



Highland Archaeology Services Ltd

Bringing the Past and Future Together

Balcroy Cycle Track, Kilravock, Highland



Archaeological Watching Brief Project

Summary Report

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Summary Report

HAS Report No.	BAC17-1
Site Code	BAC17
Client	Kilravock Estate
Planning Reference	13/03771/FUL
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Summary

A programme of archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken during preliminary ground work for the construction of a new cycle track at Balcroy, Kilravock. The project represented the second phase of archaeological monitoring undertaken for the new cycle track, the first stage having been undertaken in 2014.

A single concentration of rounded cobbles was revealed within topsoil, which possibly reflected the site of a field clearance cairn of unknown date. No other significant archaeological deposits, features or finds were identified during the course of the watching brief and no further analysis or reporting is considered necessary.

Contents

Summary	2
Contents	3
Illustrations	3
Appendices.....	3
Legislation and Policy.....	3
Acknowledgements.....	4
Location	4
Introduction.....	5
Archaeological & Historical Background.....	7
Fieldwork.....	7
Aims and Objectives.....	7
Methodology.....	7
Results.....	8
Summary of Finds.....	9
Discussion & Conclusions	9
Recommendations.....	10
Appendices.....	10

Illustrations

Figure 1 - General Site Location.....	4
Figure 2 – The Study Area showing Cycle Track Route	5
Figure 3a and b – Location of the 2017 Phase 2 Cycle Track Archaeological Monitoring.....	6
Figure 4 - The cycle track corridor (SW) as stripped at CP2. Facing SW	8
Figure 5 - The cycle track corridor (NE) as stripped at CP7. Facing SW. Scales 1m	8
Figure 6 – Detail of the natural substrate in the NE stretch. Scale 1m	9

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Table of Recorded Contexts
- Appendix 2 - Photographic Register
- Appendix 3 - Plan showing position of Camera Points

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 policies¹.

Professional standards maintained throughout the present project adhered to the Codes of Conduct and Approved Practice and Standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists².

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

² Chartered Institute for Archaeology (CIfA) Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Excavation.

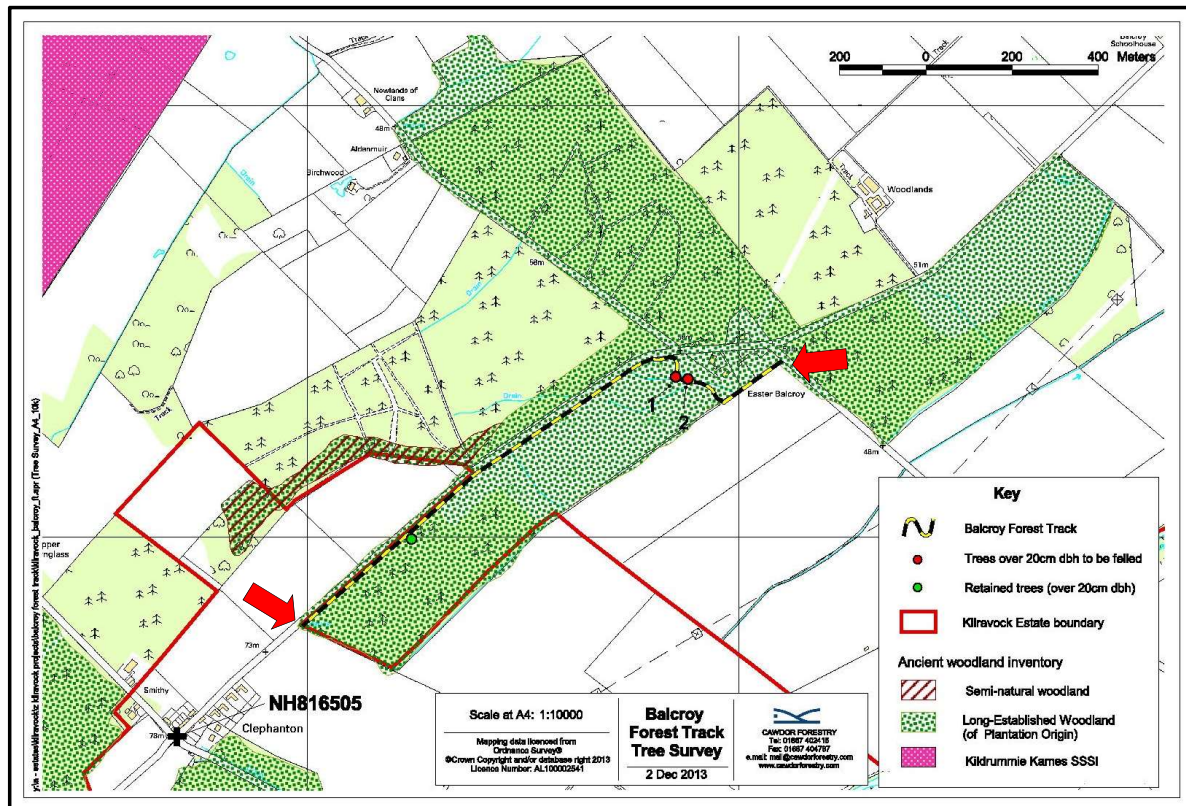


Figure 2 – The Study Area showing Cycle Track Route

Introduction

A watching brief was undertaken to monitor a final stage (Phase 2) of preliminary ground works for the construction of a new cycle track at Balcroy near Clephanton, Highland. The project was commissioned by Kilravock Estate and undertaken in accordance with a Condition attached to planning consent (13/03771/FUL) by Highland Council.

Work on phase 2 of the trackway (Figure 3a and b) was undertaken on the 20th and 21st of November 2017 and involved monitoring of machine excavation in areas to the SW and NE of the portion of the cycle track route monitored in 2014. Both these sections of the cycle route followed the line of the B9091 and ran through rough grassland to the SW and mixed Birch woodland to the NE.

Balcroy Cycle Track, Kilravock, Highland Archaeological Watching Brief – Summary Report

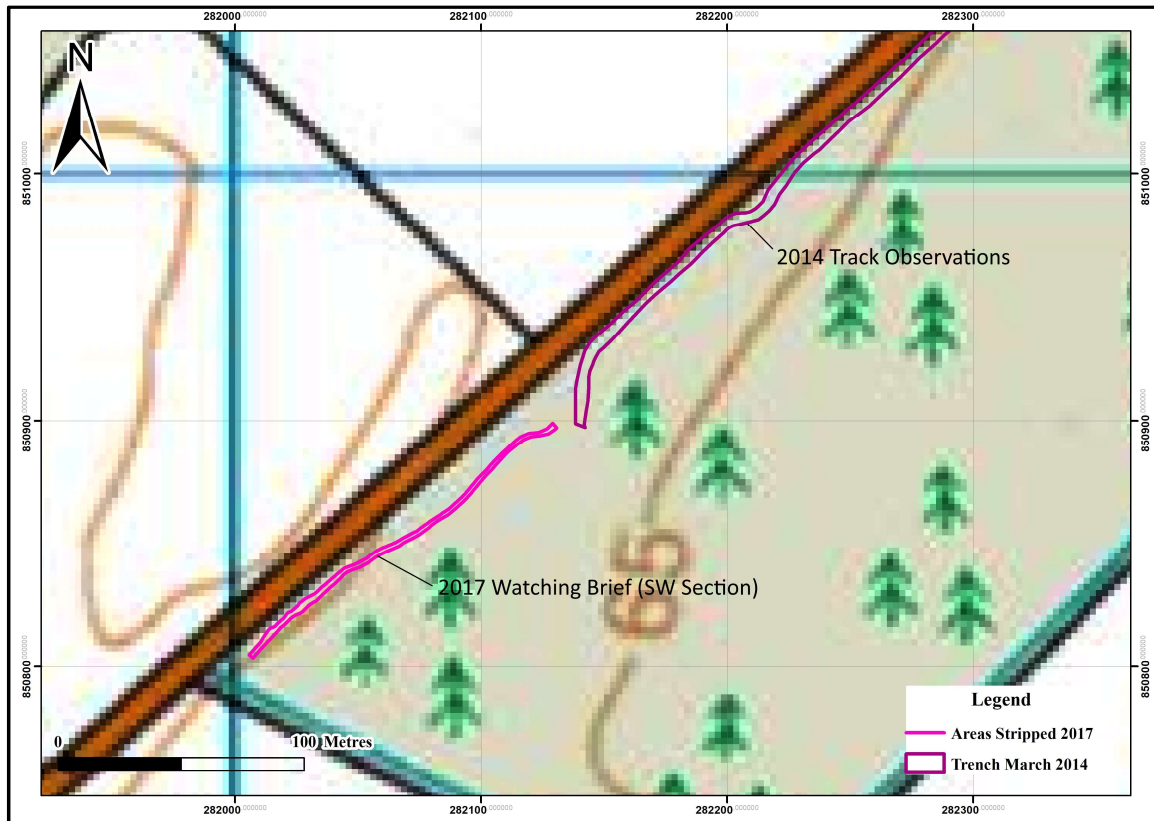


Figure 3a and b – Location of the 2017 Phase 2 Cycle Track Archaeological Monitoring

Archaeological & Historical Background

The archaeological and historical background to the study area is set out in the 2014 HAS report³ (HAS 2014), which detailed the results of the first phase of archaeological monitoring.

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

Fieldwork was undertaken over two days on the 20th and 21st of November 2017. The route was opened using an 8-ton slew tracked machine equipped with a flat grading bucket to a width of between 2m and 3m and to a general depth of approximately 500mm (Figure 4). The machine stripping was opened in two sections. The first section was opened between NH 82129 50898 and NH 82007 50808 to the southwest of the area monitored in 2014. The second strip was opened between NH 82300 51070 and NH 82756 51390 immediately to the northwest of the 2014 work (see Figures 3 and 4).

Throughout the fieldwork the weather varied from wet to biblically wet. The majority of the Phase 2 route was formerly woodland and many stumps were removed during work. This was undertaken in sections as work progressed using the flat blade

³ HAS 2014 – *Balcroy Cycle Track, Kilravock, Ardersier – Controlled Topsoil Strip*. Unpublished client report. Highland Archaeology Services



Figure 4 - The cycle track corridor (SW) as stripped at CP2. Facing SW



Figure 5 - The cycle track corridor (NE) as stripped at CP7. Facing SW. Scales 1m

Results

The topsoil consisted of very dark grey to black humic silt-clay to sandy loam and varied in depth from a maximum of around 400mm in the SW section to no more than 250 mm in the NE stretch. In places the layer contained more tree roots and rootlets than soil. In the SW stretch the deposit was

very poorly drained and collected water almost immediately once the trench was opened. The extreme SW part of the route, a stretch of some 70m or so, was effectively immediately totally waterlogged, which made the identification of archaeological features impossible.

The natural substrate (Figure 6; contexts 103 and 104) was only revealed directly below the topsoil in the NE sections of the cycle track. Here it consisted of mixed dark grey to brown to yellowish-cream sandy clay with common to abundant stones and occasional larger cobbles and boulders (Figure 6).

A concentration of stones and cobbles (Context 102) was revealed within the topsoil at NH82308 51075. The spread was 2.5m wide and 300mm deep in the trench and appeared to extend beyond it towards the E. No associated artefacts were present.



Figure 6 – Detail of the natural substrate in the NE stretch. Scale 1m

Summary of Finds

No significant archaeological finds of any kind were identified during the fieldwork.

Discussion & Conclusions

The watching brief failed to identify any significant archaeological deposits or finds within the route of the cycle track.

The remains of a possible field clearance cairn (Figure 3, C102) of unknown date were identified at NH82308 51075.

Recommendations

No further archaeological work is considered necessary on the remaining part of the cycle track, which has still to be stripped of vegetation.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Context Register

Context	Description	Comments
101	Humic black silt clay topsoil with sparse stones and cobbles and rare boulders. Common roots and occasional tree stumps. Very common large tree roots in the southernmost 70m. Up to 400mm deep in the SW part of the strip but mostly less than 200mm in the NW stretch where it had very common Birch rootlets and larger roots.	In the SW stretch of the trench strip. The final 75m or so waterlogged and flooded
102	Patch of more concentrated stones and cobbles up to 200mm size within the topsoil in the NE stretch. Exposed for a distance of 2.5 m just below the modern ground surface and greater than 800mm wide. No more than 2 cobbles deep and 300mm. No associated finds.	Possibly the remains of a field clearance cairn. If so undated but most likely post medieval or modern.
103	Natural mixed boulder clay substrate. Common stones and cobbles and rare larger boulders (NE stretch only)	Natural with common penetrating rootlets and roots
104	As 103 but with natural organic smears and patches derived from rotting tree roots (NE stretch only)	Natural substrate

Appendix 2 – Photographic Register

<i>Photograph No.</i>	<i>Camera Point</i>	<i>Facing</i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>Description</i>
2078	CP1	SW		General excavation work
2079	CP1	SW		General excavation work
2080	CP2	SW		General excavation work
2081	CP2	SW		General excavation work
2082	CP2	SW		General excavation work
2083	CP2	SW	2x1m	General excavation work
2084	CP2	SW	2x1m	General excavation work
2085	CP3	SW		Waterlogged/ flooded
2086	CP3	SW		Waterlogged/flooded
2087	CP3	NE	2x1m	Waterlogged/flooded
2088	CP3	SW		Waterlogged/flooded
2089	CP3	SW		Waterlogged/flooded
2090	CP3	SW		Waterlogged/ flooded
2091	CP4	NE	2x1m	Cobbles context 102 =?clearance cairn
2092	CP4	SE		Ongoing excavation
2093	CP4	NE		Ongoing excavation
2094	CP5	NE	2x1m	Ongoing excavation
2095	CP5	NE	2x1m	Ongoing excavation
2096	n/a	n/a		Detail of variation in natural substrate
2097	CP6	SW	2x1m	Ongoing excavation
2098	CP6	SW	2x1m	Ongoing excavation
2099	CP7	SW	2x1m	Ongoing excavation
2100	CP7	SW	2x1m	Ongoing excavation
2101	CP8	NE	2x1m	Ongoing excavation
2102	CP8	NE	2x1m	Ongoing excavation
2103	CP9	SW	2x1m	Ongoing excavation
2104	CP9	NE		Ongoing excavation
2105	CP10	SW		Taken from NE end point of WB monitoring

Appendix 3 - Plan showing Camera Points

