



*Highland Archaeology Services Ltd*

Bringing the Past and Future Together

## No.2 Heathcliffe, Brough, Caithness



### Archaeological Watching Brief (Planning reference 17/05367/FUL)

### Final Report and Recommendations

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## No 2 Heathcliffe, Brough, Caithness

### Archaeological Watching Brief Final Report

<b>Report No.</b>	BRC18-2
<b>Site Code</b>	BRC18
<b>Client</b>	Mr Graeme Hull
<b>Planning Ref</b>	17/05367/FUL
<b>OS Grid Ref</b>	NGR ND 2287 7378
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## Summary

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken to mitigate the potential heritage impact of ground works for a new dwelling house and access road on land located 50m to the West of Sogno Cottage, Brough, Caithness.*

*The work was required to satisfy a Condition attached to planning consent by Highland Council Historic Environment Team.*

*No significant archaeological deposits, features or finds were identified during the course of the watching brief and no further archaeological work is recommended.*

## Contents

Summary .....	2
Contents .....	3
Illustrations .....	3
Appendices.....	3
Legislation and Policy.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	4
Site Location .....	5
Introduction.....	6
Archaeological & Historical Background.....	6
Statistical Accounts.....	8
DBA Conclusions .....	8
Fieldwork.....	9
Aims and Objectives .....	9
Methodology.....	9
Results.....	10
Finds.....	10
Discussion & Conclusions .....	10
Recommendations.....	11
Bibliography and References .....	11
Appendices.....	11

## Illustrations

Figure 1: General Site Location.....	5
Figure 2: Location of the Study Area .....	5
Figure 3: The Study Area showing area of Watching Brief.....	6
Figure 4: Extract from the 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1872 showing approximate development area. Not to scale .....	7
Figure 5: Extract from the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1907 showing the approximate area of development. Not to scale .....	8
Figure 6: Footprint of the Watching Brief Area. Scale shown .....	9
Figure 7: The topsoil stripping area nearing completion. Facing NW from CP2. Scales 1m.....	10

## Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Photographic Register
- Appendix 2 – Context Register

### *Legislation and Policy*

The common principles underlying international conventions, national legislation and local authority planning policies are that cultural heritage assets should be identified in advance of development and safeguarded where practicable; if disturbance is unavoidable appropriate recording of features and recovery of portable artefacts should take place. These have been set out in international and European Union agreements, and UK and Scottish legislation, as well as national and local planning policies<sup>1</sup>.

Professional standards maintained throughout the present project adhered to the Codes of Conduct and Approved Practice and Standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists<sup>2</sup>.

### *Acknowledgements*

The fieldwork and preparation of the present report was undertaken by Andrew Young MCIfA. The project was commissioned and funded by the landowner, Mr Graeme Hull.

Background mapping has been reproduced by permission of the Ordnance Survey under Licence 100043217. Historic mapping is courtesy of the National Library of Scotland.

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<sup>1</sup> A summary of relevant international, EU, UK and Scottish legislation and policies is available from the HAS office on request.

<sup>2</sup> Chartered Institute for Archaeology (CIfA) Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Excavation.

## Site Location

The site is located at Heathcliffe in the settlement of Brough (Figures 1 and 2) on Dunnet Head, Caithness, approximately 16 km to the east of the town of Thurso. The study area is centred at ND 2287 7378.



Figure 1: General Site Location.

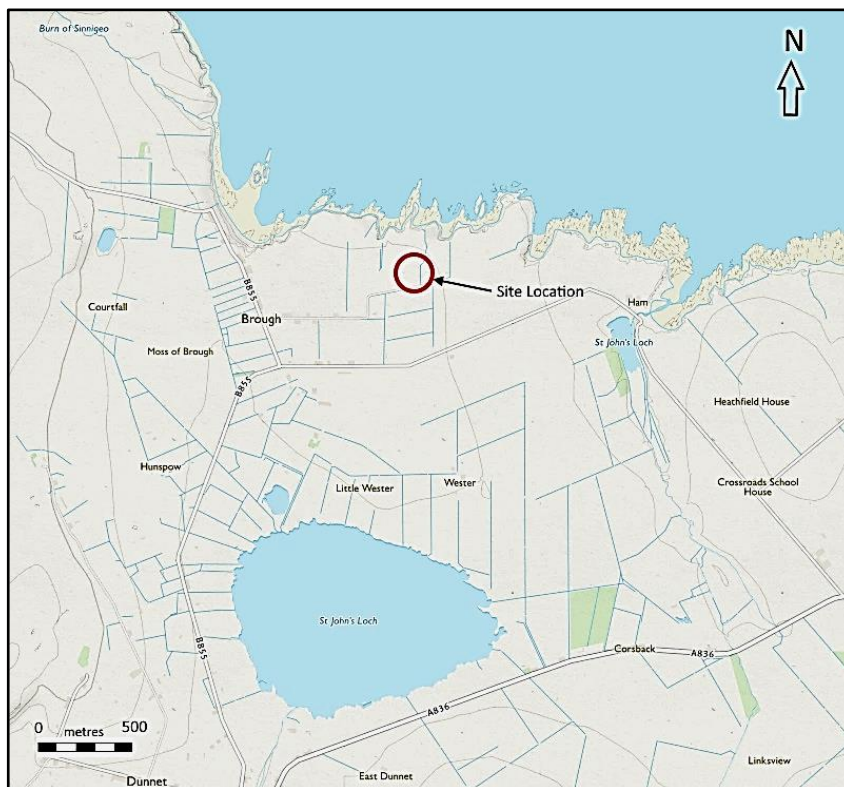


Figure 2: Location of the Study Area

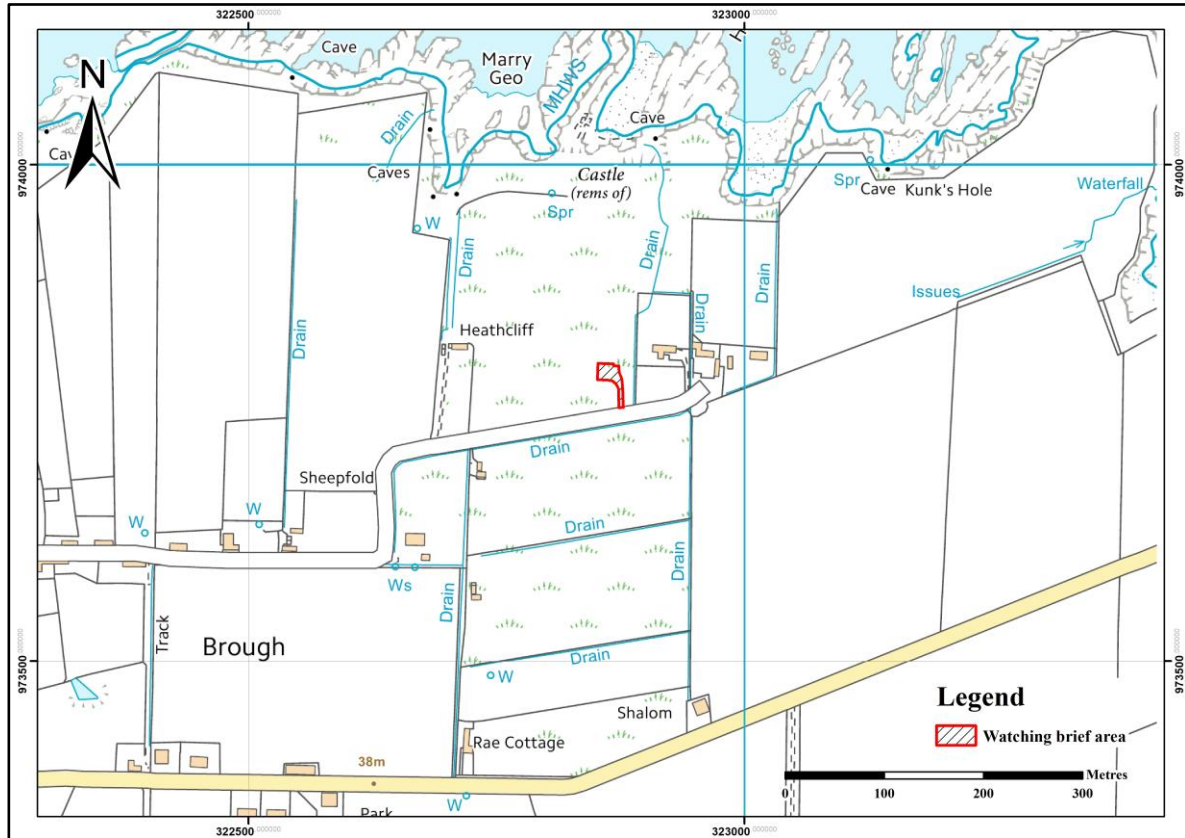


Figure 3: The Study Area showing area of Watching Brief

## Introduction

A programme of archaeological monitoring and recording was required by Highland Council as a Condition of planning consent (17/05367/FUL) during the preliminary ground works for the construction of a new dwelling at Heathcliffe, Brough, Caithness (Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4).

The watching brief was required in order to identify and record all significant archaeological remains revealed during the course of development ground works.

The archaeological project required:

- Examination of readily available documentary and cartographic sources for the site
- Preparation and approval by the LPA of a WSI and Risks Assessment document
- Watching Brief and recording during development ground works
- Post excavation collation and assessment of field data and preparation of the Data Structure Report
- Preparation of the project archive and DES entry

## Archaeological & Historical Background

Readily available documentary and cartographic sources for the site including the Highland Council Historic Environment Record (HER) have been examined and reviewed during the preparation of

the preceding WSI document in order to identify significant recorded monuments, areas, sites and find locations in the vicinity of the development area.

### ***Documentary Evidence***

The study area is not located either within or adjacent to any Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) and there are no Listed Buildings within the near vicinity.

The study site is located adjacent to and possibly within the boundary of a former farmstead (MHG 27540) as indicated by a partly upstanding stone structure measuring approximately 19m by 4m in plan. The structure is shown on the Ordnance Survey 6 inch map of 1872 (see Figure 4) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of 1907 (Figure 5) where it appears to reflect a roofed building. The origins of the building are not known. In addition, the farmstead site is associated with an area of preserved rig and furrow cultivation that is potentially of medieval origin (Canmore 118861).

A further former settlement site is indicated just to the west of the study site at ND2271 7395. The location is named Marry Geo and the settlement evidence includes an undated linear earthwork and an associated enclosure (MHG27539 and Canmore 118858), the origins of which are at present unknown.

Brough Castle (MGH 1591) is located close to the coast edge just to the north of the study site. The remains include traces of a number of demolished structures suggested to reflect the site of a promontory fort of medieval origin. No documentary references have so far been traced for the site and it has not received modern archaeological investigation. Its date is variously ascribed between the early Iron Age and early medieval periods.

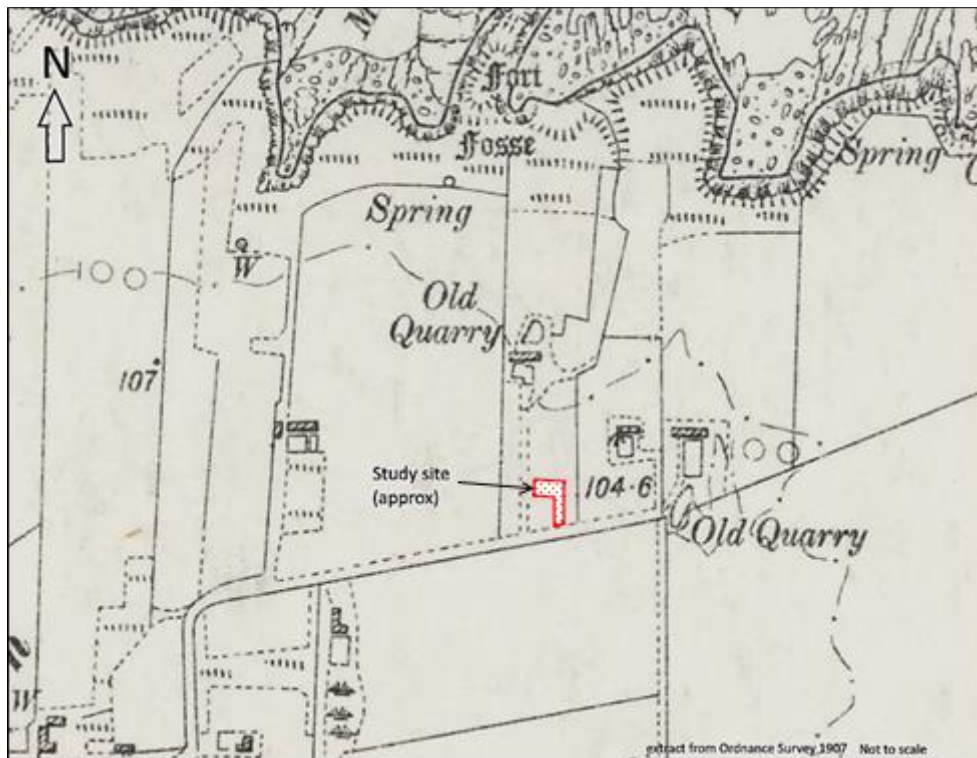


Figure 4: Extract from the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1872 showing approximate development area. Not to scale

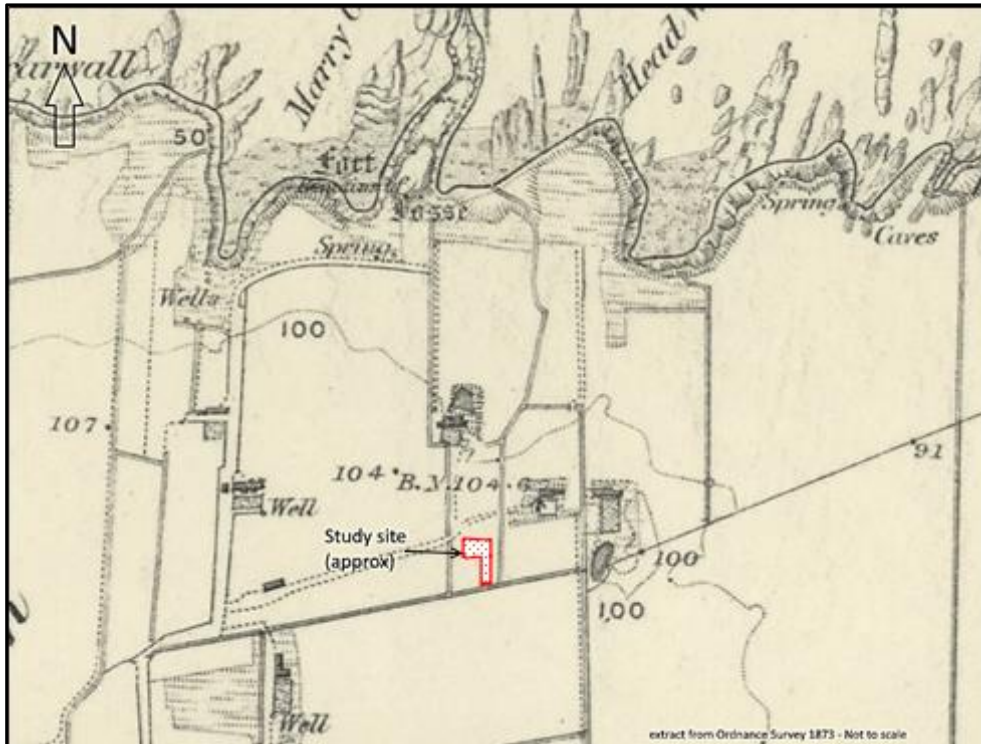


Figure 5: Extract from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1907 showing the approximate area of development. Not to scale

### ***Statistical Accounts***

Both the Old Statistical Account<sup>3</sup> and New Statistical Account<sup>4</sup> for the Parish of Dunnet were consulted as part of the documentary research.

Neither refers to the study site specifically, or provide any directly relevant information pertaining to the history or cultural heritage of the study area. Both volumes do refer to several old chapel buildings in the area and a number of ruined ‘pictish’ dwellings at nearby Ham.

### **DBA Conclusions**

The documentary evidence for the site indicated that the development site is located in an area where there may be buried remains associated with the farmstead of probable post medieval origin depicted on the 1873 and 1907 Ordnance Survey mapping.

Evidence for earlier activity, during the medieval period, is provided by the remains of the fortified site called Brough Castle, a complex whose origins and history remain very unclear.

No direct evidence for activity on the study site during the prehistoric period was traced although Caithness is recognised to be rich in structures and buried remains from the period and a large number of suggested funerary and settlement sites are indicated along the near coastline by the earlier Ordnance Survey mapping.

<sup>3</sup> [http://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk/static/statacc/dist/viewer/osa-vol11-Parish\\_record\\_for\\_Dunnet\\_in\\_the\\_county\\_of\\_Caithness\\_in\\_volume\\_11\\_of\\_account\\_1/](http://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk/static/statacc/dist/viewer/osa-vol11-Parish_record_for_Dunnet_in_the_county_of_Caithness_in_volume_11_of_account_1/)

<sup>4</sup> [http://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk/static/statacc/dist/viewer/nsa-vol15-Parish\\_record\\_for\\_Dunnet\\_in\\_the\\_county\\_of\\_Caithness\\_in\\_volume\\_15\\_of\\_account\\_2/](http://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk/static/statacc/dist/viewer/nsa-vol15-Parish_record_for_Dunnet_in_the_county_of_Caithness_in_volume_15_of_account_2/)



## Fieldwork

### *Aims and Objectives*

The principal aims of the watching brief project were to:

- Establish the presence or absence of significant buried archaeological deposits within the study area and, if present, to determine their character, extent, date and archaeological significance and to record them to professional standards, in line with current legislation and policy.
- Minimise any possible delay or cost to the development by anticipating archaeological requirements as far as possible, timetabling and integrating archaeological recording work with the project, and dealing with any issues arising quickly and efficiently.

### *Methodology*

The footprint of the development area (see Figure 6), including the route of a new access road, was stripped of topsoil and overburden to the upper surface of the natural clay substrate using a slew-tracked machine equipped with a toothless grading bucket. All machine stripping work was monitored by the writer.

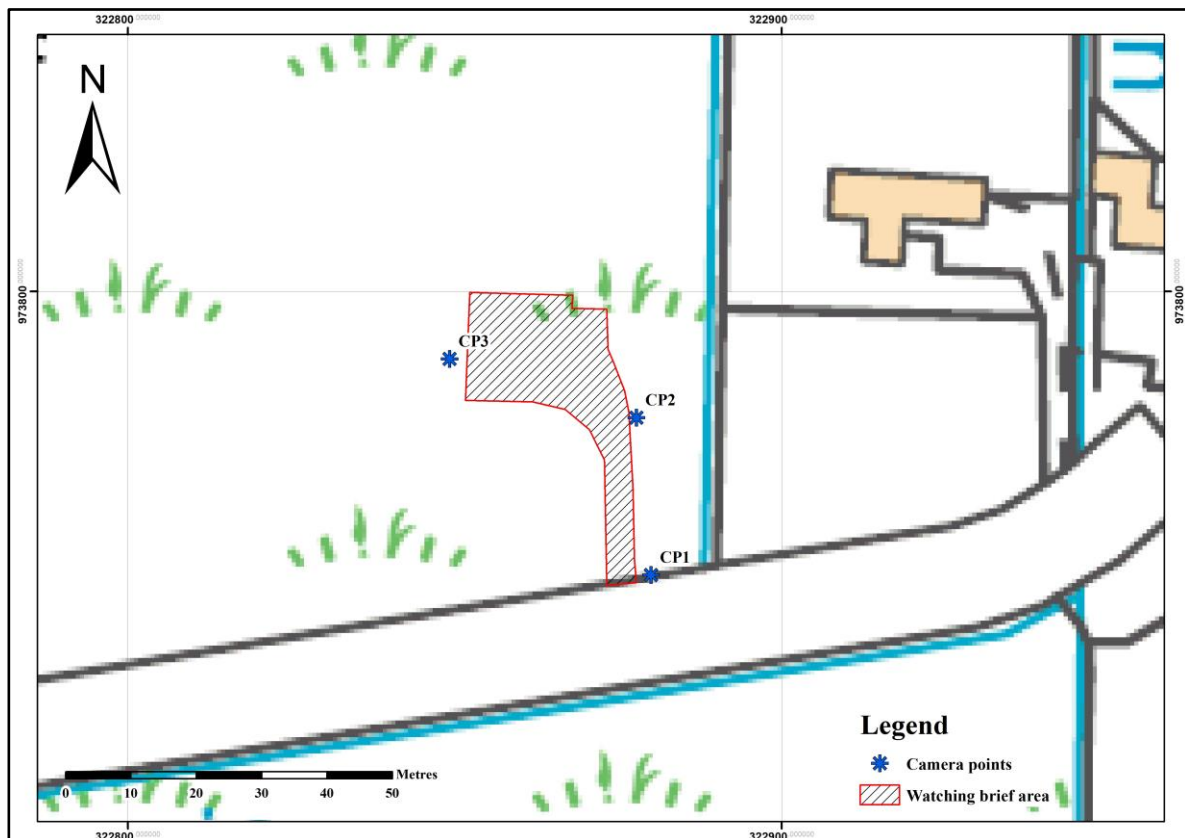


Figure 6: Footprint of the Watching Brief Area. Scale shown

## **Results**

Topsoil and overburden was stripped across the development footprint (Figure 7) under direct archaeological supervision using a slew tracked excavator equipped with a toothless grading bucket.

The topsoil (101) was uniform across the site and consisted of a stone-free silt loam up to 300mm deep. This in turn overlay a stone-free natural clay substrate (102). The substrate was also essentially uniform across the site and undisturbed throughout.

No archaeological features of any kind were evident cut into the surface of the substrate. No trace of Rig and Furrow cultivation was identified.



Figure 7: The topsoil stripping area nearing completion. Facing NW from CP2. Scales 1m

## **Finds**

Finds recovered during the course of the archaeological monitoring were restricted to a handful of modern pottery sherds including Transfer-printed and White wares. These are not considered significant and have not been retained.

## **Discussion & Conclusions**

A programme of archaeological monitoring and recording has been undertaken during preliminary ground works for the development, in accordance with the requirements of the Condition for archaeology attached to planning consent by Highland Council.

The watching brief work failed to identify any significant archaeological deposits or finds within the study area, which was effectively archaeologically sterile.

## Recommendations

No significant archaeological deposits or finds were identified within the study area during the course of the watching brief and no further archaeological mitigation is considered necessary.

## Bibliography and References

Canmore database *passim* – National Record of the Historic Environment for Scotland

HAS 2018 *No 2 Heathcliffe, Brough, Caithness - Archaeological Watching Brief and Reporting Project Risk Assessment and Methods Statement*. Highland Archaeology Services unpublished client report

HHER *passim* – Highland Council Historic Environment Record

Scottish Government 2014 *Our Place in Time – The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland*

[www.archaeologystrategy.scot](http://www.archaeologystrategy.scot) 2015 *Scotlands Archaeology Strategy*

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Photographic Register

Photograph No.	View facing	Camera Point	Description
0036	NW	CP1	The study area before excavations
0037	NW	CP1	The study area before excavations
0038	N	CP1	Stripping the access track. Scales 1m
0039	NW	CP1	Stripping the access track. Scales 1m
0040	NW	CP2	Topsoil stripping of main area. Scales 1m
0041	NW	CP2	Topsoil stripping of main area. Scales 1m
0042	NW	CP2	Topsoil stripping nearing completion. Scales 1m
0043	NW	CP2	Topsoil stripping nearing completion. Scales 1m
0044	E	CP3	Stripped area completed. Scales 1m
0045	E	CP3	Stripped area completed. Scales 1m

### Appendix 2 – Context Register

Context No.	Area	Description
101	all	Topsoil (all areas)
102	all	Natural clay substrate (all areas)