

Rapid Walkover Survey and Desk Based Assessment

Lair Bridge, Glenshee, Perth and Kinross



General view of Lair Bridge looking North East



21st December 2012

Introduction (Illus 1 and 5)

Perth and Kinross Council intend replacing the bridge at Lair with a new crossing and associated new road realignment. The author was commissioned by Capita Symonds to undertake a rapid walkover survey and desk based assessment of the area of the proposed road alignment and new bridge to assess the archaeological implications of the development. The rapid walkover survey was carried out by the author on Tuesday 18th December 2012 (Site Code LA01); weather conditions were bright and cold.

Historical Background (Illus 2, 3 and 4)

The settlement at Lair is marked on Timothy Pont's map of the 17th century and James Stobie's map of 1783. Settlements are marked on Stobie's map in the location now occupied by the Glenshee pottery and at the position of the extensive building remains that are still visible just to the south east of the proposed new road works (Easter Lair see below). The farmstead of Wester Lair is visible on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1862/3. Constructed in 1759 Major Caulfield's military road from Coupar Angus to Fort George runs through Glenshee and still survives in part as upstanding earthworks. The higher ground to the west of Lair and the A93 contains a great number of surviving monuments including Prehistoric cairns, potentially Early Historic Pitmarmick type buildings and post medieval farms and fermtouns. The presence of such a range of monuments indicates that the area was a prime focus for human occupation throughout the past.

Visible monuments

Historic Environment Record data from the Perth and Kinross Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) was consulted as part of this exercise. The SMR contains records for several monuments and sites to the west of the A93 most of which lie at least 500m from the proposed road and bridge works and as such are felt by this author to be under no threat from the proposed area of development.

Walkover (Illus 1)

The proposed route of the new road was walked to check and assess recorded archaeological sites and features and log any new ones. This entailed the author covering an area up to the course of the Shee Water to the east and to the top of the 400m contour to the west (Illus 1). The following list includes those monuments or features which could potentially be affected by the development works (Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust monument record numbers are given in brackets) and follows the proposed new route of the road from south to north.

1. Line of military road from Coupar Angus to Fort George (MPK5959) (Illus 6)

The 18th century military road line is visible as a set of earthworks on the western side of the A93 approaching Lair Bridge (Illus 7 and 12).

2. Lair / Cray Junction memorial cross (MPK16161) (Illus 8 and 9)

On the eastern side of the A93 just above Lair Bridge and the Cray road junction a small stone cross stands in the grass. This cross stands 0.47m high, measures 0.31m across the central arm and is 0.12m thick. There are traces of what may be weathered decoration but no inscription is visible.

3. Earthworks? (Illus 10)

On the northern side of the current road leading to Cray Bridge are a group of sizeable mounds which may be natural although they could also represent spoil heaps associated with the road construction.

4. Wester Lair North Military Road from Coupar Angus to Fort George (MPK17896) (Illus 11 and 12)

Above Lair Bridge a section of the military road heads north off the A93 and runs parallel to it before rejoining the road line again. This section is very well preserved with earthen banks on either side.

Sites in close proximity to road line (Illus 4, 13 and 14)

Fermtoun of Easter Lair (MPK4383) (Illus 13)

The remains of the fermtoun of Easter Lair lie to the east of the A93 road and comprise at least seventeen buildings, reduced to turf covered wall footings, together with their associated pens, enclosures and two kilns. The buildings are disposed on either side of a canalised burn, the major concentration being to the east of the burn, nearby a ruinous 19th century cottage in which two pairs of in filled cruck slots are visible. This settlement is shown on Stobie's map of 1783 and the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1862/3 (Illus 3 and 4).

Wester Lair farmstead (MPK4440) (Illus 14)

This farmstead is situated at the foot of the north east flank of Creag an Lair 180m south south west of Wester Lair cottage. It comprises three buildings and appears to post-date the old field dyke that runs along the foot of the slope. The principal building measures 22.3m from north north west to south south east by 5.3m over a grass grown wall spread 1.2m in thickness by 0.3m in height; it probably has three compartments. At the north end of this building there are traces of a second building set at right-angles to it. What is probably a third building, reduced to little more than a rectangular platform, lies 5m west of the first. The platform measures 6.4m from north north west to south south east by 2.2m; there are low banks about 0.3m high at each end and a possible outshot on the north north west. What is probably the scar of the field-bank is visible running between the buildings.

Recommendations

1. Any below ground excavations associated with the new road and bridge construction should be monitored by an archaeological watching brief, the terms of reference for such works should be discussed with Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust.
2. Where it is likely that road construction will destroy upstanding monuments (the military road at the southern end of the road realignment for example) these features should be properly recorded and excavated prior to road construction. Advice on this should be sought from Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust.
3. The construction of the new road and bridge will entail the removal of the stone cross above the Cray road junction and consideration should be given to reinstating this as close as possible to its original position following completion of the works.
4. The well preserved section of the military road to the north of Lair Bridge lies in close proximity to the proposed northern course of the road and should be fenced off to avoid any damage during the works.
5. The fermtoun at Easter Lair and the farmstead of Wester Lair (Illus 4) lie far enough away from the proposed works to not be directly affected however their presence should be kept in mind when the locations of site offices and welfare facilities are being considered. This latter point also applies to any other monuments of archaeological and historical interest in the vicinity of the entire development.

Cartographic Resources (www.maps.nls.uk)

Pont sheet 27: Strathardle, Glenshee and Gleneloch

James Stobie 1783 The Counties of Perth and Clackmannan

Ordnance Survey 6 inch First Edition Survey maps 1862-63

Illustration List

Illustration 1 – Boundary of walkover area (based on Ordnance Survey map Crown Copyright 2012. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 100049628)

Illustration 2 – Lair as marked on Timothy Pont's map of the late 16th century (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

Illustration 3 – Lair as marked on James Stobie's map of 1783 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

Illustration 4 – Lair as marked on 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1862/63, red circles indicate settlements of Wester and Easter Lair (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

Illustration 5 – Proposed road line and site of new bridge marked with identified archaeological features and monuments (edge of military road shown in red)

Illustration 6 – Section of military road visible on West side of A93 approaching Lair Bridge

Illustration 7 – Current bridge at Lair looking west

Illustration 8 - Location of stone cross to east of A93 just above Lair/Cray junction

Illustration 9 – detail of stone cross beside A93

Illustration 10 – Earthworks to north of side road to Cray (either natural or associated with road construction?)

Illustration 11 – preserved section of military road heading north off A93

Illustration 12 – preserved section of military road looking south

Illustration 13- fermtoun of Easter Lair looking south east (canalised burn in foreground)

Illustration 14 - Earthwork remains of Wester Lair farmstead looking west

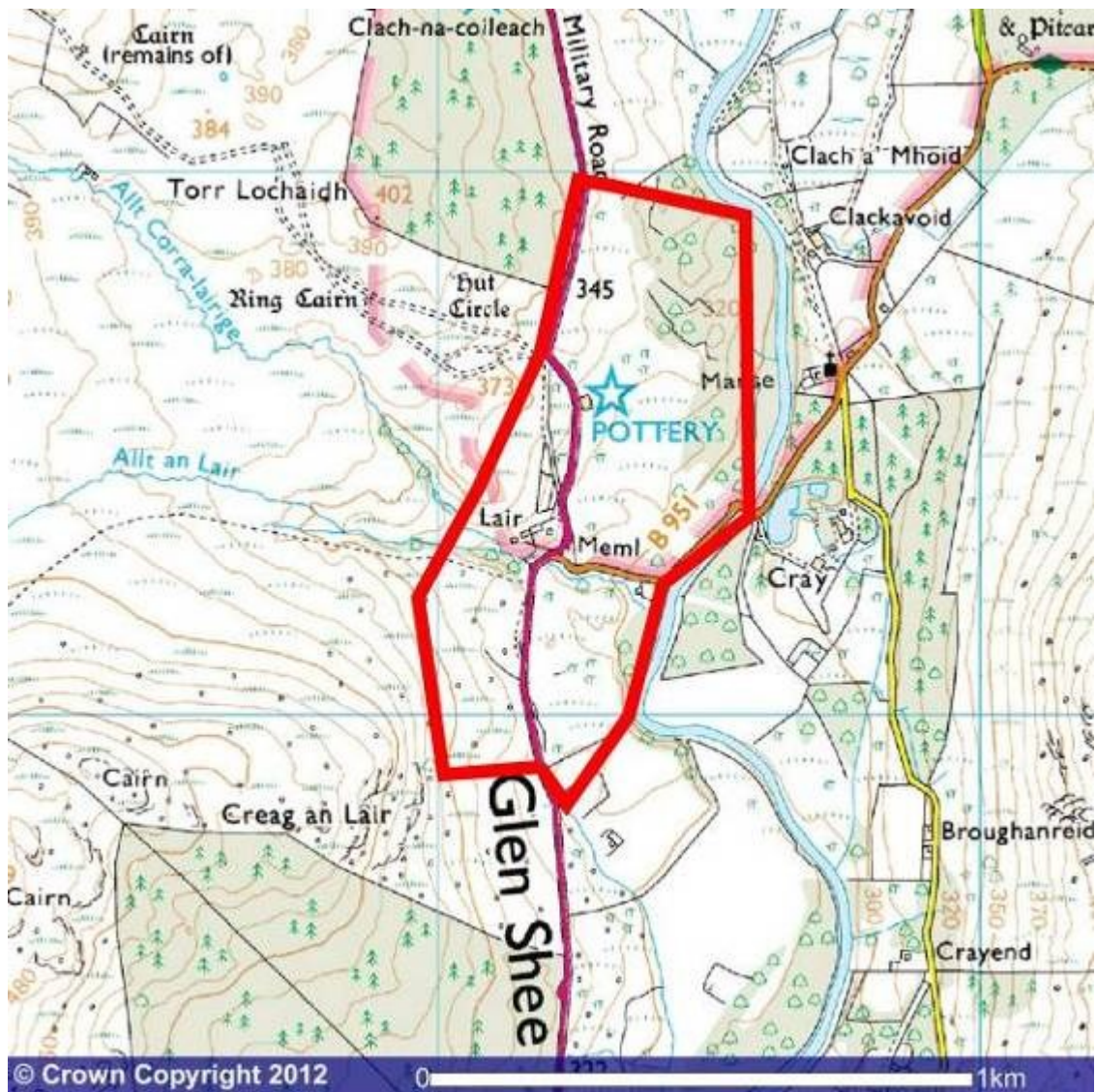


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Illustration 2 – Lair as marked on Timothy Pont's map of the late 16th century (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

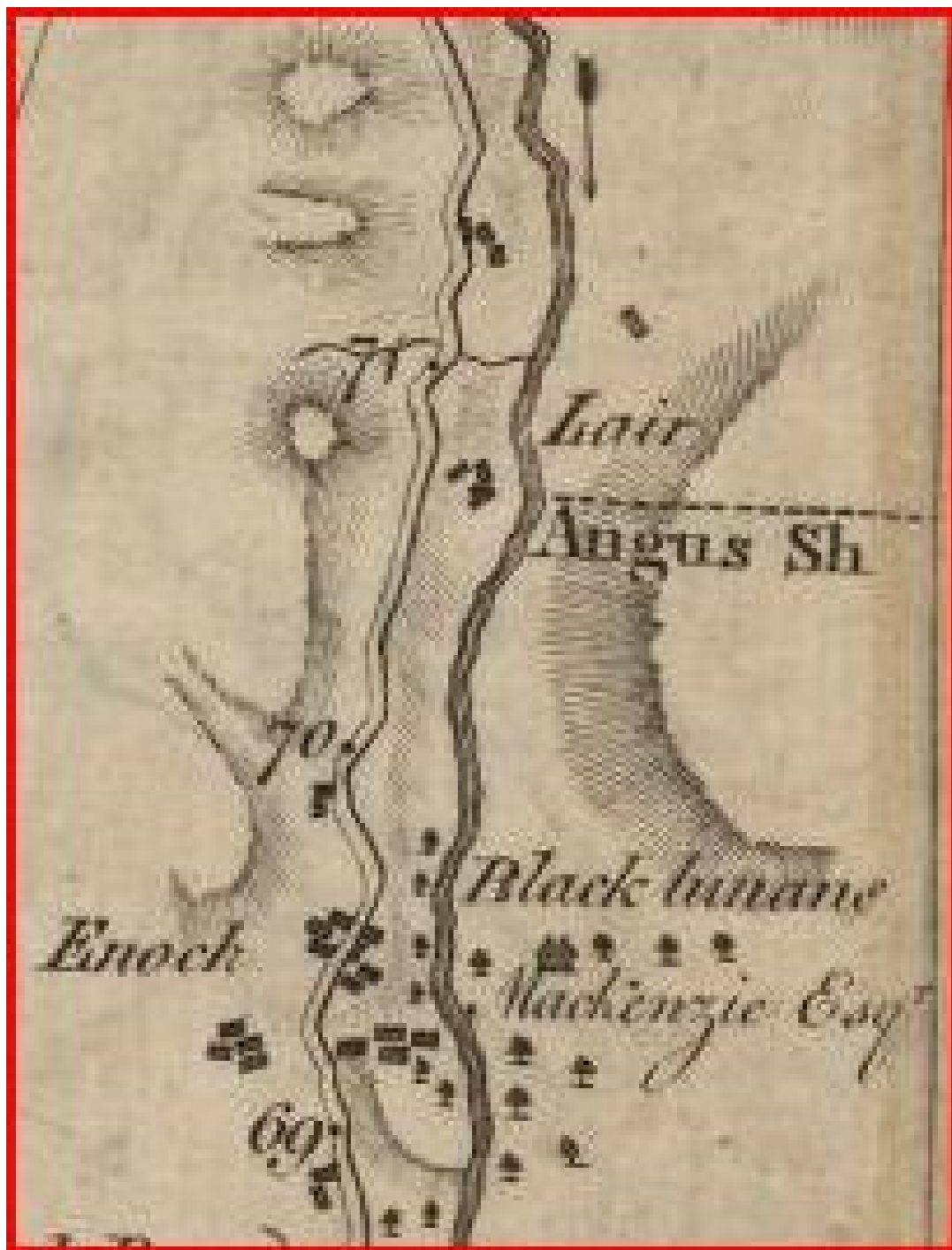


Illustration 3 – Lair as marked on James Stobie's map of 1783 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

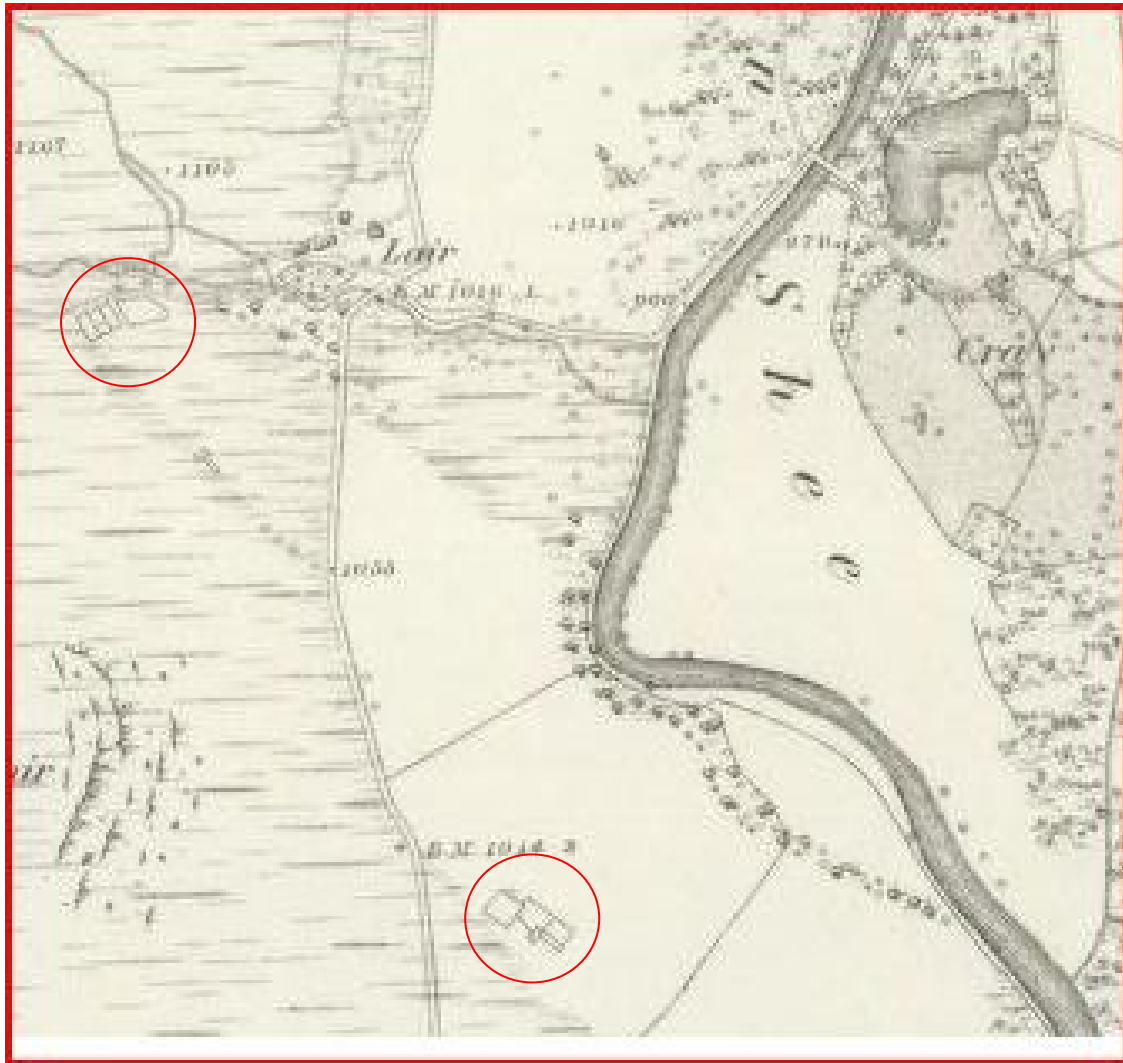


Illustration 4 – Lair as marked on 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1862/63, red circles indicate settlements of Wester and Easter Lair (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

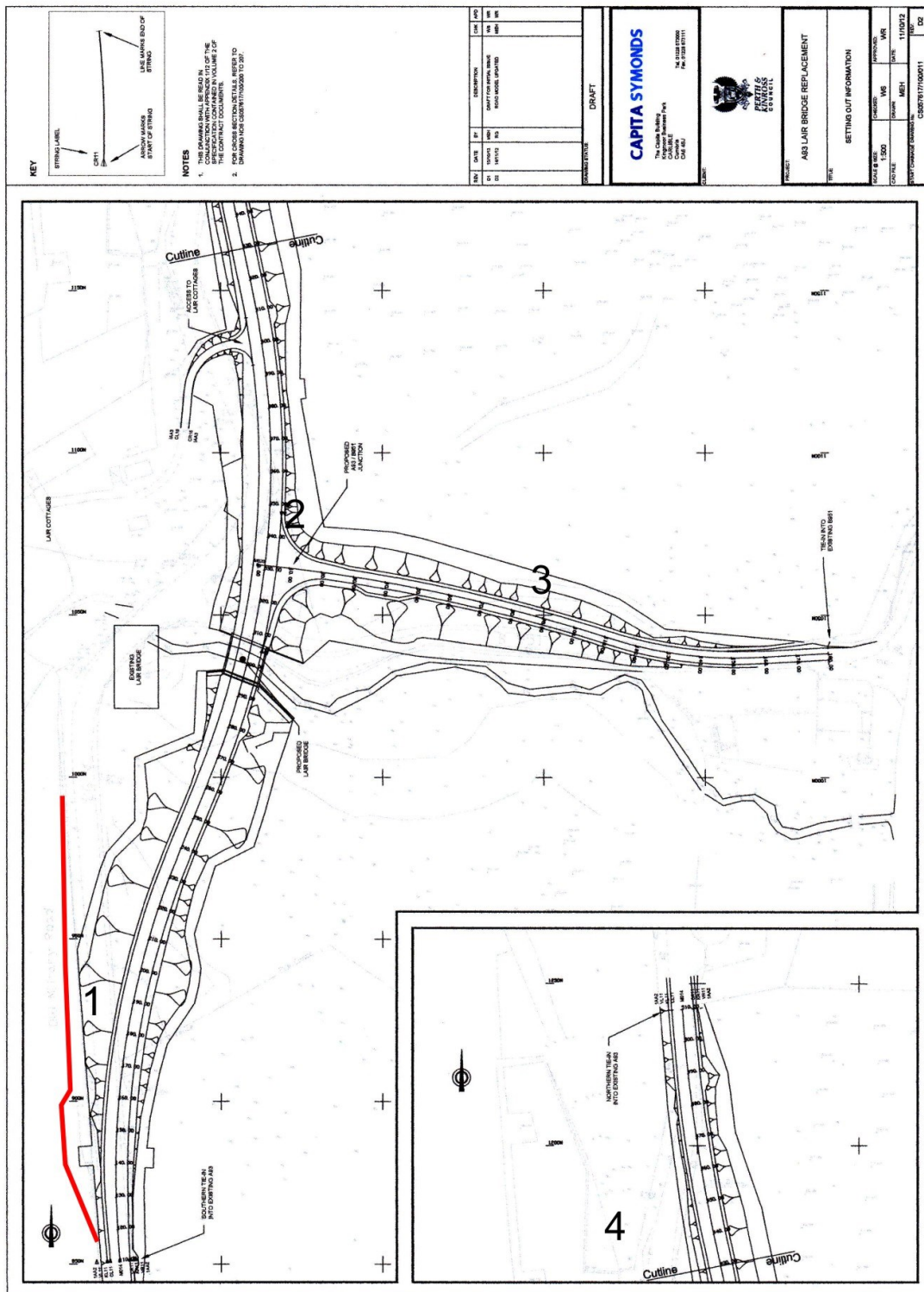


Illustration 5 – Proposed road line and site of new bridge marked with identified archaeological features and monuments (edge of military road shown in red)



Illustration 6 – Section of military road visible on West side of A93 approaching Lair Bridge



Illustration 7 – Current bridge at Lair looking west



Illustration 8 – Earthworks to north of side road to Cray (either natural or associated with road construction?)



Illustration 9 - Location of stone cross to east of A93 just above Lair/Cray junction



Illustration 10 – detail of stone cross beside A93



Illustration 11 – preserved section of military road heading north off A93



Illustration 12 – preserved section of military road looking south



Illustration 13- fermtoun of Easter Lair looking south east (canalised burn in foreground)



Illustration 14 - Earthwork remains of Wester Lair farmstead looking west