

# West Coast Archaeological Services

## WOODLAND ESTABLISHMENT SCHEME

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT AND WALKOVER SURVEY

Auch Estate – Area 1, Bridge of Orchy, Argyll & Bute



National Grid Reference

**NN 3000 3850  
(Centred)**

Site Code

**AUCH11**

Author

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Report #

**007/AUCH/11**

Client

**Miller Harris/Auch Estate**

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## **WOODLAND ESTABLISHMENT SCHEME**

### **Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and Walkover Survey**

#### **Auch Estate Area 1, Bridge of Orchy, Argyll & Bute**

## **Summary**

*An archaeological desk-based assessment and walkover survey was carried out between the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2011 on behalf of Miller Harris and Auch Estate, Bridge of Orchy, Argyll & Bute in advance of a woodland establishment scheme. The work was undertaken to assess the nature and extent of any archaeology likely to be affected within the areas outlined for planting and regeneration (Area 1) and in order to inform recommendations for the protection and management of any sites recovered. The survey identified new sites of archaeological interest including a bothy, a shieling, a boulder shelter and possible shooting butts. Mitigation measures are proposed to safeguard the sites during the establishment of the woodland scheme.*

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 A desk-based assessment and walkover survey of the visible archaeological monuments surviving within the boundaries of a proposed woodland establishment scheme (centred at grid reference NN 3000 3850) was carried out within Area 1 on the Auch Estate, Bridge of Orchy, Argyll & Bute (see Fig.1) by West Coast Archaeological Services between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2011. The survey was requested by Miller Harris (Forestry Consultant) on behalf of Auch Estate, because the area proposed for the woodland development is located in a landscape with a potential for sites of archaeological significance.
- 1.2 The purpose of the desk-based assessment and archaeological walkover survey was to identify and record the location and nature of any archaeological features of interest prior to development, whilst assessing any potential adverse impacts and proposing an appropriate strategy of mitigation. 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.

## **2. Acknowledgements**

- 2.1 We wish to thank the owners of Auch Estate and Miller Harris for commissioning the work. Fieldwork was carried out by Steven Birch and Mary Peteranna, while mapping is reproduced by permission of ProMap license #LIG1044.

## **3. Site Location**

- 3.1 The area for survey (Area 1) on the Auch Estate is bounded to the west and southwest by the main A82 trunk road and a major river course – the Allt Kinglass, to the east by the West Coast Rail Main Line and the slopes of Beinn Dorain (1074m), and is located to the south of Bridge of Orchy (see Fig.1).





**Figure 1 – Location maps showing survey area**

- 3.2 The area generally comprises rough undulating moorland with deer grass and heather, some of which had been burnt off during the survey. Some of the ground is covered in drainage ditches indicating earlier attempts to improve the ground, but some of the low-lying areas still retain water. Several small stream courses run from northeast to southwest through the survey area, while a large glacial erratic (Clach a' Bhein) dominates the area of ground and must have been a prominent landmark in the landscape through time. Towards the southern end of the survey area a block of mature conifer trees forms a fenced plantation.

#### **4. Archaeological and Historical Background**

- 4.1 The small landmark hamlet of Bridge of Orchy (Drochaid Urchaidh) dates back to at least 1751 and includes the notable hotel of the same name. Located at the head of Glen Orchy this important location provides links through major glens into the Highlands of Scotland and as such, has been the focus for major transport routes including the A82 and West Coast Rail Line. The bridge, which crosses the River Orchy, was built by Government forces as a part of a programme of pacification of the Highland Clans, which involved the construction of military roads from the Lowlands into the much wilder upland areas of Scotland.

#### **5. Methodology**

The overall aim of this assessment was to identify and record any archaeological sites or features that might be affected by the proposed tree planting, regeneration and fence erection within Area 1 on the Auch Estate and to propose mitigation as appropriate to ensure that archaeological evidence is not unnecessarily damaged or destroyed.

##### **5.1 Desk-Based Assessment**

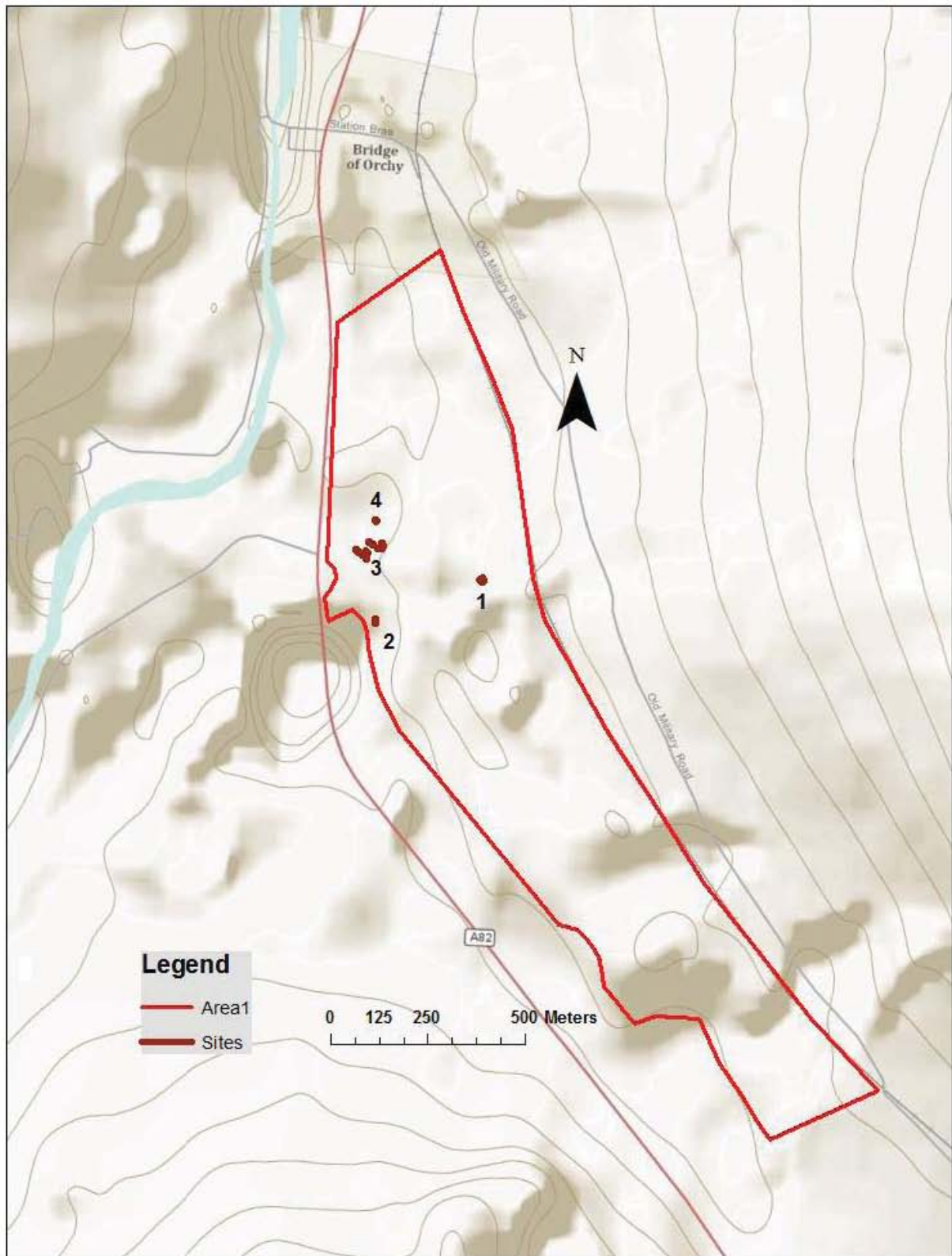
- 5.1.1 A desk-based assessment was conducted prior to commencement of the survey in order to assess the archaeological potential of the area based on previously recorded sites and any historical documentation.
- 5.1.2 A search was made of all relevant records from the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS – Canmore) and the West of Scotland Archaeology Service Sites and Monuments Record. Online aerial photographs were also checked for any relevant site information where possible.

##### **5.2 Walkover Survey**

- 5.2.1 The area of the proposed woodland establishment scheme within Area 1 was walked over and surveyed on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2011, during a period of fine, sunny weather. Conditions on the ground for the walkover survey were good, although wet underfoot in parts, with good visibility and light levels. Stands of heather and tussock-covered ground with long deer grass resulted in some difficulty in identifying archaeological features in some areas.
- 5.2.2 Archaeological sites were recorded individually including using high-resolution digital photography where possible, while sketch survey drawings were produced where necessary. The individual site locations were plotted using DGPS technology and ArcPad software on a



handheld Windows Mobile-based computer. Details relating to the individual recovered sites and monuments can be found in the Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites in Appendix 1.



**Figure 2 – Map showing survey Area 1 and distribution of sites**

- 5.2.3 Survey and recording methods from the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) were employed and all work was conducted in strict adherence to the *Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) Code of Conduct*.

## **6. Results**

The following sections present the results of the desk-based assessment and walkover survey.

### **6.1 Desk-Based Assessment**

A desk-based assessment was carried out in advance of the walkover survey in order to assess the archaeological potential of the area based on previously recorded sites and any historical documentation.

#### **6.1.1 Cartographic Sources**

- 6.1.1.1 Mapping held at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh was checked on-line and produced the following results.

##### **6.1.1.2 Ordnance Survey Six-inch to the Mile (Argyllshire 1874, Sheet lxxvii)**

This was the only Ordnance Survey map to provide any evidence for sites and features within Area 1, which included one unroofed building (a possible shieling) and the site of Clach a' Bhein, a large glacial erratic that dominates the landscape within the valley floor.

#### **6.1.2 West of Scotland Archaeology Service SMR**

A full search of the West of Scotland Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) produced the following result relating to known archaeological sites within the survey areas.

##### **6.1.2.1 WoSASPIN 42861                      NN 2988 3862                      Shieling Hut**

What may be a single unroofed shieling-hut is depicted on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition of the OS 6-inch map at Drochaid Chonoghais (Argyllshire 1874, sheet lxxvii), but is not shown on the current edition of the OS 1:10000 map (1992).

### **6.2 Walkover Survey Results**

The walkover survey revealed four archaeological sites, all of which most likely relate to post-medieval use of the landscape including transhumance activities. The Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites (see Appendix 1) provides details of the individual sites recovered during the survey.

#### **6.2.1 Prehistoric Period**

- 6.2.1.1 No archaeological sites of definite prehistoric date were identified within Area 1, although the boulder shelter (Site 1) may have been used during this period. However, this does not necessarily suggest that no other prehistoric sites exist within Area 1. The walkover survey



only records upstanding and visible sites and monuments, and there is the possibility that archaeology relating to prehistory is preserved within buried contexts.



**Plate 2 – The possible rock shelter on the NW side of Clach a' Bhein (Site 1 – Scale = 1m)**

### **6.2.2 Historic Period**

- 6.2.2.1 The four sites identified during the walkover survey most likely relate to the use of the landscape during the post-medieval period. Transhumance activities are well known in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, where shielings (Sites 2 and 4) were utilised to manage domestic stock and utilise upland pastures and areas of marginal ground. Caves and rock shelters have also been used where available for these activities and Site 1 may have functioned as an overnight shelter or temporary dwelling.
- 6.2.2.2 The features identified at Site 3 are more difficult to interpret. Built into the sloping north-facing side of a large esker or glacial moraine, these shallow scoops with low banks on their down-slope sides may be the remains of shooting butts, relating to the use of the land as a sporting estate. However, these unusual features may relate to an altogether different function in the landscape.





**Plate 3 – Stone-built shieling (Site 4 – Drochaid Chonoghais) looking N**

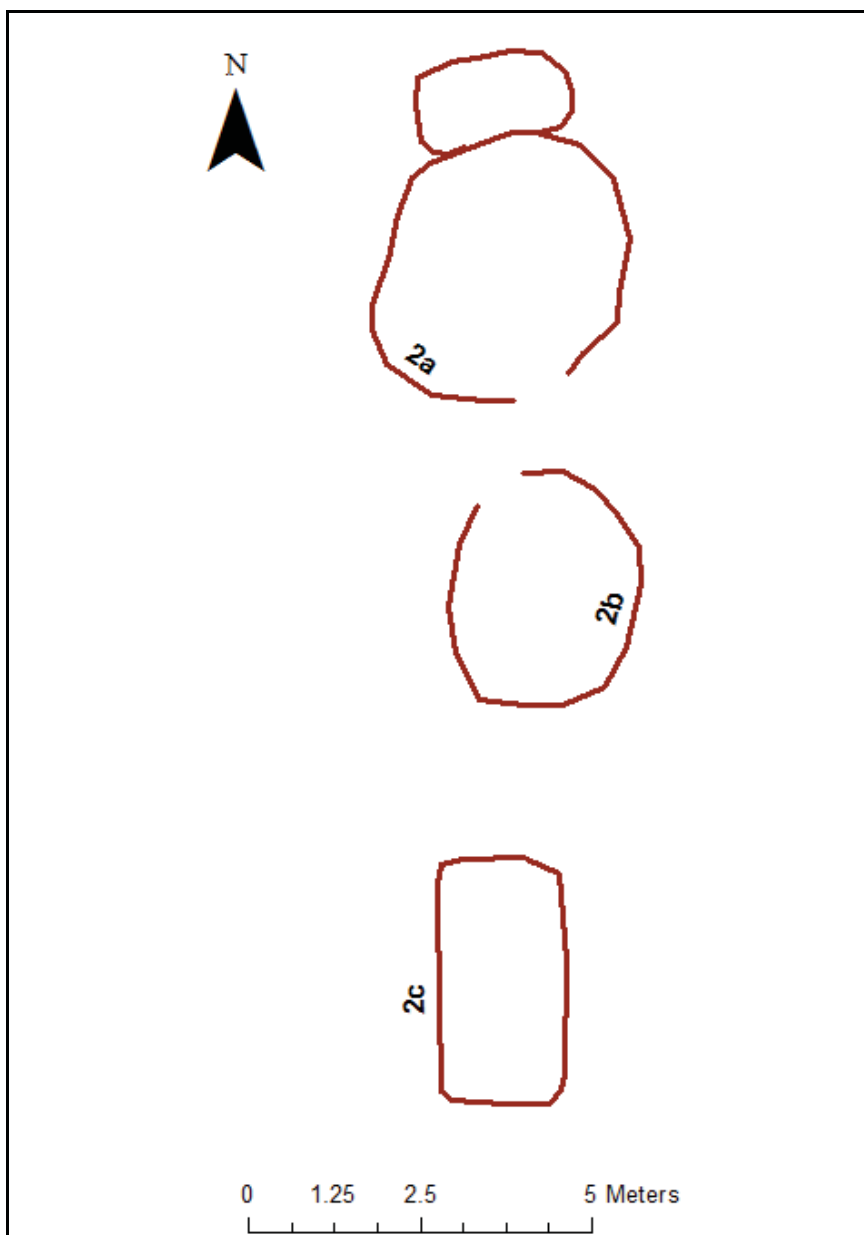
## **7. Discussion**

- 7.1 The walkover survey recovered four archaeological sites within Area 1. These generally comprise structures and features associated with transhumance activities, while the possible shooting butts indicate the use of this part of the landscape for sporting activities during a later phase.
- 7.2 The absence of boundary walls and enclosures suggests that the ground enclosed within Area 1 has always been marginal land, with no evidence for relict cultivation or major settlement.

## **8. Recommendations**

- 8.1 At least a 10 metres buffer zone should be maintained around any individual buildings and structures including bothies and shielings (Sites 2 and 4), while any new tree growth within these buffer zones should be managed.
- 8.2 At least a 20 metres buffer zone should be maintained in the planting scheme around Clach a' Bhein. This is a prominent landscape marker and as such, may have attracted activity in both the prehistoric and historic periods. Many of these large glacial erratic in the landscape have unique Gaelic place-names and associated folklore stories.

- 8.3 Access tracks for vehicles and the erection of any new fence lines should also respect the recommendations set out above.



**Figure 3 – Plan of shieling site 2**

## 9. References

Institute for Archaeologists (IfA). 2009. *By-laws of the Institute for Archaeologists: Code of Conduct*. Reading, IfA.

MacKenzie, A. (1883) *The History of the Highland Clearances*. Edinburgh.

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS). April 2004. *Survey and Recording Policy*.

The Scottish Government 2010. Scottish Planning Policy.  
[Http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/300760/0093908.pdf](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/300760/0093908.pdf)

## 10. Web-Based Sources

British Geological Survey – <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>.

Gazetteer for Scotland – <http://www.scottish-places.info>

West of Scotland Archaeology Service Sites and Monuments Record – <http://www.wosas.net>

Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia – <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulva>



<b>AUCH11 : Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites</b>									
<b>No.</b>	<b>Site type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Align- ment</b>	<b>Condition</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Height OD (m)</b>	<b>Easting (centre)</b>	<b>Northing (centre)</b>	<b>Photo No.</b>
<b>1</b>	Glacial Erratic / Rock Shelter	Located on a west-facing slope with grass and heather is a large glacial erratic named Clach a' Bhein that has a low rock shelter on the N and NW sides measuring 4m wide by 1.2m deep and up to 1.4m high. There is a prominent grassy talus below the shelter. This large, house-sized erratic would have formed a prominent marker within the landscape	E-W	Well Preserved	Unknown	192	30157	38473	1, 2
<b>2a</b>	Shieling	Located adjacent to the W boundary of survey Area 1 and to E of prominent bend in river under tussocks of deer grass are the very degraded remains of stone and turf-built shielings, comprising three separate units in a linear N-S alignment. Site 2a is a double cell structure aligned N-S with the main cell measuring 3m diameter internally with walls spread to 0.8m. Entrance in the SE end of the cell is 0.6m wide. The smaller northern cell is 1m N-S by 2m over walls spread to 0.8m. The walls survive to a maximum height of 0.4m.	N-S	Very Degraded	Post Medieval	153	29887	38379	3, 4

No.	Site type	Description	Align- ment	Condition	Period	Height OD (m)	Easting (centre)	Northing (centre)	Photo No.
2b	Shieling	Located adjacent to the W boundary of survey Area 1 and to E of prominent bend in river under tussocks of deer grass are the very degraded remains of stone and turf-built shielings, comprising three separate units in a linear N-S alignment. Site 2b is a single cell structure measuring 2.5m internally NW-SE by 2m wide with walls spread to 0.8m wide and surviving to a maximum height of 0.4m. Entrance in the NW end of the structure is 0.6m wide.	NW-SE	Very Degraded	Post Medieval	153	29888	38370	3, 4
2c	Shieling	Located adjacent to the W boundary of survey Area 1 and to E of prominent bend in river under tussocks of deer grass are the very degraded remains of stone and turf-built shielings, comprising three separate units in a linear N-S alignment. Site 2c is a rectangular single cell structure measuring 3.5m long internally (NE-SW) by 2m wide with walls spread to 0.7m wide and surviving to 0.4m wide. No visible entrance.	NE-SW	Very Degraded	Post Medieval	153	29888	38364	3, 4

No.	Site type	Description	Align- ment	Condition	Period	Height OD (m)	Easting (centre)	Northing (centre)	Photo No.
3	Shooting Butts	Revetted into the steep north-facing slopes of a prominent esker/glacial moraine under grass, bracken and some heather and around 60m E of the boundary fence are the remains of possible shooting butts. Comprising shallow depressions in the ground with low turf mounds on their down-slope sides (surviving to a maximum of 0.5m high), the features are generally aligned NW-SE. At least 12 of the features were identified during the survey.	NW-SE	Very Degraded	Post Medieval	160	29836	38554	-
4	Shieling	Located 10 metres to the S of a small burn within low-lying ground with grass and some heather, and with eskers and glacial moraines to the S and E, are the very degraded remains of a stone-built shieling. The rectangular structure measures 3.5m internally (N-S) by 2.2m, with walls up to 0.6m thick and surviving up to 0.6m high. There are the faint remains of an entrance in the W wall 0.7m wide, while much of the stone from the west wall of the shieling has been robbed away. A stone-built twinning pen has been constructed within the SE corner of the building and is 1m long (N-S) by 0.7m wide, with the wall 0.5m wide and up to 0.6m high.	N-S	Very Degraded	Post Medieval	151	29891	38631	5, 6

<b>AUCH11 : Index of Photographs</b>					
<b>Photo No.</b>	<b>Direction Facing</b>	<b>Site No.</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Taken By</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>1</b>	SSW	1	Rock shelter at base of glacial erratic (Clach a' Bhein) with green talus	SB	21/04/2011
<b>2</b>	S	1	Glacial erratic Clach a' Bhein showing rock shelter and green talus	SB	21/04/2011
<b>3</b>	N	2	Multi-cell shieling site adjacent to west boundary of survey area	SB	21/04/2011
<b>4</b>	N	2	Multi-cell shieling site adjacent to west boundary of survey area	SB	21/04/2011
<b>5</b>	N	4	Stone-built shieling located in low-lying ground	SB	21/04/2011
<b>6</b>	e	4	Stone-built shieling located in low-lying ground, showing degraded wall on west side	SB	21/04/2011