

# Scotia Archaeology

**REPORT  
TO  
MR ATHEL PRICE**

**CONSTRUCTION OF  
NEW DOMESTIC RESIDENCE  
AT PLOT 3, CROFTMORAIG,  
KENMORE, PERTSHIRE**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING  
DURING TOPSOIL STRIPPING**

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## INTRODUCTION

This document describes the results of archaeological monitoring during the removal of topsoil in advance of the construction of a new domestic residence at Croftmoraig, Kenmore, near Aberfeldy, Perthshire.

Perth & Kinross Council granted consent to the project (Planning Application number 14/01271/FLL) subject to several conditions. One of the conditions, based on advice from the council's archaeological advisors, Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT), was that the removal of topsoil and other materials that overlie the natural geology of the site should be monitored by an approved archaeological contractor.

A Written Scheme of Investigation for archaeological monitoring was presented to PKHT for approval prior to the commencement of any work on site. That document was subsequently approved. The archaeological work was undertaken by John Lewis of Scotia Archaeology on behalf of Mr Athel Price of Bolfracks Estate, the excavations being undertaken by T&M Developments (Scotland) Limited of Birnam, Perthshire.

## CROFTMORAIG

Croftmoraig is a small hamlet on the south side of the A827 road, 6km west of Aberfeldy and 3km north-east of Kenmore in Perthshire. At Croftmoraig the land is reasonably flat, rising to the south up the side of the Tay valley. To the west of the farm is the well known Croftmoraig Stone Circle (NN74NE 12), a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM5024). It was excavated in 1965 (Piggott & Simpson 1971) when the following chronology was determined.



*Croftmoraig Stone Circle viewed from the south-east*

The initial phase of the monument consisted of a setting of 14 timber posts opening to the south-west. This was supplanted by an oval setting of stones outside of which a stone circle and two outliers were added in its third and final phase. A few graves were also uncovered although these had been robbed. The three phases of structural activity are believed to span the late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age.

### THE DEVELOPMENT SITE

The overall area of the proposed development measures some 100m by 40-60m and is centred on approximately NN 79820 47280. It is contained within a small pasture field bounded on the south-west by a farm road and on its north-west by a road accessing two recently built houses (on Plots 1 and 2). A small stream runs south to north through the east part of the site (see plans supplied by the client and reproduced below).



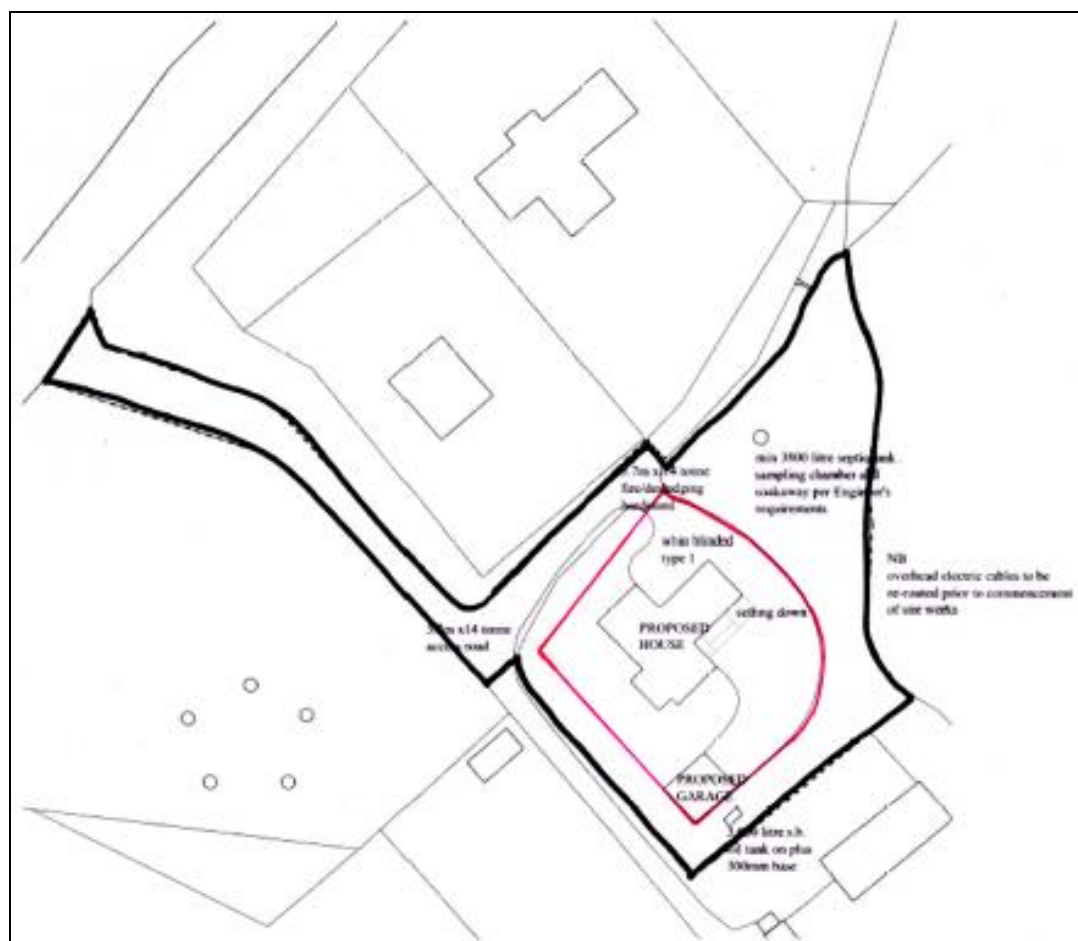
*Location map of the development site (shown in red) at Croftmoraig*

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken because of the proximity of the stone circle, which is situated 30m from the development area. Small-scale investigations undertaken by the Scottish Urban Archaeology Trust (DES 2006, 131) and by Scotia Archaeology (DES 2009, 147) in advance of house-building at Plot 1, 50m north of the development area uncovered a small number of archaeological features. Although some of those features may have been prehistoric in date, they could well be contemporary with the nearby 19th-century Croftmoraig Farm.

In March 2017, a watching brief was maintained during the excavation of a trench for an underground 33kv power cable to replace an overhead one that spanned the development site. Trenching on that occasion revealed nothing of archaeological significance, only 0.3m of topsoil overlying fluvio-glacial till of silt, gravel and boulders (Lewis 2017).

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

The area monitored comprised the house footprint together with a strip 2m wide around its perimeter, the site of a proposed garage and an area for a drive describing an arc around the east side of the house (see plan below). The overall area, centred on approximately NN 79818 47302, measured 34m north-east/south-west by 22.5m wide, approximately 765m<sup>2</sup> overall. It had been proposed that the excavation of a trench for a septic tank would also be monitored. However, this trench, which is to be excavated at a later date, will be located some distance north-east of the main trench and, considering the extent of this investigation, it was decided not to monitor this particular operation.



### *The development site showing the area monitored (outlined in red) during topsoil stripping*

Soil-stripping was carried out on 13-14 April 2017, during cold but dry conditions, using a smooth-edged ditching bucket attached to a mechanical excavator. This operation was monitored closely by the archaeologist and features deemed to be of some potential significance were investigated further.

The trench cut through short grass and topsoil of mid-brown loam with some gravel and pebbles which maintained a consistent depth of 0.3-0.4m over most of the site although it deepened somewhat towards the north and west, the result of soil creep. This material overlay fluvio-glacial deposits of orange-brown silt, gravel, pebbles and small boulders.



*The site stripped of topsoil, viewed from the south. In the background can be seen, left to right, Croftmoraig farmhouse and houses on Plots 1 and 2*

A small number of natural features, stone voids and, towards the north-west baulk, irregular features filled with very silty soil, interpreted as tree root holes or animal burrows. The only man-made feature encountered was a sheep burial towards the north-west side of the trench. Although the burial was reduced to skeletal remains, it was clear from the odour emanating from it that this feature was of relatively recent origin.

The only artefacts retrieved during the excavation were a small number of ceramic sherds of late 19th- or 20th-century date and objects of even more recent origin. These were not retained.



*The site stripped of topsoil, viewed from the north-east*

#### **OTHER OBSERVATIONS**



*Fields to the north-east of the development site containing remnants of rig and furrow.  
The stream cutting through the area is in the foreground*

A visual inspection of the fields beyond the stream identified scant remains of rig and furrow agriculture running downhill towards the north-west. In all likelihood it was associated with one of the nearby 18th- or 19th-century farms of Croftmoraig or Styx (also spelt Stix), shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map (Perthshire 1867, sheet 49) (see below). No trace of rig survives in the fields to the west of the stream although they may well have been flattened during agricultural improvements in the 19th century.



*Extract from the first edition 6-inch OS map showing Croftmoraig and Styx*

## CONCLUSIONS

Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered during this operation. Nonetheless, the proximity of Croftmoraig stone circle means that future ground-breaking activities in this area should also to be monitored archaeologically.

## REFERENCES

DES *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*. Archaeology Scotland.

Lewis, J 2017 *Re-routing of 33kv power line at Croftmoraig, Kenmore, Perthshire: archaeological watching brief*. Unpublished report to Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks.

Piggott, S & Simpson, D D A 1971 'Excavation of a stone circle at Croft Moraig, Perthshire, Scotland', *Proc Prehist Soc*, 37, 1, 1-15.