



# BARCALDINE CASTLE, OBAN, ARGYLL

*Archaeological Evaluation*

*for H & C Whitehead Ltd*

*10/01365/PP*

*March 2011*



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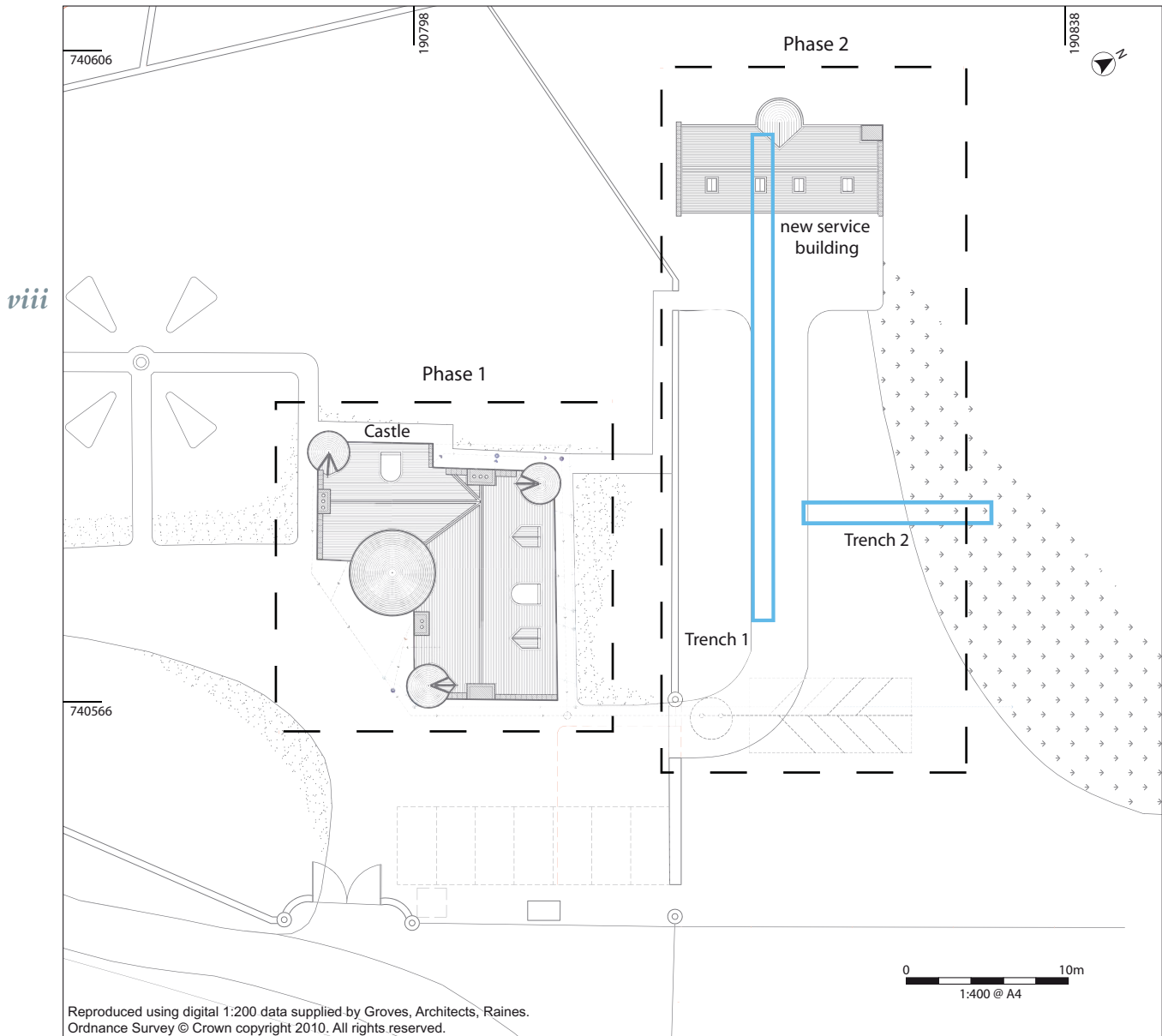
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**Illus 1**

Site location and trench plan



# BARCALDINE CASTLE, OBAN, ARGYLL

## Archaeological Evaluation

*Headland Archaeology Ltd conducted a small evaluation at a proposed development site of a new service building and access track with parking, plus a drain and soakaway at Barcaldine Castle, near Oban, Argyll & Bute. This was in order to satisfy a planning condition placed by West of Scotland Archaeological Services and the work was commissioned by H & C Whitehead Ltd. Two trenches were excavated to ascertain the presence of archaeological deposits, but revealed no archaeological features, deposits or artefacts.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by H & C Whitehead Ltd to undertake a small archaeological evaluation at a proposed development site of a new service building and access track with parking, plus a drain and soakaway at Barcaldine Castle, near Oban, Argyll & Bute. The evaluation was undertaken as part of a programme of archaeological work required to fulfil a planning condition attached by West of Scotland Archaeological Service (WoSAS) (Planning 10/01365/PP).

A rapid desk-based assessment of the area was undertaken prior to the evaluation. The assessment concluded that the site had some potential for containing archaeological remains as it lies in an area of known archaeological deposits.

The fieldwork took place on the 3rd March 2011 and this report outlines the results.

#### 1.2 Site location and background

The evaluation area is located in the northern part of Barcaldine Castle grounds. The site is currently part enclosed by a wire fence to the south-east and a ha-ha to the south-west which runs NW-SE.

The geology of the area comprises of Islay Quartzite – Dolomitic Quartzite and is characterized by gravel deposits. The topography of the site slopes gently towards

the east. The uneven nature of the ground surrounding the gardens of the castle is representative of the bedrock outcrops present in the area.

Barcaldine Castle lies in an area of known archaeological deposits. A cairn lies to the west at Achnamoine and three cairns, which are Scheduled Ancient Monuments, lie to the east at Barcaldine Castle Farm. A standing stone once stood close to the three cairns but was moved in the late 19th century.

Historic mapping shows no marked changes in land use over time with the castle being built between 1601 and 1609 for Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy. The castle, however, does not appear on Roy's Military Map of 1747–1755. The site was used as castle gardens at the time of the evaluation, and has likely been in this condition since renovations of the castle took place between 1897 and 1911 after it fell derelict in the 18th century.

A previous watching brief (2004) was held over new drainage works which lie at the east end of the new access track and this identified recent topsoil imported when the house was refurbished and dated the ha-ha as early 20th century in date.

### 2. METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1 Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation were:

- to evaluate the archaeological potential of the development site and determine the location,



**Illus 2**

Gardens of Barcaldine Castle due for development

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character, extent and quality of any archaeological remains identified within it,

- to propose arrangements for the safeguarding, where possible, and recording where necessary of any archaeological feature or finds identified,
- to meet the needs for archaeological conservation and recording without unnecessary delay or disturbance to the development project.

## 2.2 Methodology

### *Machine evaluation*

The proposed development area comprised  $c.756\text{m}^2$ . Trenching amounting to 30 linear metres was scheduled to be evaluated along the proposed access track and on the site of the new service building. Evaluation trenches were laid out to provide coverage across the application area and to investigate any topographic features or areas that were thought to have more archaeological potential.

A mechanical excavator equipped with a flat-bladed bucket was used to remove topsoil under direct archaeological control. Excavation continued until clean geological sediments, significant archaeological deposits or structures were encountered or until the limit of safe excavation (1m) was reached. Only trenches less than 1m deep and considered safe were entered by site staff.

Further excavation required to satisfy the objectives of the evaluation was continued by hand. A representative

sample, sufficient to meet the objectives of the evaluation, of identified features was investigated by hand and all identified features were recorded. The stratigraphy of each trench was recorded in full.

## 2.3 Recording

All recording was in accordance with the code of practice of the Institute for Archaeologists. All trenches and contexts were given unique numbers and all recording was undertaken on pro forma record cards that conform to accepted archaeological norms. All stratigraphic relationships were recorded.

An overall site plan at an appropriate scale and relative to the National Grid was recorded by hand held GPS.

A photographic record of digital photographs was taken. A metric scale was clearly visible in record photographs of contexts.

## 3. RESULTS

Two trenches were excavated designed to provide coverage across the area of the access track and new service building as well as the general development area. Trenches included topographic features that were thought to have higher archaeological potential.

Trench 1 was orientated SE-NW and was 30m in length whilst Trench 2 was orientated NE-SW and had a length of 12m. The location of Trench 2 was moved roughly 10m north-west from its original placement which was adjacent to the current soakaway. This was due to the ground conditions being saturated within the original trench location area.

The soil profile comprised a topsoil of between 0.15 and 0.5m of mid brown gravel sand with small pebble inclusions which lay over a geological deposit of mid orange gravel sand with various sized stone inclusions. The location of Trench 1 was designed to incorporate a mound feature in the landscape towards the north-west end of the trench which, after topsoil removal, revealed bedrock. The bedrock continued to remain below the topsoil in the remainder of the trench.

This stratigraphic sequence was uniform throughout Trench 2 also, with bedrock being present towards the north-east of the area.



**Illus 3**

Trench 1 from the south-east

Within the topsoil in both trenches, remains of ceramics, and in particular ceramic bottles, were identified. A sample of these was inspected by Julie Franklin of Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd who identified them as 19th to mid 20th century in date.

No archaeological remains or deposits were uncovered during the evaluation.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

From the evaluation, in particular the excavation of Trench 1, it would suggest that at some point, an area where the garden is now situated was leveled, leaving bedrock still present on the outer areas. This could possibly have happened at the time of construction of the ha-ha. This supports the findings of the previous watching brief in 2004.

The presence of the 19th to 20th century ceramics is likely to suggest either garden middens from the recent past or simply the inclusion of debris in the imported topsoil.

Despite the archaeological potential of the site suggested by desk-based work, no archaeological features or deposits were identified during the evaluation.



**Illus 4**

North-east facing section of Trench 1 showing typical soil profile

#### 5. REFERENCES

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##### 5.1 Bibliography

Roberts, M, 2010, *Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological work at Barcaldine Castle near Oban*. Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd. Client Report.

##### 5.2 Internet Sources

RCAHMS, *Pastmap* [website] <[www.rcahms.gov.uk/pastmap.html](http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/pastmap.html)> accessed 1st March 2011.

##### 5.3 Maps

1747–1755, Roy, W, *Military Survey*, 14/5a.



## 1. APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 – Trench register

<b>Trench no.</b>	<b>Orientation</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Length (m)</b>	<b>Max depth (m)</b>
1	SE-NW	Topsoil of mid brown gravel sand overlaying natural subsoils of mid orange gravel sand with a variety of stone inclusions	30m	0.5m
2	NE-SW	Topsoil of mid brown gravel sand overlaying natural subsoils of mid orange gravel sand with a variety of stone inclusions	12m	0.2m

### Appendix 2 – Photographic register

<b>Photo no.</b>	<b>Direction facing</b>	<b>Description</b>
001	W	Area of evaluation – grounds of the castle
002	SW	Area of evaluation – grounds of the castle
003	NW	Area of evaluation – grounds of the castle
004	E	Area of evaluation – grounds of the castle
005	NW	Mound in garden (possible bedrock)
006	NW	Area of proposed service house
007	W	The ha-ha
008	E	Working view
009	NW	Barcaldine Castle
010	-	Sheep
011	NW	Trench 1 post-ex
012	SW	NE facing section of trench
013	NW	Trench 1 post-ex
014	NW	Trench 1 post-ex
015	NW	Bedrock (mound seen pre-ex)
016	NE	Trench 2 post-ex
017	N	Evaluation trenches
018	E	Evaluation trenches
019	-	Ceramic bottle
020	-	Ceramic jar







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