



ROSS & CROMARTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES

## Tain Fruit Warehouse, Ross-shire



## Desk-based Assessment and Trial Trenching Evaluation

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### 1.3 Weather conditions

The weather throughout the evaluation was dry and overcast.

## 2. PLANNING BACKGROUND

The *Scottish Planning Policy 2010* describes 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 erection of a fruit warehouse at Blarliath Industrial Estate, Tain has the potential to impact on valuable features of historic and archaeological importance. An archaeological evaluation of the site will determine its archaeological baseline.

Appendix 1 contains a plan of the development as supplied by the client.

## 3. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Tain is located on a plateau aligned almost parallel to the Dornoch Firth. The underlying bedrock in the area is the Old Red Sandstone. The raised beach to the north side of Tain is approximately 30m above sea level. This town occupies the shallower side of the Dornoch Firth. The River Tain, which runs alongside the town and empties into the firth, has changed its path over time and there is uncertainty as to the exact original location of Tain with respect to the river<sup>3</sup>.

Although there is very little recorded archaeology in Tain, the surrounding region has an extensive amount of prehistoric sites, such as roundhouses, cairns, field systems and scattered findspots.

The early historic period (from 550 CE) in Ross-shire was characterised by Pictish inhabitants and traditions, which by the late 8<sup>th</sup> century were mostly absorbed during the conversion to Christianity. At the same time, the Norse influence was growing in Northern Scotland. This unsettled period of power struggles between the Norse and the local clans eased by the 11<sup>th</sup> century when the Crown began to assert its influence<sup>4</sup>.

Tain was originally an *Immunity*, a neutral meeting place of the clans. The town was thus seen as a sanctuary, particularly on the site of the chapel of St Duthus by the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Robert the Bruce and his family sought sanctuary at the chapel<sup>5</sup>.

There is no clear evidence for the founding of the burgh of Tain in the 12<sup>th</sup> century as the establishment of Tain as a burgh took a rather unusual route. Due to the town's religious importance and growth over time associated with the cult of St. Duthus, Tain had gradually acquired rights and privileges of a burgh without the actual written charter. It was not until the late 16<sup>th</sup> century that James III granted final confirmation of *royal burgh* status<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Government

<sup>3</sup> Oram *et al* 2009, 7

<sup>4</sup> Oram *et al* 2009, 14-18.

<sup>5</sup> HHER #MHG8582.

<sup>6</sup> Oram *et al* 2009, 21-23.

After the Earl of Ross endowed the church to Tain in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, the town developed a sizeable ecclesiastical presence. Tain had risen to regional importance as a popular pilgrimage destination to the site of St. Duthus' (St. Duthac's) birth and death. His remains, which were said to have curative powers, were supposedly located here. Tain was often known as *Baile-Dhuthaich*, or Duthac's town<sup>7</sup>.

James IV made regular annual pilgrimages to Tain beginning in 1493, and there would have been significant pomp alongside him. However, after the death of James V and the Reformation parliament, the chapel of St. Duthac and the collegiate church were closed down after pilgrimages and veneration of relics were forbidden<sup>8</sup>.

Medieval Tain would have had houses/manses for the priests and clergy, town-houses for local landowners, inns and workers' homes. There was no town wall or man-made boundaries, but there was the concept of the *Immunity* boundary<sup>9</sup>.

The post-Reformation era was the start of economic decline of Tain, although Tain did retain a certain amount of importance as an administrative capital for Ross-shire, particularly from its establishment as the seat of the Ross sheriffdom<sup>10</sup>. The 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed the end of seaborne trade with Tain beginning at the time that Dornoch was granted royal burgh status. The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw significant amount of emigration from the Highlands to North America, though Tain did retain in its population a significant presence of craftsman, including silversmiths, shoemakers, etc<sup>11</sup>.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 General

Work was conducted with regard to the Institute for Field Archaeologists' (IfA) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Evaluation* and *Code of Conduct*<sup>12</sup>.

### 4.2 Desk Based Assessment

A desk-based assessment was conducted prior to commencement of the evaluation in order to assess the archaeological potential of the area based on previously recorded sites and any historical documentation.

The drawings of the area, as supplied by the client, were checked in detail against the Ordnance Survey 1:25000 Map, the Highland Council's Historic Environment Record (HHER), the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS), the Highland Council Archives and Historic Scotland's records of scheduled monuments and listed buildings. Online aerial photographs were checked and the map collections of the National Library of Scotland (NLS) were studied. Other literary sources were also consulted.

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<sup>7</sup> Oram *et al* 2009, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Oram *et al* 2009, 31-36.

<sup>9</sup> Oram *et al* 2009, 1-2.

<sup>10</sup> Oram *et al* 2009, 40-48.

<sup>11</sup> Oram *et al* 2009, 55-61.

<sup>12</sup> IfA

### 4.3 Trial Trenching Evaluation

Trenching totalling 192m<sup>2</sup> (c.9.4%) of the development site took place to the north-west of Shore Road, which is currently a grass field used for grazing cattle. There were no known constraints, below or above ground, to the trench positions.

A series of seven trenches were opened to examine an approximate 9.4% sample of the area to be evaluated. The desk-based assessment and a site visit did not reveal any potential features to be targeted. Trench positions were agreed with HCAU so as to provide good overall coverage of the area.

Topsoil and modern deposits were removed by an earth-moving machine equipped with a smooth-bladed ditching bucket to reveal the subsoil surface. This activity was conducted under constant archaeological supervision.

All on-site recording was carried out according to standard RoCAS procedures through digital photography and completion of written records. Trench locations were plotted using DGPS technology and ArcPad software on a handheld Windows Mobile-based computer. Trenches were backfilled upon completion of excavation.

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1 Desk-based Assessment

The early maps such as Pont (1580's – 1590's), Blaeu's Atlas of Scotland 1654, Herman Moll's map of 1745 and John Thomson's Atlas of Scotland 1832<sup>13</sup> do not depict the study area in sufficient detail to note particular features, although all suggest the site was within open land. On Roy's Military Survey of Scotland (1747-1755)<sup>14</sup> the study area appears to be on the edge of rig and furrow cultivation (Figure 2).

The Ordnance Survey maps referenced, from the 1-inch-to-one-mile surveyed in 1874 through to the one-inch-to-one-mile popular edition surveyed in 1927-8, show the survey area as open land<sup>15</sup>.

The Highland Historic Environment Record (HHER) does not hold any records of sites or find-spots within the study area. No Scheduled Ancient Monuments lie within or close to the study area.

The under-noted HHER<sup>16</sup> records relate to sites or events in fairly close proximity to the study area:

<b>EHG2727</b>	<b>Archaeological evaluation</b>	<b>NH 77214 82546</b>
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This was a trial trenching evaluation (2008) ahead of development, which uncovered (undated) field drains and possible post-medieval rig and furrow marks.

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<sup>13</sup> NLS

<sup>14</sup> NLS

<sup>15</sup> NLS

<sup>16</sup> HHER





**Figure 2:** Roy's map showing the rig and furrow cultivation to the north-west of Tain (NLS)

**MHG51556                      Rig & furrow                      NH 77193 82617**

This is possible post-medieval (1560 AD – 1900 AD) rig and furrow found during evaluation EHG2727 (above).

**MHG33525                      Well                      NH 7718 8249**

Raven's Well, which is shown as post-medieval.

**MHG22868                      Morangie House Hotel                      NH 7730 8257**

This is a post-medieval house.

**MHG32318                      Tain Foundry                      NH 7758 8247**

This is a post-medieval iron foundry.

**MHG33526                      Tain Foundry                      NH 7744 8253**

This is a post-medieval iron foundry.

### 5.3 Archaeological potential

Roy's map suggests that there may be evidence of cultivation present on the site. This case is strengthened by the discovery of possible post-medieval rig and furrow, together with field drains, during an archaeological evaluation at Morangie Road, Tain<sup>17</sup>, which lies to the west of the present site. In addition, archaeological evaluations at Jubilee Road to the south-west of Tain revealed evidence of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century cultivation<sup>18</sup> and an evaluation at Kirksheaf Road on the eastern side of Tain revealed a variety of cultivation features and medieval small finds<sup>19</sup>.

There is a general lack of archaeological material in Tain stretching from the Mesolithic period through to the Early Historic period<sup>20</sup>. Absence of evidence does not equate to evidence of absence, however, and it has been suggested that the raised beach upon which Tain is situated is a likely repository of Mesolithic remains<sup>21</sup>. Equally, there is the potential for the discovery of Neolithic and later remains.

### 5.4 The Evaluation

Seven trenches totalling 192m<sup>2</sup> (@ 9.4%) were excavated within the development area.



**Figures 3 and 4:** Trenches 6 (left) and 3 (right) taken after excavation.

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<sup>17</sup> Richardson 2008

<sup>18</sup> Dagg, 2008; Dagg 2009

<sup>19</sup> Peteranna, 2009

<sup>20</sup> Oram *et al.* 2009, 116

<sup>21</sup> Oram *et al.* 2009, 116



Subsoil across the site was a loamy sand of varying shades of orange and yellow/grey with sub-angular and some rounded stones of variable size. Topsoil depth ranged between 0.3m and 0.6m.

All the trenches were devoid of any archaeological features or field drains (Figures 3 and 4). There were no small finds made apart from a very small quantity of modern pottery.

The trench positions are shown in Appendix 2. Appendix 3 contains a tabulated summary of trench dimensions and topsoil and trench depths. As no archaeological features were encountered, only two context numbers were assigned to the site and are shown in Appendix 4. An index of photographs is given in Appendix 5.

## **6. DISCUSSION**

The site does not appear to have been built upon in the documented past; it sits outside the extent of Victorian/Edwardian and late 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion of Tain<sup>22</sup>. The cartographic evidence is suggestive of the area being cultivated and Tain, as with the rest of the Highlands, underwent agricultural improvement during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Such improvement, in conjunction with the relatively shallow topsoil even now present, could easily have removed any archaeological traces particularly if they were of an ephemeral nature.

The lack of field drains is in contrast to the findings of the evaluation conducted at Morangie Road, which is a short distance to the west of the present site, where field drains and evidence of possible rig and furrow cultivation was uncovered. This can be explained by the fact that the current site sits below the 30m contour line and is therefore located on the raised beach. The sandy/gravelly subsoil attests to this and would not have required any form of artificial drainage.

## **7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

Seven trenches were excavated across the development at Shore Road, Tain totalling 192m<sup>2</sup>. No features or finds of archaeological significance were uncovered; there were no field drains.

As a result of this evaluation RoCAS recommends that no further work in mitigation is required. However, the responsibility for deciding whether further work is required lies solely with the Highland Council Archaeology Unit.

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<sup>22</sup> Oram *et al.* 2009, 118.

## REFERENCES

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Moll, Herman, 1745. *County Maps of Scotland: The Shires of Ross and Cromartie*

Ordnance Survey 1881. *1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ross and Cromarty Shires Mainland XLI* six inch to the mile

Ordnance Survey 1878. *1<sup>st</sup> Edition Sheet 94 Cromarty* one inch to the mile

Ordnance Survey 1896. *2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Sheet 94 Cromarty* one inch to the mile

Ordnance Survey 1911. *3<sup>rd</sup> Edition Sheet 94 Cromarty* one inch to the mile

Ordnance Survey 1930. *Popular Edition Sheet 21 Dornoch* one inch to the mile

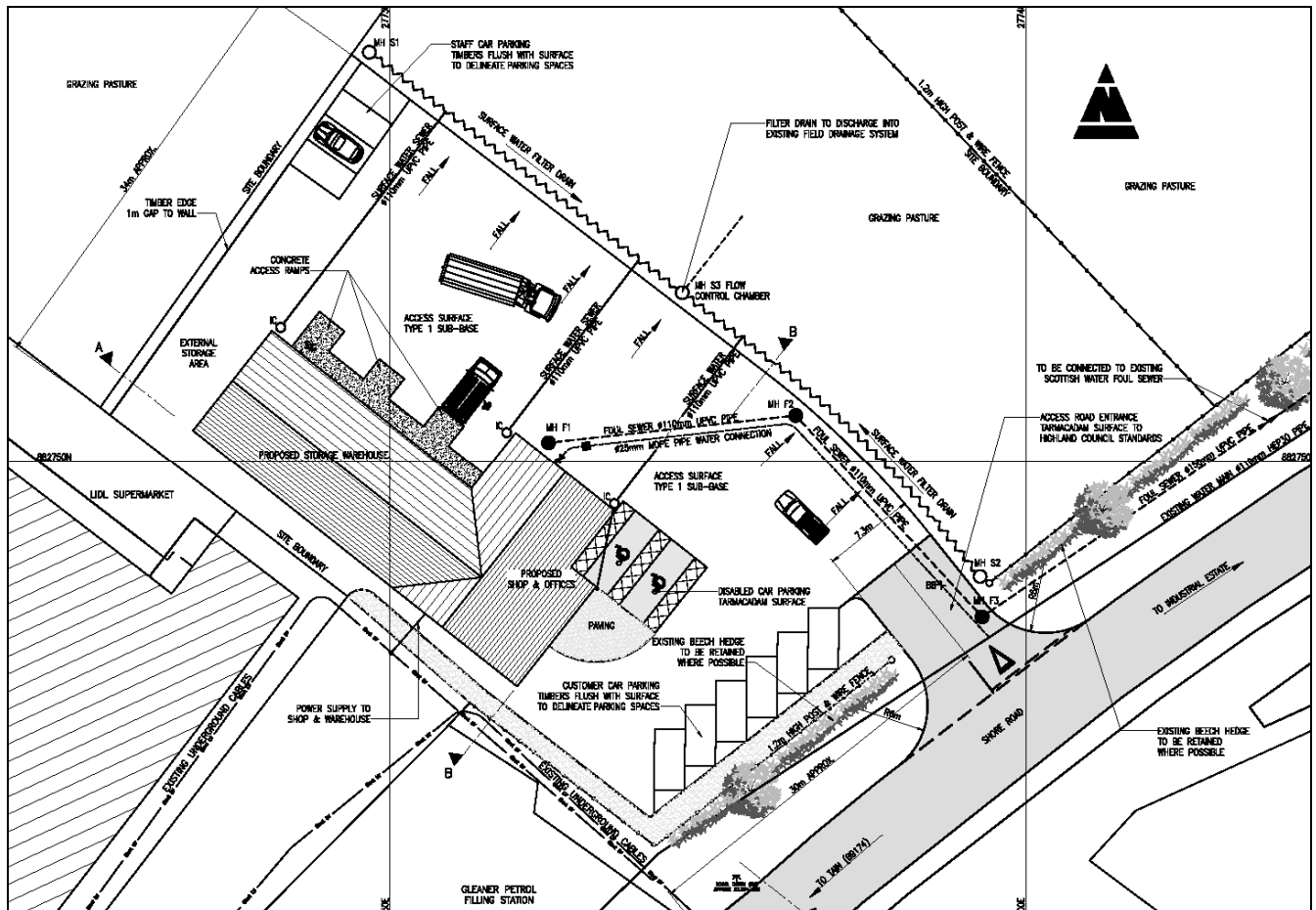
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## APPENDIX 1

### SITE PLAN



Site plan of the proposed fruit warehouse as supplied by Gunn MacPhee & Associates.





### APPENDIX 3

#### SUMMARY OF EVALUATION TRENCHES

<b>Trench Number</b>	<b>Dimensions (m)</b>	<b>Total Area (m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Topsoil Depth (m)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1	22 x 1.5	33	0.4 - 0.5	No archaeology and no field drains
2	20 x 1.5	30	0.45 – 0.55	No archaeology and no field drains
3	10 x 1.5	15	0.5	No archaeology and no field drains
4	20 x 1.5	30	0.3 – 0.4	No archaeology and no field drains
5	22 x 1.5	33	0.5 – 0.55	No archaeology and no field drains
6	24 x 1.5	36	0.35 – 0.6	No archaeology and no field drains
7	10 x 1.5	15	0.5	No archaeology and no field drains

### APPENDIX 4

#### CONTEXT REGISTER

<b>Context</b>	<b>Trench</b>	<b>Description</b>
001	All	Topsoil and turf
002	All	Varying shades of orange and yellow/grey loamy sand with sub-angular and some rounded stones of variable size

## APPENDIX 5

### INDEX OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo Number	Camera Point	Direction facing	Date	Taken by	Comments
001	1	NE	29/06/10	LF	Trench 1 post-excavation
002	2	ENE	“	LF	Trench 2 opening trench
003	2	N	“	LF	General shot across site
004	2	ENE	“	LF	Trench 2 post-excavation
005	3	NE	“	LF	Trench 4 post-excavation
006	-	NE	“	LF	Trench 4 close up of matrix
007	4	NE	“	LF	Trench 5 post-excavation
008	5	SSW	“	LF	Trench 6 post-excavation
009	6	E	“	LF	Trench 7 post-excavation
010	7	SE	“	LF	Trench 3 post-excavation

## APPENDIX 6

### ARCHIVE LOCATION

The archive is presently held by Ross and Cromarty Archaeological Services.



