



Highland Archaeology Services Ltd

Bringing the Past and Future Together

Furrows End, Watten Caithness



Watching Brief

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Furrows End, Watten Caithness

Watching Brief

Report No.	HAS101107
Site Code	HAS-FEW10
Client	Mr A Macdonald
OS Grid Ref	ND 24265 54460
OASIS	highland4-87584
HCAU / Planning Ref	10/01983/FUL
Date / revision	16/12/2010
Authors	Paul Humphreys and John Wood

Summary

A Watching Brief was conducted during site clearance works for the construction of a house at Furrows End, Watten, Caithness in response to a planning condition. No archaeologically significant features or artefacts were recorded.

Contents

Location	4
Introduction.....	5
Background.....	5
Programme.....	7
Results.....	9
Conclusions and recommendations.....	10
Appendix: Tables	13

Illustrations

Figure 1 Site location	4
Figure 2 1st Edition OS 6 inch map (extract: not to scale).....	7
Figure 3 Watching Brief area (shaded), showing features and photo locations.....	9
Table 1 Features.....	13
Table 2 Photographs	13

Acknowledgements

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The site is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference ND 24265 54460 at a height of about 26 metres above sea level.





Plate 1 View SE across site before stripping (Photo 1)

Introduction

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Highland Archaeology Services Ltd in response to a planning requirement at Furrows End, Watten, Caithness, to identify and record the nature and extent of any archaeological features affected by the development.

Background

An archaeological assessment was requested in this case because there was potential for finds or features of interest to be discovered during site works. The current planning and policy framework includes the Highland Council's *Structure Plan*¹, and the Scottish Government's *Scottish Planning Policy* (SPP), issued in February 2010, which consolidates and supersedes the previous SPP and NPPG series². The fundamental principles underpinning UK and Scottish policies are set out in *Passed to the Future: Historic Scotland's Policy for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment* (2002)³ and the *Burra Charter* (Australia ICOMOS 1999).⁴

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

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/02/03132605/8>

³ www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/pasttofuture.pdf

The site is located in an area of improved land between existing dwellings. The 50m by 18 m plot opens onto a metalled road within the village of Watten, Caithness. The 1st edition OS 6 inch map (figure 2) shows this area as open fields south-east of the then village.

To the east, the Strath Burn is a relict glacial melt-water channel and head-water of the Wick River. This area has clearly been densely settled since at least the Bronze Age (c. 2,600 to 4,400 years ago) because an unusually dense concentration of archaeological monuments is located along this water course and its tributaries; this includes several brochs, the nearest of which lies circa 500m to the SSW of the site.

A standing stone is located on the first terrace, about 250m SE of the dwelling site⁵. This was recorded by the Ordnance Survey in 1871, at which time the surveyors noted that about

50 years ago there were another two stones standing near the present one; they were removed for building purposes about that time. A third stone is still barely visible above surface. This has no doubt fallen over and gradually been embedded in the soil. These stones were all within a few feet of each other.⁶

However the RCAHMS did not find any information about these other stones on their visit in 1910 and they have not been recorded since. The standing stone is included in the Non Statutory Register as potentially of national importance (Category V).

A further 50 m to the SE is the site of a Bronze Age cist burial, excavated in 1834, which now lies beneath the A882 road. This was reported to contain human remains, bones of deer, and stone implements including a huge stone spoon or ladle.⁷ Close to this, a number of 'small circular tumuli' were reported as having been levelled in about 1841. These may have been Bronze Age field clearance as Roger Mercer identified two hut circles here in 1995⁸.

Another short cist, containing a cremation burial and urn, was reported to have been found when Greystones farmhouse was built in 1873⁹.

There are also more recent features of interest nearby, including the 19th c. Watten Smithy, shown on the 1st edition OS map was recorded by John Hume in 1977¹⁰. It may be noted that the 1st Statistical Account for Watten (1791-9) complains that there is 'neither village nor manufactory within the bounds of this parish'.¹¹ The 2nd Statistical Account (1834) makes a similar comment, so the modern village of Watten appears to be of mid-late 19th c. origin.¹²

⁴ <http://www.icomos.org/australia/burra.html>

⁵ HHER MHG2349; NMRS ND25SW 11

⁶ OS Name Book 1871, quoted in RCAHMS record NMRS ND25SW 11

⁷ HHER MHG2350; NMRS ND25SW 12

⁸ HHER MHG1962; NMRS ND25SW 17

⁹ HHER MHG1961; NMRS ND25SW 16

¹⁰ HHER MHG1975; NMRS ND25SW 29

¹¹ <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1791-99/Caithness/Watten/>

¹² <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1834-45/Caithness/Watten/>

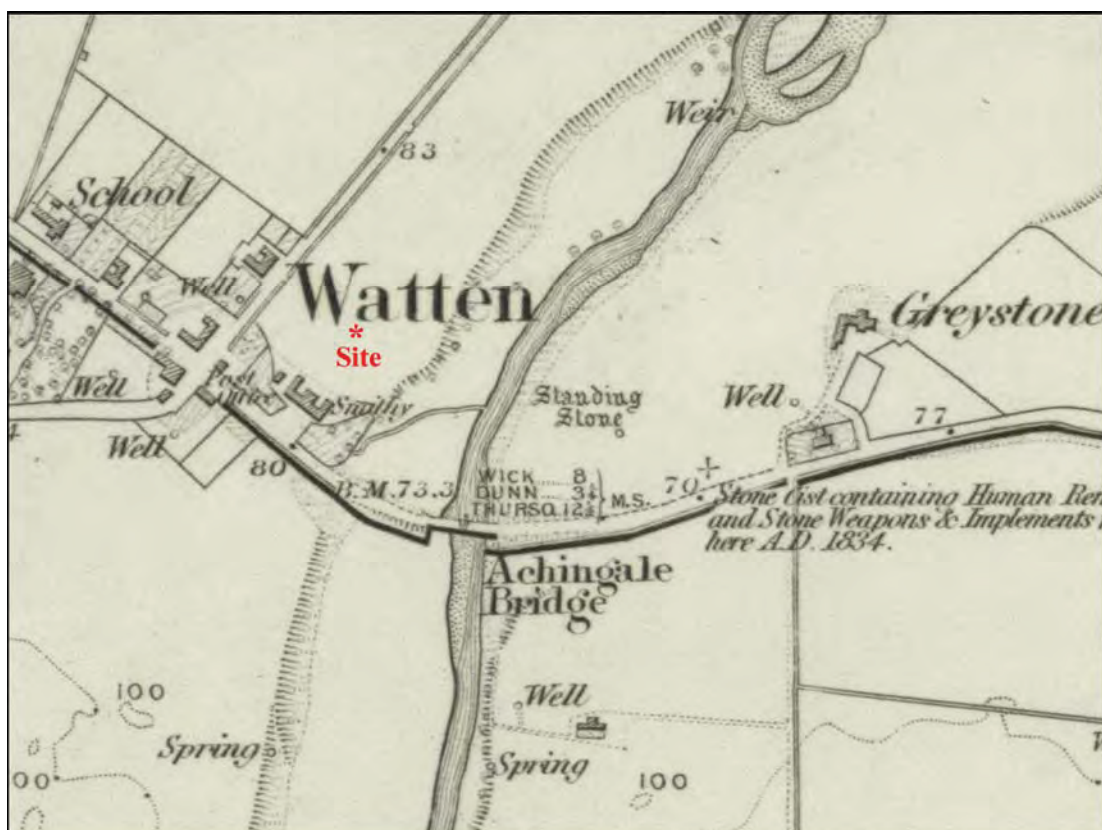


Figure 2 1st Edition OS 6 inch map (extract: not to scale)
Caithness, Sheet XVIII; Surveyed 1871; Published 1877

Programme

A desk-based assessment was followed by a watching brief during topsoil stripping, which was carried out on 9th October 2009 in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) previously approved by the Highland Council.¹³ Stripping was conducted using a 13 ton tracked 360 excavator fitted with a smooth bladed bucket and covered the full extent of the area to be cleared.

¹³ Wood, J 2010 *Furrows End, Watten, Caithness: Proposed watching brief: Written Scheme of Investigation*, Highland Archaeology Services, Cromarty (Report No. HAS101101)



Plate 2: Concrete indicating main sewer line (Photos 5-6)

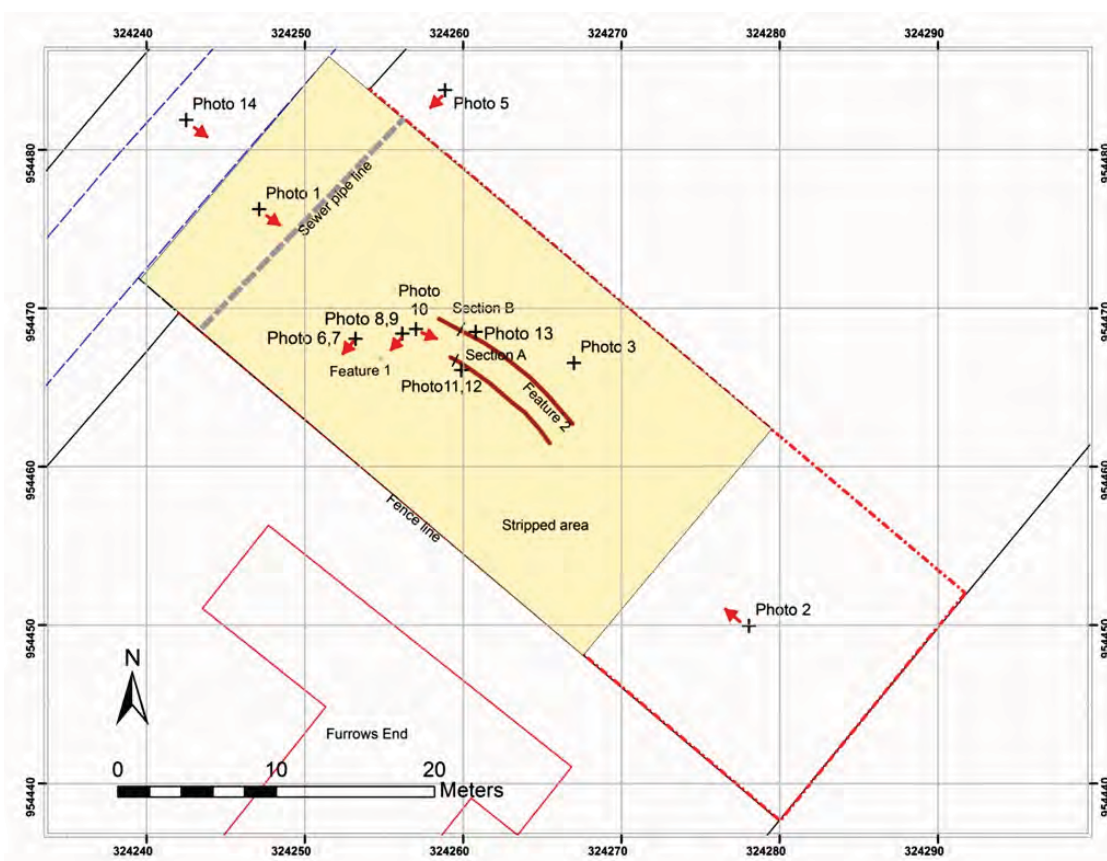


Figure 3 Watching Brief area (shaded), showing features and photo locations

Results

Nothing of archaeological significance was noted. On opening the site a cut was noted which proved, on enquiry, to be a main sewer. A wider spread of concrete on the top-soil / till interface indicated that the area had previously been stripped, presumably for the sewer construction (Plate 2 above).

Two further features (Features 1 and 2) were recorded (see Figure 3 above for locations):

Feature 1

Feature 1 (Plate 3 below) was investigated and found to be an imprint caused by compaction of the surface. It was roughly rectangular with rounded corners and measured approximately 40cm x 30cm. It is interpreted as an impression made by the stabilising foot of a JCB.

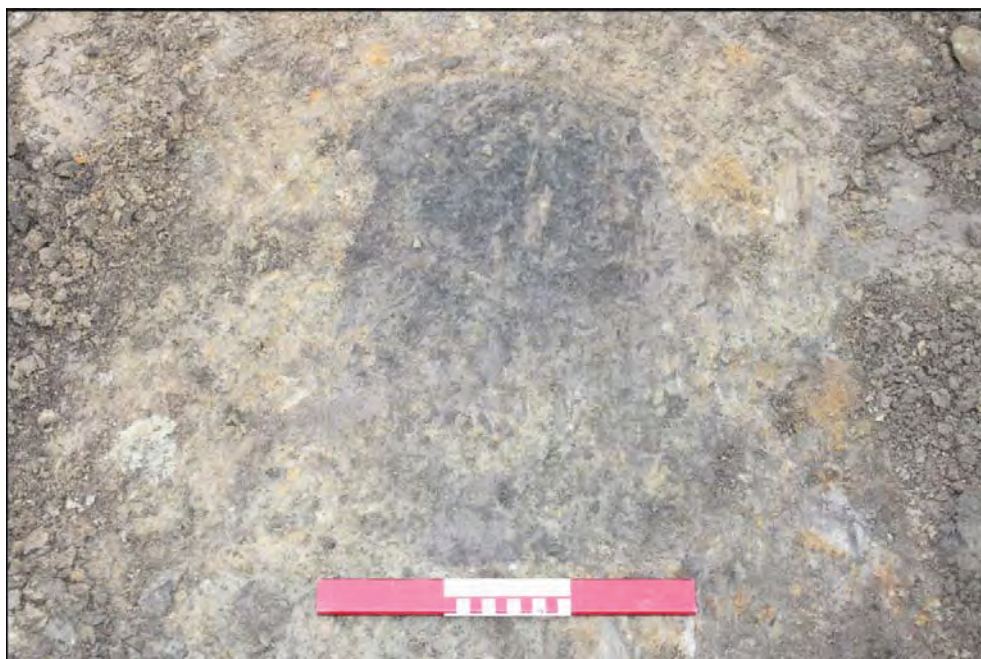


Plate 3 Feature 1 (Photo 8)

Feature 2

Feature 2 (Plate 4 below) consisted of two shallow lines of compaction containing topsoil, 1.8m apart. Each track is about 30cm wide at the cleaned surface and about 10cm deep at the centre (See Plate 4).

This is interpreted as the tyre tracks of a construction machine. The extent of this feature suggest that approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the stripped area was stripped for the sewer construction. Both features were sectioned and photographed to confirm the interpretation (plate 6)

Conclusions and recommendations

No archaeologically significant features were recorded and no further archaeological fieldwork is recommended.



Plate 4 Sections through Feature 2 – above: Section A; below: Section B



Plate 5 Feature 2 (Photo 10)



Plate 6 Stripping completed (Photo 14)

Appendix: Tables

Table 1 Features

Ref	Type	Width	Length	Depth	Photo	Interpretation
F1	Impression	0.4m	0.3m	0.05m	Photo 8,9	JCB foot
F2	Linear	0.8-0.9m	8.9m	0.11m	Photo 11-13	JCB track

Table 2 Photographs

Photo No.	Location	Direction	Notes	Taken by	Date
1	CP1	SE	View (pre-start)	PDH	09/10/2010
2	CP2	NW	View (pre-start)	PDH	09/10/2010
3	CP3	SW	View (pre-start)	PDH	09/10/2010
4	CP2	SE	View (pre-start)	PDH	09/10/2010
5	CP4	SW	View (pre-start)	PDH	09/10/2010
6	CP5	SW	Stripping in progress: concrete	PDH	09/10/2010
7	CP5	SW	Stripping in progress: concrete	PDH	09/10/2010
8	CP6	SW	Feature 1	PDH	09/10/2010
9	CP6	SW	Feature 1	PDH	09/10/2010
10	CP7	SE	Feature 2	PDH	09/10/2010
11	CP8	WNW	Feature 2 pre-ex	PDH	09/10/2010
12	CP8	WNW	Feature 2 Section A	PDH	09/10/2010
13	CP9	WNW	Feature 2 Section B	PDH	09/10/2010
14	CP10	SE	Views across site- stripping completed	PDH	09/10/2010