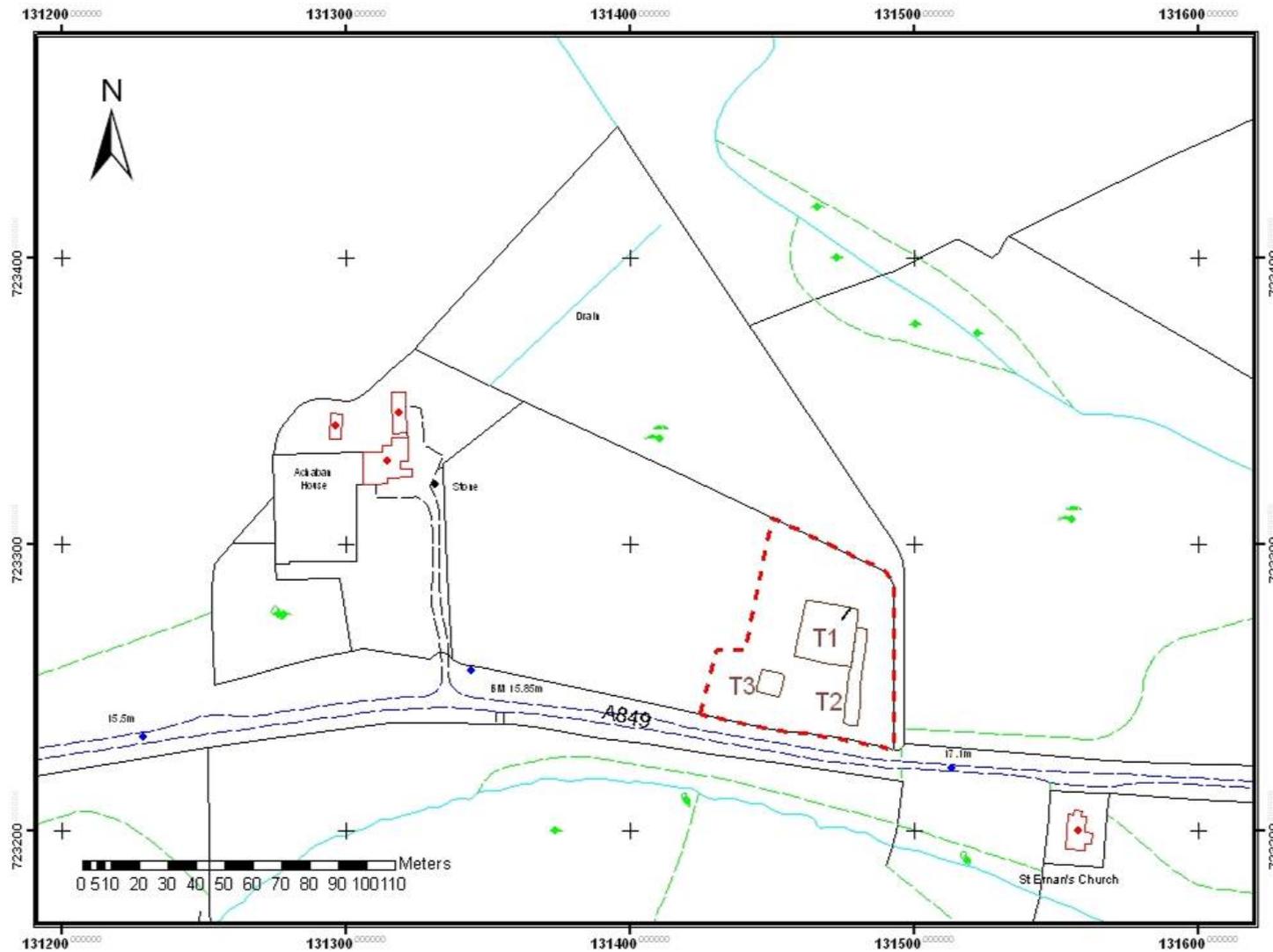


Figure 9 Overall site plan

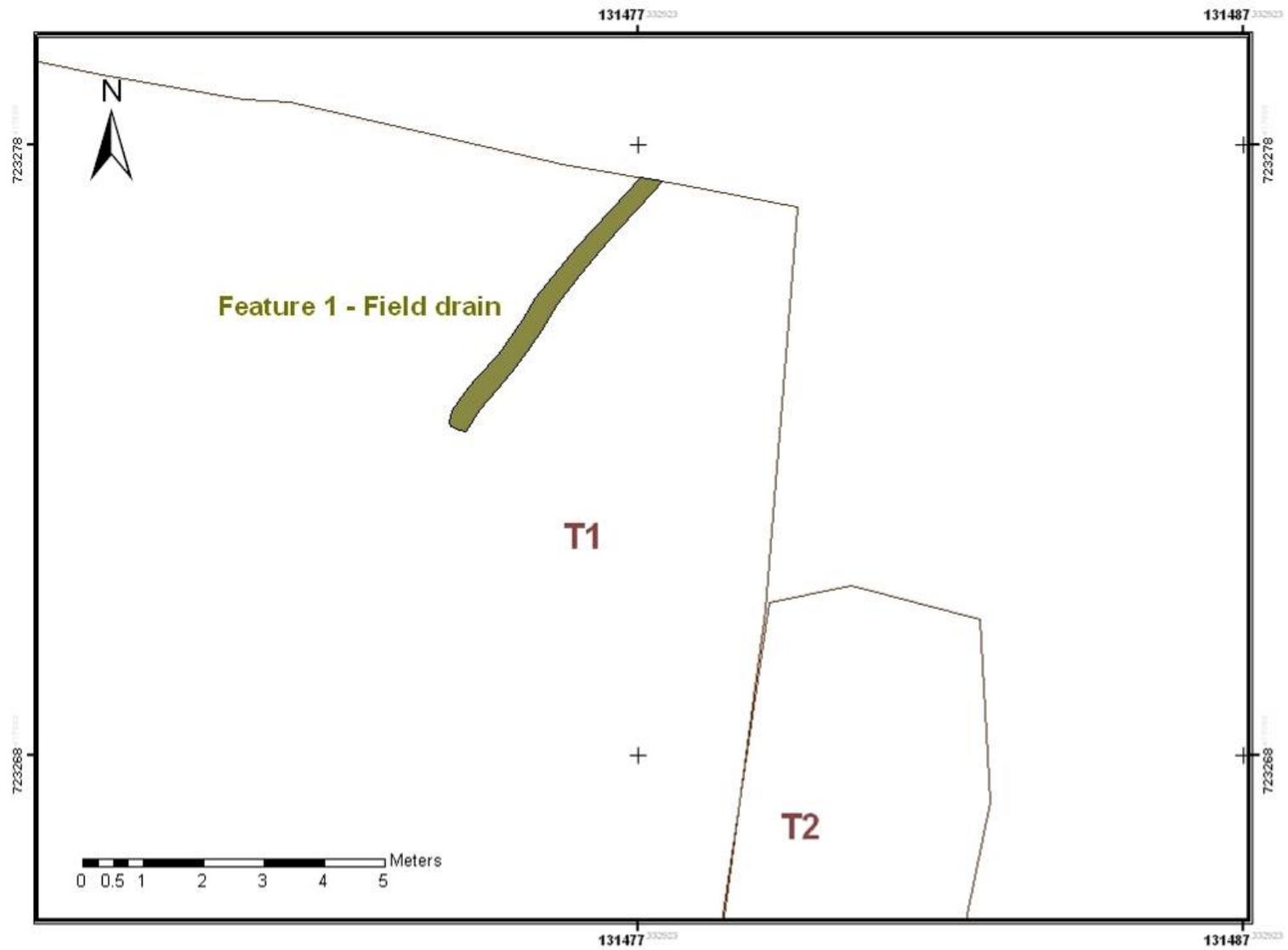


Figure 10 Feature 1

Appendix 1: Index of Photographs

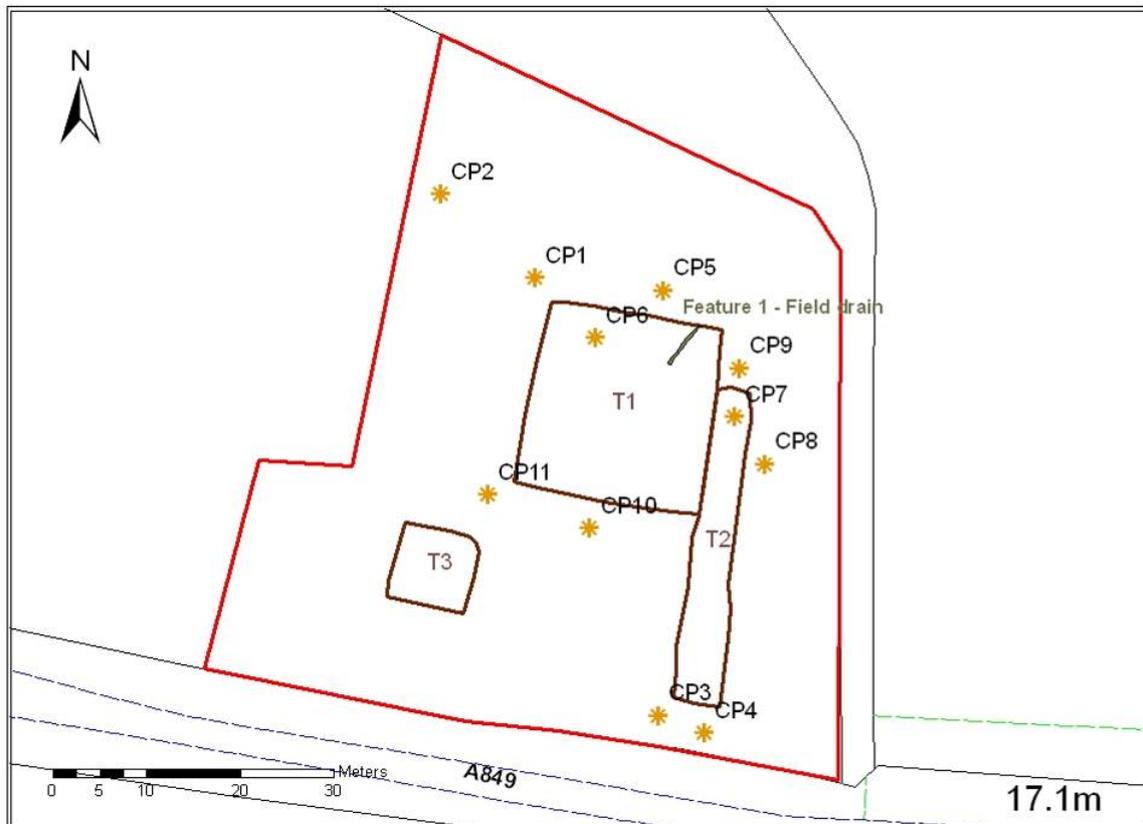


Figure 11 Camera locations

Photo No.	Camera Location	Notes	Taken by	Date
1	CP1	View southeast over house site prior to digging.	MKP	24/01/2007
2	CP1	View south-southeast over house site prior to digging	MKP	24/01/2007
3	CP2	View east over house site prior to digging	MKP	24/01/2007
4	CP2	View southeast over house site prior to digging	MKP	24/01/2007
5	CP2	View south over house site prior to digging	MKP	24/01/2007
6	CP2	View west over neighbouring field to Achaban House	MKP	24/01/2007
7	CP3	View northwest over site and neighbouring field / house	MKP	24/01/2007
8	CP4	View north over mound showing approx. line of old fence	MKP	24/01/2007
9	CP5	View north over northern fence boundary to neighbouring field	MKP	25/01/2007
10	-	HAS Mascot	MKP	25/01/2007
11	CP6	View south-southeast over house site during digging	MKP	25/01/2007
12	CP6	View south-southeast over house site during digging	MKP	25/01/2007

Photo No.	Camera Location	Notes	Taken by	Date
13	-	Feature 1 - View north to northern house site trench edge	MKP	25/01/2007
14	-	Feature 1 - View north to northern house site trench edge	MKP	25/01/2007
15	-	Feature 1 - View north to northern house site trench edge	MKP	25/01/2007
16	CP7	View west over house site upon completion of watching brief	MKP	25/01/2007
17	CP8	View northwest over house site upon completion of watching brief	MKP	25/01/2007
18	CP7	View southeast over house site upon completion of watching brief	MKP	25/01/2007
19	CP9	View south over drive upon completion of watching brief	MKP	25/01/2007
20	CP7	View south over drive upon completion of watching brief	MKP	25/01/2007
21	CP10	View north over house site upon completion of watching brief	MKP	25/01/2007
22	CP10	View north-northeast over house site upon completion of watching brief	MKP	25/01/2007
23	CP11	View northeast over house site upon completion of watching brief	MKP	25/01/2007
24	CP1	View southeast over site upon completion of watching brief	MKP	25/01/2007
25	CP2	View southeast over site upon completion of watching brief	MKP	25/01/2007
26	CP12	View south-southwest over site upon completion of watching brief	MKP	25/01/2007
27	-	Selection of pottery sherds found in site topsoil	MKP	01/02/2007