



Highland Archaeology Services Ltd

Bringing the past and future together

Archaeological Evaluation



Plot 1, Savalmore Sutherland

July 2007

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Sutherland

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Site Code	HAS-SVP07
Client	Mr A Butcher
Planning Ref	05/00417/OUTSU
Date	14/07/2007
Authors	Cathy Dagg and John Wood

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out in advance of construction of a new house at Plot 1, Savalmore, Sutherland, as a condition of Planning Permission. No features or artefacts of archaeological significance were found. There are no recommendations for further archaeological work in this case.

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Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Mr and Mrs A Butcher for commissioning the work. The fieldwork was carried out by Cathy Dagg. The trench locations were mapped by John Wood, who also undertook the desk-based assessment. Background mapping is reproduced here by permission of the Ordnance Survey under Licence 100043217. All photos are by Cathy Dagg.

Location

The site is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NC 5880 0847, at a height of about 165m above sea level.

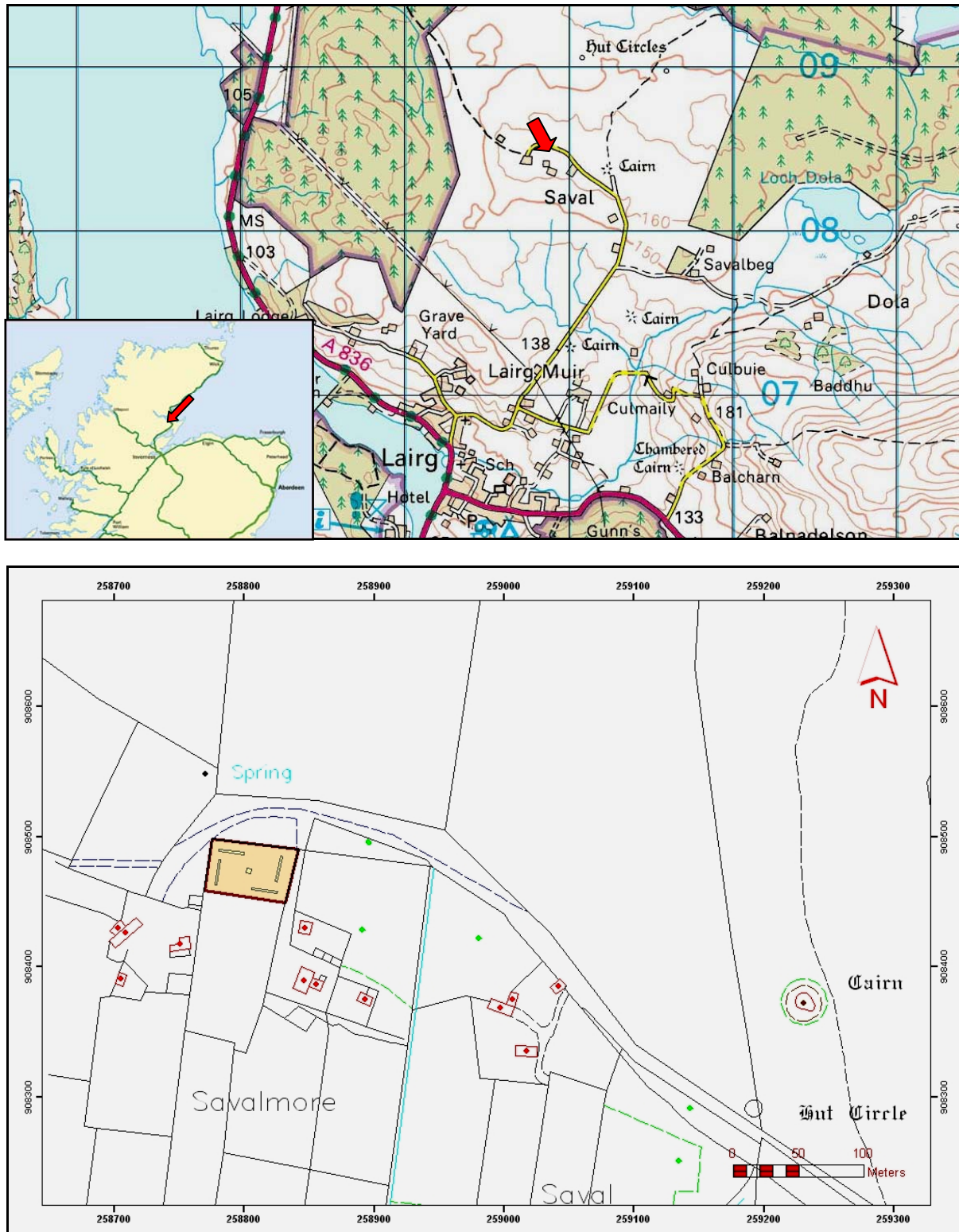


Figure 1 Site Location

Introduction

A desk-based assessment and archaeological trial trenching evaluation were carried out by Highland Archaeology Services at Plot 1 Savalmore, Sutherland in June 2007 on behalf of Mr and Mrs Butcher to fulfil a planning requirement prior to development of a new house site. The purpose was to identify and record the nature and extent of any archaeological features likely to be affected by the construction of a new house. This report describes the work and presents the results.

Aims and objectives

The archaeological investigation was requested in this area because of the potential for archaeological finds and features of interest. The overall aims of the archaeology programme were to:

1. Minimize any possible delay or costs to the development by anticipating any archaeological requirements as far as possible, timetabling and integrating archaeological recording work with the project, and dealing with any issues arising quickly and efficiently.
2. Determine as far as possible the character, extent, condition, date and significance of any archaeologically significant remains; and to preserve these where possible and record where necessary in line with NPPG 5 (SOEND 1994) and PAN 42 (SOEND 1994).
3. Ensure that any artefacts or human remains are dealt with in accordance with legal requirements and current Historic Scotland policy guidance.
4. Meet the requirements of the Highland Council Archaeology Unit brief for this project.

Policy background

The planning and policy framework in this case includes the Highland Council's *Structure Plan*¹, and the Scottish Executive's *National Planning Policy Guidance Notes* 5 (NPPG5)² and 18 (NPPG18)³, and *Planning Advice Note* 42 (PAN42)⁴ (SOEND 1994). The fundamental principles underpinning the above policies are set out in *Passed to the Future: Historic Scotland's Policy for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (2002)⁵ and the *Burra Charter* (Australia ICOMOS 1999).⁶

¹ <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourenvironment/planning/developmentplans/structureplan/thehighlandstructureplan.htm>

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/1998/10/nppg5>

³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/1999/04/nppg18>

⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/1994/01/17081/21711>

⁵ www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pasttofuture.pdf

⁶ <http://www.icomos.org/australia/burra.html>

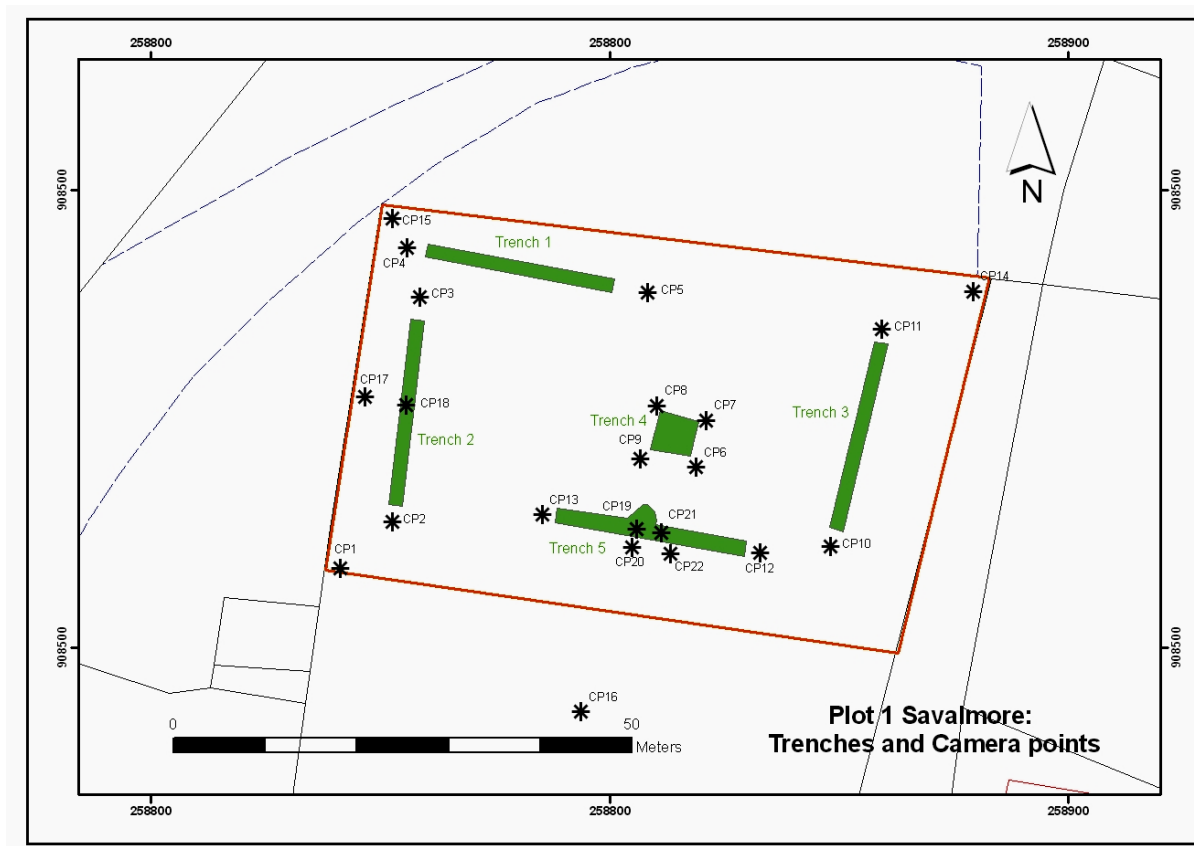


Figure 2 Trenches and Camera points

Archaeological background and cultural significance

The area around Lairg in mid-Sutherland is exceptionally rich in archaeological features. There are no recorded features of archaeological interest within the site itself, but extensive prehistoric and later sites have been noted nearby, including hut circles, cairns and field systems of the Bronze Age and Iron Age periods (c. 4,400 – 1,600 years ago). The place-name Saval (Sabhal) means a barn or store and may perhaps refer to a medieval tithe barn or an estate giral. To the SE of this site is the Creag an t-Sabhal, the rock of the store or barn. However, no evidence of this can be seen today. Sabhal Mòr (Big) probably serves simply to distinguish this hamlet from Sabhal Beag (Little).

In 2002 a desk-based and walk-over survey was carried out by Janet Hooper in advance of the renewal of a water main but no further information came to light. However she noted that at the beginning of the 19th c. 'Savil' was proposed by the Sutherland Estate for inclusion in a sheepwalk, and in 1807 the inhabitants were cleared, it was included in the Great Sheep Tenement and let to two English farmers. By 1874 however, when the first edition Ordnance Survey (6 inch to the mile) map was produced, the sheep farm had been broken up and four crofts formed. Three of these survive.⁷

⁷ Janet Hooper, Highland Water Mains Renewals – Lairg Regional Supply Phases 1-3 and Additional Works: an Archaeological Assessment (2002) (Highland Council SMR report no. 760)

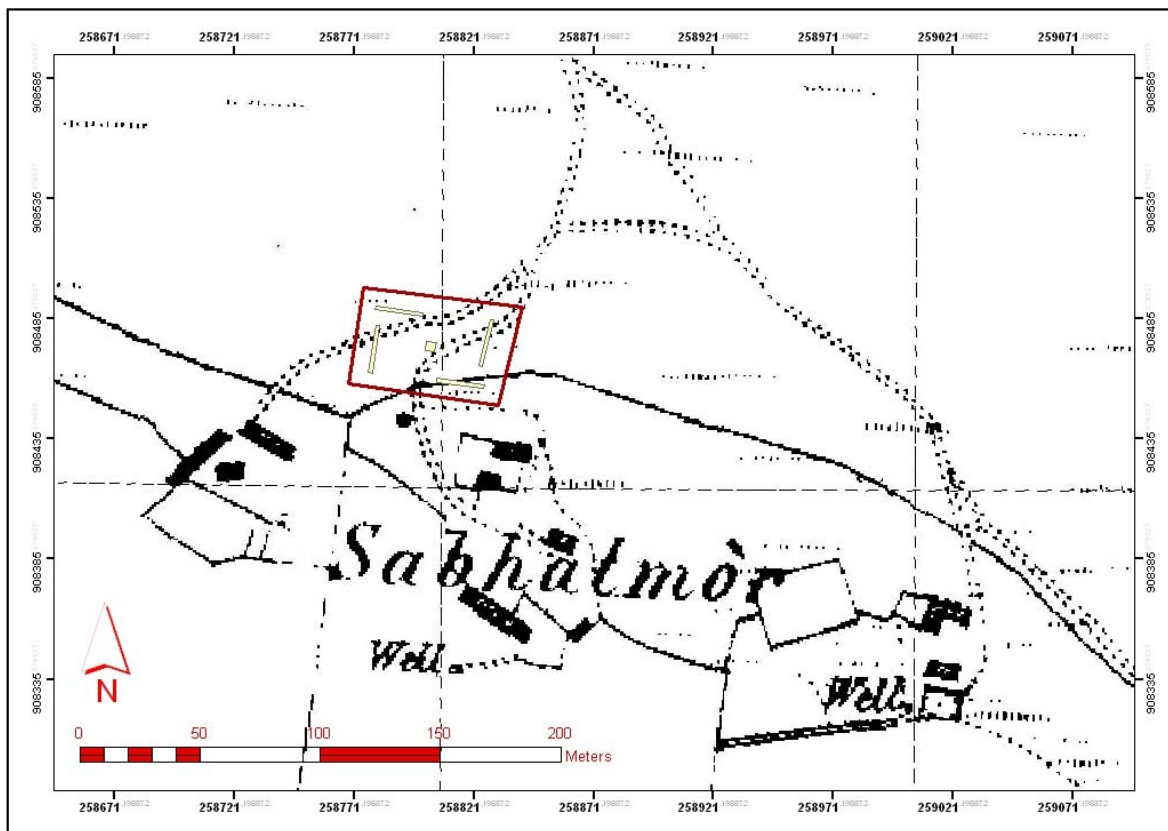


Figure 3 Site superimposed upon 1st edition OS 1:10560 map (1879)

Not to scale

Today, the development site occupies the north part of an improved field, in-bye croft land, now under pasture. The field rises gently from the SE to a high point on the west boundary. To the north of the site, beyond the public road, the ground is unimproved moorland and forms the summit of the ridge whose southern slopes are occupied by the Sabhal crofts. To the east of the site is wet ground landscaped into ponds, and to the west an area of hardstanding at the road end. To the south the improved field continues.

The 1879 1st edition Ordnance Survey map records the township head dyke crossing the south part of the site and two trackways crossing from the NE corner, one leading to the croft buildings to the west and one curving south to the croft buildings to the east (See Fig 3 above). There is now no trace of these features on the ground. The field is now bounded to the north and west by a rubble dyke, shown on the 1908 2nd edition map, and to the east by an access track separated from the field by a drystone dyke of recent construction. The field is understood not to have been cultivated for at least 20 years.

Programme

The work consisted of a desk-based assessment and a trial trenching evaluation, all designed to meet the requirements of the Highland Council Archaeology Unit. It followed the project design set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation submitted to the Council in June 2007. The Desk-based assessment included checks of all material available online and at the Highland Council's headquarters in Inverness.

Trial trenching was carried out on 26 June 2007 in sunny and dry weather conditions. Five trenches were opened: four linear trenches measuring 1.5m by 20m and one box trench measuring 4m by 4m.

Results

Desk-based assessment

The results of the desk-based assessment have been included in the assessment of archaeological significance above, which draws on desk-based assessments and walkover surveys in the general area of Lairg Muir carried out by Janet Hooper in 2002⁸ and Stuart Farrell in 2004⁹ for the Lairg Water Mains Renewal.

Trial Trenching Evaluation

A tracked back-acting mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m straight-edged ditching bucket excavated 5 trenches under close archaeological supervision. These trenches covered a total of approximately 164.5 sq. m., representing a sample of 6.1% of the total survey area of approx 2695 sq m..

The depth of topsoil was approximately 0.2m in all trenches, overlying a gritty orange subsoil. The subsoil varied slightly across the site, containing a greater number of embedded large stones, 0.4m in diameter or more, in Trench 2. One possible anthropogenic feature was noted in Trench 5.



Figure 4 Trench 1 from W

⁸ Highland Council SMR Report No 760

⁹ Highland Council SMR Report No 1391

Trench 1

Trench 1 was 1.8m wide and 42m long. No archaeological features were found.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was 1.8m wide and 41m long. No archaeological features were found.



Figure 5 Trench 2 from S

Trench 3

Trench 3 was 1.8m wide and 42m long. No archaeological features were found.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was approximately 4.2m x 4.4m as excavated. No archaeological features were found.



Figure 6 Trench 3 from S



Figure 7 Trench 4 from NW



Figure 8 Trench 5 from W



Figure 9 Trench 5: Feature 1

Trench 5

Trench 5 was approximately 1.8m x 42.4m.

Feature 1.

Between the topsoil and subsoil, or embedded in the subsoil, a shallow layer of medium-sized (up to 15cm in diameter) stones covering an area 1.5m by 0.75m in a rough oval aligned NE-SW (Photos 6-8) The feature did not extend to the south section of the trench. The north section was extended to ascertain whether the feature continued northwards, but this was found not to be the case. This was interpreted as either the infilling of a hollow in the field or the remains of one of the 19th century trackways.

Small Finds

No small finds were recovered from the plough soil during the evaluation. This is in itself significant, as it possibly confirms that the ground was brought into cultivation after the practice of incorporating household waste into the midden material to be spread on the fields had ended.

Discussion and conclusions

No features of archaeological interest were identified.

Recommendations

1. There are no areas that warrant preservation *in situ*.
2. No further work is proposed, although it is proposed to visit during construction of the access road. We recommend that archaeological clearance should be given to the site.

Appendix 1: Photographs

A full set of photographs is included on the accompanying CDROM. Camera points are shown in Fig 2 above.

Photo No.	Camera point	Feature	Description	Direction	Taken By	Date
sabhal 1	CP16	General view	Pre-excavation view from south of entire site, bounded to N, W and E by fencelines	View N	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007
sabhal 2	CP17	General View	Pre-excavation view E of north and East area of site	From W boundary, view ENE	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007
sabhal 3	CP15	General view	Pre-excavation view SE of site in foreground, and relation to existing croft buildings to SE	From NW corner	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007
sabhal 4	CP17 (approx)	General	Pre-excavation view: west boundary dyke of field/ development area	From E	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007
sabhal 5	CP17 (approx)	General	Pre-excavation view: west boundary dyke and existing croft house to SE	From NNE	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007
sabhal 6	CP19	Trench 5, feature 1.	Rubble infill as initially exposed on removal of ploughsoil	From S	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007
sabhal 7	CP20	Trench 5, feature 1.	Rubble infill as initially exposed on removal of ploughsoil	From E	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007
sabhal 8	CP21	Trench 5, feature 1.	Rubble infill as initially exposed on removal of ploughsoil	From W	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007
sabhal 9		Trench 5	Section showing brown ploughsoil overlying orange gritty subsoil	From SE	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007
sabhal 10	CP21	Trench 5	East end of trench with topsoil stripped	From W	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007
sabhal 11	CP18	Trench 2	North end of trench with topsoil stripped	View N	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007
sabhal 12	CP2 (approx)	General, trenches 3,4,5	General view of trial trenching in progress	View NE	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007
sabhal 13	CP4	Trench 1	Entire trench topsoil stripped	View E	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007

Photo No.	Camera point	Feature	Description	Direction	Taken By	Date
JW 001	CP1	General view	View across site	View N	Cathy Dagg	26 June 2007
JW002	CP1	General view	View across site	View NE	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 003	CP2	Trench 2	View of trench as stripped	View N	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 004	CP3	Trench 2	View of trench as stripped	View S	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 005	CP13	Trench 5	View of trench as stripped	View E	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 006	CP12	Trench 5	View of trench as stripped	View W	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 007	CP6	Trench 4	View of trench as stripped	View NW	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 008	CP7	Trench 4	View of trench as stripped	View SW	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 009	CP8	Trench 4	View of trench as stripped	View SE	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 010	CP9	Trench 4	View of trench as stripped	View NNE	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 011	CP9	Trench 4	View of trench as stripped	View ENE	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 012	CP10	Trench 3	View of trench as stripped	View N	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 013	CP11	Trench 3	View of trench as stripped	View S	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 014	CP5	Trench 1	View of trench as stripped	View W	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 015	CP4	Trench 1	View of trench as stripped	View E	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 016	CP14	General view	View across site from NE corner	View SSW	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 017	CP14	General view	View across site from NE corner	View WSW	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 018	CP15	General view	View across site from NW corner	View SE	John Wood	28 June 2007
JW 019	CP15	General view	View across site from NW corner	View S	John Wood	28 June 2007