



ROSS & CROMARTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

# Cameron Square, Fort William – Ground Investigation Archaeological Watching Brief Final Report



National Grid Reference

**NN 10151 73890 (centred)**

Site Code

**CAM13**

RoCAS Report

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*Cover image: Cameron Square, during the ground investigations, facing east*

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### Acknowledgements

Fieldwork was conducted by Mary Peteranna. We would like to thank Helene Bennett and Martin Penny of Capita Symonds for their assistance and Robert Cairns for visiting the site during the fieldwork. All mapping, unless otherwise stated, is reproduced by permission of Landmark Information Group under RoCAS licence LIG1044. Excerpts from historical maps are taken from maps copyright of the National Library of Scotland. Aerial imagery and other background mapping are reproduced under ESRI licensing and provided by the World Imagery layer. This is an unpublished report.

## **Summary**

*This is a report on the watching brief conducted on behalf of Capita Symonds during ground investigations ahead of a regeneration project in Cameron Square, Fort William. Due to the methodology employed by the geotechnical team in targeting previously excavated areas, a watching brief for the ground investigations was determined to be of minimal value. However, one feature of archaeological interest was identified during the works and there is potential for further archaeology to be uncovered during the development of the site.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on 11 June 2013 during ground investigations in Cameron Square, Fort William. The ground investigations were conducted ahead of development of the site, which forms part of a regeneration scheme on behalf of the Highland Council.

The purpose of the archaeological watching brief was to efficiently record the character, extent, condition and date of any archaeologically significant remains which may lie buried below ground level on the site whilst minimising delays and disruption to the development.

## **2.0 Aims and objectives**

The general aim of the archaeological watching brief was to identify features or objects of archaeological importance that could be damaged or destroyed by this development and to propose appropriate mitigation in the event that significant features of interest were uncovered<sup>1</sup>. The *Scottish Planning Policy 2010* and PAN 2/2011 describe how archaeology should be managed when considering planning decisions and determining conditions for developments that have an impact on the historic environment<sup>2</sup>. The end result of the fieldwork is to make available the records of any archaeological remains found on a site.

The specific objectives were:

- 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
- To record and excavate all features and recover any artefacts prior to their destruction
- To sample deposits for post-excitation work, including environmental analysis and dating
- To make recommendations for post-excitation work, when required

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<sup>1</sup> Highland Council 2012 and Institute for Archaeologists 2008

<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Government 2010 and 2011

### 3.0 Site Location and geology

The development site is centred at approximately Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NN 10151 73890 in Fort William (Figure 1). Cameron Square is located on the southeast side of High Street, roughly in the middle of the Town Centre adjacent to the West Highland Museum.

The underlying geology is Micaceous Psammite overlain by hummocky glacial deposits of diamicton, sand and gravel<sup>3</sup>.

### 4.0 Archaeological and historical background

Fort William is strategically situated at the head of the Great Glen where the River Lochy and River Ness flow into Loch Linnhe. The first reference to a settlement appears in 1597 and a turf and timber fort was constructed in 1654 by General George Monk. This fell into disuse and a new fort, named after William III, was begun in 1690. A sutlery or army followers' camp grew up around the fort, named Maryburgh after the queen, in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was built of timber and turf so that it could easily be destroyed if rebellion broke out; it was destroyed on the governor's orders in advance of a Jacobite siege in early 1746<sup>4 5</sup>.

Later known as Gordonsburgh, after the Duke of Gordon, the settlement was remodelled in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the southwest of its original location. It was renamed Duncansburgh in 1834 after the new feu superior, Sir Duncan Cameron of Fassiefern, and became established as the Burgh of Fort William in 1874<sup>6</sup>.

The coming of the railway to the West Highlands had a significant impact on Fort William. Part of the disused fort was obliterated and the heart of the town was cut off from the waterfront<sup>7</sup>.

On the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1871), Cameron Square was known as *Church Square* with a church at its southeast end and *Kennedy's Monument* at the northwest end<sup>8</sup>. In more modern times, Cameron Square, was a car park located in front of the now demolished Town Hall before becoming a focal point for the West Highland Museum, a converted bank dating from around 1835<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> BGS 2013

<sup>4</sup> Miers 2008: 12 -15

<sup>5</sup> Pollard 2008

<sup>6</sup> Miers 2008: 12 -15

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Ordnance Survey 1876

<sup>9</sup> *Am Baile* 2013

## 5.0 Methodology

All work was conducted in accordance with the *Standards for Archaeological Work* from the Highland Council Historic Environment Team (HET)<sup>10</sup>. All reporting and fieldwork will be conducted as per the Institute for Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*<sup>11</sup>.

### 5.1 Desk-based Assessment

The purpose of the desk-based assessment (DBA) was to gain information about the known archaeology or potential for archaeology within the development 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 to assist in the formulation of a strategy for work<sup>12</sup>. This information serves to inform the archaeologist of the potential nature of archaeological features to be uncovered during fieldwork.

A check of all available historical and archaeological records, aerial photographs and historical maps was conducted using the Highland Historic Environment Record (HER), 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.

### 5.2 Watching Brief

The fieldwork for the ground investigation consisted of hand digging five test trenches and pits for two window samples (Figure 2). The test trenches were dug to identify the position of utilities cables and pipes which had been located during a recent ground penetrating radar survey. The two window sample pits were hand dug to a depth of 1.2m prior to utilising the borehole shaft to collect a sample.

Prior to conducting the watching brief, the archaeologist had not been informed of the actual methodology, which would leave very little potential for uncovering *in situ* archaeology during this phase of works. After monitoring the digging of two window samples and two test trenches, it was determined that the remaining three trenches could be dug without archaeological supervision. This assessment was supported by the Highland Council Historic Environment Team.

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<sup>10</sup> Highland Council 2012

<sup>11</sup> Institute for Archaeologists (a) 2012

<sup>12</sup> Institute for Archaeologists (b) 2012



Figure 1 Site location map<sup>13</sup> showing Cameron Square in Fort William

<sup>13</sup> Contains Ordnance Survey data Crown copyright and database rights 2013

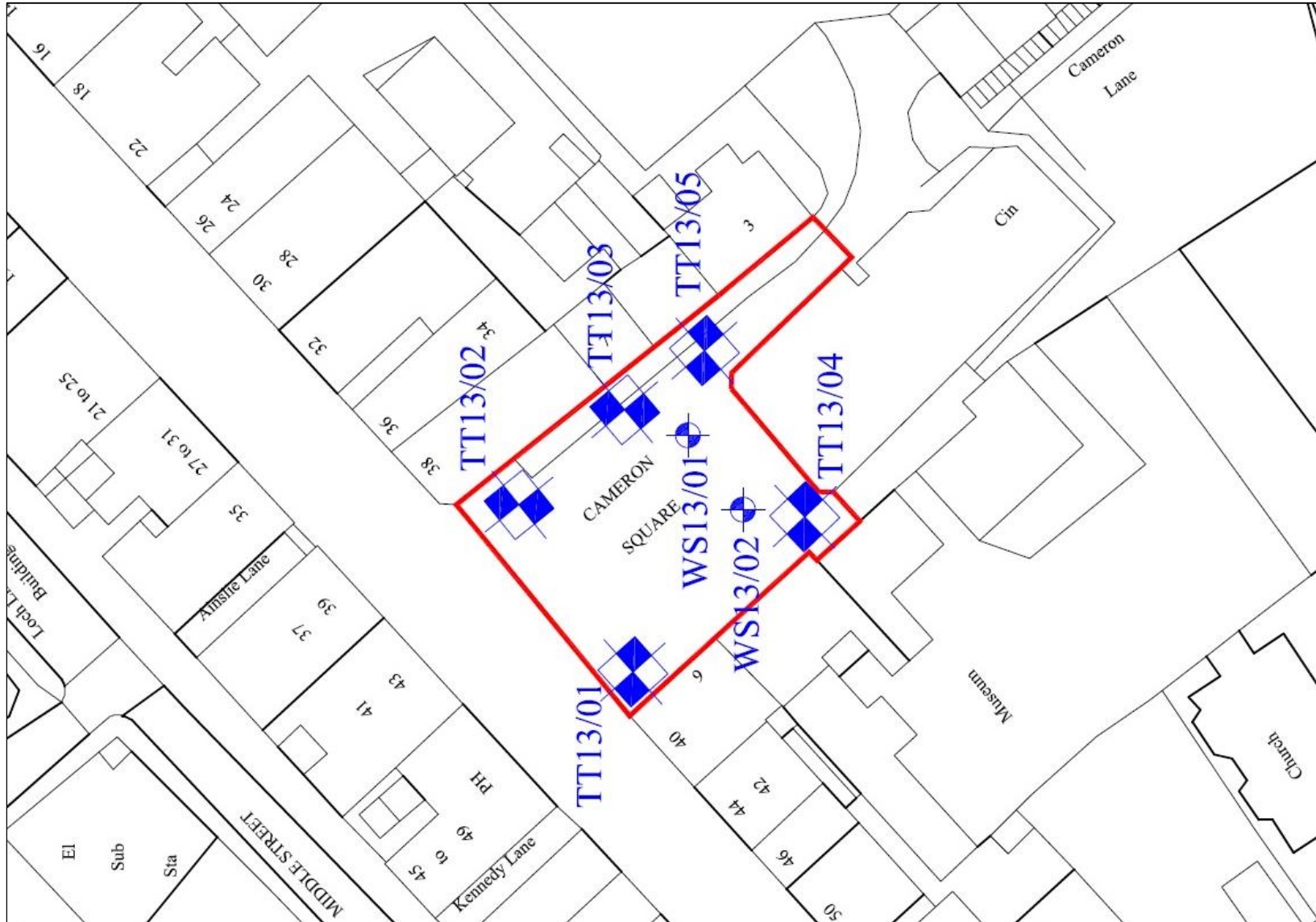


Figure 2 Proposed test trench (TT) and window sample (WS) locations for the Cameron Square ground investigations<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Plan supplied by Capita Symonds



## 6.0 Results

### 6.1 Desk-based assessment

A desk-based search was carried out in advance of the fieldwork.

#### 6.1.1 Cartographic Sources

The site location and surrounding landscape were examined on mapping held at the National Library of Scotland on-line<sup>15</sup>.

**First Edition 25-inch-to-the-mile Ordnance Survey map  
*Inverness-shire (Mainland)*, Sheet CL.7 – surveyed 1871, published 1876**

The First Edition Ordnance Survey map refers to the site as *Church Square*. Kennedy's Monument is located near the centre of the northwest end of the square within an enclosure containing trees. A church is shown at the southeast end of the square and part of the British Linen Bank on the southwest side of the square appears to have an extension on the front of it (Figure 3).

**Second Edition 6-inch-to-the-mile Ordnance Survey map  
*Inverness-shire (Mainland)*, Sheet CL – revised 1899, published 1904**

The Second Edition Ordnance Survey map does not provide a name for the square. It still shows the Kennedy Monument in the same position, but the building at the southeast end of the square appears to have an extension from the north corner of the building.

#### 6.1.2 Highland Historic Environment Record

**MHG21967    NN 10240 73890    Kennedy Monument, Cameron Square**

The Kennedy Monument was once located in the centre of the northwest end of Cameron Square.

**MHG17336    NN 10237 73926    38 High Street, Fort William**

Located on the northeast side of Cameron Square is the former bank, which had once formed part of the Caledonian Hotel, reportedly built in about 1840.

**MHG17254    NN 10218 73893    West Highland Museum, 4, 6, & 8 Cameron Square**

The present day West Highland Museum, located on the southwest side of Cameron Square, was formerly the British Linen Bank, founded in 1835.

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<sup>15</sup> National Library of Scotland 2013

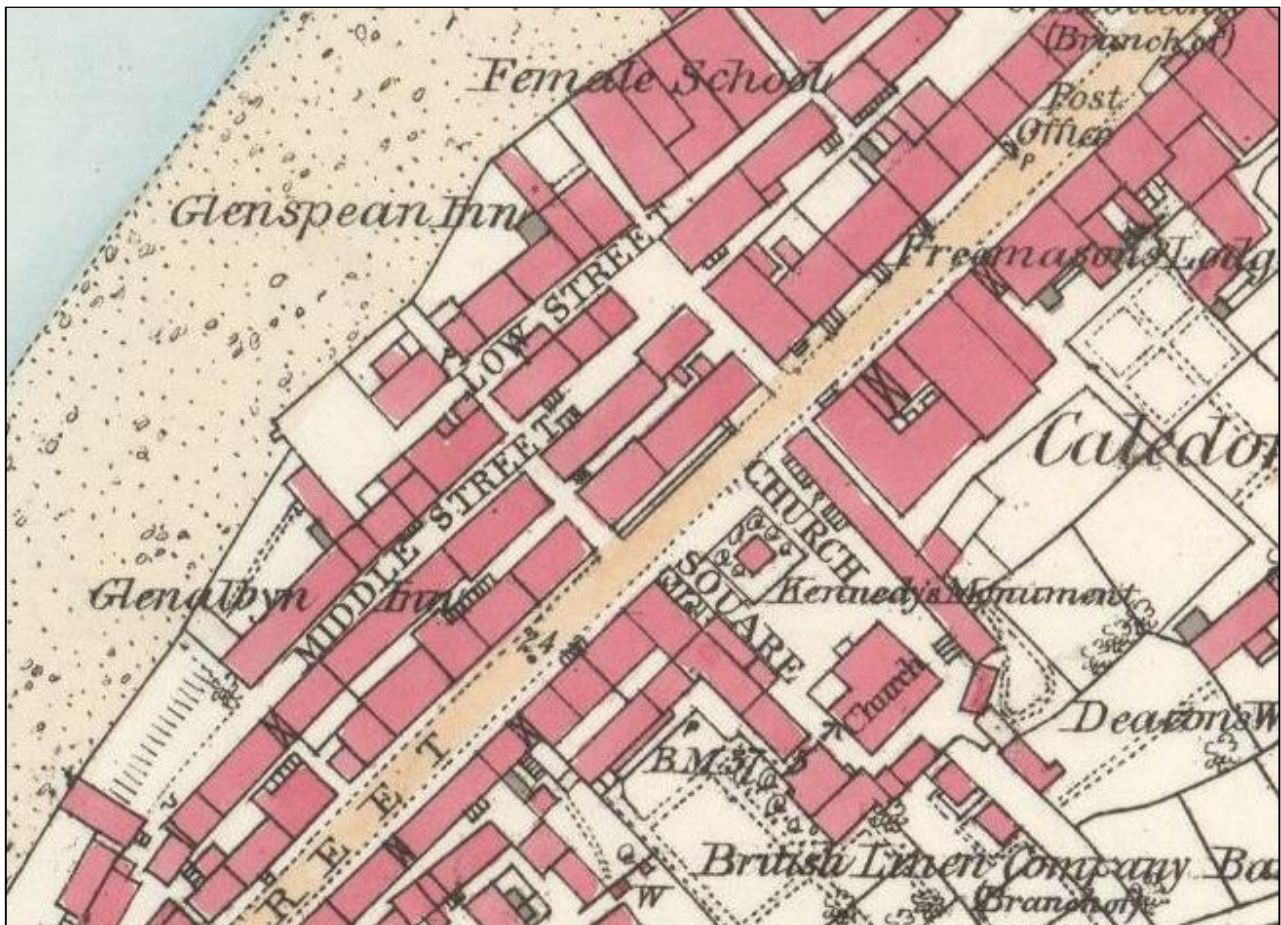


Figure 3 Excerpt from the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 25-inch to the mile Ordnance Survey map of 1871 (copyright National Library of Scotland) showing Church Square<sup>16</sup>

## 6.2 Archaeological Watching brief

The archaeological watching brief was conducted on 11 June 2013. The site sloped uphill from northwest to southeast and comprised a surface laid with concrete blocks and planted with some trees.

The archaeologist had not been previously notified of the methodology to hand dig trenches in the locations of previously identified utilities. Test trenches 13/01 and 13/02 and Window samples 13/01 and 13/02 were monitored during the fieldwork (Figure 4), after which it was determined, due to the methodology, that monitoring of the three final trenches would provide little information as they were being dug in previously disturbed locations.

**WS13/01**, located in the southeast corner of the square, comprised a hand dug pit measuring approximately 0.3m in diameter and 1.2m deep (to coring depth). Below the concrete block surface, an infill of mixed gravel and stone slab fragments was noticed to a depth of approximately 1m where the natural gravelly sand appeared.

<sup>16</sup> National Library of Scotland 2013

**TT13/02**, located in the north corner of the square, measured approximately 1.2m long by 0.3m wide. Utilities services were located at both ends of the trench. At the centre of the trench, at approximately 0.56m below the surface, a thin schist capping stone covered a slight drain (Feature 1). Only a small portion of the drain, which comprised a channel 0.14m wide and 0.17m deep with small cobbles lining the sides, was uncovered (Plate 1 and Plate 2). There appeared to be no structural base to the drain, which was filled with gravelly soil contained glazed pottery sherds, slate fragments and animal bone apparently Post Medieval in date.



Figure 4 Location map<sup>17</sup> showing the four trenches monitored during the watching brief

<sup>17</sup> Contains Ordnance Survey data Crown copyright and database rights 2013



**Plate 1**      **Feature 1, a cobble-lined drain at the base of TT13/02**



**Plate 2**      **Feature 1, a cobble-lined drain in TT13/02**

**TT13/01**, located in the west corner of the square, measured approximately 1.2m long by 0.3m wide. A utilities pipeline was located in its base within a gravelly sand fill (Plate 3). There were no pottery sherds or other finds noted in the trench fill.

**WS13/02**, located in the south corner of the square, comprised a hand dug pit measuring approximately 0.3m in diameter and 1.2m deep (to coring depth). Below the concrete block surface, an infill of mixed gravel and stone slab fragments was noticed to a depth of approximately 0.9m where the natural gravelly sand appeared.



Plate 3 TT13/01, utilities pipeline at the base of the trench

## 7.0 Discussion

Due to the methodology employed during the ground investigations, which targeted areas on the site that had been previously disturbed to install utilities, and due to the ground conditions noted in the window samples, it was determined that the test trenches on southeast (uphill) side of the site did not warrant archaeological supervision. Local amateur archaeologist, Robert Cairns, did visit the site to check the remains three trenches. He noted no further features and recovered several scattered sherds of Post Medieval pottery from **TT13/05**.

## **8.0 Conclusions**

The cobble-lined drain, Feature 1, is of archaeological interest and indicates the potential for archaeological remains, particularly dating to the origins of the Post Medieval town, on the site. Furthermore, the historical mapping and historical records indicate there is significant potential for archaeological remains to survive below the present surface on the site, i.e. the footings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Kennedy Monument, the footings of the old church/town house at the southeast end of the site and remnants of earlier structures in front of the West Highland Museum.

It is recommended that site clearance during development work be conducted under archaeological supervision.

## 9.0 References

Am Baile 2013. *Cameron Square, Fort William*. Accessed online on 7-6-2013 at [http://www.ambaile.org.uk/en/item/item\\_photograph.jsp?item\\_id=110007](http://www.ambaile.org.uk/en/item/item_photograph.jsp?item_id=110007)

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**Appendix 1 List of Site Photographs**

No.	Direction Facing	Feature No.	Notes	Taken By	Date
1	N	-	Cameron Square during ground investigations - photo shows the site of WS13/01 bore hole	MKP	11/06/2013
2	NNE	1	TT13/02, with a cobble lined drain (Feature 1) at the base and the purple utilities pipe in the north end of the trench	MKP	11/06/2013
3	NNE	1	TT13/02, with a cobble lined drain (Feature 1) at the base and the purple utilities pipe in the north end of the trench	MKP	11/06/2013
4	SSW	1	TT13/02, with a cobble lined drain (Feature 1) at the base and the purple utilities pipe in the north end of the trench	MKP	11/06/2013
5	N	1	TT13/02, showing side-on view of the cobble lined drain (Feature 1) at the base of the trench with the and the purple utilities pipe in the top of the trench	MKP	11/06/2013
6	E	-	Cameron Square during ground investigations - photo shows the site of TT13/01 in front right of photograph inside fencing	MKP	11/06/2013
7	SSW	-	Cameron Square during ground investigations - photo shows the site of WS13/02 bore hole (centre of photo inside fencing and TT13/01 in centre right of photograph inside fencing	MKP	11/06/2013
8	NE	-	TT13/01, showing utilities pipe in base of trench	MKP	11/06/2013
9	WSW	1	Thin schist capping stone covering ditch Feature 1	RC	11/06/2013
10	SE	1	Feature 1, after clean-back, showing slight cobble lining and no evidence of stonework at base of drain	RC	11/06/2013
11	SE	1	Feature 1, after clean-back, showing slight cobble lining and no evidence of stonework at base of drain	RC	11/06/2013