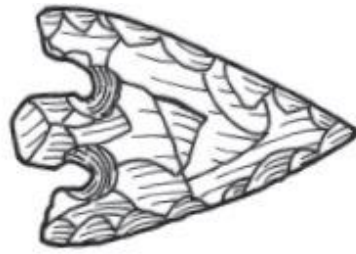


ROCAS



ROSS & CROMARTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

Erection of 2 Holiday Houses Inchnacroe, Morvich

Archaeological Controlled Strip Watching Brief



Erection of 2 Holiday Houses Inchnacroe, Morvich

Archaeological Controlled Strip Watching Brief

Final Report

Client	Mackintosh Joinery
National Grid Reference	NG 97018 21187 (centred)
Site Code	INC14
RoCAS Report No.	2014-10/INC14
Author	Mary Peteranna
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Approved by	L. Fraser
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Fieldwork was conducted by Mary Peteranna. We would like to thank Callum Mackintosh of Mackintosh Joinery for his assistance on site and for commissioning the work. Excerpts from historical maps are taken from mapping copyright of the National Library of Scotland. Ordnance Survey mapping is reproduced by permission of Landmark Information Group license #LIG1044, Ordnance Survey ©Crown Copyright 2014. All rights reserved. Licence number 100022432. This is an unpublished report.

Summary

A controlled strip archaeological watching brief was conducted on behalf of Mackintosh Joinery during the topsoil clearance of a site for two holiday letting houses in Inchnacroe, Morvich. There were no features of archaeological interest uncovered on the site. During the fieldwork, a rapid survey of the landscape on the north side of the development area was conducted in order to record the location of four archaeological sites of interest.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

A controlled strip archaeological watching brief was undertaken on 20th March 2014 during site clearance ahead of development of two holiday house sites on land east of 2 Inchnacroe, Morvich in Glen Shiel. The work was requested by the Highland Council Historic Environment Team due to the potential for buried archaeological remains to be affected by the development. The purpose of the archaeological watching brief was to efficiently record the character, extent, condition and date of any archaeologically significant remains whilst minimising delays and disruption to the development.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The general aim of the fieldwork 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 uncovered¹. 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 environment². 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 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-excavation work, including environmental analysis and dating
- To make recommendations for post-excavation work, when required

¹ Highland Council 2012 and Institute for Archaeologists 2008

² The Scottish Government 2010 and 2011

2.0 Site Location and Geology

The development site is centred at approximately Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NG 97018 21187 (Figure 1) near the southeastern edge of Loch Duich, at the northwest end of Glen Shiel in the Scottish Highlands. The house sites are located approximately 1km east of Morvich in Strath Croe on the north side of the River Croe, situated at the base of Beinn Fhada.

The underlying geology is metamorphic pelite and psammite overlain by hummocky glacial deposits of diamicton, sand and gravel³.

3.0 Archaeological and historical background

Morvich falls within an estate owned by the National Trust for Scotland and is home to the Kintail Mountain Rescue Team, located at the north-western extremity of the Five Sisters of Kintail, a location well-placed as a base for mountaineers and hill walkers.

The remains of significant prehistoric settlement have been previously recorded around the development site. Three probable prehistoric hut circles have previously been recorded approximately 100-150m northeast of the site, with three further hut circle sites located between 300-800m to the southwest on the south side of River Croe⁴.

During the 18th-19th centuries, Strath Croe was home to scattered farmsteads and associated settlement along the River Croe and its tributaries. At the south-eastern end of Loch Duich, Strath Croe formed part of a main thoroughfare from the west coast to Beaulieu / Inverness via Glen Affric. Ruinous Post Medieval settlement sites are dotted around the landscape on both banks of the River Croe.

The ruins of St Dubhthach's Church are located just over 1km west of Morvich, next to the A87. The site of the church, dedicated to Saint Duthac in 1050, lies next to the Clachan Duich, the traditional burial ground of the Clan Macrae⁵. Eilean Donan Castle, formerly a seat of the Mackenzies of Kintail, is located approximately 6mi to the northwest of Morvich.

³ British Geological Society 2014

⁴ Highland Historic Environment Record (HER) 2014

⁵ *Ibid*

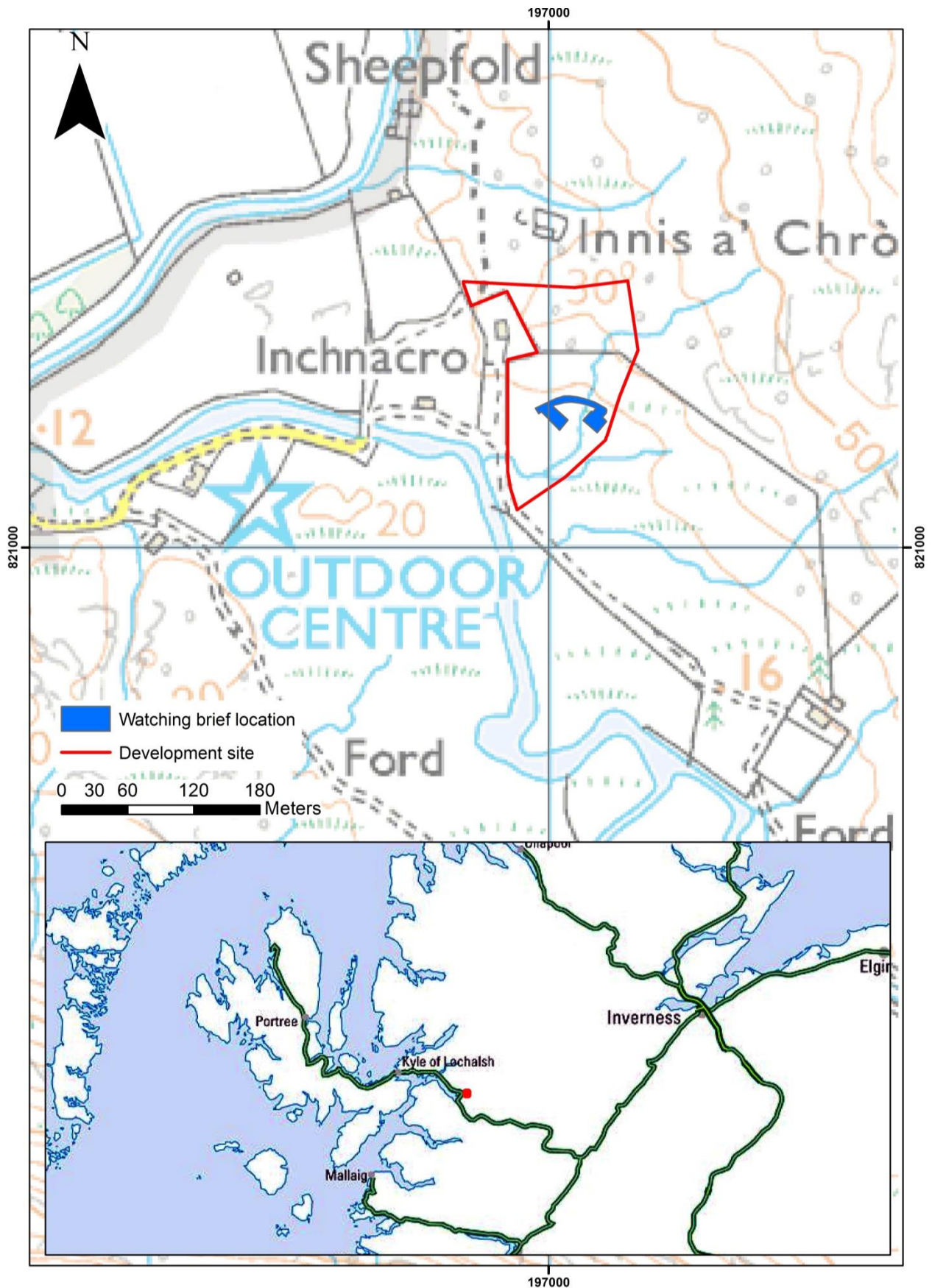


Figure 1 Location of the development site and watching brief location. Mapping reproduced courtesy of Ordnance Survey ©Crown Copyright 2014. All rights reserved. Licence number 100022432.

4.0 Methodology

All work was conducted in accordance with the *Standards for Archaeological Work* from the Highland Council Historic Environment Team (HET)⁶ and the Institute for Archaeologists' (IfA) *Code of Conduct*⁷.

4.1 Desk-based Assessment

The purpose of the desk-based assessment 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, quality and state of preservation of the potential archaeological resource), in order to make an assessment of its merit to assist in the formulation of a strategy for work⁸. This information serves to inform the archaeologist of the potential nature of archaeological features to be uncovered during fieldwork.

A desk-based assessment was conducted ahead of fieldwork. A check of all available historical and archaeological records, aerial photographs and historical maps was conducted using the Highland Historic Environment Record (HHER), the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS), Historic Scotland's databases, the National Library of Scotland, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland databases, statistical accounts and other literary sources.

4.2 Controlled Strip Watching Brief

The purpose of the controlled strip archaeological watching brief was to efficiently identify and record any features or finds of archaeological interest uncovered during the development work, in order to minimise any delays or disruptions to the project⁹. All on-site recording was carried out according to standard IfA procedures, using written records and drawn plans.

Topsoil clearance of the entire area to be developed was conducted under the guidance of an archaeologist. This area included an access track, parking areas, footprints for two new houses and the locations of any service trenches/ soakaways.

5.0 Results

5.1 Desk-based assessment

The initial desk-based assessment revealed that settlement had been present in the area around the proposed development site since before the mid-1700s. Earlier settlement, possibly prehistoric, was also noted within 1/2km of the development site.

⁶Highland Council 2012

⁷Institute for Archaeologists (a) 2012

⁸Institute for Archaeologists (b) 2012

⁹Institute for Archaeologists 2008

5.1.1 *Cartographic Sources*

The site location and surrounding landscape were examined using mapping held on-line by the National Library of Scotland¹⁰.

William Roy's Military Survey of Scotland, 1747-1755

On Roy's map, the strath along the River Croe is annotated as *Croe of Kintail*. On the east side of Loch Duich in the glen, settlements are depicted at *Clachandonich, Morvachbeg, Morvachmore, Beaulag* and *Incherua* – Inchnacroe – on the north side of the River Croe. Areas of cultivation are also shown on the south and north sides of the river at Morvich.

John Thomson's Atlas of Scotland, 1832

Northern Part of Inverness-shire

This map also depicts *Croe of Kintail* and interestingly shows a substantial road running from the strath eastward across the country.

First Edition 6-inch-to-the-mile Ordnance Survey map

Ross-shire & Cromartyshire (Mainland), Sheet CXXVIII

Survey date: 1874 Publication date: 1880

The First Edition Ordnance Survey mapping (Figure 2) shows Strath Croe as a well-established, cultivated landscape with substantial field divisions. Much as it appears today, the cultivated ground runs up to and along the west side of the *Amhainn Chonaig*, a burn which branches off the River Croe to the northeast between Morvich and Inchnacroe.

Innisa' achro' (Inchnacroe) is accessed from *Morvich* via a ford over the river at the junction with *Amhainn Chonaig*. A track runs northeast-ward to the settlement at *Innisa' chro'*, which is depicted as a main farmstead with attached enclosure bordered by trees. Within the settlement, there are five other roofed buildings and a sheepfold with an attached dyke running southward to the River Croe. The mapping also depicts tracks running to the northeast and southeast along the two burns.

Second Edition 6-inch-to-the-mile Ordnance Survey map

Ross and Cromarty Sheet CXXVIII

Publication date: 1904 Date revised: 1902

The Second Edition Ordnance Survey mapping (Figure 3) shows a significant change in the settlement at *Innisa' Chró*. A sizeable roofed building is depicted adjacent to the north bank of River Croe on the west side of the dyke that is shown on the First Edition mapping. There are two other roofed buildings associated with the settlement and four unroofed buildings, including the main farmstead which has been abandoned by this time.

¹⁰ National Library of Scotland 2014

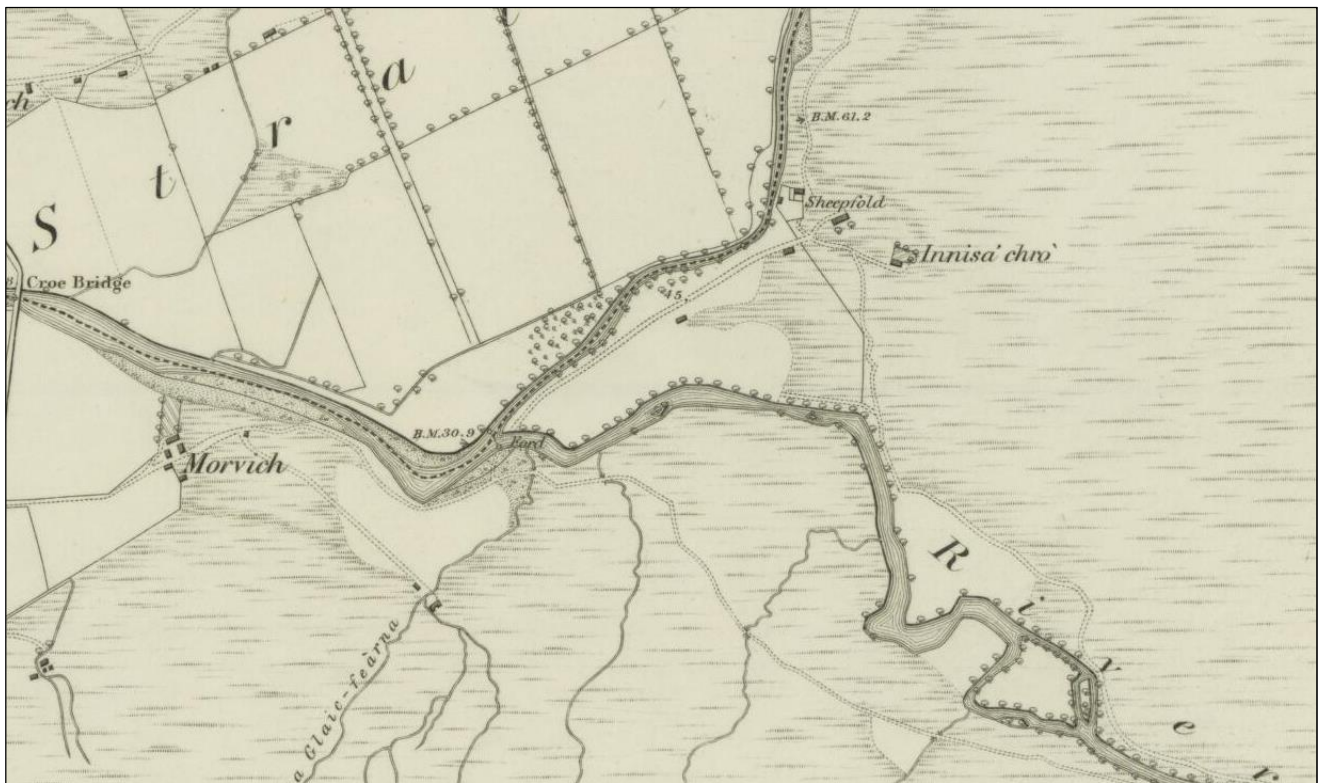


Figure 2 Excerpt from the 1st Edition 6-inch to the mile Ordnance Survey map of 1874 showing *Inchnacroe*¹¹



Figure 3 Excerpt from the 2nd Edition 6-inch to the mile Ordnance Survey map of 1902 showing *Inchnacroe*¹²

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² *ibid*

5.1.2 *Highland Historic Environment Record (HHER) Sites*

MHG7451 NG 9710 2140 Innis A'Chrotha Hut Circles

According to the Ordnance Survey in 1974, in the area centred on NG 971 214 there is a settlement of 3 hut circles (A-C). 'A' measures 7.5m in diameter between wall centres with an entrance in the west. 'B' is a circular platform 9.5m in diameter with traces of walling round the edge and a later building 4.5m x 2.5m on the east side. 'C' is 5.7m in diameter within a wall 1.1m thick and an entrance in the west. Immediately on the N side of the entrance built against the outer face is what appears to be an annex 2.5m in diameter. About thirty metres in front of the hut circle is a ruinous wall of uncertain period.

MHG7453 NG 9680 2170 Dorusdain Wood, Cup-marked Stone

As recorded by Wallace in 1897, on the low ground between Lienassie (NG 9621) and Dorusduan (NG 9822), there is an exposed, glaciated rock-surface covered with cup-marks. This site was visited in 1974 by the Ordnance Survey who recorded five cup-marked stones in the area centred on NG 968 217 on outcrops situated on a low rise.

EHG42 NG 9796 2160 (centred) Inchnacroe Walkover Survey

A walkover survey was conducted by Jill Harden and Jonathon Wordsworth in 1998.

MHG34812 NG 9682 2075 Gleann Lichd Roundhouse

A roundhouse measuring approximately 9m in diameter has boulders protruding through the grass and rushes. There is no definite width or height to it. This site was recorded by Wordsworth and Harden in 1998.

MHG34811 NG 9686 2067 Gleann Lichd Roundhouse

A possible roundhouse measuring approximately 7m in diameter has had most of the walling robbed out. There is no definite width or height to it. This site was recorded by Wordsworth and Harden in 1998.

MHG34810 NG 9614 2086 Morvich Roundhouse

A possible roundhouse, measuring 6m by 5m, is located on a prominent knoll used for the radio and TV masts for Morvich. This site was recorded by Wordsworth and Harden in 1998.

5.2 **Archaeological Watching brief**

The archaeological watching brief was conducted on March 20th, 2014 during a day of rainy, windy weather. Prior the fieldwork, the western section of the proposed site access had already been constructed. The location of the house sites had also been changed from the northern side of the development area¹³ to the southern side of the development area (Figure 1).

¹³ Peteranna 2014

5.2.1 *Summary of Fieldwork*

The new house sites and access track were located on hummocky, heather-covered terrain on ground set just above a low-lying plain extending from the River Croe (Plate 1). A small watercourse ran from northeast to southwest between the two house sites. At the time of the fieldwork, the peat topsoil was saturated with water and the watercourse was fast-moving, while the plain around the River Croe was partially flooded with water.

The peat layer measured up to 0.8m deep along the western side of the access track and up to 0.6m deep over the rest of the site. It covered an underlying subsoil of grey clay and loose gravel and stone layers (Plate 2) with rock outcrops in places. There were no features of archaeological interest identified and no artefacts were recovered.

Although the development site did not appear to have any archaeological potential, a small cluster of probable tree roots (Plate 3) was noted on the west side of the site during digging for the access track. The vegetation was preserved below the peat layer in a clay deposit. There was no evidence for cutmarks on the wood, which may have been evidence of early tree cover in the landscape.



Plate 1 House sites and access track after site clearance, facing W with the River Croe in the background

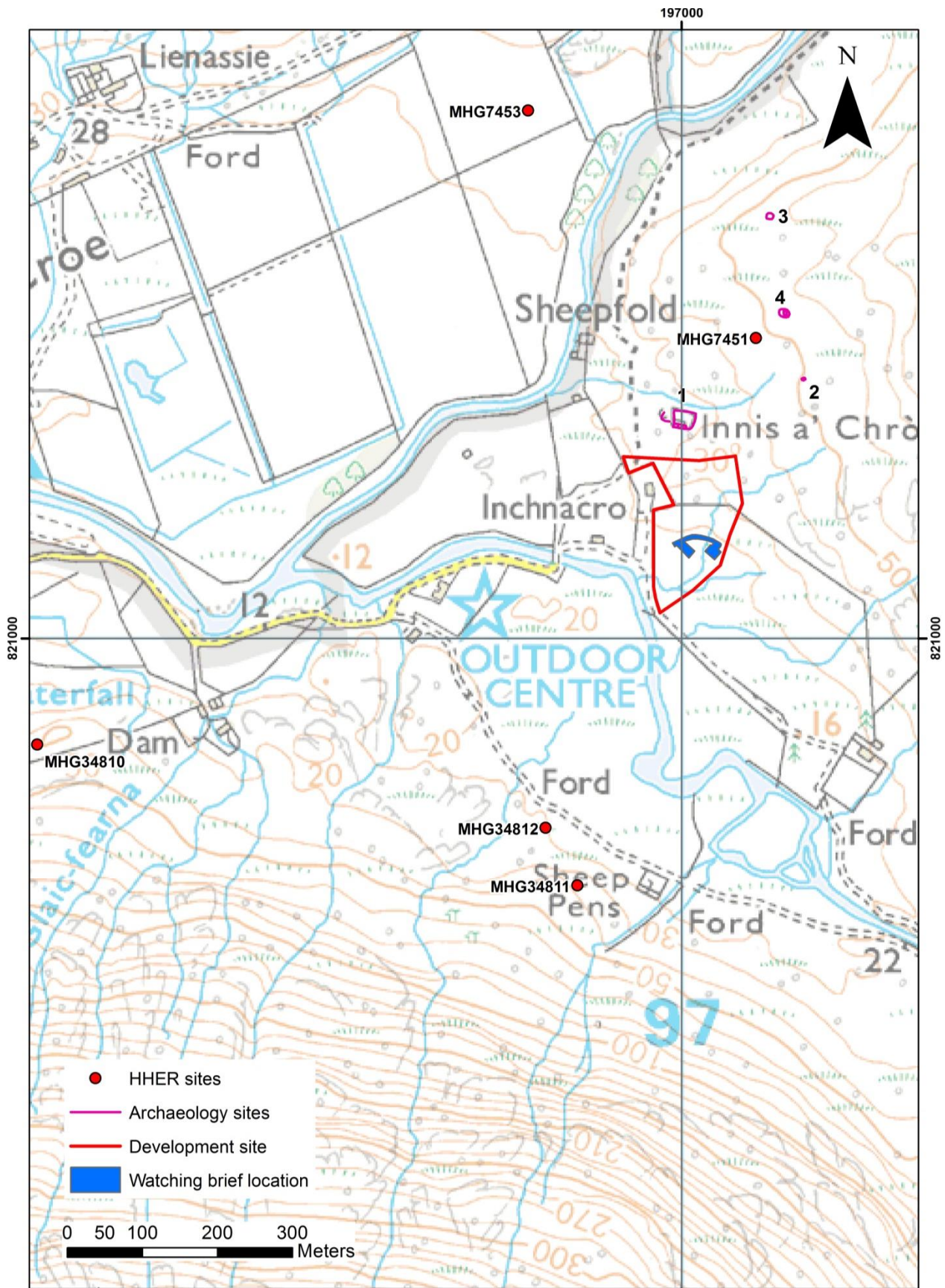


Figure 4 Location of archaeological sites surveyed. Mapping reproduced courtesy of Ordnance Survey ©Crown Copyright 2014. All rights reserved. Licence number 100022432.



Plate 2 Eastern house site after site clearance, showing the stony gravel and clay subsoils, facing NW



Plate 3 West end of the access track, showing possible early tree roots, facing ENE

5.2.2 Survey – North of Inchnacroe

During the fieldwork, a rapid survey of the archaeological sites located on the north side of the development was conducted in order to record the location of the three possible hut circles previously identified (**HER No. 7451**). Four sites were recorded during the survey (Figure 4) and are listed in Appendix 1. Only two of the aforementioned hut circles were identified during the survey, although the area was not completely walked over during the present work.

Site 1 comprised the remains of the main farmstead and enclosure depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey mapping (Section 5.1.1). Site 2 was a small stone-built structure, possibly a shieling, and Site 4 also comprised a possible stone-built shieling overlying an earlier structure, which may have been a hut circle (Plate 4). Site 3 was another hut circle, a well-preserved stone/turf suboval structure (Plate 5) that was highly visible in the heather-covered landscape and set above the *Amhainn Chonaig* burn. The time period of Sites 2-4 is unknown, although they must predate the mid-19th century, given that there is no indication of either hut circles or shieling structures in this location the historical mapping. Furthermore, the occurrence of a structure being built over a pre-existing structure indicates some time depth to the sites, possibly relating to prehistoric and/or medieval periods.



Plate 4
Site 4, a stone-built structure overlying an earlier possible hut circle site; facing ESE



Plate 5
Site 3, stone/turf banks forming a suboval structure – possible hut circle – overlooking cultivated fields and Loch Duich in back; facing W

6.0 Discussion and Recommendations

The south half of the site, due to the nature of the hummocky and undulating terrain and the wet, low-lying position of the ground, appeared to have limited archaeological potential. There were no archaeological features or deposits identified during the fieldwork and no artefactual evidence was identified. The wider landscape is of great interest, with 19th century settlement and at least two earlier settlement periods being represented in the four sites surveyed.

There are no recommendations for further work on the site.

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Appendix 1 Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites

Site No.	Site Type	Site Name	Description	Alignment	Condition	Period	Photo No.	Easting	Northing	Ht OD (m)	HER No.
1a	Farmstead	Innis a' Chro	The remains of a grass- and moss-covered stone-built farmstead measures 11m E-W by 6m over walls spread 1m wide and standing up to 0.7m high. There is an internal partition and entrance in the S wall.	E-W	Degraded	Post Medieval	30	196997	821286	27	-
1b	Building	Innis a' Chro	Built against the E end of the farmstead (Site 1a) is an attached building measuring 4m E-W by 3.5m internally. It probably formed a byre or other external structure associated with the house.	E-W	Degraded	Post Medieval	30	197006	821283	27	-
1c	Enclosure	Innis a' Chro	A stone/turf enclosure under rushes, grass and moss measures 29m E-W by 22m and is attached to the NE side of the farmstead. The walls, spread 0.6-0.9m wide, are mostly degraded along the N side and stand up to 0.7m on the W side.	E-W	Very degraded	Post Medieval	30	197011	821302	27	-
1d	Enclosure / pen	Innis a' Chro	The remains of a further enclosure, comprising mostly turf, and measuring up to 0.4m high and 2m wide, is located on the west side of the farmstead. It may have formed an earlier pen or enclosure.	-	Very degraded	Unknown	30	196974	821293	27	-
2	Shieling	Innis a' Chro	The remains of a suboval, stone-built probable shieling are visible as a grass-covered site against the hillside. It measures 4.3m NE-SW by 3m over walls spread to 0.9m wide and stands up to 0.4m high.	NE-SW	Very degraded	Unknown	19	197160	821346	50	-
3	Hut circle	Innis a' Chro	A possible hut circle is visible as a moss- and grass-covered oval structure on the N edge of a hill. It measures 9m E-W by 8m over banks comprising large stones and turf and measuring 1-1.5m wide and 0.5m high. No visible entrance.	E-W	Degraded	Unknown	21-24	197113	821563	58	MHG7451
4a	Hut circle	Innis a' Chro	A probable hut circle comprises the remains of a stone/turf suboval platform measuring 11m E-W by 9m and standing up to 1.5m high. There is no visible entrance and the structure underlies a later shieling (Site 4b).	E-W	Very degraded	Unknown	25-28	197132	821438	55	MHG7451

Site No.	Site Type	Site Name	Description	Alignment	Condition	Period	Photo No.	Easting	Northing	Ht OD (m)	HER No.
4b	Shieling	Innis a' Chro	A probable shieling is built overlying a probable hut circle (Site 4a). It comprises a stone-built subrectangular structure measuring 5.5m N-S by 4m over walls spread 1-1.3m wide and 0.5m high. There is a possible attached structure on the S end.	N-S	Degraded	Unknown	25-28	197140	821432	55	MHG7451

Appendix 2 List of Site Photographs

Photo No.	Direction Facing	Site No.	Notes	Taken By	Date
1	SW	-	House sites prior to site clearance; image shows the small watercourse running between the two sites	MKP	20/03/2014
2	SW	-	House sites prior to site clearance; image shows the small watercourse running between the two sites	MKP	20/03/2014
3	SW	-	House site 1 prior to site clearance, image shows that the SW end of the access road had already been constructed	MKP	20/03/2014
4	E	-	Clearance of the small watercourse prior to site clearance	MKP	20/03/2014
5	ENE	-	Vegetation or tree root bases preserved below the peat layer in the SW corner of the site access track	MKP	20/03/2014
6	ENE	-	Vegetation or tree root bases preserved below the peat layer in the SW corner of the site access track	MKP	20/03/2014
7	W	-	Vegetation or tree root bases preserved below the peat layer in the SW corner of the site access track	MKP	20/03/2014
8	W	-	Vegetation or tree root bases preserved below the peat layer in the SW corner of the site access track	MKP	20/03/2014
9	W	-	Looking west over the new house sites and down Strath Croe; site clearance in progress; image shows the hummocky and wet nature of the peat-covered landscape	MKP	20/03/2014
10	SE	-	Eastern house site, after site clearance; image shows the gravel-stone subsoil below the peat	MKP	20/03/2014
11	N	-	Eastern house site and access track, after site clearance; image shows the gravel-stone-clay subsoil below the peat	MKP	20/03/2014
12	NW	-	Eastern house site and access track, after site clearance; image shows the gravel-stone-clay subsoil below the peat	MKP	20/03/2014
13	NW	-	Eastern house site and access track, after site clearance; image shows the gravel-stone-clay subsoil below the peat	MKP	20/03/2014
14	W	-	Development site after site clearance, looking west through Strath Croe	MKP	20/03/2014
15	W	-	Panorama of development site after site clearance, looking west through Strath Croe	MKP	20/03/2014
16	WNW	-	Site access track after site clearance, showing the wet nature of the ground	MKP	20/03/2014
17	SE	-	West house site after topsoil clearance showing the gravel-stone-clay subsoil	MKP	20/03/2014
18	WNW	-	West-facing panorama of Strath Croe, taken from the beyond the north border of the development site	MKP	20/03/2014
19	W	2	Looking west of Site 2, stone-built circle structure, possible shieling	MKP	20/03/2014
20	WNW	-	West-facing panorama of Strath Croe, taken from the beyond the north border of the development site	MKP	20/03/2014
21	WNW	3	Looking WNW over Strath Croe with the hut circle site 3 clearly visible in centre right	MKP	20/03/2014
22	NW	3	Looking NW over the Strath Croe landscape with the hut circle site 3 clearly visible (light-coloured patch within the heather) in centre of image	MKP	20/03/2014
23	NW	3	Looking NW over the hut circle site 3 (grass-covered banks standing above the heather) in centre of image	MKP	20/03/2014

INC14: Inchnacroe, Morvich – Archaeological Watching Brief

Photo No.	Direction Facing	Site No.	Notes	Taken By	Date
24	W	3	Site 3, hut circle, with Strath Croe and Loch Duich in background	MKP	20/03/2014
25	SW	4	Site 4, stone-built structure overlying earlier hut circle mound; development site and Inchnacroe in background	MKP	20/03/2014
26	SSW	4	Site 4, stone-built structure overlying earlier hut circle mound; development site and Inchnacroe in background	MKP	20/03/2014
27	ESE	4	Site 4, stone-built structure overlying earlier hut circle mound	MKP	20/03/2014
28	SE	4	Site 4, stone-built structure overlying earlier hut circle mound	MKP	20/03/2014
29	W	-	West-facing panorama of Strath Croe, taken from the beyond the north border of the development site	MKP	20/03/2014
30	N	1	Looking north over the ruins of the stone-built farmstead and enclosure beyond the north side of the development area	MKP	20/03/2014